

H. M. S. PLYMOUTH

1964-1966



H.M.S. PLYMOUTH

THIRD SHIP OF THE NAME

THIRD COMMISSION

1964-1966

Captain Thomas Evelyn Fanshawe, D.S.C., ROYAL NAVY

FAR EAST - HOME - FAR EAST



Captain Thomas Evelyn Fanshawe, D.S.C., Royal Navy
Captain (D) 29th, Escort Squadron.

FOREWORD

By the Commander, Far East Fleet, Vice Admiral Sir Frank TWISS, KCB, DSC.

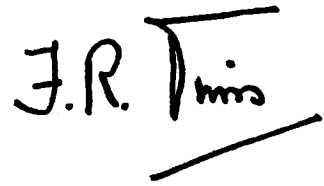
Since HMS PLYMOUTH, first commissioned in 1961 she has spent much of her time East of Suez; indeed she really qualifies as an 'old hand'.

During this last commission, her third, HMS PLYMOUTH has been part of a great Commonwealth Fleet which has dominated and kept free the seas around Malaysia and Indonesia.

She has played a full part in frustrating aggression (sometimes called confrontation), and to do this has spent long periods at sea with few opportunities for visits and relaxation.

I have been fortunate to have HMS PLYMOUTH under my command both in the Home Fleet and the Far East Fleet and I know that the spirit of the ship has matched that of the City whose name she bears.

As you complete yet another commission, with a job well and cheerfully done behind you, I wish you, one and all, good fortune and a bright and happy future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J.R. Twiss". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Vice Admiral

INTRODUCTION

By Captain T. E. FANSHAWE, DSC, Royal Navy

When I joined the PLYMOUTH, it was twenty one years since I first assumed command of a Frigate as a young Lieutenant. Since then I have had six commands. In this time I have seen many changes in the Royal Navy, but in one essential respect it has not changed - dependability and loyalty of the sailors who man the ships and uphold the highest traditions of our Service in the most resilient manner.

During almost two years, steaming over 100,000 miles, I have always been in the happy position of knowing that I could tackle any task I might be called upon to perform with full confidence that I would be well backed by the Ship's Company.

The City of PLYMOUTH is proud of the ship which bears the name so honoured and steeped in Naval History, and to me it has been a privilege as well as a pleasure to be her Captain.

Thank you for your support and Good Luck wherever you may go.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T.E. Fanshawe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Captain



H.M.S. Plymouth

The Story of the Commission

For most of us, the start was on 17th June 1964: and while the draft orders said PLYMOUTH, in fact we joined Devonport Barracks, for the ship was refitting. This, said the signs as people trooped on board every morning, is a Clean Refit: but it looked very much like any other! Looking back, it seems to have been a warm and dusty summer: or perhaps it was just the haul back to the barracks in the evenings that made the beer taste so good. But out of the chaos came order, and we moved into the ship on Wednesday, 26th August. We undertook trials, tested and tuned, and generally cleaned up and painted, had panics, went on weekends, and had a commissioning ceremony in the rain, when Captain T. E. FANSHAWE DSC Royal Navy, who had taken over the command earlier in the week from Captain D. G. KENT the ship's captain in her last commission, read the commissioning warrant on a forecastle crowded with the ship's company and their friends and relatives, a Royal Marines Band, the Bishop of Plymouth, and the Lord Mayor and representatives of the City of Plymouth. The City Council made this the occasion for the presentation of a splendid and greatly appreciated silver model of the statue of Sir Francis Drake which stands on Plymouth Hoe.

We still remained in and around the Dockyard: on 13th November, Commander in Chief Plymouth Admiral Sir Nigel Henderson KCB OBE walked round the ship, to be greeted by A. B. Ward with the remark "Laundry almost ready for your inspection, Sir!" this set the note for the rest of the inspection.

It eventually dawned on even the most ardent native that R. A. couldn't last for ever, and on 16th November 1964 we sailed for Portland for a winter workup. This was divided into two parts: the pre-Christmas leave part, when the weather was bad, and we were full of zeal: and the post Christmas period, when the weather was still bad, and we were full of Christmas pudding. The second period contained a week's maintenance, and Flag Officer Sea Training inspection, which we passed successfully, spurred on by the thought that if we didn't we would have to face it all again. During these winter months the ship had been much in demand as a film star: an official film called "The Clear Trumpet", all about management techniques, was made on board: from time to time the actors in it can be seen on our television screens, but although we asked if the premiere of



"The Clear Trumpet" could be held on board, it's not yet come our way. There was for a few days some talk of us featuring in a nautical drama starring Richard Widmark: we were to take the part of an American destroyer. Nobody is quite sure why this plan didn't come off, but it is possible that the extreme reluctance of some members of the ship's company to get crew cuts for the close up shots may have had something to do with it.

The Christmas leave period had been spent in a bitterly cold Portsmouth Dockyard: in February we returned to Devonport for a further short spell of leave before sailing for the Far East.

