

892 SQUADRON



during our Malta visit. It re-emerged sporting a beautifully repainted tail fin bearing the 892 Omega insignia.

The visit to Malta provided many families with the opportunity to take an early spring holiday with their menfolk, adding to the pleasure of the visit.



Even divisions, which were held on the flight deck did not mar a very pleasant ten days during which our sports teams excelled themselves, the squadron had a "thrash" and our limited flying commitment was successfully executed. The weather could have been kinder but all in all when we eventually sailed it was a wonderful visit to look back on. Exercise "Ruler" was now in the offing and the role of the Phantom in this organised period of tension was that of keeping tabs on the enemy surface ships who were hunting for *Ark Royal* and standing by, as always, to provide air defence should the need arise. In the event, peace came suddenly (our deterrent having worked) and we could settle down somewhat

on the passage to home waters. Disembarkation took place in two waves, the first on the night of 13th March thus qualifying two night crews who had this last chance to obtain the required amount of night launches, the second wave saw aircraft flying to Leuchars and to Belfast for re-furbishing. Ground crews as ever followed the blazed trail North one day later after the ship's arrival in Plymouth. It was during this disembarkation that the Squadron flew its 10,000th hour—a notable achievement.

So with yet another move behind us and only two more to go it was leave time again.

When the squadron re-assembled an ambitious programme of weaponry lay ahead along with close air support in the North of Scotland. It was about this time that some aircrew were seen to be wandering about in fearsome looking flying clothing that seemed to resist all movement, tubes dangling and brows sweating, they had great difficulty just standing let alone manning aircraft. They were the high level team who were practising for the forthcoming missile shoot in America, where weapons would be fired at heights of above 50,000 ft. and speeds greater than M1.5.

The usual merry band (that the aircrew are) began to become nervy and irritable (and it was not lack of vitamins) as Friday 20th April loomed, for it was then, when others were off for the weekend, that they were to find themselves "surviving" on Dartmoor for two days.

To add a little excitement a commando of Royal Marines was sent out to capture as many as possible, and those who were caught could look forward to a friendly chat in the Dartmoor Hilton (and who knows any friendly marines when their weekend is stopped). The days passed and with the ordeal over Easter was celebrated with a long weekend.

The final embarkation was now at hand and with bags packed and farewells over the squadron set off yet again to join *Ark Royal*. Ahead lay the promise of balmy nights and banyans and visits to Fort Lauderdale and Mayport, missile shoots, "Rimex" and "Sinkex" all of which will keep us very busy until our return to U.K. in July.

At the time of writing the present commission with *Ark Royal* is all but over for 892. Disembarkation is imminent and there is only Exercise "Sally Forth" to complete. Looking back over the last three months with *Ark Royal* we have, perhaps, enjoyed one of the better embarked periods. The visits to St. Thomas, Fort Lauderdale and Mayport (where we operated

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from Cecil Field) were all as successful as previous years and there was no excuse for anyone returning home without at least a trace of a suntan. Operationally we carried out all the tasks set for us and the squadron is returning home to Leuchars after another profitable embarked period. It is slightly ironic that one aircraft was lost only days before our departure, aircraft 007 being left to its own devices

shortly after launch in the Firth of Forth. The aircrew were fortunately recovered quickly and without serious injury.

It is with mixed feelings that we leave *Ark Royal* this time, some of us are unlikely to return but others know that when the refit is over they will be returning once more for another equally enjoyable commission.

HULL AND VENTILATION PARTY

In January 1972, just before the ship sailed for the United States, Lt.-Cdr. Trace joined taking over from Lt.-Cdr. Haimes. Almost immediately the ship ran into bad weather crossing the Atlantic and suffered damage to the ventilation intakes, boat decks and booms. Worse was to follow as the ship went north to New York for a visit. With high winds and sub zero temperatures, 13 ventilation coolers and 2 heaters froze solid necessitating round the clock maintenance for 5 days and nights to get them repaired before going south again to the Puerto Rico area. Numerous other pipes, drains and weatherdeck fittings froze solid with resultant floods and damage. The staff needed a rest to get over the New York visit, but not quite in the same way as they hoped it would be needed.

