

Australian Honeymoon—Near Disaster and back Title 46

There is not very much to tell about Australia during the time we actually spent there as pure tourists. The real result was that we liked the country and the people, the climate and the free and easy style of living. It was 1947 when we visited, and the War had also touched Australia deeply; the treatment of the Australian prisoners of war by the Japanese in their terrible camps was often discussed. The hate of everything Japanese we found, was just as deep, as I had hated everything connected with Germany.

Although there was no rationing of any food, there was a remarkable lack of imagination in the meals we had in the hotels and restaurants. Magnificent steaks were served, but either 'Steak and chips' or 'Steak and eggs', and with it there was either Tea or endless 'Schooners' of beer as the small glasses were called. We travelled to Melbourne, but found it too much like England, conventional and rainy, and we even had a look at Adelaide. This we considered too small and provincial, and our choice fell on Sydney which we never regretted.

While in the Southern Hemisphere we also wanted to have a look at New Zealand and this ended nearly in disaster. We took off from Sydney's Rose Bay in a Flying Boat, a pure routine for us, and expected a 10 hour flight. But as there was no meteorological forecasting in those days, the pilot found himself halfway across the Tasman Sea facing a tropical cyclone. He tried to fly over it, but could not, he tried to fly under it, but could not. The only, the last, alternative, was to return to Sydney, but had he passed 'the point of no return'? He certainly did not tell us.

The passengers' mood was by now pretty desperate, many had been airsick, and one of the Stewardesses, Joy, was being run off her feet. I was able to help her and this led to a life-long friendship, extending into the generation of our children. When the flying boat neared Sydney again we realised how near we had been to disaster, as it barely could fly over the roofs of the houses before landing. We eagerly bought the newspapers with their headlines "Destroyers left to pick up survivors of flying boat disaster". Indeed, we had a near miss!

But not as bad as for others, including a Bishop, who were flying the same route a few weeks later, when the pilot, faced with the same situation, decided to dump all luggage into the sea to save his flying boat. (We read about this event in *The Times* when back in London.)

We left Rose Bay again the next day, with fewer passengers and more fuel and reached Auckland, spent a fortnight touring, but found the country too agricultural for our liking. Sydney was our choice, and so back to London by flying boat, along the same route with the same stopovers, equally pleasant.