Ahoy from all onboard DRAGON now firmly into 2015; and what a start to the year it has been. Since the last edition we have completed our patrol of the Falklands, visited Tristan De Cunha and enjoyed a well earned rest and completed some maintenance in South Africa. As ever Team DRAGON, your friends and family, continue to impress all they meet with their can-do attitude and enthusiasm. Everyone has been getting stuck in and many of their exploits are highlighted in this edition of Lem Draig, which I hope you enjoy reading. We are now very much heading North and on our way home. With an exciting programme in West Africa ahead of us I look forward to writing to you again with the last edition before we return to Portsmouth. Enjoy issue 12.

FAREWELL FALKLANDS

After all that Christmas fun in South Georgia it was time for DRAGON to head back West and complete her time in and around the Falkland Islands. With only a few weeks left in the area before heading East again there was certainly a lot to squeeze in.

A visit by a contingent from the 1st Falkland Island Scouts Group was first on the list. Led by SLt Dan Battar, the Scout group enjoyed the chance to take a look at all the Ship’s systems, equipment and take part in some fun hands-on demonstrations of our fire-fighting gear and body armour. But it wasn’t just the kids who enjoyed the visit; their parents and chaperones also seemed to enjoy themselves and were impressed by the Ship's capabilities and the sheer size of DRAGON. Unsurprisingly several of the Scouts even confessed to a strong desire to join the Navy. To show their gratitude, they gifted the Ship a very potent cake that was probably more alcohol than cake mixture; needless to say, it did not last long.

All aboard.. This was the next call of the day as the next set of boy Scouts in the form of the Resident Infantry Company (RIC) embarked DRAGON on exercise. This time it was a group of soldiers from the Duke of Lancaster’s Regiment who were on the Falklands as part of the UK’s commitment to protect the islands. Onboard as part of the six-monthly exercise (Ex Cape Bayonet)
DRAGON was tasked to embark the company and insert them into positions around the island, providing Naval Gunfire Support to bombard the shore ahead of their arrival by helicopter. This was another first for DRAGON and having 80+ ‘pongos’ (as us sailors say) onboard certainly was a challenge enjoyed by all – mind you we are not sure how much our land-loving friends liked it; sea sickness was the order of the day for most of them.

With the Army now safely back in their tents it was time for DRAGON to pop over to the Island’s capital, Stanley – no visit to the Falklands would be complete without it. In its own right a very famous place the town enjoys very strong links with the Navy and all the DRAGON’s enjoyed the chance to meet the locals and see for themselves the numerous Falkland’s War memorials and even the Governor’s House where the whole thing started. Sadly DRAGON is too big to come alongside in Stanley itself, but nestled safely at her anchorage a mile away, the Ship played host to both a capability demonstration and with the help of some very nippy boats provided by the Falkland Island’s Company (same guys who own the Gosport Ferry – fun fact)
the Ship was able to open to visitors. Add a visit by the Island’s TV and Radio outfits it certainly was an whole-island affair. Even Stanley Growers (the Islands fruit and veg suppliers) adapted one of their signs to pay tribute to our visit.

But we cannot stay in the Falklands forever so after a hugely rewarding time around the Island’s over December and January it was time to head East and towards South Africa. In true DRAGON style the Ship’s Company achieved a lot during its time, everything from: working with the Typhoons to bring on the islands air defence capabilities, landing the army ashore, providing Naval Gun Fire Support, conducting various settlement visits and even seeing enough Penguins to last a life time. We even managed to educate our RAF colleagues in Mount Pleasant Airbase to what a Type 45 can do, as well as teaching them some of our Jack Speak. As ever the friendliness of the islanders endured and on departure DRAGON received a very warm farewell for a job well done.
Always Remembered

Before we move on it could not go without a mention that DRAGON also took the time to remember the fallen who lost their lives in the Falklands War in 1982. Both HMS Sheffield and HMS Coventry were lost due to enemy action in the campaign and each ship has a memorial on Sealion and Pebble Island respectively. Led by the XO and then CO some Dragon's (using the help from the ship's Lynx) made it ashore and spent some time carrying out some husbandry and maintenance to make sure the memorials are neat and tidy. A moving experience for those that went along and a big DRAGON thank you to the families who live on the island for their warm welcome and continued work to keep the memorials in good order.
TRISTAN DE CUNHA

TRISTAN DE CUNHA

A rare sight – Tristan De Cunha appears from over the horizon.

There isn't much out in the middle of the Atlantic, however, 2200 nautical miles North East of the Falklands there is a place called Tristan De Cunha. A less known British Overseas Territory of Saint Helena it is home to around 290 British people (with only 7 family names in use) and is world famous for being the most remote inhabited island in the world. Of course, DRAGON could not resist taking a look on our way to Africa and it was decided that we could pay the island a two day visit. It was also a great chance to see if we could help the islanders in anyway and for most of the Ship’s Company it would be there first time to the volcanic islands.

