

away at Kai Tak for repairs, mods, and facelifts, and we all settled down very nicely indeed.

But soft, we are observed. What is this? A signal? Don't tell us - we've already guessed.

Brother Bung was beating his drum again down on the border, and help was wanted quickly. Notice for sea was shortened and fatter, healthier but very boot-faced, we sailed four days early for Borneo.

Tawau had been chosen for us this time, and we arrived there at Cruising Stations after a lot of rock-weaving. Once more 846 Squadron packed their axes, and primuses and prepared to do battle - this time with machine guns - from the dust and mud. Two L.C.A.'s were also detached with O.C.R.M. to join the River Assault Force - a small private navy that was blocking the river entry routes to Tawau. Later Lt.-Cdr. Bourdillon landed, with two Midshipmen, to run the Team. Soon we sailed again with *Lincoln* in company and took a long drink of F.F.O. from the little *Gold Ranger* ("Riding High" indeed when we'd finished). *Lincoln* escorted us part of the way and then returned to Guard Ship duties. Later, we rendezvoused with *Quiberon* and promptly gave her fuel and stores. By the 16th January, we were at anchor off the Rajang River and spent two days building up 845's aircraft strength at Sibü before returning to Singapore on

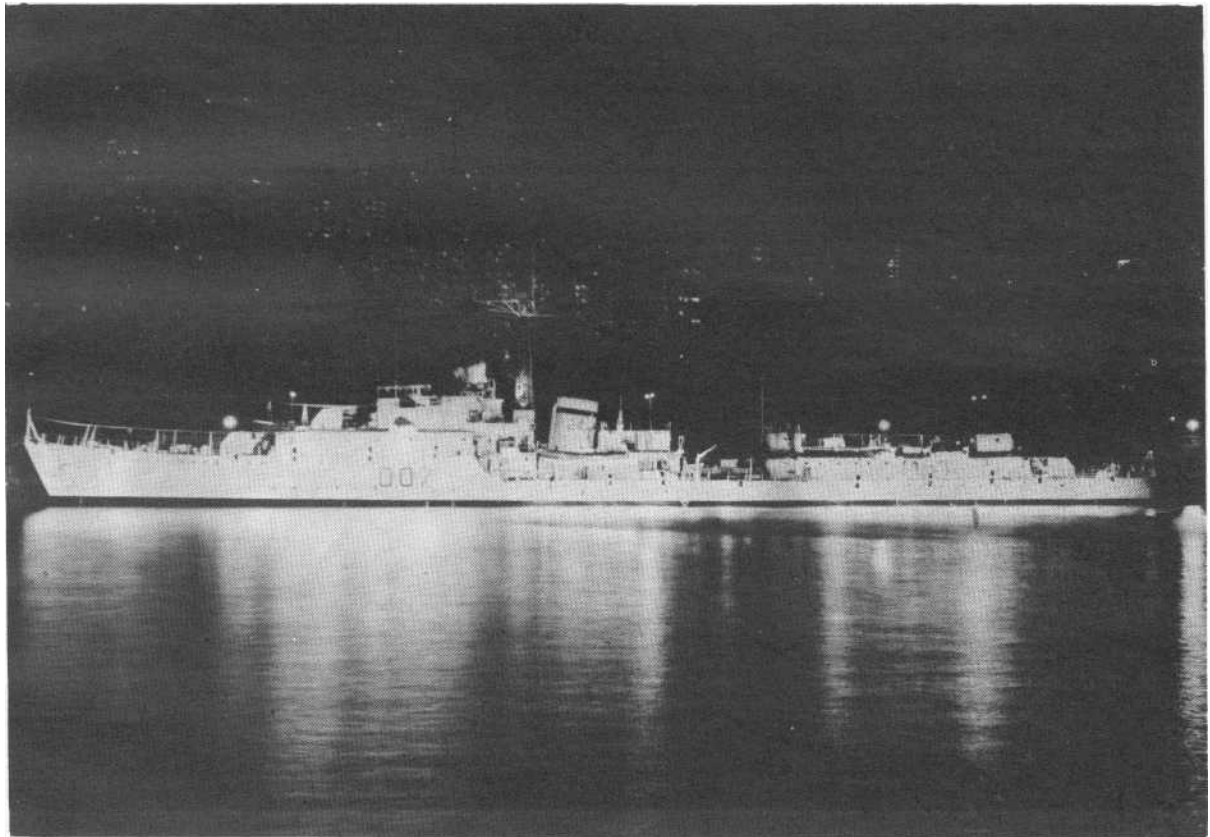
the 19th January. Before going in, on a bright Sunday morning we carried out another solids RAS with *Fort Dunvegan*. This time: 200 tons in three and a half hours. The new Beatle records must have helped.

