



NAVY NEWS

JANUARY 2021

Royals rock

ROYAL Marines from 43 Commando completed demanding training in Gibraltar, testing new kit – part of Future Commando Force modernisation – on cliff assaults and underground missions as they perfect techniques to safeguard the UK's nuclear deterrent
(see pages 20-21)

PICTURE: LPhot Dan Shepherd

Inside: Royal Navy Transformation





RIDERS OF THE STORM

**ARGUS COMPLETES
CARIBBEAN
DEPLOYMENT**

IT'S been an epic but it's now mission accomplished for RFA Argus in the Caribbean.

The end of the deployment didn't fizzle out in any shape or form and the support ship was in the thick of it right up until it was home time.

Argus has been in the Caribbean since April for hurricane season and in last month's *Navy News* we left her as she'd just arrived off the coast of Honduras in the wake of Hurricane Eta.

American Chinooks had just started to use Argus'

spacious flight deck to sustain aid sorties into devastated areas.

It wasn't completely apparent at that stage how long the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship would hang around Central America for, but in the end Argus, after pausing while Hurricane Iota raged and swept through the region, stayed on in Honduras.

Her Commando Merlin helicopters from 845 Naval Air Squadron flew in aid from the coast to isolated communities in the Gracias a Dios Department in the north east of the country.

In all, 101 different bags of aid – weighing a collective 24 tonnes – were packaged and dropped to aid stations during a 48-hour mission to the remote region on Honduras, which has extensive pine savannas, swamps, and rainforest, making it very difficult to access by road.

The aid drops carried tonnes of food, fresh water and shelters to displaced Hondurans, who had been left with out homes and access to the basics to survive after devastating flooding and landslides left fragile infrastructure fractured.

Argus was used as a 'lily pad' for US Army Chinooks to

fly aid missions, while the on-board Merlin and Wildcat helicopters also gathered vital information on reconnaissance sorties, which aided the operations led by US Southern Command and Joint Task Force Bravo.

Lieutenant George Day, a pilot of a Royal Navy Commando Merlin Mk4 helicopter from 845 Naval Air Squadron, said: "UK aid and relief stores are held on Argus and we have been flying them from ship to shore.

"The stores are loaded into 500kg bags which are carried in pairs beneath the aircraft. We hover over the deck and our load team hook them on for us to carry away. Moving stores in this way is the Commando Merlin's bread and butter and it is fantastic to use our skills to help those in need."

Once her Honduras mission was complete, Argus began her journey home, via Antigua and Barbuda to drop off unused aid stores.

The remaining aid was given to the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force to distribute to good causes in the island nation.

After the off load, some maintenance and a well-deserved pizza dinner for the crew, Argus was off back to colder climes.

She leaves the Caribbean with countless dits to spin.

During the deployment, alongside HMS Medway, at the heart of the Royal Navy task group in the region, Argus landed around £400m worth of drugs across operations since the start of September, based on figures from the National Crime Agency.

In the final hurrah of her drugs bust forays, Argus took her own personal total to nearly £378m after acting on reports from an American patrol aircraft.

Argus changed course and launched her Wildcat helicopter from 815 Naval Air Squadron to investigate.

Using powerful sensors, the Wildcat was able to track down a drugs-running go-fast boat.

Royal Marines from 47 Commando's 539 Raiding Squadron were quickly dispatched to give chase.

The commandos and a US Coast Guard team took control of the suspect vessel and several bales of cocaine were seized and the smugglers detained.

RFA Argus's Commanding Officer, Captain Kevin Rimell, said: "It's been such a successful year for counter-narcotics operations, and the RFA Argus has worked hard to deliver repeated success.

"Working with the USCG has been a privilege and together with the expert support from all the RFA sailors and the embarked units on board, the Marines, the Army commandos and the Squadrons, we have all achieved this together."

Since April, the ship has been a reassuring presence across the region during hurricane season and the Covid-19 pandemic, visiting British Overseas Territories, from Bermuda, Turks and Caicos and Montserrat to the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla and the Cayman Islands.

Just check back on your *Navy News* copies since May. Every single month Argus has made the headlines.

There were also stops in Curaçao, where crew helped clear waste plastics strewn across turtles' beach habitats.

As well as working with patrol ship HMS Medway, Argus worked with French, American and Dutch allies, in a jam-packed deployment, which saw her fly the flag with pride.

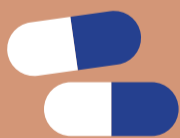
Argus was making her journey home as *Navy News* went to print, arriving back in Falmouth shortly before Christmas.

Pictures by LPhot Robert Oates



TOP: A Merlin helicopter arrives back from aid missions over Honduras. ABOVE: The scene at an aid station as UK aid is sorted for distribution across northern Honduras

RFA ARGUS ON DEPLOYMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN



Seized £400m worth of drugs during operations as part of the Royal Navy task group with patrol ship HMS Medway.



Carried out disaster relief operations in Honduras, dropping 101 bags of UK aid and assessing the hurricane damage.

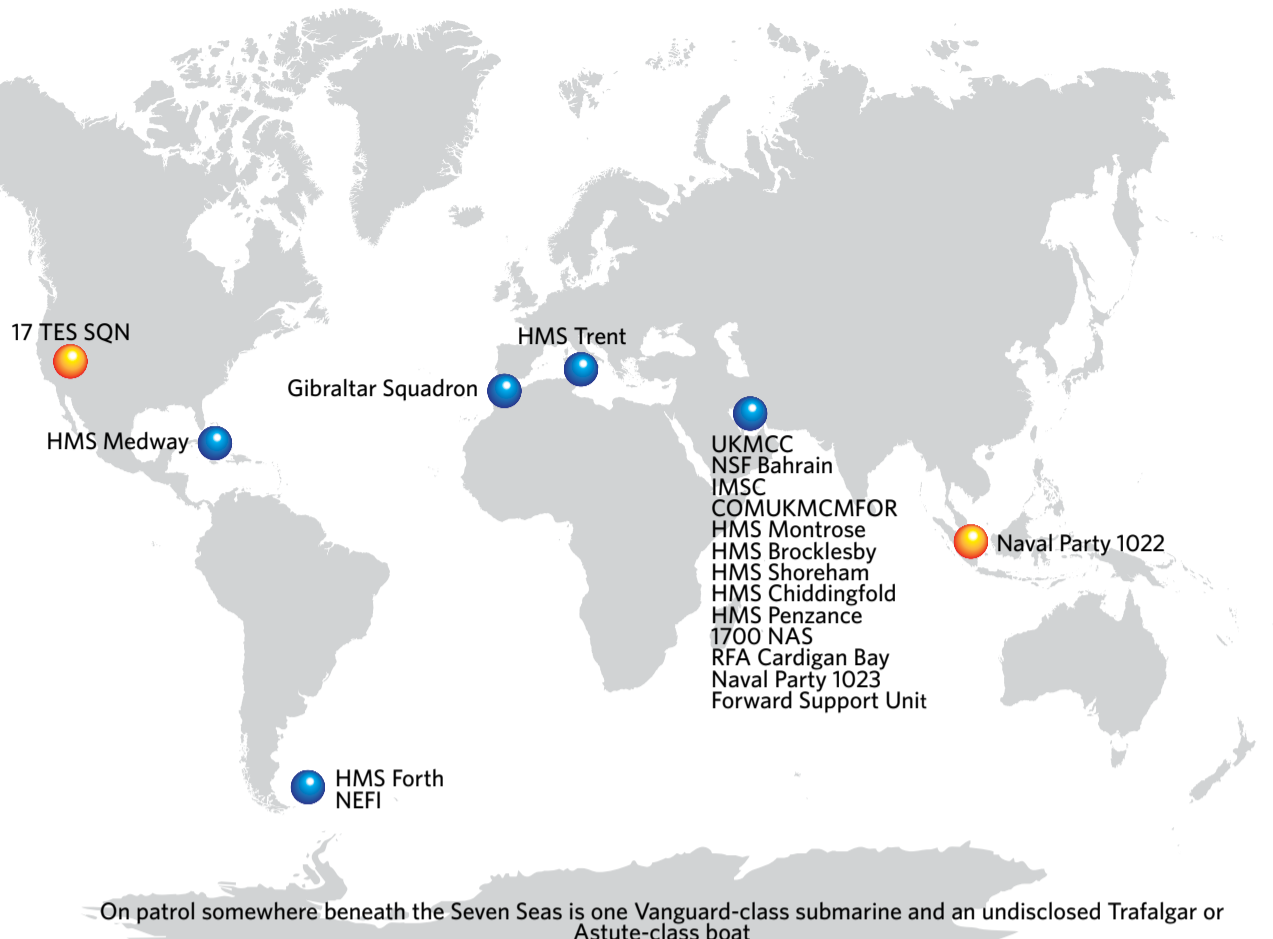
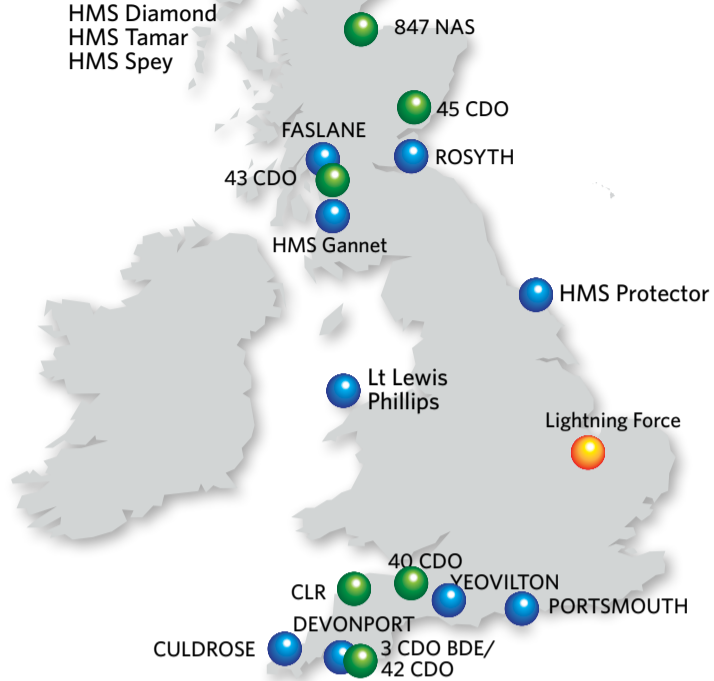


Visited and supported many British Overseas Territories during hurricane season and Covid-19.

Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Northumberland
HMS Lancaster
HMS Richmond
HMS Kent
HMS Tyne
HMS Severn
HMS Mersey
HMS Magpie
HMS Defender
HMS Diamond
HMS Tamar
HMS Spey

Project Wilton
RFA Fort Victoria
RFA Tideforce
814 NAS
815 NAS
820 NAS
824 NAS
617 Sqn



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

GLOBAL NAVY
Protecting our nation's interests

WELCOME to 2021. We kick-off the new year in much the same way as we saw out the old, with the Royal Navy continuing to deliver on operations at home and overseas.

Royal Marines from Scotland-based **43 Commando** Fleet Protection Group rolled out the latest kit on missions scaling cliff faces and battling through Gibraltar's tunnels as they perfected techniques to safeguard the UK's nuclear deterrent (see pages 1 and 20-21).

New kit features strongly this month, with a round-up of **new technology** milestones (see pages 14-15) as the Royal Navy and Royal Marines look to bring more technology to the frontline.

Cutting-edge **autonomous minehunters** will change the way the Royal Navy counters the threat of sea mines and reduces the risks faced by sailors on the frontline (see page 13).

RFA Argus deployed from the Caribbean to Honduras to assist after the country was devastated by Hurricanes Eta and Iota (see pages 2-3). Pilots and crew from **845** and **815** Naval Air Squadrons flew vital reconnaissance missions over the Central American nation.

Over in the USA and Royal Navy personnel based with **NATO** (see page 9) are preparing for a milestone exercise this year.

A Royal Navy officer is currently serving as the navigator of the **USS Winston S Churchill**, a practice which goes back 20 years (see page 19).

To the Med now and UK flagship **HMS Albion** and supporting amphibious ship **RFA Lyme Bay** joined forces with ITS Giuseppe Garibaldi and her escorts in the central Mediterranean (see pages 16-17). Albion and Lyme Bay have formed the core of the UK's Littoral Response Group, which has spent the autumn conducting trials and exercises to help shape the amphibious forces and Royal Marines of the future.

Also in the Med is **HMS Trent** as the offshore patrol vessel joined NATO allies for Operation Sea Guardian (see page 6).

In the Gulf and **HMS Brocklesby** (see page 24) joined American and Saudi ships for a four-day workout to test their minehunting skills.

Back to the UK and eight Royal Navy ships – **HMS Northumberland, Lancaster, Richmond, Tyne, Kent, Severn, and RFA Tideforce and Tiderace** – monitored significant Russian presence close to UK waters (see page 5).

The crew of **HMS Northumberland** prepared to spend Christmas away from their families (see page 7) as they continued their vital mission to protect UK waters.

Commando aviators from **847 NAS** hit the ranges in Scotland (see page 6) as they enhanced their ability to bring down a hail of explosive firepower by day and night.

Sailors returned to **Palace Guarding** duty (see page 33) for two weeks in December, the third time since 2017 that the Royal Navy has provided guards to the Royal Palaces.

Five Royal Navy officers have been decorated for their efforts (see page 19) keeping trade flowing through the Middle East as they are named in the latest batch of **Operational Honours**.

Interest in joining the Royal Navy has surged during the pandemic, prompting a third naval base – **HMS Collingwood** – to take raw recruits and turn them into sailors (see page 27).

RFA Fort Victoria is being put through her paces off the South Coast of England (see page 11) and supply chain specialist, Leading Seaman William Downie, provided a day-in-the-life glimpse of life aboard.

Royal Navy aviator **Lieutenant Lewis Phillips** has made history after earning his Wings on the military's new fast-jet trainer (see page 24) at RAF Valley.

HMS Defender's trophy cabinet will soon be bulging (see page 26) after the Type 45 destroyer picked up six titles in the Royal Navy's new Surface Flotilla awards.

Last March Navy News reported on how the new **People and Training Directorate** was aiming to transform the 'lived experience' of Royal Navy personnel. Since then a huge amount of work has been carried out (see page 25) to enable the RN and its people fulfil our potential.

The team behind a **Cold War museum** in Plymouth are pressing ahead with the ten-year project after meeting their first goal (see page 31), while the former **Royal Marines museum** in Portsmouth has been sold (see page 32).

Shipbuilding has said goodbye to retiree **Jane Westmore** after an innovative 47-year career as a trailblazing naval architect (see page 23).

THE start of a new year is always a time for reflection and new beginnings.

2020 was difficult for many of us thanks to Covid. Ship's programmes were changed, we all had to adapt to new ways of working and we had concerns for relatives and loved ones who were at risk from the disease. And sadly, many people lost their lives or are still struggling with the effects of the disease.

However, 2021 has the potential to be very different. The vaccine breakthrough in the UK has been announced, and this promises to be a game-changer.

As we start to return to normality though, we need to be mindful of the lessons we have learnt this year about remote working and how to balance work and home life.

We should not just blindly return to how we were before, but take the opportunity to do things better.

2021 also has exciting potential for Defence. At the end of 2020, the Prime Minister set out an increase in Defence spending of £16.5 billion over the next four years, and outlined his vision for the UK's Armed Forces.

This was great news both for Defence and the Royal Navy. It allows the government and the MOD to take the strategic decisions that will keep the UK safe in the longer term.

The Armed Forces will continue to be central in the UK's leadership in the world, upholding international law, maintaining freedoms and improving people's lives

VIEW from the BRIDGE

worldwide.

And, just as importantly, we continue to play a key role in the government's priorities for increasing national prosperity, levelling up and supporting the Union.

The Prime Minister outlined an ambitious and exciting programme of shipbuilding. This will be the first time in 50 years that so many different classes of ship are being constructed together.

As well as confirming all eight ships of the Type 26 class, five Type 31 frigates and the Fleet Solid Support ships, he announced the development of multi-role research vessels and a new Type 32 class.

This will allow us to increase our forward presence in key global regions and to realise the Prime Minister's vision of the Royal Navy as the foremost naval power in Europe.

We will also be reducing and retiring obsolete and outdated equipment to focus on more modern and efficient technologies, from using drones to conduct reconnaissance to deploying offensive cyber capabilities.

This will be epitomised in the Future Commando Force, which is already proving itself in trials and exercises today.

HMS Queen Elizabeth will set sail on the CSG21 deployment in company with our allies, taking her to the Mediterranean,

Indian Ocean and East Asia. This is the floating embodiment of the Prime Minister's vision, showcasing a Global Navy, supporting Global Britain.

You will recognise in much of this the pillars of Royal Navy Transformation that you have all been working so hard to deliver.

■ Renewing our nuclear deterrent, building the Type 26 frigate and conducting more operations in the High North will increase our operational advantage in the North Atlantic.

■ We will have two operational aircraft carriers, able to deliver a carrier strike task group.

■ Our forward presence around the world will continue to grow, with the Type 31 and Type 32 augmenting our new Batch 2 OPVs.

■ The Future Commando Force and its use of technology will deliver sophisticated, networked troops to conduct operations worldwide, and continue to contribute to the UK's Special Forces.

■ And underpinning all this, we are exploiting developments in technology and innovation as they emerge and getting these to the front line much faster.

Thank you for all your hard work in getting us here. Despite the challenges of Covid and the uncertainties that have accompanied it, the Royal Navy has continued to deliver, and this announcement is excellent for all of us, as well as for Defence and the nation. We all look forward to seeing how 2021 develops.



Dawn of exciting year for Defence

KEEPING WATCH

THE ROYAL NAVY MONITORS RUSSIAN PRESENCE NEAR THE UK'S WATERS

ROYAL Navy warships monitored nine Russian vessels around the UK non-stop for 20 days.

Every move made by the Russians – a surfaced submarine, destroyer, corvette, patrol ship and their supporting tugs and supply ships – was watched closely by eight RN ships from the English Channel and the Celtic Sea to waters close to the west coast of Scotland in a concerted operation.

First Sea Lord, Admiral Tony Radakin, said: "This is why the Royal Navy is at sea every day, protecting the UK and our interests. Even with the pressures of Covid, we remain at short notice to respond to threats both in home waters and around the world. Despite the increase in Russian activity, both on the surface and underwater, we are always ready to respond."

Type 23 frigate HMS Northumberland watched the movements of Udaloy-class destroyer Vice-Admiral Kulakov as she sailed past the Outer Hebrides, off the north-west coast of Scotland.

