

HMS WESTMINSTER

Family & Friends Newsletter

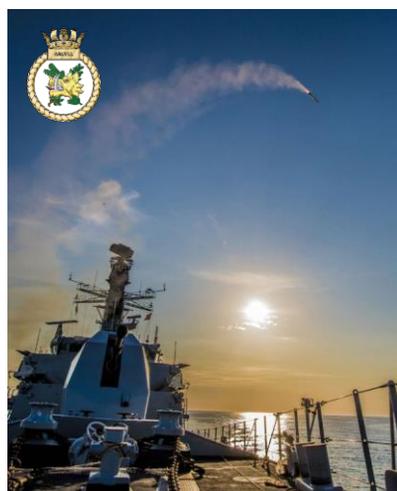


ISSUE 04 | OCT-NOV 2017

SPOTLIGHT ON...

SEA CEPTOR

HMS WESTMINSTER'S BRAND NEW SURFACE TO AIR MISSILE SYSTEM



HMS Argyll fired the first Sea Ceptor missile in September

HMS Westminster has recently been fitted with the state of the art Sea Ceptor missile system.

The new air missile defence system can intercept and destroy enemy missiles travelling at supersonic speeds and will form part of the protection for the nation's new aircraft carriers. The first firings were conducted from Type 23 frigate HMS Argyll whilst off the coast of Scotland.

Sea Ceptor, which uses MBDA's next-generation Common Anti-air Modular Missile (CAMM), is being fitted to replace the Sea Wolf weapon system on the Type 23

frigates. The air defence system will also be used on the new Type 26 frigates and potentially the future Type 31 frigates.

Using innovations in radar and datalink technology that will guide these potent missiles with pinpoint accuracy, Sea Ceptor will provide the Royal Navy with an improved shield against airborne threats such as the new generation of supersonic anti-ship missiles, fast jets, helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles.

The system uses a new UK-developed missile capable of reaching speeds of up to Mach 3 and will have the ability to deal with multiple targets simultaneously, protecting an area of around 500 square miles (1,300 square kilometres) over land or sea.

- SLt Smith, Editor



An artist's impression of Sea Ceptor when quadpacked

A MESSAGE FROM THE CAPTAIN

It has been nearly six months since I last wrote to you about the Ship and our programme.

In that time, we have completed Operational Sea Training, deployed around the UK to conduct patrol tasking, and undergone a successful period of maintenance.

We now move forward to another period of Continuation Operational Sea Training, before we conduct the first firings of our new missile system and undertake duties patrolling UK waters.

Your loved ones continue to perform to an exemplary standard, and I know that you, as I am, are proud of them.



Commander Simon Kelly, Commanding Officer

FROM THE BRIDGE

The Quartermaster (QM) is a member of the bridge team, responsible for steering the ship and ringing through engine orders for speed as directed by the Officer of the Watch (OOW).

The QM also acts as a key lookout for the OOW, and is one of the first to react to emergencies such as a man overboard, where their first reaction is to ensure they have the ship in hand, release buoys and make sound signals, or a steering gear failure, where the QM will inform the OOW and act as a link between the bridge and the engineers dealing with the issue.

Not only will the QM steer the ship at sea, but they will be closed up at the helm whilst berthing and unberthing.

- SLt Carmichael

MEET THE SAILOR

Name: Callum 'Finchy' Finch

Age: 24

Rank: AB

Joined: Nov 2015

Branch: Steward

Home: Scunthorpe

Best run ashore: Belfast



Steward Callum Finch

ON THE HIGH SEAS ONCE MORE



HMS Westminster departed HMNB Portsmouth on Friday 27th October after a period of maintenance following her activation for Fleet Ready Escort. Her destination: Plymouth, home of Flag Officer Sea Training (South), where the Ship's Company will consolidate and build upon their previous training and experience in preparation for carrying out further national tasking in the lead up to Christmas.



HMS Westminster departs HMNB Portsmouth, bound for Plymouth to undergo Continuation Operational Sea Training (COST)

HMS Westminster is not the only ship undergoing such training, however. Both Royal Navy and foreign warships are engaged in sea training, including our own HMS Albion, as well as the German frigates FGS Hessen and FGS Ludwigshafen.