We sailed again on 22nd January for Hong Kong calling off Sibü to collect some Wessex aircraft and 845 personnel, who also needed the holiday treatment. We had a lot of fun watching our Pantomime "Binhad The Sailor" on passage. We were planning to arrive on 25th January. At this point in time, this story is being written, and, because we've got to get the manuscript off to the printers, it must end by recording that in the middle of the South China Sea, we were told that we were to become a proper Commando Ship again and that our presence - no less - was needed in another spot in this quarrelsome world - Africa.

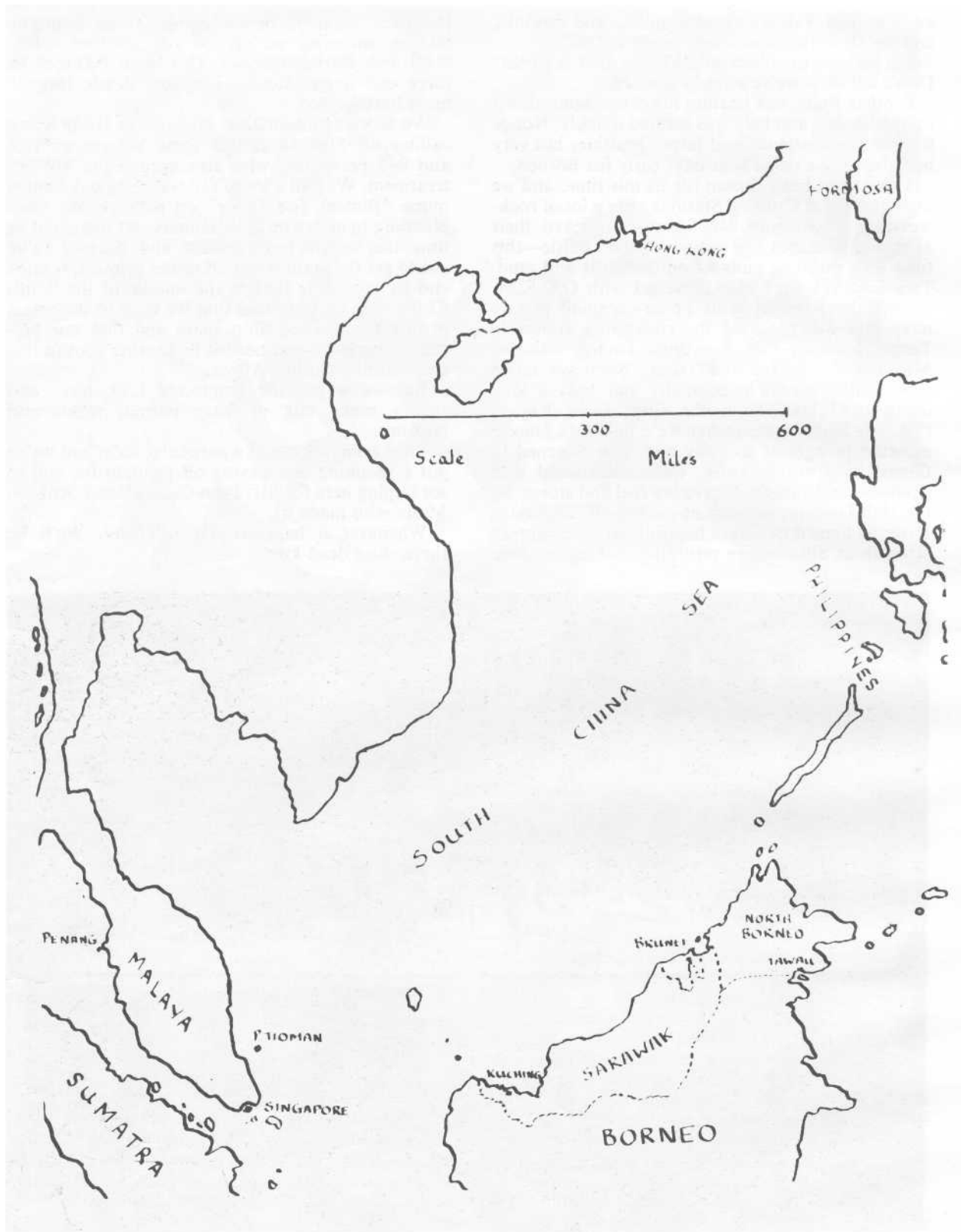
But we've got the homeward look now, and there's much talk of leave parties, reliefs and customs.

