

the ship's broadcast just before he left early on the 13th. He told us that we had achieved a satisfactory ORI.

The final evolution before leaving the Moray Firth was a TOWEX, when **HMS ARK ROYAL** towed RFA **RESOURCE** during the forenoon of the 14th. Another success for the Seaman Branch. One of the passengers to be embarked from RAF Lossiemouth was the Right Reverend Monsignor Francis J. Walmsley - Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain and Vicar General to the Royal Navy.

He spent the following few days seeing us at work and at rest; as well as visiting ships in company.

By 1730 on the 14th we were under way round the north coast of Scotland, through the Hebrides to the west coast of Ireland. Once more we experienced the Atlantic swell and gale force winds - will the weather never leave us in peace? As we rounded the southwest corner of Ireland and headed towards Cornwall on the 16th we were joined by numerous dolphins which gave a different goofing view.

OCEAN SAFARI 17-28 OCTOBER 1977

The big Autumn exercise "Ocean Safari" began at 1200Z on 17th October, and FOCAS wearing his NATO hat as Commander Carrier Striking Group Two (COMCARS-STRIKGRU 2) embarked during the forenoon and flew his flag in **HMS ARK ROYAL**. He was CTG 401.2 and within our group were 11 surface ships of different nationalities. The other countries taking part in the exercise were USA, Canada, Netherlands, Portugal, Germany, France and Norway, and **ARK ROYAL** was the only fixed wing strike/attack carrier taking part.

The exercise, as far as we were concerned, started in the Bristol Channel off St. Mawgan. We headed south in a zig-zag pattern across the Bay of Biscay and by the 21st were off the Lisbon area of Portugal. Throughout the period 824 Squadron ripple flew their helicopters providing the ship with an ASW sector screen. The Phantoms of 892 Squadron carried out Combat Air Patrols and Medium Level Air Intercepts against enemy aircraft sent to test our defences.

The 849 B Gannets provided AEW surveillance and controlled the 809 Buccaneers which acted as probes to search the surrounding areas and identify contacts seen by the Gannet's radar display.

On the 21st October, the Buccaneers carried out attacks on the Portuguese range at Alonichele just outside Lisbon. They were again busy back in the Bay of Biscay when they were tasked to deliver attacks to the Stuttgart region of Germany. As the exercise drew to a close all the aircraft their appropriate primary roles and 824 continued until the final whistle at 2359Z on 28th October, by which time it had clocked over 400 flying hours of almost continuous flying during the exercise.

Once FOCAS and his staff, together with the exercise umpires, had disembarked on the morning of the 28th October to Portland, we set off to continue our deployment. Before we left UK waters the ship received the following signal from Admiral Staveley:

"During Ocean Safari 77, the first major NATO exercise for many of you in this great ship, ARK ROYAL has gone from strength to strength in improving her operational

capability and working with our allies. Well done. Keep up the good work."



Big Bear, we are watching you.

ON PASSAGE TO GIBRALTAR 28 OCTOBER to 1 NOVEMBER 1977



Sunday at Sea



30 October



The ship was now on her way to Gibraltar and so we retraced our journey south across the Bay of Biscay and along the Portuguese Coast. En route we had time to relax and Sunday 30th was our first Sunday at Sea Routine for a number of weeks and many activities were organised.

The 50 knot winds over the flight deck did not deter the contestants in the inter-part obstacle race. The competition was won by a team from B Unit in a time of 5 min 37 secs. For the less energetic there was the Great ARK ROYAL Conker Contest: the conkers having been collected during the ship's visit to Hamburg by the PT Staff. The first knock was between the Captain and the Commander in which the latter won but he did not progress beyond the next round. The knockout competition was eventually won by Band Corporal Tim Syme-Rumsby, and the successful event raised £12.50 for the ship's charities.

