

Festive greetings to you all from the West Pacific! It has been a while since my last update letter and I thought that as the year draws to a close, it would be good to send you a quick summary of what we've been up to.

For all of us, Christmas is a time when we should be together enjoying time with our families. I acknowledge that this will not be the case for many of you, and as a husband and father, I am exceptionally grateful for the support that you all give to us throughout the year. It goes without saying that HMS ENTERPRISE has achieved a lot over the year, we wouldn't have done it without your patience given the number of changes we've had in our programme.

Last time I wrote we had seen a major change in our programme which resulted in us leaving the Atlantic to head out, via the Mediterranean, all the way out to Japan. This was quite an epic undertaking and a fun journey with many deployment "firsts". From a personal perspective, I had the opportunity to take the ship into my home port of Gibraltar. During our time alongside we hosted a number of people including the Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Kyd, who presented Able Seaman (AB) Faulkner and Able Seaman Dixon with their Able Seaman Class 1 (AB1) badges.



Vice Admiral Kyd presenting ABs Faulkner and Dixon with their AB1 badges.

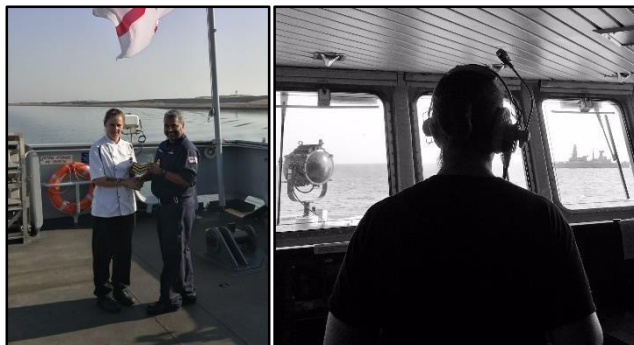
On departing Gibraltar, our next stop was in Souda Bay, Crete where we completed a watch rotation and hosted a visit from our new Hydrographer of the Navy, Captain Derek Rae. The visit provided us with an opportunity to top up with fuel and stores before we continued on our journey east and on towards the Suez Canal.



View from the bridge during our passage through the Suez Canal.

Never one to miss an opportunity to do something slightly different, I had the chance to present

Leading Logistician Catering Services (LLogs(CS)) Cat Taylor with her second good conduct badge (GCB) half way through our Suez transit. LLogs(CS) Taylor has recently been selected for promotion to Petty Officer and will be leaving the ship early in 2020 to go to her promotion course. Once we left the canal, conditions were pretty hot and dusty to say the least, but we fought through until we got to the Bab el Mandeb Strait where we met up with HMS DUNCAN who was on her return trip home.



LLogs(CS) Taylor receiving her 2nd GCB – Petty Officer O'Hagan watching HMS Duncan sail by.

Three weeks after leaving Crete, having steamed nearly 6000 nautical miles, we arrived in Singapore. This was a relatively busy visit where we had the opportunity to host the British High Commissioner, Her Excellency Kara Owen CVO. During the visit, Petty Officer Davey was presented with his Long Service and Good Conduct Medal and Able Seaman Cox with his Able Seaman Class 1's badge. Other visits to the ship included a STEM event for a local international school as well as a local scout group.



Her Excellency Kara Owen CVO presents AB Cox with his AB1s badge - Local scout troop visit.

Maintaining our core skills is important, particularly when operating far from home. To keep us up to speed, we embarked a small team of trainers from Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST). They worked with our onboard team to deliver a bespoke training package during our passage from Singapore to Japan. This included a range of firefighting, damage control and first aid exercises to make sure that we were on top of basic routines. Although conditions were calm during this particular transit, we were looking ahead at Typhoon Hagibis which was quickly sweeping through the Pacific Ocean northward towards Japan. The resulting conditions forced the ship to make a detour to Sasebo, Japan. In doing so we were able to seek shelter and rotate some of our crew.



Firefighting training at sea – Graphic showing the track of Typhoon Hagibis with ENTP behind it!

We left Sasebo in the knowledge that we were going to be following closely behind the typhoon. Benefitting from our own top level forecasters, we were able to keep heading up to Tokyo so that we arrived on time for the Japanese International Fleet Review. The event was part of the celebrations for the enthronement of the new emperor however, following the widespread devastation caused by the typhoon, the decision was made to cancel the review. We still made it to Yokosuka, Japan for a routine visit where we had the chance to meet the Japanese Chief of the Maritime Self Defence Force, Admiral Yamamura. The other main focus for the visit was a royal visit by HRH the Prince of Wales whilst we were in Tokyo.



Presenting Admiral Yamamura with an ENTP crest - Prince Charles joined us for a tot of rum!

The visit required a huge amount of preparation but it was a success, with articles in the UK press including the Daily Mail, The Times, Forces News and Daily Telegraph. During the visit HRH met with senior members of the Japanese Defence Ministry and the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force as well as a number of delegates from the Japanese Climate Change Partnership. HRH also had the opportunity to meet the ship's company; where he presented Able Seaman Dixon with the Hamborne Trophy for Top Student on Hydrographic Junior Rates Course 2019. The Prince joined the crew in a toast to the new Emperor of Japan, having been enthroned the previous day and exercised his prerogative to "Splice the Mainbrace" – or in normal speak, he gave us the order to drink a tot of rum!

On departure from Tokyo, the ship returned to Singapore for a maintenance period. This was quite a challenge as the air conditioning systems were turned off for part of this period leaving the ship in some exceptionally challenging conditions. To provide a welcome distraction, a range of adventurous training activities were put on giving everyone the chance to participate in either stand up paddle-boarding, snorkelling, mountain biking or a nature walk.



Mountain biking, paddle boarding and climbing – adventurous training is always a welcome distraction!

November also saw our sailors participate in the Remembrance ceremonies at the Kranji War Memorial. Following on from previous visits by RN ships, we also provided an honour guard who trained with the Singaporean Armed Forces to stand on ceremony and deliver drill movements obeying commands in Malay. It was a fantastic achievement which drew praise from all quarters not least the High Commissioner. Shortly after Remembrance Sunday we were visited by Rear Admiral Peter Sparkes who has just taken over as the UK's National Hydrographer. After a quick tour of the ship he presented Leading Medical Assistant Haynes with an award having been selected as the best Medical Assistant in the RN.



Remembrance Day service at the Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore

We have since left Singapore and are back up in Japan. The journey took us through some heavy seas in order to get to Yokosuka on time. Whilst in port we facilitated a meeting to look at how different nations can collaborate to share hydrographic data. Onboard some are already getting into the Christmas spirit, with talk of secret Santa, decorations making an appearance and the odd Christmas song playing in the galley. Santa was not able to make it to us, his representative, Vice Admiral Merz the Commander of the US 7th Fleet called on us instead! During his visit he presented Petty Officer Smith and Leading Engineering Technician Chadwick with their third good conduct badges.



Presentation of Good Conduct Badges to LET Chadwick and PO Smith

Whilst it is not the same as being at home, we're trying our best to make the most of it and hope that you all do the same too. As ever, we would not be able to achieve all that we have done if it wasn't for your support. Thank you for being part of our journey - I will endeavour to keep the two way channels of communication open and would welcome any feedback you have, any time.

Merry Christmas and a happy new year to you all,