

HMS LANCASTER

(Starboard Crew)

Autumn Newsletter
Issue 09 | Oct 2022



CAPTAIN'S WELCOME

Welcome to HMS LANCASTER's Autumn Newsletter – the first Newsletter I have introduced as the Commanding Officer of the HMS LANCASTER's 'Starboard Crew'. Since I last wrote we have had another 200 personnel join HMS LANCASTER's Team in the form of an entire additional Ship's Company known as HMS LANCASTER's 'Port Crew' who are led by Commander Paul Irving. As such HMS LANCASTER now has 2 full Ship's Company's; a workforce model which will allow the ship to remain deployed away from the UK for the next 3 years whilst the 2 crews conduct a total swap every 4 months; a significant challenge but one we are all looking forward to.....although I may find it difficult to hand over 'the keys' to Paul when he and his crew come out to join the Ship in the Middle East in early December!

Since I last wrote to you HMS LANCASTER has completed a challenging 'work up' in the UK and subsequently deployed on operations, having been given a quite exceptional send off by our friends and families who lined the waterfront and Round Tower in Portsmouth to bid us farewell. This meant a great deal to us all and I would like to pass on my sincere thanks for giving us such a fantastic send-off.....although I have to admit I did have a tear in my eye as I waved goodbye to my wife and 9-month old son George.

Since deploying from the UK in Mid-Aug the Ship's company have continued to work exceptionally hard, conducting operations alongside our NATO counterparts across a vast area, ranging from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Irish Sea. Alongside a lot of hard work we have also had some time for a little R&R, visiting many beautiful European ports where we embraced the opportunity to challenge local teams in sporting fixtures...so far we have a 100% win rate...long may it continue!

Finally, I must note that the past few months were of course dominated by the sad loss of our Ship's Sponsor, Her Majesty the Queen. It was with deep sorrow that we learned of this loss, but despite the associated sadness the way in which LANCASTER's Ship's Company reacted to perform ceremonial duties to mark this most solemn event was exemplary. HMS LANCASTER conducted gun salutes (96 Guns to mark the passing of Her Majesty and 21 Guns to mark the Proclamation of the King) and a number of memorial services which were impeccably delivered. I have to say that during this time I have never been more proud of the professionalism and exemplary strength of character of LANCASTER's Ship's Company. Additionally, I had the honour of returning from operations to London to represent HMS LANCASTER at the Queen's funeral service in Westminster Abbey and thereafter marched ahead of the Queen's coffin with the UK's Service Chiefs in the procession from the Abbey to Wellington Arch. I was also fortunate enough to be able to present a wreath to the Royal Household, built around a HMS LANCASTER crest, and letter of condolence which has subsequently been presented to the King. A true honour which I conducted on behalf of all those who make up the wider HMS LANCASTER family. From the Commanding Officer of 'The King's Frigate' – 'God Save the King!

Nec Aspera Terrent - Difficulties be Damned
"The King's Frigate"

Warfare Department

LANCASTER has now commenced her exciting deployment to the Gulf. After returning from a well-earned summer leave, the Warfare Department hit the ground running, getting the ship aviation qualified and fully armed up for the trip ahead. Mid-August saw LANC sail from Portsmouth for the last time, with an outstanding send off from family, friends and well-wishers gathered at the round tower, the large banners and the scale of the turnout was heart-warming for all of us.

After a few short and successful sea trials, LANC officially joined SNMG1 (Standing NATO Maritime Group 1). With the Warfare Department working hard to integrate the ship into the task group, comprised of ships from various NATO nations, we shared intelligence and even took part in the occasional over-night quiz to improve communications between ships.

Now into September and SNMG1's tasking saw the start of Exercise REPMUS and Exercise DYNAMIC MESSENGER, a three week exercise designed to test the abilities of unmanned aerial, surface and subsurface 'drones' with real world warships. This saw the Warfare Department working particularly hard to integrate the drone's software into LANC's Command System. The exercise was hugely successful, with our operations room commanding the exercises we sent orders to the drones to find and shadow Portuguese ships (acting as enemy), and received real time video downlink from multiple drones, giving LANC a brilliant overview of the exercise, and a great insight into the future of naval warfare.

