

HMS Atherstone, an 800 tonne mine hunter, returned home to Portsmouth last week after a two year mission.

She sailed the 10,000 km distance to and from station, and had five different crews during the deployment.

Her role was to provide security in the Gulf for surrounding nations, and has now been relieved by a similar ship, HMS Middleton.

Which goes to show you don't need a one billion pound ship to do many of the "real world" tasks in troubled areas.

Nor a permanent crew.

And this is exactly the kind of vessel that's needed in our own coastal waters (as the French seem to have recognised)

Big lessons there for the planners of the next generation of surface ships in these straightened times.....