Message from the Commanding Officer

March was another busy but equally productive month for the “Fighting Clan” and perfectly highlights the versatility of the Type 23 frigate. We have spent time at sea supporting two Navigating Courses, demonstrated our warfighting prowess and conducted numerous training exercises to hone our skills. You’ll read about some of these activities below, along with a round-up of what else we have been up to this month and a look at what the future has in store for the “Fighting Clan”.

Training Our Future Navigators

Ready to train the next generation of Navigation Officers, HMS SUTHERLAND assisted with their professional development by hosting the Fleet Navigating Officers Course (FNO) on the south coast of the UK. Under the watchful eyes of our Bridge Team, the trainees were able to hone their skills navigating through simulated mine danger areas and the busy shipping lanes of the Solent both day and night. All five Officers successfully passed the course and were grateful for the support from the crew over the week.

Storm Gareth Strikes

They say ‘smooth seas never made a skilled sailor’ and no saying could be more appropriate for the “Fighting Clan’s” recent time at sea. On her return leg from her forward deployment in Faslane to Devonport, HMS SUTHERLAND encountered the scourge of some of the roughest seas brought from Storm Gareth. Footage of the ship battling the large waves and strong winds went viral on both sides of the Atlantic with an American News Network showing video taken from the bridge.
International Navigators Join The ‘Fighting Clan’

HMS SUTHERLAND was back at sea in the channel further assisting with the International Navigators Course (INC). Naval Officers from Albania, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Malaysia, Montserrat, Nigeria, Singapore and South Africa were on the bridge as their final part of 4 months training with the Royal Navy. Fair weather saw the ship undertaking close navigation in both the Solent and Portland areas as well as around the Channel Islands.

Reward and Recognition

It’s always a proud moment for the Ship when one of our own is recognised for their efforts, more so when it’s by one of our affiliates. We were delighted that The Honourable Company of Master Mariners invited CPO Cowell to their annual awards ceremony held in London onboard HQS WELLINGTON. He was recognised for his outstanding performance whilst the Ship was deployed to the Asia-Pacific region and for leading and organising the various family events which had a positive impact on the morale of our families whilst we were away – BZ!!!!

Off with a Bang

“The Fighting Clan” once again proved her fighting worth by firing a variety of her Close Range weapon systems including her Mini-Guns and GPMGs in addition to the powerful Medium Calibre Gun. Capable of firing a high explosive shell over a distance in excess of 13 miles, the 4.5” calibre gun is used primarily for Naval Fire Support, a form of land bombardment and supporting amphibious troops. The Ship fired 45 shells at the Lulworth military ranges off Portland providing valuable training to the gun crews and proving that HMS SUTHERLAND is ready for any tasking at a moments notice.
Happy 23rd Birthday!!!!!

The Ship’s Company celebrated the Ship’s 23rd birthday this month. Launched in March 1996 as the 13th of 16 Duke Class Type 23 frigates by our sponsor, Lady Christina Wallmsley, she broke with tradition and used a bottle of Macallan Scottish whisky to send her to sea. Before this occasion, Royal Navy ships had always been launched with a bottle of champagne. The Wardroom marked the occasion by toasting the Ship as the sun set over the Channel Islands. Congratulations to the “Fighting Clan”, here’s to the last 23 years with plenty more years to come!!!

Bavarian Surprise- NOCG

Away from the action onboard the Ship but still very much at the heart of the “Fighting Clan” spirit, a number of Ship’s Company travelled to the Naval Outdoor Centre Germany (NOCG) in Bavaria, to enjoy a week’s skiing as part of their Adventurous Training (AT) entitlement. AT provides challenging outdoor training that incorporates controlled exposure to risk in order to develop leadership, teamwork, physical fitness, moral and physical courage as well as other personal attributes and skills that are vital to the delivery of Operational Capability. From December to April, the centre operates a ski package which caters for all abilities. From May this switches to their summer programme which includes activities such as mountain biking, kayaking and rock climbing.

‘Casualty, Casualty, Casualty’

‘Casualty, Casualty, Casualty’ is never a pipe any sailor would wish to hear but for the crew of the “Fighting Clan”, this calm, clear announcement over the main broadcast system is the beginning of an exercise. The risk of accident remains ever present when operating onboard and thus why all Ship’s Company regularly undertake such training exercises. Realistic injuries and the opportunity to transform the Wardroom into a temporary treatment centre made this a challenging scenario for all involved. This was also an opportunity to test the Ship’s sickbay and her full medical team. Though the ship’s sickbay is small, it is as well equipped as any GP’s surgery and can accommodate two people in isolation for more serious cases.
Visit to Portsmouth

It’s not often a Plymouth-base Type 23 gets to spend much time in her sister port, but that’s exactly what happened to HMS SUTHERLAND during a break in Navigation Training. Earlier this month the ship visited Her Majesty’s Naval Base Portsmouth, for a few days between Navigation Courses. On entry into port she conducted ceremonial with both HMS VICTORY, the oldest commissioned warship in the world, as well as HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH, the largest ship ever to sail under the white ensign. It proved a great opportunity for the Ship’s Company to meet and socialise with their ‘Pompey’ counter parts, as well as provide a short but sweet rest from our busy schedule.

Dazzle Paint

HMS SUTHERLAND was delighted to have been chosen as the trials ship for the latest paint scheme on the 1st April 19. It’s an update of the ‘dazzle’ paint scheme used during the 1st and 2nd World Wars; used to confuse our enemies and make it increasingly difficult to be accurately classified. We have taken over from HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH and will get our new livery paint during the forthcoming maintenance period. Although it isn’t the tartan scheme we were after the announcement gained lots of interest on our @HMSSutherland Twitter feed – the more observant correctly identified this announcement coincided with April Fools Day!!!!!!

End of term Awards and Easter Leave

After an action packed start to 2019 it was time to reward the sailors who have excelled in their duties over the first term. Congratulations go to LSea Titmus, LCH Jones, ET(ME) Aston, ET (ME) Jackson and ET(WE) Webber for receiving a Commanding Officer’s Efficiency Prize for their efforts. Following the awards ceremony the Ship’s Company proceeded on a well earned leave period ready to face the challenges of the next term when HMS SUTHERLAND will under go vital maintenance before heading back to sea once again to conduct a series of equipment trials and a comprehensive training package prior to fulfilling National Tasking.