Welcome to the first edition of Crew 8 Chronicles!

The Crew has been deployed to the Middle East since December as part of the Royal Navy’s permanent presence in the region.

Our new home, HMS Middleton, is a Mine Hunter, capable of detecting and defeating sea mines with the use of high frequency sonar, remote underwater vehicles and mine clearance divers.

Forward deployed to the Gulf, she is held at high readiness to react to any threat.

Here is our story so far...

FEELING FESTIVE!

We were all missing home during the festive period, but Crew 8 made the best of it and organised a fantastic day of Christmas celebrations. Fancy dress with plenty of games and even a visit from Santa to deliver presents to the Ship’s Company. Attached are some of the best pictures from the day.

A word from the Captain...

Dear Friends and Family of Crew 8,

Happy New Year to you all!

As you will gather from this newsletter, the Crew is thriving in HMS Middleton and in the very different operating environment of the Middle East.

It's never easy being away from home for Christmas but I was hugely impressed by the positive attitude and considerable effort that went into making it a really memorable day. I'm proud to say that that same effort and attitude has been applied to all of our endeavours; whether on operational tasking with regional partners and navies of many other nations in the Gulf, or carrying out the essential maintenance to ensure we are fully mission capable at all times. In the context of the significant global strategic changes of the past few months, it's been an incredibly exciting and interesting time. The rest of the deployment promises to deliver much more of the same.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely,
Operational & Decorational!

MCM2 Crew 8 in HMS Middleton had the honour of hosting the Fleet Commander, Vice-Admiral Ben Key CBE. Here to better understand the view from the front line, Vice Admiral Key met members of each of the four UK Mine Counter Measure Vessel’s, the Mine Warfare Battle Staff and their support ship RFA Lyme Bay for an informal ‘stand-easy’, followed by a buffet lunch on the Fo’c’sle.

MCM2 Crew 8 enjoyed a busy first month deployed in the Middle East region, including ‘theatre integration training’ and exciting operational tasking, and this was reflected in the upbeat and positive attitude of those meeting the Fleet Commander.

The Officers and sailors were able to talk openly to the Admiral about their training running up to the deployment and how they are finding life in the Middle East.

The Fleet Commander was greeted onboard by Crew 8’s Commanding Officer, Lt Cdr Charles Wheen who said, ‘It’s a great privilege to host the Fleet Commander onboard and a really important opportunity for the Crew to feedback their experiences and to help influence the shape of things to come’.

HMS Middleton Cricket vs Awali Taverners (Part 1)

On a warm January afternoon, the Ship’s Cricket team ventured out for a match against a local Bahrain ex-patriots team.

The match was played in great spirits with plenty of ‘sledging’ at the crease from both sides.

See the full match report written by the team captain, ET(CIS) ‘Asda’ George (Pictured left) on page 8.
Some festive fun from our Christmas Day onboard…

(Below) Christmas games, with organiser LS(MW) ‘Apples’ Graham taking charge!

(Below) Pre-preps complete! Well done to the Leading Hands onboard!

(Left) Members of the Senior Rates Mess enjoying the festivities.

(Below) The Officers were in charge of the BBQ!
... after the festivities were over the guys were back to doing what they do best, training hard for any eventuality

(Right) The Ship’s Company await an address from the CO

(Below) ET(CIS) George Delivers a brief to the Ship’s Company on Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) equipment

(Below) The Dive Team, enjoying the warmer waters of the Middle East!

(Left) Weapons free! The upper deck weapons crews practice live firings.

(Below) AB(Sea) Jamie Rathbone & AB(MW) Andy Warner working hard on the Sweep deck

Maintain the fight!

Before HMS Middleton ventures out for operational tasking next month, she is due a period of maintenance alongside. The whole ship has been making the most of it, she has undergone a full make-over, both inside and out. The hull & upper deck have been given a new coat of paint, all the wood varnished and spaces cleaned down.
Now, Crew 8 has been able to really make the Ship their own.

The engineering departments have been busy maintaining the Ship's propulsion plant, machinery, weapons and sensors... The unrelenting conditions of the Middle East means there is always plenty of arduous work to be getting on with. The great work of both the WE & ME departments have meant HMS Middleton hasn't lost a single day of operational tasking so far.