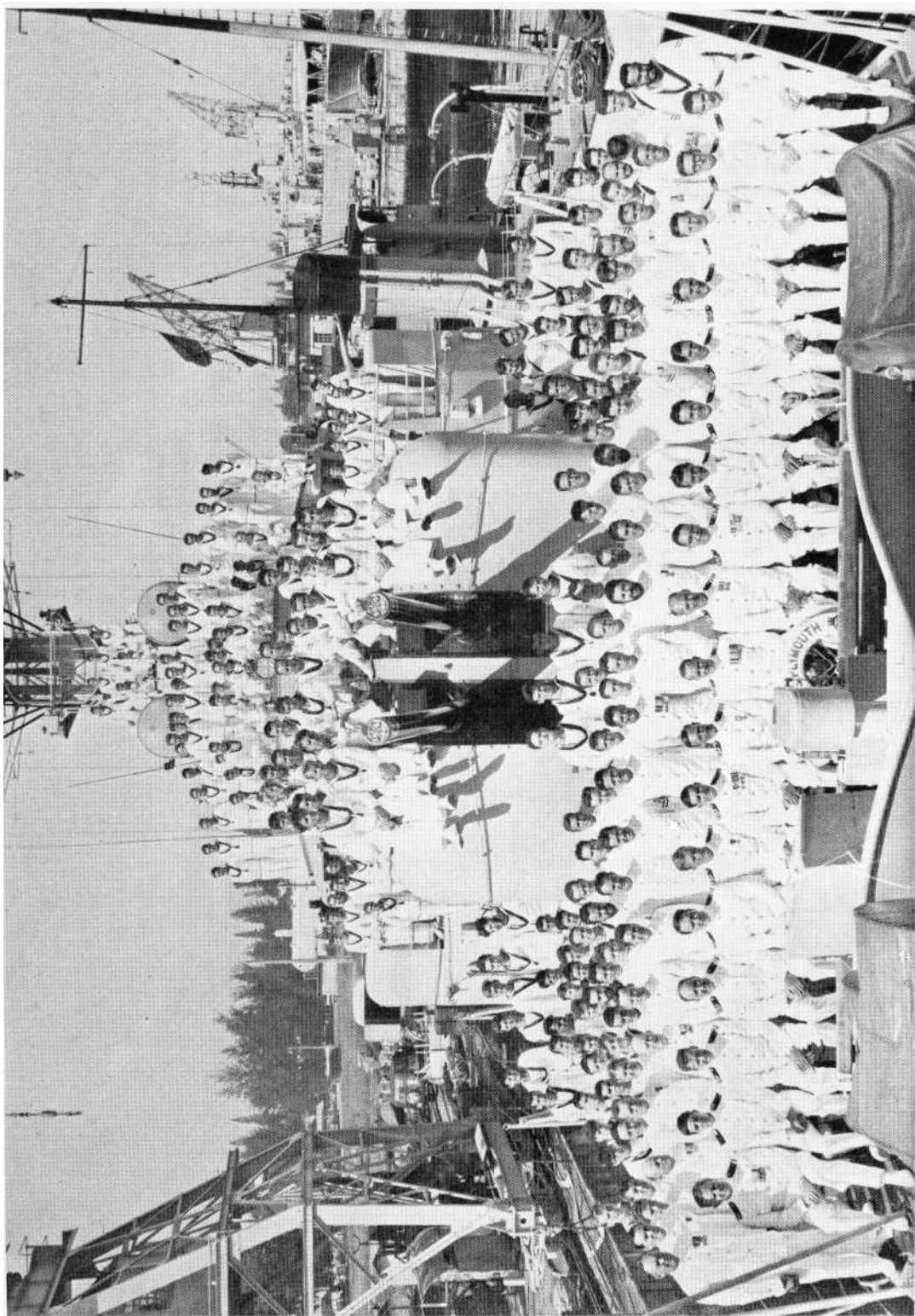
The First Foreign "Leg"

We slipped in the afternoon of 16th February, our departure being watched by a Dockyard cat. For many members of a young ship's company, this was a first time abroad. First stop, Gibraltar, where we went to the South Mole (where we have been on all our visits to that delightful port). The ship was floodlit, and a team of volunteers, sent to the Casino to report, said that she looked well. Although there were difficulties at the border, everybody seemed to enjoy themselves.

We paused in Malta for a day and a half, old Med, hands being heard to mutter that "things ain't what they used to be" at the sight of an empty Grand Harbour: but a lot of the old haunts still survive in spite of the departure of most of the Fleet.

Two days out from Malta, we met H.M.S. BERWICK and H.M.S. DIDO, on their way back from the Far East. We closed them, and were given turn-over notes. Members of the ships company near the spud locker exchanged potatoes with those similarly situated in H.M.S. BERWICK, but nobody was hurt in the barrage. So on, through the Canal, pausing at Port Said for the convoy to assemble, and watch a gully-gully show, in which bored looking young chickens were found in the most unlikely places.

It was widely advertised that we would go into tropical uniform on the day of leaving Suez, but the temperature was such that the sight of an immense array of white and knobbly knees was postponed for a couple of days. But in the Red Sea the sunbathing addicts first began to take their vocation seriously, and by the time we were through Aden many people were turning quite a respectable shade of brown. A pause at Gan,



Officers and Ship's Company May 1966

where the beaches are splendid, and the Royal Air Force helpful and friendly and we proceeded to Singapore, about which the poet was doubtless thinking when composing the celebrated "Tiger, tiger, burning bright, in the forest of the night . . ."

