



## TASMANIAN AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY Incorporated

### THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL

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## THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL

### Introduction

This report presents the “Log of the Sea Gull” as written by “Napier Lion” and published in the *Sydney Mail*.

The “Sea Gull” was a Curtiss Flying Boat which undertook the first flight from Sydney to Launceston and return between 13<sup>th</sup> March to July 4<sup>th</sup> 1921.

The plane arriving in Launceston on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1921.

The Trip was undertaken by captain Andrew lang as the pilot and Alexander Hill as his companion, with Captain Snook accompanying the journey in the support ship “Acielle”.

The following extract from an article in the Sydney Times<sup>1</sup> describes the purpose of the trip:

*There will leave Sydney shortly the outpost of one of the most Interesting and significant expeditions in the history of Australia. The party, consisting of a 30-ton auxiliary yacht and a three-seater Curtiss Seagull flying boat, will survey and photograph the eastern coast of Australia from Tasmania to New Guinea, and establish definitely every spot from which amphibious aircraft may come and go. The expedition has been fitted out by Mr. Lebbeus Hordern, and the results of his work will be presented to the Federal Government as a gift.*

*As everybody knows, Mr. Lebbeus Hordern is 'mad on flying.' He was the pioneer of sea-planing in Australia and made his first flight from Double Bay in a Maurice Farman machine with the late Maurice Guilleaux as pilot. In those days Mr. Hordern was merely playing with aviation in search of new sensations; but when the war broke out, as it did almost immediately, he handed the Farman over to the Federal Government, and the machine was at once put into commission for the New Guinea expedition.*

*After several years of war experience, Mr. Hordern returned to Australia convinced of the efficacy of amphibious aircraft, both for defence and for commercial purposes. Acting on this belief, he imported two Seagull flying boats, one sporting type Short seaplane, and one twin engined 10-seater Short flying boat. The first of these to be assembled was a three-seater Seagull, and, after thorough testing, she has turned out to be an eminently efficient and comfortable bus.*

*Complete sets of photographs will be taken at every point, and all possible mooring places will be properly tried out and reported upon, with, minute attention to detail. Finally the whole of the data will be handed over as a gift to the Federal Government. It is a big job, and a fine, patriotic thing to do, and Mr. Hordern is to be highly commended for his undertaking.*

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<sup>1</sup> Sydney Times, Sunday 27 Feb 1921, p18



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The “Log” was published in weekly editions from 13 April to 14 September 1921. From a number of comments that are made in the “Log”, Captain Lang used a typewriter to record his journey in “real time”.

In the “Log”, the dates each of the particular flights are only given occasionally. In the last Chapter, a summary of the flight statistics is given, which has been presented here also to aid the reader.

Date (1921)	Section	Mileage		Time	Petrol Consumption	
		Miles	Kms		Gal	Litre
March 13	Sydney – Huskisson	87	140	1h 45m	14	64
March 25	Huskisson - Moruya	76	122	1h 50m	15	68
March 27	Moruya – Eden	72	116	1h 45m	14	64
April 12	Eden – Lakes Entrance	160	257	4h 0m	32	145
April 18	Lakes Entrance - Bairnsdale	70	113	1h 40m	14	64
April 29	Lakes Entrance - Welshpool	120	193	2h 25m	20	91
May 16	Welshpool – Lady Barren	145	233	2h 0m	23	105
May 20	Lady Barren - Launceston	142	229	2h 40m	20	91
<b>Down Trip</b>		872	1403	19h 5m	152	691
[1] Broke Passage at Marlo						

Date (1921)	Section	Mileage		Time	Petrol Consumption	
		Miles	Kms		Gal	Litre
June 19	Launceston - Georgetown	42	68	1h 15m <sup>[2]</sup>	8.5	39
June 22	Georgetown – Cape Barren <sup>[1]</sup>	105	169	1h 50m <sup>[3]</sup>	13	59
June 23	Cape Barren – Deal Island	70	113	1h 50m <sup>[3]</sup>	13	59
June 24	Deal Island - Welshpool	60	97	1h 40m <sup>[2]</sup>	14	94
June 26	Welshpool – Lakes Entrance	120	193	2h 0m <sup>[2]</sup>	17	77
June 28	Lakes Entrance - Eden	150	241	2h 45m <sup>[4]</sup>	19	86
June 29	Eden - Huskisson	165	266	3h 25m <sup>[4]</sup>	31 [5]	141
July 04	Huskisson - Sydney	100	161	2h 40m <sup>[2]</sup>	18	82
<b>Return Trip</b>		812	1308	17h 25m	133.5	607
<sup>[1]</sup> Forced to alight at Whitehouse Island through rain <sup>[2]</sup> Ten minutes on surface warming up <sup>[3]</sup> Over 10 minutes on surface <sup>[4]</sup> Five minutes on surface <sup>[5]</sup> Includes petrol consumed when forced to alight through plugs at Eden						



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#### Presentation of the Log of the Sea Gull

The “Log” originally including “Chapters” in the title, but the numbering of the articles ceased part way through. (We have given all of the publications a chapter number and Chapter Title to simplify navigating the story).

The text and follows as close as practical the presentation in the *Sydney Mail*, with some of the clearer photographs included. Other photographs, mostly of scenic shots of the coastline, have not been included, due to the quality of the newspaper reproductions.

Please note we have retained the two-word format for “Sea Gull” as use by *Napier Lion* and the *Sydney Mail*. Whereas in modern text, it is written as one word. Also, some words retain the spelling used at the time, e.g. “gadgets”.

To aid the reader, the extended paragraphs have been split where feasible. And additional headings included.

As nick names or non de plumes are used, in the *Sydney Mail*, they were in parenthesis, here we will simplify by using Italics.

Name	Nick Name	Role
Captain Andrew Lang	<i>Napier Lion</i>	Pilot and Chronicler
Captain Charles Snook	<i>Admiral</i>	Captain of the Acielle
W.B.M. Smith	<i>Binnacle Bill</i>	Bo’sun on the Acielle, on outward trip
Frank Chandos	<i>Frank</i>	Cook on the Acielle
Jack Watson	<i>Spanner</i>	Engineer on the Acielle
Alexander Hill	<i>Shellback</i>	Sea Gull rigger
Fredrick Laidler	<i>Splitpin</i>	Engineer on the Sea Gull
Alfred Holt		Acielle crewman on return trip
Captain Andrew Lang	<i>Joy Stick</i>	Appears only in Chapter 1 to introduce the crew

Where words or phrases are used which are not used commonly today, explanations are included as foot notes.



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#### Glossary

Ark	The Aceille
Barracoota / Coota	The Aceille
Bird	An Aeroplane
'bus	The Seagull
Cow's Calf / Calf	Dingy of the Aceille
Gun	Aerial Camera
Hook	Anchor
Ironclad	The Aceille
Kite	The Seagull
Pick	Anchor
Sticks	Oars

#### Reference Information

After the “Log”, some background information to the participants and the fate of the plane is provided.

#### Commentary

When reading the “Log”, two historical attitudes become apparent.

Firstly, the impact the recent World War had on the outlook. And secondly, the societal attitudes to the first nations people, especially those on the Furneaux Islands in Chapter 21.

Reading the “Log” a century later, when the present-day attitudes prevail, is illuminating. We pass no judgement on the historical attitudes.



## The Log of the Sea Gull – By Napier Lion

### Chapter 1: Introductions and Leaving Sydney

#### *Thrilling Start of a Great Pioneering Cruise*

Mr. Lebbeus Hordern's scheme for the aerial survey of the east coast of Australia has started sensationally. Last Week, while the mother ship *Acielle* and the flying-boat *Sea Gull* were lying at anchor in Twofold Bay, a fierce gale sprang up that threatened to wreck the 'plane. Single-handed the pilot boarded the craft, and at great peril succeeded in carrying her through the teeth of the storm to a position of safety. The story briefly told below of the courage and daring of the pilot is just what we should expect from an airman of the type of Captain Lang, whose aerial exploits already entitle him to a place among the world's greatest aviators. As the cruise of the survey party proceeds, we shall record its progress from time to time. So that readers may be better able to appreciate the type of men who are conducting the expedition, *Joy Stick* here tells something of the personnel of the sea and aerial crews.

In Chapter II, *Napier Lion* takes up the story, and those who are already acquainted with his breezily-written, practical motoring notes in the 'Mail' will look forward with pleasure and a good deal of anticipation to the publication of succeeding chapters.

#### *The Introductions*

By *JOY STICK*

ALTHOUGH *Napier Lion* and myself are the best of pals, and in connection with this little jaunt around the eastern coast of Australia we are inseparable, there is no getting away from the fact that as the "Joy Stick" of the *Sea Gull* I am the hardest-worked individual of the whole little outfit, unless it is the propeller of either the *Acielle* or the little 'airship.' From the time the engine is opened out to move the machine until we take to the water again everything depends upon my behaviour in the hands of the pilot. If I got it into my head to become a bit stubborn when the engine was throttled down we would probably come down tail first; but as I dislike a splash in the ditch from anything higher than six feet you can depend upon it that nothing so foolish is going to happen. The "Sydney Mail" of February 23 had a good deal about this little expedition, but very little mention was made of the careers of our little band of aviation enthusiasts. Before launching out with my attack, let me assure you that they are all returned men, and have done their bit, and are all gifted with a sense of humour in consequence.

WELL, to get down to facts. The *Acielle* left Sydney Harbour at exactly 2.30 on Saturday morning, March 12, and after a wonderfully good trip dropped anchor in Jervis Bay — Jervis, not Jarvis, please — after a voyage which lasted 11 hours 25 minutes — the actual time from head to head. It speaks volumes for her Tasmanian builders when one mentions that she steamed all the way down with portholes open. It was only after the heads into Jervis Bay had been passed that things had to be made snug, as she began to ship nasty green seas. However, she behaved herself like the truly well-found ship she is.



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Captain Snook, of the Acielle, is not, in the full sense of the term, the true-blue skipper who has been well pickled in brine. He was during the war, amongst other things, a Captain in the Royal Flying Corps. Educated at the Sydney Grammar School, he entered the motor business fairly early in life, so that when the call was heard, like many another motorist, he felt peculiarly fitted to become a pilot of an aeroplane. Misfortune dogged his steps, because, a few months after crossing to France, in an attempt to down two Hun machines they got in first and grassed their prey, fortunately without doing him much damage. After 21 months of prison life the skipper was exchanged for another prisoner, and found himself interned in Holland, where he stayed until the Armistice. During his internment he devoted a lot of time to the study of navigation, and upon his arrival in England was attached to a Handley-Page navigation squadron, where his knowledge picked up as an internee came in more than useful. He has made every preparation for recording the data gathered on the present trip. It should be of immense value to the Federal Government, which cannot ignore the importance of the flying boat or seaplane in the defence of Australia. If the ideas and ideals of Mr Lebbeus Hordern, promoter of the expedition, can be fulfilled, this voyage will be historical — a pioneering venture supplying a vivid chapter to Australia's sea and air records.



**Captain Andrew Lang,**  
Pilot of the Sea Gull. The story of his intrepid battle with a storm at Twofold Bay is told on this page.



**Captain Snook,**  
Skipper of the Acielle, the yacht which went south as "mother-ship" to the flying-boat "Sea Gull."





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*BINNACLE BILL* the Sailor is down on the ship's papers as the bo'sun. When the old country called for assistance from her cubs Bill was amongst those who were down on the roll of the 2nd Field Company, 1st Division, A.I.F. It was at the age of 14 that the call of the sea first, took possession of Bill, and his first packet was a three masted barque. Strange to say, although he has visited most ports in the world, he has never touched at China and Japan. For a real sailor man this is unusual. It was not until the age of 21 that he touched the Aussie coast again, and by that time he was a full fledged bo'sun. At the outbreak of war Bill was mate on one of the finest-equipped yachts in Australia. The next man to engage, our attention is perhaps the most interesting of the whole crew; at any rate, in the eyes of the crew he is quite the most important man on the vessel — at meal-times! He is *Frank*, the cook.

*Frank* is a truly wonderful study, and the more one sees of him the more one marvels. Over 37 years ago he came to Australia, accompanied by his Scotch wife, having sailed from *Bia Blanca*, in South America. Although his mother was Scotch and his father Welsh, *Frank* is a Belgian, having been born in ill-fated Louvain. His father was very anxious for him to enter the navy, but *Frank* yearned to become a chef of the highest order. He apprenticed himself to the famous firm of Gatti, well known in these days to the Digger. Getting married, he left for South America to carry on with his profession, but that wanderlust so prevalent among the Scotch took hold of his wife, and 37 years ago the two of them sailed for this country. And of all places to be visited by them first of all was Oondooroo, up near Winton, in North-west Queensland. It is rather interesting to note that *Frank's* Scotch mother was housekeeper to the Rev. Drury, who was chaplain to King Leopold, and who is closely connected to the Queensland Drurys. Tiring of the heat and the flies, *Frank* made for the coast, and reaching Brisbane connected with the A.U.S.N. Co. as a chef. In consequence he is well known up and down the east coast. After a few years of this life he eventually found himself Admiral's chef on the flagship *Orlando*, but had not been long on board when an opportunity came for him to accompany Captain Le Marinel and Lieutenant Vaelcke, of the Belgian Carabiniers, on an expedition to the Congo, *Frank* re-joining his old regiment as sergeant-major. He can stir one up with stories of the Congo atrocities.

RETURNING to this part of the globe, he took to the coast, and was just beginning to get his sea-legs once more when the South African war broke out, and off he went as a stretcher-bearer in the Australian field hospitals. At the completion of that little picnic, he returned to coastal steamers as chef, and then went into business at Rockhampton. His wife died just when things were looking most prosperous, and he sold out and joined up with the Howard Smith Co. Then the Great War broke out, and, at the age of 54, with his two sons, *Frank* enlisted on the 12th October, 1914. After being wounded in the left foot, the right knee, and the right eye, he was invalided home, and received a V.G. discharge. But amongst those brave heroes that are sleeping for ever on Gallipoli's shores are to be numbered *Frank's* two sons. What more can one say? His two daughters are still living, and the pride of his heart. Apart from being a great chef, *Frank* speaks six languages. But our Ole Pilot insists that he is not a





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natural linguist, because when up north he — *Frank* — failed to master the language of Burketown! ' But yes, mon Capitan, what I lack in what you do call the language of the north you do make up for — in fact, you do contain enough for the whole ship. Ah, you are a homme!' And up the companion-way he darts, with his sides splitting from laughter.

THE next member of the crew is *Spanner*, and right down at heart one must admit that his task is not an enviable one by any means. *Spanner* is the engineer on board, and has charge of all the internal combustion engines, except that of the Sea Gull. To start with, there is the 45-h.p. Stirling engine that drives the Acielle through the water at nine knots, and in the same engine-room is the little electric lighting plant, which has to be run for a few hours daily to charge the batteries. Then the little pinnacle attached to the ship has a small 23-h.p. engine in it, and this takes about as much attention as the 160-h.p. engine on the Sea Gull; in fact, from what I have seen of the engines, I would far sooner have the large 160-h.p. Curtiss to look after than the little marine job. The Stirling seems contented to go right through the piece without even a miss — but in making this statement I am touching wood. If the little lighting plant show takes it into its head to jib, all that can happen will be replacing with oil lamps until the machine is once more put in. order. But you can see at a glance that the job of engineman is no sinecure at the best of times.

*Spanner* began his career as an apprentice in a big engineering firm which catered for the marine trade principally. The man who serves his apprenticeship in steam cannot be beaten as a tradesman. He learns the limits of the hammer and chisel, which is more than a lot of the so-called present-day motor mechanics can ever learn. There are men in the motor-trade to-day who, if they were pulling your watch to pieces, would pick up a hammer and chisel if they found themselves in a knot. Some of them are honest, but are ignorant enough to try the same thing on their own watches! This is not the type of man our own *Spanner* happens to be.

At the outbreak of war he was in Fiji as an engineer to a big sugar-refining company, and, like the rest of the available on the island, he signed up for the duration of the war as a marine engineer. The biggest job he found himself on was seventh engineer to the *Justicia*, which was engaged on transport duties. Seventh engineer sounds a bit down the scale; but when you are told in all good faith that this vessel tarried no fewer than 42 engineer ratings you begin to wonder what sort of an engineering shop it was. She was built by Harland and Wolff for the Hamburg-America line, but at the outbreak of war was not completed. Her overall length was about 900 feet, her tonnage about 40,000, and the number of troops she carried was about 10,000. *Spanner* took ill after one of his trans-Atlantic voyages and was sent down to London to hospital. Sure enough, the wily Huns had been waiting for such a snap as the great mammoth transport, and five submarines attacking at once, in spite of the escort, managed to pierce her hull. But all hands were saved, as she took 24 hours to sink, which is a great feather in the cap of the British shipbuilder.



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COMING back home, the next character we have to “screen” is a man of big import. He is the rigger to the vessel and goes under the name of *Shellback*. Next to the pilot, *Shellback* has more to do with me than any other member of the crew. His duties consist of attention to the hull and the trim of the wings, and being an old sea-dog, *Shellback* is in his element, and the way he cares for and fondles me can only be equalled by a mother with her first-born babe. No matter what be the hour, should the weather spring up in any way *Shellback* will always be found somewhere handy to make sure that the moorings are sound or that there is no dragging of the “hook”.

*Shellback* was born at Mount Macedon, in Victoria, but in spite of his country upbringing he resolved to go to sea, and at the early age of 14 embarked on the *Samaritan*, a “four-stick” barque who hoisted her flag under the colours of McVicar, Marshall, and Co. He stuck the “wind jamming” trade for eight years, and then tried his hand at steam. Shortly after this change the South African fracas broke out, and *Shellback* found himself the youngest trooper in the 3rd N.S.W. Mounted Rifles, under the now famous Charlie Cox. When that little business had been satisfactorily settled, he returned to sea, sailing with the Sir W. Tatem line of tramp steamers.

At the outbreak of the Great War *Shellback* happened to be in Odessa and tried to join up with the Russian Army. He failed and found a berth on a transport taking refugees across to Malta. He then got to Teneriffe and shipped on board a transport that was bound for Australia. As soon as he put foot on our soil he joined up with the Bridging Train, A.I.F., with which unit he went to Egypt. Upon arrival there they were disbanded, and *Shellback* was transferred to No. 1 Squadron Australian Flying Corps, with whom he served in Egypt and Palestine. One of the most pleasing features to me as the *Joy Stick* of this little party is that *Shellback* and the Ole Pilot are as thick as thieves. They travel about together, work together, and go ashore together, as they have a great deal in common, the pilot having had a fair smattering of the sea.

AND here we are at the end of the census — except, of course, for the Ole Pilot. Naturally I see more of him than anyone else, and in consequence I almost overlooked him. Well, he is a queer ole bird. Some say he is 'cranky,' which he considers a compliment, as such comments, he says, generally come from the incompetent through sheer jealousy or crass ignorance. Have you ever met any real downright enthusiast and lover of his job who did not appear to have a “kink” somewhere? And as a *Joy Stick* I am quite convinced that there are more cranks amongst the pilots who are real artists than will be found among individuals of ether artistic trades.

Being short of a mechanic, he is at present doing his own mechanical work, having in his youth qualified as a motor expert in the days when cars were rare in Australia. Owing to his pre-war technical knowledge, our pilot was one of the chief experimental test pilots to the British Air Force and has flown 53 different types of machines. During his term at this class of work, he,

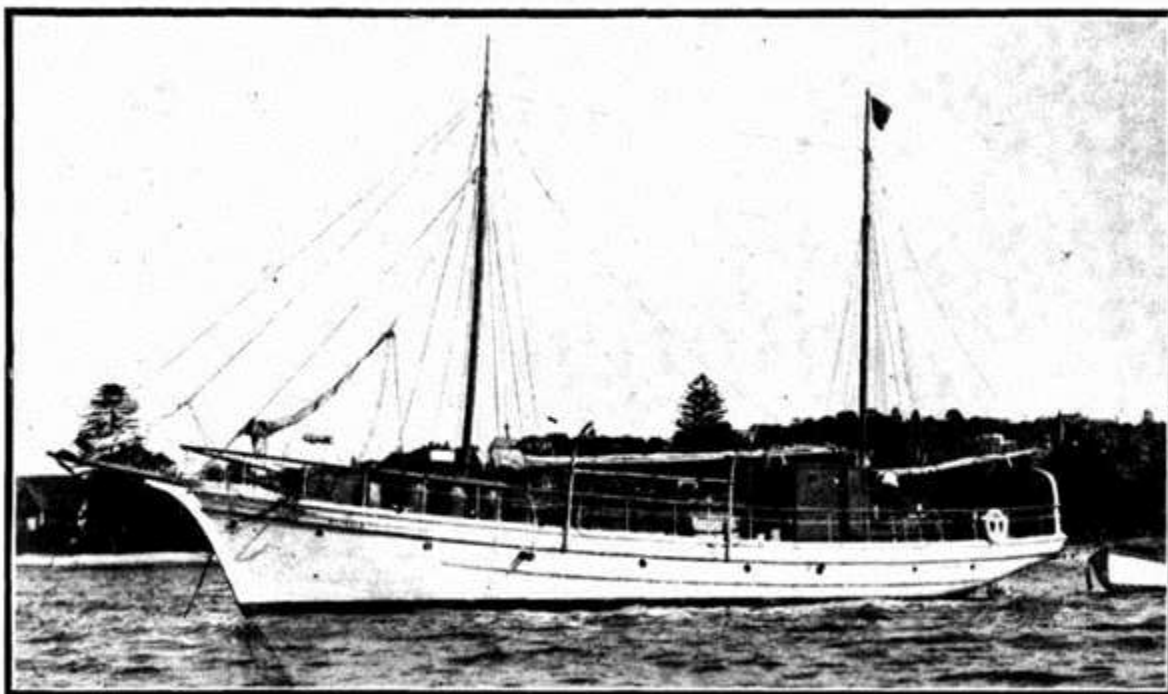


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with an observer, took an aeroplane up to 30,500 feet just after the Armistice, creating a new world's height record, beating the previous world's best by 5,000 feet. His record stands to-day as a world's best in a two-seater machine. If you should ever meet him and discuss the subject, do not on any account suggest that you thought the thing was done as a stunt. In very truth it was one of the most scientific flights ever accomplished, the data gathered during the flight being the most complete in existence. Remember that, whatever you do!

Another feature about him that appeals to me as the *Joy Stick* of the 'bus is his steadiness. On a game like this a man wants to keep himself fit if he is to give of his very best. In consequence our pilot never smokes, though he loves the weed, and if he drinks at all it will be a pint of beer after the day's flying is finished — and incidentally he loves his pint too! Some kindly lady the other day asked him if he had any vices at all. "Oh, yes," was his reply. "Sometimes I run amok and will paddle in my porridge or eat my bedding, both of which greatly annoy my friend the enemy *Frank*, who is Monsieur Le Chef!"

Well, there you are. Time is up, and I must get to business; but in the future you are bound to hear a bit about me in this column through *Napier Lion*, who will take up the reins from this on — that is, if he can get the time, eh?



The Auxiliary Yacht Acielle,  
Mother ship for the Sea Gull.



## THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL

*The following article was also published with Chapter 1:*

### **FROM A TWOFOLD BAY CORRESPONDENT**

A THRILLING incident occurred on Friday last which illustrated the intrepidity of the Sea Gull's famous pilot in circumstances of unwonted danger. The 'plane had been lying at her mooring on the northern side of Twofold Bay during an unusually stiff nor'-easter, which for twenty-four hours blew so heavily as to necessitate the frequent attendance of the pilot and his mechanic. Watch was kept over the craft all Thursday night. During Friday the blow abated slightly, but towards evening, and while the mechanic was off duty, the wind swung round without warning, and began to blow strongly from the south-west. To such a wind the Sea Gull was peculiarly exposed, and Captain Lang, who was on watch, noticed that, as a result of the high water and surging waves, the anchor had commenced to drag, and the Sea Gull was drifting in the direction of the rocks which fringe the edge of the beach nearby. With the least possible delay he got aboard from a dingy to prepare as best he could for emergencies. The force of the wind considerably increased, and under its influence the sea became greatly agitated. The anchors continued to drag, and the Sea Gull being now in danger of being carried on to the rocks, the pilot removed the engine covering and started the engine. By this means he managed to take the strain off one of the anchors. Thus he awaited the arrival of the mechanic. The gale, however, increased to such an extent that Captain Lang soon realised that further delay would be fatal to the craft.

It was imperatively necessary that he should endeavour to get her away at once to a place of safety, even if he had to make the attempt unaided. Lying down at full length on the nose of the machine, he slipped the hawser attached to one of the cables, the while he was drenched continuously by heavy waves. Then he increased the revolutions of the engine, and, once more lying prone along the nose of the machine — it being impossible to stand up — he succeeded in raising the second anchor and dropping it into the cockpit along side the pilot's seat. Almost at the same instant he opened the engine up and headed the 'plane into the raging storm. Forcefully the Sea Gull fought her way forward, and by the time the end of the wharf. was passed she met the full force of the gale. Thereafter little could be seen from the shore of either the 'plane or her plucky pilot — only occasional glimpses through the mass of blinding spray. It was seen, however, that the Sea Gull, was forging ahead, and, following a short run over the turbulent waves, she took the air, and, flying low in the face of one of the wildest of south-westerlies on record, alighted a few minutes later on the waters of the sheltered southern corner of the bay. There the pilot dropped his anchors, and, later, was taken off by a boat.

Interviewed regarding the adventure, Captain Lang, who was the recipient of numerous congratulations on his single-handed achievement, modestly deprecated any suggestion that he was entitled to exceptional credit for his accomplishment, remarking that such experiences were all in the game. In response to questions, however, he admitted that the conditions



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were full of peril, and a single mistake in handling the machine would have resulted in disaster.

*This incident is described in Chapter 7.*

### **Chapter: 2 Sydney to Jervis Bay/ Huskisson**

IT was with a deep feeling of relief that we of the Sea Gull crew found ourselves over the rail of the Acielle for the last time in Sydney Harbour. And when making for the kite shed (aeroplane hangar) down at Double Bay we were greeted with the news that the vessel had lifted her anchor at an early hour that morning, we really felt that the circus had at last begun. As children you can well remember that impatient feeling that overcame you as you sat looking into the arena of a circus, gazing at the kerosene flares and longing for the hour to arrive when the beloved lady equestrienne and the dummy clown would make their appearance. Well, such were my feelings on the morning of the 12th of March, only upon this occasion we were waiting for a wire from the boss of the Acielle to say that our mooring was down and ready for us at Huskisson, in Jervis Bay.

At midnight of the 12<sup>th</sup>, word reached us that Jervis Bay was in a nasty mood, and that on no account were we to leave Sydney before 9 a.m. on Sunday, the 13th. If one is superstitious concerning the number 13, then there was some compensation in the thought of the old saying, "The better the day the better the deed." The morning broke beautifully fine, with a slight mist over the Manly end of the harbour, which was quickly dissipated by a zephyr of a breeze blowing from the west. However, it was not until 10 a.m. that the Sea Gull rose from the surface of Double Bay, heading in the direction of North Head.

And a very fair load she was carrying too, although the petrol tank was only a little more than half-full, containing about 28 gallons altogether. Besides having *Shellback* the rigger on board — he is no light weight, either — we had the aerial camera, one magazine of plates, no end of clothing, which we had to hold over from the yacht, maps, coats, riding lights, and, last, but not least, a 28 pounds anchor, with 20 fathoms of line attached. This, of course, is made nice and snug in true sailor fashion, and is so situated that if the engine should konk out at a height of 1,500 feet *Shellback* has sufficient time to get it clear with himself over the wind screen of the Sea Gull, ready to let it go at the "toot." And, my word, thanks to the attention paid by *Shellback* to the flukes or that little 28-pound pick, we have mercifully been saved many hours of worry and anxiety. A forced descent is always on the boards, and if a man has sufficient height with a bit of luck he may be able to glide into some small bay or cove that will be more or less sheltered from the elements, drop the pick after drifting sufficiently close to the shore, and then tackle the problem of getting the power plant of the old petrol kite to once more "mote."

IN connection with the flying-boat, one does have the advantage of always having an "aerodrome" handy — that is, as long as he does not lose his head and try to perch on the top of a rocky cliff or sand dune! But the poor unfortunate 'bird' on the land machine at





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present has to perch on the top of any old thing in the event of a forced landing. It all depends on the conditions "downstairs." It may be a spot with a nice rocky surface, or some dense scrub, in which case he will find himself doing a little bit of bird-nesting. Of course, on a flying boat there is always a possibility of a ducking; but a wet skin is preferable to being perched up on the top of a hundred-foot gum-tree, hungry and far from home!

Well, after taking off, we flipped round the harbour at the Manly end for about 20 minutes, until we attained a decent height. We then passed out of the Heads, as was only meet upon such an occasion as this. Even *Shellback* saw the humour of this little effort, as he pulled my sleeve and nodded as much as to say. "That's right."

We passed over Bondi at 2,000ft, and at that hour it was surprising the large number of folk who were already in the water. Curiously, they all looked like a badly organised army of soldier crabs. And did we envy them? No; not on your life, in spite of an insatiable love for swimming. Passing over Cape Banks at the northern end of the entrance to Botany Bay, the atmosphere took a hand in the show, and the machine had quite a good time yawing and rolling. As one gazed down, fascinated, at the sight of the varying depths of the bay, one's thoughts flew back to the early days of our country's history, when Captain Cook, on a craft very much more frail than our own, first entered the mouth of the bay. Carried away by these thoughts we were well down towards Bulli before one realised that he was not Captain Cook and had a craft under him which needed more concentration than it was receiving.

OFF Thirroul we passed over a collier steaming along very close into the shore; in fact, one felt that it could not be more than 3 inches off at the very most. It was funny to notice the vessel ploughing its way through what appeared to be shallow water. A few yards ahead would be a jutting reef running well out to sea, and, gazing down waiting for the crash to come, one felt that he wanted to cry out to the captain, "Hard a'sta'board your helm, you fool; you are going to crash for a certainty!" But, somehow, the crash never came. The little cockleshell, as it appeared to us, just went complacently on its way, leaving a thin white ribbon of wake over the spot that from the air appeared a veritable death-trap. As a matter of fact, upon looking up the Admiralty chart later, I found that the depth of water under his keel was something like 50ft. Of course, the day was beautifully clear, and at 2,000ft one could see to a surprising depth.

After this the Sea Gull began to yaw and roll a bit more; so it was decided to make out to sea a little; but the further on we went the worse it became, and so her nose was gradually directed towards the shore line again. The cause of this little bit of friskiness, however, very soon became apparent as, glancing out to sea, it was quite clear that a north-easterly was on its way down the coast. At our height it was probably travelling faster than "down-stairs," and was rebounding from the surrounding hills out to sea. After Wollongong it abated considerably as the range ran well inland behind Dapto.



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We photographed Wollongong, which from the air is decidedly disappointing. When motoring through the little spot I always felt that it would look rather fascinating from the top, but my expectations were not realised. Lake Illawarra looked splendid. What a great sheet of water that is, to be sure! My thoughts flew down to Bill Beach, the old ex-champion sculler, who lives near Dapto and the Lake, and I wondered if, when looking for the cause of the noisy disturbance in the air, he realised that the man at the wheel of the craft was an enthusiastic amateur sculler?

Shellharbour was next, but we were settled so far as photography was concerned, as the camera had jammed, just like a blanky machine-gun, when mostly needed; and as we were supplied with only the one magazine for this stretch — we hope to return this way from the south, and will, therefore, photograph anything that we miss on the down trip — our spirits were considerably dampened, and one felt that a thumping lot of interest had been knocked out of the section.

PASSING over Kiama the wind had freshened, and the smokestacks round about, with the assistance of the natural elements, gave us a “rousing” reception! Nevertheless, Kiama would have made an excellent picture, as the light was great, and not too much smoke coming off the furnaces. There was also a fair-sized vessel lying at anchor, which would have added interest to the picture.

With the wind on our tail, we flew a little inland over Gerringong, a district well known to me as a motorist. And, my word! the cows in that vicinity put up one of the gayest Sunday morning stunts ever attempted in the whole of their career. My fervent prayer was that our engine would carry on and not let us down at that spot, as to have got into the hands of the cow cocky there would have meant nothing more than the termination of the trip, so far as the crew of the Sea, Gull was concerned, at any rate! My word, though, the Gerringong cow, if given a bit of training, may very easily hold its own with some of the Randwick cracks.

We crossed short over Black Head, which, strange to say, from the air appears to be appropriately named, and in a few minutes we found ourselves opposite Greenwell Point, with Nowra in the distance well ensconced in a bend of the Shoalhaven River, which from the sea looked very fine indeed. It would make a splendid shelter for flying-boats, I should imagine, as there are strips of water that would enable a machine to get off with the wind in any direction. But it should be examined from the surface, also, to determine whether or not it would be satisfactory.

TAKING a short cut across Wollumboola Lake, we were over Jervis Bay before the crew of the Acielle were aware of it, and some reception the elements meted out to us, too. By this the wind was blowing from the north-east at a speed, of about 25 miles an hour, the temperature had risen, and when making a turn over the town at 1,000 feet there was no mistaking the “remous,” or “air-pockets” — commonly called bumps— that were floating about. We alighted within 50 yards of our mooring buoy in a direct line, so that all that was necessary





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for us to do was to give the 'bus a little engine to carry us to the spot for *Shellback* to pick up the moorings. But it was not so easy as it at first appeared, as we were reckoning without the choppy and turbulent seas that were coming over. However, we made the mooring at the first time of asking, although it took *Shellback* all his time to hang on and make fast. Five minutes later — after one hour 40 minutes in the air — we were on board the *Acielle*, with a cup of good hot coffee made in the best French style.

Owing to the strength of the nor'-easter that was blowing it was decided to run the kite into the shelter of the Currumbene Creek, which runs through the foot of the little village, and no more ideal spot will probably be found in the whole of Australia — on the east coast, at any rate. Across the opposite side of the mouth is a sandspit, which runs north and south. The creek is entered from the north-east, but as soon as the bar is crossed it turns at an acute angle, running due north, and is well protected by the banks and scrub, the only winds that appear to have any effect on the machine being nor-west, south-west, or westerly.

A great many people turned up in the afternoon to see the first flying-boat in Australia, but, unfortunately, the wind and tide made things too rough over the bar, and the thought of any flying taking place during the afternoon had to be abandoned. So we spent the rest of the day running over the working parts of the 'bus. Unfortunately, the *Acielle* was anchored about 1½ mile outside the bar, which was decidedly inconvenient, especially in a choppy sea, as the little two-stroke engine in the tender very much objects to operating in a moist atmosphere of any description. The point that is exercising my mind, though, is how long that little gadget will hang out. It is the first of its kind that has ever come to my notice to do really honest work, as it is generally recognised amongst the motor fraternity that a single cylinder two-stroke engine is about as rare as flying elephants are in the Northern Territory. But time will tell.



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### Chapter 3: Huskisson

The cruise of the flying-boat Sea Gull and her mother ship the Acielle, which are engaged on the aerial survey of the east coast of Australia, is progressing well. The entire coast from Sydney to the Victorian border has been surveyed, the main stretches photographed, and places suitable for the establishing of aerodromes marked. Last week we told the story of the trip up till the arrival at Jervis Bay. Here *Napier Lion* continues the tale of the flying-boat's adventures from Huskisson to Moruya. It is a breezy narrative, touching on all manner of incidental happenings and containing a great deal of practical information that will be appreciated by all who are interested in aircraft.

Of all the delightful spots it has been my good fortune to visit, I think there is none to compare with Huskisson. It is not only, the situation of the little village that appeals to me, nor the swimming, nor the fishing. There is something very attractive about the people, from the children upwards. The school children took great interest in the Sea Gull. The day following our arrival the weather broke fine and cool, with just a zephyr of a breeze from the north east. We ran the nose of the Sea Gull on to the sandspit near the entrance of the river and commenced flying at about 10 a.m. Quite a crowd had gathered on the little jetty, but it was not long before all the available rowing-boats in the river were requisitioned to carry the "cargo of live freight" across to the Spit. And to the Huskisson women, for pluck and enterprise one must extend the glad hand. They were all anxious to see their own little harbour from the air. The factor of human freight is always to me one of intense interest, and the more one studies one's passengers the more interesting does the subject become. One of our male passengers at Huskisson was so blind that he could not see to pick up a rope in the bow of a pulling boat; yet at a height of 1,000ft he could see the bottom of the sea close to the shore.



THE SEA GULL MOORED OFF THE BEACH AT HUSKISSON, JERVIS BAY.

AFTER a sojourn of about four days the Acielle decided to push off for the Moruya bar. Waiting for the tide, she moved out at about 9.20 p.m., leaving *Shellback* and myself, with our restricted kit, quartered at the hotel. A jolly little rest house it is too. At 2 o'clock the following morning *Shellback* — who never sleeps woke me to say he thought the vessel had returned to her anchorage. "Rot, man," was my semi-conscious reply. "You're dreaming. Turn over and



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dream another." And off to the land of nod I went. At 6 a.m., his usual hour for calling me, he led me out to the veranda, and, sure enough, there lay the Acielle. The engine of the pinnacle on the yacht had got it into its head to go "phut," and nothing in the wide world would make it go. And, as the crew of the Sea Gull, we had little or no time to tinker about with it. That was *Spanner's* job, and he had enough to do, goodness knows. Finally, word reached us that the clutch had gone "dud" on the parent ship, and that all sail had to be clapped on to pull the craft out of a serious predicament. However, thanks to the seamanship of *Binnacle Bill*, disaster was averted, and her bow once more turned for the heads of Jervis Bay. As the delay was mapped out to be a matter of days, *Shellback* and myself held a council of war, and decided to get our vessel on the back of the Government slipway, which is beautifully situated alongside the shipbuilding yard. Yes, they build ships at Huskisson, in spite of there not being one of those ultra-modern picture shows there. That is one of the charms of the little place, and probably accounts for the health and freshness of the children's minds.

AS soon as we had the craft high and dry we were astounded to find the hull one mass of barnacles, as she had been in the water only a day or so over a week. In discussing this we recalled an old sea axiom that when a vessel is once painted with copper paint and allowed to take the water again she should not be pulled out unless one is prepared to repaint with copper paint at once. The exposure to air, plus the drying salt water, has a neutralising effect on the paint. We may be mistaken; of course; but for barnacles to become firmly established inside a week is some going; but *Shellback* soon cramped the style of any living marine growth that had suddenly taken a liking for aerial navigation with a rag well soured in petrol. We then washed her all over with fresh water and gave her a coat of the best marine varnish, which, of course, is carried by the mother ship. A second coat was added the following day, and I can tell you as we stood there in our bathing costumes, as black as any Bondi or Manly surfers, we felt immensely proud of our little vessel. The more one knows of her the more one likes her, and the more one can appreciate her sea and air worthiness.

The day following the second coat of varnish we decided to put her back in the "ditch," as this was the top of the Easter tide, and she would float off without too much trouble. The tide was running an absolute banker — too fast for us to hold the Sea Gull in a rowing-boat. The Acielle having left the previous evening for Moruya, we requisitioned the services of a couple of fisherman, with their motor craft, and five minutes later we had her across the stream and moored opposite our favourite sand spit. The way those fellows handled their boat in that tide, with our cranky vessel astern, was really good to watch.

ALL day we worked greasing the cables of the machine to keep the rust out of them. Rust is the bugbear of all riggers attached to aircraft of the sea. There is also an indicator on the top of the petrol tank, which registers so many American tins of petrol. *Shellback* and I decided that as we had a little time on our hands the best thing to do would be to remove all the petrol from the tank, and measure, every tin that we put back. This was no small job, but by evening we had completed it and were much happier, as we could tell at a glance how much petrol



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we had in our tank. And the difference between the gauge and our own measure amounted to no small item.

Word reached us from Moruya that the Acielle had arrived; so we moored out that night, leaving everything in readiness to push off at daylight, in order to catch the tide on the full at that town. But the fates were against us. Calling our two fishing, experts to the towing line once more, we were bringing her up to the spit a little too fast, I thought at the time, but as the tide was making at a great rate I was inclined to blame my imagination. As the Sea Gull swung her nose for the beach — they are dreadfully poor things to tow, owing to the shallow draught — *Shellback* yelled out to let go. Just as he did this the motor-launch ran high and dry up on to a sandbank, and though *Shellback* and I both jumped overboard to prevent the wing tip colliding with the launch, we could not avoid a certain amount of impact. It was not sufficiently bad to bruise the fabric of the wing, but it might very well have thrown the alignment of the wing out a trifle.

IN checking the alignment of an aeroplane the first essential is to place the machine in what is called “flying position,” which is the attitude assumed by the machine when flying level. As the tide was falling fast, we secured bags, filled them with sand, and placed them under the machine. As *Shellback* watched the spirit-level it was my job to remove sand out of the bags fore and aft as she settled down in position. It all looked very easy, and sounds so; but let me tell you that by the time she was in the correct attitude we were both quite tired cut. The tide was making out at such a rate that at one time it looked as if she would beat us and leave us high and dry. Lifting and heaving, we finally pulled it off, and both automatically fell face down on the sand, and simply lay and panted for the best part of a quarter of an hour, speechless. That evening, when we put her back into the ditch, she was as true as a new pin; in fact, the slight concussion that she had received had not affected her one-sixty-fourth of an inch. But as we are at times carrying other lives beside our own, we decided that it was the right thing to do to check over the rigging, and so it was done. But let me tell you that if the two of us were the only passengers to use this 'bus you can depend upon it that fifteen minutes after the occurrence we would have been well on our way to Moruya! However, we turned in early that flight, dog-tired, preparatory to our hop down to the southern coastal town.



## THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL

### Chapter 4: Huskisson to Moruya

AT 5.30 on Good Friday morning *Shellback* called me with the news that the weather prospects appeared good. After a lengthy discussion in bed the previous night *Shellback* and I had decided that we would not take any more risks with fishing craft in such a tide, but would try to “break” our own anchor when under steam. This, I might say, is an almost unheard of thing in the Royal Naval Air Service, as when a vessel is being prepared to get under weigh she generally has a small crew of mechanics and a pinnacle or two flitting about her. The only point that had us agitated was the strength of the tide. It was running a “fair perisher,” and if anything happened to the engine when taxiing along the surface nothing could save the machine from going on to the rocks, if we chanced to be in the channel at the time. However, after removing the engine, propeller, and cockpit covers we soon had the engine ticking over at her mooring, warming the circulating water. One of the drawbacks to an effort like this is that the boat, when the engine is throttled down, will move along at the rate of about four knots an hour. However, after a few minutes' gyrating round the anchor line, I soon found a method to keep her steady, and we were, happier for it. As soon as the thermometer on the dashboard showed 120 degrees temperature the word was passed on to *Shellback*, who was by now standing on the nose of the vessel, the throttle was opened up a bit so as to release the weight on the anchor-line, and as he signalled that the “pick” was broken— i.e., out of the sand — the throttle was once more opened up, and we were under weight.

As we neared the point of the sandspit to turn east for the bar, movement in the hull appeared to cease, though the engine was “revving” away as she had done since the anchor had been hauled on board. This meant an increased opening of the throttle, and as we crossed the bar the revolutions of the engine against the tide were 1100. Our revolutions in the air when cruising at about 65 miles per hour are 1500, so you can gain some idea what the strength of the tide must have been. The wind was slightly, westerly as we steamed out into the bay.

We had a bit of photography to perform before leaving the bay, but ere we had reached 1,000 feet the wind switched round a bit more towards the south east, and with it just behind the Naval College appeared a nasty low bank of cloud. I passed a note to *Shellback* to the effect that we had better “snap” the College first, as that cloudbank looked bad. This we did, and then turned once more for Huskisson — about nine miles away — to photograph that spot.

By this time the wind was fairly on the warpath, as we put in a fair bit of rolling. However, having got through with that particular job at 1,500 feet, we once more turned for the open sea. Nearing the College again, we ran into that bank of ominous looking cloud, and a really nasty, clammy specimen he was, too. My word! it sent me back to “the other side” with a rush and for the time being my thoughts were far from Jervis Bay. “Hitting” such a bank meant closing down the throttle, as the horizon was more or less obliterated from our view. Down, down we went, and at 800 feet were not, far off the College. This meant turning east for the heads for safety sake, as we were now short of height to cross the strip of land between the College and the open sea. And still we descended until our altimeter showed 250 feet. It



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cleared considerably at this height— sufficient at any rate, to allow us to hop over on an even keel near Governor Head. But my hopes were soon dashed to the ditch, as we had no sooner put our noses out into the open sea than we ran into the real pukka scud. The throttle had again to be closed down, and when we did manage to see about 400 yards ahead we were not much more than 50 feet off the water.

THE strange thing about this little stunt, though, was this: From 1,500 feet down to 250 the atmosphere was as bumpy as it could possibly know how, but as soon as we got out into the open and found ourselves below the top of the cliffs everything, appeared calm. It was an extraordinary thing to be flying below the cliffs, and not more than thirty yards away from them. On more than one occasion our maximum visibility could not have been more than 400 yards, and as we came licking along at about 63 miles an hour towards a jutting cliff one found that he was cogitating upon what would happen if he came face to face with another machine travelling at the same speed round that corner. Ah what really did happen was that we put a “vertical gust”- up a couple of rabbits, who were rooted to the spot with fear. A brother Sea Gull also got wind up a little further on. It attempted to fly ahead of us, but, finding that we “had his wings,” did a split-air semi-spinning nose dive for the pond, and we lost track of him! Entering Wreck Bay, the scud lifted considerably, enabling us to attain a height of about 400 feet, with visibility about two to three miles. There was nothing to be seen of Sussex Inlet, but, working a little into the south-west, we found the coast opposite Green Island, a region fairly well known to me. Stretching inland was Lake Conjola, a beautiful spot, where some of the happiest days of my life were spent. However, the mist tenaciously held, and obscured the beauties of the lake, and we had to continue without a photograph. Nearing Ulladulla the scud once more came down, and again height had to be reduced to about 50 feet; in fact, to avoid going round Warden Head it was imperative to open up the throttle to pick up a few feet in height, to enable us to cut off a few yards. And so it was all the way down to North Head, Bateman's Bay, climbing a little when the scud gave us a chance, or losing height again when the elements considers: that we had been given enough latitude.

IF anything should make a pessimist of a man who is up in the air, recommend me to the varying weather conditions. One minute they will coerce you to believing that at last all is well; you can sail ahead. In the next, what has been given is snatched away with a merciless coldness. As we flipped along the surface at about fifty feet, one could not help thinking of the poor unfortunate land pilot, who, if not held up from flying, would be flipping along the tops of trees, crags, and chimney pots, ever listening with his trained ear for the least alteration in the note of his engine. And here were we with a ready-made aerodrome under us on to the surface of which we could perch at any moment.

