



NAVY NEWS

FEBRUARY 2014

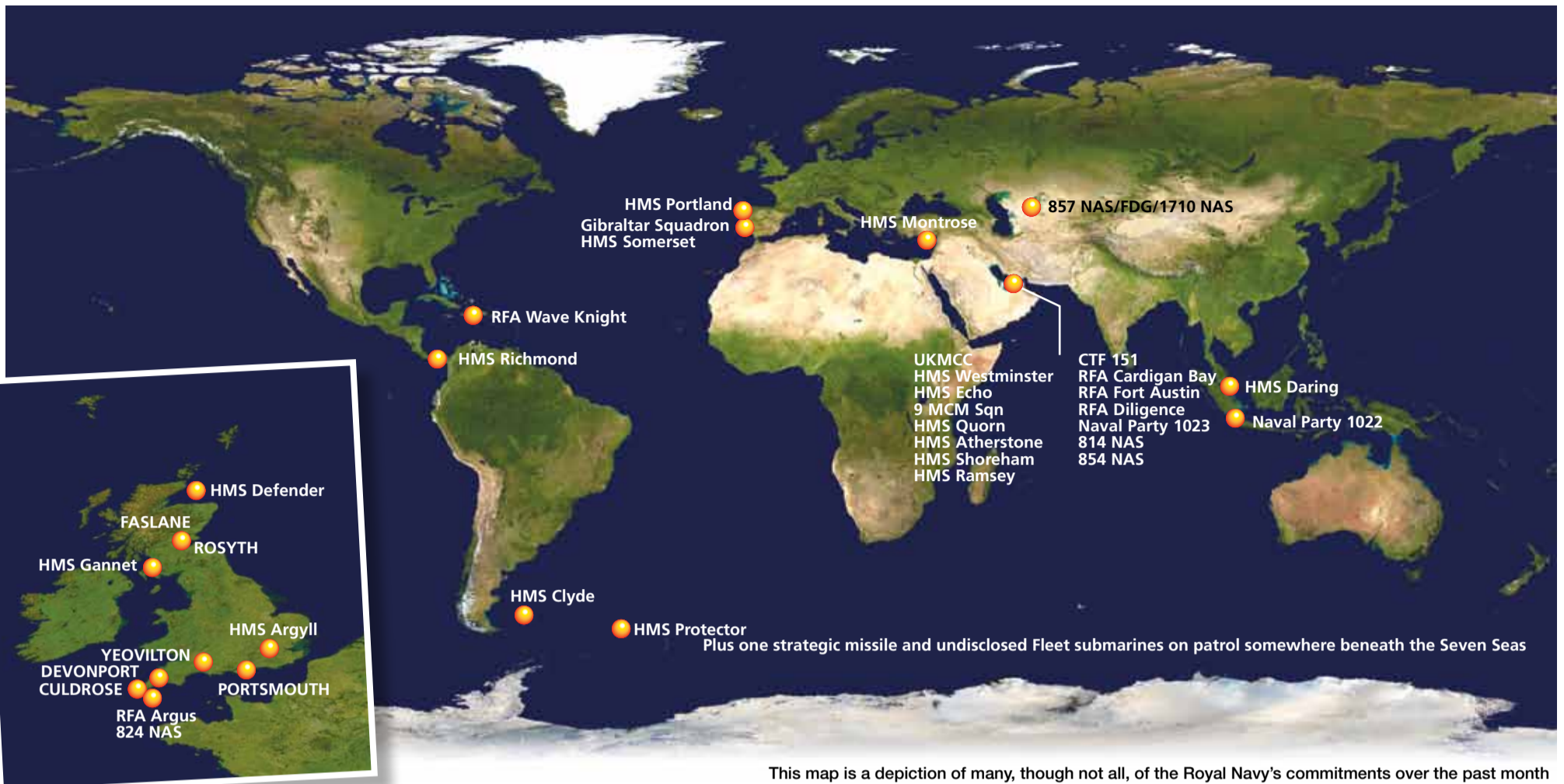
RED, WHITE & BLUE

HMS Protector in Port Lockroy in the Antarctic. The ship delivered much-needed supplies to the small research community at this isolated location. See pages 23-25 for details.

Picture: LA(Phot) Vicki Benwell



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This map is a depiction of many, though not all, of the Royal Navy's commitments over the past month

THE second month of the new year. You've probably got the sniffles, the winter blues even. It's cold, still dark, those summer hols seem like an age away.

But at least (probably) your home wasn't flooded over the festive season or your car wasn't trapped for nearly a month by a landslide, requiring the assistance of the Royal Navy.

Winter storms placed usual – and unusual – demands on the Senior Service. And the Search and Rescuers of **771 NAS** and **HMS Gannet** responded to the usual – and unusual: floods, missing persons, lost walkers, medical cases (see right).

And the commandos of **1 Assault Group Royal Marines** responded to the unusual, sending their landing craft up the Tamar to ferry 30 trapped cars from a road in Calstock (see opposite).

Otherwise, 2014 has begun as 2013 ended. Busily. First to kick off the year – with the exception of those already deployed – were HM Ships **Portland** and **Somerset** which both departed Devonport within a few days of each other – the former for the South Atlantic, the latter for the Gulf (see page 6).

In time Somerset will take the place of her sister **HMS Montrose**, who has shifted her zone of operations from the Gulf to the eastern Med to support the removal of chemical weapons from Syria with a UN task force (see page 9).

HMS Westminster has been looking for pirates on both sides of the Equator. She didn't find any, but she did find King Neptune (see pages 14-15).

HMS Illustrious completed her extended autumn deployment with a homecoming witnessed by thousands in Portsmouth and millions on the telly (see pages 4-5).

A couple of days later and another homecoming – this time in the unusual surroundings of an Oxfordshire hotel – as **HMS Quorn** and **Ramsey's** crews completed their six-month tours of duty on minehunters in the Gulf by flying back to Blighty (see page 7).

HMS Lancaster was the last ship home from overseas in 2013 after her drug-busting exploits in the Caribbean (see page 4).

HMS Daring is in the final stages of her global tour which has now brought her to South-East Asia – Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia the latest countries to host a Type 45 destroyer for the first time (see page 10).

Daring was away over Christmas. As was her sister **HMS Defender**, although in the slightly cooler surroundings of northern Scotland, meeting up with a Russian carrier battle group (see page 6).

The new Merlin, the Mk2, has been to sea for the first time, as **824 NAS** joined **RFA Argus** for training in the Channel (see page 16).

We're now in the 100th anniversary year of the start of the Great War – a commemoration which is already gathering considerable steam. Sailors at **RNAS Culdrose** have been learning about the first air station on the Lizard Peninsula, while **HMS Richmond's** crew paid tribute to the men of the 1914 Battle of the Falklands (see page 20).

Another key anniversary this year is the 350th birthday of the Royal Marines, which begins this month with the **1664 Challenge** (see page 22).

And finally... it's Pingu time again as **HMS Protector** gets stuck in to her surveying work around the frozen continent, visiting the Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia and the remote, uninhabited island of Thule – once regarded as the end of the known world (see pages 23-25).

Christmas rescuers go all the way to 11

THE foul weather which lashed Britain almost non-stop over the festive period led to the Royal Navy's Search and Rescue helicopters being scrambled more than two dozen times.

In doing so the fliers from **RNAS Culdrose** in western Cornwall and **HMS Gannet** in Prestwick, near Ayr, saved or helped more than 20 fishermen, stranded walkers and medical cases.

Rescue 193, the duty Sea King of 771 NAS at Culdrose, lifted off the tarmac 17 times between Christmas Eve and January 6, helping nine people in the process.

Their colleagues at Prestwick were launched on ten occasions between Christmas Day and January 3. Fourteen people – and two dogs – have Gannet to thank for their efforts.

"The last few days of 2013 and the beginning of the New Year have been pretty busy for the duty crews at HMS Gannet," said the unit's CO Lt Cdr Andy Drodge.

"With Scotland rarely escaping the grips of stormy weather, some of the flying conditions have been quite tricky. Between high winds lashing the coastal areas and more wintry conditions further inland, as well as persistent low cloud, our crews have been challenged, but have always risen to the challenge and completed the job successfully."

Gannet's longest job of the festive period was the search for two walkers lost on Beinn Ghlas, a 3,619-ft peak north of Loch Tay – that one was five hours and 50 minutes from start to finish.

The helicopter's return to base was difficult in freezing temperatures with heavy snowfall. But, alongside the mountain

rescue team, the duty crew got the walkers off the mountain safe and well, if a little chilly.

Rescues in the mountains are typically Gannet's staple diet – but the winter storms have generally persuaded walkers and climbers to stay away from the peaks of western Scotland.

The domain of the Prestwick unit covers 98,000 square miles of Scotland, northern England, Northern Ireland and the North Atlantic.

The furthest flung Christmas call-out – a round trip of some 300 miles – was a medical transfer from the island of Barra, moving the patient to specialist care in Glasgow.

"Our shortest job was one which actually caught the headlines – rescuing three people, four children and two dogs from a flood bound farmhouse in Dumfriesshire," said Lt Cdr Drodge.

"This was just one hour and 20 minutes from start to finish – a really good job, very cleanly carried out by the crew involved; the rescue itself barely took ten minutes, the remaining time was transit from Prestwick and back again."

"The important thing was just to make sure that everyone was taken out of any imminent danger."

In Cornwall, nine people were assisted by 771 NAS – with the final days of Christmas/first days of 2014 proving to be particularly challenging thanks to the battering the West Country took in a succession of winter storms.

A French fisherman was winched off the Mon Briez south of Fowey on January 6 in conditions described by observer Lt Cdr Andy Watts as "a rescue at the limits of the aircraft and

crew".

The casualty was safely taken to hospital in Truro, while the previous day a burns victim had to be flown from Perranuthnoe, near Penzance, to Bristol. It took the Sea King three hours to return to base – normal flying time would be about an hour – as it battled 50kt headwinds and had to stop at Chivenor in north Devon to refuel.

That same day, January 5, a Spanish fisherman was safely lifted off his boat – despite a Sea State 7 which made for an extremely tricky winch – 150 miles off the Isles of Scilly.

As well as these successful missions, the Culdrose fliers had to abandon some sorties because of the weather, while the Sea King was called upon to help with the search for Guildford man Harry Swordy, who went into the sea at Loe Bar in the small hours of New Year's Day, and teenager Harry Martin, who vanished while photographing the effect of the storms in the Wembury area, just south of Plymouth, on January 3.

Mr Martin's body was found in the Channel by Coastguards around ten days after he vanished, while Mr Swordy's body was subsequently washed ashore.

"The rescue efforts put in by all the Royal Navy's Search and Rescue assets over this period has been immense," said Cdr Andy Rose, Commander Sea King Force.

"To pick just one example, 771 Squadron were involved in a very difficult rescue effort in extreme conditions 200 miles south-west of the Isles of Scilly on Christmas Eve that eventually saw a merchant vessel get the stricken sailors to safety; out of ten for the endeavour, I'd score them an 11."

Wave Knight's £1m seizure

CHRISTMAS brought an unexpected present for the crew of **RFA Wave Knight**: £1m of marijuana after a two-day chase in the Caribbean.

The tanker, which has a US Coast Guard Law Enforcement team and Royal Navy personnel on board, began chasing the suspect vessel, *Miss Kameney*, on Christmas Day.

When **Wave Knight** was within range, the Coast Guard boarding team struck; the US team found around a quarter of a tonne of marijuana hidden in sacks on board, and immediately detained the crew of five aboard the tanker while the haul was counted.

"The entire ship's company – Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Royal Navy and US Law Enforcement Team – as well as headquarters and prosecuting staff ashore in mainland USA are delighted with this result," said Capt Duncan Lamb RFA, the tanker's Commanding Officer.

"It has been a truly international team effort and I acknowledge the fact that a number of shore personnel have been recalled off leave to provide the necessary support. This operation is a notable disruption to the regional drug trade."

A joint Coast Guard and RFA team from his ship took charge of the *Miss Kameney* and the two vessels sailed in company to the Dominican Republic, where the boat, her illegal cargo and the suspected smugglers were handed over to US authorities.

It was the second substantial drugs bust for **Wave Knight** over the winter; back in November she bagged more than £6m of cannabis in another intercept.

In conjunction with **HMS Lancaster** – which spent the second half of 2013 in the Caribbean, returning to Portsmouth just before Christmas – the Royal Navy and RFA dealt a blow to the illegal drugs trade in the Americas of nearly £170m at the tail end of last year.



● Happy landing (craft): three of the four landing craft used to transport the stranded vehicles down the Tamar muster off the slipway at Calstock and (above) an LCVP ferries one of the rescued cars downstream

Pictures: LA(Phot) Joel Rouse

C-Day landings put Marines in the spotlight

THE RM are used to operating LCUs and LCVPs but not usually for the benefit of a select group of VIPs, including OAPs, and having the entire thing recorded by the BBC and ITV.

Even the NT got involved as 1AGRM transported around 30 vehicles, including a VW, SKODA, MINI and a TRACTOR (bit of journalistic licence with the last two...).

On Christmas Day motorists in Calstock on the River Tamar – about 11 miles upstream from Devonport Naval Base – were cut off from the national road network after a retaining wall carrying the highway collapsed.

The only way to return the vehicles to the roads was by ferrying them down river.

After an SOS by Cornwall Council on behalf of villagers and Christmas visitors, the amphibious experts of the Royal Marines offered to transfer the cars by landing craft using existing slipways.

Personnel from 1 Assault Group Royal Marines, based aptly enough at RM Tamar in Devonport Naval Base, used four smaller Landing Craft Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP) – their Landing Craft Utility vessels (LCU) were too big for the slipways – to take the cars



● One of the LCVPs moves away with a car onboard

one-by-one to the National Trust's Cotehele Quay slipway, about a mile down river.

Vanessa Southcott, whose car was stranded and whose ten-year-old son Charlie suggested asking the Navy for help, said: "It's really great that the Marines have given up their time to help us out."

"The whole village is really grateful. It's been a real problem for us who commute to work that we can't easily get to our cars."

"We don't see the Marines in a quiet place like Calstock and it's been a big event."

She praised her son for his initiative which resulted in C-Day (Car/Calstock/Commando, take your pick).

"Charlie saw a senior Navy officer at a carol concert and had his contact details already from then."

"So when the landslide

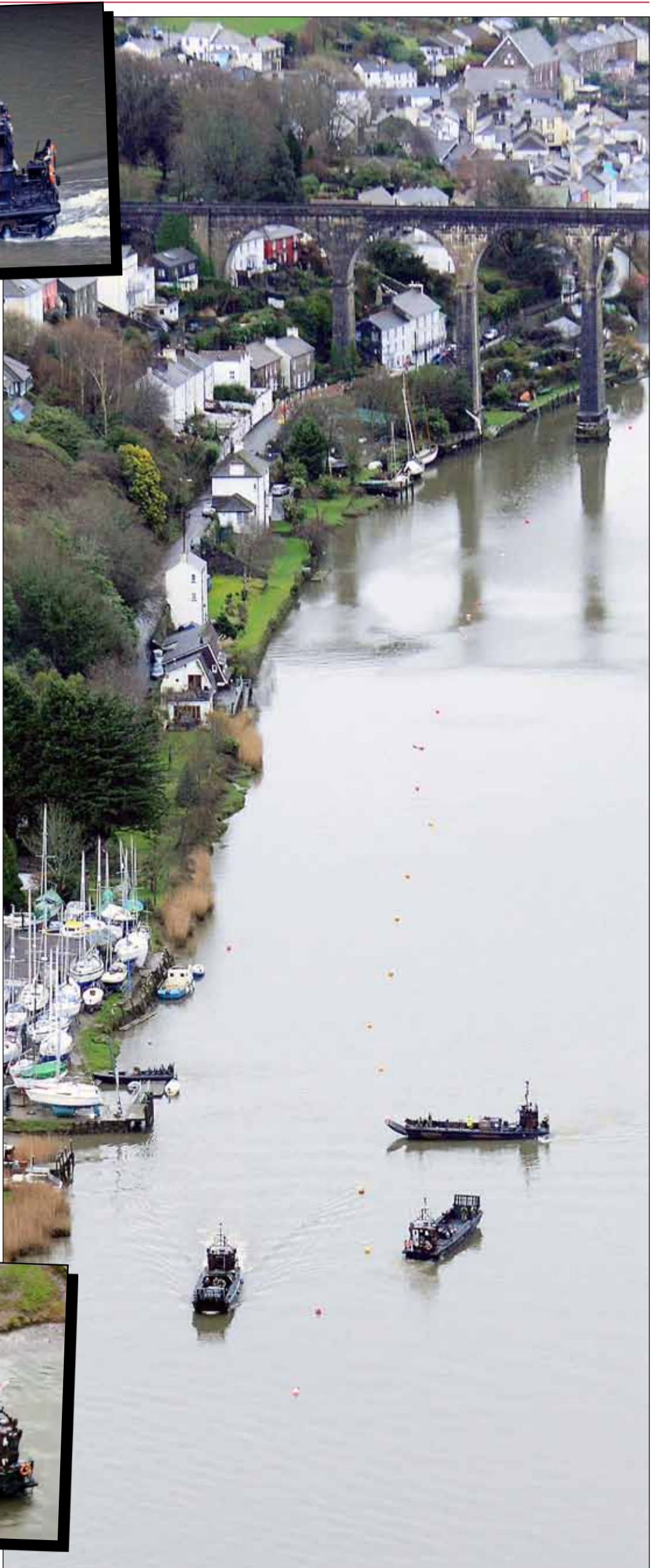
happened later he suggested the Marines help out and passed the contact details onto a councillor who made the request to the Navy."

Col Garth Manger, 1AGRM's CO, said: "This kind of operation is nothing new to the Royal Marines."

"We train to move vehicles and personnel by landing craft on and off beaches and slipways like this."

"We do this for combat scenarios and for disaster relief and similar humanitarian reasons worldwide."

"This is not strictly a humanitarian issue, but it is a great opportunity to put our skills to good use – helping the community on our doorstep and also helping refine the results of our training. The Royal Navy is delighted to come to the aid of the civilian authorities."



● Vehicles line up in the car park at Calstock to wait for the landing craft



It's 'bean a good deployment...

LITTLE Che, meet Big Che.

Young Che Golding high-fives his dad, also called Che, one of 185 reunions – some tearful, all cheerful – as HMS Lancaster added a splash of colour to a drab winter's day in Portsmouth.

The drugbusters were the last sailors to return home from overseas in 2013.

Crew stepped off the frigate carrying red roses for family and friends reflecting the ship's connection with her namesake city of Lancaster and the county's famous flower.

The frigate dealt a £160m blow to the illegal narcotics trade in the Caribbean, pouncing on six occasions against drug runners during a two-month spell – undoubtedly the most headline-grabbing part of her deployment.

"Seven months is a long time to be away from friends and family, however the successes we have seen on this deployment make the time away worth it," said Lt Cdr Adrian Gubby, the Red Rose's weapon engineer officer.

"The press coverage of the deployment has been fantastic and I am proud that my team have been a part of spreading the good news of Lancaster being in the region during her various visits, ensuring the drug runners knew we were here to get them, and also let people at home know what we have been doing in the Caribbean."

Since leaving Portsmouth in May, Lancaster clocked up over 30,000 miles and made 20 port visits to 18 countries.

She visited all six of the British Overseas Territories in the region, starting with Bermuda and ending with Montserrat, as well as Commonwealth states such as Jamaica, Belize and Barbados. She also stopped off at a number of other islands and countries in the area such as Dutch Curacao, French Martinique, and Columbia.

"This has been a really successful deployment and I am really proud to have been a part of it," said AB James Duffy, a son of Lancaster and coxswain of one of the frigate's sea boats which played a key role recovering bails of drugs from the ocean during the succession of busts.

"All the guys have dug out and looked out for each other and it is the team effort by everyone on board Lancaster that has made us so successful."

Cdr Peter Laughton, who took over as the ship's CO in the final weeks of the deployment, added: "What Lancaster has achieved over the seven months is nothing short of remarkable."

"The variety of roles that the ship has undertaken and the range of successes that have been achieved demonstrate the versatility of a frigate in this region. We have trained on a small scale with many islands' coast guards as well as operated as part of a task group alongside other navies in Exercise Unitas, and our counter narcotic operations speak for themselves."

As the ship returned home, so too her Lynx helicopter which also played a vital part in those half-dozen drug seizures.

And like the ship's return, so the welcome for the ship's Flight at RNAS Yeovilton was a teary affair.

"The team did extraordinarily well in some really challenging circumstances," said Flight Commander Lt Chris Easterbrook.

"This deployment asked for early starts and long days and everyone delivered. Helping to take such a large quantity of drugs off the streets is a great reward for all this hard work. You always hope to be home for Christmas but these things are always subject to change. It's great to be back."

Mickeala Burrige, the partner of LAET Carl Boyce, was there to welcome him back with their 14-month-old daughter Carly.

"It's been a really long time and Carly has changed so much! It's really lovely to be back together as a family for Christmas," she said.

PO Kev Messom, the mechanical systems maintainer, said of the deployment: "It was a long but successful seven months away but a huge sense of achievement was felt by all on board. It was very hard work and it's good to be home in time for Christmas."

Picture: PO(Phot) Paul A'Barrow, FRPU East



● Blue skies break through the clouds as HMS Illustrious enters Portsmouth Harbour after her extended deployment

'Proud moment for

THE pavements around The Hard and Gunwharf Quays in Portsmouth were busier than normal.

A father and daughter made their way towards a car park; he carried two full shopping bags; she had a huge rucksack slung on her back.

Nearby a man carried a similar rucksack and had a decorative beaded purple lampstand under one arm as he strode towards the railway station.

Several groups of people, husband and wives, sons and daughters with their parents were also heading to trains, coaches, buses and cars. A typical scene at the transport hub.

But look more closely; The grey skies were spilling its promised rain but these people were all grinning and had a spring in their step.

Less than an hour earlier they had been welcomed back to Portsmouth Naval Base as heroes – now, in their civvies, the crew of HMS Illustrious were making their way home – at last.

Portsmouth has seen many homecomings – and this one attracted thousands of wellwishers. Spectators lined the seafront; the Hot Walls; Round Tower; Gunwharf – and more than 1,500 relatives and friends gathered on the jetty.

The crew of the aircraft carrier missed Christmas at home after being diverted to take part in the humanitarian mission to deliver aid to the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan at the end of November.

Illustrious and her crew – which at one point numbered 950 – spent three weeks delivering emergency aid supplies and repairing key services and broken



● Above, Peaches Mandebvu holds up her iPad as she waits to greet her sister, ET(ME) Thelma Mandebvu

Picture: POA(PHOT) Owen Cooban

Right: LET Jack Lowe proposes to Amy Clarke

Picture: LA(Phot) Ian Simpson



infrastructure. The welcome party in Portsmouth included a delegation from the Southampton Filipino Association, which wanted to say thank you in person. Earlier Armed Forces Minister Mark Francois joined the ship off the Isle of Wight.

The day of thank-yous included a tweet from Prime Minister David Cameron, while Secretary of State for International Development Justine Greening, whose department oversaw the British relief effort, said Lusty had "saved lives and got vital UK aid supplies to the worst-hit parts of the Philippines."

"HMS Illustrious – and all she achieved – sums up Britain's 'all hands on deck' approach to helping people in desperate need in the wake of deadly disasters such as Typhoon Haiyan."

"The homecoming of HMS Illustrious is a proud moment for

the entire country."

The ship's longest-serving crewmember was also on the dockside to greet his colleagues. PO Paddy Taylor, 34, left the ship in Singapore to take leave ahead of his next posting.

The highlight of his deployment was undoubtedly the humanitarian mission.

"I've been in the Navy for 16 years and to do something different...it was so worthwhile," he said.

"Around £75m was raised by the UK public for the appeal and it was nice for a British warship to deliver aid. The people were amazing and we were sad to leave to be honest."

PO Taylor, from County Armagh, joined Lusty in July 2010 following her refit and is now looking forward to a two-and-a-half year posting in Gibraltar in May with wife

Sabrina and three-year-old son Sebastian.

Back to the homecoming itself. Hundreds of relatives gathered on the jetty; children and adults took advantage of the face-painter and were entertained by a magician and the Royal Marines Band.

Some younger children made good use of the puddles formed after a short sharp downpour while mums could be heard urging their children to calm down as their excitement threatened to become too much.

But then the sun came out, a rainbow appeared over Portsmouth Harbour and the excitement grew, with shouts as jets of water from the tugs heralded the appearance of Lusty.

Some of the ship's aircraft flew overhead as Illustrious manoeuvred alongside, dozens of cameras, phones and iPads were held aloft to capture the



Picture: LA(PHOT) Dave Jenkins

Low key but just as warm



● Lt Cdr Ed Cooper is greeted by his family as he returns to RNAS Culdrose

THE welcome party was tiny compared to that which greeted Illustrious - but the greetings were just as warm as the crew of the ship's Merlin arrived home at RNAS Culdrose.

The Merlin Flight disembarked at Culdrose while Lusty sailed past the Lizard Peninsula.

"We could see the families waiting for us as we taxied to the squadron," said Petty Officer Stu Cragg, who was welcomed home by his wife and two daughters.

Promoted to Lt Cdr during the Cougar deployment, Flight Commander Ed Cooper said: "It has been an incredibly busy and successful few years for the Merlin team of 829 NAS 01 Flight.

"Cougar 13 and Op Patwin were great examples of what the RN do best; it shows the Royal Navy is globally deployable and can take part in operations at short notice. It also shows that the Merlin is one

of the most capable and versatile helicopters in the Armed Services."

Leading Air Engineering Technician Dan Donbavand said: "Singapore was such a fantastic run ashore and part of the world I've never been to or likely able to go back to again soon!"

Since sailing for exercises in the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and Middle East in August, the single Merlin Flight has flown over 200 hours on 100 sorties; ranging from hunting pirates off the Horn of Africa, searching for submarines or, more recently, flying humanitarian aid ashore in the Far East.

Of those 200 hours, 75 were flown during the intense two-week period of Op Patwin.

Having spent more than half of last year away from home, 01 Flight personnel will now take some leave before another busy year, starting with Merlin Mk 2 training in March.

r the country'



● Above, the crew line the upper decks

Picture: LA(PHOT) Ian Simpson

Left: A rainbow appears as Illustrious approaches Gunwharf Quays

Picture: LA(PHOT) Nicky Wilson

moments. The first person to disembark was the Commanding Officer, Captain Mike Utley, who was met by his wife Charlotte, and his five daughters, Harriet, 14, Isabelle, 12, Emily, eight, Beatrice, seven, and Imogen, four.

As the family made their way back onto the ship the signal was given and the rest of the crew flooded ashore.

Lt Cdr David Carr was welcomed back by wife Angji, daughter Janie and son Maverick. Mrs Carr was the driving force behind Operation Lusty Kids - an appeal to send Christmas presents to the crew's children. The appeal also donated gifts to Basics Banks at Eastleigh, Fareham and Gosport and Yeovil. "I had over 700 gifts donated to more than 170 personnel on board with a total of 300 children receiving presents," said Mrs

Carr, who was planning a delayed "Davemas", having given her husband's Christmas dinner to their dog.

"The dog loved it"

Leading Engineering Technician (LET) Jack Lowe, 20, from Stoke-on-Trent, got down on one knee to propose to Amy Clarke, also 20, from Portsmouth, who said yes.

Caroline and Nick Lambert led a large family contingent to greet son Ben, 20, who is continuing a family tradition - his father and uncle both served in the Navy.

"He won't believe how much he's grown," said sister Gemma Okyere, of her ten-month-old son Elijah.

Able Seaman Emma Whitty joined the ship just two days before it left Portsmouth for her first deployment since joining the Navy 14 months ago.

The 22-year-old from Fareham

said: "We are all really pleased to be home. Being away for Christmas and the New Year was tough on our families."

Many of the crew took their family aboard before changing into their civvies and heading for home.

HMS Illustrious sailed from Portsmouth in August for Cougar 13 - the annual deployment of the UK's high-readiness Response Force Task Group.

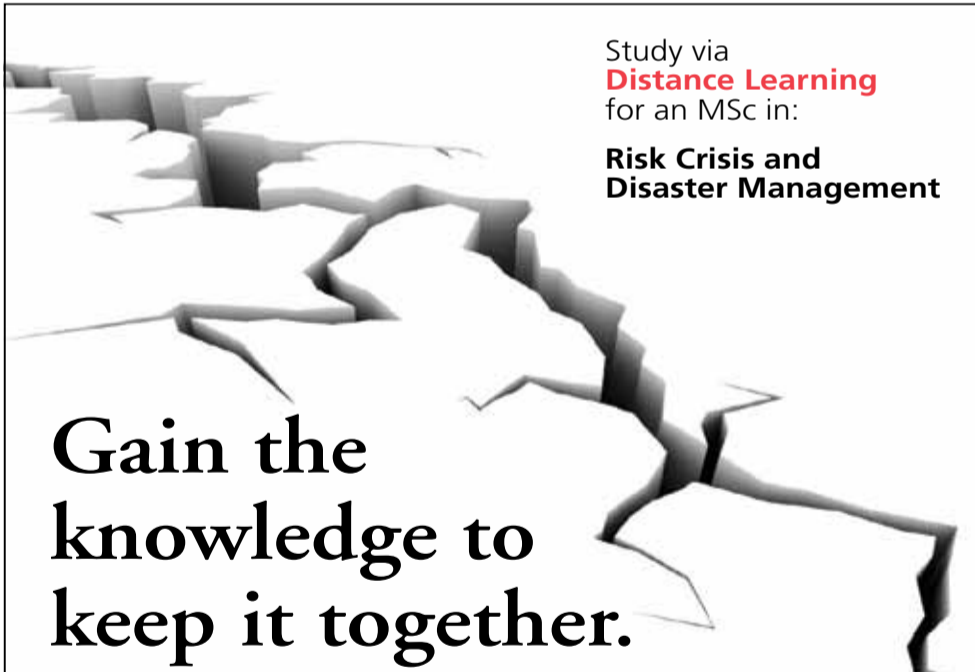
The carrier was around 6,000 nautical miles away in the Horn of Africa on counter-piracy operations when she was re-tasked with the aid operation.

She carried around 500 tonnes of UK Aid. She spent 152 days away, with 128 of those at sea, and visited ten countries.

Illustrious will undergo essential maintenance in Portsmouth before deploying later in the year.

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Keeping the faith with historic viewpoint

DEVIL'S POINT. It doesn't sound the most enticing of places does it?

But for centuries it has been used by friends and family to wave goodbye or welcome home the crews of Royal Navy warships.

And so it was to Devil's Point where loved ones gathered twice last month to bid farewell to two Type 23 frigates as they made their way into Plymouth Sound and out to the English Channel.

First to leave was HMS Somerset – the first Royal Navy vessel of 2014 to leave home for operations abroad.

The warship departed Plymouth to take over from her Devonport-based sister HMS Montrose as our "Gulf guardian", patrolling the waters from Hormuz to the shores of Kuwait and Iraq, working with Britain's partners in the regions.

The ship's company of 215 will not return to the UK until the summer after completing varied operational tasking in the Med, Indian Ocean and the Gulf.

Many of the crew are deploying from the UK for the first time, among them Sub Lt Phoebe Coutts.

"Serving on a fully-operational warship, on an operational deployment, is what everyone joins the Royal Navy to do," she said.

"I am particularly excited by the opportunities to broaden my experience and understanding in the next few months."

It's the first deployment too for the new-look frigate, which emerged from a major revamp 12 months ago and spent 2013 working assiduously to be ready for the current mission.

Guiding the frigate all the way down that long – and occasionally winding – road is CO Cdr Mike Smith.

"I have every confidence that HMS Somerset will succeed on any operational mission we are given, wherever we are needed, over the next six months," he said.

Three days later it was time to bid farewell to HMS Portland as she left



● LA(Phot) James Crawford and his daughter Lily, 3, wave to Lily's grandfather, CPO Kev Rashleigh, aboard HMS Portland

Picture: PO(Phot) Ray Jones

for the South Atlantic where she'll take over from her sister HMS Richmond.

The seven-month tour of duty is the first by the second youngest Type 23 since a year-long revamp in Rosyth.

With several commands under her belt – four minehunters, including eight-and-a-half months in the Gulf in charge of HMS Pembroke – HMS Portland's CO Cdr Sarah West knows, by and large, what the next seven months holds.

As does LS Graham Baring, an underwater warfare specialist, who's spent one fewer year in the Mob than his commanding officer – although he's never deployed to the South Atlantic before.

"It is an emotional time to see families waving you goodbye from Devil's Point, but I know the deployment will go quickly because we will be very busy."

Their loved ones are undoubtedly counting down the days until they return to Devil's Point to welcome them home.



● Right, The crew of HMS Somerset line up as they leave Devonport

● Far left: A wave to HMS Portland from relatives watching the ship leave at Devil's Point

● Left: The view for the crew as HMS Somerset heads out of Devonport



Picture: PO(Phot) Ray Jones



Picture: LA(Phot) Ben Shread

Watching over Russian visitors

RUSSIAN bear, meet Albion's lion.

HMS Defender executes the signature turn of a Type 45 destroyer as she escorts a Russian carrier group off the coast of the UK.

Just as HMS York did a couple of years ago when the Admiral Kuznetsov sailed on her winter deployment, Defender left the shelter of the Solent to meet up with the Russian leviathan – named after a wartime Soviet naval leader.

And just like two years ago, the carrier group – half a dozen warships/support vessels – sheltered from winter storms in the Moray Firth.

That was after Defender had sailed 700 miles from her base in Portsmouth through those rough seas to meet the six-ship task group north of the Scottish mainland.

As the Fleet Ready Escort – the Royal Navy warship at immediate notice to sail for duties in home waters – Defender's festive season was spent at sea.

Although holiday plans of the 190 or

so sailors aboard were rather scuppered, the air defence ship's Commanding Officer, Cdr Phil Nash, said all aboard rose to the challenge.

"I am extremely proud of each and every one of my sailors; they have tackled this mission with utter professionalism and dedication to duty, whilst also being separated from their families at short notice over Christmas and New Year," he said.

"As a maritime nation the security of the seas around our coastline remain vital to our national interests. This tasking has demonstrated the Royal Navy's enduring commitment in home waters and readiness to undertake tasking at any time of the year."

After the storms abated somewhat, the Kuznetsov group continued their passage down the east coast of the UK.

As a sign of the friendship between the two navies, goodwill messages were exchanged between the ships on New Year's Eve.



● HMS Defender in the foreground with the Russian carrier Admiral Kuznetsov



First glimpse of Successor

THESE are the unfeasibly sleek lines of Successor – the Royal Navy's next-generation ultimate weapon.

This is your first look at the submarine which will carry the nation's strategic nuclear deterrent from the latter half of the next decade onwards until the second half of this century.

The artist's impression of the boat was revealed as Whitehall signed contracts worth £79m to begin buying the first parts for the submarines.

The Successors will replace the four Vanguard-class boats currently carrying out Operation Relentless, providing the UK's continuous at-sea deterrent, a duty performed by the Submarine Service – without missing a day – since the end of the 1960s.

All four V-boats – Vanguard, Vigilant, Victorious and Vengeance – date from the 1990s and reach the end of their natural life in the 2020s.

With the government committed to replacing the submarines, BAE Systems and the MOD already have around more than 1,000 people working on the Successors.

When they enter service from 2028, the next-generation deterrent boats will be the largest and most advanced submarines to fly the White Ensign (on the rare occasions they're on the surface), while their design and construction will be the most technologically complex in the history of UK shipbuilding with up to 850 British firms and 6,000 workers likely to be involved at the peak of construction.

The orders placed with BAE by Defence Secretary Philip Hammond mean the firm can begin buying structural fittings, electrical equipment, castings and forgings.



