

Medical Research Council
ROYAL NAVAL PERSONNEL RESEARCH COMMITTEE
SURVIVAL AT SEA SUB-COMMITTEE

Survival Experience following the
Loss of H.M.S. Dunedin, November 1941.

by

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(Written September - November 1942)

Personal experiences.

Although I wrote the official report of the loss of the ship, I did not attempt to recount my own experiences. The report was largely compiled by the Navigator's (Lieutenant Milner) accounts from his own recollections up to the time of abandoning ship, and after that from the collected accounts of the survivors. This was done in rough shortly after our arrival in Trinidad, before any of us was sent home. My own condition was then low and it was not until several weeks later that I felt the energy to rewrite the report and add my recommendations.

I have often wanted to record my own feelings and actions over that period, but until now have found it too distasteful. However, memories fade and before they do so and inaccuracies intrude, I have decided to attempt a narrative. This will not conflict with the report but is a subjective account which only overlaps the objective one in places.

The Ship.

The DUNEDIN was one of those cruisers originally known as "D" Class Light Cruisers, which were built at the end of the last war. She was completed after the war, too late to take part, but embodied the latest experience of it. In other words, like every ship, she was the very latest thing when she first appeared, and a worn out old tub and over-crowded hell-ship and other less printable things in her latter days. Too fast to be used for escorting convoys and with inadequate A.A. armament for fleet work, she drifted on to the West Africa Station, and was used to supplement the larger cruisers in scouring the enormous spaces of the Middle and South Atlantic in search of whatever enemy ships the C. in C. had reason to suppose might be there.

A hasty refit in 1940 had made her far from suitable for work in the tropics. All except a very few of the side ports had been blanked off and the lining stripped off the ship's sides, thus removing the air space which acted as a heat insulator. Besides this, the hull was painted dark grey. Though one reads of sailors - and soldiers - enduring greater hardships, worse discomfort and privations without complaints, one must take into account a great many factors to be certain of how much they have gone through and with what incentive. Ours in an unspectacular and boring role, earned little sympathy and no credit, but they carried on, and with a spirit of steadiness and patience

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which the officers could not better. The messdecks were never clean; there was never enough room to put things - clothes, cleaning gear and food seemed to be jumbled together, cockroaches ambled warily but openly over the paintwork, and among all this in a sweltering atmosphere the sailors lived and moved and had their being.

In the West Indies there had at least been a good outlook for those who went ashore. At most places there was late leave, and 'fun and games' could be expected. In West Africa, where we were based for the last six months, it was different. There was no fun and few games. Even fruit and drinks were scarce and expensive. Leave expired at 6 p.m. to avoid the risk of malaria and yellow fever.

The boats when the ship was at sea were always kept ready for immediate use, fully provisioned. I was the Boat Officer and I had strict orders about that. The floats were a more difficult problem. They have to be dropped overboard, and not much can be done by way of preparation. Some progress had been made recently with the provision of jars of water. The large ones had a flag on a stave. Paddles were in place. The rest of the gear had to be provided at 'Abandon Ship Stations'.

It was on a patrol 'out in the middle' when the day came. There was nothing in particular to distinguish it from any other day. A clear sky and a hot sun, a fresh South East Trade Wind, miles from anywhere and nothing to tell us when we were likely to move on elsewhere. The cruising watch - one third of the ship's company - were at their stations, at guns, torpedo tubes and in the engine room department.

It was 1.30. After a comfortable lunch I was sitting in the wardroom reading a paper that had arrived shortly before we left Freetown. I think it was the Illustrated London News. There was nothing to disturb one; the usual hum of the engines and vibration in the after end of the ship - we were doing about 18 knots - and some motion caused by the swell. There was a sudden shock, like that of dropping a depth charge, and then the ship whipped violently and noisily, as if some giant had her by the middle and was shaking her from side to side. I knew what it meant at once, and so did the few others present. We dropped everything and made for the door. Already the ship was taking on a bad list.

