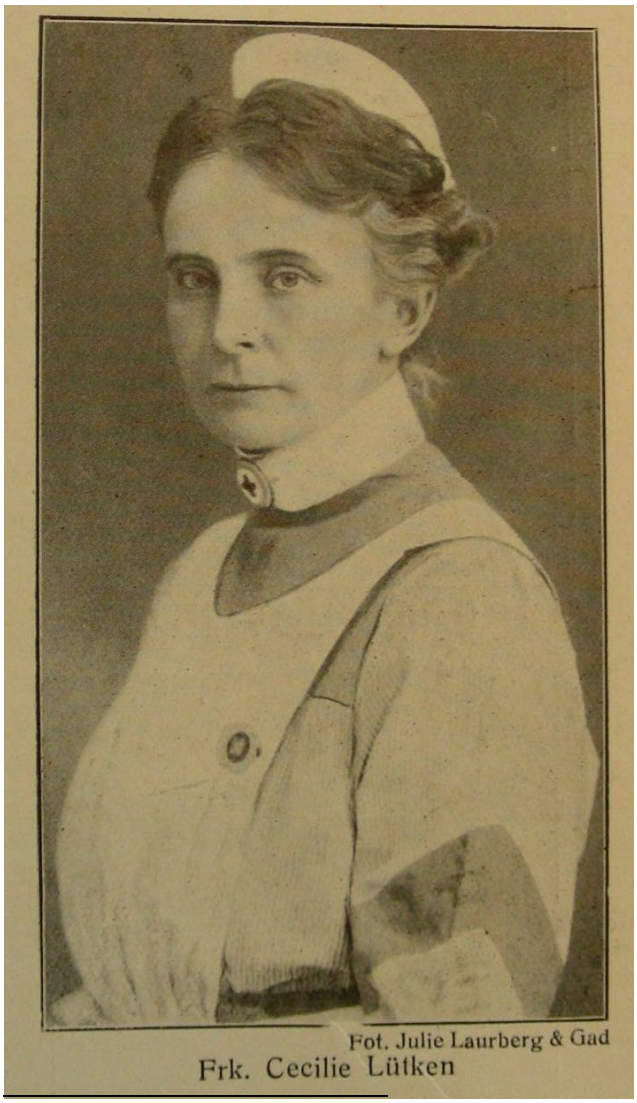
Cecilie Lütken: Diary notes from the winter of 1918-19

With prisoners of war over the North Sea

26.09.2019

Cecilie Lütken wrote a diary. Her entries from the winter 1918-19, when the 54 year old spinster was matron on the "Frederik VIII", were published in a pamphlet in 1923 by the Danish Red Cross Society with the title **"Under Britisk Røde Kors: Med krigsfanger over Nordsøen**" – "**For the British Red Cross: With prisoners of war across the North Sea**". The pamphlet text was used again as one of the chapters in Cecilie's biography published in 1944 "Livserindringer og rejseoplevelser"[1].


Fot. Julie Laurberg & Gad
Frk. Cecilie Lütken

Cecilie Lütken, born in 1864 into a middleclass family, had had a very active life, in her youth a budding artist and gymnast she later took up nursing. She trained in Germany and in 1898 took the position of matron at the Garrison Hospital, finding her true vocation in army nursing. At the same time she was active in the organization of nurses, taking part in an international women's congress in London in 1899, was involved in creating both the Danish Nursing Council and the International Nursing Council, and she occasionally took, all through her life, long leaves of absence from it all, travelling far and wide. Both Cecilie and her brother, Louis Carl Frederik Lütken, permanent under-secretary in the Ministry of War, were leading progressive committee members of the Danish Red Cross Society (DRC), but both left in 1915 when their suggestions for expanding the society's premise weren't implemented. However in 1917 when DRC reorganized Cecilie was voted to a seat on the committee again.

[1] Kjøbenhavn 1944, Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck

“Under Britisk Røde Kors: Med krigsfanger over Nordsøen”

