

THE GUNNERY DEPARTMENT



occasions `trivial' things like passwords were forgotten, this was more than compensated for by the spirit of the emergent `Audie Murphys'. Terms like `when you hit the beach - fan out!' were bandied about like well-scripted scenes from the `Sands of Iwo Jima', and though half of the platoon had never seen the film - much less read the script - the various beaches were somehow `fanned'.

Statistically, these and the Com-mando landings have enabled us to rid ourselves of over 1,000,000 rounds of 7.62 ammunition, which seems to suggest that Jack and his Royal Marine counterpart on patrol is nothing if not trigger-happy.

What of individual achievements? Well, there were many that will go un-heralded, but perhaps the best remembered was when `Henry' Cooper shattered the peace of a sunny Sunday morning towards the end of 1971 when called upon to sink a telephone buoy that had failed to explode when encouraged to do so by 3001b of high TAS-type explosive!

At times our patience has been stretched to the limits by poor communications, by out-dated equipment and a demanding programme, but the fact that we were able to rise above it all and come out smiling indicated the presence of the right kind of spirit. Yes, *Albion* for the Gunners has been a happy ship. The Gunners for *Albion* - if you'll pardon the pun - have been men of the highest calibre.

Editor's Note

After writing this, the author was instantly drafted to the next GI's Course.

Nobody can deny that the influence of Whale Island has been felt throughout the length and breadth of *Albion* over the past commission.

From Gun-Line Transfers to Gun Salutes, from Boarding Parties to Procedure Alpha the presence of a gunner has been the link that suggests that without him the evolution would not have gone so well.

As perhaps might well be illustrated by the following conversation overheard on the GDP

'GDP-Ops'

'GDP?'

'Aircraft approaching, Red 110°, 15 miles'

Pause.

'This is GDP ... say again Ops'

'I say again - aircraft approaching, Red 110°, 15 miles'

Pause

'What'd'e say Moose?'

'Dunno, carn't ear a bloody thing for these bleeding petrol pigeons - sounded like "Aircuts are poaching on the Golden Mile" ... just give 'im a Roger'

'Ops-GDP'

'Ops?'

'Roger, Sir, Understood'

The Gunnery problem is, of course, to engage and hit as quickly as possible, a fast-moving target from a moving platform. This may be extended on board *Albion* to include `and to pass and decipher command orders above the sound of roaring helo's on a broadcast system that would send Alexander Graham Bell screaming for the peace and solitude of the long basketwork course at Netley'.

But we survived and somehow managed to send 6000 Bofors shells if not on the target - certainly in the general direction.

Besides the business of creating the occasional bang, we have also shown the other side of our Whale Island coin with the numerous ceremonial parades. Quite the most impressive of which was the Far East withdrawal parade on 30 October 1971, which took place on Simbang parade ground. A multi-nation effort that required the highest degree of training - and not a little practice.

The Gunner's party have also played a vital role in the supply of ammunition to the Squadrons. Over the commission they have dug up from the denizens of the deep magazines no fewer than 5000 2in rockets, which included a number of the wrong warhead type of missile that caused a Cypriot farmer to throw all his bottles of EMVA CREAM in the Med and sign the pledge forever.

The backbone of the ship's Landing Platoon, was also supplied by the Gunnery department. Although on



F Troop or the Ship's Company Support Platoon

MAREN DEPARTMENT STORY



16 and 18 Mess

'Most of it works, most of the time!' is perhaps the most fitting description of our somewhat mature machinery. After nearly two years of relatively quiet steaming around the world we can only claim a handful of 'custards' and they could be described as 'controlled evolutions' anyway. *Albion's* machinery was old and tired long before 1971 when the present hand-picked complement took over, but endurance and patience by the men who make it all work down there has paid dividends as our recent inspection by the Chief Staff Officer (Technical) to FOCAS will verify.

As the senior department on board we are not as forward in blowing our own trumpets as others are but, (according to the First Lieutenant) it does appear we make our presence felt in other ways. Oil stains (unspecified) down the ship's

side have always caused unpleasant scenes in *Albion* and the First Lieutenant has traditionally claimed we have been responsible. However some clever detective work by Hank (FCMEM John Hankin) after reports of a nasty mess on the port side revealed that the 848 maintainers had been quietly ditching aircraft gearbox oil over the side. The 'evidence', an oily smudge on Hank's forefinger, was rushed down to the Engineer's Office for immediate and impartial examination by Commander (E), Senior Engineer and the DB Officer. Judgement was passed and Hank's finger was pointed to the 848 AMCO Office. So we kept Jimmy off our backs for twelve hours until a stoker with a bucket of 'dry' gash from a boiler room suddenly learned all about relative wind velocities and force 6 crosswinds. The guilty FFO covered

stoker still claims there could not have been enough oil in the bucket for the ship's side as well as himself.

