

H.M.S. SOUTHAMPTON — 1981-83



EMERAUDE

1757

"FIRST OF JUNE"

1794

HELICOLAND

1914

JUTLAND

1916

SPARTIVENTO

1940



BELLE ISLE

1761

ST. VINCENT

1797

DOGGER BANK

1915

NORWAY

1940

MALTA CONVOY

1941





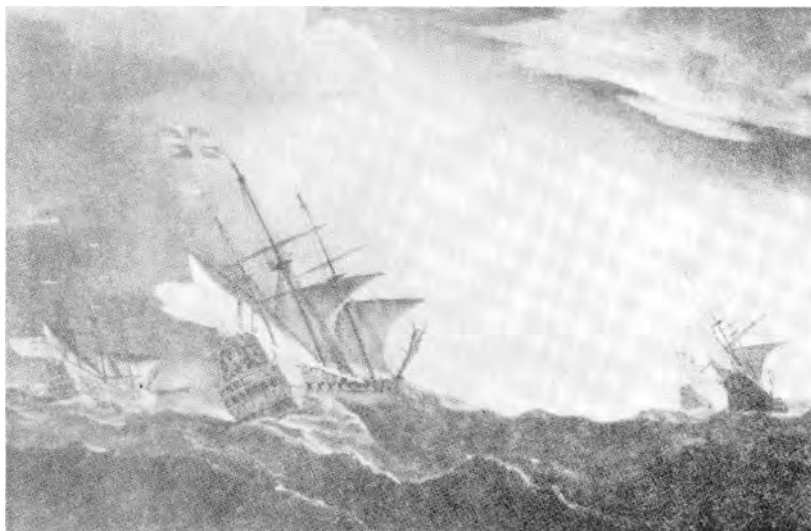
Introduction -

HMS SOUTHAMPTON — the sixth — was commissioned almost two years ago on 31st October, 1981. Seven months later, in June 1982, she sailed for the Falkland Islands Total Exclusion Zone and returned to UK as the South Atlantic winter ended and the next English winter was beginning. This year has seen a similar pattern with another 5-½ month South Atlantic deployment — once more covering the English summer.

You may wonder how it is possible to produce a " Full Commission " book worth reading about a ship that in her first two years has seen five winters and no summers, two long South Atlantic deployments and only two short foreign runs (one of which was very bad!).

The worthy fact is that it is people not programmes that primarily make for a happy and successful ship — although I am amongst the first to agree that the latter are important. Individual ships have an uncanny knack of retaining their character and personality from build and then passing these on through successive ship's companies. HMS Southampton will always be a friendly, cheerful and successful ship and we are right to record her early life and ship's company. She has covered over 83,000 miles in her first two years — almost twice as far as the average pre-Corporate operational frigate or destroyer in the same timescale.

This book is your record of a slice of your life — mainly to remind you of the characters and personalities with whom you served. For me, personally, this book will always remind me with immense pleasure and much reassurance of the thoroughly supportive and cheerful team with whom I was privileged to serve after the extraordinary events of last year.



The First H.M.S. Southampton

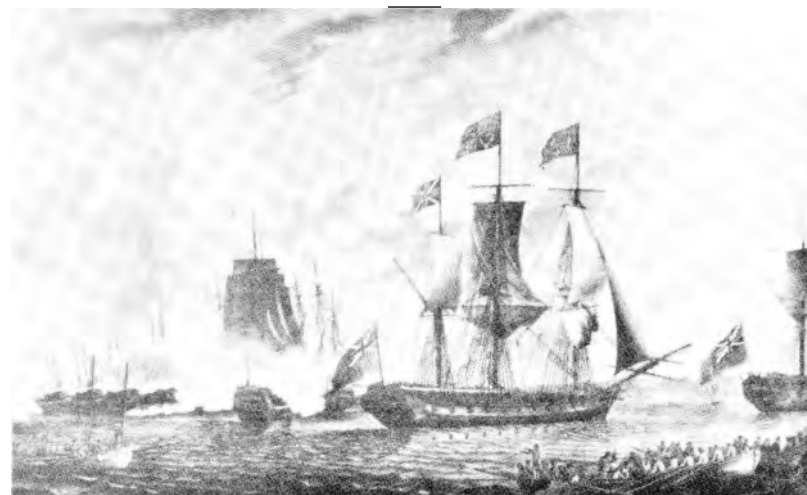
THE FIRST HMS Southampton was a 48 gun frigate of about 600 tons, and was launched just outside the walls of the city of Southampton in 1693 " by Chapel Mill ". This was on the opposite bank of the River Itchen to the modern Vosper Thornycroft's shipyard and about five hundred yards further north.

