From the Captain

Welcome back to our third edition of Ocean Wave – news about your ship from your ship.

We are now back alongside in Devonport for a few weeks after a busy and unusual month of trials and training. You will read about some of our exploits in the following articles and, again, I can report that everyone onboard has continued to learn and grow as we build our capacity and capability. Your friends and family, my ship’s company, have a growing purpose and efficiency which has stood up well to the challenges of operating further away from our home port.

Our emergence from refit will finish at the end of the year with our completion of the training and testing provided by Flag Officer Sea Training and his staff. So far, we have been able to predict much of our programme; that will, I’m afraid, change. Soon your ship may be called on to carry out our Nation’s bidding anywhere in the world and I would ask that you continue to provide the amazing level of support that we have come to rely on. Remember, however, that this support goes both ways and the Naval Family may also be able to help you if things get tough. Do you know how to let us know that there is a problem at home? The box at the bottom of the last page of this newsletter is a good place to start.

Tim Henry

From the Med and back... by air!

We finally set sail for Exercise Albanian Lion on Saturday the 30th of August feeling a sense of excitement and achievement for all that had been achieved during the regeneration of HMS Ocean and getting her on track to becoming operational again.

A few days after we sailed 820 Naval Air Squadron embarked with two Merlin Mk2 aircraft. This was the first time that aircraft had sailed with the ship and that all the aircraft maintenance would be done on board since coming out of refit! At points during the next few weeks we would have visiting aircraft on board, including RAF Chinooks and ‘Jungly’ Seakings from Commando Helicopter Force, based at Yeovilton.

After sailing through the Bay of Biscay, which was not as cruel as I am told it can be, we picked up the FOST (Flag Officer Sea Training) staff who came on board to teach and instruct us in the running of the ships safety procedures. They stayed with us for a week ensuring that the ship’s company completed all possible states of emergency effectively and safely.

During the working week we would always look forward to the inter-mess sports on Saturdays that were organised by the POPT. It was particularly good to play sports, or just relax in the glorious weather of the Mediterranean and top up our tans!

During this time it was plain to see the strength of the friendships and camaraderie that has already been built up onboard between different ship’s departments.

AB1 Mark Haslam
‘CLUBZ’ MED IS NO HOLIDAY!
As OCEAN deployed to the Mediterranean it was clear that the new gym facilities would be heavily tested during the period and so it turned out!

The CO’s Cup saw 2 events being contested, the first of which was the Super Teams competition which was won by 9ASRM. This was followed by the Bucketball event which was supported by 16 teams in total. Again this was a closely fought event, but the eventual winners were the Wardroom which meant they reclaimed the Cup.

In-between all of this the Ship competed for the 50 x 1km Concept II Fleet rowing challenge. The challenge was a little over 3 minutes of pain and heartache as rowers dug deep to try and beat the fastest time. The times were then sent away for analysis in preparation for the presentation of prizes later in the year to the Ship with the fastest overall time.

Gibraltar was always going to be a busy stop for the PT department as they looked to provide Football, Rugby, Squash, Golf and the famous Rock Race. On top of this there was also Kayaking and Water Sports utilising the excellent facilities provided within the Gun wharf Sailing Centre.

As is proving a regular feature for all OCEAN’s teams they returned from Gibraltar with excellent victories across the board. This leads the newly gelled squads quite nicely into the Navy Cup events that commence in October – let battle commence!

First Timers…
Two Weapon Engineers’ and a ‘Gollie’ talk about their first sea time experience.

So far, to serve on HMS Ocean has surpassed all expectations. From daily routines to life in the mess, everything has been more intense than I ever could have foreseen. The work itself has been varied and enjoyable, having worked on the Phalanx Close in Weapon System, the Automatic Small Calibre Gun, and Internal Communications. Each section has its own challenges but they also have their own unique rewards. HMS Ocean has also enabled me to further my career under the new Faraday promotion scheme. Knowing that the management team believe I have the potential to be fast tracked is extremely humbling.

ET Daniel Hanney.

Over the past couple of weeks we have been working up to and getting ready for Operational Sea Training. We have had FOST staff onboard teaching and observing what we do and how we go about our work.

It has been fun and hard work at times but overall rewarding especially when the FOST staff said we were safe to be at sea! I have also been able to help in an ‘operation defect’ on our main navigation radar, we had to take the whole antenna down to rectify a problem with water ingress which was stopping us getting our navigation feed for the bridge which aids us in safe navigation.

ET Alex Isted

Where do I begin? Leaving Devonport I had quite a few mixed emotions, sad, anxious, going into the unknown, having to leave family and my girlfriend. But also excitement about going on my first deployment and pride because I am out there doing my part for my country, knowing that I am making my family and my girlfriend proud, but most of all making myself proud! The thrill of being out in the Mediterranean, it’s quite a good buzz. Going into the unknown for the first time not knowing what to expect.
yet attacking every obstacle that gets chucked at us!

