Welcome to the latest edition of 'The Fighting Clan Chronicle'. Since our last edition, as a Ship's Company we have been working hard towards achieving a safe return to sea, which we are delighted to have achieved prior to Easter Leave. However, it has not been all just work on board; we have had Charity and celebrity visits, departmental team building, sports successes, cake bake offs, Burns night and a rather unusual new joiner. These are just some of many things that the crew of the Fighting Clan have been up to these past three months. So I invite you to read on and find out more.

HMS SUTHERLAND RETURNS TO SEA!

On 24 March 2015, 17 months after entering a period of maintenance and upgrades, known as Upkeep, HMS SUTHERLAND returned to sea. This was the culmination of a huge amount of hard work from the Ship’s Company and Babcock that has seen the Ship structurally strengthened, radars and weapons systems upgraded and over 100 new crew join us. The Upkeep period has been filled with a variety of challenges and delays; HMS SUTHERLAND was designed to serve for 18 years but this period of Upkeep has doubled her life span so she is now ready to serve until 2033. In addition to all of the new equipment that has been fitted, the mess decks and messes where the sailors and officers live have received improvements, and thanks to considerable support from the Royal Naval Royal Marine Charity (RNRMC) and the Navy’s Rebalancing Lives Fund, new televisions, entertainment systems and pictures have been bought for the Ship’s Company to enjoy in their time off watch.

The new members of the Ship’s Company range across all ranks and rates, all of whom were keen to go to sea for the first time in HMS SUTHERLAND. Engineering Technician (Marine Engineering) Tyler Flynn said: ‘Having recently finished my professional training in HMS Sultan I was given the responsibility to join the Marine Engineering team onboard HMS SUTHERLAND. Helping take this ship out of refit and back into the fleet is an extremely hard job, which I am honoured to be a part of. This will be my first time on a warship out at sea; other than nervousness to put all my training to the test I am looking forward to seeing the world and enjoying my time in the RN and on board HMS SUTHERLAND.’

After such a long period of time alongside the Ship’s Company have had to prove their equipment and themselves safe to proceed to sea – the Flag Officer Sea Training team have been on board putting us all through our paces, testing our reactions to fires, machinery breakdown and navigation difficulties in order to assess us as Safe to continue at sea with our post maintenance
machinery trials, that will take us up until Summer, and later with Operational Sea Training.

Able Seaman Williams, Engineering Technician (Marine Engineering) Flynn, Engineering Technician (Weapon Engineering) Muncaster and Sub Lieutenant Eddy – some of the new joiners going to sea in HMS SUTHERLAND for the first time.

A VISIT FROM CARE AFTER COMBAT

Thursday 29 January 2015 seemed like just another day in the HMS SUTHERLAND regeneration process, however a trip down to the Ship’s 45 man Junior Rates accommodation would have told you otherwise. Chairman of the charity ‘Care After Combat’, and well renowned comedian and stage performer, Jim Davidson OBE was doing his rounds and meeting the Ship’s Company.

The visit, organised in conjunction with the Warrant Officers and Chief’s Mess (WO and CPO’s) who have chosen Care After Combat as their affiliated charity, was to promote the charity and all the great work it does providing professional assistance for the well-being of the Veteran and their family. Jim Davidson OBE has closely worked alongside the British forces for over 30 years, from delivering comedy stand-up shows to assisting personnel around the world, to assisting veterans in the UK.

Whilst onboard, Jim Davidson OBE had the opportunity to understand the working dynamics of a commissioned warship in the Royal Navy and visited the many sections and departments within the Ship to gain an appreciation of the time, effort and dedication that the Ship’s Company were putting into the regeneration process, all building towards
the Ship’s return to sea. The visit culminated in a discussion with some of the junior rates onboard, where questions on the good work of the charity were answered and intentions for future fundraising ideas were discussed. One such idea will see several members of the WO and CPO’s Mess cycling to Invergordon from Plymouth, a distance of over 500 miles.

Jim Davidson with the 45 Man Mess

CPO Tuach, the Chief Caterer onboard, said ‘The work of charities such as Care After Combat is truly admirable and it is crucially important that visits such as this one take place in order to establish an understanding and make service personnel aware of the services available to them particularly when they are at their most vulnerable after leaving the Services’.

WARDROOM CELEBRATES BURNS NIGHT

On the 22nd of January, the Wardroom of HMS SUTHERLAND sat down to enjoy an early Burns Night dinner. Although this night is celebrated fleet wide, it had particular importance to the Ship: not only with reference to its Scottish roots and its connection to the County of Sutherland, but to its very own current Scottish Commanding Officer. The night was organised by Steward Bagen, one of SUTHERLAND’s Wardroom Stewards, who did an excellent job liaising with the Chefs to design an appropriate menu and ensuring the smooth running of the evening as a whole. The Ship’s Galley once again provided stunning cuisine for the evening with a smoked salmon starter, followed by the mandatory haggis, neeps and tatties, finished off with handmade lavender ice cream with biscuit base.

