



# HMS LANCASTER

Winter Newsletter  
Issue 09 | Feb 2024

## A Message from the Commanding Officer – Commander Chris Chew

Dear affiliates, friends, families and loved ones,

I hope that everyone is well at home and enjoying the start of 2024.

The start of this deployment has been like no other, and your people in LANCASTER have delivered on Operations constantly throughout the period. With a whole host of diverse and complex missions conducted, you should be extremely proud of their actions, which have had a direct impact on the ship being able to play its part maintaining peace and ensuring stability in the region.

November saw Starboard crew arrive back on board and quickly regain currency in a number of areas through external audited training – this meant the team were ready for whatever was thrown at them next, which in this case was extremely significant. Proceeding West, LANCASTER became the first Royal Navy unit to enter the Bab El Mandeb Strait and Red Sea following significant geopolitical events that increased tension levels in the region. The crew, professional as always, dealt with the tasks to hand and responded well in a high threat environment. On completion, when they were ready to relax, they were asked to do this again over Christmas and New Year. They succeeded once again, professionally and calmly, getting the job done away from the media spotlight. This high-paced programme was intertwined with boardings, maritime security, and key training serials. LANCASTER well and truly played her part.

At the start of January, the ship went alongside in Bahrain to start its major maintenance period. It also gave the ship's company a chance to have a well-earned break. We have also had the opportunity to conduct adventurous training, play football and rugby against local clubs, carry out our own hobbies and interests, as well as having the chance to reset.

Since taking Command in December it has been my absolute pleasure to engage with a number of you so far, whether that has been via the Royal Navy Forum or the Families' Video Call in January. I would urge you all to continue using these fantastic opportunities, which I hope remain of great benefit to you. I hope you enjoy this term's newsletter, and we will all look forward to seeing you when we return home at the end of next month.



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



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## Weapon Engineering Department - Leading Engineering Technician Fortnum



Since the start of the deployment, Starboard watch have been rigorously put through their paces starting with a Fleet Operational Sea Training (FOST) assured Deployed Assurance and Readiness Training (DART) and Platform Aviation Currency Reset (PACR), which got the crew up to pace with various weapons, sensors and communications exercises. The department carried out testing to the team's battle-damage-repair skills and general department knowledge. While it proved a steep learning curve for some, the senior ratings used their previous experience to bring on the junior members of the department to great effect. This prepared the ship for an immediate response to happenings in the Red Sea, where we assumed our highest state of readiness (State 1) in order to protect the high valued assets through the Bab al Mandeb Strait (BAM).

Whilst being in a high threat environment, it also provided the back drop for various members of the department to progress professionally with ETs Verity, Frazer, Richards, and Willcox all passing their rounds competency boards. Congratulations to LET Lozovik, who will shortly promote to Petty Officer. A busy period of transits back and forth through the BAM escorting UK strategic assets allowed the WE department to ensure that all weapons, sensors and communication systems would deliver lethality if called upon.

A Fleet Time Support Period (FTSP) has not only allowed the crew to regenerate the ship, but also provided personnel with frequent whole ship events. Everyone has continued to work hard to support our FTSP before completing trials to return to sea, so BZ (well done) to all!

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## Warfare Department - Leading Hand (AWT) Dellow

Upon arrival in theatre, the Warfare Department was required to hit the ground running. Sailing with the FOST teams onboard for DART training whilst conducting real world operations and maintaining situational awareness with vessels of interest and white shipping closely monitored.

Once the FOST teams had left, we were required to step up the pace for escort operations in the BAM. The Houthi Rebels in Yemen were firing ballistic missiles at merchant shipping transiting the Red Sea and the UK had a priority vessel tracking into the area.

Working closely with the US Arleigh Burke class USS Mason we sailed North through the BAM monitoring Yemeni Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and missile sites to RV with the vessel.

The CO conducted a hot handover to Commander Chew and we were back out into the Gulf of Oman for boarding operations. We located and gained vital intelligence from the boarding carried out by our RM team. The ship then proceeded to Bahrain for some much needed rest over Christmas, However UKMCC required us to sail back to the BAM to escort another UK ship south. The crew spent Christmas day in Defence watches as we transited to monitoring units and UAVs as well as vessels of interest that were in the area.

The transit North through the BAM this time was alone, but several US ships were nearby in key areas of the BAM and Red Sea. After our RV with the UK vessel and taking station for the transit South through to the area of operation, we passed the USS Eisenhower task group tracking north.

