From Dream to Reality: A study of British migration to Western Australia in the 1960s, with special emphasis on those who travelled on the SS Castel Felice

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CHAPTER THREE

At Sea on the Castel Felice
The migrant voyage to Fremantle

This chapter contains a rare personal record of the sea voyage of over 100 migrants who came to Australia in the 1960s. Most of them came on the Castel Felice or her sister ships, SS Fairsea and SS Fairstar. They were part of one of the greatest voluntary ship borne migrations in modern times. According to Hammerton, most £10 Poms chose to travel by sea,¹ though this option became less available when towards the end of the 1960s most migrants were brought to Australia by air.²

Assisted passage schemes for Britons introduced after the Second World War were hindered by the short supply of ships available for migrant passage in the post-war years. Nevertheless influenced by the changes to the White Australia Policy then taking place, 1,150,000 people migrated to Australia from Britain and Europe. Of these 86% travelled as assisted migrants.³ Some 100,000 of these travelled on the Castel Felice. Of these migrants 16,126 were breadwinners and the others dependents.⁴ I found that Western Australia received only about 5% of the British migrants who travelled on the Castel Felice in 1959, (161 of 3,250). I noted further that during the 1960s Western Australia attracted fewer passengers from the Castel Felice than other states. In the late 1960s large numbers of migrants were leaving the ship in Adelaide. Disembarkation from the Castel Felice at Brisbane or Auckland was infrequent in the sample of passages I inspected at the National Archives. Her sister ships, the Fairsea and the Fairstar, also plied the route. The responses to

³ Hammerton and Thomson, p. 96.
⁴ Western Australia, State Records Office, State Immigration, Migration information issued to press, 1193/228 42/5.
my survey from migrants who travelled on these ships are very similar to those of the passengers of the *Castel Felice*.

The *Castel Felice* was launched in 1930 for the British India Line under the name *Kenya*. She sailed in the Indian Ocean for ten years until she was requisitioned by the British Government and converted into a troop carrier and landing ship. She was then renamed *Keren* and took part in the Allied landings in Sicily. The British India Line did not reclaim her after the war and for a time she was laid up at Holy Loch, Scotland, before changing hands a few times. In 1950 she was transferred to the Sitmar Line and sailed under the Italian flag, initially to service passages between Europe and South America. She was again refitted after the Sitmar Line gained a British government contract to carry migrants to Australia. Although she was a small ship of some 1478 tonnes, the refit nevertheless provided basic accommodation for 1200 passengers.

*Saying goodbye*

Hammerton says the migrant farewells to friends and relatives ‘evoke the meaning and significance of emigration’. When the time came to say goodbye migrants were leaving

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behind the home they had known, the goods they had accumulated, their pets, family, friends and the social life they had built up.\textsuperscript{6} One remembered that when she left England in 1963, ‘everything happened so quickly, selling the home, packing etc’.\textsuperscript{7} Michael Geurds stayed with relatives and friends in the week or so before leaving Britain. He recalls that he and his family spent the last six weeks at his grandmother’s home: ‘she was a great cook’, and as promised they were given a different sweet every night they were there.\textsuperscript{8} His sister Jeanette recalled saying goodbye friends and relatives with several other migrant families at Stockton station after staying with her grandmother.\textsuperscript{9} Another participant had to wait with other migrants, ‘before boarding the train to Southampton, our minds now in limbo—our life in just a few suitcases and trunks’.\textsuperscript{10} One family travelled from their Nottingham home to Bournemouth ‘to say goodbye to family and friends’ before boarding the ship.\textsuperscript{11} Others tell a similar story. ‘We stayed at Uncle’s house in Southampton for a couple of weeks before sailing’.\textsuperscript{12} ‘We spent the last week with my grandparents’.\textsuperscript{13} Because the heavy luggage had to be despatched to the ship some time in advance, staying with relatives and friends was an alternative to sleeping on the floor as Geoffrey Shapland had had to do. He remembers, ‘We had dinner at a Chinese Restaurant, first time I had eaten out, I slept on the floor with Dad, and everything was packed’.\textsuperscript{14} Marilyn Fonte also remembers her last meal in England, ‘I can’t remember the trip but do remember eating jellied eels’.\textsuperscript{15}

The survey participants came from all parts of the United Kingdom. Many journeyed overnight and some, as previously described, had to stay with relatives, friends or in a hotel before boarding the boat. The majority travelled by train because a rail pass was

\textsuperscript{6} Hammerton and Thomson, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{7} Name withheld, arr. Nov. 1963, Survey 7.
\textsuperscript{8} Michael Geurds, arr. May 1963, Interview, 22 May 2006.
\textsuperscript{11} Name withheld, arr. Jan. 1966, Survey 15.
\textsuperscript{12} Lillian Clarke, arr. July 1966, Survey 20.
\textsuperscript{13} Jean Lesley Ross, arr. July 1964, Survey 10.
\textsuperscript{15} Marilyn Fonte, arr. Sep. 1966, Survey 59.
provided by the Australian Immigration Department. Others travelled by taxi or in private cars with relatives and friends for at least part of the journey. Moving vans, buses and the underground were all mentioned as means of transport to the dockside by the respondents. It is not hard to visualise the experience in 1965 of one large family from London: the mother, father and eight children all leaving home. One of the children recalls that they were ‘marched to the bus stop carrying our suitcases’. Travel by car was not without problems. The Baldwins, who also came from London, nearly missed the boat because of a flat tyre. For Patricia Paleeya, who travelled in a tense silence to the boat in her parents’ car, it was ‘akin to having a tooth pulled’. Geoffrey Shapland said that he travelled in the moving van while his parents and sisters travelled in a friend’s car. ‘The children slept in the back of the van as we drove through the night from Liverpool’, wrote another. My respondents from Ireland tell a similar story. Terence Milligan remembered an emotional parting with his family as he left Belfast on his way to London. Another immigrant from Ireland, David Shaw, who left as a 14 year old recalled that his family:

Left Craig Avon by road, stayed with relatives in Dublin for a couple of weeks, saw grandparents, travelled ferry train to Southampton, stayed with relatives, then joined Fairstar.

