



# NAVY NEWS

JUNE 2020

## Supporting role

COMMANDO Helicopter Force Merlin Mk4s carry out disaster-relief training in the British Overseas Territory of Montserrat. The aircraft, from 845 NAS, deployed with support ship RFA Argus to the Caribbean in time for the hurricane season.

*(see pages 15-17)*

Picture: LPhot Rory Arnold

**INSIDE – ROYAL NAVY TRANSFORMATION**



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## Echoes of Arctic operations more than 75 years ago

### REMEMBRANCE

**A**mid an eerie light over the icy sea, HMS Kent paused to remember those who lost their lives in the Arctic Circle during World War Two.

The frigate marked the 75th anniversary of VE Day with a poignant remembrance service on her flight deck.

It was especially personal for HMS Kent's Commanding Officer Commander Matt Sykes, pictured above.



His great-grandfather Chief Petty Officer Frank Hodges, pictured inset, served in the light cruiser HMS Edinburgh in the Arctic Convoys.

On 30 April 1942, Edinburgh was struck by two torpedoes from a German submarine and attacked again by aircraft and destroyers two days later. Dozens of sailors died but the rest of the crew, including CPO Hodges, were rescued.

HMS Kent conducted the memorial service near the area where HMS Edinburgh sank to commemorate all those who died undertaking those heroic actions during the war.

Cdr Sykes said: "It has been a privilege to operate my own ship in the same area as my great-grandfather and it is only fitting that we took time to pause and remember all of those who fought in this challenging, but also beautiful, place.

"This is an area steeped in history for the Royal Navy, in particular the Arctic Convoys in which my great-grandfather served. His service in HMS Edinburgh – joining her in build and only leaving her as she sank into the Barents' icy waters on 2 May 1942 – was the defining period of his career and is often spoken about in my family."

HMS Kent's predecessor, a County-class heavy cruiser built in 1924, also saw action in the Arctic region escorting 18 convoys which provided critical supplies for the war effort. ■

## HMS Kent strengthens the UK's advantage in the High North and heads...

# INSIDE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

It's summer in the Arctic Circle, and the sun shines all day long. But don't be fooled by the elegant seas and beautiful skies – for the ship's company of HMS Kent these waves hide some serious dangers.

Air temperature drops below -10 degrees Celsius with the wind chill, and the water is so cold that a man overboard needs to be rescued within two minutes to survive.

The ever-present daylight takes a strange toll on the body clock, making sleep difficult and posing a mental challenge in addition to the physical ones.

But in a region which is assuming growing importance, the Royal Navy's ability to operate in the icy climate is becoming ever more vital.

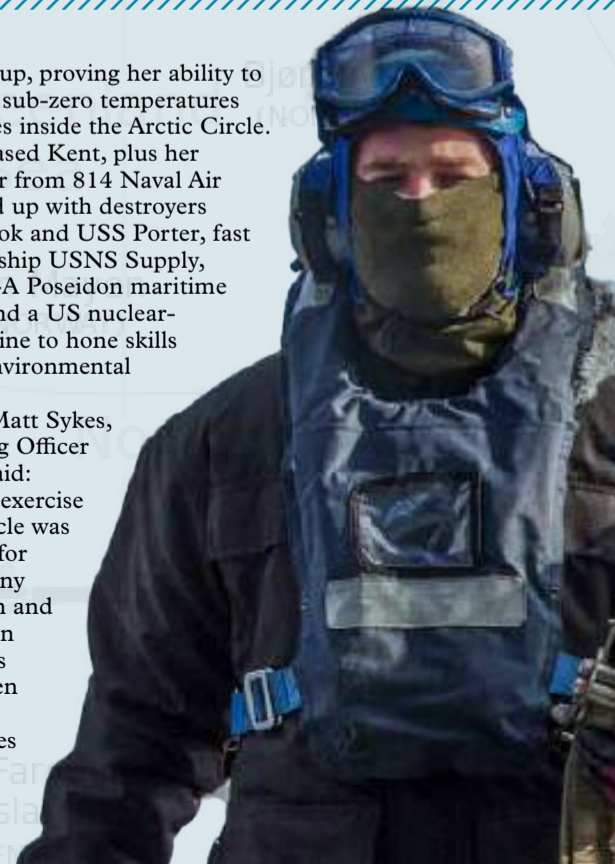
Which is why HMS Kent found herself in the Barents Sea working as part of a combined US

and UK task group, proving her ability to operate at sea in sub-zero temperatures hundreds of miles inside the Arctic Circle.

Portsmouth-based Kent, plus her Merlin helicopter from 814 Naval Air Squadron, linked up with destroyers USS Donald Cook and USS Porter, fast combat support ship USNS Supply, an American P8-A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, and a US nuclear-powered submarine to hone skills in challenging environmental conditions.

Commander Matt Sykes, the Commanding Officer of HMS Kent, said: "Conducting an exercise in the Arctic Circle was a new challenge for the ship's company whose dedication and professionalism in preparing for this exercise have been impressive.

"The challenges of working in this extreme environment

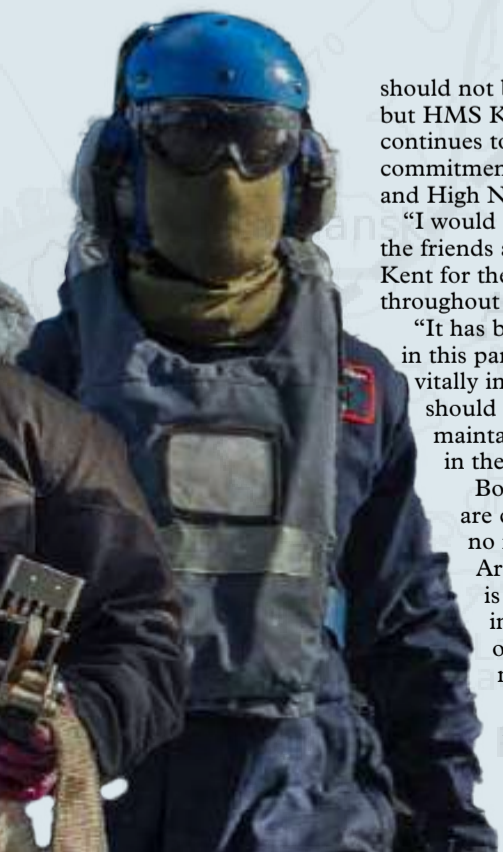






► HMS Kent's embarked Merlin helicopter from 814 NAS conducts a vertical replenishment while on maritime security patrols in the North Sea.

Parents Sea



should not be underestimated but HMS Kent's presence here continues to demonstrate the UK's commitment to the North Atlantic and High North.

"I would also like to thank the friends and families of HMS Kent for their unwavering support throughout this period.

"It has been rewarding to work in this part of the world and it is vitally important that the UK should take a strong interest in maintain stability and security in the region."

Both the UK and the US are committed to ensuring no nation dominates the Arctic region, which is assuming growing importance in the face of increased activity and melting polar ice.

More than 1,200 military personnel from the two nations were involved in the Arctic drills –

strengthening the Royal Navy's operational advantage in the North Atlantic.

It was the first opportunity for many of the sailors serving in HMS Kent to enter the Arctic Circle and experience the hostile cold environment.

Engineering Technician



**The challenges of working in this extreme environment should not be underestimated.**

COMMANDER MATT SYKES

Cameron Warren said: "It has been interesting to work in the Arctic region but also surprisingly normal.

"It has shown me that our training really does prepare us for anything. I have enjoyed the surreal experience of being able to

go on the upper deck at any time of day or night as it's always light outside."

In the last 12 months, HMS Kent has operated around the world and seen the full spectrum of challenging conditions in the past year, having operated in the high temperatures of the Gulf last year before taking up her tasking in the North Atlantic and High North.

Lieutenant Georgia Harding, HMS Kent's Principal Warfare Officer for underwater warfare, said: "This exercise was the culmination of a high-intensity period of anti-submarine warfare training that has seen a step change in HMS Kent's readiness to conduct operations.

"Being able to work with US Navy ships, submarines and

aircraft is an excellent opportunity to further hone our skills in a challenging environment."

The ship's activity plays a key role in the defence of the United Kingdom while many sailors and Royal Marines remain in the UK supporting the current national fight against COVID-19.

It comes on the back of Anglo-US anti-submarine warfare training in UK waters earlier this year, when the two allies joined up to help train future boat commanders undertaking the Royal Navy's world-renowned Submarine Command Course – also known as Perisher.



#### KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @HMS\_Kent and @RoyalNavy on Twitter for the latest updates

Words by Sam Bannister & Lt Cdr Sam Farrant // Pictures by LPhoto Dan Rosenbaum



**Training or on patrol around the UK**

HMS Queen Elizabeth  
HMS Trent  
HMS Tamar  
HMS Mersey  
HMS Tyne  
HMS Magpie  
HMS Chiddingfold  
HMS Lancaster

HMS Richmond  
RFA Tidespring  
RFA Tidesurge  
RFA Tideforce  
814 NAS  
820 NAS  
824 NAS



17(R) TES  
617 Sqn  
RFA Argus  
HMS Medway

Gibraltar Squadron

HMS Kent

UKMCC  
NSF Bahrain  
IMSC  
COMUKMCMFOR  
HMS Montrose  
HMS Argyll  
HMS Brocklesby  
HMS Shoreham  
HMS Ledbury  
HMS Blyth  
1700 NAS  
RFA Cardigan Bay  
RFA Wave Knight  
Naval Party 1023  
Forward Support Unit

HMS Enterprise  
Naval Party 1022

HMS Forth  
NEFI

On patrol somewhere beneath the Seven Seas is one Vanguard-class submarine and an undisclosed Trafalgar or Astute-class boat

**FLEET FOCUS**  
Protecting our nation's interests

IT'S very much business as usual for the Royal Navy with work continuing at home and abroad – as well as personnel helping the national effort against Covid-19.

RFA Argus and HMS Medway are at the centre of the Royal Navy's annual support to British Overseas Territories in the Caribbean (see pages 1, 15-17). Sailors, airmen and commandos tested their Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief capability with three days of exercises on Montserrat. Argus has the additional support of four helicopters from 815 and 845 Naval Air Squadrons and a Crisis Response Team from 47 and 24 Commando Royal Marines. Keeping the aircraft ticking over on Argus are a team from 1700 NAS (see page 20), from RNAS Culdrose.

The Arctic Circle in summer was where the men and women of HMS Kent found themselves (see pages 2-3) as the frigate headed for the Barents Sea to work as part of a combined US and UK task force. Portsmouth-based Kent, plus her Merlin helicopter from 814 Naval Air Squadron, linked up with destroyers USS Donald Cook and USS Porter, fast combat support ship USNS Supply, an American P8-A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, and a US nuclear-powered submarine to hone skills in challenging environmental conditions.

Underwater gliders that can rapidly send vital information that could give an extra edge to the Royal Navy's submarine-hunting operations are being trialled in the North Atlantic (see page 11).

Survey ship HMS Enterprise has been in the Asia-Pacific region since September (see pages 18-19). Sub Lieutenant Jack Ashbridge describes his experience with the vessel, which he joined in Vietnam for Common Fleet Time Training.

The ship's company of Enterprise paid tribute to the men of World War 2 destroyer HMS Jupiter while sailing in the Java Sea (see page 19).

To the Gulf and the baton of safeguarding shipping in the area has passed between two Royal Navy officers – virtually (see page 5). Commodore Rob Bellfield took charge of the International Maritime Security Construct from Commodore James Parkin.

The Royal Navy's routine operations in the Gulf continue (see page 14) despite the global challenge presented by Covid-19. HMS Blyth and Shoreham headed 300 miles up the Gulf for some combined training with the Kuwait naval force and then Blyth joined Brocklesby and two US Avenger-class hunters for an intense mine countermeasures exercise. They were joined by frigates HMS Argyll and Montrose.

Gulf-based mother ship RFA Cardigan Bay took some fresh ducklings under her wing when she practised with US patrol boats for the first time (see page 19).

Crews for the Royal Navy minehunters are to begin four, not six-month stints, in the region as the force undergoes its biggest frontline change in more than a dozen years (see page 21). The four-strong mine countermeasures force operating from the Naval Support Facility in Bahrain will mirror crewing methods successfully trialled by HMS Montrose for more than a year as part of the Royal Navy's Forward Presence programme.

Back in the UK and minehunter HMS Hurworth (see page 5) is about to undergo an upgrade – after having travelled the distance of two laps of the planet since her last one.

The 'flying eyes' of the Royal Marines have touched down on Britain's biggest warship (see page 7), clearing them to join HMS Queen Elizabeth on front-line operations. A Commando Wildcat from 847 NAS landed repeatedly on the carrier's deck in the Channel.

HMS Mersey tracked a Russian warship off the coast of France and monitored her movement through the English Channel (see page 9).

A four-man bomb disposal team from Southern Diving Unit 2 dealt with a 2in mortar bomb unearthed in Brighton (see page 18).

Royal Navy personnel continue to join the fight against Covid-19. Former naval medic Jordan Holland rejoined the service to help (see page 6). URNU students up and down the UK have also been doing their bit (see page 29), from delivering shopping and medical supplies, working in care homes and in hospitals.

Finally, the Royal Navy joined the rest of the nation in paying tribute during the VE Day 75 commemorations (see pages 24-25). When the pandemic spiked long-standing plans to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe, it forced a hard, but rapid, rethink. Cue some socially-distanced garden, street parties, and parades. Sea Cadets throughout the UK held their own virtual tributes, followed later in the day by virtual tea parties (see page 27).

# Humbling times

## VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

AS THE Covid-19 pandemic progresses, this month we wanted to bring you some of the stories from the men and women supporting the government in its response across the UK and overseas.

One of our most important responsibilities is to assist in planning and preparations. Lt Lauren Davis was seconded to Op Rescript in April, with the alarming job title of 'SO3 Death.' She was one of six people in the joint Excess Death Operational Planning Team, planning for any mortality management MACA requests.

"I helped to gather data on the international military response in comparable countries, a key piece of work to identify how we could learn from what other nations were doing. This allowed us to build a picture of how we should manage excess mortality if Covid-19 worsened," she explained.

She found the experience "truly unique and interesting. The rate at which Defence could stand up an effective organisation to support Civil Authorities was rapid and the combined Joint experience made a tangible contribution to the nation's Covid-19 response."

Of course, Royal Navy personnel have also been involved in front line efforts. Royal Marine Lt Joe Martin was part of the Covid support force delivering mobile testing, something that he described as "an extremely rewarding and unique role."

Usually 42 Cdo are responsible for conducting global maritime operations such as stopping international drug smugglers or training foreign forces. However, he pointed out, Royal Marines training teaches you to be adaptable in a variety of challenging environments.

"I now find myself battling Covid-19 by commanding a Mobile Testing Unit in the south west," he said. "It's new to all of us, but we are proud to support the NHS in this fight."

As well as protecting the UK, the Royal Navy also has a duty to safeguard our Overseas Territories. RFA Argus deployed to the Caribbean at the start of April for the hurricane season, but she was also prepared to provide Covid-19 assistance if needed.

Lt Henry Saunders, a pilot from 845 Naval Air Squadron, is on board.

"This deployment has meant encountering a number of novel challenges as well as flying



● Royal Marines have been manning mobile testing units in the south west

in some incredible locations, for example around the volcanic island of Montserrat. We have learned a huge amount and continue to build our readiness for whatever challenges are to come," he said.

POACMN Liam Waterhouse is on his first operational deployment, working as part of a Tailored Air Group for the first time.

"We have been putting the Merlin's capabilities to the test and on some flights using a variety of disciplines like trooping, load lifting and winching," he said.

His enthusiasm was shared by AET Liam Doughty from 815 NAS.

"A lot of the flying has been doing reconnaissance for potential landing sites. Along with working in the heat of the Caribbean and at sea, keeping the aircraft ready at all times has been a new challenge that we have all risen to."

Of course, it is not just about those who work in and on the aircraft themselves. LET Mark Cormack and ET Luke Rhodes are responsible for survival equipment for the embarked flights.

"During the first six weeks on board, we have set up a fully functional SE section and passenger briefing area, as well as maintaining over 60 items of SE," they explained.

The unique operating environment of the Caribbean has also given the Mobile Air Operations Team (MAOT) plenty to do. This specialist team has been identifying landing sites and key infrastructure across the islands.

Lt Adam Figgins was one of those playing a key role in the disaster relief exercise that the team conducted on arrival.

"We provided helicopter landing site management on the ground, including rigging under-slung loads for flight and receiving resupply in challenging terrain," he said.

These are only a few of the stories from the men and women of the Royal Navy who have been involved in the responses as this pandemic has progressed. But there are many more out there who have been involved, from front line medics to HQ support staff. You can read more about them on pages 6 and 29.

However, even as we celebrate what we have achieved, we remain humbled by the hard work of so many others. Much of what we have done has been in a supporting role; we thank all those, especially the NHS but also our own medics, who have been on the front line of Covid-19.



# Hunter proves Hurworth

## New lease of life for Royal Navy stalwart



SHE has sailed 43,682 nautical miles, had 16 commanding officers and seven different crews – but now HMS Hurworth is having a rest.

Having travelled the distance of two laps of the planet since her last refit, the Hunt-class minehunter is about to undergo an upgrade.

Now back home at HM Naval Base Portsmouth, BAE Systems will overhaul her power generation, propulsion and weapons, including the installation of an upgraded combat system.

This will ensure she returns to the front line as one of the most advanced and capable minehunters in the Royal Navy, even though the

hull entered service 35 years ago. Living accommodation will also be modernised.

During the seven years since HMS Hurworth last undertook a major maintenance period, she has been focused in and around the UK and northern Europe on national defence taskings and keeping sea lanes open.

She has escorted Russian warships through the English Channel and has conducted no less than six periods of Operational Sea Training; the final one in March.

This has prepared crews deploying to the Middle East where two of HMS Hurworth's sisters, HMS Ledbury and

Brocklesby, are stationed.

Lieutenant Commander Neil Skinner, who brought HMS Hurworth back into base as the last Commanding Officer before the refit, said: "While the nation fights the COVID-19 epidemic, the Royal Navy's minehunters have a vital role to play in the defence of home waters and overseas, keeping shipping lanes open to help the flow of international commerce.

"We're looking forward to seeing HMS Hurworth at the conclusion of her refit which will keep her at the forefront of mine warfare for years to come and a return to overseas operations."

The refit will be completed next year, after which HMS Hurworth will conduct extensive sea trials and regeneration training before a new crew is due to sail her out to the Gulf to continue the enduring UK commitment in the region.

Minehunter crews rotate around the ships in their squadron, including those currently deployed to the Gulf.

The Royal Navy has just announced these rotations to the four minehunters operating from Naval Support Facility Bahrain will occur every four months, rather than the current six, to improve the ability of sailors to balance their home and family lives with the demands of service overseas, see page 21.



● Cdre James Parkin hands over to Cdre Rob Bellfield via video

## Virtual change of command

THE baton of safeguarding shipping safely entering and leaving the Gulf has passed between two Royal Navy officers – virtually.

Commodore Rob Bellfield is now in charge of the International Maritime Security Construct, the military force established last year with the emphasis on ensuring merchant vessels pass through the Strait of Hormuz unimpeded.

One sixth of the world's oil and around one third of its liquid natural gas, in addition to other cargos such as vehicles, foodstuffs and consumer goods, pass through the narrows – just 40 kilometres wide – every year.

To provide additional protection to shipping, the Construct was set up last year by seven nations – Australia, Albania, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, the UK and the United States – since when Lithuania has also joined the coalition.

Commodore James Parkin – who's normally in charge of the RN's amphibious forces as Commander Littoral Strike Group – has commanded the Construct and its Operation Sentinel mission from its headquarters in Bahrain since the end of January.

