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Ophir: Revisiting the 1901 Imperial
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Abstract: This article takes a fresh look at the 1901 royal tour of the British Empire by the future George V and Queen Mary on HMS *Ophir*. This tour has been examined by several scholars, who have tended to concentrate on a single individual dominion, i.e., Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or South Africa. Discussion has focused on local responses to the tour, and in particular to the royal couple. This article, in contrast, considers the tour as a single, global voyage, which involved more sea days than port days. It also moves beyond the royal couple to include the passengers and crew of both HMS *Ophir* and the accompanying British warships. By exploring a variety of individual shipboard accounts, in particular the illustrated journal of Petty Officer Harry Price and the published tour volume of Assistant Press Secretary Donald McKenzie Wallace, along with the personal diaries of the royal couple and an accompanying journalist's description, the article explores the various, overlapping meanings of the tour for its diverse participants. In turn, it helps to clarify the class, gender, and imperial dimensions of both the royal tour and the British world c.1901.

Keywords: Royal tour, British Empire, ship, sailor, George V, 1901

The 1901 imperial royal tour of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, son and daughter-in-law of the new British monarch, Edward VII, was a blockbuster. This grand tour of the British Empire dominated local as well as metropolitan newspapers, and was seen as a key moment in the evolution of both the dominions (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and, later, South Africa) and the British royal family. The tour was a direct response to two developments. Most important was the invitation to the heir to the British throne to open the first federal Australian Parliament, in Melbourne, following the federation of the six Australian colonies in 1900.¹ A second, but increasingly important, reason for the tour was Britain's ongoing war with the Boer republics in South Africa. Britain had received generous military assistance from Canada, New Zealand, and, in particular, Australia, but as the war dragged on and details emerged of the inhumane British treatment of incarcerated Boer women and children, public support for the war dwindled both at home and in the former colonies. A royal tour was seen as a timely demonstration of British gratitude to the empire. This gesture was made more poignant and meaningful by the sudden, if long-expected, death of Queen Victoria in 1901. By allowing the seven-and-a-half-month long overseas tour of his son and daughter-in-law to proceed, Edward VII demonstrated his family's willingness to place national and imperial priorities above private grief. Similarly, by

¹ Canada had federated in 1867; South Africa would do so in 1910, while New Zealand had rejected the offer to join the Australian federation in 1900.

urging that Canada be added to the itinerary—which significantly extended the tour and thus separation from their young children and ageing parents—the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (later George V and Queen Mary), demonstrated their personal commitment to the empire. Through the tour, the younger generation of the British royal family performed its new status as imperial leaders.

The 1901 tour has been examined in a series of important scholarly journal articles as well as popular accounts, most of which have focused on a single dominion. These have tended to view the tour as a response to an individual invitation from that country and concentrated on the time spent there, rather than the journey as a whole.² This approach mirrors the approach of local journalists at the time, and stresses variously the Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, or South African perspective of the tour. The emphasis in these accounts is on the ceremonies ashore involving the royal couple, dominion officials, and the crowds who welcomed them, as reported in local as well as London newspapers. This reflects the attitude of the royal tourists, who worked hard to ensure that local residents, who were the king's subjects, felt that they were receiving the royals' full attention and individual interest. As the Duke wrote to his mother, "It is all very well for you & Papa to say we mustn't do so much but it is impossible to help it. Our stay in each place is so short, that everything has to be crammed into it."³ In his speeches ashore the Duke flattered colonists on their particular commercial, social, and cultural progress. But he also noted the dominions' role within the imperial family, frequently citing the example of their recent contribution to the South African War as proof of their ongoing devotion to empire.⁴ Biographies of the royal couple have understandably focused on their personal responses to the entire tour, while recent scholarship has considered the great boost the imperial progress gave their respective reputations at a particularly important moment of transition from one monarch to another, from warfare in South Africa to hoped-for victory, and, in the case of Australia, from a set of separate colonies to a unified commonwealth.⁵

While valuable, such approaches, whether concentrating on individual dominions, the empire, or the royal couple, are insufficient to provide a full understanding of this epic journey. The party travelled approximately 50,000 miles over seven-and-a-half months, and spent more time aboard ship and in international waters (125 sea-days vs 106 harbour days) than in any

² See: Jane Connors, *Royal Visits to Australia* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2015), 28-43; Phillip Buckner, "Casting daylight upon magic: Deconstructing the royal tour of 1901 to Canada," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 31, no. 2 (2003): 150-189; Wade Henry, "Imagining the Great White Mother and the Great King: Aboriginal Tradition and Royal Representation at the 'Great Pow-wow' of 1901," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 11, no. 1 (2000): 87-108; Judith Bassett, "A Thousand Miles of Loyalty: The Royal Tour of 1901," *New Zealand Journal of History* 21, no. 1 (1987): 125-138; Phillip Buckner, "The Royal Tour of 1901 and the Construction of an Imperial Identity in South Africa," *South African Historical Journal* 41, no. 1 (1999): 324-348.

³ Royal Archives, Geo. V, AA 36 55, quoted in James Pope-Hennessy, *Queen Mary, 1867-1953* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959), 369.

⁴ See, for example, the Duke's speech in Auckland on 11 June 1901, quoted in Donald McKenzie Wallace, *The Web of Empire: A Diary of the Imperial Tour of their Royal Highnesses the Duke & Duchess of Cornwall and York in 1901: By Sir Donald McKenzie Wallace* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1902), 222.

⁵ James Pope-Hennessy, *Queen Mary* and Kenneth Rose, *George V* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983); Charles Reed notes that the Empire became a priority for George in a way it had never been for previous British royals. See Charles Reed, *Royal Tourists and the making of the British world, 1860-1911* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

particular part of the British Empire.⁶ Furthermore, the vast majority of people on this royal tour (about 550 on the main vessel *Ophir* alone, with hundreds more on the warships *Diadem*, *Juno*, *Niobe*, *Royal Arthur*, and *St George*, which took turns as escort vessels), were Royal Navy sailors, marines, and Orient Line stewards rather than royals or their civilian servants and assistants.⁷ Shipboard workers (mostly men, though the wife of the laundryman was listed in the *Ophir*'s complement) outnumbered those passengers who worked (primarily) on the land portion of the tour (domestic servants, lords and ladies-in-waiting, equerries, aides-de-camp, the Duke's private secretary and assistant private secretary, official artists).⁸ All of these workers—private secretaries as well as sailors—appear only in the background of most contemporary and subsequent accounts, mere bit-players in the shadow of the royal stars. This article, by contrast, considers the tour in its entirety as a long ocean voyage rather than as a series of separate visits to different countries, and by a fully-manned ship (which in turn was accompanied by several other fully-manned ships) rather than just a royal couple.⁹ This study thus explores the voyage of HMS *Ophir* and, to a lesser extent, its companion vessels—not just that of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York. By doing so it builds on the recent work of scholars such as Jonathan Hyslop, Tamson Pietsch, and Frances Steel, each of whom, with separate focal points and methodologies, has drawn attention to the development of a 'British Sea' in the late nineteenth century, and the ways that lengthy voyages, especially by steamship, shaped the racial, national, and imperial understandings of 'British' shipboard workers as well as passengers.¹⁰

The *Ophir* left Portsmouth on 16 March 1901 and crossed the English Channel to the Mediterranean Sea (Gibraltar, Malta), then passed through the Suez Canal (Egypt) to the Indian Ocean (Aden, Colombo), and through the Straits of Malacca (Singapore) down through the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean to Australia (Albany, Melbourne, and Sydney), across the Tasman Sea to New Zealand (Auckland, Wellington, and Lyttelton/Christchurch) and back again (Hobart, Adelaide, Albany, Fremantle/Perth) before returning to the Indian Ocean (Mauritius), visiting the Cape of Good Hope (Durban and Cape Town, South Africa), into the

⁶ Wallace recorded that the *Ophir* travelled 33,097 nautical miles (38,118 statute miles) that, when added to train travel, totaled 50,718 miles—demonstrating Price's claim that they travelled "over 50 thousand miles." Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 441. Harry Price, *The Royal Tour 1901 or the Cruise of H.M.S. Ophir being a lower deck account of their Royal Highnesses, the duke and duchess of Cornwall and York's voyage around the British Empire* (Exeter: Webb & Bower, 1980).

⁷ Wallace gives the figure of "nearly 550 souls on board," while the Duke claimed on 17 March that "we are 559 on board all told." Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 19; "Diary of Geo V June 1898 to April 14 1901," R[oyal] A[rchives] GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 17 March. I gratefully acknowledge the permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to make use of material from the Royal Archives.

⁸ Wallace notes: "Besides the officers of the Royal Navy, a list of whom is given in Appendix A, the *Ophir* carries 125 bluejackets, 100 marines, 7 engineer officers, with an engine-room complement of 88; 37 bandsmen, a purser, 50 stewards, some 30 private servants, 20 boys, 9 cooks, 3 bakers, 2 butchers, 1 laundryman and his wife, 1 printer, and 2 hairdressers. All told, there are nearly 550 souls on board." Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 19.

⁹ Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 19. There were also many live animals aboard: individual pets and ship's companions, and gifts presented to the royal couple.