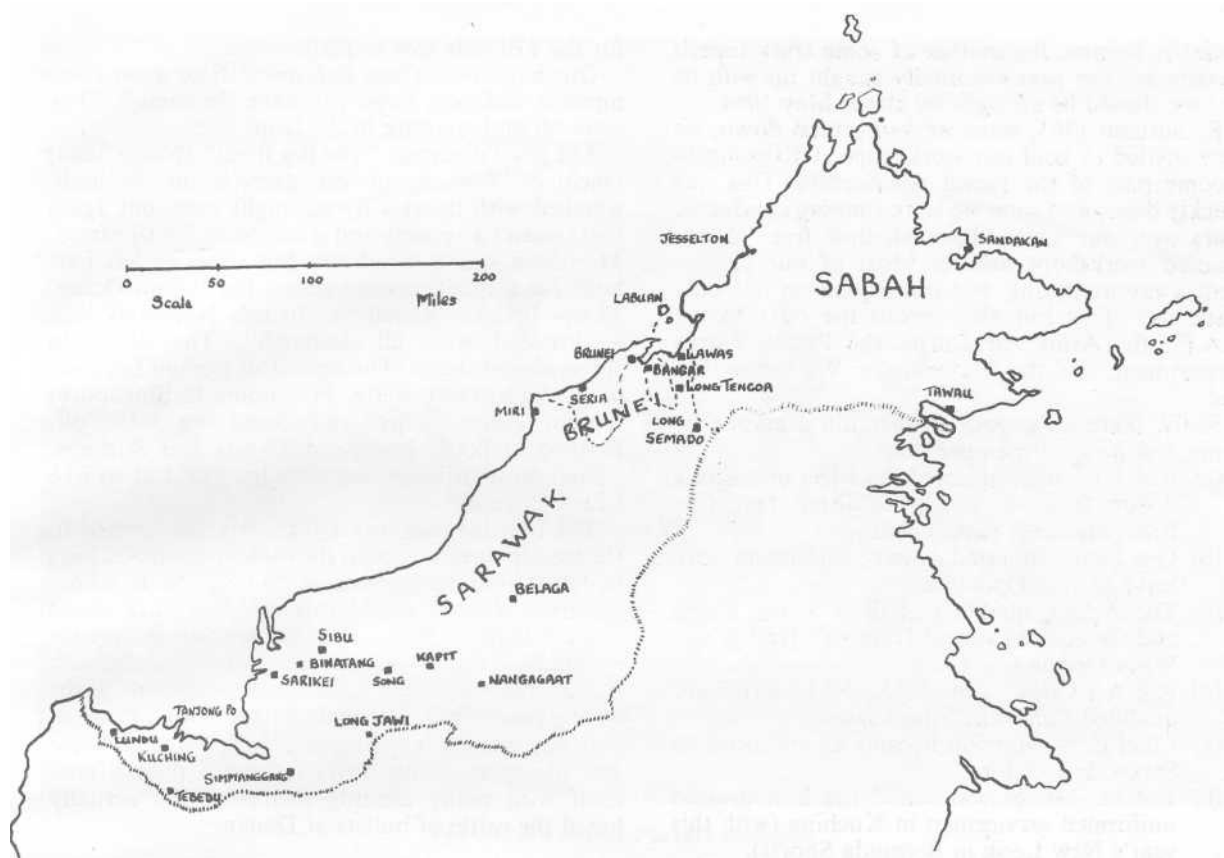
They even talk about a particular date, and we've got a spanking new paying off pendant for you to see (a plug here for Mr. John Casingena of Senglea, Malta who made it).

Whenever it happens. Or wherever. We'll be there. And dead keen.



*Gaudy neighbour - H.M.S. Caesar at Hong Kong*





## AIR DEPARTMENT



Yes, we're the happy Waffoos of the Safety Equipment, Photographic and Aircraft Handling professions. Despite our small numbers, we have

tried to help everyone from the R.A.F. upwards, and are proud of our hospitality.

Looking after the "Roof" is one of our main occupations, and this has not been helped by the presence of vast quantities of soot, oil, torrential rain and Avgas. During the times it wasn't being chipped or painted, it did support, literally, many activities including Deck Hockey tournaments, Brass Band Concerts, Crossing the Line Ceremony, Weight Lifters and Cocktail Parties. Occasionally, by disturbing the Sun Worshippers, we used it as a Helicopter Launching Pad.