He transferred command to Cdre Bellfield virtually – online, no handshakes or face-to-face meetings – given the coronavirus pandemic.

"This change of command – taking place virtually due to social-distancing measures – is the most unique ceremony in which I have participated," Cdre Parkin said.

"Our coalition has grown since I took command. I expect that it will continue to grow. With increased membership comes greater influence over those who fail to respect the rule of international law, and over those who might want to interfere with the free flow of global trade."

His staff, the numerous ships assigned to the mission and maritime patrol aircraft have all been working around the clock to ensure maritime security and to deter malign activity in the Middle East.

"I have had the privilege to command a capable and diverse group of sailors, marines and airmen from many nations, who I not only have come to trust, but have also relied upon for the last three months," Cdre Parkin added.

"This team rose to this challenge of building the IMSC to what it is today. I have no doubt they will continue to hone this mission now that it is in the capable hands of my good friend Rob."

Commodore Bellfield, until recently in charge of the Devonport Flotilla and a former deputy commander of the Royal Navy's mission in the Middle East, said providing reassurance to the merchant shipping community was "paramount – especially during this unprecedented time of global pandemic

"Our mission remains focused on supporting global trade; it is more important than ever to shine a light on illegal actions and uphold the Rule of Law on the High Seas."



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RN personnel continue to deliver to help nation combat coronavirus

# Back on the frontline

A FORMER naval medic from the New Forest has re-joined the service to help the national struggle against Coronavirus.

Jordan Holland spent eight years as a Royal Navy medical assistant before she left the service last year to pursue her dream of becoming a full-time artist.

But she also wanted to continue serving her nation – as an officer in the Royal Naval Reserve.

The latter, like many things, has been put on hold by the pandemic. In the interim, the 29-year-old decided to sign back on as medical assistant and join the collective fight against COVID-19.

Jordan returned to HMS Nelson in Portsmouth, re-joined the navy and received her uniform ahead of being assigned to one of the MOD's Joint Hospital Groups – Forces medical personnel who are attached to NHS hospital trusts around the country.

"It's an unprecedented time for the world, but it's great to feel like you can do something," she said.

"It's fantastic watching all services come together – the NHS, police forces, delivery personnel and shop workers – holding this all together.

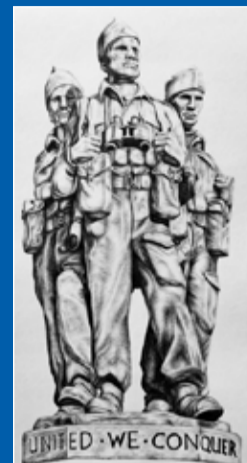
"It feels good to be a part of it and as I was already a qualified navy medic that seemed the natural area for me to help in."

Jordan, who's half-British, half-American (her father is a pilot for British Airways, while her mother

served in the US Air Force for 28 years as an officer) joined the Royal Navy in 2011 from university in Tennessee to begin a career as a medical assistant.

There's no direct equivalent in the civilian world: it entails everything from working side-by-side with doctors and surgeons on ships or sick bays ashore to providing life-saving trauma care to troops and Royal Marines injured on the frontline as a field medic.

Her eight years in the navy took



• Jordan pictured training in the field during her previous RN career and examples of her artwork

the former pupil of Bournemouth's Talbot Heath School for Girls to the Horn of Africa and efforts to curb piracy with frigate HMS Somerset, working in the medical centres of the navy's engineering school at HMS Sultan in Gosport, and providing immediate assistance to trainee Royal Marines injured in the field at the Commando Training Centre in Lymington, Devon.

She continued as a field medic with the Commando Logistics Regiment in North Devon and provided vital care and assistance to islanders in the Caribbean

in 2017 as part of the UK's response to a series of devastating hurricanes (Operation Ruman).

In addition, she's been a member of the navy's badminton team, representing the Service in Portugal and Hong Kong, enjoyed adventurous training opportunities, and recorded many of her naval career in art form – a hobby she took up on her first deployment with HMS Somerset.

"Art has always been a passion and I left the navy last year so I could pursue this profession properly as I was getting a lot of requests and commissions," Jordan

explained. "I was in the process of re-joining as a Royal Naval Reserve officer – I have always and still do love the navy. You make the best kind of friends, you work so well together – it's a whole other world. When you leave, you miss the people and the banter.

"When my interview date was put on hold due to COVID-19, I offered to re-join temporarily to help with the coronavirus as a medic."

Jordan re-joined the navy inside four weeks. If you are interested in rejoining visit [royalnavy.mod.uk/careers](http://royalnavy.mod.uk/careers).

URNU students step up, see page 29.

## Marines run mobile test centres

Royal Marines helped key workers in the South West test for coronavirus as they ran two mobile centres.

Personnel from 42 Commando at Bickleigh, near Plymouth, were drafted in as part of the nationwide response to the pandemic, assisting the running of Mobile Testing Units in Salisbury and Torquay.

The centres are two of eight around Britain established to test key workers and their families who may have shown symptoms of COVID-19.

At those eight sites, they are directed to drive through a lane where military personnel provide them with instructions on how to conduct the test – which involves a mouth swab – and to how to dispense with it safely upon completion.

The marines, who underwent comprehensive training at their base near Plymouth, set up their mobile centres at a park-and-ride car park in Salisbury and at Torquay coach station.

Key workers – who remain in their vehicles at all times – drive up, show their ID to the commandos, who are wearing PPE, and then receive instructions on how to perform the tests themselves, all courtesy of a series of signs.

"Afterwards, they return the test kit to us which



we deliver to Bristol Airport – our regional testing centre," explained Lieutenant Ben Wagstaff, part of the team assisting in Salisbury.

"The team has been working really well together and the public have been very friendly and inviting.

"We're just happy to be here, supporting the NHS and doing what we can to help the country."

## Joint effort to print face masks

SAILORS and dockyard workers in Plymouth worked around the clock to meet the unprecedented demand for face masks from the NHS.

They joined a city-wide effort involving the university, colleges, Plymouth Science Park and individual tech enthusiasts, harnessing 3D printing technology to produce components for face shields.

Specialist workshops with 3D printers in Devonport Dockyard ran 24/7 to produce the vitally-needed protective equipment as part of the military response to the pandemic.

The Royal Naval Reserve maintains a transportable workshop with three 3D printers which were introduced last year and are designed to support the Fleet's operations around the globe.

For the past fortnight, engineers Chief Petty Officer Gareth Chilcott, pictured, and Leading Engineering Technician Ben 'Axel' Foley – who work in the dockyard for defence firm Babcock Marine by day and volunteer as reservists with Plymouth unit HMS Vivid –



have been producing face visor headbands for the masks.

"During this unprecedented time we really feel that the whole country is pulling together and we all owe great gratitude to all NHS and care workers and it's been a privilege to be able to do our little bit," said Ben.

"We may only be able to manufacture relatively small quantities compared to others within the consortium, but looking at the bigger picture I think every single face shield that is delivered will make a difference."

Once printed, the parts are assembled with components produced elsewhere in Plymouth by Babcock to make a complete face shield, which is then delivered to the NHS.





# Cat's are on the carrier prize

THE 'flying eyes' of the Royal Marines have touched down on Britain's biggest warship – clearing them to join HMS Queen Elizabeth on front-line operations. A nimble Commando Wildcat from 847 Naval Air Squadron landed repeatedly on the vast

"The massive flight deck of the Queen Elizabeth gives us lots of space to manoeuvre the aircraft," explained Petty Officer Aircrewman Arron Tobin. "But it can also get very busy with lots of activity and so proves excellent training."

"We have made considerable gains in our knowledge and experience of operating at sea and it has been great to see everyone, engineers and aircrew alike, working together to achieve the qualification."

Qualified Helicopter Instructor Lieutenant Commander David Westley added: "It was hugely rewarding to be part of the first Commando Wildcat crew to conduct night-vision deck landings on the Queen Elizabeth class."

RNAS Culdrose-based 820 NAS then re-joined HMS Queen Elizabeth to take part in Basic Sea Training and Carrier Sea Training. Aircrew, engineers, survival equipment technicians and logistics personnel embarked with their Merlin Mk2 helicopters.

820 NAS Commanding Officer, Commander Ian "Reg" Varley said: "I have recently taken over command of 820 NAS and I am hugely excited and privileged to be going to sea with my team."

"We were recently on call supporting the nation's emergency services and we have just handed that over to another Culdrose squadron so that we can focus on our more traditional purpose which is to defend the UK's aircraft carrier task group."

Keeping the sophisticated Merlin helicopter flying is no small task and is very much a team effort.

"The run-up to a major training exercise is a busy period for us," explained Leading Air Engineering Technician Danielle King.

"The aim is to keep these aircraft capable of flying around the clock ensuring we can always keep an asset on station hunting the enemy submarine."

"Our number one priority is to keep the aircraft and its crew safe and that means we need to be meticulous in our aircraft maintenance as any mistakes could be costly. It's hard work but a job I really enjoy doing."

Pictures: LPhot Unaisi Luke, HMS Queen Elizabeth

deck of the Portsmouth carrier in the Channel. The multi-role helicopter with its three crew is typically found over land, performing tasks as varied as reconnaissance, close air support – directing air and artillery strikes on enemy forces – evacuating casualties, troop protection with its heavy machine-gun, and ferrying troops and equipment around. But as the marines are the nation's elite amphibious force, the Commando Helicopter Force Wildcats must be expected to operate seamlessly at sea (something the Army version of the Wildcat, also based at Yeovilton, cannot do).

HMS Queen Elizabeth sailed from Portsmouth to begin the latest stage of her training in preparation for her maiden deployment leading a carrier task group next year.

Pilots and a crewman from the Yeovilton-based squadron joined the carrier to ensure they remained qualified for operating at sea – requiring 24 safe landings by day and night (the latter with the aid of night-vision goggles – and to ensure they're ready for immediate operations if called upon.

They'd already performed a number of training 'sorties' in at the state-of-the-art simulators at their home base before heading out over the Channel to join the future flagship.

While landing a Wildcat safely on HMS Queen Elizabeth with a flight deck the size of three football pitches is considerably easier than on a much-smaller frigate or destroyer, there are other considerations to bear in mind for the crew.

## KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

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## First tick in the FOST box

HMS Queen Elizabeth is one step closer to being able to deploy on global operations after completing the first stages of Operational Sea Training.

The Portsmouth-based aircraft carrier has been at sea for the past few weeks proving she is ready for her maiden operational deployment next year.

The ship's company have been put through their paces with simulated fires, floods and battle damage as well as carrying out warfare training and mission rehearsals.

They entered Fleet Operational Sea Training (FOST) to undergo further extensive assessment under the watchful eyes of the renowned Royal Navy FOST team.

This phase is based on the survivability of a major incident at sea where the ship's company will have to work together to overcome any emergencies or threats.

Passing FOST means they can then sail on global operational deployments.

Second in Command of HMS Queen Elizabeth,

Cdr Charlie Guy, said: "This is the first Basic Sea Training period for a Queen Elizabeth-class carrier. It is a chance for us to put to the test everything we have learnt over the last two years and show our FOST assessors we are ready for anything."

Preparing for FOST saw HMS Queen Elizabeth cleaned, painted and scrubbed and equipment checked from breathing masks for fighting fires to the ship's sea boat.

The next stage will see more qualifying training for UK F35 Lightning fighter jet crews, who will be conducting practice Combat Air Patrols from her decks, giving vital experience to the aircrews and ship's company involved in air operations.

This training will prepare the ship for further training later in the year with other Royal Navy ships to ensure they are ready to deploy as a task group next year.

You can find out how they fared in next month's *Navy News*.



● Weapons Engineer Tom Hoare fixing flight deck lights



● Personnel prepare for a fire-fighting serial



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# Mersey monitors

THE Royal Navy tracked a Russian warship off the coast of France and monitored her movement through the English Channel.

HMS Mersey, an Offshore Patrol Vessel, was on routine security patrols in home waters when she was called on to locate and monitor the Russian Navy vessel – plus its support ship.

Portsmouth-based Mersey tracked the Russian vessel, Steregushchiy-class corvette RFS Boiky, closely as she sailed into the Channel after taking over from the French Navy.

Mersey watched every movement as the corvette linked up with RFS Akademik Pashin, an auxiliary vessel, to refuel and transfer stores, before getting underway again.

Commanding Officer of Mersey, Lieutenant Commander

Will Edwards-Bannon RN, said: "Working to preserve the maritime security of the UK has always been one of the Royal Navy's very highest priority missions throughout our long history."

"The need to fulfil this mission hasn't changed with the coming of the COVID-19 pandemic so, although we are living and working in slightly different ways on board to limit the risk from the virus, HMS Mersey's fantastic ship's company continues to work hard to protect our



nation's interests.

"This work includes the close monitoring of foreign warships operating near to our shores, which is what we – along with our sister ship HMS Tyne – have been doing so far on this patrol."

Sub Lieutenant Zac Connor RN, Mersey's new Gunnery Officer and one of the bridge team involved in this operation, said: "I have only recently joined the Mersey and I'm happy to be using the world-class training that I have received for real. I am proud of what we do, the important role that the Royal

Navy has and the contribution that we make to the UK."

Lt Cdr Edwards-Bannon, added: "I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the friends and families of HMS Mersey for all of their support to us on board."

"Many of our friends and family members are now on the front-line themselves, helping the nation win the fight against COVID-19."

"All of us in Mersey are incredibly proud of their efforts and grateful for the

sacrifices that everyone is making on the home-front while we are out here at sea, doing our own bit to protect our nation's interests."



## ...while Tyne's crew are also on top of their game



EAGLE-EYED sailors from HMS Tyne helped save a diver's life off the south coast of the UK.

The Offshore Patrol Vessel responded to a mayday call for the missing diver while on routine maritime security patrol in home waters.

The alert from Her Majesty's Coastguard saw Tyne assist RNLI lifeboats from Exmouth and Lyme Regis, as well as two Coastguard helicopters, a dive boat and four local fishing vessels.

Tyne arrived in the area in Lyme Bay – around four miles off the coast of Seatown, Dorset – within 45 minutes of the alarm being raised.

The warship took up station in the last known position of the diver and sailors were called on to carry out a visual search.

After 20 minutes Sub Lieutenant Andrew Boyle, pictured left, a young officer under training on Tyne, spotted the diver.

Tyne then radioed the location to Exmouth lifeboat which was in the best location to recover him.

The diver was found well and taken to safety by the lifeboat.

Lieutenant Nick Ward, the Executive Officer of HMS Tyne, said: "This incident is a great example of how versatile the vessels of the Offshore Patrol Squadron are."

"The ship's company quickly adapted to a changing situation and worked to support the Coastguard, the RNLI and local mariners in carrying out the search."

"We are always concerned for the safety of our fellow mariners at sea, thankfully SLT Boyle spotted the diver and we were able to play a key part in recovering him quickly."

An RNLI statement said: "[The diver] had been diving without a buddy and adrift for two hours in which time he floated three miles from his last reported location. He had surfaced safely but lost sight of the dive vessel after his line became detached. He did not require medical attention."

Exmouth RNLI Deputy Coxswain, Roger Jackson, said, "The diver was

very fortunate to have been located safe and well so quickly and, although there was an easterly swell, visibility was good and there were a number of vessels in the locality who came to help in the search."

"We are grateful for the invaluable assistance of our RNLI colleagues from Lyme Regis, the crew of HMS Tyne, Lyme Regis Coastguard Rescue Team, the HM Coastguard helicopter and other vessels in the area that came together in a coordinated effort that led to this successful rescue. The diver was very lucky indeed and although I'm very pleased the outcome was good, I would urge everyone to please heed the latest government Coronavirus instructions."

HMS Tyne later went on to perform a ceremonial sail past of Guernsey to celebrate 75 years since the island's liberation.

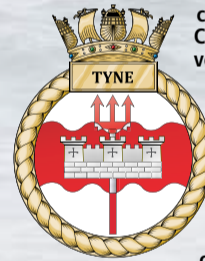
Tyne anchored off Sark on the anniversary of VE Day with the ship bedecked in flags from bow to stern. She blasted her siren in celebration at 3pm – when Churchill addressed the nation in 1945 – and shone her searchlight in concert with other Royal Navy warships at home and abroad for five minutes from 9.30pm, signifying the end of the blackout 75 years ago.

The following day she sailed past the pier heads at St Peter Port, flying her Battle Ensign – an oversized White Ensign to make the ship stand out.

The Royal Navy, led by HMS Bulldog – which had played a key role in the Battle of the Atlantic by seizing an Enigma coding machine back in 1941 – arrived in the Channel Islands to take the surrender of German forces.

Later on May 9 1945, sailors from Bulldog went ashore in St Peter Port, while HMS Beagle landed a party in St Helier to raise the Union Flag in Jersey and end Nazi rule there. The islands mark May 9, rather than VE Day, as a national day.

*Life on the Tyne, see page 13  
VE Day commemorations, see pages 24-25*



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**THE JOURNEY DOES NOT HAVE TO END!**



# THE GLIDER FACTOR

Words by Peter Howard

**Underwater gliders that can rapidly send vital information that could give an extra edge to the Royal Navy's submarine-hunting operations are being rigorously trialled in the North Atlantic.**

One of the Slocum Gliders is right now being tested to the limit as it hoovers up information about the seas west of Scotland during a five-month deployment.

The unmanned Slocum – using its array of cutting-edge sensors – is capable of sending near real-time information on temperature, depth, salinity (salt content), currents, oxygen levels, turbulence and more.

These parameters can impact the efficiency of the sonar and sensors used by the Type 23 frigates and Merlin and Wildcat helicopters – as well as the Royal Air Force's P-8 Poseidon – during submarine-hunting operations.

Currently, data collection takes months, but these gliders can not only provide unparalleled insight, they can also relay information in a matter of hours.

The intention is for the navy to eventually deploy gliders continually to high-threat areas to give a clear and constant picture of the underwater battlespace, meaning operational decisions will be based on the very latest information.

Having this data quickly means sub-hunters will be able to

adapt better when they are attempting to detect underwater surface threats.

"Ocean environments are changing – what we knew 20 or 30 years ago doesn't apply now in many areas, particularly the North Atlantic which is our backyard for submarine operations and probably one of the most complicated and challenging bodies of ocean," said Captain Pat Mowatt RN.

"Salinity, sound velocity and temperature have all changed. We need to know these accurately as we strive to understand more and more about the undersea environment (battlespace) and how this effects the performance of ship and submarine sensors so we can achieve an operational advantage."

The way sound travels through water is greatly affected by the water temperature, pressure and salinity, which impacts the effectiveness of sonar and sensors used by ships and aircraft to track submarines.

The gliders can provide up-to-date information on these matters quickly to TAC HM (tactical hydrography, meteorology and oceanography) trained officers who can then advise submarine hunting commanders about the range of the ship's sonars and how to adjust settings for best results.

A better understanding of water column properties can also reveal insight into how an adversary might exploit the

environment to 'hide' in underwater features, such as ocean fronts and eddies.

The glider can dive down to 1,000m using controlled buoyancy to drive itself to the surface and back down, which ultimately means it can stay out at sea for months on end and constantly send data.

Right now, the Royal Navy continues to trial these gliders as part of Project Hecla. One of them is currently off the North West coast of the Outer Hebrides.

The Slocum was due to stay out for four weeks but has been extended to up to five months, giving the project the opportunity to test the glider to its limits on a long duration mission for the first time.

The data is being integrated into ocean forecast models by the Met Office and is available for use by the Navy at the Joint Operational Meteorology and Oceanography Centre at Northwood.

These trials are supported by the National Oceanographic Centre, British Oceanographic Data Centre and the Scottish Association of Marine Science.

During these latest tests, the project has been able to look at reducing power consumption of on-board sensors to extend battery life and resolve teething issues of getting data from the shore-side receivers to the Met Office.

