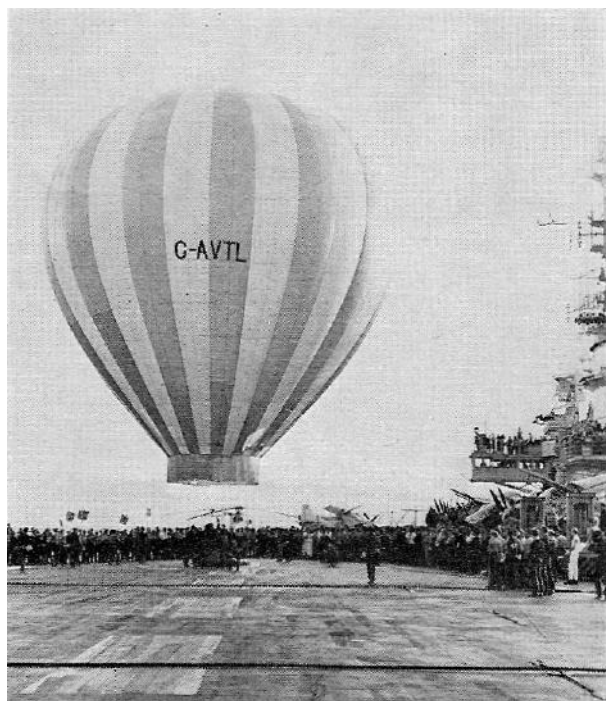


849B FLIGHT



"BALLOON MAIL"

Lieutenant Adams prepares to leave H.M.S. Ark Royal in his hot air balloon "Bristol Belle", on an air mail run to Malta—just visible in the background.

targets were unmanned drones controlled from other aircraft. Upon completing this phase of the cruise the ship paid a visit to Florida, and in order to carry out continuation flying a number of jets were deployed to N.A.S. Cecil, some 250 miles north of Fort Lauderdale. In support the C.O.D. Gannet was flown ashore to Hollywood (Florida) International Airport from whence it made regular trips to N.A.S. Cecil with stores and personnel. Whilst ashore it was maintained by a small Naval team assisted by Sunny South Aircraft Services, who were most proud of the unique "lodge" in their hangar.

The American visit ended in July, and by the 29th the ship was close enough to launch two Gannets for Lossiemouth. The remaining three stayed on board to participate in Exercise "Lymelight", which involved live television transmissions by the B.B.C. as the ship operated in Lyme Bay. With this successfully completed the remainder of the Flight left for Lossiemouth and summer leave.

Following leave it was back to the now familiar pattern of embarkation, work-up, and exercise, and as a complete contrast to Florida in July *Ark Royal*

now proceeded to the Norwegian Sea for Exercise "Royal Knight". This was more or less a repeat of "Northern Wedding" with "B" Flight conducting surface search missions and also giving early warning of raids coming off the Norwegian mainland once the ship was within striking range.

The remainder of the year was spent in the Mediterranean, where we once again met with the U.S.S. *Independence*. Following an exercise in which the two carriers mounted long range attacks on one another there was a cross operating phase, but unfortunately "B" Flight was limited to one Gannet doing three roller landings on *Independence's* deck without actually hooking on. Just prior to *Ark's* visit to Malta the Gannets carried out a successful ship plot of three soviet warships which had been shadowing *Ark Royal*, but they were quickly forgotten at the prospect of a Christmas "rabbit run" in Malta. On passage home the ship visited Gibraltar for a weekend, and whilst there the Flight participated in the "Top of the Rock" race. The Officers were sponsored by the Wardroom to carry the Flight Mascot—a large blue teddy bear called "Argo"—to the top of the rock, and although he finished 51st he did raise a useful sum of money for the Gibraltar Society for Handicapped Children.

At the beginning of 1972 the Flight was beginning to get used to its somewhat nomadic way of life, and the new year proved no different from the old in this respect. However, when we once more embarked it was without the C.O.D. Gannet, which had been taken off the strength of the Flight.