The Plymouth-based ship's Commanding Officer, Commander Thom Hobbs, paid tribute to his sailors as they continued their patrols around the UK. *Read more on page 7.*

He said: "This has been a particularly busy time for Northumberland. The challenges of Covid-19 has made it even more demanding and it is credit to the team on board that they have been able to deliver despite the sizeable challenges."

Patrol ship HMS Severn was on duty in the English Channel and Dover Strait, where she shadowed a surfaced Kilo-class submarine Stary Oskol, the corvette Boikiy, patrol ship Vasily Bykov, plus tug boats Kapitan Gurev, Altay and replenishment vessels Kola and Akademik Pashin. Severn was also on patrol as the Vice Admiral Kulakov sailed through the English Channel as she headed north.

For some of the operation, the Russian ships sheltered from bad weather within the Baie de Seine off the Normandy coast, where Severn was joined by allied French Navy ships and aircraft.

Commander Philip Harper, the Portsmouth-based ship's

Commanding Officer, said: "In weather rough enough, at times, to leave fish stranded on my bridge wings, Severn and several other British and allied ships, have spent 20 days ensuring that Russian transiting warships remain under our watchful eyes."

"Fortunately I'm blessed with a committed, experienced and largely seasickness-free crew."

HMS Lancaster joined Severn in this operation, closely tracking Steregushchiy-class corvette Boikiy in the English Channel, using her Wildcat helicopter to gather intelligence using the aircraft's powerful ar-ray of sensors.

Meanwhile, three Royal Navy warships – HMS Tyne, HMS Richmond and HMS Kent – combined to escort the same group of Russian ships as they operated in the Celtic Sea off the south coast of Ireland and approaches to the south-west coast of England.

This task group were joined by RAF Typhoon and F-35s jets, plus tankers RFA Tideforce and RFA Tiderace, which kept the allied ships replenished throughout the operations and contributed to monitoring duties while in the Irish Sea. HMS Tyne's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Richard Skelton, said: "HMS Tyne has once again monitored Russian vessels operating in the vicinity of UK waters, ensuring the integrity of UK waters."

"The Russian naval vessels acted in accordance with international norms throughout the period. This type of task is one that River-class Offshore Patrol Vessels conduct regularly and are ideally suited to perform."

Lancaster was on the way back from the Arctic Circle when she was tasked with to assist with these operations. In highest north, the Queen's Frigate carried out a day of exercises with Norwegian warship HNoMS Fridtjof Nansen in the Norwegian Sea.

The training started out with both crews lining the deck of their respective ships and mark the end of World War One with a two-minute silence and, soon after, Commander Will Blackett cast a wreath into the waters near Bodø, believed to be the last resting place of submarine HMS Syrtis. *Read more on that on page 31.* It has been a busy year for Lancaster and she sees it out having earned her blue nose – a symbol of heading to the frozen north.



Above: A view from HMS Severn as she monitors the Kulakov; below: a sailor on board HMS Northumberland monitors Kulakov



From left to right: The view from HMS Severn as she monitors several Russian ships; HMS Lancaster, foreground, shadows Boikiy; A sailor on board HMS Severn monitors Vasily Bykov and in the background submarine Stary Oskol; Vice-Admiral Kulakov as seen from HMS Northumberland



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Trent joins NATO allies for Operation Sea Guardian

HMS Trent joined her NATO allies to ensure the Mediterranean remains safe for all those at sea.

The Royal Navy offshore patrol vessel has spent weeks on Operation Sea Guardian – a year-round commitment to deter, disrupt and defend against terrorism, smuggling and illegal activity in the region.

It is a role many UK ships take on when transiting the Med and sees them working with navies from a range of countries.

Currently, Greece's navy flagship Spetsai is leading the operation with Trent offering support along with Bulgarian ship Smeli and Greek and Turkish submarines.

Maritime patrol and airborne early warning aircraft from Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the US are also contributing to the focused patrol.

While on Sea Guardian, HMS Trent has also ensured her sailors are ready for any eventuality undergoing a series of training exercises.

They launched her sea boat for man overboard training and did machinery breakdown drills.

Their time at sea also gave the ship's warfare Young Officers the chance to conduct navigation training through the Straits of Messina (between the toe of Italy and Sicily) and Bonifacio (between Corsica and Sardinia).

Sub-Lieutenant Dominic Olivier, 24, from Essex, said: "Being on HMS Trent for my Specialist Fleet Time is an excellent opportunity as it is a great ship for me to conduct the training I need to become an Officer of the Watch and its programme is perfect for supporting me and helping me develop my real world skills."

Earlier in her deployment, a routine stop in Gibraltar gave Trent's sailors the chance to offer some help to the Gibraltar Naval Trust.

Four of the ship's company helped the manager of the new Wessex House by sorting and lifting furniture in preparation for its

opening.

It will replace the former Britannia House – providing short-term accommodation for service personnel, their families and veterans.

Sub Lieutenant Ben Hoffmeister, 23, from London, said: "It was a pleasure to be able to lend a helping hand to the Gibraltar Naval Trust as they provide support to navy personnel when they are based here in Gibraltar."

HMS Trent also met up with Type 45 destroyer HMS Dragon which spent three months in the Mediterranean as part of the Royal Navy's amphibious task group.

After leaving flagship HMS Albion, Dragon conducted some training with Trent before sailing back to her home port of Portsmouth.

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

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● Sub Lt Charlie Nethercott was second Officer of the Watch during an exercise on board HMS Trent
Picture: LPhoto Unaisi May Luke



● A Wildcat heads to the ranges on a murky day in the Moray Firth and (below) morning mist hugs the tarmac at Lossiemouth as a winter dawn rises

Pictures: PO(ACMN) Pat Whitcomb



Tain strike

COMMANDO fliers hit the ranges in Scotland to 'lay down some lead' and call in air strikes.

Wildcats from 847 Naval Air Squadron, which provides battlefield support for the Royal Marines, used exercise areas on the Moray Firth to enhance their ability to bring down a hail of explosive firepower by day and night.

Among a range of battlefield functions, the squadron's Wildcats provide close air support either with the M3M .50 heavy machine-gun in the rear of the helicopter – it can deliver 1,100 rounds per minute with devastating effect on enemy forces – or by calling in air strikes.

For that it requires a qualified Forward Air Controller (Airborne) – perhaps the most challenging role aircrew train for, as the pilot must coordinate the safety of other helicopters, drones and fast jets, and integrate them with indirect fire, all in close proximity to friendly forces on the ground.

A couple of months after guiding F-35 jets from HMS Queen Elizabeth on bombing runs at Garvie Island off Cape Wrath, the squadron flew north from its home at RNAS Yeovilton to RAF Lossiemouth.

From there it's just a short flight across the Moray Firth to RAF Tain, a former air base which now serves one of the few live weapons ranges in the UK – 2,300 acres of land which includes static and moving

targets and a mock village for aircraft to attack.

With Joint Terminal Attack Controllers – troops who call in air strikes from the ground – occupying the observation tower at Tain, the Wildcats called in repeated strikes from RAF Typhoons, Diamond Twin Stars (propeller-driven close air support trainers) and other Wildcats on 150 occasions, assisting troops exercising on the ground, including shooting 10,000 rounds of .50 ammo.

Exercise Terminal Strike wasn't just a test for the fliers, but also the men and women supporting them on the ground – assessing their ability to deploy at short notice anywhere in the world.

So for 72 hours they pitched camp in a forward operating base – a cluster of tents inside the wire at Lossiemouth.

Engineers carried out maintenance in weather approaching zero degrees and some fine Scottish rain.

With only minimal supporting equipment to power their mission planning systems, the detachment proved that the Commando Wildcat can operate in unforgiving environments – and be truly expeditionary in nature.

That aside, the detachment returned to base in Somerset with two more personnel qualified as airborne Forward Air Controllers, and a third re-validated for another 12 months.



Big berg threat



THIS imposing wall of ice could threaten the waters around the wildlife paradise of South Georgia.

This is a section of A68a – above the waves the size of Somerset, below them larger than Israel, in short: the world's largest iceberg – and it was predicted to run aground somewhere in South Georgia based on weather and currents last month.

The RAF sent up one of its A400M aircraft on a long-range recce mission from the Falklands to inspect the enormous slab of ice and snow on behalf of the British territory's government.

The huge berg, the largest section of A68 which calved off the Larsen C ice shelf on the Antarctic Peninsula in July 2017, has been tracked by satellite and would ordinarily have been monitored by tourists this austral summer on cruise ships... but the pandemic has largely strangled tourism.

Instead, the RAF aircraft – carrying a representative of South Georgia's government – conducted a detailed look at the berg, including cracks and fissures on the surface, stunning tunnels carved out of the ice, and the many smaller icebergs in the surrounding waters (pictured inset).

It's the latter which are of particular concern presently as A68a drifts into the 'marine protected area' – more than one million square kilometres of sea and land surrounding South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

The amount of debris is growing in warmer waters, a possible issue for Royal Navy patrol vessel HMS Forth – which typically pays a couple of visits to South Georgia each summer – or survey ship HMS Protector, which is due to head to Antarctica this year, as well as the government-run Pharos, which regularly conduct fishery patrols and surveillance in the surrounding waters.

The sheer size of A68a meant it was impossible to capture the entire iceberg in a single shot, but the images and video captured by the flight, plus the observations of those aboard the A400M have been shared with government officials and scientists from the British Antarctic Survey.



NORT ON A MISSION

Picture by Lt Cdr Shaun Roster

HMS Northumberland's sailors spent Christmas away from home as they continued their vital mission protecting UK waters and the nation's nuclear deterrent.

The Type 23 frigate was last at her home port of Devonport in late September and since then has been part of the UK Carrier Strike group during landmark operations in the North Sea and monitored Russian activity close to UK waters during her relentless patrols of the waters around Britain. *See more on page 5.*

In all, Northumberland had sailed more than 8,000 miles since leaving home, even before Christmas at sea. The frigate and her ship's company carried out operations over the festive period protecting the UK's home waters, all with rigorous Covid-19 restrictions in place which ultimately mean nobody on board can go any further than the jetty when they come alongside between operations.

Northumberland has stopped in Dundee, Lerwick and Faslane, but each time sailors have remained in a protective bubble, straying no further than their allocated jetty, to ensure the virus does not risk their vital operations.

Commanding Officer, Commander Thom Hobbs, said: "This deployment has been incredibly challenging for my ship's company given the stringent but necessary restrictions we follow due to the coronavirus.

"We follow them to ensure that the UK's very high-readiness frigate is always available, ready to re-pond at immediate notice to protect UK sensitive waters and the UK's strategic deterrent.

"Even in the face of these extraordinary challenges, my ship's company has responded, remaining professional, adaptable and delivering in abundance. I am incredibly proud of what every sailor has achieved in these testing times."

During operations with HMS Queen Elizabeth and the UK Carrier Strike group, Northumberland was de-ployed in her role as an expert submarine hunter, providing vital protection from subsurface threats to the group of allied warships.

Using her specialist equipment, including state of the art Sonar 2087 Variable Depth Sonar, Northumberland kept tabs on activity below the waves, as the largest and most powerful European-led maritime force in almost 20 years gathered in the North Sea.

In all, nine ships, 15 fighter jets, 11 helicopters and 3,000 personnel from the UK, US and the Netherlands were involved as HMS Queen Elizabeth prepared for her first operational deployment next year.

Northumberland quickly turned her attentions to security in UK waters after breaking away from the carrier and was involved in an operation to monitor Russian intelligence gathering ship Viktor Leonov with patrol ship HMS Tyne, before monitoring destroyer Vice-Admiral Kulakov off the west coast of Scotland.

Continuous tasking such as this provides a good challenge for Northumberland's marine engineers, keeping the Type 23 ticking over while using some 700 tonnes of diesel fuel, with the ship getting through one gallon every 128 yards.

Keeping the ship fuelled and running is one thing, but there's also the crews' bellies and some 190 meals needing to be prepared three times a day seven days a

week. Given the strict restrictions to protect the ship's company from Covid-19, almost every meal eaten is served on board by the galley team.

That ultimately means lots of sausages – 8,000 in all, along with 9,000 eggs, 750kg of cheese, 10,000kg of potatoes and 2,000kg of flour – to keep the ship's sailors going.

During the frigate's time away, Flight Observer (from Mohawk Flight, 814 Naval Air Squadron) Lieutenant Luke Maciejewski achieved the accolade of 1,000 flying hours.

When the ship's submarine-hunting Merlin Mk2 helicopter touched down on the flight deck, Luke was met by the commanding officer and a fresh -wash down to celebrate his milestone.

He said: "I'm delighted to have reached this milestone. Whilst not quite as many as our Flight Commander it is a great achievement for me and demonstrates the enormous team effort involved in put-ting the Merlin Mk2 into the air.

"It is a key asset when conducting national tasking and anti-submarine warfare and it is a privilege to be part of it."

Cdr Hobbs added: "All those embarked and deployed in HMS Northumberland would like to wish friends, families and loved ones a safe and festive Christmas and we all very much look forward to see-ing you all again in the new year."

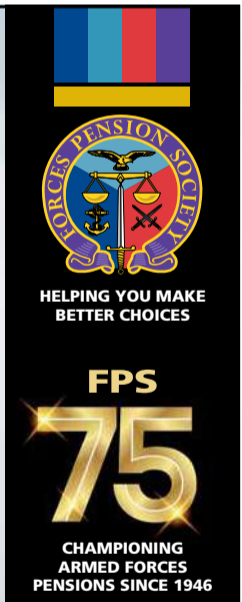


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Storm in a T-boat

SUBMARINERS are now using a state-of-the-art escape and rescue complex to prepare them should disaster strike.

No Royal Navy submariner has been forced to abandon a boat in nearly 50 years. But the generations of crews have still been trained to leave a stricken submarine, rise to the surface and await rescue.

The £34m Submarine Escape, Rescue, Abandonment and Survival (SMERAS) training complex in Faslane features an indoor pool which simulates all manner of weather conditions such as wind, rain and storms, day and night-time, and sea states so that submariners can practise their escapes in a safe environment.

The complex, built by Kier Graham under the supervision of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, replaces the much-loved Submarine Escape Training Tank which has dominated the Gosport skyline since the 1950s.

With the concentration of the submarine flotilla in Faslane – and to take advantage of 21st Century technology and training – it closed earlier this year.

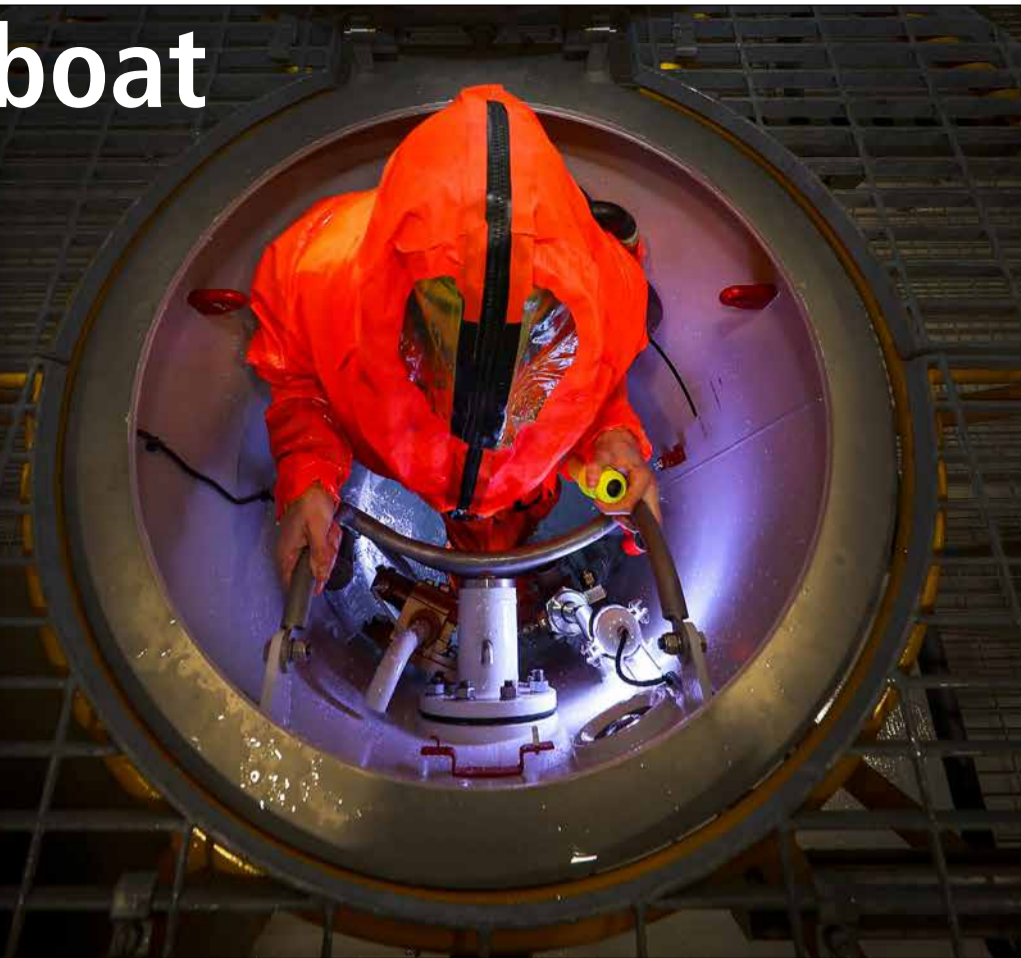
Its successor, which has taken three years to design and build, features escape towers and escape compartments, the sea simulator, plus supporting classrooms, offices, workshops, plant rooms and changing areas.

“The Royal Navy’s reputation for submarine escape training has been significantly enhanced by this impressive capability that combines both escape and surface abandonment training,” said Commander Duncan McClement RN, Fleet Operational Sea Training (Submarines), HMNB Clyde.

“The SMERAS is fantastic, new and world-leading. It enhances the training for Royal Navy submariners.”

Beyond its role teaching crews to leave a crippled submerged boat, the new facility will also dramatically improve training for abandoning a stricken submarine on the surface.

The complex is due to be fully operation by March.



Portland's Easter deadline

THE White Ensign flies on Her Majesty's Ship Portland for the first time in nearly three years as she begins to emerge from refits.

Britain's second-youngest frigate is the latest to undergo the major overhaul – the LIFEX or Life Extension programme which the Type 23 flotilla has been going through over the past five or six years.

