



COMMUNICATION DIVISION

WHEN LOOKING BACK on a commission, a man will tend to think of those events which directly affected him, be they happy or otherwise. No-one can really describe this process because it will vary so much with each person.

A long time ago, on 14th January 1958, we joined *Victorious* not knowing quite what to expect.

None of us really knew each other and all of us had some doubts about serving in an enormous aircraft-carrier.

There were difficulties during those first few months but they are best forgotten.

The Buntings led by Chief Yeoman Cox soon settled in to 50 Mess, next door to the R.M. Barracks, and within a very short time they had turned what had been a bare space into one of the best messes in the ship — if not the best, with apologies to the Sparkers.

All of them will remember watchkeeping on the Flag Deck with the funnel fumes impregnating the air so that by the end of a watch one's mouth and lungs seemed coated with strong sulphurous soot. No-one ever resolved the problem and the Buntings rather thought that the smoke-stack should have been elsewhere.

The funnel in fact remained the *bête-noir* of the VS Department. In spite of all the efforts by Yeoman Ryan and Yeoman Jackson, it was quite impossible to keep up with the soot on the Flagdeck.

The Sea-Ensign after only a day at sea would look quite black and, as for Flag Foxtrot, it just did not stand a chance. There was that splendid occasion when the Chief Yeoman substituted a tin Flag Foxtrot. It really was most effective until the halyard broke and Foxtrot almost decapitated an unfortunate Bunting below.

But enough of funnel and fumes.

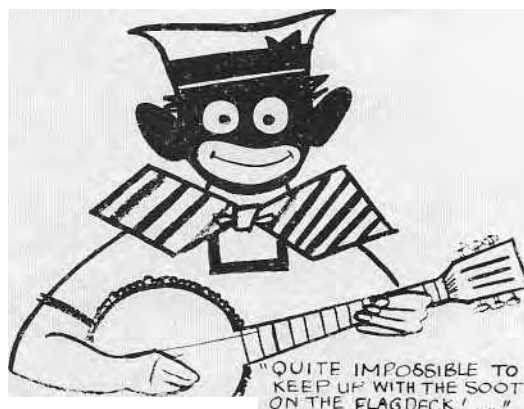
In the MSO, Yeoman Stevens strove valiantly to master the art of signal distribution and, of course, of spelling. He even provided a dictionary to help certain members of his staff to find hope and salvation.

Facts and figures never really mean very much but it is interesting to note that the MSO used six million sheets of paper, presumably all on distribution.

A final word on Buntings. Whatever the Sparkers may say to the contrary they still do send and receive a lot of signals by VS. In eighteen months, they exchanged identities with no less than 800 merchant ships.

And now, a few words on the Sparkers. Of course, we all know that without them the ship would simply come to a halt. So much depends on them.

Their lives generally revolved around the BWO. There, led by Lt.(SD) (C) Arthur Howell and directed by C.R.S. Clarke, they worked and slaved through no less than six major NATO exercises in the course of one year.



In spite of the odd strong words of criticism, they managed their business with considerable success. After all, was it not at the "Dawn Breeze" analysis that C. in C. Home Fleet stated that it was the first exercise in which no-one had complained about the communications. *Victorious* was OTC, but of course!

There were snags, though, all of which will be remembered by the Radio Supervisors. The hours rushed by as the internal interference on Radio Circuits mounted and transmitters, filters and receivers were checked and rechecked. R.S. Eilbeck and Lucas will both have vivid memories of those tempestuous times.

As for C.R.S. Lowe, he will never, never forget VHF.

Actually, the *Victorious* BWO was rather different from others. It could have qualified as an inventors' paradise with Lt. Howell contributing one idea after another all of which proved to be remarkably successful. Emmett of "Punch" repute would have enjoyed himself.

There were, of course, the more boring and routine aspects of life, cleaning stations, dining-hall attendants and, sometimes, stores parties. These were the un-

popular aspects of life — but they all had their rewards. Who could have wanted a more sparkling UTR or LRR, and what about all those big eats in the Dining Hall?

The Sparkers were also responsible for the Telephone Exchange and they could pride themselves in giving the most excellent and polite service on any ship in the Navy. Many were the congratulations received.

And finally, a word on Crypto. This did not exactly fall within the direct sphere of influence of the Sparkers because Yeoman Mawdsley was in charge. However, they provided the labour and the Crypto Office was in the BWO.

