

The Albion Chronicle

HMS Albion's newsletter for families and friends

Issue 5 | Nov 2018



From the Captain...

As we conclude our tasking in the Asia Pacific and Middle East, HMS ALBION turns west, to begin the long transit home across the Mediterranean. Our ten-month deployment will have been the largest undertaken by a Capital Ship in recent memory. During this time we will have crossed two Oceans, visited 10 countries, across three continents, to work with key partners and allies upholding the United Kingdom's commitment to Peace, Security and Prosperity, whilst also enjoying numerous runs ashore and a plethora of Adventurous Training opportunities. We have made lasting memories and have been privileged to enjoy the highlights of a career in the Royal Navy, truly 'living the advert'.



Filled with unique opportunities and experiences, our deployment has seen ALBION conduct an active period of operations, supporting the UK's interests throughout the Asia Pacific and the Middle East. The impact that we have had in this part of the world cannot be overstated, with significant and tangible influence achieved throughout the region. Our endeavours have strengthened the relationship between the United Kingdom and our key allies and partners; Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Vietnam and Oman, significantly through a plethora of expertly executed defence engagement and combined operations upholding United Nations Security Council Resolutions and the UK's commitment to the Rules Based International System. This has directly contributed to paving the way for a global, post-Brexit, Britain through a demonstration of the United Kingdom and the Royal Navy's resilience, reach and professionalism on the world stage.

The impact that this prolonged period of operations has had on my Ship's Company does not go unnoticed, and it goes without saying that all that we have achieved in 2018 would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our families and friends at home, as well as our shipmates on board. You have all been the trusted and reliable constant throughout our deployment and have coped admirably with the various challenges that we have faced, be that programme uncertainty, a prolonged time away from home, or coping with the level of activity that ALBION has undertaken to accomplish so much since deploying from Plymouth in February.

As I type, ALBION, has just completed her duties as the Amphibious Flagship in the Maritime Component of Exercise SAIF SAREEA 3. This major, joint and combined UK/Omani exercise represents the pinnacle of ALBION's operational deployment which sees the Ship, and her Ship's Company at the vanguard of the UK's Defence main effort for 2018. The exercise has tested our ability to operate as the Task Group's Amphibious Command and Control platform, working alongside our Omani allies to promote interoperability in the Gulf region - We have come a long way since our rededication just 17 months ago and our success is borne out of the professionalism, tenacity and determination of a magnificent Ship's Company to consistently deliver success over the last two years.

After such a remarkable and sustained period on operations, it is approaching time for me to hand over the baton of Command. In the New Year, I welcome HMS ALBION's new Commanding Officer, Captain Peter Laughton MBE Royal Navy, who will assume Command on 15 January 2018. As I sign off, I would like to take this opportunity to say, it has been a rare privilege to take HMS ALBION from extended readiness to the far reaches of the Asia Pacific as the UK's Fleet Flagship and lead a fantastic Ship's Company to deliver success on operations, and I thank you all for your continued support throughout. Finally, as we begin to look forward to our return to Devonport in November, I very much look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the jetty for our homecoming to help us celebrate ALBION's success in 2018.

Tim

Captain Tim Neild
Commanding Officer
HMS ALBION

BRUNEI WITH A BANG



As the UK's very high readiness assault ship, our aim is to put Marines ashore into any environment and the coastline of Brunei proved to be the perfect training ground. Working with our allies we were able to test our full amphibious capability to the max. This meant putting Marines and vehicles on the ground via Landing Craft and Helicopters. The three day exercise culminated in a beach assault where His Royal Highness, The Sultan of Brunei and Vice Admiral Ben Key, RN Fleet Commander watched as both forces worked together to destroy the enemy compound.