¹⁰ See: Jonathan Hyslop, "Steamship Empire: Asian, African and British Sailors in the Merchant Marine c.1880-1945," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 44, no. 1 (2009): 49-67; Tamson Pietsch, "A British Sea: making sense of global space in the late nineteenth century," *Journal of Global History* 5, no. 3 (2010): 423-446; and Frances Steel, *Oceania under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism c.1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

Atlantic Ocean (St Vincent in the Cape Verde Islands (to coal), then Quebec City, Montreal, Halifax in Canada and St John's, Newfoundland), and then finally crossing the Atlantic to the English Channel, where she docked at Portsmouth on 1 November 1901. This voyage was designed to include as many parts of the British Empire as possible, and indeed many commentators noted, as the Duke reported proudly in a speech given at London's Guildhall at the end of the voyage, "it is a matter of which all may feel proud that, with the exception of Port Said, we never set foot on any land where the Union Jack did not fly."¹¹ Nevertheless, the tour was also planned around the ship's requirements, in particular the need for regular coal refuelling. As Donald McKenzie Wallace noted, "between New Zealand and the Pacific coast [of Canada] the coaling stations are few and far between," which partly explained the decision to travel to Canada via the Atlantic Ocean, which was more plentifully equipped with coaling stations.¹² Maritime considerations shaped the voyage, as did public relations, and tension flared when the decisions of Captain Alfred Leigh Winsloe, the Commodore and thus senior naval officer in charge of the voyage, were seen to conflict with the interests of the journalists and other staff working to promote the royal tour. When, despite careful planning, the escort ships reached Melbourne too late for the journalists aboard to view the royal couple's entry into the city, their complaints produced a sharp response from the Commodore, who apparently disliked passengers querying the naval leadership's decisions over ship movements.¹³

As a global voyage, this tour followed in the footsteps of several late-nineteenth-century British overseas royal tourists, including the future Duke of Cornwall and York himself. George's uncle, Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh (1844-1900), made a series of pioneering royal voyages on HMS *Galatea* between 1867 and 1871, in his dual role as an officer of the Royal Navy and British prince. As adolescents, George and his elder brother, Albert Victor (1864-92), travelled the world on HMS *Bacchante* between 1879 and 1881, combining naval training with a princely education.¹⁴ While the Duke's voyage on HMS *Ophir* retained the naval flavour of these earlier voyages (the *Ophir* was commissioned as a naval vessel, was accompanied by British warships, and participated in naval ceremonies of welcome throughout the voyage), it also added a new element. Unlike earlier royal transports, which were either warships or—for shorter voyages—royal yachts, the 6,910-ton, 10,000 horsepower *Ophir*, launched in 1891, was a modern, if relatively small, commercial passenger liner. The choice of this luxurious vessel, which was completely refurnished for the tour, reflected the novel nature of this royal voyage—for the first time, a royal couple was making a global journey. The presence of the Duchess and, perhaps, that of the three ladies-in-waiting who accompanied her (along with more lowly female maids and other servants), demanded a greater level of shipboard comfort and style, which publicity photographs of the refurbished interiors amply reveal.¹⁵

¹¹ Quoted in Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 444.

¹² Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 5.

¹³ Wallace to Francis Knollys, 16 May 1901, RA VIC/ADDC7/2/B.

¹⁴ See: Cindy McCreery, "Something borrowed, something blue: Prince Alfred's precedent in overseas British royal tours, c.1860-1925," in *Royals on Tour: Politics, Pageantry and Colonialism*, ed. Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).

¹⁵ Pope-Hennessy, *Queen Mary, 1867-1953*, 365-66; Alan Major, *Royal Yachts* (Stroud: Amberly, 2011), 103; "H.M.S. 'Ophir' 23rd March, 1901 ... Photographs taken for the Orient Line," Album and loose photographs, Royal

HMS *Ophir*

The choice of the *Ophir* also signalled the success of Britain's commercial fleet, and in particular the prestige now associated with firms such as the Orient Line. From humble beginnings in the late eighteenth century, by 1901 the Orient Line, soon to form a partnership with P&O, was considered prestigious enough to transport the King's son and daughter-in-law on their epic journey around the empire. When colonists gathered along the shoreline to watch the Duke and Duchess enter Sydney Harbour, or Port Phillip Bay near Melbourne, or the approaches to Durban, Auckland, or Montreal, they did not see any old ship. Rather they saw a vessel whose new name 'HMS *Ophir*' (using the prefix 'HMS' [Her/His Majesty's Ship] given to British warships rather than 'SS' [Single-Screw Steamship] or 'RMS' [Royal Mail Ship] used for commercial vessels) combined the tradition of the world's largest and most impressive fighting force along with the mystique of the ancient past—'Ophir' was a place mentioned in the Bible famous for its wealth. In this period, ship names often conveyed the aspirations of their owners and, more broadly, the state itself. Britain's navy had a genius for choosing evocative ship names, with an emphasis on fighting spirit and/or history. Among the British battleships *Ophir* met during the cruise were HMS *Devastation*, *Illustrious*, *Magnificent*, *Majestic*, *Renown*, *Resolution*, and *Victorious*.¹⁶ By contrast, commercial shipping lines frequently named ships with the same first letter, emphasizing the size and continuity of their fleet (the Orient Line from the 1890s favoured 'O' names like *Omrah*, *Orama*, *Orcades*, etc.) Beyond the evocative name, the *Ophir* demonstrated modern ship style and comfort, and modernity in general. Throughout the tour she became a celebrity, with thousands of colonists crowding aboard during her visiting days. *Ophir* thus combined the glory of Britain's naval past with the promise of her prosperous commercial future—a future that, as numerous commentators repeated, depended on closer ties between Britain and her dominions.

The ship significantly shaped the experience of the royal tour for those who travelled on her. In order to recover this experience, instead of focusing on land-based, national, or royal accounts, I compare two major shipboard accounts: those of Harry Price, a Royal Navy sailor, and Sir Donald McKenzie Wallace, acting private secretary to the Duke of Cornwall and York. A third account, by the journalist William Maxwell of the *Standard* newspaper, provides some additional context, as do the diaries of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, photograph albums, loose photographs, and a royal album of tour sketches by Sydney Prior Hall.¹⁷ Each account reflects the particular perspectives and limitations of its creator. None of these accounts reveal, at least not directly, what their fellow sailors, passengers, local governors, or ordinary men, women, and children in the dominions thought about the tour.

Photograph Collection, Windsor, RCIN 2582075-2582103. Lady Katherine Coke, Lady Mary Lygon, and Mrs Bridget Keppel (wife of the Duke's aide-de-camp Derek Keppel) served as ladies-in-waiting.

¹⁶ See: "Appendix C: British war-vessels met during the cruise," in Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 477-478.

¹⁷ William Maxwell, *With the 'Ophir' Round the Empire: An account of the tour of the Prince and Princess of Wales 1901* (London: Cassell and Company, 1902); RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 16 March-2 November; RA QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 16 March- 2 November; "HMS *Ophir*" album and loose photographs, RCIN 2582075-2582103, "Photographs of HMS *Ophir*, 1901," RCIN 2939139-2939153 and Queen Mary's Album volume 7, RCIN 230142-2918700, Loose Photographs 2810567, all Royal Photograph Collection, Windsor; Sydney Prior Hall sketches in "Voyages of HMS *Ophir* 1901-2 and HMS *Medina* 1911-12," Royal Print Room, Windsor.

Still, by describing the experience of a working sailor and working passenger aboard the *Ophir* (and, in the case of Maxwell, a journalist travelling mostly on one of the escort ships), as well as the royal passengers themselves, they demonstrate that the 1901 royal tour was an extended sea voyage as well as a set of individual dominion visits, a project which involved many participants beyond the royal couple, and an opportunity for new, if usually tightly controlled, encounters with other classes, genders, and races.¹⁸

Price and Wallace

Petty Officer Harry Price (1877-1965) and Sir Donald McKenzie Wallace (1841-1919) make an odd pair. As a twenty-four-year-old working-class sailor (albeit one whose family aspired to middle-class status), amateur artist, and champion angler from Birmingham, Price's career aboard the *Ophir* contrasts sharply with that of Wallace, a sixty-year-old affluent and well-educated Scot who worked variously as a journalist, editor, and royal private secretary (senior press aide). Price bunked down in the hot and crowded sailors' quarters on the mess deck, while Wallace retired to his comfortable cabin immediately below the *Ophir*'s splendid saloon dining room. Still, their lives reflect some interesting parallels.¹⁹ Price left his home and family for the sea at age sixteen. Wallace was orphaned at age fifteen, and used his inheritance to embark on over a decade of self-directed study at Scottish and continental European universities. Both eventually chose employment that allowed them to spend much of their lives travelling the world.

Price rose steadily in the Royal Navy, from the lowest rank of boy to warrant officer, petty officer 2nd class, a testament to his industry and aptitude. Price's selection for the royal tour reflects his good standing in the Navy. In 1907, however, Price was demoted two ranks due to his brief participation in a mutiny, though his role in ending the mutiny stood him in good stead and he later was restored one rank. Wallace's knowledge of foreign affairs, honed through his extensive travels in Russia and the Ottoman Empire, which led to the publication of well-received books, then work at *The Times*, drew the admiration of both the British and Russian authorities. He served as private secretary to the British Viceroy of India, Lord Dufferin, and later accompanied the Russian Tsarevitch (the future Tsar Nicholas II) during his journey to India in 1890-91. Price and Wallace excelled in their chosen pursuits, and demonstrated a lifelong curiosity about the world beyond Britain—while retaining a firm conviction of British cultural, political, and racial superiority. This made them ideal candidates for the assignment that brought them together (there is no evidence that they ever conversed or even met, though they may well have crossed paths) aboard HMS *Ophir* on the 1901 royal tour of the British Empire.

¹⁸ This article focuses on class and gender, with a forthcoming article to discuss racial attitudes and encounters. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge here that all of the *Ophir* accounts discussed here paid attention to race, and that racial encounters were frequently described, sometimes in significant detail. In particular, the relative reliability and efficiency of coal loaders was discussed in relation to their racial background.

¹⁹ Jack Price, "Harry Price 1877-1965," in Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*, i-ii; G. E. Buckle, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, "Wallace, Sir Donald McKenzie (1841-1919)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/36702.

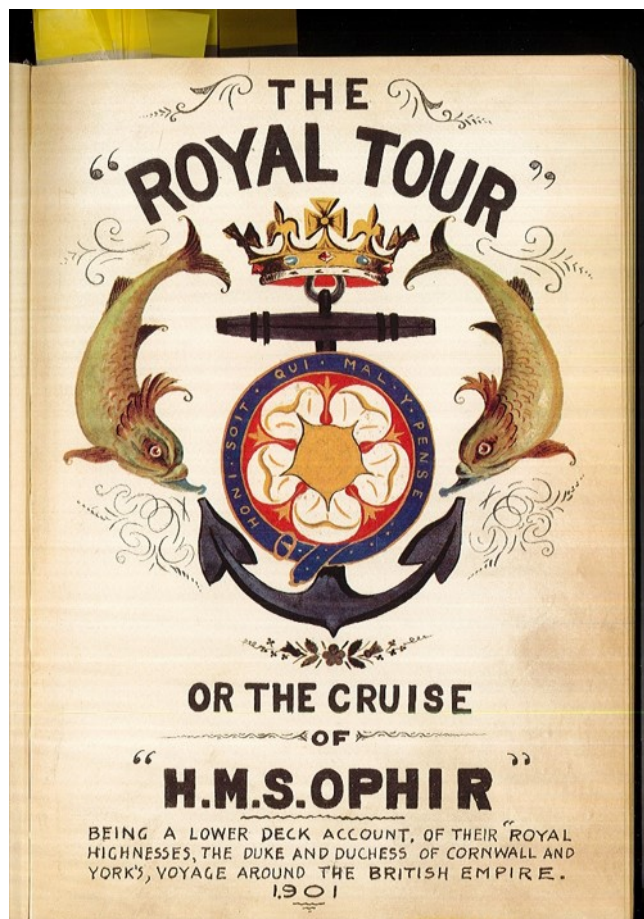


Figure 1: Title page hand-drawn in pen-and-ink by the author, Harry Price, *The Royal Tour or the Cruise of HMS Ophir* (written 1901, published 1980.) Volume in the collection of the author.

