



NAVY NEWS

JUNE 2021

It's all systems glow

A Wildcat from 815 NAS conducts a night-time sortie aboard HMS Kent. 206 Flight is one of the units helping to protect the Carrier Strike Group, led by HMS Queen Elizabeth, as nine ships, more than 30 aircraft and 3,700 personnel head on their global deployment
(see pages 2-3 and 20-21)

PICTURE:
LPhoto Dan Rosenbaum,
HMS Kent

Inside: Littoral Response Group (North) heads to Baltic





TWENTY-SIX thousand nautical miles, visits to more than 40 nations and three oceans lay ahead for the UK's Carrier Strike Group.

With HMS Queen Elizabeth leading the way, the nine ships, more than 30 aircraft and 3,700 personnel that make up the task group started their maiden operational deployment as *Navy News* went to print.

Over the next few months they will join up and take part in exercises with French carrier FS Charles De Gaulle in the Mediterranean as well as navies and aircraft from allies such as the US, Canada, Denmark, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, and the UAE.

While in the Pacific, ships from the Carrier Strike Group will mark the 50th anniversary of the Five Powers Defence Agreement between Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK by taking part in Exercise Bersama Lima.

For many of the units, final preparations for this global mission started off the coast of Scotland in Exercise Strike Warrior. Involving more than 20 warships, three submarines and 150 aircraft from 11 nations, it was the final test for the Carrier Strike Group.

The exercise, which ran for two weeks, saw the task group pitted against warships from NATO's Standing Maritime Group 1 to prove it was capable of undertaking high-intensity operations against the most demanding adversaries.

The culmination of Strike Warrior saw the Carrier Strike Group certified ready for deployment, and saw operational command pass from the Royal Navy's Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd, to the Chief of Joint Operations, Vice Admiral Sir Ben Key.

And now, with certification and final preparations completed, the task group sailed from their prospective ports to meet and start their mission.

Commodore Steve Moorhouse, Commander UK Carrier Strike Group, said: "As the Carrier Strike Group heads to sea, a new phase opens in Britain's maritime renaissance. A year's worth of exercises, and more than a decade of preparation is over.

"HMS Queen Elizabeth, her escorts and her aircraft, will now begin the most important peacetime deployment in a generation."

While at sea, HMS Queen Elizabeth embarked 5th generation fighters, comprising of 18 F-35 Lightning jets drawn from the UK's 617 Squadron, the Dambusters, and VMFA-211 of the US Marine Corps, better known as the Wake Island Avengers.

Exercise Strike Warrior gave the F-35 stealth fighters the chance to show they can protect Britain's flagship from air attack during the first missile firings at sea in 15 years.

Two 'bogeys' – jet drones – were brought down by air-to-air missiles fired by pilots from 617 Squadron. In a first for both the squadron and the carrier, two infrared MBDA AIM-132 Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missiles (ASRAAM) were fired by a pair of F-35s – the first time a UK jet has fired a missile at sea since 2006.

Both jets successfully launched their weapons which were seen to hit their intended target.

Captain James Blackmore, Commander of the Carrier Air Group, said: "The first successful ASRAAM firing is an important moment for the F-35B, and for Carrier Strike. These firings proved our confidence in the weapon system and demonstrate the growing potency of this fifth-generation strike fighter."

The Carrier Air Wing also includes the largest concentration of

helicopters in a Royal Navy task group in a decade, with three Merlin Mk4 from 845 NAS, four Wildcat from 815 NAS and seven Merlin Mk2 from 820 NAS.

Leading the 820 squadron of around 190 men and women – the aircrew, engineers and support staff – is its commanding officer Commander Ian Varley. He sees 820 as a family and being the head of that family is "an incredible honour".

"One of the things I love about my job is that about 80 per cent of my people are all here on the first frontline squadron," he said.

"They are either in the most junior ranks or, as they go through their career, they generally come into 820 for the first time in their new rank. So, I have quite a lot of youngsters – and I use that term fondly – who are 19 or 20-years-old, who have only been in the navy for a very short time, and they may have been to sea once – perhaps not at all.

"For many, the opportunity to visit places in the Asia-Pacific will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. They will be creating memories that they will keep all the way through their lives, and when they retire, they will tell these stories to their grandchildren."

Cdr Varley added: "The carrier deployment this year is the greatest achievement that 820 squadron has had on its books for the past 10 years. This is the coming together of years of planning and hard work."

As part of Strike Warrior, frigates HMS Kent and Richmond worked with a Royal Navy submarine – conducting a stores transfer and other exercises with the A-boat.

HMS Kent and her Wildcat helicopter from Yeovilton-based 815 NAS transferred vital stores to the surfaced submarine.

Lieutenant Lee Colthart, 206 Flight Commander, said: "This is just one example of the utility of a Wildcat in the Carrier Strike Group. Wildcat crews train for a variety of tasks in order to protect and sustain the task group. Today our task could be to deliver stores to a submarine, tomorrow's task could be anything from searching for enemy units to delivering rotary wing strike with our Martlet missile system."

HMS Richmond practised escorting the surfaced submarine and acted as enemy forces locating and tracking the submarine. Thanks to the ship's recent maintenance programme and work on her propulsion systems, she proved a quiet foe for the A-boat.

Lieutenant Commander David Tinsley, Richmond's weapons engineer officer, said: "Our hull mounted and towed sonar system are incredibly capable at locating sub-surface contacts. Combined with the very best operators and environmental analysis methods, the equipment performed exceptionally well in tracking the submarine. We are now fully endorsed to protect HMS Queen Elizabeth as an anti-submarine warfare escort."

Lt Cdr Kyle O'Regan, the ship's principle warfare officer (underwater warfare) added: "Getting to work with a live submarine, one of the most capable in the world, is a real privilege, and my team and I are looking forward to doing it for real in the coming months."

For Richmond's commanding officer, Commander Hugh Botterill, the next few months are "hugely exciting" for the ship and her sailors.

"Having spent two busy years bringing the Royal Navy's new diesel propulsion and controls system into service, HMS Richmond is one of the most up-to-date anti-submarine frigates in the fleet," he said.

"Our proven weapons and sensors, operated by a team of highly skilled men and women, represent a potent defence against underwater threats. But we are also looking forward to working with the Royal Navy's friends and allies to help strengthen Britain's international partnerships as part of this historic deployment."

“ ”
A YEAR'S WORTH OF EXERCISES, AND MORE THAN A DECADE OF PREPARATION IS OVER.

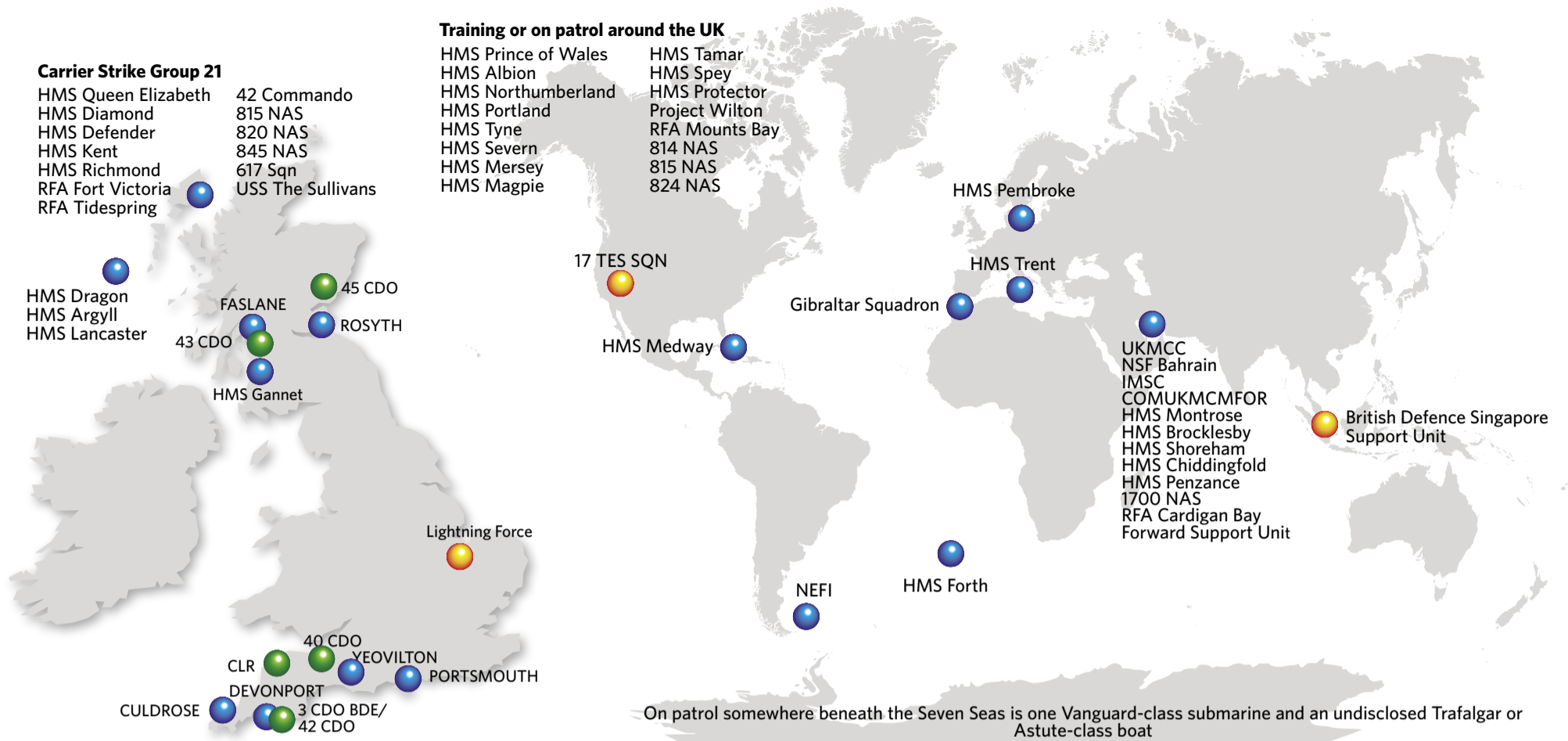
Commodore Steve Moorhouse

Pictures: POPhot Jay Allen; LPhot Unaisi Luke; LPhot Dan Rosenbaum; LPhot Barry Swainsbury; Shaun Rooster RNR



See pages 20-21 for more Carrier Strike Group preparations





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 UK's Carrier Strike Group has been declared officially operational after successful training off Scotland and is now ready for its global deployment (see pages 1, 2-3 and 20-21).

For the past few months, all those involved have been working hard to get ready and with HMS Queen Elizabeth leading the way, nine ships, more than 30 aircraft and 3,700 sailors and personnel are ready to head east.

Preparation for the deployment, which also involves HMS Diamond, Defender, Kent, Richmond, RFA Tideforce and Fort Victoria, along with 820, 815 and 845 NAS and 617 Squadron, saw ships take part in Strike Warrior off Scotland.

As the strike group heads east, more than 1,000 sailors and Royal Marines were heading north for a three-month mission to the North Atlantic and Baltic at the beginning of a new era of commando operations (see pages 16-17).

This is the first deployment of the Littoral Response Group (North) task group, which is the first of two forces – centred around Royal Marines and amphibious ships – that will regularly carry out operations in areas of interest to the UK, providing reassurance to allies and deter potential adversaries.

This task group is made up of amphibious assault ship HMS Albion and landing dock RFA Mounts Bay, plus Type 23 frigate HMS Lancaster, Wildcat helicopters from 847 NAS, and Royal Marines from 45 and 30 Commando.

We have extensively covered the Future Commando Force concept in Navy News and this month we explain exactly what it means (see centre pages).

The future remains a strong theme this month as the names of the new Type 31 frigates were revealed (see page 6). HMS Active, Bulldog, Campbeltown, Formidable and Venturer draw their names from warships and submarines whose deeds and missions are intended to reflect and inspire current and future Royal Navy operations.

The frigates will follow the new Type 26 City-class frigates (see page 6), led by HMS Glasgow, which is taking shape at BAE's Govan yard on the River Clyde.

The Royal Navy's second carrier, HMS Prince of Wales, also left her home base of Portsmouth (see page 5) to complete further trials and tests before heading to the south west coast for an intensive period of Basic Operational Sea Training.

The world's most advanced torpedo has been declared ready for front-line action with the Royal Navy and undergone extensive deep water trials with HMS Audacious in the Bahamas (see page 23). Five of the cutting-edge heavy Spearfish – known as the Mod-1 – torpedoes were successfully fired by Audacious during three days of trials on a special range.

Audacious's younger sister, Anson, has been launched at Barrow (see page 11). The fifth of the seven Astute-class boats will leave Cumbria next year for Faslane.

Over to much warmer climes and four Royal Navy ships took part in an international minehunting exercise in the Gulf (see pages 14-15). RFA Cardigan Bay served as the mother ship as minehunters Brocklesby, Penzance, and Shoreham, worked with ships from the USA, Australia and France for Artemis Trident.

The greenest ship in the Royal Navy fleet, HMS Tamar, has undergone a transformation as she now wears dazzle paint (see page 7). She is the first RN ship to have the iconic paint scheme since WW2.

Sister offshore patrol vessel HMS Forth landed 900 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid vaccine on Tristan da Cunha after a 2,500-mile journey from the Falklands to beat winter storms (see page 13).

Meanwhile HMS Trent has shown the versatility of the patrol ships during her first month on operations in the Mediterranean (see page 19). The River-class Batch 2 warship has been on a diplomatic mission to Algeria, hosted Tunisian Special Forces and been on NATO security operations.

Specialist commando gunners covertly patrolled deep behind 'enemy lines' on exercises with the US Marines (see page 35). It's up to Royal Navy, Royal Marine and British Army commandos from 148 Commando Forward Observation Battery to bring a rain of fire and fury down upon enemy positions by guiding the guns of the Fleet – or their own 105mm howitzers of 29 Commando Royal Artillery – with pinpoint accuracy.

Finally, Lieutenant General Robert Magowan has become Commandant General Royal Marines – the most senior officer in the Corps – after Major General Matt Holmes handed over the role at a supersession ceremony (see page 43).

Be bullish: this is a new chapter

VIEW BRIDGE from the BRIDGE

2021, the Royal Navy's Year of Delivery, is already shaping up to be something very special.

The past month has once again seen the Royal Navy and Royal Marines very much in the public eye, with the deployment of the Littoral Response Group (North) centred on HMS Albion (see pages 16-17) and the sailing of the Carrier Strike Group for CSG21 (see pages 2-3 and 20-21).

The recent experimental work conducted by the Royal Marines and HMS Tamar of Gravity Industries (see page 33) highlighted the game-changing kit we are trialling as we embrace the latest technology and innovation.

The recent coverage in the press of Richard Browning's jet suit demonstrates just how far technology is advancing, with social media commentators referring to it as the Ironman suit, and more like an action film than reality. But the exciting thing is that this is really happening, and our people are getting to trial it now.

May also heralded a very successful Sea Power Conference, held at the International Institute of Strategic Studies, and the first time the conference was successfully delivered in a hybrid format both online and virtually.

The conference received a keynote address from Secretary of State Ben Wallace, who delivered the Sir Henry Leach Memorial Lecture. We discussed the challenges facing the maritime with the Secretary of State, Service Chiefs, leading academics and opinion formers, and the future maritime strategists. This was the first time we opened up the conference to such a diverse group, and this was reflected in the wide-ranging and fruitful presentations, discussion panels and interview sessions.



● The embodiment of the UK's 'maritime renaissance', carrier strike and international partnerships in one image: Arleigh Burke destroyer USS The Sullivans follows HMS Queen Elizabeth (left) and HMS Prince of Wales through the Channel last month

Picture: PO(Phot) Jay Allen

I was also particularly proud with the advent of both the Littoral Response Group (North) and the Carrier Strike Group deployments. These demonstrate both how operational the Service is and highlight our enduring belief in working with our partners and allies. And let's not forget these are two of our largest deployments in recent years, being delivered at the same time as all our other outputs: Continuous At Sea Deterrence, support to the NHS front line, protecting the home base and our overseas territories.

And all of this is being supported by a Government which gets the

importance of the maritime, and is investing in us now, to provide the capabilities we need in the future.

Our world-class fifth generation F-35B are operating at sea, Type 26 construction continues apace (see page 6) and the recent unveiling of the Type 31 names brings back some of the most historic names in the Service's history (see page 6), and heralds a new chapter.

If I sound bullish, I make no apology for that. Backed by a Government which truly believes in us and what we can deliver, this is a great time to be in Defence and in the Royal Navy.

First Sea Lord, Admiral Tony Radakin



■ SUBSCRIBE ONLINE AT ROYALNAVY.MOD.UK/NAVYNEWS

■ News@royalnavymail.mod.uk

■ advertising@navynews.co.uk



SHE'S GOLDEN

HMS PRINCE OF WALES SAILS FROM CITY TO START SEA TRIALS

THE flight deck of HMS Prince of Wales is buzzing with air power again – as the Royal Navy generates a second 65,000-tonne aircraft carrier ready for front-line operations.

The Portsmouth-based warship spent much of her first fortnight back at sea in the relatively sheltered waters of Lyme Bay conducting aviation trials with the RAF and Commando Helicopter Force.

The ship's company has changed substantially since she last sailed in the spring of 2020 – and since her flight deck last welcomed helicopters, so it's been a mix of brushing up on old skills and new experiences for a good number of sailors.

Those on the upper deck were treated to the impressive sight of a unique RAF Chinook, proudly sporting a Union Jack tail to celebrate its 40th anniversary in UK service, touching down. The Boeing-built helicopter entered service with the air force in November 1980 and has seen action in every major conflict involving the nation's armed forces since.

ZD984 from 27 Squadron at RAF Odiham has just emerged from a maintenance period, during which the paint job was applied.

The Queen Elizabeth-class is unique in its ability to stow a Chinook in its hangar (though it didn't on this occasion). ZD984 is not the only 'wocca-wocca' to make use of HMS Prince of Wales' expansive flight deck; 7 Squadron's Chinooks have also been helping to train the carrier's air department alongside commando-carrying Merlins of 846 NAS from RNAS Yeovilton.

"It's fantastic to be back at sea operating numerous aircraft types from all three Services," said 'Wings', Commander Phil Beacham, in charge of aviation operations aboard the carrier. The ship has a combination of highly-experienced air department personnel – and much-less-experienced sailors across other departments.

"This essential sea period is giving our new sailors crucial maritime aviation experience, moving Prince of Wales towards her full operational capability and helping to build the future Royal Navy."

Engineering Technician Ashley Smith and his dad Warrant Officer 2nd Class Duncan Thornhill are two of more than 700 souls serving aboard the carrier.

Ashley is charged with ensuring salt water pulses through the ship's pipes so that it is always available for use by fire-fighting teams in the event of an emergency. As a marine engineer he's also responsible for monitoring machinery and systems as a watchkeeper.

And dad has the small task of ensuring everyone aboard is properly fed three times a day – over 2,000 meals daily – by ensuring the fridges, freezers and stores are filled by sticking to a tight budget as the catering services manager.

Both father and son are enjoying their different experiences aboard – and say the support they receive from the rest of the family at home in Devon is crucial.

"Growing up it was hard with the amount of time dad spent deployed, but after seeing what the service had provided for him and our family it was easy to understand why he enjoyed it and I wanted to be a part of that," said 27-year-old Ashley.

"It's nice to have a familiar face on board and makes it that little bit easier when away from the family."

"The guaranteed lift home each weekend is also quite a nice perk! But working in two separate departments we rarely cross paths."

After completing her training in Lyme Bay the ship headed out into the open waters of the Channel and her first top of fuel and supplies since leaving Portsmouth, courtesy of tanker RFA Tiderace – together more than 100,000 tonnes of naval might moving through the water on parallel courses just 50 metres apart.

To keep up morale, the ship's TV studio has hosted its first 'show' for shipmates (a whole-ship quiz), and with the cavernous hangar briefly empty between helicopter visits, it's been used as a dodgeball/bucketball arena.

"People join the Royal Navy because it's a way of life, not just a 9 to 5 job. Therefore it's important to find opportunities where we can to maintain the balance between operational output and relaxing whilst deployed and events like these are a great opportunity to have some fun," said First Lieutenant Lieutenant Commander Laura Mullin.

Pictures: LPhot Finn Hutchins and LPhot Mark Johnson



A Naval Charity providing personal help and advice for all serving and former members of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, their Reserves and Families on;

Civilian Employment & Personal Administration
Including - resettlement finances, pensions and commutation, legal and family law matters

For further information please contact:
www.whiteensign.co.uk
0207 407 8658
office@whiteensign.co.uk



MEET HMS Glasgow.

And, yes, she's big. Roughly one-and-a-half times bigger than the ships she replaces.

Courtesy of the folk at BAE, this is your first sight of the first Type 26/City-class frigate about to be joined.

The two halves of HMS Glasgow are just millimetres apart by the banks of the River Clyde in her namesake city, ready for the complex job of connecting countless systems, pipes, and cables as well as ensuring the hull and structure aligns perfectly.

It's nearly four years since the first steel was cut on the first of the eight future submarine hunters.

First the forward block – which contains the bridge, operations room and accommodation spaces – then the after block were carefully moved out of the construction hall at BAE's Govan yard and on to the adjacent hardstanding.

Also waiting to be added to the ship is the main mast – delivered by barge to the shipyard.

With the three huge 'jigsaw pieces' coming together on the south bank of the Clyde, the scale and scope of the Type 26 programme is now clearly visible.

Commodore Stephen Roberts, heading the Type 26 programme for the Royal Navy, hailed the roll-out as a triumph of engineering and effort and an "important milestone in the life of the future HMS Glasgow".

He continued: "I want to take the opportunity to reflect on this huge achievement, most recently against the incredibly challenging backdrop of Covid-19."

"Seeing the ship take her form in this way is a tangible representation of the scale of the Type 26 programme and I look forward to witnessing the next phase in the delivery of this advanced anti-submarine warfare capability to the future Royal Navy surface fleet."

The Type 26s will incorporate some of the weapons and sensors from their predecessors – notably the Artisan radar and Sea Ceptor air defence missile – plus new systems and innovations, including a 5in main gun (instead of the long-standing 4.5in) capable of hitting targets 22 miles away, towed array sensors for anti-submarine warfare and a 'mission bay' which can hold whatever is required for a specific mission, such as automated minehunters, drones, and humanitarian aid.

At nearly 7,000 tonnes once completed, the new class is considerably larger than the 'souped up' anti-submarine warfare Type 23 frigates they will replace.

They're also 17 metres longer (more than 50ft) yet crewed by just 161 sailors – a good 20 fewer than their predecessors.

Commander Philip Burgess has been involved in the Type 26 programme for the past 18 months and will join HMS Glasgow as her Senior Naval Officer

– in charge of the ship until her first Commanding Officer is appointed.

"It is very exciting to see HMS Glasgow coming together," he said. "My team and I are looking forward to the next phase of her build, turning her from a shell into a living warship."

"We will gradually welcome more of her crew to the Glasgow family as she is brought to life."

"Glasgow and the other Type 26 frigates will be at the cutting edge of anti-submarine capability, but also extremely flexible and diverse ships that will be deployed all over the world. They are modern, capable ships that give their crews really exciting opportunities for the future."

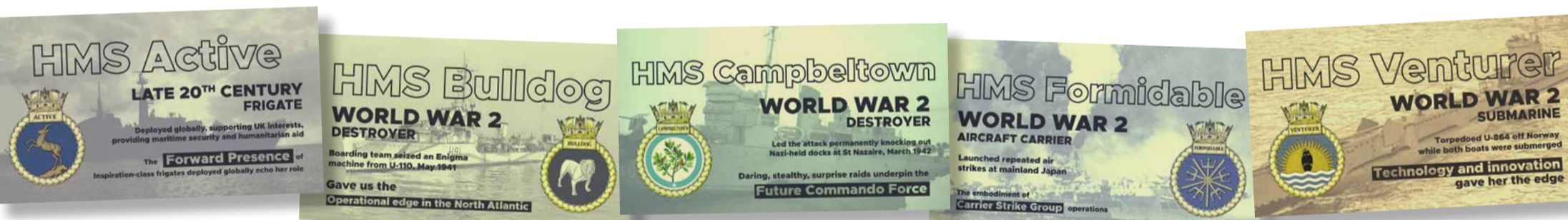
Of the eight ships in the class – each named after one of the UK's great cities and all to be built by BAE on the Clyde – the first three have been ordered.

HMS Cardiff is roughly two years behind HMS Glasgow, whilst the first steel on the new HMS Belfast is due to be cut this year.

Picture: BAE Maritime Systems



All go on Glasgow



Inspiration for the nation

FIVE names to rally and inspire sailors and Royal Marines now and for the future have been selected for Britain's next generation of frigates.

