CREW 6 INTO THE RHYTHM

Crew 6 are now over half way through the deployment and have established themselves into the rhythm of life in the desert heat. Since the last issue of the Crew 6 Chronicle HMS Atherstone has achieved a great deal. Having successfully completed her maintenance period she has visited Abu Dhabi, completed periods of underwater survey, exercised our damage control teams with Flag Officer Sea Training in the summer heat, completed Exercise Alkaseh (during which the ship recovered a number of exercise mines) – all of this while also adding to our main mission of creating a safe and secure maritime environment to support and protect national interests in the Gulf region. This issue of the Chronicle covers some of the highlights of the last 6 weeks, as well as accounts from the down time enjoyed by the ship’s company, including sports and charity events.

CLOSE MANOEUVRES

During routine exercises in the Gulf HMS Atherstone often operates with our sister ships who are also deployed as part of Op Kipion. These photos were taken during an exercise in company with HMS Shoreham and HMS Penzance where the ships were operating in close formation.

The bridge team of Atherstone benefit from such manoeuvres as it sharpens their skill level. Throughout it is vital to keeping the whole team on their toes so we are able to react to what ever situation may arise. The training serial also concluded a period of intense of exercising which saw Atherstone prove her full capability as a minehunter locating and recovering a number of exercise mines.

The picture to the right shows one of the ship’s 7.62mm GPMG machine guns. It is the job of the ships force protection teams, which include personnel from all branches to man these weapons and stand ready to defend and if necessary defeat any threat to Atherstone and her ships company.
Captains Corner

Families and Friends of Crew 6,

How time flies….since my last update to you Crew 6 have been busy! The ship has been committed to conducting underwater surveys, diving and mine warfare training throughout the Arabian Gulf, interspersed with routine maintenance in our Forward Operating Base in Bahrain and a visit to Abu Dhabi. Our forthcoming programme includes the largest maritime exercise in the world, the International Mine Counter Measures Exercise, which will involve over 50 countries from around the world and span the whole of the gulf region. Following that and later in the year we will visit Dubai and Abu Dhabi before the crew focus on our return home to the UK in mid January.

As part of the Crew’s charity efforts while deployed, I would like to draw your attention to the Bahrain Challenge article in this edition. Nine members of the Crew will be taking part with others providing support. The aim is to raise money for the Royal Naval Royal Marine Charity to support our fellow sailors. If you can, please donate via the Virgin Money website and pass the word far and wide. Every pound will spur the teams on in what is expected to be a very hard endurance event - every little helps!

Keep safe and thanks for your continued support.

Yours,
Simon Pressdee
Commanding Officer Crew 6/ HMS Atherstone

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

FREE CINEMA TICKETS
As part of the Deployment Welfare Package the Crew have decided to send VUE cinema vouchers home to the families. If you haven’t already got them watch out for the arrival of your vouchers soon – they should be in time for half term.

HOME COMING EVENING EVENT
The Crew’s entertainments committee are working on an evening all ranks/rates event in the UK following post deployment leave in late Feb 15. This will be held in Portsmouth and heavily subsidised by the Deployment Welfare Grant with the aim to offer a special occasion for all the Crew and their better halves to enjoy. What this space for more in the next edition.

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/

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.

Last posting date to guarantee delivery for Christmas is 28 Nov 14.
A PERSISTENT VISITOR
The force protection efforts of three of the Royal Navy’s forward deployed Minehunters was clearly not enough to deter this persistent airspace intruder. The bird of prey, a resident Falcon from the region, spent several hours swooping majestically between the manoeuvring ships before eventually choosing one of Atherstone’s mini guns as a place on which to rest.

Crew 6 Home Run!

The crew of Hms Atherstone has been unable to maintain their winning way playing football recently due to the time spent at sea. There was time however for an enjoyable day of liaison and interaction between the coalition MCM community based in Bahrain. Elements from both the UK and US came together for a force photograph followed by an afternoon of friendly athletic competition. Atherstone’s sportsmen turned their hand to the game of softball and after a confusing explanation of the rules quickly advanced through the competition knocking out teams from the Royal Navy en-route to a hotly contested Quarter Final match with the USS Gladiator. After the first innings Atherstone where one run behind but a Virgin Innings for pitcher Lt Coleman and strong batting from the DwEO “Curly” Watts with a few catches by the Captain saw Atherstone take the lead. In the third innings the US team regained their lead by 1 run before prevailing in the Fourth by 2 Home runs.
RAISE A WET FOR CANCER AWARENESS

The Worlds Biggest Coffee Morning is Cancer Charity Macmillans biggest annual fundraising event. The charity asks people across the UK to hold a coffee morning and raise money for those living with cancer in the UK. Although Atherstone clearly is not in the UK, we saw no reason why we could not hold our own “Big Coffee Morning”. It was however a coffee morning with a typical Naval twist thrown in.

The ‘dice off’ is the preferred RN method for settling important inter-mess disputes, such as who will clean the plates and who is going to make the wets (teas/coffees). The Worlds Biggest Coffee Morning in Atherstone was no different and was preceded by a whole ship dice off. The loser was SLt Harry Welch, who then happily “got the wets in” for the 46 members of Crew 6!

