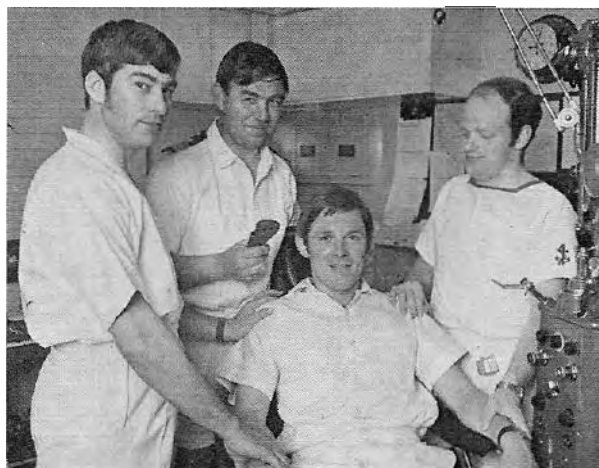


DENTAL DEPARTMENT



Since the last Commission Book was published, this department has doubled in numbers to four with the advent of a second surgery.

However you can still imagine the disruption when two members of the staff, Surg. Lt. (D) Day and L. M.A. Dowle both had to leave the ship in Summer 1972 as a result of injuries.

Luckily however reliefs were quickly obtained, and the present staff of Surgeon Commander (D) Hird, Surgeon Lieutenant (D) Martin-Jones, P.O.M.A. Baldwin and L.M.A. Drummond have been together since June 1972, and should see the refit out.

A huge groan could be heard throughout the ship, but principally from the Senior Dental Surgeon, when Lieutenant Martin-Jones broke his ankle playing Rugby for the ship's side in Malta. Fortunately one can always kick a foot pedal with a plaster cast.

Statistics are always invidious in that one can usually extract whatever one wants from them. However, for the record, since February 1972 to date 1st August 1973, 5,367 Fillings have been inserted somewhere in the body; the ships' company have lost 443 teeth (most of them in the Dental chair, some on the operating table under general anaesthesia, and a few on runs ashore); there have been 8,135 attendances (451.9 per month), which is high if you

take into account leave; and finally 159 patients are now or ought to be wearing *Ark Royal* Dentures (with their Fly Navy brand mark !).

With the huge consumption onboard of Naafi "Nutty", the lack of dental hygiene, and the prohibitive cost of fruit, Dental Education in meeting the advances of decay is given a high priority.

The Department has been pretty active in the Rugby World with the Junior Dental Officer a star player in the ship's side, and the Senior Dental Surgeon an active referee, excitable supporter and Chairman of the club.

Our influence even extends to the Television World with Lt. Martin-Jones organising the live television programme of news and events—Roundup, on the ship's internal circuit. One other of the miscellaneous ship's responsibilities has been the purchase and sale of all *Ark Royal* souvenirs undertaken by the Senior Dental Surgeon.

Our thanks to many of the ship's Technical staff for sorting out our equipment problems at sea, and for providing us with better ventilation.

Our runs ashore we don't brag about, but from all appearances were well enjoyed, and we all look forward to a "restful" period in Devonport during the refit.

MED. PATROL 71

With the early autumn spent in the traditional hunting grounds of the Striking Fleet Atlantic off North Cape in Exercise "Royal Knight", followed by a call at Rosyth, the ship entered Portsmouth on 9th October. A pleasant change for the Pompey natives to have a S.M.P. at home, was preceded by

short of the 30th anniversary of that sad loss of 1941. Prior to our next series of exercises, we had four splendid days in Palma, Majorca. We were alongside—one of those rare occasions—in a port whose facilities are those of both a large town and a holiday