Where ever the place of parting from friends and loved ones, or the mode of travel to the ship, the final farewells were often traumatic. According to Hammerton some migrants felt that a refusal to come to the quayside indicated opposition to the move by family and friends. None of my respondents tell of this feeling, but one, leaving England in January 1969, explained, ‘We were not farewelled by family and friends due to the appalling

17 John and Joan Baldwin, arr. May 1966, Survey 57
20 Name withheld, arr. Nov. 1968, Survey 73.
23 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 98.
weather’. Many of the respondents said they endured terrible weather on the trip to Southampton. Some explained it was ‘cold and foggy’ or ‘it was snowing’. There was sometimes panic due to long delays on the rail journey to the ship because of ice on the tracks, as one found travelling in December 1967: ‘the delays caused by bad weather meant we boarded the Castel Felice with minutes to spare’.

Some participants said they wanted to make their farewells in familiar surroundings and were disappointed when relatives insisted on coming with them to the ship. Friends and relatives were not able to mix with the migrants once they had passed through customs, and the consequence was distressing:

It was terrible she (mother) stood on the dock all day by herself, we had to leave her to find cabin, where we went for meals etc. It was most upsetting as she stood there waving a big red scarf as we slowly moved out to sea. I was watching the scarf until we disappeared over the horizon. I always wished she had listened to us and said goodbye at home.

One respondent wrote that her mother ‘was choking back tears as I waved goodbye. The band played ‘Auld Lang Syne’, a favourite of my mother’s. It was the last time I saw her’. Lesley Ross was overcome when ‘Nan kissed me so hard it hurt. As we sailed down the Solent River we saw my grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends waving. My Mum was crying’. One participant has a memory of ‘Dad’s blue eyes filling with tears and I swear I could still see that in detail as we looked down on the quayside’.

Loretta Thomas said that ‘when the family took us to the ship; we kids thought it was just going to be a holiday’. Some young people migrating as part of a family unit were in relationships. One young traveller remembered, ‘My boyfriend saw us off, he didn’t want me

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26 Chris Davies, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 35.
to go, I didn’t really want to go, but daughters had to do what their parents told them’. 33 Two sisters remembered:

I had a boyfriend who went there (to the dockside) on a motorbike, I didn’t want to go but I had no choice I cried buckets. My Dad made me carry my youngest sister on the ship so I would get on.34

My elder sisters were very upset about leaving, one was engaged and one had a long time boyfriend. Dad was very upset.35

It seems too that it was not just the children who were coerced into such a journey. In some cases extended families formed the group. One participant spoke of her grandmother who travelled with them causing anxiety: ‘she was struggling emotionally because she didn’t want to go to Australia’.36

**All board**

Alistair Thomson thinks that the voyage was a special event for many migrants, and ‘a significant rite of passage’. He thought that the journey was ‘one from memory to imagination’.37 The voyage from Britain, which held all the memories, to Australia, the land of their dreams was never easy. The time taken to reach Australia may have been reduced over the previous decades, but it was still a long voyage and passengers, as the convicts had been before them, were kept in confined spaces and with company they may not have ordinarily chosen. The sea is unforgiving and seasickness and boredom are part of the ongoing tale of migrant passage to Australia. For many of my participants it was their first trip overseas, and while there was excitement at the thought of the new life ahead, there was also sadness, apprehension and sometimes guilt. A few began to doubt the wisdom of the migration and some, especially teenagers, were angry at not being consulted in the decision to

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36 Name withheld, arr. Mar. 1968, Survey 68.
leave Britain.

Many migrants had to leave well paid jobs, good schools and sell well equipped houses. They were advised not to take furniture which had heavy freight charges but to pack cutlery, linen, toys, items of sentimental value, tools of trade, and small electrical appliances. Personal effects were transported free but larger items such as refrigerators and washing machines attracted an excess baggage charge. Animals or birds could not be carried. The Castel Felice was not a cargo vessel and alternative arrangements had to be made for the transport of personal effects if there was no room on the vessel. Restrictions existed on the placement of baggage on the ship; limited luggage was allowed in the cabins. Passengers were advised that other luggage that would be required during the voyage should be labelled for the baggage room. All other luggage, including such baby furniture as prams, had to be stowed in the hold and could not be accessed during the voyage. Folding push chairs could be put in the baggage room but could not be used on the ship. Goods which the migrant wanted to be sent in the baggage room or hold had to be forwarded so that it reached the ship no later than 3 days before the ship sailed. Special vans were attached to the trains at Waterloo Station in which migrants were asked to place their cabin baggage. Peters says the amount of luggage taken by the post-war migrants in her research varied. Some brought the whole household, and others came with a few clothes and personal treasures. Hammerton concluded that where people could afford the freight costs they did so. Other people had to make do with hand luggage and the free allowance to be put in the hold.

