

‘X’ FORCE

‘X’ Force consisting of HMS GLEARN, and the empire ships now flying the White Ensign, Emp. ARQUEBUS, Emp. BATTLEAXE, Emp. SPEARHEAD, & Emp MACE, HMS LAMONT formerly s.s. CLAN LAMONT, which was taking the place of the Emp. BROADSWORD which had been sunk by a mine, 536 Flotilla was on the Emp. ARQUEBUS as the Emp. CUTLASS had been damaged by a Doodle Bug (VI) whilst alongside, Force X would be under Rear-Admiral Talbot flying his flag in HMS LOTHIAN, formerly the s.s. City of Edinburgh, Force X was to proceed to the S.W. Pacific, attached to the US 7th SW FLEET and under their jurisdiction, via New York and the Panama Canal, the force sailed from the Clyde on 3.8.1944.

On approaching New York 14. 8 .1944 there was a heavy sea mist, a prelude to a very hot Aug. day, I was up in the lookout station, could not see anything, not the deck below, nor the fo’c’sle, looking up it seemed a bit brighter, right ahead high up in the mist I could make out a vaguely familiar shape, I reported ‘Barrage Balloon Dead Ahead’ then ‘Barrage Balloon moving to Starb’d’ then the shape stayed above us still quite indistinct and kept station with us, as the mist cleared we could see that it was a US Coast Guard BLIMP, I had no idea that these small airships were still in use, especially in any armed forces, as the visibility cleared we could plainly see the crew who were checking us out.

‘Glenearn’ went alongside a pier, and a run ashore was like going to another planet; I went ashore with Paddy Wxxxx, he was from Eire and his sister lived in New York, she tried to make him desert, give him civilian clothes, and help him ‘disappear’ into the Irish community, but he would have none of it, he always came back, in the flotilla we had two men from Eire, some from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and all parts of England, no matter where we went there always someone who could jump on the local bus and go home, there were RCs, Jews, C of E, Baptist, Methodist, religion was never of any consequence and we all got on very well, a bit of inter city or county banter was normal, but no offence was ever taken.

The shops full of things that we hadn’t seen in Britain for years, no shortages, plenty of everything, at night all the streets Times Square and shops were lit up, neon lights, restaurants, bars etc. open until the early hours, there was no sign of war here, the US Gov. gave us an extra 50cents a day while in port this may not seem much now, but to us it was quite a boost in pay, then stores were loaded on to the ship, we couldn’t believe our eyes, ice cream, chicken, things we had never seen for years, they weren’t for us, several hundred US Army Air Force came on board, these were all aircraft mechanics and maintenance men, they were all sergeants, top sergeants, and every other sergeant, there were more stripes than a herd of zebra, to us they were all old men, must have been 22yrs to 25yrs old, also there were 6 young seamen, (Gobs)17 &18yrs of age , they were going to the Pacific to reinforce a SEE BEES unit, but they hoped to get a ship, they spent a lot of time with us being navy and the same age group, one 17yr old was Polish , they called him Polack, he wanted to go to Europe as he said that the Nazis had made soap out of his grandmother, at the time I had no idea what he was talking about, there were two cold water fountains installed on board for the troops, an unheard of luxury

for us, then we sailed for Panama, there was a hurricane south of us so we put in to Charleston, Sth Carolina for a day or so, then on to Panama.

The troops seem to congregate in little circles , playing poker , all around , no one took any notice, gradually the games got less and less, but the seamen told us that the reason for this was that the stakes were getting higher and higher, you could not enter a game unless you had a \$100 then later \$500 then the games were hidden out of the way with the main participants paying guards to vet anyone who came too close, they would have had the big games down on the troopdeck, or below that, the 'Buzz' [rumor] was that the Paybob, had to borrow from them to pay the crew, as there was not enough cash in circulation on the ship, the main players had their own bodyguards as this was all cash, on arrival at Finschhaven they were given an armed escort ashore to bank the money by the US.

We still had our hot meal at midday, but the US troops had theirs in the evening, so at midday they were given sandwiches, the 'fillings' at times were quite strange to them, the first time they got corned beef they asked us what it was, naturally we answered 'corned dog' they were horrified, they knew that Britain was very short of food, but to be eating dog!! And to serve it up to them they were aghast!! we tried to tell them that that was our slang name for corned beef but I think they remained unconvinced as every time they asked a crew member what it was they got the same answer ' corned dog ', the 'errins' in' drew some unique comments too !! And the young seamen who wore jeans tried to make them look well worn anything but new, they tied them on the end of a line and put them over the side all night, then laid them out in the sun to bleach them, so what's new in 2007??