Britain's senior sailor First Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin announced the names of the Type 31 frigates – which will now be known as the Inspiration class.

Approved by Her Majesty The Queen, HMS Active, Bulldog, Campbeltown, Formidable, and Venturer draw their names from warships and submarines whose deeds and missions are intended to reflect historic and inspire current and future Royal Navy operations.

Each name has been selected to represent key themes and operations which will dominate and shape the global mission of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines: carrier operations (Formidable); operational advantage in the North Atlantic (Bulldog); forward deployment of ships around the globe to protect UK interests (Active); technology and innovation (Venturer); and the Future Commando Force (Campbeltown).

The names of the five future frigates were revealed at the First Sea Lord's



Seapower conference hosted by the International Institute of Strategic Studies in Arundel House.

"I welcome the announcement of the names of the Inspiration-class.

"Each of the names has been chosen for evoking those values we strive for: cutting-edge technology, audacity and global operations," Admiral Radakin said.

"They represent the best of Britain's world-class shipbuilding heritage and will fly the flag for decades to come."

Admiral Radakin told conference delegates that the new class was at the heart of a new era of maritime renaissance – as heralded by this year's defence review – which recognised the importance of defence, the Royal Navy and the maritime realm to the prosperity

of the nation.

This "maritime resurgence" has brought with it a rebirth of Britain's shipbuilding industry to provide modernised forces – but the government expects "increased presence" as a result, embodied by the global missions of the Inspiration class.

The Type 31s replace five general-purpose Type 23 frigates which have

served the Royal Navy with distinction since the early 1990s.

All five ships will be assembled at the Babcock yard in Rosyth, where a new construction hall is nearing completion.

Their design is just about finalised after experts pored over plans for ten days.

A dozen independent experts reviewed the design of the Type 31, interrogated the engineering team and offered advice to designers from Babcock.

That will allow them to produce a final 3D model of the class – and from there the detailed plans and charts for construction which will allow work to begin later this year.

Roughly 80 per cent of the cash assigned to the Type 31 programme has already been spent with firms in the supply chain providing the various systems and parts the ships require.

The bulk of the work on the vessels is taking place in Rosyth, Bristol, Devonport and Crawley, with around 1,250 people involved in the class at the peak of construction.

The first steel is due to be cut on the ships this summer and all five are due to be accepted by 2028.

SPORTING a livery not seen on Royal Navy warships in nearly 80 years, HMS Tamar emerges from maintenance with 'dazzle camouflage'.

The patrol ship departs on her maiden deployment this summer with a nod to her forebears, courtesy of the striking paint job applied by the folks from A&P during her maintenance period in Falmouth.

Once it covered the hulls of Royal Navy – and other – as a *trompe-l'œil* to trick the foe.

The dazzle job – various shades of black, white and grey in strange or jarring shapes – has been added to the fourth new River-class patrol vessel as part of an initiative to foster a unique 'look' and identity among

the quintet.

Dazzle was introduced by the Royal Navy towards the end of World War 1, was adopted by many of the world's navies at the time – and repeated between 1939 and 1945.

The different shapes, angles and colours were intended to confuse submariners peering through periscopes, making it hard for them first to identify ships and confuse their calculations about the target's speed and direction – hopefully causing a torpedo to miss.

With the end of the war and the improvement of radar and optical devices, dazzle camouflage was quickly phased out by the Royal Navy after 1945 – until now.

Tamar, which entered service last

year, already stands out from much of the rest of the Royal Navy fleet thanks to large red lion motifs on her superstructure.

They've been retained, but shipwrights also added 200 litres of paint in four shades of grey, plus black.

"We're really proud of our new paint scheme and the historical significance that it comes with," said Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Michael Hutchinson.

"Different styles of dazzle were used by the Royal Navy on ships in various stations throughout the world and we are pleased to have been given an iconic new look before we deploy in the summer."

Commander David Louis,

Commander of the Overseas Patrol Squadron, said the Navy had decided to give the River-class ships a distinct identity to recognise their unique role.

"Dazzle has much less military value in the 21st Century although there is still value in littoral environments when viewed against the background of land," Commander Louis explained.

"It is very much more about supporting the unique identity of the squadron within the Royal Navy as part of their forward presence mission."

Dazzle paint/camouflage owes its existence to Royal Navy officer and artist Norman Wilkinson and the height of the first Battle of the

Atlantic in 1917.

With Britain struggling to deal with the U-boat threat, Wilkinson came up with the idea of confusing U-boat skippers during patrols out of Plymouth.

He couldn't make ships invisible – the smoke belching from their funnels were an obvious give-away – but he could make it much harder to identify them, or judge their course and speed.

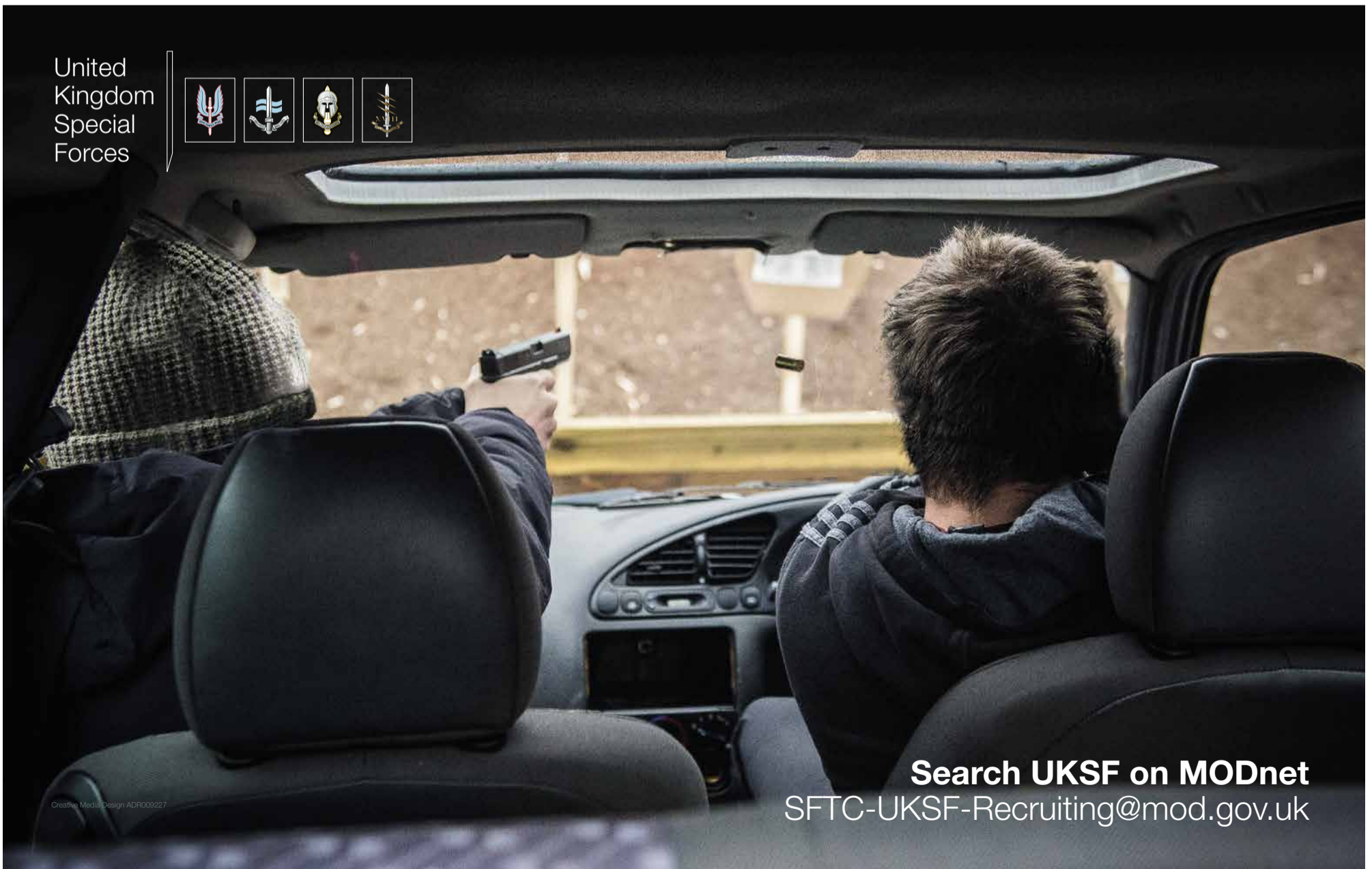
After tests with miniatures, the paint scheme was approved by the Admiralty and introduced to more than 2,000 ships across the Fleet, merchant Navy and then allies.

Picture: Bob Sharples

■ Tamar joins the jet (pack) set, p33



United Kingdom Special Forces



Search UKSF on MODnet
SFTC-UKSF-Recruiting@mod.gov.uk

Atkins & Co.
Chartered Accountants



CASH FOR YOU

Do you drive from home to work?
Do you own your own car?
Have you worked in different locations?

You could be entitled to thousands of pounds in TAX REFUNDS. Millions have already been received by your colleagues.

- Over 10 years experience
- Family connections with RN and RM, so you know you are in safe hands
- Bootneck and Matelot friendly
- We'll square the admin away!
- Specialist areas:- Maritime security, Overseas and UK security sector, Diving, Pilots and Rental Property

**GET YOUR TAX REFUND NOW!
CONTACT US TODAY**

**FIXED FEE OF £110 PER YEAR
NO REFUND – NO FEE**

E: info@atkinsandco.com

T: 01934 527888

W: www.atkinsandco.com

Atkins & Co. Chartered Accountants are fully regulated by ICAEW (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales)



Feeling the heat in the galley

HMS Duncan's ship company is working hard to bring her back to operational status following time in a dry dock at HMNB Portsmouth for her programmed upkeep period.

Before moving back on board they have also been tested on their ability to keep the ship and her personnel safe.

Fire onboard a warship is a constant risk, even more so in the galley where hot oil, moving machinery and tight spaces make for a potentially lethal combination.

Under the leadership of Chief Petty Officer Paul Cook, the sailors from HMS Duncan recently proved they were up to defeating this danger as they prepare to move back on board, the ship having been in the care of BAE Systems for her first upkeep period.



CPO Cook said: "I'm really pleased with the hard work of the team; their knowledge and enthusiasm was impressive."

As part of the training scenario, the fire proved too large to be put out with handheld extinguishers so the team had to close the door, testing their ability to contain the blaze which now threatened to divide the ship in two.

The containment team, led by PO Luke Savage were now key to holding back the fire, buying time for the support party to get into their firefighting suits.

Once the electrical supplies had been isolated and all preparations were in place, the support party could re-enter the galley, shielded behind ET(WE) Cameron Cumming's water wall which for a real fire would put out 37.8 tonnes an hour of water.

Once in, ET(ME) William Bell could smother the fire with a blanket of foam, while LCS Craig McCheyne could use the thermal imaging camera to confirm that the fire was extinguished.

This was all the more challenging as the Fleet Operational Sea Training team were on hand to advise and assure, declaring at the end of the exercise that had this been a real fire the team would have extinguished it and saved the ship.

Commanding Officer, Commander Hugh Harris said: "The success of the exercise is entirely down to the teamwork and dedication of the ship's company over the last few months, as Duncan continues her journey back to being a fighting warship."

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @HMSDuncan and @RoyalNavy on Twitter

On the NATO beat

Pembroke teams up with Baltic task group

KNUCKLING down to NATO duties for the next few months is HMS Pembroke which has taken her place in a minehunting task group in the Baltic.

The Faslane-based warship has sailed more than 1,500 miles from her native Clyde in Scotland to take her place in Standing Mine Countermeasures Group 1, dedicated to peacekeeping in the waters of northern Europe.

Pembroke picks up where her sister HMS Blyth left off when she departed the group just before Easter.

Currently the task group comprises six ships – from Belgium flagship Godetia and Crocus, Estonia's Ugandi (formerly HMS Bridport), Germany's Sulzbach Rosenberg, Zierikzee from

the Netherlands, plus Pembroke – under the leadership of Dutch Commander Jan Wichers.

Its three-pronged mission: show NATO's ability to deal with 21st Century mine threats, help make the seas safer by dealing with historic ordnance which litters the Baltic and North Atlantic, and demonstrate the alliance's positive role.

Pembroke took her place in the group in Klaipeda, Lithuania's principal port, after an occasionally idyllic journey from her home base on the Clyde.

"Our transit across the North Sea was unbelievably calm and sunny, I really enjoyed being able to work out

on the upper deck and seeing as far as the eye could see," said mine warfare specialist Able Seaman Phil Channon.



Fellow mine warfare specialist AB Ross Whitaker added: "It is great to get to see new places and the scenery is phenomenal, transiting through the Danish straits and right by Copenhagen was amazing."

So far the ship's company of 45 are enjoying their Baltic experience – and the ability, due to their size, to visit places some of the Royal Navy's larger vessels perhaps cannot get to, or rarely call upon and looking forward to the eclectic international experience of a NATO deployment.

"Deploying to the Baltics has provided new opportunities for the crew; to see new places, support NATO and to work and relax with our allies," said Pembroke's navigator Lieutenant Harry Long.

His shipmate, gunnery officer Lieutenant Toby Robson, added: "It is always great to work with our allies; everyone has different ways of working and it allows us all to learn and improve from the techniques of others."

New NATO command, see page 29

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @HMS Pembroke and @RoyalNavy on Twitter



because you're there for us

Our team of lawyers have many years of experience providing specialist legal advice to forces personnel. Our military law experts will not only advise you on issues arising from the line of duty but with your home life as well.

There for you supporting the forces

wilkin chapman llp
inc. gilbert blades
solicitors



By Appointment to Her Majesty The Queen Medallists
Worcestershire Medal Service Ltd
Bromsgrove

Worcestershire Medal Service Ltd

Specialists in Orders, Decorations and Medals
56 Broad Street, Sidemoor, Bromsgrove, B61 8LL



Medals mounted for wear and display

Miniature and full size replacement medals supplied, all made in the UK to the highest standard.

See our web site where you can order securely on-line

www.worcedmedals.com

or call 01527 835375 and our team will be pleased to help you.



Talk to us



Sometimes the **smallest actions**
can make the **biggest difference.**

During uncertain times, it may be difficult to ask for help. Forcesline is a free and confidential helpline to support you, no matter the problem. Make that first step for long lasting help - **don't keep quiet, talk to us.**

0800 260 6767

Free and confidential. Open weekdays, 09:00 to 17:30

Or get in touch online at

ssafa.org.uk/forcesline

ssafa | the
Armed Forces
charity

Regulars, Reserves, Veterans, Families

Registered as a charity in England and Wales Number 210760 in Scotland Number SC038056 and in Republic of Ireland Number 20202001. Established 1885.



ON A perfectly still night by the shores of the Irish Sea, spotlights bathe HMS Anson in bright light as she emerges into the open air for the first time.

This is the half-way point of a delicate two-day operation firstly to roll the fifth of the Navy's seven Astute-class boats out of the cavernous Devonshire Dock Hall in Barrow, then to lower her gently into the adjacent Buccleuch Dock.

From there she's now been moved to Wet Dock Quay – all part of the extensive facilities at BAE's yard.

There she will undergo final testing and commissioning of systems, and conduct her first dive – submerging most of the boat – ahead of leaving Cumbria next year and joining her four sisters in Faslane.

Anson's crew are key to all these tests, having been increasingly involved in the construction and fitting out process of their boat which was formally named in the dock hall – the boat's home since Anson was laid down in October 2011 – by her sponsor Julie Weale just before Christmas.

She returned to Barrow to see Anson emerge into daylight for the first time on a beautiful spring day in Cumbria.

The final year of the boat's completion has been complicated by the pandemic, which placed particular challenges and demands on the complex operation to lower the hunter-killer into the water.

After thorough testing

and commissioning of some 40 critical systems, the crew are responsible for the boat's watertight integrity during her time in Barrow as well as general safety aboard.

In the days leading up to her launch, Anson's crew ran fire exercises and other emergency scenarios for every duty watch to respond to any eventuality.

Only when the crew, BAE staff and submarine/shipbuilding experts were happy with the safety and condition of the boat was her launch allowed – carried out by BAE under the direction of their operations team, but also involving BAE naval architects, shipwrights, port operations and an embarked pilot.

On board Anson, BAE staff join submariners, led by the boat's first commanding officer Commander David 'Bing' Crosby, operating critical positions, such as running the diesel engines for power, changing the ventilation states, and bringing air into the ballast tanks for buoyancy.

Everyone aboard – Service and civilian – have to comply with COVID regulations which means wearing sealable facemasks (filtered and forced air) for the duration.

"The roll out itself from the dock hall is a slow and delicate operation, checking that the cradles and submarine hull are not subject to stress as the boat is rolled over the transitions on to the ship-lift," explained Commander Crosby.

"Lowering the ship-lift also takes time, with the Naval architects ensuring that all the tanks have the correct contents, so the boat maintains the correct trim as she floats.

As she is lowered the ship's staff are conducting rounds, leak checks and looking for floods."

Once afloat, the boat was 'cold moved' to Wet Dock Quay assisted by tugs, which is where the training starts in earnest towards the next milestone (the trim dive) and then exit and joining the rest of the Astute-class in Faslane.

Commander Crosby said the efforts so far by the combined team working on his boat had been "nothing short of amazing".

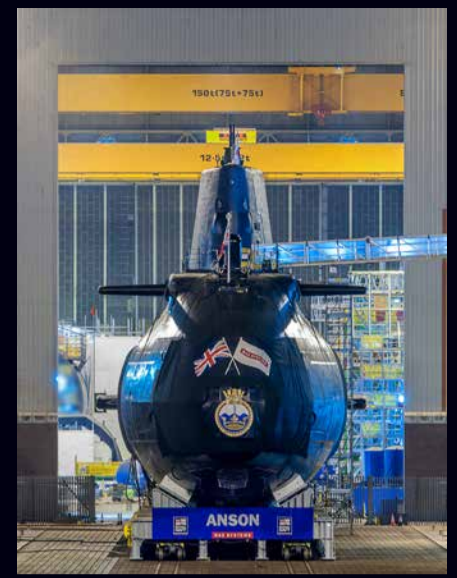
He continued: "The launch marks a significant milestone in the delivery of HMS Anson to the front line.

"I am extremely encouraged by the strong relationships my team and the RN are maintaining with the BAE build team and their contracted support; these teams will ensure HMS Anson leave Barrow in 2022 set well for sea trials ahead of what will be a long and successful operational life.

"My small team have worked tirelessly over the past nine months to get the acceptance of watertight integrity systems over the line, thereby supporting the next stage.

"BAE and the RN returned to work last May and, through a stringent Covid testing process and adherence to PPE guidelines, have worked wonders to deliver us to this point.

"I would also like to thank my team and their families for their understanding and support at the challenging time – their support is essential to our continued success."



SUCH ANSON LINES

WELCOME

home with a Barclays mortgage

We're proud to support the Forces Help to Buy scheme, which lets you apply for an interest-free loan of up to half your salary (£25,000 maximum) to put towards your deposit, and estate agent and solicitor fees.

Get in touch to see how we could help you find the right mortgage. Contact us 24/7, except on UK public holidays, from anywhere in the world.

[Search Barclays Forces Help to Buy](#)

Make money work for you



All mortgages are subject to application, financial circumstances and borrowing history. T&Cs apply.

Barclays Bank UK PLC. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority, and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority (Financial Services Register No 759676). Registered in England. Registered no 9740322. Registered Office 1 Churchill Place, London E14 5HP. August 2020.

Living the dream delivering vaccine

ONE week you're in a remote South Atlantic island improving the lives of inhabitants...

... the next you're in a remote South Atlantic island improving the lives of inhabitants...

HMS Forth made a 5,000-mile round trip to beat winter storms and help protect one of the most isolated communities on the planet from Covid.

Barely had the patrol ship returned to her native Falklands from an environmental mission to South Georgia than she was turned around and dispatched to the even-more-isolated island of Tristan da Cunha with 900 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine on board.

With no airport and no ships able to offload on the island during the austral winter, the 200-plus inhabitants of the British Overseas Territory are cut off from the world for months on end.

Forth, which is the Royal Navy's permanent presence in the Falklands, acted as the last 'baton carrier' in a 10,000-mile race to get the vaccine to islanders.

First the Royal Air Force delivered more than 900 doses of the vaccine from RAF Brize Norton to Mount Pleasant in the Falklands.

Within an hour, the tiny phials were delivered to the ship (pictured above), safely stored in Forth's sickbay and the ship was leaving her base to sail across the ocean.

The mission, on behalf of the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office, proved to be a challenge for Forth with the 5,000-mile round trip close to the limit of the patrol ship's fuel endurance.

With no opportunity to refuel en route, the voyage had to be cleverly planned to avoid the effects of the wind, sea and current. And throughout the voyage, the vaccine itself had to be kept in cold bags at an ambient temperature of between 2C and 8C, with sailors regularly checking them.

Only 60 minutes were allowed to pass between the vaccine doses leaving the ship and arriving in the refrigerator on Tristan da Cunha.

Commodore Jonathan Lett, Commander British Forces South Atlantic, said the operation had been a huge logistical challenge – one which everyone involved had risen to.

He said: "The entire operation has been a great team effort from start to finish. I am hugely proud of every member of the BFSAI (British Forces South Atlantic Islands) team involved in all elements of this epic journey."

The rapid offload was all the more fortunate as strong winds mean the island's sole harbour is only open for 60 days per year and rarely in the austral winter.

Dr Alex Wonner and the island's administrators Fiona Kilpatrick and Steve Townsend were waiting to collect Forth's doctor Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Rory Goodenough – following in the footsteps of his father who spent six months on the island as a botanist a generation ago – and his precious cargo for the final leg of the journey from the ship to Camogli Healthcare Centre (pictured below right).

One week after the delivery, the first jabs were administered with islanders receiving both injections by the end of June.

"It was wonderful to see HMS Forth and be on the receiving end of so much work and support from so many," Ms Kilpatrick said. "Vaccinations are well under way and we are so grateful to all those who made this possible."

Commander Chris Hollingworth, Forth's Commanding Officer, said this was exactly the sort of mission the new class of ships excelled at.

He continued: "This was a vital lifeline to a community whose nearest support is seven days sailing away."

"This latest tasking has demonstrated the exceptional utility of the South Atlantic Patrol Vessel and the capability of a forward-deployed patrol vessel."

"Most significantly, the UK and Royal Navy have reaffirmed their enduring commitment to our overseas territories by safeguarding Tristan da Cunha's over 200 inhabitants against the very real threat of Covid-19."

Forth was the first ship to call on the volcanic island in eight months – and the first Royal Navy vessels to stop in six years.

She broke off regular training in the Falklands with just hours' notice to prepare for the Atlantic crossing.

During the two-week round trip, trainee officers put their navigating skills to the test and learned how to navigate the ship and plot her position by measuring the sun, moon, planets and stars with sextants, rather than rely on technology, so they can safely navigate the ship out of sight of land when there is no GPS to aid them.

Crew also dedicated a service of remembrance to the Duke of Edinburgh, who visited Tristan with the Royal Yacht Britannia during a Commonwealth tour in 1957.

The island has strong Royal Navy connections: it was commissioned during World War 2 as the base HMS Atlantic Isle, monitoring radio traffic and U-Boat activity during the Battle of the Atlantic, the RN helped with the evacuation when the volcano erupted in 1961, and the harbour was rebuilt with the help of the RFA in 2008.



Pack to the future

DRONES will soar over the frozen wastes of Antarctica – and help guide the Navy's sole polar research ship safely through packs of ice.

HMS Protector has been assigned two small rotary wing drones, specially adapted for her unique mission in the polar extremes.

Although the Devonport-based survey ship has a large flight deck, with no hangar she cannot take helicopters with her – unlike her predecessor HMS Endurance, which carried two Lynx.

The two small Sky Mantis Remotely-Piloted Aerial Vehicles (pictured above) from Surrey firm Evolve have been given the same numbers as the (long-retired) Lynxes 434 and 435.

They can operate in sub-zero temperatures for up to an hour at a time, sending high-definition video (including 30x zoom and infrared imaging) back to their operators – all members of Protector's 48-strong ship's company.

They were trained by the Royal Navy's sole drone squadron, 700X, based at Culdrose near Helston, then continued to train with the 7.6kg drones at HMS Raleigh in Torpoint, much closer to the icebreaker's home.

The main mission for the two small aircraft will be scouting for 'ice leads'. "When operating in the ice we will always look for the path of least resistance, as this reduces the long term strain on the engines and hull," explained survey specialist/hydrographer Lieutenant Adelaide Banyard.

"It is very easy to 'chase a lead', an area with less-concentrated ice, but that might not actually take in the direction we want to."

Instead, the drones will be launched to find the ice leads and the positions/locations will then be inputted into the navigation system and the team can work out the best compromise route.

