



The Rt. Hon. Christopher Mayhew, M.P., Minister of Defence for the Royal Navy,



Mr. Mayhew takes coffee with the Chief Petty Officers



DISTINGUISHED VISITORS



Dame Joan Vickers, D.B.E., M.P.

Mr. J. P. W. Mallalieu, M.P., Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Navy



*His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.
Dr. Ramsey, P.C., D. D.*



Mr. A. L. M. Cary, C.B., Second Permanent Under-Secretary of State



*Field Marshal Sir Richard Hull, G.C.B., D.S.O., B.A.,
Chief of Defence Staff*



*Admiral Sir David Luce, G.C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E.,
First Sea Lord*



*Admiral Sir Wilfrid Woods, G.B.E.,
K.C.B., D.S.O., C-in-C. Portsmouth*

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS



*Admiral Sir Nigel Henderson, K.C.B.,
O.B.E., C-in-C. Plymouth*



*Vice-Admiral Sir Raymond Hawkins, K.C.B.,
Chief of Naval Supplies and Transport*



*Rear Admiral D. C. E. F. Gibson, C.B., D.S.C.,
Flag Officer Naval Flying Training*

EARLY DAYS

At 0800 on Thursday, 24th November, we slipped and sailed sedately down the Hamoaze towards the Sound and the open sea. The two weeks since the Commissioning had been a turmoil of Inclining Trials and Gales, of Storing and Ammunitioning, of embarking Trials teams and test equipment. On the 19th, the two Whirlwinds of the Ship's Flight had landed on to act as a reminder that our essential purpose is to carry aircraft.

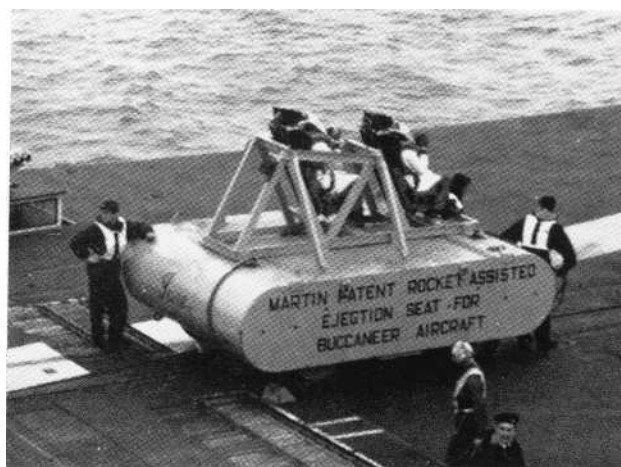
Within a couple of days we were at full stretch when we were called upon to conduct the search for a Sea Vixen aircraft that had come out to inspect our new Flight Deck lighting and had failed to return to Yeovilton. Sadly the search was unsuccessful and we returned, slightly exhausted, to Charlie Buoy. There we fired off "Jane", a float which carried two experimental rocket assisted ejection seats. As the float reached the end of the catapult the seats were fired, the dummies were ejected high into the air and then drifted gently down on their parachutes into the sea from where they were rapidly recovered.

By the end of the month we were ready to accept the first aircraft into the arresting gear. At 0930 on the 30th, Lieut.-Cdr. W. H. Barnard (Commanding Officer of 849 Squadron) came into the first wire and then, with the deft touch of a master, plucked each in turn to give it an official clearance. During the week further clearance trials of catapults and arresting gears were carried out under a variety of conditions by Scimitar, Sea Vixen and Gannet aircraft. All these were completed in time for the entry into Portsmouth for the week-end, a time for a rest and for the "Pompey" families to have a good look over the ship.

During the week-end Whale Island embarked their Trials team and when we sailed again it was to face Gunnery trials and Gales concurrently. These lasted two days. In the fine weather which followed the storm flying was resumed and we welcomed some distinguished visitors - the Minister of Defence for the Navy, the Rt. Hon. Christopher Mayhew, M.P. and also Rear Admiral D. C. E. F. Gibson, D.S.C., a former Captain of *Ark Royal* and now Flag Officer Naval Flying Training. The fine weather was short-lived and a forecast of a serious deterioration led to a return to Devonport Dockyard a day early, to the unconcealed delight of the natives. We had found our "sea Legs" and knew that after Christmas leave we should be steaming north to improve and perfect our techniques in an operational Work-Up.