My cabin door was immediately opposite the wardroom. I slipped in, grabbed my cap and life belt which lay handy, and turned aft towards the hatch to the upper deck. It never occurred to me to try to save anything from my cabin. Ahead of me were one or two other officers and I remembered that the after hatch had been kept closed for the last few days. The escape manhole was the only exit and that was awkwardly placed in relation to the ladder. I turned about and made my way forward. I passed through a W.T. door, through the W.Os' flat and up a steel ladder. I do not remember whether I put the clips on the door or not. Somehow I do not remember any of that journey. Then I must have crossed the lobby from starboard to port and gone forward. I remember stepping out of the

The "DUNEDIN" was lost on November 24th, 1941, in a position approximately $3^{\circ}\text{N } 26^{\circ}\text{W}$. Commander Watson estimates that the air temperatures by day rose to 130° in the sun, and was about 65° at night, whilst the sea temperature was about 75° .

screen door on to the upper deck. By this time the list of the ship seemed to have increased considerably, the sea was just washing over the starboard side on to the deck planking. Quite innocent and clean, blue and white it looked.

There seemed to be very few people about. I at once noticed that the cutter had not been lowered. This seemed strange, and I called to a man I saw to collect some others so that we could lower it. I felt pretty dazed at the time and my mouth seemed so dry it might have been full of flannel. I wondered, if it were already so dry, how I should endure any length of time without much water. It never occurred to me then, nor till months afterwards, that a second torpedo had struck the ship without my realising it and that perhaps I had been rendered unconscious or nearly so for some time. However, the first torpedo actually hit the ship abreast the bridge and the second one less than 30 seconds later hit the after part abreast the No. 6 gun and cabin flat. Had I followed my first inclination to turn aft to reach the deck, I should have been killed as doubtless those were who did so.

After seeing the cutter I looked inboard and then aft, and saw the galley and screen W.T. doors open. There seemed so much to do, Then the Commander (Ted Unwin) appeared and asked me to try and close the screen W.T. door the starboard side. I went across and tried. As I went I saw the figure of a man sitting half awash on the deck. It was C.E.R.A. Tall; both his thigh bones were broken and sticking through the skin. He sat supporting himself with his hands, but occasionally moved by a wave. His expression was brave and cheerful, though in my ignorance I thought it strange for him to be alive, and hopeless for him to leave the ship. The deck was wet and sloping. A man helped me as we each needed a hand to hold on. The door could be shut, but not enough to get the clips on. It was no good. It had been distorted by the explosion.

I returned to the other side of the ship with difficulty. It had become a climb, yet I found two men trying to get Tall up to the high edge of the deck. The cutter had been lowered; I looked overboard into it and it seemed a long way down, and ram full of people. It was my boat for abandon ship but I at once decided that to go to it was out of the question. I also saw that the ship was almost stopped; the propeller shaft seemed to be going round in the air, but the propeller was missing.

I think I reported to the Commander about the W.T. door; there were several like that. Most of the Carley Floats were in the water, and the little 14ft dinghy was the only other boat which might be useful. I got it down on deck from its davits, but the Commander said he didn't think it was worth putting in the water.

Somewhere about then I barked my shin (right?) on the wardroom galley door.

After that, or was it before?, I blew up my lifebelt. Anyhow I soon found it had gone down again and I tried again with the same result. I cursed myself for not having tested it more recently though it wasn't so very long ago. Then it occurred to me the valve was leaking and I screwed it down as hard as I could. Still it leaked and I tried pinching the tube. That stopped it, but how could it be held? Then an idea came; I bent the tube double, back on itself, and slipped my key ring over, which held it like that. The belt was only half inflated but it would have to do.

The most important thing seemed to me to provide something for the

people who were already in the water. There would be some who couldn't swim, probably others without lifebelts, though one couldn't see. I looked round for timber, then went up on the booms where there were a lot of spars but most of these were too heavy for me and I was already out of breath. However, I threw down a good assortment of things, cushions out of the motor boat and so on, and Midshipman Wilson who appeared up there helped.

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It was becoming difficult to do this, as the list of the ship took us further away from the ship's side. But my brain somehow insisted that I must keep on doing something, possibly for fear that I might sit down and do nothing, or because I found it so hard to think clearly.

After this things seem a bit vague. There seemed to be very few people left onboard. I realised that I had all the time been hoping that perhaps the ship wouldn't actually sink, her reserve of buoyancy might hold her up and I had not heard any order to abandon ship. However, as I stood on No. 5 gundeck, on the after part of the super-structure, I realised that it was time to leave. I sat on the deck and lowered myself towards the water which was over the gun-deck guard-rails. Then I saw a Carley float abreast of me and not too far off. I slipped into the water and began to swim slowly towards it.