Having set off for the United States in January, the ship was diverted to the Florida area due to the possibility of a confrontation between British Honduras and Guatemala. "B" Flight's contribution to this was the landing of a Gannet to Bermuda to collect vital documents and orders relating to the operation, but as the situation eventually calmed down and *Ark Royal's* presence was no longer required, the ship was able to return to the intended programme. This included a visit to New York followed by another "Lantreadex" off Puerto Rico, and by then it was time to return home for Easter leave.

When next the Flight rejoined the ship it had the C. O.D. Gannet on strength once more, but this was to be the last time as it was soon due to be replaced by an extra Sea King allocated to 824 Squadron. The work-up in home waters concluded with an Admiral's Inspection in Portsmouth and an Operational Readi-

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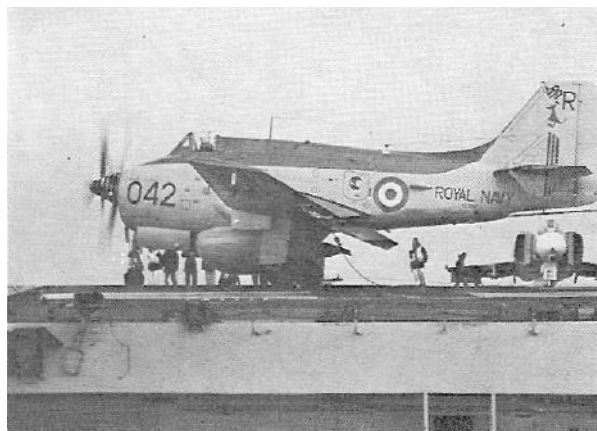
ness Inspection in the South-West Approaches, the final phase of which was the Squadron disembarkation back to Lossiemouth.

Shortly after re-embarking in September one of the Flight's aircraft was damaged in a deck handling accident, as a result of which it was not considered desirable to catapult it off the ship because of the stresses involved. Consequently it made a free take-off for the short flight back to Lossiemouth, and this rare occurrence drew the crowds in "Goofers" and also merited a brief article in *Navy News*.

Following the work-up in the Moray Firth the ship took passage for the Norwegian Sea and Exercise "Strong Express". Once more the Gannets were employed on Ship Search and A.E.W. sorties, but there were also several novel sorties such as dropping of canisters of reconnaissance photographs to the U.S. Command Ship *Mount Whitney*, anchored in one of the Norwegian Fjords. This gave the pilots an opportunity of practising low level flying in spectacular scenery, a privilege not often afforded to the Gannet. During a more routine mission one aircraft did stumble across the new Soviet A.E.W. aircraft which was keeping a watchful eye on what was going on, and this caused quite a stir within the ship as one had not been seen at such close quarters before.

On 2nd October Lt.-Cdr. M. I. Neale assumed the duties of Commanding Officer, and following a week in Rosyth there was a visit to Oslo, when some of the personnel took the opportunity of camping out in the countryside and doing some fishing. At the same time one of the Flight's Observers, Lt. D. F. Roue, was loaned to Headquarters Flight at Lossiemouth to participate in exercise "Red Dragon". This involved a number of familiarisation flights by H.R.H. Prince Charles in various marks of Gannet aircraft, which took place at R.N.A.S. Yeovilton on 18th October. With the highly successful visit to Oslo over, *Ark Royal* put into Portsmouth once more and the Flight returned to Lossiemouth, which, since our departure in September, had become an R.A.F. Station.

It was a brief visit only, for on 8th November the ship went back to sea once more. This time the Flight took its new U.S.N. exchange officers—Lt. H. C. Fortenberry and Lt. J. Lamey—to sea for their first taste of life onboard the Royal Navy's carrier. This cruise was to be in the Mediterranean and it got off to a good start with a visit to Barcelona. From then on, flying operations were conducted south of Toulon and in the vicinity of Sardinia and



"BY APPOINTMENT . . ."