As a matter of fact, just after passing St. George's Head, near Wreck Bay, my engine began to “cut up rough” — that is, to vibrate as if some hidden hand were giving her a smart rasping with a hammer at a high rate of speed. On the right of the pilot is a small switchboard that switches on or off the magnetos, or allows one magneto to be switched off independently of





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the other. This “roughness” had made its appearance before reaching Huskisson on the down trip, and after careful watching the cause was put down to the American magneto. There is always a pair of magnetos fitted to an aeroplane engine, in case one of them should cut out when in the air. However, in place of the second Yankee magneto a new British “maggie” had been fitted, to see how it would behave under the same conditions as the one originally fitted. When the engine showed signs of roughness over Huskisson on previous flights and the Yankee magneto was “cut out,” the British article appeared to carry on merrily, whilst any attempt to run on the Yankee alone caused bad misfiring. However, it was not long, before that “Yank” and myself became acquainted, and it soon worked beautifully. There was only one weakness, and that was that the two magnetos were not quite synchronised. By that I mean that the two were not firing at exactly the same point, and in a delicate high-speed gadget like the aeroplane engine every sixty-fourth counts. But, to return to the story. Off Wreck Bay she, began to cut up a bit rough, and on testing the firing of the magnetos separately I was very much surprised to note that the British article had downed sparks and struck. And it continued to do so all the way down the coast. Now, if we had been flying over country, say, from Sydney to Melbourne, as things are at present, with practically no aerodromes between towns, just imagine what would have been the feelings of the pilot as he sat there looking ahead for tall trees, hills, and suchlike, and no chance of climbing higher owing to the scud and mist, knowing that one of his magnetos had cut out, and that if the second went he was in for it! Did we sit there and worry? No, not on your life. We worried more over the loss of photographs. As soon as it was settled that that magneto had given up the ghost a little chit was passed along to *Shellback* advising him that, as we were flying so low, it would be advisable to unbend the anchor, so as to have it clear for instant running. That was all that was needed in our case. If the engine konked out, then all we had to do was to perch on the pond, drop the pick, and get busy on the defaulting gadgets.

THE wind was slightly more east off Bateman's Bay, with a practically calm sea, occasionally showing a white cap or two. Off the North Head, instead of following the coastline, we set a compass course, which we checked later by passing a little to the east of the Tollgate Islands. We then altered our course a little more easterly, and came right out at Burrewarra Point, where, to our surprise, we found that the mist had considerably lifted, the wind having taken a turn to the north-east a shade. Turning in towards the Tomaga River and north of Broulee we opened up to a little under our maximum “revvs” to pick up height, preparatory to making for Sandy Point and the Moruya River. We quickly rose 1,000 feet, and then headed across for the mouth of what finally gave me the impression of being a “drain.” As we beetled along at about 1,200 feet above the town one could do nothing else but feel dismay, as the only chance of getting out if we once got down was in the teeth of an easterly or westerly breeze, and by the first impressions gained from the air I felt that I would sooner wait for a week elsewhere for that particular wind than in Moruya! However, as the engine was switched off to come down the wind very politely blew from the east, and a few seconds later we found ourselves floating, and moored on the drain off the wharf and opposite the Acielle, after an





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hour and fifty minutes in the air. And we felt decidedly fit for breakfast, too. That is one of the beauties of early morning flying; it wakes you up and instils an appetite as nothing else "on earth" can do.

### Chapter 5: At Moruya

QUITE a nice easterly was blowing, but, with the engine running in such a rough manner, flying was put out of the question. *Shellback* left me to myself, and in no time the British "sparker" was out of its place and down in the engine-room on the *Acielle*. It had completely lost its "punch," and had no more magnetism in it than there is in a flying pig. Of course, we carried a spare Yankee magneto, and this was at once taken out of its little bunk, properly adjusted, and taken over to the packet. There is no doubt about it, the Americans when they lay themselves out to it can make a really good and clever job. In order to get accurate synchronisation of both magnetos there are a series of minute teeth on the driving shaft and in the driven sleeve, and with the control lever also adjustable there is no reason why the timing should not be adjusted.

WELL, having satisfied ourselves that the magnetos were in thorough unison, we crossed the drain for lunch. Unfortunately, the rain began to fall, the wind having suddenly died down, and, continuing to drizzle all afternoon, we took the opportunity to get on to the planes with cloths and give them a good freshwater cleaning. It was rather a tiresome job in a way, as the boat should really be alongside the beach, so as to enable us to get up to the top storey with ladders. And, again, the rain did not come down with quite the pressure of a garden hose!

You are probably not aware that the wing frames are covered with the very best Irish linen and are then treated with a form of chemical which is a deadly poison, and amongst flying men is known as 'dope.' After several coatings of this stuff, which costs about £3 per gallon, the linen tightens over the framework like a drum. The tighter the fabric, the livelier is the machine to handle in the air. In consequence, on a flying-boat it is essential that the salt water should not be allowed to affect the dope more than possible, as this has a more deteriorating effect than has fresh water. However, we managed, with the aid of Nature's water supply, to give her a good squeegeeing before nightfall.

Next day broke fine and clear, but with a westerly blowing. As mentioned before, on the Moruya River the only way to get in or out is with a westerly or easterly wind. But, looking at the spot, I began to have my doubts if a westerly breeze would be very much good, as at the end of quite a nice reach there is a bridge crossing the river, with a few rows of telegraph lines well mounted on the top of poles reaching across it. In a good stiff breeze I think it would be O.K., as the machine takes off rapidly in the teeth of such a wind, but in a light wind it would be doubtful if the run allowed by the town reach would permit the machine to gain sufficient height to clear the wires. That is, of course, assuming that there was a full cargo on board.



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Just before lunch word came along that a couple of gentlemen were anxious to have a “flip” in the afternoon, and so, shortly after lunch, we took the machine across to the sandbank that had been selected for picking up or releasing cargo. By this time the tide was on the fall, and before one could say “Boo!” our kite was nearly high and dry. It was an awful struggle to get her off, but one or two local young men kindly took off their boots and came to the rescue. It was just a little too much for two men. The position was then changed a bit; but still the tide continued to fall rapidly, and this, plus a sudden gust of wind on one occasion, swept the machine broadside on; the wing skid caught in the sand, and split it. It was not such a terrible disaster, but we were wild that our beloved Sea Gull had been hurt at all.

IN case you are not conversant with the location of the wing float and skid, I may say that it is under the tips of the lower wings. The float is an air-tight metal vessel, and attached to this is the wing skid, which is made out of ash, the primary use of the latter being to help the machine on to an even keel, as she shows signs of rolling when gathering speed to take off the water. The floats come into action when the machine is lying idle on the surface at her moorings, as the action of the wind and waves on such a shallow craft sets up extensive lateral motion, which, without the floats, would cause the wing tips to become perpetually submerged. However, the damaged skid was replaced in about five minutes with a new spare, which, of course, is carried along with the other spares on the Acielle.

By this time we had the vessel more than half way out in the stream, and two passengers were brought out in the dinghy, whilst *Shellback* and *Binnacle Bill* stood waist high in the water. The passengers having been made snug, the machine had to be headed for the wharf and then swung round under “steam” into the narrow channel which runs alongside the training wail on the south side, and gradually veers across the drain in a north easterly direction. Just as her nose was turned in this latter direction the wind blew a gust from the south-east, and I began to gamble with myself whether or not she would take off before we got to the end of the reach, as this change caused her to try to get her nose round to the wind, in true weather-cock fashion.

Not everyone is aware that all birds take off and land up wind. I have often sat and watched birds in different parts of the world make landings in what, to all intents and purposes, have been absolutely dead calm atmosphere, and all landing in the same direction. Then, hopping into a machine, I have found that the direction of what wind there was had been coming from a point in the direction faced by the birds. When you have a spare moment or two, just you notice how a bird takes off and lands. One of the most fascinating creatures of the feathered world to watch is the magpie. He is great, and to my way of thinking is one of the finest “splitair” merchants we have.

BUT to come back to the “drain.” We eventually got off, with a little time to spare, and, by the time we had crossed the goose-neck, that is over the other side of the far end of the reach, we had gained about 50 feet. Still climbing, we attained a height of 150 feet, and were making



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a mild turn to the south-east to avoid a hill about 250 feet high, when “Wop” — and on an even keel she began to sink like a lift. Down went her nose to give her some speed to get out of it, but, by the time we right, we were once more 50 feet above the water. Of course, that jolly old ant heap on our left had been the cause of the “bump.” As soon as we rounded the corner, the machine once more wanted to take the bit in her mouth, and, letting the rudder bar go, she immediately headed for the nor'-east, which proved to be the true direction of the wind. Yet, when we left the water, the wind was actually east-south-east — this I verified by the compass when in the air — all of which can only be put down to the atmospheric disturbance that is caused by that bit of a mound!

And what a glorious day it was to be up — really wonderful; and I loved every minute of it. The atmosphere appeared as clear as crystal, and the visibility was, in consequence, wonderful. Looking north from 1,000 feet, one could see the Tollgate Islands opposite Bateman's Bay, whilst, stretching south as far as the eye could see, was the rugged coast-line, with Cape Dromedary reaching out to the ocean. Just beneath us — really about 10 miles out to sea — was a big cargo vessel, making her way north. The sea, a deep azure blue, crowned here and there with a white-capped wave, appeared to rise and fall with the restful ease of a sleeping child. Inland, one caught flashing glances, as if thrown by the deep blue eyes of a capricious maiden, the bluish sheen of many great lakes. But — time was up, and, with one more glance from north to south, the nose of the little craft was once more pointed up the “drain,” and, with a feeling of deep regret, a real live dream came to an end. Since leaving, the tide had fallen considerably, and, to look down on that funny little “gutter,” with an equally funny little township “perched on the pavement” alongside of it, was a rude awakening after what, we had just left behind us.

Just before alighting, when still about 500 feet up, the wind rippled along the water from the north-east, and so, making for that part of the channel that pointed in the same direction, we once more took the surface. As we were tying up to the mooring “barrel,” the O.C. of our “Ironclad” advised us to get all our gear in order, and fill up with petrol, as he had engaged a pilot to take them out of the heads at 9 o'clock the following morning. My feelings found utterance in the one sentence “Thank the stars for that.” Five minutes later, we were hard at it, and, by nightfall, were ready to weigh anchor for Eden. Moruya was too far inland for Sea Gulls. We wanted the open sea.



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**Chapter 6: Moruya to Twofold Bay, Eden**

In previous chapters of this exclusive 'Mail' story *Napier Lion* described the flight of the flying-boat Sea Gull in various stages of the coastal trip from Sydney to Moruya. Here he relates further adventures, carrying the narrative up to the arrival at Eden. There he had a series of thrilling experiences which will be recounted in succeeding chapters.

SHORTLY after 9 o'clock on Easter Sunday morning *Shellback* and I were on the wharf at Moruya watching the *Acielle* casting off her "strings," as one member of her crew in all seriousness calls a three-inch coir hawser! We were wondering if the new pilot would pile her up on the sandbank in the same manner as the first one. That first effort was quite a tragedy. It appears that the *Acielle* was in need of a pilot to show the way up "the drain." The first man to come along happened to be a fisherman — at least, so he said — but when within 40 yards of the pier he put her up on the sand, and there she stayed, as at the time the tide was running "downhill." She canted over to such an angle that Monsieur Jack the black cat took his morning sun bath on the starboard side of the hull. Monsieur Le Chef had to remove his stoves out of the galley and have them rigged up on boxes to carry on with his cooking. However, this is not the log of the *Acielle*, of which we know little. It is all we can do to look after our flying business, with out taking on the job of "ocean navvying."

Picking up our dunnage, we went to the hotel and got into a quiet room to write up our engine and machine logbook. You are probably not aware that a book— called a logbook is carried with every aeroplane, into which is entered every particle of work that is carried out on the engine, the hull, or the wings. No matter how minute the job, even if it be the changing of a split pin or the cleaning of the spark plugs, it all has to be entered up. The value of this can be easily recognised when one considers that the oil requires changing in the engine every 12 to 15 hours' flying. Then the cables require frequent renewal, and every day these are examined and greased. On a flying boat or a seaplane this is of very great import, as the sea air plays up with all forms of metal, except copper.

After lunch *Shellback* strolled out to have a look at the weather and came back with excitement written in his eyes. "The wind is going to veer round, I think; it looks to be breaking in the east." That suited us, and soon after 3 o'clock we were getting ready for the flight, when an aboriginal brought word along that the schooner was still inside the bar, the engine having broken down.

WHAT were we to do? Should we miss the chance of catching the favourable wind, or should we go on and take the risk of picking up a suitable spot for mooring? After all, it would be good practice, so we decided to push off. Scrambling on board, we got the "clock" wound up. In running the engine to get her warmed up we met a new experience, as the tide was running out against the easterly wind. The first thing that warned us of what we were up against was the pick line catching in the port wing float-skid. That meant switching the engine off at once, allowing the Sea Gull to drift free, then close-hauling her and starting the "clock" off once



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more. The bottom being of loose sand, she started to drag the anchor owing to the close-hauling of the line; but *Shellback*, sensing an opportunity, broke the anchor, and, raising it, allowed the vessel to drift out towards the stream a bit, and dropped it again. In the mean time the engine was warming up nicely, and by the time the pick had become firmly embedded — just what it would do — we had raised 130 degrees in the water jackets of the cylinders. In hauling in the pick she immediately faced south, but, as soon as the gadget came away, by opening up the throttle she swung into the wind. We then headed for the channel, and a minute later were in the air making for the “anthill.”

Taking, the same short cut as on the previous day, we ran into the same bump, but this time, having a lighter load, we did not feel anything like the same effect. As we swung north-east great was my joy in discovering that the wind outside was coming from the north-east, and when we swung clear of the anthill we spotted white caps out at sea coming towards us full of “punch.” We quickly rose to 1,000 feet; then we turned the nose of the 'bus once more up the “drain” to carry out our main job— photography.

As mentioned before, *Shellback* is armed with the camera, and anything he sees that may be of use or interest he has to snap. In this connection we co-operate very closely, and if keenness has anything to do with securing good results our aerial photographs should be equal to the best. Yet, so far, those we have taken are much below expectations. After “shooting-up” Moruya with the camera, we cut across the Smith Head and made for the open sea. Having set our course and made ourselves as comfortable as possible, a chit was passed to me by my companion with the message: “Did you spot the barge tied up to the wharf near the mouth of the drain?” My hastily-scribbled reply was: “No; unfortunately had the telescope to my blind eye” — and that was that! In a few seconds we had forgotten all about the Acielle and her troubles as the wonderful glory of the Tuross Lakes held us entranced. I cannot remember ever having seen anything finer, but I cannot profess to be able to describe such wonders. The area these lakes cover must be very great indeed, but difficult to estimate owing to the broken nature of the coastline and the islands that are scattered throughout the different waters. The varying depths of the lakes were clearly visible, whilst the different little bays were fascinating as the back waters and the tiny nooks came and went in a perpetually changing scene. It was entrancing, and like looking down into a fairyland gemmed with lovely lakes. In leaving the vicinity, one could not help having the feeling that a great deal of interest would be taken away from the remainder of the section after having witnessed such a glorious scene as the Tuross Lakes. The small inlets and lakes that we passed between Bodalla (which we saw inland) and Noorooma would have attracted attention at ordinary times, but after the Tuross they were almost dwarfed to insignificance.

NOOROOMA from the air looked delightful on the south side of the bar. Strange to say, we both spotted a small rowing-boat moored right out on the bosom of the lake, little dreaming at the time that a friend of ours was down there with a rod in his hand, gazing up at us. He once paid for a flit on a machine, and since that occasion he looks up at an aeroplane when it



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passes and remarks to his companion or to himself: "Yes, old man you can have it all on your own!" Some fellows have queer notions!

When over Moruya and looking down the coast Mount Dromedary appeared a long way off; but with a following wind and a beautifully revving engine it was not long before we were abreast of it, and, owing to previous experience of these coastal ranges, one was more or less prepared for a warm reception from the "animal." Strange to say, for the first time since I have been flying in Australia, I caught myself singing. When one says he was singing, he is not referring to the real pukka stuff a la Caruso, but the spontaneous warbling, good or bad, that a man can't help when all Nature seems in harmony and the spirits are exhilarated. I remember once when over the Thames on a twin-engined flying boat, doing an experimental test, those two engines were running so beautifully that they began to sing a song to me, and I had to join in with them. Now for the first time I realised that the 160-h.p. plant on the Sea Gull was doing the same thing to me. It never dawned upon me that this was so until I noticed that, sure enough, it was humming the refrain that was at that time running through my mind, and, without any exaggeration, that little effect gave me more pleasure than anything has done for a long time. It told me she was right; that everything was in synchronisation, and the engine was enjoying her work. To the casual reader this may sound a bit far-fetched, but to the man who is used to handling high-class machinery this musical peculiarity is characteristic of good machinery when "all is well." It is particularly gratifying when is the result of one's own tuning efforts. And so we were past the Dromedary — a stately, spire — before we realised it.

A LAKE that greatly attracted the eye was Wallegar, with the aboriginal station on its bank looking very snug. Eermagui of shark fame — the natural enemies of Sea Gulls — also looked very snug, though the nor' easter appeared to be blowing in fairly solidly. From the air the little shelter on the end of the pier gave one the impression of a red roof, and of having been built on the charming lines of a pagoda. Whether this is so or not one is almost afraid to inquire from anyone who knows, the place. Distance often lends enchantment.

We passed over one or two small streams until we came opposite the Bega River, and this looked truly fine as it took a tortuous course in and out of the hills inland, one minute showing up miles away, the next a fresh view appearing quite close to the seaboard. For some time I endeavoured to again locate the town of Bega, or any little place pitched on the river-banks; but by this time we were coming in line with the now rapidly sinking sun, and all one could see was an occasional glitter or a flash as the reflection was cast up from the surface of the waters. Immediately after this came Tathra Head, which did not attract much interest, as at that time we spotted two or three steamers a little off our port bow, the first we had seen since the vessel we had passed near Wollongong. Very comforting they were, too. Although we were between them and the mainland and could glide from our height of 2,300 feet to either the beach or the vessels themselves, there was something companionable about seeing those smoke-vomiting plodders.





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We next crossed over Wallagoot Lake, and this gave me the impression of being a magnificent sheet of water, and one should say of very fair depth, too, taking it all round. It impressed me far more than Lake Illawarra. By this time the light was beginning to fade rapidly, and, at our height, for the first time since leaving Sydney we felt the cold. As we were passing over Merimbula Lake, with its little village planted on its west side, my attention was drawn to *Shellback's* gyrations by the vibrating of the machine. Feeling chilly, he was doing a little bit of hand-clapping and stamping. It was this latter stunt that had the machine on the move. It is surprising how the stamping of one's feet, no matter how lightly this may be performed, affects the 'bus.

MERIMBULA looks as if it should be easy to get in and out of, but much depends on the depth and the nature of its industries, such as net-fishing or oyster leases. In a few minutes we were over Panibula Broadwater, and this looked fine from the air, with its shores densely clustered with timber. It was more like a Canadian lake than any we had so far passed over on this section, but it is small. Green Cape by this time was well up on the horizon, but still far distant. Eden was at our feet. With the sun behind a huge golden cloud, and Eden bathed in subdued light from shadows cast by the surrounding hills, the first view of the town was impressive — very peaceful. This was partly due to contrast with the disturbed condition of the sea outside.

Twofold Bay appeared to be only slights ruffled in places. We circled over the town, taking a few photographs. Throttling down the engine, we began to come down in a big circle. The wind in the little bay just at the foot of the pier seemed, to be coming from all quarters; so I decided to wait until we got down to about 500 feet, then stick my beak over the wind-screen and “smell” the way it was blowing. At 1,000 feet Eden welcomed us with a colossal bump. It was difficult to locate the cause. At 500 feet, the nose of the vessel was pointing east, but my “beak” said, “Nay; the wind comes from the south-east.” Kicking the rudder over to that direction, the wind held for a few feet, until we got a bump, and my “guide” said “East.” When only about 200 feet off the surface three little puffs got me one after the other, one from the sou' west, one from the east, and the last from the nor'-east, and in the latter direction the nose was finally pointed. Just as she was taking the ditch we got another from the east, but I was not having any; she was held into it, and we perched down just off the end of the pier. A little engine throttle, and in about 30 seconds we were 45 fathoms off the beach; so *Shellback* let the pick go from the foc's'le head, and we were once more at anchor.

When commencing to descend, very few people were to be seen, and not a soul on the pier; but upon rising from my seat to stretch myself great was my astonishment to find the pier and the hillside from the wharf up to the town one mass of people. Once again our “friend the fisherman” came to light with his boat and very kindly put us ashore, where Mr. Rodd, the shire clerk, made himself known to us, and it was not long, before we were experiencing the hospitality of “Auntie” Pike at the Hotel Australasia.





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**THE ACIELLE AND THE SEA GULL**  
Moored in Snug Cove, Twofold Bay.



## THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL

### Chapter 7: Eden

Previous instalments of *Napier Lions* ' interesting story covered the various stages of the flight of the Sea Gull from Sydney to Eden. This week we are told of the happenings at that picturesque port, including the thrilling experience of the pilot during a storm, a brief account of which by a 'Mail' reporter appeared in our issue of April 13.

AT Eden I was joined by a young fellow, who reported that he had been sent down from Sydney as engine-man to the Sea Gull. Oh! joyful news. There is nothing more fascinating than looking after a highly-strung piece of mechanism, such as an aeroengine, but when you have been at the helm and have then to change into old duds and get on to the engine job, you feel at the end of the day about as enthusiastic as a lump of ice in the tropics. It very often means beginning work at 6 a.m. and finishing at 10 or 11 at night, as the log book has to be written up each day. On the top of that we have to make preparations for the flight on to the next stop, and a most important thing is the drawing up of a map for that particular section. We tried a map drawn off an Admiralty chart, but this proved hopeless after the first flight down to Jervis Bay, as few names are given, and many of the inland waters are not clearly indicated. It falls to my lot to sketch the maps and include all the little points that may be of especial interest. One gathers a lot of information from the fishermen and different waterside folk, and opposite the different points a note can be made that may prove of future value.

Well, the new arrival goes down in this log as *Splitpin*, and the name is quite appropriate, as he has long legs. One great advantage is his youth. At the outbreak of the war, *Splitpin*, who is English, was serving his apprenticeship with the firm of C. A. Vandervell, who are famous as makers of magnetos and motor-car electric lighting sets. As soon as his apprenticeship was over, he joined the Royal Naval Air Service as an engineman, and at the beginning of 1917 found himself posted to the finest flying-boat station in the world — namely, Felixstowe. After spending three months in the engine shop, he was sent out on flying-boat patrol, strafing Hun U boats, and some of his experiences over Heligoland are interesting.

AT the end of six weeks he was taken off this job for a rest and sent into the erecting shop, where the great twin-engined Short flying-boats were undergoing assembly. Then back again to the "tin fish strafe" until the Armistice. A transfer then came along to what is known as the Ferrying Pool, in London. Pilots and mechanics, when posted to this section, are sent up to London, and are at the disposal of a Major, who was taught to fly by me in 1915. When word comes through that a machine is somewhere in Scotland awaiting transfer to the Isle of Wight, let us say, the O.C. of the Pool has to select a crew that is suitable for that particular type of craft. And so *Splitpin* found himself on this "joy stunt" for some time — a joy stunt if the pilot is one of the right sort.

When things once more became quiet at the Pool, he was transferred to the seaplane station at Calshot, in the Solent, and there received his discharge. Being a twin-engined Rolls-Royce expert, he joined up with the Handley-Page firm, and fairly fell on his feet by being sent off to



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Warsaw with a party that was leaving to show the Poles and Russkis what a British twin-engined machine could do in the way of mail-carrying, etc. Financially, I believe the trip was not a success, but *Splitpin* added to his kit many scalps of new experiences. Upon returning to England, he was at once engaged by Mr Lebbeus Hordern as engineer for the new twin-engined 10-seater Short flying-Boat, which is now in Sydney unassembled.



"SPLITPIN" DRAWING PETROL FOR THE SEA GULL  
From the mother ship *Acelle* at Eden

WE were up at 6.30 the next morning and had the machine alongside to enable the newcomer to have a run over the engine under my supervision. *Shellback* looked over the controls. About 10.30 two visitors sought a flight, and in a few minutes we had "steam up," and were under weigh. The wind seemed to be coming from the south-east, and in that direction we started



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off, but before we could get up the speed to get off the surface it suddenly hit us with considerable force from the east. Bringing her round in this direction, she was well under weigh, but still on the surface, when we got another beauty on the port bow, and still she had to be brought into it, by this time pointing true nor'-east. There was another difficulty to contend with, and that was the surge. Many surging seas have passed under me, but nothing in all my experience has ever equalled that found in Twofold Bay. It was an awful job to keep her on the surface. Owing to the steps that are designed on the hull of a flying boat to enable her to hydroplane, and thereby gain speed, she is very apt to start hopping, and when they commence this it is time to close the throttle and start afresh. It is no exaggeration when one says he has seen a flying-boat bounce as high as 40 feet off the water and come out of it with a keel intact. They generally start with a three feet hop, then on to six feet, then 12 feet, and up the scale until they finally lose all speed, and — zone! The whole art of handling a flying-boat is in taking off the water, and also not trying to do too much in the way of steep banked turns, etc.; in short, knowing exactly what she can do, and doing that properly. Well, that surge did its best to set us on the hop, and she took some holding down to it. However, we got off all right, and everything went well for the first 200 feet, when suddenly something hit us under the keel, and she went up like a lift, to lose it all again in the following few seconds. It did not stop there; it continued to get worse. She then began to yaw as if hunting for the wind; in fact, that is the correct term, “hunting,” and, letting her have her nose again, she swung east. The bumps moderated here for a few minutes, and then began again in earnest, with the wind this time coming from the south-east.

CROSSING the bay in the hope that we would get a little ease from this buffeting about, it got worse, and over Boyd Bay there was a gust from the south and south-west, with increased bumps. Again I decided to cross over the bay, and see if there was any change at the higher altitude; but, if anything, things were worse still. By this time it was nearing the point of alight, and so, glancing down to pick up the spot to perch, great was my astonishment when I saw that the surface displayed signs of the wind coming from about six different quarters, and not in gusts, mind you, but in steady draughts. The point to be decided was which direction would be the best to make for. It was finally fixed in my mind that the nor'-easterly direction appeared the best of the lot, as the water looked the steadier, and the general direction of the wind outside was from that point. But when about fifty feet up there was no mistaking what was the cause of the appearance of the better surface, as it was here that the surge was at its greatest. This simply meant that the machine had to be put down at the slowest possible speed, because if the hull were to hit the top of one of these oily gentlemen at, say, 60 miles an hour, one would be lucky to miss a 40-foot bounce, as she would ricochet off this like a flat stone hurled along the surface of the sea. However, as soon as she felt the surface the hull stayed there. The wind had freshened since our taking off, and, as it was on the quarter we shipped a few seas making for the cove at the foot of the town. This is known as Snug Cove, and at the time struck me as being most appropriately named, but more about this little spot you will hear later. In taxiing along the surface towards the pier a breeze from the east tried



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to turn our tail round, and as we entered the cove the wind was once more behind us from the south east. To Twofold Bay I must hand the scone for being the bumpiest place that it has been my misfortune to fly over.

DURING the afternoon word reached me that there was no end of excitement as to who was to be the first Aeroplane Girl in Eden. To solve the difficulty and make the event a sporting one I suggested that the first two ladies down on the beach before breakfast would be the first two up, and they would find us down there at the machine at 6.30. Sure enough, at 6.35 along came Miss Jean Logan and Miss Eileen Hilder. They were filled with the enthusiasm of youth. Others followed and enjoyed the trips immensely. By 10 o'clock the north-easter had started to blow, and by midday the surge that came in through the Heads made itself felt throughout the whole bay. So bad was it that *Shellback* hit on the plan of making a pier out of chaff bags filled with sand and running them out a few feet into the sea. This meant that the vessel was kept well out and reduced the risk of dumping her on to the beach.

On the second morning after our arrival we had a visit from Mr. J. R. Logan, owner of a splendid property across the bay. He came across with his family in a very fine yacht. Her beam is one-third her length, which is the very ideal, and with her engine going and all sail up she has steamed from Sydney, with one stop on the way, in 36 hours. She also did a lot of very fine work during the war. And let me say at once, although Mr. Logan is the father of grown-up daughters, he went off to the war as a sergeant in the remounts, serving in Egypt. That is the kind of thing that should make the cold-footer squirm.

Mr. Logan got me to accompany him on a trip across the bay to Boyd Town, offering to show me the most sheltered spots on the south side, so that, should at any time a south westerly blow, we would know where to run to. It took some persuasion, but I shall always be grateful for the advice given me during that afternoon. Shortly after lunch the nor'-wester was at its height, and, though we were being tossed about out in the bay like a cork, the *Seat Gull* lay in practically calm water in Snug Cove. Never in my life have I stood on a more seaworthy craft for her size than the 'White Heather,' the yacht owned by Mr. Logan. It was beautiful to feel the rise and fall of the hull as she mounted a sheer wall of water, hesitated on the top ever so little, and then gracefully slid down the other side. As mate of the vessel we had Captain Hill, of Captain Cook pilot boat fame in Sydney. He is a Cornishman, and a great companion. He was down as the guest of Mr. Logan.

AT noon on Thursday some of our little friends of the beach came running down to say there was a yacht coming through the Heads, and sure enough a few minutes later the *Acielle*. steamed in and dropped anchor to pick up the pilot. And this is where the circus began. She came in running on two or three cylinders, and as soon as the engine was switched off she back-fired or some such stunt, unmeshed the driving cogs of the water pump, and made a nice mess of the driving spindle. As the glass had fallen considerably, the Eden pilot — Captain Macalister, a big genial Soot — advised that the yacht had better make for East Boyd Bay,



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which is at the foot of Mr. Logan's beautiful residence, 'Envor,' just in case the wind came round to the sou'-west. So they hoisted the "muslin" and left for the other side of Twofold Bay with a dud engine.

Towards evening the wind freshened up to a gale, blowing from the nor'ard properly, and no longer was Snug Cove the spot its name at first implied. The wind came across the hill in solid gusts, and fairly lifted the Sea Gull out of the water. Mr. Logan rang me up later to ask if we could do with a heavier pick, and upon our gladly accepting his offer he very kindly came across over the surface of a sea that carried a big lop, which, in sea lore, means "some" sea. It was extremely good of him, as we were tied up to two 28-pounders — the Acielle carrying our 2cwt. anchor — and his pick was a 56-pounder. So we slipped one of the lighter ones, and, attaching the heavier gadget, made everything in readiness in case the wind changed during the night, and we would have to go for it.

SNUG COVE was converted into a veritable moving inferno. The seas whipped over our tiny craft as if she were a reef jutting out into the sea, and this added greatly to our anxiety in case the anchors should begin to drag, for it would be doubtful if we would then be able to board the craft from another boat. However, there was always the expedient of being able to swim out to her, as *Shellback* and I are fairly efficient at that department of the game, and it would take a fairly solid sea to stop us if our beloved craft were in danger.

We decided on the spot that she would have to be watched during the night, and so the other two were sent off to tea, leaving me with a watchful eye on the pier. At 12.15 a.m. *Shellback* relieved me. Whilst undergoing my trick on the pier it was fascinating to watch the bank of clouds working up from the south-west. They came with an awful rush, and at a very great height, until they reached a certain point. There a halt was called, and after some hesitation they split up and swung round to the east and the west. It was a great sight, but one that was ominous. I made up my mind that if necessary I would summon *Shellback* and *Splitpin*, and we would have everything in readiness to get under weigh as soon as the inevitable lull came. What matter if it were dark? Instinct would partly guide us, and during the afternoon many minutes had been spent in picking up landmarks that might show up as we got close to the other side. In my own mind I knew that if we had to make a run for it in the dark, everything possible had been done to ensure a good fight for safety.

*Shellback* relieved me at the appointed time, and to bed I went, but not to sleep, the wind whistling round the building with too much force to allow of that, and every half-hour I would peep out in order to see what was doing up above. All the time the little vessel was tugging and straining at her anchors in the surging sea. When I rose at 6 a.m. the wind was still at it as hard as ever, and with ever-increasing force. We were short of clothing, having been soaked through and through over and over again, and, as Mr. Logan had come over to see if there was anything he could do for us, it was decided to send *Shellback* over to the Acielle to get our things. *Splitpin* had been hustled off to bed, as it was an effort for him to keep his eyes





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open, this being due to the sea air and the wind, as he has had little of it since leaving the R.N.A.S.

He had not gone an hour before there came an unearthly stillness in the atmosphere. Suddenly thin wisp of air came from the south, followed by a small gust. "Come on, Mick; we will have to go for it!" — this to my small companion, son of Constable Dwyer. And off we went. Before we could reach the craft a biggish gust struck us, and in a few seconds our little dingy was in a sizzling sea. By the time we reached the Sea Gull there was a young gale blowing, and already the craft had recommenced her sea saw racket, heaving up and down in a vain endeavour to free herself from her moorings. Swinging the dingy up to the wind, I found myself rowing ahead as the cockleshell bore down stern first on the nose of our boat.

Handing the sticks to Mick, without asking him if he could row, we appeared to bore down at a terrific rate. "Hold her, Mick; hold her hard!" and I could feel the youngster of about 12 years of age put forth all the strength he knew. "Ease her a little, boy," as we came dangerously close, and as I was ready to jump knee first on the fo'c'sle head a sea caught her, and up went the nose. All my strength had to be exerted to keep the tuck of the dingy from becoming crushed under the nose of the vessel. As the Sea Gull plunged her nose once more into the sea, soaking me in the one splash, I jumped knee first on the fo'c'sle and pushed with my foot, giving Mick a flying start. "Row, Mick; row for your life!" and at the same time a bellowing voice reached me from the wharf. It was the voice of Mick's father. "Row son, row!" and in a few seconds the lad was clear of the vessel. A few days later the boy's father told me that the lad had seldom been in a boat in his life, and yet he never faltered one second when called upon to put all his pluck to the test. He got away like a veteran, and made the pier without mishap, though he was getting a continual drenching.

IT was almost impossible to stand on the vessel, and, of course, out of the question to stand on the fo'c'sle head. The suddenness of the whole thing still had me partially stunned, but as the anchors were dragging fast there was no time to lose and thinking had to be done at express speed. Any mistakes were out of the question. One "bloomer," and at one fell blow bang would go something like £5,000. My greatest difficulty was to keep my feet. The space allowed for the placing of the feet is ridiculously small, and a small divergence from the path as laid down by the makers means one's foot going through the decking of three-eighths thickness. Whilst straining and pulling at the engine covers, which we had to leave on when the vessel was moored, owing to the spray, my eye was fixed on a certain mark on the pier to note the extent of the anchor drag. At times this was positively hair-raising, as she seemed to gallop, and then pull up with a jerk. On one occasion it seemed all up, as she made so much leeway. It was as though one of the anchors had gone. Pulling off the propeller covers, my eye caught the jagged edge of a reef not much more than 40 feet off, against which the seas were smashing. Forty feet probably sounds a long way off to you, but to one who has his heart wrapped up in a beautiful thing like the Sea Gull, and who realises how these anchors were dragging — well, it was just simply the next step to destruction. Then relief came to me. As a



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sea hit that reef, and left it with white spume and water gushing from its crevices, to all the world it looked like some awful carnivorous beast with saliva rushing from its mouth, and showing its teeth awaiting its prey.

Flinging the engine covers into the passenger's seat, and hopping down into my own perch, the petrol pressure was pumped up. Then the carburettor was flooded and the propeller given a few turns, so as to suck the juice up into the cylinders. This was one of the worst jobs of the lot; it meant that one had to straddle the fuselage of the machine, and in a sea like that it was easy to go overboard. That would only mean a swim, but all the time those anchors were dragging and that half-submerged reef was waiting for its prey. Having pulled through with this job, I got down into my cockpit, flicked on the switch, and at the first time of asking the engine started off without a falter. Yes, by Jove! it pays to keep the engine in the pink of condition, and when she took up so beautifully I could have yelled with delight. But she had dragged a little since first turning the prop, to suck in, and to stop this more engine revolutions would be necessary.

Fitted with two Zenith carburettors, it is impossible to open the throttle more than a quarter of an inch when the engine is dead cold. Here my old motor experience came to my rescue. Setting the throttle so as to make sure that the engine would not stop, I hopped up and flooded the carburettor until the engine began to run on a very rich mixture. Then, getting back to my seat, the throttle was gradually edged up, and the engine took it beautifully. But still she was far below the revvs. necessary to take the load off the anchors, and, as soon as she showed signs of faltering through the functioning of the carburettor, I got up into the birdcage once more and gave the carburettor another flooding. In a few more seconds the engine was turning over at 900 revvs., and the temperature had climbed up to 100deg. Fahrenheit. Now to get the correct amount of revvs. to take the load. Gradually opening the throttle, and keeping my eye on a mark on the pier, the revv. counter began to climb up to the thousand mark, and still no response from the hull. More throttle, and still more — ah! she moved. No — yes; by Jove, she has it! And, fixing my eye carefully on the mark, the throttle was minutely adjusted until she had moved forward about 10 fathoms and then eased there, until she held. The revolution indicator now registered 1180 revvs., and was just holding her.

From the windscreen the seas shot up into the air and lobbed down my neck. I was minus an oilskin or a cap. What next? A boy had been sent for *Splitpin* "hours ago". Looking at my watch, I found that only 12 minutes had elapsed since my climbing on board. Well, it seemed like hours. While waiting for *Splitpin* the elements shattered my hopes. By this - time the gale was a storm, and with a sudden rush, like a pugilist making a final effort cheered on by his supporters, a gust caught us and drove us before it like a wisp of straw. Before the throttle could be opened sufficiently to hold her the strain came on the anchors, and they started to give way before the onslaught. Taking a hasty glance at that vicious rock, which was now no more than about 30 feet distant, if that, I decided to make a run for it if it was possible to do so without making a mess of things with the picks. Opening up the engine until the lines were



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both slack, I wormed my way over the screen and along the fo'c'sle. Selecting the line attached to the 56-pounds anchor, this was released amid perpetually breaking seas. Looking up, on the verge of letting the line go altogether, I got the shock of my life to find a fisher lad, young Warren, pulling at a dingy for'ard. "Just a second, skipper!" — as he ceased rowing for a bare breath, so as to permit the boat to drift down a little. "Now!" And the end of the line was flung on to the tuck of his boat. That was the work of a kindred spirit. Standing on the pier, he realised the only way out of the difficulty was to slip the picks, and, as that meant dragging for them later — the very thing that I was anxious to avoid — he hopped into his dingy to save this extra trouble.

AFTER taking the line, young Warren still kept within range, and it took a bit of yelling to convince him that the 28-pounds pick was coming on board with me, and the sooner he got clear the sooner that would be carried out. Dropping back into the cockpit, the engine throttle was opened up a very little so as to get a little weigh on and then, getting over on my hands and knees, the anchor line was picked up from the nose and hauled in. Hauling up to the pick, lying face down, I found it impossible to break it, and so, slipping back a little and raising myself to my feet, all my strength was put into one good pull. The anchor held for a second, and then came away with a rush, all but sending me overboard. Up she came, hand over hand, and an extra effort brought it over the fo'c'sle, whilst the same movement put it on the floor at the foot of the passenger seat. A couple of seconds more and my hand was at the throttle. In that short space of time she had already commenced to veer round to the east, pointing for the pier. Giving her more engine, and kicking hard at the right rudder, she hardly responded, and so more engine was put on, and still very little response, while the seas were drenching the whole machine each time a wave hit the nose. I kicked viciously at the rudder. Being in a perfect sweat by this time, my right hand went down to feel if the pick or its line had jammed in the auxiliary rudder. Lifting it clear, but not daring to look down, I gave one more kick, and this time, aided by an extra gust, she just cleared the pier nicely. Now she had the bit well in her mouth, and, instead of the seas coming over periodically, it was one continuous sheet of water. To the onlooker, it must have been an extraordinary sight, and worth the money. Now for the Coomambie, the State trawler, moored about 300 yards off the end of the pier, where she had come for shelter from outside. One just caught a glimpse of her through the spray right ahead, and giving a little left rudder, she responded at once. I knew now what was wrong with the rudder. This was the end of a perfect day! It had been lashed on the right auxiliary rudder-bar, and any lashing that *Shellback* makes is there for keeps.

Easing the throttle down the least bit, she took the water again without a splash, and, as she did so — it was all a matter of seconds — the throttle was opened to the full, and then it fell to me to hold her there. Taking a chance, the left, rudder-bar was given a little kick, and, with all my strength, the right rudder was kicked on with a jerk. With a sudden swerve she swung round to the wind—and the rudder-bar was free. In three more seconds we were in the air,



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and, tearing along broadside on to the wind, we set across the bay at 73 miles per hour, according to the speed indicator, and at a height of 25 feet. Coming under the lee of the land, we got a bump that let us down to within five feet of the water, but we were still on deck.

Five minutes after leaving Snug Cove, the Sea Gull and myself were once more anchored in the one little cove that Mr. Logan had pointed out to me as the only safe shelter during a sou'-westerly gale. Half an hour later, *Shellback* pulled over on the "Cow's Calf" — the engine being still phut — and we made the Sea Gull snug for the night, and all was once more "Jake."

Climbing on board the *Acielle*, Monsieur le Chef greeted me with "Ah! Monsieur le Capitan, we have been waiting for you. The fishing here is very good. I have already a line for you and some magnifique bait and the fish are hungry." Changing into warm, dry clothing, it was not long before my line was over the side.

### Chapter 8: Eden

This instalment of *Napier Lions'* interesting story of the experiences of the flying-boat Sea Cull and the mother-ship *Acielle* finds the adventurers still at Twofold Bay, on the South Coast of New South Wales.

YES, Monsieur le Chef spoke the truth when he said that the fish were dying to be caught, although for a few minutes one had a feeling that all his optimism might have been mythical. My line had been over the side barely ten minutes when a very encouraging nibble was wirelessly up to me, followed very shortly by another. "Next time, my boy," was my comment. Sure enough, it was, as giving the wily fish a little more line, then a tug, he was hooked. And a beauty he was too; nothing under 3 ½ pounds by the feel of him, and, getting him to the surface, he proved to be a lovely bream, turning the scales at 3 ¾ pounds. The flapping of his tail attracted *Shellback*, whose eyes lighted up at the sight, and over the side went his line also.

It proved to be a great afternoon's sport, as we appeared to be over a ground that was patronised by all kinds of fish; in fact, one cannot recall ever having fished over a ground with so many different varieties of fish being hooked, and all with the same bait, too. We started off with a piece of raw steak, and as soon as *Frank* had decapitated the bream we baited with a piece of the head, and from that on the sport became fast and furious. Amongst our haul that evening were red bream, schnapper, flathead, trumpeter, trevally, barracoota, and great big "yellow-fellow" leather-jackets. The latter put up far more of a fight than the large flathead. But out of the whole lot named, including "gummies," the trumpeter, right down to the smallest of them, were good sports, and always put up a good show. That evening we had fish fried, boiled, and baked, and we liked the baked best.



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### ***Solving Problems***

THE following morning the sou'-wester was still at it, and so *Shellback* and I decided to take a day off. We began at 7 a.m. with our fishing-lines, and by 7.45 had caught three bream, a couple of flathead, and one or two "gummies," having at the same time evidently hooked a shark or two, as they simply took the hook and made straight out to sea. The rest of the day was devoted to readers of this journal.

In the meantime *Splitpin* was kicking his heels in Eden, as miserable as a bandicoot. The excitement of the day was the retirement of *Binnacle Bill*, who had an urgent call from home. That left *Shellback* and me the only ones on board who had really had experience at sea. The following morning it was decided that *Shellback* should have a run over the gear of the *Acielle*, and I wandered down into the engine-room to try to help the engineer— *Spanner* — to locate the cause of the 45-h.p. Stirling running only on two cylinders, with an occasional burst on the third. Starting the engine up, to the trained ear of the motor expert it was not difficult to discover that there was a very serious air leakage in the induction tract of the for'ard pair of cylinders. And so the manifold had to come down, the discovery being made that the gasket had not been put in when the engine had been reassembled after the overhaul at Moruya. This was easily understandable, as all hands and the cook had been on the job, and it is one thousand to one that *Frank* had probably been given the job of attending to that particular part of the mechanism, and, instead of having his mind on the race, had been thinking about his omelettes.

We worked like niggers, and towards the evening, as the wind showed signs of abating, it was decided to up the picks and make for the other side, leaving the *Sea Gull* in her snug little cove until the conditions improved sufficiently to permit of our flying her over. After the engine had been started up we began to man-handle the picks, and the very dickens of a job it was, too, as the largest of them is a 2cwt. gadget, and with a considerable sea running we had to cathead it; otherwise there was a chance of its knocking a hole in the forefoot of the vessel. It was real ocean navvying, and by the time we had them all clear *Shellback* and I felt as enthusiastic as a snowball in the tropics. This was only a forerunner of what was to follow.

We had both been in a good mood up to this, but were now tired. However, he took the wheel, and I got on to another problem. The Schebler carburettor and the Zenith have been special studies of mine, and it was a good opportunity to put *Spanner* wise to the adjustment of the gadgets when the vessel was under weigh. We had a good brisk run across the bay, and tied up alongside the town pier, to be greeted by the smiling face of *Splitpin*. As soon as he realised that the vessel had actually arrived he was full of beans. And talk about a surge! There were times there when one felt that the ark must go over the pier. So much so that it was decided to get the 2cwt pick bent on to the stern of the dingy and run it out on the starboard bow of the *Acielle*, and the smaller one aft, so as to hold her off the pier. The result was that, owing to the rain and the wind that had sprung up, the pick was dropped about 25 yards short.



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### ***An Involuntary Bath***

It was now getting dark. However, just in our sweaters and old clothes, not forgetting our sea boots, we climbed into the "Cow's Calf," picked up the chain, and got well over the anchor. Taking in all the slack, we stood on the seat and began to take the strain. By degrees we felt that it was beginning to give, and when I felt that it only required a few extra pounds I said, "Now, *Shellback*" And we both got into it with all our strength. Suddenly we became aware that something was happening; water was coming over our boots. Realising that the dingy was standing on her beam ends, and that if we did not move at once the boat with its little engine would be sunk, I yelled, "Jump!" And over we both went, still hanging on to that chain!

Needless to say, we both went down with it, but soon came to the surface again, to find that the dingy had shot off a few feet. We soon reached it, and then began the finest piece of elocution heard in Twofold Bay since the days of Ben Boyd. The whole submersion only occupied the space of a very few seconds; in fact, we were hanging on to the gunwale of the dingy before we realised that we had swum after it with our sea boots on. The water was cold, and so was the wind. We climbed back on the dingy, took our boots off, and tried again; but by this time we were exhausted, and had to give the pick best.

When we climbed on board the "Iron-clad" no one spoke to us. This was tact. Although there were no belaying-pins on board, we were sufficiently well worked up to knock the heads off Carpentier or any other leading light with our bare knuckles. Dripping, water on deck, and then into the saloon, the next uproar came from *Frank*: "Mon Dieu, Monsieur le Capitan, what do you think I do all day? Do you think I spend all my time mopping up water in this saloon? What will the chief say when we get back to Sydney and he sees this £30 carpet ruined? He will say to me, Frank, you have not done your duty. You have ruined this magnifique carpet." When I had replied in a lurid burst, *Frank* went on: "Ah, mon Dieu, what a terrible man you are! Vous etes un ties terrible horame."

