



On 23rd November last year HMS Tyne returned to her river. On a wet and cold evening, then Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson announced that a future Type 26 City Class destroyer would be named HMS Newcastle – the ninth of that illustrious name.

There's going to be a new Geordie Gunboat.

Our editor has been telling people about the long history of her predecessors, so we're publishing his notes on the next page.

The 8 HMS Newcastles serving the Royal Navy so far have had the motto is "Fortitudo Vinco" - (I conquer through strength)

NUMBER 1

The first Newcastle was a fourth-rate ship launched in 1653 from the yard of Phineas Pett II on the north bank of the Thames in the Stepney area, at the behest of Cromwell's Commonwealth. She was upgraded to 54 guns in 1677, rebuilt again in 1692 and wrecked in 1703. She collected battle honours like some people collect postage stamps.

Her first action came in 1655 when, along with fourteen other warships, she sailed into Porto Farina in Algiers to engage Barbary Pirates to secure the return of an English merchant ship and English prisoners. This action resulted in the destruction of the entire pirate fleet, which won the Newcastle lineage its first battle honour. It was also the first time that navy ships alone had defeated shore fortifications. In 1657 she took part under Admiral Blake again in a daring attack on Santa Cruz de Tenerife, her second battle honour.

The Battle of Lowestoft took place after the restoration of the monarchy in June 1665 during the Second Anglo-Dutch War for control of the seas and trade routes. The Dutch were desperate to

prevent a second English blockade of their ports after the first was broken off by the English for lack of supplies. A fleet of more than a hundred ships of the United Provinces attacked an English fleet of equal size commanded by James, Duke of York, the future king, forty miles east of the port of Lowestoft in Suffolk. For this the now HMS Newcastle was awarded her third battle honour.

The conflict continued the next year with the St James' Day Battles which were the Battle of the North Foreland and the Battle of Orfordness in July. It is considered to be an English victory in a war which it eventually lost, and HMS Newcastle distinguished herself with her 4th battle honour. Interestingly, the fleet was commanded by George Monck, the Parliamentary general who had subdued Scotland but who was instrumental in bringing Charles II back to the throne.

Seven years later she won two honours in one year during the third Anglo-Dutch War, part of a Franco-Dutch War which was a three way struggle for dominance. The Battles of Schooneveld were two naval battles fought off the coast of the Netherlands in June 1673 between an allied Anglo-French fleet commanded by Prince Rupert of the Rhine on his flagship the Royal Charles, and the fleet of the United Provinces.

The Dutch victories in the two battles, and at the Battle of Texel that followed in August, saved their country from an Anglo-French invasion, but nevertheless resulted in HMS Newcastle receiving her fifth and sixth battle honours .

On 14 March 1674, HMS Newcastle, under the command of Sir John Wetwang, captured the Dutch East India ship Wapen van Rotterdam in the Battle of Ronas Voe, but gained no honour for that. No doubt there was much celebrating nevertheless. The prize became the HMS Armes of Rotterdam.

NUMBER 2

After her loss in 1703 the first HMS Newcastle was almost immediately replaced by the second, a 54-gun fourth rate launched in 1704, rebuilt in 1733 and broken up in 1746.

The next 2 HMS Newcastles were also fourth rate : Such vessels were considered by Royal Navy during the first half of the 18th century to be ships of the line, mounting from 46 up to 60 guns. While the number of guns stayed in the same range until 1817, after 1756 the ships of 50 guns and below were considered too weak to stand in the line of battle, although the remaining 60-gun ships were still classed as OK for that. However, the 50-gun ship continued to be used largely during the Seven Years' War, and during the time of the American Revolution a whole new group of 50-gun ships was constructed, not for the battlefleet, but to meet the needs of combat in the shallow waters off North America where the larger ships found it difficult to sail. 50-gun ships were also suitable as convoy escorts and for service on foreign stations, where larger enemy vessels were unlikely to be encountered. Some saw service as flagships since, as two-deckers, they were able to accommodate a flag officer and his retinue, and they also had

the physical presence of a flagship. Their usefulness was declining, however, and during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars few 50s were built, although several remained in service, especially on distant stations such as the East Indies. The 60-gun ships were also dying out, superseded initially by the 74-gun third-rates, although by 1793 there were still four 60-gun ships left in harbour service.

