



NAVY NEWS

OCTOBER 2020

It's the jet set



HMS Queen Elizabeth's flight deck bristles with F-35B jets as the carrier embarks two squadrons, the UK's 617 Squadron and the US Marine Corps VMFA-211, for exercises with allies in the North Sea

(see page 6)

Picture: LPhot Belinda Alker

Inside: RN lead task groups in Arctic, Caribbean and Mediterranean



ADVANCED IN THE



From trialling a new torpedo to leading a multi-national task group, it has been a busy early autumn for Type-23 frigate HMS Sutherland.

The Plymouth-based Royal Navy warship spent weeks in waters above the Arctic Circle working with United States and Norwegian navies to demonstrate freedom of navigation in the region.

It is the first time in more than 20 years an operation of this kind has been held in the High North by the Royal Navy, and Sutherland, supported by tanker RFA Tidespring, led a series of exercises with her allies.

US Navy Arleigh-Burke destroyer USS Ross sailed from Spain to join forces with Sutherland and Tidespring off the Scottish coast to start training, with a replenishment-at-sea with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary tanker first up.

Then it was time for the group to test their abilities with an anti-submarine exercise.

HMS Sutherland and USS Ross managed to locate and track an underwater target with their towed array sonar, giving their sailors an opportunity to perfect their anti-submarine warfare skills and knowledge.

Their tracking ability was given a boost by two Merlin helicopters from 814 Naval Air Squadron. The submarine hunting Mk2 helicopters are embarked on the frigate and Tidespring, giving the group eyes in the sky.

Speaking of the training, Commander Tom Weaver, commander of the task group and commanding officer of HMS Sutherland, said: "It was a privilege to work alongside the USS Ross as we headed into the North Atlantic, which as an anti-submarine warfare specialist is HMS Sutherland's natural habitat.

"Two Merlin Mk2 helicopters bring the task group a range of capabilities and with RFA Tidespring in the force we have a considerable amount of freedom to operate at range."

Shortly after, the task group headed north and were joined by the RAF, Norwegian frigate Thor Heyerdahl and Danish aircraft for the deployment to the Barents Sea.

More than 1,200 military personnel from the four nations took part, supported by US P-8 Poseidon and Danish Challenger Maritime Patrol Aircraft along with RAF Typhoons and refuelling

tanker RAF Voyager.

HMS Sutherland led the ships through a demanding series of exercises, testing their abilities to conduct surface and anti-submarine warfare in one of the world's most challenging environments.

Conducting routine tasks, such as replenishments-at-sea, in conditions close to freezing and in unfamiliar waters becomes a vital training exercise to ensure effective integration between allies.

This operation was the first time the UK has operated so far north alongside Denmark and Norway, both of whom are part of the Joint Expeditionary Force.

Cdr Weaver added: "The High North is a changing environment and one that is increasingly important to our security. The UK is committed to preserving the peace and stability of the Arctic region and the Royal Navy together with our allies and partners are demonstrating that we can sustain operations in this challenging and complex environment."

The High North is witnessing a change in its security environment and represents a key area of interest for the UK. Recent Russian attempts to control freedom of access and navigation in the region are of concern to the UK and its partners.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said: "The UK is the closest neighbour to the Arctic states. In addition to preserving UK interests we have a responsibility to support our Arctic Allies such as Norway to preserve the security and stability of the region.

"It is vital to preserve freedom of navigation when melting ice caps are creating new shipping lanes and increasing the risk of states looking to militarise and monopolise international borders."

The activity was completed in a considered manner that demonstrated each nation's continued determination to ensure stability and security in the High North.

Before HMS Sutherland was given the responsibility of leading

the task group, she spent time trialling the navy's new torpedo. The world's most advanced torpedo is on the cusp of entering service with the Royal Navy after the extensive trials in Scotland.

The upgraded Spearfish – the principal weapon of the UK's Submarine Flotilla against enemy ships and submarines – was 'fired' repeatedly at Sutherland as scientists, engineers and sailors studied its performance.

Over four days on special ranges near the Kyle of Lochalsh, the improved weapon was put through its paces, testing both software and hardware enhancements – while the frigate did its utmost to fend off the torpedo's attacks.

The Royal Navy is making a multi-million pound investment in upgrading Spearfish, fitting a new warhead, new, safer fuel system, an enhanced electronic 'brain' and a new fibre-optic guidance link with its parent submarine to improve its accuracy and lethality.

The latest trials are the fourth involving Sutherland – which is purpose-built to hunt down hostile submarines – to help introduce the new Spearfish into service.

The ship was assessed to see if she could defeat the new-look torpedo, using a mix of evasive manoeuvres to evade the torpedo and advanced acoustic counter-measures to lure it away from Sutherland.

"During the trial this week we have put our elite training into action, using a variety of underwater sensors to locate and track the weapon," said 23-year-old Able Seaman Matthew Brown from Perth, one of the underwater warfare specialists who's been tracking Spearfish.

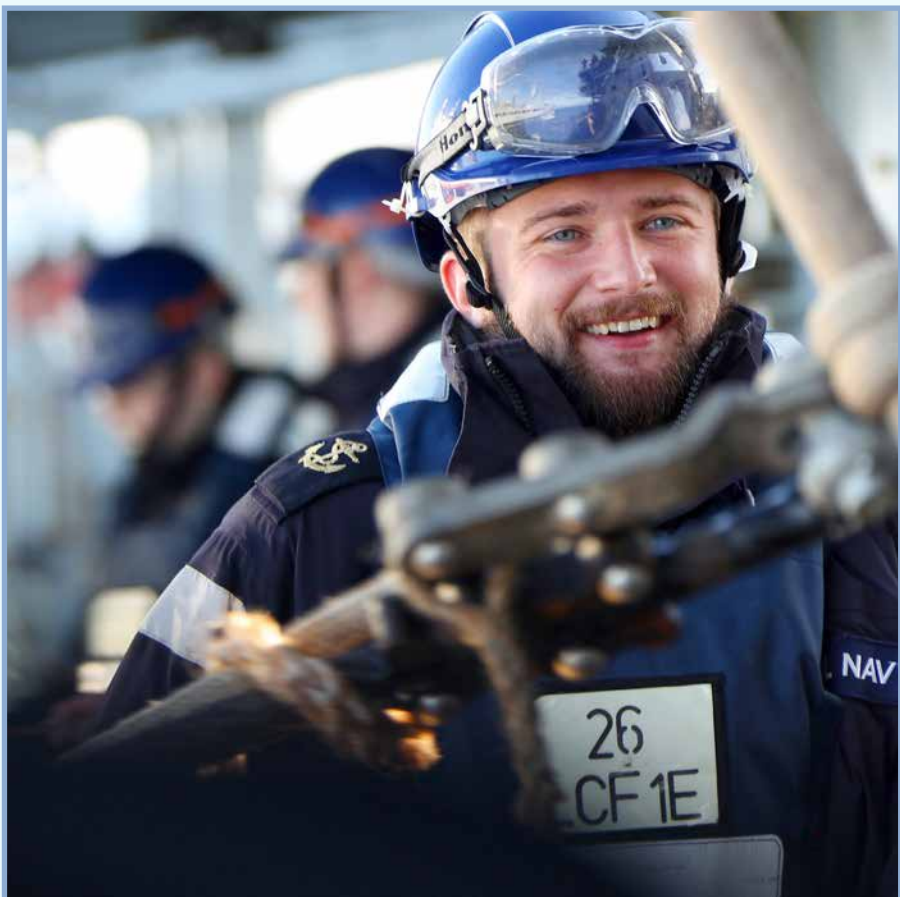
"Having one of the most advanced and capable torpedoes in the world fired at you certainly puts the pressure on."

Further trials of the upgraded Spearfish weapon will take place over the next six months before the weapon reaches Initial Operating Capability (IOC) in 2021 and then begins a full manufacture and roll out to the fleet.

“ ”
The High North is a changing environment and one that is increasingly important to our security.

Commander Tom Weaver

TURBLES ARCTIC



Remembering Arctic Convoy heroes



● Crew of HMS Scylla shovel snow off the deck

HMS SUTHERLAND took a short break from leading her task group to commemorate those killed while making “the worst journey in the world” during World War 2.

The ship’s company took time while in the southern Barents Sea to honour the thousands of men who died in the harsh, freezing conditions of the Arctic between 1941 and 1945.

Sutherland’s chaplain, the Reverend Robert Jackson, led a service while AB Hadyn Morris read a poem he had written. Commander Tom Weaver, the ship’s commanding officer, laid a wreath in memory of those who died.

He said: “It is humbling to be in the High North commemorating the heroic acts of merchant and Allied sailors almost 80 years ago.

“The conditions they served in were amongst the very worst a mariner could experience.

“We are proud to remember the UK and

Allied crews who bravely did their duty in support of values that the UK and Royal Navy still hold dear today.”

The Arctic Convoys were tasked with carrying thousands of tanks, aircraft and vehicles to the Soviet Union.

Faced with the unforgiving Arctic environment, their journeys were also under threat from German bombers, U-boats and, occasionally, surface ships, based in occupied Norway.

By tonnage, more than a quarter of the world’s shipping capacity passed through the convoys.

During the conflict, more than 100 warships and merchant vessels were lost, while over 3,000 sailors and merchant seamen were killed.

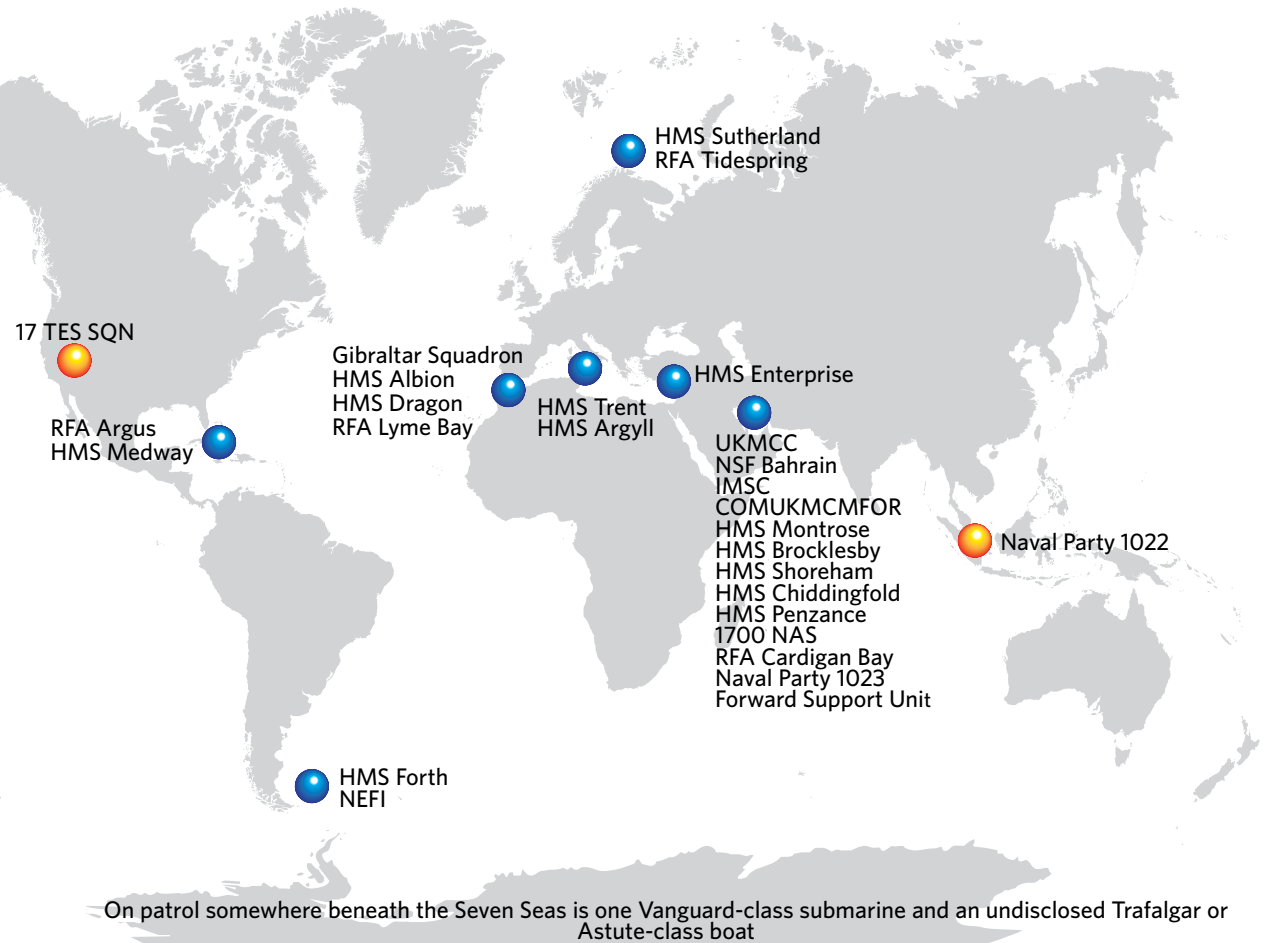
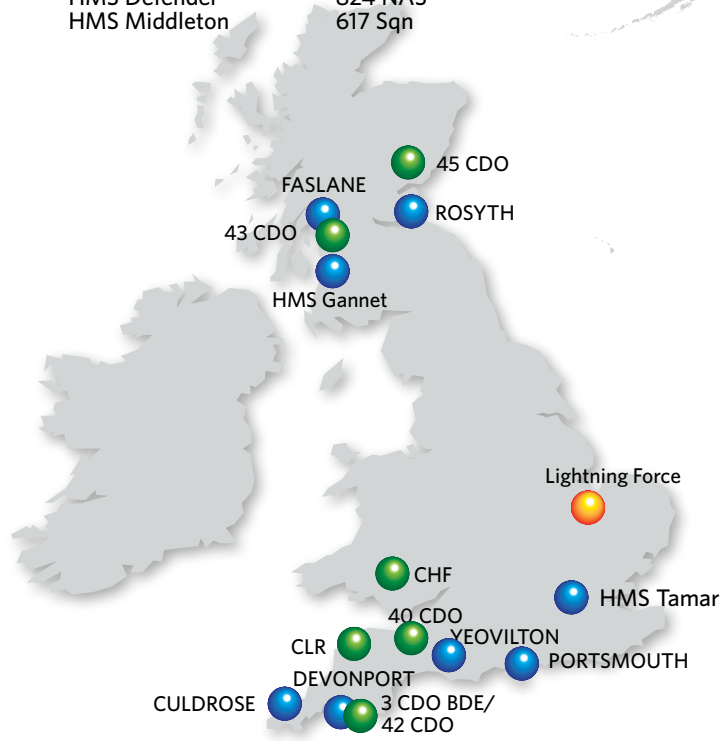
HMS Sutherland is in the region leading a UK-led task group with US destroyer USS Ross, Norwegian frigate Thor Heyerdahl and Danish aircraft.



● HMS Sutherland’s ship company attend the service (above and top left)

Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Queen Elizabeth	HMS Kent
HMS Northumberland	HMS Scott
HMS Westminster	Project Wilton
HMS Severn	814 NAS
HMS Mersey	815 NAS
HMS Magpie	820 NAS
HMS Defender	824 NAS
HMS Middleton	617 Sqn



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

GLOBAL NAVY
Protecting our nation's interests

THE Arctic, the Caribbean and the Mediterranean – the deployment of three Royal Navy task groups feature in this month's edition.

We start with the Arctic (see pages 2-3) where **HMS Sutherland**, supported by **RFA Tidespring**, commanded a naval force comprising the US destroyer USS Ross and the Norwegian frigate Thor Heyerdahl on a deployment to the Barents Sea. More than 1,200 military personnel from four nations took part, supported by US P-8 Poseidon and Danish Challenger Maritime Patrol Aircraft along with RAF Typhoons and a Voyager refuelling tanker.

In the Caribbean, sailors and Royal Marines from **RFA Argus** and **HMS Medway** were involved in three operations to seize drugs worth more than £81m (see centre pages). The ships are in the Caribbean as part of a Royal Navy task group supporting communities during hurricane season and also to carry out maritime security and counter-narcotics operations.

The Mediterranean is the destination for a task group led by Fleet Flagship **HMS Albion** (see page 6). More than 1,000 sailors and Royal Marines are taking part in the three-month mission to forge the commando forces of tomorrow. The force includes **HMS Dragon** and **RFA Lyme Bay**, green berets from 47, 42 and 40 Cdo units, intelligence experts from 30 Cdo IXG and Wildcats from **Commando Helicopter Force**.

Royal Navy ships operating from Bahrain also feature strongly this month, with two minehunters – **HMS Chiddingfold** and **HMS Penzance** – arriving in the Gulf and two – **HMS Blyth** and **HMS Ledbury** – arriving back in the UK (see pages 16-17).

Type 23 frigate **HMS Argyll** should now be home after five months on constant operations in the punishing heat of the Gulf (see page 15). Nearly six million tonnes of shipping – 68 merchant vessels – carrying goods, oil and natural gas – has been safely monitored through key sea lanes in the Middle East since the Plymouth-based ship arrived in the region in April.

Argyll has been working side-by-side with her sister ship **HMS Montrose**, and the UK's allies and partners in the region to reassure merchant shipping in potentially dangerous waters.

A new crew have taken charge of **HMS Montrose**, the pilot ship for the Royal Navy's growing Forward Presence programme (see page 15). The latest changeover saw 200 men and women of the Port crew hand over to their Starboard counterparts.

HMS Brocklesby joined ships from the US and Royal Saudi Navy for a minehunting test in the Gulf (see page 16).

Royal Marines have limbered up for a busy autumn of experimentation with Future Commando Force exercises at the Bovington Training Area in Dorset (see page 14). The marines of Taunton-based 40 Commando took each other on in 'force-on-force' battle, which saw the commandos break off into small teams and use developing tactics to outsmart one another.

The fifth and final new Royal Navy patrol ship is at sea for the first time (see page 15). **HMS Spey** has sailed from BAE Systems' yard at Scotstoun on the Clyde to begin Contractor Sea Trials.

Sister ship **HMS Trent** has been supporting NATO as she continues operations in the Med (see page 7). Following her first foreign port visit to Gibraltar, Trent sailed to join Operation Sea Guardian tasked with deterring, detecting and disrupting illegal activity.

HMS Tamar made her debut on the Thames (see page 5), where she berthed alongside HMS Belfast and hosted a number of engagement events.

Veteran offshore patrol vessel **HMS Severn** has been shadowing Russian vessels through the Channel and Dover Strait (see page 9).

The future of minehunting arrived in Faslane with the arrival of a new Autonomous Mine Counter Measures vessel (see page 11). **RNMB Harrier** will be operated by Project Wilton, a recently formed Maritime Autonomous Systems (MAS) team based out of HM Naval Base Clyde.

The crew of **HMS Westminster** have returned home, after 110 days isolated from the world (see page 14). The entire ship's company self-isolated to ensure the ship could perform key duties in the Atlantic and waters of northern Europe.

Survey ship **HMS Scott** has spent a record-breaking summer gathering information about the waters around the UK (see page 5) while survey vessel **HMS Enterprise** worked with Cypriot partners during search-and-rescue training off the island in the Eastern Med (see page 19).

Finally, Faslane's cavernous shiplift facility provided the impressive backdrop as the Duchess of Rothesay helped **HMS Astute** celebrate her tenth birthday (see page 24).



Much to celebrate but we have more work to do

MOST of you will be aware that October is Black History Month, and across the Royal Navy and the rest of Defence there are events going on to celebrate this.

The events following the killing of George Floyd and the subsequent demonstrations around the world have made this year's event particularly relevant, and so we wanted to take a bit of time to reflect on the contribution of our black and ethnic minority personnel, not only now but throughout the history of the Royal Navy.

Diversity in our service is nothing new. There were sailors from over 50 different nations serving in Nelson's fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar, many of whom were from ethnic minorities.

Famously, black sailors are depicted in the frieze showing the battle at the bottom of Nelson's Column, as well as in several paintings of HMS Victory.

More recently, large numbers of Commonwealth personnel joined the

VIEW BRIDGE

Royal Navy during the two World Wars last century, fighting for our country alongside their British-born colleagues. Many settled here afterwards and made the UK their home.

As well as this, many members of the Windrush generation and their descendants have served in the Royal Navy and worked in our dockyards.

Their contribution is remembered every year on Windrush Day in June, when we honour the contribution they made to rebuilding the UK in the aftermath of World War 2.

Today, we are proud that personnel from across the Commonwealth, as well as many UK black and ethnic minority personnel, continue to serve in the Royal Navy.

But we know that we have more to do if we are going to be fully

representative of the nation that we serve, and we know that we need to work harder to offer up the same opportunities for everyone.

That is why we have just appointed a new Race and Ethnicity Advocate, Rear Admiral Mike Utley, to support our ethnic minority communities, challenge and overturn the policies that make their lives harder and help encourage diversity across all ranks and specialisations of the Royal Navy.

"As an organisation we will not tolerate any form of racism or bias," said RAdm Utley. "We are a microcosm of our magnificently diverse societies in the UK and Commonwealth and I am determined we must be an inclusive organisation that embraces the diversity and quality of all our people; these are our core values."

There are lots of events going on to celebrate Black History Month across the Royal Navy and more widely.

We encourage you all to come along to these, take part and learn more.

Taming the Thames

OFFSHORE Patrol Vessel HMS Tamar passes under Tower Bridge as she made her debut on the Thames.

The vessel was berthed alongside HMS Belfast for her visit, during which the ship hosted a number of engagement events and capability demonstrations featuring Royal Marines from 42 Commando.

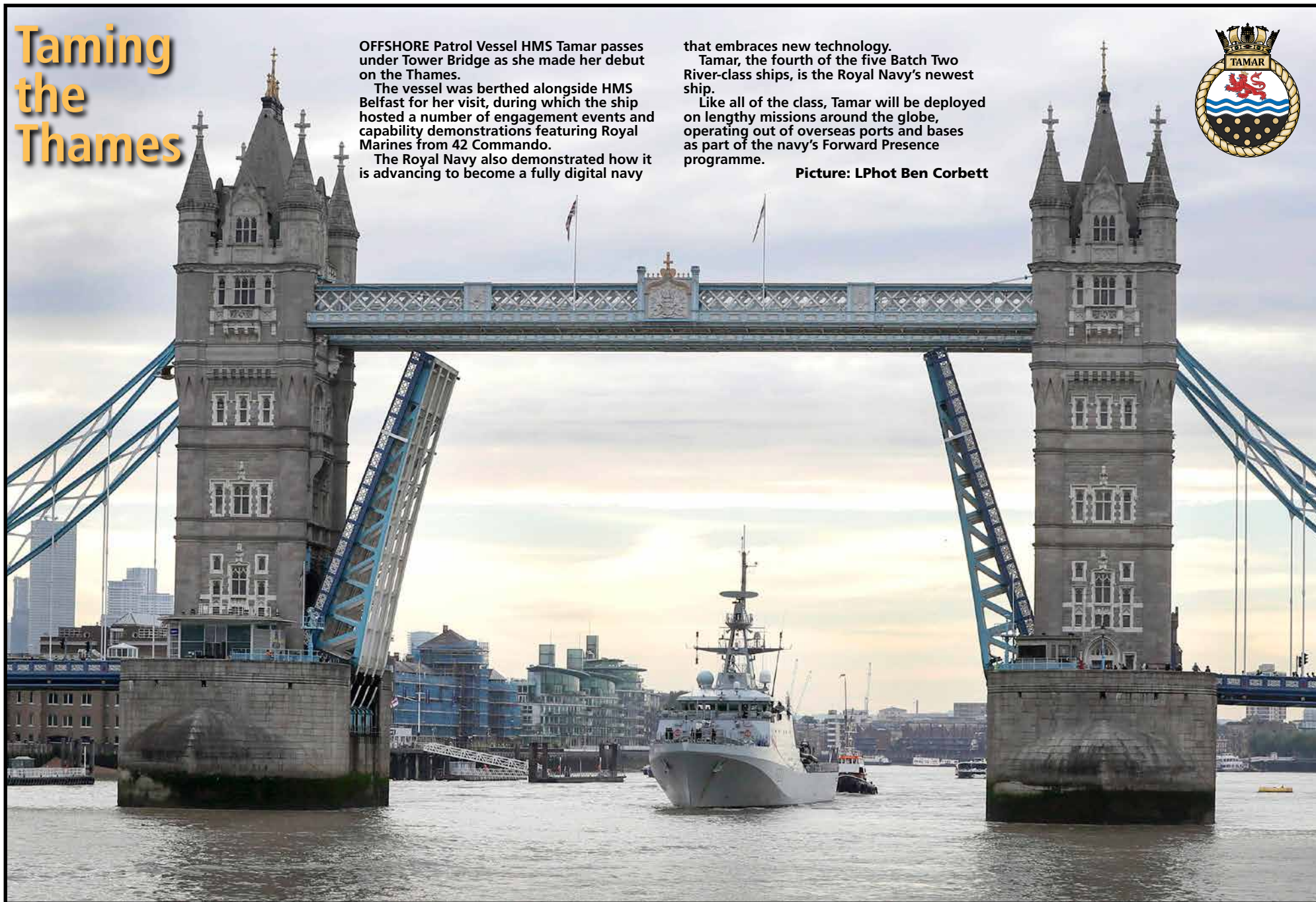
The Royal Navy also demonstrated how it is advancing to become a fully digital navy

that embraces new technology.