Let's turn now to one final field in which our communicators were real experts. All those runs ashore certainly proved their worth because in the course of two years there were no less than eleven weddings. As for Daddies, clearly the Sparkers made the most of their leave because a bevy of brand-new Communicators of both sexes joined the world, all of them QRK/QSA5.

Afloat and ashore, we remained strong, vigorous and perhaps a little sad at seeing the end of the commission.



EVERYONE knows, or should know, the Dental Department, with the morning queue of cheerful patients awaiting treatment. There are two fully equipped Surgeries complete with staff, and in spite of Steam catapults overhead, a gun mounting just aft, and the movement of the ship, all Dental operations can be undertaken. Perhaps our most satisfactory case, a year ago, being the immediate and successful replacement of a Central tooth for a Junior M.E. which had been knocked out by falling down a ladder.

Nearly 800 teeth have been extracted, 180 new dentures fitted, but, far more important, 5,000 teeth have been saved by permanent fillings, one unlucky A.B. requiring 38 in 16 months.

Dentures have been lost, and many broken, including one reported by a Naval Airman as "blown over the side by Jet blast." The usual reason given for breakage is "biting a pusser's roll at breakfast," but this is unfair to the bakery, as the history probably goes back to the last run ashore, more dentures being broken in the pocket than in the mouth. Whatever the cause we make a repair, although it was not possible to do so for the P.O.M.E. who sent his denture to the laundry in his overalls pocket; it was returned scrubbed, boiled and ironed flat.

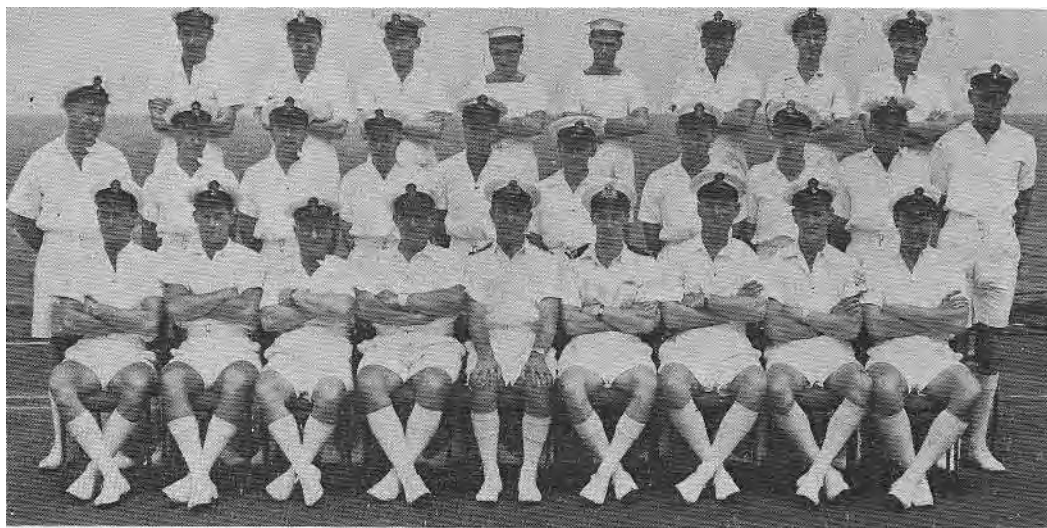
Dental materials have many uses; one of the lesser known side lines is the repair of Spectacle frames. The Engineers like our mirrors, model makers want old drills, and stones and polishers have helped to keep 984 working.

