

# Monmouth Mercury

Issue 04/5/6 | July/August/September 2017



Above – A sunset in the Indian Ocean

## Elephants, Bears, Mermaids and Matelots

Monmouth has encountered some varied wildlife on her deployment so far, elephants and giraffes in Kenya, pods of dolphin in the Indian Ocean, but none more exotic (or attractive) as King Neptune's mermaid bride and her daughters...

This bumper edition will cover Monmouth's final few weeks before Mid-Deployment Leave Period, a visit to Mombasa, a 'Crossing the Line' Ceremony, (another) RAS, further Flight Deck joviality and the classic naval tradition of 'Hands to Bathe'.



Above – LS Winsor carefully inspects his weapon during a Straits of Hormuz transit

## Captain's Corner Cdr Ian Feasey RN

Dear Family and friends,

*You will, I am sure, have noted the absence of the Monmouth Mercury in your inboxes over recent months; however, this bumper issue aims to bring you up to speed on the events that have been central to raising the morale of the team as we approach the 7 month point in the deployment and thoughts are beginning to think about homecoming in Dec.*

*I am sure you will agree that it was an excruciating wait to see your loved ones before they headed home in July and August and yet that already seems like an age ago and we have been at sea again for three weeks now. I am sure that for many of you the brief encounter with family will have made the separation even harder. With the summer ending in UK and children returning to school for the autumn term we are acutely aware of how difficult it can be. I know that similar feelings are felt at our end as well, but rest assured that we are doing the best we can to put an arm around those that are struggling and ensure that we all get home safely in just under three months. As you will see, we have been extremely busy on patrol and in various port visits and whilst the Mercury focuses on the lighter aspects of our activity we are still delivering operational effect and supporting UK interests. You should be proud.*

# Mombasa

## Mne Omlo

After another long stint at sea, we arrived at our next port visit Mombasa, Kenya. We had achieved a lot since we last set sail, one such achievement being the well publicised 65 million pound drug bust. So with the spirit of the Ship's company higher than ever, we were keen to get 'ashore' and enjoy all that Mombasa had to offer us. First we would have to complete a colossal 'store ship' to replenish our dwindling supplies. Once that had finally been completed we were 'secure' and headed to our hotel along with most of the Ship's company, that were making full use of the cheap off season prices.

We arrived at the hotel after a long coach journey through the busy streets of Mombasa. The trip also took us through the poorer areas; it was a huge eye opener to see just how much poverty there was in this country.

For RMBT 9 this port visit also meant swapping out some of our team members so, that evening we indulged in all the hotel had to offer while saying our final farewells and welcoming a few new faces. The all inclusive hotel package we signed ourselves up for did not disappoint, with all the local foods you could eat and most importantly a cocktail or two. A highlight of the night was Jordan's (Taff) cover of 'Hero' which surprised us all, along with his drinking game King's.

With Mombasa being a very rare port visit for the Royal Navy, The ship's Physical Training Instructor 'Clubz' also acted as a Port Visit day excursion representative, arranging a very special trip for the ships company; which was a day long safari with the chance to visit a Massai village. Most of the Ship's Company wanted to get involved so we had to split into two groups and go on different days. The safari trip was a long day with a lot of travelling, both to and from the wildlife reserve, but it was well worth while. Getting to see most of Africa's wildlife up close and personal was a rare opportunity and amazing experience; one I personally intend on repeating. A highlight of the trip was getting to see the large elephant population and how they stayed together in families to protect their younger members.

*Below – Photographic opportunities*



*Above – Safari Transport Arrives*



*Above – The entrance to the Safari Park*

Also included in the safari was lunch in a hotel, perched on top of a rocky outcrop, only reachable by a thin almost vertical track which I'm very surprised the buses could make it up. The hotel provided us with an almost 360 degree view of the nature reserve and also supplied us with a perfect "chad phot" opportunity. The groups that got to visit the Massai village were given a warm welcome and taught the Massai traditional dance, as well as being shown how they live. As part of this they did demonstrations of how to 'make fire'! We finally arrived back at the hotel, tired from the day's activities, but keen to make use once again of our all inclusive hotel package and attack the dance floor with our new found African dance moves.

