

## III. CRICKET

WE started the Commission's cricket while working up at Malta in July 1935, by holding one or two trial matches on the Corradino ground. These were followed by matches against the R.A.F. Kalafrana, St. Joseph's and St. Angelo, all of which were lost as we had not managed to pick our best side nor settle down as a team.

Our first success came when we moved to Gibraltar at the end of the month and defeated H.M.S. *Suffolk* in a close match on the Naval Canteen ground, largely owing to bright batting by New, Walker and Callow, and steady bowling by Ellis and Peters.

Our first two months in the West Indies did not coincide with the cricket season, but we had one very enjoyable match against St. Lucia on a matting wicket with a grass out-field. Our coloured opponents possessed the fast bowlers and hard-hitting batsmen characteristic of the West Indies, and defeated us by 66 runs. Callow redeemed the situation to some extent by a hurricane innings of 35, in which he lifted the ball out of the ground several times.

Our move to the Mediterranean called a halt to our cricketing activities until we visited Malta in April 1936 for a short docking period. We played as many matches as we could during this brief stay, as grounds were plentiful. Our first opponents were the redoubtable players from H.M.A.S. *Australia*, who had an unbeaten record, and we did very well to force a draw. We scored 202 on the Officers' ground, Corradino, where high totals are to be expected—Roberts, Smyth and Kirkby making 54, 47 and 31 respectively—and the Australians replied with 182 for 7 wickets.

In our next match with R.N. Hospital on Corradino Men's

ground, we did not field our strongest team and lost by 6 runs in spite of a fine innings of 72 by Comport and 28 by Callow. Jones took 5 wickets for 27. Our last match at Malta was against H.M.S. *Adventure* on the Corradino Officers' ground, where some prodigious scoring was done by both sides.

*Adventure* appeared to be in a strong position, with a score of 244, but we overhauled them rapidly by enterprising batting and won with 7 wickets in hand, scores being Roberts 49, New 27, Chapman 47, Smyth 63 and Comport 43. This was our best performance to date, being the first match in which the Rev. W. H. S. Chapman, who had recently joined the ship, had represented us.

Our return to Alexandria put a stop to this very chequered cricket season, owing to the lack of grounds. We managed, however, to secure the Alexandria Cricket Club ground for one match, which we played against H.M.A.S. *Sydney*. We scored a notable success in this game by beating the Australians handsomely, Chapman 54, and Callow 21, being top scorers against some very fast bowling and Chapman taking 6 wickets for 30.

Our move to Haifa in June, where we were able to use the grounds of the Iraq Petroleum Company and the Police, gave us another chance. The bumpy matting wicket and very rough outfield on these grounds spelt disaster for us, until we became accustomed to them, and we lost our first match to H.M.S. *Durban* by 108 runs. Sub-Lt. Kemp, our latest and valuable addition to the team, took 7 wickets for 54 in 15 overs. We then played the Loyal Regiment on their ground and suffered a heavy defeat. This was partly due to the fact that the army fast bowler was unplayable on a very bumpy pitch towards the end of the afternoon with the sun behind his arm.

Our next match was a keenly contested affair between Officers and Ratings. The Officers collapsed against excellent bowling by Jones, Robinson and Ellis, being out for 62, of which Roberts made 33. The Ratings, however, fared little better, in spite of good batting by Jones 30 and Witt 15, and the issue was in doubt until Sharman, the last man in,

hit a hurricane 14, to give his side the victory. We had our revenge on the *Durban* in our following match, thanks to a fine innings of 62 by Chapman and some more good bowling by Jones, who took 5 wickets for 15 runs. Before leaving Haifa we played the Loyal Regiment again, but still found their bowling too good, though this match was closer than the previous one, Callow making a useful 26.

We had one match on the ground of the International Sporting Club at Port Said in July, easily beating the local military. Roberts made a forceful 51 and took 7 wickets.

During our next docking at Malta we played the R.N. Hospital and won a good game by 44, our scorers being, Grant 41, Paisley 30, Kemp 19 and Smyth 16. Kemp and Chapman bowled well, the former taking 6 wickets for 30.

Our last match in the Mediterranean was against the Gordon Highlanders on 20th July 1936, at Gibraltar. As we were temporary Fleet Flagship we had the services of Commander Lees, who compiled a faultless 61. Grant made 25 in quick time and we ended by winning a close match against the best fielding side we had played against during the Commission. Chapman and Lees took 4 wickets each.

On arrival at Bermuda for the second time we managed to play one match against Malabar before leaving. We fielded a weak side and were beaten by some excellent bowling.

