

Considerable effort by the ships at Air Electrical Department in maintaining, testing and checking the weapons was eventually rewarded when on 11th December 1958 the first live firing was carried out. To Lt. Dudgeon went the honour of loosing the first missile at its target and from this moment everything went without a hitch and the trial ended a rebounding success.

Christmas in Malta, a quick visit to Gib., a financially drastic encounter with the customs and we were again back at Yeovilton for a few weeks. After re-arming with Venom 22s, it was no time before we were back with the old Vic Company and on our way to Gib. where the stage was set for Exercise Dawn Breeze.

Throughout the exercise we flew high and low cap sorties, the greater emphasis naturally being the night details when we kept the old hour cycle. It wasn't long however before it came to an end and once again we found ourselves back in Somerset.

By 5th May we were back with the ship but in depleted numbers. Owing to the presence of 700Y squadron half of the aircraft went to Brawdy to carry out an armament programme whilst the remainder enjoyed a round Britain Cruise. During this period at sea there were a succession of Air Defence exercises against aircraft from *Centaur* and the various Naval Air Stations which came within range as we progressed around the coast.

Eventually we arrived back at Portsmouth for the yearly Shop Window exercise, our daily contribution being an R/P P attack followed by a formation fly past.

Next came a week at Rosyth followed by Exercise Fair Wind IV. During this exercise the only outstanding event which comes readily to mind was the night turkey shoot against the Norwegian coastal *893 Squadron at Gibraltar*.



#### *893 and half of 894 to States.*

forces in the Skaggerak. This provided plenty of entertainment for the aircrew but the rest of us will probably cherish our personal memories of Aarhus and Oslo for a little time to come.

Well, of course the visit to the States is still very fresh in our minds as the highlight of any commission is, but Petty officers Barber and Stephens really have a story to tell. Having given a pint of blood to the New England Medical Centre in Boston the local Press Relations Officer asked if they would mind having their photographs taken. This was no ordinary photograph and in fact turned out to be a T.V. interview, which only goes to prove there are many roads to fame. We fear that if they ever go on a world cruise they will be too weak from loss of blood to enjoy themselves.

In the past twelve months 2,126 sorties have been flown and we have had aircraft in the air for something like 2,000 hours. Considering the overall totals for the ship of 4,300 sorties and 4,338 hours you'll agree we've got our fair share. In the early part of the commission you'll remember we hooked the 1,000th wire, and won the first cake.



## SQUADRON

849 SQUADRON "B" FLIGHT is one of four operational Airborne Early Warning flights assigned to carriers afloat. We are part of the biggest squadron in the Fleet Air Arm and are based at R.N.A.S. Culdrose which, Mail Office please note, is in Cornwall.

On 23rd July 1958, Lt.-Cdr. Stock took command of the flight, which had recently disembarked from "Ark" and reformed at Culdrose.

Then followed a two-month work up period of airborne early warning and anti-submarine exercises, M.A.D.D.L.'s, and night flying to prepare us for our task in *Victorious*. At this time the officers held the coveted darts trophy which they managed to retain in a close match at the "Ship". It was soon after regained by the ratings, who despite several challenges hold it still.

Our main task in *Victorious* is the provision of early warning of low flying strikes approaching the fleet. The Skyraider is a U.S. Navy aircraft well suited to this role, having a long endurance and an excellent radar set. Having detected an approaching "bogey" the observers can then intercept it, controlling our own fighters. The aircraft is however very versatile and other jobs are the locating of surface raiders and snorting submarines. Admirals who lose track of their ships in a large exercise sometimes ask us to find them.

The radar equipment associated with the "Sky" is pretty complex and as we have no technical officers attached to the flight, a heavy burden of falls on the senior ratings, especially now that the aircraft are getting a bit long in the tooth and some have more airframe hours than their pilots.

Our other and, most people think, more important function is to collect the mail. It is a pretty much sought after trip by the aircrew and remarks such as "You went to Bermuda last week" and "The C.O. gets all the jollies" are to be heard.

