

DIARY

The ship returned to Devonport on 5th October 1966 for refit and modernisation.

1969

DECEMBER

15th to 19th Preliminary sea trials. Plymouth areas.

1970

FEBRUARY

24th Commissioning Day. Her Majesty the Queen Mother.

MARCH

4th to 24th Post-refit trials. Plymouth/Portland/Clyde areas.
25th to 19th April Devonport. Post trials rectification.

APRIL

20th to 22nd Final post-refit trials. Plymouth/Portland areas.
24th to 27th At Rotterdam.

MAY

1st to 15th Flying trials. Lyme Bay /Plymouth areas.
15th to 11th June Devonport. Post flying trials rectification.

JUNE

14th to 20th First Work-up. Moray Firth.
20th to 22nd Anchor off Lossiemouth.
22nd to 25th First Work-up. Moray Firth.
27th to 30th At Liverpool.

JULY

1st to 9th Second Work-up. Bristol Channel.
10th to 20th Devonport. S.M.P.
20th to 27th Third Work-up. Bristol Channel.
28th to 29th Operational Readiness Inspection.
31st to 3rd September Devonport. A.M.P.

DIARY 1970-1973

SEPTEMBER

3rd to 5th	Flyex. Plymouth areas
5th	Families Day.
7th to 17th	Flyex and Work-up. Bristol Channel Irish Sea. Stand by
8th to 9th	burning coaster <i>St. Brenden</i> , off Lundy. Exercise "
20th to 26th	Northern Wedding".
28th to 2nd October	At Oslo. "Northern Wedding" P.X.D. at Kolsas.

OCTOBER

4th to 10th	Devonport. Urgent defects on catapult and arrestor gear. Catapult and
11th to 14th	arrestor gear trials. Lyme Bay/Plymouth areas. At Malta. S.M.P.
19th to 29th	Exercise "Lime Jug 1970".
29th to 14th November	

NOVEMBER

9th	Collision with SAM <i>Kotlin</i> 365 south of Greece.
9th to 10th	Search and Rescue operations.
14th	Stand by H.M.S. <i>Fife</i> with major fire.
16th to 25th	At Malta. S.M.P.
26th to 30th	Flyex. Malta areas.
29th	Launch Hot Air Balloon to Malta.

DECEMBER

1st	Filming of "Med Patrol".
3rd to 8th	At Naples.
8th to 10th	Flyex. Sardinia areas.
12th to 14th	At Gibraltar.
18th to 15th Apr. 1971	Devonport. D.E.D.

1971

MARCH

9th	Captain J. O. Roberts, R.N.. assumes command.
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APRIL

15th to 18th	Post-D.E.D. trials. Plymouth /Portland /Clyde areas.
19th to 29th 30th	Work-up. Moray Firth.
to 3rd May	At Rosyth.

MAY

4th to 8th	Work-up and Harrier trials. Moray Firth.
0th to 10th	Anchor off Lossiemouth.
1 Rh to 19th	Work-up and Harrier trials. Moray Firth.
16th	Anchor off Lossiemouth.
21st to 2nd June	Devonport. S.M.P.

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JUNE

2nd to 11th	Passage to West Indies. Flyex on passage.
11th	Anchor off Puerto Rico.
12th to 15th	Exercise "Rimex/Barex". Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range (A.F.W.R.).
16th to 19th	Exercise "Opredux" for U.S.S. <i>America</i> . A.F.W.R. and transit to Bermuda.
22nd to 29th	At Port Everglades (Fort Lauderdale).
30th to 7th July	At Mayport. S.M.P.

JULY

11th to 18th	Flyex and Phantom Hot Weather Trials. A.F.W.R. areas.
19th to 21st	At St. Thomas.
21st to 30th	Passage to Plymouth.
28th	Meet yacht <i>British Steel</i> , 200 m. SW. of Land's End.
30th to 2nd August	At "C" Buoy, Plymouth Sound.