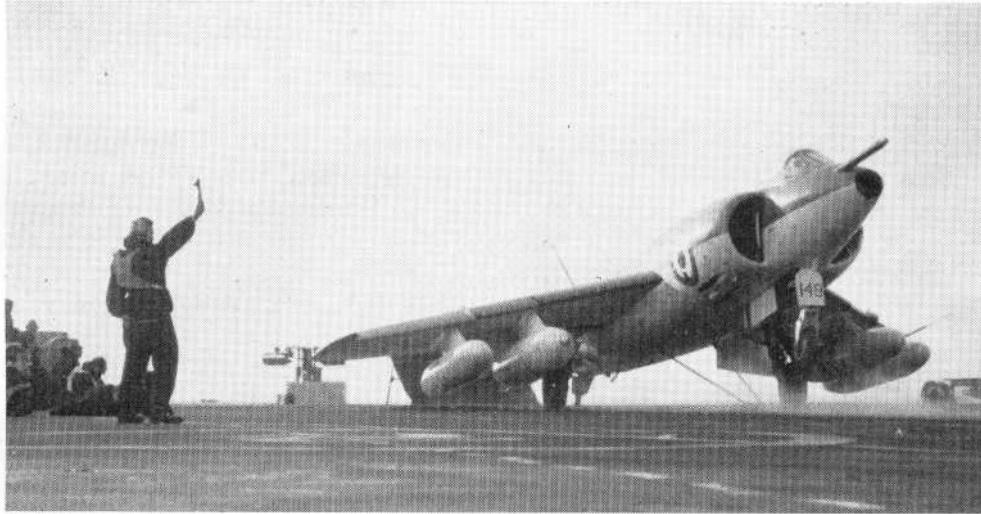
The first wire



Jane



Rocket assisted



AIR DEPARTMENT

Whaffooes, Airey Fairies, Birdmen and other less complimentary terms of endearment are among the collective nomenclatures given to the Air Department; whereas in truth, and according to the official records, it consists of Flying Control, Aircraft Control Room Staff, Flight Deck and Hangar teams, Operations Staff, Sea Air Rescue Flight, Safety Equipment Section, Photographic Section, Meteorological Section, Carrier Control Approach team, and last but not least, the Air Office. (Priority has no place, for team work is the order of any and every day.) It is about these persons upon whom flying operations partly depend, that this saga is written. A saga of flying programme changes, respotting the flight deck, painting the island, marshalling aircraft on to the catapults, safety crews who unceasingly sweat it out in their fire-fighting suits, of weather reporting, the movement of aircraft around the flight deck and in the hangar, and the movements of lifts between the two, and many other jobs which help to keep aircraft flying safely and efficiently. A saga of not any one person, but of a multitude, who are ever ready to let their presence be known no matter whether it is working the flight deck, potted sports, uckers championships, or a casual run ashore. Immodestly will their tale be told in the hope that those who have not understood them during the Fifth Commission, and have all too readily sung, "There's a mess-up on the Flight Deck and the Aircraft Handlers (augmented by enlisted stokers) did it," may see the error of their ways, and accept them with the same good humour

that sometimes created not so much a flying programme, but a way of life.

Cor! The inevitable opening remark of just about everyone who joined the ship in Guzz and saw a flight deck that was strewn with every imaginable piece of machinery - Steptoe's scrap yard had nothing on it! To avoid going completely mad the entire team detached to Culdrose to learn their trade of shouting rude sayings at each other, driving tractors around the flight deck like a poor man's Jim Clark, and generally trying to convince each other that they were the bees' knees. There is no denying they were quite good, but they found that they still had much to learn.



This is the operations officer speaking...

AIR DEPARTMENT



Rigging the barrier

This they did in Brest and Bergen, and a little at sea besides, and by the time the ship sailed for the Far East they had settled into a steady routine. A routine that is only ever broken when flying and arguing with the Aircraft Control Room gives way to replenishment stations. The familiar cries of "Whoa! Back up! Left hand down a bit!" are superseded with the unfamiliar Seamanlike terms of "Avast!" and "Belay!" as Naval Airmen are used for humping spuds instead of manoeuvring aircraft.

On the whole, life on the flight deck has been much the same as ever; exciting, frightening, too hot, too cold or simply laughable. The description would entirely depend on the viewpoint of Commander (Air), the Flight Deck Officer, a goofer, a fireman in the tropics, or a chockman in the Arctic. But, however, everyone will admit to the magnificent example of co-operation and a real sense of purpose of the Barrier rigging team to erect a barrier in the record time of 2 minutes 34 seconds, in order to "stop" a Scimitar which was unable to lower one of its oleos. It is this sort of initiative and team work that aircrew confidently rely upon.