The most unusual match most of us had experienced was played at Colon against the Canal Zone Team, who were composed of coloured British West Indians. The ground, which was alongside Gatun Locks, was several inches deep in water in places after a thunderstorm, and chickens and pigs strutted to and fro. However, the proceedings were conducted in an atmosphere of frenzied enthusiasm, as the entire negro population of "Tin Town" had turned out to watch. We did well to score 73 against accurate bowling on that slippery pitch, Callow making 21, Chapman 17 and Grant 15. Our opponents passed this total with 4 wickets in hand, though the result was in doubt for some time as they lost 5 wickets for 40. Kemp bowled extremely well to take 4 wickets for 32.

All down the west coast of South America we were unable to get any cricket until we arrived at Valparaiso. We can safely say we had the finest three weeks' cricket of the Commission there, thanks to Valparaiso Cricket Club, who put their magnificent grass ground at Vina del Mar at our disposal. Owing to net practice and all the matches that we played there, our cricket improved enormously and we were able to field two separate teams before we left. We played Valparaiso, a very strong side, in an all-day match on 31st October. Our opponents made 353 on a perfect batsman's wicket, and we replied with 142, Smyth making 52 in a patient innings.

Various inter-part matches followed and the next week-end we fielded two sides. One side played Valparaiso 2nd XI and won comfortably, Ellis 58 and Dale 37 being our scorers, while Callow and Gill bowled well. The other side travelled to Santiago to play the formidable Prince of Wales' Club. Our opponents made 193, Kemp taking 7 wickets, but we collapsed badly, a good stand by Shaw 26 and Moore 22 alleviating our defeat.

We fielded two sides again during our last week-end at Valparaiso, one side beating Valparaiso 2nd XI and the other losing to the 1st XI. In the former match Callow made 37 and took three wickets for 6, while in the latter match Chapman 47 and Grant 40 were the chief scorers.

This concluded our cricket for 1936, but we started again at Buenos Aires in January 1937 with a match against H.M.S. *York* on the magnificent grass ground at Hurlingham. We made no mistake about lowering the flagship's colours, scoring 143 for 8 wickets and dismissing our opponents for 106. Jones 34, Smyth 32, Kirkby 18, Callow 17 and Ellis 16 batted well, while Jones took 7 wickets by the most deadly bowling and Smyth took the remaining 3. *Ajax* marines beat *York* marines a few days later.

A combined *Ajax* and *York* team played Hurlingham before we left Buenos Aires and we lost a very keen match by 3 wickets. Smyth 49 and Jones 30 batted well, while the bowling honours were shared by Kemp and Jones.

Montevideo Cricket Club provided us with an excellent week of cricket in February, putting their ground at our disposal. Our first match was against H.M.S. *Exeter* and we gave our comrades of the South America Division a thorough beating. Putting the *Exeter* in, we dismissed them on a plumb wicket for 136, Jones, Kemp and Smyth sharing the bowling honours, and we then proceeded to pass our opponents' score for the loss of 2 wickets, Kemp 80, Jones 23, Chapman 30 and Moore 31 putting up a fine display, particularly the former. *Ajax* marines defeated *Exeter* 2nd XI in another match, Callow making 96 not out and Grant 32.

During our last week-end at Montevideo we played two matches against Montevideo Cricket Club, fielding two different sides drawn from *Ajax*, *York* and *Exeter* combined. Our best side turned out for the first match, which we won on a very tricky, wet pitch, by 5 wickets, due almost entirely to the *Ajax* members of the team. Jones was unplayable at the beginning of the match and took 3 wickets at small cost. Victory was sealed, after a shaky start, by a fine stand by Smyth 43 and Paisley 47. The next day a weaker side was heavily defeated by Montevideo, our bowling being quite inadequate to dislodge some fine batsmen on an easy wicket. Jones, alone, played a sound innings of 30, the rest of the Navy team failing.

Rio de Janeiro provided our last cricket in South America, a combined *Ajax*, *York* and *Exeter* team playing the formidable Rio XI at Nictheroy in an all-day match, which we lost by 80 runs. We did well to dismiss our opponents for 150, Kemp and Jones bowling splendidly, but our batting broke down on a very fast matting wicket, everybody except Jones (who made a sound 18) being beaten by the unaccustomed pace.

The history of *Ajax* cricket ended gloriously in three successive victories in the Fleet Cricket Competition at Bermuda, which brought us the Cup. *Ajax* beat *Malabar* in the first round by 7 wickets, *Dundee* in the second round by 4 wickets, and *Exeter* in the Final by 6 wickets. Our success was largely due to good fielding.

The following is a list of the team in the Final: Rev. Chapman, Lt.-Cdr. Smyth, Lt. (E) Kemp, Lt. Shaw, S/L Moore, Mid. Paisley, S.P.O. Jones, S.B.A. Comport, Musn. Callow, Marine Grant, E.R.A. Ellis.