P.O. Musgrave says that the Safety Equipment Section has made forty-eight sets of Land Rover seat covers and six windsocks, the Photographic Section under Chief Airman Ed. Moss have produced over 25,000 prints and the Flight Deck party led by "Captain" Collins have drunk 1,300 gallons of coffee.

## AIR ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

The commission really began early in 1962 when the advance party arrived, followed by an ever increasing flow of stores and equipment which was eagerly pounced on by heads of sections and storekeepers. It was fairly difficult at first but, as the Prophet says: "Out of chaos cometh order", and when we sailed for the Far East things were beginning to tick. We were still short of many badly needed bits so,

necessity became the mother of some truly superb inventions. The gear eventually caught up with us and we should be all right by about May 1964.

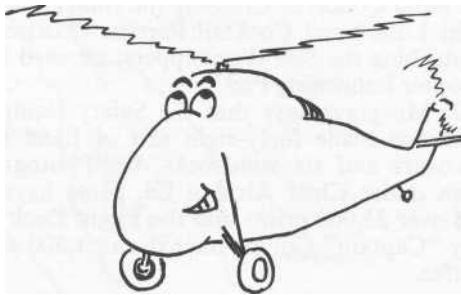
By autumn 1963, when we had settled down, we were invited to land our workshops at Kuching to become part of the Naval Air Section. This was quickly done, and soon we were running conducted tours over our air-conditioned, dust free, sound-proofed workshops ashore. Most of our visitors went away muttering, but our Squadron not only made use of us but also spread the buzz to the R.A.F., the Army Air Corps, the Public Works Department, and the Waterworks. We refused no one.

Sadly, there isn't space to mention everyone by name, but we do remember that:

- (a) A.A. I Broughton tested the effect of pouring Avtur from a height of three feet (the Broughtermass Experiment).
- (b) One cook requested a make and mend with leave to visit Djakarta.
- (c) The A.E.O. qualified Shallow Water Diver and Crocodile Control Officer (Inland Water Ways Division)..
- (d) R.E.A. Cook and P.O. REL Pritchard qualified Publicans First Class.
- (e) Chief E. A. Marriott became an authority on Sarawaki folk-lore.
- (f) L.A.M. Davies was voted the best dressed uniformed serviceman in Kuching (with this year's New Look in Bermuda Shorts).
- (g) We tried swimming in a disused gold mine, but came out just as broke as we went in.

The story of our commission may never be fully told, but when we get home we'd do our best to help it along.

### 845 SQUADRON



We embarked in *Albion* on 1st November 1962, and sailed two days later into the misty distance to start our foreign commission.

Soon we were in Gibraltar with thick heads and "Alka Seltzer". We sailed again and fought an imaginary enemy in the red desert of Libya. It was our first real exercise, and we had to leave Windmill Mike behind as it suddenly developed an urge to lead the nomadic life. The Senior Pilot was left in charge

for the 120 mile tow to Idris.

Our hand-over from *Bulwark*: "Nice quiet commission, old boy, hope you have the same". They were off and we were in the front line.

The good medicine "The Big Birds" (Ndegi Sana) machines flew again on exercise at Malindi, watched with interest by midnight men, but again there wasn't an enemy and it was quite light-hearted. Mombasa was a good run but soon we left harbour for a quiet passage across the Indian Ocean. Then - Brunei - Rebellion - British Nationals shot - "Proceed with all despatch". The old ship shivered and shook. The squadron worked full pace to get all aircraft ready. Five hours in Singapore; stores, guns ready - and we were off. Briefing at 0600. Bullet-proof vests and Stirlings. "This information is Secret". Ops gazed at us like Lear before the storm.

The first landing was a joke. Marines armed to the teeth poured out onto the racecourse at Kuching under the admiring gaze of thousands of school children. Was this war? "Sorry old boy, H.Q. seems to have made a bog". The ship sent an emergency signal. Next day it was different; Miri swarmed with troops and we placed a successful ambush - in the wrong place - but the rebels walked straight into it.

It was our first experience of jungle flying. There was plenty to come. Seria followed, then Brunei itself with many exciting incidents. We actually heard the rattle of bullets at Danau.



*Borneo- Ulu Katibas. 'Hotel' tip-toeing through the tulips!*



*The 845th Vertical Pursuit Squadron*

In early January we detached to Labuan. Flying continued at high pressure and we were busy until the rain started. How it rained! A week without stopping. Only thirty-four more days to the Flood! Soon we found ourselves very busy. Thousands were homeless and hungry and we did what we could.

