



AMBUSCADE

MONTHLY-FAMILY



NEWSLETTER.

FAMILY NEWSLETTER NO 1

Welcome to the Family Newsletter. Some of you whose husbands/sons/fathers/uncles/nephews/friends were in AMBUSCADE for the STANAVFORLANT trip last year will remember this paper with affection - but for our new readers, welcome. We hope that you will enjoy the Newsletter, and we like to think as we float about, homesick and seasick and looking forward to being home in December, that you will read it with interest and that it will help you to keep up to date with our progress around the world.

I would also like to say that all letters, articles, poems, drawings or other contributions will be very gratefully received by our hard-pressed editorial staff, and I hope that the next edition of the Newsletter will carry a good proportion of news and views from home.

And now the....

STORY SO FAR

HMS AMBUSCADE sailed for the Deployment on 31 May 1978. The Deployment group consists of Her Majesty's Ships:

- BLAKE (a Cruiser with 4 Helicopters)
- HERMIONE (a Leander class frigate)
- LEANDER (another Leander class frigate, surprise, surprise but with no gun)
- JUNO (Yet another Leander class frigate)
- AMBUSCADE
- CONQUEROR (a Nuclear submarine)

To support these ships we have:

- TIDESPING (a tanker)
- GREENROVER (a slightly smaller tanker)
- STROMNESS (a stores ship)
- RESURGENT (an ammunition ship).



HOPe YOUr MISSING ME
AS MUCH AS I MISS YOU



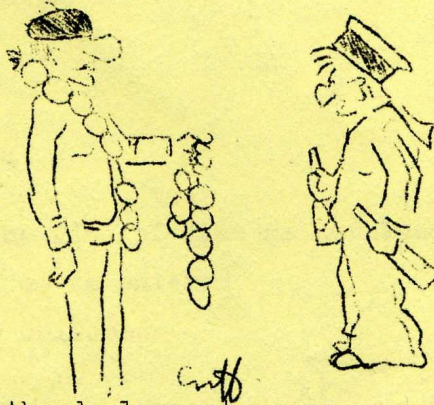
There are several reasons for having a Deployment. In the first place it gets a lot of men away from home waters for the first time. That may not strike you all as a good idea, but remember that a lot of people joined the Navy to travel and to see the world. The Deployment is also a goodwill and flag-showing operation. We are visiting a lot of places where they have respect, affection and loyalty for Great Britain, and it is worthwhile maintaining this high standing by an occasional visit. Another reason for the Deployment is that it exercises our organisation and ability to work out of home waters. This is getting more difficult as our bases abroad dwindle to nothing. Finally the Deployment is an opportunity to exercise with and learn from (and teach, of course) those navies which will be our allies in any future wars. This is an important aspect of our trip, and one which must benefit the Navy as a Defence Force.

So there it is. That's why we're here. But between all the exercising and hard work where do we go....?



BRITAIN'S FIGHTING FORCE

THE VISITS TO BREST



These, our first visits on the deployment, ~~were spaced either side of a~~ French Naval Exercise called 'SUROIT'. The main purpose of the visits was to provide an opportunity for all the participants in the exercise to get together, find out what they were going to do and then finally in the second visit to talk about what they did and why. Hence the visits were not destined to be great runs ashore for everybody.

Brest itself is the traditional major French Naval Port, situated in Brittany. It's the most western part of France. Protected by the surrounding lands, the only entrance to the harbour is by a narrow channel watched over by now derelict fortresses built in the time of Richleau. The coastline is very rugged, constantly battered by the Atlantic storms, faintly reminiscent of the Cornish Coast. Inland it is a very pretty part of France, fairly sparsely populated and mainly farming country, much like Dorset on a larger scale.

The people are not of traditional French origin, they still retain some of the Breton styles although the Breton language is now just about extinct. The Breton people originate from those Celts who fled from the Saxon invaders in the ninth century to the safety of Brittany and there established themselves. Even now there are many similarities between Welsh, Cornish and Breton traditions and languages.

The city of Brest itself is walled, protected by the main fort overlooking the harbour that now houses the local Admiral. The streets were much as any other European city except for the prices - often 3 times the English price!

The second visit was as most of you will remember much shortened because of our unexpected arrival back in Devonport for a very quick engine change and instant return. The Captain was due at a reception at 6 p.m. with the local Admiral, and having made best speed from home we arrived at the breakwater at 5.50 and alongside our host ship "KERSAINT" at 6pm exactly, at 6.10 the Captain and his party were being greeted by a very surprised Admiral.

My only treasured memory of Brittany was a beautiful seafood meal - the great local speciality to which I was treated, initially unexpected as information was that all seafoods had been contaminated by the oil from Amoco Cadiz on Brittanys north shore - thankfully not so!

From Brest we sailed out into the Atlantic to truly start our mammoth trip

BERMUDA

Our arrival in Bermuda on the 24th of June was heralded by a torrential rainstorm. Everybody on the deck as we entered the Harbour got their clean white uniforms soaking wet.