"Diabolical!" The Aircraft Control Room Officer's signature-tune. A skeleton of a man, a mere 142 stone, who before trying to make the Flying Programme work, and appeasing, on the one hand irate Flight Deck Officers, and on the other Squadron Air Engineer Officers, all of whom require him to organize an impossible number of aircraft moves in an impossibly short time, had a marvellous head of hair. A sense of humour has been an essential part of his make-up, and the ability to maintain a straight face when subse-

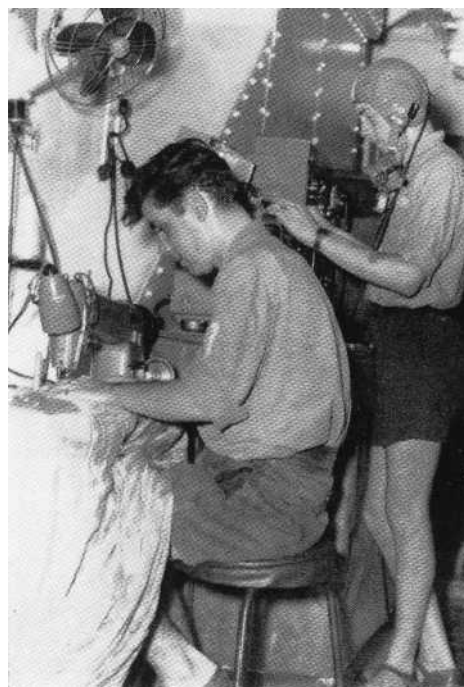
quently blaming the Flight Deck Officers for the ensuing snarl-ups.

Someone, unfamiliar with flight deck operations, may have been completely bemused by the upward turned faces of the flight deck teams, as another megacrisis occurred. Their glances were directed not towards Heaven, but Flyco, the Olympus of the Air Department, the home of Commander (Air) and Lieut.-Cdr. (F), for it is this small compartment that looks like Dad's greenhouse from whence all things great and small come.

These are people who form the greater majority of the Air Department - the people who enjoy the tropical sunshine and equally weather the rude winds and rains of the Arctic.

Down below in the two grottoes of the lower and upper hangar, a different species of the same breed play a variation of uckers with real life aircraft. For no matter where or how they arrange them, of one thing they can be certain, the one aircraft the ACRD wants, is the one which is right at the back. Somehow they cope without scratching the paint or denting too many, and in addition watch over their charges throughout, and every day attend upon the aircraft like wet nurses as they pour fuel over their clean decks.

With screwdriver, parachute packing stick, and Singer's sewing machine the S.E. ratings take in-



Safety equipment

AIR DEPARTMENT

finite care in looking after every piece of flying clothing and equipment which is worn or is likely to be used by an aviator to save his life or protect him against the rigours of near-supersonic flight, or surviving in the sea or jungle. Like so many of us, often unseen, but ever relied upon by the aircrew, and by those who have their number eights patched or their shorts made even shorter on the treadle machine.

Like every other society there are those who work, and those who sit in offices and introduce complications for the others. The Bureaucrats! The best known of these is probably the Ops Department. From their darkened space in the island, originate ship's and flying programmes, programme alterations, mail arrangements, onward routing of compassionate cases, safety of aircraft, press liaison, and every other sort of organizing job that may be going. They are among the sort of people on board who are instantly recognizable, because they enjoy that lack-of-sleep look, which accentuates the contrasting dark bags under their eyes with their blanched night club pallor.

Practically next door is the Met Office, an organization who will go to endless pains to explain to you that tomorrow will be fairly cloudy, with some rain, and above all else, weather. They dabble in their mystic cult of climatic clairvoyancy, and make sacrificial offerings to their gods by launching radio-sonde balloons, in the hope that they might receive a prophecy of "tomorrow's weather". If you ask most people, they will explain that in fact they have hopes of setting up a rival air group of their own.

Also tucked away in the island are the Air Traffic



Rest between ranges



A quick dip?

Control Officers who with great aplomb talk down the aircraft on to the deck during bad visibility and at night. Often unheard, frequently unseen, but nevertheless a very important lot.

Perhaps the most noticeable group in the Air Department are the SAR crews, who sit in their helicopters like watchdogs, ready to retrieve any lame aircrew who may unfortunately fall into the sea. Their presence is a comfort, and the other miscellaneous work they perform, such as numerous transfers at sea, is much appreciated.

The two remaining departments are a complete contrast! On the one hand the Air Office which disgorges bumph to no mean scale, on matters as diverse as Air Department Temporary Memos and the Air Department Football Swindle. On the other hand the Photographic Section, which states that semi-illiteracy drove them to hide where they could express themselves in pictures rather than script.

But life is not just a bowl of cherries, and no *one* airman would claim himself of paramount importance in an aircraft carrier, for each officer and naval airman realizes that he is an integral part of the Air Department and also that the Air Department is an integral part of the ship; and without each other *Ark Royal* could not exist.

Therefore, may we thank the rest of the Ship's Company of the Fifth Commission for helping us, by providing steam, stores, food, entertainment, and so many other things, to do our job.

