

This is Part-4 of 6 of an RFA Deck Cadet's 1st Trip Journal from 1974 ~ 1975

Start of Journal, from 24th October to 28th November 1974 can be found [here](#)

Journal from 28th November to 19th December 1974 can be found [here](#)

Journal from 19th December 1974 to 17th February 1975 can be found [here](#)

[each opens in a separate window, each filesize < 1.5Mb]

February 17th 75 - 75mi. Bahamas.

Up to the bridge at 07:40 for flying stations – there were exercises for SCA and DLP. Also there was a vertical replenishment with Resource, during which 14 loads were transferred. My main job while on the bridge was to keep the log and operate the landing lights.

When the exercise and vertrep were completed, I went out and worked on the focsle, chipping the bulwarks and finally wire-brushing and painting them.

During the tutorial. I studied some two-letter signals, after which I continued my project.

February 18th 75

We had an early breakfast this morning due to all replenishments. The first RAS was with the Ark, in which the usual 3 rigs were out. I was working out on deck, on the deck, on the point, distance and telephone lines throughout the day, until 1500 when all replenishments were complete. (Hampshire, Lyness, Resource and Ark).

We then started “watches” for the pumpover with the Pearleaf. I was not required until 23:45 when the final topping up was finishing. I spent the rest of the time closing the tank lids and sighting ports.

February 19th 75 Arrived at Mayport.

During the morning I worked for the CTO on deck, taking the ullages of the tanks and the Specific Gravities of the three fuels. This task was finished at 10:20 and afterwards I put some new equipment in the fire lockers.

At 13:00 I was on the bridge for harbour stations for entry into Mayport. I mainly kept records in the movements log. We were secure at 15:30, with 6 lines at each end and 2 springs.

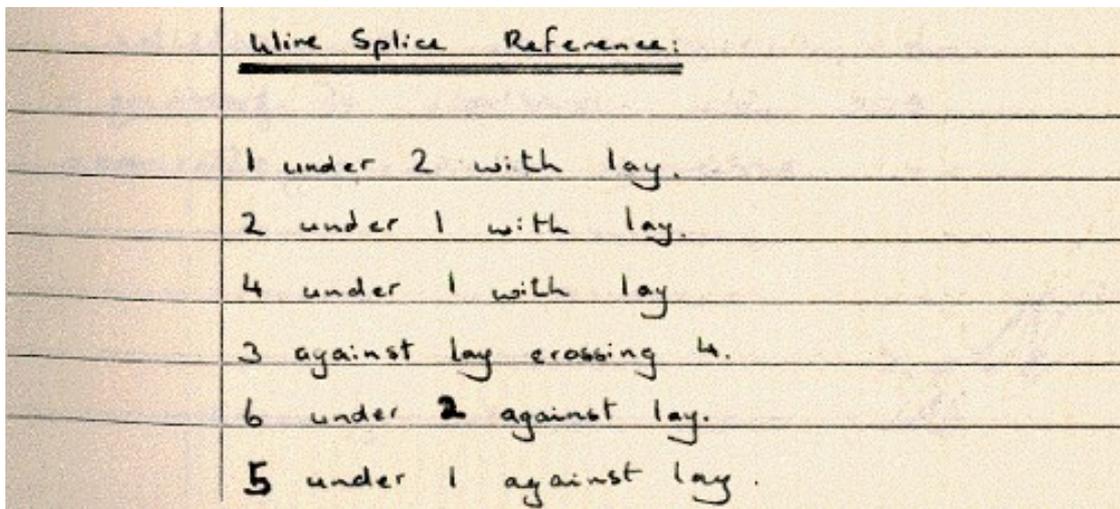
Shore leave was then granted and I went ashore to call a friend, resident of Jacksonville Beach.

February 20th 75 Mayport.

We tested the Avcat and found a slight water trace in the fuel in tank 2C. Its appearance is probably caused by the sudden change in temperature causing humidity in the air in the tank to condensate.

On completion we connected up the shore dieso hose and then stood by for the start pumping.

In the afternoon we practised wire splicing with an AB.



February 21st 75 Mayport.

Tested the AVCAT again today and the results were the same as before. On completion we had to clean up our cabins and after this port watch were given study and I continued on my correspondence course. After lunch we had the routine signals class and at 14:00 we went across to the USS LUCE. The weapons officer gave us an excellent guided tour of his department, explaining the operation of his missiles and the methods of homing – an extremely interesting afternoon.

[AUTHOR'S NOTE 2013: no entries in Journal for Sat.22nd and Sun.23rd Feb.]

February 24th 75

Quality Control of Avcat followed by harbour stations as the Truckee was to take our berth and we come alongside it. I was down aft operating the winches etc. and assisting in securing the tugs.

