

# UKMCC NEWS

News from Bahrain and the Joint Operations Area

Issue 03 | April 2015



## A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMODORE

Having been in post now for exactly one year, I find myself wondering where the time has gone. A frenetic twelve months has seen a significant amount of activity in the region during our quest to provide maritime security and maintain freedom of navigation throughout the Gulf and the Arabian sea.

Our achievements have been considerable. We have deployed twice to the Bab el Mandeb strait with the Mine Counter Measures Force, our frigates and destroyers have escorted merchant vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, and have provided support and protection to US and French Aircraft Carriers.

We have seen a steady flow of ministers and senior military figures in Bahrain, and the high interest in our business continues over the next few months with a number of important visitors coming to visit the headquarters, as well as the new permanent UK base being rapidly constructed right now.

The operational tempo remains as high as ever, and staff change over entails saying good-bye to valued colleagues and welcoming many new faces. Our close relations with our Bahraini and US hosts remain strong, and we relish the friendships made with the individuals we work alongside from many different nations, who are also out here contributing to maritime security.

Support from home is crucial for all of us. I know it's hard on family and friends when your loved ones are deployed, and so finally I would like to express my sincere gratitude for all of your support and everything you do for us out here.

Kind regards,

Will Warrender

## HMS St Albans rescues sailors from sinking vessel

HMS St Albans was recently called upon to assist a stricken Dhow whilst conducting maritime security operations in the Gulf of Oman.

HMS St Albans has been working in the Gulf with the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), and was on a routine patrol for the UK when she was contacted by an Omani Air Force surveillance aircraft. The aircraft reported seeing a dhow drifting at the sea with its engine hatch open. Suspecting that the dhow might have engine trouble, St Albans made best speed to her location in order to offer assistance. ... ctd.



Sea boats from HMS St Albans come to the aid of the stricken Dhow (photographs by Leading Seaman Matt Impey).

Find BFBS interviews of UKMCC personnel at:

<http://www.bfbs.com/radio/>

## St Albans' rescue ctd ...

On reaching the area, St Albans' crew discovered that the Pakistani dhow had suffered engine failure and had consequently taken on a significant amount of seawater. The ship immediately sent a team of marine engineers on board with portable pumps and tools to help the two Pakistani crew members stabilise the situation as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately, after several hours of labour, it became apparent that the dhow's engine was beyond repair. St Albans' crew also found a number of holes in the hull of the dhow, and discovered that the bilge pump was unusable as it was powered by the engine. This meant that it was not possible to tow the dhow to safety without it sinking. Having rescued the two Pakistani sailors, it became clear that the dhow was indeed sinking and beyond salvation. The crew of HMS St Albans were forced to scuttle it in order to prevent it from becoming a danger to other ships in the area.

Petty Officer Bethany Burton was part of the Marine Engineering Team sent across to assist the stricken dhow. She said: "Being the Diesel Section Head on board, it was really good to utilise my diesel engine skills and knowledge that the RN taught me, and to be able to help out with the team and ensure a safe recovery of the two stranded sailors".

Another member of the Marine Engineering team, Petty Officer Ryan Gooderham, added: "As an engineer our job is usually to keep ships afloat, but in this case we were asked to sink it as it was a navigational danger. This was hard work in cramped conditions and needed to be done quickly, and we were glad it was successful".

## Building Relations



HMS Chiddingfold recently welcomed a Bahraini coast guard officer on board for a few days to witness life inside a Royal Navy mine hunter.

First Lieutenant Abdullah Mohammed Albinkhaleel, who trained at the Royal Saudi Naval Academy in Al Jubayl, Saudi Arabia, for three years, has served on the Bahraini Coast Guard's patrol boats for three years. This was his first visit to a Royal Navy warship.

During his time on board, he was introduced to all the departments of the ship. He was given a tour of the new Caterpillar ACERT diesel

engines, spent time on the bridge with the crew, and also went out in the dive boat as the ship's Clearance Diving Element conducted training evolutions. He also celebrated his birthday on board, so in the finest traditions of the Royal Navy, the chefs made him a cake which was enjoyed by the whole crew!

Lieutenant Commander Steve White, the Commanding Officer on board said: "The Mine Countermeasures Vessels are forward deployed in Bahrain and many of my crew have served out here many times. It is therefore very useful and interesting to have a fellow naval officer embarked who has a great deal of local knowledge."



## New HQ

In recognition of the strong links between our countries, the King of Bahrain is very generously building a new support facility for the UK military in Bahrain. It will provide accommodation and welfare facilities for all service personnel based here as well offering extensive warehouse and workshop space adjacent to 300m of jetty frontage. It is expected to be ready for occupation in November 2017. Work on site commenced in December 2015 and has been surging ahead ever since. The photo shows the groundfloor walls rising up on one of the accommodation blocks with some of the US base beyond it and Juffair (a suburb of Manama) in the background.



## Golf Tourney

The first UKMCC golf tournament was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> March at the beautiful Royal Golf Course Bahrain. For the tournament we managed to get 11 golfers (using the term somewhat rather loosely) from across the HQ. After some initial teething problems, which included a lot of phone calls to avoid being called into work we set off in convoy to the golf course. Having travelled less than 5 minutes we received a phone call telling us we needed to return to the Marriott as one player had been left behind having popped to the toilet. Once we had him back on transport we departed yet again back to the golf course.

On arrival everybody was very keen to get to the driving range and get a quick feel for the clubs. All players had been put into 4 balls for the upcoming competition, which started off on the Mini Monty Par 3 course and ran as a Texas scramble competition. As soon as the par 3 course was completed we retired into the club house for a much deserved breakfast bap and a quick discussion on how all the golfers had been getting on.

With barely any time to digest the food we were assigned our golf buggies and made our way to the first tee for the main competition, which was played as a stableford on the 18 hole championship course. The course proved to be very tricky for all players involved which was highlighted even more by the throwing of some clubs by a certain new joiner. We were also told off by the course staff for slow play, which wasn't technically the case as it was more poor play.

Eventually the floodlights came on and all of our aspiring golfers made it into the club house for a much deserved dinner and refreshment. The scores were then tallied up and the presentations for the day were made.



Individual winner: Sgt John Cowell