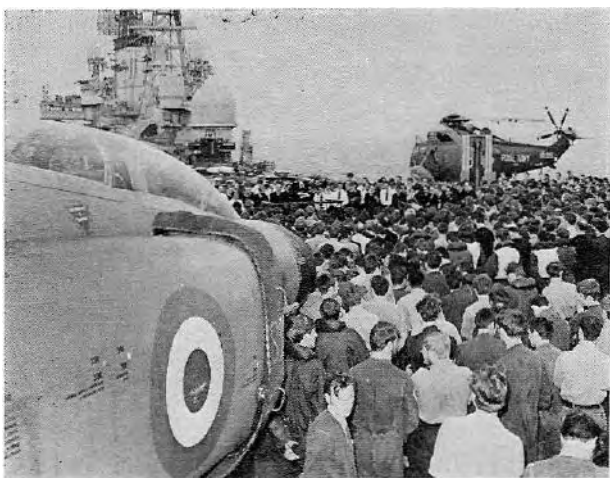
Badger Shadower during "Royal Knight"



At Palma

a Families Up Harbour for their benefit. 400 families embarked at Spithead and a vast crowd watched from Southsea as the ship made its first visit since 1965. Three weeks later we sailed for the Mediterranean, passing through the Straits of Gibraltar early on 4th November. During that forenoon we stopped engines in the approximate position of the sinking of the third *Ark Royal* and held a Memorial Service on the Flight Deck. The date was only ten days

resort. It was a little late in the season but the Blackpool landladies were having their holidays at the same time and the combination was not unpleasant. For those of us who had not visited Majorca before and had imagined it as a sprawling mass of towering package deal hotels, it was a most pleasant surprise. The former take up only a very small proportion of the area. The old town of Palma is



Memorial Service



R.N. Band at Palma Cathedral

MED. PATROL 1971

extremely attractive and rich in history and culture while the country inland, with its two main ranges of hills, is most picturesque.

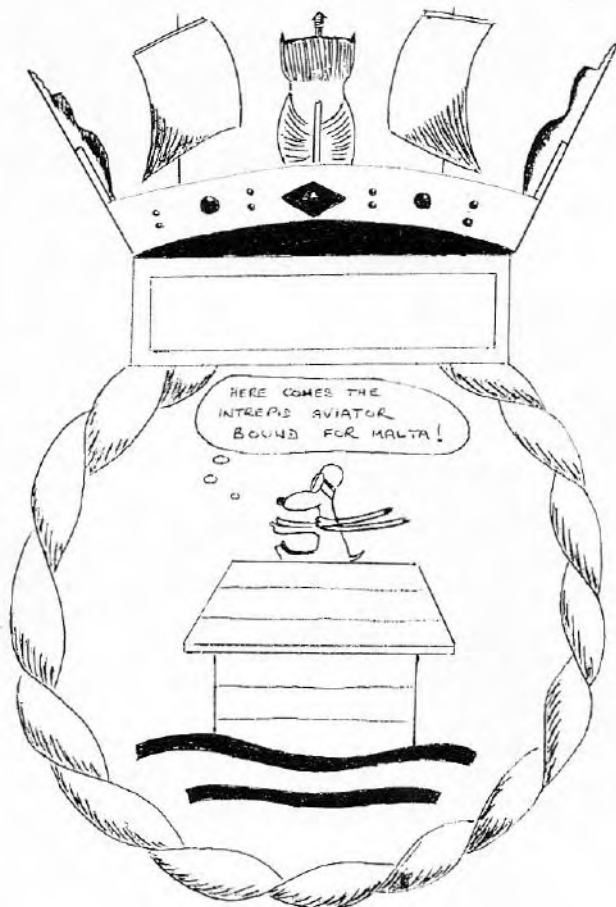
A three day Med Passex with the U.S.S. *Independence* included a period of cross-operating air-



