

THE WORLD CRUISE
THE COMPLETE STORY OF H.M.S. AJAX DURING 1975-76
Author believed to be CRS (W) Fox

We sailed out of Plymouth Sound on the morning of July the 22nd to the sound of "When will I see you again" by the "Three Degrees" playing on the Jimmy young Show. I suppose that the wife who requested that record for the Eighth Frigate Squadron was not presented with a copy of our 'Longcast'. We thank you for your kind thought.

We left in company with H.M.S. Berwick and that afternoon we were hard at work carrying out anti-submarine exercises with the Submarine H.M.S/M Otter and R.A.F. Nimrod. At 0130 the following morning, we rendezvous'd with the remainder of the Deployment Group - H.M.S.'s Glamorgan (Flying the Flag of Flag Officer Second Flotilla), Plymouth, Llandaff, Rothesay and R.F.A.'s Gold Rover, Tarbatness and Tidespring. Immediately the Group were busy working together fighting off 'attacks' by Otter.

As we headed South, Admiral Lewin, the then Commander-in-Chief Fleet, sent the following message to the Task Group:

"The progress of your circumnavigation will be watched with envy. You carry the reputation of the Fleet with you. I am confident that it is in good hands and that you will remind the people of many countries of the continuing professionalism and courtesy of the Royal Navy.

Work hard, have fun, and enjoy the comradship of your impressive Group.
Bon Voyage."

From the Southwest Approaches we proceeded to Cape Finisterre carrying out inter-ship exercises. Off Cape Finisterre we were joined by a R.A.F. Shackleton from Gibraltar. The next day saw us off Cape St. Vincent carrying out Air Attack exercises against Buccaneers and Shackleton's from Gibraltar. We entered Gibraltar on the 26th for a well-deserved 'rest'.

During our visit to Gibraltar, a mini Olympiad was carried out which included such sports as Hockey, Football, and Squash. AJAX did extremely well, coming a very close second. Sailing two days later, we were once again caught up in the 'throes of War' with Gunnery, Communications, Replenishments at sea, Seaboat Drills, and Air Defence exercises taking their toll. We were joined by H.M.S. Hermione on the 29th, and we operated together for a day.

We arrived in Malta on the 1st of August, and once again most of the Ship's Company were able to get some sport in. Malta provides some of the best sporting facilities in the Mediterranean for Royal Navy Ships, and many of us spent our afternoon's playing football, Hockey, Squash, Horse Riding, Badminton, Cricket and Golf.

Our visit was highlighted by six brave 'warriors' (members, of the Ship's Company) participating in Malta Dog Shoot Training on our Flight Deck. We had nothing to fear from the dreaded Malta Dog now, our 'protectors' were well trained!!!

We went to sea on Monday the 4th and carried out evolutions with R.A.F. Search and Rescue Launches based in Malta. Returning to Port on the afternoon of the 6th, we were all settling down for a few days of sport and recreation, when a Ship's Recall sent us to sea on Friday.

Considering that most of the Ship's Company were ashore, having a dart's match and some social 'mixing'; we did very well to sail with nearly all the Ship's Company at 0200 in the morning. Returning on Saturday, after a night and day at sea, we held Divisions on the Upper Deck, the following morning in full number 6's. (That is long white trousers and jacket). Needless to say, the day was very warm and sunny, and it took a lot of effort to remain upright under the scorching sun. But AJAX's Ship's Company are a cut above most, and we were a mass of gleaming white statues.

We sailed on Monday and headed for our Suez Canal transit. On arrival at Port Said on the 13th, we embarked a 'Gully-Gully' man Joe Cairo. This gentleman entertained us on the Flight Deck, displaying fantastic skills on how to produce a 'clutch' of chickens from out of nowhere. His performance went down well, and it is a wonder that he is not making a fortune at home in

U.K. Perhaps this can be a warning to David Nixon

As we entered the Port Said anchorage, the rumour went around the Egyptians that we were an invading force from Israel - but fortunately no-one took it seriously. Leaving Port Said in company with Plymouth and Rothesay, we set our course through the Canal - starting at 0400. We were the first British Warships to sail through the Canal since the clearing operations, and the six-day war in 1967. Most of us were excited to see the "War Zone", which many battles were fought over the last eight years. Very surprisingly, we were waved at continuously by soldiers on both sides of the Canal, and we think they were very happy to see us.

