

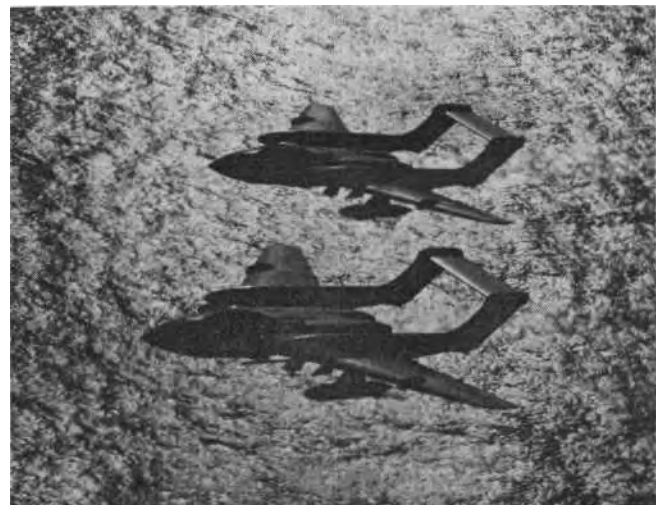
## *Where'er ye are: whate'er ye do - remember Hermes 892!*



*The C.O. has the weight*

This loyal Vixen Squadron started its work-up way back in November 1965 when Lt.-Cdr. J. N. S. Anderdon took over as CO; but it was not until June 1966 that 892 played the first deck games with 'Muvver'. The Squadron soon reached a creditable peak and performed publicly at the Biggin Hill Air Fair, the Freedom of Gosport Fly Past, as well as numerous air days in the U.K. and in Europe culminating in its participation with other *Hermes* Squadrons in the spectacular Farnborough Air Display that September. It was at this latter function that 892 as a whole nearly became disbanded at the hands of a fearless flying farmer on a milk run. On 22nd September, 10 aircraft embarked for the operational work-up off the North-East coast of Scotland but it was the visit to Hamburg which finally put right the 'terrors' of the high seas, winds and the shortage of observers who had only found their sea legs while leaning over the side. On 19th January the Vixens finally made their lair in *Hermes* for keeps as she turned her bows southwards.

Before passing through the Canal the Squadron took part in two exercises; the first, 'Pokerhand IV' in March was against an American force including *U.S.S. America*. For defence two 892 aircraft were kept airborne throughout the day and seven night sorties were flown - all without a diversion airfield. The exercise showed the sting of the 'Mighty Midget' and 892 claimed a very impressive bag of the enemy plus two unknowns, two Caravelles, one Viscount, one Buccaneer, two Vixens and a gannet in a pear tree! (The Americans certainly go big.) Own losses? -



*Me and my friend Julian*



*'The sting of the mighty midget!'*

not recorded. The second exercise in April was the NATO 'Dawn Clear' off Italy and Sicily. For the first two days the Squadron kept a defensive station against a strike force which generally didn't turn up; from thereon the tables were turned as the Vixens successfully struck the Task Force which was cruising up the East coast of Italy.

On 6th May the ship arrived off Aden to give the Squadron its most interesting, if not the hottest, phase of the tour. In the sticky heat and humid air, the aircrew under Lt.-Cdr. S. Idiens, the new CO, were all alert. Border patrols were flown in close co-operation with the RAF; these with photographic reconnaissance trips and two mass fly pasts with other *Hermes* craft, H.M.S. *Victorious*' Squadrons and the RAF, were 892's part in the show of air power. During the Sinai War, high and low sorties were flown as the ship patrolled East of 'Eden' - fortunately the force was not involved. It was thus with great relief on 11th June that *Hermes* left the area destined for the bright lights of Singapore after six weeks at sea, leaving behind the 'dissident Arabs' in their ports musing over the Twin Tailed 'Formula Ones'!

The month that never was saw the long trip home from Fremantle to the U.K. drift by without any flying prior to the mass exodus to the 'green, green fields of home'. During this period 'WD 40 is go' was the OK phrase, as maintenance was an ever apparent battle against corrosion and soot from the 'pipe smoking' officer of the watch.