She was rebuilt at Deptford only six years after her launch, which is much earlier than would be expected for a ship of that time. It is possible that John Winter, her builder, used poor materials for her as he had for the " Cornwall " which he had built previously. It was said of him in the House of Lords that " the builder should have been hanged for that ship ".

Little is known of the exploits of the first bearer of this famous war-ship's name. In January, 1695, she assisted at the capture of the French " Content " and " Trident " in the Mediterranean in Captain Killigrew's squadron. She was involved in various merchantman protection duties throughout the 1690s, both in the West Indies and in home waters under the command of Captain Kirkby.

Captain Kirkby is better remembered for his infamy. Whilst in command of the " Ruby " in 1702 in the West Indies under the flag of Admiral Benbow he and some other captains failed to engage the enemy. The incident led to his court martial and he was subsequently shot.

" Southampton " herself saw no remarkable action and was hulked in Jamaica in 1728 before being broken up there in 1735.

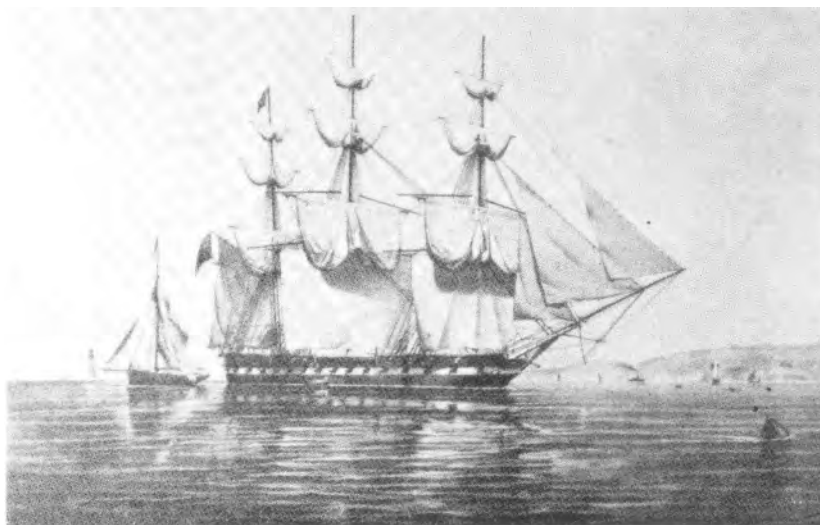


The Second H.M.S. Southampton

THE SECOND HMS Southampton was built at Rotherhithe in 1757 and was in size similar to her predecessor. Carrying 32 guns, she is said to have been the first of the " true frigates ", and her career started immediately after she was launched when she was on her way, under Captain Gilchrist, to Plymouth with money to pay the dockyard. Off St. Alban's Head she was attacked by two French 36-gun frigates, the " Marechal de Belle Isle " and the " Chauvelin ", with two sloops. Gilchrist fought them bravely for two hours and a half before they broke away, badly damaged, leaving the " Southampton " a wounded victor.

Two months later under Admiral Hawke, " Southampton " was ordered into Brest. On 21 September, 1757, Gilchrist saw a ship in chase of him, and promptly made sail towards her. The enemy opened fire, and Gilchrist did not reply until he got within twenty yards. When the ships closed the enemy attempted to board, but, vigorously repulsed, she struck in a quarter of an hour. She was the " Emeraude ", a French frigate of 28 guns. As the " Emerald ", the French ship was added to the Royal Navy.

Captain Gilchrist served a further two years with his ship until a fierce action in the North Sea, with two French frigates. The outcome was the capture of the " Danae ", which was added to the Navy, but Captain Gilchrist was severely wounded and had to retire.



