



807 SQUADRON
STARBOARD WATCH

807 NAVAL AIR SQUADRON

The present Squadron, consisting of 142 officers and men and equipped with Scimitar Mk. 1 aircraft, commissioned on the 1st October, 1958, at RNAS Lossiemouth, under the command of Lieut.-Commander Leppard, R.N. In the period between the commissioning date and embarking in HMS *Ark Royal* the Squadron represented the Fleet Air Arm at the Farnborough Air Display, carrying out formation aerobatics, individual aerobatics and dart 'snatches' and an atomic bomb attack on the airfield. The resulting bang and mushroom, plus the lowest, fastest flypast, stole the day.

During the winter of 1959, with Farnborough over and behind them, the Squadron began to work-up in earnest for a general service commission in HMS *Ark Royal*. The Commanding Officer was relieved by Lieut.-Commander (Jock) Tofts, A.F.C., R.N., and the Senior Pilot by Lieut.-Commander F. Hefford, D.S.C., R.N. Out of working hours some ratings took advantage of Lossiemouth's recreational ski-ing facilities and Lieut. Pentreath was seen careering along on skis behind a car, only to be brought to ground by the top of a runway lamp. This, unfortunately, resulted in a broken ankle. Lieut. Grier-Rees ejected from his Scimitar over the Trossachs in Perthshire and he, too, was not seen for a couple of days whilst he indulged in some downhill snow sports and mountaineering!

The work-up completed, embarkation day finally arrived and the Squadron flew south and landed on board on the 3rd March, 1960. Flying operations began in earnest as soon as the ship was within diversion range of Gibraltar, all pilots deck-qualifying on type. After a short visit to Gibraltar the ship continued to the Mediterranean to begin an intensive work-up period. A large change of personnel took place in April and then, throughout the summer, the Squadron flew hard in its many roles – LABS, P/R, Ground Attack Strikes and Interceptions, and Army Support.

A short period of acclimatisation was needed when the ship returned to the cold and wet of Scotland for the NATO exercise off Norway. Both in preparation for it and during this exercise the Scimitars worked an intensive programme flying a large number of strikes and photo recce missions. On completion, 807 disembarked to Lossiemouth for a short period of leave and another large change of personnel before rejoining the ship for her return to the Mediterranean. The leave was more than usually welcome after the particularly strenuous efforts put in by everyone to keep the aircraft flying through 'Swordthrust',

The new members settled in on the way south and soon we were back again in the Med operating as usual on board and ashore. A highlight of this period was the launching by catapult of two Scimitars from the ship when she was at anchor in Grand Harbour. This was the first launch of a swept-wing aircraft from a carrier in harbour. Shortly after Christmas another landmark was reached when Sub-Lieut. Britton flew the four thousandth sortie from the ship for this commission. At this time 807 had achieved about 1,500 hours flying and 1,400 deck landings.

849 'A' FLIGHT

849 Squadron was first formed in 1943 in the United States of America and was equipped with Avenger aircraft. The Squadron fought alongside Coastal Command guarding the Western Approaches and also with the Americans in the Far East.

At the end of the war the Squadron was disbanded and was recommissioned in its present role in 1952. The aircraft used were American lease-lend AD4Ws, known in Britain as the Skyraider AEW Mk. 1. The role of the new Squadron was, as today, to provide airborne early warning. That is, to provide an airborne addition to the ships' radar coverage in detecting low-flying attacking aircraft long before they are able to be picked up by the ships' radar. The equipment carried also enables the operators to take control of fighter aircraft and intercept the enemy. Other tasks carried out by the Squadron are strike direction, anti-submarine work, searches, photographic missions and weather reconnaissance, as well as providing a postal service.

849 Squadron is the largest in the Fleet Air Arm. It is based at Culdrose and divided into five flights, four are front-line flights and the other the headquarters flight, which deals with the training of pilots and observers for AEW work.