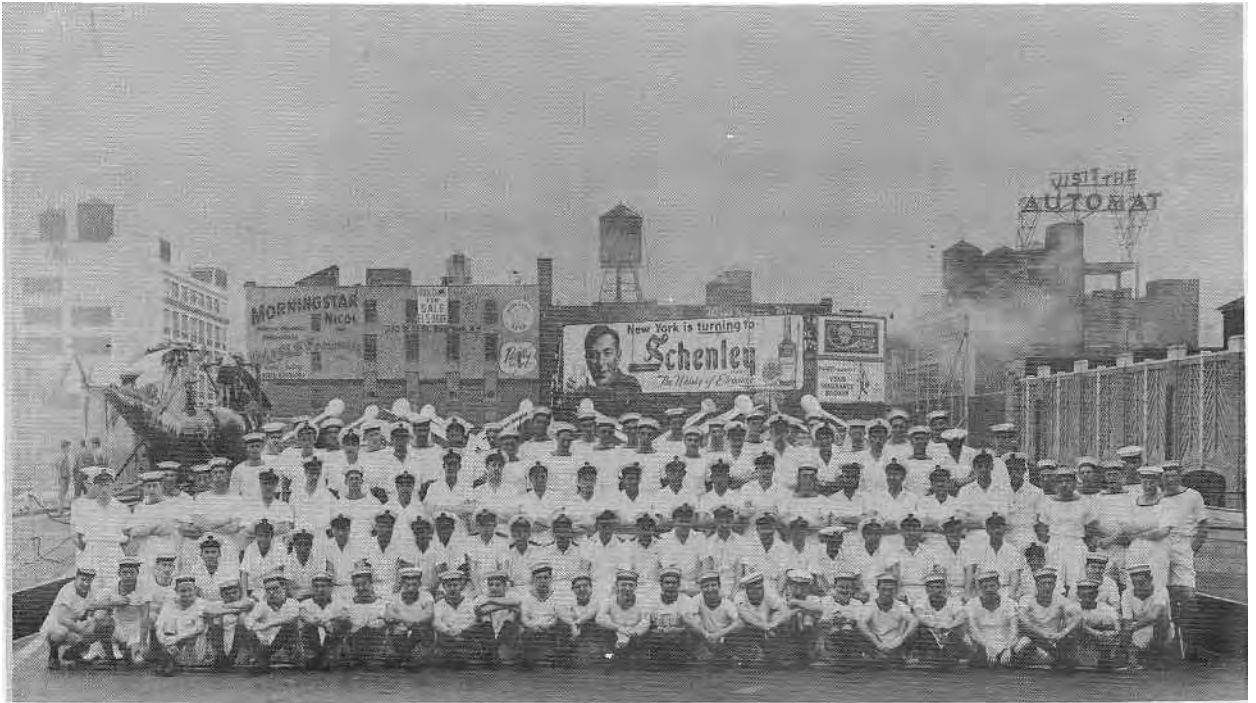
At night when the busy day is over and the drill switched off, the sound of music can be heard from No. 1 Surgery as Danny, perhaps our best known member, practises his castanets, or rehearses his dance for the next ship's concert.



The Biter Bit

DENTAL DEPT^T NOTES





THE ELECTRICAL DEPT

IT WAS NOT UNTIL we stepped aboard the "thing" that we realised H.M.S. *Victorious* was a Landing Craft-Tank, at least that was the experience (some called it luck) of early arrivals to the department. H.M.S. *Tracker* was being used as an accommodation (breathe that word lightly) ship for *Victorious* and presented the Electrical Department with its first maintenance task, being Canadian-built she gave us more than our fair share of problems.

From acorns, oak-trees grow and so the rather small department of two officers and four ratings watched the electrical equipment being "poured in" and the numbers grow to our present complement of 7 Officers, 49 Senior Ratings and 89 Junior Ratings, including the 984/CDS continuous watchkeeping radio party.

During modernisation the ship was fitted with some 800 miles of cable, generating capacity increased from 2,400 KW to 4,200 KW, some 10,000 lighting fittings, duplicated large 60 cycle and 400 cycle A.C. generating plants. Types 984/CDS, 963, 957, 500 lines auto exchange, 900 lines comprehensive communications, and 500 lines of sound powered communication.

The acceptance of the above "lot" was preceded by Final Electrical Trials; from this we somehow produced about 5,000 items which required attention, ranging from reversal of a tally to reversal of a T/G armature with its spare. The E.E.M. Department Portsmouth must at this stage be accorded a tribute for their first-class workmanship and co-operation with the department, resulting in these 5,000 items or at least 4,955 being finally cleared.

The progressing of these 5,000 items, the setting to work of all the equipment, increased the tempo considerably and at times the candle was lit at both ends and in the middle. The commissioning day (14th January 1958) was, to the department, just another milestone in that it brought the balance of junior-rates (bewitched, bothered and bewildered is hardly the phrase) to complete the complement.

