



**H. M. S. AJAX**

**1965-1966**

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Captain A. G. Tait, DSC,  
Royal Navy



### *Captain's Foreword*

During the commission we had a series of challenges - the Work Up, exercises, the refit, more exercises, confrontation, the Inspection, the South Pacific cruise - and the ship has become more efficient as each challenge has been overcome. It has required a first class ships company to achieve so much and I congratulate you all on a very successful commission. I hope you have all enjoyed it as much as I have.

*Al Tait*



## PREVIOUS AJAX AND THEIR BATTLE HONOURS

### FORMER SHIPS OF THE NAME

**HMS AJAX (1) 1767.** 3rd Rate. 1,615 tons. This 74 gun Ship of the line served under Admiral Rodney (1780-2) and was present at numerous actions, including the Battles off Martinique and the Battle of the Saints. She was sold at Sheerness in 1785.

**HMS AJAX (2) 1798.** 3rd Rate. 1,953 tons. A '74' like her predecessor, she fought against the French during the Napoleonic Wars and was present at the Battle of Trafalgar. She caught fire and blew up off Tenedos in 1807.

**HMS AJAX (3) 1809.** 3rd Rate. Another '74', she too fought against the French in numerous actions. In 1846 she was converted to steam and later took part in the Baltic operations during the Russian War of 1854-5. She was broken up at Chatham in 1865.

**HMS AJAX (4) 1835.** 2nd Rate. 80 guns. Launched as HMS VANGUARD and re-named in 1867. She spent most of her time in reserve, being broken up at Chatham in 1875.

**HMS AJAX (5) 1880.** Turret Ship. 8,492 tons. Armed with 4-38 ton guns. She was employed on Coast Guard duties and was broken up in 1904.

**HMS AJAX (6) 1912.** Battleship. 23,000 tons. A unit of the Grand Fleet during the 1914-18 War, she was present at the Battle of Jutland. She was subsequently scrapped in 1926.

**HMS AJAX (7) 1932.** Cruiser. 6,985 tons. One of the 'Leander' Class 6" cruisers, she is chiefly remembered for the part she played in the destruction of the 'Graf Spee' in 1939. For most of the remainder of the war she served in the Mediterranean, and took part in the Battle of Matapan. During one engagement, while covering a convoy, she sank or crippled three Italian destroyers. Heavily damaged by a bomb hit in 1943 she was under refit for a year before returning to finish the war in the Mediterranean. She was broken up in 1949 and her bell was presented to the Government of Uruguay.

This famous name was also adopted, in 1949, by the town of Ajax, Ontario, to commemorate the men who fought in HMS AJAX at the Battle of the River Plate.





## THE COMMISSION

HMS AJAX, the eighth in the line of ships to carry the famous name, commissioned for the second time at Singapore on the 14th July 1965. She was built by Cammell Laird & Co at Birkenhead at a cost of £4,750,000 and first commissioned in December 1963. To those who had travelled out from the UK only days previously it was the beginning of a lot of hard work. Already an advance party of approximately 60 ratings and three officers had served some three months in the ship but the majority of the complement was new.

The ship sailed on the 15th for the start of a very vigorous "Shake-down" period - many felt that this should have been entitled a "Shake-Up" period. After spending the next month doing trials with a week in harbour and a week out the ship sailed to take part in Exercise Guardrail. Exercises are exercises but there is only one Olongopo! Some also learnt that U.S. and R.N. uniforms are not compatible. This took us up to the 26th August when we had three days in which to do the final preparation prior to our Sea Inspection.

We spent the first 10 days of September in harbour and then started what was to be one of our regular chores - patrolling. We had only three nights of it and the thought of a 4 day passage to Hong Kong followed by 8 days there took the minds off the long hours peering into the black for infiltrators. Hong Kong was as usual a very good run.

October began with the passage back from Hong Kong and the last few days of rabbiting for the 3rd phase who were due to fly home. What with the move into Terror and the move to UK the Ajax personnel were everywhere - by a coincidence one of the Britannias carried the name of AJAX.