Then, all of a sudden it dawned on me that the lights were. very dull, and, yelling to *Splitpin* to get the dynamo going, he told me that the batteries were too low to start the motor, and that the handle had been mislaid. So the crew of the Sea Gull, with wet clothes, wet sea boots, and oilers for a change, decided to hunt the town for a car that had a battery on it. We were lucky in meeting with a Mr. Edwards, who came out in the pouring rain with his car and waited until we unshipped the battery and connected it to the engine of the dynamo. In a few seconds she was under weigh, and the situation was saved. Too tired to eat, and it being too early to turn in, we changed and went for a walk. We made for the abode of Auntie Pike, who mothered us, and as the evening wore on and we saw the humour of the day's work the supper supplied by Auntie was enjoyed to the full. We slept soundly that night, in spite of the creaking and groaning of the vessel from the straining of the surge.





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### ***Falling and Rising with the Surge***

THE next morning the wind had veered round to the north-east, and, Mr. Logan coming over for us, we slipped aboard the Sea Gull. It was a sickening sight that greeted our eyes as we removed the covers — rust and brine everywhere — and we longed to be over the other side of the pond to be able to get to business. In that short flip we had one of the most delightful experiences of the whole trip. Taking off into the wind — N.E. — we swung round to the west, having the town on our starboard bow. She was held at about five feet off the surface all the way, and as there was a very fair surge running we had the extraordinary experience of noting an effect that has so far been a stranger to me. I have often flown for miles over the sea at no more than five to ten feet off the surface when on testing work over the other side, but have never flown over a sea with a surge on it before. On this occasion I noticed that the machine rose and fell as if it were riding on the surface, and as the joy-stick was not moved in any direction this struck me as very peculiar. Poking my beak over the screen, I noticed that the machine rose and fell with the surge. There was absolutely no mistaking it, as at times there would be a slight pause when not quite click with the surge ahead. As soon as we had tied up *Shellback* said to me, "That is one of the most delightful flights I have ever had; the pity of it is that it did not last longer. But did you notice how she rose and fell with the surge?" "How do you mean?" was my query, as this was interesting. "Well, I watched you closely, and noticed that you were not playing with the stick at all, and when looking over the side I noticed that she was actually falling and rising, with the surge." Now, that was a voluntary statement, and made us both wonder for the rest of the day whether this was one of the reasons why the albatross flies so low over the surface of the ocean when he is keeping company with a ship. It has given us much food for thought since.

The Sea Gull kept us busy all that day, and in the evening we had our work cut out to keep things in order, as the wind freshened towards nightfall and blew a young gale by 9 o'clock. This was, from the north, and as we had proved the holding ground was good with a northerly we decided to put down a heavier pick, with its attendant bridle. This took a little doing, as we were working in the darkness, and as it was a risky job trying to climb on board in the dark we decided to get up the pick and allow her to drift down a little on the Acielle, so as to be nearer. We then made *Splitpin* 'O.C.' of the small searchlight, kept on board for this very purpose, and we then managed to carry the job out successfully.

### ***Again to the Rescue***

THE following day the wind abated, and swung round against the clock — a very bad sign. The glass was again falling rapidly, and it looked very much as if there was going to be another innings from the south west; so it was decided to get the ark away from the wharf and moor her out a hundred yards or so. Again we had to come to the rescue, as there was no bo'sun on board, and no one who knew the least bit about handling the craft. What a picnic it was, too! We were just getting the lines ready to let go when *Frank* came up with a wail that there was no fresh water in the tank. That meant tying her up and getting to it. "Come on, *Shellback*!



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Call *Splitpin*, and we'll fill the barge; she's out of water." I thought *Shellback* would have an apoplectic fit. He went black in the face, and said, "What are we? Ocean navvies, or what?" "No, ole son; we're neither. We're blinking heroes descended from the air to rescue the ole ark deserted by Noah." *Shellback* has a sense of humour, which came to his rescue, and shortly after we found ourselves what *Splitpin* called "municipal water carts." Completing this job, the fun once more began.

What happened in the next hour would require a chapter on its own, and, as this is not the log of the *Acielle*, suffice it to say that when we were yanking at an anchor for'ard someone had rung down to the engine-room full speed astern, without our knowing it, as the engineer had discovered a ton of kelp wound around the propeller, and they thought they might be doing some kind of a job whilst we were doing the "navvying" part of the business! Finally we broke the anchor, and when looking aft noticed that the vessel was bearing down dangerously close to the *Sea Gull*. "Gee, *Shellback*, let's git! She'll be through our packet in a trice!" and over into the dingy we went. As I rowed, *Shellback* got his knife out to cut the line, as there was no time to pick up the hook and shift it. However, she just cleared, and once again we breathed freely. As a matter of fact, when we got into the dingy we were breathless for our exertions over the anchor.

### ***Preparing for a Blow***

WE started in pursuit of the ironclad, and she took some catching; but pulling alongside amidships whilst still under weigh, we made fast the dingy and stood by to let go the anchor. When we realised that we were about a quarter across the bay I called out aft, asking where in the name of all that swam they were going to, and the reply came back that there was a southerly coming up, and that they were, running, for shelter to East Boyd. Looking in the direction indicated, we saw a sheet of rain. We both hopped over once more into the dingy, and were adrift in the small cockleshell, surrounded by a surging mass of water. Thank goodness, we are both good sailors, as that dingy did a sailors' hornpipe with a vengeance, and both of us learnt what a surge there really is in Twofold Bay. As I picked up the sticks to row back — "some row," let me tell you — *Shellback* pulled out his pipe, spat, and said: "There is a nice kind of mother for you! Sees a bit of rain coming, and races for shelter, leaving the kid behind. Cripes!" Before we reached the pier again the rain came down in torrents, and we were once more soaked to the skin. But what wind there was had completely abated, and, strolling up to Auntie Pike's, we got well warmed before the fire.

About 3.30 p.m. the wind veered round to the south, and, getting our pick up, we flipped across to the shelter of the little cove in East Boyd Bay. Making al' snug on the kite, we made across to the ark, but unfortunately she had not moored in the same spot, and the fishing was bad. However, we caught enough for a meagre tea, and about 9 p.m., the wind coming over from the sou'-west in volumes, we settled down for at least a good three- days blow.



## THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL

### Chapter 9: Eden to Lakes Entrance

In this instalment of his interesting account of the experiences of the flying-boat Sea Cull *Napier Lion* describes his flight along the coast from Twofold Bay, New South Wales, to Lakes Entrance, Victoria.

ON the morning of the third day after the blow had commenced there was a lull, with a bright sun shining, and as our photographs were still on the weak side. *Shellback* and I decided to have a go at more photography. However, we had only got to a height of 1,000 feet when, turning south, we were faced with a howling shower of rain, which came over with a strong southerly behind it. And down we had to go.

The fourth day broke beautifully fine, as clear as crystal, and sharp. We got off the water about 10 with the intention of putting, in a good hour in the air with the camera, and as we rowed out to the boat we were advised that the ark would follow us to the town pier as soon as we got off the ditch. It was a truly wonderful day up— one of the best I have experienced over Twofold Bay. The visibility was wonderful, not only over the sea, but under it. I never before saw to such depths. That morning when fishing before breakfast we noticed, after hooking a fish, the remarkably deep view we had of the silvery flash of the fish as it darted from one side to another in a vain struggle to free itself. We got in good work with the camera, coming in quite low over the town to Snug Cove. The wind was from the south-east, and not a bump did we get.

### *Off on a 160-Mile Journey*

AS the clock crept round towards midday the wind shifted east. This galled us considerably, as should the wind make to the nor'-east we had intended to make for Lakes Entrance if the clock permitted. Sure enough, it was well towards the north when the packet steamed into the wharf at about 12.30. We had to draw off a full tank of petrol, get all the camera stuff, and fill the radiator, besides change the plugs for the journey of approximately 160 miles. By the time this was completed it was well on to 2 o'clock, and as we had counted on getting off the water by 2.30 at the latest the thing looked pretty hopeless. We had to take into consideration the setting of the sun, followed probably by a strong head wind off Gabo.

As we were ready to go on board our own little craft some hitch occurred in the photographic end of the stick, and we at once began to sweat blood. Every minute was of vital importance, as we had discovered that the petrol tank when full did not hold anything as much as was at first anticipated. As you will probably remember, we emptied the petrol tank at Huskisson, and measured every tin that we put in, and proved that the indicator, to start with, was all at sea. On the top of this, the tank was filled for the very first time by us on this occasion, and, taking careful measure and marking off every tin put in on our broom-handle, we found that she carried only 35 gallons to the very pint, instead of the 43 or 45 as at first reckoned upon. *Shellback* and I were beginning to reap a reward for all our labours at Huskisson, and the work was not in vain, as we were to very shortly prove.



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By the time the photographic gear was ready and made snug on board it was 10 minutes to 3 p.m., and we were feeling pretty dubious about things in case we happened to strike trouble. However, the wind was now running comfortably from the nor'-east, and that was a flying start. We had a record load up, and so as to get some way on before we struck the surge we went well west of the town to take off. The load made all the difference, and it was as well that we allowed for the run, for as soon as we struck the surge she was just at the speed where a little springing assistance would be of very great use. We hit two nice rollers, and the third shot her high enough for me to hold her off the water, and we were off. Swinging round to the east, we were soon clear of the South Head, and had not been moving for more than 15 minutes when we were over Green Cape lighthouse.

Then the fun began. As we got well into Disaster Bay, the scene of so many horrible wrecks, the breeze hit us from the east. Very shortly after this— only a matter of about five minutes—we began to roll and yaw badly, and the only reason I could give for this was a change of wind. Whilst cogitating, on this matter *Shellback* touched me on the arm and handed me a chit to the effect that the wind had swung round to the sou'-west. We had a good shaking-up, as the wind seemed to do just exactly as it liked in the vicinity of Disaster Bay, and yet the two State trawlers that were down beneath us appeared to be perfectly happy, and the water looked quite undisturbed.

### ***“It Must be Gabo!”***

OFF Cape Howe we sighted a large steamer. It was a very fine sight indeed, and in all probability the men on her bridge said, the same thing about us as they adjusted their glasses and telescopes to their eyes to watch the very first marine aircraft make her maiden voyage around the cape. But was it Cape Howe? As you are already aware, we have been sketching our own maps, and on all charts Cape Howe seems to have a conspicuous point to its nose; but this cape that we were coming, to looked smoothly rounded. The beach seemed a mass of deep fissures; from the air they gave the impression of great trenches. They could not have been anything under 30 to 40 leet deep. This was the result of thunderous seas. Half an hour after leaving Eden we were over a point of land with a lighthouse on it, and after a vain search ahead and out to sea for Gabo Island I found myself in a dilemma. There was no island to be seen. What was just ahead of us proved to be a cape. Still nonplussed, I sent along a chit to my companion asking what on earth was the “show” underneath, and he sent back a line to the effect that in the distance it at first looked like Gabo; but as this was not an island then Gabo must be some distance ahead. By this time I was a bit peevish, as the wind was really a stiff 'un, right in our teeth, and our maps were either wrong or we had run up again a geographical mistake. And so the following chit went back in reply: “Idiot! The course shows



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on the compass that we are steering almost west. That must be Gabo!" But *Shellback* countered me with a beauty: "If you say so, it must be!"<sup>2</sup>

Our progress was slow — too slow for comfort — and as time went on the sun got low enough to get us full in the eyes, and it made the coastline very difficult to pick out. However, just to give *Shellback* a mild rebuke, I made inland for a mile or two and stayed there for at least half an hour. *Shellback* was sitting on the landward or starboard side of the vessel, and all he could see was a drought-stricken area beneath him, which stretched out in dense scrub and lost itself in a really fine stretch of mountains, which varied very much in height and beauty. It was a very fine sight from an artistic point of view, but for the coastline itself one can only say that it is the most inhospitable and God forsaken sight that any man could ever wish to cast eyes upon. To look at it from 2,000 feet and realise that as far as one could see desolation, starvation, and thirst would be our lot should a forced landing be pulled off, was not a pleasing thought; in fact, one had not to allow his mind to dwell upon such a subject. Nevertheless, this was a fact. One could not see so very far ahead, but from all appearances there were no habitations anywhere about for miles, and the lighthouses were a little further apart than a couple of days' walk.

### ***A Drop of 600ft***

HAVING photographed the very beautiful Mallacoota Inlet — a glorious sight — I watched *Shellback* mark the speed and the number of the plate on his map, and then reached over for it. Yes, he was "fogged" all right, as he put the mark miles ahead, opposite Taniboon Inlet. It dawned upon me that he had not grasped the fact that we were battling in the teeth of a stiff westerly breeze, and that he was reading his map a great deal by the time we had been in the air. This was soon confirmed when we were over Ram Head, as I made my way out to sea again. I then asked him for the position. He at once pointed to Cape Conran, but this was in very truth Cape Everard. On my own map I noticed that Cape Everard had a lighthouse marked upon it, whilst upon his map there was no sign of a light. This had been neglected by me in the rush we had over that same job.

As soon as we were over Cape Everard I motioned for him to cross over to the port, side to photograph the spot. His eyes opened as he saw the light house below him; and for a few seconds he studied the map closely, then looked up to me with hopelessness on his begoggled face. As we looked down upon the lighthouse buildings on that bald cape jutting out into the sea, one felt that the people who can face such a life in such an awfully lonesome spot had indeed hearts like lions. It appeared from the top to be almost the home of living death. From this on the sun was full in our eyes, and there was also the disconcerting fact that it was getting down on to the horizon. However, my mind was centred on Pearl Point, as I felt

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<sup>2</sup> Explain Gabo island would be connected to land at low tide?



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that as soon as this particular spot was passed and we were well on to the Ninety-mile Beach the back of the flip would be broken. But Pearl Point took a lot of passing.

I decided to turn in towards the shore and see by flying inland whether the wind was slack or not. We were welcomed by a beautiful bump as we crossed the seaboard, and the things became so persistent that on one occasion, without any exaggeration, we lost 600 feet in one drop. That is a positive fact, and the interesting point about the whole thing is that the average person would not have noticed it. Think how you would feel if you were on an express lift, say, coming down four to five floors without a stop! In losing 600 feet in an aeroplane you would naturally expect that the sensation would be treble that of a lift, as the lift is hung on the end of a cable. But the only factor that warned me that something was doing was the increased revolutions of the engine, with no increase of the speed of the machine. Glancing at the altimeter, I saw that since crossing inland we had dropped from 2000 feet to 1800, and by the feel of it we were losing more. *Shellback* even realised that there was something funny going on, as he touched my arm and pointed to the altimeter. So we sat there and watched the needle gradually fall until it registered 1,400 feet, and then we got a good solid kick somewhere amidships, with the result that for the next five minutes all interest was lost in the height recorder. We got such a violent tossing about that I decided it was not good enough, and made out to sea again, receiving a good bump as we once more crossed over; but this one was of an upward nature, and of assistance in helping us to regain our lost height.

### ***The Snowy River***

BY now we were well along the Ninety-mile Beach, though we could not see more than a very few miles ahead, as the sun had us fairly dazzled. *Shellback* attracted my attention and pointed to the register on the petrol tank. This was mentioned some time previously as a register for the tins of petrol that were carried in the tank, and which we had proved to be all at sea so far as Australian tins are concerned. Our efforts at Huskisson were being well rewarded, as the register was showing half a tin off the "danger" mark, which is indicated by a red square. *Shellback* and I knew better, and he showed it in no unmistakable manner, as he grinned behind his goggles and then stuck his fingers to his nose, as much as to say, "Napoo to you, me lad!" But just think of the worry that bit of tank measuring saved us! Here were we battling against a stiff breeze, the sun fast sinking, and not being able to see more than five miles ahead instead of 25. And on the top of that a fast-emptying tank, which was showing the danger mark, and at the very least we had 50 miles to go. Thanks to our knowledge of the gadget referred to, we knew that we had sufficient petrol to see us over an hour, at any rate.

Whilst we were ruminating over this the sun "dipped its flag," and all was bathed in twilight. *Shellback* handed me a note to the effect that he thought there was a jolly heavy leadline on the bottom of the sun, and that we had better get a move on before the moon came along and drove us down. He was right; the ole sun went down with a rush, and had us thinking furiously. By now we had a view ahead, and it was really gratifying to see, stretching away to our right, great strips of inland water like lots of small rivers. I was too intent upon hunting up





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the best one to alight upon, and near some habitation if possible, to pay any attention to the map; but *Shellback* handed me a chit whereon were the words "Snowy River, by the looks of it," and sure enough it was.

### ***At Marlo***

THE next thing was to find some habitation, as, although there is a town marked Marlo on the map, the question was where to find it. We could see plenty of water, but were still a long way from the mouth. However, *Shellback* discovered a small farm house perched on the side of a small stream. A hasty glance in that direction soon dissipated the thought of making an "alightment" there, as the stream was too narrow; but it was a habitation, which was most consoling, and if we had to make a perch on a good stretch of water, then we could be sure of something to eat.

Taking a look over my side, a most peculiar formation greeted me in the shape of a square which looked something like a football field cut out over an area otherwise covered with gorse. It had an almost circular track running round the inside of its boundaries, and my first comment was, "A race course," but it appeared too round to have such thing as a finishing straight, and there did not appear to be any judge's box, let alone a grandstand. However, this was indeed promising, as it looked as if there were a few sportsmen about, at any rate. I caught myself wondering where those sportsmen lived.

Looking ahead a little in the fast-fading twilight, my joy was intense when a small pier showed itself jutting out into a broad stretch of water which found, its outlet in the sea. Not waiting for anymore, my hand went down to the throttle, and we commenced to descend, and as we did so a tiny little village made its appearance a little way back from the pier, half hidden by scrub. We were home and dried, and a few minutes later made a perch on the broad bosom of the Snowy River. The last 500 feet were intensely difficult to judge, as the light was comparatively fair at 2,000 feet, but low down it suddenly became dark, and one had to put his best foot forward to pull off a decent "landing." We made the water about 200 yards down the stream and had our pick down 30 yards off the end of the pier before anyone made an appearance.

When the whole town did appear, it was some time before they realised that we were not carrying a cook or a bunk, and that we were as anxious for a meal as they are at times! So we once more found ourselves on "terra cotta" after an uninteresting, tiring flight of over three hours. As we made our way up to the delightful, little hotel, one instinctively halted as he heard overhead the call of the leader as he led west a phalanx of black swans to their home waters. The beautiful poem of A. B. Paterson's came rushing to memory. Casting a glance at the Sea Gull, one could not help a queer feeling as he thought of this famous river that found its birth in the mountains, and of the black swans, with their feathered brothers, being disturbed by a mechanical contraption, the outcome of civilisation. After many boyhood



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dreams of the Snowy, it came rather as a shock to think that we were the first to disturb its peaceful surface by a heavier than air machine.

### ***Off to Lakes Entrance***

WHILST sitting at tea a caller introduced himself to me as one of the old boys of the motoring pioneering days. Know him! Great Scott, one should think so, as he is one of the Hawker-Kauper-Busteed gang. Needless to say, we had a great crack, but not until he had introduced me to Mr. Lawson, the Victorian Premier, and his party, which consisted of Messrs. Kermode and Pennington. A most enjoyable evening we spent. It was cold that night, but we slept like logs until I was pulled out with the news that it was going to “break fine.” It was meet that the Chief Engineer of Harbours and Rivers should pull us out to the Sea Gull, and after being handed two or three letters that the Premier was anxious to have delivered at Lakes Entrance — this saved 12 hours — we once more took the air at 7.35 a.m.

As the whole of the little village had turned up, we decided to give them a treat by hopping off the water close up to the pier, and so to do this the machine was taxied down towards the mouth of the river and swung round for the head of the pier. We took off about 30 yards from the small party of enthusiasts', and then climbed in a huge circle to gain our height.

It was then that we both discovered the cause of a peculiarity that had been agitating the pair of us after leaving Gabo. The water had shown signs of mud, which reached out to about a mile from the shore, and as we continued on towards Mario, it penetrated further out to sea. There was now no mistaking the cause. The Snowy was in flood, and the ocean showed mud opposite the mouth as far out to sea as 10 miles. In the gathering darkness the previous night we had not been able to note the colour of the river. Turning our nose for the west, we were disgusted to find that there was a westerly wind blowing, which was moving at some speed full in our teeth. We just had to be patient.

Coming to Lake Tyers we were held spellbound at its beauty. At that early hour it looked magnificent with its little bays and streams pointing from all directions and studded with gems of flashing sunlight. We took several photographs, and then headed for the entrance, which took seven minutes from the centre of the lake! Taking a few more photographs of Cunninghame, we had little difficulty in locating the Club Hotel from our lofty perch, and a few minutes after first passing over the spot we found ourselves in the care of Miss Holley, the proprietress, who plied us with enough food to supply an army for a week. The previous day the wind had been piercing, but on the flight over from Marlo, which occupied an hour, the air was exhilaratingly clear and sharp.



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### Chapter 10: Lakes Entrance

HAVING enjoyed an after-breakfast bask in the sun, *Shellback* and myself climbed aboard our craft, dug out the petrol stick from the "lazarette,"<sup>3</sup> and speculated as to the quantity of petrol in the tank. He said, "Three gallons;" and my money went on five. *Shellback* won, as there were exactly three gallons left. Not too much to spare, but rattling good performance, as we had been in the air a shade over four hours since leaving Eden. As our tank carries 35 gallons of juice, our consumption worked out at eight gallons to the hour. For a 160-h.p. engine that is not to be sniffed at.

There is a little point here that may be of interest, to you also, and that is in connection with the instruments on the machine. Fitted on the dashboard in front of the pilot there are various gauges, amongst them being the petrol pressure gauge, oil pressure gauge, radiator temperature, engine revolution counter, height recorder — known as the altimeter — the air speed indicator, and the compass.

#### ***Value of Instruments***

WHEN taking off the water the Sea Gull puts up a speed of 54 miles per hour with the engine at 1490 revs. Of course, the pilot never worries about the air speed to take off, but an occasional glance at the rev. counter shows him whether his engine is liking its work or not. Another point, it also shows the sensitive pilot is the weight carried by the machine. If it is a big load she takes some time to jump into her revs; if light, they spring up quickly. As soon as the boat leaves the water the revs jump up to 1560, and the air speed shows 55 miles per hour, climbing fast. Now, let us say we are flipping together from Eden to Lakes Entrance with a full load up. We climb steadily until we get our photographing height, which in this case is 2,000 feet. The rate of climb varies with the load. With a light load we would probably climb at 53 miles per hour at 1540 revs, with the engine temperature at 162 degrees. But with a full load up we are climbing at 56 with 1540 revs and a temperature about 162 degrees. If we climbed at 53 in the same manner as we did with the light load the temperature would jump up to 180 in no time, and so the point is to be able to strike the speed and the revolutions that will keep the temperature somewhere about normal. Having reached our level of 2000 feet, the next thing, is to flatten out; that is, fly level and not lose height, and yet have the engine turning over, at the most economical revs possible. As soon as she is put on to an even keel the engine revs jump up at once, as does the speed, and so the pilot reduces the throttle, at the same time reducing the speed, but, of course, not losing height. That is why the indicators are really useful.

On this last flight my air speed flying level showed 57 at 2000 feet, and the engine revs were reduced to 1440. After about 10 minutes flying the altimeter recorded 1800 feet, a loss of 200 feet, and not the cause of bumps. And so the revs were bucked up to 1460, not falling lower

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<sup>3</sup> A lazarette is usually a storage locker used for gear or equipment on a boat



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at these revs. We got our height again by revving to 1480 having found at the 1,800 feet level that with the increased revs she held it, and as soon as the 2,000 feet mark was once more attained the revs were brought back to the 1469 mark.

Later on we ran into some bad bumps, in one place losing considerable height, and that meant hitting up 1480 again to regain our height. You will see at a glance the advantage of all this. It leads to efficiency, as one knows that his photographs are taken at the right height, and he knows the speed of his machine when taking them. Last, but not least, he is getting the maximum out of his engine for the minimum depreciation and maximum economy. One frequently hears the instrument question brought up, and a pilot discussed as being an "instrument flyer." I have talked that way myself.

Short of petrol, and never knowing when the ark would blow along, we put in two tins of ordinary Shell. We were not too keen on doing this, as the two Zenith carburettors are adjusted for Aviation spirit. The revs are down anything from 20 to 30 on ordinary stuff. I get over that a great deal by adjusting the radiator shutters so as to give a slightly higher temperature. The ordinary car juice also does not suit our engine when throttled down, and so it is avoided as much as possible.

All that day we worked on the engine and the wires and were ready for the air next day. Mr. Lawson, the Premier, turned up with his party that evening, and very kindly invited *Shellback* and me to dinner. Word reached us that the *Acielle* had just cleared the bar, and by the time we had all reached the Post Office pier she was alongside.

***The Victorian Premier in the Air***

THE next morning Mr. Lawson came along for a jaunt with me over Lake Tyers. He had attended a corroboree there the previous day and was very anxious to have a look at it from the roof. He could not have struck a more beautiful morning had it been ordered. The lake was dressed in all its priceless gems of glittering glory as if for the occasion. When crossing the centre of the lake it gave us a rousing reception with a colossal bump. Up to date it has not been my misfortune to hit a wall, but the way that bump made contact reminded me very much of a steeplechase that I once saw, when a horse hit the sod wall and crashed. It is strange what incidents creep into one's mind when bobbing about the atmosphere. The balance of the party then had a "tear round," and all enjoyed it. Mr. Kermode introduced us to Captain Gallois and his assistant, Mr. Schultz, who went to no end of trouble in fixing us up with pick and lines when the ark happened to be out of port. Just when we most wanted her the ole barge would be miles away.

The day following the Premier's flip we had quite a lot of flying to put through before breakfast, and were at it about 6.30. During dinner the previous night we were informed that the *Acielle* was leaving for Bairnsdale at 8 o'clock the next morning. This was a "stunner," as we had quite a lot of flying to do, and were anxious to get the results of our photographs from Eden. When it was announced that the craft was taking the Premier up the lakes to enable



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him to catch a train, amongst other things, there was nothing else for it, and so *Splitpin* and myself manoeuvred the Sea Gull alongside her “‘ma,” ran an electric lead out to the aircraft from the engine-room, and got to work. It was tappet-adjusting time according to the log, and as it is not a job two men can do with accuracy in 15 minutes, we were at it until 11.15 p.m.

Taking the air at 6.30 with some passengers who were anxious to catch the early boat, the whole crew of the Gull, were not in the best of moods. We were tired, and if there is one thing that will “get our goats” it is a rush. At 8.45 we climbed on board for our breakfast and had just got through out rice-and-milk when we were informed that the packet was leaving at once, the Premier having come aboard. That settled our breakfast. We made for our bunks, picked up what we thought we would require, and as the engine-room bell rang I stepped over the rail of the ironclad on to the pier.

There were the three of us — *Shellback*, *Splitpin*, and myself — with a few odds and ends in our hands, hatless, coatless, and two of us bootless, with only trousers and sweaters on. We just looked at each other and walked across to the rail on the pier. Not a word was said until *Shellback*, pulling out his ole pipe, spat, then swore, and said: “There goes my bally breakfast, anyway;” and *Splitpin* chimed in with: “And there goes my blinkin’ hat.” “Yes, by cripes,” says I; “and there goes my blankey mushrooms, and may the Premier get a fit of indigestion after he has had his fill of them, too.” You see, I have a weakness for mushrooms, and some kind person discovering this had very thoughtfully presented me with a basketful the previous evening. Well, once again we were Bolsheviks, and until the ark disappeared round the North Arm our language was not that of the Romans. Still, for the life of us we could not have picked a hole in the Victorian Premier. It was no good; we all agreed he was too much of a sportsman, and as the stern of the ark smiled us “aurevoir” we wished the party “a bonza mushroom breakfast.”

#### ***Unpleasant Experiences***

THE weather being fine, we decided to get the Sea Gull on to the beach and dry dock her, as she had not been up since the Eden gales. *Splitpin* went all over the engine, whilst *Shellback* and myself tackled the hull, and by evening we had her varnished all over and looking like a new pin. We could not raise her high enough to get at the keel, as the tide had a poor rise and fall; so we decided to leave that until an opportunity offered itself. A couple of days after this word came through from Bairnsdale that we were wanted up there on the following day — a Sunday — and after flying along the Mitchell River over the town we were to return to Eagle Bay Point, about six miles away on the lakes. The Mitchell is too narrow to perch upon; in fact, it will only just take two eight-oared crews, racing abreast.

Sunday arrived, and with it a good stiff westerly, which by 9.30 a.m. became so bad that the anchors on the Sea Gull began to drag. We got a boat, which was most capably handled by Mr. West, the manager of the Club Hotel, but we had an awful job to get on board. In fact, the nose of the machine rose and fell with such force that we decided the only thing to do



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was to climb on to the wing tips. This we did. As *Shellback* got on to one tip he moved inboard along the wing, and I followed him. Getting up "steam," we were soon under weigh and though we did not steam at more than seven knots we were soaked through and through, and had shipped quite a lot of water before we had reached shelter, about 400 yards away from our last resting-place.

Just prior to this, as we were walking along the jetty to take the boat there was an old cow-cockey standing there battling against the wind and staring out at the craft. "Air yer going up ter-day, young feller?" asked he. "No, we are not too anxious to lose the craft, let alone our lives." "What a shame! It will indeed be a great disappointment to the people of Bairnsdale." "There is a 40-mile-an-hour gale blowing up above, and if we crash do you think the Bairnsdale folk will make good the damage?" "I don't know about that; but just you hop on board and fly round for about three minutes to show me wife and me what it is like." "Yes, certainly — if you will pay to come up with me?" "No; oh, no! That is no good to me." And back to his wife he waddled. She had found the wind so strong that she could not even stand on the pier, and a good many others found it likewise.

As soon as we found shelter and dropped our "picks" *Splitpin* started to cross over to us in a dingy — not the cow's calf — but the wind beat him when he was half-way across, and when a fisherman went out to him with his motor poor old *Splitpin* was as lone as a dinner. For a new chum this same fellow is one of the grittiest I have met with for a long time. He is a real sticker and will never give up no matter what the odds. Whilst with us he has put up one or two jolly good performances, and what strikes one as a good sign is that he is liked by everyone along the waterfront.

As soon as he was rescued the fisherman came along to us, dropped his pick, and waited whilst the dingy was rowed over to take us off and then towed us across to the hotel pier. Which was another example of the kindliness of the fisherman. We saw a lot of that particular man later, and a rattling fellow he proved, too. You ask *Frank*! The way that old villain played up to our fisher friend was simply scandalous. I feel sure he got away with most of that man's catch, as we never seemed to be short of fish, though no one else appeared to be able to get it. The bulk of it went up to the city.

### **Over the Lakes**

THE following morning broke fine, cold, and clear, and at 7.20 we raised the anchor and moved off into a nor'-westerly breeze. Dead ahead of us was the North Arm channel and steaming up to this channel on our port bow was a dredge that is operating on the channels. As the throttle was opened up there were tons of room for me to get past the dredge; but just at the critical point the master of the dredge bore down on me to starboard, and though my speed must have been at least 45 miles per hour he still held on, with the result that my right rudder had to be brought on, too. That was easy enough, in all conscience, but we had to clear the end of the north training wall, and when that was done with the machine would





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have to be headed at right angles to the direction at which we first started off. It was only a matter of seconds, though if I had not relied upon the sporting instincts of the skipper of the vessel we would not have found ourselves in anything like the same fix. However, as we cleared the training wall there was only a matter of three feet between the wing tip and the beacon, and about as much between the dredge and our port wing tip. *Splitpin*, who is a fairly cool customer, and was flying with me for the first time, told me afterwards that he felt sure we were in for it. You see, the dredge veered in on me when it was too late to shut off the throttle. If I had done so we would have lost all steering way and probably crashed into the wall or the vessel. Naturally my feelings and thoughts were not of the holiest; but as we began to climb when leaving the water a few feet after clearing the dredge the sharpness of the atmosphere soon dispelled the heat that had accumulated.

It was a grand sight, too, as there was not a ripple on any of the lakes, though at the entrance there was quite a breeze blowing. We passed over Metung at 1,000 feet and had all the cooks and early risers out giving us a wave. Over Lake King there was not a ripple in the air or on the surface of the water. It was just like glass until a motor launch made its appearance from out of the Tambo River, and in such a dead calm it gave one the impression that the disturbance caused by it on the surface may have been the result of either a 10,000-ton liner or a torpedo destroyer. It was really too ridiculous to see displacement caused by this little midget.

### ***A Beautiful Scene***

AS we came over the mouth of the Mitchell River, down below us on our left was little Paynesville, which looked awfully snug and comfy, and beyond that again stretched the great Lake Victoria, with Sperm Whale Head protruding toward McMillan Strait. But of all the peculiarities that we have seen from the air during this trip recommend me to the Mitchell River. By this time we were 2,000ft up, and to see two narrow strips of land running out for about six miles into a lake, with a river dividing them, almost made a man rub his eyes before looking twice. It is a most extraordinary formation, and the more one sees of it the more he marvels. The river itself looks nothing more than a drain; but the trees that line its banks all the way up to the town greatly relieve the sharpness.

Crossing over the river from Lake King we were next over Jones Bay, a very shallow and uninviting sheet of water, though it was teeming with wildfowl. We followed the bay until we were once more in line with the Mitchell River, and, following this— which is too narrow to perch upon successfully—we found ourselves over the town a few minutes after leaving the bay.

For town-planning Bairnsdale has it all on its own. Really, I believe it is one of the prettiest towns I have flown over in my life, and that includes a good many. The place is not laid down



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like some of these model cities, such as Port Sunlight<sup>4</sup> or Bourneville<sup>5</sup> (both of these places are familiar to me from the air), but it is artistically laid out so far as the main streets are concerned, whilst the outlying parts, though scattered, are relieved by the winding of the river and the many maize fields, which looked beautiful in the strengthening sunlight. Yes, Bairnsdale, with its rich surrounding district, looked as beautiful as anything I have seen from the air in Australia.

Turning again for Lake King, another ten minutes found us on the glassy surface of Eagle Bay, just opposite Eagle Bay Point, one of the municipal reserves of Bairnsdale. We had been in the air 40 minutes and were jolly glad to get down and again face one of *Frank's* inimitable breakfasts. It was one of the coldest mornings we had so far experienced, though the trip from Eden was no tropical effort. And then *Shellback* and myself received the best news that has reached us for ages.

### ***Photographic Problem Solved***

YOU will probably notice that little has been said about photography of late. Well, this has been a "taboo" question. We took 24 test photographs over Eden, you will remember, on the morning that we left. During the run to Lakes Entrance we exposed 36 plates, and spared no effort to make a success of them, and in spite of all this they were no better than the worst we have taken since leaving Sydney. *Shellback* was about heartbroken, or very near it, and I was despondent; but we still had one more card up our sleeves.

One day, when up the coast, we overheard some people talking about aerial photography over Lakes Entrance and saying that there was a man at Bairnsdale who was looked upon as being the best outdoor country photographer in Victoria. Butting in on the conversation, we secured the name of this man, and as we stepped on to the deck of the *Acielle* in Eagle Bay the first man to greet us was Howard Bulmer, the man of whom we had been informed. Hearing of our mission he was naturally interested in the gear that we are using, and so came along and made himself known. He was given the history of our results in terse and plain Australian language, and I told him that if he could not get results for us then I would commission him to buy a camera for me at my own expense, or *Shellback* and myself would have to turn the thing in, as we were not far off the madhouse as it was!

Howard T. Bulmer did the trick. It has been mentioned here before that we both suspected the plates, but as the firm who supplied them "could do no wrong" we still had to carry on with them. But there was no mistaking the cause when Bulmer got on the job, and as soon as we tried out a dozen plates of his recommendation we got results that were far ahead of

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<sup>4</sup> Port Sunlight is a model village and suburb in the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, Merseyside, north west of England. Built by Lever Brothers to house it workers. Named after "Sunlight" cleaning detergent.

<sup>5</sup> Bournville, is a model village was built by Cadbury brothers in Birmingham England for its workers.



## THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL

anything we secured in Sydney. And is it any wonder, as the plates we were using up to this were for “indoor purposes” only? We had used 144 of the rotten things, too.

But they all but robbed *Shellback* and me of what sense we possess. The strain we have been through with that camera has been intense, because what earthly good are we if our photographs are a wash-out?

Whilst we were at breakfast Bulmer made use of our dark room, and an hour after our first alighting we were once more in the air. Photographs were taken from 1,000 feet up to 3,000 feet, and not one of them turned out a dud. Over Bairnsdale at 2,800 feet we received an awful shaking up; in fact, as soon as we got down *Shellback* admitted that it was the worst doing he had ever had during the whole of his experience — and that is some experience, too, let me add. But, oh! to think that the beastly trouble had been solved was almost like a ton of lead off our shoulders, and a doing in the air was worth it.

### ***A Memorable Meeting***

AS the day warmed up our spirits rose, and, after putting in a couple of flights and some hard work, we decided to go for a row along the shore and take a few soundings of the bottom. Pulling up towards the pier, a quiet voice called across from, the shore: 'Hullo, Grammar!' and, looking up, lo and behold, there was my old school pal “Shorty.” Great Scott! we had not met for twenty solid years, and the meeting was one of the very happiest of my life. For twenty years— almost a lifetime — we had heard of each other, but never met. And he had not changed one atom; just the same “Shorty” of old. Oh, what a day! — the camera trouble cured, and my meeting with my old school pal! It was great, and what a yarn we did have! There were “Turk,” “Spud,” “Possum,” “T.I.,” “Rosie,” “Shorty,” and “Dan,” and a bigger lot of “roughnecks” never went to the school. But there was never a similar bunch of fellows who took such an interest in the old school, or who fought so hard on the field or in the boats, as did that bunch. And if it came to bare knuckles — well, there were few in the school who could hold a candle to them. “Shorty” was the prettiest stroke oar that I have ever seen, and for a schoolboy his style was equal to interstate form, only he could not follow up the sport after leaving. From rowing we got on to the School sports and how he licked me in the open hundred yards. So you can see just what it meant to us both coming together in this way. And all this time Mrs. “Shorty” was on the beach with the two sons, all unknown to me. Twenty years can work wonders, and though “Shorty” has a most charming wife and two topping “young oarsmen” he was just the same as at school.

The next afternoon we put in six flights with passengers, my last “landing” being made in the moonlight. It was quite an easy matter, really, as there was a stiff easterly blowing, and it had the surface of the ditch well stirred up. But there was a peculiarity in this bay quite foreign to me so far as flying-boats are concerned. There is practically no tide at the point, and yet when quite a sea sprang up running from the nor'-east the wind was coming from the east. One could not recognise this until he put the machine into it. She naturally stood nose into the



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wind, weathercock fashion, which meant that we were shipping seas over the quarter, and oilskins issued for all.

We had a miserable experience here also. The evening air was sharp, and one wanted to get all the protection he could; but a lady visitor from Melbourne when scrambling aboard for a spin “did her block,” and began by putting her foot through the wind-screen right opposite my seat. I never saw anyone get so “gusty” after that in my life. She went absolutely “bush,” climbed out of her own seat into mine, and for the life of me I could not convince her that she was in the wrong “pew.” As she weighed about 14 stone it was impossible to lift her, and so, after patting her petite hand (I don't think), and using all the soothing sedatives that my tongue could muster, we once more got her into the right “compartment” and pushed off. In the air she was as cool as an icicle; but no sooner began to climb out after returning than off in the clouds went her brains once more. In her second effort she knocked a bit more out of the screen, and all but pushed a six inch high heel through the hull.

For the remainder of the day the wind fairly whistled through me; and it was cold by moonlight time too. As a sequel to the screen affair someone, at the request of the “frantic female” — as she was appropriately christened — took her photograph. Just as she was leaving, *Shellback* ran after her to secure her address in order to send her the result. Bursting into tears, she said she could not help it, and hoped that it would not cost her much. This completely bowled *Shellback* over; he could not for the life of him grasp the situation. Seeing a ray of hope from his consternation, she asked the reason for his wanting her address, and upon his explaining she beamed benignly and said, “Oh, that is all right. I thought you wanted it to summons me for breaking the screen.” I felt dreadfully sorry for *Shellback* and *Splitpin* on this occasion, as they had to stand in water up to their waists as the machine came in, for our passengers were taken on to the nose of the machine from off the pier, and the seas that were running required careful handling of the craft. By the time the last flight was made they were black with cold, and that convinced me that it would be impossible to carry on without waders. However, Mr. and Mrs. “Shorty” took the three of us up to town and filled us up with a colossally fine tea.



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**Chapter 11: Bairnsdale and flight to Welshpool**

THAT evening in Eagle Bay we were all half-frozen, but the great wood fire that Mrs. "Shorty" built up for us soon had our blood circulating. Shorty drove us out to the bay about midnight. We had the machine stripped at 7 the following morning, and ready to fly by 9.30.

*(Approximately 100 words have been omitted due to poor scan of the page).*

On opening up the throttle to take off for the first time I wondered if the machine would take off. There was no wind to assist her, and by the feel of the hull when the engine was "turned on" I felt doubtful. She did it, but it took a run of a mile.

Then she had to get her height very gradually. We were climbing at 57, and as soon as the nose was shoved up the least bit to climb at, say, 55 the radiator thermometer would jump up to 185 or 190 degrees at once. It was all I could do to keep the temperature at 175 to 180, and she seldom reaches higher than 152 degrees when she has settled down to cruise. When first taking her over she would not run at anything below 168, but a continual flushing of the radiator has improved things. In consequence of the cold down below we had on our very warmest things, including mufflers and gloves, but as soon as we reached the 1,000 feet mark it was horribly warm. By the time we were over Bairnsdale I was in a bath of perspiration, and dared not loosen off anything, as, thanks to the "frantic female" knocking a hole in the screen, the full blast of the wind got me on the chest. If my scarf came adrift it would make its way into the propeller, and "good-bye" to the whole circus. However, we had a great trip, and managed to get some excellent photographs.

That afternoon we did a bit of "fresh water washing," and were ready to fly the following morning. There was a bunch of motorists from Melbourne who were all anxious to have a look at the lakes from the air. This kept us so busy most of the morning that we quite forgot that there was such a thing as the "parent ironclad" floating about one of the lakes somewhere. On the second last trip *Shellback* told me that the ark was high and dry on some "Ararat of a sandbank," and that it was hoped to get her off with the next tide. During the last flight I took a trip over in her direction, and, sure enough, there she was over at an angle equivalent to that taken at Moruya. It was easily seen how she had hit the "mount of sand," as the beacons were at least 30 yards "inland" from the channel, the place having silted up since the last soundings had been taken. Not long after my return to our "base" *Splitpin* turned up with a quantity of petrol and the new mate. The newcomer, who succeeds *Binnacle Bill*, is on his first visit to Australia, being an Englishman, and has strong views on the beaconing of Australian channels! That evening, thanks to the rising tide and the help of a party of fishermen, the ark once more took the stream and steamed to the Post-office Pier in time to welcome us to dinner.

The next morning was a topper, and it was decided to give the hull a good varnishing, and the wires a complete rubbing down with emery paper, and to re-grease them. And this is where the 'Cow's Calf,' otherwise the *Acielle's* dingy, comes in. She was attached to the cruiser



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expressly for the purpose of towing the Sea Gull about when shifting her moorings. The engine went wrong at Huskisson, and when in Eden we discovered a bent crank shaft, which to a two-stroke engine is almost disastrous from a compression point of view. We fixed her, and certainly the use of a tow-boat saves a lot of hard work at the oars, and also saves the engine.

THE *Chief* arrived from Sydney on a Sunday morning. At 7 a.m. on the Monday we had 40 very fine minutes in the air over Lake Tyers and the Entrance. The Chief used our aerial camera. It was rather difficult making an "alightment" as the sun was right up and down the lagoon, with the wind coming from the east. It meant having to come down in a line with the shore, and at the last minute kicking the left rudder on to bring us over the water, and then the right rudder to put her straight into the wind. And then after all it was a real fluke how you took the water. A man could not bet over the height he was off the water when he went to flatten out, as he can under ordinary conditions.

As we ran up to the shore there was a dapper little male standing there who seemed to be keen on a flight, and as we had time before the car left for the city (the *Admiral* and I going with the *Chief* to Melbourne) I took him up. Our petrol tank only had about five gallons in it, and with my light weight and this little mosquito of a chap as passenger we soon topped the 1000 feet mark. After descending I told him that he was the lightest fellow we had had on board for a long time, and he then told me he was George Lambert, the jockey, and had just returned from a trip in India, where he had been up in the air a few times but had never experienced anything to equal this flight in the Sea Gull.

Crowds of passengers who have been up on land machines tell me the same thing. The land machine in my own estimation is not to be compared with the Sea Gull for comfort or vision. Of course, there is nothing to be "had" in the stunt line, on a small-powered flying-boat; they are not built on stunting lines, and as fully 75 per cent, of our passengers are of the gentle sex they very much prefer the knowledge that the machine is a straight-out flier. After this last flight I climbed into the *Chief's* car and we set off for Melbourne.

THE *Admiral* chipping into a conversation with the ominous words "May we not have any punctures," the *Chief* looked at me, then at the driver, and we all turned to the *Admiral* with looks of utter disgust. What was said was not at all complimentary to the motoring experience of the speaker. Sure enough, we had not gone six miles when we punctured badly. Another ten miles, and we had a beauty. Of course, we blamed the *Admiral* for his inconsiderate remark, and felt that it was up to him to do all the pumping of the new tubes!

We arrived in the city without any further mishap, and for three days were kept fairly hard at it. Going back we were met at the Flinders Street station by a stranger, who was introduced to me by the *Admiral* as a new addition to the expedition, who was coming only for scientific purposes only. That was all I knew and all I could tell *Shellback*. "Oil," he said, "one of these mystery ships — eh! One of the 'Q'-boat type," without a smile on his face. Whenever this





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“mystery man” and distinguished personage is mentioned in this little log he will be referred to as Q.

THE next morning very early *Shellback* very apologetically awakened me to say that he wanted me on deck. Upon going up I found the stars still in the heavens, with a faint sign of the break of dawn over in the east. But the first thing to attract my attention was a sound very much like rain on a distant iron roof which was of the soft driven kind. This made me look at *Shellback* and say, “By Jove, that is funny. What is it?” “You will never guess,” he said “It is a huge flock of black swans on that lagoon behind the Club Hotel, and they are getting off the water. Watch for little while and you will see then, come over.” There must have been thousands of them, and the noise they made was extraordinary.

It was a beautiful morning, with a zephyr from the east. The *Admiral* had some work to do near Bairnsdale and wanted to take Q with him. *Shellback* and I decided that if the wind held from the east we would get off about 11 a.m. We had in our tank over thirty gallons of petrol, in case we hit a head wind down, towards the Promontory. That spot is one of the windy points famed through out the world. It and Cape Leeuwin are looked upon as the two windiest spots on the whole of the Australian coast. As we were bound to require a lengthy run to take off, owing to a sudden lull in the wind, *Splitpin* towed us down to the western end of the lagoon. It required a fairish run, but during the whole time that I have been “wangling” the joy-stick on this 'bus she has never left the water so perfectly. She came off the ditch without the least sign of “stickiness.” As we crossed the sandbank from the lagoon to the open sea we were greeted with a delightful bump, which portended well, as it showed that there was some kind of a breeze coming from the east. We faced in that direction until our altimeter registered 500 feet, and then made a big sweeping right-hand turn until we were once more facing the west, after the fashion of the black swan.

