

HMS ARK ROYAL
1976 to 1978

THE LAST COMMISSION

HMS ARK ROYA

Cruise Chart AUTUMN 1977



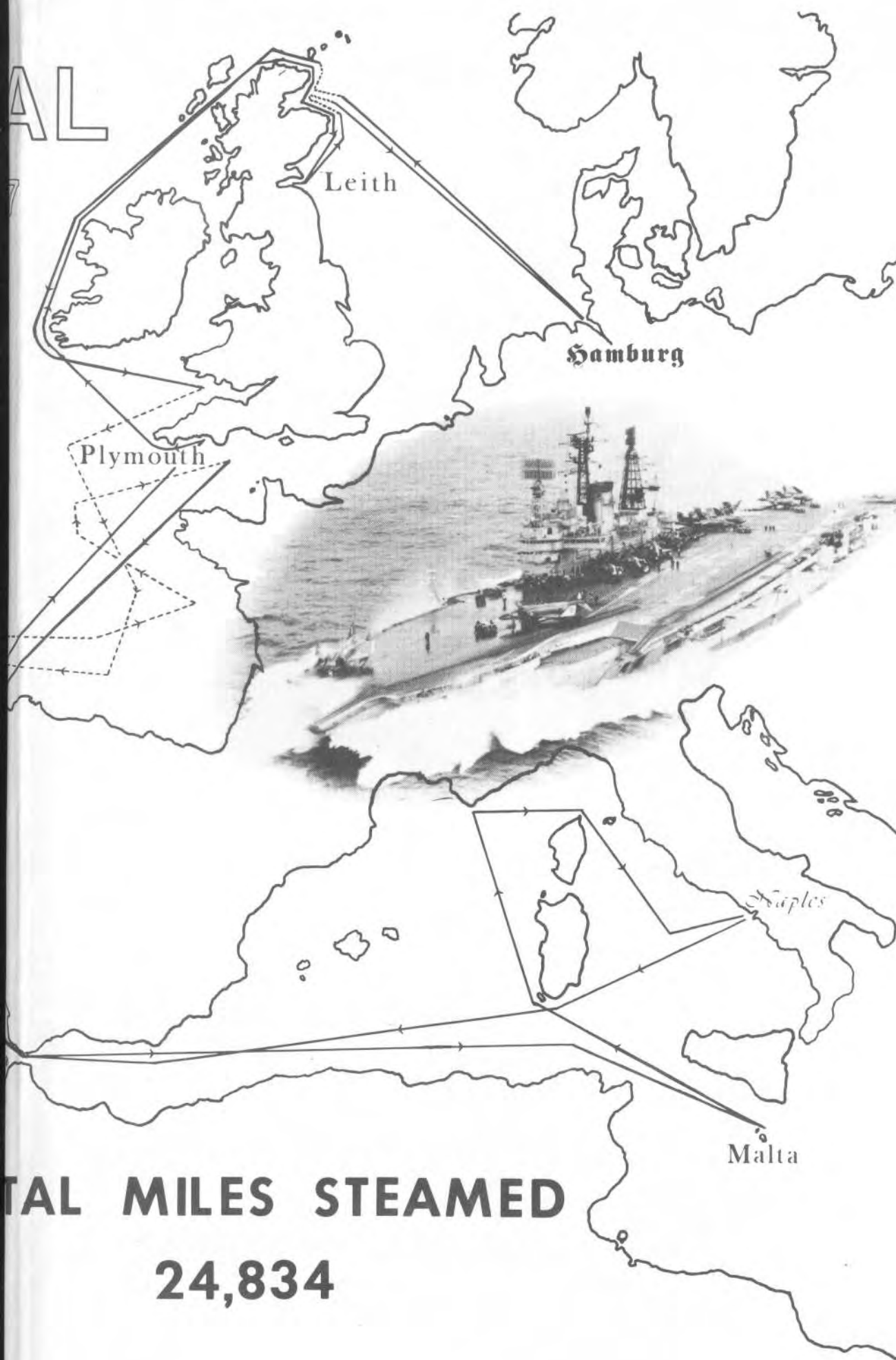
Sailed DEVONPORT	—	1st September
LEITH	—	15th-20th September
HAMBURG	—	30th September-5th October
Exercise OCEAN SAFARI	—	17th-28th October
GIBRALTAR	—	1st-2nd November
MALTA	—	5th-12th November
Exercise ISLES D'OR	—	15th-26th November
NAPLES	—	28th November-5th December
GIBRALTAR	—	8th-10th December
Arrive DEVONPORT	—	15th December



Gibraltar

TOTAL

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FOREWORD

by

Captain E. R. ANSON, Royal Navy

The last commission of HMS ARK ROYAL has been as active and demanding as any that went before. The ship has been the Flagship of the Silver Jubilee Review, has taken part in five major international exercises and has been thrust more into the limelight than ever before by a successful television series. Moreover, being the last commission of the last CVA, the ship has attracted more interest from both the media and the public than any other ship in the Fleet.