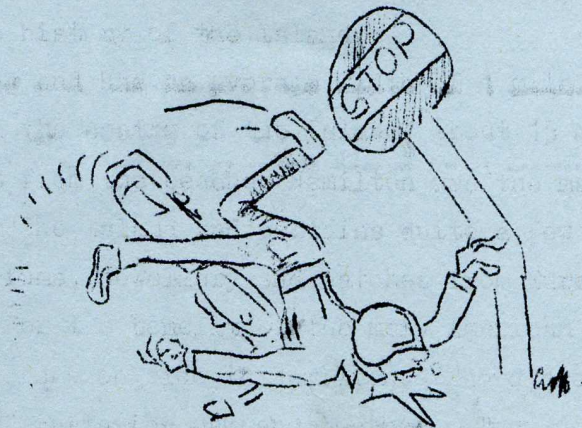
The rain it raineth every day
Upon the just and unjust fellar
But mostly on the just because
The unjust hath the just's umbrella.



We berthed alongside HMS LEANDER at IRELAND ISLAND which is at the North Westerly tip of Bermuda. Ireland Island used to be the Royal Naval Dockyard in Bermuda and now contains a museum showing the maritime history of the Island.

Bermuda itself is about 25 miles long and has an average width of 1 mile. Hamilton is the capital and is situated in the centre of the Island, about 15 miles by road from where we were berthed. Apart from the beaches Hamilton was the main attraction. It is the shopping centre for the Island and contains quite a few shops selling expensive luxury goods such as perfume, jewellery and watches from Europe and the United States. These were mainly for the benefit of the many American and Canadian tourists who arrive in Cruise Liners alongside in Hamilton. There are also a number of old English Style Pubs, full of imitation oak and leather. They did, however, sell English beer and proved quite popular.

One of the drawbacks about being berthed alongside in Ireland Island was that it took a long time to travel into town at Bermuda's speed limit of 20 m.p.h. To solve this problem we were provided with a regular ferry service. The ferry was free and the distance by water was a lot less than by road. Also drinks were served on the ferry so the choice of transport was obvious. Another solution to the transport problem was to hire a moped, which was cheap apart from a large deposit. This seemed fine at first and gave one an opportunity to travel freely over the whole Island. After a couple of days though, the drawbacks started to show themselves; people started appearing with grazes and bruises on their arms and legs and we found them limping around the ship. Luckily no one was badly hurt after falling off, but some people learnt a lesson about over exuberant riding.



The beaches were a great attraction and the ship was provided with buses every afternoon to take people to the beach. The beaches on the south side of the Island were especially good with wide expanses of sand, rocks, deep pools and surf. Often changing facilities were available on the beach and there were restaurants nearby so that a whole afternoon and evening could be spent in one place.



There were also a number of coach tours of the Island available and these were popular. Places visited included museums and old forts, caves full of stalagmites and stalactites and Devils Hole which is a deep, natural pool where fish can be caught on a line with no hook.

We were unlucky with the weather during the visit but we were told that it had been raining virtually continuously for five weeks. We did get a couple of fine days however and that made our visit to Bermuda even more worthwhile.

CARTAGENA

Cartagena was a complete contrast to Bermuda. It is an old and historic city, with masses of interesting sights and buildings to see.

The City was founded in 1533 by Don Pedro de Heredia, and was a prime target for raids by expeditions to the Spanish Main. For this reason it was very strongly fortified by the Spanish Crown, and the walls of the city and the Castles protecting it are still there. The strongest fort, the Castle of San Felipe of Barajos, cost 11,000,000 pesos to build, and when the king of Spain got the bill he climbed to the top of his palace and looked out towards America, expecting to see such a huge and expensive fort.

Sir Francis Drake carried out many raids on Cartagena and was once paid 1,000,000 pesos not to burn the City down. The strongroom where Drake used to store all the gold collected on his expeditions before taking it to Europe is still there.

Another interesting building is the Palace of the Inquisition, built in 1770. This Palace has been converted into a museum which was a popular attraction. It contains objects and relics from the pre-Columbian era and from colonial days, and has a torture chamber dating from the days of the Inquisition.

But not everything was perfect about Cartagena - and when we sailed for the Panama Canal we discovered that the food had not agreed with everybody - and the doctor is still treating several cases of diarrhoea. Oh well, you can't have everything!



THE PANAMA CANAL

We went through the Panama Canal on Sunday 9 July. It took over seven hours, from entering the first lock at Gatun at 8 o'clock in the morning to leaving the last lock at half past three in the afternoon.

The Panama Canal is about 50 miles long and consists of 3 sets of locks, one on the Atlantic side to lift the ships up into the centre section of the Canal, and two at the Pacific side to lower them down again. In the centre section is a lake, several miles wide in places, where ships can anchor. After the lake comes a man made channel, cut into solid rock, which leads to the Pacific locks.

The French tried to build the canal in 1880. But they underestimated the size of the task and the heat and disease which decimated their labour force, and after 20 years they gave it up. The Americans took over the job in 1904 and by 1914 the Canal was ready. Since then over $\frac{1}{2}$ million ships have been through.

The largest toll ever for transit was by the Q.E. II. She paid \$ 68,499. The smallest ever was 36 cents for Richard Halliburton who swam the Canal in 1928.

We went through on a clear sunny day. This is unusual, because it nearly always rains at least once every afternoon. So we were all out taking photographs and enjoying the sunshine, and looking forward to getting out into the Pacific. (This is the first time that HMS AMBUSCADE has ever visited the Pacific).

From the Panama to Long Beach is almost three thousand miles, and at the time of writing we have got almost half-way there. We are doing a gentle series of exercises and manoeuvres, but not so strenuously that we can't stop every evening for a swim in the Pacific, or for sunbathing, or for sport on the Flight Deck, or just to admire the dolphins and the flying fish.

