



OCEAN WAVE



A very Merry Christmas...

December 2015

From the Captain...



As 2015 draws to a close I wanted to reflect on the success OCEAN has had throughout what has been a very busy year.

Emerging from the clutches of the dockyard and regenerating the Fleet Flagship has taken a huge amount of effort from each and every member of the Ship's Company. Our progress during our busy exercise programme has been outstanding and our endeavours finally came to a head in November when we received our validation as the NATO High Readiness Command platform for 2016. This is a significant accolade for both OCEAN and the Royal Navy and we now stand by to undertake this duty next year with the professionalism and dedication that is the hallmark of OCEAN. Superb as the Ship's Company have been, we do not forget the role that you all play in underpinning our success. Returning to the UK with in excess of 150 families and affiliates on board is a fantastic experience and is testament to the support, love and understanding you offer on a daily basis. It is this reassurance that allows OCEAN to focus on the job in hand when away from home and consistently perform at the level expected of the Royal Navy's flagship.

Thank you and I wish you a very merry Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Steve Moorhouse

Getting the balance right!

Lisbon marked the halfway point of the deployment and was a much needed rest from the busy tempo we'd faced the 2 weeks prior. After a fine balance of culture and the lash, and a quick stop off in Rota to pick up the Americans, it was back to sea for the final exercise. With all of the aircraft disembarked (minus the MV-22's) it seemed life was going to get easier for us as an Air Engineering Department, but with a new aircraft type, and our transatlantic cousins, we had a new set of challenges to face!

That said the Americans integrated well with us and a lot of experience was shared on both parts, and a great couple of British and American themed nights had by all.

A particular highlight was the Air Department 'Sundowners' on the flight deck which gave us an opportunity to all get together for a few beers at sunset and meet our new Head of Department, Cdr Adrian Baker.



The team looking 'essence' as usual

With Rome and a quick jolly in Gibraltar to go, everyone is on the wind down to Christmas and getting in the festive spirit with arguably premature Christmas decorations and jumpers making appearances. There's still plenty to go yet however with the re-embarkation of the 814 Merlins and the 'parents and children at sea' to accommodate, but AED remain alert as ever...

AET Mike Harvey

9 ASRM Business as usual...



9 ASRM in their full glory with MV22 'Osprey' rear

With COUGAR in full steed the ASRM were thrown back into another exercise proving furthermore its capability of deploying rapidly and efficiently into any situation. Moving back into the Sardinia/Corsica island territories we conducted our LCVP roles of beach landings, TACBEREPS (tactical beach reports) along with Personnel and stores moves from ship to ship and ship to shore.

Although when it came around to delivering our troops for the main beach assault we were given the challenge to conduct a full 37 nautical mile sea transit into the beach to make H-Hour in complete radio silence and absolute darkness. A challenge which the ASRM completed with no dramas, even with the constant speed, distance, time equations done by our senior coxswain Cpl Long!

9 Assault Squadron RM were again later deployed in Portugal for a big joint display of force where 4 ASRM joined us with their LCVPs and LCUs, along with air support from a Wildcat and fast air overhead. An impressive display for the Portuguese and British MOD representatives who came to witness the power of the Royal Navy. But of course once the sun went down and all moving parts had returned to their platforms the ASRM decided to commemorate the success of the day with the Portuguese Recon marines. A friendly and welcoming group of people with an unquenchable thirst, shall we say...

The final exercise of BLUE RAPTOR saw the squadron in a different light. A slight change of pace now we were used as ground protection for the American Ospreys to retrieve casualties and Captured Personnel.

On completion of Ex BLUE RAPTOR we now entered the Roman port of Civitavecchia for a 4

day stop. It gave us all a chance to break away from the tradition of finding the first Irish pub outside the gate to talk shop, but instead seeing the Italian capital and soaking in some culture.

Although, due to recent occurrences in Paris, we found the Roman streets to be no more different than the ship, filled with armed soldiers and under constant surveillance. But this just made us feel right at home (and safe of course) as we took in the sights of the Coliseum, the Vatican and the inside of an Irish pub, central Rome.

Finally the deployment was winding down and coming to an end. Next on the list, a quick stop in Gibraltar to pick up PACAS before heading home in time for Christmas, and a much needed reminiscence with friends and family.

LCpl Al Wells

FANTASTIC FIRST TRIP!

When I originally thought about going to sea on my first ship, thoughts of sunning myself on exotic beaches and shopping at canopy-covered bazaars came to mind.

The reality of my first deployment on HMS OCEAN has been somewhat different, but no less exciting. Since joining her in August, we have been criss-crossing the Mediterranean, participating in various types of exercises involving all 3 Services and foreign navies and marines.



Lauren (centre) during the Remembrance Service

Of course, in between all the work there has been some time set aside for recharging. We have been lucky enough to see many of Europe's most beautiful cities. Florence stood out for me as particularly stunning, but Rome and Lisbon were also amazing places to visit and explore, with more than their fair share of cultural sights and vibrant café culture.