The Third H.M.S. Southampton

THE THIRD " Southampton ", a 50 gun frigate of 1500 tons, laid down at Deptford in 1805, was not completed until 1820 for want of seasoned oak.

Spanning the period from the end of the Napoleonic era through the social reforms of the nineteenth century and not being scrapped until 1912, her total lifetime saw great change. However, her active service was during a period of peace and of significant change in ship building techniques. Perhaps she was obsolete before she was launched, as the first merchant steamer crossed the Atlantic in 1818. She was laid up from her launching until 1829 when she was active for three years including a period in the East Indies; the furthest east any ship of the name has been.

She assisted at a blockade of Dutch ports in 1832, and in 1842 forced the entrance to Port Natal to enable troops of the 25th and 27th Regiments to land and defeat the Boers during the annexation of Natal. From 1848 to 1851 she was flag ship on the south east coast of South America, but the periods 1833-49, and 1842-48 were spent in reserve, a common condition for 19th century " wooden walls ".

A brief period of naval service from 1854 was the last she saw before becoming first a coastguard ship at Harwich, and then in 1867 a training ship at Hull until she was finally broken up in 1912.

FOUR



The Fourth H.M.S. Southampton

The FOURTH " Southampton " was built by John Brown & Co. at Clyde Bank and launched in 1912. She was a light cruiser, with a much longer and proportionately slimmer build than her predecessors, made of steel with coal fired steam propulsion.

An eloquent tribute to the fourth " Southampton " was contained in " The Times " of 21 October, 1925, which is reproduced below by kind permission of Times Newspapers Ltd.

Times 21st October 1925

The Passing of a Famous Ship.

She was a famous ship, and she ought not to go to her last rest without some tribute to her service. For she is doomed. They will break her into pieces and tear her decks asunder. The hot flame of the oxyacetylene will breathe upon her and the sinews of her steel plates will melt as the snows melt in the spring sun. Men in rough clothes will swarm upon her and destroy. With hammers and chisels in their hands, with destruction in their hearts and a joke upon their lips, they will rend her hull and expose her mysteries to the heavens. This is to be the end of a famous ship; so her praises must be sung while she still remains a ship and can understand.

They built her on Clydebank, laying her down in 1911, painting her for the last time in November 1912. In 1913 she became Commodore's ship of the only light cruiser squadron we had in the Home Fleet. In 1914 she was at Kiel for the yachting week and " chummy " ship of the German light cruiser " Rostock ". Six weeks later she met the " Rostock " again; this time in the German Bight.

In those early days cruisers were few, and the "Southampton" flogged the North Sea. Thousands and thousands of miles were spun by her creamy wakes. Beatty loved her squadron. They could keep up with the great battle cruisers in heavy weather; other light cruisers fell back with battered bridges, but the "Southampton" held on. Though they worked her terribly hard, she managed to be the first cruiser in the Fleet to start a voluntary band. Two years later there were dozens of them. The "Southampton" was always a cheery ship.

At the action of December 16, 1914, she was the only ship of the Battle Cruiser Squadron to come into serious action with the enemy. At the action of January 24, 1915, she led the light cruisers and was the last to lose touch with the enemy.

Jutland was the climax of her life. It was from her bridge that the long line of the German High Seas Battle Fleet was first sighted. During the run north towards the Grand Fleet the "Southampton" was rear ship of the battle-cruiser line. She remained for an hour under fire from the German battleships and reported their movements to Sir John Jellicoe. Zig-zagging like a snipe she seemed to bear a charmed life. Then came the night. At 10.20 p.m. she fought four German light cruisers at a range of 800 yards. As brisk an affair as any in the war at sea. It lasted only three and a half minutes, but in that time 75 per cent. of the personnel upon her upper deck became casualties. Three great fires flamed up from her deck to the sky, but in her agony she fired her torpedo. The leading enemy ship, the "Fraunlob" was struck amidships and blown in half. The Germans turned away from the edge of victory and the "Southampton" was saved.