There was a thickish scum of oil fuel on the surface. I paddled through this and reached a part where it was only a fairly thin skin. The thought of being sucked down with the ship urged me on, and there was always the possibility that the depth charges at the stern of the ship might explode when they reached a certain depth, though I assumed they were set to 'safe' and would not. I remember remarking on this to one or two men who were swimming alongside me. My desire to sprint, however, was tempered by the need to conserve my energy. Looking back I could see the ship heeling slowly on to her beam ends. As her masts and funnels reached the water line she gently subsided and disappeared. Shortly after this I reached the Carley float.

There were no officers on the float but some ratings I knew well - among them Thomas, the Chief Shipwright, and Moore, the Seaman Writer in the Commander's office. There seemed to be room for one and they helped me to scramble in. On or in? There is not much difference. Half of you is on the raft and half in the water. The raft itself when fully loaded is barely awash - at any rate this one was.

Each float had a number and the Chief Shipwright knew them all. He reckoned that ours was damaged. That is to say the inner structure, which is made up of copper sheeting and sectioned into watertight compartments, was dented, and in his opinion this dent had greatly reduced the buoyancy of one compartment. This float I discovered, had already overturned once, thanks to the clumsiness of those clambering on to it. As they were designed to be reversible, I did not at once realise that this could make any difference - the explanation will arise later.

A few words on the construction of the float. It is made in the shape of a capital O, in various sizes. Ours, the smallest size, had an official life-saving capacity of 18, but as I have already said, it could hardly hold this number and was completely submerged with 16 men on it. Outside the hollow copper core is a layer of pieces of compressed cork scrape. These are held in place by a canvas binding which is painted over. Roping is fitted to provide handhold, and a wooden grating, forming a platform for one's feet, is suspended from the inside of the 'O' by a rope netting of about 4-inch mesh. If the float is overturned, the grating and netting pass through the centre of the 'O' and

position underneath. The 'crew' sit facing inwards with their feet on the grating. They can support themselves against the motion of the float by holding on to the roping, but one's hands soon become cold and arms tired. After this they depend more upon mutual support and the use of the back and abdominal muscles.

When I had taken my place with the others I looked around and saw a few more familiar faces. There were one or two bandsmen with whom I shared my Action Station, and then I found that C.E.R.A. Tall, the man with both legs broken, had preceded me. This seemed as surprising as my capacity for being surprised allowed, especially as he was still smiling and not complaining. I also discovered another man with a leg broken, also an E.R.A. He was in great pain, though making the most valiant efforts not to cause any disturbance.

The rest of the men were sitting round, mostly looking rather blank, and doing little or nothing. Indeed there seemed little to be done. Some of the rafts had been fitted out with paddles, but ours now had none. I realised that to make appreciable headway we should need about half a dozen, and set about trying to gather suitable pieces of driftwood. We also fixed a couple of short planks across the ends of the raft to support the shoulders of the wounded men, who were lying in the centre and appeared in danger of drowning.

There was an assortment of clothing, varying from the full tropical outfit which I had on myself, to stark nakedness in the case of one or two men who had apparently been asleep on the messdecks and somehow escaped or emerged through the hole blown in the ship's side. I had kept my cap on while swimming, knowing that I should value it later. I parted with my cap cover and handkerchief for emergency dressings.

Several people came swimming round, all with inflated lifebelts, and looking hopefully for a place on the raft. I tried to let them, but the men were so strongly against it, that I could not try to over-rule them. It seemed hard, especially when one knew - as I did - that the chance of being rescued within 24 hours was small. But I felt bound to accept the advice of the Chief Shipwright, supported by the evidence of my own eyes. If anyone moved abruptly or violently the raft seemed to sway rather ominously.

Various plans of action suggested themselves as the afternoon wore on. Looking a little further than usual as the float rose to a crest of the swell, I saw only six or eight hundred yards away, I suppose, the conning tower and upperworks of a submarine. We wondered what she would do. The crew simply seemed to be looking round, perhaps intending to take a few prisoners. I do not think anyone wanted that; they preferred to take the risk of not being picked up, though perhaps most of them did not know that these chances were meagre. I assumed they would look round for officers, the Captain or Commander if possible, and debated in my mind whether to remove any identifying marks. However, partly from pride and partly because the U-boat did not turn our way, I refrained. Soon she disappeared and we saw her no more.

There was a waterlogged boat not very far away with a few men holding on to it. I urged our men to paddle towards it, but it was exhausting work and took a long time. We found that it was a whaler and that these men had given up hope of baling it out. I suggested getting in and throwing out any heavyweights such as the slings and anchor, but they thought the boat was holed and it was useless. They could not find

any provisions or water barricoes in her.