Returning across the Atlantic, the ship again ran into rough weather with terrific beam seas which crashed against the port side with frightening force. Ventilation gas boxes were crushed in and considerable amounts of water entered the ship. The Tango magazine complex with 18 inches of water floating on 6, 7 and 8 decks looked like a 3 storey lido. The force of the seas ripped away the Liferaft Stowages and started tearing holes in the ship's side. It was whilst shoring up a split in 4R port that a terrific bang occurred further aft. On investigating, it was discovered that a 30 ft. split had peeled open the ship's side immediately below the sponson in 4T port passage. On the boat deck over the sponson, the deck was pushed up almost 18 inches and the 35 ft. M.S.M.B. stowed there was a write off. It was a damage control exercise for real as the Shipwright Staff with water up to their waists struggled manfully to shore up the damage. Luckily we were returning to Devonport Dockyard for a Docking and Essential Defects period, even so it was a very dazed Dockyard staff who watched the ship come alongside, staring in amazement at the huge gash in the hull.

The ventilation section with its headquarters at

4R1, its main work centre in 6P6 and its exclusive clubrooms in 6W2 Mess has laboured on through the past three years of the commission, a close-knit team at all times despite the diversification in locations of our bases.

Yes, a close-knit team, a formidable side, most ably abetted at times by our counterparts, the Domestic's Party.

We may not have been the most popular maintainers in the ship or consistently the busiest, in fact there have been occasions when the contrary was the case—but, we have had our moments of toil and sweat, and at such times, in retrospect, we like to feel we didn't do at all badly.

The highlight of our achievements, no doubt, was the setting up and effective control of gas-tight sanctuaries within the ship. A solution which was recognised and complimented on by F.O.C.A.S. staff and the inspection team from *Phoenix*.

We have won a few and lost a few these past three years but over the whole piece we didn't lose too many and finished, most certainly, well within the top half of the league. A considered if somewhat biased opinion.

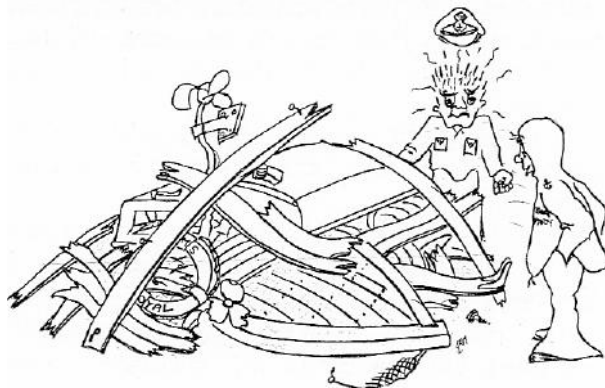
With regard to personnel, many have come and gone, some perhaps never to be seen again, but nevertheless, long remembered. We have space to mention but few. Lt.-Cdr. Trace, "the boss" is being relieved during the forthcoming refit period. "Big Jim" is being re-appointed on our final return to Devonport. Bernie Hodges, Sid Patterson, Brooksie Baby and Rusty we shall lose shortly—all transferred for an undisclosed fee to shore sides, and Rosie, Leb, Albert, and Smokey Fagg of course have already gone before.

In conclusion then, let's remember the good times. Fort Lauderdale, (who went twice?), Barcelona, New York, etc. A great little team, a job well done and a good run ashore.

HULL AND VENTILATION PARTY

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE "CHIPPIES SHOP"

WE'VE FINISHED WITH THE BOAT CHIPPY, WELL BE REPAIRING IT AGAIN ON SUNDAY



Hard work at sea we may share with others, but at last minute panics, no one can surpass us—in solving them that is. Boats, Booms, and Ladders apart, a lot of working hours were spent on the pontoon at Rosyth and Oslo, and who can forget the ill fated walkashore in Malta. Gangway steps have been produced at a few minutes' notice and most of the staff have been employed in erecting and unrigging the hangar stage at odd hours. Our activities have not been only onboard either, the battered M.F.V. at *Lochinvar* also received our attention as did the main doors of the telephone exchange in Gibraltar.