Grateful tweeter

ROYAL Navy personnel in Bahrain had a visit from the Duke of York.

Prince Andrew, pictured visiting the UK Maritime Component Command, tweeted: "A pleasure to meet @RoyalNavy personnel serving in Bahrain at @NSA_Bahrain."

The Duke was in Bahrain on an official visit to support the launch of GREAT British Week, a British Embassy-sponsored event to celebrate the long-standing bilateral relations between the UK and Bahrain.

UKMCC commander Cdre Keith Blount said: "The tremendously valuable and enjoyable visit served both to boost morale amongst the Royal Navy staff based here in Bahrain and to underline the importance of the Royal Navy presence in the region."

UKMCC's staff of about 80 fulfils a range of roles spanning operations, logistics and intelligence. They coordinate the operations of around 11 British frigates, mine countermeasures and support vessels and over 1,000 personnel stationed in the Middle East.

Double surprise near Brize



STANDING on the boarding stairs on the tarmac at RAF Brize Norton are 37 men and women – roughly half the ship’s companies of two Royal Navy minehunters who enjoyed a unique homecoming after keeping the waters of the Gulf safe.

The crews of HMS Quorn – normally based in Portsmouth – and HMS Ramsey – based in Faslane, Scotland – flew back in an Airbus 330 with the Royal Air Force to its Oxfordshire transport hub, their six-month deployment to the Middle East completed.

But rather than scatter to their homes across the UK having been reunited with loved ones, the crews remained together for another couple of hours as a ‘homecoming party’ was staged at a nearby hotel.

There they were greeted with banners, balloons, flowers, excited children and tearful partners – all the trappings of a traditional ship’s homecoming.

By flying back to Britain, sailors on the Royal Navy’s four Bahrain-based minehunters have typically been denied all the ceremony associated with a ship sailing into harbour – such as HMS Illustrious’ very public homecoming, witnessed by 5,000 people and accompanied by messages of thanks from the premier and ministers.

The welcome for Quorn and Ramsey at the Oxford Witney Four Pillars Hotel in Witney was a much lower key affair – but filled with the same raw emotions.

Two-year-old Todd and his older brother Finn Jones, aged four, were dressed in matching ‘I love my daddy’ tops by mum Jenny to welcome home HMS Quorn’s Leading Diver Toby Jones from Emsworth, near Havant.

And the excitement of seeing dad for the first time in half a year was too much for eight-month-old Tyler who

slept through much of the reunion for his mum Kelly Nickleson and dad Able Seaman Sean Clive.

To build up anticipation, the crews tweeted every step in their final two days aboard their ships in the Gulf, from the last breakfast and showers, to handing over the keys to the minehunters to their successor crews and changing into winter clothes in Cyprus ready for January temperatures in the UK – where it’s 16°C cooler than in the Gulf.

“Rather than trickle out one-by-one from the arrivals gate, we wanted to mark the end of our 182-day deployment in style by arriving back together as one team to a short homecoming event in a hotel,” said Lt Cdr Paul Ottewill, Ramsey’s CO.

“It gives us all something of the emotion, ceremony and sense of accomplishment that a ship gets when it returns alongside in the UK after a long deployment – something that is impossible to replicate in an airport.”

PO Roy McIntosh, HMS Quorn’s deputy weapon engineer officer, said simply: “It’s great to be back.”

“We get used to sailing back into port after deployment and having emotional receptions, so to have this welcome at a hotel after a long flight home is just fantastic. After six months away over the festive period, I’m now looking forward to celebrating a belated Christmas and New Year with the family.”

The Royal Navy maintains a permanent minehunting presence in the Gulf – four ships all based in Bahrain: two Sandown-class ships (HMS Ramsey and Shoreham), two Hunt-class vessels (HMS Quorn and Atherstone).

The ships themselves spend three to three and a half years in the Middle East, but the crews rotate every six or seven months, trading places with

counterparts manning sister vessels back in Portsmouth or Faslane.

Quorn’s crew joined their ship last July after three months of intensive training aboard HMS Hurworth around the UK.

The ship has visited most Gulf states and major cities since then – Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Fujairah and Doha – and worked extensively with military forces in the region, from Middle East states to US and patrolling Royal Navy warships.

She played a key role in the Royal Navy’s autumn exercise in the Gulf, Sea Khanjar, clearing a safe path through a mock minefield for flagship HMS Bulwark and helicopter carrier HMS Illustrious.

Her deployment rounded off with Quorn’s three chefs battling it off against world-renowned cooks at the Diplomat Radisson Blu in Bahrain in a *Ready, Steady Cook*-style competition, with two hours to prepare a three-course meal for a hungry ship’s company in the hotel’s kitchen.

LCH Graeme ‘Big Ginge’ Murdoch and his shipmates Chefs Andrew ‘Little Ginge’ Halcrow and Chef Alex ‘Tug’ Wilson produced a duck starter, fish main course and an elaborate dessert.

“I particularly enjoyed having full access to the range of equipment they had available, as well as being able to try out new techniques freely,” said LCH Murdoch, from Wigan.

“I would like to see if they could still produce this calibre of food in my galley in heavy seas though.”

Sadly for his team, the Radisson’s chefs pipped them at the post, winning the competition with a score of two courses to one.

However, all three Royal Navy chefs were commended by the hotel manager and resident chefs on the quality of their cooking and presentational skills.

Picture: PO(Phot) Owen Cooban, FRPU East



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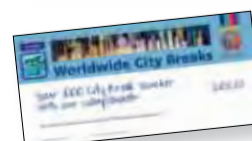


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Sights set on new kit

ROYAL Marines Commandos should be able to better spot targets thanks to £53m of new kit for the Forces.

They'll receive laser sights for their SA80 rifles which can illuminate foes up to 800 metres away, as well as new lightweight binoculars.

Royal Marine C/Sgt Phil Craigie demonstrated the latest bit of kit which could give soldiers and commandos the edge on the field of battle (above).

The senior NCO was on hand at Warminster to explain the Laser Light Module Mk3 to Defence Equipment Minister Philip Dunne.

The MOD is investing £53m in new night vision and laser equipment to help those on the front line identify targets more clearly by day or night.

The state-of-the-art laser light will be provided to all infantry to fix on to an SA80 for improved accuracy in low-light conditions.

The light can illuminate targets up to 800m (2,600ft) away, and weighs just 244 grammes – less than a quarter of a bag of sugar.

More than 15,000 lightweight, ergonomic binoculars have also been ordered to be used alongside the upgraded laser lights.

Designed to be easier to hold, the new models are 50 per cent lighter – but still offer excellent magnification.

After being tested by the Infantry Trials Development Unit in Warminster – where soldiers and Royal Marines assess new equipment and help its introduction into service – the sights were shown off to Mr Dunne, who was impressed by the demonstrations.

"The ability to see further and in more detail will allow British troops to stay one step ahead of danger," said the minister.

"The multi-million pound investment makes clear the MOD's commitment to equipping our Armed Forces, including Reservists, with world-class battle-winning technology.

"These binoculars, laser aimers and night vision goggles will improve situational awareness and reduce collateral damage across the battlefield."

Bridge support



OUTSIDE the control room of England's most famous bridge, Cdre Martin Atherton raises his cap to bid farewell to the sailors of HMS Argyll (right).

Just a few seconds earlier, the senior officer – Naval Regional Commander for Eastern England – pressed the button to bring traffic to a temporary standstill and lift the bascules of Tower Bridge to allow the frigate to pass.

And so the warship's first visit to the capital in more than 15 years came to an end – at a far more civilised hour than her arrival.

Argyll came alongside in the small hours of January 15 and berthed next to HMS Belfast (pictured above) as part of a rolling programme of visits to UK ports by warships to give the public an idea of the Senior Service's equipment, people and the work it does around the globe.

A reception and capability demonstration was held on the day of Argyll's arrival, attended by Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans Anna Soubry, Rear Admiral Duncan Potts, Rear Admiral Surface Ships, and other VIPs.

"HMS Argyll did a huge range of work around the world during her last deployment – from training African Navies to conducting counter-piracy operations in the eastern Pacific," the ship's CO, Cdr Paul Hammond, told guests.

"This has shown the versatility and value for money that all Royal Navy frigates provide."

Among the equipment Argyll was proud to show off was her new Artisan radar – also known as the 997 in Royal Navy parlance.

The frigate is only the second ship in the Fleet to receive the sensor as part of a £100m programme; it can identify a target the size of a tennis ball moving at three times the speed of sound more than 15 miles away.



Pictures: PO(Phot) Des Wade (DMC)

Aside from VIPs, the ship hosted students from a college in Tottenham, civilians interested in joining the RNR and Sea Cadets from the City of London unit.

The latter received a comprehensive tour, briefings and a meeting with Cdr Hammond.

"I was a member of Ruislip Sea Cadets throughout my youth and to be able to welcome the

members of a Sea Cadet unit on to my frigate in London is extremely gratifying," said Cdr Hammond.

"I saw the opportunities the Royal Navy offered and the exciting career prospects and the chance to see the world really appeared.

"The variety and challenge of the various roles I have had

during my 23-year career kept me motivated and to command a warship is a massive honour.

"It has always been an ambition of mine to bring a Royal Navy warship into London as a captain."

On her return to Devonport, the frigate will undergo intensive training to prepare for a deployment to the Caribbean later this year.

Bravery award for RN divers

A ROYAL Navy team of ordnance disposal divers has been presented with a bravery award for a complex operation to remove a large air-dropped mine from Guernsey.

PO(D) Nick Frost, of the Plymouth-based Southern Diving Unit (SDU1), who led the operation, received the Chief Police Officer's Commendation at a ceremony on the island on behalf of the team, which consisted of CPO Jack Harwell, who provided technical engineering and lifting advice, LD Luke Hill, and AB(D)s Stuart Farden and Jack Muddiman.

The operation required the heavy World War 2 mine – which still contained more than 375kg of high explosive – to be fully excavated by hand, lifted from the site where it was dropped in 1944 by a Canadian-manned Wellington bomber trying to prevent the Germans from resupplying during the Allied invasion of Normandy.

Nick said: "I was very honoured to receive the award on behalf of the team, SDU1 and the Royal Navy.

"A task of this magnitude doesn't come without some disruption – I am especially grateful for the cooperation of the residents of Guernsey who had to be relocated during the move.

"Their cooperation with the police made the job a lot easier and quicker, in turn it helped to return island life back to normal as soon as possible."

The mine – four metres long and weighing around a ton – fell into woodland as Allied aviators attempted to mine the entrance to St Peter Port.

Due to the remote location and the inaccessibility to lifting equipment, the mine was lifted first by block and tackles and moved along a specially-created 120m boardwalk before being loaded in the back of a truck.

It was then driven a mile to the coast – requiring the evacuation of 300 homes en route as a precaution – and taken out to sea to be detonated in deeper water.

The controlled detonation produced a 200m tall plume of water, sand and mud.

Cruiser's pets win honour

A SHY ship's cat and a wandering mongrel have been officially recognised for their efforts some seven decades after they died in a Royal Navy warship.

Leslie the cat and Shrapnel the dog were pets aboard cruiser HMS Manchester during her brief, action-packed Service career which ended when she was disabled and subsequently scuttled off the coast of Tunisia during the Pedestal convoy to Malta in August 1942.

The Town-class light cruiser, commissioned in 1936, had already been involved in the Norwegian campaign and the battle at Cape Spartivento, and was damaged by an aerial torpedo in the Med in an earlier convoy to Malta.

The damage was such that she sailed across the Atlantic for repairs in Philadelphia, where the activities of Shrapnel were brought to the attention of the Bundles for Britain aid organisation.

They decided that the dog deserved a Barkers for Britain award, and so Shrapnel was duly honoured – though not without the odd hitch...

Shrapnel had been rescued from the beaches at Dunkirk in 1940 by Allied troops, and American newspaper reports at the time stated that his ship – HMS Jaguar – was bombed from beneath him and he was rescued by sailors from Manchester.

Like much of Shrapnel's

colourful life, the facts are hazy – Jaguar was damaged but did not sink, and went to the Humber for repairs while Manchester was stationed on the river.

However he got there, Shrapnel made HMS Manchester his home, and settled in to cause mischief to all and sundry.

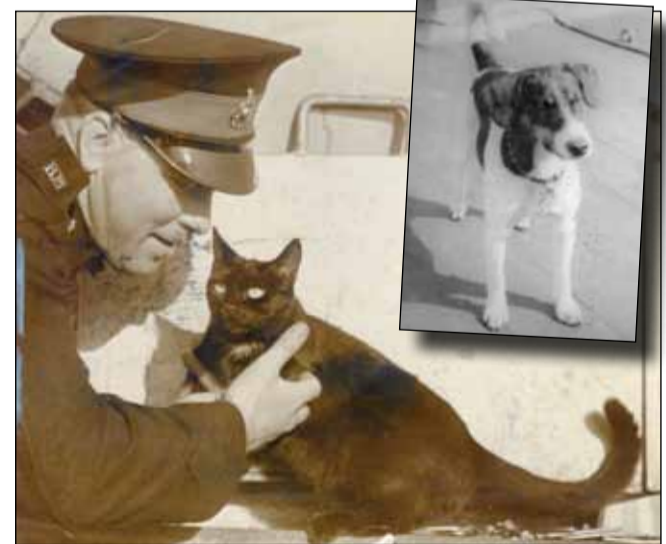
He was in trouble more than once, being busted to Ordinary Dog from Leading Dog, being disbarred at Court Martial from bones and nutty for a week for going AWOL in Scotland, and his disappearance before the ceremony in Philadelphia (he was found in a firehouse ashore) brought further opprobrium.

His official record stated that the conduct of 'Stin Ker Shrapnel' was "good on board, bad ashore."

Leslie (possibly named after the ship's builder, Hawthorn Leslie) was a paragon of virtue by comparison – but they suffered the same fate when Manchester went down off Africa.

Leslie, who retreated to the boiler room when things got lively, could not be coaxed out, and Shrapnel is believed to have gone down with the ship as well, though there were unconfirmed reports of an animal seen going ashore at the nearest beach some time later...

Maurice Broad, whose uncle Albert Reeder was a chef on board Manchester, is secretary of the HMS Manchester Association, and felt that the



● Leading Cat Leslie with Mne Batty, and (inset) Ordinary Dog Shrapnel – both pets on board HMS Manchester

animals deserved recognition.

Mr Broad had been looking through a comprehensive scrapbook kept by a member of the ship's company when he came across the stories of the pets.

"I thought that as everybody that served on Manchester was given some sort of recognition and a medal, it would be nice for the ship's pets to have recognition as Shrapnel did in America years ago," he said.

Mr Broad contacted the PDSA, and after going through

the necessary processes it was decided that both animals deserved a Commendation "for animal bravery or devotion, and for giving their lives in the service of their country."

The PDSA is the charity which awards the Dickin Medal – known as the animals' VC and instituted in 1943 by PDSA founder Maria Dickin – which was given, *inter alia*, to Simon, HMS Amethyst's ship's cat, during the Yangtze Incident in 1949, for the disposal of rats while it was injured.



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Eagle eyes prey

AN F-15 Strike Eagle swoops – leaving streaks of orange vortex in the sky – during a major exercise of air power in the Gulf.

The US jet was joined by RAF Typhoons, French Rafales and aircraft from Gulf nations for an exercise – and it was all centred around HMS Montrose.

The Devonport-based Type 23, as well as minehunter HMS Quorn, took part in the exercise which allowed pilots to practise air and surface defence manoeuvres.

Although not built specifically for air defence duties, Montrose can take out incoming enemy aircraft with her Seawolf missiles – and has automatic and hand-held weapons such as machine-guns and Miniguns as last lines of defence against aerial threats.

Lt Cdr Ben Evans, the frigate's operations officer, helped to plan the exercise and, as one of the ship's senior warfare officers, talked to the aircraft as they made numerous passes over his ship.

"All the pilots were highly-skilled and a pleasure to work with and hopefully



● The view from HMS Montrose during the exercise

we'll do so again in the future," he said. "The Royal Navy, RAF, US Air Force and our regional partners have again proven that we can operate and fight together effectively."

Montrose was then tasked with joining an international effort to help remove chemical weapons material from Syria.

The frigate is working alongside Danish, Norwegian, Russian and Chinese warships in the eastern Med to protect Danish and Norwegian merchant vessels which are carrying the industrial-grade chemicals.

Foreign Secretary William Hague said Britain also plans to give the USA equipment worth £2.5m and training to help it destroy the arsenal more quickly.

He said the action was a "strong example of international co-operation"

and added that there were plans for a major new donation in an effort to ease Syria's humanitarian crisis.

Dr Andrew Murrison, Minister for International Security Strategy, said: "I am pleased to be able to confirm that HMS Montrose will be part of the international mission to remove chemical stocks from Syria."

"As well as playing a role in safely transporting the chemical precursors, the UK is also providing specialist equipment to assist with the hydrolysis of the most sensitive chemicals before their final disposal."

Commander James Parkin, the Commanding Officer of HMS Montrose, said: "Having already proven ourselves on operations in the Gulf over the past five months, we are honoured to be the

UK unit allocated to assist in this vitally important job.

"My ship's company are well-trained, well-motivated and well-equipped."

"All of us are looking forward to working for our Danish operational commander and alongside other allies in assisting the United Nations in their efforts to remove chemicals from Syria."

Last month the crew celebrated their ties with soldiers of the legendary Black Watch, by donning the Scottish battalion's trademark red feathers in their berets.

The frigate, currently in the eastern Mediterranean, marked 'red hackle day' – a privilege she is allowed once a year.

HMS Montrose is due to return to the UK next month.



● Lieutenants Chris Paulson, left, and Daniel Sercombe keep watch as they guide HMS Montrose on 'red hackle day'

Pictures: LA(Phot Knottie Knott, HMS Montrose)

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Slowly does it with Lightning

THIS is probably the world's most expensive remote-controlled aircraft...

On the tarmac at Pax River – home of the US Marine Corps' test pilots – PO(AH) 'Knocker' White tries out a natty piece of kit to move the Royal Navy's next-generation jump jet.

This is the first run out for the Electric Shipboard Handler (Aircraft), designed to move the F35B Lightning II safely around the sprawling hangar of HMS Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales.

A team of Royal Navy and RAF engineers have been working at Pax River – officially US Naval Air Station Patuxent River – about 60 miles outside Washington for several years as they learn how to maintain the £120m stealthy strike fighter, which will replace the Harrier.

Among the challenges to overcome, 'cold moves' – shifting an empty jet around for maintenance and other purposes aboard the carriers.

At 23 tonnes, the F35 is three times heavier than the legendary British jet it replaces.

So to help the aircraft handlers, the existing RAM handler used to move Fleet Air Arm Lynx and Wildcats and Army Air Corps Apaches has evolved into the ESHA.

The prototype was tested on two bitterly cold days at the Maryland air base with the Brits permanently attached to Pax joined by colleagues from Culdrose, Fleet HQ in Portsmouth, handler manufacturers Douglas, and the F35's builders Lockheed Martin.

The aim is to build up as much 'hands on' experience so that using the ESHA for real on the deck of the Queen Elizabeth will be a doddle (technical term) when it flies aboard in 2018 with all the handlers thoroughly tested in advance.

The UK owns three F35Bs at present, but it was one of the US Marine Corps' jump jets – identical in every respect – used for the test, BF5, which was used on the recent landing/take-off trials on the USS Wasp off the Eastern Seaboard of the USA.



● Dancers greet the crew of HMS Daring in Tanjung Priok in the Port of Jakarta

Pictures: L(PHOT) Keith Morgan

Dancing divas delight Daring

TECHNOLOGY met tradition as the Royal Navy's most advanced warship arrived in Indonesia.

The welcoming party on the jetty in Jakarta featured a display by classic dancers and leis - garlands of flowers - for First Sea Lord Admiral Sir George Zambellas and HMS Daring's Commanding Officer Cdr Angus Essenhigh.

HMS Daring is completing a series of firsts during her current nine-month deployment – the first global tour by a Type 45 destroyer, first visit to the Pacific, first visit to Australia, Singapore, China, Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia.

Admiral Zambellas was on board as she sailed into Tanjung Priok in Jakarta.

The visit, which comes under the regional engagement aspect of Daring's deployment, is an opportunity to highlight the defence and trade relationship between the two countries.

British Ambassador Mark Canning said: "HMS Daring is one of the perfect examples of how British innovation and technology positions itself at the



● First Sea Lord Admiral Sir George Zambellas exchanges greetings with the welcoming party laid on for HMS Daring in Jakarta

heart of the modern world."

Indonesia lies in a region that has suffered from natural disasters in recent years and the crew of HMS Daring were providing the Indonesian Navy with a brief on Royal Navy Disaster Relief Operations including Daring's recent role in

the Philippines.

Cdr Angus Essenhigh said: "The visit programme is a busy one with many opportunities to welcome the Indonesian Navy and people aboard HMS Daring.

"Wider regional engagement will be at the heart of the visit with many opportunities to build

on the links between our two countries.

"Of course this is also an opportunity to showcase British innovation and equally importantly exercise at sea with our Indonesian partners."

Daring spent four days in Jakarta before leaving for an exercise at sea with the Indonesian Navy, an opportunity to practice international naval operating procedures in a busy region of maritime trade.

The visit to Indonesia came after Daring visited Thailand – the first Royal Navy vessel to visit the country in five years.

While in Sattahip Chuk Semat, Daring hosted an evening reception, a UK Defence and Security Industry Day, a visit to mark National Children's Day in Thailand and a visit from the Thai branch of the Royal British Legion.

Prior to arriving in Thailand, Daring became the first Royal Navy ship to visit Vietnam in seven years – and the only one to sail into the port of Da Nang.

Daring was due to return to Portsmouth at the end of this month.



● HMS Daring makes her way into the Port of Jakarta where she was met by a guard of honour from the Indonesian Navy



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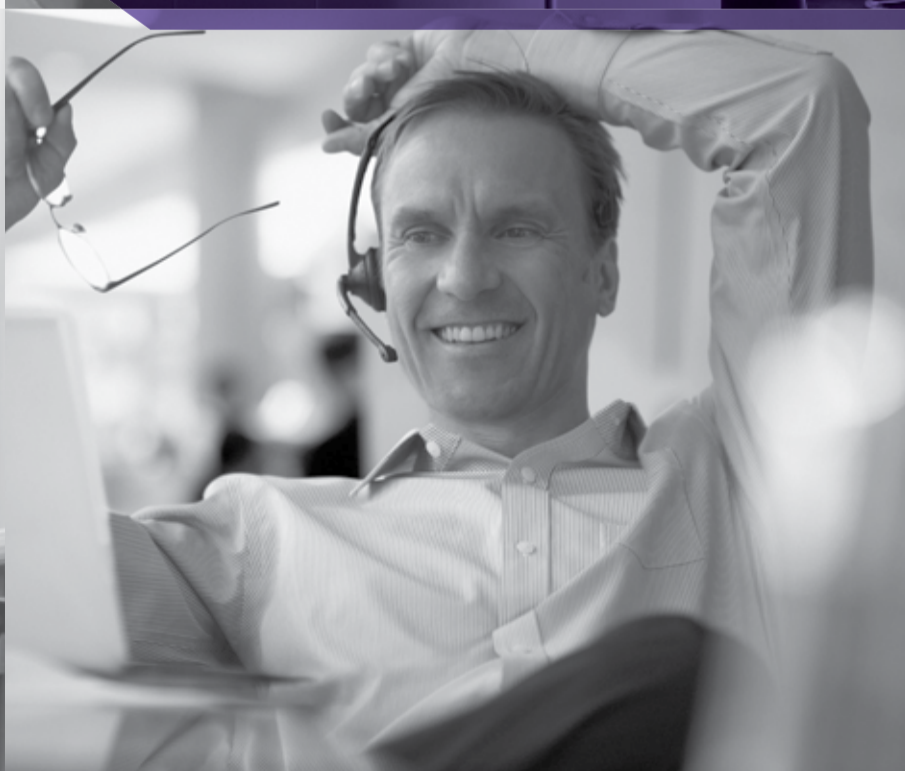
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It'll be alright on the Bite(r)

WHAT a magnificent sight of rejuvenation basking in the glow of artificial and neon lights after dark.

And, no, we don't mean Salford Quays.

On the right of this photograph sits HMS Biter, whose career has been extended until the late 2020s.

Affiliated to the universities of Salford and Manchester, the P2000 patrol boat made the 34-mile trip up the ship canal to a quay at the Imperial War Museum North – chosen as the venue to mark Biter's rededication.

Being Manchester, of course, it rained for most of the rededication – although thankfully proceedings took place in the iconic museum building rather than on the jetty, with Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Philip Jones the guest of honour, alongside the mayors of the two cities, the Lord Lieutenant, local Sea Cadets and the Worshipful Company of Tallow Chandlers (candlemakers as was, although today its role is purely charitable).

The ceremony reached its finale with *Sunset* and a demonstration by the Ellesmere Port Sea Cadets Corps of Drums – by which time the rain had stopped.

Biter became the first of the 16-strong P2000 flotilla – 14 support activities at universities across the land, two provide security on the Clyde – to receive a mid-life overhaul.

The six-month revamp didn't give the boat extra bite (sorry). It did give her extra speed (22kts instead of 14, courtesy of new Caterpillar engines). And extra life. Fifteen more years to be precise. Which means she'll be over 40 when she retires.

The boat is based at HMS Eaglet in Liverpool alongside her sister Charger (which serves



Picture: LA(Phot) Pepe Hogan, FRPU North

Merseyside's centres of higher learning).

The two are planning to head off to Norway for summer with Glasgow University Royal Naval Unit boat HMS Pursuer as part of the annual end-of-academic-year patrols by URNU boats.

Ahead of that a three-week Easter deployment around the Western Isles of Scotland beckons.

Biter is also earmarked to

support Great War centennial anniversary events which get under way in earnest in August – although the boat is due to attend Whitehaven WW1 Week in early May.

The P2000 began life in the Royal Navy in 1986 when she was initially assigned to reservists in the North West, before being transferred in 1990 to Manchester and Salford URNU. She's the sixth Royal Navy

vessel to bear the name, of which No.5 in a line going back to the end of the 18th Century is by far the most illustrious.

Built originally as a tanker, she was converted to an escort carrier – and served with distinction through the second half of WW2.


Her first action came in support of the Allied landings in North Africa in November 1942.

But it was in the crucial convoy battles of April and May 1943

where the ship demonstrated the effectiveness of air power and the escort carrier concept in defeating the U-boat in the North Atlantic.

In support of convoys ONS4, HX237 and SC129 she damaged, drove off or sank – in conjunction with surface forces – several German submarines.

By the summer of 1944, Biter was no longer needed and work to convert her to a transport carrier



Battle Honours

Baltic	1855
North Africa.....	1942
Atlantic	1943-44

Motto: *volo ut mordeam* – I want to bite

Class: Archer-class P2000 patrol boat

Pennant number: P270

Builder: Watercraft, Shoreham

Launched: October 17, 1985

Commissioned: January 25, 1986

Displacement: 49 tonnes

Length: 20.8m (68ft 3in)

Beam: 5.8m (19ft)

Draught: 1.8m (5ft 11in)

Speed: 22kts

Complement: 5 crew, up to 12 students

Propulsion: 2 x Caterpillar C18 engines each generating 873BHP

Armament: Can take 3 x GPMGs

IWM PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORIES

SUBMARINE bearing two-four-zero...

But these officer cadets under instruction from warfare ratings are not using sonar sets. No, this is ASDIC.

Our trip back in time through the photographic archives of the Imperial War Museum takes us to the end of the 1950s and Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth and one of the Central Office of Information's comprehensive series of colour transparencies of life in the Armed Forces in post-war Britain.

And in the late '50s – 1959 to be precise – the Royal Navy was still using a 40-year-old term to describe the sound device used for locating underwater foes.

Despite its crucial role RDF – Radio Direction Finding – had already bitten the dust, supplanted by the American acronym RAdio Direction And Ranging (RADAR).

The British acronym for its underwater counterpart persisted, however – you won't find any reference to Sound Navigation And Ranging in the pages of *Navy News* in the 1950s. There is ASDIC aplenty.

Come February 1 1963, however, the Admiralty bowed to the inevitable and, reluctantly, dropped ASDIC in favour of the term used throughout NATO navies, sonar – although to save money it refrained from reprinting existing literature or replacing plates and name tallies on equipment and compartments with the new term.

And thus a British term, if not a British invention, passed into history. The term ASDIC was first used in 1918 and, two decades later, was in reasonably common usage such that the compilers of the Oxford English Dictionary asked for a definition.

The Admiralty explained that the apparatus bore the name of the Allied Submarine Detection Investigation Committee which had given birth to it. Which was a lie. There was no such group.

ASDIC was the child of the British Board of Invention and Research who, at the height of World War 1, were less than keen for the Germans to find out about their underwater detection device which made use of the science of supersonics (today ultrasonics).

The 'superson' bit was dropped and ASD – for Anti-Submarine Division – slotted in its place to confuse the enemy.

Sonar or ASDIC, the principle is the same: send out a sound wave – the distinctive ping which is the staple diet of every submarine/anti-submarine movie – and should it strike an object, the ping will be returned.

The time it takes for the echo to return determines the range to the target, the direction from which it comes, the bearing.

It was tested for the first time in the summer of 1917 but it was only in the inter-war period that it was introduced to the fighting Fleet.

■ THIS photograph (TR 9577) – and 9,999,999 others from a century of war and peace – can be viewed or purchased at www.iwmcollections.org.uk, by emailing photos@iwm.org.uk, or by phoning 0207 416 5333.



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Zany, -zania, Z

AIRCRAFT. Bearing Red zero-three-zero. Six miles.

AB(WS) David Loch grabs his binoculars to scan the horizon as HMS Westminster is buzzed.

Ah yes, the old air defence bit of a Thursday War. *Always a pleasure.*

It is, of course, the climax (we'll studiously avoid the use of the word 'highlight') of a week of Operational Sea Training off Plymouth.

And it

- i. is not a lot of fun;
- ii. is physically and mentally demanding;
- iii. demands long hours at the coal face.
- iv. is played out under grey skies on lumpy (technical term) seas.

Except that Westminster's not off Plymouth. She's stooging around the Indian Ocean.

So at least you can strike off number iv.

Or not. Under grey, leaden clouds and in choppy seas more usually found in OST's typical stamping ground off the South Coast, Westminster was put through her paces.

The Flag Officer Sea Training organisation which runs OST in Blighty also provides a mobile team. It flies around the world visiting deployed ships to make sure that lessons learned during OST haven't been forgotten thousands of miles from the mother country. Luckily for the ships, the FOSTie visit lasts a few days, not a few weeks.

Having spent the bulk of her

time away patrolling the Indian Ocean looking for pirates and other ne'er-do-wells – with the emphasis very much on boarding party operations – it was time to see whether the 'capital ship' could cope with all-out war, beloved of the FOSTies on Thursdays.

So the wreckers began smashing up machinery, causing fires, flooding compartments and generally causing mayhem... and the ship's company had to demonstrate they could deal with it all.

Not *all* the ship's company, though. Some had a bit of a lie down and rest, or groaned – playing the part of bloodied casualties, whom MA Renee Sturgeon had to 'treat'.

"Going to Action Stations and running around providing medical help can be quite strenuous – mentally and physically," she said.

"It definitely gets the adrenaline pumping, not knowing what is going to be thrown at you next."

The adrenaline was pumping too in the ops room. Dimmed lights. Intense faces peering at computer displays. Cool, crisp orders. Blasts of whistles announcing missile and torpedo launches.

"Having multiple simulated threats coming in and having to provide defensive solutions to the command definitely keeps you on the edge," said AB Jimmy Clements, one of Westminster's electronic warfare specialists.

"However, we are all trained to a very high standard to deal with

these threats. That's what makes the job so satisfying."

Now how do you let your hair down after the rigmarole of a FOST inspection?

Obviously you daub the CO's head with custard...

Ordinarily, we wouldn't encourage such actions.

But if you're upholding a 200-year-old tradition to maintain morale, it's perfectly acceptable.

The Indian Ocean is a big patch of sea straddling the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

Pirates and criminals aren't going to be held back by some imaginary line.

Nor are the sailors and Royal Marines of Her Majesty's Ships.

Two in every five members of Westminster's 200-strong ship's company had never experienced sailing over the Equator.

To be allowed to pass, the 'Equatorial virgins' must go through an initiation ceremony at the Court of King Neptune (aka CPO(ME) Alan 'Sharkey' Ward) before receiving a certificate as proof of passage.

On the evening before Westminster approached 0° latitude Neptune's helpers – a mix of 'bears' and 'policemen' – did the rounds of the Portsmouth-based frigate, issuing court summons to novices who'd never crossed the Equator before.

The following afternoon, with stage, thrones and ducking stool rigged, Westminster's Commanding Officer Capt Hugh Beard was the first to be initiated, followed by the ship's

youngest sailor, Midshipman Philippa Little: "Having only been onboard a few weeks, I didn't know what to expect, but I am glad I was one of the first, as the pool water got rather dirty really quickly!" she said.

In all, more than 80 members of the ship's company were found guilty by the court, with Capt Beard's deputy, Executive Officer Lt Cdr Toby Waite, the last to be put on trial.

"I knew something was up as soon as the police started to swarm around my group, I had already guessed that I would be dunked, if you were to give the senior ratings a chance to dunk the XO you would be a fool not to take it!"

With Neptune appeased and the ship now across the equator, the day was finished off with a flight deck barbeque at sunset, and AB Clements entertaining the ship's company with his guitar and guest singers.

"I have been in the Navy for eight years and this is by far the highlight of my naval career, it's been absolutely brilliant, I want to thank all the senior rates for their time, effort and enthusiasm for this traditional event, brilliant just brilliant," said Westminster's navigator Lt Rob Couzens.

Capt Beard added: "Traditions play an important role within the Armed Forces and particularly the RN and we must strive to ensure they survive. Finding an opportunity within our tasking was always going to be difficult, but Neptune must have been looking after us as there were no suspect vessels within sight."



Photographs: LA(Phot) Dan Rosenbaum, HMS Westminster



Westminster

The first stop on the other side of the Equator? Dar es Salaam in Tanzania – which typified everything the RN does in this part of the world: the tried-and-trusted formula of military force, flag flying and being jolly good eggs.

The good eggs first (otherwise they'd go off in the heat...).

More than 40 sailors toiled in the Tanzanian sun to paint a new pre-school and home for children.

When the frigate put into port, her crew wanted to bring some cheer to a local good cause; the British High Commission suggested Kidz Care.

The charity builds pre-schools and primary schools in rural areas just outside Dar es Salaam – and also provides a home for children with disabilities and youngsters orphaned by HIV. It prides itself on providing 'a home for life' – children can live with Kidz Care as long as they want.

Westminster's clubz LPT 'Reggie' Cawley drummed up interest and donations from shipmates – cash, books, clothing, sports equipment and sweets (many of which were Christmas presents) for the children – and headed off to a newly-built home and pre-school.

"I felt like this was something that needed to be done and I had planned to do this before we deployed in August," said Reggie.

"I had a lot of sports kit saved up and was only too happy to finally have a worthy cause to donate it all to."

"The ship's company were

very happy to offload some of the sweets and biscuits they received in the post for Christmas – especially those who were watching their waistlines!"

Volunteers and kids alike were full of smiles after the painting was finished in just a few hours.

A traditional Swahili lunch was prepared and the volunteers enjoyed a chance to play games with the children and watch a special song and dance performance.

"It was a rewarding day and the smiles on the children's faces when the ship's £346 donation was handed over made it a not-to-be-forgotten experience for everyone," Reggie added.

It wasn't the only rewarding episode of the frigate's visit to Dar es Salaam.

The main focus of the visit was a three-day package of training for Tanzania's Maritime Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET), who carry out boarding operations on vessels.