Second February 1958 was the real test when, at last, the tugs pulled us off the dockyard wall and things really had to work. Somehow, no-one quite knows how, we left no "visiting cards" at either Fort Blockhouse or Sally Port, and proceeded to Spithead under our own power to commence the sea trials. The flight deck was manned by a motley collection including some 90 of E.E.M.s Department (or to be precise 89, as one of them was a brass-band enthusiast who joined up with the ship's volunteer band disguised as a P.O.) who must have witnessed the proceedings with satisfaction — a job well done. We had the good fortune of this team living aboard for these sea trials and between us, involving at times rather long and arduous hours, we countered every problem as it arose. We can at this stage of the commission assure H.M.S. *Hermes* that an A & A to fit bunks inside the 984 aerial is not a requirement after all.

We have provided a goodly quota of players at all forms of sport in the ship and Fleet Teams, and on an interpart basis we reached the semi-finals of the soccer and deck hockey championships — the usual "Hard luck" story follows. As regards the swimming competition, well, our last competitor is now out of the water, I understand, and drying himself off (you will notice that the "Roll of Honour" follows this paragraph).

Roll of Honour

- (i) Promoted to S/Lt. S.D. C.R.E.A. Luck, R.E.A. Kay, E.A. Dore.
- (ii) Passed for A/E.A.3 E.A. Tucker, E.A. Berry, E.A. Capstick.
- (iii) Passed for A/R.E.A.3 R.E.A. Adams, R.E.A. Short.
- (iv) Passed for A/P.O.El. L.E.M. Giblett, L.E.M. Hynes, L.E.M. Dinwoodie, L.E.M. Plomer, L.E.M. North, L.E.M. Gibbs.
- (v) Passed for A/P.O.R.El. L.R.E.M. Roake, L.R.E.M. Johnson, L.R.E.M. Kelly, L.R.E.M. Green, L.R.E.M. Pinfield, L.R.E.M. Spiby.
- (vi) Passed for A/L.E.M. E.M. English, E.M. Montgomery, E.M. McKenzie, E.M. Bright.
- (vii) Passed for A/L.R.E.M. R.E.M. Mathews, R.E.M. Thorpe, R.E.M. Martin, R.E.M. Robinson, R.E.M. Fleming, R.E.M. Day.

L.R.E.M. Day represented the Portsmouth Command Rifle Team.

Denials of Rumour

(i) The E.M.R. was not used as a Parisien cabaret during Portsmouth Navy Days, merely as a female drying room after a heavy shower.

(ii) The C.R.E.A. did not propose that the U.T.R. be permitted to burn down, merely that the communication rating should tune the burning transmitter for maximum smoke in the aerial and minimum flame in the grid.

(iii) The Electrical Officer was not presented with three hard-baked, crisp, black and tan eggs for his breakfast following a fire in the water boiler in No. 1 Unit Switchboard. Those responsible shall remain nameless, the sand in their egg-timers having run out once already.

(iv) The D.L.O. did not take advantage of the 1st Floor Address in the Rue Le Sully, Toulon, offered, complete with full length, freshly dhobeyed, night shirt by the Acting E.A. 4th Class, about to take his confirmation examination.

It is not easy to write a thrilling account of life in the Electrical Department. Our motto is "*anything* for a quiet life." By that we mean that we try to find out what is going wrong with the equipment before the users found out themselves with the inevitable cry of "Where are those . . . electricians ?" If we have been beaten to the punch on occasions, we hope a call at any time of the day to 2 Change over switch room (Ext. 236 VICOS 0305 refers!) has produced the required service.

In conclusion we would like to mention that we are not too proud to accept any "backsheesh" that our shipmates may care to give for services rendered. To avoid any possible embarrassment, we have decided to have a standard scale of charges and to copy the Chinese way of paying their doctors — the patients only paying when they are well. The standard charge is therefore 3d. per day per compartment when there are no defects. All our "Silver Ghosts" will be finished in light green to show that they are an Electrical Department cleaning responsibility!



THE SHIPWRIGHTS DEPT

THE FIRST MEMBER of the present Shipwrights staff joined *Victorious* on 9th May 1956. At that time the ship was in "D" Lock at the North End of Portsmouth Dockyard. Looking back, it seems incredible that the Dockyard completed the ship and *Victorious* finally sailed as planned.