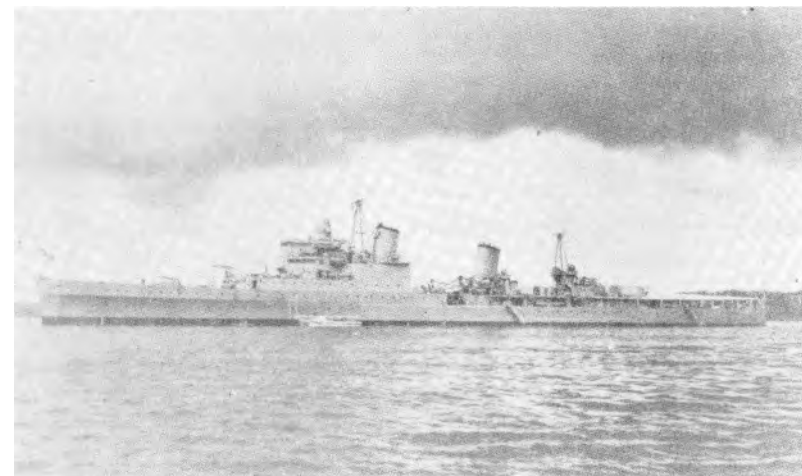
Thirty-six hours later she made Rosyth, the last ship in. The King and his ministers stood upon her scarred decks and spoke well of her. On a day in August of the same year five torpedoes were fired at her. No other ship in the Navy ever had the honour of being at all those four actions.

After the war they sent her as flagship to South America. Mighty men with the gun lived in her that commission, and the game book showed over 25,000 head. The South American Squadron was abolished but the "Southampton" endured. They sent her to the East Indies. Flagship of course; nothing else was fitting for such a ship.

At last they thought she could do no more, and the "Southampton" was doomed. In 1924 before the autumn leaves had fallen in England for whose honour she had done so much the "Southampton" was paid off into the mortuary called "Material Reserve". I can only hope that she had the most splendid paying off pennant that Portsmouth had ever seen.

I hope economy was sent to blazes and that her pennant was of pure silk with a bladder at the end picked out with much gold leaf.

In August, 1925, she was ordered to be prepared for sale, and now comes the news that the bargain has been struck. They will tow her away to some yard and break her up. England will cast her upon one side without a thought. But long after her slim strong hull is scattered to the winds the memory of her exploits will endure, and men at sea lingering over their port and reflecting upon the great days, the sad days, the hard days, the days of glory when two hundred pennants moved swiftly at the bidding of one man, will say with pride: Yes, I served in the "Southampton".



The Fifth H.M.S. Southampton

The FIFTH "Southampton", originally to have been called "Polyphemus", gave her name to a class of cruisers authorised in 1933. She was laid down in 1934 by John Brown & Co. at Clydebank and completed in 1937. Between then and the outbreak of war in 1939, she was employed in the North Atlantic and around the British Isles. She was to be found escorting and assisting refugees from the Spanish Civil War as they made their way by sea to France in 1938 and she visited Canada during the Royal Tour of 1939.

When war broke out in 1939 she was flagship of the 2nd Cruiser Squadron, Home Fleet. She was allocated for duty with the Humber Force (two cruisers, five destroyers), the primary duty of which was to protect shipping on the East Coast of England, but also to prosecute offensive operations against the enemy as opportunity offered.

On 16 October, 1939, "Southampton" was at anchor off Rosyth when German aircraft attacked that base. Twenty bombs were dropped around her, and one 500Kg bomb passed through three decks before coming out just above the waterline, where it exploded, sinking the Admiral's barge. Damage was not extensive and was repaired in three days. In the last week of October she patrolled in the Denmark Strait, and later supported the Northern Patrol.

She was back with the Humber Force in November, when it was expected that Germany might invade Holland by sea, but went north again later that month when the sinking of the "Rawalpindi" showed that German commerce raiders were at large in the Atlantic.

When Germany invaded Norway on 8th April, "Southampton" was at sea covering and escorting Convoy ON 25. She was ordered with other ships to attack enemy forces reported in Bergen.

On 25th May, still in Norwegian waters, she was again slightly damaged by near misses from enemy bombs. On 26th and 28th she was attacked once more; on the latter occasion sustaining damage which needed 10 days to put right. The 28th May was the day Narvik was captured, and "Southampton" took part in the final evacuation from Norway on 8th June.