So started what was for many a long and tedious spell of hard work as the ship began to resemble a ship being built as bits and pieces were removed from all parts of the ship. The bofors

were removed and the boats, life rafts all taken away for overhaul. We spent quite a while in AFD 10 and got used to the idea that we were referred to as AFD 10 on the soccer field. During the time spent in refit, many parties of the ship's company had the good fortune to visit the Royal Naval Training Centre at Frasers Hill. This is a training camp about 4,500 feet above sea level and about 60 miles north of Kuala Lumpur set in some of the most beautiful forestry of Malaya. The main attraction is the cool climate plus almost every sporting facility that one can imagine, the most popular probably being the 9 hole golf course. Many took the opportunity of seeing the country by road and drove up, so taking the opportunity of seeing Malacca and Port Swettenham going by the Coast road or else keeping in land and passing through Negri Sembilan and of course Kuala Lumpur.

The keener adventurers went as far as Penang for the sun and beautiful beaches. The train journey itself was an experience one will live with for ever. The local population seemed to bring everything apart from the kitchen sink with them and the noise level reminded one of the village at Sembawang on Market night.

Throughout our stay in Terror, sport was always to the fore. Soccer was the star attraction and many evenings Ajax could be seen entertaining a large crowd under the lights, to a good clean game of soccer. With the supporters, who were never outnumbered by the opposing team's crowd of followers, giving the team an 'A' even before the kick off, the team were off to a goal start.

Residing in Terror gave our boxers, under the careful handling of POM (E) Jock Gordon an opportunity to win the 1965 Novices Championships when we combined with HMS LINCOLN. We organised the 24th Escort Squadron Sportex and with Barrosa unfortunately having to go to sea competed against ZEST and LINCOLN for the

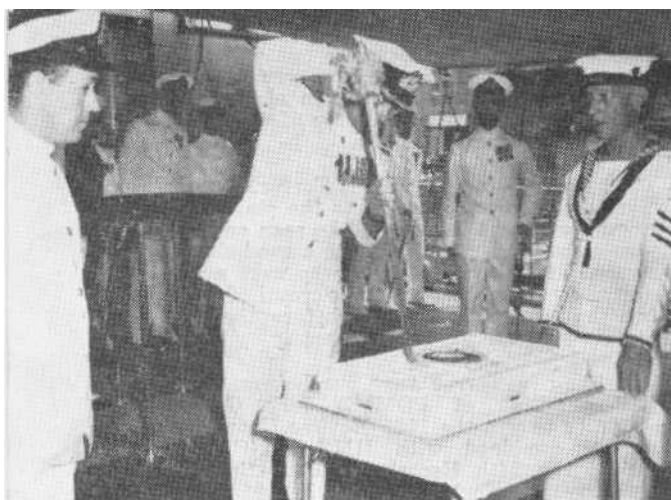
Squadron Cock. Ajax again proved themselves a good sporting ship by winning the trophy after a very close fight.

Soon the great day drew near - the day we were to go back to a 'new' ship. We felt that we wanted to get our sea legs back again after nearly 4 months shore time. The 4th February saw us dragging kit bags, holdalls and uniforms down to the ship.

The weekend was given to settle in and we sailed on Monday for the beginning of our Post refit trials. After three days we returned to commence the Harbour Acceptance Trials which took us to the end of February. Throughout March we did SATS, Pre HATS (G), calibrated the Mortar and actually did limited blind fire capability against aircraft targets at the end of the month.

During the SATs we closed up, closed down, towed ships, boarded ships and just to add interest we put out imaginary fires down below.

We spent an uncomfortable 8 days in the dry dock while we painted the hull. This was as a result of a fruitless paint trial we were undertaking. The air conditioning was very temperamental during this period and the ship resembled an oven for the majority of the time. Again the opportunity was taken to give as much leave as possible. We were in harbour until 23rd when we proceeded to rendezvous with ALBION and act as her planeguard to Borneo. We had 2 days in Labuan while ALBION changed over helicopter Squadrons and we escorted her back before going on Patrol ourselves. We earned ourselves two days towards a Borneo General Service Medal and since then failed to add to it. Due to a machinery failure we were a day late in leaving for Hong Kong and the Chinese were heard to be near to Mutiny when the Captain announced just after reveille that we were going into Singapore and not to Hong Kong. We had a busy 6 days in Hong Kong when to the annoyance of everyone beneath the fox'le, the contract labourers were to be heard chipping away all day - hang-over or no hang-over. Bowlers from the ship made an attempt to win the bowling trophy at the China Fleet Club and many tombola addicts were to be seen in residence 4 nights a week.



