

There is not a single member of the Section who does not agree that in every way, both on and off duty, it has been a most enjoyable commission. New friends have been made, new countries seen, and a new (and true) idea of how the other half lives has been acquired.

For the future it is hoped that the Army sections and the Royal Navy will work as happily and as closely as has been the experience of this Section.

Major Compton-Bishop and Staff-Sergeant Perkins will be joining H.Q. C.B.G.L. Group at F.O.A. (Home) and will at any time be glad to see old friends from H.M.S. *Albion*. Driver Fytche, as already mentioned, is destined for service in a new 67 Section which will be joining *Centaur* next year, while Captain Cameron should be seeing some "real soldiering"

when he rejoins his battalion next year, and Corporal Jackson has views of a commission in his branch of the Service.

Things we should like to know

1. Who is Lady S --k ? (With apologies to the Captain.)
2. Which officer in the Section knows of a good and expensive night club in Athens ? (Captain Cameron need not answer.)
3. Who is the best pilot in the world ?
4. Why is Welsh so difficult to understand when heard over the tannoy ?
5. Who has spent the longest time on the pilotage position during the commission ?
6. What brand of cigars does Driver Fytche smoke when fishing with the Commander ?

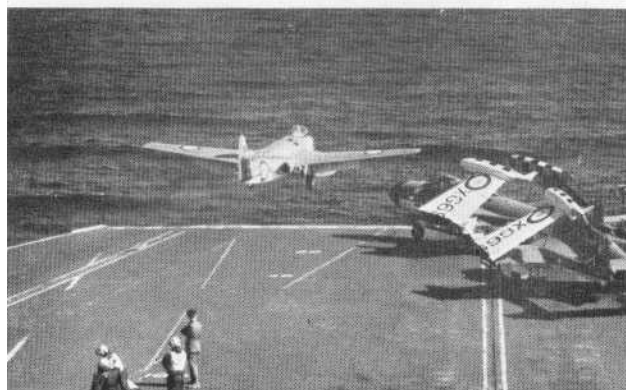
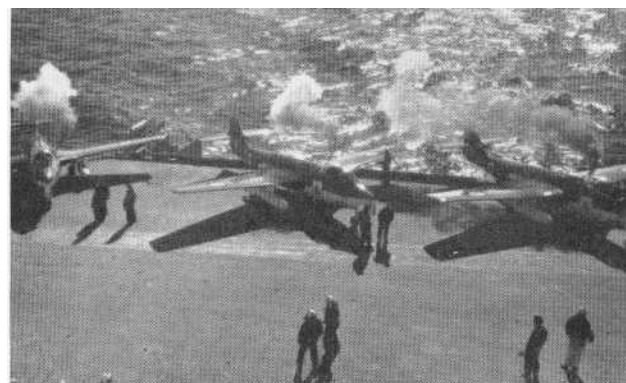
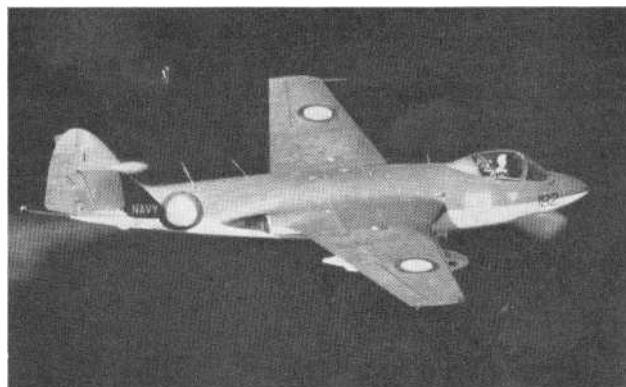
806 Squadron

OUR PRESENT COMMANDING OFFICER, Lieutenant-Commander W. W. Illingworth, took command of the Squadron on 1st October, 1959, and that is where our story starts. Brawdy was cold and windy, but after the operational work-up programme the prospect was bright - the Far East for a year. No more immersion suits and Brawdy "clamps" for twelve months.

So while white uniforms, tuxedos and hopes were being aired, the Squadron concluded the final phase of the pre-embarked work-up, which consisted mostly of day and night MADDLS. Final leave and good-byes were taken, and before one could say Illy Willy the historical day was upon us. Friday, 5th February, 1960. Place: H.M.S. *Albion* at sea in Lyme Bay. Event: The embarking of 806 Naval Air Squadron, the very first and last Seahawk squadron to be formed. The last of a long line of Hawks, an aircraft which has graced the Fleet with its trim lines and pleased pilots of a decade with its ease of handling. This was a proud occasion for the Squadron, and the officers and men who had the privilege of serving in the last Hawk Squadron.

If a ship heads south from Pompey for x miles, then east for y miles, the said ship may well arrive in the Mediterranean Sea. If, in addition, the ship be of grey funnel variety, the chances are that Gibraltar and Malta will be passed en route. The perfidious one was no exception, and even improved on conditions by finding a capital named Athens.

However, let us proceed farther east, for that was to be our hunting ground for the rest of the year: we became an "East of Suez" squadron on Monday, 4th April - from now to be known as the start of the prickly heat season. The heat was our biggest problem in the East. It made mess decks unbearable and tempers short; pilots' mates swore, and their pilots sweltered. (It is rumoured that one or two swore as well.) But all in all everyone took it with a smile, and the Squadron's efficiency was not impaired. The maintenance ratings did an excellent job



throughout the cruise, maintaining an extremely high standard of serviceability, often under the most trying conditions. But do not be misled; our successes and failures have not been confined to earthborne activities. We do not seem to have stopped flying since last February, and the emphasis has undoubtedly been on weaponry - we seemed to have dropped more bombs and fired more rockets and bullets than most of us thought we carried onboard. We achieved better results than hitherto possible in a Hawk; a tribute to all the Squadron personnel who have made possible the impossible.

The ship's wanderings around the mystic East will be recorded elsewhere in this magazine. It should be sufficient to say that the Squadron went with her - not much option, really. Some highlights are well remembered, however, such as the Squadron stewards dining in Singapore's famous Raffles Hotel, while their penniless officers gobbled rice in Albert Street. Tiger Balm Gardens and Tiger ale. Sea snakes of Seletar Beach. Snake charmers in Change Alley. American hospitality in Inchon, Japanese baths in Yokohama. A fortnight of Fuji-Fuji tours, Fuji film, Fuji fruit juice (!), even Fuji massage house. San Miguel in Manila, San Mig in China Fleet Club. "Good morning, sir" to one's divisional officer - in Wanchai. Camphorwood chests in Kowloon, rickshaw races to Star Ferry. H.K.3 for a wallah wallah if the last ferry had sailed - it invariably had! Oh yes, and we flew. Not all the time, but certainly when the ship was at sea; after all, we had to keep our end up. If it couldn't be avoided, we flew when the ship was in harbour, too.

This was achieved by the simple evolution known as disembarking. At least it sounds simple: before the ship enters harbour the Squadron flies off and lands ashore, and there they are all ready to operate. But what about the ground personnel? And their spanners? And surely we will require rockets, spare tyres, even shear keys! So it wasn't quite so simply done as imagined, though we did in fact very successfully fly from ashore many times - a commendable effort. We were guests of the R.N.Z.A.F. at Tengah and twice of the R.A.F. at Seletar, Singapore. We went to Kai Tak at Hong Kong for a week, and we were also very admirably looked after by the R.A.A.F. at Butterworth for two weeks.

