



*It could have been Murmansk, but it was  
Portsmouth Harbour, 25th January, 1963.*

# EARLY DAYS

The day after Commissioning was an exceptionally busy one for everybody, spent in storing and sorting out the last minute snags, and when knocking off time came along it seemed strange not to be hopping on a bus up to Oxton. The whole atmosphere had changed as, what had been a daily job of work, became, overnight, our floating home for the months ahead.

Still officially in Contractors' hand and carrying civilians representing Cammell Lairds and the Admiralty we left the Mersey on November 17th for the formal handover in Liverpool Bay. This should have followed a short full power trial and ended with our return to the Mersey Bar and disembark the civilians. Fate decreed otherwise! As soon as we were in open water it was obvious that the sea state was going to prevent these evolutions and it was decided to press on up to the Clyde for more sheltered conditions. The horrors of this night will live in many minds. Not so much because of our own feelings but because of the discomfort of our unwilling guests who were squeezed into the most unlikely places. Eventually, the ship was signed for at 0421 on the 18th and our civilians went off for the longer, but smoother, journey by rail back from Greenock to Birkenhead—replete with a Charlie Vella breakfast.

Now we were on our own the shake down process started and in the ensuing days we worked our way down to the South Coast where, off Falmouth, helicopter deck landing trials started. Even the confirmed sceptics of the heavier-than-air machine came up and had a goof at the goings on and had to admit that it might be useful for getting the mail. Continuing our progress along the coast we called at Torquay, Plymouth and Portland and, on December 7th, made our way up harbour at Portsmouth. Here we received a warm welcome from our families and a signal from the C. in C. suggesting that even Guided Missile Destroyers should not have all their Radar aerials rotating when entering harbour.

The leave period and the setting-to-work which followed will be remembered for the bitterly cold weather. The edges of the harbour were frozen over, icebergs slid past the ship on the ebb tide and the Bosun's Mate's ki froze in the mug—or so they said! It was obvious that all the ties with Merseyside had not been broken when the time came to slap in for the leave warrants.

A great deal of interest was shown in our shiney new ship and every day brought some party of visitors to pry into the technicalities or just to say she didn't look much like the last one. The Brass didn't leave us alone either and by January 16th, when we sailed for further trials, the Admiral Tote in the Ops. Room showed that we had been visited by 13 officers of Flag rank and this number increased to 24 by the time we sailed to the Mediterranean. Although the broad outline of our future programme was known there was still room for speculation. Fuel was added by the string of letters received by the Commander from. Jenny, Queen of the Hong Kong side party, offering her services to the ship.

During January and February sea trials and the periods of recuperation between occupied most of our time and we visited Plymouth and Portland. At Plymouth 38 hardy souls accepted President Kennedy's challenge to do the 50 mile walk and set out to Bodmin and back. Midshipman Boyce was first home in just over 13 hours and Lieut. Porter was the only other finisher in 17 hours. About 15 others managed 35 miles or so and all the starters reached the half way mark. Darkness and cold were the principal enemies.

At a time when night leave was being given at St. Helen's Roads our genial quiz-master, E.A. Wills, decided he knew a quicker than the M.F.V. of getting ashore and later confirmed that the sea temperature was 32 degrees or thereabouts. He didn't even get an extra tot or survivor's leave.

On March. 4th we entered the final phase of sea acceptance when we left Portsmouth for Seaslug firings at Aberporth. Frustrations with the weather and numerous dummy runs were commonplace because, for these fully recorded firings, it was essential to have near perfect visibility. Lieut.-Cdr. Davidge worked overtime and produced the right conditions on March 7th and we heard, most of us for the first time, the noise of tearing cloth that meant "Seaslug Away." Suffice to say that this and the other firings proved the working of the system and that the efforts of the past month had not been in vain.

During an interlude in Plymouth on March 16th a ceremony was held on board at which we were presented with the first of eight Mini-sail sailing dinghies and a silver trophy, the gift of the Devon County



*There goes the Rumbling Cookie Missile-Wise.*

Council. The Chairman, Sir George Hayter Hames, made the presentation and he, the Lord Lieutenant of Devon and members of the council were entertained on board. This ceremony was combined with the presentation of a fine silver rose bowl by the County Territorial and Auxiliary Forces Association and representative Officers and Men of units throughout Devon were also entertained on board. We really felt that our name meant something!

Firings over and with our full outfit of missiles on board we returned to Portsmouth to make ready for the Mediterranean, grateful for all the support and help we had received from the Admiralty civilians and the Contractors—but oh so glad to be on our own at last!

# SOME LIKE IT HOT

All acceptance trials completed and a few missiles fired and the ship is ours. After a week in Portsmouth topping up with stores and saying goodbye to the Admirals, we sailed on April Fool's Day for Gibraltar, Malta and the first batch of our Machinery Trials. We spent the first weekend in Gib. where some of the younger members made their first visit to the Troc, a rather different Troc to that of the balmy old days. In fact, Gib. was pretty chaste all round.