Project Hecla was established to optimise the navy's ability to collect and exploit hydrographic and oceanographic information and they are continuing to look at other opportunities on top of the gliders.

Among those are 'profiling floats' (basically a cylinder packed full of sensors) that can operate for three to four years once they are in the water, sending subsurface measurements to shore.

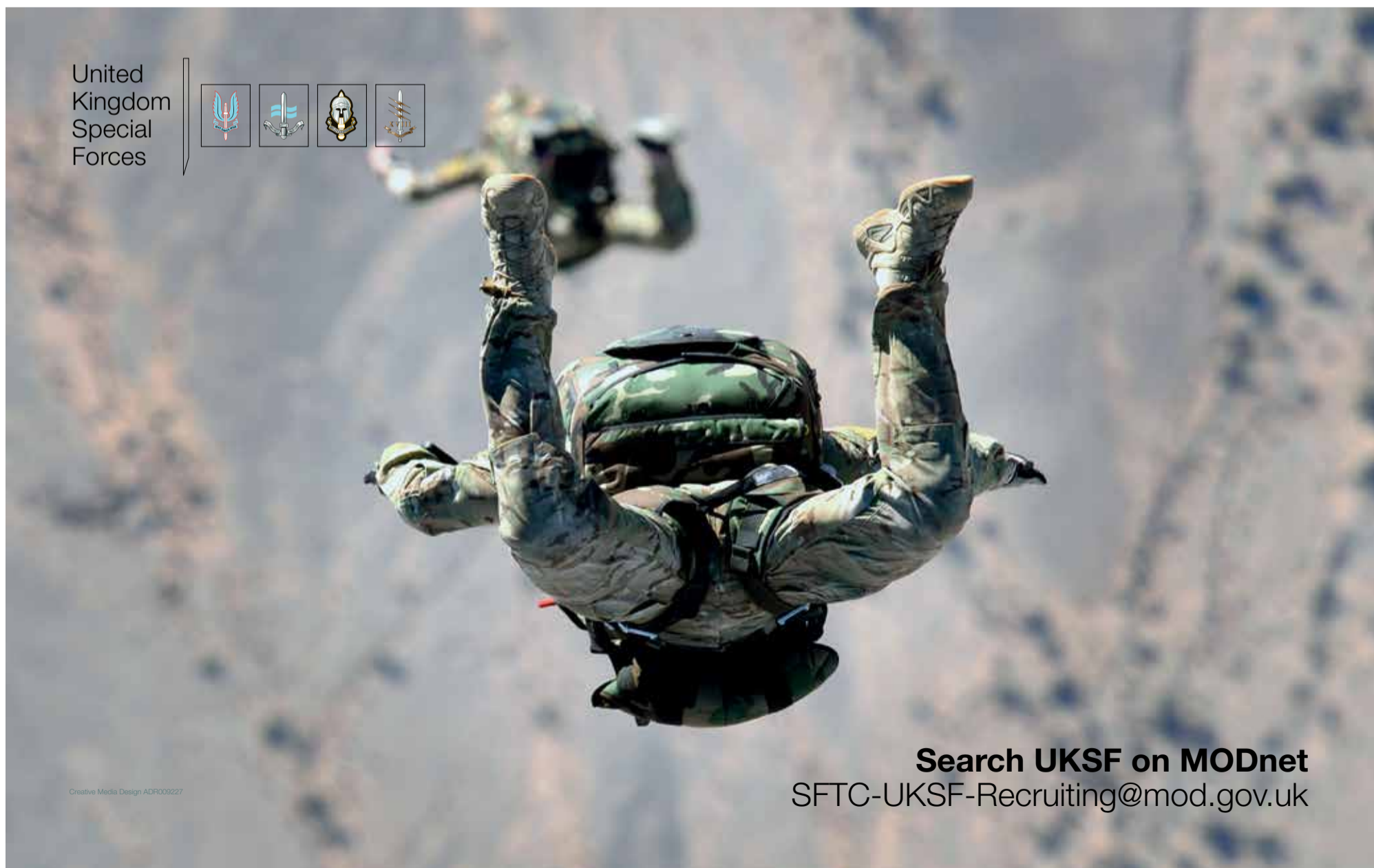
The project will also trial how autonomous vehicles can aid data collection and exploitation missions alongside NavyX, who are responsible for developing and testing new technology for potential use on the frontlines.

Project Hecla is also involved in maintaining safety of navigation for all ships using autonomous vehicles.

Data from trials of the REMUS autonomous underwater vehicles is used to produce Admiralty Charts for maritime navigation systems.

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# ALWAYS ON TYNE

“”  
While HMS Tyne has spent the patrol closely monitoring Russian warships, the ship's company is very aware of the efforts of the rest of the UK in the fight against the coronavirus.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER  
RICHARD SKELTON

## It's not just fish, you know.

HMS Tyne's recent patrols have included shadowing 12 Russian Navy warships as they passed close to UK waters. Yes, the Royal Navy's Offshore Patrols Vessels have a big hand in protecting the fishing industries, but they are also extremely versatile.

Examples of this are written about many times across this month's paper. You can read about Tyne saving the life of a missing diver on [page 9](#) and about how they marked 75 years since VE Day in the waters around Guernsey ([pages 24-25](#)).

Tyne and her fellow OPVs are a constant and reassuring presence, not just in home waters but in the North and South Atlantic, too, with HMS Medway ([pages 15, 16 and 17](#)) in the Caribbean and HMS Forth patrolling the Falkland Islands.

For Tyne, though, the focus is very much on affairs around the UK and being at the forefront of duties in the UK's Area of Responsibility, the zone that, under a NATO agreement, British ships are on call to provide a constant presence, taking or handing off responsibility as ships of interest enter and exit.

In her last two patrols, Tyne has shadowed four Russian warships passing through close to UK shores.

This has included tracking the Yuri Ivanov, an intelligence collection ship, plus the Akademik Pashin, a fleet auxiliary and two warships.

Taking up duties in the North Sea, Tyne watched every movement through the Strait of Dover and into the English Channel before handing over to the French Navy off the French coast.

This all took place after an action-packed March that saw Tyne involved in the shadowing of eight Russian warships as part of a task group that included fellow Royal Navy ships and the allied NATO navies of Norway, Denmark, Germany and France.

Tyne went about this business while the RN continued to support the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic at home.

Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Richard Skelton put Tyne's recent contributions into some context during this uncertain time.

"While HMS Tyne has spent the patrol closely monitoring Russian warships in UK's Area of Responsibility, the ship's company is very aware of the efforts of the rest of the UK in the fight against the coronavirus," he said.

"The ship's company have been following government direction on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 which will allow us to safely continue ensuring the security of UK waters.

"The ship's company are very grateful for the efforts of the NHS and the MOD COVID Support Force in protecting the UK from the worst effects of the pandemic. Like the rest of the country, we all would like to show our thanks and appreciation."

In between these tasks, Tyne briefly stopped to embark fuel, stores, rotate crew and carry out essential maintenance before again putting to sea.

These short support periods are essential to sustain Tyne, ensuring she is available throughout the year for tasking. Whilst she is alongside her sister ship, HMS Mersey, covers patrols, helping ensure the constant security of UK waters.

This stop also allows one of Tyne's three watches to leave the ship and go on well-deserved leave as another watch, fresh from leave, takes their place on board.

As well as conducting maritime security operations, the ship maintains the skills required to respond to incidents at sea, while also training the next generation of Naval Officers in navigation.

Shadowing a Russian warship in busy UK waters is an ideal opportunity to test the skills that allow the Royal Navy to operate anywhere in the world; at sea, on land, and in the air.

Supporting HMS Tyne in carrying out her essential tasking are several mobilised reservists, who make up 11% of the ship's company.

Able Seaman Jason Boull, a reservist from HMS Cambria, is the latest to join the ship's company and is getting to know the ropes.

He said: "I have thoroughly enjoyed getting stuck in and learning all I can to help me integrate into the Ship's Company, it's a great team and the work is great fun, a complete change from my civilian job working in catering."



# Sealane lifeline

## CLAP for carers. *Absolutely.*

Clap for the paramedics, doctors, nurses, pharmacists. *Definitely.* Clap for the shopworkers, the bakers, the grocers, the truck drivers delivering the goods and ensuring shelves are stocked. *Yes, or course.*

And why not also clap for the seafarers and dockworkers ensuring the global sinews of supply are largely unaffected by the lockdown? *Trade has to keep flowing.*

Which is why, despite restrictions and limitations, Royal Navy ships in the Gulf region continue to ensure shipping moves around unimpeded and unhindered.

"Routine operations in the region continue despite the global challenge presented by Coronavirus," explains Lieutenant Conor Smith, Navigating Officer of Bahrain-based minehunter HMS Blyth.

"Maintaining readiness is far from easy and it includes a wide range of factors to ensure the ship is able to succeed on operations. The crew must train to ensure skills remain current. Stores and equipment must be replenished and maintained. Personnel must keep physically and mentally fit to remain flexible and ready for tasking."

Away from home waters, the Gulf remains the RN's crucible of effort: frigates, minehunters, a RFA support ship, one headquarters and support facility, well over 1,000 sailors and Royal Marines.

All have been active over the past month in maintaining trade to and from the Gulf (source of one sixth of the world's oil, one third of its natural gas supply).

They do not do so alone. The US Fifth Fleet operates from Bahrain. Eight nations, including the UK, are committed to Operation Sentinel protecting merchant shipping in the Strait of Hormuz (see pages 20-21). And a long list of regional navies share the goal of maintaining peace and trade.

Like the Kuwaitis. Blyth and her Sandown-class sister ship HMS Shoreham – both specialists in locating mines in deep waters – headed 300 miles up the Gulf for some combined training with the emirate's naval force.

A series of tactical manoeuvres with missile attack craft KNS Istiqlal provided the British warships with an excellent opportunity for training while building stronger relationships with a regional partner.

All three ships gained a considerable amount of value from the combined training and both navies left feeling confident in their ability to operate quickly and efficiently with each other, should the need arise.

Blyth did not take part in the next major foray into the Gulf, but Shoreham did: a two-day combined workout with the US Navy.

She joined Hunt-class HMS

Brocklesby and two US Avenger-class hunters Gladiator and Dextrous on the short, but intense, MCMEX 2-2020 (ie the second Anglo-American mine countermeasures exercise of the year...).

The hunters were given added punch through the involvement of frigates HMS Argyll and Montrose. The former has recently arrived in the region to begin a six-month tour of duty, while her sister Montrose is deployed to Bahrain for three years as part of the Navy's Forward Presence programme to position its ships around the globe on extended missions.

Taking charge of the 48-hour test was Commander Neil Griffiths and his staff – who direct the Royal Navy's Gulf mine forces on a daily basis.

The exercise began with the minehunters working together to clear a corridor through a (mock) mine danger zone.

Shoreham alone investigated 40 'suspicious' objects with her Seafox Mine Disposal System – a robot submersible which feeds back live imagery to the operations room and can also be used to safely detonate a mine; alternatively, the ships can send their dive teams down to place charges and neutralise the explosives – which Shoreham did on three occasions.

"Working with our fellow minehunters from the US Navy,

Shoreham has again proved herself worthy of her reputation as a highly-capable, operationally effective vessel," said Petty Officer (Mine Warfare Specialist) Grant Mallion, the ship's minehunting director.

"The exercise was also an excellent chance to prove our ability to work as part of a combined task group." That group then showed its ability to defend itself against a fast moving simulated surface threat.

HMS Argyll choreographed the response and provided protection with her 4.5in main gun, while her Wildcat helicopter buzzed overhead.

The Wildcat – callsign Razorback after Argyll's Wild Boar crest – then got the chance to switch sides and play as the hostile threat in the skies, doing its best to threaten the important work of the MCMs with a skilful show of tactical flying until it was taken out by Argyll's new Sea Ceptor Missile system.

The joint exercise concluded with an impressive display of ship handling as four of the vessels took up close formation for a final sail past before breaking away to continue delivering ongoing operations in the region.

"I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the exercise, particularly as I was afforded the opportunity to provide force protection for my small ship brethren," said Lieutenant Commander Tim 'Castro' Castrinoyannakis, HMS Argyll's

Operations Officer – and also a qualified minewarfare and clearance diving officer who used to serve in Shoreham.

"The exercise has again demonstrated the close relationship between the US Navy and Royal Navy, and the versatility of these capable ships and their crews.

"Standing together, ready and prepared for any tasking or contingency it has been a great opportunity to reassure the maritime community of our commitment to ensuring security and stability in the region."

The exercise, as with all RN work in the Gulf and Middle East since early March, has been played out against the backdrop of the global lockdown (which affects the ships and the base in Bahrain just as it does loved ones at home in the UK).

"I am immensely proud of what the team have achieved so far and truly grateful for the unfailing support which we all receive from our friends and families back home, particularly at this difficult time," said Blyth's Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Peter Ellison.

"We will continue to maintain peak readiness throughout the rest of their deployment.

"The crew's thoughts are with their friends and families at home and with the key workers back in the UK who are looking out for them."





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# REPORT FROM THE CARIBBEAN

**O**n golden sands and in the shadow of an active volcano, the Royal Navy's annual support to British Overseas Territories in the Caribbean has swung into action.

A formidable force has arrived in the region for hurricane season and also to disrupt the illegal movement of narcotics across the Caribbean.

Centred around RFA Argus and HMS Medway, sailors, aviators and commandos of the Royal Navy task group are ready to respond and provide vital support to the island nations.

Preparations to ensure that everyone is ready roll when the time comes have been completed.

In six weeks, six islands have had the reassuring sight of Argus off their coastline, the whirr of Wildcats and Merlins overhead and commando boots on the ground.

This is Atlantic Patrol Tasking North and now they're ready for hurricane season.

This time, though, there's extra work to be done.

Argus has also been prepared to respond, if required, to calls for support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Those embarked too have been training to react in the wake of a disaster while coronavirus is still present in the area.

That means extra protective clothing and procedures to deliver the same level of relief but without risking the spread of the grim virus.

» *Full report on next page.*





Words by Peter Howard // Pictures by LPhot Rory Arnold

**In the shadow of Montserrat's active volcano, the Royal Navy's specialists in responding to humanitarian disasters formed up and were put through their paces ahead of hurricane season.**

A series of eruptions from the Soufrière Hills volcano saw half of Montserrat closed off, including its capital Plymouth.

The crisis reached its climax in 1997, destroying 80 per cent of Plymouth, demolishing the island's only hospital and airport, burying it in mud and ash up to 12 metres deep.

This disaster acted as a stark reminder of the power of nature as sailors, aviators and commandos set about training to ensure they are up to scratch to respond in the aftermath of a natural disaster during hurricane season, which runs from June to November.

RFA Argus is the home to this formidable force, which is formed every year and designed to assist British Overseas Territories in their time of need, if required.

For the past three years RFA Mounts Bay has carried the baton, but now it's over to helicopter carrier/support ship Argus and HMS Medway, the Offshore Patrol Vessel, to be the Royal Navy presence in the region.

Three days of demanding exercises on Montserrat checked that the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) capability is ready to roll if and when the time comes.

"Once again the Royal Fleet Auxiliary is central to supporting the British Overseas Territories in preparation for the hurricane season," Captain Terence Barke, Commanding Officer of RFA Argus, said.

"RFA Argus follows in the footsteps of RFA Mounts Bay who provided boundless support to the region in the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, and Dorian in 2019.

"This time, RFA Argus has the fellow support of four helicopters from 815 and 845 Naval Air Squadrons and a Crisis Response Team from 47 and 24 Commando Royal Marines. Team Argus is now ready."

Over 72 hours, Argus and co were tasked to respond to simulated requests called in by the island's authorities.

In each scenario, different areas of expertise were used to complete the mission. Reconnaissance teams from 845 Naval Air Squadron and 24 Commando Royal Engineers were tasked with surveying the affected areas, checking for landing sites and assessing where aid was needed most.

Personnel, vehicles and stores – containing rations, water and supplies to rebuild infrastructure – were brought ashore to the key zones by the helicopters and boats. This included the engineers, who have proved highly-valuable to these missions after repairing vital infrastructure in recent hurricane seasons.

The helicopters also practised winching people on to 47 Commando Raiding Group's boats, and evacuating casualties from both land and sea.

During this training, the British worked closely with the Royal Montserrat Defence Force. The locals are well-versed in these situations and secured the immediate area.

Social distancing measures were enforced throughout this mission and also allowed the task group to test their procedures for responding to relief while the Covid-19 pandemic continues.

The training was conducted in careful liaison with the Governor of Montserrat

**ROYAL NAVY IN THE CARIBBEAN**

- RFA Argus
- HMS Medway
- 3x Merlins of 845 Naval Air Squadron
- 1 x Wildcat of 815 Naval Air Squadron
- 1700 Naval Air Squadron  
*(read more on page 20)*
- 47 Commando Raiding Group
- 24 Commando Royal Engineers



and was designed to have zero impact of the island's population and its unique habitats and wildlife.

Corporal Thomas Thornton, a coxswain from 47 Commando, said: "My role on Argus is to lead a team of four marines on small boats in varying tasks including inserting and extracting the Crisis Response Troop in HADR situations, re-supplying troops on the ground, acting as a surface casualty evacuation boat and working with US Law Enforcement Detachments in counter-narcotics operations.

"As a secondary role we have a Remote Piloted Air System (drone) capability that we use to provide an insight into what lies ahead including route selection and damage assessment."

Soufrière Hills remains active and every year the Royal Navy supports the Montserrat Volcano Observatory by helping the scientists to re-locate seismic sensors and equipment.

In addition, wherever Argus visits as part of her deployment to the region she's sends her helicopters – three Merlin troop carriers from 845 Naval Air Squadron and one smaller Wildcat maritime patrol aircraft – into the skies to provide the latest information on helicopter and beach landing sites if the worst should happen.

"The airborne view of abandoned Plymouth served as a powerful reminder of the impact of natural disasters – and reinforced the need for Argus' presence to enable rapid humanitarian relief," said Merlin pilot Captain Anne Bloechle, a US Marine Corps officer on exchange with 845 Naval Air Squadron.

"If a disaster should occur during this hurricane season, our support helicopters can bring supplies and personnel from ship to remote locations ashore. The recent flights have familiarised aircrew with the islands to ensure the best possible support to those living in nature's destructive path."

Together with the specialist Crisis Response Troop from 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines and her air group, Argus will remain on station with HMS Medway until the late autumn, and also be available to provide resilience to British citizens overseas during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I feel it is important to provide help to our overseas territories when needed," said 38-year-old Lieutenant Mark Jones from Plymouth (UK). "I still remember hearing about the volcano on Montserrat as a young boy, and I also saw the devastation caused in 2017 by Hurricane Irma. Although we cannot control the weather, I am keen to uphold the UK's continuing dedication to the provision of assistance from the sea wherever it may be required."





# TURKS AND CAICOS



The Argus Caribbean tour was off 700-plus miles north-west to the Turks and Caicos Islands after the stop in Montserrat.

Each stop – at this point when Argus reached Turks and Caicos she had already been to five of the British Overseas Territories – has its own purpose.

Bermuda (read below), the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat (twice) and now Turks and Caicos have had the reassuring presence of a British ship on their shoreline.

The stop in T&C held the same value as any of the other visits. It was about practising what would be needed to deliver relief to the islands, refreshing knowledge on the local environment and getting reces done to ensure operations can be tailored around the complex archipelago.