Rough weather on leaving Hong Kong prevented the full Exercise programme we should have had with F02. He did come onboard for lunch and was impressed with what he saw. The weather grew worse as we neared Manila, where we were to meet the rest of the fleet building up for the SEATO Exercise SEA IMP. Manila was very wet and Sangley Point the American Air Force Base was invaded by Ajax on the couple of evenings we were there. Boat transport to and from Manila was a little haywire in the morning as the Canteen Manager and PO Wtr Fish found to their cost - as they returned in the American Admiral's barge at 10 o'clock on Saturday morning. We had 2 days at sea to put everyone on the same level and we exchanged two of our lads for two American sailors from the USS GOLDSBOROUGH who were to be our liaison ship for the next 10 days. We began the exercise on the 26th May and concluded on 6th June with an impressive entry into Bang Saen. F02 in Devonshire plus one ship from each nation taking part had proceeded up river to Bangkok.

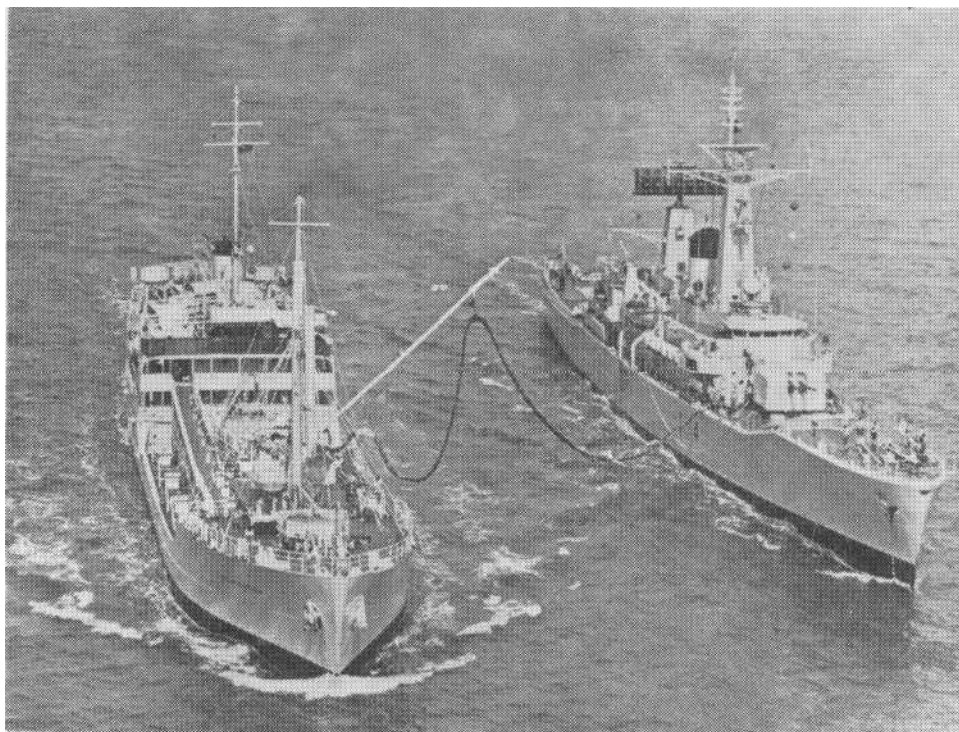
We had three fine days in Bangkok and had an opportunity to see some beautiful scenery. 35 of the ship's company managed to hire a coach and went to see the Bridge over the River Kwai and the War Memorial which is nearby and kept in first class condition.

The weekend after leaving Bangkok was spent at that holiday island of the sailors - Pulau Tioman. Here we relaxed and got our breath back before doing the inspection of OTAGO and helping in the inspection of Plymouth.

We entered Singapore just long enough to drop off F02 and his staff and returned to sea for a shoot before coming back in on the 15th for a short SMP. We held our Sports day on the 17th and had a fine day for it - with the Comms plus one RP running out winners after some very spirited competition and much fun with the not so serious events.