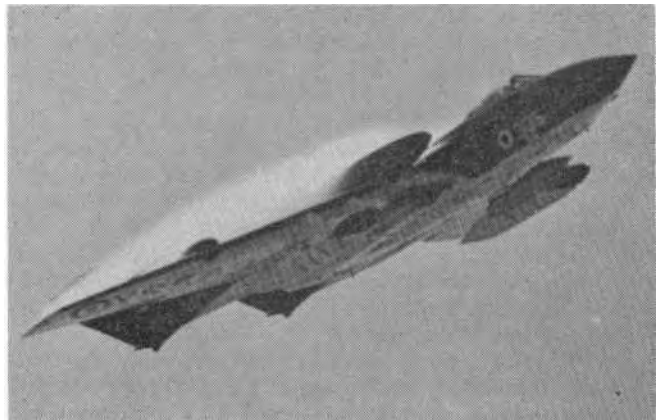
As a landlubber Squadron at Yeovilton, 892 had 10 days to get back to their old form. Alas, the British weather hadn't changed, it played havoc with the first few days; to add to this the aircraft themselves had been affected by the sudden change of climate and environment. However as a consolation 893, 890 and 766 Squadrons kindly lent their cabs to the breaker's yard!

The Lyme Bay fiasco which followed in early November was a replica of the North-East Scotland affair - a 'psychedelic freak out' ; suffice to say the aircraft arrived on board together with a new Senior 'P' - Lt.-Cdr. T. J. Bolt who 'had erred and strayed' from 766 Squadron.

However in the two days of high seas and high winds, the Squadron got the message and the aircraft found their sea oleos in time for the 'Loop'.

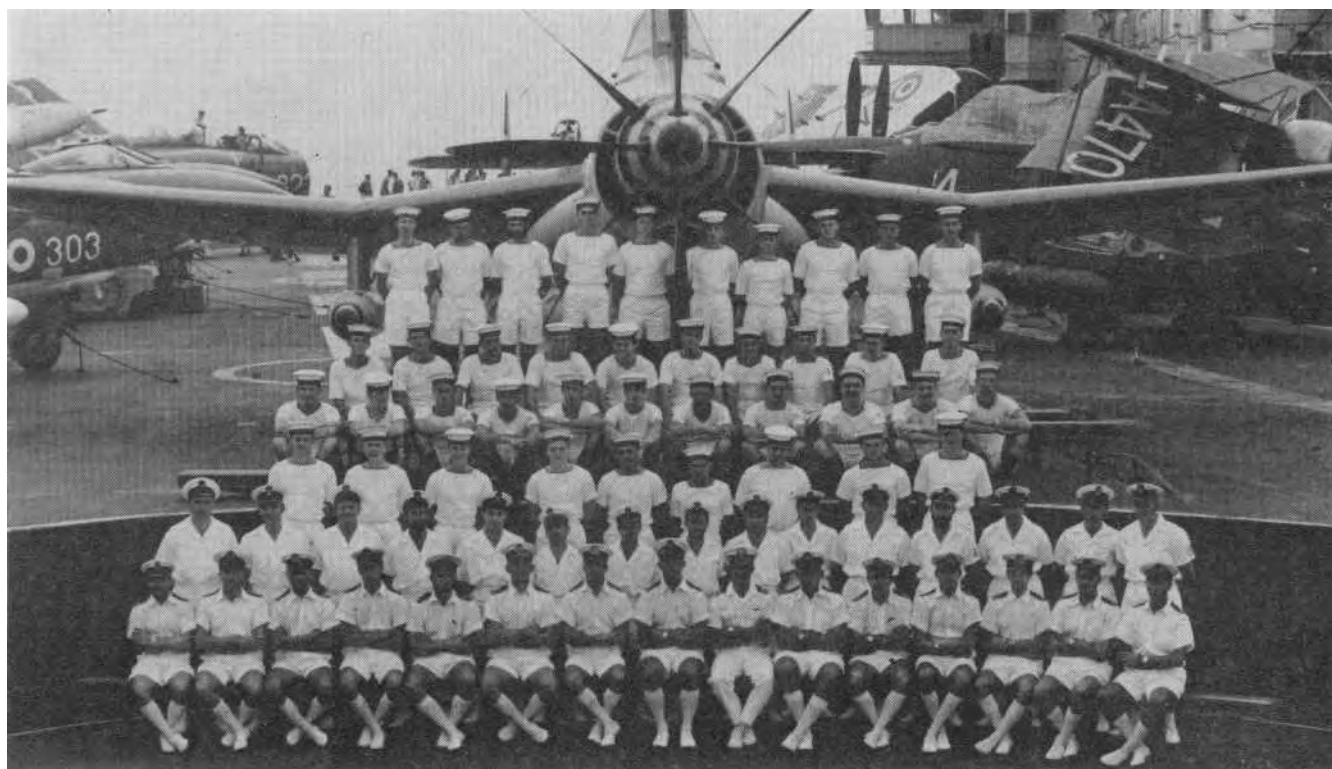
Thereafter until Christmas, when this narrative concludes, flying was a sunny success story with flyex's off Ascension, Cape Town, Durban and East Africa and full credit must go to the maintainers who provided enough aircraft to average 22 sorties per day - serviceability crews were the difficulty! Although Wideawake (Ascension) was used as a diversion field, its peace was never disturbed by a Vixen which proved a good omen for the non-diversion flying to follow. It was off Cape Town that 892 hit the headlines - 'Strike Aircraft's 200 lb victim - RN Rocket Kills Giant Biskop' (it goes on to say that the previous record was 70 lb!).