Through the Caribbean it was starting to get hot so we took our hammocks and slung them up in the LCAs on the davits, we did this from then on in the tropics, on deck were rigged a couple of canvas 'pools' filled with sea water about 2ft 6in deep, that we could dip in to to keep cool, unfortunately one of our corporals dived in and broke his neck, he lived, and was put ashore in Colon, all the outboard LCAs were lowered and the davits turned inwards before entering the Canal, then 'Glennearn' entered the canal like a mother duck with her brood of LCAs following close behind.



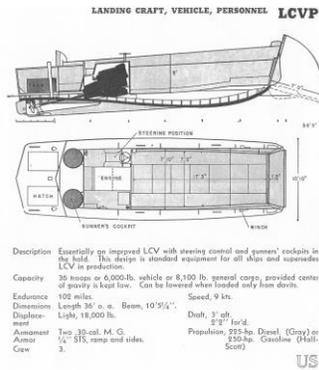
At Panama it rained like I've never seen before about 6in. in about 30 minutes, we stripped off and climbed up to the craft on the davits and pulled the bungs out in case they got swamped those craft following behind had to keep the bilge pumps going !! at Balboa the LCAs were hoisted then with Captain Hutchison as senior officer 'Glennearn' and the 4 Emp. ships sailed on, next stop was Bora Bora; 'Lothian' and 'Lamont' were

left behind for “ repair “, (there was a mutiny on “Lothian” but at the time we did not know) the Galapagos Islands were sighted, then on into the Pacific.

About halfway across the Pacific there was an incident on board, I was working in the LCA on the davit above, idly watching as the US Troops were drawing their nutty {lollies} ration and thinking that the quantity and variety made our meager ration look sick, there was a sudden commotion, then pandemonium broke out, their PX had run out of Tutti Frutti’s!! it was bedlam !! they had a sit down strike on the deck chanting ”No Tutti Frutti’s No War” they had gone on strike!! On the deck of a British Warship!! This chanting and banging mugs etc. went on for quite a while, I went below for ‘stand easy’ And they were still going strong when I came back up, with the PX manager pleading that he couldn’t get any more supplies of Tutti Frutti’s in the middle of the Pacific, then the TOP men were piped to hose down decks, you could say that the strike was a washout, they scattered in all directions.

On arriving at Bora Bora some of the US troops were put ashore, and we heard that there had been a mutiny on the ‘Lothian’ half a dozen stropky matelotes had played up because there was an acute water shortage on board and the Admiral made them parade in clean pressed whites every day, also someone had painted Rear Admiral Talbot’s initials on his cabin door, this is all that we knew about the mutiny, I did not know any more until I read the book “Mutiny in Force X” by Bill Glenton about 1995, (available in the Brisbane State Library) then many things became clear, we then pushed on to New Guinea as there was something big coming off and we were to be part of it.

Approaching Finschhafen at the end of Sept. 1944, ‘Glenearn’ was told to wait for a pilot, Captain Hutchison sent back “I surveyed these waters before you were born “ and came in and docked unaided, the rest of the troops and the young seamen were put ashore, then on to Hollandia where the main invasion force was assembling, the something ‘big’ was the invasion of the Philippines, Captain Hutchison had talks with the top US brass, Admiral Dan Barbey the US officer in charge of landing craft, he was known as ‘Dan Dan the Amphibious Man’ he gave permission for us to take part in the invasion as long as we only used US landing craft, an LCVP was tried on our davits, it did not fit, so we were out, this had to be political, an LCVP (known as Higgins craft) carried 36 troops or a small vehicle, an LCA carried 35 troops but no vehicle, had a much shallower draft and could get much closer to the beach, 90% ‘dry landings (in Europe the LCA was the preferred craft of the US Rangers and Special Forces because of its silent approach, low silhouette, and shallow draft) X Force had over 100 of these landing craft so could carry more than 3500 troops but were not wanted !! a US sergeant drawled that it would not look good on the news ‘Stateside’ see British landing craft at the Liberation of the Philippines after Gen McArthur’s much trumpeted “ I Shall Return “ LCA length 41ft 6in, LCVP 36ft. to us it wallowed like a ‘Hippo’ and were very susceptible to the wind which seemed to blow them around because of their high sides.