Many migrants found that boarding the vessel and leaving England’s shores was a traumatic experience. Alan Huckins said, ‘neither of us could watch as the coastline of

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40 General Information for Passengers, Sitmar Line.
41 Nonja Peters, Milk and Honey but no Gold: Post-war migration to Western Australia 1945-1964, UWA Press, Nedlands, 2001, p. 77.
42 Hammerton and Thomson, p. 91.
England slipped away’. This sentiment is echoed in the words of another, possibly upset at leaving behind her boyfriend: ‘I’m glad no one came to see us off. Those on board who had family and friends waving goodbye were in tears, I was ready to jump ship’. William Coackley, who left England in 1966, wrote, ‘On embarkation the crew’s attitude was to pack in as many people as possible (like sheep). If you didn’t like—then get off the boat’. Steve Gallagher, who was a seaman on board migrant ships in the 1960s, confirmed this: ‘When I brought out immigrants from Britain, the immigrants were treated like animals’.

Gallagher’s remark made me recollect my own feelings of the time. We were herded and harried because, I suspect, the boat was due to leave. I can remember thinking: We are like
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial</th>
<th>Passengers Surname and Initials</th>
<th>Indicates by /whom</th>
<th>Intended Address in Australia</th>
<th>British / NO British</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ABDAIR A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>79 Hood Terrace, Sorrento</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ABDAIR A.P.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ALEXANDER G.</td>
<td></td>
<td>C/O Imm. Dpt.</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ALEXANDER M.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ALEXANDER M/B.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ALEXANDER C.F.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>B A L L W.P.</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 Boulder St, Bantley, Perth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>B A L L M.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>BANKS D.</td>
<td></td>
<td>C/O Imm. Dpt.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>BANKS M.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>BOLTON P.B.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>BOLTON H.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>BOLTON D.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>B O O T G.U.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>B O O T N.J.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>B O O T C.J.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>B O O T J.P.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>BROWN J.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>BROWN S.M.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>BROWN P.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>BRYSON G.</td>
<td></td>
<td>31 Stanley St, Scarborough</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>BRYSON J.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>BUCKLAND H.D.</td>
<td></td>
<td>33 Rose St, Norwood, W.A.</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>BURTON B.D.</td>
<td></td>
<td>63 Westminster St, Perth</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>CAUNT D.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0/C Imm. Dpt.</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>CAUNT N.J.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>CAUNT A.C.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>CAUNT J.N.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>CLARK O.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>CLARK K.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>CLARK A.C.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>CLARK M.B.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>CLARK J.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>CLARK L.O.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>CLARK J.C.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>CHAMBERLAIN F.H.</td>
<td></td>
<td>St. George Terrace, Perth</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>CHAMBERLAIN J.H.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>CHAMBERLAIN P.H.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>CHAMBERLAIN D.G.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>CHAMBERLAIN P.H.</td>
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<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>CLIFF J.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>C/O Imm. Dpt.</td>
<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>CLIFF K.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>CLIFF M.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>CLIFF G.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>CLIFF H.</td>
<td></td>
<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>CLITHERRO P.</td>
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<td>do</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>CLITHERRO S.H.</td>
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<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>CLITHERRO S.H.</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>CLITHERRO J.H.</td>
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<td>do</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>CLITHERRO J.H.</td>
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<td>do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>COULSON R.</td>
<td></td>
<td>46 Bedford Ave, Subiaco, W.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the peoples of the holocaust—we don’t know where we are going, we don’t know what conditions we will travel in or what lies at the end of the voyage, we don’t even know where our luggage is. But we were on a conveyor belt from which there was no turning back.

The Castel Felice was fitted to accommodate up to 1200 passengers but an analysis of a sample of 13 passenger lists indicate that it often carried many more. Nearly 1400 were on each run between Britain and Australia in 1963 and 1964. Most passages until 1969 carried more than 1200 passengers. (See table below).48

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Passengers</th>
<th>Fremantle</th>
<th>Melbourne</th>
<th>Sydney</th>
<th>Brisbane (Port Said 1)</th>
<th>Adelaide</th>
<th>Auckland</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18/02/1963</td>
<td>1371</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>460</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/04/1963</td>
<td>1384</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/10/1963</td>
<td>1393</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/12/1963</td>
<td>1379</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/3/1964</td>
<td>1369</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>399</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/4/1965</td>
<td>1285</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>393</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/1/1966</td>
<td>1287</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>484</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/04/1966</td>
<td>1340</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>411</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/04/1967</td>
<td>1184</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>531</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/03/1968</td>
<td>1288</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>569</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30/04/1969</td>
<td>1336</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many respondents to the survey complained about ‘overcrowding’ on board the Castel Felice. One participant claimed the voyage leaving England in December 1965 and landing at Fremantle in January 1966 had ‘1460 passengers on board’,49 though the passenger list gives a total of 1,287, of which only 224 disembarked in Fremantle, the majority sailing on to Melbourne and Sydney.50

48 Australian Government, National Archives of Australia, Series K269/4, Western Australia.
50 Australian Government, National Archives of Australia, Series K269/4, Western Australia.
Many migrants were surprised at the small size of the ship; especially those who saw her tied up alongside such luxury liners as the Himalaya. One participant, a South African, was scathing:

*Castel Felice* was a shitty old ship, I had worked a couple of voyages on the *Kenya Castle* as a steward and I would sooner work on the *Kenya Castle* than be a passenger on that rotten old converted auxiliary aircraft carrier.  

On seeing a copy of a postcard illustrating the *Castel Felice* included as part of the survey Chris Davies remarked; ‘Looked nothing like the picture postcard, 12,000 tonnes of floating scrap’. Another said, ‘I would never go on a boat again, it was so small’. Others had a different view—‘when first coming to the ship I thought how grand’—and Loretta Thomas remembers the pageantry of the departure ‘there were lots of streamers thrown to the people on the dock’.  