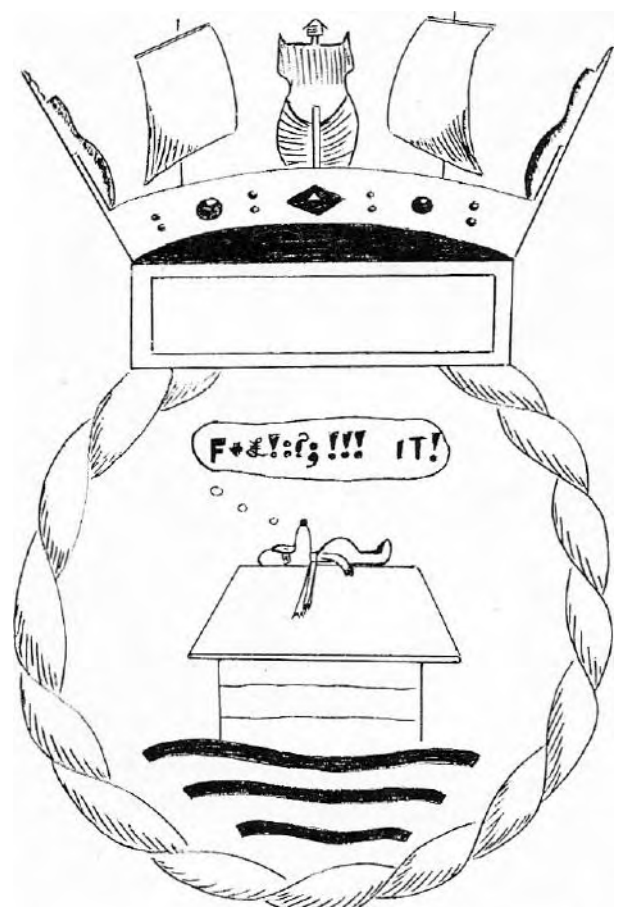
With U.S.S. Independence, November 1971

craft in the Ionian Sea. The glamour catcher was the C-1A C.O.D. with its free take-off and its wing-fold style only second to the Gannet in its novelty. A bridle tensioning problem limited the Buccaneers to rollers but we swapped four F4Ks for four F4Bs on two occasions and the principle of cross-operating was established. Comment of one of the Badgers who spent some time in the other ship — "It's nice to be back to the much better food, messdecks and even heads of *Ark Royal*!"

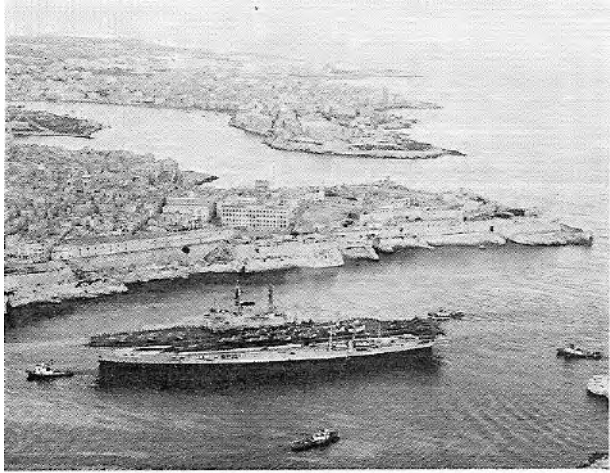
Two days later, we entered Grand Harbour in Malta and secured to head and stern buoys abreast Gun Wharf Jetty. A short S.M.P. from Friday to Tuesday turned out to be quite hectic and could not be summed up better than by Snoopy. More flying—first off Decimomannu in Sardinia where the weather wasn't all that good, and then in the Alboran Channel, east of Gibraltar, where the visibility was so extreme that one day one could see the Sierra Nevada Mountains of southern Spain from 60 miles away



Here comes the intrepid aviator bound for Malta!



MED. PATROL 1971



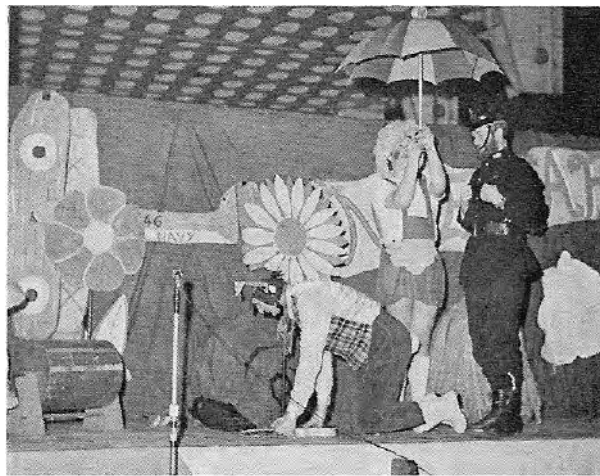
Entry into Grand Harbour

and, at the same time, the Riff Mountains of Morocco. Into Gib for two days and one of the best remembered events will be the Top of the Rock Race in which we put over 300 human entrants plus a Great Hairy Purple Teddy Bear which gained 849 Squadron some £20 for charity. The day after sailing, we held "Noel's Ark"—a magnificent evening extravaganza in the sumptuously appointed upper hangar with the choice of the connoisseur canned Courage. It was almost four hours

of non-stop entertainment and, of those who saw it, who now can watch The Magic Roundabout without a sly grin and a memory of the 809 version?