Gannet XL500, the aircraft in which H.R.H. Prince Charles flew on exercise "Red Dragon", about to launch from Ark's bow catapult. The red cartoon dragon on the fin commemorates the event, as does a brass plaque mounted inside the rear cockpit!

Corsica. The Flight's activities were almost exclusively devoted to ship search exercises in preparation for the forthcoming exercise against U.S.S. *Forrestal*. Various R.N. ships were transiting the Western Mediterranean on various days, and each time they were successfully located and attacked. The exercise with the carrier *Forrestal* commenced on 1st December, and consisted initially of a long range search followed by a strike. She was found by the afternoon and successfully attacked, and thereafter, as the two ships closed, the battle became more a one of countering one another's strikes. Eventually the two ships joined up and did a limited amount of cross operations, during the course of which one Gannet was able to do a number of rollers on *Forrestal's* huge deck before recovering onboard *Ark Royal*.

With the exercise over it was home for Christmas, pausing only for a weekend visit to Gibraltar in order to stock up with Christmas presents. Whilst in Gibraltar Captain Cassidi presented two of the Flight's ratings—A.A.1 Harvey and L./Stwd. Dixon—with their Long Service and Good Conduct Medals.

Following Christmas leave there was a work-up period in the Channel when our new R.A.F. pilot, Flt. Lt. M. J. Frank, was able to get used to carrier operations, and with that complete it was back to the Mediterranean once more. There was a short exercise off Lisbon on the way, including A.E.W. for

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strikes of Portuguese Air Force Sabres and a ship search for "hostile" ships leaving the Azores. Flying in the Mediterranean was initially to the south east of Sardinia where the ship was subjected to strikes by R.A.F. aircraft detached to the N.A.T.O. airfield at Decimomannu. A brief ship search exercise was also conducted against three Italian warships which were located and struck to the south west of Sicily.

When *Ark Royal* put into Grand Harbour two of the Flight's aircraft detached to R.A.F. Luqa, together with other elements of the Air group, to carry out continuation flying preparatory to Exercise "Ruler". This exercise started even before the ship left Malta and was a large scale National exercise covering the whole Western Mediterranean and Straits of Gibraltar. Initially the Gannets searched for shadowing ships, and it was not long before these began to close in around *Ark Royal* and the Blue Forces. During the ensuing dash for the Straits of Gibraltar, ship plots were the order of the day, and, as the exercise drew to a close, strikes were also controlled on to the Orange forces which had massed off south west Spain waiting for *Ark* to emerge into the Atlantic.

Easter ashore was marred only by a Naval Air Command Escape and Evasion Exercise on Dartmoor in mid-April, in which the Flight was invited to participate. By various methods we managed to come out of it relatively unscathed, and much to everyone's surprise were all in a fit state to re-embark early in May.

By now the ship's programme had become more or less routine, and following a rapid transit of the Atlantic, in the course of which we conducted brief skirmishes with a French Navy Task Force headed by the Carrier *Foch*, we found ourselves off Puerto Rico again. During the ensuing "Lantreadex" "B" Flight got the opportunity of doing very little flying due to aircraft availability problems, but thanks to the efforts of all the Flight personnel were able to meet most of our commitments. As soon as this large exercise was over *Ark Royal* left the area for Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with the memories of the ship's last visit there very much uppermost in everyone's thoughts.

The visit got off to a good start with the official reception on the evening of 8th June followed by a weekend with the ship open to visitors, both occasions providing opportunities for striking up new friendships with the local people. Besides taking advantage of the many invitations extended to the ship there

was also time for recreational and sporting activities such as sailing, fishing, swimming and football; the Flight beat a local soccer team from Broward Community College with a score of 7-6 after a fiercely fought game. In a class by himself was Lieutenant Pulleyn, who accepted a challenge from a restaurant to eat a seventy-two ounce steak in under one hour. He won, taking a mere forty minutes—not counting the jam roll he had for "afters" !

Following the all too brief visit to Fort Lauderdale there was a short period at sea, flying off the east coast of Florida. Slack winds hampered flying, but some useful sorties were flown, then on 19th June two Gannets were deployed to N.A.S. Mayport prior to the ship entering the dockyard later in the day.

