

**H.M.S.
ARK ROYAL**



**THIRD COMMISSION
DECEMBER 1959 - MARCH 1961**

THE FOURTH ARK ROYAL



LAUNCHING SCIMITARS - MEDITERRANEAN, NOVEMBER 1960

First Ark Royal	1586	Armada
Second Ark Royal	1914	Dardanelles
Third Ark Royal	1938	'Bismarck', Malta Convoys



CAPTAIN P. J. HILL-NORTON
ROYAL NAVY

This memento of the third commission of H.M.S. *Ark Royal* will help to remind me and, I hope and believe, all of us, of a happy ship and a rewarding and stimulating commission. Our standards have always been set very high and we have been asked from the very start to pull out all we've got – and sometimes what we thought was a little more. But we have come through with distinction and, as I asked you when we commissioned, can now truthfully say that we have not only upheld the very high reputation of the first two commissions but even enhanced it.

I believe that we have done this, and that it could only have been done, by team-work. It is the biggest single team in the Navy – but, even so, we all know now that there is no room in it for passengers. I am very conscious of the honour it has been to be Captain of it.

Let us remember all we have learned, use our experience, and pass it on. Let us look back on the time we have been shipmates with pride; let us – in the words of our last concert party – 'Look Back in Pleasure' on the *Ark*.

Good luck to you all.

P. J. HILL-NORTON
Captain, Royal Navy

THE THIRD COMMISSION OF THE FOURTH ARK ROYAL

by THE COMMANDER



THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY

When the last commission paid off into refit in the summer of 1958, they said good-bye to an *Ark* which had maintained a very high standard – much higher than *Eagle's* they liked to think – against some pretty fierce odds. It had proved impossible to maintain her machinery properly, her accommodation was shockingly overcrowded and uncomfortable, her bathrooms were always flooded, and in many other ways she was terribly old-fashioned and difficult to run. The Admiralty had decided in the autumn

before that, whatever the price, the *Ark* must have a 'Special Refit' of sixteen months' duration to make her fit to operate the modern generation of naval aircraft and fit for her ship's company to live in, and that this refit should take precedence over *Eagle's* modernisation. The large jobs that were done were:

- (a) A completely new steam service line, enabling auxiliary machinery to be run on another unit. This has helped maintenance enormously.
- (b) Total volume of accommodation was increased by 18 per cent but the number of men on board was reduced, thus giving everyone more room.
- (c) All senior rates' messdecks were modernised and some junior rates' messes were much improved.
- (d) The side lift and the starboard forward 4.5 battery were removed.
- (e) Many new test-shops and work-shops were fitted for more sophisticated weapon systems.
- (f) Electrical generating power was increased by fitting two large gas-turbine generators.
- (g) A stronger after-lift was built in place of the old one to withstand the landing blow of heavier aircraft.
- (h) Both catapults were fitted for using wet steam, and the port one was given an improved valve, which enables heavier aircraft to be launched than by any other British carrier.
- (i) Many thousands of other alterations and defects were made good.



THE CAPTAIN, FLAG OFFICER AIRCRAFT CARRIERS, ADMIRAL SUPERINTENDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, PLYMOUTH

All this work, which would normally have taken well over two years, was done in sixteen months, under severe pressure from the Admiralty. At the same time the small retard

party of a few hundred men made good many more thousands of defects, and an average of forty-five men a day were employed solely as fire sentries. Even so, a serious fire damaged part of the ship, entailing much rewiring and other extra work.

As we all know, the job was done by Christmas 1959, and we were able to commission and go to sea for trials on the planned date; but the price we had to pay was that we received an uncomfortable and dirty ship, still stuffed with the refuse and trash of a hurried semi-modernisation.

Fortunately, the spirit and determination of earlier *Ark Royals*, with seventy-five officers and men of the previous commission, were still with us, and in five weeks of non-stop sea trials we cleaned the ship up and began to make her tick.

In the meantime, our squadrons were forming and working up ashore. All were bedevilled by serious difficulties, of which not the least was late and 'un-modded' supply of new aircraft. 807 had been formed longest, and had put on a splendid show at Farnborough the previous autumn. 892 were having difficulty with their weapons system, which eventually resulted in their having to leave 'B' Flight behind for four months. 824 and 820 only just got their choppers cleared for flying over water in time to do a high-powered work-up at Portland over Christmas and the New Year. 849 'A' Flight, having done the intensive flying in their Gannets most successfully as 700G Squadron, then became an operational flight, but with two less aircraft than originally planned. 800, the last fixed-wing team to get together, made it in spite of severe shortage of aircraft at Lossie.

So when March 3rd came, and we sailed from Devonport flying Rear-Admiral R. M. Smeeton's flag as Flag Officer Aircraft Carriers, to embark our squadrons, we had some right to be a little smug. For, for a year and a half, Jimmy-know-alls, senior officers, wise birds in the Admiralty, and every single man in Devonport Dockyard had sworn, advised and bet that we wouldn't make it, particularly after the fire.

The weather was fine, everyone who could have come with us did (except for two deserters, who were immediately hustled out of the Navy), and we set off for warmer climes, no cigarette ration, and a strenuous work-up.



HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AND SENIOR SPECIALIST OFFICERS

And here I must dip back into the past again, for there is another aspect of this commission which is unusual and needs explanation. By August 1958 all the different naval specialisations had made their bids for the number of officers and men they thought the *Ark Royal* would need this time. That was fine but, unfortunately, when all the bids were added together (and they had been heavily pruned already) the total was still 10 officers, 50 senior rates, and 200 junior rates more than there was room for on board. Two work study teams had been active on board for a year, trying to help thrash out this little conundrum. However, by November little progress had been made in the Admiralty, so it was decided that every department in the ship and squadrons should be reduced by five per cent, and that there would be no allowance for communal duties whatever. That solved the problem nicely outside the ship and left us to find out how to solve it inside. To a very large extent we have solved it by using some very simple old-fashioned naval principles, principles which are often forgotten today.

The first was that we made Divisions much smaller than usual, so that there was more chance of more officers getting to know the men who worked for them, and vice versa. Thus, amongst other advantages this has, suggestions from men on the job for cutting out unnecessary and time-wasting work would have a better chance of getting to the officer who could do something about it.

The second thing we did, and this is most difficult and is still not fully achieved, was to try very hard to produce an organisation and a combination of routines which permit an officer or rating to get on with his job without continually being fallen-in or mustered or taken away for some other unexpected job. Essentially this meant that work had to be preplanned much more than it normally is in a warship and that officers and senior rates couldn't just be told 'carry on'. Planned maintenance, job cards, complicated departmental and sub-departmental orders, masses of ARTEMs about everything under the sun, daily orders of all different sorts, the minimum of piping, doing all replenishments at sea, insistence on having regular periods for self-maintenance (and this includes maintaining oneself) in harbour, payment while going in to dinner, and so on, are all part of the plan – the plan which has enabled us to run this ship and her aircraft far better, and with far less men, and in spite of a terrible start, than anyone expected. As Commander Air says, 'Aeroplanes are just aeroplanes, and they fly if you try'.



COMMUNAL 'A' AND 'B' DIVISIONS ('TWEENDECKS PARTY')



HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR OF MALTA
SPENDS A DAY AT SEA

And so – back to our work-up. This had been planned before Christmas, so that as soon as we left Gibraltar, after our first blow through, we were able to get straight on with serious flying, A/S, and ship drills. The weather went calm for good, which was pleasant, but no wind meant much high speed, and this was soon to have a repercussion. The intensive flying programmes associated with working-up quickly showed up the weak points in our organisation, and ABCD, Gunnery, and other exercises all helped to teach us how much there was to learn about our jobs on board. Two days at Palermo gave us a slight breather after the first work-up period, and ten days' self-maintenance in Grand Harbour after the second came as a wonderful change.

Spring had broken out over Malta, and in the *Ark* and everyone was more than ready for the several days of rest which Easter fortunately forced us to take. Swimming, sailing, Marsovin sampling and banyans all went on apace, while final plans were made for the third and last work-up period and our Operational Readiness inspection, which was to be combined with an Army support exercise off Cyprus. We were due to make a four-day visit to Naples thereafter, so children's party

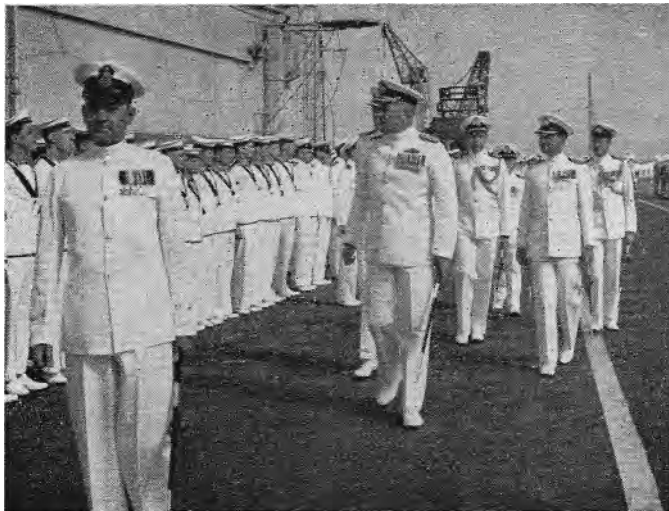
gear, trips to Rome, and all the normal arrangements, had been made for an important visit. Then, half-way through the self-maintenance period troubles began to hit us and they went on hitting us until the middle of the next month. A routine inspection by our divers revealed a cracked propeller-blade and erosion on a rudder, to start with. Then, when we got out, we had our first barrier incident, a Scimitar with a No. 1 hydraulic failure. Feed-water problems followed, resulting in two days on two shafts only. Then a second chopper ditched in the sea for no accountable reason and, to end it, a change of plan, no visit to Naples and docking at Gibraltar instead. And all the while we were finishing off our work-up, doing whole days of complex ABCD exercises and, in fact, kicking ourselves finally into shape. The Admiral declared himself satisfied at the end of April, and off we went to dock at Gibraltar, leaving half our aircraft at Malta on the way.

We were in dock for a fortnight. During this time the weather was perfect and not as unbearably hot on board as we had expected. Two propellers were changed, both rudders mended, the ship was painted externally, and a great deal of maintenance was done, to ourselves and the ship. The border had been opened just before we arrived, which caused a big rush for passports, and the Padre, Commander (E) and I went over to Tangier one memorable Sunday with four hundred of the ship's company. All in all, we decided that Gib was for us, and we were very sad to leave.

There followed normal flying exercises, a rehearsal of Barcelona Shopwindow, an Air Defence exercise with the U.S. 6th Fleet, and a four-day visit to Toulon. Being alongside



C.-IN-C. HOME FLEET CONFERS
ON THE BRIDGE



REAR-ADMIRAL R. M. SMEETON, FLAG OFFICER
AIRCRAFT CARRIERS, INSPECTS DIVISIONS

and secured firmly to French soil is a good start to four days' holiday, and when we left we decided Toulon was for us too. While there we had finalised arrangements to embark a squadron of French naval Venoms for a few days' embarked training later on, in exchange for a few days' A/S practice for our helicopters with the French Navy. As President De Gaulle has withdrawn his naval forces from NATO in the Mediterranean, this was well worth while, as opportunities to work with the French are fleeting.

From Toulon we joined up with F.O.F. Med, *Tiger* and half the Mediterranean Fleet destroyers and frigates, for a pair of air defence exercises, one with the French at Bizerta, and another with U.S.S. *Saratoga*. Both were useful and successful exercises, showing that NATO Naval Forces really can work together whenever the need arises. Then on Friday, June 3rd, we arrived off Barcelona, and gave an outstanding Shopwindow to a hundred and thirty Spanish Service VIPs. I know it was outstanding because a friend of mine has just

been in Barcelona, and they are still talking about it. The piece *de* resistance, without a doubt, was the rocketing and straffing by the Scimitars.

We were at Barcelona for five days, and while everyone else was secured alongside in the harbour we remained at anchor outside, and as the weather was not too good, boatwork took some of the gilt off a run ashore. Nevertheless, for a short visit it was good value, and the Spaniards are much greater friends of ours as a result. They see very little of us and a great deal of the U.S. Navy, and commented continually on the difference, to our credit.