Leading Steward Hanson, Chef Pedley and Steward Bagen

Throughout the night, many Robert Burns poems, read aloud by members of the Wardroom in some fairly suspect Scottish accents, were enjoyed by all. After the meal, a bottle of Macallan Whisky (the Ship is affiliated with The Macallan) was passed around, accompanied by port, to make a final toast to the immortal memory of Robert Burns.

Inspired by the events, Sub Lieutenant Kromlicki, one of the Ship’s Young Officers, wrote this poem as a toast to the event.

After a hardworking month, on the 22nd Jan, The Wardroom celebrated the work of one man, A great Scottish poet, by the name of Robert Burns, And after such a great night, our respect, he earns.

With a somewhat dodgy accent, it all started with a grace, And after much laughter that really set the pace. The haggis was presented during the first speech, Another poem followed, well, more of a screech.
After the meal we passed the whisky and port, and took another moment to reflect what he taught. A quick look back over his works and rhymes, it became clear his poems survived the test of time. Fine after fine led to more poems being read, toast after toast... and then it was time for bed!

DEPARTMENTAL TEAM BUILDING

With the Marine Engineering (ME) department working long hours setting the machinery to work, whilst dealing with the frustrations of emergent defects and temporary setbacks, it was decided that the MEs needed to let off some steam. Someone suggested that a teambuilding day was in order. Little did they expect this would take the form of Zorb football! Zorb balls are large, soft, transparent, inflated balls that you climb inside, leaving only your lower legs exposed. Due to the balls cushioning effect it was soon discovered that a well placed tackle could send your opponent bouncing and rolling away. At this point the purpose of scoring goals became obsolete as people proceeded to chase down their ‘oppos’, and in the case of a few brave souls the Marine Engineering Officer (MEO) and her Deputy (DMEO). After several ‘games’ of football with an undetermined winner, the ME team moved to playing Bulldog, a more suitable game to expend their energy as well as to demonstrate the aforementioned tackling technique. Lt Rob Manson, the DMEO, commented ‘days like these are very important for building morale and fostering team spirit, as well as a deserved break from the hard work that is ongoing, thankfully today there were no actual ‘breaks’.

THE GREAT SUTHERLAND BAKE OFF

Chef Severn’s entry: a Chocolate Orange cake

In March a task was set before the Chefs of the ‘Fighting Clan’ by Chief Caterer Tuach. The challenge was for each of them to produce a cake for 8 people, for less than £12.00 and to be judged by a discerning panel made up of members of the Ship’s Company and the CO’s wife. The marking criteria was strict with the cakes being assessed on their taste, appearance, texture and the imagination of the Chef.
Chef Pedley’s winning cake

Although it was a complete treat for the judges to be able to eat a variety of cakes, it was, due to the very high standard of the entries ranging from a 7 tiered rainbow cake to a and a dark and white chocolate duo cake, a rather difficult task. However, the overall winner and the title of 'Sutherland’s Master Cake Baker of 2015' was awarded to HMS SUTHERLAND’s most junior chef, Chef Pedley, with his Battenberg Cake. This classic cake won overall due to a combination of its superb taste, the lightness of the sponge, offset by the marzipan icing. Despite being at the start of his Naval Chef career, Chef Pedley has already shown he has a great deal of culinary potential, the only question that remains is will he retain the title next year?

CO’s COMMENDATIONS FOR TOP SAILORS

Before the Ship’s Company proceeded on leave they were assembled in the hangar for the CO’s end of term address. It is customary for awards to be given to individuals who have performed to an exemplary standard and gone beyond what is expected of them. This term there were three recipients of a CO’s Commendation. They were Supply Chain (SC) HESELDEN, Leading Engineer Technician (LET) APPLEYARD and Petty Officer (PO) JONES. In front of the Ship’s Company their citations were read out and each received a certificate and an iPod, to the applause of their colleagues. An abridged version of the citations is printed below.

SC HESELDEN

SC Heselden joined HMS SUTHERLAND during refit. Working in the store rooms section, he was pivotal in supporting the move on board of all stores; he managed the safe stowage, identification and relocation of all department stores from storage and back on to the Ship. In January, the Supply Chain sub department endured the absence of the POSC and both LSC’s, this left SC Heselden and a fellow SC to run the sub department with a little support from base. SC Heselden showed initiative, forethought and integrity in his management of the jetty, distribution of deliveries, and de-confliction of jetty space with Babcock.

LET APPLEYARD

LET Appleyard joined the Ship as the Close Range Weapons leading hand, but when the Aviation Facilities Petty Officer left with no relief he immediately stepped into this role. The Aviation Section has a massive real
estate onboard consisting of not only the Hangar and the Flightdeck, but also the servicing compartments too. This equipment requires manpower intensive maintenance to keep it up to standard. Specifically mentioned by Navy Aviation and by the recent FOST inspection on the huge contribution he has made to the Ship, he should be very proud of his Harbour Air Trials achievement and he is now taking a central role to ensure the Ship is well prepared for sea trials. Not forgetting his other onboard commitments he has demonstrated he is capable of covering both an LET and a POET role. A well respected member of the Ship’s Company, LET Appleyard has impressed at all levels and has a very bright future ahead of him.

