



**HMS FEARLESS**  
**LANDING PLATFORM DOCK**  
**Assault Ship – Headquarters Command Ship**



*The Team Works*



*The 6th Fearless, the F Class destroyer*

## PAST SHIPS OF THE NAME - 200 YEARS OF HISTORY

The current *Fearless* is the seventh to bear the name in the 200 years since the first, a purpose built gun vessel was launched in 1794. Built at Gravesend she carried 12 guns and a complement of 50 men, she was unfortunately wrecked in January 1804 in Cawsands Bay, off Plymouth Sound.

A Gunbrig followed 11 months later, again with 12 guns. She saw action at Copenhagen in 1807 before also being wrecked, this time near Cadiz, in December 1812.

An ex-GPO vessel, the *Flamer*, built at Limehouse, was renamed, becoming the third *Fearless* in 1837 when the Admiralty took over the Packet Service. She was a wooden paddlewheel survey vessel and served until June 1875 when she was broken up by Admiralty Order.

The fourth *Fearless* was a Torpedo Cruiser of 1,850 tons, armed with four 5 inch guns and three torpedo tubes. She was built by Barrow S.B. (Vickers) and launched March 20 1886. originally commissioned at Portsmouth, she served mainly in the Mediterranean but also saw service at the Cape of Good Hope in 1899. She paid off in Portsmouth in 1900, then was recommissioned for the China station in November 1901 at Sheerness before being finally sold at Portsmouth on 11 July 1905.

An "Active" class Scout Cruiser of 3,440 tons was the next to bear the name. Built at Pembroke dock and launched in June 1912, she carried ten 4 inch guns, four 3 pounder guns and two 21 inch torpedo tubes. She served with the Home Fleet 1913-14, seeing action off the Dutch coast on 18 August 1914 with the German light Cruiser *Rostock*. Ten days later, off Heligoland, she was present at the sinking of the German Destroyer "V.187". Two years later she was in action again at the battle of Jutland and subsequently became attached to the 12th Submarine Flotilla. *Fearless* was present at the battle of May Island in the Firth of Forth in 1918 before being sold on November 1921 to Slough T.C.

The predecessor of today's *Fearless* was an "F" Class destroyer of 1,375 tons. Launched in May 1934 at the Cammell Laird Shipyard in Birkenhead, she had four 4.7 inch guns and eight 21 inch torpedo

tubes. She was involved in the Spanish civil war in 1937, before teaming up with HMS *Brazen* to sink U.49 off Harstard in 1940. In June 1941, again with other ships, she helped sink U.38, west of Cape Trafalgar, only to suffer torpedo damage one month later from Italian aircraft whilst screening *Ark Royal*. *Fearless* caught fire, lost all power and, when judged too damaged for towing, she was sunk north of Bone by *Forester* on 23 July 1941. A gap of twenty years followed before the present *Fearless* was launched in December 1963.

An eighth ship was named *Fearless II* and was a 1907 Drifter of 81 tons hired by the Admiralty during the Great War.

## THIRTY YEARS AND STILL GOING STRONG

Since her launch on 19 December 1963 by Lady Hull the present HMS *Fearless* has served throughout the world either in her primary role as an Assault ship or, as many Royal, Commonwealth and Foreign Naval officers will remember her, as the Dartmouth Training Ship. The Ship's first joint service operation involved landing Irish Guards in RAF helicopters and ship's landing craft into Aden during anti-terrorist operations in 1966. The following year the ship added her heavy lift capability to withdrawal operations after Aden's independence. As the last steam powered warship in operational



*The present Fearless on exercise in a Norwegian Fjord*

service, the ship is still very capable and it is intended to run her until she is replaced by a new LPD(R) HMS *Albion* in 2003. (*Actually paid-off 2002*)

During the Falklands War in 1982, *Fearless* was the Command ship for the Amphibious Task force and led the way into San Carlos water. Later, Major General Moore set up his headquarters in *Fearless* and initial surrender negotiations were conducted on the ship and General Menendez, was held onboard as a prisoner of war. The ship lost six of her ship's company when one of her landing craft was attacked. A memorial plaque is displayed onboard in remembrance and the ship holds an annual service of remembrance wherever in the world she is operating.