During a spell at home, we lost *Ark Royal's* only remaining Artisan, Ch. Plumber Vanner, but gained another "fifth fiver" as his replacement. At the time of writing it is whispered that one of the staff whose home is in a damper clime than most of us is to become a Grandfather, and note too, the number of confinement leaves at Easter last.

On the sports field we have a mixed bag of results to report. Two of the Hull Department have made the 1st XI soccer team, the "boss" made the ship's Golf team and most of the unwary have made Shipwright's "B" deck hockey team whilst engaged in taking the air at an inappropriate moment. In general, in spite of sports representatives resigning at the drop of a hat, we have more than held our own in most inter-part activities. It is hoped soon to match

Dave Whittaker and Bernie Hodges in an eating contest, but we will have to first obtain the catering Officer's permission, or hold it ashore one evening (after supper of course).

On the television front, several of the staff have been seen in various quiz shows, but kindly note "Mick", Trigger did *not* win the Grand National. Fred Westover has even secured his own regular TV spot, and become a ship's celebrity.

We now look forward to a spell in glorious Devon, where most of us are "R.A.", and where Bridport is just a bitter memory. Spare a thought though and wish a mild winter for Roy Harvey, Gary Cartmell and the other travellers, as the going can get mighty rough on the Exeter by-pass.

BY THE SURVEY SECTION

Tucked away in 4AZ1, only noticed by those who frequent cells, is one of the most important sections onboard. Not for us are the glories of making picture frames or crests for V.I.P.s. Not for us is the continuing limelight of changing ventilation systems from fresh air to air conditioning. We only look after the watertight integrity "of the ship. (Experts at mixing cement.)

We are a staff of six (has someone got their priorities wrong) who carry out a continuous maintenance of doors and hatches—would you believe nearly a thousand (1,000) of them. We survey compartments and try to get you to use the correct paint scheme. Doesn't sound very important, but do it properly and you won't have to paint every week. So when that b*/: '1** nuisance, keeps closing and opening hatches, and putting grease on, instead of nice shiny paint, don't moan—you may have to escape through that door or hatch one day, to stay alive. Perhaps then, we will gain some recognition for our efforts.

There aren't many people who can say they know the ship like the back of their hands, and have been just about everywhere. (Guess what it's like at the bottom of 11JA7 W.T.C.) So in our quiet unassuming way, we realise our importance, which is all that matters I suppose.

MED. PATROL 72

A week's flying in the Southwest Approaches started off the post-Portsmouth period and this included trials of the new Martel missile by two special Buccaneers from Boscombe Down. These were completed without any help from the weather which caused repeated changes of areas of operation and of diversion airfields.

On passage to Barcelona we operated with some French Naval aircraft and also did some private flying in spite of a locked shaft. On 17th November we reached Barcelona and anchored about a mile off the end of the long mole. Unfortunately even the end of the mole was another two miles from the landing place at the Plaza de Colon beneath the impressive statue of Columbus.

However, the sea was seldom rough enough to stop the ship's boats and, while it would have been an excellent visit had we been alongside, it was not far from excellent at anchor. The charm of the town appealed to everyone; a lovely dignity from the tree-lined Ramblas to the ancient Gothic Quarter; the splendid views from the Montjuich near the harbour and from Tibidabo at the back of the town. The prices contrasted markedly with Oslo with both food and drink cheap and a first class choice of good Christmas presents. Bus tours were organised to a number of interesting places and many included an excellent meal with wine. It was a very worthwhile five day visit for which we presented the fishes with a flight deck tractor before sailing.