AUGUST

2nd to 4th	Operation "Lymelight". Lyme Bay.
5th	Families up harbour.
5th to 14th September	Devonport. A.M.P.

SEPTEMBER

17th to 25th	Flyex. Moray Firth.
27th to 4th October	Exercise "Royal Knight". Norwegian Sea /North Cape/North Sea.

OCTOBER

5th to 7th	At Rosyth. "Royal Knight P.X.D.".
7th to 8th	Exercise "Magic Sword IV". North Sea.
9th to 29th	At Portsmouth. S.M.P.
30th to 2nd November	Flyex. SW. Approaches

NOVEMBER

4th	Memorial Service for third <i>Ark Royal</i> . East of Gibraltar.
5th to 9th	At Palma.
11th to 14th	Exercise "Med Passex" with U.S.S. <i>Independence</i> . Ionian 7th.
15th to 18th	Flyex. Malta areas.
19th to 24th	At Malta. S.M.P.
25th	Flyex. Sardinia areas.
26th to 1st December	Flyex. Gibraltar areas.

DECEMBER

2nd to 4th	At Gibraltar.
7th to 20th Jan. 1972	Devonport. A.M.P.

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JANUARY

20th Sail for Virginia Capes areas.
26th Diverted to British Honduras.
28th Buccaneer sortie to overfly
30th to 1st February Belize. Flyex. Key West areas.

FEBRUARY

4th to 11th At New York.
14th to 18th Flyex. Puerto Rico areas (A.F.W.R.).
19th to 20th At Virgin Gorda.
22nd to 27th Exercise "Lantreadex" with U.S.S. *F. D. Roosevelt*. A.F.W.R.
28th Flyex. South of Puerto Rico.
29th At Roosevelt Roads.

MARCH

1st to 9th Passage to Devonport. Flyex on passage.
9th to 6th June Devonport. D.E.D.

JUNE

6th to 11th Post-D.E.D. trials. Plymouth /Portland areas.
12th to 16th Flyex. SW. Approaches.
19th to 23rd Flyex. Cape Wrath/Moray Firth.
26th to 29th Flyex. SW. Approaches.
30th to 10th July At Portsmouth. S.M.P. "Meet the Navy."

JULY

11th to 12th Flyex. SW. Approaches.
13th to 16th 5thrcise West Hoe. Off W. Ireland.
17th Operational Readiness Inspection.
18th to 31st August Devonport. A.M.P.

AUGUST

22nd Captain A. D. Cassidi, R.N., assumes command.

SEPTEMBER

3rd Anchor off Lossiemouth.
4th to 11th Flyex. Moray Firth.
14th to 28th Exercise "Strong Express". Norwegian Sea /North Cape.
29th to 5th October At Rosyth. "Strong Express P.X.D."

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OCTOBER

6th to 10th Flyex. North. Sea /Moray Firth.
12th to 17th At Oslo.
20th to 7th November At Portsmouth. S.M.P.

NOVEMBER

7th to 14th Flyex. SW. Approaches.
17th to 22nd At Barcelona.
25th to 26th Exercise "Corsica 1972".
27th to 4th December Flyex. Sardinia areas.

DECEMBER

6th to 8th At Gibraltar.
12th to 25th Jan. 1973 Devonport. A.M.P.

1973

JANUARY

26th to 2nd February Flyex. SW. Approaches.

FEBRUARY

4th to 8th Exercise "Sunny Seas". Off Portugal.
9th to 12th At Gibraltar.
14th to 22nd Exercise "Sardex". Sardinia areas.
23rd to 6th March At Malta. A.M.P.

MARCH 6th to 11th

15th to 30th April Exercise "Ruler". Western Mediterranean/ West of Gibraltar.
Devonport. A.M.P.

