

HMS WESTMINSTER

Family & Friends Newsletter



ISSUE 06 | MAR 2018

SPOTLIGHT ON...

ARCTIC CIRCLE CROSSING

SHIP'S COMPANY REMEMBER THOSE IN THE
ARCTIC CONVOY



Photo of Loch Ewe
Remembrance

HMS WESTMINSTER sailed deep into the Arctic Circle at the beginning of the year. Operating in the harsh Arctic Sea proved a significant challenge for the crew. It was poignant to give reference and thought to the sacrifices made by the Arctic convoys during the Second World War. The Arctic Convoys played a critical role in keeping our island nation fighting with materials traded between the UK and the USSR. Loch Ewe in the Western Highlands of Scotland was a dramatic backdrop for the laying of a wreath on a Commemorative Memorial. The ceremony was attended by nine of the Ship's Company who were carried ashore in one of the ship's sea boats. The shore party were well received by the local museum and described the experience as a cold reminder as to the losses of fellow sailors during the war. The

long transit north after the Loch Ewe ceremony followed the routes taken by the convoys. Once in the Arctic Circle, the Ship's Company gathered on the Flight Deck to remember those who perished along the same passage 70 years ago. Accounts of the battles fought were read and prayers said as everyone paid tribute to their fellow sailors lost at sea. On completion of the ceremony's formal proceedings a 'Blue Nose' ceremony took place. True to Naval tradition those personnel who had never sailed over the Arctic Circle before had their noses painted a fetching blue to signify their Arctic 'steeliness'.

Article by SLt. Campbell

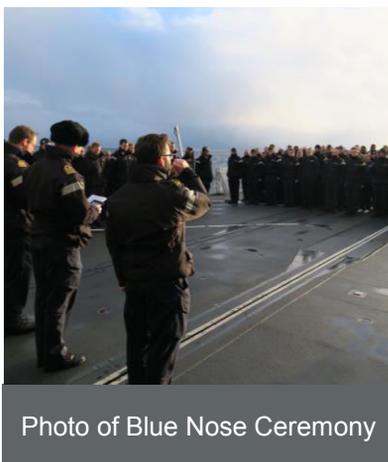


Photo of Blue Nose Ceremony

A MESSAGE FROM THE CAPTAIN

Since our last newsletter in Jan, the Ship has been at sea conducting a variety of training and exercises; operating in the challenging Arctic environment.

The Ship's Company have made the most of our Port Visits to Tromsø and Bergen, where everyone was able to go ashore and experience the attractions of the Arctic Circle, as well as seeing the Northern Lights.

As we approach our return to Portsmouth, I know we are all looking forward to being reunited with our families and enjoying a well deserved leave period.

I want to advertise the upcoming Families Day on 11 May (see final page). I am very pleased to be able to offer to host you all at sea and hope for a good take up. So make sure you get the date in the diary!



Cdr Simon Kelly,
Commanding Officer

FROM THE BRIDGE

SEAMAN SPECIALIST YEOMAN

The Leading Seaman Bridge Tactical Yeoman is accountable to the Navigating Officer, Officer of the Watch, Bosun's Yeoman or CBM. Their duties include acting as the Command advisor on all aspects of tactical communications and manoeuvring, supervision and management of the Bridge tactical operators.

In addition to this they will provide warfare support to the Command whilst conducting AAW, ASUW and ASW functions and duties. Overall, they will ensure the efficient running of the Bridge in conjunction with the Navigating Officer.

MEET THE SAILOR

Name: Tom 'Springy' Springett

Age: 26

Rank: LET (ME)

Joined: 2012

Branch: Marine Engineer

Home: Eastbourne

Best run ashore: Capetown



ME Tom Springett

SHIPS COMPANY TAKES TO THE SKIES



HMS WESTMINSTER'S Flight Department organised a day of experience flights which proved to be a soaring success. Volunteers from the Ship's Company put their names forward for an airborne experience that will be hard to forget. The flights took place over the Isle of Arran which was a perfect landscape for Lt Barkley and Lt Ridley to fly their passengers on a thrilling low level loop. The Merlin's large side door was left open for the duration of the flight allowing those in the rear of the helicopter to get a brilliant view of the landscape and their Ship from an angle they don't often see. It was a bizarre assault on perspective as their home suddenly looked small against the backdrop of the coastal waters of Western Scotland. Flying below the Island's ridgelines and hugging its contours gave everyone a great insight into the capabilities of the Ship's primary asset. The flight ended with a flypast over the Ship and then a landing, on the seemingly impossibly small flight deck. With six flights in total it was a busy day for the flight and a truly memorable one for those lucky enough to experience the flight in the back of a Merlin Helicopter.



