



## RMBT Take aim



## 'Four Five Engage' 4.5' Medium Range Gun put to the test



## Port Out, Starboard Home

## A Message from the Captain

A very warm welcome to Issue 15 of 'The Rose', the Official Newsletter of HMS MONTROSE. As you can imagine the current global pandemic caused by COVID-19 has brought challenges to us all and as you will read through this issue of 'The Rose' this has been no different for the Crews of HMS MONTROSE. I hope that as you read this newsletter you will recognise the sheer effort and determination that has been required, by all, to enable HMS MONTROSE to remain on task, protecting the Nation's Interests.

This issue looks at what HMS MONTROSE has been able to achieve in the nearly two months since we departed the UK. It includes, isolation, quarantine, fire exercises, multiple gunnery shoots (of every calibre of weapon), battle damage exercises, transits of strategic choke points (Strait of Hormuz), differing operating routines, flying operations, sonar

trials, radar trials, 'Action Messing' (where the chefs do 'ready, steady, cook for 200 people) and that is just the tip of the iceberg.

On a more personal level, core training has been vast at every level for the Ship's Company. Those who have been here before are integrating the 22% change over of new personnel; thus training the next generation of MONTROSE.

Finally, we have commenced a Fleet Time Support Period. This is essentially a 'MOT and Full service' for the Ship. Due to current COVID measures the external support we have come to rely on to assist, are no longer available and it is a whole ship effort so that we can get back to operations in a sustainable state.

It is safe to say that in the last 7-weeks we have achieved a lot....read on to find out more, but I feel there is a lot more still to come!

Firstly, I hope this finds you safe and well. COVID-19 has impacted on all of us but I am truly grateful for your support in enabling your nearest and dearest to deploy on global operations with the Ship. In being able to do this has been a massive team effort – you all are firmly part of that team; thank you.

Additionally when I talk to my Ship's Company of some of the great things that members of the 'MONTROSE family' are achieving at home, during this testing time, it is hard not to be impressed. Whether you are on the frontline with the NHS, volunteering to support those in need of assistance, home-educating due to the closures of schools or shielding to remain safe – you are all in our thoughts.

It will not be lost on any of you that seven weeks ago, we re-formed and re-grouped

in Plymouth and Yeovilton, readying ourselves to deploy again to the Middle East. A lot has happened in the past 7-weeks but the two main themes have been; keeping us safe from the unintended transmission of COVID and preparing ourselves to deliver on operations, as we have done time and again.

The first 3-weeks consisted of isolation and quarantine, the final 4-weeks has been training. In both aspects, albeit very different, the sailors and marines of HMS MONTROSE have been exceptional. They have overcome the challenges faced, run the gauntlet of pressure thrown at them and come out the other side (yet again) a fully functioning operational warship; made only possible by the quality of its people.

As ever, thank you for your continued support to allowing such capability to be made possible. Stay safe; keep in contact and again, many thanks for all you do whilst we are away. **Ollie**

# Monthly Overview

## Part 1: Isolation

This issue's Monthly Overview starts a little before April. A letter from the CO was sent to all HMS MONTROSE Port Crew in late March saying that due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United Kingdom the decision had been made that all HMS MONTROSE Port would return to HMS DRAKE, a week later. Once there we would begin our isolation phase to combat and protect against COVID. The aim; to ensure that HMS MONTROSE Port could return to Bahrain in as known 'COVID State' as they could be. Everyone was showing agility and flexibility in adapting to the pandemic and the National lockdown that we were all enduring.

Fast forward one week and the crew found themselves en route to Bahrain, ready for handover with Starboard crew, to sail into operations once again.

Unfortunately, just as with the UK, Bahraini Government regulations were in a state of flux. No sooner had everyone landed into the country the direction came through that all foreign personnel entering the country would have to isolate for two weeks. So instead of taking ownership of HMS MONTROSE as planned, Port Crew had to isolate for 14-days in the United Kingdom's Naval Support

Facility (UKNSF) and be tested for COVID at the end of the period.

Strange and testing times for both crews! Instead of handing over the ship and HMS MONTROSE Starboard Crew still embarked, the Ship returned to sea to continue executing the operational tasking required from her.