'A' Flight at present in *Ark Royal* formed on the 1st February, 1960, with Lieut.-Commander Hawley, R.N., in command, equipped with the new Gannet AEW Mk. 3. The Squadron consisted entirely of personnel who formed 700 'G' Flight, the trials flight for the new aircraft in August of the previous year and had done an enormous amount of work in the air and on the ground. The Flight is at present commanded by Lieut.-Commander Smith, R.N., and is due to go to HMS *Centaur* in March of this year.



GANNET
LANDING

LAUNCHING A VIXEN



THE VIXEN SQUADRONS

892 Squadron – Lieut.-Commander Hamilton, R.N.

893 Squadron – Lieut.-Commander F. D. Stanley, R.N.

892 Squadron –the Navy's first to be equipped with the 'all-weather' Sea Vixen, joined *Ark Royal* in March 1960 to solve the problems arising from the operation of this new aircraft at sea. Much hard work and, of course, some hard words were required, but the Squadron was very soon a firmly welded part of the ship. Heavy flying tasks were set and satisfactorily met by all concerned.

But perhaps the achievements of the Squadron, always ably led, most worthy of mention here was its 'fairy godfather's' act at Athens, where it took under its wings (spread for action) an attractive and homesick cabaret troupe for the duration of our visit!

The culmination of the training effort came with Exercise 'Swordthrust', during which the Vixens surpassed expectations, and it was with some dismay that the ship saw 892 depart to join *Victorious* after a happy and successful association.

The newly-formed 893 Squadron joined the ship in October for the very brief second part of her short commission and were soon fully appreciative of the comforts afforded to passengers taking a gentle Mediterranean cruise –the brilliant moon, calm seas, with gentle lapping of water against the ship's side and ... 'Get a /)(Z...%XXing Palouste on Vixen 462, we're xx!?!xx well launching in fifteen minutes!' Wedding this new squadron to a worked-up ship provided plenty of hard work for all and produced some scenes which are amusing only in retrospect. However, by Christmas (spent in Malta) 893 began to justify its existence.

The scene with the entire Squadron singing carols in Straight Street in the early hours of Christmas Eve is one which will be long remembered.



893 SQUADRON



824 SQUADRON

824 NAVAL AIR SQUADRON

824 Squadron formed originally in 1933 in HMS *Eagle* for a commission on the China Station equipped with Fairy III spotter planes. The modern edition re-formed in November 1959 with somewhat more modern, though assuredly less handsome, aircraft – Whirlwind Mk VII helicopters.

The Squadron, with Lieut.-Commander F. K. Steele in command and Lieut.-Commander R. M. Creasy as Senior Pilot, moved to Portland to work-up its AS procedures and then joined *Ark Royal* as she was about to leave the UK early in March. Routine anti-submarine screening was instituted and the Squadron has provided this protection throughout the commission.