Clockwise from left: HMS Albion, one of our Landing Platform Docks; FGS Hessen, a German *Sachsen*-class air defence frigate; FGS Ludwigshafen, a German *Braunschweig*-class corvette

After COST, HMS Westminster will head north to engage in high seas firing of the new Sea Ceptor missile system, before assuming her duty as Fleet Ready Escort/Towed Array Patrol Ship. She will return home for Christmas during a break in her tasking, in order to give your loved ones the chance to spend the holidays at home with you.

- SLt Smith, Editor.

WESTMINSTER'S GUARDIAN ANGEL



Ryan 'Nobby' Halls has been recognised by the Royal Navy for his consistent and sterling work in keeping shipmates aboard HMS Westminster safe in all aspects as it moves through its programme.

The 31-year-old Petty Officer from Thetford has been singled out for his safety conscious efforts aboard the Portsmouth based frigate - efforts which helped the warship through an extensive refit and back to frontline service.

He is Westminster's 'Chief Bosun's Mate' – the sailor in charge of seamanship, the safe operation of the ship's Pacific 24 fast sea boats and rope work when berthing or leaving port.

Since joining the ship, he has effectively rewritten the safety manual covering huge swathes of day-to-day living and working aboard Westminster – going far beyond his remit.

Rear Admiral Gardner from Naval Command Headquarters presented PO Halls with his award at the end of October in front of the Ship's Company, commenting that it was one of the most valued awards he ever presents.



Rear Admiral Gardner presenting PO Halls the Safe Guardian Award on board HMS Westminster

Of the award, PO Halls said, 'I am very pleased to receive this award on behalf of my team in the seamanship department'.

The former Charles Burrell High School pupil has spent a decade in the Royal Navy, particularly enjoying a lengthy deployment to the Far East in 2008 with HMS Kent and a stint on counter-piracy patrol off Somalia with HMS Lancaster, during which time the ship seized modern-day pirates and their weaponry.

We look forward to seeing where his career leads in the future!
- SLt Weatherstone

NEW DEFENCE SECRETARY DOES THE ROUNDS

After a busy first week in post which saw him travel to Brussels for NATO and Counter-Daesh ministerials, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson's second week saw him visit a range of Defence sites and equipment platforms in and around the UK.

After he started the week with the Army, HMS Queen Elizabeth played host to the Defence Secretary, as he flew by Merlin helicopter from RAF Northolt landing on the carrier's flight deck to be met by the ship's company, from Captain Jerry Kyd to the most junior ranks.

Speaking about his visit, Mr Williamson said:

"In a world of intensifying global threats, this magnificent ship will be a leading force fighting to protect the values of the UK and our allies. It's an honour to visit her at sea, and to meet such a passionate crew. I'm sure Her Majesty will be similarly impressed at next month's historic ceremony [on 7 December, in Portsmouth] for the nation's new flagship, which proudly bears her name."

Speaking on the occasion, HMS Queen Elizabeth's Captain Jerry Kyd said:

"I was delighted to be able to welcome the Defence Secretary on board HMS Queen Elizabeth at what is a very exciting time for the ship, for the Royal Navy, and for Defence as we move into the final phase of our sea trials.

We spoke about the progress made on our trials so far and the exciting future ahead as the UK regenerates its strike carrier capability"

MEET THE LADS

HMS Westminster's Rugby Team is drawn from all ranks and rates across all departments on board:

1. AB (WS) Hickman
2. Lt Flynn
3. ET (WE) Taylor
4. PO (UW) Flack
5. ET (WE) Western
6. PO (SEA) Halls
7. LS (SEA) Johnstone (Captain)
8. Lt Andrews
9. ET (ME) Murray
10. LET (WE) Baker
11. AB (WS) Emerson
12. AB (WS) Chuck
13. Snr Chief Parker
14. AB (WS) Roch
15. LS (AWT) Bellis
16. SLt Matthews
17. AB (SEA) McNair
18. AB (WS) Netherwood
19. ET (WE CIS) Stephenson
20. AB (WS) Duke
21. Lt Priestley

To be fully effective in combat, men and women in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines must be physically and mentally fit. They must also possess self-discipline, stamina, courage and a competitive spirit.

Physical Education in basic training plays a vital role in developing these qualities which are then enhanced through operational experience and a vibrant programme of Sport, Fitness and Adventure. The Royal Navy continues to live by the mantra "time for phys, not time off for phys".