THE MORAY FIRTH

Christmas and Hogmanay came and went and were celebrated decorously or immoderately according to taste and native land; early January brought the reality of further storing and ammunitioning into cold, dark nights. On the 12th January, Flag Officer Aircraft Carriers (Rear Admiral H.R.B. Janvrin, D.S.C.) hoisted his flag in H.M.S. *Ark Royal*. We were to have sailed the next day but a blustery gale delayed the departure for 24 hours. By nightfall of the 14th we had embarked the aircraft of 890 Squadron and 849 C Flight and were on our way towards Dover. An appreciation of the probable weather conditions during January in the Channel and in the Moray Firth indicated that the latter was preferable for a heavy flying programme. On the 16th, 803 Squadron and the helicopters of 819 Squadron landed on to complete the air strength. A brief visit was paid to Rosyth, or rather it should have been brief, but a mishap with a boat-rope gave the diving team a chance to operate in the fast-moving, bitterly cold waters of the Forth.

The weather log shows a variety of conditions off Lossiemouth at this time - fine, cold, dry days; cold days with snow showers; cold days with strong winds and cold days with no wind at all. The M.F.V. came out daily and we had visitors by air. We even had one Wren stenographer who nearly had to spend a night on board but was eventually bundled into a boat for a long, rough passage to the shore. The centre of activities was, of course, the Flight Deck and everyone spent some time in "Goofers" as our Pilots practised their several arts of handling their aircraft. Emergency drills were practised both on the Flight Deck and below - Damage Control exercises, Emergency Stations, Crash on Deck, Shelter Stations - and we dashed, sometimes uncertainly or in the dark to the appropriate spot. The hours of flying extended as the pilots regained their skills - first into the dusk and then into the dark of night.

On Sunday, 24th January, the news came through that Sir Winston Churchill had died after some weeks of illness. Only the youngest of the Ship's Company can have failed to have had some personal recollection of the great man or to have been aware of his impact

on Britain and the world. For the first time in this century there was to be a State Funeral for a Commoner. One wondered whether we should be called upon to to send officers or men to stand guard in Westminster Hall or to line the streets of London. The day chosen for the Funeral was the Saturday when we were due to visit Brest. Would it be regarded as quite suitable to have the first "run ashore" abroad at a time when both Britain and France would be in mourning? Some said that we should be diverted to Portsmouth and others that we should return to Devonport. (The words "The Buzz is Guzz" were to recur throughout the Commission in every clime and on any occasion.) Doubts were soon resolved and the visit was to proceed, if in a somewhat quieter and more subdued mood.

ARK TO THE RESCUE

The little 22-ton Grimsby seine net fishing vessel *Aldersea* had been in distress for two days in the storm-lashed North Sea with engine failure and with her radio out of action, when *Ark Royal* passed nearby on her way to Brest. Handflares were lighted and the Union Jack was flown upside down as conventional distress signals and *Ark* altered course and came to the rescue.

The motor-cutter was sent over with four engineers, two wireless operators and a doctor to try to sort out their problems. The Skipper of the *Aldersea* was almost afraid that the influx of rescuers would sink his craft. While the engineers tried unsuccessfully to restart the engine, *Ark* relayed messages to Grimsby who were unaware of *Aldersea's* difficulties or of *Ark's* presence in the area. The 40-ton *Foursome* was soon on its way to take the *Aldersea* in tow, the Skipper having refused the offer of a somewhat perilous tow from the enormous carrier. About five hours later when *Foursome* arrived on the scene Captain Griffin sent his last signal to Grimsby, "Have turned *Aldersea* over to *Foursome* and am now proceeding in execution of previous orders."

VISIT TO BREST

Although many old hands were *blasé* about visiting France, there were about 400 on board for whom this was the first visit to a foreign country. Brest is not exactly the Riviera, nor was the weather welcoming, but all were determined to get a breath of French air. The 38-foot draught of the *Ark* limits the number of ports in Europe, or elsewhere, where she can come alongside, but in Brest, where the Germans had built deep underground submarine pens which are still visible, she had plenty of water underneath. Just ahead of *Ark* lay the Battleship *Richelieu*, stationary now but still impressive. This was to be our host ship and there was a great deal of convivial hospitality offered aboard her at all levels.

The mourning for Sir Winston meant that the social side of the visit had to be somewhat curtailed; nevertheless, the Flag Officer Aircraft Carriers had to pay and receive a number of Official Calls. On the second day, the Admiral and other senior officers attended a ceremony at the Hotel de Ville when the Royal Marines Band Beat Retreat in an impressive display.

The screening of the State Funeral presented quite a problem for *Ark* T.V. Eurovision uses 625 lines; the French use their own 819 lines; *Ark* in common with the B.B.C., uses 405 lines. With the help of the French authorities a 819-line receiver and its associated aerial were hastily installed and by focusing the Studio camera on this screen a satisfactory picture was relayed round the ship. In every Mess quiet groups watched the pomp and pageantry of the procession through the streets of London, secretly proud of the bearing of the naval Gun Carriage Crew. On the Sunday forenoon, 31st January, representatives of the City of Brest and of the French Navy came to join in a short Commemorative Service, which was conducted in French and English by the Chaplain and by a local Catholic priest.