After returning back to HMS Monmouth for another shorter 'store ship', we spent the rest of our final day chilling by the 'infinity pool' which over looked the beach. Also it was a chance to try our hand at bartering with the locals, they drove a hard bargain but we quickly found out they were just as keen for our 'pussers issue' socks, pens and note pads as our currency. That night we used our final opportunity to Facetime and Skype our loved ones at home and of course drain the hotel of any remaining cocktails and beers that were left.

On returning back to ship to set sail once again, it was certain that Kenya was a stop we would not forget and, with the end of the first half of our deployment reaching ever nearer, minds were on home and seeing our loved ones once again.



Above – Fort Victoria engaged in an ammunition RAS

## Fort Vic to the Rescue

Lt Ross (DMEO)

In order to stay on task and remain in a high state of readiness, Monmouth recently conducted a Replenishment At Sea (RAS), taking on stores, food and fuel whilst underway in the Gulf of Aden. This was supported by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) tanker Fort Victoria (pictured). The multi-role replenishment ship can carry a colossal amount of fuel and stores in order to support deployed units anywhere in the world.

It was a busy day for the Black Duke engineers as we took on both fuel for the ship's propulsion engines and aviation fuel for the Wildcat helicopter.

Once the probe was connected, the teams were fully focussed on the task at hand including all comms numbers and those measuring rapidly rising tank levels. The Marine Engineering Department must ensure we reach 95% of our total capacity to maximise endurance without risking any kind of overflow or spillage. This is no easy task for the team when pumping rates can be as high as 3 tonnes a minute!

During our RAS with Fort Victoria in June, Monmouth took a total of 168 m<sup>3</sup> of fuel (enough to power your average car for 1,887,640 km). As the co-ordinator, CPO Lee Pardoe could breathe a sigh of relief on completion as all levels were correct and the operation was completed safely. Monmouth can now remain on task with the ability to react to any crisis or contingent tasking which may come our way.

## Crossing the Line

MA Wilcock

Naval tradition dictates that any ship crossing the Equator must pay their respects to the Lord of the Seas, King Neptune to gain his acceptance. This ritual requires all those who have never previously 'Crossed the Line' to be 'charged for their crimes' and get the justice they deserve.

It all started one hot, sunny day just like many others that the crew experienced in our time on deployment in the Indian Ocean. This two day celebration starts with a morning pipe advising the ship's company that Lord Neptune, King of the Seas & Oceans, will be holding court tomorrow for

...the crimes of the Pollywogs (those who have not crossed the equator before) and that his advanced party will be arriving later on today which will include his Police, Bears, Surgeon and Secretary (who all having the striking resemblance of senior rates) to ensure all the paperwork is in order for his arrival.

Later the same day the Ship's Company are mustered on the Flight Deck for the 'Pollywogs revolt': many of the Ship's Company dressed in gas masks, loin cloths and other colourful fancy dress. As the advanced party climbed the ladder, surrounded in smoke, and ascended onto the flight deck the crew went wild with some friendly banter and pushing of the Police and Bears.

The Captain in smoking jacket and pipe quietened the crew and so started this Naval 'nativity play'. From the off the Captain showed the whole crew why he is the captain of the mighty Black Duke rather than the next Daniel Day-Lewis. Neptune's Secretary had his list of names and he checked it twice. As Neptune's Secretary it was a standout performance from PO Wtr McGregor or was it just that he had some paper admin to get excited about. After the Captain had defended the honour and integrity of the Black Duke, the amateur 'thespianism' that would have brought a tear to most mothers' eyes was over, it was time for the Ship's Company to return to their respected messes to await the arrival of the Bears.

That evening each mess was visited by Neptune's motley crew for some 'good humoured naval banter and two tins of beer'.