- Lt Priestly

TOUCHDOWN HIGHLIGHTS



The Ship's rugby team continue to go from strength to strength and have a solid group of committed members who are regularly turning out for the Ship either at home and when the Ship is away.

The team have, since the last Link Letter, played 2 games against HMS Queen Elizabeth, and our old friends in Plymouth, the Plymstock Albion Oaks.

The game against HMS Queen Elizabeth was staged at HMS Temeraire, with a small crowd made up of the Fleet Flagship and the Capital Ship, Westminster.

Westminster started, as ever, in a committed fashion and tackled hard, but went behind early to a try from a driving maul. They soon however were back in it and good work by the forwards led to Lt Luke Flynn going over for Westminster's first score. QE managed to score three more times before half time, which sadly was a bit too much to chase for Westminster. However Lt Flynn went over again in the second half, as did AB (WS) Leo Chuck, making the final score 51-17 to Queen Elizabeth. On scoreline alone it seems a one sided affair, however the spectators on the sideline were unanimous in the belief that Westminster were the team with the better structure and togetherness. If it hadn't been for some exceptional individuals who have played for the Royal Navy Senior and Under 23 sides, then the scoreline may have been much different.

On to Plymouth, where the team faced off against old friends Plymstock Albion Oaks. Westminster's side visited this fantastic local club back in February, when both players and spectators were treated to some exceptional hospitality, and with a day off prior to commencing COST, it was an easy choice to go back to the Oaks for a game against a mixed side of Vets and Colts. Bringing a strong force of spectators with them, Westminster were optimistic of a win.

The Oaks, with some experienced heads and big ball carriers, made limited inroads against a committed Westminster defence, however when a long kick was not fielded the Oaks winger managed to hack through to score, making the score 5-0.

The next phase of play however was dominated by Westminster. The ball was well recycled on many occasions. This led to AB (WS) Chuck making a clean break, and although he was brought down the ball was offloaded to Senior Chief Parker who ran through untouched to score under the posts. ET (ME) Murray did the honours and Westminster were ahead 5-7. The team continued to dominate, with PO (UW) Flack making a break down the wing. This was in spite of the ball going behind him and Flack carrying the ball on his back! Had it gone to hands then Westminster may well have gone further ahead.

Having lost possession the Oaks runner then came into play, and a number of penalties were conceded, which alongside the Oaks strong scrum, put Westminster under pressure. The Oaks forwards continued to hammer the line and eventually breached it, going ahead 12-7. More penalties conceded by Westminster meant the Oaks were able to score again out wide. However the conversion was missed, and after a short tit for tat period in which neither team gave much away, the teams turned around and half time with Oaks ahead 17-7. *Continued overleaf.*

Westminster's commitment has always been a strength and in spite of being 10 points down the team's heads never dropped, with more ferocious tackling and aggressive running putting the Oaks on the backfoot. The decision by the referee to go to uncontested scrums also relieved pressure and after a period of play with a number of offloads AB (WS) Duke ran in under the posts on his debut, putting Westminster right back in it at 17-14. At this point Westminster really had their tails up and were making it difficult the Oaks to gain any quick ball at the breakdown, with captain LS (SEA) Johnstone, Lt Andrews and Lt Flynn all competing well. This led to the Oaks making a poor kick, with Lt Flynn breaking down the right hand side. With PO (UW) Flack free in space on the right it seemed a score was imminent, but Flynn held on. Luckily he managed to offload to LET (WE) Baker who pooped to Senior Chief Parker to go in for his second try, putting Westminster in the lead 17-21.

The Oaks hit straight back however, and managed to once more use their strong runners to bulldoze their way through to score. Crucially the conversion was missed and Westminster were behind by just 3 points, 24-21.

It was with 10 minutes to go that the moment of the match happened. With Westminster on the offensive the ball was recycled quickly. LET (WE) Baker, with space and time, gave a flat ball to AB (SEA) McNair, who picked a lovely line to break through. Support was on the way but McNair managed to step round the Oaks defence to score a brilliant try in the corner.

With the conversion missed the last moments were nervy, as the Oaks came at the Westminster defensive line hard. However Westminster's tackling and committed defence, which was displayed by every member of the team throughout the game, held out, and more combative work at the breakdown allowed Westminster to steal and kick the ball out of play, with Westminster coming out on top 24-26.

