A Message from
Captain Rex Cox Royal Navy
Commanding Officer

A warm welcome from all onboard! This is the first of many updates to come as the Ship makes its way South on our deployment – and what a deployment it has been so far. As I hope you will see from these pages all of your friends and family have been very busy!

As you know it all started on that crisp morning in October when we sailed – we were all so pleased to see so many of you on the harbour walls at Old Portsmouth to wave us off. Since then all onboard have been working and training hard. I am always struck by the professional and enthusiastic way the ‘Dragons’ approach these challenges and I know that your support is fundamental to that – thank you.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all well and to thank you for your continued help, be you family members, friends or our ever so important affiliates. I very much hope that you enjoy reading this edition of Lem Draig and would like to take the opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

RETURN OF THE DRAGON

Returning to her home port of Portsmouth HMS DRAGON spent the Summer and Autumn preparing to deploy to the South Atlantic. This was an exciting and busy time for all involved as the Ship’s Company and contractors worked tirelessly to make sure all the necessary preparations were made for what will be a challenging deployment.

One of the most unusual preparations before the Ship headed South was the replacement of the Ship’s red dragon, which has now been proudly reinstated on the port bow. All of us love it and are very proud to have it back. Of course, it would not have been possible without the generosity of the Ship’s sponsors for which we are extremely grateful. Having the dragon back on HMS DRAGON has generated a real sense of excitement. The dragon represents both the Dragon of Wales and the Dragon of St George and it seems a fitting way to salute our links with both Cardiff and York.

“We yield but to Saint George”
FAMILIES DAY 2014

With the last of the summer heat blessing DRAGON and her Ship’s Company – the Ship was delighted to welcome all of her families and affiliates onboard to enjoy a day at sea.

This was the Ships chance to enlighten friends and families alike as to where we worked and what we all do when we are away from home.

Whilst alongside the Ship’s boarding team gave a demonstration of the techniques they use when boarding suspicious vessels.

With tugs nestled alongside, DRAGON left the jetty and slowly started making way her out of the harbour so that guests could enjoy a day out in the Solent.

Watching the families it was clearly evident all were excited at the prospect of the day ahead. The Ship’s Lynx helicopter even came out all the way from its home in Yeovilton to conduct a role demonstration! For the rest of the afternoon the families and affiliates spent time familiarising themselves with the different parts of the Ship and seeing what it was like to live and work onboard.

It was soon lunchtime and all onboard enjoyed the chance to tuck into the hog roast that was laid on and then finish off the afternoon was a large piece of the special cake that was made for the occasion – it didn’t last long! Everyone left cheerful with some treasured memories.

DEPLOYMENT DAY

With all the preparations complete the time soon came for DRAGON and her Ship’s Company to head off past the Round Tower once more. Less than a year since Dragon returned from her last trip it was time to say goodbye. What a year it has been for everyone and as ever Dragon sailed on a bright sunny and crisp morning to the waving families without which we would not be able to do our jobs so well.

Sailing with us to wish the team well was the lady sponsor, Mrs Susie Bossier, who launched the Ship when DRAGON was new to the Fleet. She had a great time and wanted to pass on this message:

“We yield but to Saint George”
“I just wanted to say a huge thank you the Ship’s crew for giving Paul and I such a very special day on Monday. We were looked after so well during our entire stay, thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many of the crew, learning more about how things work and our delicious lunch. Our flight home in the Lynx was fabulous, and it was huge fun landing in our own field!

We were so impressed with the professionalism, friendliness and cheerfulness of everyone we talked to, particularly when they must all have been feeling miserable at leaving their families and apprehensive about what the next months will be like.

Paul and I send you all our very best wishes for a successful and fun deployment - we will be thinking of you and following you on our atlas!”