February 1963 found us all back at Sembawang while the experts solved our engine problems.

Easter came uneasily with rumours of Communist trouble in Sarawak, and off we went to Kuching and remained there until the end of July, supporting troops all over the border area and keeping 40 Commando supplied with food and goodies. The officers and senior rates firmly established the squadron's independence by living in two isolated and completely unprotected bungalows for three months.

All Naval personnel withdrew with a flourish at the end of July for FOTEX 63, which we didn't find very interesting, although it was good to see that Her Majesty's Navy had a few other ships.

We welcomed 815 on board for a week when their own ship took sick. They said that an angry elephant had tried to cure vibrations in the port outer shaft by ... Noah really ought to take charge.

Soon, the ugly word "Confrontation" came up and we were back ashore in August, at Labuan and Sibul, later moving down to Kuching and up to Belaga where there was a little notice "Sea - 250

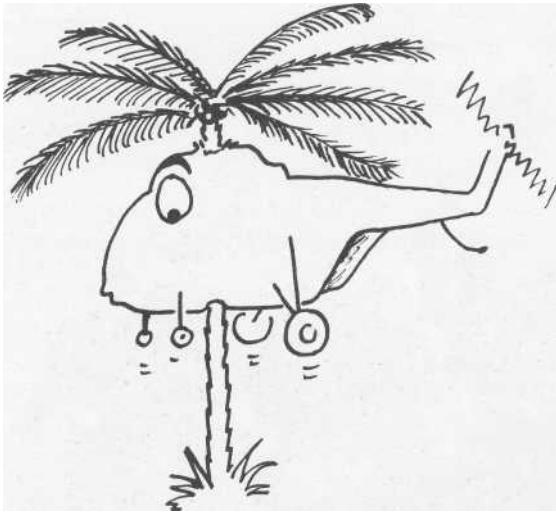
miles".

They were busy weeks, pilots, groundcrew and aircraft putting in long hours, maintenance on a shoestring and grit and sand everywhere. But we had some success, and the patrols that we put into the deep jungle engaged the enemy several times and killed many. This interior of Sarawak was more desolate and forbidding than anywhere we'd seen, chain upon chain of mountains covered in the original garments of Creation, largely unseen and untouched by man, trees by the hundred million, great rivers, a thousand rocky streams, waterfalls and sudden threatening storms of violent rain. But we had our fun, and "Queen Victoria's Iron Birds" gave a good deal of amusement to the laughing, likeable Dyak people, whose pretty girls were always a boost to morale.

At the end of October 1963, the Belaga detachment moved to Nanga Gaat which could be reached by river and was more accessible in bad weather. Flying at Sibul continued busily with operations in the border areas and out towards the coast where the opposition were landing at night from fishing craft. In mid-December 1963, the Kuching detachment was withdrawn and went with the ship to Hong Kong for a jug up.

And so things go on. It's the New Year now and *Bulwark* is getting ready for sea, we hope. We have some busy months ahead and when she does arrive we can hardly say to her - "Nice quiet commission".

## 846 SQUADRON



On Tuesday, 8th May 1962, the Squadron commissioned under the command of Lt.-Cdr. David F.

Burke. This man was the first time that the Squadron had been in commission since 1945. Then, it has been equipped with Avenger aircraft, operating from H.M.S. *Tracker* and H.M.S. *Trumpeter* during the North Atlantic and Russian convoy battles.

Nowadays, we are equipped with Whirlwind Mk 7 helicopters, modified for the Commando role, and we embarked them in *Albion* for our Foreign Commission on 2nd November, having spent the summer working up.

On the way to Singapore, two exercises were carried out - "Sandfly" at Homs, Libya, and "First Look" at Malindi, East Africa. The operational readiness of the Squadron was given its first work-out when on 15th December 1962 we disembarked to Brunei to help the Military in quelling the revolt. This was a far cry from the work-up and Culdrose. We had arrived in the monsoon period and a lot of ingenuity was spent over combating the hazards of the lightning, thunderstorms and torrential rain on our tented camp. Later on, they built us a private long house.

We remained, with one break, at Brunei until 13th April 1963, when the Squadron shifted its activities to Kuching, Sarawak to meet the Indonesian confrontation threat in the First and Second Divisions.



*Whisky over the Kuching area*



"..... perhaps they've all gone to lunch, sir"

During our very pleasant break at Hong Kong, the U.S.S. Evans - known as the "Palm Tree Ship" in the Seventh Fleet - presented us, the "Palm Tree Squadron", with a very healthy copy of our joint mascot which even now flourishes in a Singapore garden, living proof that hard liquor is the best fertiliser.

