

R.M.S. ARK ROYAL



FIFTH COMMISSION
1964-66

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CAPTAIN M. F. FELL, D.S.O., D.S.C. +, R.N.

FOREWORD

by

Captain M. F. FELL, D.S.O., D.S.C. †, Royal Navy

Ark Royal is a famous name in the Royal Navy. During the Second World War there were few who did not know of her or of her achievements. She was held in great affection by the people of our Islands and when she was finally sunk their reaction was first one of disbelief and then of personal loss.

I believe that our *Ark Royal*, the fourth to bear the name, is a worthy successor to our war-time predecessor. I feel qualified to make this statement having served in the war-time *Ark*, served in our *Ark Royal* during her first commission and finally had the honour to command her during her fifth commission.

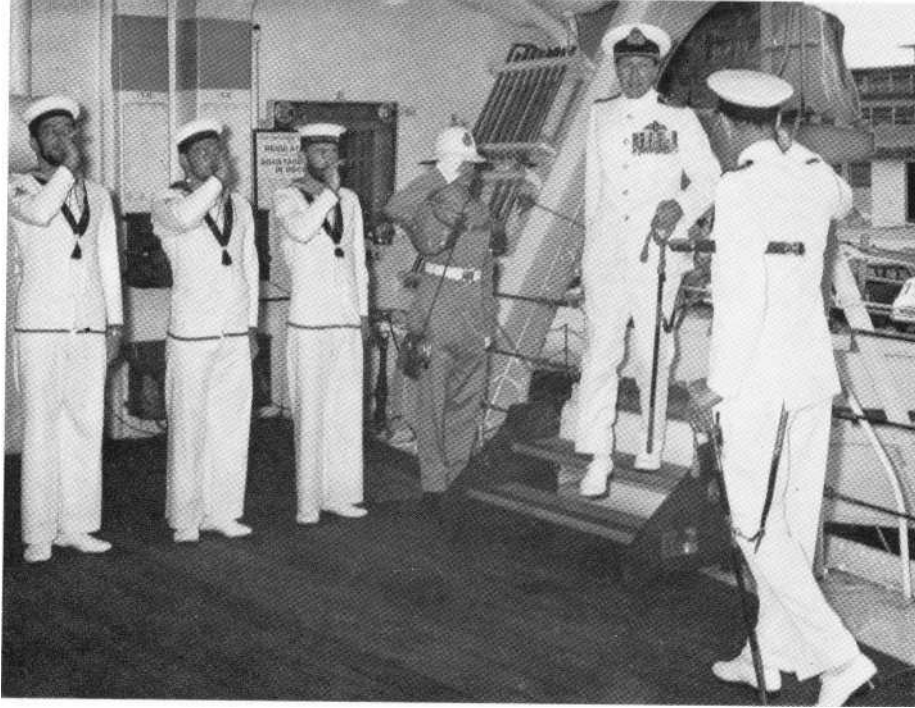
No matter how modern a ship or her weapons or her aircraft or her equipment, she is nothing without the men who man her. It is they, and they alone, who bring her alive and infuse spirit into her. Each and everyone of you can feel pride in the way you have achieved this during the *Ark's* fifth commission. She is not as young as she used to be, and by the middle of June 1966 had steamed some 405,000 miles, 100,000 miles of which were steamed during this commission.

You have not only kept her running but brought her to a high degree of efficiency. You have all worked long and arduous hours and yet remained cheerful throughout. Whenever Senior Officers have visited the ship, they have commented on the excellent spirit in her.

And what has all the training been leading up to? First and foremost, that we have the ability to steam vast distances quickly and then perform any operational task assigned to us, as we demonstrated during the Beira patrols. The presence of *Ark Royal* in the Far East during the height of the Indonesian confrontation of Malaysia was undoubtedly not only a stabilizing but a restraining influence. Perhaps it is all best summed up by the Far East Fleet Commander who, when we left the station at the end of our year East of Suez, said - "The *Ark* is a key figure in a world political scene of great difficulty. It should be a matter of pride that this is so and that each movement and action of the ship should count for so much."