"Noel's Ark" — I, Naval Airman Dummy



"Noel's Ark"—!/, Magic Roundabout

THE STEAMIES

When a lot of your machinery reaches the stage where you would rather not stop it—like it might not start again—then is the time to call a halt and give it a refit. It was just bad luck that the dockyard workmen got the word in first and led to our spending summer 1973 in Florida instead of in number 10 dock, but then, the engineers never were ones for complaining. You might ask what they are ones for, but just let your imagination run wild for a moment while we fill you in with a few things out of next year's *Guinness Book of Records*.

Take water for instance (you were usually not allowed to) but if you look at what was produced, we begin to wonder if someone didn't have a profitable racket in its sale. Since we commissioned, the evaporators have made over three quarters of a million tons, or enough water to float fourteen *Ark Royals*. What *did* you do with it all—apart from the Commander's bath that is? During the production of this veritable reservoir, we used 20 complete sets of steam coils and 36 pumps—all refitted by blokes who needed a drink every five minutes because they were sweating so hard and turning it all salty again. Did you ever have the feeling that somewhere along the line you had completely missed the point?

And whilst on the subject of what we've used, let's have a look at the fuel that has disappeared up the funnel in smoke—invisible to the naked eye, of course. We have managed to burn just under half a million tons of it. If it were petrol, then it would be 98,437,500 gallons, or enough to take the average family car 2,953,125,000 miles. We are not quite sure how many times round the world that would take you, but the kids in the back would get awfully bored, that's for sure. Or to put it another way, when flying with no wind, we burn £33 of fuel a minute, or it is like putting a £5 note in each boiler every minute. Our friends in the Electrical Department can tell you how much electricity has actually been used but we are able to generate enough to keep a town of 100,000 people warm, lit up and turned on. It's thoughts like this which keep us going, come to think of it.

The average age of the Navy is reducing every

year and that of our department is 19.8, despite help from the geriatric members.

A lot of training has had to be done and we have managed to turn out just under 500 M.E.M.s, over 150 Auxiliary Machinery Qualifications, 78 L.M.E.M.s, 52 P.O.M. E.M.s, 73 Boiler Watchkeeping Certificates, and over 80 Unit Watchkeeping Certificates (some have even left of their own accord). This number will enable *Centurion* to man at least 10 frigates and the F.M.G. to support them. Jolly grateful they should be to T.S. *Ark Royal*.



Browsing through the histories of past commissions, we find casual references to sailings delayed because of defects or water shortages. Eleven days in one case. But *we* always sailed on time—or even a day early. Mind you we have got four shafts to play with, which sounds real sexy as the Actress said to the Bishop, but for all that we are proud—whoopswell, contented with the reflection that we kept *Ark* floating, moving, flying, lit up, warm, cool, and plugged into the tanker more often, perhaps, than any newly-joined First Lieutenant would ever dream of.

After all that we will none of us ever be quite the same again.

Mushrooms.

55 CARRIER BORNE

GROUND LIAISON SECTION

Back in the Good Old Days when fixed-wing flying in the Fleet Air Arm was a flourishing branch of the Service there were over a dozen C.B.G.L. Sections deployed on Carriers and R.N. Air Stations. The organisation had its own Headquarters at Lee on Solent and to be a C.B. G.L.O. was a way of life in itself.

Alas, 55 C.B.G.L. Section is now the last of a long and distinguished line, superimposed almost as an afterthought on to G.L. Group U.K.

Pongoes on ships confuse everyone—almost to the extent that in self-defence they are driven to having hand-outs run off explaining their duties. "No, Madam, I am not in the Royal Marine Band. . . ."