During the year September 1958-1959 our aircraft have landed at:

Culdrose	Brawdy
Christchurch	Kindley Field
N.A.S. Norfolk	(Bermuda)
N.A.S. Oceana	Valley (Anglesey)
Arbroath	Hyeres (Toulon)
Greenham Common	Catania (Sicily)
Lajes (Azores)	Yeovilton
Lee-on-Solent	North Front (Gib.)
Lossiemouth	Hal Far
La Senia (Oran)	Brest
L'Orient	Aarhus

and on the following carriers :

<i>Victorious</i>	<i>Eagle</i>
<i>Karel Doorman</i>	<i>Saratoga</i>
<i>Centaur</i>	<i>Wasp</i>
<i>Essex</i>	

Recognition of our G.P.O. status was achieved during "Shop Window." A lady M.P. who had been told that Skyraiders often flew ashore to collect the mail, pointing to one, asked one of our ratings, "Is that the mail plane?" "Oh no, Ma'am," he replied, "that's the radar."

The flight embarked on 26th September and the workup continued apace, including anti-submarine exercises with the gallant 824th, who, alas, often turned into "sinkers" themselves, very confusing for the controllers. During this period we discovered that one of our duties was the logistic support of 803 Squadron who were scattering their aircraft either side of the Med.

In the early days the phrase "Your perch is vacant" was often to be heard over the R/T. This meant that "Big Brother" had gone on the blink again. We never actually got around to mounting a "Sky" atop the 984, but it was seriously considered!

After brief visits to Gib. and Malta, two aircraft were disembarked to Hyeres for "continuation training." This rather grandiose expression meant that each morning two aircraft would set out from Hyeres on a sightseeing tour of the Riviera, normally ending up "Anchored St. Tropez Angels decimal five" in an attempt to catch B.B. basking on a rooftop. Excellent vino was provided daily with lunch and after maintenance slowed down considerably. This was a very worthwhile diversion and morale was greatly boosted by seeing the French flying even older American aircraft than our own. We were of course disappointed not to be going home for Christmas but, making the best of a bad job, won the ship's interpart hockey competition. No cup was available so we remedied that and future winners will become the proud custodians of the "Bees' Cup."

After a belated Christmas leave, a short cruise to Gib. and Easter leave (what a life), we embarked for the long-awaited summer cruise. After a short and successful sortie to Scandinavia we sailed for the States. During exercise Riptide we cross-operated 849 Squadron

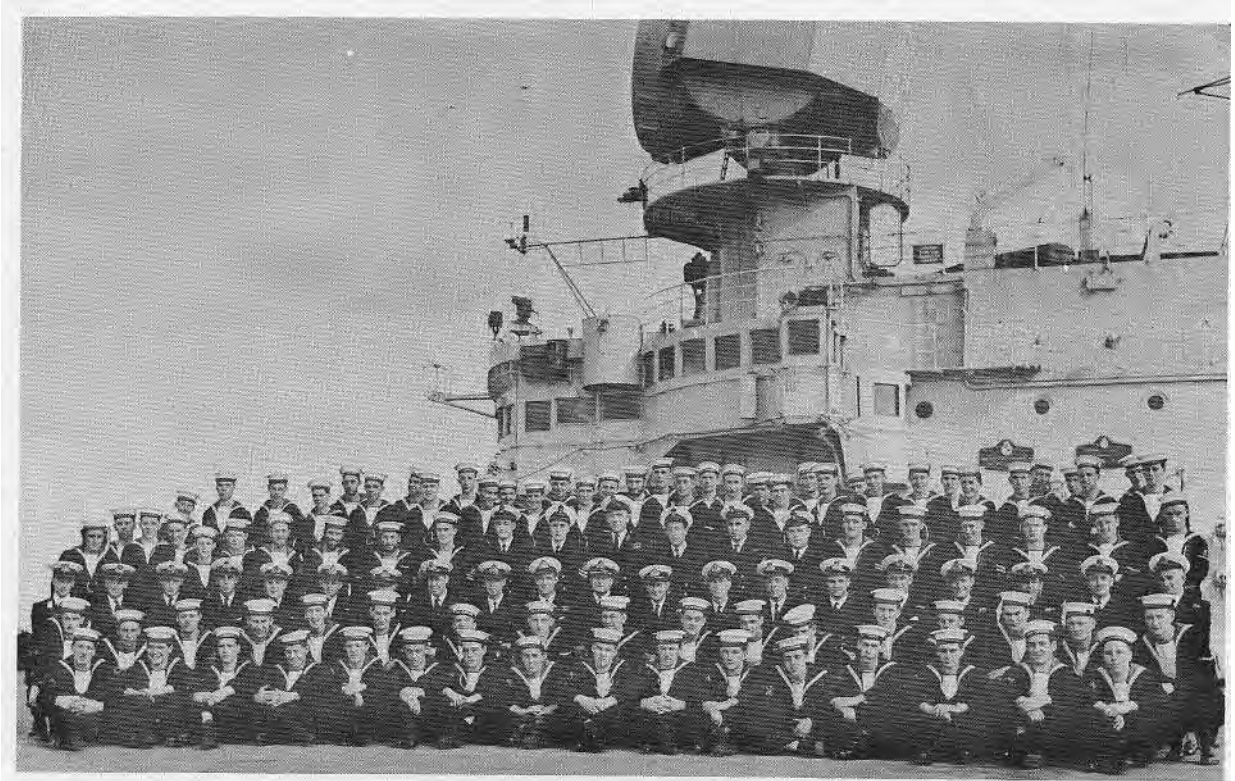
with U.S. carriers. Our "Skys" landed on *Saratoga*, *Wasp*, and *Essex*. We were well looked after by our opposite numbers in *Essex*, who seemed to be having a little problem with their aircraft. They even asked us for spares! We came away much impressed with their hospitality and clutching illuminated knee pads, flying suits and lighters.