The ship was pulled into the centre of the harbour while Truckee secured and then we came alongside her. We were finally secure at 12:45.

In the afternoon we rigged safety nets and then worked in the foreward hold re-storing beer kegs.

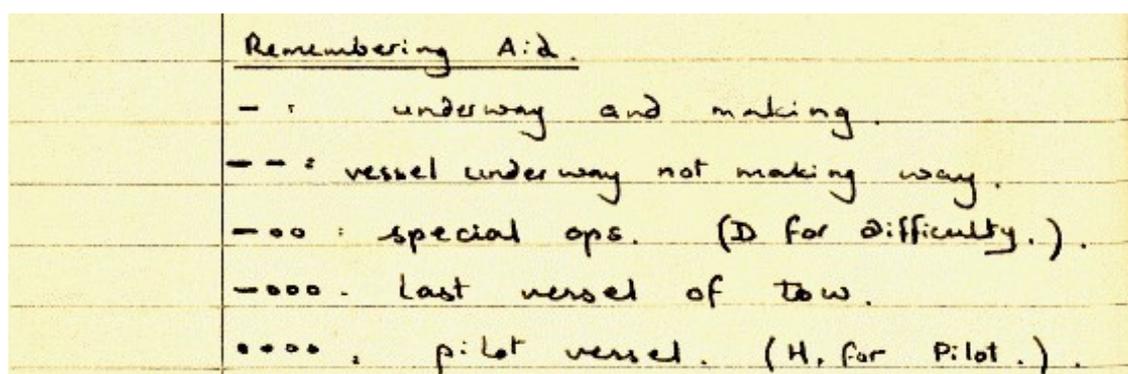
At 16:15 we were allowed to go over to Truckee and look around – basically its very similar to Olwen.

Evening tutorial. 18:30 – 19:30

February 25th 75 Mayport to Sea.

After completing Quality Control of Avcat harbour stations were called and I was on the poop, retrieving the mooring lines. After recoiling and storing all the ropes, we worked out on deck with the bosun, chipping, wire brushing and painting. This continued throughout the day until all equipment was secured by 16:45.

In the evening I studied Rule 15 – Sound Signals.



February 26th 75 at Sea.

Proceeded with Quality Control of Avcat and then continued with Study – finishing up lesson Four. During the day there were various emergency exercises – testing the steering gear in the Command Shelter (problems due to a lack of hydraulic pressure of glycerine).

In the afternoon there was a “man overboard” exercise followed by a fire drill. This took on a different light with Section 1 Base moved to the classroom and a Sit rep board being kept also.

In the evening we had a brief lecture by the Chief officer and then a talk with the CTO.

Studied Rule of Road:

Three bell strikes between 5secs of rapid succession ringing: vessel aground
Bell and Gong: vessel over 350ft.

February 27th 75 360 mi SE BDA.

On completion of the Quality Control, I worked on number 4 boat, stencilling the port or Registry on the after end. After this I put two oil bags in 1 and 2 boats prior to steering at 11:00. At approx. 11:10 a man overboard exercise was staged which provided an excellent opportunity for me to practise (Needless to say I eventually ran over the "body").

In the afternoon I went to signals and then worked on greasing and chipping the butterfly nuts and blake slips on the boat davits – This was slightly interrupted by a Fire Exercise.

In the evening I had tutorial followed by my 9th hour at the helm.

February 28th 75 240 mi S BDA.