In T&C, another bout of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief capability training was undertaken, practising how they would deliver aid if a hurricane hit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this training scenario, Turks and Caicos Governor, Nigel Dakin, phoned in a request for assistance and Argus instantly sprang into action:

- » A Wildcat patrol helicopter of 815 Naval Air Squadron surveyed West Caicos and Ambergris Cay for damage, establishing areas in most need of assistance.
- » 24 Commando Royal Engineers were sent ashore by Merlin troop carriers from 845 Naval Air Squadron to repair infrastructure.
- » 47 Commando Raiding Group were responsible for beach reconnaissance, looking at where boats could drop supplies ashore.
- » Crisis Response Troop set up a facility so that people could be checked for injury by medical personnel, provided with food and water, and given shelter. All this was done under simulated COVID-19 restrictions.
- » Casualty evacuation procedures were carried out, ensuring an injured service person could be safely brought back on board Argus to receive medical attention.

In the three days that followed, the disaster relief teams delivered aid stores from Argus and carried out further surveys on beaches, helicopter and airfield sites, testing all of their equipment along the way.

Volunteers from the ship acted as local civilians in need of medical attention.

“COVID-19 has created lots of new challenges to how we would normally provide assistance,” said Lieutenant Aaron Wilding RN, a medical advisor on Argus.

“During this training we have been adapting our standard operating procedures to ensure that, even in the aftermath of a hurricane, the risk of exposure is protected against.”

Royal Marines Corporal Chris Teasdale, of the Mobile Air Operations Team, added: “My main job is to conduct reconnaissance and security of helicopter landing sites.

“Before departing I gained as much information as I could to build a picture of the potential options. I was then tasked to go forward in a Wildcat helicopter, survey the area, mark the site and clear it of any potential hazards.

“This is because in the aftermath of a hurricane the sites may be damaged or obstructed. Once completed the information is sent via radio to the pilots who were able to land the helicopters safely and bring in aid.”

Prior to Turks and Caicos, Argus was in the waters around the Cayman Islands, where they established the best helicopter landing sites in the wake a hurricane. 845 and 815 Naval Air Squadrons carried out patrols with the Royal Cayman Islands and also undertook drug interdiction exercises.



The first stop on the island hop was Bermuda, far north of the Caribbean Sea and other British Overseas Territories in the North Atlantic.

Over the pink-sand beaches navy aviators completed reconnaissance sorties.

Three Commando Merlin helicopters of 845 Naval Air Squadron and a Wildcat of 815 Naval Air Squadron worked with Bermudan authorities.

They patrols was set up to gather information on landing sites where humanitarian aid could be brought ashore if called for by the island's governor in a time of need.

“As my first deployment and after a long sea transit it was great to have the opportunity to experience the beautiful island of Bermuda from the air,” said Merlin pilot Lieutenant Matt Gordon.

As well as search-and-rescue training, the navy fliers took part in joint exercises with the newly-formed Bermudan coastguard, which was launched in February to provide security and safety in the seas around the islands which have a population of more than 62,000.

This included the Wildcat helping the Bermudians track noncompliant vessels.

Lt Gordon added: “Having the chance to not only operate in a mixed formation with a Wildcat, but experience and work alongside them as we conducted search and rescue training – and the Wildcat carried out noncompliant vessel pursuit training with the Bermudan Coastguard – is something I will not forget.”

Captain Phil Dennis RN, Commander of the Royal Navy's task group in the region, said: “RFA Argus and her ship's company have been excellent in the delivery of a very capable ship that can operate in a multitude of roles.

“Our preparations in Bermuda demonstrate that as a navy we can operate together, with our partners, and ensure the protection of British nationals, both within mainland UK and the Overseas Territories.”

One of 845's Air Engineering Technicians, ET Keri Slade, said: “I am excited to be getting the chance to make a difference to other people's lives, and those who are in need in our overseas territories.”







● (above and below) Southern Diving Unit 2 were called to a mortar bomb in Brighton.

## Busy time for bomb disposal experts

A FOUR-man bomb disposal team from Southern Diving Unit 2 dealt with a 2in mortar bomb unearthed in Brighton.

Despite the ongoing situation regarding Covid-19, Royal Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams remain on stand-by all day, every day to assist civil authorities with such tasks and ensure the public's safety.

After being called in by Sussex Police, the team deemed the British-made bomb too dangerous to move from where city centre construction workers found it.

The team destroyed it in situ, with mitigation measures around the blast and a cordon to protect the public.

Southern Diving Unit 2 has been kept busy over the past few weeks with several call outs including two calls in Bracklesham, West Sussex.

Royal Navy bomb disposal teams were also needed at Meon Shore, in Hampshire in early May. The beach was cordoned off while the unexploded ordnance was detonated.

Meanwhile, other diving teams from the Fleet Diving Unit have been equally busy.

Northern Diving Group assisted emergency services in the first week of May by carrying out a controlled explosion in Portpatrick, on the west coast of Scotland, and in a separate call in Lockerbie.



# HA LONG BAY FROM HOME AS ENTERPRISE VISITS VIETNAM



**Survey ship HMS Enterprise has been in the Asia-Pacific since September. Sub Lieutenant Jack Ashbridge joined the ship in Vietnam for Common Fleet Time training – time spent on an operational warship when rookie officers learn the basics of life at sea. The submarine warfare officer told Navy News about his experience so far.**



"JOIN the Royal Navy, see the world" is a phrase which has enticed many an aspiring sailor to make that first step into their careers office.

As someone who aspires to be a submariner, I was aware when I signed up that I would "see the world" differently in comparison to my surface counterparts.

As a result, when I joined the navy in January 2019 as a submarine warfare officer, I fully expected the choice of foreign port visits to be somewhat limited.

Little did I know that I would find myself writing this article in the Indian Ocean just over a year later. I joined the multi-role survey ship HMS Enterprise in Hai Phong, Vietnam, for my Common Fleet Time (CFT) training.

Given the fact this was the Royal Navy's first visit to Hai Phong, joining at this time was a real privilege. Vietnam is a vibrant country with a rich, cultural heritage.

Although the mood was dampened by the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, the people were friendly and exceptionally welcoming. With

the strange mix of French colonial architecture, Communist Party flags and modern office blocks in Hai Phong itself, as well as the more picturesque environment of Ha Long Bay (*main image*), this visit was quite an introduction to the deployment.

On sailing from Vietnam, I had the opportunity to transit through the South China Sea. As an officer under training, this was my first opportunity to get to grips with life at sea in HMS Enterprise.

Armed with my task book, I was busy learning what makes a Royal Navy ship function at sea.

This experience is made even more unique by the fact that, as far as I am aware, I am the first Young Officer (YO) to conduct CFT aboard an Echo-class vessel, as this phase of an officer's training is normally delivered in a frigate, destroyer or a capital ship.

As such, I've been able to witness how the Royal Navy's Hydrographic Squadron operates and contributes to wider understanding of the operational environment in one of the world's most hotly contested seas.

## STUDY NAVAL HISTORY ONLINE

Our established MA Naval History online course offers a unique opportunity to study the history of the Royal Navy at postgraduate level. Studied either full time or part time by distance learning, you will have the option to blend your online study with archival visits and enrichment activities both in the UK and abroad. This includes unparalleled behind-the-scenes access to both the National Museum of the Royal Navy's experts, archives and historic ships in Portsmouth and Lloyd's Register in London.

[port.ac.uk/ma-naval-history](http://port.ac.uk/ma-naval-history)



UNIVERSITY OF  
PORTSMOUTH







● Captain Cecil Ladislaus, commanding officer of HMS Enterprise, is welcomed to Vietnam; (top) Enterprise arrives in Hai Phong, Vietnam.

Between March and April we were alongside in Singapore for a deployed maintenance period. This gave me the chance to explore my family's connections with this part of the world.

My grandfather served in the Royal Air Force, and lived in Singapore with my grandmother, father and aunt during the 1970s as a radar technician in RAF Changi.

Although the street they lived on has changed nearly beyond recognition – dirt streets and bungalows replaced by tarmac and mansions – going there was an experience I doubt I would ever have had without the Royal Navy.

While operating so far from home, it is easy to forget that the Armed Forces have a rich history in the Asia Pacific region.

Having sailed from Singapore in April, we conducted our post maintenance trials before heading south to the Java Sea.

This is where we picked up the story of HMS Jupiter, who met her end in the Java Sea 78 years ago. I was asked to organise the service...

## ENTERPRISE REMEMBERS HMS JUPITER IN JAVA SEA



● Ship's company hold a remembrance ceremony for HMS Jupiter while in the Java Sea

HMS Enterprise remembered the men of World War 2 destroyer HMS Jupiter while sailing in the Java Sea.

The Echo-class ship is in the Asia-Pacific region and recently made stops in Vietnam and Singapore.

After spending time alongside for routine maintenance in Singapore, the survey ship has returned to sea and, while transiting the Java Sea, held a service for the men who died during Jupiter's sinking in February 1942.

Not since the next – and to date last HMS Jupiter, a Cold War frigate – passed over the wreck in January 1974, with the Prince of Wales among her ship's company, has the Royal Navy visited the last resting place of the wartime destroyer.

More than 45 years later, Sub Lieutenant Jack Ashbridge organised the ceremony at sea.

"As part of my training, I was tasked to prepare and lead a service of remembrance for the men who lost their lives on board HMS Jupiter," he said.

"I was grateful to hear from the Jupiter Association who provided some memoirs from sailors who served during the war."

Accounts by Stoker George Squance and Able Seaman Harold Lock were read out by Engineering Technician Todd Millward and Able Seaman Ryan Payne.

HMS Jupiter was deployed to the Far East in 1941 after spending time fighting German destroyers near Plymouth and helping in the chase and destruction of the Bismarck.

“”

**These deep connections between the past and present are part of what makes the Royal Navy such a unique organisation.**

- SubLt Jack Ashbridge

In January 1942, she sank a Japanese submarine but just weeks later, disaster struck.

During the Battle of the Java Sea, she hit a mine and sank within minutes.

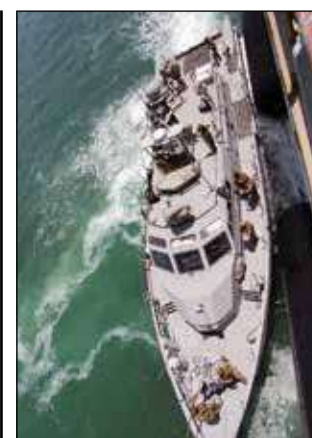
More than 80 men went down with the ship and a quarter of those captured by the Japanese later died in prisoner-of-war camps.

Sub Lt Ashbridge added: "These deep connections between the past and present are part of what makes the Royal Navy such a unique organisation."

"Forgetting the sacrifices of those who served in the past would mean forgetting our identity – and our commitment to peace."



● (above) WW2 destroyer HMS Jupiter; (left) HRH Prince of Wales, next to the Bugler, remembers HMS Jupiter in 1974 service



## Cardigan adds US boats to family

GULF-based mother ship RFA Cardigan Bay took some fresh ducklings under her wing when she practised with US patrol boats for the first time.

The auxiliary, which acts as a floating command ship and support vessel, for the Royal Navy's four Bahrain-based minehunters, 'rafted up' with two Mark VI Patrol Boats at her home in Mina Salman port.

The manoeuvre – well-honed with British and US minehunter crews, who frequently bring their ships alongside Cardigan Bay to take on board fuel and other supplies to sustain operations in the Gulf – saw two American crews bring their craft safely alongside the much larger Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel.

The ten-strong crews of boats 1201 and 1204 carefully – and successfully – manoeuvred their craft into position several times, ready for the RFA crews to cast lines down, providing excellent training for both the Brits and Americans, and especially the patrol boat coxswains.

The US Navy's 3rd Coastal Riverine Squadron operates four Mark VIs in Bahrain for numerous duties including launching/recovering surveillance drones, force protection missions – the 45kt craft carry a mixture of automated and hand-operated machine-guns – and board-and-search missions.

They can also be adapted for minehunting duties.



## ASK YOURSELF:

- Were you made in the Royal Navy?
- Do you want to give others the opportunity to make it in the Royal Navy?
- Are you seeking a rewarding Second Career?

If the answer to any is yes then...

### APPLY TO BECOME A CAREERS ADVISER

Flag Officer Sea Training is currently seeking RN and RM WO's, Senior Rates and SNCO Service Leavers and former Service (those that left Service under 3 years), to work in Armed Forces Careers Offices which are listed on the map.

Positions are nationwide, employed on Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) (NCS) Limited Commitment.

Salary starts from £30k with promotion opportunities to rise to £43k. FTRS rates of pay apply (Reviewed annually and pensionable).

For more information contact:

PSTN 01929 403172 | Mil 94374 3172 | E-mail [navycnr-rnsrtrainingassist@mod.gov.uk](mailto:navycnr-rnsrtrainingassist@mod.gov.uk)







# 1700 reasons to be cheerful

**SAILORS from Culdrose air station are playing a key role in the flagship of the Royal Navy's Caribbean task force.**

Aviation training/support ship RFA Argus – carrying four military helicopters and elite Royal Marines – is likely to be the UK's first response to a devastating hurricane should it strike the region during the impending hurricane season (see pages 15-17).

The helicopters – three-troop carrying Merlins and a smaller, agile maritime Wildcat – plus a specialist detachment of Royal Marines Commandos and Royal Engineers will be at the vanguard of any relief effort.

But none would land or take-off on Argus without trained aircraft handlers who guide the helicopters on to and off the flight deck safely, oversee refueling, firefighting in the event of an accident, and the safe transfer of loads slung beneath the aircraft, under the direction of Flying Control, the ship's aviation officer. All come from 1700 Naval Air Squadron.

"Operating the third largest flight deck in the Royal Navy is only as good as the embarked flight deck teams," explained Lieutenant Commander Neil Harris, in charge of the Culdrose team aboard Argus. "Both the aircraft engineers and the aircraft handlers are out in all weathers, day and night."

The unique squadron – which, despite its name, possesses no aircraft – provides ships across the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary with specialist teams of sailors to carry out their mission.

At any one time, two thirds of the squadron is deployed; right now, there are 53 men and women from Culdrose on Argus... even though no helicopters from the Cornish air station are embarked.

They make up an eclectic team of aircraft handlers, engineers, naval police officers, medics and others ensure not just the smooth running of

the busy flight deck.

Since Argus left Plymouth in March, the 1700 team has trained extensively to ensure they are ready for any situation they might encounter – set against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic which meant personnel had to isolate/maintain a safe social distance from colleagues and family members ashore.

With serious casualties always likely in a hurricane, medics from 1700 Squadron have practiced carefully moving critically-ill patients quickly and comfortably from a disaster zone to the ship, either by using the Merlins and Wildcat or by boat.

Weapon engineers from the Culdrose team are responsible for overseeing Argus' weapons systems – used solely to protect the ship – ensuring RFA sailors are qualified to use the ship's guns in close in weapons shoots.

Outside hurricane season, Argus can support counter-narcotics operations, working with the US Coastguard to intercept drug runners. The ship's policeman Petty Officer Neil Crawford has prepared for arresting/processing smugglers working with the ship's dedicated boarding teams.

And all 50-plus members of the 1700 NAS team on Argus have worked side-by-side with the RFA ship's company on life-saving drills in preparation for recovering migrants in the Caribbean Sea, if required.

"We are now on station in the Caribbean and in a position to support British Overseas Territories – whether assisting in countering illicit trade, responding to a humanitarian crisis or supporting efforts to combat the effects of Coronavirus," Lieutenant Commander Harris added.

"The personnel of 1700 NAS are a diverse and intrinsic part of team Argus and ready, as always, to deliver. It's a real privilege to lead such an eclectic and effective team."

Pictures: LPhoto Rory Arnold, RFA Argus



# Wings without usual trappings

THE Fleet needs fresh blood just as the sinews of life in the UK must be maintained during the pandemic.

But instead of the traditional pomp, marching band and, fly-past and parade watched by proud families, the latest aviators to earn their Merlin wings entered front-line service in low-key fashion at Culdrose.

The three pilots, five observers and four aircrewmembers assembled in flying overalls, each two metres apart, stepped forward one at a time to pick up their wings

badges before saluting the air station's Commanding Officer (and veteran Merlin aviator) Captain Stuart Finn.

"Communities across Cornwall will have seen the familiar sight of Culdrose Merlins in the skies – despite the coronavirus pandemic," said Commander Martin Russell, in charge of 824 NAS, the Merlin Mk2 training formation.

"Training has continued and it is essential that we continue to prepare personnel for the frontline Merlin squadrons.

"I'm very proud that whilst

observing social distancing as best as we can, we've been able to graduate the latest batch of aircrew to join 814 and 820 squadrons. This is a special occasion for them as they begin their frontline careers. Well done."

It is hoped, if circumstances allow, that the graduates and their families could be invited to a full ceremony, with parade and marching band, at the next scheduled presentation in December.

Picture: LPhoto Kyle Heller, RNAS Culdrose



## App extends to cover health and wellbeing

NEW features on the My Navy App – Health and Wellbeing information now live

Health and wellbeing information – including the latest Covid-19 advice – is now available on your smartphone.

The My Navy app has been extended beyond managing your career and admin, managing benefits, and now includes a series of additional features across the health spectrum.

The Health and Wellbeing feature provides personnel easy

access to information on a range of services from confidential and free helplines, online resources and tools, welfare help, mental health support and advice and techniques.

Personnel are also reminded to check My Navy regularly for the latest alerts and communications.

Service personnel can access My Navy at [www.royalnavy.mod.uk/mynavy](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/mynavy). Follow the instructions to log on via your smart phones and personal devices.

## Adieu 'Naval Service,' Hello 'Royal Navy'

UNDER the transformation banner, the phrase 'Naval Service' to embrace all elements of the Naval family is being replaced by the term 'Royal Navy' as directed by the Navy Executive Committee.

There is a strong public understanding of Royal Navy as a powerful, resonant and historic brand, in much the same way as our sister Services use 'Army' and 'RAF' to encompass their full range of activities and elements.

This will not remove the separate identities of the individual components that make up the Royal Navy such as the Surface Fleet, Submarine Service, Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Royal Naval and Royal Marines Reserves, civil servants, careers service and QARNNS will all continue to exist as distinct elements, and should be referred to individually as appropriate.

But when referring to all these elements together, Royal Navy rather than the Naval Service should be used.

## Healthcare hub added to Defence Gateway

A NEW digital service for all service personnel now provides a 'one-stop-shop' for information on all aspects of primary healthcare

The My Healthcare Hub – accessible via the Defence Gateway – is a mine of useful information on issues as varied as medical, dental, mental health, rehab (physio) and occupational health.

The site is designed to provide patients with information about Defence Primary Healthcare (DPHC) services, facilities and response to both the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

Through the hub, personnel can

- Find and contact their nearest medical centre, dental centre, or other healthcare facility
- Find their pharmacy
- Keep up to date with DPHC services
- Find useful links to health advice and information
- Book an appointment online
- Give feedback about their experience to DPHC

Patients can search for their nearest DPHC healthcare facility whether they are located near their local unit or further afield.

There is a wealth of health-related information on this site which will be a useful resource for Regular and Reserve personnel and civilian patients with Defence Gateway access.

The My Healthcare Hub can be accessed on MODnet devices or personal PCs, tablets and smartphones.





## Elaine passes impressive milestone

PASSING the impressive milestone as 32 years as a reservist is HMS King Alfred's dedicated nurse/recruiter Warrant Officer 1 Elaine Grist.

Elaine (pictured here as a leading hand in the 1990s) originally joined the now-defunct HMS Salford as a QARNNS nurse, serving as an instructor to Medical Support Assistants... while working by day as an operating theatre nurse in the NHS.

She has served at HMS Eaglet (Liverpool) and HMS Wildfire (formerly HMS Northwood) before coming under the wing of HMS King Alfred in Portsmouth, and deployed on operations to Iraq (Op Telic) and on Herrick 9 and 14 in Afghanistan.

Over her 32 years, she's collected two commanding officer's trophies, Reserves Nurse of the Year for her work in Iraq, a Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire's award and a Second Sea Lord's Commendation – all acknowledging her dedication and professionalism.

