

Grand Harbour, Malta.

raider and was taken by helicopter to the ships of the 3rd Destroyer Squadron who were in company. The Flag Officer Aircraft Carriers, Vice-Admiral A. N. C. Bingley, embarked by Skyraider for a three-day visit to witness our workup, and left us at Grand Harbour.

A visit to Toulon was enjoyed by all, and for ten days we explored the "Cite Maritime," whilst the squadrons disembarked to Hyeres/Le Polyvestre and indulged in daily commuting for flying practices "en francais." We entertained Vice Admiral d'Escadre P. E. M. J. Barjot the Prefect Maritime, who was collected from Toulon by helicopter. He witnessed our flyoff and was then flown ashore again where he was due to attend a farewell parade before leaving to join the N.A.T.O. staff in Paris.

Whilst at Toulon, hospitality was exchanged with the cruiser *De Grasse* and the Carriers *Arramanches* (ex *Colossus*) and *Bois Belleau*.

Our departure from Toulon was marred by the inability of one Scimitar to rejoin us. This aircraft was serviced at Hyeres by a retard party and later Lt. Middleton flew to Halfar direct to rejoin the squadron.

On 6th November one of the Whirlwinds experienced engine trouble during an anti-submarine exercise with H.M.S. *Tapir*, and ditched five miles from the ship. The crew, Lt.-Cdr. (O) D. A. Evans, Lt. (P) A. J. Richmond and L.S. G. A. Hall were picked up unhurt by other helicopters taking part in the exercise. This episode was followed four days later by a precautionary landing by the planeguard helicopter as a result of which 824 Squadron stopped flying. The loan of two Whirlwind Mk 3's from 848 Squadron at Halfar for planeguard duties enabled the ship to continue operating Venoms and Skyraiders.

In the meantime the decision had been made to disembark the Scimitars and five aircraft were flown off to Halfar to continue the Squadron workup from shore.

Dusk and night flying exercises were carried out as planned and the Venom and Skyraider crews clocked up a lot of flying hours.

By the 4th November we were due for a short period in harbour and the ship went to Messina for four days. The visit proved to be most enjoyable. Tours were arranged to Gambaari and Taormina and



Toulon



Messina

Messina



an intrepid party of climbers set out to climb Mount Etna, only to be prevented from reaching the summit by bad weather.

On the Sunday afternoon the ship was open to visitors. All went well until the middle of the afternoon when the merry crowd on the quayside became impatient to get on board and charged the brow. Order was restored with the help of the police before there were any casualties, but no further visitors were allowed on board.

After leaving Messina we joined *Eagle* for six days. This was the first time we had operated in company with another carrier. For this period 831 "B" Flight embarked with their four Venoms to lend a little weight to our effort and also to get in a little sea time.

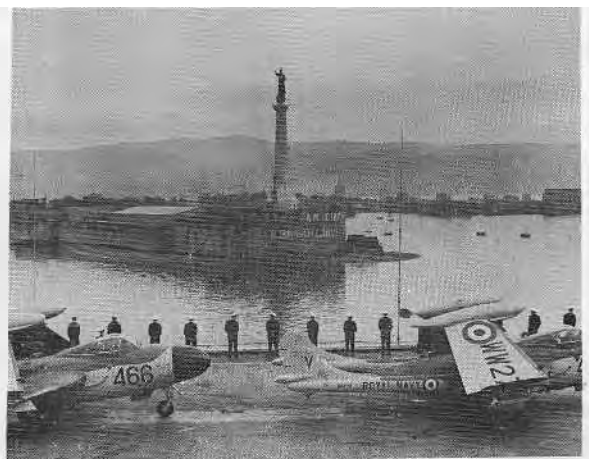
On completion of these exercises Venoms and Skyraiders were disembarked to Halfar while the ship entered Grand Harbour for 10 days' self-maintenance.

During this stay in Malta numerous exercises were carried out by the aircraft ashore.

In our last period at sea before Christmas firing trials of the Firestreak weapon were successfully carried out by aircraft of 893 Squadron using drone targets supplied by N.A.S. Halfar.