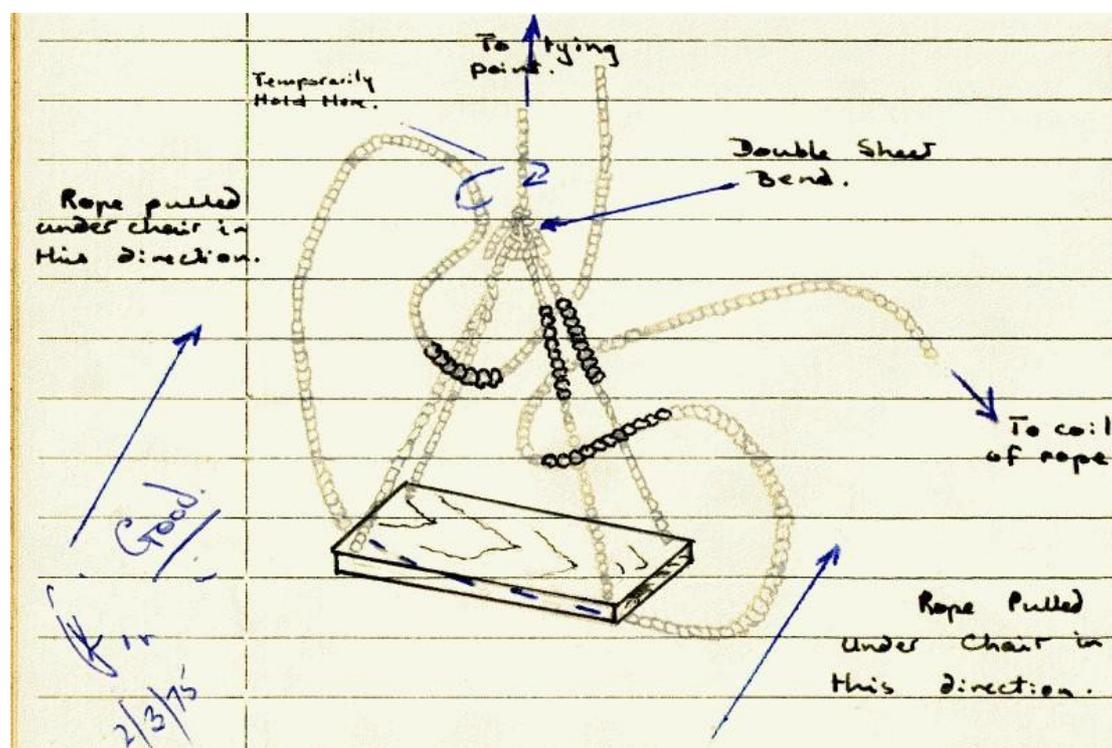
After Quality Control, I worked on the focsle preparing for the Heavy Jackstay with Fearless – freeing the pins for the safety nets and finally rigging them. This took the entire morning because the pins were seized in by paint etc.

At 14:00 the Fearless was alongside and the fwd. gun line was fired taking out distance lines and telephone lines + a messenger to which the Jackstay was finally connected. The 'block' had an outhaul and inhaul so that goods could be transferred, and a third line with a rolling shackle was used to downhaul the jackstay.

On watching and partaking in the rigging and use of this apparatus, all personnel have to be aware of the hazards and due regard to safety has to be given. ie: open railing, swing palets, free + fixed wires and ropes, rolling of the ships causing unpredictability of loads being transferred.

March 1st 75 240 mi SW BDA.

Quality Control of Avcat after which we practised knots, bends and wire splices. Due to variations of opinion, no-one properly completed the splice to a Board of Trade Standard. However, everyone successfully completed rigging a Bosuns Chair and Staging.



March 2nd / 3rd 75 Mayport. [AUTHOR'S NOTE 2013: date not clear]

This morning I worked out on deck with the bosun, our first task that of bringing out the mooring ropes. On completion, we assisting in breaking up the oil slick with detergent and this task lasted several hours.

For harbour stations I was on the gangway, and this rigged the pilot ladder etc. The ship berthed as 12:50. We then had to clear the lounge for the evening party, after which we brought out new paint from the foreward hold and transferred it to the paint store on 1 deck.

Following coffee break we cleaned the lifeboats and then secured for an early evening meal.

March 4th 75 Mayport.

This morning we lowered No.5 lifeboat and rigged the lifeboat radio and antenna. This piece of equipment, with a power output of 4.2 watts into the

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wire antenna provided, operates on internationally allocated frequencies for distress calls; on 500 KHZ and 8.364 MHZ. The actual transmitter has fitted an auto keying device sending GQKA SOS, and a long dash for radio direction finding purposes.

The entire unit is built in a watertight highly visible case which floats. There is a built in generator and the total weight of the entire unit is 65 lbs. The equipment is so designed so that the most inexperienced can use it. It comes complete with operating instructions and also tells the best way to rig the antenna.

March 5th 75 Mayport.

This morning we changed and replaced eight of the CABA bottles prior to the admirals inspection. After this, the low bottles were taken for replacement on Lyness. Also during the morning I had to run several other messages.

After lunch I cleaned off some of the cutter which is once again in a poor state due to the chipping etc. which has been taking place above it. (The rust stains require quite lengthy periods to remove.)

At 15:00 we secured for the day and I went to stock up on some last minute supplies.

March 6th 75 Mayport to Sea.

During the morning, all cadets were out cleaning the ships boats and generally tidying them up. The boats were speckled in soot and the job thus became long and tedious.

Immediately after lunch we had to replace two aftersprings which had parted. This task took about 1 hour, and we spent the remaining time cleaning our cabins.

For harbour stations, at 16:00, I was on the gangway and we cleared that, replaced the railing and stood down.

At 19:40, RAS stations were called, but an emergency breakaway postponed the replenishment until 21:00. I was working on rigs 8 and 12.

March 7th 75 at Sea. The "Big" Day.

Up early this morning prior to the admirals inspection. RAS stations for refuelling with LYNESS and HAMPSHIRE on rigs 3 and 4. My station was on the "point", handling the hose lines etc. There was also an emergency breakaway with HAMPSHIRE due to some mechanical fault. After this I sewed canvas covers for the lifeboat axes. This operation was interrupted by a major fire

exercise and all the smoke bombs were planted down aft. My job was to keep the Section 1 Base incident board to date so that, at a glance, all modes of the fire fighting could be quickly recognised. The entire exercise lasted approx. 35mins and on completion we were stood down.

