

Rosyth

## SHOP WINDOW AMERICA

Operating in the Portsmouth area is never a very satisfactory task for the modern jet carriers, but we managed to entertain the Ministry of Supply and Society of British Aircraft Constructors to a good day's flying on Thursday, 21st May, and followed this by a dress rehearsal of our Shop Window programme on Friday. We welcomed our new Commander Air, J. Treacher who arrived from Yeovilton in a Venom provided by 893 Squadron managing to catch No. 3 wire. Poor visibility marred the first two days of Shop Window, and the Scimitars, Vixens and Venoms were on C.C.A. almost from take-off. On three days of this week the N.A. 39 gave a display including touch and goes. With the aid of a polished display by the destroyers of the 6th Destroyer squadron *Cavendish*, *Contest* and *Barrosa* and the smoothness of the submarine demonstration by H.M.S. *Porpoise*, the general opinion of the Visitors seemed to indicate that they had enjoyed this demonstration of the Navy's work at sea.

*Victorious* sailed immediately on completion of Shop Window, having disembarked the Vixens whose period of time with us was over. We also bade farewell to Commander S. J. A. Richardson, who had piloted us safely through our "initials" as Commander Air of the first commission. He wisely left us by boat for his next appointment as Commanding Officer 104th M.S. Flotilla. There followed a week's maintenance in Rosyth in preparation for our participation in Exercise Fair Wind IV. Golf and wind seemed to be our stable companions in Scotland. Golf we all enjoyed, but the wind developed a steady 25 knots from the south-west, and this delayed departure from our alongside berth in the dockyard for 36 hours.

During our stay at Rosyth 803 Squadron pilots were given cockpit checks in Skyraiders so that they could taxi the aircraft during flying operations if it became necessary to move the deck park for a recovery or launch and no 849 pilots were available.

This caused some eyebrow raising amongst the twin jet men, but picture the red faces when as a result of a pipe "a pilot to taxi a Skyraider" no less than three hot pursuit men went chasing down the deck, eager to play with a piston, to find on arrival one of the Skyraider pilots was out of bed and on the job.

We sailed at 1630 on Tuesday, 9th June, to join the Home Fleet for the five-day exercise which included an Air Defence exercise with Canberra bombers of Bomber Command, and an attack by Danish light forces in the Skagerrak, together with cross-operating Venoms with Seahawks of *Karel Doorman*.

On 11th. June, His Royal Highness Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands embarked in *Karel Doorman* by helicopter. During the day he visited *Victorious* by helicopter to witness flying and the 984/CDS System.

We arrived in company with *Tyne* and the destroyers at Aarhus in Denmark, and a welcome weekend in brilliant weather was also notable for the loveliness of the Danish maidens.

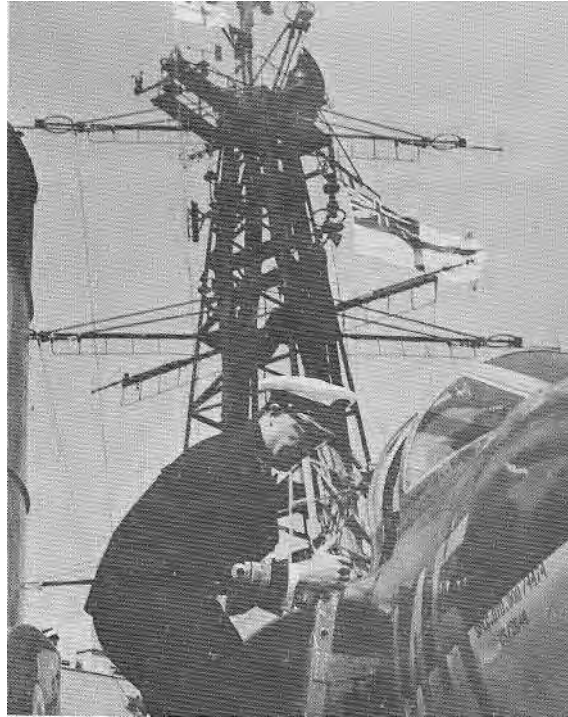
Then to Oslo for a further visit in company with *Tyne* and RFA *Tidereach*, where everyone was impressed by this lovely capital.