For Port Crew, confined to quarantine in an accommodation block, it required people to get creative. MA Potts began running an isolation competition for Port Crew to keep busy whilst in lockdown. This included quizzes, fitness challenges (run by our Physical training Instructor (known as Clubs), and a creative challenge. The creative challenge caught people's attention, with a number of video entries recreating Aladdin, or the Pixar lamp animation using what they could find in their accommodation as props or costumes. These were all hosted on a Defence Connect page (like Facebook circa 2008), for the Ship's Company to keep informed of information. The page also had daily work outs from Clubs, and a Vlog from the Chaplain to keep everyone in the right headspace and general information to ensure we stayed connected.

Finally after one week of group isolation in the UK, 14-days in quarantine in Bahrain, 2 x swab tests for COVID, and countless laps of the 3G pitch (for daily exercise) Port Crew were back onboard HMS

MONTROSE handing over with Starboard, safe in the knowledge that both Crews were 'COVID free'.

## Part 2: Operational Assurance

Four days later and HMS MONTROSE were now the custodians of the Ship, ready to proceed on task within the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman.

To mention, during all of this the crew were joined by a team from the Surface Flotilla (SURFLOT), and Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) who after enduring isolation with everyone then provide the training, and ultimately the green light to say that we were once again ready to conduct operations. Thus began 3 weeks of an Operational Assurance Visit (OAV) and Theatre Integration and Weapons Training (TIWT).

During this period the team were put through their paces, being tested unilaterally across departments. The Mechanical Engineers in particular were being quizzed daily (even hourly) on their system knowledge. What they would do in the event of a break down of an engine? What they would do if the ship lost all steering? Or more routinely, on their daily working and engineering practices.

The Weapons engineers would be tested on their ability to deal with battle damage to key systems. Working in small maintainer teams to rove the ship and fixes problems great and small. From fixing weapon systems and essential

Command systems, to stripping wires and re-rigging communications boxes so that Command and Control could be articulated accordingly to the crew.

Logistics was no different. Their tests varied massively. In the galley, feeding 227 people in under 45 minutes (including all of the washing up.) To supplying pivotal parts and stores of who ever requested them – cue "Action Logistics". On the other end of the spectrum, the medical team were fighting hard in exercising to save lives, dealing with causality scenarios.

Fighting hard against the simulated battle was the Warfare Department. Their assurance package consisted of continual assessments of emulated attacks, very real replenishment at sea (like filling your car up from another car on the motorway), flying serials to keep the ship and aircrew in date for aviation and also making the big gun go bang to prove accuracy and precision.

Overall, HMS MONTROSE Port had returned to Bahrain after whirlwind 7-weeks. In a particularly uncertain world the one certainty, that is evident, is that Port Crew were back onboard and once again ready to deliver on operations as the Royal Navy's Forward deployed Frigate; HMS MONTROSE remains at the tip of the spear.

*A big thank you this issue goes AET Godfrey, who has taken some stunning photos of us in action.*

# Running Laps Around Coronavirus

The circumference of the earth is 40,075km (24,901miles); a lap around our upper deck is approximately 250m. We therefore need to run a total of 160,300 laps! This is no mean feat, so we are asking our families, friends and affiliates to contribute ‘laps’ to our endeavour.

Every 250m run or walked by the wider ‘Montrose family’ will equate to one lap of our upper deck. To take part and record your ‘laps’ for the event please do so via your family member, friend or point of contact onboard. We will log the distance you have run or walked, your name and when you conducted the exercise, so keep us updated on your progress and in return we will provide regular updates via social media as to how we are getting on as a collective. You can even send us photos of yourself completing your ‘laps’!

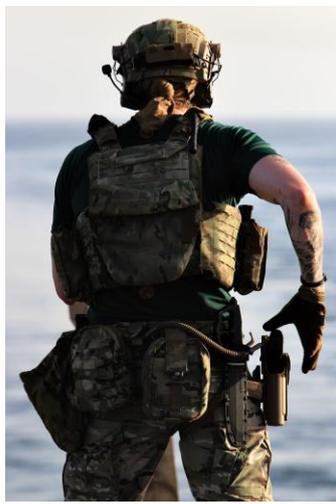
A Virgin Money Giving page has been setup for donations to MIND, the Royal Navy Benevolent Trust and Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity, which can be found at the following address:

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/HMSMONTROSE>

Alternatively search for ‘HMS Montrose’ on the Virgin Money Giving Website.