During Lunch a final - crash on deck - exercise took place but it was rapidly under control. This saw the end of the Admirals Inspection.

March 8th 75 20mi EAST of Mayport.

In the morning we proceeded with the emergency routines, starting lifeboat engines, fire pump, emergency generators etc.

On completion of the "firing up" of the emergency engines I had my Rule of the Road test and then practiced a left handed locking splice with little success until the second attempt.

This Sunday we had our record books checked and after this we were free. I spent the afternoon working on my correspondance course.

March 10th 75 anchor to sea.

Calls were at 04:30 for cadets on the anchor party and at 05:00 we commenced to weigh anchor.

When the anchor was finally up, we secured it in position and stood down. Breakfast was early today because RAS stations were scheduled for 07:30 for replenishment with Ark, Hampshire, Lyness and Resource. The rigs in use today were 8 16 and 11 – there was no dieso transfer, however lub.oil and water were pumped across. The entire series of replenishment ended at 13:30.

In the evening I read the information on ropes, types, grades etc.

Manila is the most suited natural fibre rope for use at sea – however nylon is far stronger but it is more expensive being a manmade fibre.

(made from)
Adipyl-chloride
Diamino Hexane
Carbon Tetra Chloride.

March 11th 75 75mi EAST of C'aba Bch.

[AUTHOR'S NOTE 2013: location writing unreadable]

After breakfast, cadets of port watch started to maintain the davits of the 36' cutter. Chipping the winch gear took longer than was anticipated as there was excessive rust and material that had corroded away on the interior.

After several hours work, it was still not complete so we covered it with boiled linseed oil which goes into the pores of the steel.

In the evening, I completed my 11th hour of steering, this time using the electric, which is far more simple than hydraulic.

March 12th 75

There was an early breakfast this morning as the ship was scheduled to go into Freeport for fuel but due to variations in connections and ship design, this never materialised. The ship steamed up and down, outside the fuel depot for the majority of the day, awaiting official instructions.

During the afternoon we continued working on the cutter winch and finally completed chipping and oiling down.

The ship finally headed away from Freeport at 19:00 – the programme now is for a pumpover with the Pearleaf.

March 13th 75

Port watch were given study today and I spent the day working on my project – ships pipeline system.

After dinner there was a code practice session in the hangar – on completion we secured for the day.

At midnight, the watches commenced and I was on the bridge while the replenishment with Tartar and Ark took place. The rigs used today were 8 – 16 and 15 and 3.

Replenishment continued until 02:00 and after breakaway, the ship steamed to rendez-vous with the rest of the ships in the exercise.

March 14th 75

At noon today the ship was some 50 miles from the exercise fleet. During the watch, I did some radar plotting and kept a lookout for ships. We rendez-vous'd with the ships at 15:30 and then proceeded to station – the guide ship being Albany.

At 00:15 we were finally in station and at 01:00 the zig-zag submarine exercise began and I formulated the course alterations from the book, and announced when to execute the alterations.

Also during the watch I kept a track of the ships on radar and kept a general lookout.

March 15th 75

Rule of the road this am. After an early lunch I was on the 12 – 4 bridge watch. It proved to be a quite a quiet watch and Trenton was Guide. The Junior Second Officer showed me how to use the range finder – a piece of apparatus used to measure with reasonable accuracy, distances of objects up to approx. 10,000 yards. It is used when radar silence is in force.

The midnight to four watch revealed an invader into the convoy and we spent time watching for green flares. I did a little radar plotting and visual lookout work. Stood down at 04:00.