During the official ceremony the next morning Neptune held his court accompanied by his wife and 'gorgeous' daughters but don't get caught staring too long at them or you'll get extra dunks in the pool. It is also at this point the question I had asked myself during evening rounds: 'Where had all the mop heads gone?' Now I knew the answer.

Leading the way as is proper, the CO bravely faced the court followed closely by the XO and the rest of the wardroom as the rest of the crew lined up to receive their baptism. All of which is taken in good spirits. After a 'shave' from the barber, a pill of mash potato and some spicy 'medicine' from the surgeon, a few dunks or more in the ceremonial pool by the Bears, followed finally by the crew being forcibly ejected with some member of crew seeing more airtime the ship's Wildcat. For those few who tried to escape their fate the Police ensured their efforts were wasted. All those involved received certificates as proof of their 'Crossing the Line' which I'm sure they will hold onto for the next time to ensure Neptune's good grace.

*Below – Ship's Company face Neptune's wrath!*



## Wildcat Saves the Day

Lt 'Si' Hall

On the morning of 26<sup>th</sup> June at 0237 UK time the Merchant Tanker Rama 2 put out a "Mayday" call that was passed to the UK Maritime Trade Operations office in Dubai. The *Rama 2* was reporting a heavy list to starboard with 14 crew members on board; weather conditions were very difficult in the area with a sea state 5 and a swell with waves of over 25 feet / 6 metres. The United Kingdom Maritime Component Command (UKMCC) in Bahrain was informed and assessed options to assist the rescue plan with the The Black Duke's Wildcat helicopter, 'Blackjack'. She was launched to meet up with RFA Cardigan Bay who was closer to scene and able to transit towards the area for an airborne search and rescue operation.

Blackjack was at the limit of its safe operating window with darkness approaching, fuel running low again and weather conditions hampering the search when the rescue began. In difficult seas with tall waves and worsening conditions, Black Jack spotted the last survivor and, after various attempts to connect him to the winch wire, they were able to lift him out of the water with only seconds to spare..



*Above – AET Rogers, Lt Hall and Lt Morgan with their Wildcat*

...There were times when the waves engulfed both winchman and survivor in exhausting conditions which took over half an hour to get him connected to the wire. Just before sunset Black Jack landed safely on the flight deck of Cardigan Bay with the rescued sailor.

# Mid-Deployment Leave Period (MDLP)



Above - Monmouth's berth in ASRY next to an enormous merchant vessel

## MDLP Adventure Training (AT)

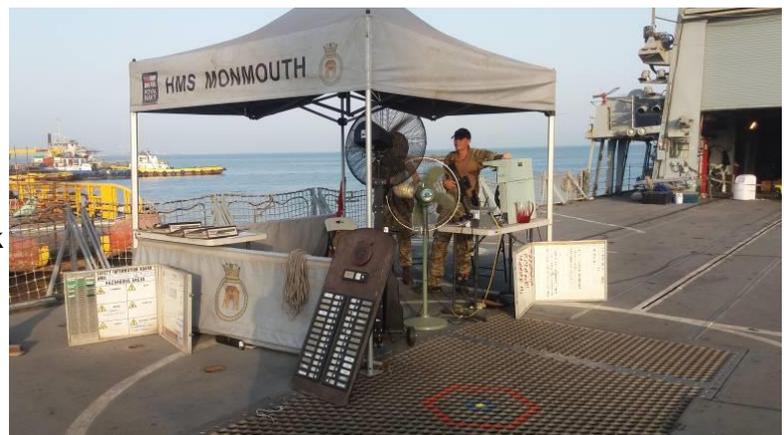
LPT Squance AKA 'Clubs'

During our Mid Deployment Stand Down period HMS Temeraire sent an Adventurous Training Team out from the UK to assist HMS MONMOUTH's Leading Physical Trainer meet the annual Adventurous Training quota for 2017. The team were able to provide low level challenging activities during the working day. Challenging Activities are activities which involve a controlled exposure to risk in a safe environment.