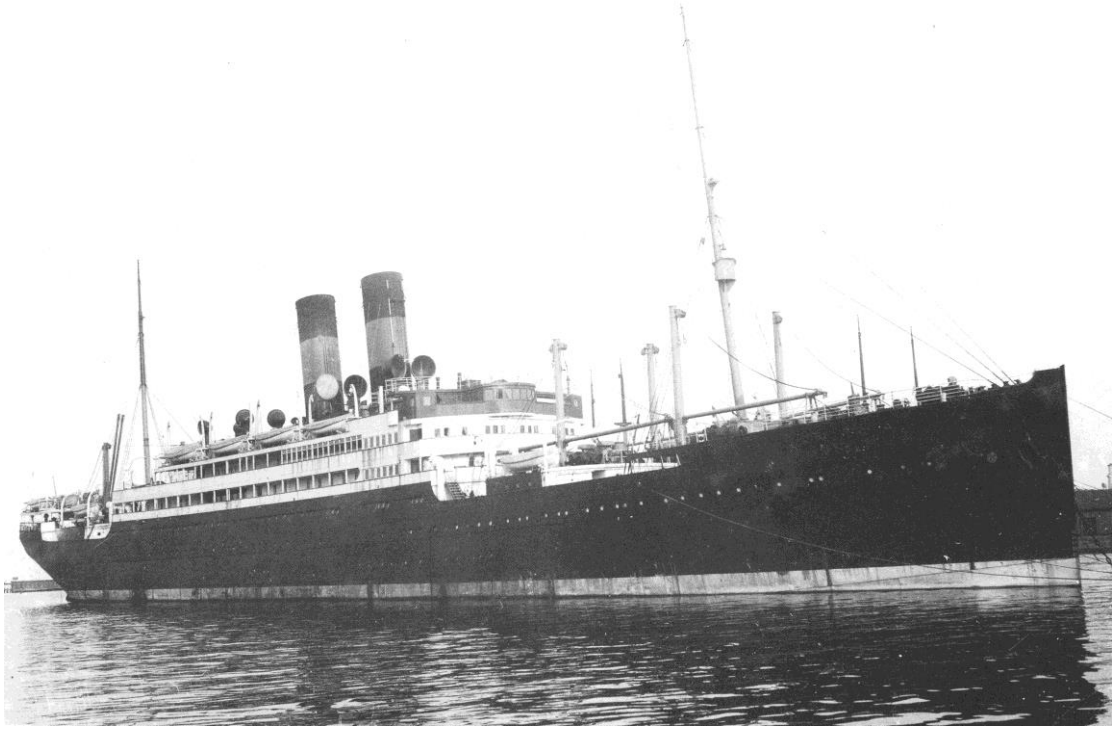
I had been given leave from my position as matron for the Army Nurse Corps to assist with the transport home of the British prisoners of war from Germany after the armistice.

The winter of 1918-19 was filled with major developments one after the other. In November an armistice was agreed between the warring powers. Kaiser Wilhelm and the German princes were dethroned after the Kaiser’s escape to Holland. The swell of these events reached Denmark too; as large numbers of homeward bound soldiers flooded especially Copenhagen and caused quite a commotion in the city.

Immediately the armistice was announced the Allies began the process of getting their prisoners of war out of Germany and home to their respective countries. Denmark was to provide the transport, particularly for the British and French soldiers, who had no shorter way to get home. The British Red Cross in Copenhagen organized the ships, doctors, nurses etc., and as early as the 21st November the first ships sailed to Sassnitz to pick up prisoners of war.

From this day on foreign soldiers streamed through Copenhagen. They arrived often quicker than they could be moved on, and the streets teemed with British, French, Italians, Serbs etc. Committees were established to look after them. They were housed in barracks and camps. Many of the sick were taken to the Garrison-hospitals and the hospital-ships. An enormous activity was put in motion.

When I was told about the transport to England and that nurses were needed, and after having got permission from my superiors, I volunteered to the British Red Cross, and was immediately accepted for duty as matron on the ‘America ship’ Frederik VIII.



Frederik VIII www.liners.dk

The following are individual diary notes from trips over the North Sea from 22 November 1918 to January 1919, reproduced here in the hope that they may be of a certain interest recalling that period in time and Denmark's contribution towards helping the prisoners of war home.

First Journey

17 November

Professor Mygind has undertaken to provide doctors and nurses and to direct the medical service on the ships that are to transport the British prisoners of war home from Germany. Some of the ships are to sail directly from Danzig and Stralsund to England, others from Sassnitz to Copenhagen and on from there. The twin ships 'King Haakon' and 'Queen Maud' are to fetch the soldiers from Sassnitz. In Copenhagen they are to transship to 'Frederik VIII', which can accommodate all from both these ships, that is 1,500 in all to continue their journey.

I go onboard on Sunday with 4 nurses to accompany the first transport.

Prof. Holger Mygind

Mrs. Annie Mygind

19 November

All the 35 nurses that are to be on the ships were together at Prof. Mygind's where we were given identity cards, a sewing box and a bottle of whisky, the last not for own use, but to treat prisoners with. It costs 16 kr. a bottle, and the professor advised us to take the label off and put 'poison' on instead.

21 November

I was requested to go to Sassnitz with the professor and his wife to fetch the first group of prisoners. We went onboard 'Queen Maud' in the evening, ready to sail next morning at 6 o'clock and sailed in lovely weather. All of the ship's cargo-rooms were converted into dining and living-rooms. We spent our time, while we sailed, decorating the tables in all the dining-rooms with flags and flowers, and we arranged a first-aid station in case anybody should need their dressings changed. There may be some that were injured.

22 November

At sundown we were near Germany and passed the high forest clad cliffs near Sassnitz. It was with really strange feelings we looked towards land. I hadn't walked on German soil since the war broke out over 4 years ago. War and famine and now recently revolution has happened here. The former so mighty Empire was broken down and transformed into a republic.

'King Haakon' had arrived and was already in the harbour, when we docked. Neither dockworkers, nor customs officers or any other officials that formerly always met a foreign ship were there. Everywhere was strangely quiet, and we had to, ourselves without help, moor and secure the gangway.

