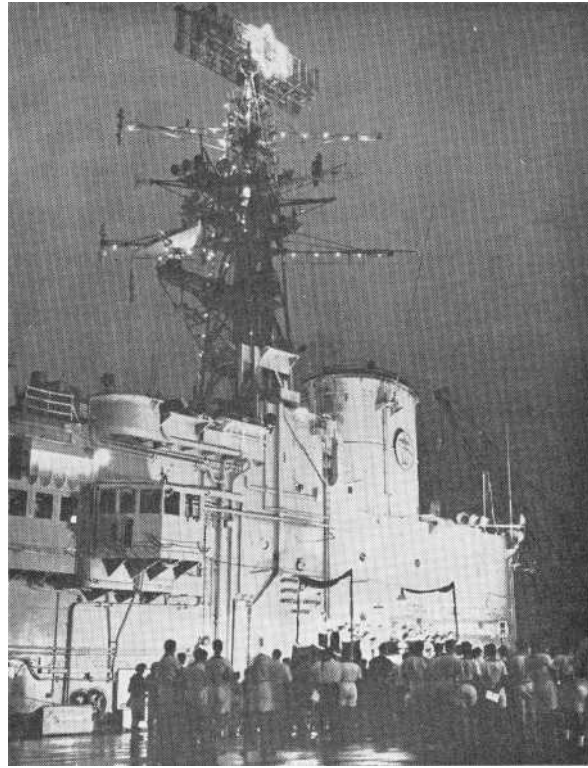


CHRISTMAS 1965



Carols on the Flight Deck
(with Pusser's Christmas tree)



J. R. O. Williams (Captain of the day)
on the L.E.P's mess deck.

VISITORS



Neptune and his court,
crossing the Line.



The Public at Kobe.