Once more American hospitality took over, and together with the pleasant climate made for a very enjoyable stay. On the first night in one of the Flight's U.S.N. exchange officers appeared on the local television network, starring in a forty-five second interview on life aboard *Ark Royal*.

For the weekend in Mayport two of the Flight's aircraft flew north to N.A.S. Norfolk, Virginia, where the crews were the guests of the U.S.N. squadron VAW-124. Besides being shown over an interesting selection of American aircraft and attending the many social gatherings arranged, old friendships were renewed both with 849 officers on exchange with the U.S.N. and American officers who had at one time served on 849 Squadron. Loth to leave on the Monday, one of the aircraft developed radio problems and had to remain at Norfolk an extra day.

Apart from this visit to Norfolk, a limited flying programme was carried out at Mayport, and in addition, various personnel took leave in order to visit relations in such distant parts of the country as Idaho and Michigan. Towards the end of the stay A.M.2 Simcock was presented with his Long Service and Good Conduct Medal by the Captain in a small ceremony on the Quarterdeck. That same afternoon the Flight acted as hosts for a group of officers and enlisted men from the U.S. Marine squadron HMH-362 who had flown down from New River, North Carolina, to pay the ship a visit. The helicopter's captain was Lieutenant Whitehead, an R.N. exchange officer serving with the U.S. Marine Corps and a one time Gannet pilot from 849 "A" Flight, so once more there was just reason for a reunion party.

Everyone was reluctant to leave Florida but the

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prospect of being home in just over three weeks more than compensated for this. Following an uneventful passage the final flying period of the commission commenced early in July with two Gannets flying into R.A.F. Kinloss to collect the backlog of ship's mail. Flying conditions were far from perfect, with seafog patches and extensive low cloud, but in spite of this a number of successful missions were flown. In addition to the flying, "B" Flight hoisted two groups of pupils from Gordonstoun School who visited the ship on 9th and 10th July. Fortunately the weather did permit flying on those days so that there was always something of interest for them to see, and although the visits may not have persuaded too many of the boys to "sign on", they nevertheless enjoyed themselves.

Also during this period of flying off the north coast of Scotland, two notable distinctions went to the Flight. The first of these was when a Gannet carried out the nine thousandth catapult launch of the commission and the second concerned the visit of Commander Goetz, the commanding officer of 849 Headquarters at Lossiemouth. Commander Goetz flew himself onboard in a Gannet and in so doing became the only commander in the service to pilot a Gannet to and from the deck of an aircraft carrier at sea.

The climax to this final phase of flying was

exercise "Sally Forth", a N.A.T.O. review off the Firth of Forth, and "B" Flight supplied three aircraft for the Air Group demonstration. As soon as their part in the display was over, however, the Gannets promptly vanished and were last seen heading north for Lossiemouth as fast as they could go. For those remaining onboard it was not until 26th July that they were able to set foot on home ground once more, but many were able to take advantage of the Families' Day to bring relatives onboard and show them around the ship. Before entering Plymouth there was a small display provided by Air Group aircraft which were operating from their parent shore stations, and one Gannet was deployed to R.N.A.S. Yeovilton in order to take part.

Following the successful disembarkation there was one week ashore before summer leave, during which the Flight managed to get settled into a shore routine at Lossiemouth once again. With *Ark Royal* due to remain in Plymouth until early 1974 quite a number of the present Flight personnel will have left by that time. The emphasis ashore will therefore be upon continuation flying in order to maintain the current level of expertise and front line operational effectiveness, in readiness for the important Spring Cruise next year.

THE CITY OF LEEDS AND H.M.S. ARK ROYAL

The association between Leeds and H.M.S. *Ark Royal* stems back to World War II and the third *Ark Royal*.