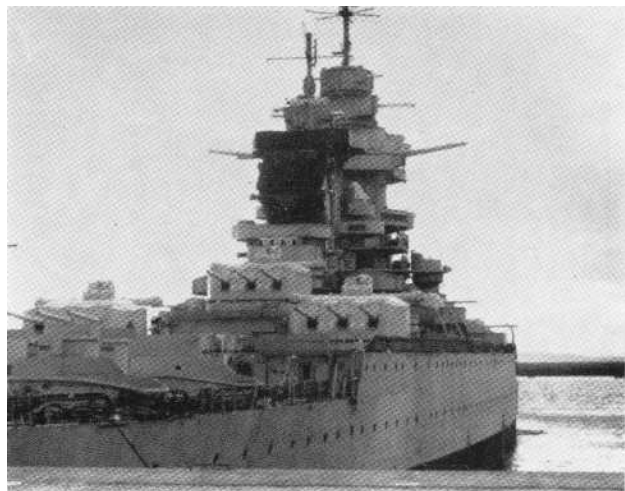
Despite the depressing weather a considerable crowd came onboard when the ship was Open to Visitors, and showed interest in the ship, in the aircraft and in the weapons and stores displayed in the Hangar. A small but happy Children's Party was also given.

The sporting programme was a heavy one. The matches took on something of the flavour of international competition with the presentation of the teams to the Senior Officer present, the playing of the National Anthems, the giving of pennants and bouquets and an excessive amount of hand-shaking. Association and Rugby Football, Basket-ball, Golf and Judo were also contested.

Between these events there was still time and energy



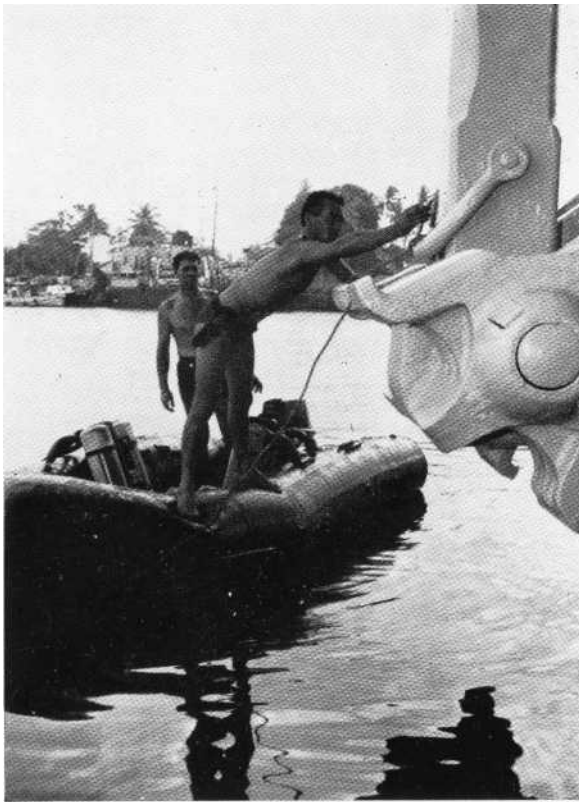
for the "run ashore", where everybody seemed to achieve what they intended. There was plenty of good, if expensive, food for the discerning; an abundance of cheap, if lethal, drink for the fool-hardy; shopping, dancing, bars and cafes galore. Several hundred Breton dolls were bought (later to provide an outrageous revenue for the Rosyth Customs). The weekend gave a chance for the ship's company, who were learning to work together, also to enjoy themselves together. One small postscript in the Commission Diary - on Wednesday, 3rd February, the Captain's Defaulters lasted for three and a half hours. C'est toujours comme ça!



SEAMAN DEPARTMENT

There is an International Prize presented annually to the man who "by technical and human skill displays, to the very highest degree, a measure of that imponderable and not easily defined quality of the seaman which is his seafaring spirit." How far can we capture this quality of the seaman among us by examining their technical and human skills?

In the first place, the large number of those described as Seamen soon divide off into splinter groups and sub-sections so that, of the 30 officers and 300 men in the Department, only four seem to have *exclusively* seafaring problems at heart - Jimmy, the Bosun, the Buffer and Sam. Every store containing rigging shackles, hawsers, swivel-pieces, stoppers and the like is firmly designated "The Bosun's Store" and Section Rounds reveal that their number is legion.



Technical and human skill?