- 250m – distance around the upper deck
- 40,065km – Distance around the Earth
- 160,300 – The laps HMS MONTROSE requires to run around the Earth



## ‘Royals Take Aim’

Keeping skills and drills current is an ongoing battle. Whether you are an engineer re-acquainting with the jet engines powering the ship, or one of the Royal Marine Boarding Teams (RMBT) onboard, keeping up to date with your equipment and its use is paramount to keep a ship fighting effectively.

During a brief rest bite from whole ship exercises the RMBT took the opportunity to do just that. On a Tuesday afternoon, the Royal Marines commandeered the flight deck to practice their weapon skills, “point of aim” for technicality. A day

shoot was conducted with the 9mm pistol, before an evening/night shoot (see cover photo) with the C8 Carbine, The evening shoot established their ‘black light’ skills, where they have to acquire a target in the pitch black with only ambient light, and an IR laser for guidance whilst using night vision goggles.

The team also used the opportunity to practice their ability to switch between primary and secondary weapon systems, whilst keeping speed and accuracy up. Of course it wouldn’t be very military to conduct such an exercise

without some friendly rivalry, with the team keeping score. They tallied their points for grouping (consistency in spacing between shots) – needless to say it was a close contest these guys are highly trained marksmen.

Whilst some friendly rivalry and competition brings an element of fun to the serial, there is no question that it is these sorts of drills that keep our ‘Green Team’ on the top of their game, as one of the most useful assets in combating illicit activity in the region.

## ‘RAS ON’

One of the hardest evolutions from a navigation perspective is to conduct as Replenishment At Sea. As stated in the prelude for the month, Replenishment at Sea (or RAS, for short) is like fuelling your car, with another car, whilst driving along the motorway. MONTROSE is always at 30 minutes’ notice to RAS, with the planning of fuel consumption, and the prediction of when the ship needs fuelling under constant review. Then, after this has been calculated, the ship must request this support via appropriate channels to book their ‘slot’.

Once all the prerequisites are in place, the ship will have to make a rendezvous point (RV) with their fuelling ship (this time the USNS Joshua Humphries).

HMS MONTROSE arrived on time in mid May to RAS with the aforementioned ship.

At RAS stations everyone closes up to take fuel – it is a whoship evolution. The aim being to drive the ship 32 metres away from the tanker, then firing a line across to attach hoses, take on fuel and supplies, all whilst keeping clear of shipping. Of course, on HMS MONTROSE no RAS is complete without the ‘half time’ obligatory RAS ice cream.

Ice cream eaten, it was then time to depart, topped up on over a cool 1/8 of a million pounds worth of fuel, ready for onward tasking – hopefully topping up the car won’t ever be that much at the Tesco pump.....but think of the points if it did!



*On the approach the Captain discusses the Ship’s positioning with the Navigator.*

## NFF Can Brighten Your Day!

Recognising that there is additional pressure on those families whose serving loved one is currently deployed or away from home as a result of COVID-19, the NFF has received funding from Annington Trust to provide resources to support their resilience, enhance coping strategies and to brighten their day whilst apart.

We are delighted to be able to invite families to choose from a list on our website of goodies such as gardening kits, craft kit subscriptions, a slow cooker, Wi-Fi extender or a yoga mat! Launched on VE Day, word has got out and NFF have received lots of requests. This initiative has been extremely well received and feedback has been that spouses are delighted to have been thought about at this challenging time.

However, we here in MONTROSE are keen that we don’t miss anyone! <https://nff.org.uk/brighten-your-day/> .

**Book Project** – NFF have re-launched their very successful book project thanks to RNRMC. Resources are offered to family members of all ages to support separation, anxiety and additionally bereavement. Again, families are invited to order from the book list on our website <https://nff.org.uk/family-resource-project/>.

**Working Away from Home** - finally, NFF were invited to share what we know about separation with the families of NHS staff that are currently living apart from their families. The team produced a bespoke resource that is also for Royal Navy families <https://nff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Working-Away-Covid19.pdf>

**Naval Families**  
FEDERATION  
*Speaking up for Naval Service families*

## HMS MONTROSE – PHOTO OF THE MONTH