Description Essentially an improved LCV with steering control and gunners' cockpits in the hold. This design is standard equipment for all ships and supersedes LCV in production.

Capacity 30 men or 6,000-lb. vehicle or 8,100 lb. general cargo, provided center of gravity is kept low. Can be lowered when loaded only from stern.

Endurance 102 miles.

Dimensions Length 36' o. a. Beam, 10'9 1/2".

Displacement Light, 18,000 lb.

Armament Two 30-cal. M. G.

Armor 1/2" STC, ramp and sides.

Crew 3.

Speed, 9 kn.
Draft, 3' aft.
22" forward.
Propulsion, 225-hp. Diesel (Gray) or 250-hp. Gasoline (Hull-Scow)

US

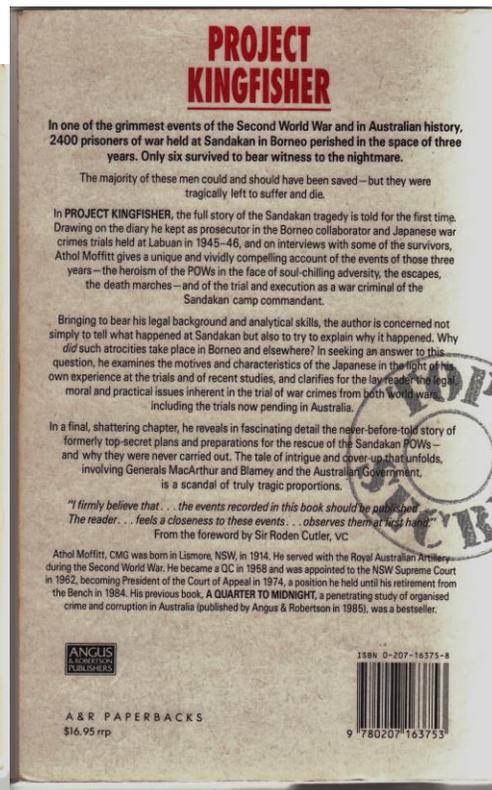
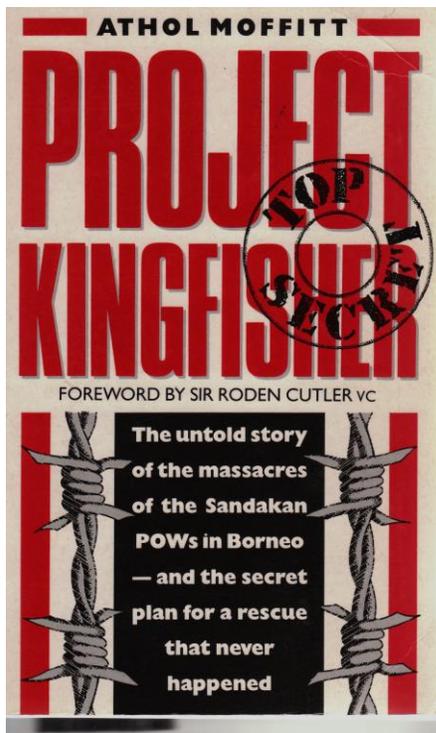
X Force was broken up, 'Glenearn' and 'Emp. Spearhead' (539 Flotilla) were sent down to Cairns and Townsville to train the Australian Army for amphibious landings, the other ships were sent to various destinations around the SW Pacific, and now as a unit of the USN we were given a number, HMS Glenearn became HMS PZ 47 or something like that, the USN gave us a pair of black shoes on loan to put us in line with US crews, a US Admiral came on board and we paraded for his inspection, he said that he had never before seen such well kept and highly polished shoes so he said that we could keep them.

The Australian troops came on board in their faded jungle greens and slouch hats, they had a yellowish tinge to their skins that they said was due to the Atabrin anti malaria tablets that they had to take, among the first to come on board was a bloke who stopped and looked around, then said 'I've been on this ship before, this is the ship that evacuated us off of Crete (1941), Captain Hutchison had the troops and the ships company assemble on deck to explain the programme, he started off by introducing himself, then said 'I don't like Australians!!' ----- 'I was waiting for my wife outside a cinema in the West End of London and these Australians asked me what time the last feature started !!' this brought a laugh, (this was a reference to cinemas having a uniformed commissionaire outside) and everyone settled down, the troops were on board for a week at a time, with landings every day, then back to port weekend for the next lot, a run ashore was 'different' the town and bars were full of servicemen, the pubs closed at 6pm, so about 5.45pm everyone bought as many drinks as was possible, lined them up outside on the footpath against the wall, when the doors were closed we all kept going for another 30 min or so outside on the footpath!!