The activities provided for the 2 weeks were: Stand Up Paddle Boarding, Snorkelling, Kayaking and Dinghy Sailing. The team visited for 11 working days in total and were able to provide 170 members of the Ship's Company with 1 day each of AT. On a daily basis a group of 12 personnel went to Amwaj Island to conduct the AT and were split into 2 groups upon arrival.

This article of the *MM* will explain what the Ship's Company have been up to during MDLP and Adventure Training (AT) conducted during the leave period.

MDLP has not only enabled Ship's Company to take well-earned leave, it has allowed Monmouth to regenerate her operational capability through a complex works package. This has consisted of a combination of general ship's husbandry, cosmetic and structural work and more serious maintenance to Ship's equipment and weapons systems.



Above – LS 'Salad' Stallard mans the Aft Gangway in 43 degree heat

## MDLP Continued...



Above – Ringo-ing

There were also 2 opportunities for 8 personnel to carry out a RYA Dinghy Sailing Course over 2 days which was a basic teach in on how to sail a single sailing Pico (small sailing boat). This was more in-depth than the Stand Up Paddle Boarding and Snorkelling but these personnel gained a qualification for completing the training.

On completion of each activity the groups swapped around so that everyone got to try both activities. In the afternoon the instructors hired a speed boat with a Ringo where people were able to go out in groups of 3 and 4 and hold on whilst they were thrown around by the boat towing the ring.

The day was enjoyed by all participants and most have now asked when there is a possibility for more opportunities to carry out adventurous training activities. The ship is currently awaiting booking confirmation for 20 spaces which allows personnel to go Skiing in the Royal Navy's Outdoor Centre Germany during Feb 18.

The first group collected a snorkel, goggles and a set of Fins and proceeded to the far end of a private beach where the instructor gave them a comprehensive safety brief and told them how to snorkel correctly. They proceeded around the rock edge to a ship wreck in which they were able to snorkel around to see the marine life and explore the wreck.

The second group collected a Paddleboard and a paddle and proceeded into the shallow water where they were also given a safety brief. They then headed into deeper water where they were taught how to paddle around on their knees, how to utilise the paddle correctly and how the paddle could influence the board. They then progressed quickly into standing up and moving around each other.



Above – A Member of the Ship's Company enjoys snorkelling in the vicinity of a wreck

## Post MDLP

With the ship's operational capability regenerated and the ship's company refreshed, Monmouth and her sailors once again braved the Straits of Hormuz to conduct operations in the Indian Ocean. Ship's Company are also looking forward to a well earned visit to Goa, India after a long stint at sea. For those that hadn't participated in 'Hands to Bathe' before, great enjoyment was had by Monmouth's sailors as they swam in the Indian Ocean.

# Hands to Bathe

Lt Doherty

Most of us didn't know what was going on at first. It was 0700 on a Wednesday morning and, instead of the expected Call the Hands pipe, the CO was addressing the Ship's Company over main broadcast, accompanied by a rousing chorus of *Heart of Oak*. But then, gradually, the words sank in and all became clear; not only were we being gifted with a surprise forenoon off work, we were also going to get to undertake one of the few naval traditions we hadn't managed to check off on deployment thus far – it was time for Hands to Bathe!



Above – Ship's Company enjoy the warm waters of the Indian Ocean



Above– CPO Roberts gracefully takes to the Indian Ocean.

A busy hour of tagging out equipment, rigging scrambling nets and launching seaboats later, PO(UW) Stockley was the first one in the water, rapidly followed by a good number of the Ship's Company. The water was a balmy 32 degrees, still and clear, and a quick dip was the perfect way to wake up. As the morning progressed, people got braver and braver, with more and more elaborate dives, spins and somersaults appearing over the side of the port waist – as clearly evidenced by the number of bright red backs and chests from the increasingly frequent “flops”!