42 Commando's YOGI



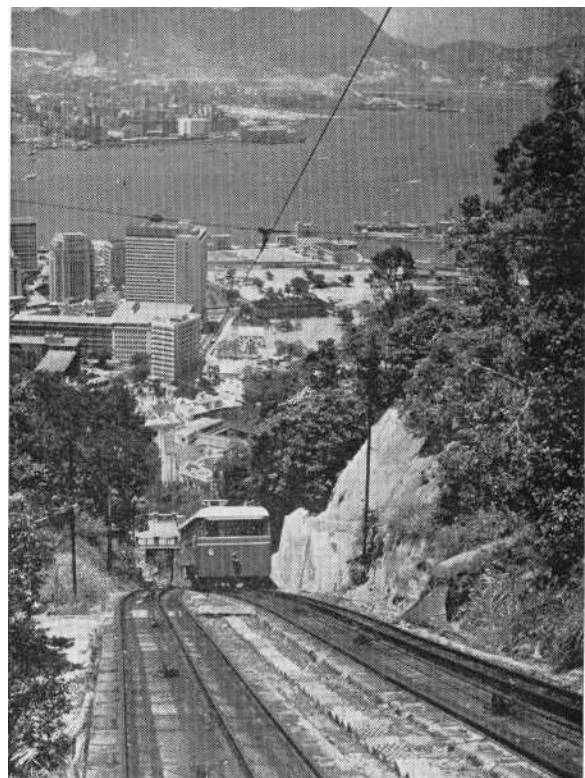
Tracker dogs,
Borneo

HONG KONG



Aberdeen
shops and houses

The Peak Tram
with
Kowloon viewed from the Peak





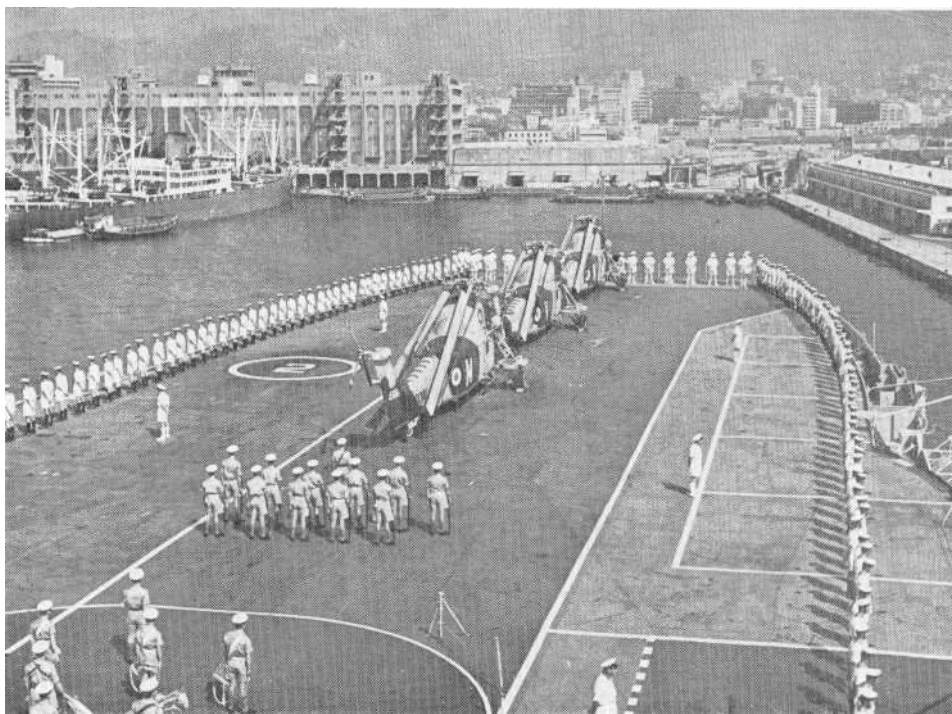
848's first arrivals

848's HANK the YANK
Capt. D. P. Hansen U.S.M.C.
receives his Presidential Citation.



Rear Admiral Adams
"Seen off" by Jenny and Albion.

JAPAN
KOBE



Morning - Ceremonial Arrival



Evening - Ceremonial Reception

Hong Kong night scene



Sight-seeing Tours in Japan



Naval Whites
Japanese blues



Japanese cameras at home.