The *Castel Felice* had a number of decks, some of which were below the water line, and these were where the most crowded cabins were located. At the top of the ship was the ‘Sun’ deck where the life boats were held. The ‘Saloon deck had the swimming pool, ladies
room, card room, writing room and a library, there was an outside area where the deck games were played. There were some cabins on this deck. Next down was the ‘Promenade Deck’ the main features of which were the huge dining rooms and kitchens. ‘A’ deck held the main foyer with the grand staircase and such shops as a barber, gift shop and hair-dresser. On ‘B’ Deck were the laundry and medical rooms. ‘C’ deck contained the laundry drying rooms which were in reality part of the engine rooms, with ropes strung here and there between pipes for drying lines. The Caunt family travelled on ‘D’ deck. According to my participants ‘D’ and ‘E’ decks were the home of people with young families and singles in dormitory type

57 Plowman, p. 211.
accommodation. ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ cabins had portholes. On the lower decks, even in cabins where a porthole existed it was so close to sea level it was shut most of the time, especially in rough weather. There were no lifts so the lower decks were accessed by steep staircases, a special problem for families with young children who had to climb up and down many times a day to cater for different meal sittings and other chores such as washing and fresh air. All toilet and bathing facilities were communal—another difficulty for families with children. The time taken for the passage to Australia by the *Castel Felice* and her sister ships was about four weeks, and although this time was shorter than that of the eighteenth and nineteenth century passages, the privation of ship board life was much the same. The sea route to Australia was never easy, and to some the voyage on the *Castel Felice* seemed horrendous. Hammerton says migrants often did not enjoy the ‘luxury cruise they expected although he thought (unlike some of my respondents) that it was a great improvement on that of the nineteenth century migrant’.

**The cabins**

Many of the participants were expecting accommodation similar to that which they had seen portrayed in movies. Peters, referring to post-war migrants from Europe in the late 1940s and early 1950s, speaks of ‘refugees packed like sardines,’ and says, ‘the facilities on the ships ‘were barely adequate’. She also thinks the British migrants had a more privileged voyage and ‘enjoyed the benefits of a long cruise’. Though a few of my respondents did have an enjoyable time many did not agree with Peters’ statement and found the voyage to be an unpleasant experience.

In a brochure issued by the *Castel Felice* there are illustrations of cabins that would appear to be far better appointed than those experienced by some of the participants in my

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60 Peters, *Milk and Honey*, pp. 100.
At Sea on the *Castel Felice*

One participant wrote: ‘Cabin very small, I shared with two old ladies on the bottom bunks and a young girl and I had the top bunks. I found I was claustrophobic’.62 Another had the same fear: ‘The first shock was to discover I was claustrophobic and the small cabin was not too good for me’.63 Others were more fortunate in being assigned a cabin on an upper deck, but even they found that shipboard life had some drawbacks: ‘The cabin was next to the dining rooms we were awakened every morning by the stewards preparing breakfast’.64

The comfort of the cabin was most often related to its location. Being on ‘A’ deck with a porthole and easy access to the shops and entertainment venues was a far better situation than travelling in the bowels of the ship and having to make many journeys up and down steep narrow-stepped staircases. Some respondents were quite happy with their allotted space. Peter Norris said, ‘My wife and I were lucky for we were on ‘A’ deck that being the top passenger deck, it was a short walk to the lounge and dance floor’.65 Others wrote ‘We were lucky as we were allocated a nice cabin with a porthole on the main deck; our porthole

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61 Caunt, private papers.
63 Name withheld, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 40.
64 Name withheld, arr. Jul/Aug. 1968, Survey 71.
overlooked the front deck’. 66 ‘Our cabin was on ‘A’ deck and we were the only occupants’. 67 ‘We had a good cabin with 5 berths’. 68 ‘Family had a comfortable 4 berth cabin on the same floor as the purser’s office’. 69 The Gawthrops were also satisfied as ‘the cabin was outside with porthole’. 70 The Baldwins who travelled on the Fairsea considered themselves lucky:

‘Above waterline cabin, very nice’. 71 Another considered her family to be fortunate:

At least we had a cabin to ourselves; it was a small cramped room at the bow of the ship so we really felt every movement of the ship. It had two single bunk beds and a small cupboard on the wall. The floor space was just enough to stand in and get dressed one at a time. There was no porthole so it was very claustrophobic. Bathroom facilities were shared. 72

However, most remember only too well the discomfort they endured. Teenager Michael Geurds recounted during an interview:

Our cabin was below the water line next to the water tanks. Remember lying in bed in our very small cabin listening to water slopping around as the boat rocked and rolled.

He shared the cabin with three other boys with whom he spent a lot of time on the ship playing table tennis. 73 Phena Pritchard ‘shared a six berth cabin on ‘D’ deck’, 74 while Lesley Ross remembered: ‘I shared with my parents and younger brother. It was very small and consisted of two bunk beds, a hand wash basin and a small porthole’. 75 Christopher Moore who came as a single man found the accommodation was pretty basic, ‘we had three sets of metal bunks in our cabin’. 76 However, one said that:

My family and I were fortunate to have a four berth cabin allocated to us on the lower deck near the stern. Somewhat cramped but at least we were together. The bulkhead at the back of the cabin was all that separated us from the ships workshop from which noises of metal against metal and voices could be heard at most times day and night!’ 77

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68 Anon, arr. May 1968, Survey 70.
69 Anon, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 40.
71 Anon, arr. May 1966, Survey 57.
Lillian Clarke recalled:

Cabins were horrible. Mum and I shared a cabin with four other women, (two sets of three tier bunks) with about two feet between them, had to get up one at a time as there was no room to move.\textsuperscript{78}

Families often suffered in the allocation of accommodation, finding the cabins variously undersized, under equipped, and sometimes infested by insects. The family cabins were often on the lower decks and even then families were split between cabins once on board.

