

# ICE BREAKER

## Deployment News from HMS PROTECTOR

Affiliates Letter Issue 3 - December 2016



## WELCOME TO ANTARCTICA

Since our last newsletter we have completed two out of four periods in the Antarctic region for the 2016-2017 season. The first was spent in and around South Georgia supporting the South Georgia government, conducting diving and surveying tasks as well as transporting a group of BAS scientists to Bird Island. Once home to a thriving whaling industry, the whaling stations are now abandoned and South Georgia boasts a thriving tourist industry receiving 10,000 eco-tourists a year. It is therefore even more important than ever that the waters are accurately charted to enable navigational safety for the cruise liners that carry the tourists as well as other vessels working in the area.

During the second Ice Work Period HMS PROTECTOR visited the Weddell Sea, and proceeded much further south than has been the case for many years due to particularly low levels of ice coverage for the time of year. Here the Ship was able to conduct surveys, made more challenging by the need to dodge icebergs, chart a retreating glacier and carry out two very successful base visits.



## MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE CAPTAIN

**A very Merry Christmas from all in HMS PROTECTOR! We hope this edition of Icebreaker finds you enjoying the very best of the festive season.**

We have had a busy, exciting time since the beginning of the 2016/17 ice season carrying out some important survey work, supporting the South Georgia government and British Antarctic Survey and conducting informal base visits under the Antarctic Treaty.

As we head to Chile to spend Christmas alongside we are looking forward to some time to relax and enjoy each other's company. White watch will be leaving to head home to spend Christmas with their families as Red watch will take over and join Blue watch for Christmas on board. Whilst it is always hard to be away for the holidays we very much appreciate your support and thoughts. We pray you are all well and look forward to continuing our affiliations into 2017.

*Captain Angus Essenhigh OBE RN*



## ANTARCTIC RESEARCH

HMS PROTECTOR regularly supports the British Antarctic Survey and in Work Period 1 we gave 5 scientists (central 5 below) a lift to Bird Island, on the western edge of South Georgia, where they be based for 18 months studying the local wildlife and environment. For the last 2 months the Ship has also been home to 2 Uruguayan scientists (far left and right) studying micro-plastic pollution in the Antarctic seas.



## ARMISTICE DAY

In front of a stunning backdrop HMS PROTECTOR joined many people across the world in observing 2 minutes silence to commemorate Armistice Day.

On a beautiful day in Antarctic Bay, South Georgia, the Ship's Company joined across the United Kingdom and fell silent to observe the Armistice Day silence. Gathered on the flight deck for a short service HMS PROTECTOR stopped to remember the war dead and a wreath was laid by the Executive Officer (XO), Cdr Trefor Fox.



The XO, Cdr Trefor Fox laying a Wreath on behalf of the Ship's Company.

## THE BROTHERS RUDGE

Continuing the family theme, a member of the Ship's Company – SLt James Rudge, was joined for the last month by his brother, Capt Rob Rudge of the Royal Logistics Corps. Rob is a Linguist and Cultural Specialist and has been supporting the ship in Antarctica when we have been visiting Antarctic Bases and South American countries with his Spanish. The brothers, from York, are enjoying the inter-services camaraderie and look forward to attending the Army Navy Rugby match together once again next year. James said "It has been a fantastic opportunity to serve alongside Rob". "It's funny; I didn't think I would ever have to share a bunk bed with him again!" Rob added "It has been such a surreal and rewarding experience." "I was pleased to find that sea legs ran in the family!" James is set to return to UK for Christmas ahead of the birth of his first child whilst Rob remains onboard, supporting PROTECTOR in her operational commitments. He will return to the UK later in 2017.



## A VIEW FROM THE SENIOR RATES MESS

The Mess President of the Warrant Officers and Senior Rates Mess (WO&SRs) hosted a 'reserved table' dinner to mark the end of tour of several Ship's Company members. CPO Daz Garbett leaves the service in early 2017, PO Olly Colman leaves to join HMS Raleigh's Parade training staff instructing new recruits and PO 'Spider' Webb leaves to join FSU base out in Bahrain. Collectively they have served just over 9 years on PROTECTOR. The WO&SRs mess wish them all the best in their new endeavours.



## A GALLEY BUZZ

It is the custom in the RN to have theme nights in the Galley and this period has been no exception. Fijian nights (led by Chef 'Sully' Vadiga) have been followed by a Caribbean night (featuring a menu by CPO Haynes, LSC Pierre, Ch Beaubrun and Ch Forde) as well as Uruguayan night with our guest scientists, Carolina and Federico, taking over the Galley. All have been exceptional and have given us a real flavour of Global cuisine as well as a small taste of home for themselves.



