From the Commanding Officer

I am delighted to introduce the latest edition of ‘The Black Duke’ Newsletter that aims to keep you abreast of your Ship as She navigates Her way through this next stage of Her life.

When I last wrote to you ‘The Black Duke’ was on the cusp of completing Her extensive refit and, at that time, we were in the midst of a vast array of harbour trials which not only tested every System on board but also put the Ship’s Company through their paces to ensure that we were safe to sail. I am pleased to say that these trials went exceptionally well and, following a successful inspection, the Ship made it back to sea for the first time in over 18 months. We are now well into our Sea Trials phase. This phase is designed to evaluate the performance of every bit of important machinery (such as the gas turbines) and weapon systems in their typical environment, often pushing them to their limits.

As well as sailing for the first time in a long while, the Ship also visited Dublin, Her first port visit outside of Devonport since before the refit. This was a welcome respite for the Ship’s Company from what has been a busy quarter and, for about a third, it was their first ‘foreign’ run ashore in the Royal Navy!

The autumn term will see us finishing off trials before officially returning to the Fleet in the middle of September. Then, following a short top-up maintenance period, we plan to hold a Rededication Ceremony and Families’ Day on 29th & 30th October respectively. These important events will give you all an opportunity to visit your Ship and get an appreciation of how far your valued support has gone in returning Her back to the Fleet to once more serve the Nation. In the meantime, I wish you all an enjoyable and sunny summer and I very much look forward to seeing you again or meeting you for the first time in October.

Commander Philip J E Tilden Royal Navy

‘The Black Duke’ Sails Again

HMS MONMOUTH sailed for the first time after an 18 month refit on 12 Jun 15

Cdr Philip Tilden said: “It is important not to underestimate the monumental and complex effort put in by both my Ship’s Company and our industrial partners to get the Ship to sea today after such an extensive refit. In particular, at this significant milestone my team in ‘The Black Duke’ can be very proud that the huge personal investment they have made to date will ultimately benefit our nation for many years to come.”

MONMOUTH entered refit at the beginning of 2014 and has seen a significant amount of structural work to Her superstructure, which has included approximately 17 tonnes of new steel covering an area of 220 square metres and over 1.1km.

The focus will now move to testing Her engines, as well as trialling the latest updates to her weapons and computer systems; including the new Type 997 medium range radar, 4.5 inch gun and Seawolf missile system.

Lieutenant Commander James Holgate, the Ship’s Weapon Engineer Officer said: “Having brought MONMOUTH into refit over 18 months ago it is a real honour to finally get the chance to reap the benefits of the hard work put in by all.”

Following a significant changeover of personnel, over 90 percent of the Ship’s company will be sailing with MONMOUTH for the first time with approximately 30 percent making their maiden voyage in the Royal Navy.

MONMOUTH’s youngest sailor Engineering Technician Harry Thomas (18), from Anglesey, said: “I am looking forward to going to sea for the first time since I joined the Royal Navy 18 months ago. This is what I joined the Navy to do and I cannot wait to put all my training into practice for the first time at sea.”

MONMOUTH will spend the next few months conducting sea trials before undertaking training and endorsement which will get Her ready to be deployed on operations whenever and wherever tasked.

Upcoming Events

HMS MONMOUTH REDEDICATION CEREMONY
Thursday 29 October 2015

HMS MONMOUTH FAMILIES DAY
Friday 30 October 2015

Further details will be promulgated soon
Black Dukes take home a Bronze in Culinary Challenge

A team from HMS MONMOUTH entered the high pressure arena of competition cooking to participate in the Devonport Flotilla Culinary Challenge held at HMS Raleigh, in Cornwall.

The three person team, made up of Steward Ratu Rokobiau, Chef Sean Stapleton and Chef Rory Fraser, were awarded bronze certificates by the Judges as shown by the photo to the right.

HMS MONMOUTH’s team produced a mouth-watering menu and Chef Stapleton said: “We found the competition interesting and there was a bit of pressure. We’ve only just returned from sea, so our preparation was a little bit rushed. The menu was the creative part of the competition and overall we’ve enjoyed the experience and would definitely do it again.”

While the chefs concentrated on preparing and cooking the meal, the stewards were judged on their front of house skills in preparing the table and serving the meal.

Trials

This first period at sea since refit was called Initial Sea Safety Training (ISST) and was aimed at proving MONMOUTH was safe to be at sea and included a series of sea survival and damage control exercises assessed by Flag Officer Sea Training staff.

This included everything from proving the Ship can extinguish fires on board to reacting to a Man Over Board as seen on the picture to the right.

The Ship then proceeded onto the first phase of Marine Engineering sea trials, essentially a week to prove that MONMOUTH is able to safely ‘move’.

It was during this period that the photo to the left was taken by the previous Marine Engineer Officer, Lieutenant Commander Laura Hodgson showing a view from the Quarterdeck during the Ship’s high speed manoeuvring trials.

The Duke of Buccleuch opens Leadership Library in ‘The Black Duke’

His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, a direct descendant of James, Duke of Monmouth, recently visited HMS MONMOUTH to unveil the Buccleuch Leadership Library on board, reaffirming his close affiliation with ‘The Black Duke’.

Recognising this affiliation, the Duke of Buccleuch has sponsored a Leadership Library in HMS MONMOUTH. The library, fitted during the Ship’s refit, has an extensive collection of titles that will assist the Ship’s Company in all aspects of Command Leadership and Management development and will be added to by the Duke on a regular basis.