Those duties do tend to be a little difficult to define in full, but in simple terms, the Army section is responsible for providing the vital link between the ship's attack squadrons and any ground forces operating ashore. All C.B. G.L.O.s are Primary Forward Air Controllers and spend a lot of their time doing Close Air Support—both live and dummy—with the squadrons. This is done largely for the Squadrons' benefit as in war it would not normally be a primary role for the C.B.G.L.O.s. They would expect to remain onboard and deal with briefings and debriefings, tasking and mission reports.



On manoeuvres

The Officers of the section are also integral members of the ship's Strike Planning Team in conjunction with representatives from Operations, Met, Gunnery, Photographic Interpretation and of course selected aircrew. As a result of their involvement with strike planning they also become involved with the extraction and correlation of intelligence material.

The Section's other responsibilities include providing a back-up photographic interpretation capability, instructing aircrew in recognition, particularly of military equipment, and in general providing all possible assistance to the Air Department in the training of the aircrew. A subsidiary but time-consuming task inherited by us for the last six months of this particular commission was the production of *Noah's News*.

This certainly helped us to influence people if not exactly to make friends—to rephrase an old proverb

. . . you can annoy all the people some of the time. . . ."

I have always felt that probably the most important part of our job is to convince the Royal Navy that Pongoes are People. It is a frightening thought but we are probably the only soldiers that the vast majority of the ship's company will ever get to know really well. Really the Army's reputation stands or falls by the impression we create—Crash !—who said that?

The unfortunate thing is that it really is rather difficult to know when one is succeeding and when one is failing, for what is abject failure in the eyes of one element of the ship can be viewed as an outstanding performance by other (usually more junior) sections of the community !

One can but do one's own thing and hope that one will be elsewhere when the pigeons come home to roost.

The one indisputable fact about serving with the Royal Navy is that one probably makes more real friendships in one year onboard ship than in ten years in an Army environment.

WESTLANT 72

From the cold shores of Europe to the icy shores of the U.S. Eastern Seaboard with a quick dip south at the end—at least that's how the programme looked, and on sailing from Devonport on 20th January, we headed west southwestwards for the Virginia Capes areas.

26th January—Port 15—make it British Honduras instead. A spot of bother was rumoured to exist there with an alleged threat of invasion from neighbouring Guatemala. *Ark Royal* was ordered to make a presence felt at Belize, the British Honduran capital, and we planned to go via the Florida Strait and the Yucatan Channel, while flying off a long range strike as soon as possible. The FOF1 group with *London* was to take the Windward passage, east of Cuba. So we put on the revolutions and with head seas, a heavy swell, and a relative wind of 70 knots over the deck, it is not surprising that we lost two whip aerials, one boom, a number of guard rails, and buckled 3T starboard boat deck. On 28th, when southwest of Bermuda, two Buccaneers for strike on Belize and two tankers were launched. The strike pair was topped up on the way out and again on the way back having carried out a successful mission involving six hours in the air and a round trip of 2,600 miles. The strike crews were subsequently awarded the Boyd Trophy for the finest feat of Naval Aviation in the year.

Later that evening, we were ordered to proceed to the Key West area and told to conduct private flying exercises for three days and then, if the situation in Central America had not worsened, to take passage to New York to meet our originally programmed visit dates. Well, anyway, we'd had five days or so of sub-tropical sunshine, which was a bonus allowing us to soak up a few calories in preparation for the anticipated temperatures of New York.

Heading north-eastwards, we flew for a day off Jacksonville, battered through some more swell and, on the night of 3rd February, suffered a temperature drop from 68°F to 38°F in a 12 hour period. Goodbye Gulf Stream for a while!