As these two men's lives differed greatly, so do their accounts. Price's remarkable hand-written, highly illustrated though unpaginated account was created during the journey but only published, in a facsimile edition, in 1980, fifteen years after his death (Figure 1).²⁰ It remains unclear exactly who Price envisaged would read his approximately 200-page work, though at several points in the text he addresses the general reader, and at one point describes his journal as a "log-book" and an account by a lower-deck seaman of an "historic occasion." He also notes proudly that, during the second half of the voyage, whilst en route to Mauritius, the Duke asked to view the journal and that the royal couple then expressed their pleasure in it and a desire to see it again at a later stage. Despite this indication of royal approval, nothing more is mentioned of its circulation among the royal party, nor of any plans for disseminating

²⁰ Price's 200-page text included 164 illustrations, including both small vignettes set into the text as well as half-page and even some full-page illustrations. A facsimile edition was published by the Exeter firm Webb & Bowser with an American edition by New York's William Morrow and Company; both appeared in 1980. I have used the latter edition, and have kept Price's sloppy spelling, grammar, and punctuation as it is reproduced in the facsimile.

it to a wider audience.²¹

Price's journal is perhaps best understood as an unusually lively, extensive, and well-illustrated adaptation of the logbook genre. All ships' captains were required to keep a daily log of the voyage, including details of the ship, crew and cargo, sea and wind conditions, distance travelled, sailors' work, disciplinary measures, and any other events of interest. Logbooks were taken very seriously by the Royal Navy, and used not only for record keeping but as a form of training (and writing discipline) for junior officers such as midshipmen, who often joined the navy as adolescents. Midshipmen were taught to illustrate their logbooks with voyage charts, and technical views of harbours and coastlines. Some included additional material such as photographs and humorous sketches of crewmembers.²² The archives of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, contain numerous examples, including the logbooks of midshipman C. M. Crichton Maitland, who later served as a lieutenant on HMS *Ophir* during the 1901 royal tour.²³ Many distinguished admirals' papers held by the Museum include their youthful logbooks and journals—suggesting that these officers, or perhaps their families, regarded these early efforts as evidence of their future promise and a worthy part of their professional papers. By contrast, few examples by ordinary sailors (enlisted men) or even those who made it to the rank of petty officer, like Harry Price, survive.²⁴ These men had less time and no training to create these records, and such records may not have been viewed as worth preserving by either the Navy or their own families.

By making his own logbook whilst aboard the *Ophir*, Price was demonstrating his literary and artistic ability, and also asserting the right of ordinary sailors to create shipboard records, which reflected their individual perspective and acknowledged their presence on and contribution to the voyage. Price's logbook may also indicate that on this special voyage aboard a civilian vessel, ordinary 'bluejackets' had fewer regular duties than when aboard a regular warship, at least whilst at sea. There were, for example, no guns to clean or fire aboard the *Ophir*. In port, however, Price emphasizes that the crew were often kept busy coaling, cleaning, and painting the ship. By directly addressing the general reader from time to time in his narrative, Price was claiming his rightful place as an authority, both on the royal tour and on naval life as experienced by ordinary sailors.

As we will see, Price several times made pointed observations about the very different treatment of sailors and officers both afloat and ashore. 164 colourful—if naively drawn—sketches complement Price's textual comments. There is an illustration on almost every page, ranging from small vignettes to half and even full-page illustrations. These sketches reveal Price's artistic confidence, which appears to be a product of both his family background and own outlook. Jack Price's biographical sketch describes a family of master builders in the bustling city of Birmingham, with the resources to fund (or at least allow) some relatives'

²¹ Its subsequent history, up until its publication in 1980, remains unclear. Neither the Duke nor the Duchess refers to Price's journal in their diaries.

²² See for example "LOG/N/39/1 Jan. 15 1897 to Sept. 1898, including logs on vessels HMS *Resolution*, *Collingwood*, *Royal Oak* and *Blake*. With photographs, hand-drawn and coloured flags, charts and plans pasted in," Archives, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

²³ Logbook of HMS *Tyne*, HMS *Warspite* and HMS *Royal Oak*, kept by Mid. C M Crichton-Maitland, 1892-94, LOG/N/R/33; Logbook of HMS *Royal Arthur* and HMS *Hyacinth*, kept by Mid. C M Crichton-Maitland, 1894-1896, LOG/N/R/34, Archives, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

²⁴ See the collection of logbooks LOG/N/R held in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

artistic ambitions; Price's brother was apparently a member of the Royal Academy of Arts, Britain's premier association of artists, while another family member became a minor poet. Price, however, evidently spent only a few weeks at Birmingham's School of Art before being told that there was nothing more they could teach him due to his great natural talent. In apparent disgust, Price quit both the school and the city and decided to join the Navy at the age of sixteen. Whether Price ever regretted not pursuing further artistic study or education is unknown, but his life story as well as his tour journal testifies to his assurance in his ability and right to express his views when—and however—he wished.²⁵ As a petty officer (i.e., a rank drawn from among the enlisted men), Price inhabited a somewhat anomalous position between officer and ordinary crewmember, yet his journal states his clear identification with the lower deck rather than the officer corps.

As the product of a respected author, who had already published major books on Russia and the Ottoman Empire, Wallace's *The Web of Empire* has a look and feel very different from Price's journal (Figures 2 and 3). The *Web's* 504 pages, gilt edging, and stamped cover (with an elegant border of repeating boat and fish motifs) convey its status as a weighty, authorized account, intended for sale to a well-heeled readership.

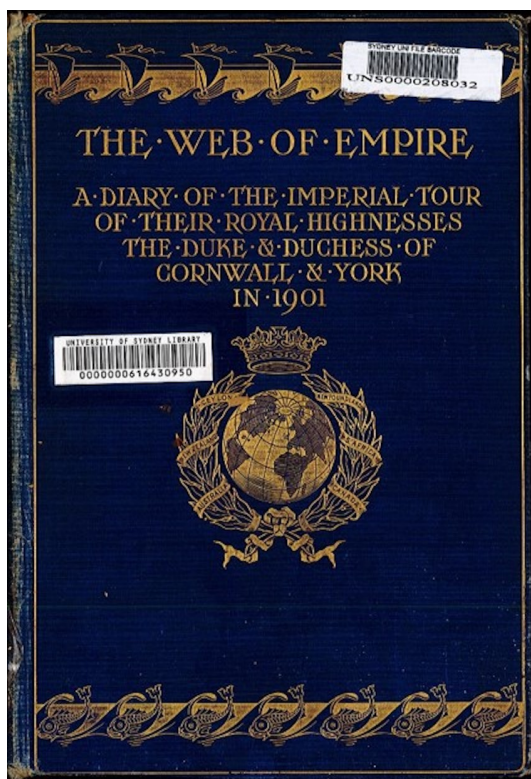


Figure 2: Cover of Donald McKenzie Wallace, *The Web of Empire* (1902). Volume in the University of Sydney Library.

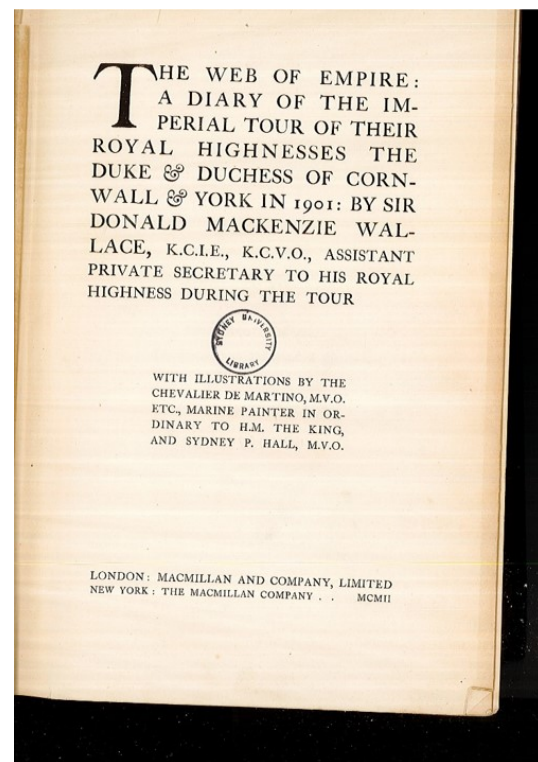


Figure 3: Title page of Donald McKenzie Wallace, *The Web of Empire* (1902). Volume in the University of Sydney Library.

²⁵ Jack Price, "Harry Price, 1877-1965," in Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*, i-ii.