Over the course of the forenoon, almost all of the Ship's Company were able to jump in, with even those on watch arranging stand-ins so that they could take the plunge. It was a great way to break up a long stint at sea and, for many of us, to tick off a new item on our Navy bucket-lists.



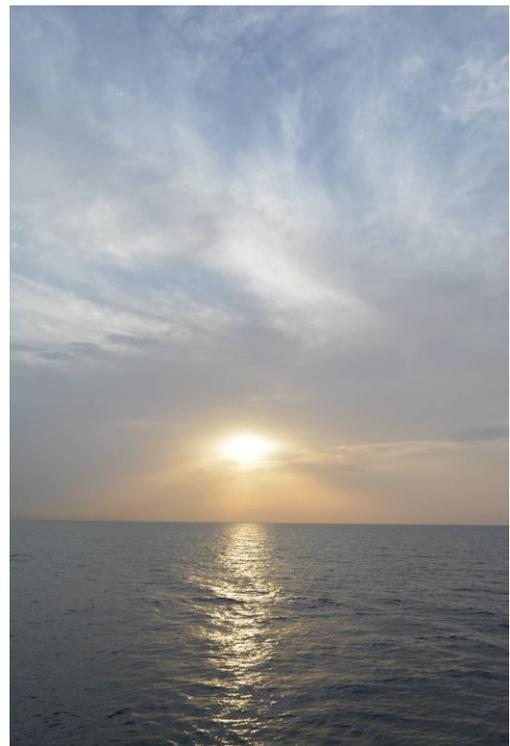
Above – An unusual view of Monmouth during HTB

## Village Fête

SLt Harris

The last weekend of August marked the village fete on HMS MONMOUTH, with proceeds going towards the ship's welfare fund. Under the Middle Eastern sun the Ship's Company provided a number of attractions, some light hearted and some with an element of competition, which transformed the Flight Deck. The Wardroom thought it would be appropriate to provide a set of stocks, with their members being locked in for 5 minute (sometimes more) stints where they were then used as target practice for wet-cloth-wielding members of the Ship's Company, the Royal Marine Captain proved to be the most lucrative source of income.

The Leading Regulator also made a guest appearance which proved popular. The Stoker's Mess 'lateral raise challenge' using two very large spanners provided some more determined competition. Other notable attractions included a pin ball machine (with home made sound effects) and blow-up sumo wrestling. This ended with a spectacular spar between the XO and the CO, the XO proving to have the edge at this strand of martial art. All in all a fine afternoon at sea.



Above – Perfect Conditions for the event

### MONMOUTH MONTHLY FACTS:

ME – MONM has steamed over 7000 miles since the previous issue of the *MM* was released.

WE – Currently hold 7000 tons of explosive which holds the equivalent energy to power 1800 UK homes for one year.