TOKYO NIGHTS

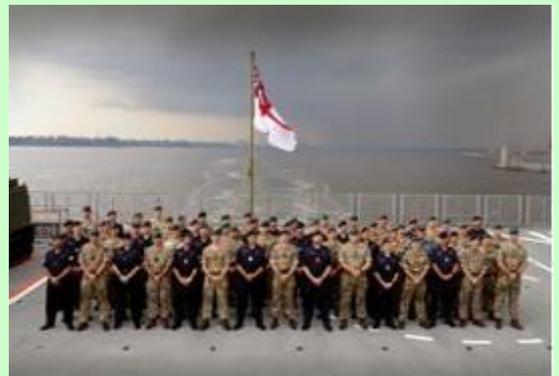
The final Japanese visit for ALBION was the Capital Tokyo. The vibrant city full of colour, food and culture was a fitting end to the time we spent in Japan.



For the Ships Company the list of activities was endless with Mario Go Karting, climbs up Mt Fuji and Disneyland visits all planned. It also allowed us to open the ship up to visitors with over 6000 people queuing in 35+ degree heat to see our Nation's Flagship.

Whilst in the Far East we have undertaken several high profile Defence Engagement events, but the largest by far was saved for Tokyo. With the assistance of HM Royal Marines Band based in Portsmouth an evening showcasing the best of 'Brand Great Britain' took place on the Flight Deck where over 25 companies including Aston Martin showed Japan what 'Great Britain' had to offer.

JOINT STAFFS EMBARK



With ALBION heading for Ex Saif Sareea 3, Singapore provided the perfect opportunity for the Joint Staffs to embark and begin integrating with Ship's Company. Headed up by Commander Amphibious Task Force - Cdre James Parkin RN and Commander Land Force - Brig Gwyn Jenkins RM they embarked to conduct training, planning and exercise preparations ahead of a successful exercise with the Omani Navy.



HIGHLANDERS HEAD EAST



As we left the region, we handed the baton over to HMS ARGYLL, and for ALBION's 'Captain Tim' it provided the perfect photo opportunity.

"Having been the CO of both ships, it great to know that our all our good work will be continued by the mighty ARGYLL!"

GOOD MORNING VIETNAM!!

Ho Chi Minh City. As the ship sailed up the river towards the city formerly known as Saigon, we were unsure what to expect from Vietnam, and as the rain started to pour and the lightning struck, there was certainly some doubt. However within 20 minutes of stepping off the gangway the friendly locals made us feel at home. For many, the main draw was the nightlife offered by the city, but whilst alongside many also took the opportunity to learn about Vietnam's war-torn history. A visit to the city's war museum and Chu Chi Tunnels certainly brought to life the horrors suffered by both sides during this terrible conflict. Vietnam's economy is booming, so the ship was on hand to support His Excellency Gareth Ward, the UK Ambassador to Vietnam, in promoting British Interests and Business in the Country.



"You don't know man, you weren't there!"



FLEET COMMANDER VISITS FLAGSHIP

Whilst alongside in Brunei the Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Ben Key, took the opportunity to visit his Flagship and speak to his sailors about the recent Asia Pacific Deployment, he was keen to listen to the range of experiences from our deployment ahead of more ships deploying to the region.



THE PT OF NIGHTMARES

The time - 1500, the place - Flight Deck, the session – IMF. For some, those three letters will fill them with dread, but this was a session with a difference, carried out in exactly the same spot as the previous ALBION on their Asia Pacific deployment in the 1960's. It was with trepidation that the younger members of the Ship's Company took to their spots, however all thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity and were honoured to follow those who went before us.

LIONS RETURN TO PRIDE



Under the lights of Singapore's Cricket Club, the ALBION Lions walked out to the cheers of our Ship's Company. The return to Singapore meant only one thing to this team, the chance to compete for the Challenge Cup. The Challenge Cup was first presented in 1887 by the Royal Navy in recognition of the many games played on the Padang, with the last game being played by an RN Ship in 1967.

The team made up from a mixture of Ships Company and Royal Marines included Rab Seru (45) who has played against the Fiji National Side and Lennox Green (23) a former rugby league player for Hull RFC, had been in training since returning from our MDSP leave in July and had managed a couple of friendly's to try out a few formations.