Elaine, who now lives in Fareham, left the NHS in 2013 since when she's focused her time on recruiting men and women for the RNR's medical branch, a job which takes her all over the country.



## Bedtime stories on your phone

TO HELP the precious link between parent and child, Aggie's Storybook Waves runs a free service allowing personnel to record a bedtime story for their child.

The stories are normally recorded in a special booth, but Aggie's has now made it possible to record a story on your smartphone which it will then send to your family.

In the same pack they will also receive a copy of the book *Zoe and the Time Rabbit*, donated by the Naval Children's Fund, activity scrapbooks provided by Reading Force and a mini medal to say 'thank you' to children.

Storybook Waves is open to everyone in the fighting arms of the Royal Navy who is separated from their children through deployment, courses, weekending or long shift patterns.

To access the smartphone service email [storybookwaves@aggies.org.uk](mailto:storybookwaves@aggies.org.uk).

# All change for MCM personnel

## Move gives stability to community

THE way minehunters will be crewed for future deployments to the Gulf will change this month, giving the MCM community greater predictability and stability to plan their lives and improve their lived experience.

As part of Programme Hecate, the First Sea Lord has announced the Navy is moving to a dual-crewing model for future deployments.

Starting this month, crews will begin four, not six, month deployments in the Gulf, as the force undergoes its biggest front-line change in over 12 years.

These changes are being introduced after extensive work to explore options for how the RN crews minehunters, to ensure the navy address operational pinch points and the frustrations that the MCM community has said impacts their quality of life.

The four-strong MCM force permanently providing forward presence at the Naval Support Facility in Bahrain – currently Sandown-class ships HMS Shoreham and Blyth, plus Hunts Brocklesby and Ledbury – will mirror crewing methods successfully trialled by Type 23 frigate HMS Montrose for more than a year.

Two crews will be assigned to each of the four mine countermeasures vessels – one crew in the Middle East, delivering the vessel on front-line operations and exercises, the second back home in the UK.

"The unique capability of our mine countermeasures force in the Middle East continues to underline the UK's unrivalled prowess in demanding and dangerous mine warfare operations, providing forward presence, and a flexible guarantee of continued access and safe navigation for all seafaring nations plying their trade," said Commander Simon Cox, who commands the Portsmouth-based Hunts of 2nd Mine Countermeasures Squadron.

"These sailors do so under a new promise of increased stability for them

and their families, a leading example of the First Sea Lord's Transformation policy and recognition of the importance defence continues to place on this genuinely unique capability."

Since the first minehunters were deployed to Bahrain in 2007 (originally two ships which soon grew to four), crews have rotated roughly every six months, swapping a Hunt/Sandown class ship in theatre for one in the UK for training and duties in home and European waters before returning to the Middle East.

Instead, 'dual crewing' will be rolled out completely over the next 12 months: one 'on watch' crew deployed to the Gulf, one 'off watch' back in the UK enjoying leave, adventurous training, individual and collective training – including four to six weeks to prepare for a return to the Gulf.

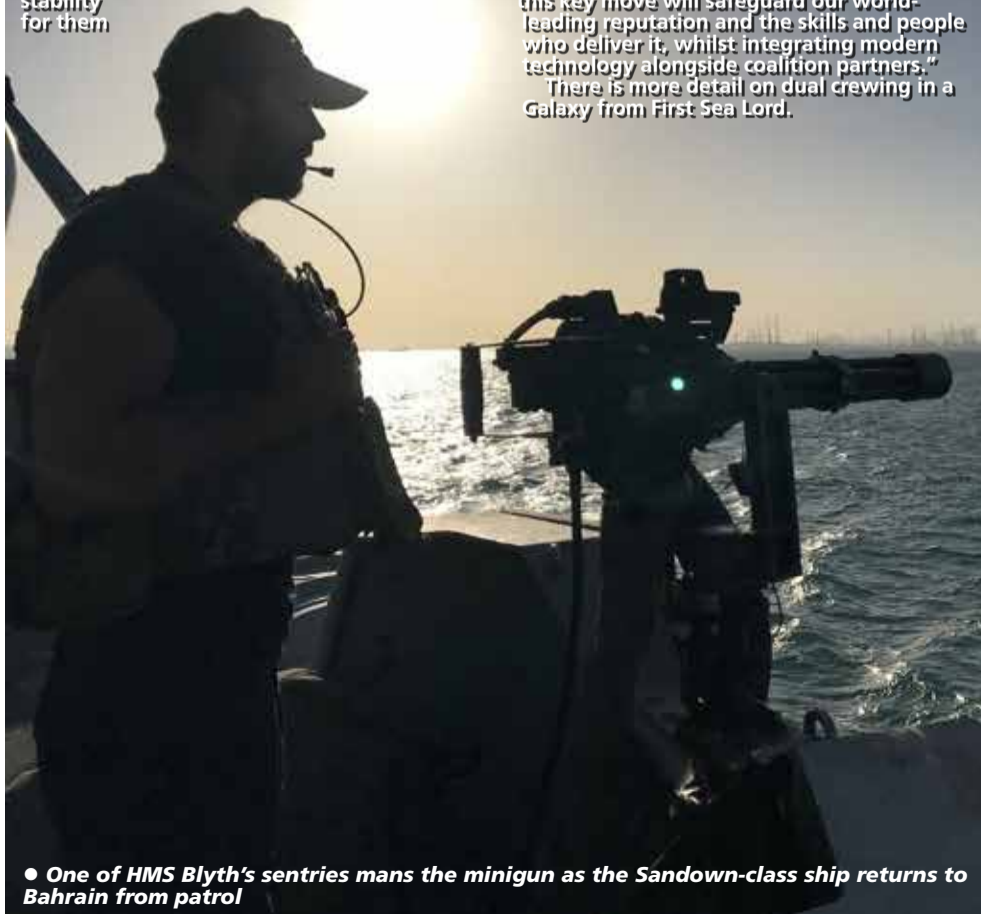
The aim is to spend less time generating crews for Middle East duties, allowing the ships to spend more time on operations, and allow sailors to plan their lives – family holidays, attending weddings, concerts, key family events – with greater certainty and much less disruption than at present. The rotations will be set up so that no crew misses two consecutive Christmas or summer holiday periods.

Once the two years assigned to the Gulf force ends, crews will spend the next two years operating from their base ports – Faslane for Sandowns of MCM1, Portsmouth for Hunts of MCM2.

First Sea Lord, Admiral Tony Radakin, said he believed the new cycling of crews would meet the demands of maintaining a 'jewel in the crown' mine warfare capability in the key Gulf region, allow personnel to better introduce and exploit new mine-hunting technology, and lessen 'churn' – disruption to everyday life which plays a key role in sailors leaving the service.

He continued: "As we rapidly embrace new capabilities and deliver autonomous and unmanned mine countermeasures systems, this key move will safeguard our world-leading reputation and the skills and people who deliver it, whilst integrating modern technology alongside coalition partners."

There is more detail on dual crewing in a Galaxy from First Sea Lord.



● One of HMS Blyth's sentries mans the minigun as the Sandown-class ship returns to Bahrain from patrol



## Gold-standard reservists recognised

DEDICATION to the navy and nation that goes beyond what might be expected was rewarded by one of the country's oldest livery companies, who singled out two naval reservists for the prestigious gold award.

The Fishmongers' Company presents just a handful of its medals each year to military personnel in its affiliated units who have stood out.

This year – just before the country went into lockdown – seaman specialist Able Seaman Ryan Scott of HMS Tyne and Warrant Officer 1st Class Tony Matthews from HMS President were treated to a tour of Fishmongers' Hall next to London Bridge, dinner, and the presentation of medals by the Worshipful Company's Prime Warden, David Jones.

While assigned to Tyne and the Portsmouth-based Fishery Protection Squadron, Ryan (pictured above on in the main stairwell of the hall) has been instrumental in creating opportunities for fellow reservists to go to sea with the 'Cod Squad' and demonstrate to the squadron the many roles RNR personnel might fulfil if assigned to or mobilised to work with the navy's oldest formation, which safeguards the nation's fishing stocks.

"To even be considered as a recipient of the Fishmonger's Medal is very humbling, but to receive such a prestigious award make me feel extremely grateful, proud and honoured," Ryan said.

"Having the work the Fishery Protection Squadron undertakes recognised by the Company of Fishmongers is fantastic and should be proudly felt by all who serve within it. The tasking we carry out during the eight months we spend at sea each year is vital for the UK, varied and can change at short notice. However, the experienced sailors in the squadron always deliver exemplary results.

"Hopefully I can use this award to progress the work we have been able to achieve in Tyne and encourage more reservists to serve in Offshore Patrol Vessels. It really is a fantastic opportunity to hone skills and really make a difference."

Tony (pictured inset with his medal) has spent 38 years in the Maritime Reserves, and by day works with the MOD to improve its ties with industry to the benefit of both.

His achievements in this position have been both significant and wide-ranging and he has shown outstanding communication and people skills all of which have fostered strong relationships and championed initiatives such as the Armed Forces Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme.

"It's a real honour to be rewarded with this accolade by our affiliated livery company. There are many worthy candidates so I feel special to be recognised and will cherish this medal," he said.

Commander Richmal Hardinge, President's Commanding Officer, said the Mr Matthews was the unit's "stand-out candidate" for nomination as "an ambassador and credit to the Maritime Reserves and to HMS President in particular."

## Mentors needed

THE Naval Servicewomen's Network is establishing a mentoring scheme to give experienced sailors the chance to offer guidance, advice and support to shipmates and colleagues.

Under the banner 'share, inspire, empower', the network believes everyone in the RN is entitled to a mentor – and is looking both for people to step up as such, as well as sailors who might need assistance or guidance to come forward.

For further details contact either LMSA(SM) Luena Thomas [Luena.Thomas771@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Luena.Thomas771@mod.gov.uk) or Lt Katy Watts [Katy.watts102@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Katy.watts102@mod.gov.uk).



# Setbacks failed to deter Amy

FOR MOST civilians ten weeks of basic training to turn them into fledgling sailors is a big enough challenge.

For 21-year-old Amy White from Bedfordshire, those ten weeks turned into 18 months as a result of injury.

But she stood side-by-side with her 50 classmates of Hanson 34 division on the parade ground at HMS Raleigh to realise her dream and pass out.

Amy arrived at Torpoint to begin her basic training as a chef in October 2018, but just four weeks in she developed multiple stress fractures in her foot, heel and ankle and was moved to the rehabilitation division to recover from her injury.

"It was hard at the time because I knew I'd be there a long time, but I stuck at it because being in the Royal Navy was something I really wanted.

"I don't do failure," she said. "In June 2019, my grandma passed away, which made me even more determined because I'd promised her that I would do it."

After nearly a year Amy was allowed to return to full training but suffered a further set-back two weeks later when it became apparent that her injuries were not fully healed. She returned to



rehab and six months later was pronounced fit to continue.

"I returned to training at week seven. I was excited, but it was also quite nerve-racking because I knew I had some really challenging training to face, such as initial military fitness, but my foot held up and I knew then that it had completely healed," she said.

Coronavirus prevented Amy's family – and the rest of Hanson 34 class – from watching her pass-out in person; instead they saw the ceremony broadcast live on the internet.

"I've met lots of people during my

time at Raleigh and they all wanted to see me pass-out, so I had lots of family and friends watching the live-stream," said Amy, who was awarded the Stuart Cup for her determination to complete her basic training.

"There were times over the past 18 months when I thought I may have been discharged for medical reasons, but I'm now so happy that the Royal Navy stuck with me and I've finally achieved my goal."

She's now headed to HMS Collingwood having chosen to switch from chef to communications specialist.



## Engineer's unusual record

YOU don't need to be a pilot to fly the world's most advanced submarine-hunting helicopter.

No, air engineering technicians can also seize the controls of a Merlin Mk2.

And one, Chief Petty Officer Chris 'Mitch' Mitchell has clocked up a remarkable 500 hours in the pilot seat.

Chris works as a Flight Test Recorder with the Flight Test Section at RNAS Culdrose, ensuring the Merlins of 814, 820 and 824 Naval Air Squadrons are safe for continuing training and front-line duties.

Experienced pilots and observers clock up 3,000, 4,000, or more hours in the cockpit – but they're airborne for all sorties from training through the operational.

Recorders join the test pilot and observer purely on annual maintenance test flights or when Merlins emerge from their four-yearly in-depth overhauls at Culdrose, making 500 hours a lot of testing.

To be allowed to sit in the left-hand seat typically occupied by a second pilot, the test recorder must not only be medically fit, but also pass the aviation medicine course to spot the symptoms of hypoxia (lack of oxygen), demonstrate they can escape from a ditched helicopter ('dunker' training), then go through pool and sea drills awaiting rescue in life rafts.

And they must learn airmanship procedures so they are

able to perform many of the key functions of fully-fledged aircrew, such as radio communications and emergency procedures.

On top of that there's the actual job of flight test recorder, passing a vibration course so they can analyse and record the data from each flight and look at trends through all the aircraft they fly in; and a zonal surveyor's course to identify areas of the helicopter that may need attention.

All of this comes on top of the 'day job' as an air engineering technician.

Mitch is qualified to fly both Merlins and veteran Sea Kings, which were also based at the Helston air station until they were retired a couple of years ago.

"In my previous draft on 820 Squadron, the experience I had from operating Merlins with the Maintenance Test Pilots was invaluable," he said. "To be able to understand how aircraft faults manifest in flight was very enlightening."

"My avionics-trade skills were improved dramatically – I was much better at talking pilots out of booking faults than the other technicians!"

Lieutenant Commander Rich Beaumont, in charge of Culdrose's Flight Test unit, said clocking up 500 hours was "a most uncommon achievement for a chief petty officer air engineering technician. It represents enthusiasm, dedication and an aptitude for airborne work. Congratulations, Mitch!"



## Tigers call in to help the tigers

FLYING Tigers from Culdrose came face-to-face with Amur tigers in Hampshire's largest wildlife park when they helped staff at Marwell Zoo near Winchester earlier this year.

A team of seven air and ground crew from 814 Naval Air Squadron – back from submarine hunting duties with NATO in the Mediterranean – headed up the A30 (then the A303, then down the A34 briefly, a short stretch of the M3 and finally the country lanes of Hampshire) to spend a week helping staff at the huge zoological park.

The zoo is home to a family of Amurs – an endangered breed of tiger, normally found in eastern Russia/north-eastern China. There are thought to be fewer than 500 in the world.

The Tiger team from 814 volunteered to give their fellow hunters (who prefer preying on birds, fish, badgers and raccoons than nuclear and diesel-powered submarines) much-improved accommodation.

The sailors ripped up floorboards, cleaned out the pens, sanded and painted the tiger house and built a new public pen for the animals to enjoy.

## On their bikes to help hospital ward

A TEAM of servicemen at HMS Collingwood took on a unique cycling challenge to raise more than £1,800 for the Maternity Ward at QA Hospital, Portsmouth.

The team are all currently working in the establishment's Operations and Isolation Cell, and with the majority of the team's children having been born at the Portsmouth Hospital they wanted to raise money for the ward for the duration of their COVID-19 operations.

Warrant Officer Dean Button said: "We wanted to give something back during these unprecedented times."

Each member of the team utilised one hour of their spare time per day to support the British Public and NHS.

You can still support the effort by visiting [uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Team/SailorsupportingMaternityQA Portsmouth](http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Team/SailorsupportingMaternityQA Portsmouth)



## Deeps move to raise cash

FASLANE-BASED Royal Navy Submariners used their daily exercise time to raise cash for Claire House Children's Hospice.

Around 50 of HMS Astute ship's company either walked, ran, cycled or rowed a total distance of 560 miles – the distance from HM Naval Base Clyde to Claire House Children's Hospice on the Wirral.

Members of the ship's company each completed their exercise in their own homes or local area and uploaded their mileage onto social media through a fitness app.

Claire House helps seriously and terminally-ill children live life to the full by bringing back a sense of normality to family life.

Like many organisations it is being heavily impacted by the COVID19 crisis. The charity relies heavily on fundraising and donations made by the public and with the vast majority of fundraising events cancelled due to ongoing restrictions, the crew of HMS Astute wanted to continue to support them during this challenging time.

The crew, who have a very close relationship with

the charity, came up with an idea where they could use technology to host a remote fundraising event – raising some cash while keeping everyone safe.



Lieutenant Arran Deakin, the brains behind the 560miler, said: "Submariners are known for being a very determined bunch and really looked forward to the challenge of running, cycling or rowing 560 miles over 48 hours."

"The event was a great way to raise funds as everyone can get involved whilst staying safe. "Hopefully we did Claire House proud and ensured they are able to continue carrying out their incredible work"

Each participant sent their mileage to Lt Deakin to keep tally, with some crew members covering more distance than others.

The crew aimed to raise £1,500 for the charity over the 48 hours but smashed that target easily, raking in more than £4,100.

If you would like to donate go to: [justgiving.com/fundraising/hms-astute1](http://justgiving.com/fundraising/hms-astute1)

Registered charity number: Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund 1160182

### Naval Children's Charity

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caseworkers@navalchildrenscharity.org.uk





# One man and his docks...

FAMOUS for its harbour, Falmouth has had historical links with the Royal Navy stretching back several centuries. Reputed to be the deepest natural harbour in Western Europe and the third largest in the world, Falmouth is now home to some of the navy's largest vessels.

Castling a watchful eye across the Royal Navy's presence this far west is the Resident Naval Officer (RNO) – a unique and important posting which maintains the relationship between Falmouth, industry partners and the Royal Navy.

Lieutenant Commander Trevor Brookes holds the post – the only permanent position for the Royal Navy in Falmouth.

Falmouth Dockyard still hosts regular visits from Royal Navy, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and NATO vessels, and Trevor is the first point of contact for all, ensuring that any military needs are met by linking into the dockyard support and services as well as contacts with the town.

"The role is varied as there are many different and changing needs depending on the vessels and what they are preparing for," Trevor said.

"One week in April, for example, we had survey vessel HMS Scott in a dry dock for maintenance and RFA Lyme Bay loading stores and specialised equipment for an upcoming deployment to the Caribbean."

Key to the post is the provision of dockyard support; helping supply essential services such as booking cranes and vehicles, arranging contractors for maintenance work, and keeping the ships and sailors safe through provision of security.

"The RNO facilitates the smooth running of port operations for all visiting RN ships and vessels.

"I have overview of all separate silos within the dockyard, so I link them together in a polarised effort on behalf of the logistic departments and the ship's commanding officers."

However, the resident officer also acts as an important link to the local community ensuring that the Royal Navy remains an active presence in the town.

Trevor involves sailors in events ashore and is a useful guide to the array of great services locally while also creating opportunities for organisations to visit vessels or get involved with the Royal Navy

across the town and Cornwall.

Trevor added: "As a representative of the Naval Regional Commander, I look to maximise outreach and engagement opportunities to get a ship's company ashore to take part in civic services or parades, and I reciprocate this by enabling ship visits for cadet units and affiliates such as the Falmouth Maritime School."

In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it also falls to the RNO to link into response work, as a member of the Local Resilience Forum.

In partnership with the local council and emergency services, in the past this saw Lt Cdr Brookes coordinate naval support with floods or other crises.

At the moment it means he is prepared to help local response efforts and ensure the Royal Navy is best placed to assist in any tasking that emerges.

"The Royal Navy has a role locally to support MACA – Military Aid to Civilian Authority tasking, particularly with any COVID-19 work I will connect regularly with local emergency planners and blue-light services."

Picture: LPhoto Joe Cater, FRPU East



## Care packages for front-line personnel

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity has sent more than 650 care packages to naval medical personnel who are assisting in the fight against Covid-19.