It is a tribute to every man on board that wherever she has been, whatever she has done, ARK ROYAL has emerged with credit.

This is a welcome opportunity for me to say well done and thank you to the Ship's Company for keeping the ship fully operational right up to the end of the commission; not forgetting the support that we have all had from our wives and families. They also deserve a big thank you.

THE ARK ROYAL HERITAGE

The name ARK ROYAL has a majestic ring, and our present ship is the fourth in the history of the Royal Navy to bear it.

The first ship to be called ARK ROYAL was built at Deptford for Sir Walter Raleigh in 1586, who in fact named her ARK RALEIGH as the custom in those days was for ships to bear their owners' names. Queen Elizabeth I bought the ship in January 1587 for £5000 while it was still on the stocks and she was renamed ARK ROYAL in the following June. When the Armada approached England in 1588, Lord Howard of Effingham, the Lord High Admiral of England hoisted his flag in the 800 ton, 38 gun ARK ROYAL, and she took part in the first encounter with the Spanish off Plymouth and continued in battle until the decisive action at Gravelines. She saw further action against the Spanish, until in 1608 she was rebuilt and renamed the ANNE ROYAL in honour of James I's wife Anne of Denmark. The ANNE ROYAL was eventually broken up in 1636, after a series of mishaps, including being sunk in the Thames.

Three hundred years passed before the second ARK ROYAL was commissioned. She was a merchant ship being built at Blyth, Northumberland when at the outbreak of war in 1914 she was bought for the Royal Navy and converted into a sea plane carrier of 7400 tons. Launched on 5th September 1914 and commissioned on the 9th December, ARK ROYAL sailed from England early in 1915 with six sea planes and two aeroplanes embarked, and joined the Mediterranean Fleet at Malta. During the war

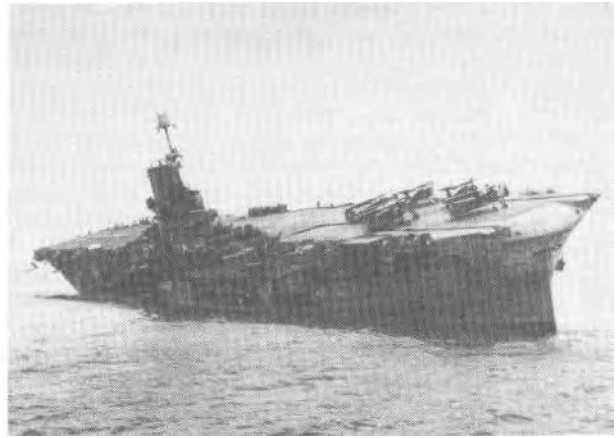
years her main roles were that of conducting reconnaissance, spotting and photographic flights, and she was present at the Dardanelles Campaign and the Gallipoli Landings. During 1920 while operating in the Black Sea, Ark helped with the evacuation of Russian refugees from the Revolution.

In 1923 on her return to England, ARK ROYAL went into the Reserve Fleet at Chatham, and in December 1934 was renamed HMS PEGASUS and used as a trials ship for catapults, aircraft recovery and general training. During the early years of the Second World War, PEGASUS was recalled into active service and used as a catapult carrier escorting Atlantic Convoys. In July 1941 she returned to the role of catapult training duties once more, before being sold in 1946 when she was renamed ANITA I before finally being broken up in 1950.

The second ARK ROYAL was renamed HMS PEGASUS after it had been decided to name the aircraft carrier of the 1934 ship building programme ARK ROYAL. The third ship to bear this proud name was laid down on 16th September 1935 at Cammell Laird's shipyard at Birkenhead. She was the first in the Royal Navy to be laid down as an aircraft carrier and the 22,000 ton ship was launched on the 13th April 1937. After being commissioned on the 16th November 1938 she became the Flagship of the Vice Admiral Aircraft Carriers, and during the Second World War she had a wide variety of roles. By 14th September she had been attacked by U-Boats, and by the end of the month one of Ark's Skua aircraft had the