Improvements include new engines, ripping out the obsolete SeaWolf air defence missile and installing its successor Sea Ceptor, and generally overhauling machinery, computer and IT systems onboard, as well as refurbishing mess decks designed in the 1980s to meet the needs and expectations of 21st Century sailors.

Although still covered in scaffolding, Portland is out of Devonport's landmark frigate shed and has been formally handed over to the RN by defence firm Babcock, who have overseen the demanding project.

Guiding the ship through the final crucial weeks of the refit over the winter and spring, Portland's first Commanding Officer in four years has been taken command: Commander Tim Leeder, pictured top.

“It is an incredible privilege to be appointed as Commanding Officer of such a capable ship,” said Cdr Leeder.

“Her biggest capability is – and will remain – her people, the Portland family. The hard work, resilience and dedication they have all shown so far to generate her amidst a global pandemic is testament to the sailors.”

“I am yet to meet all of them but it will be with pure pride when I do. We look forward to trials and training before taking on our assigned role as an anti-submarine frigate.”

The goal is to be ready for sea by Easter, followed by extensive instruction and assessment culminating in Operational Sea Training.



Reinforcing Atlantic bridge

ROYAL Navy personnel based with NATO in the USA are preparing for a milestone exercise this year.

Among the Brits serving at Allied Joint Force Command, Norfolk, Virginia, is Lieutenant Grace Allum, who serves as the aide-de-camp to the Deputy Commander, Rear Admiral Andrew Betton.

Lt Allum takes up the story:

Across the Atlantic, nestled within the largest naval city in the world is Allied Joint Force Command Norfolk, NATO's newest operational command.

The command was created in response to NATO's 2018 review and adaptation of its command structure that identified the Alliance's need for a stronger linkage between Europe and North America, in response to increasing threats within the North Atlantic region.

Having achieved initial operational capability in September 2020 and programmed to reach full operational capability (FOC) at the end of 2021, JFC Norfolk is taking on a core-coordinating role in assuring the security of the Strategic Lines of Communication across the Euro-Atlantic area, through the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap and into the Arctic.

Leading Writer Lee Kearney said: “It's an exciting time to be in NATO as we adapt the Allied defences to meet the historic, current and evolving future challenges.”

JFC Norfolk is much leaner than the sister Joint Force Commands in Brunssum in the Netherlands and Naples in Italy.

At full complement, there will be 135 peacetime posts, including 30 dual-hatted US staff members, plus space for an additional 15 liaison officers from various



● Rear Admiral Andrew Betton with some of his team in Norfolk, Virginia

NATO commands.

Staff are currently drawn from 16 of the 30 Allied nations stretching from Canada to Turkey.

The UK is the second largest contributor with 15 positions, seven of which are filled by personnel from across the spectrum of the Naval Service, from Leading Hand to Rear Admiral.

Altogether, the joint international staff provide invaluable perspectives and subject matter expertise to form a 360-degree all-

domain understanding of JFC Norfolk's area of responsibility.

Deputy Commander, Rear Admiral Betton, said: “We are an agile, operationally-focused staff of multi-national military professionals, driven to deliver effective deterrence and robust defence on behalf of the Alliance.”

With a dual-hatted US Commander, who is also in command of US Second Fleet, there is a strong integrated relationship between the staffs: that share

the same building and combine battle rhythm events where appropriate, in order to drive efficiency and effectiveness.

The goal is to develop a seamless HQ, which can cohere national level activity whilst planning and executing multi-national Alliance activity in peacetime, crisis, or conflict.

Exercise Steadfast Defender (STDE21) will be a significant milestone in achieving FOC, demonstrating JFC Norfolk's competence and readiness to fulfil its roles and responsibilities.

As a SHAPE sponsored operational and tactical level live exercise, STDE21 will train and evaluate a wide range of NATO and national force elements.

Focused on the reinforcement of continental Europe from North America, NATO will exercise its ability to secure the Strategic Lines of Communication which link our continents.

Commander Neil Loughrey, who leads training and exercise planning, said: “With a very small team, we've had to be creative in our approach.”

“This is the first major NATO LIVEX in three years and I anticipate that it will be hugely successful; it will certainly demonstrate our coherence and integration with US Fleet Forces, sister JFCs, NATO Allies and Partners.”

JFC Norfolk is just one of the many diverse locations across the globe, where small pockets of Royal Navy personnel contribute to wider Defence, supporting our Allies and Partners.

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Victoria's secrets

ONE-stop floating support ship RFA Fort Victoria has been put through her paces off the South Coast this autumn.

The long-serving supply ship provides fuel, ammunition, replacement jet engines, spare parts, food and water and anything else a Royal Navy task group requires when deployed.

The ship can also deploy in her own right (she's served as flagship of a counter-piracy task group in the past, off the Horn of Africa).

Whichever mission she's dispatched on, she's joined by a team of Royal Navy sailors from 1700 Naval Air Squadron at Culdrose, who work alongside the RFA crew to maintain/operate the defensive guns, run the flight deck and perform other duties aboard.

Supply chain specialist Leading Seaman William Downie, pictured bottom right, spends the bulk of his time managing all the aircraft spare parts stored aboard Fort Vic, but he also works with the flight deck team when helicopters – currently Merlin Mk2s from Culdrose – are embarked.

The 37-year-old, who's served for 11 years and lives in Falmouth, has provided a unique 'day-in-the-life' glimpse into life aboard the auxiliary as she conducts Operational Sea Training:

7am: Get up and go for a shower and then head to breakfast. I avoid the fry-up and go for porridge this morning. The whole flight team share the same mess and we usually all meet up in the morning and have a cup of tea before starting work.

8am: I am duty 'mess chefs' today. This involves cleaning the showers, heads and mess.

9am: Flight deck FOD plod – all hands to carry out a slow sweep of the deck looking for any small objects which could cause a danger to the aircraft or personnel (known as FOD for foreign object debris). My specific area for the FOD plod is the Flyco (flying control) wings. Once that's done, it is signed as completed and repeated every six hours while there's flying.

9.15am: I go down to the air engineering office to see if they need any assistance with any jobs they are doing. I

help with greasing the ring-bolts as part of their flight deck maintenance. Then I go down to the air store office and check my emails and supply responses on the signal machine.

10am: 'Stand-easy' in the mess for half an hour.

10:30am: Square away any supply chain related work I am doing in my office then attend the flying brief.

11am: Flying briefing (to hear details of today's tasking) with the Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, bridge officers, AVSO (aviation support officer), FDO (flight deck officer) and AETs (air engineering technicians) and others.

11.30am: I go for an early lunch back to the mess. It's salad today as I am trying to keep in shape – but hear 'prepare for flying' pipe at 11.45am.

11.45am: I make my way up to meet AVSO (aviation support officer) in Flyco

and carry out my pre-flying lights and equipment checks. As the Flyco logger (flying control logistician) I control the stop/go lights under the direction of the AVSO. This is a vital role that assures the FDO (flight deck officer) that he is clear to land and launch aircraft from one or two spot.

12.05pm: Ship pipes 'hands to flying stations'. Flying serials (missions) normally last three to four hours.

Today there's a Merlin Mk2 out of Culdrose. The pilots are doing their currency (up-to-dateness) training in deck landings. The aircraft comes in on a circuit to land ten to 15 times. Sometimes the engineers lash-on and chocks-on, sometimes they don't depending on the serial. There's a refuel as well.

We are also conducting a procedural flyex (flying exercise) – it is basically flying with serials to test Flyco, AC (aircraft) or

whole-ship and bridge reactions. Events such as fuel spills, emergency low-visibility approaches, communications failure and low approaches are just a few of the serials that are thrown in.

4.14pm: Flight deck FOD plod again.

5.10pm: Fill in the paperwork and logs of today's serials for the AVSO to update.

5.30pm: Time for a bit of a break and have our scrum (dinner). Tonight it's steak and chips.

6.30pm: Flying brief and muster to do all our pre-flying checks. Up in Flyco for another two hours in the evening. At sunset, order is given to darken ship.

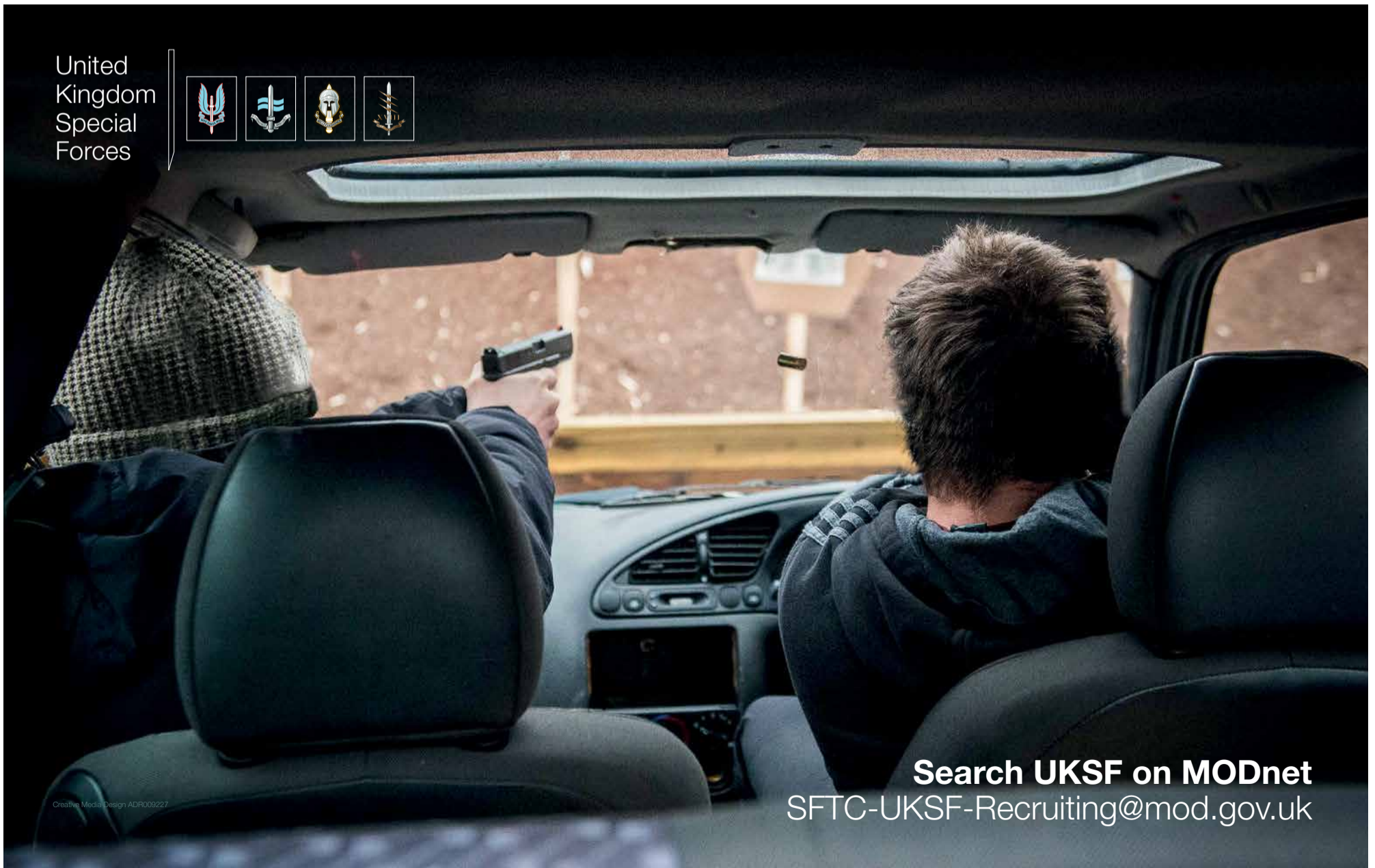
I log in all serials, missions, deck landings, squadron and cab (helicopter) details, time airborne and what the ship has achieved regarding aviation currency. This information then gets passed to the AVSO who updates everything online to show the competency of

the ship. Lastly, I tidy up Flyco and put the batteries on charge for comms (communications) tomorrow.

8.40pm: Free time in the evening in the department is quite social. We sometimes have a cheese board or curry evenings. Tonight we play video games and board games together and then watch a movie before heading off to sleep.



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MINE THE GAP

Programme will see the Royal Navy invest in autonomous minehunting vessels

CUTTING-edge autonomous minehunters will change the way the Royal Navy counters the threat of sea mines and reduce the risks faced by sailors on the frontline.

Crewless surface vessels will be built and integrated into the navy, with plans to see them operate around the world.

The new technology comes following an investment of £184m into the Mine Counter Measures programme and is the latest in a series of autonomous kit to be trialled and used by the service.

Through this project, a joint British and French production contract will culminate in the autonomous kit being deployed in support of global Royal Navy operations.

They are designed to be used by the navy when they're called upon to deal with mines and other historic ordnance, left over from the Second World War, around the UK – something the service deals with regularly.

In recent times, the navy has also been involved in minehunting operations across the world, including the Gulf and Libya.

The investment in this technology comes as the Royal Navy commits to developing the latest equipment and getting it to the frontline quickly and effectively.

Commander Steve White, who is involved in the MCM programme at the Royal Navy, said: "The emerging technology associated with these Maritime Autonomous Systems are designed to replace the minehunters in the decade ahead, who have served the Royal Navy so well over the years.

"Our professional sailors who serve in these ships will transfer their skillsets across to these new systems and continue to provide the human decision-making interface, however they will be displaced further away from any mine threat making this new system far safer for them."

Following successful demonstration phase and trials completed in 2020, the new contract will produce three sets of minehunting equipment, consisting of an autonomous vessel, towed sonar and mine-neutralisation system.

When used together, these three elements are known as the Primary

System. This next-generation Autonomous Minehunting System is designed to replace conventional crewed minehunting vessels, such as the Royal Navy's Hunt and Sandown-class ships, with autonomous systems.

First Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin said he was excited by the potential of future minehunting capability.

"This will allow us to deliver minehunting more effectively, more efficiently and more safely, and to integrate even more closely with our French counterparts in this important area," he added.

The contract sees a boost to companies in the UK with more than 200 jobs supported by the newly-signed contract.

The investment will see around 215 jobs supported in Thales sites in Somerset and Plymouth as well as the wider supply chain including L3 Harris in Portsmouth, Stonehaven in Aberdeen, and Alba Ultrasound in Glasgow.

Three sets of equipment will be bought comprising of a portable operation centre, an autonomous surface vessel, towed sonar and mine neutralisation system.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace, who announced the programme at a recent joint UK/French event, said: "This £184m contract offers a huge leap forward for the Royal Navy's autonomous capabilities in the detection and defeat of sea mines. These systems will protect vital shipping lanes, commercial traffic and our personnel from

these deadly devices.

"The programme also underpins a deep and ever-strengthening relationship with France and marks the tenth anniversary of the Lancaster House treaties between our two nations."

The investment follows the substantial £16.5bn settlement for defence over four years that will modernise the armed forces, reinvigorate the shipbuilding industry and bring jobs and prosperity to every part of the UK.

The UK element was negotiated by Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), the procurement arm of the Ministry of Defence.

“ ”

This will allow us to deliver minehunting more effectively, more efficiently and more safely

Admiral Tony Radakin
First Sea Lord

To see more technology trialled and tested by the navy, turn over...





2020 SAW THE ROYAL NAVY AND ROYAL MARINES MARK A NUMBER OF KEY MILESTONES AS THEY LOOK TO BRING MORE TECHNOLOGY TO THE FRONTLINE

FROM drones dropping equipment to Royal Marines in the wilderness to crewless boats integrating with Royal Navy ships on deployment, 2020 was a year of firsts for technology in the senior service.

Numerous trials took place throughout the year in the harsh, freezing conditions of the Arctic Circle; the heat of the Mediterranean and the rough, choppy seas around the UK.

The Royal Navy did not let the global Covid-19 pandemic slow down its efforts to bring the latest technology to the frontline and continued to show its commitment to getting cutting-edge equipment into the hands of sailors and marines.

2020 was about looking forward to the future and how the service will adapt to be lethal and sustainable – something evident during the recent Littoral Response Group (Experimentation) (LRG(X)) deployment (see pages 16-17).

In the three months UK flagship HMS Albion, destroyer HMS Dragon, RFA Lyme Bay, 40 Commando and 47 Commando were in the Mediterranean from September, some 40 different experiments and assessments were carried out, spread across nine real-time exercises.

Drones feeding back live video footage, quad-copters delivering supplies and all-terrain vehicles were used in the series of trials in Cyprus.

They were latest in the Autonomous Advance Force (AAF) exercises the Royal Navy launched in 2019. Dedicated to integrating autonomous and crewless tech into warships and commando units, the exercises have been important milestones to making this a reality.

They started this year in Norway in March when the Mast 13 crewless boat, now known as Madfox, successfully sailed into HMS Albion while being controlled by operators deep in the ship. It was the first time the boat's artificial intelligence system to control the tech was integrated in a Royal Navy ship.

Fast-forward eight months and the next phase of AAF trials saw Malloy T-150 heavy lift drones drop supplies to 40 Commando – taking off from Albion and flying inland to the waiting Royal Marines.

The same drone also underwent extensive trials in the UK, getting it

ready to head to sea on a Royal Navy warship.

NavyX, the navy's team for getting technology to the frontline quickly, and the RN's Discovery, Assessment and Rapid Exploitation (DARE) team, worked with Malloy over the summer to practise the drone landing on a moving testbed as well as drop life-saving kit in man overboard drills on Horsea Island, in Portsmouth.

Peter Whitehead, DARE project lead, said: "These trials are the next evolution to making unmanned systems increasingly autonomous and of benefit to the navy. It increases their utility at sea and their use in future Royal Navy operations."

700X Naval Air Squadron, the navy's experts in drones and remote piloted systems, oversaw the man overboard drills – one of several trials they took part in last year.

They were also in Norway in February and March, testing their Puma craft in the frozen Arctic while later, back home in South Wales they took part in Exercise Merlin Storm, supporting the Commando Helicopter Force with aerial surveillance using their new Phantom Flight equipment.

The integration of new technology across the service comes as the Royal Marines used 2020 to go back to their commando roots and become the Future Commando Force.

As well as integrating the T-150 drone into their training for the first time in Cyprus, marines also used small remotely-piloted aerial systems (RPAS) to aid decisions made on the patrols in October at the Sennybridge Training Area in the Brecon Beacons. The drones fed real-time footage back to their Android Tactical Assault Kit (ATAK), which is a tablet that provides useful information for navigation and situational awareness.