At the end of June 1940, when the threat of a German invasion began to be apparent, "Southampton" was sent to Sheerness, but on 16th August, during the Battle of Britain, with the Thames area under heavy air attack, she and "Birmingham" were moved back to Rosyth. In September she returned to Sheerness, and remained there as part of the anti-invasion forces until October.

On 15th November, "Southampton" left Belfast for the Mediterranean with other reinforcements, arriving in Gibraltar on the 22nd. On her passage eastwards, she took part in the action with the Italian battle fleet off Cape Spartivento, on 27th November, but arrived safely at Alexandria on the 30th. Next day she was ordered to the East Indies to meet the troop convoy WS4B for the Middle East, as far south as possible.

On 10th December, she attacked enemy shipping in Kismayu. Her presence there illustrated the ubiquity of the Fleet, for in exactly one month she had travelled from Iceland to the Equator. On the 17th December she met convoy WS4B coming up from the Cape, at 22° South, and accompanied it to Suez, arriving on 28th December.

On 1st January, 1941, the "Southampton" was ordered to form part of the 3rd Cruiser Squadron, Mediterranean Fleet. On 6th January, she left Alexandria with a convoy for Malta, landing troops there on the 8th. After meeting another Malta-bound convoy, she was detached with "Gloucester" and "Diamond" on 10th, to proceed to Suda Bay. She was subsequently directed, but was attacked, with "Gloucester", by a force of dive-bombers during the 11th. She was hit immediately at about 1520 in two places by 250Kg. bombs and caught fire. The damage caused, and the ensuing fire which eventually raged unchecked below decks in the after part of the ship and finally amidships as well, caused her to be abandoned at about 1900. All of the survivors of the action were taken off by "Diamond" and as one of them has since remarked "not one of us got our feet wet". The fifth "Southampton" did not sink however, and had to be torpedoed first by "Gloucester" and then by "Orion", whose torpedoes caused a massive explosion, signalling her end. Eighty-one of her ship's company had been lost, and 87 wounded.



The Sixth H.M.S. Southampton

THE SIXTH HMS "Southampton" was built by Vosper Thornycroft at Woolston Shipyard, Southampton.

Laid down on the 21st October, 1976 (Trafalgar Day), she was named by Lady Cameron, wife of the then Chief of Defence Staff, Sir Neil Cameron, on 29th January, 1979, and launched later that day. After a long fitting out period she was accepted into service on 17th August, 1981, under the Command of Captain H. G. DeCourcy Ireland, RN. After a fairly lengthy period of trials the ship returned to Southampton where on 31st October, 1981, at The Queen Elizabeth II Terminal, the Commissioning Ceremony took place. Trials continued into 1982 with a new sense of urgency following the Falklands crisis. The ship was declared operational in June, 1982, some four months ahead of schedule. On 18th June, 1982, she sailed from Portsmouth for the South Atlantic four days after the Argentinian surrender. There followed an interesting period as part of the peace-keeping force, after which the ship returned to Portsmouth, and welcomed a new Commanding Officer, Captain J. F. T. G. Salt, RN. On 22nd April, 1983, after a period of exercises and short visits, she again sailed for the South Atlantic.

