

H.M.A.S. MELBOURNE,
at Sea.

- 8 JUN 1960

The Flag Officer Commanding,
H.M. AUSTRALIAN FLEET.

H.M.A.S. MELBOURNE - REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS - MAY 1960

Sir,

I have the honour to report the proceedings of H.M.A. Ship under my command for the month of May 1960.

2. 1st - 13th May - Exercise "Sealion"

Sunday 1st May found H.M.A.S. MELBOURNE at anchor off Manila among an assembly of S.E.A.T.O. ships preparing for exercise "Sealion". As I mentioned last month, considerable liaison between officers and ratings of H.M.A. Ship under my command, and their opposite numbers in many ships, but particularly in U.S.S. YORKTOWN, formed a good friendly basis from which to embark on a major exercise.

3. On the afternoon of 1st May your band, Sir, gave a concert at the Quezon Institute, a hospital administered by the Philippine Tuberculosis Society at Quezon City. This was reported in the Local Chronicle, and I have received a letter of appreciation from the Director of the Institute addressed to the Australian Ambassador in Manila, who instructed his "Defence Attache" to forward it to me. A photograph of this event has also been published in "Navy News".

4. The object of "Sealion" was to exercise air defence, anti-submarine and anti-ship warfare, and at the same time to give S.E.A.T.O. maritime forces the maximum possible experience in working together. To implement this the forces were divided for the major part of the exercise, SEATHAI force and SEAPHIL force, carrying out the phase one initial workup and weapon training at Bangkok/Sattahib and Manila respectively. MELBOURNE was in the latter force under the overall command of CTF 318, Rear Admiral V.C. Begg; C.B., D.S.O., D.S.C., flying his flag in H.M.S. BELFAST and later in H.M.S. ALBION.

5. Task Groups sailed from Manila for phase one at 0830H 2nd May, and between then and 1800H 4th May, when the ship returned to anchor, we carried out a programme of day and night flying, air defence, anti-submarine and gunnery exercises as laid down in SEAPHIL orders.

6. Considerable interest and amazement was shown by all onboard when United States Marine Crusader aircraft acted as targets for an A.A. tracking exercise in Manila Bay shortly after sailing. Very few had seen such fast modern aircraft.

2/. 7. Two Venom.....

7. Two Venom aircraft were diverted to Naval Air Station, Cubi Point, on 2nd May when the forward lift jammed down temporarily. The aircrew received most generous hospitality from the United States Marine Air Group until the next day, when there was sufficient wind to recover them.
8. Four HS-4 anti-submarine helicopters from U.S.S. YORKTOWN landed on deck at 1600H 3rd May, but unfortunately they had to leave almost immediately, thus preventing close inspection of these interesting aircraft.
9. The 5th May with all ships in harbour provided a period for post exercise and pre-sail discussions and conferences as well as social and sporting events. A MELBOURNE team was victorious in a sports carnival onboard H.M.S. ALBION.
10. "Sealion" phase II commenced on Friday 6th May when all Task Groups sortied from Manila in accordance with exercise orders.
11. Flying operations with ALBION in the same formation shortly after departure gave my Air Department an all too rare experience of competitive operating.
12. For most of phase II the three carrier groups operated apart providing air support for the passage of real and imaginary convoys, the former represented by the Underway Replenishment Groups, against submarine and air threats. Some serials provided opportunities for air strikes between MELBOURNE and ALBION.
13. A sports carnival was held onboard MELBOURNE on Sunday 8th May and competitors from the third carrier group took part. Unfortunately, 2 of the 3 U.S.N. Destroyers in this group did not send representatives which reduced the social value of the competition.
14. At 1330H 9th May a Gannet aircraft developed a fault on one engine on being catapulted, and ditched in the sea ahead of the ship. The pilot was immediately recovered by the helicopter planeguard, and the observer and telegraphist were recovered within a few minutes by H.M.S. CAVALIER a destroyer on the anti-submarine screen. The pilot received only minor injuries, and the other two aircrew were unhurt.
15. A stranded wire on the catapult halted flying operations on 10th May. Just as it again became serviceable on 11th May a main circulator bearing on the starboard engine broke down and took 24 hours to repair, during which period the ship steamed on the port shaft only. As a result of these material failures MELBOURNE's participation in several serials was much curtailed, and it was not possible to replenish from the Underway Replenishment Group on 11th May.
16. The rendezvous between the SEATHAI and SEAPHIL forces took place at noon on 11th May, and the whole Task Force 320 proceeded towards Singapore.
17. While the smaller units of the "Sealion" force carried out gunnery and torpedo exercises on 12th May off Singapore, MELBOURNE and ALBION exercised independently. The force formed up in groups at 1730CH and after night steaming entered Singapore Naval Base on the forenoon of Friday 13th May. MELBOURNE berthed starboard side to No. 7 berth at 0840CH.