With an excellent victory to celebrate, the team and spectators retreated to the clubhouse for some typically excellent Plymstock hospitality. The club were also presented with a crest which now hangs proudly over the bar, marking the bond between both the Ship and the club – *Lt Priestly*



HMS Westminster's Rugby Team after their close victory

WRNS100

2017 has seen the Naval Service celebrate the centenary of the formation of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS).

It has recognised the supporting role given by the WRNS to the Naval Service and acknowledged the transition made by women from the separate WRNS into the Royal Navy, demonstrating the way in which the WRNS helped define the opportunities for women in today's Royal Navy.

Throughout 2017 there have been various events marking the Centenary. The Royal Navy is supporting the WRNS100 Project Team (www.wrns100.co.uk) which comprises members of the Association of Wrens, the WRNS Benevolent Trust and the Dauntless Association.

Since the formation of the WRNS, with its original motto of 'Never at Sea', life for Servicewomen has changed beyond all recognition.

The past century has witnessed changes that the ladies of 1917 could only ever have dreamed about. No longer in a supporting role, today's women of the Royal Navy serve alongside their male colleagues at sea, under the sea, in the air and on land.

They have served in conflicts such as the first Gulf War, the Balkans, the 2003 Iraq War and, more recently, in Afghanistan.

The fundamental day-to-day role of the Royal Navy has not changed, but today the Service relies equally on the contribution of its men and its women, to protect our Nation's interests.

- *LPT Mannering*

WELFARE

Protecting our nation's interests around the world, every day, wouldn't be possible without the family of 35,000 men and women who are the Royal Navy. But neither would it be possible without the family and friends who support and think about them, every day.

Whether it's dealing with the demands of deployment or the rigours of relocation, we make sure that the family and friends of Naval Service personnel have all the help, guidance and support they need, every day.

Not only is the Royal Navy proud of the comprehensive welfare and well-being support we provide, we're as proud of the thriving communities – both online and in the real world – that join family and friends together, and continue to keep the Naval Service ready, resilient and resourceful.

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Welfare provide a confidential service for families regarding any welfare issue. RNRMW Portal can be accessed via the RN Website:

<http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/welfare/welfare-teams>

During the working day contact +44 (0)23 9272 8777

navyopers-welfare@mod.uk

Out of Hours Cover provided by Officer of the Day at HMS Nelson:

+44 (0)23 9272 3875

These teams are always there to support you, so please make sure that you call them if you need them.

Newsletter compiled and edited by SLt Ricky Smith

A FOND FAREWELL TO HMS SEVERN



HMS Westminster's departure on 27th October saw her bid farewell to one of the Royal Navy's River-class offshore patrol vessels. After 14 years of productive service, and 604450 nautical miles sailed, HMS Severn was decommissioned at a service attended by her Ship's Company in Portsmouth.

The sail past was particularly poignant for HMS Westminster's Executive Officer Lt Cdr Chris L'Amie, who served on HMS Severn from 2007 to 2009. Not only that, but the vessel was where he met Kate, a young lady who later became his wife!

The decommissioning of HMS Severn heralds the arrival of five new Offshore Patrol Vessels. The new Batch 2 River-class will be used for counter-piracy, counter-terrorism and anti-smuggling operations around the globe. Forth, Medway, Trent, Tamar and Spey are named as the five new OPVs due to enter service by 2021. - *SLt Weatherstone*



HMS Westminster's Lt Cdr L'Amie, with his old ship HMS Severn

WESTY WORDSEARCH

Can you spot the Royal Naval ranks and rates hidden in our wordsearch? There are 10 in total!

Q W A R R A N T O F F I C E R D M H
B U U Q F Y A B L E S E A M A N I B
E O W O H X F V H A A Z W C O K V Z
X W R U E P B B D S U D Q Z D E F L
C O M M A N D E R D P V M L H B H C
X L E A D I N G H A N D R I T V B X
J F B M L I E U T E N A N T R A E O
M I D S H I P M A N R Z C H R A K L
D S Z O P E T T Y O F F I C E R L Y
L Y B S C K F L F U L R Q J B K G L
W E P R E C A P T A I N M G D B X J
S I M Z V R C V C O M M O D O R E E

*Misthipman; Lieutenant; Commander; Captain; Commodore; Admiral
Able Seaman; Leading Hand; Petty Officer; Warrant Officer;*