

Diary: Bill Palamountain, July 1942 to July 1943

Bill Palamountain, a member of the Radar Crew, kept a movement record for his year on the ship from July 1942 to July 1943. [Ed: some details added in brackets.]

1942

July

29 Radar crew joined ship at Garden Island.

August

01 Sailed to Broken Bay for settling in.

04 Returned to Sydney.

06 Sailed with convoy to Melbourne.

07 Encountered submarine – fired depth charge.

09 Reached Port Phillip Heads – turned back with another convoy – *Deloraine* with us.

11 Collided with ferry on entering Sydney Harbour. Holed port side.

14 Ship moved to Cockatoo Dock.

24 Moved back to Garden Island.

26 Left Sydney for Townsville at 1300.

30 Arrived Townsville. Rough to Brisbane.

Sept

02 Left Townsville with convoy of troop ships for Port Moresby. Rough trip.

05 Arrived Port Moresby 1200. Left again towards Townsville to pick up another convoy.

08 Arrived back at Port Moresby at night.

09 0400-1900 transported American and Australian troops from troopships to wharf.

12 Set off with convoy but returned to Port Moresby, then went out and rescued 2 American airman shot down.

14 Left Port Moresby for Townsville. Met *Arunta*.

16 Passed by Fleet including *Australia*, *Hobart* and 4 destroyers.

17 Arrived at Townsville, went on anti-submarine exercises with Fleet at Palm Island.

21 Left Townsville for Port Moresby.

24 Arrived Port Moresby. Ferried troops ashore. Air raid.

28 Sailed out and met convoy. Worked until 0230 ferrying American troops ashore.

29 Left Port Moresby at 1000 for Thursday Island.

30 Arrived Thursday Island after rough trip.

Oct

01 Began repayment messing.

02 Left Thursday Island for Darwin.

05 Arrived Darwin at 1900 [escort for *Van Heutsz*].

06 Left Darwin at 0500 for log tests.

07 Arrived in Darwin late – moored alongside *Platypus*.

08 [Escort for *Sibigo* to Thursday Island, returned].

10 Went on swimming trip to Barry Springs.

12 Left Darwin at 0730 for Thursday Island [escort for *Joseph Lane*].

14 Arrived at Thursday Island at 0930.

- 15 Left for Darwin at 1800.
- 18 Did minesweeping on entering Darwin. Arrived 0730.
- 20 Left Darwin at 1000 on minesweeping assignment – anchored at Popham Bay.
- 23 Swept for 2 days and returned to Darwin.
- 24 Air raid 0345. Left Darwin but engine defective. Turned back and tied up to *Platypus*.
- 25 Air raids at 0430 and 1300.
- 27 Air raids at 0200 and 1100.
- 31 Went minesweeping with *Kalgoorlie*.

Nov

- 05 Prepared for trip to Timor. Took on 3 War Correspondents and one photographer, Damien Parer. Anchored outside boom, departed at 0430 on the 6th.
- 07 Arrived at Timor by *Voyager* wreck at 2030. Unloaded supplies and men. Took on [an official], wife and daughter and Timor officials and some AIF. Left at 2230 at 13.5 knots – Jap cruiser reported in vicinity.
- 09 Arrived Darwin at 1030.
- 15 Left with convoy at 0930 for Cape Don.
- 18 Arrived back in Darwin at 2000.
- 19 Sports competition with *Armidale* and *Kalgoorlie*.
- 21 Left Darwin at 0300 to pick up convoy.
- 25 Arrived back at 1530 with convoy.
- 26 Air raids at 0430, 1500 and 1530.
- 27 Air raids at 0530 and 1130.
- 29 Loaded barges on board and left for Timor at 1100. Sighted by Japanese aircraft.
- 30 Attacked by Japanese bombers and fighters. 40 bombs dropped at 1914 and machine gunned. Our Oerlikons damaged Zeros. One Beaufighter shot down.

Dec

- 01 Reached Timor at 0300. No fires or ships visible, sailed at 0400. No sign of *Kuru*. Picked up refugees off raft and found *Kuru* with refugees. Bombed and machine gunned. Hit bomber with Oerlikon (fired by Bruce Tannock). *Armidale* sent back to Timor. Severely bombed and sunk.
- 02 Arrived back in Darwin at 0900.
- 07 *Kalgoorlie* arrived with *Armidale* survivors.
- 08 Left Darwin with *Alagna* at 0300 for Thursday Island.
- 10 Waited at Wessell Islands for return convoy. Fired at Jap float plane. Left without convoy.
- 13 Left with *Islander* for Thursday Island.
- 15 Met *Period* and *James Cook* and turned back. *Period* bombed by floatplane, 6 killed and 5 wounded. Wounded taken on board. Very slow convoy.
- 18 Arrived Darwin at 0130, patients removed to hospital.
- 19 Left for Adelaide River on recuperation leave at 0730. Poured with rain – all soaked. Meals poor.
- 21 Returned to ship – replaced by others.
- 23 Left with *James Cook* for Thursday Island.
- 28 Recalled from leave and left for Merauke. Picked up *Van Heemskirk* and took it to Thursday Island and then onto Port Moresby.