The ship (pictured below crunching her way through the Ross Sea) also plans to use the drones to provide 'overwatch' – providing additional safety for sailors as they carry out fishery boarding operations on behalf of the Foreign Office and Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, or looking out for teams put ashore by scouring the area for dangerous animals.

And there's also the potential for using the drones in the aftermath of a disaster, to gather information about the area affected and allow the sailors and Royal Marines to determine where or who to help first.

"This is an amazing piece of kit to be working with," said Protector's First Lieutenant and senior drone operator Lieutenant Commander Robbie Nash. "We have been continually learning with this system as we are the first Royal Navy ship to have its own remotely-piloted aerial system. Hopefully we have hopefully demonstrated a viable route for other units to source and develop their own drone capability."

Survey specialist Able Seaman Joe Cochran is one of the sailors itching to test the small aircraft over the ice and snow.

"The Royal Navy has provided me with various training courses with 700X Squadron based at Culdrose, but flying the Sky Mantis is far superior to anything I have flown before," he added.

"We are yet to fly it at sea and look forward to doing so, and deploying while in the ice to test the amazing cameras that are fitted."

His ship is currently undergoing Operational Sea Training ahead of her return to the ice following the most extensive refit/maintenance period in her history.





RIDENT

**RFA CARDIGAN BAY
TAKES ON FLAGSHIP ROLE
FOR INTERNATIONAL
MINEHUNTING EXERCISE**



WelCome

WELFARE

Your WelCome account card...

A **WelCome account card** is assigned to you for your entire military career and can be used to access **telephone** and **Internet** services whilst deployed.

You should receive it after basic training. If you haven't been given it, speak to your admin officer. For more information visit: www.mywelcome.co.uk

Lost your account card? No worries! Speak to your admin officer who will be able to provide you with your WelCome account number and a password to reset your PIN.

WelCome Customer Contact Centre
customer.support@mywelcome.co.uk | www.mywelcome.co.uk

WelCome
Welfare Communications Everywhere

TESTED

RFA CARDIGAN BAY was at the centre of the largest test of international minehunting forces in the Gulf since the pandemic.

More than 700 personnel – sailors, divers and aircrew – from the UK, US, Australia, and France took part in Artemis Trident, a two-week workout testing the ability of the four allied nations to keep sea lanes open.

The exercise integrated ships, units and staff from the participating nations to create a potent combined minehunting task force – seven mine warfare vessels, one command ship, a couple of fast patrol boats, three helicopters and three specialist dive teams who can deploy anywhere around the globe.

Support vessel RFA Cardigan Bay acted as flagship throughout – as well as home to a Royal Navy command staff who direct UK mine warfare operations in the Gulf, and a dive team flown out from the UK to hone their expeditionary skills.

Also flying the flag for the UK were three of the Royal Navy's four minehunters based in Bahrain: HMS Penzance, Brocklesby and Shoreham. France

provided sister minehunters FS Céphée and L'Aigle, plus a battle staff and dive team, while staff officers from the Royal Australian Navy were among those choreographing the complex force and manoeuvres.

And the US Navy – directing

the overall exercise – committed a couple of their Avenger-class minehunters, which work side-by-side with RN forces based in Bahrain; USS Gladiator and Sentry, plus expeditionary minehunting teams.

A couple of Mk VI patrol boats provided protection for the force, supported by helicopters including huge Sea Dragons which tow minesweeping equipment through the water.

Run every two years, Artemis Trident expects participants to clear a path through sea mines in response to a fictitious mining incident, while also defending themselves



Opportunities like this to exercise with our international partners are invaluable.

Lieutenant Commander David Bryden,
Commanding Officer HMS Shoreham

against threats in the air and on the sea, and providing maritime security for other seafarers.

This was the fifth time it's been run – and in its 2021 iteration there was a heavy focus on tech, on top of traditional methods as participants tested new techniques and technologies.

The Royal Navy's Expeditionary Mine Unit 3, based in Portsmouth, deployed an 11-strong team which worked alongside French and US counterparts, deploying autonomous underwater vehicles and clearance divers to find and dispose of mines.

They set up temporary home in the US Naval Base in Bahrain, heading out into the exercise area by boats and raiding craft.

"The exercise provided an excellent opportunity to practise and develop expeditionary mine warfare tactics, techniques and procedures, sharing ideas

and experiences between the three nations," said Lieutenant Commander Peter Needle, Officer in Charge of Expeditionary Mine Unit 3.

"It will provide valuable lessons learned as the Royal Navy moves towards increasing use of offboard, autonomous systems alongside existing capabilities such as clearance divers."

Lieutenant Commander David Bryden, Commanding Officer of HMS Shoreham embraced the chance to take part in such a varied workout.

"Opportunities like this to exercise with our international partners are invaluable, it helps to reinforce our collective commitment to safe freedom of navigation on the high seas," he said.

"Working together with other units is very important for command and control and communications, making sure all of our systems work together."

Commander James Lovell, in charge of the UK's Gulf-based mine forces, said the opportunity for such a major collective test with close partners was "fantastic".

"Exercising with our Gulf partners and coalition partners in the region is all about maintaining our military fitness so that we are ready to work together when the time comes.

"Artemis Trident is even more poignant this year as the UK is celebrating its 15th year of a continuous mine-warfare presence in the Gulf."

Commodore Ed Ahlgren, UK Maritime Component Commander in Bahrain, said, "The ability to effectively counter mines is critical to maintaining the free flow of commerce and maintaining freedom of navigation."

"Exercise Artemis Trident 21 has truly demonstrated the ability for our multinational MCM Task Force to work collaboratively, using our combined assets and skills."

Captain Donald Crosbie, Deputy Commander of Task Force 52, added: "This exercise served to refine our procedures as a multi-national MCM Task Force. We were excited to be able to integrate next generation technology with current capabilities in order to enhance our overall readiness."

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIPS

Follow @RFACardiganBay, @HMSBrocklesby, @HMSPenzance, @HMSShoreham and @RoyalNavy on Twitter



UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH

STUDY NAVAL HISTORY ONLINE

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

Find out more at port.ac.uk/ma-naval-history or email hss-enquiries@port.ac.uk



**THERE'S ANOTHER TASK GROUP
YOU KNOW**

LITTORAL REPOSE GROUP (NORTH) IS OFF ON THEIR EUROPEAN MISSION

WITH all the fanfare that has come with the Carrier Strike Group, it's probably easy for some to overlook that another Royal Navy task group has formed for their own important missions.

More than 1,000 Royal Marines and sailors have stepped off on a deployment around northern Europe that hails a new era of commando operations.

It might look on the face of it as your normal amphibious task group and, granted, it looks ultimately very similar in terms of vessels, with assault ship HMS Albion at the heart of it all along with RFA Mounts Bay and Type 23 frigate HMS Lancaster as the main escort.

The Littoral Response Group (North) deployment will take commandos into the Baltic Sea, training and engaging with allies and partners from NATO and the Joint Expeditionary Force. They will take part in the largest multinational exercise in the Baltic Sea, Baltops, which marks its 50th anniversary this year.

All this is familiar work for a task group like this, but there's a difference with the Littoral Response Group (North).

At its core is another meaningful step into a new era, which began more than two years ago when the Future Commando Force and Littoral Strike concepts were first mooted. You can read more on the concepts on pages 24-25.

The forming of this task group is the beginning of a new way of operating and deploying commando forces.

The plan is to eventually have two Littoral Response Groups – North and South – which have different areas of responsibility, but are a constant presence in hot spots around the world, where they can respond quickly to world events.

It's about putting commandos in forward positions, closer to the action and working with allies for reassurance and as a deterrence to potential adversaries.

The Littoral Response Group (North) is the first proper debut for this way of working, after the trials and tests of Littoral Response Group (Experimentation) in the Mediterranean at the end of last year.

The response groups are designed to deliver the fire and fury of 3 Commando Brigade to coastlines around the world, with Royal Marines from 45, 47 and 30 Commando all attached to this particular group, along with Wildcat helicopters from Commando Helicopter Force's 847 Naval Air Squadron.

Ultimately, this is about returning commandos to being raiders from the sea, equipped with new kit to counter the threats of a new era and continuously deployed to make sure they are in the right



Task groups together: A view of HMS Queen Elizabeth from HMS Albion when the Carrier Strike Group met up with the Littoral Response Group (North)

place to react to events.

Captain Simon Kelly, task group commander and Commanding Officer of HMS Albion, explains: "The Littoral Response Group will be training alongside our NATO allies and regional partners on our deployment into the North Atlantic and Baltic Sea region."

"With two major exercises, including the 50th anniversary of NATO's Baltops, it is shaping up to be a busy deployment."

"We are excited to be part of the development and delivery of the vanguard Littoral Response Group, as announced in the recent Integrated Review, which will project a more sophisticated, persistently engaged, and lethal commando force."

For many of the sailors and marines, this is their first military deployment after training.

AB Ben Tovey, 25, a newly-qualified Warfare Specialist on Albion, said: "I joined the Royal Navy a year ago wanting to have a job with more purpose."

"This deployment holds a lot of firsts for me, with HMS Albion being my first ship and my first time at sea; the ship already feels like an extended family."

"I'm excited to be part of the large international exercises and being involved with testing new weaponry and equipment."

Littoral Response Group (North) deployed at the same time as the UK Carrier Strike Group and, before going their separate ways on their respective missions, the two groups came together along with US Navy ships of the USS Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group.

The LRG(N) task group had just returned from US-led exercises in Norway, while the Carrier Strike Group was just wrapping up their training on Exercise Strike Warrior (*more on pages 2-3 on that*) when they came together; 15 ships from four NATO nations gathering in the North Atlantic in a pretty impressive showing of naval power.

When *Navy News* went to print, the LRG(N) task group had already clocked up many miles and carried out training in preparation for their operations.

Around 300 marines from 45 Commando tested their amphibious warfare skills, using a range of landing and raiding craft.

Albion was used as the headquarters for the exercises, deploying a variety of landing craft from her spacious dock full of commandos and their equipment to the coastline.

The training, known as Wader, is the cornerstone of amphibious operations and helps to prepare sailors and commandos for any eventuality.

It included capsize drills into freezing cold water, beach landings in the dead of night and the transporting of large vehicles to shore from landing craft.

As well as Royal Marines, personnel from 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery, 24 Commando Royal Engineers and Commando Logistics Regiment were also involved.



TOP: RFA Mounts Bay is attached to the Littoral Response Group. ABOVE: Marines on capsizing drills



ESCORT: HMS Lancaster sails alongside HMS Albion during Littoral Response Group (North) work



ABOVE: A view of HMS Albion from an American Sea Stallion helicopter



LEFT: A Sea Stallion lifts a Land Rover from HMS Albion's flight deck

This intensive training is treated as a mission rehearsal and provides personnel with the core skills and confidence to conduct an amphibious assault, even in the most arduous conditions.

Marine Medley of 45 Commando, said: "Although we experience ship-to-shore movement and landing craft operations in training, it is actually quite a complex procedure which needs refreshing."

"Given that we need to be ready to do this for real at any point, I'm glad we completed a Wader at the start of the deployment."

"The weather conditions were not fantastic, but it made for a realistic experience when we conduct capsize drills. I'm confident that I know exactly what to do if things don't go quite to plan."

The Commander Littoral Forces, positioned on Albion, works closely with Commander Amphibious Task Force, Capt Kelly, to bring the commando force together, maximising their ability to deliver their mission objectives.

Lieutenant Colonel Innes Catton, Commander Littoral Forces and Commanding Officer of 45 Commando, said: "Projecting a commando raiding force to a target ashore is a complex manoeuvre involving many moving parts, often in adverse weather conditions, and almost certainly at night."

"Practice makes perfect, which is very surely the case for difficult amphibious operations, so it also rehearses what to do when things go wrong and how to regain the initiative when challenges, such as capsizing, present themselves."

"This is not a just a training serial, to commandos, this is vital battle preparation for being able to fight and win."

Royal Marines were then heading on an 11-day tactical exercise before the Littoral Response Group moves into Northern Europe and the Baltic region for operations with NATO allies.

RBS15

Strike with confidence



Distance is no factor for our anti-ship RBS15 missile family. With superior operational range exceeding 200 km, the RBS15 provides true all-weather capability where and when you need it.



For more information, visit saab.com/rbs15-family or scan the QR code.



SAAB



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The White Ensign flutters in the breeze in Souda Bay as HMS Trent sails into Crete; Trent alongside in Algiers during their stop in Algeria; divers work beneath Trent to keep her in pristine underwater condition; Trent works with Tunisian forces, including patrol ship, Jomhouria, in the final image

BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE MED

HMS TRENT COMPLETES FIRST MONTH ON MED MISSION ... AND THERE'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT THE NEW GUY ON BOARD

HMS Trent has shown the first-rate versatility of the Royal Navy's newest patrol ships during her first month on operations in the Mediterranean.

The River-class Batch 2 warship has been on a diplomatic mission to Algeria, hosted Tunisian Special Forces and been on NATO security operations in southern European waters since she deployed at the end of March.

The patrol ship left Portsmouth on an enduring deployment with a focus on security in Southern Europe and Africa, joining her sister ships dotted around the world in forward positions – from the South Atlantic, the Caribbean and, in the near future, the regions east of the Suez Canal.

Already Trent – one of five new Batch 2 River-class patrol ships built for the Royal Navy for patrolling missions far beyond the UK's waters – has made her presence felt as she carries out missions from her base in Gibraltar.

During a port stop in Algiers, Trent hosted representatives from the Algerian military, the British Embassy in the capital and Commodore Andrew Stacey – the commander of Fleet Operational Sea Training.

There, the British contingent laid important roots in the North African country before heading off on Operation Sea Guardian, NATO's security mission to the Eastern Mediterranean.

Trent was there to help gather information about movements in international waters and to deter and counter terrorist activity, supporting Turkish frigate Orucreis and later Italian frigate Margottini during their patrols.

Between these periods, the ship acted as a platform for the Tunisian Special Forces – the Unité Spéciale – Garde Nationale – to use for boarding exercises.

Trent also worked with the Tunisian patrol ship, Jomhouria, on boarding operations and lifesaving/rescue exercises.

"It was exciting to see what our ship can be used for, and they invited us to train again with them," said Engineering Technician (Marine Engineering) BJ 'Sledge' Hammersley of the training with the Tunisians.

"Not only has Trent provided a vital Royal Navy presence within the Mediterranean but has also strengthened military, as well as diplomatic relationships.

"For myself as a humble stoker, I don't see much of the diplomatic processes. But I aid them in the preparation work and the work we as engineers do every day in keeping the ship running efficiently.

"Having been with HMS Trent from the early stages of build, generating her from just a shell of a ship into a fully operational warship, it was a tremendously proud moment seeing how much has been achieved in such a short time."

Once these operations were completed, Trent headed for Crete and a short logistics stop (and some takeaway pizzas for the crew) before resuming her missions.

Trent's time at sea has also allowed for essential training for her ship's company.

Seaman Specialist AB Devon Burgin has qualified to hold watches on the bridge as the quartermaster while others have had time to complete task books to qualify in watchkeeping.

"The ship's company is always conducting training with everything from machinery breakdown drills, sea boat drills to firefighting and damage-control exercises in order to qualify personnel and refine the skills of those already qualified," added ET Hammersley.

"The ship is also home to reservists Able Seamen Robyn McFadden and Karl Stephenson. They can conduct training and work with us as part of ship's company away from their day job as civilians."

Lieutenant Will Burrows, the ship's intelligence officer, has been running circuit sessions, keeping the crew in good shape, while Steward Dorcia De Freitas has negated that slightly by making banana fritters and pumpkin fritters using recipes from her mum in St Vincent.

"This is an area of the world that we hold close to us given the circumstances – our thoughts are with those who are going through difficult times there in the aftermath of the volcano," added ET Hammersley.

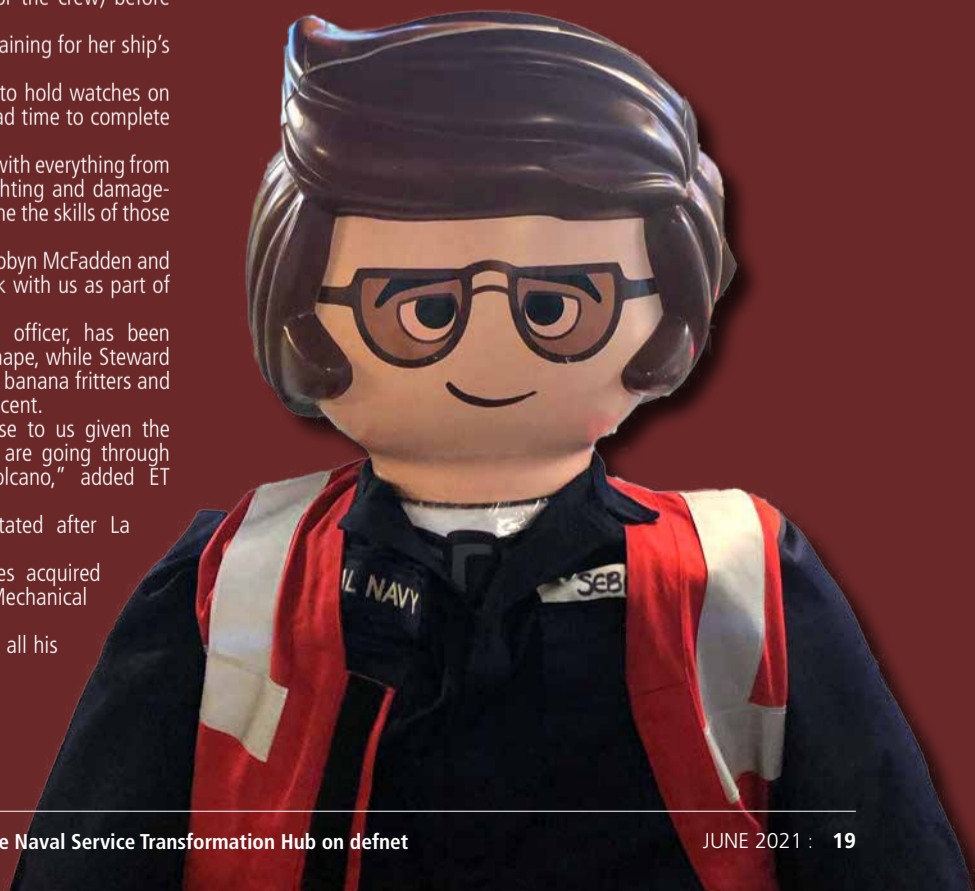
The Caribbean island has recently been devastated after La Soufriere volcano erupted.

At the start of her deployment, the Junior Rates acquired (legally, we must add) a new member of the Mechanical Engineering Department.

Engineering Technician Sebastian, pictured right in all his

glory, is a 4ft-tall Lego figure and is the new kid on the block. Seb can now be in various places around the ship after coming aboard in Gibraltar; he's already been in the Machinery Control Room and has got himself a pair of overalls to work in.

Trent's stop in Gibraltar also saw them host officials, the Governor of Gibraltar and the Chief Minister included, who were delighted to come on board and meet some of the ship's company, Sebastian included.



AND THEY'RE



Ships, squadrons and sailors have been preparing for months for the UK Carrier Strike Group deployment. They have said farewell to their loved ones and are ready for the global operations that lay ahead.

On a busy day for Portsmouth Naval Base, four of the seven Royal Navy ships that make up the UK Carrier Strike Group sailed from the city.

Elsewhere in the UK, ships departed Plymouth while helicopters and fighter jets left their bases to embark with the task group.

For the thousands of sailors and aircrew that make up the Carrier Strike Group, it will be the last time they see their families and friends for the next six months as they begin a deployment that will take them across the world (see pages 2-3 for details of the route).

The ships, including carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, destroyers HMS Diamond and HMS Defender, frigates HMS Richmond and HMS Kent, Royal Fleet Auxiliary support ships RFA Fort Victoria and RFA Tidespring and an Astute-class submarine, have spent the past few months ensuring they are ready for what lays ahead.

From intense training to maintenance programmes, it has been all hands on deck to get the task group ready.

For HMS Kent, the road to getting in to the best possible state to deploy has required hard work and dedication from the whole ship's team, especially in the context of the ever present pandemic.

From operations in the High North, to multiple anti-submarine warfare exercises and significant equipment updates during two extensive maintenance periods, tempo has remained high.

Commander Matthew Sykes, commanding officer, said: "The ship's team and support organisations ashore have worked incredibly hard to get us ready to deploy in support of the Carrier Strike Group."

"We deployed in the best possible material state we could hope to be. I am immensely proud of all that my sailors have achieved and I am confident we are ready for any challenges ahead."

Able Seaman (Above Water Tactical) Chris Parsons is currently on Type 23 frigate HMS Kent after qualifying as a warfare specialist in December. The 36-year-old said: "For

my first deployment I'm looking forward to being able to see different parts of the world and integrating with different people in the task group."

Able Seaman (Above Water Warfare) Georgia Vickers, 22, is on her first deployment in the Royal Navy. She said it was great to see families gathered in Portsmouth to wave them off.

"It makes me feel very proud to be part of the CSG deployment and I'm really looking forward to seeing some interesting places around the world," she added.

It is not just the ships that had to make sure they are fully functional for the deployment.

Wildcat helicopters from Yeovilton-based 815 Naval Air Squadron (main picture) were ready to join the frigates and destroyers the weekend they sailed, and will be supporting the warships' operations to protect the carrier from threats both above and below the waves.

Meanwhile, F-35 stealth jets of 617 Squadron, the Dambusters, and US Marine Corps VMFA-211, are now also embarked on the carrier in numbers not seen since 2010. While deployed, they will join Operation Shader in the fight against Daesh.

Father and son duo Jon and Matt Asbridge (pictured above right) are lucky enough to be deploying together – both on UK flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Covid-19 restrictions prevented Royal Navy Commander Jon from attending Matt's passing out parade from Britannia Royal Naval College. But now the two have found themselves serving together on the carrier.

Jon, 54, from Petersfield, is a logistics specialist who has been sent to the 65,000-tonne vessel as part of a team which ensures the ships, aircraft and people within the Carrier Strike Group are fighting fit ahead of their first operational deployment.

Onboard for the deployment will be Matt, 23, who is assigned as the Logistics Officer to 820 Naval Air Squadron, which operates seven Merlin helicopters.

Jon said: "Back in 2011 we had a few days where we



were able to bring our children onboard to the opportunity to travel. I have already been experience life at sea.

"Matt was 14 at the time, and enjoyed himself so much that it sealed his ambition to join the Royal Navy and become a logistics officer like his dad."

After leaving Britannia Royal Naval College in April 2020, Matt undertook sea training onboard the assault ship HMS Albion in the Mediterranean and the frigate HMS Lancaster in the Arctic Circle.

He added: "I joined the Royal Navy as a logistics officer because I love the variety in the role, plus

“ ”
The ship's team and support organisations ashore have worked incredibly hard to get us ready to deploy in support of the Carrier Strike Group.

Commander Matthew Sykes

(known as ASaC) and will fly up to a mile and

OFF



a half above the carrier group to look over the horizon for possible threats, while the sub hunters monitor activity beneath the waves.

They embarked HMS Queen Elizabeth before she sailed from Portsmouth and a few days after sailing, met a milestone – lifting off for sorties from the four-acre flight deck for the first time at sea.

Meanwhile support ship RFA Fort Victoria met up with HMS Queen Elizabeth to carry out a replenishment-at-sea (pictured below). She supplied the carrier with stores and ammunition in a moment that was unique for Fort Vic's commanding officer Captain Karl Woodfield.

He said: "The ship's company are buzzing after seeing HMS Queen Elizabeth up-close-and-personal for the first time.

"On a personal note, with this RAS I completed a unique career double. Having undertaken the first fuel RAS with HMS Queen Elizabeth while in command of RFA Tidespring in 2019, I have now completed the first ammunition and stores RAS too.

"This is a significant moment for both the

Royal Fleet Auxiliary and the Royal Navy as we proved the critical capability which enables the Carrier Strike Group to deploy globally."

Fort Victoria is joined by fellow RFA ship Tidespring in supplying the Carrier Strike Group with essential stores and fuel.

The gathering of the Carrier Strike group, including US Navy ship USS The Sullivans, came as they completed Exercise Strike Warrior – the final step to being declared operational (again, see pages 2-3).

Commodore Steve Moorhouse, Commander UK Carrier Strike Group, said: "The advent of the UK Carrier Strike Group represents a substantial new injection of fifth generation combat power into the defence of the Euro-Atlantic region.

"It was therefore fitting that our final and most demanding test prior to deployment involved so many of Britain's allies.

"Exercise Strike Warrior was an opportunity prove to ourselves, and to the world, that we have what it takes to act as cohesive and potent fighting force at sea, under the water, in the air and over the land."