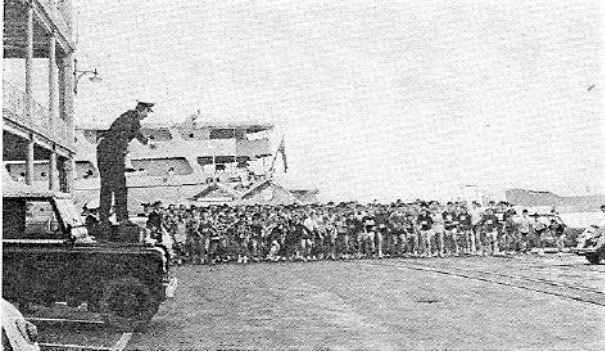
During our stay, the weather had been superb with dry off shore winds giving warm afternoons and this remained with us while we did a couple of days' flying off Hyeres. Then followed Exercise "Corsica 72", a R.N. amphibious landing on the west coast of Corsica from *Bulwark*, *Fearless* and *Intrepid* with *Ark Royal* providing Close Air Support. Towards the end of the exercise, the "Mistral" came hurtling down the Rhone Valley and produced a rough force seven in the exercise area and winds of up to 60 knots around some of the coasts.

From 27th November we spent a week operating in the Sardinia areas off Decimomannu and for two of these days did some cross-operating with the U.S.S. *Forrestal*. We lent them some Buccaneers and

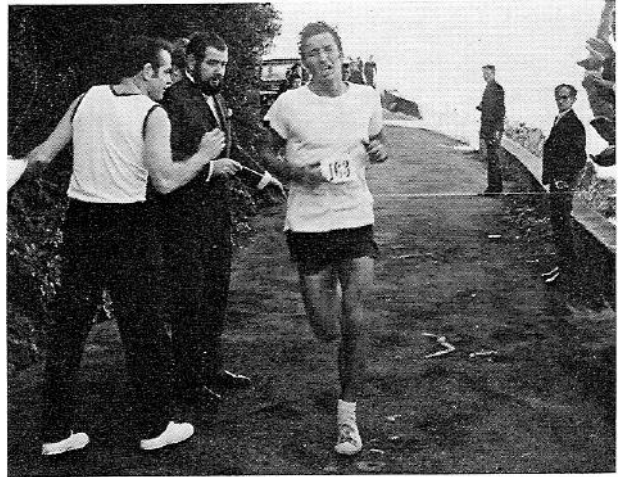


F4K Phantoms and they lent us some F4B Phantoms, A7 Corsairs and A6 Intruders. Then we called in at Gibraltar from 6th to 8th December and performed again in the "Top of the Rock" race—this time winning the Fleet Trophy for the shortest time by the fastest six. Meanwhile the winds in the Bay of Biscay had been very strong and whipping up heavy swells, and while we anticipated a rough passage our guardian angel waved her wand and the return to Devonport on 12th December was relatively uneventful.