(Apart from his immense knowledge about cable-work and replenishment rigs, the Bosun has also proved to be the repository of other exclusive know-how and folk-lore such as how to conduct a Crossing-the-Line Ceremony, the art of telepathy and the delights of Crown and Anchor.) Those who give a hand with anchors and cables inhabit the Fc'sle while, at the other end, the locals are recognized by their habit of marking their buckets, scrubbers and everything else in sight with the mystic letters A X - which is their own esoteric abbreviation for the Quarterdeck.

The bulk of the alleged seamen prefer, in fact, to devote their time to such diverse and multifarious activities as being a Sailmaker's or a Painter's Mate, a Navigator's Yeoman, P.T.I.'s, Butchers or in that large group, called the Seaman Weapons Party, who appear to owe their allegiance to the Electricals, if to anybody. The Communications ratings retired long since from the hurly-burly to the ivory tower from which they distribute pink and white signals indiscriminately (almost), while the Radar Party base their activities on another lofty office, when they are not huddled in the half-dark over their plots and screens. A small group of T.A.S. operate in such seclusion and secrecy that they have recorded their activities in verse in another part of this publication.

At sea, the working day seems to be divided between watch-on-deck and painting in preparation for entering harbour: in harbour, there is a concentration on painting in the cause of ship-husbandry. To a seaman painting is not so much a part of the programme, it is more a way of life, and he devotes considerable thought and ingenuity to determine those parts of the ship where his labours will have the most effect on the life of the community as a whole. The art of placing the Warning Notice so that one has one's hand or foot firmly in the painted area before seeing the sign is one in which the experienced seaman excels.

Watch-on-Deck, however, makes real demands on the seafaring spirit, combining, as it does, the tedium of hours on watch in exposed, uncomfortable condi-

SEAMAN DEPARTMENT



Man the side

tions with a demand for instant, correct action in an emergency - the first sighting by a look-out, the crash lowering of the seaboat or the swift response of the life-buoy sentry. The hours of inactivity may so easily blunt the keenness and the sense of urgency.

At regular intervals there is the demonstration of the technical skills in the Replenishment-at-Sea. An account of the preparation and laying out of the gear could fill a Snotty's Journal - and frequently does! As the manoeuvre commences, so the goofers' positions fill up with avid spectators of seamanship. With Special Sea Dutymen closed up, the Captain gently eases the Ship into its correct position and the first line is passed, followed closely by the sequence of messengers, wires, hoses and telephones. While this evolution is being carried out on deck with controlled haste, and during the prolonged transfer of stores or fuel, the Quartermasters down in 6K require all their concentration to maintain the accuracy of course needed by the Captain to keep his station. And, on deck, the rest of the seamen are often pulling their weight in the actual jackstay operation, even though mechanical handling of stores has been developed to a fine art in *Ark Royal*.

In contrast to the organized confusion of the R.A.S. we can turn to the quiet and dignified ceremonial of the Quarterdeck in its harbour role. After an initial frenzy of securing alongside, the Officer of the Watch, in his cleanest suit and with a telescope traditionally under his arm, is Master of all he surveys and is the

Captain's Representative. Every visitor to the Ship stepping on to the Quarterdeck receives a courteous salute and welcome and every vessel passing is saluted or acknowledged by the O.O.W. In his task he is assisted by a group, ranging from the eldest to the youngest of the seaman department, whose specific duties are obscure but who act as guides, watchdogs, cup-bearers and what-have-you. It is also necessary to record the presence in this group of the Marine Bugler since technically he is not a member of the Royal Marines Band and will not, otherwise, get a mention anywhere in this book. His performance at 1115 daily has been *most* memorable.

Apart from the standard set by the Officer of the Watch and his team, a Ship is also judged by its Boats and its Side. *Ark* carries a great variety of types of boats but they have had few opportunities to display their versatility and prowess. Even when all the boats have been in use their manoeuvres have been principally distinguished (if that is the right word) by their handling by the Mids. under Training. Boat running is tremendously dependent on conditions - while Bergen and Mombasa leave pleasant memories of the



Away first motorboat

SEAMAN DEPARTMENT

boat trip, Rosyth will remain a ghastly memory. The Side Party have fought their everlasting battle against rust with brush and with chipping hammer. From time to time they have received reinforcement from some local team of cheerful Chinese. In one Ship's Quiz the question was asked, "Who painted *The Fighting Temeraire*?" The Captain was the first to reply with the answer - Jenny's Side Party!

The seamen and the airmen are probably most closely associated through the Back Room Boys of the A.I.O. Well over 1,500 interceptions have been completed, not including those controlled by our D's from shore-based radar stations, stretching from Yeovilton to Bukit Gombak. In addition, they have taken their share in some thousand C.C.A. recoveries in all weather conditions. The avoidance of Major Fleet exercises has reduced the Inter-Carrier programme.