Singapore and Malaysian Patrols

We arrived at Singapore in March, 1965, and we left to return home in mid August: during that time we had two main cruises: one to Hong Kong, Manila, and Bangkok: and the other to Fremantle and Geraldton, Western Australia: most of the rest of the time was spent on patrol around the coast of Malaysia. Indonesians bent on "confrontation", were known to be coming across from Java and Sumatra trying to land in small groups, with the aim of committing sabotage and generally making nuisances of themselves in Malaysia, and it was the main preoccupation of the Far East Fleet to stop as much of this traffic as possible. Before we set sail to play our part in this, however, we went alongside the maintenance ship, H.M.S. TRIUMPH, as her first customer. We were very grateful for the way she not only looked after the material side of things, but provided air conditioned living quarters for us when ours became uncomfortable, as the work of the maintenance period progressed.

Patrolling started in some excitement, since H.M.S. AJAX had had a very successful engagement with some Indonesians only a couple of months before: we soon came to appreciate that the mixture was one per cent excitement, and 99% routine - and the excitement rarely seemed to come our way - rather to everyone's relief, as the First Lieutenant read nightly stories over the broadcast about "kumpits" - the Indonesian small boats-filled with high explosive. The kumpits we stopped and searched were found to be going about their lawful occasions, and the ship's side remained unscarred by midnight explosions.

During the later part of our time on patrol, we were honoured by a visit from the Minister of Defence for the Royal Navy CHRISTOPHER MAYHEW M.P. On a tour of the ship, he arrived in 7 Mess. "Give me", he said, "two good reasons which would make sailors sign on in the Navy." "Two tots a day", said a voice from the back.

Hong Kong, Manila, Bangkok

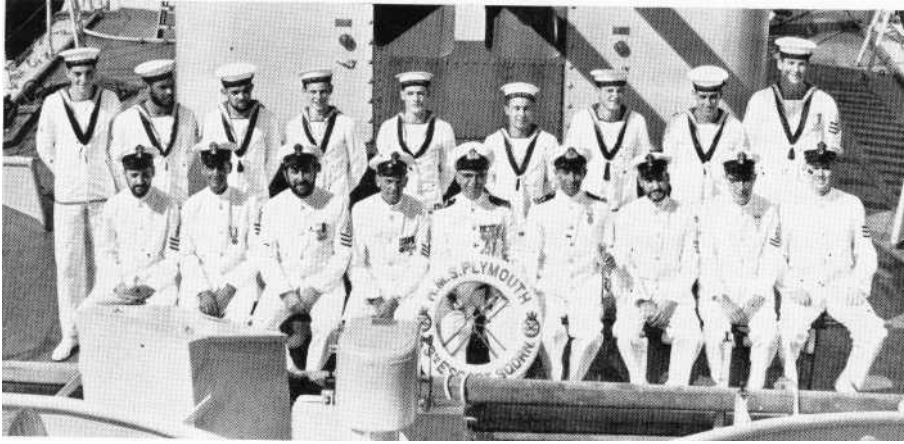
On 26th April, we sailed in company with H.M.S. WHITBY for Hong Kong, taking in food from the FORT CHARLOTTE and fuel from the WAVE SOVEREIGN on the way: very much the standard way of getting food and fuel on the Far

East Station, but "Never on Sunday" doesn't apply! Hong Kong was bathed in late spring sunshine: the harbour as beautiful and crowded as ever, and the towns on both sides of the water apparently bursting with people and prosperity. For most people, shopping and just taking life as it came played havoc with the budget. Some people went on very worthwhile "Exiled" excursions to POK LIU CHAU a large and sparsely inhabited island close to Hong Kong: but even this attempt to get away from it all for a couple of days didn't seem to save them from the universal spending spree. But enough is enough, especially when you're out of funds: and so we left for MANILA BAY - a brief pause, a considerable distance from the town - and then, together with other British warships and ships of the United States, Royal Australian, and Royal Thai Navies, we sailed for exercise SEAHORSE and subsequently, Bangkok, which we reached after some days of the intricate chess moves of a big international naval exercise. We were leading a Commonwealth visit to this interesting city for Commonwealth Day. Over 1,000 local inhabitants visited the ships.