On the first run in to the beach with the Aussies at the beginning of the exercises, one bloke said 'how far out are you going to drop us, as on a previous exercise a couple of months ago, with the USN when they dropped us off we had to grab 'Shorty' under the armpits to stop him disappearing' Shorty was nodding his head in agreement, I said that we would put them on the beach with the possibility that they wouldn't even get their feet wet, he said 'yair I've heard that before' or something like that, at the end of the day after being hoisted back on board I looked at his feet, he grinned and said 'not even damp', it was on Trinity Beach that we were instructed to practice re-embarking troops from the beach for an operation on N'th Borneo, but we heard no more, except that Gen. Mc Arthur now needed every ship that he could muster for the Philippine campaign, the troops would then take off for the 'Tablelands' and if they could they would try to get

a crew member to buy them a bottle of tomato sauce, “ to help down the bully beef, can’t buy it on the’ Tablelands” , ‘Taylor makes’ (cigarettes)were virtually non existent and in very short supply.

Many years after the war I read a book ‘Project Kingfisher’ that had been endorsed by Sir Roden Cutler VC; at Sandakan on Nth Borneo there were 2400 allied POWs 1700 Aust and 700 British to build an aerodrome for the Japanese, there was a plan to rescue these POWs, 600 Aust paratroops were on standby on the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland, the US was to supply the planes, the paratroops were to secure the area at Sandakan then the landing craft [from X Force] were to come in and take the POWs off, the planes were never supplied, the airborne troops and the landing craft were ready,---- p’haps it was already too late.



When a fully laden landing craft hits the beach the troops run out, the craft is lightened so can go astern, therefore to re embark troops from the beach the craft has to slowly move astern so as to keep afloat, otherwise it gets stuck, this we had to practice we were told “ for an operation on Nth Borneo in conjunction with Aust. Troops, and the USN had given us the OK as Nth Borneo was British territory “ for some reason the planes were not supplied, there were only 6 survivors, all escapees, all Aust. But through guilt or some other reason there is denial now that there ever was such a plan, but there is no doubt in my mind that we had practiced for just such an operation, on Trinity Beach, Nth Queensland, also we had the go ahead from the US Navy, late Nov 1944, 6 survivors out of 2400 = 1 in 400 or 99.75 % death rate, appalling, even the infamous Burma Railway didn’t have this percentage, and to add to their woes they were even bombed by the US Air force. No British POW, Survived Sandakan to tell their story that does not mean that they should be forgotten, 700 young British soldiers---worked as slaves----starved----

beaten----tortured---then killed!! And no known grave!! And if you ask about it, no one knows!!

The US had a policy we were told of not liberating, or deploying if it could be avoided in any territory that belonged to an imperial power, as they did not condone empires, to liberate one nation from another to hand it to another was against their beliefs, but they gave us permission to take part in this operation as Nth. Borneo was British territory altho technically we were part of the US Navy, so to me it is ludicrous to say that no such operation was ever envisaged.

A book by Athol Moffit, Project Kingfisher, and the untold story of the massacres of the Sandakan POW's in Borneo— and the secret plan for a rescue that never happened, “Project” was an operation that involved Para troopers

The RN officers (no LCA experience) decided that they would borrow an LCA to take WRANS and Army girls on a trip to Magnetic Island, no marine crew, unfortunately the breakwater extended out further than they thought under water, they hit a submerged post, and the craft sank putting everyone in the water, and an end to the anticipated picnic, they had to swim for it, very embarrassing for the RN officers, the craft was bought back slung between two LCMs and hoisted on board the Chippy made it like new again, ‘Father’ was not amused, and issued orders that in future no LCAs were to be used without the marine crews.