Tamar, the fourth of the five Batch Two River-class ships, is the Royal Navy's newest ship.

Like all of the class, Tamar will be deployed on lengthy missions around the globe, operating out of overseas ports and bases as part of the navy's Forward Presence programme.

Picture: LPhot Ben Corbett



Scott set new record

SURVEY ship HMS Scott has spent a record-breaking summer gathering data in the North Atlantic.

The Navy's largest survey vessel has collected reams of information over an area of ocean roughly the size of Austria.

The Plymouth-based vessel typically spends the summer in the North Atlantic and winters in cooler climes, hoovering up data about the oceans which will assist naval operations and seafarers in general through updating charts used to safely guide ships the world over.

Using Falmouth and Plymouth as her bases, the ship has conducted extended six-week patrols where she collected more data than in any previous stint at sea during her 23-year career.

"Scott has had an extremely successful summer

season in the North Atlantic gathering an unprecedented volume of bathymetric survey data," said Commander James Baker, the ship's Commanding Officer.

"As ever, success is built on a team effort, and I could not be more proud of my ship's company who have worked their socks off to deliver this operational task, despite a myriad of engineering challenges and significant programme changes."

The pandemic has extended time on board for the ship's company, meant the ship spent longer periods at sea – which in turn meant embarking more supplies – and ruled out any chance for the crew to enjoy port visits at home or abroad.

And on board, increased cleaning routines and social distancing where possible – although



she's as long as a frigate she has just one quarter the crew – have also contributed to keeping Covid at bay.

"A fantastic effort from the whole ship has meant that Scott has taken Covid in its stride, and has continued to deploy and operate safely," explained ship's doctor Surgeon Lieutenant Andrew Thornback.

"HMS Scott can rightly take pride that she has demonstrated her ability to operate in very challenging conditions, getting the job done safely and effectively."

Scott traditionally operates far from commercial shipping routes and in very deep water, away from fishing grounds.

It means the ship can often go several weeks without seeing another vessel and, other than each other, the only company for the crew is

marine life.

"We've seen a wide range of marine wildlife ranging from the very small to the truly massive: sei, minke and humpback whales, a 200-strong pod of dolphins and the odd jellyfish," said Able Seaman Tim Aitchison.

To maintain morale while largely cut off from friends and family, the ship's company staged various fun events aboard from a go-kart-esque race on the upper deck to games of Cluedo, quizzes and bizarre challenges mirroring the TV comedy gameshow *Taskmaster*.

And many sailors took a dip in the Channel when the ship anchored off the Isles of Scilly.

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Picture: LPhot Belinda Alker

Avengers assemble

THE flight deck of Britain's biggest warship is currently reverberating to the largest carrier air group she's yet carried.

Fourteen British and American F-35s embarked on HMS Queen Elizabeth, ready for the final chapter in the future flagship's long road to front-line operations, see *front page*.

Groupex involves two F-35B squadrons on the deck (and in the hangar) for the first time: the UK's 617 ('Dambusters') and the US Marine Corps' VMFA 211 ('Wake Island Avengers'), who crossed the Atlantic to join the combined RAF/RN unit at its base at RAF Marham to acclimatise to operating in UK skies.

With a total of 14 jets and eight Merlin helicopters, it's the largest concentration of fighter jets to operate at sea from a Royal Navy carrier since HMS Hermes in 1983, and the largest air group of fifth generation fighters at sea anywhere in the world.

The Lightning crews warmed up for their embarkation with a 50-aircraft exercise over the North Sea as British, US and Dutch F-35s grappled with American F-16 Hornets (brought in from Italy), RAF Typhoons, US B-52 bombers and F-15 Strike Eagles, while while RAF Voyagers and American KC-135 Stratotankers kept fuel tanks topped up to allow the dogfights to continue.

Already aboard Queen Elizabeth were half a dozen Merlins from 820 and 824 Naval Air Squadrons; the former are her guardians against hostile submarines, the latter embarked to complete the at-sea training of Merlin air and ground crews.

"For several of my personnel, this is their first time onboard," said 820's Commanding Officer Commander Ian Varley. "The excitement and trepidation is clear on their faces. We are well prepared and, as the tight-knit family we are, we will all make sure that we make the most of our time onboard in a safe and encouraging environment."

As for their 'stead', after a spot of maintenance over the summer, Queen Elizabeth put to sea for a few days to shake off the cobwebs and stretch her sea legs.

The run-out (before returning to Portsmouth to embark the kit needed to support the Lightnings) took her to Weymouth Bay, which has become something of a 'car park' for cruise ships during the pandemic... among them Cunard's Queen Elizabeth (50ft longer and almost one third heavier than her Royal Navy namesake). The two vessels exchanged pleasantries as dusk descended over Dorset.

Joining forces with the carrier are seven Royal Navy destroyers, frigates and auxiliaries, plus other supporting units, to form a fully sovereign Carrier Strike Group, ready to fight on the surface and in the air.

The group will be put through its paces off the north east coast of Scotland as part of Joint Warrior, NATO's largest annual exercise.



Picture: SAC Ben Mayfield



Generation (X)

MORE than one thousand sailors and Royal Marines are now in the Med on a three-month mission to forge the commando forces of tomorrow.

This autumn's amphibious deployment - now re-branded the Littoral Response Group (Experimentation) - is a key building block in the transformation both of the green berets... and the way they are delivered to the field of battle.

With flagship HMS Albion choreographing affairs, new tactics, new methods and new kit will be tested in the coming weeks across the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

The deployment is intended to test new concepts of the Littoral Strike Group (which replaces the UK's long-standing amphibious task group) and shape the Future Commando Force (FCF) - the evolution of the Royal Marines into a hi-tech raiding/strike force - both of which are at the heart of the Royal Navy's metamorphosis as it enters the 2020s.

The force includes the headquarters and staff of Commodore Rob Pedre, the Commander Littoral Strike Group, aboard Albion, destroyer HMS Dragon and amphibious support ship RFA Lyme Bay.

The Royal Marines are represented by elements of specialist raiding units of 47 Commando, marines of 42 and 40 Commando based in Plymouth and Taunton, and the intelligence experts of 30 Commando Information Exploitation Group, plus Wildcat helicopters from the Commando Helicopter Force at RNAS Yeovilton.

Much of the (r)evolutionary training will be conducted in and around Cyprus, where two exercises - Olympus Warrior and Autonomous Advance Force 3, a test of cutting-edge kit and how it can be exploited by commandos to deal with the very latest of threats - are planned.

"We will test cutting-edge technology and innovative concepts such as the Future Commando Force and the Littoral Strike Force concept to ensure our war-fighting edge in an era of constant competition," said Cdre Pedre.

There are also more typical task group duties during the deployment: support to NATO's Mediterranean security operation Sea Guardian and training/port visits in the Black Sea to underline Britain's support for the region's security and stability.

The journey to Gib was punctuated by a day of air attacks as eight French Rafale fighters bounced the task group as it passed the Brittany peninsula.

That brought the ships well within range of the jets, based at Landivisiau Naval Air Station near Brest when they're not embarked as the striking power of France's flagship, carrier FS Charles de Gaulle.

And lifting off from Lann-Bihoué air base on the outskirts of Lorient was an E-2 Hawkeye airborne early-warning and control aircraft, which spent a few hours looking for the naval group.

When the Hawkeye's crew located the shipping, they directed the Rafales in to make their attack runs, coming in with the sun at their backs - a classic fighter tactic.

In theory Dragon and her Sea Viper missiles should take out incoming jets - or any rockets they fire - at long range. Should that fail, the task group has numerous automated Phalanx Gatling guns which spew out a supposedly-impenetrable wall of lead up to around one kilometer from each ship, decoys and, as a last resort, hand-operated machine-guns and SA80 rifles.

Both sides were able to test their attacking and defensive tactics and manoeuvres during the successive waves of raids.

"The opportunity for joint training in an alliance as strong as that of the UK's with France has been fantastic," said pilot Lieutenant Tom Lennon who normally carries Royal Marines into battle in a Merlin helicopter but is assigned to the task group staff for this deployment.

"To have eight French fast jets attacking the UK's Littoral Response Group has provided invaluable training for both parties. Watching Rafale jets close on the Royal Navy's Fleet Flagship and seeing her dynamic response was extremely rewarding. Exercises like these improve our ability to defend at home and, if needs be, fight abroad."

The contrast with a sleepy Sunday morning in mid-September on the Rock could not have been greater. Six days after departing UK waters, the task group arrived at the gateway to the Med.

Covid restrictions limited many of the staple fixtures of a visit to Gibraltar largely to a re-fuel/re-supply stop - although there was an opportunity for the Royal Marines of 42 Commando to stretch their legs for the first time on this deployment.

Exercise Gibraltar Strike included abseiling from helicopters and urban combat training making use of the facilities/ranges on the Rock.



Pictures: LPhotos Barry Swainsbury and Fin Hutchins





Mediterranean mission

HMS TRENT settled into her deployment in the Mediterranean as she completed her second patrol on NATO security operations.

Continuing to support Operation Sea Guardian, the patrol ship has vigilantly aided efforts to detect and disrupt suspicious and illegal activity.

While on patrol, Trent met up with allied US Navy warship the USS Winston Churchill. Named after the iconic World War 2 Prime Minister, the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer has both historical and current links with the Royal Navy with its navigating officer always British.

Upon leaving Gibraltar, Trent's bridge team took the opportunity to make the most of the Mediterranean sun by sailing the ship out of the harbour from the open bridge, testing out a new capability.

The warm weather and calm sea also meant the ship's company were able to swim in the Mediterranean's waters, as the ship

carried out her first hands to bathe.

Engineering Technician (Weapons Engineering) Robson Gelder said: "It was really good fun to jump in the water, it's looked really tempting at times with all this sun we've been having."

"It was my first time doing a hands to bathe but it's been something I've wanted to do since I joined up so I'm glad I got to tick it off the list."

Earlier in the deployment, HMS Trent was able to hold her first fundraiser.

The sailors successfully rowed and cycled the length of the River Trent, all 293km of it.

A group of Royal Navy Reserve Officer Cadets helped to organise the event which raised money for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

As Trent headed to Limassol, in Cyprus, she conducted a search-and-rescue exercise with a Cypriot Joint Rescue Coordination Centre helicopter. It comes after Royal Navy survey

ship HMS Enterprise did similar training with Cypriot forces earlier this month.

The exercise revolved around a scenario where one of the crew was so badly injured they had to be urgently winched off and flown to the local hospital for immediate assistance.

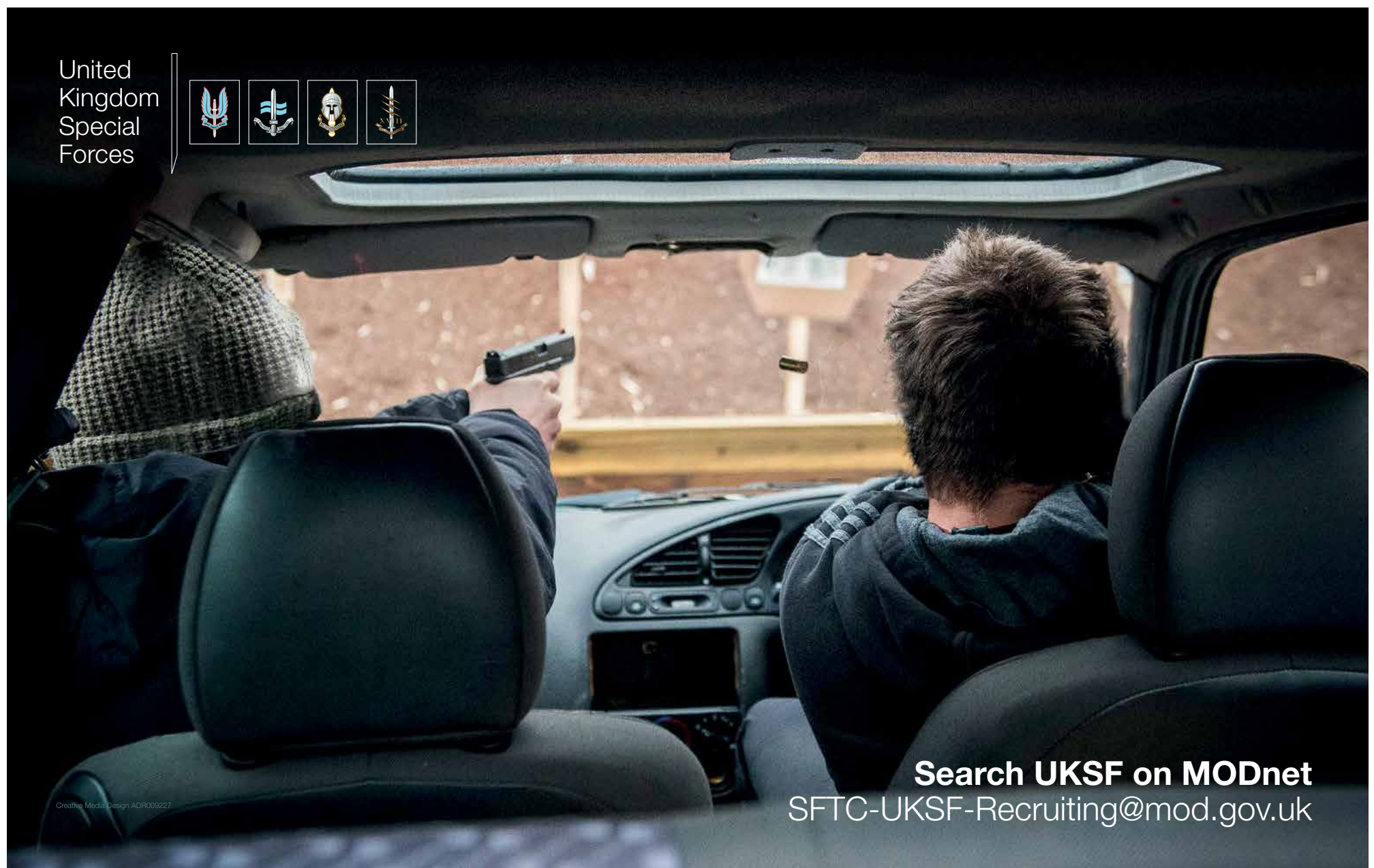
After completing the training, the ship stopped in Limassol. It marked the ship's first deployed watch rotation, where a third of the crew will depart on leave and the 'off-watch' crew will go on board. This way of manning the ship is the same for Trent's sister Offshore Patrol Vessels Forth, Medway, Tamar and Spey.

Lieutenant Oliver Bekier, the off-going executive officer, said: "This period in command has been superb. It has not been without its challenges, but the opportunity to lead Trent on her first period of operations and establish this new warship in a part of the world the Batch 2 OPVs have never been before has been an honour."



● HMS Trent meets with USS Winston Churchill (main picture) and works with Cypriot forces on a search and rescue exercise (above).
Pictures: LPhot Unaisi Luke

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HMS Severn has been shadowing Russian vessels through the Channel and Dover Strait.

The re-commissioned patrol ship escorted the Russian Navy's Vishnya-class intelligence ship Feodor Golovin and auxiliary tanker Akademik Pashin through UK waters.

While HMS Tamar hosted VIPs on the Thames, and Medway, Trent and Forth knuckle down to operations around the globe (the Caribbean,

Mediterranean and Falklands respectively), their first-generation River-class sisters continue to perform vital work for the navy and nation in home waters.

The Russian ships had been transiting from naval bases in the Baltic and Barents Seas to and from the Mediterranean.

Severn was tasked to shadow the ships, taking over from the French navy.

She was joined by a Belgian warship for a short time before handing over to the Dutch as the Russian vessels continued their journey.

Lieutenant Roddy Hartridge, navigating officer, said: "As well as providing world-class navigational training HMS Severn regularly escorts foreign warships through UK waters.

"As an island nation it is crucial to safeguard Britain's sea lanes and patrol the high seas."

HMS Severn's primary role is to deliver bespoke training to the future generation of navigating officers. But she can be called upon to support the navy as the very high readiness ship which is charged with protecting the integrity of UK waters.

Demonstrating her speed and deft manoeuvrability, the ship churned up the

North Sea in company with her sister HMS Mersey as trainee officers were tested.

Severn returned to front-line operations in July and has been working in the North Sea, independently and in company with Mersey.

"As the Fleet Navigation Training ship, you would expect HMS Severn to take every opportunity for vigorous shiphandling," Lt Hartridge added.

"It makes a pleasant, albeit brief, change from escorting Russian warships through the UK's area of interest in poor weather."

Severn gradually worked her way up the east coast of England, and now Scotland, allowing the ship's history buffs to 'castle watch' by sailing close to ancient fortresses such as Bamburgh (near Lindisfarne) and Dunnottar (near Stonehaven).

Both Severn and Mersey paid a whistle-stop visit to Aberdeen to take on stores, change crew and host the city's Lord Provost, Barney Crockett, before parting company, with Severn striking north to the vast expanse of Scapa Flow – the principal anchorage for the Royal Navy in both world wars.

Today the huge natural harbour – it covers an area twice the size of Nottingham – is largely quiet, but remains extremely useful for navigational and seamanship training.

Picture: LPhot Dan Shepherd



Top accolade for the Tigers

SUBMARINE-HUNTERS from 814 Naval Air Squadron – aka the Flying Tigers – and their ship, HMS Northumberland, have been recognised for their exceptional ability to remain at high readiness at sea.

Mohawk Flight and HMS Northumberland were praised for their record, including during a major NATO exercise and the Westlant 19 deployment, where they protected the carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth during her time in America.

The Canadian and US Navies also praised the ship's company and Mohawk Flight for their proactive and focused behaviour.

Handing over a trophy, the Sopwith Pup Award, given for maintaining the highest degree of operational capability, was Commodore Nick Walker, the Royal Navy's deputy director of naval aviation.

He heard how, in credit to the squadron's engineers, during one deployment the helicopter flew for 135 hours at sea over an 80-day period, with an impressive serviceability rate of 90 per cent.

Receiving the trophy on behalf of Mohawk Flight was Air Engineering Technician Oliver Pilling, pictured above with Cdre Walker and other flight members at the squadron's hangar at RNAS Culdrose.

■ HMS Northumberland and RFA Fort Victoria worked together as they both undertook crucial training.

Alongside RFA Tideforce and Dutch Navy ship HNLMS Rotterdam, Northumberland has been supporting Fort Victoria's return to the fleet following a refit last year.

Meanwhile, the work with Fort Vic gave Northumberland the chance to put the ship's company and the Wildcat Viking Flight crew through their paces during her operational sea training.

Dragon to rescue

SAILORS from destroyer HMS Dragon helped a yacht when it was snared off a Dorset beauty spot.

The two crew of the Weymouth-based Monterey sent out a distress call when a lobster pot wrapped around its propeller shaft off Lulworth Cove – and the boat was unable to move.

Portsmouth-based HMS Dragon was in Weymouth Bay carrying out helicopter and board-and-search training ahead of her task group deployment (see page 6).

Within 50 minutes of picking up the yacht's distress call, the destroyer was on hand and one of her sea boats was racing across the bay to offer assistance.

Aboard was experienced marine engineer LET Charlie 'Riggy' Rigelsford who succeeded in freeing the pot. He found there was no way of getting the pot off the shaft and rudder from the stern of the craft.

Instead he clambered down the stern ladder, into the water, and under the yacht to get the line and buoy which had snared the Monterey free.



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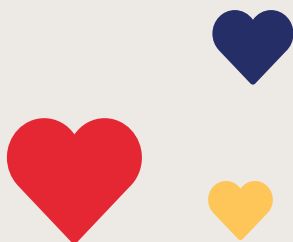
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THE FUTURE OF MINE HUNTING AT FASLANE

THE FUTURE of mine hunting has come to Faslane with the arrival of a new Autonomous Mine Counter Measures vessel.

The new boat, Royal Navy Motor Boat Harrier, will be operated by Project Wilton, a recently formed Maritime Autonomous Systems (MAS) team based out of HM Naval Base Clyde.

Part of the First Mine Counter-Measures Squadron (MCM1), the Wilton team are charged with introducing this cutting-edge technology into the Royal Navy.

RNMB Harrier arrived on the Clyde in August and was straight into a week-long familiarisation and training package delivered by prime contractor, ATLAS Elektronik UK (AEUK).

The Wilton team and the Royal Navy took formal ownership of this capability in August and will now work towards Initial Operating Capability (IOC).

Lieutenant Commander Ross Balfour, Officer in Charge of Project Wilton, said: "We have been working closely with both Defence Equipment and Support and our industry partners to realise this emergent capability for a considerable time.

"It is very exciting to see the equipment and Harrier in the flesh and allow my highly-trained team to get their hands on the kit and start to develop the potential of this highly-capable system."

RNMB Harrier can operate in three modes – manually, remotely and autonomously – giving a large range of flexibility to deploy either Towed Side Scan Sonar systems or Autonomous Underwater Vehicles. This provides the ability to very accurately survey the seabed and, after trained analysis, determine the presence of mines and other underwater threats.

The new system offers greater flexibility to deploy around the world where it can be quickly set-up for survey and mine-hunting operations. Primarily a capability demonstrator, Project Wilton and RNMB Harrier are supporting the development of Maritime Autonomous Systems to ensure the Royal Navy remains at the forefront of technology and innovation.

Jared Pocock, Senior Project Manager for Defence Equipment and Support said: "It has been a privilege working with the Project Wilton team delivering this transformational system.

"It is exciting to see the fruition of the dedicated work put in over the past two years with the Royal Navy now getting their hands on this equipment and putting it to work."

RNMB Harrier has joined her sister-vessel RNMB Hazard which has been in operation for around 18-months, initially being put through its paces by the Royal Navy's Maritime Autonomous Systems Trials Team (MASTT) prior to transferring to Project Wilton.

The third and final Wilton boat, RNMB Hebe, is due to arrive in spring next year. At 15 metres she is larger than the 11-metre-long Harrier and contains a Portable Operations Centre Afloat that allows her to control Harrier and Hazard while also co-ordinating autonomous operations.

By 2022 the system will "gain teeth" after continued development into a fully operational Mine Counter Measures system capable of removing bottom objects and neutralising explosive ordnance.

The Royal Navy's investment in the Harrier boat comes as the Service commits to embracing and developing the latest technology for frontline operations.



HUNTER: RNMB Harrier in full motion on the Clyde



READY: RNMB Harrier arrives at Faslane ahead of taking to the water



Puma ready for take off

PUMA unmanned aircraft will join Wildcats, Merlins and F-35Bs on flight decks with the first Royal Navy deployable drone squadron.

Three flights, operating the Puma, are now ready to support front-line operations around the world, providing extra eyes in the sky for warships.

The Royal Navy experimented for several years with the Scan Eagle system in the Gulf, working with technicians from the drone's manufacturer Boeing, and proved particularly useful during surveillance and boarding operations.



A Puma is launched from HMS Albion during her deployment

The formation of the three flights – Phantom A, B and C – under Culdrose's 700X Squadron marks the first 'home-grown' drone capability in the Navy.

Twelve months ago it was set the challenge of giving the Royal Navy drones which could be flown at sea in support of operations – and has accomplished it.

"It is great to be able to say that we have now completed the many months of training to take this remotely-piloted system to sea," said Lieutenant

Commander Justin Matthews, 700X's Commanding Officer.

"We have two flights ready to deploy and a third to follow later in the year.

"This is all about Royal Navy sailors flying from Royal Navy ships. The instructors and everyone at the squadron should be really proud of what we have all achieved as we move forward with this new technology. This is a new and exciting chapter for the Royal Navy."