Thence back to Hyeres, close to Toulon, where we disembarked our helicopters and embarked eight Aquilons, with spares and maintenance crews. Within three days we deck-qualified them all, and they all took part in intercept exercises with our own aircraft: they were clearly an efficient and determined squadron, and impressed us all on board. It was therefore particularly sad that one of them crashed into the sea, killing the pilot upon disembarkation. You'll remember how that night an appeal on the TV for the pilot's wife (he was a CPO) produced £376, for which she and the French Navy were extremely grateful. This is the sort of thing which people who go to sea and live at sea always do for each other, and transcends political and international boundaries.

After we had re-embarked 824 and 820 from Hyeres, we spent a day 'banyanning' in the Bay while the formal enquiry into the crash was held, and then set off for yet another air defence exercise with the U.S. 6th Fleet. On Monday, June 20th, at 1430, we once more steamed into harbour at Gibraltar, most of us licking our lips for one reason or another. For the first of our Passion Planes was due in the next day bringing seventy wives, and due to take home a plane-load of our own officers and men, either to get married or for compassionate leave. And many more of us were just looking forward to simpler things like swimming, meeting friends again, a sing-song in Main Street, or even a little adventure in La Linea or deeper into Spain. Fourteen days later it all came to an end, the Passion Plane did its return journeys, and we set off for what turned out to be a very hot month of intensive flying in the Eastern Mediterranean.

FIRING A SALUTE ▶
AT TOULON



In the ten days after leaving Gibraltar we really showed how today's new aircraft could and should be operated, flying over six hundred day and seventy-odd night sorties. Another exercise with the Army in Cyprus hammered home the same air support lessons as before, but this time we were able to land our Royal Marines by helicopter to take part as well.

For the first time our AEW Gannets ran into trouble, and two, one of them by night, ended up in the nylon barrier very sorry for themselves but equally glad to be safely back with us. Their nose-wheel problem was not solved quickly, and so for a while they stopped flying; the two broken ones were later joined by one of *Hermes'* which had the same embarrassing Cinderella experience.

Two days at Limassol were dull for most people, but not for me, as I discovered a cousin there whom I only vaguely knew about who turned out to be unquestionably the most beautiful girl in Cyprus. She turned up—to my surprise and one or two younger officers' delight — at Palma, and still owes me five pounds for her hotel bill!

Athens, after some independent flying, was really too hot and too expensive to enjoy, but, even so, large numbers toiled their way round the Parthenon and some of the other beautiful and impressive remains of Greek power. On the whole, Athens was not for us.

And so back to Malta at the end of July, stopping to swim and sunbathe whenever flying exercises permitted. Although it was midsummer in the Mediterranean, our thoughts were by now turning more strongly towards one pleasant and two rather daunting events in the future. Leave at Home in October was the one, Exercise 'Swordthrust' and an Arctic trial after Christmas were the others. We were well worked up by August; we had more or less undone the havoc wrought by the Dockyard, and we were getting towards feeling that

maybe we could sit back a little and pat ourselves on the back. But 'Swordthrust' put a firm stop to all that, and for ever people were saying to each other, 'It won't be like this in —' or 'You wait until — "Swordthrust" '.

It was a surprise, too, to find that there was another carrier, albeit a small one, around. For *Hermes* had at last been able to embark her squadrons

SPANISH
DANCING
ON BOARD
AT GIBRALTAR ▶



◀ CHILDREN'S
PARTY —
ATHENS



JUNIORS' 'A' AND 'B' DIVISIONS TAKEN, 15th JANUARY, 1961

throw the Contractors away, and had arrived to work-up and join us for 'Swordthrust'! She came into Grand Harbour the day after us for self-maintenance and immediately we became embroiled in challenges for Carrier Squadron Trophies. All good clean fun, except that we had all the advantages and therefore won nearly all the cups. As a matter of fact, they seemed an excellent ship, and the more we saw of them the more we liked them. On August 9th we set off again for a week of private flying while *Hermes* finished her work-up. Then together we had another combined exercise with the U.S. 6th Fleet, where *Hermes'* modern air defence and control equipment enabled us both to achieve intercepts at three times the rate of the Americans. All very satisfying and encouraging with 'Swordthrust' in the offing.

After a final fling ashore at Palma, Majorca, we met up with *Hermes*, who had been to Algiers, and went off together at high speed for home. In the Channel we disembarked 824 so that they could have some leave before taking part in a large A/S exercise, embarked four Scimitars of 803 Squadron, and did a really miserable solids replenishment with the Navy's latest and best, but very unworked-up RFA, *Resurgent*. It was trying to have to go past Devonport twice in one day, but at least we were in home waters and soon enough we would be at home. In the meanwhile, round to Lossie so that 803 could be deck-qualified, and then on the 5th September into Rosyth for ten days' self-maintenance. Quite a few Home Fleet ships were there preparing for 'Swordthrust', so although we had to stay below the Bridge (as we can't get under it), and they were all alongside, we met many friends. 260 were lucky and went home on long leave – they were to form the retard party for the main leave in October. For the first time we were able to play quite a lot of interpart and inter-ship sport. A cricket team went

down to Pompey to take the Carrier Cricket Trophy off *Victorious* – we won by one run. We took away the following Home Fleet trophies, although we had concentrated more on competitions with *Hermes* and inter-part games:

- Curzon-Howe Trophy – Water-Polo
- Britannic Cup Golf Singles
- Golf Cup – Golf Foursomes
- Individual Golf – Lt.-Cdr. Nightingale
- Rawson Bowl – Ratings' Dinghies
- Strathcona Cup – Team Sailing, Whalers and Dinghies.

The final preparations for the major NATO autumn exercise were being made all over Europe. At the same time politicians and statesmen were gathering at UNO, and at one moment it seemed as if our side might get cold feet and call the exercise off. For essentially it was an exercise which assumed



AIRCRAFT READY TO FLY OFF AFTER EXERCISE 'SWORDTHRUST'

that major nuclear war was starting and we were all playing our part, fairly realistically. The Russians might think it a good opportunity to stage an incident. However, cool heads prevailed and we steamed out of the Forth with *Hermes* on the 15th. C.-in-C. Home Fleet spent the day with us and watched the two carriers settling back into seagoing and flying routine. For the next week we played with *Hermes*, making sure we were all completely on the ball. Unfortunately, during this time one of our Vixens landed a bit short one night, broke its tail-booms off, and went straight into the sea. Lieuts. Bond and Marjoribanks were a sad loss to us but a reminder also of the hazards and of the high standards continuously required.

The exercise itself need not be described here, it suffices to say that we played our part well and always met our tasks – on one day during the exercise we had launched seventy fixed-wing sorties! When we disembarked our fixed-wing aircraft north of the Shetlands they were all serviceable and all flew off home, no small feat after such very strenuous flying. The ship was 530 tons lighter after that launch.

On the way south we stopped off Greenock to disembark Scimitar ground crews for Lossie, and three hundred men for long leave in Scotland, the North of England, and Northern Ireland. The next day, at 1530 on October 3rd, we went up-harbour in spite of a very strong wind and secured alongside at Devonport. The longer and tougher half of the commission was over, and were we glad to be home for a spell.

A few days before we got in we said farewell and 'bon voyage' to 892 (going to *Victorious*) and 820 (paying off). Both were sad losses to us, as we had all been through the mill together.

Whilst alongside for the first half of the leave period almost everyone was away. We were fortunately able to keep the ship reasonably secure, safe and clean during this period by not allowing anyone on board who hadn't an important job of work to do. The second half was murderous, though, with nearly everyone back from leave beavering away at maintenance, storing and painting.

FOAC had announced his intention of inspecting the ship in mid-December and there was much to do. We were foiled by the Home Fleet's lack of a solids replenishment ship, so that – quite apart from normal harbour maintenance – a large quantity of stores which were badly needed had to be embarked, causing continual blockages of gangways and hatches.

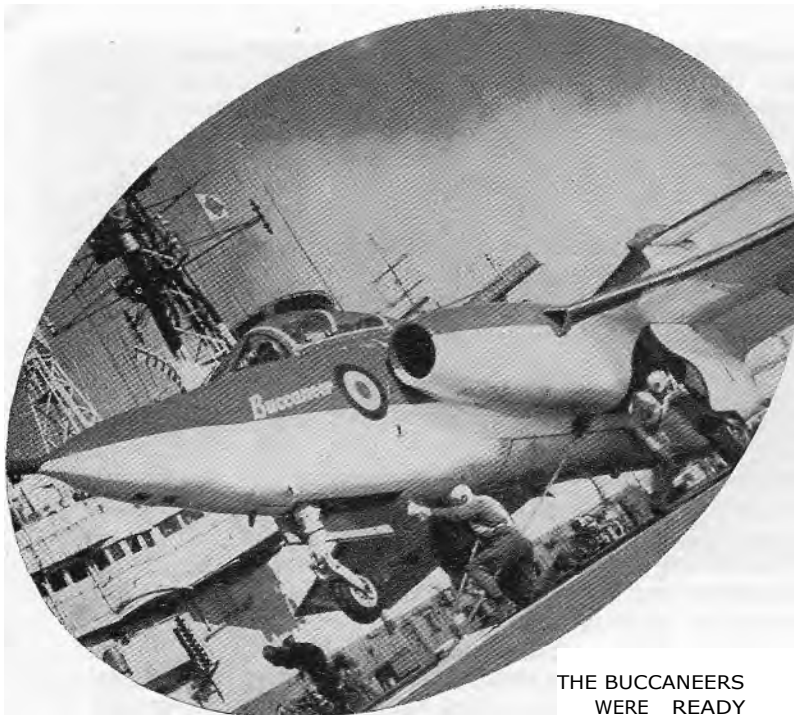
Inexorably the penultimate day came, and with it the usual scramble. Squadrons joined from all over the place; 824, re-formed with eight helicopters, embarked; nearly a hundred new men joined and lost themselves; and we had a make-and-mend!

A great deal of serious defect work had been done, and here the Yard were most helpful; we had all had a spell at home and even the ship's side received a bit of a lick and wasn't quite so much like a tramp's! So that when Wednesday, October 26th came we were at least refreshed and ready to go again. Although it was a pretty wet day, four hundred of our wives and children came on board to watch the squadrons embark. The best remarks that I heard were (a) when a Gannet started to fold its wings a nameless wife said 'Oh, how sweet!' and (b) Commander

Air's youngest daughter, kneeling on his chair in Flyco, beside herself with excitement, having watched the Scimitar launch, turned and said, 'Oh, Daddy, do it again, please!'.



COMMUNICATIONS
DIVISIONS



THE BUCCANEERS
WERE READY

It was pouring with rain when they left in the tug, and all the sadder to say good-bye, for we were off back to the warmth of the Med again. And so it was, for, after two fleeting days in Gibraltar, as we steamed east, the sun came out, the sea went calm, and we began to get our whites out. Just as well, too, because when we went into Marsaxlokk everyone was still in tropical rig; and there in Bighi Bay was another small British carrier, *Victorious*. She was half-way through her work-up and had our sympathy. We were expecting only the week-end in, to be followed by ten days or so of trials with two Buccaneers, and then ten days self-maintenance at Toulon – a pleasant enough prospect.

However, as in May, things went differently: the two Buccaneers had arrived at Malta, but only by the skin of their teeth, and until a fuel-pump problem had been resolved there would be no flying for them. So the Toulon visit was cancelled and we settled down to ten days in Bighi Bay. This meant, amongst other things, disembarking some Scimitars and

Gannets for continuation flying at Hal Far while we were in harbour. A convenient NE breeze on Monday morning enabled us to launch them as if it were a normal occurrence to do this in harbour. Neither the gesture, nor the fact, were wasted on *Victorious*, who were ever thereafter a jump astern at least.

By Tuesday, 15th, the Buccaneers were ready, and so were we. The boilers were cleaned, the ship had been painted outside, and we had had an unexpected and welcome rest. Furthermore, we had transferred FOAC and all his staff to *Victorious*. We had learned, to our benefit, how high his standards were, and the five Commanders who pulled the Admiral over in the whaler, did so with a real swing.

The two Buccaneers weren't quite so ready as they had hoped to be, and the next ten days were as tiresome as trials always are. However, by the time they disembarked some very useful information, and some valuable lessons, had been learned. But weren't they ugly!

