



HMS MONMOUTH DEPLOYMENT NEWSLETTER

Issue 4



From the Captain, Commander Gordon Ruddock Royal Navy

Dear Family and Friends,

Greetings once again from the Arabian Gulf!

In the last few weeks, we have been involved in demonstrating the Royal Navy's capabilities to our allies in the region. Whilst visiting Kuwait we had the opportunity to take over one hundred staff and students from the local naval staff college to sea to show them what the Black Duke can do. We spent two days showing officers from fourteen different nations how capable a sophisticated warship like MONMOUTH is.

The visitors were full of praise for the professionalism and welcoming attitude of our sailors and I am, of course, particularly proud of all the Ship's Company for the effort they put into this important event.

As you might imagine, since we left Dubai after our maintenance period we have been very busy with the operational tasks, which we are carrying out in partnership with other navies in the region. As we have patrolled the sea-lanes and oilfields, deterring piracy and other illegal activities it has become very clear how important our presence here is to both regional maritime security and UK national interests.

Much of our work in the area has fallen under the heading of "hearts and minds" as we have sought to assure local trading vessels and fishermen of our commitment to providing long-term security to the waters where they ply their trades. I must pay tribute to our joint "blue and green" boarding team consisting of both members of the Ship's Company and our embarked detachment of Royal Marines. Having visited over one hundred dhows to provide support and assistance they leave behind a legacy of trust in the Royal Navy – indeed, our boarding teams have regularly been greeted with cheery waves and the occasional familiar face as our boats have approached.

While I am proud of all onboard for keeping such a clear operational focus, you will not be surprised to learn that you at home are also in our thoughts. In recent weeks we have celebrated Valentine's Day, Mothering Sunday and Easter Day – some of you may very well have received appropriate cards from someone on board. In many ways it is your support of the people on board which makes it possible for us to do our job and I would like to extend my thanks to each of you for this continuing support whilst we have been away.

Once again I wish you all the very best and look forward to hearing news from MONMOUTH's wider family.



Emergency Contact Details

NPFS can be contacted on: East & Overseas – 02392 722712;
West & Eire – 01752 555041;
North – 01436 672798

Out of Hours contact: East & Overseas – 02392 726159
West & Eire – 01752 555220
North – 01436 674321

If you need to contact the ship, and you can't get hold of your loved one through normal communications, NPFS should be your main point of contact.

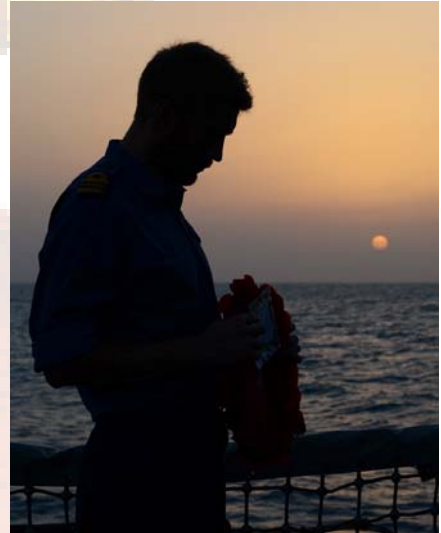
If there is an emergency or crisis at home then you should contact the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Cell (JCCC) on 01452 519951.

Remember to check out the RNCOM website at www.royalnavy.mod.uk/community. This is where information will be posted should the Ship be required to turn off her communications for operational reasons.

Remembering those who have gone before.

March this year saw the tenth anniversary of the start of the war with Iraq – known within the Navy as “Op Telic”. At a sunrise service a number of the Ship’s Company, including those who were serving in the Gulf during the conflict, gathered on the flight deck to remember those who had fallen. Particularly remembered were those who had tragically died early in the conflict in a helicopter accident.

Speaking at the service, Lt Cdr Steve Gilmore RN paid a short tribute, saying “To our fallen shipmates from 849 A Flight, and to others lost in the Iraq conflict, may we say: Rest in peace in the knowledge that your professionalism, dedication and ultimate sacrifice will never go unrecognised or be forgotten.”



1000 miles round the upper deck

30 year old Petty Officer “Dutchy” Van-Der-Linden from Blackburn, Lancashire, set himself the challenge of completing 1000 miles round the upper deck of the Ship as the Black Duke left Plymouth back in October. Running an average of 6 miles a day, “Dutchy” completed the challenge in 167 days and had to deal with extreme heat, wind, rain and fatigue as his body protested at the task – and occasionally he found himself forced to take unplanned “rest days” simply to let his body recover.

All money raised will go to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity. It is still possible to give money for Dutchy’s challenge by logging on to www.virginmoneygiving.com/DutchyVanDerLinden

Over the course of the 9000 laps of the 133m long frigate “Dutchy” has worn through 4 pairs of trainers, 2 iPod arm bands, 2 pairs of headphones and many gallons of water!





Love at a distance

A picture may very well say a thousand words – so the giant heart on the flight deck on Valentine’s Day might very well say it all.