Puma is slightly smaller than Scan Eagle – 1.4m long with a wingspan of 2.8m – is capable of speeds in excess of 50mph and carries sophisticated cameras which feed live imagery back to the mother ship.

The small aircraft is operated and maintained by a three-strong team: a flight commander, plus air engineer and naval airman who each serve as Puma pilots.

The robust system is a superb bit of surveillance and intelligence gathering kit. Already, things are gathering pace with the first launch of the system from a ship at sea during an operational deployment.

The flight from Culdrose on HMS Albion's mission to the Mediterranean, flew their Puma from the ship ahead of a busy deployment developing the use of the UAV.

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New simulator for submarine guardians

Historic naval wing provides new pilots

A GIANT transporter has delivered the first simulator to train Britain's future guardians of our nuclear deterrent.

An Antonov AN-124 cargo aircraft touched down at Glasgow Prestwick Airport, bringing the first Operational Flight Trainer for our new fleet of maritime patrol aircraft.

Two P8 Poseidons – Pride of Moray and City of Elgin – are now in service with the RAF.

Crewed by Air Force and Royal Navy personnel, the aircraft conduct long-range patrols of the North Sea and Atlantic on the lookout for any threats to navy submarines, especially the Trident boat performing the nuclear deterrent patrol.

In addition the Poseidons give military leaders additional information on activity in waters of interest to the UK.

A £100m complex to support the

new submarine-hunting jets – which are modelled on a Boeing 737-800 airliner – is being built at Lossiemouth, with two flight deck simulators linked to the mission simulators used by the rear cabin personnel, allowing a flight crew to practise sorties without leaving Scottish soil.

The flight deck trainers aren't especially heavy, but their size and shape make them too large for any aircraft in

the RAF's inventory to transport them.

It was moved by road to the coast of the Moray Firth for installation.

The two British Poseidons are using Kinloss, just west along the coast from Lossiemouth, as their temporary base until their permanent home is ready to accommodate them this autumn.

The remaining seven aircraft bought by Whitehall in a £3bn deal will be delivered by the end of next year.

A new Fleet Air Arm unit with a nod to the birth of naval aviation will provide the helicopter pilots of the future.

2nd Maritime Air Wing has been formally commissioned at RAF Shawbury in Shropshire to oversee the training of Naval, RAF and Army Air Corps helicopter pilots – turning men and women with a basic knowledge of flight into skilled aviators ready to handle front-line machines.

The wing has been operating since 2018, but only formally commissioned now which saw a blessing for the new formation by the Right Reverend Squadron Leader John Harrison and a formal pennant raising in the presence of Captain Roger Wyness, Assistant Director of Flying Training 22 Group.

“There is no doubt that the world class training that the wing delivers on behalf of defence will ensure that the front line is supplied with well-trained and highly motivated rotary wing aviators,” Capt Wyness told personnel in the new formation. “I am delighted that 2 Maritime Air Wing is undeniably ‘Underway, Making Way’.”

2nd Maritime Air Wing traces its history back to the first days of the Great War and 2nd Squadron, Royal Naval Air Service – forerunner of today's Fleet Air Arm – formed at Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey on the orders of Winston Churchill, the political head of the Navy at the time.

In its 2020 incarnation, the wing must provide the Fleet Air Arm, RAF and Army Air Corps with 106 fresh pilots every year as one of two training wings under No. 1 Flying Training School (the other is 9 Regiment Army Air Corps), encompassing 705 Naval Air Squadron, 660 Squadron AAC and 202 Squadron RAF.

Students fly state-of-the-art Airbus H135 Juno (also operated by the police) and the larger Airbus H145 Jupiter for live training.

Both helicopters have two engines, ‘glass’ – ie fully digital – cockpits, kitted out with the latest navigation equipment, fully compatible with night vision devices, and with capability for load lifting, winching and surveillance operations.

The trainee pilots often arrive at Shawbury, near Shrewsbury, with no previous experience of flying helicopters, but leave as skilled fliers, able to fly low-level, in poor weather frequently encountered at sea and around naval/air bases, in tactical formations, operating day or at night with night vision devices.

Successful Fleet Air Arm students move on to 824 NAS (Merlin Mk2), 825 NAS (Wildcat HMA2), 847 NAS (Wildcat AH1) and 846 NAS (Merlin Mk4).

Flying tank trailblazer

Engineer learns how to maintain Army's new Apache

A ROYAL Navy air engineer was picked to help introduce the most potent helicopter in the UK's arsenal into service.

Petty Officer Stu Isaksen was one of six personnel sent to the USA to learn how to maintain the newest variant of the fearsome Apache gunship which enters service this autumn.

The Apache has been around for nearly half a century with the British-built variant in service with the Army Air Corps since 2004.

From the outset, the UK has operated the tankbuster both on land and at sea – including flying missions from HMS Ocean during the Libyan civil war and initial trials with the new Queen Elizabeth class of aircraft carriers.

The latest version of the Apache, the E Model, is designed for operations from carriers as well as air bases and is due to be delivered to the Army Air Corps from next month.

Those upgrades include an attack radar which will pick out potential targets at sea, better rotor blades and more powerful engines making the

helicopter faster and able to carry a heavier payload. In addition, the new combat system installed allows the crew to operate drones from the cockpit.

Although serving in the Navy, Stu has spent the past three years assigned to 3 Regiment Army Air Corps at Wattisham in Suffolk working on the existing Apache fleet after previous experience with the gunship while serving aboard HMS Ark Royal and Ocean.

To pave the way for the E's arrival in the UK, a small group of trailblazers was sent across the Atlantic to get to grips with the new model.

Stu and his Army colleagues did so at the height of the Covid pandemic, so had to endure two weeks in quarantine in Virginia when they arrived – and were expected to wear US Army uniforms throughout their training which, given the scale of the Apache programme, took place around the clock.

The Brits found themselves working on the Apache E each day between 5pm and 1am – which spared them the worst of the 35-plus degree heat at

Felker Army Airfield, about 30 miles northeast of Norfolk, the US Navy's principal Atlantic base – in Virginia.

Their hosts used state-of-the-art interactive training aids which highlighted just how more user friendly maintaining the new Apache will be for all technicians.

After being tested on topics such as the improved airframe, hydraulics, engines, and transmission systems on the enhanced gunship, the six engineers returned to the UK with diplomas to prove their ability to maintain the E model.

Stu says working on the Apache at home and abroad, for the past three years has been “fantastic”, but the best is yet to come from the formidable ‘flying tank’.

“It is very clear that this aircraft is far superior to its predecessor and will prove to be an exciting opportunity for all those personnel involved in its operation,” said Stu who's been in the Royal Navy for 16 years.

“These are undoubtedly exciting times for Army aviation and I feel lucky to have the opportunity to be a part of it.”



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GETTING HOT AND BOVVED

ROYAL Marines have limbered up for a busy autumn of experimentation with Future Commando Force exercises at the Bovington Training Area in Dorset.

The marines of Taunton-based 40 Commando took each other on in 'force-on-force' battle, which saw the commandos break off into small teams and use developing tactics to outsmart one another.

This is all part of preparations for deployments later in the year, which will see further experimentation and evolution of tactics to shape the commando forces of tomorrow.

Marine Edward Harte said: "It's exciting times. We are just trialling everything so in regards to small man teams, instead of pushing out as sections we're going as four-man teams and



seeing how it works.

"It can be a bit trial and error at the moment but the marines are going the right way."

This training put Future Commando Force tactics under scrutiny and shows the advantages and disadvantages of the concepts.

It saw Bravo Company's Four and Five Troop, plus Fire Support Group battle it out and strike in small teams to disrupt each other in mock battle.

Future Commando Force is a bold modernisation of the UK's commando forces, which will see Royal Marines constantly forward deployed ready to respond to crises around the world.

As part of this, they will embrace new technology and weaponry, fight in smaller commando teams and also don a new uniform.

Marine Matt Doey said: "It's really exciting, especially because



as marines our input from exercises like this and others is being used to help form the concept. You can use what goes well and what goes badly and essentially build that into what we hope to be a really great Future Commando Force concept over the next coming years.

"The purpose of this week is essentially to trial Future Commando Force concepts and the important part is that it's force-on-force and that's where not being seen really comes into play."



■ A Royal Marine from 40 Commando during Future Commando Force exercises at the Bovington Training Area in Dorset.

Westminster's pandemic epic

ONE hundred and ten days seeing the world – but also shut off from it – are over for frigate HMS Westminster.

As one of the RN's high-readiness ships, her entire ship's company self-isolated from mid-April until late August to ensure they could perform key duties in the Atlantic and waters of northern Europe.

Mission complete, the ship returned to her native (and very wet, as evidenced by soaked Pacific 24 crew: ABs Kai Turner and Luca Bailey, pictured) Portsmouth – allowing her 200 crew to reunite with friends and family after three-and-a-half months in the 'Westminster bubble'.

The frigate clocked up over 18,000 miles since deploying on May 1 under strict infection prevention measures, completing her unusual tour of duty working with a NATO group monitoring nine Russian warships near UK waters.

Westminster also took part in exercises with other Royal Navy units, the RAF and NATO allies, assisted with a submarine deep dive and conducted a significant period of deck landing training for 825 Naval Air Squadron – allowing the qualification of three Wildcat pilots, with nobody allowed out of the helicopters to avoid any risk of Covid transmission.

The ship could not risk losing any timetabled activities to Covid, so there was a 'closed gangway' for almost the entire time she has been deployed.

A fenced-off area on a jetty to exercise during routine logistics stops was as much dry land any of the crew trod for weeks at a time.

With the cancellation of nearly all scheduled port visits, which would have provided some respite from the demanding programme, the crew had to keep morale and motivation high.

"It's been a really successful deployment and we're pretty proud of it. We were asked by Fleet to do our bit during this time of national Covid struggle so we've been doing our job – but doing it in a slightly unique way and making sure that we are definitely available should there be any operational tasking required," said HMS Westminster's Executive Officer, Lt Cdr David Armstrong.

"We closed ourselves off from the rest of the country, held our breath for two weeks as we worked out whether we were infection-free and from the moment we discovered we were, we were available to Fleet with no worry that we would need to bring ourselves alongside with infection. We then jealously guarded that status."

Thanks to a very low number of Covid cases in Iceland, Reykjavik was the only survivor amongst the planned port visits at the end of NATO anti-submarine warfare exercise Dynamic Mongoose.

But with only those three days of open gangway during 110 deployed, it provided the crew with additional challenges.

Lt Cdr Armstrong continued: "Effectively we've been stuck on board as a ship's company for 110 days. No one's gone home and we haven't seen our friends and family for that length of time, which is unusual, and the extra stress of Covid has made it a more challenging.

"Keeping the ship's company collegiate when no one gets the opportunity to step ashore and take any respite has been a challenge.

"Our physical trainer was busy, along with the wider executive team, creating our own sort of entertainment – whether that's running a charity triathlon on board, a whole-ship pizza night, quizzes or whole-ship film nights – anything and everything which can alleviate the boredom and give people the sense of 'downtime' has been really important."

After a spot of well-earned leave for the crew and maintenance for the ship herself, Westminster will resume duties this autumn.



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THE fifth and final new Royal Navy patrol ship – at the vanguard of the UK's renewed global aspirations – has made her debut at sea.

HMS Spey sailed from BAE Systems' yard at Scotstoun on the Clyde in mid-September to begin Contractor Sea Trials.

A mix of Royal Navy sailors, BAE employees, contractors, inspections authorities and civilian sailors are crewing the 2,000-tonne warship for the key tests and assessments off the west coast of Scotland.

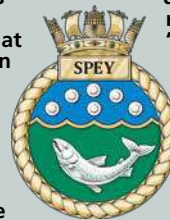
The sea trials are a significant milestone in Spey's short life to date and are designed to thoroughly test the capability and integrity of the vessel.

Her systems will be tested to the max and will include live firing of her weaponry (including her main 30mm gun), pushing the ship's engines to their full power and testing her top speeds before the ship returns to Scotstoun.

She encountered HMS Mersey off the west coast during the early stages of her trials... and had to reduce revs to allow her first-generation River-class 'step sister' (top speed 20kts) catch up.

Her maiden voyage comes just weeks after the first sailors of her ship's company moved on board and ahead of her journey to Portsmouth later this year when she will officially join the Royal Navy fleet.

HMS Spey is last of five new River-class ships and will join her older sisters HMS Forth, Medway (see centre pages), Tamar (see page 5) and Trent (see page 7), all of which are now operational.



KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @HMS_Spey and @RoyalNavy on Twitter

YES, we're still the good shepherds.

We may not be hitting the headlines as we did 12 months, but we're still here in the Gulf, making sure shipping enters and leaves safely, without harassment, or interference.

By 'we', we mean HMS Montrose (pictured) – for her partner on maritime security operations east of Suez these past five months, HMS Argyll, is now home in the bosom of Devonport naval base.

Nearly six million tonnes of shipping – 68 merchant vessels carrying goods, oil and natural gas – has been safely monitored through key sea lanes in the Middle East by Argyll alone.

Much of her work during 164 days in the Middle East has been performed for the International Maritime Security Construct, the relatively-new partnership of nations committed to ensuring the safe passage of ships into and out of the

Gulf, currently commanded by the Royal Navy's Commodore Rob Bellfield.

In addition, Argyll conducted combined exercises with the Saudi, Pakistani and Japanese Navies.

Working with the latter provided the 200 sailors and Royal Marines aboard the British warship with one of the most memorable sights of her deployment.

After joint gunnery and manoeuvres in the Gulf of Aden with the destroyer JS Onami, the Japanese bade farewell to their allies.

"They were manning the side, smart as guardsman, buglers on the bridge roof and a martial arts and samurai display on the flight deck," said Argyll's Deputy Weapon Engineer Officer Lieutenant Ryan Boulton. "It was really impressive."

Leading Engineering Technician Ben Harrington from Plymouth sailed leaving his baby son just three months old – and the uncertainty of lockdown descending on the UK.

"It's been a challenging deployment," he said. "Covid has meant that we were not able to get ashore much – but we have

become a really close team and made the most of it.

"The Jetty Highland Games and darts night were a blast and raised over £10,000 for charity between them."

"We've delivered everything that has been asked of us in pretty difficult circumstances and we're still smiling, now I can't wait to get back to my little boy."

His Commanding Officer Commander Andrew Ainsley said the pandemic had placed demands on the entire Argyll family – ship's company and loved ones at home – and all had borne them with fortitude.

"With our families at home living through Covid, my people have maintained a determined focus on the task in hand and I am exceptionally proud of each and every one of them," he added.

"Be it reassuring UK shipping in and around the Strait of Hormuz, co-operating with our international partners, or integrating with the other Royal Navy ships delivering persistent presence in



the region, they have risen to each and every challenge."

Argyll arrived home on the day this edition hit the presses.

As for her sister, she's completed her latest crew swap in Bahrain as Port crew were replaced by Starboard following four months in charge of the pilot ship in the RN's Forward Presence programme.

Like Argyll, Montrose has spent most of her time providing reassurance to merchant shipping operating in the Gulf and off the Horn of Africa, working for the IMSC and Combined Maritime Forces – the other multi-national naval organisation committed to peace and security east of Suez.

The 200 men and women of Port crew have endured operations at the height of the Gulf summer – temperatures of 55°C on occasions – while the incoming crew have enjoyed time at home with loved ones before resuming training ready to return to the Middle East.

"The past four months back home have

allowed us to spend some much needed time with our family and friends – and support them as the country tackles Covid," said Commander Charles Collins, in command of incoming Starboard crew.

"We are ready to hit the ground running – you can see the hard work the ship's company have put in to maintain our operational skills."

Both crews have had their lives disrupted by the global pandemic, from limiting opportunities to get ashore and separation from families at a challenging time, to the need to self-isolate and protect 'bubbles' to ensure the ship is always ready for front-line operations.

Port crew vowed to help those affected by the disease by raising money for charities and organisations at the forefront of the battle against Covid.

The sailors and marines set themselves the goal of running around the world: 24,901 miles/40,075 kilometres, or 160,300 laps of the upper deck... or 200 laps each per month. They raised nearly £1,000.



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It's all changing

Chiddingfold and Penzance arrive in Bahrain...

Nations united to test their skills

THE USS Gladiator leads HMS Brocklesby as three nations joined forces for a minehunting test.

The US and UK met up with the Royal Saudi Navy to test their combined effectiveness at minehunting in the punishing high-summer heat in the Gulf.

The Saudis operate three Sandown-class ships built, like their Royal Navy counterparts, at the former Vosper Thornycroft yard in Southampton.

All are designed to hunt mines in deep waters, while Brocklesby specialises in locating explosive devices in the shallows.

And among the USA's impressive mine warfare forces in the region, Avenger-class ships based next to the Royal Navy's flotilla at Mina Salman in Bahrain.

They dispatched Dextrous and Gladiator to join Brocklesby and Al Shaqra for a week-long workout which tested the ships' and navies' individual and collective abilities.

Participants were expected to detect, classify and, if required, neutralise a series of training mines laid by exercise co-ordinators, share their experiences and follow standard minehunting procedures.

Working not far from the coast, the four ships had to contend with a challenging environment. With temperatures in excess of 40°C and strong seasonal winds known as the shamal (meaning 'north' in Arabic).

"It can be hard sometimes being this far from home when there's so much going on around the world, but it's rewarding to know that we are making a difference to a part of the globe that I knew very little about before I came out here," said mine warfare specialist Able Seaman Dan Buttery, aged 22.

Brocklesby's Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Chris Easterbrook said given the challenging weather conditions, the exercise "was more a masterclass than a gentle introduction."

He continued: "For some new joiners, this was their first taste in working with the UK's partners in the region. And it was a fantastic opportunity for mine hunters from the UK, USA and Saudi Arabia to learn from each other.

"We like to pride ourselves on being at the forefront of mine countermeasures, but there's always something you can learn from your allies."

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @HMSBrocklesby and @RoyalNavy on Twitter

ROYAL Navy minehunters HMS Chiddingfold and Penzance have arrived in the Gulf after a 6,000-mile odyssey from their home ports in the UK.

The duo, who are replacing HMS Blyth and Ledbury, were at sea for two-and-a-half months as they sailed through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, the Bab El Mandeb Strait and the Strait of Hormuz before arriving in Bahrain, home for the pair for the next three years.

Chiddingfold's journey from Portsmouth was immediately stormy as the Hunt-class minehunter encountered foul weather in the Bay of Biscay, facing five-metre waves and wind speeds of 50 knots.

Her 50-strong Crew 3 from MCM2 were relieved to finally see the Rock of Gibraltar, first stop on the journey to the Gulf, and time to meet up with Sandown-class HMS Penzance, who had sailed from her home on the Clyde via Falmouth.



The pair continued through the Med, stopping off at Sicily, Crete and Cyprus. Covid restrictions meant many of the pair's port visits were restricted to the jetty but this failed to dampen morale, with a number of deck barbecues, quizzes and sporting contests taking place when their ships' programmes allowed.

Once in the eastern Med, Chiddingfold supported NATO's Operation Sea Guardian, which involves allied ships patrolling the region.

Operations Officer, Lieutenant Isaac Johnson, 27, from Somerset, said: "Our assignment to Direct Support of Op Sea Guardian and the commendation we received for our reporting demonstrates that MCMVs can make a useful contribution to a variety of maritime security operations." Next up for both minehunters was the Suez Canal.



Chiddingfold's Navigating Officer, Lieutenant William Gunter, 25, said: "The Suez Canal is a navigational wonder of the world. The canal transit marked the start of our time in the Middle East, HMS Chiddingfold's home for the next three years, so it really was a significant milestone of the deployment."

From there, the pair sailed through the Red Sea, Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman, with visits to Duba and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Salalah and Muscat in Oman.

The ships had to negotiate some strategic choke points, including the Bab El Mandab Strait and the Strait of Hormuz.

Arriving in Bahrain, the crews – 50 on Chiddingfold and 40 on Penzance – had a few days to relax before work started again.

Chiddingfold's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Tom Harrison, said: "It's been a massive team effort to get Chiddingfold to Bahrain.

"My crew have worked with determination and fighting spirit to overcome the many challenges of COVID-19, inclement weather and being away from base port for ten weeks with limited support. We are now fully focused on contributing to efforts in the Gulf."

Chiddingfold and Penzance will now be forward deployed in Bahrain for three years, operating under the new MCM dual-crew manning model. During her time there, she will be involved in multi-national exercises, mine hunting, maritime security and wider defence engagement.

It was the second time the two vessels have sailed in company to the Middle East for a three-year tour of duty, having last made the extended trip between 2014 and 2017.

Once the pair were in Bahrain, it was time for HMS Blyth and Ledbury to head back to the UK. The Royal Navy has maintained a four-strong minehunting force – bolstered by a dedicated battle staff and mother ship, currently RFA Cardigan Bay – for more than a decade.

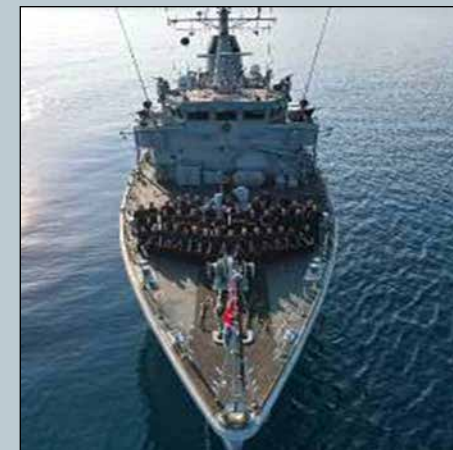
Report: Lt William Gunter



● Above, HMS Chiddingfold viewed from an RAF helicopter during Operation Sea Guardian; left, Chiddingfold arrives in Bahrain



● Clockwise from above, divers undertake a training exercise; the ship's company gather off Crete; weapons crew training in the eastern Med; a firefighting-exercise aboard ship



KEEP UP WITH THE SHIPS

Follow @HMSChiddingfold, @HMSPenzance and @RoyalNavy on Twitter

Home in the Gulf



Certainly wasn't Cardigan weather

ENGINEERS aboard RFA Cardigan Bay carried out repairs to the ship's generators – in 50C heat in the Gulf.

Routine maintenance by Second Officer (Engineers) Matt Eves and Joe Deakin of the port and starboard forward diesel generators highlighted some irregularities and on further investigation it was decided specialists were needed to remove and replace the bearings on the engine alternators.

To restore the port main engine, a company formed of specialist engine fitters were brought in to assist.

The team observed a two-week isolation period before replacing the main bearings and inspecting and repairing the big end bearings and crank pins.

Each bearing took around a working day to repair.

Further work had to be carried out on the two engines' main and big end bearings, which also included hand dressing the profile of the crankshaft to remove any abnormalities in its profile.

This work was carried out with support from UKMCC Fleet Support Unit 2 and was led by 2/O(E) Eves, assisted by the CPO(E) and Motormen.

Defence Equipment and Support rapidly deployed the



defect repair support equipment, allowed the alternators to be "rolled back" to a position to enable bearing removal and replacement.

Immediate stores were also required in the form of new bearings which were deployed into theatre in no time.

The work by ships staff and contractors, over a period of several weeks, successfully returned both generators to service following a rigorous running-in period.

This level of repair is normally conducted during a refit, so provided an excellent opportunity for junior engineers to gain valuable experience.

RFA Cardigan Bay is operating from Bahrain, where she supports the Royal Navy minehunters.

● Left, Jane Lamb, with her children, Ethan, four and Aria, two, who donned their navy uniforms as they excitedly waited to greet dad, AB(MW) Shaun Lamb aboard HMS Ledbury; Right, the weather was grim as families gathered at Rhu to wave to their loved ones aboard HMS Blyth

... as Blyth and Ledbury arrive back home in UK

TWO Royal Navy minehunters returned home to the UK after completing three years of operations in the Gulf.

HMS Blyth and HMS Ledbury made the 6,000-mile journey home after more than 1,000 days away from Britain's shores.

The trusty pair parted ways as they approached the UK, with Sandown-class Blyth on her final stretch into her home at Faslane and Hunt-class Ledbury sailing for Portsmouth.

The duo have been forward deployed to the Gulf since 2017 with their crews rotating every few months.

It was Second Mine Counter Measure Squadron (MCM2) Crew 2 who guided Ledbury home, having put the seal on a demanding stretch of operations, which saw the ship spend 116 days at sea, with their anti-mine marine drone Seafox carrying out 57 missions and 88 dives carried out by the ship's clearance diving teams.

