

H.M.S. EXMOUTH



HMS Exmouth  
c/o GPO London

16th January 1940

*Dear Aileen*

Thank you ever so much for the nice warm blanket that you so kindly sent to me, it will certainly keep me nice and cosy on the bridge while steering the ship.

It is very cold indeed at sea at this time of the year and during wartime we spend far more time out, than in harbour.

We sailor men are very grateful to the girls and boys of Stanton Road School and the teachers, for all the lovely woollen things, books, sweets and the cigarettes that we have received, all these and the nice letters make us very happy and proud to think that we have so many friends.

You say you had a grand Xmas, well, that's fine, it is a pity that its only comes once a year, isn't it? I hope you and all the school have a very happy New Year and that very soon the war will be over and your Uncle in France and Brother-in-law out in Palestine return safely home, I am sure you will be very glad to have them back once more.

The hat ribbon and badge will help you remember the "Exmouth" especially when you say your prayers, the badge is worn by the torpedo coxswain or the man that steers the ship on the bridge, it is a pretty badge and I think you will like it.

Perhaps you would like me to tell you what we sailors do in wartime, I think the censor will let me tell you, because a nice little girl like you, would not think of telling the Germans. I will try and make it interesting with a few pictures.

To start my story, we must start with HMS Exmouth lowering an anchor, then a whistle is heard, that means the Captain <sup>Fig.1</sup> has arrived on board, we then get our anchor up and the Captain makes his way onto the bridge, the Coxswain is on the steering wheel waiting for the order to put the Engine Room <sup>Fig.2</sup> telegraphs to "FULL AHEAD", the Captain gives the order and the men in the Engine Room start the engines as in the picture on the right. The pointers on the big clock-like face points to the order the steam valve is opened and we are off.



Fig 1.jpg

Fig 2 .jpg



We are now on our way to meet the ships that are bringing the food from our little friends . So while the butcher <sup>Fig 3</sup> cuts the meat up for our dinner the remainder of the crew are very busy.

Fig 3.jpg



Fig 4.jpg



Fig 5.jpg



Fig 6.jpg



Fig 7.jpg



Cleaning the guns <sup>Fig 4</sup> so that they are ready to fire at the enemy, the Torpedo men are loading their torpedoes into the tubes <sup>Fig 5</sup>, and sailors are keeping a sharp 'lookout' on the bridge for hostile aircraft and submarines <sup>Fig 6</sup>.

Presently the wireless operators hear a signal for help <sup>Fig 7</sup>, from a ship that is being attacked, the Captain orders more steam on the engines and the Stokers open the valves <sup>Fig 8</sup>. The engines gather speed and our ship is after the Germans to teach them not to interfere with our Merchant Ships <sup>Fig 9</sup>. The order is passed to 'load' the guns <sup>Fig 10</sup>, the shell is rammed in to breach and we are ready.

Very soon we sight the 'Nazi' submarine <sup>Fig 11</sup>, and when they see us coming, submerge but too late, we make straight for the spot where 'she' dived and drop our 'depth charges' <sup>Fig 12</sup> and that submarine will not sink anymore of our food ships.

Sometimes we find survivors swimming about, so we send our boats <sup>Fig 13</sup> to pick them up, because although they are our enemies we just cannot leave them to drown.

Fig 8.jpg



Fig 9.jpg



Fig 10.jpg



Fig 11.jpg



Fig 13.jpg



Fig 12.jpg



Of course is not only submarines that we have got to look out for, it may be one of the enemy Battleships like the 'Graf Spee' that our gallant comrades fought until 'she' scuttled herself if we do meet one of these we fire one or our torpedoes at her and save them the trouble of sinking, herself. Very often you read in your daily papers of attacks on our ships by 'bombers', well if they come while we are about we give them a very hot time with guns like you see at the top and on the right.



Fig 14.jpg



Fig 15.jpg



Fig 16.jpg

Having foiled the Germans, we arrive in harbour and our convoy of merchants ships are told by signal to drop anchor <sup>Fig 17</sup> and unload the food stuffs, while we take in more oil fuel so, that we are ready for the next rip, which is sometimes waiting for us.



Fig 17.jpg



Fig 18.jpg



Fig 19.jpg



Fig 20.jpg

The postman is sent ashore to bring aft the mails, and you should see how happy sailors are when they see a big parcel from their little friends at Stanton Rd School, they gather together and read their letters <sup>Fig 18</sup> and open their little parcels sent by the girls and boys that so kindly think of them while they are at sea.

When we are lucky enough to have a day or so in harbour, we clean our ship, remove all the salt spray from the paint; sometimes we send a diver <sup>Fig 19</sup> down to have a look at the bottom of our ship, just to see there is nothing wrong. When the weather is nice and warm sailors just love to take off their clothes and dive overboard for a nice swim <sup>Fig 20</sup>. Of course it so far too cold at present.

The young sailors sometimes go to school on board so that they can get higher ranks <sup>Fig 21</sup>.

Fig 21.jpg



Well little friend, I think you have got some idea now of how we sailor men carry on in the Royal Navy, I hope you will let all the other little girls and boys read this letter, so they will all know how HMS Exmouth helps to bring their food home, and remember before you go to sleep, to say a little prayer for the sailors.

It is nearly time to get our anchor up again, so I must catch the post with this letter so 'Cheerio' little friend and God Bless all the boys and girls at Stanton Road School from the man on the bridge.

*Ernest Davies CPO*  
Coxswain