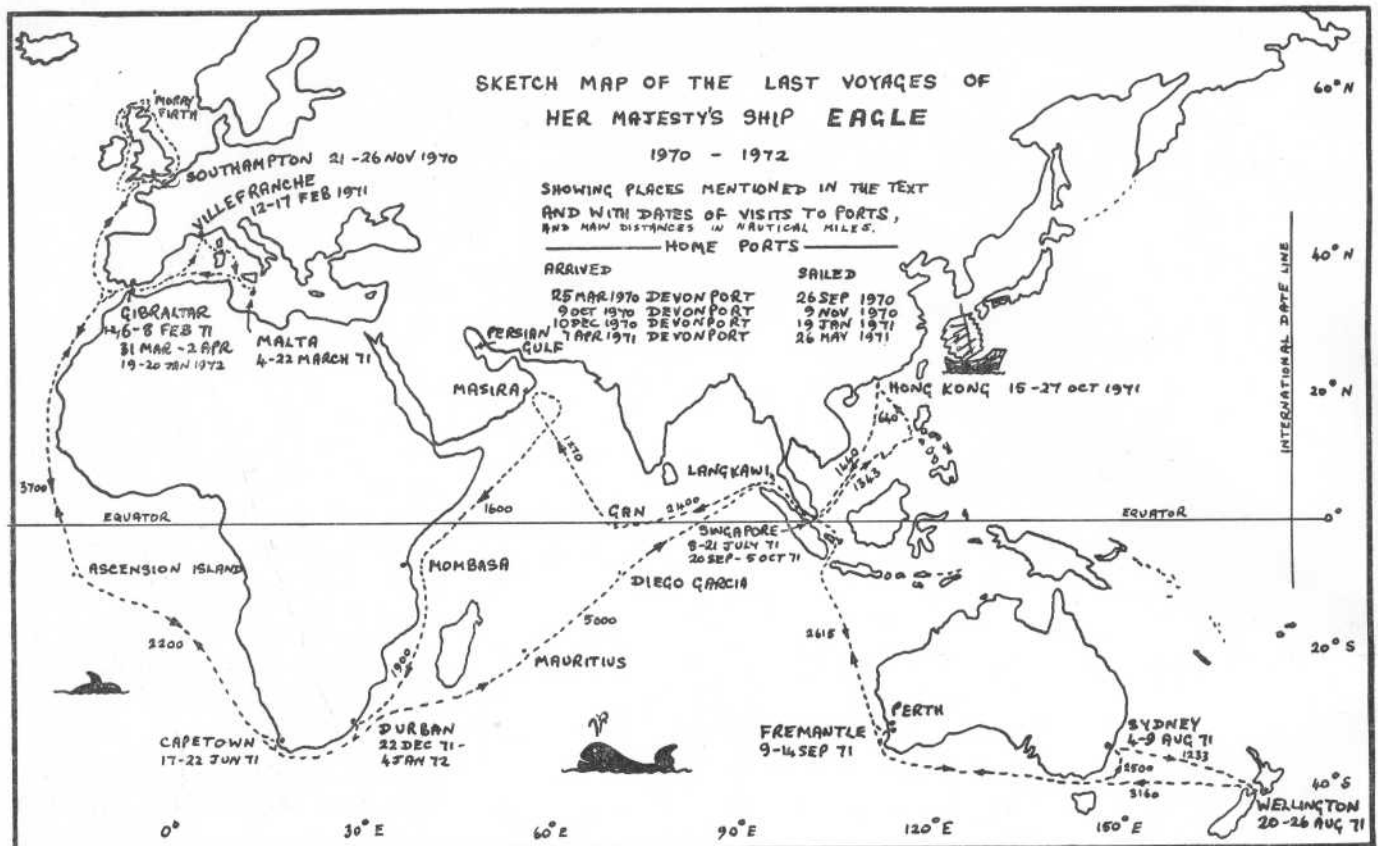


HMS EAGLE





Introduction

This is a book about HMS EAGLE for those who served in her, but many others will read it: wives, parents, sweethearts and friends. To those who do, may I suggest that you concentrate on reading between the lines. If you do this you will recognise at once the labour of love which the compilation of this book entailed.

You will also recognise that here is the last saga of a Great Ship, prepared to fight if needed, prepared to aid anyone in distress, prepared to represent her country honourably on all occasions and in all parts of the world. In the many photographs you can meet the men of EAGLE, no less a band of brothers than the men of Nelson's ships.

Between the lines in this book, with its frequent understatement, you will find an anatomy of the Royal Navy revealed in the character, courage, fortitude, humour and kindness of EAGLE's officers and men.

EDITOR'S NOTE - We regret that this souvenir book is in 'paperback' form, but by sacrificing hard covers we have been able to include a lot more material than would otherwise have been possible with the money available. Should you wish for a copy bound in boards, then, it is quite easy to get this done by any bookbinder - it would not be very expensive. (For those of you in possession of the book of the first half of the commission, from 5 March 1969, the two could be bound together.)

