CREW 6 TEES OFF IN THE GULF

Crew 6 departed from RAF Brize Norton on the 24 June. We all spent a week living in the spacious accommodation areas of RFA Cardigan Bay before finally moving aboard our home for the next seven months. HMS Atherstone is the third ship to be commissioned with the same name, the previous two being a Racecourse class minesweeper in WWI and the Hunt Class Escort Destroyer during WWII. Commissioned in 1986 she is the youngest Hunt Class minehunter in service. Having deployed to the Gulf in 2012 she is due to return to the UK later next year.

THE HANDOVER

Lt Cdr Pressdee – Commanding Officer

I am pleased to report that Crew 6 are now established as the proud new owners of HMS Atherstone having taken over on the 28 June from our colleagues in Crew 2.

The first month in Bahrain has seen the crew settle in and get to know our ship both at sea and alongside. I’m acutely aware that this has also been the period when our families have been getting used to our absence. To that end I would like to thank all of you at home who have supported us out here as well as keep the home fires burning! Welcome to the Crew 6 family and I look forward to updating you in the next edition. In the meantime I hope you enjoy the benefits from the family welfare grant, and for those with younger children the opportunity to go to Paultons Park in Sept – more detail on the second page.

SHIPMATES RE-UNITED

AB (MW) Dodd

On flying out to the Middle East we (Crew 6) have taken over and relieved Crew 2. I found it quite exciting as Crew 2 was my previous crew and I was able to catch up with old ship mates and find out all the gossip and some of the things that they had been up to. I have been serving in the Royal Navy for nearly 6 years, and this is my 6th Hunt Class Mine Counter Measures Vessel. Crew 6 has served on Atherstone before. 2 years ago I was lucky enough to be on her when she sailed out from the UK and through the Mediterranean. The crew handover process is getting easier for me but it’s still as interesting as the first time as you never know what you will find. I think that we were all keen to get settled in and see how she has changed over the years. During Crew 2’s time in the Gulf they have established a good relationship with one of the American Mine Sweepers that are also stationed out here and I hope that Crew 6 can carry this on. Apparently the Americans aren’t very good at “Soccer” so I hope that we get a chance to challenge them to a game or two! Most of July was Ramadan which is one of the Holiest periods of the Islamic Calendar and means that they cannot eat food or drink water from dawn until dusk. Something that I think a few of the crew would struggle with! It is also expected that people are to wear long sleeved shirts and trousers to cover their elbows and knees as a sign of respect. I think that some of the newer crew members aboard who haven’t experienced this before have found it interesting and enjoyed learning about the cultural differences. This was not easy at first with the heat, but I think that we’re all getting used to it now. Ice creams and ice lollies from the shack on the Jetty are just the ticket in the mid-day heat and tend to help too. Sadly I will be leaving the crew soon and missing all the excitement. I will instead be returning to the UK to attend my AIB (Admiralty Interview Board) at HMS Sultan in Portsmouth. I’ve been with Crew 6 now for nearly 2 years and made some good ship mates so it will be sad to leave, but I’m also excited about attending my interview and the possibility of becoming an officer. One thing is for sure though, I know for a fact that I won’t miss the heat or the humidity which regularly reaches near 50°C! Who’d have thought you would miss the rain?
SPORTS NEWS

Teams representing HMS Atherstone have taken part in four organised fixtures since arriving in Bahrain. Three were played against a team from HMS Shoreham, another minehunter based in Bahrain. The last match was played against the crew and Royal Marine contingent of RFA Diligence. The Bahrain Rugby Club have kindly allowed us to use their facilities, which also include a gym, swimming pool, bar and restaurant for such occasions.

Travel Insurance for Visiting Families

The CO’s weeks in September and December are fast approaching. For the families and friends planning to visit crew members in the Gulf it is important to consider the ramifications of short notice military tasking. The following companies all offer travel insurance that includes short notice cancellation due to military tasking: Abacus Insurance, PAX Insurance, Trinity insurance & Holsure/Ageas Insurance.

Free Forces Parcels

Friends and family members are reminded that packages weighing less than 2kg can be sent for free, in addition to Blueys (available from the post office). Many members of the ship’s company have enjoyed receiving care packages from home. We have found that they generally take about a week to arrive.

Example Postal Label

AB(MW) BLOGGS (name)  
3009999999 (service number)  
OP KIPION  
HMS Atherstone  
BFPO 215

Sadly we were comprehensively beaten in two matches with Shoreham. The 7-0 and 5-0 score lines reflect that, but a stirring performance in the third match saw Atherstone run out 5-4 winners. Well organised by Player-Manager AB(CIS) Turner, backed up by a commanding performance by the on field Captain AB(MW) Turner, ensured that the team have made continuous and steady improvement. The match against Diligence was an exciting evenly matched affair. Most agreed that the 3-3 draw was at least a fair result with two goals from Lt Coleman and one from AB(MW) Stone for Atherstone.

The most recent and talked about match was the win against Shoreham. Atherstone shocked their opponents with a 5-4 victory after two heavy defeats to the same side. It seemed like a recurring theme with Atherstone 2-0 down after just 10 minutes, but an inspirational showing from Leading Chef Powlesland(4) and Lt Coleman(1) combined with great performances from members of the dive team and the less gifted footballers onboard ultimately leading to a memorable first victory!!

FAMILY ACTIVITIES


As part of an extremely generous offer to all RN Service Families whose spouses or partners are deployed on Operations, Paultons Park is offering up to 4 free tickets per service family on the dates above. If you are keen on taking up the offer please ensure that your spouse or partner onboard has applied to the ship’s XO by 1 Sep. We expect tickets to be confirmed and then distributed from the 9 Sep.

FREE CINEMA TICKETS

As part of the Deployment Welfare Package we have decided to send VUE cinema vouchers home to the families of the crew on board. Watch out for the arrival of your vouchers soon.
MEET THE CREW

Back: LCIS Jones, AB CIS Mallinder, AB Kay, LD Sweeney, AB(MW) Turner, ET(ME) Sutcliffe, ET(ME) Gaye
5th Row: LS(MW) Roberts, AB(MW) Stone, LS(MW) Roberts, ET(ME) SNELL, ET(ME) Wojcik, STD Williams, LCH Powlesland, AB(MW) Smith
3rd Row: PO(MW) Klein, CPO(MW) Lyons, PO(MW) Gover, CPOET(WE) Davey, CPOET(WE) Watts, POET(ME) Bond, POET(ME) Millward-spence, CPOET(ME) Rogers, PO(D) Roberts.
2nd: SLt Welch, SLt Gidney, WO1 Cunningham (MEO and Chief of the Boat)
Front: Lt Stone-ward, Lt Cooper (XO), Lt Cdr Pressdee (CO), Cdr Goldstone (Cdr MCM2), Lt Coleman, Lt Irwin
HMS Atherstone in the foreground alongside Bahrain with RFA Diligence, HMS Shoreham and HMS Northumberland.

Useful Links

MOD support fund for schools. The government has allocated additional monies for schools with children of serving armed forces personnel to claim. More details at this link.


Royal Navy Facebook Page

http://www.facebook.com/RN.Community

RNRMC (Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity)

http://www.rnrmc.org.uk

Defence Discounts Services

https://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/