As the sole operational command and control ship for the Royal Navy's amphibious forces, *Fearless* invariably has a very busy programme of exercises interspersed with maintenance and leave periods. In a typical year the ship could expect to take part in a number of national exercises to conduct unit



*Docked down and ready to operate*

training, sometimes operating with Dutch Marines as part of the UKNL Brigade. There would also be two or three much larger NATO exercises. These major exercises would involve the close integration of forces from Norway, Denmark and Germany for the northern exercises and Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey in the southern region. The USA of course, maintains large forces for both areas. The ship can also be called upon to deploy to the Caribbean with troops for jungle training. She is increasingly on call for contingency operations as part of the Amphibious Task Group. The typical year would also include an important maintenance period which would incorporate the upgrading of systems as well as general maintenance.

As a Landing Platform Dock (LPD) *Fearless* is virtually a streamlined floating dock with vehicle storage space on two decks, which is surrounded by accommodation for the ship's company and military personnel and surmounted by a flight deck. She also has facilities and an extensive communication fit for



*Greek tanks stowed on the main vehicle deck*

use by embarked staffs during a joint operation or an Amphibious Assault. Commissioned on 23 November 1965 much of her machinery is original fit. The ship is steam powered with two Babcock and Wilcox Y24A boilers each driving an English Electric main turbine engine with a maximum of 11,000 SHP and a top speed of 21 knots. Electricity is supplied by four 1000KW Allens turbo alternators supported by two 450KW Paxman diesels. With a standard displacement of 12,600 tons, this increases to 14,900 tons at full load and further increases up to a maximum of 21,600 tons when ballasted deep.

Built in Harland and Wolff in Belfast, *Fearless* is 160 metres in length with a beam of 25 metres and a normal sea going draft of 6.46 metres. This is the normal state when on passage with the dock area dry and the larger landing craft secured in the dock, loaded ready to go out when the dock is flooded. Flooding of the dock is achieved by taking in up to 6000 tons of sea water into ballast tanks using 4 large pumps. This lowers the stern by some 3 metres. When the stern gate is opened water floods the dock allowing the landing craft to operate. The ship's armament is purely self defence and consists of two 20mm guns and two 20mm Vulcan Phalanx "Gatling" guns. The normal ship's company is approximately 550 men and women which includes the 90 Royal marines of the Assault Squadron. An Embarked Force, up to a further 700 officers and men may be accommodated.

## AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE

Amphibious Warfare is one of the oldest forms of maritime warfare. It involves the movement of a military force, irrespective of size, by sea and the effective landing of that force by air and surface means, either opposed or unopposed while maintaining a protective ring around the Task Force. The largest amphibious operation of recent history occurred in June 1944 with the D Day landings in Normandy. As the lead and only fully operational ship in the class, *Fearless* forms the nucleus of the



present British amphibious capability and therefore one of her principal roles is to provide Command and Control facilities for both naval and Military Commanders during amphibious and joint operations.

The Naval Commander is the Commander Amphibious Task Group (COMATG) and, with his staff, he is responsible for transporting the military force to the area of interest safely and in good time to allow the Military Commander to achieve his aim. Responsible for all aspects of the naval part of the operation, his staff coordinate and control the air, surface and submarine escorts to ensure that the troop ships are well protected and his logistics team would coordinate resupply of everything from fuel



*LCU entering the dock*



*LCU approaching beach for offload with mexefloat in the background*

and spares to ammunition and food. The Brigadier in charge of 3 Commando Brigade is the Military Commander and, with his staff, he is responsible for all aspects of the land battle once the troops are ashore. He would formulate a landing plan with COMATG staff and, once the bridgehead is secured, he would transfer his headquarters to shore to maintain a closer liaison with his forces. COMATG would retain control of all naval assets to maintain support for the land forces, particularly with a constant stream of men and equipment being transported ashore. Although COMATG and the Brigadier are UK national commanders, both have the capability of commanding multi national forces, particularly those of NATO during integrated operations and this is regularly practised.

*Fearless* is able to land troops of an infantry battalion or Royal Marine Commando and their equipment, a squadron of tanks or armoured cars or a complete unit of Royal Engineers with their heavy equipment. The ship can also assist in the loading or unloading of other ships in the Amphibious Task Group (ATG), either LSLs of the SIR class of the UK, or NATO and foreign landing ships or Ships Taken Up From Trade (STUFT) from any nation. This is all controlled from the Amphibious Operations Room (AOR) which is in addition to the normal Ship's Operations Room. The AOR is the

nerve centre during any amphibious operation maintaining close liaison with higher Command, other ships, both naval and merchant, with the military forces when landed and with the helicopters, fixed wing aircraft, hovercraft and landing craft throughout the operation. Amphibious operations are, by their very nature, complicated and it is essential that comprehensive briefings and a rehearsal landing take place prior to the main event. The rehearsal landing would be well away from the eventual main landing site, in friendly territory that most closely matches the main objective area. Changes to the plan invariably happen even at the last minute but there is always flexibility built into the final landing plan.