The Messdecks were just empty spaces, paint lines on the bare steel decks marked the proposed positions of kit lockers, bunks, wardrobes and all the other items of equipment fitted into a typical mess. The Wardroom, situated on 5 Deck, was a void compartment filled up with thousands of sheets of plywood.

The advance party had plenty of tasks to keep them occupied. One of the many problems that had to be solved was the safe stowage of over 7,000 kit lockers and 500 sets of cabin furniture keys. In fact it was keys by the bunch, boxful and, finally, the sackful !!!

By 14th January 1958 the staff was complete except for one Ch. Shpt and two Shpts. who were to join later.

Commissioning day, 14th January, saw all the Domestic services turned on for the first time. Needless to say, a queue quickly formed outside the Shipwrights Office to report leaking pipe joints, defective bathroom fittings and slowly flooding compartments.

By working right through the "Dogs" the staff were able to put right all the major snags and next day life was peaceful again.

The two fifth class Shpts, loaned to assist over the difficult commissioning period, were drafted back to R.N.B. (P) an hour or so before the ship sailed for the first sea trials. On arrival in Barracks, these two Shpts. were very surprised to be handed a "Draft Chit" marked *Victorious*. "To Complete Complement."

A short bus ride to Lee-on-Solent and an hour's flight in a Chopper solved the problem of how to get these two men back on board the ship, now steaming in mid-Channel.

So to Shpts. Longstaff and Newman go the distinction of being the first men to be drafted to *Victorious* BY AIR this commission.

With 90% of the fitted furniture constructed of aluminium, the staff soon became accustomed to working with sheet metal. The "POP" Rivet gun and guillotine slowly replaced the more traditional tools of the trade as the staff began to manufacture alloy bookcases and sets of shelves.

The fixing of Fibre Glass insulation also had to be mastered. In fact, so many new materials were used in the reconstruction of *Victorious* that it seems amazing that the Navy has managed in the past without such lavish fittings.

On any ship there are days when the unexpected suddenly upsets the daily routine of work. *Victorious* was no exception.

The first time an oiler attempted to come alongside, it cleared all the guardrails along the starboard after gun deck. The slow steady grinding sound of tortured steel giving way as the bridge of the oiler crushed against our ship's side will long be remembered. So will the amount of extra work involved in repairing the damage before the ship sailed the following Monday.

On another occasion, as the ship was about to secure to a buoy in Plymouth Sound, the buoy jumpers were suddenly thrown into the sea as the buoy overturned with the Blacksmiths and Shpts sitting astride it.

Even when wearing a service lifebelt it is difficult to keep afloat if one's pockets are full of lead pellets.

During our first trip across the Bay, the majority of the tables in the two Dining halls were severely damaged as the ship rolled badly to port one dinner-time.

Although the runs ashore at Toulon and Messina were enjoyed by all, the highlight of the commission was the American Visit during July and August 1959.

The entire staff worked hard to get the ship looking her best for the occasion. They also had every right to be proud of the "Anne Hathaway Cottage" which formed the centre-piece of attraction during the ship's official parties at Boston and New York. This huge set piece, rigged in the after lift well, captured the real "Olde Worlde Atmosphere" and was greatly admired by all the Americans who saw it.

Sport also had its place in the life of the staff. Shpt. Sub.-Lt. Rodgers, the assistant Shpt. Officer, and Shpt. Topham, both represented the ship at the 1958 Command Rifle meeting.