On unveiling the library, the Duke said “I am delighted to affirm my family’s links with HMS MONMOUTH and hope that this library can provide insight and inspiration to the Royal Navy’s future leaders”. It is hoped that members of the Ship’s Company will be able to put their leadership skills to the test through ties with the Kettering Buccleuch Academy and The Queensberry Initiative both which the Duke himself is personally involved in.
CPO Lucas awarded the Drapers’ Medal

The Commanding Officer and CPO ‘Joff’ Lucas recently attended an award ceremony at the Hall of The Worshipful Company of Drapers in London where CPO Lucas was presented with the Drapers’ Medal for outstanding contribution to leadership. He can be seen here at the ceremony with the current Master John Giffard CBE QPM DL.

There were a small number of presentations made on the occasion including to five individuals whose work on behalf of the Company's charities and schools were being recognised. These included representatives from RAF Shawbury and 71st Yeomanry Signal Regiment.

The training CPO Lucas delivered was integral in achieving the milestone of Ship’s Staff Move On Board and Ready For Sea Date. Fire Fighting and Damage Control are fundamental skills for every mariner and he designed and executed a training plan that addressed every aspect. Specialist training aside, he has supported his Departmental Junior Rates in the achievement of NVQ taking time out of his busy work schedule to ensure they benefit from external validation.

MONMOUTH Visits Dublin

In the midst of a busy sea trials period, MONMOUTH was fortunate enough to pay a visit to the City of Dublin.

Not only was this a welcome break for the majority of the Ship’s Company, it was also the first ‘run ashore’ for over a third of them.

Drapers Get a Taste of Life On Board

The Ship was recently delighted to welcome 2 members of The Worshipful Company of Drapers’ on board for a Sea Acquaint.

During their 2 days in ‘The Black Duke’, Stephen Beharrell and Mark Holdsworth spent time with each department and Mess.

Keeping them entertained was not a difficult task, with activities including dining with Junior Rates, walking through all the engine spaces to a ride in the seaboat through Plymouth Sound.
HMS Monmouth is proud to be affiliated to:

Lady Eaton (The Ship’s Lady Sponsor)
His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch
Lord Lieutenant of Gwent
The Borough of Monmouth
Monmouth Town
The Worshipful Company of the Drapers
Monmouth School
Haberdasher Monmouth School for Girls
Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers (Militia)
IV(R) Squadron RAF
The 1st Queen’s Dragoon Guards
Royal Naval Association
Haberdasher Askes CCF
Harrow School CCF
Royal Observer Corps Association
Ross & Wye Sea Cadet Corps
British Warships’ Association
LXX Squadron RAF

HMS MONMOUTH is known informally as ‘The Black Duke’ after James Scott, the Duke of Monmouth who was beheaded at Tower Hill on 15 July 1685. In reference to this heritage the Ship is unique in the Royal Navy as the only ship to fly a black flag and have a black as opposed to red name plate. The Ship’s crest contains the town’s mediaeval stone gated bridge which is the only one of its type remaining in Britain.

HMS MONMOUTH has more Battle Honours than any other serving warship:

- Sole Bay  1672
- Texel    1673
- Barfleur   1692
- Vigo    1702
- Gibraltar   1704
- Velez Malaga   1704
- Finisterre   1747
- Ushant           1747
- Foudroyant    1758
- Belle Isle    1761
- Sadras    1782
- Providien    1782
- Negapatam    1782
- Trincomalee    1782
- Camperdown    1797
- Egypt           1801

Sports Update / News

This has been a hugely successful period for the Ship’s sports teams and Physical Training Department. On a personal footing, LPT Stephen represented the Royal Navy during the Army v Navy Rugby match at Twickenham, while the Ship’s football and rugby teams both enjoyed success on the playing field. Finally, following the removal of the Ship’s ‘Tail’ (towed array sonar) – ‘The Black Duke’ now has a brand new gym in the Winch Well which is proving to be a huge success with all of the Ship’s Company.

Royal Navy Online Community (RNCOM). All serving personnel and their friends or loved ones can register to become a member of the Royal Navy Online Community (RNCOM). By registering, you can keep up to date with the latest information on the RN, including a forum for HMS MONMOUTH where letters from the CO and items specific to MONMOUTH can be posted. There are links to registration via the Royal Navy Internet Site (https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/profile/register) – please sign up and encourage your friends and family to do the same.

Key Contacts and Further Info

CO    Cdr Philip Tilden RN
XO    Lt Cdr Andrew Ainsley RN
MEO   Lt Cdr Mark Gibbs RN
WEO   Lt Cdr James Holgate RN
LO    Lt Cdr Steve Plumer RN
SWO   Lt Dave Knowles RN
EWO   WO Adrian Coles

For the latest info on the Ship visit the Royal Navy Website: www.royalnavy.mod.uk/hmsmonmouth
For any feedback on this newsletter please email the Public Relations Officer via HMSMONM-PRO@mod.uk

HMS MONMOUTH is known informally as ‘The Rebels With a Cause’ re-tracing the route taken by the 1st Duke of Monmouth.

The Rebels are still looking for volunteer cyclists, requirements are ownership of a road bike and a good level of fitness.

Turning the spokes for 212 miles in aid of Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC), Little Things and The Mayor of Monmouth’s Appeal.

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