At the end of the month, then, we became a Fleet carrier again – for our new Vixen Squadron, 893, joined from England, and we also embarked 831's radio warfare squadron for a fortnight for two exercises. We DLP'd them all over a week-end, and then set off for 'Royal Flush II'. This was yet another AD exercise with the U.S. 6th Fleet, but this time with a difference, for *Hermes* and *Victorious* were there too, and we outnumbered the Americans. The superiority of our intercept and control gear was once again demonstrated and we had a successful and effective exercise.

The exercise only lasted a day, whence the three carriers made independently for Malta; each had a variety of storing and disembarkation commitments but a heavy swell from the east made the whole plan a bit shaky. We were first in to MX, before conditions became really bad, and cleared our transfers by boat and chopper in time. We did a solids RAS during the forenoon and then for an hour in the afternoon the three carriers steamed around in formation being photographed. They looked a brave sight, but somehow the photographs were not inspiring. After a further RAS that afternoon, we went **off to** Cyrenaica to be ready for 'Pink Gin III', and the other two



BUT WEREN'T THEY UGLY!



T.A.S. RATINGS —TAKEN 15th JANUARY, 1961

returned to Grand Harbour and MX to finish off their transfers and storing. We didn't see *Hermes* again, as she was bound more far, via the Suez Canal. But *Victorious* came with us for our third and last Army support exercise, which lasted from the 5th to the 7th of December. Upon reflection, this was probably the most valuable of the lot. The principles of Army support are by now well known, if not well practised, but the unique feature this time was the surprising number of times Scimitars were called overhead, not to strafe the enemy but to give a demonstration to the local Bedouin sheiks and senior officials. No wonder they kept coming back at 'Chicken' after only an hour's sortie, a fact which at first caused some interesting and forceful discussion in Flyco. I am quite sure that these demonstrations by such powerful aircraft 'out of the blue' must have left an indelible impression on many important and independent natives of Cyrenaica and Tripoli.

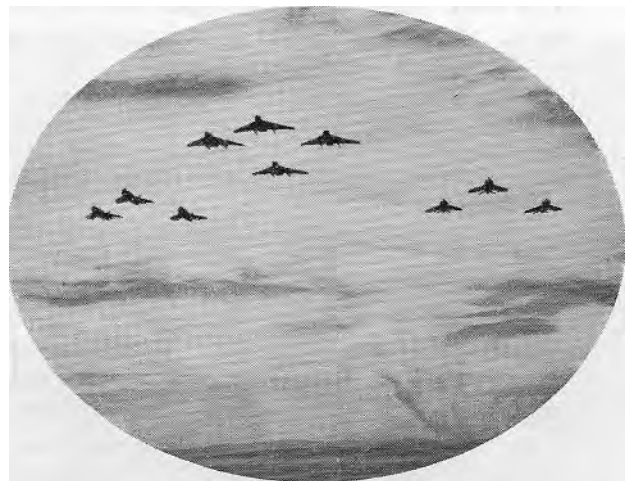
No sooner had we washed the taste of 'Pink Gin' away than we formed up for 'Decex'. We and *Victorious* were joined by *Albion*, just back from the Far East and on her way home, *Bermuda*, and sixteen destroyers and frigates, some of them NATO. The idea was that half a dozen submarines and some V-bombers were going to try to stop the three carriers from getting through the Sicilian Narrows; and, conversely, we, with FOF (Med) (Admiral Dreyer) on board and in charge, were going to try to get through this natural trap, to the west, unscathed.

In the main we succeeded, and it turned out to be a spirited, interesting and well worthwhile exercise; it had been planned with plenty of imagination and freedom of action. *Victorious* copped it, but *Albion* and *Ark* made it undamaged.

This was a portentous fact, for the next day, with FOAC on board, *Victorious* really was in trouble.

The exercise finished on Saturday night, the 10th, and the next morning we were due to transfer FOF (Med) back to *Bermuda*, whence the carriers would go west fast to Gib and the remainder in various directions for visits, etc. But Old Man Boreas stepped in with a naval staff officer's nightmare. In the middle and morning watches of the 11th a first-rate Gulf of Lions nor'wester piped up, and by breakfast the wind was gusting 70 knots with a very steep excited sea to match it.

I don't need to remind you what an unsavoury day it was, thirty life-rafts, two bandsmen disillusioned for ever, many wet shirts and socks, one launch, and the Jackstaff were perhaps a small price to pay for our first real lesson in rough weather. We had to find sufficient shelter to transfer FOF (Med), and so we forced on through the worst of it, getting ever farther ahead of the others, until we were in the lee of the Balearics just after midnight. *Bermuda* was with us by dawn, and we said farewell to Admiral Dreyer and set off at high speed for Gibraltar. Our final fling there and our Christmas shopping were in jeopardy because of this delay. And so, too, was the Admiral's inspection and all the inter-carrier competitions we had fixed up with *Victorious* for



FLY PAST —FIRST SEA LORD'S VISIT



THE SHIPWRIGHTS

our two-day stay. For on the morning that the wind blew *Victorious's* rudder had faltered and then jammed at 'starboard 5°'. She was therefore having a miserable time in the bad weather behind us, steering by main engines: to make matters worse, one engine was out of action for four hours. Eventually she got into the lee of the Balearics and collected some underwater burning gear from Gibraltar Dockyard in a Gannet, with which her divers were able to clear the obstruction and free the rudder.

Meanwhile, we arrived in Gibraltar at 1400 on the 18th, and set about cleaning the ship up for the inspection: we didn't know for sure whether FOAC would arrive or not, but we had to be prepared. The next morning a party of four hundred went off to Tangier, and those who were left waited at an hour's notice for Admiral's rounds to start; and immediately after lunch they did, as he had flown on ahead with his flag lieutenant at almost maximum COD Gannet range. The standard of cleanliness achieved was excellent, and he said so; what is equally gratifying is that it has gone on improving ever since. We have once and for all broken the back of that ghastly start.

Both watches having had a run ashore, and Christmas presents having been bought, parcelled up, and put in *Puma*, who was off to Guzz that day, we sailed at 0900 on the 15th with the First Sea Lord and FOAC on board. Behold, there was *Victorious* outside, ready and waiting to do her part in the demonstration. The day was spent by the two carriers showing their paces to Admiral Sir Caspar John, and a fine calm day it was, with some excellent flying, firing and aerobatics. 893 showed us that they were no longer working-up, they were with us.

In the evening the Admirals left us for *Victorious*, at anchor in Algeciras Bay; we heaved several sighs of relief that all had gone well, turned left at Europa Point, and rang 20 knots for Malta, Christmas, and a sort of a rest.

On arrival there at breakfast-time on the 19th, we secured both ends in record time and settled down to arranging the season of joy and happiness. For nearly everyone this meant a liberal mixture of sweat and toil, for not only had we to do all the normal chores of a ten-day self-maintenance period, but we simply *had* to enjoy Christmas. There was a typically *Ark Royal* determination about this attitude, resulting as it did from the fact that we would far sooner have spent it at home, but couldn't – and that was that. The Passion Plane duly arrived, with seventy excited wives, who had spent the night at Nice on the way!

Not only did we make the best of our spell in Grand Harbour but we had enough fun left over to entertain 300 at the Wardroom Christmas Dance; 800 at the performance of *The Messiah* and Christmas carols by our forty-strong choir in the Upper Hangar; 1,200 on two evenings by the ship's concert party at the Corradino Canteen; and last, but by no means least, 2,200 poor Maltese children and 200 Maltese helpers at a children's party, the like of which none of them had ever seen before.

But the day which surpasses all memory was Christmas Day itself. I hear that everyone else felt it was the best Christmas that they had ever had away from home too.

By the time January 6th came we were more than ready for sea again. The airmen were a jump ahead; the Vixens and Gannets had been night-flying and the choppers had been doing A/S with the frigates while disembarked at Hal Far. But on board we had given the ship a good going over, the storm damage was repaired,



the rust was gone from the side, most of the aircraft on board were now serviceable, and we were all ready for the last long haul, almost two months at sea with only two breaks of four days each; home was the carrot at the end of it. And this carrot was clearly in the mind of the stoker who just made it alongside in a dghaisa after we had slipped, sitting royally if anxiously, in the back with two dghaisamen straining at the oars to catch us.

So at 0900 we left Grand Harbour, finally sounding-off and waving our hats respectively as we bade farewell to flag officers, friends and wives.

For the next few days we shook ourselves up and settled ourselves down again, flying and exercising in the Malta area and night deck-qualifying some more of 893. And it was on the first night out that we were shocked back into shape, if that were necessary, when Lieut. Dudgeon and Sub-Lieut. Russel lost their lives in a Vixen in roughly the same circumstances as the other time in October. We searched all night, but the sea had taken its toll.



Top left: CAROL SERVICE — CHRISTMAS, 1960

Top right: CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY, MALTA

Circle: PARTY FOR 2,000 MALTESE CHILDREN

Bottom right: SHIP'S COMPANY CONCERT
THE LADIES OF THE CHORUS



SHIP'S GUNNERY RATES—STARBOARD WATCH

We left the Royal Marine Detachment ashore enduring their second spell of being soldiers and, apart from flying practices, we stocked up with stores in three underway replenishments and did some serious AA gunnery. Earlier practices had shown that we had a good chance of winning the Mediterranean Fleet Gunnery Competition. More intensive practice showed that we couldn't fail, and what a feather in our cap this would be for a carrier, of all ships! – to win a gunnery competition. However, we found that there must be an exception to prove every rule and, weather-lucky as we have been, the weather defeated us on the final day, as the cloud base was too low for competition conditions. Earlier, four exceptionally good runs had been invalidated by a fifth in which the recording machine in the target had awarded 110 per cent hits! Such is luck.

On Saturday, January 14th, with forty-five days to Guzz, we re-embarked the Royal Marines, band instruments and all, and a large quantity of ammunition and stores, all by helicopter, as the first real Gregale was blowing.

The Commander-in-Chief paid us a short visit to say 'good-bye', we appreciated his warm praise of our excellent 'public relations' and efficiency.



LAUNCH IN
GRAND HARBOUR

ORDNANCE
ENGINEERING
DEPARTMENT



And in the evening we went west, with our fingers well crossed, hoping that this was for the last time. All in all, we had had a good run for our money in the Mediterranean.

As we passed through the Pillars of Hercules we landed the mail and two compassionate cases for UK at Gibraltar, but the rest of us had to make do with a nostalgic view of the Rock gliding past in misty majesty. Before reaching Lisbon the PMO gave a TV talk on health in Portugal. This achieved maximum viewing response but, judged in retrospect, disappointingly little success. Many of the ship's company came away with colds, etc., from going ashore inadequately dressed.

Off Lisbon we embarked a Vixen from *Victorious* flown direct from Yeovilton. The pilot had to be reminded that he was a quarter of a minute late on his ETA arranged ten days before.

Our arrival at Lisbon was at the unusual hour of 1600, due to the tidal bar at the mouth of the Tagus, but the job of 'mooring ship' went smoothly and over a thousand men were soon ashore—the largest number since we commissioned. They found the Portuguese capital most pleasantly hospitable and accommodating. Assisted by the timely arrival of some traditional *Ark Royal* weather, we played the usual games, including

SHIP'S GUNNERY RATES — PORT WATCH



'ARK' AND GROWLER



judo, fencing and table-tennis, with honours being about even. Several sightseeing tours were organised and many others occurred by mutual consent. Altogether this was voted the best visit yet. On Monday, even the ship was unwilling to move and finally dug her toes in and said 'No'. One of the capstan motor drives had failed, delaying us for repairs long enough to miss the tide.

The Atlantic crossing coincided with a period of typical winter storms, and the ship was soon jumping about in a disconcertingly lighthearted way, to which we had long been unaccustomed. Flying was severely curtailed by the excessive pitching, and the embarkation of fuel and stores from *Tidesurge* was only achieved after two abortive attempts, by which time our need was beginning to become pressing.

In the Davis Strait we turned north and soon found the cold weather we were looking for. Temperatures dropped to 7 degrees F. (25 degrees of frost). We experienced widespread sea-smoke and saw several icebergs, some quite large – at any rate, to us. However, we soon become, in part, accustomed to the cold and carried out normal day and night flying. The ship remained warm and comfortable and boredom was kept at bay during the day by the general novelty of our surroundings and after dark by quizzes, sing-songs and special SRE and TV programmes.