Late in the afternoon on 2 deck the chefs started the Christmas celebrations with the ceremonial Christmas pudding stir. The Captain performed the honours, and real Pusser's Rum, left over from the Jubilee Review "Splice the Mainbrace" was added by the then youngest man on board, JMEM David Grieve, with help from the galley staff.

Monday 31st October was our last night in the Atlantic, before the warmth of the Mediterranean, and the Band Concert on the Quarter Deck was well received. The Commander enjoyed himself, especially when he took over from Mr Welton and conducted the Royal Marine Orchestra.

GIBRALTAR AND BEYOND 1-5 NOVEMBER 1977

The ship finally berthed at the South Mole at about 1730A on Tuesday 1st November, just before sunset. The length of our stay was to be very short, a matter of 24 hours, and many went ashore that evening for the first time since Hamburg, while the dutymen went ashore the following forenoon. Generally people were well behaved considering that the ship had been at sea for a month.

At Gibraltar, we embarked six members of the Committee of Lloyds, headed by the Deputy Chairman, Mr Findlay, and they remained with us until Malta. The Committee has had a long standing association with the Royal Navy, and in particular with HMS ARK ROYAL, and over a period of

years has presented the ship with many gifts, including ARK ROYAL's TV system, video equipment and a complete Wardroom library.

By 1830 local on the 2nd the ship was on her way again, but this time eastwards across the Mediterranean. What a difference in the weather, with clear blue skies, the sun blazing down, very little wind, and the temperature into the seventies. Despite the lack of wind the air world managed to do some flying while off Sardinia on the 4th. Mind you, 824 once again beat the fixed wing as it was airborne on the 3rd, practising emergency procedures and taking fresh bread to HMS PLYMOUTH.

MALTA 5-12 NOVEMBER 1977



Grand Harbour.



MALTA

At work and at play



During the early hours of the 5th we were off the northwest tip of the Maltese group of islands and we entered Grand Harbour in Procedure Alpha at about 1000A. Witnessing our entry was Flag Officer Malta, with the President of the Republic of Malta, the British and Australian High Commissioners, and the Italian, German and French Ambassadors. With the aid of tugs the ship was ceremoniously backed in the Kalkara Creek and secured between two buoys.

For some the Malta visit was a holiday as they took leave to be with their families, wives or girlfriends who had flown out from the UK. For the remainder there was much to be done and a lot of hard work.

The Seaman Department continued what it had started in Gibraltar by helping civilian dockyard workers with the painting of the ship's side. The Maltese painted below 3 deck, while our own seamen were the ones hanging from the nets above 3 deck. The Air Department, too, was busy painting, but its concern was the flight deck which had lost its nice look. Soon it was looking itself again with the red, white, yellow and green breaking up the vast expanse of grey. When all the painting was complete, the mighty Ark looked in a far better condition than the "worse for wear" appearance of our arrival.

Down in the depths of the ship the ME Department was extremely busy as much machinery was shut down, providing a golden opportunity for maintenance work to be

carried out. The WE Department was also able to carry out maintenance on their equipment and new aerials were fitted above 03 deck. Other departments too did their bit by painting their part of ship and generally carrying out their normal daily tasks.

Throughout the week, however, there was time for rest and relaxation, and for those with energy a full and varied sporting programme took place. Over 800 officers and ratings took part in sport of some form of activity and the highlight was the convincing defeat of HMS FEARLESS in the first round of the "Maxi Ships Cup". In the "It's a Knockout" competition against RAF LUQA, the AED team came through as worthy overall winners. The members of the 4Ro Mess continued their money raising efforts by having a sponsored walk around Malta and raised over £600.

In addition to the official receptions and visits by Service and Political representatives in the island, there was considerable coming and going by others. Once more we were subjected to a boats routine if we wished to go ashore. The ship's boats and the official contract boats were well supported by the dghaisamen in the motorised dghaisas.