Everyone enjoyed Seletar, for it was a very spacious and cool place in which to work and live; but it was undoubtedly Butterworth that stole our hearts - and our hats! Butterworth is an Australian air base near Penang, about 350 miles up the Malayan Peninsula, far from the humidity of Singapore. It has an excellent situation: a glorious view of Penang Island over the water, tropical flowers and trees around its quarters, and miles of paddy and coco-nut stretching inland to thick jungles. What made our stay a problem was the hospitality of our Australian hosts. From the pilots' point of view it was heaven - large crew rooms, complete with almost larger 'fridges

stocked with fruit juices and milk, all supplied on the house by a grateful Australian Government. Lunch was simple - a mere 2 lb. of choice steak "done yourself" on an infra-red grill. We all put on weight. Well, who wouldn't?

The ratings, after biting their teeth at the open barn appearance of their mess decks, equally enjoyed the stay. A very friendly rivalry soon sprang up between the limeys and the diggers triggered off, it is believed, when a bearded, bespectacled killick turned up at both watches wearing a bush hat. The next thing we knew was the appearance of a peculiar animal painting on our bone domes-a "Rou," I think it was called. Our hosts, Nos. 3 and 77 Squadrons, then had the effrontery to challenge 806 to a rocketing competition. We provided the rockets, so, of course, won. Then the C.O.'s aircraft appeared with two very large "Rous" on its nose. The next day an Australian asked the way to the Ace of Diamonds Squadron. He was shown to 77 Squadron, whose C.O. by now, of course, had a very large Ace of Diamonds on his Sabre.

Ever restive for more action, someone brought up the point of jungle survival. "Here we are," he said, "surrounded by the thickest, greenest, dampest and darkest jungle available, and we don't make use of it." All pilots suddenly discovered urgent appointments in Singapore, and an air defence exercise was even organised to keep them busy on the fatal day. So unfortunately the air crew were not available, except a certain Royal Marine officer, and what was proposed as a survival exercise turned into a most interesting and educational jolly. With the help of the Australian gunners they were all fitted up with jungle green - smart, keen, healthy and eager to go. They were off for a quick jungle stroll. This was at 0800, but, alas, not to return until the evening. But surely our transport had picked up the wrong team; these couldn't be our ratings! Covered in mud, clothing torn, limping, these men must have been in the jungle for months. But after a shower and a pint of Tiger they were indeed new men, and *then* stories came out. "Tarzan can keep that lot." "Chiefie fell out of sight in a swamp, cheers." "There it was, the biggest snake you ever saw, about fifty feet it was!" We stay-at-homes were now, of course, most jealous as each story grew in importance. After the initial shock as to the difficulties of jungle travel the men were full of it, and indeed it is quite an experience for a sailor.

At the time of writing the Squadron is just disembarking for the last time to Changi in Singapore Island. Plans are already in force for climbing Kilimanjaro, for buying our last rabbits, and even for next leave. And, of course, we have still got to fly. But it has been a most happy cruise and an eventful one. It will be a happy day for us all to arrive in Pompey and to be with our families again, but there will be many a sorry heart saying good-bye to 806. May she fly again.

815 Squadron



"GEORLANDO IN DISTRESS"

TODAY IS THURSDAY, 8th September, 1960, and we in 815 Squadron are celebrating our first birthday. The celebration has been quiet, and its principal events were a cake-cutting ceremony and a make-and-mend for all hands. Unfortunately, it did not also justify the issue of an extra tot of rum, but, as this narrative will show, the past 366 days have not been devoid of social occasions. Quite apart from our anniversary and the demands of the editorial staff, today would seem to be a good day to record our history because from now on our progress will be towards the West and home. We have yet another visit to Singapore and then on to Trincomalee, Karachi and Mombasa. At a glance that programme would seem to be rather restricted and lacking in appeal. However, having said that the future looks quiet, it can almost be taken for granted that someone in 815 will find good cause to remember the homeward passage.



For the uninitiated and for those with short memories it must be explained that 815 Squadron has the Westland Whirlwind Mark 7 aircraft, and as such is primarily an anti-submarine squadron. At the time of formation at Culdrose in Cornwall a year ago the aeroplane had just been cleared by the Admiralty for operational work following an extensive trial to improve the performance of the engine and other mechanical components. We were the first squadron to receive the modified aircraft, and we had high hopes for the future. These hopes were jolted when, with only four of the eight scheduled aircraft delivered, we were grounded with a mechanical defect. However, that restriction was short-lived, and we were able to proceed to Portland, where we spent most of October and November. It was there that we came to know each other and get ourselves worked-up to an efficient operational standard.

It was a period of hard work spiced with a fair measure of Dorsetshire entertainment. By day we chased submarines about the English Channel and maintained the aircraft on the ground. By night it was not unknown to chase a few skittles down any one of the numerous bowling alleys, and for those so inclined to chase a few ladies along the front at Weymouth. Indeed, one of our number took his enjoyment to the stage where he found himself on the wrong side of the dock at the local magistrates' court!

Having returned to Culdrose at the end of November, the remaining period before Christmas leave was spent exercising in the local areas.

We embarked in *Albion* at Portsmouth in mid-January. From then until the beginning of February, when the fixed wing squadrons arrived, we were notable for our absence either day-running from Portland or, as on one occasion, being entertained at Park Royal Brewery by Arthur Guinness and Son, whose patronage the Squadron enjoys and whose

motif adorns our aircraft. After the embarkation of the other squadrons the ship proceeded to Gibraltar, which for some of us was our first run ashore in a foreign port. However, both young and old, we found ourselves enjoying the first foreign visit of the commission. During that period we lost an aircraft which ditched off Gibraltar. The crew survived unhurt and none the worse for their immersion.

The following six weeks were spent in the Med, and our service alternated between the ship and R.N.A.S. Hal Far on the island of Malta G.C. Needless to say, we found that Malta provided its fair share of distractions. Added to this, we visited Messina and Athens, both of which allowed fair time for the pursuit of pleasure. But life in the Fleet Air Arm is not one full round of beer and skittles. We did battle with a few submarines, encountered all the difficulties of operating from the same deck at the same time as our fixed wing friends, kept the ship well supplied with mail, and picked a couple of ditched aviators out of the water. Two of the squadron aircraft took part in a large army exercise in Libya and carried Earl Mountbatten around the desert. One of our most notable search and rescue achievements was the delivery of food and technical assistance to an Italian ship, the S.S. *Georlando*, which had been drifting for four days on the N. African coast and had exhausted its food supplies.

On the first day of April the ship entered the Suez Canal, and at the same time we changed into our tropical uniforms. At that time the sight of bare knees and the heat of the sun were both strange to us. In a very short time the novelty wore off and the disadvantages of a shipboard life in high temperatures became all too apparent. A short stop at Aden saw many of us returning on board with new cameras and watches, the principal items of this port's trade. From Aden we went direct to Singapore, a passage which saw very little flying and a lot of rest and sunbathing. However, shortly before our arrival at Singapore another of our aircraft was lost to the sea, but happily the crew got out safely.

At Singapore we disembarked to R.N.A.S. Sembawang and its attendant comforts of well-ventilated living accommodation, a swimming pool and the "Magnolia Man." This gentleman sells cold refreshments ranging from milk to ice-cream. What is more, he gave us credit, and thus became a very popular and regular visitor in his rainbow-coloured van. Swimming and a short working day became the routine when all our aircraft were grounded following an unexplained mechanical defect. Then followed a fourteen-day period in which signals flew thick and fast while we sat on the ground. Eventually we split our forces, some going to the ship for a SEATO exercise, the remainder of us staying ashore to carry out a hover trial. By the time we were reunited as a squadron we were back in business with the restrictions lifted. The attractions of Hong Kong, Korea and Japan lay ahead of us.

