

CHAPTER 3 - Part 2

Royalist was a Dido Class, light anti-aircraft cruiser. Displaced nearly 6,000 tons and her armament consisted of:

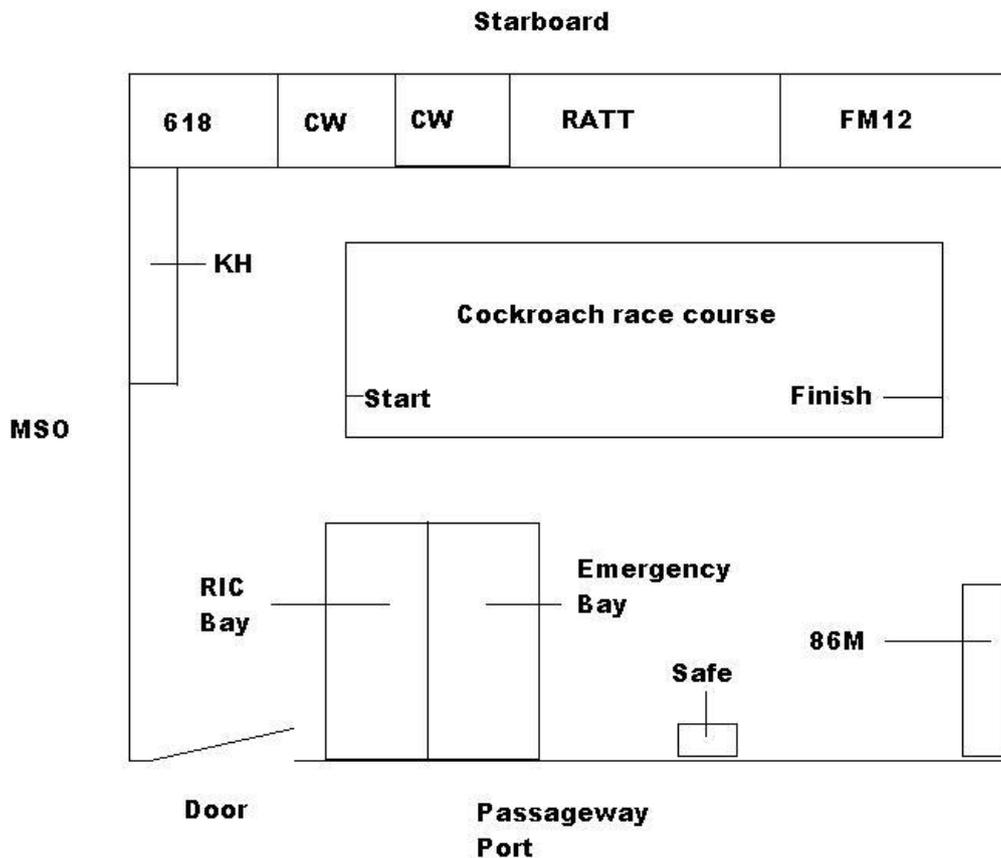
8 x 5.25 inch QF guns in four turrets (A, B, X and Y)

2 x 40/60mm bofors - one either side of the Bridge.

2 x **STAAGs** (Stabilised Tachymetric Anti Aircraft Gun') which were twin-barrelled, stabilised, and carried its own tachymetric (i.e. predictive) fire control system, based around the centimetre Radar Type 262, capable of "locking on" to a target. These were situated just forrard of the after funnel, one on the port side and the other, starboard.

Prior to leaving Auckland for her last deployment, Leading Hands and below stored ship and then the ship went to the ammunition anchorage in the outer harbour to take on ammo from lighters that had been towed from the RNZN Armament Depot, Kauri Point. All the ammunition was stacked on the quarterdeck prior to distributing to the magazines. According to the Dido Class stats, 5.25 ammunition was distributed as 360 rounds per gun to A and B Magazines, 320 per gun to X magazine and 300 to Y Magazine. Not sure where the 40/60 ammo went but it could have been stowed in the old Q Magazine which was immediately behind B. 5.25in shells weighed 36.3 kgs and the brass cartridges were 18.6 kgs.

The ship departed on the 15th March and sailed for Pago Pago, Eastern Samoa, where we tied up alongside for a few hours to refuel. A party went ashore to the grave of M(E) Moore to tidy it up and lay flowers. Moore had been killed in an accident a few years earlier whilst serving on HMNZS Lachlan. Moore's remains are being repatriated to Timaru in May of this year.



The above diagram shows the Bridge Wireless Office layout. There were three wireless offices (including the EW Office) and three equipment rooms. Details can be read here <https://rnzncomms.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/history-of-naval-ships-wireless-systems-iii1.pdf> 2nd of Port Watch consisted of RS Sam Tilton, LRO Al Tritt and RO's Jim Dell, Dennis Pennefather and Brian Wood. Bob Ohlsen came into this watch later when I was seconded to the EWO. LSG Tom Cassidy manned the MSO.

Normal cruising meant monitoring the RATT broadcast, which on the NZ Station was WVR - a 75 baud (100wpm), off-line Radioteletype (on-line systems hadn't come on stream yet which meant hours of encoding/decoding traffic by hand) simultaneously keyed from Irirangi, Waiouru (ZLO) on several frequencies to allow for complete coverage. Taping up messages for transmission by RATT, calling up the ship/shore station on CW and then transmitting the RATT messages when directed by the shore station. As the ship carried several operators, we were obligated under International Maritime law to monitor all transmissions on 500 kHz. This was done on the FM12. In those days we didn't have stable, synthesised frequencies which meant that the 5 Ton operator had to manually swing backwards and forwards over 500 kHz. Penny was normally allocated this task by Sam. Invariably, Penny would fall asleep but he sat with his back to the rest of us, propped up by his left elbow and left earphone cupped in his left hand. The up and down motion of the ship moving through water allowed Penny's right hand clasped to the dial, to move backwards and forwards. Sam was wise to this and would hurl the rather heavy hole puncher in Penny's direction and after it had made contact, would yell out "Wake up Pennefather!"

