

Friends of Carrier – Newsletter #7 – December 2013

So we come to the end of an incredibly busy year – at both the shipyards assembling and building the QEC carriers around the UK and in the meeting rooms of the ACA and the MOD. All of you will have followed the events of 6th November on the TV and radio when the revised QEC agreement was announced by Phillip Hammond. Under the revised agreement, the total capital cost to the MOD of procuring the carriers will be £6.2 billion, which reflects the realistic cost of delivering the vessels, as well as strengthening the cost control and management of the programme. The Carrier Review was an extensive analysis of the whole programme, including the remaining activities - testing, integration and commissioning - and the implications of the Short Take Off and Vertical Landing reversion. We have also agreed to appoint an independent chairman of the ACA, to focus management on the delivery of the ships. We believe these measures will keep the ACA focussed on delivering to the programme - Sea Trials in 2017, Flying Trials in 2018 and Initial Operating Capability for Carrier Strike in 2020 with the First of Class, HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Since I last wrote to you in July the assembly work on HMS Queen Elizabeth has gathered pace and now, as we reach the end of the year, she is structurally complete.

At the end of July, in a key operation for HMS Queen Elizabeth, teams in Rosyth removed all the supports at the aft end of the ship. She is now currently sitting in the position she will be when she takes to the water. With this careful operation complete, work to install and align the shafts has begun.

The galley, the final compartment on LB03, was signed off for compartment handover inspection (CHOI) by the ACA and Babcock at the end of August. Final integration of the galley has been achieved through the hard work and cooperation of all alliance



partners.

The final section of ramp for HMS Queen Elizabeth was successfully lowered into place on Sunday 10th November taking just under 5 hours to complete. The lift work brought to an end all major lifts with the Goliath Crane for HMS Queen Elizabeth, and now enables the final elements of the major structure to be welded together. The ramp is 64 metres long, 13 metres wide and the highest point, the take-off ramp, is 6 metres above the flight deck. Current plans will see the first Lightning II fast jet thunder off the ship using this ramp in 2018 during her flying trials.



In October the mast cap was successfully erected onto the Forward Island. The Long Range Radar was then fitted onto the mast cap in November. With the addition of the mast cap and the Long Range Radar antenna all of the ship's main structure blocks are now in place. The radar, which provides a three dimensional, long-range picture sits 27 metres (88ft) above the flight deck, 50 metres (164ft) above the sea. And that's still not the highest point on Queen Elizabeth. When the communications pole mast is fitted next year it will be 70 metres (230ft) from tip to keel – which is almost as long as a River-class patrol ship. As for the radar, it can track up to 1,000 contacts up to a range of 400km (250 miles) from the ship.



As I said, the ship is now structurally complete but, away from the ship, mission systems, communications and platform systems are being tested and set to work. They will be installed when compartments and ship wiring are ready. In early September HMS Collingwood hosted the latest of a series of trials designed to test QEC's Combat Management System and Visual Surveillance System. Thirty seven trainees from the Maritime Warfare School acted as operators, performing tests provided by the Aircraft Carrier Alliance. The systems, which are key for the successful delivery of both ships, performed well despite scenarios designed to cause disruption.

Construction work is also continuing apace on HMS Prince of Wales with Lower Blocks LB02 (Portsmouth) and LB03 & LB04 (Govan), Centre Blocks 02, 03, 05 & 06 units underway. The bulbous bow and aircraft lifts are already at Rosyth and the first sponson units were delivered from Appledore in the Spring.

In October, LB02 in Portsmouth reached another milestone with the join up of ring C to the rest of the block. The move went very smoothly and quickly.



November saw the delivery and installation of the Diesel Generator sets for HMS Prince of Wales in Govan. This complex task was completed with no quality or safety issues, and one month ahead of the original plan. In fact all of the Prince of Wales blocks are proceeding well, with good learning impact from Queen Elizabeth.



Assembly of HMS Prince of Wales will begin at Rosyth following float-out of HMS Queen Elizabeth. Float-out will take place in summer 2014.

I will write again in the new year as we head towards float-out and the naming ceremony. Have a Happy Christmas and New Year.

