HMS IRON DUKE was the first British warship to visit Guinea in 15 years, and we had a lot of catching up to do. Such was the fanfare of our arrival that as the lines were passed and the gangway put in position we were greeted by a Guinean Military Band.

Whilst alongside in the capital Conakry we achieved a phenomenal amount of good will and training. Hosting an official reception with ambassadors from Britain, France, Malaysia, Japan, Egypt and the USA along with the Guinea Chief of Defence Staff. The Ship also hosted a maritime defence conference with the Head of the Guinean Navy, discussing anti-piracy tactics.

Meanwhile the rest of the ship were contributing training alongside their Guinean counterparts, teaching fire-fighting, seamanship and navigation skills.

Further afield we also had several members of the ships company doing some community work at the local Sabu School.

After a pleasant and productive stop in Guinea HMS IRON DUKE, along with RFA BLACK ROVER conducted a productive set of exercises in company with French and Guinean naval and air assets to assist in the development of navigation and seamanship skills.

During the manoeuvres several ships exchanged personnel in a CROSSPOL to gain an appreciation of how the different navies conduct these manoeuvres.
AB MALONE: Going to the SABU school was a real eye opener. Seeing these people made us realise just how lucky we are. The people who lived near the school do not have much money, clothes, food, or even water! But they always seemed happy. Each day the kids would come running up to us eager to help and do everything they could which inspired us to do everything we could. After seeing how little these people had, we collected everything we could once we got back to the ship that night. Amongst other things we gathered spare clothes, food, and water. The next day when we returned we were met by the locals again, all smiling and eager to help. We went inside then came out with the clothes and food and water for them. They were so happy and grateful to be receiving food and water; which we take for granted everyday.

We then took a half hour out of our work to play a friendly game of football with the school children. This was unbelievable. It was only a little kick around but the village came out to watch. What we were doing made such an impact on the lives of these people.

The next day the Ships ‘Chippy’ and I built two book cases for the school. Meanwhile LS Haslam went around the Mess Decks and collected donations to pay for the materials to repair the school’s roof. We all felt touched by what we had seen and did everything we could to help. I feel it changed me as a person and has made me appreciate things I have a lot more.

STANDING PROUD

Welcome to the Jungle : Sailors visit Dubreka

A few of the ships company from HMS IRONDUKE and RFA BLACK ROVER managed to get a trip to the Soumba waterfalls outside Dubreka in Guinea. For many this proved to be the experience of a life time.

Dressed up in long trousers and walking boots, with spirits high we headed off to our destination. Just getting out of the city proved challenging enough, the road was chaotic, like a scene out of wacky races, and choked with rubbish. But out of Conakry the scenery turned from a dilapidated city into lush green countryside, dotted with shanty towns along the way.

On the roadside women and children were selling sardines and biscuits, a few of the ships company stopping to buy some of the local produce. The weather was a bit hit or miss with it turning into a ‘monsoon’ in places and the rainwater collecting in the potholes and turning the road to mud. Never-the-less after enduring a painful 2 hour drive out of the city, in a cramped bus with no suspension or air conditioning, we arrived at our destination.

It was certainly picturesque with the water cascading down the smooth rocks. It did not take long before the majority of the group were in the water enjoying the refreshing and warm river. At the base of the fall there is a small point where you could jump or slide into the rapids and ride it out. Out of sight there was a ladder tucked away, hidden by trees where you could ascend up to the top of the falls, enabling you to enjoy the views up and down the river. There was even a little alcove where you could hide behind the waterfall. Being surrounded by beauty and nature was absolutely incredible.

LS HASLAM: Whilst in Guinea AB Malone and I amongst others, were involved in the outreach project helping restore a school in Conakry. I first put my name down for the project as an experience. The thought of doing something a bit different interested me. Once I had the experience of working on the school and meeting the local community I felt it changed me as a person forever and gave me a totally different out look on life.

When we arrived at the school I really didn’t know what to expect. We started doing a lot of heavy ‘lifting and shifting’ work, removing rubble out of one of the class rooms and giving the place a good clean out. Then we painted the class rooms and tidied up the grounds. While we were there we played football with about 12 of the local children at the back of the school. It was an excellent experience.