When viewed in retrospect, the two months spent visiting these northern parts of the Far East Station have undoubtedly been the highlight of the commission to date. This does not mean to say that we did no work. We enjoyed a balanced diet of industry and leisure, carrying out exercises with British and

American forces and relaxing in a great variety of ways.

Hong Kong has known the Navy for many years, and it has therefore a very wide knowledge of what to give the troops. We bought everything from camphorwood chests to chopsticks, and there will be many Squadron sweethearts and wives who will be clad in silk brocades purchased there. Many bottles of San Miguel beer were purchased and consumed and leave us with a pleasant memory of the circumstances in which they were drunk.

As a break in our journey northwards to Japan we called for a few days at Inchon in South Korea. Only shortly before our arrival the country had been through the insurrection which resulted in the exile of Mr. Syngman Rhee and the death of many Koreans in the riots, but despite this and a disappointing first impression of what was obviously a poor country, many of us were well entertained by the various locally based United Nations forces. Our choppers came in for a great deal of use as a convenient means of transport between the ship and Seoul, some two hours away by road.

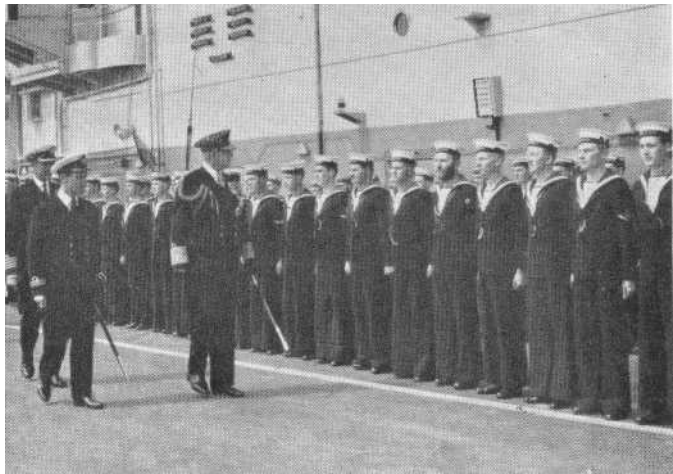
All the way from Singapore to Japan we were in company with many units of the Far East Fleet, and a great number of exercises were carried out in which we played our part, and also kept the Fleet's mail delivery service going.

In Japan we had no flying commitments, and there was ample opportunity for rest and relaxation. Our first port of call was Yokohama, where we spent four days before moving twenty miles down Tokyo Bay to the U.S. naval base at Yokosuka for a further twelve days. It is impossible to record all the happy memories that stem from this period. We can remember the wonderful hospitality of the Americans, Japanese baths and food, the pleasures of a run ashore "downtown," the view of Fujiyama on the rare occasions when it was not in cloud, and a thousand other things which included bus tours, Tokyo, shopping, and by no means least the National beverage, saki. All the married men and a good proportion of the bachelors came away with the belief that Japan is a male's paradise.

On leaving Japan we exercised with the American fleet before returning to Hong Kong for a further visit, and on to Singapore for a self-maintenance period. On sailing from Singapore we entered the busiest period of anti-submarine operations of the commission during Exercise "Fotex" with the rest of the Commonwealth Far East Fleet off the east coast of Malaya, and made ourselves popular by the regularity of our mail deliveries to the rest of the Fleet. Back to Singapore for a very brief wash-up of the exercise, and away once more to Hong Kong for a "shop-window" demonstration and our final visit. On the day before we got to Hong Kong we answered an SOS from the S.S. *Twinhorse*, and sent two of our choppers to lower a doctor and bring back an injured seaman.

After a ten days' visit to Hong Kong following a very successful "shop window," we are now in the U.S. naval base at Subic in the Philippines, and from what we have seen so far we are going to have another very good time cementing Anglo-American relations.

894 Squadron



Motto: Omnium Capax Ubique.

Literally: We are capable of anything anywhere.

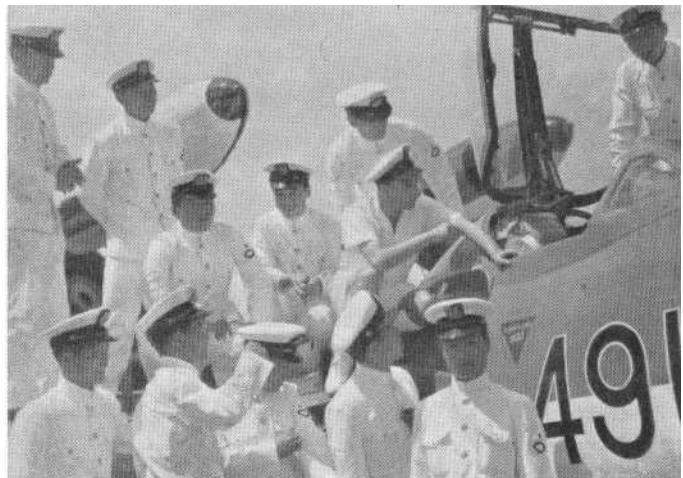
894 SQUADRON FIRST FORMED in August of 1942 at N.A.S. Norfolk, Virginia, with Grumman Martlet aircraft. Their first operational sorties against enemy territory were flown in early 1943 in the Norwegian area, by which time they were flying Seafires, closely followed by the Salerno campaign later in the same year. In early 1944 they did two months "R.A.F. time," operating as fighter cover for Typhoon bombers against German shipping in the Channel. They then returned to the scene of their first war-like exploits, and throughout August and September of 1944 were employed off Norway, mainly as fighter cover for R.A.F. and F.A.A. strikes against the *Tirpitz* in Altenfjord. During this period the aircrew claimed their first confirmed kills - two enemy fighters being shot down on 22nd August.

The end of the year found the Squadron in the Far East, and the whole of 1945 was spent in this theatre. Amongst the operations in which 894 - who were embarked in H.M.S. *Indefatigable* - took part were strikes against Sumatra in January, 1945, the

TOP: King Paul inspects
894 Squadron.

CENTRE: Lt. Mauerley,
S/Lt. Symington and
N.A. 1 Langford.

RIGHT: Japanese P.Os.
inspecting a Sea
Venom.



Sakashima Islands Campaign in March and April, and the final strikes against the mainland of Japan in August.

The Squadron disbanded in U.K. in March, 1946.

894 re-formed as an all-weather fighter squadron in January, 1957, at R.N.A.S., Yeovilton. They were (and still are) equipped with the De Havilland Sea Venom F.A.W. Mk. 22, a two-seater jet fighter with an A.1 21 radar set.

From January until August the Squadron remained at Yeovilton, working up. On 5th August they embarked in H.M.S. *Eagle*, where they were to remain as part of the C.A.G. for the next twenty months.

The professional highlights of this commission were: Exercise "Strike Back" in September of 1958, when the Squadron, having been embarked just over a month, achieved 231 hours' flying in ten days; Exercise "Phoenix 11" in November, 1958; the five months off Cyprus from June to October, 1959, with special reference to Operation "Fortitude" in July of that year. This was the escorting of the paratrooper airlift from Cyprus to Jordan during the Lebanon crisis; the ship was put on a war footing for eight days, and a twenty-four-hour flying programme was planned and achieved each day. As 894 were the only night fighters available, 50 per cent. of the effort was provided by them, the three Sea Hawk squadrons embarked providing the day fighter cover.

The social highlights of the cruise were visits to Vigo, Toulon, Barcelona, Istanbul and Naples - five runs in twenty months. They were also well known in Gibraltar and Malta.

The commission finished for 894 on 29th April, 1959, when the Squadron disembarked. This date is also a red-letter one for another reason, as it was then that H.M. The Queen and H.R.H. Prince Charles visited *Eagle* for the day and watched flying operations. This was the first time for some years that a reigning monarch had visited one of H. M. ships at sea and a great honour to all the ship's company.