The crew, who arrived on board in January, also took part in the multi-national exercise Khunjar Hadd, Arabic for 'Sharp Dagger'.

Ledbury was joined by RFA Cardigan Bay, HMS Shoreham and HMS Brocklesby for the ordnance disposal exercise with US, French and Omani navies.

Lieutenant Commander Matt Ellicott, commanding officer of Ledbury, said: "It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to sail the oldest sea-going ship in the Royal Navy from Bahrain to the UK after three years deployed conducting vital operations in the Middle East.

"A proud crew have completed a highly successful eight-month deployment in the Middle East against a backdrop of high regional tensions. Add to this the challenge of maintain operations during a global pandemic.

"This is a hugely commendable effort and testament to our people

"We're are delighted to return to the familiar sights of Portsmouth harbour.

"It is desperate shame that our families aren't able to greet us within the naval base but it's always great to see them and so many well-wishers at Round Tower and Southsea beach to welcome us home."

Meanwhile, First Mine Counter Measures Squadron (MCM1) Crew 2 (who have also been deployed since January) covered 3,300 nautical miles,



spending 111 days at sea on Blyth in the Gulf.

Commanding officer Lt Cdr Pete Ellison, said: "I am immensely proud to bring HMS Blyth and MCM1 Crew 2 back home to Faslane after an extremely successful three years of operations for Blyth and seven-and-a-half months of operations for my crew.

"This deployment has been uniquely challenging and has tested my team like never before.

"Crew 2 have performed magnificently through a difficult period and we now look forward to a well-deserved period of rest and relaxation with our families.

"My thanks must firstly go to my crew for their professionalism and commitment, but also to our families at home; they have faced an extended and very challenging period with their loved ones away at sea and I am extremely grateful for their support."

The ship and crew were welcomed back to HM Naval Base Clyde by a small flotilla of boats, including Royal Marine craft from 43 Commando Fleet Protection Group and a Clyde-based

tug. Some family members also chose to head to Rhu narrows so they could wave to their loved-ones as Blyth passed on her way to the base on the Gareloch.

The Faslane-based crew visited 11 different ports, multiple times, for logistical support, re-supply and engagement with local communities during their deployment.

Blyth worked with fellow Royal Navy ships and the US Navy on minehunting exercises and in Kuwait hosted the Commander of the Kuwaiti Naval Force on board.

In March, both ships had to adapt quickly when restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic were brought in.

For the sailors it meant staying within the base when alongside at the UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain or on board the ship when visiting other ports.

During this time, Ledbury received 117 bags of mail, giving the crew a timely boost of morale.



KEEP UP WITH THE SHIPS

Follow @HMSBlyth, @HMSLedbury and @RoyalNavy on Twitter

Pictures: PO (Phot) Paul Halliwell and LPhotos Rory Arnold and Stevie Burke

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @RFACardiganBay, @RFAHeadquarters and @RoyalNavy on Twitter

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SAAB



EVENTS FORWARD

HMS Enterprise joins Cypriot forces for search-and-rescue exercise



SURVEY ship HMS Enterprise showed she can be called to help in any situation during recent exercises in the Mediterranean.

The Royal Navy vessel worked with Cypriot partners during search-and-rescue training off the coast of Limassol.

She joined the Joint Rescue and Coordination Centre, the Republic of Cyprus Police Aviation Unit and 84 Squadron, from RAF Akrotiri, for the annual exercise.

It simulates the joint rescue of a missing person at sea and the evacuation of an injured crew member from on board the ship – something they had to do at the start of this year when a sailor fell ill and had to be flown off the vessel.

Enterprise recently returned to Limassol having been deployed to Beirut after the explosion at the port. She worked alongside the Lebanese Navy Hydrographic Service to conduct a survey of approaches to the port.

Once back in Cyprus, she was joined by the British High Commissioner Stephen Lillie and Lieutenant Junior Grade Anastasios Paraskevopoulos from the Joint Rescue and Coordination Centre for the exercise.

Commander Cecil Ladislaus, commanding officer of HMS Enterprise, said: “Having been deployed across the globe this year, the importance of working with our international partners cannot be understated.

“At the start of this year, we needed to conduct a casualty evacuation using helicopter support. This sort of thing could happen to any mariner, anytime,

anywhere – it is in our best interests to train and work together like this to ensure that we are ready should the unexpected occur.”

The exercise saw a member of the Cyprus Navy join Royal Navy ship Enterprise before she sailed off the coast of Limassol.

They searched and located the “person” (played by a dummy) missing at sea, before 84 Squadron were called in to winch them to safety to their helicopter.

The ship then acted as if a member of their crew was in need of evacuation and again called on 84 Squadron to winch them off the deck.

Speaking after the exercise, Mr Lillie said: “Such exercises are vital for maintaining our search-and-rescue preparedness and an excellent opportunity to bring our nations together in training.

“We value our long-running co-operation with Cyprus in both search and rescue and crisis response, and we look forward to continuing to work together, including through live exercises, to the benefit of both our countries and the wider region.”

Major General Rob Thomson, Commander British Forces Cyprus, added: “This exercise further strengthens an already close working relationship between our two nations.

“Our crew from RAF Akrotiri’s 84 Squadron have worked successfully alongside their colleagues in the Republic of Cyprus on an almost daily basis, fighting fires during this very busy summer period. To be able to utilise the capabilities of HMS Enterprise while she is moored in Cyprus was also an opportunity too good to miss.”



HMS Medway' ship's company and the seized cocaine from their two busts



Members of the RFA Argus crew and the seized cocaine



BUSTS AND THE GUSTS

RAIN storms cast a grey shroud over RFA Argus as she tracked a suspicious craft heading for the perfect concealment for the 28,000-tonne ship as she tracked a suspicious craft heading for land after responding to reports while on a patrol in the Caribbean Sea.

This was the start of a week that would see the Royal Navy task group and US Coast Guard colleagues land a triple drugs bust worth an estimated £81m on Britain's streets, according to figures calculated by the National Crime Agency.

Argus and HMS Medway were part of a bigger picture of operations that saw the Royal Navy, US Coast Guard and US Navy combine to seize 12 tonnes of cocaine and two-and-a-half tonnes of marijuana.

Three of the 12 operations were led by the Royal Navy. The Royal Navy's HMS Medway, which saw 650 kilogrammes of cocaine captured, and the RFA Argus, which saw 358 kilogrammes seized.

It all started when the operations room on Argus was fed information from the Joint Interagency Task Force South, which detects and monitors and coordinates security operations from their base in Florida.

An American maritime patrol aircraft spotted a suspicious vessel in the water and reported it to Argus, which immediately chartered a boat to investigate.

Royal Marines from 47 Commando's 539 Raiding Squadron were positioned in the ops room at the top of the ship alongside the US Coast Guard team.

In the ops room they forged the plan to take down the suspected drug runners, who were currently more than a mile out, unsighted and in heavy rain squalls and had little idea a crack team of commandos with the finest moustaches in the North Atlantic were about to pounce on them.

The commandos from Plymouth's 539 Raiding Squadron are the



Clockwise from top left: The view from a Merlin during casualty evacuation training on Argus; A Merlin from 845 Naval Air Squadron during Caribbean exercises over the British Virgin Islands; A 'casualty' is lifted from a sea boat; Royal Marines and the US Coast Guard head out to take down drugs runners; A Wildcat from 815 Naval Air Squadron works with Dutch ship HNLMS Groningen.

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masters at the art of boarding operations and manoeuvring their fast craft alongside other vessels, even when that vessel is not laying on the most hospitable welcome.
They, alongside the US Coast Guard, were given a bearing and dispatched two hours before last light from Argus in their Pac 24 sea boat to carry out the take down.
The sea was lumpy and the Pac 24 was low in the water, but the coxswain had picked up on the suspect craft before they could be spotted about a mile-and-a-half out.
The British-American team gave chase, but about half a mile out the drugs runners spotted them in the water, turned back south and started to offload their illegal cargo.
Putting on their blue lights, the marines put their foot down, picking up one discarded bale (the others were picked up later) and catching up with them. The coxswain steadied the Pac 24, allowing the Coast Guard team aboard.
The marines and Americans drew their weapons as a deterrence and the suspects yielded.
In all, 11 bales weighing of cocaine 358 kilogrammes and three detainees were brought back to Argus, before being transferred to the US Coast Guard cutter Spencer for full processing.
It was then HMS Medway's turn to enter the fray with two interceptions of her own inside 24 hours.
The Offshore Patrol Vessel acted on reports of a suspicious go-fast, diverting course and launching sea boats piloted by Royal Navy sailors with their US Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment aboard.
Sixteen bales of cocaine and three detainees were captured in the first boarding, which saw Medway catch up with the suspect craft from 45 miles out.
Just one day later more information was fed to Medway and she gave chase to

another craft, landing a further nine bales and three more detainees.
Those detainees and the seized drugs have now been handed over to US authorities allowing Medway to resume patrols of the region.
Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Jim Blythe, said: "The Royal Navy and the US Coast Guard have prevented a significant quantity of drugs crossing the Caribbean that could have been destined for the streets of the UK.
"It is testament to my ship's company, along with the US Coast Guard, that we have captured such a large amount of drugs and smugglers in such a short space of time.
"They have done themselves, their families and the country proud. This marks the start of what will hopefully be many interdiction operations as we continue to operate in the Caribbean."
The task group are now readying for yet more drugs busts and as part of those preparations, the Wildcat helicopter from Argus worked with HNLMS Groningen of the Royal Netherlands Navy.
The Wildcat of 815 Naval Air Squadron carried out flying exercises with the Groningen, qualifying the navy fliers to use the Dutch patrol ship as a base for fuel and resupply during counter-narcotics operations.
This will allow the squadron to fly further from support ship Argus, extending their time on security patrols as they hunt for and monitor suspicious activity using their powerful array of sensors.
It means the Wildcat crew now have three ships – the Groningen, Argus and Medway – to use as a lily pad to launch and sustain their operations from, giving an extra edge to their missions in the Caribbean.
These flying exercises carried bigger importance as it was the first time the Groningen had operated with a helicopter since the tragic crash of their NH90 aircraft near Aruba at the end of a coastguard patrol in July, killing two on board.
Lieutenant Gert-Jan van Veen, a Flight Deck Officer in the Royal Netherlands

Navy, said: "For us as a ship, but especially for me personally, it was a very important exercise.
"It was the first time that we operated with a helicopter since the tragic crash of our NH90 in July and lost two of our colleagues.
"Therefore, this serial was of key importance to us in order to get used to everything in our team once again.
"We are really happy that it all went well and we're relieved to operate in a normal and regular way with a helicopter executing deck landing procedures. We are confident for the future to operate with naval helicopters again."
Halting the trafficking of illegal drugs is just one part of the job in the Caribbean for Argus and Medway. The other part is to be there ready to provide disaster relief if a hurricane were to sweep through and devastate island communities.
To stay ready, aviators, medics and commandos on board Argus primed themselves to evacuate people in the Caribbean stranded by storms.
The Commando Merlin helicopters of 845 Naval Air Squadron can provide a precious lifeline, dropping supplies and putting troops ashore.
But they can also rescue those cut off by in the aftermath of a hurricane smashing through island communities.
The crews of the Merlins ensured they were ready for missions ahead, lifting casualties on stretchers from the flight deck of support ship Argus, before ramping up the difficulty by combining with 539 Raiding Squadron to winch the injured from a moving sea boat in choppy seas.
This all takes expert control from all involved to make sure the casualty is lifted safely and is able to be tended to by medics and brought back to Argus.
Petty Officer Aircrewman Joe Gibbs said: "Timing is key for the winchman.
When working with the boat, we have to take great care so as to lower them into the boat at the right moment, as the boat is moving in the swell. We achieved a number of pick-ups and drop offs of 47 Commando and the medics."

Outstanding, Jason

OUTSTANDING service was recognised at a ceremony at HMS Collingwood, the home of the Maritime Warfare School, near Fareham.

Petty Officer Engineering Technician Communications and Information Systems Specialist Jason Stavely, who currently lives in Reading, was awarded HMS Collingwood's Commanding Officer's Outstanding Achievement Award by Officer Commanding Weapon Engineering Training Group Commander Jonathan Pearce.

This year marks Jason's 20th year in the Royal Navy, a career that has seen him serving on HMS Coventry and HMS Iron Duke and also deployed on anti-piracy operations.

He was awarded the Volunteer Reserve Service Medal (VRSM) in 2010, Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012, 1st Bar for VRSM in 2015 and 2nd



Bar for VRSM in 2020. When he is not working hard training communications specialists, Jason enjoys running and touring the countryside on his motorcycle.

Jason's citation read: "PO Stavely has performed 'above and beyond' throughout his time in MWS and is thoroughly deserving of recognition of his efforts. He is a role model for the future Maritime Reserves and is a worthy recipient of a Commanding Officer's commendation."

Mountain marathon

A RATING from Devonport is taking part in a seven-day trek to climb Mount Kilimanjaro to raise funds for charity.

AB William Biscoe and six colleagues, who all met at Surrey University, started their trek last month and aim to raise £4,000 for a number of charities, including SSAFA.

The team began their trek at Mkubwa Camp (2,790m) and progressed to their destination of Urhuru Peak standing at 5,895m.

Kilimanjaro is the highest free-standing mountain in the world and only around 65 per cent of climbers are able to complete this ascent, so it will be a challenge for the team of seven.

William joined the Royal Navy in September 2016 and joined HMS Northumberland in July 2017 after his initial phase one and phase two training.

At the end of October 2019, William's draft on Northumberland came to an end and he was then drafted to 47 Commando to work on fixing and maintaining Landing Craft, where he is still currently based in Plymouth.

He said: "We chose SSAFA as one of our charities as I'm currently serving in the Royal Navy and so is one of my teammate's brothers. A few of my other teammates also had grandparents who served in the military."

"We're all quite active and are looking forward to this challenge. After much uncertainty, we're pleased it's going ahead as planned."

If you would like to support the team, visit: <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/kilimandemjaro>

Chief's charity 600-mile trek

A ROYAL Navy senior rating is planning to walk from Plymouth to London via Dover to raise funds for charity.

Chief Petty Officer Stefan Dolby reckons it will take him between seven and ten days to complete the 600-mile trek and he plans to sleep rough and survive on ration packs.

"I plan to visit as many smaller villages and towns as possible to hear the stories of the smaller places that were devastated by World War 2," said Stefan, who is planning to complete his trek in November.

Stefan, who wants to raise funds for Armed Forces charity SSAFA, added: "To this day it is still not known how many war memorials/plaques there are in the country. Every city, town, village and hamlet was affected and some of these stories and memories are untold on a national level."

Stefan's trek will begin at



Plymouth Hoe and end at the Cenotaph in London.

Every year SSAFA helps more than 85,000 people in need, from WW2 veterans to young men and women who have served in more recent conflicts.

You can contribute to Stefan's trek by visiting [gofundme.com](https://www.gofundme.com) and searching for Stefan Dolby.



Pelican brief

Tall ship task to help young scientists

ROYAL Navy sailor Jennifer Whalley is crewing a tall ship around Britain to pave the way for young scientists following in the footsteps of Charles Darwin.

The 31-year-old hydrographer based in Plymouth has joined TS Pelican to ensure hi-tech survey equipment installed is ready for a two-year adventure retracing the route the legendary 19th Century naturalist took in HMS Beagle.

The observations and discoveries the naturalist made during his five years on the Beagle laid the foundations for Darwin's groundbreaking theories of evolution published a quarter of a century later in *On the Origin of Species*.

Two centuries since Beagle was commissioned, the Darwin 200 project is intended to attract 200 scientists, naturalists and conservationists, taking them on a global voyage, allowing them to conduct research – and inspire as many as 200 million people in science, conservation and the environment.

Jennifer, from Bournemouth in Dorset, works at the Devonport-based Fleet Hydrography and Meteorological Unit, but is spending the next few weeks on the Pelican on a preparatory voyage ahead of the main adventure which begins next year.

"This will be a really exciting and amazing experience for me," said Jennifer. "I learnt to sail as a teenager but never on something as big as TS Pelican."

"I will be assisting with their newly-installed echo sounder, getting to understand the technology, and hopefully helping them with its operating procedures prior to the start of the Darwin 200 project."

"They are also contributing to the 'Seabed 2030' initiative, whereby the aim is to have the whole of the earth's seabed surveyed in some way by 2030. It's an exciting venture to be part of."

As a Royal Navy hydrographer, she has



served on HMS Echo, one of the Navy's dedicated survey patrol ships which spends months on end mapping and surveying the world's oceans and harbours.

She has worked in the Mediterranean and around the British Isles, in particular working with teams which surveyed the Solent and approaches to Southampton – one of the country's key commercial ports and home of the cruise industry – and the Scilly Isles.

Jennifer was also part of a trials unit looking at crewless survey vessels.

Her journey on the Pelican starts in Liverpool, from where the ship heads into the Irish Sea, then Glasgow and the remotest of the UK's island groups, St Kilda, roughly 40 miles out into the Atlantic from the Hebrides.

After spending a few days exploring the island and epic landscape, Pelican continues to the Orkney and Shetland Islands. The final

leg of the journey will be heading south to Edinburgh and eventually into Canary Wharf in London.

"I want to soak up as much as I can about the ship, what it does and is doing in the future. It will be really interesting to see how Darwin and the Navy of his time managed before our current technology," Jennifer added.

"I love Scotland and I'm really looking forward to exploring the uninhabited Island of St Kilda before we sail south and into Canary Wharf, something I haven't done before."

"It's hard to know how it will differ from life in the Navy, but I have been told there aren't any daily orders and the routine alters quite a lot from day to day depending on the weather. I really don't know what to expect but I'm looking forward to this once-in-a-lifetime experience."

Hoses for heroes ticks green box

A ROYAL Navy Regional Support Unit (RSU) in Bristol have been making an effort to recycle old and damaged equipment, that would otherwise be thrown away and end up in landfill sites.

The Wales and Western England RSU, based at HMS Flying Fox, the regional Royal Naval Reserve unit for Bristol, came up with the initiative after finding several redundant fire hoses that had been used for training. Because of their condition and signs of wear and tear, they could not be returned to service. So the Logistics team thought about how they could practically be put to good use.

"It didn't sit right with me to just throw them out as waste," said Lieutenant Charlotte Houghton, Officer in Charge of the Bristol RSU.

"I was aware of the luxury designers Elvis & Kresse, who work with the London Fire Brigade, saving decommissioned fire hoses from landfill,

and we got in touch with them."

Elvis & Kresse have been rescuing raw materials such as fire hoses and transforming them into lifestyle accessories, including luxury handbags as well as donating much of the profits back to charities.

Charlotte added: "Just a few days later, James Henrit from Elvis & Kresse drove from Kent all the way to us in Bristol to collect the hoses, and they will now be repurposed into handbags, wallets and belts etc, with up to 50% of profits going to charities such as The Fire Fighters Charity and Help for Heroes."

"It's great that we can do our bit for the environment and also benefit charities which are close to our hearts, Hoses for Heroes will make a difference."

Elvis & Kresse have also repurposed parachute silk, leather, coffee sacks and auction banners. So if any other units have surplus hoses or other material, they should contact James at james@elvisandkresse.com.



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

Naval Children's Charity

Supporting children whose parents serve or have served in the Naval Service.

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311 Twyford Avenue, Stamshaw,
Portsmouth, PO2 8RN

www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk
023 9263 9534
caseworkers@navalchildrenscharity.org.uk



D-Day survivor makes last trip

READY to disgorge Allied armour just as she did nearly 80 years ago on the sands of Normandy is one of the last survivors of D-Day, her final journey complete.

Landing Craft (Tank) 7074 now enjoys pride of place under a protective canopy at Southsea's D-Day Story museum and will be opened to the public in a few weeks, the end of a lengthy £5m restoration programme.

Not only is the 59-metre-long vessel one of the last ships to serve in the Operation Neptune armada in June 1944, but she's the sole survivor of some 800 Landing Craft Tanks which ran the gauntlet and delivered Allied armour to French soil.

So it was fitting that her final journey mirrored some of the challenges faced 76 years ago (minus enemy fire...).

It took two attempts to get the 300-tonne craft, loaded on to a barge, from the naval base to the seafront; summer storms thwarted the operation on the first night, but the seas and wind had calmed sufficiently for a second go at a beach landing, accomplished at 3.50am on August 24.

Restoration of LCT 7074, carried out on behalf of the National Museum of the Royal Navy and Portsmouth City Council in the same ship hall where segments of the UK's new carriers were put together, was slowed a couple of months by the pandemic and the move performed in relative secret at night to prevent large crowds gathering to watch the spectacle.

"Just like D-Day itself, this move required intricate planning, as high tides had to align with clear weather and local road closures," said Nick Hewitt, Head of Collections and Exhibitions at the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

"The move involved placing the craft on a barge and travelling from Portsmouth Naval Base to a beach, then transported by road to Southsea Common.

"We were hugely disappointed when we weren't able to complete the move the first time. We have been restricted to very small windows of opportunity when the tides are right, but we also rely on calm winds and we have experienced unseasonably high wind speeds. We really hoped that the predicted reduction in wind would give us good enough conditions to land her, but it simply wasn't safe to do so."

Beyond delivering armour on to the beach at Normandy, LCT 7074 was used to bring German prisoners back to the UK in the immediate aftermath of D-Day.

After a chequered post-war career involving conversion into a floating clubhouse and nightclub, the ship was lying in private hands, semi-derelict and sunk at her moorings at East Float Dock, Birkenhead, until in 2014 she was successfully salvaged and moved to Portsmouth by The National Museum of the Royal Navy.

It teamed up with Portsmouth City Council to revamp the vessel to make it the centrepiece of the D-Day Story.

Road move complete along the sea front, two WW2 tanks – a Sherman Grizzly (a Canadian-built variant of the legendary vehicle) and flamethrowing Churchill Crocodile – were lifted into the hold before LCT 7074 was slipped under the canopy and her last journey completed.

"Visitors to LCT 7074 will be able to experience D-Day like never before, they will get to step on board this historic landing craft and get a taste of what the troops in World War 2 experienced including having two refurbished tanks on display on the ship's deck," said Councillor Steve Pitt, Portsmouth City Council's Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development.

Despite a massive injection of lottery cash, the project still requires donation to complete the restoration – and maintain the vessel for future generations. They can be made via nmrn.org.uk/donate.

Pictures: NMRN



● 'The Sub Hub' – a potential design for the proposed Cold War Heritage Museum in Devonport's South Yard

Coming in from the Cold

AN AMBITIOUS ten-year plan has been launched to create a Cold War naval museum in Plymouth with the hunter-killer submarine HMS Courageous at its heart.

The Cold War Maritime Heritage Museum aims to give voice not just to the Silent Service, but also the surface fleet, RAF Maritime Patrol Aircraft and other units and formations which were in the thick of the action until the last days of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The museum, planned for the naval base's historic South Yard as part of the city's Oceansgate regeneration project, also intends to celebrate Plymouth's rich naval history and the work of the dockyard to support ships and submarines, and dispel many of the myths around nuclear power.

The centrepiece would be nuclear-powered hunter-killer HMS Courageous, in service between 1971 and 1992. She's been opened to the public on a limited basis for nearly two decades, with tours offered by volunteers who have also painstakingly restored her over that time to reflect how she appeared in the 1980s at the height of the Cold War.

At present she hosts around 5,000 visitors every year, but the team behind the Cold War museum believe she could draw 150,000 people annually – as the only other decommissioned nuclear submarines, FS Redoubtable (in Cherbourg) and USS Nautilus (New England), do.

A small team, led by Rear Admiral John Weale, who retired

OLIO's Devine intervention

NAVAL officer Lieutenant Eddie Devine, who works at the forefront of remotely-piloted air systems has been working hard to build a unique set of skills outside the military.

Executive officer of 700X NAS at Culdrose, Eddie is one of 22 personnel across the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Civil Service who are spending three months 'outside the wire' as part of the inaugural Percy Hobart Fellowship.

The fellowship is designed to increase exposure to and understanding of the UK's innovation and technology sector. Part of the fellowship involves lectures, mentor sessions and workshops with Public. The rest of the time is spent working on their own innovative project or embedded within a start-up company.

Lt Devine is working with OLIO, which is making huge

as head of the Silent Service earlier this year, is working with Plymouth City Council, the Royal Navy, MOD, the Courageous Association and National Museum of the Royal Navy to look into the feasibility and cost of the project – for which they need an estimated £40,000.