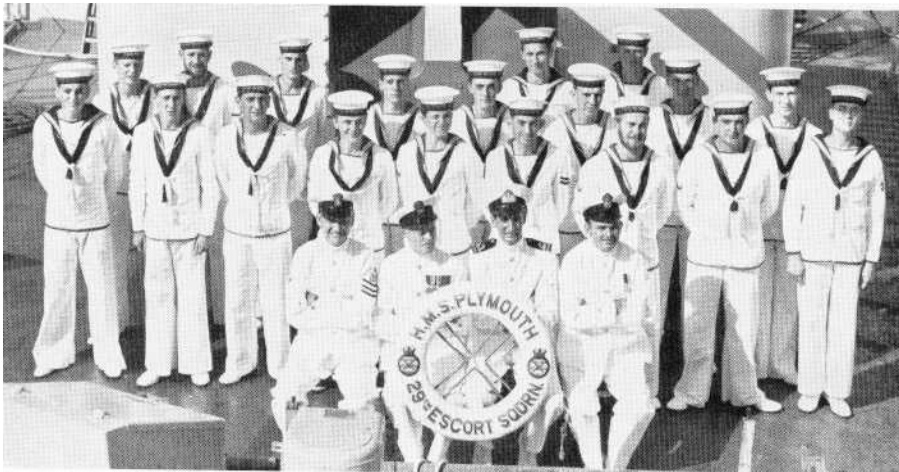
The Thai authorities had kindly arranged the berthing of the visiting warships at the main commercial berths at Klong Toey: the city centre was within fairly easy cab distance. A massive series of bus trips was organised, including visits to the River Kwai bridge and the Commonwealth war cemeteries. An abiding memory of the visit is of the charm and courtesy of the Thai people, who were most pleasant and generous hosts.

Fremantle and Geraldton

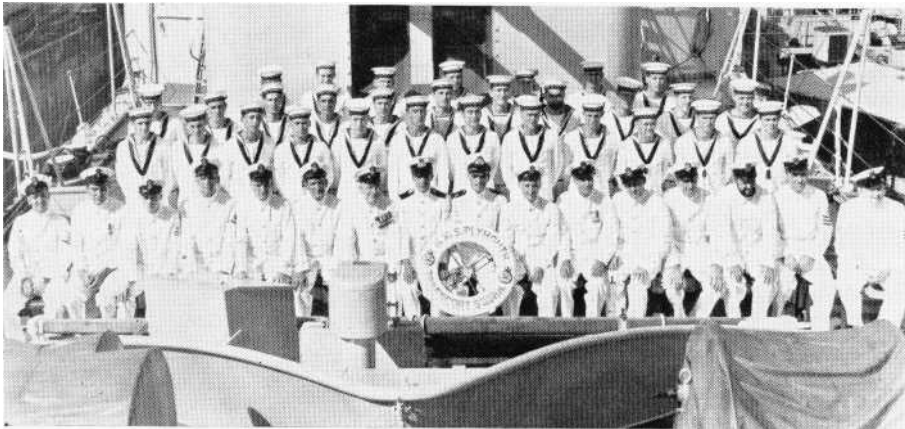
Returning to Singapore, and the pattern of patrols and maintenance, we were surprised and delighted to find that the programme, had changed, as programmes will from time to time. We lost a prospective visit to Hong Kong, but gained in its place a visit to Fremantle and Geraldton, in Western Australia. This trip, it is safe to say, was the highlight of the first foreign leg, and possibly of the commission. After a rapid replacement of the Main Feed Pump, we proceeded to sea, to find it a little bumpier than the stuff we'd grown accustomed to in the relatively sheltered waters around the Malaysian coast. Some were seasick, and many others became grumpy, refused their food, and spent more time on the upper deck than usual. But the seas went down a little - and of course we soon got used to them: the weather grew cooler, and crumpled blue suits were brought out and pressed up, and on the evening of 13th July we saw the lights of Fremantle. Little did we know at the time that the local press and radio were



Supply and Secretariat



Communications



Marine Engineering

advertising "WANTED -1,000 WOMEN - to dance with British Sailors" - for there was to be a dance for the ships' companies of H.M.S. BULWARK, H.M.S. ZEST, and H.M.S. PLYMOUTH. In the event, 1,200 girls turned up. The dance was a tremendous success, as was the whole visit - apart from the experience of one sailor, who bought a boomerang, and was delighted to find that when he threw it, ashore, it came back. "Look" he said when he got back to the ship, throwing the boomerang gaily over the middle of Fremantle harbour "it comes back!" It didn't. After three splendid days, we sailed for Geraldton some 300 miles up the coast. We were welcomed by a very large crowd, by the Caledonian Pipe Band, the Sea Cadets (six of whom we had brought from Fremantle), and an immense sign saying "WELCOME TO GERALDTON." The whole keynote of this memorable visit was the friendliness shown to the ships company by the citizens: their interest in the ship - over 3,000 of them visited the ship when we were open to visitors, and many more at other times - and last and very far from least, the immense scale of hospitality, by all sections of the community. There can hardly have been a member of the ship's company who did not receive private hospitality of one sort or another. A minor but noteworthy sporting event there was the first and probably the last appearance of the ship's Australian Rules football team who won - or dare it be suggested were allowed to win - their match: this result was not achieved by any close regard to the finer points of the rules by the ship's team!

The Governor of Western Australia, Major General Sir Douglas KENDROW came on board, after which he expressed his gratitude for the visit which had been a great success.

Home, Sweet Home.