The author of the book of the first part of this last commission concluded by saying, 'We'll be back'. Yes, here we are. As the 'Through Deck Cruiser' is being considered by the powers that be, we might conclude by saying, with certainty, 'We'll be back *again*'.

CONTENTS		
GENERAL NARRATIVE	2	
RAS	16	SAR
DEPARTMENTS		Fleet Chiefs
Seaman	17	Medical
Communications	21	Dental
Weapons Electrical	23	Weapons Supply
Supply and Secretariat	26	Laundry
NBCD Party	30	Meteorological
Divers	31	Education
Church	32	Royal Marines
Maren	33	Eagle Players
Air Engineering	38	'Eagle Express'
Air	40	Children's Parties
800 NAS	42	Radio 4XO
826 NAS	46	Eagle Brass
849 NAS 'D' Flight	48	Cinema Staff
899 NAS	49	Thrash
		SPORTS
		Soccer
		Rugby
		Hockey
		Squash
		Cricket
		Water Skiing
		Harriers
		Golf
		Fencing
		Cycling
		Surfing
		Shooting
		Water-polo
		Judo
		Canoeing
		Tennis
		Dog Shooting
		A BRIEF HISTORY and
		PHOTOGRAPHS of EAGLE
		<i>Back Cover</i>

PLEASE NOTE * Names are listed in order for all group photographs, taking the back row first, left to right. Asterisks are used to indicate the separations between rows. For example: ** indicates the start of names referring to the second row from the top; *** for the third, etc.



Left: Captain I. G. W. Robertson, DSC, Royal Navy, arrives on 1st June, 1970 with the ship in dry dock and (on right) is introduced to Commander E. M. G. Johnstone by the previous captain, Captain J. D. Treacher. Below: On Watch; Off Watch (drawing one of the lucky car-winning tickets for the Highwayman Draw); Going ashore, on 28 January 1972 for the last time

Foreword

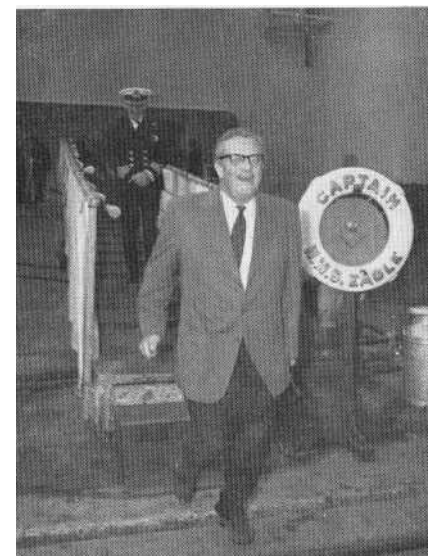
HMS EAGLE
at Portsmouth
28 January 1972

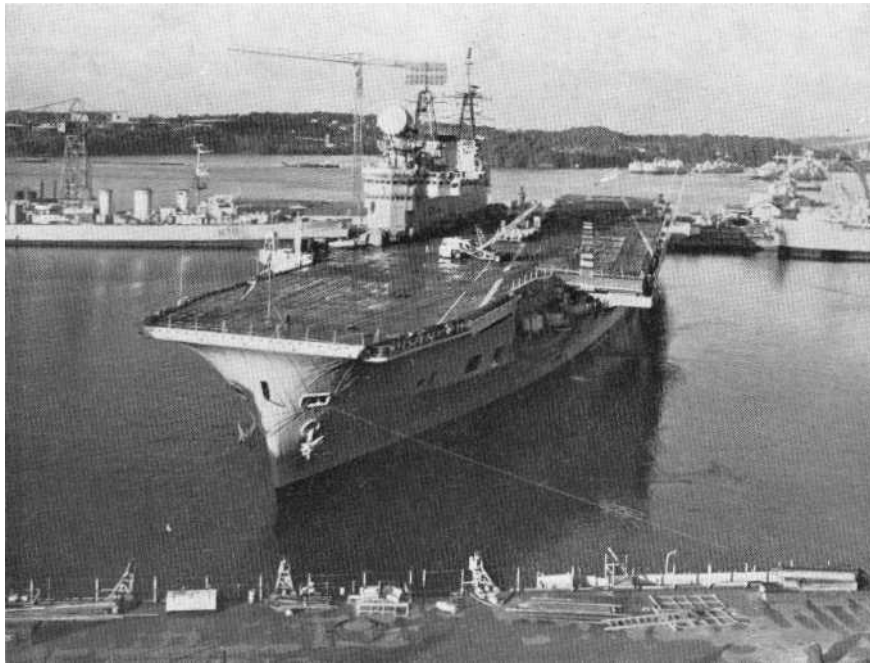
It is a great honour to be asked to write a few words for the book of the last Commission of this famous EAGLE.

When we first met, I stated that my aim was to try to achieve a 'whole' ship. This meant that everyone was to work together, whatever his job, to attain, at the end of the day, the maximum operational efficiency out of the aircraft - our prime weapon.