Westminster carries a specialist Royal Navy and Royal Marines team for the same purpose – and they're more than happy to share their expertise and experiences.

The first two days, spent in port, demonstrated correct use of boarding equipment, how to question and handle a vessel's crew, first aid techniques, paperwork processing and how to search a suspect vessel for illicit cargo.

In Dar es Salaam's impressive natural harbour, Westminster's team used the frigate's seaboats to show how to approach a suspect vessel and demonstrated

pilot ladder climbing techniques.

The final day at sea was a chance to put into practice what had been taught shoreside and saw Westminster and three Tanzanian Navy vessels simulate various boarding training scenarios with the LEDET.

"Working with the Tanzanian LEDET team was really enjoyable," said Lt Nick Palmer, Westminster's boarding officer.

"To see them develop from barely being able to climb a pilot ladder, to being able to conduct a boarding at sea was inspiring. They were enthusiastic throughout and truly learned a lot."

After the action, a spot of ceremony with a cocktail party and ceremonial sunset on Westminster's flight deck on behalf of UK plc.

All told, Capt Beard says his ship definitely left its mark on the Commonwealth country – and its largest city especially.

"There was not one member of my ship's company not involved in one of the events here in Tanzania," he said.

"It doesn't matter whether it was national tasking, a charity event or even a sporting event, they always give 100 per cent."

"My team can be very proud of what they have achieved. You will find a lot of people in Dar es Salaam now with smiles on their faces and the name HMS Westminster etched into their thoughts."

As it is on the minds of the ship's company's families – for the frigate returns to Portsmouth at the end of this month.



THE NEW WIZARD OF THE LIZARD



THIS, believe it or not, is something you've never seen before.

We know you're thinking: grey skies, grey flight deck, Merlin firmly strapped down, another carrying an underslung load while handlers watch.

Been there, done that.

But you've not. For these are second generation Merlins. And this is their first time training at sea.

Three Merlin Mk2s decamped the short distance from their base at RNAS Culdrose to aviation training ship RFA Argus for a spot of, er, aviation training off the South Coast for aircrew, for engineers, for handlers, the inaugural embarkation of the new helicopter.

The grey Merlin fleet is in the process of a £750m revamp turning the original models (amazingly the RN has been flying them for more than 15 years now) into the Mk2.

Unless you're a really eagle-eyed aircraft buff, Merlin Mk2 looks identical to a Mk1.

Same camouflage. Same fuselage. There's no new tailplane at the back, one feature which does at least make the replacement for the Lynx, the Wildcat, stand out from its predecessor.

It's inside the Merlin Mk2 – new cockpit, new console for the observer and aircrewman – where the changes are noticeable, and where the world's leading anti-submarine helicopter will come into its own once again.

The differences between the Wildcat and Lynx mean it's being treated as an entirely new aircraft with a squadron, 702W, formed specifically to introduce it into service.

The handling and flying characteristics of Merlin Mk2 mean its introduction to the front line is somewhat easier, with 824 Naval Air Squadron – which provides the Fleet Air Arm with all its trained Merlin air and ground crew – charged with converting the Merlin world to the Mk2.

To date, two of the four squadrons are up to speed with the new aircraft – 824, plus 814 (it's one of the two Merlin units which deploys en masse). 820 NAS (814's sister) and 829 (which provides Merlin flights for Type 23 frigates) are getting their hands on the Mk2 imminently.

Much of the conversion is done back at base; the simulators in the Culdrose's impressive Merlin Training Facility have been revamped to reflect the second-generation helicopter, while extensive use has been made of the Royal Navy's 'playground' in the Western Approaches.

All of which is indispensable but, says, Lt Cdr Tony Morris, one of 824's flying instructors, "it's getting the helicopters to embark at sea and involved in around-the-clock flight deck operations when they can be truly assessed."

Which is where Argus comes in. For ten days. In the bleak midwinter. With all the 'fun' that the Western Approaches can provide.

"Throughout our training, we emphasise the difference between the 'concrete deck' of Culdrose and flying off a ship's deck – in more-often-than-

not challenging environments, anywhere around the globe," Lt Cdr Morris stresses.

CPO Jay O'Donnell – one of the RN's most experienced aircrewmen – echoes the officer's views on the 'hands-on' experience of flying on and off the deck of Argus.

"No matter how much we use technology and simulators at Culdrose, a pitching and rolling deck will always be where we need to operate from," says 824's senior aircrewman instructor.

"We use time aboard to work up the close crew co-operation between the pilots, observers and aircrewmen.

"With all new aircraft we adopt a policy of 'crawl – walk – run', slowly building up to a fully-functioning crew.

"A period like this at sea allows us to develop crew procedures which we can pass on to others."

It takes 18 months to train a fully-fledged aircrewman to fly in the back of a Merlin, from a 12-week initial course where would-be fliers learn about sonar, the acoustic signatures of submarines – a bit like DNA, each class of boat is different – and where they're likely to operate, to flying assessment at RAF Shawbury and the art of submarine hunting with 824 NAS. Like pilots and observers, it's a mix of simulator and the real thing.

Although Merlin aircrewmen will spend the bulk of their time sat alongside the observer in the back of the cab staring at the display console – it's from here that the never-ending game involving submarine and hunter is played, not the cockpit – they're expected to perform bread-and-butter flying tasks as well: winching on search-and-rescue missions and the art of lifting heavy loads... like the one being carried off the deck of Argus in the image above.

To squeeze the maximum training out of the ten-day detachment, rookie air engineer technicians also embarked with the Mk2s for insights into maintaining the helicopter at sea, part of their 23-week course learning about looking after Merlin.

"Getting onboard for the first time is what our training's all been leading to," said AET Jack Charles, one of the trainees.

"Experiencing a cold wet flight deck, struggling with sleeping routines, eating when you can and working watches day and night, are all strange at first but I've been pleasantly surprised how easily I've taken to it all."

Getting the young AET trainees to this stage are a dedicated team of experienced instructors who have all seen plenty of time at sea, working on front-line squadrons or flights.

"It's important the trainees get onboard and learn what it's like to operate from a multi-spot ship like Argus," said PO(AET) Jon Tonkin.

"We are 'ramping-up' to the new Queen Elizabeth class going to sea in the near future. The Merlin force will be leading the Carrier Air Groups and these AETs will be running the routines and training when it's needed.

"It's vital we show them professionally how to adapt to their surroundings and safely get aircraft off the deck and away on their missions."

Flight operations on HMS Queen Elizabeth are still a few years away. PO Tonkin's charges could be deploying in support of a Merlin flight or squadron in a matter of weeks, while the Mk2 is due to enter front-line service later this year.



NAVY NEWS

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Flypast marks the final 848 class

A FLYPAST by three Sea Kings heralded the end of a ceremony to award eight pilots their wings.

The students underwent a gruelling eight-month course learning to fly and operate the Sea King Commando helicopter, the culmination of three years of flying training.

The course of 848 Naval Air Squadron student pilots and aircrewmembers from the Royal Navy's Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) pushed the eight to their limits.

The aircrewmembers received their coveted wings badges from Rear Admiral Russ Harding, Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Aviation and Carriers) during a ceremony at RNAS Yeovilton.

Relatives and friends watched the ceremony, which also included a spectacular demonstration.

One of the graduating pilots, Lt Dominic Savage, said: "It's a tough course, and standards are really high; at times I didn't think I would finish it, but the instructors are really good and they do everything they can to get us through."

"I found the tactical phase of the course particularly challenging, but it gives you a real sense of satisfaction being able to successfully work in an operational scenario as part of the final exercise."

Royal Marine aircrewman Cpl Michael Maguire said: "I'm really looking forward to getting to the front line and doing the job we've been training to do."

The students will now join the operational 845 Naval Air Squadron and complete further training in preparation for deployments abroad.

The Sea King Commando helicopters are used by the Royal Navy as part of their role within the Joint Helicopter Command to transport soldiers and equipment on the battlefield.

With its last students trained, 848 Naval Air Squadron will now stand down as part of the Fleet Air Arm's transition process which sees the handover of Merlin aircraft from the RAF which starts at the end of this year.

Top Korea move for squadron

A NEW twinning association got off to a flying start for a Naval Air Squadron.

HMS Daring hosted a ceremony to cement the twinning between 815 Naval Air Squadron and 627 Squadron of the Republic of Korea Navy.

The hosts gave their visitors a tour of the Type 45 destroyer and then visited Jin Hae base, home of the South Korean squadron.

The South Korean squadron currently flies the Super Lynx with a similar role to 815 NAS, providing flights to frigates and destroyers on security patrols around the Korean Peninsula.

They are due to move to the Agusta Westland 159 ASW Variant, a sister to the RN's Wildcat.

The affiliation was marked by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Commander Haigh and his opposite number Commander Ha Sung Wook, watched by First Sea Lord Admiral Sir George Zambellas and the Korean Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Jung Ho Sub accompanied by the Korean Commander of Naval Aviation Flotilla, Rear Admiral Shim Jae Ok.

Help needed to honour death slide commando

ROYAL Marines are looking for help so they can honour one of their own killed in a commando display in New York half a century ago.

Capt Antony Easterbrook died during the finale of a show for more than 10,000 people at the world-famous Madison Square Garden when he plunged from an 85ft-high rope slide.

The 31-year-old is remembered with a memorial plaque in the sports pavilion at the Commando Training Centre in Lympstone, Devon.

But after more than 50 years, the plaque is in need of replacement – a project for the Royal Marines as part of their 350th anniversary year.

What the team at Lympstone do not have are particularly good photographs of the unfortunate officer – hence an appeal for help.

In July 1960, Capt Easterbrook was part of a 30-strong Commando Display Team performing at a military tattoo, part of the British Exhibition in New York.

The high point of the show was billed as 'the death slide' – a 200ft-long rope fixed to the roof of the venue, down which the marines would slide.

At the end Capt Easterbrook – dressed in a suit and bowler hat – would do a somersault on to the slide and then descend it one-handed while waving an umbrella at the crowd, before being served a gin and tonic at the bottom and strolling off.

On July 1 1960, while performing the descent he fell to his death. A military inquiry found that he was wearing a



harness under his suit which attached to the line but that a coupling link – very different from those used in modern displays – had failed.

"We trained using the giant cranes in Devonport dockyard," said Douglas Palmer, a member of the 1960 display team.

"After months of intense training together, the accident came as a severe shock to us all. The impact on us, and the audience was of utter shock and

trauma." Shortly before the accident Capt Easterbrook was asked by a New York journalist why he joined the Royal Marines.

"I wanted excitement, varied work and comradeship," he said. "By nature I think I'm adventurous, and I know I've always been disobedient. The marines could satisfy the first and cure the second."

He was buried in his home town of Torquay. Despite the

tragedy, the Marines continued to perform high rope displays, including high abseils and swallow dives, firstly as part of the Royal Tournament until it ended in 1999, and today as part of the British Military Tournament.

Anyone with photos of Capt Easterbrook should call 01392 414061 or 414011 or write to Corporate Comms, CTCRM, Lympstone, Exmouth EX8 5AR. ■ RM350 - page 22



● Capt Antony Easterbrook, pictured, would wow spectators with his 'death slide' stunt during which he wore a suit and bowler hat as he slid down a 200ft-long rope



● CPO John Crawley and wife Stacey with Olivia and Lilli'ella

Inspirational leader

A CHIEF Petty Officer from Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose has received a special award which identifies leadership beyond what is expected of him.

John Crawley was selected to receive the Special Achievement in Leadership (SAIL) award at Culdrose for his work as the Supply Chain Divisional Regulator in the Logistics department on the Base throughout a particularly demanding and challenging year.

The purpose of the Culdrose SAIL award is to recognise individuals who demonstrate inspirational qualities.

John has built close working relationships with the manning and drafting department of NCHQ.

"The award has come as a complete surprise to me as I had only ever considered I was just

doing my job," said John.

"It's great to have been recognised by the command structure for my efforts and it's very much appreciated."

John has plenty of experience to call upon having served at sea onboard HMS's Chatham, Sheffield, Somerset, Bulwark, Enterprise and Cornwall.

He has also had shore drafts to RNAS Yeovilton, RNAS Culdrose and Devonport in Plymouth.

There to present the award was Captain Mark Garratt, Commanding Officer of RNAS Culdrose.

Also at the ceremony were John's wife Stacey with Olivia and Lilli'ella two of their four daughters, along with work colleagues from the Logistics department.

Meet the new champ

SAILORS and Royal Marines have a new champion of their cause.

Air engineer WO1 Steve Cass has taken over as the Warrant Officer of the Naval Service – commonly known as WONS – handed the reins of office by WO1 Terry Casey after more than three-and-a-half years in the job in a ceremony onboard HMS Victory, attended by Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral David Steel.

With the position comes a wide-ranging portfolio and includes involvement in the most senior forums, including the Navy Board, the Naval Command Operating Board and the Personnel Executive Group. There's also an important ceremonial role, with the WONS attending high-profile public and private events alongside senior officers.

"The last three years and eight months have seen a great deal of change – from the early days of the Defence Review, the redundancies, the pay freezes and the huge uncertainty, to today, when the Royal Navy needs to grow to meet its future commitments," said Terry.

"It's a hugely exciting time



● WO1 Terry Casey, left, hands over to WO1 Steve Cass

Picture: POA(Phot) Owen Cooban

for everyone and requires all – particularly the warrant officers and senior non-commissioned officers – to inspire the next generation to go on to operate the most complex warships, submarines and aircraft that defence supplies."

Of his new role, Steve said: "I am relishing all of the challenges that this prestigious position demands."

Vice Admiral Steel said WO1 Casey had done "the most

exceptional job" during his time in office.

"With its high profile not only within the Navy but across the Armed Forces and at the highest levels of Defence, as well as amongst families, the wider support network and retired community, WO1 Casey brought unparalleled dedication and commitment to the position, always representing with absolute integrity the views of our sailors and Royal Marines."

Pupils grill crew after lunch

A VISIT from the Royal Navy proved a great excuse to quit the maths class at Hamstreet Primary School in Kent.

The overcast weather did put the visit from HMS Somerset's Lynx helicopter in doubt but the crew were determined not to let the children down.

The first the pupils knew of the arrival of 203 Flight was the noise of the rotors echoing from beyond the school fence. There was an eruption of excitement and everyone hurried outside.

The crew, along with the Type 23's commanding

officer, Cdr Mike Smith, arrived just in time for lunch.

After lunch the children gathered in the assembly hall to ask questions and find out more about HMS Somerset and her forthcoming deployment.

Some of the questions were challenging at times, especially trying to work out where the questions were leading. One question that was particularly unexpected was, "Do you read the newspaper?"

After the grilling the crew swiftly gathered their belongings and departed safely back to Yeovilton.

Mighty O is almost ready to go

...TO SEA again...

Life is being breathed into Britain's biggest warship as HMS Ocean prepares to emerge from a 15-month revamp.

The helicopter carrier has been out of action since late 2012, undergoing a £65m overhaul in her home base of Devonport.

As 2014 opens, sailors have begun to rejoin Ocean in earnest, not least her new Commanding Officer Capt Tim Henry, who'll guide ship and ship's company through the final weeks of the refit.

By the end of 2014, Ocean will be the UK's sole on-call helicopter carrier; veteran HMS Illustrious, which has performed the duty while the Mighty O has been going through her revamp, is due to pay off after more than 30 years' proud service in the late autumn.

With that deadline to meet, Capt Henry – who's previously commanded frigate HMS Portland – knows the coming months will be challenging, and his men and women will rise to that challenge.

"I join HMS Ocean at a most exciting time. She has undergone a significant refit period, and our priority is now to ensure that all of her new and improved systems are brought on line, as we work up towards our high-readiness status.

"Ocean's ship's company – along with the many workers and contractors in the Naval Base – should be proud of what they have achieved so far."

It's a project described by the defence firm Babcock as the equivalent of overhauling three Type 23s.

Ocean has received more than 60 upgrades and improvements – from a complete refurbishment of her flight deck, hangar and aviation facilities to an overhaul of much of her mechanical and engineering equipment, and replacement or refurbishment of many of her communications and weapons systems.

In dry dock, Ocean's hull received a fresh coat of anti-fouling paint, and her engines, propellers, shafts, rudders and stabilisers were all given a thorough going over before she was moved out of dock.

The refit and trials are due to be completed by the summer, when the main effort will move to the intensive training of her ship's company.

A flotilla of Navy flag ships

IT'S the awards season – and while there's no red carpet, there are plenty of blue and white flags as ships across the RN are recognised with Fleet Effectiveness Trophies.

Ships large and small are recognised for their efforts – anything from contributions to understanding naval technology and warfare to deeds on the front line.

The sailors of Portsmouth minehunter HMS Ledbury were named the best in Britain out of eight Hunt and seven Sandown-class crews at the forefront of the RN's mine warfare efforts at home and abroad.

As 2nd Mine Counter-Measures Squadron Crew 6, the sailors began by taking HMS Atherstone from Portsmouth to Bahrain to relieve her sister HMS Middleton.

After seven-and-a-half months with Atherstone, the sailors returned to the UK to take charge of her sister HMS Ledbury – and took her to the Mediterranean and Red Sea with NATO, then later in the year took part in a NATO exercise in the Baltic.

HMS Sutherland is the RN's No.1 submarine hunter after more than 850 live and simulated hours of training with her two



● Haunting images of a sunken giant... (clockwise from above) one of the tanker's anchors on the seabed; cordite strands litter the ocean floor; a gun mounting which became detached as the ship sank; and the ship's rudder and propeller

Darkdale's deep secrets

EXPERTS will have to remove oil from one of the most hallowed sites in the history of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary to spare a tropical island environmental damage.

Tanker RFA Darkdale was torpedoed by a German submarine in November 1941, blowing up, breaking in two and finally sinking just off St Helena in the South Atlantic.

Seven decades later and experts say that unless steps are taken to remove millions of litres of oil still held inside her hull, storms could cause an oil leak.

To prevent such a potential environmental accident, the MOD's Salvage and Marine Operations (SALMO) organisation says the oil should be removed – repeating a technique successfully used on the wreck of battleship HMS Royal Oak at Scapa Flow.

The most detailed study ever carried out of the wreck, which lies about 600 metres (1,968ft) off Jamestown, the island's capital, took place in the spring of 2012 involving diving and salvage experts, environmental scientists, and made use of robot submersibles. The team presented the findings of their

survey at the end of 2013.

The tanker lies in at least 17m (55ft) of water with her upturned hull about 75 metres (246ft) from the port, which bore the brunt of the torpedoes fired by U-boat ace Karl-Friedrich Merten in U-68.

Darkdale was used to refuel Royal Navy and other vessels passing St Helena. Most of the fuel in the crushed aft section of the tanker is thought to have gone, although there is a slow leak.

The bow section, however, contains anywhere between 2,300 and 4,950 cubic metres of oil – at least enough to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Although the SALMO team say the hull is in good condition given how long it's been on the seabed, joints and rivets are corroding and will give way in time – particular if the wreck is buffeted by heavy seas – resulting "in a significant slick" which could contaminate the shoreline of nearby James Bay in the long term.

Due to the difficulty of getting to St Helena – the only way is by boat from Ascension Island or South Africa about every three weeks – to date the wreck has not been visited by many divers.

But with an airport due to open in early 2016, the number of visitors – including

recreational divers – is likely to rise, so a spill could have an impact on St Helena's fledgling tourist industry.

To mitigate the effects of any oil leaking from the Darkdale, the SALMO experts say in the short term there should be a ban on fishing in the vicinity of the wreck, as well as an exclusion zone on ships dropping anchor.

But in the longer term, the only solution is to repeat the process used on the Royal Oak – known as 'hot tapping'.

There would be up to three times as much oil to take away from the Darkdale – but the construction of the tanker should make the process much easier.



● The best ship in the RFA rafts up with the USS Devastator

sonar systems – that's more than five whole weeks. That work and efforts as the duty Towed Array Patrol Ship meant she took the underwater warfare title.

Best Ship in the RFA is Cardigan Bay, for her ongoing work in the Gulf in support of pretty much everything the RN does there.

She's the 'mother ship' to the quartet of British minehunters based in Bahrain, the floating command ship for their staff, a floating airfield for an 815 NAS Lynx, and regularly plays host to visiting international units, anyone from Japanese divers to

US riverine patrol boats.

The Surface Flotilla Effectiveness Awards, presented on behalf of Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Philip Jones, cover all aspects of warfare by Royal Navy and RFA surface ships.

As well as receiving a trophy, winning ships have the right to fly a blue and white pennant.

Other 2013 winners included HMS Daring (Naval Capability), HMS Bulwark (Capital Ship), HMS Dragon (Destroyer), HMS Lancaster (Frigate), HMS Severn (Offshore Patrol Vessel), HMS Echo (Hydrographic) and HMS Blazer (Inshore Patrol Vessel).



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Richmond remembers two Falklands battles

Tragic sub recreated

THIS is the conning tower of one of Britain's pioneering submarines – and it's not been seen like this for a century.

One of the very first boats built for the fledgling Silent Service, HMS A7, is being recreated digitally in an effort to shed light on her loss and give people an idea of what it would be like to dive on her.

The 103ft boat sank in Whitsand Bay in Cornwall in January 1914 while practising mock torpedo attacks on a Royal Navy vessel. All 11 men aboard her died.

Her wreck lies with the stern embedded in clay on the sea bed about 135ft down and is a protected war grave; permission must be sought from the MOD to dive on A7.

As part of their efforts to raise awareness of research and exploration, international maritime charity Promare asked a team at the University of Birmingham to recreate a virtual reality A7 and her wreck site, with educational content.

The team, under Prof Bob Stone, is used to recreating submarines in a 3D computer world – they've produced the SubSafe system used by the Royal Navy to teach rookie submariners about the layout and features of a modern nuclear boat.

The results so far from the work by Profs Stone's Human Interface Technologies team are just the early stages of the work on the sunken boat.

They're not just the beginning of A7, but also of other 3D maritime projects.

Prof Stone said: "A7 is just the first of a number of exciting opportunities we have in the pipeline over the next two years that will demonstrate how we can use virtual reality to bring long-forgotten aspects of our country's important maritime heritage back into the public's awareness."

HMS A7 was one of 13 A-class boats built in the first decade of the 20th Century, three of which were lost during training.



● A sailor from HMS Richmond and personnel from Mount Pleasant pay their respects to the men of 1914 at the impressive memorial in Stanley

Picture: LA(Phot) Gaz Weatherston, HMS Richmond

BATTLES which left their mark on the Falklands Islands nearly 70 years apart have been commemorated by sailors from HMS Richmond.

Most people associate the South Atlantic islands with the 1982 conflict which led to their liberation from a ten-week occupation by Argentine forces.

But until that short but bitter conflict, the islands were known in Naval circles for the destruction of most of a German cruiser squadron which had ranged around the Pacific seemingly at will.

The ships of Admiral Graf von Spee quickly dispatched a British force it encountered off Chile – the Battle of Coronel – in November 1914, prompting retribution from the Royal Navy.

It sent a potent flotilla, led by battlecruisers (fast battleships) under Admiral Doveton Sturdee, to hunt down and wipe out von Spee's force.

On December 8 1914, with Sturdee's force taking on coal in the Falklands, the smoke of the German ships was seen on the horizon.

The Royal Navy gave chase and, by the day's end, von Spee, his two sons and more than 1,800 fellow Germans were dead and four German cruisers were sunk (the Dresden escaped), for the loss of ten killed on the British side.

Ever since, Falklanders have remembered December 8 as Battle Day, with commemorations focused on an imposing memorial on the seafront overlooking West Stanley.

Islanders gathered alongside members of all three Services based at the Mount Pleasant Complex for a service of thanksgiving followed by a wreath-laying.

Richmond's Commanding Officer Cdr Rob Pedre said despite the passage of nearly a century there was a resonance between 1914 and 2013.

"The Battle of the Falklands not only ensured the security of these islands, but made a vital contribution to the unimpeded flow of trade to the United Kingdom and our allies," he said.

"Likewise, today's Royal Navy continues to ensure maritime security, critical to our nation's safety and prosperity."

Arriving in Stanley two days ahead of the annual ceremony, his ship's company held an official reception onboard, hosting the Governor of the Falkland Islands, Nigel Haywood, the islands' military commander Air Cdre Russell La Forte and other local civilian and military.

A short period of rainfall could not dampen the enthusiasm of guests nor the music played throughout by the Royal Marines Band.

From Stanley, the Portsmouth-based frigate moved on to a regular site of pilgrimage for any RN vessel on patrol in this part of the world – San Carlos Water.

It was here that the ships of the Operation Corporate task force put soldiers and Royal Marines ashore in May 1982 to begin the liberation of the islands.

After anchoring near Ajax Bay, the ship's company gathered on the flight deck to conduct a service of remembrance, at which ET(WE) Scarlett Johnson read.

"It was incredibly overwhelming and a great privilege to be able to honour our predecessors who sacrificed their lives during the war," she said.

Sailors then went ashore, visited and carried out minor maintenance on the memorial to HM Ships Ardent and Antelope, two Type 21 frigates lost during the conflict.

Other members of the ship's company met locals from the settlements at Port San Carlos, Wreck Point and Ajax Bay.

Surg Lt Ruth Guest was particularly moved by the Ajax Bay refrigeration plant which served as a field hospital in 1982: "It was truly humbling to walk around the Ajax Bay memorial and very poignant for me as the ship's doctor to visit the site of 'The Red and Green Life Machine', the site of such skilful and heroic medical practices to look after men from both sides of the conflict."



Culdrose delves into Lizard's WW1 sub-hunting pioneers

TODAY'S submarine hunters at Culdrose have been learning how their forebears dealt with the same threat a century ago – from a long-forgotten Cornish airbase.

In the run-up to centennial commemorations of the Great War, staff at the Helston air station – home to the Navy's principal anti-submarine helicopters, the Merlin Mk1 and Mk2 – have been delving into the history of the Lizard Air Station, from where airships flew to hunt U-boats in the Channel.

The station – also known as RNAS Mullion – was in operation for just three years, three decades before Culdrose was established outside Helston.

In those three years, the site on 320 acres of the Bonython Estate – about one mile west of the present-day Goonhilly satellite station and three-and-a-half miles southeast of Culdrose – became a major military complex.

The base comprised accommodation blocks, gas storage tanks, processing plants, workshops, and was dominated by two airship hangars – similar to, but smaller than, the sheds at Cardington in Bedfordshire which later housed the ill-fated R101 – which towered over the Cornish countryside.

Mullion was closed in the summer of 1919 and the land returned to its owners, but there's still a little evidence of its wartime use.



● An aerial shot of RNAS Mullion in its prime late in WW1 and (right) some of the airship crew pose in front of one of the base's hangars



Culdrose's community relations officer Pete Wooldridge found the site now dominated by six wind turbines.

"The layout of the wartime station is still visible among the bushes and brambles," Pete said.

"Although the buildings and people are long gone, the roadways and hard standings for the hangars are clearly visible."

Mullion enjoyed a vital position at the western gateway to the English Channel. It was from here that airships flew hundreds of hours patrolling over the sea.

The bulk of the patrols were performed by Coastal-class airships – a 'balloon' filled with 170,000 cubic feet of hydrogen gas (more than 4,800,000 litres), with a gondola for five crew slung beneath it.

The open, unheated cockpits were uncomfortable; crew members resorted to walking around the outside on the grab-rails to stretch their legs.

In winter, crews risked frostbite and hypothermia. Often ground handlers would have to lift crews from their cockpits after patrols; some lasting

over 15 hours at a time.

If they sighted a German submarine, they could attack it with an armament of four machine-guns and a small number of bombs or depth charges – as Flight Sub Lieutenant Charles Colton did on February 12 1917 after spotting a submarine surfacing.

From a height of 1,000ft, he dropped two bombs – one missed; another struck near the conning tower as it disappeared in a swirl into the Atlantic. "A large quantity of oil came to



the surface as well as numerous small bubbles. Nothing further was seen of the submarine," he reported.

German records show no U-boat was lost that day, but for his service at Mullion Flt Sub Lt Colton received the Distinguished Service Cross – as did three comrades. Three Distinguished Service Medals and nine Mentions in Dispatches were awarded to the sailors of the Lizard air station.

In researching the Great War, today's breed of submarine hunters at Culdrose have been struck not by the differences between 1914 and 2014, but rather the similarities – albeit with much more primitive equipment.

"Remarkably, those World War 1 aviators were doing pretty much the same job as us," said Lt Chris Luke, an observer on a new Merlin Mk2 with 820 Naval Air Squadron.

"They didn't have the array of technology available to us – they relied on the Mark 1 Eyeball, although near the end of the war they were experimenting with an early form of acoustic hydrophones, which is really what we do today – listening for the enemy."

You can see satellite imagery of RNAS Mullion as it is today at 50°02'45.39"N, 5°12'15.80"W on Google Earth, or by visiting maps.google.co.uk/?ll=50.045496,-5.202831&spn=0.004155,0.010568&t=h&z=17

A beautiful island and a history lesson to boot

AN INVASION of France more than two centuries ago formed the basic template for an adventurous training expedition by Naval Service paddlers.

Exercise Entente Amicable was a self-supported sea kayaking enterprise

which saw a team of seven – two Royal Navy, four Royal Marines and one former bootneck – travel to the Quiberon Peninsula of Brittany under the auspices of the Royal Navy Kayak Association.

From Quiberon the group completed a circumnavigation of Belle

Île, following in the wake of Keppel and Studholme Hodgson's invading amphibious forces of 1761 during the Seven Years War.

The expedition involved open crossings of up to six nautical miles and an 18-mile journey along the exposed Côte Sauvage and, whilst the weather was relatively kind, the team were nonetheless exposed to a variety of tidal

and meteorological conditions including a healthy Atlantic swell, which tested their navigation and paddling skills.

Aside from the excellent paddling, a highlight was an evening presentation by Lt Col Dai Davies on the military relevance of Belle Île, which was particularly pertinent as it followed a visit to the island's capital Le Palais with its impressive Vauban citadel.

The island was held for two years by British forces, as it was seen as a good location for a forward naval base commanding the Bay of Biscay.

French attempts to retake it from the mainland failed because of the strength of British sea power.

It was returned to the French under the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, in exchange for the island of Minorca.

The presentation

by Lt Col Davies culminated in a toast to the endeavours of those that had gone before, using a vintage set of themed glasses which had been carefully carried in the bow section of his kayak throughout.

If you'd like to know more about sea kayaking in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines contact the RNKA Sea Kayak Secretary, WO1 'Batch' Batchelor (NAVY PERS-CM RM RMCA1 (Batchelor, James)



Globe and Laurel and Hardy...

YOU can never have too many Hollywood A-Listers wearing a Santa hat serving Royal Marines Christmas dinner at the spiritual home of the Corps...

So when Tom Hardy, star of *The Dark Knight Rises* and *Inception*, to name but two, and a bona fide member of the British big screen aristocracy, visited the Commando Training Centre he was happy to don festive headgear and help out in the galley.

The London-born actor paid a three-day visit to Lymptone, where mere mortals are turned into Royal Marines commandos.

During his visit the 36-year-old BAFTA-winner had the chance to watch recruits training on the (in)famous Tarzan assault course, and he also met with many of the staff and trainees based at the Devon camp.

He later took part in some

Modern Urban Combat training with CTC's Infantry Support Wing, before attending the King's Squad Pass Out parade of 165 Troop as a VIP guest, when successful recruits earned their green berets and became fully-fledged commandos.

"Thank you to all at CTC – and congratulations to all the Kings Squad – passing out," Tom said as he left the establishment, which sits on the east bank of the River Exe just south of Exeter.

"Thank you for having me – an honour and a privilege, and for an incredibly inspiring and memorable day.

"Great men. Great team. Great families.

"Thank you to the Royal Marines for your excellence, integrity, self-discipline and humility. Courage, determination, unselfishness and cheerfulness.

"Just Amazing. True Honour."



● Tom after taking part in paintballing in the Modern Urban Combat compound

Picture: WO Richard White (CTCRM)

Bravery medal up for sale

THE bravery medal of a Dartmouth submariner who drowned in the North Sea two years after saving a pair of Canadian sailors from a similar fate, was up for sale as *Navy News* went to press.

William Moyes was awarded the Royal Humane Society Medal in 1915, a year after the outbreak of World War 1.

The courageous Serviceman went over the side of his ship with a line to save the lives of two Canadian seamen when a steamer sank near Quebec on the St Lawrence River.

Two years later Moyes died off Harwich when his submarine collided with another British boat.

Now his medal is up for sale at Martlesham auctioneers Lockdales.

It was due to go under the hammer at the end of last month, with a catalogue guide price of £400-£450.

James Sadler, the Lockdales Auction Manager,

said: "The story of William Moyes is quite remarkable, and in the end desperately sad.

"The submarine in which he perished has never been recovered.

"William went out with a line to save the lives of two men and so richly deserved to receive his Royal Humane Society Medal in May 1915.

"He was a true hero who came to grief not long after.

"We are proud to have the medal in our possession and there is, not surprisingly, great interest in it from our part of the world, down in Devon, and indeed, from Canada."

LS Moyes died on January 19 1917 when his boat, E36, was in collision with sister submarine E43 as they headed for a patrol off Terschelling – the latter had slowed up to repair damage to a bridge screen and is thought to have collided with E36 in poor weather.

American city challenges Royal Navy

IN late August 1814, five ships of the Royal Navy made a daring journey up the Potomac River to support the forces of General Ross, who were attacking the American capital, Washington.

Having touched the bottom of the river more than 20 times and survived a fierce summer storm that removed all their topmasts, the ships arrived off the city of Alexandria, a few miles downriver of Washington, having achieved their main objective of neutralising Fort Washington, on the riverbank.

In order to preserve the city, the British demanded 100,000 pounds Sterling of ransom, mainly in the form of tobacco, sugar and other commodities.

The Fleet then returned downriver, Ross having

occupied Washington and burnt many public buildings, including the White House.

Almost two centuries on, the City of Alexandria has issued a tongue-in-cheek challenge to regain some honour from the event.

The challenge will take the form of a cricket match, a yacht race on the Potomac and a tug of war.

Cdr John 'Ned' Kelly, Assistant Naval Attaché at the British Embassy, received the challenge on behalf of the Defence Staff in Washington DC.

The competitions will take place at the end of August as the City of Alexandria commemorates the occupation by the Royal Navy during the War of 1812.

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Royal Marines 350
1664 - 2014
Timeless Distinction

Celebrating a key part of UK defence

THE Royal Marines celebrate their 350th birthday this year and you are all invited to join in the celebrations.

From fighting on the decks and in the mastheads at the Battle of Trafalgar, through World War 2, to the modern day, leading the assaults on the Falkland Islands and Iraq and operating in Afghanistan, they are an integral part of Britain's defence.

Formed in the reign of King Charles II on October 28, 1664 as the Duke of York and Albany's Maritime Regiment of Foot,

the name Marines first appeared in the records in 1672.

Since then, Marines have taken part in more battles on land and sea around the world than any other branch of the British Armed Forces. So numerous are the Corps' battle honours they are simply represented by the famous Globe and the single honour 'Gibraltar'.

Today, the Royal Marines are the UK's Commando Forces and the Royal Navy's amphibious troops. An elite force held at very high readiness, they are trained

for worldwide rapid response, able to deal with a wide spectrum of threats and security challenges.

Fully integrated with the Royal Navy's amphibious ships, they can deploy globally, gather offshore as part of the Response Force Task Group and when necessary, jump into action from Navy ships to conduct operations on land, or at sea.

The main deployable force is 3 Commando Brigade RM with a Lead Commando Group ready and held at five days notice to deploy globally.

Elsewhere, 43 Commando Fleet Protection Group RM, remains on permanent duty protecting the UK's nuclear deterrent as well as providing boarding parties in support of counter-piracy in the Indian Ocean.