Of Boston and New York little can be said of the flight's activities — little that would pass the censor anyway! The natives were definitely friendly, some say too friendly.

The American visit has proved to be a fitting climax to the cruise and the highlight of a very happy and successful commission.

The Bees are much looking forward to returning to *Victorious* next commission, equipped with nice new shiny steeds. Only one thing worried us about the A.E.W. Gannet and that was the lack of space for the mail. We hear this problem has been overcome and the mail will arrive on board in a detachable mail pod which has been developed for use by 803's Scimitars.





## 984 SQUADRON

IT WAS THE COMMANDER who first gave us our "squadron" status. He was trying to remember the names of the squadrons which were to embark and inadvertently added in at the end, "984 Squadron". In no time at all after that we had a crest, a motto and various other ancillaries such as a Commanding Officer and a line book.

Even at the end of the commission we still feel a glow of pride that we were lucky enough to be chosen to be the first to take this equipment to sea. On our way to and from "Dryad" we had seen a monstrous aerial perched on top of Portsdown Hill and wondered vaguely what it might be. A very few of us knew that for years, a host of brilliant minds, and not a little of the Navy's money had been necessary to produce it, and that since no sea trials of it had been possible, no one was certain whether it would work and do all its designer hoped. This was the challenge which we were to accept.

We started slowly. Only half a dozen of us knew how the thing was supposed to work, and their first job was to build up a nucleus team upon which the main training could be based. In addition their Lordships were very keen that the more important denizens of the Admiralty should see it as soon as possible. Luckily these two requirements could be dealt with together and the nucleus team was trained to give the demonstrations which started soon after returning from our first sea trials.

The scene opened with "*Victorious* is an Air Defence Ship in the middle of the Atlantic and I want you to imagine . . ." on loth March 1958, and the show ran for three weeks, surely an all-time record for a man-o'-war. During this period our public included all the Sea Lords, other distinguished Admirals, including Admiral Holloway, the Commander-in-Chief North East Atlantic and Mediterranean and the heads of many of the Admiralty Departments.

When we sailed for our second Sea Trials period on 28th May 1958 we had two main tasks to accomplish. The first was to train the remaining squadron personnel and the second was to make sure the radar itself was ticking over properly. The radar trials took place by day--and the training by night. I'm sure we'll none of us forget those middle and morning watch lectures ! As we progressed, the training became more fun and we sharpened ourselves up with games and competitions. There were titles for the main events, Leading Seaman Woodland was the Tote-Keeping Champion and A.B. Rawlings kept the Tracking Title he had won in A.S.R.E. in 1956.

When we got back to harbour again the scientists and Dockyard busied themselves with certain defects which had been found in the radar, and when possible, we put the finishing touches to our training.

On 26th September 1958, the day after our Squadrons joined, we did our first interceptions with the Scimitars. With bated breath we watched the echoes of target and fighter drawing together — the first of all was a failure, but the second was completely successful, and Lt. Anson, the senior pilot of 803 Squadron, reported that he had been brought to within 1,000 yards astern of the target.