The national response to thanking all the country's key workers every Thursday evening has prompted the RNRMC to acknowledge all those within the Royal Navy Medical Service, both Regular and Reserves, who are working alongside their NHS colleagues and delivering direct patient care across defence.

With the help of ESS and some of the staff from the Institute of Naval Medicine, the charity has sent packages to over 650 naval personnel who are assisting in the fight against Covid-19.

Adrian Bell, CEO of the RNRMC, said: "Every single one of us has a part to play in defeating this virus but it is right that we should acknowledge the special role of those who are involved on the front line, meeting the exceptional demands being made on our health services.

"We are very proud to acknowledge and support our

naval personnel who are there, shoulder to shoulder with their civilian colleagues."

The boxes include a personal thank-you letter from the First Sea Lord, Admiral Tony Radakin, along with a selection of useful items such as shower gel and hand moisturiser, and morale-boosting items including sweets, an Amazon voucher and a Pusser's Rum miniature.

The packages were packed and prepared at the Institute of Naval Medicine in Gosport, Portsmouth, before being distributed to medical personnel across the country.

Surgeon Captain Elizabeth Crowson, Commanding Officer of the INM, said: "It is always good to feel valued and I know that the RN medical community on the front line will appreciate this kind gesture from our charity at this difficult time.

"It is very much appreciated that the First Sea Lord and the RNRMC have acknowledged the contribution that our medical personnel are making at a time of significant challenge."

## Helping veteran Bill to stay safe in tough times

DURING these unprecedented and difficult times, it is important more than ever that we find ways to come together to help those in need of support.

Through financial support from the RNRMC, Alabaré have been able to ensure 95-year-old WW2 Royal Navy veteran Bill Silvester is safe and feels connected during the Covid-19 crisis.

In addition, they have also been able to deliver Bill an essential food package supplied by the RNRMC and their corporate supporter ESS.

Bill was involved in the D-Day landings and went on to serve in the Special Forces, going on tours right across the globe. He was first referred to Alabaré by SSAFA in France, where Bill was living at the time, as he wanted to return to the UK to be closer to his family.

Alabaré support homeless adults, young people, veterans and those with learning disabilities. With ongoing funding from the RNRMC they support Royal Navy and Royal Marines veterans who have fallen on hard times. Alabaré's 22 dedicated 'Homes for Veterans' accommodate over 100 homeless or those in need of support.

At the time of Bill's referral, Alabaré had no vacancies, but they were able to source temporary accommodation with a specialist housing provider for the elderly.

Through their outreach services, thanks to funding support from the RNRMC, they were able to find Bill



somewhere permanent to live, as well as register him with medical services, organise and pick up his medication and take him to hospital appointments. Additionally, they helped Bill remain in contact with his family.

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdown, Bill's move has been delayed. However, through Alabaré's outreach service, they have been able to offer reassurance and support to Bill.

The RNRMC joined forces with ESS Compass Group to deliver 500 essential food packages to local Royal Navy families, young carers and veterans. Through this, Alabaré were also able to drop Bill a box of food essentials, including bread, biscuits, soup and some chocolate.



## Veteran cycles for five causes

ROYAL Navy veteran Chris Ball cycled around Daventry to raise funds for charities.

The 70-year-old former Leading Radio Operator, who has been diagnosed with bipolar, cycled for four-and-a-half hours to help five charities – Warwickshire and Northants Air Ambulance, Motor Neurone Disease, RNLI, Alzheimers and Help for Heroes.

You can support Chris by donating at [justgiving.com/fundraising/christopher-ball](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/christopher-ball)



## Supporting seafarers

THE maritime charity welfare sector has stepped up to support seafaring key workers, during the Covid-19 crisis.

From Seafarers UK to Trinity House, the group's ten members are working together to coordinate their response, fund delivery partners working on the ground and fast-track grants to those in need.

Initiatives range from emergency grants for individuals to revenue support to keep seafarer centres operating.

With severe restrictions in place in ports around the world, including the UK, many seafarers working on merchant ships are stuck on board without access to shore-based help and all leave has been cancelled.

Thousands of miles from home, worried about their own health and that of their families, support from the charity community is needed even more than ever. Fishermen are suffering too with the market from the catering trade at home and abroad all but dried up and incomes dropping fast. That's why support from the maritime charity sector is so vital.

Speaking about the combined effort of their members, MCG Chairman, Cdr Graham Hockley, said: "Our members are working brilliantly together to respond to the Covid-19 crisis.

"Their job is to fund the front line charities so that they can respond to the unprecedented demand.

"And it's not just working seafarers who need help; ex-seafarers are some of the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach in our society and seafarer families are suffering too."

For information about MCG see [seafarers.uk/about-us/partners/maritime-charities-group/](https://seafarers.uk/about-us/partners/maritime-charities-group/) or contact Valerie Coleman, MCG Programme Development Manager by email on [Valerie.coleman@seafarers.uk](mailto:Valerie.coleman@seafarers.uk) or call 07515 050 301.





## App gives veterans help locally

THE Veterans Gateway charity has launched an app to help ex-Service personnel access local support and services.

The app uses cutting-edge mapping technology, coupled with a directory of NHS facilities and more than 2,000 charities, to help veterans access a wide range of support and services. This includes those dealing with physical and mental health issues, wanting financial advice or housing support, employment issues and relationships.

The directory has been designed to be easy and intuitive to use and can be used on smartphones as well as tablets.

The app was developed by Northumbria University and the software designer, Rippleni. with funding from the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund.

Analysis of how the app is being used will help the government and charities develop a better understanding of the needs of the veteran community. In turn this will be used to inform the development of future services.

## French honour at Ferndown

New member of Ferndown branch, D-Day veteran and red beret Alfred Guenigault, received France's highest honour just before the country went into lockdown.

Back in 1944, Alfred was serving with 6th Ulster Rifles Regiment, part of the Airborne Division which invaded Normandy in the small hours of June 6.

He landed just 60 metres from Pegasus and was deployed in the surrounding villages to help protect the local populace and their homes, a mission which led to him being wounded while assisting comrades later in the day.

Three quarters of a century later and Alfred was presented with the Legion d'Honneur by Ferndown Mayor Julie Robinson on behalf of the French government in recognition for helping to liberate their country from the Nazis.

The presentation was made as the branch celebrated its 40th anniversary at St Ives and St Leonards Ex-Services Club.



SEVENTY FIVE YEARS SINCE THE SPECTRE OF NAZIS

# OUR GREAT

NECESSITY, so the proverb goes, is the mother of invention.

When the pandemic spiked long-standing plans to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe on a scale and manner befitting the sacrifices made by the wartime generation, it forced a hard, but rapid, rethink.

Sail pasts, parades, large-scale services of thanksgiving, street parties, 1940s-themed concerts, a throng in the Mall in front of Buckingham Palace. All pretty much out of the window. In their

place? Some socially-distanced (ie spaced out) garden, street parties, and parades. A bagfull of memories from those who remember May 8 1945 – and from those who helped deliver victory.

And from the Royal Navy: reverence and resonance, befitting a service which lost more than 250 warships defeating Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy; more than 40,000 sailors and Royal Marines were killed in the Atlantic, Arctic and Mediterranean.

From the immortal White Cliffs of Dover to the sands of Bahrain and the Caribbean and windswept Falklands, today's sailors and Royal Marines made every effort to reflect both the solemnity of the day demanded by the sacrifices of the wartime generation... and the celebrations and relief as the greatest threat to have befallen the nation in modern times was banished.

As Britons fell silent at 11am for two minutes to contemplate those sacrifices, HMS Severn was patrolling just west of Dover (pictured here by LPhot Ben Corbett).

The patrol ship's crew certainly couldn't hear the skirl of Pipe Major Andrew Reid of 1st Battalion Scots Guards on the top of the chalk cliffs. It's a good bet they couldn't see him either, even with binoculars.

There was no missing the two Spitfires and purr of their Merlin engines as they buzzed both piper and patrol ship to create one of those moments that makes the hairs on your neck bristle.

There was certainly no mistaking the 60-second cacophonous fanfare at 3pm as sirens and horns on every active surface ship sounded around the globe.

That was the signal for many to stage various parties and the like... and for the RN to stand down from ceremonial duties until dusk when Officer Cadets and staff at Britannia Royal Naval College joined the Dartmouth community in a *We'll Meet Again* singalong after the Queen had concluded her address to the nation.

Personnel gathered on the parade ground to sing Dame Vera Lynn's wartime favourite, with the music sounding across the Dart valley courtesy of BRNC's public address system, which had broadcast the VE Day speeches of Churchill and King George VI earlier in the day.

As the music ended, the 115-year-old college façade was brightly illuminated in keeping with the 'end of blackout' theme from 1945.

Officer Cadet James Driscoll said he hoped his great-



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...M WAS BANISHED, TODAY'S ROYAL NAVY SALUTED THOSE WHO DELIVERED

# TEST VICTORY

grandfather, Jerry Driscoll, who joined the RN in 1918 and served throughout World War 2 would be proud that today's generation venerated the men and women of 1939-45.

"He served in HMS Aurora in the Italian, African and Atlantic theatres. His ship was badly damaged in 1941. He was vital in saving the ship and his men," James said.

"If I could speak to him today, I would tell him he has always been a real inspiration

“““

**If I could speak to my great-grandfather today, I would tell him he has always been a real inspiration to me and is a true hero. I am proud to be following in his footsteps.**

OC JAMES DRISCOLL

to me and is a true hero. I am proud to be following in his footsteps."

At about the same time, most of the 40-strong ship's company of HMS Medway were gathered on the patrol ship's flight deck – it was only 3pm in the Caribbean.

The war against the U-boat reached these waters – one of the lesser known adjuncts to the Battle of the Atlantic which ranged from the Gulf of Mexico to the Seychelles and Madagascar and the Cape of Good Hope to the North Cape.

Medway's Commanding

Officer Lieutenant Commander Jim Blythe read the very address Churchill gave to the British people and Commonwealth at that hour 75 years earlier, with the *Last Post* and *Reveille* for the fallen expertly delivered by Leading Seaman Jonathan Cake on bugle and a wreath laying on the flight deck.

"It is hugely important to remember the sacrifices made in the past, which give us the opportunity to live our lives in the present," said Medway's Executive Officer Lieutenant Glyn Duffell. "The commemoration service we held on the flight deck was the perfect opportunity to do just that. Wherever we are in the world, whatever we are tasked with, we will always remember the bravery, losses and hardships that secured victory over tyranny."

For the past month Medway has been sailing in company with RFA *Argus*, heading up the Navy's presence in the Caribbean on disaster-relief standby (see pages 15-17).

Sailors, soldiers and Royal Marines spelled out a large 75 on the flight deck as their vessel sailed off the Cayman Islands.

By the time Medway was finished with her commemorations, it was about 9.30pm and time for the ships of the fleet to 'shine a light' – mirroring the end of the blackout in 1945.

After nearly six years of darkness, blackout curtains were pulled back, street lamps, ship's lights, vehicle headlights blared once again.

The ships of the Fleet were asked to commemorate moment by turning their searchlights on and direct them into the night sky.

And they did. Except that May 8 2020 proved to be the hottest and brightest day of the year. So unless you were close to the beams – or sufficiently far south – unfortunately the natural light proved too strong and onlookers hoping for the heavens pierced by moving shafts of light were sadly left disappointed.

Still, one to perfect for the 80th anniversary...

That was the last act of VE Day, but not the last commemoration of the bank holiday weekend.

Celebrations came to the Channel Islands a day later than the rest of the United Kingdom in 1945 – and did so again 75 years later.

And as with the rest of the mother country, original plans to mark Liberation Day were tossed out of the window – including the traditional visit by a Royal Navy warship.

But with HMS *Tyne* darting around the islands giving junior warfare officers a taste of navigating in challenging waters, she offered to play her part.

Dressed overall at anchor off Sark on VE Day, her searchlights pointed to the heavens at nightfall, the River-class patrol ship sailed past the at St Peter Port on May 9, flanked by a cluster of small boats.

As *Tyne* turned for home in Portsmouth, Assistant Harbour Master Mike Harris sent a thank-you:

*In these uncertain times seeing the Royal Navy in the Little Russel, as was the case on this day in 1945, was a very welcome sight to the population of our island.*



● National President Vice Admiral John McAnally and General Secretary Captain Bill Oliphant honour the fallen on VE Day at Portsmouth's Naval Memorial

Picture: Nigel Huxtable

## We're here for you in unprecedented times

THE methods might have changed, but the RNA is still making sure shipmates are looking out for each other during the coronavirus pandemic.

Revised financial forecasts (particularly affecting investments) have required swift action from Central Office, as a result of which some of the staff have been furloughed while others have taken cuts in hours and pay, writes Mike Gray of the Royal Naval Association.

So while the normal service has been somewhat scaled back, essential support and communications remain intact.

Central to this is the RNA Helpline (07542 680082), giving members immediate guidance on where they can seek help from specialised providers such as local authorities or charities.

In addition, S/M Geoff Apperley, the RNA's Deputy National Welfare Adviser, has been producing tailored advice notices on a range of subjects including isolation, health, bereavement and finance which have been published on RNA websites and Facebook pages.

Branch committees and officials, particularly secretaries, have taken on an increased workload, looking out for their own members, cascading information down the line from Central Office and helping improve the accuracy of the Association database.

Despite remote working, through daily video conferences Central Office staff have been able to introduce new initiatives while keeping the Association ticking over.

One was the launch of an appeal to raise the £15,000 cost of an NHS ventilator, recognising the fact the many RNA members fall into vulnerable categories through age or health conditions.

The appeal – echoing the Warship Week collections of World War 2 where communities paid for or supported Royal Navy warships – was almost half-way to the total by mid-May. If you would like to contribute, go to <https://tinyurl.com/ya32r6zu>

With VE Day 75 plans wrecked by the coronavirus, Aylesbury branch standard bearer

S/M Ken Satterthwaite suggested the Association hold a 'virtual parade' to mark the two-minute silence on May 8, displaying standards in gardens or homes (while acknowledging social distancing), which drew an enthusiastic response from members around the country.

At the same moment, at the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, RNA National President Vice Admiral John McAnally and General Secretary Capt Bill Oliphant paid their respects, on behalf of members, to those who fought and died in Europe during World War 2.

Many RNA branches have been embracing comms technology to maintain contact with members and other branches, while others have taken it further – Wrexham, for example, holds regular virtual tot nights via Zoom.

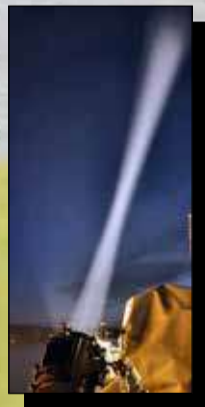
National chairman S/M Keith Ridley's branch, St Neots, runs a buddy scheme in which every committee member makes frequent contact with designated shipmates to ensure all is well and see if any errands need running such as collecting medicine or shopping.

Membership Secretary S/M Nigel Huxtable has been carrying out a similar exercise for those on the Central Office roll, making hundreds of phone calls to ensure all is well with those veterans who tend to be more isolated than many of their shipmates; so far there have been no major issues to address.

Video conferencing will be employed to replace the National Conference that was planned for this month in Liverpool, but will now take place online in August – details are still being worked on to ensure the Association's obligations as a charity will be fulfilled.

Central Office has been informed of several shipmates who have died as a result of Covid-19 infection, where social distancing has prevented a traditional funeral and send-off.

Once the lockdown has eased sufficiently, the RNA is planning to hold a memorial service for all shipmates who crossed the bar during the pandemic, to be conducted by Chaplain of the Fleet the Ven Martyn Gough, while officials are also looking at the possibility of holding a number of regional events.



## Tributes to River Plate's Bugler Boy Bob

THERE are now just two men with us who helped deliver the Royal Navy's first victory of World War 2 after the passing of River Plate veteran Bob Batt.

In December 1939, the then Boy Bugler, who has died in his native New Zealand aged 97, manned the 4in transmission in cruiser HMS Achilles as she joined battle with HMS Exeter and Ajax against the Graf Spee off South America.

Of the battle he once said: "We weren't thinking of ourselves. We were all one on the ship. We all had our jobs to do. Nobody panicked."

The battle lasted barely an hour. The ensuing drama in Montevideo little more than three days before the German pocket battleship emerged and was scuttled in the estuary which gave the battle its name.

Bob and his shipmates were



later fêted in Auckland with a parade, official reception and a week's leave. "We were treated like heroes, but I didn't feel like one. I was just doing my job."

Bob Batt joined the navy following a recruitment drive at his school and thought he would be a good fit as he had a canoe as a young boy. He served for 15 years and rarely spoke about

his wartime experiences with his family – although his great nephew Jonathan Bentin was inspired to join the Royal New Zealand Navy.

Bob's son Doug attended 80th anniversary commemorations of the battle in Uruguay last December, and his father's bugle was played at events in Montevideo.

And, as with many River Plate veterans, there's a road named after Bob – Batt Crescent – in the Canadian town of Ajax, which honours the men of 1939.

The Mayor of Ajax, Shaun Collier, said: "The service that Mr Batt provided will always be remembered and will always be part of Ajax's history."

Still with us is Basil Trott (100) who was in HMS Exeter and Bob's HMS Achilles shipmate John Thomson in Australia.

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# Cadets' tribute for VE Day 75

## Barnsley secure their long-term future

SEA CADETS across the United Kingdom played a full part in commemorating the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

Many of the 400-plus units up and down the land got out their Union Flags, despite the limits imposed by social distancing, and paid tribute to the fallen of World War 2.

Using a specially-produced and well-received celebration pack full of singalong sheets, quizzes and bunting, cadets everywhere shared a spirit of both celebration and remembrance.

One of many to have direct family involvement was Cadet Milo from Brentwood Sea Cadets.

Twelve-year-old Milo, along with fellow cadets at Training Ship St Vincent, paid tribute from their homes the day after their weekly Zoom meeting.

Milo's great-grandfather was Petty Officer Sydney William Talley, who served in HMS Hood during World War 2.

PO Talley had been ordered to take leave and so was not aboard the Mighty Hood when she was sunk during the Battle of Denmark Strait by the German battleship Bismarck on May 24, 1941.

Of the 1,418 men aboard, only three survived and the event haunted PO Talley for the rest of his life.

PO Talley went on to marry Sarah and the couple had three sons, four grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Cadet Milo spoke about his great-grandfather for a VE Day commemorative film for Brentwood Borough Council.

While cadets have been under lockdown, they have managed to do so despite restrictions which their ancestors would have approved.

One lone cadet played *The Last Post* near the Memorial Gardens in Maryport, Cumbria, accompanied only by a local vicar and her husband.

Sea Cadets were also featured in a special playing of *The Last Post* from the four highest peaks of the UK.

Burnham Sea Cadets have produced their own version of *We'll Meet Again*, which was highlighted in their local media.

And Sea Cadets across the country paused to observe a minute's silence at 11am, including those from Tooting and Balham Sea Cadets.

Captain of Sea Cadets, Philip Russell, paid tribute to the number of units across the country, taking part.

"It is a fine achievement for so many of our cadets across the country to take part in this significant anniversary for the nation and indeed, the world.

"Many will have family links but all have come together to commemorate this day and they should all be very proud of what they've done."



● Cadet Milo paid tribute to his great grandfather, PO Sydney Talley; Brentwood new entry cadet Darcy with her VE Day cakes



● Brentwood cadets, clockwise from left, Morgan, Alexandra and Cameron, Freyja, Ahmet, Apple-Jane and Miles, and William, all marked VE Day



● Brentwood Junior Cadet First Class Jude with her picnic; Right, Members of Tooting a Balham Sea Cadets



BARNESLEY Sea Cadets are to get a new lease of life after fundraising worth more than £30,000 secured their long-term future.