During the war, various government sponsored campaigns were mounted to encourage people to save in support of the war effort, e.g. by savings certificates, war bonds, etc. One of these was a series of "Warship Weeks" and that in Leeds was arranged for 30th January to 7th February 1942. On 4th November 1941, in anticipation of the week and to add objective and incentive to the campaign, the City of Leeds, through its National Savings Committee decided to adopt H.M.S. *Ark Royal*. A target of £3 million was set. Ten days later, on 14th November, *Ark Royal* was sunk. Immediately the target was raised to £5 million. But such was the enthusiasm that £9,301,293 was invested (equivalent to some £40 million at today's values). The enormity of such an effort is still quite bewildering—and how right that, even though other cities were anxious to adopt the next *Ark Royal*, the honour should remain with Leeds.

Additional to the money invested, the Week produced such a fervent response that people queued at the Civic Hall throughout the week to hand in to the Lord Mayor's offices small personal and collective sums as gifts to the nation. These totalled more than £20,000. The week was to have been opened by the then First Sea Lord, Lord Chatfield, but influenza prevented his appearance and Admiral of the Fleet Sir Reginald Tyrwhitt deputised.

On 19th September 1942 the adoption became official when, at a ceremony in Leeds attended by Lord Chatfield, Captain E. Elgood, R.N., received the City of Leeds Plaque and in return presented to the City the *Ark Royal* crest. This crest was diamond in shape and was replaced by the new round design when the present *Ark Royal* was commissioned. The City of Leeds plaque commemorating the adoption can be seen on the quarterdeck alongside that of Lloyds who also adopted the present *Ark Royal* at the time of her commissioning.

Although formal adoption took place in 1942, it was several years before dream became reality for although the keel of the present *Ark Royal* was laid in 1943, at that time the intended name was H.M.S. *Irresistible*. May 1950 witnessed the launching and naming of *Ark Royal* by H.M. the Queen (now Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother) and the ceremony was attended by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Leeds (Alderman and Mrs. Norman D. Vine) and their civic party—not forgetting a group of 20 sea cadets from Leeds whose unit had adopted the name T.S. *Ark Royal*.

At the commissioning ceremony at Birkenhead on 22nd February 1955, Leeds was again well represented, the civic party being led by the Lord Mayor, Alderman H. S. Vick. Two weeks before this, on 8th February, Captain D. R. F. Campbell (the first Commanding Officer, later to become Rear Admiral) with a representative body from *Ark Royal* went to Leeds where, at a civic luncheon, Alderman Vick presented the ship with a silver owl as a ship's trophy. The owl was a natural selection as the bird has featured in the City of Leeds coat of arms since the Royal Charter was granted in 1626. It owed its origin to the Arms of Sir John Savile, appointed the first Alderman of the City by King Charles I at this time. In return a new "round" *Ark Royal* crest was presented to the Lord Mayor and this still occupies a prominent position in the Leeds Civic Hall.

Work had also commenced to present to the ship a Bishop's Chair and a Chaplain's Chair for the ship's chapel. The carving of these magnificent chairs was performed by the late Robert Thompson of Kilburn in Yorkshire—the famous "mouse man", known as such as he always leaves his "signature" in the form of a mouse somewhere in the carving. On their completion, Captain F. H. E. Hopkins (second Commanding Officer, now Admiral Sir Frank Hopkins, ret'd.) went to Leeds for their formal presentation at a civic reception.

Shortly after this a party of 20 sea cadets from T.S. *Ark Royal* spent a week on board at Devon-

THE CITY OF LEEDS

port, only one of various exchange visits to take place between Leeds and the ship. Perhaps it is appropriate here to mention the custom which has developed for the ship to be represented at the annual Leeds civic visit to the Leeds Children's Holiday Camp at Silverdale, overlooking Morecambe Bay in Lancashire. This camp which enables some 600 needy and underprivileged children to have two weeks' holiday by the sea each year was built and paid for, and is maintained entirely, by voluntary contributions. Flying over the camp is a Union Flag presented, and renewed annually, by *Ark Royal*.