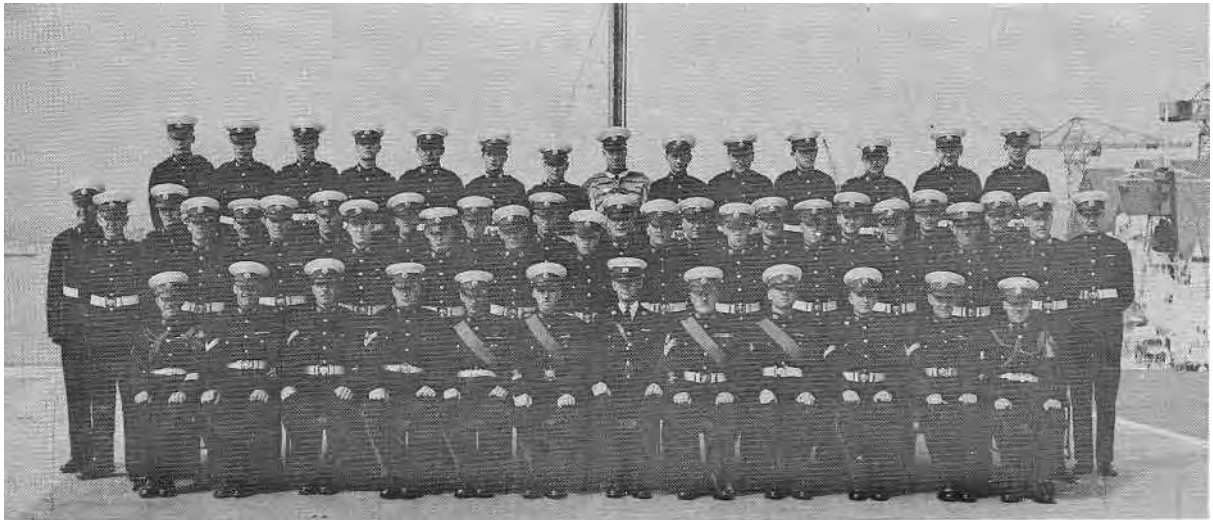
Others took part in Ski-ing and Sailing Expeds whenever the opportunity arose to get away for a few days.

At the time of writing, the first of the old Guard have been relieved, among them Shpt. Lt.-Cdr. W. Clayton. To him and all the others who have left, those remaining wish every success in their new appointments.

To those who will shortly be joining *Victorious*, we wish the best of luck for the next Commission, and hope that we have not left too many snags for them to sort out.



THE ROYAL MARINES



THE ROYAL MARINES detachment formed at Eastney in November 1957. Those who had expected to be joining a large number of others for pre-embarkation training were soon to find they were forming the first "new look" detachment. This consisted of one officer and thirty-four, including six N.C.O.s and two buglers, and was joined a year later by a band of eighteen. One wet day in January the detachment paraded before the Captain in the drill shed at Eastney and then made ready to embark a few days later. On Commissioning day the detachment marched through Guildhall Square and past Portsmouth station, turned towards the Royal Naval barracks where it was to join the remainder of the ship's company and found the dockyard railway gates closed. Progress was temporarily halted but the march to the dockyard from the barracks was not delayed. In the afternoon the first guard of the commission was paraded prior to the commissioning ceremony for various flag officers. After the ceremony we commenced the various duties in the ship.

During the next two weeks everyone settled in; the senior N.C.O.s learned to live without a Sergeant's mess, the four butchers learned how far it is from the after cold rooms to the forward galley and the six ex-recruits learned what ship routine is like and what polishing and scrubbing really means. Having so few Marines, all had eventually to do most of the duties in turn. This was particularly important so as to ration out the amount of watch keeping required of each man; forty per cent of the commission was the time each Marine could expect to be working twenty-four about.

During the ship's first period at sea much time was devoted to gunnery training. Nearly the whole detachment is required to serve the two 3 inch mountings and so all were soon at the loader and on the guns. While the ship was on trials and measuring her speed and turning circle off Arran, the detachment had their first opportunity of a day ashore. Despite the weather this was a welcomed break and soon reminded us how quickly one can become unfit. This was followed in

April by ten days at Browdown training and firing the annual range course. The main gain was a healthy brown tan which had to last the next period at sea, when so few had the opportunity of ever seeing fresh air.

The summer passed with weekdays at sea and-week-ends at Spithead with one break at Le Harve when all had a good run — some to Paris. Two days were snatched in September to camp out at Midhurst and keep our hand in at shooting. The locals were surprised by our presence on Midhurst common (or were they ?) for two young ladies walked into the camp in the dark and explained they were looking for a missing cat. The Sergeant-Major soon cleared them away! However, the O.C.R.M. found a cat nearby a few minutes later so perhaps the Sergeant Major had been hard on the girls after all.

Later in the month we sailed to the Mediterranean where the detachment managed to get ashore twice in Malta. Once was by helicopter for a day's exercise and the other was between Christmas and New Year when three days were spent at Ghain Tuffieha. Weapon training, section tactics and football made a pleasant change from watchkeeping, scrubbing and



runs in Floriana. This period in the Med. was broken up by visits to Toulon and Messina, where we found that the locals appreciated the jetty sentries marching up and down more than the sentries themselves. Away from the distractions of weekend leaves everyone settled down to ship routine more happily at this time.