The weather at Malta was very pleasant and warm, and most of us looked more tanned than when we arrived. After a very enjoyable week we were off on our travels again when we left Grand Harbour on Saturday 12th November and set off for French Port of Toulon.

ON PASSAGE TO TOULON AND EXERCISE ISLE D'OR 12-18 NOVEMBER 1977

After an early fixed wing flyex on Sunday 13th just to give the air crew a chance to see if they could remember how to fly, the rest of us settled down to peace and quiet. However, being Remembrance Day, a non-denominational service was held on the Quarter Deck with the Royal Marine Band accompanying the hymns and the Captain gave the address and led the Act of Remembrance.

During the day, to the north of us, the well known MISTRAL wind was gathering strength off the Mediterranean French Coast, and in the early hours of Monday 14th the ship ran into gale force winds and high seas. This retarded our progress and prevented us from anchoring in Toulon Harbour. Instead of our expected visit to Toulon we remained at sea, riding out the rough conditions, and quite a number seemed happier about us being there than at anchor.

While off Toulon, the exercise briefs took place in Toulon in preparation for the French sponsored multi-national exercise "Isle D'or". Besides the French and UK forces taking part, the other countries invited were America, Italy, Holland, Greece and Canada. HMS ARK ROYAL and USS SARATOGA were the only carriers taking part in the exercise, but there was a lot of air activity from ashore.

The official start to the exercise was 1200Z on Wednesday 16th November but very little seemed to happen, and, although some flying did take place, a number of departments continued repairing the damage sustained during the previous few days.

The first part of the exercise was classed as a work up phase where each ship tended to do its own thing. Once more the darken ship canvas screens went up and the groping sessions began. Throughout this phase we operated off the west coast of Corsica. The tactical phase began on the 20th and as hostilities escalated we became more involved in the exercise with all four squadrons doing their own speciality. Towards the end of the exercise we were directed

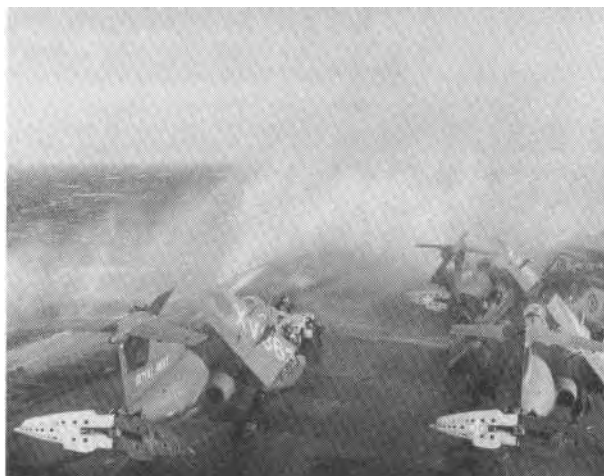
away from our operating off Corsica and Sardinia to the southeast of the Balearic Islands.

While the exercise went on, the ship was having her own private war with the elements. The sea caused by the



Remembrance Service at Sea.

MISTRAL which blew on and off throughout the exercise caused the flight deck to go out of limits on several occasions; thus curtailing the flying programme at times. As our group tracked towards Toulon and the exercise drew to a close, the MISTRAL again set in with a vengeance and the exercise came to a premature end as all the ships taking part struggled with the elements.



The Mistral

ON PASSAGE TO NAPLES AND AT NAPLES 28 NOVEMBER to 5 DECEMBER 1977

The weather improved as ARK ROYAL left the Toulon area on her way to her next port of call, Naples, and light winds were a pleasant change after our MISTRAL dominated exercise. However our entry into Naples Harbour on Monday 28th was marred by light rain.