(Left) ET(ME)’s ‘Buzz’ Graham & ET(ME) ‘Bagsy’ Baker pictured in the Ship's Generator Room.

....The Dive Team have also been busy. At sea they have proven their capability and have fully integrated into the operational theatre, carrying out successful live firings with diver placed charges and diving down to 60m.

During maintenance they have fitted blanking plugs to the Ship's inlet pipes, below the water-line, so they can be fully cleaned and maintained.

‘Meat’ & Greet!

A rare opportunity on operational deployment. Members of the Ship's Company were invited to dine with the Commanding Officer. The dinner party enjoyed ‘Sundowners’ on the bridge before sitting down to dinner in the wardroom. As is tradition, AB(MW) Jake Caddy, the youngest attendee, was invited to say grace. The guests then toasted ‘Our Sailors’ before feasting on ‘Michelin-star’ style fillet steak and dauphinoise potatoes, prepared by our very own AB(Chef) ‘Paddy’ Bidgood.

AB(Diver) Dobson (Above) & AB (Diver) Wootton (Left) setting up some dive equipment.

ET(ME) ‘Smokey’ Colbourne enjoying a G&T before the CO dinner.

The toast of the day!
Notice Board:

Alive & Tweeting!
HMS Middleton Twitter Account, up and running… Follow the latest news @HMSMiddleton

Keeping in touch
Don’t forget the ways in which you can keep in touch with loved ones! There is now an E-Bluey website and android app which your sailor can sign up to and send letters and emails quick and easily! Visit www.ebluey.com for more information.

Care Packages
There is nothing better than receiving goodies from loved ones at home! You can fill a shoebox full of exciting things. Anything up to 2kg is free, just wrap it up and take to your nearest post office addressed to:
e.g. AB(MW) Smith
(Service Number)
HMS MIDDLETON
BFPO 335
OP KIPION
They usually arrive within a week! Fantastic!

Time for Physical Development!
Sporting opportunities in Bahrain are excellent, since arriving the Crew have made the most of the local facilities including the US gym and sports centre to stay ‘fit-to-fight’. During January’s maintenance period, Wednesday afternoons have been set aside for whole-ship sports and with the upcoming 6-nations competition, Rugby has been a firm favourite.

Football
The Crew 8 football team has had a mix of results.
Played 2, 1 x Draw & 1 x Loss:

HMS Middleton 2 vs 2 HMS Bangor
Goals from: AB (MW) Jake Caddy
ET (CIS) Will George
Man of the Match: L(Ch) Micheal Green
HMS Middleton 2 vs 8 Fleet Support Unit
Goalscorer: ET(CIS) John Clarke
ET (CIS) Will George
Man of the Match: AB (MW) Jake Caddy

Triathlon
AB(Sea) Jamie Rathbone & AB(MW)’s Jake Caddy, Andy Warner, Ben Rossiter & AB(Diver) Wootton all took part in a shortened triathlon which included a 450m swim, 3km run and 5km cycle! AB(D) Wootton finished 3rd overall! Congratulations!

Birthday Boys
The Ship’s Company have wished several of our sailors happy birthday since arrival in theatre:
AB(D) Remi ‘Dobby’ Dobson 01 Jan 17
AB(MW) Andy Warner 22 Jan 17
AB(MW) Jake Caddy turned 23 Jan 17

Whats next?
HMS Middleton will begin phase 2 of their exciting deployment in mid-February with 6 weeks away from their base port. This will be a busy period which will include participation in several multi-national exercises, developing operational capability, promoting wider engagement and regional partnerships. The crew will have the opportunity to enjoy some operational stand down periods including a week of adventurous training and ‘CO’s week’ for family & friends to visit.
Some more from the cricket!

PO(ETME) ‘Ears’ Duff, AB(Diver) ‘Dobby’ Dobson & PO (ETME) ‘Bill’ Bailey before the first ball!

The team in high spirits after a closely fought contest!

(Left) Lt Tom Lewis, awarded for dramatically missing a catch at 3rd man!

(Below Left) Respect shown from both sides as they shake hands after the match

(Below right) ET(ME) ‘Dickie’ Davis picks up catch of the day after a fantastic display of all-round cricket
HMS Middleton cricket match vs the Awali Taverners 28th January 2017
Match report by ET(CIS) Will George

On Saturday the 28th January 2017 HMS Middleton’s inexperienced cricket team travelled to Awali Cricket Club to take part in an eagerly anticipated match against the Awali Taverners.

