

## JOURNAL OF ARCHIE MACFARLANE - 7TH - 16TH OCTOBER

### Wednesday 7th October 1942

Wakened up in the train at Carlisle. Eat a good part of my rations. Eventually arrived in Glasgow, passed by the ice rink at Polokshaws. We skirted Glasgow and reached Gourock at 9.15. We came straight off the train, were checked off and went on to a tender. Had to stay in the tender for about 2hrs but fortunately we got tea & some biscuits. We then moved off and came alongside the QUEEN MARY. Got aboard and was given Cabin 6 along with Pete & Gerry. We paraded on Promenade Deck and were detailed as reserve fatigue party. When the canteen opened I bought a doz. oranges for 2/- To us everything on board is luxury and Gerry has just come in with a box of a doz. bars milk chocolate (pre war nestles). Feeling fairly tired I have decided to have a good wash & shave then get to bed (bunk top). Everyone else in the cabin has also decided to go to bed early so I will get to sleep fairly soon

	-- myself
	-- Pete
	-- Gerry

### Thursday 8th October.

Wakened very early this morning feeling very cold and found we had got under way. Went down to breakfast but discovered we were early, so we went up on top and had a good look round. We were still in sight of land, which we thought was probably Ireland. Beaufighters were patrolling round us all morning and late on into the afternoon. After breakfast we went up on top to parade and there we discovered we had to stay up there until 11.15. Things were getting a bit rough by now and lot of people were sick. Pete and I went to bunk and slept through dinner time. We paraded in the afternoon and got a job which we skipped out of and went back on to the bunk and read for the afternoon. During the afternoon a Sunderland circled round us which we saw at the porthole. In the evening Pete and myself went up on to the bows where it was absolutely wizard. The spray was coming right over the bows. We had to go eventually as it was getting too rough. We went into the canteen and had a drink then we went off to bed and had a very good nights sleep.

### Friday 9th October:

Wakened up this morning at 8 o'clock by my watch but remember in time that we were now 1 hr back. Had a very good breakfast (egg) and then went and cleaned up the cabin a bit. Parade about 0900 hrs and got a job chucking salvage overboard, afterwards we mucked around until it was time to go down when I bought some more oranges and chocolate. Lay on my bunk till dinnertime. Pete & I decided to skip the afternoon parade and of course Gerry hadn't been on parade for the last two days. The weather has definitely improved and the ship has increased her speed. The afternoon was spent either on our bunks or wandering about the deck. In the evening we had a tour up to the canteen but decided it was too stuffy and adjourned to bed.

### Saturday 10/10/42:

The clocks are again back 1 hrs. so we had a very nice long lie this morning. Breakfast this morning was not very exciting. As usual we paraded at 0900 hrs and did nothing. Had a very interesting discussion with another fellow on motor bikes during boat drill. Dinner wasn't too bad. Went up on parade a little late this afternoon and got a permanent job. i.e. cleaning up the

officers lounge at 1330 hrs and 1700 hrs, only a hours job in all. We did our job then had a walk round the deck followed by our usual read & rest on the bunk. When 1700 hrs came we went up to the lounge and had to wait until it had cleared. Did our job and wandered about the deck as usual until tea which wasn't very exciting. Weather has been grand all day and we stayed up on deck until thrown off. Then went down to the cabin.

#### Sunday 11/10/42:

One hour back this morning again. Weather marvellous, seems we are very far south as it is terribly warm. Breakfast was excellent this morning consisting of porridge, bacon & eggs, fruit. After breakfast we cleaned up the cabin and then went up on deck where we stayed until 11.15 sunning ourselves. After that I went for a haircut quite a good one but had to wait a long while, cost 1/- . After my haircut it was dinner time which consisted of pork chops peas, potatoes, stewed apples & custard. Pete & I went up as usual to the officers lounge but found out that it hadn't been cleared so we just buzzed off, and had a stroll round the deck. As it was very warm we didn't have our jackets on so we had a seat up at the bows and sunbathed. Discovering it was too warm for comfort we went back down to the cabin and slept. Tea consisted of cold ham etc. After tea we went up on deck but we weren't there very long when we were thrown off. Then we went along to the officers lounge & cleaned it up. Pete & I got the job of cleaning the glasses for which we got a bottle of orange each. We then went to the canteen & bought some chocolate and then went to the cabin and talked for a long while, the heat was stifling

#### Monday 12/10/42:

One more hour back this morning still very warm but the wind is a little stronger. Went on deck as usual before breakfast and had our morning blow. There is plenty of seaweed around and we saw an occasional flying fish, they look very small just like dragon flies but they are definitely fish. About 8.15 I spotted something large on the water in front of us, it turned out to be a raft and it looked suspiciously like it had been occupied previously. Breakfast wasn't very exciting. I bought an electric razor off Jack Kaizer for 25/- this morning, it seems in very good condition. Went up on deck at 9.30 and sat in the sun till dinner time. After dinner we went as usual to the lounge but did no work as it wasn't cleared. We all went right forward on to the forecastle and inspected the damage, the bows look very badly dented. After tea we had a stroll until blackout and then went and cleaned the lounge. Afterwards going to the cabin & bed.