Lastly, we come to the magic world of Gunnery which, in its turn, has many ramifications. Many of those who are numbered amongst the other sections mentioned above have duties inside the framework of Blue-Watch-of-This or Red-Watch-of-That. The hub



Pulling their weight



The bolas thrower

of this organization is the Gunnery Office in 7U, where Lt.-Cdr. (G) holds court (provided, that is, that he is not acting as Liaison Officer in Brest, Bergen, Singapore, Fremantle or Mombasa!). Three Gunnery men of mature years keep tight control over the weapons and the Watch bills, whether it be for a surface engagement or for the provision of Air Weapons on the Flight Deck. There is, also, one bright-eyed Lieutenant (G) who is kept as clean and shining as his own Wilkinson's sword in order to take charge of the well-drilled ceremonial guard that is turned out for visiting potentates or for the transfer of command. On one occasion at least all these gallant officers, together with the Chief G.I. and a posse of markers and measurers, fell on the innocent Ship's Company and dragooned them into Ceremonial Divisions. One was enough!

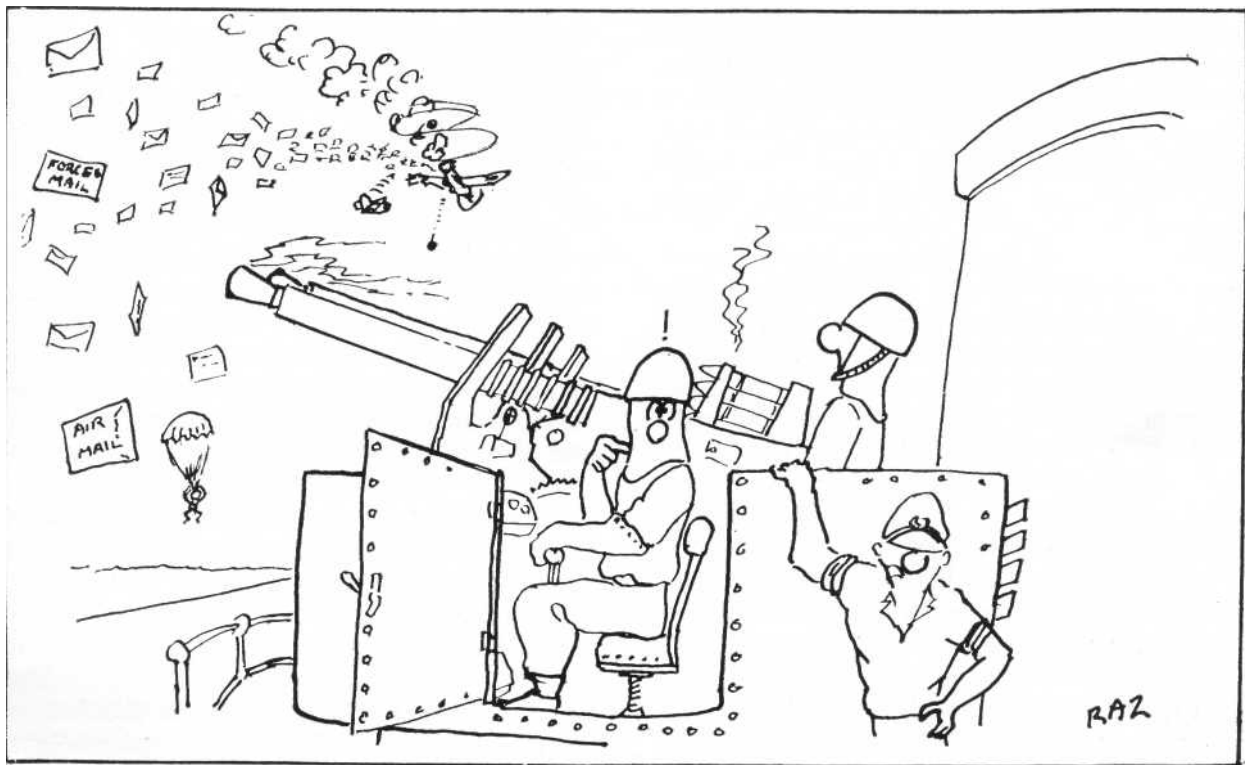
Slightly further down the chain of command we come to the Master Gunner's Party. These have apparently two main functions - the supply of webbing equipment and a limited amount of ammunition to Awkward sentries and to even more awkward Internal Security Platoons, and, secondly, a vital role in any ship-to-ship transfer when the otherwise versatile helicopter has been dispensed with. This process used to be heralded by the waving of flags and the blowing of whistles (the mark of the Gunner or G.I.) before the firing of the dreaded coston gun-line but,

SEAMAN DEPARTMENT

after a fatal accident in the Fleet, it was decided to try a less lethal method of passing the first line and the practice of throwing across the bolas was introduced. Rapid rotation of the bolas, together with release at the critical moment carries the bolas over the other vessel and the seamanlike evolution with distance lines, messengers, and those others, can commence. In rough weather, however, it is necessary to revert to the old-fashioned gun-line and the inevitable waving of flags and the blowing of whistles. This leads to happier faces among the Gunner's Party, who now feel that they understand what is going on.

