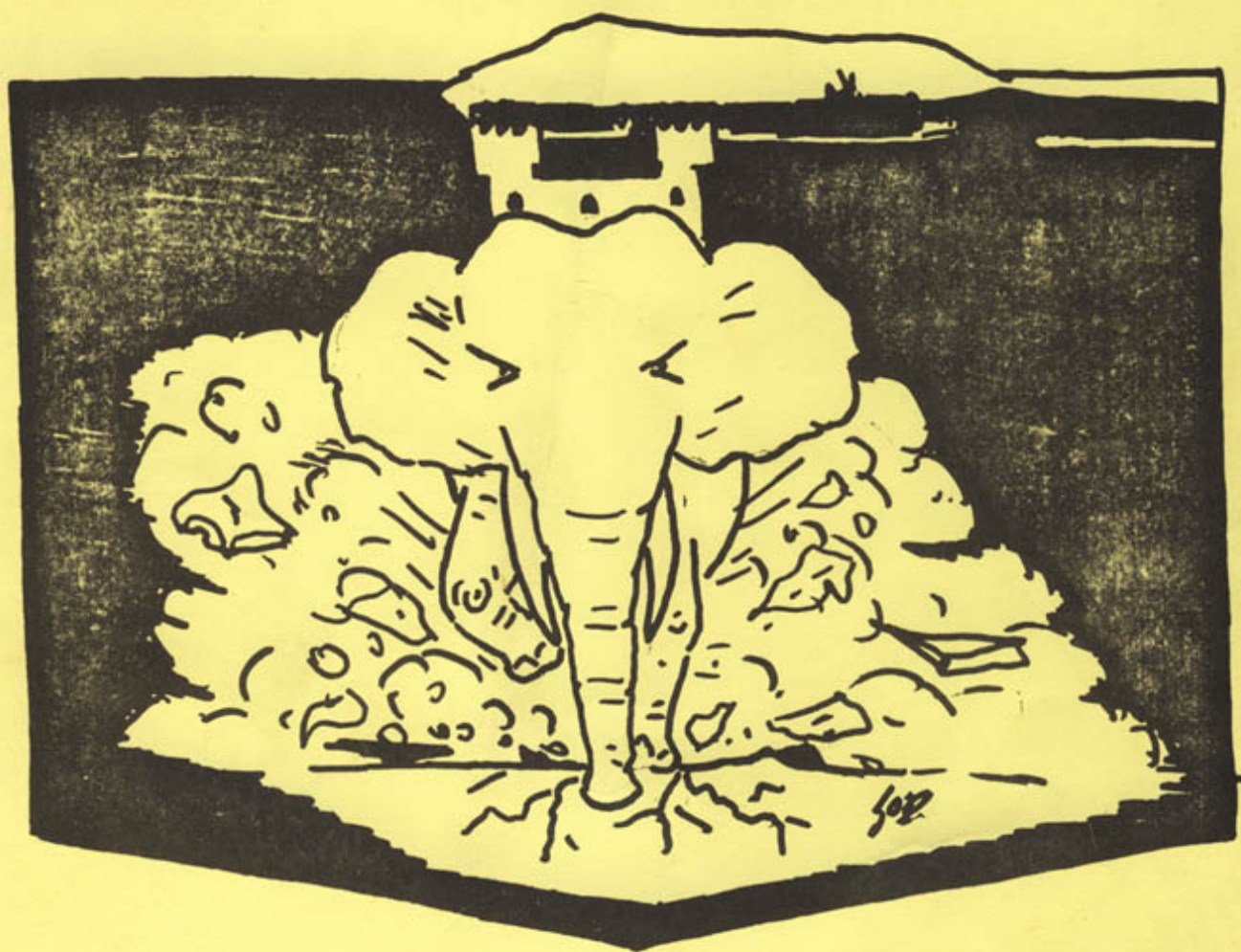


H.M.S. COVENTRY

'GOODBYE PORTLAND'



NEWSLETTER
Summer 1981

FOREWORD

This is the final contribution I will make to the Newsletter. When I leave HMS COVENTRY, it will draw the curtain on the finest appointment of my career. Captain David HART DYKE will join in my place on 30th June 1981.