Wallace's journalistic experience was evident in his skilful prose, which contrasted with Price's frequently awkward sentences and misspellings, compounded by the lack of editorial intervention or copyediting.²⁶ For Price, handwriting his journal as he travelled, the first draft was apparently the only draft, while Wallace had the luxury of editing and revising his text after the end of the journey. Wallace had a clear sense of his project and its audience—this was an officially approved record, dedicated with their permission to the royal couple, and hence included suitably deferential and discreet references to them. Wallace included details of the dominions' recent economic and social development, noted dominion contributions to the Boer War as well as details of honours conferred by the Duke on imperial officials or colonists overseas during the tour.²⁷ Whether or not they ever read this weighty tome, the royal couple certainly had the opportunity to do so; Wallace presented a copy to the Duke and this, as well as an additional copy and a 1903 abridged version intended for schools, are still held in the Royal Collection.²⁸

Web of Empire was intended for commercial issue soon after the tour, and it was duly published by the prestigious publisher Macmillan in 1902. It too was illustrated, but not by Wallace. Instead, the seventy-eight illustrations included photographs taken along the route by a variety of photographers, and sketches made by two professional artists who travelled with the *Ophir*. 'Chevalier' Eduardo de Martino was a former officer in the Italian navy who gained fame in Britain for his paintings of British warships and historic sea battles, while Sydney Prior Hall was best known for a wide variety of sketches published in the London illustrated weekly *The Graphic*.²⁹ Both artists were patronized by the royal family: Martino's work was purchased by Queen Victoria, and he held the official position of 'Marine Painter in Ordinary to H.M. the King.' Hall had accompanied the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) to India in 1875-1876, and his sketches of Indian rulers lined the 'Durbar corridor' at Queen Victoria's residence, Osborne (on the Isle of Wight), as well as Edward VII's Norfolk retreat, Sandringham. In addition to Wallace's *Web of Empire*, some of Hall's sketches were published in *The Graphic*, which employed him as a special correspondent for the tour.³⁰ An album in the Royal Collection of Hall's sketches aboard the *Ophir* contains numerous scenes aboard ship as well as ashore, and indicates the royal family's interest in having a permanent visual record of the tour, as does the Duchess of Cornwall and York's album of photographs, which contain both professional and amateur photographs taken during the cruise.³¹

Other Accounts

The *Standard* newspaper (elder sibling of the *Evening Standard*) also sent along a

²⁶ In addition to his work as a journalist and editor at *The Times* and also of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Wallace had published a classic two-volume work *Russia* (1877) as well as *Egypt and the Egyptian Question* (1883).

²⁷ Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 480-485.

²⁸ Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, RCIN 1054650; also RCIN 1094458 and RCIN 1128100.

²⁹ Maxwell's account indicates that Martino travelled, at least some of the time, on an escort ship like the *St George*, which explains Martino's numerous side views of the *Ophir* at sea.

³⁰ Mark Pottle, "Hall, Sydney Prior (1842-1922)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/52024.

³¹ "Voyages of HMS Ophir 1901-2 and HMS Medina 1911-12," album, Royal Print Room, RCIN 30941-31081 and Queen Mary Photograph Album, Volume 7, Royal Photograph collection, RCIN 230142-230168.

correspondent, William Maxwell; his volume *With the 'Ophir' Round the Empire* reworked individual newspaper articles he had contributed throughout the journey.³² Published in an inexpensive edition, without illustrations, by Cassell and Company in 1902, Maxwell's 319-page account was more accessible, both in terms of its plain writing style and its low cost, than either Price's or Wallace's accounts, with at least one edition earmarked for distribution in the empire itself.³³ By travelling mostly on the *St George*, one of several warships which took turns escorting the *Ophir*, Maxwell gained an understanding of ordinary naval crews' experience of the voyage, which was often different from (indeed, despite Price's complaints, perceived as worse than) that of both passengers and crew aboard HMS *Ophir*. While not addressing directly the paradox that *Ophir* functioned simultaneously as a warship and a commercial vessel, with regular naval sailors (bluejackets) working alongside Orient line personnel (stewards and engineers), the authors refer frequently to the protective presence of the warships which escorted *Ophir* throughout the voyage, as if the ship itself, like its royal passengers, was a precious celebrity which needed protection. While the *Ophir* encountered many foreign warships, these carried warm greetings rather than threats. The greatest challenge faced by the *Ophir* proved to be the weather, which this small passenger ship coped much better with than the larger accompanying warships!

Shipboard Space

There was much to distinguish Price's and Wallace's shipboard experiences on the *Ophir*. In many ways Price and Wallace, like the other (non-officer) crewmembers and passengers, undertook different journeys. Both aboard ship and ashore, these groups occupied separate and indeed highly segregated spaces. Like the watertight compartments that protected a leak in one section of the *Ophir* from spreading to the whole ship, the sleeping, eating, and entertainment quarters of passengers and crew were strictly divided. By and large the passengers occupied the upper decks and middle areas of the ship, while the crew was berthed aft and below. The Duke's diary, for example, notes that the passengers walked on the promenade deck, while the crew ate below on the mess deck.³⁴ The spatial segregation aboard the *Ophir* reflected standard practice aboard ships—and not just luxury passenger liners. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century civilian vessels as well as warships segregated people by class, gender, and occupation, and this segregation was enforced especially stringently during long, transoceanic voyages such as those of British and Irish convicts, and later a wide range of European immigrants to Australia. The goal was to preserve social and gender norms, to avoid the possibility of immoral liaisons (between working-class men and women, but also their superiors), as well as to minimize opportunities for disgruntled passengers and crew to attempt a mutiny. It created different *Ophirs*—those of sailors, officers, and passengers, whose

³² Other correspondents travelled on the tour including a Mr Watson who worked for Reuters.

³³ The edition I consulted was stamped "This Edition is printed for circulation in the Colonies and India only."

³⁴ Price complained of the heat and poor ventilation in his quarters, while Wallace wrote of his spacious cabin, located, along with those of other prominent assistants to the royal party, in a "quadrangle" nicknamed "Household Square," below the splendid dining saloon. Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 18. RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 28 July. The photographs produced for the Orient Line included images of the passengers' and officers' areas aboard the ship, and, perhaps surprisingly, the laundry—but not the crew's quarters. RCIN 2582075-2582103.

experiences overlapped but were not the same.

Time as well as space separated the groups aboard the *Ophir*. The divergence in the shipboard routines of crew and passengers is starkly illustrated in the two accounts. Price included a detailed ‘Sea Routine’ that described the sailors’ daily schedule, beginning with the: “Call the watch” followed by 4.10am. “Watch to muster, scrub and wash clothes, except Sundays,” and a series of duties, such as “6.45 Out pipes, Hands fall in, scrub after part of upper deck,” punctuated by breakfast at 8.00 and dinner at 12.30 and ending with the 10.00pm: “Pipe down.” Wallace describes an alternative universe, which, even allowing for some artistic licence (gentlemen, and in particular private secretaries to royalty, did not discuss their actual workload), reveals a completely different rhythm of time and space:

By 8 o’clock the morning constitutionals have begun, and half an hour later we begin to assemble for breakfast, which is understood to be a moveable feast ... After breakfast the band play for an hour on their wind instruments, and the rest of the morning is devoted to reading, writing, and similar occupations. About noon we collect in the smoking-room to know how many knots we have run in the twenty-four hours, and who has won the sweepstake for the day. At 1 o’clock lunch is served in the same way as breakfast, but greater punctuality is observed. During the afternoon there is a great deal of sea-gazing and pacing the promenade deck; reading on long chairs, which sometimes transforms itself into an involuntary siesta; cricket or some such game for those who require violent exercise, and musical drill or the parallel bars for those who like to take their exercise in a more methodical fashion ... the only fixed item in the programme is afternoon tea, which is taken in the saloon or on the promenade deck, according to the state of the weather. At 7.30 the bugle warns us that it is time to don our mess-dress, a comfortable semi-naval costume specially invented for the voyage, and punctually at 8 o’clock we all sit down to dinner ... Two of the suite [members of the royal party], taken in rotation, dine in the ward-room [the ship’s officers’ dining room], and their places are occupied by two of the officers of the ship. The excellent band of the Royal Marines (Chatham) play on their stringed instruments during the whole of dinner, and for an hour or more afterwards on the promenade deck outside, or, if the weather is stormy, in the gallery of the dining-saloon ... Before 12 o’clock we have generally ... all turned in for the night.³⁵

The Duke and Duchess’s diaries indicate that the royal couple followed Wallace’s schedule, but much more loosely. The Duchess, as we will see, spent much time in her cabin and even on good sea days often appeared on deck only in the afternoon. The Duke kept busy with the activities listed above (especially when the Duchess was unwell) but also involved himself with the naval personnel; he had a day cabin near the bridge where he spent much time, and on Sundays he regularly inspected the crew and their dinners on the mess deck.³⁶ Interestingly, neither the Duke nor Duchess kept a separate tour diary; rather, their accounts of the tour were included within the daily diary entries which both kept scrupulously for most of their adult lives. This suggests that they saw the tour as an extension of their regular royal duties rather than, as with Price and Wallace, an exceptional life event.

Both the sailors’ and the passengers’ schedules were designed to keep people busy—and apart from each other. Price’s and Wallace’s accounts attempt to give armchair travellers a

³⁵ Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 58-59.

³⁶ RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 17 March and 29 March.

sense of what it was like to be on board ship—its comforts, discomforts, and sources of entertainment and boredom. While they were not created as competing narratives (neither Price nor Wallace mentions the other), each account nevertheless works hard to impress the reader that its version contains key insights. Certainly their shipboard perspective contrasts with the more familiar ‘land view’ provided in most newspaper accounts of the tour. While many newspaper articles described the arrival in and departure of the *Ophir* from a particular port, their emphasis was on the ceremonies which occurred ashore.³⁷

Maxwell’s account largely complements the land perspective of these newspapers. But by also describing conditions aboard the escort ships, Maxwell draws attention to the tour experience of the naval officers and crew, and how these compared with their counterparts on the *Ophir*. For example, where the *Ophir* naturally received the star berth at Gibraltar and indeed all ports—which allowed her passengers, and also some crew, including Price, to go ashore—as a lowly escort the *St George* was deemed less important than the other British warships present, especially those of the prestigious Channel Fleet, and was forced to bob about in rough seas beyond the harbour with little opportunity for shore leave. Similarly, while the *Ophir* was greeted with spectacularly decorated warships, fireworks, and admiring crowds in Malta, the *St George* passed by in the night, sent on ahead to Port Said at the far end of the Mediterranean. As they approached the final dominion on the tour, Canada, the escort ships suddenly received new orders to return to Britain; according to Maxwell this was an odd and unfortunate decision which meant that the crews missed out on much-needed rest, though Price’s account of his time in Canada focuses on the intensive coaling, cleaning, and repair work undertaken in Halifax dockyard. Earlier in the text, when in Australia, Maxwell criticizes Commodore Winsloe’s caution at Port Adelaide as well as his decision to stop in Albany during rough weather instead of proceeding as planned to Fremantle. Could the journalist, already annoyed with the Commodore for the mix-up that led the journalists to miss the royal entry into Melbourne, have absorbed some naval crews’ resentment at their superiors’ decision-making?³⁸ Without royal passengers, the crews of the escort ships certainly enjoyed fewer diversions and treats than their counterparts on the *Ophir*, and indeed, all the recorded entertainments for ships’ officers took place aboard the *Ophir*. Maxwell describes his brief passage on the royal vessel (from the Cape of Good Hope to St. Vincent) as a pleasant contrast: “in the *Ophir* were many consolations. Their Royal Highnesses are very gracious and their tact and thought for the comfort of everybody won genuine admiration and affection.”³⁹ But this was a brief interlude and, interestingly, both the Duke in his diary and Sydney Prior Hall in a sketch detail the return of Maxwell and another correspondent to the *St George*, as if this was an important milestone in the *Ophir*’s journey.⁴⁰

On the *Ophir* itself, the officers were treated very differently from the crew. One of Price’s illustrations, “Wardroom & Crew Provisioning Ship,” depicts the gulf between the diet of the *Ophir*’s officers and that of the crew (Figure 4).

