There was a sigh of relief in the Naval Staff Office, Darwin, when A.F.D.18, and her escorting vessels and tugs, were safely anchored. For the rattle of cables through hawse pipes on this occasion marked the completion in Australia of long and eventful tows which had commenced, in the first place, at Greenock, Scotland, when A.F.D.20—a sister dock to A.F.D.18—had departed from that port in December 1944, in tow of H.M.R. tugs Destiny and Eminent.

Earlier in the war A.F.D.20, being identical with an enemy floating dock then located in Norwegian waters, was used by midget submarines of the Royal Navy as a practice target, it being intended later to carry out a midget-submarine operation against the enemy dock. In addition to acting as a practice target, A.F.D.20 also docked the midget submarines before they proceeded on their successful mission against her German opposite number.

H.M.R. tugs Destiny and Eminent, with A.F.D.20 in tow, commenced the long tow to Darwin on the 31st December, 1944, when the vessels departed from Greenock for Gibraltar. New Year's Day was passed in fine weather, but shortly afterwards the weather deteriorated, causing Destiny and Eminent, together with A.F.D.20, to pitch and roll so heavily that Eminent's steering gear carried away. Although her engineers repaired the damage with the aid of the galley fire, Eminent was relieved by another tug so that she could put in to an adjacent port for repairs. Rough weather continued until Gibraltar was reached on the 12th January, 1945.

Following the completion of various repairs, Destiny and A.F.D.20 departed from Gibraltar on the next stage of the voyage, leaving Eminent to follow. Eminent overtook the
A GOOD TOWING FEAT

tow at a most opportune moment when Destiny was in trouble. Eminent took over the tow, and Destiny proceeded to Oran for repairs.

Eminent and A.F.D.20 proceeded to Bizerta where they were joined by Destiny, and sailed for Malta, reaching there on the 27th January and leaving again five days later for Port Said. Good weather was experienced on passage, and port was reached on the 7th February. Six days later Suez was left astern and a good-weather passage was made down the Red Sea until, two days before reaching Aden, a considerable swell was experienced. Arriving on the 21st February, tugs and tow departed from Aden on the 25th of the month and reached Cochin at daylight on the 10th March. Here their numbers were swelled by A.F.D.18 and her tugs, and escort vessels for the passage to Australia.

The whole convoy departed from Cochin but was soon reduced in numbers. Shortly after leaving port Eminent caught fire in her engine-room, and although the fire was extinguished by her crew she had to proceed to Colombo, towed by H.M.R. tug Cheerly. To add to the troubles Destiny had a fire, but got it out successfully. Some days later A.F.D.20 broke adrift from Destiny in the early hours of the morning, and it was five hours before the tow was secured again. Cheerly, however, rejoining the convoy, eased the situation for the other tugs. Water and fuel supplies being low by this time, the tanker Eagles Dale rendezvoused and supplied the vessels with those necessities.

Heavy weather was again encountered, and seas commenced breaking over the docks to such an extent that their boats were in danger of damage. Good seamanship, however, and an ingenious idea of raising and forming a breakwater around them, saved the boats from harm.

By this time the convoy was near Australia, and H.M.A.S. Warrambool having joined, these ships were or-
Remains of Police Station, Darwin, after Japanese air raids, February, 1942.

Rana Recreation Island, Manus, 1945. (Drawings by Sub-Lieutenant P. C. Forster, R.A.N.V.R.)