

H.M.S. MOHAWK

FIRST COMMISSION

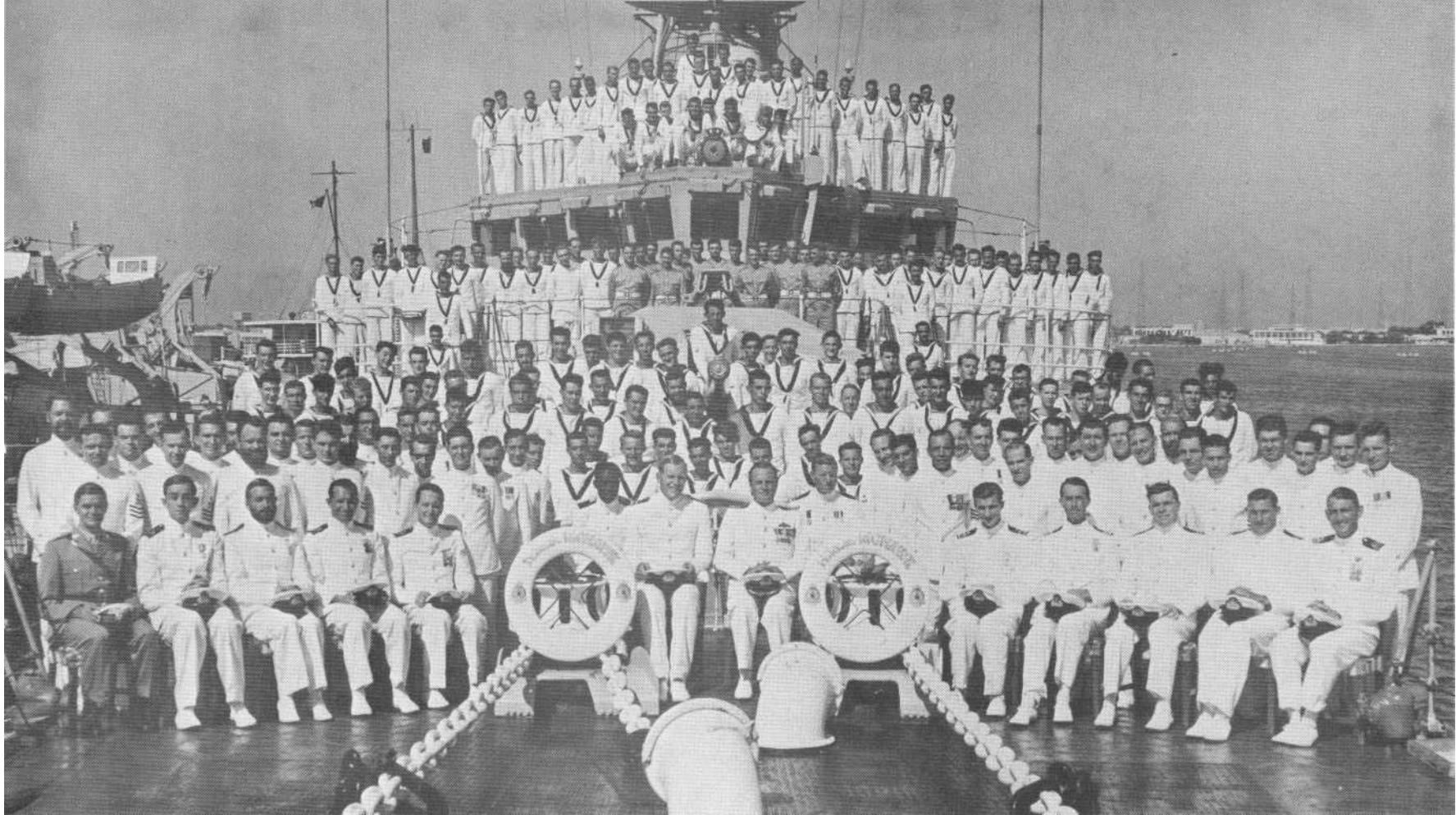
November 1964

to

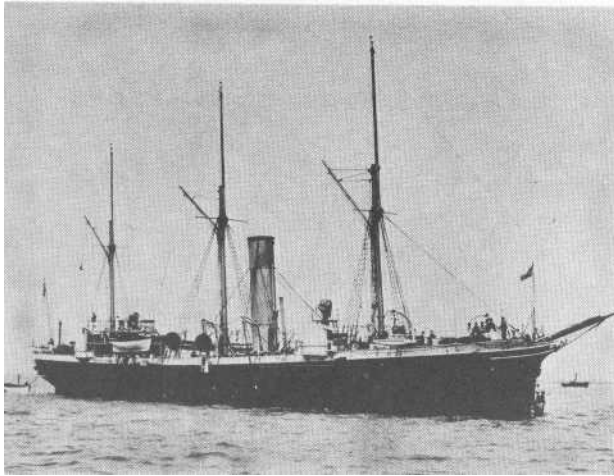
June 1965



The Ship . . .

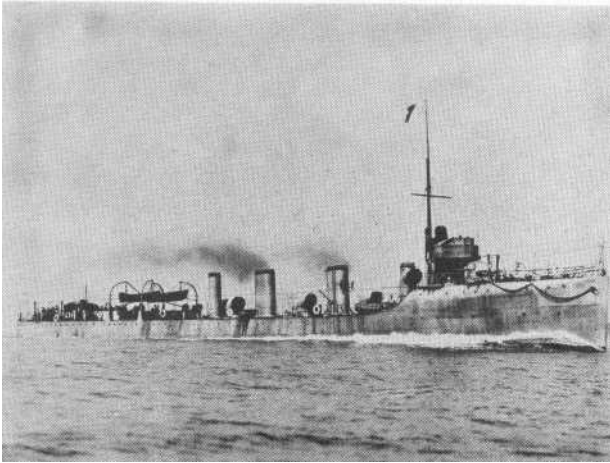


. . . and those who sailed in her



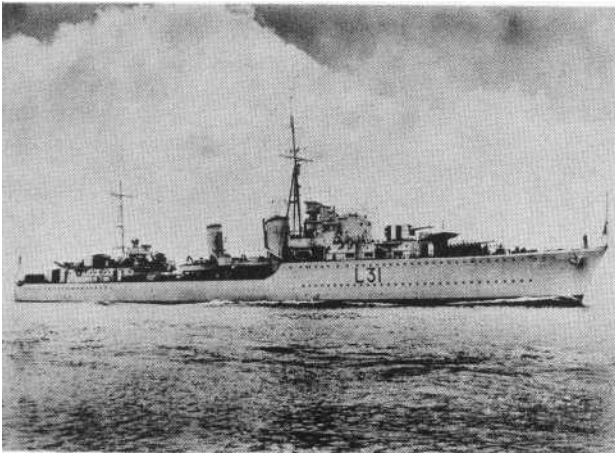
The Fifth MOHAWK- 1890-1905

Costing £87,538, she displaced 1,770 tons, carried six 6-in. guns, eight 3-pounders and three torpedo tubes, had a maximum speed of 16 knots and a complement of 172. She served on the South Atlantic, Australia, East Indies, Mediterranean and China Stations.



The Sixth MOHAWK- 1908-1919

Costing £14,000, she displaced 765 tons, carried five 12-pounders and two 18-in. torpedo tubes, had a maximum speed of 34 knots and a complement of 60. She was commanded by Commander E. R. G. R. Evans (Evans of the Broke) during the First World War. She was engaged on the Dover Patrol until suffering damage after striking one of the first German mines in 1915.



The Seventh MOHAWK- 1938-1941

This ship, one of the famous World War Two Tribals, won battle honours in operations off Norway and in the Mediterranean at Calabria, Sfax and Matapan. She was torpedoed in April, 1941, in an engagement with Italian destroyers off the coast of Tunisia.

FROM THE CAPTAIN



AS the Commission draws to a close, I look back on the past months and ask myself whether we have achieved the aim I set at the Commissioning Ceremony. You will remember this was to have a happy, efficient and well behaved Ship's Company.

