From the Captain

There is much to report in this edition of Ocean Wave with your ship, once again, at the centre of the action. A busy passage to the Baltic, a starring role in the largest NATO Maritime Exercise in some 20 years, a visit by the Secretary of State for Defence and then a high profile visit to Kieler Woche, Northern Europe’s Largest outdoor festival.

As this edition of Ocean Wave “hits the streets” the ship will be starting her second Fleet Time Support Period for 2015; an opportunity for the machinery to be taken down and maintained / repaired in preparation for our next period away. It is also a time for people to go away on courses and, for some, to take time off in advance of summer leave duties or other commitments.

It is also, for quite a number, the end of their time in OCEAN; and I will be one of those leaving in July. There is no easy way of capturing how proud I am to have been allowed to Command HMS OCEAN and, as importantly, how grateful I am to all the friends and family of OCEAN who have made our journey from refit to operational warship possible. Simply put, you are the reason that your ship has a matchless reputation and I will forever be in your debt for the unswerving support that you have given your ship in all that we have sought to achieve.

With my very best wishes, thank you.

Tim Henry

‘Toppers’ for BALTOPs

Demands on the Logistics department have been high as OCEAN has played an important role in the 43rd Operation BALTOPs as Fleet Flagship and host to Commander Amphibious Task Force and Commander Land Force battle staff.

With a total embarked number of just over 950 the 27 tri-service chefs and 18 tri-service stewards have been tested to their limits as they provided over 52,000 meals which were served over 150 hours of counter service and costing over £50,000. On top of all this they also had to plan, prepare and deliver on a number of high profile official visits which included the Sectary of State for Defence and Rear Admiral Surface Ships, Rear Admiral Tony Radakin.

The medical team have also had a busy period with so many personnel onboard from different NATO countries. They have provided high quality medical care with only 7 members of the medical team and the Principal Medical Officer (PMO) on board with one medic ashore with 9 ASRM during their beach patrols and assaults.

BALTOPS was not all about supporting the Battle Staff; multiple amphibious operations including WADER and DRYOUT exercises were conducted. The whole Logistics team worked closely together during the exercises, which involved providing a full range of support for feeding, clothing, documenting, providing medical care and even foreign money changing for embarking military personnel.
But it wasn’t all work and no play!

The Ship has also had a 5 day port visit to Kiel, which included two SOTVs (Ships Open To Visitors) and a Reception Capability Demonstration evening. Every member of the logistics department was involved in some way. The Writers have exchanged €78,000 during the 5 days in Kiel which has resulted in a very good ‘run-ashore’ for the entire Ship’s Co.

Last but not least… SC Jacobs was given the opportunity to visit USS San Antonio and see what life is like onboard an American Amphibious Assault Ship and thoroughly enjoyed the experience, which was the highlight of his time on BALTOPs

Wtr Gemma Ellis

On the beaches!

For 9 ASRM BALTOPs proved to be a very busy yet rewarding period as the Squadron carried out its primary role of conducting plenty of Ship to Objective Manoeuvre (or STOM). From the start of the amphibious phase of the exercise the Sqn deployed 3 x LCVP, the Amphibious Beach Unit (ABU), the Ramp Support Platform and a BV206 to tick off the full range of our amphibious capability.

I have been working in Flyco (Flight Control) over the whole of the BALTOPs Exercise as the Flyco Logger, recording every aircraft landing and departure on the flight deck (there were 1112 Deck Launches and Landings during the Exercise, plus one Ramp Support Pontoon and one boat!). I assist Lt Commander Flying (F) with all the pre flying checks that need to be done every day and also act as a safety number to the flight deck team. Normally working on the flight deck, my stint in Flyco has given me a different view on not just how the flight deck works but how much time and effort goes in, from moving an aircraft around the deck with a flight deck tractor to launching several aircraft in the space of a few seconds!

Once the exercise had finished, the Ship’s Company were looking forward to a few days to relax and fully appreciate the full sunbathing capabilities of a Swedish Beach, having to open the beach to run 4 different training packages with 3 different types craft and for 5 different services, proving to be a no mean feat! As well has having to plan and plan again as craft became unserviceable and troops ended up in the wrong place at the wrong time! The LCVPs also did their standard practice of completing a lot of the Troop moves when other craft failed to turn up or when, as usual, the aircraft went unserviceable. Overall an excellent training period for the Sqn with a lot of lessons learnt - mainly that ‘pussers’ sun cream doesn’t last all day!

Mne Kay

PREPARE TO LAUNCH!

It has been another busy flying period for HMS Ocean’s Air Department for the BALTOPs Exercise with aircraft embarked from all 3 services, which have included 4x 656 and 662 Sqn Army Air Corps Apaches, 2x 18 Sqn RAF Chinooks and 2x 815 Naval Air Squadron Lynx Mk8s plus visiting aircraft from other NATO Warships.