On the children's side it may also be noted that from time to time parties of sailors have visited the Margaret Children's Home in Leeds, a home administered by the local authority for children who, for various reasons, are deprived of a normal home life. At the end of the last commission £100 was donated to this home by the Welfare Fund; at the same time certain other disposable assets, including expedition gear, were transferred to T.S. *Ark Royal*.

As the time for *Ark Royal's* refit drew near, it was realised that there would be little opportunity in the coming years to pursue the links of adoption. But to mark the proud relationship between the ship and the City of Leeds, a civic party headed by the then Lord Mayor (Alderman J. Walsh) "flew navy" to Portsmouth and took passage in the ship to the Moray Firth where the party was flown to Lossiemouth and thence back to Leeds.

In August 1969, a further honour was bestowed on us. Football fans may well have recognised that the *Ark Royal XI* plays in the colours of Leeds United—but did you know that this "strip" was presented to us by Leeds United, being the colours worn by them during and winning the inter-cities Fairs Cup in 1969?

An even later event is, in effect, an adoption inside an adoption. For 34 years the British Ship Adoption Society has been active in establishing school/ship liaison. For most of this time the scheme applied only to merchant ships and RFAs, but in 1968 H.M. Ships were also invited to participate. What could be more fitting than we should be adopted by a Leeds School? This was arranged in February 1970 through the Society with Abbey Grange C. of E. School, Butcher Hill, Leeds, a mixed school of some 700 pupils with ages 12 to 16+.

On Commissioning Day on 24th February 1970,

his Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor (Alderman A. R. Bretherick) and the Lady Mayoress accompanied by the Town Clerk, the Leader of the City Council, the Opposition Leader of the City Council and their respective ladies formed the official Leeds civic party. (It is of interest to note that the Commanding Officer of the third *Ark Royal* at the time of her sinking was Captain Maund. Following his retirement as Rear Admiral, he settled in Leeds for a while, was a prime mover in the sea cadet organisation and became a personal friend of Alderman Bretherick. When his daughter was married it was a naval sword that cut the cake—Admiral Maund's, of course.)



Alderman Watson

Because of her size, the closest port to Leeds that *Ark Royal* can visit is Liverpool—and such a visit took place 26th to 30th June 1970. At an official reception in the hangar on arrival, the Lord Mayor, Mr. Arthur Brown, led a large civic party. On the Sunday, T.S. *Ark Royal*, 130 strong and led by their band, gave an impressive display of marching on the jetty before coming on board to see round the ship, while below decks in the ship's chapel, C.P.O. Kessick from the unit and his wife were two of the proudest parents as their young baby was christened on board H.M.S. *Ark Royal* by the ship's chaplain, the Reverend Bill Walter.

Subsequent visits by Lord Mayors of the city have occurred on three more occasions in the commission.

THE CITY OF LEEDS

In August 1971, after the ship had returned from the West Indies and was about to take part in "Lymelight", Alderman T. Watson accompanied by the Town Clerk, Secretary, and Sergeant-at-Mace, spent one day and two nights on board.

This was topped by his successor, Alderman A. Smith, who flew out to Oslo to join the ship and left by helicopter in the English Channel three days later. Then in July 1973 off Rosyth, Alderman K. T. Davison joined by helicopter for a two day stay.

A most fitting climax to the relationship between the ship and the city is the honour of being given the Freedom of the City which the ship will accept on 25th October 1973.



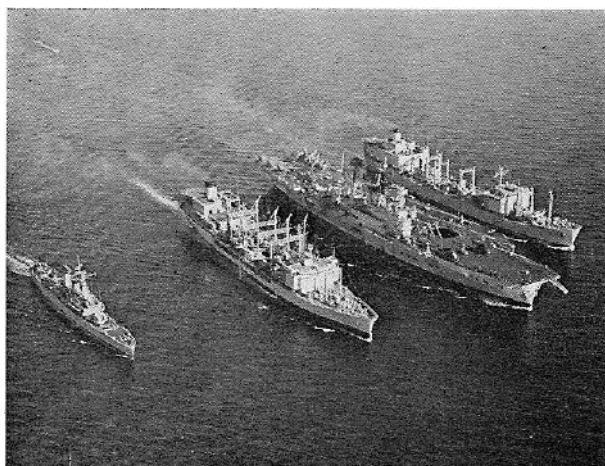
Alderman Smith

SEAMAN DEPARTMENT

And so it was written that "Ye shall R.A.S. in .. rainstorms, operate under airways, and anchor in mud". For the past three years, the ship has adhered fairly closely to this edict, although occasionally, through circumstances beyond our control, it has not been possible.