This toughness and resilience is the reason that the Royal Marines provides the greatest single contribution to UK Special Forces, with about 40 per cent originating from within the Royal Marines.

Overall, the Marines have a history worth celebrating.

Getting physical

THERE'S plenty of chances for you to take part in a series of physical challenges and raise money for the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund.

For those keen on cycling, the RMRIDE350 takes place on August 2. The 350-mile endurance road event starts and finishes at the Royal Marines Museum in Portsmouth.

Entry will cost £150, which can be paid in three instalments. There is no minimum sponsorship but a figure of £300 per rider is a reasonable expectation. Visit www.rmctf.org.uk/event/554/RMRIDE350/ for more information.

For the very fit, why not take part in the Royal Marines Commando Challenge and undertake the same training course used daily by Royal Marines.

With a choice of three distances from the 4K 'fun' challenge to the 17K 'endurance' challenge, there's something for everyone on September 6-7. Visit www.commandochallenge.co.uk to sign up.

For the superfit, there's Survive the Yomp on September 13 - and it's no walk in the park.

Set in the Scottish Highlands, this is a 30-mile hike across remote and rugged terrain following in the footsteps of the thousands who trained to be Commandos.

It's the walk of your life. Visit www.commandospirit.com to sign up.

One of the highlights of the year will be a Rock Run on Gibraltar on October 25.

The event is open to a maximum of 350 people who will travel to Gibraltar on Friday October 24 and return to the UK on Monday October 27.

The following day the top 30 fundraisers will attend a reception hosted by the Governor of Gibraltar.

The registration fee is £280 and all participants are asked to raise a minimum of £2,800 for the RMCTF. Flights, accommodation and meals are included.

For details contact enquiries@gibrocrun.co.uk, phone 01392 272842 or visit www.gibrocrun.co.uk.



Picture: PO(Phot) Sean Clee, RNPOTYx3

Going the extra miles (over 4,000 of them)

THE YEAR 1664 is imprinted in the minds of all Royal Marines - the birth of the Corps.

The number 1664 has formed the basis of a challenge to mark the Marines' 350th anniversary.

But one test across 1,664 kilometres (1,034 miles) isn't enough for the crack troops - so they are planning on five challenges.

They will ski 1,664km, sail 1,664km, cycle 1,664km, canoe 193km (even the Royal Marines can't make the the English Channel 1,664km wide) and finally run 1,664km.

The skiing challenge was beginning this month in Norway, 400km north of the Arctic Circle.

The Royal Marines will ski south to Stavanger, crossing some of the most inhospitable terrain in Europe.

Averaging a marathon a day on skis, and carrying their full survival kit, they will cross the Finnmark Plateau and Lyngen Alps in north Norway, and then

traverse the Dovrefjell, Jotunheimen and Hardangervidda in south Norway before arriving in Stavanger in April.

"The challenge is massively ambitious, but that's what being in the Royal Marines is all about - to go that extra mile, to achieve the extraordinary," said Lt Col Gary Green, the brains behind the RM 1664 Challenge.

"The guys taking part will be displaying true commando spirit and a determination to succeed."

It is hoped the challenge will raise £500,000 for the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund.

Lt Col Green previously attempted a 1,000km ski in just 20 days (50km per day) in memory of his wife, to raise money for cancer charities. This inspired the 1664 challenge.

"Personal tragedy was a factor in my motivation, but more than that was the realisation that with this challenge I could raise much-needed funds for the Royal Marines charity and help our seriously injured guys in their transition back to

some kind of normality," he said.

A core team of Marines are expected to take part in the first four stages of the challenge, with different colleagues accompanying them on each stage.

Once the ski team reach Stavanger they hand over to the sailing team, who will head to Cadiz.

The third leg will see the team cycle from Cadiz to Normandy in France, where they will swap their bikes for canoes and head across the English Channel to Poole - the precise sea distance will depend upon the tides and weather.

The final leg involves a 1,664km run around England and Scotland before culminating in the RM350 Corps Marathon in London on July 25.

During the run, the challenge team will visit as many Royal Marines units and Royal Marines Association locations as possible.

Around 2,000 Marines will take part in the total challenge.

The first phase of the challenge in Norway, where Royal Marines regularly

train, (members of 45 Commando are pictured above taking part in Exercise Cetus 13 last year) will be particularly testing as the wind-chill temperatures could plummet to -40C.

Each marine will need to eat around 5,000 calories a day in Norway just to keep their bodies ticking over.

The daily ration pack consists of 5,421 calories - made up of: Tinned cocktail nuts (588cal); jam biscuits (208); two cereal bars (398); Italian soy marinara (310); Sweet-and-sour chicken and rice (480); biscuits (434); fruit and oat snack bar (200); hazelnut spread (267); cinnamon bun (350); tuna mayo (144); meusli (250); fruit and custard (390); milk chocolate beans (250); orange sports drink (107); caramel-flavoured hot chocolate (200); two powdered fruit drinks (390); apricot gel (75); drink creamers (160); sugar (100); dental chewing gum (20); boiled sweets (100).

To donate to the RMCTF, visit www.1664challenge.co.uk and click on the just giving link.

Marking milestone

THE Royal Marines have a number of events to mark their milestone, including:

- March 10: RM350 Launch
- March 13-15: Mountbatten Festival of Music (Royal Albert Hall)
- May 18: Graspan Parade (Horse Guards / The Mall London)
- June 4-5: Massed Bands Beating Retreat (Horse Guards Parade)
- June 6: D-Day 70
- June 28: Granting of the Freedom of Weston-super-Mare
- July 25: City of London March
- August 1-23: Edinburgh Military Tattoo
- September 6: Exercising the Freedom of Newcastle
- September 20: City of Glasgow March
- September 20-21: Royal Marines Association reunion weekend
- October 25: Gibraltar Rock Run
- November 8: Commando 999 Speed-march (London)

Welcome the future of the corps



● The new officers' passing out parade at Lympstone

Picture: LA(Phot) Jason Ballard

THESE are the new breed of men who will lead the Royal Navy's ultimate warriors.

The Royal Marines welcomed 33 new officers to the elite band of brothers as the future leaders completed 15 months of training - regarded as the hardest and longest course for any officer in NATO - to earn their coveted green berets.

During the passing-out day at the Commando Training Centre in Lympstone, near Exeter, the young officers - known throughout

their training as YOs - delivered a presentation to their proudly-assembled families and the Commandant General of the Royal Marines, Major General Ed Davis, to show what they had done throughout their time in training.

They then performed a precision display of drill on Lympstone's parade square wearing their ceremonial 'blues' uniforms.

The 33 YOs have now taken their places as troop commanders in the Corps' front-line operational units.

Follow the Royal Marines during their anniversary year at www.Royalnavy.mod.uk/RM350

HMS Protector

At World's End

AND the temperatures were most definitely not Caribbean...

No, the average annual temperature at the end of the world – Thule Island, 59°27'S 27°18'W – is below freezing.

It's also pretty much the most southerly point in what was once the British Empire, today Britain's Overseas Territories.

It is the last of the South Sandwich Islands (named after the eponymous Earl who, as well as being fond of a slab of meat between two slices of bread, was First Lord of the Admiralty in the mid-18th Century when Capt Cook discovered the archipelago).

Continued on page 24





Continued from page 23

Thule owes its name to the mythical island at the end of the world.... although it isn't, of course, the end of the world because (a) the world's not flat and (b) the next stop is Antarctica... which is a rather substantial land mass.

Anyway, just in case you've never visited Thule, allow the HMS Protector team to tell you a little bit about it.

Well, it's pretty remote: the Antarctic Peninsula is 950 miles to the southwest, South Georgia is 450 miles to the northwest, while the nearest permanent human habitation is 1,300 miles westwards in the Falklands. And the mother country? 7,600 miles north.

It's about two miles long and dominated by a volcanic caldera which rises more than 2,300ft above the Southern Ocean – and whose summit is often swallowed by mist, as it was when Protector called.

The last attempt to get ashore under the White Ensign – HMS York in 2010 –

was thwarted by bad weather.

As well as being hampered by the elements, the Fastest 42 wasn't endowed with specialist divers, landing craft and surveying craft...

...whereas Protector is.

It was the four-strong dive team who tested the waters (literally) initially to determine a safe spot for a surveying party to come ashore with their kit.

The South Atlantic around Thule is a 'lovely' -1.7°C – but by and large the divers wear the same kit as they would in the UK (it's about 9°C in the Solent at this time of year).

So after donning a combination of thermals, all-in-one padded suit, and the standard-issue compressed neoprene dry suit, mitts and gloves, and finally masks, the divers – LS(D)s Chris Hayes and Craig Waghorn and AB(D)s Matthew Coburn and Richard Hughes – stepped into the sea off Thule and searched the shore and approaches for underwater obstructions such as large

boulders or rocks and kelp patches.

"Diving into such cold temperatures is always challenging but once in it is amazing to see all the wildlife and environment around and underwater – it is quite unlike anywhere else," said Chris.

"We were watched the whole time by groups of penguins who seemed intrigued to know what we were doing."

Happy that the approach was safe, Chris and his shipmates signalled to the survey team – CPO(SR) Ben Fitzsimmons, WO2(ET) Tony Tindale, LA(Phot) Vicki Benwell, AB(HM) 'Bob' Hopes and Mne Tom Lemar – to come ashore for a rapid environmental assessment, producing a rough sketch of the area with dimensions of the principal features, a set of photographs of the site and taking GPS references.

The surveyors also had a look for evidence of a whaling/sealing station dating from the 19th-Century – or possibly earlier...

...and didn't find a lot. What there is in Thule are the decaying remains of a former Argentine survey station, Corbeta Uruguay, built (without permission) in the mid-70s and which was destroyed by the Royal Navy in the aftermath of the 1982 Falklands conflict.

What remains is a playground for the resident penguin populace – 60,000 in all; that's over 28,000 penguins per square mile.

Which is a lot of penguins. Chinstraps. Adélie. Gentoo. Not to mention other wildlife.

There are plans to dismantle the remnants of the research station to return Thule to its natural state – but only if the work is feasible and wouldn't have too much impact on the wildlife.

Hence the reason for putting a survey party ashore.

While the small team was ashore, Protector herself was pinging frantically with her multibeam echo sounder to

create an accurate underwater picture of the Douglas Strait which separates Thule from neighbouring Cook Island (one and a half miles to the East) – waters which have never been charted before to the standard the icebreaker is capable of.

Although ships don't come this way very often, surveying is important to update Admiralty Charts – not least as two earthquakes measuring over 7 on the Richter Scale (that's as powerful as the shock which devastated Haiti in 2010) have struck the area in the past half dozen years.

Although Thule was a novel experience for all aboard, the mission there was typical of Protector's work around the frozen continent.

"Part of our tasking in this austral summer period in the Antarctic region is to gather data using our hi-tech on-board equipment and also to send





teams of personnel ashore to conduct physical surveys," said Capt Rhett Hatcher, the survey ship's Commanding Officer.

"This takes us to some very inhospitable and challenging environments but my team are well trained, extremely keen and privileged to see some of these islands that few people ever get to visit."



Rather more people – not just in Protector, but across the Naval Service – have visited the icebreaker's next port of call (after negotiating some pretty dense ice and thick fog).

After the isolation and desolation of Thule, South Georgia (population c.30) must have seemed like Times Square....

The South Georgian Government wanted accurate readings on the depths of the waters in Husvik Bay – a large natural harbour which once

served a whaling station – and any dangers they possessed.

Protector's survey motor boat James Caird IV was dispatched for the most accurate inshore readings. It can get in far closer to shore than Protector given its size – and is crammed with the same hi-tech surveying wizardry: a state-of-the-art multibeam sonar system, a single beam and towed side scan sonar. It collected oodles of data from the three square miles of Husvik Harbour, data which is now being processed by Protector's powerful computers.

While James Caird IV was busy in Husvik, a ten-strong team from Protector was moving down the shore in Cumberland Bay, the next inlet along the island's fjord-littered coast.

Now for those of you of a certain age (like the *Navy News* team...) your childhoods were probably scared – and somewhat scarred – by the bevy of public information films you had to endure either at school or on the telly,

because certain death was around every seemingly-benign corner.

Stop, look, listen. Clunk-click every trip. Charlie says. Protect and Survive. The bloke drowning while the middle-aged couple on the beach wave and shout 'coo-ey'.

Some campaigns endure. Some evolve. And some disappear.

Still going strong is the chap dropping his rubbish in the bin. Keep Britain Tidy. An admirable (and environmentally-friendly) campaign. And Britain should be kept tidy – wherever Britain is.

Even though it's half a century since the whaling stations were active and the nearest major human habitations are 1,300 miles away in South America, there's still a litter problem – each tide and each storm brings the detritus of the southern ocean ashore on the beaches of South Georgia.

So, after grabbing huge rubbish sacks and dodging curious seals and nonchalant penguins, the

beachcombers swept a mile-long stretch of shore free of junk in just under two hours.

"It's always nice to leave an area like this which is beautiful and abundant with wildlife, cleaner than when you got there," said WO2 Tindale, a member of the RN Birdwatching Society.

Litter picking was obviously a tad too leisurely for some of Protector's men and women, who decided a spot of mountaineering was the order of the day.

Ten volunteers first conquered Orca Peak, then scaled Mount Hodges, which rises 605 metres (1,985ft) above Cumberland Bay, offering the most spectacular views of the 'capital' Grytviken and environs.

Even those exertions were deemed a bit lightweight by some aboard, who put their names forward for an extended version of the Shackleton walk – an eight-kilometre trek from Husvik to Fortuna Bay with the final

leg descending Shackleton Valley to Stromness – following the original route of Sir Ernest Shackleton as he led some of his party to safety after his aborted attempt to cross Antarctica 100 years ago.

Other members of the ship's company deployed ashore in Shackleton Valley to practise their cold-weather survival skills as well as basic field-craft techniques.

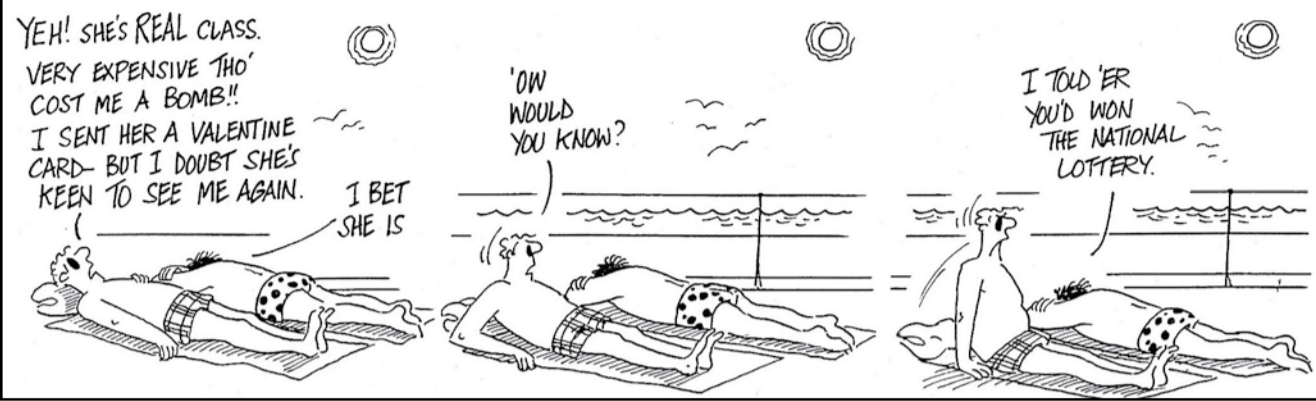
The final task in South Georgian waters was by far the simplest: transfer one government official, one Norwegian nature expert and two members of the South Georgian Heritage Trust to the Falkland, dropping off a member of the British Antarctic Survey team at the aptly-named Bird Island off the western tip of the main island on the way.

So that's another work period around Antarctica done. There's still time for at least one more before the austral autumn sets in. After that, a boreal summer surveying in the Caribbean.



pictures: la(phot) vicki benwell, hms protector

CLASSIC JACK



Picture a perfect gift



● Arthur Simmons pictured in 1944 and in the summer of 2013



I DO enjoy reading the *Navy News* that I buy for my father Arthur Simmons. My father's memory is not too good these days but he does remember his wartime service in the Royal Navy. Father received his Arctic Star medal last July and a few days later celebrated his 90th birthday.

I commissioned a painting of his ship, HMS Rhododendron, for a family birthday present (excellent artist Kevin Clarkson). Father has also applied for the Ushakov Medal (1944 campaign medal) that the Russian Federation are due to issue.
- Michael Simmons
Suffolk

Lanyard kept me out of jail

I MUST protest most strongly at Doug Barlow's plea in your December edition to get rid of the lanyard.

In 1944 mine saved me from at least one night in the slammer.

At the tender age of 17, I was on a wireman's course at Leitchworth, staying in civvy digs.

It was of 12 weeks duration and we were granted one leave pass, with railway warrant.

I'd used mine and my mate, Ginger Blakemore, who lived in Manchester, was disgusted that he could get home okay but would have to leave within the hour, or he would be adrift.

"It's no use to me", he said, "have it if you want it or it goes in the bin".

As the train moved out of Paddington, two Army red caps boarded it.

"Got a leave pass Jack?" said one. I handed him Ginger's pass. They asked for my name and number and as I went to get my card out of my pocket it got tangled in my lanyard. The red caps said they could see I had a pass and didn't need to see it.

- Oily Barton
Worcester

So proud of their uniform

WITH reference to a letter in the December edition from Doug Barlow.

Shame on you sir, there were none smarter than our sailors of yesteryear.

I was always so proud walking out with my sailor husband in his navy blue suit with bell bottoms.

There have been far too many changes of late, please keep what is left.

- Pat Howell
HMS Ganges Association
Portsmouth

Numbers not needed

I SEE that the powers that be are to do away with the WO2 rate.

This should never have been brought in the first place. I was one of the early WO's and I can remember my soldier brother-in-law asking me what was a fleet chief equivalent to.

When I told him a WO1 he asked "what about the WO2?" I said the Navy does not bother with it, you are either a warrant officer or you are not.

In my opinion it was yet another example of the Navy coming into line with the Army instead of the other way round.

Yes by all means get rid of the WO2 but while you are at it, drop the 1 from WO1.

- Paul Fitzgerald
Devon

Let us remember Scotland's sailors

WE OFTEN read about the bravery of Scottish soldiers in the world wars. However, the valour of Scottish sailors is never mentioned by historians or reported in war documentaries.

The documentary, *PQ 17: An Arctic Convoy Disaster* on the BBC reminded me that six members of the crew of HMS Ayrshire were from the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles.

The documentary stated that Lt Cdr Leo Gradwell navigated through the ice with the help of a school atlas. However, on board HMS Ayrshire were two Hull ex-fishermen who had sailed in these waters pre-war. They were ordered to the top of the masts to guide the ship.

I believe Coxswain John Morrison, an experienced seaman from Lewis, was the helmsman and this is why he was Mentioned in Despatches.

Murdo MacKay, one of the Lewismen on HMS Ayrshire, had a brother who was decorated twice for bravery at sea in WW2. Their father, Murdo MacKay, was awarded the DSM in WW1 but was lost on HMS Otway on July 23 1917. He was one of five Lewis Naval reservists lost on this ship, another six islanders survived the sinking.

Returning to the UK from one Arctic convoy, Lt Cdr Gradwell, breaking Naval orders, decided to head for Stornoway instead of the Naval base at Scapa Flow. This was to give the islanders a day's leave at home. The crew had not been paid for weeks but Stornowegians rallied round and gave the crew ample cash to enjoy the pubs and buy food and stores.



● Escorts and merchant ships of the convoy PQ17 gather in Hvalfjörður before sailing in June 1942 Picture: Imperial War Museum

In 1942, Arctic Convoy PQ18 was under constant attack from 225 aircraft and 36 U-boats.

Four Western Islanders were decorated - Able Seaman Finlay Ferguson (Harris) was killed on SS Empire Stevenson: WW1 survivor, Capt Murdo MacLeod (Lewis) awarded the DSC on SS Empire Snow. He was a survivor from SS Michael E in the Atlantic in 1941 and later lost on SS Fort Buckingham in the Indian Ocean in 1944: Capt Hugh MacLeod (Tiree) was awarded the DSC on SS Dan-y-bryn and Bosun Donald MacAskill (Uist) was awarded the DSM on SS Temple Arch. Carpenter Neil MacLean was awarded the DSM serving on a Naval escort vessel.

PO Murdo MacDonald, from North Tolsta, Lewis, was awarded the DSM on HMS Bulldog on an Arctic convoy. In the Far East he was awarded the BEM on HMS Glenartney. His neighbour, Kenneth MacIver, was killed in the Battle of the Barents Sea on HMS Achatas and was Mentioned in Despatches (Posthumously).

Four relations of PO MacDonald, from North Tolsta, were decorated for bravery at sea during WW2.

Lt Angus Murray, RNR, was Mentioned in Despatches for bravery on HMT Lord Melchett. His brother, John, was a survivor from HMS Whittaker in 1944.

Five Murray brothers served at sea in WW2.

Leading Seaman Murdo MacLeod, RNR, was badly wounded and a survivor from HMS Skipjack at Dunkirk. He was awarded the DSM.

His brother, Donald, AB, Merchant Navy, was taken ill in SS Port Gisborne bound for New Zealand in 1939. He returned to the UK on the SS Port Jackson and died in Liverpool. Their father, John, with ten other Lewis Naval reservists, was among those killed on HMS Invincible at the Battle of Jutland in WW1.

Two of Murdo MacLeod's uncles, Angus MacLeod and Alexander McLeod, both Seaforth Highlanders, died in WW1.

Leading Seaman Murdo

MacIver, RNR, served in HMS Tadoussac and was Mentioned in Despatches at the Normandy landings in 1944.

Able Seaman James MacMillan, Merchant Navy, was awarded the British Empire Medal on MV California Star. The ship was torpedoed north-west of the Azores on March 4, 1943 with the loss of 51 crew and passengers. James was honoured for his part in handling the lifeboat.

Among those who survived were William MacKenzie, John Morrison and Andrew Morrison, all from Lewis and Harris.

James MacMillan's brother, John, Merchant Navy, was a survivor twice during the war; from SS Corinaldo and SS Windsor Castle. Another brother, Donald, PO, RNR, served on HMS Carnation. Their brother-in-law, Donald Munro, RNR, from Gress, Lewis, was a coxswain on a landing craft at Normandy.

Lewis seamen Malcolm John Smith and Norman MacKenzie served aboard HMS Onslow on an Arctic convoy.

The youngest Western islander killed in WW2 was Peter Wilson, from Uist, who was 15, when SS Goolistan was sunk on an Arctic convoy. His fellow islander Bosun John MacLellan also died.

If he were alive today Leo Gradwell would be mortified to see that the Western Isles fishing fleet, that provided the Navy with so many capable seamen during the war, is virtually extinct.

Scottish sailors from Shetland to the Solway proved their worth in the world wars and it is time their capability and courage was appreciated.

- Donald John MacLeod
Aberdeen

Floating museum proposal

YOUR report "Destroyer veterans mark end of an era" in December's *Navy News*, mentions that plans are being formed to create a memorial to the Type 42s at the National Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire.

It would also be a good idea if HMS Edinburgh, the last Type 42 to be decommissioned on June 6 2013, and the largest Type 42, could be berthed as a floating museum in Leith Docks in Edinburgh, next to the Royal Yacht Britannia. I believe the council is looking into this possibility, which is supported by the Britannia management.

If it were not possible, then there might be several places down the Firth of Clyde which could use a tourist attraction.

I notice from Wikipedia that HMS Liverpool, which saw action in August 2011 off Libya, is still "awaiting disposal". Perhaps it might still be possible for her, also, to be berthed on the Mersey.

- Alistair McConnachie
Glasgow

Wild about the opera

I wonder if any readers recall the Med Fleet SODS Opera held in the Fleet Canteen Corrodino in Malta back in 1971?

Top of the bill were Pan's People, who danced on to the stage from the port side wearing very little while six hairy matelots danced on from starboard in shorts and boots. The audience of 2,000 matelots went wild.

I learnt later it was organized by the late Cdr Dai Somerville-Jones, who could have taught Andrew Lloyd Webber or Simon Cowell a trick or two.

Much rum was consumed.
- Eric Davies
Hampshire

Gone fishing

I SERVED aboard HMS Warrior for the duration of Operation Grapple - British nuclear tests in the Pacific - in 1956-57 and was present when the first weapon was detonated in May 1957.

The target island was Malden, some 400 miles south of Christmas Island. The weapons were dropped from the RAF's Valiant bomber.

One of my jobs as a young sub lieutenant was to take a 32ft open cutter into the island a few hours after the explosion and collect fish

from the reef and bring them back on board for the scientists to test for levels of radiation.

My sole protection was a white boiler suit and a dosimeter. How little we knew at that time.

HMS Warrior published a very comprehensive report of the operation with a foreword by the Rt Hon Aubrey Jones, who was the Minister of Supply at the time and Operation Grapple fell under his aegis.

- Guy O'Donnell
Captain RN (Rtd)

Crane called in at H-bomb isle

THE H bomb tests of the late 1950s were conducted around the other Christmas Island - due south of Hawaii in the Pacific.

I was serving in HMS Crane on our journey from Singapore back to the UK via Panama in January 1962 when we paid a brief visit to the site. Not much to be seen from memory.

Also, the letter in December's edition regarding the rum tot. If Michael was issuing a gill to each man, the lucky buggers were having splicers daily. The true measure was an eighth of a pint.

- John Roadnight
ExCPO SA
Melbourne, Australia

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Chasing Smokey

SEEING your mystery ship in December's *Navy News* prompted me to write about HMS Arlingham's principal role in the 1970s as Gibraltar's patrol boat in its confrontation with Spain.

Unlike today's stand off, the border was shut and Arlingham, and a fleet tender manned by the visiting guardship, was always available to shadow Spanish naval vessels on their entering Gibraltar's territorial waters.

During my 18 months as Arlingham's commanding officer, the Spanish Navy's 'opposition' was usually an old coal-burning (Bidasoa Class) minesweeper nick-named 'Smokey Joe' by the Gibraltarians.

The day after I joined she tried to ram us into a badly-damaged tanker lying at anchor in the bay. Fortunately Arlingham, though rather slow for a patrol boat, was a lot more manoeuvrable.

Arlingham only functioned as a torpedo recovery vessel for one week a year for the annual torpedo firings by the submarine commanding officers' 'Perisher' qualifying course.

Arlingham had a crew of 15 and a Leading Dog named Tramp, who lived onboard but used to disappear regularly up town only to come racing back when he heard Arlingham's engines start.

If we slipped he would leap into the water and swim after us. He missed the ship and lost his hook a few times. Happy days!

– Richard Prendergast
Lt Cdr ret'd
Emsworth



● Above, HMS Arlingham's leading dog Tramp with RO John Wilkinson



Left: Arlingham in pursuit of the Spanish minesweeper Smokey Joe

Paying tribute to Swordfish

BETWEEN 1936 and 1940 Fairey Aviation built about 600 Swordfish but required the space to bring on new aircraft.

The government gave the contract to build the wartime Swordfish to Blackburn Aircraft of Leeds.

They also gave them a shadow factory at Sherburn-in-Elmet, near Selby.

Parts were made by sub-contractors in Leeds. Appleyard of Leeds, the main Morris dealers, made the wings.

I worked there before going into the Fleet Air Arm. I was making some of the steel components that went into the wings.

There were eight assembly lines making two sets of wings at the same time.

The wing spars were made at



Blackburn's factory up Roundhay Road in Leeds and sent down to Appleyards. This factory is now a Tesco store.

The aircraft was always called Swordfish. In fact there was a board on the wall of the work manager's office headed 'Swordfish Battle Honours', the most prominent being Taranto and Bismarck.

In the FAA I was trained to be an Air Mechanic Electrician and on completion was drafted to HMS Nightjar, a naval air station

at Inskip.

This was the home of 766 Squadron, an anti-submarine training squadron.

I was working in the maintenance unit. During my Service this aircraft was called Swordfish.

I was one of the founders of the Leeds Swordfish Trust, raising money for the Historic Flight. Alas no longer, as we got down to two and age does not let us carry on.

I have never heard the name Blackfish. All the people I meet who worked on this aircraft during the war call it Swordfish. Swordfish it was and Swordfish it will remain.

– MD Grubb
(On behalf of AW Hodgins)
Leeds

Exercise aboard Duke of York

THE article in December's letters page entitled counting ships is very apposite.

I have included an extract from my diary from 1948 about the autumn cruise on board the flagship HMS Duke of York.

We were accompanied by two aircraft carriers, three cruisers and 12 destroyers.

"Captain gave us a lecture this morning on where we were going and how to behave.

"We did first phase of Exercise Oneship, we were attacked by MTBs and RAF tomcats.

"No searchlights were allowed to be used. Planes flying round us taking pictures..."

We had little thought then that we would contract to what then would be regarded as a flotilla.

– Spike Wheeler
Ex Chief CDI
Buckingham

Totting up in the USA

WITH reference to your readers' letters regarding the rum ration, the following events may prove of interest.

I had been drafted from HMS/M Thermopylae into the nuclear programme and eventually to my first nuclear boat HMS/M Revenge (starboard B) after more than two years' building at Cammell Lairds in Birkenhead.

We made our way across the pond to test fire our A3 Polaris missile.

I had been designated engine room chief and in those days a day-working position, as opposed to watch keeping. Therefore it was convenient to cover in my spare time caterer, social secretary and senior rates mess president.

As such, the rum ration was within my bailiwick.

Discussing future movements and logistics with my engine room POME Thornber, it seemed a problem was looming when the port crew flew over to relieve us and we would be



Each month Pussers Rum are offering to courier a bottle of their finest tiple to the writer of our top letter. This month's winner is M R Golding

ensconced in Patrick Air Force Base for a month with no tot.

To circumvent this appalling situation, it was deemed prudent to decant unclaimed rum each day into empty two-litre plastic cola bottles which were secreted behind formica panelling in the

senior rates mess.

By the time the port crew relieved us we were well on the way to filling our fifth bottle.

My ER POMEs eventually left the boat with our green pussers' cases seemingly somewhat heavier than usual and we settled shore side in Patrick Air Force Base.

Each morning at 1100 "Up Spirits" would be had at my locker and all senior rates requiring a pick-me-up were invited.

Conservation of our dwindling stock was worrying initially but, by careful management we were able to maintain our service to the end of our stay at Patrick.

Guards at Patrick's main gate never did find out why the Brits went ashore in such high spirits and good humour.

Happy days at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida.

– M R Golding
Mech I Rtd
Senior Rates Mess President
Dumbarton

Tot tradition

I HAD my tot of rum in the navy when I was 19 and I also had my mate's as he didn't drink.

I am still drinking rum each day and I have now turned 88, but unfortunately it's not Pussers at the price it is now.

I recall a RM sentry who struck a match over the rum breaker to see if there was any left and burned his hair and eyebrows.

– KJ Taylor
Kent

I missed out

WITH reference to Michael A Carrigan's letter in December's issue, I am sorry to say I was never on a ship with the said Jack Dusty as I would have loved to be issued with a double tot.

In all the ships I served on the ration was half a gill daily.

I don't know about winning a decanter of rum, I think this tot should be stopped.

– John Roche
Plymouth

LETTERS to the editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent's name and address, not necessarily for publication.

E-mail correspondents are also requested to provide this information. Letters cannot be submitted over the telephone.

If you submit a photograph which you did not take yourself, please make sure that you have the permission for us to publish it.



Given the volume of letters, we cannot publish all of your correspondence in Navy News, nor can we reply to every one.

We do, however, publish many on our website, www.navynews.co.uk, accompanied by images.

We look particularly for correspondence which stimulates debate, makes us laugh or raises important issues. The editor reserves the right to edit your submissions.

The editor reserves the right to edit your submissions.

Cheery Chid crew ride home

MEMBERS of the ship's company of minehunter HMS Chiddingfold have cycled from their ship in Portsmouth Naval Base to their namesake village and back again to raise money for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

Eight of the 43-strong crew donned their lycra to undertake the 152km trip from ship to village to ship in one day. The group left the ship at 9am and were waved off by the Commander of MCM2 Squadron.

The cyclists arrived at the village (south of Guildford in Surrey) for lunch after making good time in some fairly arduous conditions, and arrived back at the ship (now in the dark) around 6pm.

The group have raised around £1,500 sponsorship for the RNRMC including donations totalling £150 made by the parishioners of Chiddingfold village.

For their seven hours in the saddle they climbed 4,784ft and, although shadowed by a support van throughout in case of any problems with the bikes, the only casualty was one snapped chain.

The ride was the idea of Able Seaman Diver Ashley Mansell, 23, from Fareham, who said: "It was quite a challenge and the team really worked together to keep each other going, especially on the larger hills. The weather was pretty poor unfortunately but it was all for a good cause."

Further donations can be made to RNRMC through the riders webpage at www.virginmoneygiving.com/team/chiddingfold

Proving every little helps...

FUND-RAISERS in Helston had a successful shopping trip for The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

Petty Officer Aircrewman Richie Hacker from 824 Naval Air Squadron, based at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, was overjoyed at the substantial amount customers to the town's large Tesco store gave.

"Everyone was really happy to contribute," said Richie. "We have so far counted over £970."

Benefactor's gift to keep on giving

PHILANTHROPIST and businessman Sir Michael Hintze has pledged £500,000 to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity to support serving personnel, their loved ones and the veteran community.

The Hintze Family Charitable Foundation will gift the donation over 20 years and is encouraging others to forge longer-term financial relationships with the RNRMC.

He said: "The Foundation is delighted to offer its long-term commitment to the RNRMC."

"The work it has done for the naval charity sector is outstanding and, indeed, their support for serving personnel and their families and veterans is first class.



● Sir Michael Hintze

"It is a privilege to support those who give so much to our nation and I see this as the beginning of a more substantial

commitment to the RNRMC."

The gift from the Foundation is made, not only in recognition of the nation's sailors and commandos but also of the RNRMC's success in amalgamating over 70 funds and charities.

The RNRMC operates a group structure, creating operating efficiencies and enhancing grant-making and fundraising capacity in the sector.

In appreciation of the Foundation's gift, the RNRMC invited Sir Michael to become its first vice patron.

Vice Admiral Sir Richard Ibbotson, Chairman of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity said: "Sir Michael's unwavering commitment is reflected in his appointment and his presence

brings a sense of momentum to the charity.

"We very much look forward to the insight, expertise and ambition that Sir Michael offers, which will truly set the pace for our future fundraising endeavours.

"This marks a step change in the RNRMC's philanthropic approach and I very much hope that this will encourage others to join us in supporting the charity."

Sir Michael said: "I feel exceptionally privileged to accept the role of vice patron and I do so with the greatest pleasure.

"I have enjoyed my engagement with the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity a great deal and I look forward to building on this in the future.

FUNDRAISER OF THE MONTH

LEE BEAGLEY



● CPO Lee Beagley and teammate Pete Muir at HellRunner 2014 which took place in Hampshire

Beating Hills of Hell

DURING the past 12 months Chief Petty Officer Lee Beagley has taken part in a number of road, trail and challenge events.

In his most recent contest, HellRunner 2014

– Hell Down South, he took on the gruelling Bog of Doom and the Hills of Hell at Longmoor Camp in Hampshire.

To date Lee has raised in excess of £1,000.



● Dame Mary with Michelle Midgley and Lucy Ware

Room with a view

THE Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Dame Mary Fagan, visited Portsmouth to mark the opening of the RNR Training Unit HMS King Alfred's refurbished drill deck and Junior Rates Mess.