If successful, the project team believe the museum will give tourism and employment in Plymouth an important boost, underline the case for nuclear power (both in the Navy and civilian life), the skills, engineering and technology it brings to the region, and generally raise the profile of the RN in the South West. "The museum will explore the Cold War role of submarines, the surface fleet and maritime aircraft with relevant artefacts, photos and personal stories with a library and archive for future reference," said Admiral Weale.

"It would also cover the wider theme of nuclear power at sea in submarines; HMS Courageous is an iconic piece of 20th Century technology and engineering – and would complement the planned Oceansgate Maritime Technology Innovation centre."

The team have set Christmas as the deadline for initial fundraising for a comprehensive study to be drawn up next year which will determine whether establishing the new museum is feasible – and if it is, how much it will cost and how long it will take to build. In the current climate, it could take up to a decade to complete.

You can support the fundraising at www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/hmscourageous.

inroads in reducing food waste around the globe.

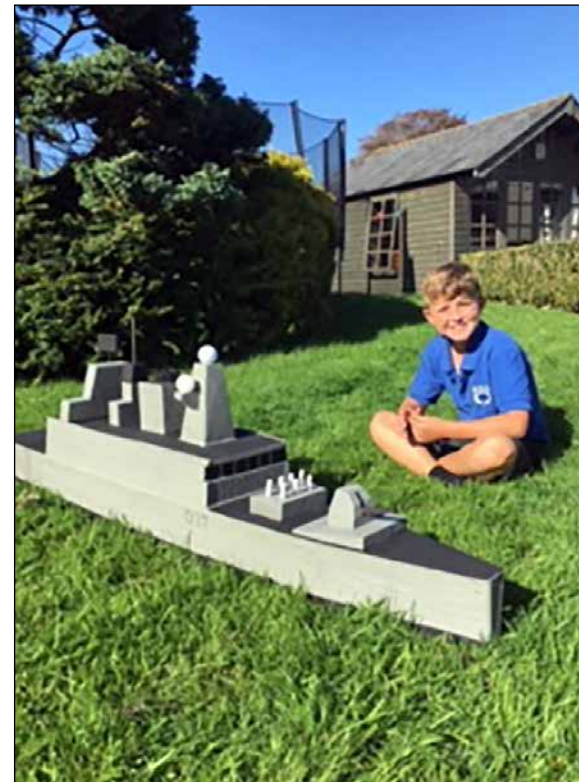
The firm has more than two million users across 53 countries and has shared nearly five million portions of surplus food – saving the equivalent of more than 14 million car-miles.

"The purpose of the fellowship is to go out and learn how the high-tech start-up world operates," Eddie said.

"The idea is to bring a new way of thinking into the Royal Navy that allows us to identify and take advantage of future innovative opportunities.

"OLIO is a new company which is harnessing digital technology to reduce food waste and foster local communities and I've come to strongly believe that we can learn a lot from how start-ups do their business."

■ See next month's *Navy News* for more details on the fellowship programme



Archie helps build his own warship

A TEN-YEAR-OLD boy has a permanent reminder of lockdown – a model of his favourite warship HMS Duncan.

Young Archie, along with grandad Paul Tucker, spent about three weeks building the 4ft wooden model of the Type 45 destroyer, complete with Sampson radar and a helipad.

The duo then painted the model battleship grey and it will sit on a wall in Archie's bedroom.

Archie, whose dad is in the Royal Marines, dreams of joining the Royal Navy as a warfare officer when he is old enough.

Mum Kim said: "HMS Duncan is Archie's favourite ship because it's the most capable ship in the world and he is an avid watcher of *Warship: Life at Sea* and knows all the names of the people who appeared on the programme.

"My husband also worked alongside Duncan's PWO on their second deployment."

HMS Duncan, based in Portsmouth, is the sixth and last of the Daring-class destroyers built for the Royal Navy and launched in 2010.



Riding to fight cancer

HMS Collingwood's Environment & Energy Manager was facing a different kind of energy challenge as he attempts a daunting fundraising trip.

Mark "Cozy" Powell was joining with a group of other Armed Forces veterans to cycle the 180 miles from Birmingham's Bullring to Havant Ex-Serviceman's Club near Portsmouth in just four days.

The aim is to raise both awareness and funds to help Macmillan Cancer Support nurses, who are there for cancer patients from diagnosis right through all stages of treatment.

Although Cozy and friends Keith Clark, Steve Vaughan and Spencer Drain often champion good causes in their communities, they are not experienced long distance cyclists, having previously managed just a maximum of 25 miles.

This challenge will see them push themselves to double this distance for four consecutive days to complete the journey.

Cozy said: "I have been saddened this year by the number of close friends that have been devastated with tragic and terminal news due to cancer.

"I have seen first hand how it has affected their lives and their families and can't put into words the emotions and feelings of these situations.

"I have in mind three special people who are living day to day not knowing what tomorrow will bring.

"I have never done anything like this before but while I am fit and healthy, I want to give these people something to say "thank you" for helping the people I know and love.

"My thoughts and best wishes go to Steve and his sister Carron who is no longer with us, Keith and his brother Brian and my good friend Spencer Drain and his wife and family."

To support the team you can donate via their JustGiving page: justgiving.com and search for Mark Cozy Powell



● The Duchess of Rothesay presented the Admiral Max Horton Award to Lt Craig Barrie

Camilla marks anniversary

FASLANE'S cavernous shiplift facility provided the impressive backdrop as the Duchess of Rothesay helped HMS Astute celebrate her tenth birthday.

The hunter-killer's Lady Sponsor joined Commander David Crosby and a selection of his crew for her third visit to the base, a decade after Astute's commissioning on the Clyde.

Commander Crosby provided an update on Astute's most recent operations before accompanying the duchess into the shiplift facility where she thanked the socially-distanced submariners for their largely unsung efforts, and praised their loved ones for their unstinting support.

"I should like to thank you from the bottom of my heart," she told the crew.

"I am only sorry that today I am unable to shake each of you by the hand to express my gratitude, but sadly that will have to wait until the Covid restrictions have lifted.

"We are equally in debt to your families, who steadfastly keep the home fires burning, while sharing the stresses and strains endured by all those on board. Please tell them, from me, how much I



● The Duchess addresses submariners at Faslane

admire their loyalty, stoicism and support."

She continued: "As we look forward to the next ten years of Astute's service, please know that, wherever you may be, I will be holding you all in my thoughts and prayers.

"I am certain that, just as you have always done, you will continue to carry out your duties with the pride that comes of being at the forefront of our Naval prowess. May you always return safely to harbour."

The pandemic prevented any

families attending the visit, but Astute's sponsor was able to present awards to a couple of the crew – at a suitable distance.

Lieutenant Craig Barrie received the Admiral Max Horton Award as the Best Warfare Officer during Basic Submarine Qualification (BSQ).

And Lieutenant James Montgomery was presented with the Beaufort-Wharton Testimonial Award for achieving the highest marks in the Initial Warfare Course at HMS Collingwood.

Sword show for Princess Royal

THE Princess Royal learned about the skilled work that goes into making ceremonial swords during a visit to Pooley Sword Ltd.

She was welcomed to their Sussex base by Rear Admiral John Lippiett and Robert Pooley.

The princess toured the museum, workshops and library, meeting the sword cutlers, designers and leather armourers, taking great interest in learning of the traditional and unique skills required to create a Pooley Sword.

The leather armourers were particularly pleased to demonstrate hand stitching leather scabbards to the princess as she is the Permanent Master of the Worshipful Company of Saddlers.

Pooley Sword Ltd is the last remaining Sword Cutler in England to manufacture traditional British Military Ceremonial Swords.



● The Princess Royal with Robert Pooley

Support for families

'STRENGTHENING Families – By Your Side', a new offer of support for all Royal Navy families, officially launched last month.

It has been developed by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) and Naval Families Federation (NFF), in partnership with the Royal Navy, Kings Active Foundation, Home-Start UK and Relate.

This project is supported by funding over the next three years from the Armed Forces Covenant.

In addition to this, the RNRMC have also brought together funded projects from the Naval Children's Charity, Aggie Weston's and KIDS to provide a comprehensive support package to service families whenever and wherever they need it.

This groundbreaking partnership will work collaboratively to address some of the key issues underlined in the RNRMC's 'Understanding of Need' report, primarily looking at the gap between the support available for dispersed families nationwide compared to support

available for those living in or near base ports.

Professor Janet Walker, who has been instrumental in the project's development, said: "Increasingly, as Royal Navy families choose to live away from their home base, many are experiencing loneliness and social isolation, the absence of a military peer group who understand and share the same pressures, relationship difficulties caused by time spent apart during deployments and weekending, and the unpredictability of homecomings and family time.

"Strengthening Families – By Your Side' can break down the barriers to seeking support and will assist members of navy families, wherever you live and whoever you are, to access confidential and personalised practical and emotional help."

The importance of support for dispersed families was echoed by Anna Wright, CEO of NFF: "From my perspective the most exciting aspect of this project is that it supports our dispersed community.

"With 39 per cent living away from bases, having located in

every county in the UK, it is essential that RN/RM families can access appropriate support on the ground.

"And being able to self-refer to this support as a naval family is vital. We are delighted to be working with a group of charities that are collaborative, flexible and committed to supporting the naval lifestyle."

Mandy Lindley, director of Relationships and Funding at the RNRMC, added: "By working together, we can deliver the improvement in quality of life that is needed by our service families. 'Strengthening Families – By Your Side' is about early intervention and prevention, providing a range of services leading to improved family cohesion, conflict resolution, health and well-being, and increased levels of happiness."

Find more information about the full range of support available and how to access it at: rnrmc.org.uk/how-we-help/families-and-relationships

New village for veterans

RESIDENTS of Broughton House Veteran Care Home in Salford moved into their new accommodation last month following the completion of the first stage of a £15m redevelopment, which has been supported by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

The military veterans will move into a three-storey building named The Stoller Wing which features a residential care wing and nursing care accommodation, with a total of 32 beds over two floors.

Each floor of accommodation has an activity room, a lounge, a kitchen and a balcony.

The nursing care suite is named after Col Sir William Coates, who founded Broughton House in 1916 to care for soldiers and sailors injured during the First World War.

The residential care suite is named after Charlie Fox, the first Broughton House resident.

On the ground floor is a café area for residents and their families, staff and the general public, along with the Broughton House museum, a reception area, hair salon, physiotherapy and treatment room, conference facilities and, for the time being, the Armed Forces Support Hub.

The hub will be relocated after the next stage of works, and the space it currently occupies will



become a gymnasium.

Work on the next stage of the scheme is due to begin in October. This will see the construction of The Jellicoe Wing, which will feature a total of 32 residential care and residential dementia care beds and six independent living apartments alongside the Armed Forces Support Hub.

The redevelopment of the two-acre site is being carried out in phases to minimise the disruption to the veterans living at Broughton House.

It will create the UK's first Veteran Care Village at the only home in the north west for ex-servicemen and women.

Outdoor features of the redevelopment will include memorial gardens, a bandstand, landscaped gardens and a bowling green.

So far, Broughton House has raised £11.5m towards the total cost of the scheme. A Buy-a-Brick appeal is among the initiatives to raise the remaining funds.

Eric Wright Group is the main contractor for the project, which is being managed by Dooley Associates. Levitt Bernstein is the architect.

Tom O'Brien, chairman of the Broughton House executive committee, said: "We are thrilled that the commissioning of the The Stoller Wing at the Veteran Care Village will be taking place this month. It will be an iconic building where our veterans and families will receive the care and service they richly deserve.

"We are extremely grateful for the support that the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity has given. We could not have reached this important milestone without your commitment and belief in the Veteran Care Village concept.

"I hope everyone connected with the RNRMC will be delighted with the result and that you will come and have a look at what has been achieved."

For more information on Broughton House, visit broughtonhouse.com

Inspiration for STEM students

THE RNRMC has joined forces with defence company Raytheon UK to inspire young students to build their knowledge of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) with naval-inspired online exercises.

The partnership started with a series of STEM activities for young students and families.

Students had the chance to take part in a challenge that put their skills to the test by designing and building their own boat.

Winners will be announced on the RNRMC's Facebook page following an evaluation of the entries by a team of engineers and serving Royal Navy personnel.

Raytheon UK is committed to promoting STEM learning across the UK so that it can inspire the younger generation to take up careers in STEM.

Jeff Lewis, managing director and CEO of Raytheon UK, said: "This partnership is important,

timely and part of Raytheon UK's long-term commitment to train and reskill the UK workforce.

"We can inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers and mathematicians through challenges such as these, so they too can play a role in building a Britain of the future."

Raytheon UK's long-term partnership will help support navy families and drive forward STEM learning across the country. Over the next year, the partnership will see the business deliver a befriending scheme and support fundraising activities for serving members and veterans.

Adrian Bell, chief executive of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, said: "This unique partnership with Raytheon UK will help raise the engagement and capability of children and young people from naval families nationwide in STEM subjects and careers in an

increasingly information-based and highly technological society.

"Especially at a time where there has been huge disruption to the provision of education, the hands-on activities and accessible learning resources produced by Raytheon UK's STEM ambassadors will be very much welcomed by naval families and help to foster problem-solving, discovery and exploratory learning which can be taken back to the classroom once schools resume as normal."

The partnership is part of Raytheon UK's ongoing commitment to supporting and training up the next generation of engineers, scientists, and mathematicians.

Raytheon UK invests in programmes, such as its flagship Quadcopter Challenge, which helps to build students' knowledge and skills in engineering principles and maths.





FLIPPIN' FUN

ROYAL Marine Neil Lutas shows off his freestyle skills as members of the Royal Navy Paddlesports Association got the chance to take to the water at the home of British Canoeing.

Twenty-five sportsmen and women from the association took part in the training camp – staying within their own 'bubble' at the National Watersports Centre Holme Pierrepont in Nottinghamshire, which features a 2km artificial lake, a whitewater course, and access to the River Trent.

The focus of the multi-disciplinary camp was to get as many people on the water in an enjoyable and safe manner while pushing their comfort zone in a multitude of different craft.

Two world-class coaches were also on hand to offer their advice, Lowri Davies, former European Freestyle Champion and international expedition paddler, and British Canoeing's National Trainer Chris Brain.

Forty-one British Canoeing qualifications were awarded, including:

- Foundation safety and rescue
- Whitewater award
- Freestyle award
- Paddle sports instructor
- Core coaching, focused on developing performance within the specific disciplines.

Royal Navy Reservist Midshipman Afton Fitzhenry – GB sprint C1 (canoe) paddler – took time out of her busy training schedule at the lake to both show how to paddle her boat and get some coaching in different craft.

RNPA president and chairman of the UK Armed Forces Canoeing Association, Captain Steve Jose, said: "In running a training camp this year, RN paddlesports is leading the way among other RN sports and is well ahead of RAF and Army canoeing."

"It has been a great opportunity to develop personal skills and qualify the next generation of grassroots instructors – I look forward to seeing them introducing more RN personnel to this exciting and challenging sport."

"Towards the end of the week, with everyone's skills honed it was time for the RN Freestyle Championships. As well as cartwheels and flips from the freestyle team this saw air guitars and paddle-spins from those trying to eek out as many style points as they could surfing the wave. Needless to say there was also a lot of capsizing. LPT Gareth Smith (pictured bottom right) looped his way to victory.

"All those who attended enjoyed themselves immensely and it was great to get back on the water again."

"Thanks must go to Lt Oliver Taylor-Wood, the event's organiser, whose tenacity and initiative to make this happen are a real testament to the RN's can-do attitude. It should also be noted that without the support of both NavyFit and the RN Sports Lottery this camp could not have gone ahead."

The RNPA is the hub of navy paddlesports, including open boat canoeing (one-bladed paddle), stand up paddleboarding and kayaking (two-bladed paddle).

Kayaking disciplines include: sprint and marathon K1 K2 and K4 (Olympic disciplines); whitewater (classed as

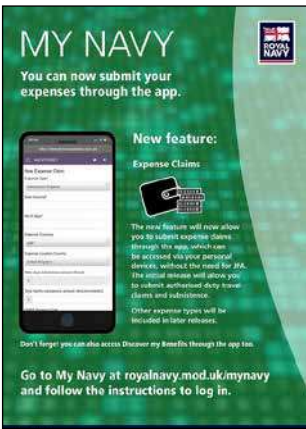
AT in the Armed Forces); Freestyle, including boater X and Slalom (Olympic discipline).

Anyone interested in joining should find RN Paddlesports on Facebook or contact membership secretary

Alexander.Riddell102@mod.gov.uk

Report: Lieutenant Nick Mahony, 1710 NAS





Submit exes by phone

SAILORS and Royal Marines can now submit their expense claims on their smart phones, tablets and home PCs thanks to the latest update to the My Navy app.

The upgrade – which also includes an improved alerts section and access to support and well-being – means personnel won't necessarily have to log into JPA.

Since its introduction, My Navy has been constantly updated and enhanced, allowing personnel to manage their careers and perform admin via a personal device.

The latest release will allow you to submit claims for authorised duty travel and subsistence. Other expense allowances will be added in subsequent upgrades.

The app has also been given a fresh look with a clearer, more modern layout and improved navigation, while two-factor authentication enhances security.

You can access My Navy at www.royalnavy.mod.uk/mynavy, via Defence Gateway or see 2020DIN01-089.

Top women shortlisted for awards

SIX sailors and one team will learn this month if they will go on to represent the RN in the Women in Defence awards.

The six – listed below, plus the staff of HMS Sultan's Medical Centre – have been shortlisted as exemplary individuals/teams who inspire, trailblaze and generally improve the lot of women who are serving in the Forces, MOD, security, or defence industry.

The shortlist will be whittled down to the finalists on October 21, but those selected will have to wait until March next year to learn in they've won.

More details about the awards, categories and nominees can be found at: www.womenindefenceuk.com/awards-2020.

Inspirational Award: Cdr Maryla Ingham and CPO Joanne Barlow
Special Award: LWtr Bethany Barnes

Equality of Opportunity Award: Lt Cdr Nicholas Stone
Emerging Talent Award: Sub Lt Rebecca David and Lt Nicki Whitehead

Inclusive Teamwork: HMS Sultan Medical Centre

Fireworks off

HMS Sultan's annual firework display is the latest public event to fall victim to Covid.

The annual event, due to take place on Wednesday October 28, attracts thousands of people to the grounds of the Gosport establishment – and raises thousands of pounds for local/Service charities.

Rules on mass gatherings during the pandemic, while organisers found it impossible to arrange a socially-distanced event.

Remember tax-free childcare scheme

YOU are encouraged – if it's applicable – to make use of the Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) scheme which has a relatively low take-up rate across the Forces.

The initiative was introduced in 2017: a savings account which parents can use to pay for childcare. For every £8 they pay in, the government adds another £2.

Parents can save up to £2,000 every year (£4,000

where children are registered as disabled).

To qualify for TFC, both parents have to be in paid employment, each working a minimum of 16 hours per week at the National Minimum/Living Wage (approx. £130 per week).

The low sign-up across the Service community may be because parents are still making use of the Childcare Voucher scheme (CVS), which closed to

new entrants in October 2018, or because parents are unsure whether they are eligible.

You can check that eligibility for TFC by visiting the www.childcarechoices.gov.uk, where there's a step-by-step guide.

Parents leaving the CVS to join TFC will not be able to re-join CVS.

Eligible parents posted overseas can access TFC as long as they use MOD-approved

childcare providers. This includes childcare offered by MOD schools and nurseries, and Ofsted-regulated and inspected childminders. Parents in non-MOD school areas can access TFC only when the provider is regulated, registered and inspected by the relevant host nation and both the parent and provider have access to a UK bank account.

See DIN 2020DIN01-054.



WE Jordan stands out

ENGINEERING Technician Jordan Dalglish has been recognised for his prowess with weapons systems and his dedication to the service he joined just 15 months ago.

The weapons engineer from Neilston in East Renfrewshire was singled out for a Herbert Lott Award, which recognises sailors who 'encourage efficiency' in the RN.

Jordan, who joined up after studying at the University of the West of Scotland, greatly impressed instructors throughout his course, completing all his work to a very high standard, making use of skills and knowledge from his student days, and also showing bags of enthusiasm.

Consistently top of his class, he also regularly demonstrated leadership skills by readily helping classmates – all of which not only earned him the Herbert Lott, but also a recommendation for the RN's Fast Track to bring on talented, dedicated engineers.

For now, however, he's joining destroyer HMS Duncan, saying: "I'm grateful for the opportunities the Navy will give me which I'll gladly accept."

Home advice

THE Joint Service Housing Advice Office has launched an online forum for service personnel and families.

The Skype presentation is still delivered in the same format, with a financial mortgage advisor online, providing details on the mortgage process and answering any queries.

This new delivery method provides personnel and their families with the ability to attend via visual access or dial-in for an audible version. Copies of the presentation will be sent to emails for those dialling in.

The JSHAO also has the ability to tailor presentations to suit different audiences.

To keep numbers manageable – and to enable questions to be answered – booking is essential via: RC-PERS-JSHAO-0Mailbox@mod.gov.uk.

Digital ideas endorsed

SEVENTEEN digital projects have been given the green light by senior officers in the second round of hi-tech schemes endorsed by the RN's Digital and Data Board.

The board, which was set up at the end of last year, draws on senior civilian and military figures from across the Royal Navy and Defence.

It looks to both fund digital projects and initiatives as well as hold teams to account for delivering their ideas quickly and educate senior leaders on what's possible in the digital world.

The list of schemes selected can be found in the Second Sea Lord's 'outletter'. In addition, the board received an update on four projects which received backing earlier this year, including geospatial information and intelligence on the front line and digital upskilling/digital ways of working.

From 2 become 1 to Top Gun

THE hard work and dedication of six of HMS Shoreham's most junior crew were rewarded in the heat of the Gulf.

Mine warfare specialists Gary Morrison, Euan Dustan, Adam Cross, James Kelters, diver Morgan Hudson-Ryder and weapons engineer Harry Fenney were promoted from second to first-class able seamen/engineering technicians respectively.

The half dozen sailors have spent the past 12 months learning their core roles on board and demonstrated diligence and professionalism throughout this time, particularly during a challenging period of operational sea training in the middle of the Covid pandemic.

"It's a real achievement to be promoted from AB2 to AB1 and it's only with the support of the rest of the crew that I and the other lads were able to do it. It felt like a special occasion and it's one to remember as I go through my career," said 21-year-old Morgan.

The six were promoted during Requestmen – a traditional ceremony when sailors make a plea to their commanding officer, in this case a request for promotion.

Also recognised were the minehunter's buffer, Leading Seaman (Mine Warfare) Andy MacLeod, who added a second good conduct stripe to his uniform for another four years' service without a disciplinary offence and exemplary standing among his shipmates.

The occasion, which ended with a ceremonial sunset and small celebration afterwards at Shoreham's home in Bahrain, also saw Gunnery Officer Lieutenant Christopher Stone and Navigator Lt Callum Burns



awarded their Bridge Warfare Qualification – the next step on the ladder to becoming principal warfare officers. After months of study and a formal board which included the Shoreham's captain, executive and operations officers, both men are accredited to such a level as they can effectively fight the ship in an operational environment.

"It's great to be able to formally recognise the efforts of my crew in this way," said Shoreham's Commanding Officer 29-year-old Lieutenant Commander Richard Kemp.

"Their achievements are not only a reflection on themselves but also on the support and mentoring they've received from the rest of the crew. For those advanced to AB1 I'm sure they have many more promotions ahead of them during their naval careers."

From sailors in the early stages of their careers, to one near the pinnacle and barely were

Requestmen ceremonies over than Shoreham was welcoming the most senior naval officer in the Gulf – and a Top Gun to boot – on board.

Less than a month after taking command of the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, Vice Admiral Samuel J Paparo Jr made the short trip from 'America' (as Brits dub the US base) to the UK Naval Support Facility to learn about the role of our minehunters in the region.

An aviator by trade, with 6,000 hours in F-14, F-15 and F/A-18 jets under his belt as well as 1,100 carrier landings, the American senior officer is also a graduate of the US Navy Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor Programme – better known as Top Gun.

Joining him for the visit to HMS Shoreham was the senior RN officer in the Middle East, Commodore Dean Bassett, UK Maritime Component



Albion receives sword of honour

THE nation's flagship received the most important 'peace prize' in the UK armed forces for spreading goodwill in the Far East.

Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd joined HMS Albion to formally present the 400-strong ship's company of sailors and Royal Marines with the Firmin Sword of Peace.

It's presented to the military unit which has done the most to save lives or foster peaceful relations at home or abroad – from HMS Daring assisting typhoon victims in the Philippines in 2014 to RFA Sir Galahad delivering aid to Iraq in 2003.

In Albion's case, the assault ship served as an outstanding ambassador for Britain during her nine-month deployment in 2018.

Six of those nine months were spent in the Asia-Pacific region. Throughout that time, Albion and her men and women acted as "a force for good around the world, highlighting

the Royal Navy and United Kingdom's commitment to peaceful interaction with communities both at home and overseas" in the words of the citation.

"This proved crucial in a part of the world seldom visited by the Royal Navy and it sent a clear and simple message; the United Kingdom remains mindful about the region, its security and its people."

Interaction included opening the gangway to awestruck schoolchildren in Indonesia and Vietnam, to inviting 6,000 Tokyo residents aboard for tours when the ship was berthed in the heart of the Japanese capital.

In addition, important outreach work was carried out ashore during Albion's nine port visits, including helping out at an orphanage in Jakarta, sporting fixtures including a resurrounding a rugby contest in Singapore after more than half a century's absence.

And wherever they went, the ship's





Life in the RAS lane

THIS is the man who'll head the Royal Fleet Auxiliary from the end of this month when Commodore Duncan Lamb retires from the post.

Captain David Eagles, whose official title will be Commodore RFA and Deputy Director Royal Navy Afloat Support, has served with the RFA for over 30 years.

He takes the reins from Cdre Lamb, who's guided the service for the past five years and overseen the advent of the four new Tide-class tankers which are at the heart of all present-day and future task group operations.

"My five years of service as Commodore RFA has seen significant change, and whilst there are still many challenges to be faced, I am confident that Capt Eagles will steer the RFA on a steady course and expand on our reputation as a highly valued support force to the Royal Navy," said Cdre Lamb.

Capt Eagles, who'll be promoted commodore upon taking up his new post, started his seafaring career sailing BP tankers around the world.

In 1988, however, he plumped for a career in the RFA seeking more "excitement and variety". He is "thrilled and proud" to take charge and continue guiding the RFA towards a bright and secure future.



Nielsen touch for Raleigh

AND there's also a new face at the helm of HMS Raleigh with Captain Suzi Nielsen taking charge of the Torpoint training establishment... just a few months after leaving it.

The 44-year-old was in charge of the Defence Maritime Logistics School until late last year when it closed - helping to oversee its move to the new combined Defence College of Logistics, Policing and Administration at Worthy Down near Winchester.

Capt Nielsen was welcomed to the base in Torpoint by a guard of honour comprising recruits from the Gould 20/08 entry just days before they passed out at the end of the ten-week basic training course.

Capt Nielsen said she "couldn't be more delighted" of taking charge at Raleigh from Capt Rich Harris, who's moved on to study at the Royal College of Defence Studies.

"Whilst there is much to do as we look to increase our trainee numbers against the backdrop of Covid I know that me and my excellent team are ready for the challenges ahead."

Paving way for new NATO HQ

THE Royal Navy has committed to supporting Germany set up a new headquarters for NATO's maritime operations.

It has signed a binding agreement with its continental counterpart - which includes providing a liaison officer to the new German Maritime Force (DEU MARFOR) taking shape in Rostock.

From the middle of this decade, the headquarters will not only be the hub of German Navy operations, but also be available to the UN, NATO and EU for operations and exercises they wish to direct.

Warfare officer Lieutenant Commander Thomas McPhail is the trailblazer as the first Briton assigned to the fledgling command centre.

The Germans are building an impressive new headquarters building at the Hanse Barracks in the western suburbs of Rostock.

Until it's completed in the spring, Lt Cdr McPhail and his colleagues are working out of four buildings spread across three sites.

In his case it's an inconspicuous building behind trees with a small sign on the door - from the outside, it is hard to imagine that the DEU MARFOR core staff is based here, working flat out on the future contribution of the German Navy to NATO.

"The move is eagerly awaited," he says. "Every morning after passing the gate in the Marinekommando in Rostock, the view of an imposing new building opens up in the centre of the base."

Back in 2016 and set against the background of a changed security situation, allied nations decided a new naval headquarters was required capable of directing larger-scale NATO formations.

The result is DEU MARFOR, established last year and fully operational in 2025.

The aim is to assume the responsibility of the NATO Response Force Maritime Component Command (NRF MCC), with the German HQ joining the exclusive club of other Maritime Forces Headquarters, including our own UK Strike Force (UKSTRKFOR).

And where does the RN fit into this?



● RN liaison officer Lt Cdr Thomas McPhail (right) discusses ops in the western Baltic with colleagues at the new German HQ

It is not easy to start a new concept with new staff from scratch.

Even in well-developed headquarters, there is much to gain from multinational officers with an exchange of experience.

Lt Cdr McPhail was the first international officer assigned to the HQ, joining its operations branch in May last year.

In August, Britain's Naval Attaché in Berlin, Captain Andy Ewen, signed the official agreement, securing this position and relationship for the future. "This is far more than just

having a staff member in a new staff. Germany is one of our key partners in defence, confirmed at the annual Oxford Meetings between our defence ministers, where we look to develop a deeper cooperation in many maritime areas," said Capt Ewen. The German Navy has, of course, planned and run operations and missions for decades - but its focus has been on lower-intensity operations run by three smaller front-line headquarters.

In creating the new command centre, it's merged those HQs as well as welcoming experts from international allies.

"As we further our relations

with Germany, it is important to play our part in this headquarters. We now have the experience of five nations, including France and Lithuania, and I recommend others to work in multinational and NATO staffs in the course of their careers", Lt Cdr McPhail said.

As well as helping to run a 50-unit exercise last autumn - Northern Coasts - he and his comrades helped direct the German Navy's response to the pandemic - mirroring the UK Armed Forces in supporting the civilian population and regional/local governments.

After moving into their new

building the next major milestone for Lt Cdr McPhail and his colleagues is a large-scale exercise pencilled in for May 2022, Griffin Marker - the first real-time test of all the procedures and new infrastructure and systems.

"DEU MARFOR still has a long way to go, which can only be achieved with the support of the German Navy as a whole, but also all its partners," said Lt Cdr McPhail. "But with the headquarters, the German Navy clearly stands out from the crowd within NATO and shows the strong will to take on more military responsibility as a reliable ally."



Lockdown loneliness on the rise

SERVICES' charity SSAFA says its helpline for Forces personnel past and present - and their families - has seen an 80 per cent increase in calls during the pandemic.

Its free and confidential Forcesline service saw requests for befriending and support from those feeling isolated by lockdown rise dramatically, with more than 300 people turning to the charity for help.

Forcesline acts as a 'front door' to the wider support services offered by the charity and beyond. The helpline can act as a telling indicator for the overall well-being of the military community: currently serving (regulars and reserves), veterans and their families.

The Forcesline team say that the other most pressing issues throughout the pandemic have been:

- mental health;
- urgent assistance with food;
- emergency need for housing;
- lack of human contact;
- and the breakdown of relationships.

If you think the helpline could be useful, it's available 9am-5pm Monday to Friday on freephone 0800 731 4880 or via a live webchat service at ssafa.org.uk/forcesline.

BRNC gym complete

ALMOST ready to put would-be officers and ratings through their paces is the new gym at Britannia Royal Naval College.

A £9m fitness complex has been completed and handed over to the Royal Navy to fit out.

The first fitness lessons are due to take place this month and while civilians making the transition to naval officer will be the principal users, a second batch of ratings training at Dartmouth to help out HMS Raleigh, will also make use of its facilities.

The gym has been built to meet the 21st Century needs of 800 personnel and staff and is centred on a multi-purpose main hall as well as three smaller rooms for fitness activities.

The whole complex has been designed with input from the college's PTIs and potential users, built using environmentally-friendly materials and with minimal disruption to the site's flora and fauna.

Helpline if you're bullied

A HELPLINE for reporting bullying, harassment and discrimination you may suffer in the Forces/MOD is now live.

Call 0800 783 0334 if you are the victim of any of these actions and you will be put through to trained advisors.

The confidential and independent helpline is available for civilian and military personnel. You will be able to discuss incidents and receive support, guidance and advice on taking issues forward.

The Defence BHD helpline was one of the key recommendations in Air Chief Marshal Wigston's review aimed at tackling unacceptable behaviour across defence.

As well as offering guidance and advice, where there are reported incidents of unacceptable behaviour, serious action will be taken.

Pirates of the Hebridean...

THIS impressive - and very colourful - 'pirate ship' is the centrepiece of the latest phase of the transformation of Helensburgh's Drumfreck Centre/Churchill Square development.

Now being used by local youngsters is the playground, opened in the middle of September.

Chief Petty Officer Mark Trollope headed the Community Park Committee which designed the play area based on surveys, discussions and consultations with local families, while the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity have provided the bulk of the funding for the whole project.

The resulting park includes a wheelchair-accessible swing, a range of sensory play equipment which provide a multitude of sounds, colours and textures helping children learn through play.

It's free to use not just for Service families but also the wider Helensburgh and Lomond communities.

For teenagers there's an assortment of outdoor fitness equipment which uses the very latest Smartphone technology.

Users simply scan the QR's code on each piece of equipment and up pops a video demonstrating the exercises that can be done on each piece of apparatus. This provides fitness enthusiasts with their very own personal trainer - free of charge.



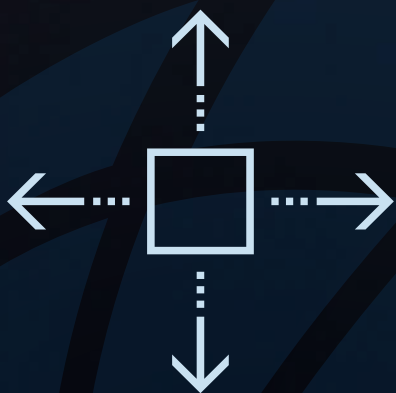


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Pledge to 'our ship'

Cannon's had a blast

THE Royal Navy's new 'ambassador' in Bristol has pledged new aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales will be embraced by her city.

Lord Lieutenant of Bristol Peaches Golding – who has been appointed an Honorary Captain in the Royal Naval Reserve – wants the ship and her 700 crew to be at the heart of major events in the city... as well as flying the flag for it, wherever she sails in the world.

As with her older sister HMS Queen Elizabeth, the second of the Royal Navy's new 65,000-tonne strike carriers is affiliated with two great British cities: Bristol and Liverpool, which she visited earlier this year, generating enormous interest across the North West.

Peaches is president of the affiliation between the West Country powerhouse and Portsmouth-based warship, and is determined both city and ship benefit from a strong bond.

She visited HMS Flying Fox, the Royal Navy's HQ in the Bristol area where she was hosted by Royal Marines Brigadier Jock Fraser, Naval Regional Commander Wales and Western England, she was briefed by local Naval commanders, key personnel and affiliated supporters of the Royal Navy, enhancing her local and broader service knowledge.

"I hope to translate my enthusiasm into a programme of events and activities that ensures HMS Prince of Wales is at the heart of our city wherever in the world she may be and that all who serve on her feel welcomed in Bristol, their second home," she said.

Brigadier Fraser said: "I know that she will be a passionate advocate for the whole Naval family."

IN 1971, a quiet young lad slipped into Watford Royal Navy Careers Office and told them he wanted to sign up.

"I don't really know why I wanted to join the Navy," said Chief Petty Officer Martin Cannon. "I joined straight from school and was a Sea Scout before that, but I just remember really wanting to do it."

After more than 20 deployments, 25 countries, an unspecified number of runs ashore and several cap tallies later, CPO Cannon retired from service last month.

Back in 1971, it didn't take long for young Martin to figure out he'd made the right career choice.

After 12 gruelling but rewarding months undertaking basic training at HMS Ganges and HMS Vernon, the newly-qualified Leading Junior Seaman Underwater Controller Cannon's first duty was a little unorthodox: he was picked-up by a Royal Navy display team swinging cutlasses for Remembrance Weekend.

"We got a coach up to London on the Thursday, filmed *Blue Peter*, did the Albert Hall at the weekend and then dispersed the following week," he remembers.

After that he spent time in the Americas with HMS Ark Royal and in East Asia with HMS Mermaid, the latter almost getting him caught up in the tail-end of the Vietnam War.

"We had to be within 12 hours of Saigon. You could see flashes in the distance from the bombing."

More deployments back in the East and in the Mediterranean were split by a spell as a Royal Navy Pentathlete – despite not knowing how to ride a horse.

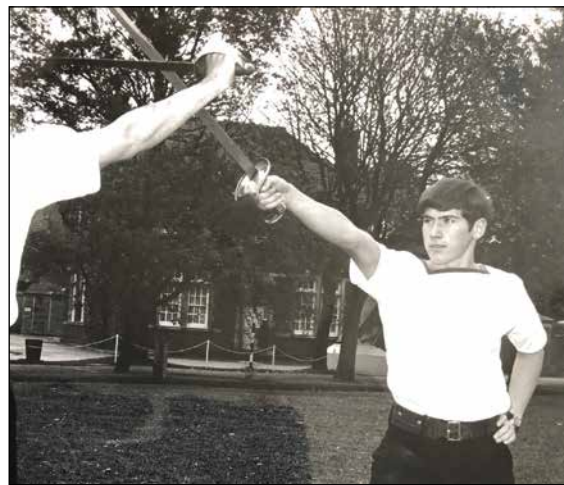
"They were trying to introduce it as a Navy sport. I could swim, but had to learn how to shoot, fence and ride."

He'd only just turned 18 at that point.

He left full-time service in 1978, spending 12 years on civvy street working in newspaper distribution.

It was never going to last though. Yearning to get back to sea, he joined the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) in 1990 based at HMS President in London.

Countless short deployments in home waters and in Europe followed, along with another trip East, a mobilisation to the Gulf in 2009, a Lord Lieutenant's Meritorious Award, and being awarded Freedom of the City of London in recognition of his service as a marshal at the



annual Lord Mayor's Show.

After working his way up to Coxswain, Chief Cannon upped-sticks to HMS Wildfire in 2014, accepting a newly-created position as Whole Ship Coordinator.

This saw him work as part of the unit management team, specifically helping officers and ratings alike in their career development.

"I've got no doubt about it, this role is what's kept me in the service so long," he says.

"I enjoyed being part of the Navy back in the day, but this role is so diverse. You can have a real influence on how the unit is run, and you get to see what the future of the Royal Navy looks like."

"People's ability that gets them to where they are, but you like to think you've had a little bit of bearing in the help you've offered in getting them there."

But all good things have to end sometime. And so, 49 years (almost to the day) after first joining-up, and 30 years (again, almost to the day) with the RNR, CPO Cannon put his feet up.

"I could have stayed, but with the dates aligning so well and my wife now retired, it seemed like a great chance to sell up and move to the country!"

Still a keen sportsman, he's looking forward to getting out hiking, sailing, and having a bit more time to spend with his children and

grandchildren.

"I'll miss the camaraderie though, and the people," he's quick to add.

He's got a lot to be proud of, but, in his own word: "Maybe it sounds cheesy, but I'm most proud just to have served the country."

"Although some parts have been easier than others, it's been amazing to have done 30 years and to have seen how much the Navy has developed during that time."



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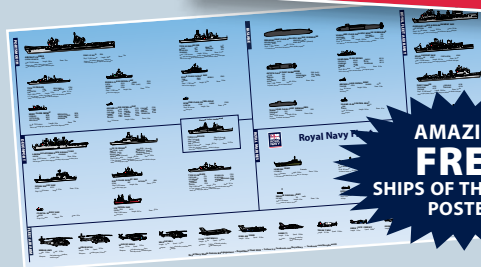
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Farewell 'Father' Ted

PLYMOUTH are mourning the passing of 'Father of the Mess' Ted King, who devoted nearly half his life to the RNA.

Ted (pictured at a dinner dance in 2018) joined the Battersea branch back in 1973 (he was subsequently its chairman and a life member), spent a brief time in the early 90s 'on loan' to establish Torre Vieja in Spain before returning to the UK and settling in the South West.

He served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1947 as a gunlayer on Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships, sailing all over the world manning 6in guns when the vessels were threatened.

Ted served on 27 convoys, including upwards of a dozen Atlantic crossings, and saw extensive service in the Far East as WW2 drew to a close.

He was part of the Guard of Honour at the signing of surrender by the Japanese in Singapore in the presence of Lord Mountbatten and subsequently helped repatriate Australian and New Zealand POWs.

Upon leaving the RN, Ted spent several years serving with the Met Police where he was involved in providing security for senior MPs.

While on duty at Chequers, a senior security officer asked Ted why he was present in the room



with the Prime Minister.

Before he could reply to the breach of protocol, Margaret Thatcher replied, "I invited Ted in for a coffee."

Renowned for his charisma and captivating personality, he will also be fondly remembered by members of Drake's WOs' and Senior Rates' Mess where he was known as the 'Father of the Mess' by some and he enjoyed the ultimate honour, awarded Honorary Member by then Mess President (May 2002-June 2004) WO1 'Daisy' Adams.

Ted died at the end of August aged 96.

Plaques for Falkland yards

MEMORIAL plaques could be erected in the dockyards which played a vital role readying the Falklands task force in record time nearly 40 years ago.

Dockyard workers worked around the clock with no warning to ensure an armada left for the South Atlantic in April 1982.

They did so against a backdrop of a bleak personal and economic outlook as widespread cuts – both to the Fleet and to its supporting dockyards – loomed as a result of the 1981 Defence Review, and the Argentine invasion coincided with the start of Easter leave.

Yet just three days after Portsmouth-based ships and the yard were alerted to the need to prepare a task force, the first vessels in the Operation Corporate task force were sailing on a 9,000-mile journey to the remote South Atlantic islands.

Among them was carrier and Corporate flagship HMS Hermes with a 17-year-old Andrew Cave aboard.

Four decades on the former sailor was struck by the lack of recognition for those who readied the veteran carrier – and the rest of the fleet – for their date with destiny in the South Atlantic (some of the task group, for example, left Gibraltar after taking part in NATO spring exercises).

"I remember our Captain Lyn Middleton signalling the dockyard, thanking them for their magnificent support – and this was repeated by other departing ships," said Andrew.

"I can also remember being told by one of these dockyard workers after the conflict that many of the jobs that were done to make sure that everything was ready for the ships to sail on time would normally have taken weeks but had been done around the clock in just days."

While memorials, monuments and plaques to units, the task group, and individual ships have appeared since 1982, Andrew has asked today's base/dockyard senior figures to consider honouring the 'forgotten heroes' of the Falklands for the 40th anniversary in 2022.

He continued: "Thirty-eight years have now passed since the start of this conflict and I believe that these dockyard workers, their families and indeed the dockyards have waited far too long and deserve a lasting recognition as our nation was facing a severe crisis and they played a massive part in the success of the operation."

"The Commodore of Portsmouth Naval Base is very much on side with the proposals and has now agreed the design and location for their plaque."

Following that initial positive response from Portsmouth – the memorial is intended to be erected in the historic site – Andrew has expanded his efforts to other yards which played key roles in readying the task force and sending it south in the spring of 1982: Devonport (where lockdown has put the plan on ice); Chatham Historic Dockyard (discussing the plan once lockdown is over); Gibraltar and Rosyth (planning under way); Faslane and Portland (showing interest).

Never too late to h

A 92-year-old naval veteran has been presented with a framed tribute to his war hero brother.

Michael 'Mick' Orme and his family had lost track of the achievements of their eldest sibling Ralph, a telegraphist/air gunner with the Fleet Air Arm killed nearly 80 years ago.

He distinguished himself in action in a lumbering Fairey Fulmar fighter/reconnaissance aircraft in the Mediterranean, before dying in a flying accident over Northern Ireland in 1942.

Ralph was an inspirational figure to his younger siblings – three out of four of them, including Mick, followed his example and joined the Royal Navy.

So when Captain Stephen Thompson, whose parents have lived in the same street in Blaby as Mick for more than half a century, learned that the family had misplaced some of the key mementos from Ralph's career, he set out to help.

Captain Thompson, who retired from the Navy in 2018 after more than 37 years' service and now is the build manager for Britain's next-generation Type 31 frigates with the Defence Equipment and Support organisation, delved into a remarkable family history.

Mick served between 1946 and 1948 as Able Seaman (Torpedo Direction), following his older brother Dennis (an air mechanic in the Fleet Air Arm from 1941 until 1946) and sister Barbara, who served in the Wrens from 1943 to 1946 as boat crew, including helping load troops on the Hamble for D-Day) and re-joined post-war, finally leaving in 1964 as a CPO Regulator.

"Apparently, Denis, Barbara and Mick were all inspired to sign-up after hearing Ralph's tales

of adventure when home on leave," said Capt Thompson.

"Mick has lived in the same street as my parents since the early 1960s and helped to spark my interest in the Navy when I was growing-up. It was only recently that I found out his elder brother Ralph was killed while serving in the Fleet Air Arm."

Ralph Orme joined the Navy in 1936 aged 15½ and eventually trained as a telegraphist (radio operator) and rear gunner (pictured inset).



When he completed training he was assigned to HMS Ark Royal and the Fulmars of 808 Naval Air Squadron, taking part in the hunt for Hitler's flagship Bismarck, and numerous sorties in the Mediterranean, where the carrier spent most of her career – until she was sunk in November 1941.

During that time he earned a Mention in Dispatches and the Distinguished Service Medal for bravery, including a dogfight with several Italian biplanes in his very first encounter.

The 19-year-old fought off every enemy attack on his crippled aircraft – even when the bullets on his machine-gun ran out.

According to his citation: "Having exhausted every alternative method of warding off stern attacks, he finally used wads of paper which he hurled at the attackers, twice causing an enemy fighter to cease fire and break away."

That citation joins Ralph's medals – DSM, Africa and Atlantic Stars, 1939-45 Star and War Medal, and a small leaf denoting the Mention in Dispatches – plus a detailed history of his service and two photographs of the sailor in uniform in a special display case which Capt Thompson presented to a delighted Mick at his Leicestershire home.



Rosyth recalls

The 75th anniversary of Victory over Japan and the end of World War 2 was marked by a service of thanksgiving and remembrance by Rosyth branch in Hillend Children's Playpark.

The event was led by branch president s/m Alan Bayliss and the branch chairman s/m Richard Wardrope, with s/m Dickie Wardrope putting the end of the war in the Far East in context by outlining the background to the Japanese surrender.

Myrna Venters lit the Beacon of Peace ahead of a two-minute silence,

bookended by the *Last Post* and *Reveille* performed by Michael Hunter.

Wreaths were laid by s/m Jim Stewart and Jill Coleman from the Village Hub. And as s/m Brooklyn Morris performed *Amazing Grace* on the pipes, flowers and tributes were laid by members of the community who lost loved ones during the Covid pandemic and for any other loss.

Proceedings closed with the village crier ringing out the *Cry For Peace* followed by the *Nation's Toast* to those who never returned and the parade marched off to the Hillend Tavern.



Les is mourned

ALRESFORD branch will never be quite the same again after the passing of founder/oldest member and Normandy veteran Les Nugent, aged 94.

Les (pictured above during one of his proudest moments, presenting awards to recruits at HMS Collingwood a couple of years ago), helped to establish the branch (April 14 1993) and at various times Les served as chairman, secretary and treasurer. He remained a valued committee member at the time of his death; his knowledge and experience were great assets to shipmates.

Les volunteered to join the RN in 1943 as a 17-year-old boy signaller. After completing training at HMS Royal Arthur, he was drafted to Coastal Forces, which involved training with American forces at Slapton Sands preparing for D-Day.

During Operation Neptune, Les served as a signaller aboard a fast patrol boat supporting those landings and ferrying medical supplies across the channel.

His role in the operation was recognised by the French Government when they awarded Les the Legion d'Honneur, a medal the veteran wore with great pride.

Post-Normandy, Les was drafted to Ceylon (today Sri Lanka) where he joined frigate HMS Bann on convoy duties in Indian and Burmese waters before spending VJ Day in South Africa serving in a hospital ship which was proceeding to Singapore as part of the relief package. In August 1946 Les returned home where he joined MMS 1080 sweeping the English Channel until he was demobbed in January 1947.

Memorable VJ-Day

Trafford Veterans – which supports serving and former military personnel from the three Services in its namesake district – hit the streets to persuade fellow residents to fly regimental/patriotic flags and turn their houses red, white and blue to mark VJ Day/the end of WW2.

