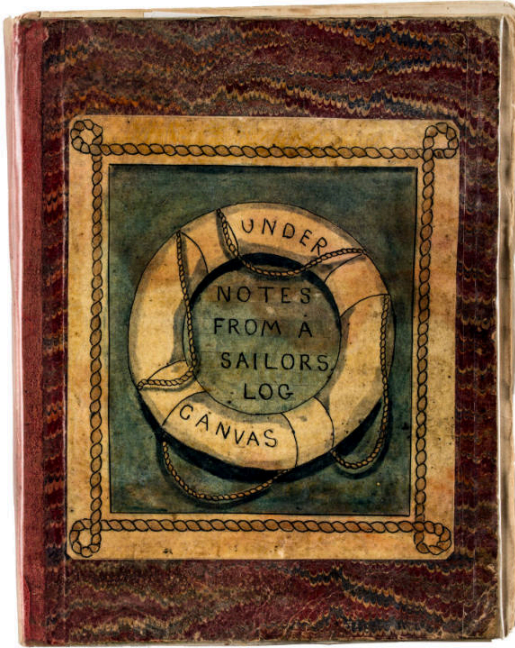


# Basic Detail Report

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**00005661**

**Title**

Under Canvas notes from a sailor's log, volume 1 1889 - 1937

**Date**

1889 - 1937

**Primary Maker**

James Bryce Conder

**Medium**

Ink on paper, boards

**Dimensions**

Overall: 23 x 258 x 209 mm, 800 g

**Name**

Diary

**History**

James (Jim) Bryce Conder was one of thousands of ordinary Australian sailors who helped to shape Australia's naval history. His naval career, interspersed with periods ashore, illustrates all stages in the transition from British control of Australia's naval defence to full local responsibility with the formation of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). It also shows what a strong imprint the Royal Navy had on the RAN. Conder joined the Royal Navy in Australia in 1891 aged 19, having sailed in the merchant ships ELLORA and AVENGER over the previous two years. He served in the flagship of the Australia Station, HMS ORLANDO, when it escorted the ships of the new Australasian Auxiliary Squadron (paid for by the colonies, but manned by the Royal Navy) around the coasts to be shown to the colonists. He signed up for an initial period of six months with an option to extend that to 12 years but chose to leave and return to family and home in Melbourne. His decision not to remain in the navy may have been influenced by a somewhat emphatic letter from his sister Alice on behalf of their mother, 'Whatever you do don't sign any papers to join for twelve years or any longer', and in case he didn't understand her plea, 'So Dear Jim, don't join.' So it was that he instead joined the Victorian Colonial Navy and was posted, in succession, to the turret ship HMVS CERBERUS (its remains can still be seen today in Black Rock), the old battleship HMVS NELSON (the wonderful figurehead of the famous Admiral is displayed in the museum's Navy exhibition) and the gunboat HMVS ALBERT. In 1896, some four years into his service and with financial cutbacks in the offing, Conder left the navy, married Victoria Agnes Nihill and became a policeman. But it wasn't long before he returned to the sea and naval life joining, in 1904, the transitional Commonwealth naval defence forces which had been formed after Federation. His first ship was HMS KATOOMBA where, as bosun's yeoman, his

job was to help train new recruits. This third period of naval service for Conder continued in HM Ships CHALLENGER and PSYCHE and included voyages to Fiji, the New Hebrides, Singapore and New Zealand as well as regular and routine cruises to Australian ports. In 1909 once again Conder left naval life for shore-based civilian work until 1913 when he was recruited to the RAN Naval College at Osborne House in Geelong. He remained with the College - through its moves from Geelong to Jervis Bay NSW and then Crib Point, Victoria - until 1937 as a study corporal, training midshipmen according to the practices of the Royal Navy and helping to ensure that its traditions were carried into Australia's Navy. Conder described his seagoing years in the memoirs he wrote later in life. For each of his children he produced a two-volume handwritten journal, lovingly illustrated with his own paintings and drawings, with photographs, poems, concert tickets and other mementoes. His journals tell of the conflict between his love of the sea and his desire to be with his wife and family. The set of memoirs produced for his daughter Alice, with some other articles recalling his naval life, were donated by family members in his memory.