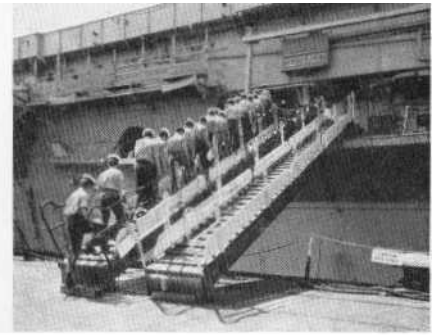
I believe that, together, we have well and truly accomplished this aim. We have not, as far as I am aware, turned down or found too difficult any task we have been called upon to perform, and, as you know, these have been many and varied. We have taken part in moments of history - covering the withdrawal from our military bases in the Far East and the Persian Gulf. Above all, we have achieved an immaculately clean, smart and efficient ship. This has been a corporate effort.

From the bottom of my heart I say to each and every one of you, thank you: God bless you, and good luck in all your endeavours in the future.





A tight squeeze



Home from home

DED

In April, after leave had been given, all but the RAs took up residence in HMS CENTAUR, towed especially round from Portsmouth to provide accommodation for us whilst EAGLE underwent docking and rectification of essential defects.

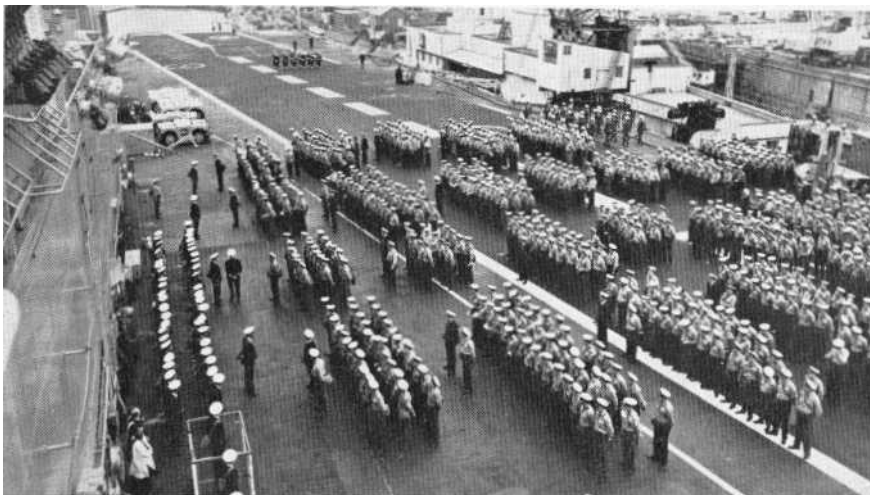
Daily orders took on a new importance: they published the caisson opening times. When it was open, the walk from EAGLE to CENTAUR, around the basin, was a long one. (It took from ten minutes to an hour - depending on whether lunch or work was at the other end.)

Captain Robertson joined and the twin hulks under his command took on steadily changing appearances. CENTAUR became a lively home, where an 'EAGLE spirit' developed, due mainly to the successful innovation of the Eagle Club. EAGLE herself began to look more ship-shape as the rectification programme went ahead smoothly.

Summer leave came and went. The Tot went. The dock was flooded and we floated again. On being warped out to the tidal berth we were able to vacate CENTAUR and establish ourselves, thankfully, 'at home' again.



Make room for a small one



Divisions with AGRS





Arriving at Southampton



The Mayor of Southampton stirs it

WORK UP & ORI

We sailed for trials on a Saturday afternoon (26 September). The squadrons found their sea-legs and various evolutions were practised: Thimblehunt, Emergency Stations, and so on. The machinery, too, was put through its paces, and we returned on 9 October for a short rectification period. This became another docking for work below the water-line after a rock had been struck on the way past Drake's Island.