We could not know then that this was the beginning of a very bleak period for us. The radar was sick and growing sicker — and by October it was apparently quite dead. For nearly a month we sat and looked at PP18's "wherein there was no video" and wondered if it was all a hopeless venture. Strange incantations were made by the Squadron High Priest, Rp 1's and *Maintainers* ' 984

" d " s were sacrificed upon the Slip Rings, but it was to no avail. Eventually, with the assistance of ASRE, our hardworking Squadron Electrical personnel, who from the first has never doubted final victory, began to bring things to life again. With a lot of leeway to make up we had to work hard but when, after exercises with *Eagle off Malta*, we had our first brush with Bomber Command, in the shape of fourteen Canberras from Luqa, on 5th January 1959, the results were most encouraging.

After a period of leave in Portsmouth the tempo steadily increased as during the early days of March, together with the Royal Marine Band who were now becoming Master tote-keepers, we prepared for Exercise "Dawn Breeze," which was primarily designed to test our ability. The results of the exercise showed that our efficiency was steadily increasing, although we were clearly not yet on top of our job. The R.A.F.'s Vee bombers however had had a considerable shock from the Scimitars which we had controlled against them.

The period between March and June 1959 was spent working up for the most exciting part of the commission, our visit to the U.S.A. to demonstrate the installation! This workup included numerous attacks from shore stations, an exercise called "Fair Wind" in the North Sea, when we met Bomber Command once again, and countless interceptions and Air Defence exercises with our own squadrons.

We left Pompey for the States on 30th June and two days later had a glimpse of the "form" which we had now reached. Bomber Command sent us an



attack by six Canberras; we "splashed" them all and three of them twice for good measure.

As we drew nearer to the States we had an opportunity to deliver an early calling card. Twenty-three U.S.N. bombers from the Naval Air Station at Oceana attacked us. We only claimed nineteen, but the bombers themselves admitted twenty-one interceptions.

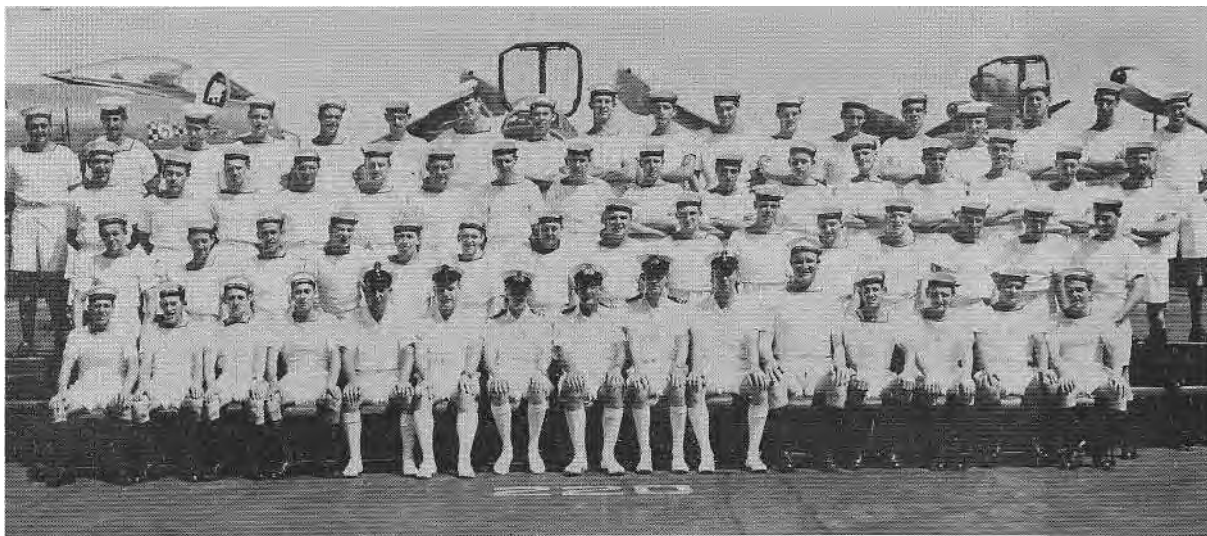
None of us will ever forget the following weeks. In harbour we carried out demonstrations galore, even though some of our heads were very muzzy from American hospitality. At sea we had an exercise called "Riptide" in which we had all the fighters and targets that we could want. The American fighters seemed to enjoy our control, and we enjoyed the novelty of listening to and controlling them. The Commanding Officer of a Skyray Squadron in U.S.S.

*Essex* even flew over by helicopter to meet the officer who had controlled him!