October has brought on another new task group (SNMG2), new exercises and new NATO ships to play with. This Task Group, SNMG2, is focused on the Mediterranean, with a lot of effort from the Warfare Department going in to surface, air and subsurface defence exercises to further enhance our capabilities.

Unfortunately this saw the sad passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, The Duke of Lancaster and the Ships Sponsor. With LANC being "The Queen's Frigate" all eyes were on us at this emotional time, and the gunnery sub department of the Warfare branch didn't disappoint, successfully sounding a 96 gun salute to commemorate the reign of Her Majesty while we were alongside in Setubal, Portugal.



Nec Aspera Terrent - Difficulties be Damned
"The King's Frigate"

Weapon Engineering Department

Since our last update the Department has been busier than ever. Initially delivering a complex maintenance package, then trialling all our new equipment at sea, before on loading ammunition and missiles to ensure the Ship was materially ready to deploy on 15 Aug 22. Over this period Lt Lauren Eyre (Deputy Weapon Engineer Officer) also passed her Weapon Charge Qualification, qualifying her to be Head of Department in the future (and making the current Weapon Engineer Officer largely unemployed!), many congratulations!

Shortly after joining our first NATO taskgroup around beautiful Portuguese waters, we set about testing cutting edge naval technology, pushing the boundaries the integrating a T23 with un-crewed aircraft, surface and sub-surface vessels. For the first time, the Royal Navy demonstrated that we can control and task allied nation's un-crewed systems from our Ship – a glimpse into our highly automated future.



As we transit eastwards through the sunny Mediterranean the department has practiced adopting a heightened readiness posture known as “Defence Watches”, a first for many and valuable experience of how we are likely to operate in the Arabian Gulf. We also supported an Italian led exercise called ‘MARE APERTO’ (translates as Open Seas) whilst integrating with another NATO taskgroup. We have also ensured LANCASTER remains lethal by testing weapon systems such as the 4.5” Gun and 30mm (pictured). Most proudly however, the Department prepare and enable the Ship to formally mark the passing of the late Queen with a 96 gun royal death salute. (pictured in the Warfare section above)



There have been numerous great ‘runs ashore’ including Cadiz, Sines, Sebutal, Lisbon, Gibraltar, Cagliari and Crete which everyone has thoroughly enjoyed. Over this period we have waved goodbye to CPO Palombella, PO Hartley, ET Goddard and ET Girdwood and extended a warm welcome to SLt Bruce, PO Young, ET Smith, ET Higginbottom, ET Green and ET Hawkins who have quickly integrated into the Department. In a few weeks it will also be time to bid farewell to our Head of Department Lt Cdr Adam Leveridge and we will welcome Lt Cdr Paul Kempsey as the new WEO for LANC(Starboard) crew. As the Ship arrives in OP KIPION to start our tasking as the Forward Deployed T23, the WE department are very proud of everything we have achieved.

Nec Aspera Terrent - Difficulties be Damned
“The King’s Frigate”

Marine Engineering Department



Following on from a successful dry docking and maintenance period, LANCASTER was ready in all respects for our deployment to the Gulf. The deployment started and not long after sailing it transpired that some electrical gremlins had stowed away on ship and were causing faults with two important pieces of cooking equipment in the galley. Luckily, while the galley were struggling to cook on electric, the M2 section were cooking on gas and got the defects rectified before the entire ships company unwittingly became participants in the ships 'biggest loser' competition (a deployment weight loss competition to promote healthy lifestyle choices).

Not to be outdone by the M2 section, the M1 section have been firing on all cylinders over the past two months working hard to ensure the same can be said about their diesel generators, with two of the four diesels needing significant maintenance involving the removal of several pistons and even cylinder liners. M1 have also shown how team work makes the dream work

when they worked side by side with M3 in order to ensure defects on our sea boats (M1) and sea boat hoists (M3) were quickly rectified allowing command the maximum operational capability to conduct boarding operations, something that will be of increasing importance in the Gulf.

Along with impromptu defect rectification there have been several important serials including a highly successful citadel and pre-wet test, meaning that LANC has reaffirmed her ability to operate in a chemical, biological or radiological contested environment (we create a positive pressure within the Ship to keep the contaminants out). The success of this trial highlighted the impressive and often unsung diligence that M3 have been paying to even the most infrequently tested systems, ensuring LANC remains ready for anything the ever-changing global climate can throw at her.