The VIP guest unveiled a plaque marking the generous grant by the Sir Donald Gosling Maritime Reserve Amenity Fund, administered by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

The grant funded the installation of new wood flooring and intricate marquetry of the HMS King Alfred ship's crest that was inlaid into the drill deck. The room was freshly decorated

in contemporary colours and new furniture provided added comfort to the Junior Rates Mess.

Michelle Midgley and Lucy Ware, grant administrators from the RNRMC, were present to witness the unveiling.

Lucy said: "It's heartwarming to meet the beneficiaries of the grant and to see what a tremendous difference it can make."

HMS King Alfred's First Lieutenant Lt Cdr David Grist said: "We are delighted and proud of the new flooring and decor which has significantly transformed these rooms for the better."

EVENTS

MAR 13-15

Making music
The Mountbatten Festival of Music returns, featuring the massed bands of the Royal Marines at the Royal Albert Hall. Proceeds go to the RMCTF and Clic Sargent. Tickets from bit.ly/MFM2014.

MAR 26-29

Witches Abroad
HMS Collingwood's amateur dramatic company take on its first-ever stage production of Sir Terry Pratchett's *Witches Abroad*. Proceeds go to the RNRMC. To book, call 07502 037922. Tickets cost £6.

APR 27

Join the team
Are you taking part in the Plymouth Half Marathon? Then why not join the RNRMC run team – running vest provided. Please contact fundraising@rnrmc.org.uk

In the picture

IFYOU have ever had your hair chopped at Mop Docs barbers shop in Portsmouth Naval Base or visited The Pankhurst Maritime Gallery just outside Victory Gate you would have met Julia Pankhurst and seen her stunning naval paintings.

To mark the start of 2014 and of her becoming a full-time artist, Julia is looking to auction off many of her original paintings to make space for lots more. She has the following paintings of ships available on her web site:

- HMS Westminster
- 2 x HMS Ark Royal
- HMS St Albans
- 2 x HMS Illustrious
- HMS Dauntless
- HMS Defender
- HMS Dragon
- HMS Endurance
- HMS Nottingham
- HMS Liverpool
- HMS Edinburgh

Ten per cent of the sale of each painting will be going to the RNRMC.

For full details how to bid see: www.pankhurstgallery.com/auction/

Four new faces on board of trustees

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity started 2014 on a high, as it welcomed four new trustees into its organisation.

The new trustees will bring a wealth of relevant skills and experience to an already strong and established board.

While each new trustee has their own motivations for joining the RNRMC, all of them share a collective interest in furthering the quality and scope of the charity's work.

■ Oona Muirhead CBE, a former Chief Executive of the South East Development Agency, brings with her a strong background in government leadership and communications.

■ Jenny Rowe CB, Chief Execu-

utive and Accounting Officer of the UK Supreme Court, has a wealth of legal experience. Her husband undertook National Service in the Royal Navy.

■ James Pitt, Partner and co-Head of co-Investments at Lexington Partner, is a natural fit for the charity given his career in financial services and having previously served in the Royal Navy as a warfare officer and navigating officer.

■ Ann Paul has 25 years as a not-for-profit specialist in the healthcare, youth and family services sector. Her former position as Head of Philanthropy for Macmillan Cancer Support aligns her expertise perfectly with the charity's fundraising goals.



**GO THE DISTANCE!
MAKE EVERY MILE COUNT!**

You can help us wherever you are in the world by taking part in a run, row, swim or cycle.

Your challenge is to cover the number of miles you are from Twickenham before the Army v Navy rugby game. For example, if you are based in Portsmouth, you could row 80 miles. If you are based in Lympstone you could cycle 180 miles. You could do this individually or as part of a team, with your starting point being your unit, ship's current location or your affiliated town. Raising sponsorship will help your charity care for you, your family and oppos.

Register now and measure up to the challenge! Search 'Road to Twickenham' on the Virgin Money Giving website or contact: fundraising@rnrmc.org.uk T: 023 9254 8289

Registered charity in England and Wales (1117794) and Scotland (SC041898).

the road to TWICKENHAM rnrmc.org.uk/roadtotwickenham

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Purl of an idea to knit families back together

EVERY year Service personnel return from deployed military operations to their families and the lives they left behind.

Some of those coming back may not realise that they could be suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Operational Stress Reaction (OSR), behaviour changes which can have a serious impact on loved ones.

But now a charity is using the skill of knitting to help such families.

PTSD symptoms and increasing changes in behaviour or personality are often detected first by those closest to the Service person.

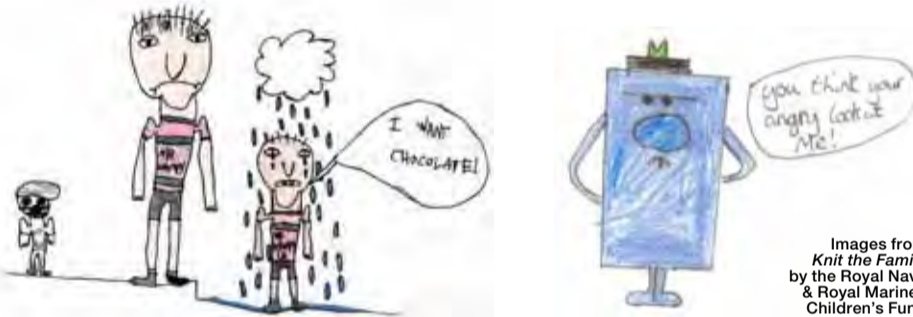
The diagnosis can follow after experiencing a particularly traumatic and distressing event that is way outside normal occurrences and can include depression, flashbacks, inability to sleep, anger, and an increasing withdrawal from everyday life.

The diagnosis of PTSD and OSR seriously affects the families of those involved, with children especially finding it difficult to understand.

In recent years the Royal Navy Royal Marines Children's Fund has noticed an increase in the amount of families who have been affected by the issues that PTSD and OSR brings.

In response, the charity has now created a book aimed at helping families understand and cope with the impact and stresses both pre, post and during deployment, helping to knit them back together.

The title of the book, *Knit the Family*, reflects the spirit of



Images from *Knit the Family* by the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund

the charity's campaign aimed at providing strategies for supporting children, alternative therapies that can assist families to reintegrate and understand ways of broaching the issues and providing valuable tips and advice for dealing with them.

The publication of the book was made possible following a donation from the LIBOR fund. The government transferred £35m to the Ministry of Defence from penalty fines on the banks to support the Armed forces Community, especially those

injured and bereaved.

Knit the Family looks at the different types of alternative therapies available for those suffering with the effects of PTSD and OSR.

The treatments recommended are designed to help with

controlling worry, stress and the constant fear that so often surrounds the sufferer, plus advice on how treatments can be beneficial to the entire family, many of whom suffer in silence.

Monique Bateman, Director of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, said: "Through conversations with family therapists, we identified there was a real lack of information and help readily available to families of returning military personnel."

"The effect PTSD has on a person not only affects their life but also their families and can cause families to fall apart as they try to battle through."

"At the RN and RM Children's Fund we find it's the children who especially suffer when a parent returns home from the front-line, the parent has changed and this is an issue that children struggle to come to terms with."

"The self-help book is intended not only to help families understand PTSD but also to aid families in finding a way to re-establish their bonds and giving partners the support needed to knit the family back together."

Knit the Family is available to families through the RN & RM Children's Fund and can be sent to families to help them prepare for when their partners return from deployment.

The fund is the only charity dedicated to supporting the children of parents who have worked with the Naval Service.

They also help with educational needs, childcare, in-home support and respite holidays. Visit <http://rnmchildrensfund.org.uk/>

Couple's trek in memory of Cody

A ROYAL Navy careers liaison officer and his wife are planning a charity walk in memory of their baby son.

Cody Tinsley died aged 15 weeks of cardiomyopathy (heart disease) and was treated at Leeds General Infirmary and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

Now his parents, Lt David Tinsley and his wife Louise, are planning to walk the 33 miles from Doncaster to Leeds in one day to raise money for the Children's Heart Surgery Fund.

The couple will be joined by some close family members for the walk in March.

Lt Tinsley, who will soon join HMS Defender, said: "Cody was brave and strong and was so well-supported by this incredible charity."

The fund enhances patient facilities and support, provides the latest medical equipment and funds research dedicated to babies, children and teenagers with heart defects.

Anyone wishing to sponsor the Tinsleys can visit www.justgiving.com/codysmarch

Cycle ride to aid BFF

SUPPORT the British Forces Foundation and take part in a unique 100-mile cycle race this summer.

RideLondon is a closed-road event which follows the same route taken by Olympic marathon runners in London 2012.

The challenge, which takes place over the weekend of August 9 and 10, enables cyclists to raise funds for good causes.

BFF have a number of places available for the ride. Anyone interested needs to raise at least £500. Visit bff.org.uk for details.

Bear boost

A GROUP of classic and sports car fans have given a £6,800 boost to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund.

The Sporting Bears car club handed over the money next to HMS Victory in Portsmouth and added a touch of glamour to the ceremony by bringing 12 of their most prized vehicles.

The cash was raised by a series of fundraising events, most masterminded by WO2 Baz Firth, the Bears' South West regional organiser.

Nikki's short cut for charity

WRITER Nikki Bodkin is feeling the chill after having her head shaved for charity.

Nikki's efforts (pictured right) were in aid of Cancer Research UK and she had her head shaved while HMS Illustrious made its way back to the UK.

A crack team of barbers, including the Commanding Officer Capt Mike Utley, ensured that Nikki's new look was complete.

Nikki said: "Seeing my loved ones struggle with being diagnosed with

cancer inspired me to raise money for Cancer Research. I'd been thinking about doing it for a while and had resolved to shave my hair off last summer. It'll take some getting used to.

"Captain Utley was so kind to me beforehand. He kept asking if I wanted to go through with it and saying that it wasn't too late to change my mind. I told him that my mind was made up and nothing was going to stop me.

"My hair will grow back and this is all for a really worthy cause. My hair

will be going to the Little Princesses Trust to make into a wig."

Through the efforts of all involved, £877 was raised on the night for Cancer Research UK and the total is still rising.

Visit Nikki's Just Giving page at www.justgiving.com/Nikki-Bodkin2013.

The crew of the aircraft carrier also held a charity race night and a raffle – with Chief Petty Officer Nick Brindley winning the star prize, a Peugeot 208 car.



Picture: LA(Phot) Nicky Wilson

Backing for boatbuilder Double stubble on Defender

A NATIONAL charity dedicated to supporting out-of-work over-50s set-up their own businesses as a viable route back into employment is going to be delivering services exclusively for ex-seafarers, as well as their families and dependents.

Following a grant from Seafarers UK, the Prince's Initiative for Mature Enterprise (PRIME), is going to support ex-seafarers across the country and during this month the charity will be hosting several launch events to introduce their services and how they help aspiring mature entrepreneurs start their own enterprises.

A launch event was lined up for Hull for February 18 at the Maritime Museum and PRIME is looking to host two more during February in Portsmouth and Bristol.

This is the first time PRIME has delivered services exclusively



● Mark Bestford set up a boatbuilding firm with wife Julie

for people with a seafaring background or someone who has a relationship with a person in the seafaring community, and in addition to the launch events, the charity is planning to facilitate workshops, training courses,

business clubs and mentoring programmes.

Julie and Mark Bestford both spent 22 years in the Royal Navy and have worked across the marine industry in various locations around the world.

When the couple relocated to Dronfield, Derbyshire, in 2012, Mark completed a City & Guilds boatbuilding course and to help boost his business skills, Mark attended one of PRIME's business training courses.

The couple have since gone onto establish Boatwork Ltd (<http://boatwork.co.uk/>), assisting private boat owners, boatyards and water sport centres in the building, repairs, maintenance and support of their water-based craft.

If you wish to take part in the programme, or for further information about PRIME, call 0845 862 203 or visit: www.prime.org.uk.

WHY have a 'tache tickling your upper lip when you can go the whole hog and grow a full set of whiskers?

So thought the crew of HMS Defender who turned November – the annual facial hair fest for charity – into 'Beardecember'.

Sailors on the Portsmouth-based Type 45 destroyer paid £15 for the privilege of growing beards to support a shipmate diagnosed with a life-changing condition – the news came as a blow to all aboard Defender.

For some of the ship's company donating £5 proved rather easier than growing an Abe Lincoln – we're told that a strong gust of wind removed one beard, while others looked so terrible that the command decision was taken to shave them off.

For those who persisted, however, there were a few sights to behold: LS Grant Drysdale grew a true sailor's set; AB(Sea)



● Members of HMS Defender's crew showing off their efforts for Beardecember

David Carter wouldn't look out of place in an Amish community; and older members of Defender's ship's company sported 'Arctic blond' (ie grey...) highlights in their beards.

Now well into 2014, the beards

are, alas, a distant memory.

More importantly, a fantastic showing of comradeship brought all onboard together, raising more than £3,000 for the sailor and the men's health charity.



● First Sea Lord Admiral Sir George Zambellas presents Sub Lt Thomas Ribot with his certificate
Picture: LA(Phot) Caroline Davies

Frenchman qualifies as Observer

“WELL done, Thomas! Welcome to the Lynx family.”

With those words First Sea Lord Admiral Sir George Zambellas congratulated Sub Lt Thomas Ribot of the French Navy for his successful completion of the Lynx Observer Course.

The French Naval Attaché and officers of the Aéronautique Navale (French Fleet Air Arm) attended the ceremony that sealed a year of intense and highly-demanding training.

A former Maritime Patrol Aircraft controller, Sub Lt Ribot joined 702 Naval Air Squadron, at Yeovilton in August 2012, to be trained as an Observer.

He is one of the 11 exchange officers taking part in the Personnel Exchange Programme between the Royal Navy and the French Navy – the reciprocal position in France is currently filled by Lt Cdr Aitken as a Panther helicopter flight commander.

Now fully part of an RN flight crew, Sub Lt Ribot has joined 815 Squadron and is deployed on board HMS Diamond for her next operational tour.

Just desserts

OVER 100 years of Royal Navy catering expertise was formally recognised by the presentation of Valedictory Certificates and a Long Service and Good Conduct Medal to four Senior Rating Caterers by Commodore The Honourable Michael Cochrane, Commodore Portsmouth Flotilla.

This event marked the retirement of three CPO Caterers – David Boot, Ian Ward and Stuart Thompson, all of whom joined the Royal Navy at the tender age of 16 and who have served on 31 ships between them, including HM Ships Zulu, Achilles and Unicorn.

Their notable moments in the Royal Navy are too long to list in entirety, but include hosting Sir Donald Gosling’s 80th birthday party on HMS Ark Royal and catching Prince William out first ball at flight deck cricket during the Prince’s short Naval service on board HMS Iron Duke.

CPOCS Ward leaves the Royal Navy after 34 years service to spend time with his family and relocate to the sun in Lanzarote.

CPOCS Boot leaves the Royal Navy after nearly 32 years service, also to spend more time with his family, while CPOCS Thompson leaves after 23 years service to start a new career and spend more time at home in Staffordshire.

The Commodore also presented an LSGC medal to PO Caterer Michael Cain, marking an unblemished 18-year career that has seen service on a number of ships including HMS Scott and, if he follows in the footsteps of his fellow presentees at the ceremony, is in the prime of a long and fruitful career.

Lawrence maintains family’s Naval links

A 19-YEAR-OLD from Plymouth who joined the Royal Navy 50 years to the day after his grandfather has completed his basic training at HMS Raleigh.

Trainee Engineering Technician Lawrence Williams arrived at the gates of HMS Raleigh for his ten-week basic training course on October 15 2013 – thereby becoming the fifth generation of his family to opt for a career in the Royal Navy over almost a century.

His grandfather, George Williams, joined the Service on October 15 1963 and served for 23 years.

George and his wife Barbara were among the family and friends attending the passing-out-parade at HMS Raleigh, and with them was a surprise guest – Lawrence’s father, Gareth, who flew from the other side of the world to be there.

Gareth and his wife Helen emigrated to Australia last year, along with Lawrence’s two sisters and brother.

Gareth said: “I am so very proud that Lawrence had not only chosen to follow the family tradition of a seafaring career but also that he has chosen a branch that will give him skills for life beyond his promising naval career.”

“I am also very pleased to have been able to make the journey to see Lawrence pass out on the very parade ground that I and my father have both done in the past, and that a great family tradition is being maintained – one that his ten-year-old brother Oscar

● George, Lawrence and Gareth Williams at HMS Raleigh after Lawrence’s passing-out parade



Picture: Dave Sherfield

is also keen to follow, whether that be the Royal Navy or Royal Australian Navy.

“Sadly, due to a conflict of timing and other commitments in Australia, Lawrence’s mother and siblings were unable to join me to make the journey.”

Lawrence’s family link to the Royal Navy stretches back to 1914 when his great-great grandfather, Ebenezer Hancock joined up as part of the war effort.

He left the Navy in 1936, three years before his son, Lawrence’s great-grandfather Edward Hancock, embarked on his Naval career, which ended in 1958.

Gareth Williams, Lawrence’s father, was a member of the RN Reserve with Plymouth-based unit HMS Vivid for four years.

While he was waiting to join the Navy, Lawrence had been living with George and Barbara.

George said: “He waited so long to get in and then when we found out he would be joining on October 15, exactly 50 years after me, it was really weird.”

“It’s also Barbara’s birthday so I suppose it was just meant to be.”

George and Barbara have been busy researching the family’s Naval history while Lawrence has been in training, and were able to present him with a book of photographs at his passing-out parade containing each relative’s service record.

Lawrence’s decision to join the Royal Navy was inspired by listening to George’s tales of his time at sea.



● Lt Cdr Caroline von Maltzan with her ceremonial sword at BRNC
Picture: Craig Keating

Ceremonial sword for Caroline

THE German Navy Liaison Officer at Britannia Royal Naval College has been rewarded for her contribution to training the next generation of Naval leaders as her appointment with the Royal Navy comes to an end.

Lt Cdr Caroline von Maltzan was presented with a ceremonial sword during the recent passing-out parade at Dartmouth.

The 30-year-old joined the German Navy in 2002 and over the past two years has worked at BRNC as part of an exchange programme designed to foster relations between the two navies.

The sword presented to Lt Cdr von Maltzan was donated to the College by the family of the late Capt T E Podger, who served between 1920 and 1957.

The College regularly receives the swords of deceased Naval officers, which are normally used as prizes for the cadets.

It is rare that a sword is presented to a member of the training team – and even more so for it to be awarded to an overseas Navy exchange officer.

Lt Cdr von Maltzan said: “I didn’t know that I was to be awarded the sword until about five minutes before the presentation, so it was a very nice surprise.”

“The German Navy no longer carry swords and every time I took part in a parade I’d look at the Royal Navy officers and wish that I had one.”

“Capt Podger served during World War 2 and it’s really great that we can now live in a world where I can have his sword.”

“I won’t be able to wear it with my uniform, but to me, as I prepare to leave BRNC, it is the best leaving gift ever.”

Capt Jerry Kyd, the Commanding Officer of BRNC, said: “Lt Cdr von Maltzan is one of four Liaison Officers from overseas navies on the staff of the College – there are also officers from the US Navy, the French Navy and the Royal Omani Navy.”

“Each one plays a key role in delivering the training we provide here whilst also providing a vital link to their Naval equivalent of BRNC.”

“Lt Cdr von Maltzan has been an inspirational figure to many cadets during her time with us and she is a worthy recipient of Capt Podger’s sword.”

During her two years at BRNC Lt Cdr von Maltzan’s role has included teaching navigation to cadets under training and also acting as a Divisional Officer looking after the welfare of cadets undergoing the first phase of their specialist warfare training.

Lt Cdr von Maltzan said: “The Royal Navy has been really wonderful in treating me like one of their own.”

On return to Germany and newly engaged, Lt Cdr von Maltzan plans to cut her wedding cake with her ceremonial sword.

From child star to star snapper

ORDINARILY, we tell Royal Navy photographers not to send us ‘grip and grins’.

But when they’re in the picture, rather than taking it, we’ll make a rare exception.

Collecting a gong for his efforts to raise the profile of the Royal Navy is LA(Phot) Will Haigh, whose sterling – and stunning – work behind the lens these past 12 months was recognised with a commendation from Commodore Steve Garrett, Commodore of the Faslane Flotilla.

Mancunian Will, who now lives on Teesside with his wife Rachel and the couple’s 20-month-old daughter Phoebe, spent five months aboard HMS Monmouth in the Gulf, capturing images which ensured that the frigate generated countless column inches – and reached hundreds of thousands of people via the Royal Navy’s social media outlets.

Those efforts helped earn the ship the Desmond Wettern Media Award – presented to the RN unit which has done the most to raise the profile of the Service – while Will has also bagged a couple of Navy News front covers (HMS Monmouth’s Lynx spectacular flare firing and an AB from HMS Defender on watch on her bridge on our January 2014 edition).

But the 29-year-old, currently attached to the Faslane photographic section, hasn’t always been behind the camera.

Will’s recent success is not the sailor’s first brush with media spotlight. Twelve years ago he was frequently watched by millions of television viewers as he walked the cobbled streets of Britain’s longest-running soap *Coronation*



Street.

According to ‘Corriepedia’ (a sort of Wikipedia for the show), the future sailor played Glen Middleham, the then boyfriend of Sarah Louise Platt (still played by Tina O’Brien), from late 2000

until early 2001.

“It is not something that many people in the Navy know about,” said Will (they do now...).

“I was just 15 when I played the part on Corrie and a lot of years have passed since then.

“It was an amazing experience though.”

“To be 15 and be on national television is definitely something to tell the grandkids.”

“At the time I was appearing in television magazines and I couldn’t walk down a street in Manchester without something shouting my character’s name.”

Will also appeared in *Holby City* and *That Peter Kay Thing* before quitting the acting business at the ripe old age of 17 and eventually deciding to join the Royal Navy.

Sadly, apart from a copy of an old TV magazine featuring him, Will’s not kept many mementoes from his acting days...

...but luckily we tracked down a cutting from the telly pages of the *Daily Star*...

“Acting was a difficult business and starting as a child and then trying to find roles as an adult became impossible,” he said.

“Eventually I became a chef to pay the bills. But I’m named after my great-grandfather who served on board a minesweeper during World War 2, so I always had an interest in the Royal Navy.”

“I decided to join up when I was 23 as I knew it would be a good career.”

He served initially as a mine warfare specialist, serving aboard HMS Pembroke in the Gulf in 2009 before switching to the photographic branch.

“Seeing your photographs in print in newspapers and other publications gives you a real sense of achievement,” he says.

“And to be honest, these days I’m a lot more comfortable behind the camera than in front of it!”



13 years at sea for Buck – and counting

Network pioneer rewarded

New award presented

THE final parade of 2013 at Dartmouth was also the setting for the first presentation of a new award.

More than 70 newly-qualified RN officers, along with 22 cadets from overseas navies who trained alongside them, marked the end of their course with a parade watched by families and friends.

The parade – attended by more than 400 guests – was inspected by the Commander UK Amphibious Forces and Commandant General Royal Marines, Maj Gen Ed Davis (above).

One fledgling officer with even more cause to celebrate was 24-year-old Officer Cadet Oliver Hounslow, from Portsmouth.

Oliver was presented with a new prize donated by the Officers' Association – 'The Officers' Association Spirit of the Royal Navy Sword' – to be presented annually to the Officer Cadet who has demonstrated the strongest adherence to the Naval Service's values and ethos.

The Officers' Association charity supports anyone who has ever held a commission in the British Forces and their families.

A ROYAL Navy sailor has celebrated his 5,000th day at sea – that's more than 13 years.

CMEM(M) John 'Buck' Rogers, 47, has served in 14 ships since he signed up 29 years ago, but says his current deployment on HMS Daring is the best.

"I did celebrate by doing 5,000 metres on the rowing machine in 19mins 15secs – a respectable time," said Buck, from Petersfield, Hampshire.

His deployment aboard the Type 45 destroyer is his longest, beating the eight months he spent in HMS Boxer. Daring broke off from Exercise Bersama Lima to take part in the humanitarian mission in the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan.

"On HMS Daring we are coming to the end of what has got to be the highlight of anybody's career and the best deployment I have ever been on," said Buck.

"There has been a lot of very hard work, including Operation Patwin, and all the hosting in all the countries we have visited."

Buck's first ship was HMS Naiad, and it remains one of his favourites.

"We lived in a mess square with people drinking and smoking all around you all hours of the day – there is no way you could do that now.



● John 'Buck' Rogers pictured at the start of his Royal Navy career in June 1984 (left) and at the end of 2013 on board HMS Daring

"I tell the younger lads about it and they look at me in disbelief.

"That is where I learned to be a stoker and the rules to survive were work hard and play hard."

Several other ships followed before Buck served in three Type 21 frigates – HM Ships Ambuscade, Avenger and Arrow – therefore becoming part of the Type 21 Club (Royal Navy Amazon Class Frigate Crew Association).

"We had some good deployments to the West Indies and played some good rugby there, as well as meeting some wonderful people," said Buck.

His career continued with a LMEM(M) course before moving to the Type 22 frigate HMS Beaver – and back to a full stokers' mess.

"I was considered a junior LMEM, having only done 12 years," said Buck, whose CO in Beaver is now Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Philip Jones.

He also recalls serving on his first Type 23 frigate, HMS Monmouth. "One of my highlights was being voted in as the captain of the ship's rugby team.

"We had some good hard games in some of the biggest stadiums I have played in, and in Cape Town we played well, drew

with their navy but unfortunately lost to Hamilton's RFC five tries to three, no kicks allowed."

In December's edition of *Navy News* we featured WO1 Ronnie Scott, who marked his 4,000th day at sea with a 4,000-repetition fitness circuit on the flight deck of RFA Fort Victoria.

"I served on HMS York with Ronnie Scott for a while and did a few runs with him – he is fitness mad," said Buck, whose wife Jayne served in the Navy for 23 years, leaving as a Petty Officer Stores Accountant.

The Commanding Officer of Daring, Cdr Angus Essenhigh, said: "During our extraordinary deployment, Chief Rogers reaches a milestone in his own career with separated service equivalent to over 27 standard six-month deployments.

"During our deployment he has brought his considerable experience to bear and he can be rightly proud of his achievements, both in the humanitarian relief in the Philippines and in enabling the first Type 45 to circumnavigate the globe."

Buck added: "I am now awaiting my next shore draft, then one more sea draft – so I may yet be able to reach 6,000 LSA days yet."

His career has also seen him serve aboard HM Ships Boxer, Iron Duke, Invincible, Edinburgh and Exeter.

Tears flow on a night for heroes

A ROYAL NAVY medic was honoured at the Sun 2013 'Millies' Annual Military Awards.

PO Emily McCullough from the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service was praised for her exemplary care of patients during two tours of Afghanistan and one in Iraq.

As she received her award for the Most Outstanding Sailor/Marine, her submariner husband Sean surprised her on stage in a tearful reunion. The couple wed in 2012 but have spent most of their marriage apart.

Petty Officer McCullough said "To be singled out is just such an honour.

"This whole thing has been crackers and I'm so embarrassed that I cried all over the stage but I just couldn't help it as it's so overwhelming."

A member of HMS Flying Fox was nominated as 'Best Reservist' at the awards night.

Andy Westlake often finds himself performing the duties of a man two ranks his senior.

Despite his everyday job as a quantity surveyor, the 45-year-old from Bristol, who is married with three children and two step-children, has proven his skill with a variety of weapons and now instructs others in their use.

He is also one of a small number of Reservists qualified to drive the Navy's fast Rigid Inflatable Boats.

A Special Recognition went to veterans of the Battle of the Atlantic. Albert Owings, 90, a former radio officer, described receiving the award as 'very emotional'.

Gen Sir Nick Houghton, Chief of the Defence Staff said: "For six years the Sun Military Awards



● Above left, PO Emily McCullough; Above right, Andy Westlake; Left: Crew members from HMS Lancaster on the red carpet for the Millies

Pictures: PO Phot Derek (Des) Wade

have showcased these stories of bravery, determination and care at a personal and whole unit level.

As each year passes, we are consistently rewarded with tales of how our people excel in all fields and continue to serve with pride and fortitude."

The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall were guests of honour at the sixth annual Sun Military Awards, which were

held at the National Maritime Museum.

They were joined by Prime Minister David Cameron and wife Samantha, defence ministers, senior military, government and political figures and stars from entertainment and sport, including Sir Bradley Wiggins, Tom Hardy, Kian Egan, Holly Willoughby and Suranne Jones.



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Ocean's four for Craig

THE bevy of medals on PO Craig Hawley's chest when he donned his No.1s prompted a barrage of questions from his HMS Flying Fox shipmates.

The 37-year-old senior rating is one of the permanent instructors at the Bristol unit, responsible for training recruits in the Royal Navy Reserve.

He owes his clutch of awards to a single ship – HMS Ocean – although not in a single draft, rather several over a 12-year period.

Craig gave a run down of his awards: "I got my first medal on Ocean in 2000 for Operation Palliser in Sierra Leone and the second one in 2001 for Operation Veritas, which supported troops in Afghanistan.

"I had been away from the ship for a while but returned in 2003 for Operation Telic in Iraq, and then away from her for a long time but returned in 2011 during the Libyan campaign, and during the Olympics in London I was awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012."

His current CO, Cdr Dave Bucknell RNR, said: "You can see the common denominator is HMS Ocean and now Flying Fox is gaining from all that experience."

The senior rate originally comes from Rotherham, ditching a career with Morrison's supermarkets for the Grey Funnel Line in 1999, specialising as an Above-water Warfare Tactical (AWT) operator – which is why he's now at Flying Fox training and mentoring reserves.

Medal No 5 will come from a 15-year unblemished record in the Mob. Craig is due to receive his Long Service and Good Conduct Medals on July 5... when he's back aboard HMS Ocean, which is just emerging from a refit in Devonport, making "five on the fifth for my fifteen".

ROYAL NAVY RNR LIVE

HERE are the dates for this month's RNR Live events giving an insight into life in the maritime reserves. See www.royalnavy.mod.uk/News-and-Events/Special-Events/Events-Calendar for details.

HMS President
London
9am
FEB 1

HMS Forward
Birmingham
9am
FEB 4

HMS Flying Fox
Bristol
9am
FEB 6

HMS Calliope
Gateshead
7.15pm
FEB 12

HMS Scotia
Rosyth
9am
FEB 15

HMS Cambria
Sully, near Cardiff
9am
FEB 27

Banker, reservist top yachtsman... Dinner to mark RND

SAILOR receives award for sailing, shock horror.

But not any old award. No, HMS President's Joseph Macdonald is the Royal Yachting Association Yachtmaster of the Year 2013.

His thorough technical knowledge of sailing, demonstration of sailing skills and sheer enthusiasm and enjoyment for sailing earned him the trophy, presented by the Princess Royal at the London International Boat Show last month.

"It was a great privilege and a fantastic achievement. I love sailing and bringing others to the sport, and being presented with one of the RYA's most prestigious awards by Princess Anne was a really great moment that I'll remember for a long time to come," he said.

Joseph is currently working towards his Fleet Board examinations which will confirm him as a commissioned sub lieutenant.

He passed out of Britannia Royal Naval College last May and is preparing to spend time at sea in a Royal Navy warship before Fleet Board.

When not studying, Joseph acts as unit sailing officer for London's Royal Naval Reservists, a role which sees him organising activities such as day skipper theory courses, acquaint weekends in the Solent and even more ambitious expeditions to the Baltic and the Caribbean.

And when not sailing or studying with the RNR, Joseph's day job in the City of London

involves managing the execution and clearing strategy for Deutsche Bank's OTC derivative business.

He first sailed a yacht in 2009 and was quickly bitten by offshore racing after a cold, wet and bumpy ride to Cherbourg.

He has since completed the Caribbean 600 and a Fastnet campaign in 2011, and participated in several Hamble winter and spring series campaigns, with several trophies to show for it.

The junior officer enjoys cruising and skippering, having learnt about the importance of getting the tides right as a day skipper by sitting in a Force 6 gale off Dungeness for six hours in a 32ft displacement yacht. He passed the RYA Yachtmaster Offshore in 2013 after training with Stormforce Coaching in the Solent.

Congratulating Joseph, HMS President's Commanding Officer, Cdr Eugene Morgan, said: "This is a fantastic achievement from a dedicated young officer whose enthusiasm for the sport has inspired so many members of the ship's company to learn how to sail. This award is very well deserved."

RYA Yachtmaster Examiner Mark Todd, said Joseph was "one of the best Yachtmaster candidates I have ever seen."

Mr Todd continued: "He has a thorough knowledge of the technical aspects of sailing and a superb demonstration of sailing skills on the water.

"What I admired about



Joseph's style was that during the exam not only did he sail to the highest standards but his enthusiasm and sheer enjoyment of sailing shone through.

"His confident and safe style made me relax and his love of sailing made him someone you would want to sail with as well as feeling safe doing so."

Picture courtesy of the RYA

Alfred's greats honoured

FAMILIES and friends of HMS King Alfred's reservists were invited to celebrate with recipients of awards and medals presented by Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire Dame Mary Fagan.

The RNR unit's Coxswain, CPO Lorraine Baker from Gosport was named the Whale Island unit's 'Reservist of the Year' for the tremendous impact she made at the unit this past year.

King Alfred's XO Lt Cdr Steve Monk read out a citation recognising her skills, motivation, sheer professionalism and diligence that she has applied to all of the extra tasks she volunteered for in 2013, in addition to her annual Maritime Trade Operations branch training commitments.

Just over a year ago, the 46-year-old senior rating retired from the regulars to undertake a civilian post working as an operations manager at the Maritime Trade Organisation in Portsmouth, utilising skills and experience gained in the Naval Service.

She also transferred to the RNR specialist MTO branch and has rapidly become an invaluable addition to the staff at HMS King Alfred.

"After 27 years in the Royal Navy I still felt I had a lot to offer the Naval Service. I have enjoyed my first 15 months with the RNR," said CPO Baker (pictured receiving her award from Dame Mary – by Lt Cdr Heather Lane RNR).

"This award came as quite a shock due to feeling that I am just doing my duty in supporting the Reserves and the unit. I very much appreciate the recognition of my work."



Wearing the uniform of Honorary Commodore in the Royal Naval Reserve, Dame Mary presented the awards watched by the Commander of the Maritime Reserves, Commodore Andrew Jameson, and around 200 people.

The 'new entry of the year' title went to 24-year-old OC Jamie Smith from Lymington who joined King Alfred a year ago.

His citation said that he had shown excellent leadership qualities and was a comprehensive team player, always considering the needs of his classmates. He was noted as an individual who has a strong belief in Naval ethos and core values and brings credit to the Service for his dedicated work and contribution to the local community.

Jamie, who works for the South Central Ambulance Service, is a qualified paramedic based in Southampton.

"I am happily surprised,

especially as I was up against other great new entries at the unit," he said.

"Joining the RNR has been the best thing I have ever done, it really complements my civilian life and provides some nice variety across interesting activities."

A recently retired reservist – the popular CPO Steve Lacey – was presented with a clasp to his Voluntary Reserves Service Medal and a Service Valedictory following long and valued Service in the RNR. Steve's experience and reassuring presence will be missed by the King Alfred team.

LNN Sarah Hudson, 42, from Gosport received her Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal from Dame Mary. Sarah is a nursing sister in the Accident and Emergency Unit at St Richard's Hospital in Chichester.

A second clasp to the Voluntary Reserves Services Medal was presented to LS(D) Carter.



'Like a naval air station at sea...'

A TEAM of Air Branch reservists were given an exclusive tour of Britain's biggest ever warship as HMS Queen Elizabeth moves ever closer to completion in Rosyth.

The chance to look over the colossus was not to be missed and 12 reservists, hosted by WOs Mick Davidson and Nick Downs from the ship's company, were quick to sign up.

On arrival at Rosyth briefings from WO Davidson brought into focus the ability of Queen Elizabeth and her sister Prince of Wales.

