Hello and welcome to Issue 8 of ‘The Rose’, the Official Newsletter of HMS MONTROSE. January started with some R&R for the sailors of MONTROSE; pulling into Tahiti to give everyone a few days off for the New Year, having been at sea over Christmas. Rested and recharged, the ship sailed for the final section of her Great Pacific Voyage, the end of which was marked with a homeport visit (in sort) as she pulled into Devonport Naval Base, New Zealand. Building on ties with our Southern allies MONTROSE was greeted with a resounding roar as she pulled into her berth, as they came out in force welcoming – or challenging, as some may say, Her Majesty’s Ship onto Kiwi shores once again with a traditional Ha'ka. The beginning of 2019 has allowed us to reset, look ahead at our future, train for operations, as well as recognise the special achievements of our sailors. So quite fittingly, this months cover photo goes to our Sailor of the Year, Petty Officer Seaman Specialist David Whittaker (pictured above) who through consistent drive and dedication throughout 2018, has been recognised as HMS MONTROSE’s strongest performer.

STOP PRESS, having just left Singapore, I hope that those of you who came to visit us had a great time – more to follow next month.

Cdr Conor O’Neill RN
French Exchange

Just after new year, Montrose visited Tahiti, French Polynesia and used the opportunity to conduct some training with our ‘local’ ally the French Navy (Marine Nationale). Experienced in training together in the English Channel, or La Manche, and on operations around the Northern Atlantic, our global deployment has allowed this relationship to continue 10,000Nm from our normal operating grounds.

Following a visit to the Pitcairn Islands, in a manner akin to crossing the English Channel, HMS Montrose left the UK Exclusive Economic Zone around these Overseas Territories, and entered the French Exclusive Economic Zone on New Years Day, to be welcomed by a Marine Nationale Maritime Patrol Guardian Aircraft. A couple of days later we conducted an Air Defence Exercise, where the French Guardian simulated an enemy aircraft and HMS Montrose’s warfare team countered the threat, honing their skills they practised in sea training prior to deployment.

Afterwards a Dauphin helicopter embarked for Deck Landing, providing valuable experience for the crew from the Marine Nationale 35th Squadron.

Once alongside in Tahiti the Ship’s Company took the opportunity to get away from it all, and enjoy a rather belated Christmas Holiday. A number of Ship’s Company resourcefully found somewhere with a pool to spend their time off, and BBQ with ocean views. Others managed to set off on adventure and undertake the island’s mountains; trekking for the day, and climbing the 2050m to the top of Mt. Aorai (worth a google search). A large number of sailors went scuba diving in this world-renowned location for the sport, while others tackled the mountainous interior for hikes to enjoy the views. Sub-Lieutenant White said “Following our recent visit to Chile and the hike I conducted in the Andes, Tahiti delivered equal challenges but rewarded us all with some truly stunning views.”

Prior to sailing, Commander O’Neill hosted the Commander of Armed Forces in French Polynesia, and the French Maritime Commander for the Pacific, Rear Admiral Lebreton for breakfast.

Commander O’Neill commented on the visit “Our visit to Tahiti has given us the opportunity to train with old and established allies thousands of miles from our normal operating regions. This has emphasised both the UK’s commitment to the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region, and the interoperability of NATO nations working together”. Adding “We also had the opportunity to enjoy a one in a lifetime visit to this beautiful Island, our third so far, as we continue the trans-pacific leg of our global deployment”.

Needless to say Tahiti was a fantastic bit of rest bite after a long 2 weeks away from family over Christmas. For an island so remote and alien, it is a privilege that Montrose was able to visit her, and her sailors experience a port visit unlike any other in recent history.
Prepare! To Be Boarded

Boarding was the name of the game during January as the boarding teams of MONTROSE had their first run out together since deploying way back in October.

Composing of two ‘Sticks’, the teams under the guidance of two boarding officers would take it in turns to conduct controlled approaches towards MONTROSE. Once tucked into the side, the team makes a hearty climb up the side of the netting in full kit.

Boarding is often one of the most dangerous serials and exercises we conduct onboard. It requires the skill of not only the coxswain of the boat, but also those members of the boarding team who need to commit themselves to each ascent.

Boarding is a role that the Navy must be able to achieve at short notice and the ability to train and prepare for this is paramount to its success.

A New Zealand, A New Devonport

From Devonport Naval Base, in the UK to Devonport Naval Base in Auckland, NZ, Royal Navy Frigate HMS Montrose has rekindling relationships with the Royal New Zealand Navy during a visit to their main operating base.

Our time in New Zealand opened with a major gunnery shoot on the RNZN’s sea ranges, proving the capability of the ship’s Medium Range Gun in both countering a surface ship and the ability to support troops ashore with Naval Gunfire Support.

Shortly after our arrival, members of the Ships Company were invited to attend a Powhiri – a formal welcome to the spiritual home or Marae of the Royal New Zealand Navy. During the ceremony the Commanding Officer, acting as the “Chief” of Montrose, accepted the wero or challenge, from the RNZN’s warrior, to show that the visitors come in peace. Having been accepted as friendly visitors, there were welcome speeches in Maori and English, and a song of welcome from the RNZN, which we returned by singing Flower of Scotland, accompanied by some local pipers, summoned by an appeal for some Scottish support a long way from home!

In addition to the Adventurous Training and Sport, we enjoyed the opportunity to explore further afield; including the volcanic springs of Rotorua, the metropolis of Auckland and Lord of the Rings Fans couldn’t resist a visit to Hobbiton! It was also a homecoming for Petty Officer Heidi Tait who, from New Zealand, was able to show her friends and family around the ship in which she serves.

2Deck – Dabbers

This month in 2 Deck we are shining a light on the Seaman Specialists, also known as the ‘dabbers’. Just as the personal training instructor onboard keeps the sailors fit and healthy, the dabbers keep the ship fit and healthy through routine maintenance and husbandry. Whether it be, grinding and painting, oiling doors and hatches, or general wash downs from the barrage of salt water the ship will routinely have thrown over her decks from the sea; But maintenance is not their sole job onboard. They also have a heavy responsibility on the bridge, keeping a lookout and steering the helm; for when 3am rolls around and everyone else is in bed, it is the ‘dabbers’ that will routinely play a vital role in keeping the Ship’s Company safe.
The Story So Far – Jan 19

1 Oct – Depart Devonport, UK
2 Nov – Visit Miami, USA
3 Nov – Pass through Panama
4 Dec – Arrive in Valparaiso, Chile
5 Dec – Sail to Talcahuano, Chile
6 Dec – We had xmas here!
7 Dec – Visit Easter Island
8 Jan – Visit Pitcairn Island
9 Jan – Arrive in Tahiti
10 Jan – Arrive in Devonport, NZ
11 Jan – Visit Darwin, AUS
12 Jan – Sail for Singapore

HMS MONTROSE Photo of the month

SC Crosby boards MONTROSE during training
AB Cronin enjoying some ‘bump and grind’ driving