



# Golspie stop-off for carrier Ark Royal

THE SIGHT of a large ship anchored off Golspie over the weekend puzzled many.

Suggestions for its identity ranged from a Royal Navy frigate to a coastguard support vessel.

But the Ministry of Defence has confirmed to the *NT* that the impressive ship was HMS Ark Royal, the Invincible-class aircraft carrier.

The MoD was unable to tell us why the vessel was in the area.

HMS Ark Royal is the largest of the three Invincibles. At 211.4m she is 1.5m longer than her two sisters, HMS Invincible and HMS Illustrious.

She carries around 1000 crew and air group personnel.

The fifth vessel to bear the proud name Ark Royal, she was built by Swan Hunter at Wallsend

and launched by the Queen Mother on 20 June 1981 before being accepted into service on 1 July 1985.

During her busy life the ship has seen service around the globe in many different roles, including as Fleet Flagship.

The ship was deployed in early 2003 leading the UK's naval forces during Op Telic.

After a short period in extended readiness, she moved to Rosyth for modernisation and modification prior to rejoining the fleet as the Royal Navy's most up-to-date aircraft carrier.

She is currently operating in the Commando Carrier role, capable of carrying an embarked military force of approximately 400 Royal Marines or Army, as well as operating Chinook, Lynx, Apache and Sea King helicopters.