

H.M.S. Phoebe back from "Cook's Tour"

WITH FORMIDABLE ARRAY OF SPORTING TROPHIES

BACK from her second Mediterranean commission since May, 1946, H.M.S. Phoebe (Captain H. C. Dickinson, D.S.C.), 5,540-ton Chatham cruiser, edged slowly into No. 3 Basin at Chatham Dockyard on Wednesday, to be greeted by hundreds of relatives of officers and men of the ship.

For something like two hours the crowd of relatives had waited patiently on the dockside while the Phoebe battled her way up from Sheerness in gale-force south-westerly winds preceded by the Home Fleet cruiser, H.M.S. Swiftsure.

Handkerchiefs were waved and excited greetings exchanged from shore to ships. As the gangways were lowered into position, wives, sweethearts and parents clambered up on to the quarterdeck to be greeted warmly by their menfolk, many of whom were meeting their young children for the first time.

SHORT BREAK

The Phoebe returned to Chatham in the autumn of 1948 for three short weeks, before returning to the Mediterranean for a further 2½ years.

Her second commission reads something like a Cook's tour, during which the ship steamed a total of 37,646 miles and visited every corner of the Mediterranean, including calls to Alexandria, Beirut, Venice, Trieste, Monte Carlo, Gibraltar, North Africa, Crete, Greece and Turkey.

At Marmarice, too, the Phoebe won the coveted Mediterranean Fleet Regatta Cock in July of last year, and a formidable array of cups and trophies for almost every type of sport.

She was the first ship to return to Chatham for many years wearing a gigantic replica of the Cock on her "B" 5.25 gun turret, and this proud achievement typifies the spirit which pervades this very happy ship.

From May to December, 1950, the cruiser was the flagship of the First Cruiser Squadron, wearing the flag of Rear-Admiral C. T. M. Fizy, C.B., D.S.O.

ROYAL VISITORS

On Easter Sunday, H.R.H. Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh were entertained on board, and again on January 15th of this year, when the Phoebe staged an impressive searchlight tattoo at Malta, witnessed by over 600 people. This was the first naval tattoo to be held in Malta, and practically the whole of the ship's company took part in it. Another well-loved visitor to the ship was Gracie Fields, who came aboard at Capri and entertained the ship's company last September.

On leaving Malta, the Phoebe joined the Home Fleet at Gibraltar in combined exercises, returning in company with them as far as the English Channel.

Among those who waited to meet the ship were Mr. and Mrs. Williams, of Mount Road, Chatham, whose son, L.R.E.M A. J. Williams, has been in the ship for three years and four months. He will celebrate his 22nd birthday on April 25th.

Chief Petty Officer Shipwright Albert Parks, of Chatham, had a pleasant surprise, too. His parents were unable to come to the Dockyard, but on the quayside was his old friend Kenneth Link, formerly of Rochester, and now living at Addlestone, Surrey.

The two went to school together, were apprenticed together in Chatham Dockyard, and joined the Navy together. Kenneth was invalided out in October, 1948.

With Kenneth was his wife Margaret, and a friend, Cicely Ledger, from Virginia Water. Cicely and Albert have been corresponding for the 2½ years that Albert has been away, and this was their first meeting.

OLDEST INHABITANT

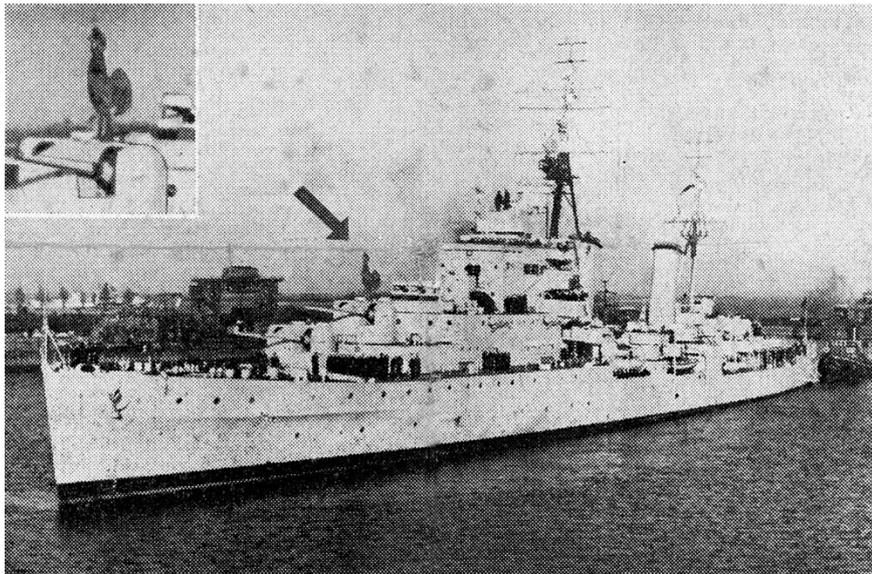
One member of the ship's company that was a favourite with everyone was "Snowy," the ship's three-legged white cat, and its oldest inhabitant. It is estimated that "Snowy" has been aboard for about eight years. Last commission, he fell down a hatch, and had to have half of his left hind leg amputated by the ship's surgeon. Comment from one of the crew, "The loss of his leg doesn't bother him much. It makes it a little awkward for him to scratch his port ear, but he manages!"

Other pets are "Bonehead" and "Bombshell," the gunners' party's tortoises.

The Phoebe will now pay off to the Reserve, and will be one of the main attractions for visitors to Easter Navy Days at Chatham.

Foreign service leave for part of the crew begins on Saturday.

Other ships of the Home Fleet are arriving at Chatham today (Friday) and tomorrow.



Returning to Chatham on Wednesday after her second 2½ years' commission in the Mediterranean since 1946, H.M.S Phoebe proudly wears a replica of the Golden Cock, awarded to the ship last year when she won the 1950 Mediterranean Fleet Regatta, on her forward gun turret.