OPERATIONAL



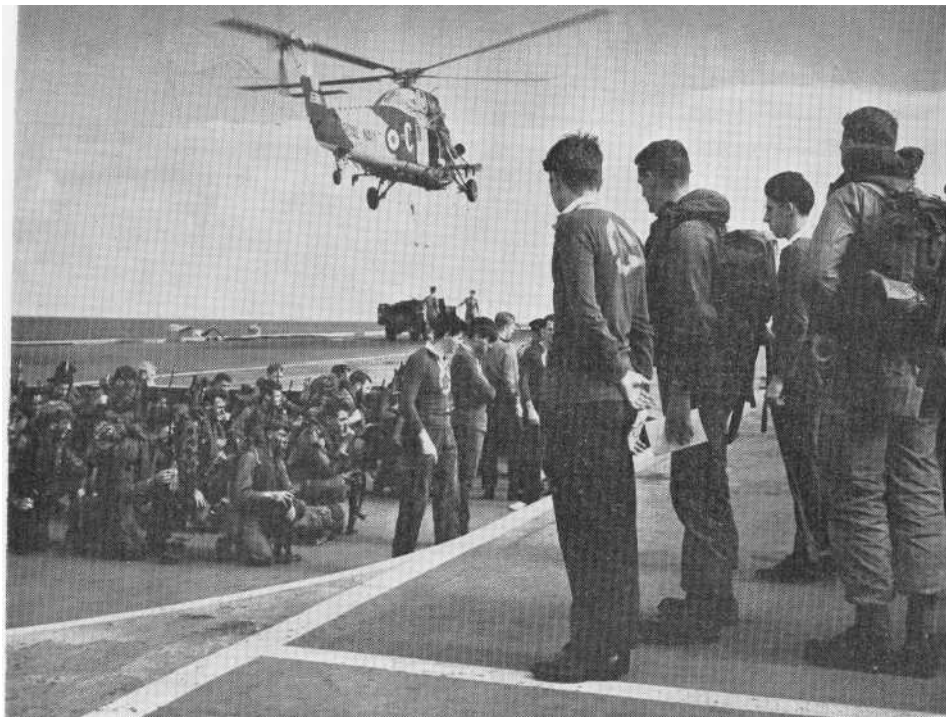
Dawn patrol



Tideflow fuels Albion, Brighton and Barrosa (astern) simultaneously



Assault Stations.



Commando on their way ashore.



Rotor Running Refuel.

We can't expect them to walk



C.P.O. Martin
direct the lift
of a 105 mm.



Water for the thirsty
-we have supplied
Champagne too!

OUR SQUADRON

848 Naval Air Commando Squadron

They laughed when Orville Wright said he wanted to fly. When he succeeded rumours were put about that he had been wearing a gas-filled waistcoat and pedalled with his feet. It is in that fine tradition of confounding the scoffers that 848 Squadron has achieved a massive and continuous defiance of the law of gravity for the last eighteen months.

Many of the pilots who flew onto ALBION in March 1965 made it look as though it was their first deck landing. It was! Who would have guessed that what, in March 1965, was largely a bunch of pale novices fresh from Culdrose would have become a well-co-ordinated team of lean leathery veterans by September 1966? Nobody. And how right they would have been, for as a result of the trickle draft-ing system the squadron is still largely a bunch of pale novices fresh from Culdrose.

But if much of the personnel has changed, the spirit of the squadron has not. It remains one of supreme flexibility, dash and sheer bafflement. Much of the credit for the smooth running of such a widely dispersed organisation must go to the flight system. Apart from the disadvantage of breeding Senior Pilots like rabbits, it has enabled the squadron to cope with simultaneous detachments as far apart as Aden and Borneo. The fierce flight loyalties of the early days have been largely overcome by a deliberate ecumenical movement coupled with some bewildering flight reshuffles.