I saw the First Lieutenant (Sowden) sitting on a piece of wreckage, probably a box, with his back to us. I shouted to him more than once, but he never turned round. I thought he had heard, but had pretended not to have. I imagine him, a very devout Christian, declining to accept a place which might have deprived someone else.

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There were about a dozen Flotanets carried by the ship, but we only saw one in use. Seven men lay sprawled on it, constantly awash. It is only a rope net with cork discs threaded on to its sides. Among these men was the Commander. I wanted him to come to our float, and the men remained silent, but he declined. It was his Abandon Ship Station, and he would not change.

We began to think of the coming night. It was not a pleasant prospect but we had hopes of being found on the following morning, and they buoyed us up. We wanted to keep close to the other rafts, and paddled steadily towards them. Progress was terribly slow, the larger rafts seemed to drift down wind rather faster than we did, and we could not afford too much energy.

I explained to the man next to me, A.B. Moore, how we were situated as regards prospects of rescue, as well as I knew. The nearest British ship, an Armed Merchant Cruiser, was probably about 300 miles away. If we had succeeded in sending out an SOS, and if she had received it, she might be in the area at dawn. The other ships engaged in the operation were even further away. The nearest land was probably Brazil, and as that was about 1,000 miles, we had not the faintest hope of reaching it. Moore listened to this carefully, and shortly afterwards he called on everyone to listen and told them with great accuracy what I had said. There was no padding, no beating about the bush, and the news was received in grim silence. Everyone seemed to be facing the fact and hoping for the best.

One of the kittens came swimming towards us mewing piteously. It was very bedraggled with oil fuel. One of the men tried to put it out of its misery by drowning, but I think he failed. It made my heart ache.

The sun went down and the darkness came down quickly. We were accustomed to that. The air grew cooler at once. The spray which every few minutes splashed over us had helped to keep us cool. Now it began to make us feel cold. We shivered, and later I found my teeth chattering. Perhaps it was not very cold, but we had no protection.

Whether we reached the other rafts that evening or the next morning I do not remember, but I think it was the next morning. Other nights we secured the painters together to prevent our separating; this entailed a good deal of bumping, but we thought it necessary. The risk of further damaging our float was in our minds, and we cast off again in daylight.

One cannot avoid some stereotyped phrases probably as a result of reading accounts of similar experiences by others. Thus I can only describe those nights as endless. They were very very long, and the dawn simply would not come. I remember someone telling the others not to go to sleep whatever happened. I thought this a counsel of perfection. I had already dozed and did not think there was much danger of falling out. In any case we could only sleep for very short periods. Doubtless this dozing off and waking after perhaps a minute or two, thinking it had been

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for a few hours, was the cause of our feeling the intolerable length of the night. Every time we woke the darkness seemed much the same. Even a vivid imagination could not give the impression that it was growing lighter.

E.R.A. Smith grew steadily worse. He could not speak much but was obviously in agony. Towards the end he begged us to put him out of his misery. When we were absolutely sure that there was no spark of life in him, I agreed to his being slid over the side. Privately I tried to say a suitable prayer which was his only burial service.

I wondered how long we could last on one of these floats. For myself I estimated about four days.

I fell to wondering how many of my fellow men had escaped alive out of the ship. Though the number on rafts and in the sea was large, it did not seem many in proportion to the whole ship's company. I had not seen the Captain, and only a few of the officers - those whom I've already mentioned. The first torpedo which struck at some of the messdecks and the second which struck at the cabins aft must have done terrible work. And the engineers, on watch down in the boiler rooms and engine rooms, always run a very great risk when any ship is sunk. Sometimes the order to abandon ship does not reach them all. It is impossible to imagine what goes on between decks, and I did not try to do so.

When dawn came, there was just a waste of water and a few rafts. The majority were fairly close together. One big raft, with a small spar erected, carrying a flag, had two small ones and the Flotanet in tow. These were not far from us, and we soon paddled close to them. Others were further away, and we eventually counted eight rafts in all.

A.B. Moore, who was convinced that there was a jar of water somewhere attached to our float, made several efforts to find it, and eventually succeeded. It was on the underside of the grating on which we rested our feet. Somehow he managed to dive down and recover it. It was a 2 - gallon rum jar. The bung was intact, and the jar was passed round. It tasted perfectly fresh. Someone raised the cry "Only half a mouthful each", and as each man drank the eyes of everyone else were on him. If he seemed to take unduly long, there were murmurings. When my turn came I tried to be quick, to avoid any suspicion of trying to drink more than my share. It was not easy, since one did not know how far to tip up the jar before the water began to flow into one's mouth.