King Olaf of Norway visited us whilst we were in Oslo, and during a walk round the ship was shown the Scimitar and, seated in the cockpit, one of the squadron pilots explained its intricacies to him.

*Victorious* sailed from Oslo on Saturday, 20th June, for a maintenance period in Portsmouth before departing for the United States of America and Exercise "Riptide" with the U.S. 2nd Fleet.

By the 3rd July *Victorious* in company with the 5th Frigate Squadron, *Scarborough* and *Tenby*, the picket *Salisbury*, and RFA *Tidereach*, had reached the Azores. During flying exercises in the vicinity of the island of Laertes, news was received that a B.47, en route from Spain to America, had caught fire whilst air refuelling from the tanker aircraft operating out of the Azores, and the crew of three had ejected from 30,000 feet. The U.S.S. *Betelgeuse*, a supply ship, and two destroyers, U.S.S. *Camp* and U.S.S. *Kretchmer*, assisted by aircraft, were searching an area to the N.W. of Flores. A British merchantman discovered the navigator of the plane, Captain Lloyd-Carter U.S.A.F., and the destroyer *Camp* picked him up.

A helicopter from *Victorious* collected Captain Carter, together with a destroyer rating who had developed appendicitis, and, after transferring them to *Victorious*, our Skyraider flew them 280 miles to the U.S.A.F. air base at Lajes. This all on Independence Day.



*Prince Bernhard visiting at sea.*



*Visit by King of Norway, Oslo.*

We arrived at Norfolk on 10th July having conducted a very successful Air Defence Exercise against attacks by U.S.N. Skyhawks and Banshees from M.C.A.S. Cherry Point.

*Victorious* berthed near the U.S.S. *Independence*, 60,000 tons, the latest carrier of the Forrestal class to be commissioned. As some one said, "we could stick *Victorious* down into the *Independence* hangar." But we were to show that the best does not always arrive in the biggest package.

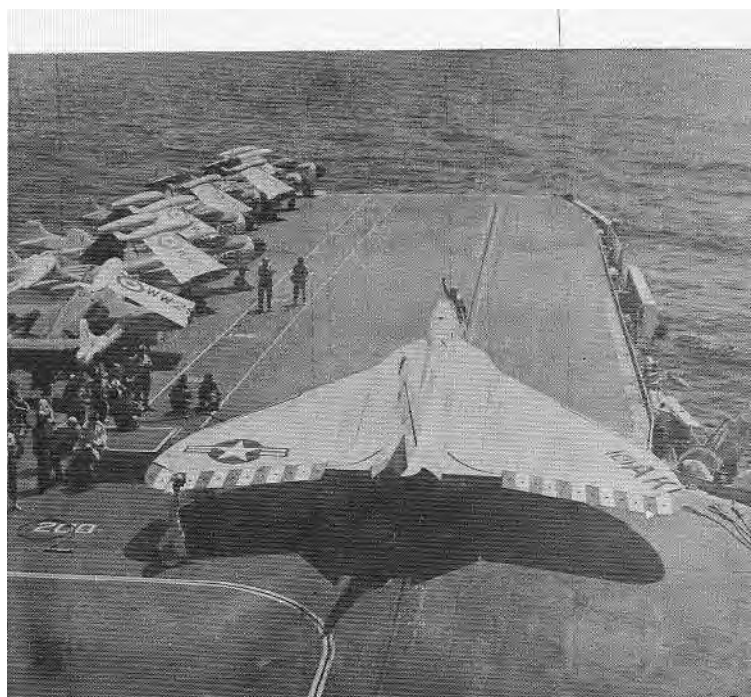
After a few pleasant days preparing the details of the Exercise and, of course, cementing Anglo-U.S. relations in many and varied forms, we sailed on 14th July to join the U.S. 2nd Fleet under the overall command of Vice Admiral Smedberge in the *Northampton*, a Combat Information Centre equipped cruiser.

