SOUTH AFRICAN SUBMARINE EXERCISE

Following a month alongside in Simon’s Town Naval Base, LANCASTER embarked on a four day period of anti-submarine training with the South African Navy, to pit her wits against the South African Submarine QUEEN MODJADJI. Throughout the exercise LANCASTER’s Wildcat Helicopter “VOODOO” was extensively used to assist in locating the elusive underwater foe, and simulated dropping stingray torpedoes onto the submarine’s location. The training serials ranged from anti-reconnaissance missions, where LANCASTER and GOLD ROVER were tasked to prevent the “enemy” submarine from gaining imagery of locations along the coast, to advanced “eyes only” running, where the surface units charge the submarine before it dives.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE WARRANT OFFICER

As the senior sailor on board, I have kindly been asked to introduce this, the third of our deployment newsletters. We have now left South Africa, with the mid-deployment leave period behind us and the West African Phase of the deployment to look forward to.

Whilst in the Falklands the Ship’s Company was heavily involved in several important remembrance events, which served as a poignant reminder of the importance of us being there. Whilst in and around the Falklands, we put the Ship through her paces conducting exercises in a tri-service environment. However, as you will see from some of the articles in this newsletter, it wasn’t all work; we still had our fair share of fun, mostly in the form of local wildlife spotting.

Upon leaving the Falklands we sailed towards South Africa with a stop in Tristan da Cunha, the most remote inhabited island in the world, before embarking on the Mid Deployment Leave Period and a very successful maintenance package. As the end of the deployment draws ever nearer, we are all looking forward arriving back in Portsmouth to a warm reception. Although this newsletter is a great way of keeping you all updated, it will be fantastic to tell you about our travels face to face.
Liberation Parade

After almost three months of seafaring and assurance visits, LANCASTER found herself honouring British sailors, soldiers and airmen, with a British audience, in a British town, in British weather... 8000 miles from home. The 14th of June marks the liberation of the Falkland Islands from Argentine occupying forces in 1982. A small party of sailors from LANCASTER attended and had the honour of parading through the capital Stanley with bayonets fixed. There was a small service which was attended by the Governor and many local residents. The reward for those who braved the South Atlantic midwinter was a fabulously large buffet in the town hall after the parade.

Exercise CAPE SWORD

Exercise CAPE SWORD saw 98 Army personnel from 2 Rifles embark on HMS LANCASTER in a joint exercise. Also featured were Typhoon Jets from 1435 Flight based at RAF Mount Pleasant in the Falkland Islands. LANCASTER played a critical role acting as the platform from which the Army assault was launched during the exercise. The Ship also provided Naval Gunfire Support onto Second Creek Range making use of its 4.5 inch Mk 8 Naval Gun. The exercise highlighted the effectiveness of joint operations and played a major role in further integrating LANCASTER with our Army and Air Force brethren.
Charity Fun Run

Over 30 members of the Ship’s Company took part in a Half Marathon fun run to raise money for the Ship’s Charity – Unique Kids. The event was held on a rather hilly course, although it was a sunny and calm day by Falkland’s standards. The 21km distance was mostly run for sheer enjoyment with many of the competitors choosing to wear fancy dress. However, as always there were those who took it more seriously and the winning time was posted by Lt Sammy “Iron Man” Haynes who completed the distance in a time of 1 hour 23 minutes.

SETTLEMENT VISITS

Along with maritime security operations, LANCASTER’s crew have also been getting around the various islands of the Falklands visiting remote and isolated settlements. These visits have enabled the Ship’s Company to meet the residents of the different islands and visit the memorials dedicated to the fallen service personnel lost in the 1982 conflict. Many of the Ship’s Company have also been privileged to view the local wildlife in its natural habitat, including several species of Penguins, Seals and Birds that reside in the harsh conditions of the Falklands.