A group of children, pale and wretchedly clothed, stood quietly and stared at us. Only after we fetched all the ships sugar bowls and handed out their contents amongst them, did they come to life. It moved me to see the reverence with which they received the sugar, and their care that everyone should get some. Even the children at the back were nudged forward so they too could get their part. There was not the least formality about going on to land. We could do exactly as we wanted, so we made use of this to go for a walk and do some shopping. On the way a woman spoke to me and asked me very subdued and self-conscious, if I could get her a piece of soap.

We went to bed early, as the trains with the prisoners were to arrive next morning at 6 o'clock.

23 November

We were roused at 4.30 so we could be ready to receive the prisoners, but it became a long wait. It wasn't until 12 o'clock that a train rolled slowly up to the ships. I will never forget the vision before me!

In my childhood I saw in a provincial theatre 'Around the world in 80 days', in which there was a train that rolled onto the stage, but by accident the train broke up and the carriages broke apart into several pieces. This was roughly how this train looked. It didn't have one single whole window left. The doors and sides of the carriages were hammered together with tin and no paint was left at all.

But out of every single broken window thrust heads, so closely, that one couldn't understand how they could get in again, and they were waving small flags. All these heads shouted and sang, and the flags waved at us. The carriage doors were locked, to prevent everyone pouring out in one go and causing confusion. Then carriage after carriage was opened, and out of each poured men and luggage without end. One could not understand that there had been room for all these people. They streamed towards the two ships' gangways. The professor's wife[2], with tears in her eyes, welcomed her fellow countrymen onboard. We stood by the gangway, where we received them all and guided them on from here seating them at the long tables.

It was a strange group of men we had before us. Of all classes and professions, amongst whom were also approximately 200 blacks. All were wearing brown prisoner clothing with a dark arm band sewn on. This

[2] 56-year-old Mrs. Annie Mygind

was a transport of the civilian prisoners from Ruhleben. They sat quiet and calm as if not quite woken after an evil dream. They could not understand that now after 4 years of imprisonment they were free men.

At 3 o'clock with all onboard we sailed north again. The German children that had been given large parcels containing food by the British, waved at us, as long as they could see us. A torpedo boat guided us through the Sound, and 10.30 we docked at Frihavn behind 'Frederik VIII' on to which we immediately boarded. This magnificent ship was festively illuminated from front to back and stairs, salons, cabins and hold rooms were warm, light and inviting after the cold trip over the sea.

Arrival at Frihavn

There were a number of sick and weak, that we had to accommodate in the hospital sections. Two of these areas were placed at the front and two at the back. Helped by 4 nurses, who were now on duty, and other helpful souls, we managed to get everyone installed, so we ourselves could go to bed at 1 o'clock. It had been a long day from 4.30 that morning.

We sailed 5 o'clock the next morning, out into the Sound. There were 4 Danish doctors onboard, and Dr. Guildal was chief physician on this first trip.

24 November

The doctors and I looked all around the ship early in the morning to see how all the British were accommodated. It was a long and winding trip, we had to have an expert guide to show us all the many stairs to the different cargo-rooms, where beds were placed in layers right down in the deepest depth of the ship.

So as not to get complaints about who should use the grand cabins in first-class and who should get second, third or the cargo-rooms, the professor had the day before very cunningly picked out a committee from the prisoners of war, who should distribute all the numbers for the berths onboard 'Frederik VIII'.

This proved to be very foresighted; because when we arrived down at one of the deepest rooms, that by the way was very airy and well lighted, and where mainly the Negroes had been placed, a very agitated black guy came and complained that, he was put amongst Negroes. "I am a white man, sir". It was impossible for us to see that he was white, but obviously he felt he was white inside. We could only refer him to his own billet master, whom he could try to convince that he really was white. The other blacks listened with rolling eyes to this discussion.

We spoke with many of our passengers both on this round and when they came up. They were quiet, polite and well mannered, and it was a joy to be among them. All these people had by chance been in Germany when the war broke out. There were whole ships crews from captain to ship's boy, chance travelers, artistes, tourists etc. etc. and all had to spend 4 long years in Ruhleben. They showed me printed statements the Germans had given them to take home, saying that they regretted that they had been tough on them, and they asked them forget this and be friends with them.

25 November

Busy at consultation at the doctors today. Many had bad tummies, because they had eaten too much of the delicious Danish food.

We lay still last night because of the danger of mines. One cannot sail through the minefields at night. A ship was blown up here in the North Sea 2 days ago. But as soon as it became light we sailed on from Skagen. The weather was quiet and the sea calm. It is nice to sail again!

The British are sitting in the large salons dozing in the armchairs. They look like half dead flies in the heat. They have not been in heated rooms for over 4 years. In the evening I spoke to two young men, they had been onboard a Japanese ship when '*Möwe*' sank it, and for 5 months they had had to sail with this ship and sink ships, before they were put ashore and sent to prison camp.