As we passed over the Entrance we had made 1,000 feet without raising the temperature of the water 10 degrees above the normal, which pleased me muchly. And she was ticking over like a clock. *Splitpin* had her in great fettle. He is the type of man to be in charge of an aeroplane engine. Owing to a leaking water pump gland, he had fitted in the spare pump. On examining the original pump we discovered a most ingenious device in connection with the pump gland packing. There are points about the engine that many a noted aero-engine builder in Great Britain could very easily follow with great advantage.

TO come back to the Ninety-mile Beach. What wind there was gave us no small assistance, which was greatly appreciated after our last battle from Eden. The lakes on our starboard side were looking exceptionally fine, as the day was clear and slightly warm. Up to date there has been no occasion to use a coat, unless it was during that last hour before we perched at Marlo. All I use is a muffler, which has accompanied me on many a chilly flight, and, of course, my old flying cap and goggles, which have been in use since 1915.



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As we steadily moved west, we had a good view of lakes and lagoons that we had only been able to see in the hazy distance. For instance, there was Sperm Head, which is a neck of land that runs out into Lake Victoria. On the map this looks very much like the head of the sperm whale. The "likeness" to the head of that whale is remarkable. What wonderful observers those naval fellows were who first surveyed this coast! The heights of the hills and the depths of the ocean, and everything appertaining to the Admiralty charts, are masterpieces. During the war I once had the privilege of meeting one of these men who go out with a piece of string and bit of lead sounding unknown depths and putting the results down on a bit of paper. This same man when out in these waters discovered an island somewhere up in the Pacific, and to-day it bears his name, Greave Island. Although you may not have heard of Greave Island, you have heard of the man himself. He is far from being a "chicken," but he had the stomach to ask for leave free of pay so as to accompany Harry Hawker on his flight across the Atlantic.<sup>6</sup> Greave and I frequently met in London when we happened to be on leave. After leaving Lake Reeve on our stern we looked for Reeve Lagoon. On the map this seems to be a fine sheet of water, but on this occasion it was as dry as the Sahara.

FROM this on all the lagoons that, on the chart, run parallel with the Ninety mile Beach were in the same condition. There were few signs of life. One would find a shack perched on the top of a small island right in the middle of one of these dry lagoons, whilst about a mile or so inland a small farm would show up, with a couple of hundred acres or so under cultivation. What got me was the lack of a line of communication to these outlandish places, as for the life of me I could not pick up any roads. The inmates all came out and took a look at us, though none of them seemed to have the energy to wave, this probably being due to consternation.

The curving line of white sand and the dirty brown dried-up lagoons were very monotonous. The sea looked almost like oil, with just here and there a ripple. We had been in the air exactly an hour when suddenly we got a colossal bump, which shot us up a couple of hundred feet, but we had no sooner gained this than we lost it again. Then war began in earnest, and for about ten minutes it was hard work keeping the machine on an even keel and trying not to lose height. Finally we were having such a racketing about that I decided to make inland and see if we could gain any relief. We had no sooner crossed over the coastline than things became 50 percent worse; in fact, before I had time to turn her nose once more for the sea, we had lost 550 feet in height. It was quite a relief to get back again to the sea, but there was no moderation, in the bumps. After about another five minutes of the "loose feather" stunt she gradually settled down to a more even keel, though there was still something going on that was most disturbing.

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<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Mackenzie-Grieve was the navigator on the flight with Harry Hawker, when they attempted to be the first plane to fly the Atlantic on 18 May 1919. They were unsuccessful. Alcock and Brown were successful in their attempt on the 24 May 1919.



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We were headed parallel with the beach, and yet she appeared to be going backwards, but drifting out to sea at the same time. I simply could not believe my eyes and concentrated on a mark on the beach. Yes, we were being driven out to sea, right enough, and, putting on the right rudder, this turned the nose inland a little to compensate for the drift. But still there was that awful feeling of going backwards. Looking down to the sea, I noticed a few white horses, and to my surprise they were coming from the west. That evidently accounted for the disturbance we had run into — the changing of the wind; and as we progressed one began to seriously think that there may have been something in that “going backwards” business. I had been blaming my liver.

DISTRACTION soon came in the shape of something about a mile out from the beach which looked very like an old wreck. As we got over it we discovered it to be a reef, and “tied up” alongside, but at the bottom of the sea, was a small school of what looked to me to be schnapper. There they were, like a team of horses feeding from the bags of the wagon-shafts, and they were the biggest fish of their kind I have ever seen. We were at the height of 2,000 feet, and it was awfully “rummy” to look down on those fish peacefully feeding at a depth of seven fathoms.

About half a mile further on we saw what appeared to be a huge ball of seaweed, but as we came more or less over it the object turned out to be a seething mass of fish. From their appearance they must have been salmon, and from our height of 2000 feet they looked an aggregate bulk the size of a six-roomed house. They were not only boiling the surface of the water but were stirring up the sand at the bottom. The Admiralty chart gave the depth at that particular spot as 6 1/2 fathoms;<sup>7</sup> so my estimation of the size of the school may be quite modest.

Shortly after this we ran over a small settlement called Merriman's Creek. Wilson's Promontory and Corner Inlet now began to take substantial shape, and when we were opposite Terriville the surroundings became interesting. There was a bit of a haze over the hills to the north, which made it rather difficult to pick out any of the little townships that were nestling at their feet.

AS we passed over Port Albert the little town turned out in full force. We once more turned west and headed for Welshpool. We seemed to be over a world of mud. After about 15 minutes in the air we came opposite another little port, which had a ketch tied up to the pier and two more moored out in the narrow little stream. This looked to me to be Port Welshpool, but where was Welshpool? It suddenly dawned upon me that the island opposite Welshpool went under the name of Snake Island, and, glancing over the port side, there, right beneath

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<sup>7</sup> 12 metres



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us, was a place very much the shape of the head of an over-fed python, with the remainder of the body tucked into all shapes. "Good old man from the navy, you did your work nobly!"

My hand crept down to the throttle, and we began a circling glide down to the "drain," and down we went and anchored 50 yards from the pier. As usual, the first to greet us were the fishermen. While we were waiting for a boat to come out to us *Shellback* spoke about the bumping we had experienced, and said: "You may not have noticed it, but I could have sworn we were being driven out to sea backwards on one occasion for about five minutes." That settled it; we were going backwards, after all. *Shellback* never makes any rash statements. It was a rummy feeling whilst it lasted, and it was most comforting to think that my liver was quite in order.

### Chapter 12: Port Welshpool

AT Welshpool the first matter we went into was that of pilotage for the ark through the channels. The next move was to get into conversation with the fishermen on the pier as to the weather conditions, the prevailing winds, what kind of a sea ran with the different breezes that were likely to crop up, and all manner of questions appertaining to the safety of our little craft, so as to be ready in the case of an emergency. The Welshpool men were all out to help us, and when we mentioned that we were anxious to secure a pick to bridle the 'bus there was a general scramble to be first in with the gadget.

Next day the *Acielle* steamed in amidst volumes of black smoke. At the best of times, *Spanner* tells me, she does a mile and three-quarters to the gallon of petrol. On the pier they wanted to know if she carried a petrol well on board. During the whole of my motoring career I have never yet seen an engine run on such a rich mixture. As usual, she had to steam up on three cylinders. "What is wrong with that musical box of yours?" was my first query upon boarding the vessel. "I don't know," said the *Admiral*, "but if you have the time would you mind taking a look over the thing with *Spanner*?" So eventually the engine-room engaged my attention. It transpired that after leaving the Lakes about 5.30 on the previous evening she began to "pop" in the carburettor, and then finally cut out altogether on one of the cylinders, still keeping up the popping tattoo. It was decided to remove the plugs from the offending cylinder whilst under weigh, and thereby cut out the misfiring and give the engine more freedom to turn over. As soon as the plugs were removed the fumes were so overpowering that *Spanner* had to fly for the railing and for a day or two after this suffered from a form of gassing. *Splitpin* was asked if he could do anything, but the damage had been done; the room was flooded with fumes and before he could do anything he had to go for the rail also. It got him very badly, and for days he suffered severely with headache. I suggested to *Spanner* to put the plugs back. This being done, I pulled the flywheel over a few turns, so as to test all compressions. The fourth had none. Removing the valve cover of the offending cylinder, lo and behold! there was the exhaust valve stuck up and fixed in that position well and truly.



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The thing to do is to make a practice of turning the flywheel over once daily when in port; in fact, the engine should be given run for a few minutes just to keep the valve stems a bit on the 'greasy' side.



MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION.

From Left to Right: The Pilot, "Splitpin," "Spanner," "Shell-back," Frank, and "The Admiral." "Q" (the man of science) is not included in the group.

***The Barracoota***

SHELLBACK had a very bad time with a bad foot. The trouble was caused by a cut on an oyster shell at Huskisson. He concealed his pain as long as he could, which shows the type of man he is; but when we saw his foot we were frightened. A fisherman got some permanganate crystals, applied the stuff neat, and bound it up with wet cloth. This gave the patient an awful doing for about ten minutes, but as soon as the cloth was removed and the wound washed all the bad-looking flesh was gone. Two or three more treatments on the same lines and the wretched thing had practically cleared up. How on earth he had managed to carry on is a marvel to me.

The day following the arrival of the vessel we received an invitation from a large body of fishermen to attend a social given by them in our honour. It was a great success. By the way, a new name was given to the ark on the morning she arrived. One fisherman was talking to another about the lines of the vessel. She is 77 feet long and rather narrow in the beam. Said



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one to the other, "I say, Axel, what does she remind you of?" "Well, Chris, I do not remember seeing another vessel like her." "Well, I see her kind every day. All she wants is a coat of bluish silvery grey and you could call her the 'Barracoota.'" This really described her to a nicety, though, mind you, I would be prepared to do a jaunt around the world in that little Barracoota.

A few days after the social some of the residents of Port Albert rang up to ask if we would fly over there and put in a few flights. We did not feel too keen about putting down in the vicinity of the "mud factory," but we went. The tide was well out when we showed, up. From the air it was very easy to see the bottom of the channel, and it looked like a single ridge on a corrugated iron sheet. However, the wind was in the right quarter, and we flopped down right in front of the little village. Next morning broke fine, with a delightful breeze coming from the right quarter, and the conditions up were almost perfect. It is a long time since I have flown under such ideal conditions. A local lady — Mrs. Russell — was the first to come up, accompanied by a gentleman; they enjoyed the flip every bit as much as the pilot.

After having made three flights and loaded up for a fourth the engine refused to start up. I could not notice anything out of place, and after one or two unsuccessful attempts I had to request the ladies to dismount. It hurt considerably, as it is the first time; during my flying career that I have had to cancel a flight of any sort after having prepared to take off. The trouble was soon located. This was the first time the engine had let us down. The cause was the spark retard lever, which when pulled back makes contact with the "juice" in a battery, so as to enable easier starting. A small spring failed to make contact, though to the naked eye it was practically undiscernible. Once located it was only a matter of seconds to fix with a pen-knife, and she started in her usual fashion. The manner in which the engine starts up is one of our proudest achievements. She takes it up at the very first pull over of the propeller, a fact which gives us keen satisfaction.

### ***An Unpleasant Experience***

LOOKING across Bass Straits from the air that evening, one could see Cliffy Island about 20 miles away, then the Hogan Group about 40 miles off, and behind that the Kent Group, about 60 miles, and all from a height of 1,000 feet. This portended ill, my impression being that such a clear evening pointed to rain. *Shellback* also surmised that we were in for some sort of weather. The night suddenly clouded over from the west, and next morning there were little gusts of rain. We seized our grips and got out to the machine. It was not long before we had her under weigh, by which time the wind was "going some." Being from the west, we had some little distance to taxi to get out into the channel off the pier, and when we did manage this there was a long line of beacons to steer through, which took some doing. However, as soon as she felt the wind in her teeth another 100 yards saw us in the air. It was only just in time, as the wind became stronger every minute that it blew.

We only had 12 miles to go to Welshpool, but it took us exactly 35 minutes until we hit the surface again. At the Pool things were fairly humming, and in endeavouring to turn for our





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mooring, which we had left attached to the heavy pick, the engine faulted and nearly died down. Picking up again, I gave her full throttle to bring her round against the force of the wind; but there was something up, as she would not revv up with any punch. When halfway round a batch of crayfish "coffs" showed up between the choppy seas. To have closed the throttle in this position would have been fatal, as nothing could have prevented the hull crashing into one of the coffs. All that was left to me was to hang on with the rudder and opposite "stick" hard over, and trust to the fast falling revvs. Would she clear the wing skid or float, or crash both of them? *Shellback*, kneeling — he generally stands, but the seas were too much for him this time — was ready to pick up the mooring. He was drenched, as seas were fairly flying over us. Realising what was about to happen, he flung his weight to the opposite side. How he did this without going overboard beats me even now; but it was too late. Zone! and the starb'd wing-skid hit the foremost coil just as it rose on a wave. She came out of it with the skid split down the centre and the float badly dented. Just as we got clear there was a pop, followed by a bang, and — phut — the engine had cut out altogether, having consumed the last drop of petrol. It took all our strength to bring the vessel to her proper mooring and to bridle her.

In the meantime *Splitpin* had been sent off to us in the dingy with petrol and a few odds-and-ends. At lunch time on the previous day, seeing at least a dozen flights were on the boards, I rang up Welshpool asking that petrol might be sent down to me, thinking that *Splitpin* would get away in time to reach us before dark. It was fairly late in the afternoon before he moved off, with the result that low tide caught him. He and his companion kept going until they were exhausted from pulling the 'Calf' over the mudbanks. At last they gave up and returned to the yacht about 11 p.m., soaked to the skin, very weary, and very hungry. If they had only known it, they were within four miles of their destination.

To add to the whole thing, just as we took off the water, unknown to us, *Splitpin* was within half a mile of the port. It was heartbreaking for him, but he went into the town, rang up the Pool, told them what had happened, and with his assistant started back in the 14 foot dingy, with its little 2 ½ h.p. two-stroke engine. He used his coat (his "oiler" was on the yacht) as a protection for the engine. Often when we have been working on the Sea Gull the dew of half-an-hour has sufficient to cause the engine not to start up. The seas were not of the bis lippy kind, but were short, chippy, and as they were head on to the wind the failure of the engine would have meant a lot of hard rowing.

They arrived with the boat half full of water; the passenger having baled from the time they left the Port until they arrived, and they were drenched to the skin, whilst at the same time chilled to the marrow. It was a jolly fine effort, and worthy of a member of the Sea Gull's crew.

That little affair in connection with the petrol was a jumble up from the start. There was a scarcity, but Mr Daight, of the leading store, secured some for me from Yarram, upon which there was a freight of seven and sixpence! - This was a mere mosquito bite in comparison



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with what occurred later in the day. As we were preparing the machine for the afternoon flips a man drove up in a motor car and told me he had brought the petrol. "That is very good of you; but I am afraid you have the better of me. So far I have all the petrol that we require." "Yes; but someone rang me up and said you were stuck up for the stuff, and that I was to bring a case along at once." "Oh, is that so? Come along, then, and let us go into the matter, as I do not know of anyone having ordered stuff for me; in fact, my own lot is on the way from Welshpool now. What is the cost of it, anyway?" "There is the case at thirty seven and sixpence, and then the freight at £6 5s."<sup>8</sup> "What!" was my astounded query, 'freight £6 5s? Where on earth have you come from?' "Sale, 50 miles away," was his reply. For a case of petrol that must surely be a record price for this country. Our experiences at Port Albert were not rosy. From the time we took off the ditch until we had moored her again we appeared somehow to run into a rift of ill-luck.

### ***Cray-Fishing Experts***

THE vessel alongside which our ark was tied up belonged to the Burgess brothers, who are famed all over the Straits for their crayfishing abilities. You may recall the rather recently sad incident which occurred off the Tasmanian coast, when one of the brothers was shot outright by a policeman in the act of lifting lobster pots. It appears that the use of the pots in the island waters is prohibited, though there is nothing against their use off the mainland.

This vessel, the *Mary Muirhead*, was quite interesting, as the holds have been converted into wells by simply drilling a series of holes through the hull to give access to the sea water. They are capable of carrying 250 dozen crayfish, and these at 30s a dozen represent quite a tidy sum. But the working expenses are heavy, and on the top of that the crew are not only seamen of the first water, but the vessel is magnificently found. It is doubtful if Sir Thomas Lipton's vessels carry "muslin" in better, condition.

Harry Burgess, clean-shaven, massive-shouldered, weighing about 14 stone and built in proportion, looks the very man who could cross the straits when all other wind jamming craft would be tied up under shelter. I have been told there are few men with the knowledge of the Straits and the Tasmanian coast anywhere near the equal of these brothers, and that they are as fearless as human beings can be.

The mate on the *Mary Muirhead* is a fine fellow also, and for "morning exercise" before breakfast he used to lift the hatches off the wells and, with a pole at the end of which there is fitted a net, he would scoop out two or three "crays" at a time and drop them into bags, which were already slung up on trestles and awaiting their cargo to be sewn up and shot off to market. Whenever *Shellback* made his appearance on deck and found "Mary's mate" netting crayfish each morning he would call out: "Digging fish again, are you, ole sport? My word, you have struck a rich claim there, all right! What kind of bait do you use?" And the

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<sup>8</sup> About \$515 today



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reply would come back, "Elbow grease!" Then the pair of them would have a go at one another in the manner that only those who go down to the sea in ships can do. It is a language of its own.

When these vessels are out at sea over the fishing grounds they carry what they call a dingy, but which we would call a boat of about 24 feet over all length, carvel built, with a thickness of about 51 inches. *Shellback* and I had never seen a stouter-built boat for its size, and into this is fitted a 6-h.p. engine that fairly punches her through the water, whilst her carrying capacity is equivalent to 50 dozen "crays." As soon as the wells on the big craft are half-full of the fish grids are let down, so as to relieve the pressure on those that are at the bottom, and the upper half is then filled. When the vessel makes port, which is the one nearest the market from her fishing ground, the fish are "dug out" and dropped into the coffs, which are really latticed boxes that float just under the surface of the water, and when full are towed out into the stream, moored, and left there awaiting the market. It was a string of these that very nearly settled our account on our return from Port Albert.

### ***A Three-Days Westerly***

FOR three days the westerly continued to pipe all hands on deck, at the end of which time our nerves were beginning to suffer. It is different for the crew of the ironclad, as their vessel is built to stand all weathers, but our little craft is designed principally for air work and sheltered moorings; in fact, in the navy the machines were housed nearly every evening. It was not pleasant for us to stand there and watch our little craft being sprayed from stem to stern, with one wing tip completely submerged and then the other.

On the third night of the blow the townsfolk very kindly gave a dance to the members of the expedition. This turned out a huge success, every available man and woman and many children turning up — in fact, there were many infants there not more than 7 to 10 months old. It was a great and glorious evening, due to the untiring efforts of Mrs. Petersen, the secretary, Captain Moore, who is one of the serangs of the Fishermen's Association, and who is about 84 years of age, gave a stirring speech, which was replied to by the *Admiral*.

The next morning broke fine, with a little mist over the hills, but not sufficient to prevent Q and me taking the air to photograph the inlet. Q was instructed on the wangling of the gadjet; but we had another photographic fizzle, owing to plates getting mixed. This was unfortunate, chiefly because every minute the engine is run is a minute nearer the overhauling time. The allotted time for a top overhaul for this Curtis is 100 hours; so I am keen on "nursing" her.

By midday the sky was clouded over, in the afternoon it commenced to blow from the east, and by midnight it was piping a corker. The westerly that had just blown over was nothing to this, for the seas broke over the fo'c'sle of the Sea Gull, and as they hit the stern of the ark they broke over on to the deck. This continued for close on six days, and during that time the three of us experienced many anxious moments. There were times when the vessel was



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absolutely unapproachable, the big choppy seas throwing her about like a cork and accompanying this there were severe tides with a rise and fall of 14 feet.

At this juncture the water-pump on the engine belonging to the Cow's Calf gave up the ghost completely, and as the Sea, Gull was moored about 75 yards east and astern of the Acielle when the tide was making out, and the wind in our teeth it was all we could do to make the kite. As there was an odd fishing crafts or two still out, we decided on the first night to try to get our riding lights on board. With myself at the "sticks" and *Shellback* on the stern of the Calf, we dropped down on to the sta'board wing tip. "Steady!" said *Shellback*. "Hold her — hold her hard!" But an extra big wave rolled up, swung the Calf half-round, *Shellback* about lost his balance, and the lamp standing on the rear seat of the boat caught under the lower plane and punched a small hole in the linen. This was the first time, beyond a bruise at Huskisson, that we had done any damage to the wings, and it made the pair of us positively sick. We turned without a murmur and made back to the ark. *Splitpin* came to the rescue by fitting up the small searchlight and attaching it to the rigging of the Barracoota, thereby lighting up the kite. This we continued to do during the whole of the blow.

### ***More Dirty Weather***

BUT we had to board that craft sooner or later, as there was bound to be some chafing of the lines at the holding ring on the bow of the vessel, and the following day *Shellback* and I decided to see what we could do. The sun was shining brightly, but the seas continued to come over a dirty green. Taking the sticks, I took the Calf well above the Sea Gull, and then allowed her to drop down until within about six feet off the bow. By this time we have got to know each other's methods so thoroughly that there is an unwritten rule between us that, the man who is boarding the vessel does not attempt to touch a line attached to the craft in dirty weather, but relies entirely upon the man at the sticks, jumping for the foc's'le as soon as the time is ripe.

The seas on this occasion were throwing us about like a cork, and all my attention was concentrated upon keeping the Calf clear enough from the kite, but within striking distance for *Shellback*. Unknown to me, he had picked up one of the anchor lines and was gradually pulling the dingy towards the Sea Gull against what judgment and pressure were being exerted by me with the sticks. The result was absolutely disastrous. *Shellback*, feel that the psychological moment had arrived, gave a good pull on the line and then jumped. Thinking that the bearing down of the dingy on to the Sea Gull was due to wind and waves, extra pressure was exerted by me on the sticks, and as *Shellback* let go the line the dingy shot away, and he found himself suspended between the ring bolt on the bow of the kite and the tuck of the dingy. It was really too humorous for words— a typical Heath Robinson effort; but *Shellback*, of course, could not see much fun in the situation. Here he was suspended between two objects tossing about like corks. At one stage the dingy's stern would be high in the air, with the nose of the Sea Gull buried in the sea, and all that would be visible to me were the soles of *Shellback* feet hanging over the inner side of the tuck in the same manner as a



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trapezeist hanging by the toes! The next second he would be almost perpendicular, as the nose of the kite reared up and the stern of the dingy fell. It was on such an occasion as this that I endeavoured to back in to allow him to get his weight on to his feet, but the seas beat me, and the dingy being nearer the air-vessel his knees had to double up and the next sea submerged him. Having shipped a couple of handsome ones. *Shellback* decided to let go his foot grip, and the weight coming on to the nose of the Sea Gull the pair of them disappeared altogether for a fraction of a second. But to see him come up with his hat still on his head was too much for me, causing me to laugh out right. With one mighty effort he pulled himself up on to the fo'c'sle, and without a flicker of a smile, or any other sign for that matter, he calmly readjusted the ropes, and, signalling that all was clear, once more leaped aboard the Calf.

Rowing back to the Barracoota in all sincerity I apologised to him for having laughed in the way I did, but he was horribly sick with himself for having been such a blithering idiot to hang on to the line at all. "We know each other's methods so well now that really I was not thinking at the time, and fully deserved all I got." After relating to him how really humorous it was to see only a pair of boots hanging on to the stern of a boat, his face lit up with that soft smile of his, and he said, "All it wanted was Charlie Chaplin to come along, using me as a gangway, eh?"

But he was chilled to the marrow and was badly in need of a rum. However, this was not to be had; some two-legged rat had evidently broached it, and *Shellback* had to be content with a good rubbing down from a towel. Nevertheless, to a man who is used to the sea there is nothing like a really good rum after an extra heavy piece of work or a thoroughly cold ducking.

### Chapter 13: Welshpool to Flinders Island

In this instalment of his interesting narrative *Napier Lion* describes the flight from Welshpool across Bass Straits to Flinders Island. Next week he will relate a thrilling experience on the ways to Lady Barron Cove.

AS the Acielle steamed out of the Pool there was a steady easterly blowing, with a fairly high glass. But the indications pointed to a westerly; at least according to the Welshpool weather prophets this was on the boards. However, *Shellback* and myself have given up taking any notice of these so-called weather experts. This is the sort of thing we get: "What will the weather be like tomorrow, my boy? Well, there is a high glass, and the tide is lower than I have seen it since, the Battle of Waterloo, although, mind you, it was very nearly as low on the day Queen Victoria got married. But I think that the wind to-morrow will come from the west so long as it comes up with the tide. But if it does not come up with the tide then it will come from the east. If it is a dead calm when the tide is going out then it will be a fog, and this, when it does come, will last for two or three days. We had an awful fog here just after the Crimea, which lasted for a whole week; but we seldom get it over three days, and we have never known one last under two days. Of course, if there is no fog, no rain, and no wind, and



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the sun shines brightly, it will be a fine day, and you may be able to get away; but if it rains you will be kept here for at least a week, as when it once comes down here it will continue day and night, until everything is waterlogged. Now, I remember the flood of '72 ? " And off he goes!

What chance have these fellows got if the Government man cannot hit it? A Melbourne paper gave the weather for the ensuing 24 hours as smooth seas in the south-east. *Shellback* said that the prophet must have been referring to the Gippsland Lakes. As soon as the Ironclad had disappeared from sight, we borrowed a pick so as to bridle the craft in case a westerly came up during the night. We were gazing out to the south when *Shellback* suddenly remarked upon a peculiar pink glare in the sky. We at first put it down to the reflection from the sunset, which on that particular evening had been particularly fine. But as the twilight died down and the darkness drew round our little part of the globe, the pink became almost scarlet, and *Shellback* felt quite convinced that it was a glare from a ship on fire at sea. Watching it and discussing the possibilities of the escape of her crew, and a hundred and one things that crop up in such a discussion, the glare suddenly died out, and was at once followed by dozens of bright rays, as if sent out by a number of searchlights. "I know what that is, old man; it's the Aurora Australis — what will you bet me?" "Won't bet you anything; but it might be the Aurora Borealis for all we know," *Shellback* replied, with a twinkle in his eye. A man has to get up mighty early to catch *Shellback*; in fact, if he thought there was some wind about he would never go to bed at all. But the aurora was magnificent on this occasion.

### ***A Bank of Fog***

THE next morning there was a dense fog, and from all accounts this could not possibly pass off for at least 24 hours. As it was so thick we decided not to pack our things, and after breakfast took a stroll on to the pier, just to see how the Kite was getting on. After breaking through the fog we found that the end of the pier was absolutely clear of the mist, though it was still dense across the water, the latter being as smooth as glass. This looked hopeful for our getting away during the day, and it also portended well for the Barracoota.

About 10 a.m. the whole surroundings were free of the cold clammy mist, and the sun shone down on the water, which was so calm that it reflected the light as if from a mirror. Of course, we had to grumble, as this dead calm with our long journey load-up was not going to be of any aid to us in getting off the water. However, *Shellback* was all on edge to get away, though one had to steady oneself with a restraining hand, as away down to the south there was a nasty fog bank that might not be quite as far away as it at first appeared. Drawing *Shellback's* attention to this, he felt inclined to think that it was travelling east, but I felt positive that it was south'ard bound. After watching it for a little he agreed with me that this was so, and we at once decided to give it half an hour, and in the meantime slip off and pack our things.

This, of course, was only a matter of minutes, but to fill in the time and also to get information that might be of use to us we put in a telephone call to the lighthouse keeper on Wilson's





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Promontory. This took some time to get through, but in the meantime the bank of fog was gradually working its way down towards the southern horizon. We at last got in touch with the lighthouse-keeper, and he informed us that his "candle" was about 340 feet off the surface of the water, and that as far as he could ascertain the bank was somewhere in the vicinity of the Kent Group. That was sufficient for us. If it was so far down as that group, then by the time we had reached that point it should be clear enough for us to pick up Flinders Island.

And so, after being paddled out to the Kite by the dingy of the Mary Muirhead, we had everything made snug and the engine started up before the inhabitants of the little village were aware that we had decided to make a run for it. And "some" run it was, too, let me add — not only the run that was necessary to take off, but also the trip down the end of this particular section.

### ***Following the Channels***

TAKING the machine well up towards Port Albert, she was turned just as the desired temperature had been reached. This also gave *Shellback* time to make the pick snug and to get himself comfortably seated. It was dead calm, and she was given her head by being allowed to adopt any attitude she liked on the water. As the tide was running out, though, after we had gone about half a mile, she was just beginning to get into her stride when I had to take a hand and steer through the beacons so as to follow the channels. This greatly retarded the speed just when it was mostly needed, and after she had put in a run of at least a mile and a quarter one had to take a firm hand and get her off. The channel was fast narrowing, and the temperature was beginning to mount up a little. However, after allowing her just a short hop the next time, she was held off the water for a few seconds, and then we began to climb. One advantage we did have, and that was we could make straight out without having to circle round to get our direction. In the taking off, by following the channels we automatically set our course.

The sea was beautifully smooth right under us, but one could spot far out on the other side of the Hogan Group that there was a breeze of some sort, though from what direction was a matter of surmise. It was not long before we were clear of the inlet and heading straight for the Clifly Light, our course being south 130 degrees west. The lighthouse perched up on the top of Clifly Rock looked awfully close from the mouth of the inlet, but it was a good 14 miles away. About three miles on the other side of this rock was a large tramp vessel, which looked delightful as it steamed along in what appeared to be a perfectly calm sea, with the smoke from its funnel reaching straight up to a height of about 500 feet, and, running into a strata of air at that altitude, formed a kind of oblong cloud of smoke. The conditions augured well for the *Acielle*, at any rate, as a man could have put to sea in a 33 footer fitted with a 10-12-h.p. engine and a little muslin up, and under these conditions he could have done the trip in 20 hours easily. Many fishermen have done it in less; so one felt sure that the packet would be there this time.



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### ***The Hogan Group***

WE photographed Cliffy, with its attendant group — the Seal Islands — which are comparatively small alongside Cliffy itself. But the lighthouse and its outbuildings looked very well from the air and gave the impression that the whole show was beautifully kept. Suddenly a stiff bump was experienced; we had been hit on the port bow by a stiffish easterly wind. This was a nuisance and promised to be a factor that would require reckoning with. The further we went the stiffer it became, but although it was tuning us up it did not affect the sea sufficiently to set the white horses off the mark. This was midway between the Cliffy Light and the Hogan Group. So far as the flight was concerned, we were only two minutes behind our calculated time; but passing over the Hogan Group we were a good ten minutes behind schedule, which went to prove that the wind was taking a hand in this little sporting effort.

The Hogans did not interest me very much, as they looked very barren; but after *Shellback* had passed me a note to the effect that one of the islands was carrying stock I naturally became interested. We have since learned that the Hogan Group are leased by a Mr. Askew, who, by the way, had a brother in the Australian Flying Corps. Mr. Askew has on these islands 50 head of cattle and 400 head of sheep, which latter are shorn each year by a couple of men brought from Melbourne. I have been informed also that whenever stock arrive for sale from the Hogan Group the Launceston butchers withhold their bids until the island stuff is put through. This invariably tops the market, as it is looked upon as being the best fattening country throughout the Straits. And, looking at it from the air, one honestly thought that it would not feed a rabbit, let alone one sheep!

One of the great difficulties with this particular spot is that there is no shelter, whilst the landing is of the worst type from a mariner's point of view. It has gained such a reputation that vessels will not go there to bring the stock to market.

### ***A Violent Bump***

LEAVING the Hogans astern, in view of the increased strength of the wind I decided to change my course and pass over the Kent Group from the east, instead of from the west as originally planned. This was in the first place due to my having to drop the mail for the light house-keeper on this lonely outpost, and as the group has a reputation for wind I preferred to be travelling downwind when passing over it, to pushing the nose into the "gas" and getting a prolonged tossing about.

You see, if the machine gets a bad bump under the nose or over the top of the tail, this at once throws the nose up, and the speed is reduced very considerably unless the pilot is very quick or is flying a very sensitive machine. In such a case the great point is to increase the speed by putting the nose down, and this generally overcomes the force of the atmosphere. If the machine is inclined to be heavy, as this machine is, one is inclined on such occasions to lose a fair amount of height.



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The fogbank was now right on the edge of the group, and appeared to be not more than 500 feet in places: which with the sun shining portended bumps; so I preferred to take it on the run rather than against the wind. Now, coming across from the Hogans, in view of the fogbank that appeared ahead and the breeze that was on the port bow, I sat for along time staring down at the sea, just over the fo'c'sle of the Sea, Gull, determining the angle at which we were travelling to that of the waves, as with so much drift it would be madness to steer our old course of south 130 west. As we did not know the speed of the wind, I decided to photograph in my mind that angle with the waves, and continually check by taking a glance back to the Hogans. By the time that we had reached the fringe of the cloud bank we were right opposite Murray Pass, the strip of water separating Erith and Dover Islands from Deal Island, upon which is situated the lighthouse.

Strange to say, although we were surrounded by the mist, which was also well below our level in places, there was no sign of this over the islands or through the pass. This enabled *Shellback* to get busy with the camera, and at the same time warned me that there must be something doing in the atmospheric line; so my gloves — which have experienced a temperature of 90 degrees of frost — were removed, so as to enable my fingers to receive any sensitive messages that the atmospheric conditions might send along. The lighthouse is 1,000 feet above sea-level, and our altimeter showed 1800 feet; but the keeper's house being down near the shore I decided to try to pass right over this, and thence across the centre of Deal Island.

However, the elements said "Nay." Just as *Shellback* let go the mail matter we got a violent bump from the top, and before one could say Jack Robinson we were below the level of that part of the island which I had made up my mind to cross. There was not a second to lose, and banking over with the right rudder hard on, we swung off west, passing "below" the level of the lighthouse on the point. The whole affair could not have lasted more than three minutes, but whilst the orchestra held the stage it was what *Shellback* afterwards termed "a rorty innings." By the time we had got clear of it we were not much more than 700 feet high and just on the fringe of the bank of mist. This meant throttling down the engine and getting below it, which we did after losing 200 feet. Now, just before we turned to the west, so as to pass over Deal Island my eye caught sight of something whitish behind the island. It was only a flash of the sun on a rock which my memory told me was Wright Rock, and dead in line with Point Bligh, on Flinders Island, though, of course, the island was not to be seen through the thick curtain of fog that was confronting us. However, at this juncture there was nothing to be seen at all, and one was suddenly overcome with a very great feeling of loneliness; in fact, he might almost term it helplessness. Again those geographical cells of white matter had to be called into commission, and, thinking hard, I felt sure that there should be an island somewhere off the sta'board bow. After a very diligent search this chap showed up very indistinctly, but having picked up a landmark known to me there was something to go on with, at any rate. My next object was to set the nose of the machine at the same angle as was assumed with the run of the waves prior to reaching the Kents. In carrying this move out the



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sun once more flashed upon Wright Rock, and after that we were “jakerloo.”<sup>9</sup> My course was set as true as if by compass, and if everything carried on as anticipated we should pass right over Wakatipu Rock and strike Flinders at Cape Frankland.

### **Heavy Rainstorms.**

SOME difficulty was encountered in picking up Wright Rock, as the mist had come down a bit thick in that quarter. However, when it did show up, I found that my course, set by the waves, and Pyramid Rock checked correctly with the Wright. Presently *Shellback* passed along a chit, upon which was written, “Where do you think you are steering for?” My reply was “Lady Barron, Flinders Island”. “Are you going to pass round the east side of Flinders Island?” “No, expect to come out of this muck opposite Cape Frankland.” Then *Shellback* wrote, “If you ask me I think you are going to blazes,” and my retort was “Right-oh. You're coming too.” That settled him. He set his old chin and mouth and sat there gazing at the compass. You see, he had not spotted what I had, so it was only natural that he would get a bit “goaty,” especially when he knows the compass off by heart, and also the vagaries of navigation.

However, eventually, to the east the mist began to lift considerably, and there we beheld the West Sister Island, with Bligh Point just sticking out. *Shellback* had not seen this, but very shortly after, just over the sta'board side, a reef showed up. There could not have been more than a foot or so protruding from above the surface, but there was a big lot of it underneath, and as it was now low water this was put down to be Wakatipu Rock. *Shellback's* attention having been drawn to it, he crossed over, gazed down for a minute or so, and, grasping his chart, took a hasty glance over it, with the result that he jotted down on his chit block “Looks like Wakatipu,” and upon my nodding assent his face beamed all over, and once more he began to take interest in things, and looked around. He had not realised the strength of the drift, of course, but, as soon as he focussed the Sister in his “binnacle,” life for *Shellback* once more became bright.

ONE naturally felt happier, but there were rocks ahead, as was shown by Bligh Point being blotted out by a downpour of rain, and as Cape Frankland was now as clear as the former had been before we picked up the Cape, it looked very much as if that rainfall and ourselves would clash. In consequence, the course was altered a few points more southerly, and we left the Cape abeam just as the rain got there. From this on things became a bit lurid. There were no end of islands to sta'board. whilst to port we now had Flinders Island proper. We secured one or two photographs that may be of interest, and after passing Marshall Bay and Settlement Point we steered in towards Long Point and Emita so as to give the wireless station a look at us in case the yacht had been in touch with them from Lady Barron by telephone, and they

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<sup>9</sup> Slang which indicates that the load and harness were secure and everything ready for a start. It was also used to indicate that all was well with the speaker.



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could then report our having passed. However, a violent rainstorm came over the coast with the speed of an express train, and with the wind on our tail we made straight out to sea.

### Chapter 14: Flinders Island

*Napier Lion*, in this instalment of his interesting account of his Coastal Survey Tour, relates a thrilling experience near Lady Barron, Flinders Island. "The most trying flight," he declares, "that I have experienced during the whole of my career as a pilot."

WHITEMARK was obliterated by rain, and so we passed to the west of Green Island and almost over Kangaroo Island. Up to this we had been getting some tidy bumps owing to the vicinity of rain clouds and the wind hurtling down from the peaks. There are some tidy peaks in this spot, but we could not see the top of them owing to the scud that was racing around. Our height varied from 1800 feet to 700 feet, on one occasion coming down to 400 feet; but nearing Frankland Sound, up which we were to proceed, things cleared up, and in hopes of getting some photographs we once more made 2,000 feet. But it was only a trap set by the elements. As we passed Entrance Rock and altered our course ESE the sky suddenly became dark, and with a violent bump we began to lose height like a lift. This lasted for a few seconds, when we got another upward push, and then the fun began in real earnest. How grim that fun was to become the pair of us little dreamt, but when we were well in the sound we found ourselves suddenly enveloped in an inky-black cloud that appeared to come from nowhere, and down had to go the throttle and the nose. Down, down we went. Would the thing never cease? It had me puzzled, as there was no sign of this disturbance a few seconds previously. Where had it come from? Then out into the open we once more flew, 1,200 feet off the water. We were received with a colossal side bump which was at once converted into a stomach-moving flat drop. At first I did not take too much notice of this, though one could not help realising that it was a bump out of the ordinary. Added to the "lifty" feeling there appeared to be no response from the engine. The accustomed roar seemed to have become muffled, though a glance at the revv. counter showed that I was all at sea, the revolutions varying from 1480 to 1600. This made me at once take an extra "feel" of the joystick, and from this there was no response. We were in a "pukka" remous,<sup>10</sup> and she still continued to drop. Taking a hasty glance shorewards, the beach being about 350 yards away, I was dumfounded to find that we were hardly making any forward speed at all. We seemed to have almost come to a standstill. And then the water came rushing up like a racing car showing off.

### ***A Remarkable Experience***

IT was now becoming serious, and if our guardian angel did not take a hand in a very few seconds it would mean the finish. By this time fatigue was getting me under. But fortunately,

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<sup>10</sup> Remous – swirl or eddy



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our guardian angel did take a hand. I tell you this honestly, as it was one of the most remarkable things that has occurred to me in the air.

Just as my feet were on the very verge of leaving the rudder-bar, so as to double them up and lessen the impact when the crash came, the hull suddenly received a bump that shook her from stem to stern, and in the fraction of a second we were 100 feet up in the air again. Great Scott! it was close. There could not have been more than five feet of space between the keel and the surface of the water, which at this particular spot was only slightly ruffled.

From this on it became a fight — not the kind of battle that one had in Twofold Bay, which was short and sharp, but a real fight for the very life of the whole show. My shoulders were now feeling very tired, that tired, hopeless feeling that a man gets after boxing for a while a fellow very much stronger than himself. It is a horrible feeling, although it does not say that a man is a quitter or that he is beaten. Many a tired man has won a fight through having the pluck to stand up. Well, there was no lying down in this case; we had set out for Lady Barron, and, although three or four little bays only a hundred yards or so on our starboard side looked to be in a dead calm, and sorely tempted me, there was nothing doing; we were out to win.

Just after receiving a terrific upward bump which drove us up about 75 feet, we ran into another downward drop, which once more took us almost down to water-level. Up again, a few seconds' respite, and then down again. It was horrible, but the objectionable thing about it all was the viciousness of those attacks. They were out to win by the knock-out route, and when this was fully driven home to me the very best thing that could have happened did happen, and that was I lost my temper, but — not my head!

Just ahead of us, after receiving an upward bump, five catpaws appeared on the surface of the water, as if a man had placed his hand over the surface palm down and the fingers stretched out and apart. This, somehow, gave me a warning. It instinctively told me to look out, that there was something doing, and as we came over the spot "zone!" and down she went with a nasty heel over to the starboard side. This is what went on for fully fifteen minutes — one perpetual fight to keep the machine on a level keel, which, under the conditions, was an utter impossibility. It was impossible for me to cross over to the other side of the sound, as it was raining cats and dogs, and to go higher was out of the question, as there was a mist not 100 feet up. One had to just grin and bear it; though it was bad enough for the one who was in action, it was a hundred times worse for the poor unfortunate passenger. Then suddenly the light appeared to fail, there was a blur over my goggles, and we were in a rainstorm.

Whence it came we knew not, but it was on us without the least bit of warning. This was, serious, as for the last five minutes we had edged to within a hundred yards of the cliffs, and now all was obliterated. Kicking the right rudder a little, so as to take us out, I attempted to lift my goggles so as to get some kind of view, but the rain and wind in my eyes forbade such an effort for even the bare fraction of a second. The pain was beyond endurance. There was





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only one thing left, and that was to dive for a handkerchief. This meant releasing my safety belt and working my hand into a trouser pocket where this article of apparel was carried. On hastily rubbing one of the glasses I found that, instead of east, we were scuddin'<sup>11</sup> south and across the sound, in place of travelling up it. To rectify this was only a matter of a kick on the rudder, and she was once more on her course. But although the securing of that handkerchief was the matter of seconds, to me it was a lifetime.

For the next five minutes my glasses were being perpetually wiped, though in a very short time the handkerchief was as wet as everything else. Happily, we came out as suddenly as we had run into the fracas; the hills had receded inland, there was rough water twenty feet below us, and straight ahead was Lady Barron, with Vansittart Island on our starboard bow. We were still being bumped, but the attack had lost a great deal of its sting.

### ***Lady Barron at Last***

NEARING Lady Barron one could locate a little harbour formed by a series of rocky islands, which ran out about 350 yards from the shore. As soon as we had passed through two of these the throttle was closed, and she began to settle. Just as I felt she was about to take the water we were suddenly attacked by a bump under the starboard wing tip; she reeled over to an angle of 45 degrees, and at the same time threw the nose right up into the air. The force was so great that it unseated me, throwing me over on the side of the seat, my safety belt being undone. With almost the speed of a trained boxer my right arm went out and around the central stanchion, and at the same time all my strength was exerted to push the joystick hard forward to the right. It was all over in a second. From an apparently hopeless position she suddenly came back to an even keel, and ten seconds later was at rest on the surface.

And so ended the most trying flight, without any exception, that has been experienced by me during the whole of my career as a pilot. When victory seemed certain just on the last "gong" the apparently vanquished made that final onslaught, and very nearly made us take the count. We might have escaped, but the Sea Gull would have become a total wreck if that wing tip had touched the water. And the Acielle had not yet arrived.

### ***"A Home From Home"***

AS soon as *Shellback* had dropped the pick in Lady Barron Cove, and he felt quite satisfied that she was holding all right, he slipped back into his seat just, behind me, as it suddenly began to rain. As a matter of fact, we had been racing this storm from the time that we first sighted the alighting spot. The rain naturally had the wind on its tail and we were going right into it. However, our guardian angel once more winged above us, and we just did it with a minute or two to spare. It was close thing, as if it had come on any sooner, owing to the

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<sup>11</sup> Scudding – move fast in a straight line or as if driven by the wind



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proximity of the islands and projecting rocks, we would have been forced to make a perch out in the open more or less.

As *Shellback* took his seat he looked straight at me and, extending his hand to grip mine, said: "You'll do me for a pilot. I'm satisfied." Coming from *Shellback* that was one of the greatest compliments paid me for many a long day, and bucked me up a lot, as it was the first time that he had ventured any opinion whatever upon my abilities as a pilot. All that was left in me was sufficient energy to lightly squeeze his hand back in response and smile. I was utterly exhausted, and if the thing had gone on for another half an hour fatigue would have forced me to take refuge in some little cove that offered shelter.

*Shellback* was shivering, and with his teeth chattering he said: "I'm cold. Wish I were half as warm as you are. Why, man, you're sweating!" Putting my hand up to remove my cap, my fingers came in contact with a saturated forehead. In very truth this was a fact, and then for the first time I realised that it was not only round about my head, but that the whole of my body was in a lather of perspiration.

A young fellow then made his way out from the shore in a neatly built little craft which is called in these parts a "dingy." We made the engine and cabin secure from the weather, and then began a veritable circus, the art of climbing into this cockle shell of a dingy. After a lot of manoeuvring we managed to get aboard successfully without spilling anything over the side, and were half-way to the shore when *Shellback* half absent-mindedly ejaculated: "By George, I nearly forgot!" and then dried up. Taking it up, I said: "What's up?" and he replied: "I was just going to take my watch out of my pocket to have a look at the time, but as we are now nicely balanced I was a bit afraid that she might turn turtle if I altered its position." And all as solemn as a judge. He is a humourist, without any mistake. But the same afternoon we saw four men in that little boat, and on one occasion they changed seats. How on earth they did it one really does not know, as these little craft, though very attractive in their lines, are more difficult to sit with two or three on board than is a best-and-best sculling boat.

At last we touched the beach, both as deaf as posts, and upon asking the young fellow where we could get accommodation he at once led us off through the tea-tree for about a hundred yards and presented us to a portly lady who was very busy at the time cooking. Upon explaining that we were miserably lonely, being far from home, and that we were looking "for a home away from home," she kindly consented to put us up in a little tent-like place just off from the house. The outside of the small building was covered with some kind of timber and overgrown with creepers and tress, whilst inside the place was lined with some kind of canvas. It looked very snug, and as we flung our haversacks — very lightly loaded — on the floor we both took a horizontal perch on the beds, which gave the appearance of much comfort.

