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To our friends at the Survey Ships Association.

The ship is now emerging from a difficult 2021, with several frustrating periods alongside and delays to sailing dates. I write to you from dry dock in Middlesbrough, where we are completing an important period of maintenance for the ship.

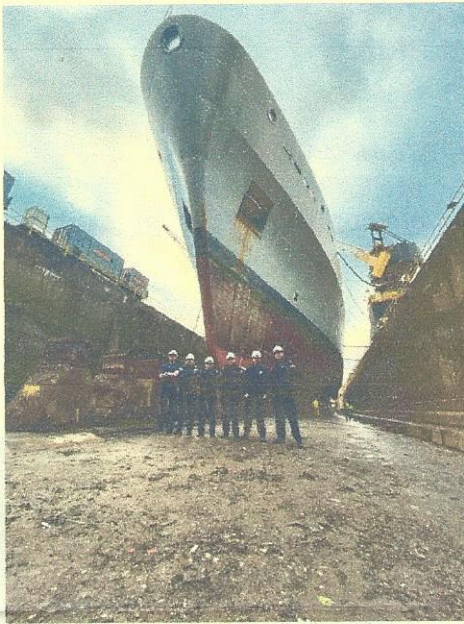
Due to our engineering challenges we have been operating in the English Channel, including the Channel Islands, where despite being close to our base of operations there remains a large amount of survey work to complete. A large number of personnel changes over the year means that we have continued to focus on building experience and working as a team – vital to the safe operation of the ship. As you can see from the picture not all new joiners came via the traditional route and we are struggling to find a uniform that fits!



Despite the numerous challenges, we have managed to exploit a few opportunities for down time as a ship's company. Whilst in Middlesbrough over the summer, a number of the ship's company were able to enjoy the great outdoors in the form of the North York Moors. For those with the need for speed the ship's welfare fund subsidised a trip to the local go karting track. As you can imagine competitive juices were flowing and no quarter was spared. The karting theme continued at sea with a hotly contested MarioKart tournament. Also the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions within the Navy meant that we could enjoy the hospitality of Falmouth much more freely during our watch handover period in September.

A delegation from the Ship's Company attended Remembrance Sunday commemorations in Middlesbrough, whilst a service was held on board for the rest of the ship.



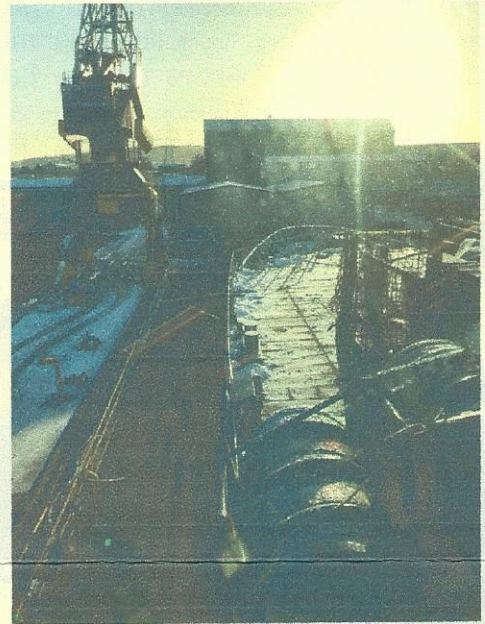


Improving the material state of the ship has also been a vital part of our work, with a successful maintenance period conducted in Middlesbrough over the summer, during which lots of key work was completed including on all of our main diesel generators. Our current period in dry dock has enabled vital work to be completed on our propulsion system, with both Azipods being temporarily removed from the ship for an overhaul. We have also used this time to help improve the material state of the ship, with a lot of work being put in across all departments to get us looking ship-shape, even through the snow!

After the completion of this maintenance period, all the ship's company are very much looking forward to having some well-earned time off over the Christmas and New Year period. The nature of watch rotation means that time spent at home is precious, so this will be a fantastic opportunity for us all to spend time with our friends and families.

At the start of next year, we will be conducting survey operations in UK waters. Once completed, the data collected will be sent to the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office to enable them to update their charting products, thereby providing greater confidence for all mariners operating in UK waters.

The experience we have gained from this year's periods of training in the South Coast Exercise Areas as well as assurance visits will help us next year, when we will be completing an intensive 4-week Operational Sea Training package. This rigorous training period will ensure the ship's company are fully confident with everything required of a warship, including internal damage control exercises, learning how to defend ourselves, utilising our survey suite of sonars in our core hydrographic role as well as operating as part of a larger task group. Whilst this will no doubt be a demanding period for the ship's company, it will ultimately mean that we become better sailors and a better ship.



Planning is now underway for an Affiliates' Day in the summer of next year. Once our programme is confirmed and we can firm up a date I will of course let you know. I am very much looking forward to hosting you on board, along with all of the families and friends who support our Ship's Company.

But until that time allows, take care, stay safe and have a fantastic Christmas.

Mal McCallum

Malcolm McCallum
Commander Royal Navy
Commanding Officer