The 24th June saw us to sea and on Patrol. This time we had a day off when we escorted ALBION to Kuching and after another night's patrol joined in a National Exercise Long Hop.

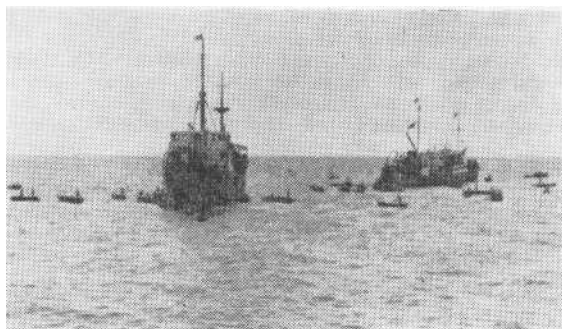
July brought the month of our Sea and Harbour Inspection. We got in four days hard work at Pulau Sibn and then had two more days with Long Hop. We were on Patrol from the 12th to 18th and during this time were visited by Mr. Denis Healey on the 14th. We showed him round the Barter trade areas and he seemed most impressed with all he saw. After assisting in DELIGHT's Sea Inspection we came back to Singapore to prepare for our own Harbour Inspection which took place on the 23rd July after the Departmental Inspections had taken place on the two days previous. "It was a pleasure to walk round a smart and well kept ship. I congratulate you all on achieving such a uniformly high standard of appearance and preservation. Very well done indeed." We all celebrated on the night of the 23rd and all was gloom when we heard we were to do patrol on the 24th. Away we went and after assisting in DIDO's Inspection of the 26th had our own on the 27th. Sea inspection completed. You have done very well indeed and I am entirely satisfied that Ajax would give excellent account of herself in action." DIDO incurred our deepest displeasure by going crock on us and we had to do her Patrol that evening while she came back to Singapore to get ready to go to Hong Kong!!