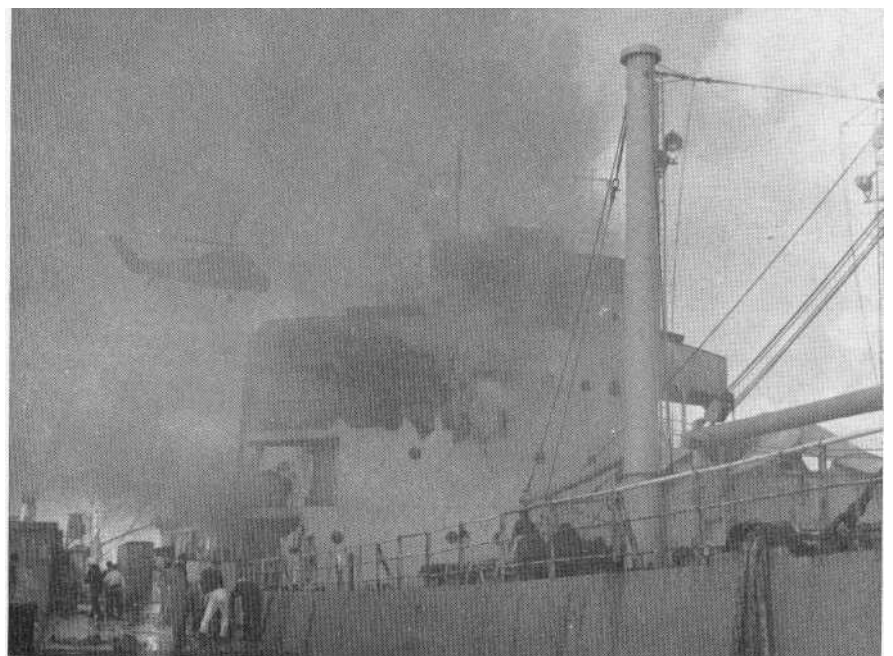
All was fixed and we sailed a month later and worked ourselves up the West Coast on the first leg of a 'round Britain trip'. It was 'all go' in the Moray Firth for some time, in company with CAVALIER, MALCOLM and the submarines AURIGA, AENEAS, ZEE HUND and POTVIS. The words *AMBER* and *RED* took on a new significance: to some it meant that meals were available round the clock.

We came down the East Coast and took a long week-end off in Southampton: the first of many splendid runs ashore in foreign parts. Duly refreshed, we steamed round to the Bristol Channel and were off Brawdy on Friday 27th where we held the second work-up with DANAE, CHICHESTER and OSIRIS, returning to Devonport on 10 December.

On 19 January we sailed for our third work-up and the Operational Readiness Inspection, carried out off Gibraltar on 8-9 February. There was little time for leave there, and inclement weather did not help, stranding several hundred ashore one night. The Inspection was carried out by Rear-Admiral Treacher and his staff. With his recent and intimate knowledge of the Ship, we were braced for a thorough going-over. We got it, and 'passed' with flying colours.



Fuel and food but no chance of sleep



Firefighters at Gibraltar - the SS BYZANTIUM



Arrival at Villefranche



Carnival at Nice



Perfume galore

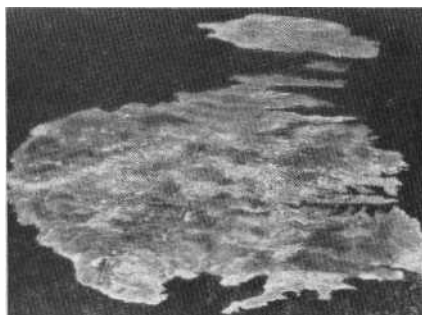
THE MED

In the crisp morning air of 12 February we went to the buoy in the centre of the Bay of Villefranche and took a well-earned opportunity for recreation. The British community extended a welcome and, through their generosity, many coach-trips were made possible. Some of us were content to sit in the local cafes; others visited Nice or

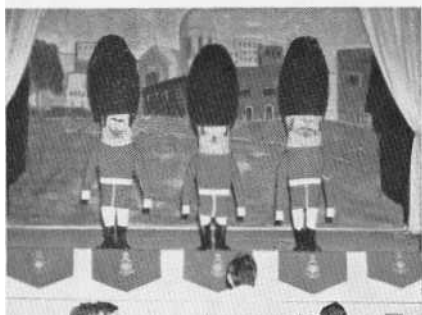
toured into the Alpes Maritimes, Grasse, Cannes or Monaco. No one broke the bank at Monte Carlo, and we sailed for some exercises before arriving for a period of self-maintenance at Malta. Some wives had flown out, and there were a few anxious faces on board as our entry into Grand Harbour was delayed by the weather for some hours.

Whilst some worked on board, others worked at LUQA. There was recreation, too: sport, theatricals and adventure

training away from it all at Golden Bay in the North. We sailed on 22 March and were able to call in at Gibraltar for a couple of days on the way home. On the 7th we returned to Charlie Buoy and, after clearing Customs in the forenoon, we embarked families and sailed with them up the Hamoaze. The mail strike had caused many to be out of touch with their homes during the whole of this trip and we were all glad to be back.



Maltese Islands



Eagle's Grenadiers



Leaving Malta



'Golly, it's good!'

DEPLOYMENT

For those trying to put their houses and gardens in order, April and May passed far too quickly. The Ship was loaded down with stores of every description. Because of the Far Eastern 'run-down' we had to take everything we might need (for nine months) with us. RFA RELIANT helped out and together we sailed for the Bristol Channel on 26 May. From there we picked up the jets, last-minute stores and stragglers before deploying to the East on 1 June. We closed within flying range of Gibraltar and passed close to the Canaries. GLAMORGAN, RELIANT, RESOURCE and TIDPOOL were all following

