Message from the Boss

I can hardly believe it’s been six months since I last took the opportunity to write in this newsletter but in the intervening period, the unit has been extremely busy and has gone through immense change. The greatest challenge of recent months has undoubtedly been the extended maintenance period and re-engineering of HMS BITER. What began as a simple 8 week overhaul and engine replacement quickly developed into a major project. The engines, gearboxes, generators, shafts, propellers, rudders, heating and control systems have now all been replaced with state of the art equipment. BITER is now back in the water and is a completely new ship in all but name. We can all be suitably proud that the contractors and our own engineers have delivered the most up to date and capable P2000 in the Royal Navy. Despite a lack of ship, the unit and its members have in no way been idle and this time has allowed us to strengthen our links with the wider armed forces. As you will read later in this newsletter, members have travelled the length and breadth of the world, on a plethora of RN ships and yachts and we are all a little fitter for the amount of sport and adventurous training we have achieved. But now towards the future. BITER will deploy in September for a much awaited belated Summer Deployment. Deploying again to the west coast of Scotland and Republic of Ireland, this will be a vital opportunity for us all to find our sea legs again and visit some of our most loved ports whilst again achieving the URNU Mission Statement. We will again return to a busy autumn programme of recruiting and inducting new members. The annual Trafalgar night dinner and a hectic series of Sea Training weekends. The busy academic term will culminate in the Re-dedication of HMS BITER. This will be a huge event, held at the Imperial War Museum North when we will formally accept the ship back into Naval Service. This will be the largest event of its kind ever attempted by an URNU and I look forward to seeing many of you there in November.

Lt Cdr L P Gardner RN

Annual Alumni and Affiliates Ball

The Place Hotel, Manchester was the venue for this year’s Annual Alumni and Affiliates Ball, held with a 'Fire and Ice' theme. Complete with ice sculptures and artificial flames the ballroom looked spectacular and the hard work put in by the Social Secretaries, Mid Adam Coomer and O/C Amy Trimble and Deputy Senior Mid-shipman Nicola Hall was well rewarded with an excellent turn out. With a welcoming cocktail on arrival and a dinner of Daube of Beef, the night got off to a good start. A swing band kicked off the entertainment and a DJ ended the evening playing hits that kept the dance floor full throughout the evening.

Social Secretary Mid Adam Coomer with Alumni member, Emma Sutcliffe
The end of May saw students travel to Liverpool in order to participate in the city’s celebrations commemorating the 70th Anniversary of The Battle of The Atlantic.

The Battle of The Atlantic was the longest continuous military campaign of World War II from 1939-1945, and claimed the lives of 36,000 seamen. At this period in time, nearly a third of the world’s merchant shipping was British; being an island nation, imported goods were of high importance. The battle, therefore was a campaign to keep the British supply routes of the Atlantic Ocean open, and Liverpool was the location of the strategic centre behind it.

From 24th-28th May, Liverpool was a hive of activity, with an absolutely huge naval presence on the agenda, meant an esti-flock to the city to enjoy the The RN were joined by personnel from navies around the world and amongst the great number of vessels present, 5 ships were open for visits from the public; PEMBROKE, Russian destroyer VICE ADMIRAL KULAKOV, Canadian destroyer HMCS IROQUOIS and the German minesweeper FGS GROEMITZ.

HMS BITER was of course absent, as she is still having her new engines installed, which was highly unfortunate as not only is Liverpool her home port, but she also boasts the Atlantic as one of her Battle Honours. However, this did not mean that M&S URNU did not participate, quite the contrary. Lt Cdr Gardner was part of the organising committee from the start and organised all the waterborne and airborne demonstrations. Students from the unit were in attendance, with other URNU ships providing accommodation for the week, ARCHER, BLAZER, CHARGER and RANGER all offering our students a home. This was a great opportunity to meet students from other units around the UK and even more interestingly, to meet their Ship’s Company and experience life onboard another P2000.

On the Sunday, veterans, serving sailors and an array of guests arrived at Liverpool Cathedral, for a moving service which paid tribute to the thousands who lost their lives in The Battle. A number of URNU students were in attendance at the event, which was televised, and a very solemn-looking Deputy Senior Midshipman Anna Holland could be spotted in the congregation at various stages of the service. Afterwards, she was even fortunate enough to have the chance to meet HRH The Princess Royal, who was also present, and joined by local elected representatives and foreign ambassadors. Following the service, a march-past of veterans took place, where Her Royal Highness took the salute.

One of the major spectacles of the weekend, and the brainchild of the CO, was a demonstration entitled ‘The Battle of The Mersey’, which saw a local vessel captured by a band of pirates, and the heroic rescue efforts of the Armed Forces that followed. This dramatic display out on the river involved a Sea King full of Royal Marine Commandos and a team of patrol boats too, with Mid Adam Coomer joining the crew of HMS RANGER.