One night, the Emergency Alarms went off and the Ships' Company, except for those on watch, mustered around the upper deck, having been told that two crew members were missing. The ship came to a halt and with 10in and 20in SPs illuminating the surrounding sea, the ships' company looked for their missing shipmates. All was quiet except for the frigate birds calling as they swooped over and around the ship, when suddenly, voices could be heard singing. Eventually, the singing was traced to the Port side aft and sitting on the forrard, port propeller guard were the two missing miscreants. A seaman and a stoker. They were brought safely back onboard - they didn't go ashore for some time thereafter. It transpired that the two enterprising gentlemen had thought of a way to save the rum that was poured down the scuppers every day after rum stops. They had rigged a container below the scupper, that was ALWAYS used, to save the precious liquid from disappearing into Davy Jones' Locker.

We sailed on to Fakaofu Island in the Tokelaun Group where we lay off to offload explosives for blowing holes in the reef to widen the boat passage. A party of NZ Army Engineers were later sent up to do the job. Next stop was to call in at Christmas Island (Kiritimati) to pick up sailing dinghies and go-carts left by the RN when they pulled out in 1964. We were to take this equipment to Singapore for the Nuffield Trust. Christmas Island was the site of British nuclear testing in the 1950's.

Sometime during passage to Pearl Harbor, Lou Simonsen and myself were summoned to the EW Office where we told that we were being taken out of our watches to keep watches in the EWO. We permitted to go back down to 6 Mess to get our dhoby gear and a clean set of clothing. For the time that we kept watches in the EWO, we also slept and ate in there. We had a mattress on the deck up the far end of the office under the operating bench and used the hot bunking method at night - he got out and I got in. We monitored two B40 receivers on two different frequencies with split earphones and received all the traffic on an Imperial 66 typewriter.

The traffic being monitored was broadcast from FUM the French naval station at Papeete, Tahiti. Lou and I had filled up several cardboard boxes with received messages by the time we got to Pearl Harbour. All the traffic was encrypted so we didn't know what the contents were. Many years later, I suspected that it was to do with preparations for the tests at Mururoa. This all took place in March 1965 and the 50 year caveat was up in 2015. The rest of the sparkers all thought that we were monitoring them whilst on watch but we couldn't say otherwise.

During lulls in traffic at night, I would tune in to the MF band and listen to the latest hits being broadcast from Honolulu -

I Can't Get No Satisfaction

Wooly Bully

Mrs Brown You've got a Lovely Daughter

To name but a few..

Our first contact with US Pacific Fleet was on the 24th March when we rendezvoused with the fleet tanker, USS Kawishiwi, to take on fuel.



I think that is Gordon Kyne on the right. USS Kawishiwi on Starboard side.

The next day, the ship entered Pearl Harbor and went to the Naval Armament Depot opposite Ford Island to offload half of her ammunition along with the dinghies and go-carts. This was normal procedure since the attack in WWII to reduce the amount of damage should a ship explode whilst berthed at the naval base.



Ford Island behind Royalist. To the right is the ramp that the Catalina flying boats used to use. The entrance is up above B Turret.

We then proceeded to Pier Hotel in Procedure Alpha and spent the weekend alongside. On Monday 29th March, we sailed to commence our Training Readiness Evaluation, followed by five weeks of evolutions for the Training Battle Problem. During the Pearl Harbor training, I was sent down to X Magazine for the gunnery phase. The idea was to fire as many rounds as possible at an island and for this they grabbed extra personnel to man the magazines. We were passing 5.25in shells to each other as quick as we could and during one broadside firing, the ship lurched and I fell back onto the metal deck with the shell in my arms. That permanently buggared up my lower back and sacroiliac joints.

We finished our Final Battle Problem with an overall grading of Excellent (90.08%).

We visited the submarine VLF station at Waihiawa, which was sited on an extinct volcano. The bus stopped about 100 metres away from the aerial site that we were going to visit and told not to touch the sides of the bus as we got out. About 50 metres from the building, there was a ring of dead birds. Inside the building, we were within a couple of metres from the final stage of the RF coupler (500,000 watts) that was behind a metal cage, which was not copper. There was a fluorescent tube stuck in the cage, not connected, and glowed as the transmitter transmitted. I was to experience this problem again in the old transmitter building at Waiouru. The similarities between Waihiawa and Waiouru were identical - poor earthing due to volcanic soil leading to RF in the transmitter buildings.



Glenn Parry, Don Mihaere and Self at Waikiki. Can't remember who took the photo. Where that was taken is now the International Market, shops, restaurants and bars. Waikiki wasn't much to look at in those days - Hotel Street in downtown Honolulu was much better - the Hubba Bubba Bar and on the way back to the base - The Dunes.



During our work-up and alongside, we read the CW Broadcast from NPM Honolulu - Broadcast Hotel which normally belted along at 28wpm. Stayed on this broadcast until we were able to read the offline RATT broadcast from Singapore (GYL).

We sailed from Pearl Harbor on the 3rd May and called in to Midway Island for a few hours to refuel and then on to Guam. The US Navy had arranged an interesting tour of the island, including a drive through the huge Andersen AFB with its mighty fleet of strategic bombers (B52's) that went on daily sorties to Viet Nam. A BBQ was arranged on one of the beaches and for many of the ship's company it was the first time that they had experienced this American way of life.

We sailed from Guam for the first of our South East Asian ports (Hong Kong) during our operational deployment in the Indonesian Confrontation.