MED. PATROL 1972



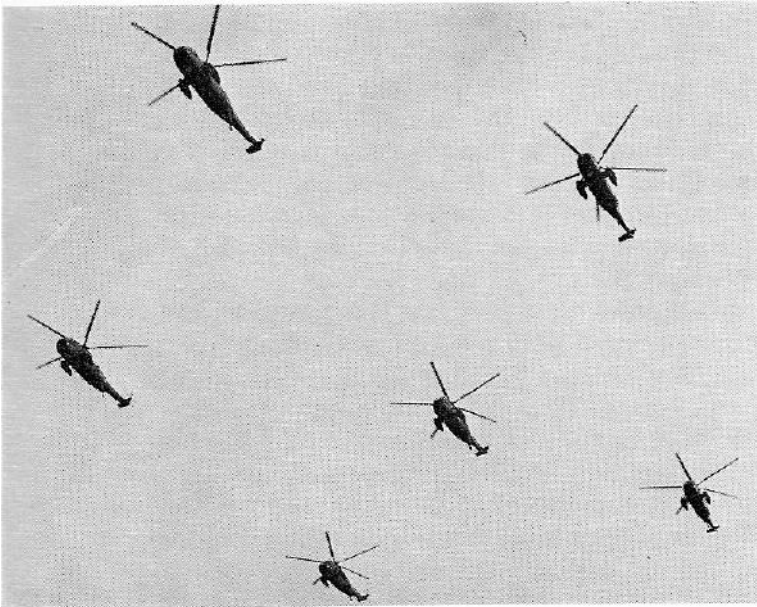
"Top of the Rock" — Start



"Top of the Rock" — Finish — Lieut. Parker first home

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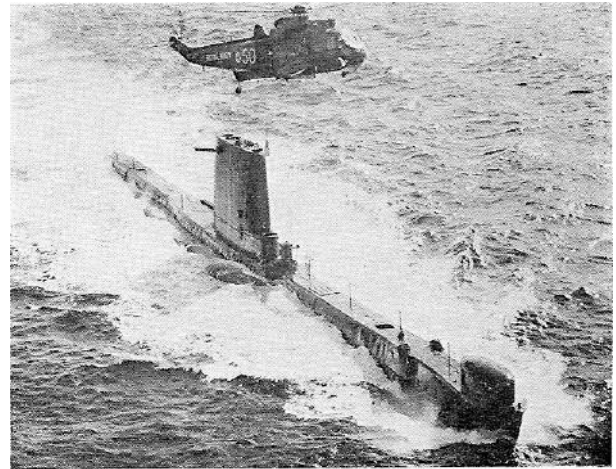
The history of 824 Squadron dates back to 1933 and includes periods of fixed and rotary wing flying in a large variety of aircraft. They have taken part in most of the British sea battles of recent times, including Taranto, and are today to be seen battling with the world's most effective anti-submarine helicopter, the Sea King. Undertaking the first operational deployment of this versatile machine, the Squadron joined H.M.S. *Ark Royal* in June 1970 and has been operational ever since.



Be there fog, be there storms, (or even balmy West Indian sunshine), the Squadron has echoed the "Windmill" tradition of "we never closed". Many a Flyco goofer, having rashly decided that no aircraft could fly in the mists swirling over the flight deck, has been seen stumbling below shaking his head at the sight of those ten ton inverted Flymos appearing out of the murk.

Flying achievements like 1069 hours in one month, and six minute scrambles from the boss's bed to airborne have come to be regarded as the norm, but tribute is due to Westland Helicopters who make the aircraft, Squadron maintenance personnel, who keep them going, and to the "manglers", who get them in the right place at the right time (well sometimes!).

The prime task of 824 is to find and attack enemy submarines—the biggest menace at sea today. The successes in this field are too numerous to mention, and the failures too embarrassing! However, given the right water conditions, the Squadron has proved itself against many submarines, both British and American, and has sent an appreciable number of Russian nuclear boats packing at high speed over the horizon. An impressive history of independent operations and excellent attack accuracy has proved the worth of flying in this role which accounts for well over half the helicopter flying from the ship.



In addition to the anti-submarine role, the Sea King has been used widely onboard to augment the fixed-wing squadrons in the defence of the fleet from enemy surface ships. With a very accurate navigation system and a ground stabilised radar set, 824 has often detected and controlled attacks against surface threats. Shadowing an enemy ship is an ideal task for a Sea King with its long endurance and its ability to operate in conditions denied to other units.

However, life is not all operational, much as we would like it to be so, and the things that the Squadron is remembered for are the "jollies". Operation "Aquamarine", named after the latest in a string of Senior Observers, was a helicopter search and rescue "Helocross" around the Virgin Islands intended to train aircrew in secondary roles. Apart from being

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great fun and good value it gave the winners, Lieutenant Mike Watson and his crew, a chance to drink some of the Admiral's champagne as a prize.

This sortie was followed by another daring exploit in which Lieutenant Xlxn Lxckxy and his crew drank a special shipment of the Admiral's milk, thinking (they say) that it was a present for them from the Shore Liaison Officer.

It takes tons and tons of stores and spare parts to keep the ship and the fleet operational and the



quicker they can be got onboard the better. Thus another major task for 824 is created. In one month, the Squadron shifted 50 tons of vital equipment for *Ark Royal* and her escorts. For operational flexibility people need to move about the fleet; personnel with urgent compassionate need to go home have to get ashore; V.I.P.s and V.I.P.s and V.I.P.s want to look at the most powerful ship in the Navy; important training is achieved by swapping personnel with submarines and other ships. A dozen at a time, the ten ton "Bushy's Buses" move them all around at the rate of about a thousand in a busy month. And of course one must not forget the mail. If all the letters received onboard by helicopter were laid end to end, they would not only go many times around the world, but most of them would also get wet if it were not for 824.