The morning of 4th February was freezing, with a biting 25 knots offshore wind. Our passage under the Verrazano Narrows bridge—the longest single span

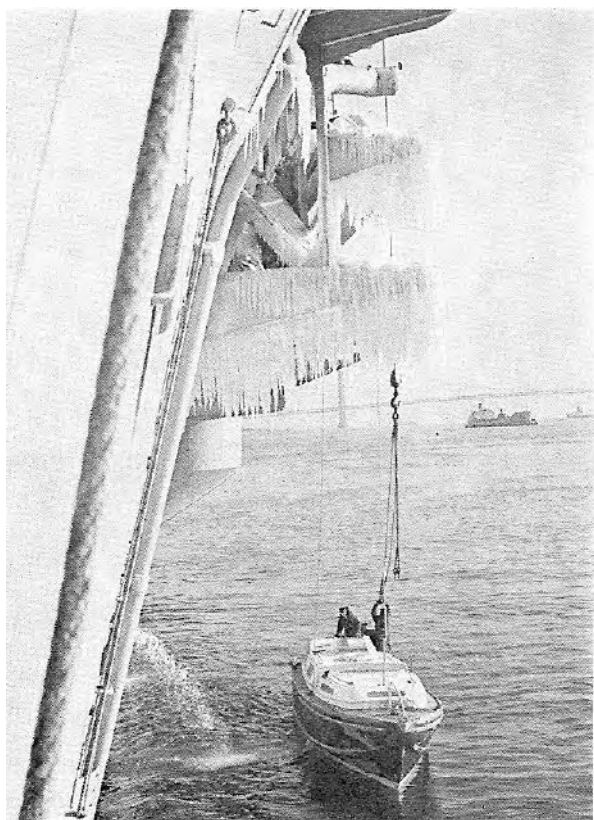


Approaching the tallest building in the world in lower Manhattan—the World Trade Centre

in the world - and through Upper New York Bay into the Hudson River was a splendid sight for the few who were up top. The ship secured to head and stern buoys which had been laid specially for us alongside the middle of Manhattan and about a mile and a half from the Cunard Pier to which the ship's boats were to run.

Tragedy. A shackle securing the head buoy to its mooring broke and our bow swung free carrying the buoy with it. The stern buoy was slipped and we drifted sideways down the river. It was fortunate that it happened while full steam was available and the tugs were still with us. Had it occurred a few hours later, H.M.S. *Ark Royal* could now be an extension of West 85th Street. We took a temporary berth in the Quarantine Anchorage off Staten Island, gave no general leave that night, and the next day moved to a permanent anchorage about a mile off St. George's Coastguard Base, Staten Island. The comparatively small organisation at this base suddenly became the landing and shore facility for the visit of a capital ship. The coastguards worked round the clock and some individuals were on the go for the first 48 hours without a break. They went out of their way to make every possible facility available to us, and without their assistance, the pieces of the visit could not have been put together again.

WESTLANT 1972



Definitely cool

However, the bright lights of Manhattan were now some six miles away and involved a boat ride, a half mile walk, and a thirty minute ferry trip before reaching them. The Staten Island Ferry—alleged to be the cheapest ride in the world at 5 cents—had offered free passage to the few sailors who might have ventured all the way from our intended mid-town Manhattan berth to visit Staten Island. Instead it became the main access route for the whole ship's company! Anyway, it was nice and warm on board the ferries and food and hot drinks were available. Some people found even the early morning sleeping quite good and managed to clock up an additional couple of circuits.

In spite of these setbacks, we had a lot of enjoyment from the week's visit. A lot of hospitality was offered and accepted and we like to think that we left a pleasant flavour of our presence.

Back south heading for Puerto Rico, we thawed out the frozen pipes and our chilled bones. The 15th of February was Chinese New Year. This was the Year of the Rodent, and early in the morning one of them must have gnawed through the lashings of

Buccaneer 031 which slipped over the side. That weekend, we anchored off Virgin Gorda and did our banyan act. The facilities ashore there were nothing like St. Thomas and the population was only about 1,200—before we got there—but the unspoilt nature



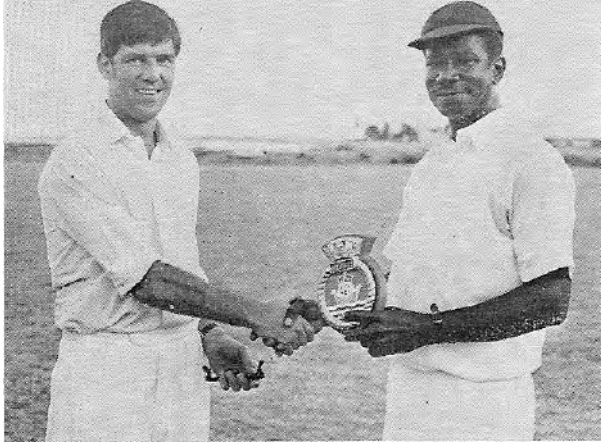
At Virgin Gorda

of the island and its beaches are quite delightful, and to lie in the hot sun in the middle of February is one reason why we joined. The Royal Marine Band and the Cricket Team flew over to Tortola where they played their respective things.