Nor was there much attempt to configure accommodation space by age or interests. Moyna Harland, a young woman coming to Western Australia to join her fiancée, complained, ‘Shared a cabin with two elderly women . . . would have preferred sharing with people my own age’.\textsuperscript{79} Other respondents wrote:

They took us to our cabin I could not believe my eyes it looked like a prison cell or how I thought a prison cell looked like. It was lovely and clean with four bunk beds no where for the baby to sleep. My husband saw one of the stewards who quickly sorted out a big basket.\textsuperscript{80}

We had a cabin with four berths, two bunk beds and a cot for the boy—it was down near the engine room so no windows—the cot was jammed up against the hand basin—a metal wardrobe was full of steam beetles.\textsuperscript{81}

For many the greatest shock was the separation of families and even newly weds.

Hammerton says this ‘segregation’ was to make the best use of space and facilities and was universally unpopular.\textsuperscript{82} Reverend Patterson, Chaplain on the Castel Felice in September 1967, noted in his report that:

There were several young married couples who had not been married very many weeks who were separated cabin-wise for the whole of the voyage. As there were 82 cabins for two on the ship, it would seem to me that a little more careful planning on the part of arranging cabin allocations would have made it possible for these couples to have been allocated two berth cabins. It would appear that some cabins were free at the commencement of the voyage and that some traffic took place. I would suggest that special consideration be given to young

\textsuperscript{78} Clarke, arr. July 1966, Survey 20.
\textsuperscript{80} Anon, arr. Dec. 1967, Survey 66,
\textsuperscript{81} Anon, arr. Nov. 1968, Survey 73.
\textsuperscript{82} Hammerton and Thomson, p. 105.

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couples who have been married for less than six months.  

It would seem this suggestion was never implemented. Segregation remained a problem for participants who travelled in 1968 and 1969. Peter Thomson said that when he travelled in 1968: ‘Couples were separated in six berth cabins’.  

The complaints from participants in this study demonstrate the extent of the problems which followed the separation of families. As one remarked, ‘Many families found themselves separated due to the overcrowding which, one can imagine, gave rise to indignation and anger on the part of those affected’. Another was disgusted:

Four families were squeezed into three cabins, done by putting four husbands in one cabin. My wife was stuck with a woman with one small kid still on the potty. Babies slept in laundry baskets.

Lesley Ross faced a similar situation: ‘Mother slept with four children while father was assigned to a lower deck sleeping with three men’. Tom Rollo said, ‘We were allocated separate cabins, Mary shared with three other girls and I shared with their husbands all strangers’. It was the same for another:

I was in a cabin with my daughter and another woman and her daughter—her husband was one of the men in my husband’s cabin and a second daughter was in another cabin.

Some used their initiative to sort out the problem for themselves, ‘We were in separate cabins but had a swap around with another couple then there were two couples in our cabin’. On husband wrote:

Was originally separated by cabins, one for wife and others, one for me and others, but did a swap with helpful others and firm stand – just us three in a four berth cabin.

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88 Tom Rollo, arr. Apr. 1963, Survey 44.  
Others had to resort to other arrangements to spend time together. Peter Norris recalled that:

We found husbands and wives had been separated cabin wise, four men to a cabin, and four women to a cabin. One could foresee intimate moments taking place in very cold places on the ship, as proved later, and the cause of much hilarity.  

William Watkins joked that though seven couples on his ship were separated, six wives somehow became pregnant by judicious use of lifeboats and under dining room tables on which the cloths hung to the floor. Others complained: ‘As a newly married couple I shared with two elderly and one middle-aged man while Roberta shared with three elderly women’. For one mother it was very difficult: ‘Alan was in a different cabin . . . it was awful having four children and myself being sick’. Alan Huckins writes, ‘Mum, Dad and sister had a four berth cabin between them. My brother and I shared a four berth cabin—two up two down—with two individual migrants’. In at least one instance this situation led to comical errors of assumption. ‘One big family the husband was put in with the men. After so many days he was reported missing at sea—he was in his wife’s cabin’. Victor Humphries was more philosophical about the problem of separated families; ‘The cabins were only used at night for sleeping’.

**Conditions at sea**

There was a constant worry of what might happen in the case of an emergency. Passenger safety was sometimes a real concern. Lifeboats appeared to be in short supply and some complained that safety precautions seemed compromised. Emergency drills were poorly...
attended and were confusing. One participant expressed the thoughts of many of the passengers:

I was thankful that there hadn’t been any untoward crisis because up to that point, an emergency drill had been previously conducted that left most, if not all passengers in total confusion. The ships crewmen seemed almost as confused and I have no doubt that the over crowding was the reason for their lack of order and confusion.

It was my own experience in an emergency drill that half the passengers did not bother to attend. The chaos was not helped because the crew spoke Italian or broken English. There were children screaming and parents trying to fit life-jackets that were too large on babies and toddlers. On my voyage in 1966 the whole thing was abandoned without one life boat being lowered.

Despite the many complaints about other conditions on the ship most found the crew helpful and friendly. Children were cared for when left in the minding centre or in the cabins to sleep while the parents dined when the stewards acted as baby-sitters. One participant writes that the crew were ‘marvellous’. Phena Pritchard wrote:

The cabin staff were friendly, but not overly so. And looking back they must have been frustrated by young people that partied half the night and then never wanted to get up in the morning. However much we pleaded we would make our own beds we were told it had to be done properly.