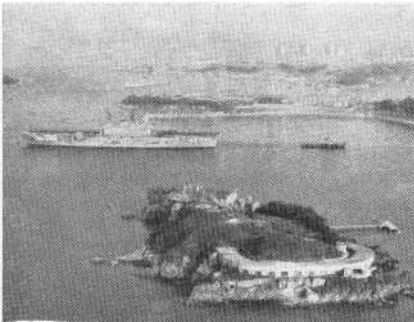


All in white

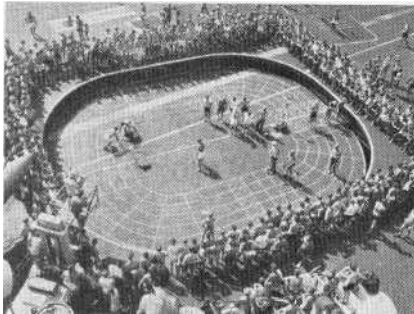
roughly the same route and the pattern for the voyage was established. We topped-up from the URG (underway replenishment group) and rushed off to fly in some suitable spot. As they caught up, we topped-up again. After a day or so we chased on and topped-up as we passed by - and so on. It was strange how we always seemed to meet up on Sundays, though...

With the prospect of months at sea now becoming a reality, the Ship Spirit, which had been smouldering and

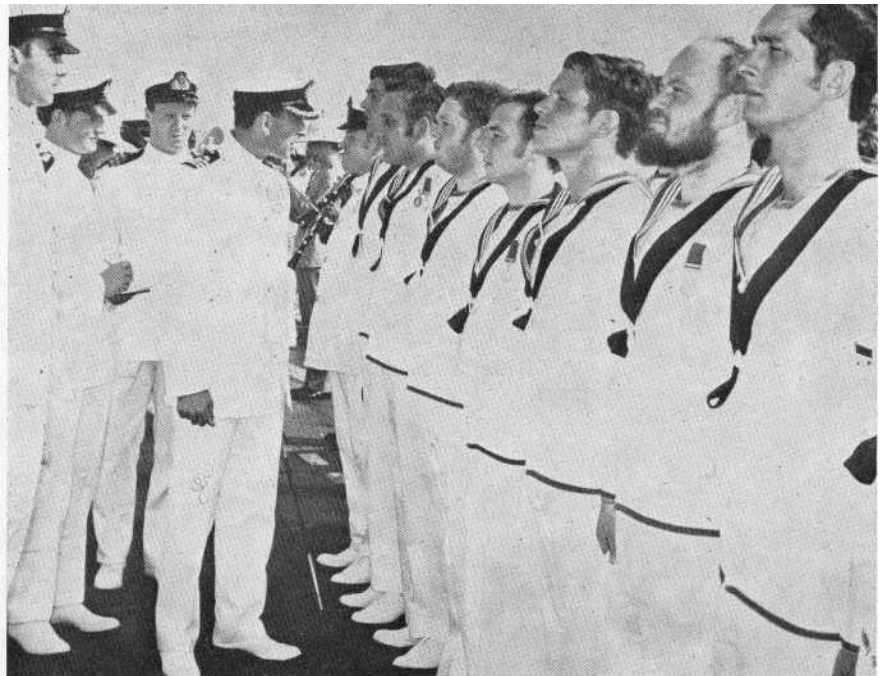
flickering at times such as the ORI, steadily glowed. Individuals began to find ways of spending their time profitably during the long sea passages the Ops Team dreamt up exercises; the Command thought of divisions (just to check that we'd brought our whites). The 'Off Watch' group, which had been functioning quietly since the ORI, became more meaningful as it thought up and arranged entertainment for all. The first of many 'Singalongs' was held on the cable deck on 5 June.



Sailing from Devonport



Horse-racing



Commander Johnstone inspects



The PMO gets a ducking



Photographic evidence



Ascension Island

CROSSING THE LINE

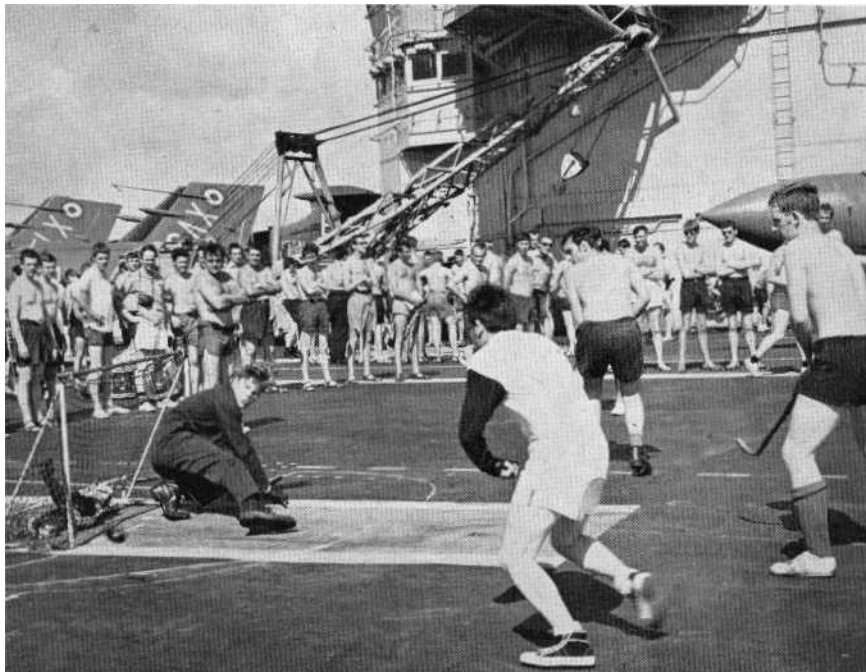
Tradition has it that ceremonies are performed in obeisance to King Neptune as ships cross the Equator, and a day was set aside for such merrymakings. Initiation, sacrifice, call it what you will: a representative selection of the Ship's Company were selected to be shaved, dolloped, whitewashed and thrown to the bears. With full court regalia, mermaids, policemen, etc., the Captain was the first to sample the