Arriving with Rothesay and Tidespring on the 18th, at the French Foreign Legion Post of Djibouti (in French Somaliland), in the South of the Red Sea, we berthed astern of the French Frigate D'estrees. Djibouti had very little to offer us, and the exchanging of some of us to the Ship's Company with F.S. D'estrees for lunch parties, helped to make the visit more acceptable. A boat trip to the Island of Maskali, where swimming and sunbathing were 'exercised', was a brief break for forty of us.

Sailing from Djibouti on the 20th, we exercised with the French Ships' Le Bordais, and D'estrees. They also provided three other small craft. Later that day, we rendezvoused with the remainder of the Task Group, who arrived from their visits to Port Said and Port Sudan. Off we went heading East.

On the 29th we held a 'Sods Opera' on the Flight Deck, with the highlight of the evening being a Miss AJAX. Contest. We had entries from each of the messes, competition was high, and although everyone deserved to win on merit - the outright winner was a Leading Seaman, with a Killick Stoker 'coming-in' a very close second.

Arriving in Madras the following morning we were all a little concerned about the water situation. While alongside in Madras, we didn't want to take any water on, as it would have to be boiled first. So with 250 strong and healthy men, it was going to be difficult to extend the fresh water in our tanks to cover the five day visit. With excellent common sense, consumption of water was kept to well under 25 tons a day, compared with our normal use of between 35 and 40 tons.

On our third day we were hosts to a children's party, with many of our sailors dressing up as pirates to give the children the time of their lives. Throughout our stay, there were sightseeing tours within Madras and to Mahabilipuram. Sport played a big part in the visit too, with AJAX taking on local opposition. Games against Liandaff and Gold Rover were also played.

Although rain is nothing new to us, it was to Madras. Our arrival was greeted with a downpour. Not very nice for us, but it was for the people of Madras. It was the first rain that they had in two years.

As we were sailing from Madras on the morning of the 4th of September, we were greeted by the Indian Naval Ship Delhi. Delhi is ex-HMS Achilles of the "Battle of the River Plate" fame. We think it was the first time since that famous incident in 1939 that AJAX and Achilles were together. Two days later we were joined by H.M.S. Glamorgan and her Group, who were returning from their visit to Bombay, and together we headed into the Sun.

Whilst in Madras there was a strong suggestion that perhaps a rat or a shrew was onboard. After several days search, and lots of false alarms, we finally "caught" the stowaway, as we happily proceeded on our way to Singapore. We arrived in the Naval Base on Wednesday the 10th of September, where we all got our first taste of "tropical routine" This meant getting up at 0630 and working from 0730 to 1300 daily (except for Sundays). On this short visit to Singapore, opportunity was taken for the Ship's to play sport as a combined team, taking on British Servicemen serving on the Island and local talented opposition.

We sailed from Singapore on Monday morning, fully refreshed, and proceeded to Hong Kong with Berwick, Llandaff, Rothesay, Gold Rover and Tarbatness, carrying out Damage and Fire exercises. That night we met up with H.M.S. Chichester, the Hong Kong Guardship, and carried out a Night Encounter Exercise. (This is a sort of hide-and-seek).

We entered Hong Kong at 0900 on Friday the 19th, only to sail later in the afternoon. Hong Kong was

threatened by Typhoon Alice, and we didn't return until early Saturday morning. We went straight into dry dock to have minor repairs to the ships' bottom. This gave us all an excellent break from routine, as we all moved into Hotels. Only the Duty Watch (25 per cent of the Ship's Company) were required onboard Saturday and Sunday. Although we were living 'ashore', we represented the ship at several sports and enjoyed the hospitality of H.M.S. Tamar, the Naval Establishment there. The Blood Transfusion Unit came onboard on Monday and AJAX contributed 105 pints to this worthy cause. A letter from them some weeks later informed us that some of this blood had already been used in saving lives

Coming out of dry dock on Sunday, we're all looking forward to a week alongside the wall at Tamar. However, Hong Kong was not to be spared the threat of Typhoon Betty. Travelling Northwest from Luzon (in the Philippines), Betty took a sharp turn to the left, and headed towards us. Off we went to sea again, sailing late Monday night. Fortunately, Betty did another turn, and avoided Hong Kong, allowing us to return on Wednesday morning. It was while we were in Singapore that we read about Typhoon Elsie hitting the Colony, and winds were recorded of up to 128 miles per hour. Fortunately no-one lost their lives, but several were injured, so perhaps the Blood Transfusion Unit were going low on stocks again.