I also spoke to a Sir John something or other[3], who had been taken prisoner two years ago on his way to Holland. He appeared as on 'older' man. I asked him if he was in the Relief-committee. He made a really strange face and answered: No, in the Blockade department. See, that had quite another purpose.

[3] Sir John Irvine

26 November

Arrived at Scotland and took on a pilot until Spurnhead, where we took on another pilot to take us up the Humber to Hull. Then we met many really strangely camouflaged ships, painted in the wildest cubistic way in motley colors. At a distance it was impossible to see what was the front or the back of such a ship, or if it was a wreck or several wrecks in a pile.

When the 'Frederik VIII' had caught their eye, these ships together with forty-odd trawlers sailed on both sides of us all the way past Grimsby and further. They were making the most infernal hooting concert from all their steam whistles to honour their homeward bound prisoners. At the same time the men were waving and fanning with great enthusiasm. It looked most festive, however one had to cover one's ears so that one's eardrums didn't burst because of this horrible caterwauling.

Finally our prisoners of war began to liven up and look forward to their homecoming.

27 November

It was a most festive arrival, but celebrations stopped here. The day was spent, after we had arrived at Hull, disembarking the men, and the sick were not picked up until 8 o'clock in the evening. However one felt that if they had learnt nothing else in prison camp, they had learnt to wait. With infinite patience they accepted it and to be sent to a camp for a couple of days instead of rushing home to their families, which is what they longed for.

Finally in the evening we doctors and nurses were left alone on the enormous ship, and a strange stillness ruled after the day's noise. The British authorities would not allow us to go on land, but we hoped to get permission the next day. We wanted to go to York to see the famous cathedral. However this time we weren't allowed to go on land. A British officer with 6 men came onboard. In the future they were to sail with us and be responsible for the prisoners provisioning and supplying them with new clothes.

A lot happened before we reached Denmark again, to start with we had to sail to Middlesbrough to be in dry dock and then on to Newcastle for coal. And nothing happened quickly in these days. Firstly we had to wait for the dry dock to be available and then, when it was finally our turn, there was hardly enough workers to scrape the bottom of the enormous ship. The workers turned out to be small women equipped with tiny scraping tools. There was plenty of time to enjoy the view from the deck, of the blast furnaces that were close by, where melted, glowing iron ran seething and flashing out, while flames that reached the heavens and red glowing steam hit up against the dark, smoke heavy sky.

We had still not been given permission to go on land and had to stay onboard the dry docked ship. However it soon proved to be that we had to go on land after all. The British had to allow it. Because when a ship is in dry dock its W.C.s may not be used. We then experienced, several times a day, being escorted onto land by armed soldiers that took us to the harbour office and brought us back again. On one of these 'office' trips I crept down to the dock to the small ladies and watched them scrape alga off the bottom of the mighty hull. They told me that they earned 7 shillings 2 pence a day for 12 hours work. There were many sweet, young girls among these dockworkers. It was strange to walk under the keel of 'Frederik VIII'.

3 December

Finally we got water under the hull again and sailed to Newcastle, where we waited 5 days before we took on our coal. We were docked far up the Tyne in coal dust and smoke.

We managed to obtain permission to go on land. We had to be rowed over to a shipyard and from there go and report ourselves at a police station, where the officers used over an hour to write our names in a book. In the meantime it had become pitch-dark and since no streetlights were on in Newcastle and the surrounding country in these days because of coal shortage, we preferred to go back to the ship and wait until the next day to look around.

But it was easier said than done finding our way back through the mighty shipyard with all its pitfalls and the articles it was filled with in the blackest dark. Suddenly however we were illuminated. One of the nurses fell with one leg down onto an electrical wire and she began to squirt and shine and flash. Terrified we ran to her and thought she was dead. We pulled her up and fortunately she got away with only a burn on her leg. Lucky for us we found a sailor with a lantern and he then escorted us and helped get us in touch with our ship by swinging the lantern.

We experienced quite a bit more these days in Newcastle but that's another story.[4]

On the **8th December** we finally pulled anchor and sailed off into the North Sea. We had now got a British officer onboard. We anchored 50 miles from Skagen, outside the minefields, which we first could pass the next morning, when it was light.

10 December

We passed 6 mines that were very close to the ship.

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[4] And there was another story here, which we unfortunately miss out on hearing from Cecilie's version of events. For "Frederik VIII" did not sail back to Copenhagen empty, there were in fact 380 passengers. Earlier in 1918 a Danish recruitment agency "Bangs Bureau" in Holbergsgade had hired Danes to work in England. According to Danish newspapers, they were hired to work in the forests, necessitated by the blockade having stopped the import of Scandinavian timber for the mines. The workers had been taken on for a 9-month or to end of war contract. With the war over they were all to be sent home. One article tells of two workers at Beddgelert forest who had unauthorized left their "compound" to seek advice from the nearest Danish consul. They were arrested on 7th November and jailed for a month. Another 400 Danish workers were sent home on "Plassy"s journey to Copenhagen. It appears there were approx. 2,000 in all.