#### Tuesday 13/10/42:

Another hour back making us 5hrs back. Weather is again a bit rough. It was our turn to clean out the cabin & Gerry & myself did most of the work. It was also my turn to stay in the cabin which I did doing some excellent work on my buttons. After lunch I did some washing and skipped the lounge cleaning. The afternoon was spent mainly in bed even although the weather had cleared once more. After blackout we sneaked out on to the forecastle and watched the phosphorising it was grand.

#### Wednesday 14/10/42:

Usual stroll before breakfast. Land sighted about 8.45 which of course caused great excitement. American aircraft circled us during boat drill period. Unfortunately a mist came down and the ship had to cut down speed and we were in dock before we knew anything. There was great excitement at the dockside with the fellows throwing British coins to the girls below, after tea we packed and spoke to the coast guards who had come on board. About 9.30

our draft was called off and we marched on to the dockside where we were put into flights and then on to the train. We soon started off, Peter & I in the Womens compartment. We slept for short periods despite the strange noises of the trains. The first stop I remember was Portland (Maine) where Pete & I talked to a porter. We wakened (Thursday 15/10/42) early in the morning and had a wash, then we stood out on the platform and waved to many a fair damsel. Breakfast was brought round, sandwiches, coffee, apple. Dinner same. Had a talk with a fellow at Sussex. Tea, Sandwiches coffee, fruit. Eventually arrived at 8 o'clock. Got 11 dollars, bed, meal. Shower, shave bed.

Friday 16/10/42:

Got up at 7.15 and went straight to breakfast which was very good. Afterwards we went back had a wash and made our beds ready for parade at 0800 hrs. Fixed up our pay stuff, had an FFI ??? then handed in our respirators by this time it was dinner time which was also quite good. After dinner we were dismissed for the day but we had to collect our deep sea kitbags at 1700 hrs. which we did, we then went out to Moncton sent off our cables & airographs. Everything in town was wizard. I bought a parker pen for \$3.50. A lighter &1, a film 30c. We had a marvellous meal 2 eggs, bacon, tomato chips 50c. Eventually went home.

1939-1945

The memories of myself Margaret Mary Mac Farlane aged nine when World War 2 started, living at home in Spean Bridge and attending the village school. To us as children it was something exciting, there was such a buzz around with the grown ups showing great concern and we children knowing this was something out of the ordinary and would definitely change the quiet life of the country.

For some time nothing much changed for us although we faithfully listened to the news every night at 6pm and when we went to the Cinema saw the movitone news and pictures of the action going on. This usually was on a Thursday, being banking day and an outing to Fort William was our treat during holidays.

Gradually signs began to show up in the Highlands, at school we spent our breaks going up to the moors to collect sphagnum moss which we heard was used for field dressings in the army. We also collected old papers and every Saturday morning gathered in the old barn near our house, (which is now the Woolen Mill) to sort out and pack the papers to be sent away for the "war effort". We were never without our knitting, scarves for the beginners and later as we progressed, socks and gloves in Khaki, navy blue and airforce blue wool. We had aprons with pockets to hold the knitting and even at breaktime went about with these on. One day while out of bounds the bell for class went and I had to run down a hill to get back in time when one of the two pointed sock needles stuck fast in between both my knees. Very painful and nobody near to help pull the darn thing out. War wound number one.!!

Next thing we were issued with gas masks, what fun, taking lots of time off study to try these on and learn how to use them. They had to be with us at all times and we all had fancy bags fitting the cardboard boxes to carry over our shoulders. No fear of the time if and when we would have to use them. Quite often we had gas mask drill and air raid alerts. Fortunately for us we never had the real thing, unlike thousands of other children all over Britain and Europe. We had to put up special blackout curtains as not a chink of light was to be seen from outside. The air raid wardens walked around the village to check this out. We only ever had an enemy plane overhead once and it was said this Jerry lost his way and landed up too far north. I clearly remember all of us under the dining room table for a while. The enemy bombers main aim in Scotland was the river Clyde were a lot of troop ships sailed to and fro. My father was also a special constable and did his duties of home guard.