Patricia Thyer expressed the feelings of most of the passengers: ‘I think the crew tried to make the journey pleasant’.

A few however, were not so impressed: ‘I found the crew creepy’, wrote one, while another found: ‘Sailors on board a bit like bush flies, sticky’. Patricia Paleeya explained, ‘The crew being Italian and hot blooded pursued the young girls whenever they got

107 Name withheld, arr. Apr/May 1969, Survey 74.
the chance and at times it was very difficult avoiding them’. Geoffrey Shapland noted that the English passengers were not accustomed to providing the tips the Italian crew expected. Some found the crew amusing. Margaret Bolton, a young married woman, says, ‘We got to know the Captain and he asked me if I would go and visit the ship next time it came to Fremantle—I never did’. Norris recorded events at one of the dances held on the ship:

The Captain and the ship’s doctor were always in attendance, both of them with a keen eye for the unattached female and in some cases the married ones. The doctor was short but obese in stature he believed he was the dancing king of Italy but in fact was a terrible exponent of ballroom dancing. With perspiration dripping down his face he would gallop and run some poor unwitting girl around the floor, much to the amusement of the other passengers.

On board ship the day tended to revolve around mealtimes, the food was generally very good, though some found it fattening and monotonous. ‘Most found the food to be of a very high standard though a few found the Italian influence foreign to their English palette. Special efforts were often made such as birthday cakes for children and banquets on special occasions such as Christmas and New Year. There were banquets to welcome and farewell the passengers and another crossing the equator’. There was plenty of food available—‘miracles’ were performed and alcohol was affordable’. There were a few complaints such as the use of powdered milk and finding weevils in the bread. Some found the menus monotonous and said the standard declined as the voyage progressed

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The Castel Felice was a comparatively old ship and many of the respondents tell of a rough passage, sometimes in the Bay of Biscay, in the Mediterranean and often in the Indian Ocean. In 1966 one participant experienced heavy seas in the Mediterranean where the vessel was pitched violently and the stern literally ‘corkscrewed’ across the surface of the ocean.

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At Sea on the Castel Felice

Travellers in 1967 were puzzled when the crew began to thread ropes through the handrails in the passageways, but soon found these to be in preparation of a ‘force 9’ gale. The Geurds had a rough start and end to their voyage, while crossing the Bay of Biscay had been turbulent, their last night on the ship was frightening with ‘crockery being smashed as the ship rolled in the storm’. On a voyage in 1966 it was so rough that bunk heads were separated from the bulkhead, fire extinguishers broke away from the walls and a sealed porthole broke open. The mood of the passengers soured and fights broke out. Paleeya recalled a rough passage around Cape Town when tablecloths were dampened to prevent crockery from slipping, while ‘passengers and waiters held hands to form a chain’ so people could safely leave the dining room.

Added to the discomfort of the inclement weather were concerns about the

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114 Caunt, Private papers.
119 Crossing the Bay of Biscay, December 1965.
seaworthiness of the vessel. These complaints included: the air conditioning, which broke down on several occasions, many toilets that did not work and rooms that were infested with cockroaches.\textsuperscript{120} One participant was a turbine operator and worried through the entire voyage at the ‘steam leaks and blows everywhere’.\textsuperscript{121} Geoffrey Shapland shared his concerns when he said; ‘the ship was a real rust bucket (we sometimes wondered if it was going to sink) the crew seemed to be continually painting over the rust on the outside’.\textsuperscript{122}

Passengers in March 1966 had a real scare:

During our passage through the Mediterranean thick black smoke began to pour from the ships one and only funnel spewing tiny black particles of oily material across the upper deck in whatever direction the wind may have been blowing. My first thought was ‘fire down below’ but my fears were groundless and the black smoke attributed to an engine mal-function (or so we were told) which slowed the vessel and resulted in a late arrival in Fremantle.\textsuperscript{123}

Most of the participants in the study suffered from seasickness at some time during the voyage, possibly due to rough seas, but also no doubt due to the stress of the unknown. Some were given injections of anti-nausea medication.\textsuperscript{124} A number of passengers were sick for the entire journey, including Penelope Lennon’s brother and Mary Rollo.\textsuperscript{125} Even the crew were seasick. The vessel apparently had no stabilisers and as a result was tossed violently in rough weather. Moyna Harland recalled how the passengers complained about the lack of stabilisers and says that on her voyage in 1966 the ship was renamed ‘Castor-oil Felice’.\textsuperscript{126}

Other forms of illness descended on the overcrowded passengers including gastro-enteritis, sunburn and other childhood ailments such as measles and chicken-pox. Jeanne Reid was plagued with illness from the very start of the voyage. She became seasick before

\textsuperscript{121} Anon, arr. Mar/Apr. 1965, Survey 78.
\textsuperscript{123} Anon, arr. Mar. 1966, Survey 19.
\textsuperscript{124} Name withheld, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 41.
\textsuperscript{126} Harland, arr. Jul. 1962, Survey 22.
At Sea on the Castel Felice

the ship left Southampton Waters and lamented the inadequate sterilisation facilities for baby bottles and the food which made her children vomit. She complained at the hygiene of the Italian passengers who were collected at Naples, though Hammerton and Thomson suggest that in their research here was little evidence of racial tension on board. Children were often sick with even the smallest ailments and the ships doctor was kept very busy. One participant complained that he and his wife spent much of the voyage in the sick bay as their children were so ill. A participant told of another problem: ‘During rough weather I fell out of bed and badly bruised myself at the top of my legs’. Heat stroke affected adults and children alike. Some participants remember that there were deaths during the voyage.