³⁷ See for example *The Argus* (Melbourne), 28 June 1901, 4.

³⁸ Maxwell, *With the ‘Ophir’ Round the Empire*, 10-11, 198, 237, 205. Wallace, too, expressed some criticism of Winsloe; “Wallace to Francis Knollys, 16 May 1901,” RA ADD C7/2/B.

³⁹ Maxwell, *With the ‘Ophir’ Round the Empire*, 233.

⁴⁰ RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 29 August; and Sydney Prior Hall sketch “Mr Maxwell (The Standard) Mr Watson (Reuters) regain their ship in the St. George. Aug. 29/01,” in ‘Voyages’ album, Royal Print Room, RCIN 31008.



Figure 4: Harry Price, 'Wardroom & Crew Provisioning Ship', pen-and-ink sketch, Royal Tour (1901), unpaginated. Volume in the collection of the author.

Wooden crates of meat and game, including turkeys, fish, hare, geese, capons, and rabbits as well as oxtails and tongues are all marked "wardroom & crew," perhaps the gift of well-wishers ashore. While this suggests that officers and crew received the same fare, two vignettes, "The Crew's Share," and "The Wardroom's Share," reveal otherwise. While the latter shows the officers, dressed in black tie, being served dinner on silver trays in their dining room, the former depicts the crew not eating but rather loading these goods onto the ship. According to Price, the crew's share is limited to transporting these luxuries so that the officers can enjoy their share. Whatever the men of the *Ophir* missed out on, they still ate relatively well. In Colombo, Price records the crew enjoying the gift of fresh fruit and tea from the planters in Ceylon, while in Melbourne and Halifax he records the special treatment given to the 'Ophirs' by locals, including very reasonably priced meals and beer. In Mauritius, Price notes visiting naval crews' surprise that the *Ophir* crew breakfasted on sausage and mash. Maxwell does not record what they ate on the escort ships, but the Duke noted in his diary that he, the Duchess, and "some of the party" brought their own lunch with them from the *Ophir* when they spent a

day aboard the escort ships.⁴¹

Aboard the *Ophir* there were some important exceptions to the segregation of passengers and crew. Sunday worship services brought together the entire ship's company in the splendid dining saloon, as did special events such as the Crossing the Line ceremony, held on deck. There might well have been more joint events had the weather not proved so poor for much of the voyage. Even the normally restrained Duke confided to his diary on 17 July 1901 that "most people feel a bit seedy I think." Stormy weather brought the highly regarded Royal Marine band indoors, thus depriving the sailors of the opportunity to hear them, and in very rough weather some events were cancelled; when events did go ahead, attendance remained low as passengers remained in their cabins. Rough weather further reduced the already tiny number of female audience members. The Duchess quickly gained a reputation as a poor sailor, and indeed she declared in a letter to a friend during the tour: "I *detest* the sea. I like seeing the places & being on land, the rest of it is purgatory to me & makes me miserable & depressed, so please don't envy me."⁴² Her brother, an Army officer who accompanied the tour, privately lamented the amount of time she spent in her cabin, and she remained out of sight (or at least out of sight of the crew) for much of the voyage.⁴³ A note pencilled in her diary at the end of the voyage states: "I stayed in bed 40 days at sea." Whether due to seasickness, to provide assistance, or simply not to draw undue attention to the Duchess's absence, the three ladies-in-waiting do not seem to have appeared much on deck without her. When she did appear, though, her ladies often participated in concerts and entertainments while the Duchess looked on approvingly.⁴⁴

The Duchess of Cornwall and York

The Duchess's shipboard reserve contrasts with public depictions of the land tour, which celebrate the thirty-three-year-old Duchess's enthusiastic appearance at ceremonies. She was often viewed as less wooden and more natural and gregarious than her thirty-five-year-old husband, who struck many dominion residents as stiff and formal.⁴⁵ Afloat, though, it was the 'sailor prince' who seemed more at home—as was of course natural for a man who had spent his formative years in the Royal Navy and undertaken several round-the-world voyages.⁴⁶ While the Duchess remained frequently unwell—"Darling May still rather seedy, so she remained in bed"—the Duke ploughed on with his regular inspections of crew, men's dinners, engine rooms, etc.⁴⁷ If only for inspection purposes, the Duke had free run of the whole ship, and he displayed professional curiosity in the workings of *Ophir* and other ships. Even when

⁴¹ RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 4 September.

⁴² RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 17 July; "Duchess of York to Hélène Bricka, 16 April 1901," cited in Pope-Hennessy, *Queen Mary, 1867-1953*, 367.

⁴³ Pope-Hennessy, *Queen Mary, 1867-1953*, 367.

⁴⁴ QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 31 October, 29 April, 2 August; Sydney Prior Hall sketches of choir practice on board the *Ophir*, 'Voyages' album, Royal Print Room, RCIN 30967.

⁴⁵ The Duchess turned 34 on 26 May 1901, and the Duke 36 on 3 June. Christopher McDonald's article in this issue quotes an example of the latter in Wellington, New Zealand. Pope-Hennessy, *Queen Mary, 1867-1953*, 367.

⁴⁶ In particular, the three-year voyage (1879-1881) aboard HMS *Bacchante*, where he and his late elder brother Prince Albert Victor served as midshipmen.

⁴⁷ RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 17 March.

sailors did see the Duchess on the *Ophir*, they rarely heard her; both aboard and ashore she let her husband speak for her, although she overcame her natural shyness better than in England.⁴⁸ Still, her presence aboard was much appreciated, and Price notes the Duchess's attendance at various ceremonies and, in particular, her small but valued gifts to the crew, such as a wreath at a sailor's funeral. Price's glimpses of her enjoying the Crossing the Line ceremony and smiling when the men spontaneously broke into "For she's a jolly good fellow" on her birthday suggest a much more informal, even intimate encounter with a royal than most sailors—indeed most ordinary people, either 'at home' or in the empire—would ever have.

In turn, these events may have given the shy Duchess a sense of community and support during what was, at least in terms of its rough ocean crossings and lengthy separation from her young children, a profoundly stressful and alien journey.⁴⁹ But the Duchess's interest in the crew should not be exaggerated. Her diary does not mention several of the occasions where Price saw her—for example, the sailors singing on her birthday; although this may be partly due to the Duchess's writing style—she wrote only brief diary entries throughout the cruise, particularly whilst at sea and especially during bad weather, when a day's entry was inevitably limited to "at sea. In bed."⁵⁰ But it also reflected the Duchess's greater interest in and contact with the officers, about whom, like her husband, she wrote far more, and more often. Sydney Prior Hall's sketches do show sailors participating in the Crossing the Line ceremony and singing the Duchess Happy Birthday, but he too gives more attention to the behaviour of the passengers and officers than the ordinary crew, who remain as bit players in most of his images.⁵¹

Differing Perspectives

Even where passengers and crew shared the same events—such as stormy weather, musical entertainments, and Sunday church services—their responses suggest that they experienced them quite differently. Right from the start of the journey, Price was philosophical about the rough weather: "We shipped large quantities of water but taking her all together the 'Ophir' proved a good sea boat." He noted, somewhat smugly, that the passengers took longer to adjust: "The landlubbers had a very bad time of it and swore they would go back home when they reached Gib[raltar], but the sea moderated a great deal by the following evening, and the Duchess came on deck; the first we had seen of her since we started." Wallace, while avoiding mention of the Duchess's sea-sickness, noted the passengers' dislike of the storms, though soon he too was expressing confidence in the *Ophir*'s sailing qualities. Both Price and Wallace described the sight of the escort ships disappearing from view in the mountainous waves and considered themselves lucky to be on the *Ophir*.⁵² Later in the journey, aboard the *St George*, Maxwell claimed that landlubbers' belief that sailors preferred sea to shore was

⁴⁸ Pope-Hennessy, *Queen Mary, 1867-1953*, 368.

⁴⁹ Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*; Pope-Hennessy, *Queen Mary, 1867-1953*, 365-369.

⁵⁰ RA QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 26-29 October.

⁵¹ Sydney Prior Hall, "Crossing the Line," "Splicing the Main Brace & drinking the Duchess of York's health on board the Ophir Ship anchored in the Hawkesbury River May 26th," "Evening for she's a jolly good fellow," and "In the Ward room on coaling night at St Vincents. Cape Verde islands," 'Voyages' album, Royal Print Room, RCIN 30970, 30981, 31024.

⁵² Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*; Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 19-20, 27.

mistaken; after a rough passage from New Zealand “Sailor and landsman rejoiced when the green banks of Tasmania rose out of the sea.”⁵³ Alternatively, Price argued that the *Ophir* sailors enjoyed the rough weather near the end of the voyage and made merry, singing loudly as water rushed over the ship. Both the Duke and Duchess noted the poor weather and their resulting seasickness in their diaries; but the Duchess was clearly much more severely affected (at least in her own mind) than was her husband.