Home after Christmas was popular with all of us. At the end of January the band joined us from Deal where they had been working up together since the previous October. Besides their musical duties they had to learn their action duties. This was in the Aircraft Direction Room pushing buttons controlling the tote. They learned the job quickly and during the

exercises the following month showed how their enthusiasm paid off. Perhaps they should be wearing RP badges as well as the lyre on their sleeves.

Prior to the exercise we met up with *Eagle's* detachment at Gibraltar. We were defeated by them in tug-o-war but managed to beat them and *Gambia* in the shooting for the Home Fleet Rifle Trophy. The previous year we had come second to *Centaur*. The band took the air for the first time when, with *Tyne* and *Eagle*, they delighted the crowds watching the fleet football final at half-time.

Back in England after the exercise, a week was spent at Browdown again firing the range course. A new series of practices was tried for the first time with mixed success but quite a few managed to earn some extra shillings. During this week we lived in what used to be the Sergeants' mess and shared the camp with some sappers who were levelling much of the ground on the far side of the road, to fill in the water where the mosquitoes breed. The view from the camp looked a lot different than when it belonged to the Royal Marines.

The ship then sailed for Rosyth for a week's stay. During the time there the band, with several amateurs, started to prepare for the American cruise. It was expected that they would be required to Beat Retreat on a number of occasions and much work was needed to ensure the amateurs were up to standard. With their help the size of the band was increased from eighteen to twenty-nine. The band proper, with that of the *Tyne*, performed at Oslo on two evenings as their exercise ashore during the Home Fleet's visit to Denmark and Norway. The detachment, with that of *Gambia's*, had a day exercising with a company of Danish infantry some distance from Aarhus. *Victorious* sailed for flying while we were away and so we made the journey to Oslo in *Tyne*. The change of surroundings was most marked and the impressions gained by those who were seeing a ship other than a carrier for the first time were varied. In Oslo contact was made with some United States marines. A splendid time was had by those who spent the evenings with them and they provided an introduction for many more pleasant days with U.S. marines on their home ground.

After a week's stay in Portsmouth we were on our way to the States. This was the first occasion some people in the ship realised there was a Royal Marines detachment on board. The band paraded several times for Beating Retreat both on hoard and ashore. Wearing blues in the hot and humid climate was uncomfortable but much appreciated by those watching. One of these occasions was at Plymouth,

Mass., where there was a most appreciative crowd watching the band. It was the first time a R.M. band had ever visited the town and indeed the first time a British service party had visited since before the war. The detachment competed against the U.S. Marines at Camp Elmore in Norfolk at .22 but were not successful, and again against the detachment of the U.S.S. *Boston* where a similar results was levelled when we beat them at softball. Several evenings were spent in the company of U.S. Marines which resulted in quite a few of ours having to spend some of their I.U.A. making up their kit.

The American trip was the climax of the commission. All enjoyed the time away and received much hospitality and met new friends. The months before we sailed were spent preparing for the visit and the stays in the three ports called for hard work and hard play. We now look forward to hearing what our future drafts are to be, but can look back on a happy commission in which we all have learned a great deal about life in a modern carrier. Several things have been different from other ships, in particular the small size of the detachment, but the experience has been most interesting.



THE NAVIGATION DEPT



INERTIAL NAVIGATION not being available, even in Vic, conventional techniques, albeit highly polished, have well sufficed. Our two stalwarts of the commission, "N" himself "with Battenburg in hand he waits" and C.P.O. Woods 35 years C.S.; he was drawing before most of us were born.

In the beginning the Channel was our beat. Ships everywhere, into wind, out of wind, round the stern of that tanker, across the bows of the coaster, discreet circuit of an ocean giant — He's bigger than us. What's that . . . ship doing? The Casquets ! About turn — oh no, not that lot again, that's the third time tonight.

Down below the advantages of a centre screw and rudder were quickly appreciated and the ship disciplined to creep about under perfect control when required. On the gangways the division between the First Lieutenant's brightwork and ours was soon fixed and has since continued to move ever outward. Several fine beards on the gangway are believed to owe their gloss to bluebell.

Further afield — the Med. — memories of figures of eight round Lampedusa and Linosa. First hints of the temperatures to come in the F.S.P. Was it just