Some fourth-rates did remain in active service even during the Napoleonic Wars, especially in the shallow North Sea, where the Royal Navy's main opponents were the Baltic powers and the Dutch, whose own fleet consisted mainly of 50- to 64-gun ships HMS Leander, with her 50 guns, was with Horatio Nelson at the Battle of the Nile.

The sole battle honour of this HMS Newcastle was won at Battle of Marbella (also known as the Battle of Cabrita Point) which took place while a combined Spanish-French force besieged Gibraltar in March 1705 during the War of Spanish Succession. The squadron containing HMS Newcastle was led by Sir Thomas Dilkes, who was also an MP, in HMS Revenge. It was an allied victory for the English, Portuguese and Dutch which effectively ended the Franco-Spanish siege of Gibraltar, which after the Treaty of Utrecht became the British territory with a naval base exercising strategic control of the entrance to the Mediterranean until the present day. Marbella was the 7th battle honour.

NUMBER 3

The third HMS Newcastle was a 50-gun fourth rate ship built by Peirson Lock at Portsmouth dockyard from 1746 to 1750 and launched on December 4 1750 She foundered in a storm in 1761. But not before she'd collected another 3 battle honours in her relatively short service, all during Anglo-French naval engagements off the coast of India during the Seven Year's War

The Seven Years' War was perhaps the first true world war, having taken place almost 160 years before World War I and influenced many major events later around the globe. The war restructured not only the European political order, but also affected events all around the world, paving the way for the beginning of later British world supremacy in the 19th century, the rise of Prussia in Germany (eventually replacing Austria as the leading German State), the beginning of tensions in British North America, as well as a clear sign of France's eventual revolutionary turmoil.

During the Seven Years' War, the ship was under ever changing commanders, which must have been unsettling for the crew:

- from December 1755: captain John Lloyd
 - during 1757: captain Thomas Howard Hutchinson and then captain George Legge (dismissed the service in June 1758)
 - from April 1758: captain James Colville
 - in 1759: captain Colin Michie (killed in action at the battle of Pondicherry on September 10 1759) when captain Digby Dent took command
 - then finally until January 1 1761 when the ship foundered in a cyclone: captain Richard Collin .
- In June 1757, the ship was part of the squadron under the command of Commodore Stevens

which left England for India.

On March 24 1758, Stevens' squadron reached Madras (now known as Chennai) and joined with vice-admiral Pocock's squadron in the Hooghly river. It then took an active part to the operations on the coast of Coromandel, south east India. On April 29, she was among Pocock's ships who took part to the combat of Cuddalore, during which she won the battle honour of Sadras, the 8th battle honour. This was despite at the beginning of the engagement, her captain mistook the signal for the line and did not close up to the ships ahead of him. The captain was court-martialed and dismissed the service.

In July, Pocock's squadron sailed from Madras, intending to engage the French squadron of French Commodore d'Aché near Pondicherry. On August 3, the ship under Captain Colville took part to the victorious combat of Negapatam where, at the beginning of the engagement, she was almost cut off from the British line. For her actions she was awarded her 9th battle honour

In September 1759, the ship took part in the battle of Pondicherry (also known as the Battle of Porto Novo, the 10th battle honour) where it was damaged. It was the third battle in the area and although inconclusive ended with the advantage to the British. Her captain, Colin Michie, was killed in action. After the battle, on September 11, she was towed by the Sunderland (60). Maybe we should gloss over that bit.....

There were no more battle honours for her successors until the Second World War.

NUMBER 4

HMS Newcastle (1813) the fourth of the name, was a 60-gun fourth rate launched 1813 in response to the US-UK War of 1812 and the anticipated end of the Napoleonic wars. She was never fully used in combat, technology was changing, so she was converted to harbour service in 1824 and sold in 1850.

NUMBER 5

The fifth HMS Newcastle was an example of this new technology which was changing the nature of warships and conflict - a screw frigate launched in 1860 from Deptford Dockyard on the Thames. Quickly superseding her type came the rise and rise of the purpose built ironclad frigate and all iron and steel built warships starting, with HMS Warrior launched just two months later in the same year. The latter was restored in Hartlepool in the 1980's and is now a tourist and corporate hospitality venue in Portsmouth.