Musical opinions varied too. Concerts and theatrical performances proved a highlight of the journey for Price; he enthused about one: “It was a complete success, what had a lot to do with it was we had a complete set of theatrical costumes, supplied by the court costumers, London. I give a programme of the events on the next page.” Wallace was less impressed: “The sentimental songs have sometimes an interminable number of verses, but they never seem too long for the majority of the audience.”⁵⁴ Price’s enthusiasm was no doubt partly explained by his own participation: a programme dated 10 April 1901 includes as its last number “10. Coon Song Is yer mammy allways wid yer. Price P.O, 2nd Cl.” Price seems to have taken an active role in such performances; a second programme dated 26 August 1901 lists songs by ‘The “Ophir” Minstrel Troupe’ including ‘Coon Song “Lily of Laguna” P.O. II H. Price.’ “Coon songs” and minstrel troupes were standard fare in contemporary British music halls popular with the working classes. The Duke and Duchess expressed amusement at what they described in their diaries as “sing songs” and “nigger songs” but provided no further details of the music.⁵⁵ Such shipboard entertainments combined naval traditions of sentimental and comic sailor songs with the contemporary music hall, reflecting the strong racial, ethnic, and gender prejudices of contemporary British society.⁵⁶ It is noteworthy that when Wallace objected to these songs, it was due to their length rather than the racial attitudes they expressed.

Entertainments were not just put on by members of the lower deck; the first concert programme included a “song” performed by Lord Crichton (Captain Viscount Crichton, Royal Horse Guards and A.D.C., part of the Duke’s royal party), and a “twin duet” sung by two Royal Navy officers, Lieut Maitland (C.M. Crichton Maitland) and Mr Bryer (S.M.G. Bryer, Engineer).⁵⁷ This duet paired a traditional executive officer (Maitland came from a naval family and entered the service as an adolescent midshipman, learning most of his craft at sea) with an officer from the new technical engineering branch. The latter were often looked down upon by their more traditional counterparts. While there was clearly some room on the *Ophir* for entertainments that crossed class boundaries and naval career divisions, most attention was paid to theatrical productions like the naval burlesque written by one of the senior officers and performed by a combination of officers and members of the royal suite. So successful was this comedic production (it was praised in all of the tour accounts) that the officers of the escort ships were invited to a second performance a few evenings later.⁵⁸

⁵³ Maxwell, *With the ‘Ophir’ Round the Empire*, 191.

⁵⁴ Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 46.

⁵⁵ RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 10 April; RA QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 29 April, 8 July.

⁵⁶ Penny Summerfield, “Patriotism and Empire: music-hall entertainment 1870-1914,” in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. J. M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 17-48; Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 46.

⁵⁷ The programme does not list the songs they sang.

⁵⁸ RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 29 August.

Other than Price, all of the tour accounts view the ordinary sailors as spectators or bit players in these entertainments, with a very low profile aboard the ship itself. According to Maxwell, sailors' only respite from the workaday routine was Sunday services. He paints a rosy view of sailors' delight in worship, and in general takes a paternalistic view of sailors as sensible, loyal chaps.⁵⁹ Wallace says very little at all about the sailors on the *Ophir*, as do the Duke and Duchess, except to note their assembled presence on special occasions. These occasions provided rare opportunities for sailors, officers, and passengers to see one another en masse and to develop, albeit temporarily, a sense of shipboard community.

The funeral at sea of a stoker who died of dysentery in Singapore was one such occasion. All commentators complained of the intense heat aboard the ships in the tropics, with gentlemen passengers like Wallace seeking relief by sleeping in the open air on the upper decks, while the Duke, ladies, and crew continued to swelter below deck.⁶⁰ Yet it was only Maxwell on the *St George* who pointed out the heat's impact on the crew working in the engine room:

To think of the men in the hot bowels of the ship—the stokers fanned by the breath of the furnace, and the engineers living in an atmosphere that almost chokes you when it comes up from below in a hot, oily blast, is to realise that we have invented at least one inferno of which Dante never dreamed.⁶¹

None of these authors explicitly made the link between these conditions and the stoker's death in Singapore (though the Duke did blame the general heat), but his funeral featured in both Price's and Wallace's accounts as a major event aboard the *Ophir*. Price provided a colourful if rather schematic sketch of the ceremony, showing the body dropping from the deck into the sea. His one-and-a-half-page description emphasized the pathos of the "sad incident" when he noticed "that several men where [sic] very much affected." After the burial at sea, "the silence now was painfull ... as I glanced over the side all I could see was a shattered wreath floating on the troubled waters." Price commented on the way the ceremony affected the whole company:

then all hands joined in the hymn; A few more years shall roll, very softly at first but towards the end it gathered strength; and enabled most of those present to relieve their feelings in song; the Duchess and most of the ladies and gentlemen present seemed very much affected right through the ceremony, especially those that were roving the sea's [sic] for the first time.

While Wallace also described the funeral, he said little about its impact on the passengers, and presented it as but a brief interruption in the tour schedule:

The chaplain reads the burial service, and as soon as he pronounced the words, "we commit the body to the deep", the Union Jack and wreath are removed, the inner end of the stretcher is gently raised, and the body drops into the sea. Three volleys are fired, with solemn strains of music

⁵⁹ Maxwell, *With the 'Ophir' Round the Empire*, 79-80.

⁶⁰ Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 88; RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 2 April; RA QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 10 April; Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*.

⁶¹ Maxwell, *With the 'Ophir' Round the Empire*, 54.

between them, the buglers sound the last post, a hymn is sung, and the squadron moves on again.⁶²

The Duke and Duchess also mentioned the funeral in their diaries; indeed, the Duke was the only writer to record the stoker's name—Booth—and to attribute the death to “the heat and heart failure.” They were impressed by the funeral music, but, as befitted their daily diary entries, and distance from ordinary sailors, kept their comments brief.⁶³

These commentators responded similarly to the Crossing the Line ceremony. While Price revelled in the spectacle of the traditional festivities, held to commemorate a traveller's first crossing of the equator by ship, Wallace viewed it as more of a quaint but trivial ritual to be adapted to the overall tour schedule. Price described it unfolding spontaneously—“It was about ten o'clock the following morn, when old Neptune came aboard”—whereas Wallace pointed out that it was delayed, “In reality we crossed the line some ten hours after leaving Singapore.”⁶⁴ For Price, King Neptune was in charge, accompanied in his chariot by “three representative[s] one of Britannia one Australia and one Canada”; whereas for Wallace, Commodore Winsloe, not the Sea-King, was the real master of ceremonies: “His Majesty [Neptune], at the request of the Commodore, kindly consented to postpone his visit until we should have more sea-room.”⁶⁵

Again, Price described the way the shipboard scene engaged the passengers: “I noticed that all the ladies and gentlemen belonging to the Royal suite, where [sic] very busy with their cameras,” while Wallace focused more on the Duke's paternalistic treatment of the sailors:

The Sea-King [Neptune] declares himself greatly pleased with all the arrangements and everything else on board; but before taking his departure he ventures to remark that in his humble opinion “the main brace requires splicing”, a mysterious sea-phrase which means simply that the crew ought to have something to drink. In this opinion of a competent naval expert the Duke concurs; and accordingly in the evening the bluejackets, marines, and stokers receive a portion of rum, in which they drink with lusty cheers long life and prosperity to their Royal Highnesses.⁶⁶

For Price and his fellow sailors, the gift of a drink of rum was a special event which deserved mention for its rarity on a voyage where ordinary crew-members (unlike officers) were not permitted alcohol on board. Later in the voyage, on the Duchess's birthday:

In the evening the Duchess sent word to the men that they could drink her health on her birthday; rum was served out on the upper deck, and both the Duke and Duchess had a lot of Navy Rum too, the Duke then stepped forward [sic] and said he had been asked by the Duchess to thank the ships company for their kind wishes for her birthday; The whole ships company then gave three ringing cheers, and the band played god bless the “Prince of Wales.” A most laughable incident now occurred, one man started to sing: She's a jolly good fellow, and the whole ships company took it up and gave it lip, the Duchess seemed greatly amused, the men then gave three more cheers, and then spliced the main brace in true nautical style I may here mention that this was the

⁶² Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 106.

⁶³ RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 23 April; RA QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 23 April.

⁶⁴ Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*; Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 108.

⁶⁵ Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*; Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 108. Captain Alfred Leigh Winsloe (1852-1931) was later Admiral and Commander-in-Chief, China Station; “Alfred Leigh Winsloe,” *Dreadnought Project*, accessed 20 December 2017, http://www.dreadnoughtproject.org/tfs/index.php/Alfred_Leigh_Winsloe.

⁶⁶ Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*; Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 111.

second time we spliced the main brace, the first time being at the Dukes invitation the day we crossed the line.⁶⁷

For Maxwell, the Crossing the Line ceremony was an anachronism (rarely observed in modern Royal Navy vessels), which provided a precious moment of festivity for the crew of the *St George*: “this was the sole diversion of the voyage to Australia, and was a welcome relief from the daily routine.” The Duke played a prominent role in the festivities and wrote about it enthusiastically: “I went first & then the Commodore then the Staff, Officers, servants & ship’s company, it was very amusing & everybody enjoyed it” while the Duchess’s amusement was cut short by the sudden deterioration in the weather: “By 12 it was so rough that I collapsed and stayed in bed whole day.”⁶⁸

Just as their experiences and perspectives provide complementary but not identical views of shipboard life, reflecting their respective positions as crewmembers and passengers, so too Price and Wallace provide barely overlapping accounts of their time in port. Wallace, in keeping with his employment as a private secretary supervising journalists and writing an authorized account of the tour, focuses his port descriptions on the royal couple’s reception ashore, as does the journalist Maxwell. By contrast, Price writes about his own precious shore leave or his work aboard the *Ophir* whilst in port. Price draws the reader’s attention to his ignorance of the royal party’s movements ashore in a rather defensive passage entitled “Interjection”:

Although we on board the ‘Ophir’ were interested in the doings of their ‘Royal Highnesses’; we had other things to attend to, for, at most places, when the ‘Duke & Duchess’ were attending functions ashore; we were busy, coaling, or cleaning ship, or carrying [sic] out work, ... So all I ask, is, that the reader of this log, should look on this narrative as just the expression of a lower deck seaman, on what is an ‘historic event.’