On, on to Malta with a little three watch cruising on the way. Malta was much the same as we'd all known it. One or two dghaisas had outboard motors, the fares had gone up and, in the process, their owners had got a lot fatter. We spent the first few days in Grand Harbour, then with the Flag Officer Flotillas onboard, we went to visit Barcelona for four days. This was our first big run ashore, and very successful it was, too. The ship was berthed slap in the middle of the town, and it was literally two minutes to the night life. Some people flew off to Madrid, where they were entertained by the British Community, very well, it was reported. On the Sunday, there was a bullfight in Barcelona, which was well attended. It was most interesting for beginners for the variety of uncommon things that happened, a badly gored matador, a rejected bull and a really good fight. Anyway, everyone appeared to enjoy the visit ; there are some, who still think it was the best of the whole commission.

On Friday, 26th April, we went alongside *H.M.S. A USONIA* for fourteen days self-maintenance after a week or so at sea doing machinery trials and weapon training. Back in Malta, we took part in the Fleet Athletics and did quite well, considering we'd had no training. Some had an opportunity to go ashore in Malta for the first time and many to renew old acquaintances. Dozens of visitors from local establishments came to look round our new ship, just as they had in Portsmouth.

Self-maintenance over, and back to sea, refreshed both man-wise and machinery-wise, for more trials and weapon training. Then just as everything seems to be going so well we have a machinery failure (the wardroom was watching a film about castaways on a desert island at the time—it was particularly apt) and are forced to return to Malta, and alongside *H.M.S. A USONIA* again. A week later after Devonshire had bought the exclusive rights of "Moonriver" in every night club in the island, we leave Malta for Gibraltar (first stop) and England. A little shopping in Gib. where the bargains are not what they used to be and the rabbits have disappeared into their holes. the rest of the comprehensive blast trials which seemed to do less damage than everyone expected, and we arrive back in Portsmouth on the 8th June.

In Portsmouth there are two kinds of sailors, those who go native and those who don't. Those who "go native" are seen about the ship with a look of "we've never had it so good" on their faces; those who "don't" count the hours to the next tide. Both sects however are quickly amalgamated into one by the thought of a return to Aberporth and all its frustrations weather-wise.

But before Aberporth came successful basin trials and then return to sea on Thursday, 29th August, to try out the engines. All went well and with tails up we sailed to complete missile firings. The fascination of British weather lies in its diversity, but on this occasion we are in no mood to stand any of its nonsense. The result is successful missile firings. The pudding had been eaten. We now knew that we had a ship which was capable of doing everything we asked of her.

So, here we were, with a clean slate and all set to go to the States. Engines doing their stuff, two successful missile firings under our belt, and everything just straining to go. Back to Portsmouth for storing, pick up the Marine Band and do a few last minute preparations, then off to Plymouth to collect our outfit of missiles. Those last few days were pretty hectic. Among other things, we had to practise in the dockyard our march through Philadelphia as there was unlikely to be any time later. Eventually all was ready and we sailed from Portsmouth on Sunday, 22nd September.





*Devonshire and Ark Royal in the Mediterranean. There is no truth in the rumour that two Sea Vixens tried to land on Devonshire's Flight Deck.*



# OTHERS LIKE IT EVEN HOTTER

Tuesday, September 24th, the day we had all been looking forward to for the last 3 months or so in Portsmouth. After all the trials and tribulations it was still difficult to believe we were really on our way, engines mended, missiles fired, and all systems go. It was true though, and even the most cynical of the "We'll never make it" brigade looked brighter as the sun grew hotter and the sea calmer on the ten-day haul across the Atlantic to Bermuda.

This, the longest trip we'd done at sea so far, was used to exercise seamanship and tactics with Wave Ruler, our faithful attendant over the next 3 months, to cleaning the ship, and of course, the inevitable trials. The time passed quickly and so, on the morning of Friday, October 4th, we berthed alongside at Hamilton, Bermuda.



## Bermuda

An island paradise—so it said in the brochures anyhow! In fact, Bermuda turned out to be a disappointment to those who had not been there before, a tourist trap mainly for American honeymooners, who seemed to be dragooned into doing everything—yes, everything—by numbers and expensive as well. However, almost anywhere is better than Portland on a windy October day, and at least we could paint ship in reasonable comfort and provide a free show for the waterfront public at the same time.

Accordingly, there were few regrets when we passed the Narrows outward bound on the 8th, and headed North for Philadelphia, Pa.

## Philadelphia

Looking back at it now, it is incredible to think how much we managed to get into the six days we were there and still be on our feet (almost, anyhow) at the end of it all. We went there to represent Great Britain—us and a London bus—for Exposition Britannia, designed to present the best of Britain's exports (amongst which we hope were included us and a London bus again!), and, even if it sounds like boasting, as far as can be recalled, we never failed.