3/. 18. An unfortunate.....

18. An unfortunate accident when a rating was lost overboard from H.M.S. ALERT during the night of 12th/13th May marred an otherwise most successful exercise period. A helicopter from MELBOURNE assisted in the search from daylight on 13th, but the rating was not recovered.

19. A weekend of sporting and social events and post exercise conferences, under the title of "Shorecat" ended exercise "Sealion".

20. The Commander-in-Chief, Far East Station, and Lady Luce gave a luncheon party for Flag, and Commanding officers on Friday 13th May, which I had the pleasure of attending in your company, and similarly on the evening of the same day a reception held onboard H.M.S. ALBION given by the Commander-in-Chief, Flag Officer 2nd in Command, Commanding officers and officers of H.M. and H.M.N.S. Ships, for their counterparts in the Australian, French, Pakistan, Philippine, Thai and United States Navies.

21. 14th - 27th May - Singapore/Hong Kong.

Shortly after casting off at 1230GH Monday 16th May, the flag of the Commander-in-Chief, Far East Station, was saluted with 15 guns. H.M.A. Ships MELBOURNE, VENDETTA and VOYAGER then proceeded in company, with you, Sir, and certain members of your staff embarked in VENDETTA for her annual sea inspection.

22. Once clear of Horsborough Light, ships carried out an A.A. sleeve firing, and reasonable results were obtained in MELBOURNE. H.M.A. Ship under my command then detached and proceeded to the northward while the small ships exercised independently. VOYAGER remained in the Singapore area, and VENDETTA rejoined at 2100GH when you and your staff officers were transferred to MELBOURNE by light jackstay. H.M.A.S. QUEENBOROUGH having sailed from Singapore at 1330GH exercised in the Singapore area and joined the force at 0500GH 17th May.

23. At 0830GH 17th May VENDETTA came alongside and you, and staff officers were transferred to her to continue the sea inspection.

24. Two sorties of Gannets were flown during the day, the Venoms being grounded pending inspection.

25. You, Sir, and your staff officers returned to H.M.A.S. MELBOURNE by jackstay transfer at noon.

26. An hour of Officer of the Watch manoeuvres from 1600GH was followed by a three ship radar calibration after which a two ship screen was formed and the force made ground to the north at 17 knots during the night.

27. It was planned to launch the now serviceable Venoms as well as Gannets at 0800H 18th May, but insufficient wind prevented this, and only the latter were flown, completing two sorties by 1400H.

28. From 1500H to 1700H 18th May, QUEENBOROUGH and VENDETTA were fuelled by the abeam method, after which three officers were transferred from VENDETTA by light jackstay.

4/. 29. After the.....