One of the more interesting and unusual tasks the Squadron has had to carry out was a survey of shipping in the Dover Strait, the busiest shipping lane in the world. In order to find out how many ships disobeyed the traffic lanes schemes, and to try to



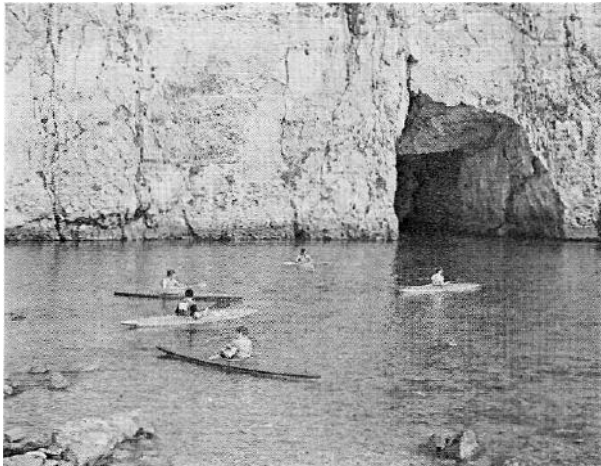
prosecute the "rogues", the Department of Trade and Industry used 824 for a continuous patrol. 650 ships were photographed and details noted such as course, speed, name, number and port of registration. Those of them who were breaking the rules soon realised that "Big Brother" was watching. After the second day, the buzz went around and they all started to comply.

Search and Rescue has always been the helicopter's metier and the *Sea King* with its range, stability, and navigation system is the best S.A.R. vehicle in the world. In spite of an interminable number of false alarms, nothing is ever stinted when an S.A.R. incident is piped. *Sea Kings* appear from the shed like rabbits from a hat, and aircrew appear at Ops desk as if they have sprung from the earth (the Deputy Air Engineer Officer believes that that is where they live anyway). The *Leda* (sinking) the *Anatina* (on fire), a borstal escapee (who had "borrowed" a boat and fallen unconscious from exposure) and the crew of a *Gannet* (who suffered an engine failure and bailed out) are all amongst the list of successful S.A.R. incidents the Squadron has handled whilst part of *Ark Royal*.

The story of 824 in *Ark* cannot be told in these few lines. It is impossible to include the chefs, the stewards, the naval airmen, the maintainers, the aircrew, and even the "Colonel's team" from the office all in one article, but just wait until next commission. They will all be there because without them and 824 hovering in the Starboard Wait, the *Ark* just wouldn't be "Royal".

ARK ROYAL CANOE CLUB

The *Ark Royal* Canoe Club is claimed to be the largest in the Navy and is certainly the largest in any ship, with a fluctuating membership of between 30 and 40 canoeists from all ages, ranks, and departments of the ship, and all degrees of competence. Onboard there are 14 recreational canoes, stowed in various odd corners around the ship, some privately owned. The service owned canoes come from a variety of sources, bought by your Welfare Fund, by the Nuffield Trust, or loaned from the R.N. Kayak Association, or given by people who have no further use for them. The governing body in canoeing circles is the British Canoe Union, and most of the more experienced members of the *Ark* Canoe Club are in fact members of the B.C.U. The B.C.U. has a hand in most of the competitive events, it runs the various examinations and tests required to achieve the standards set for each type of canoeing, and it works very closely with the British Sports Council and the various Water Authorities to safeguard the interests of Canoeists, and try to achieve a certain degree of harmony with angling associations, who claim that canoeists rot up their fishing. They appear to think generally that they have a divine right to the exclusive use of waters for recreation. Stringent safety rules are applied to canoeing in general and in the *Ark* Canoe Club especially. Obviously to canoe, you must be able to swim—non-swimming canoeists



are potential suicides. Lifejackets are always supplied and must be worn, lone canoeing is only allowed in the calmest of shallow waters; crash helmets are supplied and must be worn in any running waters, and in open waters such as the sea or large lakes, we always try to provide a safety boat and insist that the minimum number of canoes for safety must be three in any one group.