The same kit was used in Gibraltar in November along with ground-based robots called 'Throwbots' designed to feed live data to commandos on the battlefield to inform crucial decisions in combat.

Speaking of the new technology's importance, Major Tom Baybutt, the Officer Commanding P-Squadron of 43 Commando, said: "We've sought to integrate new Future Commando Force concepts, so that in addition to the traditional commando skills of amphibious operations and vertical



● (main picture) T-150 heavy-lift drones on HMS Prince of Wales; (above) Mast13 crewless boat sails into HMS Albion on trials in Norway.

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● (main picture) Royal Marines in the new Future Commando Force Uniform; (right) T-150 drones drop supplies to 40 Commando in Cyprus; (far right top) a Royal Marine uses a tablet to get live feedback from a drone; (far right bottom) tactical feeds fed back to the UK from trials.



assault, we've included some new technology available to us.

"The RPAS were put to good use, with the marines flying them at night and then scaling cliffs to assault the objective. Using the drones allowed us to work out the best method of entry to the target and the number of adversaries on the ground.

"The 'Throwbot' is another system that we can put into confined spaces. We can steer it remotely to understand the shape and size of confined spaces and identify any threats."

Working closely with the Royal Marines to get this equipment into place is MarWorks – the Royal Navy's information warfare technology specialists. They were there in Norway and in Cyprus, ensuring tactical and communication feeds could be used to their full potential by the marines.

Norway was the first real test of Project EVE, the infrastructure that is underpinning Future Commando Force, and Cyprus further put the system through its paces.

Closer to home, work focused on testing a private 4G mobile network infrastructure at Bickleigh Barracks, the home of 42

Commando, and they also built Command Rover Tablets for delivery to navy warships in the future.

During lockdown, MarWorks led the rollout of a messaging app to 3 Commando Brigade in support of Covid-19 MACA tasking.

Dave McInerney, MarWorks Programme Manager, said: "2020 was a great year for the MarWorks team who have really pushed the boundaries of digitising the battlespace and supporting end-to-end information exploitation. These are key concepts if the Royal Navy is to gain and hold the information advantage. LRG(X) was a particular highlight, with validation of our concepts and experimentation by the warfighter on the ground."

The pace of trials and experimentation with new kit is expected to continue this year with the creation of the Vanguard Strike Company – trailblazing Royal Marines who will have access to game-changing technology and weaponry as they head on their first deployment.

It will also see the T-150 drones undergo testing at sea while further trials are completed on the Madfox boat and the recently launched Pacific 24 crewless RIB.



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The end of the beginning

TIME for reflection.

After three months of extensive trials, exercises and experimentation, an aircrewman from 847 Naval Air Squadron looks back at HMS Albion as the flagship makes her way home through the Mediterranean.

Now it's time to analyse, adapt and introduce tech and tactics across our amphibious forces to complete their evolution.

The flagship tested some 40 concepts – some them clearly visible (drones carrying supplies, others (comms, command and control) less so – on its Littoral Response Group (Experimentation) deployment.

All, in some way, have, says Albion's Executive Officer Commander Jason Eacock, "paved the way for the Future Navy and Future Commando Force" by "testing new ideas, concepts and kit to help us constantly adapt in a changing world."

There will be extensive 'post-match analysis' by the RN's best and brightest.

But the assessment of LRGX didn't begin when Albion came alongside in Devonport.

Throughout the deployment, every exercise and trial has been guided, observed and analysed by a military scientist.

Normally found at HMS Collingwood in Fareham helping to shape the Navy's ways of working on front-line operations, Natalie Anders sailed with the task group to offer both guidance on the use of the new kit/tech/software/comms, how to get the most from it, and how to gather the data which will help experts when the deployment is scrutinised in microscopic detail.

Natalie works for the government's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and is currently assigned to the Navy's Maritime Warfare Centre as an operational analyst studying Land and Littoral Strike.

It's from the centre that the Navy's cutting-edge tactical development and doctrine emerges.

Her advice to task group commander Commodore Rob Pedre and his staff wasn't limited to tech and tactics, however, but also embraced subjects as diverse as the Covid pandemic and command and control, drawing on her own expertise and her colleagues back in the UK.

They are now poring over the data, feedback and reports from LRGX. One key element not to be overlooked is the human factor – which is why living with and working alongside sailors and Royal Marines for three months was an invaluable experience.

"There's no substitute for taking experimental tactics and equipment, putting them in the hands of our front-line personnel and discovering how it all performs in the real world," Natalie said.

"Life on board as a civilian is interesting. Being among experienced sailors and marines allows me to get a thorough understanding of the challenges they face and how best science, technology and doctrine can support what they do.

"Being a civilian and a scientist also means I have a different perspective which adds to the diversity of thought within the HQ and allows me to spot things that others may not."

She is in no doubt about the importance of the three-month mission.

"By putting experimentation front and centre the Royal Navy is demonstrating its commitment to ensuring it remains a top-tier naval power well into the 21st Century."

So what was tested?

Well, quite a bit of the kit is commercially sensitive, which is why we've only formally identified the large Malloy cargo-carrying quadcopters and the small Puma radio-controlled aircraft flown by 700X Naval Air Squadron.

The Malloy – which featured heavily in last month's edition thanks to its ability to ferry supplies from Albion over the Mediterranean shore and up into the villages where the commandos were 'fighting' – was the largest and most visible drone on trial.

It shared the skies over Cyprus with a miniature helicopter (on the ground it could easily be mistaken for some form of sniper rifle) which provided the commandos with live intelligence of goings on behind enemy lines... as did an even smaller backpack-carried quadcopter drone, used for much more immediate, localised intelligence gathering.

This new tech required considerable bandwidth and command and control structures, plus software... and on top of that, of course, trained operators.

"By putting experimentation front and centre the Royal Navy is demonstrating its commitment to ensuring it remains a top-tier naval power well into the 21st Century."

NATALIE ANDERS

We left the task group last month as it joined NATO's Sea Guardian security mission in the Mediterranean.

For alongside the trials and experiments, there have been more traditional fare: working with allies, diplomacy, flying the flag for Britain and patrolling the high seas.

As Albion and supporting amphibious ship RFA Lyme Bay made their way westwards through the Mediterranean, they were joined by Italian carrier ITS Giuseppe Garibaldi.

Just a few days out of her home port of Taranto, Garibaldi was stretching her sea legs after a lengthy spell of maintenance, accompanied by her escorting frigate ITS Carlo Bergamini and tanker Stromboli.

The veteran carrier is home to AV-8B jump jets (the US-built version of the Harrier) which tested their ability to evade the British defences during an air defence exercise.

The carrier group conducted combined training with Albion and Lyme Bay, from basic communications through to manoeuvring in close proximity, some helicopter 'cross-decking' and an anti-submarine exercise, before a ceremonial sail past prior as the two allies went their separate ways.

For the first time the Garibaldi hosted a Wildcat helicopter as 847 Naval Air Squadron touched down on the carrier's 571ft-long deck... and the crew were promptly surprised by Italian hospitality.

"They even gave us a package containing a crate of Peroni and freshly-cooked pizzas," said delighted pilot Captain Tom Arkell RM.

Lieutenant Sam Furniss, Albion's second navigator, said both task groups had benefited from their time training together and the link-up had been a fitting finale to the deployment.

"The training was rich and provided all units with a challenge in operating together as one in order to counter a number of exercise threats," he said.

"Although relatively short in duration, the knowledge and experience taken forward from this is invaluable and serves as a real highlight for both the UK's commitment to NATO and RN operations in the Mediterranean."

The link-up with the Italian carrier group was the last significant act of Captain Peter Laughton's two-year tenure as Albion's Commanding Officer.

As the ship passed Gib on her way home, he handed over the baton of flagship CO to Captain Simon Kelly.

Before departing for Gibraltar in one of Albion's landing craft, Captain Laughton told his ship's company they were "truly brilliant and impressive" and had "consistently delivered above and beyond the call of duty", demonstrating an "immense can-do attitude, fighting spirit and humility".

He added: "I could not be more proud of them, serving their ship, the Royal Navy and their country with commendable commitment, pride and professionalism.

"It has been the most wonderful privilege and honour to command the Fleet Flagship."

Sadly as with the rest of the Fleet since March, Covid denied Albion the homecoming she deserved. Families spaced out on The Hoe or at Devil's Point, rather than crowded the naval base quayside, before individual rather than mass reunions with loved ones.

So Chef Tom Curry, the youngest member of Albion's ship's company, has yet to experience his first traditional welcome back from deployment (the pandemic also frequently kiboshed runs ashore) which meant instead that everyone "embraced life onboard.

"To see how we are shaping the future for both the Royal Navy and Royal Marines has been really exciting."

Having laid the foundations, there will be more test, trials, exercises in 2021.

This is just the beginning...





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Peacekeeping efforts rewarded

FIVE Royal Navy officers have been decorated for their efforts keeping trade flowing through the Middle East.

The concerted efforts of the sailors singled out – and the men and women they led – helped to maintain peace and prevent disruption to global shipping.

Those efforts are recognised in the latest batch of Operational Honours awarded by the Queen to military personnel who have gone above and beyond the normal call of duty on the front line.

All five RN personnel are decorated for operations in the Gulf over a period of heightened tensions.

Commander Richard Hewitt, pictured left, receives the OBE for his time as Commanding Officer of destroyer HMS Defender, including a Gulf deployment where she faced “significantly increased enemy rhetoric and aggression” during 16 passages of the Strait of Hormuz.

He says the award is “a huge honour and privilege” and rewards “a collective effort” by the team on Defender, named the Navy’s No.1 destroyer.

“To have been in command of those sailors was an honour. That team reflected the very best traits of the Royal Navy in the way they conducted themselves,” Cdr Hewitt added.

“It’s a time of my naval career I will always look back on with huge affection and I am proud to be part of the ship’s company.”

Lieutenant Commander Ben Martin, pictured left, is made an MBE for his “dynamic” and “resourceful” command of minehunter HMS Blyth during the highest tempo of operations for any minehunter in the last decade in the Gulf.

The 40-year-old from Portsmouth, who currently

lives in Helensburgh with his wife Kim and two children Emily and Sam, was “selfless throughout his command and inspired others through personal example, calm leadership and utter resilience” all while operating in Middle Eastern waters without the protection of frigate or destroyers.

He says he and his crew were “tested and challenged almost relentlessly” from the summer of 2019 through to early 2020 and he is “filled with intense pride” at being decorated.

“The heat of the Gulf was intense and the operational demands during the period of exceptional tension in the region put extreme pressure upon us to



It’s a time of my naval career I will always look back on with huge affection.

CDR RICHARD HEWITT

deliver,” he added.

“I must thank my crew for their tenacity and spirit. I am deeply proud of them and how they all stepped up to meet the challenge with a professional and proactive approach.”

Commander Ben Keith, pictured right, receives the Queen’s Commendation for Valuable Service for his “outstanding contribution” to the formation of the International Maritime Security Construct. It was established in 2019 with the emphasis on ensuring merchant vessels pass through the Strait of Hormuz unimpeded.

He became Head of Naval Operations, managing the formation of the headquarters and trained a multinational team of watchkeeping officers capable of maintaining oversight of nearly 7,000 merchant vessels.

Cdr Keith said: “It is a real honour to receive this recognition for what I see as a team effort, and recognition for my family and their sacrifice as well.

“The highlight for me was working so closely with the US and being the link

between our two nations. The team out there made a difference at a difficult time and the coalition is still going strong now.”

Lieutenant Commander Alexander Szweda receives the Queen’s Commendation for Valuable Service for his “remarkable personal contribution” to mine hunting operations in the Gulf.

When he left HMS Shoreham as her Executive Officer in April, he’d served longer at sea in the Middle East than any other sailor after two back-to-back tours of duty aboard the Sandown-class ship.

He spent 11 months continuously on operations in conditions which are physically and mentally demanding, sacrificing “personal time, relationships and leave” and demonstrating “phenomenal stamina and effectiveness” for the good of Shoreham and her important mission.

Many of the above efforts relied on the assistance received from the Royal Navy’s new support facility in Bahrain whose Commanding Officer **Commander Suzy Conway** receives the OBE.

She made sure Royal Navy vessels operating in the Middle East had the support they needed – whether they were in base or at sea – and juggled numerous issues and challenges, all with half the normal logistics team in theatre. Her citation describes her efforts as “nothing short of superb” and “simply outstanding”.



Unique mission with USN

ROYAL Navy officer Lieutenant Cameron Fisher enjoys the unique privilege of safely guiding the US warship named after Britain’s wartime leader.

The 27-year-old from Hampshire is navigator of destroyer USS Winston S Churchill, currently working alongside the Royal Navy in the Gulf as part of the US Navy’s Fifth Fleet.

As well as enjoying the rare distinction of being named after a Briton – a nod both to the wartime alliance between Britain and the USA and Churchill’s family ties with America – the destroyer always sails with a Royal Navy navigating officer aboard, going back 20 years.

“It really is an honour to be representing the UK on USS Winston S Churchill,” said Cameron. “Since being onboard, I have learnt more about Winston Churchill than I think I ever had done before.

“We fly the Churchill house flag for special evolutions, and we proudly fly the Royal Navy’s White Ensign from our outdoor halyard in acknowledgement of the tie between our countries. The crew even wear a combined UK/US patch on their arm in lieu of the normal US flag patch.”

Initially a US Navy officer always served on frigate HMS Marlborough (the first namesake Duke was one John Churchill), but although she was paid off in 2005, the association with the US destroyer has continued.

“Being a part of a US ship means I am working in the largest Navy in the world. During the deployment we’ve operated alongside the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean and in the Gulf; I have served on Royal Navy ships and worked alongside the US before, but now I get to experience it from the other side which I’ve really enjoyed.”

Engineering support

ROYAL Naval Reserve Engineering Branch has continued to provide front-line engineering support to the Navy at home and abroad, with resounding success.

Lt Mick Hawkes mobilised from his civilian job as engineering director at Safran Helicopter Engines to the Future Operations Cell in Preston, which is combatting Covid across the North West.

He said: “I enjoyed my mobilisation and would be happy to take part in another. The highlight for me was the opportunity to develop my planning skills and learn the estimate process.”

At the same time, four engineers have been providing PPE equipment for NHS workers by making use of the 3D printers at the RNR’s Additive Manufacturing Facility.

They produced 112 face visor headbands and 664 ear protectors for surgical masks.

In addition, four engineer reservists are filling positions at Naval Engineering Support Bahrain (NESB) facility for 12 months, helping set up a new workshop facility to support frigate HMS Montrose which is deployed to the Gulf for three years.

New man at the top of international coalition force

HALF a billion tons of oil, gas and goods have passed safely through the waters of the Middle East thanks a Royal Navy officer and his team.

Commodore Rob Bellfield has handed over command of international Coalition Task Force Sentinel to fellow Briton Commodore Craig Wood.

He has used 58 warships during his tenure of the task force, which provides security and reassurance for all merchant

shipping passing through the Strait of Hormuz – gateway to the Gulf – and the Bab al Mandeb Strait – gateway to the Red Sea. In particular, more than 1,200 merchant ships, totalling over 500,000,000 tonnes, flying the flags of the coalition’s nine member nations – such as the UK, USA, United Arab Emirates and Australia – have sailed through the choke points incident-free during Cdre Bellfield’s command.

Cdre Bellfield said: “It has been an

honour and privilege to command this outstanding task force and work with such professional sailors and ships across the coalition. We have grown, matured and become confident in our mission to deter those who seek to undermine freedom of navigation and the rules based order in the maritime domain.”

Cdre Wood, who has more than 30 years’ experience under his belt, including command of destroyers HMS Liverpool

and Dragon, says there will be no let-up in the security mission. He said: “The world no longer feels the same as it did before. Now more than ever we need stability, and stability generates confidence – instability here causes problems everywhere.”

“It is an honour to continue the momentum generated by Commodore Bellfield and this mighty task force, because as long as the threat persists our mission endures.”

Signal success for train driver Jamie

TRAIN driver Jamie Hayhurst swapped transporting passengers safely for the security of seafarers on a four-month stint with the Royal Navy in the Gulf.

The 36-year-old left the lines of Northern England behind and helped direct oil and gas tankers and cargo ships through some of the Middle East’s hot spots.

Jamie, who serves as a lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve with HMS Calliope in Gateshead, was mobilised to join the Navy’s headquarters in Bahrain.

There he was responsible for monitoring and reporting on merchant shipping in the region, acting as the liaison between the military and merchant vessels to ensure the latter safely reached their destinations.

“I’ve really enjoyed the last four months on deployment. The opportunity to put my military training into use in an operational environment has been really rewarding,” said Jamie.

He joined the Royal Naval Reserve in 2006 while studying for a Master’s degree at Durham University. He then joined the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and spent time in the Merchant Navy before settling on a career with Northern Trains.

“Dealing with incidents or challenges as a train driver has given me the ability to remain calm under pressure and act methodically in order to get the job done – something that I have applied to any challenges I face in the operations room in the Royal Navy.

“Equally, the confidence developed briefing senior officers in the Reserves has helped when dealing with passengers whose trains may have been delayed, or when dealing with a signaller when my train has been involved in an incident.”

When not deployed overseas, Jamie drives local passenger services all over the North and North East from Newcastle to Carlisle, Sunderland, Teesside, Northumberland and County Durham.





ROYAL MARINES

IN THE ROCK

S ROLL OUT NEW FUTURE COMMANDO FORCE KIT DURING TOUGH TRAINING IN GIBRALTAR

ROYAL Marines rolled out the latest kit on missions scaling cliff faces and battling through Gibraltar's tunnels as they perfected techniques to safeguard the UK's nuclear deterrent.

More than 80 marines from Scotland-based 43 Commando Fleet Protection Group spent two weeks on Exercise Serpent Rock, honing the skills necessary for their no-fail mission protecting the nation's nuclear assets.

The commandos, who are based at Clyde Naval Base, also added new tech to their training as part of Future Commando Force modernisation, using drones and robots as they carried out amphibious operations, daring cliff assaults and close-quarters battle in the famed network of tunnels beneath the Rock.

They also practised patrolling Gibraltar's streets, thoroughfares and the narrow alleyways and passages in scenarios designed to test their guile and agility in battle.

Their presence didn't go unnoticed by locals and, a picture posted on Royal Marines Instagram of a commando patrolling outside a nearby pizza place, see right, was spotted by the restaurant's owners.

Soon after, Mamma Mia Pizzeria and Pasta House posted to offer '20% discount when showing your Royal Marines ID'.