EAGLE twin-tub, whiter than white, dollopwash. (He was accused of - 1: sailing on time; 2: 'Did deprive the Ship's Company of Whit week-end'; and 3: was seen to smile at the return of the squadrons.) The Commander, Doctor, Dentist, Schooly, youngest chap on board - were all for it and all were duly accused (in rhyme, too!) and ducked. The formalities over, the duckings became less formal and a few

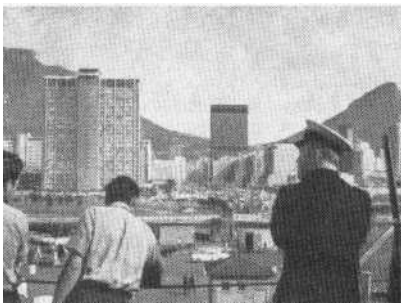
innocent and unprepared spectators were manhandled into the water, and by mid-afternoon the pools were filled with volunteers and pressed (or pushed) men. Of course, someone had to pull the plugs out; the waters drained away and revealed a small collection of keys and false teeth at the bottom of the pools!

When aircraft movements permitted, the deck space was given over to organised sports. Sometimes, complete knockouts or marathons were arranged; at others the fitness enthusiasts ran around the aircraft and did their press-ups in quiet corners. For the 'spectator only' sportsman there was horse-racing, with opportunities to buy, bet, or just to watch. If you liked none of that, then the sun was shining, the sky was clear, and all was set for a spot of bronzing.

As we approached Ascension Island, with its runway available as a diversion, our aircraft became more active and, of course, some mail arrived. The football team, the Royals and some other visitors were landed on the Island, and the helicopters were called on to shift loads of earth up the barren mountains in order to provide a roothold for trees being planted amongst the ash of the volcanic wastes. As darkness fell, the visitors were brought off and the course was set for Capetown. We did not close St Helena and changed back into blues in preparation for 'winter' down south.



It must be a goal . . .



Main street at our doorstep



In the mountains



Dawn, and the EAGLE, strikes Capetown

CAPETOWN...

We were certainly glad of our blues for the ceremonial entry into Capetown. The helicopter brought out the pilot and the Admiral - Flag Officer, Second-in-Command of the Far East Fleet. We watched as the first rays of sunshine dissolved the table-cloth and crept down from the tiny lift house at the top of Table Mountain to the flats and office blocks below, and we listened to the noise of the saluting guns as they echoed round the rocks. Berthed as centrally as one could hope for, we were quickly ashore for a 'leg stretch' and the first chance to savour the tremendous hospitality that became a feature of the cruise. Special offices were set up on board and ashore to cater for invitations to lunches, for drives and barbecues.

For those who enjoy sightseeing there was, of course, the cable-car trip to the top of the mountain. Some visited the Rhodes Memorial at Rosebank, and many took coach-trips farther afield: either round the Cape and to the Cape of Good Hope itself, or along False Bay, past Cape Hangklip and up into the mountains that are inland. There was beautiful scenery in contrasting styles - from the sheer cliffs of the Cape to the wide open stretches of sand in False Bay; from the ruggedness of the mountains to the flatness of the plateaux behind them; from the barrenness of the mountainous moorlands to the fertile apple-growing areas and vineyards.

After five days, on Tuesday, 22 June, we sailed towards Singapore, slowing down off Mauritius to land and deliver mail and to 'show off' some of the aircraft in a flypast and demonstration.

We also landed a helicopter at Diego Garcia. It was the first aircraft ever to land on the new airstrip being constructed there by the Americans. We collected their mail and were able to fly it off almost the next day as we got within range of the Penang areas. We exercised there for some days before entering Singapore on 8 July for a period of assisted maintenance at the Sembawang Shipyard. For some there were wives to meet them; for some the challenge of an inter-departmental multi-sport Olympiad; and for all there were the swimming-pools; the many small bars of Sembawang or the bright lights and fascinating life of Singapore City itself. 'Rabbits' were purchased, although with the prospect of another visit there many people were holding back, probably to save up a little more cash. On the 21st it was time to press on farther eastwards.