From May, 1959, to February, 1960, the Squadron was based at R.N.A.S. Yeovilton, though "894 B Flight" were detached to *Victorious* for both her Scandinavian and American cruises to back up 893, Vic's resident Venom squadron.

894 Squadron embarked in H.M.S. *Albion* on 1st February, 1960, for a Home/East of Suez commission.

"It was a cold and gloomy day," as the old story starts, when *Albion* sailed from middle slip jetty on 2nd February to begin her fourth commission. The ground party had embarked the previous day, and the aircraft were due to arrive on the 3rd. Unfortunately, however, bad weather prevented their arrival until the 5th, so the aircrew were forced to spend an extra two days at Yeovilton - much to their disgust, of course.

The actual embarkation was marked by a deter-

mined effort on the part of Lieutenant Riley and his "looker" to stay behind, which was foiled by the Squadron's ex-C.A.A., C.A.A. Trout, and a large hammer - he wanted no reminders, we gather, of his previous commission! The other point worth noting was that all ten pilots "got on" at their first attempt - by way of complete contrast to "that other" jet squadron.

The ship then proceeded to Gibraltar to commence the work-up. Here we had our first accident, when Lieutenants Stanley and Sturgeon "ditched" straight off the catapult. Fortunately both survived, but Lieutenant Stanley was hospitalised: he is now back on flying duties again with the F.R.U. at Hal Far. That evening the officers had a run over the border to La Linea to sample the local delights, when it was definitely proved that the midshipman had ideas both above his station and beyond his years!

The work-up continued until the end of March, broken only by a brief visit to Messina and eleven days disembarked at R.N.A.S. Hal Far. During our "shore time" Alcoholics Anonymous (894 officers) were defeated in a soccer match by a team of Squadron ratings, in spite of a sterling display at scrum-half by Lieutenant Sturgeon, who wasn't quite sure which game he was playing, and a show of sheer brute force and ignorance by Lieutenant West. The competition was finally won by the Chiefs and Petty Officers, who won the toss after a 2-2 draw with the "As and Es" in the final.

The work-up culminated in F.O.A.C.'s inspection and Exercise "Starlight" between 21st and 25th March. "Starlight" was interrupted by a distress call from the Italian schooner *Giolante*, who was in dire straits about 100 miles from us. She was located and identified by an 894 Venom flown by Lieutenants Roddick and Day, and assistance was duly rendered.

A brief but hectic visit to Piraeus - the port of Athens - finished off our time in the Med, and on 1st April the ship passed through the Suez Canal, pausing briefly *en route!* A twenty-four-hour stop was made in Aden, where many rabbits were caged, and we then made best speed to Singapore so that the ship could dock before Easter.

The ship arrived at Singapore on 13th April, and the Squadron disembarked to R.A.F. Seletar for an idyllic fortnight with "the crabs." This was a very pleasant and welcome break, the highlights being N.A.M. Grubb's boxing achievements and a Squadron party.

The Squadron re-embarked on 29th April, and the ship set off for Manila and "Sealion," the yearly SEATO naval exercise. A two-day stop in Manila gave all those who were so inclined a chance to sample its delights, most of which were pretty expensive - even the "Yellow Bar." One Squadron member certainly enjoyed himself, as he rejoined via the Sangle Point Ferry twenty-five minutes before sailing waving a large banana leaf!

After "Sealion" there was a week-end in Singapore, and we then paid our first visit to Hong Kong. The only possible comment on this is "no matter how unlikely the story, it's probably true."

Hong Kong was followed by a call at Inchon, the major port of the Republic of Korea. This was a very bleak place, and in spite of the U.S.O. and "Whisky Mary's" most people were not sorry to leave, especially, two officers, who shall be nameless, who spent the day going round the Fleet with a boatful of odd shoes trying to find the owners after shuffling them at a U.N. party in Seoul.

After Inchon came what was undoubtedly the high spot of the commission - eighteen days in Japan, five at Yokohama and thirteen at the U.S. Naval Base in Yokosuka. It would be impossible (and very indiscreet!) to try and list the various activities and predicaments of various members of the Squadron during this time. Suffice it to say that everyone had a marvellous time, and we were all sorry to leave. As we left, someone was heard to say, "Well, we came in here for twelve days self-maintenance. At the end of that time the ship wouldn't go - and I'm in a worse state than the engines!"

After we left Japan we made for Hong Kong once more via an exercise off Okinawa with units of the U.S.N. Four aircraft were disembarked to Kai Tak during the ship's stay, and all the aircrew were led round the Red Chinese border by the R.A.F. Venoms. Various Banyans were also held in an M.F.V. provided by *Tamar*.

The ship left Hong Kong on 8th July, and on the 12th the aircraft were once again disembarked to Seletar, the ground party following them next day when the ship had secured alongside. The next fourteen days were spent at Seletar and proved just as pleasant, if not more so, than the first visit. During this period the flying was nearly all banner firing for the benefit of the A.48, and at the end of July it was found that the Squadron's average was 93 per cent., the highest score ever recorded by a Fleet Air Arm Squadron and made possible only by some very hard and prolonged labour by everyone. For a night fighter squadron, with its greatly increased maintenance problems, to come out top of the quarterly returns and achieve a new all-time F.A.A. "high"-all this in the Far East with its lack of facilities and frequent lack of wind which often curtailed the flying - is an achievement of no mean order and one of which every member of the Squadron may well be proud.

On the lighter side, a Squadron party and water polo tournament was held at Seletar Pool. The water polo tournament finished abruptly when Lieutenant Hilditch playing in goal for the officers pulled the goal posts on his own head and broke them, but the party was a great success - though those officers who neglected to wear swimming trunks found themselves swimming in their gent's natty suiting. The officers

also held a couple of Banyans, which proved very successful.

The first half of August was occupied by "Fotex," a fourteen-day exercise held yearly by the Far East Fleet. This went off well, and the ship returned to Singapore for four days before sailing for Hong Kong on 16th August. It was during this period that we lost Lieutenant Day, who decided a year in 894 was the ideal preparation for an Arabic interpreters' course, and departed for Durham University, sitting on his donkey.

On arrival at Hong Kong the Squadron disembarked to R.A.F. Kai Tak for ten days. Very little flying was done, mainly due to bad weather, but the usual other Squadron activities - Hong Kong style - were indulged in. During this period Sub-Lieutenant Hodgkins joined us as Lieutenant Day's relief.

After our visit to Subic we are due to disembark to R.A.A.F. Butterworth while the ship is in Singapore before rejoining in early October and heading for home via Ceylon and other points as yet unspecified, arriving in Portsmouth (we hope) in mid-December.

Lest our loved ones should think all Squadron activities were unmentionable, it would be as well to give a brief list of the Squadron's sporting activities. It is fair to say that our football XI is the best in the ship; they have yet to lose a match and have recently won the ship's k.o. competition. In addition, Lieutenant Moverley is a regular member of the ship's XI, while Sub-Lieutenant Crossley, Leading Stewards Lovatt, Houlcroft and Murray, and Steward Cameron have all played at least once. Sub-Lieutenant Pearce has played regularly for the ship at both rugby and cricket, R.E.M. Parker and A.A.I. Curtis are regular members of the ship's basketball team, and ship's volley ball has been virtually an 894 benefit with one or two guest stars. The Squadron has also contributed its fair share to all other ship's sports teams, and also other activities such as the concert party and winning a house on daily orders tombola!