The Warfare Department showed it could move fluidly from situation to situation providing professional service to Command regardless of the tasking restraints and changes.

We arrived in Bahrain for FTSP and the Warfare Department continue to deliver low-level maintenance and training on a daily basis.

Whatever comes next, the Warfare Department will rise to the challenge.

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## Marine Engineering Department - Leading Engineering Technician Hoskyns-Staples

This deployment opened in challenging fashion, with the ship down one diesel engine. After a short period of acclimatization in Bahrain at UK Naval Support Facility, we immediately dived into FOST serials. After the FOST training, we commenced Ships Propulsion Assessment (SPA (ME)) preparations. SPA (ME) required all pieces of ME equipment to be tested to their maximum capabilities in all configurations, meaning the ME department had their work cut out to ensure the ship was up for the challenge.

LANCASTER then arrived in Bahrain where we intended to spend Christmas alongside; unfortunately, this was not meant to be. Due to the tasking LANCASTER received throughout December, the ship set a new personal record for distance travelled in a month, consuming 1.2 million liters of fuel.

In January, we commenced a busy FTSP with significant maintenance conducted by all sections, including load trials on all diesels, large amounts of maintenance on F1, H1 and H2 diesels, Port gas turbine and the galley floor refurbishment.

The ME department is looking forward to the remainder of our FTSP, ending in February, and then our operational tasking for the remainder of our deployment and handover to PORT crew.



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## Logistics Department - Chief Petty Officer (Catering Services) Powlesland

### Supply Chain

During a very demanding start to the deployment, the supply chain team has been busy from the outset. Beginning with a period of training in damage control and warfighting, the team were also embedding themselves back into the routines of life at sea. Shortly after HMS LANCASTER stepped into operations, there was a requirement to issue the whole ships company with action overalls, rarely used in modern times. Whilst on operations the ship was working in state 2 Defence Watches, once operations had quietened down focus shifted to the upcoming Fleet Time Support Period (FTSP) which involved a number of evolutions;

- An ammunition ship topped up the ship's ammunition and returning any that are going out of date or any spent shells. This involves a huge amount of effort ensuring all paperwork is correctly completed, such as ensuring the captain of the ship returning the ammo is aware of what is packed into each container and the hazards surrounding it, and that the customs paperwork is completed for both export and import to the UK.
- The supply chain were also heavily involved in receiving millions of pounds worth of equipment to support a new system being installed during the FTSP, enabling unscrewed air systems to be launched and recovered by HMS LANCASTER.
- A number of items were received to support the engineering and maintenance taking place during FTSP, such as paint for the sides of the ship, pumps and valves for the engineers, as well as replacement life rafts to replace the ones aboard that were going out of date for inspection.
- General replenishment for the ship came in the form of four, 40ft containers and one, 20ft container, containing everything from new boots and duvets to spare parts for the engines and weapons systems. Each item had to be checked and accounted for before being brought aboard.
- Receiving all of this equipment inevitably means that there are lots of items that need returning to the UK to either be repaired or placed back into the supply chain. At the time of writing the team have returned over 40 pallets of equipment with more taking place daily.

Looking ahead the team are currently planning for the next ammunition serial, another FTSP later in the year, as well as ensuring the supply chain is in the best possible state to hand over to our counterparts on Port crew.

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### Writers

HMS LANCASTER STBD Crew deployed in November with a new Ship's Office team. Though this has been labelled as a risk due to no continuity of personnel within the office, the team has been able to adapt and overcome challenges that they have faced. Due to the vast amount of knowledge and experience among the team members, training was being delivered to the team prior to the crew deploying so that everyone is able to offer support to each other, which has continued while being on operations regardless of how busy this period has been. FOST Team training prior to engaging on operations saw the team actively involved in First Aid Training, boarding drills, narrative training, Incident Board Operator training and Ships Control Centre training. Transiting through high threat areas meant that the team closed up in Defence Watches maintaining watertight integrity of the ship and delivering personnel administration assistance to persons onboard 24/7. Being in genuine Actions Stations was a first for the team but they were not fazed as they continued to press on and maintain a positive attitude. Now in FTSP, the team has worked hard to ensure they are capable of holding duties whilst alongside and deliver support where needed in their primary duties while engaging in adventure training to maintain a healthy balance of work and recreation.