Before joining the Middle East Task Force the ship was involved in Exercise 'Liver Paste' against H.M.S. *Eagle*. For two days 892 kept a three-craft airborne vigil throughout and sent a strike on the final day - the official result will never be released but let it be known (whatever big sister says) our Squadrons surely won the day!



*'Vaporous' Vixen*

## 849 B Flight



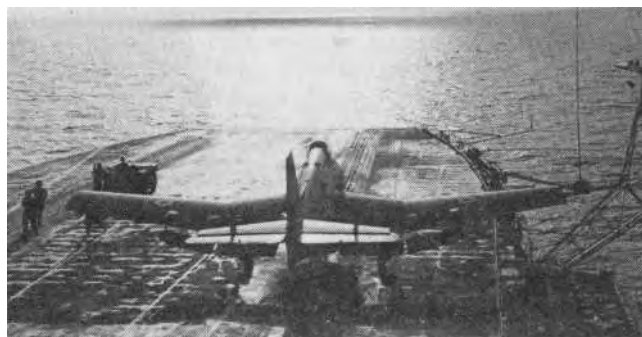
Although we commissioned before the ship and did not finally embark until January 1967, our activities during this earlier period are not truly relevant to *Hermes'* commission book. Mind you, we would undoubtedly go right ahead and tell you how we stole the show at Farnborough, relevant or not, but unfortunately space does not permit us to relate this and other tales of derring-do from pre-embarkation days.

The Gannet Mk. III is a flying radar platform, and as such is suited to a number of tasks which include the detection of low-flying hostile aircraft below the horizon of the ship's radars, the control of our own fighters to intercept these raiders, the control of our own strike aircraft against surface targets, and the compilation of extensive shipping plots. In addition, of course, the flight maintains the Courier Gannet, which has the popular task of carrying our mail.

Perhaps the most exciting flying that has come our way was that carried out over the Aden Protectorate where we flew on border patrols. The excitement was derived from the ruggedness and aridity of the country over which we flew, and equally from knowledge of the hostility of the inhabitants. Other unusual serial activities consisted of our controlling, on different occasions, RAF Lightning interceptors from Singapore, and U.S. Navy Skyhawks from Cubi Point in the Philippines.

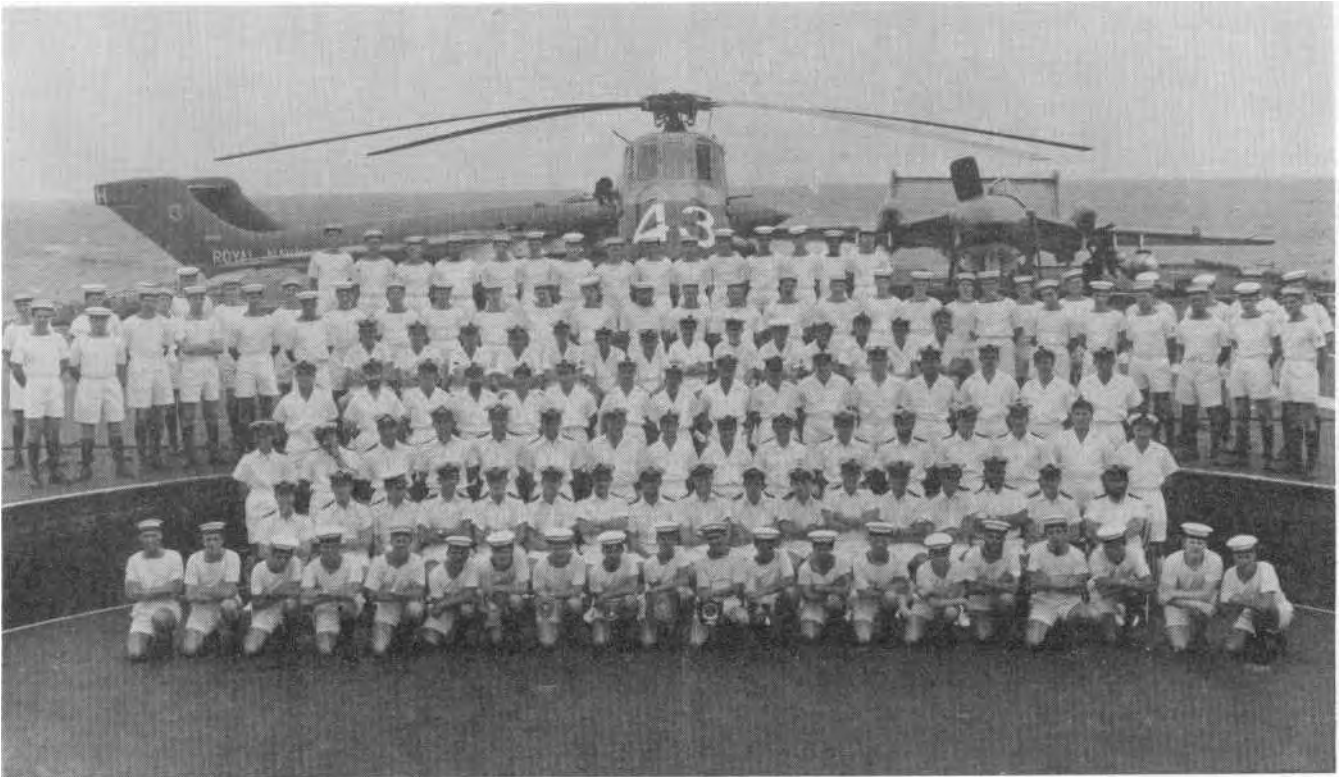
On the social and recreational side, probably the most popular visit on our first Mediterranean leg was Malta, where we enjoyed our first sunshine and a number of the Flight were fortunate in having their families there during

