

# ASSAULT STATIONS!

## The Newsletter for HMS BULWARK

Issue 05 | October 2016



## ALL ROADS LEAD TO RHODES

On completion of Albanian Lion, HMS BULWARK arrived in Rhodes on 11 Oct for a three day visit to allow the crew and staff some well earned rest and recuperation. Rhodes is an ancient port with a colourful history dating back to before 305BC. It was once the home of the Colossus, a 105' high statue made of bronze which was one of the wonders of the ancient world. It was also a key staging post for the medieval Crusades in Africa.

The ship's football team went to a local stadium and played a team from the Greek 3<sup>rd</sup> division (equivalent to League 1!). The local team were welcoming and friendly and the facilities were excellent. The ship's team thoroughly enjoyed the game, despite the gulf in quality, the final score was locals 8, HMS BULWARK 1.

A group of budding SCBUA divers chose not to take the rare opportunity of a lie-in, and woke early to visit two dive sites on the island. The first, Kolymia Beach, which was a shore reef dive, the second was the wreck of a French cargo ship, the Chef Mecanicien Muotte. On both days the weather was fair and the water still relatively warm, a rather pleasant 24 degrees. A large number of the Ship's Company also took the opportunity to visit Faliraki for a chance to let their hair down.

All in all, the visit to Rhodes provided an opportunity for the majority of the crew to relax and enjoy the benefits of a top European holiday destination, even if only for a few days. BULWARK sailed from Rhodes on the 14 Oct to head to the Suez Canal to continue with her Joint Expeditionary Force (Maritime) deployment



### FROM THE CAPTAIN



Dear families and friends,

Since the last edition of Assault Stations, BULWARK has conducted an extremely successful amphibious exercise off the Albanian coast, proving we are ready to play our part as the Fleet Amphibious Flagship. We have also paid a brief but enjoyable visit to the island of Rhodes, which saw the Ship's Company getting ashore to enjoy a well deserved break before heading further south.

Since we left the UK, BULWARK has already sailed approximately 6800 nautical miles and is now stationed in the Indian Ocean ready to conduct our next major part of the JEF(M) deployment, operating with our allies in the Royal Navy of Oman.

My sailors and marines - your family and friends - are working hard in the heat, but we are enjoying ourselves and looking forward to flexing our "amphibious muscle"! It is not long now before we are halfway through the deployment, but we have some fascinating and exciting jobs to do before we start to head home.

As ever, thank you for your continued support to all of us, and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at our Homecoming.

**James Parkin**  
Captain  
HMS BULWARK

# CHURCH IN A NEW LIGHT!

Church at sea in HMS BULWARK has recently taken on a new dimension as our Chaplain proposed the idea of departmental sponsorship. Whilst always optional Church is a big tradition in the Royal Navy, going back to the earliest days of the Service, and having a different departmental sponsor encourages attendance and active participation, engenders a good ethos on board and most importantly enables individuals to step aside from their busy routines to spend a few moments in quiet reflection. Naturally our worship also provides for the spiritual needs of those sailors who profess strong faith and for whom prayer is an important aspect of their lives.



And so it was that the Warfare Department kicked off with our first Sunday Service for which they chose the Bridge Roof as the location. As one of the Warfare Specialists remarked to the Chaplain, 'Bish, up there we'll be closer to God!' Having chosen the theme and picked some hymns all hands mustered and sung with the gusto a Cathedral choir would have been proud of! Almost 50 sailors and members of Embarked Forces were in attendance, also enjoying 'wets and stickies' (Navy speak for hot drinks and cakes) upon conclusion, another fine tradition! Warfare certainly raised the bar but not to be outdone the following week saw the Marine Engineering Department suggest the Forward Engine Room as their location for Sunday Church, prompting the Chaplain to begin his Church Pipe (tannoy announcement) with the words, 'it might sound bizarre but Church today is in the FER!' Our Engineers even designed and made a new Church cross consisting of two spanners welded to a fire-fighting nozzle! It may have been warm down the engine space however that did not diminish the enthusiasm or good morale of the large numbers present. Of note was the Gospel reading for this occasion, the 'Parable of the Ten Virgins and Oil,' which the Chaplain suggested should be renamed, 'A Stoker's Dream!'



At the time of writing the third Church Service of the Deployment has just taken place, sponsored by 4 ASRM (Assault Squadron Royal Marines) and held in their Assembly Area, hence the Chaplain's Pipe on this occasion beginning with the words, 'Hands to Church Stations, Hands to Church Stations, worshippers close up!' This proved a poignant Service as it was held close to the Corps Birthday of 28<sup>th</sup> October, the theme being that of trust i.e. in one's own ability, one another's ability and in the Almighty, important ingredients which have enabled the Royal Marines to prevail in their distinguished history and which will ensure success in all our future taskings.