In spite of the intense heat of the Summer months, the monotony of patrols, and the unsophisticated nature of the area, we have certainly achieved this aim.

In addition, as we were reminded by the Officiating Chaplain at our "first birthday" celebration-a most moving service-H.M.S. *MOHAWK* during her first year in Service has gained a "soul."

Both these achievements seem to me to be very important indeed, and it is each and every one of you who has contributed to make them so.

As you all now disperse to your new jobs I hope you will always look back and remember this first Commission with pleasure.

Good luck to you all and thank you.

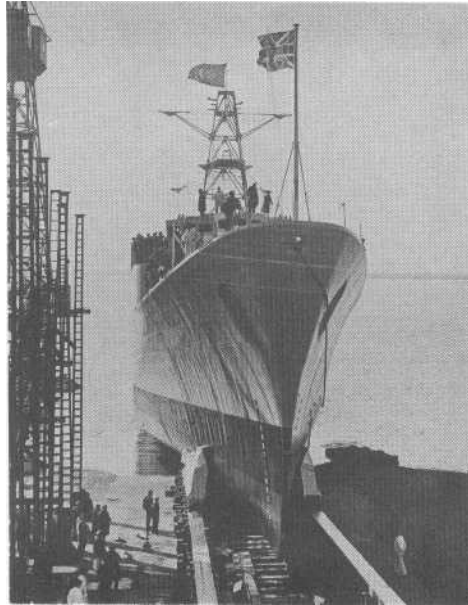
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "I G W Robertson". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

CAPTAIN I. G. W. ROBERTSON, D.S.C.,
ROYAL NAVY

How it all started ...

How to begin the story? Well, once upon a time someone decided to call a ship *MOHAWK*. Although there may well have been earlier ships of the name, the first *MOHAWK* to see R.N. Service was laid down in 1813. In fact the vessel's name was changed to *ONTARIO* before it was even launched, but we count her the first when reckoning ours to be the eighth. Whilst the sixth saw Service under Lord Mount Evans in the first two years of 1914-1918 War, the seventh distinguished herself during the first two years of the 1939-1945 War.

Then in the early 1950's Their Lordships decided, very wisely, to build another TRIBAL Class of General Purpose Frigates and up popped the name of *MOHAWK* yet again. The seven contracts were spread around the shipbuilding firms and Vickers, Barrow, got us. The ship was laid down in December, 1960, and was launched by Lady Villiers, wife of the First Sea Lord at the time, in April, 1962. The first Engineer Officer and a small team of Engine Room ratings joined prior to the launching and were the sole Ship's Company representatives until early in 1963 when the build-up began. It gathered momentum throughout the year, despite demarkation disputes in the Yard, until the last members of the Ship's Company joined a day before Commissioning on 29th November, 1963. The Royal Marines Detachment marched from Eastney to Barrow and arrived wet, but cheerful, having had a ball in almost every town and village en route.



Launching

The Commissioning Service was conducted by the Chaplain of the Fleet. We were honoured by the presence of the High Commissioner for Canada and were blessed with one of the very few fine November days for the open air ceremony.

For those who stood by the ship during building there will always be very happy memories of Barrow, the delightful Lake District and the many friendships made. The local ladies made several "captures" and the Ship's Company Dance on Commissioning night was a fitting climax to our associations with the Barrovians.



Commissioning

The Story of our Life ...



December 1963-February 1964

After a weekend of crisp, cold sunny days in which Vickers were able to complete the painting which, hitherto, had been fraught by Lakeland weather, those who "stood by" made their farewell visits to favourite pubs or packed up house, and the new comers made friendships, some of which have become more lasting than expected, *MOHAWK* sailed from Barrow for the last time under the "Red Duster" on Monday, 2nd December. Final trials were completed and the C.S.C.B.S. "formally accepted" the ship, on behalf of the Admiralty at 1645 on 2nd December, 18 miles East of Maugholt Head, Isle of Man.

After revisiting the Arran Measured Mile, enduring in St. Georges Channel one of the worst gales of the Commission, and a short preview of Portland, we arrived at Portsmouth and took up the place of honour at South Railway Jetty. We were deposed as the "newest" after one week by the arrival of *AJAX*, who was to be our constant companion till the end of the Work-up.