We also managed to put in some very solid night flying which included a series of Venom Strikes on Sheffield and Ulysses. These two ships had been detached and shadowed by Skyraiders whilst returning from the Western Mediterranean to Malta. The night flying was completed by around-the-clock flying for some 58 hours, in which small sorties of Skyraiders and Venoms carried out day and night exercises.

Messina



Christmas at Malta was quite a pleasant period. - The ship was the envy of the remainder of the Fleet's Electrical Officers by virtue of the imposing red, green and white occulting electric decor in the form of a Christmas tree on the mainmast.

1959 was welcomed in the usual service fashion.

We sailed from Malta on 2nd January and after a very hectic exercise with Canberras of the Royal Air Force we started on our way home via Gibraltar to Portsmouth.

Our arrival in Portsmouth coincided with the first anniversary of this commission, and 'too relatives boarded the ship at Spithead (not very long after the Customs officials) to join us for the passage up-harbour. At 1615 on 14th January in cold misty weather we secured to Pitch House Jetty.

H.M.S. *Victorious* sailed from Portsmouth on Friday, 20th February, having been delayed 24 hours by thick fog which covered most of the South Coast.

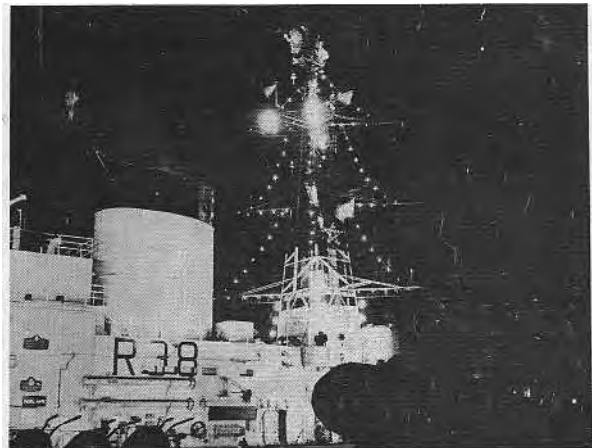
No. 824 Squadron embarked their helicopters at Spithead and No. 803 Squadron Scimitars with 893 Venoms Squadron and 849 "B" Flight Skyraiders embarked on the 21st, 893 Squadron resplendent with new Mk. 22's.

We then sailed for the Mediterranean to join H.M.S. *Eagle* off Cartagena for flying exercises which included a search and strike exercise by Scimitars. Further exercises, including night flying, preceded our return to Gibraltar. Here we joined units of the Home Fleet, and the French and Netherlands Navies.

Apart from the exchanges of hospitality, we were all occupied in the final preparations for Exercise Dawn Breeze IV. Just before the NATO fleet sailed for the exercise, our helicopter squadron was grounded owing to a technical fault. An immediate reorganisation of carrier complement was put into force and during the hectic night before departure No. 824 Squadron were lightered across to H.M.S. *Eagle* to be disembarked at Plymouth on completion of the exercise, whilst six Venoms of 894 Squadron were lightered from *Eagle* to *Victorious*.

Exercise Dawn Breeze IV, designed primarily as an Air Defence exercise, included participation by Canberras and "V" Bombers from Bomber Command and afforded ample opportunity for *Victorious* to exercise her 984/CDS as Air Defence Ship, with *Eagle*- and *Centaur* in company, forming a fast carrier Striking group.

Vice Admiral Douguet in the French cruiser *Guichen* controlled the A/S effort in the Anti-Submarine phase of the exercise. It was most unfortunate that our A S helicopters were not able to participate.



Christmas tree at Malta.

Scimitars from *Victorious* were used both as deck interceptors and also for strikes against airfields in Cornwall, whilst Seahawks and Sea Venoms filled the C.A.P. stations. The bombers were given a hard time. During the exercise two Scimitars were diverted to *Centaur* in emergency, and were forced to stay the night; *Centaur's* deck became quite crowded.