At Kuching, the mixture was very much as before: recce, troop lift, casevac, light cargo carrying, and general cabbying in and out of jungle clearings, but on routes very close to the Indonesian border. At last, the Squadron re-embarked in *Albion* on 2nd July 1963, just under seven months since our debut at Brunei. We spent six weeks away from Kuching, enjoyed Singapore and Penang and helped in Exercise FOTEX 63, when on 19th August they said: "Just nip back to Kuching for a week or two, would you". The fortnight stretched a bit. We each had our two weeks "R and R" at Singapore and went back to Sarawak to get fit again. Time, airframe hours and engine failures went by until the *Albion* made a very special effort, for us, to go and get 225 Squadron, R.A.F. from Libya and put them in to Borneo in early December. The engine failures, by the way, by-passed the ordinary mortals and selected the C.O., Lt.-Cdr. Burke and the Senior Pilot, Lt.-Cdr. Williams, who were obviously the best people to deal with them.

On 12th December, the Squadron pulled out, they said "For good-unless a dire emergency happens". We said, "Good. Swinging. Lovely" and went off to have a lovely holiday in Hong Kong. Naturally, we had our little spell cut by four days and *Albion* rattled back at high speed to Borneo to throw us into the fray once more. We put our little possessions together again for another drop of "Exped". This time a new place was offered us - Tawau, Sabah (North Borneo) with unrivalled views of our good neighbours across the border.

As we go to press, it does seem to us as if our shipborne commission in *Albion* was a pleasant dream. We did, however, spend the month of November 1962 on board and are looking forward very much to doing it again in April 1964(?).

## A COMMANDO'S COMMENTARY

To join *Albion* from *Bulwark* in November 1962 was a great experience. The old team had a lot of know-how and a common language. The new team had a mass of talent and untapped resources of unknown quantity.

We sampled the fabulous food. We tried hard to respect the cleanliness of the ship (which remarkably remained this way throughout the commission) and tried to help in our "part of ship".

On exercise and passage we got used to the big new Wessex. We quickly made friends with both the Squadrons, in whom we were to put all our confidence. And soon we all began to breathe as one. The better mess-decks, the great improvements in offices and stores all helped us to be more efficient with less effort. The quick grasp by all in the assault operations organisation of our needs and problems was most heartening. Then the ship received its challenge in Borneo, and off we went to accept it with her.

As things turned out, only one Company group of the Commando was left aboard to carry out the famous "Concept". Three times between December 15th and 27th this Company was landed. During these hectic days we began to realise the enormous potential of *Albion*. We learnt that to ask was to receive, and that the communications were there to make it possible twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. We learnt too of the efficiency and kindness of the whole Supply organisation. We did realise that we had the lion's share of excitements as well as of stores and helicopter hours, but we had not expected to sit down to a four-course dinner deep in the jungle on Xmas Day - nor did we expect our facetious request for a "helicopter to hover with a Haggis for Hogmany" to be filled.

We were always on the receiving end and were so thankful to be associated with the ship.

*Albion* had to be a troopship far too often, but from our point of view we were delighted. The six-hour dobie service, the hot showers, the certainty of good food were welcome indeed after Sarawak.

We spent a further two and a half weeks on board as the afloat reserve for the 3rd Commando Brigade. We perfected routines for both helicopters and LCA's using different combinations of men, equipment, and stores and fitting them to pay-loads. This all became commonplace and we together found automatic solutions and drills for Assault Stations - Issue of ammunition - Issue of Lifebelts etc. The team system worked.

This article is not meant to be a eulogy but the candid comments of a Commando. We are sorry that we could not stay on board with you as a Unit, and play as a ship/unit team on our runs ashore. Nevertheless, *Albion's* commission has been a success story for us. We are better in our jobs, and feel that the ship always understood us and our problems.

For all your help, *Albion*, thank you and good luck.

## THE SEAMAN DEPARTMENT ALIAS "X"



This is a cheerful, clever mob of R.P., T.A.S., and Gunnery experts known as Sand Scratchers, Deck Apes or Dab Toes; but just as stokers are now M.E.'s and Telegraphists are R.O.'s, we will doubtless soon be dubbed Nautical Technicians.

It was widely believed earlier on in the commission that we were the only people to eat, dress and drink here because the Seamen were the only people seen on deck during replenishments. However our other shipmates soon jumped on the bandwagon, and got into the act very well. After this, we could hardly begrudge them their victuals, slops and beer.