HMS WESTMINSTER seen from the Merlin above

PIZZA NIGHT TO RAISE MONEY FOR CHARITY

The PO's Pizza Night was held on the evening 6th Feb. Every member of the PO's Mess was involved in the event, during the day a team tirelessly made pizza bases from scratch and prepared the toppings, teams took to the phones taking orders, others filling the pizzas with the desired toppings, a team monitoring ovens for readiness, and finally being sliced placed into pizza boxes and being delivered to Mess Decks and to members of the Ships Company whilst on watch.

The event, organised by PO Halls and raised £400 altogether. £200 was donated to the Ship's Welfare Fund and £200 was donated to the PO's Mess Charity which is The Sick Children's Trust.

EXPLORING IN NORWAY

TROMSO

Several members of the Ship's Company from HMS WESTMINSTER made the most of their time alongside in Tromsø by taking to the slopes with huskies. The use of huskies as a mode of transport in Norway is a tradition that dates back hundreds of years and it was a fantastic opportunity for the Ship's Company to appreciate the work required to train and best utilise such energetic animals.

Wrapped up warm, the team headed out into the wilderness to meet the huskies who were eager to get out into the snow. The activity centre provided thick layers for Ship's Company who have spent the week adjusting to the harsh conditions of Norway.

After a quick tutorial of how to 'mush', it was time to head off into the starlit mountains. A 2km trail with plenty of uphill and downhill meant there was plenty of time to soak in the stunning scenery of Tromsø, even at night. The terrain was sometimes too steep for even the strongest of dogs so the team were able to also fit in some physical activity when required to jump off the sledge and push it, running as part of the pack. After returning to the camp and warming up around the fire the team enjoyed a great show of the Northern Lights - a magical way to end a brilliant evening's experience.



The Northern Lights over Tromso and the team Husky Sledding

BERGEN

Upon arrival in Bergen, a lot of the Ship's company were keen to make the most out of their short stay by hitting the slopes once more and made the journey to Voss for some more great runs in the snow. The conditions were perfect for beginners and experts alike with many members of HMS WESTMINSTER learning how to ski in one of the best locations in Norway.



Skiing in Voss

SPORTS EVENTS

CROSSFIT OVERSEAS

HMS WESTMINSTER's onboard PTI, LPT Saunders contacted CrossFit Tromso to see if members of the ships company could use their facilities whilst alongside. Head coach and owner Stefan Revang to confirm the Ship's Company were welcome to go along to CrossFit classes and use the Open Gym facilities free of charge. A few members of Ship's company took him up on this generous offer and found facilities and coaching from CrossFit Tromso were of the highest standards. All who attended enjoyed the experience, and would fully recommend to anyone visiting.

RUGBY SOCIAL

HMS WESTMINSTER has had a limited rugby season so far this year due to operational commitments, however some time alongside in Faslane coincided nicely with the start of the 6 Nations for the year. With a number of locally based personnel seizing the opportunity to take advantage of reduced journey times, any training would have had poor attendance. Instead, over 20 personnel attended an impromptu social in Helensburgh whilst alongside for the weekend to watch England triumph over Italy. Despite Italy's poor showing for yet another year it proved to be a great afternoon out and plans have been made for games throughout FTSP, including a showing at the Eastern Region 7s. We are particularly pleased to have secured the assistance of CPO Lorry Osman for coaching and advice throughout the near future – her help has already proven invaluable in the most recent game against Plymouth.

Article by SLt. Clouter

DRESS SHIP FOR THE KING'S BIRTHDAY

HMS WESTMINSTER visited Bergen, Norway, for a short period. Upon our arrival Wednesday 23rd February we “dressed ship”. Dress Ship is the term used when ships are ordered to fly “bunting” from the bow and stern up to the main mast with various flags and pennants in sequence, in this case it was to join in with national celebrations for the birthday of the King of Norway, King Harald V. King Harald V was born in 1937 becoming King of Norway in 1991, succeeding his father. Additionally he holds the rank of Admiral within the Royal Norwegian Navy.

Article by SLt. Campbell

REMEMBERING HMS ROYAL OAK

During a busy period supporting Specialist Navigator training HMS WESTMINSTER found herself operating in and around the Orkney Islands. This proved a good opportunity for the Ship's Company to carry out a service of commemoration in honour of the crew of HMS ROYAL OAK which was sunk during a German attack in Scapa Flow. WESTMINSTER came to anchor within Scapa Flow, the wreck of the Royal Oak lying just off her port bow, marked by a single green buoy. HMS ROYAL OAK saw action in the Battle of Jutland, home waters, the Atlantic and Mediterranean. On Oct 14th 1939 she was anchored in Scapa Flow when German submarine U-47 fatally torpedoed her causing her to sink in just 20 minutes. The loss of the ROYAL OAK devastatingly seen 833 of her 1,234 crew lost, over one hundred of which were boy sailors not even 18 years of age. This was and remains the largest loss of boy sailors in naval history. The attack was named by the Germans a symbolic act of vengeance in retaliation for the capture and self scuttling of the German High Seas Fleet at the end of WW1, the wrecks of which can still be seen in Orkney today.