It was not long before the "tweakers and turners" descended upon us and for the next twelve weeks we were at their mercy.

Christmas and leave came and went, and this year, only the minimum number had to spend it onboard. The Captain narrowly missed spending it in R.N.H. Haslar, where he had to go for an operation. He was released just before the festivities but, sadly, having caught jaundice, had to return in January, leaving the ship once more to the mercies of the First Lieutenant who was appointed in temporary command during his absence until just before the Work-up. The period of day running that occupied late January and most of February was memorable for its wonderful Winter weather, a wet and windy night in an unsuccessful search for a crashed aircraft, and a plethora of day-running visitors.

The impending departure to Portland for the Work-up kept us busy, thinking of all the things we ought to have got done before we arrived there for our shakedown week. Much good groundwork was done in the weeks which preceded it and we at least had the great advantage of knowing our ship by the time we arrived at "Portlandia, Sheikdom of Fosti," in the last week of February.

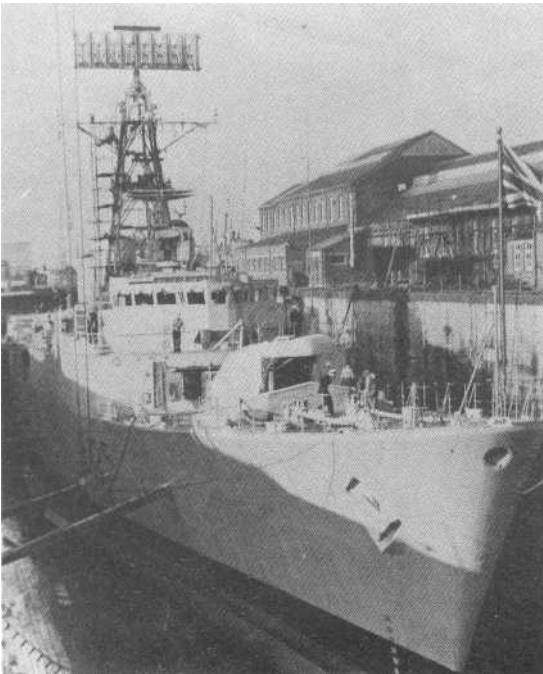
February-May 1964

The Captain rejoined and took over Command again in time for us to sail from Portland for a shakedown week on 24th February. There was a tremendous feeling of the ship, at last, being ours.

The Work-up proper started on 9th March, and thanks to the good behaviour of equipment, reasonable weather, and, dare I say it, the keenness of the Ship's Company, it proved to be less terrifying than we had all imagined. The time certainly flew by and the harbour week, a couple of weekend leaves, Westaxe, consort for Penelope's Inspection and a Little Hallmark-our own Inspection-all came and went. F.O.S.T. reported that we had been "a pleasure to work up."

Portland was also our first real meeting with our Wasp helicopter, and as the first Tribal to carry one we soon appreciated that the convenience of having it onboard for mail runs and the suchlike easily outweighed having "bird-men" in our midst!

After a brief stop at Portsmouth to de-ammunition we arrived in Chatham in April, in order to try to put right everything that would otherwise go wrong when



we arrived in the mysterious Gulf. It was a bit of an anti-climax to go into Dockyard hands, albeit-a "planned" Dockyard, after the activity of the Work-up, but everyone enjoyed some leave, and a surprising number decided to spend some of it at least in a place called Barrow-in-Furness!

The Dockyard, under the supervision, I am assured, of the occupants of a trailer labelled "Refit Office" eventually managed to get everything back together again, and we escaped from their clutches on 28th May.



The Chief Braves

June-July 1964

We sailed for the Gulf in a cold, miserable rain, and though few of us were glad to leave, some no doubt nourished the secret knowledge that at least the weather would be better in the Gulf. We flirted mildly with F.O.S.T. and his Staff on the way past Portland but then headed South to Gibraltar and our first taste of the sun. Only a short visit there, but even so the impatient purchasers were out buying their cameras and radios. Malta we visited for one night only. In spite of all the political changes we'd read about it still looked very much the same.