With the prevailing north-west winds, the nearer we approached the ice edge the clearer and colder became the weather. Still, we had to remember that a prolonged recovery period 'into wind' could be embarrassing

and that there was enough loose ice about to keep us wary. The resulting compromise kept the temperature where it was wanted – between 10° and 15° C. below – and the weather just good enough for the task to go on. On February 9th we turned south for New York with everything satisfactorily completed.

Exercises arranged for the next week with the Canadian Navy and Air Force were cramped by the reluctance of the Americans to allow us air space at height, and bad weather at Halifax prevented the Canadian Banshees from landing on board. However, flying continued until our consorts, *Londonderry* and *Tidereach* – who had kept us



GANNET BEING RECOVERED
IN POOR VISIBILITY



PACK ICE
AND THIN SEA SMOKE

well supplied with fuel, beer and spuds – left us to enter New York.

Flying then virtually finished for the commission, and it is worthy of note that since the squadrons joined in March, 1960, the choppers

have flown every single day at sea, except on Sunday, 14th August, when we enjoyed a real Sunday, and on Sunday, 11th December, when we were stormbound in the Gulf of Lions. Looking back on that day, it wasn't so very rough, was it? But at least it was the only time when good green salt sea has soaked the goofers on the GDP.

Ark had to wait a little until her New York berth became vacant, so we enjoyed two quiet days in Block Island Sound titivating a little for our last and best visit. Whilst there a small officers' landing party prepared an expedition with due secrecy and ceremony, and liberated the State of Rhode Island from the 'Capitalist Yoke' by the solemn planting of the White Ensign on the beach!!

And so to New York – enough said!!

The trip home, laden with presents, memories and anticipation, seemed to take no time at all. We couldn't have gone much faster, even if we had tried. Of course, we had expected the rain on picking 'C' buoy in the Sound, but the *Ark Royal* weather rescued us for the trip up-harbour in the afternoon, and the paying-off pendant looked a splendid sight.

The commission has certainly been a memorable one. It has been short, intense, and solid hard work. It has been successful hard work too, and we have done all that has been expected of us or that we have been told to do. Above all, we have made hosts of good friends wherever we have been, although our visits might so easily and so powerfully have been directed against their enemies.

We can be thankfully assured, in those splendidly familiar words, that we have been 'a safeguard unto our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth, and her Dominions, and a security for such as pass on the seas upon their lawful occasions' . . . and justifiably hope 'that we may return in safety to enjoy the blessings of the land, with the fruits of our labours, and with a thankful remembrance of Thy mercies to praise and glorify Thy Holy Name. Amen.'

COLD WEATHER DECK WORK





THE AIR DEPARTMENT

In our young days all small boys wanted to be engine-drivers. Judging by the reactions of our visitors, the modern equivalent is to drive a tractor around the flight-deck of a carrier. We would, however, warn them that the sheer hard grind of handling the modern heavyweights under the caustic lash of Flyco soon removes the gilt from this, and advise them for a quiet life to settle for British Railways.

At the outset the Department had the task of drilling itself to take full advantage of the latest improvements to the ship's equipment designed to make the operation of the modern naval aircraft an efficient and continuous performance. Sea trials soon showed that the new catapults, arrestor gear, projector sights etc., were all first-class equipment, and long hours of work during the subsequent work-up produced the required efficiency – or signs of it.

The optimists began to hope that the pressure would ease off. But various exercises brought 'flying stations' earlier and earlier each day, and flying continued later and later into the night, till, on some memorable occasions, it was shown that in this respect, at least, the Navy could make both ends meet.

There were breaks, however, and early on Palermo, famous for its 'pink plonk' and the Mafia, was visited. Little contact was made with the latter but the Department formed an enduring attachment for the former.

The Air Department has justly earned a reputation for hard work and long hours at sea and, by contrast, it is difficult to pin down in harbour. Interesting evidence must be available at Athens, Barcelona and Palma to explain this, but the laws of decency and libel prevent our publishing it.

Repeated acquaintance with Malta led to an ex-ped outing to Gozo which was voted by one as 'All right for some, but it seems "all go" to me'. Christmas could not pass without incident, and we can record – though not, unfortunately, in sound – that a well-known figure of the Air Office aroused Commander Air very early with an excruciating trumpet voluntary. The seasonal goodwill did not prevent a brief but very vocal reprisal.

AIR DEPARTMENT— FLIGHT DECK DIVISION



The Photographic Section have had a full programme recording all landings and launches and processing films after photographic reconnaissance sorties. Their ubiquitous flashes have also been in evidence at all sorts of ship's occasions.

The Met men, too, have kept up their continuous performance—putting up with the inevitable leg-pulling with the patience born of long suffering. If they have on occasions been surprised by the vagaries of the Mediterranean weather, they are at least not without august company. Just now they are enjoying a little retaliation by regaling all and sundry with tales of horror of the icy unpleasantness to come.

Meanwhile, the flight-deck parties, as yet quite snug in their new winter woollies, await with some concern the signs of the first ice on the flight-deck, with whispers of fifteen degrees of frost cropping up in all conversations. At any rate, chipping ice will be one way of keeping warm.

In completion, we give some hitherto unpublished extracts from the Air Department's resolutions for 1961:

That Jumbo shall not be allowed to practise the elephant tango in the silent hours.

That Flyco shall be restricted to Parliamentary language.

That FDO shall not cause the CSO to be involuntarily struck down on the forward lift.

That for one day in 1961 there shall be a flying programme that remains unaltered for 24 hours.

That when important private air-mail is sent by sea, it shall be enclosed in a bottle.



PHOTOGRAPHIC AND METEOROLOGICAL SECTIONS

GUIDED WEAPONS SECTION

Many times have the doors of 5V Section been opened to distinguished visitors to reveal the inner secrets of these temperature-controlled compartments. Visitors have included two Sea Lords, three Commanders-in-Chief, five Flag Officers, and various Senior Officers of other Services.

What is it that draws all the 'visiting Firemen' to 5V? *Ark Royal* is the first carrier to take the Firestreak air-to-air guided missile to sea operationally. The practical problems of their stowage, handling and general maintenance and, of course, their solutions, are therefore of very great importance.

How successful have these new equipments been? *Ark Royal* has shown that, in spite of all the added complexity of these new systems, they can be prepared to be available to meet all Sea Vixen Squadron requirements. The missiles, in conjunction with our latest all-weather fighter, are ready for use as the ship's first line of defence against air attack.

Who are the men who do these complex tasks in 5V? They are Air Radio, Electrical and Ordnance ratings trained at Ariel and Whale Island, working as a team of specialists. They have not had the satisfaction of seeing their missiles fired at drone targets, but they know that they have done a first-rate job in providing the Vixens with all the missile-training required. They have proved that missile maintenance at sea is possible and not quite the 'black art' many supposed it to be.



AIR TECHNICAL DEPARTMENT



AIR TECHNICAL DEPARTMENT ELECTRICAL SECTION

Modern aircraft contain an enormous number of complicated equipments designed to help a pilot control his aircraft safely and enable it to carry out its designated role. Because of their complexity the equipments can seldom be repaired, set up, or adjusted on the aircraft itself, but must be removed to specially fitted-out workshops for servicing.

In these workshops the tradesmen of the Air Technical Department, the Back Room boys of the Fleet Air Arm, strip and repair the units and carry out the necessary realignments at precision test benches, to bring them up to a condition as new.

The tradesmen of the aircraft hydraulic workshop, for example, maintain components such as aircraft landing gear, actuators and dampers, using, amongst other rigs, a test console that is capable of developing a static pressure of up to 25,000 lb./square inch.

AIR TECHNICAL DEPARTMENT—ENGINEERING SECTION





AIR DEPARTMENT –
OPERATIONS ROOM AND
HANGAR DIVISIONS

There is an enormous amount of work involved in aircraft servicing. The Instrument workshop, fitted out for dealing with items such as air-speed indicators, altimeters, compasses, oxygen regulators and cameras, completed over 1,900 jobs in 1960 with a staff of three.

The servicing problems faced by the Electronics workshop staff can be illustrated by the fact that in one aircraft radar set alone there are over four hundred valves.

The Air Technical Department is not, however, restricted to dealing solely with high-precision engineering. Servicing aircraft wheels, for example, is a very important task, and nearly four hundred new tyres have been fitted during the commission. The maintenance of the motor transport, mobile crane, fork lifts, electric generators, compressors, jacks and hoists are but a portion of the miscellany of additional servicing responsibilities.



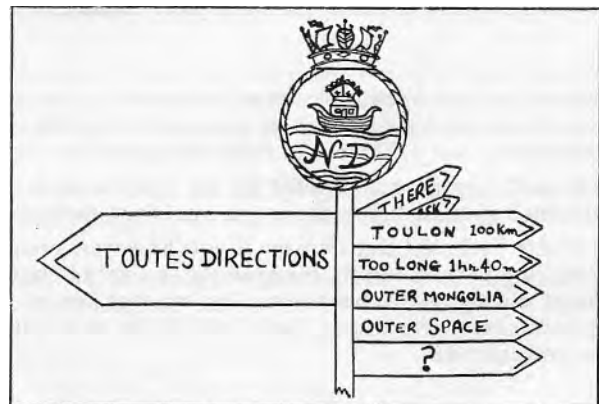


DIRECTION OFFICERS

THE N.D. DEPARTMENT

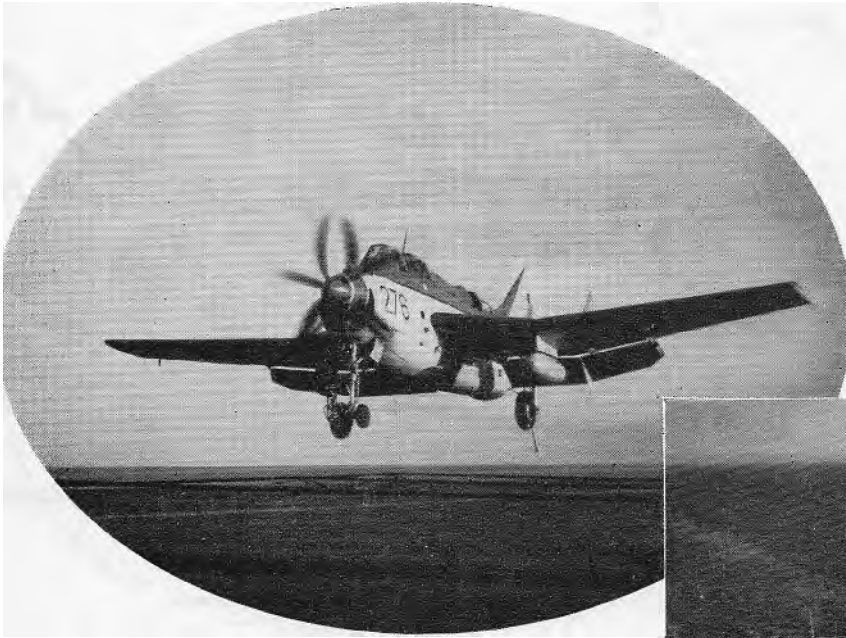
Our motto (on the right) includes the RPs and, even though there isn't much to toot about in the ADR, the Royal Marine bandsmen as well. It also describes fairly well where the ship and aeroplanes go and where our various plots like to make out that they've gone.

The photographs show most of the people who work in the A10 (both terms are used in their loosest sense), some have been rated up or have left us for other reasons before they could be photographed — in particular, Petty Officer Draper, now on SD Course.



R.P. RATINGS





Our real thanks for a happy and efficient fighting unit should go to Nick's Café, which has produced, at a rough estimate, twenty thousand cups of coffee so far; much of this has had to be carefully scraped from the insides of delicate machinery by ILO and his staff, for which we thank them, the coffee so saved has made us an enormous profit.

63 C.B.G.L. SECTION

This highly specialised and individual section of the ship's air department has always lived up to the exacting standards set by its predecessors in other carriers. Being compact and highly mobile, it has carried out its liaison duties with distinction, both on and off the battlefield.