March 16th 75

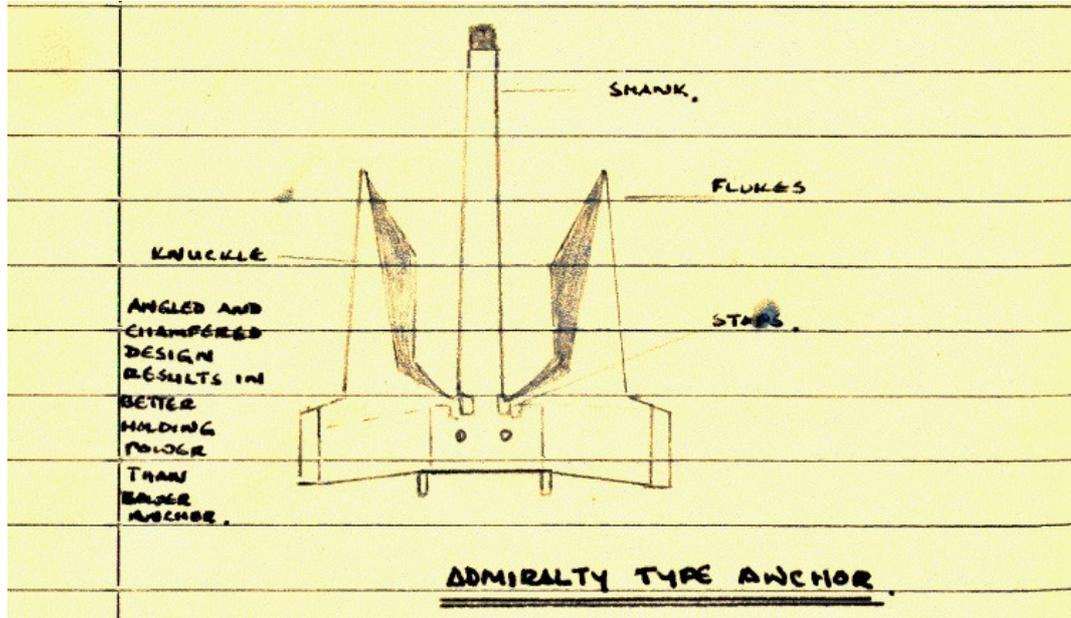
The pumpover with Pearleaf began at 10:45 and the OLWEN was loading some 10,000 TONS of fuel. During the bridge watch, I kept the RAS log and also kept a lookout for shipping in the vicinity. (in 4 hours only 1 vessel was seen.) At 16:00, the pumpover was still in progress.

The midnight / four watch was extremely quiet and no vessels were seen in the entire period.

The Officer of the Watch showed me how to draw up a radar plot, which is used to obtain “true motion” vessels courses and speeds etc. Most Interesting.

March 17th 75 N. Puerto Rica.

I used this morning to study and after lunch we had a lecture on anchor types and anchor cable. The anchor in use on here is the DTI accepted Bower design while modern warships are carrying a more efficient Admiralty type anchor which is more stream lined, and ton for ton, holds more load than an equal sized bower anchor.



March 18th 75 75 mi. N. Puerto Rica.

The entire morning was occupied by replenishments although chipping and davit maintenance was carried out between times. The rig in use throughout the day was the PROBE on 12.

The first USS. Ships were Luce and Paul and both were refuelled with DIESEL by NOON.

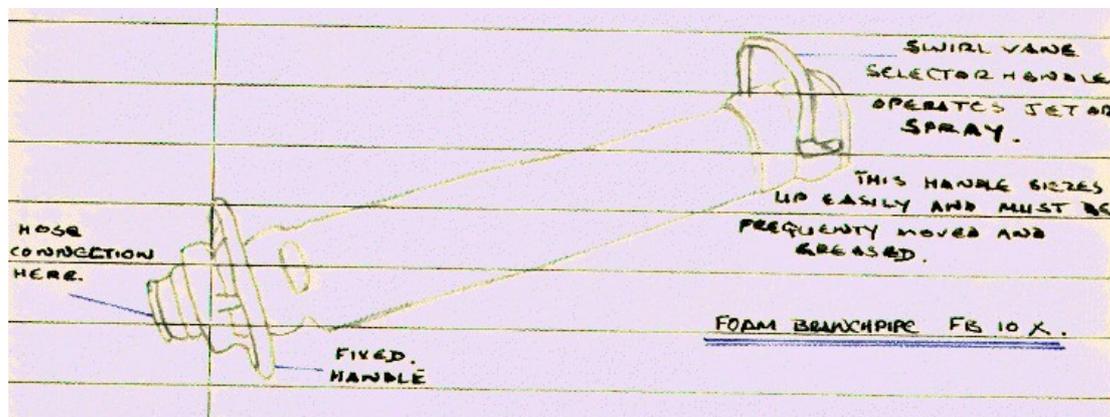
Maintenance on the 36' workboat continued during the afternoon – repairs of lights etc.

Further interruptions at 16:45 with refuelling of USS BLAKELY, and hence the library was closed 10MINS early.

The actual replenishment, lasting until 17:45 ended with the ATW failure and the jackstay was retrieved by hand. The resulting mess was finally cleared up by 18:10 and the ATW maintained.

March 21st 75 Near Puerto Rica.

Worked on the flight deck until 10:30 cleaning and replacing some of the FB10X Jet/Spray foam nozzles.



The FB10X is used particularly on flight decks with the salt water main. The consumption of foam is about 6¼ gallons per minute and is of the high expansion type.

During the afternoon I worked in 36' workboat, sanding down the mahogany.

March 22nd 75 VIEQUES.