Finally, since the Gunnery motto is *Si Vis Pacem,*

Para Bellum (If you wish for Peace, Prepare for War) one must not forget the Armament, the 4-5 inch medium range and the 40/60 close range mountings. Despite the fact that *Ark* now only possesses two of her original eight turrets, she has given a good account of herself against sleeves and pilotless aircraft, on Helicopter throw-off shoots and against Fast Patrol Boat targets. To achieve this, the Turret and Computer teams, with some help from the Royals, the Close Range and Gun Direction crews and the Weapon Supply numbers have all been vital cogs which enable the machine to run smoothly - yet another example of the efficiency and versatility of the very able seaman.



"Tell 'em to pipe, 'Mail is now ready for collection.'"

OPERATIONAL READINESS

On departing from Brest many felt less than well and their number was increased when *Ark* came clear of the Brittany coast into the teeth of a north-easterly gale and swell. During the night one for'ard scuttle gave way and the Damage Control experts had a real life exercise on their hands. Morning found us in the lee of Cornwall and a full day's flying was achieved as we steamed northwards towards Brawdy and the Pembrokeshire coast. Onwards through the Irish Sea and the Western Isles, west-about, and we were in the Moray Firth again. The solitary crofters of those desolate islands must have gazed with wonder that men could live so tightly packed as in an aircraft carrier; in turn, one wondered that they could live in such solitude.

After some delay, occasioned by F.F.O. in the feed water, the second full phase of the Work-Up was continued off Lossiemouth. The climax of this was a 24 hour exercise which was designed to test the operational efficiency when in a high state of Damage Control readiness and security. In addition the arrangements for feeding the ship "round-the-clock" were brought into action, including the provision of a night snack designed to sustain the watchkeepers during the long night. To the Pussers' surprise morning revealed that over 5,000 such snacks had been consumed - not to mention an additional 400 suppers. Apart from this one cheerful aspect, the exercise again demonstrated the fact that war is very largely discomfort and waiting and very little action and excitement.

Between the second and third phases there was a period of self maintenance at Rosyth. The aircraft disembarked to Lossiemouth in bitter winds of up to 70 knots, proving once more the remarkable serviceability which comes with the call to fly ashore. "At Rosyth" is not strictly accurate since the building of the Forth Road Bridge now prevented *Ark* from getting upstream of the Bridges. Long, dreary boat rides were to be our lot for the next ten days. Some of the keener souls struggled off to Glenshee and to the Dall Hut for Exped, and for some ski-ing practice in anticipation of the visit to Norway. Visitors from shore included some of the "light blue jobs" from the R.A.F.,

some apprentices from H.M.S. *Caledonia* and a large number of ladies who had for years been packing and despatching all manner of Naval and Air stores and were now discovering what their purpose was.

At last came the final phase of the Work-Up, when all the stops were out and all manner of emergencies were exercised, in preparation for the Inspection. The Flag Officer, Aircraft Carriers and his staff had left the ship at Brest and now returned to test and prove our Operational Readiness. To set the whole thing off on the right note the Inspection started at 0330 and continued throughout the day with a full and demanding flying programme, designed to meet all probable circumstances. In addition to this there were a number of incidents, promoted to test the individual departments. Early in the day one of the Staff passed an envelope to the Chief Yeoman. Inside he read a note which said, "You are to faint." He slumped to the deck on the Compass Platform. "What's the matter with you?" demanded the Commander in such a tone that the supposedly unconscious Chief could not refrain from gasping, "I've fainted, Sir." With considerable difficulty the Chief was manoeuvred down innumerable ladders to the Sick Bay. He subsequently returned to his post, pale and shaken.

When the flying was completed and the last aircraft safely on the deck, disaster broke out below decks as the yellow-banded umpires of the Staff distributed envelopes containing tidings of structural and other damage. Fires were started and extinguished; power supplies were lost and regained; bulkheads damaged and repaired. One sad "casualty" with a notional broken leg, called piteously for help for half an hour until he finally gave up and walked away in a huff. An umpire was swept up by the Shipwright Chief into his shoring-up party and found himself working in the team despite his protests and his yellow armband. By 0100 all the incidents had been dealt with and the Inspection was declared to be at an end. By breakfast, the Captain was able to announce that F.O.A.C. had found *Ark Royal* to be Ready for Operational Service with the Fleet.