We sailed from Hong Kong on Sunday, and headed South to Singapore. Off Singapore we exercised with Forces of the Royal Australian Navy, the Republic of Singapore Navy, and the Republic of Singapore Air Force. The latter provided lively 'enemy opposition.'

Arriving in Singapore on the 3rd of October, we commenced our Assisted Maintenance Period and the Ship's Company moved into H.M.S. Terror. Some members of the crew were soon joined by their wives and families, who flew out from the U.K.

. One of the highlights of the A.M.P. was the Perth Cup. This Cup was presented by the Royal Australian Navy in 1962 "to be competed for by three or more Commonwealth Navies at any one time." The competition has since been expanded to include the Navies of the Signatory nations to the Five Power Agreement.

Since 1968 the Royal Navy have won it five times, the Royal Australian Navy.(RAN) once, the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) twice, and the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) three times.

Each Navy opted out of one sport at no detriment to the overall scoring system. The R.N. Decided not to compete in Tennis. The overall winners ended up being the RSN with 46 points, The Royal Navy came second with 34 points, the RAN third with 30 points and the RMN ended up with 28 points.

The Perth Cup was presented to the Republic of Singapore Navy by Rear Admiral D.C. Wells, CBE, Royal Australian Navy, who commented on how well organised the whole competition went. He congratulated the winners, who have now won it three times running.

Although the Royal Navy did not win it, we certainly congratulated the RSN, and we on AJAX can honestly say that we enjoyed a good weekend of high class competition. We would like to come back again and perhaps win it.

Leaving Singapore on the 27th of October, we sailed in company with other ships of the Squadron - HMS's Rothesay, Berwick and Plymouth. Also with us we had the Falls Tidespring and Tarbatness and the Australian ship Vendetta. No sooner had we left the Jahore Straits than we were busy at work with Communications, Gunnery exercises, Equipment Checks, and Flying our Helicopter.

Although we had crossed the 'Line' in the early hours, King Neptune's "defaulters" were not held until the afternoon of the 28th. This traditional Naval Ceremony is carried out the first time a ship crosses the equator in a Commission. Among the many to be 'dipped' and 'shaved' were the Captain (For taking us on a World Cruise), (He suffered an ankle injury as a result of our enthusiastic 'Bears'), The Caterer (for feeding us too much 'Mince'), An Australian Signalman on loan from HMAS Vendetta (for not wearing his ball and chain), and Able Seaman Owen (for trying to bully us into believing he was a baby P.T.I.). The Crossing-the-Line is a nice break from routine, but as soon as the jovialities had ended we were back at work.

Arriving in Fremantle on the 3rd of November, we were all ready for a relaxing time. With the hospitality of the Western Australians - the rest was going to be hard to come by. Within hours of berthing, invitations poured into the ship. These included a reception by the Lord Mayor of Perth, an official reception onboard for local officials, and also the Ship's Company Dance. The dance was well attended, but unfortunately they ran out of beer!!

The second day in Fremantle saw us being hosts to a children's party onboard, a tour of the Swan Brewery (they claim to have the best beer in the West), racing at Ascot (not the same as U.K. though), playing Squash, A Barbeque at the British Ex-Services Association, Cricket against a local civilian side, a reception in the local Australian Shore Establishment, H.M.A.S. Leeuwin, a games and social evening at the Royal Park Social Club, and for those with the energy, a dance was laid on at the Flying Angel Club. (This club is run by a religious group for mariners.)

The third day was used playing Volleyball, Basketball and Darts. Army cadets visited the ship, as did hundreds of school children. The Perth Yacht club played hosts to us for a social evening.

The fourth day was also based on sport. A golf tournament against the Western Australian Command was the highlight, with the Royal Navy Ship's coming away the victors. Again H.M.A.S. Leeuwin were hosts for a social evening, and the Royal Australian Air Force also gave us another social evening. The ship was visited by recruits from HMAS Leeuwin and trainee Helicopter Pilots.