For our first meal we were tempted to try mutton bird. This was nothing new to *Shellback*, though to me it was a novelty; but if the thing had been jumbuck bird, kangaroo bird, or bullock bird it would have been all the same: in fact, we both felt fit to eat an ox. However, a



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little went a long way, for the mutton birds are full of oil and extremely rich. Having learned from the good lady that there was a store within about 100 yards, as soon as we had finished our meal we decided to make tracks for that spot, in the hope of getting some information about petrol.

The proprietor of the establishment is a young Mr. Gunter, who is a returned man, and during the whole of our stay on the island he was extremely kind to both of us; in fact, if it had not been for him *Shellback* and I would perhaps have both developed some form of melancholic insanity. And all the time it was raining "cats and dogs," which did not tend to make us as hilarious as a pair of school boys on holidays.

### ***Looking for Petrol***

NO, Mr. Gunter did not stock oils or petrol, and the only stuff he ever did have was not the brand that we required or the kind of stuff that we would use if we could get it. Our engine was too precious to try any such tricks. And then a chap blew, in who knew the Flinders Island from A to Z, and he said he would look round and see what he could do for us. In the mean time Mr. Gunter, who is also postmaster at Lady Barron and is connected by telephone with the wireless station at Emita, on the west coast of the island, very kindly rang up those good folk to ask them if they had seen any craft pass that answered to the description of the *Acielle*. But no, they had not; though one or two ketches known to them had passed during the day, no vessel of the description of the yacht had been seen. Well, if there was none of the right brand of spirit to be had, all that was left for us was to sit down and wait patiently. In the meantime, it continued to rain, and the wind was working round against the clock inwards the nor'-west, and so back to our shack we strolled.

Throwing off our oilskin coats, we stretched out on our bunks with little to say. *Shellback* broke the ice by sitting up and asking me what flashed through my mind as the *Sea Gull* heeled over on the occasion when we were just about to perch on entering the cove. This brought me to a sitting posture also, and my reply was: "Well, to tell you the honest truth, old man, as all my strength went into the controls my mental voice said, 'This is the end of the whole bally circus,' and no one could have got a bigger surprise than I did when she took an even keel again. What did you think?"

"Well, at the time I was standing up unbending the lashings round the pick, when all of a sudden I saw you thrown over side ways from your seat, and then something made me instinctively throw my whole weight backwards over the port side, and at the same time, thinking that the wing tip must catch the ditch, I said to myself, 'Poor old *Sea Gull*; this is the end.'"

"And it jolly nearly was too, and, as *Frank* would say, don't you forget it." "No," says *Shellback*; "I am not likely to forget that trip if I live to be a million — and don't you forget it."



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At that we both had the first laugh which the situation had permitted us since we had first landed on the island. But such is the mind of men who are absolutely wrapped up in their work. It is a truly wonderful thing, the brain. Many men have told me of extraordinary experiences that they have gone through, and when they have been asked what they thought at the time of the actual crux of the situation their reply shows invariably that "self" has been obliterated from the picture. So it was with us when it seemed that the Sea Gull was doomed.

Well, our little bit of mirth had hardly subsided when we were informed that we were wanted outside. It was the man who was to make inquiries round the island for petrol. No luck, he informed us, for the car-users on the island did not use the brand of stuff we required. Thanking him, we resigned ourselves to the position, but felt somewhat despondent. If the morrow broke fine and we were not away before 2 o'clock, then it would be no good leaving at all that day, as the sun sets very early down this way at this time of the year.

Fleas gave us a merry time that night, and we could not sleep. Towards daybreak, however, we both fell into a fitful slumber, and it was close upon 8 o'clock when we appeared, feeling anything but fresh. We were greeted by a beautifully clear sky and strolled down to the pier on the off chance that the packet had come in during the night; but, as Shellback said on our return, "You might just as well go and look for snowballs in Port Darwin." Neither of us felt up to breakfast, but we stowed away an egg or two and went down to the beach.

### Chapter 15: Lady Baron

#### ***A Photographic Flight***

AS we were sitting there, feeling far from merry and bright, *Shellback* suddenly developed a spasm. "We have 12 gallons of petrol in our tank; what do you say if we go up and do our photography with the plates that we have over from the last run, and when the barge turns up, if time permits after we have filled up, and all that, we can then just beetle off!" Gee, did it require a second thought? Not on your life? It was part of the job, and *Shellback* had once more brought me back from lethargic melancholia to life "as she is." In half an hour we were ready to cast off into a very fair nor-easterly breeze, the very breeze to carry us over to Tasmania. And what a reception those islands in the sound did give us!

Taking off to the nor'-east, we had to bear off gradually to the east, then the south-east, owing to the nature of the coast, and also the proximity of the scattered islands, which made it hard to get height; in fact, for many minutes we ploughed along at heights varying from 50 feet to 150 feet. We would no sooner gain a few feet than it would all be lost again by bumps that would shoot over from one of the islands.

And on the top of this the engine, for the first time on this trip, was very much below par. She would not come up to it at all. Is it any wonder, when one considers what she had been through the previous day, especially after having carved out 148 miles between Welshpool and Lady Barron — that was the route that we took, of course — in three hours. In case it was a matter of temperature, I reduced the shutter openings considerably, and when she was



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showing 170 degrees she picked up well. However, until we made the open sea we had a really warm reception, but after that flying once more became enjoy able.

We made up the east coast a little, so as to get some photographs of a few lagoons up that way, and also in the hope that we might see something of the "Coota" sporting amongst the waves ; but nary a sign. Of course, she was due to come down the west coast, but in case she had become fractious and left her rudder behind her there was always a possibility of her bobbing up from nowhere, which would not have surprised us one atom.

We then flew south down the east coast and took numerous photographs which were of interest. The water in this sound is the clearest that I have ever seen in my life, and the depths that we must have been able to penetrate were considerable. To the south side of Vansittart, right in one of the shallow channels, is a sailing ship — the Farsund is her name— and at first sight you could have sworn that the vessel was moored there awaiting a favourable tide. But she is a total wreck, having stood there on an even keel for nearly nine years, I have been told. All three sticks are standing upright — she was a barque — but the yards are all gone with the exception of the foreyard, whilst the main topgallant mast is missing. She is well ensconced in the sand, but somehow it was very difficult to believe that she could not have been salvaged if the job had been properly tackled from the very jump. Of course, it is all very well to criticise from the air, but by the looks of the different channels it appeared to me that a move of a couple of hundred yards would have been sufficient to float an ironclad.

### ***Shoals and Fish***

ANOTHER very interesting point was the number of shoals in this vicinity. It would be an awful place to navigate anything through, but the shoals were really pretty to look at, as they run perpendicular to the shore in a series of waves, just as did the surge in Twofold Bay, which looked fine from the air. And a most interesting sight were the shoals of fish that were lying with their noses up to the ridges, as if stalled in stables feeding like a lot of horses. It was really too comic for words, and one had to pinch oneself before realising that they were not head stalled and were at liberty to dart off to any spot they liked. Fine-sized fish they were, too. We were told later that in all probability they were salmon; but during the period that fish have held an interest for me I have never seen any to come up to the size of these fellows.

We then moved west on the southerly side of the sound, and were just about half-way across when down came the scud with a run. Most of this came from the direction of the Strezlecki Peaks, 2550 feet high. We both took a dislike to that name, as for one thing it reminded one too much of the war, and it was due to this particular spot we received such a doing upon our entrance to the sound on the previous day.

Do you know that we afterwards learnt from different men round about the place, and who own boats, that when there is a nor'-easterly blowing no one will dream of passing round the northerly side of the sound, as the gusts — to use their own words — are so vicious that there



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is a grave chance of being skittled with only a storm jib flying. No wonder, then, we got the awful doing that was meted out to us.

As the scud was now coming thick and fast, we once more beat it for clearer atmosphere. Picking up our lost height once more, we crossed over Little Dog and Big Dog Islands and got a father of a shaking up. Over Vansittart, which is 552 feet high, we did not receive a tremor. The island behaved like a gentleman, though we both sat there expecting something colossal. Big Dog is 254 feet high, and he played up like any ill-bred dog would be expected to do. This, one is inclined to think, is due to the proximity of Vinegar Hill, perched on the mainland north-east of Lady Barron. Coming down to perch we got a good thumping about, but this time, as the water was smoother, we took the ditch to the south-east of the pier without any further incident. We had put in 40 minutes with the camera and were still feeling fagged out from the lack of rest the previous night. That afternoon the sea was calm, but the sun was blotted out by a drizzle of rain. And still there was no sign of the mother ship.

### ***The Acielle Arrives***

THE afternoon was spent in walking the deck until 4 o'clock, about which time we both took a stroll up to the store to see if there was any news from the wireless station. Just as we walked into the yard, which was the front door of the store, Mr. Gunter was called to the telephone. It was Emita ringing up to say that a strange craft had recently passed, making her way towards the south, and that, from all appearances, by her rig and the whiteness of her sails, she should be the yacht we were inquiring about. As she was standing well out it was a sure indication that the vessel was a stranger in these waters, but whether she was an auxiliary or not they could not tell.

About 6.30 we were sitting in a disconsolate attitude on our beds when something brought me with a rush to the door of our shack, "What's up?" said *Shellback*. "I could have sworn I heard the little dynamo plant on the 'Coota' somewhere out there to the east. Listen!" And the pair of us stood in breathless expectancy. "I cannot hear the electric motor, but I can't hear the big engine, though," said *Shellback*.

Rushing out minus our hats, we made for the jetty at full throttle. As we drew near our destination the throb of the little engine became more distinct, and then we commenced an argument. *Shellback* said he could distinctly hear the marine engine, and I reckoned he must be mad, as there was only one engine running. Coming round the point opposite the pier we spotted down the east channel a vessel with all navigation lights up, and with the hustling exhaust from the dynamo there was no mistaking the packet for the Acielle.

"There you are! She's at anchor, and the dynamo is the noise that we hear after all." "No, she is under weigh, and all I can hear is the big engine," replied *Shellback*. We were too bucked at the sight of the packet to bother arguing heatedly about it, but, nevertheless, I felt convinced that she must be anchored, as to the best of our knowledge the Alamo lighting set is never in action when the vessel is at sea. I was on the verge of pointing this out to his nibs when the





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thing suddenly stopped, and sure enough the exhaust of the big engine reached my ears the very next second and — well, *Shellback* was right also. Is that not rather a peculiar occurrence? Two engines were in operation, both at the same time, one of very high speed and the other of really slow speed, and yet each of us could only hear the exhaust of a different engine! Such a thing had never happened to me before, nor had I ever heard of anything similar.

As it would be a good half hour before the craft would be tied up alongside we decided to bolt a bit of tea, as this meant working during the night. Inside a quarter of an hour we were once more bound for the wharf, arriving there in time to see the last line made fast. Stepping on board, the first thing we asked was if they had caught anything like a good supply of fish, but none of them could see the joke.

"We've had a rotten time. Just after leaving Welshpool, when miles out, one of the tappet rods broke, and as the weather was not looking too promising we decided to put back to the inlet. But we could not fix it, and so decided to come on the following morning on three cylinders, thereby maintaining her reputation. We steamed all that day until about sunset, and as we were off the Kent Group about 5.30 p.m. we decided to anchor for the night off Deal Island, as the sky to the south had a very peculiar appearance, and it looked as if it might blow."

Presently I suggested that there was a lot of work on hand, which meant the first step to getting off the island. The dews that fall at Lady Barron are surprisingly heavy; in fact, we were informed that if it never rained on the island there was always sufficient dew to help the herbage along.

### ***Getting Ready for the Air Again***

THE cover was removed from over the engine on the Cow's Calf before we swung her over the side on the davits, and by the time that all our paraphernalia had been collected and stowed aboard the dew had thoroughly saturated the little engine. That meant rowing over to the Sea Gull, and though the night air was fresh, after half a dozen trips backwards and forwards — only a distance of about 400 yards — the perspiration was streaming off me. Nothing would make that little engine budge or kick, and as time was flying we had to let it rip for the night. At the termination of my last trip across to the Kite I said, "Now then, you fellows, avast<sup>12</sup> for the night. Another hour or two should see us through to-morrow, and if all is well we should be in a position to get off the ditch between 9.30 and 10."

"But the ark goes to-morrow at daybreak. Has the programme been changed?"

This was news to me, so once more the Cow's Calf bore me across to the vessel, with the assistance of plenty of elbow grease. She is a beast to row, this being greatly due to the

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<sup>12</sup> Avast — stop, cease



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resistance set up by the propeller. Yes, they were leaving in the morning at daybreak. As there was a grave chance of the weather breaking up from the west they had decided to cut out the ground photography, rely on ours, and get away as soon as the light permitted. And so many more trips were indulged in before we had finally got the machine into condition fit for the flip across Banks Strait and along the north-east coast of Tasmania to Launceston.

Climbing on board absolutely weary, we roused the *Admiral* out of bed to explain the course that we were going to take on our next hop. If the wind was north easterly we would make straight for Waterhouse Island as soon as we cleared Cape Barron. But if the wind veered round further to the nor'ard we would steer sou'-sou'-west from the cape so as to have the wind on our tail and strike the Tasmanian coast as early as possible. Many engine troubles occur after or towards the end of a lengthy run, and as the chances of being pulled out of the Banks Strait were poor if we fell in, should there be a wind or tide running, I deemed it better to make Tasmania as soon as possible.

The parent ship would be leaving at daylight, and if we got away by 10 a.m., should the weather permit, we would pass her between the cape and Waterhouse. But if the weather delayed us in any way we would pass over Waterhouse on our route to show that all was well. We made this arrangement, as there is considerable shelter on the southern side of this island, and as we had flown from one group of islands to the other on our trip from Welshpool to Lady Barron, and no one on the yacht had seen or heard us, and vice versa, we considered it the best thing to do.

When we arose next morning the ark had departed, and rain fell all day.

#### ***A Welcome Visitor***

THE following morning the sun appeared about 8 o'clock; but before it had a chance to even say "Good morning," over came the rainclouds, and once more the place was saturated in a light misty rain. Towards noon Mr. Gunter informed me that the medical officer (Dr. Ingram) from Whitemark, on the west side of the island, had called in his car, and was anxious to see me.

Slipping out, I was met by a tall, well-put-together man, who looked decidedly young, but was as grey as a badger. At first glance I put this down to "war greyness;" in fact, I felt sure of it, as only a returned man would motor 18 miles in an open car in the rain to invite two absolute strangers over to his little corner of the world to lunch as was his intention. *Shellback* would not come over, as he was anxious to keep his eye on the machine and so the doctor and myself, mounted on a very old model underslung Regal, started off in the rain. It was pouring in places by the bucketful; in others it was only a mist, but neither of us noticed this, as we were too intent upon talking war and cars.

My surmise in connection with the premature whiteness of the doctor's hair was correct. He was blown up on Gallipoli, and when found had hardly a stitch of clothing on him, his identity



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disc having gone also. He was then put on to a French Red Cross ship in an unconscious condition; but in his mutterings they discovered him to be British, and transferred him to one of our own Red Cross vessels. Four days later he came to in a huge ward full of men. When the M.O. of the ship was summoned, the first thing he said was, "Hullo, my man; how are you?" "Not too bad, thank you," was the reply; "but where am I?" "You're all right; don't worry. You've had a nasty 'Bligly,' and are now on your way home. By the way, whilst I think of it, what is your name? We have no record of you whatsoever." "Major Ingram, of the A.A.M.C." "Now, then, cut it out. None of your Major stuff here." You see, the Major had bad haemorrhage of the spine, and the ship's M.O. naturally thought that this was having some effect on his patient's mental capacity. And it took a lot of drumming into those good Tommy folk that he really was a Major.

### ***Aviation and 'Nerves'***

ONE very interesting discussion we had was over a point that interests me much indeed. That is the temperamental side of aviation. During a chat upon this subject the Doctor informed, me that he had been attached to an R.F.C. squadron in 'Bligly' for a little while and made a special study of every chap that was posted to his station. Being a keen observer and keen on his work, this was an opportunity that he made full use of.

Now, re the physical fitness of the man who is being medically examined for a pilot. My contention from the very start has been, and is continually strengthening, that as long as a man is sound in the heart, lungs, hearing, and seeing, and is absolutely keen on the business, and if he proves himself to be really competent in the air, then that should suffice.

As it happened, one of my best friends was killed within 400 yards of where the Doctor was standing on his aerodrome — Harold Barnwell was his name, the famous test pilot to the Vickers Company — and it was the Doctor who pulled Harold's remains out of the wreckage. Now, Harold was one of the most brilliant men that ever held a joystick. He was about 38 years of age, and not strong to look at, but if that man had been sent up to Arkwright road, where the Air Force Medical Boards are held, and no one knew his history, he would have been fired out at once. Some M.O. fellow would be talking to him, probably, when another chap would creep round behind the applicant and fire a pistol. According to the height he jumped, so would his nervous system be judged! But it is the highly-strung man that, in my opinion, makes the true pilot.

Take all the great test pilots for instance; they are as highly strung and as jumpy out of a machine as a cat on hot bricks. But the solid pilot, the man with the muscle who is always fit to step on to the football ground and play a hard game, is the man who brings down the other fellow with his popgun, but probably makes horribly bad landings nine times out of ten. He is the type of man that we termed a "stout fellow," a man with no end of stomach, but lacking in brains in comparison with the man of high-tuned nerves. Giving my own present condition as an example: at the time my flying health is what one would term "fit" my muscles are loose,



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but not flabby, and at the least pretext my nerves are ready to jump out of their covering. If I were now to go into steady training, say, for a month, and then commence to fly on such a journey as we are now undertaking, my flying efficiency would be far below par, as my movements would be much slower.

And on this point the Doctor quite agrees with me. He has followed it very closely, and he summed the whole thing up in this way: "The examining medical officer should be a man thoroughly trained in modern methods, a man versed in things worldly, who is keen on flying and always anxious to take the air, and, above all, should be a man who thoroughly understands the enormous part that personality plays in the selection, of a suitable pilot. Of course, there are bound to be a few of the bluffing rotters who would get by, and probably some of the right sort would be turned down; but if such a foundation had been laid down during the war fewer rotters would have passed through, and many more of the right type would have been given the chance to carry out a work for which they were eminently suitable."

***Back to Lady Barron***

AFTER a most enjoyable lunch — which, we may add, was badly needed — with the Doctor's wife and mother, we once more hopped into the Regal — which is the ideal car for the conditions on the island, strange to say — and we ran out towards Emita, about 18 miles away. We visited one or two spots that are about the only suitable places on the island to make an aerodrome for land machines, and then made back for afternoon tea. By this time the sun was out, and the sky almost devoid of clouds, but, of course, as the sun now sets early it would almost be madness to start off the water later than 2 o'clock at the very outside. The Doctor then drove me back to Lady Barron, reaching that spot about 6 o'clock in mist and fog. The little outing did me a thumping lot of good, although I would have felt happier if *Shellback* had been with me also.



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### Chapter 16: Lady Barron and Start of Flight to Tasmanian mainland

We had been in bed about two hours, and during that time my mind had been very active — too active, in fact, for one who was badly in need of a good natural sleep. “If *Shellback* would only wake up, so that a man could talk and pass away a little time” was a thought, that passed through my mind. As if the thought was father to the action, his nibs suddenly stirred, and I could hear him groping for his pipe and matches. As he lit up I said, “Stoking up, ole son?” “By Jove, I'm sorry if I woke you, but I have not slept a wink since we turned in, and the yearning for a smoke was too much for me.” At that we both laughed; but it was short lived, as we were bathed in a blinding flash of lightning, followed by a sultry peal of thunder, which at once threw us into pessimistic vein. This was horrible. If it rained at all heavily and the weather broke clear on the following morning we would require at least 12 hours' drying before the vessel could get off the water. At present there was only a fine drizzle, but the machine was waterlogged sufficiently as it was, without adding a downpour on top of the whole thing. We waited silently to see if there was any more of the fireworks stuff coming along; but there appeared to be nothing doing.

#### *The Mutton-Bird*

WITH his pipe well going, *Shellback* began to dilate upon the industries of this wonderful island. He had been picking up some information during my absence, especially that in connection with the mutton-bird. “They must be rum cows.” he went on. “They turn up regularly on the 25th or 26th of the same month every year, and the hen lays her one egg. The cock bird then takes the bridge and does not leave it for three weeks, the hen bird in the mean time attending to the victualling. Then the ole bloke passes the command of the 'google' over to the missus, and he gets on to the “tucker stakes” for another three weeks. The 'younker' then makes his appearance, and as soon as he, or she, as the case may be (as they say in our school grammar books), has the strength to go down to the water's edge, then the old pa and ma get up the pick and they're off. They evidently know a thing or two, because in a few weeks the slaughter begins among the birders, and there are not many left when they have finished dumping them salted into casks.”

#### *Another Downpour*

WIFF! We were almost blinded by the vividness of a flash of lightning. There was a pause of some duration, and then — crash! The peal of thunder that followed shook the shack to its very foundation. It had barely receded on its course when we heard a distant roar, which ever grew nearer. It was only a matter of seconds, but we both simultaneously jumped to our feet and made for the door. What was it, wind or rain? If rain, then we were safe: but if wind, then — well, we would just have to swim out to the craft if there was any sign of her dragging. The cranky little dinghy at our disposal would not weather a sea that this roaring wind would set up. And so we just patiently waited.

Relief soon came, however, in a few big drops of rain, and about a minute after these heralds had made, their announcement down it came in torrents. It rained in such a manner as to



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outdo anything that I have seen south of Capricorn, and this is saying something. Needless to say, we were at once steeped into the utmost depths. We did not have our rotary pump to dry out the hull, and as there were no small children about, to put down into the petrol tank hatch to dry up the water, it looked fairly hopeless.

The rain had been coming down for about twenty minutes when suddenly *Shellback* sprang out of bed as if he had been bitten by a snake. "What in the name of heaven is wrong, ole man?" was my startled query, coming to a sitting position in bed. "I don't know," said he as he fumbled for a match, but there is something monkeying around my bed." Lighting the candle, he located the trouble. The roof was leaking, and the water was trickling into his bed from half-a-dozen points. He seized the bedclothes and flung them to the floor; but it was too late, as they were far too damp to be safe to sleep on. And so, making room for him on the edge of my bed, we pulled the blankets round our bare legs, cursed and stared at the spluttering candle alternately. Later on a visitor to the island popped his head in, and seeing the state of things told us of a dry bed that was available, and so *Shellback*, pulling on his boots, departed.

### **A Valuable Book**

THIS left me feeling very lonely, but the torture of filling in time was alleviated by reading an excellent book, lent me by Dr. Ingram, upon the meteorological conditions and winds of Australia. This book is by Professor Griffith Taylor and should be read by every man whose daily bread depends upon the weather. It is most delectable reading and put in such simple language that the veriest schoolboy could understand every word of it.

Time was limited, and one had to rush through it, rather, so footnotes in consequence were more or less ignored. But when going through one chapter upon 'pressures' — a subject which has always interested me greatly — for some unaccountable reason, before turning over the page, something made me glance at the footnote, and there to my utmost astonishment was my own name and reference to a scientific flight of mine in England. It was really quite a happy discovery, and bucked me up no end, as there is considerable satisfaction to be got from the fact that one's efforts are appreciated enough to be recorded. However, just before completing my hasty perusal of this excellent little book the candle — the reserve candle, too — gave up the ghost, and, rolling over in my blankets, after little time to think, I soon fell asleep.

I felt as if I had been asleep only a few minutes when *Shellback* called me, just after daybreak. "It's fine to-day, boss, but we had 126 points<sup>13</sup> of rain here last night; so that has just about cooked our mutton-bird!" "Look here, Mr. *Shellback*, don't you come and call me in the morning with the word 'mutton-bird' on your lips unless you are anxious to qualify for an early grave." "Well, do you think we can get off to-day after that rain last night?" This with a look

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<sup>13</sup> 72 points to an inch, 1¾ inches, 44 mm of rain





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of intense anticipation in eyes that were as keen as the albatross. "Do I think, *Shellback*? No; I don't think at all." With this his lip fell, and that far-away, disinterested look came into his eye. Continuing, I said: "If the weather is fit for our photography — that, you must remember, is what we are here for — and she has only half an inch freeboard, old man, you can rest assured that we get out of here like a scalded blue-tailed flea, and don't you forget it."

"Right; that will do me. I'll get down to the dinghy and return the heavy pick we borrowed."  
"Yes; and don't forget to look into the Kite's water-tight compartments and see how much water she has taken in. We may be able to bail a lot of it out with that apple-tin Mrs. Ingram gave us."

### ***Wireless Stations and Meteorology***

BREAKFAST was ready when he returned with the news that she had shipped, as far as he could ascertain, about five gallons, and oil tasting it found it to be mostly fresh water. It would have taken a tin roof to stop water getting into anything after last night's down pour.

After breakfast we collected all our gear, which mainly consisted of camera stuff and the apples. I decided to take a run up to the store and see if anything had come through in the shape of a weather report from the wireless people at Emita. These good folk had been extremely kind to us by calling up the Hobart station twice daily for the weather reports of the north-east coast, and then communicating it on to us by telephone.

In connection with this there is one little point that had me perpetually wondering, and that was the lack of meteorological instruments at the wireless station. The men in charge of these places are generally above the average so far as intelligence is concerned, and if the latest instruments were fitted and readings taken at specified times throughout the day the data that should be gathered throughout our coast must in time prove of the utmost value. And for a small nominal sum one feels sure these men would welcome the idea, as it would not only be a diversion, but would prove of educational value also. In making this suggestion one is not referring to Flinders Island only, but to all the wireless stations throughout the Commonwealth. Each day the results could be "sparked" across to headquarters, and then communicated to the shipping and flying world in the usual way.

However, there was no chance of our getting anything through before 10 o'clock, and as the wind was threatening from the nor'-west we decided to scramble aboard, and then decide upon our plan of action.

Having made everything snug, we were quite prepared to up the pick at any time of the day, even if we had to sit there all day. But we did not want to lose a minute more than we could help in preparing to move off; at the same time, we were anxious to allow the vessel as much time as possible to dry off after the bad soaking she had received overnight.

The water she was carrying had me a little worried in a way, as we were loaded well up to the Plimsoll, and as *Shellback* had calculated there were five gallons of water in the hull that



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meant carrying 50 pounds of superfluous weight. This on the top, of what had saturated the wings meant no small item. Again, the salt had worked its way into the hull and varnish, and all this meant extra ounces, and one has to remember only sixteen of these go to the pound weight. We decided that a good way to kill time would be to mop up as much water as we could reach with the aid of handkerchiefs and any odd paraphernalia that would be useful, not forgetting the apple tin! In this way we managed to lift about two gallons of the unwelcome passenger, which meant at least 20 pounds less weight to carry, and we were ready.

### ***Ready to Move Off***

SITTING there, too tired to talk, we received a sudden gust of wind from the west that put our starboard wing float well under water. *Shellback*, who was busy with the anchor lashings, and looked every bit as fagged out as I was feeling myself, said, "She's going to pipe from the west before very long, and if we don't get out of here to-day it is a lump of seaweed to a flathead that our pick will stay in here for a week at the least." Glancing over to the west, feeling too fatigued to reply, my eye was attracted by something that a few minutes previously had not been there. *Strezlecki* was bathed in a low-lying blackish raincloud. "That does it," thought I, and hopping up to climb aft, *Shellback* was warned to stand by.

"What's up?" was his astonished query as I took hold of the propeller to give her the usual "suck in."

"Look at *Strezlecki*. If we can get off the water now we may just get out of the sound before the clouds come over, and complete our photographs of the western side."

The engine took up at the very first time of asking, in spite of the damp and the cold. When we first stepped on to the machine what wind there was occasionally moaned through the rigging; but now it was whining like a dog in distress, and as every minute sped by it increased, and still that raincloud, which by now was backed by an army corps of similar stuff, remorselessly sped on its way to cut us off at the western end of the sound. However, the wind gave us the advantage of being able to stand fast into it without having to manoeuvre as the engine warmed up. As soon as the desired temperature had been registered the throttle was opened up a little so as to carry her forward on to the end of the line, and thereby turning her nose down-wind to lift the pick. This procedure had to be undertaken on the grounds of there being an island about 100 yards away which had a small jutting reef running out from it, and with the wind that was blowing at the time, though there was no sea, it would have been an impossibility to turn in the space allotted to us.

As the strain came gradually on to the line the throttle was gently opened, and the rudder kicked hard on. In the meantime, *Shellback* had the line still made fast to the nose ringbolt, but as is his custom during this stunt he had the line lightly in his fingers to note whether there was any drag or not on the anchor. He signalled that there was only a slight "give," and to go ahead with the throttle, and so, opening her up a little more, we swung round down



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wind, and as soon as the pick line ran slack the throttle was closed and the line hauled in from the fo'c'sle. When the slack has been "caught up" — that is, if he has the luck to overhaul it before we run over the position where the pick is located — we know that it can be broken; but if she bears down too fast, she over shoots it, and, of course, to attempt to raise it then would mean swinging her round into the wind again. On this occasion she beat us badly — due, of course, entirely to the force of the wind. Very seldom does she get us like that, and if such should be the case and the coast is clear we generally let her drift down, as the wind will overcome the four-knot throttled-down speed of the propeller. We could have carried out that procedure upon this occasion, but there were two islands and a reef to get through, and it could not be done. However, it is only a matter of patience. We let her run her course until the line swung her round into the wind, and then, opening up once more, we came up into it until the strain again began to make itself felt; then the throttle was eased slightly, and at the word from *Shellback* it was opened up once more, and round she came. We know each other's methods so thoroughly by now that if we were blindfolded in turn and just simply worked on word of mouth one's imagination would cinema the proceedings just as clearly as if they were being witnessed by the naked eye. But that does not by any means infer that we take things casually. Not on your life! There is always "the glorious uncertainty" in this game of ours, more especially in pioneering work, such as this present undertaking.

### ***Clear of the Islands and Reef***

As soon as I felt that she had her tail to the wind on this second attempt the throttle was closed, and *Shellback* hauled for dear life. He got there a yard or so ahead of the machine, and just had sufficient time to jump to his feet and give one mighty haul before it was too late. The pick broke away at once, and, as soon as he signalled that it was clear, the throttle was opened to give her steerage way, which, when running down-wind on the surface, requires some speed to have rudder effect. This, of course, sets up undue heating of the water circulation, but on such occasions as this the temperature is only raised to 100 degrees instead of the usual 130 before the pick is broken, as the journey down-wind to take up position does the rest. When we got clear of the islands and reefs there was quite a sea running, and before *Shellback* had got his lines and pick clear of the fo'c'sle we shipped a couple of green 'uns, with the unfortunate result that he got soaked to the skin below the knees. As soon as he signalled that the hook and all its gear had been made fast, she swung round into the wind and once more we started on another section of the journey. But what a lifeless trio we were, to be sure! No more life in us than a hibernating bear, and out of the whole trio, the most limp of the lot was the Sea Gull. Yes, that doing at Welshpool and the 126 points of rain the previous night had done their work well.

As soon as the throttle was opened the engine replied surprisingly well, but the hull - from that there was no response, and inside the first 100 yards one felt instinctively that all the very best that was in him would have to be called into action if we were to get off in the condition that the vessel was now in. And all this time those rain clouds had been vindictively



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making their way round the range straight for Cape Barren. Before leaving, I made a point of getting some idea of the distance between various points, my main reason being to gain some idea what distance the vessel required to run in order to get off the surface.

### ***A Lifeless Hull***

WE had gone fully half a mile, and there was not the least response from the hull, and things were looking hopeless, when suddenly, without any apparent movement on my part, she livened up most noticeably. But still there was none of that feeling of the life vibrant that should have been there considering the distance we had covered, and even at the end of a mile, we were far from attaining a speed that would even cause her to “hop” if one wanted to. The only thing one could do was to help her along the surface without causing too much keel surface friction, and for that I aimed. At the end of a mile and a half, she was beginning to feel it, but another half a mile of this would just about see the end of the run, for the reason that the temperature was not only creeping up towards the 180 degrees mark, but there were breakers ahead and nasty ones at that.

As a last resource, I decided to “kangaroo” her off, because, should she fail to lift with this nothing would take her off the water until she had thoroughly dried out. As you are already aware, the art of handling one of these machines is to get them off the water gracefully. It will come off the water alright, as many a pilot has found to his cost, but it does not go back in the orthodox fashion, for the simple reason that the pilot has allowed the machine to come off the water under the influence of the steps on the hull, and not as a result of the air pressure on the wings. It is quite capable of bouncing, or “kangarooing,” to a height of 40 feet, and if the pilot “does his block” and allows her to continue with the little stunt the last time she hits the water generally is the last time for all time, as “Zone!” goes the bottom and any of the musical box worth having, whilst the pilot gets off — if he is on a trip like this — with an interrupted monthly bath. But if he knows the game it can be done, and on weight-carriers, should there not be enough wind to assist; or on dead calm water this method is always resorted to. We had the breeze alright, but she was as soggy as an island sponge. However, the “hop” effort, if it was to be resorted to, had better be done quickly, as we were bearing down fast on that reef, and that scud was now very near to the entrance of the Sound.

### ***Steadily Climbing***

AT the first attempt she showed that with a little more pressure the second one might be more acceptable, and so it proved to be. She came out about six-inches, and this was followed by another about a foot off the surface. And then began a gentle see-saw until she came off the ditch about 4 feet. Holding her there for a fraction of a second, I gently let her back on to the surface, but before the water had a chance to embrace the hull with its overpowering friction I had her off again, and there she remained. She could not have been more than two feet off the surface, but holding her there for a matter of seconds until the atmosphere had taken a firm grip of her, we began to steadily climb. And, by Jove, she was game. It was a real struggle between speed, weight, weather, and a very tired man. In fact, the whole thing



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appeared like one of those dreams where you are struggling to move and do something, but it is an impossibility to do so. My muscles were fatigued, and the machine was fatigued also — mechanically speaking — with the result that the response that was needed from both of us when required at the psychological moment was not there.

The wind was now piping from the west, but those low-lying clouds were coming from the nor'ard. It was going to be a face to Cape Barren between the rain and the Sea Gull. Holding a debate with myself as to the best course to steer, the choice fell on the south side, as the machine was in a far too heavy condition to weather the catspaws round the feet of those peaks, but I felt sure that if we could take the northern course we would make the Cape first. And I was very anxious to get a photograph of that particular spot also, as the Burgess Brothers say it is a good shelter spot in certain weather for their ketches, and that when their vessels are requiring a keel-hauling and painting, even if they are a fortnight's voyage off, they always make for the Long Island shelter opposite Cape Barren. The tide has a rise and fall of about 14 feet, leaving a firm sandy bottom as if mixed with concrete, which lends itself not only to the shoreing up of the vessels, but also enables the men to work round her with greater ease. As a result of the clearness of the water in the Sound one was, naturally, rather anxious to see this location from the air.

Passing south of Goose Island — the home, by the way, of the Cape Barren goose — we got a few substantial bumps, but the machine was far too 'soggy,' and so was the pilot, to worry about the result. She plodded along like an old draught mare chasing her foal through a stubby paddock, just simply stumbling along, recovering, getting another, then rolling, and so on right through the piece.

As we drew near the Cape things became really exciting, and, for the first time since taking off, interest was aroused sufficiently to arrange a bet with myself. "A magazine of new plates to a pint of developer we do it" was the final arrangement arrived at, and, signalling to *Shellback* to cross over to the port side from his usual side so as to be ready, we commenced a watch of suspense on clouds and distance. We had traversed close on 15 miles, and were still trying to climb, and we were only 1,100 feet instead of our customary 2,000. Then suddenly my goggles became blurred, and signalling to *Shellback* to 'shoot,' my hand went down to the throttle, and the next second we were enveloped in the rain cloud.



### Chapter 17: On to Launceston

WHEN we came out of the rain cloud, the little settlement at the foot of the range and on the brink of the cove was submerged in rain. And so beetling along at 500 feet we left Long Island on our right, too low and the light too dull to photograph. But it was dark in the vicinity of that cloud; in fact, it had such a depressing effect upon me that I was debating with myself whether to come down and shelter at Long Island or proceed, when without warning we came out into bright sunshine.

At once looking about me to take bearings, to the left stretched Barren Island, with its rugged and uninviting coastline, whilst straight ahead one could spot an island with something white upon it in the shape of a lighthouse. The stretch of sand then behind that island must be Tasmania, and the light would be that on Swan Island. But where was the rest of the Tasmanian coast? Gone, all enveloped behind a fog. And a shifty fog it was, too. But the sun was shining, and a man could pick his way here and there amongst the fogbanks, which were rather scattered, although a height of anything over 800 feet was almost out of the question.

Cape Barren upon looking back would be seen for a few seconds and would then disappear behind the mists. Then Clark Island— to the south— would come to light, and very much more imposing did this island appear from the impressions that we got of it as we passed well to the west. The coast did not look nearly so cruel as that along the islands further north, and there were one or two likely looking bays about it, too, which one can depend upon are napoo; otherwise Mr Burgess would have told me of them, and no one knows that part of the coast better than he does.

### *A Fascinating Sight*

AS soon as my bearings had been located the wind was the next consideration, and sure enough this was coming from the nor'-west, as I had predicted when spotting these clouds round Strezlecki. From a meteorological as well as from an artistic point of view — which includes the wonderful clearness of the water, exposing from the air those gems of the hidden depths — Flinders Sound is of intense interest. If one lived to 100 it would be impossible for me to forget the fascination of sitting there and prying down to the depths of the sea; but of all things in this world that one would hate to be is either that of a pilot of a flying boat stationed at Lady Barren or a navigator of a submarine. Life at the test of times is precarious, but to be stationed there on either of those two jobs would be just about as precarious as the life of one of those blanky mutton birds, whose numbers are up as soon as the old hens lay their eggs. It is the very devil of a place to fly over.

As the wind was now from the nor'-west, my original plan was not departed from, and, setting a course that varied from south to sou'-sou'-west, we began to hit up a little speed. When the fog lifted in the direction of Swan Island for its customary breather we were more than half-way across, and the glimpses that we now and then caught of the Tasmanian coast showed that it was gradually coming nearer to us.





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Swan Island still kept its distance, as the further we progressed the more to the west was the course altered, until we were about seven miles off Cape Portland. It does not sound far, but it is a goodish swim in those cold waters. However, one felt that one was safely over the straits now, and the nose of the machine was headed for Waterhouse Island, which was now standing well out from Ringarooma Point, on the west side of Ringarooma Bay. This bay appears to be of goodly proportions, according to the Admiralty chart; but as we flew past it, in towards the coast one could not see much more than fog; so it was impossible to gauge its dimensions.

As we passed over Waterhouse Island at a height of 800 feet we saw two men launching a boat, and perched on the top of the island was a snug-looking little cottage. We were halfway across it when the sun deigned to peep out from the low-lying clouds, but it was too late to get a photograph. We were a bit too low for the speed we were travelling at, and, to tell the honest truth, we have had such rotten luck one way or another with the bally ole "gun" that I did not feel disposed to waste more plates than I could possibly help. The photograph taken at Cape Barren was an experiment, and until the result of that exposure was known then no more snapshooting on chance would be done.

Shortly after leaving Waterhouse astern the mist cleared for a little to the north west and showed up Ninth Island. On our left we caught glimpses of the coast, which appeared to be very flat, with now and then a hill sticking up in the distance. But what we did see of the coastline was intensely uninteresting— almost as desolate, in fact, as the section between Gabo and Marlo.

### ***Nearing the Tamar***

WE cut across Anderson Bay and picked, up the coast proper at East Sandy Cape, which, strangely enough, reminded me very much of Cape Howe, as it is greatly inundated with, huge fissures, worn through the continual pounding of the westerly storms— at least, one presumes it is due to the westerlies, as there is - no sign of any such formation on the east side of the cape.

When opposite Stony Head and Tenth Island the fog out at sea appeared to have risen considerably, though inland it was dense. However, as we were now nearing the Tamar, it was decided to get a bit more height from our position, things appearing to be clearer at the mouth than elsewhere. We had been beetling along at 1500 revvs, as we were now partially facing a stiffish breeze, and opening up the throttle a little I found there was no response. And so she was given still more gas until, the gadget being finally right open, she would not show any more than 1520 revolutions, just 40 revvs below her maximum. She was so dreadfully rough at the 1520 mark I had to make up my mind to sail along at 1500 and give up the idea of gaining more height. It proved, however, later on all for the best; so I did not worry any more about it; but it is the first time on this trip that the engine had failed to



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respond when in the air. She has been wonderfully efficient, and always comes up to the mark upon every time of asking.

### ***Launceston at Last***

AT Five Miles Bluff we ran into some rather dense fog; but before the throttle was closed, down Shellback got busy with the “gun” and took a distant view of Low Head, which looked fine from our position, apart from giving one a comforting feeling. This last fog attack brought us down to the 500 feet level, and at the same time displayed to us one of the finest sights of its kind it has ever been my good fortune to witness. We were threading our way through the banks, and the sun being on the opposite side of the fog to us, some of the lighting effects wore really glorious. There were literally thousands of rainbows dancing all over one another, and some of the opalescent tints were unsurpassable. However, coming over the mouth of the Tamar, the fog seemed to have cleared here, and making out to sea about five miles we regained our lost height, though it was a slow business, and we were now ready to make up the river.

*Shellback* was busy with the camera, and, though the further we went and the more beautiful the scenery became, the more dense became the fog. Sydney Harbour is a wonderful sight from the air, but for all-round beauty, judging from the little we have seen of it, commend me to the Tamar, except over the unattractive last five miles, owing to the discolouration of the water and the barrenness of the surroundings.

Exactly 32 minutes after entering the heads of the Tamar River the Sea Gull alighted on the river close to the Cataract Gorge. As no one expected us, naturally there was no provision made, my wire from Flinders having turned up 10 minutes before we did; but, having been a guest of the Tamar Rowing Club at a regatta some years ago, we had no difficulty picking up our whereabouts. Exactly two hours forty minutes after starting up the engine at Lady Barren it once more came to rest, and when all had been made snug and put into perfect order two very tired men were assisted ashore by Mr. Jack, the well-known boat-builder and father of Eddie, the ex-champion amateur sculler. And both were indeed truly thankful at having arrived without any untoward excitement.

### ***The Sea Gull to be Docked***

AS soon as we had thoroughly got our land legs once more my first question put to Mr. Jack was as to the possibilities of our being able to secure a good slip way to dry-dock the kite. But he shook his head and informed me that there was no such thing to be found near Launceston. Pointing across to where there was a ketch high and dry on the back of a pontoon, he explained that that was the method in vogue in this part of the world, and that all big vessels on the Tasmanian coast were dry-docked in the same manner by the Marine Board. Not knowing at the time that, he was the proprietor of the yard under discussion, my next thought was to find the man who owned the show, and so, making my way across the pontoons to the shore, I encountered Eddie Jack, the son of the man to whom we were talking.



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It was good to see Eddie again, as I had not seen him since he won the amateur sculling championship of Australia in Melbourne about 1907. He then introduced me to his father, who had just then strolled up with *Shellback*, and we were once more “jakeloo”. Yes, there was a punt lying idle within 30 yards of the vessel, and we could, have it at a moment's notice. Just sav the word! That was the question. *Splitpin* had by this time arrived with the 'Cow's Calf,' and at once we held a confab. You see, for the week we had exceeded our stipulated time in the air by about half an hour. That meant that every minute put in between this day—Friday— and Sunday night meant a certain amount of pocket money to the three of us. My own mind was quite made up as to what should be done, but these two must be consulted first.

Putting it to *Shellback*, he gave me a contemptuous look and said; “Cripes, no; hang the dough. She's been in the water coming on for three months now, and it's bally murder to keep her out a minute longer than we can help. I say dock her, by all means!” And with that *Splitpin* heartily concurred. We then made back to the Ark, and as usual were greeted by old *Frank* as if we were long-lost brothers who had risen from the dead.

Sitting at lunch, we discussed the programme for, the future, and as there was quite a lot to be done on the mechanical side, and we were anxious to dock her with as little weight on as possible, it was decided that *Splitpin* and myself should carry on up to the time that she was ready to be towed into position to go on the punt. *Shellback* had earned more than a rest; he was badly in need of it, and it is no exaggeration when I say that he has gone as grey as a badger round the ears since we left. How he has stood up to it with shortness of sleep and the perpetual worry has had me thinking upon many an occasion. After detailing to *Splitpin* our programme *Shellback* inquired where he came in, and upon my telling him that he could “wash out” until 2 p.m. Sunday afternoon, when we would dock her, his face lit up, and he said: “That will do me. I have a lot of friends here.”

“Good!” was my reply. “Do anything you jolly well like, but don't get married. There is only room for the two of us with the pick when on the move, and don't be late on Sunday, so as to miss the tide.”

### ***Our Beloved Craft***

WITH that we left him, and once more on the 'Calf' we made for the shipyards. And the Sea Gull was in a tired condition, brine showing out all over the hull, as if she had not been varnished for months, instead of about three weeks previously. The pipes on the engine were white with the salt, which, of course, had been splashed up when taking over an odd sea or two. The paint on the wing floats had patches of rust showing through it, whilst the varnish on the lower planes was completely washed off and had worked its way into the dope. To the three of us, who know how well she has looked, she now presented a pitiful appearance. But she could not have looked so awfully bad to the ordinary persons when Captain Fred Huxley,



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who has a passenger carrying 'bus here in Launceston, remarked that she looked in wonderfully good condition.

“Good condition, my boyee! Good condition! You should have seen her before that bally easterly got her at Welshpool. She looked a jewel in comparison to the typhoon-stricken appearance she now possesses.”

But, of course, such is the price of pioneering. If this were an established air route, then naturally at each stopping place there would be shelter of some kind to protect the machines from the elements; otherwise the game would not be worth the candle. As we stood and gazed upon the little craft my heart warmed towards her in a manner that it has never done before on this trip. One only had to go back over the route and think of the weather conditions she has experienced, apart from the amount of flying that she has done, and one could not help but stand and adore!

And then, of course, owing to the atmospheric conditions, we have had to fly in weather that no fool but an old fool would ever dream of tackling, though needs must when the devil pipes, and so we were ready to set to once more in order to prepare her for probably something dirtier than she has so far experienced. Winter is approaching fast, from the feel of the temperature, and our southern coast has not a savoury reputation about this time of year. We should have left here at least eight weeks ago.