Coaling

Coaling provides another point of contrast in the accounts. Wallace complained of “the disagreeable operation of coaling” which, due to the pervasive dust and dirt, necessitated the closing of all doors, windows, and portholes “to the great inconvenience of passengers who like a reasonable amount of fresh air.”⁶⁹ The Duchess agreed, complaining of the “hideous din” while the Duke commented on the “beastly mess.”⁷⁰ So unpleasant was the experience that the royal couple vacated the ship whenever possible during coaling. Or, rather, coaling was organized to take place whilst the royal couple were staying ashore, usually at Government House, as in Wellington, New Zealand. The exception was the small island of St Vincent in the Cape Verde islands, where the Duke and Duchess visited the accompanying warships for lunch and tea for an entire day whilst the *Ophir* coaled. Still, as a former naval officer the Duke recognized the importance of coaling, and he made several entries about it in his diary. He

⁶⁷ Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*.

⁶⁸ Maxwell, *With the ‘Ophir’ Round the Empire*, 79; RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 25 April; RA QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 25 April.

⁶⁹ Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 47.

⁷⁰ RA QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 30 March; RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 5 September.

noted how the nearly empty ship pitched “a good deal ... having used nearly 1500 tons of coal” as well as how rough sea conditions in St Vincent slowed down the coal lighters so that they were only able to load 1,100 tons.⁷¹ Wallace dutifully recorded that the *Ophir* consumed 14,500 tons of coal throughout the tour, but he regarded coaling as a virtually inhuman task, carried out by lesser beings.⁷² In Port Said, he described the scene as viewed from the passengers’ position at the top of the ship:

An artist making studies for a picture of the Inferno might have gained some useful suggestions by looking down from the promenade deck, through the coils of dark-blue smoke issuing from the braziers, into those grimy barges filled with black, gesticulating, screaming figures, more fiendish than human. Fortunately, there is a monotony in the horrid din that encourages rather than prevents sleep.⁷³

For Price, in contrast, coaling was not something to be avoided, but rather a key part of the ship’s routine in port. Like Wallace, he notes the shock of hearing the foreign workers coaling in Port Said; “it was like a babel to hear the incessant chanting and gibberish chatter of the natives.” But, as befits a practitioner rather than a mere observer, in both Port Said and later in Singapore Price paid respectful attention to their efficiency and speed. In Singapore the “Chinamen kept up a continual run all the day long, their peculiarity being to run when loaded and walk with empty baskets.” Most importantly for Price, however, was recording the *Ophir* crew’s participation in this exhausting and dirty chore:

One thing I wish to mention is that this [Wellington, New Zealand] was the first place where the crew of the *Ophir* coaled ship, and we took in 800 tons, the above illustration shows the manner in which the bluejackets and marines, carried the coal, and you will understand it was exceedingly hard work when I say that each basket was about two cwt.⁷⁴

Price’s accompanying illustration ‘Bluejacket coaling ship’ depicts a sailor hauling a huge basket of coal on a filthy deck; another sailor appears ghost-like in the background (Figure 5).

⁷¹ RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 25 March, 5 September. Sydney Prior Hall’s sketch “In the Ward room on coaling night at St Vincents. Cape Verde islands,” shows officers exhausted after coaling; ‘Voyages’ Album, Royal Print Room, RCIN 31024.

⁷² Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 441.

⁷³ Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 47.

⁷⁴ ‘cwt’ refers to ‘centum weight’ or hundredweight, equivalent to 112 pounds. This means that the sailors were hauling coal baskets weighing 224 pounds each (about 102 kilograms).

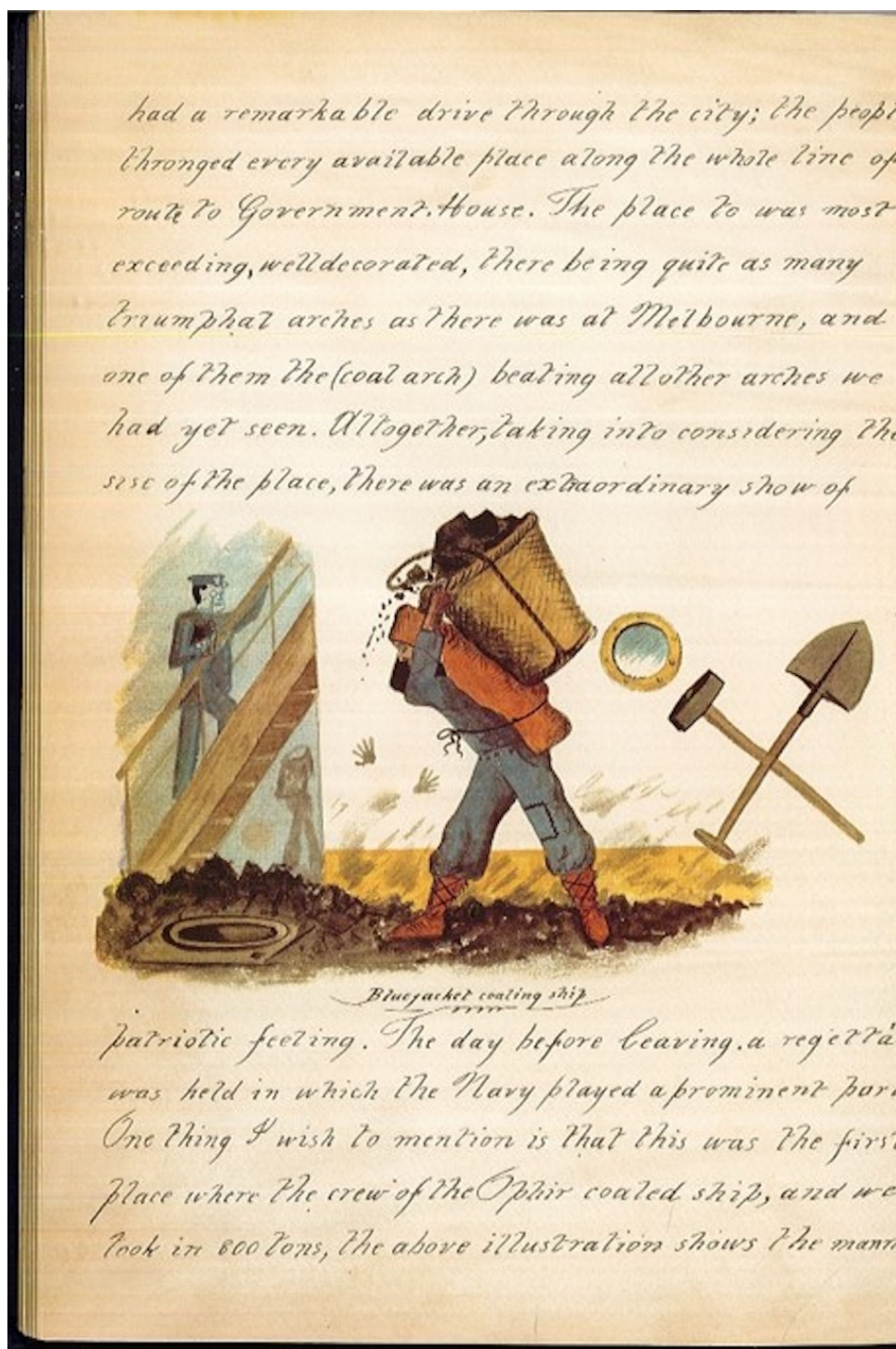


Figure 5: Harry Price, 'Bluejackets coaling ship', pen-and-ink sketch, *Royal Tour* (1901), unpaginated. Volume in the collection of the author.

To the left is a monocled naval officer, probably Commander R. E. Wemyss. He resembles Price's sketch of the ship's commander in his drawing 'Physical Drill "Knees Up"' (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Harry Price, "Physical Drill ('Knees Up')." Pen-and-ink sketch, *Royal Tour* (1901), unpaginated. Volume in the collection of the author.

This latter sketch illustrates another activity where, according to Price, the officers pushed the men too hard:

One more thing I may mention was 'Physic's or Physical drill,' of which we got plenty, And our commander was a regular school of physical culture, and never seemed so happy, as when he had charge during the drill, Especially when he ordered 'knees up' [see illustration].⁷⁵

The Duke, who, unlike Price, was required to do no regular exercise, seems to have engaged in his own version of physical drill with great enthusiasm, albeit on an occasional basis. The Duchess, too, records exercise in her diary, though a sketch by Sydney Prior Hall depicts the Duchess and her ladies-in-waiting engaged in what looks like very gentle swaying movements.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Price, *The Royal Tour* 1901.

⁷⁶ RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 6 April; RA QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 18 April.

Returning to 'Bluejacket coaling ship,' the monocled naval officer climbs a staircase, somewhat grim-faced and apparently oblivious to the sailors' arduous labour.⁷⁷ Here and at several other points in his journal, Price emphasizes that sailors' work receives little recognition from either officers or passengers. His narrative and sketches emphasize sailors' humanity, and sense of fun, along with their hard work. In 'Bluejacket coaling ship', two black handprints on the wall indicate sailors' presence, while a crossed spade and mallet, tools of the coaling trade but also symbols of labour, provide a dignified reminder of the heavy exertion involved. In another, untitled sketch (Figure 7), sailors painting the ship have left crude daubs of a laughing face and a stick-figure on the wall; to the right a sailor paints his colleague's mouth with red paint!

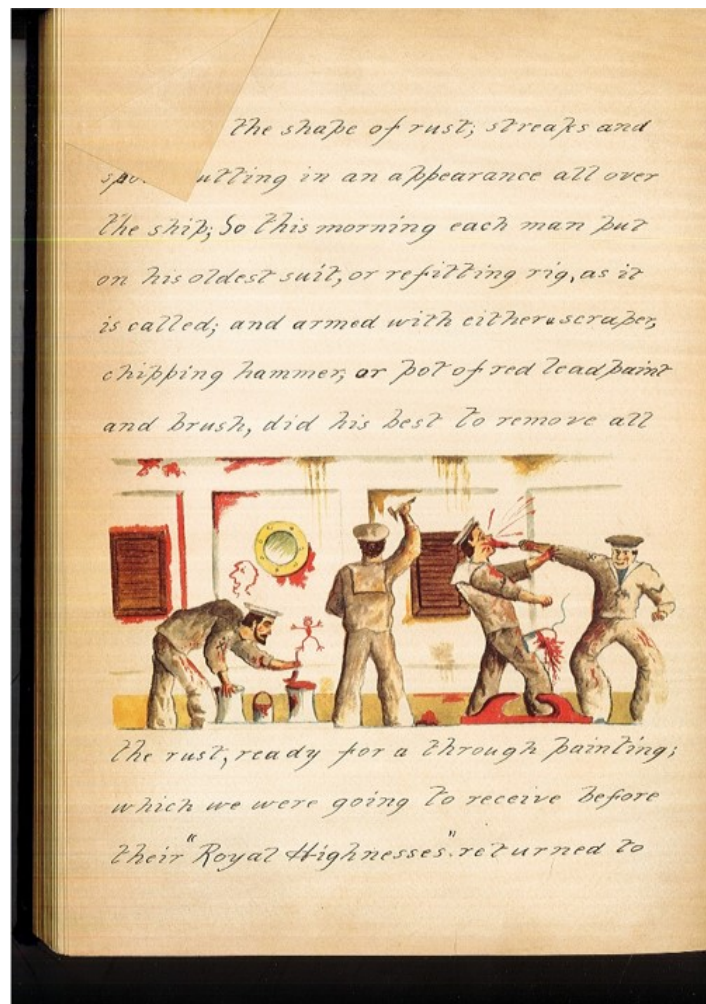


Figure 7: Harry Price, Sketch of sailors painting ship, pen-and-ink sketch, *Royal Tour* (1901), unpaginated. Volume in the collection of the author.