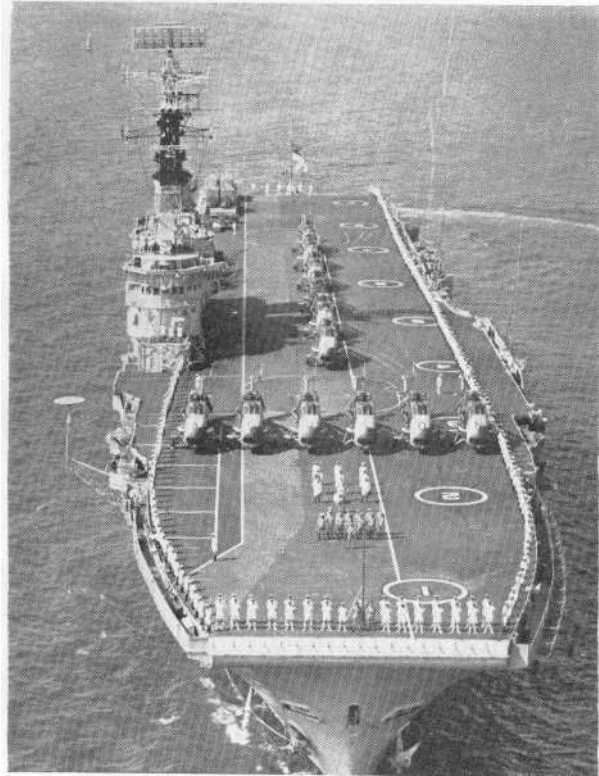
The Embarked Squadron

Although the brunt of the operational task was borne by the Aden, Sibü, Nanga Gaat, Labuan and Bario detachments, the flying from the ship has made up in variety what it lacked in teethery. We generally signalled our departure from each port of call with a formation flypast. These were no ordinary nine aircraft formations, but the much more sophisticated and daring manoeuvre known as the nine aircraft formation in which each of the nine pilots has a monumental hangover. The largest formation of all (eighteen Wessex and two Whirlwinds) was wisely used to mark an arrival rather than a departure; in this case the arrival of the squadron at Labuan. Seen as a massive vindication of "Flexible Servicing", it was in fact a reflection of enormous industry on the part of the maintenance crews, and perhaps neglect on the part of the pilots who tend to forget to put things in the 700.

If the object of a formation is to get as many aircraft into as small a space as possible, the opposite extreme is represented by the roulement, in which the aircraft get spread over as wide a stretch of countryside as possible, preferably on different frequencies and at maximum all up weight. Roulements have now become very much a routine part of the job, Royal Marine bears and all.

We have also participated in several exercises, from Aden (where we did a private assault exercise with 42 Commando) to the China Sea. Our "jointest" exercise was "Lions Roar" up on the north east coast of Malava. where we sent a detachment of aircraft to co-operate with the R.A.F. Living in conditions of unbelievable squalor under canvas. we became more than ever convinced that the Army life was not for us. The most hair raising exercise was "Flying Foot" which included a night withdrawal of troops from ashore.

Although it is in roulements and exercises that we reach our most feverish level of activity, the great bulk of bread and butter flying on the ship has been continuation training. The detachments ashore, heavily committed, and with a limited ration of hours, have no opportunity for such things as night flying, instrument flying, formation and netting. While flights have been embarked they have been able to catch up on all these things. In fact by a shrewd economy we have sometimes been able to catch up on several at once, for example doing night formation in conditions of actual instrument flying. Do you wonder we have grey hairs?



The Wessex 5 "on Parade".

Even if he spends the vast majority of his time flying, and mentally preparing himself for flight, the most dedicated work-hog must squeeze in the odd bit of relaxation. Nor is it enough just to climb to two feet and level out in the afternoon. One needs a complete change from the nerve racking pace of life on the ship. This was provided by our numerous disembarkations to the mosquito bitten luxury of R.N.A.S. Sembawang, where a tropical routine contrived to make everything move pretty slowly, and the only flash of activity was signalled by the daily arrival of the Magnolia man. Working out of a 1948 Bedford van, he has been doing the job for fifteen years and can produce a substitute breakfast quicker than the eye. Even Sembawang isn't everything as a holiday camp, and this commission has seen the inception of the scheme by which aircrew (to understandable mutterings from the rest of the ship's company) are sent back to U.K. for recuperative leave. They arrive back looking pale and shaken by their exertions.

But the most interesting moments of our embarked time have undoubtedly been our visits to foreign ports. Some places such as Mombasa, Hong Kong and Kobe stagger by the sheer variety and intensity of the entertainments available. Others, such as Djibouti and Assab did not quite fall into the fleshpot class. But whether it is Gibraltar, the Radfan mountains, the Mombasa game park or the Seychelles, there is no doubt that the best way to see a place is from the air. We have done so. Thank you, Orville Wright.

What the Squadron did and where it lived in Sarawak during the Ship's commission

Shortly after HMS ALBION arrived in Singapore in April 1965, the first of the squadron's personnel and aircraft went ashore into Sarawak to relieve 845 Squadron. Since then everyone in the squadron has experienced living in a tin or bamboo roofed hut for at least three months. Some have even had three spells ashore!

On arriving in Sarawak we took over 845's main base at Sibu airfield. Sibu is one of the few towns of Sarawak. It sits on the north bank of the River Rajang where it is about five times as wide as the Thames at London Bridge. Life at Sibu, though hot and dusty, was very much like life at home. There were roads, which didn't go anywhere but just petered out in the jungle a few miles out of town, there were cars, telephones, a cinema and even a swimming pool.