1943

Jan

- 01 Arrived Port Moresby at 1000. Two hours leave ashore, entertained by natives.
- 02 Left for Thursday Island at 1230.
- 05 Visited *Arunta* at Thursday Island.
- 06 Left with *Islander* for Darwin.
- 09 Arrived Darwin 1830, *Arunta* met us.
- 12 Left Darwin for Thursday Island with *Islander* at 0600. Met *Warrego* and *Inverell* with *James Russell Lowell*.
- 25 Left for Darwin with *Burwah*.

Feb

- 03 Left for Thursday Island with *Burwah* and *Kooliga*.
- 12 Refuelled off *Bishopdale*.
- 13 Left with *Bishopdale* and *Vendetta* for Darwin at 0700, very rough trip.
- 20 Left for Thursday Island with above ships.
- 24 Left for Darwin at 1900 with *Wanaka* and *Burwah*, rough trip. Passed *Koompatoo* and *Kookaburra*.

March

- 02 Went into floating dock – scraped bottom. Spitfires shot down 6 bombers.
- 06 Loaded with 55 RAAF chaps and gear. Left for Wyndham at 0700 with *Babinda*.
- 07 Arrived Wyndham 1700.
- 08 Left at 1200 for Drysdale – arrived 9th.
- 10 Unloaded barges and provisions at Mission off *Babinda*. Left for Port Keats at 1630. Arrived 1000 on 11th
- 12-13 Towed barges up the river to Port Keats Mission and unloaded tractor and provisions. Left for Peron Island and Darwin – arrived midnight on 15th.
- 18 Took on RAAF personnel and left for Millingimbi Mission 1730.
- 20 Ran aground – ship high and dry. High tides at 2000 but stuck fast.
- 21 Pulled off by *Babinda* at 0700. Carted stores ashore in barges.
- 23-24 Left Millingimbi at 0730 on 23rd arrived Darwin 1700 on 24th.
- 29 Castlemaine water polo team defeated *Latrobe* 8-0.

April

- 01 Left Darwin at 0120 with RAAF personnel aboard for Drysdale. (Arrived 1200 on 2nd) and Wyndham (1600 on 4th) and arrived back at Darwin at 1430 on 6th.
- 09-20 Left at 0730 with *Muliana* and *Kuru* for Malay Bay and Millingimbi at 1300 on 12th and piloted by an aboriginal, King Harry. Unloaded barges and left for Groote Eylandt at 1430 on 14th. Arrived at 1700 (17th) and arrived back at 0315 (18th). *Kuru* returned to Darwin and *Castlemaine* on to Thursday Island – arrived 1200 on 20th.

May

- 03 Left at 0400 for Darwin with *Darvel*, *Burwah* and *Forceful*. Arrived Darwin 1700 on 6th.
- 13-18 Left 0700 for Millingimbi with *Darvel*. Arrived 1800 on 14th. Left at 1530 on 16th for Thursday Island, rough trip. Arrived 1800 on 18th.
- 29 Towed barges to Horn Island – on to Red Rock back to Thursday Island.

31 Left Thursday Island at 1130 with *Darvel*, *Wilcannia* and *Admiral Halstead*.

June

02 Left *Wilcannia* and *Darvel* and proceeded with *Admiral Halstead* to Millingimbi. Rough trip. Arrived Darwin 1430 on 5th.

07-17 Left for Millingimbi at 0900. Arrived 1500 on 9th. Left for Thursday Island at 1400 on 14th. Met *Inverell* and *Tulagi*. Arrived Thursday Island 1400 on 17th, rough trip.

20-24 Left for Darwin at 1800 with *Inverell* and a Liberty Ship. Developed engine trouble (21st), rigged a sail on fo'c'sle (22nd). Engine fixed and arrived Darwin 1300 on 24th.

28 Store party to Vesteys, caught in an air raid, in trenches near RAN Hospital.

29 Left Darwin at 0900 for Thursday Island with *Inverell* and *Charles P Steinmetz*, rough trip. Arrived 1100 on 2nd July. Refuelled off *Steinmetz*.

July

05 Advised that *Cootamundra* was relieving us. She arrives on 6th.

07 Left Darwin for Sydney via Thursday Island, Gladstone and Jardine Passage.

11 Arrived Gladstone 2000.

12 Went alongside 0730. Leave granted. Dance arranged for crew at Empire – those that were sober.

13 Left at 2130 with *Geelong*, *Lithgow* and 5 merchant ships in convoy.

15 Arrived Brisbane 1200.

18 Left Brisbane at 0600 with *Bundaberg*, *Bendigo*, *Glenelg* and 4 merchant ships.

20 Arrived Garden Island 1400. After a refit and a spot of leave most of us headed north again to repel the 'yellow peril' – no swinging around the buoy in Farm Cove for us.