

JOURNEY FROM LONDON TO SYDNEY
NOVEMBER 1957
ON BOARD "HIMALAYA"

HOMEWARD BOUND

LONDON - CAPETOWN – FREMANTLE – ADELAIDE – MELBOURNE – SYDNEY.

To mark our exit from Great Britain, we hired a Rolls Royce from the local garage, complete with Driver. I can't remember their names, but they had the garage in the village Kennington, where we had lived for our stay in England. Their surname was "Mills" and Mr. Mills had never driven out of Oxfordshire, and must have been feeling adventurous, to take on the 60 mile trip to London.

He picked us up from the Cottage, and the villagers stood outside their homes and waved us goodbye. We had booked a week at the Tavistock Hotel in Tavistock Square. We had two rooms, with connecting door. During the days we rode on the double decker busses all over London, went to Petticoat Lane, went to the Tower of London, Museums, and did all the things we hadn't done on our arrival. Somewhere there is a picture of us all at Piccadilly Circus, complete with pigeons.

There was TV in the boys room, and each night they were anxious to escape up there to watch it. They were allowed to excuse themselves when they had finished their dinner, and take the lift to their room. On our last night in the Hotel, a gentleman came over to us, He said, with an American accent, "I have been watching your little boys for a week now, and I have never seen such well behaved children before. Please accept my congratulations on the way you are educating them". Of course, that was the first thing I told the boys when we returned to the rooms.

We took a train down to the dock (was it called "Tilbury"- not sure) to board the Himilaya. This time we had two adjoining cabins, I can't remember which Deck they were on, but whatever it was, I knew we had to accept it after our failure during the voyage out, to have a change of cabins.

And so I said a glad farewell to England. My hopes of seeing Cairo and the Pyramids were dashed as the Suez Canal was closed because of the war going on there. We just had a very long sea trip and were told that Durban was going to be the port of call in South Africa. I was delighted at this, as Dad was born in Durban and most of his family was still there, and it would be an opportunity to meet them.

Unfortunately the ports of call were changed, and Capetown became the only stop after London. We walked around the town, noticing the unpleasant distinction between blacks and whites, over every building and even in the parks and beaches. We did a few bus trips, and on one such trip, David piped up and said "Mum, I know the difference

between Australians and South Africans. South Africans spit.” This was because of a “no spitting” sign erected on the bus.

The first few days of the voyage, I was cursed with the sea sickness. Tom took me to the ships Surgeon, who gave me a course of tablets, which almost knocked me out for three days. When I woke up, I was cured.

We did the usual things, playroom for the boys, fancy dress affairs, swimming in the ships pool, ping-pong, quoits, horse racing on deck. There was one bad day when a crew member fell overboard and we turned round and searched the area where he had gone over, to no avail. There were huge trees of seaweed floating in the water, which could be mistaken for a body. And the ship rolled from side to side. It had no stabilizers, and was nicknamed the “Himarolla”.

Fremantle was a delight. Stepping back on Australian soil was heaven for me. We were all starved for some good old Aussie tucker, namely garlic sausage, and I remember that we looked around for a Deli, bought a huge chunk and ate it standing out in the street.

The trip around into the Bight was horrendous. The weather was so rough ropes had to be erected for passengers to hold on to, and some had broken arms, and legs, from falls. I lay in bed at night and watched the door curtain swing up the walls, first side, shudder, shudder, then slowly up the other side, shudder, shudder. There was a screw about one inch from the ceiling, and I vowed that if the curtain swung as high as that screw, we would never recover from the roll.

We docked in Adelaide and then Melbourne, and finally were back in Sydney. There we were welcomed by Tom’s rellies, my own Mum and Dad, who had driven all the way from Mackay, and Gladys and John Fearn. What a welcome that was. I am still moved by the memory of it all.

And so the trip was over. Back home. Mum and Dad had moved into our house and cleaned it up and after a week or so, drove all the way back to Mackay.

THE END