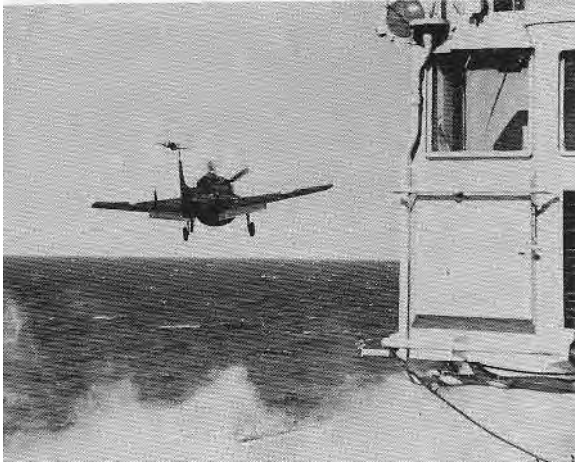
The exercise finished on the 22nd and ships returned to home ports, *Victorious* entering Portsmouth for leave and docking, on 24th March.

We sailed again on 4th May and after re-embarking the Scimitars we also embarked three Sea Vixens of 77 "Y" Flight (Cdr. M. Petrie, R.N.) for three weeks' carrier experience.

The ship called at Plymouth on the 5th where Flag Officer Aircraft Carriers Vice Admiral Charles Evans, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., D.S.C., transferred his flag to *Victorious*. We then embarked our Venoms and Skyraiders.

Operation Dawn Breeze.





Postman

Exercises in the channel gave the Vixens the chance to carry out the necessary qualifying day deck-landings under the lee of their parent station N.A.S. Yeovilton prior to dusk and then night-landings.

A short break was spent in Torquay, followed by a day visit by the cadets from the College at Dartmouth, and also a flying visit by the First Lord to the Admiralty, the Viscount Selkirk.

By this time the Vixens were looking fairly comfortable and were gaining valuable early experience of the aircraft's day and night capabilities aboard. Initial night-landings presented a certain amount of difficulty which was soon overcome and night-operations became a matter of routine.

On 13th May *Victorious* moved into the North Sea and after an Air Defence exercise with Bomber Command Canberras, conducted a search and strike exercise against *Centaur* who was returning to join us from a "jolly" in Copenhagen. A Skyraider detected her off the Norwegian coast and shadowed her, whilst both Scimitar and Sea Venom strikes were carried out, one of which was led by a Vixen.

Bad weather reduced our two days' flying in the Moray Firth to little more than token flying during which two Skyraidors proceeded to Lossiemouth to collect our mail, but were forced to stay the night as the ship encountered thick fog. They joined us next day west of the Mull of Kintyre.

Combined exercises with *Centaur* continued in the Irish Sea and during the day one Vixen fitted with long range tanks had to divert to Yeovilton owing to a failure in the fuel transfer system. Whilst night flying the same evening, off Anglesey, another Vixen was forced to divert to R.A.F. Valley due to shortage of fuel whilst night deck landing. Both were recovered but the one at Valley needed the assistance of a Scimitar with a Palouste starter, before he could return to the ship.



Scimitars and Sea Vixens taking part in Operation Shop Window

Sunday, 17th May, was spent at anchor in Tremadoc Bay where cross-operating by both was the order of the day, and a number of old friends exchanged greetings.

The next day the two carriers were subjected to intense air attack by aircraft from N.A.S. Brawdy and the whole of the approach to the Bristol Channel seemed to be filled with aircraft. We then bade farewell to *Centaur* who detached to proceed to Brest and Lisbon whilst *Victorious* set course for Portsmouth and Exercise "Shop Window".