Pictures: POPhot Jay Allen; POPhot Dave Jenkins; LPPhot Dan Rosenbaum; LPPhot Dan Shepherd; LPPhot Unaisi Luke

Invested in Training

We are looking forward to working with the Royal Navy to help transform its training and learning solutions. Our expertise and extensive experience will help provide them with tailored, digitally enabled, agile training that is fit for the future.



AUDACIOUS AND THE SPEARFISH

THE LATEST STEPS FOR THE UPGRADED HEAVY TORPEDO INVOLVED A TRIP TO THE CARIBBEAN WITH AN A-BOAT

THE world's most advanced torpedo has been declared ready for front-line action with the Royal Navy and undergone extensive deep-water trials with HMS Audacious in the Bahamas.

Five of the cutting-edge heavy torpedoes were successfully fired by Audacious – the fourth of the Royal Navy's Astute-class nuclear-powered submarines – during three days of trials on a special range.

The firings at AUTEK, the Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Centre on Andros Island, studied the performance of the weapon at its maximum operating depth and challenged the torpedo's homing abilities through the introduction of countermeasures.

The trials in the Bahamas were the latest in a string of crucial tests on the upgraded heavyweight torpedo since the decision was taken to enhance it in 2010.

The souped-up Spearfish – known as the Mod-1 – features a new warhead, new, safer fuel system, a smarter electronic 'brain' and a fibre-optic guidance link with its parent submarine to improve its accuracy and lethality.

These trials took place after Initial Operating Capability was achieved, meaning work can now begin turning existing Spearfish into the improved Mod-1 version for entry into operational service with all Royal Navy submarines by 2025.

Spearfish has been the Silent Service's weapon of choice for taking out foes on and below the waves for nearly 30 years, capable of crippling frigates, destroyers and large warships, as well as hostile submarines.

Commodore Bob Anstey RN, the senior officer responsible



PICTURES

Above, right: Engineers/crew preparing 'Mod-1' Spearfish torpedo for trial

Right column from top: Engineers on board HMS Audacious during firing trial; view from HMS Audacious; Sunset at Andros Island, Bahamas; engineers/crew preparing 'Mod-1' Spearfish torpedo for trial (on board Audacious)

Below: view from trials team boat as they approach HMS Audacious at the start of the trials

for the Programme and Deputy Director Submarines, said: "I am delighted to be able to formally declare that the Spearfish Programme's Mod-1 Spearfish Torpedo has reached Initial Operating Capability; the culmination of a great effort from across the whole Spearfish Team, including our partners across industry."

"Whilst we remain focused on the ultimate aim of providing the Full Spearfish Mod-1 Operational Capability, the team should be congratulated on achieving this important milestone; a critical step in the process of maintaining the effectiveness of the Royal Navy's submarine-launched heavyweight torpedo for years to come."

Even after initial capability is declared, important data still has to be collected on the torpedo's performance in a range of environments.

That is why Audacious and the Spearfish team headed to AUTEK, the principal proving ground of sub-surface warfare on the world's oceans.

The ranges off Andros Island – south-west of Nassau – are centred on a 6,000ft deep natural phenomenon, the Tongue of the Ocean, a huge deep-water bowl carved out of coral reef, which resembles the Rolling Stones' famous tongue logo.

To this natural wonder is added humanity's ingenuity: the tongue is crammed with sensors and hydrophones to record reams of data on how well a submarine or torpedo is performing.





FUTURE COMMANDO FORCE

EXPLAIN



IED

A NEW ERA FOR THE COMMANDOS . . .

THE last two years has seen the Royal Marines work on the way they will work on the battlefield of tomorrow, returning to raiders from the sea but with new kit and tactics that enables them to counter modern threats.

That modernisation programme was known as Future Commando Force, but now as the ideas and the kit behind it become a reality, the future is arriving.

Because of that, the 'Future' tag in Future Commando Force is being dropped, with the programme now simply called 'Commando Force'.

Let's get into what this all means....

WHAT IS THE COMMANDO FORCE?

The Commando Force programme is the modernisation and restructuring of 3 Commando Brigade – the operational formation of the Royal Marines – into a fighting force equipped and ready to identify and fight future threats.

The Commando Force reflects a new way in which the Royal Marines will be organised and will change the way they conduct operations around the world.

Building the Commando Force is also about putting cutting-edge technology in the hands of commandos – from drones and autonomous vehicles to new light and agile mobility equipment and weaponry – to give them the edge in battle. Primarily it is about specialist commando forces changing from the concentrated



FJORD FOCUS: Commandos will continue to have a focus on Arctic operations as part of the Littoral Strike concept

fighting force seen in more recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and returning them to expert missions as raiders from the sea. This echoes the original purpose of the commandos when they were first formed by Sir Winston Churchill for special operations in enemy occupied territory during World War 2.

This means a change in tactics and techniques. It includes putting commandos in small teams with the ability to carry out specific missions. They will operate against multiple targets, from the sea and across the shoreline while equipped with new technology and weapons. They will be able to conduct a range of missions from training with partners to countering opposition systems that can deny access to allied land, sea or air forces.

Commando Forces are built on world-class training of the Royal Marines. Creating exceptionally agile and adaptable individuals and teams, giving the UK government a highly-flexible force able to carry out a range of operations.

It does not draw away from other areas of responsibility for 3 Commando Brigade. Maritime operations, crisis response and the protection of the UK's nuclear deterrent – but reworks the more conventional warfare offering and structures it to take on emerging threats, deploying closer to the action and being quicker to respond.

WHAT IS LITTORAL STRIKE?

Littoral Strike is the name given to the Royal Navy's future amphibious warfare capability, at the heart of which will be Commando Forces.

The Royal Navy will establish Littoral Response Groups (LRGs), which are built around specialist shipping that support Commando Forces who will be deployed to regions of the world where the UK has national interests so they can react quicker to global events.

The LRGs will provide strategic to tactical effect, by being present in key regions and by being equipped with a range of capabilities able to respond to events and crises.

The plan is to create two LRGs – North and South. They can be moved to different parts of the world but LRG North is mainly focused on west and north of the Suez Canal and LRG South on regions to the east and south.

The two LRGs will be capable of joining together to form a larger Littoral Strike Group when needed for warfighting, joint or coalition operations to meet UK Government and coalition partnership expectations.

In routine operations, LRGs will provide a reassuring presence to allies and a deterrent to potential adversaries. They will carry out a range of operations, from maritime security missions to supporting Commando Forces in infiltrating coastlines to locate and destroy an adversary's defensive systems to give access to larger allied forces.

The Strike/Response groups can also join the UK's Carrier Strike Group to add yet further to an already potent force, giving the option to land commandos ashore and destroy defences that can restrict the ability of aircraft or weapons to operate effectively.



ALB BE THERE FOR YOU: Assault ship HMS Albion is currently leading the first Littoral Response Group (North) deployment

STRIKE TEAMS

Commando 'Strike Teams' will be responsible for delivering operations from the Littoral Response Groups' ships.

The LRG responsible for operations east of the Suez Canal will have Strike Teams drawn from 40 Commando, while the LRG in the European and North Atlantic Area of operations will have teams drawn from 45 Commando.

Each of these commando units will train and rotate elements to provide dedicated Strike Teams persistently forward deployed, to face specific and emerging threats.

The principal building block of the Strike Teams will be groups of 12 commandos largely from the Royal Marines but with specialists from other services too. They will be trained in a range of skills, including reconnaissance, demolition, communications, operation of drones and autonomous vehicles. These will enhance the lethality and range of effects that the commando teams can bring to bear on the opposition or in support of partners and allies.

These teams will be capable of hitting coastlines from range and be able to conduct raids without resupply while identifying and destroying targets. They will be able to work closely with Special Operations Forces from the UK and NATO.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ROYAL MARINES

Up until now the Royal Marines have been responsible for delivering the Lead Commando Group (LCG). This very high readiness formation of up to 1,800 men and women, protected vehicles, boats and craft, helicopters and logistical support was ready to deploy from the UK around the world at short notice. With the Commando Force concept the Royal Marines has undertaken a radical rethink and transformation to meet future threats.

The Commando Force and Littoral Strike programmes mean that Royal Marines will be deployed overseas persistently, rather than held at high-readiness in the UK.

Many of 3 Commando Brigade's units will keep their current responsibilities, while supporting Littoral Strike operations when needed.

42 Commando will continue as maritime operations specialists and will deploy on Royal Navy ships to carry out board and search, counter piracy and terrorism, force protection and personnel recovery.



KIT: Commandos will have access to new kit, like the CanAm 6x6 above

43 Commando Fleet Protection Group will maintain their responsibility as guardians of the nuclear deterrent at Clyde Naval Base.

30 Commando Information Exploitation Group will continue to focus on reconnaissance, information operations and surveillance activity aided by new technology and fuse information to identify, deliver and support operations.

Strike Teams will also be supported by boat specialists from 47 Commando and Army Commando Gunners and Engineers, and by commando logisticians. The LRGs and LSGs are all arms, more than just the Strike Teams and capable of operating across the spectrum of operations.

These changes are already underway and will be refined over the next ten years,



RAIDERS FROM THE SEA: The Commando Force programme returns commandos to their roots as raiders from the sea

with capabilities, from commando combat equipment, new vehicles and boats arriving over time.

WHY IS THIS AN IMPORTANT CHANGE?

The sort of threats that now exist across the globe means Commando Force and Littoral Strike deliver important means for UK Defence to pre-empt, respond and compete.

The creation of low-cost but sophisticated weapons that can attack ships, boats and aircraft at ever increasing range means that adversaries may prevent UK presence in contested regions, denying economic activity, the free movement of our forces and support to our regional and international partners.

The need is for armed forces that are actively engaged in forward positions, working with partners and competing with potential adversaries, but not necessarily in armed conflict.

That is why we will base Littoral Response Groups, equipped with the latest tech and military kit, in areas key to UK interests around the globe so they can identify, pre-empt and where necessary, react more quickly when needed. The smaller, more agile, rapidly-deployable Teams that support these Groups will be able to offer a greater range of effects to achieve the mission.

The Commando Force and Littoral Strike capability will see Royal Marines conduct roles traditionally carried out by Special Forces to deliver specialist operations, pre-empting and deterring sub-threshold activity and counter state threats. The Royal Marines contribute to 47% of UK Special Forces personnel, from an organisation that is a mere 4.5% of the UK's Armed Forces, so the quality required for this sensitive work is already there.

The Commando Force and Littoral Strike strengthens the Royal Marines 'offer', modernising and restructuring, to maintain its valuable contribution to UK Defence, its global ambitions and to NATO partners.

China Fleet Country Club

★★★★

YOUR CLUB



As a serving Royal Navy, Royal Marine, RFA or Reservist, you & your immediate family are automatic members of the China Fleet Country Club.

With you in mind we have great benefits for you to enjoy.
Register for FREE and receive your discounts.

- Fixed room rate of £90 per night (Book direct – promo code RNRM)
- £15 golf green fees
- Free pay as you play membership
- Discounted health club monthly membership
- Discounted golf membership
- Discount on the driving range
- 15% discount on food & drink
- Free room hire on events
- 10% discount on weddings
- 15% discount on beauty treatments
- 15% discount on Woodland Adventure Golf
- Discount on Woodland Fairy Trail
- 10% discount on spa days
- 10% discount on spa breaks
- 10% discount on golf breaks

JOIN NOW!



Aqua Spa is a bookable facility



Woodland Adventure Golf



Prices valid until 31st May 2022. T&Cs apply.

FOOD HYGIENE RATING



Call 01752 848668

www.china-fleet.co.uk



I'd do it all again

RFA Chief Officer retires after 40 years



● RFA Argus leaves Sierra Leone after her ship's company helped tackle Ebola in West Africa

A SAILOR who has fought Saddam Hussein and the Ebola virus and helped peacekeeping efforts in Africa is finally stepping ashore after 40 years' service.

Chief Officer David Gatenby retires from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary – which operates the ships supporting Royal Navy warships around the globe – and says he would gladly do it all again if he could.

David, who was raised in Currie, near Edinburgh, trained in catering and hotel management at the city's Telford College and worked for various hotels before opting for a life on the ocean waves.

Following a period of intensive training, in 1982 a 22-year-old Dave embarked on his first ship, small tanker RFA Gold Rover.

"Following in the footsteps of dad Terry and brother Chris, I joined a service that I had been involved with as a small child – visiting ships that dad was serving on," he said.

"I travelled all the way from Edinburgh to Portland, Dorset by numerous trains to find my ship had not yet arrived. My first night was spent on another RFA vessel, RFA Engadine, until my ship arrived the next day.

"I remember my first telling off, asking the captain to make a 'Tannoy' and being strongly rebuked as 'we use pipes on ships'... there was a whole new language to quickly learn.

"The Falklands conflict began, and my ship headed to the Gulf to cover the duties of Royal Navy warships; all other



● From left, Chief Officer David Gatenby; David pictured as Senior Purser aboard RFA Sir Galahad; David and his brother Chris during the first Gulf War

ships went South. A ten-month trip ensued until our return to the UK."

Dave, who now lives in Broxburn, continued: "Progressing through the ranks, I worked on all classes of RFA vessels as a 'baby assistant purser' until being promoted to purser and suddenly being 'in charge' – a daunting thought! Reaching Senior Purser (Chief Officer Logistics – RFA rank) followed and my final seagoing trip was on RFA Argus, a ship I stood by when she was being converted for the RFA at Harland & Wolff, Belfast.

"I got to travel the world and meet a whole host of interesting people along

the way. "In 1991 I sailed off to Gulf War 1, Operation Granby, onboard RFA Sir Galahad at the same time as my brother and various media outlets took a lot of interest in the 'The Brothers in Arms' perspective as we went off to war. Thankfully we both returned home unharmed."

In 1995, Dave was serving aboard RFA Sir Galahad's 1995 supporting a United Nations mission to stabilise Angola following many years of civil war.

"This was the first time the Royal Fleet Auxiliary was officially recognised

as being part of a UN peacekeeping force," Dave explains.

"Sir Galahad was awarded the Wilkinson's Sword of Peace and I received a Queens Commendation for Valuable Service for pioneering logistical support to the operation."

Two decades later he was dispatched to West Africa again, this time aboard RFA Argus, sent as part of UK efforts to successfully combat Ebola in Sierra Leone.

"I was proud to have played a part in assisting the fight against the virus," says Dave.

"I have also worked in a number

of shore postings – I was appointed RFA media/public relations officer and worked in RFA Headquarters in London before it moved to Portsmouth Naval Base.

"I was the first RFA training officer in HMS Raleigh and have twice served as the RFA's liaison officer with the trade union Nautilus, representing many members in their time of need.

"It is hard to summarise just under 40 years at sea, but I have met and worked with some amazing people, assisted in some very difficult situations and faced a lot of challenges, but would certainly do it all again."

Great handle on training

TWO men from the Caribbean country of St Vincent and the Grenadines were among 23 Royal Navy sailors who completed their training as aircraft handlers.

They were part of a class of new recruits learning emergency firefighting skills and how to operate on flight decks at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose.

Able Rates Taye Soley and Enrico Barker joined fellow sailors from across the UK for a low-key and socially-distanced ceremony – which nevertheless marked a significant milestone in their naval careers as they now prepare to join frontline operations.

Naval Airman Soley, a former student of St Vincent Community College, was motivated to become an aircraft handler to avoid the prospect of a boring desk job. Instead, the 22-year-old will soon find himself working a ship's flight deck.

He said: "I was given the offer of going into logistics, but decided becoming an aircraft handler suited me because of my love of aircraft and escaping the desk-job role. I really want the chance to travel and learn some new line-long skills. My colleagues helped me through my training, especially during the study sessions. It's been rewarding but hard work."

He will join 1700 Naval Air Squadron and is due to be posted to the support ship RFA Argus.

Also from St Vincent is Naval Airman Barker, a former student of Bishop's College in Kingstown, the island's capital. The 30-year-old said: "I joined because I wanted a better career and have a better education. I have seen some of my family members excel in life with the navy.

"I found the firefighting training a challenge and we had a lot of revision and study to do on the course. I most enjoyed doing the aircraft ground movements. I am pleased now to have completed the course, gained a new skills set and got some practical hands-on experience – as well as having worked with a close group of friends."

He first draft will be providing emergency firefighting cover at the airfield at Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton.

Lieutenant Commander Scott Harding, the commanding officer of the Royal Naval School of Flight Deck Operations, said: "I'd like to offer my congratulations to all those students who have completed their training to become qualified aircraft handlers. They have had to adapt and work hard to complete their training."

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.

Naval Children's Charity,
311 Twyford Avenue, Stamshaw,
Portsmouth, PO2 8RN

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

Still time to join the banger rally

THERE'S still time to join the 70 teams representing the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force in the veterans' banger rally.

Each car must have at least one veteran or serving member of the armed forces and must provide their own vehicle which should cost less than £500.

Points are awarded to teams for driving the oldest car, having a lower engine size or driving a three wheeler, as well as for rally challenges during the 1,500-mile drive around the UK.

The fundraising event starts on September 6 2 with money going to three main military charities – SSAFA, the Royal British Legion and the Captain Tom Foundation.

John McGowan, rally organiser and naval veteran explained: "We've tried to make the fundraising really simple, because this rally is about many things: camaraderie, fun and fundraising. So just by entering the rally, our teams are helping our big three charities because a part of their fee is donated straight to them."

The rally starts on September 7 with teams congregating at the National Armed Forces Arboretum, Staffordshire.

For more information visit veteransbangerrally.co.uk or email the organiser at veteransbangerrally21@gmail.com



● Above ABs Shantal Quammie and Daniel Adjabeng at the collection point in RNAS Yeovilton; Below, HMS Medway's Red Crew runners show off their tally at HMS Nelson in Portsmouth



Sailors rally round to help volcano-hit island

SAILORS across the Navy have rallied round to help thousands of Caribbean islanders whose lives have been thrown into turmoil by a volcano.

An estimated 20,000 people in St Vincent – the largest island in the small Commonwealth state of St Vincent and the Grenadines – have been displaced by the unexpected and violent eruptions of La Soufrière.

Outside the Caribbean, the disaster has hit the RN especially hard as more than 500 serving personnel hail from the island chain.

They watched the alarming footage of the first major eruption in more than 40 years which dumped a thick layer of ash over homes and public buildings and led to widespread evacuation of people to temporary camps – where they require the basics of life.

Naval charities in the Portsmouth area got involved with collections almost immediately.

They were joined by personnel from RNAS Yeovilton in Somerset, the crew of patrol ship HMS Medway and frigate HMS Lancaster.

"My heart is saddened, my eyes are weary, my peace is disturbed. It looks like a scene from a movie – seeing my beautiful island in ruins and my people displaced is beyond my wildest dreams," said Able Seaman Shantal Quammie, a writer with 815 Naval Air Squadron.

"I can recall stories my father shared with me from his horrifying experience during the 1979 volcanic eruption, to behold another is unfolding right before us."

She and fellow Vincentians have been collecting the fundamentals of life to send to their homeland: bedding, shelter, tinned food, basic medical supplies and painkillers, clothing, batteries and torches, clothing (especially for children). A collection point has been set up outside the air station's chaplaincy.

The sailors of HMS Medway are split

between Mayport, Florida (where the vessel's undergoing maintenance) and the offwatch 'Red crew' (in HMS Nelson).

They each set themselves the target of covering 166 miles (the square mileage of the entire island chain) by rowing, running, walking and cycling either in Portsmouth or Mayport Naval Bases.

The team in Portsmouth covered 49.35 miles collectively before exhaustion took hold while in Florida – spurred on by Vincentians Chef Bernard Gloster and Marine Engineer Shaquille Barbour whose families are dealing with the fallout of the eruptions – the 40-strong ship's company knocked out 250.3 miles.

Despite the broiling Florida heat, Able Seaman Cavan Robinson and Engineering Technician Shane 'Stella' McCartney ran 15 miles each in 2 hours 20 minutes.

Medway's efforts raised £1,860, which will be distributed among families being assisted by two emergency shelters on St Vincent: Fair Hall Primary School and Bethel Secondary School.

HMS Lancaster chipped in with £1,595 by rallying friends and family. Vincentian Petty Officer Astha 'Ash' McMillan called on the frigate's family to donate on behalf of local charity, Country Meets Town, which is working alongside the authorities to provide essential support for people in public and private shelters.

Beyond encouraging friends to dig into their pockets, the senior rating is in training for the Three Peaks Challenge (conquering the highest mountains in England, Scotland and Wales) for the same cause this summer.

"I really wanted to support my fellow Vincentians in the Northern Zone through this difficult time and am hugely grateful for every donation," he said.

Ramping up training

OFFICER Cadets from Britannia Royal Naval College have returned from their Initial Sea Time in various Royal Navy warships, marking the final stages of their training.

The OCs were hosted in the carriers HMS Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales (pictured below), as well as HMS Lancaster, Dragon and Tamar.

They spent between four to five weeks on board, rotating through the various departments and branches; learning from ratings and officers alike. A 'round-robin' approach was used where syndicates were hosted by each department.

OCs shadowed the Weapon Engineers, learning about the numerous systems on board and taking part in an 'ammunition ship' serial.

With the Marine Engineers OCs discussed propulsion and electrical generation, and even got involved with hands-on diesel generator maintenance.

The logistics departments educated the OCs about the medical, stores and catering branches, where they assisted with casualty extraction training, storing ship and food preparation.

The OCs also had the opportunity to spend time on an operational bridge with the warfare department, gaining an insight into the roles of the officer of the watch, navigator and quarter master during standard seagoing operation and man overboard exercises.

The embarked aircraft, such as a Wildcat aboard Lancaster, enabled OCs to witness flying operations and learn the secondary roles of the pilot and observers on board.



In addition to this, OCs spent time with the executive branch, witnessing the behind-the-scenes contributions that keep the ship running efficiently.

OC Joshua Green of Hawke Division, said: "Initial Sea Time provided us with valuable experience and impressions of the 'real' Royal Navy."

"The day-to-day running of an operational warship is no simple feat; all members of the ship's company, from the most junior Able Rate to the Captain have a key role to play."

The largest contingent of OCs was aboard HMS Prince of Wales, and OC Jack Clark, of Howe Division, said: "One thing that strikes you from the offset is the sheer scale of the QE-class carriers; they not only dwarf the other warships berthed in HMNB Portsmouth, but also the dockyard itself."

"Talking to the ratings in the ship's company gave some valuable insights into how to be more effective leaders in the fleet for the future," said OC Stephen White, of St Vincent Division.

OC Jake Lasham of Howe Division, added: "The OCs learned valuable lessons onboard HMS Dragon which they can build upon later in their careers."

Eleven OCs in HMS Dragon experienced life during Operational Sea Training (OST).

The OCs took part in four 'Thursday Wars' during their time onboard, and they particularly enjoyed the damage control exercises and shadowing key personnel during action stations.

OC Lasham continued: "One of the most memorable moments was observing the 4.5 gun and Phalanx GUNEX, where upper deck access was granted to them for some firing serials".

The OCs also commented on how they embraced physical training opportunities while onboard.

OC Clark said: "Phys on the flight deck was a new challenge to undertake – with the ski-jump for F-35s becoming the new 'cardiac hill' – giving us an incredible view across HMS Queen Elizabeth's flight deck while in the middle of sprints."

A highlight for Hawke Division was competing in the HMS Lancaster inter-mess bucketball which – much to ship's company's dismay – they won!

The OCs returned to BRNC to prepare for their final leadership exercise with their pass-out parade on the horizon.

Words: Lt Simon Williams



Comms check ahead of key NATO mission

SAILORS in Portsmouth have paved the way for the Royal Navy to take charge of NATO's most important naval force next year.

The Royal Navy will lead the naval element of the Alliance's Readiness Force – a combined multinational air, sea and land force which is at very short notice to respond to major global events if required.

Britain takes charge of the naval element of the NATO

Response Force every seven years – but preparations for command begin many months earlier to allow a seamless handover when 2022 arrives.

Those preparations include virtual and live exercises of which Steadfast Cobalt is the test of communications between the partner nations and their many different national and international systems.

Beginning in mid-March and concluding in May, it was NATO's largest collective workout for Communications Information Systems.

It involved some 6,000 tests to ensure data, intelligence, live feeds, email and signal traffic can be shared quickly and securely between the 22 participating units and nations – all to the satisfaction of the NATO's senior commanders as well as the UK Carrier Strike Force staff who will be directing the naval force from on board HMS Prince of Wales.

"Having verified the interoperability of our key information services

with NATO Response Force Units and headquarters, we will have a further live exercise in September, Exercise Dynamic Mariner which will prepare our Portsmouth-based staff for the upcoming year-long mission as the High Readiness Force Maritime within the wider force," said Lieutenant John Hobson.

