



1958-1959

H.M.S. VICTORIOUS



H.M.S. VICTORIOUS

BATTLE HONOURS

'Rivoli'	1812
Norway	1941—44
'Bismarck'	1941 May 23rd—27th
Arctic	1941—42
Biscay	1942
North Africa	1942
Malta Convoys	1942
Sabang	1944 July 25th
Palembang	1945 January 24th
Okinawa	1945 March 26th—May 25th
Japan	1945



This book contains a history of what Victorious achieved during her first commission after modernisation. It describes the passage of events after Portsmouth Dockyard had finished their splendid work, but it cannot attempt to give a chronicle of the individual effort, the endless hard work, which it was necessary for each man to contribute to the whole. As Captain I took a huge pride in commanding so splendid and so successful a vessel, but my pride was not in being in the limelight but in the knowledge that everyone on board was pulling his weight to make a really efficient ship. I warmly thank every officer & man & I send my best wishes to their wives and families.

The reward for me, and for us all, was not that we had a good deal of fun, but that we did something really worth doing.

Charles Cox



Captains' Letter

Captain H.R.B. Janvrin, D.S.C.

To those of us who, like myself, have recently joined as the forerunners of the second commission this story will serve to set the standard for the future

May our second commission be as happy and successful as the first has been.

Richard Janvrin

CONTENTS

1	<i>THE VICTORIOUS STORY</i>
14	803 <i>SQUADRON</i>
19	839 <i>SQUADRON</i>
21	849 <i>SQUADRON</i>
23	984 <i>SQUADRON</i>
25	<i>THE FORECASTLE DIVISION</i>
27	<i>T.A.S.</i>
30	<i>THE TOP DIVISION</i>
33	<i>THE GUNNERY DEPT.</i>
35	<i>AX REPORT</i>
38	<i>THE SUPPLY AND SECRETARIAT</i>
43	<i>THE ENGINE ROOM DEPT.</i>
47	<i>THE EDUCATION DEPT.</i>
49	<i>THE METEOROLOGICAL DEPT.</i>
50	<i>THE COMMUNICATION DEPT.</i>
52	<i>THE DENTAL DEPT. NOTES</i>
53	<i>THE ELECTRICAL DEPT.</i>
55	<i>THE SHIPWRIGHTS DEPT.</i>
57	<i>THE ROYAL MARINES</i>
59	<i>THE NAVIGATION DEPT.</i>
61	<i>THE AIR ELECTRICAL DEPT.</i>
65	<i>THE ENGINEERING DEPT.</i>
67	<i>THE SICK BAY</i>
69	<i>SPORTS REPORT</i>
79	<i>EXPED.</i>
81	<i>POSTSCRIPTS</i>



Sea Trials

THE VICTORIOUS STORY

1785-1959

THE PRESENT SHIP is the fourth to bear the name. The first two were third rates of 74 guns in 1785-1803 and 1808-1863.

The third was first class battleship of 14,900 tons from 1895-1923.

The present *Victorious* was built by Messrs. Vickers Armstrong at Newcastle and launched on the 21st September 1939, with a displacement of 28,385 tons, length 743 feet, width 106 feet.

A distinguished career during World War II included :

1941 Strikes against the Bismark; Russian convoys; Strikes against Norwegian shipping and airfields.

1942 Strikes against the Tirpitz; Russian convoys; Malta convoys; North African landings.

1943 Service in the Pacific and Indian Oceans to including a period with the U.S. Navy.

1945 Strikes against New Georgia, Sumatra, Palembang. She was hit by a Kamikaze aircraft in May 1945, but was in action again after a few hours for repair.

The ship was taken over by the dockyard at Portsmouth in July 1950 for major modernisation. This was prolonged to include the latest devices and equipment, and has been the largest task of its kind ever undertaken in a Royal Dockyard.

During the seven years refit the ship has been completely rebuilt from the hangar deck. She now has a 775 feet, fully angled ($8\frac{3}{4}^{\circ}$) flight deck which is 4 feet higher than its predecessor.