distinction of shooting down the first enemy aircraft of the Luftwaffe to be destroyed in the war. Her other roles included the search for the GRAF SPEE in the South Atlantic during 1939, the Norwegian Campaign in April/May of 1940, and in June 1940 took part in the attacks on the French Fleet at Oran when France had fallen to the Germans. She then joined the famous Force 'H' based on Gibraltar and took part in many successful operations during the following 15 months in the Mediterranean, including convoys to Malta and in the operation which ended in the sinking of the BISMARCK. Repeatedly the Germans claimed in their propaganda war that the ARK ROYAL had been sunk, the first time being as early as the 26th September 1939. She finally met her end at 0613 on the 14th November 1941 when, having been torpedoed the previous afternoon by a U-Boat, she turned over and sank within sight of Gibraltar.



The death of the third ARK ROYAL ...

THE PRESENT ARK ROYAL

The present ship was originally one of two carriers which were included in the 1940 Supplementary Building Programme and was to be named HMS IRRESISTIBLE. However on the 7th February 1942, King George VI gave permission for the name to be changed to ARK ROYAL. When the keel of this ARK ROYAL was laid down at Cammel Laird's Shipyard on 3rd May 1943 by the late Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, the City of Leeds had already adopted the fourth Ark. It was on the 4th November 1941 that the long and agreeable association between HMS ARK ROYAL and the City of Leeds began, when the City Fathers, in preparation for the "Warship



... and the birth of the fourth

Week" between 31st January and 7th February 1942, decided to adopt the third ARK ROYAL as an incentive to raise funds for the war effort. Ten days later the ship sank. Such was the wave of emotion that swept the country in the wake of the disaster, that the target set for the campaign was exceeded and over £9 million was invested by the people of Leeds. In recognition of the City's efforts the privilege of adopting the new ARK ROYAL was reserved for Leeds, and adoption was officially confirmed on 19th September 1942. Lloyds of London also adopted the ship and both of these ties remain as strong today as they were in the early days of the ship's life.

When she was launched on the 3rd May 1950, by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, now the Queen Mother, the ARK ROYAL, with a displacement of 36,700 tons and a length of 810 ft was the largest ship in the Royal Navy.

For the next five years the ship remained in Birkenhead while all the latest developments in aircraft carrier flying techniques and associated equipment were incorporated and by the time she was commissioned on 25th February 1955 she was the biggest and most modern ship in the Royal Navy.

The launching of the Ark was the beginning of the Queen Mother's association with the ship and in the Commissioning Edition of Noah's News of February 1955, the following message from Her Majesty was printed:-

"I am most happy to send a message of goodwill to the ARK ROYAL and all her company.

"She bears a name which has won great renown through all the long years of this country's mastery of the seas: those who set forth in her have a proud inheritance and a great name to uphold.

"I do not doubt that they will bring to her service the loyalty, seamanship, and courage which is her right, and I send my good wishes to all who put to sea again in the ARK ROYAL."

The ARK ROYAL with her 5½° angled deck was Commanded by Captain D. R. F. Campbell, DSC, RN, who had evolved the angled flight deck concept some years earlier.

After various work-ups and trials around the coasts of the UK and a spell in the Gibraltar sea areas, the first flying trials took place in June/July. The aircraft of this period were the Sea Hawks (800 & 898 Squadrons) and Sea Venoms (809 & 891 Squadrons).

Ark had numerous commissions and refit periods after 1955 and during each refit, the latest aids available for operating aircraft were incorporated, and the aircraft changed as developments in this field progressed. From 1955 until October 1966 when ARK ROYAL went into Devonport for a 3 years major refit, she roamed the High Seas as part of Britain's Fixed Wing Carrier Force, and during the period had 5 commissions.

The aim of the three years, £32 million refit and modernisation plan was:

- a. To enable the ship to operate the latest aircraft, i.e. the deck and hangars were "phantomised", and the angle deck extended to $8\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$
- b. To extend the old ship's life into the seventies.
- c. To improve the accommodation.

During this period, Ark was ripped to pieces and slowly

put together again so that at the end she emerged as the largest and most powerful warship ever to join the Royal Navy. The ship was re-commissioned on 24th February 1970 at Devonport with Captain Lygo in command.

The first incident of this sixth commission to receive world wide attention occurred on the 9th November 1970 while the ship was operating in the Mediterranean. ARK ROYAL collided with a Russian SAM Kotlin class destroyer. From then until the present day, ARK ROYAL has continued to be news worthy. She continued to operate on the High Seas but now, within the NATO role, she was limited to the North Atlantic Ocean, North Sea, and Mediterranean, and for our final deployment in 1978 we are following a similar pattern to previous recent deployments.