I had to decide on the degree of discipline which I could try to preserve among the men. It did not seem advisable to try to give direct orders unless there was little doubt that they would be obeyed. Generally it seemed better to suggest things, and if there was any appearance of dissent, to explain the reason. You can't enforce orders in those conditions, and control once lost could never be regained. However, the commonsense of the large number of senior ratings among our number ensured that nothing unwise was decided on. Caution seemed to be prevalent, and anyone who became a little out of hand was soon checked.

The absence of any sign of a ship was obviously felt by everyone. It was no use blinking the facts; it seemed that the neighbouring ship on patrol had not come to look for us, and that we might have a much longer time to wait. I remember thinking of the power of prayer and telling everyone that although I could not pretend to be a very religious man myself, I thought that we should all do well to pray for an early rescue. This was received in silence, but I believe that it bore some fruit.

Commander Watson estimates that each man received only an ounce or two of water daily.

As we neared the big float, we recognised many friends - including Milner, the Navigator, Mr. Titheridge, the Gunner, the Chief P.O. Telegraphist and the Chief Sick Berth Petty Officer. They hailed us and asked us if we had any water. Our crew were most reluctant to admit to this, but the men in the other float told us that they had picked up a tin of ship's biscuits they had found floating. They gave us each a small amount; it was very soft being sodden with salt water, and did not go down too easily, but it was very welcome.

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After this our men admitted to the water, and discovered that the others had a supply of their own.

C.E.R.A. Tall died that morning. To the end he endured his misery like a hero. We consulted the Chief Sick Berth Petty Officer, as to the signs before agreeing that he was really dead, and then his body was quietly put into the water in the same way as Smith's.

We heard from Grant, the Chief Petty Officer Telegraphist, that he had transmitted an SOS six times on the emergency set; this was only expected to have a range of a few hundred miles. The main set had been put out of action, and there was no certainty that the emergency set had actually sent out the message on the ether.

Milner told us our position and a few other facts. Also that the Captain had abandoned ship at the same time as himself.

The men on the Flotanet were in the worst case, as they were awash the whole time and could not sleep or relax. One or two were taken on to the rafts, including our own. Commander Unwin remained on the Flotanet.

The second day passed without further incident. In the evening we each had another half biscuit and a mouthful of water.

Several of the men had begun to show signs of strain, and some were having hallucinations. At first some of their remarks struck us as slightly unusual, then later as very peculiar. Some things that were said seemed really funny, but when they repeated themselves and insisted on our listening to their demands, the other men became impatient and bluntly told them to be quiet. The same theme ran through all their minds, they wanted something to eat and drink, and they wanted to go and get it. The obvious place to go was to their mess. They at first asked permission to go down to the messdecks, but when this was refused and they still persisted we tried to reason with them. We told them what had happened and where they were, but they could not understand. The Canteen Manager became very indignant, and said he would complain to the Commander.

One or two became very weak, and had to be put in the centre on the gratings, where their heads were only kept above water by the efforts of the remainder. Little waves kept slopping in, and as their heads lolled back frequently it was impossible to prevent the sea water from entering their mouths. Eventually they became too weak to resist and in this way some must have been drowned.

One man begged loudly for water, and I had to insist on his being given a little, but in the end he went the way of the others.

We all dreaded the length of the second night, and about midnight the wind changed and it began to rain. We held up our faces to it, and it seemed to refresh us. We tried holding our mouths open to catch it, but though one's jaw ached, one seemed to catch very few raindrops in that way.

The water which trickled down our faces and ran into our mouths washed the salt in with it, and this method was a failure. We had nothing else in which to catch any rainwater.

We became cold and huddled together, turning our backs to the wind as far as possible. Eventually the wind changed again and the rain ceased. We fell into a sort of doze.

It was that night that someone suddenly cried out "My God I've been bitten in the foot". Soon afterwards another man was bitten in the leg. It seemed impossible that any of the sharks which we had seen swimming about outside the raft in the daytime could have made such an attack. Sharks are not very brave, and the mesh of the net was too small. One of the men suddenly reached down and grabbed something; he held it up and we saw a fish about a foot long, of a greyish hue, with a blunt nose and a round mouth full of sharp teeth. He did not try to kill it, but ~~throw~~ it hurriedly out of the raft.

I felt thankful that I had kept my shoes and stockings on, though the latter were small protection. Many men had either left the ship without them, or had kicked off their shoes while swimming.