Working in the OPS room can be tiring at some points and there can be long days. I was placed with Leading Seaman Evans to get me through my task books, which he’s managed to do with the encouragement of my good old oppo AB Clarke and my sea daddy AB Gibson.

My first run ashore with HMS OCEAN will be in Gibraltar and I should imagine it will be quite messy! I am hoping to be doing kayaking in the day time and then it’s time to party because the whole ship’s company is due a little break having being worked so hard for the last few weeks!

AB Curtis

A REAL CHARITY BASH!

The RN/RM Charity often supports members of the RN and RM with regular financial contributions being made in support of personnel.

To try and raise funds for the sought after the CO kindly agreed to allow HMS OCEAN to run a unique event in the form of a Blind Boxing show. First impressions amongst Ships Company were mixed as many felt it was dangerous and others had simply never heard of such an event. Those who had seen the event before though were 100% supportive and ensured that the show went ahead.

The contests runs similar to boxing itself; however the boxers are blind folded with a large padded glove on their weaker hand. As soon as the referee gives the order to ‘box’ each boxer has to shake there rattle which is held in their strong hand. It is the shaker that assists the boxers in locating their opponents.

The show was an overwhelming success with the auction alone raising over £600. It is estimated that once all monies have been collected the overall amount raised will be in excess of £1000!

POPT Mark Feighery

EX ALBANION LION
(or how to turn the Blue Navy Green)!

The first serial of the exercise was to disembark the FOST staff. The weather was pretty horrendous and needless to say the FOST staff looked pretty ‘green’ when they got to shore! Once the Sqn had cleaned up the mess in the LCVPs (Err!) it was time to move onto the second serial, a Tactical Beach Reconnaissance. With Cpl Scotty ‘Brasso’ Billington leading the way the Recce Team, along with a number of Young Officers spent the next three hours crawling around a mosquito infested beach eventually working out that it was not really suitable for any form of LCVP landing Operations!

The next day saw Ocean going to assault stations and the LCVPs were able to deploy with the full Young Officer contingent (67 personnel) for an amphibious WADER (a rehearsal for an amphibious assault). The main bulk of this WADER involved teaching the YOs Cross-decking drills and Capsize drills, meaning that they inevitably spent a large time in the water!

The trip back to OCEAN again saw the majority of our passengers looking rather ‘green’ and leaning over the side - now that’s what you call a chuck up!

Mne Mellor

Pusser Provides...

The ship sailed at the end of August and our medical team’s first aid skills were immediately put to the test during man overboard drills and reactions to casualties during fire and flood exercises. When the FOST (Flag Officer Sea Training) staff embarked during our second week at sea, they put the medical team through their paces by taking the PMO (Principal Medical Officer) out of the serials and encouraged the junior members of the team to step up into those roles.
The Writers have ensured that the Ship’s Company are paid correctly and that all the appropriate allowances, including Longer Separated Service (LSA or “sea pay”) are started on time. The team initiated the deployed welfare package so that everyone receives free Paradigm telephone calls in order to phone their loved ones at home. In preparation for Gibraltar, over £10,000 worth of cheques were cashed and on arrival they also received and sorted 40 sacks of mail.

The chefs have been hard at it too. They had to adapt to the changes in programme such as night time flying serials and the short notice embarkation of FOST staff, adjusting meal times, arranging accommodation and remaining flexible throughout.

The Whole logistics team worked closely together during the planning and staging of Non Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) and Operation DRYOUT exercises, which involved providing a full range of support for feeding, clothing, documenting and providing medical care for evacuees (during NEO) and for embarking military personnel (during DRYOUT). This period at sea has been a very valuable learning opportunity and about 70 percent of the Department also experienced their first flight deck BBQ, were given an opportunity to take part in ‘Hands to Bathe’ and for a lucky few, their first run ashore in the Royal Navy in Gibraltar.

LAST BUT DEFINITELY NOT LEAST!

The ME Department has been hard at it to keep the Ship at sea and maintain the services to support her sailors. There were some long days and many challenges but, as ever, the Department achieved all asked of it and more. The past five weeks has seen the department heavily involved in many operations ranging from Refuelling At Sea to Boarding Training. We have also completed a Safety and Administration Check and taken the lead in Fire Fighting and Damage Control training, a field historically championed by the Marine Engineers.

A stop in Gibraltar offered the opportunity for some well earned rest and relaxation in preparation for our next busy maintenance period back in Devonport. ET(ME) Tom Ashcroft had the following to say, “I have really enjoyed experiencing life at sea and have achieved a lot of my task book. This period has been made even better by my first Royal Navy ‘run ashore’ I can’t wait for the next!”

Lieutenant Alex McLennan Royal Navy

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!