The Lady Sponsor is met by the XO – Lt Cdr J Allfree RN
Heading West all onboard quickly set to getting settled into life at sea. Of course, the first priority was to ensure that all the Ship’s Company were drilled and exercised to make sure that all we had learnt from the summer was still fresh in our minds. Now with Royal Marines and even an Army Officer onboard the first few days were also an important time for our new joiners.

HMS DRAGON alongside in Puerto Rico for her first port visit.

However, with the UK Autumn behind us it could not go unnoticed that the weather was starting to improve and the breaking out of shorts, knobby knees and traditional RN deck-shoes was a big moment! A few weeks into the deployment and we all started to think about our first stop – this time to the Tropical Island of Puerto Rico! In true Dragon style all onboard wanted to get the most from the visit. With a rainforest, sandy beaches and plenty to keep the sailors occupied fun was certainly had by all. Some decide to take a dip in the rainforest fresh-water waterfall, whilst others used the time to paddle in a beautiful lagoon. Of course, not everyone is as adventurous and some took the opportunity to explore the cafes and bars whilst conducting an in depth survey into which establishment served the best Mojito! There was even time for a spot of Golf.

The Flight Commander, Lt Rob Dixon RN, shows off his HMS DRAGON brolly to a real dragon at the golf course.
A TIGHT SQUEEZE

After the fun in Puerto Rico the Ship soon sailed again and this time the focus had changed. The Caribbean is notorious for drug runners and on route to the Panama Canal all onboard had to be alert and ready should we encounter anything suspicious going on! Whilst the canal seems the obvious squeeze, what was also tight was fitting in a 18-strong film crew from Captain Naval Recruiting’s office.

As a result, and from Boxing Day you may soon see some faces (and a Destroyer) you recognise on the TV as Dragon was lucky enough to be selected as the film-set for the Royal Navy’s recruitment advert for the next 3 years! Never a Ship to do things in half measures everyone from the CO down got involved and with flying, damage control, boat operations, time in the Operations room and around the whole Ship we are all excited to see the outcome –so keep those eyes peeled on the goggle box!

But the squeeze was not to stop there as the Ship headed to navigate the difficult, but once in a lifetime opportunity, to go through the Panama Canal. Arriving the evening before it was an early start for the Bridge team as Dragon set off through the locks at 0400 in the morning. Unlike the more commonly navigated Suez Canal the Panama is famous for its locks where a Ship can expect to actually climb up and down hill as it makes it way through the 82 KM of waterway to the final destination of Panama City. A truly spectacular experience for all of the Ship's Company. Thank you to all of those who looked for us on the Panama Canal Company web cams.

“We yield but to Saint George”
Popping out of the Canal the next thing on Dragon’s to do list was to pay homage and salute the sea God – King Neptune - as the Ship and her Company headed towards the equator. For the unaccustomed this is where each Royal Navy Ship asks permission to ‘cross the line’ as the Ship steams over the Equator. As with all things there is no such thing as a free lunch and whilst the sea god often allows passage – there is a price to pay!

To mark this event a Ship is visited by a myriad of characters (who despite accusations are not the Ship’s Senior Rates in fancy dress) to discipline the crew, get them in line and ensure that they receive Neptune in the appropriate way. From a pack of bears, policeman, a nurse, barber, doctor, Mrs Neptune and King Neptune himself it’s a right jamboree.

As ever the Senior Rates Mess, led by Neptune (our very own WO1 Alex Orr) did a simply fantastic job to build the stage, props and other skylarking gear needed to make it a great day. The legend goes that to be accepted by Neptune all those that have not crossed the line must appear before him; take their medicine, be attended to by the barber, nurse and the doctor before being dunked and baptised in the water by the bears. No small matter! But with over 145 newbies to welcome in this way it was a true whole-Ship sport and turned out to be a great afternoon. Of course the CO, XO and all the HODs got a good dunking – the fact that they had all (well except the WEO and Ops Officer) crossed the line before was not enough to save them!
Able Seaman (Communications Information Specialist) Ben Miller-Glentworth

Modern warships have a lot of sophisticated computer systems that range from those that help propel the warship through the water to those that fire missiles! Not to mention those that helped write this article and e-mail it! The team that is responsible for ensuring that the computers and radios on board function correctly are known as “The Communicators”.

