

MEDWAY

June - October 2020

MESSENGER

Greetings from the Caribbean! The Ship's Company send their regards and hope that they find you well in these unusual times. Medway is now well in to its deployment on Atlantic Patrol Tasking (North) after arriving in theatre in late January. The ship has been extremely busy since deploying. Medway has visited Bermuda, Martinique, Curacao, Jamaica, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the British Virgin Islands, Barbados, the Cayman Islands and Florida. Each visit providing an opportunity for maintenance; rest; restock food and fuel; as well as opportunities to build relationships and understanding of the region. She has also proven her aviation capability with both Merlin and Wildcat helicopters. Most recently Medway has embarked a US Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment to conduct Counter Illicit Trafficking Operations. All whilst maintaining our readiness to deliver Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief throughout Core Hurricane Season (1 Jun-30 Nov) against the background of the COVID 19 pandemic.



Change of Command

In April, Cdr Power was relieved by Lt Cdr Blythe as Commanding Officer. Possessing many years of operational experience, Lt Cdr Blythe will lead Medway in fulfilling her role of support to British Overseas Territories, both through humanitarian assistance and by maintaining maritime security. His Ship's Company are keen to rise to the challenges ahead.



Change of XO

In June, Medway changed her Executive Officer from Lt Glyn Duffell to Lt Cdr Andrew Rowlands. Lt Cdr Rowlands has a wealth of experience from Navigating HMS Ramsey to Gunnery Officer of HMS Diamond as well as a rewarding instructor role at Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

Counter Narcotic Operations

Throughout our APT(N) tasking we have been working up and rolling out our Counter Narcotic Operations using our Pacific 24 Seaboats and working with our NATO partners to combat smuggling operations around the Caribbean.

The Caribbean is a key smuggling route for illegal drugs, weapons, cash and people. Many countries, such as the Dutch, French and Americans have interests in the region and maintain a naval presence.



Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief

In June Medway took part in her first Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief exercise in the Cayman Islands. The ship worked in conjunction with RFA Argus. After embarking the Crisis Response Troop of the 24 Commando, Royal Engineers.

Medway deployed personnel, equipment and essential supplies to the beaches of Grand Cayman.

The success of this exercise has proven that Medway is ready to provide support to our overseas territories should they request our assistance, during hurricane season.

Aviation

In May, Medway continued to lead the way for the Batch 2 Offshore Patrol Vessels by conducting her first aviation exercises in the Caribbean region. It was a special occasion for Medway as she worked side by side with RFA Argus and her embarked Wildcat and Merlin Aircraft. She was the first ship in her class to “land on” a Mark 4 Merlin helicopter. As the picture right shows, the Merlin also conducted a Vertical Replenishment exercise, using the helicopter to transport under-slung loads. This is a key capability which may be required in the aftermath of a Hurricane to deliver bulky stores ashore. BZ (well done) to PO Andrews and PO Fitzgerald for successfully completing their Flight Deck Officer upgrade qualification.



In September Medway was also used in a joint US / UK training exercise whereby US Navy Seals practiced boarding an unfamiliar Ship. Exercises like these help strengthen ties and allow us to learn from each other. It was also good to see the famed Seals up close, although we had to maintain distance due to COVID restrictions!

Presence Operations

One of Medway's key tasks whilst in the region is to reassure British Overseas Territories. We achieve this by sailing close to key areas within the territories (British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos, Barbados etc) to ensure that our presence is felt by the local population. Sometimes just being in the vicinity of an island is enough to disrupt the flow of drugs from South America. Below is Medway in front of the capital of the beautiful British Virgin Islands.



Reserves at Sea

In April, Medway received a Royal Navy Reserve new joiner Able Seaman (Seaman Specialist) Scott Finch, 38, from King Alfred Reserve Unit, Portsmouth. He has joined Medway as an AB (SEA) for a year, he spends most of his time on the bridge driving the Ship or driving one of the Ship's Sea boats. AB Finch in his civilian job works at a University as a Head of Conference and Accommodation Security.

AB Finch is determined to progress his career in the RNR by working on gaining his Leading Seaman qualifications while on Medway.



“I joined the RNR looking for a new challenge and I jumped at a chance to put my training into practice. I am enjoying my time on Medway so far and excited for what the remainder of my year on board brings.”

Counter Illicit Terrorism Operations

HMS Medway received national news attention over this period for her impressive haul of confiscated narcotics, along with RFA Argus. We are all very proud that we managed to keep 18 million pounds worth of Cocaine off the streets. It was also great to see all our hard training pay off as the suspect vessels were initially detected by a Marine Patrol Aircraft, then passed to Medway by communications equipment. Medway then made best speed on an intercept course. Once in the vicinity we used our Radar systems to get as close as possible to the vessel without being detected. When we were in visual range we used our Electro-Optical Camera in IR mode to start recording to gather evidence. As soon as our embarked LEDET contingent had enough evidence to suspect that the vessels were engaged in drug trafficking, the order was given to launch our sea boats to conduct a right of search on them. A photo of the Ships Company with the 'haul' is below.



Success Stories

Congratulations to the following personnel for been selected for promotion (with more selection boards still to come!);

To Petty Officer:

LET (WE) Hamilton
LS (AWT) Lynch
LS (AWW) Ebo

To Leading Hand:

AB (SEA) Walker
AB (SEA) Judd
AB (SEA) Bell
ET (ME) Gower
ET (WE) Hall



Sailor of the Month

Congratulations to PO SEA 'Julie' Andrews for being the worthy winner of the Sailor of the Month for August. PO Andrews won the award for his excellent leadership over the month.

HMS Medway

There are number of navy related words hidden for you all to find. Can you find them all!?

K D I N N I T S Z M K T W N A T T J Z Y
A C D B K A N A A J M I K S Y K T W V R
F C D I L V R D O R O H C N A S N G H E
F D G C L L O C F B W F E C I P S N U O
O M W E Z C E E S T A M D B T L R T V U
G Y T B Y P A I Z C H E S F C W E I E I
N E T A A N R R M X Z I S P R K T W U K
U D A B W A V A I P G Q E Y C B P A N J
J B E Q D C P M O B V G M A A L O O D T
Q J S Q E I P S Z S B L J L H E C J J U
E W R U M O R G E A O E H N U G I N I M
S M H Q E O M P M R F R A B G E L A O R
X P K L A Y O R T I S G D N H C E P Z Q
F M T M G R L A L F T R J S J D H Q G E
T M M H W A P G C D B M E T J I Y V A N
F L P N G G N U R V D I O K T P F B L G
Y K C E D I V G G S O L R Z R M Q Z L T
W W F K C F L I W M M N G Y L O J N E W
N B I V E P D F Y A Q Z K E E C N X Y R
F E D S D Y D H F T Y V T S J M X S Z K

MEDWAY
SEA
PATROL
GOFFA
GANGWAY
ANCHOR
GALLEY

ROYAL
HELICOPTER
ROPES
SNORKERS
MINIGUN
FLIGHT
MESSDECK

NAVY
CARIBBEAN
SEABOAT
SCRAN
LIFEJACKET
DECK