Having fully charged the batteries, we were now in a fit state to enter Exercise "Lantreadex"—the O.R.T. exercise for the U.S.S. *Franklin D. Roosevelt*. This all took place in the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range areas north of Puerto Rico, and included a "Rimex" missile firing phase, a "War at Sea" tactical play, and a "sinkex", in which a de-commissioned U.S.N.

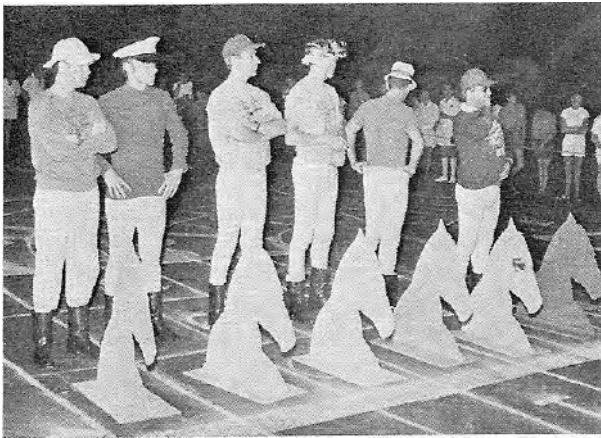


WESTLANT 1972

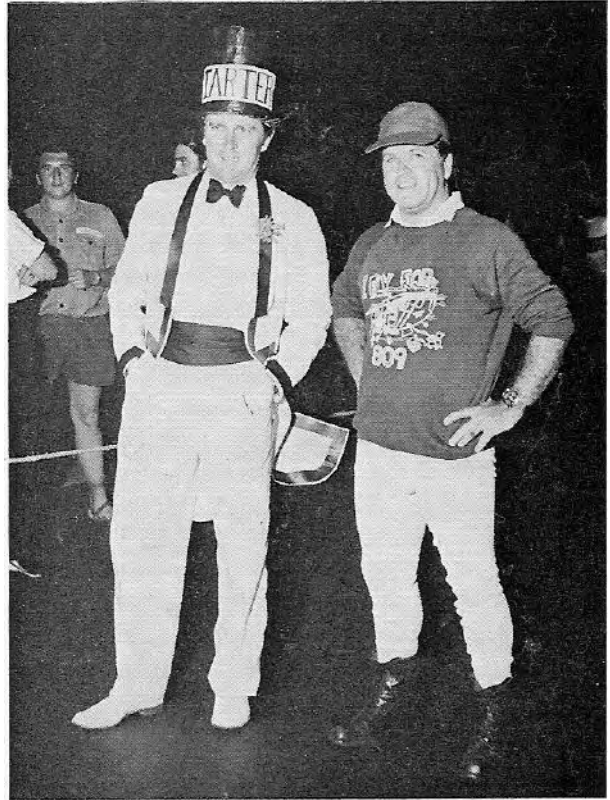


ship was a target for live missiles, shells and bombs. The *F.D.R.* kindly allowed *Ark Royal* Air Group to have first go and we kindly sank the target with ten direct hits a bit mean as neither *F.D.R.*'s C.A.G., nor the surface gunfire units had had a chance to test their prowess.

For that rare day, 29th February, we anchored off Roosevelt Roads for six hours and, by helos, lifted in sports teams, the band, and a few P.X. shoppers before sliding through the Virgin Passage, out into the Atlantic and heading for home. On our first evening of the passage, 809 provided some excellent entertainment in the form of Royal Arkcot horse racing.