### Medical

A brand new medical team have worked tirelessly to get the crew ready to deploy on operations in the KIPION Joint Operating Area. Running First Aid training packages, which included mass casualty scenarios and disaster relief exercises to name a few, ensuring that everyone involved was properly prepared and equipped to deal with anything that may be thrown the ship's way. The members of the ships first aid teams have been trained to respond to any casualty aboard, with the assistance of the LMA & PMO (Ships Doctor) whilst simultaneously, ensuring they have all the medication required to keep the ship's company fit and healthy. Liaising with the Stores sub-department to acquire, package and deliver thousands of different types of medication, equipment, documentation, vaccinations, even seasickness tablets to keep LANCASTER safe on task.

### Catering Services

Autumn/Winter 2023/24 has been an excellent term for the Catering Services sub-department. It began with a compact 2 week Defence Engagement package consisting of canapés, cook and serve competitions and front of house training at the RN Embassy (the Second Sea Lords private residence) all wrapped up with a 4 course lunch party for the ship's Command team at the home of logistics training in Worthy Down, Winchester. Some well-earned leave was had by all prior to re-deploying to the Kipion JOA. Once back on board LANCASTER, they hit the ground running, providing three hot meals a day for not only the 200 ship's company, but also 30 members of staff from FOST (the training team for the Royal Navy). The intense training package provided keeps the chefs busy as they carry out CBRNDC & First Aid training exercise, emergency messing, action stations and other intense evolutions, all on top of the usual 3 meals a day, sometimes 4!

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## Executive Function - Petty Officer (Police) Everatt

During a very busy period, LANCASTER (STBD) has encountered some significant challenges for the ship's company and the Executive Function, ensuring the smooth handover between both crews Starboard and Port in Nov 23. One of the outstanding performers from the Executive Department was LPT Rob Rowston, who was committed to successfully providing adventurous training when the opportunities were given; he was also fundamental in the heat acclimatisation for all. His efforts were recognised and deservedly awarded a UKMCC Commendation.

With an ever-changing and demanding programme, which resulted in HMS LANCASTER being at sea on operations over the festive season, there was a big drive by the Executive Function to ensure all mail was collected during a limited period, which resulted in over 80 bags of mail being received over Christmas. This was a big component for the ship's company's morale during an arduous period.



The Executive Function has been at the forefront of the majority of successes that HMS LANCASTER has been a part of from boarding operations to escorting vessels of high interest, whilst also ensuring discipline and routine is adhered to at all times.

During the FTSP period there has been AT packages put in place by the LPT, which the majority of the ship's company has taken advantage of, to ensure much deserved time off and respite.





### INFERNO 1 Flight / Lieutenant Harrison

Inferno 1 Flight had a slightly different path to join HMS LANCASTER than the normal ship's generation. Flights are allocated from 815 Squadron and work to a different model than the two crew, 4-month RIP cycle that the majority of the ship's company follow. The Flight departed from Yeovilton to meet LANC STBD in Portsmouth in mid-November; for the majority of the Flight this was the first time they would meet the crew they would be working with over the coming months. Although for many on the Flight this would be their first proper deployment, much like LANCASTER herself, the Wildcat HMA Mk 2 helicopter was already waiting for them in Theatre – having been operated and looked after aboard LANCASTER by Inferno 2 Flight since the summer.

The first weeks passed quickly with the focus on taking over the aircraft, hangar spaces, and all the equipment required to operate the helicopter at sea, before moving into an intense period of sea training prior to conducting the operations we had prepared for prior to leaving the UK.

As always, no plan survives for long, and the implications of recent events in the Middle East were felt as LANCASTER's plans and tasking changed frequently. However, the Flight achieved some important milestones during this period, including fitting out the aircraft with new weapon configurations, which had thus far not been employed in Theatre, as well as improving our understanding of how the aircraft and ship could co-operate in tactical scenarios.

This was a very busy but also successful period for the ship and all her embarked forces. In addition to the operational tasking, there was also an ongoing need to keep training for all the additional tasks a ship's helicopter can be asked to do: Search and Rescue practice with the Flight's winch man, underslung load lifting stores, and support to other department's training.

As this period of operations came to a close, the ship's focus turned to a period of maintenance and the Flight disembarked into nearby facilities to allow a thorough maintenance package on the hangar and flight deck (a never ending task in the maritime environment!) This also facilitated preparations to receive LANCASTER's new "Peregrine" Uncrewed Air System (UAS) in the near future. This also gave the Flight a chance to conduct more in-depth maintenance on the Helicopter – ensuring it is fully ready to return to sea and operations when required.

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