"The Queen Elizabeth class will operate Joint Strike Fighter and will give the UK the ability to project military power from anywhere in the world," the senior rating explained to the visitors.

"She can move around 500 miles a day and can operate a mix of 40 aircraft to support a broad range of operations."

WO1(AH) Charlie Vickers, now an air branch reservist, served on two of the previous HMS Invincible class aircraft carriers and HMS Hermes during his naval career.

He has also spent time at sea with the US Navy and was part of a team advising Naval Command on American carriers.

"This is an amazing thing to see," said Charlie. "I've worked on British and visited US carriers and it's taking us back into flying strike aircraft at sea again."

"It will be an enormous shift in the way we operate and work. The aircraft handlers' branch is going to be very busy for a long time to come."

Another visitor to QE was CPO(AH) John Campbell, Chief of the Air Branch.

He served on the old HMS Ark Royal (No.4) in the late 1970s – Britain's last conventional carrier – when her fixed wing aircraft complement consisted of Phantom and Buccaneer jets as well as Gannet Airborne Early Warning aircraft.

"As an aircraft handler you can't fail to be impressed by everything on the Queen Elizabeth Class. From the flight deck down to workshops and living areas it's marvellous to see it all."

"Certainly the proudest man when she goes to sea will be the 'Captain of the Flight Deck' on that first deployment. It's like being on a Naval Air Station at sea."

RNR responds to London calling

TAKING a break from commanding the cable-laying merchant ship CS Sovereign, Capt Paul Haines swaps stripes to change into his RN No.1 lieutenant's uniform, joining fellow reservist Lt Cdr Fred Wales on the Navy's stand at the 2014 London Boat Show.

The duo were part of a sizeable contingent from HMS King Alfred – other volunteers from the Whale Island establishment included logistics officer Lt Cdr Simon Lewis and maritime trade

ops officer Lt Martin Heighway – taking it in turns to man the RN stand and raise awareness of the RNR's latest recruiting campaign: RNR Live.

Among those interested in the RNR were the Princess Royal and her husband Vice Admiral Tim Laurence, who both dropped in on the RN stand as part of their visit to the long-running show in the capital's vast ExCeL Centre.

The Reservists had an encouraging start at the opening weekend of the boat show,

registering 42 members of the public who expressed interest in becoming a Naval reservist and went on to spark the interest of another 40 potential applicants as the week progressed.

"It was a lot busier than I had expected," said Lt Cdr Lewis.

"I was impressed by the visitors' depth of knowledge about Naval operations. We've had some high-quality discussions about the Royal Navy with members of the public.

"The visitors' demographic

changes at the weekend with more teenagers and youngsters enjoying climbing on board the Royal Marines Offshore Raiding Craft (ORC) we've got on display and wanting to be photographed manning the GPMG mounted at the bow."

Like William Balmbro (aged three-and-a-half) for example, plus granddad Peter, both from Horsell in Surrey.

Royal Marine Henry Mitchell from 10 Training Squadron helped the boy reach the GPMG for the photo opportunity saying: "Being here makes a nice change from doing my training role, driving the boat around all week with the trainees during the Wader package of training.

"The children have loved getting up close to the vessel, especially the machine gun, it's been a popular attraction!"

For Lt Haines, such interaction with the public was a delight – as was the chance to tour the exhibition complex.

"During the quieter periods I've been able to walk around visiting the yachts and motorboats on display and it's been a pleasure receiving the warm hospitality and chatting to other contractors on the various stands," he said.

In his civilian life working for Global Marine Systems, Lt Haines spends six weeks at sea helping lay the offshore sub sea cables for the new wind farms, supporting renewable energy and new telecom projects. He then gets six weeks ashore.

In this spare time, Lt Haines also lends his seafaring experience in his supporting role as a reservist in the amphibious warfare branch of the RNR, acting



Picture: PO(Phot) Des Wade, DMC



Paul's career ends on a high

JUST shy of three decades' service in the RNR by Paul Hurlow was recognised when the 46-year-old was named in the New Year's Honours.

Self-employed builder Paul from Guildford – pictured below safeguarding RFA Wave Knight by night – was awarded the Queen's Volunteer Reserves Medal, the crowning achievement in a 29-year career.

The warrant officer has played a key role in the re-organisation of RNR warfare branch training in support of the Royal Navy's Force Protection commitments and helped to develop and manage exercise and training opportunities abroad – an initiative which became the Cyprus-based Helios Encounter series of military exercises, designed to improve the operational capability and build up coherent training within the branch.

"I deployed to the Gulf on protection duties in 2003 to bring a number of ships back through the Suez safely, before returning in 2008 for further force protection based on RFA Cardigan Bay.

"One of the true highlights of my career has to be having responsibility for a 276-strong tri-Service security team when I was mobilised as the Greenwich-based Coordinator for the London Olympics in 2012."

For that work, Paul – known as 'Fingers' thanks to a hatch slamming shut on his hand in a stormy Bay of Biscay many years back – was awarded an Army General's Commendation.

He said: "It's quite an experience to be recognised for your efforts by another military service, it was a lot of hard work at the time but also very enjoyable and worthwhile.

"To receive the Queen's Volunteer Reserves Medal at the end of my career is a real honour indeed.

"I've really enjoyed being part of the RNR but I'd realised I had finally achieved all my goals, the higher up the promotion ladder you go there are less chances to go off to sea which I always loved doing most of all. It is now time to focus on some new challenges back in the building industry; I've just completed my electrical courses and am now undertaking my gas certificates."

Paul's love of the sea and seafaring prompted him to join up briefly before transferring to the RNR unit in Shoreham, HMS Sussex, in the mid-80s.

When it closed, and HMS King Alfred was commissioned, he plumped for the Portsmouth unit, taking time out of his day job running Castle Builders of Guildford to head down the A3.

His King Alfred CO Cdr Anthony Stickland said Paul had been "a tremendous asset to the RNR".

He continued: "We will miss his presence but he can be rightly proud of his career and this well-deserved honour from Her Majesty the Queen. He has represented us well in all his endeavours and we all wish him every success in his future career."



Buster's a reservist with merit

HMS Sherwood reservist AB Jonathan 'Buster' Browne can hold his head up high after completing a leadership course 'with merit' as part of his training programme at Nottinghamshire's only RNR unit.

The 41-year-old from Chesterfield only joined the reserves two years ago, since when he's completed both his recruit and basic specialisation training, gone to sea aboard HMS Mersey, visited Cyprus on exercise and now successfully completed his leading rate's leadership course.

Specialising as a seaman, Jonathan has been trained to carry out ship's protection duties on both Naval and merchant vessels.

"I've worked hard over the last year to progress quickly through my branch training matrix. You start to develop your skills as the weeks go by, with a little study at home too.

"You get to know your new shipmates and you develop a strong sense of unit and camaraderie with your fellow recruits."

Passing the course for leading ratings with merit required all candidates to communicate effectively, act as a leader, a member of a team as well as being able to prepare and execute a plan to achieve a given task.

"Because I am progressing quickly through my branch training matrix it's been tough to facilitate this swift climb sometimes, when courses have clashed with family commitments, but my partner and family have been fantastic.

"The leading rates' leadership course tested me physically and mentally over the 12 days, but I totally enjoyed the experience especially the dynamic leadership exercise testing my navigation skills to the max with over 44km navigated in 48 hours of the exercise – all carrying a bergan weighing in excess of 55lbs."

Sherwood's CO Cdr Martin Clegg said the junior rating was "showing good confidence as a leader and has achieved some great results since he joined the unit.

"I've been impressed with his hard work so far and believe it just goes to show what can be achieved with determination and a positive attitude."

with a second musical interlude around the restaurant and bar areas, while the Reservists have been really good interacting with the public successfully helping to raise the profile of the wider Naval Service."

From Tyneside to Twickenham

HMS Calliope's ship's company will be travelling the distance from their Gateshead base to Twickenham for the RNRMC.

The 'Road to Twickenham' event will see the reservists running, walking, rowing, cycling and swimming the 298-mile distance to the home of English rugby union in time for the annual Army-Navy clash on May 3.

You can support the unit at uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/hmscalliopeoadoctwickenham

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Special help for the early leavers

AN EARLY Service Leaver (ESL) is an individual who is discharged – compulsorily from the trained strength or untrained strength or at their own request from the trained or untrained strength, having completed less than four years' service.

Until recently, these individuals received a mandatory resettlement brief and a one-to-one resettlement interview given at unit level.

From October 2013, the support provision has been enhanced to include a more focussed intervention and this will be delivered through the Future Horizons programme (FHP).

What does this actually mean to the Early Service Leaver?

Individuals will now have access to a Specialist Employment Consultant Support for advice, and this service will be available for up to two years after leaving the Service.

Where appropriate the allocated consultant will be able to refer an individual to specialist partner organisations. After the two years, individuals can gain continuing support from the RFEA.

How is this enhanced service accessed?

As part of the 'leaving' process, all individuals should have an interview with either the Naval Resettlement Information Officer/Education and Resettlement Officer or Personnel Selection Officer. During the interview the FHP 'opt-in' form will be raised and then passed to the FHP Employment Consultant if exiting through CTCRM, HMS Raleigh or Drake.

For those exiting the Service from outside the South West region the FHP 'opt-in' form will be faxed to the Naval Service FHP Hub at Devonport.

The Naval Service 'hub' will be co-located with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) in HM Naval Base Devonport. Contact details are as follows:

☎ Telephone number: 01752 553143

☎ Fax number: 01752 553143

✉ E-mail: Tmurphy@futurehorizons.uk.com

Further information is available in JSP 575 Early Service Leavers – Guidance Notes for Resettlement Staff, JSP 534 The Tri-Service Resettlement Manual and BR 3, Chapter 96. In addition, your local Naval Service Education Centre can provide further information if needed.

Key contacts help with career management

Manpower Operations by Cdr Richard Bowbrick

ManOps consists of a small team based in Portsmouth which conducts Personnel e-OPDEF management on behalf of Commodore Naval Personnel (CNPers).

Acting through its agents the Career Management Centres (CMC), ManOps seeks to balance the operational demand with the available resource in a fair and pragmatic manner.

To assist in this process, ManOps has devised and introduced a new Category B Personnel Functional Standard (PFS) to identify and capture a significant element of hitherto unregulated personal turbulence. This PFS will, for the first time, enable the measurement of the short-notice, short-duration assignments that impact greatly on an individual's ability to plan their life.

Full details have been published in the October 13 Edition of BR3.

In addition, a new post has been established at the heart of the Maritime Operations Centre (MOC), Northwood, to provide a 'visible' personnel conscience within this operational hub.

General Service by Lt Cdr Harry Palmer

Over the last 12 months the number of Personnel e-OPDEFs in the RN has increased by more than 75 per cent.

Limited availability of suitably qualified and experienced personnel (SQEP) often requires personnel moves between units to provide a short-term solution. While such movement may create opportunities, the associated uncertainty is generally unwelcome. In order to restrict this uncertainty, units will often be instructed to sustain Personnel e-OPDEFs. Where this is not possible, a relief is normally only provided to enable essential activities to take place.

Instructions for raising Personnel e-OPDEFs have been updated and can be found in RNTM 199/13. To help us help you, it is imperative that the instructions in this guide are adhered to, especially with reference to addressees.

Submarines by Lt Cdr Karl Wall

Since our last article in February 2013, the submarine community has experienced a

Drafty's corner



number of significant manning challenges as evidenced by the sharp increase in the number of personnel e-OPDEFs and e-PERREQs raised.

The tactical management of these short-notice requirements is in addition to the routine task of manning current and new-to-service submarines, as well as providing watchkeepers for those recently decommissioned.

The tactical manning and actioning of short-notice moves remains the responsibility of the respective CMC, be that Devonport or Faslane, with which ManOps continues to work closely to source solutions to maintain frontline operational capability.

Maritime Operations Centre, Northwood by WO1 Brian Wood

As CNPers' liaison officer based at the MOC, Northwood, I work with the Operations and Commitments teams to assess the likely impact on personnel, either currently deployed or about to engage in operations, where a significant programme change is required.

In effect, I prick the N1 (Personnel) conscience of those planning and overseeing operations to ensure that the issues affecting you and your families are appropriately weighted in the decision-making process.

To do so, I look at unit separated service levels, adherence to PFS, outstanding leave, platform harmony, assignment plans, and notice giving in order to produce 'Impact Statements'. So as not to cause undue alarm in the planning phase, I collate this data without contacting the units concerned using JPA, the Separated Service Planning Tool, and PFS returns. It is essential,

therefore, that these data sources are accurate and up-to-date.

CMC Portsmouth by Lt Cdr Sam Hearn

CMC Portsmouth is an extension of CNPers' West Battery hub, providing a focal point for career management and personnel matters at the waterfront, and are responsible for the career management of almost 4,500 junior ratings across the main RN branches.

This is achieved with six LH and eight AB Career Managers who manage assignments from completion of Phase 2 training until selection for Petty Officer. CMC Portsmouth is responsible for the delivery of junior ratings to HMS Illustrious, the Type 45 destroyers, six of the T23 frigates, MCM2, and seven University Royal Naval Units.

CMC Portsmouth also manages a number of positions locally, in London, and in operational posts worldwide.

The team is supervised by a CPO, a WO1 and led at SO2 level. In addition CMC Portsmouth is responsible for the management of Personnel e-OPDEFs up to SO1 level for all Portsmouth-based units. CMC Portsmouth works closely with Portsmouth Flotilla and the Force Generation Authority to ensure that those units on the front line are manned appropriately, having enabled them to generate, train, and deploy.

CMC Devonport by Lt Cdr Tony Dunn

CMC Devonport's primary output is the routine career management of 3,500 junior rating JPA positions (Engineer, Logistics and Warfare) in Devonport-based ships and submarines. The team is also responsible for the Devonport Geographic Squadron Pool, a variety of shore-based positions (including Culdrose and RN positions in RM units), and a share of Operational Tours, London and LFS positions.

CMC Devonport also manages the tactical manning deficiencies reported by Personnel e-OPDEFs and e-PERREQs for its geographic area. Its third key output is identifying personnel to support endorsed augmentation requirements. Since April last year, CMC Devonport has been responsible for the career management of all HM senior and junior ratings; from December last

year, it assumed responsibility for HMS Protector's junior ratings; and in April, it will assume responsibility for the career management of RM chiefs in West Country-based RM units.

Career Managers (LWTRs managing LH plots and WTR1s managing AB plots) can be contacted direct (by phone, email or in person) by individual junior ratings to discuss current or next assignments.

CMC Faslane by WO1 Tony Care

CMC Faslane is responsible for assigning both the General and Submarine Service junior ratings in the Faslane area. There are three staff members in the MCM1 Office, seven in the Submarine Office and a CPO Ratings' Career Adviser who is responsible for all careers advice, augmentation, and Operational Tours.

The day-to-day running of CMC Faslane is overseen by WO1 Tony Care.

The MCM Office consists of a career manager responsible for assigning junior ratings to MCM1, who also has responsibility for First Patrol Boat Squadron junior ratings and those assigned to the Falkland Islands.

Two Career Manager Supervisors action all personnel e-OPDEFs, and also act as DOs for the junior ratings assigned to MCM1 Squad, where ratings spend time conducting temporary employment modules in preparation for assignment to a Single Role Mine Hunter.

The Submarine Office is split into Warfare and Logistics/Engineering with a mix of career managers and supervisors.

As with the MCM1 Office, the Career Manager Supervisors take the lead on actioning all personnel e-OPDEFs. This year looks set to be a busy year as the Trafalgar Class to Astute Class transition continues apace, and the augmentation requirement for the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow takes shape.

CMC Culdrose by WO1 Chris Boucher

In comparison with the General Service, the current manning levels of the FAA Air Engineering junior ratings are relatively healthy, as we support the force generation of the Merlin Mk1, Sea King SAR and Sea King ASaC Forces.

CMC Culdrose has recently taken on the sole responsibility of career management of all SE ratings (OR2 to OR7) employed within the Naval Service.

Merlin Mk1 personnel are currently being retrained to Merlin Mk2, the Sea King force is due to retire in March 2016, and concurrently Merlin Mk3 and the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Forces are ramping up in manning numbers.

This will undoubtedly mean the relocation of personnel to meet these new commitments (Merlin Mk3 to RAF Benson then Yeovilton and JSF to the USA then RAF Marham), and the retraining of all FAA engineers, irrespective of rank, within the next three years. What does this mean for the individuals concerned? From the CMC's perspective – JPA, JPA, JPA!!!

It is imperative that with such a turbulent period ahead, personnel need to ensure that JPA is correct and their individual aspirations and needs are clearly documented. Individuals are also encouraged to discuss their intentions in person with their Career Manager.

CMC Yeovilton by WO1 Gary Bonds

With the continuing transition towards the new Merlin and Wildcat Forces, 2013 proved to be a busy and testing period for CMC Yeovilton.

Commando Helicopter Force has seen the closure of both 846 and 848 Naval Air Squadrons (NAS) and the movement of many personnel to RAF Benson; a commitment which will remain until the reformed 846 NAS returns in March 2015.

Likewise Lynx Wildcat Maritime Force preparations for the relocation of 702 NAS planned for December 2014 are in full flow. 815 NAS HQ elements draw down and co-locate within 702 NAS along with a steady build up of personnel on 700W NAS, now operating four of the new Wildcat aircraft.

CMC Yeovilton not only oversees Air Engineering (AE) junior rating career management of the two Forces but also AE personnel attached to HMS Illustrious, JARTS and 1710 NAS, 760 and 764 NAS located at HMS Sultan, the management of the AE Phase 2b apportionment, and course loadings to all career qualifying courses.

Spreading the word New call to change rules

THE Royal Navy Presentation Team (RNPT) visited Birmingham to talk to the congregation of the Guru Nanak Gurdwara, a Sikh Temple, in Smethwick.

The RNPT was accompanied by the Diversity Awareness Team (DAT), led by Chief Petty Officer Conrad Walker.

His team is charged with engaging with the many varied cultures represented within the UK.

CPO Walker said: "As defenders of a diverse and multi-cultural society, it is important that the Armed Services are representative of it."

"With a wide range of career opportunities available, a career in the military, both as a regular or a Reserve, promises great reward and recognition."

The day's events began with a



presentation given by Lt Cassie Staveley and Leading Writer Dave Edgar of the RNPT.

This was followed by some more energetic evolutions as directed by the Fit for Life team. A question-and-answer session with the congregation and the RN representatives rounded off the day.

Leading Writer Edgar said, "It has been a pleasure to be invited to the Guru Nanak Gurdwara, I

hope that the congregation enjoyed the presentation and that they now have a clearer picture of what the Royal Navy is doing, on a daily basis, in defence of our nation's interests."

If you would like the RNPT to visit you then contact Lt Dan Marsden, Events Director for the team, on 0239272 7466 or email NAVYFORF-RNPTED@MOD.UK.

THE Forces Pension Society is urging the government to reconsider the situation of Service widows.

The new Armed Forces Pension Scheme, due to be introduced in April 2015, means the vast majority of Service widows who remarry will lose their pensions.

Air Marshal Sir Christopher Coville, Chairman, the Forces Pension Society (FPS), said: "The government has given our widows a slap in the face. Any government that thinks it is right to leave a Service widow with the

cruel dilemma of having to give up her income or give up a new love should be deeply ashamed of itself. It's an obscenity in modern society."

"Last year, 300-400 Armed Forces widows' pensions were seized by the government and withdrawn.

"We understand that up to a thousand more could be taken. Such seizures will continue for another 40 years."

"This is intolerable, the cost of ceasing this practice is negligible, the hardship in continuing it unbearable."

"The unwillingness of the government to settle this issue is a disgrace."

"Which other government department recognises ten different classes of widows?"

"Where is the much-vaunted care of the Armed Forces community or fostering of the family in this policy?"

We call upon the government to take this issue seriously, to listen to, and understand the arguments, to lift the matter from officials and give it its due political attention.

"Let us not forget those Service widows, many of whom sacrificed their own careers for our country, who are faced with a most unpleasant choice: pension or love, financial independence or a comforting soul mate and mutual carer?"

NEED to get your message across?
To feature in the *Navy News*' Two-Six pages contact Navy Command Media – Internal Comms Staff Officer:
Lt Cdr Emma McCormick, 93832 8809, email (Dii) NAVYMEDIACOMMS-IC-TL
(External) NAVYMEDIACOMMS-IC-TL@mod.uk

Airmen lead a new way

Where to look

THREE Naval aviators have become the first in Royal Navy history to graduate from the Principal Warfare Officers (Aviation) Course at HMS Collingwood, Fareham.

Members of the Aviation Community, Maritime Warfare School and Maritime Warfare Centre gathered for the graduations.

Rear Admiral Russ Harding, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Aviation and Carriers), commended the hard work and efforts of the staff and those who had been involved in making the inaugural course a success.

After seven months of intensive training Lt Cdr Gavin Heirs, Lt Cdr Phil Barron and Lt Ben Hunt, who formed class 13/01, successfully completed the course.

The course's origins came from a recommendation by the Fleet Air Arm Manpower Sustainability Project Team to address the need for broader maritime and joint warfare training for aviators.

It improves their career prospects for selection to senior appointments, including command assignments across the Fleet to the new Queen Elizabeth-class ships.

The course encompassed joint battle space management, targeting, joint fires and air weapon effect.

Lt Adrian Riley, who organised the presentation, said: "The true test of this first course will be in the individuals' subsequent successful employment.

"The eyes of the FAA will be on them.

"With such interest in the course what happens next will enable us to further tailor the MWS product for the needs of the future."

Lt Cdr Heirs said: "All of us on course feel very privileged to be at the forefront of a new chapter in Naval aviation history.

"This course is a huge step forward in additional Warfare training, achieving a level of parity with our surface Principal Warfare Officers for future command positions.

"I'm looking forward to being able to use my new PWO(Av) qualification when I move to the CVF and Queen Elizabeth-class carrier air interface project in January."

Guests also witnessed a flyby from a Lynx Mk 8 from 815 NAS, RNAS Yeovilton.



● From left, Lt Cdr Gavin Heirs, Lt Cdr Phil Barron and Lt Ben Hunt

Navy pride as Service honoured by charity

THE Royal Navy has been named a top employer for creating inclusive workplaces for lesbian, gay and bisexual employees.

The Senior Service was placed 79th out of more than 700 leading employers by the charity Stonewall.

Being ranked in the Workplace Equality Index (WEI) demonstrates to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) and wider communities that they will be treated fairly due to an ongoing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Gay people were allowed to start joining the Armed Forces in 2000 and since then the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force have worked to implement effective diversity strategies.

The Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral David Steel, said: "This is an amazing result. To have regained our place in the Top 100, against even more challenging



● From left, Lt John Roberts, Stonewall's Ben Summerskill and Brig Peter Cameron RN at the charity's reception

competition, is fantastic and an indication of the enormous amount of work that is going into this area.

"Although the announcement of our place in the Top 100 is a result in itself, the most important fact is that our people

have benefitted enormously by the culture change that has been generated in our service over the past few years."

Overall the Ministry of Defence won the award for Most Improved Employer in the Stonewall Workplace Equality

Index 2014. The award is given to the employer who makes the greatest improvement against the Index criteria in the previous 12 months and recognises the efforts made by the department for its 50,000 civilian employees.

The MOD strengthened its performance in every area of good practice and was particularly praised by Stonewall for its work on community engagement which helped the department rise from 174th place last year to 35th in 2014.

Defence Minister Anna Soubry said: "This is excellent news and reward for the hard work the department has made to create a positive working environment for its lesbian, gay and bisexual civilian employees.

"The MOD and the three Services want to create a workforce that is drawn from the breadth of the society we defend, that gains strength from that society's range of knowledge, experience and talent and that

welcomes, respects and values the unique contribution of every individual."

Particularly core to the department's success has been the work done by their LGBT Network, a social and career support forum for LGBT civilian staff. Impressively, the network offers a range of support for the career development of staff members.

Philip Oliver, chairman of the LGBT Network, said: "The LGBT Network has come into its own this year and I am really pleased that the MOD has received this award.

"I pay credit to the commitment and professionalism shown by my colleagues across the department who regularly go the extra mile to ensure the MOD is an employer of choice for LGBT individuals."

There is now an official Royal Navy LGBT Facebook page and a Twitter account. Visit www.facebook.com/Royal-Navy-LGBT or [@RoyalNavy_LGBT](https://twitter.com/RoyalNavy_LGBT)

GALAXY

02-2014 – Royal Navy People Strategy – Tranche 1 What it means to you

DIBS

DIB 62/13 – DE&S Material Strategy – next steps
DIB 63/13 – Chancellor's autumn statement – implications for MOD

DIB 64/13 – Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCPS) member contribution increases from April 2014

DIB 65/13 – Publication of the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report

DIB 66/13 – Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) Progress Report

RNTMs

RNTM 001/14 – Royal Navy Engineers Open Golf Championship 2014

RNTM 002/14 – RNSA Windsurfing Courses 2014

RNTM 003/14 – Medical Selection Boards for Pharmacy Services Skills, Medical Technician (Laboratory, Radiographer and Operating Department Practitioner)

RNTM 004/14 – HMS Tireless Decommissioning and Disposal
RNTM 005/14 – CBRNDC Ship team training allocations

RNTM 006/14 – Communications Security (COMSEC) Common Trends and Policy Changes

DINS

2014DIN01-006: Late Entry (LE) Commissioning in the Army Air Corps (AAC) This DIN supersedes DIN 2013DIN01-028

2014DIN01-005: All England Lawn Tennis Championships – Wimbledon 2014

2014DIN01-004: Guidance notes for Service personnel applying for unsecured and secured credit - This DIN supersedes DIN 2013DIN01-043

2014DIN01-001: Support to Operations (S2O) Kit and Equipment - This DIN supersedes DIN 2010DIN01-212

Save cash on a car

ROYAL Navy personnel and their families can take advantage of a discount scheme to save money on a new car.

The Defence Discount Service Car Programme could help Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families save up to £7,170, with average savings of £3,250, on each new car purchase.

The deals feature eleven car manufacturers - Citroen, Fiat, Alfa Romeo, Chrysler, Jeep, Kia, Mazda, Peugeot, Renault, Skoda and SEAT.

To view the car discounts visit www.ddscars.co.uk.

NAVAL FAMILIES FEDERATION

Appeal in order to capture your comments

Your views? Yes please

We have some key meetings and discussions booked in the NFF diary, as ever it is your views and experiences that form the basis of our discussions, writes *Jane Williams, Deputy Chairwoman*.

The NFF website will be hosting a series of polls to capture your comments during the year and one of the key diary dates for 2014 is at the end of February.

NFF Webpoll: Meeting ministers

We are speaking to two ministers – Dr Andrew Murrison re housing and the Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare & Veterans, Anna Soubry MP at the Families Forum at the end of this month.

What would YOU like us to say? This is an opportunity to raise your views and concerns with those who can make a difference.

Visit www.NFF.org.uk to give us your feedback. It is just one question, with an open text box for your response.

NFF Webpoll: MoneyForce

Have you used the MoneyForce website? Was it useful?

We are running a poll in conjunction with MoneyForce and the Army and RAF Families Federations.

We want to know your views on this finance awareness site, which has been designed specifically for the Armed Forces community.

Visit www.NFF.org.uk to give us your feedback.

Personal, Family and Community Support (the new structure and name for NPFS)

PFCS Vision – 'Resilient and resourceful Naval Service Personnel,

Families and Communities'

Work has been ongoing to deliver a comprehensive review of the way in which the Navy delivers welfare and other services that support individuals and families in dealing with the challenges that life in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines brings.

Over the coming months the PFCS (NPFS) team will be implementing the changes so people will start to see the differences, particularly in the ways they can get in touch with PFCS (NPFS) and in the way enquiries are handled.

There will also be improvements in the provision of welfare and family information, the management of community development work, and the way that work carries forward to ensure Naval families don't miss out on bigger initiatives such as the Armed Forces Covenant.

Please keep your eyes peeled for further updates on the Personal, Family and Community Support organisation in the spring issue of *Homeport* and in *Navy News*.

Become a Mental Health First Aid Trainer

The government has launched an initiative to train members of the Armed Forces community in the mental health equivalent of first aid skills.

The Armed Forces Mental Health First Aid programme is looking for those that wish to train as course instructors.

The fully-funded instructor training course is running throughout 2014 in various locations.

Once trained, the instructors will deliver the Mental Health First Aid course to the wider Armed Forces community. Full details can be found via www.NFF.org.uk.

org.uk

Service Families Employment Course

LifeWorks Families is a free, short course for the spouses and partners of Service personnel who wish to achieve sustainable employment.

Designed around the unique challenges of Service family life, the course equips partners with the skills and confidence to develop their own careers.

The courses are provided by Royal British Legion Industries.

There are several courses planned in early 2014, at locations across the country.

For further details contact: lifeworks@rbl.co.uk, phone: 0800 319 6844 or visit www.rbl.co.uk

To contact the NFF write: Castaway House, 311 Twyford Avenue, Portsmouth, PO2 8RN. Tel: 02392 654374. E-mail: admin@nff.org.uk.



● Just part of the panoramic view from Windy Hill – looking west across the Bay of Gibraltar from the tip of the airfield, past the naval base, the old Royal Naval Hospital (currently being converted into flats), various merchantmen waiting to refuel, to former gun emplacements at the Buffadero
Picture: Cpl Scott Robertson, BFHQ Gibraltar

A NAVAL PANORAMA

IT IS reassuring how often the Navy News team, on its travels, encounters matelots who proclaim they have 'the best job in the world'.

Instructors at Raleigh. P2000 crews showing students the delights of north-west Europe. Gunbusters who love letting rip with a 4.5in on the range. Captain of Victory. And then there's the First Sea Lord, who would probably say he has the best job in the RN.

If there's not necessarily consensus over best job, there should be agreement when it comes to best view.

Windmill Hill, Gibraltar. A few hundred yards from the foot of Europe. A couple of hundred feet above sea level.

From the operations room of this monitoring station, keeping an eye on traffic passing east or west through the Strait of Gibraltar, is a vista you would pay millions for.

Through the ten large windows of this Naval 'observatory' you're offered a near 270-degree panorama not just of the 13-mile-wide Strait and the southern Pillar of Hercules towering in the distance, but most of the Bay of Gibraltar as far as the airfield, and the southern reaches of the Rock, where a strong westerly wind drives a Föhn cloud over the mountain.

And when Alexander saw the breadth of his domain, he wept for there were no more worlds to conquer...

Sadly, Pusser doesn't maintain this outpost to give sailors a nice place to work. It was built as an advantageous post to watch goings on in the second busiest narrows in the world (only the Strait of Malacca is a more heavily used stretch of water).

The waters here were labelled one of the Seven Seas' great 'choke points' well over a century ago by the great Jacky Fisher.

They remain so to this day. There are upwards of 300 major shipping movements coming into or out of the Med every day. Nearly 100,000 vessels a year – and roughly one in ten of them, everything from giant cruise liners to merchantmen and pleasure cruisers, will put into Gibraltar.

There's also a lot of military traffic passing the Pillars of Hercules every year – as evidenced by a very well-thumbed (ie falling apart) copy of *Jane's Fighting Ships* on the desk.

All that traffic is why there are 29 sailors based here on a rather exposed slope above Europa Point (the top of the lighthouse as well as the more-recently-built minaret of the mosque are visible from the observation platform.)

It's known simply as Windy – not just a contraction but a



statement of fact because, on a glorious summer's day when it's 35°C and Gibraltarians are basking on the beaches, the buffeting from the wind is so loud, outside you can barely talk.

Luckily, all the work is done inside, in the observation deck. Here, every day and every night, four sailors sit, looking out over the waters, listening to radio traffic and watching radar pictures, keeping an eye on lawful traffic, more importantly looking out for suspicious vessels – just as their colleagues east of Suez do. This is a maritime security operation, just from a base instead of the ops room of a Type 23 or the back of a Merlin.

An array of cameras feed into the centre – from the Gibraltar port authority to Windy Hill's own 'big eyes' – a giant camera which looks like a cannon and

provides the team with stunning quality images if required, by day; a smaller infra-red camera performs the same function in the dark.

This morning there's a dozen or so ships waiting to refuel from tankers – a process known as 'bunkering' and a major source of revenue for the overseas territory. There's a Gibraltar Defence Police (equivalent to the MOD police) launch racing southwards on patrol. Ferries are making their way out of or back to Algeciras on the North Africa run.

In the strait itself, it's reasonably quiet, just a couple of large merchantmen. The waters are split (invisibly) into two lanes (à la Dover). Shipping entering the Med sails on the south side, departing on the north.

On the radio there's some

lively – and not always clear – chatter. As in the skies, the international maritime language is English, although on a local level here you'll pick up Arabic and Spanish.

And for good measure there's open source information to monitor – websites, Twitter, shipping blogs, and AIS, the internationally-recognised system which means vessels of a certain size must declare their cargo, destination and the like.

All in all, a lot of information to assimilate. And typically only three junior rates and one senior, as the 12-hour-long duty watch, to keep track of it all.

"People think it's chilled out, a relaxed job in the sun. Yes, it's nice to live and work in the sun. When you're working, the days are long – 80 or 90 ships to monitor on every watch," says AB(CIS) Nicola Matthews.

"It's also completely different from anything you do on a ship as a comms specialist. You expect it to be a signal station. It's not."

Indeed, in days gone by it was Lloyd's Signal Station Gibraltar, to be precise, one of many the shipping firm built around the world (and they still receive a daily sitrep of goings on in the Strait from the RN team – as, of course, do the main Fleet and UK military commands).

Other remains from Gibraltar's past pepper this part of the Rock – known as the

Buffadero site. You drive through the wonderfully-named Devil's Bellows (which isn't that exciting – it's a very short tunnel carved through the limestone) to reach the site which is home to what is left of old gun batteries, plus an old 'village' and ranges used by the Royal Gibraltar Regiment for training.

Some of those stationed here live at Devil's Tower Camp next to the airfield, others live in family quarters close to Windy Hill.

"It's good family time out here. I've got to see my son every day during his first seven months. Deployed on a ship, you wouldn't get that," says AB(EW) Daniel 'Bobby' Ball.

"But it's busy by day – and busy by night here. It's a 24-hour operation."

As with every other RN presence on the Rock, the 'Windy Hillers' are at pains to point out the operational nature of their job. Banish ideas of languid colonial days and a couple of hours of work before topping up that tan and taking a dip.

"This is not the sunshine tour which it perhaps may have been in the past," says Windmill Hill's Officer in Charge Lt Al Darlington, a Gibraltarian and former Merlin pilot.

"It is very busy – after Malacca we have the second densest traffic in the world. That's why this station is so important."

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● Normandy veteran Eddie Linton, who survived the sinking of HMS Mourne

Veteran returns to Normandy

AS THE country finalises plans to mark the 70th anniversary of the Normandy Landings, a D-Day veteran recalled how lucky he was to survive the loss of his ship in a U-boat attack in the days following the invasion.

Thanks to an award from the Big Lottery Fund's Heroes Return programme, 87-year-old Eddie Linton from Newport in South Wales recently visited the beaches of Normandy for the first time to lay a wreath in memory of the 110 fellow sailors who lost their lives when River-class frigate HMS Mourne was struck by a torpedo from U-767.

Eddie joined up at the age of 17 in 1943, and after training at Torpoint in Cornwall and Portsmouth, Eddie joined HMS Mourne in Liverpool, which was assigned to the Fifth Escort Group for Operation Neptune, the Naval element of the Overlord invasion.

The flotilla was responsible for defending the western flank of the operation against U-boats and sweeping channels of mines.

On June 15, as she responded to an ASDIC contact in the Channel, Mourne was hit by a torpedo which detonated the forward magazine and killed 110 of her ship's company – another rating later died of his wounds.