Two parallel track 145 feet steam catapults, and two deck landing mirror sights (both British inventions) have been added. There are two hydro-pneumatic high speed lifts, having a combined area of twice that provided by the two original lifts. Larger boilers provide steam for the catapults, as well as motive power for the ship. The main electric generating capacity has been increased from 2,400 to 4,200 kilowatts to cope with the ever increasing demands for electric power.

The radar fitted in *Victorious* has been described as the best ship-borne air defence radar system in the world today. Combining early warning and high discrimination of an aircraft's position in plan and height simultaneously, the complex system of semi-automatic display can provide the Admiral or Captain with a picture of the tactical situation in any section of the sky.



The crew takes its place.

SEA TRIALS

H.M.S. *Victorious*, commissioned on 14th January as the latest carrier for the Royal Navy, sailed from Portsmouth for Preliminary Sea Trials on 3rd February--a glorious day.

During the month of February, Sea Trials were conducted in the Channel area and the Clyde, and although weather conditions were not always helpful, the programme was completed satisfactorily.

During the second week, heeling trials at Spithead caused some amusement and the occasional moments.



Sailing from Portsmouth Harbour for Preliminary Sea Trials

Two helicopters of 701 C Flight were embarked for ships flight duties and carried out sterling work, collecting mail and trials visitors from Lee, Hurn and Abbotsinch. The latter station gave excellent service during our stay in the Clyde.

The passage from the Channel to the Clyde included exercising replenishment astern with H.M.S. *Contest*, and the Commander, a willing victim of a two-way trip by light jackstay, was cheered on his return — dry!

Opportunity for the grant of a long week-end was taken whilst in the Clyde to natives of Scotland. These bona fide travellers were a little astonished to find overalls and 150 bags of potatoes awaiting them for embarkation in the returning M.F.V.

Lieutenant-Commander Lamb joined our circuit in Lyme Bay on the 28th February from N.A.S. Ford to carry out the first "fixed wing" bolters of the commission. Several neatly executed "touch-and-goes", with varying angles of relative wind, produced an involuntary "You are very nice on the approach".

The ship was settling down very well, and we already had a name for the excellent feeding arrangements.

The ship returned to Portsmouth on the 1st March for a further period in the Dockyard before final Sea Trials in mid-summer.

During this period we soon became immune to Sea Venoms and Sea Hawks and very blasé about Gannets as the F.D.T.T.M.U. from Lee and R.A.E. Bedford tested all the flight deck machinery. The Scimitars of the same squadron, No. 700 Carrier Trials Unit, led by Lt.-Cdr. P. Lamb (now of Hovercraft fame), created a new sensation. This was accentuated when the De Havilland Vixen flown by Lt.-Cdr. D. P. Norman arrived from Boscombe Down. The Flight Deck began to resemble the short runway at London Airport. Finally, with all trials completed we returned to Portsmouth on 3rd September and passed Sallyport for Pitch House Jetty to the accompaniment of the heaviest thunderstorm of the year.

Already our Visitors book recorded a variety of important names and included a number of varying nationalities.

After a further period of time in harbour, we sailed from Portsmouth on Thursday, 25th September 1958, and having fired a gun salute for C-in-C Portsmouth, proceeded into the Channel to embark our squadrons, Nos. 803, 893 and 849 B Flight. No. 824 Squadron (Lt.-Cdr. J. Trevis, R.N.) 8 Whirlwind Mk 7, had already been with the ship some time, having joined in Portsmouth on 27th August.



Cdr. Richardson (Air) catches the first wire.

MORE SEA TRIALS and FIRST FLYING TRIALS

25th June to 13th October 1958

The flying trials brought our first deck landing of the commission when on June 23rd, with much pleasure and with the co-operation of Gannet 504, Commander Air (Cdr. S. J. A. Richardson, R.N.) caught the first wire.