894 will be disbanding on board just before the ship arrives home, and we will all be going our separate ways, though no doubt the majority of us will be back at Yeovilton in January, 1961. We can only hope that when the new 894 is formed they carry on the traditions of their predecessors, and that once again the "Flying Horses" will lead the way both ashore and afloat. All of the present commission should be able to look back on their time as both a pleasant and an instructive one. A tremendous amount of hard work has been put in by everyone to achieve the results we have, but each one of us should find the experience gained a valuable one.

On behalf of "Lord Montagu's own" we would like to wish our shipmates as much leave as they can wangle and continued success in the future.

Ave atque Vale!

'D' Flight 849 Squadron

LINING UP A SKYRAIDER IS HARD WORK



. . . BUT THEY CAN BE CATAPULTED



2 CATCHES 2 WIRE (PROBABLY PARSONS!)

WITH FOUR SQUADRONS ABOARD, each writing an article about their activities during the commission so far, some duplication is inevitable. However, for "D" Flight 849 Squadron the months since February have been filled, it seems, with unserviceability problems rather than amazing exploits in the air. Whilst the other squadrons have had their difficulties, particularly 815, of course, the fact that our unit is made up of only four aircraft means that any loss through unserviceability gives a worse impression than a similar percentage loss in a squadron with more aeroplanes.

Lest this should strike too depressing a note for the beginning, we can say that once in the air our aircraft and crews seem to have well satisfied "The Command" and also the other squadron aircrew with whom we have worked during exercises.

Our main role in *Albion* is an airborne early warning defence system against low flying attacks, together with the facility to carry out effective radar searches for submarines, or indeed any surface shipping within a radius of some 500 miles at the maximum. Since a Skyraider has two rear seats, it is also used for carrying passengers either of the V.I.P., compassionate or cash officer variety. (Lieutenant Broadway can now almost switch the radar.) The mail frequently comes aboard by Skyraider, and we are very popular on those days when the blue bags are lifted out and the mail sergeant staggers away under the weight of several thousand letters.

The flight embarked from Culdrose on the morning of 5th February, knowing that this would be the last time a carrier would take Skyraidiers for a full commission.

Our first mail and currency run was to Gibraltar, and it was in this sea area where the first deck landing practices were carried out. This period proved a trifle too lively, as there were several accidents through one reason or another, and in our case one of our pilots landed up in the catwalk after a poor approach which caused him to drift rapidly to port on catching a wire. This was put down to inexperience, and with the damaged aircraft beyond local repair it was later landed at Malta. Before the end of February we had a replacement, and about half-way through the ship's work-up period we were well set for our part in the forthcoming Exercise "Marjex." Before the exercise began the ship made a brief visit to Messina, this being very well appreciated both by the ship's company and, by appearances, the Sicilians also. Messina itself wasn't rewarding, but a short run out into the country to the south was a different matter, and those who ventured that far saw a very beautiful part of the world.

Marjex was by way of being a glorified weekly practice programme in which the activities of *Albion* were integrated with those of the remainder of the Fleet working with us at that time.

During March, in company with the other squad-

rons, "D" Flight disembarked to Hal Far in Malta, where our maintenance crews worked hard at it for the eleven days we were there. In the middle of the stay a mid-air collision between two Sea Venoms of 894 Squadron set off a large full-scale intensive sea search for two aircrew missing as a result of the accident. "D" Flight's contribution consisted of seven lengthy Skyraider sorties, but unhappily it was all in vain. On 21st March the squadrons re-embarked.

During the final work-up period the flight carried out several long-range shipping searches and mail runs. At one time two aircraft were flown to El Adem to bring on board the C.-in-C. Med., Admiral Bingley, and his Flag Lieutenant, who stayed with us for a night, returning the next day. It was at El Adem that the flight's Senior Pilot, Lieutenant Parsons, was coerced into giving a talk on carrier operations to the joint Services Operation Centre set up for the current exercise then taking place in the Mediterranean. This exercise was called "Starlight," and was mainly a benefit for the two jet squadrons on board, since *Albion's* role was to send air support as needed for land forces in Libya.

Close upon "Starlight," F.O.A.C. held his Operational Readiness Inspection, for which we had all our aircraft serviceable, and were thus able to carry out our part without difficulty.

One interesting Skyraider sortie at this time was a search for an Italian barque which had a damaged steering gear and was in trouble as a result. The Skyraider sent to look for her soon found the vessel, and thereafter helicopters took over the job of actually bringing assistance to this motor yacht *Gerlando*.

Towards the end of March the ship arrived at Piraeus, and it was here that H.M. King Paul of the Hellenes visited *Albion*, this visit proving a great diplomatic and personal success. There were only three days to be spent in Greece, and in company with everyone else in the ship "D" Flight made the most of this time. It was all too short, for there is so much to see and do in Athens that the three days passed in a flash. When visits are necessarily short, it is necessary to remind ourselves that we are not on a pleasure cruise, but in a carrier with operational training commitments.

By 1st April the ship was through Suez, and a couple of days later one of the longer Skyraider trips was flown, two aircraft being sent into Aden, some 450 miles away. The visit at Aden was cut short, since the ship needed to reach Singapore as quickly as possible for repair to the bows damaged in a slight grounding in the Suez Canal.

On passage to Singapore, contaminated Avgas prevented the Skyraiders and 815's helicopters from flying for several days whilst filters were changed and the troubles rectified.

12th April marked the first day of our first stay with the R.A.F. at Seletar on Singapore Island. Seletar seemed relaxed by our standards, but a great deal of maintenance work was done during the fortnight we were disembarked whilst the ship underwent a self-maintenance period in the dockyard. The flight did a little local flying and one or two mutual A.S.W. exercises; also several of the aircrew

made trips in the R.A.F.'s single and twin Pioneers based at the station.

At the end of April the flight re-embarked, and *Albion* sailed for Manila, after which she was due to take part in the SEATO Exercise "Sealion." Our part in this large exercise, in which sixty-five ships were involved from several nations and including three carriers, might have been even more interesting than it was had not our big troubles started at that time.

One of our four aircraft was found to have metal particles clinging to a magnetic filter in the engine, and this meant that the whole engine had to be changed. Despite this, several very useful and interesting sorties were flown by "D" Flight, one of these being the first piece of cross-operating. A Skyraider took a staff officer to U.S.S. *Yorktown*, and later returned him to *Albion*. Other sorties included strike direction, barrier flying to detect American low flying jet attacks, and extensive radar and visual searches to locate and report "enemy" shipping.

All this time *Albion* was getting nearer to Singapore again, and by now any attacking phases were made by Singapore-based R.A.F. Canberras, against which Skyraiders were launched to attempt detection and subsequently direct defending combat air patrols from *Albion* towards any incoming aircraft.

Unfortunately, during this period a second Skyraider became unserviceable, necessitating a further change of engine; therefore we were reduced to half our normal working complement. On board we only had the one spare engine which had been used to replace the first defective unit, so more were urgently demanded from England, and the long wait began.

We stayed a week-end at Singapore before sailing up to Hong Kong for our first visit there, and to our disappointment metal particles were found in yet a third Skyraider, meaning one more new engine. Although the one new unit was now installed, our maximum effort was restricted to two aircraft, and the situation in fact stayed that way until early September.

Hong Kong, of course, was tremendous. Live, friendly, and the place for buying rabbits, as was very quickly discovered by everyone. After Hong Kong we made a brief visit to Inchon, and people who had been there during the war in Korea noticed with disappointment and pity that with all the American aid, which has now been going into the country since about 1951, things seemed on the surface, anyway, to be much the same as six or seven years ago. The few British and many American and other nationality hosts made us all very welcome; they were obviously very pleased to see us.