U.S. 2nd Fleet provided two fast Carriers *Saratoga* and *Essex* with *Wasp* as the ASW carrier, the CIC cruiser *Northampton* and *Boston* a GW cruiser, together with thirty-five destroyers and pickets as well as three oilers and a supply ship.

The exercise occupied six days 15th to 20th July and during this period we cross-operated Crusaders (F8U), Skyhawks (A4D), Skyray (F4D), Demon and Tracker aircraft from *Saratoga* and *Essex*, sending our Scimitars to *Saratoga*, and Venoms and Sky-raidiers to both carriers. In the course of the exercise we also cross-operated Admirals: Vice Admiral C. L. G. Evans visiting *Saratoga* to witness a Fire Power demonstration by the combined American Air Groups, whilst Vice Admiral Smedberge, Rear Admirals Anderson, Ramage, Stroh, Clifton and Ambassador John Lodge, were all embarked in *Victorious* by helicopter to witness a demonstration of 984/CDS.

On Sunday a "Holy Hello" service was flown to exchange Chaplains in the U.S. Fleet, and we followed suit, both our C. of E. and R.C. Chaplains visiting *Scarborough*, *Tenby* and RFA *Tidereach*.

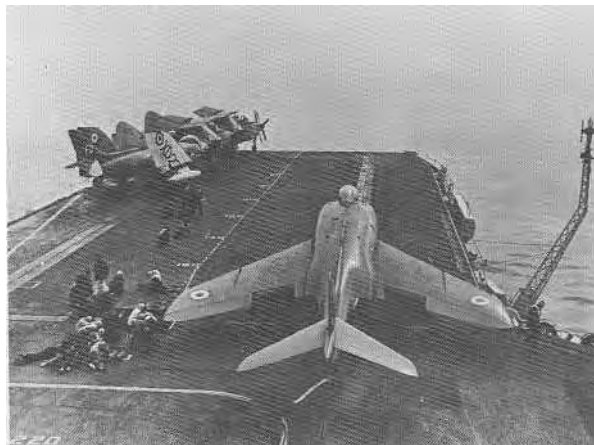
*New York*



By Monday, 20th, we had decidedly made our mark in the Air Defence phase of the Exercise and in addition had participated in the surface actions to the extent of carrying out the first day attack with Venoms on the GW destroyer *Vogelgesang*, and the only night attack by Venoms on the GW cruiser *Boston*. The night attack was conducted using Gloworm illuminant and Skyraider direction.

The Scimitars excelled themselves as deck interceptors compiling a large number of "kills" and also spent a day on longrange strikes at targets in the interior of North Carolina.

During the cross-deck operating, a F3H (Demon) needed a tyre changed. This was soon carried out, the necessary jacks and the tyre being collected from *Saratoga* by Skyraider. One of the F8U (Crusaders) arrived and was found to have a fractured launching box. The pilot was impressed with our discovery and was catapulted off quite successfully, the launching box having been replaced on board. It would have been quite an addition to our FAE had we retained the Crusader as a memento of a NATO exercise.



*Scimitar*

*Boston Massachusetts*



A short visit to Norfolk again after the exercise gave opportunity for 984/CDS to be demonstrated to visiting experts from Washington, using Skyhawks as strike aircraft and Crusaders and Demons as interceptors from the Air Group at NAS Oceana, as standstanding CAP's to support our Scimitars from the deck.

On completion of this day's demonstration we sailed for Boston, Massachusetts for a four days' visit, and the prospect of New York to follow.

We will draw a veil over our activities and fraternisation but cannot resist the following quotes :

(a) "The New York taximan who thought we were a French carrier and was very impressed with the high standard of our English."

(b) "The U.S.N. Gunnery Officer who thought we were equipped with a special weapon for night engagements."

## 803

# SQUADRON

The Squadron, first formed in 1933 on board the old H.M.S. *Eagle*, was equipped with six Fairey Osprey biplanes. From 1933 until 1937 the squadron was on the China Station, serving in both H.M.S. *Eagle* and H.M.S. *Hermes*, but in 1938 it was transferred to H.M.S. *Ark Royal* in Home waters.