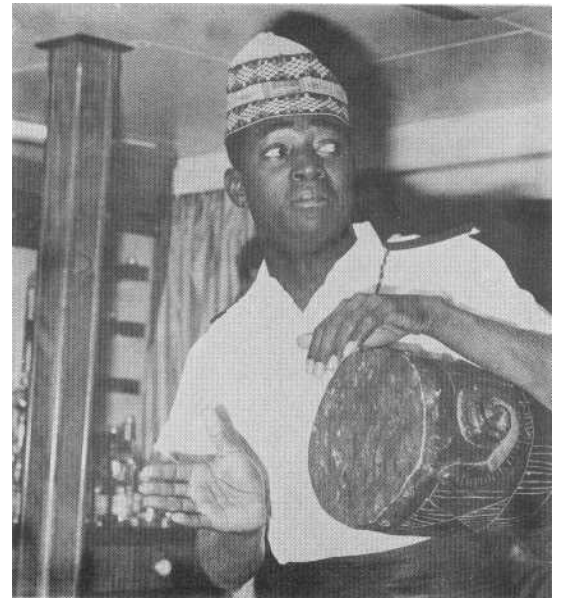
Port Said, memories of November, 1956, gully gully men, the Bitter Lakes, and the indignity of dropping from first place to last in the convoy due to a spot of bother with the engines! Finally Suez and then out into the Red Sea. By this time a lot of backs were peeling and a lot of noses were very red as the pallid white skins turned brown under the Middle Eastern sun.

Then we had our second casualty. We'd thought that P.O. Fitch's emergency flight by Wasp to Tunis to have his appendix out was a once in a lifetime occurrence, but here was P.O. Puffett doing the same thing! After a diagnosis by an East German ship's doctor he was flown to Port Sudan. Very primitive treatment we understood later.

Aden flashed past and before we knew it we were off Yas Island for FOMEX. Finally, on 25th June we reached Bahrain, only to leave almost immediately for exercises with *Aeneas* and *Loch Fada* in the Gulf of Oman. If anyone had any illusions as to the heat in *MOHA WK* they were soon dispelled at the sight of the appalling conditions in *Aeneas*.

It wasn't till 3rd July that we felt we could relax when we secured at Mina Sulman Jetty for the maintenance period. We spent nearly three weeks alongside, busy trying to make contacts ashore and finding how frustrating this could be. Sport figured prominently in most people's lives as indeed it must out there if one is to remain fit.

Just before leaving Bahrain for Aden we gave a very successful children's party. Then a few days, later the Beat Group got their photos in the "Navy News," playing to some more children we took to sea for the day off Aden, together with some of the Aden National Guard.



Midshipman "Jock" Rudolf

Specially drawn for the RNLI by Eric Fraser FSIA



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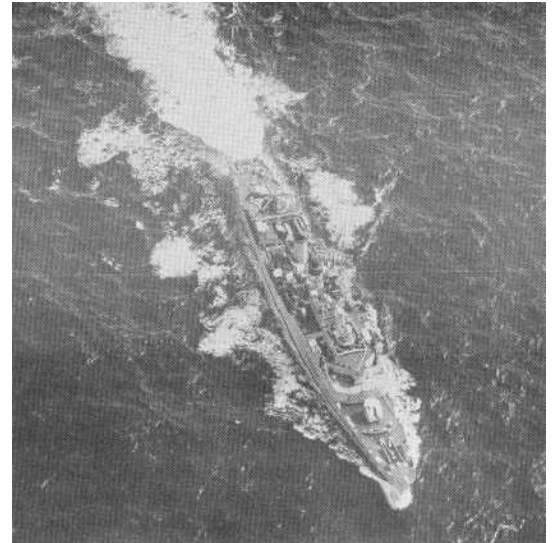
RNLI

August-September, 1964

MOHAWK was lucky enough to spend the complete month of August away from the Gulf. For those who missed the wind and the rain, Djibouti was slightly reminiscent of a thundery day in U.K. There the similarity ended; it was a lot warmer and even the more ardent drinkers of our little community found the local brew very intoxicating. The usual pleasantries of an operational visit were exchanged, including calls between the Captain and General de Brigade Vatinelle, The Commander in Chief. Having done our duty the ship returned to Aden to refuel and take part in the ceremony of change in Command of The Flag Officer, Middle East. The flag of Rear Admiral P. Howes was hoisted in *MOHAWK* on 11th August and when Rear Admiral Scotland had departed it was transferred to *Sheba*.