As the trip draws to a close, I think all these wonderful places pale in to insignificance as we think only of Plymouth and our Families and loved ones waiting for us there. We face a number of challenges in the work that we do, but knowing that we are coming home to them, makes the long hours and hard work so much easier.

When I see my husband on the Quayside later this month that will be Christmas enough for me...

AB Wtr Lauren Grant

Rapture, Rome and Reunions

Since our last newsletter Ocean has completed exercise Blue Raptor which involved us and the United States Marine Corps. The exercise was an amphibious assault based exercise which lasted just over a week, it involved using Osprey aircraft. It was very much enjoyable having them on board and seeing their capabilities.



Gareth with the whole Ship's Company...what do you mean you can't see him?

After the exercise we proceeded alongside Civitavecchia where the majority of the ship's company went to visit Rome. It was really enjoyable seeing the famous historical sights and experiencing the local culture the City had to offer.

We are now proceeding towards Gibraltar for 3 days where our family and friends will embark for our last few days at sea where they will witness what our job entails. It is exciting for myself as my farther will be embarking and it will be his first time back at sea since leaving the Merchant Navy after 36 years, but this time on OCEAN.

I am very much looking forward to my first homecoming in the Royal Navy after completing my first operational deployment and seeing my family and girlfriend again.

AB Gareth Whalley

Good memories made...

This trip has been my first real time away at sea and I wasn't too sure what to expect from it, however I haven't found it too bad! Being away from home was easier than I expected and time throughout the 10 weeks has flown by!



A first deployment can be a daunting step for a sailor

What has really helped my first time away has been some of the stops we have had during the 10 weeks. Since we left Plymouth we have spent time alongside in Toulon, Livorno, where we were able to visit Pisa and Florence, Lisbon, Rome and finally Gibraltar.

It's remarkable how once everyone is away they seem to become closer, you start talking to people you've never said two words to before and become more acquainted to different departments around the ship which I think definitely helps with anyone's home sickness. At the end of the day you're always going to have at least one person who knows pretty much how you're feeling, we are literally all in the same boat together.

For me Cougar 15 has been an enjoyable trip with a lot of good memories made.

AB WE CIS Eve Morley

The view from the Vicar...

The classic mission statement of the Naval Chaplain is to be the 'friend and advisor' to all on board and the Royal Navy has taken Chaplain's to sea since its inception.

Although I've been a Royal Navy Chaplain for 14 years, OCEAN is my first ship, having had the 'privilege' of gaining my 'Green Lid' and serving with the Royal Marines over that time.



Stu Hallam HMS OCEAN's 'Bish'

And now we are heading home and all on board are looking forward to being reunited with their loved ones and some time off to relax and recharge so that we can be ready for what the New Year will bring...myself included! So as OCEAN's Bish may I wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Peaceful New Year!

AND FINALLY THE STOKERS...

HMS Ocean deployed on 'Cougar 15' on the 28th September. We had stops in various places such as Toulon, Livorno, Lisbon, Civitavecchia and Gibraltar.

We got alongside in Civitavecchia which was the first stop that PACAS (Parents and Children at Sea) guests could come onboard to join us with our voyage back to Devonport.

Civitavecchia was a good stop overall. A lot of people travelled on the train and went to Rome to see the most of what Rome has to offer including the Coliseum, Trevi Fountain and the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City.

Gibraltar was the next and final stop for the Mighty 'O' much to everyone's relief. The rest of the PACAS guests got onboard from Gibraltar, it will take 4 days to get back to Guzz. During those 4 days the PACAS guests would be kept occupied by tours around the ship, showing various bits of kit including, Engine Rooms, LCVP's, Fire fighting Experience's and Weapon Shooting.

Cougar 15 is coming to an end. And Christmas is beginning!!

OCEAN is in essence a floating village where its ship's company and other embarked forces live, work, train, relax, worship and learn together. Like all communities it can have its stresses and strains, its joys and its woes and as the Chaplain your role is to get alongside people and help them to cope with the uniqueness of service life.

Some find the transition easier than others, but for all our people there is the recognition that life continues as normal, no one is exempt from the realities of everyday life, even when we are at sea.

The Bish (as we get called) offers people the confidential space in which to be themselves and talk through issues that are affecting them regardless of their faith or creed. The RN gives us a unique gift to enable us to do this; we have no rank, which means that we can always be on the same level as those we are serving.

It is a fantastic role and I love it and COUGAR 15 has been an awesome exercise, with plenty of hard work, yes, but also some wonderful runs ashore. What has great to see is some of our younger sailors grow as they start to explore the wider world around them, visiting wonder places like Florence, Pisa and Rome.

And for those who have struggled? Well, the ship's Divisional System has been there to help and support them with the back up of the Bish of course!



The Stokers, "If in doubt clean!"

WHERE TO FIND HELP AND SUPPORT...

For general welfare support call the RN/RM Welfare Portal - 02392 728777

Need your loved on back in an emergency? Call the Joint Casualty & Compassionate Cell - 01452 519951

Or email HMS OCEAN's Chaplain- The Rev'd Stu Hallam on HMSOCEA-EXEC-CHAPLAIN@mod.uk

Comments and suggests about the newsletter are always welcome, please email the Chaplain above!