WILDCAT IN THE FALKLANDS

LANCASTER’s Wildcat helicopter, callsign “VOODOO”, disembarked to Mount Pleasant Airfield to operate from the Search and Rescue Flight headquarters for the majority of the time in theatre. During this period it was heavily utilised and played its part in a variety of roles. These included troop movements as well as performing tactically, with fighter evasion from Typhoon fast jets and the Rapier missile batteries. In order for all of this aviation to occur, the aircraft was subject to a deep maintenance package where the aircraft engineers conducted much of the work that could not be achieved on board.
TRISTAN DA CUNHA

Tristan da Cunha, the most remotely inhabited island in the world, was visited by the Ship at the start of August. Located approximately 1,750 miles away from South Africa, and 1,500 miles away from the nearest land mass (Saint Helena), it is a British overseas territory with a population of just 275, comprised of 80 families and eight surnames. The aim of the visit was to provide reassurance and to further strengthen ties with the island community. The visit was exceptionally busy for the Ship, especially for the embarked Wildcat Helicopter and crew, who flew essential stores around the island to areas that are not accessible by other means of transport; the herculean load lifting effort saved an estimated two years of manual work.

SOUTH AFRICA

On Wednesday the 23rd of September, LANCASTER arrived in Cape Town and sounded a 21 gun salute to announce her arrival. The Ship was fortunate to be berthed in the heart of the city at the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront. This provided a fantastic location with great public access for the Ship Open to Visitor event held on Heritage Day, a South African public holiday. In total, 2000 visitors came on board over a six hour period to see some of the capabilities that LANCASTER has to offer.

The Ship also hosted an exclusive reception on board for a live screening of the South Africa vs. Samoa Rugby World Cup match. In all, 200 guests attended with VIPs including the British High Commissioner to South Africa, Her Excellency Judith Macgregor, Admirals from the South African Navy and Jaguar Landrover as sponsors of the World Cup. The event was also attended by SuperSport TV Broadcasting Company, who recorded live interviews and footage from the reception, which were screened during the match build up and half time.
SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town, a city passionate about sport, provided HMS LANCASTER’s Rugby, Football and Basketball teams a long awaited opportunity to test themselves against worthy opponents. It has been over three months since the Ship’s sports teams last had a competitive run out, and they all looked forward to the programmed matches with eager anticipation.

FOOTBALL
The Football team enjoyed success when they played Table View Football Club. A late kick off on a warm Friday night, with the backdrop of Table Mountain was a perfect setting for the encounter. LANCASTER scored first in under two minutes which was rapidly followed by a succession of goals including hat-tricks for AB Bennett and ET Wilson. The final score was an 11-0 whitewash and a great victory for the Ship’s team. Once again, fantastic hospitality and sportsmanship were shown after the match with the LANCASTER team being invited to a Braai with the families of the Table View players.

RUGBY
The Ship’s Rugby team, captained by LET “Chuck” Norrish faced a formidable team from False Bay Rugby Club. The game started well for LANCASTER, shutting out False Bay for much of the first half, and drawing level at the break thanks to a try from a quick thinking ET Basher. However, False Bay and their 30 man squad became too much for LANCASTER in the second half as they ran in a number of tries to win by a margin of 48 points to 7. After the game, the two teams enjoyed a social which also coincided with the False Bay end of season Braai (South African name for a BBQ).

Adventurous Training Package
The 2 week Adventurous Training package ran during the MDLP period supported by a team of instructors from the AT cell at HMS TEMERAIRE, Portsmouth. The activities involving Mountaineering, Mountain Biking, Stand Up Paddle boarding (SUP) and Surfing, were enthusiastically received by the Ship’s Company with every available place being filled almost immediately.

The activities gave the Ship’s Company the chance to explore the local area away from Simon’s Town and Cape Town. The Mountain Biking challenged the groups with some tricky down hill sections on a route through the spectacular vineyards of Stellenbosch, resulting in more than a few scrapes and near misses. The mountaineering saw the group take on the 800m ascent of the world famous Table Mountain and the SUP took place on the canals of Victoria & Alfred waterfront before surfing at Big Bay. One of the groups was lucky enough to be instructed by 8 time South African Surf Champion Nikita Rob.