The present ARK ROYAL in earlier years



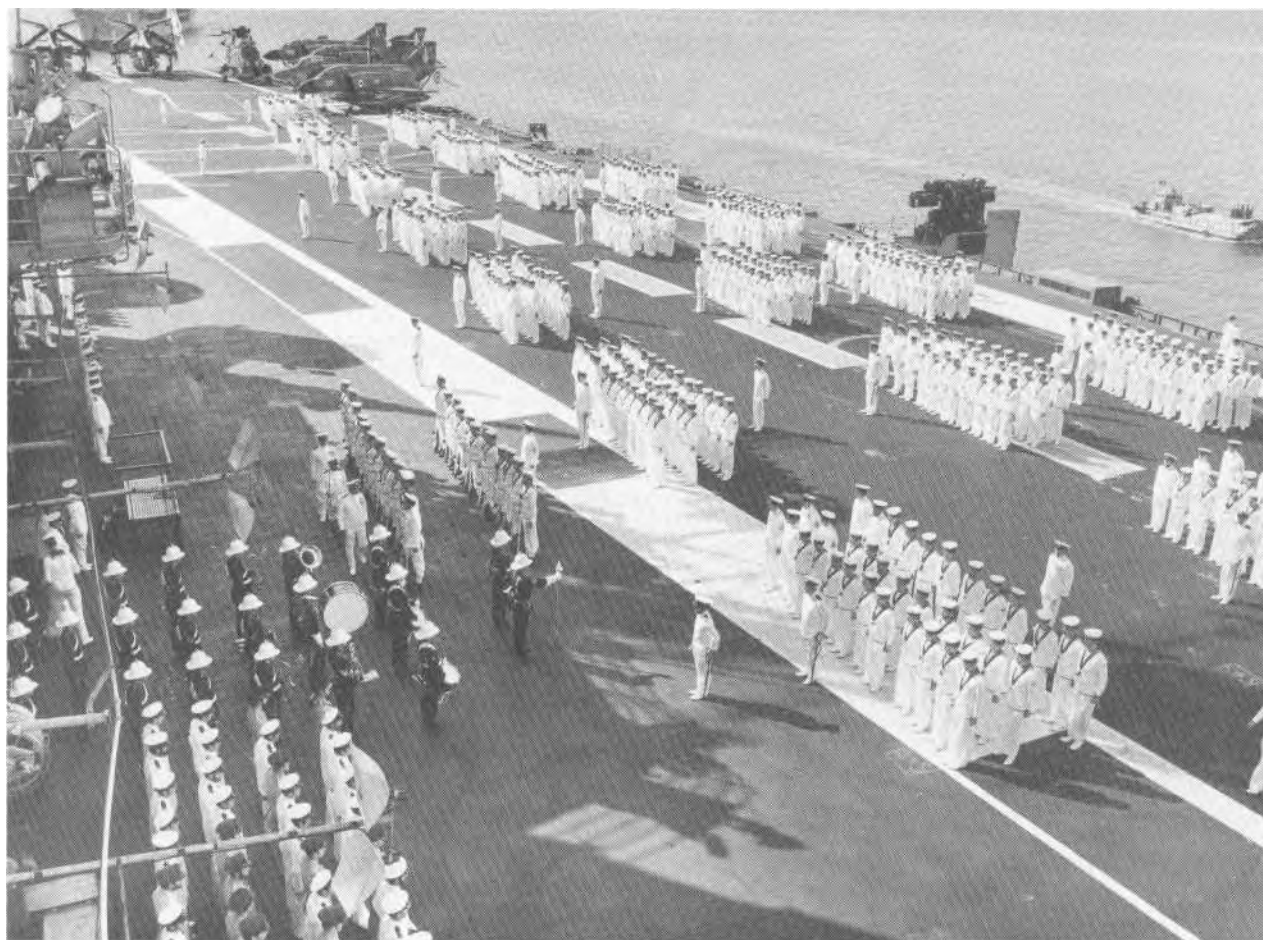
THE BEGINNING OF THE END SEPTEMBER to OCTOBER 1976

Nowadays in the Royal Navy it is difficult to say when one commission ends and the next one begins. As far as HMS ARK ROYAL is concerned, Captain E. R. Anson, the ship's last Commanding Officer arrived on board off Scotland on the 25th September as the ship headed south to the warmer climates of Lisbon. On assuming command on the 28th September from Captain Graham who left to take up his new appointment as Flag Officer Portsmouth, the new "Father" was soon seen by most of the ship's company when Ceremonial Divisions were held in whites at Lisbon.

squadron personnel between the two ships during the latter stages of the exercise. The American "Tomcats" certainly brought a lot of sailors to the goofing positions.