Several thousand miles away we may be, but members of the Ship’s Company took the time to send a special message to their loved ones on Valentine’s Day.



Welcoming new command and old friends

While in Bahrain we welcomed Rear Admiral Jonathan Woodcock OBE, recently appointed as Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Personnel) and Naval Secretary (NAVSEC). While on board he took the opportunity to meet many of the Ship’s Company and hear their concerns about welfare and their work/life balance.

We also welcomed Commodore Jake Moores OBE ADC, Commodore Devonport Flotilla, for his last visit to the Black Duke before he retires from the Royal Navy after 36 years service; the Commodore was formally dined out onboard by the Commanding Officer and Heads of Department.



Completing a trio of honoured guests, while in Abu Dhabi we were also able to welcome Commander Graham Ramsay (Retired) who was HMS MONMOUTH’s first Commanding Officer in 1993.

“I was delighted to see her again still hard at work,” he said as he showed his daughter Clementine around his old command and took another opportunity to sit in the Captain’s chair on the bridge.



Another picture painting a thousand words...

The Flight posing in front of MONMOUTH's Lynx helicopter – known affectionately as “Black Knight”.

It ain't 'alf hot in the Gulf, Mum

“Meet the gang ‘cos the boys are here, the boys to entertain you.” Boys and girls as it happens, who are members of the Combined Services Entertainment (CSE) group continued the “concert party” tradition immortalised in the 1970s sitcom by putting on a variety performance for MONMOUTH's sailors as reward for their hard work over the 7 month deployment to the Arabian Gulf.



The dedicated performance in Abu Dhabi gave all serving onboard a well-deserved opportunity to let their hair down before completing their remaining patrols and starting the long journey back to the UK. The variety show included dancing, music and comedy specially tailored for the Ship's company – the performers having previously visited the Ship to gain a flavour of the characters and humour onboard. No rank or rate was immune from the comedian's wit – much to the delight of all.

Flexing our muscles

Our visit to Kuwait provided the perfect opportunity to show off what the Black Duke can do. Over two days we were joined by staff and students from the local military staff college representing the different branches of the armed forces of fourteen different countries. Our guests – numbering over a hundred in total - were treated to displays of fast roping, boarding, fire-fighting, damage control and many other skills as well as being given talks and displays on life in the Royal Navy.



For many of our visitors it was the first time they had set foot on board a naval vessel and they all left with a better understanding of the capabilities of a sophisticated warship and the men and women of the Royal Navy.

HMS Monmouth's medical department and first aid trained ratings regularly undertake realistic training exercises so that they are ready to deal with casualties from both conflict and peace time emergencies.

“STAND BY FOR EMERGENCY LANDING” – The announcement resonates through the main broadcast system and, in an instant, the Ship's Company begin the well-practiced actions to recover a stricken aircraft. The ailing Lynx helicopter from HMS Monmouth has struggled back to the Ship only to fall heavily onto the flight deck at the last moment. So begins the Crash On Deck Exercise - or CODEX in naval parlance; in reality the Ship's helicopter is tucked-away safely in the hangar away from the action.



Leading Medical Assistant (LMA) Tom Usher leads the ship-board medical team using the exercise to conduct realistic training for such emergencies. The medical department normally consists of an LMA assisted by a Medical Assistant (MA) and a team of first-aiders drawn from the Logistics department. With the ship deployed for over 7 months the team is augmented with a Medical Officer (MO) – equivalent to a civilian General Practitioner.

Pictured from left to right: LMA Tom Usher, LOGS(STD) Shawn Mucunabitu and AB(Chef) Jordan 'Taff' Burnett discuss the best treatment for the casualty.

For this exercise, Surgeon Lieutenant Steve Woolley swapped scalpel for a clipboard as he taught and assessed his team's response to the emergency. MA Chris Bowers, the newest member of the team, experienced a steep learning curve as he donned breathing apparatus to attend to the first casualties on the flight deck as simulated toxic fumes engulf the make-believe helicopter.



A fire fighter checks for signs of life.

With casualties presenting burns, spinal injuries and even one showing no signs of life, Tom's role as the LMA is being comprehensively tested, “It's quite hectic to prioritise the overall picture and casualty requirements at first. It involves quite a bit of running around and moving from one casualty to the next. We have some very experienced first-aiders on board, so while they are treating the injuries and taking direction from me for ongoing management, I can brief the Captain on the individual states and evacuation requirements for the casualties”.

Even though major exercises such as a CODEX don't happen every day, Usher would never describe any day as “routine”. “We are a GP surgery for over 200 personnel, along with any other people that require our care, such as civilian sailors in need of assistance at sea,” he says.” The medical issues from day to day can be anything from a headache or tonsillitis to knee injuries or chronic back

pain. So what I have to deal with is different from day to day.”

The Ship's sickbay may be small, but it is as well equipped as any GP's surgery. For more serious cases it also has a small ward which can accommodate two people in isolation. The medical team also maintain first-aid posts around the Ship and provide ongoing first-aid training to the boat crews, boarding teams whilst ensuring a basic standard is taught to the remainder of the Ship's Company.