Quite early on, they thought if the ship was to sail at all, let alone become a proper Commando Ship, that we, as well as other sundry characters on board, had better become Commandos ourselves. So - like all green-hatted, khaki-clad killers as we thought we resigned ourselves to endless working weeks without Saturdays and Sundays, and lots of Assault Stations, and underway replenishments.

Much later on we discovered that Commandos

and other Soldiery always enjoyed two days of rest with mid-week make-and-mends, when not actually battling bandits. Nevertheless, make and mends became something that we studied for the Organisation Exam or saw implied in glamorous recruiting ads, and we now realise that they are an obsolete custom as rare as an eclipse. For all that, our team spirit and near infallible humour have overcome several saddening adversities and has resulted in good achievements - like our R.A.S. and general drill records. We claim that we would have done as well with the ship's side had the ship ever gone less than twenty-five knots.



*Albion drinking again*



*Jenny's Side Party and escorts*



Now near the end, we are still working at work-up pitch but look forward to seeing North Wall again when we will perform our final service for this, our home of eighteen months, and secure her finally in a snappy seamanlike manner - or something like that.

So Seamen, one and all, look back on the lessons learned so well, and so often, during weekends and don't strain yourselves exaggerating. They won't believe you anyway.

### THE MARINE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT



Someone said recently that, the Marine Engineering Department looked a hefty bunch while he had always been told that the Department was made up mainly of very young, well-mannered gentlemen. Had they left the ship, or was he told wrong? It was some of the "Young Gentlemen" that he was watching. He had a point, for the Department had started with 71 M.E.2's and J.M.E.'s who were drafted for full duties, regardless of age. No one could have guessed how well they would keep the ship going, or how much they would contribute to the commission. All credit to them, and to the older ones who helped them.

We feel we've done our bit having steamed the ship 69,836 miles in eighteen months, (by 1st February 1964) at an average speed of 17.9 knots. This included a 11,000 mile run in thirty-two days, at over twenty knots. During this trip the Department revealed an unexpected talent, when P.O.M.(E.) "Ted" Marson, helped by "Ali" Barber, "The Tiller Flat Girls," and many others, entertained the Ship's Company with "The Stoker's Spectacular", which was a huge success.

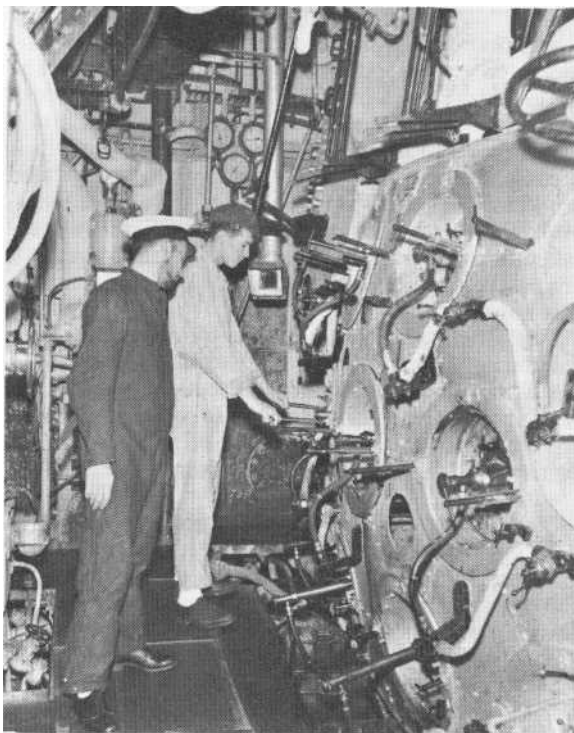
Making up about one-third of the permanent Ship's Company, the Marine Engineers have been prominent in the Ship's Sports Teams, the Band, the Concert Party, and many other activities. We are particularly proud of the six regular members of the very successful 1st football XI. E.R.A. Fraser-Stansbie, was Captain of the side which included Mechanician Crack, L.M.E. Derbyshire, and M.(E.)s Crilly, Hind, and Turley; Hind and Crilly also played for Singapore Joint Services, and most

of the others represented the Royal Navy in the Far East. Mechanician Crack, together with E.R.A. Kirby, P.O.M.(E.) Molloy and M.(E.) Dibley, also harmonised in the Volunteer Band, while Lieutenant-Commander Evans also seemed to have enough breath to spare to lead the "Albion" singers.