During the week's visit to Naples most had the chance of seeing something of the surrounding area. Detours, in collaboration with Aloschi Brothers of Naples, organised many tours which included visitors to Vesuvius, Pompei, the Amalfi Coast, Sorrento, the island of Capri and Rome,

including a Papal audience on Wednesday 30th. Of course we all have different views of each tour and memories will reflect our individual experience - how many times did you visit that Cameo factory? Besides the official tours, many made their own arrangements to other local points of interest. Memories flood back; the cheap food and wine; the incredible driving; the dhobi lines and the bonfires. Most of us liked Naples, for once no boat routine, and we were sorry to depart on the morning of Monday 5th December.



The Papal Visitors.



Naples Bay.



ON PASSAGE TO GIBRALTAR AND AT GIBRALTAR 5-10 DECEMBER 1977

The passage had its moments, and Wednesday 8th saw two significant events. Firstly, the aircraft managed to get into the air for the first time in over a week. Secondly, in the quiet of the sick bay, the PMO performed the 100th operation since leaving Devonport.

The final evolution before Gibraltar was yet another TOWEX in which Ark was pulled by the Leander frigate HMS ARIADNE. Our arrival at Gibraltar on the afternoon

of 8th December gave us our last chance of a few remaining rabbits for Christmas, but were you seen off before we left?

Once again the weather triumphed when "The Top of the Rock" race was cancelled at the start due to the very bad conditions at the top. Some breathed a sigh of relief, but others were genuinely disappointed as the build up to the race had been tremendous during the previous weeks.

HOMeward BOUND 10-16 DECEMBER 1977



The Maxi Band Concert.



The OUTs doing an NBCDO.

Off we went on the 10th December in a westerly direction leaving the warmth of the Mediterranean behind us as we faced the Atlantic once more. By the 12th we were in the Bay of Biscay and the fixed wing all managed to disembark with the exception of one lonely Buccaneer. However he disembarked the following day, as did the Sea Kings, leaving the ship quiet once more. The Maxi Band Concert with the RM Band cheered those of us left on board and the NBCDO act by OUT's and the Cold Stream Guards from 4Ro Mess were very popular.

Despite the fog preventing us from going up harbour on the 15th December, those of us whose families arrived at HMS DRAKE were reunited when they were brought out to us at "C" Buoy by PAS boats.

Eventually the 3½ month deployment came to a close as we berthed on the morning of Friday 16th December. The DAMP soon got underway as dockyard personnel began to descend upon the ship.



Home at last

THE DAMP AND WORK UP

16 DECEMBER 1977 to 4 APRIL 1978

For most of us first leave was the important feature of the period. However not everyone was lucky as the Firemen's Union was still taking industrial action and some of us were "volunteered" to go and perform fire fighting duties throughout the country in the renovated Green Goddesses. Fortunately, by the third week of January 1978, the dispute was over and men began to return to the ship after doing a splendid job for the community.

By way of a change a new ARK ROYAL was launched, not by the Navy but by British Rail. Under a revised policy, British Rail had decided to give locomotives names, and in the Western Region, their Class 50 main line diesel electric



*The new
ARK ROYAL*



locomotives were to be named after past and present warships. The first to be named was No 50035 and Captain Anson performed the unveiling ceremony at Plymouth Station on Tuesday 17th January with the R.M.- Band providing suitable music. To ensure that the new ARK ROYAL lives up to its name, the Captain presented two ship's crests made in gunmetal, to be mounted either side of

the locomotive, to Western Regions General Manager, Mr L. Lloyd.

Over the weekend of 21 and 22 January, Ark acted as host ship to the visiting Dutch frigates HNLMS GRONINGEN and JAGUAR. Unfortunately because of bad weather and the state of the pitches, all outdoor sporting activities were cancelled. However our Dutch comrades were made most welcome and enjoyed their weekend.

From the evening of the 26th January there would be no more BEANO as Commander W. H. H. McLeod was quietly relieved by our new Executive Officer, Commander J. L. Weatherall.

During the DAMP, our Harbour Administrative Inspection was carried out by CINCFLEET and FOCAS Staff during the week starting the 13th February. As usual there was a continuous stream of individuals and groups visiting the ship. On the 15th February Professor R. Mason, the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Navy, came to see the old lady.