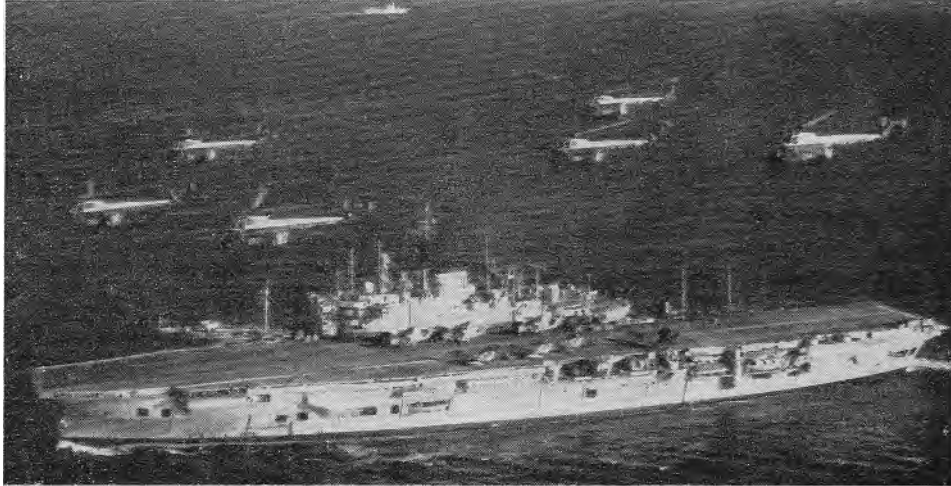
In our alternate role as 'planeguard' we have been pleased to keep a fatherly eye on the fixed-wing boys, watching with calm detachment the 'red balls of fire' from Flyco and the frantic wire-cutting by FDEO's henchmen. It has been our privilege, too, to provide a door-to-door passenger service for all and sundry, even to the extent of protecting the storing parties for the Fort Duquesne from the possible onset of seasickness in the seaboat. Recently we have even evolved a technique of dangling the third member of the crew in order to enable him to recover from the oggin the spent carcasses of pilotless target aircraft. Though they have not openly complained, our aircraft felt this was somewhat *infra dig*. 'Swordthrust' found us busy but divided, with some doing their 'small ship' time by joining *Hermes* in order to chase the American nuclear subs during 'Rumtub'.

Before rejoining the ship, half the Squadron went to Portland as temporary unpaid, untutored but not unwilling film stars for the film 'Anti-Submarine Helicopters, Part II'. The star helicopter – 331 – turned temperamental and in a fit of pique went U/S. The understudy took a quick face-lift and a number change and took over the lead. The show must go on.

November found us back in *Ark Royal* carrying out the duties of two squadrons, reinforced, it is true, by the useful combination of three pilots, one observer and two aircraft from the now defunct 820 Squadron. About this time the Squadron bard achieved immortality with this moving verse:

*We've landed stores and tools and men
 Ana flown them back on board again.
 Wells Fargo never had a clue
 About the jobs that we can do.*

Our one regret during our commission in *Ark Royal* is that our hop leaf symbol—the sign of a happy association – had to be given up. We realise that being so much in the public eye we should have been more careful about this advertising. However, we can record that the emblem was accorded a fitting end, having been buried at sea with traditional naval honours under the shadow of the Rock of Gibraltar.



In Memoriam = The late 820 Naval Air Squadron

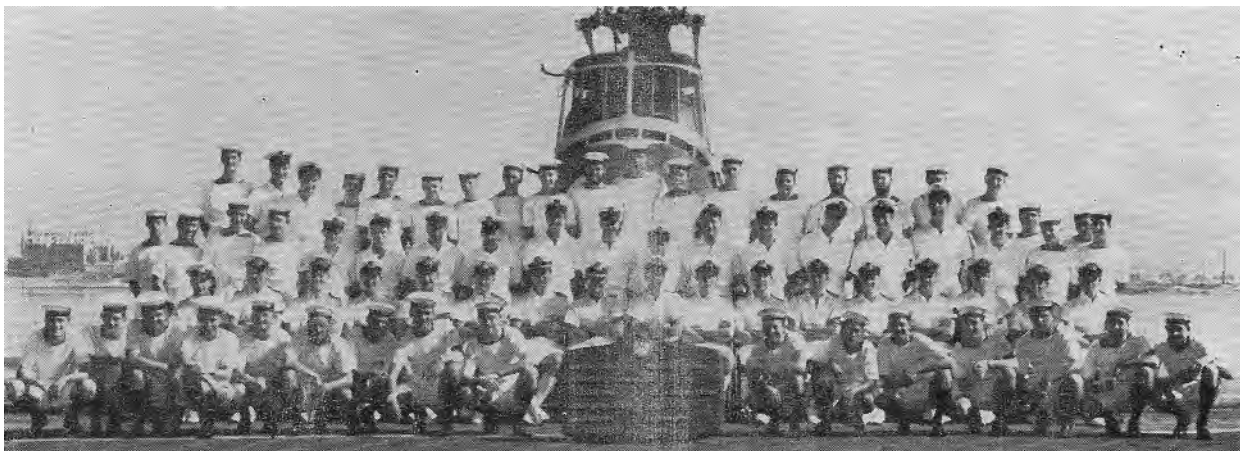
The Commanding Officer (Lieut.-Commander W. W. Threlfall, R.N.) and Senior Pilot (Lieut.-Commander P. Bailey, R.N.) commissioned 820 Squadron at Culdrose in November 1959, fortunately in ignorance of the brief existence it was to enjoy. The Senior Pilot left the Squadron before the end was in sight and his duties were taken over by Lieut. D. Miller, U.S.N., 824's popular American guest star.