For many of the Sqn this was also the first time that most of us had the opportunity to work with Foreign Forces and its fair to say that the ABU didn’t get to
unwind in Kiel, Germany. Members of the Ship’s Company participated in activities such as Rugby, Football, Golf and Cricket. There was also an International Navy Night organised where Sailors from all over Europe and the World could go, relax and ‘spin dits’.

NA (AH) Seager

Communication is the key...

During BALTOPs HMS Ocean was the host to a British Admiral, a US Commodore and a Finnish Captain and their respective supporting “battle” staff, which increased the number of people on board to nearly 1000 people! We have had to provide access to Ship’s extensive Computer and Information System networks, which hosts a range of UK and NATO military applications.

These applications (like on your phone), allow the British and other NATO members to work together on one system to plan all aspects of an operation, no matter where the operation is in the world, even if it is not in the same location as where OCEA is at that time. This means providing a large amount of Communications to the respective staffs; radios for talking to each other verbally and Information Management Systems to allow for wider planning and the transfer of Data. This means managing hundreds of laptops and computers and sometimes multiple accounts per person. As you can imagine, spreadsheets very quickly become quite large and complicated!

The key to all of this is talking to all the people you are working with and building relationships to work effectively together no matter what the nation or the language barrier. One morning you will be dealing with an AB from the Royal Navy and the next you will be helping a French Admiral! It is important you always talk and are aware of what you need from other people and what they need from you!

LET(WE)(CIS) Saunders

STOKERS ‘ Stern’ CHALLENGE!

At the start of this month the ship sailed in order to be part of BALTOPs 15 which was always going to be a challenge for the Marine Engineering Department. With this exercise being heavily dependant on amphibious capabilities, it saw the assault group pushed hard to ensure that the equipment was well maintained and able to use at a moments notice.

During the trip it saw the first deployment of the RSP (Ramp Support Pontoon) since 2011 and the assault group worked tirelessly to ensure this happened without incident using the flight deck crane to put it in the water and working with 9ASRAM to ensure that I was secured for use with the stern ramp.

As always this month there was a high drive to continue with training and development within the department and we saw some ET2s (Engineer Technician) achieve there ET1 status and it also saw some ET1s achieve their OPS (Operational Performance Standard) putting them one step closer to promotion to LET. The PEO (Propulsion Engineering Officer) also worked hard to achieve his MCQ (Marine Engineering Charge Qualification) and has been rewarded for his hard work with completing his boards and receiving a charge recommend from the CO.

Lt Sam Fayers
**My BALTOPs by AB MacDonald**

*This was the first BALTOPs of my Royal Navy career and the first time I have worked with so many other navies as a task force.*

As an operator in the ops room, my work was busy identifying friendly, neutral and suspects units surrounding the ship. This role is important for the command to have an understanding of our current tactical situation.

In the warfare spectrum my role was also involved in air, surface and amphibious exercises. Of which I was impressed with the contribution and hard work of all involved.

As the Royal Navy Flag Ship we worked closely with the Americans, in particular the USS SAN ANTONIO, to produce amphibians support to the Mariners and American Troops so they could get ashore to do the land assault of the exercise.

To finish the exercise we had a run ashore in Kiel, Germany for five days to celebrate the beer festival or as it was called Kiel Week. This gave us as a ships company time to relax, enjoy and mix with the rest of the task force that was involved in BALTOPs 2015.

BALTOPs was exciting to witness as a sailor and makes me proud to be part of the Royal Navy, representing my country at sea.

*AB Robert ‘Mac’ MacDonald*

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**In the Sports News…**

*The Mighty O’s ‘All Blacks’ and ‘BaaBaaas’ were entered into the Kiel Week Rugby tournament - if there was ever an opportunity for the ultimate clash this was it!*

Both teams played well in the opening rounds, comfortably seeing off the opposition and playing some real ‘Champagne’ rugby. Everyone was hoping for an all OCEAN final, but sadly that dream was dashed in the Semi’s.

The All Blacks were properly seen off in their Semi-final. Some dodgy reffing, short tempers and a yellow card saw off any idea of taking on their rivals the BaaBaas in the final. They were out.

OCEAN’s glory then lay in the hands of the BaaBaas, who didn’t disappoint. In their Semi-Final they pulled out all the stops with a wealth of tries from Macunabitu, Phillips & Mennie and a cameo performance by Lt Cdr Fletcher who marked his debut by intercepting a pass and running the length of the pitch to score his first try before promptly retiring again. OCEAN through to the final with an impressive 40-0 win.

With the All Blacks in support, the BaaBaaas searched for eternal glory in the Final. Several tries from Phillips and great defensive play from Macunabitu & Adams gave BaaBaas the lead they were looking for until the final try of the tournament by Sgt Delai gave OCEAN a 25-5 lead and victory!!

Both teams played some fantastic, physical rugby and thanks to the BaaBaas OCEAN’s mantelpiece has a little more shine!

*AB (NA) Caroline Penrose*

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**WHERE TO FIND HELP AND SUPPORT…**

For general welfare support call the RN/RM Welfare Portal – 023 927 28777

Need your loved one 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!