The final weekend before our departure for another work up proved to be quite eventful. Heavy falls of snow and blizzards isolated parts of the southern counties and made travelling very difficult as roads and railways were blocked. Weymouth and Portland natives as well as those from Dorset were completely cut off for several days. Despite all the odds, Cdr Weatherall managed to make his way from Portsmouth to Plymouth by a longer than usual route, but it took him 10 hours.

Tuesday 21st February, the day of departure for the short work up and post DAMP acceptance sea trials.

Except for a few people still snow bound in Dorset most of us who had travelled during the previous weekend managed to reach the ship. On the morning of sailing the BBC TV Nationwide team was on board to follow up the 'Save the ARK ROYAL Campaign' started by 14 year old schoolboy Richard Crease. The TV cameras followed him as he toured the ship, talking to members of the ship's company, and he



Cdr Weatherall

watched 4 Sea Kings and the 2 SAR Wessex embark about midday.

The sailing went as planned and by 1630 we were on our way to the sea again. The first night was spent trying and testing systems in Lyme Bay.

While off Portland on the 22nd the men who had not reached Plymouth were helo lifted on board. We also embarked 4 Gannets and 7 Phantoms, but the Buccaneers remained at fog bound Honnington. That evening we passed through the busy Dover Straits and into the North Sea. During the passage northwards off the east coast of England, the Buccaneers left East Anglia on the 23rd and recovered safely on board.

Week starting Monday 27th February saw the start of our Sea Inspection. FOCAS Staff embarked and FOCAS himself arrived on Tuesday. The Director General of the BBC, Mr Ian Trethowan also came on board and was most impressed by our performance. Throughout the week FOCAS and his staff inspected RFA's OLMEDA and RESOURCE and visited HMS LEANDER, all of which were in company with us.

As seems to be the case, the weather plagued the ship or our diversion airfields during our work up. Low Stratus or the Haar Fog, and hence poor visibility, were regular occurrences which curtailed some of the flying. Generally flying took place in the forenoons and evenings leaving the afternoons free for seamanship and departmental evolutions



Ready for Action.

in preparation for the Sea Inspection Day on Saturday 4th February. The drills began at 0600A and right from the start departments were involved in numerous exercises and evolutions ranging from baking a cake, fires, crashes on the flight deck, to the aid and salvaging of a stricken Spanish Tanker OLE (in the guise of OLMEDA). From a weather point of view, it was a lovely day for a cruise with blue skies and excellent visibility.

In general the Inspection went well and FOCAS congratulated us on our efforts. He commented on the happy family spirit on board and the pride in our ship which his staff had encountered, and said that we had done well and hoped to see the same spirit and pride when next he paid us a visit.

FOCAS departed early on the 5th, and the fixed wing squadrons, except for a few aircraft which were to remain on board for Families Day, followed during the forenoon. In the afternoon and the following forenoon, 824 Squadron did a magnificent job in disembarking the fixed wing ground crews to Leuchars, and by midday of the 6th the task was complete as we headed south for the English Channel.



Does it fit?

On Wednesday 8th the Sea Kings disembarked to Culdrose from Falmouth Bay, and the ship returned to Plymouth Sound to spend the night at 'C' Buoy in preparation for the influx of our families and friends.

Thursday 9th March and the ship's final Families Day had arrived. The guests began arriving soon after 6 am and by 9 am, after they had breakfasted, the ship slipped from the buoy with about 1500 extra people. Once in the English Channel our guests were able to witness from 03 deck the launch and recovery of the Gannets, Phantoms and the Buccaneers.

Unfortunately the low stratus and fog which had been expected arrived during the afternoon and prevented the final flying display from taking place. Despite this disappointment most people enjoyed their day touring the ship. Just being in ARK ROYAL was a memorable occasion in itself.