## IV. HOCKEY

### I. MEDITERRANEAN AND WEST INDIES

| <i>Opponents</i>                 | <i>Result</i> | <i>Place and Ground</i>   |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Suffolk Officers . . . . .       | Lost 2-3      | Gib. N.O.P.               |
| Ship's Company Pick-Up . . . . . | —             | "                         |
| Officers' Trial . . . . .        | —             | "                         |
| Queen's Park . . . . .           | Lost 1-5      | Trinidad, St. James's     |
| Barbados . . . . .               | Won 3-1       | Barbados, Kensington Club |

### II. MEDITERRANEAN, SECOND PERIOD

|  |          |                     |
|--|----------|---------------------|
| <i>Renown</i> . . . . .                | Won 2-0  | Gib. N.O.P.         |
| <i>Neptune</i> . . . . .               | Won 5-2  | "                   |
| Navy House . . . . .                   | Lost 2-3 | Port Said           |
| International Sporting Club . . . . .  | Won 3-2  | "                   |
| Ibis Club . . . . .                    | Won 6-2  | "                   |
| <i>Barham</i> . . . . .                | Won 3-2  | "                   |
| Navy House . . . . .                   | Lost 0-4 | "                   |
| Union Sportive Française . . . . .     | Won 1-0  | Alexandria          |
| St. Angelo . . . . .                   | Lost 0-1 | Malta, Corradino    |
| Minesweepers . . . . .                 | Draw 0-0 | "                   |
| 1st D.F. . . . .                       | Lost 0-5 | "                   |
| R.A.F. Mancla . . . . .                | Lost 0-4 | Aboukir             |
| Alexandria Sporting Club . . . . .     | Won 4-3  | Alexandria          |
| Union Sportive Française . . . . .     | Lost 0-4 | "                   |
| <i>London</i> . . . . .                | Lost 1-2 | "                   |
| Royal Berkshire Regiment . . . . .     | Won 3-1  | Alexandria Mustapha |
| Alexandria Sporting Club "A" . . . . . | Lost 1-5 | Alexandria          |
| <i>Glorious</i> . . . . .              | Won 3-2  | "                   |
| <i>Courageous</i> . . . . .            | Won 3-2  | "                   |
| <i>Hood</i> . . . . .                  | Won 1-0  | "                   |
| <i>Berwick</i> . . . . .               | Won 2-1  | "                   |

### III. SOUTH AMERICA

|                                  |          |                       |
|----------------------------------|----------|-----------------------|
| Lima C.C. . . . .                | Lost 1-3 | Lima                  |
| Lima C.C. (our 2nd XI) . . . . . | Lost 2-6 | "                     |
| Badminton Club . . . . .         | Lost 0-2 | Valparaiso, Vina S.C. |

## HOCKEY

| <i>Opponents</i>                      | <i>Result</i> | <i>Played and Ground</i>  |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Magallanes . . . . .                  | Lost 2-3      | Magallanes                |
| Squadron Officers v. Rio C.C. . . . . | Won 1-0       | Rio C.C., Nichteroy       |
| Barbados . . . . .                    | Won 4-1       | Barbados, Kensington Club |
|                                       | <i>Played</i> | <i>Won</i>                |
|                                       | 27            | 14                        |
|                                       | <i>Lost</i>   | <i>Drawn</i>              |
|                                       | 12            | 1                         |

By comparison with the other ships' teams which we played at Alexandria the officers' hockey team has shown itself to be strong. We have defeated ships with a very much larger complement, but against club teams the honours have been about even, so much depending on the size of the port as to the quality of team they could put in the field.

In South America hockey is only played by the British communities, and usually only by enough of them to get up two teams for practice games, but they showed great keenness and play regularly.

There has been very little opportunity for hockey for the Ship's Company, although in the two matches they have played there have appeared several very promising players.

## V. WATER-POLO AND SWIMMING

On commissioning we had one or two very good swimmers, Marine Smith being the Navy breast-stroke champion and Off. Stwd. Scott representing the Navy three years running in the inter-service competition. We got our water-polo team together at Malta, and it put up quite a good display against strong local teams. We also ran an inter-part competition which was won by the Stokers. Owing to the presence of barracuda there was little polo in the West Indies, but we beat Trinidad and St. Lucia. We also had an interesting swimming match against a very classy team in Caracas and got beaten. Back in the Mediterranean we played polo at Port Said and a lot at Haifa, during which time we ran another inter-part competition, again won by the Stokers. A certain amount was also possible at Alexandria and Malta. During the South American cruise sharks and shore attractions limited swimming and water-polo, but at Colon we did well against the locals, and on the East Coast, notably at Buenos Aires and Mar Del Plata, we amused ourselves by beating the *York* in exhibition matches for silver cups. Our first real test will come at Bermuda with the station competition—unfortunately too late for this book. We also have high hopes of our relay team.