Early in 1939 three Ospreys were replaced by three Skuas, and on the outbreak of war the squadron consisted of nine Skuas.

During operations in the North Sea on 26th September 1939, three enemy aircraft were intercepted and one, a Dornier 18, shot down and its crew captured. This was the first enemy aircraft in any area to be shot down in World War II.

The first four months of 1940 saw the squadron operating in an anti-shipping role, in conjunction with 800 squadron from R.A.F. Halston, and on April 10th dive-bombed and sank the *Konisberg* at Bergen in Norway.

The latter part of 1940 was spent in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic flying as fighter patrol and strike aircraft.

The squadron returned to the U.K. in October 1940, re-equipped with Fulmars and set out for the Eastern Mediterranean in late November, in H.M.S. *Formidable*. From this date until the end of 1943 the squadron led a somewhat nomadic existence in and around the Eastern Mediterranean and Ceylon. However, plenty of action was seen during this period, varying from embarked operations in the Malta and Tripoli area, to re-arming with Hurricanes and providing air support for the 8th Army from shore bases in North Africa in the latter part of 1942. Ceylon has already been mentioned and, in fact, part of the squadron was based there in April 1942 to assist in the defence of the island against the Japanese air attack.

The latter part of 1942 and until August 1943 was spent operating in the Indian Ocean and Far East Stations from H.M.S. *Formidable* and H.M.S. *Illustrious*. In August 1943, ten years after its formation, the squadron was disbanded for the first time.

In June 1945 "*Cane Puncum*" was lent to the Commonwealth when the squadron reformed at Arbroath with twelve Seafires, manned by the R.C.N. and after a six-month workup embarked in H.M.S. *Warrior* and sailed for Canada. Here we lose track of detailed history until 1951 when, no doubt having previously been disbanded in Canada for the second time, 803 Squadron was reformed at R.N.A.S. Ford and equipped with the Royal Navy's first jet fighter, Vickers Supermarine Attacker. The squadron was soon to renew old associations when in 1953 embarked in H.M.S. *Eagle* for exercises in the North Sea and the Mediterranean.

Early in 1954 the Squadron was disembarked to Malta from H.M.S. *Eagle* where it was to remain for nine months. Having re-equipped with Hawker Sea Hawks, the Squadron embarked in H.M.S. *Albion*, the first carrier to be equipped with the angled deck and mirror landing sight, and remained with her until she returned to the U.K., when the squadron was transferred to H.M.S. *Centaur* and the pilots back to the "Batsman," for the *Centaur* had no mirror!

On H.M.S. *Centaur*'s return to England the Squadron was disembarked to R.N.A.S. Ford and disbanded for the third time in October 1955.

### 4th 803

And now what of the present 803 Squadron? Prior to our embarking our ten Scimitars in H.M.S. *Victorious* in September 1958 we were given a short workup period at R.N.A.S. Lossiemouth, that well-known and popular resort in Northern Scotland.

As a newly-formed Squadron with a new aircraft embarked on a brand-new carrier, one can expect a certain number of teething troubles to begin with, and from September 1958 until the return of the ship to Portsmouth in 1959 we had our fair share. However, the entire time was spent in the Mediterranean and consequently a certain amount of trouble was experienced in obtaining spares for the aircraft which, at that time, were going through the "awkward" stage. Nevertheless we did manage to log a few flying hours and when our compatriots, 893 Squadron, celebrated their 1,000th deck landing with a large iced cake we, not to be outdone, were able to rejoice in attaining our 21st! It must be remembered however that we were a day-fighter squadron and therefore only had twelve hours of the twenty-four in which to fly.

A certain amount of excitement and a dash of the unknown was associated with our restricted flying programme. Within a fortnight of being embarked the Commanding Officer, Lt.-Cdr. G. R. Higgs, R.N., on being catapulted, suddenly found himself in the embarrassing position of not being able to raise his undercarriage and flap, nor lower his hook. He was forced to divert to Oran, a French airfield in Algeria. This was found to be due to the aircraft's tail-skid being fractured during the launch, thus depriving the aircraft of hydraulic power with which to operate the main services.