She rapidly sank south of Land's End, leaving around 20 men struggling in the water – including Eddie.

"I remember protecting my face when I hit the deck," said Eddie.

"I got up and I didn't know which way to jump. As she started to go one way, I jumped over and touched the side of the ship as I went down.

"We both went up in the air but I never saw my mate Edward again. He was killed and went down with the ship.

"I felt so sorry for him. He lived with his nan and his little sister, and I had feelings for his sister at the time.

"We were good mates and I'd spent some time with him in Cardiff. But there you go, that's war I suppose.

"I never saw his family after the war and I've often wondered about them."

A Carley float was dropped to the stricken sailors by a Sunderland flying boat, and after about four hours in the water the survivors were picked up by HMS Aylmer and taken to Devonport.

Eddie's pilgrimage to Normandy last year was his first in nearly 70 years.

"As I laid down a wreath for the Mourne my thoughts were with them all that day," said Eddie, who hopes to return for the 70th anniversary this year.

The Big Lottery Fund's Heroes Return programme has to date helped more than 15,000 veterans, widows, spouses and carers make visits to the UK, Europe and beyond.

For details of the programme contact the Heroes Return helpline on 0845 00 00 121 or visit www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/heroesreturn

Patrolling by numbers

BARE statistics rarely provide a full picture of a situation or event.

But a list of statistics can provide an illuminating insight – particularly when you are looking back across the decades.

Take one Royal Navy ship from one campaign more than 60 years ago – in this case, modified Black Swan-class sloop HMS Alacrity during the Korean War.

She didn't rewrite the record books, but she played her part, and that part was faithfully recorded by former Able Seaman

Phil Vickery, a radar operator on board the ship in the early 1950s.

By the time she reached her station off the Korean coast in August 1951, Alacrity had already sailed over 100,000 nautical miles since she was first commissioned in April 1945.

The ship had been nominated

for duty with Commonwealth Naval Force, formed to assist UN operations in Korean waters in June 1950.

Alacrity sailed to Sasebo in Japan to join the UN Naval Task Force, under overall US Command, in July 1950, deploying on the west coast of the Korean peninsula to escort military convoys the following month.

Phil's account of Alacrity's patrols covers the period from February 3 to July 1 1951, during which time the sloop steamed 19,045 miles – requiring 18,301,200 revolutions of the propellers and the consumption of 2,389.6 tons of fuel oil (that is nearly enough to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool).

She also burned through almost 30 tons of diesel oil.

The ship spent 111 days at sea out of 159, with 40 nights in various harbours; she anchored on 70 occasions.

Alacrity's average speed when at sea was a fraction over seven knots, and she distilled 1,900.7 tons of fresh water during the period – although she actually used 2,940 tons.

For maintenance purposes, the ship's company managed to work through 860 tins of metal polish, 1,256lbs of cotton waste and 140 gallons of paint – most of it pusser's grey, one would imagine.

On the human side, her ship's company of just over 190 ate their way through 56,032lbs of potatoes and 14,832 bars of nutty from the canteen – that's bars of chocolate to those who are not *au fait* with Jackspeak. Another 5,888 packets of sweets were also sold.

Some 2,637 pints of rum were issued, and the ship's canteen shifted 687,500 cigarettes and 400 ounces of tobacco.

The 250 or so sailors on board during the period (34 left and 35 joined the ship's company)

worked through 1,500lbs of soap – although they were not all squeaky-clean, as there were 114 Captain's defaulters (sailors brought before the boss for a variety of misdemeanours).

The officers and men were paid a total of £10,936, of which some went to the canteen (£3,401) and some was converted to foreign currency, including 4.4 million yen, and 175 dollars.

Almost 2,900 rounds of 4in ammunition were expended, along with just over 900 rounds of Bofors ammunition and 400 of Oerlikon.

There were 228 visits to the sickbay – including one case of frostbite – of whom 23 were put on the sick list and 16 sent to hospital, while 512 inoculations or vaccinations were administered, along with 36m units of penicillin (not quite as grim as it sounds, as it equates to around 43 standard doses).

A total of 22 men discontinued shaving during the deployment.

For entertainment, 43 films were shown on board in almost 160 film shows, and the crew banged off 60 private telegrams (a dozen were also received), while 1,400 official wireless messages were transmitted and 300,000 messages received.

In addition, 445 registered articles were mailed from Alacrity, and cryptographic staff decrypted 472,360 five-letter groups.

The men had to carry out 361 radar repairs, but the equipment took a fair amount of wear-and-tear – the N Type 293 aerial rotated 2.15 million times and the 291 aerial 1.2 million.

Phil recalls that patrols lasted four to six weeks, and highlights included target practice on a railway bridge in Wonchin (when spotters told an American cruiser to "get the hell out of it and let the sharpshooting Limeys in..." and finding a raft with 300 Korean refugees on it.



● Mary Villiers and Lt Cdr Chris Gotke, CO of Royal Naval Historic Flight, in front of the Flight's Swordfish

Wartime pilot revisits Swordfish

A VETERAN female pilot was given a VIP tour of the Royal Naval Historic Flight facilities – and took a close look at one of the aircraft types she flew some 70 years ago.

Mrs Mary Villiers, aged 94, remembered her wartime service as a pilot, delivering hundreds of aircraft for the Fleet Air Arm and RAF.

While touring Yeovilton Mary spotted the Swordfish, a type she delivered when serving in the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA).

Mary, from Leigh, near Sherborne – who flew more than 25 different aircraft types – said: "I delivered the Swordfish to Naval air stations in Scotland.

"Seeing the Swordfish reminds me of the scramble up the side using five footholds, swinging a leg over the side and dropping down into the pilot's seat.

"I recall it being rather cold..." Lt Cdr Chris Gotke could



● Mary Villiers aged 24 in the Air Transport Auxiliary

confirm that – as CO of the RNHF, he guided Mary on her tour.

Mary also took a look at the Sea Fury, prompting Mary to say: "That's what I like – I wouldn't mind flying that!"

A driver before joining the ATA, Mary said: "When I saw the chance of getting into flying I took it.

"They were so short of pilots that they were grateful for anyone with enthusiasm. There was no better job."

Mary joined aged 24 and was one of 166 females in the ATA, amassing 500 flying hours between June 1943 and October 1945, when she left the ATA.

After training on the Miles Magister, she delivered aircraft, including Barracudas, Hurricanes and Spitfires, from factories to operational squadrons.

She recalled one incident when flying a Wellington bomber: "Once when I was taking off a hatch at the front flew open and everything – all of my maps – flew down to the tail end.

"It wasn't my fault – the engineer should have checked the hatch.

"I didn't have the maps for guidance but it didn't matter I had learned where I was going and it wasn't very far."

Collision victims honoured

THE loss of submarine HMS Truculent when she collided with a merchantman on an icy night in the Thames Estuary has been commemorated with a service in Chatham.

Organised by Archie Watt, chairman of the Medway Towns branch of the Submariners Association, the service marked the 64th anniversary of the accident, on January 12 1950.

Members of that branch have helped stage the service for some time, and a couple of years ago it was decided to hold the event – hosted by the St George's Centre – on the nearest Saturday to the anniversary, allowing working people to attend.

Wartime T-class submarine HMS Truculent was heading for Sheerness from Chatham after post-refit trials when she caught sight of the lights of a ship on the pitch-black river estuary.

Thinking the lights denoted a stationary vessel, Truculent turned to avoid the shallows to one side of her – but realised too late that the lights indicated a ship under way carrying explosive material.

Swedish tanker SS Divina, bound for Ipswich, caught the bows of the submarine, and after locking for a few seconds, the Naval vessel sank.

Most of the men on board, which included some 18 dockyard workers, escaped the stricken submarine, but many died in the freezing water or on exposed mudbanks as they were swept away by the current.

The Davina picked up some survivors, as did another merchantman, but 64 men died.



● HMS Truculent is recovered from the Thames Estuary in March 1950

Another five RAF personnel in an Avro Lancaster from Kinloss which took part in the rescue are also commemorated as their aircraft crashed during the operation.

Truculent was raised in the spring of 1950 and refloated before she was sold for scrapping in May of the same year.

More than 20 standards were present representing the ex-Service associations, including the Submariners Association, the RNA and Merchant Navy, led by the Submariners Association national standard bearer Trevor Thomas and Medway Towns standard bearer Bob Clarke, while Rev

Gordon Warren RN conducted the service.

Medway Towns Sea Cadets manned the door, helped with car parking and assisted older members from Pembroke House.

Guests of honour included the Mayor of Medway Cllr Josie Iles, the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Kent Brig John Meardon, Air Cdre Bill Croydon, and Cdr David Phillips, the senior Royal Navy representative.

A previous Mayor of Medway, David Brake, attended in a non-official capacity to pay his respects, as did Deputy Lord Lieutenant Barry Duffield.

Rescuer is reunited with crashed airman

TWO war veterans whose paths crossed after an air crash in 1946 in the southern hemisphere were reunited by a wedding in Australia.

Bas Hanrahan's father-in-law Tom Fogg, who served in HMS Tenacious between 1942 and 1946, decided he would go to the

wedding of his granddaughter in Sydney at the end of last year.

Bas thought it a good opportunity to see if there was any more information that could be gathered to fill in the gaps in the story of Tom's service, and possibly get in touch with any old shipmates who had settled Down Under.

His search uncovered a 2010 newsletter from the Parkhill Day Centre in Manly, a suburb of Sydney.

In the article, veteran Gilbert Jan told how he was rescued from the South China Sea after his C-47 Dakota aircraft had ditched – and he was rescued by HMS Tenacious on January 4 1946.

Bas was put in touch with Gilbert's daughter, and they arranged a meeting between the veterans during the visit to Sydney – the venue was Gilbert's home, which turned out to be just 500 metres along the same street as the apartment the British group had rented for their stay.

Apart from the meeting with Gilbert, and – of course – the wedding, another highlight for Tom, from Birkenhead, was the celebration of his 89th birthday watching the New Year's fireworks display over Sydney Harbour – almost 70 years on from his last run ashore there.

Victory on menu

NELSON'S iconic flagship at Trafalgar featured in celebrity chef Heston Blumenthal's latest series on Channel 4 at the end of last year.

HMS Victory was featured in connection with the almost legendary status of roast beef in *Heston's Great British Food*.



Yangtze Incident recalled

APRIL 20 this year marks the 65th Anniversary of the start of the Yangtze Incident, involving HM Ships Amethyst, Black Swan, Consort and London.

The incident cost the lives of 46 men of the Royal Navy before Amethyst made her daring escape downriver 100 days later.

A service of thanksgiving and remembrance will be held at the National Memorial Arboretum on Sunday April 26 involving surviving members of the four ships' companies, their families and friends, led by the Rev John Oliver, who served in both HMS London and Black Swan.

As chapel seating is limited, please contact Mike Overton by telephoning 07702 387171 or email michael.overton1@virgin.net if you wish to attend.

The HMS London 1947-49 Association will also be holding their annual reunion over this weekend close to the Arboretum.

Again, if anyone is interested, contact Mike for further details.

The Yangtze Incident began when the frigate HMS Amethyst sailed up the Yangtze River on April 20 1949 to relieve destroyer HMS Consort, which was acting as guardship for the British Embassy in Nanking during the Chinese Civil War.

While en route Amethyst came under fire from Communist batteries on the bank, injuring all on the bridge including CO Lt Cdr Bernard Skinner, who was mortally wounded.

Under sustained fire the ship suffered further casualties, some of whom were landed ashore under the bombardment.

Consort – having picked up a signal from Amethyst – steamed in from Nanking to silence the Chinese guns, though she was also hit and suffered casualties.

An attempt to tow her clear failed, so under cover of darkness Amethyst was lightened, refloated and limped out of immediate danger, though each time she attempted to move she came under attack again.

A rescue attempt by cruiser HMS London and sloop HMS Black Swan simply resulted in more deaths on the two ships.

The following three months saw a tense stand-off, with the replacement CO, Lt Cdr John Kerans – the assistant Naval Attaché at Nanking – refusing to agree to Communist claims that the British ship fired first.

On the night of July 30 Amethyst slipped away and made her legendary 100-mile night-time dash down the hazardous river, slipping past hostile guns at over 20 knots, escorted along the final stretch by HMS Concord.

The incident also brought Amethyst's cat, Simon, worldwide acclaim – wounded in the initial attack, the cat recovered to clear rats from the ship and bolster morale, winning the PDSA's Dickin Medal (known as the animals' VC).

Veteran has second book published

A RESIDENT at the Royal Star & Garter Home in Solihull has had his second book published – at the age of 87.

Entitled *For Your Tomorrow*, the book is a love story interwoven with some of the key events of World War 2 – and mirrors periods of author Ronald Careless's own life in the Royal Navy.

Ronald (pictured right) was brought up in Birmingham and served in the Royal Navy between 1944 and 1947 on board HMS Nelson, a happy ship that he made the subject of his first book *Battleship Nelson: The Story of HMS Nelson*, which was published in 1985.

After leaving the Navy Ronald joined the City

of Birmingham Education Department, rising to become its deputy head before retiring in 1983.

He also ran the Shirley Sea Cadet unit and went on to take a regional role.

Ronald's manuscript lay untouched for years as he confronted dementia, but with the support of his partner and the innovative care he receives at the dementia wing at the Solihull Home, his story has finally been published – a tale which spans three continents and reflects the brutality of war.

For Your Tomorrow is available from ronaldcarelessbooks@gmail.com at £10.50 plus £3 P&P or via the Royal Star & Garter Homes on 0208 439 8000.



Rayleigh host open evening

RAYLEIGH branch staged its first ever Open Evening and Prizegiving ceremony at the Rayleigh RBL Memorial Hall.

The event was supported and attended by Defence Minister Mark Francois, Rayleigh Town Council chairman Cllr Ian Ward and his deputy Cllr Eddie Dray.

In addition, the RNA was represented by members of the Rayleigh and neighbouring branches within Area 5 (East Anglia), including Basildon, Brentwood, Chelmsford and Southend-on-Sea, plus Area 5 RNA National Council members and the National President, Vice Admiral John McAnally.

The evening began with displays and presentations from members of the Rayleigh branch, which included parades and ceremonial activities, fund raising, naval architecture and social events, but the hands-down winner for entertainment value had to go to the lads of the old guard, celebrating their life and times in the King's Navy...

Mr Francois, together with Cllrs Ward and Dray, took time to discuss and chat with each display host, who were genuinely appreciative of their interest and depth of personal knowledge within their subjects.

At 9pm the Guest of Honour – Vice Admiral McAnally – arrived, following his private dinner party with S/M Alan Booth and his wife Iris.

The dinner had been bought and paid for by members of Rayleigh branch in appreciation to Alan for his 25 years of loyal service as branch secretary.

Vice Admiral McAnally, together with branch chairman S/M Bob Hill, hosted 'surprise' presentations to S/M Don Browne on his appointment as branch president, S/M Dave Bishop for services to the branch as standard bearer and committee member, and finally a certificate of appreciation from the RNA itself to S/M Alan Booth.

After the ceremony Alan said: "I really can't get over the reception I received upon entering the hall – that will stay with me forever."

Following the prizegiving ceremony, Vice Admiral McAnally shared a few anecdotes and a story or two, before enjoying the company of branch members

Charity treble for Glasgow

GLASGOW branch supported three charities in three different ways at the end of 2013.

They collected toys worth £500 for the children at Yorkhill Sick Children's Hospital, where the chairman of the branch gave the playgroup a cheque for their funds.

They also invited residents of Sir Gabriel Wood's home for retired sailors in Greenock to an evening of entertainment and Christmas music and dance at their headquarters.

And finally, branch members collected donations of underwear, gloves, scarves and toiletries for the Lodging House Mission, which looks after the homeless in Glasgow.

RNA HQ, Room 209, Semaphore Tower (PP70), HM Naval Base, Portsmouth PO1 3LT.

admin@royalnavalassoc.com

023 9272 3747

www.royal-naval-association.co.uk

Trainees appreciate shipmates' support

A GROUP of Royal Navy veterans have been thanked for the role they play in transforming civilians into sailors at HMS Raleigh.

The 14 veterans, all members of the RNA branches in the South West, are assigned to each of HMS Raleigh's four training divisions and the rehabilitation unit, which looks after recruits recovering from injury.

The shipmates act as mentors, paying regular visits to encourage the trainee sailors as they complete their course.

The Commanding Officer of HMS Raleigh, Capt Bob Fancy, passed on his appreciation to the veterans during a special gathering in their honour.

Capt Fancy said: "We are immensely grateful to the veterans for voluntarily giving up their time to support the recruits as they make the transition from civilian to Service life.

"They are a constant source of advice and guidance, and hearing their stories helps to inspire the recruits.

"The veterans are also fine examples of people who display the Royal Navy's core values of commitment, courage, discipline, respect for others, integrity and loyalty.

"It is these values that we aim to instil in the recruits during their initial Naval training, and the veterans play a key role in helping us achieve this."



● Capt Bob Fancy and his wife Sarah with the RNA veterans at HMS Raleigh

The support given by the veterans is highly regarded by the recruits.

Trainee Engineering Technician Ben McArdle, from Manchester, who is currently part of the rehabilitation unit, Stonehouse Division, said: "It's nice to have someone who can give you a military perspective, in a less formal manner. "The veterans we have spoken

to have had amazing experiences. "They are a great source of inspiration, especially for recruits like myself recovering from injury.

"We are immensely grateful for the time they give us."

Trainee Engineering Technician Warren Hickey, from Swansea, said: "Their life experiences and the stories about where they've been and what

they've done provide us with a vision for the future.

"Although sometimes the jobs that they've done have changed over the years, it's still good to hear what it was like in their day.

"Some things haven't changed at all and they are a good source of advice with regards to our training.

"Overall they are really quite inspirational."

Honours for leading lights

THREE leading lights in the RNA have been rewarded for their efforts with an appearance on the New Year Honours list.

National Chairman S/M Chris Dovey was awarded the OBE, while National Vice Chairman S/M Keith Crawford picked up an MBE.

In both cases the awards were in recognition of service to Naval personnel, former Naval personnel, their families and their local communities.

Also on the Military List was the RNA's Honorary Chaplain, Rev Scott Brown, who was honoured with a CBE.

S/M Chris has been National Chairman for three years, having joined Tenbury Wells branch in 1988.

He has led the organisation through a period of great change and development, striving to restore morale and maintain unity throughout that time.

As well as piloting major RNA projects – including the Naval Service Memorial and the much-admired Shipmates campaign – he is also a district councillor, a community bus driver and chairman of a charity.

S/M Chris said that his efforts could only succeed with the cooperation and support of all those he worked with.

"There are many of those in the RNA who, unknowingly, have contributed in some way to my receiving this honour," he said.

S/M Chris added: "I couldn't have done all that I have achieved without my wife Gail, with her constant support and encouragement – especially at functions where I often wander round chatting to people leaving her to fend for herself!"

S/M Keith, an active member of the RNA for 27 years – and chairman of Spalding branch for 26 years – has been Vice Chair for three years and is Chairman of the Association Management Committee, charged with oversight of all RNA operations.





● Admiral Sir Desmond and Lady Deborah Cassidi at the reunion for HM Ships Undaunted, Eagle and Yarmouth
Picture: Alan 'Whiskey' Walker

Three-ship reunion is big draw

ALMOST 100 people attended a reunion of Type 15 frigate HMS Undaunted, aircraft carrier HMS Eagle and Rothersey-class frigate HMS Yarmouth.

The event was organised at the Aztec Hotel in Bristol by John Bryant, who served in all three ships.

The Guest of Honour was Admiral Sir Desmond Cassidi, who was accompanied by his wife Lady Deborah Cassidi.

Admiral Cassidi was the Commanding Officer of HMS Undaunted during the 1960s, when the ship was based in Portland as Captain D 2nd Frigate Squadron.

The weekend was deemed a great success, enjoyed by all who attended – some had to leave early on the Sunday as they heeded forecasts of a major storm, though others battled through until the Monday.

Another reunion is planned for this year in Liverpool.

Freedom of the town for Falmouth branch

FALMOUTH branch has been awarded the Freedom of the town.

At a special meeting of Falmouth Town Council, held the week before Christmas, councillors were asked by the Mayor to consider his proposal that “the council recognise the importance of the role of the Falmouth branch, Royal Naval Association, and consider admitting that eminent organisation to the Honorary Freedom of Falmouth, and to further consider the arrangements for the conference thereof.”

The motion was adopted unanimously.

Indeed, when speaking in favour, several councillors commented that the honour was well overdue.

S/M Ron Burdekin, secretary of the branch, said: “In thanking the Mayor and council, I pointed out to them that this is indeed a unique event, in that Falmouth is the first town or city to bestow this honour on any of the 350 or so branches of the Royal Naval Association in the UK and overseas.

“It is planned that the formal presentation will take place on March 15, following the annual St Nazaire Parade and memorial service, which will also be held on that date.”

The first branch of the Royal Naval Old Comrades Association (RNOCA) was formed in 1935, following a reunion dinner for a group of like-minded ex-Naval personnel.

Within months there were 50 similar branches in various parts of the country.

In the early 1950s these branches became amalgamated into the Royal Naval Association, which was granted its Royal Charter in 1954.

Although early records have been lost, there was a branch in Falmouth, which was de-commissioned at about the time of the change of name, probably due to a lack of members.

The branch was re-commissioned in September 1982, and marked the 30th

anniversary last year with a celebratory lunch, and the re-dedication of the branch standard during the Mayor's civic service.

In the first year after re-commissioning, the branch was asked to organise a parade and church service to mark Sea Sunday in Falmouth, an event that they have been pleased to coordinate annually ever since.

Sea Sunday, almost by ‘tradition’ held on the third

Sunday in July in Falmouth, is now one of the leading events in the civic and social calendar of the town.

Locally, Falmouth branch provides financial and other support to Falmouth and Penryn Sea Cadets, the 6th Falmouth Sea Scouts and the Mission to Seafarers in Falmouth, as well as other charities with Naval or seafaring objectives, in particular the Royal Naval and Royal Marines Charity.



● From left: Trustee Nancy Hill, Chairman of the WRNS Benevolent Trust Andrea Crook, Lt (N) Audrey Rivera, Attaché Staff Officer, Canadian High Commission, World War 2 veteran Dorothy Rickards and Association of Wrens Vice President Ellie Patrick, who were readers at the AOW Carol Service at St Mary le Strand in London

Canadian connection at Wrens' carol service

THE Association of Wrens – having recently amended their title to include ‘Women of the Royal Naval Services’ – was delighted to welcome Lt (N) Audrey Rivera, Attaché Staff Officer, Canadian High Commission, to their Carol Service in London.

Lt Rivera had previously met Mary Hawthornthwaite, chairman of the association, at the cross-planting ceremony earlier in the month, and accepted her invitation to be one of the readers at the service at St Mary le Strand – the Wrens' Church.

Lt Rivera was very keen for one of the church kneelers, embroidered with the legend WRCNS – to be included in the group photo of the readers.

In conversation with the association's public relations officer, Celia Saywell, she expressed her interest in the historic involvement of three senior British WRNS officers who went to Galt, Ontario, in May 1942 to assist with setting up of the WRCNS, and also the story of the AOW veterans who attended the unveiling of the Jenny Wren statue at Galt in 1972.

As PRO, Celia Saywell is used to reporting news

– but this time she was making the news.

Celia attended an investiture at Windsor Castle where she was presented with her MBE for Services to the Association of Wrens (Women of the Royal Naval Services).

She was particularly delighted to receive her award from the Princess Royal, Admiral and Commandant for Women in the Royal Navy.

Celia served as a Met Observer in the WRNS from 1958-63, and looking for a good cause after bringing up four sons, she joined the Association of Wrens in 1985, first as founder secretary Pembrokeshire branch, then she was elected to the HQ Executive serving six years as vice chairman.

In 2001 Celia realised that her creative interests could be used for promoting the association and so followed many forays into the world of publications, assisting with research projects, designing new promotional material and becoming a web author.

Every week brings a new challenge, from visiting warships to recruit serving females to finding veterans for film producers.

Harrogate duo are acclaimed

HARROGATE and District branch waited until the New Year to stage their annual festive lunch, at the Ascot House Hotel on January 8.

During the lunch the Mayor of Harrogate, Cllr Mike Newby, on behalf of the Branch and Association, presented an Award of Excellence to S/M David Ralphs, an Associate Member and former Merchant Seaman, for his outstanding support and loyalty, and Full Life Membership to branch president S/M John Stray (right).

John – a former Royal Marine who served from 1962 to 1995 in numerous capacities, including a spell on the Royal Yacht – has been president for almost 20 years.



River Plate anniversary marked

THIS year the HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association will mark the 75th anniversary of the South Atlantic battle with three key events.

First, funds are being raised to finance a memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Approval has been given and a site allocated by the NMA, and the dedication is planned for 11.30am on Saturday April 12.

In June, members of the association will travel to Canada and the town of Ajax, named after the cruiser, as they mark the anniversary.

The highlight of the visit to Ajax, near Toronto, will be the presentation to the town of Cdre Henry Harwood's Admiral's uniform, in addition to talks by Jonathan Harwood, the Commodore's grandson.

The final event will be a lunch, to be held in Portsmouth on Saturday December 13.

The association is keen that crew members and their families of the various commissions of HM Ships Ajax, Exeter and Achilles, who are not already members, attend these events and also support the appeal for funds.

There is a website – www.hmsajax.org – and an email address of h.m.s.ajax.rpv@gmail.com which contain more useful information about these events and how donations can be made.

Henry and Stephen Harwood are producing a book of approximately 120 pages entitled *Harwood and the Battle of the River Plate – including a brief biography*.

The events leading up to the encounter of the three cruisers with the German pocket battleship Admiral Graf Spee on December 13 1939 are explained, followed by a narrative of the battle which drove the Graf Spee to seek shelter in the Uruguayan port of Montevideo and subsequently to scuttle herself.

There is discussion on how and why the memory of the battle still stimulates books and films three quarters of a century later, and pays tribute to the veterans' associations, the British Uruguayan Society and to the town of Ajax, which have helped keep the story alive.

The book will be available from April 1 from the author: tel 02392 632494 or email scpharwood@gmail.com or write to Captain SCP Harwood, Royal Navy, at Hunters Cottage, West Street, Hambleton, PO7 4RW, Hampshire.

Cheques for £6 (inc p&p) made payable to HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association.

Normandy memories

WERE you involved in D-Day, the preparations or the first few days after the landings?

Navy News plans to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Allied invasion of Europe by recounting the experiences of Naval Service veterans in June 1944.

Please send your first-hand accounts – and any images if you have them – to D-Day 70, *Navy News*, Mail Point 1.4, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY, or email them to dday70@navynews.co.uk

Please let us know if you want material returned – and if possible please send copies rather than valuable original documents or pictures.

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in our December edition (right) was HMS Arlingham, which was based in Gibraltar, and Mr G Johnson, of Milford Haven, wins £50 for identifying her.

This month's ship (above) was commissioned 60 years ago next month, though she was laid down by Yarrow some seven years earlier.

She was escorting cruiser HMS Newfoundland when the British force sank an Egyptian frigate in the Suez Crisis and later sailed into the fallout from British nuclear tests in the South Pacific.

The destroyer was sold at the end of the 1960s to Peru.

(1) What was her name when she served in the Royal Navy, and (2) what was her intended name, which was changed before she was launched?

We have removed the pennant number from the image.



Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, *Navy News*, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY. Coupons giving the correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner. The closing date for entries is March 14.

More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our April edition. The competition is not open to *Navy News* employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 228

Name

Address

My answers: (1)

(2)



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Sefton unit considers a move

A CAMPAIGN is under way to relocate Sefton unit from Field Lane in Litherland to the Coastguard building in Crosby, some three miles north west of their current site.

The Coastguard station is earmarked for closure later this year, and although unit CO Sub Lt (SCC) Ken Griffiths RNR said he is against the closure, he believes the cadets would be the best new occupiers under the circumstances.

"As we have been at our current location

for over 35 years it wasn't an easy decision," said Sub Lt Griffiths.

He said the main reasons behind the move were the age of the buildings at Litherland – some over 70 years old and requiring a good deal of maintenance – and the fact that Sefton Council has government-set targets for new homes, and the unit's 'brown site' location makes it attractive for such use.

The proposed move has the support of local MP Bill Esterson and the Leader of

Sefton Council, Peter Dowd.

The unit has set up a Facebook page to test local opinion, which has received nothing but support for the initiative.

The unit, which has experienced theft and vandalism in recent years – including the loss of boats and arson attacks on buildings and their minibus – is now looking for wider support, which would allow it to expand the number of cadets by taking on the youngsters who are currently on a waiting list.



Medal for Chief Ray

AN instructor at Welwyn and Hatfield unit has been presented with the Captain's Medal by Captain Sea Cadets Capt Jonathan Holloway to mark his 50 years of service with the Corps (above).

CPO (SCC) Ray Gosling started his career as a cadet at Ealing and Brentford unit in 1952, and progressed to being a Drill Instructor. He was, for a time, OIC of the St Albans unit, and still serves as an instructor at Welwyn and Hatfield.

Farewell to loyal supporter

RICKMANSWORTH and Watford unit have bid farewell to one of their longest-serving volunteers.

CPO (SCC) Doug Wilson (pictured above) was awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for his service to the Corps in early November – coincidentally on his last night parading for the Croxley-based unit, as he is moving away from the area.

Chief Wilson was once in charge at TS Renown, and stood in some years ago when the unit looked like it was going to close because of low volunteer levels.

Fortunately the problem was resolved and the unit is now thriving.

Almost 40 cadets were on parade for Remembrance, which would not have been possible if Chief Wilson had not kept the unit going for several years during leaner times.

On the same evening two New Entrants and one Junior Sea Cadet were enrolled to the ship's company.

The unit would like to say a big 'thank you' to Chief Wilson, and wish him luck for the future.

Trio honoured

THREE adult members of Swindon unit were honoured at a Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire Awards ceremony in Devizes.

Certificates of Meritorious Service were presented to Lt (SCC) Margaret Trojan RNR, the Commanding Officer of the unit, PO(SCC) Elizabeth Linnett, Admin Officer, and Pauline Van Der Sanden, Chairwoman P&SA Committee, by Lord Lieutenant Sarah Rose Troughton.

Jack is proud to be a Rosyth Sea Cadet

FOR everyone there is one thing that defines them, writes AC Jack Percival, of Rosyth unit.

For some it is a goal on a football field, others a song on stage.

My defining experience started around four years ago when I joined the Sea Cadets.

To many this wouldn't be a major event in life, but to me it changed everything. I will now explain how much cadets has done for me.

Before 2009 I was a lone straggler with no ambition or purpose. I was intelligent but angry, meaning I could not harness my full potential.

Then in August of that year my mum returned to the Sea Cadet unit she was fondly involved with as a teenager, this time as an adult instructor – in which I showed great interest.

From that day forth I went from 'Our Wee Jack' to Cadet Percival.

So I had joined and formed my ambition in life: the Royal Navy.

Looking back, I probably would do the same thing again, as overall joining cadets is probably the best choice I ever made.

Skip forward a few months to November 11 – Armistice Day.

That was my first real taste of the parades I would be expected



● AC Jack Percival

to partake in as a cadet and eventually the Navy.

As expected the parade started early, and because it was November the weather was blusteringly cold, but I didn't care as for the first time, marching down Inverkeithing High Street, I had a purpose.

I could probably write for days about all my experiences with Rosyth Sea Cadets, but you would get bored reading it

as I probably would, so I shan't ramble on.

Through cadets I have done things I never would have expected to: captained a rowing boat, seen the Olympics first hand, lived on a serving ship, been taught to survive, been shown the basics of engineering, experienced immense amounts of pride every time I wear my Number 1s uniform, and gained the confidence to form strong friendships where I previously couldn't have.

The thing I must thank TS Five for is making me a little bit calmer in difficult situations.

It has also shaped me into the man I wish to be as well as installed discipline, making me emotionally stronger and less likely to cause major offence in the near future.

However the other point I can't forget is the ambition and direction, because pre-2009 I wasn't living, I was just passing time – and if you were too, look into the way I live my life today; you would find that I shape myself to become a sailor, my uniform is my second skin.

Chances are as you read this I will be doing something with cadets or out with my mates

whom I gained from guess where?

In conclusion, Rosyth Sea Cadets has done a huge amount for me.

It has helped me through depression more than once, given me the confidence to use the personality I was apparently born with.

Although it has split my family on occasions, I still continue to go and I will until such a time that I legally cannot.

Cadets has given me so many memories, experiences, friendships that I will take to my grave and so many nostalgic days thinking about them over the past four years and I hope to continue not only making my own memories but my fellow cadets' as well for years to come.

I would not change a second of the last years if I was paid any amount of money.

To all the members of TS Five and to all previous and future members I say thank you for everything – this may sound clichéd, but you saved my life.

Think always of what is to come but never forget the past or ignore the present.

I am proud to call myself: Able Cadet Jack Percival of Rosyth Sea Cadets.

Vandals hit Preston

VANDALS struck at Preston unit to give staff a challenging new year.

The vice chairman of the unit, Steve Hills, was at a party preparing to celebrate the start of 2014 when he was called out to the Strand Road site on the bank of the River Ribble.

On arrival Steve and other volunteers were met by police, who told them a window had been damaged as the perpetrators forced their way in, damaging a banner in the process.

That meant time spent on New Year's Day finding a building merchant so the window could be temporarily boarded until it could be repaired.

Police believe that although nothing appears to have been taken, the site was thoroughly searched by the intruders.

Corps members join war debate

SEA Cadets joined colleagues from the Army Cadet Force and Air Training Corps to debate the UK legacy of World War 1 in the House of Lords.

The inter-generational debate saw the Sea Cadets speak to the motion "The UK has not learned from its experience" – and although the event was not an out-and-out competition, the Corps were awarded 73 votes, the highest number of the groups.

The House of Lords, in partnership with the MOD, the RBL and the English-Speaking Union, gathered 150 Sea Cadets, Army, Air and CCF cadets, together with veterans of all ages and military backgrounds.

The Sea Cadets team (right) consisted of David from Chester and Staffordshire District, John from East Kent District, Bryony from North East Yorkshire District, and Alex and Sam from Tyne South District.

They congregated in the Lords Chamber to consider one main question: "One hundred years after World War 1, what is the legacy for the UK and how does it shape the nation today?"

There were three core teams who each took a different stance on the debate:

- 1 The UK is a more globally responsible nation;
- 2 Society is more aware of the impact of war;
- 3 The UK has not learned from its experience.



Picture: House of Lords 2013/Photography by Annabel Moeller

Captain Sea Cadets, Capt Jonathan Holloway, said: "We are delighted that Sea Cadets from across the UK took part in this fascinating debate about World War 1 to herald the commemorations of the centenary year.

"This was a unique opportunity to speak at the House of Lords and put into practice the communications skills that they have learnt at their local units.

"Our cadets are articulate, independent thinkers and – thanks to the support from the English-Speaking Union – they

have acquired debating skills that will benefit them in adult life."

Speaking before the event, the Lord Speaker, Baroness D'Souza, said: "In the run up to the centenary of World War 1, I am delighted that the Lords was able to host a thought-provoking debate, with young people – some of whom may be considering a career in the armed forces – and those who have already served in the military.

"Chairing the debate from the Woolsack, I look forward to hearing the speakers' views on the legacy of World War 1, and how it shapes the UK today.

With views from all ages and experiences, this promises to be a lively and challenging debate. I hope that it will touch upon a number of relevant issues about our society, the UK as a nation and our place in the world today. I hope too that it will provide a fitting way of remembering those who made the ultimate sacrifice in World War 1 and in conflicts before and since."

This was the seventh annual Lords Chamber Event. They form part of a broader outreach programme that aims to raise awareness of the role and work of the Lords.



