

Everybody must by now know that H.M.S. *Malabar* is to be paid off permanently; that all the beautiful, time-worn buildings that grace Ireland and Boaz Islands are to be closed; that H.M. Dockyard will soon be a memory and no longer the thriving industrial and social hub of the West End of the Bermuda Isles. The first visible sign of this break up took place on the 15th May, when with due and exaggerated ceremony the 20-in. signalling projector was dismantled and removed. A merchant vessel passing through Grassy Bay within a few days of this event was awarded high marks for keeping an alert look-out when, in response to the Signal Station's usual friendly signal she made "Wot! No twenty inch." The Main Signal Office and the Signal Station closed on 28th June, when touch had been lost with the Squadron sailing for the summer cruise. H.M.S. *Snipe*, at the end of May, undocked from A.F.D.5 to the accompaniment of much hooting and wailing of sirens large and small and of signals signifying her claim to be the last H.M. ship to know the lap of that grand old dock.

Sporting events have been numerous; the Governor's Cup (soccer) was secured by a team of Snipes who jubilantly informed H.M.S. *Jamaica*, last year's winner and now in the Far East, that the Cup remained in the West Country; the Road Race went to *Glasgow*; the Athletic Sports produced laurels for *Glasgow*; the Jeffery's Gold Cup is still at Kindley Air Force Base; the Command Rifle Meeting found Yeo. Edwards complete with his famous shorts and infamous "stummick" in his matter-of-fact good form despite the deluge of rain the first day and the brilliant sunshine the second; the pulling regatta ended with *Sparrow* crowing loudly, a grand achievement due in no small measure to the fine oarsmanship of Lt. (C) Kelly. *Snipe*, fulfilling a vow made a year ago, won the Communications whaler race in a very determined manner. The ocean racing yachts *Galway Blazer*, *Samuel Pepys*, *Mekoia* and *Cohoe* were very welcome

visitors preparing for the Newport—Bermuda race. Their very fine appearance and delightful handling on sailing from Bermuda for the United States to join the other British entrants gave rise to optimistic speculation as to Great Britain's chances in this year's race. H.M.S. *Challenger*, temporarily on the station, will act as the winning-post for this Ocean Racing classic.

The *Queen of Bermuda* passing the Dockyard bound for New York on 3rd May, was intercepted by a motor boat from the *Glasgow*, which gave a fanfare of miscellaneous noises and a shower of Very's lights whilst the flagship provided a background of more noises, a rocket bombardment and the flag-signal "Good Old Charlie." This operation constituted a farewell demonstration of the popularity of the ex-Commanding Officer of the Flagship and Chief-of-Staff, Captain C. L. Firth, an officer well known to Communicators.

Another officer soon to depart and of interest to the "C" fraternity is Lt. Cdr. F. H. Dunlop . . . a figure the mention of whose name, "Freddie," should bring a smile of reminiscent affection to the minds of all who have known and served with him. The end of this year will see him donning a bowler hat—or will it be a Glengarry?

One of the many reasons given by *Malabar* Signalmen for failing to repeat their performance of the previous year in the Communications Whaler race was that their messmate, Sig. Norman Collins, had chosen the Regatta Day, 4th May, as his wedding day. Thus culminated a romance which, it is declared, began with conversations on the telephone during night watches, the bride, Miss Jessie Tite, being an employee of the Bermuda Telephone Company, the impressive ceremony taking place in St. John's Church, Pembroke, with a reception at Clydedale, Hamilton. By 2300 that night the S.C.C.O. had learned that his staff could provide a most excellent male voice choir ably led by Yeoman Blaikie and accompanied by the bridegroom's song-producing wedding punch.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DEPOT, H.M.S. "MALABAR"

Launched by Napiers on the Clyde in 1867, H.M.S. *Malabar* was one of a class of beautiful but uncomfortable troopers designed to go through the Suez Canal. Simple engines gave her 6,211 tons a speed of thirteen knots, but her shallow draught made her disagreeable in anything but the best of seas; she was also heavily rigged and, with a white hull, presented a particularly attractive picture under sail. Capable of carrying 1,200 troops, she was run by the Navy on behalf of the India Office and was employed almost exclusively on trooping trips to

India. In 1881, the ship was given a major overhaul which included the fitting of steam steering gear to replace the old hand gear which had called upon the exertions of sixteen men to put the helm over; a year later electric light was installed with great success. It was decided in 1894 to give up the Indian troopers and to charter liners from the P. and O. and other shipping companies instead, but *Malabar* continued to run with the hired troopers for two years after her contemporaries had gone to the scrappers or had been converted to hulks. She was then taken in hand and converted to a depot ship to replace H.M.S. *Urgent* on the Jamaican coast, but just before sailing for the West Indies, her orders were countermanded and she sailed for Bermuda to become a coal hulk. On her arrival at Bermuda, she was found to be so much better than the receiving ship, *Shah*, that the latter became the coal hulk and *Malabar* the receiving ship. In 1901, the old *Terror* was paid off and the *Malabar* assumed her name and role as the flagship at Bermuda until 1914, when she was put up for sale but reprieved when war broke out.

Throughout World War I she remained at Bermuda as the flagship and depot ship, being sold to the United States for conversion to an oil hulk shortly after the Armistice of 1918. On the way to America, she found a final resting-place by foundering in heavy weather.

Commissioner's house, the stone frigate of the present *Malabar*, appears to have been built between 1823 and 1836, although the site itself was probably first occupied towards the end of the seventeenth century by a Captain Florentio Seymour, an ex-Governor of Bermuda. Much heated and acrimonious correspondence was exchanged over the exorbitant cost of the building, but history does not relate upon whom the responsibility for this extravagance should rest. Convict labour was mainly employed, but most

materials, including Yorkshire stone, were shipped from England.

For a number of years the house passed into the hands of the Ordnance Department, but in 1862 it was returned to the Navy and became a barracks for Royal Marines for a period of up to forty years. Various Commissioners or Superintendents occupied the solidly built, hurricane defying house, and much of the original furniture still dignifies the present wardroom, while in the basement can be seen grim reminders of the days when disciplinary action required the solitary incarceration of an offender or his suspension by the neck. During the period between the twentieth-century wars the building was of ample size to accommodate the small base staff, but the personnel requirements of 1939-45 called for a conglomeration of huts and unornamental buildings to the rear of the main house. The Main Signal Office was erected in 1943 in front of the house and overlooking Grassy Bay, and three years later the Signal Station was built on the roof of the M.S.O. which, according to a fix made 114 years ago, is in position 32 19 North, 64 51 West.