The fifth day of this visit saw AJAX defeat HMAS. Leeuwin in Basketball, and the ship was visited by hundreds of cadets and recruits. The Flying Angel Club laid on yet another dance for the Ship's Company.

As you can see from the above, our five day visit to Fremantle was a success. We were well received, and although we have only mentioned 'official' entertainment and sport, there were other invitations including sight-seeing trips and invitations to peoples' homes' for dinner. These proved very popular and many friends were made in Western Australia that we shall never forget. So it was with a heavy heart that we sailed from Fremantle on the 8th of December.

The following day was Remembrance Sunday, and the traditional two minutes silence was observed throughout the ship. The next five days at sea saw us once again in the fury of exercising. These included R.A.S.'s with Tidespring and Tarbatness, Communications exercises, Rocket Firings Bofor Shoots, PloPoting exercises, Mortar Firings and Machinery Breakdown Drills.

Arriving in Sydney on the 14th for the Weekend, most of the Ship's Company were involved in preparing for a large scale multi-nation exercise which was starting the following Monday. This exercise (known as Tasmanex 75) was to occupy our minds for the next ten days. The ships in the exercise were from Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Aircraft were provided by the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and of course, all our own Ship's Helicopters.

The basic idea of the exercise was for one group of ship's to sail from Eastern Australia and head East, while another group would leave New Zealand and head West. We would oppose each other, and also have 'threats' from Submarines (two Australian 'O' Class), and Aircraft. For Tasmanex 75 the whole ship went into Defence/Two watches. This meant that we did six hours on watch, six hours off watch, continuously for ten days. For the duration of the exercise we were under constant 'attack' from Submarines, Fill's, Skyhawks, Ships and even ourselves.

The Wellington Evening Post said of Tasmanex 75 - "Encouraging signs of the ability of five nations to integrate their forces was most apparent during Tasmanex 75. The smooth, virtually trouble-free operations conducted during the intensive 10-day exercise which ended last Thursday provided ample evidence that the forces of the countries could easily be integrated if the security of New Zealand or Australia were at stake.

We were granted an easier time prior to our arrival in Wellington, and so on the Saturday afternoon we held a 'Garden Fete' to raise money for our Welfare Fund and for the Ship's adopted Charity - Trengweath

Childrens' Home. With "Find the Treasure", Skittles, and Mud Throwing among the "games", we raised over £100 for charity.

The first evening in Wellington was very quiet, with the Catholic Maritime Club inviting us to a dance. The Pubs in Australia and New Zealand are closed all day Sunday, so entertainment was at a minimum. However, the days that followed were full of entertainment provided by the Navy League, the New Zealand Armed Forces and many New Zealanders. Organised sight-seeing trips and sport played a big part in our enjoyment. The cricket team ended up with disastrous totals of 35 (against the New Zealand Armed Forces) and 48 (against the Police College). Golf was played against the Ministry of Defence Navy (which ended in a draw), but perhaps the "friendliest" win was in shooting. The New Zealand Army lost to us by a big margin - they forgot to bring any ammunition. We also played the Police College at Basketball (we lost) and Volleyball (we won).

The ship was opened to visitors on two days, when we were visited by thousands of New Zealanders. We also had the almost now traditional children's party, and visits from recruiting establishments, cadets and scouts.

Wellington is a "Windy city" and it was not long before some of us discovered that windburn is as painful as sunburn. We sailed from Wellington on Monday the 8th, spent four days at sea, and arrived in Melbourne on Friday the 12th.

Melbourne was not to be out-done by other Australian ports, - their hospitality was among the best you will find anywhere. The next eight days were spent among very friendly and homely people

The football team had its first game since leaving Singapore. They won it 2-1. Longsdale is one of the Australian Naval Establishments in Melbourne, and as expected, they too entertained us during our visit. They also provided us with sport and recreation facilities.

