

Basic Detail Report

00033512

Title

Convoy - US1

Date

c 1940

Primary Maker

Frank Norton

Medium

Ink on paper

Dimensions

Overall: 340 x 208 mm

Name

Note

History

The outbreak of World War II occurred in September 1939 and within two weeks the Australian government decided to form the Second Australian Imperial Force and send troops overseas. It was decided that Australia and New Zealand would send their troops in the same convoys. The first convoy was formed from requisitioned ships of several large shipping companies including P&O, Orient Line, Canadian Pacific and New Zealand Shipping Company. The ships underwent hasty conversions into troop transports at Cockatoo Island Dockyards, Sydney and were ready to depart Australia with a contingent of 13,500 men on 20 January, 1940. Due to the speed of the ship conversions, a large amount of the ships' interiors remained untouched and consequently the first troops travelled in relative comfort compared with the cramped transport that became the norm later in the war. The ships in the convoy were P&O ships STRATHAIRD, STRATHNAVER, Orient Line ships ORION, OTRANTO, ORFORD, ORCADES, Polish ship SOBIESKI, British India Line ship DUNERA, Canadian Pacific ships EMPRESS OF JAPAN and EMPRESS OF CANADA, and New Zealand Shipping company ship RANGITARA. The convoy was escorted by HMS RAMILLIES, HMS KENT and a French cruiser SUFFREN. HMAS AUSTRALIA and HMAS CANBERRA accompanied the convoy for the first day of the voyage from Fremantle. ORION was the guide ship and carried the convoy commodore, Captain Blackwood. DUNERA was the slowest ship being able to travel at 13 knots at the most, and hence the convoy proceeded at this pace to the Middle East. The convoy sailed through the Indian Ocean, its most dangerous leg of the voyage, and reached Colombo in 10 days without incident. There was a change of escort at this time, with KENT and SUFFERN being replaced by HMAS HOBART and HMS SUSSEX and the addition of HMS EAGLE, an aircraft carrier. The convoy left Colombo on 1st February and reached the Arabian Peninsula a week later. The convoy was divided into two at this

stage with half going to Egypt and the other calling into Aden, Yemen. However, all Australian and New Zealand troops had arrived in Egypt by 12 February.