Families Day.



As the ship approached Plymouth Sound the weather improved a little and the decision to go up harbour was made. In deteriorating conditions we berthed alongside by 1900A with the entry being witnessed by a large number on the flight deck. Although it had been a long day our families thought it well worth while.

In March we all took our leave in UK before our final

deployment. However the ship remained as popular as ever as visits by individuals and groups continued. One such visit was a re-union of about 200 members of the Ship's Company of the Wartime third ARK ROYAL and their families. This happened over the weekend of 18/19 March and included a tour of the ship and a non-denominational Commemorative Church Service.

WESTLANT DEPLOYMENT 1978 THE FINAL ONE ON PASSAGE 5-17 APRIL 1978

At last Wednesday 5th April arrived and HMS ARK ROYAL was ready for her final departure from Devonport Dockyard as a commissioned ship. The Wessex SAR flight and the six Sea Kings of 824 arrived during the forenoon, and at 1645 the ship slipped and proceeded to the English Channel in the dry but quite windy conditions. HMS FEARLESS made the following signal as we left: "Farewell big sister, you will be sorely missed, very best wishes for your final deployment" and that statement probably echoed the thoughts of many throughout the country.

The 4 Gannets of 849B were embarked that evening and, after a night cruising off the Cornish coast, the heavies of 809 and 892 were all safely recovered on the 6th. By 1800 that evening the ships in company, HMS DEVONSHIRE and RFA's OLMEDA and RESOURCE had all joined us off the Scilly Isles, and we set off towards the Azores.

As we tracked southwest it became warmer and each department used these first days at sea to perform various exercises and evolutions either on board or with other ships. It was a case of testing equipment and familiarising new people with their jobs. The flight deck was a popular

place as keep fit activities got under way, and the flight deck sports became regular sights whenever Sea King flying permitted. By early Monday 10th we were off the Azores and in the afternoon with the Azores behind us we intercepted an SOS from the Liberian registered tanker TARSEUS III, 39,000 tons. The tanker bore 280 degrees 185 miles from our position, and she reported that she was on fire in the engine room and that there were several casualties requiring immediate medical assistance. As departments prepared for a similar sort of operation to that carried out during the Sea Inspection in March, 824 Squadron once more showed how useful it can be. Two Sea Kings with a medical team, Surgeon Lt Cdr Baldock and LMA Basson, were soon on their way to the stricken tanker. By the time the helicopters reached the ship, the Greek crew had brought the fire under control and repair work was in hand. Three casualties with burns were returned to ARK ROYAL for further medical care.

When it was obvious that all was well with the TARSEUS, the ARK ROYAL group continued its passage across the Atlantic. After this incident, the remainder of the passage



The last Farewell, we will be home in December.



The tanker TARSEUS III.



Super Mess Champions.



The flight deck is the place for me.



was quiet, with the ship's company going into tropical rig on the 12th. Arms and legs soon began to change colour but for some, who decided to do it too hastily, sun burn proved painful. The exercises and evolutions continued and every now and again the clocks went back one hour as we went into different time zones.

Saturday 15th in fact was a Sunday routine day, which gave many the opportunity to relax and soak up the sun in temperatures of about 30°C, while the more energetic took part in the Super Mess Competition on the flight deck and which was won by 4N2 mess.

That evening the festivities continued with the first Band Concert/Sods Opera of the deployment. A wide variety of acts kept us entertained for nearly 3 hours and all who attended enjoyed the evening.

On Sunday afternoon some of the fixed wing squadrons disembarked to Roosevelt Roads so that they could fly while we were alongside. All ships in company berthed at Roosevelt Roads during the forenoon of the 17th at the start of our visit to Puerto Rico.

I'm in charge here - Sods Opera.