Singapore, and the last minute rush to buy the things that we had meant to get during the past few months, but somehow hadn't. And then the 12th August was upon us, and to the strain of the "Oggie Song" played by the Commander Far East Fleet's Band - and recorded by us for future use, we sailed for home in company with H.M.S. CHICHESTER. We were delighted and honoured to have the Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Sir Frank TWISS KCB DSC and Lady TWISS to see us off. We trod the same path as the outward journey - Gan, Aden, Suez, Malta, Gibraltar. In the Red Sea we had been joined by H.M.S. CAMBRIAN, and we met the half leader of the Squadron, H.M.S. BLACKPOOL, heading East. In Gibraltar, we saw another ship of the Squadron, H.M.S. LONDONDERRY, also East-

ward bound. Wishing them well, we hurried on to Devonport, to be welcomed, on the late afternoon of 9th September, by the *Officers* of the Customs and Excise Department, to whom we offered our lists. This hurdle over, we awaited the next day when, with wives and families embarked, we sailed up the harbour and secured alongside in the South Yard, where buses were waiting to take people to the station. Leave, docking, and maintenance occupied us until the middle of October, when we sailed for Portland and trial GLOSSOP. This trial had the great merit of being both different from the usual run of things, and extremely interesting in itself. A good thing, perhaps, to look back on!

A weekend at Portsmouth, back to Portland for a rather more orthodox weapon training period, and then Portsmouth again: but at the end of October we sailed, in company with other ships of the Home Fleet, for the Home Fleet Assembly at Gibraltar. Seventeen ships were at Gibraltar, a considerable number by present day standards, although the aged amongst us tend to mutter about the Combined Fleet Meetings just prior to, and after the last war - "Carriers at the Detached Mole, cruisers in pairs up by the Penns", etc. The weather was good, there was a heavy sporting and examination programme, visits to the ship by the Commander in Chief, Home Fleet Admiral Sir JOHN FREWEN KCB and F02 HF Vice Admiral J.O.C. HAYES CB OBE.

Londonderry and Rotterdam

Leaving Gibraltar, we steamed North, in ever worsening weather, to Londonderry, off which we exercised in company with H.M.S. CHICHESTER and CAMBRIAN, and the Norwegian Destroyers STAVANGER and BERGEN. During the two weeks or so that we were in the area, weather conditions slowly improved, but we never reached the level of the Malacca Straits! Ashore, a team of Wrens from H.M.S. SEA EAGLE very sportingly took us on at hockey, but after the half time interval the teams were re-sorted into composite teams: no match result can be reported! Once again those who claim to know were able to confirm their views that draught stout is, of course, immensely superior to the bottled kind.

On the termination of the exercises, we went quickly down to Portsmouth for a brush and clean up before the Squadron, now joined by H.M.S. RELENTLESS, recently returned from the West Indies, proceeded to Rotterdam, in company with H.M. Submarines FINWHALE and THERMOPYLAE.

Rotterdam in late autumn was a rain swept city - in many ways very British in its general atmosphere: we were very well looked after by the



Gunnery



R.P.'s



T. A. S.

Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, which was just working up to the celebration of its tercentenary and by the Burgomaster and City Council. We were there at the time of the St. Nicholas festival, the time when the Dutch buy presents, Christmas being taken as a religious festival only. We thus had the benefit of a double Christmas spending spree - for St. Nicholas at Rotterdam, and our own Christmas on our return to Devonport. There was some talk of a delayed sailing from Rotterdam as a ship was said to be blocking the entrance to the river: but this trouble was cleared, and we joined the vast throng of vessels of all shapes and sizes which headed down stream, past the miles of docks and the Europort complex, to the open sea. Then back to Devonport, to the familiar South Yard, for Christmas leave.

Before we went our various ways, the Lord Mayor and City Council kindly gave us a splendid reception in the elegant new Council Office block - another of those kind gestures which have made our links with the City of Plymouth so strong and so pleasant: during this period a lusty blow was struck for the rights of the sailor in uniform, which resulted in fame in the National press and on radio and television.

We all scrambled back from leave, and before we had time to get our breaths back we were at sea, in company with our old friends of the Squadron, H.M.S. CAMBRIAN and CHICHESTER, following the well worn groove in the ocean that runs from the United Kingdom to Singapore. We stopped again at Gibraltar and Malta; paused for a few hours only at Aden, fuelled and swam at Gan, and met TIDEREACH north of Sumatra for the first RAS of the season. We entered Singapore on an overcast Sunday evening, to be met by a large number of COMFEF's staff officers. We felt that we'd never been away!

Our stay in Singapore was slightly prolonged: on the passage out there had been a switchboard fire, but Singapore Dockyard made good the damage, and we sailed to take part in exercise MILLSTREAM in mid February.

This was a national exercise in the Singapore - Borneo area, and on its conclusion we returned to Singapore for some hectic days of sport in MILLSPORT. "Friar" Tuck became the Far East Fleet bolus champion at this time, and is now probably the only Able Seaman to fly his flag at sea - a white Friar, with bolus, on a blue background.

Beira patrol

An East African cruise was advertised for the month of March: events in that part of the world brought things to a head slightly earlier than we

had anticipated, and we sailed for the Beira area on 28th February, refueling at Gan, and from the R.F.A. PEARLEAF. We had eaten our way through all our fresh provision, and it was with mixed feelings that we watched the next lot, from the PEARLEAF, getting the occasional dunking during a somewhat boisterous transfer. Presalted chips for supper!

