FROM THE CAPTAIN’S CABIN

After 4 months of operations in the Middle East, it is great to be back in European waters with less than a fortnight until we return home. We have just completed a high profile visit to Beirut where we were honoured to host some 400 guests including a Lebanese President and an array of cabinet ministers and other VIPs.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming you to our homecoming on 24th March. It has been an historic and truly remarkable deployment and I could not be more proud of the accomplishments of my Ship’s Company who have served as outstanding ambassadors for their country.

In total we have sailed over 23,000 miles, conducted engagements with every Gulf Cooperation Council member state and operated some 12 different aircraft types. We have strengthened key strategic partnerships, deterred regional aggression and helped ensure the free flow of maritime trade upon which the UK’s prosperity depends.

However, none of this would have been possible without the steadfast support of our families and friends. Thank you most sincerely for supporting us over the course of the last 6 months and for the sacrifices you have made in support of our operations. I very much look forward to seeing you in Devonport in a few weeks!

HOMEWARD BOUND!

After 6 long months of what has been a truly historic deployment the mighty ‘O’ is well and truly on the way home. And what a deployment it has been. We have received praise everywhere we have visited and from everyone that we have been involved with. Be it for the exercises we have conducted, for the CTF 50 tasking we successfully completed, for the defence engagements we have conducted and for the way the crew, have conducted themselves in such a professional manner. Of course it is your loved ones; the crew of HMS OCEAN that remains the factor in our success and that is why their hard work has resulted in the well done, the ‘BZ’ all round from the Prime Minister, foreign heads of State, numerous ambassadors and our friends in the United States.

But we are on our way home and since the last edition of OCEAN Wave (OW) we have stopped in Muscat, Beirut and Malta. Thankfully though, it has also been a time for some much needed down time for a Ship’s Company that 100% deserves it, a Ship’s Company that looks forward to seeing you all within days of you reading this edition of OW.

“Sometimes being in the Royal Navy can be really hard work and I guess that comes with being in the military, but seeing 1500 faces on the jetty, waving, shouting and cheering, well it just brings it all home that we could not do what we do without the knowledge that we have 100% support from our families and friends.” Petty Officer Carl Laycock
SAVING LIVES AND SCORING TRIES!

I’m Leading Airman Ellor, “Cinders” to everyone on ship. I’m part of the ship’s rugby team and have been asked to tell you a little bit about the team. Since we deployed back in mid-September we have had six rugby matches, most of them under floodlights in the Gulf, with our seventh game being played in Malta on Saturday 11th March against Malta A (their national side’s second team). The ship’s team is a good way to let off some much needed steam off and interact with other members of the ship that you don’t maybe work and speak with. Our record for this deployment is 4 wins, 1 draw and 1 loss, which for a ship’s team is a great effort as we don’t get much time to train all together and if we do it’s just passing drills as the camrex floor isn’t too forgiving! So far on this six month trip 52 plus players have played for the team in only six games. When it comes to sport, rank or rate does not a factor and this really helps benefit the team ethos. The captain of the team is a Naval Airman Tom Matanatabu and the team manger is a Leading Airman Ethan Barnaschone and within the 52 plus strong team we have ranks all the way up to Lieutenant Commander, who happily listen and do as they are told without any moaning (for once!).

For anyone that has every played rugby or knows loved ones that have or do, you will know it is very hard to just turn up at a pitch and play after having little time to training with each over. However that’s what we do on OCEAN and we do it well. And that’s after we have to get everyone on the team off duty and off any other ships commitments while we are along side. Although the command on Ocean is great at pushing “time for sport” once or twice the ship has had to keep high-quality players back on ship to for fill the ship commitments. If anyone back home would like to read any of the ships match reports wrote by myself please feel free too, by log on to the Royal Navy Rugby Union website www.navyrugbyunion.co.uk. There you can read our match reports from our first game against Bahrain, Dubai, Kuwait, Bahrain (again), Muscat, Beirut and Malta A. The whole team is looking forward to getting home and I’m sure if you have any family in the ship’s team you would love to hear about some of the funny stories that have happened to the players in the games but please remember what goes on on tour stays on tour!

LA (AH) “Cinders” Ellor
Deploying for 6 months for JEF(M) 16 has been a very emotional time for me. This is because I am mum and a wife to a husband who also serve in the Armed Forces. This was my turn to deploy away from the ones I love.

The thought of leaving my husband alone at home with my 4 year old daughter was quite difficult for me to comprehend. It was bittersweet leaving loved ones behind, knowing that this will be a massive tick in the box in my naval career doing a 6 month deployment but also leaving those behind who are most dear to me.