The Fourth Assault Squadron Royal Marines, borne permanently as part of the Ship's Company, is under the command of a Lieutenant Colonel Royal Marines and consists of three sections: the Landing Craft Section, the Amphibious Beach Unit and the Vehicle Deck Party. It is these sections which provide the facilities for the actual landings. The four Landing Craft Utility (LCU) are housed in the internal dock and are capable of taking tanks and other heavy equipment or up to 100 troops from the ship's vehicle decks. Each weighs over 100 tons and with a crew of seven, it is capable of indefinite,



*ABU assist offload*



*One of the larger visitors - a USMC CH53E*

independent operations, with a range of over 600 miles. The four smaller Landing Craft Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP) operate from davits along the ship's side and can carry up to 25 troops or a landrover from the dock.

The Squadron's Amphibious Beach Unit is specially trained to land and recover vehicles from most terrains and will control the beach for the assault force. An armoured recovery vehicle and two tracklaying vehicles are part of the Beach Unit. The vehicle decks, which occupy a large volume of space in the centre of the ship, are run by the Vehicle Deck Party. The vehicle decks are approached by a ramp either down from the flight deck or up from the dock, or through airlocks from the "walls" of the ship where the embarked forces mess decks hold the troops ready to go ashore by sea or air. The type and number of vehicles carried onboard depend on the scope of the operation and the space available. When helicopters are not being operated from the flight deck, it can be used as an additional space for the storage of vehicles. A typical load might include tanks, four ton lorries, armoured cars, self propelled guns and over snow vehicles.



*Stick of troops returning from ashore by Sea King helicopter*

The advent of aviation has had a marked effect on how amphibious warfare is conducted but the basic principle remains the same - keep the element of surprise and get ashore unopposed. The helicopter just makes the principle easier to achieve. Although no permanent flight is embarked, the ship can operate up to four Sea King HC4 assault helicopters from the two flight deck spots. The flight deck which measures 51 metres (165 feet) by 23 metres (75 feet) is capable of operating any helicopter from the Gazelle up to the US Marine Corps CH53E and RAF Chinook. The multi purpose utility Sea King HC4 can carry up to 18 fully armed troops or



*Gazelle and Lynx Mk7 form part of the Fearless Air Group*

undersling a load of up to 5000lb, including a land rover or a light gun. The advantage of the helicopter is that it can put the assault force well behind enemy lines, by day or night and in most weather conditions.

The usual air group, which is predominantly based at RNAS Yeovilton, is a mix of three Sea King HC4, two Royal Marine Lynx anti tank helicopters and two Gazelle battlefield recce helicopters. Space on the flight deck is at a premium. With no hangar all servicing and maintenance is undertaken on the flight deck whatever the weather. The ship's Air Department is supplemented by the flight's own maintainers to provide the personnel to conduct round the clock operations to support *Fearless'* own Air Group as well as the other helicopters in the ATF. The ever-versatile flight deck was even used as an emergency deck for the Sea Harriers and RAF Harriers during the Falklands War.

## THE SHIP'S ORGANISATIONS

As with the diversity of personnel on all other Royal Navy ships, HMS *Fearless* has a variety of specialists in various departments to ensure that the ship runs smoothly and fulfils its main task, that of delivering a military force anywhere in the world in a fit state to do their job. Although the Assault Squadron and the Air Department are directly involved moving the troops and equipment ashore in amphibious operations, the importance of the other Ship's organisations cannot be underestimated. All the ship's company are fully employed during amphibious operations to ensure effective and timely movement of personnel, stores and equipment.