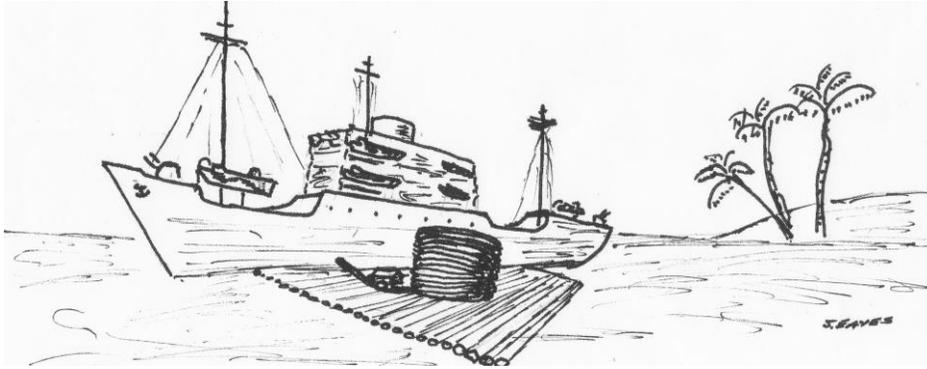
December 1944 saw ‘Glenearn’ back in New Guinea carrying troops to various places sometimes Australian troops, sometimes US troops, on the occasions when both were carried at the same time they had to be kept apart, they were not compatible, (no matter what present day politicians would like to tell us) we knew that ashore there had been many a punchup,... and a shoot out!! which according to the Aussies was all hushed up, the Aust. troopdeck exited into the port alleyway, and they were allowed forward to the Fore Well Deck, the US troopdeck exited into the starb'd alleyway and were allowed to go aft to the After Well Deck, and at specific places marines were on duty to make sure that they didn't come in contact with each other, a ‘sorry this part of ship out of bounds to troops’ was sufficient to turn them around, at times ‘Glenearn’ proceeded independently, sometimes ‘in company’ with the Emp. Spearhead, Xmas 1944 was spent at Hollandia (now Jayapura) in Humboldt Bay, Xmas dinner was as near as possible to the normal fare, no plastic in those days so the chickens were frozen in Hessian bags, some uncharitable soul reckoned that the bags would taste better than the chicken, I had no such complaint most of us enjoyed the day, in the islands courtesy of the USN we were issued with two bottles of beer per month per man, these were only issued and consumed whilst in port, in Nth New Guinea with temperatures well over 100degrees Fahrenheit even a bottle of warm beer was like nectar of the Gods, the few teetotal blokes had no problem swapping their bottles.

About this time we preferred to scrub and bleach our webbing belts, much cleaner, but the powers that be decreed that we must ‘Blanco’ them green, the green Blanco seemed to get everywhere and was not popular, Cpl Bates found out how much Blanco that the

NAFFI had in stock, we all chipped in a couple of bob, he bought up all the stock, threw it over the side, on parade when asked why our belts weren't Blancoed the answer was that the NAFFI had run out of stock !! Also in the tropics fresh water was a problem, only salt water showers, so when it seemed that the ship was heading into a rain squall, we would scamper below, strip off, and wait on the Fore well deck for the squall to hit with our soap, every body would lather up, the deck would be awash with soapsuds and hope the squall lasted long enough to rinse off the soap, a very nice cooling fresh water shower.

In the Pacific 'Glenearn' in addition to the landing craft also carried a small helicopter for submarine surveillance, a pad had been built on the port side, just aft of the fo'c'sle, Partly over the fore well deck, it could take off from there OK but could not land. It was on floats and would land on the water near the starb'd bow, there was a lifting eye in the centre of the blades and it was then was lifted in board with the derrick, and made fast, also as part of the ships company there was a 'Beach Party' of RN commandos, these were sometimes put ashore on a dark night by LCA, in the darkness among the islands, we would not know where we were, they were then picked up again before dawn, by sunrise 'Glenearn' was well away, they never discussed their work, but it was assumed that it was clandestine beach reconnaissance, any defaulters who's jail term was longer than that allowed to be served on board were put ashore at Lae where the main 'Glasshouse' for the SW Pacific was situated.