Replenishment with Ark Royal at 09:00 and after setting the distance line, I worked on Rig 16 until it was connected. The replenishment lasted nearly two hours and in the meantime Lyness took FFO from rig eleven, then dieso from rig 15.

During the afternoon I attempted another left-handed locking splice and also had the rule of road test etc.

The anchor party closed up at 18:30 and we cleared the anchors away = removed wire strops, chain bridle and let the guillotine bar clear.

7 shackles – 639ft of cable was let out. We watched the cable “growing” and saw it change from “long to short” stay as the ship settled down to the tension on the cable.

March 23rd 75 Puerto Rica.

After breakfast, cadets prepared the two dingys for launching and thus the mast and stays etc had to be rigged correctly. The ‘red’ dingy was lowered first and was soon underway after rigging Technicalities were solved.

Following lunch, all boats were away and I went out for 1 hour, commencing 15:00. We sailed across to the island and immediately turned back.

On the way back the spinnaker was rigged and we had a quick attempt at running with the wind.

At 17:45 the two boats were alongside and prepared for hoisting. Initial problems were eventually overcome and the craft were hoisted to safety and rested in the proper places.

March 24th 75 D.E. Puerto Rica.

Sounded the cofferdams and fresh water tanks for the carpenter and then helped assemble some shelving for the galley. This involved mixing and applying glue and pin nailing the wood.

When the job was finished, we then worked on the foreward gantry fixing a wooden strip for the wires to fix onto,

After lunch the anchor party was called and the cable was slowly brought up and the cable was re-marked and wired appropriately. There were some difficulties in getting the capstan operating due to electrical problems. When it finally was operational, the chain wouldn't stow correctly and at 15:30 it was secured properly.

March 25th 75 Virgin Passage.

After completing the soundings of all the spaces and the fresh water holds, I was in EASCO for the replenishment with HMS GURKHA on rig three. The fuel exchanged was Dieso 140 TONS. Then I continued working with the carpenter on the focsle, fitting and painting the wooden runners for the wires.

In the middle of lunch, replenishment stations were announced for the pumprover with Pearleaf.

The first few hours were chaotic and the emergency breakaway which never was, caused the diesel hose to blow out. Due to a severe twist in the Avcat line, this was never started until 18:30 - Rig 8 had to be recovered and sorted out; thus the FFO pressure had to be reduced.

March 26th 75 Area Dominica ~ Martinique.

Started the soundings at 07:40 and finished within the hour. We were given study today and I worked on my project of the ships pipeline system and squaring it up to near completion.

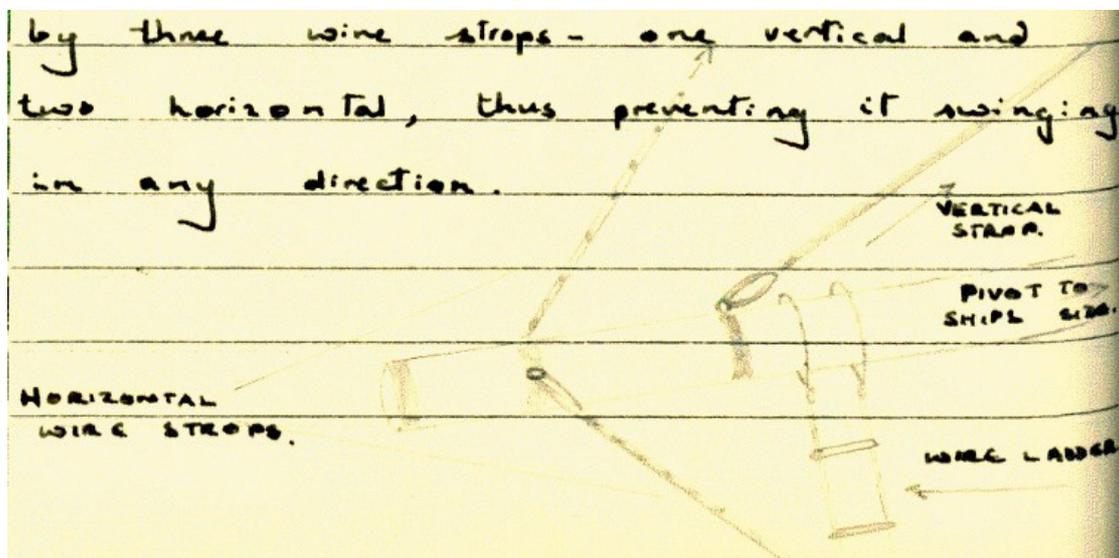
After lunch we had signals and then continued study while the Ark RAS was in progress.

March 27th 75 BRIDGETOWN.

Following breakfast in the duty mess, we were on the cable party and we cleared away anchors and finally walked back 1 shackle into the water – starboard anchor.