our 17 days disembarkation. Fleeting impressions of other ports of call were that Gibraltar had perpetual rain, Neapolitans must be the most suicidally inclined drivers in the world, the Greeks were very polite in that they waited for us to leave before having their coup d'etat, and in Cyprus there is a wine called Coccinelli. On the Far East leg perhaps the most enjoyed visit was our three and a half weeks in Singapore, disembarked at RAF Changi. This was particularly appreciated as it had been preceded by two months at sea, mainly off Aden, and also gave us all a chance to take five days leave. Aden was dry and dangerous, Hong Kong was wet and dangerous, the Philippines were merely wet, and Fremantle was cold, though by no means inhospitable!



A 'Duskers' Push

## 826 Squadron



Commissioning Day, 18th March 1966, Admiral Sir Frank Hopkins, K.C.B., D.S.O., D.F.C., the first Commanding Officer of 826 Squadron inspected the Divisions and addressed the Squadron.

After Easter leave most of the Squadron was detached to Ballykelly for exercises.

We arrived by civil air (drab hostesses), train, ship and a few by helicopters, staying in H.M.S. *Sea Eagle*, Ballykelly, H.M.S. *Lofoten* and R.F.A. *Olynthus*. Half the Squadron successfully avoiding the other half most of the time; apart from quite a lot of flying almost everyone achieved something.

Friday, 20th May saw a united Squadron once again but this was short lived. *Victorious* took three aircraft for nine days after Whit weekend to assist 814 in a fairly intensive trials programme. A few days in 'Vic' brought us a flying visit from the CO in the COD. It was assumed that everything was to his satisfaction as he had been smiling and waving when blasted off the port catapult. By the CO: 'I was not smiling. The waving was a desperate attempt to disentangle the parachute and straps from around my neck'.

Another notable, though small detachment was one aircraft with Nick Price, Ken Arden and Stew Prest to RAF Abingdon for a parachute despatcher's course. The latter two even had time to 'have a go' themselves, ending of course in an undignified heap of arms, legs and nylons.



... to RAF Abingdon for a parachute despatcher's course

Arbroath came next, the ground party arriving at 0500, after 24 hours of British Rail insomnia, to kit up for a walk in the Cairngorms. Off then to join the Home Fleet at Cape Wrath until our O.R.I. and summer leave, after which Farnborough's SBAC display was upon us. After the display came our first work-up with *Hermes* culminating in a four-day diversion to Hamburg. The so-called rest ended on a Monday, seen hazily through 'red rheumy eyes'.

Off again to Scottish waters and a disembarkation to Arbroath on 20th October while the ship was in Rosyth. In mid-January we sailed in *Hermes* for Gib. where another two weeks of detached bliss passed, taking part in a James Bond film and heaving torpedoes at submarine areas.

We arrived in the Middle East, waited, were shown the countryside by the RAF and Army Air Corps and ended up helping them both at Hailayn, a small airstrip and base 44 miles North-West of Aden. The RAF and Army flew Wessex IIs, Sioux and Scout helicopters from there on 'dissident hunting missions'.