In Jan. 1945 'Glenearn' with US troops bound for Leyte called in to Manus Island, a signal was sent ashore with a request for water, the answer was 'no water available for 24 hrs' Captain Hutchison's answer was 'enough water on board to last ships company 24 hrs,-- none for 800 US troops', the water 'barge' was alongside in an hour or so, the 'barge' was a huge bamboo raft on which was a large round galv. water tank, generator, and pump, we then proceeded to Leyte and discharged the troops and returned to Hollandia, on the return the lookout reported 'Smoke coming from the sea' it was a submarines schnorkell, 'Action Stations' was sounded, 'Glenearn' went to full speed ahead, heeled over making a tight turn to port, and raced to the position, the sub had dived, on reaching my action station position on the starboard side I saw the tracks of two torpedoes race by, my companion said 'shit did you see that', so I know I wasn't seeing things, some depth charges, were dropped, and debris from packing cases surfaced, the Japs still had isolated garrisons that had been leapfrogged, and were being supplied by submarines with deck cargo, between Finschhaven and Hollandia the Japanese still occupied Wewak.



Taking on water 'Manus' style

There would have been hundreds and hundreds of ships in the SW Pacific, far from any major ports, fresh vegetables were a major problem, so we had de-hydrated potatoes, beef, onions, carrots, and apple?? Was that green stuff cabbage?? Who knows!! When word got around that fresh spuds were on board, everyone looked forward to dinner, we were like kids at a Xmas party, never was the humble spud so revered!! the flour contained it's fair share of weevils so the bread , pastry, and duff all had plenty of them, not that worried us as we remained a very healthy and happy mob, it certainly done us no harm, extract from the 'Glenearn' magazine Jan. 1945 " the record breaking weevil from the bakery this week went to No 13 mess. Protests are being lodged at this favouritism."

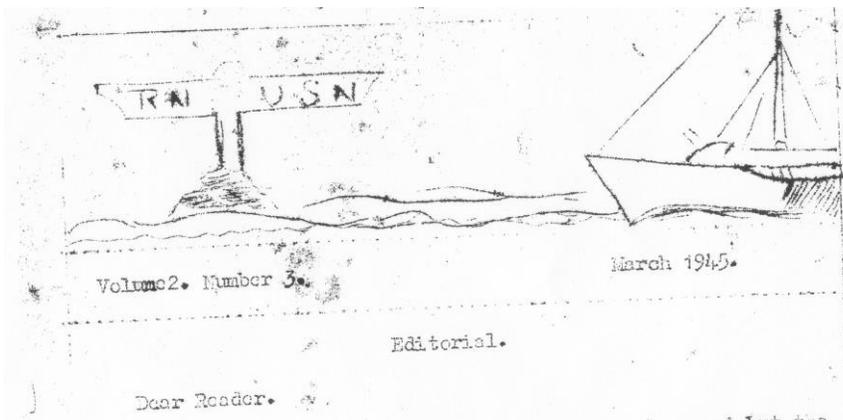
The next convoy from Hollandia was a slow one to Luzon, Captain Hutchison said that this was our last "run" for USN, 'Glenearn' was acting as vice- commodore, the convoy that had left a couple of days earlier had lost several ships, torpedoed, so lookouts were doubled and trebled, a lone LST going south passed the convoy, we heard later that it had been torpedoed in a position that the convoy had been in that morning, a couple of hours earlier, an Officer making his rounds asked me and my 'oppo' 'Scooter' (marine Scoot) why we hadn't reported something floating by , I said that I couldn't see anything, Scooter said that he couldn't either, the officer thought we were having a go at him and put us on a charge pending the MO report, an eye test revealed that we were both short sighted, so there was no more lookout duties for us, one of the ships carried a helicopter which weather permitting took off at first light and before dusk to do a submarine sweep around and well ahead of the convoy, 2or3 days out there were three small freighters that couldn't keep up with the convoy and they slowly dropped astern, they appeared to be making very heavy going, there was quite a swell running, you could only guess at the thoughts of the crews, they must have felt abandoned and very vulnerable with no escorts, we could only wish them God Speed, the troops we were carrying were combat troops, ordinary everyday blokes, quite unassuming, and polite, if they approached us on deck, it was always ' pardon me sir ', we found the 'sir' part disconcerting, I don't know if at times they had access to a drop of jungle juice or some trading with the crew for their tot, any thing was possible, but on occasion they would quietly break out into the Whippenpoof Song ?? it would be a big injustice to compare them to the Tutti Frutti lot, after Leyte 'Glenearn' was appointed convoy commodore, and headed for Lingayen Gulf in northern Luzon, 'Glenearn' usually zigzagged at the rear of the convoy, on arrival at the gulf 'Glenearn' surged ahead passing all the ships, the troops lined the rails giving

each ship a huge cheer as we passed, probably relief at the end of a long, slow , monotonous convoy, there were no ships lost in this convoy.