The chippy allowed me to operate the brake – the signals to let go were given by the First Officer. (The amount of rust and dust thrown out of the spurling pipe causes visibility to be quite poor to acknowledge)

After this, all cadets helped rig the boat boom which proved to be more easy than was expected. It was held in position by three wire stops - one vertical and two horizontal, thus preventing it swinging in any direction.



After lunch we removed the tank cover on 7 starboard, in preparation of entry into tank. The equipment on hand prior to entry into any tank should include:- Breathing Apparatus, Safety Line and harness, safety torch, appropriate clothing, explosimeter.

There should be someone always on hand outside to raise an alarm and assist should something go wrong.

The explosimeter is a must for entry into tanks, to check for flammable vapours. However it does not test for oxygen and the chemical reactions of burning, breathing and rusting all remove this from the air, so initial care and awareness is a must throughout.

The actual purpose of entry into this tank was to trace a leak in the compressed air line used in tank ullaging (Malone System). However the

fault in the system was detected several seconds before the last nut and bolt was removed from the hatch cover.

The interior of the tank was in reasonable condition and there was only surface rust. The inboard side of the tank had a corrugated bulkhead and the outboard side had longitudinal frames.

There were also web frames and angle girders. The frames running thwartships contained lightening holes and this, as the name implies, is to keep down weight and cost.

Friday: Shore Leave Granted.



AUTHOR'S NOTE 2013:
[Barbados](#)

L to R:

VB.Ramsay-Smith, M.Harper, J.Burrows with our Barbadian Host.

(Taken with a Kodak Instamatic 104 ~ 126).

March 29th 75 BARBADOS.

In the morning, cadets were allowed ashore but we had to return by 13:00 for the weekly test, today on rules, compass flags and steering.

In the remaining time we practiced wire splicing – left hand locking splice.

Steering Telemotor - NOTES

The actual motor which controls the pump outlets – suction and discharge, - turns at a constant speed. Pressures generated in the narrow bore copper tubing are caused by piston movement directly actuated by revolving the helm wheel. The amount of pressure applied causes the curtain valves on the pump to operate the horizontal pistons (4) which in turn rotate the tiller and rudder stock.

March 31st 75 departs BARBADOS.

Early calls this morning for harbour stations and departure from anchorage. Our initial job was to get the bosun's dingys inboard and haul in pilot ladders. The anchor party was piped at 05:25 and we secured the anchors as the ship headed away.

Immediately after breakfast all the bosun's dingys were cleaned and correctly secured – the gear was stowed away.

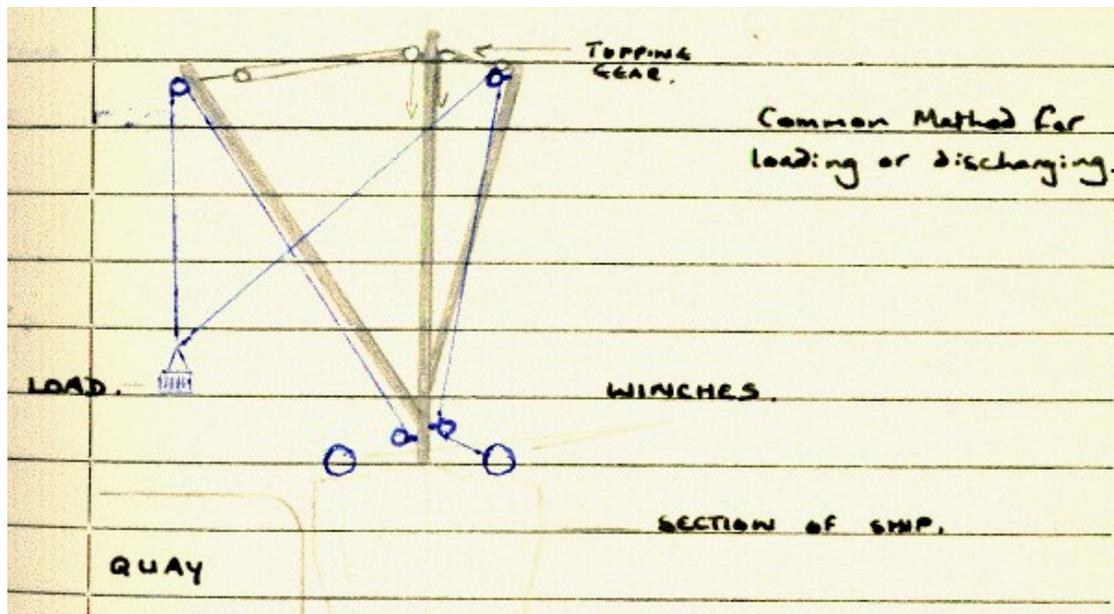
We prepared the rig – 4 for a “RAS” for practise purposes. This included getting all the equipment on hand and correctly set out:- hose lines, messengers, distance and telephone lines. In the afternoon we operated the winches and generally straightened out the rig.

