Dear DUNCAN Family,

It is with great pleasure that I write to you at the beginning of our deployment. Firstly, I would like to extend my thanks to those friends and families who were present to wave us off on our departure at Round Tower; it was very moving to see so many people and their banners cheering and waving; a truly wonderful send off – thank you. Everyone on DUNCAN is very proud and your support and love is critical in enabling us to fulfil our mission.

As you have now heard, our deployment has been extended to take us up to 9 months. Be in no doubt that this decision was not taken lightly by the Admiralty Board who recognise the impact this has on us all. Nonetheless, this short extension by 3 weeks, taking us to the 9 month extended deployment ‘limit’ makes sense – I hope you will appreciate that I can’t delve into the detail due to security protocol, however I can say that it helps to safeguard our future programme and the RN’s ability to sustain its many commitments overseas. The flip side of these new extended deployments is that DUNCAN receives a much more favourable leave package, including 2 weeks back in the UK for all at the mid deployment point. This is also supplemented by additional leave on our return and of course, our new programme still has us back in time for Xmas! Should anything change, I pledge to inform the Ship’s Company at the earliest opportunity and communicate the impact to you as soon as I can, however I genuinely do not foresee any further extensions unless there is a significant shift in tensions within our area of operations. DUNCAN is the first ship in the Fleet to undertake a ‘9 monther’ and the significance of this absence on both you and the Ship’s Company is well recognised – as a consequence every supporting agency across the RN is absolutely focussed on getting this right.

As always, support is available to you and your families should you require any form of assistance during our deployment. There is no stigma in asking for help, particularly amongst those of you who do not have friends or family close to hand. So, please talk to the Welfare team who are absolutely on side and whose contact details accompany this letter. I hope you will enjoy reading this edition of the Link Letter and finding out what the Ship and your sailors have been up to.

Cdr Rich Atkinson
Commanding Officer HMS DUNCAN

Bish’s Corner

Greetings families and loved ones! I’m Father Charles, otherwise known as ‘The Bish’, HMS Duncan’s Chaplain.

As well as assisting our crew with any issues they may have I’m also here to play my part in boosting morale and to this end I have introduced my new legendary handshake repertoire, well known across the Fleet and in our training establishments. Beginning with the ‘Bish-Bash’ the plan during our time away is to introduce a new handshake after each of our stops culminating in a competition at the end of the deployment to see who can remember them and do them in a one-r, and, in the right order!

I hail from the Rock of Gibraltar, where, through my contacts I helped ensure a good few days for our crew, and I feel very privileged to be on board this amazing ship with such a brilliant group of young men and women. God bless you all.

Revd Charles Bruzon
Chaplain HMS DUNCAN

DUNCAN on her way out of Portsmouth ready to start her nine month deployment

Secundis dubiisque rectus ~ Upright in prosperity and peril
A Healthy Ship

Did you know we have our very own Physical Trainer onboard? Sgt Abram RM works hard to make sure that we all stay in fighting shape when we are at sea. Circuits have been very popular; taking place on the flight deck and sessions have increased to three times a day in order to accommodate everyone.

Whilst we were in Gibraltar we have also made the most of the lovely sunshine by playing sports fixtures against each other and local teams. Netball, football and a Port Stop Walk all took place over the visit.

40 members of the Ship’s Company also took part in the famous ‘Rock Race’ at 0630 on a Sunday morning! The winner was Lt Cdr Nick Leeson in an incredible time of 26 minutes 42 seconds.

We are also taking part in a healthy living trial onboard which has seen us changing our menus, have our body composition measured and complete food diaries. DUNCAN’s Biggest Loser starts this week so keep an eye out for updates to follow of how we are all getting on!

The successful finishers of the Rock Race in Gibraltar, surprisingly smiley for a 0630 start!

Secundis dubieisque rectus ~ Upright in prosperity and peril
Our First Port Stop

On leaving Portsmouth after our fantastic send off, we sailed through the Bay of Biscay to arrive in Gibraltar to be greeted with the Mediterranean sunshine and a few furry friends! The Ship’s Company made the most of our time in Gibraltar and alongside the sporting events; many people took the opportunity to take the Cable Car to the Top of the Rock and meet the famous Barbary Apes. We also had fantastic tours organised to the World War 2 caves, St Michael’s cave and its underground lake, and visit Europa Point where the views across to Africa were beautiful. For many Ship’s Company this was the first port stop of their very first deployment in the Royal Navy and the excitement was evident, for others this was a return to a favourite Navy port stop!

Captain Andrew Roberston Mackie Trophy Award

Captain Mackie was a veteran of WWII who was actively involved in the Battle of the Atlantic and Arctic Convoys. He was also onboard DUNCAN in a previous incarnation during the D-Day landings. The Mackie family is steeped in Naval history and by way of a memorial to Captain Mackie, they have kindly donated a trophy which DUNCAN is honored to have received. This trophy is to be awarded to ‘a member of the Ship’s Company who has demonstrated the highest excellence in professional execution of their duties’.

The worthy first recipient of this annual award was PO Neil Perkins, Chief Bosuns Mate who was presented this prestigious award by Mr Mackie.

A Barbary Ape looks on with interest to the new arrival in Gibraltar

PO Perkin’s receives the Captain Andrew Roberston Mackie Trophy from his son, Mr Mike Mackie

Secundis dubiisque rectus ~ Upright in prosperity and peril
Hi there! My name is Duncan and I live on the big ship HMS DUNCAN, I think you know someone who lives there too. I am going to be looking after them and telling you lots about the ship and what we have been up to whilst we are away.

It is my first time away from home so I am very excited to be visiting lots of places in different countries. This week we sailed all the way from Portsmouth in England to a place called Gibraltar, I liked being on the ship although I did get a bit seasick on the way! Gibraltar is a country that has a big rock and you can see Africa from it all the way across the sea.

My favourite part of Gibraltar was the monkeys, just like the one below, that live on the rock. I had lots of fun in Gibraltar; I have been playing football and one day I ran all the way to the top of the rock with lots of my friends onboard the ship. They call it the ‘Rock Race’ and we had to get up very early so we could watch the sunrise; it was a long way to the top though so I was very tired when I got there.

When we go back to sea I am going to go exploring around the ship and I will send you lots of photos in the next edition of Link Letter of me and my friends onboard. They have all been working very hard so I will show you what they have been doing.

If you would like to write to me; I can pass a special message to someone onboard. Here is my address:

Duncan the Bear
C/O HMS DUNCAN
OP KIPION
BFPO 269

I hope you like the colouring picture!