We watched the results with fingers crossed and hearts beating faster as we saw that we were steadily achieving a higher success rate than ever the most optimistic had hoped. After our final day, with more than thirty American VIP's on board, we had scored more than 90% success.

From the many comments received it was obvious that we had achieved what we set out to do. The final and most satisfying word of all comes from the Naval correspondent of the New York Herald Tribune, the well-known pressman, Mr. Hanson Baldwin. After describing our ship, he turned to the radar and air defence installation. His paragraph ended:

"Britain has scored another 'first'!"



## THE FORECASTLE DIVISION

DURING THE COMMISSION, the division has been noteworthy for three things — its sporting record, its addiction to "Exped" outings, and its ability to put grey paint on the ship's side. The side is not, of course, all that needs painting; it was discovered quite early on that the cable deck is more often awash than not, and suffers accordingly. This discovery was put to good effect during the American trip when several figures in bathing suits (guaranteed to be banned on New York beaches) were seen splashing happily in the occasional fountains coming up the hawse-pipes.

The first "Exped" was in May 1958, when Lt. Lambert, the D.O., and a team of a dozen went off to North Wales to walk over Plyntimmon. This seemed to spark off the idea, and later trips included a outing at Toulon, a long day's walk at Messina, and a walking tour in the country around Rosyth.

On the sporting side, the division soon showed it had the makings of a good football team. This was unbeaten in the first competition to be organised on board; in the second, it won its own small league very handsomely but went down in the semi-final to the eventual winners. Unfortunately the two backs had



been injured just before this game, which was the only one lost during the season.

Deck hockey has been very popular in the Fore-castle, and games have been enlivened by considerable enthusiasm! We were unbeaten in the league organised early in the commission, but not so successful, unfortunately, in the knockout competition in July and August 1959.

In athletics, swimming and water polo, the division has been well represented in Executive Department and ship's teams, the success of which is described elsewhere. As regards boxing we have A.B. Rawlings, Home Fleet and Navy champion light-middleweight, who has done a lot in organising sport in the Fore-castle.

Although only twenty-five or so work regularly in

this part of the ship, we see most of the rest when it comes to painting on a large scale. As we are at the exposed end of things (with the occasional missing storm door to bear witness to it) this seems to happen quite often. A good deal of the side can only be reached from nets, and some remarkable tarzan-like action has been observed during the rigging and unrigging of these. We have even made use of them in dry dock, proving that fo'cs'lemen have heads quite as strong as, if not stronger than, anybody else.

We make no forecast for the remainder of the commission, but we confidently expect the sharp end to continue to lead the way. And we would like to correct one false impression; there is absolutely no truth in the rumour that approval has been obtained for the award of submarine pay to the Cable Party.

## T.A.S.

WE TAZZMEN, although in a small minority amongst the Seamen, have nevertheless covered a very wide field of activities since we commissioned; quietly and unobtrusively of course, we leave the noisy and ostentatious side of "fish headery" to our Gunnery friends.

The Shallow Water and Standard Divers have probably had most of the limelight. Standard Divers don't really like being bracketed with T.A.S. too much, but they parted brass rags with Whale Island some years ago and sought refuge with us ! They have had quite a lot of fun in this ship, including recovering bits and pieces thrown over the side by most departments, such as ,welding masks, yardarm groups, signal projectors, ammunition, cigarette cases, etc. Periodically too, they have gone down and mustered what was left of the underwater fittings such as eddy plates, ropeguards, inlet gratings and so on. In fact they have become experts in low dives wherever we've been, Messina, Toulon, Boston, etc.

Apart from the occasional Banyan, they had a most enjoyable visit sampling red wine at the French Naval Diving School at Toulon. One of them tried to share a cave with a man-sized octopus and had to surface for more wine. Another one, looking for sea-bed souvenirs, found a Bikini — unfilled. When the time came to leave, the T.A.S.I. couldn't be found. He was finally sighted, disguised as a French Cloak and Dagger Commando diver, shouting "Scotland the Brave" in French.

Shallow Water diving has been popular. In fact we had too many volunteers for *Vernon* to cope with, so our Diver i, P.O. Morris, ran two training classes himself. A.B. Owers started the commission well by making the diving store comfortable in the best diving tradition with cushions, curtains, armchairs, etc. His successor, A.B. Burgess, took over and did his best to maintain the standard; but by then the Mate of Between Decks knew where to look for missing items on his permanent loan list!