Life on board

The enjoyment of the voyage was often dependent on the age and responsibilities of the passengers. Families with young children seem to have had the worst time. Hammerton notes that the mothers may not have had to cook and clean but that they had a full time job looking after children and washing and drying clothes while on board. He points out, ‘child care facilities were not good and the playrooms were often chaotic.’ All respondents agreed that life for mothers on the migrant ships was difficult: ‘the laundry facilities were limited—no drying machines—just a hot room full of clothes lines, very difficult for those who had several children’. One mother wrote, ‘I didn’t go ashore because of my daughter being ill’, and another that, ‘I think we only had one part evening to dance and were then called back to attend to our baby boy in distress’. Frank Plummer was bothered by a ‘rebel

129 Anon, arr. May 1963, Survey 45.
130 Anon, arr. May 1963, Survey 46.
133 Hammerton and Thomson, pp 105–106.
teenage daughter . . . The fact that there were 500 (mostly young) children on board did not contribute to a peaceful voyage’.\footnote{Francis George Plummer, arr. Aug. 1966, Survey 58.} Another writes, ‘Tony and I ate at different sittings so that the children were never left alone’.\footnote{Anon, arr. Jan/Feb. 1969, Survey 83.} Some parents constantly worried about children falling overboard, and struggled to move them safely around the ship, including up and down the stairs.\footnote{Anon, arr. Mar/Apr. 1965, Survey 78; Anon, arr. Oct. 1968, Survey 13.} However, one participant was concerned about the lack of child supervision: ‘Kids left to fend for themselves, found a four year old climbing over the rail unsupervised, others running in groups down below while parents partied’.\footnote{Name withheld, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 80.}

Participants who were children at the time, on the other hand, found the voyage more pleasurable. It seems there were lots of things for them to do. Jean Pope said, ‘the children enjoyed the facilities for young ones and found great amusement in the antics of their seniors in the crossing the line ceremony’.\footnote{Anon, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 40.} Davidson remembers that her two sons loved the freedom to run on deck, and nearly everything about the voyage though they ‘hated the smell and taste of garlic’.\footnote{Anon, arr. Nov. 1962, Survey 41.} Children were generally well catered for with a school, pool and activities on the deck. Some appreciated the unusual opportunity to spend time with their parents. Jeanette Geurds learnt to play chess.\footnote{Robert David Roberts, arr. Nov/Dec. 1962, Survey 2; Geurds, arr. May 1963, Survey 4. Ross, arr. July 1964, Survey 10.} Other children were excited with the food and the entertainment they encountered:

When Mum and Dad thought us two younger ones were asleep we could sneak out and peek through the railings at all the entertainment and boy! What a grand sight. In the day we had movies, ten pin bowling and a special room for teenagers, music etc.\footnote{Name withheld, arr. Sep/Oct. 1965, Survey 52.}

For the young, single traveller the voyage was often the pleasure cruise of their dreams. For 23-year-old Phena Pritchard the voyage on the Castel Felice was wonderful:

Meeting people, dining, sunbathing, dancing, concerts, it was a five star cruise. We young people stayed in our own group and I think we all knew
each other after the first week... There were some romances, but with 4 and 6 in a cabin I don’t think there was much sexual activity. I think as a young traveller I was delighted with all aspects of our care. The most often requested song on our trip was ‘Moon River’.145

Patricia Reed enjoyed the time spent with new friends and the entertainment on board. Teenagers made friends quickly and Marilyn Fonte partied every evening.146 Some drank heartily of the cheap grog, one being hospitalized in 1968 due to alcohol poisoning according to Davies.147

Entertainment, including theme nights and concerts, was a regular feature of the voyage; often these were run by passenger volunteers.148 Special events were celebrated on board, including such occasions as Christmas and New Year. Most respondents fondly remember crossing the equator and the crew’s antics. Certificates were distributed and a banquet held.149 Jeanette Ross wrote; ‘crossing the equator ceremony was hilarious with lots of spaghetti being thrown and smeared over all the participants’.150 Some could recall the date: ‘Remember crossing the equator on Sunday 9 Jan. 1966’151 and ‘Crossed equator 22 May, crossing the line ceremony I was a judge’.152 Others simply remembered the fun: ‘Crossing the equator was a riot; everyone threw themselves into the parts. It was a great party’.153 Education of sorts was also provided, a school for children and information sessions for adults. Chris Moore also remembered attending ‘Life in Australia’ classes,

I went to one and learnt that you walk on your left, how civilised, not more than 5 mins in the sea and not more than 10mins on the beach in Australia, otherwise your pale skins will burn.154

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147 Davies, arr. Feb/Mar. 1968, Survey 35.
149 Anon, arr. May 1963, Survey 45.
152 Anon, arr. May 1968, Survey 70.