Nec Aspera Terrent - Difficulties be Damned
"The King's Frigate"

Logistics Department



Even before leaving Portsmouth in August, the Logistics Department has been incredibly busy making sure the ship is well stocked and ready to deploy on operations for over 3 years as part of the Forward Based Type 23 model. The Supply Chain Department has done a fantastic job under difficult circumstances meeting various tight deadlines, leaning on a plethora of dockyard stores support agencies to ensure that the Ship has what it needs ranging from engineering spares to clothing to ammunition. The Catering services team as always continue to work hard in the Ship's galley, conducting outstanding work making sure that the Ship's Company are well looked after and fed. The amount of food and stores coming onto the Ship at various port stops so far this deployment has been enormous, and this has only been possible thanks to the Department's hard work. The Writers in the Ship's Office have also had their work cut out for them, with a large number of personnel changes, whether it is joiners and leavers or unfortunately compassionate or medical cases during the deployment.

When this happens, it's down to the Ship's Office team to make sure that all the paperwork and transport is properly handled. They have also been very busy looking after the cash used by the Ships Company for runs ashore, dishing out the Euros for each stop for personnel to spend on what they like, noting that whatever they take, does come out of their wages the following month - much to the surprise of some more junior sailors!

The Logistics Department has also seen a major change in its Head of Department, waving a fond farewell to Lt Cdr Edward Hannah who has gone onto pastures new, welcoming Lt Cdr Kristoffer Esbensen as the new Logistics Officer. A huge welcome also to POWtr Dewars and POSC Crofts, who recently joined the Ship's Office and Stores as sub department heads.

As the deployment continues to track east, the challenges only get harder. Logistic supply chains and lead times for items grow longer, with movement of stores a major obstacle for items such as medical stores and ammunition. Movement of people becomes harder, especially the major one of the whole Stbd Crew swapping with the Port Crew before Christmas, one which needs major planning from all within the Logistics department. So far a very successful deployment, however as all good loggies like to do best, we are already planning for the next year including the crew swap back into theatre from Easter 23 onwards.



Nec Aspera Terrent - Difficulties be Damned
"The King's Frigate"

Flight Department

After a busy workup period, including an extended ship aviation training & currency weekend, Cartel 1 Flight of 815 Naval Air Squadron embarked onto HMS Lancaster in their Wildcat HMA2 (AW159). Arriving on board led by Flight Commander Frank Suter they assumed the ship's callsign 'Monarch' (a privilege afforded to the King's ship), and quickly integrated into the programme performing everything required of them throughout the deployment so far.

Initial tasking saw a period of shadowing several Russian vessels in the East Atlantic, where 'Monarch 24' played a key role in surface search, tracking, identification and intelligence gathering. Other notable early activity included 3 flights into Lisbon International Airport for vital stores collection, and an essential compassionate transfer back to the UK. Amongst this, essential training for the aircrew, engineers and ship's aviation team was conducted where possible.

Monarch 24 was then kindly asked to disembark into Portugal for 3 ½ weeks to allow space on board to conduct drone trials during OP REPMUS, a small hardship accepted calmly and professionally by the entire team. During this time, a great deal of effort was spent flying with the Portuguese Naval squadron in Montijo, who fly the cousin of our own helicopter -Lynx Mk95A or 'Super Lynx'. Aviation knowledge and best practice was shared, improving the practices of both parties, whilst forming long lasting bonds between two historically significant allies.

More recently, the flight formed an integral part of the Italian run EX MARE APERTO, helping prosecute submarines and acting as an exercise weapons carrier for Stingray; the Royal Navy's lightweight torpedo. We now look forward to operations moving into the Middle East, including providing overwatch for boarding operations with the embarked Maritime Sniper Team.

It's also worth mentioning the incredible run of aircraft serviceability that the engineers have managed to maintain throughout the deployment thus far. Their professionalism and dedication has kept the flight and helicopter at the forefront of Ships operations throughout – no small feat!

Finally, the flight greatly look forward to the upcoming runs ashore, and continuing to provide a service to the Ship, Warfare team and the Commanding Officer.