On completion of the exercise, Ark went to Toulon on the French Mediterranean coast on the 13th October for a 5 day visit. While at Toulon a team of planners and workmen arrived from Devonport Dockyard to start preparing for the refit that was to take place once the ship reached Devonport.

The ship bade farewell to Toulon on the 18th, and the same day, the fixed wing element disembarked to their



Divisions at Lisbon

While at Lisbon, 824 Squadron were once again able to demonstrate their skill in times of need when they transferred a sick rating from the Portuguese submarine BAARACUDA, 75 miles out in the Atlantic, to a hospital ashore for an operation.

The visit to Lisbon was short, and despite the fact that the jelly fish of the River Tagus used the ship's underwater openings as a sanctuary, ARK ROYAL managed to sail on the 2nd October and head straight into the Mediterranean for exercise "Display Determination".

The various ships made a fine sight as some of them passed through the Straits of Gibraltar in formation. ARK ROYAL was one of the four carriers which took part in the exercise, the others being US Ships NIMITZ and AMERICA, and the French Ship CLEMENCEAU. ARK ROYAL and AMERICA operated off the coast of Sardinia and the opportunity was taken for the interchange of

bases in the UK and, despite unfavourable weather, and minor problems with the catapults, all the aircraft were launched and safely reached their destinations. Two helicopters of 824 Squadron also returned home via France leaving the remainder to help with the vast de-storing effort.

Finally, after a popular overnight stop at Gibraltar on the 20th/21st October, Ark set off on the final leg of the journey to home. En route a massive back-RAS of ammunition, stores and fuel to the accompanying RFA's was successfully completed. The ship entered Plymouth Sound early on the morning of the 25th October and secured at 0700A - a unique event because the whole entry was completed in the dark. For some it was goodbye to their home of recent months, while for the remainder and the grand old lady herself, the refit lay ahead.



Follow me chaps.



At Toulon.

THE REFIT OCTOBER 1976 to JUNE 1977

The story of the ship's seventh and last planned normal refit began much earlier than the scheduled starting date of 22nd November. Preparations had started early in the year when defect lists had been prepared and the refit was planned around these. The dockyard personnel who had flown out to Toulon to prepare the ground work, started on the catapults as soon as the fixed wing had disembarked, and inside the ship hardboard began to cover the passageways and messdecks.

Alongside at Devonport, a four week pre-refit period began to prepare the ship for the onslaught that would follow, and tank cleaning vessels, lighters and dockside cranes were in constant use. At the Refit Conference on 9th November everyone concerned had a clearer idea of the work to be done and the difficulties to be overcome. All appreciated the necessity of containing the refit within the 28 weeks allowed if the ship was to make its appearance as the Flagship at the Silver Jubilee Fleet Review in June 1977.

To bring a little relaxation into the proceedings, the BBC returned to the ship on the 18th November in the form of BBC Enterprises. They recorded the Ship's Company singing "Sailing" and "The Wombles Song" for release as



ARK ROYAL goes on record.



The charity walkers.

a record, following the success of the BBC TV series "Sailor", which had made the ARK ROYAL a nationwide celebrity.

Two members of the Weapons Electrical Department, OEM's David Turner and Alan Gould did their thing for charity by completing a 333 mile sponsored walk between 22nd November and 11th December. Their efforts raised £700 for ten year old Tracey Brown of Sowerly Bridge near Halifax who suffers from Tunnel Vision.

While the walk was underway, the ship's company took part in a shorter walk when they moved into HMS DRAKE during November, and the ship became a place of work



That was a tight squeeze.