#### ***Interesting Records***

HOWEVER, so far as the crew of the kite are concerned, the daily log is quite interesting reading, and, eliminating all the flips that have been indulged in, such as passenger-carrying and local photography, the following extractions show the distance, time, and petrol consumptions during the sectional flights:

Date	Section	Mileage		Time	Petrol Consumption	
		Miles	Kms		Gal	Litre
March 13	Sydney – Huskisson	87	140	1h 45m	14	64
March 25	Huskisson - Moruya	76	122	1h 50m	15	68
March 27	Moruya – Eden	72	116	1h 45m	14	64
April 12	Eden – Lakes Entrance	160	257	4h 0m	32	145
April 18	Lakes Entrance - Bairnsdale	70	113	1h 40m	14	64
April 29	Lakes Entrance - Welshpool	120	193	2h 25m	20	91
May 16	Welshpool – Lady Barron	145	233	2h 0m	23	105
May 20	Lady Barron - Launceston	142	229	2h 40m	20	91
<b>Down Trip</b>		872	1403	19h 5m	152	691
[1] Broke Passage at Marlo						



## THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL

One feels that he is quite safe in saying that the mileage would be more accurate if placed somewhere on the 1000 mark, as our measurements have been more or less taken from the Admiralty charts with the aid of a pair of dividers. So far as the times are concerned, there is nothing startling recorded; but one has to remember that we have a thumping long way to go, and every consideration must be shown the engine. We beetle along at the minimum revvs permitted by the weather conditions, the speed varying between 55 and 57; but when we have been absolutely up against it, such as the Eden and Franklin Sound efforts, our speed has reached 73 flying level, though *Shellback* tells me that on more than one occasion when “nosing” out of bad bumps in the sound we touched as high as 84 miles per hour. But that, of course, is only momentary, as one always has before him the long stretching coast, and this never permits him to forget that it is a “long, long way to Tipperary.”

### ***Docking on a Punt***

BY Sunday midday we had the petrol tank out ready for reinforcing, and all weighty gear, such as the battery, wing-floats, etc., so as to reduce the weight as much as possible. If the machine was only going up for a day or two one would not, of course, go so thoroughly into the matter; but as we were counting on her being off the water for at least two weeks, and taking into account her soggy condition, we considered it the wisest policy to remove as much weight as possible.

“Pere” Jack and son Eddie were untiring in their efforts to help us; in fact, if we had sat back and not done a thing it would not have made the slightest difference to these two; they would have done all the dirty work unasked and unaided. And for that unselfish spirit we are all three truly grateful.

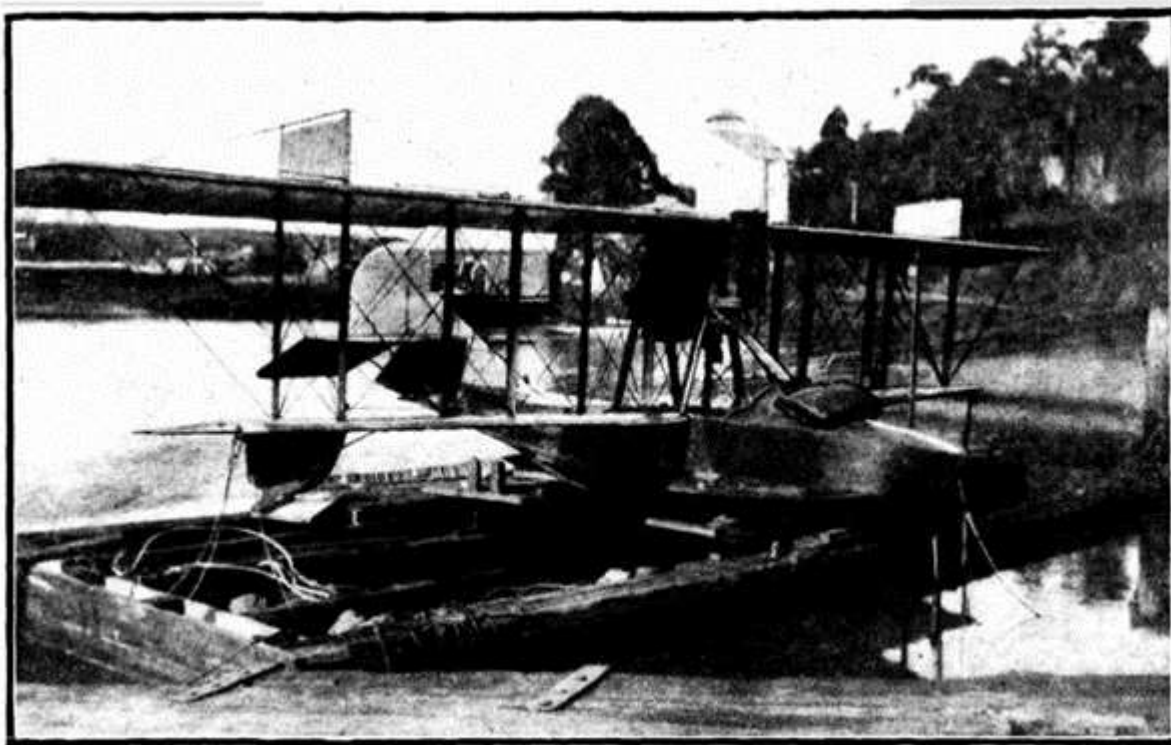
Eddie had submerged the punt by pulling out the plugs in eight feet of water, and when *Shellback* turned up at 2 p.m. all was ready to tow her over the spot. Pieces of timber had been nailed on to the sides of the punt, so that when it was lying at the bottom of the river the Sea Gull could be pulled into position and held there until the tide receded, measurements having been taken, of course, of the machine whilst she floated on the ditch.

The punt was submerged right up against the Tamar Rowing Club's sheds, which is built on the side of a steep bank, the front opening on to a rather busy street. By 3 o'clock that afternoon you would have thought that the whole of Launceston had turned up to see the circus. The place was one mass of folk. Mr. Jack, without mentioning anything to us, very thoughtfully rang up the Superintendent of Police the previous evening, asking for a constable to be sent down to look after things. This was a very kindly act on the part of Mr. Jack and the police, which relieved us of a great deal of anxiety and the usual cussing at the ever-present inquisitive. You see, this being the first flying-boat in these waters, the papers were inclined to make much of it, and in mentioning the fact that the kite was going into dock on the Sunday afternoon it was only natural that a great number of the folk were anxious to see the vessel out of the water.





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**THE SEA GULL DRY - DOCKED**

On a punt at Launceston. The propeller has been removed to facilitate work on the engine.

***A Hospitable Community***

BUT everyone in this little city was really most kind. The committees of the Launceston Club, the Commercial Travellers, the Tamar Yacht club, and the Tamar Rowing Club very kindly put us up as honorary members. But we could not take the fullest advantage of this hospitality.

Every day we had to climb into the oldest duds, and at night time we are more or less too tired to partake of the "fleshpots," and, for my own part — well, my typewriter engages my attention until bedtime. However, one invitation that proved invaluable to us was that of the Tamar Rowing Club. This must be one of the finest equipped aquatic sheds in the Commonwealth, covering quite a surface area and carrying a very fine fleet of boats. But what attracted the instincts of my crew was the fine length of hose and the abundance of fresh water for washing down the machine. When *Shellback* discovered that the hose was long enough to reach out to our craft his eyes lit up with pleasure on the instant. And so we are indeed grateful for this little courtesy, extended to us by the members of this excellent club.

By 8 o'clock on Sunday night the tide had left the punt dry, and replacing the plugs as soon as the last drop of water had found its way out on to the mud we turned into bed. Taking an early breakfast next morning, we made our way over to the yard through a dense fog, to find





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the vessel ensconced high and dry on the back of the punt. What pleased us most was that at high tide no one could come out and interfere with us at our work; but at low tide this was a horse of a different colour. However, we had her out of the ditch at last, and were now ready to get to business, though neither of us would feel satisfied until we had her once more in thorough trim and ready to take the air.

### Chapter 18: Launceston

DURING the first week that our little craft was docked the weather was not conducive towards getting the best results. The barometer on the Sunday we put her up was steady at 29-50, and on the Monday morning had dropped to 29-10. On that same morning we had a dense fog to wade through before we could reach the scene of our activities, and this was the rule more than the exception during the whole of the following eight or nine days.

One peculiarity that accompanied these foggy mornings was the severe frost experienced before the sun showed up. Each morning the decks, wharves, and ground would be almost as white as if there had been a heavy fall of snow overnight. This was easily accounted for, as the hilltops in the vicinity of the city were one mass of snow. Although we were on the scene early, it was impossible to do much work before 10 a.m., as the dew had to be dried off the hull before it could be attacked. No doubt, at some time or another, you have seen the brine-streaked funnel of a steamer after a rough passage through a gale. This was the appearance the hull of the Sea Gull presented, especially on the upper decking. To do any good with it, we decided to scrape the varnish right off down to the bare wood. This, to the uninitiated, looked a mere flea-bite of a job', but when one takes into consideration the thickness of the hull — which is three eighths of an inch thick — it must be realised that a chipping hammer or an overdose of elbow grease is quite out of the question. In this, instance Eddie Jack came to our assistance with two or three little scrapers which are used in the scraping down of racing boats— the latter, in some cases, not being much thicker than a sixpence.

As soon as this job was completed, occupying close on three days, owing to the hours of daylight being limited, we left the wood to dry out thoroughly and tackled the metal work on the vessel that was showing any signs of rust. *Shellback*, in the meantime, decided to remove the front floorboards, which is a very tedious job; as they are held down with 38 small brass screws in an awkward position. Upon lifting these we beheld a revelation, as one of the watertight compartments was carrying at least five gallons of water— the real pukka bilge stuff, that can be smelt a mile away when once exposed to the air. Altogether we must have been carrying a good 10 gallons of water from Lady Barren to here, which, if my memory has not gone astray, is equivalent to about 100 pounds in weight, an enormous consideration.



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### ***Another Surprise***

OUR next object was to remove the running control cables, which are made up of the highest-grade flexible steel wire, so as to allow them to run round the various, pulleys. Here, again, we had a surprise awaiting us. This department, of course, comes under “rigging,” and is *Shellback's* particular attention.

In spite of all the care that he had exercised, and the thorough examination he had made of all cables when at Welshpool we found the port aileron control very badly stranded, and the starboard rudder cable just beginning to go also. The ailerons of an aeroplane are nothing else but flaps that assist the machine to maintain lateral stability. If, for instance, the bus gets a bump under the right wing-tip, thereby throwing down the left wing, the pilot corrects this by pushing, the joy-stick over to the right, as would be a natural movement if trying to maintain balance, and by doing this the flap on the left or port wing is pulled down, whilst that fitted to the starboard wing is lifted above the surface of the right-wing, and assists the left wing very considerably. The same procedure takes place, only vice versa, if the vessel receives a bump under the left wing-tip. For longitudinal control — i.e., fore and aft — the joy-stick is moved forward to put the nose down, whilst to lift it the stick is pulled towards the body. All the movements, in fact, are quite natural, though it takes practice to know just how much, and no more, one should make each move. When one has height, he can afford to be a little bit ham-fisted, but near the ground such capers are not advisable. In the case of the Franklin Sound stunt, when making for Lady Barren, the stick was performing all kinds of gyrations, which, amongst the flying fraternity, is known as “stirring the porridge.”

It was this perpetual “porridge stirring” in the Sound that had caused the port aileron control wire to strand so badly, and he feels quite safe in saying that, if we had experienced similar conditions on the journey across to Launceston, in all probability this would never have been written. But well, it is these little “eccentricities” that really make the game worthwhile. Under ordinary flying conditions, such occurrences would practically be impossible, as the machines would not be subjected to anything like the trying conditions which this little 'bus has had to withstand.

### ***From Daylight to Dark***

WELL, the remedy for these small defects was the fitting of new cables, and at this game *Shellback* is a past-master. Probably there are very few men in this country who can hold a candle to him when it comes to splicing steel cables, no matter what may be the size. This fact has, on more than one occasion, been recognised by the Government. It is great to watch him at it as the whole, operation in his hands runs with delightful ease, and looks as easy as eating a meal when one is hungry. Yet there are some men who have reputations as steel rope splicers who require a special bench and special tools to carry out the job.

And so we slugged and plugged, from daylight till dark, and things soon began once more to assume shape. But we had some shocking luck with the varnishing at the beginning. When we



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felt quite sure that she had been given sufficient time to properly dry out, we gave her the first coat of varnish, but next morning, when we turned up to work, we were once more greeted with a few faint streaks of brine. And so this had to be removed. The following evening, after another attempt had been made in this direction, it rained heavily for about half an hour. "Good-bye" to our varnish again. However, we arrived at the conclusion that this varnishing, cleaning down, and re-varnishing did not do any harm, as when it did commence to take, nothing on the sea, or under the sea, would shift it. However, it was a great relief when we had the job completed, and once more had her floating on the ditch. It had been a tiring, cold, and trying business, but now, in all her glory, freshly painted and varnished, we felt that the whole show was worth it.

### ***The Acielle in Dock***

DURING this period, of course, we were living on the Ark, and to be in the fashion, she had to have a run into dock also. The Marine Board use a huge wooden floating dock, which is submerged at high tide, the vessel floated in, and the gates closed. An electrically propelled centrifugal pump is then brought into action, and in a very short time the vessel is dry and the dock afloat.

The morning that, the yacht had to enter dock high tide was somewhere in the vicinity of 6 o'clock, and at the hour that she was being towed across to take up her position — the little Calf can pull a hefty load these days — I was in the Land of Nod. My enthusiasm for messing about with hawsers and that kind of thing had been settled completely in the past, so all my cares for the time being were centred on my own craft.

Shortly after daybreak something brought me to sensibility. Was it a dream, or was the vessel really heeling over? A terrific crash brought me sitting up with a start. This was followed with the exclamation: "Oh, rnon Dieu, e'est finis. Ah, mon Capitan, come quickly," but before I could get my feet there was a loud outburst of hearty laughter, which dissipated my fears that poor old *Frank* had probably crashed. And what a sight met my eyes! The table had fallen on to its side, and with it had gone all the things that were laid out for breakfast. To see *Frank's* face was indeed a study, and as soon as he had got over the shock of the crash, he at once saw the humour of it. Not a thing was broken though, before we could rescue much of it, the sauces, pickles, and the suchlike, which are all dear to the heart of the sailor, were well and truly smeared all over the floor. Only the previous day the carpets had been taken up in the saloon, and the chairs and table, in consequence, had not been screwed down into position. This, in all probability, saved the crockery from utter destruction, as it would have had further to fall.

Pulling on a pair of sea boots in my cabin, a strange gurgling sound reached my ears, just like water in a brook gurgling over stones. On making investigation, this proved to be steady streams of dock water making their way into the saloon. And so an attack was at once made on the portholes the tightening of which saved me a swim for dear life! Everyone, of course,



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was on deck, and after an Alpine ascent up the companionway, I managed to make the deck and had no sooner put my foot down over the last step than— Zone! The deck was one mass of white frost, and the rubber heel of my boot, not taking, kindly to it, I slipped and slid on to my back, with the left arm doubled under me, until the scuppers brought me up. It was some time before that beastly arm could be extricated, and when it was the pain was so intense that it took me some minutes to convince myself that it was not broken. However, all's well that ends well! The first thought was to find out the cause of this unlooked-for excitement, though, of course, this reclining of the Ark on her side is no new stunt, but to carry it off in port struck me as being the height of humorosity! It transpires that there is a sill at the entrance of the dock, which is about three feet high. The tide was falling rapidly when the vessel commenced to enter the dock, and just when she was a third of the way in, she ran up on to the sill.

All attempts to haul her off were in vain, as the tide falls at a great rate in this part of the globe, and it was not long before she was settling down for an enforced rest in an attitude that was more restful to her than to her boarders. As the tide fell, so did the dock go with it, until it finally rested in the mud. The vessel being only a third of the way into the dock, there was a considerable overhang at the stern, until finally, when the tide had receded to its maximum, there she was, with the stern in the mud and the bow cocked up whilst she lay on her side at an angle of at least 45 degrees. If it had not been so serious it would have really been decidedly comic, but the Harbour Master ordered everyone off the vessel in case something should go. Many of *Frank's* cooking utensils went over at the first tilt, and one or two little things belonging to us in the form of an oilcan, etc., but we were lucky that the whole circus did not go, as she is carrying an enormous weight with the petrol, oil drums, and gear on deck.

One gad outfit that did worry me was that belonging to the electric-lighting set. The batteries are on the starboard side of the hull and held in position by thin laths of wood. Fortunately, the man who did the job went about it in a faithful manner, otherwise, if these had come adrift from their elevated position, nothing in the world could have prevented them from going through the hull. As it is, one greatly fears that she is strained considerably, as the railings just forward of amidships show a decided hog back, and where she only needed pumping about once a fortnight it has now been found necessary to do it about every second day. However, a hose and a deck-broom soon removed the little that was on the hull, and, after a coat of anti-fouling paint, she was once more ready for the ditch.

### ***Again in the Air***

ON the Sunday morning, exactly two weeks to the day that we had put the Sea Gull up, we decided to give her a trial in the air. Since floating her we had moved the vessel up the North Esk close to the Marine Board's dock, and within 100 yards of where the Ark was tied up at the wharf. The river at this spot is too narrow to allow the machine to warm up tied to the



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mud hook, and as the bottom of the river is formed of soft slimy mud, she would simply drag it at once.

The Calf was therefore requisitioned, and *Splitpin* towed us down to the junction of the Tamar and the Esk, which was only about 40 yards from our mooring. From all appearances there is no excess of room there, but as there are one or two beacons about, and the hook dragged as if it were lying on the surface of a concrete bottom, we had to use all our cunning to get her warmed up before taking off. However, this we successfully finalised without any mishap, and turning down the wind, which, luckily, was running down-stream from the town, we once more got to it. She responded splendidly, and though the engine was 20 revvs down, she took off the water beautifully with a surprisingly short run, just as she used to do of old.

We soon made height and had reached about 250 feet at the first bend, when, without the least warning, she coughed, gave up the ghost temporarily, took up again half-heartedly, and then spluttered out altogether, maintaining enough punch to keep turning over until we hit the ditch. This performance naturally amazed *Shellback*, as it was something entirely foreign to the policy of the bus, though she once vainly tried the same stunt at Huskisson.

Noticing that the oil and petrol pressures were all O.K., and the temperature likewise, I decided to give her another spin, as she was now turning over beautifully, throttled down. Opening up the throttle, we found ourselves off the ditch in better style than on the previous effort, but we had not been in the air more than three minutes when she did exactly the same thing again, once more flopping us down on the surface. By this time I felt quite convinced that it was a matter of excessive temperature, which was not registered by the radiator thermometer because time would not permit of this. We were now on the surface of a kind of lake air once more, the throttle being opened up, we took the air with the object of turning for home. However, with the turn half completed, she gave up the ghost again.

As soon as we hit the surface I hopped out of my seat and laid hands on the plugs. Yes, as I had half suspected, they were far too hot for the time that they had been running, and so turning, we made our way back along the surface. This meant a stop about half-way, as we were taxying down-wind, and when the temperature had almost reached boiling point we dropped the pick until she had cooled down to the 100 mark, and once more got under weigh.

#### ***Unsuitable Plugs***

THE trouble proved to be the plugs. They are not our long-distance set, but some we picked up in Melbourne, and, though one felt very loth to take them, there was nothing else for it, as the particular brand was after were unprocurable anywhere. However, we used this new lot entirely for local work, keeping the original for the long sectional flights. As soon as *Splitpin* removed the gadgets there was no mistaking that they were the offenders, as the points were all the colours under the sun and warped out of adjustment by thousandths of an inch. They may be excellent in a car, but for an engine with the M.E.P. (mean explosive pressure) of this Curtiss they have proved quite unsuitable.



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FITTING in our original plugs, the three of us took the air again for half an hour just after lunch, and she flew splendidly. About 10 minutes before coming down, though, she started to cut up rough, and, testing out the magnetos on the button switches, it was found that the port "maggie" had given up functioning, or, as Winston Churchill once said to me when discussing a certain experimental engine, "she refused to do her duty." However, we had practically no distance to go, and just before closing off the throttle for coming down *Shellback* drew my attention to the left wing, and there was Captain Huxley, mounted on his old 'Pee' 'bus, forming alongside of us not thirty feet away. In a flash my thoughts carried me over to the other side, when we were flying in formation.

Our trouble proved to be a defective carbon brush in the distributor, and after a new one had been replaced we were once more ready to move on over the next section. In what direction that would be we were yet to learn.

### **All "Off-Colour"**

THE day following our final test the *Admiral* asked me to accompany him up to Beauty Point in Bell Bay to assist him to settle a small point that had sprung up in the ground survey work, and so, putting the 'Calf' on board the Rowhitta (the excursion boat that plies between George Town and Launceston), we were under weigh about 9 a.m.

And what a truly beautiful morning it was! The sun was shining at its full autumn strength, and the river was like glass during the whole trip, whilst the air had just enough nip in it to warrant an overcoat. The trip would have been a most enjoyable one if flying had not been my present occupation. After dud weather it is most aggravating to find oneself away from the job when the conditions suddenly change to perfection. And that was my experience on this occasion.

However, it gave *Splitpin* a good chance to have a thorough run over the petrol pressure system. Since the reinforcing of the tank the pressure appeared to hold all right in the air, but after pumping up on the surface and allowed to stand for half an hour or so it would drop from 3lb to 1lb, which was contrary to our previous experience.

Returning that same evening from Beauty Point — by taking the 'Calf' we saved about two days — the wind became very chilly, and, getting in about 8.30 p.m., one felt that the only place to assist the regaining of a proper circulation was in bed — and so bed had it.

Next morning, I felt very much off-colour, and for four or five days was moving about in a 'semi-doped' condition. *Shellback* and *Splitpin* also developed awful colds, and one morning *Splitpin* looked as if he had one foot in the grave. Never in all my experience of the sea have I seen a chap look a true "sea-sick green" colour until this fellow came down to me and said that he was not feeling too well, and could he lie down for half an hour? All the inducements in the world would not entice him to turn in, and after administering a tablespoonful of





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Worcester sauce — a remedy the men of the north swear by for wonkey stomachs — inside half an hour he looked a different chap.

However, we struggled on somehow during that week of fogs, mist, and sleet, though being tied up in that fresh water river, with its great rise and fall in the tides, was enough to drive any man to an early grave. Another very great drawback to the health of the place, in my opinion, is that the city sewers enter the river right up at the town and above the shipping, which one imagines is not too conducive towards producing the best of results from a health point of view.

But those fogs! Whew! they are the dizzy limit. It is a fact when I say that we would come up on deck about 7 a.m., and the sky would be beautifully clear. By 8 o'clock there would be such a dense fog it would be impossible to see fifty yards ahead of you. Is it any wonder that the Tasmanian mails are erratic when the mail boat Nairana had to tie tied up to her wharf at Launceston, with her passengers aboard, for 24 hours on one occasion until the fog cleared? If there was not a fog, then you could count on rain or cold bleak winds, which chilled one to the marrow. Then, turning in one's bed greeted him with a nice damp musty odour that took at least a couple of hours to thaw out with the warmth of the body. My method was to go to bed half-dressed, and as soon as the warmth got into the blankets to hop out and ship into pyjamas.

### ***Rowing Chums***

PROBABLY, as *Frank* declared, I had been sticking to it a bit too much, and a change of surroundings would not do any harm. We had been on the river just seven days before time had permitted me to pay a visit to the city, and then it was only a dash up to get a haircut and a rush back. However, one evening, when all the crew except *Frank* and myself were on shore, a couple of visitors were announced, and, lo and behold in blew old Jack Artis, who stroked the winning Tasmanian interstate eight up in Brisbane in 1909. Was I glad to see him? You bet! By Jove, it was like a breath of old times, and when he told me that there was a crowd of the same 1909 eight up in town waiting for me to “pull on a coat, just as you are,” it required no second asking.



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**AIR VIEW OF LAUNCESTON.**

This photograph, taken from the Sea Gull at a height of about 1500ft, is a new view of the famous Cataract Gorge at Launceston, with its single-span bridge at the mouth. Part of the town appears in the foreground. Across the bridge is the suburb of Trevallyn. At the spot marked with the cross is the Tamar Rowing Club shed, where the flying boat was docked.



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**Chapter 19: Launceston to Georgetown**

NO matter what part of Australia you go to, so long as there is a rowing club in the vicinity and you are a rowing man, then at once the local oarsmen take you into their fold. Following Jack to the Launceston rowing men's haunts, the Royal Tasman Inn — all rowing men have their particular haunts— I found Dan Munro (who rowed six), Jack Woodhouse (five), and “Beefie” Lithgow (four), Forsyth (bow), Needham (two), and Easton (three) were still on the earth's surface handy, whilst Keith Heritage, who was one of the finest seven sticks in Australia, had made the supreme sacrifice at Pozieres. What a magnificent eight that was, to be sure, and a magnificent crowd of fellows.

Dan Munro looked most prosperous — a lot has happened in those past 12 years; Jack Woodhouse appears to be as fit as he was on the day of the race, probably half a stone heavier, but the same old “Woodie”; whilst “Beefie” Lithgow is beefier than ever. My goodness, what a tonic that night proved to be for me! It was great and gave me almost as much pleasure as the reunion between Shorty (at Bairnsdale) and myself after twenty years separation.

Of course, we yarned rowing from the moment we met until we separated at midnight. We went back to 1907, when I rowed in a regatta on the Tamar. Jack Artis was the fastest man off the mark with a crew in Tasmania in those days, but at that particular regatta we beat him at his own game, getting a canvas on him from the crack of the gun, and there we stayed; but we knew we had been going for it at the finish. We got into the final, but that was a “scream” and a fiasco for us. “Buff” Watts, a later interstate man, who has a wonderfully retentive rowing memory, recalled a lot more in connection with that regatta that had slipped me altogether until again referred to. And all for a pewter pot or some kind of tin medal! That is the beauty of the game.

Then we wandered up to Brisbane, where these men had journeyed in 1909 with the hopes of winning the greatest eight oar race in the world, for which they would receive a piece of cardboard with their names inscribed thereon! There were the “chivoo” at the pineapple farms and a visit over the C.S.R. mills, and the trip to Nambour, where the residents turned out and gave us a wonderful day, one of the main features being a shoot over a flying-fox camp. Goodness me! we could have talked on all night and all the next day, though we had to get to work next day, and late hours are not conducive to efficiency. So we all went our different ways, and one turned-in that night feeling truly thankful that he had been blessed with a constitution fit to stand the training of an oarsman.

This is not actually the Log of the Sea Gull, I am afraid; but permit me to show you the part played by the Victorian oarsmen alone during the war. And remember the same thing held good amongst the oarsmen of the other States. The total enlistments from Victoria in the A.I.F. were 112,399, and out of that number 1,380 were rowing men. Two hundred and sixty-three of these men made the great sacrifice, whilst out of a total of 12,040 Victorian orders



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and decorations 146 went to oarsmen. From my own club in Melbourne over 60 members went on active service, whilst from Dimboola, a small Victorian township, there are 74 names on the honour board. And you can depend upon it, the rowing man played it on the field in the same spirit as he played it on the "drain."

### ***Unwelcome Orders***

THEN came trouble to me in the form of a severe malarial visitation, which completely rattled me and forced me on to quinine. It was a most unhappy week. Orders reached us on the Friday to the effect that, owing to the delays that had occurred on the trip through weather, mudbanks, etc., and in view of the fact that Burnie and King Island at this time of the year are unsuitable for marine aircraft, it had been decided by the powers that be that we should return to Welshpool, via the route we had just traversed.

That "hit" the pair of us— *Shellback* and me — hard. We both knew that the shelter from an easterly in Burnie was bad, and that we could not get into Currie Harbour at King Island, and get out again if we did; and also that we would have to moor out in the open on the East Coast side of the island. But nevertheless we were "on," and felt quite confident of pulling it off, providing that we received a fair share of luck.

As I was still feeling physically weak, it was decided that we should make George Town, at the mouth of the Tamar, for the first flip; so at 12 midday on the 19th June we were towed down by the Calf to the junction of the Esk and the Tamar, and once more the propeller was put into motion.

### ***Good-bye to Launceston***

WE had said very little about leaving the port, but nevertheless there was quite a goodly array of racing craft and a few members of the Yacht Club in dinghies to give us a farewell wave. There was a fairly sharp nor'-west wind on the surface, whilst down towards the south there was a bank of cloud that was steadily making its way up towards us. That looked as if the wind was anyhow and coming from anywhere. As soon as the desired temperature was reached — the cold morning warranted 140 degrees temperature in the radiator — we cast off; but in spite of the extra heat that we had allowed the engine to accumulate she jibbed upon the throttle being opened. This simply meant closing it down and then gradually opening it up. The only drawback to this procedure is that one loses a certain amount of "taking-off" surface, as he has covered some distance at reduced throttle before he has had a chance to open up and get properly under way. Of course, the two Zenith carburettors that are fitted to our engine were adjusted at Sydney in summer-time and in latitude 33deg. 52min., whilst our present latitude is about 41deg. 15min. — well into the forties, in fact. So it can very readily be understood what an effect this must have on carburetion.

When the throttle had been opened to the full one could feel at once that the rain had done its work effectively, and that we were in for a very sloppy flight. As the wind was slightly on the port bow, in moving off she commenced to roll a great deal on the surface, and as she



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was very, very stagnant in replying to the controls, owing to the wet weather, one knew at once that if there were any bumps about we would get the full benefit of them. After a bit of wangling she came off the surface very sluggishly, and this with only 16 gallons of petrol on board. Goodness only knows what she would have done with “only” 35 gallons in the tank! However, we were off, and that was the main thing.

### **75 Miles Per Hour**

AFTER climbing steadily for a few minutes, I glanced down at the altimeter, and at the same time my eye caught the dial of the speed indicator. Whew! some speed! It was registering 75 miles per hour, and if we were climbing at anything more than 50 then I am prepared to eat my cap, and it is a leather one, well soused in castor oil! However, that did not worry me so very much, as our journey was only down to George Town, a distance of about 42 miles.

The great drawback to not having the speed indicator is that it makes things a little more difficult in economising. The cause of the present defect pointed to the suction holes in the vacuum tube having become stopped up slightly, due to the damp weather. Describing the Pitot, or air-speed indicator, very roughly, one can say that there are two tubes running out from one of the struts, the ends of both pointing out in the direction of the machine. One pipe is fully open at the mouth, the other being closed and tapered off at the point, almost like a shell. For an inch or so just behind the taper is a series of very small pinholes — about 24 in all — and the wind whizzing past these setups a form of suction— a vacuum, in fact. The opposite ends of the pipes are attached to the instrument, which has a hand just like a motor-car speedo meter, registering miles per hour. The chamber to which the tell tale needle is attached is connected to the ends of the pipes, and according to the pressure that enters the mouth of the open tube and the vacuum that is set up around the holes on the tapered pipe so is the needle affected and the speed registered. This is only a very brief outline of the gadget.

Well, we had attained a height of about 250 feet when the first turn came in the river, and when this was about half completed she immediately commenced to splutter, and the revvs dropped to 1300. By putting the nose down at once, however, she picked up rather sluggishly, which caused me to glance at the petrol pressure gauge, as *Splitpin* had not been able to locate the leak anywhere. But this showed 3 ½ pounds, and a glance at the temperature showed a drop of 20 degrees. At once the radiator blinds were closed up to the second last notch, and as the thermometer began to rise so did the engine improve in her work; but with the blinds nearly closed it was impossible to get the temperature over 150 degrees, and yet flying further north it was impossible to keep it under 152 degrees with the blinds wide open. In order to keep her between 165 and 170 on this occasion the blinds had to be closed up altogether and a very careful watch kept on the thermometer, in case it mounted too high. When this occurred then the blinds would be opened up a notch.





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### ***Over the Cataract Gorge***

ATTAINING a thousand feet we turned once more for the city, and as we approached it we were welcomed by one or two lovely bumps from the surrounding hills. One of them getting under our sta'board wing heeled her over to such an extent that my right hand went down to the throttle to close it off. However, another got us on the port wing and saved me the trouble. As we passed over the Cataract Gorge we were about 2,000 feet, and were getting it from all quarters, the wind, as we predicted, at that height coming from anywhere.

*Shellback* was busy with the "gun" in the meantime, and as soon as he signalled that he had taken all he wanted we were once more outward bound. A cold job it proved on this section. We both had on our overcoats and wraps, but in my haste and keenness to get away I neglected to get my scarf thoroughly wrapped around my neck, and the wind fairly whistled down my back. Not the best of treatment for a man just two days out of bed— what?

*Shellback* was feeling it also; but— well, it is all in the game. The Kite was flying right wing low; that is, she would gradually reel over to the right if the joystick was placed in a central position, and this meant having to fly with the stick well over to the left to counteract it. On the water the controls were perfectly adjusted, but to feel and look at them in the air one could see at once that there was evidently some give in the machine, due to the bad weather, as the controls at once became slack. Until she has a chance of drying off considerably it would not be wise to tighten them up, as she was far too soggy. It was a case of carry on.

### ***Arrival at George Town***

EXACTLY an hour and a quarter after starting up the engine it once more came to rest in the little bay opposite George Town. When coming down my thoughts flew back to Eden, as conditions here from an atmospheric point of view were very similar. My old beak could not pick up the direction of the wind close down, and though the wind upstairs was from the nor'ard, on the surface one could only locate a mass of catspaws coming from any old where. There was no smoke issuing from the housetops, but when about 500 feet up a very distinct catspaw with a little breadth came fluttering along from the west, and we took the ditch just as it reached us. In another ten minutes we were ashore, by which time the whole township had turned up on the beach. We were at once the recipients of many invitations to go to lunch.

As soon as lunch was over, we made out to the kite with the intention of finding out the cause of a petrol pressure leak, which had been obvious when we were taking photographs over George Town. We turned off the tap from the hand-pump to the tank, and the engine-pump to the tank, after we had pumped up 3 ½ pounds to the square inch, thereby eliminating both these gadjets, and still it leaked rapidly. However, we had confined the trouble to the tank, and with an oilcan we made a very diligent search around all the joints and connections; but still there was no sign of the culprit. *Splitpin* had done the same thing previously. It could not be below the level of the petrol, as we would have smelt the petrol fumes at once. Therefore





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we just had to wait until the Ark came in with our fuel, when the tank would be filled to the top, and the pressure would do the rest. The vessel eventually arrived about 5 p.m., beautifully handled by the mate, and, though she was running on four cylinders, it would be difficult to tell which one was missing. They all took a hand at the spasm stunt, but on her first long run after an overhaul this is a privilege that should be allowed all internal combustion gadjets!

Earlier in the afternoon, Mr. Harris very kindly asked me if I would like a run up to the Pilot Station, near the Low Head, in his car, which opportunity was at once jumped at, as we were anxious to hear the worst or the best that offered in the weather department. Captain Huxley — no relation to the air-pilot — was also very kind and went to a lot of trouble to have his own predictions checked, which did not look at all rosy for us. Bad weather was expected from the west, and it looked as if we would be lucky if we got away within four or five days.

Whilst on the spot, I remarked that a very large boat's crew must be kept at this station, as the place is quite a little village of very well-built houses. Captain Huxley told me that the place was established in 1838, and was built by the convicts, but the advent of the motor-boat had displaced the pilot crews, and the houses were now let to residents of Launceston as summer resorts.

### ***The Pressure Leak Located***

AS soon as the Ark had been tied up at the wharf, the "Calf" was lowered over the side, petrol tins filled, and everything made ready to locate that elusive pressure leak. As soon as the tank was filled, it only required about half a dozen pumps on the hand-pump, and the culprit was exposed at once. It was a minute crack in the cylinder that supports the petrol gauge, and although the three of us had briefly suspected the spot, owing to the paint on the tank being scarred when oil was applied, there was no sign of bubbling whatever. Probably the oil was a little bit on the thick side from the cold. The petrol streamed out as soon as the tank took the pressure. At daybreak next morning, *Splitpin* was on the job, and in very short time had it once more O.K.

The machine had been manoeuvred in between the tying-up piles and the beach, the snuggest little shelter spot that we have met with during the whole of the trip. It facilitated greasing operations; *Shellback* is the declared enemy of rust, and never seems to tire in his attack upon it. By 10 o'clock that morning, scud came up from the west, and in half an hour the rain was falling steadily. In the meantime, the result of the draught that had been blowing down my neck the previous day in the run from Launceston was making itself felt in the shape of pains in the neck, shoulders, and the back of the head. And this beastly wintry weather was not helping the thing to improve, either.

But that did not worry me half as much as what, the weather might do with the kite. The last flip most certainly had a great drying effect on the machine, but now it was all going for nothing, and was very disheartening. The following morning, Tuesday, the weather carried on



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at the same gait. Apart from the drenching the 'bus was getting, this perpetual cold and drizzly weather was having a dampening effect on our spirits. However, all's well that ends well, and Wednesday morning broke fine, and clear. *Shellback*, first thing before breakfast, had the machine towed out into the little bay, so as to get the full benefit of what breeze might spring up, and help her to dry off, preparatory to our getting away.

### Chapter 20: Georgetown to Cape Barren Island

WHILST pacing the deck at six bells (11 a.m.) and glancing to the nor'-west, a nasty raincloud made its appearance, which, though seen at some distance, threatened to be vindictive. After a hurried consultation with *Shellback* we decided to make for our craft at once, and, calling *Frank* to dish up some tea, we hurried below to pack a toothbrush, paste, comb, handkerchief, and a change of socks. We had to travel as light as possible now, as the machine was too soggy to carry joy-riding articles.

By 10 minutes past 11 we once more scrambled on to the machine, and without delay started the engine up. By this time there was quite a fairish breeze coming in from the north of west, and, though this meant that it would not be quite dead on our tail, it was a great deal better than having it broadside on, and, besides, we were due to have a fair wind, after all these weeks of battling.

As the holding-ground in the little bay was bad, we raised the pick at once and steamed slowly up into the wind until she registered 100 degrees. We then turned down wind and taxied back to the spot where the machine had been moored. Even in that short period the wind had freshened a little, and, opening up the throttle, greatly to my surprise she took off the water nearly as smartly as she had done at any time with the same load.

As we entered the river proper at a height of about 50 feet, straight ahead of us was a huge sheet of rain making for Low Head. A race at once commenced, and as to how we should fare a great deal depended upon what height we would have gained upon nearing the lighthouse, which was about five miles off. If we had sufficient height to cross the neck of land that runs out to the light without endangering the machine should the engine konk out when over the land, then it looked as if we would just about pull it off. But if the rain reached the light before we attained the desired height, then my mind was made up to return until the shower had passed, as we had had quite sufficient flying in rain during the Lady Barren effort to satisfy me for a lifetime.

When opposite the neck of land running out to Low Head we were 700 feet up, but as the rain was almost on to the lighthouse the risk of cutting across was worth it, and so, kicking on the right rudder, we altered our course east, and the machine, feeling the wind on her tail, beetled across the neck in a trice. Just as we crossed five little specks of rain settled on my



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goggles, but, waving a clenched fist of derision at that black-looking shower, we very quickly left it behind.

### ***Bound for Waterhouse Island***

YOU may remember my comments on East Sandy Cape concerning the huge fissures that appeared to come from the great westerly storms. Although the seas on this occasion were only moderate, one noticed that the tongues of spray as they rushed up the beach after breaking found their way into the fringe of these fissures, and so one now feels more convinced than ever that the huge trench-like affairs that attracted my attention when rounding Cape Howe must be due to the seas that beat in on that point.

Ringarooma Bay was also what we predicted on the down journey — a magnificent area of water, but, of course, like so many of these Tasmanian inlets, absolutely unsheltered. We did not traverse the shoreline here, as, according to the chart, there was little of interest to engage our attention, and so our course was set direct for Waterhouse Island. It was at this stage that rather a disquieting element made itself apparent in the form of a solid bank of cloud, which we had noticed on the horizon off Georgetown first thing in the morning. This appeared to be just past Waterhouse island, as Cape Waterhouse on the mainland was completely obliterated, and at once horrible feelings like pins and needles began to creep over me as I thought of the battle we had experienced between the Kent Group and Flinders Island when we were making for Lady Barren. Were we to have a similar experience on the return trip, but with vain instead of fog as our antagonist, and Cape Barren as our destination?

Passing to the south of the island, I noticed anchored off the little stretch of sand in the south-easterly corner a ketch, which at once had me debating whether she was there for shelter or cargo. If it was shelter, then that was the end of any chances the Ark had of getting away from Georgetown; but as the wind was in such an ideal quarter for fair sailing, I argued that the vessel must be there after cargo. However, before any conclusion had been arrived at a few specks of rain appeared on my goggles, which at once gave me food for fresh thought. Were we to carry on for another 77 miles through “greasy cotton-wool,” or were we to turn and make back for Waterhouse Island and perch down beside the ketch, attempting what to us had never before been attempted on this voyage — that of alighting on the open sea?

### ***Discretion the Better Part of Valour***

SO far as the putting down of the machine on the surface was concerned, this caused me little if any worry, but what did agitate my mind was the thought of getting off again. It is easy enough to put the land machine into a small paddock, but it is an entirely different matter getting it off. And so it is the same with the water craft. Under us was a huge expanse of water; ahead of us a similar expanse, with intermittent sheets of rain which, when travelling at 55 miles an hour, are literally blinding, and, of course, make goggles absolutely ineffective.

My head was giving me Old Harry, and thinking was difficult, but it dawned, upon me that we had been in the air for 45 minutes, and this meant a reduction of at least 48 pounds weight



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in petrol, and as the machine was flying quite a good deal better than when we had left Georgetown, owing to the drying she was receiving, Waterhouse got the verdict. Again one mentions that, with our experience of the fight at Lady Barron, plus the headache, which was nearly driving me mad, discretion was considered the better part of valour.

Turning the nose of the machine round and flying for position, the throttle was at once closed. But I had reckoned without the wind, and if we had continued gliding we would have ditched about a mile and a half short of our objective. Opening up the throttle when about 200 feet off the surface, one marvelled at the thought of being able to fly with the wind, and not until upon turning did one realise the strength of the breeze. Gradually losing height with a gently reduced throttle, we perched within 50 yards of the spot that I had selected in my mind's eye where the pick should be dropped, though, to tell the honest truth, that little bit of judgment is always left to *Shellback*. Well, we wore down, at any rate, and, whilst looking back across what little sheltered water there was and ruminating whether we would be able to get off the surface again, a boat manned by two men pushed off from the beach about forty yards from where we were anchored.

These proved to be Mr. Jones and his son, who are managing the island for W. Holyman and Son, shipowners at Launceston. As there was a considerable swell running, which can well be imagined, the dinghy took some handling in getting us off; but this the father and son managed after the fashion of all island folk, who are naturally used to boats and the water. In the meantime, the crew of the ketch stood on the deck of their craft, in utter amazement. Drawing Mr. Jones's attention to this, he told me that the skipper of the vessel only that morning had been talking about the Sea Gull, though he had never seen it. Funny little world — what?

### ***Wonderful Sheep and Cattle***

UPON arrival at the house, which is snugly perched in a little hollow near the summit of the cliff, we were greeted by a savage horde of cattle dogs, which were well kept in hand by Mrs. Jones. In spite of our both feeling very much under the weather, *Shellback* and myself managed to “back our carts in” for a second helping of the most delicious mutton we have ever tasted in our lives. We both agreed that in all our experience of jumbuck in different parts of the world the Waterhouse Island brand was “on its own” entirely.

As soon as we had finished our meal Mr. Jones took us up on to the plateau to point out a spot he considered a good landing for aeroplanes, and the first thing to attract my attention was the wonderful condition of the sheep and cattle. Is it any wonder, as the grass is wonderfully thick and fetlock deep? The island is two and a half miles long by about a mile across in the widest part, split up into paddocks. Where we stood was about the highest point, 144 feet above sea-level.

Looking down on to the beach; one noticed quite a lot of debris, which Mr. Jones informed me had been washed up at various times and salvaged by him, the great bulk of the stuff



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being the result of wrecked ketches which had piled up on the island. He also told us that the ketch in the offing was waiting for a favourable wind so as to take a few of the island bullocks off to the Launceston market. Sheep are taken out in dinghies — we would call them launches here — nearly all built by the Jacks in Launceston, and which, owing to the workmanship, can be picked out amongst a dozen different boats anywhere you wish to look along the coast or among the islands. This is really a noted fact. In the loading of the cattle, though, a different method has to be employed. With the aid of the dogs — this explained the large number round the house — and much shouting, one beast at a time is driven into the water, and when the animal is far enough out to be almost swimming its horns are lassoed from a rowing boat, and it is towed out to the side of the ketch. A patent kind of sling like a huge belly-band is then lowered from a man handled derrick, and the sling is wound round the unfortunate animal in the water, which is then hauled on board. And from what one can gather this is the method in vogue throughout most of the islands along the Tasmanian coast.

We had taken the surface opposite the island at 10 minutes past 12, and as it was now half-past 1; and the wind rapidly freshening, With a little of the “suthard” in it— the most favourable wind we had struck during the whole of the survey— we decided to take advantage of it, although the misty rain had cleared only sufficiently to enable us to see Cape Portland and occasional glimpses of Swan Island light. We had started our engine up at Georgetown at 11.20, and had given it 10 minutes' warming up before taking off; therefore we had occupied 40 minutes for the 48 miles to Waterhouse. With a decidedly fresher wind, and one more favourable, we felt that the 57 miles on to Cape Barren should be completed within the hour - perhaps!

### ***Off Again***

THE engine was again started up at 1.55, and, swinging into a satisfactory position when “feeling” the pick, the signal was given to *Shellback* to break it, and once more we were gently taxying down-wind over a considerable lop whilst our engine gradually warmed up. We continued down-wind until almost, clear of what little shelter the island afforded, and as we drew close to the breaking seas she was given more throttle and turned into the wind. My idea was to keep under the lee of the island as much as possible until forced out into the open. However, the lop in the sea forced me to make out into the full force of the breeze, as she was so slow at getting under weigh, and thereby commencing to kangaroo as each swell hit the hull. No matter how fast one tried to check this with the stick, the speed was not sufficient to get a quick response with the controls, and so in desperation and fear that she might take a fifteen or twenty foot bounce the left rudder was kicked on, and we were in it properly. This was something new and required all the skill I could muster to avoid some colossal hops. Just as one felt she had sufficient speed to come off the water to hold her in the air, we ran into one of those wicked little catspaw's so common round Franklin Sound. But for a wonder this one proved an ally, as no sooner had we come within its area than it



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bounced us up to about 10 feet off the surface, and there we stayed. Quite a change, getting a little assistance in this way!

Beating into the teeth of the wind for about three minutes, we turned and passed over the island within about 30 seconds after commencing the turn. Some breeze! And here again we experienced something new in bumps. We must, have left the island at least a mile behind, when we began to decidedly lose height. This made me suspect the engine, but all was O.K. in that direction. Carrying on for about half a mile, and still losing height gradually, we suddenly came to the "end of the section" by hitting a colossal upward bump, which drove us up on an even keel from 600 feet to 1,100 feet. We seemed to be doing well; what with a following wind, a catspaw assisting us off the open sea successfully, and then a bump pushing us up about 500 feet, things looked much brighter than they had done for some considerable time, and one would have felt quite bucked up with life had it not been for that dreadful throb in one's head.

### ***A Tortuous Course***

HOWEVER, little time was given for thought about headaches, as we were opposite Cape Portland in wonderfully fast time, whilst to the north of us we once more had to face a bank of rain. An opening appeared in the nor'-east, and, kicking the rudder over, our course was changed accordingly. Now began one of the most tortuous courses probably ever steered by man across an open lonely stretch, such as Banks Strait.

