

THE CRAZY A

The Newsletter of HMS Atherstone

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Sisters in arms

Whilst on operations in the Central Arabian Gulf we rendezvous with our sister ship Chiddingfold. After a quick transfer of essential stores we proceeded to meet with Penzance for further tasking.

Chiddingfold sailed the 6681 miles out to the Gulf in late 2014. The same journey that we will soon embark upon, to return Atherstone to UK waters. Atherstone has achieved more than 3 years on active service in the Gulf, and is currently the longest serving UK Warship in the Middle East.

Even though we will be heading home, our job doesn't stop when we leave Bahrain; the Ship and Crew will continue to support the UK's foreign interests throughout the journey.

Crew 4 Victorious

Not only highly capable when operating at sea, Crew 4 also proved their athletic prowess with the Ship's football team soundly beating the Crew of Chiddingfold 5-1 in a 'friendly' game at the Bahrain Rugby Club.

Dear Friends and Family of Crew 4

This second letter comes after a hugely varied period of the Ship's programme. It has been a challenging but ultimately successful couple of months since I last wrote to you all. It is my pleasure to once again let you all know how we are getting on.

The operational tempo has been extremely busy, but we were very fortunate to have a week alongside in Dubai where some of you were able to fly out and spend time with your loved ones. I hope those of you who made it out enjoyed your time together.

With well over half the deployment complete, the start of our 6700 nautical mile return journey is almost upon us. We remain upbeat and ready for more operational tasking but most of all thank you for your continued love and support to all my Crew and we so look forward to seeing you all again soon.

Mark Headley





One last time in Bahrain

Even alongside, Atherstone continues to be busy, playing host to a number of guests, most notably the Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Philip Jones. All have departed the Ship impressed with the positive attitude and professionalism displayed by everyone onboard.

The weather has been gradually cooling down and though still searing hot during the day, the evenings are at the perfect temperature to relax outdoors. The favourite weekend pastime remains very much sun based... taking advantage of one of Bahrain's myriad hotels and spending a couple of hours in and out the pool.

Out foxing the 'enemy'

Above 'Freddy' our very own fox perches happily on top of a drill shape recovered by Atherstone, although live historical ordinance is rare it's important that we keep our skills sharp and practice hard. We also aim to provide a visible naval presence, in a region where stability and good relations with the local nations are vital. There is no better way to do this than being out and about.

All of our hard work through OST and Joint Warrior has paid off with Atherstone being the 'go to' unit for the recovery of shapes and other drill objects. During our time out in the Arabian Gulf we also provide the capability to conduct route survey and other sea-bed operations. This is important because we show we have a continued commitment to enduring peace and safe passage, of an area from where much of our trade and oil is from.

It is always a very proud moment to offload the shapes we have recovered to the jetty once we are alongside. Seeing the fruit of our labours that we have 'plucked' from the sea bed is a real win for every member of the Ship's Company... however as they dry out and the sea growth dies the victory is somewhat dampened by a smell worse than Davy Jones locker containing his old gym kit!



The crazy 'A's catch: A successful week at sea for Crew 4, and the recovery of many exercise shapes, the most from any of the hunters.



Fighting Foxes

HMS ATHERSTONE has received a generous donation from Leicester City Football Club in the form of full kits for the Ship's football team.

The gesture followed a request made by ATHERSTONE, whose affiliated town is just 20 miles from Leicester, as the Ship's Football Team (nicknamed 'The Fighting Foxes' after their Ship's Crest emblem of a Fox) was badly in need of a new strip.



Able Seamen Tapan Patel, a lifelong Leicester City fan and from the North Evington area of Leicester himself, said, "Our old kit was missing shirts, old and worn so I thought, what harm could it do to ask a favour from my local club? My line manager Leading Engineering Technician George Caldwell contacted the club and, instantly, Leicester City Football Club responded notifying us that they were donating kit for our entire team".

"The lads are extremely grateful and proud to receive the new kit and there is only one person onboard who is slightly hesitant when putting the Foxes shirt on – the Marine Engineering Officer Scott Johnson, a lifelong Nottingham Forest Fan! Hopefully ATHERSTONE's football team can now replicate Claudio Ranieri's managerial success and Leicester's City performance on the pitch this season during a number of matches on our 6700 nautical mile journey home..."

Homeward Bound

Happy 1st Birthday George Fitzgerald, have a lovely day, Daddy loves you!

Happy 20th Birthday to Aaliyah Shomuyiwa and Happy 24th Birthday to Ilesha Shomuyiwa.

Happy 1st Birthday to Erris Carmel Marie Teare!

Happy Birthday, Cecily Baby!

Congratulations Lucas Walton on starting school and Cerys on your fantastic school report, love Dad.

Happy 5th Anniversary Laura, love Phill.

Congratulations to Alice Radwell on her successful audition for the Devonport Choir!

Happy third birthday to Jake, from Daddy

Khiara, Reon De'ath and Malakai Richardson Daddy will be home soon, I miss you and Love you



The Long Road

The journey home also presents its own unique challenges, the 6681 miles is a long distance to sail and even more so when our maximum speed is around 12mph! We can expect some interesting sights and sounds when we visit foreign ports on our way back. Once through the Suez Canal the temperature is expected to dramatically drop as we brace ourselves for the often stormy Mediterranean winter weather.

Turning North after Gibraltar we will pass through the notorious Bay of Biscay before the final dash up the Channel where we will finally see the familiar sight of Spinnaker Tower which will mark our arrival home.