ROOSEVELT ROADS 17-20 APRIL 1978



As usual there were the usual formal activities whenever HMS ARK ROYAL visits a foreign port. For most there was time for rest and relaxation in forms which catered for individual wishes. All the Naval Base facilities were available to us and the majority of the ship's company took advantage of these without ever leaving the base. For those who ventured a little further, San Juan and the El Yungue Rain Forest proved to be very popular and interesting. All too soon our visit was over. During the forenoon of Thursday 20th April we bade farewell to Roosevelt Roads, and off we went to start our work up in Puerto Rican waters.

At Roosevelt Roads

WORK UP ATLANTIC FLEET WEAPON RANGES 20 APRIL to 8 MAY 1978



892 Squadron in action.

On departing Roosevelt Roads, the first days were spent to the south of Puerto Rico to recover the fixed wing aircraft which had been ashore during our brief visit. There was also opportunity for the other aircrew to get in some flying time and for other departments to carry out evolutions, checks, repairs or maintenance.

On the night of the 21st/22nd April the ship passed through the Virgin Passage - the sea area between the Isle of Culebra and St Thomas - to take up station in the exercise areas to the north of the islands. Here we were to remain throughout this work up phase while we made full use of the American Atlantic Fleet Weapon Ranges (AFWR) in the area. One of the primary reasons for being in this part of the world was to use the Range facilities and enable the aircrew to practice using live heavy weapons and

missiles. Each Squadron did its own thing during this period with the help of many of the ship's departments.

892 Squadron completed its series of missile firings using the Sparrow and Sidewinder air to air missiles against pilotless target aircraft or lepus flares. So that as many as possible could witness the skill of the Squadron, several Sidewinders were fired close in at lepus flares, resulting in spectacular firework displays. 809 Squadron concentrated its efforts on the Island of Vieques. At the eastern end of the island is the controlled bombing range and the Squadron left its mark with 1000 lb bombs, 2" rocket projectiles, lepus flares and various other pieces of hardware. Meanwhile 849B continued their training by working closely with PRANG - the Puerto Rican Air National Guard. The PRANG aircraft were frequent visitors in the ship's airspace under the control of the Gannets. Not to be outdone, 824 Squadron carried out its own anti-submarine weapon training programme. This was done at one of the most sophisticated underwater tracking ranges in the world just off the island of St Croix. It also conducted a weapons programme to the SW of Roosevelt Roads.

To support all this activity by the Squadrons, the Weapon Supply party, Air Ordnance Teams and the Guided Weapons Section were kept very busy and extra people were required to ensure that weapons were ready when required. Interwoven with the weapons programme were two Quality Assurance Air Tests (QAATs). The purpose was to monitor the 1000 lb bombings by 809 and the Sidewinder missile firings by 892, to see if improvements in weapon reliability and increased effectiveness could be achieved. In general the period off the AFWR was of great benefit to all who were involved in the various aspects of air weapons.

Meanwhile some of the aircrew were taking part in a beach survival exercise on another part of Vieques, under the supervision of the Army in the guise of the Carrier Borne Ground Liaison Section (CBGL). Parties went ashore for periods of up to forty-eight hours and practiced

basha (shelter) building, and water and food collection. Although some tended to cheat by taking provisions with them, others took it more seriously and endeavoured by various means at their disposal to survive on coconuts, fish and water from solar stills.

While all this was taking place, the ship too was very active preparing herself for the visit of FOCAS, Rear Admiral Staveley. The ship was painted, cleaned and generally smartened up by all departments and a lot of effort was put in by the ship's company.

FOCAS arrived during the afternoon of Saturday 29th April, before all the paint had time to dry. Admiral's Divisions took place on the Flight Deck during the forenoon of Sunday 30th while the ship steamed within sight of the north Puerto Rican coast. Those that attended looked very smart in their best white uniforms and FOCAS was very pleased with the bearing and appearance of ARK ROYALS at Divisions.