The various Army support exercises have provided the highlights of the commission leading up to the support phase of 'Sword-thrust'. These have, of course, involved a lot of work preparing maps and intelligence generally, but a great deal of satisfaction has come from the results. In particular, the 'Pink Gin' series of exercises produced particular progress in the establishment of procedures for the carrier support of ground forces.

Off the field, progress has been equally well marked, even at Palermo.

We congratulate Captain Holmes-Higgin, R.A., on his engagement.



63 C.B.G.L. SECTION



TOTAL MILEAGE STEAMED
JAN 1960 - FEB 1961
75,000





LOFOTEN ISLES

EXERCISE

SWORD

THRUST

FAEROES

SHETLAND

ORKNEY

MORAY FIRTH

ROSYTH

CLYDE

BELFAST

PLYMOUTH

PORTLAND

TOULON

BARCELONA

LISBON

PALMA

PALERMO

ATHENS

MALTA

CYPRUS

NORTH AFRICA

THE ROYAL MARINES



ROYAL MARINE DETACHMENT

That mine of useful and interesting material 'The Queen's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions' reveals that Royal Marines are embarked in ships to-

- Man part of the armament.
- Land for internal security raids.
- Undertake military duties.
- Man ships' boats.
- Provide sentries and ceremonial guards.
- Carry out all possible duties in the ship.

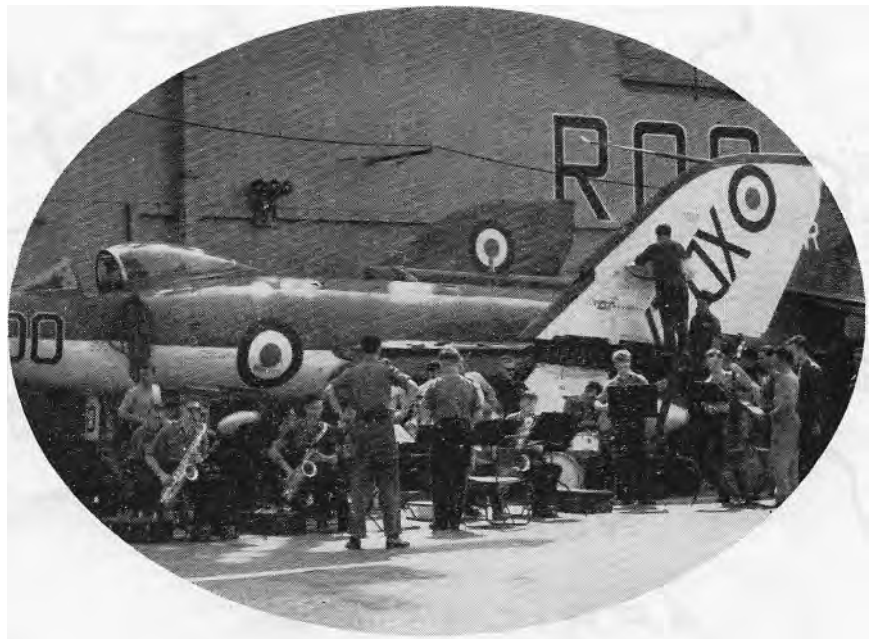
It is sad that the greatly reduced numbers has prevented the present detachment from providing a boat's crew, but the remainder of the list has been tackled with traditional precision.

It is true that to date the need for internal security forces and for military raids has not arisen 'in anger', but exercise landings have been carried out in Malta and also in conjunction with Army support exercises in Cyprus. Both of these have been by helicopter, and a satisfying level of efficiency in operating in this way has been established.

Several ceremonial occasions have seen the Guard and Band paraded with the expected degree of smartness and precision. Beating Retreat in the hangar at Barcelona and on the flight-deck at Gibraltar were occasions which will be long remembered by our visitors.

The Band has been appreciated, too, in its less glamorous moments at Divine Service on the quarter-deck, at ship's concerts of various sorts, and for its lilting music on the flight-deck during replenishments.

In accordance with tradition, the Detachment has been entrusted with the cleanliness of the after flats. This may not be a particularly glamorous function, but these have shone with rather more than the traditional sparkle — a matter on which our visitors have not been slow to remark.

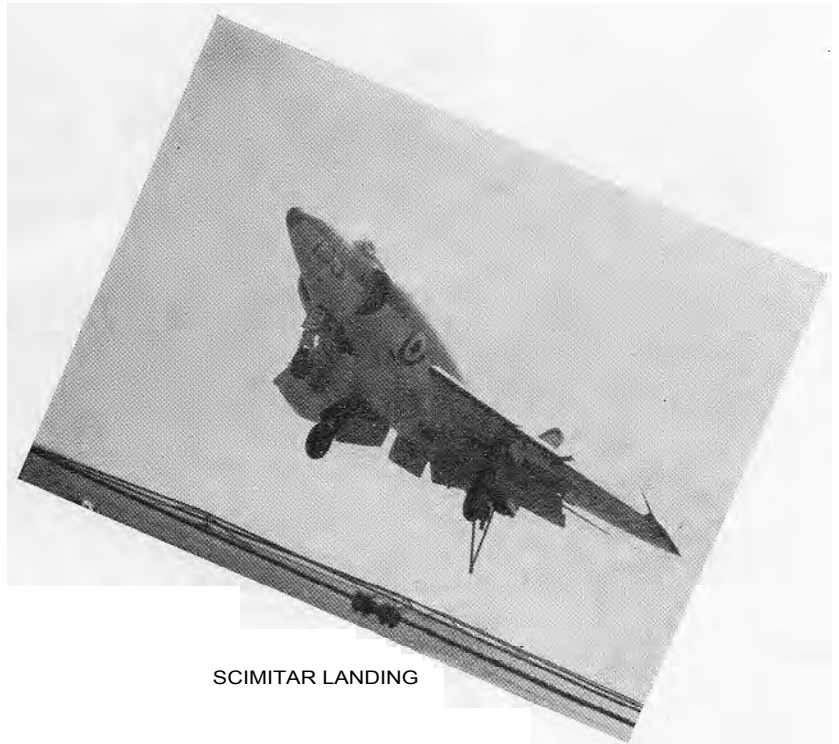


MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK

800 NAVAL AIR SQUADRON

800 Squadron –the premier naval air squadron –formed at Lossiemouth on 1st July, 1959, with six Scimitar aircraft under the command of Lieut.-Comdr. D. P. Norman, A.F.C., R.N. The Squadron then commenced an eight-month work-up at Lossiemouth culminating in flying on board *Ark Royal* on 3rd March, 1960. This was an historic occasion, since two previous 800 Squadrons had been embarked in the third and fourth *Ark Royals* – one in 1940 equipped with Skuas, under the command of Lieut. R. M. Smeeton, R.N. (now Flag Officer Aircraft Carriers), and the second, more recently in 1957, equipped with Seahawks.

After this mass embarkation the ship steamed southward whilst we found our way around our new home – no mean feat – and four days later found ourselves in the sunshine of Gibraltar, with the delights of the 'Panama' once again at hand and the mystery of La Linea just across the border. What a change from the frozen wastes of Lossiemouth!



SCIMITAR LANDING

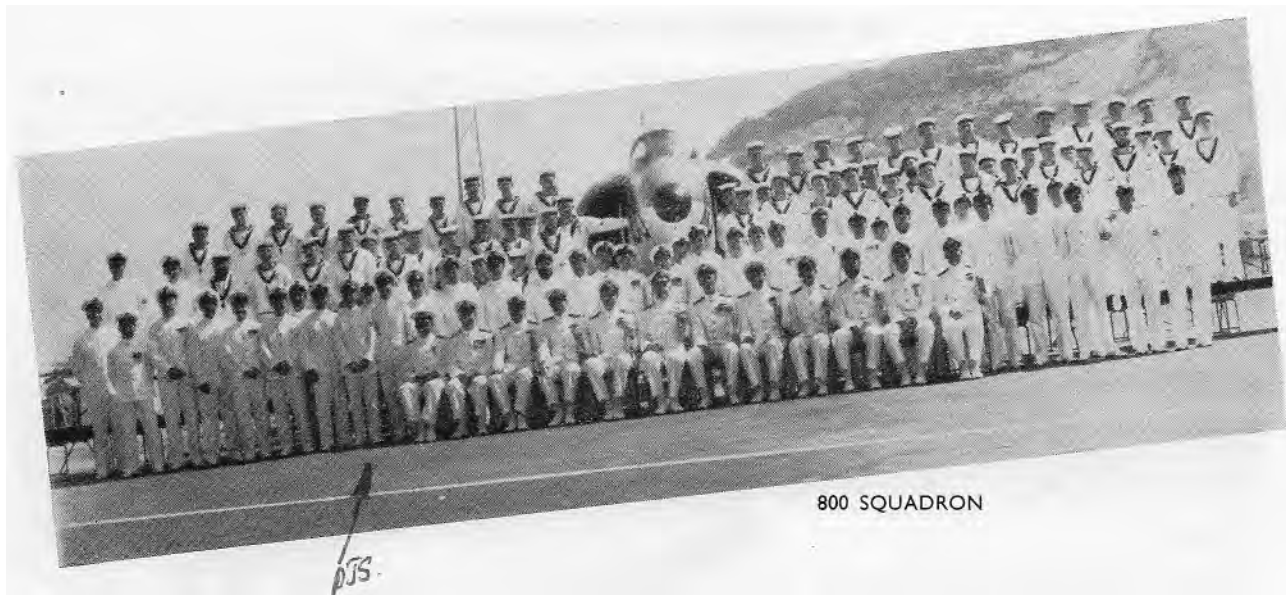


CHRISTMAS EVE
ON THE MESSDECK

And then to work! This included low-level photo reconnaissance, low-level bombing and ground attack –the latter necessitating numerous sorties firing rockets, bombs and cannon at 'splash' targets towed astern of the ship. Much of this proved a novelty to many of the Squadron, who had not seen their aircraft in action before. During one of the NATO exercises off Cyprus we had our first (and last – touch wood!) serious accident, when Lieut. Banfield landed his aircraft into the nylon barrier with undercarriage trouble. Fortunately, the damage was limited to the aircraft.

From time to time there were short breaks in the flying filled by fleeting visits to some of the attractive Mediterranean ports. Toulon, where some of the luckier ones got along the coast to see the Monaco Grand Prix; Barcelona, where we enjoyed some good bull-fighting; Athens, where it was far too hot; and finally Palma, which we will all thoroughly recommend; stand out clearly in retrospect.

By this time we had a new Senior Pilot, as Lieut.-Commander Young, R.N., had relieved Lieut.-Commander Mills, who had left us for the military precision of Whale Island.



800 SQUADRON

The ship then returned to Northern waters and the Squadron, donning its winter woollies, was soon flying in excessively high latitudes during Exercise 'Swordthrust'. After this we returned to Lossiemouth to take some well-earned leave and to complete a fifty per cent change-over.

We re-embarked at the end of October to find a full load of families on board to watch the aircraft arrive. Then back to the Mediterranean sunshine and more flying – and more flying. Christmas was spent in Malta, which might not have been quite what we all wanted but we made the most of it. After three weeks in Grand Harbour we were glad to be under way again.

In the future we have a visit to Lisbon to look forward to, followed by c-cold-weather trials in the Davis Strait, and a four-day visit to New York. After that we disembark to Lossiemouth for the remainder of the year to become the Naval Trials and Display Squadron, and we shall be seen at Farnborough in early September at the SBAC show.



807 SQUADRON —
PORT WATCH



807 SQUADRON
STARBOARD WATCH

807 NAVAL AIR SQUADRON

The present Squadron, consisting of 142 officers and men and equipped with Scimitar Mk. 1 aircraft, commissioned on the 1st October, 1958, at RNAS Lossiemouth, under the command of Lieut.-Commander Leppard, R.N. In the period between the commissioning date and embarking in HMS *Ark Royal* the Squadron represented the Fleet Air Arm at the Farnborough Air Display, carrying out formation aerobatics, individual aerobatics and dart 'snatches' and an atomic bomb attack on the airfield. The resulting bang and mushroom, plus the lowest, fastest flypast, stole the day.