After several abortive attempts we succeeded in heading for Singapore via Gan, detaching three aircraft to *Olna* for casexes and torpedo dropping. At Singapore the whole Squadron disembarked to Simbang for three weeks of rest, or near rest, broken only by a jungle survival course and jungle flyex at Kuala Lumpur. However, plenty of activity was to follow two weeks later at Hong Kong, where our stay was highlighted by the 'dash and bravado' exercised by the intrepid aviators in the Squadron in our dawn raid on Communist buildings.

... dawn raid on Communist Buildings



On the long journey south to Fremantle, exercising at Subic, Singapore and Cocos Islands on the way, we tested the flotation gear on two aircraft that ditched, luckily with no casualties.

We were grounded, but the engineers worked many long hours before and after Fremantle to get us airborne again. Stocks of artificial boomerangs exhausted, we left Fremantle for the U.K., only stopping at Ascension to land some maintainers, and again near Gib. to show *Dreadnought* how easy it is to hunt nuclear submarines.

A month at Culdrose and then back from whence we came, Aden, but via a safari or two in Mombasa!

It's rumoured, buzz, buzz, buzz, that we will be in the U.K. in February, bringing to an end 826's association with *Hermes*.

## The Air Department

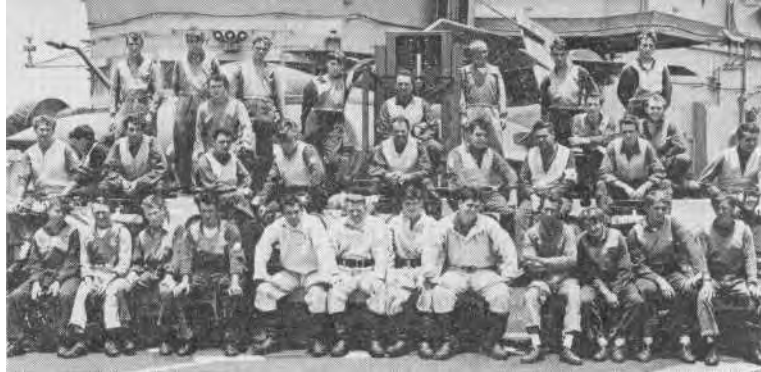
The Air Department under the command of Cdr. S. Leonard, O.B.E., R.N. (who relieved Cdr. D. T. McKeown during the first work-up) totalled 118 officers and 754 ratings and over 30 aircraft. Apart from the four Squadrons embarked, the Ship's Air Department consisted of a number of sections, the largest being the Flight Deck Party under Lt.-Cdr. 'Noddy' Hoddinott (relieving Lt.-Cdr. Brian Reilly early in the commission) and who, fair or foul, pushed and pulled, launched and recovered, ranged and struck down many thousands of aircraft. In the Aircraft Control Room, sometimes called the War Office, Lt.-Cdr. John Corbett held the fort against all comers until relieved by Lt.-Cdr. David Gray. The hangar, ruled unmercifully by Lt. 'Jimpy' Miners was the Department's showpiece and under the same control came the Safety



'Cocks of the roost.'

Equipment Section. Operations required the services of four Lt.-Cdrs., but Mac Melhuish held the whip. Flyco, that 'gleaming protuberance' on the island was manned continuously by Lt.-Cdr. Bill Whitton until Lt.-Cdr. John Beyfus took the hot seat. The Air Traffic Controllers under Lt.-Cdrs. Hank Coates and, subsequently, 'Oggie' Ogden, kept a vigilant watch in the Carrier Control Approach Room until the weather became too bad for these recoveries but their bridge watchkeeping, air office administration and wine catering cannot go without mention. The Army was well represented by the Carrier Borne Ground Liaison Team regimented by Maj. Gordon Cathcart and upheld the best traditions of the Royal Navy!

What did this great team achieve? They planned and coordinated the whole of the ship's and Squadrons' efforts into the task of flying operational sorties from the deck of



*The Flight Deck Party*

*Hermes*. Controlling the movements within the ship, on and off the deck, from smooth efficiency to controlled chaos, from maximum launch and recovery to an immaculate hangar for the official cocktail parties. Even the preparation of this book which, without the expertise of the Photographic Section under Lt. Sid Hayes, would not have been possible.

## *The Air Engineering Department*



Many members joined before 1966 and a few were even old hands by the time Commissioning Day arrived, having spent several months sorting out the invading hordes of stores and returning some of the more unlikely items. Commissioning day came and went and the Boss (Cdr. Watson) found a baby in his 'in' tray, even though later it was claimed he was seen to be shaken by the event - being the senior bachelor onboard. It is regretted that A.E.D. could not provide much assistance to the first fixed wing recovery and launch of the Commission; Cdr. (Air) determined on the honour and used a Tiger Moth, the engine of which he refused to stop after landing-on. Propeller swinging as an art was found to be a missing skill in A.E.D. Later in the summer when the fixed wing aircraft arrived all the vital missing adapters for the shiny new ground equipment started the biggest treasure hunt ever. The first attempted night landing of the commission cleaned up all three of the Sea Vixens' oleos on hitting the deck. As a preliminary work-up for the Crash-crew, the event was perfectly planned, even if the honour of the aircrew was a little dented.