155Patterson collection.
Passengers celebrated crossing the equator. Certificates such as this were distributed on the *Castel Felice* to commemorate the occasion.\footnote{Caunt, Private papers}
At Sea on the *Castel Felice*

*Ports of call*

Perhaps the most exciting diversions were the various ports of call for the migrant ships. Depending on the route taken these could include Naples, Port Said, Port Suez, Aden, Colombo, Bombay or the Canary Islands and Cape Town. Those who came through the Suez Canal speak of the sand and the pyramids they saw along the banks. Some were troubled by the standards of living they saw in the ports of call. Many participants who stopped in Aden were confronted by the poverty of its people, and the children who swam to the ship to sell the small items they dragged behind them in the water. 157 Traders surrounded the ship whenever it docked, and through the Suez Canal some were allowed on board. The haggling that followed was new to the English passengers. 158 Some were revisiting parts of the world they had first seen as service men in the Second World War. Norris remembered that his first view of the African coast was memorable because:

> It was AFRICA, not part of Europe. After a cruise through the Mediterranean we docked at Port Said. Having left there in 1946 after army service in the Middle East I noted nothing had changed, the smelly bum boats coming out to the ship, the same buildings most in need of demolition, it was as though I had never been away. We were not allowed ashore, our stay only being for 4 hours, and night time in Port Said for a visitor ain't healthy. Whilst docked I retired to bed only to be awoken by Vicky my wife with 'you speak a smattering of Arabic (Barrack room version) come out and help the girls who are trying to barter with the sellers from the bum boats that have pulled up alongside our docking'. For the next two hours I was haggling with the boat merchants over the price of watches, handbags and jewellery, and advised the ladies not to buy the watches no matter how cheap. When the Arabs discovered I could speak their tongue re money matters they commenced to drop their prices. At 3am I retired knackered to my bed wishing I had not learned a little of their language. A quiet trip through the Suez arriving at Aden where we were permitted ashore for 2-3 hours. The conditions there were awful with a surfeit of beggars and poverty and dodgy traders. 159

Frank Plummer remembered

> The ship stopped at Port Said where my daughter and I joined a crowd from the ship and travelled overland to Suez stopping overnight in Cairo (where 5 of us visited a Cairo nightclub) rejoining the ship at Suez whilst my wife

and boys stayed on board and travelled through the Suez Canal. This way
we were able to exchange experiences and make the most of the voyage.\textsuperscript{160}

Hammerton says ‘British migrants experienced their journey and stopovers as excited
tourist.\textsuperscript{161} But for some the circumstances were frightening, especially in 1966 when they
thought they were on the last boat to pass through the Suez Canal.\textsuperscript{162} Others were shocked in
1966 at evidence of gun battles in Aden and the armed guard who accompanied them on the
shore.\textsuperscript{163} One passenger recalled the experience in 1966:

> We stopped at Aden, what an experience that was the Arabs were trying to
get the British soldiers out and fighting for that right. The British army was
on guard there (the Black Watch). We were only allowed in one street to
shop. We bought an electric fan which was put to good use when we got to
Australia. The soldiers were armed and on guard on foot and in trucks at
each end of the street. There was sniper fire and as the ship pulled out of
the harbour the local radio station was blown up. If we had realised how
dangerous it was we would never have taken the children ashore. We also
went through the Suez Canal – we were the last convoy to go through. Not
long after lots of ships were blown up blocking the canal.\textsuperscript{164}

The risk to the impromptu tourists was real. Victor Humphries recalled

> When we arrived in Port Said ready to go through the Suez Canal a coach
trip was arranged to Cairo and stay overnight then pick up the \textit{Castel Felice}
up at he other end of the canal. I took my daughter as my wife was
frightened of being abducted by Arabs. We went to the Cairo museum and
saw the treasures of Tutankhamen and it cost us £8 each and the overnight
stay was in a 4 star hotel. We went ashore at Aden but the British army
were there and having trouble with the locals and 4 soldiers with machine
guns came into a big store looking for radicals so we went back on board
only to be told a bomb had exploded 30 mins after we had left..\textsuperscript{165}

Another said

> Some passengers left at Port Said to go overland to Aden but Ted wouldn’t
let us. He had served in the 8\textsuperscript{th} army during the war and wasn’t keen to go
again, thought on board was so much safer. There was a lot of trouble there
at the time.\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{160}Plummer, arr. Aug. 1966, Survey 58.
\textsuperscript{161}Hammerton and Thomson, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{162}Name withheld, arr. July 1966, Survey 25.
\textsuperscript{164}Anon, arr. Jan/Feb. 1967, Survey 60
\textsuperscript{165}Humphries, arr. Dec. 1966, Survey 34.
\textsuperscript{166}Anon, arr. Dec. 1964, Survey 50.
Australia ahead

Though some endured a tough passage, most participants now remember the voyage favourably. Some, enjoyed their time on the ship, and made many long-term friends. One wrote, ‘think everyone wanted it to go on for ever’. Others regretted leaving behind the friends they had made. Many felt excited at the prospect of their new life, and as the

167 Caunt, Private papers.
168 Caunt, Private papers.
ship neared Australia the migrants’ dreams, excitement and worries about the new life ahead of them increased. Phena Pritchard remembered the voyage as:

A five star cruise, news bulletins were posted daily which I think helped the ‘out of touch’ feeling. It was around one of these that we grouped silently to read the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Some were more nervous than others I think about what would await us in Australia. However, the reality of the voyage was, in some cases, worse than they could possibly have imagined—a ‘ship of horror’, as one suggested. One thing is certain, though many of the participants travelled on the same ship, many on the same voyage, all had different stories to tell. To some it was a positive experience, to others a ‘total disappointment’. The memory of the passengers of their voyage to Australia, unquestionably, has now, been coloured by time. For some it might now seem better than it was; for others, worse. Many had hoped for a luxurious, relaxing cruise. It came true for some, but never for all. The crew were regarded by many as the trip’s saving grace, yet by others as lecherous. The medical facilities were praised by some and lamented by others. The food was plentiful and varied as the menus demonstrate, yet some remember it as bland and repetitive. There seems to have been plenty of entertainment provided but often family responsibilities meant it could not be enjoyed to the full. There were also genuine concerns at the ship’s hygiene, accommodation and seaworthiness. The voyage was for some, the first of a number of failed promises, and may well have coloured the perspectives of many as they settled in Australia.

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