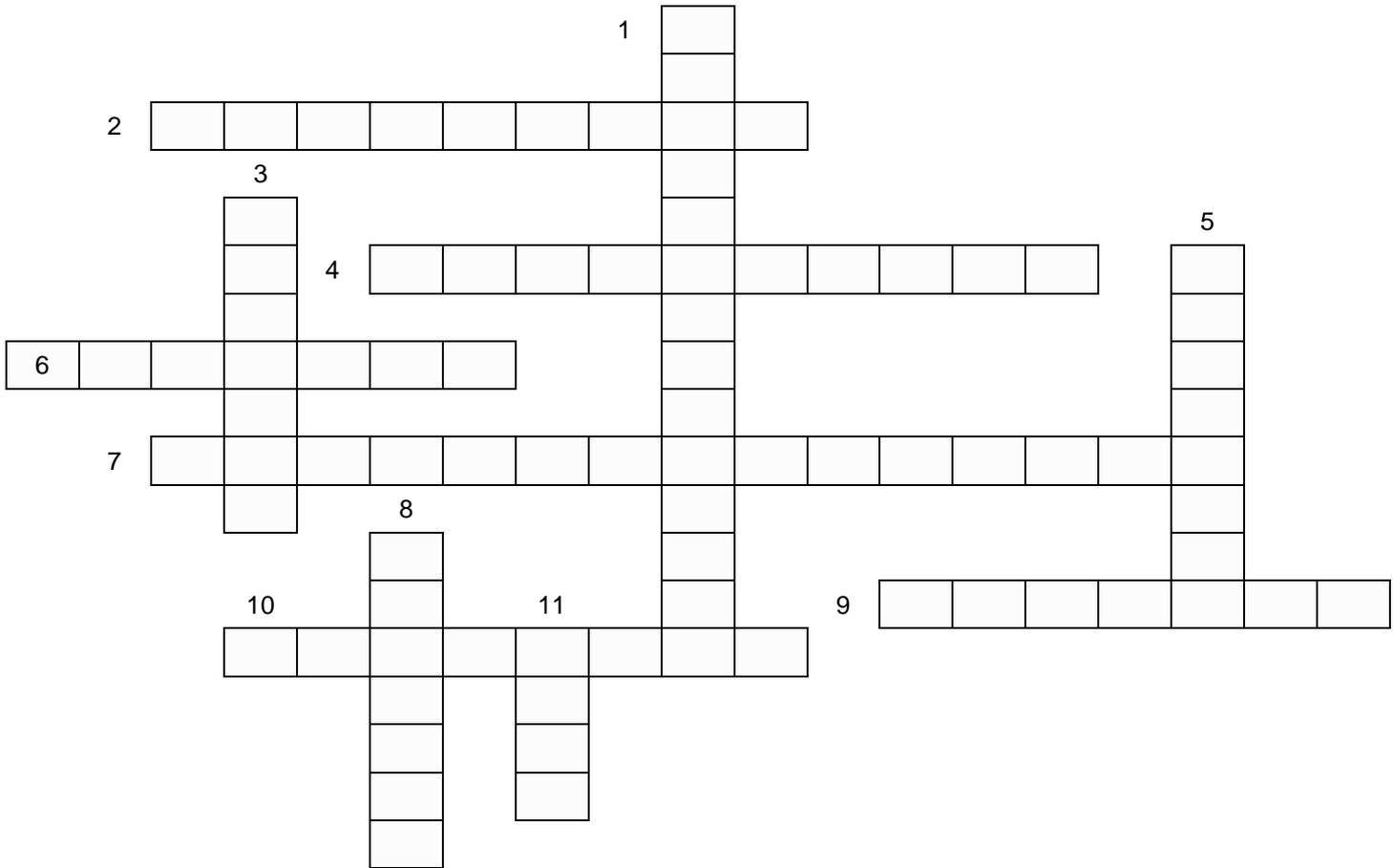
LOGs – Since MONM has deployed she has used nearly a ton and a half of washing powder! A clean matelot is a happy matelot.

MEDICAL – Since leaving Plymouth we have dispensed: 2148 ibuprofen tablets, 2880 paracetamol tablets.

FLIGHT – The recent rescue operation conducted by MONM's Wildcat is the first time the Wildcat has ever been used for this purpose.

MET – The sea water in the Southern Red Sea which HMS MONMOUTH has been operating in for the last few days is close to the warmest in the world for July at temperatures of over 36°C – that's over double the water temperature of Devonport for the same month.

# JACKSPEAK CROSSWORD



- |         |                |            |           |                 |          |
|---------|----------------|------------|-----------|-----------------|----------|
| Can-man | scran-spanners | loafing    | threaders | paraffin pigeon | hot-wet  |
|         | bootneck       | fish-heads | duff      | clankys         | sea-dust |

Down

- 1. CUTLERY
- 3. NAAFI CANTEEN MANAGER
- 5. ROYAL MARINE
- 8. BEING LAZY
- 11. PUDDING

Across

- 2. IRRITATED/FED-UP
- 4. WARFARE BRANCH
- 6. TEA/COFFEE
- 7. HELICOPTER
- 9. MARINE ENGINEERS
- 10. SALT