MAY

Flyex. Plymouth areas.
1st to 5th Passage to West Indies. *Passex* with French Group.
5th to 14th At Roosevelt Roads.
14th Flyex. A.F.W.R.
15th to 24th At St. Thomas.
25th to 27th Exercise "Lantreadex" with U.S.S. *F. D. Roosevelt*. Bahamas /A.F.W.R.
31st to 6th June

JUNE

8th to 14th At Port Everglades (Fort Lauderdale).
15th to 19th Flyex. Jacksonville areas.
19th to 30th At Mayport. S.M.P.
30th to 9th July Passage to North of Scotland. Flyex on

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JULY

9th to 13th	Exercise "JMC 168".
14th to 17th	Flyex. North Sea.
18th to 23rd	At Rosyth. Fleet Gathering.
23rd to 24th	Flyex. Exercise "Sally Forth". North Sea.
26th	Families Day.
26th	Arrive Devonport. Prepare for refit.

OCTOBER

25th	Freedom of the City of Leeds.
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THE ADMIRAL



*Rear-Admiral R. D. Lygo
The Flag Officer Carriers and Amphibious Ships
(and the first Captain of this period)*

INTRODUCTION

The commission this book commemorates was bound to be a momentous one. From long before the outset, the amount of interest aroused by the controversy over the decision on the future of aircraft carriers; *Ark's* ability to operate truly supersonic aircraft; the fact that she was, sadly, to become unique in the Royal Navy; the fascinating magic of her name; all combined to make the ship operate in the full glare of local, national and international publicity.

On top of all this, for those of us who served in her, was the ever increasing feeling of difference from the rest of the Navy. The size and scale were totally different; we were increasingly conscious that we really were the most powerful warship ever to serve in the Royal Navy and dedicated ourselves to proving her worth. We will all have our favourite tales and anecdotes but you may all be sure of this—we will never forget her.

THE ADMIRAL.

GETTING ARK ROYAL TO SEA

When I drove down to receive my new command, in the December of 1969, I had been away from carriers for about eight years and had grown accustomed to the lesser dimensions of lesser ships. I was still in command of the frigate *Juno* at the time and, coming direct from Chatham to Devonport, when I got out of my car alongside, I was immediately dwarfed and humbled.

Was I really supposed to get this mass of steel, covered in scaffolding and brown with maties and attached to the jetty with wires and pipes like the oars of a galley, out of Guzz and on her way? I picked my way up the gangway and was piped on board midst a bustle of activity, the din of windy hammers and the whine of metal grinders. After a brief inspection—I had yet to be appointed—the First Lieutenant enquired, What colour would you like the boats, sir? It all seemed to slip back into the familiar world of the possible. The same colour as they were before I replied. I do not intend to spend the whole of my time explaining to "Old Arks" why I changed it.

Life for me, then, was spent in a portakabin alongside. For the Ship's Company, it was in the old miserable wooden huddled accommodation in *Drake*. After a fight we achieved covered walkways to the heads and porches on the doors—luxury! By the time the Ship's Company rose to 1,000 the problem of getting back and forth, often in pouring rain, was becoming obsessive. Not enough Pussers transport we were told. We solved that by hiring corporation buses!

I used to go down to the bottom of the dry dock fascinated, totally dwarfed by it. Would there really be only six feet of water under this monstrous thing going through the Sound? Would it ever be finished on time? The answer had to be—yes. Two months before Preliminary Sea Trials and the notice boards were up; 60 days to go—every day a reducing figure. Every day Chief and I poring over the work schedule to determine whether we could make it and how much could we accept undone. "Just one small snag, sir, the dockyard have lost over 1,000 engine room valves!" Hurrah for *Centaur* and *Victorious*.

The numbers game; how many—what kind of a?, which?; only *Ark Royal* plays it on the grand scale. The number of compartments, men, sausages, mattresses, visitors, requestmen, all staggering by frigate

standards, but never the number of defaulters. Sport played a large part in keeping up moral in those soggy dockyard days—and at least the huts were adjacent to the sports field.