We should not really joke about FFO but, it does appear in the most unexpected places, memories of the epic FFO flood under HQ1 are stained with vivid recollections of the Senior Engineer up to his ankles in swirling FFO. If it's not FFO over the side, it's soot all over the flight deck; we have always been aware of this problem and we offer our apologies in retrospect to the roof rats and squadron.

Foreign visits and their inevitable runs ashore have provided us all with a welcome change of scenery and the chance to switch off for a few days and no one will challenge that a stoker's life is not an easy one. Stokers are engaged in laborious, lonely watchkeeping in compartments with

ambient temperatures often in the 90's where the noise level makes normal speech impossible, but somehow they still manage to offer their relief a cheerful smile. Perhaps the most immediate thoughts of the off going watchkeeper were connected with the chilled Tiger beer (our lifeblood in the Far East) awaiting him on the messdeck; it is well known that our department's affinity to Tiger did little to influence our productivity during the Singapore AMPs.

Prior to Singapore, visits were made to Durban and Bombay and it was in Bombay that our more hardened sight-seers were held spellbound in bamboo cages. Singapore provided us with superb recreation and afternoons were well spent on the sports grounds of *HMS Terror* with the department showing just what all-rounders we were. At one time we were providing at least six of the first XI soccer and a good backing for the 2nd XI, stalwarts of the sides being Stirling Moss, Wally Wallwork, Arf Smith, Paddy Yardley, Darby Allen, Nobby Hall, Steven Dellow, Erwin Rhoeling, Maggie Lockwood, Wiggy Wiggins, Ossi and Jim Molloy who has repeatedly convinced the selectors he has at least another season left in him. In Rugby circles we were very evident, Sticky Bunn aspiring to the 1st XV after some very good backing with the 2nd XV who were well supported by Pete Ritchie, Mick Cox, Chris Chapman, John Whitworth, Jock McFarlane, Baggsy Baker, Lofty Walsh, Doddy Dodson and John Bowns. MEM Wiggins threw the wheel-spanner (17.51b) a distance of 57' 9" on the ship's sports day

and we discovered that MEM Raymond Ankin was not only a swimmer but a distance runner too (he was to excel later in the 1972 Gibraltar 'Top of the Rock' Race).

Several of our personnel requiring major recuperations were despatched to Fraser's Hill to charge their batteries and take in a running oil change while enjoying the less humid climate in the hill regions of Malaysia. The more refined members of the department took over *Terror Golf*

graphs to prove it! Several messes had organised runs to the city which usually culminated in big eats in some exotic oriental restaurant. However, some of the best eats were obtained at the Sembawang Hilton better known as Bobbies Stall down the 'vill'. The food was superb and the atmosphere on the patio was always very congenial especially if you could catch the end of a real salty story told by those master storytellers CMEM Ramsey and POMEM 'Excuse me'



17 and 41 Mess

Course nearly every afternoon in some of the most outrageous rigs. The senior player must have been our CERA, Pete Butler, who always insisted on having quite a senior caddy in the form of CERA Brian Gratton. Several of our POMEMs took up this noble art and did little to improve their handicap by starting a game with more than one tiger in their tanks!

There are some very amusing stories of runs ashore in the Lion City and we have photo-

Ellam. Throughout the commission these two first-class entertainers must admit responsibility for many cheery nights and not so cheery forenoons.

It was ordained that Japan could only be a culture run by those who had been there before, 'Strictly temples stokes, you won't like it lad'. But stokes had got himself a Pentax and a box of things to stick on it and was determined to photograph all that had to be photographed. Some of the more formidable snappers were

Harry Patterson, Roy Palmer, Pete Ritchie, Peter Brenchley and David Buckingham. Well of course you can't snap temples at night so more additional entertainment was sought and found with sparkling results. The Japanese bath-houses would you believe? A steam clean followed by shampoo and manicure! Just how at home could you get that for a mere thirty bob? Afterwards several of our men were at last able to show their true colour. While on a watery subject MEM Mills who is the senior evap watchkeeper, (he makes fresh water from the oggin) claimed that he will top his ten thousandth ton by the time we pay off. He also claims he can tell you where we are in the world by the taste of the water.