The next port of call was Yokohama in Japan, and on passage there the Skyraiders exercised some jet controlling and flew one compassionate case to Japan, enabling him, as it happened, to make a U.K. connection by a margin of only eight minutes. We were in Japan from 9th June to 25th June, and most people agree that this constituted the highlight of the commission. Without exception everyone enjoyed Japan, although the enjoyment was taken in many different ways. "D" Flight had an expedition climb Mount Fuji, and there were numerous trips into the

country and into Tokyo, a city which is unique in so many ways. Unfortunately, the weather was poor for much of the stay, but that deterred few from making the best of the time.

On passage down to Hong Kong our two Skyraiders remained remarkably serviceable, and several useful exercises were achieved. This second visit to Hong Kong was as enjoyable as the first, and one day a group of 849 officers had the opportunity to go out to a realistic training ground in the New Territories, where they drove some Centurion tanks belonging to the 17th/21st Lancers, this being highly amusing and quite instructive.

Then it was on to Singapore, with general flying, communications and helicopter control for us on the way, with all squadrons disembarking once more when we reached Singapore; 849 again going to Seletar. The general amenities and recreational facilities, together with the real friendliness of the R.A.F. there, benefit us each time we disembark. Aircrew and maintenance teams alike had an interesting and pleasant break, with enough flying and plenty of ground work to be done to keep us all respectably busy. At the end of the month we were able to record two personal achievements in the flight, and they were the qualifying as a shallow water diver by Lieutenant Neale, and P.O.R.E.L. Morehead's results in the Singapore Inter-Service Annual Athletics Championships, where he came second in both the one mile and the three mile events.

On 29th July all aircraft rejoined *Albion*, and the two Skyraiders brought F.O.A.C. and two of his staff on board for a two-day visit. A full flying programme was carried out following this.

After F.O.A.C. left, the ship prepared for a fortnight's exercise with the Fleet in the local area off Malaya, under the direction of Rear-Admiral Le Fanu, the new F.O.2 F.E.S. Our main role was the Air Defence of the Force whenever a low flying threat was expected, and in addition there were a few A.S.W. sorties and many communication, compassionate and mail trips into R.A.F. Changi at Singapore. During the second week the C.-in-C. F.E.S., Admiral Luce, and his Flag Lieutenant were embarked by Skyraider for a short stay.

On 12th August we picked up our long-awaited engine replacements from Singapore, and our maintenance teams worked extremely hard and late into the nights under very hot and difficult conditions until both unserviceable Skyraiders appeared ready to fly again. The flights were delayed beyond the first expected date, and we still only had two Skyraider old faithfuls for the flight's part in the shop-window display off Hong Kong.

Bad weather curtailed flying to some extent on the passage from Singapore to Hong Kong, but on a peaceful Sunday afternoon a Skyraider was scrambled to locate a vessel radioing for medical assistance, which was conveyed by helicopter once the ship in trouble was firmly found.

Just before we reached Hong Kong we were struck a further blow, because one of the newly changed engines was found to be defective and had to be

changed yet again, this time using the ship's last unit, bringing us once more to a position where we had no spare engines on board. This was very bad luck after all the work put in by our conscientious maintenance teams.

After ten days in Hong Kong, we left it for the third and last time, most people having a final fling, some of them in quite a spectacular way.

The ship then went straight across to the Philippines and was secured alongside in Subic Bay, where we received a great welcome from the Americans which lasted right throughout our visit there.

We returned to Singapore for a final stay and self-maintenance period, reaching there on 17th September, with 849 Squadron disembarking as usual to Seletar. We now have four serviceable Skyraiders again, and in fact achieved that on 13th September. We have our fingers crossed that it will stay that way.

For the statistically minded, since 5th February to 1st September we have flown a day and night total of 632 hours 30 minutes, which made up 421 sorties.

Since we left England we have had many flight changes amounting to about a 40 per cent. turnover in personnel. All have gained in experience, and most have thoroughly enjoyed this tour, despite the amount of exceptionally hard work which has sometimes been involved. We look forward to the remainder of the cruise, and the next event in the flight will be a get-together before we leave Seletar this time. The last session we had was organised by L.E.M. Sefton, who has since returned home, and it was then that we discovered much hidden talent, one of our stars being L./A. McDonnell, who subsequently became a stalwart of the ship's skiffle group. During this coming hooley we expect a performance from L.R.E.M. Aldred, who has been making a name for himself ever since he joined the ship half-way through the commission. He has won numerous trophies from clubs all over the Far East with his singing and piano playing act and entertained us all in *Albion* at various concert parties held on board during the past months.

Another event in the future in which the flight hopes to make a name for itself is a challenge match with the current holders of the ship's soccer trophy, which 849 lost in the semi-final by a narrow margin after a very good game. As a matter of fact, we are the smallest department with a soccer team and have done well to reach the standard of the semi-final. L./A. Hall, who is our captain, is confident of taking that trophy away from 894 Squadron in the coming match.

Whilst we are at Mombasa a team from the flight aims to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, and is at the time of writing very earnestly in training for this undertaking.

The last event of note for "D" Flight on this commission will be the launch of four Skyraiders from *Albion* to Culdrose, marking the end of an era with this aeroplane and the close of a tour full of interest and experience.

The Medical Department

THE SICK BAY FLAT has been a fairly busy place throughout the commission, with beer parties, bomb-lift crews and the daily healthy looking queue outside the treatment room eagerly awaiting their mid-morning mist. pot. cit. served to the stirring accompaniment of S.B.A. Gowenlock's cornet.

Occasionally the flat was completely blocked by a larger frightened-looking crowd awaiting their jabs. They had all probably met the needle before and could only guess how much more blunt it had since become.

From time to time a large percentage of the ship's company have been uncomfortably indisposed suffering from the "dog" (either the Messina, Singapore or Hong Kong variety). Needless to say, during these times, which one may hardly call trying, No. 9s were not the order of the day.

Invariably the attacks started during the night, with the disgruntled Duty S.B.A. dishing out "tots of cement" by torchlight.

Insomnia, common amongst those of the ship's company who kept their heads down in the afternoon, was treated with the unpopular advice, "Return all loan bedding to the store." Most of the patients, however, eventually left the bay satisfied - even the lad that had been given Dr. Scholl's footpads for his haemorrhoids. Blood donors of all groups responded well to a visit from the British Red Cross at Hong Kong, when it became known that a free glass of beer followed the donation. The fact that real female nurses took the blood was, of course, no attraction whatsoever.

The S.M.O., when not composing temporary memoranda designed to frighten the life out of anyone contemplating a run ashore, was usually to be found, dressed like a plumber carrying a single black ball and a whirling instrument, making sorties to the depths of the ship. He would return, sweating but triumphant, with recordings of environmental conditions so extreme that "life as we know it" should have been impossible.

The department did escape occasionally from the humdrum round of minor complaints. Lieutenant G. L. Shaw, of 894 Squadron, will tell you what it was like to have his appendix removed while the ship was at night flying stations, although we believe the details of the operation are a little dim in his memory, thanks to the anesthetic kindly administered by S. M. O.

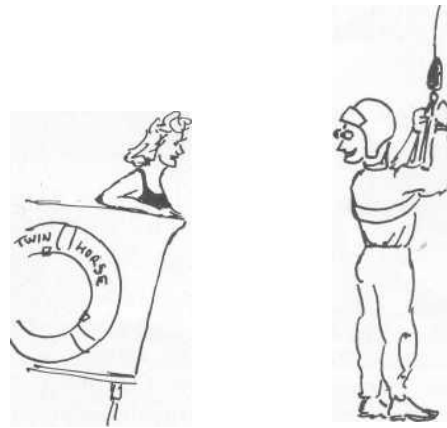
During a R.A.S. E.M.(A) Hardie, of 806 Squadron, tried to get himself into our case book by being "bitten" by a coil of rope, and subsequently following it overboard. He was recovered, however, by H.M.S. *Tenby* and returned by "chopper" to us to receive the medical comforts due on such occasions.