The troops were landed at Lingayen Gulf, there was a very heavy swell and the troops were beached with no problem, whilst being hoisted in our LCA, L\cpr. Jack Danks got out of the cox'n's cockpit before the davit had taken the weight, and was standing next to the chain holding the hoisting eye, it suddenly took the weight, the chain tightened, moved about 3in. and broke his thigh bone, there was quite a lot of shipping in the Gulf , very busy, a few miles away we could see and hear an air raid in progress, the Japs were attacking the Capital ships, but they didn't touch the transports, another convoy formed up and with 'Glenearn' as commodore headed south for Hollandia.

A day or so later 'Glenearn' left the convoy and closed with the coast, sailing down the coast there was a huge pall of smoke, mile after mile just lying above the land, we then entered Manila Bay, sailing around Corregidor [this was the island that Gen. Mc Arthur had escaped from, thus deserting his troops] we could plainly see the camouflaged concrete bunkers, but there was no movement, all quiet, the Japs had left, and looking down the bay, Manila was burning, smoke was billowing and roiling from the great fire that was consuming it, a terrible sight, then rejoining the convoy 'Glenearn' sailed for Hollandia.

At Hollandia personnel were embarked for passage to Sydney, among them were 3 very grateful happy and relieved British seamen who were now on their way home, rescued from a Japanese Prisoner of War camp near Cabanatuan City on Luzon, }{Los Banos Internment Camp??} in a daring raid by US Rangers {511 Airborne??} 25miles behind the lines, they bought them all out safely, quite a feat, the directive from the War Ministry in Tokyo dated August 1944 which laid out for the annihilation of all POW's, to stop them being rescued was known, as was the fate earlier of the US POW's at Puerto Princesa Prison Camp, at Palawan where the POW's were herded into 'air raid ' shelters , (slit trenches) then dowsed in petrol, set alight and machine gunned as they tried to escape.



GLENEARN MAGAZINE MARCH 1945

Heading around Milne Bay then south 'Glenearn' ran into a Cyclone, this was with us for 2 or 3 days, the whaler stowed on the fore well deck was smashed to pieces, Cpl Jones who was prone to seasickness under normal conditions, spent the whole time sitting on a bench outside the sick bay, then on to Sydney, there was a strong 'buzz' that the USN had given us the Philippine Liberation Medal, this was later confirmed at a meeting when Lieutenant Bell RM (543 Flotilla) was told by Admiral Lord Fraser that HMS Glenearn and two other RN ships been offered the Philippine Liberation Medal, but that Admiralty policy dictated that it could not be accepted.

On the 26.3.45, 535 Flotilla was taken off of 'Glenearn' and put onboard Emp. Battleaxe for passage back to UK accompanied by the Emp. Mace, and Emp. Arquebus with Rear Admiral Talbot on board, they left Sydney at the beginning of April 1945. 'Glenearn' went back to the Philippines to rejoin the British Pacific Fleet.

I do not know what duties the other 'Empire' ships were involved in, except that in Dec 1944 - Jan 1945 a few LCAs from Emps. Arquebus, Battleaxe and Mace took part in the small but vital operation by 'Dayforce' on the Jaba, Tekessi and Tuju rivers, the only way inland thru' the thick jungle on Bougainville, taking Aust. troops and stores up the rivers, LCVPs couldn't be used as their draft was too deep, even with LCAs it was often the case in the shallows of everyone over the side and push, an account of this operation was given in the Sept. 1945 Globe & Laurel.

536 Flotilla rescued 2 Australian coastwatchers from Bougainville, coastwatchers were men who had been left behind or landed at night usually on their own or with a native companion and reported back on enemy shipping movements and usually continuously hunted by the japs.

X Force would have been sent to the SW Pacific with the best of intentions, but on arrival the impression was that we were trespassing on someone else's turf, the USN probably had everything in hand, and we were surplus to requirements, island hopping was finished.