Rear-Admiral D. J. Williams and his Staff

... AND SINGAPORE



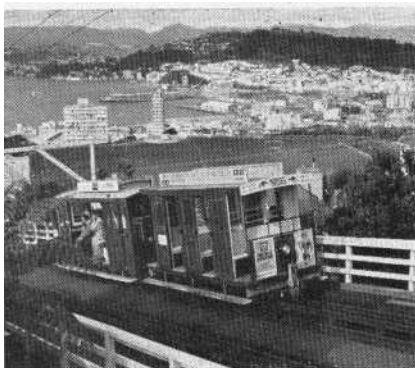
'Haircut, sir?'



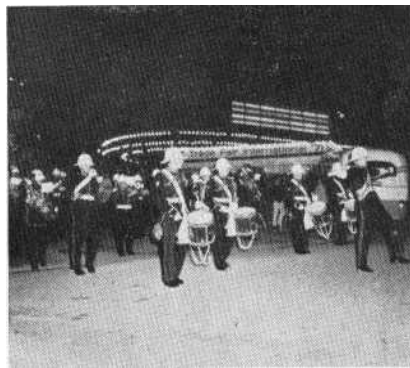
Morning mist at Sydney



Sydney Harbour (with EAGLE and HMAS MELBOURNE, left, at the RAN Base)



The railway - Wellington



Royals at the fair

DOWN UNDER SYDNEY, WELLINGTON, FREMANTLE AND . . .

The passage to Australia was marred by a fire in one of the two plants used for making liquid oxygen. This was very serious and potentially extremely dangerous. Whilst the entire Ship went to emergency stations, the fire was fought and contained within the area of the plant. Within a few hours all was under control, and the damage, although severe, was very localised. The Ship returned to the Singapore areas and flew the two men who were injured, in the initial explosion, to hospital.

Our operational efficiency was not unduly affected and we were soon exercising, as planned, off Perth. We moved across to the eastern end of the continent and, after a little more flying, entered Sydney on 4 August and began to sample life in Australia. Some never got farther than King's Cross, just up the road from the dockyard. Others were off to the beach (Bondi, of course - although there were several others) and there were coach-trips, too: into the bush or to the wilds of the Blue Mountains and Katoomba. In many ways Sydney was like London: busy, alive at night and, alas, expensive. The Australians were very friendly and some related (almost with pride) their ancestry ('Yes,' said the taxi-driver, 'I'm a fourth-generation convict.') Miss Elizabeth McCracken, a young nurse, came on board to receive a small gift from the Ship - she was born on board during the Coronation Review at Spithead. Our visit was a hectic five days - one of those long week-ends when everything happens so fast you never have time to recover.

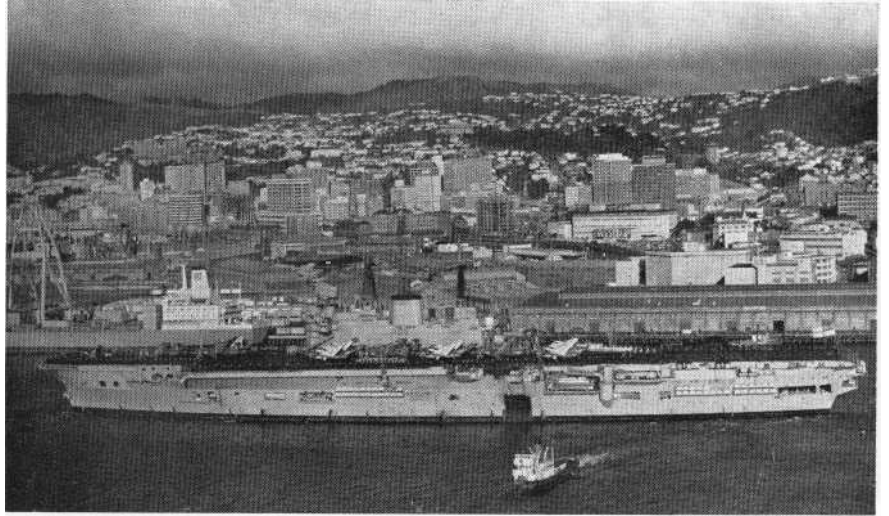
On sailing, we met with bad weather and the plans to go through the Cook Strait and exercise to the east of New Zealand were cancelled, as the Ship and her escorts (GLAMORGAN, DANAE, ACHILLES, JAGUAR, HMAS OVENS and HMNZS WAIKATO and WIRANGI) took shelter. Fortunately, the weather improved sufficiently for the entry into Wellington to take place as scheduled. Our visit there coincided with a trade fair and the delicate negotiations on the Common Market. The New Zealanders, especially the ex-servicemen, of whom there were thousands, were boundless in their enthusiasm and generosity. It was a visit never to be forgotten. Some went to Auckland, others saw the hot springs, others were just dragged from one party to another in a haze of hospitality. Again, five days was the ration -

not long enough for the initial impetus to die down, and just long enough to be able to cope before dropping with exhaustion. We sailed, and headed westwards for another visit to Australia.