The exercise is the first of a series of preparation activities and aims to prepare deployable communications information assets in support of NATO Response Force missions worldwide.



Formidable trial for air defences

THREE Royal Navy warships joined NATO allies in the world's largest test of naval air and missile defences.

Played out off Scotland's Outer Hebrides and Norway's Arctic coast, the three-week-long Formidable Shield 2021, which began as this edition of *Navy News* printed, tested missile systems, sensors, software – and the hundreds of men and women operating them as they demonstrate their ability to deal with the latest aerial threats.

Live missile launches to intercept drones were among the key 'serials' as NATO allies demonstrated individual and collective ability to track, identify and ultimately destroy incoming threats in the skies, including testing ballistic missile defence.

HMS Dragon led the Royal Navy's participation as a dedicated air defence destroyer designed to shield a task group with her Sea Viper missile system.

She was joined by frigates HMS Lancaster and Argyll, whose Sea Ceptor systems also provide shorter range defence against incoming missiles and aircraft.

Both systems were tested against supersonic high-diving targets plummeting towards the task group at speeds in excess of 12,000mph – 16 times the speed of sound – as well as sea-skimming drones simulating missiles, weaving at high sub-sonic speeds in a bid to outfox the radars tracking them.

The highlight for the Royal Navy was a live firing of Dragon's Sea Viper missiles intercepting a Firejet target drone, racing over the Atlantic at more than 400mph but just 20ft above the waves.

Other missiles in the Sea Viper family were due to be fired by fellow participants, alongside US Sea Sparrow and Standard Missiles 2, against a mix of sub and supersonic drone targets.

In addition to testing the weapon systems and sensors, the British ships are also due to test cutting-edge software which is designed to alleviate the burden on the team in the operations room who pore over the display screens constantly looking out for potential threats.

Ten NATO nations – Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the UK and USA – have thrown their hats in the ring, committing ships, aircraft, ground assets, and staff.

Led by the US Navy's Sixth Fleet and using Spanish frigate ESPS Cristóbal Colón as the flagship, in its 2021 iteration – Formidable Shield is staged every two years – the exercise involved 15 ships, more than ten aircraft and in excess of 3,000 personnel.

The exercise is intended to assure allies, deter adversaries, and demonstrate the commitment of NATO to collective defence.

"Delivering integrated air and missile defence, and specifically ballistic missile defence, is one of STRIKFORNATO's primary roles on behalf of the Alliance," said Rear Admiral James Morley, the British Deputy Commander of STRIKFORNATO.

"Formidable Shield 21 is an important opportunity to further develop fighting capability and domain integration against a challenging set of realistic targets – a demonstration of our resolve to counter the threat."



RN personnel at new command face stern test

BRITAIN'S most senior sailor visited NATO's newest operational headquarters ahead of its first major test.

Joint Force Command Norfolk – based in Virginia – was set up in 2018 to acknowledge the re-emergence of the Atlantic as a key region for the alliance.

It's the task of the international headquarters to oversee NATO's efforts across the North Atlantic, ensuring the strategic lines of communication – from seabed to space – which are central to our daily lives and would be critical to the reinforcement of mainland Europe in an escalating crisis.

Later this month it will face its first large-scale test, Exercise Steadfast Defender, a massive workout for NATO forces by land, sea and air from the Atlantic to Romania, involving upwards of 10,000 military personnel and assets including HMS Queen Elizabeth and her carrier strike group.

HQ personnel in Norfolk, Virginia – a diverse mix of military and civilians from 17 Allied nations – are undergoing an intense period of battle staff training, which First Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin witnessed on his visit to the new command.

Commanded by US Vice Admiral Andrew Lewis – also in charge of the US Navy's Second Fleet – with the Royal Navy's Rear Admiral Andrew Betton as his deputy, JFC Norfolk is rapidly approaching Full Operational Capability.

There's a strong Royal Navy presence across all the command's directorates.

"The unique structure of this headquarters based on a Memorandum of Understanding means that we have to do things differently," said Commander Steve Holloway.

"It can be hard work, but it is hugely rewarding to be part of a young command during the UK's re-stated commitment to NATO and at a time of new direction for the organisation."

Helping the Norfolk team prepare for their mission were experts from other NATO headquarters, especially Joint Forces Command Naples.

"This has been the first opportunity to travel since Covid restrictions were put in place. It has been extremely rewarding to be part of the supported Battle Staff Training here in JFC Norfolk and understand the mission of NATO's newest operational command," said Lieutenant Commander Paul Clarke, exercise controller from JFC Naples.

With the Integrated Review placing great emphasis on both the UK's role in NATO and the importance of our transatlantic relationship with the US, JFC Norfolk embodies both these defence priorities.

On a personal level, NATO assignments present rich opportunities across the Service, at all career stages, offering a fantastic stepping stone for junior rates and junior officers to understand how the Alliance delivers collective deterrence and defence.



● The First Sea Lord with the senior Royal Navy officer at JFC Norfolk in Virginia, Rear Admiral Andrew Betton and (below) chatting with RN personnel in the new Atlantic command HQ
Pictures: US Navy

For our more senior leaders, a role in NATO presents rewarding challenges in showcasing UK's commitment to the Alliance.

There are nearly 90 Royal Navy personnel in and around Norfolk area – which is the US Navy's principal Atlantic base as well as home to the NATO headquarters.

"The expertise and professionalism of Royal Navy personnel, alongside colleagues from across the Alliance is invaluable to bridge the gaps in understanding the complex and dynamic challenges that we face in the North Atlantic and High North," said Rear Admiral Betton.

The admiral – who previously commanded the UK Carrier Strike Group – believes Steadfast Defender, which began at the end of May, will demonstrate what NATO, its new command structure and the Queen Elizabeth task group with its fifth-generation F-35 jets and cutting-edge tech/vessels can do to secure the critical transatlantic link.

"Steadfast Defender is a golden opportunity to demonstrate the Alliance's capability to coordinate and deliver transatlantic reinforcement in support of the European theatre," Rear Admiral Betton added.

"Enabled by JFC Norfolk's flexibility at the operational level, working closely with US Second Fleet as our Maritime Component Commander, the contribution of the HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier Strike Group is a fabulous portrayal of the UK's commitment to NATO."

Admiral Radakin saw the "great work" being carried out by the team at Norfolk after visiting Washington Navy Yard to confer with his US Navy counterpart Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Mike Gilday about not merely strengthening RN-US Navy maritime security efforts, but expanding them.

"Our alliance with the UK is an anchor of peace and stability



● A full honours ceremony for the First Sea Lord in the impressive surroundings of Washington Navy Yard: (l-r) US Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Karl Schultz, US Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Mike Gilday, First Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin and USMC Assistant Commandant General Gary Thomas

across the globe," Admiral Gilday stressed.

"Underpinned by our shared history and commitment to a free and open maritime commons, our two navies will continue to sail together far into the future."

Admiral Radakin added: "The links between our two nations are deep, and historic, but they aren't just for the history books: they

endure, and they develop.

"We enjoy close working relationships in the Middle East, where our headquarters are collocated; in the Caribbean we have had United States Coast Guard law enforcement detachments aboard our ships for many years, and we have operated for decades in tandem in the Atlantic."



Pictures: LPhoto Will Haigh and Keith Woodland

From here...

THE first men and women to be transformed from civilians to sailors at HMS Collingwood in more than half a century have completed their training.

Eleven recruits finished three months of training at the Fareham establishment, passing out as able seamen, ready to begin their professional instruction as engineers, warfare specialists and nurses in the Royal Navy.

They are the first of 500 raw recruits to be trained at Collingwood this year – 1,000 in all by the end of 2022 – as part of a wider effort to swell the Royal Navy's numbers by 3,000 to meet the global missions expected of it under the Defence Review.

With its traditional civvy-to-sailor training base of HMS

Raleigh already at increased, maximum capacity, the Navy looked to Collingwood – traditionally the home of warfare and weapon engineering training – to take on the task for two years.

It's a role the Fareham base performed during World War 2 and, on a much smaller scale, into the 1960s.

Trainees received the same instruction as their counterparts at Raleigh in Torpoint, with some activities 'tweaked' to take into account the different location: outdoor activities on Salisbury Plain, rather than Dartmoor, and Portsmouth Harbour rather than the Tamar for a basic seafaring experience.

Their training reached its climax at Browdown Camp near Gosport where they were expected to demonstrate the

military and leadership skills they had developed since walking through the gates of Collingwood back in January.

Having come through that test, the recruits of Perkins Division – named after the first black commissioned officer, Captain John Perkins, an 18th Century contemporary of Admiral Nelson – paraded for Commodore Simon Huntington, the Royal Navy's Naval Assistant, alongside 79 other trainees still undergoing their conversion from civilians, plus warfare and weapons engineering ratings who had completed their specialist Phase 2/3 training.

The careers the 11 passing-out sailors will move on to are as varied as their ages and backgrounds. At 30 Jasmine Savage, from Canterbury, was among the older recruits.

'...They really are friends of Orkney...'

THE people of Orkney are to grant naval divers the islands' highest civic honour.

Civic leaders voted unanimously in favour of bestowing the Freedom of Orkney on Faslane-based Northern Diving Group thanks to its enduring efforts to deal with ordnance found in its waters or on its shores.

Beyond dealing with dangerous ordnance washed up or trawled by fishermen, the Faslane-based team is perhaps best known for its work with the wreck of HMS Royal Oak in Scapa Flow.

Divers regularly inspect the wreck to check on any state of decomposition, but they also pay their respects to the 833 sailors killed by replacing the White Ensign on the upturned hull of the battleship.

The group was formed in 1995, but its association with the islands go back at least to 1982 when, in a previous incarnation, its team recovered Royal Oak's bell.

The 39-strong team of divers is responsible for a vast length of coastline – all of Scotland, as

well as Northern England and Northern Ireland (more than 12,000 miles of shore) and deals with around a dozen call-outs every month.

"I am very aware that this type of award is not often issued and reserved for individuals or organisations with particularly close links with Orkney," said a delighted Lieutenant Commander Mark Shaw, the group's commanding officer. "To be only the 12th recipient of the Freedom of Orkney is a distinct privilege and both myself and the team at NDG are very much looking forward to receiving the freedom."

Orkney Council Convener Harvey Johnston said that the divers had become an indispensable part of life in the islands and in particular of keeping the memory of the Royal Oak tragedy alive.

"That is on top of their service to our citizens in safely removing ordnance which every so often is found by members of the public," he added.

"They really are friends of Orkney and I am certain they will carry this honour proudly."

Pitch perfect timing

FOOTBALL is back on the cards at the NSF in Bahrain... just in time for high summer.

And not just the beautiful game, but other ball games, as the MUGA (there has to be an acronym in the military, even for a pitch...) was recommissioned.

The Multi-Use Games Area has been out of bounds for eight months after the previous pitch was worn out by heavy use by the 200-plus personnel at the facility, which serves the RN headquarters in the Middle East, UKMCC, and units supporting Gulf-based warships.

With lockdown, opportunities to socialise and relax together have been severely limited at the Mina Salman base

Three Naval charities/funds – the RNRMC, Sports Lottery and Rebalancing Lives initiative – joined forces to provide £26,000 to relay the artificial turf – plus another £14k to maintain it for the next three years.

The refurbished outdoor facilities complement the extensive gym suite in the central NSF communal building.

To mark the occasion, a five-a-side football tournament was held with 11 teams competing

under the unrelenting Gulf sun (temperatures in early-May are already in the high 30s Celsius).

The footballers of HMS Chiddingfold proved they had the greatest skill and stamina, building on their gold-silver-bronze success in the recent UKMCC Strongest Person contest.

UKMCC Commander Commodore Ed Ahlgren performed the opening 'ceremony' and welcomed the return of outdoor sport for the 2,000 or so military personnel – from all three Services, but predominantly RN – who pass through the base every year.

"This excellent facility will do much for those of us deployed in the Gulf. I have no doubt that this will make a huge difference to the quality of life of our Navy, Army and RAF personnel deployed in Bahrain," he said.

"Maintaining our physical and mental health, whilst on operations, is a key enabler to maintaining our operational posture."

Regular five-a-side and volleyball leagues have now been reintroduced by NSF club swinger PO(PTI) Eri Davey.

Not a data day job

TWO Royal Navy officers have been recognised for their efforts to make the harbour at Bermuda safer.

Lieutenants Gary Hughes and Robert Hutchinson helped colleagues in the UK accurately map heavily-used waters at the gateway to the island.

Heritage Wharf is part of the historic Royal Naval Dockyard, but today serves as one of the key berths for cruise liners calling at Bermuda.

The UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton, which is responsible for producing the highly-accurate charts by which Royal Navy warships and merchant vessels safely navigate the oceans, wanted updated information about the waters around the wharf.

With no survey ship in the area, the UKHO turned to HMS Medway, beginning her long-term deployment to the Caribbean.

Even though the ship has no dedicated hydrographic/survey specialists embarked, the two officers worked against the clock – the patrol ship had other ports to call on – with shipmates to gather the information needed by Taunton.

Using a combination of a hand-held echo sounder, laser range finder, a sextant and a portable GPS dangle (for corroboration), the team were able to produce around 110 individual soundings extending up to 200 yards around Heritage Wharf in previously-

unsurveyed waters.

The data obtained was used for a comprehensive report, which was finalised and checked by Lt Hutchinson and sent to the UKHO... whose experts updated electronic charts for the harbour.

It's created a larger area of safe manoeuvring for visiting cruise liners and generally made navigation in the approaches to and inside the harbour safer.

As a result the two lieutenants share the Shadwell Testimonial Prize, presented to a non-survey officer no higher in rank than lieutenant commander who has

produced the best survey work for the team at Taunton in the eyes of the Hydrographer of the Navy, Captain Derek Rae.

Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd presented the award to the duo; Lt Hughes is now navigator of HMS Duncan, while Lt Hutchinson has taken charge of HMS Example.

"The team worked hard and efficiently to get this work done, and it was very windy so bravo to Leading Seaman Oliver Clarke for maintaining the boat on a steady bearing," Lt Hughes said.

"This kind of work isn't required as often by a general service warfare officer, although it is still trained by FOST and is an integral skill to retain.

"This is especially prudent for Medway's mission during the hurricane season – it's quite likely small-scale surveys like this could be needed to provide support to UK overseas territories easier after a hurricane has passed through and potentially changed the seabed.

"In this case we were able to improve safety for the fellow mariner and other RN ships visiting Bermuda, but in other circumstances it could be vital to mission success."

of the Maritime Information Dashboard supporting defence's response to the pandemic.

This web-based capability supported operational planners, including Commander Strike Force, by providing global open-source geospatial information in a single, managed dashboard.

All of which makes him a winner of the Defence Surveyors' Association annual prize, presented at Taunton by Rear Admiral Rhett Hatcher, UKHO's Director Data Acquisition.

The prize is open to all military personnel, civil servants and other civilians who, in the opinion of the association's council, have made a significant contribution to the advancement of technology or management associated with the targeting, locating, environmental support, mapping and the acquisition and management of geospatial data.

Rear Admiral Hatcher said the winner had done "great work in ensuring the geospatial data from the UKHO – so vital to the awareness and decision-making across the breadth of Royal Navy and Defence operations – gets to those that need it, when they need it."



to maturity

"Training has been challenging at times but it's meant to be. I have been able to grow as a person while doing it. I think I have taken to it like a duck to water," she said.

"I tried to enjoy the moment and take every day as it came. The friends I made also made training enjoyable, they are a really good bunch and have made this experience easier."

Four days after passing out, she reported for duty at Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth as a Naval Nurse while 17-year-old Luke Gaskin, from Darlington, the youngest recruit will remain at Collingwood to complete his training as a weapon engineer.

"I'm the first member of my family in the services and I

think that makes them proud," he said.

"I joined mainly for that – to make my family proud and also myself. It is a great opportunity and will set me up for life."

Jack Boulter from Accrington will also remain at Collingwood, but he'll complete his training as a communications specialist.

"Completing training has been the biggest highlight of my life and I plan on trying anything that's thrown at me and push myself to the limit," the 20-year-old said.

"The highlight was seamanship week where we adapted our knot-tying skills in real life scenarios, and also seeing the Royal Navy ships for the first time. The training I have been given has been challenging but feels amazing when you complete tasks."

Divisional instructor Leading Hand Sam Mullane said the training at Collingwood had gone well – and the presence of already-qualified raw recruits on the base gave the group "something to aspire to".

He continued: "A highlight for me has been seeing the final product. When they were in week one, they were working as individuals, were stressed and time management was bad. But now, they are a well-oiled machine and you can see them less stressed and coming together and working well."

"Training them has been one of the highlights of my career – seeing them coming from week one to week ten and seeing how they have developed as a team. It has really come together and I am immensely proud."



Devonport caterers' Covid efforts rewarded

HMS Drake's Catering Services Shore Employment Team (CSSET) are the branch's caterers of the year – recognised for their outstanding efforts during a challenging 12 months.

The award acknowledges the team's contribution to Devonport's response to the pandemic, including their support of the Quarantine and Isolation Facility, which has been pivotal in ensuring the safety of all messing and accommodation areas.

In a constantly-changing situation, meeting the challenges set ensured smooth and essential support to ships and units in the dockyard.

One winning innovation was goodie bags, which were delivered to those isolating before being deployed as a way of improving morale.

The award was presented by Rear Admiral Martin Connell, the RN's Director Force Generation.

"My job is to ensure that the navy is ready for operations, and this past year has been particularly challenging. It has been reliant on the energy, industry, initiative, and compassion that many people have shown in order to keep everything going."

"In the past year, people have gone the extra mile, and I am really grateful to the team here, all of you and your colleagues, for doing exactly that."

Beyond a trophy, there's a cash prize for the Logistics Branch Catering Services Team of the Year, money which will be used to fund a suitable event once restrictions allow.

When I'm 65...

HMS Sultan marks its 65th anniversary from the beginning of this month – leading up to its main 'birthday party' on August 4.

Since 1956, the Gosport establishment has provided officers and ratings with the skills to keep the Royal Navy's ships, submarines and aircraft at sea and in the air.

So for 65 days, starting June 1, the base is inviting friends and colleagues old and new to share birthday messages and follow celebrations on Facebook and Twitter using the tags #RoyalNavy #Sultan65 #takeacloserlook #inspireanengineer.

Accommodation pilot going well

MORE submariners are moving into their own properties in the Faslane area thanks to the Future Accommodation Model.

Eighteen months into the pilot of the shake-up of accommodation options for personnel across the three Services, those in charge of the initiative are taking stock of the initiative.

FAM gives eligible personnel greater choice when it comes to where and how they live, based on individual or family needs and requirements – not their rank or marital status.

Sailors, marines and submariners who've benefited from the trial on the Clyde have been vocal with their appreciation for the choices and freedoms that FAM delivers.

"The pilot has given us all a welcome and unique opportunity to truly modernise the accommodation 'offer' for our people," said Commander Stu Barrand.

"It gives our people the opportunity to access the accommodation that best suits their lifestyle – we have always said that the pilot is about 'how best to' rather than 'whether to' change the accommodation 'offer'."

"We are now 18 months into that journey at HMNB Clyde, learning and adapting the policy as we go, so that when FAM rolls out to the rest of the Defence community, it will be tried, tested and fit for purpose."

A FAM Cell at Faslane deals with questions and applications via Accommodation Preference Forms (APFs) which are flowing in and Cdr Barrand says satisfaction levels are reported as high and complaints are low.

The results of last year's Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Surveys show that more submariners are moving into their own property and 73 per cent are positive about their work location – arguably as a result of the FAM pilot.

"This are all encouraging indicators

and support the notion that FAM is starting to show a beneficial effect in Faslane," Cdr Barrand added.

FAM applies equally to all Service personnel whether single, married, in a civil partnership, long term established relationship or parents who have their children over 80 nights per calendar year.

Eligible personnel assigned to a pilot site such as Faslane can choose the accommodation that best suits their needs – whether they want to live closer to a particular school or nursery, on the base, in town with friends or somewhere they and their partner can both easily commute from.

To access FAM, you must have four years regular/full-time reserve service (FTRS) full commitment with at least a 12-month draft at a pilot site and a unique identification number (UIN) – you'll find a list on the Defence Intranet or contact the FAM Cell at Faslane on people-famcell-cly@mod.gov.uk.

Cloud R09

NEW aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales has become the latest ship in the Fleet to receive an innovative 'shared network' – a secure, private cloud for warships.

The 65,000-tonne leviathan joins her older sister HMS Queen Elizabeth in receiving the network, thanks to herculean efforts by military and civilian engineers, technicians, comms and computer experts.

At the same time, an integrated facility to trial systems – known as a sandbox – has also been installed.

Combined, the system allows the Royal Navy to host, trial and deploy new mission capabilities on one single, reliable digital platform.

The team behind the system – a collaborative effort involving BAE Systems, the MoD, RN and DE&S – say it's been challenging project from concept to completion, all the more so due to Covid restrictions over the past 14 or so months.

The collective effort has earned praise from Commander Charles Guy, Prince of Wales' Executive Officer, who thanked the team simply: "A once-in-a-lifetime pandemic and you got us out on time – utterly amazing."

The system is also being fitted to other ships in the Carrier Strike Group, notably Type 23 frigates and Type 45 destroyers.

Captain Kevin Noakes Royal Navy, of DE&S Maritime Combat Systems, said today's warships had to be "capable of dealing with the full gamut of future threats."

"The latest app-hosting capability afforded by the open architecture of MoD's Shared Infrastructure enables HMS Prince of Wales to be agile in its operation and adaptable in configuration, fully exploiting the force multipliers of autonomy and artificial intelligence in its delivery of operations around the world."

This month's rewards

THE following personnel have been selected by the Senior Command Warrant Officers for Respite, Reward and Recognition breaks.

At China Fleet Country Club: CPO Whitehead (Sultan), POs Donovan and Hewitt (Eaglet), LCH Hunt (Spey) and ET Chapman (HMNB Clyde)

At Park Dean: Lt Campbell (RNFPs), WO1 Moody (Vigilant), CPOs Rae (Raleigh), Falconar (SURFLOT) and Longhurst (Vigilant), POs Antenbring (HMNB Devonport), Croft (FSU), Parkman (iNM), Redgrave (Sutherland) and Purslow (Chiddingfold), Cpl Maskell (30 Cdo), LET Mwape (Duncan), LMA Whitney (Argyll), LH Hammond (RNFPs), ABs Wilkinson (RNAS Yeovilton), Rugg (NCHQ) and Harris (RNRC Hasler), AET May (Sultan), Std Lagai (RNAS Culdrose)

At Victory Services Club: CPO Watts (BFSAI) SCWO RNRMC Long Service Recognition Awards CPO Towell, WO1 Peet and CPO Lincoln (all RNR Air Branch) SCWO RNRMC LSASK Award LCH Hunt (Spey) SCWO RNRMC Herbert Lott Awards PO Lovegrove (Trenchant)

Duo's decades of dedication

TWO Devonport-based naval stalwarts with over 65 years' service under their belt were decorated by the head of the Surface Flotilla.

Petty Officer Steve Killeen (pictured, right) is leaving the RN after four decades and collected his valedictory from Commodore Tim Neild, who also presented Chief Petty Officer Sean Crean (far right) with his first clasp to his Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

There aren't too many WEM(R)s – Weapons Engineer Mechanic (Radio) – still serving and even fewer with Steve's departure.

He joined the RN in November 1980 as a 17-year-old straight from school, following in his father's footsteps – and serving with him in Leander-class frigate HMS Apollo, which was dispatched to the Falklands in 1982.

His subsequent service is like a canter through



the history of the RN's workhorses of the past 30-plus years: four Type 22 frigates (London, Beaver, Cornwall and Cumberland); Type 42 destroyers Liverpool and Edinburgh and four Type 23 frigates (Monmouth, Northumberland, Montrose and Richmond) plus drafts

ashore in Gibraltar, Forest Moor and Devonport. He almost certainly would have received the L55K bonus for 5,000 days at sea... except that counting only began 30 years ago, so his first decade's service don't count towards his 4,400 sea days, sadly.

Given his background it's not entirely surprising that he's continuing to work as a comms specialist in civvy street... for Babcock... working on Type 23s...

"I may be leaving the Navy after a long career but to me I am just going to another draft with a different uniform doing the same job that I have always enjoyed," he said.

Sean is also a comms expert with a wealth of experience in the mainstays of the fleet behind him including HM Ships Iron Duke, Edinburgh, Coventry, Cumberland and Chatham.

He was also in the decommissioning crew guard which paraded through Coventry when the frigate was paid off in 2002. Among his shipmates in the Type 22 was one Lieutenant Tim Neild...

The senior rate has also served at the NATO HQ in Lisbon (twice), FOST and is now at the Devonport arm of Surfplot.