Presumably, it was commando carbonara and calzones, or perhaps Royal Marine margheritas all round after that.

As part of the exercise, the marines used Remotely Piloted Aerial Systems (RPAS (drones)) and ground-based robots called 'Throwbots' designed to feed live data to commandos on the battlefield to inform crucial decisions in combat.

Major Tom Baybutt, the Officer Commanding P-Squadron of 43 Commando, said: "We've sought to integrate new Future Commando Force concepts, so that in addition to the traditional commando skills of amphibious operations and vertical assault, we've included some new technology available to us.

"The RPAS were put to good use, with the marines flying them at night and then scaling cliffs to assault the objective. Using the drones allowed us to work out the best method of entry to the target and the number of adversaries on the ground.

"The 'Throwbot' is another system that we can put into confined spaces. We can steer it remotely to understand the shape and size of confined spaces and identify any threats."

The Royal Marines also made use of new situational awareness tools such as the Android Team Awareness Kit (ATAK), as well as specialist protective equipment, all designed to give them the edge on the battlefield.

The ATAK is a tablet that provides useful information for navigation and situational awareness.

"We've been using the ATAK to give the commanders on the ground enhanced situational awareness. It's a system that allows us to track everyone and manage the battlespace more effectively," said Maj Baybutt.

"We've also got ballistic shields which offer the marines a lot more protection going through confined spaces, moving forward as they engage the adversary; that's worked particularly well in the tunnels."

The commandos made use of the tunnel network in Gibraltar, which provided a great challenge for their close-quarters combat skills.

In complete darkness where enemies can easily hide and where communications and navigation skills are tested to the limit, the commandos were in a relentless battle with the environment during a highly-demanding scenario.

Maj Baybutt said: "One of the main benefits of exercising in Gibraltar is that they've been really accommodating in their provision of training areas, to allow us to practise some of our more niche capabilities.

"They have also been flexible in allowing us to use all areas of the territory. We've had marines walking through the streets and the centre of town, climbing up cliffs that aren't traditional military training areas, and they've given us free access all around the coast to pick and choose where we want to go and when.

"Gibraltar is a really unique training environment. There are numerous fortifications available and about 35 miles of tunnels here, ranging from long transit routes to old ammunition chambers and underground hospitals, some fully lit and some pitch-black.

"It's given the marines a chance they wouldn't get anywhere else, to work in that black-light environment, underground, with the heat, with the difficulties in communications, negotiating and navigating in absolute darkness, as well as dealing with all the nooks and crannies that the adversary can hide themselves in."



Top: A Royal Marine patrols the streets of Gibraltar past a local pizza place, which later offered discount to the commandos.

Middle: A commando scaling a cliff face as part of cliff assault training on the Rock.

Bottom: A Royal Marine at the controls of a drone designed to give commanders an overview of the battlefield.

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SAAB

Trailblazer Jane retires

Successful career in world of naval architecture

SHIPBUILDING has said goodbye to retiree Jane Westmore after an innovative 47-year career.

You could say that ships were in Jane's blood, as her father was Commander Frank William Ashmole of the Royal Navy.

However, it was a career's teacher at Talbot Heath School in Bournemouth who first suggested naval architecture as a suitable career, with mathematics and art being Jane's favourite subjects.

On leaving Talbot Heath, Jane, *pictured right recently and early in her career at bottom of page,* joined the apprenticeship programme at Vickers as a ship's draughtsman in 1973.

During her time there she was awarded both Premier Apprentice and Apprentice of the year.

Through the apprenticeship, Jane gained her ONC and HNC in Shipbuilding and Naval Architecture from Barrow-in-Furness College of Further Education, before gaining a Bachelor's Degree in Ship Science from Southampton University in 1977.

Upon graduation, Jane discovered that companies were still reluctant to take on women at that time, so she decided to bolster her CV by completing a Master's Degree in Shipbuilding and Naval Architecture at Strathclyde University.

Jane decided to study the causes of change and the effects for her dissertation, which she would end up dealing with first-hand later on in her career.

However, the paper stalled when she found that nobody would admit to any change during her interviews!

Jane reluctantly changed tack and focused on the introduction of CAD/CAM in the design process.

In 1981, after graduating from Strathclyde University, Jane joined Scott Lithgow, working mainly on structures.

She then moved to Yarrow Shipbuilders Ltd (now BAE Systems) in 1983 to work in the ship design office, again focusing on structures.

Whilst working at Yarrow, Jane achieved her Chartership and was consequently promoted to Senior Design Engineer, overseeing a team designing equipment seats.

Jane also found time to complete an Open University degree in maths and technology.

In 1989, Jane worked

briefly with Clark and Standfield Ltd, expanding her knowledge to include floating docks and dock gates, before going on maternity leave in 1991.

After becoming a mother, Jane rejoined Yarrow in 1992, where she was the first woman to be taken on a part-time basis after having a baby, which greatly helped later applicants.

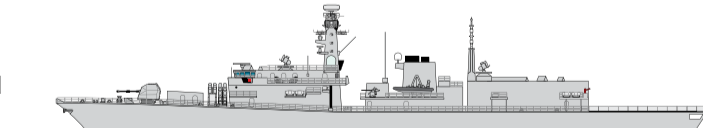
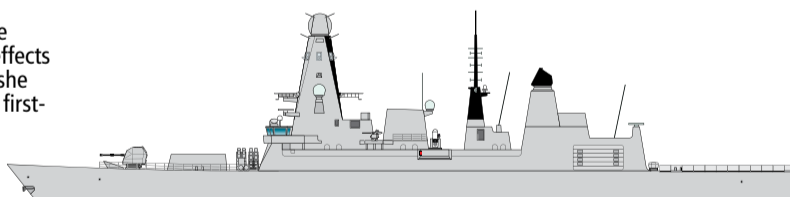
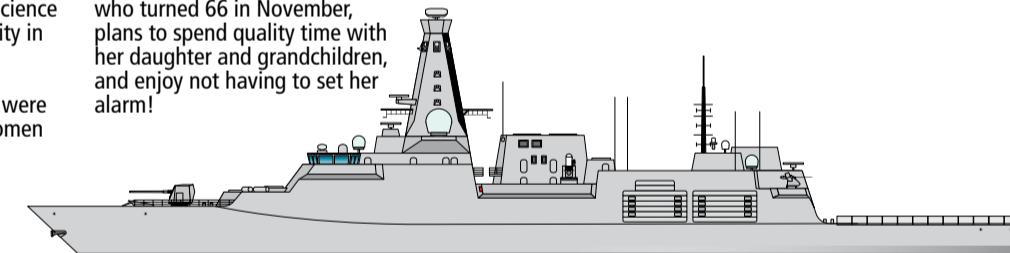
Jane has remained with Yarrow/BAE ever since and has worked in production design and forward design, on equipment seats and local structure.

Jane has worked on past, present and future ships used by the Royal Navy including the Type 23, Type 45, Type 26 and Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers.

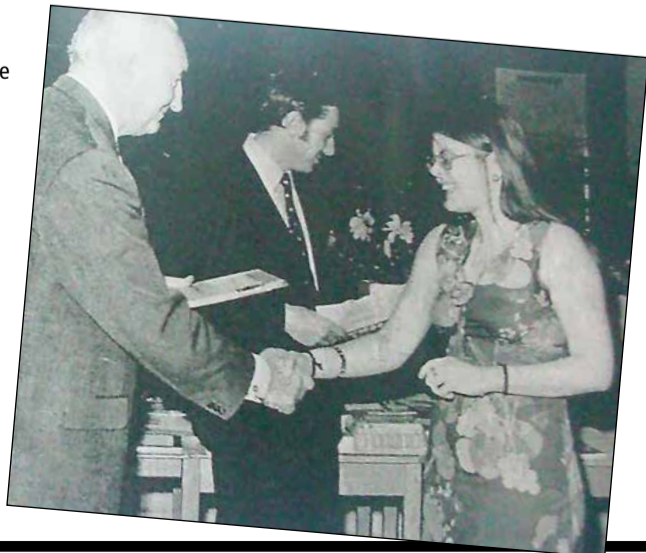
Jane has inspired and mentored many engineers over the years and helped to overcome gender bias in the industry.

In 2019, Jane was granted Fellowship of RINA in recognition of her outstanding career.

During her retirement, Jane, who turned 66 in November, plans to spend quality time with her daughter and grandchildren, and enjoy not having to set her alarm!



● During her career Jane worked on the Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers, top of page, and warships, the Type 26, above, Type 45, left and Type 23, below



Tat's amazing, Linda

IT'S fair to say that Linda Jacobsen really, really likes the Royal Navy's Hawk jets.

So much so that she's had a large image of one of the sleek, black fighters tattooed across her forearm.

Ms Jacobsen, 59, works as a civil servant at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, which is home to 736 Naval Air Squadron and its fleet of Hawk aircraft.

"I just love the jets," said Ms Jacobsen. "I always have. I've had various jobs here and I used to be a cleaner and work in the control tower, that was just perfect. Although I am not in the tower anymore, I still get to see them. They're so noisy, cute and fast. I love them."

Ms Jacobsen, who lives between Helston and Falmouth, got in touch with tattooist Seth Thomas from Penryn to realise her dream. After carefully examining photographs, he spent four hours creating the tattoo.

The Hawk flies alongside a smaller tattoo on her left arm, that of a World War 2 Short

Stirling bomber, which was the same type flown during the war by her father Bill Warren.

She said she has always loved jets and believes it is because she grew up next to an airfield in Buckinghamshire.

Ms Jacobsen added: "Everyone thinks I am crazy but then they know I am crazy about the Hawks. Even my mum thinks I am crazy."

"I saw one of the lieutenant commanders I know, from one of the helicopter squadrons, the other day and he said: 'what's that?' pointing at my tattoo. He said he hoped I had a Merlin helicopter tattoo somewhere too - but, I can't say I have. It has to be the Hawks. As soon as I saw them, I just fell in love with them."

The Navy's 736 squadron use the Hawks for training. The jets pretend to be hostile aircraft or incoming missiles attacking Royal Navy and NATO ships. They also pretend to be the enemy in aerial engagements, testing the abilities of fighter controllers to coordinate the fast-moving battlespace in real time.

Top medal awarded

The Maritime Volunteer Service's Chief Volunteer Officer, Captain Nicholas Spencer, has been recognised at the highest level with the award of the Merchant Navy Medal.

The medal is awarded to those who are serving or have served in the Merchant Navy and fishing fleets of the UK, Isle of Man or Channel Islands for exemplary service and devotion to duty, rewarding those who have set an outstanding example to others.

Capt Spencer has been an outstanding example to all throughout his career and as a member of the MVS.

He has been Chief Volunteer Officer since 2018 and has led by example visiting most of the UK's 26 active units and participating both at strategic and operational levels within the charity.

His career at sea included being a ferry master (much of the time on challenging Irish Sea routes),

a ferry company superintendent and a Mostyn pilot.

As a retired Master Mariner, now living in Barmby near York, Captain Spencer has dedicated his time to the MVS.

The job of CVO is unpaid and he has devoted more time and effort to the role than could be expected of a full-time employee.

The MVS trains its members (many of whom have had no previous connection with the sea) in nautical skills, raises awareness of all things maritime among the public, provides training and sea experience to youth groups, supports port authorities by providing safety patrols that contribute to compliance with Port Marine Safety Code and engages in the Resilience emergency response preparedness programme.

Anyone wishing to know more about the MVS can email hq@mvs.org.uk

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● The USS Dextrous, HMS Brocklesby and the Al-Shaqrta

Brocklesby joins Gulf exercise

HMS Brocklesby joined American and Saudi sailors for a four-day workout in the Gulf to test their combined seafaring and minehunting skills.

The Bahrain-based warship headed out into the Gulf to link up with the Al-Shaqrta of the Royal Saudi Navy – a British-built Sandown-class minehunter similar to those operated by the UK – and the US Navy's USS Dextrous for the second combined mine warfare exercise of the year involving the three nations.



The Americans also committed an MH-53E Sea Dragon from their Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15 for the combined training.

More than half the length of Brocklesby, the giant helicopter pulls a sled through the ocean – used to sweep for mines mechanically, detonate them magnetically or search for them using a side-scan sonar.

The three ships and helicopter practised not only their ability to find and eradicate practice mines, but also carried out more general training such as sailing in close formation and honing communications and ways of working so that they can operate seamlessly together in a real-world scenario.

The four-day exercise was directed from the Saudis' Mine Warfare Centre at the King Abdulaziz Naval Base in Jubail and the senior British officer involved in proceedings, Captain Don Crosbie, was delighted with its outcome.

"This second round of training allowed us to refine our mine countermeasures procedures as a combined team," said Capt Crosbie, deputy commander of Task Force 52, the Coalition Mine Countermeasures Group operating in the Gulf.

"Building cohesion is the best way to continuously increase our defensive capabilities as a coalition."

Brocklesby – currently home to Crew 6, nicknamed the Mavericks, from Portsmouth's 2nd Mine Countermeasures Squadron – is one of four Royal Navy mine warfare ships stationed long-term in the Gulf.

Operation Tuwaiq is a combined effort involving the navies of the UK, UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the USA designed to reassure merchant shipping passing through the Gulf that Coalition navies are on patrol and there to help them – and conveying a similar message to the smaller fishing dhows in the same waters.

Choir remains in fine voice

LAST year was certainly unforgettable for the Military Wives Choirs.

One year ago the choirs began recording the soundtrack CD for *Military Wives*, starring Dame Kristin Scott Thomas, which was released in March and topped the film charts in July.

May saw VE Day celebrations, with one submariner's wife featured on BBC's *The One Show* as we all reflected on Dame Vera Lynn's *We'll Meet Again*.

In September some 70 MWC choir members were chosen from across the UK to record *Abide With Me* to honour the 100th anniversary of the journey of the Unknown Soldier.

In November the choirs marked Armistice Day with an act of Remembrance online.

Throughout lockdown and with the tier systems in place, MWC choirs have continued to meet online and there are now more than 75 MWC choirs in the UK and across the world.



Navy pilot makes history

THE first naval aviator has earned his Wings on the military's new fast jet trainer.

Lieutenant Lewis Phillips received the proud emblem of a qualified pilot after 12 demanding months at RAF Valley in Anglesey, where he was taught the basics of operating a 21st-Century fast jet in the Texan T1.

First in the classrooms and simulators, and then in the Texan's cockpit, he's learned the fundamentals of handling a jet-engine aircraft, including formation flying, low-level navigation and coping with all weather conditions.

Twelve months ago, the 30-year-old from Portsmouth was the first trainee jet pilot to fly solo in a Texan.

And a year on, he's now the first Fleet Air Arm flier to earn his Wings in the aircraft, the only naval aviator among six pilots who graduated from 72 Squadron at Valley.

The Texan replaced the (very similar looking) Tucano which served fast-jet pilots well for the past 30 years.

But with today's fully-digital jets and helicopters, the analogue trainer was seen as obsolete and phased out.

Its successor has a fully digitised (aka 'glass') cockpit, reaches top speeds of more than 360mph and can climb as high as 31,000ft.

All of which means students must get used to wearing G-suits to counter the effects of gravity on the strains and stresses of flight, an immersion suit in case the Texan has to ditch, wearing an oxygen mask rather than breathing normally.

"The Texan is really nice to fly and a noticeable power increase from previous aircraft I've flown – the Tutor and Prefect," said Lewis.

"Having a 'glass' cockpit is also a huge benefit and step change in training, allowing instructors to deliver electronic warfare threats we need to defend against and make a sortie feel a lot more realistic."

Lewis spent nine years in the Navy as an air traffic control officer, before swapping the control tower for the cockpit.

The long road to becoming a fast-jet pilot begins with learning the basics of flight at Barkston Heath in Lincolnshire in the Grob Tutor, then moves to Valley and the Texan which handles like a jet despite being propeller-driven, then on to jets and finally a conversion course to a front-line fighter.

In Lewis' case it's not Hawk then F-35, but an exchange programme with the Americans (part of the Long Lead programme as part of the RN's return to carrier strike operations).

He'll get his first jet experience in a T45 Goshawk trainer – the US Navy's counterpart to the Hawk – before moving on to the F-18 Super Hornet, the mainstay of combat operations on America's carrier fleet.

"I am honoured to be the first Royal Navy pilot to graduate with Wings on the Texan T1," Lewis continued.

"It certainly isn't lost on me that I wear the same uniform – and now the same Wings – as all those who came before me."

"I am excited about the career that lays ahead and although receiving my wings indicates the end to my initial training as a pilot it also indicates the beginning of an even steeper learning curve, a challenge which I look forward to."



● Lt Cdr Dave Bouyac, SNO RAF Valley, with Lt Lewis Phillips and, below, Lt Phillips with his fellow classmates



Catering firm to support RNRMC

THIS year, ESS will begin selling a selection of branded Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity merchandise via their on-site shops within the Defence estate as part of their support for the charity.

This follows ESS signing up to the RNRMC's Gold Bridge Partnership in 2020, demonstrating ESS's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

HMS Collingwood, HMS Excellent and HMS Sultan will be the first sites to stock the merchandise in January, with HMS Raleigh and HMS Devonport to follow later in the year.

It was in February 2020 at HMS Excellent that a plaque acknowledging this special Gold Bridge Partnership was presented to Mark Webster, Managing Director of ESS.

The occasion was marked by a celebratory VIP lunch for 16 invited guests from the local Royal Navy family and associates of the RNRMC.

Adrian Bell, CEO at the RNRMC said: "This is a really exciting and innovative partnership and I'm hugely grateful for the genuine interest and commitment shown by ESS both corporately and individually."

"I am delighted that ESS is offering the RNRMC so many ways of interacting with and supporting our beneficiaries."

Merchandise in the shops will include the best-selling carrier bag, face masks and flask water bottles to name a few.

For more information on RNRMC merchandise visit rnrmc.org.uk/shop



Helping veterans around the globe

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity exists to support all Royal Navy sailors, marines, and their families, for life.

While most of these beneficiaries are in the UK, the RNRMC is also there for the many serving personnel, families and veterans who live all over the world.

For several years the RNRMC have worked closely with the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League (RCEL) to ensure that members of the Royal Navy family in Commonwealth nations are looked after.

The RCEL helps ex-servicemen and women who served the Crown, and their widow(er)s, who are now in need.

Many Commonwealth ex-service personnel live in challenging conditions, often below the poverty line.

In the past year, the RNRMC have funded vital aid for 52 members of the Royal Navy family across 28 countries and recently awarded a grant of £30,000 to continue this support.