It's Thirsty Work



Not taken on 17th October



"Friends" at sea

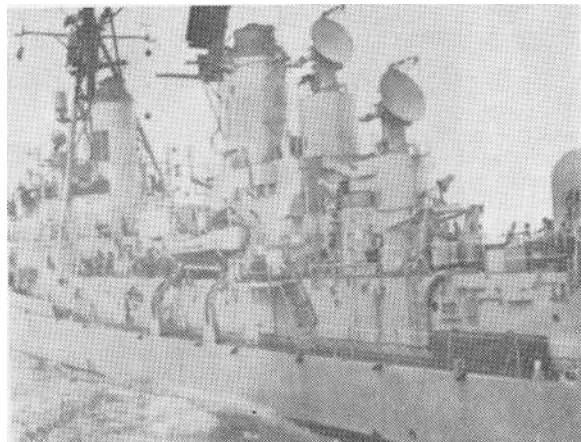


Recruiting Drive

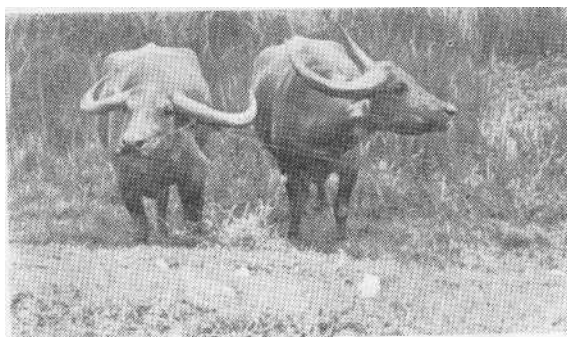




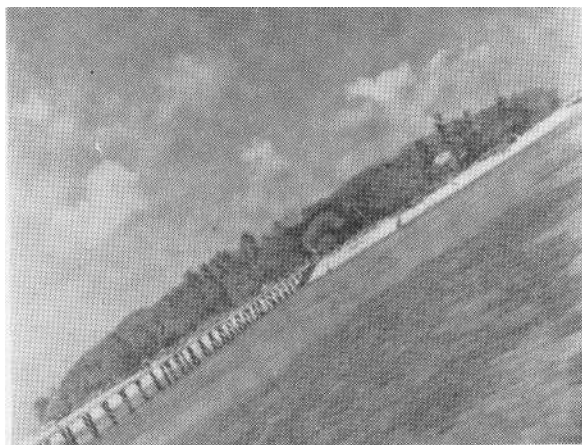
We Drip About Sea Time



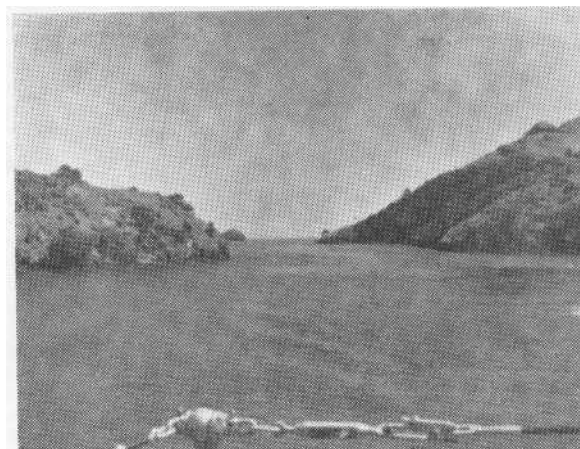
One of the Second Best



There is always some Bull somewhere



Rough Sea off Green Island



Phew!!



August brought a month of activity. 60 of the Ship's Company who had joined in the previous March flew home and 60 new faces arrived. Some arrived with mixed feeling as they had only about 6 months to do and then when they heard of the forthcoming cruise the gloom disappeared.

We sailed for our well earned trip to the Southern Islands - a trip that was to ensure we met King Neptune and a trip to Fiji and New Zealand which were to eradicate all the hard graft of patrols and Inspections.

The first leg was a long haul to Manus and the time was occupied in making comprehensive arrangements for the reception of King Neptune. The equator was reached on 31st August and the Marine Sovereign with a particularly well dressed court welcomed us across the line. The ceremony used by the previous Ajax when she crossed the line exactly 30 years before was followed precisely and except for the Chief of Police who suffered a crushed arm, there were no casualties.

Manus was a welcome break and though possessing only limited facilities gave everybody a chance to shake the salt off their feet. But we were in a hurry for the highlights of the Antipodes and so could only spare a day before setting forth once more. The visit to Honiara was the first of an RN warship for 5 years and was a good initiation for what was to come as we managed to pack a four day ceremonial visit into 36 hours - and still managed to get ashore! It soon became apparent that the Flight were out to steal all the thunder as they took every opportunity to display their "mowing machine belong a Jesus" in a very ostentatious manner - and drew large and wildly excited crowds on each occasion.

The passage to Fiji was uneventful and despite unsolicited navigational assistance from the RNZAF we got there on time. The programme in Suva was intensive and was repeated in Levuka, Savu Savu, Labasa and Lautoka. Calls, return calls, parties, ship open to visitors, football, hockey, tennis, golf and sailing matches, sightseeing trips, kava ceremonies and dances kept everybody on the move day and night. The Wasp continued to give great pleasure wherever it appeared and even helped to survey a route for a road near Labasa.

All good things must come to an end sometime and it was with mixed feeling that we set sail for New Zealand as the Fijians had been most hospitable.

First contact with New Zealand was made by the Wasp who flew round the lighthouse on C. van Dieman and then our first real view was of Queen Charlotte Sound where the first batch of expd parties were landed. By chance also it was found that a number of relatives and friends of the only New Zealander onboard had chosen this weekend to open their summer cottages near Picton. Expd parties were coming and going throughout our time in New Zealand some went North, some went South, many hitchhiked and some went by bus; but all in all 63,000 man/miles were covered.