It is said that God created all men equal, but in *Ark Royal*, there are some who are equal on deck and those who are equal below decks. We come now to that branch of humanity known as the Seaman Department, (in some higher echelons even called Executives). These brave men are the only true remnants of those who sailed with Nelson, and still one can often hear mentions of splicing, bends, and "three sheets to the wind".

There are many tasks that befall the seaman, whether in harbour or at sea. The most popular, or at least the most practised, seems to be the Replenishment at Sea, the dreaded R.A.S., whether it be Liquids or Solids. There are some who say that we have done more R.A.S.s than aircraft launches, and this cannot be very far from the truth. On average, R.A.S.(L.)s were carried out on three days out of every seven, and R.A.S.(S)s on one day in seven. There are those occasions which are memorable for some reason or another, such as enjoying a R.A.S. when off Florida when it gave a good chance for



"Four's Company"—*Ark Royal R.A.S.'s* with *R.F.A.'s Resource and Olmeda* with an escort just about to join

"bronzy-bronzy", or, at the opposite end of the scale, the back-R.A.S. with *R.F.A. Resource* at 0500 which would dampen anyone's enthusiasm.

All positions have performed above "Fleet Standard" for dead times and transfer rates and the following are the average dead times for connecting and disconnecting :

For'ard pocket-11 mins. 30 secs. /6 mins. 14 secs.
After pocket-13 mins. 20 secs. /10 mins. 12 secs.
Dieso-12 mins. 45 secs./9 mins. 32 secs.
For'ard stump-11 mins. 20 secs. /5 mins. 32 secs.
After stump-10 mins. 21 secs./5 mins. 21 secs.

The best F.F.O. dead time was 7 mins. 50 secs. by the for'ard pocket and that for solids was 7 mins. 58 secs. by the after stump.

It has seemed that wherever *Ark Royal* has visited, the ship's boats have been required, whether it be for "banyans" or the "runs ashore". In a variety of places the boat's crews have done an admirable job, whilst under some very hard conditions. In February 1972 while visiting New York, the weight of the people in the boat wasn't the greatest problem, it was more the weight of the permanent coating of ice which each boat acquired.

Conditions overall have varied as have the skills, but unfortunately on occasions the zeal of the crews has not been matched by their ability. At least it has kept the shipwrights busy.

On the port side of the ship known as the Foretop we nearly lost the majority of the "wheels" of the Seaman Department when returning from the Stateside visit of 1972. A "goffer" set the decks of 4G awash and with the sea flowing out, three bodies nearly went as well. These were the First Lieutenant, Peter Martin, John Chessum the Boatswain, and the Buffer, Mr. Heddington. What would have happened if they had joined the mermaids can only be left to speculation—no doubt the ship could never have moored or anchored again.

Those able-bodied men of the Starboard side work in an area called the Maintop, but it has never been decided which comes first, "Fore" or "Main". The Maintop has had a great struggle against the dirt that collects in the most used area of the ship. And the battle has been won. With gangways coming

SEAMAN DEPARTMENT

in, staying, and going out again, ladders and booms -- being worked and hordes of libertymen wandering around, the Maintop has probably had the hardest task in the seaman department to keep its area clean. But with short periods at sea to make up for it, the job has been done successfully.

In many ports, prior to entering harbour, the cabledeck has been a hive of activity. The strength of those who work there must be measured by the fact that when in New York, the buoy that had been laid for *Ark Royal* was torn from its moorings. It is not true that the Foc'sle Officer and the Bo'sun started an "American Buoy Appeal" on departure. They probably no longer had the strength to carry the money that would have poured in!