Unlike 824 Squadron, 820 did not yearn for glory and indulged in only one aircraft-ditching! The privilege of undertaking this rite was, with gentlemanly self-denial, granted to the Senior Pilot as a visitor. He shortly afterwards was promoted to Lieut.-Commander, but it would be wrong to assume in general that a clutch failure is worth an extra half-stripe.

Nihil nisi bonum – so we recall 'Shop Window' at Barcelona when 820 kept its flags flying – the right way up! Again, during Army Co-operation exercises in Cyprus we recall the selfless devotion to duty that led 820 to minister to the urgent needs of the 'enemy' by ferrying ice to them. It is a pity that rumour has to record that they are believed to have shared the gin it was needed to cool.

It was therefore a great disappointment to learn that a shortage of pilots was to cause 820 to be disbanded when it disembarked in October 1960.

On October 3rd the Squadron flew past *Ark Royal* in column of threes, firing fusillades of Very lights and brown smoke puffs, with paying-off pennant at the dangle, bound for Culdrose and the break-up of a splendid squadron.



820 SQUADRON

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

FLIGHT-DECK

In the more traditional ships of the Service it is unusual to find the Engineering Branch operating in the full light of day. Their habits are usually troglodytic and they emerge into the fresh air only for a run ashore or some sporting contest, and their prowess at both these recreations has become proverbial.



ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT –
FLIGHT-DECK DIVISION

In a carrier things are rather different. In *Ark Royal* about a fifth of the Engineering ratings spend their time on the flight-deck operating and maintaining the numerous items of machinery required to work the catapults, arrestor gear, aircraft lifts, fuel pumps, and other less obvious contrivances. The limelight that this sort of work attracts comes as rather a shock, as does the precision and pace required in all operations. Under the watchful and critical eye of the Bridge and Flyco the newcomer might well long for the more comfortable obscurity down below. But the sense of satisfaction and achievement in meeting the exacting demands of operating modern aircraft and of being part of a well-drilled team working at high pressure with little or no margin for error is its own reward.



ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT – MISCELLANEOUS DIVISION



ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT - 'A' UNIT DIVISION

By the time the ship has finished its trip to the Frozen North the flight-deck engineers will be completely 'case-hardened' and will need special acclimatisation before returning to life down below.

ENGINE-ROOM

The more traditional work of the marine engineer continues down below, where at sea sixty-eight men are continuously on watch with the main object of ensuring that the 154,000 horse-power required to move the ship through the water at full speed will be available when needed. Equally vital, of course, is the maintenance of generators, steering gear, fuel pumps and refrigeration machinery, air-conditioning and heating plants, and numerous other items.



ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT — 'B' UNIT DIVISION



ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT - 'X' UNIT DIVISION

Keeping the ship topped-up with fuel oil is a major item and Ark Royal has fuelled at sea over sixty times this commission, and the job of controlling the supply of fuel to the boilers and keeping the ship upright at the same time keeps at least one man continuously employed. Total consumption of furnace fuel oil is one million tons at a cost of £1,000,000, and thirty-five million gallons of fresh water have been distilled and used, mostly for domestic purposes and drinking, in more or less palatable forms. Each of the eight boilers has had to be cleaned four times and the total soot removed is nearly a year's haul by an average chimney-sweep.