As you'd expect getting on the island is not easy and even the Ship's boats can struggle in the high winds, big tide and large surf. So whilst we managed to get a small contingent ashore (including the Royal Marines detachment) it was the Lynx helicopter who was able to help the most. The Flight (as they are known onboard), played a key part in the visit, using the helicopter to move various items and resources such as fence posts and building material around the island. “We managed to do two years work in about 3-4 hours” said Petty Officer ‘Piggy’ Pigford, “they don't have many vehicles on the island, and have to carry everything up the Volcano to the sheep pastures by hand. We managed to save the islanders a lot of time.”

The Ship’s Lynx and ground team deliver vital stores and supplies to the hard-to-reach places.

The Ship’s Royal Marines take a break before they make their climb.

“We yield but to Saint George”
The Captain, Executive Warrant Officer (EWO) and a few other personnel took the chance to meet with some children and teachers at the school. “They were interested in the guns the Ship had and were really excited to watch the helicopter delivering stores around the island” said the EWO. The Marines on the other hand could not miss the chance to go for a ‘yomp’ (or Royal Marines speak for climb) and decided to try and ascend to the top of the volcano. After all this work there was even time to relax and a quick game of football with the locals rounded off a truly brilliant stop.
THIS IS SOUTH AFRICA!

After a very busy first half of the deployment (Puerto Rico, Panama Canal, Chile, Patagonia Canal and the Falklands) it was time for both the Ship and team DRAGON to have a well earned rest. Heading to the South African Naval Base in Simon’s Town, the Ship was joined by engineering teams from the UK to ensure that the Ship was ready in all respects for the next phase of our trip. Enjoying a warm relationship with the South Africans DRAGON took the chance to give her saluting guns a run out and as we entered the port a 21 gun salute echoed out across the bay whilst the Ship’s Company manned the upper deck in their best tropical uniforms.
Just Nuisance….

Home to the South African Navy the town has a long history with the Royal Navy dating back to the eighteenth century when this part of South Africa was a Crown Colony. During WW2 the Town was famous for its mascot; Able Seaman “Just Nuisance”. This sailor is unique in Navy history as being the only dog ever to sign up. He was a troubled sailor, refusing to leave bars at closing time and sleeping in senior officer’s beds for which he was often taken to the Captain’s table and awarded punishments such as “deprived of bones for one week”. The sailors of Simon’s Town looked after Just Nuisance well and when he finally died in 1944, interned him in a grave within the Naval Base with full military honours.

But it wasn’t all work and maintenance and, of course, South Africa had loads to do for the whole Ship’s Company. For some Adventurous training was the order of the day and led by a team of AT specialist from HMS TEMERAIRE most of the Ship’s Company got the chance to climb Table Mountain, go paddle boarding, throw themselves down a mountain on a bike or even try surfing. The best part was that it was all free of charge. All onboard DRAGON would like to thank the team from TEMERAIRE for organising what turned out to be a great few weeks. But the fun was not limited to those on AT; and with stories coming back to the ship of people sky diving, great white shark cage diving and plenty of eating it is fair to say that everyone had a great time.

F-A-B DRAGON. Not quite international rescue…

This edition of Lem Draig could not go out without a mention (even brief) of the DRAGON’s who rescued a walker who had injured himself on his way up Table Mountain. Themselves on their way down the mountain after a tiring hike up in the morning, the group leapt to the rescue of a man who had injured his leg and was unable to climb down. With a Royal Marine in charge the decision was soon taken to give the guy a piggy back down the remaining 300m descent. With DRAGON’s very own Ops Officer (Lt Cdr Claire Thompson) leaping ahead to get help. A real team effort all involved took turns to help carry the man (who was not light) down the make-shift steps to the

“We yield but to Saint George”
We yield but to Saint George

Dragon comes into Cape Town – the clouds do not stop the great view of Table Mountain.

Awaiting police car. Exhausting it was a great example of military team work and determination not to let the man (in his 60s) dehydrate and fall ill. As ever there was a plus side as the DRAGON walkers hitched a lift in the police car and saved themselves the remaining walk back to their wagon!

A Tale of ‘Three’ Capes....

You will remember from the last edition that DRAGON successfully sailed Cape Horn at the Southern most point of South America. With that under the Ship’s Company’s belt it seemed only fitting that we crack the other one (or is it two)? Next on the bucket list was Cape Agulhas, sometimes confused with The Cape of Good Hope, which is just a few miles South East of Simon’s Town.