Because of a P.A.S. Go-Slow at Devonport, we had had to bring forward our return by a week, and now, with no time in hand we were forced to drive on through a thundering north-westerly gale with a heavy pounding swell for the final three days. At one



point the ship was rolling over 15 degrees. The beam swell lifted a port after sponson creating a 40 foot split in the ship's side on 4 deck, we lost about 45 life rafts, smashed a motor cutter, and caused undercarriage oleo collapses on seven Buccaneers.



However, we made it in time, disembarked the Air Group and settled alongside to prepare for the second D.E.D. of the commission.

849B FLIGHT

As the major refit of H.M.S. *Ark Royal* neared completion 849 Squadron "B" Flight, under the command of Lt.-Cdr. T. G. Maltby, was formed at R.N.A.S. Brawdy, Pembrokeshire, on 14th January 1970. The Flight was to be equipped with four Gannet AEW3 aircraft each fitted with a modified version of the APS-20F search radar together with other recently introduced equipment modifications, and was the first front line unit to receive this new electronics fit. In addition to the airborne Early Warning Gannets "B" Flight also operated the *Ark Royal* C.O.D. Gannet, used for mail and passenger flights.

The first tasks to be tackled after forming were concerned with perfecting both the new equipment and the administrative side of the Flight. Once things were running smoothly, the real objective of bringing both men and machines up to front line standard could be accomplished. To this end an intense training programme was initiated which included numerous exercises and deployments to other Naval Air Stations and Royal Air Force Stations, so that the aircrew became familiar with all manner of tasks and flying operations.

By early May *Ark Royal* was at sea undergoing trials, and three Gannets were embarked for deck handling training. Not only did these enable the Flight deck teams to come to grips with their new tasks in a relatively leisurely manner, but also trials were conducted with the actual flight deck machinery—such as the arrester wires—before the really heavy, high performance jets were embarked. These trials were completed by 9th May when the aircraft returned to Brawdy, and thereafter the pace ashore built up towards the first operational embarkation in mid June.

The Flight embarked on 14th June for the initial work-up period off North East Scotland, and when this was concluded by early July the aircraft returned to Brawdy, whilst all of the technical ratings were airlifted ashore by Sea Kings of 824 Squadron. This was the first time that an entire fixed wing Squadron had disembarked by helicopter. This brief spell ashore ended on 20th July when the Flight once more embarked for *Ark Royal's* work-up prior to the ship's Operational Inspection, and with that successfully

completed, everyone could relax for a while over the summer leave period.

Following leave the main effort was devoted to Exercise "Northern Wedding" which took place in the Norwegian Sea following a brief work-up in home waters. On this exercise the Flight's task was to keep a plot of surface shipping movements and also to carry out limited A.E.W. in support of the task force. Realism was added by the fact that in addition to the exercise forces, numerous Soviet warships and aircraft were detected and reported as they prowled around the N.A.T.O. units.

After "Northern Wedding", *Ark Royal* deployed to the Mediterranean to operate around the Malta area, and following Exercise "Lime Jug" the Flight had the opportunity of carrying out a more unusual form of flying. On 29th November Lieutenant Terry Adams made the first launch from a British ship at sea in his hot air balloon "Bristol Belle". With full press and television coverage he flew from *Ark Royal* to Malta, a Flight lasting thirty minutes, and delivered a bag of air mail letters to the General Post Office, Valletta. This was the first flight by a hot air balloon over Malta and the event produced much interest and excitement amongst those who saw it. A special commemorative postmark was even produced to mark the occasion for the letters so delivered.

For the remainder of the winter "B" Flight was ashore at its new home—R.N.A.S. Lossiemouth—and it was not until April 1971 that it once more rejoined H.M.S. *Ark Royal*, this time with Lt.-Cdr. G. J. L. Holman in command. Following a work-up in the Moray Firth the Flight temporarily disembarked so that a Harrier trials team could come aboard and conduct special trials. Throughout the trials a very pleasant routine was worked whereby the Flight's Gannets still flew in support of the ship but from their parent Air Station at Lossiemouth. With the trials complete the Flight returned back onboard, and after a final work-up in home waters *Ark Royal* set off for the Western Atlantic.

A large exercise was conducted off Puerto Rico, and during the course of this, the Flight Observers were able to make their first "live" intercepts where the targets were actually engaged. In this case the