An unusual incident occurred while the ship was in Melbourne. Two Chief Petty Officers were visiting a British merchant ship in the port when a member of the crew reported that another crew member had dropped dead. Without further ado, the two Chiefs' jumped into action and went on deck. There they found a man lying on the deck with his own messmates standing still. Someone had found a blanket and was covering him. With a glance at each other, the two Chiefs' went over and started to apply artificial resuscitation. After a short while the Ambulance men arrived and they took over and started to apply artificial resuscitation themselves. Unfortunately the man died, but it certainly showed what the Navy had taught these two men - how to react in any circumstances and emergencies.

On sailing Melbourne on the 20th, we found ourselves carrying out several Replenishments at Sea from the R.F.A.'s. We had to stock up with stores, food and fuel - not to mention beer, for Christmas.

We arrived in Adelaide on Monday the 22nd of December, in company with HMS Plymouth, RFA's Tarbatness, Gold Rover and Resurgent. Awaiting us were hundreds of invitations for Christmas Dinner at home with the family. These were divided between the ships' and with over 300 of them, this was no easy task. The people of Adelaide were going to prove that South Australians too were as hospitable as any other State in Australia.

On our arrival in Adelaide we were given intense cover by the Press and Television. The following day we hit the headlines again. The Ship's Divers were inspecting the ships' bottom when Able Seaman Griffiths found a car at the bottom of the river. C.P.O. Benner is quoted in the local newspaper as sayings "Yesterday men working over the ships side in a small boat dropped a screw-driver. We decided to have a look for it today. Visibility was about four feet under the water. When I got to the bottom I saw the Maroon Morris 1100 sitting on its wheels. I opened the driver's door and looked in. I saw an arm with a watch on it hanging from the main part of the overgrowth on the roof. The body had been there for some time, because the main part of it was covered in weed." The body was later identified as a man who had disappeared on the 7th of December.

Christmas is never the same away from home and family. It's a lonely time, you miss the children, Santa

Claus, the noise and bustle of the new toys, the late night and the very early morning. However, Adelaide tried its best, but without the cold, wintry weather of home, it just wasn't the same. The people of Adelaide knew this, many of them being from Britain themselves, and they understood it, and they showed it by their hospitality. How many times have you invited a complete stranger to your home for Christmas dinner?

Another Naval tradition was observed on Christmas Day. The youngest man onboard dressed up as the Captain and carried out 'rounds' of all the messes with the Captain. As expected the Television cameras were there to cover it all. Able Seaman Oram (Scouse) was delighted to see himself on Television later in the day.

The New Year was greeted in the time-honoured fashion. However, the Australians added a few variations. Several members of the crew were invited to parties, which were mainly of a barbeque type, or by an out-door swimming pool. Not like Hogmanay in Scotland.

Everywhere we went the ship was opened to visitors. Adelaide responded with over 5,500 people in three days. For a nine-hour period this wasn't bad - three hours each day. We could have remained open all day long, every day, with the amount of people that came down to the jetty to see us. On the other hand, how many people you like walking around your home every day - thousands?

On the Saturday before we left Adelaide we said goodbye to Petty Officer Follett and Petty Officer Obree (Now Chief). They made their way to Sydney on a pair of bicycles. The distance they had to cover was only 885 miles. They succeeded in doing this, in temperatures over 100, the rain, the dust, and sand-storms, the flies, and all without a puncture. The bikes stood up to the conditions very well and our two 'brave' warriors' returned well suntanned, and weather-worn. Between them they raised around £600 for Trengweath Children's Home.

On leaving Adelaide, HMS Plymouth and AJAX took over 200 residents down the river. This was one way of thanking them for their hospitality. We would have liked to take more, but then we are a Warship and not a Liner. Many of us showed our thanks by giving our hosts a personal tour of the ship, which they enjoyed very much. Yes, Adelaide, we enjoyed you, and we shall not forget you in a hurry.

Arriving in Sydney on Friday the 9th of January we settled down to our Second and Final Assisted Maintenance Period. On Monday we were snowed under with Devonport FAG.

Leaving Australia for the last time, sailing down the River Parraraatta, past Sydney Harbour Bridge, AJAX was indeed an excellent sight, as the Ship's Company lined the ship in Procedure Alfa. We sailed in company with HMS Plymouth, Rothesay and BMAS Derwent. We settled down to exercising among ourselves, and the Royal Australian Air Force. Soon we split and in company with Rothesay, we headed for Suva.