No. 803 Scimitar Squadron (Cdr. J. D. Russell, R.N.) were the first fixed wing squadron to be embarked, and they joined from N.A.S. Lossiemouth via Yeovilton, arriving in pairs. The unfortunate accident which marred the first landing by a squadron Scimitar received much publicity. A very creditable rescue effort by the planeguard (Lieut. R. A. Duxbury, R.N.) was not successful. The remaining squadron aircraft

(under the command of Lt.-Cdr. G. R. Higgs, R.N.) were safely embarked, followed by No. 893 Sea Venom Squadron (Lt.-Cdr. E. V. H. Manuel) from N.A.S. Yeovilton and No. 849 Skyraider B Flight (Lt.-Cdr. B. H. Stock, R.N.) from N.A.S. Culdrose. The Skyraiders received a taste of what is to come by being diverted to N.A.S. Yeovilton for mail and stores before embarkation.

Until 28th September, we stayed in the Portland area conducting flying practices in Lyme Bay, and gunnery exercises. These latter performances, to the astonishment of the Staff at Portland, included a session with a battle-practice target!

During the Saturday's flying one of the Whirlwinds ditched a mile or so away from the ship. Fortunately, the pilot, Lt. J. H. Arbuthnot, R.N., was picked up by the helicopter in company on the same exercise. The observer, Lt. J. W. A. Currie, R.N., and aircrewman L.S. S. McIntosh, were recovered by the plane guard. Both officers sustained extensive injuries, although the aircrewman escaped with superficial cuts. The crew were later transferred to Portway Hospital. Not long after entering hospital, the pilot was informed that he had become the father of a baby girl.

At midday on Sunday, 28th September, *Victorious* sailed for the Mediterranean towards its first port of call, Gibraltar. The wind freshened on Monday whilst on passage through the Bay, and by nightfall was blowing gale force. During the middle watch a wind speed of 72 knots was registered and four of the twenty-man life rafts were carried away and the flight deck catwalk starboard side was damaged.

Considerable upset was caused in the Forward Dining Hall during the gale. As a result of the ship's movement, the deck was at one stage almost a skating rink of tea and soup. Rumour had it that Commander (S) took advantage of this surface to stage some very entertaining pirouettes amongst the tables. All was soon put right again and the ensuing day found us in calmer seas, exercising Aircraft-arming on the flight deck, Action Stations, Shelter Stations, and a host of assorted manoeuvres which a carrier normally has little time to practise.

The rock of Gibraltar was to be seen from the horizon, and at 2100, we passed through into the Mediterranean for a day's flying off North Front. Whilst exercising Scimitars and Venoms, which included two pre-planned simulated strikes on the Rock, a Signal was received from Sir Winston Churchill, in the Yacht *Christina* as he was about to fly home to U.K. from the airfield. The signal stated



The Rock

he would be delighted to see our aircraft before his departure. We duly obliged, and the Scimitars, airborne at the time, beat up North Front as the Great Man was about to embark in his aircraft. Apparently this pleased him greatly.

That evening two ratings were reported missing. Later it transpired that, intrigued by the lights and so-called glamour of Southern Spain, they had attempted to sail a life-raft from the ship.

A search was instituted, and, whilst lookouts were being posted, one of them fell into the sea from the damaged starboard catwalk. His cries for help were heard by several officers and men and all four quarter-deck lifebuoys were dropped simultaneously.



Civilian party at work Floating Fort

The ship was steaming at 15 knots at the time of the incident and was immediately turned. The lifeboat was lowered, and at 2250 he was picked up. On entering the Sick Bay after his return on board, his only comment was "I am only in for two years. I don't want to make a habit of this."

The search for the life-raft continued and it was recovered with its two occupants at 2340. It had been sighted visually in the moonlight at 2 miles.

At 0745 Friday, 3rd October, *Victorious* entered Gibraltar harbour and secured alongside South Mole. A landing party of 120 men comprising 3 Platoons was put ashore on Friday at 1030 and spent a day at "A" Range North Front firing Bren and Sten guns and rifles.