PO JONES

PO Jones joined HMS SUTHERLAND during the middle of her refit and swiftly took the initiative to become the lead senior rate for the UW Department and has been pivotal in its regeneration in preparation for returning to sea. He was loaned to HMS RICHMOND where he demonstrated the aptitude and integrity required of a man with more seniority, and their CO commented on how well he represented the SUTHERLAND ethos. It is worthy of note, that PO Jones continued on his return to HMS SUTHERLAND with this strong work ethic by volunteering to assist with the materiel preparedness of SUTHERLAND’s Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Damage Control (CBRND) organisation, whilst demonstrating his ability to develop others by taking an active role in CBRND training. This proactive attitude and professional knowledge was observed and commended by numerous external authorities, including the Education Officer and FOST staff during recent circuit training. Always maintaining the highest military standards, he can be trusted to complete any task asked of him, utilising his own initiative to go that one step further than would be expected.

SUTHERLAND’S NEW JOINER: RYAN THE LION

This year has seen several new joiners from across the ranks join HMS SUTHERLAND. However, none of them are quite like our latest, Ryan the Lion. Ryan will be helping out around the Ship working with all the different departments onboard and finding out what it is they do on a week by week basis. You will be able to follow his story as we progress through our sea trials, Operational Sea Training and eventually throughout deployment.

This month Ryan, like all good new joiners, has been getting around the Ship to know where everything is and he has proven to be very enthusiastic in helping out where he can. He started his tour around the Ship with the Galley, where he helped the Chefs prepare the evening meal by cutting onions for them. Ryan learnt many exciting and interesting things from the Chefs, for example, the Chefs get £2.73 per person per day and with this they have to produce 3 meals a day and a dessert!
Whilst working in the Galley he heard from his ‘oppo’ Monty that the Ship was to sail soon so he thought he better go up to the bridge and see if he could help out. During a bridge tour by one of the Ship's Officer’s of the Watch, he discovered that the Ship does not use paper charts anymore but instead has an interactive electronic chart system called WECDIS. After his bridge walk around, Ryan was set the task of assisting the relaying of messages from the ‘Ops’ (Operations) room over a headset to the Navigator as we were leaving harbour and proceeding to sea. Once we were at sea, Ryan got to witness the Ship’s Company conducting a Man Over Board Exercise (MOBEX). This is when a life size dummy is dropped into the water to simulate a person falling in to the sea, this is done to test the responses of all on board to see how quickly they can rescue the person from the sea. As soon as the alarm was raised that ‘someone’ had fallen in the water the Ship's Company sprang into action. Ryan really enjoyed watching the sea boat be lowered from the Ship into the sea. He really hopes that he will have the opportunity to go in the sea boat, which looks like a really fast speed boat, soon.

Overall, it has been an exciting start for Ryan: he has prepared food in the Galley and he has seen how a bridge team operates at sea. His favourite part was the bridge as he enjoyed watching the team navigate the Ship from the Dockyard out to sea. He did enjoy the Galley as well, because as a Lion he does enjoy his food!

Next month Ryan the Lion will be assisting the Marine and Weapon Engineers onboard and finding out just exactly what it is Engineers do onboard.

If your mummy, daddy or big sister or brother is serving in HMS SUTHERLAND and you would like to invite Ryan home for a weekend or holiday, and keep a diary about his visit to contribute to the next news letter, please email the Logistics Officer at hmssuth-logs-hod@mod.uk Smaller Ryan the Lions are also available to purchase on board from
SUTHERLAND Enterprises – ask the sailor in your life to buy you one so you can have a little bit of SUTHERLAND at home when we are at sea.

Note from the Editor

If you would like to input or request any articles in to this Chronicle, please do get in touch with me, Sub Lieutenant David Mayes, at hmssuth-war-oow3@mod.uk.

Finally, you are invited to submit your ‘Caption Competition’ entries to me at the above email address, the winning captions will appear in the next edition of The Fighting Clan: here is the caption competition for this newsletter.

The website for all information and up to date news for HMS SUTHERLAND can be found on The Fighting Clan’s website:

http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/hmssutherland

HMS SUTHERLAND IS PROUD TO BE AFFILIATED WITH:

- The County of Sutherland
- Lady Walmsley (The Ship’s Sponsor)
- The Honourable Company Of Master Mariners
- Red Lion Foods
- The Macallan
- 33 Sqn, RAF
- 4 Scots
- Clifton College CCF
- Sherborne School CCF
- TS Grenville (Paisley Sea Cadets)
- TS Duchess (Biggleswade Sea Cadets)

HMS SUTHERLAND is very grateful for the continued support and association with:

- Royal Dornoch Golf Club
- MCI Electrotechnics Ltd.
- Skibo Castle
- The Caledonian Club
- Mr and Mrs Larry Kinch

HMS SUTHERLAND’S CHARITIES:

- TYKES
- Care After Combat

Information for Naval Families
Naval Families Federation

Contacts in case of Emergency

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