The Ship's Company is now looking forward to perhaps the most important Service of the deployment, Remembrance Sunday, when all will fill the Flight Deck and wreaths will be laid to honour the memory of those who've given their lives in the Service of our country. Finally no deployment with a return home just in time for Christmas will go without a Carol Service. Sailors being sailors are already contributing their ideas for what should be 'fun' Church but about which you'll read in a future edition of 'Assault Stations!'

# SAILORS RACE THE SHIP THROUGH SUEZ

It was a case of man versus machine as sailors, marines, soldiers and airmen raced the 64,000 tonnes that is the Joint Expeditionary Force (Maritime) 16 Task Group through the Suez Canal en route to operations and exercises in the Indian Ocean and beyond.

Racing on rowing machines within the 12 hours that it took lead ship, HMS Bulwark, and the Royal Navy's largest warship, HMS Ocean, to sail through the 120 mile manmade canal were sailors, marines, soldiers and airmen from both ships who hoped to win The Royal Navy's biannual "Row the Suez" contest.

Whilst the Task Group heads towards operations and exercises in the Indian Ocean and alongside Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, 81 personnel from each ship took turns on the Concept 2 rowing machines, which are on board helping keep the force fighting fit. Each person rowed 2,000 meters in a bid to beat the best aggregate time and win the coveted prize. The heat was a testing factor in the race but it was just as difficult for those personnel on the upper decks ensuring the safety of the ships in the Task Group.

Quick to establish a link between the competition and to the protection of his ship, HMS Bulwark, Captain



James Parkin said "As a former rower I know how hard it is to row 2,000 meters in a competitive time, let alone to do so in 35 degree heat. The Royal Navy prides itself on being "fit to fight" and this event, whilst being a longstanding service tradition, proves that we are definitely ready to do so."

## EDUCATION FOR ALL

Throughout JEF(M) a Naval Education and Training Services (Operational) Officer (NETSO), will be embarked on HMS BULWARK. The role of a NETSO is to deliver Education, Life Long Learning and Resettlement (EL3R) support to operationally deployed personnel.

During his embarkation, the NETSO will provide assistance and information on a wide range of topics. He will ensure that personnel are educationally qualified for their next higher rate by providing tuition and an opportunity for personnel to sit the required exams. Guidance and advice will be provided to those that would like to study for GCSEs and A-Levels, as well as those that are interested in higher education e.g. Degrees, all of which can be fully completed whilst at sea.

There are many opportunities for personnel to expand their horizons and prepare for the future whilst deployed. The Royal Navy has invested heavily in EL3R and personal development and there are many resources available to personnel to achieve their goals. Deployments afford an ideal time to set targets for future personal and professional development and this is something that the NETSO can assist with.

## 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](http://www.royal-navy.mod.uk/bulwark)

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



*Members of HMS BULWARK try a spot of diving on the 'Chef Mecanicien Muotte'*

## STOKERS KEEP THE LIGHTS ON & PROPS TURNING

It has been a busy month for the *Stokers* (Marine Engineering Department) of HMS BULWARK supporting and delivering Power to Command, 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week, to ensure the JEF(M) deployment successfully meets, and in many cases exceeds, the deployments objectives. The exciting and productive workload includes; providing Command with the necessary propulsion and steerage, machinery break-down drills, the upkeep of the ships husbandry and services as well as the maintenance of the ship's embarked Landing Craft which deliver the Royal Marines ashore during amphibious operations.

A Warship the size of HMS BULWARK must produce large amounts of electrical power, fresh water and cool air. Over the last month the ME department have been responsible for keeping the ship at a cool 22 degrees, no easy job whilst ambient air temperatures in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea routinely approach 40 degrees. Fresh water is also a vital necessity; the ship uses the process of reverse osmosis to produce large quantities of fresh water, almost three 25 metre swimming pools worth per day. This fresh water cleans and hydrates the crew and, less obviously, it cools weapons systems and radar. The ship also requires approximately the same amount of electrical power as a large town like Bournemouth. The electrical power is generated by a combination of the nine diesel generators on board and is used; for navigational computers and radars, fire fighting water pumps and to power the propeller motors which are used to push the ship through the water at speeds in excess of 15 knots.

Recently Chief Petty Officer (CPO) Whitcher and his capable team, Engineering Technicians McCardel and Hobson, Leading Engineering Technician Eady and Sub-Lieutenant Prior, set to work on the maintenance of one of the two huge 16 cylinder main diesel engines. The maintenance is scheduled after the engine has run for one-thousand hours. It is a process which involves shutting down the engine and completely isolating the systems which feed it, including fuel, lubrication and cooling. Once it is safe to work on the engine the lubricating oil for the turbochargers are replaced and the filters are changed. Next, the team had to carefully calibrate the tappets, on the rocker assembly, to ensure exact timing for the scavenge cycle of the engine. The job was completed in good time, with temperatures in the engine space reaching over 45 degrees.



Over the past month the Marine Engineering department have been characteristically busy ensuring that HMS BULWARK remains fit to fight and win. The Engineering Technicians, Section Heads and Officers have been working tirelessly to support the embarked Royal Marines landing craft, keep the lights on, keep the propellers turning and much more.