There have been many changes of Ship's Company during my time in Command and everyone has served the ship well. The first five months of this



year have not been easy; there has been much to do and little glamour in the programme. Nevertheless, the response has been first class and the final week at Portland demonstrated what COVENTRY can achieve.

The autumn will bring a 3 month period in the NATO Squadron. This will be an enjoyable period despite the separation it entails. I know that we can count on the support of our families during this time.

Captain COWARD

The Royal Navy is currently going through a difficult phase. For many of you it will no doubt give cause for concern. I can offer no palliative, but I firmly believe that we must continue to demonstrate our disciplined and professional ability to the general public and our allies.

My best wishes to you all and my thanks for the support you have given to me and to the ship. HMS COVENTRY will always have a very special place in my heart.

Peter COWARD

THE PROGRAMME

Many of our older readers (in time not age) will recall last December, standing in Old Portsmouth, watching, heart swollen with pride, as their tanned and handsome men lined the decks of the returning HMS CONVENTRY. This newsletter is the story of what turned those bronzed demi-Gods into the wan wrecks that crewed the mighty vessel after Portland. Those with weak stomachs or faint hearts are advised to read no further - tales of a ship in DED are never pleasant; tales of Portland are nightmares. So, dear reader, read on if you dare:

After seven months in the exotic East, HMS CONVENTRY (for those who do not know the story of the extra 'N', back numbers of this Newsletter are available at a very reasonable price) berthed in Portsmouth on 8 December 1980. An emotional welcome from the families was quickly followed by a mass exodus to Christmas leave. A few stalwarts were left to "mind the shop" while the remainder of the ship's company spent four weeks enjoying the pleasures of being home.

January saw the ship going into dry dock for the start of a 3 month DED (Docking and Essential Defect period). Most of us have happy memories of this time - eating in a floating galley; two small fires onboard leading to the local Fire Brigade getting their own Bar Numbers in the Chiefs Mess; dockyard mateys swarming over the ship etc etc etc. January also saw a massive change in the ships company. Over 50% of the old faces disappeared and 150 new men had to learn that COVENTRY means Best.

The DED progressed apace. Congratulations are due, particularly to the technical departments, for the hard work and long hours put in during this period. It was all much appreciated, although we fish heads are traditionally backward in praising our "technocrats".

While the mundane business of ship maintenance went on, several events of interest took place:

In March FOF1, Rear Admiral JENKIN, presented the 1980 EW Trophy to HMS COVENTRY. Well done the Gollies.

On April 1st a group from the ship attended the naming in Coventry of the canal boat "Lady Godiva". The boat was partly paid for by funds raised by our ships company doing such stupid things as cycling and canoeing to Coventry! Designed and run for the handicapped, the boat was built by Cammell Lairds apprentices and named by Princess Alice. Our representatives thoroughly enjoyed their visit, which was extended to cover an overnight stay when it was found that city hospitality had left them too "tired" to drive back to Pompey.



Talking to Princess Alice (L to R): Chief KING (asleep), LS HOUGHTON (ear only), LS DUNN, SA HUNT, Lt Cdr PINK, Lt Cdr IRVINE (old Jimmy) and Captain COWARD.

On April 8th the ship was honoured by a visit from the Lord Mayor of Coventry and other dignitaries to present us with funnel badges. These magnificent badges were made by GEC in conjunction with the Coventry Freemans Guild.

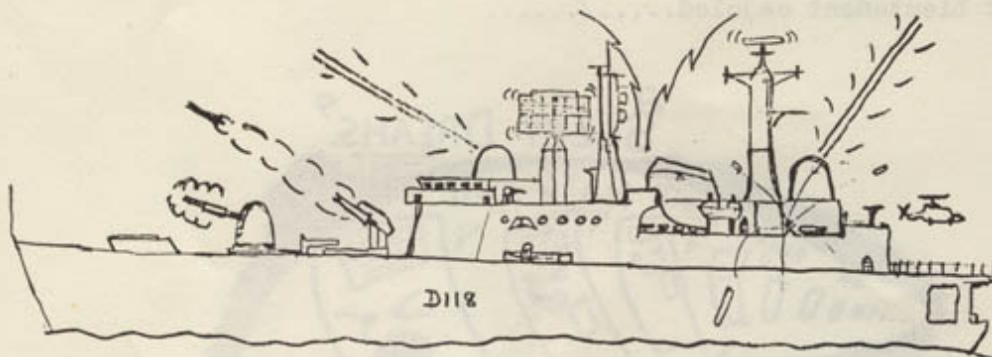
Now finally in place on the funnel, they are the envy of the rest of the Fleet.