1967 was a very different sort of year, with the Squadrons embarked most of the time, so A.E.D. spent most of the time working. Unfortunately, we can produce no such existing photographs as the last commission with Jumbo maliciously attacking a Sea Vixen, not that Jumbo hasn't misbehaved, just that the cameras haven't been on the spot.

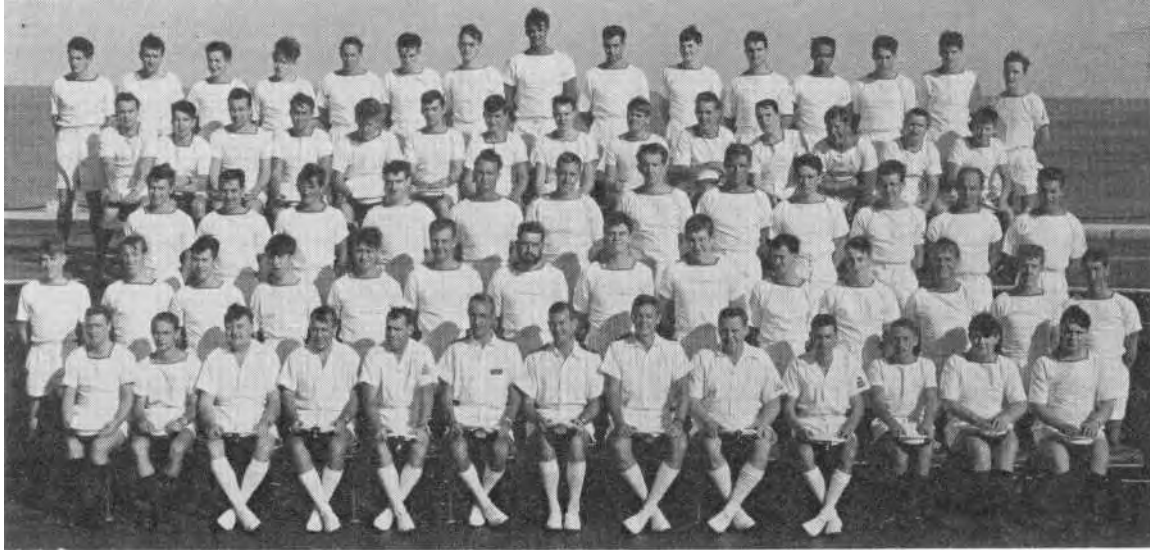
As well as doing its job, A.E.D. has been of assistance to many. Jumbo has been used by every department except the Dentist and the Padre (volunteers for a dental experiment should prove to be very interesting). The E.M.R. have mended many private radios, and I.R.S. have kept the shutters clicking in many cameras. The metal workshops converted a Landrover into a suitable chariot for King Neptune and at present are converting a steering arm into Cinderella's carriage. Unfortunately, the end product of the ordnance sections isn't so adaptable for private users, so they've just worked.

The guided weapons sections have tested many missiles, and even had a few of them fired for them just to prove that they work. This section is also a little unusual in that they have two seamen working for them, 'something to do with torpedoes' they've been heard to mutter. As well as these better known compartments of activity, there are several more; the seat shop which is the only place in A.E.D. where you can't sit; the oxygen making compartments (liquid or gaseous); the tyre bay, often to be found full of dolls' houses; a clean room which the writer has always been too dirty to visit and a place called ASUCO which some say is part of Naval Stores. There are also three offices, the Bosses', the Little Bosses' and AMCO, which is where the old saying that the pen is mightier than the sword is proved to be as true as ever in the modern world of high speed aircraft.

## *Seaman Department*

The activities of the Seaman Department during the past Commission have been so many and varied that a whole book would be required to do justice to them. Such a book would, of course, be of absorbing interest to present day readers and inestimable value to future historians. Unfortunately, however, this does not appear to be appreci-

ated by those providing the funds for this cruise book, who have allotted us only two pages. Rather than commit the injustice of inadequate comment therefore, we have decided to avoid a narrative altogether, and simply to publish some pictures of the stalwarts whose heroic efforts would have been chronicled had there been space.