However, with the assistance of 849's Skyraiders, the ship closing Oran, and a quick and excellent repair made by the A.E.O., Lt.-Cdr. A. G. Titford, and C.P.O.'s Lilley and Teah, the aircraft was landed back on board the following day.

If certain Doubting Thomases still considered the Scimitar a weak aircraft, they were soon dissuaded from that viewpoint. Although the catapult had broken a tail skid of the aircraft, it had not got away unscathed and repairs had to be carried out on the track when the ship arrived at Malta a few days later. As a result of this incident, flying for us from *Victorious* was curtailed until the catapult tracks were strengthened.

November and the latter part of December 1958 was spent operating alternately from Halfar and the ship, with a short stay at Toulon when the aircraft were operated from the French Naval Air base at Hyeres. On the ship's return to Malta in mid-November, we found ourselves grounded again until an accident to a Scimitar operating from Lossiemouth had been investigated. Our stay at Halfar during this period was a little frustrating, but at last on 3rd December we were ungrounded and hurriedly prepared ourselves for re-embarkation on 9th December.

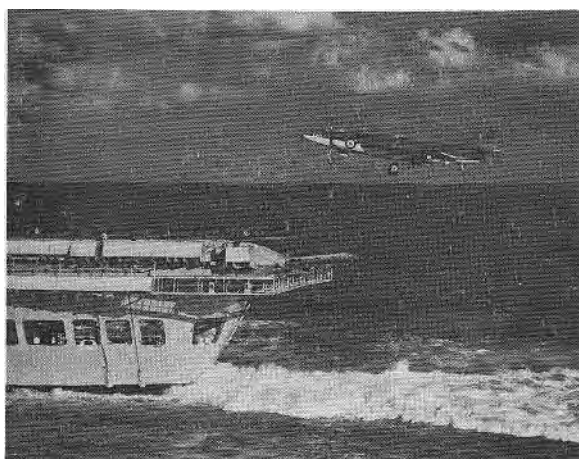


*J.G. Beyfus cutting 803's cake on their 21st Deck landing*

*893's cake in foreground for 1000th deck landing*

Our trouble-tree period was short-lived. On 10th December, Lt. Maina had the alarming experience of shedding his port jet pipe whilst in flight, and made a safe, if somewhat hurried, landing at Halfar.

*Scimitar approaching for landing.*



Christmas was spent in Malta. On 2nd January we sailed from Grand Harbour bound for England and flew off four Scimitars to Lossiemouth on 13th January, the day before the ship docked alongside in Portsmouth Harbour. There we bid a fond farewell to Lt.-Cdr. Titford, our A.E.O. (who left us to take up a staff appointment in Paris!), Lt. Barber, who was to spend the next ten months at E.T.P.S. Farnborough and C. A. A. Russell who was soon to become a civilian.

After a short sojourn at Lossiemouth the Squadron re-embarked in mid-February. With our more serious teething troubles now over we were able to fly a great deal more than we had in the past. During this short exercise we clocked up a fair number of hours, flying strike and interception sorties. With the assistance of the all-seeing eye of 984 radar we achieved a very high interception rate against the Sea Hawks and Venoms from *Eagle*, but purely from the morale-boosting point of view it was very satisfying to be able to hurtle by them with a considerable overtaking speed.

A few days were spent alongside the mole in Gibraltar harbour, but we managed to maintain a limited flying programme with four Scimitars disembarked at North Front.

After sampling the delights of Gibraltar we set sail on 14th March in preparation for exercise "Dawn Breeze," with H.M.S. *Eagle*, H.M.S. *Centaur* and other units of the Home Fleet. This was a splendid exercise for us with plenty of "V" bombers to intercept and a touch of the dramatic when S/Lt. Westlake, who joined the squadron a month previously, was unable to lower his hook and had the doubtful honour of trying out the crash-barrier for the first time with a Scimitar.