The actual “moment of truth” is yet to come !

After securing for the day, I read the chapter of Dantons concerning lifting gear.

UNION PURCHASE.

Definition:- A rig in which the whips of two standing derricks are joined to the cargo hook. One derrick plumbs the hold and the other plumbs over the ships side.



LOADING NOTES (GENERAL)

When transferring heavy loads with jumbo derricks, extreme care must be taken because the centre of gravity of the ship moves as cargo is moved. Thus possible lists can occur and when the load is released, a ship tends to move considerably as the centre of gravity is changed.

After using heavy derricks, all associated equipment should be inspected for any possible damages.

April 1st 75 80 mi N. St. Thomas.

The replenishment with LYNES was called off as she had suffered engine trouble overnight. Port watch worked on the lifeboats, however I had to draw

a deck by deck plan of the OLWEN for the FIRST OFFICER. The task took all day to complete as you cannot rush it.

We had a lecture after lunch on derricks and we were told of the rig we were to assemble – a swinging derrick. We practiced some calculations involved in derrick rigging → SWL of the various wire ropes that were to be used.

The formula for safe working loads varies with the different types of materials used and the safety factor is not always the same.

As the amount of wires per strand increases, this increases, in turn, the safe working load.

ie:

as the amount of wires per strand increases, ^{this} increases, in turn, the safe working load.

ie.

6 × 12 wire rope.	SWL. = $\frac{2c^2}{6}$
6 × 24 wire rope.	SWL. = $\frac{3c^2}{6}$
6 × 37 wire rope.	SWL. = $\frac{3\frac{1}{4}c^2}{6}$

C: circumference of wire rope in inches.
Resultant in tonnes.

example: Find SWL. of $\frac{3''}{\text{circum.}}$ 6 × 24 wire rope.

Solution. $\frac{3c^2}{6}$: formula.

$\frac{3 \times 3^2}{6}$ = $\frac{27}{6}$: 4.5 Tons.

April 2nd 75 450 SW BDA.

The deck by deck plan was finally completed by 09:45 and given to the FIRST OFFICER. We spent the rest of the working day on the 25ft cutter, generally painting and cleaning up. However, our work was interrupted at 16:00 by a fire exercise – the “fire” being in the helicopter workshop aft. During the exercise I had to keep the incident board up to date.

In the evening I read the section in Dantons regarding lifeboat handling. The author expresses extra attention on beaching lifeboats in surf:-
Always approach with the stern to the beach and bows out. Study the wave cycle as it has definite patterns. The crew should back water, steadily, and when close to the shore, some disembark and bring the boat to rest.

April 3rd 75 450 SE NORFOLK.

At 07:30, RAS stations were called for replenishments on rigs 8, 12 and 16 with Ark Royal. Fuels transferred were FFO and Dieso. The fuel transfer lasted 3 hours and we were stood down at 11:30.

After lunch we had a lecture on lifeboat handling and then had study throughout the afternoon.

April 4th 75 90 mi. NORFOLK, VA.

Due to poor overnight weather conditions we did not rendez-vous with Resource at the scheduled time and replenishment was postponed. Port watch were first allowed to study but then it was necessary for a cabin clean.

[[AUTHOR'S NOTE 2013: must have been a Friday ... Captain's Rounds](#)]

At 10:30, I continued study and worked on my navigation lesson six and also considered the layout of my project which is a detailed description of a loading operation.

The strong winds prevented the Ark from entering Norfolk and thus, we also had to stay “outside”. During the evening I worked on my correspondance course.

April 5th 75 Near NORFOLK.

I had the weekly rule of the road test, only to find that I would be required on the bridge for entry into Norfolk at 11:00. However poor weather conditions caused postponement and OLWEN continued to steam up and down the coast, outside Norfolk.

In the afternoon we practised the left handed locking splice, and completed this at 15:00.

April 6th 75 arrives NORFOLK.

Early calls at 05:30 for entry into NORFOLK but this was postponed and instead RAS stations were called for a replenishment with Resource, rig 11. I was on the bridge most of the day as another RAS with Ark Royal took place at 11:00 on rigs 8 and 16 (FFO only). The Master decided not to take the ship in as the winds were too high for berthing, however at 15:30 the conditions had improved greatly and the ship proceeded into port. I kept the movements book. We had 5 tugs, 2 on the port bow, 1 port quarter, 1 starboard quarter and one on the starboard bow. The ship came alongside, starboard side to and she berthed with the bow approx. 20ft from the end of the dock.

The mooring arrangements were 4 x 2 x 2, with springs fore and aft.

[Part-5, covering the rest of April and May 1975 will be transcribed ~ early Dec. 2013.](#)

[In April, cadets spent a few days at the US Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland.](#)