As a consequence, this HMS Newcastle wasn't completed until 1874. She saw no significant active service, and was decommissioned in 1888 and converted into a powder hulk in 1889, losing her name. She was sold in 1929 for breaking up.

Despite this less than glorious history, it's worth noting she was a 4000 tonne displacement ship that was long and thin, like most warships that followed. It took up to 600 to crew her. Her steam engine and single shaft could drive her at 12 knots, and she was armed with 51 muzzle loading smooth bore cannon – the largest of which was a 68 pounder. The other big change during this time was the suspension of flogging in the Royal Navy, which surprisingly has never actually been legally abolished.

NUMBER 6

The next HMS Newcastle was a Town-class light cruiser launched in 1909, commissioned in 1910 and sold in 1921, being broken up in 1923.

Now HMS Newcastle really was coming home. This one was built by Armstrong Whitworth on the Tyne and equipped with Parsons turbines.

This HMS Newcastle was recognisably a modern warship. She had 2 inch thick armour plate, 2 six-inch and 10 four-inch guns firing high explosive shells, a plethora of smaller guns as well as 2 torpedo tubes. Her fuel was oil, she could do 25 knots, and had a complement of 411. On the outbreak of the First World War she was stationed in the Far East on the China and Pacific station, being involved in operations during the Shanghai Rebellion in 1913. She bombarded Yap, prior to deploying to Valparaíso to search for the armed merchant raider Prinz Eitel Friedrich. In late January 1916, Newcastle captured the German ship Mazatlan, which was then masquerading as the American ship Edna. In 1917 she was reassigned to the East Indies and in 1918 she was again moved to operate off South America.

After an uneventful war service in comparison with her sisters such as those who fought with the Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland or escorted Atlantic convoys, Newcastle was sold for scrapping on 9 May 1921 to the breaking firm of Thos W Ward to be broken up in Cornwall.

NUMBER 7

The seventh HMS Newcastle was a light cruiser of another Town-class. She had a displacement of over 11,000 tonnes and a crew of around 800. HMS Belfast sitting in the Thames is a similar vessel.

HMS Newcastle was laid down by Vickers Armstrong at Newcastle on 4 October 1934 as HMS Minotaur, launched on 23 January 1936 by Her Grace the Duchess of Northumberland and commissioned as HMS Newcastle in March 1937. She joined the 2nd Cruiser Squadron, and was under refit on the outbreak of war. After the refit was completed, the ship joined the 18th Cruiser Squadron with the Home Fleet in mid-September 1939, initially being employed on

trade protection duties in the Western Approaches, she then joined the Northern Patrol. During the initial part of the Second World War, Newcastle engaged and badly damaged two German destroyers off Brest. She also set a record during this period by staying at sea continuously for 126 days.

On 23 November 1939, Newcastle encountered the German small battleships (or battlecruisers) Scharnhorst and Gneisenau but they escaped in bad weather before other ships could come up.

Newcastle was involved in an abortive action under Vice-Admiral James Somerville on 27 November 1940 against the Italians at Cape Spartivento. This is the 11th battle honour.

After operating against blockade runners in the South Atlantic, the ship was sent to the East and then redeployed to the Mediterranean as part of Operation Vigorous, (convoy escort) from Alexandria to Malta in June 1942.

Four days out of Alexandria, Newcastle was torpedoed by the German E-boat S-56, on 15 June, blowing a complete hole through her bows. The crew saved the ship, which returned at 4 knots (just under 5mph) to Alexandria, where she could not be fully repaired but was offered facilities to make her own temporary repairs. This meant building an additional wooden bulkhead, strengthened by concrete, behind the damage. This bulkhead had to be replaced at ports in India, Ceylon, South Africa and Brazil, before she finally arrived in October at Brooklyn Navy Yard, New York, where new bows were built by March 1943.

By the way, a knot is one nautical mile per hour. A nautical mile is based on the circumference of the earth, and is equal to one minute of latitude. It is slightly more than a statute (land measured) mile (1 nautical mile = 1.1508 statute miles).