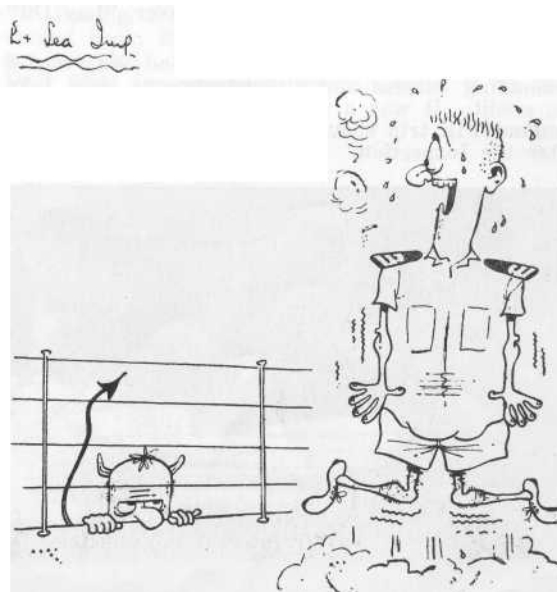
Dunedin was the first real stop and there the Scottish hospitality was overwhelming and the ship was besieged by private hospitality and offers of entertainment. It was a good introduction and the pattern was repeated in Wellington and Auckland and few of those who were fortunate enough to spend the weekend at Masterton will quickly

forget the generosity of the Wairarapa farmers. It was also a great pleasure to have the farmers as well as the UK High Commissioner, Sir Ian MacLennan, and the Lutheran Father, Mother and son on board for a day for a trip round Queen Charlotte Sound.

Auckland was remarkable not only for the number of people who were "up homers" but also for the numbers of the WR and WE Department who were away on leave for the larger part of the SMP. But they were not the only ones wisely to take advantage of the excellent facilities available. At one moment there were parties trout fishing on the Tongariro Taupo, deer stalking in the Kaimanawa Range, skiing at Ruapehu, re-visiting friends in the Wairarapa, Dunedin and Wellington and making contact with long lost relatives.

Once again the good times were soon over and the moment came to start the long trek back to Singapore, but the large numbers who came to see the ship off would have been surprised to have known that we would be in again in 24 hours to collect the Wasp which seemed to prefer shore time to sea time. There was just time to have a quick peep at Norfolk Island and then into the middle of fleet exercises in the Coral Sea. During the time we were in the fleet we did all the usual things and by chasing Victorious for three days used more fuel more quickly than possibly any other ship. With a little time to spare the ship stopped off Lindeman Island to give everybody a chance to have a swim and to allow the most unsuccessful fisherman of the commission to catch his second fish.

All that then remained were quick stops at Cairns and Darwin and back to Singapore for docking and relaxation before flying home. There were perhaps fewer jollies at the beginning of the commission than we would all have hoped but this was nobody's fault but President Sukarno's. But throughout the Ship's reputation was very high and the Ajax (65-66) has set a standard in the Far East which will be remembered for quite a little while.



## WEAPON/ELECTRICAL DIVISION

This Commission has been largely a matter of Floodlighting, A.A. Trophy, Pretty Balloons, Power Failures, Mortar Calibrations and Clear Lower Decks, for the Division.

The 4.5's, apart from securing the Far East A.A. Trophy, also managed to down 20 light switches, 30 lamp shades, numerous red lamps and fluorescent lamps in the For'd P.O.'s Mess. This brought forth several well known phrases and sayings from the H.P. P.O.El; For a few facts and figures from the above we used:-

- Approximately 1,000 fuses of various sizes
- Over 300 fluorescent lamps
- About 350 lamps of various sizes
- Over 2,700 valves.

Floodlights were rigged 17 times during the Commission and 13 of these were on the Fiji/New Zealand trip. The number of shore power failures have not been recorded and as far as we are concerned, best forgotten. (Frequency Changer is now a naughty word).

To make some comment on "Pretty Balloons" we should call upon that well-known "Photographer/Fisherman" hut at the time of writing he was deeply engrossed in the latest copy of "Playboy".

It is not certain yet if in fact the Mortars were calibrated because on one occasion they were in the wrong place to be fired and when later they did succeed, a visiting Sheep farmer was heard to remark "I suppose you fire them like that in case the first two land in the wrong place".

The commission started off with a "Dicky" Work-Up (with only one Air Conditioner). Then a trip to Hong Kong coming back to Singapore and refit. It was during this period that we had certain changes and additions to the ship, the changes were the Third Phase (and L Mech Camm) the additions were certain rodents who took a liking to some of the supply cables in the Ops Room and the Duty Watch sleeping in 13 Mess.