Many others have beavered away down below, and helped the ship run efficiently. The air-conditioning team have kept the ship "real cool" and thanks are due to E.R.A.'s Peach and Woodyard and Sub-Lieutenants Evans, Spiers and Morton. The Shipwrights have taken the cans, and collected the drips, about, and from the chilled water systems. They also made a number of sports trophies, notably that for deck hockey, which, ably led by Chief Shipwright Wragg, they proceeded to win back again. E.R.A. Roost's Flight Deck team have kept their below deck compartments like palaces in the hope of being allowed to stay on their section for the whole commission. On the Flight Deck, they ran a filling station which made the Squadrons very happy customers and are now so tanned that there's a buzz they are joining the Malayan Navy.

The Divers have been busy and Lieutenant Holt, E.R.A. Doyle, and the team have got their minutes in at Hong Kong removing polythene bags, and other mongery from sea inlets. They also helped an American despatch vessel remove some knitting from her propellers - they say that ours don't stay still long enough to allow them to look at them.

C.E.R.A. Truscott, Chief M.(E.) Attwell, and their Boiler section have spent their life producing



*Boiler Room Maintenance*



## WEAPONS AND RADIO DEPARTMENT



We decided at the start to form a Weapon and Radio Engineering Department and welcomed to our ranks Ordnance Artificers and Seamen S.Q.'s. We kept the responsibility for the ship's electrical equipment, but organised ourselves for its ultimate transfer to the Marine Engineering Department, a move received with some scepticism by our Electrical Branch Senior Ratings. As things turned out we transferred only Hull and Propulsion electrics, lending our hands to the Marine Engineering Department to do the work.

The shortage of Senior Electrical Ratings imposed by the temporary manning standard caused us a lot of worry; and high standards were only kept up by extra hard work, almost to the point of devotion. Despite this, we had a go at the recreational stuff. We won the interpart soccer cup, reached the semi-final in water polo and the third round of cricket. We boasted six members in the ship's rugby 1st XV and wondered why there was no interpart rugby competition. Our boxers fought with courage and enthusiasm. Our coxswains were superb and some looked like master mariners, although a scavenging party had to pick up the bits after an ill-fated banyan.

Because our main armament was commandos, helicopters and L.C.A.'s great importance was placed on the crane, aircraft lifts and winches. The crane was a great inspiration to us all. It must assuredly been the hardest worked crane in the fleet today, performing its task unflinchingly, despite some of the cruelties to which it was subjected. Also, since *Albion* was an air-conditioned ship, fan maintenance was never allowed to fall behind. Whilst it may be said that what you don't have you don't miss, who would have thought that an unserviceable 7½" fan (available off the shelf in Bugis Street) could have started a chain reaction. The sight of a whole messdeck of sailors changing their messes to keep cool brought tears to our eyes.

We worked hard and played hard with that well-known motto in mind "nil desperandum est" and at no time were we thwarted.

## THE COMMUNICATORS

From the middle of a pile of teleprinters, carbon papers, pencils, flags, signal pads and of course the coffee cups, we send greetings.

This commission, although not so rich in runs ashore as the previous ones, has certainly taught us a lot - thanks to Borneo.

As well as dealing with the signal traffic onboard, which flooded in like crazy, we also did our bit ashore when we set up a Comcen in Kuching over a greengrocers - to help the Naval Air Section along. The small team led by Sub-Lt. Clinton were there with the mangoes and cabbages for almost two months while we pounded off to North Africa and back. Our staff have also been ashore communicating in Brunei and Tawau.

Apart from these diversions, we still found time to lend a hand in the annual fleet exercise FOTEX 63. All other rival flagships having thrown in the sponge, *Albion* communicators were put on the "hot seat" when F.O.2.F.E.F. and his staff embarked for most of the exercise. We managed without too much heart failure, and even got a recommend at the end of it.

We found time for relaxation and sport, and in this the Communications Department, ably assisted by the Royal Marines, wiped the board and won the Interpart Athletics, Aquatics and Water-polo trophies. We even reached the finals of the Soccer six-a-sides held in Hong Kong.



Communicators have also turned out for the ship's soccer, rugger, hockey, basket-ball, water-polo and boxing teams and we must congratulate Radio Operator George Harris, on winning the Far East Heavyweight Boxing title.

Some energetic "sparkers" went on "Exped" to the New Territories in Hong Kong. They said they enjoyed themselves. We doubt this. It rained a bit (Hong Kong Observatory got quite excited). On their return, they looked more like "cross-channel" swimmers, than campers.

There may not have been many visits, but a lot happened and we never stopped.

Nearly everyone passed for a higher rate, and we had a lot of laughs while we were about it.