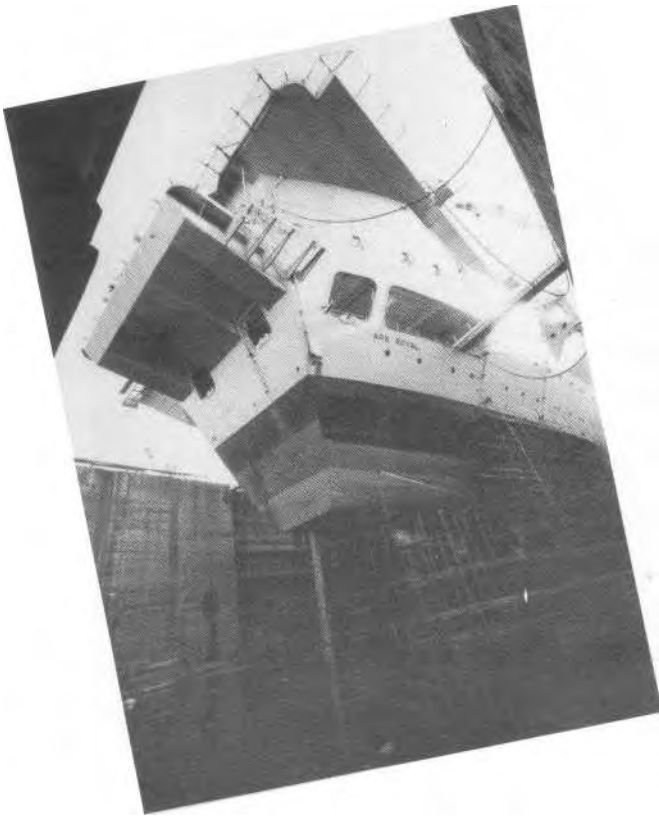
only. By the 13th December all was ready for Ark to be moved gently from the outer wall to the safety of No 10 Dry Dock. The state of the hull was found to be considerably better than had been expected and work began on refitting sea tubes, rudders and the main shaft outer bearings as the ship disappeared under a mantle of scaffolding.

During the dry dock period, the ship continued to maintain its strong ties with the City of Leeds when personnel from ARK ROYAL participated in a week long exhibition in mid February which covered all aspects of the

Royal Navy, sponsored by the Director of Naval Recruiting. A strong contingent comprising a guard and band marched through the city streets before the Lord Mayor accompanied by Captain Anson, opened the exhibition.

By the 28th February 1977 all the necessary work in the dry dock had been completed ahead of schedule and Ark was floated once more, undocked through the narrow gates and guided to the outer sea wall berth again.

On the 21st March, Vice Admiral J. H. F. Eberle, on leaving the Flag Officer Carriers and Amphibious Ships'



From below

*THE REFIT -
UNUSUAL VIEWS*

From above



chair visited and as a farewell gesture the Captain presented him with a framed photograph of the ARK ROYAL which had been his Flagship on numerous occasions. His successor, Rear Admiral W. D. M. Staveley called to see how the refit was progressing ten days later.

By the 13th April the accommodation and galleys were ready for use and the ship's company moved back on board. All the time work in hand was being completed and machinery spaces began to take shape as refitted items re-appeared from the dockyard workshops. Machines and systems were tried, tested, adjusted and set to work, and it was with some satisfaction when the first puffs of black smoke emerged from the funnel announcing that Ark was coming back to life. The Terminal Date Inspection by the Dockyard General Manager took place on the 6th May and although there was still a great deal of refitting work to be done besides the cleaning up and painting, he confidently predicted that Completion Date would be achieved.

The ME Department achieved a fine performance away from the ship in the 1977 Ten Tors Walk on Dartmoor over the weekend of 21st/22nd March. The "Bilge Rats" as the team was known, was made up of MEM's from 'A' Unit and they showed their true metal by being the first team from a sea going ship to complete the full 55 mile course.

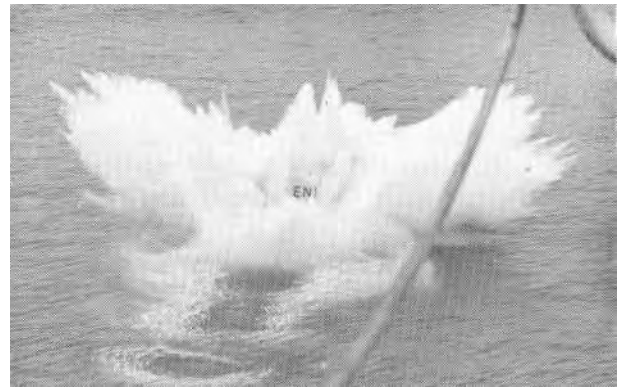


Vice Admiral Eberle departs.

The Bilge Rats fully deserved their team certificate and individual medals; and a lot of the credit must go to team manager FCMEM Les Sutton who started their training in January and ensured that they were fit to complete the course.

The ship's Basin Trial was successful indicating that all had gone well in the depths of the ship. The work on the catapults was completed much to everyone's relief, and the catapult dead load trials were successfully completed by the end of May, and proved to be a popular spectator activity. To show that they could do things as well, the Seamen demonstrated their knowledge in the manoeuvre known as "wind ship" on the 26th May when the ship was turned through 180° on the dockyard wall.