Practically every evolution possible has been carried out, from anchoring three times in the Hudson, to mooring in Oslo and coming to a buoy at Rosyth. The only exception was kedging which obviously was not included because there was no time and it wouldn't fit in to the Flypro.

The prize for the muddiest and smelliest harbour bottom goes undoubtedly to Oslo, where the Bo'sun's comments were unprintable but they referred to the inadequacy of the Viking sewerage system. Luckily the weather was not too hot and some of the cabledeck hands were suffering from severe colds, and these were admirably suited to the job of scrubbing cable. If it had been hot, nobody would have gone near the cabledeck let alone stay there to work.

No greater variety of scenes could be found than those on the quarterdeck. All tastes have been catered for, from Band Concerts to the reception of V.I. P.s. Many a notable personage from many a notable country has passed on to their glistening decks. There have been presentations of medals and it has seen guards parade, but also a few warrants as well, not those that British Rail accept either. The strength of the quarterdeck is worthy of note as was that of the cabledeck hands. In recent times, in some mysterious way, it has been possible to crack two accommodation ladders, though it has always been blamed on boats—it seems as though the boat's party is blamed for anything.

The Australians have managed to leave their mark on many things from ships to aircraft, and it just so happens that the recent Side Party Officer was an Australian. Many a ship sailed from the company of *Ark Royal* with a little kangaroo riding on the bow. Under extremely hard conditions, the side party have

managed to make "the biggest job in the Navy" look fine when the ship has been open to visitors. But be warned, if you are new to the ship. If you must chip and scrape, do it gently lest you find no metal beneath. It has been rumoured that the for'ard end of the flight deck is supported by paint alone.

Over the past three years, there has been a variety of Bo'suns presiding over the Bo'sun's Party—there was "John the Bo", swiftly followed by "Johnno", then that elusive Australian creeps in again, and he was relieved by Robin, our present one. With all the changes the Bo'sun's Party has still managed to have the R.A.S. gear ready and the buoy jumper jumping.

In the three years, many notable things have happened in that area bounded by the Seaman Department. The First Lieutenant at the time—Peter Martin — managed to make the newspapers and television news by going out to *Gypsy Moth*—the boat of the late Sir Francis Chichester—to bring it back to Plymouth. In Malta at the beginning of 1973, it seemed as though *Ark Royal* was breeding when a number of small objects called pontoons appeared in parallel alongside us. These became known much later as a "walkashore" or "how to break your leg without really trying". Malta was a trying time, as the newly laid buoys had not been tested, so when the wind got up, tugs had to be supplied to hold us in position. The same wind and sea made the walk-ashore unsafe giving problems of getting libertymen ashore.

The department has had its share of humour including appearing in a number of "Sods Operas".



Not exactly "The Good Old Days"—A.B. Miller conducts his songsters from 4W Mess

SEAMAN DEPARTMENT

The best, perhaps, being the interlude of musical enchantment by the members of 4W mess staged during the show of Christmas 1972.

Whilst at sea the Seaman Department has done its job in its normal quiet and unassuming manner. The different crews in various places have been seen to do their jobs but seldom heard. The wheelhouse crews have steered the course asked for by the Officer of the Watch on the bridge, and the Officers of the Watch have managed to get the aircraft off so that the "D"s and the A.D.R. team can play with them. Between the bridge and the A.D.R. is the Operations Room which, contrary to popular belief, is not a mushroom farm ! The service required has been given to all who asked, whether we be at "war" or not. The Watch on Deck has sat quietly by their seaboard waiting for something to happen, and when it has, for real or exercise, they have leapt into action.

Generally the past years have been hard work but enjoyable and the effort worthwhile. Great things



Lt.-Cdr. Martin calls on Mr. Moor in mid-Atlantic with offers of help and a load of Ark bread

have been seen and, although a few of the faces are the same, there are many new ones who are just starting on a new chapter in the life of H.M.S. *Ark Royal*.