## VI. BOXING

We have two outstanding boxers in the ship, A.B. Judge, the ex-Navy Heavyweight Champion, and Marine Sanders, who has proved himself Mediterranean Light-Heavyweight Champion. Amongst other keen boxers are A.B.s White and Day and Stoker Woods. S.P.O. Hunter has been invaluable in keeping youngsters up to the mark and general enthusiasm. We had a very successful meeting against the Lancashire Fusiliers at Haifa, getting beaten 2-5. At Alexandria, with a small number of entries, we did quite well in the Fleet Competition, Sanders winning, Judge being a runner-up and White doing well. In South America we put up three shows, combined shows at Iquique and Antofagasta, and one at Buenos Aires under the auspices of the Seamen's Mission. They were all successful. Boxing in South America, however, is fraught with difficulties and at the advice of the local English people we let well alone on most occasions. The local representative usually comes on board and offers a fair match against sporting amateurs. He will even offer to produce the boxer for inspection. On the night of the fight, however, our man finds himself confronted with a professional "tough" or even a champion. When he has been thoroughly beaten the least we have lost is a deal of prestige, and often very ugly scenes may develop. When the object of the visit is one of goodwill there is little sense in courting trouble in this direction.

## VII. TUG-OF-WAR

Great keenness for tug-of-war has been shown throughout the Commission, largely due to the efforts of Marine Chapman, a veteran of many Olympia teams. In the *Ajax* sports of July 1935 and April 1936 inter-part tug-of-war competitions were held, both being won by the Royal Marines after good pulls against the Engine-room and Seamen.

Arriving at Alexandria in May 1936, on the day of the fleet tug-of-war heats, we entered a heavy team of Marines who beat *Australia*. In the Semi-final, however, lack of training facilities told against us and we were defeated by *Devonshire*. At Magallanes on 27th December 1936, *Ajax* Marines pulled against the local Chilean Navy at catch-weights and won easily. In the Falklands in January the same Marines' team pulled against the islanders on a slippery turf slope. Taking clever advantage of the slope, the local team just beat our side after some very long pulls.

At Bermuda in May the Fleet Tug-of-War Competition took place, *Ajax* entering the Marines' heavy team and a mixed Seamen and Stokers' light team. The Marines won the heavy competition from the *Apollo*.

## VIII. ATHLETICS AND LONG-DISTANCE RUNNING

A Sports meeting was held at Malta on 7th July 1935 to assess our capabilities. The results were most encouraging. We were lucky to have Lt. Smyth, an ex-Navy runner, who has been the backbone of the ship's athletics. The first efforts in the sphere of long-distance running was made at Haifa in September '35, when we organized an inter-part road race. A great deal of training was done, but the race was cancelled owing to our sudden departure for Port Said. Our training, however, stood us in good stead, for in December the 1st Cruiser Squadron Marathon Race was run over a 5-mile course at Mex. In spite of our short time in the port, we secured 8th place out of 12 ships, *Devonshire* being first. The first three *Ajax* to finish were: Lt. Smyth 15th, E.R.A. Peters 40th, and Lt. Watkins 48th, in a field of 180.

Back at Malta again we had a meeting preparatory to the Mediterranean Fleet Sports at Alexandria. Unhappily we had the job of escorting the new King of Egypt from Marseilles to Alexandria, and so lost a lot of training time. In the Cruiser Sports we did very well in the Open Medley Relay and had very bad luck in the 400 metres relay, being disqualified when winning it. We had no outstanding performances, but there were several good efforts, Musn. Sharman finishing 3rd in the half-mile, thus securing a place in the Fleet Sports, while the Boys' Relay team did very well to get 2nd place, largely due to Boy McDonnell.

Our next meeting was at Magallanes on 27th December against the Olympia Club. Our team had but four days to train, including Christmas Day, and put up a very good show against strong oponents. Lt. Smyth just got beaten in the



400 metres, Snazell won the 110 hurdles, with Maggs 2nd, Musn. Sharman 3rd in the mile, Bennett 3rd in the 100 metres, and E.R.A. Peters in the 1,500 metres.

On 21st April at Bermuda we held an inter-part road race as a trial for the Fleet event. It was won by the quarter-deck.

On 30th April the Fleet Road Race was run over a  $3\frac{1}{2}$ -mile course round Ireland and Boaz Islands. The ship's team, which had trained carefully, came in a close second to *York*, out of 6 ships competing. Had it not been for injuries to two good runners before the race we should have won. The first five men home for the ship were: Lt. Smyth 2nd, Mid. Paisley 3rd, McDonnell 7th, Peters 8th, and Wilcocks 11th, out of a field of 72.

## IX. SPRING BAYONETS

At Alexandria, where one had to go a long way for games, a great deal of keenness was shown for bayonet fencing. We had several matches and got into the Semi-final of the Mediterranean Fleet Championships.