⁷⁷ The Commander of the *Ophir*, R. E. Wemyss, enjoyed a distinguished naval career (partly due to his connection with royalty; he served aboard HMS *Bacchante* with the Duke, who later invited him to serve on the *Ophir*); he later reached the highest naval rank of Admiral of the Fleet; James Goldrick, "Wemyss, Rosslyn Erskine, Baron Wester Wemyss (1864-1933)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/36832.

These and other images of sailors enjoying themselves, by, for example, climbing through life buoys as part of an obstacle race held on the deck *en route* to Canada, or grinning as they push one another down in the coal dust, reveal sailors' hidden contribution to community life aboard the *Ophir*, even if they rely on comic stereotypes of happy-go-lucky 'jack tars' performing for the amusement of their social superiors to make this point (Figure 8).

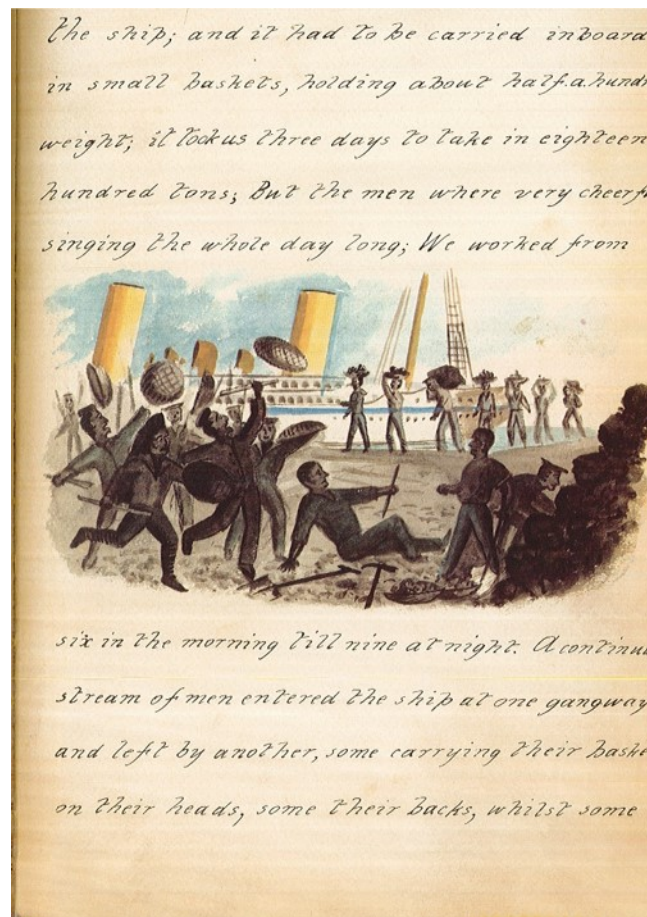


Figure 8: Harry Price, Sketch of sailors coaling on shore, pen-and-ink sketch, *Royal Tour* (1901), unpaginated. Volume in the collection of the author.

More generally, they remind us of the presence of sailors throughout the 1901 maritime world. Of the 164 sketches included in Price's journal, the most common were images of ships seen during the voyage, and in particular British warships. Every single one of these ships contained crews with hundreds of ordinary sailors—yet the work of these men has been largely forgotten. While Price's tour account remains exceptional in its focus on ordinary sailors' experiences aboard HMS *Ophir*, glimpses of these sailors appear in the other tour accounts plus a few additional sources, including photographs of the ship's company taken at various points during the voyage and in sketches made by Sydney Prior Hall.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Sydney Prior Hall's tour sketches and those of Eduardo de Martino await further investigation.

“Rolling home to England”

As the *Ophir* left Canada on the last leg of her journey home to England, bad weather set in once again, and, true to form, the Duchess spent four consecutive days in bed.⁷⁹ But by this stage in the journey, according to Price, the ordinary sailors, wearied of the strict shipboard routine, delighted in the storms as they meant the cancellation of the Sunday inspections of their uniform and sleeping quarters (no doubt to the disappointment of the Duke, who assiduously recorded attending crew divisions, inspections, and men’s dinners). Indeed, once turned towards home for the return journey, sailors noisily embraced the gales and sang a favourite tune, “Rolling home to England.”⁸⁰ According to Price ““Portsmouth” was looked forward to with more interest than any place we had been to yet; and sea songs, mostly about going home, were the order of the day, and night.”⁸¹ But for working passengers like Wallace and Maxwell, the imminent return to England meant pressure to complete writing assignments (like the *Web of Empire* and *Round the Empire*), artistic commissions (e.g., Sydney Prior Hall’s sketches for *The Graphic* and Eduardo de Martino’s sketches of the ships for the royal family), and to pack. For the royal couple, the return home meant, as for most of the civilians aboard, relief that the tour was widely seen as a success and that they would soon be home—“Thank God that the tour has gone off so well & that now we are homeward bound.”⁸² But it also meant the return to daily official duties and more regular surveillance. For all the passengers, the voyage itself provided some respite from the usual routine of work and/or court life, as well as distance from many of the cares of the world. Certainly, they received regular mail deliveries of both newspapers and letters from home, and Wallace charted the mixed success of ship-to-ship telegraphy during the voyage. Still, more attention was paid to confirming arrangements at the next port of call than reporting back to London. For all aboard, the return to England meant an adjustment from the routine of the previous seven-and-a-half months.

All the tour accounts described the huge and enthusiastic welcome that greeted the *Ophir* on its return to England. But their discussion of shipboard farewells varied with the authors’ perspectives (as conditioned by their social background) on what and who was important. Price saw least but said the most. He illustrated the small medallion which the Duke and Duchess presented to the officers and crew “as a souvenir of the cruise, the officers being of gold and the mens silver.” Moreover, he noted that once the gangway was lowered in Portsmouth “as soon as possible the Dukes” suite ran ashore, and there was much exciting talk and handshakings. “Their Royal Highnesses” left the ship soon afterward and went aboard the “Victoria and Albert,” we did not witness the meeting with the “King, Queen, and children.”⁸³ Wallace focuses on the Duke and Duchess’s reunion with their children and their dinner on the royal yacht; he also describes meeting friends at the wharf as well as the Duke and Duchess’s train journey the next day to London. Despite the Duchess’ unhappy experiences at sea, she expressed fondness for the ship and “took leave of the dear old ‘Ophir’ & the officers

⁷⁹ RA QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 26-29 October.

⁸⁰ Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*.

⁸¹ Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*.

⁸² RA QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 24 October.

⁸³ Price, *The Royal Tour 1901*.

with real regret.” The Duke, while also focusing on the officers and ship, did acknowledge the presence of the crew: “The staff & officers gave us a model of the ‘Ophir’ ... we took leave of all the officers, very sad saying good bye to the dear ship in which we have spent 7 ½ months & gone over 33,000 miles. We then walked to the [Royal] Yacht, the ‘Ophirs’ cheered us as we left.”⁸⁴ For “Ophirs” like Price, there was no description of sailors leaving the ship, probably because it took place later and with no audience. Here again, the sailors remained segregated from the passengers and mostly invisible in most accounts of the royal tour. Price concluded his account with words supposedly taken from the Duke’s later speech at the Guildhall about colonial loyalty: “In this loyalty, lies the strength of a true and living membership, in the great & glorious ‘British Empire.’” Wallace’s account reprinted the speech at length and includes a slightly different version of this sentence, proof, once again, that Price used his shipboard journal to provide his own perspective and voice on the 1901 royal tour.⁸⁵

Conclusion

Price, Wallace, and Maxwell, along with the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, offer separate, and often differing accounts of the 1901 royal tour of HMS *Ophir*. Each provides a small but essential piece of the overall puzzle. Reading these accounts together help us to view the 1901 royal tour with a fresh eye, to see it as a long ocean voyage by a fully-manned ship—indeed a group of ships—rather than as a series of discrete visits to individual dominions by a royal couple. Wallace and Maxwell offer valuable insights to the 1901 royal tour and its maritime aspects from the perspective of working passengers. The Duke and Duchess offer personal accounts that, particularly in their discussion of the unpleasantness of rough ocean crossings, differ markedly from the official triumphalist narratives of most contemporary journalism. Price provides something very precious indeed—an ordinary sailor’s response to what was at once an extraordinary voyage and the tough and unrecognized routine of maritime workers. This voyage comprised only one brief segment of these individuals’ long and varied lives. Yet their written (and in the case of Price, Sydney Prior Hall, and Eduardo de Martino, also visual) accounts—while addressing the royal tour’s significance for a wider audience—also hint at its significance for themselves. These accounts provide a testament to their own engagements with empire, and help us to understand the parallel journeys, class dimension, and maritime flavour, not only of the royal tour, but of the British world c. 1901.

⁸⁴ RA GV/PRIV/GVD/1901: 2 November; RA QM/PRIV/QMD/1901: 2 November.

⁸⁵ Wallace’s version is: “And with this loyalty were unmistakable evidences of the consciousness of strength, a consciousness of a true and living membership in the Empire, and a consciousness of power and readiness to share the burden and responsibility of that membership.” Wallace, *The Web of Empire*, 446.