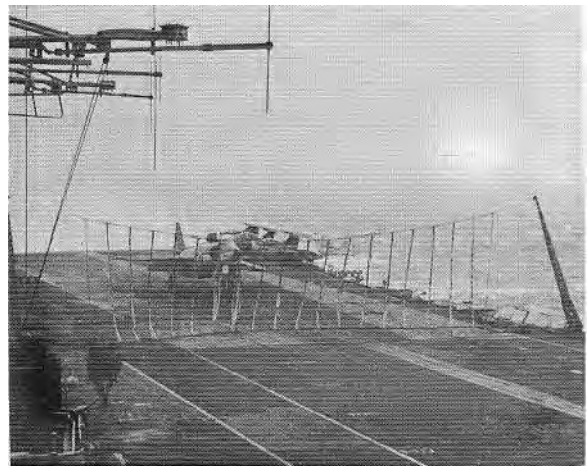
On 24th March we again disembarked to Lossiemouth for a short period before re-embarking in May.

Our return was marked by a certain eagerness this time to show our paces as part of the display for "Shop Window." This being the annual show for the uninitiated, some of the comments of the visitors rather over-exaggerated our abilities.

We set sail for the North Sea and two short exercises. However, our hard work was relieved by visits to Aarkus in Denmark, and Oslo.

Our return to Portsmouth in mid-August was welcomed after such a hectic and enjoyable cruise, and everyone went on a well-earned leave.

At the time of writing we have been embarked since mid-September and have just completed exercise "Barfrost," consisting of army support in the Northern area of Norway. The whole exercise was extremely



*S/Lt Westlake has the pleasure of trying out the crash—barrier for the first time.*

realistic and the scenery terrific. For the first time we were able to compare the Scimitar to the F.86's of the Norwegian Air Force. This was all somewhat unrealistic since, according to our plan, all the F.86's had been destroyed before we reached the area!

The exercise culminated in a small party to celebrate the squadron's '000th Scimitar deck landing which was made by Lt. Maina on the last day of the exercise, and we were honoured by the presence of a distinguished ex-member of the squadron, Flag Officer Aircraft Carriers himself, Vice Admiral O. E. Evans, K.C., etc. The large iced cake made for the occasion was appropriately inscribed: "A 1000 and Frigths!"

### 803 SQ. IN AMERICA

THE FIRST SLIGHT CHANGE to the squadron was noticed a day or two after leaving Portsmouth, when our full complement of aircraft was finally made up to twelve from the original ten Scimitars. The ensuing panic as to where we were going to put them all was short-lived but very real. However as the ship steamed westward and we flew a somewhat limited flying programme (land was miles and miles away) everything fell more or less into place and by the time we reached American Waters we were prepared to give of our best and hoped to "show these Yanks a thing or two".

Our first opportunity to do so came during the air defense exercise prior to the ship entering Norfolk when, during one day of deck launch interceptions, the squadron "shot down" all the eighteen Skyhawk aircraft which were sent to attack the ship. We subsequently learned that the Skyhawk pilots had been very impressed by our 100% interception rate, and for some time afterwards it was thought that perhaps the wing rocking of our victims as we flew by them may not have been a friendly acknowledgement, but an oscillation induced by an element of surprise on seeing a Scimitar hurtle by.

Norfolk was quite enjoyable, and the U.S.S. *Independence* impressive in a monstrous sort of way. Unofficial comments were rife—"That's the Naval Air Station Independence"— "I wonder which is the duty runway today"—"Do you think their pilots log flying time and catapult time separately?" However, one comment did appear in the American press when a Scimitar pilot was asked if we were going to do any cross-operating with *Saratoga*. "Yes, I think we are, but if it's anything like *Independence* I don't think we'll need any arrester wires."



*Scimitar of 803 Squadron*



*Lt. F.D.O Wreford 803 Squadron*

*'We've seen this one before'*





On leaving Norfolk we found that the continuous heavy rain experienced there had had a somewhat detrimental effect on the aircraft. Our first attempt to launch ten Scimitars for a practice fly-past and attack resulted in five getting airborne, followed by a thirty-minute battle with circumstances over which the pilots had very little control, which in turn resulted in five pilots attempting to fill the aircraft unserviceability logs to capacity when they landed. Regrettably the actual fly-past and attack on *Saratoga* fared even worse as far as numbers of Scimitars was concerned, but those that did get airborne put up an impressive show (we learned afterwards that *Saratoga's* flight deck was covered in prostrate bodies a second before the L.A.B.S. Scimitar was actually over the ship).