Cdr. Treacher (Air) joins



The
VICTORIOUS



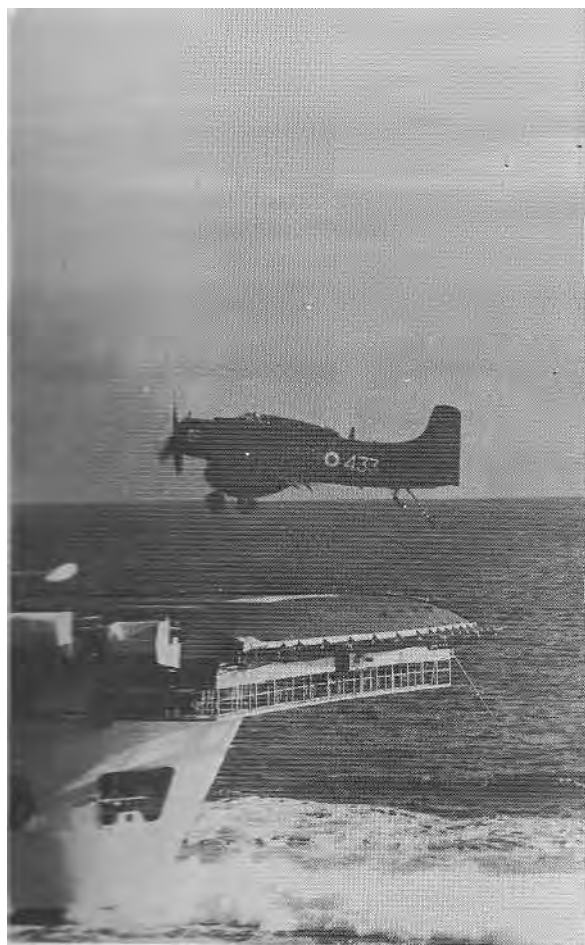
**IN
PICTURES**



Above: Childrens Xmas Party

Below: Families' Day

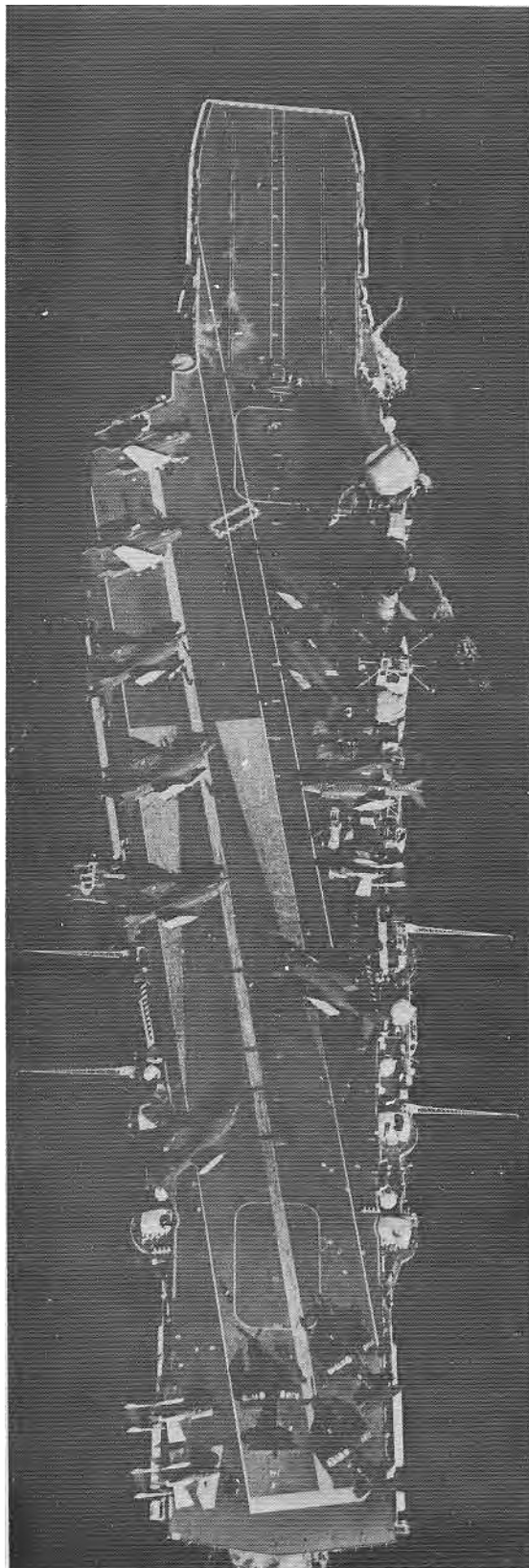




Above: Sky Raider

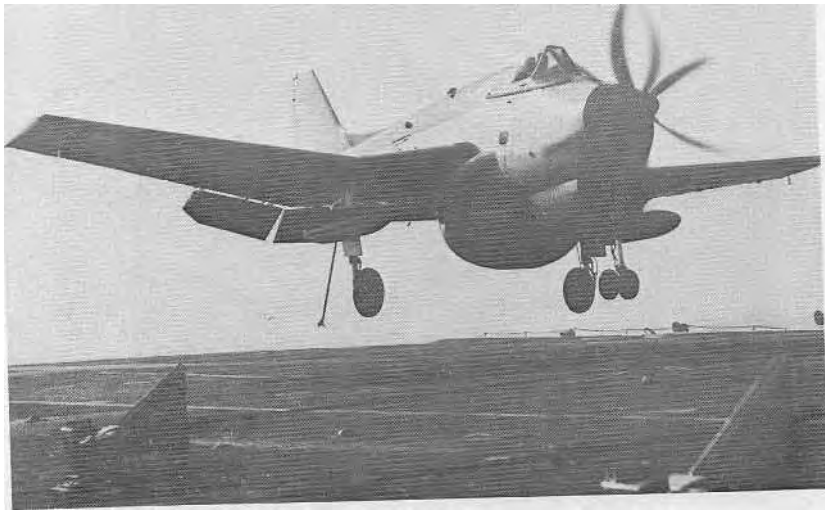
Centre: Aerial View of Victorious

Below: Sky Raider