According to Edvard N. Jørgensen in a letter to a newspaper, they were brutally forced on Saturday 5th December by police with bayonets from outside the Newcastle on Tyne Custom House onto an English steamer which transported them to "Frederik VIII". In his letter published in the socialist "Folkets Avis" on Christmas Eve Edvard described the bad food and poor working conditions they had suffered in England and Wales and that they were still owed money for their broken contracts. This was seen in contrast to the wonderful welcome the British pows, in their fancy uniforms as he said, had received in Denmark.

De jog os af Landet med Bajonetter!

Mens Danmark kæler for de engelske Soldater, behandler England de danske Arbejdere med Brutalitet.

Man fryder sig i disse Dage ved Synet af alle de fremmede Krigere med deres mere eller mindre spraglede Uniformer. Og det maa uvilkaarlig glæde En at se, med hvilken Hjertelighed castle a. Tynes Toldkammer *og set med hvilken Brutalitet ca. 380 danske Mænd blev jaget om Bord i en engelsk Transportdamper* for at blive ført ud til „Frederik VIII", der skulde

Second journey

11 December

We arrived at Copenhagen and the same day received 1500 soldiers onboard. They had waited a long time for us, and had been billeted in Copenhagen and surroundings.[5]

Already the same evening we sailed again with this cargo, very different than the former. This time it was proper soldiers; all of them young privates. They certainly made themselves cozy in the fine, white sheets in the first class cabins and by the way in the less grand cabins too. There were many 'doublepeople', that is a soldier with another, without legs, on his back. Such two were undividable and were billeted together on

[5] This isn't correct. The men had just arrived at Copenhagen on King Haakon and Queen Maud from Stettin on 11h December. This gives more sense to them bathing the next day and throwing their old dirty uniforms into the sea.

the top floor, so as not to have to climb deep down. It was moving to see the care some of the 'whole' men showed their maimed comrades. We had poorly folk with pneumonia and such like in the hospital.

12 December

The ship was rolling vigorously, and there was a rough sea. Most of the Tommies were seasick.

Something very strange happened today. The soldiers had naturally arrived on board wearing their brown prison wear, looking by the way well dressed and with good underclothing and good boots. They were all ordered to have a bath, which they did in the course of the day with some inconvenience as there wasn't enough bathrooms for 1500 people. Each man had to, after bathing, put on new clothes from inside to out and new boots, caps, coats etc.

Afterwards all 1500 used uniforms with accessories were thrown into the North Sea. They were not allowed to keep anything. Even braces, haversacks, boots etc. everything had to go swimming. The sea looked as if it was full of shipwrecked; caps and uniforms in the hundreds floated in the water as far as we could see after the ship. Our ships stoker and many of the crew were horrified at this extravagance, to throw all these expensive things overboard for no reason. They would very much have liked some of the warm underwear and the fine boots, and I must confess that I understood their feelings and looked the other way as not all from the patients at the hospital went overboard.

The motive for the soldiers to get rid of everything that they had had in the prisoner of war camps was partly a fear that they should bring some or other disease home with them, and partly so that they should feel that nothing was too good for them after all these dreadful years. They should not take anything home with them that would remind them of their years in captivity. As to the fear of contagious diseases, these measures to prevent infection were a mistake, as they had slept a night in the cabins in their used clothes, before getting the new ones on, so the cabins could by no means be said to be uninfected.

That the prisoners were so well dressed, as they also were well fed when they came on board, is the result of Britain having sent food and clothing to them during their imprisonment and doing everything that could be done for them.

13 December

We now have 17 patients, of which at least 5 are very ill with pneumonia. It has been a busy day, as we have had to bathe the cripples. Mr G. (one of the British officers) who is an especially nice man and very caring for the soldiers gave us 3 men that could help us.

We now have English food and eat the same as the soldiers. Meat, meat and more meat at all meals. It is a tough diet. It was amusing to see after lunch, how all the Tommies filed past the head steward, who poured them each a glass of port and gave them a piece of chocolate. It appeared to be just what they fancied.

Better weather today and tonight we will reach the Humber.

We received a nice invitation from the soldiers to attend a show, which was to take place in the evening in the large first-class dining-room. The evening was very lively. It was a complete variety show with songs,

dancing, tap-dancing and recitations. A few performed as ladies with long, blond curls. The men's delight in the different acts was great, and there was thundering applause from the hundreds in the audience despite being squashed together.

14 December

We were received with a similar hooting concert as last time on the Humber. It sounded like the roar of wild animals waiting to be fed. The Tommies were delighted. At 1 o'clock we docked in at the quay-side, it was full of waving and enthusiastic people that gave us a warm welcome. An hour and a half later everyone was on land with luggage and everything.

We had 15 patients on stretchers to take on land, among them our 5 seriously ill with pneumonia. They were all to go on an ambulance-train to London; I succeeded in persuading the British doctor to keep the 4 most poorly in Hull, as they certainly could not have survived the long journey.

Now it was quiet on board and we docked to get coal.