The main and most diverse of the ship's departments is the Executive and Warfare Department with nearly 100 officers and ratings in specialisations ranging from gunnery to discipline. The department, led by the Executive Officer who is the ship's second in command, is divided into eight main areas. The Officer of the Watch (OOW), together with his or her bridge and wheelhouse crews, is responsible for the navigational safety of the ship and collision avoidance and takes overall charge of the ship on behalf of the Captain. The Operations Room team, led by the Warfare Officers, monitor the air, surface and underwater battles and provide the Captain with all the information needed to make tactical decisions. They also control other friendly assets, aircraft or ships, to protect the task force. A last line of defence against enemy aircraft and ships is



*The main galley-preparing dinner for 550!*

provided by the Guns' Crews. The Communications sections are responsible for radio and signal communications. Ships at sea often have to replenish either fuel or stores and food and the specialist advice is supplied by the Seaman Specialists. They also advise on other seamanship evolutions such as towing, going alongside and sea survival. Although damage control involves the whole ship, the Executive Department is responsible for the training of personnel and the maintenance of all of the damage control equipment. Every member of the ships company is capable of fighting fires and preventing flooding although most of the specialist advice comes from the engineers. The final area of responsibility is travel and discipline and this is covered by the Regulating Staff or "Service Policeman".

The Marine Engineering Department is the largest on board with 185 officers and ratings. Basically responsible for ensuring that the ship remains afloat and can move, they are split into 6 subsections. Main machinery is responsible for the propulsion system while the "L"s are responsible for the electrical



*The Ship's Security Team made up of personnel from all departments*



*One of the two 20mm cannon in action*

generation and distribution. The Hull section covers the integrity of the hull, the superstructure and hotel services such as toilets and bathrooms and includes plumbers, carpenters and metal workers. A Landing Craft section provides engineering assistance to the Assault Squadron while liquids, such as fuel, water and other fluids are looked after by the fifth, Double Bottom section. The final, Outside Machinery section is responsible for high and low pressure air, chilled water system, refrigeration systems and hydraulics. The department has a number of well equipped workshops which are capable of manufacturing many spare parts if required.

The small but highly trained Weapon Engineering department is responsible for the maintenance of the weapons, computers, radars, communications and navigation systems, all essential to successful landings and ship safety. They also maintain and run the ship's closed circuit television which allows the ship's company to keep up to date on current affairs and, of course, the films and sport.

With 100 officers and ratings the Supply department is responsible for feeding, clothing and paying the ship's company. The department is split into four main areas. The Writers, in addition to their secretarial duties, cover pay and service documentation, while the Stores Accountants supply every department with virtually all their daily requirements, from a bunk light to a major item for a Sea King helicopter. The task of feeding everyone falls on the Catering section who select the menus, provide the stores and produce three meals a day for up to 1250 personnel if a military force is embarked. The final section is the Stewards who provide hotel services for the officers. The ship also has a NAAFI

shop which sells everything from chocolate bars to stereo systems.

Moral and physical well being is provided by the Chaplain and the Medical department. Responsible for moral welfare and religious guidance, the ship's Chaplain is also the ship's counsellor and is always available for advice. The Medical department is led by a Principal Medical Officer, a General Practitioner, who with his staff is responsible for maintaining the health of the ship's company and visitors. They are also responsible for the resuscitation and stabilisation of battle casualties both afloat and ashore. It is very much a mix of the local doctor's surgery and a casualty department. The ship also has a dentist with a fully equipped dental surgery, capable of all aspects of dental work including emergency surgery.

## ALL WORK AND NO PLAY

Although HMS *Fearless* has a demanding operational schedule, it would be wrong to suggest that there is little or no time for sports and recreation. The ship can field teams of good standard at most sports, particularly soccer, rugby, cricket, squash and golf. A number of the ship's company represent the Royal Navy at various sports. The ship has a physical training instructor who can coach and advise on fitness regimes. Even at sea there is always something to do, with regular aerobic sessions, as well as a variety of rowing machines, exercise bikes and free standing weights. For the ardent joggers, it takes just over six circuits of the upper deck to complete one mile.



*Active participation in sport at all levels*



*No pain - no gain!*

# BATTLE HONOURS

|               |      |               |      |
|---------------|------|---------------|------|
| HELIGOLAND    | 1914 | JUTLAND       | 1916 |
| NORWAY        | 1940 | MEDITERRANEAN | 1941 |
| MALTA CONVOYS | 1941 | ATLANTIC      | 1941 |
| FALKLANDS     | 1982 |               |      |

## MOTTO

EXPLICIT NOMEN-The name says it all



*A busy flightdeck with Sea King, Lynx and Gazelles*



*CHARGE! Trinidadian troops landed by LCVP*