The final few days of May saw much activity with the final tidying up, cleaning and painting in readiness for the Completion Day Inspection on 1st June by Flag Officer Plymouth, Vice Admiral J. M. Forbes and his staff. The hardwork by everyone, ship's staff and dockyard personnel, was rewarded with the assessment that we had done a good job and that he was well pleased with the final result. It was then a case of preparing the ship and the ship's company's new members ready for sea.



So does Enid the dead load.

TO SEA ONCE MORE SEA ACCEPTANCE TRIALS JUNE 1977

At last the ship was ours, and each department set about its preparations for sailing. A new evolution for ARK ROYAL was carried out on the 8/9 June with the introduction of a Fast Cruise. The ship remained alongside but we went through the various motions of being at sea, testing men as well as machinery.

Despite the fact that most of us were comparatively new to HMS ARK ROYAL, and were still trying to find our way around the mighty vessel, to sea we had to go and to sea we went when we slipped and proceeded from the comforts of 5/6 Berth at 1145 on 9th June. The Captain guided us down the Hamoaze, into the Sound, and out into the English Channel to begin our post refit acceptance trials. Of course problems arose, but they were soon corrected and the infamous stern gland incident gave us an unexpected 'C' Buoy day inside Plymouth Breakwater on the 13th but no leave.

The W. E. Department tried and tested all the equipment and carried out radio and radar checks with the aid of Hunters and Canberras from FRADU based at RNAS Yeovilton.

The Air Department embarked three Sea Kings of 824 Squadron from 13-17th June to assist in their trials. These

included Deck Landing Practice (DLP's) and Carrier Controlled Approaches (CCA's). Then the fixed wing took over, with DLP's and CCA's by Phantoms (892) Buccaneers (809) and Gannets (849B), leaving their marks on our nice clean flight deck.

While all the various trials were taking place, the ship continued to function with the Seaman Department having manoeuvres and numerous other exercises, RAS's and all the usual daily tasks. The HDS continued to provide our link with the mainland and mail, stores and visitors were the usual loads. The most important visitor of this phase was Flag Officer Carriers and Amphibious Ships, Rear Admiral Staveley who spent Tuesday 14th on board touring the mess decks and machinery spaces and making a number of presentations.

We had our lighter moments too. The Potted Sports, on a beautiful sunny Sunday afternoon, helped a lot to relax and was won by the Air Department. Meanwhile the ship continued to transit the measured mile off Looe Bar.

The initial trials came to an end on Sunday 19th when the civilians disembarked at 'C' Buoy, and we then proceeded to Portsmouth for the Silver Jubilee Review.



My this is good, free at last!!



Home to mother.



FOCAS with the Badgers



Air Department Potted Sports team.

THE SILVER JUBILEE REVIEW PREPARATIONS

20-28 JUNE 1977

The ship finally arrived alongside Middle Slip Jetty on the afternoon of Monday 20th June much to the delight of the Portsmouth natives. The following few days saw final preparations taking place for the Review. The BBC TV brought their equipment on board for live coverage of the Review, and the ship's company continued to clean and paint.

On Thursday afternoon 23rd June, Commander-in-Chief Fleet, Admiral Sir Henry Leach, GCB embarked by helicopter from his Headquarters at Northwood. We slipped from our berth as the Flag Ship of the Fleet, and sailed to our position at Spithead. By means of specially produced souvenir charts, the navigating officer found the spot marked HMS ARK ROYAL and we dropped our anchor. Here we were to remain, swinging with the tides during the next few days.

As the Fleet Flag Ship, the ship became involved with ceremonial duties on a grand scale. During the build up to the review there were gun salutes, bugle alerts, parading of the Guard and Band, National Anthems as ships of the Royal Navy, Commonwealth and Foreign Navies arrived to take up their positions in the Review lines.