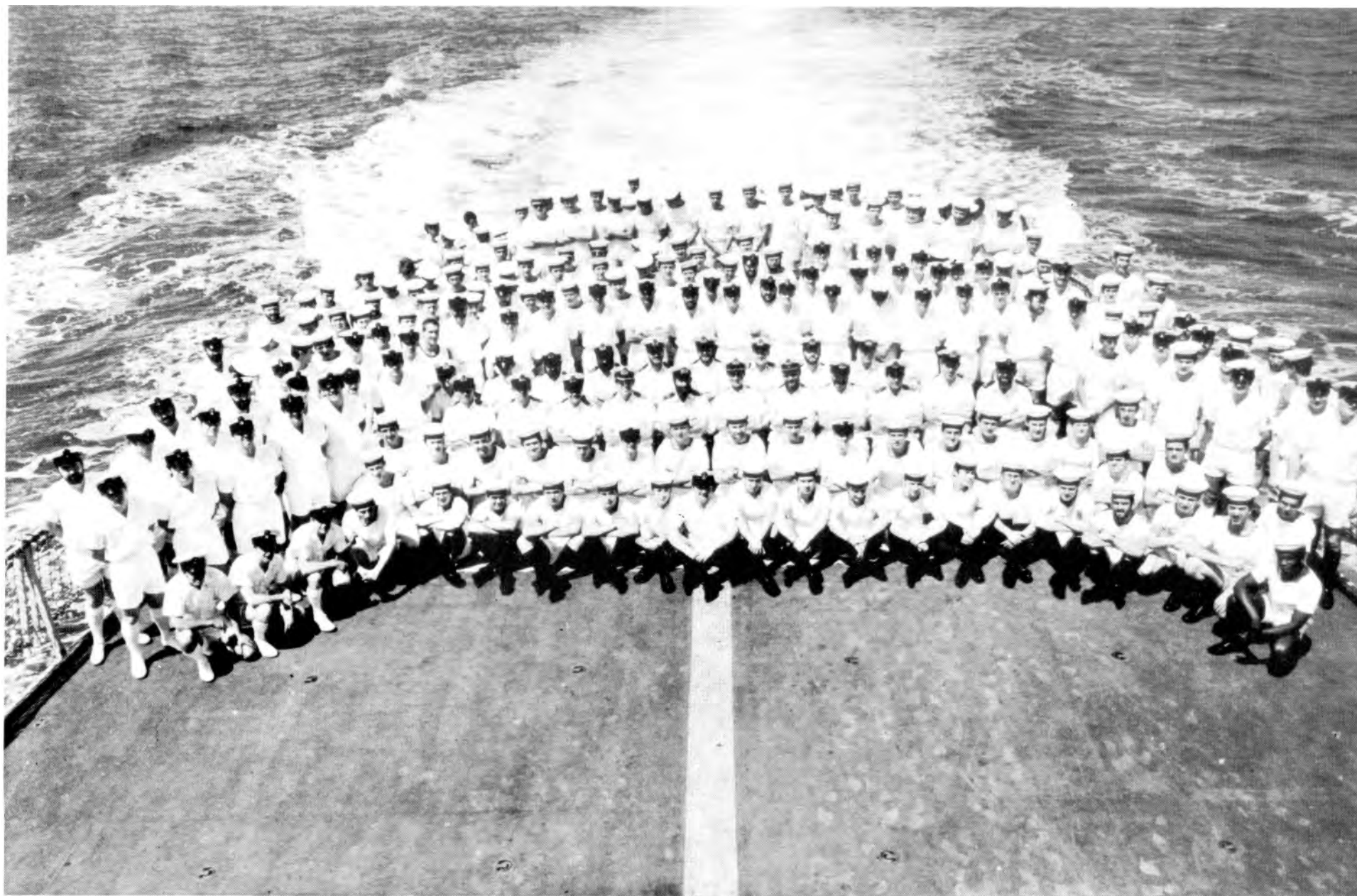
The latest "Southampton" is powered by four Rolls-Royce gas turbines (two "Olympus"; giving a max. speed of 30 knots — and two "Tyne" engines for cruising). The ship's primary role is to provide area defence for a group of ships. Main armament consists of Sea Dart Missile system. A Lynx helicopter is carried for Anti-Submarine work and the ship carries a full range of Sonar detection equipment and two triple torpedo tubes (STWS). The Lynx can also launch air to surface missiles, providing the ship with a very long range anti-ship missile system. All weapons systems are computer controlled. Fully air-conditioned with a complement of 20 officers and 260 ratings, "Southampton" is capable of world-wide operation.

The ship's motto is "Pro Justia Pro Rege" — For Justice and the King.

COMMISSIONING — October 31st, 1981, at Queen Elizabeth II
Terminal, Southampton.