It seems that a large proportion of the ships company of 'Lothian' walked off the ship at Balboa; would this mutiny have given the wrong signal to the USN?? of which we were now part, and damaged the reputation of the RN which to them was an unknown quantity, 'Glenearn' and the 4 Emp. Ships were a well trained and disciplined assault flotilla group, 'Lamont' had a few problems, Bill Glenton in his book says that 'the LCAs were proved unsuitable for the Pacific campaign' How?? Why?? Our LCAs had no problems on any of the beaches in Australia, New Guinea, or the Philippines, and were indispensable on Bougainville, and there can be no comparison to the 'Higgins Boats', the LCA had a very low profile, were silent on approach and no bow wave, it was the craft of choice for special forces in Europe, including the US Rangers and delivered the troops on to the beach mainly 'dry', and were invaluable in Bougainville, very quiet up the rivers, he said that X Force had only one good ship 'Glenearn', that's his opinion, I don't think that 'Lothian' done the RN any favours with the USN.

In his book Bill Glenton said that the troop decks weren't suitable for the troops to be on for more than a day or so, I do not know what the troop decks were like on the 'Lothian' but on the 'Glenearn' troops were often on board for periods exceeding a week, from New York to Finschhaven, from Hollandia to Lingayen Gulf, after all this was not a luxury cruise ship, but a warship in time of war, 535 flotilla spent 8 weeks on the troopdeck of the 'Emp Battleaxe' from Sydney to Falmouth, and the facilities were quite adequate, no problems, the same as the crew.

Back on parade at Westcliffe, the same Drill Sergeant that was there in 1943, inspected the flotillas, he noticed about a quarter of an inch of green shirt cuff showing below the cuff of one marines battle dress (Mne. Bowden I think of 536) and bellowed " you will not come on my parade in a none issued shirt"

Mne "It is an issue, Sergeant "

Serg." And just where would you be issued with a green shirt ??"

Mne.. " Up the river on Bougainville, Sergeant"

Serg. " Where is Bougainville"

Mne. "Some place that you have never been to,..... Sergeant "

Serg. " GET YER 'AIR CUT "

We were back home.

Captain Colin A G Hutchison, DSO & Bar, OBE. RN. known on board as 'Father', it was said that he was the youngest captain in WW1, and the oldest in WW11, in his younger days he was part of a survey team that surveyed the S W Pacific, arriving at Finschhaven late one afternoon, he was told that the harbour was full and to anchor outside for the night, so he took 'Glenearn' farther along the coast, thru' a narrow opening, into a lagoon that lay behind the beach out of harms way, there was not enough room to swing, so the ship was made fast to trees either side, and went out stern first in the morning. there is an island off of the Nth Queensland coast, and a reef off the Solomon Islands named after him, at one time the accuracy of the Admiralty Charts were queried, they said that he bristled and let it be known in no uncertain term that they were part of his work.

' Jimmy' was [Jimmy the one, known as Jimmy, is the second in command of HM ships] Commander R N Hardman-Jones, he was a very large man with an exaggerated plum in his mouth, at a ships concert when he was mimicked no one enjoyed the joke more than he did, he always went ashore with a bike, one of those big, heavy 'no nonsense' bikes, and when on watch as corporal of the gangway at night, it was not unusual to see one, two, at times even three ratings matelot or marine roll up at the last minute where the Commander had given them his bike so that they wouldn't be adrift, he would walk up later and claim his bike, the petrol for the LCAs was stored under the marines messdeck, on the 9. 4. 1945 there was an explosion with many casualties, Commander Hardman-Jones was killed in a second explosion while down on the

mess deck rescuing the injured from the first explosion, there was also a small seamen's mess under too, it happened at 'stand easy'.

Aug. 1944 the War Ministry in Tokyo issued this directive outlining a Policy of Final Disposition of POWs

When the battle situation becomes urgent the POWs will be concentrated and confined in their location and kept under heavy guard until preparations for final disposition will be made. Although the basic aim is to act under superior orders, individual dispositions may be made in (certain) circumstances, whether they are destroyed individually or in groups, and whether it is accomplished by means of mass bombings, poisonous smoke, poisons, drownings, or decapitation, dispose of them as the situation dictates, it is the aim not to allow the escape of a single one, to annihilate them all, and not to leave any traces.

In Aug 1945 there were thousands of Allied POWs still in Japanese hands; there is no doubt in my mind that these orders would have been carried out, the massacre of US POWs at Puerto Princesa Prison Camp in the Philippines, and the massacre of Aust. and British POWs at Sandakan in Nth Borneo are evidence of what would have been-- under these circumstances only, I say three cheers for the Atom Bomb!!

Jack Eaves Bowman of LCA 994