While the ship was firmly secured to the dock bottom, the Ops branch continued training in many forms. The 'Asuats' at DRYAD were taken over by our Sonar Team; the whole Command Team underwent a 2 week training package at DRYAD and the dreaded Harbour Training was firmly under COVENTRY's control for a month. Although dull at the time, this training proved invaluable in the months that followed.

The "clankies" and "greenies" hard work paid off when, on 22nd April, the ship sailed exactly on schedule. Waving a traditional sailors salute to striking Civil Servants, we sailed for two weeks of "setting to work". Despite a shortage of stores caused by the strike, our trials were successful -

and so to PORTLAND



Although close to that well known holiday resort of Weymouth, the aims of Portland are quite dissimilar. COVENTRY visited Portland for a 3 week COST (Continuation Operational Sea Training). During this time the staff at Portland (the "Green Fouly Brigade" to their friends) were tasked to bring us once again to our peak operational efficiency!

Starting, as we did, with a largely new ship's company and many defects due to lack of stores, no one was very surprised to receive a 'Below Standard' report for our first week. However, in true COVENTRY fashion, we knuckled down, determined to prove ourselves.

Exercise followed exercise.....



The First Lieutenant cajoled.....



.....Until at last our final day. Our last war won, we awaited our assessment Yes, COVENTRY had triumphed again. The Admiral was well pleased - we had once more proved ourselves as a fighting unit.

After a relaxing afternoon replenishing Sea Dart missiles, we turned East and headed for Chatham.



Our weekend in Chatham provided a welcomed break after the rigours of Portland. Many of the ship's company managed a few days with their families, while those that remained onboard showed our ship in its best light to the 7,800 visitors who braved the rain.

Ahead of us (at the time of writing) lies a visit to Sunderland, 'Navy Days' in Rosyth, Exercise Roebuck and the return to Pompey for a maintenance period and leave.

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QUICK DIT:

The peace of one Friday lunchtime was shattered by the pipe "Chief MEM SMITH - stokers mess at the rush". Within a few seconds one breathless 36 year old Chief Stoker arrived in the Mess to see what the emergency was. History does not relate what his reaction was when faced by a young MEM2 who stated "I piped for you Chief, when you were five minutes late for my kit muster and I wanted to go week-end".

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SPORTS DIARY

Considering the periods of time COVENTRY has spent away from her home port, the sports teams have done well and achieved several note worthy successes.

The soccer team dropped out of the Midi-Ships Cup after losing 5-2 to LOWESTOFT in extra time. Perhaps their best performance of the season was holding HERMES to a 2-2 draw, even after missing a penalty in the closing minutes of the game.

The hockey team have had a good season with wins over LOWESTOFT, EXETER, LONDONDERRY and COLLINGWOOD's 2nd team. Unfortunately in the match that mattered - the semi final of the Midi-Ships Cup - we lost to archrivals SHEFFIELD after extra time.

The rugby team have only lost to CARDIFF and HERMES.

The squash team have done well, beating EXETER, SHEFFIELD, LONDONDERRY, BIRMINGHAM and the Irish Club, losing only to ANTRIM and HERMES.

Golf is very popular onboard and the team, having played several matches, are as yet unbeaten.

A cross country team entered the RN championship, coming a creditable 11th. The only ship to beat us was the Royal Yacht, who came 10th, the other teams coming from large shore bases.

Another popular "pastime" is equitation (for the benefit of the gunners - thats riding). The COVENTRY Camel Corps, while not a team as such, enter as many events as possible - travel expenses permitting.

A quickly arranged tug-of-war contest at Portland provided the stage for yet another great COVENTRY victory. (The PO Caterer denies that the team was entirely made up of newcomers because none of the old hands are heavy enough).

Individually, a few of our stars have represented the Navy in Athletics, Tennis and Boxing.

Overall the scene looks set for another year of sports triumphs for COVENTRY.

