

ASSAULT STATIONS!

The Newsletter for HMS BULWARK

Issue 03 | May - July 2016



SPECTACULAR FREEDOM OF DURHAM PARADE

Nearly 300 sailors and Royal Marines staged a stunning parade through the City of Durham on 22 July as they exercised the Freedom of the City with "swords drawn, bayonets fixed, drums beating, bands playing and colours flying".

Led by the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines, Portsmouth (The Royal Band) and watched by hundreds of onlookers, the parade made its way through the narrow streets of Durham to Palace Green before culminating in a special service in the spectacular surroundings of Durham Cathedral.

The ship's company were warmly welcomed by the people of Durham as they enjoyed the rare opportunity of a 'Rig Run' in the city. HMS BULWARK was also presented with the 'Chairman's Medal' by Durham County Council recognising the ship's service to County Durham over the many years of the affiliation.

FROM THE CAPTAIN

Dear families and friends,

I write these comments as we head back to you for Families Day after a wonderful visit to Durham and Sunderland and indeed a hugely busy last couple of months. BULWARK has been, quite literally, to all four corners of the United Kingdom from Kirkwall to London and Liverpool to Sunderland. From the poignancy of the Jutland 100 commemorations to the buzz of port visits to London, Liverpool and Glasgow and then the occasion of the Freedom of the City of Durham Parade, your loved ones (who are also my superb sailors and marines) have once again distinguished themselves and proved why BULWARK is the best ship in the Royal Navy.

I look forward to meeting those of you who are able to join us for Families Day and I hope everyone has a fantastic summer break.

James Parkin
Captain
HMS BULWARK



JUTLAND 100 YEARS ON

The quiet waters of Scapa Flow saw the grey shapes of warships once again at the end of May as HMS BULWARK arrived in Kirkwall, the capital of the Orkney Islands, to take part in the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Jutland.



HMS BULWARK supported the Jutland 100 national commemorations at Kirkwall and at Lyness Cemetery with her sailors, marines and landing craft playing a key role in the events. A remembrance service involving about 100 descendants and 400 guests took place with live national television coverage in St Magnus' Cathedral and a subsequent Service of Remembrance at Hoy Naval Cemetery, Lyness attended by some 450 people, including descendants of those who fought as well as the Princess Royal, the Prime Minister and the First Minister of Scotland amongst others.

Prior to arriving in Kirkwall, HMS BULWARK took the opportunity to hold a service of remembrance in Scapa Flow, the anchorage where so much of the British Fleet departed for battle, to mark the centenary. The solemn ceremony included wreath laying, readings of first hand accounts of the battle from both sides and was attended by over 600 people, including a group of German Navy sailors from the frigate FGS SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN, as well as cadets and dignitaries from Orkney and the Shetland Isles.



Jutland saw the loss of 8645 men (British 6,094 and German 2,551) and while the Royal Navy did not destroy the German High Seas Fleet, arguably the battle set the strategic conditions which undermined the German economy, drove the US into the war and, ultimately, led to victory. As then as is now, Britain is a nation dependent on the sea - on the freedom to use the sea as a highway for trade on which the nation's prosperity and security depends.

REMEMBERING F4

Royal Marines and sailors from HMS BULWARK's 4 Assault Squadron Royal Marines (ASRM) gathered on Eastney Beach in Portsmouth for a poignant commemoration of the loss of Landing Craft Utility F4 from HMS FEARLESS during the Falklands Conflict in 1982.



4ASRM gathers every year on the 8 June to remember the crew of LCU F4. The 4 ASRM LCUs were midway through an independent transit from Scapa Flow to Plymouth and so this year's event was made even more poignant by the presence of 4ASRM LCUs on Eastney Beach.

One of HMS BULWARK's Landing Craft Utility has since always been named as "FJ" in recognition of the F4 cox'n, CSgt Johnson and the rest of the crew.

THE F4 STORY

In the midst of the Falklands Conflict and with the British Army's 5 Brigade separated from their vital communications vehicles back at Goose Green, F4 under the command of C/Sgt Brian Johnston was dispatched in poorly charted waters and under significant threat of air attack. In a remarkable feat of pilotage, in darkness and without modern navigational aids, Brian Johnston reached Goose Green in good order and loaded the vehicles

Shortly afterwards, the landing craft was bombed and sunk by Argentine Skyhawks and all but two of LCU F4's crew were killed including C/Sgt Johnston, Mechanical Engineering Artificer (Propulsion) A S James, Sergeant R J Rotherham, Leading Marine Engineer (Mechanical) D Miller, Marine A J Rundle, Marine R D Griffin.

KEEPING UP WITH HMS BULWARK

Family and friends who have access to Facebook can click on a link and ask to join the ship's closed Facebook Group. Simply go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/HMSBulwarkCommunity/>

Also, anyone can follow HMS BULWARK on Twitter at:

[@HMS_Bulwark](https://twitter.com/HMS_Bulwark)

For the younger ones amongst us, William the Bear also shares his adventures on Twitter at:

[@williamtbear](https://twitter.com/williamtbear)

Finally, the ship also has pages and a forum to join on the Royal Navy website at:

www.royal-navy.mod.uk/bulwark

Please come and join us on any or all of these sites!

BULWARK STARTS AT THE SUNDERLAND INTERNATIONAL AIR SHOW 2016

HMS BULWARK helped hundreds of thousands of people to enjoy their visit to the 28th Sunderland International Air Show with a spectacular amphibious demonstration on Seaburn Beach.



Held along the city's coastline at Roker and Seaburn, on 23 and 24 July, the Air Show saw a major programme of air, land and sea displays including the RAF's Red Arrows.



Alongside the air displays on Saturday and Sunday - and with HMS BULWARK moored offshore - crowds saw an amphibious role demonstration from 4 Assault Squadron Royal Marines. The 30-minute demonstration was designed to showcase a wide range of UK amphibious capabilities with noise, colour and movement. Royal Marines with Viking tracked vehicles arrived via landing craft and moved against an 'enemy' held artillery position defended by members of 4th Regiment Royal Artillery and The Queens Own Yeomanry. The mine-countermeasures vessel HMS BLYTH also simulated mine clearance activities off the beach including an 'underwater explosion'.



The Red Arrows play close attention to BULWARK during the Sunderland Air Show



THE ROBOTS ARE COMING....

HMS Bulwark is constantly under attack from the salt water environment she operates in. Outside, the paint can be inspected and maintained but internally within the ship, there are numerous tanks which require looking after too.

Normally, the tank needs to be emptied completely, vented to remove any noxious gases and a chemist will then sample the air to prove that it is safe for the cleaners to enter.

This all takes time and money and now Remote Operated Vehicles (ROVs) are able to conduct under water searches and inspections.



During the last maintenance period the ship was due an inspection of some of her salt water ballast tanks to check for corrosion and the condition of the internal paint coatings. Atlas Marine was contracted to assist dockyard staff and planned a 'flight' through the water within the tanks. 3D structural diagrams were discussed and the ideal route for inspection was decided upon. Once the operator was content with his 'flight plan' the ROV was lowered into the tank. The operator of the ROV controlled the direction of the submersible using a hand held controller - very similar to a Play Station controller.

The tank inspection using this new technique was very successful and four tanks were inspected by a small team of five in three days. Conventional methods of pump out, vent, chemist, clean and inspect would have taken up to ten men for a period of fifteen days.

Ship's Company Photograph 22 July 2016