Our job, and that of the other frigates who shared the duty, was to watch shipping coming into, and leaving, Beira, which was the terminus of the oil pipe line to Rhodesia. A list of ships which might be carrying oil to Mr. Smith was held, and we settled down to a regular routine of inspecting Beira anchorage, and steaming up and down a 15 mile line. EAGLE'S aircraft conducted the long range search, later joined by an R.A.F. Shackleton aircraft. One encounter with a "listed" tanker was a sort of dry run for the later encounter with JOANNA V.

JOANNA V

The story started with an instruction to proceed to the South, and keep an eye on her. When we met her, she claimed that she was awaiting instructions, and was steaming slowly up and down, barely making steerage way. Eventually, she either made up her mind, or had it made up for her, and proceeded north, towards Beira. We shadowed her, and exchanged signals: she declared her intention of proceeding to Djibouti - a curious destination, and it was far from clear why she should have circumnavigated Africa to get there, or what she intended to do when she got there, since oil unloading facilities at the port were known to be severely limited. It became clear that this was all camouflage, and that she was in reality, heading for Beira, and at this stage the Captain went on board her to talk to the Master, or rather to someone calling himself the Master.

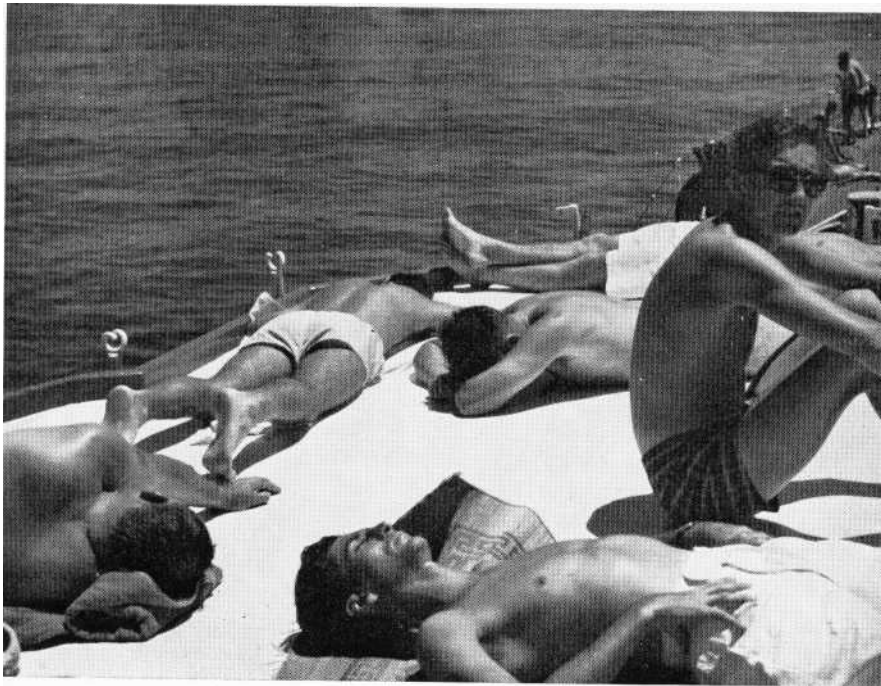
JOANNA V was adamant that she was going into Beira, and we had no authority to stop her: so in she went, and at the time of writing she is in there still, still with her oil on board, as a result of the diplomatic storm resulting in her arrival.

Shortly after this episode we sailed for Mombasa, where we arrived on Easter Saturday, having spent 41 days at sea continuously (not counting the fuel stop at Gan) - perhaps a peace time record for a small ship. We had inadvertently managed to get our names into the home newspapers, and had a "Well done" from the Prime Minister.

Mombasa was a quiet but pleasant run, with many people taking the opportunity to go up country and have a look at wild animals (we all



W. E.



The Officers

know that rhino's a vegetarian, but does he know he's a vegetarian?). Everyone got back safely, very enthusiastic about the pleasures of a safari. The principle "rabbits" were all manner of wood carvings, and the quarterdeck was covered with tiny pairs of wooden giraffes, wooden bowls, boxes, and salad servers. With no disrespect to the Chief G.I., who coped admirably while we were on patrol, quite a few found it a relief to get a decent hair cut ashore! There was a considerable amount of private entertainment which we very much appreciated: and Mombasa is a fascinating town in its own right - especially the old town, with its mixture of Arab and Portugese architecture. A very good run ashore.

And so we sailed back to Singapore, toying briefly with the idea of turning right on leaving Mombasa, and nipping down to Beira and see how JOANNA V was getting on. In the event we sailed east to Gan, and from thence to Singapore Dockyard, and probably the biggest spending spree of 1966 - all the main presents to take home seem to have been bought during the three and a half weeks of the ship's assisted maintainance period. They will have to be well hidden until after the Admiral's Inspection, due during the second week in June. How does one stow a rocking horse and a small tricycle in a kit locker?

Inspection, Hong Kong, and the trip home

This book has to be written before the end of the commission, and at the moment we are looking forward to our Inspection: to a final week in Hong Kong towards the end of June: then a quick dash down to Singapore, from whence we sail for home on 30th June, with a slight variant in what is by now a familiar track - two days visiting a port in the Mediterranean, probably Corfu, although this still has to be confirmed at the time of writing. The great date is the 28th July, when we reach Devonport and, after Customs clearance, sail up the Hamoaze with families embarked, then the ship will die for a very long weekend. The following week there will be a great unloading of stores and ammunition by day time, and a farewell party, and perhaps a dance, on a couple of evenings. It is a pity that we cannot undertake our modernisation in Devonport Dockyard, where the ship was built, and from whence she has always sailed and to which she has always returned. However, Chatham is to reconstruct us: we sail there in early August: the ship's company will steadily diminish until, by the end of the month everybody will have left, and the ship will be in Dockyard control.