29. After the transfers VENDETTA and QUEENBOROUGH opened out to ten miles on either bow of MELBOURNE for a Competitive Surface Plotting exercise, followed by an Electronic Warfare exercise. On completion a bent line screen was formed on MELBOURNE for the night.
30. At 0800H 19th May as the ships entered the passage between the Maccliesfield Bank and Paracel Islands a Court Martial gun was fired and the Union flag broken. At 0830H light jackstay transfers were effected between VENDETTA, QUEENBOROUGH and MELBOURNE.
31. Acting on your instructions I presided over a Court Martial onboard H.M.A. Ship under my command at 0900H 19th May. This was completed by 0950H, and the Union flag hauled down.
32. Officers from VENDETTA and QUEENBOROUGH involved in the Court Martial were returned to their respective ships by jackstay at 1015H.
33. A flying programme for Venoms and Cannets was carried out between 1145H and 1830H.
34. Light jackstay transfers with VENDETTA and QUEENBOROUGH ended at 1915H and completed the days events.
35. A Venom flying programme took place between 0700H and 1000H on 20th May, helping to increase their flying hours which have been curtailed on many occasions during the cruise. This was followed by a Surface Plotting exercise.
36. A radar landfall was made on the Lema Islands at 1000I 20th May, but mist and rainstorms prevented visual sighting until 1430I.
37. With ships in column the force passed through Lei-u-mun pass at 1720I and at 1745I your flag Sir, was saluted by the Commodore-in-Charge, Hong Kong, with 13 guns, an eleven gun reply being fired by MELBOURNE.
38. MELBOURNE secured to A4 buoy in Hong Kong harbour at 1800I 20th May.
39. I had the pleasure of dining with the Commodore-in-Charge, Hong Kong, Commodore A.R.L. Butler, D.S.C., R.N., on the evening of 20th May.
40. H.M.A. Ship under my command was fuelled from a Stanvac oil lighter on 21st May, 900 tons being received.
41. Having rigged bottom lines on the forenoon of 21st May the ships divers carried out an inspection of the underwater hull once daily thereafter while in Hong Kong.
42. On 22nd May I had the pleasure of being present when the Commander-in-Chief, Far East Station, Vice Admiral Sir David Luce, K.C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., Lady Luce, the Commodore-in-Charge, Hong Kong, and Mrs Butler lunched onboard.
43. The Commander-in-Chief, Far East Station, held a reception onboard H.M.S. BELFAST on 23rd May, which I attended. I was also present at a dinner party given by the Australian Government Senior Trade Commissioner and Mrs Patterson on 24th May. I lunched with the Air Officer Commanding, Hong Kong, on 25th May.

44. About 40 students from Queen's College, Causeway Bay, visited the ship on Wednesday 25th May, and were shown round by two of my officers. I have since received a charming letter of thanks and appreciation from them, signed in Chinese by all the students.

45. On the evening of Thursday 26th May, the Commodore-in-Charge, Hong Kong, Commodore A.R.L. Butler, D.S.C., R.N., and the Australian Trade Commissioner and Mrs Patterson dined onboard.

46. At 0750I 27th May, you, Sir, with the Flag Lieutenant and Fleet Engineer Officer, left the ship to fly to Taiwan.

47. After an all too short, but nevertheless most enjoyable stay in Hong Kong, H.M.A. Ship under my command slipped from A4 buoy at 0930I Friday 27th May, and proceeded to sea, farewelled by a fusillade of fire crackers from the side party sampans. Once clear of the harbour approaches course was set to the east at 14 knots.

27th - 31st May - Hong Kong/Yokohama

48. Some difficulty was experienced with clearance of flying operations with the Chinese Nationalist authorities in Taiwan, but this was overcome and Gannet and Venom sorties were flown between 0900I and 1600I on 28th May. After rounding the southern point of Taiwan the ship made ground to the north up the east coast during the night of 28th/29th May.

49. At 0900I 29th May, three Gannet aircraft were despatched to Taipei airport to embark you, Sir, the Fleet Engineer Officer and Flag Lieutenant, two aircraft returning at 1235I and the third, after a short delay at 1300I.

50. On Monday 30th May while approximately 100 miles to the north of Okinawa, Gannet and Venom sorties were flown between 0900I and 1530I. These aircraft were principally employed on Air Interceptions and Rocket Projectile attacks on a splash target.

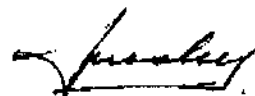
51. After passing through the Tokara Gunto north of Yokoate Shima during the night, MELBOURNE was approximately 80 miles south east of Kyushu at 0900I 31st May, when flying commenced. Venom and Gannet sorties continued until 1640I. A north easterly course was maintained during the night of 31st May/1st June.

52. Condition of the Ship

The condition of the ship is satisfactory. However, it has been again demonstrated most forcibly that under normal tropical conditions this class of ship is inadequate properly to perform its function. With light, or no wind conditions the ship has insufficient power in warmer waters to achieve speeds at which jet aircraft can be operated safely. In tropical areas the temperatures registered in the living spaces, as well as in the machinery spaces, combined with the high humidity are such that the efficiency of personnel is very adversely affected.

53. Health and Morale of the Ship's Company

The Health and Morale of the Ship's Company is good.



(J.S. Mesley)
CAPTAIN