Suite charity for Sultan's mums

YOUNG Owen Mitchemore looks nicely settled in as his mum Catherine makes use of the new fitness and wellbeing suite for pre and post-natal mums (and dads with caring duties) at Sultan.

Thanks to a donation from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, fridges, baby play equipment and a sofa area have all been placed alongside regular gym equipment.

The sensory-stimulating environment will provide parents of young children with a safe and welcoming place they can confidently visit for physical exercise and rehabilitation.

"It's a fantastic environment and we have specially trained pre and post-natal care instructors available who will take classes and inductions to ensure that everything is safe for individuals to work out, so that users can train with confidence both during and after pregnancy," said LPT Shanie Jones.

Also present at the opening was Warrant Officer 1 Rosie Dodd, who is in overall charge of the Parent Support and Information Team, overseeing divisional care for those on any form of parenting leave throughout the RN.

"Ladies who are pregnant and on maternity leave often have issues with their mental health and their general physique as their body changes, so it's really important to provide them with somewhere safe where they can come and meet with qualified people who can actually do work outs with them, advise and guide them and help them network with other service parents, so that everyone has someone to turn too.

"I think it's a brilliant facility which has been so well thought out and is split up nicely, so if people want a safe area with their babies then they can. They have brilliant apparatus and supporting equipment such as fridges and it's also a nice quiet area so you're not having to go with a baby through the mainstream gym."

For further advice on the maternity suite and using its facilities, speak to LPT Lauren Parsons.

Picture: PO(Phot) Nicola Harper, HMS Sultan



Cheers for your work

THE virtual Champagne corks were popping as the RNRMC celebrated Dean Rogers' tenth anniversary with the charity and his personal RNRMC Gold Award.

A proud veteran of the Submarine Service, Dean is a key figure within the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity as part of the Community fundraising team with special responsibility for Payroll Giving.

In Dean's words, payroll donations are a wonderful way of donating money to charities straight from your pay cheque without paying any tax on it – by doing so, you get the opportunity to support the causes that matter to you.

Dean is a passionate submariner and is very proud of his achievements during his 35 years in the Service and then with the charity.

During his time as a Warrant Officer 1, he was able to exploit his gift for imparting knowledge, teaching business and management and setting up a training programme within the Navy for achieving chartered management.

As a member of the divisional and regimental support team he discovered his niche.

Another great draft was on exchange at the Royal Australian Navy's Submarine escape tank, Aussie remains close to his heart as his eldest daughter and grandchild are living there.

So, in his own words, transitioning between serving and joining the charity was simple: as it was an obvious route to "give back to the Navy". In 2018, Dean was awarded an MBE for services to charity, one of Dean's most successful projects within the RNRMC is Payroll Giving – well over half the Royal Navy have signed up to donate regularly via this efficient method but he is not stopping there.

Dean's Gold Award was awarded to him (virtually) by the chairman of the RNRMC, Sir Bill Thomas.

Demand soars for camps

AS lockdown restrictions lift, providing safe opportunities for children to socialise, play and have fun together has never been more important.

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) are once again working in partnership with The Kings Active Foundation and the Royal Navy to provide leading sports and activity camps to Naval families with children aged between 5 – 17 at a heavily-subsidised cost.

Activity camps were able to run in a limited capacity last summer across the country.

This year, The Kings Active Foundation, the Royal Navy and the RNRMC have worked hard once again to ensure that as many children as possible have the opportunity to return to camp or experience it for the first time, identifying new locations and building new partnerships.

Camps provide fantastic opportunities for children and young people to get active, have fun and make new friends.

They will be coming to a host of Royal Navy establishments this summer, operating full week Activity Camps on selected dates.

The RNRMC are again subsidising places so that Camps on Royal Navy bases cost just £75 per child, per week and are exclusively for Navy families.

Demand for places this year has been huge and the RNRMC are expecting to accommodate more than 1,200 children from 950 families.



While many children are returning to Activity Camps for another year, there has been a surge of new interest in 2021, and this summer children from almost 350 families will be enjoying RNRMC Activity Camps for the very first time.

"We know the camps are invaluable for Royal Navy parents, but more importantly we know that the children really enjoy them," said RNRMC Commissioning Manager, Annabelle Walker.

"Our Royal Navy kids are resilient, but the reality is that service life does bring its challenges for our children. They really

deserve a bit of fun and to be recognised.

"This year more than any other we were determined to try and ensure as many children as possible had the opportunity to be active and have fun together. We are all excited that so many children will get their chance to experience an activity camp for the first time. I am really looking forward to seeing the photos and hearing feedback from families."

Mandy Lindley, RNRMC Director of Relationships and Funding, added: "We are delighted to see a big increase in the number of Royal Navy families taking up

this offer and number of children who will get to experience camp this year for the first time.

"It just would not be possible without the help of our Royal Navy colleagues and professionalism of the team at The Kings Active Foundation.

"Given the scale of the 2021 programme it is no surprise that it is one of the largest single grant awards that the charity is making this year. A family with two kids attending camp for a week will be benefitting from £300 of RNRMC funding."

More than 30 young people have also signed up for the Kings Rookie Academy, which is a Level 3 programme accredited by 1stForSport leadership that helps young people aged 15+ to get more out of their school holidays.

This qualification can be added to their CV and included in any future application where part of the assessment is on practical leadership skills. Rookies are celebrated on their camp with a graduation.

The high level of demand means that sadly, not all families will secure their preferred week or venue. The RNRMC have aimed to allocate places as fairly as possible via a ballot system, though some prioritisation has been given to families affected by deployment.

The Kings Active Foundation will be contacting families by email to offer places on camps. Please check your junk email. All instructions will be in the email. Please DO NOT call Kings, they will call you.

Helping Royal Navy children stay top of class while at home

WHEN lockdown hit suddenly in March last year, home schooling was thrust upon millions of families.

For many this was manageable, if a little inconvenient. Some families however faced an impossible situation, but thanks to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity's partnership with Sailors Children's Society, Royal Navy families were supported through this difficult time.

Sailors Children's Society has been supporting disadvantaged children of seafarers living in poverty for nearly 200 years and when schools closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they received a large number of distress calls from families in need.

The rapid transition to home schooling was fraught with challenges and adjustments for most families, but some naval families in financial difficulty were left to educate their children at



home without the necessary equipment to do so.

"With no computer in the house, the children couldn't access their education

as the new method was via online learning at home," said Deanne Thomas, CEO of Sailors Children's Society.

"Parents were not in a position to

purchase a computer nor provide the additional electricity and heating for the home school environment."

Needing to move quickly, Sailors Children's Society reached out to long-time partner, the RNRMC for help. With a COVID Hardship Fund already established, the RNRMC were able to provide an emergency grant of almost £25,000 to Sailors Children's Society, enabling them to supply 43 home computer packages to naval families.

"We quickly formed a working relationship with PC World to enable home deliveries to individual families within a few days," said Deanne Thomas. "This allowed the children to once again access their lessons and complete their school work."

"The computer also provided the family with access to many sources of online support including Sailors Children's Society Facebook community

group which we updated on a daily basis with emotional and practical assistance."

RNRMC funding also allowed Sailors Children's Society to provide a weekly grant to families in need to help with heating and electricity costs, which had increased due to the demands of home schooling.

The difference that the support made to the lives of these families was evidenced best by the heartfelt messages sent by parents and children.

"My name is Delaney and I just want to say thank you for the computer. My mum has been trying to get enough money to buy me a laptop, but this is more than a laptop – it is a big laptop," said one child.

"I really appreciate this kind gift so that I can do online schoolwork," said another. "I am lucky that there are caring people like you, who help us."



A world in which our sailors, marines, and their families are valued and supported, for life.

See our impact impact.rnrmc.org.uk T 023 9387 1520 E theteam@rnrmc.org.uk

PACKING A PUNCH WITH JET SUIT



ROYAL MARINES have tested the use of a jet suit for maritime boarding operations.

The trial saw patrol ship HMS Tamar and Royal Marines from Plymouth-based 42 and 47 Commando work with Gravity Industries to understand whether the company's jet suit could be of use on military operations in the future.

Royal Marines did not use the equipment at any stage of the trial, and it was in the hands of Gravity Industries throughout the exercises in Plymouth Sound.

Marines use stealth and speed to board suspect vessels and are specialists in terrorist takedowns and anti-smuggling and piracy operations around the world.

The commandos work in small teams in fast raiding boats to board suspicious vessels with the help of maritime snipers in Wildcat helicopters and drones.

They are currently deployed on Royal Navy ships around the world and have had recent success in the Gulf with HMS Montrose, seizing £14m worth of drugs in operations so far this year.

The trial looked at the utility of the jet suit – which allows the user to fly – in maritime boarding operations and the specialist vertical access techniques associated to them.

While undoubtedly impressive, experts concluded that the kit is not ready just yet for military adoption.

"The flight suit technology tested in this trial allowed the Commando Force to experiment with innovative methods of conducting maritime interdiction operations, and to gain insights into its potential to enable vertical access in the complex urban-littoral environment," said Lieutenant Colonel Will Clarke RM, the trial sponsor.

"Whilst the technology may not be ready for military adoption just now, it shows significant promise and we will watch its development with continued interest.


"Furthermore, the trial is a clear example of the diverse efforts being made to enhance the Commando Force with the latest technology and to give it a competitive advantage over future potential adversaries."

Pictures: LPhoto Mark Johnson

● Richard Browning, of Gravity, puts the jet suit through its paces with Royal Marines aboard HMS Tamar



SEASAM

by  notilo plus



The world's first autonomous underwater drone.

Seasam Drone™ is a compact underwater system capable of conducting autonomous operations as well as being a high-performance, next generation ROV.

Visit levelpeaks.com for more details.

LEVEL PEAKS



BATTERIES

CHARGED



SPECIALIST commando gunners covertly patrolled deep behind 'enemy lines' on experimental exercises with the US Marines designed to shape the operations of tomorrow.

It's up to Royal Navy, Royal Marine and British Army commandos from 148 Commando Forward Observation Battery to bring a rain of fire and fury down upon enemy positions by guiding the guns of the Fleet – their own 105mm howitzers of 29 Commando Royal Artillery – or USMC HIMARS with pinpoint accuracy.

During exercises in Western Scotland alongside the US Marines of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit and 101 Regiment Royal Artillery, elite reconnaissance strike teams operated deep behind hostile lines to call in precision guided munition and airstrikes.

Using small raiding craft and exploiting new kit and ways of working to identify enemy targets and call in fire to

destroy them, the stealthy teams used a digital network to communicate

quickly so a variety of munitions could be unleashed, paving the way for allied air, ground and naval forces to move in and control the area.

Among the impressive firepower and tech at the disposal of the observers: Osprey tilt-rotors, drones, mobile rocket systems and the deep reconnaissance teams from the US Marine Corps Force Recon.

The intensive training – dubbed Exercise Fleet Battle Problem – took place at the Kirkcudbright Training Area, in south-west Scotland.

It helped the 29 Commando teams – normally based in either The Citadel in Plymouth or Hamworthy Barracks in Poole – reconsider their role as part of Future Commando Force modernisation, which returns commandos to raiders from the sea, using the latest cutting-edge kit to help them in their missions.

"148 Battery played a huge role in Fleet Battle Problem and it was a seminal moment in their lifespan with the opportunity to wrestle with the wicked problem of increasing the endurance, duration, range, mobility, connectivity and lethality of their patrols," said 29 Commando Commanding Officer Lt Col Dave Glendenning RA.

"Fleet Battle Problem examined the complex issue of winning the fight to get to the fight, whereby deliberate tactical action can defeat the strategy of an adversary.

"The exercises reinforced the demand for investment in digital fires software, tactical communication systems and complex amphibious training opportunities to deliver credible political choice in the early years of the Future Commando Force programme."

The digital fires network saw 148 Battery provide valuable information using enhanced MPU5 radios – rugged yet lightweight devices which feed crucial data back to commanders, which considerably reduces the amount of kit usually carried by around 15kg (roughly the weight of a typical microwave). Aside from its lightweight construction, not needing fixed infrastructure proved another bonus.

The commandos also worked with updated Kestrel night vision devices and Mk3 Laser Light Modules, which can illuminate enemy targets at range, which aided their mission under the cover of darkness.

148 Battery are specially qualified in calling artillery, naval gunfire control and airstrikes to support 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines and UK Special Forces. They are experts in covert insertion, patrols behind enemy lines, concealment, encrypted communications and battle damage assessment.

They are part of 29 Commando Royal Artillery, the gunners of 3 Commando Brigade.

Watch the video at [YouTube.com/RoyalMarines](https://www.youtube.com/RoyalMarines)





A man of many names and the RN in his heart

COMMANDER Neil 'Nobby' Hall, who has died while serving with RN personnel at NATO's SHAPE HQ in Belgium, dedicated more than 50 years to the sea – 45 of them serving his country.

After becoming a Sea Cadet at the age of 12 in 1970, Nobby signed up for the Royal Naval Reserve as a junior seaman mine warfare specialist upon leaving school in 1975 and decided to make it his full-time career two years later.

He served in a string of Ton-class minesweepers – HM ships Fittleton, Alfriston, Kellington and Wasperton – before being selected to go to Dartmouth in 1980 as a seaman officer, subsequently qualifying as a principal warfare officer (air) in 1990, ending up in Cyprus as senior naval officer and later Commanding Officer of the Cyprus Squadron.

Nobby (pictured at an event he organised in Worthing to honour the 80th anniversary of the Almark incident) retired from active service in 2004 but remained in the Reserves as he became a police inspector (and eventually assistant commissioner of police).

He spent a decade as 'Nobby the Bobby' (and sometimes 'Commander Hall of the Yard'): in the sovereign base areas in Cyprus, the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force and Sussex Constabulary.

In 2012 he was diagnosed with skin cancer and had radical surgery which left him permanently disfigured – but he laughed it off, christening himself "Nobby No Nose" (aka N3) while his surgeon described him as "the most determined man I ever met".

In 2015 he was recalled to the Royal Navy for full-time service and promoted to Commander.

In all Nobby served in 17 of Her Majesty's ships including Blackwater, Andromeda, Phoebe, Arethusia, Broadsword, Birmingham, Ocean and Illustrious. His final posting was as executive officer for Information Operations at SHAPE in Mons.

He fought in the Falklands and first Gulf War, completed two tours in Northern Ireland and was also involved in a number of other conflicts earning eight campaign medals, including unusually for an RN Officer the accumulated campaign service medal having spent more than 1,000 days in combat zones.

Passionate about the Royal Navy past, present and future, always cheerful, Nobby lived by the maxim: work hard, play harder.

He was an avid supporter of RN rugby, RN charities, ship associations, organised reunions for his class of 81 at Dartmouth, was a regular contributor to *Navy News* (on a variety of subjects) and, when time and postings allowed, an active member of the **Worthing Branch** of the Royal Naval Association, as well as serving as Vice Chairman of the Ton Class Association.



A digital dedication

VETERANS unable to travel to Normandy because of Covid travel restrictions are invited to mark the 77th anniversary of the D-Day landings at the National Arboretum.

The Staffordshire memorial site is stepping in to offer veterans and their families the chance to remember the beginning of the liberation of North-West Europe – and watch the official opening of the new Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer.

The £30m monument – located above what was Gold Beach in the summer of 1944, close to the location of the only VC won on June 6 – has taken nearly six years to complete.

Funded by the British Government (through Libor fines imposed on banks) and public benefactors, it serves as a monument to all those who fought under the Union Jack in 2½ months of bitter fighting for Normandy, which eventually culminated in breakout and the liberation of Paris in late August.

The statue of troops storming ashore was dedicated on the 75th anniversary of the landings by then prime minister Theresa May and French President Emmanuel Macron.

It is the centrepiece of a memorial courtyard with walls seven metres high and memorial walkways lined by 160 pillars listing the names of 22,442 British and

Commonwealth dead from the Normandy campaign, one in ten of them sailors or Royal Marines.

The 50-acre site is completed by grounds landscaped by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which is responsible for numerous cemeteries across Normandy, including those at Bayeux and Ranville where many June 6 casualties are remembered.

The memorial will be officially opened by the British Ambassador to France, Lord Edward Llewellyn, accompanied by senior French guests, with the ceremony beamed back live to the arboretum.

In addition, veterans and families who converge on the memorial woodland can also watch coverage of the Royal British Legion's service of remembrance from Bayeux, including the two-minute silence at 11am.

And there will be an opportunity for Normandy veterans to have their *Legion d'honneur* formally presented to them by the French Ambassador to the UK.

Places will be limited for pre-booked guests only and priority given to veterans. If you wish to attend, contact commemorative.events@britishlegion.org.uk.

Alternatively, you can watch proceedings on the internet at: www.britishnormandymemorial.org. Proceedings begin at 10am on Sunday June 6, with the formal ceremony starting at 10.30.



Norwegian who?

DO YOU recognise this sailor carrying a Norwegian girl ashore at Gouruck in February 1945?

After nearly 80 years it's a bit of a long shot, but historian Bob Pearson hopes the naval family might be able to put a name to the face.

The sailor in question has just taken part in Operation Open Door, a largely-unknown mercy mission from the closing months of the war in Europe.

Four British and one Canadian destroyer broke away from escorting Russian convoys JW64 and RA64 to make a bold dash up a remote fjord and rescue 525 refugees from the island of Sørøya.

In the final six months of World War 2, the Germans evacuated the northernmost regions of occupied Norway, forcibly evicting the civilian populace and leaving a wasteland behind thanks to a scorched earth policy which torched towns and villages – to deny them to the enemy.

Given the rugged, isolated nature of the region, many Norwegians managed to escape the Nazi dragnet and fled into the countryside.

On Sørøya, islanders refused to obey the orders to evacuate. While the Germans burned down their homes, civilians hid in caves over the winter of 1944-45 – until the Royal Navy came to their rescue in the form of HMS Onslaught, Zambesi, Zealous, Zest, plus Canada's HMCS Sioux.

"The destroyers raced down a fjord – some 8 miles – in broad daylight to embark 525 Norwegians before the Germans could react. It truly was an amazing piece of seamanship by all concerned," said Mr Pearson, who's previously written a book on the Royal Navy's role in rescuing Norway's gold reserves in 1940.

In researching Open Door, he's succeeded in identifying the young girl, but not the sailor.

He continued: "I realise the possibility of anyone being able to name the rating is slim at best, but if anyone can name the rating or add anything to the story, it would be most welcome."

He can be contacted via bobwpearson@gmail.com. Photographs of the operation were taken by one Sub Lieutenant D W Cooksey – and are now held by the Imperial War Museum: www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205158951.

SSAFA help D-Day Bill re-settle – at 96



WORLD War 2 veteran Bill Silvester is thanking the charity SSAFA for helping him on his last adventure – returning to the UK just as the pandemic struck.

The 96-year-old veteran of the Arctic Convoys and Normandy is now living in Portsmouth, where he is supported by the charity.

Bill, who joined the RN aged 14, married French woman Simone, whom he met after D-Day and after the war they moved to New Zealand.

They and their children lived there for 36 years until Simone died and Bill

returned to France to scatter her ashes.

"Her last words were she wanted her ashes to be spread off the Porten-Bessin, so that's what I did. But I've still got some of them upstairs though. I keep them with me."

Bill then came back to England and lived in Poole in a flat overlooking the harbour. Then, aged 77 he decided to move to France.

He remained there for 18 years, until Brexit changed it for him and he decided – aged 95 and now living in a French care home, with a French girlfriend – to come back to the UK.

And this is when he turned to SSAFA for help.

After many hours of careful planning, SSAFA's branch secretaries in France and Wiltshire co-ordinated Bill's return home.

Bill initially went to Salisbury to live in sheltered housing but later he moved to a similar set-up in Portsmouth.

It was a challenging move, midway through the pandemic, but it is one that Bill has found makes him feel more at home.

"I'd never go into a place for old

people," said Bill.

"All they do is talk about their health and moan on this and moan on that. It's not me."

Decorated by both Russia and France for his wartime service as a communications rating, he went ashore in Normandy to help with the complex landings of hundreds of vessels.

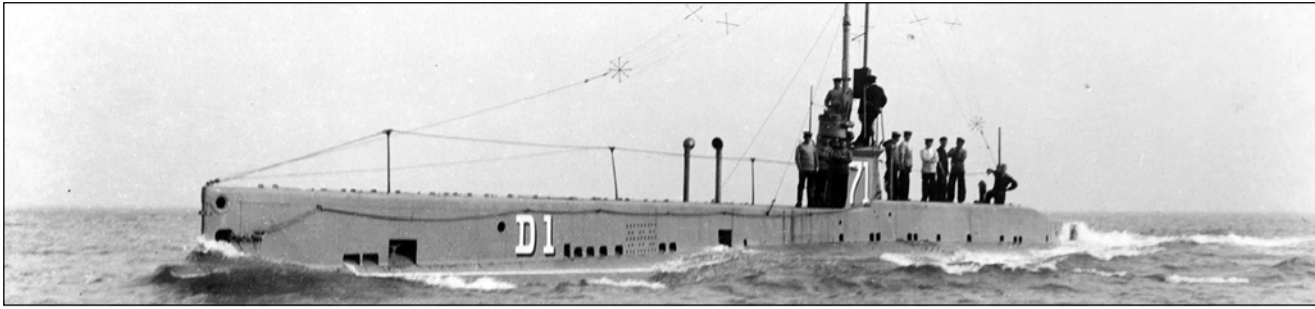
Last year he was given a tour of one of the final surviving vessels from the invasion, LCT 7074, which is now a museum piece on the Southsea seafront.

"D-Day is something that is always in my head – it's something I'll never forget. I was only 20 then," he said.

Although Bill has a sizeable family of two children, four grandchildren and three (with another one is on the way) great-grandchildren – unsurprisingly for the globetrotter he is – they live mainly far away.

He has never seen his great-grandchildren who are in Canada. And he feels his support team are like his family now.

Bill said: "The people from SSAFA are like my relations. I've got no direct family here."



Do you know the story of this motif?

DO YOU know the story behind this impressive Greek helmet – the fitting motif of HMS Ajax.

The association which keeps the flame of two Ajaxes – the wartime cruiser which famously fought at the River Plate and the Leander-class frigate which served from the mid-1960s until the mid-80s – is keen to know the story behind the impressive motif... starting with which of the two vessels it hails from.

It was passed to the HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association by Clive Petty, whose family have possessed it for a good 30 years without knowing its history (they were close friends of Admiral Sir Caspar John, First Sea Lord in the early 60s – though he was an aviator rather than a cruiser/surface fleet sailor).

The association had the helmet motif mounted in a style similar to a naval gun's tampion on a wooden base with the appropriate scrolls by experts C H Munday.

If you're able to fill in any of the blanks on the warrior helmet contact Alan Phillips, georgealan1946@icloud.com.

Deep dig deep for ex-deep

FASLANE-based submariners dipped into their pockets to help a former deep – and renew bonds with an East Yorkshire town.

For over ten years Bridlington branch of the RNA and Bridlington School Combined Cadet Force enjoyed an affiliation with Submarine Qualification (North) at Faslane.

Trainee submariners would visit Bridlington at Remembrance time and a few weeks later, cadets from the Royal Naval section of Bridlington School CCF would spend a week at Faslane, visiting ships, submarines and the various organisations required to operate submarines.

Sadly the regular link-up ended a few years ago.

But when one of Bridlington's submariner veterans, David 'Snowy' Snowden, was in need of help, the team in Faslane stepped in.

Snowy's wife Linda is suffering from the effects of long Covid and he wanted to build a new patio to allow the family to visit safely.

Martin Barmby, who chairs Bridlington and District Submariners' Association, renewed contacts with deeps on the Clyde... and five days later serving submariners had raised £435 for the Snowdens.

"If ever there was an example of the Submariner family, this is it," said Martin. "A true case of 'buddies in boats'. BZ to SMQ(N) and the wider submarine family."

Petty Officer 'Smudge' Smith, who attended the dedication of the Bridlington Branch of the Submariners Association standard, and his partner PO Jess Metcalfe presented the proceeds to Snowy.

Wreck of pioneering submarine found

The wreck of early submarine D1 is now a protected site off the Devon coast.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has agreed to grant the remains of the pre-WWI boat special status after divers found it off Dartmouth... while searching for a sunken U-boat.

Unlike many of her contemporaries which were lost in accidents or were sunk by the enemy, D1 was scuttled by the RN after long and fruitful service.

Her protected status allows divers to inspect the wreck, but they cannot remove anything – a look but don't touch policy.

She was located by a specialist dive team

skilled in operating at depths in excess of 40 metres who were looking for a sunken U-boat to help the research of submarine historian Michael Lowrey.

Instead they found the intact wreck of HMS D1 sitting upright on the seabed.

The boat spent nine years under the White Ensign helping to develop pre-war submarine and anti-submarine tactics, then joined the Dover Patrol when war came in 1914.

