Message from the Executive Officer

Firstly, it is an honour to introduce the second newsletter from our deployment. As the Executive Officer it has been extremely rewarding to deploy with such a fine Ship’s Company and what an exceptional start we have had – to date we have visited 9 ports including Lisbon, Azores, Bermuda, Key West, New Orleans, Mexico, Colombia, Panama and Chile. In each, the Ship has been extremely busy representing UK interests overseas. To achieve so much in such a short period of time is testament to the skill and professionalism of the Ship’s Company, justifying all the hard work that took place before we deployed.

Most importantly, I speak for the Ship’s company when I say that we remain extremely grateful to you all for your ongoing support. To choose just a few stories from everything we have done so far has proved challenging, but I hope this newsletter gives you some insight into the deployment so far.

Ship’s visit to New Orleans

New Orleans’ longstanding naval tradition was celebrated in April as NOLA Navy Week returned to the Mississippi Riverfront. During that week, HMS LANCASTER representing the Royal Navy, joined 5 other ships from other nations including USS WASP, USS COLE and USS JAMES E WILLIAMS of the United States Navy, HMCS ATHABASKAN from Canada and USCG Dauntless of the US Coast Guard. During the week long stay, HMS LANCASTER offered public tours of the Ship as well as many other engagements, ranging from cooking competitions to receptions. Overall the event was a resounding success for both the City of New Orleans and the Ship who were sorry to leave.

New Orleans’ Community Relations

During our time in New Orleans, HMS LANCASTER made an effective contribution to the ongoing regeneration efforts of the city’s suburbs. Even though the devastating Hurricane Katrina tore through the city almost a decade ago, the level of destruction still leaves large swaths of the city in varying states of disrepair. The work undertaken involved demolishing by hand a derelict property, spending time in a swamp eradicating invasive species of flora and clearing diseased trees. Sentiments of gratitude were expressed by many people right across the city.

Royal Baby Picture

The Ship produced one of the iconic pictures for the birth of the Royal Baby - Princess Charlotte. It was no mean feat to take the photo, involving half the Ship’s Company, careful planning, and the Wildcat helicopter used to take the picture.
Mexico Visit
The visit to Veracruz, Mexico saw the Ship greeted by a band, dancers and musicians as it came alongside. The visit involved multiple receptions with our Mexican brothers, a presentation on Diversity and Inclusion held on board HMS LANCASTER and a conference held at the Mexican Naval College. The visit ended with an exercise at sea with the Mexican Ship VERACRUZ.

Panama Canal
Transiting one of the wonders of the modern world, and one of the most well known and busiest water ways was an incredible experience for HMS LANCASTER and her crew. The transit was made on the way to Balboa, the 8th stop of the deployment. It involved a 10 hour journey starting at 0500 in the morning and involved transiting 6 locks in total.

Sports News
The Ship's sports teams have been exceptionally busy during the past few weeks. Highlights have seen the Ship's Football Team beat the Colombian Navy select XI, the first time an RN Ship has managed to win this coveted title. The Rugby team have blown away all the opposition they have faced with the exception of a narrow loss to Loyola University in New Orleans. The Golf team have also been active playing the Bermuda Police on the famous Port Royal Golf Course.

Hands to Bathe
The Ship’s Company took a welcome break to cool down in the Caribbean and enjoyed a swim in the ocean during the Ship’s ‘Hands to Bathe’ event.

Gunnery
During the Ship’s time at sea, the focus changed from defence engagement, to conducting war fighting exercises. This has included successful 4.5 and 30mm gunnery shoots, as well as 50 Cal shoots, used by the embarked Royal Marine Snipers using their superb skills firing at targets from the Wildcat.