Hello and welcome to Issue 5 of ‘The Rose’, the Official Newsletter of HMS MONTROSE. This month is a very special issue as it commemorates the first month of her 4 year long deployment as the United Kingdom’s forward deployed Type 23. Over the coming months HMS Montrose will sail around the world, providing support for a number of global operations, as well as promoting the UK’s interests overseas. The Rose’ will hopefully showcase our stories, the challenges we face, and our accomplishments as we strive daily to make this all possible.

October saw a great deal of hard work to make the ship ready for deployment. Overlayed with this were high profile visits from the Secretary of Defence, Gavin Williamson, and the Chief of the Defence Staff, both accompanied by several other senior officers. There was a final push from Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST – The Navy’s training team), some maintenance, and bringing onboard a lot of stores. This all culminated in HMS Montrose departing Plymouth on October 29th, as friends and family waved goodbye to their loved ones. Leaving UK waters for the final time this decade, the ship and her crew set their bows west ready to face the challenges ahead.

Many thanks to everyone who came out to see us at Devil’s Point – it was a beautiful morning and it meant a great deal to see so many people there. Hopefully those who could stay for coffee and cake afterwards found the information useful. I posted some information in response to some of the questions asked then in the password protected area of our Families’ Forum, about our return date, and how to contact the ship, both routinely and in a crisis. For those of you around the country who couldn’t make it down to see us off, please do have a look at the forum as you may have some similar questions to those asked on the day.

We receive an allocation of funding for families’ support whilst we are deployed, and a team of people onboard are working out plans to use it in the best way possible, supporting events, providing vouchers and other support mechanisms. As those plans develop we will let you know through this newsletter and on our forums.

Finally, BFPO advise to post any Christmas Mail for the ship by the last week in November.

Cdr Conor O’Neill RN
Goodbye…

On the cold morning of Monday the 29th of October, the ship’s company of HMS MONTROSE lined the upper deck, dressed in their best Number 1 uniform, as the ship let go all lines, and moved away from her berth in Devonport – the last time she will see Plymouth until 2022. The ship is being forward deployed to the Gulf for the next four years, as the Royal Navy’s forward operating platform in theatre and will operate out of the UK’s new “Naval Support Facility” in Bahrain. The crew however will be home long before then, as they will become Montrose (Port), part of a crew swap system once the ship is established in Bahrain.

As HMS Montrose turned and headed for the Sound, she was accompanied by the sound of the bagpipes – appropriate since she is affiliated with Scottish town of the same name. Soon the ship was in sight of Devils Point, and the Ship’s Company could see their friends and families gathered, on the hill side to see them off, cheering and waving, with flags and banners crowding the area. The crew waved back, as many of the onlookers ran to keep up with the ship as she sailed past and around the corner. Soon enough however the ship rounded Drake’s island, and was steaming out past the breakwater, heading west to begin her long voyage, and missions ranging from maintaining international relations to enforcing maritime security, en route to Bahrain. On behalf of the Ship’s Company we would like to thank all the friends, family and onlookers for their support.

Montrose began her deployment with a very brief detour to the town of Fowey, where she was greeted by her affiliated town with an armada of yachts and local mariners to wave her off. As the final boat passed, Montrose set sail south towards Miami. Unfortunately right in her path was Storm Oscar. Overnight the conditions worsened; the ship began to roll heavily as the swell began to hit the ship side on, causing even the most seasoned of sailors to feel the effects. As the storm across the Atlantic began to develop and build, the decision was taken to divert to the South of the Azores and avoid the worst of the weather.

Thankfully for the crew the plan paid off and as Montrose entered the “Azores High”, which brought with it fairer seas and warmer weather, the crew took the opportunity to hit the flight deck at lunch times to grab some fresh air (and a spot of sun).

With the worst of the weather behind us (or more precisely, North of us), Montrose started to make ground, travelling at roughly 300 miles a day, for Florida and Beyond. The crossing marking the start of Montrose’s 4 year future, and to the UK a very apt farewell!

…and Farewell!
The Montague Cup – Rowing the Atlantic

As Montrose continued her journey across the Atlantic Ocean at the start of her 7 month deployment, fine weather and a relaxed Sunday routine (Working from only 0900-1000) allowed for Ships Company to partake in the Montague Cup rowing competition.

The Montague cup, sponsored by Concept II Ltd, sees both Ships and Submarines alike compete on a time based system to see which Royal Navy platform can row 50 x 1 km in the fastest possible time. With good weather and fine seas, this event was the perfect way for Ships Company to socialise, build camaraderie and keep fit all while taking in the sunshine on a mid ocean passage Sunday.

The Captain kicked off the event with his rowing expertise, setting a very competitive benchmark for the afternoon.

As the final few times were recorded, Montrose continued her voyage across the Atlantic with a competitive time of 2 hours 57 minutes for the 50km row, and a few sets of very sore legs in the morning.

Halloween takes over the hanger

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. Fortunately for the crew of Montrose, Halloween saw the opportunity for Ship’s Company to pull their deployment costumes out of hiding and down tools for the evening. The hanger had a touch of the season, as it was decorated for the event hosted by the 18 person mess. Walks from all sorts of life attended, from pirates, to dinosaurs, and even Batman!

After all costumes were judged, the eventual winners were the Medical team (seen bottom right) who attended the event as resuscitation dolls – much to the surprise (or horror) of the ship’s Chaplin (Also Pictured). Other events included a very heated apple bobbing competition. While deployed it is often easy to get caught up in your work, and events like this one give the crew a chance to relax and reset in what can often be a very high tempo job.

LPT Forrest, the resident ‘Club Swinger’ onboard the deployed Frigate said “It was brilliant to see so many Ships Company take on the physical and mental challenge of the 1km row. A successful afternoon of PDev and friendly competition was enjoyed by all.”
Writer Cranston takes part in the Ship’s 50k rowing relay.

Important information – What to do in an emergency

If somebody becomes ill or any other serious matter and the ship is away from UK waters, please call the Joint Casualty Compassionate Center (JCCC) on 01452 519951. This telephone line is manned 24/7 and can also be used if you have any concerns about a friend or partner onboard, but remember please only use this number if the ship is outside of UK waters.

The full details of the JCCC are as follows:
Joint Casualty and Compasionate Centre – bereavement or family emergency
Personnel and Veterans Agency
RAF Innsworth
GLOUCESTER
GL3 1HW

HMS MONTROSE Families Forum

There is a Families Forum online provided by the Royal Navy and will be updated regularly throughout our deployment. It will provide a haven of information and will connect all families and friends of MONTROSE. You will be able to support other users and have questions answered. Visit the website below to register and get connected!

www.royalnavy.mod.uk/forums