17 December

After having gone through a true purgatory of formalities, I went with one of the doctors and a nurse to York. On the way we had a long break at Selby where we saw a lovely church.

The cathedral in York exceeded all my expectations. It is completely as big and interesting as Notre Dame in Paris, which it is similar in some ways too. We saw it in both daylight and illuminated, and sat a whole hour in the afternoon and listened to music from the lovely organ. There was an old drinking-horn in the church– the Danish Horn – a keepsake from the Danish-period. The clergymen were very interested to hear that we were from Denmark and that we were bringing their Tommies home from prison-camp.

York was by the way a very interesting town; entirely medieval within a brick town wall and narrow streets, with the projecting top-floors of houses almost touching those opposite.

18 December

The flu is rampant in Hull and has spread among the ship's crew. We admitted many of them in the hospital today.

We sailed from Hull into a strong storm.

20 December

Storm and heavy seas. The hospital is full, and roundabout on the ship in the crews' quarters are many poorly. 'Baby', our youngest nurse, who is never seasick, is tirelessly on the go to find and help all of these people, whose quarters are not easy to find in this ship.

We have sent a wireless telegram to Copenhagen, that the ship must be disinfected when we get there, and that there should be ambulances to pick up the ill.

Some of the nurses are ill as well. I myself am not too well either, but must keep my chin up and do the night-duty in the hospitals, which are very inconveniently situated; half in the front and half in the back of the ship; a whole journey in-between. To hasten backwards and forwards a stormy winter-night between these two sections is no joke.

22 December

Arrived at Copenhagen and got the sick on land. I went to the country to my family to recuperate over Christmas. The two British officers are also coming to be here Christmas-eve and Christmas day.

25 December

These two men's delight at spending Christmas with a family and under peaceful circumstances is moving. They were both married, and one, who had children back home in South Africa where he was from, was a man in his late thirties. But they were like two big boys that were on holiday. They played with the children on the floor, and the whole house echoed with their happy laughter.

Already on the evening of Christmas day we three had to break up the party and go back to 'Frederik VIII' that was to sail next morning.

Committee

Telegraphic Address:
"BRITREPAT" COPENHAGEN.

Tel. No. Central 13 521.
13 522.

BRITISH MILITARY REPATRIATION OFFICE.
22, AMALIEGADE.
COPENHAGEN.

December 25. 1918.

MOVEMENT ORDER NO. 6.

1. The allotment of accomodation on board S/S FREDERICK VIIIth leaving Copenhagen for the United Kingdom on the 26th December is in accordance with the following table "A".

Camp	Officers	Other ranks	Remarks.
BARFREDSHØJ	~~17~~ 22	802	
SANDHOLM	5	450	
RUNGSTED	77	-	
VEDBÆK	1	-	
HORNBÆK	98	12	
SKODSBORG	43	2	
GREVE	2	-	
MARIENLYST	11	-	
H/P Ship "REVAL"	-	12	
HEADQUARTERS	15	-	
ITALIANS	-	8	
ASTONIANS	9	-	
	~~278~~ 283	1286	

2. Details of Trains.

(continued).

Third Journey[6]

26 December[7]

This time we had approx. 150 officers, 7 diplomat-families and 1200 soldiers on-board. The first night we had to stay anchored by Skagen. There was a violent hurricane and snowstorm. I have seldom seen anything worse. Strong winds whipped up waves and blew the scum around. The pilot was not too happy to guide the ship past Skagen and the minefields in this terrible weather, so we stayed put until lunch-time. But then the situation became critical. The ship was blown in towards the beach; the anchors couldn't hold it anymore.

The soldiers were given orders to put life-jackets on. Under these circumstances it was preferred to sail around Skagen and avoid the mines as well as could be done with such low visibility. With great difficulty it was managed to get the great ship against the wind and out into open sea. Then it started to roll terribly and almost everyone on-board was seasick. We were finally only 4 left in the salon in the evening, where we played a game of bridge, with the cards quite often close to gliding off the table when the ship rolled strongly.

27 December

Kaptajn A. Thomsen paa Frederik d. VIIIs Kommandobro.

Still hurricane and rough seas. The planned concert had to be cancelled. One of our musicians, who had been ill when we left Copenhagen, died in the night. At dusk we had the interesting experience of saving some shipwrecked seamen from a small Dutch schooner, which was thrown about in the storm without sails or rudder. A light had been noticed, it popped up and down at some distance and pierced the darkness. The captain moved us as close as we could get and saw a vessel which was burning an emergency flame. But how could they be saved in this storm, when just getting near to them was dangerous?