We were all keen to move on now because the next port of call was Mombasa. Some had seen and most had heard of, the lush green, the sea and a warm sun, golf and dusky girls. The latter were just waiting to give a short E.V.T. course on a subject not covered in the ship. Of those who managed to take Station Leave, some went inland to visit the parks, others went to Silversands Leave Centre and a few visited relatives. Wherever they went it was agreed that Mombasa was a tonic. Unfortunately times do not stand still when enjoying oneself, and on the 3rd September *MOHAWK* sailed for Aden.

Waiting at Aden was another Wasp from the Ministry of Aviation. The aircraft embarked in the ship to carry out a tropical trial and made a most impressive sight as it carried out a precautionary landing on a beach on the second day. The return of our own Wasp on sailing for Bahrain enabled it to be used in the photographic role. A trip was laid on to look and report on S.S. "Esso Norway" which *H.M.S. Anzio* had beached the previous month.

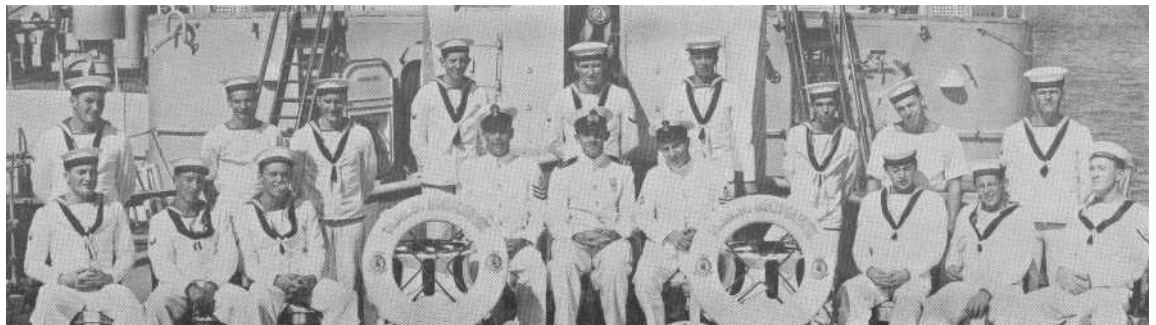


Bird's eye view

Towards the middle of September and still on passage to Bahrain we investigated five Dhows which gave an opportunity to study these fine vessels at close quarters. To prove that they are simple to sail, the O.C.R.M. and Detachment "took one away." Fortunately for us all they had a bath immediately they returned to the ship.

Once inside the Gulf the Captain got airborne and called on the Wali of Khasab; this was the first of several visits to this small and friendly village.

After a short stop at Sitra for some fuel, *MOHAWK* was soon off on another visit, this time to Mina al Ahmadi. The hospitality of the Kuwait Oil Company was outstanding and we waded through the programme of sport and entertainments fit for a Cruiser. Perhaps this prompted some wag to remark that *MOHAWK* was the smallest Cruiser in the R.N.



The Communications Department

October-December, 1964

October started with another exercise, in the familiar area of Yas Island. The Marines went ashore, we fired our guns (not at them!), and watched the A.W. Squadron loading and unloading their tanks, apparently endlessly. We also saw the last of *Gurkha*, who left us homeward-bound, with the slightly comforting thought that we were next to go, although some time in the future.

Back to Bahrain for our longest self-maintenance period, then off to Karachi for the annual CENTO exercise.

ship with the Submarine *Ambush*, to whom we offered the comforts of a modern ship in exchange for the thrills of a day at sea in a Submarine. Another friend at this time was the U.S.S. *Beatty* with whom we worked and played hard. Karachi itself was limited as a run ashore, with a can of beer costing the equivalent of 7/6d., and other amenities similarly priced. The Engineer Department and the Royal Marines disappeared inland in a doubtful looking bus for the day, returning apparently none the wiser but very much the happier! The intrepid Sergeant-Major took an unlikely gang of Chiefs and P.O.s to a mysterious camping site for three days-they too returned apparently none the worse for wear.