She spent the final year of her active life protecting Portsmouth Harbour before the decision was taken to sink her off Dartmouth to help train anti-submarine warfare experts and their equipment to detect submerged

boats.

Just weeks later WW1 ended.

"Every diver dreams of identifying a historically-important wreck," said Steve Mortimer, lead diver.

"Expecting to find the remains of a German U-boat, we were thrilled to discover a ground-breaking British submarine instead. It's tremendous that D1 is now protected but divers can still visit.

Duncan Wilson, chief executive of Historic England which advised Whitehall to grant the wreck protection, added: "This is a fascinating survival which deserves protection as an important part of our seafaring history."

Vintage fighter wrecked in crash

THESE are the remains of the Navy's only twin-seat Sea Fury fighter – severely damaged when it came down near Yeovilton following an engine problem.

The vintage trainer was on a routine flight when it suffered a significant drop in engine oil pressure shortly after take off and climbing away from the airfield.

The pilots, both highly-experienced former Fleet Air Arm aviators, immediately carried out the appropriate drills and turned back.

They were lined up for a textbook emergency landing on Runway 04... but on final approach, the Sea Fury's engine failed, changing the speed and angle of glide of the approach dramatically, and they were forced to put the aircraft straight down into a field just outside the airfield boundary.

The aircraft's wings and engine detached during the impact and the fuselage rolled upside down but both pilots were able to escape unaided. They were taken to Yeovil hospital as a precautionary measure, and one was retained overnight for observation.

The Sea Fury (T20 – VX281) is owned and operated by the charity Navy Wings who have taken over the mantle of the RN Historic Flight – and now face a decision about the trainer's long-term future.

The various sections and



parts of the aircraft have now been recovered, courtesy of the MOD's Joint Aircraft Recovery and Transportation Squadron (better known as JARTS), and returned to the charity's hangar at Yeovilton, while the Air Accident Investigation Branch and Civil Aviation Authority are looking into the causes of the accident.

"The pilots' skilful execution of an extremely hazardous situation was exemplary," said Commodore Jock Alexander, head of the charity. "We are all extremely relieved that they are safe and well.

"The Sea Fury is a classic

and much-loved Fleet Air Arm aircraft, and the accident has been a shock to everyone in the Navy Wings community. It is too early to say whether it is feasible to rebuild her and if she will ever fly again."

The accident came just four vintage FAA aircraft were formally transferred from the RN to Navy Wings.

With the MOD concentrating on spending money on front-line aircraft, it has gifted the historic collection – valued at around £1.4m – to the charity.

Handed over to Navy Wings were one of only two flying Fairey

Swordfish torpedo bombers in the world (W5856), a single-seat Sea Fury (VR930), an Armstrong Whitworth Seahawk (WV908) from the dawn of the jet era, and a de Havilland Chipmunk (WK608).

In addition two incomplete airframes – one Swordfish (NF389) and a Chipmunk – have also been gifted to Navy Wings.

To help the charity maintain its family of aircraft and assist the transition the Royal Navy will provide some grant funding over the next five years.

Otherwise Navy Wings relies on public donations and air show fees to keep its machines in the skies.

Commodore Alexander said it was crucial Navy Wings stepped in to take responsibility for the vintage aircraft.

"With reduced funding the aircraft were in danger of being grounded and their presence in the air lost forever to the Nation," he said.

The Head of the Fleet Air Arm, Rear Admiral Martin Connell, said the transfer of the six aircraft meant their long-term future was "now assured".

He continued: "The aircraft can now play a full part in the wider cultural and heritage sector at a national level, showcasing the story of naval flying at air shows and events up and down the country and continuing to be a source of inspiration and pride to wide audiences for many years to come."

Malta sub confirmed as Urge

THE remains of wartime submarine HMS Urge have been formally identified by the Royal Navy after further research by wreck explorers.

Marine archaeologists located what they believed was the U-class boat off Malta in 2019, but it's only thanks to renewed exploration of the wreck that RN historians were able to confirm the initial findings.

Urge left the island on her final mission on April 27 1942 bound for Alexandria in Egypt as the 10th Submarine Flotilla moved its base to escape the Axis Powers' constant bombing of Malta. Aboard were not just her 32 crew, but 11 other naval personnel and a war correspondent.

Everyone aboard was killed when she ran into a mine – the blast blew off her bow.

Otherwise the wreck is largely intact, sitting upright on the seabed more than 400ft below the surface of the Mediterranean.

The search for the boat was led by Canadian naval researcher Platon Alexiades, Francis Dickinson – grandson of Urge's commanding officer Lt Cdr Edward Tomkinson – and Professor Timmy Gambin of the University of Malta's Classics and Archaeology Department.

A team of six divers returned to the site this spring and photographed and filmed the submarine for 20 minutes. In one image, the boat's name is clearly legible, despite nearly 80 years of marine growth.

Urge now enjoys sovereign immunity and is protected.

Picture: Timmy Gambin/ University of Malta

Carrier tragedy remembered

THE loss of aircraft carrier HMS Glorious and destroyers HMS Acasta and Ardent will be marked in a different location this summer.

The carrier and her two escorts were sunk when they ran into German battle-cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau.

More than 1,500 men died and only around 40 were saved in the disaster, which took place as Glorious returned to the UK towards the end of the Norwegian campaign.

They were intercepted about 250 miles west of the Lofoten Islands and sunk in an unequal 2½-hour battle.

Survivors and, more recently, relatives and descendants traditionally mark the tragedy close to the June 8 anniversary with a service at HMS Drake.

Due to the pandemic, the GLARAC (GLorious, ARdent ACasta) Association is shifting its 81st anniversary commemoration to the Belvedere Gardens on Plymouth Hoe on July 18. The service will take place beside the memorial plaque to the three ships.

Details from David Emery: 01782 331730 or dg.david@hotmail.co.uk.

Naval Quirks

THERE WERE PLENTY OF PHOTOS TAKEN AT THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND IN 1916 – BUT NO MOVIE FILM EXISTS..



ONLY TWO CINE CAMERAS WERE PRESENT IN THE FLEET. THE ONE ON HMS "ORION" DID SHOOT SOME FILM BUT IT WAS UNDER-EXPOSED AND RUINED..



AS TO THE OTHER CINE CAMERA ON THE "NEW ZEALAND"; ITS OWNER ASKED PERMISSION TO FETCH IT FROM HIS CABIN BUT SADLY IT WAS REFUSED..



Just as well I suppose.. I used up most of the film yesterday filming Dusty Miller's Charlie Chaplin impersonation..



Greenway to help the Earth

A GROUP of Sea Cadets from Rushden marked Earth Day with a socially-distanced litter pick along the East Northamptonshire Greenway on Sunday morning, from Rushden Lakes to Asda, in the heart of Rushden.

Funded by the Heritage Lottery through the Nenescape Partnership, the Greenway is a popular location for dog walkers, runners, cyclists and families wanting to escape Rushden's busy streets and in recent years the route has been upgraded, with signposting, seating and an amazing mural in the tunnel which passes under Washbrook Road, but unfortunately there are always the selfish few who decide to leave their litter behind for others to clean up.

So, with Earth Day coming up, the Sea Cadets decided to pull on their rubber gloves, grab some refuse sacks and give the place a spring clean, and oh boy did they pick up a lot of rubbish – they even found a discarded microwave and an old toilet seat!

The event was organised by Ordinary Cadet Robert, as part of his leadership module, and he was amazed at the amount of encouragement and

support they received from passers-by – it left the cadets with a real feeling of pride and self-worth that made it all worthwhile. Afterwards, the cadets were treated to some well-earned refreshments, thanks to Tessa from Really Awesome Coffee – Corby (info@reallyawesomecoffee.co.uk) who sponsored the event.

Sea Cadets at Rushden Unit have set off on an epic trek of travelling virtually through 24 countries to reach Japan in time for the Olympic Games on July 23 2021.

The virtual challenge will see them aiming to rack up 8,900 miles through walking, swimming, cycling or rowing the distance to Tokyo.

David Pickles, chairman of Rushden Sea Cadets and challenge organiser, said: "The main purpose of the challenge is to motivate people to get outside and keep active."

They are also hoping the virtual event will help to fight lockdown blues and get back into shape.

You can keep an eye on their progress and support them on their JustGiving page at <https://bit.ly/2RaYcIB>



Brave Jane still walking the walk

PRESIDENT of Musselburgh Sea Cadets' Unit Management Committee, Jane Fairnie, has been walking 4,000 steps around her garden to fundraise for the unit.

Although she is recovering from heart surgery and has spent seven weeks in hospital earlier in the year, she has put her best foot forward to help the unit raise funds as part of their virtual walk challenge.

The challenge has seen the group virtually walking from their base in Musselburgh on the coast of the Firth

of Forth in Scotland to Sea Cadets London Headquarters, and back home again.

Walking some 400 steps around her garden daily with the aid of a walking stick, Mrs Fairnie, 75, has managed to clock up more than 4,000 steps.

Musselburgh Sea Cadets Commanding Officer Chris Gay, said: "Originally we aimed to walk 600km, which was the equivalent to walking to London, but we surpassed that in the first three days so we decided to double it and walk back."

Congratulations Zack

ZACK SNELL was presented with his leading cadet badges by Lt Cdr (SCC) Jon Vanns RNR at Bewl boating station in the presence of cadets and his parents

Zack has been attending virtual training to prepare for his area assessment board, which he past to be promoted to a Leading Cadet at TS Brilliant Tunbridge Wells Sea Cadet unit.

The board consists of Zack being assessed and passing tests on leadership, instructing a class, drill, and having gained boating qualifications as well as being interviewed

Following the presentation his fellow cadets cheered his success but it was not long before Zack had changed into his boating rig and was preparing to launch one of the units new laser sailing boats and take to the water.



Kick-starting career at sea



● MSSC's new kickstarters Harry and Rory are training as boat instructors at London's Royal Docks

THE Marine Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC) is offering high-quality placements for young people aged 18 to 24 who find themselves unemployed as a result of the pandemic.

MSSC has already taken on five trainees at boat stations around Britain – Crosby in Merseyside, Royal Docks in London and Port Edgar in South Queensferry, Scotland – as part of the government's Kickstart Scheme to give valuable work experience to young people.

"Our charity is committed to youth development and we are delighted to support Kickstart to help young adults to experience our amazing boating facilities and learn new skills as a trainee boating instructor," said MSSC's Director of Maritime Training and Development, Darrell Bate.

"We've been really impressed with the calibre of applicants so far. We hope they will be inspired to remain with us as sessional instructors or progress on to one of our apprenticeships."

The government's Kickstart Scheme is a six-month paid job placement with a local employer.

It provides opportunities for young people who are claiming Universal Credit, and are at risk of long term unemployment, to gain experience of working in some of Britain's most exciting companies.

Donation in memory of Prince

MUSTON Parish Council have presented Filey Sea Cadets with a donation in memory of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh.

At a meeting of the parish council it was unanimously agreed that the cadets would be a fitting organisation to receive the donation due to their work with young people and their love of the sea, which Prince Philip was passionate about.

Chairman of Muston Parish Council, Cllr Gemma Owen, presented the cheque to Nick Ingham, Chairman of Filey Sea Cadets at the end of April and said: "This is a small token of our appreciation in recognition of the hard work, life skill opportunities and outstanding results community groups such as Sea Cadets can offer to young people"

Mr Ingham said: "We are incredibly grateful to Muston Parish Council for this donation in memory of Prince Philip."

Pictured are Chairman of Muston Parish Council, Cllr Gemma Owen presenting a cheque to Nick Ingham, Chairman of Filey Sea Cadets



Lions fund new kayak

BANBURY Sea Cadets are able to buy a new kayak for the unit thanks to a donation from the Lions Club of Banbury.

Following a full clean of their meeting base and with the weather warming up, the Banbury Sea Cadets are now back on the water and putting their skills into action.

"Banbury Lions are delighted to have been able to help the Sea Cadets with the donation of a new kayak," said John Coupleditch, Banbury Lions Club President.

"We are keen on supporting organisations that engage young people and give them a sense of purpose and achievement. We hope that this is the start of a great relationship between the Lions and the Sea Cadets in Banbury."

Great to be back on the water

TEN cadets from Boldon School in Tyne and Wear found their sea legs again during a trip aboard TS Royalist this spring.

The school's Sea Cadet unit is now looking forward to new adventures as restrictions are lifted further.

The school's post-16 co-ordinator, Ingrid Moir, who runs the cadet unit, said: "Ten of our cadets and two staff members enjoyed the trip on board TS Royalist."

"This was our first face-to-face activity in over 12 months, and we were the first cadets to board TS Royalist since lockdown restrictions began in March last year."

Ingrid continued: "Our adventure was exhilarating, and many cadets are now planning a week-long voyage with the Sea Cadets."

"The impact of the trip was immediately evident. Cadets were discussing their future and career aspirations with the crew."

"One cadet who aspires to be a cook in the Royal Navy had a conversation with the Royalist cook and another who is studying IT discussed the different entry routes with the engineer."

Some very positive feedback from parents and carers was received, who were proud of their children's achievements on the day and grateful to the Sea Cadet Corps for funding this opportunity.



£4m training centre for Sheppey approved

PLANS for a multi-million pound state-of-the-art sea cadet training centre on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent has been approved.

The scheme was put forward by Sheppey Sea Cadets in October 2019.

It was given backing by Swale Council but the details had to be amended after consultation with Historic England.

"It has been a long time coming," said Vice-Chairman of Sheppey's Sea Cadets, Andy Willmore.

"This project has been in the making since 2016. Delay was caused by discussions with Historic England, mainly due to the proximity of the new building to the canal, which is The Queenborough Lines, and a scheduled monument."

The now historic monument was created in the 19th Century to defend Sheerness Naval Dockyard from the French.

Sheppey has become one of the major training centres for Sea Cadets learning to sail, row, sailboard and kayak in the south east. But the buildings have been deteriorating and have been difficult and expensive to maintain.

Plans include the demolition of existing buildings at Barton's Point Coastal Park in Sheerness to replace them with twin two-storey blocks.

The new buildings, inspired by boat hulls, will have stone and timber cladding with solar panels and pitched roofs. One block will house reception, administration, training and catering facilities on the ground with dormitories for 66 cadets above.

The other block will feature a boat workshop, garage for coastguard vehicles, teaching spaces, wardrobe and a wet changing area.

The existing concrete barracks-style building on a former military firing range date back to wartime and has been used by cadets since 1954.



Ship simulator proves a hit

THE enterprising young people and volunteers at Birkenhead Unit in Wirral, Merseyside have made good use of their time during lockdown to convert a disused office space into an interactive ship simulator.

The 15 square metre space boasts a state-of-the-art sound system, portholes and red glow navigation lights so that cadets can experience what it's like to navigate at night.

Mike Larsen, Commanding Officer for the unit said: "With many of our cadets taking part in an online navigation course during lockdown, we wanted to give them the opportunity to get a more 'hands on' experience of what it's like to navigate different vessels around the globe."

"The ship simulator gives them the opportunity to put their navigation skills to the test and keep learning enjoyable."

Teamwork is the order of the day in the new navigation classroom, with cadets working together to read nautical charts and use technology to plan their route before setting sail on the ship simulator.

"I was really surprised at how realistic the simulator is," said Hannah, one of the cadets. "It will help us put the training into practice and keep navigation interesting."

The unit's Training Officer, Ricardo Ermocilla, added: "Projects like this will keep Sea Cadets moving towards the future by providing the best possible virtual experience."



New HQ opened in Jersey

THE Jersey Sea Cadets' new headquarters at Rouge Bouillon, St Helier in Jersey was formally opened by Home Affairs Minister, Len Norman (pictured by Cleo Leather).

Lieutenant David Thompson, the Jersey Sea Cadets' new Commanding Officer, said: "It's taken five months of building work to make the former police headquarters suitable, safe and multi-functional for our cadets. That's over 2,000 combined volunteer hours to turn the four-storey building into a cadet unit!"

"All the hard work has paid off – we now have two huge halls, a Junior Rates' Mess with industrial galley, nine dedicated classrooms and ample storage facilities."

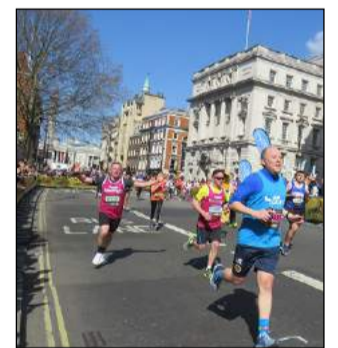
The new headquarters is a temporary solution until they are able to build a new unit for its over 100 cadets.

Mr Norman said: "I would like to reassure the group that I am committed to also delivering a permanent base for them."

"We will be working with the Sea Cadets to ensure that their needs are met and they have a good-quality and appropriate facility to operate from."

"In the meantime, I am very pleased that we have been able to deliver this new temporary facility for them."

The Jersey Unit is currently recruiting for volunteers to help with the influx of new cadets. If you would like to get involved, please email sccjersey@gmail.com.



Run the London Marathon

THE London Marathon is back! Get a coveted place for 3 October 2021 with #TeamSeaCadets

When you join our team, you'll receive a digital fundraising and welcome pack, Sea Cadets technical running top, personalised fundraising and training support and access to a private #TeamSeaCadets Facebook group to meet other runners.

We'll also support you with any questions you may have leading up to the event and have an amazing cheer point on the day to spur you on.

When you finish you'll even get a limited edition finisher's medal and t-shirt and access to professional photos!

Visit <https://www.sea-cadets.org/get-started/london-marathon> for more details.



Keeping you in the driving seat

Allied to a 5-Star service, Forces Cars Direct offer a specialist new car service for all serving Armed Forces personnel and veterans and are committed to listening to your needs and sourcing the right car for you.



Save money

Our customers save an average of £4,500.



Part exchange welcome

All vehicles are accepted.



Covid-safe nationwide delivery

Your new car can be delivered direct to your door.

Audi Q3

35 Tfsi Sport 5dr S Tronic

FCD Price: £28,004.64

SAVE: £5,260.36



Volkswagen Polo

1.0 TSI 95 Match 5dr DSG

FCD Price: £16,467.62

SAVE: £3,222.38



SEAT Leon

1.5 TSI EVO FR 5dr

FCD Price: £18,927.49

SAVE: £5,132.51



Skoda Octavia Hatchback

1.5 TSI SE L 5dr

FCD Price: £20,307.79

SAVE: £5,062.20



Volvo XC90

B5 (D) Momentum AWD Auto

FCD Price: £47,455.00

SAVE: £7,755.00

Over £100 million saved for our customers since 2001!



Call: 01522 814 010 Or visit: www.forcescarsdirect.com

Images for illustration only. Prices and details correct at time of print. Prices for standard model only and do not include any optional extras, please ask for additional options and for your bespoke quote. Discounts vary between makes and models. Delivery costs and restrictions may apply. Forces Cars Direct Limited T/A Cars Direct, Forces Leasing and Motor Source, is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FRN:672273). We act as a credit broker not a lender. We can introduce you to a limited number of lenders who may be able to offer you finance facilities for your purchase. We will only introduce you to these lenders. We may receive a commission payment from the finance or hire provider if you decide to enter into an agreement with them. The nature of this commission is as follows: we receive a fixed fee per finance agreement entered into and we receive a volume bonus if the number of sales we achieve reaches a specific target. You can request for us to disclose the amount of any commission received. The commission received does not affect the amount you will pay under your finance agreement. You may be able to obtain finance for your purchase from other lenders and you are encouraged to seek alternative quotations. If you would like to know how we handle complaints, please ask for a copy of our complaints handling process. You can also find information about referring a complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) at financial-ombudsman.org.uk



Testing times for volunteer

LEADING Hand Simon Davies from HMS Flying Fox is currently mobilised in support of the fight against Covid-19.

Simon, from Bristol, said: "In February 2021, shortly after being made redundant, I volunteered to be mobilised to MoD Shrivenham, which is currently hosting the 'Defence Managed Quarantine Service' (DMQS).

"The DMQS is a facility to quarantine Defence personnel, including civil servants, returning from red list countries, for ten days. During the period of their stay, personnel are tested to ensure they are free of Covid-19, including any variants.

"My role is to support the J1, or administration function, ensuring personnel are 'checked in' with the correct details and that we can track their quarantine over the ten days they are with the service.

"I also provide admin support to the walk-in testing facility, part of the DQMS.

"I'm second-in-command (2IC) of the J1 Cell; so take responsibility for the administrative output when the IC is away."

DMQS is currently a tri-service facility, with its operational personnel being sourced from all three services; Navy, Army and Air Force, featuring a strong mix of both regular and reserve personnel.

Simon added: "The last year has shown that the unexpected is just around the corner. Being part of the Reserves means you have some security and that you can be part of the nation's response to significant events. I have been mobilised before to the Middle East and I have learned so much and had some amazing experiences over the last 14 years."

New home is fit for a King (Alfred)

NEW facilities for HMS King Alfred have been completed for the 270-strong formation of Maritime Reserves based in Portsmouth.

ADC, Commander of the Maritime Reserves, visited the new King Alfred buildings when they were formally handed over by Naval Base Commander, Cdre JJ Bailey.

King Alfred is moving from a centre on Whale Island to the naval base, now occupying parts of historic Semaphore Tower and utilising adjacent buildings.

It is the largest element of a £11 million refurbishment of the Watering Island area at the southern end of the dockyard. The project was managed by BAE Systems.

Cdre Robinson said: "We are very grateful to BAE Systems for their sterling work in adapting the facilities at Watering Island to create a new home for our Portsmouth-based Reservists.

"The buildings represent far more to us than the sum of their component parts. Situated right at the heart of the Royal Navy's waterfront activity in Portsmouth, it will enable our Reservists to work and train in even closer alignment with their regular colleagues and strengthen our working relationships with the ships of the Royal Navy."

Cdre Bailey said: "It is exciting to see this area of the Naval Base becoming a future-facing centre of modern RN activity at the heart of the waterfront. It gives me great pleasure to welcome the men and women of HMS King Alfred to their impressive new home and congratulate everyone involved in



its completion."

Also joining the Royal Naval Reserve of King Alfred are the Portsmouth detachment of the Royal Marines Reserve, who are similarly moving across from Whale Island.

They have been given a new drill shed, gym, messes and a wardroom overlooking the harbour, classrooms and offices – including a virtual reality training suite featuring programmes to operate sea boats and acquaint themselves with the various classes of Royal Navy vessels. An adjacent camber has also been revitalised, and from here the reservists will take sea boats out for training rather than relying on VR.

Cdre Robinson added: "As an organisation, we are transforming for 21st-Century operations and a key element of this is

ensuring that Reservists get more time at sea in the early stages of their careers. The new HMS King Alfred will not only offer a thoroughly-modern training facility for our Reservists but will play a vital role in delivering a new Maritime Reserves for a new Royal Navy."

Commander Andrew Robinson, Commanding Officer of King Alfred, said: "As one of the largest Reserve units in the UK, we contribute to global operational capability with a range of specialist skills in support of the Royal Navy.

"Our ability to attract and retain exceptional individuals in the Royal Naval Reserve will be greatly enhanced by the new, modern and fit-for-purpose facilities."

Pictures: LPhot Belinda Alker

Steep learning curve

ROYAL Navy Reservist Lt Nick Hargreaves volunteered to help out during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The HMS Eaglet reservist, who in his civilian life manages a t-shirt printing and embroidery company, found himself at Donnington Barracks in Shropshire, home of 11 Signals and West Midlands Brigade and Joint Military Command West Midlands.

"Daily, I attend briefs; meetings (through Microsoft Teams, Skype, and Zoom) prepare reports and write briefs. The more you practise, the more that it becomes second nature.

"The report and brief writing elements are areas that I have learned a lot more about.

"Most importantly, I have learned (and am still learning!) how to work with all different ranks and rates from Tri-services and the 'slang' that different



services use in conversation.

"The structure of the military naturally lends itself to supporting the emergency services, NHS, schools and whoever else requires it at relatively short notice. This process is called a MACA (Military Aid to Civilian Authorities).

"Covid-19 has been a large-scale programme which the military has helped to prevent manning shortages in hospitals and a lot more."



PEMBROKE HOUSE
The Royal Naval Benevolent Trust's Care Home

www.rnbt.org.uk

Providing a home from home for older members of the **Royal Naval family**

Located close to the historic Chatham Dockyard, we provide 24 hour nursing and residential care in our exceptional building that features good sized, well furnished rooms, en-suite facilities, comfortable communal areas and landscaped gardens.

We believe personal enrichment shouldn't stop when you move in with us, so we don't just provide quality of care, we ensure quality of life.