"I remember you - we were in PLYMOUTH in '64-'66. She wasn't a bad old ship, was she? Do you remember when... "

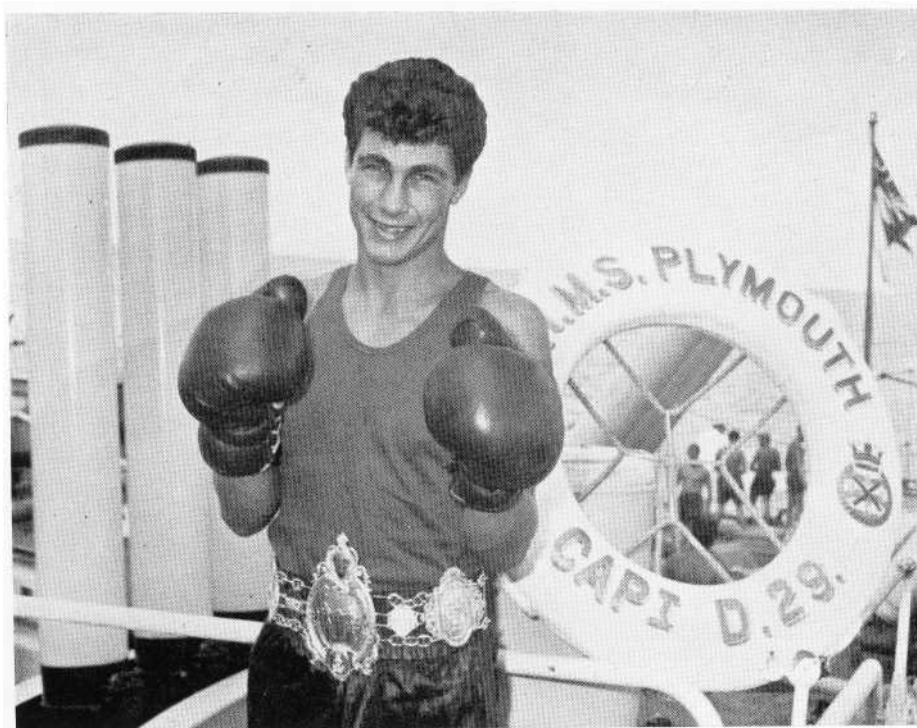


A.B. TEMPLE and friends



L/S Rooke, O.S. Jaconelli A.B. Hay
A.B. Walsh L/S Morris

The Champ



A.B. Mole

Divisional Remarks

S&S

The Division consists of two Officers and 27 Ratings, making ours the smallest on board. The Supply Officer (who is also Divisional Officer) is Lieutenant Commander J. N. HOUSE.

Life onboard has been far from dull for the Division, as the working day, which stretches far into the evening in many cases, keeps us busy and on our toes. The 'Scribes' in particular, whom we all befriend each Wednesday before Pay Day, work tremendously long hours but still come out smiling, probably following the example of their leader, the Secretary (Lieutenant G. D. LEARY), whose smile never fades.

Since the start of the Commission (June, 1964), we have visited 11 countries, much to the disgust of the Stewards. For them it means CTP's to be held, which in turn keeps them busy.

We have had our fair share of advancements in the Division. Leading Steward 'Bill' WYATT to Petty Officer, Leading Writer 'Bill' GEAR to Petty Officer, Leading Cook (O) 'Willy' WILLIS to Petty Officer, Cook (O) HOOPER to Leading Cook, and Leading Cook (S) 'Jock' DONALDSON assuming the duties of A/PO CK (S) Local for a short spell. An award from the Herbert Lott Naval Trust Fund was awarded to SA 'Rasputin' GUEST in recognition for services as an LSA during the ship's passage to the Far East in 1965. (The LSA was granted Compassionate Leave, and joined the ship in Singapore).

Sport has always played an important part in the Division, and we can boast some very worthwhile players. Although often finding difficulty in

raising a football team, we managed to win 6 of our 10 games. Ck (S) 'Tony' VELLA played frequently for the ship. Our rugby skill has never been called upon as a Division, but five of the Division play regularly for the ship - PO Writer 'Dave' BARKER, L. Std. 'Jock' STEPHENS, Writer 'Jan' COOMBES, SA 'Tiger' WILLS and THE Tanky AB 'Friar' TUCK. 'Dave' BARKER, 'Tiger' WILLS and 'Friar' TUCK also represented the Squadron.

The Division has never lacked a sense of adventure, as was shown on our Banyan at Paula Tioman. After several attempts by SA 'Spike' HUGHES to start a fire (he obviously wasn't a Scout), we at last succeeded in raising enough heat to cook our steak and onions, cooked by 'Willy' WILLIS.