As the teams lined up in the sticky Singapore evening heat the tension could be felt around the stadium, the Singapore team (Singapore Cricket Club RFU) had just returned from the Rugby 7's tournament in Japan but it was clear from the start this was going to be a tight game. The crowd made up of members of the Ships Company, Embarked Military Force and Cricket Club members stood as the anthems were played and collectively breathed in as the referee raised his whistle.

The first half saw players from both sides taking heavy knocks but it was clear that the Lions had the advantage, the practiced formations had paid off and after a line out close to the 22m line, the Lions took the lead. The early advantage was narrowed by a Singapore penalty kick, but as the referee blew for half time, the Lions still had the lead.

The second half saw tries for each side but after a tough 80 minutes it was the ALBION Lions who lifted the trophy winning 20-16. For the first time since 1967 a Royal Navy Ship's name would be added to the base of the Challenge Cup. For team captain Cpl Rob Hall RM, it was a monumental occasion, "it's great knowing that all the hard work and effort the lads has put in over the last few months has paid off".

It is hoped that as more ships are deployed to the region the Challenge Cup will become a regular fixture.



ALBION ARRIVES FOR SAIF SAREEA 3

As you read this ALBION has just completed her duties as the Amphibious Flagship in the Maritime Component of Exercise Saif Sareea 3 in Oman. This major, joint and combined UK/Omani exercise represents the pinnacle of ALBION's operational deployment this year, which sees the Ship at the vanguard of the UK's main defence effort for 2018. The exercise involving 65,000 Omani and 5,000 UK Troops served to strengthen the UK's long-standing relationship with Oman and demonstrates the UK's ability to deploy, operate and sustain a significant element of the Joint Expeditionary Force at range. For ALBION this meant leading the task force of 15 ships made up of 1 Type 45, 2 Minehunters, 2 RFA Bay Class Ships, 1 RoRo Contract vessel and 9 of the Royal Navy of Oman's vessels.

For the staff of COMATG and 3 CDO Brigade, this exercise was the result of 2 years planning. It started with the 17 Ship Task Group forming up in Duqm, a small port town to the south of Oman which is currently undergoing a multi-million regeneration project, Here the Commanding Officers of each Ship and Unit were able to form up to receive orders from their Task Force Commander. As the units sailed on the morning of the 8th of October the land forces ashore were already setting up Observation points on the enemy positions, with Omani fast jets flying overhead



providing over watch. ALBION's role throughout was not just to act as the Amphibious Assault Ship but as the Command and Control platform. Using our onboard Assault Squadron Royal Marines we were tasked with landing troops ashore with our Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel- designed to move troops and small vehicles ashore (Land Rovers or in the case of Top Gear a Ford Fiesta!); or the Landing Craft Utility - the main heavy lift force of the ASRM, these craft are capable of carrying 120 troops or a Challenger 2 Battle Tank into the heart of any situation;



or by Aviation which for Saif Sareea was provided by 3 Chinook helicopters of the Royal Air Force, which were used to drop the Marines deep inland providing extra support to the troops already on the ground.

It wasn't just about Royal Marines though, the exercise also provided an opportunity for the RN's smaller vessels to play a starring role. Two Royal Navy Minehunters were able to safely clear a route for the whole Task Group allowing them to get as close to the shore as possible. It also allowed the onboard divers the opportunity to carry out some training on the hull of ALBION.

Every department was tested over the course of Saif Sareea with our Catering Services Dept turning out 2000 meals a day, our Marine Engineers kept all our services running from electricity to hot water and cooling. Our Weapon Engineers ensured every weapon system onboard was ready for use if needed and that our vital communication links (phones, emails, WiFi) were kept running. It provided the perfect opportunity to show just how far the A Team has come since our re-dedication 17 months ago.

The exercise culminated in a firepower demonstration attended by the Secretary of State for Defence, the Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP, The Chief of Defence of Staff, General Sir Nicholas Carter and the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Philip Jones. At the end of the demonstration they stepped aboard



ALBION to meet members of the Ships Company and thank them for their efforts over the last ten months.

Their departure marked the end of Exercise Saif Sareea 3 and ALBION's time in the Middle East as she turned her bows West and headed for home waters. Guzz Revs On! See you soon!

KEEP UP TO DATE!

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