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Diary of my trip to South Africa

Edward Ferdinand Norman Roberts

On Feb 11 at 4-15am we left the Wrexham barracks and arrived at Southampton at about 4-30pm. We then had some light refreshment. The boat, The Doune Castle, was a bit late owing to the bad weather the previous night. We embarked at 8-30. We then got the luggage on board which took about two hours. The steamer steamed out of the port at 10-30pm, Sunday. We had a very nice supper then we retired.

We were called up about 7 o'clock the next morning. We had nothing to do for the first few days until we got used to the sea. On Tuesday we got into the Bay of Biscay it was as rough as ever. We were nearly all sick but some had it much worse than others. About Thursday the weather had quite settled and we had nothing more but very fine weather until we got to the Cape.

On Feb 16 we arrived at Madeira and to a fresh supply of water and coal. There were about twenty small boats with fruit but they should not sell us any, they were sent off the ship when they came on board, but they did smuggle a few boxes of fruit. On the Sunday we had a church parade and the Welsh Guard sung in the service. We had some fruit given us from the ship owners. There was nothing much the next week but on one day we saw about 20 sharks and the officers shot one of them. On the second Sunday out we passed a steamer going to the Cape but she was much smaller than our boat and we soon left her. We had some sports on board cock fighting, pillow fighting and a tug of war, but the Welshmen were not lucky enough to take any of the prizes. Our officers then had cock fighting in which one of ours' won the first prize.

On the 23 of Feb we crossed the equator, but it was not as hot as I expected but it was a dull day or then it would have been very hot.

We had an awning on the ship so we did not feel the heat as much. We passed one of the Castle boats on Thursday 2 March, but she did signal to us.