During the winter of 1959, with Farnborough over and behind them, the Squadron began to work-up in earnest for a general service commission in HMS *Ark Royal*. The Commanding Officer was relieved by Lieut.-Commander (Jock) Tofts, A.F.C., R.N., and the Senior Pilot by Lieut.-Commander F. Hefford, D.S.C., R.N. Out of working hours some ratings took advantage of Lossiemouth's recreational ski-ing facilities and Lieut. Pentreath was seen careering along on skis behind a car, only to be brought to ground by the top of a runway lamp. This, unfortunately, resulted in a broken ankle. Lieut. Grier-Rees ejected from his Scimitar over the Trossachs in Perthshire and he, too, was not seen for a couple of days whilst he indulged in some downhill snow sports and mountaineering!

The work-up completed, embarkation day finally arrived and the Squadron flew south and landed on board on the 3rd March, 1960. Flying operations began in earnest as soon as the ship was within diversion range of Gibraltar, all pilots deck-qualifying on type. After a short visit to Gibraltar the ship continued to the Mediterranean to begin an intensive work-up period. A large change of personnel took place in April and then, throughout the summer, the Squadron flew hard in its many roles – LABS, P/R, Ground Attack Strikes and Interceptions, and Army Support.

A short period of acclimatisation was needed when the ship returned to the cold and wet of Scotland for the NATO exercise off Norway. Both in preparation for it and during this exercise the Scimitars worked an intensive programme flying a large number of strikes and photo recce missions. On completion, 807 disembarked to Lossiemouth for a short period of leave and another large change of personnel before rejoining the ship for her return to the Mediterranean. The leave was more than usually welcome after the particularly strenuous efforts put in by everyone to keep the aircraft flying through 'Swordthrust',

The new members settled in on the way south and soon we were back again in the Med operating as usual on board and ashore. A highlight of this period was the launching by catapult of two Scimitars from the ship when she was at anchor in Grand Harbour. This was the first launch of a swept-wing aircraft from a carrier in harbour. Shortly after Christmas another landmark was reached when Sub-Lieut. Britton flew the four thousandth sortie from the ship for this commission. At this time 807 had achieved about 1,500 hours flying and 1,400 deck landings.

849 'A' FLIGHT

849 Squadron was first formed in 1943 in the United States of America and was equipped with Avenger aircraft. The Squadron fought alongside Coastal Command guarding the Western Approaches and also with the Americans in the Far East.

At the end of the war the Squadron was disbanded and was recommissioned in its present role in 1952. The aircraft used were American lease-lend AD4Ws, known in Britain as the Skyraider AEW Mk. I. The role of the new Squadron was, as today, to provide airborne early warning. That is, to provide an airborne addition to the ships' radar coverage in detecting low-flying attacking aircraft long before they are able to be picked up by the ships' radar. The equipment carried also enables the operators to take control of fighter aircraft and intercept the enemy. Other tasks carried out by the Squadron are strike direction, anti-submarine work, searches, photographic missions and weather reconnaissance, as well as providing a postal service.

849 Squadron is the largest in the Fleet Air Arm. It is based at Culdrose and divided into five flights, four are front-line flights and the other the headquarters flight, which deals with the training of pilots and observers for AEW work.

'A' Flight at present in *Ark Royal* formed on the 1st February, 1960, with Lieut.-Commander Hawley, R.N., in command, equipped with the new Gannet AEW Mk. 3. The Squadron consisted entirely of personnel who formed 700 'G' Flight, the trials flight for the new aircraft in August of the previous year and had done an enormous amount of work in the air and on the ground. The Flight is at present commanded by Lieut.-Commander Smith, R.N., and is due to go to HMS *Centaur* in March of this year.



GANNET
LANDING

LAUNCHING A VIXEN



THE VIXEN SQUADRONS

892 Squadron – Lieut.-Commander Hamilton, R.N.

893 Squadron – Lieut.-Commander F. D. Stanley, R.N.

892 Squadron –the Navy's first to be equipped with the 'all-weather' Sea Vixen, joined *Ark Royal* in March 1960 to solve the problems arising from the operation of this new aircraft at sea. Much hard work and, of course, some hard words were required, but the Squadron was very soon a firmly welded part of the ship. Heavy flying tasks were set and satisfactorily met by all concerned.

But perhaps the achievements of the Squadron, always ably led, most worthy of mention here was its 'fairy godfather's' act at Athens, where it took under its wings (spread for action) an attractive and homesick cabaret troupe for the duration of our visit!

The culmination of the training effort came with Exercise 'Swordthrust', during which the Vixens surpassed expectations, and it was with some dismay that the ship saw 892 depart to join *Victorious* after a happy and successful association.

The newly-formed 893 Squadron joined the ship in October for the very brief second part of her short commission and were soon fully appreciative of the comforts afforded to passengers taking a gentle Mediterranean cruise –the brilliant moon, calm seas, with gentle lapping of water against the ship's side and .. . 'Get a /)(Z...%XXing Palouste on Vixen 462, we're xx!?!xx well launching in fifteen minutes!' Wedding this new squadron to a worked-up ship provided plenty of hard work for all and produced some scenes which are amusing only in retrospect. However, by Christmas (spent in Malta) 893 began to justify its existence.

The scene with the entire Squadron singing carols in Straight Street in the early hours of Christmas Eve is one which will be long remembered.



893 SQUADRON



824 SQUADRON

824 NAVAL AIR SQUADRON

824 Squadron formed originally in 1933 in HMS *Eagle* for a commission on the China Station equipped with Fairy III spotter planes. The modern edition re-formed in November 1959 with somewhat more modern, though assuredly less handsome, aircraft – Whirlwind Mk VII helicopters.

The Squadron, with Lieut.-Commander F. K. Steele in command and Lieut.-Commander R. M. Creasy as Senior Pilot, moved to Portland to work-up its AS procedures and then joined *Ark Royal* as she was about to leave the UK early in March. Routine anti-submarine screening was instituted and the Squadron has provided this protection throughout the commission.

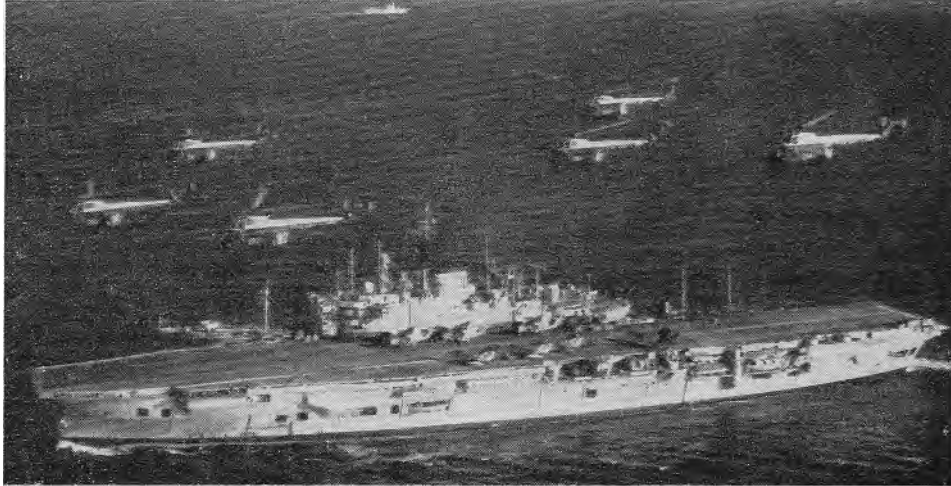
In our alternate role as 'planeguard' we have been pleased to keep a fatherly eye on the fixed-wing boys, watching with calm detachment the 'red balls of fire' from Flyco and the frantic wire-cutting by FDEO's henchmen. It has been our privilege, too, to provide a door-to-door passenger service for all and sundry, even to the extent of protecting the storing parties for the Fort Duquesne from the possible onset of seasickness in the seaboat. Recently we have even evolved a technique of dangling the third member of the crew in order to enable him to recover from the oggin the spent carcasses of pilotless target aircraft. Though they have not openly complained, our aircraft felt this was somewhat *infra dig*. 'Swordthrust' found us busy but divided, with some doing their 'small ship' time by joining *Hermes* in order to chase the American nuclear subs during 'Rumtub'.

Before rejoining the ship, half the Squadron went to Portland as temporary unpaid, untutored but not unwilling film stars for the film 'Anti-Submarine Helicopters, Part II'. The star helicopter – 331 – turned temperamental and in a fit of pique went U/S. The understudy took a quick face-lift and a number change and took over the lead. The show must go on.

November found us back in *Ark Royal* carrying out the duties of two squadrons, reinforced, it is true, by the useful combination of three pilots, one observer and two aircraft from the now defunct 820 Squadron. About this time the Squadron bard achieved immortality with this moving verse:

*We've landed stores and tools and men
 Ana flown them back on board again.
 Wells Fargo never had a clue
 About the jobs that we can do.*

Our one regret during our commission in *Ark Royal* is that our hop leaf symbol—the sign of a happy association – had to be given up. We realise that being so much in the public eye we should have been more careful about this advertising. However, we can record that the emblem was accorded a fitting end, having been buried at sea with traditional naval honours under the shadow of the Rock of Gibraltar.



In Memoriam = The late 820 Naval Air Squadron

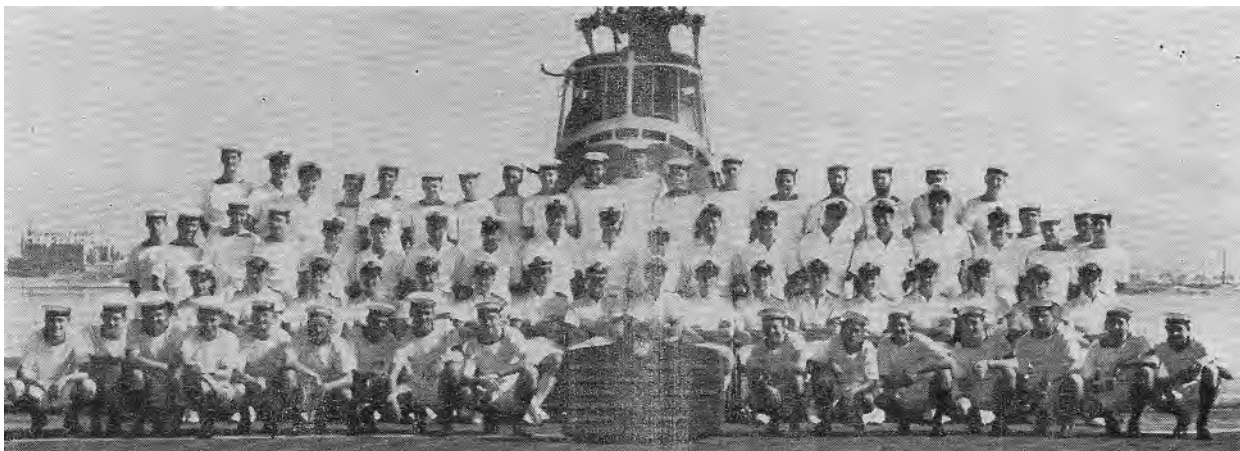
The Commanding Officer (Lieut.-Commander W. W. Threlfall, R.N.) and Senior Pilot (Lieut.-Commander P. Bailey, R.N.) commissioned 820 Squadron at Culdrose in November 1959, fortunately in ignorance of the brief existence it was to enjoy. The Senior Pilot left the Squadron before the end was in sight and his duties were taken over by Lieut. D. Miller, U.S.N., 824's popular American guest star.

Unlike 824 Squadron, 820 did not yearn for glory and indulged in only one aircraft-ditching! The privilege of undertaking this rite was, with gentlemanly self-denial, granted to the Senior Pilot as a visitor. He shortly afterwards was promoted to Lieut.-Commander, but it would be wrong to assume in general that a clutch failure is worth an extra half-stripe.

Nihil nisi bonum – so we recall 'Shop Window' at Barcelona when 820 kept its flags flying – the right way up! Again, during Army Co-operation exercises in Cyprus we recall the selfless devotion to duty that led 820 to minister to the urgent needs of the 'enemy' by ferrying ice to them. It is a pity that rumour has to record that they are believed to have shared the gin it was needed to cool.

It was therefore a great disappointment to learn that a shortage of pilots was to cause 820 to be disbanded when it disembarked in October 1960.

On October 3rd the Squadron flew past *Ark Royal* in column of threes, firing fusillades of Very lights and brown smoke puffs, with paying-off pennant at the dangle, bound for Culdrose and the break-up of a splendid squadron.