Sporto

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QUICK DIT:

RO THOMPSON at Captain's Table:

Captain: Have you enjoyed your time in the ship so far?

Thompson: Yes, Sir, but I wish I'd joined after Portland.

Captain: Don't we all.

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DIVING

After the misery of diving in the Far East, the pleasures of diving once again in Pompey's murky, sub zero waters proved too much for most of the team. They went on draft. Stalwarts Commander SHIRLEY and AB PURKIS were joined by new Diving Officer Sub Lieutenant LIVINGSTONE, and hopefully will be joined by more volunteers shortly.

Diving Pay actually works out at about £1 per minute spent diving, which is almost as much as the Chief Mech earns. The job is very different and can be done by men of any branch. If you fancy the thrill and excitement of being in a totally strange environment - ~~join 3D Mess~~ apply for your aptitude test now.

Deep's

QUICK DIT:

One of the exercises at Portland, designed to help test our sonar, is a "Triplane Tracking" serial. Nothing would make the Editor divulge the name of the Chief Ops (Missileman) who read "plane tracking" on the programme and closed up the gunnery teams! Nor would the Editor dream of printing any of the scurrilous jokes about closing up the sonar teams for some of our recent balloon tracking runs!

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DEMOLITIONS

Did you know the ship had a highly trained demolitions team? Well it doesn't. What it does have is Sub Lieutenant 'Black Rod' HEATH, Chief Bosuns Mate 'Vicar' ISAACSON and LWEM MASON. Unable to complete their course due to the Foot and Mouth epidemic putting the range out of bounds, they are still ready and willing to blow up anything for King and Country. Any member of the ship's company who wishes to join this select band should apply to W2. This atricle self destructs in five seconds.

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QUICK DIT:

A certain new member of 3D Mess filled in a Money Change list for his Mess prior to arrival at Chatham. Maybe "Tosh" their tortoise isn't the only dozy creature in the RO's Mess.

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THE FLIGHT

Write about the flight, he said, only half a dozen lines or so. How can you put in six lines something that's taken five months to achieve? Anyway here goes.

While the ship was at Portsmouth for DED, we took ourselves off to Yeovilton to give the aircraft its own overhaul. Among the modifications we carried out was an automatic chart display for the Observer to play with and to stop us getting lost.

We also joined a new parenting squadron, 815, which gives us among other benefits a profitable liaison with the Guinness brewery.

After Easter we rejoined the ship with a new pilot and three new maintainers, ready to take on FOST and his team. What we didn't plan was to go U/S on the first morning of COST and remain so for a week. However we did carry out the pleasurable task of taking the Admiral away on completion of COST.

Navy Days at Chatham gave us a chance for a couple of firsts. It was the pilot's first Air Display and the first opportunity for both aircrew to see a dockyard crane close to! Those who saw the display will know what I mean. For our sins we have now been invited to appear at Rosyth Navy Days - watch this space.

Wings

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The aim of this Newsletter is to tell you, our families, what is going on onboard. If you have any ideas, comments, sketches, photos or dits for future editions please send them to "The Newsletter Officer".

CRYSTAL BALL GAZING

As usual this is liable to change, and so should be used as a guide only
It should not be discussed generally.

JUNE

24/25 Arrive Portsmouth
26 Commence Assisted Maintenance Period
30 Captain HART DYKE relieves Captain COWARD

JULY

17 End of Maintenance Period
20 Main Summer Leave Commences

AUGUST

10 End of Main Summer Leave
10-14 Fleet Trial in Portsmouth Area
14-17 Alongside in Portsmouth
17-20 Fleet Trial in Portland Area
20-24 Alongside in Portsmouth
24 Sail for Exercise Ocean Venture

SEPTEMBER

1 Join STANAVFORLANT
8-18 Exercise Ocean Safari
19-23 Lisbon
24-27 Passage
28 Arrive Wilhelmshaven (Maintenance Period)

OCTOBER

18 Sail Wilhelmshaven
19-25 Work-up (off Holland)
28 Arrive Rosyth

NOVEMBER

2-16 JMC (Exercise off Scotland)
19-25 Kiel
26-30 At sea in Baltic

DECEMBER

4-6 Amsterdam
7/8 Arrive Portsmouth for Shristmas Leave