The latest grant will help individuals like Mr Rodrigo, pictured, who lives in Colombo, Sri Lanka with his wife who cares for him.

Mr Rodrigo served with the Royal Naval Police from 1943 to 1956 in Ceylon and now aged 94 is in very poor health and has great difficulty communicating.

The RCEL provide two meals a day to Mr Rodrigo, a critical lifeline for him.

Thanks to ongoing support from the RNRMC, those who have served in the Royal Navy family are looked after and not left without access to the most basic of needs.



The Year of Delivery

IN THE March 2020 edition of *Navy News* you read about what the new People and Training (P&T) Directorate was aiming to do to transform the 'lived experience' of Royal Navy personnel.

Since March there has been an abundance of work to underpin Transformation so that this year you will start to feel the benefits.

All this work focuses on improving the lived experience

and enabling productivity of our people and organisation, to enable the Navy and its people to fulfil our potential.

Commander Michelle Westwood explains how through four key themes.

1. HOW WE LIVE AND WORK

THE key developments in People and Training in 2020 included the creation of the Royal Navy People Vision: 'Unique Opportunities to thrive and unlock your potential. Valued and respected as individuals, who operate and fight to win'.

The development of the People and Training Strategy which underpins the intent to ensure that throughout their career with the Royal Navy our whole force personnel 'Join Well', 'Train Well', 'Live Well', 'Work Well' and 'Leave Well', and that the P&T Directorate 'runs well' to deliver the strategy.

The design of the Royal Navy Talent Strategy that seeks to increase ownership by individuals of their careers; and the commencement of a review into the scope and size of our branches and specialisations so that they are designed to best support the future of the RN.

We have also reviewed the Divisional and Regimental System and identified three areas which could be improved to deliver increased capability, capacity and to improve the culture across the system.

Pilots to test improvements to

these areas have just begun in more than a dozen units across the Royal Navy (ashore and afloat, in RN and RM units, and will report by Easter.

All of P&T work writing strategies, visions and reviewing the Divisional and Regimental System is based on engaging and listening to our people.

In 2020 the P&T teams – building on knowledge gleaned from the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey – engaged with more than 7,000 people at every rank across the whole force, conducted 1,154 one-on-one interviews, 325 workshops and more than 20 focus groups.

This year, work will begin to start engaging across the RN on how we implement the Talent Strategy, what it will mean for our people, what opportunities it will present and what the timelines for implementation will be.

Most elements we can control, but they will be dependent on further development of our digital systems and so the benefit may not be immediately felt, but we will keep you updated throughout the year on when and how you will experience changes.

Other elements of the Talent Strategy will involve close liaison across the MOD, such as the desired

changes to the appraisal system and paying for skills not rank: a huge amount of energy is being put into delivering the Talent Strategy and making it a reality for our people, it will however take time for all of it to be delivered but we have started.

P&T haven't just been focusing on the future changes we will make, but on how right now we can improve the lived experience of our personnel: focusing on gaps on the front line.

We have been working hard to increase recruitment, inflow to the RN.

CNR went digital within 48 hours of lockdown – engaging directly with candidates.

We're increasing training capacity and applications to join the Royal Navy are up (see the article on page 27) including females (11 per cent); UK BAME community (43 per cent); RFA (20 per cent).

We kept training through Covid as other parts of Defence shut down – training 237 more Junior Rates in Phase 1 during the summer term than in the same term in 2019.

We're also more efficient. Since April, loading into Phase 1 at HMS Raleigh has been 96 per cent of capacity (up from an average of 78 per cent in 2019).

We're being proactive retaining more people, establishing a dedicated retention cell and 507 personnel have been retained in Service since April under COVID-retention measures.

And we've introduced the 'Golden Ticket': since April, 155 personnel have re-joined the service, with a further 310 currently in the process of applying to do so.

All this means that total Phase 1 ratings training capacity will have been increased by 996 recruits per year – a 38 per cent increase in just nine months. And we're going to fill all of it in 2021.

It takes about 15 months from Day 1 of Phase 1 – to a sailor or Royal Marine coming onto the Trained Strength.

The huge surge of recruits we have brought into training since January will start to hit the trained strength from Easter.

Forecast gains to the Trained Strength will rise from 1,660 per year in 2019 to c.2,600 by 2022: 1,000 more a year – helping the RN grow from 28,000 to 31,000 by 2023.

The key message in our transformation of how people will live, and work is that we are making improvements that hopefully people will start to feel now.

2. WHAT WE NEED TO DELIVER TO TRANSFORM

THE P&T Strategy has underpinned the new design for the People and Training Directorate: this will start to be implemented from early this year, with the introduction of a People Engagement and Partnering team, focusing on how we better engage across the RN with what, how and when we are introducing changes, bringing the changes to life for you all so you know how it

will positively impact on your career choices.

The Training Management Group has also been established to work alongside the new training delivery partner to manage the transformed training offer, Project Selborne, which will start to be delivered in the next couple of months.

What can our people expect in the future?

Training will be increasingly delivered via remote learning, and tailored to an individual where, in line with the new talent strategy, individuals skills and qualifications achieved before they joined will be recognised. It will result in some training courses being shorter and being able to attend virtually from home, providing increasing stability for individuals and their family, but

also good for the productivity of our Service.

Some of the design will take time to implement as it is dependent on new data and digital enablement – it is expected that the new People and Training organisation will be fully operational in 2023.

Changes are under way and this year you will start to hear more about it.

3. MANAGING AND ORGANISING PEOPLE CAPABILITY

OVER the next two years, Programme Hecate will re-focus more than 500 uniformed personnel each from HQ and shore posts to front-line facing roles, employing more of the whole force, civil service and FTRS, in positions in the headquarters and ashore.

Priorities are to employ military personnel to fill gaps to bring all units R5 and above to 100 per cent crewing.

Not only will this re-focusing of military workforce build resilience on the front line, reducing gapping and churn, but the growing demand to employ the whole force is part of our People and Training Strategy.

We continue to value and employ the skills of our personnel as they transition to second careers either as a civil servant or reservist: if you are leaving soon or have recently left, consider that you are always part of the Royal Navy and can look to either use your Golden

Ticket to re-join, or apply to sideways move to a growing range of civil service or FTRS jobs across the RN shore footprints.

The Maritime Reserves are also transforming, increasingly supporting the operational outputs of the RN. More information about this will be provided later.

People and Training have also been working hard to reduce operational pinch points across different branches and specialisations.



of our Divisional and Regimental System,

Using a range of initiatives and working in different ways to solve problems, the recovery of all the pinchpoints has accelerated.

Combined with the increase in recruitment, retention and re-joiners will result in fewer gaps on the front line.

When combined with work which will mature in early 2021 to transform the design of our branches and specialisations, and the increased empowerment, capacity and changed culture of

it will result in increased availability of personnel, improved crewing models and an improved lived experience for our people.

There are a lot of dependencies in the P&T Transformation work: the branch work is aligned to the Talent Strategy, and while some aspects may take time to implement, one example of success now is the changing opportunities to progress to WO and then subsequently to commission.

The Warrant Officer transformation was conceived, approved and delivered in nine months, the first 39 commissions signalled in October, and the first WO commissioning course started at BRNC last month.

P&T Transformation is not instant, it takes time, but we are making big strides to improve how we manage and organise our people capability and you will be noticing incremental changes.

4. TECHNICAL AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

P&T transformation is enabled by digital and data.

Serving members among you will already be aware of the MyNavy App which since March has been pivotal in transforming how you can access information and how you are communicated with.

Since April, there have been more than two million visits to the App and 6.9 million page views. It has been accessed from 48 countries on every continent except Antarctica.

The development of the MyNavy App continues to be central to empowering our people, putting information at their fingertips. This year people will be able to book travel via the app and have improved information and access to sport and AT information.

By the end of the year the ambition is that parts of the Talent Strategy will be brought to life on the App.

MyNavy is not our only tool. We are looking to digitise many

of our human resources processes, moving away from paper forms and spreadsheets.

This month work on the People Data Strategy which will underpin the transformation of tools used to plan workforce, careers and availability of people, and how you access human resource advice and services begins.

As this develops we will share more information about the benefits it will bring to all our people.

People and Training

Transformation is exciting, challenging and completely focused on improving the lived experience of our people while enabling productivity of the Royal Navy.

Some of the benefits of transformation will be felt quicker than others, some will take time to be felt as underlying digital processes need to be developed, but all will be checked for success by measuring the changing satisfaction of our people, who are our ultimate beneficiaries and

judges.

We are pleased to highlight though that Project Selborne has rightly been recognised in the 2020 Cabinet Office Commercial Awards as the most innovative programme across the entire public sector this year; the Royal Navy was a finalist in the CIPD People Management Awards for the UK's best apprenticeship scheme and took third place in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers in the UK.





Helping the Navy respond to Covid

A RESERVIST from Gateshead has helped ensure the Royal Navy has operated almost as usual throughout the pandemic.

Lieutenant Fiona Porteous-Ford, who volunteers at HMS Calliope, has been part of the team which has directed the Senior Service's response to Covid – from supporting ships deployed around the globe, to assistance to the government at home and continuing the Navy continues to train its sailors and Royal Marines.

A chartered marketer by day, she's been mobilised during the crisis to act as a staff officer at the Royal Navy's 'Covid cell' in its headquarters in Portsmouth, at the heart of the Royal Navy's support operations to personnel deploying to ships, submarines, air wings and shore based employment.

The focus of the cell – run entirely by Reservists – is to prepare and protect our people whilst continuing to deliver operational commitments.

"This was a really rewarding and unique opportunity to work in the thick of it, right the way across the Royal Navy," said Fiona (pictured above alongside a map of the South West on the wall of the Covid cell).

With no two days the same, the role has seen the junior officer deliver comprehensive daily briefings, help draw up the Navy's policy under pressure, as well as ensuring testing and quarantine demands were met.

"I went into this process wanting to help," Fiona added. "The threat to everyone from Covid has been a global issue, and I am privileged to have been able to help my fellow serving personnel throughout this mobilisation.

"Ensuring our sailors and marines are prepared in all respects to deploy and support front-line operations is an ongoing challenge."

Usually based at HMS Calliope in Gateshead, Fiona manages the training and careers of ten fellow reservists at the same time as serving in the Navy's mine warfare reserve.

As a marketer she is used to poring over masses of data and information, analysing it and helping businesses develop their strategies, skills which the lieutenant has applied to the Navy's pandemic response.

"As a Reservist you often bring something different to the fold. I found an area I could add value, make a difference while using both my civilian and military skills," Fiona explained.

"Together, we can take pride in the fact we have contributed to the continued delivery of the Royal Navy's operational capability across the globe – all at the time where Covid cases are rising exponentially."

She continued: "The Reserves has provided me with countless experiences, including safeguarding National Defence Operations, participating in multi-national military exercises in addition to the opportunities I have been given to develop many other skillsets along the way.

"I feel I have grown as a person, as an employee and as a contributing member of society. I cannot wait to see what the future holds and look forward to the next opportunity."

■ Sailors at HMS Drake are giving their shipmates affected by Covid a Boost. And a Snickers. And a Mars bar.

The logistics team have been filling 'bags of morale' to personnel isolating on the base – either because they're symptomatic or who are isolating under the NHS Test and Trace scheme and unable to return home.

Isolation means they can't even pop to the NAAFI, which is where their shipmates come in. The base received a £4,500 grant from the Royal Navy's Rebalancing Lives Fund... money which is largely being spent on nutty.

"We've seen how hard it is for these sailors while isolating with us," said Warrant Officer Jason Bignell, Team Manager at the Fleet Accommodation Facility in HMS Drake. "Each isolator is given a Bag of Morale, which contain confectionery, mints, crisps and soft drinks.

"It's hoped this token gesture of goodwill will aid their wellbeing and break up the long days in isolation and make things a bit more comfortable."

Jason's team buys the items, bags them up and distributes them to their cabins in the accommodation blocks, which also doubles as a welfare check on everyone.

Rewards all round

SIX members of HMS Lancaster's crew receive Herbert Lott Awards in this month's Senior Command Warrant Officers' Reward and Recognition: CPOs Hayes and Poole, POs McMillan, Connick and Bramley and LET Hartley.

Long Service Recognition Awards go to: WO2 Mason (HMNB Clyde); WO1 Staniforth (SFM Clyde); WO1 Sinclair RM (CTCRM); Lt Col Phillips (Future Recruiting) and CPO Croucher (Yeovilton ATC).

The Victory Services Club Respite and Recognition Break is awarded to WO2 Mason (HMNB Clyde) while the Union Jack Club Respite and Recognition Break goes to LET Marshall (HMS Duncan).



The class of 2020

THE trophy cabinet of HMS Defender will soon be bulging after the Portsmouth-based destroyer picked up six titles in the Navy's new Surface Flotilla awards.

One in three trophies up for grabs went to the Type 45 for her efforts over the past 12 months.

The Surface Flotilla Excellence Awards, presented by Commodore Tim Neild, replace the long-standing Fleet Efficiency Awards and recognise the surface ships and units which have stood out in 18 distinct fields – all of them making a difference to the defence and security of the realm.

Beyond bragging rights among peers and a trophy (in most cases), the awards allow some of the winning ships to hoist a special blue and white pennant, fouled with the crown and anchor and two hippocampi (the mythical seahorses which are the symbol of the Surface Fleet).

The six awards snapped up by Defender are: best destroyer, Naval Capability, Above Water Warfare, Engineering, Signal Intelligence, and Seamanship (covering board-and-search operations, refuelling at sea and general sea boat duties).

Aside from a demanding tour of duty in the Gulf – when at times she was providing air defence for more than two dozen coalition warships, as well as providing protection for ships passing through the Hormuz/Bab-al-Mandeb choke points more than 30 times – Defender has worked extensively in home waters since her return, using her guns to develop tactics which will help the Fleet fend off any fast attack craft.

Her engineers worked in difficult conditions to ensure she was always available, coming up with ingenious solutions to problems under pressure.

In the words of her citation: "2020 has been a year in which HMS Defender has consistently maintained the utmost level of professional effectiveness, delivering all tasking required of her to the highest standard. Defender continues to set the standard as the most operationally experienced and effective air defence vessel in the Fleet."

The nation's flagship HMS Albion edged out carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth as the most effective capital ship thanks to the 'can-do' attitude of her sailors and Royal Marines who've delivered everything asked of them in 2020 – including the experimental autumn amphibious deployment to the Med – without "missing a beat".

Best Frigate HMS Sutherland earned a reputation as one of the RN's hardest-working ships, almost constantly in demand for anti-submarine warfare duties, keeping a close watch on Russian warship movements at home and in the High North, and helping to train future submarine commanders as their prey/hunter.

New River-class ship HMS Medway takes the Offshore Patrol Vessel Trophy having made her mark in her first 12 months deployed to the Caribbean, always on standby to provide help in the event of a natural disaster, as well as seizing £160m illegal drugs in combined operations with the US Coast Guard.

Crew 5 of 2nd Mine Countermeasures Squadron threw themselves immediately into their mission aboard HMS Brocklesby in the Gulf during a period of heightened tensions and then battled through difficulties caused by the global pandemic to take the MCM Trophy.

HMS Enterprise's 15-month mission to the Asia-Pacific region which mixed data gathering with diplomacy and showcased the

flexibility and utility of the Echo class means she takes the Hydrography and Meteorology Trophy. She has also picked up the Fleet Intelligence Trophy.

P2000 HMS Puncher stood out among the small-ship community to take the Inshore Patrol Vessel Trophy, working with Border Force to help prepare for the possible impact of Brexit, protecting HMS Queen Elizabeth when she anchored in the Solent, and has helped the RN develop tactics for dealing with fast attack craft.

HMS Kent was at the forefront of the RN's anti-submarine operations in 2020 from the expanses of the Atlantic to the Barents Sea, helped write the manual for defending the Queen Elizabeth carrier group from underwater threats and tested her mettle against NATO's finest to take the Underwater Warfare Trophy.

From the cool wasteland of Iceland to the warm waters of the Gulf and Mediterranean, the newly-formed Expeditionary Diving Unit 3 (previously Fleet Diving Unit 3) has provided the RN and its ships key protection against underwater improvised explosive devices whilst embracing the latest tech to earn the Fleet Diving Unit Trophy.

HMS Dragon proved experts in Communications and HMS Montrose excelled in Electronic Warfare.

And finally HMS Diamond showed she knows the laws of seafaring to take the 'Rules of the Road Pennant'.

"The awards reflect another busy year of operations," said Commodore Neild, Surface Flotilla Commander. "I am immensely proud of the unwavering commitment to delivering success.

"Despite the challenges of Covid, the Royal Navy has unequivocally maintained all our operational outputs on which our nation depends – and more."



Virtual end to Sultan contest WO all go

HMS Sultan finally managed to hold its annual challenge for young engineers – eight months later than normal as a result of the pandemic.

The competition aims to inspire schoolchildren and students to focus on the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM subjects), giving them a real-world scenario to deal with: design and build a remote-controlled vessel to deliver humanitarian aid to a hurricane-hit island.

Over 60 teams embarked on the challenge in late 2019, with 15 whittled down to the final... which should have taken place in March 2020, only for lockdown to intervene.

Instead, the team at the Gosport establishment filmed the competing vessels at HMS Sultan, so that participants could see months of project work rewarded.

Trophies were awarded across nine different categories, between groups aged 14-16, 16-

18 and apprentices from industry aged 18-24, with 'Team TBD' from Greater Peterborough University Technical College declared the overall winner, while students from the WMG Academy in Coventry scooped four trophies.

"It has been great to finish the competition, especially after all the disappointment earlier this year," said 17-year-old Beck Morgan from Greater Peterborough UTC.

"It was great to see the video of our entry in the water performing as we had hoped. Thank you to the Navy for making it all possible."

Commodore Andy Cree, the RN's lead for training projects, said that despite the pandemic it was important to run the challenge as it remained "a key component of the Royal Navy's schools STEM programme" and that the Service would continue to work on innovative ways of offering practical engineering for young people.

Childcare scheme comes to Plymouth

THE Wraparound Childcare (WAC) scheme is extended to Service personnel in the Plymouth area following a pilot scheme.

WAC provides funding to eligible parent(s) with children between the ages of four to 11 years old with up to 20 hours per week of free before-and-

after-school childcare during term time; parent(s) can choose an OFSTED (or equivalent) registered childcare provider.

The initiative covers all three Services regulars and Full Time Reserve Service (Full Commitment) who are assigned to the Plymouth area and have a child or children of the specified

ages who are attending school or being home schooled at the start of the spring term.

