

*This document was prepared by the Writers Office, HMS Ranee.
Author is unknown, but it was possibly written by Commander P. M. Bliss.*

HMS RANEE

HMS. *Ranee* (Carrier Vessel Escort No. 46) was built by the Seattle-Tacoma Shipbuilding Corporation, Tacoma, Washington, U.S.A. and was commissioned with a British crew on 8th. November 1943. Had she not been loaned to the Royal Navy under "Lease Lend" [sic] she would have been named the U.S.S. *Niantic*. She displaced 15000 tons, was 495 feet overall, 87 feet in beam at the sponsons level, and was driven by geared turbines to a single screw.

On her acceptance from the Americans, *Ranee* sailed to Vancouver, Canada, to shake-down and have a few English modifications made, spending a month there. She then sailed to Cochin, Southern India, with a load of some sixty F.A.A. planes, some service passenger, and a dozen American War Brides who had married Australians, calling at San Francisco, Wellington, NZ and Fremantle. She returned to Vancouver calling only at Melbourne.

At Vancouver, *Ranee* was again taken in for further alterations specified by the Admiralty, and the work lasted from May to July of 1944.

She then sailed via San Francisco and Panama to Norfolk, Va., to embark more F.A.A. planes, this time for Capetown. She returned direct to Norfolk in October, 1944 loaded again with some sixty F.A.A. planes and sailed to New York. At New York the personnel of two F.A.A. squadrons. Service passengers and their wives and families and schoolboys, were embarked, and the ship sailed for the U.K. arriving at the beginning of November, 1944. After five days leave to each watch from Greenock, H.M.S. *Ranee* was put through her first flying trials and a *Avenger*, a *Hellcat* and a *Wildcat* were safely landed on and flown off and at last it looked as if *Ranee* was to fulfil her prime purpose in the war.

The ship then went to the Firth of Forth to relieve the [Speaker](#) operating from Rosyth and Methil as Deck Landing Training Carrier for six weeks during which time something like 2,000 landings-on and take-offs were made. There were 17 prangs, some of them quite spectacular, but no one was hurt until an unfortunate pilot doing his first night landings in a *Swordfish*, flew over the barriers, landed on the forward end of the Flight-deck and fell over the bows into the sea. He was not seen again.

New Year's day 1945 provided some excitement as the ship left her anchorage by the Forth Bridge for another week of D.L.T. Owing to

a breakdown in the engine-room, the ship went completely out of control just as she had gathered a speed of some 6 or 7 knots. In this condition, she headed straight for a nearby merchant ship, inexplicably avoided her and then headed for H.M.S. *Deer Sound*. The port anchor was let-go and as the ship had then lost most of her way she gently touched *Deer Sound* leaving a small dent in *Ranee's* bows which can still be seen, After the usual inquiry the ship was ordered to Greenock to boiler-clean, to give five days leave to each watch and then to proceed to the Pacific for loan to the U.S. Carrier Transport Squadron, U.S. Pacific Fleet. Captain J.A.W. Tothill, D.S.C., R. N., took over command on the 20th January, 1945, the day before the ship sailed, *Ranee* proceeded in convoy to about 300 miles short of New York and was then escorted by a U.S. destroyer to Panama. Very bad weather was experienced during the Atlantic crossing and when *Ranee* left the convoy and the sea came round to the beam she rolled like a barrel - legend has it that the heaviest roll was 28 degrees from the vertical. Some damage was done to the flight-deck forward, the jeeps broke away from their lashings in the hangar and did their best to go through the ship's side and generally life was very uncomfortable for 24 hours. Gales and heavy seas, however, soon gave way to the peaceful calm of the Caribbean. Panama was reached 17 days out from Greenock and the ship proceeded to San Diego, California for voyage, repairs and to embark the first load of aircraft for the forward pacific areas. U.S. naval aircraft and personnel were ferried to Pearl Harbour, Eniwetok and Guam, two complete round trips being made from Pearl Harbour to Guam. In mid-April, orders were received for *Ranee* to return home for conversion to a Replenishment Carrier for the Japanese war. On leaving the Americans, from whom we had received every kindness and whom we had grown to admire and like, we received a very encouraging signal from our admiral (short title COMCARTRANSRONPAC) thanking the ship for its work and saying that our performance in steaming, loading and unloading stores and aircraft had compared very favourably with the American C.V.E.'s which were operating with a complement twice the number of ours (350).

After a weeks boiler clean at San Diego, a week at Norfolk, Va. to load F.A.A. planes for the U.K., a day, and more important a night, at New York to embark passengers - officers, women and children and schoolboys, *Ranee* sailed in the last convoy to reach England from New York, arriving at Glasgow on the 4th June, 1945. The conversion to Replenishment Carrier was done at Greenock whilst the ship was lying at the Tail of the Bank, the mateys coming aboard by boat each day. The refit lasted until the end of August when, with the Pacific war at an end, the Admiralty decided to convert the ship to a Naval Personnel Transport, and the ship sailed to Newcastle for this to be done and the "Arab Village", extra heads, bathroom, ventilators and the after mess hall were installed.

This work was completed at the beginning of November and *Ranee* sailed for Portsmouth to embark her first draft for the East.

During her career, *Ranee* steamed 110,000 miles and although she did not have the good fortune to engage the enemy, we like to think she paid her way.