Leaving Cape Portland astern, we would be steering north when a wall of rain would confront us, luckily leaving a fairway on either our port or starboard side. To follow this tunnel — it was a series of tunnels, really — through these showers of rain, our course was being perpetually altered from east to west. Upon one occasion, after having throttled down the engine until we had lost height to 400 feet — where we remained — and then opened up again to 1480 revs, I felt anxious to check our whereabouts by some landmark. Glancing back in the hopes of seeing Portland, great was my astonishment when the lighthouse on Swan Island showed up for a few bare seconds. We had drifted considerably, and by this time should be very nearly across the strait and over Clarke Island. The thought had no sooner passed through my mind when the weather to our right cleared, and there, right under us, was Clarke Island.

Still carrying on with the hide-and-seek game, dodging round the showers, we quickly picked up Long Island and Cape Barren. Glancing at my watch and making calculations as to how long it would be before we were both once, more on shore, we ran into a peculiar head wind, which for at least three minutes held us very firmly in its grasp. We appeared to be literally standing still, making practically no headway at all, and then, suddenly being released, we once more shot ahead. This phenomenon one is inclined to put down to the close proximity of Mount Munro, which is situated just behind the little village, and is 2,348 feet high. Of course, we could not see it, as it was bathed in mist, but as the wind was coming off the sea





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this in all probability hit the mountain and eddied back to the spot where we were slowed down. Long Island then disappeared in a shower of rain, and as this happened just when we were on the point of turning, into the Sound we had to steer out towards Goose Island until it cleared.

Then, turning east up the sound, but down wind, we fairly hopped along. Off the beach at Long Island — it was about half-tide — was a schooner shored up, with monkey-like creatures messing round the hull. “Harry Burgess, I'll swear,” was my mental comment as we passed between the island and Gape Barren village. “Now, where are we to put down? looks more sheltered at the island, but as this head of mine is giving me particular gip the boss of the native station is bound to have some cure for such ailments; so here goes!” Putting my hand down to the throttle, we made a big turn, and, coming in over the land as if we were going to perch thereon, we took the water in the middle of the little bay, a photograph of which appeared in the 'Mail' of 22nd June.

It had been a good flight — one of the best we had experienced since leaving Sydney — our actual time from the starting up of the machine at Waterhouse to once more taking the surface occupying exactly 60 minutes. Atmospherically we had received a bit of a shaking up in places between Georgetown and Waterhouse, but after the Waterhouse bump, which, of course, was due to the wind hitting the island and curving down, and then up a couple of miles to the east of the island, the atmospheric conditions whilst threading our way in and out of the showers were perfect.

The experience of getting off the open sea at Waterhouse proved to be of value, in so much as it gave a feeling of confidence that should we be forced to perch out in the open umpteen miles from nowhere, and the seas were not too hefty, we would still have a chance of getting away again, providing we managed to fix up the engine satisfactorily.

### **Chapter 21: Cape Barren Island**

AS we were taxying along the surface towards the little jetty, which was one mass of coloured inhabitants of Cape Barren village, a formation of rock suddenly loomed up just under the surface, but, thanks to the wonderful clearness of the water, I just had time to kick the rudder over and miss the obstruction by a bare three feet. What a horrible ending to our trip it would have been to have the hull stove in when gently taxying along the surface in order to locate a good spot over which to drop the anchor! This thought scared me no end; in consequence, the nose of the machine was turned north towards Long Island until the water showed it had more blue in it, and there the pick was dropped.

A smart-looking half-caste youth came out to us in a “cranky” craft, and after a discussion with him about depths at low tide we once, more got under weigh and moved up to within about 75 yards of the little pier, which position left her more or less exposed to the winds and



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the seas that blew in to the sound from the west. However, this did not worry us very much at that stage of the game. “Experientia docet,”<sup>14</sup> the saying goes, and, though the seas that were running would have worried us greatly at Eden, our Welshpool easterly experiences proved to us that she could really stand a severe blow providing the picks held, and as this breeze at Barren was only a “pup” to the Welshpool affair, there we left her.

As already mentioned, the rise and fall of the tide at this part of the globe is about twelve feet, and at the time we dropped our pick there was about six feet or water under us; but when we rowed out in the evening there could not have been more than 18 inches under the keel.

### ***Captain Bladon***

IN covering up the engine and the propeller we have always made a point of leaving the propeller standing straight up and down, so that should anyone climb aboard and mess about with the machine he would be bound to move the gadget, and this would more or less warn us to take a careful look over the 'bus before moving off again. Having made everything snug, we were taken ashore by the youth with the “cranky” boat, and upon stepping on to the pier wore met by Captain J. M. Bladon, who is in charge of the station. With him were his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Archer. Mr. Archer is the storekeeper, though he went to the island originally as sergeant of police and retains to-day the rank of special constable.

The Bladons and the Archers are therefore the only white folk on the island and one must admit here at once that our visit to this spot has proved the most interesting of the whole tour; in fact, it is many years since I have met a man who has interested me so much as Captain Bladon, who, to use his own expression, is the “chief Poo Bah of the village.”

For many years Captain Bladon was attached to the Intelligence Department in India, and when his term ended he decided upon a visit to Australia. Always keen on military matters, he joined up permanently with the Australian military forces in Launceston, eventually holding the rank of captain and adjutant. Incidentally, it is worthy of note that he also holds a master mariner's certificate as his career commenced at sea. It was only natural that at the outbreak of war he was eating his heart out to go but the authorities said “Nay;” so he was thus enabled to carry on a far greater work at home, as you will probably agree with me.

### ***How Success Was Gained***

A SHORT, dapper little man with snow-white hair and moustache, the Captain is the embodiment of the typical Indian colonel. It would be difficult to judge his age, as his eye is as clear as crystal and his complexion that of the trained athlete. Discussing how he came to be connected with the island and the wonderful success of his efforts, he told me that one of the main factors in his having gained control of the situation from the very start happened

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<sup>14</sup> Translation from latin: Experience teaches



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when he stepped on shore for the first time. This was eight years ago, and, as he did not have any room in his luggage to carry his A.M.P. helmet and his sword, he just slung them over his arm. When the natives, who had gathered on the shore to sum up their new boss, caught sight of the sword they uttered terrified yells and at once made into the bush!

A day or two later Captain Bladon, hearing some disturbance going on near the school, unobtrusively made his way to the scene, and beheld a big half-caste laying down the law to the man whom Bladon was succeeding, at the same time raising his fist and threatening to knock the head off the white man. This was more than any man who had lived in India could tolerate, and, striking down the threatening black fist, the captain loosened off all the Indian fire and brimstone that was within reach, threatening that if he ever saw a black raise a fist to a white man again he would thrash him to within an inch of his life.

Without a murmur the culprit turned on his heel and strutted off; but this played a bigger part in the future successful administration of the island than the Captain himself realised at the time, as this particular "buck" proved to be the bruiser-in-chief of the surrounding islands. But, bruiser or no bruiser, I would hate like fun to have the Captain hot on my heels for a round or two, as he looks wiry and fit enough to fight for a kingdom. And, really, if it is not a kingdom he is fighting for, then it is for the souls of these natives. The history of the station as he told it to me is intensely interesting and would fill a book; so that one can only touch upon it briefly here.

### ***A Population of 200***

THE settlement was first founded by the English Church about 1882, wholly and solely for the salvation of the souls of half-caste blacks. The genealogical tree which Captain Bladon has in his possession is of intense interest, and shows that the settlement began with, nine white men, who were either whalers or escaped convicts, and who took unto them as wife a pure black woman. The result of those unions to-day is a population of 200 coloured souls, from half-castes to octoroons<sup>15</sup>, all under the protection of the Tasmanian Government, who wisely took it over from the Church, and which is now administered by the "chief Poo Bah," Captain Bladon, upon whom, as you can imagine, rests a grave responsibility. And both he and his wife fully realise this fact also.

One of the most pleasing features of the whole administration is the fact that the Tasmanian Government, recognising that in Bladon they possess the right man, have given him carte blanche, and as he possesses vast experience in the handling of the native mind this is as it should be.

There are one or two points adopted by Bladon in connection with education that could well be carried out in the handling of white children. For instance, instead of keeping the kiddies

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<sup>15</sup> Octoroon – a person who is one-eighth black by decent



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hard at book work all day, they are given half-an-hour's drilling, each child taking charge in turn. They are then taken into school and given drawing, writing, geography, history, modelling with plasticene, or carpentry, but only a little of each at a time. The native mind tires of a thing very quickly, and so the great object to aim at is continual change.

They are now learning to cultivate the soil, a thing never before attempted on the inland. They are even given lessons in poultry-keeping, and to encourage this the Captain has imported a few good strains of fowls, and evenly distributes -the eggs or hatchings to those who are following the matter keenly. He has imported one or two good milking strains in the heifer line also.

The children are even taught to typewrite. It is true the machine is an old out-of-date gadget, but it does the work well, and with it the child's mind is brought closer to civilisation. The handwriting of the bulk of these youngsters is extra ordinarily good and puts to shame many of the examples that emanate from our high-class schools.

There is one little girl who, when recovering from typhoid, contracted rheumatic fever, which left the child almost paralysed, and though she can hobble along when walking she cannot hold or take anything in her hands. With infinite patience Mrs. Bladon has taught her to write, draw, and paint by holding the pen, pencil, or brush in her mouth, and I can honestly assure you that when comparing her work alongside other children of her own age it was impossible to tell the difference. And so by patience and sacrifice light is brought into the life of that crippled child.

### ***Remarkable Discipline***

THE discipline of the children is remarkable also. They had all gathered on the beach to watch us land from the "kite," and as we followed our host into his delightful little cottage the children all filed past into school. Captain Bladon sat chatting to us until well on in the afternoon, when I suggested that if he did not get a move on the kids would be taking charge of the school. "My dear chap," was his comment, "as soon as those children realised that there was no more to be seen they voluntarily went back into school and carried on. As soon as time is up they just dismiss themselves, as they have had to so often do before. You have got to remember that on this place I am doctor, dentist, J.P., coroner, parson and the Lord knows what. If anyone is ill they come to me to be doctored, and if they are really bad come in to the little hospital we have attached to the house, which contains six beds, and if it is necessary for me to operate, then my wife and myself can do that also. If anyone dies, being a coroner I hold an inquest, and then read the burial service over the grave. If anyone is to be married, then I'm the man to tie the knot! Besides teaching the natives how to read, write, draw, and make houses, with my nautical knowledge I am in a position to be able to show them how to make sails and how to reeve and splice. In fact, there are a hundred and one things that crop up that a man finds he must be able to do, or lose the confidence of the fickle native mind at once. In short, one is the great Poo Bah!"



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Whenever there are any important business letters to be written, in relation to marriages, inquests, etc., and very often private letters also, a child is told off in the school to carry out the job. An idea of the nature of the contents is briefly given to the youngster, and then he or she, as the case may be, drafts out a rough copy in ink, and when corrected it is reproduced on the typewriter. And so the child gets an insight into business methods.

"But," as the skipper said to me, "what is the good of it all? These children take a real interest in the work, and simply love it. They are wonderfully good so far as discipline goes, and all that, but when the mutton-bird season comes on off they all go for about six months at a stretch, and the only folk left on the place are the Archers and ourselves. Every jack thing is piled into the boats— all double-enders, which they build themselves— from the oldest member of the family right down to the smallest kitten and chicken, and when - the kiddies return they have just about forgotten all they ever learnt during the session prior to the 'birding' season. Of course, one has to remember that mutton-birds are the means of bringing in the money to pay for the necessities of their lives. And here again I have a little worry, because as soon as they get a cheque their first impulse is to spend it. With the object of trying to help them save I have started a bank, which I think will in time prove successful, as one or two of the islanders have quite substantial deposits — for natives." Yes, it is a start, and one in the right direction too. A banker kindly supplied the skipper with some deposit books, and as each person deposits or withdraws money it is entered up and signed by the deposit-holder.

### ***Worshipped by the Children***

HERE Mrs. Bladon chipped in: "You know, we had awful trouble when we first came here to get the children to wash properly, but they are wonderfully good when they attend school. We show them how to wash clothes and iron and mend them, but there is one thing they do object to, and that is washing their heads. In consequence every Friday afternoon is devoted to a head-washing parade, but, of course, when they get away in the birding season they at once become native again. However, although one cannot see in a sense any end to our labours, we still feel that it is not the fault of these folk that they have been sent into the world, and as they are the creatures of God we cannot do more than direct them along the paths of righteousness to the best of our ability. At the same time we endeavour to give them as much brightness and pleasure as we possibly can."

Yes, it is a great work, nobly and efficiently carried out. Captain and Mrs. Bladon are worshipped by the children, as is shown by the small bunches of flowers, shells, and different little tokens that find their way into the house from the hands of the kiddies when they come to school or after returning from a jaunt along the beach. Now, one could not terminate this subject without drawing attention to the island's wonderful war record. As already mentioned, there are 200 souls all told on the island, and out of that number there were 25 men available to go on active service. Twenty-four answered the call, and if I am not mistaken, four of them made the supreme sacrifice.



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The children and women, who make the most fascinating necklaces out of shells, made hundreds for the Red Cross and kindred associations, and netted altogether £300. Still carrying on with their work, they placed £402 in war certificates, besides making many mufflers and comforts for the men at the front. A truly grand record, greatly due to the Bladons.

One of the great difficulties down there is literature. The children are read to out of magazines and illustrated papers, and I noticed a great many of the latest bore the date 1919. If you are in the habit of receiving magazines, and do not know what to do with them, just put them to one side until you have a goodly collection, do them up snugly, and address them to "Captain Bladon, Cape Barren, Bass Straits, via Tasmania" By so doing you will be helping greatly to carry on a noble and unselfish work. The Captain has a fine magic lantern in the schoolroom, and he is getting from me 140 lantern slides which are connected with aviation, and which have been held very dear to my heart. But nothing is too great for men and women who can bury themselves in such outlandish parts for the sake of a rapidly declining section of humanity.

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*SHELLBACK* and myself crept into delightfully comfy beds that night, mighty pleased that we had been wise enough to stop at Cape Barren instead of continuing on to Lady Barren. Our next consideration was the Ark. Would she make this port to-morrow at daybreak, as they intended to do when we left them? It was a perfect moon light night, with a fair wind and a calm sea. If she turned up to time, then, all being well, and D.V., we should sleep the following night in Welshpool, Victoria.





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**Chapter 22: Cape Barren to Welshpool**

***In the Air Again***

AS time went on the wind continued to freshen from the sou'-west, but still the clouds remained under hatches. At 12.30 a couple of the children came up to the house to say that the Acielle was entering the sound, and to enable us to get away at the first opportunity we hastily devoured a mouthful of lunch and made down to the pier, just as *Splitpin* came alongside with the "Cow's Calf."

The yacht had tied up at Waterhouse for the night and come on after breakfast. "Some" parent! By 2.15 we once more had the Sea Gull ready for the air, and laden with necklaces and beautiful nautilus shells given us by the Bladons and Archers, we scrambled aboard.

Clouds by this time were kissing the pinnacle of Strezlecki, and away up north there was a decided haze. In consequence it was arranged that in case the weather should be thick on the other side of the Kents, which might force us to return to the latter, it would be advisable for the "barge" to call in at Deal Island and inquire the hour and nature of the weather conditions at the time we passed over. At 2.30 the wind-stick was started up, and ten minutes later we took off the surface of a choppy little sea, which was much appreciated after the sloppy surface we had encountered at Waterhouse Island.

Continuing into the teeth of the wind until nearly opposite Boxon Island, the right rudder was kicked over and we shaped our course straight for Chappell Island, which is the tallest in the group called after the same name. This is 653ft high, and we passed over it a little to the west at 1,080ft; so we had a good view over the whole of this uninviting spot, which, though from all appearances it gives one the impression that it is nothing else but a huge rock, is really the hub of a thriving industry from November to March each year in the form of mutton-bird killing. The island is one and a half miles in length, and about three-quarters of a mile in breadth, and every November is invaded by an army of families, consisting of about 200 souls all told — barring, of course, the fowls, cats, and dogs that accompany this motley crew.

As the wind was coming from the sou'-west, we passed slightly to the west of the peak, so as to avoid any bumps that might be in the vicinity — just to save trouble, as it were. Below us was Badger Island on our left, which looked beautifully green and fertile, whilst still further west was Goose Island, named after the famous Cane Barren goose, which is to be found in nearly all our Zoos to-day. This island is about one and a half mile long and about half a mile broad, and is one of the most fertile islands in the straits, carrying at present about 400 head of sheep, owned by the lighthouse-keeper.

***Over Kangaroo Island***

WE left Whitemark on Flinders Island to our right, and though we were steering for Hummock Island the drift caught us, and we found ourselves over Kangaroo Island. After looking down and seeing the mobs of sheep and the beautiful colouring of the verdure one could not have any regret at having allowed the 'bus to take the bit in her own mouth and carry us a little out



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of our course. There was a fair lop on the sea, and an occasional bump from apparently nowhere; otherwise the views we had of Flinders and the islands was absolutely beautiful. As we left Emita on our right one thought of the wireless folk on the lookout and wondered if our passing would be flashed through ether to the mainland.

Crossing Marshall Bay, we made Cape Frankland, the western point on Flinders Island, and then once again that feeling of loneliness began to assail me; but, thinking what an ass a man was to get such fool notions into his head considering that we were making for the mainland under absolutely perfect conditions in comparison to what we had experienced on the down trip, I did my best to banish this peculiar feeling. But, try how one would, it clung like a leech, as was evident by the fact that wherever there was any sign of an island or a break in the sea due to the presence of a reef one had a decided feeling of comfort. Not that the rocks would be of any use in the event of a crash through a forced "ditching" — in fact, they would be positively dangerous; but a break in the sea somehow told one that it was not all sea, that there was something in the shape of terra firma close handy, and that was sufficient. Of course, this was nerves, accentuated by an awful headache plus the anxiety to once more reach the mainland. That was it — the mainland. After all these weeks of struggle and bad weather, if we could only once more make the mainland without further trouble a man would feel that more than half the battle was over.

### ***Thirty-three Miles of Ocean***

BUT there was much before us ore we were to gain our goal. To commence with, from Cape Frankland we had 33 miies of ocean to traverse before touching the Kent Group, though looking at the Kents ahead of us, which showed up beautifully clear, they looked only about ten miles away. This made it all the more nerve-racking, as one felt that he was never going to reach his destination. The last backward glimpse I had of Flinders Island was in the direction of Mount Killiecrankie, 1,035 feet high, where some of the finest topazes in the world come from, although on the island they are known as the "Killiecrankie diamonds."

One point during this flight that impressed me much was the large number of reefs that existed between the Kents and Flinders Island: in fact, for that matter, one night say the ocean from Wilson's Promontory right down to the Tasmanian coast is studded with them. Surely about one and a half million years ago the water we have been flying over must have been land? Do not laugh at this, please, but just take up a map and look at if yourself. Owing to the fog through which we flew on the down trip I did not at first realise this myself, but after coming opposite the Kent Group, via Sentinel Island, Craggy Rock, Craggy Island, Beagle Rock, Endeavour Reef, and Wright Rock, one looked back and felt that at some time or another those reefs had been pinnacles from 300 feet upwards.

The hour was now 4.10 p.m., and although we were at a height of 1,800 feet there was no sign whatsoever of the Hogan Group. During the flight across the water from Flinders Island the sun had been full in my eyes, which was accentuated by the reflection of the sun on the



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beautifully varnished foc's'le of the Kite, and almost drove me to distraction. This is not the first occasion that I have noticed the effect this peculiarity has on the nerves, but with a headache such as was gnawing at my "dynamo" it was all a man could do not to shriek. At times the feeling was almost overpowering, because when turning away to look down into the cockpit everything appeared black, and a man could not tell a hand from his foot — due, of course, to the glare.

As there appeared to be a fog or rain ahead and the hour was late, there was only one thing left to do, and that was to put down on Murray Pass for the night and trust that the lighthouse keeper would have a boat to take us off. When opposite the Murray Pass, which is half a mile wide and divides Deal Island from Dover and Erith Islands, the rudder was kicked to the left, and our nose pointing into the teeth of the wind and facing south-west. It was then that I noticed those beastly little catspaws playing hide and seek off Deal Island, at the entrance to the pass; so I made up my mind at once that there was not going to be a repetition of the Lady Barren stunt, and decided to perch to the nor'-east of East Cove, in the pass, which is the small bay where the Federal lighthouse vessel, the Lady Loch; lands her stores for those on the island.

### ***Deal Island***

WE took the surface at 4.15 p.m., where the water was beautifully smooth, but there was a surge that put the famous one in Eden to shame; in fact, to tell the honest truth, the motion of the vessel would have made anyone ill if they were at all inclined to seasickness. After a five minutes taxi we swung round the corner and dropped the pick 13 fathoms' length from the typically well-constructed Government pier in East Cove. And for the first time we realised how precipitous were the cliffs rising from the water's edge. In this cove there is a delightful little beach, ideal for swimming, whilst the water is as clear as we have seen it anywhere. Leading from the pier up an almost perpendicular cliff is a tram line, at the summit of which is a windlass for hauling up supplies to the lighthouse-keeper's store, whilst to the left is a snug little boathouse, with a winding path which is picturesqueness in itself as it winds its way up the side of the cliff, which is densely covered in scrub, to the cottage at the summit, 750 feet above sea level.

After Mr. McGuire, the keeper, had taken us off the kite and we made our way up the little path, in spite of our ailments we both stood and looked down with amazement and pleasure on the scene that the little cove presented to us, with the Sea Gull lazily rising and falling on its bosom, as the shadows gradually lengthened. It was a sight that appealed to me more than any that we have witnessed during the whole of this trip. And one has no hesitation in saying at once that if this beautiful island was in the possession of America it would be one of the leading summer resorts in the Commonwealth. Private enterprise would build a magnificent hotel on the island, golf links of the most sporting nature could be laid down, whilst there are swimming, fishing, and shooting of the highest order. The island, which is the largest of the group, is three miles long and two and a half miles broad and rises to conical granite hills,



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some of which are clothed to their summits with an impervious scrub. The highest of these hills, upon which is the lighthouse, rises from the south point of the island to a height of about 1,000 feet. The rest of the coast is generally precipitous, especially on the south side, but at the same time it is indented with numerous and beautiful little bays.

Over the other side of Murray Pass are Erith and Dover Islands. The pass, which is about half a mile wide at its broadest part, is from 25 to 30 fathoms deep, with water of the brightest blue. The two islands are connected at low water — this we saw on the down journey — but at high water there is a boat passage between them, and the two together are 3 ¼ miles long and about 1 ¼ mile across at the broadest part.

### ***Droves of Rabbits***

ERITH which is irregular in shape, with a deeply indented coast line, has a beautiful grass valley running right through it, which is absolutely infested with rabbits. Dover Island has little to recommend it unless it is the precipitous rising of its coast, which at the southern most corner rears itself abruptly to a height of 744 feet. *Shellback* was chatting to the keeper in connection with the names of the islands in the group during tea that evening, and when the former asked Mr. McGuire the name of the northernmost island of the two across the Murray Pass the keeper said: "I don't know the official name of the island, but we call it Bondi." Strange, and yet you find the same thing all the world over; the more beautiful the country the more ignorant are the people of the gem that they possess. *Shellback* knew the name, of course, but just for the moment it had escaped him.

Kangaroos as well as rabbits are plentiful on Deal Island, whilst there are about 280 head of sheep pasturing around the lighthouse, though we did not see any as we passed over on the down trip. That 600-foot bump knocked all the sight-seeing out of us on that occasion. Strange to say, Mr. McGuire asked me if we were doing tricks just after *Shellback* dropped the mail that day, as he said the manner that the machine rolled and tossed about and lost height made him feel sure that we were doing fancy stunts for their edification. Yes, we did not think!

### ***A Lonely Life***

THERE are four children on the island, who are educated by Mrs. McGuire; the latter at the time of our visit was slowly recovering from a serious illness. In fact, she had been so bad. that a special look-out had been kept for a vessel in the hope that they might be able to take, her off to Tasmania or the mainland for medical treatment. The first thing she asked us upon making her acquaintance was had we brought any mail or papers? No; but we could tell them who had won the first and second test matches! However, when she told me she had not had any mail for four months — it is, due every three months — and that when she had last heard from her eldest son he was out of work, one, could well imagine the anxiety of the poor woman. Is it any wonder that her health had been bad?

We were not the only visitors at the island, as there was a young lighthouse mechanic who had been there a fortnight making alterations to the island light, which is to be in the future



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an automatic. The tower, which is two miles from the cottage, is of circular stone construction, and 46 feet high, but owing to the alterations necessary to convert it to automatic the windows have had to be lowered about three feet. This makes the light visible about 36 miles out to sea, but on clear nights the light on Wilson's Promontory is as clear as crystal from Lloyds signal station, which is alongside the Deal lighthouse, though we did not have the pleasure of meeting the boss of that outfit, who also has his wife up there with him.

These are the type of women all men must lift their hats to. No cafes, theatres, or picture shows for them, and a mail every three months — with luck — and those women were reared in a city, too. As there was only one spare bed— a double one at that — we both turned in, feeling very tired. It was not until next morning that we learned that the McGuires had given up their bed to us. After an early breakfast, at 7.30, we watched the Ark steam in and drop her pick within a cable's length of where the Kite was riding at anchor.

***Bound for the Mainland***

NEXT morning it was dull, with the clouds not more than about 1,250 feet up, but the visibility was greater than it had been upon any occasion during the whole of the trip. It was really remarkable, and, looking towards the Curtiss group of islands, in a W.N.W. direction from the Kents, the tallest of them, known as Curtiss, which is 1,100ft high, looked not much more than 10 miles distant, whilst in very truth it was 33 knots. Judgment Rocks, with South-west Isle, which is 323ft high and 10 miles off the Kents, seemed to be not more than a mile away. Standing at the keeper's cottage we could not see the Hogans, as they were hidden behind Dover and Erith islands, but we knew that if the Curtiss Group were so distinct at 33 knots the Hogans from 25 knots should be more visible still.

Our only worry was the chance of rain commencing off the mainland before we got through, and also, how we should fare in getting off the water here. There was a fair surge running with the S.S.W. wind, and as the tide was making out just at the Southern entrance to the Pass there was something like an eight-foot sea running, and a vindictive one at that. At 1135, with the temperature at 100 degrees Fahr., we lifted the anchor. I would have got under weigh with the engine ticking over slowly and made up the Pass as far as possible without raising the temperature so high, but if the engine had cut out by chance after moving off from our anchorage there was small possibility of our finding bottom again, as the maximum length of our anchor line was 30 fathoms, and the average depth of the Pass is the same. So our chances of holding the machine against, such a current as races through here were small.

In spite of giving just enough throttle to keep her under weigh, we had not moved half far enough along the Pass for the take-off before the radiator was at boiling point. This was rather startling in a way. On glancing around I noticed that turbulent sea too near to be healthy, and if the engine was at all sluggish in the take-off it would mean having to close down the throttle and turn back again, risking the chance of doing-in the plugs through overheating. If the water had not been so deep the pick would have been dropped on the spot until she had cooled



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down sufficiently, then started up again and moved on along the Pass until we had reached our desired turning- point. However, this could not be unless we were looking for a ditching, because, as has been mentioned already, nothing will cause a plug to give up the ghost quicker than an over-warm engine.

The engine had been started up at 11.35 a.m., and at 11.45 we turned her nose into the “gas” and opened up the throttle. For about 30 seconds everything appeared to be O.K., but after we had hit, one or two “extra” ones that were coming in with the surge I began to realise that we were up against one of the trickiest seas we had so far met with. Then the engine appeared to fall away, not coming up to it as she had done on ordinary occasions. There was something lacking, but I dared not move my eyes off the surface and take a glance at the revv-counter, owing to the nature of the seas. Our speed was gradually increasing, and the question agitating my mind was whether we could get off the surface before we reached the seas proper. She hit one with a bit of a lop that threw her about three feet up. Sooner than lose speed by trying to let her back on to the water with the joy-stick— this adds resistance, to the engine— I decided to allow her to come back any way she pleased. We then hit a wave coming towards us, and this gave her another lift in the air to about the same height; but still my mind was fixed upon giving her plenty of rope until things became too “murky.” The next time she hit the surface was in between two rollers, and as she was now doing about 40 miles per hour you can well imagine how she raced up the incline of the approaching wave, taking a flying leap, as it were, into space. On this occasion she rose to 6ft at the very least, and as this was getting a “bit over the fence” I had to take a hand with the joy-stick and ease her back, on to the surface. As she took the water once more she hit an inclining wave, and up she rose. Again the joy-stick eased her back to the surface, and finally, taking the water down a wave, she rushed up the other rose about 32 feet in the air, and— stayed there. We had just pulled it off by about fifty yards. Another second or two and we would have been out in the open sea. As it was, we did not ship one drop of water, which to me was most remarkable, considering that in a choppy sea we have taken in gallons taxying at seven knots.

### ***A Critical Time***

AS we drew near the exit of the Pass, I decided to keep well over towards Dover Island, as the wind after hitting Deal might, swing round the point and drive us down on to the surface. We were about 50 feet up opposite West Bluff, and on taking a look at the revv-counter I noticed we were not doing more than 1500 revvs. when we should have been doing 1560. Glancing up I was just in time to catch sight of a 'catspaw' as it shot off along the surface beneath our nose, and then —“Woof!” — up went the nose and down shot the left wing, just as she did in Lady Barren Bay, and over at something like the same angle. Out shot my right arm to the stanchion, so as to give me support, and hard over to the right went the rudder and the stick, whilst at the same time down went the nose with all my strength behind it. *Splitpin* and *Spanner*, told us later they both thought we were “gone coons.”





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Then something told me that the engine was on the point of turning it in as she slowly righted herself, and steadying her on an even keel, a hasty glance was taken at the revolution-counter. This still showed 1500 and holding the craft off the water— we were now not more than 20 feet high — there she remained until the temperature, eased down to 170 and the revvs. climbed up to 1540. All this happened in just about half the time that it takes to relate it but during the period this little pantomime was going on the sub-conscious mind was asking what would happen if the engine cut out off a lee-shore, with 31 fathoms of water under us and a good stiff breeze in our teeth. Nothing, in the wide, wide world could have saved the craft from destruction, though in all probability her crew would have got off after a swim; but the chances of climbing up the cliffs of Dover Island at that particular spot would have been dead against any Mount Everest sealer carrying the effort, off successfully.

As soon as the revvs had increased the rudder, was kicked over to the right, the nose set for climbing, and we headed for the Hogans. We had attained a height of about 900ft, and were well clear of the Kents, when we received one of those peculiar bumps that gave one plenty of time to think whilst the effect is still in operation. On this occasion we lost about 400ft, and why that should be goodness only knows. We had the wind slightly on our stern, and there were no obstructions to cause these bumps, as the breeze had the western most point of Tasmania as its last land kiss. This point is one that has had me continually perplexed, and I do not mind admitting that very often it has really had me in tears of exasperation, as no one minds being bumped if he can locate the cause. Here were we right out in the open sea, with an odd island here and there, the nearest at least 15 miles off, and yet at times we were getting tossed about like a feather. Such treatment was not only annoying, but decidedly tiring into the bargain; and many a time I wished that Professor Griffith Taylor had been with me to note all this.

### ***Little-known Islands***

We appeared to be a long time, reaching the Hogans, and a longer period still in passing the spot. This group consists of about seven islands, the principal ones being Hogan Island, 428 feet high, which is the largest; Twin Island, Long Island, Round and East Islands, and a bare-looking lot they are, too. We took an extra special glance down at the 50 head of cattle and the 400 sheep, which are the property of Mr. Askew, of Launceston, and are able to report “All present and correct, sir!” Besides carrying that number of stock — Hogan is one and a half mile long by three quarters wide— it also harbours a fine herd of black snakes. If there were only pigs on the island, they could eat the snakes, the sheep the pigs, the cattle the sheep, and so on; and the answer would be that Mr. Askew would not have to send men over from Melbourne to shear the sheep.

Just after passing this group the wind suddenly shifted round to due west, and from that on the voyage became more uncomfortable than ever. With the wind on our stern we did have a little assistance, but now that it was dead on our broadside we were “crabbing” along with the nose all the time attempting to point into the wind. This meant perpetual work on the



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rudder and the joystick. If the pressure on the stick was released slightly, then a little more rudder would have to be put on, whilst if the rudder was eased at all, then over would go the stick, so that she would fly with the left wing down a little. The latter, though the lightest method on the engine, is very tiring to the pilot. As a matter of fact, what with the bumps and having to fly with left pressure on the stick, when we arrived at Welshpool there was a blister on the inside of my right thumb the size of a shilling. Wilson's Promontory now looked about 10 miles away, but it was a long plugging 30 miles, as a matter of fact. Rhodondo Island (1,150 feet) looked very stately as it roared itself out of the sea to the west of us.

Right ahead, just passing Cliffy Light was a steamer — and very comforting it looked, too. As we drew nearer the vessel the slower we appeared to be travelling, but by degrees as we overhauled her half a-dozen other vessels appeared as if from nowhere. This was due to the sun shining on the water between them and ourselves, so that nothing was visible of them until they began to stoke up, the smoke at once attracting our attention.

### ***Welshpool at Last***

WHEN opposite Cliffy one felt that one was almost home, although there was still a goodly run before us. However, we could see the mountains right up behind Bairnsdale, and it would only be a matter of minutes before we should be overlooking Welshpool, Seal or the Direction group of islands, of which Cliffy is the largest, being about 180ft. high has a very fine lighthouse station, which also carries a fog signal fired at regular intervals during the 'treacle' periods, and is equipped with a life-saving rocket apparatus also.

The next largest to this is Seal Island, which is 154 feet high and about a mile round. It is covered with coarse tufts of grass, and is a great rookery for penguins and our "friends" the mutton-birds. The rest of the group consists of Rag and Notch islands and White Rock, the latter being about eight miles away from the mainland and seven from Rabbit Island, this being about another seven miles from the entrance to Corner Inlet.

Rabbit Island, so named on account of the number of rabbits it has upon it, lies eastward three-quarters of a mile from the eastern point of Wilson's Promontory. Half a mile long and 194ft high, besides being an excellent mark, it is a very pretty island. After passing this the wind was almost southerly, and as we entered Franklyn Channel — no end of Franklyns or Franklands in the vicinity of the Straits— and cleared Mount Hunter, 1,175ft high, our height at this stage being 1,000ft, we once more had the wind on our quarter and coming from the west.

Five minutes after entering the channel we took the ditch, burying our anchor in the best holding ground that we have met with on the coast. Our fishing friends, who greeted us like long-lost brothers as we climbed up the steps to the pier, told us we had dropped the pick in the very same spot to an inch, and that the vessel looked as if she had never been away. However, we did not worry much about where the pick was dropped or how the vessel looked; the main factor was that we were once more on the mainland. This last little flip had



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occupied 1hr 40min, counting the 10 minutes on the water at Deal Island, and without any exaggeration it appeared to be the longest flight that I had put up for many a long day.

### Chapter 23: Welshpool to Lakes Entrance to Eden

"We were once more on the beautiful Snowy River, with dear little Marlo snugly nestling on the bend a mile and a half from its mouth. ... I cannot recall ever: having seen any portion of this great continent of ours look grander, more beautiful, and yet so wild and desolate as it did upon this occasion, and I have been privileged to gaze over its enormous face. The spectacle was magnificent, and one longed to be able to stop the engine so as to relieve that everlastingly throbbing head and simply poise there in the air— and marvel. Oh! it was glorious, and when my spirit departs from this earthly existence, should there be such a thing as 'reincarnation,' then may it be my good fortune to become a hawk, and back to the Ninety Mile Beach and the ranges will my wings bear me." — Extract from *Napier Lion's* account of the Sea Gull's historic flight.

THE following morning the Ark appeared in the channel, making for the Pool. This was good work, and reflected credit on the new mate, Alfred Holt, who joined at Launceston owing to the English mate turning the vessel down for something better that had offered in Fiji.

That afternoon they once more got under weigh for Lakes Entrance. The weather was too dull for us to carry on; otherwise we could have left ourselves shortly after lunch. However, photography had to come first, and we resigned ourselves to pottering round the village. But all the "punch" that we possessed on the down trip had now left us, and we both felt about as enthusiastic as would be a snowball on the Equator!

On Sunday morning, however, we decided to push off. Shaking hands with the majority of the Welshpool inhabitants who had come down to see us off — which incident caused my admiration of the Prince of Wales to rise tenfold — we started the engine up at 11.15 a.m., and ten minutes later to the minute we left the surface, whilst much to my astonishment she took off as well as she had ever done with a similar load. We continued climbing west along Lewis Channel until we had gained about 500 feet, and then, turning, we passed over the pier, with our pilot (speed indicator) showing 55, and the revv counter registering 1500. The engine was turning over beautifully; so everything promised well for a good flip.

Exactly 12 minutes after taking off we were opposite the Port Albert pier, the distance from pier to pier being about 12 miles as the kite flew, to which has to be added the distance traversed by the craft in a westerly direction prior to turning and coming back over Welshpool. As we made the open sea at Bruthen Creek the wind had a flavour of northerly in it — west-north-west — which had a tendency to cause the machine to "crab" in places. As we came opposite Seacombe, on the south-east corner of Lake Wellington, we drew out into delightful sunshine, and from that on we were no longer troubled with a dull, cloudy sky.



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Lakes Entrance showed up clearly from this point, and Sperm Whale Head was just as fascinating as ever. Two hours exactly, after the starting-up of the engine the propeller once more ceased to rotate, our average speed having been 60 m.p.h. for the journey.

### ***Pens of Salmon***

AS *Splitpin*, *Shellback* and I lolled on the deck, and, recalling the miserable weather conditions that we had experienced during the latter half of our sojourn in Tasmania, we could only marvel at the change in the temperature. It was like spring! But what impressed the crew of the Sea Gull more than anything was the fact that only four hours previously we were sitting on the pier at Welshpool, 120 miles away, watching the low-flying clouds “beetle” overhead, whilst our spirits were dampened by the westerly wind that ruffled the surface of the channel. Gazing west, we still beheld the same bank of cloud that had thrown the Pool into shadow, and we had a feeling that it would work up during the night and hold us over the morrow. Hence we decided that as it was Sunday we would observe the day of rest. Anything for an excuse with our heads and colds, though all our best and longest flights had been put up on the Sabbath!

To fill in the afternoon I took the “Calf” and ran up to the fish pens— one of the most interesting sights that I can recall. The fish are caught in schools — something like that enormous school we saw on the down trip off the Ninety-Mile Beach. After being netted they are towed into port and let loose in the pens. These pens vary in size from about 50 yards long by about 30 wide to 200 yards by 50 wide. The pen that was carrying the most salmon at the time of my visit was said to contain something like 3,000 head of fish, and one could quite believe it as he watched them milling like a mob of cattle in a down-wind corner of the pen.

They were in wonderfully healthy condition; in fact, a salmon is only worth eating when he has been “stabled” and hardened up a bit. Many people will not eat them because they have the name of being coarse, but many of those same folk have eaten the fish camouflaged and bearing a nom-de-poisson!

### ***Bound for Eden***

ON the Monday we overhauled. On the Tuesday, though I was suffering excruciatingly with my head, as I had been for days, we climbed aboard once more for the 140 miles stretch to Eden. The engine was started up at 11.15 a.m., and as the day was beautifully warm we broke the pick a few minutes after starting up and taxied over the surface towards the eastern end of the lagoon. By the time the temperature had reached 130 degrees we were just about in the right position to turn. Whilst, making for the turning-point the wind was nor'- west, and shortly after opening up the throttle, and just as we were beginning to show some speed, it chopped round to the north, which at once caused the vessel to roll in an effort to get her nose round into the wind. However, using plenty of stick and rudder, she was held on her course, but one felt that there was something lacking.



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Great Scott! no wonder she is sluggish! Only 1480 revvs showing. Coming opposite the Post-office pier, with no punch in the engine at all, I decided to get up a little bit of a "kangaroo" in the hopes that it might help the engine to pick up the lost revvs as she left the water for the second or so; but the speed was so sluggish that it was all a man could do to raise even a semblance of hop. Just as the case appeared to be hopeless the engine suddenly seemed to take a new lease of life, and the revvs jumping up to 1520, by the time we came opposite Miss Holley's Club Hotel she was ready to come off. But still it was a slug, and we had to make a long way up towards Sperm Whale Head before I would dare to take the risk of crossing to the open sea. The engine with the throttle wide open was not doing more than the 1520.

Raising 500 feet on the altimeter, we crossed over into the open, the ocean giving one the impression of being a great lazy rolling pond of oil. Turning in a big sweeping circle, still on a gradual climb, we passed over Red Bluff four and a half miles to the east of the Entrance, at a height of 1,000 feet. This was done intentionally, as on the calmest of days I have flown over that same point and received a nasty bump. On this occasion we had called "its bluff," as there was not the least sign of a bump. This portended well for the trip, as Red Bluff is 160 feet high, and, like the land about it, is thickly timbered, and wherever there are a rise and dense timber one can invariably count on there being something doing in the bumping line. This is probably due to the cool air that issues from the undergrowth shooting upwards.

### ***Extraordinary Visibility***

ALTHOUGH that head of mine was almost unbearable, I was just settling down to carry out the job when— splutter! phut! cough! went the engine, and just as the left rudder was about to be kicked on she picked up again, and carried on at the 1520 revvs mark, as she had been doing since taking the air. And now a debate at once arose as to whether we should carry straight on or fly round over Lake Tyers for a little while to see if the engine would commence any more of her hectic coughing.

As those weak exhaust valves had been sticking in the back of my head for some weeks, and one felt that sooner or later they must give trouble, I had half an idea that they were the culprits upon this occasion. Then, again, the question arose as to our fuel supplies. It will be recalled that on our previous flight from Eden to the Lakes we started off with the wind on our tail and reached Marlo in the teeth of a stiff westerly just as the sun dipped its flag over the horizon, and upon arrival at the Entrance the next day we only had three gallons of petrol in our tank. We did not again want a repetition of this from a fuel viewpoint, and, besides, we, did not know what was ahead of us in the vicinity of Gabo; so it was decided to carry on.

What a glorious day it was, to be sure! The visibility was extraordinary. I glanced down at Lake Tyers. What an extraordinary piece of mechanism is the mind! My memory flashed back to my childhood, and my looking at a drawing of the lake in the 'Picturesque Atlas of Australia!'



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### ***A Glorious Scene***

WE were now flying at a height of 2,000 feet with greater ease, as the engine temperature had dropped to 130 degrees Fahr. and the throttle had reduced the revs to 1500. What a difference we now noticed in the cooling system. All the way across the straits it was an awfully difficult job to keep the radiator at 170 degrees, as altering the shutters one notch in the adjustment the thermometer would drop down to 120 in a very few seconds. And now here we were with the shutters half-open and the temperature remaining constant at 160 degrees.

Spreading away to the north of us were a few odd scattered hills, which one remembered as Little Dick, about 24 miles inland, with a height of 3,154 feet. Nine miles in from the coast are one or two others Mount Willie (1,182 feet) and Mount Tara (1,993 feet). The name of the latter as we flew along sent me back to the Tara Scrub on the Moonee River, which is on the Darling Downs, Queensland, through which many a time I have "sat on the tail" of a steer that had broken away from the mob. Musing thus, before quite realising it we were once more over the beautiful Snowy River, with dear little Marlo snugly nestling on the bend a mile and a half from its mouth. The river on this occasion was far more fascinating and appeared to be a mass of picturesque channels. This is due, probably, to the Brodribb River joining the Snowy hereabouts. But nothing would have given me greater joy than to have flown over this spot for a good hour and drunk it all in to the very full.

The appearance of the coastline itself right up to Cape Everard is somewhat similar to that west of the lakes, though the sand hummocks on the east are higher, attaining a height of about 170 feet. Immediately at the back of the coast — which differs greatly from the western side of the Lakes — and extending the whole distance, is higher back country, which is about 200 feet high and densely timbered. The hummocky coast itself is faced with sand cliffs of uniform appearance and absolutely devoid of scrub, just as if for a mile or two from the shore the country had been cleared of everything but grass and bracken. From the Snowy River east to Cape Howe the land is very marked in character, as there is no part of the coast that is not well defined by some conspicuous mountain or hill.

### ***A Glimpse of Fairyland***

WE slipped by Cape Conran with the wind varying from the west to the north, when at times we would be crabbing for quite five minutes, and then the tail would suddenly become "sloppy," and we would be on our way again with the wind on the tail and our nose dead on our line of flight. Cape Everard now looked very close, whilst ahead of us, but north of east, was Gabo Island. Glancing at my watch, my subconscious mind said, "No, it surely cannot be," but the conscious mind said "It is!" This was great, and if the engine, would only hold up we should do the trip in about two and three-quarter hours, instead of four, as on the previous trip.





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Sydenham Inlet and Lake Bemm looked beautiful surrounded by grass hummocks 100ft high, behind which, is densely-timbered country rising to 300ft, and acting as sentinel over the whole is Mount Cann (1,885ft), the summit of which in the early days was used as a surveying station.

Five and a half miles further on we came to Tamboon inlet, the entrance to which was also fascinating. The river bearing the same name flows into the inlet, and as we caught glimpses of it wending its tortuous way down to the ocean one could not help feeling that he had been given a glance into fairyland. On the surface, of the lake was the black out line of a fishing-boat of some considerable size, which floating; there so far away, from apparent civilisation, gave one the feeling that she might very easily be a phantom vessel. It was strange how this feeling of the mysterious crept over me at the sight of that lonely vessel lying sombrely there on the glassy surface of the inlet.

WE cleared Cape Everard at 3,500ft, and were given a wave by the inmates of the spacious buildings attached to the lighthouse. But what a dreary spot upon which to be located! Far worse than the Kent Group. The cape projects nearly a mile and a half out into the sea, and is composed of granite, with huge boulders strewn all over its face. There is practically no vegetation on the cape itself, whilst just behind it a little to the west is a huge hill of sand, which is about 500ft high, all of which appears most uninviting. About five miles to the north of the Cape is Mount Everard, which is only a pimple -1,200 ft high— in comparison to the long, conspicuous Diana Range, the highest peak of which is 3,000ft; and further nor'-nor'-west still is Mount Ellery, which towers magnificently to a height of 4,300ft above sea-level.

Although our height was varying from 1,800ft to 2,200ft, Ellery made us feel very small, in spite of the 40 miles that separated us. But it was a grand sight to see these stately peaks rearing themselves above the many smaller ones that struggled for a peep at us from the smaller surrounding ranges.

***Mallacoota Lakes***

AND now Ram Head, with its granite formation, rising to 378ft above the sea, and the point where on the way down trip you may recall we lost 600ft in one bump: Was he going to catch us a second time? If so, it was not going to be on the hop this trip! But before we could thoroughly grasp the fact we were over and past it without a tremor, and were gazing with amazement at another glimpse of fairyland in the form of the Wingan River flowing into the little inlet of the same name.

We were now about the same distance from Cape Howe as is Eden from the latter point, and, though Gabo looked very close, it was still a long way off, whilst Green Cape was not visible owing to the intervention of the Howe Range, which is about 1,700-odd feet high. Rounding Little Ram Head we steered nor'-nor'-east for Bastion Point, now navigating about a quarter of a mile inland. Mallacoota Lakes were next to attract our attention, and in these one could not help feeling a little disappointed. From the air they appeared to one— when comparing



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them with the Gippsland Lakes, Tyers, and others we had passed over — more like shallow tidal lagoons than anything else, though when such a man as Mr. Ike Warren — who knows the coast from Eden to the “Prom,” I am told, better than any man living— says that Mallacoota for sport with gun or rod or for beauty licks them all, then there must be something in it. From the air, then, Mallacoota must hide some of those charms for which she has become famed.