Canoeing is a sport which demands a little patience to give the hours of practice required to develop the skill needed in boat handling. It takes a considerable amount of physical effort and unless you are in a reasonable state of fitness, you are likely to feel some new muscular pains in the first couple of days. It is healthy activity, whether the canoeing is competitive, touring or just messing about on the water. You can do your own thing and keep within your own physical limits. It is a sociable activity, and entrants in the competitive events are likely to come from a very broad band of the social spectrum. Generally speaking, when the ship is in Devonport, canoeing is mainly training and competitive canoeing in the South West of England and in Wales. Abroad, or on U.K. visits away from the base port, the canoeing is recreational. During refits and long spells in Devonport, the Canoe Club will be operating from Drake's Island, the Adventure Centre in the Sound, and running evening training sessions in the swimming baths at H.M.S. *Drake* one night per week. From the cost point of view, canoes can be bought secondhand for about £40 for one in reasonable condition, or even cheaper for some of the older makes. Like any other commodity, the cost is dependent upon the type of boat you buy.

Ark Royal Canoe Club has made a good name for itself in Canoeing circles. It has been fairly successful in nearly all of the events in which it has competed, and completely successful in some others. By making contact with other civilian and service canoe clubs, around Plymouth and Portsmouth mainly, it has helped to widen its scope and to let the civilians know that all canoeing in the services is not done by trained killers. Your next ship is bound to have a canoe club—why not have a go?

SUPPLY DEPARTMENT

CAPTAIN'S OFFICE

It all happens here" is a maxim which can certainly apply to the Captain's Office of the largest ship in the Fleet. Though never quite overwhelmed by the sheer volume of paperwork which eddies, flows or races through our hands (depending on whether the requirement is "Urgent", "Priority", or "Immediate") there is nonetheless a general feeling of satisfaction in providing a valuable service to the ship, not always appreciated by those unfortunates who find themselves on the wrong side of "the table".

The inevitable departmentalisation which arises in a big ship is less apparent to us than others, for of necessity we must keep in close touch with all. (There is a move afoot for "Shoe Allowance" for our messengers, who estimate their daily travels as approximately two miles per man.) The end result is probably a better working knowledge of the ship as a whole than most other departments, which in turn

can have its drawbacks—if you know them, they know you!

On the lighter side, (is there such a phenomenon in a carrier?) the office has been known to double up as Visits Office, Refit Office, Transport Office, Pay Office, Admiral's Office and Divisional Officers' Crewroom (whilst awaiting to appear at the table). We do, however, disclaim all responsibility for the duties of Officer of the Watch, "A" and "B" Boiler Rooms and, on one memorable occasion, the "Rent-a-Jack" Office—the only time the staff have shown a marked degree of enthusiasm to answer a wrong-number telephone call!

However, taken overall, with the considerable changes of face that occur through continuous drafting, we like to think that our efforts, whilst not always apparent, contribute in some small way to the smooth running of a high speed administration in the ship.

SHIPS CATERING SECTION

If all the "bangers" that the ship's company had eaten were placed end to end, there wouldn't be a dish big enough in which to cook them. The usual statistics mean nothing when applied to *Ark Royal*, suffice it to say that the Department has dealt with the equivalent of ten frigates' (they're the real ships) meals daily, and apparently half as many again each night. What we have been unable to ascertain is, where do they get to between the time the "pubs" throw out, and 0030 when they arrive at the galley hatches?

Seriously folks, most of the time it's been a pleasure looking after your needs, in fact if it had not been your insistence on eating, we'd have thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

Achievement? Well, the Doctor in charge of "Weight Watchers" tells us that 80 per cent of the ship's company are overweight (on average), and we haven't had one case of malnutrition.

In conclusion, may we remind you, "you wouldn't

eat like it at home?" (wonder what they mean by that anyway?????)