820 SQUADRON

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

FLIGHT-DECK

In the more traditional ships of the Service it is unusual to find the Engineering Branch operating in the full light of day. Their habits are usually troglodytic and they emerge into the fresh air only for a run ashore or some sporting contest, and their prowess at both these recreations has become proverbial.



ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT –
FLIGHT-DECK DIVISION

In a carrier things are rather different. In *Ark Royal* about a fifth of the Engineering ratings spend their time on the flight-deck operating and maintaining the numerous items of machinery required to work the catapults, arrestor gear, aircraft lifts, fuel pumps, and other less obvious contrivances. The limelight that this sort of work attracts comes as rather a shock, as does the precision and pace required in all operations. Under the watchful and critical eye of the Bridge and Flyco the newcomer might well long for the more comfortable obscurity down below. But the sense of satisfaction and achievement in meeting the exacting demands of operating modern aircraft and of being part of a well-drilled team working at high pressure with little or no margin for error is its own reward.



ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT – MISCELLANEOUS DIVISION



ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT - 'A' UNIT DIVISION

By the time the ship has finished its trip to the Frozen North the flight-deck engineers will be completely 'case-hardened' and will need special acclimatisation before returning to life down below.

ENGINE-ROOM

The more traditional work of the marine engineer continues down below, where at sea sixty-eight men are continuously on watch with the main object of ensuring that the 154,000 horse-power required to move the ship through the water at full speed will be available when needed. Equally vital, of course, is the maintenance of generators, steering gear, fuel pumps and refrigeration machinery, air-conditioning and heating plants, and numerous other items.



ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT — 'B' UNIT DIVISION



ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT - 'X' UNIT DIVISION

Keeping the ship topped-up with fuel oil is a major item and *Ark Royal* has fuelled at sea over sixty times this commission, and the job of controlling the supply of fuel to the boilers and keeping the ship upright at the same time keeps at least one man continuously employed. Total consumption of furnace fuel oil is one million tons at a cost of £1,000,000, and thirty-five million gallons of fresh water have been distilled and used, mostly for domestic purposes and drinking, in more or less palatable forms. Each of the eight boilers has had to be cleaned four times and the total soot removed is nearly a year's haul by an average chimney-sweep.

It has been necessary –for maintenance – to stop each of the four shafts at some time at sea, and on one occasion we continued flying for two days with only the two port ones in use.

In harbour this department is probably even busier than at sea, with the ever-present problem of maintenance on essential machinery. Even so, we have managed to win the ship's athletic trophy, be runners-up in the swimming, and provide many of the ship's soccer, rugger and cricket teams. True to tradition, their chief and petty officers' tug-of-war team is invincible.

ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT - 'Y' UNIT DIVISION



**SUPPLY
AND SECRETARIAT
DEPARTMENT**

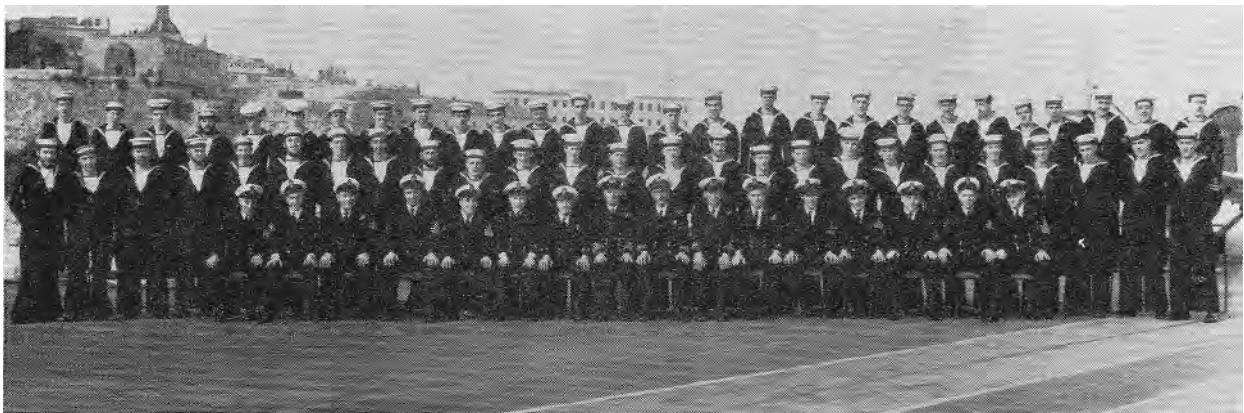


'Hanged my Paymaster this morning. He was the greatest hindrance to the campaign', wrote the Duke of Wellington. Napoleon, too, fully appreciated the degree to which military success is dependent on the victuallers.

Whilst the more dramatic dangers to the Paymaster's life have doubtless been decreased, the importance and complexity of the work of the Supply Branch have certainly increased.

Accommodated in *Ark Royal* is a population almost equal to a small country town the size of, say, Wincanton; though any further comparison between the amenities of the two communities will clearly be unwise. The 'Pusser', in conjunction with NAAFI, runs what correspond to the municipal offices; the bank and post office; the butcher's, baker's and confectioner's; the ironmonger's, tobacconist's and gent's outfitter's; several restaurants and off-licences; not to mention a soda fountain and snack-bar. The turnover in food alone is about five tons daily.

COOKS (S)





WARDROOM
ACCOMMODATION STAFF

The stores and provisions for these multifarious activities have largely to be taken on board at sea in order to leave the periods in harbour free for fundamental ship maintenance. Hence periodic 'replenishment at sea' have become a recurrent feature of the ship's seagoing programme, giving a necessary but not always welcomed break in the task of flying training. The obvious need to keep these breaks to a minimum has led to the development of a streamlined efficiency which has set new standards in this vital business. As a result, over 1,500 tons of stores have been embarked at ever-increasing rates, and this has helped to build up both the ship's flying achievements and the leave enjoyed by the ship's company in harbour.



CAPTAIN'S AND
PAY OFFICE STAFF

THE VICTUALLING
STORES PARTY



The food that has been taken in over the flight-deck has found its way to the table in more varied forms than ever before. Multi-choice menus have been maintained for the first time in the life of this ship probably to the dismay of those who run the 'big eats' cafés ashore.

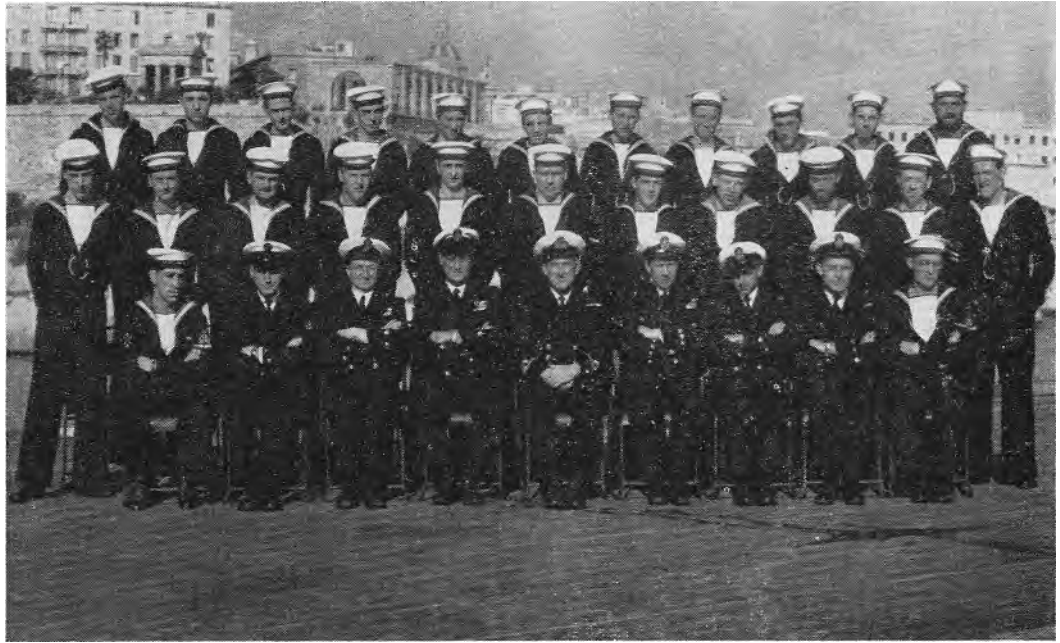
The wind of change has also been whistled-up in the pay office and payment, too, has become streamlined. This ceremony now takes place on the way to the dining-hall, which not only saves time but also removes the irritations from what ought, after all, to be a happy occasion.

These and other numerous ways of ensuring a slicker domestic organisation have made it possible to run the ship successfully with considerably fewer men than were carried during her previous commissions.



DINING HALL STAFF

**THE
ELECTRICAL
DEPARTMENT**



FORWARD GROUP

When we commissioned this ship it looked to many of us as though there would never be any end to the work waiting to be done. Now that we look back, with the experience behind us, we realise that we were only too right.

We are aware that there were times when you sat in your office or caboose with the lights out and wondered where all the electricians were and why somebody was not doing something about the job card which you put in three days ago. Unfortunately for us, you were not alone; in all probability you did not see the EMs working on the Admiral's lights, which were much more important than yours; and we don't suppose you noticed the EA and electrician working on that machine down at seven or nine something-or-other, without



AFTER GROUP

which the operation of aircraft would have been impossible.

However, we are not all apologies. The flight-deck for the modern aircraft has more and more electrical equipment, all of which is quite complicated; and it has been kept going with practically no interruption of the flying programme. The flight-deck Penguins have always been ready off the mark under the able direction of their leader – who managed to knock up another half-stripe at the same time. Their life is, of course, one great panic; but under the Mediterranean sun this helped to keep them from getting too browned off. We did hear that a certain rating was worried that he might get his head caught under the JBD one day. Someone else unkindly suggested that this might be a greater peril to the JBD!

Below decks there is an awful lot of ship. Early in the commission it was decided to change the old system of administering the department, and we were sawn in half like the magician's lady. A work study team made many suggestions about running things, particularly with regard to the after group, and they received many suggestions in exchange, some of which I hesitate to repeat. Nevertheless, lessons have been learned and information collected for the carriers of the future.

The Island 'R' and '1' sections have their quiet fun in their more rarified atmosphere. Their rows of radar displays, navigational gear and general operational equipment all require that faults be rectified whenever possible, with a negative lapse of time. With a life depending on every valve, so to speak, there isn't any room for a prolonged breakdown.

The ship's programme ensured that we spent plenty of time in the sun, of which we feel only an indirect but more uncomfortable effect down below – in other words, it gets hot. At one point it was wondered if an 'itsy-bitsy tiny polka-dot bikini' might be better for Father Christmas when we lit him up at Christmas time, but December's gales put the idea in its proper place, and the effort was put into illuminations instead, and was well rewarded.

In the breathless halts between the operational periods the Electrical Department has done its best on the sports fields of the Mediterranean and Scotland, winning the 'round the Rock' relay race, getting into finals in the tug-of-war, and having representatives in most of the ship's teams. Of course, we lost



ISLAND GROUP



FLIGHT DECK GROUP

goodness knows what, but the athletic prowess of the Department is unquestioned - particularly in some quaint spots around Barcelona, Palma (Ahh!) and La Linea de la Concepcion. With an empire extending from the highest point-that couldn't get under the Forth Bridge - to four feet below the keel, there has never been any lack of variety - or opportunity for exercise - in the Electrical Department.

PS.— If you were paying for your electricity by putting shillings in the slot, and at the same rate as you would at home, each one of you would have stumped up £51. 16s. 2d. in the past year.

And the Electricity Company would have collected £103,620. 2s. 0d.

Which is a lot of shillings!

THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT



The Sick Bay has often been very busy during this commission, but only rarely has this been due to sickness. This paradox is due to the fact that the *Ark* is blessed with an ideally situated sick bay which can be approached by four doors.

The port door has only been used occasionally: it is the access for casualties collected by the seaboat, who usually just require a hot bath and dry clothing.

The starboard door is labelled 'Officers and Medical Staff Only' but it is also used frequently by the Regulating staff, who seem to be under the mistaken impression that the Medical Officers would like to see some of the returning libertymen. (This is quite untrue, and in our experience the libertymen have no desire to see us either.)

The forward door is the most used. Through it stream the queues of eager volunteers for vaccination, TAB, tetanus, etc. - also quite often whole messes who have suddenly developed an interest in entomology.