Rumour of what was happening spread, all the seasick crawled on to the promenade decks and from there all the British witnessed a beautiful achievement in Danish

[6] Capt. H. Wilkinson, who had been pow at Dänholm and travelled back to UK on this journey wrote a diary. See "From Dänholm to repatriation and home – Appendix C - leaving Stralsund on 14th and 15th December 1918"

[7] Boxing day and back to work. Except there was a problem getting enough Danish stokers to coal the ships, which of course according to the newspapers was something of a scandal considering the numbers of unemployed receiving benefits. However Frederik VIII left Free harbour as planned on 26 December with 1500 passengers both officers and OR.

seamanship. The lifeboat with its strong-armed crew was swung out and hoisted down into the rough sea. It was important to act quickly and skilfully or they would be crushed against the side of the ship or be tipped over. Would they succeed - with bated breath we watched the boat disappear into darkness. Everyone stretched their necks.

Could it find the shipwrecked and get them in the lifeboat? After a while we saw a small black ship, driven by the storm, pass by 'Frederik VIII's front. Then the lifeboat turned up, and by clever manoeuvring managed the waves that hit the ship's side. Everyone watching shouted an immense hurray for the brave seamen as 6 exhausted and stiff Dutch seamen were saved in this action. They had burned their emergency flame for 48 hours.

28 December

The storm finally slackened and the planned show was performed in the evening. It was obviously well rehearsed and was great entertainment for the soldiers. It was with things like this they had passed time and made life tolerable during their many years in prison-camp.

In the evening our usual Scottish pilot came on-board off May Island and we welcomed him. He was an exceptionally nice and pleasant man. He was Admiralty pilot and had for the last 4 years guided British war-ships up and down the coast. The effect of doing this in jet-black, stormy nights with blinded lanterns along a dangerous coast and among drifting mines could be seen and heard on him. He had snow-white hair on his young head. The responsibility had whitened his hair but not taken his wonderful sense of humour. Mr. Flockhard stayed with us after completing his duties and the next pilot had taken over at Spurnhead. He was our valued entertaining comrade on all the trips to Hull and once over and back across the North Sea.

We arrived at the Humber on Sunday morning, but we could not sail up to Hull until the next day, so the British had to all stay on-board. To pass the time there was music and dancing all afternoon and evening. Officers and privates danced alongside each other and that there were so few ladies didn't seem to matter. They danced just as happily and gaily with each other. The tone between officers and privates was absolutely strait forward and plain and always characterized by tact and good-manners. And their tone towards the nurses was on all the trips polite and respectful. If one had to go through a crowd of soldiers, one never needed to say anything. The first person that saw one always said " Please make a gangway" and there was immediately space no matter how crowded they stood.

The British never liked to talk about the war or what they had experienced but one could feel that they hated the Germans right from the heart.

Finally Monday morning a pilot ship came to fetch the prisoners, and we docked.

31 December

There is to be a grand dinner onboard, and the captain himself will eat with us, which he otherwise never does on these trips. But before this Mr. G. and I are going to the theatre to see a real English Christmas pantomime.

1 January 1919

The theatre was full of parents and children of all ages over 2 years, they shouted with joy, chattered and applauded all the strange things they saw on the stage. The piece was about Whittington and his cat. The first became lord mayor of London, though he began out as a poor boy. The cat was especially popular. I personally amused myself almost most over the 38 year old boy I was with, and over his contagious laughter.

We arrived on board just in time for the dinner, which was most festive. All the ship's officers, including those that didn't usually eat with us were there 'dressed up to the nines'. We had real turtle soup and other delicious foods and fine wine, and beautiful speeches were made and then the dancing began. The captain and I opened with a polonaise. It was a good evening with our own simple seamen that I must admit I have always been fond of and that I know so well from my long sea-journeys. They are an especially engaging sort of people.

2 January

New Year day's evening could easily have taken a dramatic turn for us. It was our luck that it didn't turn out worse than it did.

In the evening Dr. Møller, 'Baby' and I were sitting in the salon – all the others had gone to York – when we suddenly heard a loud thud or bang from above. Within seconds a seaman ran in and shouted: the captain's cabin is burning and the third mate has been injured.

We dashed upstairs and found the third mate lay bleeding and unconscious outside of the burning cabin, where two other mates were putting the fire out. It turned out that a fire extinguisher had exploded when the third mate was using it and the bottom had hit him in the face and cut open from the corner of his mouth up to his cheek. It had grazed his cheek-bone, which had protected his eye, and then hit the ceiling where it had made a hole. We immediately busied ourselves getting him sewn together and installed in the hospital as our first patient in the New Year, while the fire that had eaten up no small part of the contents of the captain's cabin, was put out. Had the mates not been up there when the fire broke out, it could have devoured the whole ship, and true luck that it had not been the evening before, when we were all on a lower level.

6 January

Arrived home and were informed that we only had one more trip to do.[8]

[8] They arrived in Copenhagen to the ongoing conflict between the Danish workers and the British authorities. They had tried to get the Danish government via the Danish minister in London to sort things out for them. Things don't appear to have been proceeding speedily enough and 200 of them, Bang's Brigade as the newspapers called them, turned up at the British Embassy in Amaliegade on 10th January. They in turn didn't know anything about the matter, but the British minister paid them out of his own pocket 50 kroner each to tide them over until a deal was made about the 500 kroner they wanted. A couple of days later another 50, this time rather rowdy, "workers" turned up at the Embassy demanding their

11. Januar

30 unge Arbejdere kræver Penge paa det engelske Gesandtskab i Amaliegade.