Nec Aspera Terrent - Difficulties be Damned
"The King's Frigate"

Executive Department

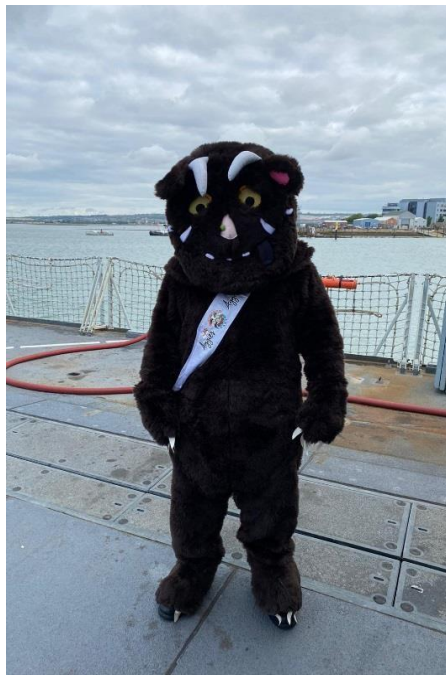
Prior to deployment, we welcomed HMS LANCASTER's wider family on-board during 'Families Day'. We were thrilled that over 250 guests got together and learned about the ship their loved ones are serving on. During the day everyone involved enjoyed a ships tour, breakfast and lunch in the marquee, charity stalls, a balloon maker, a singer, and even the Gruffalo made an appearance!

Just before 1000, on the 15th Aug 22, we sailed from Portsmouth for the start of a three-year deployment to the Middle East. The 'King's Frigate' is the second ship from the Fleet to be forward based, trading places with a second crew in the UK every four months. The Ship's Company lined up on the side of the ship in 'Procedure Alpha', watched by an abundance of family and friends with union jacks and handmade signs. One family member was so excited they decided to throw a purple and green flare in celebration.

During the weeks that followed, we became familiar once again with life at sea and were newly accompanied by the ship's Mascot, who later became to be known as "Queenie". As well as working hard at sea, the crew have enjoyed various 'runs ashore' in Cadiz, Lisbon, Setubal, Sines, Gibraltar, and Sardinia where we have had the opportunity to let off some steam, make great memories, indulge in local customs, as well as soaking up some much needed sun. This was also a great opportunity for newer members of the crew to socialise with their new shipmates outside of work. The Ship's football and Rugby teams have also had the chance to stretch their legs and delivered great results during their first matches and we are sure more positive results will follow. Other crew members used the time alongside to complete fitness challenges, one of which was a run up and down the Gibraltar Rock followed by 1000 Burpees!

After the crew enjoyed their runs ashore the hard work continued, however, whilst at sea the crew entertained themselves with quiz nights, ships bingo, a MacMillan coffee morning on the flight deck and have planned a Halloween evening and a horse racing night with a BBQ.

Some crew members have chosen to use their spare time to take part in the run, walk or row the distance from Lancaster to Portsmouth totalling 283 miles!



Nec Aspera Terrent - Difficulties be Damned
"The King's Frigate"

FUTURE EVENTS

As always you can keep up to date with us by following us on Twitter (@HMSLANCASTER). For those serving on HMS LANCASTER a quick reminder that the Families RN Forum page is now available and allows our loved ones to stay informed, involved and in touch with the Ship and crew whilst we are deployed. It also offers Families the chance to take advantage of free activities and days out organised around the country every month and most importantly the RN Forum enables you to know at the touch of a button who to contact in times of personal crisis. **To access the LANCASTER page, you need to know your family member's name and Service Number.** <https://forum.royalnavy.mod.uk/>

There is a plan to conduct another Microsoft Teams call between the Command Team and families on Wednesday 23rd Nov 2022. Please watch out on the RN Forum and Facebook for details that should be publicised in the coming week or two. The Captain, Executive Officer and Executive Warrant Officer will be representing the ship, similar to before we deployed, and it will be great to see families on screen to talk about the deployment so far, our homecoming the UK, and what lays ahead for LANCASTER Starboard Crew.



Contact email: HMSLANC-PRO@mod.uk

Nec Aspera Terrent - Difficulties be Damned
"The King's Frigate"