A couple of volunteers were invited to take part in the Trafford Council-led service and lay a wreath at the Cenotaph in Sale along with representatives

from other associations and the local authority.

A local firm donated some tea bags which were distributed among veterans and there was a treat for Far East veteran Albert Jones, who served in the RAMC and captured by the Japanese.

The Trafford team dropped in on Albert at his home in Flixton on the edge of Greater Manchester, handing over an afternoon tea and reminiscing with the 99-year-old.

Naval Quirks

THE MOST BIZARRE CLASS OF SUBMARINE WAS SURELY THE RN'S 'M' CLASS OF 1918-20..



THEY HAD A GIANT 12 INCH GUN WITH A HIGH ANGLE ELEVATION TO ENABLE IT TO FIRE WITH JUST THE GUN AND PERISCOPE VISIBLE..



Now I see why you call him "Kamikaze"...

.. BUT THEY HAD TWO BIG DISADVANTAGES. 1) THEY HAD TO RE-SURFACE TO RELOAD THEIR GUN..



NO RAPID FIRE THEN..

.. AND 2) THEIR GUN COULD NOT REVOLVE, SO THEY HAD TO TURN THE SUB TO FACE THEIR TARGET!



We're surrounded! You know what this means? Yes sir, we're all going to get very dizzy!!

Honour the WW2 generation



FOR more than seven decades former Wren Pamela Norton was convinced her wartime service did not warrant any public recognition.

She spent just over two years at RNAS Ayr, HMS Wagtail Scotland, as a telegraphist after joining the Fleet Air Arm on her 18th birthday in 1944.

Following enquiries by a family friend, the 94-year-old was belatedly decorated for her wartime service by Commodore Phil Waterhouse, Naval Regional Commander Northern England, accompanied by buglers from the Royal Marines Band Scotland sailors from HMS Eaglelet, including Chief Petty Officer Trish Wilkinson, who spent 22 years in the Fleet Air Arm.

"Thanks to people like Pam I don't think we will ever have to experience anything like that," Trish said. "They are so humble and never think they did anything – but they are the real unsung heroes of the war. It really was a delight to meet Pamela."

In formally awarding the 1939-1945 War Medal Cdre Waterhouse said: "It was such a pity she was not presented with her medal many years ago, but it is an absolute delight to set the record straight and make it such a



special occasion to remember as a tribute to her."

And WW2 veteran John Jude was presented with a replacement set of medals with full honours – plus a congratulatory letter from First Sea Lord, Admiral Tony Radakin.

The 100-year-old was invited to a ceremony in Cambridge Guildhall, where Commodore David Elford, Naval Regional Commander for the East of England, re-

issued medals honouring his wartime service – 1939-45 War Medal and Star, the France and Germany Star, Italy Star and Africa Star with North Africa Clasp – and a veterans' badge having misplaced the original set.

After completing basic training at HMS Collingwood, Mr Jude joined destroyer HMS Farndale as a gunner and spent much of the next 12 months in the Med.

When Farndale was

severely damaged in February 1942 he was drafted to cruiser HMS Naiad, a draft which lasted only a week before she was sunk by U-565 off Crete, killing one in every six of her 480 crew.

Mr Jude spent the rest of the war serving with Coastal Forces in European waters and remained in the RN until the late 1950s when he returned to his home town of Norwich to work in the Mackintosh chocolate factory.

Oldest writer on the books

OF ALL 272 members of the Royal Navy Writers' Association only one is a centenarian.

And to mark the occasion, his shipmates provided Denis Bartlett BEM with an engraved bottle of Pusser's Rum to celebrate his 100th birthday at home in St Austell with his wife Molly (a 'mere' 98).

Denis joined the Royal Navy as a writer the month World War 2 broke out (pictured sitting far right) and retired as a Chief Petty Officer Writer in 1966.

The Cornishman enjoyed a distinguished naval career, serving with the Allied Expeditionary Force sent to Norway aboard SS Orion. He avoided being captured by German invasion forces with the help of Norwegian resistance fighters, eventually making his way to Scotland on the sloop HMS Pelican.

In July 1940 he joined HMS Nemo, the coastal forces base at Brightlingsea, as a Leading Writer and the following year did his Arctic survival course.

In January 1942 he joined L-class destroyer HMS Lookout and two months later was aboard when she sailed on an Arctic convoy to Murmansk.

Denis went on to take part in convoy escort duties to South Africa and the Indian Ocean, escorting HMS Newport, Badsworth, Beverley, Keppel, Leamington, Volunteer, Antelope, Boadicea, Rockingham, Illustrious and Inconstant.

In the summer of 1942 he took part in Operation Bellows, the delivery of Spitfires to Malta and



Operation Pedestal, the attempt to deliver supplies to the besieged island.

Pedestal saw more than 500 Merchant and Royal Navy sailors and airmen killed and only five of the 14 merchant ships reached Grand Harbour.

While costly for the Allies, it was a strategic victory; the arrival of tanker Ohio justified the decision to hazard so many warships; its cargo of aviation fuel revitalised the Maltese air offensive against Axis shipping.

In November 1942 Denis was involved in Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of French North Africa, with HMS Lookout acting as a support vessel off Tunisia.

He remained with her into 1943, writing the terms of surrender of Lampedusa when HMS Lookout was detailed to send a landing party ashore to obtain a signature of

surrender during Operation Corkscrew.

The destroyer continued her work in the Mediterranean on operations in Sicily (Husky) and, a few weeks later, mainland Italy (Baytown).

At the end of WW2, Denis served at HMS Drake before drafts to President, Vulture, Ark Royal (twice), Drake again, Phoenicia, and RN Hospital Stonehouse, before retiring as a chief petty officer in October 1966.

As well as being awarded the British Empire Medal, Denis holds the South Africa Star, North Africa Star and Clasp, Atlantic Star, and Italy Star. He has also applied for the Arctic Star.

If you're a serving/ex-writer and wish to join the association, contact secretary Les Heyhoe on 07404 150 563 or les@heyhoe.com.



Memorial glade opened

THIS idyllic scene is the new site for contemplation and reflection at the National Memorial Arboretum.

The Royal British Legion formally opened its 'Remembrance Glade' intended for use all year round.

Unlike the more formal memorials across the 150-acre site – from small, individual monuments to specific ships and units, through to the central

Armed Forces Memorial for the 16,000-plus personnel lost since 1945 – the glade is entirely composed from materials found in the natural environment.

It features curved oak gateways in a circle of Himalayan birches with a mirror in the centre.

The RBL wants it to act as a space for quiet contemplation of service and sacrifice and allow people to reflect on what remembrance means to them.

Commodore takes helm at vets' charity

THE RN's senior officer in the North West of England is now also chairman of a key veterans' group in the region.

Commodore Phil Waterhouse takes the helm of Broughton House in Salford as chairman of its board of trustees.

The Naval Regional Commander for Northern England and the Isle of Man takes up the role after three years on the charity's board.

That time has seen the house begin a £15m transformation into the UK's first 'Veterans' Care Village': a two-acre site featuring a 64-bedroom care home, up to 30 independent living apartments, a military support hub, memorial park, and landscaped gardens with a bowling green and bandstand.

The charity dates to 1916, providing treatment to soldiers returning from the Western Front and has grown into a care/nursing home for all veterans.

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Out of this world

Saturn picture: NASA / Jet Propulsion Laboratory

A GROUP of junior Sea Cadets from Rushden spent an evening with the stars and planets.

A team from UK Astronomy Events – a national charity based in Milton Keynes - which specialises in delivering astronomy outreach events visited the cadets.

It was their first official event since lockdown restrictions were lifted and the cadets were lucky enough to be the first to see the charity's new AstroVan – designed to make it easier to travel further and introduce more people to the night sky.

"Sailors have used the night sky to navigate the oceans for thousands of years, but in an age where we have all become so reliant on technology, it was wonderful to be able to introduce these youngsters to this ancient art," said David Pickles, chairman of Rushden Sea Cadets.

After a talk on the solar system, the cadets were able to go outside

and see the planets for themselves, using the charity's telescopes.

They were lucky enough to see the cloud bands of Jupiter and the four main Jovian Moons, but the star of the show was most definitely Saturn – they could not contain their excitement when they first saw the detailed ring structures around the most visually impressive planet in our neighbourhood.

One of the cadets even managed to get a wonderful photograph of Jupiter and its four moons using his mobile phone, taken through the eyepiece of the telescope.

You can learn more about Rushden Sea Cadets by visiting their webpage www.sea-cadets.org/rushden or find them on Facebook @SeaCadetsRushden



JUST as with VE Day, Sea Cadets were proud to mark the 75th anniversary of VJ Day, the day which marked the conclusion of hostilities in the Far East, bringing victory over Japan and the formal end of the Second World War.

Many units paused to give the salute on August 15 in memory of those lost in the conflict, including 1st Cadet Luke from Scunthorpe Sea Cadets here.



Grand effort towards Flitwick repair bill

A GROUP at Flitwick and Ampthill Sea Cadets got on their bikes to raise vital funds after they suffered vandalism during lockdown.

Around 60 young people from Central Bedfordshire were gutted to discover every window in their facility was broken.

And if that wasn't bad enough, their minibus – which takes cadets on

boating and camping trips – was also damaged.

Katharine Ward, ordinary cadet Nathanael and junior cadet Dominic, all pictured above, took to their bikes and raised more than £1,000, completing the equivalent distance covered in August's Virtual RideLondon cycle event, which can run up to 100 miles.

Katharine said: "Flitwick and Ampthill Sea Cadets are giving young people a place to belong, learn and grow."

"The unit is staffed by local volunteers who work incredibly hard to provide this. I am shocked that people out there would want to cause damage to an organisation that are working so hard to do good for young people."

It's great to be back

SEA Cadets have been getting back on the water across the UK with the easing of lockdown restrictions.

All Sea Cadets units were placed on lockdown in March and are only now beginning to emerge as restrictions ease.

Many cadets are now returning to parading at their local units under strict guidelines and some are even getting out on the water.

From Port Edgar near Edinburgh to

Cheddar in the South West of England, from Crosby on the North West coast, the Royal Docks Boat Station in the City of London, more than 2,000 cadets have been taking part in in any number of activities in all corners of the UK

Paddlesports, rowing, kayaking and sailing sessions were all available, as cadets showed just how much they had been missing their chance to do what Sea Cadets do best!



New home for boat station

THE new Midlands Boat Station is up and running in Birmingham, albeit in temporary circumstances.

Interim facilities which meet Covid-19 restrictions and allow cadets to get out on the water and stay safe have been installed in the short-term.

It'll soon be possible to see permanent

buildings going up on site in Ladywood but even when completed, it remains unclear when residential facilities will be available to use in the expanded site.

While it is operational for cadets across the heart of England earlier than expected, we hope cadets will see the site looking even better in 2021.



A Worthy place for Winch

WINCHESTER Sea Cadets are celebrating after moving into their new home in the city's Worthy Down barracks.

Having been allocated temporary housing in the last three years, they've

taken up facilities provided by the Ministry of Defence.

Parading will take place as soon as possible, once the site is brought within Sea Cadets' Covid-19 guidelines.

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DOESN'T OFFICIALLY EXIST,
COMPLETED MISSIONS THAT
NEVER HAPPENED**



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ROYAL Navy Adventurous Training Instructor POPT Ian 'Smokey' Cole sky-dived with his brother Daniel to raise funds for the Naval Children's Charity. Daniel has Down Syndrome and the charity was chosen to benefit as it supported Ian's family when his son Aedan died in 2014. Ian takes up the story.

The charity personally helped our family when our beautiful son Aedan passed away in 2014.

My brother Daniel has been wanting to raise money with me for a long time but because of his weight and his disability we had to think what we could do together.

I challenged Daniel that if he could lose nearly 2½ stones, I would organise a skydive for us.

True to his word, he has adopted a healthier and more active lifestyle and has went from nearly 20 stone to under 15½ stone proving how determined he is.

As Daniel held his part of the bargain it was only right that I held my part of the bargain and got us both thrown from a perfectly good plane.

It was a 05.30 start for both of us on the day of the jump as we had some travelling to do to get us to Salisbury for a 07.15 start.

Daniel couldn't believe there was two five o'clocks in one day.

We arrived in plenty of time and received our safety brief and where set to jump.

Luckily for us mother nature was on our side and she provided a beautiful clear sunny day for us to jump.

We made our ascent and we both had

great views of the ground below.

As we broke through the cloud cover, I was informed by my instructor that we had climbed to 1,000ft and had a further 9,000ft to go.

This was the point that I realised I was a little scared of heights, coupled with the fact that I was also informed that I was the first one out the plane....

I set about trying to divert my attention on to my brother Daniel to make sure he wasn't feeling as anxious as me. Daniel was as cool as a cucumber which made me think I had to man up.

So, the time had come, the shutter went up and I was dragged to the edge of the plane. 3,2,1 go!!!

Daniel said he heard the word "MUM" as I fell out the plane, but I can't recall this.

We began our 125mph free fall back to dry land which was amazing.

You get to experience being *Superman* for 30 seconds before the parachute is deployed.

At this point it was a very controlled descent with beautiful views over Salisbury. The instructor

threw in some spins just to add value to the experience.

Both myself and Daniel made it back to *terra firma* in one piece and we're glad that we both chose to have this experience together whilst also raising money for the charity.

We managed to raise £2,290 for the charity which is £2751 including Gift Aid. I'm overwhelmed by the generosity of people around us, especially in the midst of all the Covid-19 chaos.

■ You can support the brothers and see their skydiving video at virginmoneygiving.com and search for Cole Brothers Sky Dive.

Sky's the limit for the cool Coles



If you're part of the Royal Navy or a Veteran, did you know you can join Rewards for Forces for free?

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TEN ab-initio students from the three Royal Naval Gliding Clubs took to the skies at Predannack airfield in Cornwall.

Many of the students had been inspired by the £5 taster sessions offered by the club in order to get new people into gliding.

Service students were supported by £200 worth of grants – £100 each from the Temeraire Adventurous Training Fund and the Sports Lottery.

Unfortunately, the Cornish summer had different ideas, with low cloud preventing flying on the first two days.

During this time, the students

were able to benefit from some classroom-based theory lessons.

Thankfully, the weather significantly improved for the latter stages of the week, allowing a full day of flying on day four, with the added option to return over the weekend to continue to progress through the syllabus.

Sub Lieutenant Sam Burton, who flew solo on the final day of the course, said: "Thank you to the Seahawk GC for organising the Gliding Development week at Predannack."

"I can say, on behalf of the guys who attended, we all thoroughly enjoyed the week.

"We did lose two days flying due to poor weather; however, these were replaced by ground school which helped us understand the fundamentals of gliding, competitions and soaring."

"The club members and instructors were fantastic and dedicated to getting us flying. As a result, I plan to carry on with gliding in the future."

During the week, Seahawk Gliding Club hosted their Chairman, Commander Jonathon Bird, who in his day job is Commander Air & Training at nearby RNAS Culdrose, for his first flight in a glider.

The club also hosted Commander

Barney Wainwright RNR, Chair RN Gliding and Soaring Association, who "enjoyed the opportunity to discover the joys of an auto tow launch" rather than the more conventional winch or aerotow launch.

LACMN Ash Wilcox said: "Great to be back in the air after an 18-month break and I'm looking forward to going solo with the Seahawk GC as soon as I can."

The course leader and Chief Flying Instructor, Commander Chris Bryning RN (Ret), said that "despite the two poor weather days, the first Development Week that the club has run has been a tremendous

success, which the club will look to repeat in the future."

All the students and instructors enjoyed it immensely and he expressed personal thanks to Lieutenant Colonel Ian McFarlane (TA) and Chief Technician Norman Potts (626 VGS) for their essential instructor support, without which, the course would not have been possible. A real Joint Service success story.

For links to the clubs and future Joint Service Gliding AT courses, please go to the RNGSA website at www.rngsa.com

Report: SLt Harry Silcock



Virgin flights

Crew up for Great APT-North Run

PETTY Officer Joe Gibbs committed to joining the Great North Run this year, and even when the UK event was cancelled and then his squadron deployed overseas, he would not be stopped.

As an Aircrewman with 845 Naval Air Squadron, Joe is currently embarked in RFA ARGUS on operations in the Caribbean. Not able to run in the UK, but still determined to raise money and awareness for his chosen cause, he elected to set up a half marathon event on board and run it anyway.

RFA ARGUS is deployed on Atlantic Patrol Tasking (North), so the run has been nicknamed the "Great APT-North Run" and after his hard work and careful organisation, Joe led an event with medical support, feed stations, and with over 50 other members of ship's company taking part.

Joe was running for "Beat", a charity that offers advice and support to those suffering with eating disorders or those caring for those struggling.

Joe said: "I am not much of a runner and I was looking for a challenge to help raise money for Beat, who are a charity that are very important to me personally. I am from Middlesbrough and I have always known the Great North Run is an iconic event, and something to train for."

He added: "Due to COVID the charity has been struggling – there



are more people isolated and so plunging back into problems with mental health and eating disorders, and Beat were seeing more and more people need their service, and at the same time seeing a drop in fundraising as lots of events were being cancelled.

"It was hectic leading up to the event, I had to speak to lots of departments on the ship to get permission, to move aircraft and machinery off the flight deck, to set up medical and support cover. I have been massively supported by everyone, to make the event safe and to help it happen."

The event itself had to begin before sunrise owing to the oppressive heat in the Caribbean. Nevertheless plenty of people came out to run with Joe, some joining

the half marathon, others opting for 10km or 5km efforts.

Joe said: "We had a good range of ship's company: Navy and RFA sailors, other aircrew and engineers from 845, the medical teams, and the Logistics department who supported and even provided fresh fruit for the feed stations."

Joe also managed to smash his own targets.

"This was my first ever marathon event and I just wanted to get round. I got a time of 2 hours and 8 minutes which I am really pleased with. I am very keen to go back and do the real Great North Run in future, but this was so well supported that it has been a great experience. Of my target of £500, I have now raised over £1,300. I am so grateful for the ship for getting behind me."

Joe joined the Royal Navy in 2016 and has trained since then to be a Petty Officer Aircrewman. This is his first front line unit and his first deployment, and he will remain on station in the Caribbean with Commando Helicopter Force on the UK ship RFA Argus as they offer disaster-relief support to the region during hurricane season, see centre pages, and with their other tasking to combat illicit drugs smuggling in the Caribbean.

You can support Joe and learn about the charity at: justgiving.com/fundraising/JoeGibbsGNR and beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Test of strength in searing heat

FRESH from holding a 'Highland Games', the Royal Navy's HQ in the Gulf tested the physical prowess of personnel with a day-long test of strength.

More than 80 men and 25 women serving at the RN's base in Bahrain braved the punishing Middle East sun for the title of 'strongest sailor'.

Competitors from all three Services took part in various physical challenges – staged in one of the Royal Navy's air-conditioned warehouses to spare competitors the 40C heat.

Contestants were challenged to lift weights against the clock through to pulling a Mitsubishi Pajero SUV by rope, cheered on by personnel who run the Royal Navy's operations in the Middle East from the Bahrain headquarters.

"We wanted to make sure everyone got a real challenge and sense of achievement from taking part in the strongman competition so it was a tough afternoon but as well as the hard-work everyone really enjoyed it. We have excellent gym facilities here and lots of opportunities to train," explained Petty Officer Rob Knott, who helped organise the event – and was crowned winner in the over 95kg



category.

Fellow organiser, physical training instructor Petty Officer Dave Berry, added: "We wanted to give personnel a chance to break away from the daily strains of deployment but also do so with social distancing restrictions."

"All those who entered, no matter which category, showed great commitment, courage and desire to compete against a varied range of experience."

"People are still talking about the competition, which just shows how important events like this are for morale and mental wellbeing."

Sgt Carrie Smith (Army) triumphed in the women's event, top masters entrant was Lt Cdr Andy Parker, the U85kg title went to Lt Bowden and U95kg was LH Long with the RN's senior officer in the Gulf, Commodore Dean Bassett, presenting the prizes.

Collectively, participants lifted more than 37,000 tonnes (roughly the equivalent of a new Tide-class tanker... or half the displacement of carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth).





Back on their bikes

● SLt Jon Hunt competed on his Honda CB500



● Lt Ryan Hughes, no 34, in action during the Inter-Service Military Race at Mallory Park

Newbies continue to improve

THE second round of the shortened Inter-Services Championships took place at Mallory Park Circuit in Leicestershire, a circuit I was fairly familiar with, writes Lt Ryan Hughes.

I entered the circuit for my qualifying session and achieved a lap time of 1:02.803 putting me 25th on the grid for the first Inter-Service race later that day.

I had two races in the Golden-Era Supersport championship during the day to work on my pace where I managed to finish 22nd and 25th after starting 28th on the grid.

As we made our way round on the warm-up lap a RAF rider unfortunately parted ways with his bike on the way up to Shaw's Hairpin.

The race began without incident until the third lap where an Army rider went a bit 'hot' into Edwina's chicane and sadly took an RAF rider with him into the grass.

Having managed to pass a RAF rider over the next few laps I had fellow team mate Marine Charlie White in my sights. Although having around half the power of my bike, he kept me at bay to the finish line and as we passed the chequered flag I was beaten by 0.001 seconds, finishing 17th.

The routine on Sunday was much the same with a quick warm-up to check everything is working as it should followed by two races in the Golden-Era Supersport class, where I started 26th on the grid and managed to finish 22nd and 21st.

Based on my best lap time from the previous day, I was moved up to 20th on the grid for Sunday's Inter-Services race. The warm-up lap was completed without incident and we lined up on the grid ready for the final race of the weekend.

This was the furthest forward on the grid I had been and I made a clean start and managed to take a few places before the fast Gerard's bend.

An exit on the far left of the track put me in the perfect position to take a couple more places in the braking zone for Edwina's and I found myself chasing down the team captain, Lt Cdr Max Wilmot, into the John Cooper Esses on the run up to Shaw's Hairpin.

This however, was short lived as I was overtaken by some of the faster riders, including PO Alan Curtis and I was put further down the pecking order.

Over two consecutive laps I managed to overtake both on the outside at Gerard's which put me up to my finishing position of 15th. As the riders ahead were now just too far away to catch in the remaining laps, all I had to do was defend my position. I passed the chequered flag having succeeded and also set my best lap time of the weekend, 59 seconds.

As a brand new member of the team having only done three track days before my first race I was given a number of chuck-ups by the experience riders on my progress over the first two rounds. I will continue to learn the craft.

Leading Hand Jo Truscott joined the road racing team for his first experience of the sport, acting as pit crew.

"What I especially liked was watching when the bikes were taken apart," he said.

"As an engineer, I enjoy problem solving and even though most racers work on their own bike and don't necessarily need a second pair of hands, it's good to learn what can go wrong with a bike and how to fix it.

"The weekend of racing has definitely increased my interest in racing myself and I have been given many tips on what to do if I do start racing. But until then, I will continue to pit crew for the team and help out where I can."

THE Royal Navy Royal Marines Road Racing Team got back on their bikes for their first competition since lockdown with round one of the Thundersport GB contest at Donington Park.

Eleven members of the team turned up with 14 bikes between them and the weekend started with a track walk first thing Friday morning, to allow the more experienced riders to give some valuable information to the team rookie riders. Chief Petty Officer Colin Wilson, who raced in the pre-national 600, didn't qualify well, starting way down in 29th place.

"Race 1 started well, and I managed to pass loads of riders on lap one, including our team captain (Cdr Max Wilmot), however he soon got passed me again, leaving me to finish the race in 26th," said Colin, who enjoyed a better start in race two, making his way up to seventh spot by the end of lap one.

"Starting the last lap in tenth after losing out to a few other riders, Cdr Wilmot had been holding off till the last lap before passing me so that there was limited time for me to get back pass him.

"Going down into the old hairpin Max went under me to pass, which of course I wasn't happy about and started to get back at Max as soon as I could. Both of us were hard on the brakes at the last chicane with me passing Max on the brakes tipping right, Max tucked in behind only to get on the power a little earlier and beat me to the line. Finally finishing 11th, well done Max."

Colin started in 28th spot for the final two races, finishing in 26th before disaster struck in his final race and he slid onto the grass after his bike suffered a catastrophic mechanical failure, which put him out of the Inter-Service race.

Sergeant Luke Terry was on his Suzuki for the GP2 Supertwins and finished ninth in race one and 22nd in race two.