“We yield but to Saint George”
For many onboard who had now sailed around both Capes it was the final task needed so that they can have the right to place both elbows on the table during dinner time – one for each Cape rounded.

But where is the third Cape? Well that would of course be the Ship’s unforgettable visit at the end of the period to Cape Town. It was not all play as DRAGON took the chance to complete some rewarding anti-submarine exercises with the South African Navy on route. Add that to a visit by an inspection team from our very own Portsmouth Flotilla – it was a busy time indeed. Back at sea DRAGON and GORV teamed up to ‘for exercise’ hunt down the South African Submarine MANTHATISI. At sea to train one of her own officers to be their newest submarine Captains, the 3-day exercise allowed both Navies to work on their Submarine Warfare techniques. As ever it was a group effort with the Ops room team on point searching the sea with DRAGON’s sonar whilst the Lynx helicopter was our eye in the sky.

After all that it was time for DRAGON to swing into the Cape Town. Berthed in the iconic Victoria and Albert Waterfront the Ship really was pride of place amongst the shops, restaurants and cafes which adorn the waterfront at the foot of Table Mountain. Add an official reception for over 350 people, tours, UK industry visits and the Ship open to over 2500 visitors in 6 hours, it certainly was a great way to show the world the Ship we are most proud of.

Not bad! Table Mountain proved an excellent backdrop for the reception alongside in Cape Town.
Dydd Gwyl Dewi Hapus (or Happy St David’s Day for short)

With not much of an excuse needed another St David’s Day at sea for DRAGON meant another photo opportunity for the Ship’s Welshmen/women. With a St David’s Day themed church service (including Welsh Cakes) it seemed fitting for all the Ship’s Welsh to proudly sport their flag. This time the photograph was taken on the fore-deck as DRAGON was completing a replenishment at sea with the GORV. Happy St David’s day everyone.

Oh and Red Nose Day

Hot off the press comes this DRAGON salute to Red Nose Day. At sea on route to our next stop the Ship’s Company could not resist the chance to get this shot. A special thanks needs to go to the Chief Bosuns Mate (or Buffer as we say) and his team along with the aircrew. Without them we would not have been able to get this photo – oh and to the XO for his patience.
British warships normally contain dozens of sailors, they maintain and fire the weapons, keep the hull clean and tidy, power the lights and engines that propel us through the World's oceans as well as provide us with food while we do all of these things. In most peoples’ minds the Navy patrols the seas and we often forget that an integral part of the Royal Navy capabilities when deployed around the Globe is the ability to help or if necessary fight from the sea and sky ashore. In order to achieve this complex and difficult feat DRAGON has embarked some of its special brethren; the Royal Marines.

Normally found on the larger warships DRAGON has been fortunate to receive a small contingent of ‘Royals’, who have been sailing with us since we left the UK last October. One of these is unique individuals is Royal Marine Alex Maskery.

Originally from Newport in Wales, ‘Maskers’ joined the Corps in December 2013, after working in a warehouse at Tesco. This is his first operational deployment; “I enjoy the travelling and seeing the world” said the 24 year old now living in Plymouth.

LEM DRAIG asked him what his favourite part of the 32 week of intensive Royal Marine training was; “The best part for me was the Commando phase because you are almost at the end of training and getting the prize possession of a Royal, the green lid.”

Alex also enjoys getting involved with the Ship’s Company activities, during the Christmas period he was a member of the cast for the Christmas play, “I never thought I’d spend my first deployed Christmas at sea dressed as the Captain of HMS DRAGON!” While more recently he has enjoyed celebrating with the rest of the Welsh Ships Company Saint David’s Day and taking part in a ‘Welsh’ photograph during a recent replenishment at sea with RFA GOLD ROVER.

With only a couple of months left until DRAGON gets back home, Alex is looking forward to seeing his girlfriend and enjoying a break before heading off to a different part of the world, continuing his career as a Royal Marines Commando.
KIDS CORNER
Del the Dragon

Over the past few weeks Del has been learning how to play one of the ‘Matelots’ favourite games, Uckers. Popular with many onboard – if you want to find the Captain and XO at lunch time just follow the sound of the Uckers dice.

Similar to Ludo it is based on the same principles; get your four pieces around the board before the opposition. As ever being a Navy game there are all sorts of other rules and cheating that goes on but that makes it all the more fun. Uckers is very popular and played by Navies around the world including the Royal Australian Navy, Royal New Zealand Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy.

Sadly for Del he was unable to win his first game of Uckers, but he continues to practice with everyone he can find to hopefully beat someone soon. Come on Del.
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
The South Wales Sea Cadets: www.southwalesscc.org.uk