The ceremonial highlight of the visit was the march through the city, first to the historic City Hall for an address of welcome, and then to be highly honoured by being granted the Freedom of the City. From there, band playing, bayonets fixed, we marched up Market Street through clapping and cheering crowds to line the streets outside Wanamakers, where the exhibition was being opened by the British Ambassador. A memorable occasion, made even more so by the Gunnery Officer who, observing that the leading cars of the procession had gone the wrong way, rushed up the column shouting "They've made a balls"—much to the delight of the assembled crowds.

What else have we to remember Philadelphia by? For those of us who were duty onboard on visitors' days, we will always remember that they never seemed to stop coming, over 15,000 in all. For those of us who weren't duty—well, take your pick! U.S.O. Dances, tours, even games of cricket, rigger and hockey—a home from home, and that really was what Philadelphia was—a city of wonderful hospitality and friendliness, and one of which I am certain we are all very proud to be freemen.

It was with sadness that we hauled away from the jetty in the last remnants of the late fall sun and headed down river, not for the open sea though, but for the Chesapeake—Delaware canal, the Potomac river and Washington. Despite the fog, which caused us to anchor off the entrance to the one way only canal for the night, this trip was full of interest. We passed first through the narrow, winding canal, and under some hair-raising bridges on bends—the biggest warship

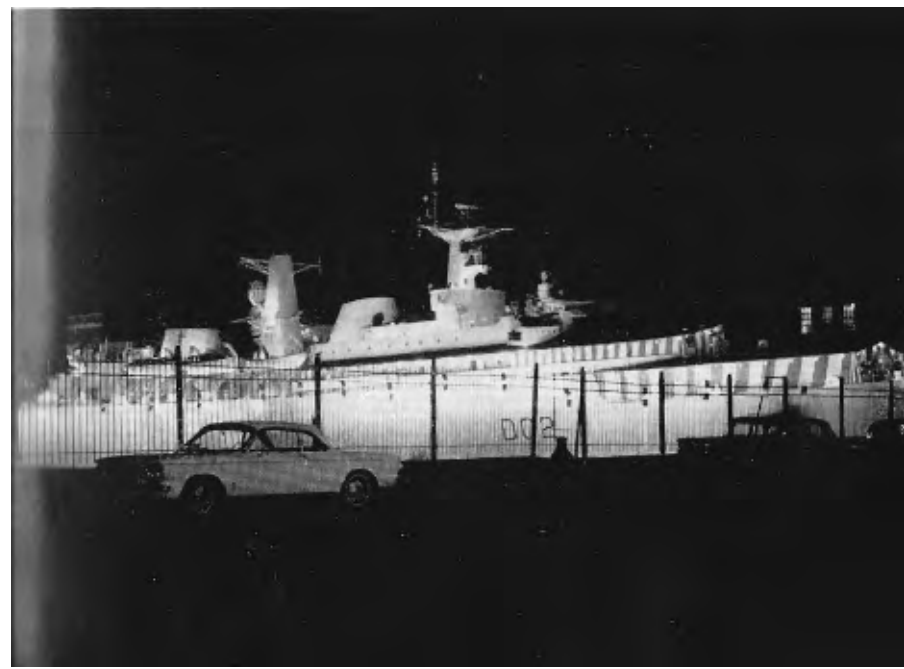
*Devonshire berthing in Philadelphia.  
The good ship "Lollipop" was not  
present at that time.*



*Just a few of our friends in Philadelphia.*

ever to do this—and then out into the waters of the Elk and Susquehanna rivers, past Baltimore, on under the new Chesapeake Bridge to Annapolis where we anchored briefly. From there out into the broader reaches of Chesapeake Bay, a sharp right turn and quickly into the narrow confines of the Potomac River, until we finally anchored

*Devonshire by floodlight in Philly, Pa.*



*Lady Ormsby Gore  
unveiling  
Sir Joshua Reynolds's  
painting  
"Georgina,  
The Duchess of  
Devonshire,  
and her daughter"  
at the  
Philadelphia  
Museum of Art.*



again for the night off Quantico to draw breath and to catch up on sleep before the final assault on Washington.

#### **Washington**

The main purpose of our Washington visit was to show the American Navy on their own doorstep that we were biggest, best and British. There was no doubt in anyone's mind when we arrived that we were British anyhow. We went up river, paying the traditional marks of respect to Washington's tomb at Mount Vernon, and then on to fire our salutes and play ourselves into the capital of America with full ceremonial. There was no denying the fact that we were the biggest either—the biggest anyhow ever to navigate the Potomac to the Navy Yard. Those two facts assured, the next five days were devoted "service-wise" to giving the Americans proof that we were also the best of our type in the World—no mean task! To achieve this, specialised tours of the ship were organised for a very broad cross section of the American Navy Office—American Admirals in fact were more the rule than the exception! On the whole, the opinion seemed to be that we made up in quality what they made up in quantity!

Once again, the Philadelphian story was repeated, hospitality and friendliness abounded and we did what we could to repay it with the children's party—a very great success—and also being open to visitors,