There was even more excitement when we were summoned from our "Sunday Afternoon Action Stations" by a call for urgent medical assistance from the freighter S.S. *Twinhorse*. She had an injured and bleeding man on board who had fallen down a ladder.

The flight by helicopter from *Albion* to the freighter provided an interesting change of scenery for the Duty Flight Deck Medical Officer.

The patient, Mr. Lam Ka Ling, was transferred to *Albion* by helicopter and his leg was sutured in our theatre. He was given passage back home to Hong Kong, where we found that the incident had already been reported in the local newspapers. It was not mentioned, however, that following this episode *Twinhorse* made a signal to *Albion* saying: "We think the Navy is wonderful."

Hidden around the corner a short distance from the Sick Bay is the Dental Surgery. Many people still have to be shown the way to it. Surgeon-Lieutenant (D) Davison and S.B.A. Wilford have had their share of accidents, for at least one sailor has returned from "his run" with a fractured jaw instead of "rabbits." There was also the plumber who, because he preferred to pull rather than push on his spanner, had to have a conversion job done and now wears false teeth in place of the originals.



AN INTERESTING CHANGE OF SCENERY

These and similar incidents have shown us that the toothwright intends to extract as much as possible from the commission, although in the later stages he will probably be spending all his time scaling and polishing teeth in preparation for Christmas in the U.K.

Unfortunately, we have had our own casualties. L.S.B.A. Davies was taken ill and admitted to R.N.H. Haslar within a month of joining. He was replaced by L.S.B.A. Hall, who has elected to postpone his entry into the big wide world and stay with us until our return home S.B.C.P.O. Parsons also went into Haslar, and was relieved only just in time by the ship's "Grand Inquisitor," S.B.C.P.O. Jones. S.B.A. Finch was invalided home from R.A.F. Seletar, and his place taken by S.B.A. Sharp.

The Sick Berth Petty Officer prefers to remain anonymous, but two others of the staff, L.S.B.A. Howarth and S.B.A. Johnson, must inevitably be mentioned. The former, because he is so often to be found getting "wet" with the water-polo team, the latter because he still cannot decide whether to become a greengrocer or to sign on for the Hong Kong run again.

Meteorological Department



AWAY BALLOON

THE HUMDRUM ACTIVITIES of plotting charts, analysing them, writing forecasts, briefing aircrew, keeping the boards up to date in the briefing room, Flyco and the A.D.R., taking and transmitting weather observations and providing climatological data for future cruises are not likely to stick in our minds very long after this commission is over. The things that are likely to stick are the trials (official and unofficial) we have carried out and the typhoons we have never, fortunately, met.

This has been the most active typhoon season in the Western Pacific for many years. Between late May and the middle of September (when we left these waters) no fewer than nineteen typhoons appeared on the weather charts of the area, with as many as three on the same chart on occasion. We started with "Lucille" and finished with "Irma," having been right through the alphabet with one or two exceptions. Of this large number, however, only four ever threatened *Albion*. The first of these was "Nadine," which raised a moderate swell but finally passed us at a range of 200 miles. A few days later "Mary" gave us a difficult twenty-four-hour period before a clear-cut decision could be taken to stay in harbour at Yokohama rather than put to sea; she had caused havoc in Hong Kong and eventually passed 150 miles to the south of us. During the same cruise on the way back to Hong Kong "Olive" looked dangerous at first, but then took a wide sweep well clear of our track. Finally, on our next (and last) trip to Hong Kong we had the interesting experience of a tropical storm developing only about seventy-five miles to the east of us; most fortunately this proved to be an unusual one - it moved north-eastwards first of all to southern Formosa (where it became typhoon "Elaine"), then westwards to Hong

Kong, filling over the land and giving us little worry as far as safety in harbour was concerned.

On the trials side, a series of four separate trials was concluded by the middle of September. The first of these concerned a new type of precision aneroid barometer and was a dreary affair from start to finish, involving much extra observation on the part of the met. ratings and much tedious computation by Lieutenant Barnett. A lot more fun was had out of our attempts to overcome the difficulties of upper wind-finding in light wind conditions. Clock-work devices and soluble plug delays were tried of many weird and wonderful configurations, but eventually we gave the whole thing up and got suitably equipped destroyers and frigates to try the balloon tracking for us!

Equally amusing were some of our early attempts to launch radio-sondes - these shiny boxes which are taken aloft to heights of 60,000 ft. or 70,000 ft. by a balloon and which transmit to us pressure, temperature and humidity (each eight times a minute) as they ascend. The uninitiated might like to hear how a launch is carried out. About 0330 local time a bleary-eyed band assembles in the Met. Office demanding cups of kye, coffee or limers (according to climate) and is met by the Duty Forecaster (looking very bright and pretending he has been up all night, although only half an hour ahead of the rest of us) and the Duty Met. Observer (who has been up all night and looks it). While the Duty Forecaster and Petty Officer Marshall are carrying out a final calibration check on the sonde (prepared the day before) the rest of the team assemble hydrogen trolley, radar reflector, unwinder, aerial, parachute, balloon plus spare and themselves on the after lift. Getting power on the lift (often the most difficult part

of the whole proceedings!) the team, less the Duty Forecaster, drives to hangar level, fills the balloon, couples the gear up and orientates it in approximately the right direction for a successful launch. In the meantime the Duty Forecaster has been pacing the flight deck, catching the occasional wire in the dark, working out the best position from which to launch having regard to the relative wind, parked aircraft, the island, down draughts, funnel smoke, minimum movement on deck and the idiosyncrasies of the Senior Met. Officer, should he be present. The decision having been taken and confirmed or amended, last-minute instructions are shouted down the lift well, the lift is driven to flight deck level, the Duty Forecaster seizes the sonde and switches it on (time now about 0415). At this moment it is noticed that at least one of the ratings is standing where he will go up with the balloon, so a hurried rearrangement of personnel takes place before the order for release is given. The team then retires to the met. office for more coffee/kye/limers, to find one of their number already seated in front of the B40 with a glassy look in his eye as he decodes and records the steady "bleep-bleep" from the ascending sonde; another member dashes into the A.D.R. to join the wind-finding team there.

All this sounds very cut and dried, but infinite variety is lent to it by different relative wind directions and strengths and different parking arrangements of aircraft. Our boast is that we can get a sonde away in 30 knots of relative wind in darkness, and we believe that this performance has been equalled by few and bettered by none. Although

nearly all our early work was done in darkness, we have carried out many launches in daylight during the normal flying programme. Long and awkward hours have been worked by both officers and ratings to achieve this concurrently with our normal met. commitments; the devotion to duty of the team is legendary - one sonde was successfully launched only by the Deputy Met. Officer rushing along the deck beneath the released balloon (which had struck a zero-lift region - funnel smoke/ and finally taking the fourth wire with his right instep! (A fortunate circumstance, or he would have been airborne over the side with the sonde still in his hand.)

This article would not be complete without mention of those other departments whose willing assistance we have had at all times - the Communications Department (meteorology is impossible without good communications), the Direction Officer and his wind-finding teams who have turned out regularly at all hours of the day and night to fit in with our launching schedules and, of course, the Air Department which has given us at all times the utmost co-operation in the use of the lift, the suitable parking of aircraft and the lowering of aerals.

VITAL STATISTICS (to the middle of September)

| | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-------------|
| Number of written forecasts issued | ... | ... | 294 |
| Number of weather observations transmitted to shore | ... | ... | 847 |
| Number of radio-sounds released | ... | ... | 38 |
| Highest radio-sonde | ... | ... | 70,000 feet |
| Highest balloon with radar reflector | ... | ... | 73,500 feet |

The 'Ell Office

If you want to see some fun,
Come to the office, everyone.
We can guarantee a show
Way down there in 5 P.O.