„Panserbilen" rykker ud og klarer Begreberne paa 10 Minuter.

De utilfredse Arbejdere faar idag udbetalt hver 50 Kroner.

Som vi i sin Tid bragte Meddelelse om, har det Bangske Hververkontor i Holbergsgade, der i sin Tid blev stormet af Syndikalisterne, sendt en Mængde unge, danske Arbejdere til England, hvor de allesammen fandt Beskæftigelse. Ved Vaabenstilstanden og den snarlige Fred er imidlertid en Mængde engelsk Arbejdskraft vendt hjem til Fædrelandet, og der blev derfor ikke i saa lang Tid, som man havde ventet, Brug for de danske Arbejdere. De blev sagt op og maatte rejse hjem med forholdsvis kort Varsel. Dette vakte stor Utilfredshed blandt Arbejderne, og de forlangte højlydt, at de vilde have en Erstatning, ca. 500 Kr. pr. Mand.

Utilfredsheden voksede efterhaanden som Tiden gik, og man besluttede da at gribe aktivt ind for at faa Kravet gennemført.

Arbejderne henvender sig i Gesandtskabet.

Og igaar Eftermiddags drog ca. 30 unge Arbejdere til det engelske Gesandtskab i Amaliegade, hvor de fremsatte deres Krav. I Gesandtskabet kendte man aldeles ikke noget til Sagen, men blev naturligvis noget nervøse over dette Krav om Penge, der pludselig blev stillet, og da man jo ikke vidste, at det var fredelige danske Arbejdere, man havde med at gøre,

blev Politiet rekvireret, og et Øjeblik efter susede Panserautomobilet gennem Stregt.

og standsede først foran det engelske Gesandtskab i Amaliegade. Panserbilens Mandskab stormede op i Lokalet i den Tro, at de skulde udkæmpe en Dyst med de sædvanlige Syndikalister. Det kom heldigvis ikke til nogen alvorlige Uroligheder. Misforstaaelsen blev hurtig klaret, og den blev klaret paa den Maade, at der blev tilbudt hver enkelt Arbejder 50 Kr., der skulde udbetales idag. Og hermed erklærede de sig alle tilfredse.

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money. There had been some episodes with socialist demonstrations in Copenhagen that had gone a bit wild so the minister called the police. They turned up with sirens ringing and truncheons raised. After 10 minutes pushing and shoving the workers left, also with 50 kroner each. Since they were getting everything ready for the big party to be held at the British Embassy on the 17th it must have very irritating for them! A couple of days later a notice in newspapers announced that, if no final official arrangement had been made with the British Govenment, on the following Saturday and Monday those workers returned on Frederik VIII and Plassy who could document their contacts, either a "9 months" or "to the end of the war" would at Jagtvej 111 receive 50 kroner. I don't know how it all ended.

Fourth and last journey with prisoners of war

This journey took a different shape than the former ones. As well as all the soldiers, with 35 officers, there were 50 civilian refugees from Riga – both men and women – with us. Professor Mygind's wife and engineer A. Foss were with us too – the later on one of his many for Denmark so important journeys. The poor refugees had lost everything to the Bolsheviks, whom at this time had begun their activities in the Baltic region. An activity that had, if it had been stopped in time would perhaps not have become as big or corruptive.

This last journey offered no particular or strange events, so I will quickly move on.

11 January

Arrived at Hull, and our two British officers were the last to leave us here. It was with sadness, we parted, as we had become very good friends over the 7 weeks we had been together. I gave the South African as a keepsake the sewing box that I had been given by Professor Mygind at the beginning of the trips, after I had decorated the inside of the lid with masses of hearts pierced with arrows in flames and surrounded with roses. He pealed with laughter and was greatly amused to think of what his boys would say when they saw it. "What did daddy do in the Great War?" "Look here my boys – this is what daddy did – pierced hearts and set them on fire."

19 January

'Frederik VIII' arrived in Copenhagen and I said goodbye to everyone onboard, before I left my floating home where I had experienced two glorious, memorable months. That time had gone so pleasantly was not least due to the friendliness and helpfulness of the excellent crew, from captain to the youngest ships-boy. From first moment on board one felt at home and amongst good friends.[9]

Dix' recommendation – a medal

Captain Dix recommended "9 ladies worthy of recognition" for their services rendered to the "Danish Scheme". 5 of them were awarded an Allied subjects medal (prisoner of war helpers medal) on 10.3.22. Miss Louise Lindegaard's, Professor Mygind's secretary, was in silver while the 4 matrons, Miss Valborg Jorgenson –on board "Russ", Miss Johann Madsen on "Koch" and "Reval", Miss Kirstine Petersen on "Mitau" and Miss Cecilia Lutken matron on board "Frederik VIII" were given bronze medals.

[9] The next chapter in Cecilie's book is about her participation in the Danish Red Cross help in Austria and Hungary.