From New York she sailed to Plymouth and then on to join the Eastern Fleet at Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), and acting as the lead ship of the 4th Cruiser Squadron. During her time with the Eastern Fleet, Newcastle participated in the bombardment of numerous Japanese-held islands and supported the British Fourteenth Army in their campaigns in Burma, the 12th battle honour.

After the war, the cruiser was given an extensive modernisation in 1951-2, with a new bridge, New Mk 5 40 twin 40mm light AA armament and Type 275 radar to control its twin 4 inch guns and took part in the Korean War - acting as a flagship and providing naval gunfire support to UN forces. This became her 13th and so far final battle honour

Newcastle also served during the Malayan Emergency in the later 1950s, shelling Malayan Communist targets in June and August 1955 and again in December 1957.

HMS Newcastle No 7 was decommissioned and sold for scrap in 1959, and subsequently broken up at Faslane on the Forth in Scotland.

NUMBER 8

The eighth HMS Newcastle was a batch 1 Type 42 destroyer of the Royal Navy, build by Swan Hunter, and launched in 1975, 5 years after the Royal Navy abolished the daily rum ration! And

in 1971 the death penalty for arson in Royal Dockyards had also been scrapped – one of the few crimes for which you could by then be hanged, even though it had only been used once in 200 years.

It took 5 years and a month to get her from keel lay to commissioning. Her first commander was Captain Julian Oswald, who went on to become Admiral of the Fleet Sir Julian Oswald, the First Sea Lord.

Type 42 air defence destroyers had a displacement of some 4,800 tonnes and a crew of around 300. By modern standards this is a small ship with a big crew. Type 45 destroyers are around 9,000 tonnes but a crew of only 191 – and cost a billion pounds a pop.

This HMS Newcastle could manage a reported top speed of 30 knots – that's 56 kilometres an hour – powered by her Tyne turbines, and was armed with Sea Dart missiles which gave her her air defence capability, a 4.5 inch gun for land attack, a Lynx helicopter to add to her three dimensional reach, the phalanx system for close in defence, and anti submarine torpedo tubes. The ship and her crew were granted the Freedom of the City of Newcastle on 1st March 1978, which means "the captain officers and ship's company have the privilege, honour and distinction of marching through the streets of the city of all ceremonial occasions with bayonets fixed, drums beating and colours flying" as it said in the grant. Nobody has worked out yet if this Freedom will transfer to the next HMS Newcastle.

In the Silver Gallery of the Newcastle Civic Centre is hung the ship's bell. And oddly, it has names engraved on the inside. It turns out that when the ship returned home, the bell was turned into a font and used to baptise the children born when she was away, and those are the names. The first of them, a girl, recently turned 40.

Perhaps surprisingly she wasn't one of the 71 British warships sent to recover the Falkland Islands, but it's worth reciting the sort of overseas deployments she undertook during the 90s as an indication of the wide variety of tasks our naval warships were asked to perform then and now.

In May 1992, Newcastle deployed with the Orient '92 group HMS Invincible, HMS Boxer, HMS Norfolk and RFA Olwen to the Far East. During this time she took part in Joint Exercises in the Malacca Straits and carried out diplomatic visits to The Seychelles, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and the Philippines. She returned at the end November in time for Christmas at home. In 1993, Newcastle undertook exercises in the northern fjords of Norway during Exercise Battle Griffin '93 as well as Fleet Ready Escort duties. In September 1993 she deployed as the Falkland Islands Guardship. En route, she called in at Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire and spent Christmas and New Year in and around the Falkland Island patrol areas. When relieved she returned to UK via the Patagonian Canals, calling in at Valparaiso, Callao and Port of Spain with a fuelling stop at Ponta Delgado before returning to Portsmouth in 1994.

On the way for a refit in Rosyth in July 1995 she visited us on the Tyne – the "best run ashore in the country", according to matelots then and now.