Arriving in Suva, the capital of Fiji, we were greeted by a military band on the Jetty. The Fijians are among the most friendly people in the world, and as you walked among them they were forever smiling and bidding you a friendly greeting. Fiji also meant sport. Our first outing was at Rugby against the Royal Fijian Military Forces. It will be remembered for the sporting aspect, a game of thrills, exciting fast rugby, and a score line of 104 points to Nil. We lost. The opposition were an exciting side, and very professional. Cricket and Basketball were also played and lost, but fortunately we were to win at Football by 6 goals to 1. Mind you, some of the football players on the Fijian side could kick a ball as hard as Pele, and in bare feet. The sport in Suva was a combined effort with HMS Rothesay.

We opened to visitors, and like most Pacific Islands, the Fijians came in their hundreds to have a look at us and our ship. This was particularly impressive, as we were berthed adjacent, but not alongside two Soviet Holiday Cruise Liners.

Sailing from Suva on Tuesday, we anchored off Astolabe Island in the early afternoon. Among the glorious palm trees, sandy beaches, and cloudless blue skies, we had a Banyan. This is a sort of Naval Picnic. We stayed at anchor overnight and sailed the following morning, with Rothesay.

On Wednesday the 4th of February we retarded the clocks a full 23 hours. This had the effect of putting the clock back a day. We had crossed the International Dateline. Therefore we had two Wednesday's the 4th. This being a Leap Year, and the month of February, meant that we had thirty days in February.

Unfortunately the second Wednesday the 4th will be remembered for another reason. We had a major fire onboard. It was in the Switchboard, which supplies the ship with its electrical power supply. The fire started shortly after one o'clock in the afternoon and was soon under control, thanks to the fast reaction and control of our fire-fighting team. Fortunately there were no injuries. Having practiced fire-fighting daily, it was very encouraging to see that the real thing was handled with such expertise.

The following day was the start of our Inspections by Flag Officer Second Flotillas - it was the day of Departmental Inspections. This is when members of the Admiral's Staff "invade" the ship and proceed to ensure that we are doing our jobs correctly, that the correct records are being kept, that equipment and material is in good repair and that each department is being correctly regulated.

The second day of the Inspection consisted of rounds of the ship by the Admiral - Admiral Fieldhouse. Indeed he entered every compartment onboard and ensured it was up to his standards. Overall we came out on top, as the Admiral seemed very pleased with all our hard work. Our Sea Inspection had to be cancelled because of the fire.

We travelled to Pearl Harbour in company with the Task Group, which had been joined by the New Zealand ship Canterbury. Conditions onboard were unpleasant. Had limited ventilation onboard, which meant that we were working in extremely hot temperatures. The laundry was out of action and the Ship's Galley had difficulty coping with the high temperatures. However, H.M.S. Glamorgan assisted in our laundry by taking about one hundred bundles, and they also sent over baskets of freshly baked bread. It was much appreciated.

We entered Pearl Harbour on Wednesday the 11th of February and were destined to remain there until repairs to the Switchboard could be completed. Meanwhile, some members of the Ship's Company were loaned to other ships in the Squadron, who were going to take part in a major United States exercise - Fleetex 76. This exercise lasted ten days, and had over forty ships from the United States, Canada, New Zealand and of course, Great Britain taking part.

While the ship was in Hawaii, opportunity was taken to carry out a full inter-mess sports programme at Football, Tug-of-War and a swimming gala. Games were organised against local residents and American Servicemen in Rugby, Bowling, and Cricket. Other activities included Exped, Shooting and just plain swimming. Hospitality ashore was once again extended by American Servicemen, their families and local residents

We sailed from Pearl Harbour on Tuesday the 2nd of March and made our way to the West Coast of the United States, where the remainder of the Squadron were exercising with the Americans. The ship went into Defence Watches on the 7th, and took part in the remaining four days of Fleetex 76.

We arrived in Long Beach, California on Friday the 12th, and several members of the Ship's Company had the opportunity of spending the weekend with American families. This was an ideal way to see how the average American family really lives, and not like the American Millionaire we all think they are.

On Saturday and Sunday several buses left the ship for a visit to Disneyland. It is fairly difficult to describe it on paper - suffice to say that it was fantastic. Without exception, all the married members of the Ship's Company would love to have had their children with them, as it really was a visit of a lifetime.

