A Message from
Captain Rex Cox Royal Navy
Commanding Officer

A warm welcome to this final edition of “Lem Draig” from DRAGON's second deployment. It seems an age since we set sail last October for what has been a remarkable adventure. A deployment that over 190 days has seen DRAGON visit 4 Oceans, 4 Continents and 15 countries, crossing the Atlantic twice and steaming a total of some 22,500 nm. We have rounded both Cape Horn and The Cape of Good Hope, hosted King Neptune, visited the most remote community on the planet (Tristan Da Cunha) and encountered jungle, ice bergs and desert; every member of the Ship’s Company has at least one “I was chased by a Seal, Arctic Tern or Cape Baboon” story!

Throughout the deployment DRAGON has conducted Defence Engagement, Capacity Building for foreign Navies and Maritime Security Operations, whilst providing deterrence in the South Atlantic. It is however the people who make DRAGON what she is and the Ship’s Company have delivered everything asked of them and more, in the finest traditions of the Royal Navy, with professionalism and an irrepressible sense of humour.

This will sadly be my last forward in Lem Draig as I shortly handover Command. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Dragons for their contributions, both individually and as a team, that have made this Deployment such a success. I would also like to express my personal gratitude and admiration to you, our families, friends and affiliates who have supported DRAGON during our time away on this important task; your help and unwavering support has been pivotal to the Ship’s success.

It has been an absolute honour and privilege to Command HMS DRAGON and the men and women who make her so special and I wish you all the very best for the future. Rex Cox

UNEXPECTED STOP

Now on our way North with RFA GOLD ROVER, both Ships got the chance to make an unscheduled stop to Walvis Bay Namibia. Whilst we had stopped to take a sip of fuel, the Ship’s Company made the most of their short time alongside to see what this infrequently visited country had to offer. Famously home to the Skeleton Coast many of the Dragon’s took the chance to get out and about and a quick-quad-bike in the desert was in order.
Others choose to visit some of the great eateries in the local town and for some they were even lucky enough to find the time to complete their fitness test!

**OBANGAME EXPRESS**

Waving goodbye to the sand dunes, Dragon continued to her next task, this time in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). These are some of the most pirate infested waters in the world and it is here that Dragon was to take part in Exercise OBANGAME EXPRESS. The aim was to increase regional cooperation, boost information sharing and improve the anti-piracy abilities of the countries who share a shore line with this infamous region. Meaning ‘togetherness’, the word ‘Obangame’ was a fitting title and over the 7-day long exercise Dragon worked with American, Spanish, Cameroonian, Gabonese, Equatorial Guinean and Nigerian Coast Guards and Navies – so a busy few days, especially for the Ship’s Royal Marines who led with all the boarding training.

It was a real whole ship effort and whilst the Royal Marines put the various boarding teams through their paces the rest of the Ship was hard at work to help out. The Buffer’s team were probably the busiest with constant boat operations throughout the period to make sure the teams could get about. Helped again by RFA GOLD ROVER the tanker was used as a ‘vessel of interest’ so that the teams could practice what they had learned from Dragon. It also gave the Royal Marines an excuse to carry out their other favourite pass time - dressing up! This time it was to pretend to be either the Ship’s crew or pirates.

The exercise culminated in a non-compliant boarding to test the capabilities of the regional Special Forces. The final assault was a great success and with over 80 Nigerian personnel, assisted by American training teams; it certainly was a busy but very productive exercise.
CAPE VERDE – LAW ENFORCERS

Whilst most of you were on your Easter holidays the theme of boarding continued, but this time Dragon was tasked to patrol the waters surrounding Cape Verde to train the local Law Enforcement Detachment and teams from the local Command Centre who are responsible for all law enforcement at sea in the area. Drug smuggling is the name of the game in this part of the world and Dragon’s job was to keep an eye on the colloquially known “Highway 10” which is where a lot of the smugglers operate. With the possibility of a live operation always in the background it certainly gave some realism to the training.

Taking it slow at first, the law enforcement team (and their mentors from HQ) practiced their skills and drills in the Ship’s boats before having the chance to go through the entire planning process and briefing their intentions to Dragon’s Commanding Officer. As the exercise progressed they even used the chance to send out one of their own yachts who pretended to be a drug smuggler for the morning. This gave a chance for the Ship’s Lynx helicopter to take part and provide over watch with its Royal Marine Maritime Snipers embarked. But even as the exercises ended the Ship was put through its paces again as we thought that the Yacht had got lost. Fortunately, this was not the case, but it was made all the more amusing by the fact that the Ship’s very own Weapon Engineering Officer (Lt Cdr Rich Harris) was at the helm. We are sure these two things are not linked!
GOODBYE GOLD!

After the best part of 6 months together the time finally came where Dragon and RFA Gold Rover needed to part company and say farewell. As Dragon continued on her way home the tanker returned to the rest of her programme which will see her circumnavigate the Atlantic one more time before she eventually returns to the UK in 2016 to be de-commissioned. All onboard Dragon wish the Officers and Crew of RFA Gold Rover well on their voyage as without their help, support and fuel we simply would not have made it this far!

MOORED IN MAURITANIA

Have you ever heard of Nouakchott in Mauritania – neither had we! This country (which is four times the size of the UK) lies almost at the most North Western tip of Africa and is neighbours with Mali, Morocco, Algeria and the Western Sahara. The visit was another first for a Type 45 and a Royal Navy Ship has not visited the country since HMS Edinburgh in 2012. The aim of the visit was to strengthen UK relations in the country and conduct capacity building; with only 9 British EXPATs in the country it seemed that they were all pleased to see us.