Australia did not really excite us, the beer was expensive and someone said it rained most of the time. On the way to Hong Kong we called in at Olongapo in the Philippines but the Americans had the scene under control so we kept ourselves to



POMEM's Division

ourselves by avoiding `jeepy' rides and not buying fluffy ducklings to feed the alligators on the main drag. Hong Kong provided another paradise for rabbit hunters and the chance to see if Dad was right about Wanchai. The visit by train to the New Territories was very popular and no strays over the border were reported.

The last exit from Singapore

saw us heading for the Indian Ocean and regrettably leaving *HMS Terror* in Australian hands in the form of a garrison. To many of us *Terror* had become a very acceptable way of life. A word of thanks to the MOD men in the Sembawang yard, Sam Hussey and Alan Bowden for their excellent assistance and interest during our AMPs which ensured that we always got away on schedule.

The Mombasa visit will always be remembered by 56 Mess. Topsy Turner and Sharky Ward planned a spartan weekend in the Tsavo game reserve but missed the turning and ended up in Nairobi some 300 miles away, the leave chit did say Exped and rumours are that they did manage to live rough. Alf Ramsey took to his job as liaison chief at Silver Sands, like a policeman on point duty but he had to actually don his old policeman's uniform (PC 583) when high spirits produced dampened spirits at the nearby Nyali Beach Hotel. Some of the ship's



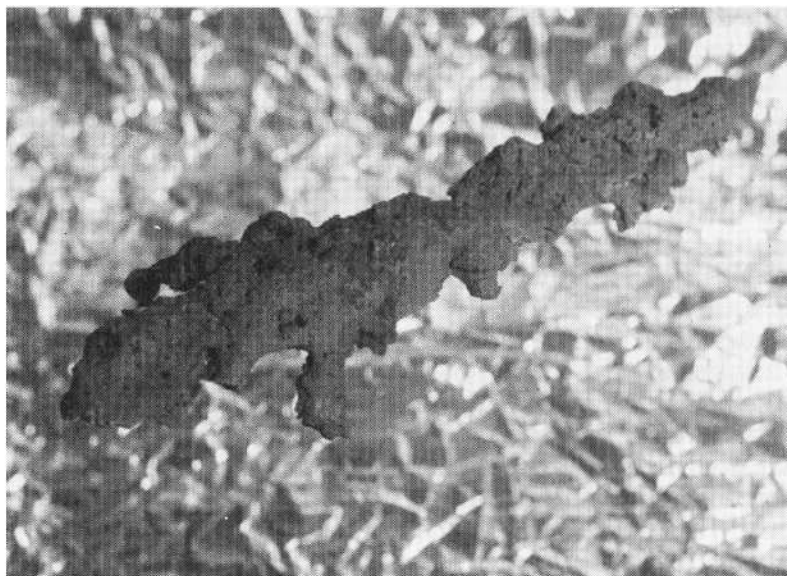
19 and 21 Mess

company took to unofficial cabaret acts in the floodlit pool which did not go down well at all. 'Plain clothes' men eventually kept things quiet especially in the form of POMEM Mick Petty who upset an engineer officer's run by always being just in sight, (he is far better employed as a soccer referee).

The ship's expedition to Mount Kenya was predominantly thick with engine room 'new-frontiersmen', they were Jasper Brown, Wullie MacIlvaney, Fred Hutchinson, Neil Britten and the official photographer Pete Ritchie. Apparently the summit was not reached because of oxygen deficiencies but MacIlvaney's transistor radio nearly reached 14,000 feet!

We had been dreading the Gulf bit for some time, mainly because it was shrouded in mystery. We had optimistic visions of shutting down to auxiliary for days on end or at least hanging around on one unit. While off Masirah our main circulators sucked in a few tons of jelly fish and almost shut down the ship's power supply. Propulsion was seriously affected by our inability to maintain sufficient vacuum so an evolution began to dig out the shredded mess while steaming on one shaft at a time.

Still in the Gulf, the Indian-Pakistan war reached its peak and we were suddenly deployed at a high passage speed to the Bay of Bengal. It was a pleasure indeed to offer the bridge 76,000 odd SHP with no strings attached. The fears of arriving home late in the UK were quashed by our abrupt return to Gan to off load 40 Cdo. Whilst embarked several Royals helped us out with unpleasant cleaning duties in-



~ THE SOOT-BACKED PLATYPUS ~
(filthyfoofosaurus)

NATURAL HABITAT

lives with vast numbers of others of its kind in a nest of tubes. lies very quietly digesting vapours which are fed to it by its keepers - known as sprayer punchers. the bosses of the sprayer punchers are notoriously schizo-phrenic, and while allowing the s.b.p. to live quite happily for about 1400 hours will suddenly demand that they all be removed. when this happens the sprayer punchers go into the tubes with long sticks and sharp edged instruments, and kill all the s.b.p.'s. when they are attacked the s.b.p.'s lie very still and fossilize, whilst the sprayer punchers pray to their great god 'make and mend' for victory.