Article by SLt. Campbell

SUBMARINE COMMAND COURSE

HMS WESTMINSTER was involved in a Submarine Command Course (SMCC) 19-21 Feb 18. SMCC is one of the most intense courses in the world with success or failure deciding whether the potential submarine Commanding Officers, in this case from Norway and Netherlands, will Command a vessel or not. A Walrus class submarine, being commanded by the SMCC candidates, was put through its paces by having to evade detection from a Task Group, including HMS WESTMINSTER, FN Provence (French), HNLMS Tromp and HNLMS Van Amstel (both Dutch). Each of the surface units launched their helicopters to assist in the search for the submarine. At the peak of the exercise there were three surface units, three helicopters and a Canadian Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) all conducting Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) searches. To enable HMS WESTMINSTER to be an effective fighting unit 24 hours a day the Ship assumed Defence Watches, with half of the crew being awake at any time. SMCC built relations between all of the countries involved and gave the Ship invaluable experience working in the ASW environment.

Article by Lt. Morgan

GUNNERY SERIALS

On 11-12 Feb 18 HMS WESTMINSTER fired 27 rounds from the Ship's Medium Range Gun (the turret on the Foc'sle), 190 rounds from the Ship's 30mm Automatic Small Calibre Guns (ASCGs) and 9000+ rounds from miniguns and General Purpose Machine Guns (GPMGs). The Ship's helicopter, a Merlin Mk 2, also proved its 0.50 calibre M3M machine gun by firing 600 rounds. The unfortunate target for this gunnery was a 'killer tomato', a large red inflatable target which is launched from the Ship.



The M3M 50 Calibre Gun being fired from the Merlin

Gunnery Serials are an essential part of the Ship's training, keeping operators up-to-date and proving the equipment; ensuring that if the Ship was tasked to use weaponry in an operational environment the drills would be second-nature. The Merlin helicopter managed to capture some fantastic footage of the gunnery, showing the immense firepower that a HMS WESTMINSTER can unleash.



The 4.5 Gun being fired

Article by Lt. Morgan

FAMILIES DAY

HMS WESTMINSTER will be carrying out a Families Day on Fri 11 May 18 and will take place in Portsmouth Dockyard. It is the intention to take the Ship to sea for the day and show family and friends of Ship's Company how a warship operates. This will be a fantastic opportunity to see the day to day work involved in your loved ones career.

Proceeding to sea on an operational warship is an unfamiliar and potentially dangerous environment for our guests. For this reason, and to ensure the safety of all guests, the minimum age for any children attending the Families Day is 4 years old. This is based on the requirement to transit ladders unaided and be able to fit the Junior Lifejackets provided. All children should be supervised by a ratio of 1 adult per 2 children. This may include the Service Person or additional adults to increase the number of children able to attend. There is no upper age limit but all guests must be of suitable mobility to transit ladders and disembark in event of an emergency. Pets are not permitted.

Editor – SLt Jess Osuch

Publisher – Lt Adam Coomer

FAREWELL TO XO

Lt Cdr Chris L'Amie leaves HMS WESTMINSTER having served as Executive Officer for just under 2 years. On joining as Senior Naval Officer, he oversaw the Ship emerge from refit, handing over to the Commanding Officer before putting WESTMINSTER to sea and subsequent sea trials. As Second-In-Command, he's successfully steered the Ship through the choppy waters of Operational Sea Training, various multi-national exercises and Duty Towed Array Patrol Ship live operations in the North Atlantic. A big fan of "reaching into the Joint Space" wherever he can, Chris moves on to work at Maritime Ops Centre, Northwood, where he will have a direct role in WESTMINSTER's future operational tasking, no doubt influencing it for the better!



Lt.Cdr Chris L'Amie

Royal Navy and Royal Marines Welfare (RNRMW)

Contact +44 (0)2392 72 87 77 or navyers-welfare@mod.uk.

For Out of Hours Cover provided by the Officer of the Day at HMS Nelson, call 023 9272 3875.

WESTY WORDSEARCH

Can you spot the nautical words hidden in our wordsearch? There are 10 in total!



Buoy, Rope, Knot, Sail, Anchor, Port, Starboard, Bow, Cabin, Deck