Fremantle is the port for Perth at the mouth of the beautiful Swan River. Perth is the capital of Western Australia and is a charming city with ocean to the west and desert to the east and an extensive agricultural belt around it. There were sights to see there, and the visit got off to a swinging start with the Ship's Dance - the big hooley of the Commission - held on the first night in. Whilst some loners went off into the bush, the less adventurous athletes walked from Fremantle to Perth and back for charity. In comparison to Wellington, the visit was quiet, but nonetheless very enjoyable - another long week-end and we sailed again on 14 September for Singapore.

For those who had lounged at the pool all day during their first visit to Singapore, time was running short: sights had to be seen and, of course, the remaining rabbits had to be purchased - although some felt that Hong Kong would offer better prices. More wives arrived. The changes as the British Forces left became noticeable; the sentry at the gate of HMS TERROR was frequently wearing the grey-green uniform of the Australian forces. At a short ceremony there, the Far East Colour was paraded and transferred to the Ship. Many of the visiting dignitaries, most of them servicemen, commented on the smartness and bearing and precision of the EAGLE guard at that function; an historic event, we were proud to have been the bearers of the Colour and to have acquitted ourselves at the ceremony so well.

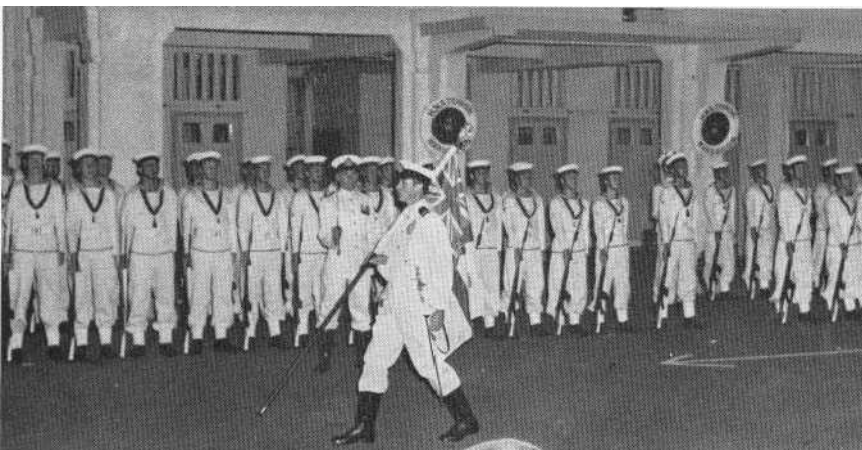
... SINGAPORE AGAIN



Leaving Wellington



Arriving at Fremantle



The Far East Colour leaves Singapore to be returned in EAGLE to Portsmouth

HONG KONG

The passage from Singapore to Hong Kong was to have included extensive exercises off the Philippines, but three tropical storms played havoc with the programme and we spent some time avoiding the storms. It was during this time that we heard an SOS from the SS STEEL VENDOR that had drifted onto a reef whilst its engines were out of action. Helicopters from 826 Squadron were scrambled and were able to winch the crew of forty men to safety before their freighter, loaded with cement, began to break up on the rocks.

With that adventure behind us, we salvaged what we could of the practice programme and managed to avoid the typhoons and steam for Hong Kong for a period of self-maintenance and an opportunity to see the sights. Shopping was a favourite activity - as was sight-seeing, be it in the Wanchai area by night, or up The Peak, or round the New Territories, or down to the south of the Island to the beaches, or for a meal in the floating restaurants at Aberdeen.

Being at a buoy meant coming and going by boat, but we soon got to grips with the boat and wallah wallah routine. The guard performed at a ceremony to mark the retirement of the Governor-General, and the aircraft flew past for Princess Anne who was starting a visit to the colony as we left. Between those two events the wardroom hosted many dignitaries from Hong Kong for the annual celebration of Trafalgar. A dinner is normally held at HMS TAMAR



Wreck of the SS STEEL VENDOR

but on this occasion our wardroom was chosen as the venue, and the Queen's Far East Colour was displayed behind the top table.

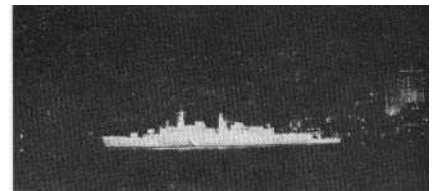
Some wives took the opportunity to join their husbands, and for everyone it was a 'last-minute shop to catch the post'. Postie and his staff were very busy dispatching the last lot of sea mail that would get home in time for Christmas.

The Side Party, too, was busy, co-operating with Jenny and her side party

to get the Ship's side looking clean: it was quite a sight to see the local painters swinging in the wind on planks suspended from the flight deck by a couple of thin ropes. The Sea Kings in the meanwhile were dangling strange bits and pieces from their aircraft as they assisted the authorities ashore with several load-lifting jobs up mountain sides.



Arrival at Hong Kong.



GLAMORGAN by night



Seen near the border of Communist China