Christmas 1970 was coming and if we were to achieve Preliminary Sea Trials we had to be on our way in time to ensure a return by the holidays otherwise we would be stuck. "How little will you accept?" was the constant question. Nothing less than full completion, but I'll let you know on the day. People just didn't seem to understand that it was the weather as much as the material condition of the ship which would decide me.

The great day finally came and as I walked forward to the Bridge, visibility dropped to 5 yards in fog! When will you sail? chirped the B.B.C. When I'm ready. The next day dawned and a full gale was blowing. Why can't you go? chided *The Sun*. Are you afraid of the weather? Silence. Next day at 0600 I was awakened by the B.B.C., Are you going today? We went. Four engine rooms fed from 3 boiler rooms and with 600 dockyard maties. Mixed manning? !

The wind was well outside the limits for movement but we went, asking no-one's permission. That was an oversight! We made it. I really believe towards the end no one but me believed she would.

All worked well, and by the time we returned the last boiler room was producing steam.

January 1971: The Commissioning Day is coming. Four thousand five hundred guests expected ! How do you wine them—dine them—seat them—entertain them? The Queen Mother is definitely coming. We must have a good finish. "Really Mr you can't possibly let 'Her' see that !"

Our biggest job was to get over 2,000 tons of gash out of the ship in one week. You do understand Q. H.M.? Oh Yes. Here goes then, and the whole jetty and Q.H.M. disappear in a vast heap of rubbish. Total stoppage of all transport. Rehearsal day. Parson's seat collapses and he falls off the dais !

When the day came, we made it, a truly great occasion. The award of the *Ark Royal Star and Bar* to all those who had fought the battle of the refit. Then off for Sea Trials proper. All worked well. We *had* made it—and I do mean we. Two thousand men welded into a team and united by our task. Now to show her paces to the world.

IN THE BEGINNING

After the lengthy modernisation which had been subjected to a large number of frustrating delays—the final one being the weather—the ship put to sea on 15th December 1969 some 3 years and 2 months since her last appearance there. The Preliminary Sea Trials lasted four days and were conducted with only three boiler rooms working and with 600 dockyard personnel embarked. Then followed the build up to the commissioning and, on 24th February, Her Majesty the Queen Mother, who had launched the ship in 1950, cut the commissioning cake in front of some 4,000 people in the hangar.

We sailed for extensive Post-Refit Trials on 4th March, returning three weeks later for rectification and leave, and then off for more trials but, between 24th and 27th April, taking a break at Rotterdam. The ship had an excellent berth in the heart of the city and the visit was a great success. In our honour a new tulip was named *Ark Royal*. The first half of May was spent in the Lyme Bay and Plymouth areas conducting Flying Trials which were marred on the third day by the tragic loss without trace of a Phantom. Problems were encountered with the Jet Blast De-



IN THE BEGINNING



flectors, the bow catapult, and the arrestor gear so that the latter half of the month and the early part of June were spent on rectification in Devonport. We sailed on 12th June for our major work up programme, the first period of which was spent in the Moray Firth. This went most successfully up until the last minute when another defect occurred on the arrestor gear. However, the ship was due to spend the last weekend of June at Liverpool and an opportunity would exist to effect repairs. Sailors always like Liverpool and this run was no exception. We berthed at Princes Pier and were proud to display to the Merseysiders the ship which had been built there but had not returned since being first commissioned in 1955. The links were soon re-established, however, knot of friendship re-tied, and the opportunity taken to re-

new the association with Leeds, the City of our adoption.

The second and third work-ups took place in the Irish Sea and Bristol Channel areas in the most appalling weather. With fog banks and low cloud affecting the diversion airfields, it was a continual question as to which out of Brawdy, Valley or Yeovilton could produce the best conditions and then moving the ship to within diversion range of that one. In spite of these conditions, the Phantoms did some excellent missile firings on the Aberporth range and when it came to 28th July and the O.R.I. most of the exercises went smoothly.

August was spent in Devonport for leave and maintenance and, at Navy Days at the end of the month, Ark Royal provided the major attraction