A total of six officers and twenty ratings have been Shallow Water Divers at one time or another during the commission. Some of them found themselves stars in the film "Floating Fortress".

The Demolition Teams have had some outings too, including an explosive and sumptuous five-course Barbecue Picnic in Sandy Bay at Gibraltar and a couple of visits to Worthy Down, where they helped to dismantle the old *Ariel*. There were nearly a few vacancies in the department when the T.A.S.O. observed a certain Leading Seaman standing next to him *on* a detonator which was connected ... to a few pounds of T.N.T.

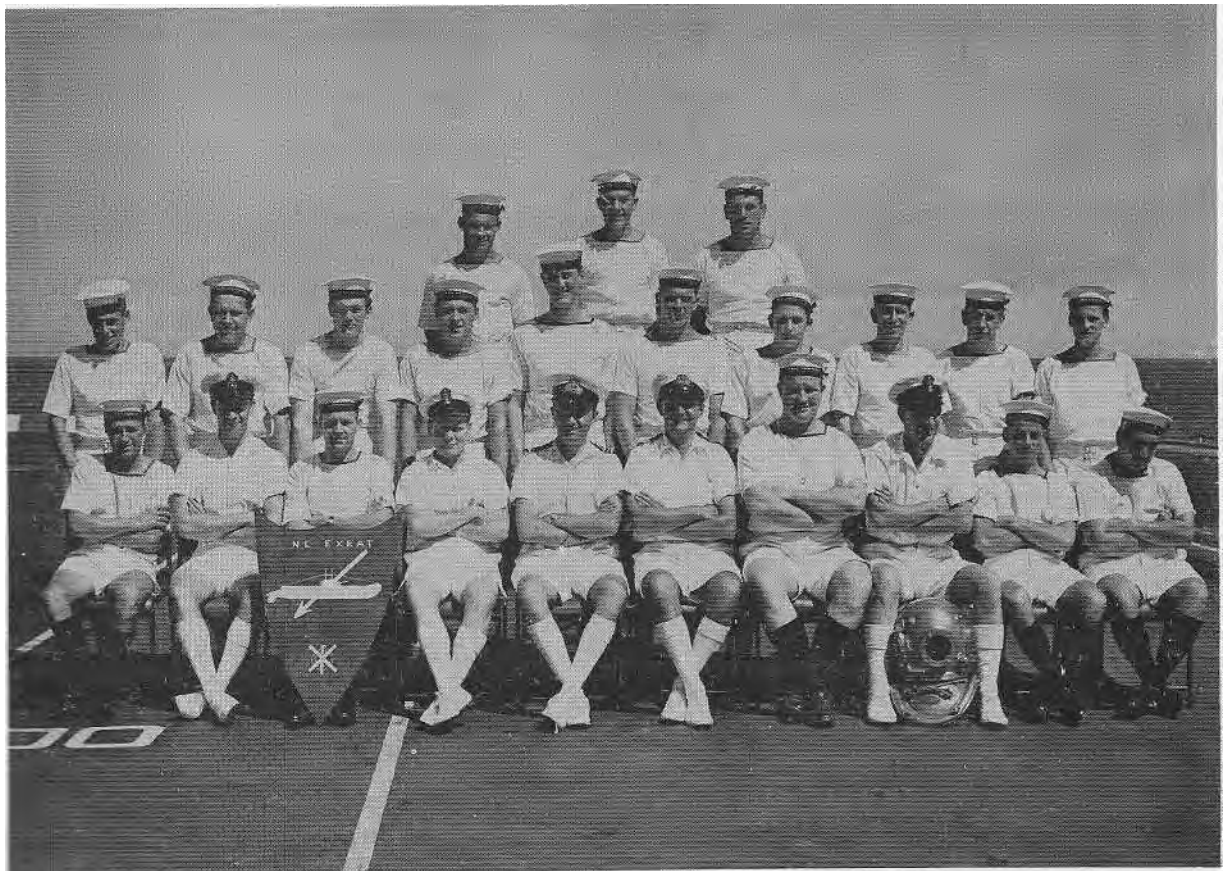


The Asdic ratings have been much more fortunate than most of their opposite numbers in other aircraft carriers, and indeed in some destroyers. We have had two new type asdic sets to play with, the first ship to have them, and we had to devise our own operating procedure. Our large dome has meant that we have been able to "ping" at high speed, though the T.A.S.O. has been bottom of the popularity poll with the Captain and Navigating Officer because speed has had to be reduced to eight knots to raise or lower the dome.