We started Exercise "Riptide" with all stops out, and went on until the end in the same condition. The temperatures we experienced actually improved the performance of the Scimitar, but the pilots found that their aircraft were red hot in more ways than one. After a couple of days it was seriously considered holding a "Mr. Body Odour of 803 Squadron" competition, but unfortunately we couldn't find anyone to judge it.

During this time our activities were not entirely associated with the 984 radar, as we also carried out a number of attacks on the American mainland. All  
*803 Squadron*

of these were flown at low level and must have caused the American populace a certain amount of consternation. One pilot flew over a lake full of water skiers. This peaceful scene must have been chaos a few seconds later because the Scimitar was flying at 600 Kts.

At the end of Riptide we were all looking forward to our stay at Boston and the Bostonians did not let us down. With the Americans trying to keep us English, and we staying English, everyone had a good time. (However there were one or two misunderstandings at the official cocktail party—"you mean you make your own aircraft!?"—"It's a pretty small carrier though."--Smart-young officer: "You know who Anne Hathaway is, of course." Young thing, "Yeah sure, she was Abe Lincoln's wife."--"In England we don't have ice with our drinks ....") For those in the know, it is *not* true that one of our C.P.O.'s got married in Boston.

Our next visit was re-christened "Exercise New York." To make it official was the only way to stand the pace. Everyone, needless to say, made their own way around, even if it was back to Boston for the weekend.

We still have one quotable quote: On the last Monday morning as New York faded into the distance, "You know, sir, it's a good thing we-aren't coming back in nine month's time."



ALL  
WEATHER  
FIGHTER  
SQUADRON

IN KEEPING PACE with the new look in Naval Aviation it is probable that the squadron will not remain in its present form for very much longer. Naturally this is not the first time it has happened and it may be of interest if we quickly glance back into the past and view our heritage.

It was on 15th June 1942 that the squadron came into being with a strength of six Martlet I aircraft. Soon after it re-armed with twelve Martlet IVs. In October the same year it embarked in H.M.S. *Formidable*, which as part of Force H assisted in the North African landings : the squadron providing fighter patrols for the fleet and also assisted in sinking a U Boat.

Between December 1942 and June 1943 they operated in the Western Mediterranean (the Tunisian campaign) and later provided fighter cover for the fleet during the landings in Sicily. In September it was the same story, but this time at Salerno.

After a brief spell in England the squadron was again back at sea, this time covering a returning North Russian convoy which did in fact arrive without loss. This was the last of their war-time exploits as in November 1943 the squadron disbanded.

Over twelve years passed before it was reformed, this time with Sea Venom 21s, and during the past 3½ years has been embarked in *Bulwark*, *Eagle*, and *Ark Royal*. Whilst in *Eagle* the Squadron took an active part in the Suez operation, providing strikes and C.A.P.

25th September 1958 saw the first of our aircraft embark in *Victorious* and within a few days we were off to the Mediterranean to commence working up; much of our effort in the first month of the commission was directed to giving the 984 team a chance to find its feet.

During one of the periods spent in Malta a few aircraft flew ashore to Halfar and we got moving on an armament programme. Whilst the ship was at Toulon we again disembarked part of the squadron to the French N.A.S. Hyeres, and during this time we took the opportunity of carrying out interception exercises with French destroyers and the cruiser *De Grasse*.

The most memorable episode during the time spent in the Med.—and it is probably safe to say the whole commission—was the firing of the air-to-air guided weapon Firestreak. This was the first time such a weapon had been assembled, tested and fired by aircraft from an operational carrier. Special aircraft were allocated to the squadron and scores of flying hours were given to obtaining data and accustoming pilots to the technique of firing the missile.