Achnacarry castle, ~~Lochiel~~ Lochiel's country estate only a few miles from us, was commandeered by the army and turned into a training camp for the Commandos, an elite section of the army which had a very intense and hard training, using live bullets during their manoeuvres. Quite a few accidents happened and the first thing to greet newcomers at the gate were mock graves of soldiers that were not quick enough to dodge the bullets. The CO was a Colonel Vaughn, a cockney, could have been the Pearly King in real life.!! But tough as nails. Village life was changed forever with the arrival of the Commandos, lots of traffic, hustle and bustle. Their movements were very secret but some nights we would waken up to hear a train pull into the station and know another batch of recruits were in. Up we got to hang out the windows to watch them march past, led by the pipers. That sound will always be with me. Some time later a new sound came, another night but something weird and strange, no tackity boots, the Yanks had arrived in their rubber soled boots.!! My family got to know and often entertained some of the staff, they changed quite frequently while the previous ones went off to the real thing. Some never to return.

Food and clothing rationing came in and that was a hard thing to get used to. Tiny amounts of all foodstuff issued per week. The family were all involved in the shop to help weigh everything out and counting ration coupons was a nightly chore for all, sitting around the dining room table with minute pieces of paper to sort out and count to be sent off for the next order. Many a curse was put on anybody who opened a door letting in a draft, which blew the piles of coupons away. A lot of bartering went on with sweet rations and clothes coupons. One of our English cousins Duncan Chisholm who was in the airforce came to spend his leave with us one year and sitting down to a hearty breakfast of bacon and egg asked "when does food rationing start in this house"? We were lucky to own the only grocery store in the village and I suppose sneaked a bit extra for our visitor.

First of the family to go off to the war effort Rosalie affectionately known as Posy. At the age of 18 she signed up for the WAAFs and had training in communications and was stationed in various camps in

England. Looked ever so smart in her uniform. Next was brother Archie at the age of 18 off to the airforce, after his initial training as a pilot, and eager to get into combat, he was sent to Canada as an instructor pilot much to his disgust, but my Mothers relief. He spent most of the war out there and came home a married man, quite a shock to my parents as he went off a boy barely out of school. His Canadian bride was sent to Britain on a troop ship and we only heard about her arrival once she docked in Newcastle. At the age of thirteen I was not impressed as I had great hopes for my big brother to get home and have time for me!!! Soon changed my mind as she was like a breath of very fresh air, so pretty, modern and different with a suitcase full of the most beautiful clothes we had ever seen !! Very impressive.!!

My eldest sister Marac was called up to be a nursing assistant and went up to Nethy bridge to a hospital there, she subsequently met and married an Englishman (shock to the villagers) Peter Cooper who was a Civil Engineer and worked at the Dalcross Airfield. Second sister Cath was exempt from war service as she was recovering from Tuberculous and once she was sent home had an exciting time dating a few of the Commando officers. However a highland man won and she married a Veterinarian surgeon, Willy Curly from Newtonmore. My next brother Donald and I were too young to get involved although Donald went in to the Scots Guards after the war ended and was posted to Tripoli for a while and then on sentry duty in London.

Lots of children were evacuated from the large cities because of the intense bombing, they were separated from parents and sent to country villages for safety. Any household with spare bedrooms had to take in one or two and large lodges owned for hunting and fishing seasons were taken over by the government and many children were housed there. We were not happy with an influx of Glaswegians who we could not understand and who took over the school. No sympathy for the fact that they were probably lonely and afraid. We came to learn how it is to be street wise.!!!

When the long awaited victory in Europe arrived there was much jubilation, a huge bonfire was lit on the sports field and we all celebrated and danced well into the wee hours. Meanwhile our thoughts and sympathies were with the families who lost dear ones. One of our men I remember was Henry Welsh who had been a prisoner of war in Japan for years, we were all excited to see him arrive home. He suffered from the dreaded Beri Beri, looked very ill and never really recovered good health.

The war years changed a lot of things, some good some not so good. A lot of marriages broke up, after years of separation, it was difficult for both husband, wife and child. Class distinction took a knock, which was good, and I think people learned to be more thoughtful and understanding of their fellow beings. We also appreciated everything a lot more when gradually the country got back to normal. Food rationing remained for some time but slowly luxury items were available, fruit, real eggs, (not the powdered kind), clothing which was not drab and skimpy, the fashionable new look was very glamorous with skirts going down to calf length.

By the time war ended my junior school years came to an end and off I was to boarding school at Clerkhill Convent near Dumbarton. But that is another story.