We have had various types of torpedoes fired at us for trial purposes and during exercise "Shop Window"; they were not meant to hit, of course, and they didn't, but one homing torpedo took a fancy to us and ran on the surface after us, giving the Captain cause to look reproachfully at the T.A.S.O. who was thinking far worse things about the Torpedo Trials Base ashore!

T. A. S.

Leading Seaman Pink (our U.C.1.) and his team operated for hours with the new submarine "porpoise" during "Shop Window." (We even took some tape recordings for the boffins in case they didn't believe us.) Our "ping" must have scared the submarines during the big N.A.T.O. exercises because *Victorious* emerged unscathed: one submarine did cheat through and claimed to have torpedoed us when we were out of the exercise! The U.W. ratings also had a go in the Asdic Control Room because we have not got enough U.C.'s to man all the sets. A.B. Cadd kept the compartments immaculately clean. O.A. Aylward and El. Mech. Bushell kept things going extremely well, including giving the T.A.S.O. fishing practice trying to recover a "T" spanner from the bottom of the dome. One of them also kept him fit by having a small flood once and making him spring from 02 deck down to 9 deck and back!



Mention should also be made at this stage of our winged colleagues from 824 A/S Helicopter Squadron, Lt.-Cdr. (O) (T.A.S.) L. Reynolds, P.O. T.A.S.I. (Aircrew) Cooke and eight U.C. Birdmen. They were with us for a year until the squadron disbanded because repeated engine failures caused too many choppers to dunk themselves in the water.

824's bad luck was bad luck too for the U.W. ratings who could not do much with their beautiful homing torpedoes. We pulled them out regularly when open to visitors and for Navy Days and we kept all sorts of distinguished visitors from the Defence Minister of Persia downwards happily employed making the homing gear operate by jangling a bunch of keys in front of the nose unit. But, unfortunately, like the proverbial bathing suit, the tinfish never got wet.

Of course, this meant that there was a prolonged assault by all departments on our tiny little Torpedo Body Room.

A few things did get in, in spite of the staunch rearguard action by the T.A.S.I., P.O. Wilson, and the U.W.1., Leading Seaman Adamson. T.A.S.O.2., Lt. (SD) (TAS) C. H. Downing, listed a few of them to amuse himself.

Concert party stage and proscenium.

Marryott's chariot.

Cat and litter of kittens (no liberty allowed in the U.S.A. by the Port M.O. because they were not inoculated).

Scimitar drop tanks.

Various crates of spares.

Anne Hathaway's Cottage.

Exped. canoes.

About 2 miles of coconut matting.

Spare bunks.

30 Hangar tables.

Children's party slide.

Loads of private effects from lucky R.A. men abroad (one P.O. had two refrigerators!).

We hope to be able to see the torpedoes one of these days! In spite of all this, the minute standing T.A.S. party of one U.C., one Diver, one cat and kitten and two U.W.s kept all the compartments so clean that the Captain singled them out for high praise.

Of course we have all been grossly misemployed in accordance with best carrier custom. Lt.-Cdr. M.O. Taylor became the Chief Troglodyte spending his time in harbour as Mate of Between Decks (Tweeny) and at sea during exercises locked in the Operations Room. Lt. Downing, a Gunner enthusiast(?) was Splash Target Marking Officer. A.B. Street, the Writer, has of course been Messdeck Office Writer.

The Diver i has had Boats, Dining Halls and is now also Between Decks. The U.W.s have had more than their fair share of time in the laundry, as messmen, or in the General Mess Party. So as you see, we get around.

Missing from the photograph are L.S. Kay, A.B.s Mathews, Grove and Monkman, O.S. Duff and Lee, who were locked in the laundry and other places. Also missing of course are L.S. Guider and Davies and A.B.s Dauber, Owers, and Grant who have left us.

During the Commission (up to going to print) L.S. Pink, A.B. Owers, A.B. Mitchell, got married; and little Torpedomen were born to T.A.S.O., "T.A.S.O.", T.A.S.I., L.S. Pink, L.S. Kay, A.B. Cadd, A.B. Newman, A.B. Grove. The future of the T.A.S. Branch is thus assured.



*Ships Diving Team.*