CHANGE OF CAPTAIN



Captain M. F. Fell, D.S.O., D.S.C.⁺, R.N. joins

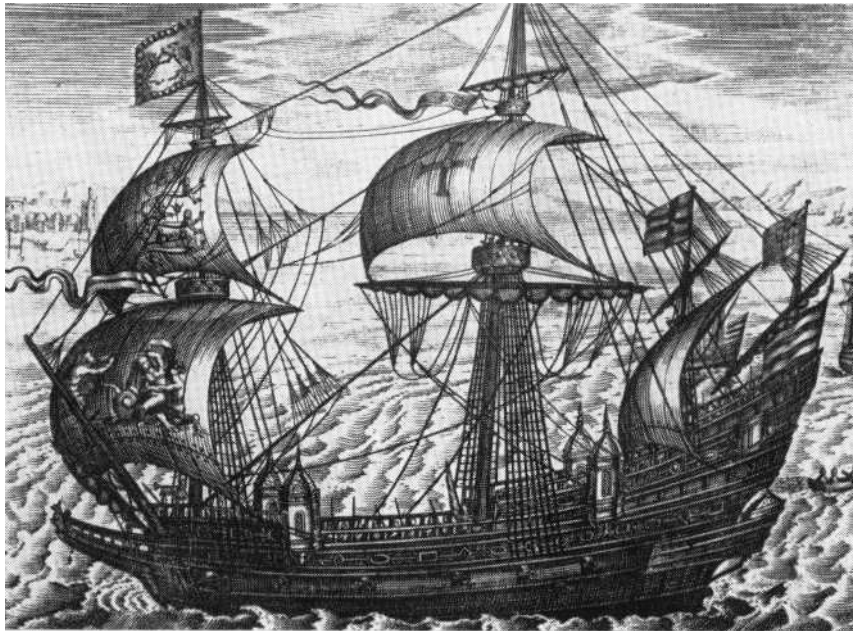


Captain A. T. F. Griffin, R.N. is pulled away

The History of H.M.S. Ark Royal

In 1586, Sir Walter Raleigh placed an order with R. Chapman, shipbuilder of Deptford, for a vessel to be named Ark or, more correctly, *Ark Raleigh*, for ships then bore their owner's name. In January 1587, the Crown bought her from Sir Walter and she became styled *Ark Royal*, a formidable vessel of 38 guns, and a ship for great occasions. Her greatest was the Battle of the Armada. With the flag of the Lord High Admiral of England, Lord Howard of Effingham, at her masthead she was in the battle from the first encounter with the Spaniards off Plymouth to the decisive battle of Gravelines, chasing the scattered and fleeing Spanish ships into the North Sea and beyond the Firth of Forth. It was not the last time Lord Howard was to fly his flag in her, for in 1596 she was in the front line of the joint Army and Navy expedition against Cadiz, an interesting early example of combined service operations. The Spaniards only threatened England with invasion once more, in 1599, and *Ark Royal* was again commissioned as flagship. Perhaps the memory of her guns spoiled the Spanish appetite for action against her, for the threat died and *Ark Royal* never saw action again in her own name. When James I acceded to the throne he renamed her *Anne Royal*, in honour of his Queen Anne of Denmark. In 1625, under her new style, and as flagship of Lord Wimbledon, she led another expedition against Cadiz, this time a disastrous one owing to the poor preparations made for it.

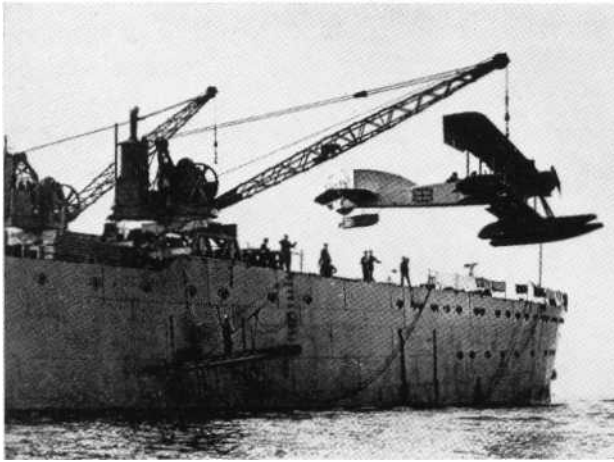
To her Admirals she was a great ship in all conditions, an opinion definitely not shared by the soldiers who were carried in her and who complained of the excessive rolling. Only the soldiers therefore would not mourn when, in 1636, as she was moving from the Medway for service as Sir John Pennington's flagship, she stove in her timbers on her own anchor and sank. At a cost greater than her original purchase price she was raised and docked, but found to be beyond repair and broken up.