This small team has recently received several new joiners prior to leaving for the South Atlantic, amongst them is AB(CIS) Ben Miller-Glentworth.

Ben joined the Royal Navy in December 2013 and completed his professional training in July 2014 as a Communication and Information Specialist. Ben, whose father also served in the Navy as a Chef, was keen to show his leadership skills at both phases of his training by being nominated as the Class Leader. He took this nomination to heart as his father was also a class leader during training.

Now onboard his first Ship, HMS Dragon, he is starting to settle in and is becoming familiar with the Ship and its Company of Dragons. Ben said, “Joining your first Ship is quite a daunting experience, especially when the deployment gets changed twice two weeks prior to leaving and you’re trying to find your feet. But I am really enjoying it so far and I am very excited about the challenges ahead.”

While away on Deployment Ben has decided to get involved with the Ships media team, “I have always had an interest in design and the end products; this is probably the best way to rekindle that interest.”

Ben is quite a keen performer, as well as performing in two pantomimes, he also plays the Saxophone. “Before joining up, I was in a six piece jazz and swing band called The Blue Notes”.

So, you never know, you may hear one of his rendition’s one of these days!
As HMS Dragon set sail for her seven month adventure, Del joined the crew on the upper deck to witness the action and wave goodbye to friends and family. As the Ship sailed past the Round Tower and out to sea, lots of people were stood cheering and waving us off. With the red dragon on the side of the Ship there was no mistaking which Ship was leaving port that morning!

Del was slightly nervous and sad to be leaving his family for such a long time but he knows he will see them all when he gets back and he will never be lonely as he is surrounded by his friends onboard Dragon.

Del is looking forward to visiting lots of new places and to receiving letters from home telling him all that is happening, he is even hoping for a few Christmas presents, what do you get a Dragon for Christmas??? I hope he likes surprises…

Remember to write to Del if you would like to send a special message to anyone onboard.

Can you find the Dragon words?

Words to find:
claw, dragon, fire, puff, tail, toothless, wings.

COLOUR ME IN!
AFFILIATES & SPONSORS

The City of Cardiff
The City of York

HMS Dragon: www.royalnavy.mod.uk/operations-and-support/surface-fleet/future-ships/air-defence-destroyer-type-45/dragon/
Royal Welsh Regiment: www.army.mod.uk/infantry/regiments/royalwelsh
Worshipful Company of Plaisterers: www.plaistererslivery.co.uk

The Merchant Adventurers’ York: http://www.theyorkcompany.co.uk/
Nestle: www.nestle.co.uk

The Welsh Livery Guild: www.welshliveryguild.org
The British Warships Association: www.auxiliary-crew-association.co.uk
Cardiff United Services Mess: www.usmcardiff.co.uk
Howells School: www.howells-cardiff.gdst.net
Cardiff Business Club: www.cardiffbusinessclub.org
Chevaliers Bretvin: www.bretvins.co.uk

Naomi House: www.naomihouse.org.uk
Malvern St James Girls’ School: http://www.malvernstjames.co.uk
Applefields School: http://www.applefieldsschool.co.uk

Royal Naval Association / Royal British Legion Cardiff: www.royal-naval-association.co.uk
Royal Thames Yacht Club: www.royalthames.com
DEKS UK: www.deks.co.uk
Geldards LLP: www.geldards.co.uk

6 Squadron RAF, Leuchars: www.raf.mod.uk/organisation/6squadron.cfm
Welsh Motoring Writers: www.motoringwriters.com
The Dragon School: www.dragonschool.org
5th Barry Sea Scouts: www.barrydistrictscouts.btck.co.uk/Groups/5thBarry