It was an event enjoyed by all, including SLt Welch, but more importantly £280 was raised for a charity which carries out invaluable work in our society.
IRON MEN TO CHALLENGE BAHRAIN

Challenge Bahrain is a Half Ironman event held over a course 113 kilometres long spanning the island of Bahrain. Teams of 3 enter the competition and each individual completes one of the disciplines; whether it be the 1.9km swim, 90km bike ride, or the 21km run. The event will take place on 6 December 2014 and HMSATHERSTONE have impressively registered 3 teams into the event.

The first trio consists of the Captain, Executive Officer and Gunnery Officer; LtCdr Pressdee, Lt Cooper, and Lt Stone-Ward. The second team includes the ship’s Navigator, Deputy Marine Engineering Officer, and a Marine Engineer; Lt Irwin, CPO Rogers, and ETME Sutcliffe. The third team, confident of success is entirely made up by members of the ship’s dive team; AB(D) Tarbox, AB(D) Snell, and AB(D) Chambers.

The teams are raising money for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, of which donations would be greatly appreciated. The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity improves the lives of all who serve – past and present – including their families. They provide valuable funds for naval and military charities that work with families and veterans, especially those experiencing difficulty with child support, ill-health, old age or hard times. To find out more about our chosen charity and their invaluable work go to their website at www.rnrmc.org.uk.

Please support the teams by visiting their fundraising page and donate whatever you can. The web address is uk.virginmoneygiving.com/BahrainChallenge.
MINE WARFARE

As well as practising enjoying coffee mornings and taking part in organised sporting events, in their spare time Crew 6 onboard HMS Atherstone have been honing their mine warfare skills. All joking apart, maintaining Operational Capability and readiness is a primary focus during this tour and Atherstone must be ready to react to unfolding events in the region, and as with anything, practice makes perfect.

Mine recovery (and I should stress that these mines are not real and for training purposes only!) is one of the more challenging evolutions a mine hunter must undertake. First the Mine Warfare team must locate the mine on the seabed using the ships advanced Sonar equipment.

Then the dive boat, shown to the left, must be guided to the mine’s position, which enables the clearance divers to locate the object with greater ease.

It is then down the diver to locate the mine on the seabed and attach a recovery line securely to the heavy mine in preparation for it to be safely craned onto the upper deck.

On the right you can see a drill mine which was successfully recovered. The success of the evolution rests of every member of the team knowing and carrying out their job with accuracy and confidence.

If we were to take part in real mine warfare, it is unlikely that we would risk recovering submerged objects onto the ship. Instead we would dispose of it in a controlled explosion using the Seafox mine disposal system or diver placed charges.

In this case an underwater demolitions charge was placed by Diving Officer Lt Rob Stone-Ward. The charge was detonated and the target destroyed. (See Left)
GEORGE HW BUSH SAYS HELLO TO CREW 6

Not the 41st American President, but the ship named after the President who served in office between 1989 and 1993. USS GEORGE HW BUSH is a ‘super carrier’; it displaces more than 100,000 tonnes, is more than 300 metres long and regularly carries up to 90 fixed wing strike aircraft and support helicopters. It is no secret that she has been spearheading the efforts against Islamic State fighters in the north of Iraq and Syria. The crew of AHERSTONE were lucky enough to encounter this impressively powerful warship as she made her way through the Gulf waters.

Here the Navigator’s Yeoman, AB(SEA) ‘Rocky’ Kay, is photographed in the process of exchanging identities with USS GEORGE HW BUSH using a flashing light to communicate in Morse Code.

Flashing Light remains an effective form of simple communication between ships at sea.
A Taste of Life at Sea!

AB(MW) Collis practises his best Matador pose!

AB Pagram, who likes to think safety first, dons his Once Only Survival Suit at Harbour Stations prior to sailing.

AB(Sea) “Rocky” Kay tries his best impression of Adm Nelson to avoid another flashing light serial, stating, “I see no ships!”

Deputy Weapon Engineering Officer CPO ‘Curly’ Watts enjoying a visit to the Bridge while trying his best Batman Joker face.
CREW 6 LEAVERS

It’s often said – “Once Crew 6, always Crew 6”, but inevitably some members of the Crew have to move on. Fair winds and following seas to all those below.

Young Officers SLts Raymond Gidney and Harry Welch departed HMS Atherstone in October after 7 months onboard. The Navigator was overheard moaning, ‘How will I cope without these guys?”...while he valiantly tried to operate the photocopier without a fresh hot wet!

We wish both SLts all the best in their next ship and follow on Navigational Assessments next year.

PO Millward-Spence, a self professed “Gift to the ME branch”, leaves Crew 6 after 12 months having been selected for promotion. During his time on Crew 6 “Spence” has served in the local acting higher rate as the Engine Room Petty Officer where he has been responsible for overseeing the replacement of two engines and three MEOs! Good luck on course next year.

AB Smith joined Crew 6 in October 2011, know affectionately by all as ‘Singles’. Having served in Mediterranean, Baltic and Gulf with Crew 6 Singles leaves as the senior AB(MW) on board. He moves on to work ashore with MCM2 Squadron in Portsmouth Naval Base supporting the ships and crew of the MCM community.

AB Mallinder is not only leaving Crew 6 but the Navy as well. He has served as a communicator since 2008. Prior to his time with Crew 6 and MCMVs he saw action in Libya aboard HMS Liverpool. ‘Mal’ is hoping to become a fibre optic cable engineer and dreams of becoming a professional Rugby player. Best of luck from C6.