Those whose Assignment Orders have a report for duty date between January 1 2021 and June 30 2021 may also apply.

Further details can be found in [DIN 2020 01-117](#) and in an MOD Information Sheet.

THE rank of Warrant Officer 2nd Class will re-appear from April 1 next year after an eight-year hiatus following confirmation of re-organising senior rates' upper ranks.

Introduced in 2004 to RN technical branches to replace Charge Chief Petty Officer, it was phased out ten years later.

It is being brought back to allow the rank of WO1 to be held purely by men and women in positions which perform an executive, command and leadership type function.

The aim is to renew the status of WO1 as the pinnacle of the ratings structure and a post everyone should aspire to, while the returning WO2 rank will embrace all branches and specialisations in the Royal Navy.

The 2021 promotion round will be the first to select to WO2, with those selected having a Common Promotion Date (CPD) of March 31 2022. There will be no promotion selections to WO1 in 2021; WO2 to WO1 promotion boards will recommence in 2022.

For more details see [DIN 2020 01-121](#).



13 is lucky for Ian

WITH more than 13 years' sea time under his belt, Chief Petty Officer Ian Davies is the first recipient of a new award recognising dedication to front-line service.

The LSA5K – a certificate plus financial reward – has been introduced for any sailor or Royal Marine who spends more than 5,000 days away from their base port/unit.

The marine engineering mechanic (a branch which has now been superseded by marine engineering technicians) joined the RN in 1984 and has clocked up extensive sea time, plus a stint with the Royal New Zealand Navy, during his 36-year career.

After a first draft to Leander-class frigate HMS Phoebe, Ian has spent much of his career in the (now retired) Type 22 community: six ships in all, including witnessing the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997 aboard HMS Beaver, helping Sri Lanka in the wake of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami with HMS Chatham and helping rescue civilians from Libya in 2011 aboard HMS Cumberland as civil war engulfed the country.

He's also been drafted to Northern Ireland, completed four tours of duty providing support to RN/RFA vessels operating in the Falklands courtesy of the small engineering team at East Cove and enjoyed an exchange with the Kiwis under the Long Look programme, helping to maintain the RNZN's small boats.

More recently, he served in helicopter carrier HMS Ocean providing relief effort during the Caribbean 2017 hurricane season and remained with the Mighty O until she left the Fleet.

Now in the final year of his career, Ian is employed at the Defiance Walk-in Workshop as part of Surface Flotilla (West) Engineering Delivery Group in Devonport and still keen to accrue more days away, recently supporting an in-theatre requirement on-board HMS Montrose, in the Gulf.

Vice Admiral Chris Gardner, Chief of Material (Ships), presented the Longer Separation Allowance 5,000 Days award.

Rock engineers recognised

ENGINEERS who ensure the Royal Navy is ready to patrol the Rock around the clock have been singled out by Gibraltar's commander.

It's thanks to the marine engineering department that the six craft of the RN's Gibraltar Squadron are available to safeguard the British territories water and provide protection for visiting warships.

That task in 2020 has been made all the difficult by the global pandemic which has reduced the number of available engineers... and the arrival of two more complex vessels to replace veteran patrol boats Scimitar and Sabre.

They were retired over the summer, replaced by P2000s Dasher and Pursuer – dispatched from the UK to stand in until new replacement craft enter service.

The two fast patrol boats are larger, faster and have a greater range than their predecessors, working side-by-side four RIBs also used by the squadron.



Covid control measures saw the engineers adapt their working hours to ensure that they minimised cross-contamination with the duty crews, often working late into the night to ensure repairs and maintenance were completed.

As well as maintaining the squadron's craft, they serve as engineers on Dasher and Pursuer on patrol, and coxswains of the RIBs when they are out and about in territorial waters.

They have done so demonstrating "drive, motivation and initiative" working "above and beyond" for months on end in the words of the citation accompanying the Herbert Lott Award for Efficiency, which was presented by Commodore Steve Dainton, Commander of British Forces Gibraltar.

"It is only right that this group of outstanding, technically-minded individuals received recognition for their exploits throughout the year," said the squadron's Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Lloyd Cardy.

Collingwood take on recruit influx

RAW recruits begin training at HMS Collingwood for the first time in decades this month – a response to both the growing RN and a surge in interest in joining up during the pandemic.

Applications to join the Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary as last year ended were up by around one third on 2019 figures – 34 per cent for officers and 28 per cent who want to become ratings or join the ranks of the commandos.

To meet the growing demand, beginning on January 11 an additional 500 men and women will be turned from civilians into sailors at HMS Collingwood in Fareham, where they will complete their initial naval training package.

This is in addition to Britannia Royal Naval College, the spiritual home of the Officer Corps in Dartmouth, which has just taken a second intake of junior ratings on the ten-week initial course after already successfully delivering one entry.

It's a task traditionally performed at HMS Raleigh in Torpoint but, even though it's ramped up capacity by taking on an extra 330 raw recruits – delivering more than 3,000 fresh sailors in the next 12 months – more are needed.

It's turned to Collingwood, the Navy's Warfare and Weapon engineering school – and its largest training establishment – to assist, while further intakes are also planned to go to Dartmouth as well.

"We've clearly seen an increase in interest in people wanting to join the Royal Navy – and that's across the board: the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary. A 30 per cent rise in



● The first recruits of Whittall Division – civilians undergoing the transition to junior ratings – form up on the parade ground at BRNC last summer
Picture: PO(Phot) Joel Rouse

applications is really healthy," said Captain Pete Viney, the Service's head of recruiting.

In all over the past 12 months 5,944 people have applied to become officers across the Royal Navy – one in nine wanting to become an F-35 or helicopter pilot, although the figure would have been higher as recruiters expected a spike when Tom Cruise's *Top Gun* sequel was released... only for it to be delayed by Covid.

And applications to become a rating or join the Royal Marines ranks have risen from 14,757 to 18,872.

Beyond the relative security a military career offers in uncertain times and the desire to help out in a crisis, Captain Viney attributes the extra applications to the broad range of apprenticeships offered to all specialist branches and in all trades, which gives them a prospective career in the civilian world. He also said the recent advertising campaign targeting the Submarine Service sparked renewed interest in life beneath the waves.

However, despite the success, recruiters are still actively seeking new applications, not least in the Reserves, both

Royal Navy and Royal Marines. They have been heavily called-upon and mobilised during the pandemic, but applications to join the Maritime Reserve have not matched those to become Regulars.

Royal Navy training has continued throughout the pandemic, with the service continuing to perform the tasks expected to – as well as providing support and assistance to the government's Covid response.

"We've not stopped for a single moment – we have continued to provide the Navy with the people it needs to do its job both today and tomorrow," Captain Viney explained.

"Covid has had a marginal impact on some training availability, but in good naval fashion, we've adapted. In fact, the pandemic has also allowed us to break free from the way we've done things for decades, to better use technology, to do things differently to meet the realities of the 21st Century."

The Admiralty Interview Board – which determines whether applicants have the 'right stuff' to become Naval Officers – is now delivered in a fully virtual manner, using video conferencing. This was rapidly adapted in response to the pandemic and is still being refined, with a fully-online digitised version expected to be in place by this summer.

"We are looking to now make use of the best practices in the commercial recruiting sector to aid us selecting 21st Century officers – while at the same time continuing to recognise the different strengths and attributes we need in our men and women, who will go on to serve and lead in the modern Royal Navy of tomorrow," Captain Viney added.

How to keep your head in a good place

GIVEN the strains and stresses of Service life, compounded by the pandemic, the Royal Navy Health and Wellbeing Team is offering advice on helping you and your family remain resilient in these challenging times.

You may feel frustrated, worried or be anxious about your health or the health of those close to you.

Remember that your Divisional System and Chain of Command are there to support you. If you have any concerns about your mental wellbeing, reach out for support and make use of the many apps and tools out there.

Also consider what impacts your mental wellbeing and what you can do to actively maintain and improve it, such as:

- Keep active: the NAVYfit social media channels are full of workout ideas;
 - Continue to eat healthily: the Supercook app has plenty of ideas (www.supercook.com);
 - Make sure you get enough sleep; eight hours a night are recommended;
 - Reduce your alcohol intake. Drinking too much alcohol can harm your health and negatively impact your lifestyle.
- Use the Drinkaware app to track how much you drink (www.drinkaware.co.uk/tools);
- Quit Smoking. The sooner you quit, the sooner you'll notice changes to your body and health.
- Use the NHS Smokefree App to get daily support and to track your progress (www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking).

In addition, the Naval Families Federation is providing 3,000 Naval families (regular and reserve) one year's free access to the Headspace app.

There are guided sleep casts and music, as well as all the mindfulness courses and even topics and courses for children.

This particular service is only open to non-serving family members with one licence allocated per Service Number. For more details visit www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/nff-Headspace.

Singapore team prepares for a year to remember



TAKING command of one of the smallest military units in the Forces inventory is Commander Tim Hutchins.

He's been given the reins of the British Defence Singapore Support Unit, run for the past three years by Commander Paul Bastiaens (on the left of the picture) as it prepares for a demanding 2021.

It's the task of the unit – located at the northern tip of Singapore and comprising just 33 men and women (UK service and civilian personnel, plus locally-employed civilians) – to support British and allied forces operating in the region, in particular providing fuel (at Senoko) and port facilities at Sembawang.

Although Britain withdrew its military forces from east of Suez in 1971 – including the main hub of Singapore, which included the sizeable RN establishment of HMS Terror – the UK has maintained a small military presence for the past half century supporting the Five-Power Defence Agreement.

It was signed by Britain, Singapore,

Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand, all of whom vowed to work together to safeguard the region with an exercise each October, Bersama Lima, to test their combined abilities.

Beyond that annual exercise, the unit has found its workload growing in recent years as the Royal Navy stepped up its presence in the Asia-Pacific region, with visits by HMS Argyll, Albion, Montrose, Sutherland and, most recently, survey ship HMS Enterprise.

During the past five years, an average of 120 allied vessels visited the support unit each year, and in 2017 under Cdr Bastiaens, 150 vessels.

Covid restrictions have produced surprisingly minimal changes to visiting numbers – but have reduced ship's company shore leave.

Most vessels are from either the five FPDA nations or the US, but the unit has also supported ships from Brazil, Chile, Fiji, Greece, India, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands,

Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Sweden – at times making it the busiest UK-military operated port in terms of frigate and destroyer movements.

"The role of commanding officer comes with a hefty responsibility," said Commander Bastiaens, who's now off to be executive officer of HMS Sultan in Gosport.

"The unit remains the UK's only visible permanent commitment to the Five-Powers Defence Arrangement in the region."

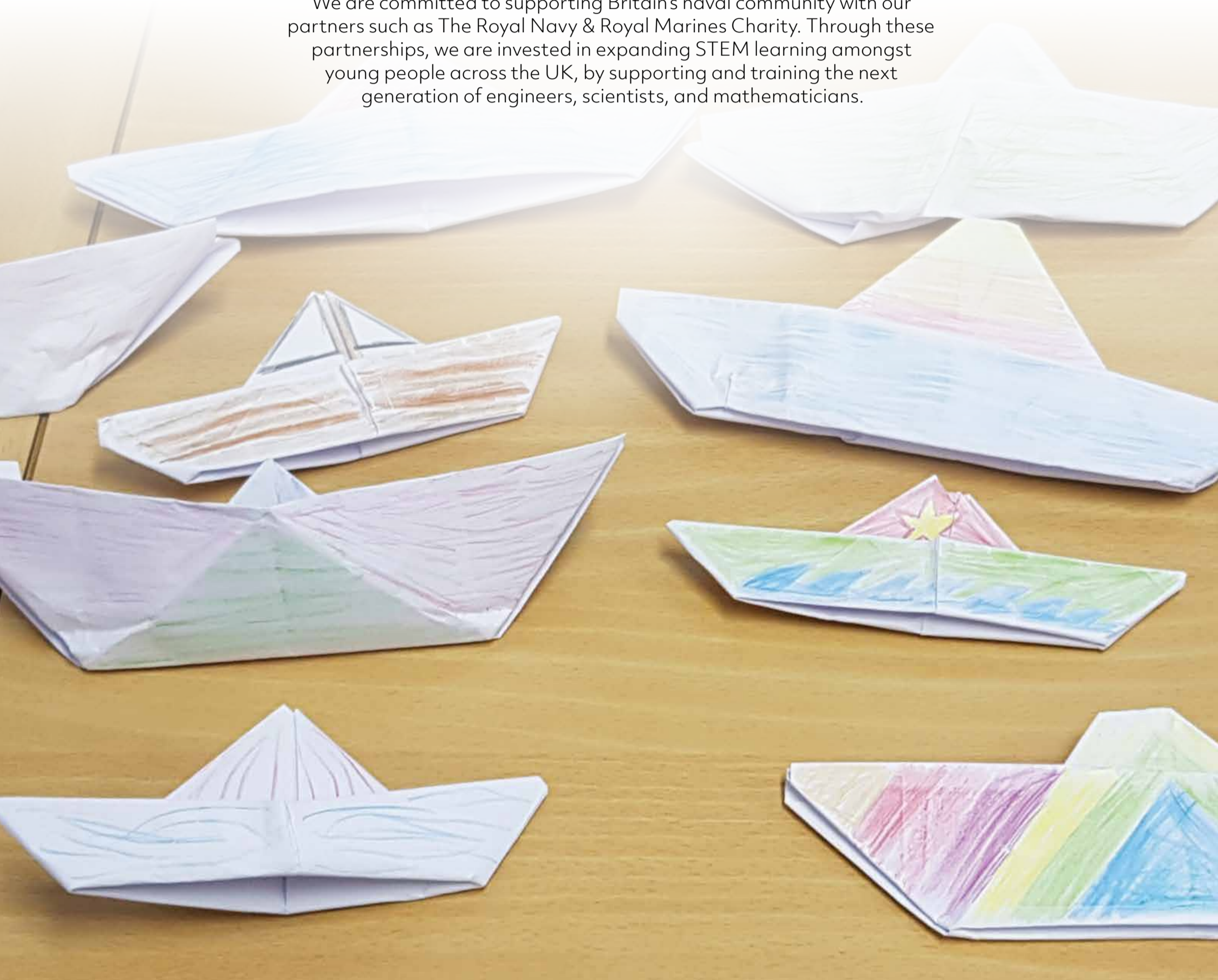
His successor faces the challenge of supporting the HMS Queen Elizabeth carrier group which will sail to the Pacific Rim as part of its maiden deployment and there will be UK participation in the 50th anniversary Bersama Lima exercise.

"It is an outright pleasure and delight to take command here and an incredibly exciting time for the UK, Five-Powers Defence Agreement and UK Strategic Command to prove our worth," Commander Hutchins said.

| Invested in training |

Raytheon UK's Partnership with the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity Drives STEM Learning

We are committed to supporting Britain's naval community with our partners such as The Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity. Through these partnerships, we are invested in expanding STEM learning amongst young people across the UK, by supporting and training the next generation of engineers, scientists, and mathematicians.



Find out more on our partnership and download your own STEM activity pack at: <https://www.rnrmc.org.uk/float-your-boat>



You've been great, Scott

LS takes top honour in first Reservist awards

PART-TIME sailor Ryan Scott has been named the Navy's 'reservist of the year' for his dedication in Gibraltar and UK waters.

And acting Corporal Ed Norman from London is the No.1 Royal Marines Reservist of 2020 for his efforts to help comrades maintain fitness under lockdown.

They are just two members of the Maritime Reserves singled out by their commander Commodore Mel Robinson in the first annual awards honouring the men and women Churchill once dubbed 'twice a citizen' for devoting their free time to serving their country – alongside demanding day jobs.

Leading Seaman Ryan, pictured right, who volunteers with HMS Wildfire based in Northwood, Hertfordshire, has been instrumental in helping fellow members of the Royal Navy Reserve seamlessly slip into life with the Gibraltar Squadron and, most recently, with patrol ship HMS Tyne which has been keeping an eye on fishermen and Russian warships operating around the UK.

A former full-time member of the Royal Navy, he's the first recipient of the Commodore Muriel Hocking Trophy, named in honour of the late commodore, who is remembered for her example of service, compassion, hard work and determination in the face of adversity.

Ryan was mobilised twice in 2020, firstly to the Gibraltar Squadron, more recently to the Offshore Patrol Squadron and HMS Tyne, which has been in demand in monitoring Russian activity in UK waters this autumn.

Quickly gaining the trust and respect of his regular counterparts, Ryan created a training package for reservists and established himself as a natural mentor and leader for new joiners, helping them to settle into life at sea and quickly familiarise themselves with their roles onboard.



"I'm delighted to be recognised for the contribution I've made to the Royal Naval Reserve and to the Offshore Patrol Squadron," Ryan said.

"It's true what they say, though. I've only been able to make the difference I have because the Commanding Officer and the whole ship's company, both in Wildfire and here in HMS Tyne, have been onside and supported me. It's a team effort.

"I accept my trophy on behalf of all those who have mobilised into the squadron to do what we joined the Royal Naval Reserve for – supporting the Royal Navy at sea."

Ed Norman from RMR London received the Commando Dagger Award, which is given to the Reservist who epitomises the Corps' ethos, values and spirit – and contributes most to operational output.

Ed, a former regular Royal Marine who now works in the fitness industry,

is one of just two physical training instructors in the Wandsworth-based unit. He quickly realised the impact lockdown would have on his fellow green berets – particularly new recruits – so he devised a virtual training regime which was adopted across the Royal Marines Reserve, providing advice on avoiding injuries, dealing with mental health issues, and generally maintaining a positive outlook while restrictions made it impossible to attend a gym.

"I was really surprised to receive the Commando Dagger Award," Ed said. "The medical and fitness standards for the Royal Marines are demanding and exactly the same in the Reserves as in the Regulars – you have to hit the same standards. All I did was make sure that we could get as many new Recruits through the challenging recruitment process as possible so we could continue to generate Reservists to support Commando units around the world."



The Philip Dark Trophy was awarded to HMS Hibernia in Belfast for achieving the highest recruiting numbers over the course of the year, while the Richards Trophy was awarded to the Maritime Reserves Media Communications and Engagement Team in recognition of the team's exceptional contribution to the front line.

A series of commendations have also been presented to reservists who've stood out from their peers these past 12 months, such as Leading Seaman Kim MacDonald, pictured above, from HMS Scotia in Dunfermline, recognised for delivering online fitness sessions during lockdown.