On completion of the refit and commencement of S.A.T.S. and Mortar Calibrations, we got down to the business of "Working Up" for F.O.2's Inspection, which did eventually come 5 month later! (This must be the longest Work-up on record). In between times it was a pretty dull life of Routine Patrols and exercises. We did however, "Lay Off" at Manila and Bangkok.

The Inspection, both harbour and sea, was a resounding success and all departments must take the credit. It was a fitting reward that the New Zealand/Fiji trip should follow almost immediately after the Inspection.

It was during this trip that one of the highlights of the commission occurred with a request that the 965 aerial should be set on a certain bearing to act as a sail, but the aerial decided that it wanted to swing round and proved difficult to set on any hearing.

The D.W.E.O., apart from being the D.O. was also the Film Officer and responsible for the showing of over 450 films during the commission (including 6 of the epic "Red River").

The division throughout have provided their fair share to the sporting world in REM Cheeseborough, LREM Muir and OA Seward as regular members of the highly successful Ship's Soccer Team, with LREM Poole and EM Thomas making the occasional appearance.

In case it is not known, it was in fact LREM Poole and LEM McDermott who initiated the "Give us an 'A'" for which we are well known and has become our "War Cry".

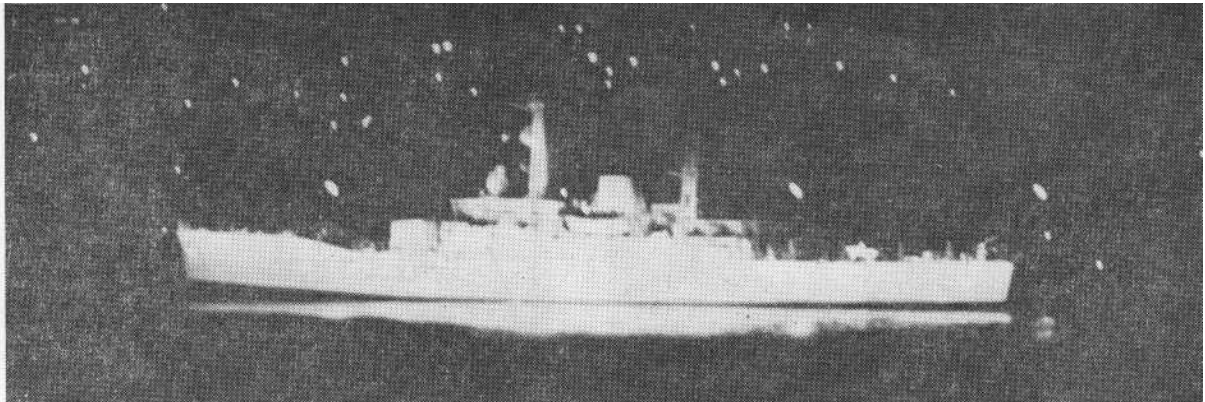
The Water Polo Team were well served by L Mech Camm (who is also a Combined Services and Navy Player), REA Everton, REM Waspe and EM Clarke, whilst REAs Rose and Beech made an unsuccessful attempt at the Ship's "Uckers' Title" only to be let down by the "Bones" in the final. REM Cheeseborough also reached the final of the Ship's Tennis Title. Commander 'L' was somewhat undiplomatic in beating the Captain in the Veterans Race on Sports Day but the Tug of War team made amends by winning that title, and so proving that beyond any shadow of doubt that the W/E Division throughout this commission have "pulled their weight".

On the rugger field too we have provided OA Seward, with EMs Evans and Vangorph making regular appearances, and P.O. El O'Brien playing once.

The Squash Team were also helped on their way by the "services" of OA Seward, L Mechs Hull and Camm and W Mech Smith.

It is also worth a mention that CAW Schofield and AB Dowsett did play regularly for the ship at hockey and PO El O'Brien stood behind the stumps and AB Dowsett was an able scorer for the cricket team. But without a doubt the most unusual sporting activity was the Fraser's Hill Scrabble Championships in which REA Harper beat CAW Ling by two falls to one submission.

E O'B.



DUNEDIN