Chair Maddison Brown has led an effort to share success stories to show the powerful effect being a Sea Cadet can have on young lives.

The 23-year-old said: "When I took over as chair last year, it wasn't in the best position.

"We only had £500 left in the bank and part of our roof was falling down due to major amounts of rainfall which left us really worried.

"Our building was built in 1967 and there hasn't been much work done on it since then.

"I started at the cadets when I was 13 and had hardly seen any new equipment or changes to the building – it was troubling times.

"Our future was uncertain and I knew I had to step up and do something about it."

"South Yorkshire Funding Bureau helped with applications where we worked out that in a single year, the cadets give out nearly 1,000 qualifications to members.

"I knew our potential and knew that we could be so much

more than £500 in the bank, so I used case studies from our members to show organisations how good we are.

"I'm confident that in the next couple of months we'll be reaching £40,000 and maybe £50,000 in grants and funding which is absolutely amazing. It was important to me, being a cadet myself, that I continued to keep them engaged and showed that being a member is worthwhile."

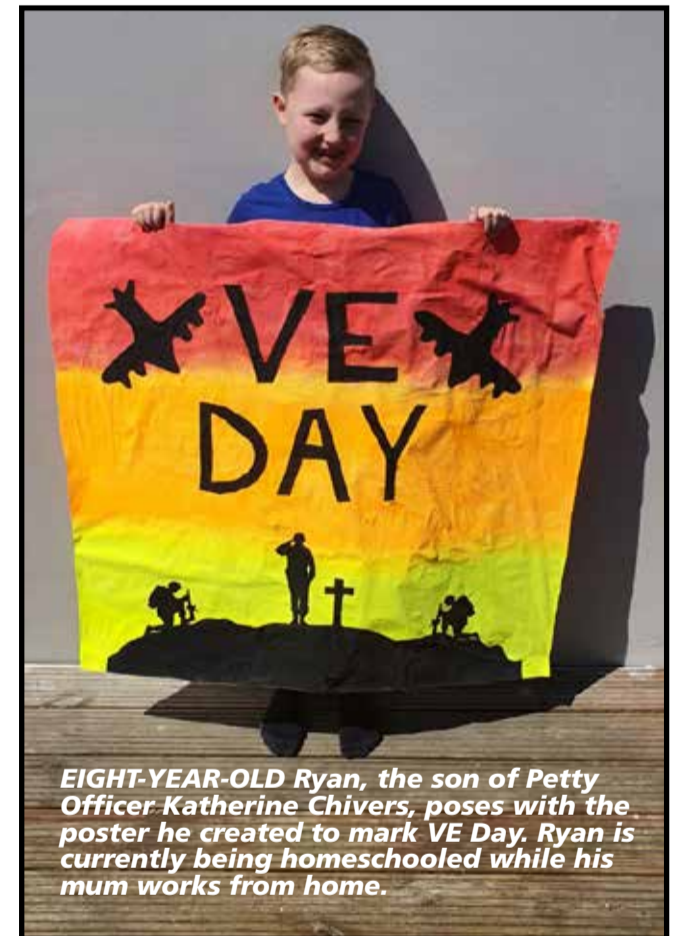
Maddison is eager to get the unit back up and running once lockdown restrictions are weakened to begin with repairs to the unit.

"Barnsley Sea Cadets helped me with my confidence. I was quite quiet at 13 and then I was able to make friends and believe in myself.

"I needed to keep cadets afloat as it offers one-to-one support that young people may not receive anywhere else.

"The money will be used for repairs of the building, more first aid and training equipment.

"Sea Cadets means so much to me and lots of other people across Barnsley and I'm so thankful that we can continue to provide these opportunities."



EIGHT-YEAR-OLD Ryan, the son of Petty Officer Katherine Chivers, poses with the poster he created to mark VE Day. Ryan is currently being homeschooled while his mum works from home.

## Sheffield unit's salute to mark the loss of namesake

SHEFFIELD Sea Cadets have taken part in a virtual ceremony to mark the 38th anniversary of the loss of HMS Sheffield in the Falklands in 1982.

The destroyer was lost with 20 crew on May 4.

Lockdown guidelines meant the annual parade outside Sheffield Cathedral had to be cancelled, so nearly 50 Sea Cadets, pictured right before lockdown, performed a salute in their back gardens on video.

Petty Officer Chris Smith, who put the montage together, said: "We thought this event's coming up, it's always a big one in our calendar, why don't we try and do a virtual parade.

"I never thought I'd have to be putting together a virtual parade for them.

"I've been here about seven years now and always attended the parade in person but as a media manager I've always been taking the pictures so this is a very different angle."

The cadets, aged between ten and 18 who usually meet up twice a week, have been keeping in touch via social media since the lockdown began in March.

The petty officer shared why it was important that the cadets continued to commemorate those who have fallen, while in lockdown.

"It's similar to The Royal British Legion motto lest we forget," Chris added. "It's just our way of passing it on to the next generation and hopefully they will grow up and keep the memories alive."



TWICKENHAM Sea Cadets have benefited from the traditional Army v Navy fixture at Twickenham, which was cancelled.

£10,000 is being allocated to each of a number of local charities in the Twickenham area by the Army v Navy Committee.

The match would have marked the centenary of the Inter Services Rugby Championship and the first services' women's match at Twickenham Stadium.

Commander Gary Bushell, Chairman of the Match Committee, said: "The Army Navy Match Committee wanted to give recognition and provide a degree of financial support to the community that encompasses Twickenham Stadium.

"We recognise that staging a sold-out fixture impacts on the local community and, with advice from the RFU Community Liaison Officer, we sought projects and activities that would benefit those living in the area."





# Rival teams sleighed

THE Royal Navy took gold in this year's Bobsleigh Inter-Service Championships, writes *Leading Diver Ian Crofts*.

Heading to Königssee, Germany, were manager and captain Colour Sergeant Ashley Morris, alongside assistant manager, Sergeant Adam Baird. Olympic bronze medalist Bruce Tasker and three-times Olympian, former Royal Marine Lee Johnston joined the team as coaches.

As well as being the reigning champions, this was to be C/Sgt Morris' last year in charge as team manager before his final outing as an athlete at next year's UKAF inter-services.

Following two weeks of training and selection, the championships take place over two days at the end of week three.

Each bobsleigh gets four runs, with the best three timings for each bobsleigh counted towards an aggregate for each service. Fastest time wins.

Königssee itself consists of 13 turns over a distance of 1.2km

where teams can expect to reach speeds in excess of 100kph.

With corners including Kehlstein and Echowand, named after peaks in the surrounding mountains, this track is one of German bobsleigh's top tracks and as such is a technical and challenging course for the pilots to navigate.

Due to the challenging nature of the track, the team were only able to field three men's pairs and one women's pair, but were still confident going into day one.

Sgt Baird and his brakeman, Mne Lawrence (who was fresh off the back of the four-man Bobsleigh World Championships the week before), narrowly missed a sub-five second start. Despite the conditions, Sgt Baird and Mne Lawrence took the lead with CSgt Morris and Mne Waite sitting in third place, putting the RNRM in a strong position going into day two, which ended with no obvious leader.

In the women's race there were no questions as to who was in charge. Despite the Army and RAF

throwing everything they had at the RNRM team, LS Andrews with her brakewoman LPT Haslam were in a league of their own, sliding down the track 3.5s ahead of the pace.

With everyone giving it their all for the last run, the coaches scribbling finish times down and exercising their fastest maths skills, it was left to the official time sheet to answer the question of who came first. The RNRM had taken it, with the Army second.

All that remained was the awards ceremony hosted at the Eisarena, where the RNRM were presented with gold in the men's team event. There were also individual golds for fastest brakeman, Mne Lawrence, and fastest brakewoman, LPT Haslam. Fastest male bob and fastest female bob were awarded to Sgt Baird and Mne Lawrence, and LS Andrews and LPT Haslam.

The women finished 2.5s ahead of the nearest competitor but were unable to claim gold in the team event due to being the only RNRM female team.



## Marine's marathon effort – in a barn

A ROYAL Marine took on a punishing commando challenge during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown – involving running a marathon and climbing four times the height of The Shard.

From home, Captain Tom Lawson, who works from 3 Commando Brigade headquarters in Plymouth, and his brother Ralph took on a lockdown version of the Ben Nevis Marathon – a race to the top of the British Isles' highest mountain and back down again.

That's running 26.2 miles and completing 260 individual 18ft rope climbs to ascend the 4,413ft equivalent height of the mountain in the Scottish Highlands.

Capt Lawson didn't just do it to fulfil his commando appetite for a gruelling test; he raised more than £8,000 for the NHS, Age UK and the Royal Marines Charity.

The aim was to raise cash to help key workers during these uncertain times by

putting himself and his brother through a physically and mentally demanding challenge.

"With the nation in lockdown, my brother and I wanted to do what we could to support the vulnerable and the key workers by raising funds," Capt Lawson said.

"We wanted to do something that was physically and mentally arduous, but could be done from our home, so came up with the idea of running and rope climbing a Lockdown Ben Nevis Marathon.

"We are sticking to what is close to the heart of all Royal Marines – rope climbs, running and mountains!"

The brothers live on a farm and used barn to do the rope climb, while a 300m stretch of farm track acted as the running area for the marathon.

You can add to their fundraising at [uk.virginmoneygiving.com/ThomasandRalphLawson7](http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/ThomasandRalphLawson7)



## Holding the fort for Atlantic row

PERSONNEL aboard RFA Fort Victoria formed part of a team of 150 rowers from around the UK who rowed the distance of the Atlantic.

Each team rowed 32km, with the RFA team rowing a further eight km.

The purpose was to raise money for the 'Who Cares Wins' NHS charities, providing support when needed to NHS key workers during the current pandemic.

The ship has so far raised £175 for the charity, with more donations continuing to come from the ship.

The event took 16 members of the ships company just under two hours.

Life-long keen rower and event participant, Third Officer Gary 'Stavros' O'Hanlon, said: "An excellent effort was made by all whom attended, with everyone digging deep to work hard to push through the metres."

Pictured are, from left, 3/O O'Hanlon, 3/O Stewart, 3/O Horlock, Cdt Gard, SG1 Davison, LH Tora, and AB Mason.



## Forward-thinking way of helping

OFFICER cadets from Birmingham University Royal Naval Unit put their thinking caps on after the city's 10k run was cancelled due to the current pandemic.

The team still wanted to raise funds for Combat Stress and, thanks to OC Helena Martin, they were able to.

Each Officer Cadet utilised their advised one-hour-a-day exercise window to collectively run, walk or cycle the virtual distance between HMS

Forward in Birmingham and HMS Exploit in Portsmouth – a distance of 153 miles – as many times as possible throughout April.

All data was tracked using an app and the unit managed a staggering 1908.86 miles which equates to 12.47 times the distance.

Birmingham URNU has raised £595 so far for Combat Stress, which supports thousands of veterans affected by depression and post-traumatic stress disorder in the UK.



# Officer cadets do their bit

ISOLATED and vulnerable residents on the middle of Dartmoor are being helped through the pandemic by a naval cadet and his friend.

Ben Baily provides an essential delivery service to those over 70 and people with underlying health conditions, turning up twice a week with provisions.

The 21-year-old officer cadet, who is studying politics and international relations at Cardiff and joined the city's University Royal Naval Unit for a taste of life in the Senior Service, set up the lifeline with his friend Sam Fabian Miller.

Ben is one of a number of officer cadets from Royal Navy university units volunteering to help the nation through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ben's home village of Manaton (population of 344) has a large number of residents in the government's 'at risk' category. On top of that public transport links are few, the nearest supermarket is a good car ride away while home delivery slots are almost impossible to book.

So the duo – dubbed 'Sam and Ben, the delivery men' – pop to the shops every Tuesday and Saturday morning, sourcing as much as what they can from local independent retailers, before completing the haul at a supermarket.

"Reaction in Manaton has been wonderful and local greengrocers, butchers and supermarkets have all helped us to provide this service the best they can – knowing that we are shopping for multiple people," said Ben.

"It really means the world to be able to contribute to the community which has given me so much growing up."

Liverpool Naval cadet Monika Pura Kalleshappa has put her studies on hold to help residents of the city's care homes.

Originally from Bangalore in India, the 22-year-old came to Liverpool to study advanced aerospace engineering at its university, where she also signed on for the local University Royal Naval Unit.

Unable to work over the Easter break or return to her family in India due to the pandemic, Monika decided to "play an active role here in the UK", volunteering to help in care homes, fully aware of the risks given the high rate of infection.

"I felt it was the right opportunity to serve the country even though I knew many vulnerable people in care homes had already tested positive for COVID-19 and were dying," the student said. "I didn't want to be just sitting at home feeling underutilised, so I volunteered."

Her volunteering in Liverpool's care homes has been rewarding and heart-rending in equal measure.

"Rather than considering COVID-19 as negatively impacting my life, I consider it as God giving me a chance to serve people during an unexpected and unprecedented time," Monika explains.



"I have found it particularly heartbreaking losing people who I have grown so close to; people who I have taken care of, listened to their stories and experienced their kindness and then helplessly watch them die."

"I put myself into other people's shoes and think what if my parents or grandparents were in this position, I would want them to be looked after."

In her hometown of Cardiff, second-year student nurse Officer Cadet Beth Oelmann has volunteered to work in the city's University Hospital as a student nurse/health care support worker, treating patients suffering from COVID-19 and other illnesses.

"I knew that I could help make a difference to patients' care and my URNU training has provided me with the confidence to confront any issue face on," the 21-year-old said.

"I'm in a fortunate position to be able help in the crisis without affecting others around me and grateful that I am able to help in any way."

With family visits to hospital severely limited by the virus outbreak, Beth has seen its impact on patients – and their recovery.

She and fellow nurses have done their utmost to plug that gap and focus on the emotional wellbeing of those on the wards – including a friend and fellow student nurse who contracted the virus and spent 22 days in intensive care.

"I feel an innate sense of pride in being just a small part of this huge movement, the teamwork has been inspiring to see," Beth added.

In Oxford URNU trainee doctor Midshipman Harriet Sexton has volunteered to help her local GP practice checking in on vulnerable patients and making sure they are up to date with the current advice.

"I also call an elderly lady every day," Harriet said. "She lives alone and has major health problems. I'm really enjoying the experience and our conversation topics have ranged from the Kardashians to the Great British Sewing Bee! I leave every call feeling like I've really made a difference to someone's day."

Her Oxford URNU Officer Cadet colleague Anya Piotrowicz is studying to become an Emergency Care Assistant – paramedic – at Oxford Brookes after which she'll be on the front-line of care and medical

provision.

As well as preparing for online exams and completing online portfolios, she's continuing revision for her C1 driving test (theory and practical) which will allow her to drive ambulances and volunteering with patient transport, moving ill and recovered COVID-19 patients between their homes and hospitals.

And Midshipman Benjamin Fernando, a PhD student on Environmental Research at the University of Oxford, heads a 60-strong team of volunteers who brief the Shadow Cabinet on the latest virus research.

"Basically, we summarise the content of all published medical papers on Covid and synthesise pertinent policy questions," Benjamin explained.

Those briefings are received by around 200 MPs and Peers, as well as local councillors, MSPs and Covid researchers.

Benjamin also sits on the Faculty Board for Oxford's Science and Engineering departments, helping to draw up the policies which will reduce the impact of the pandemic on students.



● Ben Baily, an officer cadet at Cardiff URNU, with a bootful of supplies for the elderly; Top, from left, Monika Pura Kalleshappa; Beth Oelmann and Harriet Sexton



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**£50 PRIZE PUZZLE**



THE mystery ship in the April edition of *Navy News* (right) was passenger and cargo ship HMS Bulolo, which served as flagship for Admiral Sir Harold Burrough.

John Makinson, of Morecambe, wins £50 for sending us the correct answers.

This month's mystery ship (above) was the class leader of nine A-Class destroyers built for the Royal Navy in the 1920s.

1) What was her name and 2) where did she meet her fate?

Please complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY.

During the COVID-19 pandemic we will also accept emailed entries to [edit@navynews.co.uk](mailto:edit@navynews.co.uk) with June Mystery Ship in the email header.

Coupons and emails giving the correct



answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

Entries must be received by June 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 July edition.

The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

**MYSTERY PICTURE 304**

Name .....

Address .....

My answers: (1) .....

(2) .....

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Swap Draft columns in July's Noticeboard must be received by **JUNE 14, 2020**

**Deaths**

**Rear Adm Colin H D Cooke-Priest CB CVO.** FONA, HMS Brilliant, Dryad, Boxer, Warrior, Plymouth, Fulmar, Victory RNB, Osprey, Seahawk, Russell. RAN Albatross, Died April 6, aged 81.

**Raymond Michael Cato, LSA.** Served from 1964 to 1974. Joined as AB(Radar) before moving to stores branch in 1968. Served in HMS Salisbury (1965-66), Scylla (1967-68), Intrepid (1970-71), and Ashanti (1973-74). After RN, joined MoD Police, serving at RNAD Coulport and AWE Burghfield. Died May 7. Leaves a widow, daughters Rachel and Caroline, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. His father served in the RN and his son-in-law currently serves.

**John Dobel. CPO Cook.** Served from 1960 to 1984. Initial training at HMS Pembroke and served in HMS Drake, Vigilant, Victorious, Heron, Tiger, Seahawk, Ark Royal, Scarborough, Berry Head, Royal Arthur, Salisbury and Brighton. Member of St Austell Branch of RNA. Died March 27, aged 76.

**Stanley Bevan.** Served in Flower-class corvettes during WW2. Member of RNA Birmingham Central Branch. Died April 19, aged 97.

**Arthur George 'Gerry' Wilmot.** Served from July 1942 to July 1977 as acting Sub Lieutenant and then as an engineering officer. Served at HMS Caledonia and at Chatham before serving in HMS Dido, Diadem, Superb, Dolphin, Thule, Telemachus, RN College Greenwich and at Devonport, HMS Victorious, Alcide, and Trump. Served as RN Area Schools Liaison Officer in Birmingham. Died April 7, aged 93.

**Doug Morris L/S RP RN & PO (MW) RNR.** Served in HMS Ganges, Dryad, Tiger, Juno, Palliser, Sussex & Kellington. Member of Worthing Branch RNA. Died April 19, aged 70.

**Major RM Malcolm D Cavan OBE.** C-in-C Nav Home, 41 Cdo RM, RM Poole, ATURM, ITCRM, Defence Studies Latimer. Died April 18, aged 83.

**Cdr Trevor C Deacon OBE.** Dir Gen Ships. HMS Fife, President, Warrior. Malaysian Govt. Died April 27, aged 95.

**Lt Cdr Michael C Dobbs.** HMS Barcoo, Tradewind. Died April 17, aged 92.

**Capt QARNNS Patricia M Hambling OBE.** Defence Med Tg HQ. DNR, RNH Haslar, Plymouth, Gibraltar. HMS Raleigh. Died April 27.

**Capt John R Jameson.** Capt Port Devonport. C-in-C Fleet, FOF1, FOF2, HMS Arethusa, Argonaut, Exeter, Dryad, Cutlass, Andromeda, Scarborough, Crofton, Excellent, Ajax. Died April 13, aged 75.

**Lt Cdr Peter F M Milner.** HMS President, Zest, Venus. Died May 1, aged 90.

**Cdr Peter J Nops.** HMS Nelson, Hornet, Victory RNB, HM Dockyard Portsmouth. RNZN Wakefield. Died April 10, aged 98.

**Lt Cdr Alan S Peacock.** FO Sea Tg, HMS Dryad, Mercury, Ajax, Cochrane, Endurance, Drake, Naiad, Llandaff, St Angelo, Arlingham, Ark Royal, Scarborough, and Defender. Died April 7, aged 71.