Sometimes the bosses send s.b.p.'s to laboratories to find out how they breed, - but no one has ever found out...



Senior Rates' Division

cluding an external boiler clean. We all got on well together and began to understand each other at long last. It was while at Gan that one of our lads went on 'exped' but when he heard it was Hercules only and not VC10 to the UK he lost interest and got back on board in quick time.

The steady slog to Capetown spending Christmas at sea was taken well by the department. We gave the *Albion* Fete excellent support by providing a Miss Gulf '72 entrant (MEM Graham Tuckley) and POMEM Yorky Ellam for the Baby Show who was almost disqualified for burping in the judge's face (unrehearsed), but a plea from mum. (POMEM Dusty Miller) was upheld. MEMs Leo Haffenden and Ray Cant walked up and down the flight deck all afternoon and raised £65 for charity. After a few days light duties Haffenden grew some skin on his feet and returned still limping to the DB Party.

Capetown allowed us to welcome 1972 in style, but to

most of us it was an anticlimax knowing that the UK was only 24 days away. Our trip to colder waters was largely uneventful and it was noticeable that the only occupation of 2G28 POMEMs' Mess was getting the bronzy bronzy in, and threatening to replay the EOs at volley ball in order to avenge their crushing defeat on Christmas Day.

Our unbelievable machinery availability record was upset on the way home by an annoying main feed pump defect which resulted in us delivering an unwelcome OPDEF to Pompey Dockyard. MEA Fred Podmore had it in bits every day for weeks and almost qualified for the Netley long course. While talking about men and machinery a word about the



Juniors' Division



45 and 56 Mess

steering gear. Back in 1954 the makers confessed there was something not quite right and throughout '71 and into '72 Mechanician Dave Hicks has been trying to solve this 18-year-old problem. However he once got it to work briefly in all modes but in a moment of sheer frustration he put it back to the 'normal' state rather than explain just what he had tweaked to Lieutenant Ritchie and the Senior Engineer. Not all stokers are devoted to items of machinery, MEM Bayliss decided to make the Engineer's Ready Use Store fit to live in and has done so ever since (our MEAs can now get AF spanners on temporary loan besides tea and coffee eight hours a day).

Perhaps the most intimate contact between man and machine nearly came about after our return to Portsmouth when K3 Turbo Generator made noises and suggested to MEM Peter Brenchley that he should leave the compartment at the rush. K3 made an awful mess of itself. It was Mechanician John Lawson who

volunteered to get K3 to perform again after the dockyard rebuild and only after several weeks of 18 hour days of coaxing, the governor agreed to work again.

Our visit to the Med for a major exercise gave limited leave in Cyprus and we did not participate in any startling events apart from the Grand Prix of Brest in which our department entered a team of well known rally drivers who were most reluctant to participate in the civic reception after the event.

After a further exercise in the Orkneys we spent a week anchored in the Clyde and several of our juniors took the opportunity to spend an afternoon at the Local Quarrier Homes, Bridge of Weir. The purpose of the visit was to tour the home and extensive grounds and play the boys at six-a-side football and although the home side were 10-15 year old, our juniors were relieved to leave with a draw. On the following day 80 children from the home came on board for a party as guests of the junior division.

They were well entertained in the hangar especially with a Wasp helicopter and a very worried pilot. The afternoon finished with a very elaborate tea provided by the Chinese staff and a mammoth Tom & Jerry show in the dining hall which was unofficially shared by most of the ship's company who happened to be just passing through.

We are, at the time of writing, healthy machinery wise, but our exhausted diesel generators have never got over the shock of being threatened with supplying Gosport Town during the power station strikes.

On our last full power trial we made 26.2 knots uphill against a head wind and still had steam to spare, the 30 knots were there but we decided to save them for our final trip back to Pompey from Canada.

When we pay off at the end of the year we shall still have boilers with an estimated life of 8 years and main engines which are just nicely run-in, a tribute to the Tyneside builders and the engineering branch that have served on board *Albion*.