The team, including myself also gave away food, sweets, and a lot of water to the local children and community. It is by far the most satisfying thing I have ever done. Seeing the small difference we made, not just to the children’s lives, but the local community as well, was special and made me realise how lucky we are compared to others. I would jump at the opportunity to do voluntary aid work again.
HMS IRON DUKE has paid a three-day visit to a naval base in Ghana building on the UK’s strong relations with the West African nation. Portsmouth-based HMS IRON DUKE arrived in Sekondi where she berthed alongside RFA BLACK ROVER and the two ships hosted an official reception.

They were also welcomed by the Ghanaian forces with IRON DUKE’s boarding team of Royal Marines and sailors spending time on one of the Ghanaian Navy’s patrol boats practising techniques and sharing experiences.

Lieutenant Ollie Behan, an Officer of the Watch and the Ship’s Lead Boarding Officer said: “I enjoyed working with the Ghanaians; they were keen to learn and had some interesting experience to share from their patrols in the Gulf of Guinea.

“Having the Royal Marines with us really made a difference and added to the professionalism.”

While in the country a contingent including IRON DUKE’s Commanding Officer Commander Tom Tredray and the Captain of RFA Black Rover Captain Nigel Budd visited a cemetery in Sekondi’s twin city – Takoradi, to pay their respects at a number of Commonwealth War Graves. A service was held and a wreath was laid at the grave of a sailor from the Great War.

The service was led by a local chaplain with a contingent of Royal Navy, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Ghanaian service personnel present and a Ghanaian bugler played the last post. The Commodore of the Ghanaian Navy Western Naval Command led the parade with the overall event lasting around 30 minutes.

After a short service of remembrance, the delegation was then able to wander around and pay their respects. One such grave noted by a Petty Officer from HMS IRON DUKE was that of an Able Seaman Lowe.

HMS IRON DUKE’s engineers were also given the chance to get their hands dirty with a trip to the Sekondi Naval Base’s mechanical workshops and training centre for technicians. In one room were sailors stripping down an outboard engine, with access to an injector test set, in another a group of junior engineers in a class learning about electronics.

On leaving Ghana a navigation and manoeuvring exercise – a PASSEX – was conducted between the two navies, with an exchange of personnel to allow UK sailors first hand experience of local forces and their knowledge of operating in the Gulf of Guinea.

**MEET A SAILOR**

Name: CPO Glen Millar
Known as: Dusty
Age: 40
Family: Sarah (Wife)
Hobbies: Reading, Walking, Cycling
Music: Rock
How long have you been in the RN: 20 Years
Kakum to Cape Coast

Whilst IRON DUKE had a short stop in Ghana, members of the Ship’s Company managed to get in a visit to Cape Coast and Kakum National Park and its 300m sky walk. With an early start we set off to our first destination. As we left the Dockyard behind, lining the streets were the old rotten and crumbling colonial buildings giving a sense of a bygone age.

We arrived at our first destination which was the Kakum National Park. On our arrival the weather was overcast and humid, but what was waiting was a lush green forest alive with the sound of birds and insect’s, not that we saw any. The climb of 86 steps, over large cobbled rocks was followed by another 500 meters of twisting pathway to the top of the mountain led to the start of the canopy walk. Once we had re-grouped we were briefed by our guide on what to expect, he mentioned that it was 30m from canopy floor to the forest ‘rooptop’. And that the weight of the walkways could take the weight of 2 elephants. Four by four the lads started out across the walkways which consisted of 6 rickety separate bridges made up from ladders and rope. We were informed that these were quite safe, and that the platforms which connected them would allow us an amazing view as well as the chance to catch our breath. Unfortunately didn’t see any wildlife apart from a lizard but regardless, it was an enjoyable few hours of nature.

After a short hop, skip and a jump it was onto our next interesting and humbling destination, Cape Coast Castle. The castle or ‘castle and dungeon’ as its officially named was originally called Cabo Cors and is now a World Heritage Site. This is one of the most culturally significant spots in Africa. Forever haunted by the ghosts of the past; we were informed by our guide that this castle was once the largest slave-trading centre in West Africa, and at the height of the slave trade it received a workforce from locations as far away as Niger and Burkina Faso.

Walking into the bowels of the imposing castle, the dungeons where up to a 1000 male slaves and 500 female slaves occupied the dungeons at any one time. Each slave would be locked up for 6-12 weeks waiting their turn to board one of the ships. All of a sudden it turned eerie when the light was turned light out and we stood in total darkness.