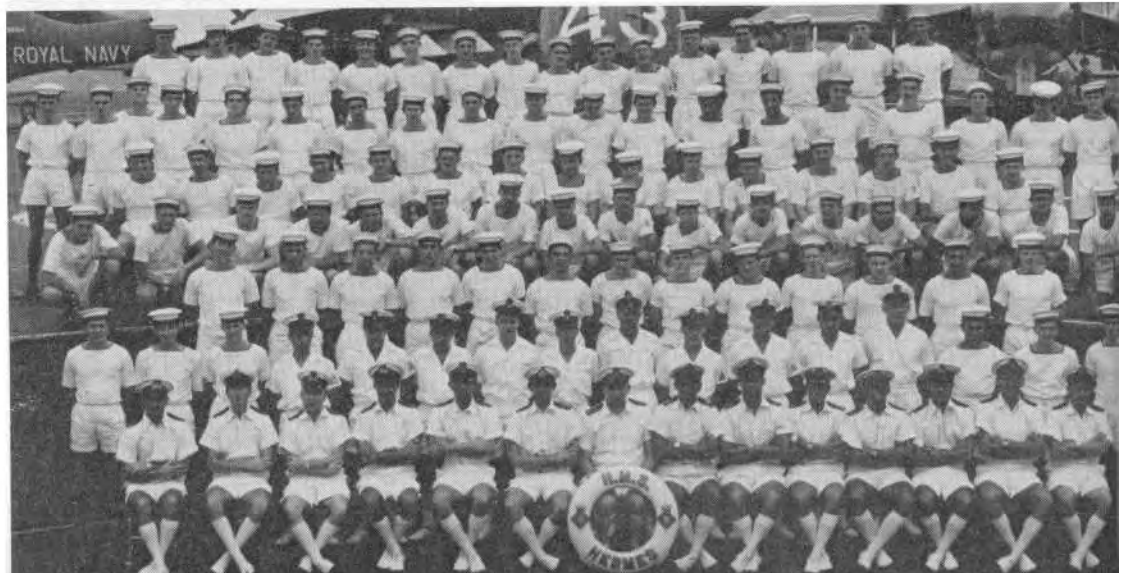


This is the Forecastle Division. Most of their part of ship is underwater most of the time which accounts for their strong T.A.S. bias.



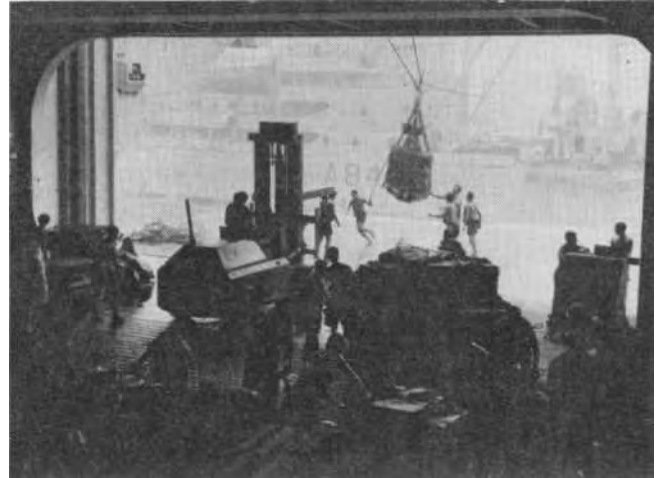
And here is the Quarterdeck Division, the Commander's favourites. We wonder where Barney was last night? And who dragged the Vicar out into the sunlight?

This third photograph is published not so much because the RPs are so attractive that you want to look at them twice, as because it poses such fascinating questions. For instance, what has Fred Ball just done to Big D? Is it starting to rain, or has Bruce McNess just seen an UFO? Is Blood Reid just shy, or has he seen something crawling down Parrott's neck?





*Jenny's Side Party  
 'Hands off the one behind the Captain's right shoulder;  
 she's mine. Yours is sitting on his left'*



*Solids*

Finally, two action shots of a few members of the Department engaged at their favourite activity - replenishment at sea (or RAS). The first shows that at least one load of provisions arrived safely on the forward rig, the second is the scene at 'Fuel 2' as an unusual U.S.N. rig is brought on board and the team wonder how they are going to deal with it. Needless to say they soon sorted it out!



*Offenders and Escorts.'*



*Liquids*



*The Marine Spike Department*





*Gunner's Party (motto: 'Have "Guns"- Will Travel')  
Note the steely-eyed look, the firm jaws, the squared shoulders: each one a 'Heart of Oak'*



*Ship's divers*

### THE COMMUNICATORS

'We joined the Navy to see the sea; we've seen the sea, now let's go home.' End of story.

So say some of the more cynical ones among us, but most of the Communicators have enjoyed two years of a very active Commission on board the Big 'H'.

