

# HMS WESTMINSTER

## Family & Friends Newsletter



ISSUE 07 | JUN 2018

SPOTLIGHT ON...

## DUTY TAPS / FRE

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR  
FAMILY AND FRIENDS



As many of you will be aware, HMS WESTMINSTER is currently undertaking the role of Duty Towed Array Patrol Ship/Fleet Ready Escort (TAPS/FRE).

There will always be a T23 Frigate fitted with Towed Array Sonar assigned to the role of Duty TAPS. This enables the UK to react quickly in order to deter and detect any potential threats to the UK from foreign submarines. This role protects the UK's Continuous at Sea Deterrent in the form of our Vanguard submarines that form a vital part of our national security.

FRE tasking is assigned to a UK warship that will require them to be held at short notice. This gives the UK the ability to react to any priorities inside our territorial waters. An example of this is to escort foreign navy ships through the English Channel.

During activation periods, we are required to be as secure as possible with information we pass on both verbally and electronically.

For this reason communications both on and off the Ship will be ceased when required in order to maintain the ships integrity and safety.

It is important that our families understand that we may sometimes be unable to communicate for prolonged periods of time. It is also just as important to know that their loved ones are playing a vital role in protecting our nation.

Should you need to contact the ship in an emergency, this can be done by either of the following methods:

The Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC):  
+44(0)1452 51 99 51;

Or

Royal Navy and Royal Marine Welfare:  
+44(0)2392 72 87 77.

*Article by Lt L Jones.*

### A MESSAGE FROM THE CAPTAIN

Since I last wrote to you, the Ship has completed a very busy maintenance period alongside in Portsmouth, which provided some time for the Crew to focus on spending some time at home. This period was rounded off with a fantastic day at sea with the families.

Thank you all so much for your support in attending what was a very important day for all of us. I have received lots of positive feedback and everyone in the Ship's Company, myself included were very pleased to have the opportunity to show you around the ship; the areas where they live and work.

As we embark on our next period at sea on national tasking, this is likely to involve periods without external communication, please continue to email the Ship's Company and we will attempt to receive these at the earliest opportunity.

The contact numbers provided in this Newsletter are available for support, should it be required.

We have also established a new Facebook site, HMS Westminster Community, which we will keep up to date with our movements. Please feel free to join and add comments.

## ISLE OF HARRIS



HMS WESTMINSTER Ship's Company visit the Isle of Harris Gin Distillery

Exploiting a rare break in a busy ship's programme, HMS WESTMINSTER dropped anchor off the remote Hebridean village of Tarbert on the Isle of Harris. Tarbert is the home of the famous Harris Tweed... and Scotland's most remote gin distillery. Those enjoying sundowners on the flight deck hoped the clear skies and glassy seas would hold for the morning.

Instead, early risers for the first boat ashore found the ship shrouded in a fog bank. Fears of a cold drear day evaporated with the fog at the entrance to the harbour, revealing the picturesque village of Tarbert and the distillery on the foreshore.

Thanks to the generosity of the RNRMC a boat could be chartered all day, allowing well over half of the ship's company to go ashore. The Sea Specs were particularly pleased as the charter – and the cold water discouraging "Hands to Bathe" – meant the seaboat was required only briefly, rare when at anchor.

Ashore, ship's company enjoyed the kind offer of a tour and tastings from the Harris Distillery, stocked up on tweed or simply soaked up the sun. Picnic tables and outdoor dining areas were particularly popular after a long spell of meals below.

On return, shoregoers found the fog bank lifted, the ship sitting as if on a sheet of glass and the flight deck rigged for a barbecue. A dedicated effort from the WOs' and CPOs' Mess yielded a magnificent meal – even seconds for the big eaters – and the entire ship's company enjoyed the opportunity to relax amid the magnificent scenery of a Highland anchorage. Tweed jackets and flat caps contrasted oddly with Hawaiian shirts but did not detract from a fine end to a very welcome break.

*Article by SLt A Ronaldson.*



Dress Ship for Commonwealth Day, anchored off the Isle of Harris

## VC COMMEMORATIVE STONE LAYING

The UK Government, as part of its efforts to mark the First World War Centenary, has since 2014 been laying commemorative paving stones in the home towns of those that were awarded a Victoria Cross (VC) during the Great War. It is hoped that the stones will provide an enduring legacy of local heroes and enable residents to gain a greater understanding of the impact the war had on their community.