The after door should remain permanently closed, as it is the access to the forward lift and is designed to collect casualties from the flight-deck. Fortunately, there have been few casualties of this nature, but there have been all too frequently cases of another kind. One of the most irritating diseases arriving by this door is flourrhoea (this means a discharge of flour, in at one orifice and out at the other); there is also split peorrhoea and many others which are most disturbing to patients and staff alike.

However, laughter is the best medicine and, in the words of an old wartime acquaintance of mine (Mrs. Mopp): 'It's being so cheerful keeps me going!'

SPORTS

There has been no lack of enthusiasm for organised sports in the ship this commission but there has been a great dearth of opportunity. Whenever chances have come up they have been seized greedily by the various secretaries, but ship's teams have always been handicapped by the lack of continuous training and practice and by the fact that it has rarely been possible for any team to be kept the same for two games running.

With opportunity being limited, it has been the policy to hold inter-part competitions rather than a large number of representative matches, in order to let as many as possible out onto the field. From this point of view we can certainly claim to have had a successful commission, even though the total of representative matches won may be disappointing. Even so, the trophies won in inter-carrier competitions is by no means disappointing.

SOCCER

Two ship's teams have been run, but of the dozen or so games played only one was won. Our teams showed skill quite equal to that of their opponents, but to little avail.

The inter-part trophy was competed for twice, in March and again in January 1961. In the first competition the Royal Marines beat the Scimitar Squadrons in the final 2-1. In the second the final was drawn 1-1, and the Engine-Room Juniors beat the Supply and Secretariat team 5-3 in the replay.

The standard of play in the finals was high and it was good to see the keenness, coupled with the good sportsmanship that characterised all the matches.

RUGGER

Early in the commission a few preliminary games were played before the ship left Devonport, and these enabled us to field a reasonable side when we visited Barcelona in May. On this occasion we beat the local champions 19-3 in a very open game. The play and the result gave great delight to a large and appreciative crowd.

At Rosyth in September *Hermes* was defeated in both the Carrier Squadron 'sevens' and in the first round of the Home Fleet Cup. Unfortunately, we could not keep this up and lost to Tyne unexpectedly.

An inter-part seven-a-side competition was run at Malta early in 1961 and one hundred and eighty players took part in a most enjoyable and energetic day. The Wardroom beat 849 Squadron in the final, and in the final of the 'plate' competition 800 Squadron beat the Air Ordnance.

We hope to round off the season with matches at both Lisbon and New York, but the team is chary of indulging in any American football.



INTER-PART FINAL - MALTA

SQUASH

The small number of enthusiasts, which includes an encouraging proportion of ratings, have been chasing around the courts to let off steam rather than as a preparation for matches. A few have been played, however, in which we have held our own — almost. We wrested the Noble Cup from *Hermes*, only to lose it immediately to *Victorious*. Plans to recapture this led to some near serious preparations, but these were foiled by *Victorious* having to delay her arrival at Gibraltar on account of a little rough weather.



BOXING

Unlike the field games, boxing need not suffer from long periods at sea. This may be why its popularity has undoubtedly increased through the commission. The enthusiasts have trained consistently and the effects have shown in the results. With little experience at first we lost all bouts in a match at Gibraltar in May. In September, against *Hermes*, we won three bouts out of eight, and ran the 40th Commando close, only losing by 13-14. Then in Malta, against the RAF, we succeeded in winning all bouts. These matches have always been good to watch and our thanks are due to those departments who provided the necessary setting for them in the hangar.

HOCKEY

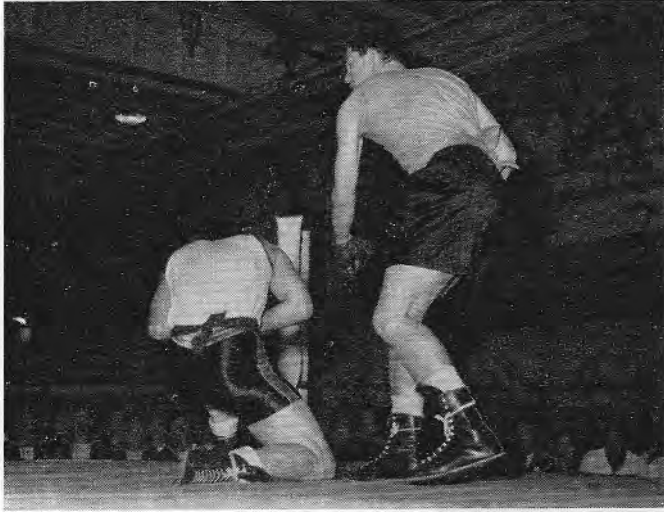
The Hockey team has had no star performers, but ability and enthusiasm has been waxing throughout the commission. Now we can put out two good, though not outstanding, teams and have won about as many games as we have lost.

A six-a-side contest was held in May in which twelve teams competed, the Flight Deck being the winners. The same team were successful in a seven-a-side knockout held at Gib in June. A further eleven-a-side knockout was run over Christmas at Malta, which was most keenly contested. In the final the Scimitar Squadrons won the final after extra time.

Playing against *Hermes* for the Carrier Squadron Trophy we were heavily beaten 7—1 but regained a little prestige by beating *Victorious* 4—1.



INTER-PART HOCKEY
MALTA



CRICKET

During our second visit to Gibraltar an inter-part knock-out competition of 20-over matches was played, the Air Technical XI beating the Scimitar Squadrons in the final.

Of the ship's matches we can look back on one particularly enjoyable day's cricket at the Marsa when we gave *Hermes* a fairly sound beating. Later on we played Victorious for the Squadron Cup in our most exciting game.

Playing on a very soft wicket at HMS *Dryad* after our matches on the Marsa concrete, we were never very impressive when batting and scored only 63. To the intense excitement of all, Vic did little better and we managed to eject them for 62, thus gaining the trophy by one run.

SWIMMING

Comparatively little swimming training has taken place, but thirty-one life-saving awards have been gained, including two distinctions and nine awards of merit.

Water-polo has proved popular, and a strong team was formed. Every match was comfortably won and the season was appropriately rounded off by our carrying off the Home Fleet Cup at Rosyth against strong opposition.

ATHLETICS

Two inter-part contests have been run for the benefit of those with an interest in athletics. The first was a 'round the Rock' relay race at Gibraltar, in which thirteen teams of seven competed. It provided a very interesting contest, and the Electrical Department 'A' team came in first, with 892 Squadron and the Engine Room Department following up.

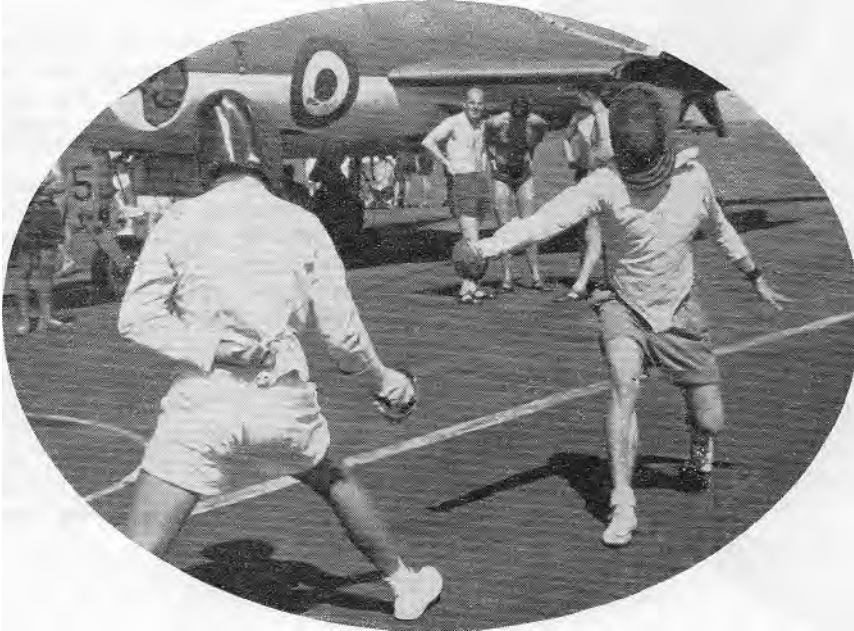
Next was a comprehensive athletics meeting staged in Malta in August. It hardly needs to be said that the weather was hot to very hot, and the track not so hot. However, some good performances were recorded in the sprints and jumps. The competition was won easily by the Engine Room Department.

For those who prefer the slower death of a cross-country, there was a race with *Hermes* for teams of forty over a three and a half mile course at Rosyth. On this occasion we had to admit to a narrow defeat, but we attribute this to a navigational error which took the team up the wrong side of a hill.

Finally, we sent a team of four ashore to compete in a village-to-village relay in Malta. With little preparation the team did well to finish seventh out of a field of fourteen.



ATHLETICS - INTER-PART
THE CAPTAIN PRESENTS THE PRIZES



FENCING

This has naturally been confined to a fairly small number of enthusiasts, but these have taken every opportunity to practise at sea whenever there has been no night flying. Three complete novices have been trained to competition standard during the commission. The ship's team has competed in three matches for the Carrier Squadron Trophy and won them all.

DECK HOCKEY

On the very few occasions when this interesting blood sport has been possible it has been fought with the usual disregard for life and limb. Few casualties have been reported. One major competition has been arranged, and in the final of this the Flight Deck 'A' team soundly beat the Air Ordnance, to win the shield.



PISTOL-SHOOTING
ON FLIGHT DECK

VOLLEY-BALL

A great deal of volley-ball might have been played but for the unsportsmanlike insistence on using the pitch the after lift – for lifting aircraft. As it was, we can only record that the Carrier Squadron Trophy was captured from *Victorious* by three games to two.

GOLF

This has been largely a private enterprise activity, though one or two matches have been arranged. We did take part in the Home Fleet Competition with three notable successes. The canvas screen rigged from time to time on the AX has been the scene of some high drama, and a few novices have on occasion appeared to be trying to do the spectators, the quarter-deck and themselves some serious injury.

JUDO

The Judo Club was formed in October – rather late in the commission – and a short demonstration, organised as a curtain-raiser to a boxing match, did much to arouse interest and let the ship know a little about this more unusual sport. Its popularity has been building up and the Club is looking forward to its match at Lisbon.



CARRIER SQUADRON TROPHIES HELD BY THE SHIP

Won from 'Hermes': **Seven-a-Side Rugby, Fencing, Deck Hockey, Pulling Whaler, Team Sailing, Team Tennis, Team Golf**

Won from 'Victorious': **Cricket, Individual Sailing, Volley-Ball**

VITAL STATISTICS

In the fifteen months since the ship commissioned, including the first five weeks in Devonport Dockyard, we have spent 253 days at sea and 203 in harbour. This is 55+ per cent at sea compared with 41 per cent for the last commission.

The total distance steamed was 80,000 miles – about three times round the world – and the 100,000 tons of fuel oil burned cost £750,000.

Nearly 2,000 tons of solid stores were embarked at sea and provided the storing parties with 100,000 man-hours of hard labour. Over 150,000 tons of fresh water has been distilled – very little of this, of course, has been drunk.

The Squadrons have flown a total of over 9,000 sorties, 450 of which were at night. The catapults have launched 2,400 Scimitars, 1,100 Vixens and 400 Gannets. Over 4,000 helicopter sorties have been flown. The total distance flown is 2,231,500 miles—five return trips to the moon.

The total payment was £776,543, of which £28,565 was deposited in the POSB, and over £2,000 contributed to charities.

The total rum issue was 637,000 tots. If consumed in one day, even by this ship's company, it would lay the entitled men so flat that . .

Twenty million cigarettes have been smoked – enough to line both sides of the road from Plymouth to John o' Groats.

Over 2+ million meals have been eaten, including about 8¾ million potatoes.

The barbers estimate that they have cut 480 million hairs, which would stretch from Plymouth to Siberia and back – if the red ones came back.

A total of 1,390 offences were recorded, divided departmentally per man per week they ranged from 1 in 36 for the Royal Marines to 1 in 61 for the Seamen. 101 warrants were read, which is an all-time low.

It costs 7d. per foot to move this ship and £1,000,000 per week to run it. Has it been worth it? And how!