In typical fashion, the glorious weekend sunshine conveniently disappeared just in time for the Raft Race on Day 4, as teams from around the region and many of the visiting Ship’s Companies took to the water for the challenge. As a temporary HMS Charger resident, O/C Emma Smith competed for Liverpool URNU, helping to paddle the team to a very respectable top-table position on their ‘yellow submarine’ themed raft. O/C Amy Trimble was also called to the water’s edge that afternoon, having been roused in order to join one of the Royal Marines Reserves rafts. Additionally, Manchester & Salford URNU students were invited to a Reception onboard the Belgian frigate Louise-Marie as well as hosting guests onboard the P2000s. Guests ranged from high ranking officers, to senior figures of the Ministry of Defence, and also a Royal Navy Chaplain, or ‘Bish’ who visited the students for a Q&A session onboard HMS ARCHER.

Overall the week spent in Liverpool was thoroughly enjoyed by all those who participated. There were countless opportunities to join in the celebrations with nearly 6000 other military personnel, and also the public, to commemorate one of the RN’s great battle victories.
During this year’s Easter break, Officer Cadets Cassabois, Oliver, Clark and Midshipman Rowlands were given the opportunity to spend a week with the River-Class Patrol Vessel, HMS MERSEY. Normally the students would go on deployment on HMS BITER however this was not possible as she was in refit. Fortunately the Commanding Officer, Lt Cdr Gardner, was able to allocate sea time to 28 cadets on warships across the fleet. Having travelled from Manchester to Dover, the cadets boarded the ship on the evening of the 5th of April and HMS MERSEY sailed from Dover to Portsmouth over the course of a week, having a heavily packed schedule prepared by the CO, Lt Cdr Oakley. Their time on board was structured by a 1 in 4 rotation around the bridge watches. This meant that one cadet was always assisting the Officer of the Watch and the others were always busy helping around the different departments and learning about life onboard. Whilst on the bridge, common duties ranged from taking the helm, having the conn and navigation. The cadets were able to gain a lot of knowledge of the equipment on the bridge like the WECDIS, radar, and anemometer. These devices became essential when the cadets were given the responsibility of placing fixes whilst on watch. But they were given the chance of seeing HMS MERSEY in action completing her main duty, fishery protection, and Mid Rowlands was lucky enough to be part of the boarding team. He assisted in evidence gathering and net measurement with a fine later being imposed by the Maritime Management Organization (MMO) on the trawler in question. The cadets experienced other parts of the ship when not on the bridge and often gave a hand to the ratings with duties ranging from cleaning the engine room, preparing scran or undergoing security checks across the ship. But when they weren’t working the cadets would often relax in the wardroom with the other officers sipping on a wet or working up a sweat in the onboard gym.

“IT’s great that there’s a gym onboard, but it’s a strange feeling lifting weights or running whilst the ship is moving”.

O/C Cassabois cleaning the engine room deck

O/C Oliver using a WECDIS to place a fix

The four URNU cadets posing in front of a Union Jack whilst at anchor

Thanks to the Fisheries Protection Vessel HMS SEVERN for allowing 8 of our students onboard during their Easter break from University. This was a fantastic opportunity for the cadets to see the roles performed by a larger ships company, having only previously been to sea on the smaller P2000 vessel, HMS BITER which has a ships company of 5. During their time on board the cadets experienced first hand the roles of each department and spent time on the bridge. “The highlight of the trip was taking the sea boat and boarding foreign trawlers to inspect their catch” said O/C Horner.
M&S URNU AT and Sports Weekend

Due to problems with HMS Bristol, this years URNU Sports Weekend was abruptly cancelled 2 days before it was due to commence. Undeterred, Lt Cdr Gardner immediately called a mess committee meeting and tasked the committee with organising a replacement weekend and within 48 hrs, that’s exactly what they did. That weekend the cadets spent a 2 nights in a cottage in Snowdonia and during the day they enjoyed activities such as coast steering, outdoor rock climbing and walking in Snowdonia National Park. At HMS Indefatigable they partook in indoor rock climbing and spent a day taking part in sports activities at Bangor University. Good effort!!

We have a new Coxswain

CPO ET (ME) Jason Shaw joined us in March 2013 and will be our Unit Coxswain for the next 18 months. Jason joined us from HMS LANCASTER where he had been Ships Services Group Head for 18 months and was involved in bringing the ship out of refit and conducting Trials and Operational Sea Training for 2 years.

HMS PURSUER

O/C’s Orrill and Saunders joined Glasgow URNU’s ship, HMS Pursuer for their Easter deployment. The cadets settled into their daily routine quickly and, despite the bad weather causing one impromptu harbour day, a whole five days at sea saw them immerse themselves in everything duty necessary to ensure a safe deployment for all, complete with middle watches. Thanks go to the Captain and Ship’s Company of HMS PURSUER for the opportunity.