### ***Gabo Island***

WHEN *Shellback* had satisfied himself with the camera we changed our course east-nor'-east, so as to pass over Tullaburga Island, the scene of one of the saddest nautical tragedies in the history of our coast.<sup>16</sup> This is really nothing more than a rock standing about 28ft out of the water, with little soil, and a few bushes on the north easterly point.

Glancing towards and beyond Gabo to a distance of about three miles, one noticed that there was a peculiar ripple on the surface of the water, with the appearance of being disturbed by wind, which at one particular spot suddenly ceased, as if stopped by some invisible wall. This peculiarity was noticeable from a point north-east of Gabo travelling in a semicircle; round to a point almost opposite Little Ram Head. As a matter of fact, this had attracted my attention when off Cave Everard, but as the sea was quite oily on each side of the ripple it had me puzzled. The only explanation that I can now offer for this peculiar effect is that a very strong southerly current sets down the coast at this spot, and the majority of vessels bound south usually stand well out to sea to get the full benefit of this, whilst the vessels travelling north hug the shore to escape it. It was Mr. Ike Warren who gave me the clue to this idea on the down journey, as he informed me that, in his opinion, the cause of so many disastrous wrecks in Disaster Bay are due to a current that sets back north along the coast from Cape Howe. In any case, from the air, on this particular occasion, one could not dispute the fact that the peculiar ripple out at sea gave one the impression that it might be a bank with the current on the outside travelling south, whilst that on the inside might easily be travelling north. To-day Gabo really was an island. On the down trip, it may be recalled, we were awfully perplexed when opposite Howe, as, the tide being out, the island appeared from the air to be connected by a narrow neck of land. In any case, the depth of water in the channel, which is about two cables wide, between the mainland and the island is not more than six feet at high tide. The island itself is about a mile and a half long and half a mile broad, and is composed of red granite, the light house being constructed of the same material, and extremely difficult to pick out. To tell the truth, *Shellback* and myself were both firmly of the opinion that the place must have been camouflaged during the war, and had not returned to peace time costume. The lighthouse itself is 156ft high, whilst the light is perched above high water at a height of 179ft.

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<sup>16</sup> On 15 May 1853, the SS Monumental City, on a run from Sydney to Melbourne, ran aground off Tullaburga Island and became a total wreck, with the loss of 37 lives, which prompted the building of the Gabo Island lighthouse



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Cape Howe, with its low sandy point rising steadily into a hill some three miles inland, with its bare patches of glaring white sand, was not imposing; but those huge fissures that reminded me so awfully of giant trenches were still as fascinating as ever.





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***Eden Once More***

AND now we were across the border into New South Wales. At once the aspect changed, as the coast began to rise in lines of bold though no lofty cliffs of dark red rocks, intermingled with boulders of granite and porphyry. In the north-west corner of Disaster Bay is Bay Cliff, which is the south head of the Wonboyn River, the latter being only accessible to boats of very shallow draught in fine weather. The mouth is very narrow and has at times been known to be shallow enough to permit of the fording of cattle at low tide. But the scenery is magnificently wild, and I believe the wildfowl and the fishing are equal to anything on the East Coast.

Passing over Green Cape at 2,000ft, we were enthusiastically greeted by the inhabitants of the lighthouse. And what a contrast is this light in comparison with that on Gabo! The light, which is exhibited 144ft above sea-level, is situated on the top of an octagon. lighthouse 80ft in height, which is painted white, giving it an awfully squat and dapper appearance from the air.

As we neared Ben Boyd's lighthouse (without the light!) we veered out to sea, so as to once more photograph the whole of Twofold Bay. Having completed this, we turned in and photographed the southern and northern side of the bay, and, closing down the throttle, came in on the glide over the town. Taking the surface near the pier a minute or two later, our engine was stopped, with the pick firmly ensconced in the bed of Snug Cove, exactly two hours 45 minutes after having been started up. Not bad going for 140 miles!

But greater still, and from more points than one, this has proved to be the most memorable flight of my whole career. If it had not been for my splitting head one could have considered it the most wonderful day in a life of varied experiences met with in different parts of the world. To commence with, the surprising wonder of the flight was that everything appeared totally different from what it did on the down trip. The Snowy River, the Diana Range, Mallacoota, Gabo, Disaster Bay, and the different streams emptying themselves into the bosom of the great ocean all appeared as if never seen by me before. This in itself was something new in aerial experiences. Again, the visibility was another source of wonderment.

Never in my life will I forget the scene that was opened up to me as we turned from north to west, heading in to photograph the inlets in Twofold Bay. To the south on my left, almost down below us, appeared Green Cape— we were now 2,800ft— then the Wonboyn, only a stone's throw, it seemed; whilst further south, which appeared to be not more than a few minutes' flight, was Gabo. Glancing to my right up north, one beheld Mount Dromedary, looking about 10 miles away, but in very truth not an inch under 47 knots.

Sitting there in open wonder, my thoughts flew to that great navigator Captain Cook, who named the Dromedary and estimated that the mount could be seen 60 miles out at sea on a clear day. What would have been his thoughts if he could have only come to life just for the duration of that flight with me? Looking, down, he would have seen his Dromedary, while far



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beyond that still, just behind Ulladulla, reared that conical mountain “Cook's Pigeon House,” 2,398ft high, with Mount Sidney, 2,496ft, close beside it. And, further still — and you may not believe this— about 135 miles as the crow flies, stood Point Perpendicular, which, though only 263ft high, was very prominent as it jutted out into the sea. Yes, it was a wonderful day. And what a truly glorious country is this Australia of ours!

### Chapter 24: Eden

ON the evening of our arrival at Eden we made arrangements to draw a few tins of Shell motor-car spirit for our 'bus, so that in the event of the following day being fine we could put this into our tank and get away without having to wait for the Ark. To tell the honest truth, the spirit we were now using, and which had been picked up at Launceston, was the filthiest that either *Shellback* or I had ever used in the whole of our aviation experience. The petrol as it is put into the tank is first of rill run through a chamois leather strainer, and after 50 gallons of the Launceston stuff had been put through, the leather was absolutely ruined. It went as hard as a board and dried off leaving a kind of cement substance behind it. Apart from the strainer being affected, the rear centre section struts of the machine after each flight were black with soot, an occurrence which had never taken place before during the trip. Of course, this explains largely the fluctuating “revvs” of the engine.

ON the following morning all previous records were broken, as the “ironclad” steamed into Eden shortly after 9 o'clock, having left the lakes a quarter of an hour after our departure. Mr. Holt was indeed backing us up admirably. *Splitpin* got busy as soon as the packet came alongside the wharf, and at 11.20 we once more scrambled on board for the longest and second last section of the trip. What wind there was appeared to be coming from the nor'-east, but this was very faint, as the surface of the sea, apart from the surge which is always present in Twofold Bay, was beautifully smooth and oily.

The “wind-stick” was started up at 11.30, and after seven minutes' “heating” and three minutes' taxiing into position we opened up to take off. Once more we experienced that sluggishness of the engine. There was absolute lack of punch in the musical box, and the revvs were down to 1480. This was at once attributed to wonkey compression on one cylinder particularly, and also the bad “juice” we were using. By the time she had come off the water we were past the lighthouse — in fact, well out into the middle of the bay. Climbing in a horribly sloppy manner, we reached a height of about 200ft, when something told me the engine was going to give up the ghost. We were just coming abreast of Worang Point, which is the north head of the bay, when 'plop — bang — splutter!' and out she went. We flopped down on the ditch with hardly a splash, taking the top of an oily roll like a true sea gull. But what extraordinary luck! Here were we out in the open sea, off Eden of all places — famed for the seas that roll into Twofold Bay — but on this occasion the surge was crowned with an oily surface in place of the racing white horses.



## THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL

Turning the vessel round facing Eden, so as to get to some spot that was shallow enough to take the pick, the throttle was again opened up, and this time racing down the surge — which gave one the impression that one was on one of those ocean waves that are found at agricultural shows — we once more got off the surface to about 100ft, but were no sooner up than the engine konked — out again. Putting down, *Shellback* let go the pick.

“What is it?” said he. “Petrol,” said I. “Bet you it is the plugs,” was his emphatic rejoinder. Tackling the petrol strainers first, these opened up perfectly clear of water or grit. *Shellback* had put the petrol in the tank, so he was on a winner! Out came the plugs. He was right; the points were a light blue, touched with a straw-coloured tint. Positively fatigued after doing a big number of hours. This was interesting, as from the coughing that she had developed over Lake Tyers it very much looked as if a couple of the plugs had been inclined to give out then, but thought better of it at the last moment. The minutest fall in temperature would save the situation, and this is what in all probability happened. In the present case, the plugs being fatigued caused weak firing, as the points were consuming the bulk of the heat from the spark, instead of giving it off. This meant a considerable run along the surface of the ditch, with the attendant drag on the engine, which is always accompanied by overheating. The temperature when we took off the surface was 180deg. and, though not hot enough to affect a plug with plenty of vitality, it would be sufficient to put out of court a plug suffering from fatigue. Once more the safety of the flying-boat is demonstrated beyond doubt.

Luck was indeed with us. One afternoon, when pandering around Sim King's spacious mo-bike garage in Launceston, my eye fell upon some Lodge aero-plugs, type KR 3. Inquiring the price of these, something made me decide on a dozen, just in case our Titans — the plugs we were using — might when least expected give up the ghost. In connection with these Titans here is another rather interesting fact. During the experimental work upon which it was my good fortune to be engaged when in the R.F.C. we were continually conducting tests with all makes of aeroplane plugs on different types of engines. The Titan aero-plug is a Yankee, and after a lengthy and very searching test the Titan showed up the worst of the lot. There was one point, though, that has to be taken into consideration, and that is altitude. At no time during this survey has our height exceeded 3,300ft, whilst when undergoing these experimental tests they had to carry out climbs to an altitude of 22,000ft, which is a different proposition altogether. However, it has been proved beyond doubt on this trip that the Titan is an eminently suitable plug for the 160 Curtiss engine.

WE had been on the water 55 minutes when our engine was once more started up. This time she took off in about 400yds, the revvs jumping up to 1520 before she had moved 100yds, the engine giving out a healthier note than she had done since leaving Launceston. The difference was so marked that by the time we were opposite Worang Point again we had attained a height of 500ft.





**THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL**

Opposite Pambula Water we crossed over Iloala Point. Entering the little bay opposite Merimbua we struck a wind coming from the nor'-east, which not only steadied us up considerably, but tossed us about for a few minutes like a feather. However, this passed over, and we began to forge ahead again. Passing Tathra we got our next bumpy reception opposite the mouth of the Bega River. On this occasion we could not pick up Bega, this being probably due to our attention having to be paid to the gyrations of the kite. These periodical bumps had not worried me overmuch, beyond causing much thought as to their origin, but as far as one could see when they did occur the wind appeared to be coming in from the sea whilst we were a couple of miles off the coast, which strikes me as typical of Australian coastal atmospheric conditions.

The visibility was good — very good, really — though not up to what it had been on the previous day. Of course, that was an exception. Approaching the Dromedary the atmospheric conditions became more puzzling than ever. To the south of the mount the wind appeared to be travelling from the north, according to a fire that was giving off a dense smoke. Looking to the north, quite close to the shore there was a steamer vomiting out columns of smoke, which hung for a little and then made out to sea. Inland, beyond the steamer, was another fire, the smoke from which was travelling from the south. As my thoughts dwelt upon the vagaries of the atmosphere we came abreast of the mountain, and then the craft fairly put her head down and for a good five minutes kept us occupied. The surface of the sea at this spot was noticeably ruffled, and the wind appeared to be dead in our teeth.

AS soon as things settled down again, on looking over the side one saw that the surface had resumed an almost unruffled calm — not the oily calm that we experienced at Twofold Bay, but just as if a zephyr of a breeze was passing over it at constant pressure. That was the impression gained at 2,000ft. Nearing Montague Island we made out to sea, so as to pass over the island for photographic purposes, and very picturesque it looked upon this occasion, too. Having “shot-up” the island, we headed north-west for Noorooma, and as we neared this very beautiful spot the scene kept continually unfolding itself, like a cinema in fairyland.

Shortly after leaving Wagonga Lake astern — which, like all these southern lakes, shows great character from the air — we again hailed Tuross Lakes, and how different they did appear to-day in comparison with the flippant and fickle fairies of the down trip! The sun was still bathed in cloud; as a result the lakes gave one the impression of being stately dressed in winter costumes of sombre grey. But they were wonderfully fascinating and made one wish that there were petrol and time to allow a lengthy flight over their broad bosom.

At intervals we appeared to have the wind on our tail, whilst at other times it would be dead in our teeth; again, the kite would have a tendency to crab, proving that the wind was coming off-shore, but rarely did it show any signs of coming in from the sea. As we came opposite the mouth of the Moruya River, almost wishing that there was a supply of petrol awaiting us on the lake just inside the mouth — as we did not fill up after that delay at Twofold Bay — a nasty



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black shadow flitted across the water to wards us, and — “woof!” - It was a “peach” of a bump, and came from the direction of that little anthep of a hill north-east of Moruya which caused us discomfort during a couple of flights that we carried out when over it on the down trip.

We had barely recovered from this one when there was another rush along the surface, out towards us from the shore, and — “woop!” over she went again, always with a tendency to get the nose down. For a few minutes we got it really badly, and when glancing at the altimeter over Broulee Island it did not surprise me very much to find that, instead of registering 1900ft, as it was doing when over the Tuross, we were now at 1,200ft. This meant more “revvs” to regain what we had lost, and, to be candid, this did not appeal to me at all, as more “revvs” meant greater petrol consumption, and we still had a long way to go yet.

In fact, on this trip we were doing what on the down trip was two sections and having consumed a bit of “juice” on the false start I was on pins and needles whether our supply would see us through. I took an oath umpteen times that if we got through on this occasion without having to put down for petrol never again would I leave it to chance if at any time we had consumed petrol prior to starting off on a long trip!

### Chapter 25: Sydney

*Napier Lions'* account of the aerial survey expedition along the coast from Sydney to Launceston (organised by Mr. Lebbeus Hordern) has caused a great deal of interest among readers of the “Mail”. Here is the concluding chapter of the narrative.

THE bumps calmed down after Broulee, but from our recent experience off Moruya there was not the least doubt that we were in for a rosy time opposite Bateman's Bay. We had again reached 1,800ft, and darting out from the coast were nasty dark catspaws, which at once sent me back to Lady Barron. Yes, they were the dinkum thing, alright, but we were at a good height, and this gave us the advantage of being able to prepare for anything that was coming. And it came, too, with a vengeance just as the sun broke from its temporary seclusion, which added fresh reinforcement to the mystery of the atmosphere.

The sun had no sooner poked its nose out than we got a nasty bump under the left wing, followed immediately by one under the tail. This kind of thing kept going until we were half-way across the bay, until over the Tollgate Islands we received the worst one of the lot. The right wing, with the nose, went up at a horrible angle, both at the same time, out shot my right arm as usual under such circumstances to seize the centre stanchion for greater support, and in trying to push the rudder over, to the right, hard, as the nose was being pushed down, my foot slipped off the rudder bar. For a bare second she was out of control so far as the steering, was concerned, but just as my foot found the bar gain another bump got her on the drooping left wing, and over to the right she rolled, and for the remainder of the journey across the bay did this form of atmospheric aerobatics continue.



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The bay from head-to-head is about four miles wide, and runs in a north-westerly direction for a distance of three and a quarter miles to the bar of the Clyde River. This trip across the bay proved to be one of the worst doings that we had experienced for sometime, as she was continually pitching and rolling. By the time we had reached the north head we had lost just on 900ft, and at the sight of calm water ahead I felt relieved, as I was beginning to feel very tired, my shoulders aching from the exertion nearly as much as my head.

### ***Extraordinary Conditions***

OPENING up the engine again to 1540 revs, the best she would do, we steadily climbed to 1800ft again, from which height Jervis Bay was visible. The view to the north was truly glorious, as the whole of the horizon on the sea-board appeared to be bathed in a lovely transparent veil of salmon-pink. This was extraordinary, in contrast to the appearance of Bateman's Bay.

Bateman's Bay will live with me forever. Really, to tell the honest truth, on more than one occasion I marvelled at the machine holding together, as when these bumps hit her on either wing tip or right under the hull, we could feel them as distinctly as if she had been hit with a sledge hammer. This is no exaggeration. They were without a doubt the most vicious bumps we had met at that height during the whole of the trip.

And yet downstairs all looked so wonderfully peaceful in places, whilst even in the bay, which had the most ruffled appearance of the lot, no one could say there was a sea running. The swell opposite the Tollgate Islands was coming in from the east, at sea the wind appeared to be coming from the north-east, whilst on shore the smoke from fires a little inland was moving in a north-easterly direction in some places, in others in a southerly direction, whilst the catspaws always came off the shore from the west. Just read that over again so as to get a good impression of the extraordinary conditions that were prevailing that afternoon between Moruya and Jervis Bay. It was hard to believe it, but let me assure you that the same peculiarities were met with right up to the minute that we perched at our destination. Of course, a great deal of this disturbance could be put down to the proximity of the hills.

At this spot the ranges which, are luxuriantly beautiful, approach closer to the coast line and greatly add to the grandeur of the scene. The land about the bay is low and very thickly wooded, receding from each "shore" to an elevation of 400ft to 600ft. Inland the country becomes mountainous; Mount Oldrey, with its conspicuous round summit, 2,212ft. above the sea, is the highest in the Clyde range, whilst further to the north-west is Mount Collaribbee, 3,385ft high. We then have Mount O'Hara, 1,100ft high, only a mile from the sea with the Wason Heights next. Then Cook's Pigeon House, 2,398ft, Table Hill, and Mount Sidney, 2496ft, with all the minor hills that go to make quite a lofty range, which form a conspicuous group from seaward and the air off this part of the coast.

On the down trip, it will be remembered we flew along this portion in a mist at a height, varying between 25 and 400 feet, so that we had little idea of the nature of the country. With



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the wind coming off such a ragged coast the tossing we were, receiving would be all that one could expect, but to have the smoke on land varying between the north and the south, vicious catspaws coming off the water from the south-east, with an easterly swell on the ocean, was beyond anything met with during the whole of my experience with the air and the sea.

### ***Jervis Bay Last***

TO the left of us lake Conjola, looked a perfect paradise whilst further-north were Red Head Swan Lake, Sussex Inlet and St. George's Basin opening out from Wreck Bay. It all looked very beautiful bathed in the soft pink sunshine, appearing as if covered with the finest gossamer veil.

After photographing the basin we turned for Cape St. George — still getting beautifully bumped about— when the, question arose, “Would we have sufficient petrol to carry us round the cape through the entrance of the bay, leaving Point Perpendicular on our right. Ahead of us was a strip of country about four or five miles across, forming part of the cape, and upon which the Naval College is situated. Would it be safe to risk an attempt to cross this at the narrowest part and save time and petrol?”

Opening the engine up to the full - by this time 1520 revs; she was getting a little “rough” — we steadily climbed to 2500ft and when once across it one breathed a deep sigh of relief. If we did run short of petrol now, we were in the bay and clear of the open sea. The college looked like a Lilliputian village built on model lines, and with the fleet of T.B.Ds. at anchor in formation the whole appeared most placidly restful. And yet we were still rolling and pitching like a small craft out in the ocean. This condition of affairs continued until we were 100ft off the wafer in coming down.

After alighting near the mouth of the creek we lost no time in taxying round the sand spit up to the mooring that Mr. Dent so kindly lent us on the down trip. Careful measurement showed that we had exactly four beautiful gallons of petrol left.



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Date	Section	Mileage		Time	Petrol Consumption	
		Miles	Kms		Gal	Litre
March 13	Sydney – Huskisson	87	140	1h 45m	14	64
March 25	Huskisson - Moruya	76	122	1h 50m	15	68
March 27	Moruya – Eden	72	116	1h 45m	14	64
April 12	Eden – Lakes Entrance	160	257	4h 0m	32	145
April 18	Lakes Entrance - Bairnsdale	70	113	1h 40m	14	64
April 29	Lakes Entrance - Welshpool	120	193	2h 25m	20	91
May 16	Welshpool – Lady Barren	145	233	2h 0m	23	105
May 20	Lady Barren - Launceston	142	229	2h 40m	20	91
<b>Down Trip</b>		872	1403	19h 5m	152	691
<sup>[1]</sup> Broke Passage at Marlo						

Date	Section	Mileage		Time	Petrol Consumption	
		Miles	Kms		Gal	Litre
June 19	Launceston - Georgetown	42	68	1h 15m <sup>[2]</sup>	8.5	39
June 22	Georgetown – Cape Barren <sup>[1]</sup>	105	169	1h 50m <sup>[3]</sup>	13	59
June 23	Cape Barren – Deal Island	70	113	1h 50m <sup>[3]</sup>	13	59
June 24	Deal Island - Welshpool	60	97	1h 40m <sup>[2]</sup>	14	94
June 26	Welshpool – Lakes Entrance	120	193	2h 0m <sup>[2]</sup>	17	77
June 28	Lakes Entrance - Eden	150	241	2h 45m <sup>[4]</sup>	19	86
June 29	Eden - Huskisson	165	266	3h 25m <sup>[4]</sup>	31 <sup>[5]</sup>	141
July 04	Huskisson - Sydney	100	161	2h 40m <sup>[2]</sup>	18	82
<b>Return Trip</b>		812	1308	17h 25m	133.5	607
<sup>[1]</sup> Forced to alight at Whitehouse Island through rain <sup>[2]</sup> Ten minutes on surface warming up <sup>[3]</sup> Over 10 minutes on surface <sup>[4]</sup> Five minutes on surface <sup>[5]</sup> Includes petrol consumed when forced to alight through plugs at Eden						

#### ***The Final Section***

WE experienced heavy rain at Jervis Bay, and we had to await the arrival of the Acielle, which had experienced many head winds and did not arrive till three days later.

At 9.40 a.m. on Monday, 4th July, in the middle of Jervis Bay, the wind-stick was put into motion for the final section. We tittivated along the surface for about 10 minutes warming up, as *Shellback* had made the pick snug whilst we were under tow; then, turning into the wind, we again got under weigh.



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We now met something fresh in the form of a run down the surge, but against the wind. A surge to us seemed quite funny in this spot we knew so well that is, from a flying viewpoint — but we knew from experience that when the wind came from the west of north at Huskisson one could count on having to contend with a very peculiar atmosphere. We experienced a great number of slow but height losing bumps. The unfortunate point about it was that we were flying down wind as we had to skirt the beach, and as we gained 50 feet we would lose 25ft as each funny little bump came along under our tail.

When opposite Point Perpendicular the nose was once more turned for Huskisson, and with the wind in our teeth she was much steadier, making better headway on the climb; but the throttle was opened to the full, our maximum revvs being 1540, or 20 down.

Carrying on and feeling awfully ill, we passed out of the bay to the north of the lighthouse, and from that on a fight began against physical weakness and the losing of height. Once clear of the bay we reached 1000ft, but when opposite the mouth of the Shoalhaven River in attempting to close down the throttle to spare the engine, we found ourselves at the 500ft level after one or two wallowing bumps. Here again one could more or less see these coming, as the catspaws, on the surface gave warning; but under the conditions this was only natural — for a change as the wind was coining off the land.

This state of affairs remained fairly constant until we came over Kiama, when the wind began to oscillate from either side of north, at times going so far as to swing on to our tails for a few minutes.

### ***Wonderful Scenery***

IN discussing scenery from the air. with different pilots I have always contended that for variation of greens there is not a spot in the world to touch England, especially about Surrey and Sussex, and have always bemoaned the lack of colour variation out here. But after this last flight of ours to Sydney my opinion has to be altered. Neither of us had any idea that there was such an abundance and richness of greens as we beheld on this occasion. The mountains from the Shoalhaven, beginning with Mount Berry, right up to the National Park were really grand.

The scenery fell away at the Park, but the ever-changing panorama appeared to my throbbing head almost like a wonderfully coloured cinema picture that had been taken in any country but our own. It was really magnificent, and beggared description.

Then the ports themselves looked totally different from what they appeared on the down trip, or on any other trip taken by train or motor-car. Kiama, Lake Illawarra, Port Kembla, Wollongong, Bulli, with the entrance to the pass on the same level as ourselves; then Clifton, followed by the liveliest tossing about that one could imagine. It will, be remembered that on the down trip opposite this spot we got a shaking-up, though we were out at sea and had a following wind. On this occasion, though, the wind appeared to be coming from all quarters





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at the same time, and when it did hit us there was no mistaking the weight that was behind it.

To my tortured brain I honestly felt that this was like the final rally often put up by two fast-fighting and fast fatiguing pugilists after a strenuous and wearing battle. "Could I hold out?" was the question that kept drumming through my head as each successive bump got me up against the ropes, as it were, gradually edging me into the corner. The joy-stick began to feel like lead, whilst the rudder felt as if it required a ton to push it. Receiving an extra vicious one under the right wing, the kite heeled over at a horrible angle. My hand went down to the throttle to close it off, and missed the right rudder was pushed hard on, and my foot slipped off instead, whilst all feeling in my left arm - the arm I usually fly by, though. I am righthanded— had become numb and all feeling seemed to have left it. However, somehow she righted herself, and, to make sure, my right hand was placed over the left hand to give it support, which relieved me a lot, as I could feel slightly the grip of the flesh.

Nearing Port Hacking a dreadfully overpowering feeling of wanting to make perch and go to sleep began to creep over me. If I could only shut off and glide down to the surface and sleep, how lovely that would be! and the feeling took such possession of me that I had to look round frequently at the two fellows behind, to remind myself that there were others besides me in the machine. Upon my actions depended the safety of these two fellows, and to even go down for a rest would never do. I knew instinctively that if we once took the surface we would never get off again, as I would fall off to sleep at once!

### ***Sydney Harbour Once More***

WE received the final "punching" as we passed the entrance to Botany Bay; and then, all feeling left my right hand. Was it bad circulation of the blood or had my hand gone to sleep? I gave my shoulders energetic shrugs frequently, so as to stir up the blood if that was the trouble, but it had no effect at all. I was afraid to take my right hand away from holding the left in position to give it a bang to see what wrong, in case the left hand let go the joystick - without my knowing it.

As we drew near Coogee my head was almost unbearable, but my senses were active enough, to know that Double Bay, Rose Bay, and the south-western portion of the harbour, were bathed in fog, whilst 1000 ft beneath us, now and then showing through a break in the mist, was the Howard Smith cargo-carrier the Burwah. Looking down on the roof of the fog, laughter convulsed me. "Fog! Pshaw! The idea after our experience of Lady Barren! Having failed to break us with brutal bumps during the last half-hour, the atmosphere now tries to finish us off by foul means. Heavens! what a poor finish!" murmured my overwrought brain, and again uncontrolled laughter got the better of me.

Entering the Heads *Shellback* drew ray attention skywards. An aeroplane, by Jove! and a DH9, too, with a 410-h.p. Liberty. 'Some bus!' was my mental comment, and then came the Zoo. What wind there was blew from the north, and so the Zoo was clear of the fog, which was



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evidently travelling south, as all the North Shore appeared to be clear of the mist, and, setting the nose of the 'bus for the spot where Double Bay should be, the throttle was closed down and we began to glide through the blanket of fog. By degrees masts of ships began to appear, like matches; then decks showed up, looking blurred and black, whilst the water appeared dank and murky.

Finally the roofs of houses stood out on Darling Point, followed by the white sand along the Double Bay beach; then suddenly we came out into clear atmosphere, realising that on the surface there was quite a breeze. "Hang it! What's the odds alighting down wind? Only 300 yards to swim, in comparison to the 30 miles between the islands in Bass Straits, if we do crash." And again that beastly uncontrolled laugh escaped me. Taking the water fast, owing to the breeze on our tail, at 12.20 we once more found ourselves back at the very spot we had left on the 13<sup>th</sup> March, 1921.

### ***Northern Survey Postponed***

THE remainder of the northern survey is postponed owing to our delayed return to Sydney, as there would be grave danger of us being caught in monsoonal weather when well up north.

### ***Results of the Expedition***

IN a sub-leader of fifth July the "Sydney Morning Herald" very aptly summed up the results, of the tour, emphasising their value from a defence point of view. IF the majority of those against compulsory training, and the extremist with his Bolshevik tendencies, had only passed through the trials and joys that were experienced by us — the former through tempestuous weather and the latter by the unexpected glory emanating from the scenery of our country — the majority of them could do nothing else but cry aloud for defence on sound common sense lines. This country is ours, and after many wanderings over the broad bosom of the globe I am more satisfied than ever that we are not only living in the finest country in the world, but also in a fools paradise. That article in the "Herald" is worth looking up.<sup>17</sup>

Now for a few remarks from a technical viewpoint. The machine we were using was not designed for the ordeal which she has just passed through. For a craft of her size, in all probability this trip has established a world's record for the period and conditions of weather that the machine had to stand up to without being housed. Of course, there was nothing else for it — she had to stay out, whether it rained, hailed, sleeted, blew, or broke into a roasting day. And when it blew — the vessel is naturally designed to "catch" wind — she tugged and strained at her lines with terrific tension, and still the little ringbolt on the bow held, and the hull — three-eighths of an inch in thickness — maintained its alignment. Glen H. Curtiss, one of the world's flying-boat pioneers, in turning out this little vessel with its 160-h.p. six-cylinder vertical engine has indeed triumphed, probably beyond his wildest dreams. I have no scrip what-ever upon American-built stuff, but one believes in giving credit where credit is due, and

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<sup>17</sup> The sub-leader is presented below after the Log



## THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL

verily I say that it is doubtful if the very best of flying-boat builders in Europe could turn out a machine and engine—certainly, not one of them could design and build the boat and engine, both under the one name— with the same lifting capacity, performance, reliability, and hardiness of the Sea Gull.

One can take this for what it is worth, but I am speaking as a pilot who commenced flying early in 1915, and who has flown just about as many different types of aircraft as any man living, and though the Sea Gull is not a “stunt” machine, with full tanks and 42 stone of human freight on board, she has taken off a choppy sea with greater alacrity than a land machine with similar wing spread and engine power.

### ***Constant Vigilance***

ON page 16 is published a table of distances and dates. Of course the distances vary a great deal, as the only way to arrive at the approximate mileage was to trace off our route at the termination of each section flight, and then as accurately as possible measure it up with a pair of dividers. The figures given cover only the flights made on the actual survey. To these could easily be added another 50 hours flying at the different ports carrying passengers and photographing. The repairs effected on the engine were nil, except for the refitting of the American “Berkshire” magneto in place of the British one, which gave up the ghost between Huskisson and Moruya, and the petrol tank bursting at Welshpool. In the rigging section, the port wing float had to be repaired, due to collision with the crayfish-coff at Welshpool, and four control cables had to be replaced with new ones owing to bad “stranding.”

Two or three very small patchings were required for the wings, due to the Calf coming in contact with the pitching craft during the Welshpool blow, as they were underneath the lower plane they were not noticeable; in fact, it was remarked by everyone who saw the vessel at the termination of the trip that she did not look one bit older than her sister, which had just been assembled and was floating alongside her at anchor in Double Bay. And the reason for this is not far to seek. It was entirely due to the wonderful staying powers and early sea training of *Shellback*. Having learnt the art of the sea so thoroughly and practised it so skilfully in the beautiful sailing ships which have played so great a part in the development of this magnificent country of ours, is it any wonder that the Sea Gull preened her feathers on the surface of the harbour as if just out of the shed?

Fit as a fiddle going down, but a very sick man by the time we had reached Huskisson on the return trip, *Shellback* maintained his keenness, and perpetual vigilance right up to the very finish, which under the circumstances makes one very much doubt if there is another man in Australia to equal his skill at this game, and also his conscientiousness. It is due to these two factors that we pulled through the circus alive, as there were times in the air when remous hit us with such force that had there been any neglect on the part of the rigger we must have gone west. Time and again, through that instinct with which the true sailor is gifted, *Shellback* in his sleep would “smell” a change in the wind, and bopping out watch for any signs of a



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### **THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL**

dragging anchor —all this whilst the pilot slept. It was owing to his constant vigilance that he was enabled to call on me in times of danger, when we would both get out to the craft and stand by, sometimes all night, thus saving her from destruction on the beach or crashing down on moored vessels. May his shadow never grow least.

And so ends the first cruise of the first flying-boat in Australia. May she one day find rest in some quiet museum, where in the ages to come she will be looked upon with awe and wonder by the children who, receiving education in different parts of the world, return to Australia by air for their midwinter and Christmas holidays, during which time the soul of her pilot may probably be hovering over our beautiful south eastern coast.



**THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL**

**Sydney Morning Herald Sub-Leader 05 July 1921**

**THE SEAGULL'S PERFORMANCE.**

There returned to Sydney yesterday the flying-boat Seagull from her four months trip along the south-eastern coast of Australia. She carried a pilot and a passenger, a camera, and some amount of gear, but not nearly so much weight as she frequently bore down south. She might have been an enemy with a load of bombs. She has kept the sea and the air for four months without once being under shelter, and without any mishap, save in the last few days a sparking plug defect, which was remedied in a few minutes. Her pilot has photographed from the air every river, inlet, bay, and other outstanding coastal feature from Sydney Heads to Wilson's Promontory, around the islands of Bass Strait, and as far west as Launceston.

She has ridden out gales at anchor and several strong blows in the air. Over most of her passages she carried three men, a 281b anchor, and sundry equipment. We may visualise, henceforth, from her performance the chance of a low-winged hull (she is a boat of 20 feet overall and 51 feet wing span) someday flitting over the harbour heads with 300lb of bombs earmarked for Garden Island or the Central Railway Station perhaps a fleet of such visitors. Such is the likely form of an enemy's announcement to Australia of war on our coastal fringes - if such war should ever come.

This is not meant to frighten Sydney homes; but the performance of the Seagull makes more certain than ever that such an attack is possible with most chances in its favour, and that if an enemy obtained command of the sea, and chose to parade that command in Australian waters, he could impress the fact of it grimly enough upon our people ashore through the medium of flying boats.

It is no secret that the Defence Department has been deeply interested in the experiment of Mr. Lebbeus Hordern's stout little craft. Through part of its long reconnaissance it followed certain direct instructions from Australian military headquarters. For this reason it is not to be expected that information obtained on the cruise will be published unreservedly.

The stormy winter season in Bass Strait prevented the fulfilment of the Seagull's entire original pinn, which was to examine thoroughly the coast of Tasmania, cross from Launceston to Melbourne, and return to Sydney around the Southern Victorian coastline. But without this latter part of the trip the Seagull has done well enough.

We may expect in the near future further coastal reconnaissances-up the northern coast, for instance, and oven as far, perhaps, as Torres Straits, by either the Seagull or by one or more of the new flying boats ordered from England for the Royal Australian Air Force. The Seagull has proved the difficulties of flying on the south-eastern Australia coast in both fair and bad weather. It would be interesting, as well as highly valuable for defence purposes, to test the flying conditions over the Barrier Reef and in the sub-tropical latitudes.



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This should form the basis for an instructive comparison of the virtues of seaplanes-the cruiser Melbourne recently took a seaplane with her to New Guinea and flying boats for coastal operations. The advantage of a flying boat over a seaplane (a flying machine on floats) is that (as the Seagull has shown) the flying boat can ride out a gale at her own anchors, which for a seaplane is impossible. On this coast, where southerlies come up so rapidly, that advantage is one which must command considerable attention.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, Tuesday 05 July 1921, page 8





## THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL

### Epilogue

Captain Lang wrote in the concluding chapter of his journal:

*The machine we were using was not designed for the ordeal which she has just passed through. For a craft of her size, in all probability this trip has established a world's record for the period and conditions of weather that the machine had to stand up to without being housed. Of course, there was nothing else for it — she had to stay out, whether it rained, hailed, sleeted, blew, or broke into a roasting day. And when it blew — the vessel is naturally designed to "catch" wind — she tugged and strained at her lines with terrific tension, and still the little ringbolt on the bow held, and the hull — three-eighths of an inch in thickness — maintained its alignment. Glen H. Curtiss, one of the world's flying-boat pioneers, in turning out this little vessel with its 160-h.p. six-cylinder vertical engine has indeed triumphed, probably beyond his wildest dreams.*

Today we would question why the trip was started with winter approaching. Especially considering on the trip down, they did not leave Welshpool till 16th May. Nowhere in the historical record was halting the trip at any point discussed.

The flying conditions were mostly bad in such a small slow under powered plane, travelling at about 1000-2000 feet which were subject to severe atmospheric turbulence. On the return trip, Captain Lang was physically weak after contracting a severe cold and then a "malarial visitation" in Launceston, which makes the success of the trip more remarkable.

The final paragraph of Captain Lang's log:

*And so ends the first cruise of the first flying-boat in Australia. May she one day find rest in some quiet museum, where in the ages to come she will be looked upon with awe and wonder by the children who, receiving education in different parts of the world, return to Australia by air for their midwinter and Christmas holidays, during which time the soul of her pilot may probably be hovering over our beautiful south eastern coast.*

From our view point of 100 years on, the Seagull did not end up resting in a museum, but we hope publishing the log again honours the first flying boat cruise in Australia, and the first flight from Sydney to Launceston.



**THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL**

**Reference Information**

**The Sydney Mail**

The Sydney Mail was a weekly magazine published in Sydney from 1860 to 1938 by John Fairfax and Sons.

It was the weekly magazine edition of the Sydney Morning Herald.

**The Log Of the Sea Gull Publication**

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Publication Date and Page Numbers</b>
1 & 2	Wed 13 Apr 1921 Page 10, 11 & 34
3 & 4	Wed 20 Apr 1921 Page 10 & 11
5 & 6	Wed 27 Apr 1921 Page 33
7	Wed 04 May 1921 Page 14 & 15
8	Wed 11 May 1921 Page 11
9	Wed 18 May 1921 Page 15 & 24
10	Wed 25 May 1921 Page 13
11	Wed 01 Jun 1921 Page 13 & 40
12	Wed 08 Jun 1921 Page 13
13	Wed 15 Jun 1921 Page 16 & 25
14	Wed 22 Jun 1921 Page 13 & 35
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16	Wed 06 Jul 1921 Page 17 & 34
17	Wed 13 Jul 1921 Page 13 & 35
18	Wed 20 Jul 1921 Page 16
19	Wed 27 Jul 1921 Page 13 & 39
20	Wed 03 Aug 1921 Page 13 & 40
21	Wed 10 Aug 1921 Page 13
22*	Wed 24 Aug 1921 Page 17 & 34
23	Wed 31 Aug 1921 Page 31, 32 & 41
24	Wed 7 Sep 1921 Page 38
25	Wed 14 Sep 1921 Page 16 & 34

\* Note Chapter 22 was delayed a week due to space constraints in the 17 August 1921 edition



**Captain Andrew Lang**



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

DACS0687A

Andrew Lang was born on 28 August 1888, at the family property Walla Walla near Corowa NSW, son of Dr W.H. Lang, who was later the handicapper for the Victoria Racing Club and the Victorian Amateur Turf Club.

He attended Melbourne Grammar school.

He joined the Royal Flying Corps in England from August 1915 to May 1916, serving on the French front. He was invalided back to Australia and served as an instructor at the NSW Aviation School, which had recently been established at Richmond.

He then enlisted with the Australian Flying Corp help raise the 4<sup>th</sup> Australian Flying Corps in Victoria, which then sailed to England. He then transferred back to the Royal Flying School, commanding three training squadrons in England.

He was an official aircraft tester for the British War Office, when, on January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1919, Lang and Observer Lieutenant Blowes achieved a world altitude record of 30,500 feet in a two seater plane fitted with a 450 hp Napier "Lion" engine. The flight took 66 minutes to reach



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this height. At 21,000 feet, the Lieut. Bowles oxygen supply failed and he fainted, but regained consciousness when the plane again reached 10,000 feet. Both men suffered frost bite.

The height the plane reached was limited by the low air pressure which impacted the fuel and oil pumps to operate efficiently.

He returned to Australia later in 1919.

The flight of the Seagull described here was his major achievement in Civil aviation, together piloting the Seagull in Papua New Guinea in 1922 with Frank Hurley's photographic expedition.

As well as flying, Captain Lang was an avid motorist, competing in many car rally's.

In 1912, in company with A. V. Dodwell, he established a motor car record from Sydney to Brisbane, about 700 miles, in 30 hour 50 minutes.

He had a regular Motoring column in the Sydney Morning Herald & The Sydney Mail under the by line of "Napier Lion" from January 1920 until his death.

It was killed in a car crash while completing in an endurance test on 21 May 1924, (three years after the Seagull arrived in Launceston), at Kariah, near Mortlake in Victoria. He was aged 36.

He was survived by his wife Olive and daughter Joan.

#### References

Australian War Memorial<sup>19</sup>

Obituary<sup>20</sup>

#### **Alexander Hill, *Shellback***

Alexander James Hill was born at Mount Macedon in Victoria in c. 1880.

At the age of 14, he "went to sea" on the barque "Samaritan" and continued with sailing ships for another 8 years. He then enlisted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> NSW Mounted Rifles during the Boar War and served as its youngest trooper for 17 months.

When he enlisted in April 1916, he was said to be 36 years and 2 months old, and single. (His father was deceased and listed his mother and sister as next of kin). He enlisted in the 17<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements of the R.A.N.B.U (Royal Australian Bridging Train. He was sent to Egypt, arriving in November 1916, where the unit was used to support operation of sections of the

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/DACS0687A>

<sup>20</sup> The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW) Tue 5 Jul 1921, Page 8



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Suez Canal. The unit was disbanded the following year and he transferred to the Australian Flying Corps and served till the war end in Egypt and Palestine.

At discharged from the AFC in December 1918, he was listed as an Air Mechanic 1st Class and Aircraft Rigger.

When the flight of the Sea Gull started, he was 41 years old.

He accompanied Captain Lang on the New Guinea flight in 1922.

His further history is unknown.

#### **Frederick Laidler, *Splitpin***

Laidler was an Englishman who was employed by Mr Hordern to come to Australia and assemble his new Short Flying Boat. When he arrived, with the flying boat unassembled, he was sent to Eden to join up with Sea Gull trip, this arriving in early April 1921.

In the "Log" he is described as "young", having completed his mechanical apprenticeship in 1917, which could possibly suggest he was about 18-19 years old then. (The UK National Archives lists a "Frederick Laidler", date of Birth 27 July 1898, born London, as enlisting in the Royal Naval Air Service in 1917).

He enlisted in the Royal Naval Air Service and assigned to the RNAS Felixstowe, the Flying Boat base in Suffolk on the English Channel. After spending 3 months in the engine shop (presumably as a mechanic), he then was assigned to flying boat patrols which searched for German U-Boats. After six weeks, he then was used in the erecting shop, assembling the twin-engined Short Flying Boats. He then served again in the U-Boat patrols till the end of the war in November 1918.

His next posting was to the Ferrying pool, that "ferried" planes around the country. Then he was assigned to RAF Calshot, the flying boat station in southern England (The RNAS and RAF had merged by this time), from where he was discharged.

He was then employed by Hadley-Page aircraft manufacturer based upon his experience as a Roll Royce engine mechanic.

He then came to Australia in the employee of Mr Hordern.

His further history is unknown.



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### “Q”

In Chapter 11, Napier Lion mentions an additional member “Q”, who joined the party after Captain Land and Snook, with the “Chief” (Mr Hordern?) travelled to Melbourne for business:

*We arrived in the city without any further mishap, and for three days were kept fairly hard at it. Going back we were met at the Flinders Street station by a stranger, who was introduced to me by the Admiral as a new addition to the expedition, who was coming only for scientific purposes only. That was all I knew and all I could tell Shellback. “Oil,” he said, “one of these mystery ships — eh! One of the 'Q'-boat type,” without a smile on his face. Whenever this “mystery man” and distinguished personage is mentioned in this little log he will be referred to as Q.*

When the Acielle arrived in Launceston, The Examiner newspaper<sup>21</sup> reported:

*On board the Acielle, which is owned by the Aerial Company, Limited, and comes from Sydney, are a number of returned soldiers connected with the expedition. Captain Charles Snook (staff), formerly of the Royal Air Force, is in charge of the outfit; and with him are associated Messrs. Jack Watson, engineer, Rossiter, and W.B.M. Smith, Major Wootton (the last-named being of the Imperial staff, stationed at Melbourne), and Mr. Frank Chandos, a veteran of the war, with various decorations. The flying boat is piloted by Captain Lang, who is assisted by Mr. Alex Hill as rigger, while Mr. Frederick Laidlaw is the mechanical engineer.*

The purpose of him joining the ship, or what he did on the trip is not mentioned In the “Log”.

It is presumed that “Major Wootton” mentioned is George Frederick Wootten (later Major General Sir George Wootten), who was a veteran of Gallipoli and WWI, who was promoted to Major in December 1915. In October 1918 he was appointed to the staff of Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, (i.e. the “Imperial Staff”), and was posted back to Australia in early 1920 and held army positions in Adelaide and Hobart. He returned to Civilian life in 1923, and then re-joined the Army during WW2.<sup>22</sup>

The Examiner reported that a Mr Wootten sailed for Melbourne on the “Nairana” on May 30.<sup>23</sup>

His presence does add credence to the aim of the trip, which was Mr Hordern declared was to provide photographs and descriptions of all mooring places along the coast, which would be made available to naval and military authorities.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The Examiner, 20 May 1921, p6

<sup>22</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Wootten](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Wootten) ; <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wootten-sir-george-frederick-12073>

<sup>23</sup> The Examiner, 31 May 1921, p4

<sup>24</sup> Sydney Times, 27 Feb 1921, p18





**THE LOG OF THE SEA GULL**

**What happened to the Sea Gull?**

The Curtiss Seaplane, registration G-AUCV.

Lebbeus Hordern kept the two seagulls till 1923, when he loaned them to Horrie Miller in South Australia who had plans to develop an Adelaide to Eyre Peninsula service using flying boats. They were used for joy flights from Adelaide beaches, but the commercial operation did not eventuate. (The other Seagull, G-AUCU, crashed in Adelaide in July 1925 and its registration cancelled).

The plane was then sold to E. R. Videan, who had a motor hire business in Brisbane in July 1925. He plans to develop commercial aviation in northern Queensland.

The plane, with a new engine and new rigging was undertaking a test flight off the Brisbane River new New Farm on the 17 January 1926 after maintenance. The plane had just become airborne and at a height of 80 feet, it "hit an air pocket" and dropped from that height into the fence of a property on the riverbank.

The pilot and mechanic on board were not injured, but the uninsured plane was extensively damaged. After the crash, the owner stated that he would not pursue seaplanes, and use the new engine in another land plane in the future.



**The crash of the Sea Gul on the Brisbane River, 17 January 1926**  
(Part of the Horrie Miller Collection, National Library of Australia<sup>25</sup>)

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<sup>25</sup> <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-148226523/view>