Leaving Sibu, one could travel for two days by longboat up the River Rajang and then the Baleh until one eventually reached Nanga Gaat. Alternatively the journey would take just one hour in a helicopter.

Nanga Gaat in English means "the mouth of the River Gaat" which is just what it was. A tongue of land at the junction of two rivers, the Gaat and the Baleh into which it ran. Even here, over 100 miles inland the river was wider than the Thames at Teddington, and furthermore, it could rise 60 feet overnight when it flooded.

To this small piece of land, surrounded by jungle, everything had to come by helicopter, parachute or up the river in one of our five longboats with the White Ensign fluttering astern. The longboats were to us what a Mini might be at home. In them we collected our food and laundry from the nearest town (4 hours away). When paying a social call on our neighbours, the Ibans, the longboat was used. We lived in *Bashas*, built on stilts of split bamboo and attap leaves, and very cool and comfortable they were. The a/c were kept in the open on small levelled sites which had a fence round to keep the local headman's bulls from walking into them in the night!



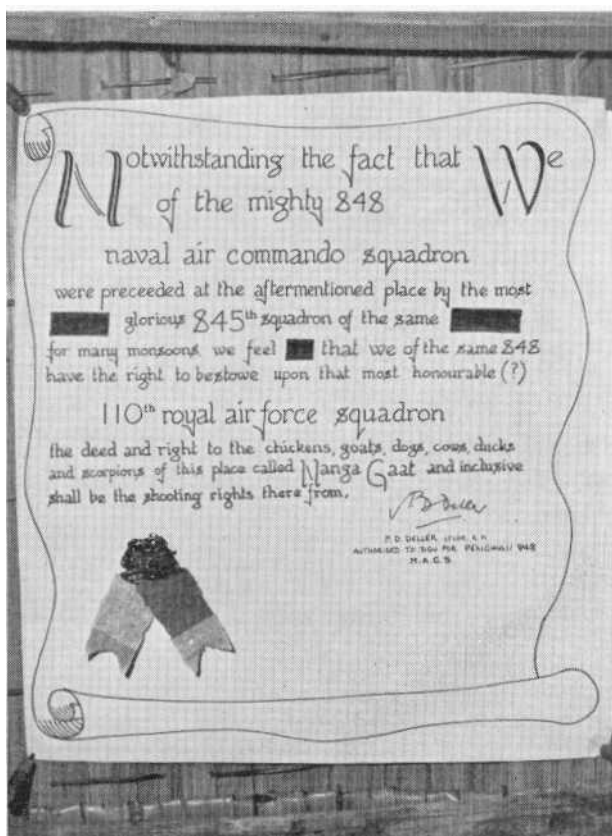
Nanga Gaat



"Bull pens?"

In the mornings the aircraft would take off and be away for most of the day moving soldiers from one place to another without seeing a single road or house. Just a green carpet of trees interspersed with rivers.

In the evenings one might visit a longhouse to talk with the old men and eat wild pig and drink their rice wine, this could go on well into the night before one was allowed to sleep. The journey down river through the rapids the following morning was quite enough to wake the sleepest of persons!



Cinema shows in the evening used to be fun too, often the audience could be more entertaining than the film. Long haired gentle men with gold teeth flashing and tatooed limbs staring in amazement at the picture flickering across the screen. On one occasion we were even lucky enough to have Frankie Howard and Shirley Abicair visit us for an impromptu chat. To many Ibans she was the first white women they had ever seen.

Regrettably our stay with the Ibans came to an end all too soon. In September we handed over Sibu and Nanga Gaat to the R.A.F., and so the Navy said goodbye to the Anchor Inn for the last time.

After returning to HMS ALBION we sailed for Labuan, an island off the north east coast of Sarawak, next door to Brunei. Two days later we flew ashore to R.A.F. Labuan and set up our main base. Meanwhile others went forward to Bario to settle into our forward base.