Leavers Dining Out

Sadly, it was once again time for us to say a fond farewell to our leavers at our Annual Leavers Dining Out held here at the University Barracks. This years leavers are:

Mid Christine Cassar
Mid Adam Coomer
Mid Nicola Hall
Mid Mark Hanson
Mid Anna Holland
Mid Lizzie Poole
Mid Guy Rowlands
Mid Becky Stanley
Mid Bradley Woliter
O/C Emily Goodall
O/C George Halsey
O/C Iain Hunter
O/C Amy Trimble

You will all be missed. Keep in touch.
The Falklands on HMS CLYDE

After an extensive journey down to the remote and unique Falkland Islands, and 4 students from M&S URNU joined HMS CLYDE in the middle of her preparations for Operational Sea Training. The Royal Navy has a reputation for being a world leader in Operational Sea Training; this accolade was certainly lived up to and the crew took great efforts to maintain their standards whilst giving the students the opportunity to observe and partake. Day to day activities ranged from simulated missile attacks to learning how to operate fire fighting apparatus. A new experience for the students and light entertainment for the crew with their initial attempts at keeping the hose under control. The students were provided an opportunity to visit two of the RAF units based at RAF Mount Pleasant once they were alongside. Visits to No. 1564 Flight RAF operating the Westland Sea King’s for search and rescue cover for the island, and No. 1435 Flight RAF operating the Eurofighter Typhoon for air defence gave them a valuable insight into other areas of the Falklands combined defence capability. The crew also ensured they were able to engage in activities suited to their individual interests and career ambitions. As a hopeful WAFU, Mid Stanley’s highlight was being able to assist the Flight Deck Officer in deck landings for pilots in No. 1564, whilst O/C Katharina Schumacher, a potential medic enjoyed learning how to treat casualties. For Midshipmen Anna Holland and Nicola Hall, the chance to spend time on the bridge as potential Warfare Officers, whilst different exercises were carried out, was indispensable. A relaxing last night gave them a chance to walk along Bertha’s beach in the first rain of the trip. Yet luckily they managed to find and mingle with the penguin’s that give the Falkland’s its charismatic charm. Though all too soon, the days left turned to hours before the return home. The days had been much longer than they were used to at university, the work was unlike anything they were used to on HMS BITER, the experience was tiring but completely worthwhile and they left with a greater understanding of the Navy’s role. The flight home gave them time to reflect on the last ten days and why the Navy remains an important presence within the Falklands. As aspiring sailors, the opportunity to place largely class-learnt naval knowledge into a real-life experience was interesting and having been exposed to new elements of the Navy also provided a profound impact upon their future career ambitions, courtesy of the unique insight they were provided throughout the visit.

Annual Reception

On Thursday 7th February we hosted military and civilian guests at our Annual Reception held here at University Barracks. Guest of Honour, Commodore Baum was on hand to present O/C Dominic Wylor-Owen (left) with an award for winning Gold in his weight division in the RN Judo Championships and Silver in the Tri-service Judo Championships. He was also awarded Navy Colours for Judo. As always the cadets were turned out impeccably and did a superb job of hosting our guests throughout the evening.

“It is testament to the positive experience provided by CLYDE’s crew that there was a shared feeling amongst the four of us that the end had come far too soon”.

Mid Becky Stanley
Navs Yeo

It's farewell to Alan ‘Paddy’ Paxton and welcome to Adam ‘Watty’ Watt as our new Navs Yeoman.

Meet our new Senior Midshipman and Deputy Senior Midshipman

During May the new Snr Mid/ Deputy Snr Mid were selected and who better than Mid Michael Fox and Mid Daniel Cunningham. Recognition should go to Mid Guy Rowlands, Mid Anna Holland and Mid Nicola Hall, the outgoing Snr Mid/ Deputy Snr Mids for a job well done during the past 12 mths.

VE Day Celebrations

On the 6th May, 8 of our members, along with Lt Cdr Louis Gardner, congregated in St Peters Square, Manchester to take part in the Victory in Europe Day Celebrations. 1st celebrated on the 8th May 1945, VE Day marks the date when the WW11 allies formally accepted the unconditional surrender of the armed forces of Nazi Germany and the end of Adolf Hitlers Third Reich, thus ending the war in Europe.

Worshipful Company of Tallow Chandlers

It is with great delight and pride that we can announce the formal affiliation between Manchester and Salford URNU and HMS BITER and the Worshipful Company of Tallow Chandlers, a Liver Company of the City of London. The Tallow Chandlers have a long and illustrious history within the city, tracing their formation back to the 15th Century. Ships of the Royal Navy have maintained affiliations with Livery Companies throughout history and we are proud to be one of only a small handful of P2000s with a city affiliation. We look forward to working closely with them in the future.

Goodbye Tony/Rock Night Social

What better way to send off Tony, our Coxswain from March 12—March 13 than with a Rock Night Social. The students, as always, came out in force and embraced the theme, making sure they gave Tony a fantastic send off and a night he will never forget. Tony will be re-joining HMS OCEAN as The Boss, as Freddy Mercury with Mid Adam Coomer.

Get Involved

Since the formation of M&S URNU, approximately 500 students have passed through its doors. If you have any photos that you would like to share with your fellow alumni, please email them to us at ms.urnu@btconnect.com and we will publish them in the next edition of the Alumni Newsletter. Thanks.

Contact Us

We are looking for M&S URNU Alumni to get in touch and tell us what you are up to.

If you would like to find your old URNU friends, post messages in future copies of this newsletter or write an article, please get in touch.

We would love to hear any of your dits from your time in the URNU.

Please get in touch!

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