Top: Sky Raider



Centre: A.E.W. Gannet

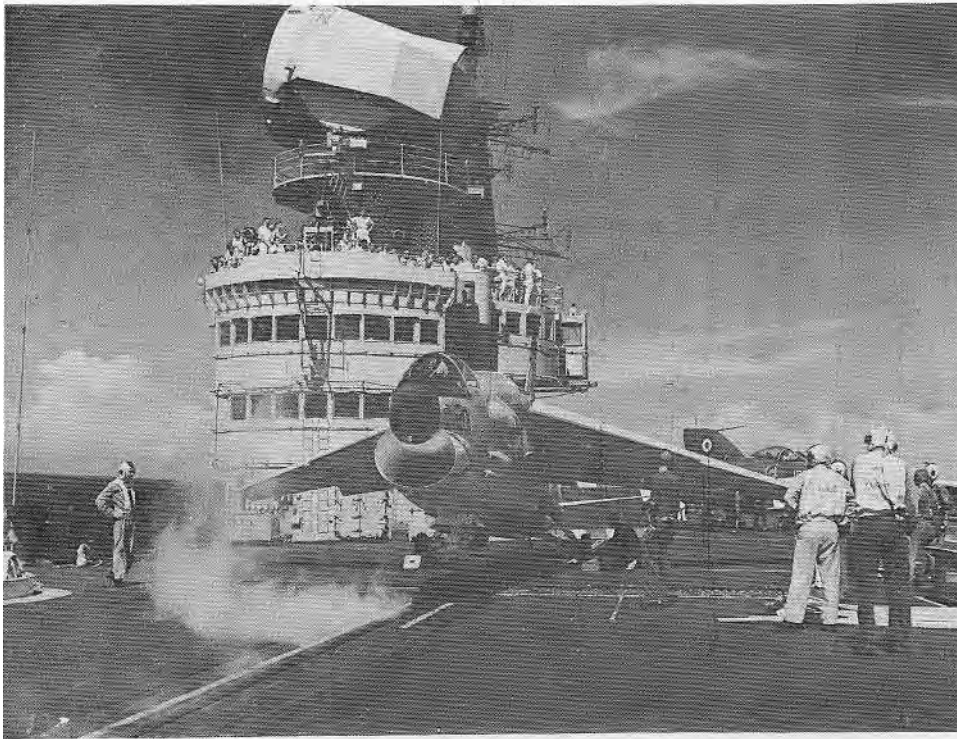
Bottom: Sea Vixen (Shop Window)





Above: Ships' S.A.R. Below left: S.A.R.s 'Chopper' Below right: fl.'4s 'Chopper' attending launching.





Above: Cross Operating Sky Ray.

Below: Cross Operating Rip Tide; Crusader.

