



Historic Warships News Sheet

(News of the Historic Warships based at The Historic Dockyard Chatham)

December 2011

Christmas is once again almost upon us and looking back over the past 12 months a lot has happened with much work and effort being put in by a significant number of people. One of the major bits of work has been the making of a new mast for HMS Gannet. This has been a considerable undertaking requiring the lower section of the Foremast to be completely renewed. It was constructed from Douglas Fir planks which were laminated together using a polyurethane glue and then cut and shaped with chainsaws and planes. From start to finish (removal of old mast and fitting of new) just over a year has elapsed and more work on *Gannet* is planned.

At the same time work has continued apace on HMS Cavalier with much steelwork replaced on the aft superstructure (around the Seacat missile area). Work has now shifted to the funnel which was badly in need of restoration.

Some of our group have also been involved in restoring one of the old Railway Wagons and, more recently, the Admiralty Constabulary Wagon which had been parked on the dockside near the Destroyer Memorial.

Another significant milestone has been the completion of the work on CMB 103 (the Coastal Motor Boat) which is sited in Number 3 covered slip.

More information on all of these projects can be found elsewhere in this News Sheet along with a selection of photographs and other news.

Meanwhile, I would like to wish all readers a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous and peaceful New Year.

HMS Gannet's Masterful Work Yes, a corny title but that shouldn't distract from what has been a tremendous piece of work this year, making and fitting a new lower section of *Gannet's* foremast.

Watching the mast being made was fascinating with construction starting with the delivery of a large quantity of Douglas Fir planks (some of which can be seen below).



These were then laid and laminated to form a 70 ft long, square sided form which was then cut to shape with a chainsaw and plane (as can be seen in the picture to the left).

This part of the operation took several weeks and once completed, the mast was then given two coats of primer, two undercoats and several topcoats of paint. The next stage of the work involved the making and fitting of the

trestles to support the fighting top as well as the re-fitting of numerous items of ironmongery!

One of the items consisted of a long track on which the Gaff (or boom as some refer to it) is located. This particular item was secured with 164 four inch brass screws which took a considerable amount of effort to secure in place.



Whilst the new mast was being constructed, the topmast, topgallant, yards and gaff were rubbed down, a few pieces of rotten timber replaced and all were repainted. This work took place alongside the mast construction in No 3 Covered Slip and visitors were able to see all the work taking place at every stage – work was carried out within cordoned-off areas. Outside, the Fighting-top was also given a complete rub down and repaint with some of it's being repaired where rot had taken hold.

Finally, in October 2011 all was ready for the new mast, with renovated Fighting-top, yards and gaff, to be put back in its

rightful place on *Gannet*. The following two photographs show the top yards being hoisted into position.



All in all the whole project has proved to be a massive undertaking with many people being involved ranging from a professional Shipwright, Shipkeeping staff, our own volunteers and various others as needed.

Now that the Foremast is back in place the next phase of work is underway on *Gannet* with the Mizzen Mast yard and gaff being removed for repair and repainting. As well as this the decks are currently being recaulked, some deck planks have been replaced (there are a few more still to do), scaffolding has been erected in the Engine Room so the deckhead can be painted and the Foredeck steps have been rubbed down and revarnished.

More work is planned over the next few months to ensure *Gannet* remains in first class condition for years to come.



CMB complete. After many months work on restoring the CMB's hull and wheelhouse was completed in August this year. CMB103 has been in a run-down condition for some time and, whilst not owned by Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, it was felt that we should carry out work necessary to restore her external appearance to 1940's condition. The finished result can be seen in the photos below.



The picture above is taken from the starboard bow and shows the CMB with her wartime pennant number M103. Originally built to launch torpedoes (from a well at the stern as can be seen from the picture to the left) she was converted to lay mines.



Having a stepped hull gave her a very high speed well in excess of 30 knots.

The restoration included the construction and fitting of new wheelhouse decking, stays, wires, a dummy aerial, ensign staff and ensign. All in all she now looks in first class condition and quite is often the subject of questions from visitors to Number 3 slip.

HMS Cavalier has not been neglected over the last year with two major renovation projects being undertaken. The first (now completed) involved the cutting out and replacement of rusty areas on bulkheads in and around the Squid deck and Seacat Missile Handling room. This also necessitated the removal, renovation and refitting of fans and ducting. At the same time the Squid Mortars and deck were repainted. A section of the deck still awaits repainting as soon as the weather permits. The following photo shows the work underway, viewed from the port side.



The work on the Funnel is currently underway as is evident from the scaffolding surrounding the funnel. Efforts are presently focussed on the top section of the funnel which has now been capped off with new steel plating to make it watertight. The old canvas cover was well and truly past it's sell-by date and rainwater was running down the funnel into the ship. The picture below shows the newly capped funnel with a coat of primer having been applied. The frame which supports the canvas cover can also be seen following it's removal and repair.



Together with the repairs around the Squid deck and Seacat Missile Handling room, this has helped to massively reduce the number of water leaks and will be a major factor in helping preserve *Cavalier* for years to come.

Other jobs Apart from the work on the ships, many other jobs have also been completed including the restoration of a Railway Wagon and Admiralty Constabulary Wagon. The latter sits alongside the crane on the port side of Dry Dock No 3 (*Cavalier's* dock). Restoration work has recently commenced on another railway wagon and whilst not strictly within the remit of the Historic Warships Volunteer Group, this work greatly helps the Railway Volunteers as well as providing an interesting diversion for some of our own group's members.

Another job currently underway is the repainting of the barrier along the starboard side of *Cavalier's* dock. A seemingly trivial, but important, job helping to improve the appearance of the dock and preserving the structure.