It was not a nice feeling; nor was standing at the gate of no return, where the slaves were herded onto vessels like cattle, irrevocably altering the lives of generations to come. The “gate of no return” was the last stop before crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jackspeak</th>
<th>Clanky’s Corner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watchkeeper</td>
<td>A shift worker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standeasy</td>
<td>A tea break, taken at 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scran</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train Smash</td>
<td>Bacon and tinned tomatoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run Ashore</td>
<td>An outing, away from the ship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dip-in</td>
<td>To gain a windfall, of some description, through good luck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dip-out</td>
<td>To miss out through bad luck.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Electricity

Onboard HMS IRON DUKE we can not rely on a power station to provide our electricity, so we produce our own.

We have a 1.3KW generator which is driven by our 4 Paxman V12 Diesel Engines. This supplies us with either a 600 Volt supply, which we use for propulsion, or a 440 Volt supply.

440 Volts is then either used for 440 Volt equipment, such as motors or kitchen equipment, or it is sent down the the Electrical Distribution Centre (EDC), to be broken down into either a 240 Volt supply, for standard electrical items, or a 115 Volt Supply, for items such as computer terminals.
Lessons in Lagos: Iron Duke Conducts Maritime Training

HMS IRON DUKE has spent a few days in West Africa’s most populous city, Lagos in Nigeria – hosting official receptions, a UK Trade and Industry expo and members of the Nigerian Navy for training in a variety of Naval disciplines.

We are the second of our class of ship to visit the former capital city of Nigeria this year following on from HMS PORTLAND in February. Berthed in Apapa, the port area of the city to engage with industry and military audiences, the stop also provided a brief interlude from Maritime Security Operations at sea for the Ship’s Company.

One day was dedicated to showcasing British trade and industry, which allowed a number of companies to host Nigerian dignitaries and delegates on board HMS IRON DUKE to promote UK interests. The event was well attended and as well as a successful interaction between hosts and visitors, the opportunity to look around a working warship offered a demonstration of some of the equipment in action.

There was also an opportunity for IRON DUKE’s Ship’s Company to work closely with members of the Nigerian Navy, as training was conducted between the two navies. Carried out onboard IRON DUKE were lessons in Navigation, Seamanship, Fire-Fighting and Damage Control Techniques and First Aid. Spread across two days, it provided an excellent opportunity for sailors of the different Navies to interact and compare and contrast techniques.

Chief Petty Officer Norm Brindley is an underwater-warfare specialist, but is also one of the Ship’s fire-fighting and damage control experts. He said: “The training proved very useful, it’s always good for us to conduct training with other navies as it forces us to review our own techniques. Training with the Nigerian Navy was particularly interesting; they do a lot of things under the same principles as our methods so it was a good refresher for both sides.”

The visit also provided the Ship’s Boarding Team with an opportunity to share their knowledge with a Nigerian Navy Team. Training was conducted alongside with the Ship’s embarked Royal Marines also providing specialist knowledge and techniques. The training culminated in a boarding exercise carried out by the Nigerian team at sea where they boarded IRON DUKE from one of their vessels. It was part of a larger exercise that the Type 23 Frigate conducted out in the Gulf of Guinea with 4 Nigerian Navy Ships. RAdm Alade, the Flag Officer Commanding Western Naval Command of the Nigerian Navy sailed with IRON DUKE for the day to witness his ships at sea, so the pressure was on for the teams to put on a good show. Lieutenant Oliver Behan, one of the Ship’s Boarding Officer’s said;

“The two days were an excellent chance to work with regional partners and assist the Nigerian Navy with its training. It was a chance for both navies to see how the other conducts boarding operations and all involved were able to take some valuable lessons from the 2 days”

Down Time in the Namib Desert

HMS IRON DUKE’s Sailors have taken a few days down-time in Walvis Bay, Namibia. The low-key visit was originally programmed for four days, however was extended to take up a five day period. An official reception and capability demonstration were held onboard, hosting members of the Namibian Navy and local dignitaries.

During their RnR period the crew took up various activities, including Dune Boarding, Sea fishing, Quad Biking, Golfing, Kayaking, Surfing and participating in Football and Rugby fixtures. Other members of the Ship’s Company travelled further afield to the tourist destination Swakopmund, where they enjoyed restaurants, craft markets and the beaches.

The IRON DUKE’s sports teams enjoyed mixed success, with the football team achieving their first win against a semi-professional team, the final result being 3-2. The rugby team, in their first outing, endured a sound defeat, the final score being 63-0.
ARMEE DE MER GUINEA V HMS IRON DUKE

HMS IRON DUKE’s football team arrived at the Stade Du Septembre, Guinea’s National Football Stadium mid morning to play an XI from the Guinea Navy. The match was played on a third Generation Astroturf pitch in front of a crowd of around two hundred.