**Lt Cdr David G Ridgers MBE.** HMS Osprey, Blake, Warrior, Sheba, Brighton, and Loch Inch. Died April 24.

**Cdr Frederick J Robertson OBE.** DG Ships, DGNMT, HMS Bristol, President, Osprey, Leander, and HM Dockyard Chatham. Died April 18, aged 88.

**Cdr William J Soames.** DN Plains. DG Ships. HMS Neptune, Londonderry, Llandaff, MFV1069, and St James. Died March 31, aged 93.

**Submariners' Association**

**Edward (TED) Hancox, RO.** Served from 1939-1948 in HMS Tiptoe and Italian boat Bronzo, later renamed French submarine Narval. Member of HMS Ganges Association and Burton-upon-Trent Submariners Association. Died March 22, aged 96.

**David King BEM, LSGC WO.(OPS) (S).** Served Jan 1958 - Nov 1986 in HM Submarines Thule, Seascope, Rorqual, Token, Truncheon, Otus, Repulse, and Valiant. Member of Exeter Branch. Died April 2, aged 83.

**A Doughty PO RP.** Served 1967 - 1976 in HM Submarines Resolution(P)(67-71) and Revenge(S)(71-71). Member of Gosport Branch. Died April 6, aged 71.

**Andrew Vaughan POMEM (SM).** Served 1978-2001 in HM Submarines Rorqual, Grampus, Olympus, Cachalot, and Warspite. Member of Nottingham Branch. Died April 15, aged 64.

**Derrick Douglas LME.** Served 1983 - 1968 in HM Submarines Aeneas, Token, Astute, and Auriga. Member of Hull Branch. Died April 15, aged 78.

**James West Ck(S).** Served 1962 - 1967

in HM Submarines Truncheon, 1963 Dreadnought. Member of Merseyside Branch. Died April 20, aged 83.

**George Bell BEM AB UWZ.** Served Sep 1948 - Nov 1954 in HM Submarines Spiteful, Sturdy, Seadevil, Spirit, Tiptoe, Thorough, Alliance, Sanguine, and Trump. Member of Northern Ireland Branch. Died April 22, aged 92.

**Gerry Lloyd-Williams S/LT RNVR.** Served Jun 1944 - 1945 in HM Submarines X-Craft, 12 S/M Flotilla. Member of Gatwick Branch. Died April 23, aged 95.

**Ray Bullimore CPO WEA.** Served 1980 - 1986 in HM Submarines Courageous. Member of Dolphin Branch. Died April 23, aged 73.

**Alan Jupp ME1.** Served 1959 - 1964 in HM Submarines Solent, Thule, Narwhal (60-61), and Grampus (61-64). Member of Lincoln Branch. Died April 25, aged 82.

**Edmond Bartlett L/Sig.** Served 1953 - 1957 in HM Submarines Trespasser (53), Subtle (53-54), Tabbard (55-56), and Sleuth (56-57). Member of Beds & Herts Branch. Died April 30, aged 87.

**HMS Cheviot Association**

**Morris Smith, Tel.** 1945.

**Derek Tanton, L/Tel.** 1956-58. Died April 19, 2019.

**Joe Cusson, AB.** 1956-58. Died September 15, 2019.

**Derek Bidwell, L/Sig.** 1956-58. Died March 26, 2020.

**Vic Denham, Sig.** 1951. Died April 15, 2020.

**HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans' Association**

**Bob Batt, boy bugler.** Served in HMS Achilles. Died May 2, aged 97. (See page 25)

**Richard Green.** Served in HMS Ajax. Died April 18, aged 97.

**Jeff Rook, A/PO(UCI).** Served from 1963-74 in HMS Diana, Londonderry, Ajax and Brighton. Died April 21.

**Alec James Townsin.** Served in HMS Ajax 1946-8. Motorboat crew. Served in Med and involved in blockade of Palestine. Died April 5, aged 91.

**Albert Edwin Smith.** Served in HMS Ajax aged 17 at Battle of River Plate from 1939-41. Part of ship was A Turret. Smith

Lane in town of Ajax, Canada, named after him. Died April 18.

**Jerry Kirk.** Served in HMS Ajax in the Med. Died December 31.

**Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNOC**

**Adm Sir Brian Brown KCB CBE.** Second Sea Lord, DGNMT, DGNPS, RCDS, Office of First Sea Lord, VCNS. HMS Raleigh, Tiger, Victory, Heron, President, and HM Royal Yacht. Died April 27, aged 85.

**Cdr Gerald M Williams.** HMS Warrior, Victory RNB, Sirius, Dryad, and Eagle. NATO. Died April 15, aged 89.

**Lt Cdr David G Ridgers MBE.** HMS Osprey, Blake, Warrior, Sheba, Brighton, and RNC Greenwich.

**Lt Cdr Peter Nightingale.** Bahama Defence Force. HMS Fisgard, Daedalus, Centurion, Collingwood, and Bulwark.

**Surg Cdr Desmond G Bluett.** RN Hospital Haslar. HMS Bulwark, President, and Afrikander.

**Cdr Frederick J Robertson OBE.** MOD Bath. DG Ships, DGNMT, HMS Bristol, President, Osprey, Leander. RN Staff Coll. HM Dockyard Chatham, HM Dockyard Portland.

**Capt John E Franklin.** MOD Central Staff, RCDS, RNEC Manadon, Dir Naval Education. HMS Saker, Bulwark.

**Capt Peter G Downs RM.** ATURM. 42 Cdo RM, RM Eastney. HMS Royal Prince. Died April 7, aged 93.

**Capt RM Stephen M Othen.** CTCRM. RM Eastney. ITCRM.

**Lt Cdr Colin F Mitchell.** HMS Mercury, Intrepid, Collingwood, Cochrane, Jufair, Hardy. RNWT Mauritius.

**Lt Cdr Eric W Golding RNC.** C-in-C Fleet, RNC Greenwich, HMS Raleigh, Pembroke, Warrior, Ark Royal, Gannet.

**Lt L A Millard Sea Cadet Corps.**

**Cdr John P G Bryans.** HMS Caledonia, Droxford, Saker, Neptune, Cochrane, Rooke, Ganges, and Fearless.

**Lt Cdr Eric A Gibson.** HMS Excellent, DGV402, Orion, King George V, RAN Platypus. Died April 7, aged 94.

**Lt Cdr D B Etheridge.** HMS Drake, Jufair. 45 Cdo RM. RM Eastney. Director Naval Education.

**Lt Cdr John E Hole.** HMS Mercury, Dufton, Rothsay, Comet, Loch Quoich, and ML2571.

**Reunions**

**HMS Phoebe:** Reunion will now take place on October 2-5 2020 at the Aztec Hotel, Bristol. Details from IOW Tours Ltd, 3 New Road, Sandown, Isle of Wight PO36 9IN. Tel 01252 405116, or email [enquiries@iowtours.com](mailto:enquiries@iowtours.com).

**HMS Liverpool Association:** Reunion planned for Saturday June 13 has been cancelled. Next year's reunion will be held on June 12 2021. For membership details contact the secretary John Parker at [info@hmsliverpoolassociation.org.uk](mailto:info@hmsliverpoolassociation.org.uk) or call 02392521222.

**HMS Londonderry.** First Commission July 1960 to October 1962 are having a reunion from July 19 to 22 at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea. Contact Brian Coward at [briancoward39@btinternet.com](mailto:briancoward39@btinternet.com) for details.

**RMBS 1/70 and 2/70 Squad.** A joint 50th anniversary reunion of 1/70 and 2/70 squads is planned for the last weekend in August 2020 in Deal. Contact Nick Buckley on [nickbuckley55@aol.com](mailto:nickbuckley55@aol.com)

**HMS Troubridge Final Commission Association 1966-69**

Royal Beach Hotel, Portsmouth October 2-5 2020. Contact Bryan Pace at [Romt1@gmail.com](mailto:Romt1@gmail.com) or via [HMSTroubridge.com](http://HMSTroubridge.com).

**HMS Lowestoft Association:** Our tenth reunion will take place at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea, from October 2 to 5. All who served in Lowestoft during her RN service (1961-1986) are welcome, including wives/partners/guests. A 1, 2 or 3 night package is available or if you reside locally why not join us for the Saturday night gala dinner only. For further details or to book, call IOW Tours on 01983 405116 or contact [ian@hmslowestoft.co.uk](mailto:ian@hmslowestoft.co.uk) Tel: 07778 546861.

**HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association:** Our reunion due to be held on October 2-4 at Weymouth has now been cancelled.

**Royal Marines Band Service Annual Reunion:** The RMBS reunion will take place on October 10 at the Warrant Officers, Senior Rates & Senior NCOs Mess, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth. For further information and tickets contact the Blue Band

Office: 023 9254 7563 or email: [sec@royalmarinesbands.co.uk](mailto:sec@royalmarinesbands.co.uk). The annual RMBS Memorial Service will take place at 11am the following day in St Thomas of Canterbury (Portsmouth Cathedral), Old Portsmouth.

**Weapon Mechanicians Association:** The 2020 annual reunion takes place at the Bear Hotel in Havant, on October 10. This will be the association's final reunion, wives and partners are welcome. Peter Andrews at [weaponmechs50@btinternet.com](mailto:weaponmechs50@btinternet.com) or phone 07411 807552.

**HMS Undaunted, Eagle and Yarmouth Associations:** Annual reunion, Hallmark Hotel, Midland Road, Derby, October 23-26. Gala dinner on October 24. Contact Alan (Whiskey) Walker on 01268548041 or email [whiskey66@outlook.com](mailto:whiskey66@outlook.com)

**BRNC Entry Sept 1980** 40th anniversary reunion dinner, BRNC Dartmouth, Saturday October 31 2020. Details from Cdr N J 'Nobby' Hall, [neil.hall324@mod.gov.uk](mailto:neil.hall324@mod.gov.uk)

**Ask Jack**

**HMS Kenya:** My father commanded Kenya in 1952 and when she paid off, received her bell, which was displayed at my home in Hampshire. I loaned the bell to the HMS Kenya Association and have lost contact and would like to track it down.

**Bruce Trentham**  
[abtrentham@yahoo.com](mailto:abtrentham@yahoo.com)

**RNTT Kenya Navy Reunions.** I would like to contact the person in charge of these reunions. Having moved to Spain 20 years ago, I have lost all contact.

**John Dymond, ex-Chief Engineer of KNS Ndovu**  
[Johndymond1936@icloud.com](mailto:Johndymond1936@icloud.com)

**HMS Royal Oak.** I have recently discovered an item from the *Navy News* of October 1993, in which Laurence Myers would like to hear from anyone regarding the Royal Oak and in particular from anyone who knew George Edward Myers (who was lost on the Royal Oak). I am the son of George Edward Myers and would like to know if anyone has contact details for Laurence, who was living in Little Sutton, South Wirral.

**Roger Myers**  
[rogermyers@btinternet.com](mailto:rogermyers@btinternet.com)

**Brian Boulton.** I am trying to trace an old friend who was training to be a diver at HMS Ganges from 1958.

**Pauline Mahon (nee White)**  
[01677988296](tel:01677988296)/[07910275290](tel:07910275290) [pauline22@hotmail.com](mailto:pauline22@hotmail.com)

**CPSA Jim Asher.** I am trying to contact a former shipmate with whom I served in HMS Cardiff during the Falklands conflict. I served as a CHMEM at the time.



**Terry Edson**  
[Sallyann.edson@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:Sallyann.edson@tiscali.co.uk)

**CPO John Terrett.** We are trying to trace my sister's brother-in-law. He served in HMS Ark Royal in either the 1970s, 80s or 90s. He was born in Middlesbrough and had a brother, Norman, and mother Milly.

**Alver and Nigel Bryden**  
[Invermill@talk21.com](mailto:Invermill@talk21.com)

**Michael Frampton.** My brother-in-law boxed extensively for the navy during his service in the 60s and was awarded his colours. He would love

**DOES anyone recognise any of the personnel in these photographs?**

If you do, *Navy News* reader Keith Jones would like to hear from you.

Keith bought a set of encyclopaedias from a jumble sale in Havant, Hampshire, some 30 years ago and found two photos in them.

They appear to show personnel mixing their Christmas pudding.

Mr Jones believes they were taken at HMS Bellerophon, the collective name of the reserve fleet moored off Whale Island in Portsmouth.

The fleet was commissioned on July 1, 1950 and paid off on February 1, 1971.

Anyone who would like the photographs is asked to contact Keith at [Keithrjones@mail.com](mailto:Keithrjones@mail.com)

to get a Imperial Services/Combined Services cloth badge to sew on to his sweatshirt. He is now 75 and I would love to obtain one for him.

**Joe Joryeff**  
[joryeff@gmail.com](mailto:joryeff@gmail.com)

**HMS Isis. D-87 'That which Remains' 1936 to 1944.** My father was an Army officer attached to HMS Isis as BLO and survived her sinking on July 20 1944. I am seeking contact with former crew, survivors, families and or descendants.

**Angus Beaton**  
[07966166981](tel:07966166981)  
[angusbeaton@me.com](mailto:angusbeaton@me.com)





• Officers on the bridge of a British destroyer observe an Atlantic convoy in October 1941

Picture: Imperial War Museum A5667

# Albert recalls USSR tragedy

WHILE most of the nation's eyes were fixed on 1945 last month as they marked the 75th anniversary of VE Day, Albert Foulser's memories were fixed on 1944.

One year before the Allies celebrated victory over Nazism, the Royal Navy was battling the weather and the enemy as it endeavoured to deliver vital supplies to the Soviet Union to sustain the Eastern Front.

At the end of April 1944, Able Seaman Albert Foulser's destroyer HMS Walker was part of a strong escort force guarding a precious cargo heading back to Britain.

Among more than 40 merchant ships was the American Liberty Ship William S Thayer, one of several vessels carrying more than 2,300 sailors of the Red Fleet to take charge of battleship HMS Royal Sovereign, four submarines and other warships being transferred to the USSR.

Two days into the voyage, the convoy ran into a U-boat wolf pack 50 miles south of Bear Island.

The Thayer was torpedoed by U-307 and broke in two. The bow sank, casting survivors into icy waters, the stern remained afloat long enough for HMS Walker to take 49 men aboard, while another 56 men were rescued from the sea.

Despite being in the water no more than four minutes, submariner Senior Lieutenant Valentin Aleksandrovich Martinov died from exposure after he was rescued by HMS Whitehall and was buried at sea with four American crew members of the Thayer and one Russian seaman.

The Thayer was the only ship lost on return convoy RW 59, while three U-boats were sunk by Swordfish from escort carrier HMS Fencer in revenge.

And there the story might have stayed, one of hundreds of triumph and tragedy amid hundreds from World War 2 at sea – but for an able seaman with a Box Brownie, and a son's determination to honour the father he never knew.

Albert Foulser was the only man on the lower deck of HMS Walker with a camera (a childhood birthday present) and recorded the journey back to the UK, including the Russian survivors and his shipmates had saved from the Thayer (pictured top).

Valentin Kovalev was just two months old when his father Valentin Martinov was killed on his way to take charge of HMS Unison under the banner of the Hammer and Sickle. He learned of his fate aged 13,



• (Clockwise from top left) Valentin Martinov; a young Albert Foulser; and Albert with a trademark Arctic convoy veteran's at a reunion with Russians outside the Imperial War Museum



since when he has endeavoured to keep his memory alive.

Which is why on Victory Day – May 9 – the story of Snr Lt Martinov, the Thayer and the Britons who came to the aid of those shipwrecked sailors appeared on Russian TV, illustrated with the 76-year-old photographers Albert Foulser took... and with the still-vivid memories of the veteran.

"I remember 'action stations' and 'full speed ahead' when the Liberty Ship was torpedoed. Half of it was still afloat. Our skipper put his bow against it and said to us: 'Grab them as quickly as you can.'"

The Thayer was, says Albert "one of the most distressing things" he witnessed in his service. "But these things happen..."

The Londoner attends an event with Russian veterans each VE Day aboard HMS Belfast (except this year; its provisionally put back until September due to the pandemic).

# Our finest hour

PROFESSOR Evan Mawdsley formerly held the chair of International History at the University of Glasgow. He has already written 'A New History' of World War 2 and an award-winning study of December 1941.

Now he has turned his attention to an overall analysis of the maritime history of the war, putting this key dimension into the overall history of the conflict, writes Professor Eric Grove.

Unlike some similar books which overly concentrate on operations the author puts these matters into the overall strategic and economic context. As Professor Richard Overly puts it, the result is "the first fully-integrated account of a truly global dimension to the war."

Mawdsley correctly identifies the Allies' command of the sea as the key factor in their victory. He convincingly argues that from the perspective of grand strategy, Germany was the most dangerous enemy – more so than Imperial Japan, despite the latter's naval strength.

The Royal Navy's ability to maintain Britain's security from invasion and blockade meant that it was possible to challenge Axis hegemony in Western Europe and the Mediterranean.

The author is right to argue that the "Battle of the Atlantic was never such a 'near-run thing; as is often depicted – Britain never faced an actual supply crisis." Connecting the enormous strategic potential of the USA with the periphery of continental Europe, a campaign which required "immense and decisive effort", was the key factor in victory.

This effort was primarily dependent on the maritime forces of the British Empire, whose contribution to the Allied victory "deserves more credit than it is often accorded today". Professor Mawdsley convincingly argues that it is misleading to project British post-war maritime weaknesses back before 1944-5. The Royal Navy, the author argues, "was the dominant Allied warship force in the North and South Atlantic, the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean through most or all of World War 2." The British mercantile marine began the war strong enough and remained strong enough to play a fundamental role in both national survival and Allied victory.

Professor Mawdsley rightly makes the point that the Royal Navy was still the world's strongest navy in 1939, Britannia still ruled the waves in all aspects except one vital one – what the author calls 'sea-air warfare'. The legacy of dual RAF-RN control in the inter-war period was a negative one and this had

serious effects that it took years fully to overcome.

I think, however, Professor Mawdsley slightly overstates the lead of the US Navy in carrier aviation. American carriers were still operating biplane fighters in 1940 and the Devastator torpedo bomber, though a monoplane, was more of a deathtrap than the British Swordfish. Later on the Helldiver dive bomber, called 'The Beast' by its crews, was only a qualified success; the Fleet Air Arm refused to adopt it after fatal crashes on trials.

The book is based on a strong and up-to-date research base and is hard to fault. It is well structured and clearly written.

There are, however, one or two problems. The main one is the author ignoring his own argument in supporting the British attack on the French capital ships at Mers-el-Kebir was justified. He had correctly pointed out that "in military terms little was achieved. The British certainly did not sink or eliminate the French Navy."

There was still a very powerful force of cruisers and super destroyers that could have changed the balance of power in the Channel and the action was, in the author's

view, "counter-productive; ships were moved from North Africa to the French mainland, where the risk of German seizure was greater. Mers-el-Kebir moreover worsened British relations with the successor government at Vichy and outraged the tight knit naval officer corps." Quite!

Professor Mawdsley rightly points to the key Soviet dependence on western supplies by sea. Surprisingly, however, he does not make the vital point that the Husky landings in Sicily caused Hitler to call off the Battle of Kursk, in which, contrary to legend, the Germans were destroying Soviet counter-attacks. This was a truly major maritime impact on the war ashore. Also one might also have expected a little direct discussion of Zimm's radical deconstruction of the Pearl Harbor attack (which does appear in the bibliography)

Nevertheless the strengths of this great book far outweigh its minor weaknesses. It really is a landmark work for which its author is to be congratulated. It is the best overall history of the maritime war not least in its critical discussion of well-worn legends and the stress on factors other than naval battles. It should be acquired by everyone interested in the subject. **The War For The Seas: A Maritime History of World War II**, 557 pages with excellent maps is published by Yale University Press (ISBN 978-0-300-19019-9) for £25 (and a paperback is on the way).



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