## SHACKLETON'S WALK

Led by Sgt Simpson RM, a small group from the Ship had the chance to walk in the footsteps of the intrepid Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton. Covering a 4 mile section of his arduous 20 mile trek over the mountains in South Georgia the crew had a small taste of the conditions that Shackleton endured to reach civilisation. Shackleton's ill fated journey led him and his crew to be stranded on Elephant Island, 800 miles south of South Georgia. In an open boat salvaged from his wrecked ship, ENDURANCE, Shackleton and five of his men managed to reach Haarkon Bay (pictured above) before their trek to the safety of the whaling station in Stromness Bay on the northern side of the island. Several months later all 22 of his crew left on Elephant Island were rescued. In this, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his rescue, Marine Tom Colwill said, "It was a privilege to be able to follow in the footsteps of Sir Ernest Shackleton – if only for a short distance. The weather going over the ridge was amazing and we had fantastic views. Once we reached Stromness the fog closed in and we had a short taste of the conditions the original expedition may have experienced."



## LANDING ON DECK

**Whilst sailing around South Georgia we had 2 unexpected guests; a pair of South Georgian Diving Petrels landed on the main deck in a bitter snow storm.**

The Petrels, nicknamed "Percy and Penny" were rescued from the deck, cold and tired from the buffeting weather. Many seabirds have such tiny legs they can't give themselves the lift they need in the way other birds can. They were re-hydrated and warmed up before the First Lieutenant (1LT), Lt Cdr Becca Burghall released them in fairer weather to return to the shores of South Georgia the next day. They had obviously told all their friends as the following afternoon, on leaving South Georgia, no fewer than 18 Petrels landed on the upper deck hoping for a lift. They were disappointed as the 1LT and Surgeon Lt Sean Vanstone collected them all up before kindly helping them on their way home.



# HMS PORTLAND

During our second Ice Work Period PROTECTOR took advantage of an unscheduled stop to the Falkland Islands to rendezvous with HMS PORTLAND and conduct a series of in-company exercises including coordinated manoeuvres and an Air Defence Exercise involving 2 Typhoons from 905 Expeditionary Air Wing. It also gave the Young Officers on board going through Specialist Fleet Time (SFT) and young AB(HM) Sam 'Jumper' Collins the chance to swap Ships and experience a night on the other ship. Midshipman Brunskill from the PORTLAND commented "Although HMS PROTECTOR is a warship there are a number of differences on board, namely and expansive bridge, en suite cabins and a sauna!"



## A SPECIAL TREAT FOR THE CAPTAIN

At the start of the Ice Work Periods I had the honour to welcome my father, the former First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Nigel Essenhigh, on board as we transited through the Straits of Magellan followed by a 1300 mile passage northwards through the Patagonian Canals. I will admit the thought of my father, a specialist navigator by profession, joining us for the narrow and tricky navigational route between the off-laying islands and the mainland of southern Chile was somewhat daunting; however it was a rare privilege to sail with him and will be one of my abiding memories of this deployment.



*Captain Angus Essenhigh RNOBE*

## WHEREVER NEXT?

**After a short break for Christmas alongside in Chile, PROTECTOR will once again return to the ice for the third and fourth Ice Work Periods. Resuming our Antarctic patrols, support to British Antarctic Survey stations and continuing in our survey role.**

There will be a few notable crew changes in the next few months. The Operations Officer, Lt Cdr Mike Wood has just handed over to Lt Cdr Doug Owen and soon after the last Ice Work Period the XO, Cdr Trefor Fox will hand over to Cdr Simon Bodman. The 1Lt, Lt Cdr Becca Burghall will be replaced by Lt Cdr Matt Lindeyer, the Logistics Officer, Lt Cdr Geoff Hughes will be replaced by Lt Cdr Charlie Carver and the position of Engineering Officer, currently Lt Guy Dimmock will be taken over by his deputy, EO2, Lt Ed Gaught with Lt Ollie Fairburn arriving as the new EO2. There will also be a large changeover within the Senior Rates Mess with the Chief Bosun's Mate, the Petty Officer Gunner and a number of others handing over as well. With such a large change over in the Command Team the next maintenance period due in the spring will not only give the ship a new lease of life but allow the Command Team time to settle in and find their way around the ship before learning how to sail her.

**As your Ice Patrol Ship heads back to the Antarctic we look forward to updating you in on her adventures to come as she travels through some of the world's harshest environments.**