Other attractions at Long Beach included the Queen Mary. She is alongside and is now a hotel, museum and a tourist attraction. A visit to Universal Studios was arranged for Sunday. Although no-one saw any Superstars, they had a very entertaining day seeing how the movies are really made, watching a Stunt Show, torpedoed by a submarine, almost run over by a train and being on a bridge as it collapsed. Some fortunate members went to Knott's Berry Farm - where they saw the delights of how the West was Won. One thing is certain, Long Beach had lots to offer in the way of entertainment.

We sailed on Monday the 15th, and started our passage to the Panama Canal. As you may have read in the newspapers, there was a strike at the Canal, so it was decided to make a "fast passage" - so that we would not be delayed too long if the strike continued. Arriving two days earlier than expected we berthed alongside Rodman Naval Base with the remainder of the Task Group.

The strike in the Canal was soon over, and things began to return to normal. The remainder of the ships went through the Canal, while we stayed on the Pacific side. We paid an official visit to Panama. This was the first time ever that a British Warship had visited Panama. The Deputy Head of State inspected a Guard of Honour on our flight deck as we anchored off the Island of Taboga.

After two days at anchor, our official visit was over, and we went alongside the United States Naval Base at Rodman again. Rodman is not part of Panama - but part of the Canal Zone. We stayed there two days and played more sport against the locals. One such game was the football match against the British Community. We won the game by 4 goals to 2 and celebrated the victory with a massive cake they had made for us to mark the occasion.

We had the opportunity to donate blood here, as the Blood Transfusion Unit came onboard. They worked most of the day, and were never short of volunteers. We opened the ship to visitors and many Panamanians and Americans were soon walking around the ship.

On Sunday the 28th of March we transitted the Panama Canal. The last ship in the Task Group to do so. We were soon in the Caribbean Sea heading for Puerto Rico and our visit to San Juan.

0900 we bade farewell to fair old San Juan and headed towards the Atlantic. In company with HMS Rothesay we rendezvoused with the remainder of the Task Group, which had been joined by HMS Zulu. HMS/M Sovereign was also in the area, and we were soon carrying out a lot of anti-submarine exercises with her - in our last major exercise of the Deployment - Exercise Last Chance III

On the 10th we had even more opposition. The Dutch Submarine EMNLS Potvis and the British Submarine HMS/M Finwhale joined as our 'enemies'. The following 36 hours were spent defending the Main Body from attack from these three submarines.

On Monday, during the early hours, the exercise ended and all the ships started heading for their respective UK Ports. Berwick and AJAX headed for Plymouth, Zulu for Rosyth, and the remainder headed towards Portsmouth

We anchored in Plymouth Sound on Tuesday night and awaited Customs clearance the following morning. Early on Wednesday the 14th (TODAY) it was all hustle and bustle as we prepared for the Customs and the Families who were going to join us on our last few yards up to the Dockyard.

So there you have it - the World Cruise has ended. We have made many new friends around the world, and on the other ship's that were with us. We are now back in Guzz and-Task Group 317.3 has been deactivated.

We have received 14,837 signals (messages) since leaving-home have guarded for other ships on occasions, and their total was 575 We have received 132 telegrams and sent 82.

We have made 115 Radiotelephone Calls out of the ship, and received 33

61 people have joined the ship at various ports throughout the world, while we have sent 68 people back home, on leave and draft.

One person got married and three have got engaged during the Deployment.

At one time we had three sets of brothers onboard - but we returned to U.K. with two - the Waterworth's and the Robson's,

The most popular name onboard is Cook/Cooke. We have four of them. Three of the Cook's are Stokers! There's W.P.M. Cook, R.G. Cook and S. J. Cook, both of whom are MEM1's and there's AD (H) Cooke. We had 416 pages of T.W.I.T.T. [Ship's Magazine], which does not include any Families Edition. (That's even

more than was used for Daily Orders.)

The saddest occasion on Deployment was the relegation of Pompey to Division 3 of the Football League. The Editor was not there to see them, and assist them in their time of need.

If our Helicopter flew at 90 knots in nil wind conditions, it would have travelled 20,047 miles as it flew for a total of 233 hours