In November 1997, Newcastle made her way to the Caribbean to act as the West Indies guard ship. These deployments are primarily counter narcotics operations, embarking US Coast Guards. They are there to help out with natural disasters arising from the hurricane season, although in this case over the next eight months she rendered assistance to the Governor and

people of the British Overseas Territory of Montserrat following a devastating volcanic eruption. In 1999, Newcastle escorted the aircraft carrier the seventh HMS Invincible – the only one of the three carriers not to be built at Swan Hunter - during the Kosovo War, in which Invincible launched attacks on Serbian targets.

She was decommissioned in January 2005 as part of Royal Navy cuts, cannibalised and finally scrapped in Turkey in 2008.

Incidentally, there is a Newcastle currently in service, but not for much longer. HMAS Newcastle, named for the city of Newcastle, New South Wales, the largest provincial city in Australia, is an Adelaide-class guided-missile frigate of the Royal Australian Navy which entered service in 1993. During her career, the frigate has inter alia operated as part of the INTERFET peacekeeping taskforce, served in the Persian Gulf, and responded to the 2006 Fijian coup d'état. She has just visited her city en route to be decommissioned in Sydney in a few days time.

And so to NUMBER 9

She will be the 6th of 8 of the first two batches of Type 26 frigates (HMS Glasgow is under construction, HMS Cardiff and the new HMS Belfast have been ordered, all to be built on the Clyde in Glasgow by BAE Systems) Birmingham, the next shiny Sheff, the Geordie gunboat, Edinburgh and London have all been announced but not yet ordered. Three to the same design will be built in Australia, where the Type 26 is known as the Hunter class, and the Canadians are interested too.

Although called frigates, they are large yet leanly manned – 7000 tonnes displacement, 8000 tonnes fully loaded, but needing only 150 to person her (although she has a surge complement of 208) Although I should add that "manned" has no gender connotations because women will also serve aboard all of these ships.

Modern warshipbuilding isn't quick and isn't cheap.

In March 2010 BAE Systems were given a four-year, £127 million contract by the Ministry of Defence to fully design a new class of warship, the "Global Combat Ship". Expectations at the time were for the first ship to be "in service" by 2021. The October 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review reaffirmed the government's commitment to the Global Combat Ship, saying; "As soon as possible after 2020 the Type 23 will be replaced by Type 26 frigates, designed to be easily adapted to change roles and capabilities depending on the strategic circumstances". As part of the defence review it was also announced that the remaining Type 22 frigates would be decommissioned without replacement, reducing the Royal Navy's escort fleet from 23 destroyers and frigates to 19 (6 Type 45 destroyers and 13 Type 23 frigates). The erosion of the escort fleet means that the Royal Navy is unable to offer full protection in the world's main

choke points for a nation that relies on maritime trade for wealth, energy and food.

A decision was made in November 2010 to reduce the specifications and capability requirements of what was then known as the Global Combat Ship to reduce the cost and improve its export potential. Nevertheless, the design concepts by 2014 had returned to their original working baseline of a large 6,900 tonne warship. In February 2015, the MoD and BAE Systems signed a contract worth £859 million to continue the development phase and to support progression towards the manufacturing phase. On 2 July 2017, was awarded a c£3.7 billion contract by the UK MoD to manufacture the first three Type 26 ships. Steel was cut on the first ship HMS Glasgow shortly thereafter. In September 2015, the programme cost was estimated at £11.5 billion, for what was then assumed to be for 13 Global Combat Ships. The cost for the current eight ships was quoted as £8 billion in 2016.

The next HMS Newcastle will be armed with the Sea Ceptor supersonic missile defence system and a powerful and accurate 5 inch naval gun capable of hitting Heathrow when tied up at Portsmouth. Her radar can track many hundreds of objects over 100 miles away – including a tennis ball travelling at three times the speed of sound (if Andy Murray is able to serve a ball that fast)

These ships will be platforms for naval aviation – they'll be able to house 2 Wildcat helicopters armed with anti ship missiles, torpedoes or depth charges; the Merlin anti submarine search and attack, the massive Chinook, beloved of our special forces, and aerial drones.

Coupled with land attack Tomahawk cruise missile, as well as extensive self defence, when she enters service in the latter half of the 2020's, the next HMS Newcastle, like many of her predecessors in time and place, will be a ship you won't want to mess with!