

ASSAULT STATIONS!

The Newsletter for HMS BULWARK

Issue 04 | August-September 2016



HMS BULWARK, READY FOR ANYTHING



Pre deployment, Fleet Amphibious Flagship HMS BULWARK spent 4 weeks preparing for this autumn's Joint Expeditionary Force (Maritime) deployment to the Adriatic and Arabian Seas, with time spent at sea off South West England, and essential maintenance being conducted alongside in Plymouth.

The four week package of trials, training, and tactics was designed to ensure HMS BULWARK was both ready to deploy on time and capable of any emergent tasking.

After a busy month, the ship welcomed MPs from the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme to see for themselves the readiness and morale of the "best big ship in the Fleet", on the same day that she started the process of embarking over 250 additional sailors, marines, soldiers and civilians, who will spend the next few months calling BULWARK their home.

Captain James Parkin, the Captain of HMS BULWARK said, "My sailors and Royal Marines have put everything into making sure that BULWARK is ready to deploy and I am proud of all the work they have put in to reach this stage. I am confident that my people and my ship are ready to meet any challenge thrown at us in our demanding and exciting future programme, and we look forward to embarking the Commander of the Amphibious Task Group, and his staff, to lead the British Armed Forces' major operational deployment of 2016."

HMS BULWARK will lead the Royal Navy's Joint Expeditionary Force (Maritime) deployment to the Middle East. The ship will return to the UK before Christmas and commence the process of handing over duties as Fleet Amphibious Flagship to her sister ship HMS ALBION.

FROM THE CAPTAIN

Dear families and friends,

As you know, after our well deserved Summer leave, we went to sea every week for the month leading up to deploying on our JEF(M) (pronounced "Geoff Emm"!) deployment. The huge amount of hard work that everyone on board put into the preparations for this ensured that we were ready in all respects to deploy, on time, and in good shape, on 19 September.

As I write, BULWARK is transiting east through the Mediterranean, along with the three other ships in the JEF(M) Task Group, towards our major exercise of this deployment, ALBANIAN LION (AL16). This will be a real chance for the ship to demonstrate our full amphibious capability in testing conditions.

On completion of AL16, and after a brief stop to restock vital supplies and fuel on board, we head further east, for our next planned activity.

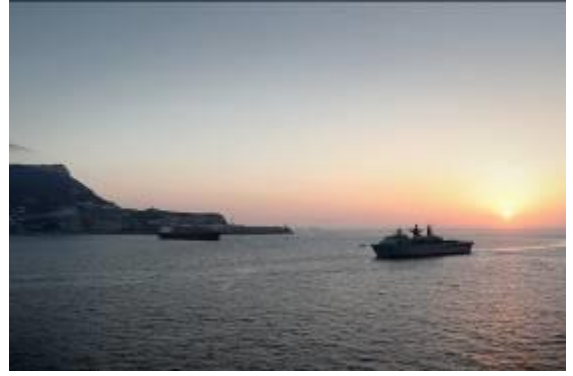
As always, however, our thoughts are never far from home, and I remain grateful for all the support we receive from you all - thank you for being part of Team BULWARK - it means a great deal to all of us..



James Parkin
Captain
HMS BULWARK

FIRST STOP-GIBRALTAR!

HMS BULWARK pulled in to Gibraltar on the 24 September 2016 for the ship's first port visit of the Royal Navy's inaugural Joint Expeditionary Force (Maritime) Task Group deployment, joining RFA MOUNTS BAY and MV EDDYSTONE already alongside.



Father Charles Bruzon, Chaplain of HMS BULWARK (and hailing from Gibraltar himself) said, "It always fills me with great pride to arrive in my home town in one of Her Majesty's Ships and to do so as Chaplain to HMS BULWARK is a dream come true. It is especially satisfying to hear the sailors talk of their affection for 'Gib' and I know they'll be afforded a very warm Gibraltarian welcome."

The trip afforded the Ship's company the opportunity to take a short break ahead of a busy period and enjoy the delights of Gibraltar such as the Ocean Village Marina, a relatively new complex situated on the picturesque waterfront and containing an array of bars, restaurants and boutiques. As well as the more traditional Naval haunts on Gibraltar; The Horseshoe pub, affectionately known as the 'Donkeys flip-flop' and the Angry Friar or the 'Mad Monk / Stormy Padre', being just two of these (in)famous establishments.

On Saturday, the ship's football team played at Devils Tower Camp in order to hone their skills ahead of their up coming match in Rhodes. Members of the Ship's company and embarked personnel also had the opportunity to have a guided tour of the World War 2 tunnels, and the Lower Saint Michaels cave.

After a serene Sunday enjoying the Mediterranean sun, the Ship's Company turned their attention back to sea and setting sail for ALBANIAN LION.

BULWARK'S YOUNG OFFICERS

There are currently eleven Young Officers on board, who are conducting their Basic and Specialist Fleet Time. BFT allows recently commissioned officers to become familiar with the way that a warship functions as a whole, with SFT being the next stage of training and specifically focusing on their specialisations (Warfare, Marine Engineering, Weapon Engineering). Everyone was pleased with their appointment to BULWARK, knowing that they were deploying to warmer climes while some of their fellow trainees had three months of HMNB Portsmouth to look forward to. The ship is certainly fulfilling expectations so far.