11 Oxford Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 4BS
Call **01634 852431** or email enquiries@pembrokehouse-rnbt.org.uk

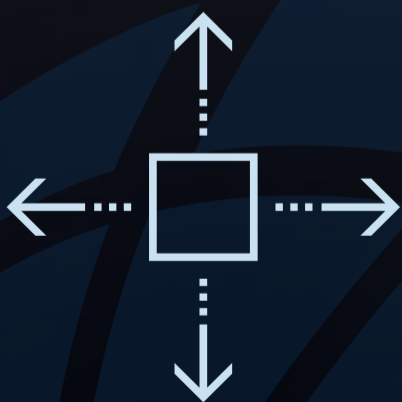


Independent technical expertise and consultancy

BMT remains a trusted partner to help overcome the complex engineering and programme challenges faced when delivering, and supporting, the world-class equipment used by the Royal Navy.

With over thirty years of defence maritime experience and a wealth of professional engineering, asset management and programme management expertise, we are proud to play our part in ensuring that naval assets remain safe, capable and available.

With a long-term commitment to R&D and innovation, we solve the problems of today and shape the ideas of tomorrow.



www.bmt.org



Find out more about BMT's
design, acquisition and
support expertise

Westminster's warm welcome home



HMS Westminster returned home following a highly successful 15-week deployment protecting the UK's interests in home waters, North Atlantic and northern Europe.

Rear Admiral Simon Asquith, the Royal Navy's Commander Operations, embarked during the morning to welcome the frigate back to her base port at the conclusion of her patrol.

It took her from the Baltic to the Channel Islands, including monitoring a passing Russian submarine. The deployment also took in various trials, training and exercises, including working with the RAF's new P8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft.

HMS Westminster's Commanding Officer, Commander Louise Ray, said: "I am extremely proud of all of my sailors who have been in Covid isolation onboard, away from their families since January 2.

"It always astounds me how much they are prepared to give up but still keep driving forward to achieve the goals set to them."



The ship's company have now spent nine months of the previous 12 in a social bubble to reduce the risks of Covid and maintain operational effectiveness.

This deployment also included a first for the Royal Navy; a refueling at sea for a warship from a Royal Fleet Auxiliary tanker for which both ships were commanded by women.

After completing the refueling, the two vessels continued separately into the Baltic to rendezvous with HMS Lancaster for multi-national exercises.

Throughout her deployment, Westminster encountered seriously heavy seas, twice needing to take shelter before continuing patrols.

The ship's company did make the most of the time together and prepared for the next deployment later in the year by qualifying two new flight deck officers, a new captain of the turret and captain of the gun bay.

A spell of maintenance now follows for Westminster, with a return to operations later in the year.

Pictures: LPhot Rory Arnold



Marines' future in new hands

THE mission of re-forging the Royal Marines into a hi-tech raiding force continually deployed around the globe has changed hands.

Lieutenant General Robert Magowan becomes Commandant General Royal Marines – the most senior officer in the Corps – after Major General Matt Holmes handed over the role at a supersession ceremony at the Commando Training Centre in Devon.

Lt Gen Magowan takes charge as the Royal Marines embrace new technologies and tactics, and lay down plans to be a constant presence in strategically important areas of the world as part of Future Commando Force developments.

"For centuries the Royal Marines have gone about their business, doing the hard yards with an understated courage and pride," Lt Gen Magowan said.

"To be amongst them, a part of them, encouraging them to go a bit further, climb a bit higher, is a tremendous personal honour for me, and it always will be.

"As I take over as Commandant General, the Royal Marines are once again adapting and responding to new adversarial threats and wider challenges.

"The Future Commando Force is an exciting and wholly appropriate manifestation of that adaptability.

"It signals a future based on persistent presence, dispersal, and an even closer maritime integration. I am proud to tell people that I have been the head of our Corps, always said with a quiet humility, and so I will be again."

The ceremony at Lympstone – where civilians are turned into Royal Marine ranks and officers in one of the longest and most demanding training courses in any of the world's armed forces – was attended by First Sea Lord, Admiral Tony Radakin, Deputy Commandant General Royal Marines, Brigadier Tony Turner, 3 Commando Brigade's commander Brigadier Richard Cantrill and Colonel Simon Chapman, the Commandant of the training centre.

Maj Gen Holmes departs after nearly two years at the helm.

He said: "These are exciting times for the corps. Our Commando Force, suitably equipped and persistently forward deployed, offers an enticing future for all Royal Marines.

"I'd certainly join to do it all over again and much of that is because of the quality of people we attract then train rigorously.

"It's been an enormous privilege to serve you all and our wonderful, wider Corps Family as an immensely proud Commandant General Royal



Marines. Thank you.

"We must remain ready to deliver operational excellence, as we do every day, to reinforce our global reputation and remind our adversaries when necessary."

First Sea Lord, Admiral Tony Radakin said: "I congratulate General Matt Holmes for his sterling leadership of the Corps over the last two years, and wish General Rob Magowan every success as he assumes the mantle of CGRM."

Lt Gen Magowan joined the Royal Marines in 1989 after reading chemistry at Southampton University.

He has served in Northern Ireland, Afghanistan and was second in command of 42 Commando during the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The 53-year-old has worked in the Cabinet Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and

the Ministry of Defence, with a particular focus on intelligence.

He deployed to Helmand Province in Afghanistan during his command of 30 Commando Information Exploitation Group and was later Chief of Staff of the National Contingent Commander in Kabul, Commodore Naval Personnel Strategy and then Commander Joint Forces Intelligence Group.

Lt Gen Magowan became Commandant General Royal Marines, for the first time, and Commander United Kingdom Amphibious Forces in 2016. He also assumed command of the European Union Naval Force Somalia.

He has been Deputy Commander UK Strategic Command since January 2020.

Future Commando Force explained, see pages 24-25

Picture: LPhot Joe Cater



RBL helps veteran to reignite his passions

FORMER Royal Marine, Nick Redshaw, from Telford, Shropshire, is an accomplished artist, founder and chairman of the Royal Marines Art Society and was a hugely successful competitive canoeist during his military career.

Joining the Corps in 1985, Nick served for 15 years until his medical discharge in the year 2000 after suffering a series of brain haemorrhages.

Although Nick managed to pursue a new career in teaching, in 2018 he suffered a breakdown.

In the months following, Nick and his wife, Bethan, pictured above, went to the Royal Marines Charity for help and support with his recovery and the Royal British Legion's Battle Back Centre was suggested.

A fully-funded centre for wounded, injured and sick service people past and present, the centre aids in each person's individual recovery programme.

Nick said: "After my discharge, I had thrown myself into my teaching and gaining new qualifications and I suppose I was trying to put a brave face on what had happened and move on.

"What I didn't realise at the time throughout the years before my breakdown was that I had been masking my struggles, sweeping my experiences throughout my illness and discharge under the carpet and I kept going.

"Eventually I became paranoid, stressed and anxious over time and I had completely turned my back on sports, dropping everything after being at the top of my game as a

World Class canoeist. This all culminated in things coming to a head in 2018."

Upon arriving at Battle Back, Nick was the only marine on the course, but as he soon found out that didn't matter.

"Battle Back was life-changing. It was my first experience of being back in the fold of Armed

Forces people, which made me nervous, but I was soon assured there was nothing to be scared of, with no formalities or ranks – it was just veterans together, taking some time to recover and rediscover."

Battle Back took Nick and his fellow participants through a week-long course of activities and exercises to aid recovery – no matter what stage each individual was at. Nick rediscovered his love of sport and even got back into the canoe!

"The confidence came flooding back and the best bit was I was being re-charged with 19 other people at my side.

"We were all supporting each other and it was simply amazing. I can't express how humbled I am by the whole experience, I would recommend it to anyone seeking a reset or guidance in their recovery."

Nick has recently reignited his passion for art, after becoming a Royal Marine Illustrator in 1989, and has set up a virtual branch of the Royal Marines Arts Society.

It aims to reach out to those with a close link to the Corps share their art in a safe and supportive environment, as well as to learn and develop in a space away from stress and anxiety.



Lapping it up for charity

ANYONE for tennis?

Not Petty Officer Andy Ireson, despite spending several hours on the courts at Yeovilton.

Not a ball was hit over a ten-day period by the senior rating... but he did pound the underlay ferociously.

Confined to base as part of quarantine measures to ensure his squadron can deploy with RFA Mounts Bay on spring and summer exercises in the Baltic, the Wildcat engineer with 847 Naval Air Squadron decided to put his isolation to good use.

He vowed to run 100 kilometres – ten per day over ten days, with the Yeovilton tennis court as his track.

When not maintaining the battlefield/amphibious variant of the helicopter, he's been volunteering with Exmoor Search and Rescue for the past four years.

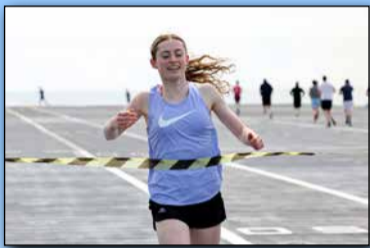
The team helps the police with searches for loss/missing walkers on the moors, and helps ambulance crews with recovering casualties from some of the more remote and inaccessible locations.

It costs around £25,000 per year to provide the service – money which comes entirely from donations.

By running 1,240 laps of the tennis court, Andy hopes to raise around £4,000 for his teammates, money which will be spent on vital operational equipment.

You can support his efforts via <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fundraiser-display/showROFundraiserPage?userUrl=AndyIreson&pageUrl=1>

Carry on running



ROYAL Navy personnel aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth put on their running gear for the carrier's inaugural flight deck 5km park run.

The event saw 72 athletes, from all departments, squadrons, ranks and rates, complete 12-and-a-half 400m laps around the flight deck.

The event was the brainchild of the ship's club swinger CPO(PTI) Daz Hoare, who said: "I was on the bridge closed up in specials for a Replenishment-at-Sea and was talking to the captain about what we could do to make use of the no-fly day the following day.

"A 5km run is relatively quick and easy to organise. Seventy-two people took part, all ranks and rates from every department, which was a good effort given it was

mostly advertised by word-of-mouth.

"We've got a seven-and-half month deployment ahead of us, so it's something that can build and hopefully turn into a league."

Fastest aboard the ship were ET Jack Watts, who completed in 19.09 minutes, and for the women, AB Jessica McLenaghan, of 820 NAS, who finished the 5km in 20.27 minutes.

CPO(PTI) Hoare said the event was the first in a planned series, with the ship eventually hosting a 10k run during her deployment with the Carrier Strike Group, see pages 2-3 and 20-21.

It also served as great practice for those personnel planning to take part in the virtual London Marathon on October 3.

Pictures: LPhot Unaisi Luke



Squad heralds return of Navy cricket

THE sound of the thwack of leather on willow heralded the return of Royal Navy cricket.

The Royal Navy Development Squad met for the first time in more than a year at Burnaby Road in Portsmouth last month.

It was also the first time that any Navy cricket was able to be played at any of the grounds since the lockdown and marked an exciting moment with the return of Navy Cricket for 2021.

Under the careful and experienced eye of Lt Cdr 'BJ' Smith, the team coach, team manager, PO Nick Brooks and team Captain LH Karl Pritchard, 16 players of the Development Squad, of which eight were new, had a full days training.

The session culminated with a training match over at Temeraire, where players got the opportunity to get their 'eye' back into the sport practicing

those essential skills in batting, bowling and fielding, as well as having a considerable amount of fun.

Despite a shortened season, there are still loads of fixtures throughout June, July, August and September.

The Development Inter-Services T20 Men's Dev tournament at Portsmouth CC takes place on July 1 and the Inter-Services Men's T20 at Arundel Castle on September 10, which is filling in, this season, for the usual tournament at Lords and will be well worth watching.

If you're interested in playing and developing your cricket skills, at any level, please contact your local PTI, who should be able to help you make contact with your unit or nearest Service cricket team or Bob Mitchell (Robert.Mitchell250@mod.gov.uk – 0300 1629024).



Riding out the storm

Military equestrian contest goes online during pandemic



● Above, Sub Lieutenant Fleur Spencer; Left, AB Robyn McFadden and below, Lt Cdr Suzanne Clark



LIKE so many other Service sports the Royal Navy Equestrian Association's (RNEA) competitive fixtures were heavily impacted by Covid-19 in 2020.

After seeing the civilian Hickstead – Rotterdam Dressage challenge last summer, where international riders competed against each other in a televised setting, the embryo of an idea grew to set up an online challenge for armed forces personnel to compete remotely against another nation.

Lt Cdr Nicole Sherriff-Vonk, an exchange officer from the Royal Netherlands Navy, took the lead for the RNEA to organize the online Armed Forces Nations League for UK and Netherlands military riders to compete against each other via a Dutch online dressage platform WeAllRide.

Competing online provides a Covid-compliant way for riders to demonstrate their dressage skills.

Tests are recorded on video and uploaded for judging; this format creates multiple benefits to riders from them not having to travel great distances and allowing test to be ridden at a time and location of their convenience.

The competition consists of three qualifying rounds at a variety of levels to identify the top 5 riders from each nation to compete against each other in the finale.

The first round concluded with 13 riders entering for the UK and six riders

competing for the Netherlands.

Royal Navy senior rider Lt Cdr Suzanne Clark and her horse Billy are top of the leader board for the UK team with a brilliant score of over 69 percent, closely followed by AB Robyn McFadden on her mum's horse Pyper as the second best Royal Navy rider.

Robyn has been deployed since December but managed to ride and enter her test during her three weeks leave.

Home for Robyn and Pyper is in Ireland and therefore this online competition is a great opportunity to participate in a team event without the considerable complication of travelling which includes a ferry trip with the horse lorry.

Lt Cdr Jill Monnox and SLt Fleur Spencer are also flying the ensign for the Royal Navy amidst the UK competitors

The interim scores after the first round see the UK sitting on an average of 67.89 percent and NL on 68.07 percent, but with two more rounds to follow there is still much to play for before the top five UK riders (from across all three Services) are pitted against their NL counterparts in the final.

The contest already has the signs of being an exceptionally close one and we look forward to reporting on the conclusion of this unique competition in the summer.

Words: Lt Cdr Nicole Sherriff-Vonk



An irreplaceable loss to naval history

FOR the past 15 years these pages have been graced with the iconoclastic, erudite, sometimes controversial views of Professor Eric Grove, a giant among naval historians of the last half century.

Shortly after finishing his review for our May edition, he died suddenly at home in Lytham St Annes at the age of 73.

It's not just readers of *Navy News* who will remember Eric. A generation of naval officers were taught by him, many more have heard him speak or received comments and feedback from him on papers they've submitted in the course of their studies.

Born in Bolton in December 1948, his association with the Navy began in 1971 when he joined Britannia Royal Naval College as a civilian lecturer in strategic studies.

He spent 13 years in Dartmouth and the institution became a part of him as much as any Officer Cadet who has moved through its corridors.

Eric co-wrote the college's 75th anniversary history and frequently returned after leaving in 1984 to deliver the Britannia Lecture or attend a Mess Dinner in the Senior Gun

Room, having also written about the great battles celebrated on its walls. His official association with the college only came to an end in 2019 having served as the external examiner for the BSc (Hons) Defence Studies degree.

He also spent a year as a guest lecturer at the alma mater of the US Navy's Officer Corps, Annapolis, was a frequent contributor to conferences and publications by the Royal United Services Institute, and held a string of titles for his work: Vice President and Fellow of the Society for Nautical Research, a member of Council of the Navy Records Society, a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, President of Maritime History North and a First Sea Lord's Fellow.

Other positions included working with the Foundation for International Security, lecturing at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich, and the University of Cambridge.

In the mid-90s he helped the MOD draft the first volume of British Maritime Doctrine during a 12-year stint as a senior lecturer at the University of Hull, before he moved on to Salford University as Professor of Naval History and ended his full-time academic days down the road at Liverpool Hope in

2015. And as well as inspiring generations of students and future naval leaders, Eric was just at home among veterans at reunions and gatherings of ship associations.

He was also a prodigious author of more than a dozen tomes, from detailed studies of naval policy, strategy and politics to general histories and accounts of specific battles.

Perhaps most people will recognise him as a 'talking head' on television from offering insight into the latest military-global political issues, to sharing his naval knowledge on documentaries, such as the one which accompanied the search for the Bismarck and Hood 20 years ago (the great battle-cruiser's demise was one subject which particularly fascinated him).

Eric was flamboyant – never seen without his trademark bow tie – passionate about his subject matter, difficult to pin down (seemingly always in a hurry and speaking at a million miles an hour...), yet he always yearned to learn more and delighted when a new book could add to his already vast naval knowledge.

These pages – and all of naval history – will be the poorer for his passing.

Back – and better Ex-sailor Trevor aims for top ranking with Rankin

THE nation's premier historic naval museum has reopened with hi-tech displays to welcome visitors back after a five-month break.

Staff in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard used the enforced closure of the site by the pandemic lockdown to complete telling the story of HMS Victory, her crew and battles, with a new, interactive gallery.

The dockyard last welcomed tourists six days before Christmas and with more than 80 per cent of the historic dockyard's revenue coming from visitors, the site has been hit hard by the pandemic.

The Royal Navy has provided more than £4.4m to the National Museum while the government's 'cultural recovery fund' has provided more than £1.2m to support both the Mary Rose and the boatbuilding academy on site.

"Without visitors, we will not survive," said Professor Dominic Tweddle, the national museum's director general. "They are our lifeblood. We have sought to use this period to continue to develop our offer. Ours is a world-class experience and we are optimistic that this summer will be a safe and memorable one."

The new gallery – HMS Victory: The Nation's Flagship – occupies the original museum on the site, built opposite the great vessel and constructed in large part to house William Wyllie's panorama of Trafalgar (13 metres long, four high).

The huge painting (pictured) has been redisplayed and digitally reinterpreted so visitors can get even closer to it – and understand it better.

The rest of the gallery has similarly been brought into the 21st Century with a large format cinematic film, interactive screens/displayed.

Alongside the tech, the museum's



curators and custodians have also used the hiatus to reinvigorate existing displays, and add new and hitherto unseen items, led by a section of wooden foremast from Victory which was shot through by a French cannonball at Trafalgar.

Also going on display is a life mask of Nelson taken in Naples in 1798 and later used to produce a marble sculpture of him by Anne Seymour Damer, along with a figurehead that was once appeared on the bow of fifth-rate HMS Minerva between 1820 and 1895.

The aim is to tell the story not just of Nelson and the Royal Navy's greatest triumph, but the 256-year history of Victory, her era, her crew and her decline and salvation in the early decades of the 20th Century.

"Visitors love HMS Victory and they never tire of her story," said lead curator Andrew Baines.

"Even those who think they know all about the ship, will discover something new."

Later this summer the Mary Rose Trust will unveil its new 'immersive experience' which will give visitors the chance to virtually sail aboard Henry VIII's flagship at her final battle in the Solent in July 1545.

As before the current lockdown, visitors will have to book in advance – you cannot turn up at Victory Gate on the day – with tickets and timed slots available for reservation via www.historicdockyard.co.uk.

As well as the central museum/historic dockyard, its various branches – the RN Submarine and Explosion firepower museums in Gosport, the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton and HMS Trincomalee in Hartlepool – have also reopened, with the same caveats about booking in advance.

FORMER Writer turned writer Trevor Wood takes on the giants of crime fiction next month.

His debut novel *The Man on the Street* is one of 18 books selected for the No.1 prize in crime-writing, the Theakston's Crime Novel of the Year.

The novel – about a homeless RN veteran who sees a murder but no-one believes him – has already won the Crime Writers' Association's John Creasey Dagger for the best debut crime novel of the year.

It's been praised by Lee Child – behind the international best-selling Jack Reacher series – and named a 'book of the year' by *The Guardian*.

Now Trevor is up against some of the genre's best-known names such as Val McDermid and Ian Rankin, with the winner announced next month during a four-day crime-fiction festival in Harrogate.

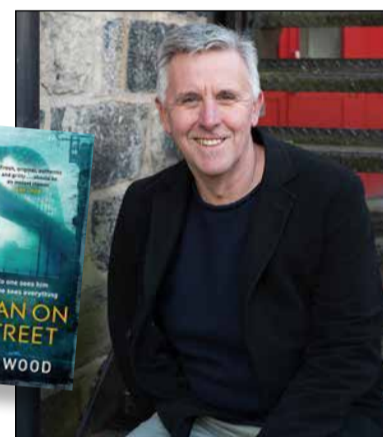
Trevor joined the RN in 1978 as a Writer, serving in HMS Falmouth and Bristol before leaving the Service as a lieutenant in 1994.

Since then he's forged a new career, first as a journalist, then finding success as a playwright, co-writing international hits like *Dirty Dusting* and *Waiting For Gateaux*.

His debut novel, published on the cusp of lockdown last year, received immediate praise and glowing reviews, but the nomination for the crime fiction award has taken the former matelot by surprise.

"This really is beyond my wildest dreams, and I've had some pretty wild ones," Trevor said. "When the book was launched just as the bookshops closed, I feared the worst."

"Twelve months on and it's fighting against the likes of Val McDermid and



Ian Rankin to be named Crime Novel of the Year."

In addition, the book has been 'optioned' for possibly turning into a TV drama by World Productions, behind *Line of Duty* and *Bodyguard*.

"From the moment we read *Man On The Street* we knew it was special," said head of drama Jake Lushington. "The compelling story of a homeless man, who is forced to engage with a society he had given up on, would make a powerful drama all on its own."

"But for a novel to do this, while unravelling all the twists and turns of an utterly compelling thriller, is remarkable. We can't wait to bring it to the screen."

That's for the future. For now Trevor is focused on Harrogate in July.

The crime fiction award is partly decided by public vote so he's hoping shipmates will vote for *The Man on the Street* at harrogatetheakstoncrimeaward.com/vote/

Meanwhile, his second novel, *One Way Street*, is published in hardback this month and is already available as an e-book/audiobook.

WALL SHIELDS OF ROYAL NAVY SHIPS



Hand painted on wooden base 6" x 7"
£58.60 including UK postage and packing
 REDUCED PRICES given for orders of 3 or more
 SPECIAL PRICES given for 10, 25, 50 and 100
 CRESTED TIES TO YOUR OWN SPECIAL DESIGN
 (minimum 50)

Specialist experience over 100 years

C.H. MUNDAY LTD
 Rosemary Cottage, Churt Road, Headley,
 Bordon, Hants GU35 8SS
 Telephone: 01428 714971
 email: enquiries@chmunday.co.uk
www.chmunday.co.uk

Reference code: NAVY

The Royal Alfred Seafarers' Society

Providing the highest standards of residential, nursing, dementia and respite care, including sheltered housing for independent living, for former seafarers and their dependents. Set in a 14 acre estate, our Surrey based care home provides like-minded companionship and support for seafarers and a safe haven for those in old age.

IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO NEEDS OUR HELP, PLEASE CONTACT US
 T- 01737 360 106 E- admin@royalalfred.org.uk www.royalalfredseafarers.com

Personalised Reversible Belt

**ONLY
£29.95
PLUS P&P**



This quality leather belt is easily reversible to show either black or brown. It measures 48 inches (122cm approx.) long and can be cut to length. The buckle can be engraved with up to 3 initials or personalised with an enamel military badge of your choice. Most badges are available.

Please clearly state the badge or initials you require when ordering using BLOCK CAPITALS.



HOW TO ORDER

Order Online - www.awardmedals.com/belt

Order by Phone - Call us between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday on **01952 510053**

Alternatively, please complete the order form enclosing a cheque/postal order or completing the credit card details and send to:

**Award Productions Ltd,
PO Box 300, Shrewsbury, SY5 6WP, UK**

AWARD Guarantee

Your Personalised Reversible Belt is brought to you by Award Productions Ltd, international medallist. You can order with complete confidence knowing that every item is backed by the AWARD guarantee.

AWARD
PROUD TO SERVE

For full terms and conditions please visit our website: www.awardmedals.com

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

Address

..... Postcode

Daytime Tel. No.

Email address

I enclose my cheque/postal order for £ made payable to Award Productions Ltd or please debit my card account no:

..... (Switch only)

Security Code:

Last 3 digits on signature strip

Cards accepted:



Switch Issue No.

Expiry date:

Valid from:

Signature

If cardholder's name, address and signature are different from the one shown, please include these details.

AWARD
PROUD TO SERVE

Order Form

AWARD Productions Ltd, PO Box 300, Shrewsbury, SY5 6WP, UK
Yes, please send me the following belt(s):

Code	Belt	Badge or Initials	Price	Qty	Total £
BELT	With Badge		£29.95		
ENLB	With Initials		£29.95		
(PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS) Postage/Packing/Insurance					£2.50
Total £					

Delivery Subject to availability.
Please allow up to 28 days for delivery.

Award Productions Ltd,
Registered in England No. 2001900, Shrewsbury SY5 6BT

NN08

Orderline: 01952 510053 Online: www.awardmedals.com/belt