During the Commission the Division has had to keep the ship supplied with necessities. Here are a few facts and figures to illustrate the point. By the time we arrive home we expect to have used 11,000 miles (nautical of course) of toilet rolls (enough "bumph" to stretch from UK to Tokyo), 82,832 tots (enough 'food of the God's to keep even our Tanky happy) and 379,861 Lbs of fresh (????) potatoes (enough to make a plentiful supply of Oggies).

We are all busily preparing for our Inspection in June, and as the Commission draws to a close it is unlikely that any of us will forget our time onboard, particularly the comradeship of the Division which has been an asset to us all which one hopes will be met throughout the Service as a member of the S & S.

A word from the communications department

Although an unglamorous job, communications is one of the most important jobs on a ship. What I mean is that when someone shouts through a voice pipe to the Bridge Wireless Office and is greeted with the reply - "Nerve centre, brain of the watch speaking!" - He's not always joking. If there's a telegram to be sent to a loved one, give it to the B.W.O., the G.P.O. has nothing on them. The other side of the communications

branch is the Tactical side, or Bunting or Flag-waggers. It depends on what mood one is.

You will always find a 'Bunting' everywhere, on the bridge, on landing parties or anywhere else where there is tactical communications to be carried out. The 'Buntings' came into their own on the night of the JOANNA V. Never had anyone seen so much depending on one signal - one signal that could make or break the Smith Regime.



Quo vadis ?

The mailman cometh



P.O.M.E. Miller

L/Sea. Proffitt

Under the ever faithful guidance of the Chief Yeoman the Buntings have done a very good job or to quote a well known phrase "a job well done."

There is, believe it or not, yet another wing of the branch. It is called Electronic Warfare. I cannot really say much about these people because they are never to be seen. Maybe I could put this in a better light. So long are they in their hammocks after a while you do not even notice that they are there. They seem to become permanent fixtures. This is joking of course.

Ashore there is nothing like a communicator. I do hope that fifteen mess will accept our most sincere apologies for any disturbances caused whilst in harbour between the hours of 2000 and 0700. It's your own fault for living next door.

The department was always represented in Volley-Ball, Football, Rugby and Beer drinking. We usually won the latter. (Worried parents and wives take note).

While writing this in Singapore, I think of the places I have been, seen and enjoyed while serving on Plymouth. Rotterdam, Gibraltar, Londonderry, Malta, Aden and in fact a whole host of places over the Far East.

Of all the original communicators who commissioned with the ship around March 1964 only about half remain.

The ships longest bout of steaming was 40 days and 41 nights at sea covering a distance of 13,000 miles, with the whole department closed up in 3 watches. In fact, if my memory serves me right, even the Electronic Warfare people were watchkeeping. That suddenly came to mind because I remembered all their mumbling and 'dripping' about it. But still, we mustn't be too hard on them for they did a good job.

Other small (profitless) sidelines of the department were the ship's newspaper (sparkers and buntings), football results (sparkers), and defaulter forms (this was done by whoever the Cox'n was agile enough to catch to do it).

Another subject for conversation is the mess funds. With these we acquired the mess eyesore - a rented television set. It works, which, I suppose, is half the trouble. Whilst in Guz (Plymouth for illiterate civilians), the whole ship (it seemed) used to crowd into the mess to watch films like Double Your Money, Supercar, Watch with Mother and any other programme that suits a matelots mentality. Out here in the Far East it sits in the mess covered with a blanket and is in fact, as I've already said, an eyesore. The only thing mess funds has really helped with was the time of the 'Great Cup Shortage'. The leading hand of the mess went ashore to buy some cups and now we've almost run out of stowage space for them.

The next and I'm afraid the last topic is the "Sacred" hour of "Tot-Time." This is always presided over by any two of four people. I will not mention any names in case of legal action. 'Queens' (what is left in a rum fanny after the rum has been issued) was a permanent subject for animosity, i.e. "I didn't have a wet of Queens!"

"Yes and I bet I know who saw it off as well" And then from behind a bunk a Northern voice would say

"Well it wasn't me!"

On a more serious note, I think it will be a hard moment at the end of the commission when oppo's say "seeya" and depart to their respective drafts, and saying goodbye to a ship where all in all, there was "a job well done."

The Marine Engineering Department

The Engineering Division of H.M.S. Plymouth started off the commission in fine fettle, with delusions of many happy hours of quiet steaming - this was not to be so. Very soon after we first raised steam, on coming out of refit, we were all amazed at the startling amount of defects, simple and complicated, which had to be rectified before commencing the work-up. The "work-up" was unavoidably delayed, much to the delight of the ships' company and to the frustration of the Engineer Officer.

However, we finally started the "work-up". That over, we had a short stay in Plymouth before sailing for the first foreign leg of our commission.

We had a pretty steady voyage out with only slight variations in speed due to some infernal contraption the Seamen's Department was trying out; something beyond the comprehension of a simple stoker.

We reached Singapore with not a murmur of protest from our faithful engines "ANDY" and "FLORRY", and proceeded on several patrols.

The highlight of the first foreign leg was, I think, our trip down to Aussie. But, the night before we sailed our main feed pump failed us; this time the ship's company was not so delighted, and the Engineer Officer even more frustrated.