Three centuries passed before another ship called *Ark Royal* fought for Great Britain. She was a merchant ship bought for the Royal Navy whilst still building in 1914 and converted into a sea-plane carrier. With the Mediterranean Fleet she served at the Dardanelles and the Gallipoli landings and, in 1918, in the Russian operations in the Black Sea, where in 1920 she was the evacuation ship for Russian

THE HISTORY OF H.M.S. ARK ROYAL

refugees from the Revolution. After refitting in Rosyth and a period in reserve she joined the Fleet again at Constantinople when trouble was brewing between Greece and Turkey. Returning to England in 1923 she was placed in reserve and eventually disposed of.



Embarking a seaplane in the second Ark Royal



Last hours of the third Ark Royal

The third Ark Royal, a ship of 22,000 tons, was launched at Birkenhead in 1937. She was destined to carry some seventy-two aircraft and 1,500 officers and men into some of the most stirring battles of the Second World War. After taking part in the Norwegian Campaign in 1940, she joined the attacks on the French Fleet at Oran when France had fallen to the Germans. She then joined the famous Force "H" based at Gibraltar and for fifteen months saw action in the Mediterranean, where she was a favourite target for the enemy, notably on convoy runs to Malta. The sinking of Ark Royal was a frequent German claim, and the enemy doubtless wished it were true when she played a crucial part in the great naval operation of the sinking of the Bismark. Her career was in fact ended early in the morning of 14th November 1941 when, having been torpedoed the previous day by a submarine, the "old Ark" - as she is still referred to by many - turned over and sank within sight of Gibraltar.

In May 1943, the keel of the present Ark Royal was laid down at Cammell Laird's Yard, Birkenhead, by Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, and in 1950 she was launched by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, now the Queen Mother. The ship has an overall length of 810 feet and has a deep displacement of 50,786 tons, the fourth great ship to bear a famous name.

She was adopted at the time of her building by both Lloyd's and the City of Leeds.

OUR ADMIRALS



*Rear Admiral H. R. B. Janvrin,
C.B., D.S.C.,
Flag Officer Aircraft Carriers*

Vice-Admiral P. J. Hill-Norton, C.B.

*Flag Officer Second-in-Command,
Far East Fleet*



COMMISSIONING DAY

12th November, 1964

On Thursday, 12th November 1964, the Commissioning Ceremony for the Fifth Commission was held in the Hangar. It marked the end of several months of refit in Devonport Dockyard and the beginning of a full programme of Storing and Trials that was designed to be completed by Christmas. The evening before, many of those who were now gathered for the Ceremony had been to the Ship's Ball which had been held in the Guildhall. On this sunny, cheerful morning the ladies found themselves in a quandary as to how they were to achieve the maximum of comfort, warmth and elegance simultaneously. Our guests came on board in their hundreds - civic and Naval dignitaries, families and friends. The Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth, Admiral Sir Nigel Henderson, K.C.B., O.B.E.; and Lady Henderson, and the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Plymouth headed the list of Official Guests.



COMMISSIONING DAY



The Ship's Company and their Guests stood while the Captain (Captain A. T. F. G. Griffin, R.N.) read the Commissioning Warrant. This Warrant had been read originally in February to the few Officers and men who had stayed on after the end of the Fourth Commission to see the ship through her refit. This fact was betrayed by the use of the words "Their Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty" which had been correct at the time of issue but had receded into History with the inception of the unified Ministry of Defence in April 1964. When he had completed the reading of the Warrant, the Captain called on the Ship's Company to ask God's Blessing on H.M.S. *Ark Royal*, using the Gaelic Blessing of 1589, which contains these words:

The Captain: What do you fear seeing that God the Father is with you?

The Ship's Company: We fear nothing.

The Captain: What do you fear seeing that God the Son is with you?

The Ship's Company: We fear nothing.

The Captain: What do you fear seeing that God the Holy Spirit is with you?

The Ship's Company: We fear nothing.

There followed a brief service of hymn and prayer led by the Chaplain, assisted by the Roman Catholic and Free Church Chaplains, and ending with the Benediction: "Go forth into the world in peace. Be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no man evil for evil; strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour all men; love and serve the Lord."

Finally, the Captain gave an address of welcome to the friends and families who had joined with us on this occasion and started the lighter side of the festivities by helping Mrs. Griffin to cut the first slice of the traditional Commissioning Cake.