Numerous sporting fixtures were arranged and ship's teams played soccer and hockey matches against teams from ashore as well as a number of inter-departmental matches.

The usual "shopping" was conducted and the Ship's company were soon baptized with the local vino. A number of people passed across into Spain, and a few intrepids even climbed the Rock.

On Monday we proceeded to sea for further flying exercises, and for three days operated East of Gibraltar. On Thursday we moved along the coast for a day's flying off Oran La Senia. Here we experienced the tribulations of a Scimitar being diverted ashore. This was after the failure of No. 1 hydraulic system, due to damage sustained by the tail skid on take-off.

The Scimitar, apart from its size and weight had several small problems associated with the need for diversion. It required pressure refuelling, and a special L.P. Air starter (Palouste). This was complicated if the aircraft were diverted to an airfield not normally equipped with the necessary auxiliaries. This state of affairs existed at La Senia, the French Air Base south of Oran, and our Scimitar and his escorting Number 2 found themselves high and dry ashore.

At the time we were unable to fly a Palouste (starter) ashore, but immediately sent a Skyraider off with the Squadron A.E.O. (Lt.-Cdr. D. G. Titford, R.N.) to assess the damage. The ship closed Oran and sent a further team ashore with a starter and the extra equipment needed.

We sailed cast to keep an R.A.S. rendezvous with R.F.A. Tideflow off Algiers, returning on completion to re-embark the two Scimitars. These planes had by this time been refuelled by means of a modification to a French Air Force bowser. After a temporary hydraulic repair, both returned to the ship. The repaired aircraft had to make the return flight with undercarriage down.

After the delays caused by this diversion, the ship set course for Malta arriving in Marsaxlokk at 1700 on Sunday. As the ship approached Marsaxlokk we passed close down the western side of the islands passing between Filfa and the mainland. To many this was their first view of the island of Malta; In the bright sunlight and against a calm blue sea it was a strangely pleasant sight.

The object of visiting Marsaxlokk was to offload by lighter 3 Whirlwinds which we had carried out as cargo. Unfortunately the swell at Kalafrana jetty prevented this operation so the Whirlwinds remained with us until the following day, when they were serviced by Halfar and flown off.

Victorious entered Grand Harbour at 0915 on Monday, 13th October, and secured to buoys in Bighi Bay next to *H.M.S. Eagle*.

Amongst the many renewed acquaintances in *Eagle* and the subsequent badinage, one remark stood out. After comment on the general splendour of our turnout for entering harbour, one wag was heard to remark "I am most impressed by those BRITANNIAS on your flight deck!"

During this period a film unit, Harold Bairn Film Production (London) Ltd., under the direction of Mr. Harold Bairn, has been resident with the ship, making a feature film of *H.M.S. Victorious*, which was to be released through United Artists. It was most instructive to many of us to witness at close hand the wiles and whims of a film director.

In addition to many visitors, all of whom seemed to enjoy *Victorious* hospitality, we now boasted a Work Study Unit. This team had been instrumental in reducing "loafing" to an even more skilled art than ever before in the annals of Naval Motion Study. The handful of pink signals technique was dead, and a new subtlety had been added — much to the disgust of the Regulating Office.

14th October 1958 to 14th January 1959

After this very short stay at Malta we sailed from Grand Harbour for our first workup period in the local areas. Because of temporary trouble we had experienced operating the Scimitar from the catapult, these aircraft were not flying, and the exercises were primarily Venom interceptions for the 984 and A/S exercises for the helicopters.

However, the period was enlivened by a night-encounter exercise with the 3rd Destroyer Squadron (*Saintes*, *Camperdown* and *Armada*) during which *Victorious* took upon herself the role of a six-inch cruiser.

We were visited by the Flag Officer Malta, Rear Admiral Sir Charles Madden, who arrived by Sky-