The ship has been extremely busy with continuous exercises at sea and for me (I am Steward) also hosting defence engagements in the Middle East. This has included Defence Engagements, formal lunch and dinner parties with VIPs from Dubai, Bahrain, Muscat, Kuwait, Beirut and most recently Malta.

Keeping in touch with your loved ones and supporting them is key to a successful deployment in my opinion. For me one of the best ways to keep that link strong has been Storybook Waves as this has allowed my child to hear my voice every day even though I was thousands of miles away, on a CD that I recorded whilst on deployment.

As the deployment nears the end and the ship nears home, I end by saying that despite the hardships and though I am joyously looking forward to reuniting with my loved ones soon, JEF(M) 16 has been an experience of a lifetime.

Steward Lagai

Hello readers I am Petty Officer John Wicking and I’m writing this story because I have been in the Royal Navy for 37 years reaching my 6000th day at sea whilst on deployment, what a legend (ho ho!). I joined HMS OCEAN back in Aug 16, not long before we sailed, and became the Wardroom Mess Manager, so if your loved one is a Steward they have probably been working with me. As the Fleet Flagship we have often been called on to do Defence Engagement and other such high profile events. Of all these events the biggest function was definitely held in Beirut where we delivered and served over 500 guests at a Reception Capability Demonstration (RCD). The chefs have produced high quality food on a daily basis whilst delivering Michelin star quality for the Defence Engagements. Having spent a day or 2 deployed I have been able to enjoy some good runs ashore in my time, including Bermuda, Beirut, South Africa Singapore and everywhere in-between so my advice to your loved ones would be to enjoy every opportunity they get to see the world because that is the best part of any deployment. This may well be my last deployment but now as it draws to a close, and as always, I am really looking forward to seeing my family on the jetty after a demanding but enjoyable deployment.

Petty Officer (Catering Services) John Wicking
Ahoy there I am Able Seaman Daniel “Coops” Cooper (the one with the Fleet Flagship buoy!). I joined the ship in May 2016, with this being my first ship straight out of training, it helped being onboard for a few months prior to be getting deployed and being away from home for 6 months for the first time. It was hard saying goodbye to my family at first but I knew down the line that they would all be waiting there on the jetty for my homecoming.

Visiting so many ports and countries I’ve managed to see and take plenty of photographs and witnessed many things, making the trip even more enjoyable. This deployment has allowed me to make new friends for life and make so many memories which shall live with me for years to come but now the time has come to return home and we are about to get back to the UK after being away for 6 months and finally see all our families and friends. I’m full of excitement and joy knowing in only so many days’ time I’ll be able to get onto the jetty and be reunited with my family and the ones that mean the most for a nice bit of leave and a whole lot of catch up time.

Able Seaman Cooper

I would like to introduce myself as the new Commander Marine Engineer onboard HMS OCEAN. Having only joined at Christmas I will not claim to have gone the distance through this 6 ½ month deployment. However I am fully aware that the vast majority of the ME Department have, and worked tirelessly for the duration, maximising operational capability throughout. Their efforts are nothing but remarkable as it takes a relentless work ethic to provide the continual husbandry and sometimes nursing that the unique equipment within OCEAN demands. Our work is often taken for granted but I measure success by the ‘up time’ of the many systems we look after which is not just propulsion but a plethora of other essentials systems to keep a warship alive: electricity, fresh water, air conditioning, sanitation, fridges, boats etc… none of which have prevented HMS OCEAN completing her missions or performing as the UK Government has asked.

HMS OCEAN is now returning home and although morale buzzes more the closer we get, I am proud to say the entire ME dept and management team remain focussed on making sure this 22,000 tonnes of steel gets there on time. The remainder of the year promises more hard engineering graft; however, at this time my communal wish is that we all sustain our own operational capability by enjoying our Easter Leave, relaxing and adjusting back to life alongside in the UK. A successful deployment thank you and well done!

Commander Marine Engineer Jim Ellis
From the Editor

As this is the last issue of Ocean Wave for this deployment and likely my last issue as Editor before I depart to pastures new I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all of our loved ones back home for their patience and support over our long, sometimes arduous but wholly successful deployment. It is your support that keeps us going when times get tough and very shortly (9 more sleeps at the time of this issue!) we will be alongside in Devonport to show you all just how missed you have been and how appreciated you all are.

Writer Jevan Raynor, Editor

JACKSPEAK TRANSULATOR: SLANGUAGE OF THE ROYAL NAVY

Jackspeak Word of the Month:

**Sundowners (Sun-down-ers)**

1. A social event held at sunset.

Example: “Are you heading to the Quarterdeck for Loggies’ Sundowners?”

Illustration provided by Mr John Allan