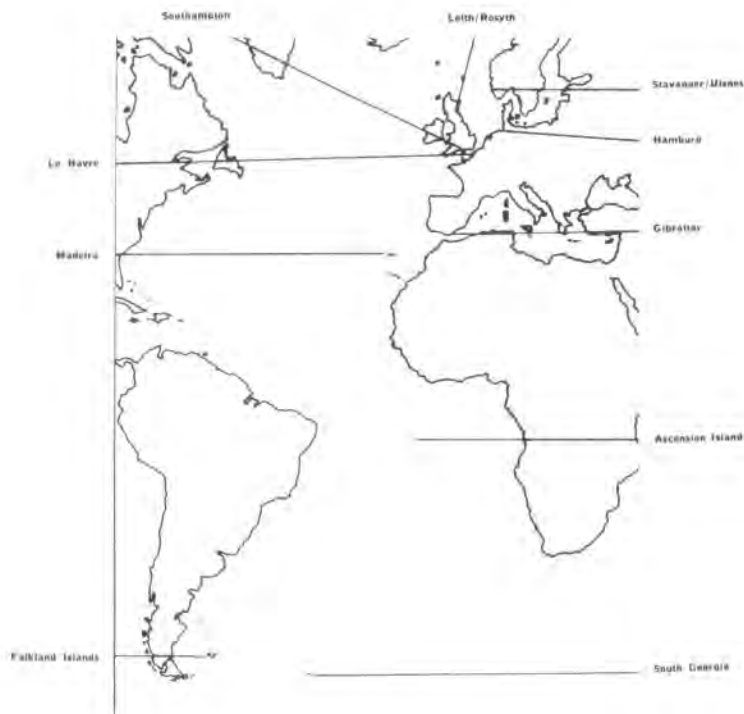
"SHIPS COMPANY" — October, 1982



Visits —

BORN A child of a turbulent era, Southampton has spent the majority of her short life involved in operational duties and, sadly, has had little opportunity to " See the World ". Her first visit was to the City of Southampton to be Commissioned on October 31st, 1981, followed by a short trip across the channel to the twin City of Southampton, Le Havre, from 5 — 9th November. There followed two months of weapon training, Christmas leave and a series of exercises in the North Sea before the ship became the first RN warship to visit Edinburgh in five years. After a pleasant spell there from 15 — 18th February, Southampton sailed for Portsmouth to continue her Acceptance Trials. Things changed obviously with the Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands, with the ship preparing and training for the South Atlantic. On June 18th she sailed, with HMS Birmingham, HMS Apollo, HMS Bacchante and RFA Olwen in company, for the Islands. During her period down south, Southampton visited Stanley on two occasions: August 3/4th and September 4/10th before returning to Portsmouth on October 17th, 1982.

After a short spell in UK waters, the ship had a six day visit to Hamburg (January 19 — 24th, 1983), followed by a brief stay in Stavanger in Norway. After another period of exercising in the North Sea, Southampton sailed once more for the Falklands on April 27th, 1983, returning after her patrol via Madeira (13-16th September, 1983).



H.M.S. Southampton's Programme 1981-83

	DATE	DETAILS	REMARKS
1981	August		Ship accepted into service.
	September	Shakedown	Portsmouth areas.
	October	Shakedown/Visit	Southampton for Commissioning
	November	Passage	Visit Le-Havre.
	December	SMP/AMP Preps.	Portsmouth (Xmas leave).
1982	January	AMP	Portsmouth.
	"		Portland/Leith.
	February		North Sea.
	March	Engine Change	Portsmouth.
	April	Engine Change	Portsmouth.
	May June	Exercise Areas	Portsmouth.
	July	Passage to ASI	
	August	TEZ	Falkland Islands (PSC).
	September	Repairs	PWS/Patrol.
	r	Patrol	
	"	Passage	To ASI.
	October	Passage	To Portsmouth.
	November	AMP	Return from leave.
	December	Visit	Southampton/Xmas leave.
1983	January	Passage/Visit	Hamburg / Stavanger / Ulsnes / Rosyth.
	February		
	March	Portland	Portsmouth
	April	Shakedown	Portland.
	May	Passage	Gibraltar/ASI/Falkland Islands.
	June	Patrol/Passage	Visit South Georgia.
	July	Patrol/AMP	PSC.
	August	Patrol/AMP	PSC/PWS.
	"	Passage	ASI.
	September	Passage	ASI/Madeira/Portsmouth.

SMP - SELF MAINTENANCE PERIOD
 AMP - ASSISTED MAINTENANCE PERIOD
 TEZ - TOTAL EXCLUSION ZONE
 PSC - PORT SAN CARLOS
 ASI - ASCENSION ISLAND
 PWS - PORT WILLIAM STANLEY