Starting off from a wet (literally), bedraggled bunch of individuals in Guzz Dockyard in the winter of '65, we have gone through the trials and tribulations of testing and tuning (equipment and personnel), various exercises interspersed with visits to some of the fleshpots around Europe (not forgetting Hamburg where one of our number got himself involved with 007 Bond), and the Far East.

A very enjoyable three weeks was spent in Singapore during which time two of our number spent a week with the Army indulging in Jungle Warfare training, being joined by CRS Randall for a forenoon's hike through the jungle, he afterwards declaring 'I'm glad I didn't join the Army!'.

Off to sea again for more exercises followed by a visit to the Jewel of the East, Hong Kong. Due to the local troubles some of the more sophisticated places could not be visited, but on the whole everyone managed to enjoy themselves.

More exercises and a visit to the Philippines where a very energetic R.O.2 (who shall remain nameless by

popular request) managed to return on board by climbing up the headrope with a live duck stuffed in his shirt; the O.O.W. thought it was an American trying to stow away!

The visit to Fremantle provided the first contact with the Antipodes for most of us and was very much enjoyed. The fact that our next port of call was to be Portsmouth probably accounts for the fact that none of our pioneering spirits 'went up country' to join a sheep station or otherwise seek his fortune.

And so the long passage to the U.K., 27 days, which we are told is another 'first' for *Hermes*; longest passage non-stop by a surface ship since the war. This is where we, the Communicators (who are usually so modest as not to say anything at all), say thanks to Stokes for pushing us around all this time, to Slosky for filling us up with goodies, and to Scribes for paying us to enjoy this cruise too. We won't mention those who perform on the lawn, keeping us awake all night and day, except perhaps to say thanks for fetching the mail and the signals occasionally!

As a final news flash! We have rounded the Cape yet again but this time on an easterly heading. So far Mombasa has been our only port of call but there are rumours that an exciting visit awaits us early in the New Year. Perhaps it will be Portsmouth!

## *Bedtime Story for Engineers*

Once upon a time there was a big ship with a lop-sided funnel and a flat top, painted a dirty grey with big brown patches, and tied to a wall. She had very few people aboard and even fewer people who knew how the engines worked. One day the Owners decided that this ship must go to sea again (some said for evermore) so they hired the Men of Guzz to work on her.

Much later when the Men of Guzz had left, and later still when the ship looked clean again she started trials. First she tested her engines to make sure that they would go and then she tested her seamen to see if they knew which way she ought to go. Finally she tested her engineers to see if they knew why her engines, boilers, generators, catapults and arrester gear went at all. Often doubts remained, but

After the Reeperbahn and a term at Roedean she was so much in need of care and protection that the Owners committed her to the dock at Portsmouth. There the Men of Pompey gave the engines the overtime they were paid for, and changed one of the propellers to see if the new one would crack in the same place as the first. Finally she was given clean underwear and sent to try her luck once again in foreign ports.

At length she came again to Gibraltar and was initiated into the Rites of the Water Wash, the Bilge Clean and the Planned Maintenance. Whereupon her stokers became disenchanted with their designers (N.W.P. and G. and J.W. (the only brand)) and made obeisance to a new deity called Saint Herbert Lott. He was a very good saint who gave



*Devotees of St Herbert*

the Owners believed that all would come to pass as it was written in Books of Reference 3000 and 3001, and their faith was rewarded and she went out on to the waters of the world.

Her first voyage took her to Gibraltar, Hamburg and thence almost to Scotland where Chaos fell upon her from the Forth Bridge. All her lights went out, her pumps shook, her gauges quivered, her engines stopped and she was unable to move at all. All her aeroplanes deserted her for their nesting place at Lossie and gloom descended on the M.C.R.

But her resourceful engineers danced the dance of the water carnival and made burnt offerings to their designers (Newcomen, Watt, Parsons and G. and J. Weir (the only brand)) and a few hours later the ship was able to continue on her way.

them cans of beer with their fuel and cakes with their aeroplanes and so they took in much fuel and recovered many aeroplanes.

After Gibraltar her Owners decided that the ship should begin her Full Power Trial, and (without stopping, it seemed) she passed rapidly through Malta, Naples and the O.R.I. Here a Most Important Engineer came on board to inspect her machinery whereupon the air was suddenly no longer conditioned, many of her lights went out and Freon ascended from 6 Juliet A.C.U.

In Malta, the boilers were cleaned again, air conditioning units repaired, and steam was kept up all the time. A fortnight later she went again upon the waters to Athens, called in at Cyprus and then lowered her bowsprings and slipped through the Canal and on and on down the Red Sea to Aden. Here, in a windless wilderness of hot