A contingent from HMS WESTMINSTER were honoured to be invited by Westminster Council to attend the unveiling of a VC Commemorative Stone in Embankment Garden in Westminster, London on 8 May.

The VC recipient in question was Lieutenant Commander Geoffrey Drummond Royal Navy, born in 1886 in Westminster. He volunteered for Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) in 1915, after training he served in several Motor Launches in the English Channel and was appointed in command of ML254 in December 1917, based at Dover.

On 23rd April 1918 during a raid on the German occupied port of Ostend ML254 rescued 38 men from the crew of HMS VINDICTIVE after they had scuttled their ship. Geoffrey Drummond together with Lieutenant Rowland Bourke RNVR (Commanding Officer of ML276) and Lieutenant Victor Crutchley RN (First Lieutenant of HMS VINDICTIVE) were awarded the VC for their actions.

He ended the war as a Lieutenant Commander RNVR and was also awarded the Legion d'Honneur by the President of France. At the outbreak of the Second World War he tried hard to rejoin the RNVR, but was considered too old and unfit. Determined to serve, he signed up as a Second Hand (equivalent to an Able Seaman) in the River Emergency Service then transferred to the Royal Naval Patrol Service.

In April 1941, while carrying a sack of coal, the leg, which had been injured during the Ostend Raid, gave way and he hit his head on the deck housing. He suffered severe concussion and died on 21 April in St Olave's hospital, Rotherhithe. He was buried in Chalfont St Peter Cemetery, Buckinghamshire.

*Article by Lt Cdr M Price*



Motor Launcher 187



Stone Laying Ceremony

## FAMILIES DAY

The Ship's Company of HMS WESTMINSTER played to their parents, grandparents, boyfriends and girlfriends, spouses and children on Families' Day, which took place at Fountain Lake Jetty at HMNB Portsmouth on Friday 11th May.

Families were greeted at the gates of the Historic Dockyard in front of HMS VICTORY before embarking on HMS WESTMINSTER for a short passage along the Isle of Wright, where they were afforded stunning views of the Channel on a day that saw plenty of sunshine and no rain at all.

The families were awed by a flypast of a Hawk whilst the Ship's Company demonstrated their capabilities with their seaboats before heading back to Pompey to spend more time ashore with their loved ones.

Over 300 guests attended the event, and special praise went to the catering staff for laying on a rolling buffet that was thoroughly enjoyed by family and crew alike.

It would be fortuitous that the Families' Day came ahead of an activation for HMS WESTMINSTER, in providing assurance to families and friends of the Ship's Company that the ship is capable of providing all the means and safety measures required for surviving long periods at sea.

*Article by Lt E Moss.*

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

HMS WESTMINSTER is the first ship to receive fuel on operations from RFA TIDESPRIING during a recent Replenishment At Sea (RAS). The RFA ship was built to refuel the new Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers and her surrounding Task Force whilst at sea.

Measuring just over 200 meters in length and with a top speed of 27 knots, TIDESPRIING is a welcome addition to the fleet. Recently the vessel participated in the bi-annual exercise Joint Warrior off the coast of Scotland.

Even though it was raining on the approach to the vessel, there was still a sense of occasion on the upper deck. It was clear to see the crew were proud to be working with another British warship. A lot of the Ship's Company have not participated in a RAS before, after all the last RAS was Nov 2017 with RFA WAVE KNIGHT.

TIDESPRIING towered over WESTMINSTER. With a delicate approach, WESTMINSTER's Captain made his decisions from the Bridge Wing with a team of specialists to advise him appropriately.

Once the ship was in position, Leading Seaman Vine shot the soft nose projectile across to begin the exchange of ropes between the two ships. It was Leading Seaman Vine's last RAS onboard WESTMINSTER quoting:

*"Being Above Water Weapons specialisation, I pride myself in attention to detail. For me to fire the projectile onto the ship first time is a major win".*

Four lines were then pulled across to WESTMINSTER allowing communications between the ships, a distance line for correct separation, a spare line and finally a line to transfer fuel.

Once the exchange of fuel was complete WESTMINSTER's Captain, Cdr Simon Kelly, sent over a Ship's crest and a bottle of red wine to TIDESPRIING, for Captain Simon Herbert. As the two ships separated the crew took a sigh of relief, the serial was over and the Ship could return to conducting operations after a successful RAS.

*Article by ET(CIS) J Volpe.*



HMS WESTMINSTER conducting a Replenishment at Sea (RAS) with RFA WAVE KNIGHT