Initial training for officers now only includes three weeks onboard a warship so this period of training is invaluable to us and has included a few 'firsts'. Donning fire fighting kit has refreshed our knowledge of damage control incidents, circuit training with POPT brings back too-recent memories of being thrashed around Dartmoor and we have honed our vegetable chopping skills in the Galley. We have had our first 'proper' run ashore in Gibraltar

We continue to learn all that we can (as well as enjoy the runs ashore) so that we can pass our B/SFT periods and move on successfully to the next stage of our training. The ship's company have been welcoming and helpful and this has certainly eased our transition from BRNC Dartmouth to the wide world of the Fleet

SLt Zoe Jones



TOP OF THE ROCK

At 0715 Monday 26th September HMS BULWARK's Ship's Company and embarked forces attempted to conquer the infamous 'Rock Run'.

Famous across the RN, the Rock Run provides plenty of entertainment to accompany the pain associated with dragging oneself out of bed to cure the past few day's festivities. With some choosing to adorn their hero's regalia the Power Rangers, Gandalf, Fireman Sam and Bananas in Pyjamas were joined by a further 300 competitors to tackle the 2.7 mile route.

The first to the top of the 1300 ft ascent was Mne Frazer in an impressive time of 21m 52s, followed closely by Cpl Mason (23m 43s) and Chef Clarke (24m03s). Barely had the sun risen however, before it was time to make haste and return to the ship in preparation for sailing, in order to rendezvous with the rest of the Task Group and continue east on the JEF(M) deployment.

KEEPING UP WITH HMS BULWARK

Family and friends who have access to Facebook can click on a link and ask to join the ship's closed Facebook Group. Simply go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/HMSBulwarkCommunity/>

Also, anyone can follow HMS BULWARK on Twitter at:

[@HMS_Bulwark](https://twitter.com/HMS_Bulwark)

For the younger ones amongst us, William the Bear also shares his adventures on Twitter at:

[@williamtbear](https://twitter.com/williamtbear)

Finally, the ship also has pages and a forum to join on the Royal Navy website at:

www.royal-navy.mod.uk/bulwark

Please come and join us on any or all of these sites!



Merlin helicopters from 845 and 846NAS based at RNAS Yeovilton fine tune their ability to land on BULWARK's flight deck during both day and night flying operations ahead of JEF(M).

BULWARK'S BOARDERS



All RN vessels the size of Frigates or Destroyers (FF/DD) or larger are required to train a 15 person boarding team, capable of conducting Level 1 unopposed, compliant boardings. To meet this commitment members of BULWARK's Ships Company have trained hard and worked diligently to generate this capability. Attending the Board and Search course at HMS RALEIGH, Devon, conducting helicopter fast rope training and underwater escape or 'Dunker' training, the team are capable of inserting onto vessels of interest by aviation or by surface using BULW's sea boats and LCVPs.

BULWARK got the chance to successfully test and validate this capability on the 14 Sep 16 whilst being inspected by the staff of Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST). The team will continue their training throughout the JEF(M) deployment to ensure that they maintain their skills to remain ready to respond to any future tasks. In particular the team are looking forward to conducting live aircraft training with aviation assets from the Tailored Air Group (TAG) embarked on board HMS OCEAN.



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Chaplain

in the current HMS BULWARK and sail into my home port as we did so recently at the start of our deployment! So here I am and what a privilege, the privilege of serving in a magnificent ship with such an iconic name but more importantly that of sharing in the joys and sorrows of our fantastic sailors and Royal Marines.



From left to right ET(CIS) Jake Sykes, AB(WS) Emily Peckett-Frampton, Revd Fr Charles Bruzon and ET(ME) Thomas Hughes.

My first official duty as the Bulwark Chaplain came last July, only five days after joining the ship, when I was invited to preach at Durham Cathedral on the occasion of our Freedom of the City celebrations; a baptism of fire! I reminded the ship's company that exercising the Freedom of the City is a reminder to all, both sailors and citizens alike, that the freedom we enjoy today has been won at a great price and is therefore something we must cherish, and that we, as a deployed unit, are called upon to protect that freedom in all our taskings. Remembering this will motivate us to keep working hard and better enable us to sustain being away from loved ones; the knowledge that what we do, we do for them and for our country as much as for ourselves.

Returning to Gibraltar our presence there coincided with the installation ceremony of the Rock's new Bishop in the Roman Catholic Cathedral. I had the privilege of attending the moving service and representing the ship, as did three of our young sailors, one of whom, ET(CIS) Jake Sykes had previously lived in Gibraltar during his dad's posting to the overseas territory. Our two day visit was a proud moment for me and hearing our sailors speak of their affection for 'Gib' was very satisfying. Long may the close association between Gibraltar and the Royal Navy continue, as well as with our affiliated city of Durham and its magnificent Cathedral; wherever we're from in our United Kingdom and Commonwealth home would not be home without the shaping influence of the Royal Navy, lest we forget!

God bless you all,

Father Charles



A PAC 22 seaboot from HMS BULWARK patrols the sea.



Leaving Plymouth Harbour on the evening of the 19th September 2016. The last time the Ship will leave Plymouth for at least the next 6 years!