Exercise MIDLINK successfully completed, and back to Bahrain again.

Soon after we got back the Royal Marines disappeared to Muscat, returning a week later looking brown, fit, and happy.

Then we were off again to Aden for Christmas. In spite of all our efforts to make it as gay and enjoyable a Christmas as we could away from home, the unpleasant situation in Aden-indiscriminate throwing of bombs at innocent people-took the real fun out of the day. However, we had a traditionally hilarious time-J.R.O. Coleman acting superbly as Captain for the day,



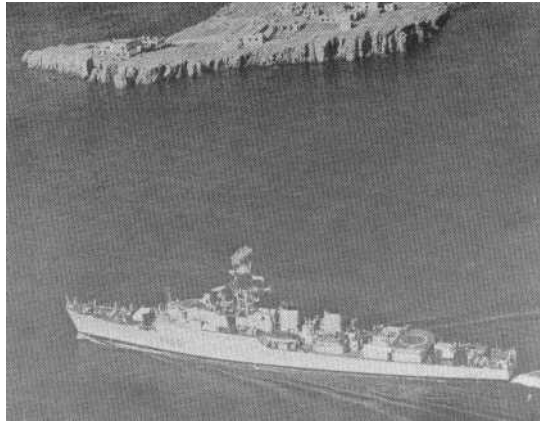
"Mohawk was here"

and the Royal Marines, resplendent in their Arab head-dress, taking over the duties of the galley staff only temporarily thank goodness.

During the Christmas period we were wonderfully well looked after by the newly arrived 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards-"SKINS" to one and all. They adopted us as their "liaison ship," and for the rest of the Commission continued to show us marvellous hospitality. Many firm friendships with them have been made, and may we take this opportunity of saluting you, SKINS, and wishing you well wherever you may be.



The Villagers of Khasab



Khor Kwai

January-May, 1965

With the New Year came the inevitable casting of thoughts towards home-only 4 months left! But such thoughts were soon pushed into the background as we arrived in Mombasa for our second visit on 2nd January. Our stay was, if anything, more enjoyable than the first one-old acquaintances were renewed and old haunts revisited. The weather was magnificent, and we relaxed for two glorious weeks. The Wasp went off to work with the Game Park Authorities again, a party of volunteers assisted in the rebuilding of the Cheshire Homes for old people at Kilindini, and people disappeared-

far and wide to visit Game Parks, golf courses, and old friends. Our Dentist, temporarily attached, climbed Mount Kilimanjaro with the minimum of fuss, and the Navigating Officer, the one remaining bachelor in the Wardroom, fell at last. What was that about the hot weather and its effect on a single man?

Back to Bahrain again in February, where we started working feverishly for our Sea Inspection and Harbour Inspection. The former took place immediately after Exercise MILLHOUSE, along the Oman coast, where from all reports our Detachment covered themselves with glory. F.O.M.E. seemed to be very pleased with our efforts at sea: for our part we thoroughly enjoyed being put to the test. We spent the next few weeks removing every speck of dust, dirt and rust for the Harbour Inspection. This too went well, and F.O.M.E. told us all that he was well pleased with the cleanest ship he had ever inspected.

March came, and off we went to our old favourite Yas Island for our last exercise in the Gulf. This was cut short very suddenly, and back we sailed to Bahrain, which had suddenly been hit by strikes, riots and general political disorder. Since then we have been taking our share of Security Duties, and all appears to be back to normal. In the middle of it all we escaped for three days to our favourite banyan spot-Khor Kwai, where we fished, swam and laid the foundations for our home-going suntans.

Now we have five days left before we sail home. We are taking F.O.M.E. on a short Gulf Cruise, then home we go, via Aden, the Suez Canal and Gibraltar. Portsmouth, here we come!



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