Labuan was much the same as Sibu, but the journey to Bario was completely different. The distance was about 100 miles, but one had to cross range upon range of jungle clad mountains before at last reaching Bario sitting in a broad open valley at 3,000 ft. with 7,000 ft. mountains encircling it on three sides. At Bario, there



Is this where I catch a No. 11 Bus?

was a grass landing airstrip, which was the sole means of exit to the outside world, unless we were prepared to walk, for about 6 months!

At Bario we lived with the Ghurkas and Gordon Highlanders and it was our daily task to fly them wherever they wanted to go. Our local neighbours were the Kelabits. Like the Ibans they too lived in longhouses, and made their living by tending the rice paddy fields in the valley. They also had a sawmill, which we helped to maintain for them. With it they had built a fine new longhouse, school and dispensary. Some of the schoolchildren were boarders, coming from longhouses 30 or 40 miles away - there's no 4 o'clock bus home!



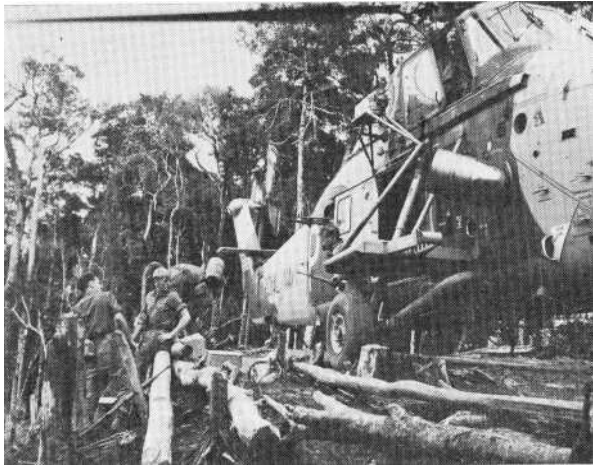
"Bario"

"Bario"



"Longhouse Surgery"

We will all remember Bario for different reasons; the day the beer ration dropped from the back of a Beverly without the parachute opening; MIMET and FRED the squadron's two monkeys; compo rations and the day the fresh eggs and bread didn't arrive; the Christmas pantomime "Puss in Jungle Boots"; the Carol Service in the longhouse with all the children watching; the fact that the evenings were cool enough for a sweater, and a blanket at night was a must; but perhaps most of all it will be because (and this applies to all the squadron detachments in Sarawak) it has been so intensely interesting, varied and worthwhile and quite unlike anything else one can expect in the Navy.



Troops unloading - upcountry



Girls unloading - Bario

(By the time we reach Portsmouth the Squadron will have flown 5,000 hrs., 12,000 men and 5,000,000 pounds of freight in Sarawak).

The Aden Detachment

Aden in May 1965 has all the appearance of a town without the law; in which terrorists careered down the main street in cars or stalked the downtown shopping area in pairs. But look again. The desperate men clinging to the running boards of a strange vehicle streaking down the Maala straight are not a getaway gang on the run; they are pilots returning from a run ashore. And those scarred thugs darting from door to door, their eyes swivelling like ball bearings are as likely as not a couple of petty officers trying to beat down the going price for coffee percolators.

Yes, the "A flight" detachment of 848 squadron was in town, and badmen from Dhala to Sheikh Othman blanched at the news.

Our dark green two horsepower Citroen may have looked a bit shabby alongside the shiny Alfas at R.A.F. Khormaksar, but for getting around some of the hottest, dryest and most inhospitable terrain in the world, our fifteen seat three wheelers were just the job.

Even the available relaxation had its little thrills. As you walked down the street to the beach it was easy to convince yourself that every Arab you passed was about to take a short run and lob a bomb down the back of your neck. And when you made it to the sea there was this net fifty yards out with you on one side, the sharks the other, and a lot of holes in between.