● Russell Whitlock presents the Mounts Bay Rotarians' cheque for £1,750 to Dr Paddy Hicks of Penzance unit

Alarming donation

THE annual awards night of Penzance unit also featured the presentation of a donation from Cornish Rotarians that will help increase usage of the facilities.

A cheque for £1,750 was presented to Dr Paddy Hicks, chairperson of the Unit Management Team, by Russell Whitlock, chairman of community services at the Rotary Club of Mounts Bay, also based in Penzance.

The donation will help pay for the installation of a fire alarm system, which will allow cadets to remain on board their training ship TS Grenville at night and during weekends.

It will also allow Sea Cadets from the wider district to use the facility for training purposes.



Publication aimed at volunteers

WHILE we (quite rightly) highlight the activities of the cadets themselves in these pages, we also try to recognise the work of the adult volunteers and the support of the parents.

And if you would like to read more on that side of the Corps, may we point you in the direction of *Fleet*?

Every three months, Sea Cadets publish this magazine, which is jam-packed with news and updates from the Corps for all their volunteers and parents.

Fleet will also keep you up-to-date with Sea Cadet activities from across the UK – when read in conjunction with *Navy News*, of course.

Read all about volunteers and cadets as they embark on challenges such as sailing the Pacific Ocean from China to San Francisco on Clipper, rowing the world to raise money for the Corps' new tall ship, or Royal Marines Cadets preparing to face the toughest event on their calendar – the Gibraltar Cup.

Thousands of Sea Cadets every year take part in competitions to win a trophy for their unit, from football to band, from canoeing to kayaking, events which are reflected in the pages of *Fleet*.

Email fleet@ms-sc.org if you need more copies of the magazine for your unit.

RNA cheque for Tamworth

TAMWORTH and Lichfield unit has been presented with a cheque for £2,000 by the chairman and members of the City of Lichfield branch of the RNA.

The money will be used to offset the cost of sending ten cadets away on offshore sailing courses for a week this year.

Lt (SCC) Terry Powell RNR received the cheque from the RNA branch chairman S/M George Treadwell, watched by cadets, unit staff and RNA members.

Ship design proven in wind tunnel tests

A SCALE model of the Sea Cadet Corps' new flagship has sailed through her first trials.

The 1:15 model of the sail training ship, which will replace TS Royalist next year, was put through its paces in a wind tunnel at the University of Southampton.

Spanish shipyard Astilleros Gondan and the Southampton-based Marine Technology and Industrial Aerodynamics Wolfson Unit put the fully-rigged model – measuring approximately 2m in length and 1.6m high – through sail optimisation and performance trials in the large, low speed section of the university's wind tunnel.

Watched by Sea Cadets who took a break from their offshore voyage in TS Royalist, the model ship was tested at different wind angles, with rig configurations from full sail to bare poles.

The test proved that the mast positions and centre of effort, sail sizes and shapes, braces and sheet leads are all correct and performing as designers envisaged.



● The scale model of the new Sea Cadet Corps sail training ship is prepared for a test in a wind tunnel

Rough ride for Barnsley group



● RFA Fort Victoria ploughs through heavy seas off the coast of Scotland

A GROUP of Barnsley Sea Cadets and accompanying staff had a memorable trip round the top of Scotland just before Christmas, thanks to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary supply ship Fort Victoria.

On arrival at Crombie, on the north shore of the Firth of Forth, the cadets were quite taken with the size of the 35,000-ton Fort Vic.

The first night saw the visitors assigned sleeping accommodation and given safety briefings before the ship headed out into the North Sea.

OC Henry Clark said: "On day two we awoke to rough weather, during the day the weather got worse and at its worse it was a gusting Force 10 and a Sea State 8, which meant most of us were rather seasick."

The group took a look at the freezer facilities and the veg room, and also visited the RASCO, where they were able to sit in the crane operator's seat.

Cadets were told all about the tricky task of replenishing a ship at sea – RASing – and then turned their minds to aviation matters.

"We were given a tour of the hangar, which was very big – it has space for three Merlin helicopters, and we went out on to the flight deck, which was very windy," said Henry.

A visit to the bridge was eagerly anticipated – though they were not allowed to steer the ship as it was too rough.

"In the ship's hospital – not sick bay, as most of us thought – the POMA gave us a first aid lesson, and taught us how to do the recovery position. We all had fun bandaging each other."

They also took a closer look at the ship's lifeboats.

Day 3 was not so good for some: "I was sick eight times, so don't remember a lot about it," said Henry.

"We had a lifeboat drill, so we all had to get dressed in our waterproofs and life jackets and wait for further instructions."

"I fell asleep waiting as I was a bit warm..."

The fourth day saw the ship dock at Loch Striven, off the Firth of Clyde, late in the morning, and the cadets were back in Barnsley late the same evening, clutching their commemorative coins.

'Slightly Bluenose' certificates were awarded to those who made the trip, displaying the Lat-Long coordinates 58° 43'N 005° 07'W – the most northerly point reached on the trip, as Fort Vic made her way round a storm-tossed Cape Wrath.



● Two-year-old Keegan is ready to join the Corps – though he has a few years to wait...

Bags of cash from superstore

SITTINGBOURNE unit helped Christmas shoppers and boosted their own unit funds when they carried out bag-packing sessions at the local Morrisons Superstore.

Youngsters who have joined the unit and enjoy the wide variety of activity they offer, from sports to sailing and powerboating, turned out on a busy Saturday to help raise funds for their Training Ship Wyvern.

That day at Morrisons was such a success – with just a small team they managed to raise £324.66 – that they were booked to appear again on the Saturday before Christmas.

And second time round they did even better, raising just a few pennies short of £358. Cadets from Sheppey unit were also packing bags on the second date.

Cadets also took the opportunity to speak with parents and young people from the area about who they are and what they do.

A good deal of interest was shown in joining the unit which means they will grow their cadre of cadets.

One young man, Keegan – who was almost three years old – wanted to join straight away, but PO(SCC) David Friday had to explain to young Keegan and his parents: "I'm sorry, but Keegan will have to wait until his is ten years old – but we will still be here then and would be happy to have him on board."

To do this successfully however the unit will also need to grow the number of adult volunteers, and is actively seeking volunteers to support the running of the unit.

Vice Chairman Peter Luxton said: "I would like to thank Morrisons at Sittingbourne for supporting us."

"The staff have been particularly supportive and helpful. Without support like this we would struggle to do what we do."

Tom cruises across the Atlantic



● During the Atlantic crossing Tom and his fellow mariners saw plenty of wildlife, including hammerhead sharks

AS MOST Sea Cadets were gearing up for Christmas, one member of Shirley unit was grappling with the challenges of a transatlantic crossing in a yacht.

Tom Gahan took part in an annual cruise across the Pond, in the 47ft Beneteau Oceanis yacht Tamsel as part of a 220-boat armada.

Tom, who travelled with his father and five other friends, left Gran Canaria in late November and set a course for the Caribbean.

"We were participating in the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers, which annually sees about 200 boats cross the Atlantic and a further few continue around the world," said Tom.

"It took us 24 days and we saw hammerhead sharks, dolphins and pilot whales."

"We caught and ate fish – wahoo, tuna and dorado – almost every day."

"Some days were long, when the weather was calm at the beginning of the trip, but the winds and waves soon picked up, and the last week was full of squalls and heavy weather sailing."

"We snapped a spinnaker pole in one storm, which slowed us down a bit, and also lost use of our mainsail after it jammed and

had to be cut down.

"However, we arrived safely in St Lucia in the early hours of December 18, having sailed almost 3,000 miles."

The ARC cruise is intended to be a sociable event and not a race – but for a bit of friendly competition data is collected about the boats' progress and a handicap system means all have a chance to shine.

● Tom Gahan, pictured right on deck and below while working up the mast of the cruiser Tamsel during the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers



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● Betty Topp with her bouquet of flowers and celebration cake

Crystal vase for Betty

STONEHAVEN and District unit presented a crystal vase to one of their staunchest supporters in appreciation of more than 50 years of service to TS Carron.

Elizabeth 'Betty' Topp was born in June 1923 and served in the WRNS during World War 2.

In February 1962 Betty, along with the late Margaret Waldie, established a Girls Nautical Training Corps (GNTC) Section at TS Carron, where she joined as Third Officer.

In 1975, and by then a Second Officer, Betty's service with the TS Carron GNTC was recognised in the form of a Certificate of Service signed by a Navy League Rear Admiral.

Betty was elected to the unit management committee and served continuously until standing down at the AGM last year.

In token of her long and highly-valued service Betty was presented with an engraved crystal vase by current unit chairman John Agnew.

Leading Junior Cadet Martha Craig presented her with a bouquet of flowers, and a special cake had been baked for the occasion which Betty cut during a reception at the unit, organised by the Parents and Supporters Association.

Among those present were Unit President and Deputy Lord Lieutenant Dr Andrew Orr, District Officer (Grampian) Lt Cdr (SCC) Brian Mair RNR and unit chaplain Rev Margaret Jackson.

Plea for help after storm destruction

THE local community – and one of their own – have rallied round to help a Sea Cadet unit in the North West of England which was devastated by storms at the end of last year.

Whitehaven unit has started to receive donations to help with the cost of refurbishing their unit headquarters, which suffered serious damage during bad weather in December.

Unit chairman David Abbott said that although the major work would be covered by insurance there would be a number of items which would not be included – and these costs would have to be met from the unit's funds.

"A number of people have asked me what we need – and at the moment that's a really difficult question to answer," said David.

"We may have to replace the railings at the front of the building, and that will be expensive.

"But even little things like cups, plates, towels and even pens add up to a lot of money when you have to buy 40 or 50 of them."

A Christmas raffle organised by one of the cadets' parents raised over £200 and another, held during the annual Presentations Evening just a week after the first storm, added an extra £80.

Sea Cadet units in Maryport and Workington have also offered to help their unlucky neighbours.

But there have been individual donations as well.

"One of our long-standing supporters sent a cheque for £100, there have been a few smaller donations, all of which will be acknowledged, and we have had pledges of support from Whitehaven Lions and others," said David.

But the biggest donation so far has come from within the unit itself – Cadet Connor Bragg, 15, made a personal donation of £1,000 through his Charities Aid Foundation account.

"I feel that I've gained a lot and



● Damaged equipment and fencing at the Whitehaven unit headquarters following winter storms

really enjoyed being a part of the team during my three years with the Sea Cadets," said Connor.

"I was gutted when I heard how badly the unit was damaged, and really wanted to do something to help.

"I talked with my mam about making a donation, and she was happy with the decision."

Thanking Connor and his family, David said that the donation had been a huge – but



● Cadet Connor Bragg

very welcome – surprise which would be a massive boost to both cadet and staff morale.

"We try to do our best for the cadets, and I guess this shows that our efforts really are appreciated," said David.

"We really can't thank Connor enough for his incredibly generous support."

Connor's CAF account was originally set up by a close family friend who had a strong belief in charitable giving and the impact of charities and their work in local communities.

If anyone would like to make a donation or offer help, they can contact David on 07890 291213 or email david.abbott@tsbee.org.uk

The HQ and the approach to Old Quay were both closed because of the damage, and the unit has had to find alternative accommodation for the foreseeable future – cadets will now meet above Whitehaven Police Station.

South Shields unit also suffered in the storms over Christmas and the New Year, with a tidal surge on the Tyne flooding the building and ruining recently-refurbished rooms.

Staff found up to 2ft of water

in corridors and compartments, damaging carpets, building materials, uniforms, mattresses and musical instruments – much of the equipment obtained through the hard work of cadets, and which will take much more hard work over the coming months to put right.



● Daring Patrol, who built the best shelter – from left, Bethany Porter, Amelia Bale, Elsie Scriven, Ewen Meagher and Ed Francis

Sea Scouts take shelter

A GROUP of Sea Scouts from the 1st Watchet Troop braved the elements before Christmas and slept outside in shelters made out of natural materials as part of a survival skills weekend.

Instructed by their leaders and an ex-Royal Marine, the 18 scouts made camp on the Saturday in woodland on the Brendon Hills on Exmoor, where they chose suitable sites for their shelters.

Using only bracken, fern, straw and wood from fallen trees they constructed shelters, whilst also building and lighting fires to keep themselves warm and cook their meals.

The scouts were instructed in the correct use of axe and saw and the use of their knives for skinning and cooking a variety of meats, then cooked a game stew on their fires.

An orienteering course was undertaken on the Saturday night, learning how to navigate using only the stars and a compass – the following day they learned to do the same using the sun.

As the temperature fell to -2°C the scouts headed into their shelters, waking to a heavy frost in good spirits and ready for breakfast.

On Sunday morning a gamekeeper demonstrated how snares and humane traps are set for survival, vermin control and conservation.

The scouts then prepared their lunch on their fires which included cooking fresh trout without using any cooking utensils or equipment.

All of the scouts completed the weekend having qualified for not only their survival skills badge, but also their 'Frostic Award' having camped out as scouts in sub-zero temperatures.

Assistant Scout Leader Judith Hall said: "They all learnt a lot about surviving in the countryside, and it made me proud to watch them achieve so much."



● The Hong Kong Sea Cadet Corps hold a 45th anniversary parade just before Christmas at the Police Training College in Aberdeen, Hong Kong. On parade were Training Ships Ark Royal, Brilliant, Cornflower, Drake, Mountbatten, Nelson, Neptune, Royalist, Lightning, King Lin, and Lau Wing Sang, totalling 350 cadets. The salute was taken by Raymond Young, the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The Corps was formed in 1968 by Royal Naval Reserve officers

Text Santa's little helpers



DID you spot Sea Cadets on ITV's *Text Santa* just before Christmas?

Eleven lucky cadets from Sutton and Southwark units rubbed shoulders with celebrities for the charity fundraiser (left).

The cadets were on an open-top celebrity-packed London bus drumming alongside Ant and Dec, Philip Schofield and Paddy McGuinness.

They were also spotted drumming behind Robbie Williams dressed as Father Christmas on his sleigh.

And in the studios they stood behind presenters Holly Willoughby and Christine Bleakley. They also saw McFly perform.

Text Santa is ITV's annual charity appeal, raising money and awareness for six UK-based charities – on this occasion the charities were Age UK, Barnardo's, BeatBullying, British Heart Foundation, CLIC Sargent and Help the Hospices.

Just a couple of weeks earlier two dozen Sea Cadets appeared on BBC's *The One Show*, standing in the audience while watching themselves on screen.

The show had filmed the youngsters on board TS Royalist in September as part of the World War 1 commemorations, comparing the lives of teenagers separated by almost 100 years.

The cadets were filmed showcasing their nautical skills – hoisting sails, keeping watch and anchoring.

PTIs give us a twirl

NOT only are they the Navy's ultimate warriors, but they can twirl clubs in sync with their comrades.

Putting on a show to celebrate their passing out at the home of the Corps are eight Royal Marines corporals who completed the 17-week Physical Training Instructor Class 2 course.

Friends and family at the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines in Lympstone also saw the eight green berets demonstrate sit ups, beam work, skip jumps, vaulting, and trampolining skills.

That was the end. Back to the beginning and the corporals had to undergo a rigorous five-day physical training selection, testing not just physical ability, but their academic skills, lecture technique and character while instructing a class.

Pass that and they're enrolled on the course at Lympstone where they are taught not just physical instruction, but also diet, healthy living and even preparing

for battle – known as 'combat conditioning'.

"Combat conditioning is about preparing a marine or recruit for the rigours of a combat environment – where you might not have a lot of equipment to train with such as weights or a gym," says Sgt Chris Steer, 33, who runs the PT2 course.

The corporals gain qualifications as a swimming teacher, pool lifeguard, boxing coach, rugby league coach. They're also expected to organise sporting events which, in the case of the latest candidates, included the RM mountain biking and ultra-fit championships.

As for the club swinging – which gives PTIs their 'clubz' nicknames and branch badge...

"Club swinging is a skill that dates back centuries and was developed as a way of doing physical exercise within the limited confines aboard ship," explains Sgt Steer.

"We retain it now as a link with the PTI branch of the past."



● Three of the new Royal Marines PTIs who have completed their Physical Training Instructor Class 2 course Picture: LA (Phot) Ben Shread

High fives for victorious squad



● The victorious HMNB Portsmouth squad at Wembley

HMNB Portsmouth topped a great 2013 by winning the UK Fives Grassroots Championships at Wembley.

The victory came after the side won the United Services Football League and the RNFA 5.

HMNB scored 40 goals in six games and became the first Royal Navy team to reach the FA Fives National Finals at Wembley.

They were drawn in a group with FC Stallions, Ely Dracones Futsal Club, Red Star Spartans and Elite Pro Sports FC.

The first match was against Red Star Spartans, a team that they had beaten in the regional finals. Despite most of the possession being with Portsmouth, they were unable to score and drew 0-0.

After losing their nerves from the first game the sailors moved on with two good performances, winning their next two games, 4-2 and 3-1.

The final game was against Ely Dracones Futsal and after going 1-0 down, the team secured their place in the semi-finals with a 1-1 draw and topped the group.

The NB started well in their semi, taking the lead early on. Halfway through two quick goals were scored by the opposition.

Three minutes remained and POPT Shortt rang the changes, bringing on veteran CS player Lt Pete 'The machine' Tagg.

Lt Tagg set up CPO Archbold for the equaliser with two minutes left before going on a mazy run in the last minute and smashing the ball past the keeper to secure a place in the final.

The final saw Portsmouth take on Elite Pro Sports FC. CPO Archbold, who was named player of the tournament, scored twice and LPT made it 3-0.

The NB will now play in a European competition in Valencia in April.

Seniors unbeaten in quest for cup



ONLINE with Lt Mark Toogood, RNFA

The Royal Navy Seniors continued their impressive start to the season with a fine victory over the Sussex FA at Lancing.

In the second game of the Southern Counties Cup the RN started confidently and dominated the early exchanges with fast, precise passing.

On 14 minutes, following a ball lofted over the Sussex defence by ET Michael Cushion, Mne Ben Goodge beat the offside trap and coolly lifted the ball over the keeper from 20 yards out to make it 1-0.

The RN's second was a carbon copy of their first goal. Cushion again provided a superbly lofted ball for Goodge to latch onto and lift over the stranded keeper to take a two-goal advantage on 22 minutes.

The RN continued to press and after AB Leon Cashman was brought down 30 yards from goal, POPT Dave Berry struck a fine effort from the resulting free kick which was well saved by the Sussex stopper.

The perfect half was nearly closed out until the 45th minute when the RN conceded a free kick. Following a good ball into the box, the Sussex striker slipped his marker to neatly flick the ball into the corner.

The RN would have been disappointed to have conceded

in the dying moments of the half and so it was important that they regained the initiative early in the second.

The management team of Lt Fraser Quirke and WOPT Paul Willetts were not to be disappointed when the two-goal lead was re-established on 51 minutes.

Man-of-the-match Goodge rolled his marker from a lofted ball and accurately picked out AB Max Blood.

Loitering near the penalty spot, Blood smashed the ball past the keeper for 3-1.

Despite continuing to press, the RN were unable to add to the scoreline.

Having dominated throughout, against strong opposition, they deserved the victory and remain unbeaten in their quest for Southern Counties Cup success.

RN U21

The RN U21 doubled their win tally in their second game of the season against EDF Energy.

Following the short notice withdrawal of original opponents,

Moneyfields AFC, the RN used the opportunity to field debutants – including the Pointon brothers – and established players for the Victory Stadium encounter.

The RN started positively against a physical EDF team and played some neat football.

Well organised from the back by ET Hunter, the midfield of ET Batiszovsky, AB Reed and AET Holliday were linking seamlessly through the middle with the latter looking dangerous on the break.

On 16 minutes a Batiszovsky through-ball was struck just wide by 17-year-old AB Pointon and a lapse of concentration nearly allowed EDF to take the lead on 21 minutes when they headed wide from close range.

EDF spurned another golden opportunity when right back AET Pointon conceded a free kick in a wide area.

The ball was accurately delivered into the box and again an EDF player found himself free of his marker only to miss the target from close range.

With half time approaching and EDF having the best of the

chances, Holliday seized the initiative with a good run down the right.

He cut into the box and delivered a perfect ball across the six-yard box where AB Pointon was on hand to place it into the net to make it 1-0.

Having made no changes at half time the RN started the second half sluggishly and were punished for it on 49 minutes.

A long ball over the top caught the defence sleeping and the EDF striker levelled the scores.

Following the introduction of fresh legs on 55 minutes, momentum swung in favour of the RN.

The effect of the changes was almost immediate as AB Andrews played a neat through ball for AB Pointon, who finished in style.

Following the goal, the RN visibly grew in confidence and began to dominate.

The killer blow was dealt on 77 minutes.

A corner delivered from the left found ET Hunter free in the box who drilled the ball into the roof of the net to finish the scoring at 3-1.

In only their second game together and with very little time spent on the training ground, this was a good result against a physical and determined opposition.

Anna at the double

THE ROYAL NAVY scooped two titles at the annual Admiral's Cup regatta – thanks to their trainee officers.

Sub Lt Anna Woods, pictured, put in fine performances to take both the women's individual title and the overall individual title.

Navies and coastguards from 15 countries took part in the dinghy regatta at the Indian Naval Academy at Ezhimala, on the west coast of the subcontinent.

The RN team consisted of team leader Lt William Goodall, the Gunnery Officer from HMS Tyne and Sub Lt Adam Doggart and Anna Woods, specialist fleet time officers from HMS Tyne and HMS Severn.

Sub Lt Woods emerged from the practice race victorious.

The first official day of the



regatta began with a tour of the Academy itself.

A presentation on Indian Naval Training was followed by a tour of the bridge simulator, small arms simulator and seamanship school before the group was transported to the sports complex. The tour concluded and the sailing began again.

Lt Goodall was at this stage co-opted into the protest committee so became neutral.

Despite light winds throughout the afternoon Sub Lt Woods finished in the top three in each of the day's three races.

Sub Lt Doggart, new to the Laser Radials, struggled and remained in the bottom third.

The second day saw Sub Lt Woods continue to lead the pack in direct competition to one of the male competitors from the UAE. Much hinged on the third and final day of competition.

The racing on the final day was fiercely competitive. The team event was beyond the RN, lying in seventh place. The cup was instead bound for Asia with the UAE and India teams separated by five points.

Shining at showcase

NAVY boxers put up a great show but had to settle for second place at the SBS Charity Dinner – the showcase for military boxing.

Former world champion Barry McGuigan and Olympic gold medallist Anthony Joshua were among the audience for the prestigious event at London's Grosvenor House Hotel.

First on the bill at middleweight was AET Scott Grant, from RNAS Culdrose, against experienced Army fighter Marc Truslove.

This was a closely-contested bout to open the show and the decision could have gone either way, but at the final, AET Grant received the nod and saw the Navy take an early lead on a majority decision.

The Army levelled the score

as Chez Nihel overcame Lt Kyle De-Banks, of HMS Pembroke, in the heavyweight contest.

Bout number three, at light middleweight, saw Mne Elliot Larsen, HMNB Portsmouth, dominate his match against L/Cpl Matthew Martin.

Next up, at Light Middleweight was Cpl Marc Bird, CTCRM, against Pte Peter Nevison.

This was an impressive performance by the young Marine, who boxed beautifully, sitting on the edge of his range and drawing shots from his opponent. Cpl Bird countered with a flurry of classy combinations.

Pte Nevison tried to keep Cpl Bird on the end of his long rangy straight arm shots, but Cpl Bird's head movement and counter punching left this almost

impossible for the Army man.

In the most controversial decision of the evening, Pte Nevison was awarded the victory on a majority decision.

Cpl Bird won an award for the most gallant runner up of the evening.

The final contest was an open class middleweight contest between Mne Ben Jones (42 Cdo) and Pte Thomas Barry, who received a majority decision, allowing the Army to pip the Navy team 3-2.

The evening raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for the SBSA Charity, which looks after SBS Servicemen, their family and dependants during times of hardship, loss and bereavement.

Golden first year for Navy skydiving team

A ROYAL Navy skydiving team grabbed gold at the European Skydiving Championships to cap a memorable debut year.

Seafury, which comprises POAC Fish Fisher (Team Captain), LT Sean Peters, AET Dave Day, AET Charlie Hart and reserve stand in George Perkins, formed in 2012, with the aim of entering the UK Skydiving League (UKSL) in 2013.

The team managed seven jumps in training before their first competition – the first round of the UKSL – where they picked up silver (gold went to an all-female team called Chatter Chicks).

A month later Seafury picked up gold in round two and maintained their great form with first place in round three.

With a further six training jumps prior to the competition, the battle for UK National Champions started. With 21 teams in the Rookie category, Seafury were feeling the pressure due to the success so far in the league.

The first round didn't go as planned and the team were placed mid table.

Thanks to the ever-changing Great British summer weather, the next day the skies had cleared and the jump programme was back on.

Seafury, having had time to revitalise and relieve some of the self asserted pressure, came out firing on all cylinders and the points kept on rolling in. Smashing their personal best points round for the season, and really showing the rest of the field they were on the hunt to catch them up.

Seafury kept on improving with every jump, ending up with silver in the contest which enabled the team to secure gold in the league.

As the newly-crowned UKSL winners, Seafury were invited by Team GB to compete in Moorsele, Belgium at the European Skydiving Championships.

Seafury joined Team GB, a collective of other UK skydiving teams in other categories in the combined goal to win 'the Spirit of Skydiving' which is awarded to the country that accumulates the most points over the competition but also to win in their respective categories.

After seven rounds of a very close battle with the Belgians and Dutch and having beaten their personal best jump twice, the final round was upon them. As the aircraft climbed and



● Above, the Royal Navy skydiving team Seafury in action

Picture: Adam Threlfall

● Right, the victorious team with their awards from 2013

levelled off at 13,000ft, Seafury took to the door for the last time and secured gold, the first ever Royal Navy Team to win gold in Europe.

Formation skydiving is a specific discipline in sports parachuting where the team exit the aircraft linked together, flying their bodies in order to take grips on each other to form set formations.

The sequence of formations are selected at random in a competition so no two dives are the same, nor will the teams be able to practice the routine before the day of the competition.

Each manoeuvre is selected from a pool of 16 set formations.

The team will jump with a cameraman and the footage will be submitted to the judges after each jump and scored, one point for each successful formation achieved in a time limit of 35 seconds from exiting the aircraft.

If you are serving there are free courses for skydiving held at Salisbury or Cyprus.

Ask your unit PT staff or email kristoffer.martin127@mod.uk for a guide on how to apply for a course. If you are already a skydiver are you aware of the Royal Navy Royal Marines Sport Parachute Association? Find the RNRMSPA page on Facebook or at www.skydivenavy.com



Braving heat in memory of Paul

HMS Ramsey's new crew kicked off their latest Gulf deployment, with an endurance feat which saw them brave sun, sand and blisters to raise more than £2,000 for The Teenage Cancer Trust.

The Bahrain Half Marathon is an annual event attracting more than 400 entrants of all abilities.

Not wanting to miss out on the challenge and fundraising opportunity, 16 of Ramsey's ship's company, including the commanding officer, signed up to the event prior to deploying and quickly set about raising support and gathering sponsors.

The CO, Lt Cdr Ash Spencer, said: "Sadly Crew 2 lost an ex-crew member, Paul Oakley, 22, to cancer in September.

"The Teenage Cancer Trust provided excellent support to both Paul and his family. We wanted to say thank you."

On the day, 16 went out and 16 came back. WO2 ET(ME) Grant Wilson and PO ET(ME) Leighton O'Doherty were Ramsey's first to cross the line, setting the standard at 1hr 41mins – a great effort.

HMS Ramsey is one of four mine counter-measures vessels permanently based in Bahrain.

The new crew, MCM 1 Crew 2, arrived in Bahrain early January and will serve onboard Ramsey until the autumn.

Clyde up for windy challenge

TWENTY-FIVE sailors from HMS Clyde each ran a mile in relay to claim the Swann Hunter Challenge Shield.

The feat, which took 2hrs, 44mins and 16secs, took place along a windswept stretch of road near their 'home port' in the Falkland Islands.

The ship's executive officer started the relay, setting a solid time of 5mins 57secs for his mile, with the fastest time set by ET(ME) Lenny Tabner who ran in 5mins 17secs.

Commanding Officer Lt Cdr Dan Thomas, who ran the final mile in 5mins 34secs said "Fitness forms an extremely important part of daily life onboard.

"Competing in the Swan Hunter relay was a great way of combining fitness and promoting *esprit de corps* and we look forward to conducting similar events in the near future."

HMS Clyde is the Royal Navy's longest deployed warship. She left the UK in 2007, and has been on patrol in the South Atlantic, in support of the BFSAI mission, ever since.

Rising star takes Service squash title



● Commodore Tony Radakin, President of RN Squash, hands over a trophy to Royal Marine Ryan McKechnie

PLYMOUTH-BASED Royal Marine Ryan McKechnie has won the Royal Navy's Under 25 squash title.

Having only joined the Service in February 2012, Ryan is proving a rising star within Royal Navy squash.

Such was his talent that he was released from exercise at sea to take part in the Royal Navy Squash Championship.

Ryan said: "I got a text while on deployment on Exercise Cougar 13 asking who was available, so I had a chat with my Colour Sergeant Major and it was agreed I could fly home to represent the Navy in the Combined Services championship.

"It was challenging but in the end I was really pleased to win the event and I'm now looking forward to a squash tour in Canada with the Royal Marines."

Warrant Officer 1 Danny Egan (Royal Marines), Royal Navy Squash U-25 Manager, said: "Ryan is proving to be truly excellent ambassador for Royal Navy Squash, his attitude, tenacity and fitness are testament to his character and commitment and an example to all in any sport."

Before he joined the Royal Marines the corps already had notice of his talent as a regular player at Weymouth

Squash club owned by former Royal Marine Mark Long.

Born and raised in Weymouth and educated at Budmouth School, he has always been a multi-talented sportsman excelling especially at football and squash.

The challenging Royal Marines training was enjoyed by McKechnie and he passed out in 2012. On leaving training he was able to be released to play in the Royal Navy Championships in 2012 where he reached the final of the men's open, only to be narrowly beaten in an exhilarating match by the long-standing and experienced Navy Captain, Lieutenant Matt Ellicott (Royal Navy).

Last year his true potential was glimpsed when he played as the number one seed in the Inter-Services Championships – he did not drop a game. He also reached the final of the Royal Marines Championship, being beaten by the current RM Champion Marine Nick Jezeph. Later in the year McKechnie was crowned the Combined Service U25 Champion.

Ryan is assigned to 42 Commando and has aspirations in the future to be a Royal Marines Physical Training Instructor.

Plea for trustee

THE NAVAL Service Sports Charity is looking to recruit a serving trustee, either Royal Navy or Royal Marines, to join its board.

Board meetings are held three times a year, in Portsmouth. A keen interest in sport and good team-working skills are essential.

More information and application forms can be obtained from Norman Jackson, the company secretary, ideally by email to cosec@tnssc.co.uk or on 07512 857 806.



Aiming for gold at Sochi

ROYAL Marine John Jackson (pictured) is leading TeamGB's quest for gold at the Winter Olympics.

Sergeant Jackson, 36, is piloting one of two four-man bobsleigh teams in Sochi.

TeamGB, looking for its first bobsleigh medal since 1988, also qualified for the two-man bobsleigh.

The PTI instructor, who competed in the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games, said: "To represent TeamGB for a second time is a great honour."

"I'm looking forward to performing on the greatest stage, the highest level of competition with my teammates."

One of the Royal Navy's elite athletes, Jackson's Olympic dream looked in doubt when he ruptured his Achilles tendon in July last year but, following extensive rehabilitation, he returned to training in November.

Jackson, who competes for GB Bobsleigh in Bath, grew up in County Durham, has three daughters and lives with his girlfriend and GBR1 women's two-man pilot Paula Walker in Trowbridge, Wiltshire.

Leopards maul Warriors



HMS WESTMINSTER Warrior ET (ME) Simon Tulakepa evades a flying tackle in the soaring heat of Dar es Salaam.

During the Type 23's stopover, the ship's rugby team, the Warriors, took on the Dar Leopards.

The home side scored several tries against the Warriors, who struggled with

Tanzania's 40 degree heat.

Following a motivational half-time team talk, Lt Nick Palmer opened the scoring with a slice through the Leopards' defence. The resulting try was converted by POMET Kev Hancock.

Another highlight saw fly half, Marine Jake Burns, dash down the wing to score

under the posts. The hosts finished victors by 42-28, which leaves the sides all square as Westminster won the previous game in 2012.

The frigate is currently deployed in the Indian Ocean on counter-narcotics and counter-piracy operations.

■ Westminster patrol, see pages 14-15

Picture: LA(Phot) Dan Rosenbaum



Mum's the word for Linda

A ROYAL Navy lieutenant from Plymouth was the winner of the ladies category of the South West United Services Cross Country League.

Lt Linda Lawrence (pictured) was presented with her medal after the final race of the season at HMS Raleigh. She is currently serving at the Royal Navy training base in Cornwall within the Royal Navy Submarine School.

The 38-year-old is a seasoned Royal Navy cross-country competitor and previous Service champion. She has recently returned to duty from maternity leave.

Lt Lawrence said: "I kept up my fitness while I was on leave by attending Moovin Mamas, a buggy boot camp, and taking my own fitness pram sessions in the Plym Valley for other new mums."

Around 60 runners took part in the six-mile race for men and three for women at Raleigh.

Exeter University scooped most of the junior prizes in both the men's and ladies' category. Devon and Cornwall Police and the Commando Training Centre were also among the winners.

Dream end to hellish season

A ROYAL NAVY road race rider scooped a top award after the "season from hell".

Marine Frankie Gallagher took the Inter Service Championship title, winning by 66 points.

The RNRM team missed out on the team title, finishing second in what was only their second season of competition.

Around 50 riders from all three Services competed in the Combined British Military Services Championship, hosted by Thundersport GB (TSGB).

After what can only be described as the "season from hell", plagued with numerous mechanical issues, Sgt Stevie Elliott was rewarded for his continued resolve and commitment when he was presented with the "True Grit Award" by Thundersport.

This recognition was over the whole TSGB paddock and not just the military riders within it.

Due to his outstanding effort it was also top spot for Mne Gallagher in both the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Championship's.

LAET(M) Karl Dyer won the honour of being the Top Naval Rider.

The last two races of the season were held at Mallory Park and then Donington Park.

Mallory ended up being a meeting to forget. A major oil leak from one of the competitors early in race one saw Sgt Elliott and LEAT(M) Karl Dyer crash



● From left, Sgt Stevie Elliott, Mne Frank Gallagher and C/Sgt Bill Callister in action

Picture: Jack-Snaps.co.uk

out in spectacular style.

Both bikes sustained very heavy damage, which ended both their seasons prematurely. Only RPO Jon Hunt survived to fly the flag for the remainder of the day.

Donington Park was a mixture of wet, damp and dry conditions for racing, which caused lots of last-minute tyre changes for all riders competing.

Representing Team Navy were C/Sgt Bill Callister, RPO Jon Hunt and new rider AB Perry Davidson.

AB Davidson impressed in what was only his second meeting.

He demonstrated some strong racing and even a touch of showboating too coming out of the Melbourne Loop.

RPO Hunt had his best round so far, and had some really close racing in the back of the pack, beating several Team Army riders in the process.

He even had a coming together with Freddy Sheene, son of the late Barry Sheene, but managed to stay upright.

C/Sgt Callister will continue to compete onboard a 1000cc Honda Fireblade within TSGB; he will also be entering the Isle of Man TT for a second time.

Mne Gallagher has left the Royal Marines and will no longer be eligible to ride for the team. He is entering the Manx GP as a newcomer.

The RNRMRRT are aiming to win the team title in 2014 as well as retaining the individual title.

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