Two telephones in parallel,
When they ring it's just sheer hell.
If the defect is for you,
Answer quickly "432."

If perchance a pack you've lost,
You will find out to your cost,
That if it should have come this way,
It's still in someone's black in-tray.

Requests for drafts and lifts and cranes
Tax the effort of all the "brains."
But if your fan has ceased to go,
You'll soon appreciate the blow.

Armatures and field coils here,
Magnetrons and crates of beer.
Amps and volts and varies,
How on earth can one relax.

Daily orders go to press,
You should all read them in your Mess.
What the purpose, who and when
Is sometimes beyond our ken!

It was overheard whilst working late,
By a certain senior rate,
A self-confession in a twinkle,
That someone had a 'wiched wink!

Banyan parties and "Exped,"
For those who lead and those who're led.
Rounds and ras, your arms will ache,
Once again we've won the cake.

There is a certain telephone,
With a sound all of its own.
Stand well clear and let's have hush,
Or be trodden in the rush!

The crane's U/S, it just won't luff,
All right then, "Play it off the cuff."
The boat is holed now that won't do,
The First Lieutenant's in a stew.

Floodlights large and cocktail circuits,
Microgram and chaps to work it,
Rude remarks and change of plans,
It's all routine for duty hands.

Stores get lost and don't arrive,
Power goes off and out we dive,
At four o'clock the party's over,
All is well, and we're in clover.

MAN

Used Carriers on the Road



With apologies to the "Autocar."

Test No. 99. 1954 "C" Time Series. *Centaur* Class. *Albion* Model. Licence No. R07.

Makers: Messrs. Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson, of Wallsend-on-Tyne.

Price: Secondhand, £5 million, or best offer. Credit terms available. New, £12,750,000 free of tax.

Performance: Acceleration from rest, to 10 m.p.h. - 5 mins., to 20 m.p.h. - 10mins., to 27.5 - 20 mins.; Braking distances, from 27.5 - 1.53 miles, from 20 m.p.h. - 1.02 miles, from 10 m.p.h. - .044 miles.

Fuel consumption: Cruising 150 gall./mile; full 250 gall./mile.

Oil consumption, negligible, about 1 pint/mile.

Mileage counter reading, 238,879 miles.

Date laid down, 23rd March, 1944. Date launched, 6th May, 1947. Date first registered, 27th May, 1954.

Provided for test by Admiralty Ltd., Whitehall London. Tel.: WHI 6000.

ONE OF THE AIMS of this series is to bring to the notice of potential used carrier buyers among readers some of the carriers which they may not have considered before, usually because they had not realised that depreciation had brought such models within their particular price range. The *Albion 54* Model is a good example of this.

While admittedly the mileage covered by the example tested is probably not high, its body condition is much above average for what is really a sixteen-year-old carrier, and there is little to fault in its mechanical order. On driving it one is impressed immediately by the precision and response of nearly all of the controls, while the silent and stately progress it affords helps to make it a very enjoyable carrier in which to travel. The only attention needed to the mechanical side of this model concerns the brakes, which are of indifferent performance and show by

the length of pedal travel to be in need of adjustment; also a tendency for the engine to carry on turning when stopped. Starting is not instantaneous until after a long period of warming through. Trifling details in themselves, but which tend to spoil an otherwise immaculate mechanical performance.

The engine is a four-cylinder turbine unit driving twin shafts, and though it has overhead steam valves there is none of the sluggishness which is often associated with this basic design. Instead it is remarkably lively, responding eagerly to the throttle, and no concern need be felt for the maximum forcing rate with the built-in governor control. It is not particularly sensitive at low revolution increases, but remains extremely quiet throughout its range and at top speed is seldom audible at all. In the higher speed range a certain amount of vibration and body noise at the back end becomes evident but which in no way interferes with the general comfort. The negligible oil consumption and most economic rate of using fuel show clearly the care which has been lavished upon the maintenance of the engine unit. The exhaust smoke when first starting up or at high speed can prove a trifle troublesome, and a better position for the exhaust pipe itself could surely have been found. The performance figures suggest that acceleration is fairly leisurely, but there is no impression of this once under way.

Little gearbox wear is evident, contrary to what one might expect with a single stage gearbox and is quiet to such an extent that the driver happily leaves this gear engaged for long spells in traffic driving. The m.p.h. figure at 236 r.p.m. is just under thirty, and this well-chosen gearing ratio undoubtedly contributes to the carrier's economy and its effortless cruising at any speed up to its maximum.

Independent hydraulic suspension all round is, of course, a "must" on this type of machine and results

in excellent insulation of the carrier from normal external noises and jolts. The ride is smooth and stately, becoming outstandingly-good on rough surfaces, and the only weakness is a tendency to float on wavy surfaces, suggesting some deterioration of the dampers. On corners the carrier holds well, cornering fast on wet surfaces with little roll or squeal. The oversteer characteristic of the carrier is not noticed until cornered hard, when an unpleasant roll oversteer occurs.

The steering wheel is large and set at a comfortable angle, but vision generally from this position is not good. No detectable lost movement is present in the steering, which contributes to the pleasure of driving. The *Albion* responds to the smallest wheel movement and its directional stability, little affected by cross winds, is splendid. The steering does not stiffen excessively at manoeuvring speeds, and the lock is sufficiently good to make parking easy.

The interior trim leaves a certain amount to be desired while showing occasionally traces of its former elegance. The upholstery has in places begun to come adrift and tell-tale rust marks have begun to appear in the corners. Excessive darkening of the interior tells the age of the carrier, but the fitted corticene carpets and red plastic doorway trims show little signs of wear. The general appearance inside is one of very mild deterioration.

Externally the appearance is better still and looks very smart with paintwork and brightwork which for the most part shine brilliantly. The roof has been resprayed lawn green in a delightful patchwork fashion, while the remainder of the finish is in two shades of grey with a rust brown edging.

The two sunshine roofs, a feature unique to this class of machine, are very positive in action if not entirely watertight in practice and might well be worth sealing off completely. Luggage space in the

boot is somewhat limited, but the large amount of space inside the body provides ample accommodation for normal requirements. A roof rack is very easily fitted if required.

A small dent in the front lower part of the body has obviously been hammered out, and there are minor abrasions on the underside of the body probably gained at the same time; these, however, detract nothing from the carrier's performance. The undersealing coat applied at the last major overhaul is wearing remarkably well, and areas of rust and pitting are the exception rather than the rule.

All the electrical equipment is working perfectly, and all the switches give a positive snap when operated. Similarly there is a splendidly solid action about the way in which the hatches and doors close. The carrier as a whole is almost free of rattles and feels rigid and strongly built.

A comprehensive range of tools is supplied with the *Albion*, which should not be construed as a slight on the carrier's reliability but rather as an indication of the thoroughness of its construction and fitting out.

The performance figures quoted were gained using the premium grade Admiralty type fuel, but the engines with their 300 : 1 exhaust ratio run perfectly happily on commercial grade fuel.

Allowing for the fact that the *Albion* is a right-hand bridge drive, which naturally influences the price, it can undoubtedly be said that it is one of the better examples of value for money tested in this series.

Prospective purchasers might well be interested in the latest conversion kit for this model now on the market and retailing quite cheaply. Obtained from the well-known firm of H.M.D.Y. of Portsmouth, Hants, it is known as the Commando Kit and is quite easily fitted while you wait.

Will it fit your garage? Length overall, 737 feet; width, 123 feet.