"I was unable to finish race three due to a minor technical issue," he said.

Luke's final race of the day was the Inter-Services. "I had a good start, overtaking at least five riders, first on the inside, then moving to the outside of turn one. This sent me wider than intended, affected concentration and I lost all five places after the first three laps. I finished last, but at least stayed consistent throughout, with some valuable time on the bike before I get the new engine in the bike."

A Honda CB500 was the ride of choice for Sub Lieutenant Jon Hunt in the Thundersport 500 Sportsman event, and he finished qualifying in 25th spot.

Race one saw him finish in 18th spot, while he took fourth position in race two. He finished race three in 18th.

"Race four was by far my best race of the weekend. I led the whole race, only to outbrake myself on the last corner, leaving me to pick up a good second place."

Petty Officer Alan Curtis competed in the pre-injection 600 aboard his Yamaha R6 for his first time on the bike in 13 months.

"Although qualifying went as well as I predicted, I did get black-flagged after only a few laps because my exhaust was hanging off.

After getting it sorted by the pit crew we came across another issue this time with the wet wheels brakes. Whilst in the process of undoing the disc bolts, one snapped in the wheel forcing us to drill the wheel to replace the nut (its bound to get better soon I thought)."

Alan got off to a flying start in wet conditions for race one but as he chased down eighth spot on the final lap, his back wheel high-sided him over the top of his bike.

"A visit to radiography confirmed I had broken my little toe so that was it for the day for me," said Alan. "With the bike surviving the crash unscathed I decided to get strapped up and go out for the first race on Sunday morning to get some confidence back, time overtook me I was that slow and in some discomfort! However, it gave me the warm-up I needed for the military round at the end of the day."

He started the Military Race in 20th and finished in the same spot.

Corporal Charlie White competed in the Thundersport 500 Sportsman aboard his Honda CB500.

"I qualified in ninth which was one of my best results to date in the dry which gave me the chance to jump up with the faster riders in the race. The rest of the riders got on well apart from Llewellyn (the Doc) who decided to take a trip and fall into some gravel and Alan decided to lose his exhaust halfway round.

"It poured with rain just before the start of race one so we all went out in wet tyres. After a bad start I got into a steady pace and saw many riders crash in front (allowing me to see what not to do)! Hence, I got myself ninth overall and second in class."

Races two and three saw Charlie finish tenth in both, pushing him down to fourth in class.

"Race four was my best race of the weekend. I had a great start and tried to get in the mix in the first lap. This put me with the quicker riders, who dragged me around. After a good race with others in my class I came out on top winning my class and was ninth overall."

The main event, the Military Race, saw the team get off to a poor start as they lost Colin when his bike engine blew up and rookie rider Ryan was involved in a start-line incident which also ruled him out.

"As I ride a small bike, I always hope for rain to make the race more interesting and level. But it didn't and after holding off some bigger sports bikes for the first few laps, watching them get frustrated, their power easily got past me on the straights.

"I had a quiet race until the final corner when an Army rider dived up the inside of me in the final chicane. This caused him to go wide with his optimistic overtake. I finished 22nd overall. For the rest of the team Max, Brian and Stu who were further up the grid, they all got good starts and had good races with other Army and Navy riders involved. They all achieved top-12 places."

Follow the road racing team at rnmrrt.co.uk or on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @RNRMRRT

Pictures: Simon Hill Photography & Design

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the August edition of *Navy News* (right) was HMS Vidal, the last surface vessel and last oceanographic survey vessel to be built at Chatham Dockyard. She was named after Alexander Thomas Emeric Vidal.

Ken Nicholson from Gateshead wins £50 for sending us the correct answers.

This month's mystery ship (above) is a C-class destroyer which served from August 1945 to the 1960s. Built at Alexander Stephen and Sons in Glasgow, she was one of eight 'intermediate' destroyers.

1. What was her name? and 2. Who was her first captain.

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



bm@navynews.co.uk with October 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 November 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 December edition.

MYSTERY PICTURE 307

Name

Address

My answers: (1)

(2)

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to - The Editor, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY, or email: news@royalnavymail.mod.uk or editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk

If you are sending your notice via email, please include your full address and telephone number.

Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.

Please send in reunions at least two months (preferably three) before the month of the event. There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.

Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.

The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Swap Draft columns in November's Noticeboard must be received by

OCT 14, 2020

Deaths

AB Ricky Davies. Ganges 61, Leopard, AFD60 and others. Died August 16, aged 74.

David Thomson, LAH. Served from 1965 to 1972 in RNAS Culdrose, HMS Albion, Eagle, Centaur, Hermes, and Bulwark. Member of City of Glasgow RNA. Chairman of Cambuslang British Legion and founding member and past chairman of Cambuslang Remembrance Garden Group. Died aged 71.

Frank Taylor, CPOEM. Started work in the shipyards as an apprentice electrician and called up for two years' national service on minesweepers before returning to the ship yards. He then joined the reserves and served 35 years in Clyde RNR, Glasgow. He was a member of the City of Glasgow RNA. Died August 18, aged 84.

Frederick Albert Beedie, acting AB. Served from 1943 to 1946 aboard HMS Alresford, Rochester, and Whitesand Bay. Died August 19, aged 95.

Ted King. Served from 1942 to 1947 as a gun layer on defensively-equipped merchant ships. Served in HMS Glendwover, SS Raranga, Jamaica Producer, and MV Highland Brigade. Member of RNA for 47 years (Battersea, Torrevieja and then Plymouth). Died August 27, aged 96.

Surg Lt Cdr RNR Bernard H Colman VRD. Unattached RNR. July 13. Aged 95.

Capt RM Cecil L Dixon-Brown. Died August 14, aged 98.

Matron-in-Chief Mary S Fetherston-Dilke CBE RRC QHNS. Med Dir Gen (Naval). Naval Hosp Plymouth. Died August 23, aged 101

Col RM Henry J Flamank OBE. 42

and 43 Cdo RM. RM Eastney. HQ Cdo Forces RM. Centurion. HQ 3 Cdo. DRORM. CGRM. Died August 24, aged 86.

Lt Cdr John M Sellers MBE. HMS Seahawk, Hermes, Plymouth, Osprey, Fulmar, Glamorgan, Cochrane, RNE Seafield Park, FÖNAC, Naval Op Combat Systems Gp. Died August 3, aged 78.

William (Bill) Green LEM. Served HMS Ashanti and two commissions on HMS Eagle. Former member of the Friends of the Eagle crew. Died July 24, aged 71.

Edward Hartill, Acting Master at Arms. Joined February 1947, retired 1971. Former member of Liverpool RNR and the Southport branch of the RNA. Died September 10.

Michael Robert Fountain, AB. Served 1956 to 1958 in HMS Sheffield and Indefatigable. Member of Aylesbury No.1 Branch of RNA. Died August 23, aged 84.

Geoff Pursey CPO Writer. Served from 1948 to 1970. Served in Royal Arthur, Ceres, Amethyst (shorthand/typed the full report of the Yangtze Incident 1949), Defiance, Implacable, Falcon, Seahawk, Centurion (Commodore, Naval Drafting) twice, Loch Alvie and Malabar. Died August, aged 89

Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNOC

Rear Admiral Christopher D Stanford CB. HMS Puma, Excellent, Huberston, Exmouth, Dryad, Newcastle, Antrim, Brilliant, Fife, Boxer, Coventry. RCDS. MOD London, Died July 10,

aged 70.

Cdr Michael J Butt OBE. HMS Collingwood, Triumph, Berry-Head, Warrior, Jupiter, FO Portsmouth, FO Medway, MOD Bath. Weapons Dept Naval. Died August 16, aged 85.

Cdr Jeremy Redman. HMS Terror, Fulmar, Drake, Raleigh, Bristol, NATO Rome, FO Plymouth, SHAPE. Died August 26, aged 86.

Cdr Michael D Sizeland OBE. HMS Dolphin, Andrew, Forth, Cleopatra, Churchill, Royal Arthur, Nelson, NATO, FO Submarines, Service Attache Oslo, C-in-C Fleet. Died August 22, aged 85.

Lt Cdr Ian T D Riddell MBE. HMS Daedalus, Seahawk, Albion. Died August 19, aged 88.

Lt Cdr Robert A Stevens. HMS Eagle, Caledonia, Bulwark, Gurkha, Cochrane. HM Dockyd Chatham. Died August 12, aged 79.

Lt Cdr James A Bradley MBE. HMS Fulmar. Defence Intel Staff. MOD Central Staff. Died August 7, aged 91.

Lt Cdr RNR David G M Roberts CBE VRD. Unattached RNR. Died July 31, aged 95.

Inst Lt Cdr Ieuan E Roach. HMS Victory. Aug 6, aged 95.

Lt J Fletcher. HMS St Angelo. HMS Drake, Lochinvar. Aug. Centurion. HQ 3 Cdo. DRORM. CGRM. Died August 24, aged 86.

Submariners' Association

Chris Wright, L/Sea RP. Served 1968 to 1973 in HM Submarines Acheron and Andrew. Member of Indalo Spain Branch. Died August 5, aged 72.

Douglas Todd, CCMEA. Served 1957 to 1985 in HM Submarines Renown,

Conqueror, and Valiant. Member of Scottish Branch. Died August 11, aged 79.

David Ash, CRS. Served 1954 to 1972 in HM Submarines Alderney (54), Auriga (55), (64), Scythian (55-56), Subtle (56), Grampus (57-61), Andrew (61-63), Artemis (65-66), Ambush (66), and Opossum (69-70). Member of Exeter Branch. Died August 16, aged 88.

Timothy Greensides, GSM, LSGC, MSM, PINGAT JASA WO RS. Served January 17, 1977 to January 3, 1995 in HM Submarines Renown(S) March 1977 to July 1977, and Resolution(S) June 1980 to October 1982. Member of Gosport Branch. Died August 22, aged 73.

Peter Inchcliffe, MEM1. Served 1972 to 1974 in HM Submarines Porpoise 1972 to 1974. Member of Hull Branch. Died 22, aged 69.

David Craven, BEM LSGC CPO MEM(M). Served March 1969 to March 1990 in HM Submarines Superb 1969 to 1974, Churchill 1975 to 1976 and 1978 to 1986, and Conqueror 1987 to 1990. Member of Beds and Herts Branch. Died August 23, aged 70.

Colin Chambers, A/POCK. Served in HM Submarines Renown, Valiant, and Warspite. Member of Scottish Branch. Died August 24, aged 61.

Robert 'Bob' Cliff, LME. Served from 1959 to 1967 in HM Submarines Alderney, Odin, Thermoploe and Trespasner, as well as HMS Kenya and Tyne. Member of Derbyshire Submariners Association. Died August 29, aged 80.

Reunions

HMS Liverpool Association: Next year's reunion will be held on June 12. For membership details contact the secretary John Parker at info@hmsliverpoolassociation.org.uk or call 02392521222.

RMBS 1/70 and 2/70 Squad. A joint 50th anniversary reunion of 1/70 and 2/70 squads is planned for August 2021 in Deal. Contact Nick Buckley on

nickbuckley55@aol.com

HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association:

Our reunion due to be held on October 2-4 at Weymouth has been cancelled.

BRNC Entry Sept 1980 40th anniversary reunion dinner, BRNC Dartmouth, March 27, 2021. Details from Cdr N J 'Nobby' Hall, neil.hall324@mod.gov.uk

HMS Undaunted, Eagle and Yarmouth Associations:

Annual reunion, Hallmark Hotel, Midland Road, Derby, April 23 to April 26 2021. Contact Alan (Whiskey) Walker on 01268 548041, whiskey666@outlook.com

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association:

Reunion will now take place on May 7-10 2021 at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea. Contact Secretary Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email askhamd3@gmail.com

Ask Jack

HMS Ganges Class 283, January 2 1961: It is 60 years since we first met in January 2021 and are pictured right. I am in touch with a number of members and we are thinking of possibly meeting up in the Birmingham area. If there are any members who are interested in a class reunion next year, please contact me.

Alan Barry
Barryaj@virginmedia.com

Gerald Smith and James Murphy: I am trying to find out details about my grandfather who may have used two names, Gerald Horace Patrick Smith and James Michael Murphy. Gerald was born on August 4 1901 and died in February 1949. He served in the Royal Navy and when he died the doctor who certified his death said he was at least 20 years older than he claimed. Gerald, who was from Ireland, also said he had saved the life of a man called Fred Key while in service and they remained friends until he died. James was born May 5 1878 in Ireland but I cannot find a record of his death. I would appreciate any help in this search.

Kay Smith
Smith_kay@sky.com or 07887 872009.



TRNTT 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

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)
01677 988296 / 0791 0275290
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 CPOMEM at the time.

Terry Edson
Sallyann.edson@tiscali.co.uk

Anson 35s: I am trying to contact the Scribes who joined up with me in August 1976 (D161). Our WAFU classmates managed a meet up in 2016 and we want to get the whole class together, if we can, in 2021 on our 45th anniversary. Contact Guy Musgrove on Facebook or email guy_musgrove@hotmail.co.uk.

THE Mountbattens: The author of the biography of Earl Mountbatten of Burma and his wife Edwina would like to talk to anyone who has information about them.

Dr Andrew Lownie at lownie@globalnet.co.uk or telephone 0207 222 7574

HMS Monmouth. I am trying to contact Commander Graham Ramsey, who commanded HMS Monmouth in 1993.

Charles Brown
Charles.brown@forces.gc.ca

You can't keep a good man down...

A ROYAL Navy helicopter pilot with more than an entire year of flying hours in military aircraft said he just loves to fly.

Lieutenant Commander Andrew 'Tank' Murray has clocked in excess of a staggering 8,760 hours in the air - more than any other regular member of the navy.

The 54-year-old's service includes eight years flying search and rescue helicopters around Scotland and Cornwall - including the Boscastle disaster - five tours of Afghanistan, tours in Iraq and Sierra Leone, as well as deployments around the world, from the Caribbean to Japan to the Arctic.

His list of naval air squadrons includes 814, 706, 810, 820, 849, 771 and 857 with roles in airborne early warning, anti-submarine warfare and search and rescue.

"Everyone calls me Tank," said Lieutenant Commander Murray. "I actually have a tank driving licence - but mostly I get the name because I am a big lad."

"As far as I am aware, I'm the only regular in the Royal Navy with this many hours. I just love flying helicopters. It's like having your own rollercoaster, as you've got that freedom in three dimensions."

Lt Cdr Murray joined the Royal Navy as a



pilot just before his 21st birthday and has spent the bulk of his career in Sea Kings, having only recently converted to Merlin Mk2 helicopters. He is a qualified instructor and now works as a staff pilot at 824 Naval Air Squadron, the training unit at RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall.

"My first love will always be the Sea King. I've spent enough time in it that it's like a favourite pair of slippers. The Merlin is more like a pair of new shoes."

Of all his time in the air, Lt Cdr Murray said his years spent in search and rescue were the most challenging and rewarding. He has flown

406 rescue missions over five years with the red and grey Sea Kings of 771 Naval Air Squadron in Cornwall and three years flying from HMS Gannet all over Scotland.

"I miss search and rescue," he said. "That was the best job I've done. It's almost like being in a war, but not being in a war obviously. We'd be at Culdrose on duty and usually we'd have 15 minutes to get airborne from the call - and we never took that long. Then we'd set off with the most basic information about an emergency."

Lt Cdr Murray also flew the fourth helicopter to arrive at Boscastle in Cornwall, which was devastated by a flash flood in 2004.

"I was at home and was watching all this happening on TV," he said. "I rang in to Culdrose and asked if we were going and we got an extra crew together. When we got over the village, we checked some of the cars that were washed out to sea and we helped take a woman to hospital."

He said his flying time has not been without its share of trouble in the air, adding: "I've been on fire and I've had to make emergency landing after a gearbox oil dump - twice actually. I've had every problem you could think of in the Sea King."

He will continue to serve until just before his 60th birthday.

Hostile times

ALMOST always naval history is written from the perspective of the top down. The sources are government documents and/or officers' memoirs. The lower deck is too often taken for granted.

It is therefore particularly welcome that former Acting Able Seaman (HO) Fred Beedie has taken the trouble to write an extended 93,000-word memoir of his time in the Service towards the end of World War 2 and immediately afterwards, writes Prof Eric Grove.

After a period in the Home Guard a 17-year-old Fred signed up to join the Royal Navy on a 'Hostilities Only' basis, the only entry open to him (he wanted to join as a long service regular).

Initial training began at Collingwood at the end of April 1943 and he was there when the establishment was bombed.

After a bad period at Stockheath Camp, Havant, dominated by three days' 10A punishment for a dress offence, Beedie was sent to the gunnery school at HMS Excellent for the daunting three-month gunnery course.

Qualified as a gunnery rating Beedie was given a short draft to Fraser (not as the book spells it Frazer) Battery at Eastney (later HMS St George) and then his first ship was HMS Arlesford an old minesweeper attached to HMS Dryad, the navigation school. She was a coal burner that added to the discomfort of serving on board the old ship. The compensation was a shilling a week's hard lying money and the enlightened leadership of Commander FE Chevalier which made Arlesford a happy one.

The ship was used to teach pilotage but she soon acquired an important task laying buoys marking anchorages and making other preparations for the Neptune invasion fleet. After June 6 she resumed her instructional role.

In February 1945 Arlesford was replaced by the sloop Rochester and Beedie moved over to the new ship.

As an HO expecting rapid demobilisation, he was surprised to be drafted to RN Barracks for a course at Whale Island on twin 4in gun mounts. This was a prelude to a draft to the frigate Whitesand Bay, completing at Harland and Wolff's in Belfast.

The ship's commanding officer arrived and made a poor impression on his ship's company, a situation that did not improve.

I decided to do a little research on this officer; Beedie does not mention his name.



● A class of 'Hostilities Only' seamen gather round the winch on the forecabin for instruction on anchors and cables
Picture: Imperial War Museum

THE GROVE REVIEW

He was Lieutenant BC Longbottom. As the author says he had been first lieutenant of a fleet destroyer but it was HMS Relentless, not Racehorse as the book says. Longbottom had in fact left Relentless at the beginning of the year but his mood was probably not brightened by a few months in the CW candidates training ship, the converted armed boarding vessel HMS Corinthian.

He should have been happy to get a command of a real warship but he seems to have allowed his hostility to HO ratings to get the better of him. The combination of a hostile command team and HO ratings expecting to go home once the war in Europe was over did not augur well.

Whitesand Bay was bound for the British Pacific Fleet. The morale situation got worse as the war with Japan ended also. The ship came close to mutiny. The frigate was based in newly-liberated Hong Kong on anti-piracy duties, an important role during the post-war chaos.

The frigate escorted three US built 'British Yard Mine Sweepers' (BYMS) being returned to the Americans in the Philippines. The ship also visited Labuan off Borneo to assist in

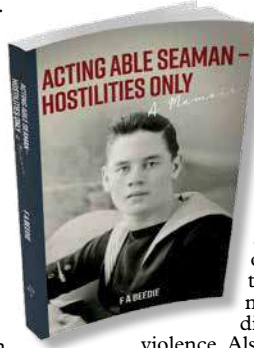
salvage operations. According to the author, shootings of Japanese former prison camp guards seem to have been routine.

Finally, during a visit to Australia on the way to a refit in New Zealand the first six HO ratings from Whitesand Bay were informed of their demobilisation. After a not-very-pleasant sojourn in HMS Golden Hind, a hutted camp 18 miles from Sydney. Beedie returned home in the carrier Indefatigable converted, like other fleet carriers, to a demobilisation transport. His last day in the service was 24 September 1946.

There are mistakes in the book, some pretty elementary like misspelling Bofors guns, but these are not serious. It is, perhaps, a pity that a historian did not cast his eyes over the text before publication to deal with these small issues.

They do not detract from a fascinating and important account which reveals features of lower-deck life 75 years ago that seem disturbing to the modern reader, notably arbitrary discipline and unofficial gratuitous violence. Also, food quality could be variable, to say the least.

Acting Able Seaman - Hostilities Only by F.A Beedie (ISBN 978-1-78132-931-3) is published by SilverWood of Bristol in paperback for an extremely reasonable £10.99. I much enjoyed the book and it deserves the widest readership.



How your family can survive in civvy street

THERE are booklets, pamphlets and generally support to help sailors and Royal Marines return to their families.

But how do their partners cope with the transition? How do relationships survive a change affecting lives which can be as challenging as coping with deployments and front-line tours of duty?

The wife of a former Royal Marine hopes to offer some answers – or at least some guidance – and help military charities at the same time.

Elizabeth Eager's husband spent 16 years in the Corps, serving in Iraq and Afghanistan until he was medically discharged in 2016.

While her partner was still serving she compiled a collection of short stories from

fellow military wives to tell the 'other side of the story'... and also posed as Miss January in the 2015 RM Wags' Calendar.

Her husband's transition to civilian has presented a whole new set of experiences and emotions (good and bad) which have inspired **Embracing Peace: How a military relationship can thrive post-conflict** (available via Amazon as an ebook (£4.99) or paperback (£9.99)) aimed at personnel and their partners and dealing with issues as varied as finances to communicating with each other and sex and is aimed at

a military audience (so expect some choice language on occasions).

"I've written it as though I am speaking with my friends or to my own husband; military people have a very direct and honest way of communicating," says the 35-year-old mother of two. "The words would mean nothing if it wasn't coming from someone who has not only lived through the difficulty – but come out happier the other side. I think both men and women will gain something from reading the book."

Ten per cent of proceeds from *Embracing Peace* will be distributed among Forces charities.



The fast and the curious

WITH a new national museum to some of the smallest ships in the Royal Navy due to open next year, it's apt that the latest in the popular Haynes series Owners Workshop Manual is the trusty wartime powerboat.

It focuses on a working survivor of that once-impressive wartime armada: Motor Gunboat 81.

Over 188 richly-illustrated pages, authors Stephen Fisher and Diggory Rose not merely give an insight into the workings of MGB 81 as a man o'war, but also her exploits – and the broader background to Coastal Forces and their wartime mission.

They draw upon contemporary plans, adverts, imagery, documents, even comics (the exploits of these fast craft were celebrated as recently as the mid-80s by the now-defunct *Victor*) as well as reams of photographs of work to restore MGB 81... and the refurbished boat on the move.

At their peak in 1944, there were more than 2,000 boats like MGB 81 of various types and roles, crewed and maintained by 25,000 officers and men.

They fought an estimated 900 actions between 1939 and 1945, sinking around 400 enemy vessels, laying minefields, intercepting coastal convoys, taking part in clandestine raids, dropping off and recovering spies from occupied territories. In doing so, one in every 12 boats was lost.

The 'Spitfire of the Seas' tag which accompanies such craft today was apparently first used (rather inappropriately) to describe the sluggish Skua dive-bomber and Fulmar fighter in late 1941. As the war dragged on, the phrase was increasingly (and much more accurately) assigned to Coastal Forces by the media. It stuck.

The book's subject was built in the first six months of 1942 and by August 1 was in service with the 8th MGB Flotilla under Lieutenant Commander Robert Hichens, one of the doyens of Coastal Forces.

Her missions were many and varied:

- protecting night convoys around the UK coast from attacks by their German counterparts, *Schnellboote* ('fast boats', traditionally known as E-boats)
- harassing German vessels around the occupied Channel Islands;
- sweeps of the North Sea;
- driving E-boats from the Channel to pave the way for the Normandy invasion;
- and supporting the Allied drive into the heart of occupied Europe.

All of which explains why, by the beginning of 1945, MGB81 was worn out – it's clear from this manual just how hard-worked Coastal Forces craft (and their men) were.

Given the high casualty rate, the lifestyle and attitude of Coastal Forces crews seems similar to Battle of Britain pilots.

The Imperial Hotel in Torquay was particularly popular among officers operating boats out of Dartmouth, such as the future Avenger Patrick McNee who remembered "puffing cigars, downing the liqueurs and roaring with the sort of laughter that comes from wondering whether we would live to enjoy another such night".

Like many of her sisters, post-war MGB 81 was turned into a houseboat before eventually being turned back into a working wartime boat (with some mod-cons and minus working weaponry) as a tribute to Coastal Forces personnel.

As she's in working order, it'll be two other craft (Coastal Motor Boat 331 and Motor Torpedo Boat 71) which take pride of place in the new museum taking shape in Gosport.

This book (£25, ISBN 978-17852-11423) is as good a guide/handbook to that museum – and as admirable a tribute to Coastal Forces craft – as you'll find.

● MTB 80 on patrol in 1943



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