

CLYDE SUBMARINE BASE FASLANE

A number of you will have already noticed the appearance of a new callsign and routing indicators in our more common publications and this may have aroused some curiosity or perhaps renewed an interest in the type of base these station identities serve.

Submarines have been based in the Clyde for many years now, first at Rothesay and then at Faslane using the jetties of the wartime emergency port. The move from Rothesay to Faslane enabled advantage to be taken of closer support ashore, not



HMS Valiant arriving at Faslane after underwater trip from Singapore (27) days.

on a great scale but enough to begin to link submarines and Faslane. Housing, recreational facilities, a convenient railhead for stores, somewhere to park cars, were the kind of things with a few small offices and workshops which enabled the depot ship to be detached for refit or for a short cruise. When the Polaris project came along it was a relatively simple decision to combine the facilities for all Clyde based submarines into one comprehensive unit with one barracks, one set of workshops and the many supporting elements, all common to the two squadrons that will operate from here in 1968, without the need of a depot ship.

The Polaris submarines will be operating to a patrol pattern made possible by nuclear propulsion and quite unique in peacetime. Therefore it is all the more important that better than average recreational and welfare facilities are provided ashore for the crews when they return to harbour after their long submerged patrol. For the first time in 50 years MOD(N) have had the opportunity to build a completely new base with the right facilities for both work and play.

The Clyde Submarine Base now covers a vast area at Faslane and Coulport and will soon include all of Capic Clyde's responsibilities, bringing the whole of the western half of Scotland under the command of Commodore Clyde early next year.

The one mile by a quarter long operating base at Faslane, which is to be commissioned HMS *Neptune* on 5th August 1967, is where the Commodore will have his HQ. The base contains a Command building, workshops, jetties, a floating dock and a stores complex capable of supporting four Polaris submarines, twelve fleet and patrol submarines, one frigate and the needs of the base itself.

All of the buildings in the base, and the jetties, are connected by a pneumatic tube despatch system, which will provide us with one of the most speedy message distribution systems (15 mph). The pneumatic tube will also be used for distributing correspondence, files, and small items of naval stores.

In the training area there is the RN Polaris School where the Polaris crews are given their initial training and refresher courses, and not as some of the locals first thought, for the education of naval children.

The barracks area will accommodate about 250 officers, 1500 men and 100 WRNS, and will provide them with clubs, shops and a bowling alley in a large four storey mess and recreational building. There are also numerous playing fields, tennis and squash courts, a cinema, swimming pool, rifle range, sports arena, and a sailing centre.

The operational, training and barracks areas will be predominantly manned by uniformed personnel whilst the armament depot at Coulport and the stores area in the base will be almost entirely civilian. Including an average number of submarines alongside the total of naval personnel inside the base during a normal working day is expected to be about 2500 plus approximately 1000 civilians.

For accompanied personnel there are several MQ sites in the locality, two in Helensburgh and one in Rhu. The largest, which is named Churchill Estate, is being built in the west of Helensburgh. It will comprise almost 800 ratings' quarters catering for various family sizes and providing play areas, a community centre, shops, welfare offices and a school. At the other end of Helensburgh there is the Ardencaple Estate which has 162 ratings and 35 officers' quarters. The site at Rhu, which will have 122 officers' quarters is to be named Mackenzie Estate, after the Chief of the Polaris Executive. There are likely to be a further 75 ratings' quarters at Gareloch Head, for use as an overspill; at the moment however the ratings MQ roster is dry.

For obvious reasons there is little that can be written, in these columns, about the Communications System, except for the inevitable funny which occurred during a particularly busy phase. We had been requested to use alternative secure methods of transmission at a time when we were already fully committed. Whilst considering ways of solving this problem we received a signal from the RAF, one paragraph of which read "Communications God Throughout"! Originator and DTG supplied to disbelievers!

For those who are interested in serving at Faslane the Communications Complement at present consists of one CCY, two CRSs, one CRS/RS(W), four RSs, eight LROs (G, T, or W), eight ROs (G, T, or W), and twelve WROs. Most of these—not the WROs—will be submariners by about 1969.