Aside from the usual reception and capability demonstration (described by the Ambassador as “the social event of the year!” and press event, the short visit also allowed some of the Ship’s Company to get out and about – meeting the country’s very friendly and warm people. Some Dragon’s ventured off to help a local orphanage, meeting the staff, children and passing them some much needed food and
supplies. For the sports teams it was chance to play the Navy at Football (on a sandy pitch), whilst the Ship’s Rugby team took on their national side in their National Stadium. The game was well attended with 700 cheering fans (who may have been their for a local team football game, but they cheered loudly for the Dragons nevertheless) and the Dragon Rugby team seemed to enjoy it! Fishing is a huge industry in the area and some of the Ship’s Officers even managed to go to the main fishing beaches and see where literally hundreds of long boats ride the surf everyday to bring home their catch. Those that were there said they had never seen so much fish; you know you have a big catch when you need to use a bulldozer to move it about!

The CO joins HMA Morocco in addressing the delegation during the defence sales event.

CASABLANCA

We have all seen the movie – haven’t we? With this in mind all of the team onboard were looking forward to this visit. Another high profile visit it was going to busy for most as Dragon played host to Her Majesty’s Ambassador, the UK Defence Senior Advisor in the Middle East, a UK Defence Sales exhibition and the usual Capability Demonstration. As ever the team completed these events with the usual Dragon panache. The best part was that, for most, Saturday provided some time for the Ship’s Company to get out and about. For some an exploration of Casablanca was in order, whilst others ventured North on the train to Rabat; two even took the plunge and made the 138 mile journey by train to Marrakech. Wherever people went everyone got the chance to get lost in the narrow streets and Souks that sold everything from spices, chess sets and local food to dodgy flip flops!
LASTLY LISBON

Last, but by no means least, was Dragon's stop in Lisbon – pleased to be back in mainland Europe this visit proved to be a busy one, but a great place to finish our epic tour (of over 14 countries). As is the norm the ship was able to enjoy a fairly central berth which meant many of the Ship’s Company could easily step ashore and take in the culture and local entertainment. Of course, there was a capability demonstration but unusually the Ship soon found itself turn into a film set. A local political programme used the ship as a set for the day and with interviews with the CO and others it was another first for us. Most excitingly Lisbon is where we embarked our friends and family who had agreed to join us for the final few days at sea across the Bay of Biscay.

With the chance to jump to fire some guns and watch the helicopter fly it certainly seemed that fun was had by all involved!

HOMECOMING

After 191 days (that's 27 weeks and 2 days or 4584 hours or 275,040 minutes or 16,502,400 seconds) away the day finally came when Dragon and her Ship’s Company returned home to Portsmouth. With over 22,500 miles steamed (that is 500 miles more then the distance around the world on the equator) it was fantastic to see such a big turn out for the homecoming. With a flypast, bands, choirs, children’s’ entertainment and food & drink on the jetty it was a rousing welcome for all the Sailors, Royal Marines and their families. From all onboard we want to say a very big thank you to all for your help and support these past months and we look forward to some well earned leave. Dragon will be in refit for a while now but keep your eyes peeled for the latest Lem Draig – the Dragon will be back!
ET (WE) Luke Pinnock

Born in Portsmouth but “Made in the Royal Navy”, Luke Pinnock 26 is a Weapon Engineer onboard HMS DRAGON. Luke’s step dad had a huge influence on Luke joining the Navy and was a PO WEM(O).

Before Luke joined the UK’s premier fighting force he was an aspiring Barista at the well known Costa coffee chain; he makes a brilliant flat white.

As if his Coffee wasn’t sweet enough, he has been known to take time out of his busy schedule to organise ships quiz nights. These events provide a great source of morale for long nights at sea.

ET Pinnock is currently studying computing and IT with mathematics at the Open University whilst deployed on ATP (S). Dedicating his free time to improving himself is just one of the many advantages of joining the Royal Navy.

As part of his Engineering role on board Luke maintains the Ship’s communications systems. Ensuring the smooth running of DRAGON’S ability to talk to other ships is vital to any training serial or exercise. Without Luke, the Ship’s company would not be able to phone home, so you can thank him personally when he walks off the gangway on 6 May 15.

ET Pinnock joined DRAGON on the Gulf trip in 2013 and has never looked back. Now one of the senior ETs in his department, the new joiners look to Luke for guidance and knowledge. He is especially looking forward to getting back to his Fiancé Bekah and son Barney.
Del’s Corner

This month Del has been looking back at all the places he has visited in the past six months. Having left Portsmouth in October, his journey has taken him to many different countries. Starting in the Caribbean HMS Dragon stopped in Puerto Rico and Panama and Del enjoyed the sunshine and warm weather. After the Panama Canal he headed south to Chile before moving on to the Falkland Islands, here Del found there were lots of penguins but it was quite cold and windy. HMS Dragon then travelled across the Atlantic Ocean to get to South Africa, as we were there for quite a while people he was able to relax a little and do some sightseeing. Del managed to see some more penguins, some sharks and even a Lion, lucky Del! After South Africa HMS Dragon started getting closer to home, but we had to make some more stops on the way. We stopped in Namibia, Senegal, Mauritania, Cape Verde, Morocco and Portugal, can you find all the countries on a map? Ask an adult to help you; I am sure you can find them all.

Del has had a great time travelling around the world with your friends and family onboard (and his new best friends, the ship’s office fish) and hopes you enjoy having them home.
AFFILIATES & SPONSORS

The City of Cardiff
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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/
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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
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Naomi House: www.naomihouse.org.uk
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Royal Naval Association / Royal British Legion Cardiff: www.royal-naval-association.co.uk
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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

“We yield but to Saint George”