To complete the more serious aspect of his visit, FOCAS' Rounds took place on Monday 1st May and he was most impressed by the consistently high standard that was achieved both on and off the rounds route, and remarked that it could only have been achieved by much hard work over and above the effort required to meet the AFWR

tasks. "Don't we know it," came the reply and at least our Admiral was satisfied and recognised the fact.

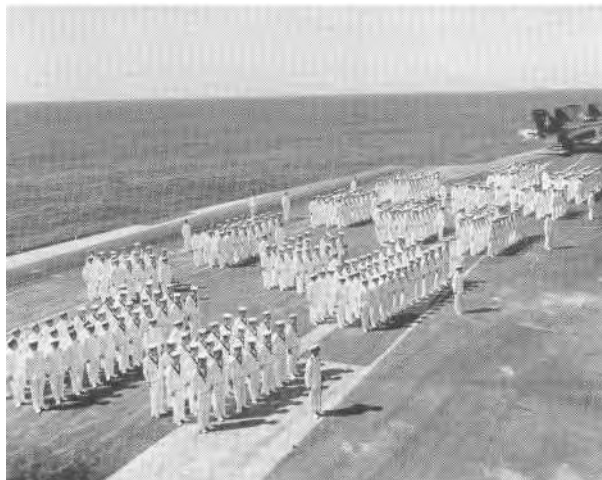
For the remainder of his stay Admiral Staveley tried to meet as many of us as possible. He flew in all the five types of aircraft on board, drove the flight deck tractors, toured many departments of the ship and generally enjoyed himself. He also took the opportunity to visit other ships in company. By the time he left us on Monday 8th May, there was very little that he had not seen or done in the ship.

As Ark usually provides the ships in company with something to look at, it made a change when HMS DEVONSHIRE provided us with a brief period of entertainment when she fired one of her Seaslug missiles on Monday 8th May.

During the day the ship began to prepare for our next port of call to St Thomas in the US Virgin Islands. After a fairly hectic work up phase most of us were ready for a period of rest and relaxation, and our arrival off the town of Charlotte Amalie on Tuesday 9th was greeted with sighs of relief. However as the ship was to be at anchor throughout the visit, not as much leave as one would have liked was possible but most of us made the most of what time ashore we did get.



Admiral's Divisions, 30th April.

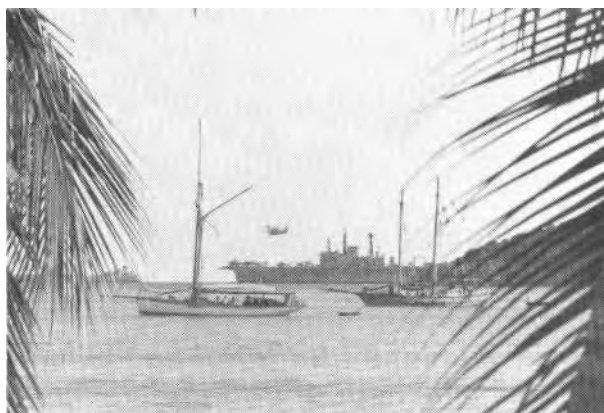


ST THOMAS, US VIRGIN ISLANDS 9 - 15 MAY 1978

The ship anchored off Charlotte Amalie, the main town of St Thomas at 1000 on Tuesday 9th May. Once again we were subjected to a boats routine whenever we wanted to go ashore, but at least it was a little more pleasant on this occasion.

As usual there were the official receptions but most of us did our own thing whenever we went ashore. As the Virgin Islands are a free port, the shops of Charlotte Amalie were full of goods at low prices from throughout the world and many of us bought something during our shopping expeditions. However the most popular places during the day were the clean beaches around the island with the cool, refreshing and clear seas. Just to spend a few hours relaxing in the sun was heaven for many.

Although there were no organised tours of the island, many visited Coral World on Cokie Beach on the north-east coast. There were mixed feelings about the Underwater Observation Tower and its associated attractions,



At anchor.