

# Countess of Wessex speech

Captain MacAlpine, Officers and Ships Company of HMS Daring, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your welcome today.

It is an enormous pleasure to be here with our ship proudly wearing the White Ensign and Union Jack in her home port. She is a testament to those who designed and built her and she will be an inspiration to all the men and women of the Royal Navy called to serve on board. She is our flagship and the pride of the Royal Navy. We should all be extremely proud of her and her sister ships, as they take their place in the fleet.

Daring has come a long way since that cold February morning in 2006, when she slipped into the water - and those of us who watched held our breath, waiting to see if she would stop before hitting the bank on the other side.

Then she was merely a hull containing a building site, but my affinity with her was born.

Just a few months later, I returned to check on progress and stepped on board for the first time and starting her generators, I felt life flow into her structure. On this occasion, the crew had grown from a mere one to an impressive twenty, but still we were severely out-numbered by the engineers and shipwrights.

On Trafalgar Day in 2007, another visit was combined with a dinner in Glasgow City Hall and I swelled the ship's company in more ways than one, as I was expecting my second child. I don't know if the timings of my visit on board Daring had been coordinated to ensure that the gangway was at its flattest, but the tide was definitely in my favour.

However, despite the best laid plans to ensure a smooth and easy climb onto Daring, I reached the top of the gangway, stepped aboard and promptly tripped over a metal stay. I think I have tripped over that same stay every time I have been on board and I am beginning to think it is her way of saying to me, "Where have you been?"

The most exciting visit so far was April last year, when I was embarked for 'sea trials'. Standing on the bridge and giving orders to test speed, manoeuvrability and response times was fantastic. As we passed other warships, I was proud to see their crews out on deck admiring Daring as she showed us what she could do. Were we showing off and we were testing the limits? Absolutely we were but that is what being Daring is all about.

Today Daring is formally commissioned into service and will soon take her place in Her Majesty's fleet. I look forward to telling The Queen that she can have absolute confidence in Her newest warship.

She is the most technically advanced ship in the world. Her capabilities are more than impressive, and she looks the part. As the Captain said to me only the other day, the leap forward in technical ability is as great a leap as the step up from steam to jet propulsion.

The world that we live in right now is an unsettled one and our Armed Services are called upon to meet this challenge. I am certain that our ship has the capability to make a difference and to play her part.

I would now like to address those of you called to serve in HMS Daring?

This ship's future is in your hands. It is a future that sits comfortably on the foundations of a great naval history. But it depends upon every one of you doing your bit to build on that reputation. Through teamwork you can undertake any challenge, always confident of the support provided by your families and friends. But it is down to you. And if you ever doubt, then remember who you are. You are 'Daring'. Daring by name, Daring by spirit and Daring in deed.

In conclusion Captain, no one could feel more proud of being associated with HMS Daring than I am: As her Sponsor, I shall watch your progress, listen for your achievements and visit when I can.

Along with all the families and guests here today, we give you, your officers and your ship's company all our best wishes with your commission.