The Guinea XI started strongly, keeping possession well, IRON DUKE struggled to settle and adjust to the humidity. Guinea pressed their advantage home when Luke Storey gave away a defiant penalty which was converted by the Home teams Goalkeeper. IRON DUKE didn’t let their heads drop and should have equalised through a string of free kicks, corners and crosses. The rest of the first half stayed equal with John Bayne having a half chance with his header going just over the bar. The Guinea Navy looked comfortable on the ball and towards the end of the half opened up the visitors defence with a cross from the left back which drifted over Terry Johnson’s head and in to the goal.

IRON DUKE made five changes at half time and debutant Dan Robbins, who the locals called ‘Mezut Ozil’, making the biggest difference. He provided IRON DUKE with an edge upfront and quickly pulled back level with a long range finish which caught the keeper off guard. IRON DUKE then started to create more chances with the substitutes adding some much needed fresh legs to the side. The away side then went ahead and not long after Robbins converted a simple tap in after good work in the midfield by Matt Ireson and Arthur Lowe to put IRON DUKE in the lead for the first time in the game. Tom Rowley continued to be a rock at the back until a superb strike from the edge of the area from Guinea’s centre midfielder. IRON DUKE Struggled to clear the ball out of the box only for it to fall to a Guinean’s foot and on the half volley hit struck home with a clinical finish.

The game finished 4-3 to the home side who deserved to win in a game played with good spirit that earned the respect of the home team and the crowd, who were quick to enter the pitch for pictures and a mingle with the IRON DUKE team.

GHANA NAVY XI V HMS IRON DUKE

A disbelieving IRON DUKE team turned up at Ghana’s national stadium, for their second match of the deployment against the Ghana Navy, pulling up to the ground was met with joy and enthusiasm as the realisation that the team would play in the 17,500 seated stadium sunk in.

The game evenly fought out in the early stages with both teams cancelling each other out, Ireson and Lowe worked the midfield well while Turnbull and Darnell kept good width on the wings. The Ghana Navy team attacked mostly down the right keeping Whinfield very busy, but IRON DUKE earned a chance after good work by Robbins, who crossed into the six yard box to the on-coming Turnbull who finished the move and got a good clattering for his effort.

IRON DUKE had the chance to double the lead when Turnbull produced a great cross from the left which the rising Robbins met with his head only for the keeper to turn it over the bar. The opposition soon won themselves a penalty given away by an unlucky Rowley.

The first half finished 1-1 with IRON DUKE unlucky not to be ahead.

A second half to forget for the ships team as a combination of fatigue, added quality from the opposition, in the form of Didier Drogba’s clone, proved too much for IRON DUKE to Handle. The game ended 5-1.

IRON DUKE UNDERDOGS VICTORIOUS IN VOLLEYBALL

After a long days work while alongside in Lagos Nigeria HMS IRON DUKE sent a Volleyball team to the Western Naval Command to play against the Nigerian Navy. The team arrived to find the Nigerian Navy to be already warming up. Both teams were lined up and introduced to each over and the Nigerian Navy’s Sports officer, during the warm up the team felt like major underdogs while watching the opposition warm up and train.

In the first set the Nigerian Navy took control.

Iron DUKE started to find their feet near the end of the set and got back in to the game and started to reduce the gap but in the end the advantage was to strong for them to come back. SET 1 to Nigerian Navy.

In the second set the Nigerian Navy took an early lead from starting with the serve, but IRON DUKE got the serve back and took the advantage with it. The score kept going back and forth then IRON DUKE started to take control of the set and get some good form which helped them win the set by 4 points. SET 2 to IRON DUKE.

In the final set IRON DUKE used the form and attitude from the second to take a very early and strong win over the Nigerian Navy by 7 points. The Home side started to get some points back but IRON DUKE was relentless in the attacks and increasing the gap between the two teams. In the end the gap was to big for the Nigerian Navy to try for a come back.

IRON DUKE won the set and the match in strong fashion.

Result: Nigerian Navy 1 – 2 HMS IRON DUKE

Team: STD Simon (CAPT), STD Alleyne, LET Woodley, ETME Cotton, AB (Cis) Darnell, AB (Cis) Russell