Nothing could be done for those who had been bitten and they had to bear their sufferings as best they could. No doubt one or two lost a lot of blood and became very weak from that alone.

Dawn came and the third day began. There was no sign of any ship. On the large raft a man stood up and gazed in all directions while we watched hopefully, but we gathered that there was nothing in sight. Even when on one or two occasions they claimed to have seen something nothing came of it. We resigned ourselves to waiting as long as we could stick it out.

One of the large rafts had found a boat's sail and the men at the windward end had rigged this up as a screen for their backs. This seemed to cause the raft to drift a little faster than the others, but by keeping our painters made fast we remained together, though still inclined to bump each other uncomfortably. A small piece of duck from the dinghy's foresail was given to us to use for catching rainwater in. This proved useful the next night.

I examined my legs by pulling down my stockings, to see if they were coated with oil. They seemed remarkably clean and intact.

One man from another raft had gone overboard, probably under the impression that he was going down to his messdeck. He drifted astern, and A.B. Fraser, from the same raft dived in and swam to his rescue. Knowing that there were sharks everywhere, and that he had to conserve his energy, he showed very great courage. The man drowned just as Fraser reached him, and he swam back to his raft, splashing vigorously with his feet. He never showed any sign of flurry.

Another young fellow stays vividly in my memory. I have decided not to mention his name, though I remember it clearly enough. He was about 20 years old, an Able Seaman, with a rather delicately nurtured look, slightly built and finely featured. He seemed to crack up rather suddenly and began declaiming in a loud voice 'I'm Jesus', 'I'm Jesus'. At first my ears told me that he was calling on Jesus, as he might have been, either reverently or irreverently, according to his

religious outlook, if he were in great pain. But it did not appear he was in much pain, and he repeated himself so often that no doubt remained as to his words. The effect on the rest of the men was little at first; prayer or blasphemy, they were used to both, but they soon tired of the constant repetition and bluntly told him to be quiet. This had very little effect and he was struck sharply by one or two men and threatened with severer blows if he wouldn't stop. This silenced him for a time but it was obvious that he was delirious and would need watching.

I remember feeling immensely sorry for this poor lad; through no fault of his own his privations led him to say a terrible thing, and my mind must have become obsessed to some extent with this. When darkness came and he was weak from exhaustion, I tried to find a comfortable place where I could lie down and nurse him back to health. This I tried to do. There were very few corners where one could find a place, but I settled down somewhere somehow, and supporting this fellow as best I could, stayed perhaps an hour. By then I was feeling so cramped and uncomfortable that I had to give up, and begged someone else to take the job over. There was no response; apparently the men had less sympathy than I for him and I also heard muttered remarks which suggested that I was making some sort of a favourite of him.

Later, this same lad made a dart at me and apparently tried to pull me over backwards into the water. I managed to shake him off. He also spoke to me in the most abusive terms. I found that my shirt was badly torn over the left shoulder blade. Later he made another attack without warning and bit me in the buttocks. I cried out and thrust him away. His teeth did not appear to have gone through my shorts.

I have often thought about those incidents; it is clear that my mind was losing its normalcy. But to what extent? Probably the fish tore my shirt and attacked my stern, at any rate my shirt was undoubtedly torn, as will be noted next day. Also there were no 'corners' to a Carley float.

It was the third night, and, as on the second, we had rain. This time we managed to catch some and refill our water jar. It was handed round for a mouthful apiece, and perhaps refilled. We wished we could keep warm and envied the men with the sail on another raft. They had draped it round their shoulders.

It seems rather nightmarish to look back upon.

A young officer from one raft became obsessed with the need to go to another raft; he swam there but was rejected, and swam to us for sanctuary. The ratings did not want him, but I told them at least they must allow him to rest until he could recover strength to swim to his own raft. He was dragged half on to our raft, scared and meandering. He had often kept watch with me on the bridge, and I knew his mental make-up well enough. I induced the men to paddle to his own raft, and then told the Petty Officer there that he must take him back. He replied that he had told him not to leave the float but in spite of every effort he had left, and now he did not want him back; he would not be able to restrain him. However, back he had to go. The men next me began to whisper that they were afraid the men on the other raft were plotting to put some of their people in to ours as they considered we were not carrying our fair share. They reckoned this would capsize us and that would be the end of us all, so that we must somehow get clear again. So, summoning a little strength, we cast off and paddled clear about a float's length. After we had rested a bit the floats seemed to have drifted together somewhat and we paddled

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