For most of the team this would be the first time they have played cricket before. Including, Lt Rob Stone-Ward (XO), AB ‘Busy’ Bushnell, PO(ET) ‘Bill’ Bailey, ET(CIS) ‘Clarky’ Clarke and AB (Diver) ‘Dobby’ Dobson. It was safe to say HMS Middleton were the underdogs, facing up against a team who play week in, week out. Nevertheless an air of quiet confidence was evident in the team. An upset was on the cards. Could HMS Middleton perform a smash and grab victory over the Taverners?

We arrived at the club and were warmly welcomed by the Awali Taverners, a great bunch, some young and some veteran. The rules were explained fully and we were raring to get on the pitch. We lost the toss and were elected to bowl first, a good job really, as that’s what we all talked about doing if we had won the toss. The match was a 24 over s per side, with each player having to bowl. Batsmen were to retire at 20, this was so everyone got a chance. Retired batsmen had the chance to come back in to bat at the end, if there were enough overs remaining.

We began the innings with ET(ME) ‘Dickie’ Davies and PO(WE) Threapleton opening the bowling with 2 overs each, followed by 2 from myself and the XO. These 8 overs were probably the best we bowled throughout the innings and the bowlers took 3 wickets (Davis-2, Threapleton-1). We were hit for around 60/70 runs, it was tight, a very good start. The Taverners 4th, 5th and 6th batsmen however, began to steady the ship and we sensed danger, they all retired on 20, and new batsmen came to the crease. AB(Diver) Dobson came in to bowl a fantastic over and was only hit for 8 runs. The next 4 bowlers who had never bowled before, did so respectably. They weren’t as expensive as first feared. In fact, only one ‘6’ was hit in the entire innings.

The Awali Taverners were ticking away nicely with another batsmen retiring on 20 and another 2 on their way. This was until a golden chance came to Lt Tom Lewis (Ops Officer), who was about to give everyone their biggest laugh of the day. A Taverner skied a ball straight towards Lt Lewis and with every limb pointing in a different direction, he fluffed it. He managed to run right towards the ball and it landed 5 metres behind him, definitely the moment of the match. The next pair of batsmen had reached 20. Some tight fielding, 2 wickets (George-1 and stumping-1) and some good last ditch bowling restricted the Taverners to close on a very respectable 268 for 5, a target we thought was very much winnable. The hope was that they could bowl as many wides as us, as their highest scorer was the extras on 68.

After some refreshments we were ready to go again. We opened the batting with a mix of experience, ET(ME) Davies who had played at club level was partnered with ET(CIS) Clark, who had never even picked up a bat. Another funny moment was when Clark asked the bowler, after only the first ball of the innings, to ‘please slow down!’. A few nice boundaries from Davis got us off to a good start. Clark provided firm support with some strong defensive shots. However, Davis would go on to be caught in the deep. Some tight fielding, 2 wickets (George-1 and stumping-1) and some good last ditch bowling restricted the Taverners to close on a very respectable 268 for 5, a target we thought was very much winnable. The hope was that they could bowl as many wides as us, as their highest scorer was the extras on 68.

We proceeded to suffer from a middle order collapse as wickets began to fall, we found ourselves with the number 7 batsman, the XO, steering the ship, he retired on 22, a solid innings, especially from a non-cricketer.

I was next to the crease and hit 3 boundaries in succession until I stupidly skipped down the wicket and was stumped out, Dobson was next to the crease and began strongly, the warrior himself even took a ‘corky’ to the face for his team, unfazed, we found another non-cricketer retiring on 20, great innings.

There was a nice cameo performance at the tail end from PO (WE) Threapleton and PO (ME) Duff, scoring 17 and 14 respectively. The 2 retirees came back in at the end a strong bowling and fielding performance from the Taverners meant we finished 50 runs short of the target on 218. A great effort from an inexperienced side who have never played together and some phenomenal first performances against a strong Awali Taverners.

A thoroughly enjoyable day ended with awards being presented by the Taverners Captain, followed by some great food and some beverages. A great end to a fantastic day hosted by a great group of guys, a definite rematch is in order after a little more practice.