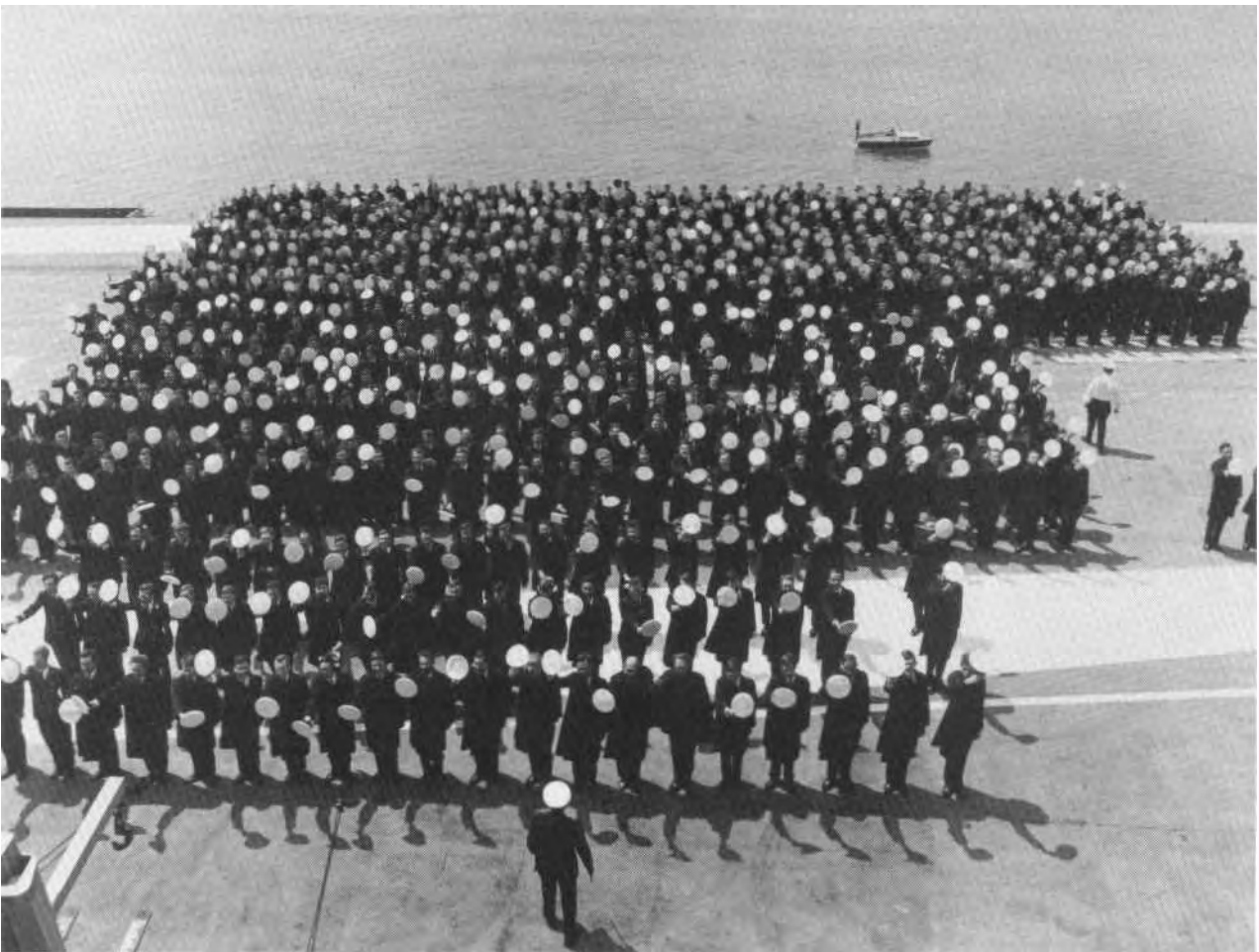
Between all the ceremonial duties the ship managed to rehearse the "Man and Cheer Ship" procedure, especially the 'Hooray', as well as the continual process of cleaning ship so that it would be fit for a Queen. Sunday 26th was a

little more relaxed. During the morning a Jubilee Thanksgiving Service was held in the after end of the Upper Hangar. The service was conducted by The Chaplain of the Fleet and Archdeacon for the Royal Navy, The Venerable B.A. O'Ferrall, assisted by the Principal Chaplain, Church of Scotland and Free Churches, The Reverend J. C. Creber and the Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain, The Right Reverend Monsignor F. J. Walmsley.

In the afternoon official receptions took place as well as visits from our own families. They had the opportunity of viewing the lines of ships from the vantage positions of the flight deck. Throughout the weekend hundreds of pleasure craft, fishing vessels and even canoes came to see the ships at anchor. It was a picturesque scene with all the grey hulks of the warships towering above the sightseers.

Monday 27th was final rehearsal day. We "Manned and cheered ship" again, first by ourselves, and then in the afternoon there was a full Review rehearsal with RFA ENGADINE acting as HMY BRITANNIA. On completion of the review of the ships, the fly past by rotary and fixed wing aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm was rehearsed. As it turned out, this was the only occasion that we witnessed the full flypast with the symbolic E + R by the fixed wing aircraft.

From the time we arrived at Spithead and throughout the period we remained, we were inundated with visitors.



Will we get it right? "Off caps" rehearsal.