It has been necessary –for maintenance – to stop each of the four shafts at some time at sea, and on one occasion we continued flying for two days with only the two port ones in use.

In harbour this department is probably even busier than at sea, with the ever-present problem of maintenance on essential machinery. Even so, we have managed to win the ship's athletic trophy, be runners-up in the swimming, and provide many of the ship's soccer, rugby and cricket teams. True to tradition, their chief and petty officers' tug-of-war team is invincible.

ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT - 'Y' UNIT DIVISION



**SUPPLY
AND SECRETARIAT
DEPARTMENT**

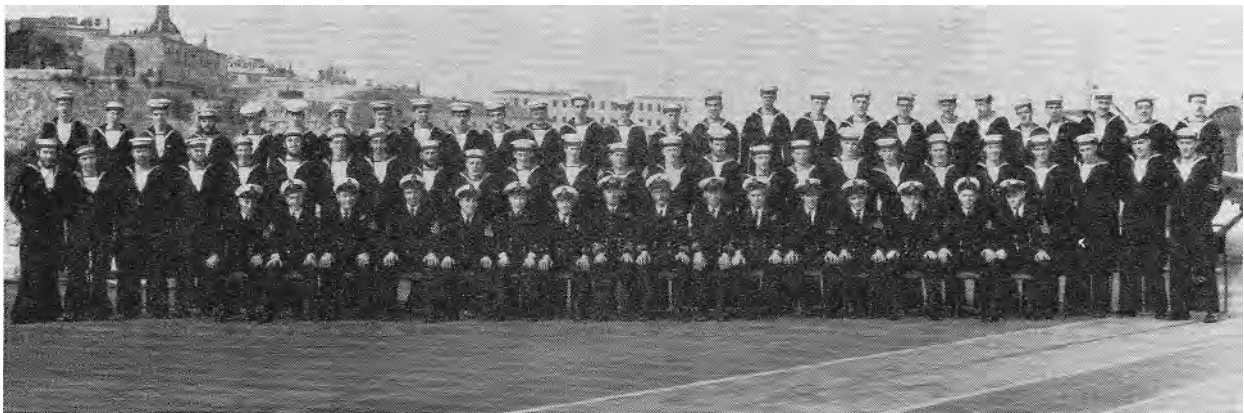


'Hanged my Paymaster this morning. He was the greatest hindrance to the campaign', wrote the Duke of Wellington. Napoleon, too, fully appreciated the degree to which military success is dependent on the victuallers.

Whilst the more dramatic dangers to the Paymaster's life have doubtless been decreased, the importance and complexity of the work of the Supply Branch have certainly increased.

Accommodated in *Ark Royal* is a population almost equal to a small country town the size of, say, Wincanton; though any further comparison between the amenities of the two communities will clearly be unwise. The 'Pusser', in conjunction with NAAFI, runs what correspond to the municipal offices; the bank and post office; the butcher's, baker's and confectioner's; the ironmonger's, tobacconist's and gent's outfitter's; several restaurants and off-licences; not to mention a soda fountain and snack-bar. The turnover in food alone is about five tons daily.

COOKS (S)





WARDROOM
ACCOMMODATION STAFF

The stores and provisions for these multifarious activities have largely to be taken on board at sea in order to leave the periods in harbour free for fundamental ship maintenance. Hence periodic 'replenishment at sea' have become a recurrent feature of the ship's seagoing programme, giving a necessary but not always welcomed break in the task of flying training. The obvious need to keep these breaks to a minimum has led to the development of a streamlined efficiency which has set new standards in this vital business. As a result, over 1,500 tons of stores have been embarked at ever-increasing rates, and this has helped to build up both the ship's flying achievements and the leave enjoyed by the ship's company in harbour.



CAPTAIN'S AND
PAY OFFICE STAFF