All in all we enjoyed our time, but these things leave their mark. If you see a member of the squadron with a deep tan, shoes full of sand, and eyes in the back of his head, you are looking at a member of A flight.

THE AIR DEPARTMENT

The Air Department has the most varied assortment of jobs done by any department in the ship. Some of their work is described in these paragraphs.

This commission started, for the Air Department, on 19th November 1964 when Captain Adams and Commander Halliday jointly made the first helicopter landing on board. By now (June 1966), the total number of landings has passed the 7,000 mark while the number of take-offs is exactly twelve - hence the aircraft in the hangar.

In all this time the Meteorological staff of ALBION have made thousands of "reset" observations, and issued hundreds of forecasts. It is believed that some of the forecasts actually came true.

The Flight Deck team, with their fire-suit men, fire-fighters, tractor and crane drivers, etc., have all done a magnificent job. No one regrets that all their rescuing and fire-fighting has only been 'for exercise'. One tractor driver did try to work out the mileage covered by our tractors while towing aircraft. He now looks very despondent and goes around muttering about the Monte Carlo Rally.

Unfortunately no one has worked out the number of times the cranes have been used but we do know that over 250 tons of stores have been lifted by helicopter to or from the flight deck in the shape of external loads. About 50 tons of this total was done at night.

Our very active Photographic Section (whose work is described in detail elsewhere in this book) has used over 6,000 yards of film and a strip of paper 6 inches wide and 32 miles long to produce photographs of all the interesting happenings in and around ALBION.



The Safety Equipment section, whose motto is, "If it doesn't work when you need it, we replace it free", has enough assault life jackets to give everyone on board a spare life-jacket. Everyone of these has to be tested and inspected at the end of each roulement. In their spare time the Section also has to keep the aircrew safety equipment serviceable.

Hundreds of aircrew briefings have been given - perhaps even a few have been heard. Only when the ship's position was described as "5392 miles from Culdrose" did the audience show any interest.

All in all, a hardworking bunch the Air Department, even though their main aim appears to stop cinema, volley-ball or deck hockey whenever possible.

"Trust Us"

PHOTOGRAPHIC SECTION

It has been a busy commission for the Photographic Section. Every activity has been covered and approximately 27,000 prints have been produced. At times the section has been stretched to the limit, even the Photographic Officer has been seen with a camera in hand.

Although busy as previously mentioned, the commission has had its rewards. P.O. ROBINSON "walked" away with the PEREGRINE TROPHY, having awards in six out of the seven classes. He also won the Open Competition in the Black and White section. Rear Admiral ADAMS won the colour section, thereby making it an all ALBION effort.

Early on in the commission a film unit visited the ship to produce a training film for the military. This film demonstrates the routine of an assault from the messdecks, along the routes to the hangar and right to the door of the helicopter.

Publicity has been a major project from the word "go". Reporters from the B.B.C. and I.T.V., the national papers and the provincials have visited the ship at some



"P.O. ROBINSON receives the PEREGRINE TROPHY"



stage or another. Vernons, the Naval publicity agents, came out to the Far East and also a few free-lance photographers.

The material produced by the section was soon in heavy demand. Requirements came from the 1965 Boat show, Westlands, the Fleet Air Arm Museum, Bristol Siddeleys, Army Recruiting, the Joint Welfare Establishment, Dartmouth and many others too numerous to mention here.

I.D. photographs, passports, V.I.P.s., roulements, assault exercises, defects, copying, carol service, the mast by day and night, ship's concert, "local boys", presents, recces, landing sites, the Nuffield Trust equipment in use, sport - you name it, we've photographed it. Some of the requirements are best illustrated by the accompanying photograph.

P.O. Robinson has proved himself a winner, not only in photography but also in his sailing activities. Several of his sailing opponents have spent the commission trying to beat him and are well satisfied if they have managed it once. A full report appears in the Sailing section.

Everything in this ship is wanted yesterday.