"It is great to have my hard work recognised, especially as it has been a challenging time, balancing developing my own business during lockdown with family commitments and, of course, my commitment to the Royal Naval Reserve," Kim said. "I love what I do and

it has been so satisfying to see shipmates from across the Royal Naval Reserve benefit from the online physical training sessions I run."

Also commended were Sub Lieutenant Charlotte Kertrestel, pictured right, from HMS Forward (Birmingham) for commitment to building and maintaining positive relationships with employers in the West Midlands; Colour Sergeant James Lynskey, pictured below, from RMR Merseyside, unit media officer in addition to his full-time role as chief instructor, telling the Royal Marines Reserve story to key stakeholders across Merseyside;



Lieutenant Carlo Contaldi RMR London, who commissioned as a junior officer from the ranks this year and was immediately mobilised in support of Covid operations; Chief Petty Officer Tim Nichols, pictured below, from HMS Vivid (Plymouth), was recognised for his support to British Overseas Territories during the pandemic; and Able Seaman Steven Court, who is also mobilised along with AB Scott in HMS Tyne.

Commodore Robinson said, "I promised when I assumed command of the Maritime Reserves that I would instil a culture which recognises exceptional performance and publicly thanks those who go above and beyond their duties.

"I am so proud of this first batch of winners and I offer them my wholehearted congratulations."



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No white knight for Foxy Lady

THE world's last flying Sea Vixen fighter has taken to the skies for the last time after custodians halted repair plans.

After three years' work attempting to restore Foxy Lady to flying order after the jet's airframe was badly damaged in a heavy landing, Navy Wings say they are still £2m short.

The veteran interceptor has not flown since she landed 'wheels up' at RNAS Yeovilton back in 2017 after her undercarriage failed.

Sea Vixens, with their distinctive twin boom tail, was a mainstay of carrier operations in the 1960s to the early '70s.

Foxy Lady was donated to the collection of vintage naval aircraft at Yeovilton in 2014, the last of 145 Sea Vixens built for the Royal Navy still airborne, and was a regular on the display scene until the accident.

Despite hopes of crowd-funding or a 'white knight' to underwrite repairs, the charity has reluctantly decided to halt repairs and maintain Foxy Lady as a non-flying exhibit.

Instead the charity will focus its efforts on restoring a single-seat Sea Fury FB11 to airworthiness, so it can share the skies with the collection's Sea Fury T20 two-seat trainer.

"It is difficult having to make choices between historically-important and beautiful aircraft," said Navy Wings' spokeswoman Louise Evans.

"The Sea Vixen will continue to be a star attraction at Yeovilton Air Day."

Cold War Centre clears first hurdle

THE team behind a Cold War museum in Plymouth are to press ahead with the ten-year project after hitting their first target.

The public has donated the £40,000 needed to carry out a detailed study into whether the ambitious plan – with veteran hunter-killer nuclear submarine HMS Courageous as its centrepiece – is feasible.

Rear Admiral John Weale – head of the Silent Service until earlier in 2019 and now heading the team behind the 'Cold War Centre' – said that since announcing the plans in September, the level of interest in the museum project had "far exceeded expectations".

Two thirds of the donations – anywhere between £5 and £500 – has come from individuals, many of them Cold War veterans, especially from the Submarine Service, with defence firms providing the remaining cash.

"We are delighted that the bulk of the money has come from the Royal Navy community," said Ian Whitehouse, former commanding officer of Cold War submarines HMS Onyx and Sovereign.

"We feel this is an era which needs to be recognised beyond the few flashpoints that people might remember, such as the Greenham Common protests.

"The Plymouth Cold War Centre is about telling the story of the 'war' we went to sea in, which RAF aircrew flew in, which soldiers in Germany and Royal Marines in Norway trained and



served in."

A small team will now work with the MOD, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Plymouth City Council and industry to draw up detailed plans, costings – short and long-term – and the likely benefits of the centre.

Beyond boosting tourism in the South West and shedding light on a period of UK and global history which is eclipsed by the two world wars, one key goal of the centre is to champion British industry past and present in developing the cutting-edge technologies needed to keep the nation's armed forces ahead of their adversaries – hopefully stimulating tomorrow's engineers, designers and tech advocates.

Courageous has been opened to the public for nearly two decades pulling in about 5,000 visitors every year.

She's run on a volunteer

basis, access is difficult – for security reasons, tourists have to book well in advance – and, as she's afloat in No.3 Basin in Devonport Naval Base, she needs to go into dry dock every few years for maintenance and hull cleaning.

The submarine is currently being worked on ready to go back in the water in time for her 50th birthday in the spring, when she'll re-open to the public.

The detailed study will look at the cost of restoring and maintaining her as the focal point of the Cold War Centre and the location of the supporting museum/archive/research centre – which may be in the naval base (as imagined above), or elsewhere in the city.

That study should be completed in the spring and, if positive, the principal fundraising (including a bid for lottery money) would begin in 2022.

Read all about an astonishing career

LAST month we brought you the happy news of Captain Duncan Knight celebrating his 100th birthday in the presence of present-day Senior Service personnel at his home in Chichester.

And we thought he might be the last surviving officer to have served throughout World War 2.

Well... enter retired Lieutenant Commander Robert Read, former submariner, and who also served for the duration, and who celebrated his 101st birthday in November, and is probably our oldest email correspondent (he's pictured shortly after hitting his centenary in the 'nautical corner' of his home).

"I have no wish to steal his thunder, but may I mention that I, too, am a fellow sailor who served likewise throughout WW2 but cannot compete with his total length of service," he writes.

A then Ordinary Seaman Read was mobilised as a member of London Division, RNVR on August 29 1939, drafted to HMS Duncton Castle (Armed Merchant Cruiser) promoted able seaman and recommended for officer training.

Following service in the Med (including the evacuation of Crete) he was recommended for the Submarine Service.

He served as navigator of HMS Thrasher under future Admiral Sir Arthur Hezlet, took part in one of the X-Craft operations against the Tirpitz (Operation Source) before following Hezlet to HMS Trenchant for duties in the Far East.

And what duties: "many gun actions, mine laying, a commando raid, Chariot attack



in Phuket Harbour, we sank U-859 in the Malacca Straits (Septemeber 23 1944) and the Japanese heavy cruiser Ashigara (June 8 1945) – the largest ship sunk by any British submarine in the war."

He returned to the Surface Fleet post-war (with the DSC to his name for his exploits), served as 1st Lieutenant of a sloop and a frigate, carried the Olympic Torch for the 1948 London games from Corfu to Bari in Italy, served in Korea and in naval intelligence and finally three years in Hong Kong before leaving the Service in 1956.

He's been living in the USA since 1967, currently Liverpool, New York State, as the company he joined in civvy street moved him across the Pond.

And if you want to read more about Lt Cdr Read's exploits with HMS Trenchant 75 years ago, see our article on him from 2012: [issuu.com/navynews/docs/201206/31](https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/navynews/docs/201206/31)



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OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE ROYAL NAVY

RM objects on show as museum is sold off

YOU will be able to see some of the Royal Marines' incredible collection of historic artefacts again this year – while their former museum turns into a five-star hotel.

Some £2m has been spent turning an old storehouse in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard into a repository for the two million items transferred from the museum's old site in Eastney since it closed in 2017.

The museum is due to relocate to the dockyard – but the project is on hold at present from the combined impact of a failed lottery bid and the Covid pandemic, though the sale of the 150-year-old building in Eastney will give the future museum plan a fresh shot in the arm.

Its old location has been sold for an undisclosed sum to Grand Hotel Excelsior International who will convert the listed building into a luxury hotel.

The museum, which is part of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, was housed in the former officers' mess on the Eastney Barracks site from the early 1970s until it closed in 2017 when the museum deemed that the building was no longer suitable.

Proceeds from the sale have been split between the NMRN and the Royal Navy, and to support the NMRN's vision, the Royal Navy agreed to assist the National Museum in moving/storing the Royal Marines' impressive collection of paintings, weapons, personal effects, uniform and kit, a move completed the week lockdown began.

Those artefacts are now held in a state-of-the-art 'collections centre' in Storehouse 12 in the historic dockyard which will be opened to the public in 2021, allowing visitors to view and research the collection, and take tours or enjoy talks from the curators.

But the longer-term goal of a new Royal Marines Museum which tells the Corps' outstanding story to a 21st-Century audience, while honouring its rich heritage remains.

"The impact of the pandemic left the future of the National Museum at risk, and meant we did have to take some time away from the project as we fought to secure our future," said Dominic Tweddle, the National Museum's director general.

"The dedicated team working on the project have been working hard over the last couple of months to move the plans along. The sale of Eastney represents a huge milestone in that process as it frees up some capital to support the project".

The historic fabric of the building in Eastney will be preserved, and the iconic statue at the entrance and memorial gardens will remain on the site in the care of the museum.

'Diving without getting wet'

VISITORS to the National Museum of the Royal Navy can learn about the 'forgotten Mary Rose' thanks to the work of underwater archaeologists and the latest tech.

The new Diving Deep exhibition recounts the story of HMS Invincible, lost in the Solent in 1758 after running around.

Her crew were saved and the wreck was gradually forgotten until be rediscovered in 1979.

Increasingly, the site has been threatened by time and tides as the sandbank which has protected her erodes.

Over the past three years, the site has been excavated by marine archaeologists and crucial items and objects recovered so that Invincible is no longer on the 'at-risk' register.

Full of stores, provisions and equipment, much of the ship survived below the waves and during

the excavation, the team recovered swivel guns, a gun port lid, the main stay and even a mop head and bucket, clay pipes, wig curlers and a number of bottles – some with their contents still preserved.

Some of these objects have been donated to the National Museum of the Royal Navy and form the centrepiece of the exhibition in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

Running until October, it tells the story of Invincible: her capture from the French; the contribution she made to the Royal Navy and ship design; her sinking; and finally her rediscovery and excavation.

The exhibition uses the latest in digital technology, 3D reconstruction of the excavation and new techniques in underwater filming which is projected on to three screens to create the effect of 'diving without getting wet'.

Hasler step up to help veterans

STAFF and patients at the RN's rehabilitation centre took on demanding physical challenges to help veterans and Service families.

The team at Hasler dug into mental and physical reserves – and their pockets – for a week of sporting activities to assist fitness and recovery and help the Royal British Legion and the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, two charities which have helped Hasler and the hundreds of people who've passed through it since 2009.

Based at HMS Drake in Plymouth, Hasler is a rehabilitation centre for WISSPs – Wounded, Injured and Sick Service Personnel – helping them resume their careers or start a new life in the civilian world.

Spurred on by the inability of fundraisers to collect normally for the 2020 Poppy Appeal due to the pandemic, the centre hit upon encouraging as many personnel as possible to walk, jog, run, swim or cycle as far as they could over a week, recording the distances covered on smart watches.

"The idea was to get as many of the WISSPs involved as possible with a physical challenge that was easily tailored to a wide variety of injuries and illnesses and could

be done in a socially-distanced and safe manner," explained Corporal Gaz Spacey, on the Hasler staff.

Among the impressive efforts put in were 1½ miles covered in the pool in just one hour by Colour Sergeant Paul 'Charlie' Charles, while veteran Sergeant Paul Rickard (pictured below) put in five half marathons in five days.

Collectively, the staff and WISSPs covered 1,427.79 miles – greater than the distance between Plymouth and Rome!

The success of the challenge – both financially (£655 raised) and physically/mentally – has prompted Hasler to make the event an annual affair, complete with a plaque produced by Drake's woodworkers/metalsmiths to engrave the winner.

The latter is determined not by distance covered but by the amount of hours spent exercising.

"I'm incredibly proud of all that took part. We had a great time and I hope the challenge continues in future years," said Gaz.

The overall winner among those rehabilitating was AB1 James 'Jenny Wren', while Cpl Gaz Stacey put in the most time of Hasler's staff exercising.



Plea to bolster Belfast association numbers

VETERANS of wartime/post-war cruiser HMS Belfast are urged to join its association to give it a fresh lease of life.

The iconic ship has served as a floating museum on the Thames for nearly 50 years, the last reminder of the days when big guns dominated the Fleet – and a living memorial to the Arctic convoys.

In her heyday as many as 880 men called the warship, now looked after by the Imperial War Museum, their home on service in the Arctic (18 bitter months, including the sinking of the battle-cruiser Scharnhorst), Normandy and Far East in WW2, then Korea post-war.

As nearly six decades have passed since the cruiser was last in service, numbers in the association are dwindling (and it'll be a few years yet before fresh blood is injected by sailors assigned to the new Belfast, second of the future Type 26 frigates).

It now counts just over 140 full members – men who served aboard during her 25-year career, plus more than 80 associate members who are interested in preserving the ship and the memories of the hundreds of men who served in her. The association also supports widows of Belfast veterans.

"As the years slip by, we are increasingly losing members and we would like to appeal to any, who feel so inclined, to become an Associate Member," said Commander Richard Thorne.

For an annual membership fee of £10 you can attend the monthly meetings aboard the ship (when there's no pandemic...), the annual general meeting in March, and participate in other key occasions such as Trafalgar Night and other events, and receive three copies of the association journal, *The Seahorse*, which is packed with 'salty dits'.

For more details contact Roger Alford, Membership Secretary HMS Belfast Association, 25 Bach Mill Drive, Birmingham, B28 0XN, including a stamped, addressed envelope or rogeralford01@yahoo.co.uk, ☎ 0121 604 8094.

Lancaster recalls sunken Syrtis off Norwegian coast

IN THE seemingly endless, unforgiving grey of the Norwegian Sea, HMS Lancaster paused from working the country's navy to remember forebears lost in action.

Commander Will Blackett cast a wreath into the waters near Bodø, believed to be the last resting place of submarine HMS Syrtis.

The S-boat was lost with all hands in 1944 on her sixth war patrol – all of which bar one were conducted off the coast of Norway and in the Arctic.

After sinking a Norwegian merchant ship pressed into German service 50 miles southwest of the northern port of Bodø, nothing was heard of the boat or her 48 crew again.

Her wreck has never been found but it's assumed she fell victim to a German minefield laid off Bodø, an important base for the occupying Luftwaffe at the time.

Portsmouth-based Lancaster has been operating in the High North recently, the latest Royal Navy vessel to venture into Arctic waters to demonstrate the UK's commitment to the safety and security of the region.

The memorial service off Bodø, led by chaplains Timothy Ndegwa and Thomas Backulumpagi, was a reminder of the efforts made by the Royal Navy off Norway during five years of war – from the bitter two-month campaign to prevent the kingdom being overrun by the Nazis in 1940, to the convoys dispatched to the Kola Peninsula between 1941 and 1945 to support the Soviet war effort which cost 16 British warships, more than 80 merchant vessels and hundreds of seafarers' lives.

A two-minute silence, started by sounding the ship's siren was held as the crew of HMS Lancaster lined the deck to pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice as their frigate sailed side-by-side with the HNoMS Fridtjof Nansen. A signal flare from the Norwegian vessel marked the end of the solemn act.

"This was a poignant moment – two allies meeting in misty waters on a very significant day," said Commander Blackett, Commanding Officer of the 'Queen's frigate' (it's named after her in the role of Duke of Lancaster).

"The connection to our forebears was felt keenly throughout the ship and we very much enjoyed the opportunity to reinforce our relevance in the 21st-Century context as we worked with HNoMS Fridtjof Nansen to develop our fighting edge."



Naval Quirks

THE LARGEST GUNS EVER FITTED TO RN SHIPS WERE THE MONSTER 18 INCH GUNS ORIGINALLY ON THE BATTLECRUISER "FURIOUS" IN WWI..



.. THEY WERE LATER SWITCHED TO 3 MONITORS. THE FIRST, "GENERAL WOLFE"; HAD SUCCESSFUL TRIALS WITH HER GIANT GUN OFF THE ISLE OF WIGHT IN AUGUST 1918..



Hallo! ...Where's the Isle of Wight gone?

.. AND THE FOLLOWING MONTH SHE FIRED IT AT A BRIDGE ON THE BELGIAN COAST AT THE INCREDIBLE RANGE OF 36,000 YARDS – A ROYAL NAVY RECORD!



WOW! AND DID SHE HIT THE BRIDGE?

I HAVE NO INFORMATION ON THAT..



WELL, BEARING IN MIND THE ASTONISHING RANGE, ..

.. PERHAPS HER SHELLS ARE STILL AIRBORNE..

Proud Dukies on parade

NEW students who joined the Duke of York's Royal Military School last year wore their prized uniform berets for the first time at a special annual ceremony – one of the most important events of the academic year.

The time-honoured tradition saw Principal Alex Foreman inspect the parade of Year 7 students who have completed a period of training after joining the Dover school last September.

The school's Vice Principal and Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Steven Saunderson assisted, and all staff attended to congratulate students by clapping their march from the Parade Square.

At the parade, some senior students were able to perform their new roles; they were Student RSM Toby Thorne, Senior Under Officer Felix Banks, and Stick Orderlies Archie Hendry, Billy Hendry, Chloe Martin, and Niamh Scott.

While regular school uniform is worn most of the time, the beret is an essential part of each student's ceremonial No.1 Dress (Blues) for parades and special occasions.

Receiving the beret is the start of a student's career as a Dukie and the many opportunities this presents throughout life – once a Dukie, always a Dukie.

Students can also wear the cap badge of a family member who has served in the armed forces on their dress Blues.

It is called their 'heart badge' and is a poignant recognition of their family's military heritage. The



ceremony was the students' first parade.

Principal Foreman said: "Our military ceremonies remind us of our heritage and ethos, which helps develop character and life. Wearing the beret on parade for the first time is a proud moment, signifying the importance of starting careers as Dukies and the life-long honour this bestows."

The Duke of York's Royal Military School was established in 1803 by the then Duke of York to care for the orphans of soldiers and moved, in 1909, to its present 150-acre site in the Kent countryside.

Since becoming an academy in 2010 and opening its doors to all students, the school has welcomed an increasing number of students from across Kent and Sussex.

Successful old Dukies of the School include: James Jones, former Bishop of Liverpool; Simon Daghish, founder of the Walking with the Wounded Charity and Deputy Managing Director, Commercial, of ITV; and the late Maurice Colclough, Lions and England International Rugby Union player.

For more information, visit www.doyrms.com



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Dave's so dedicated

A SEA Cadet volunteer with more than 30 years' experience of getting children out on the water has been honoured for his work.

Dave Finlay has been the Chief Instructor at Derwenthaugh Sea Cadets over the last decade, as well as being a sailing and powerboating Instructor down the years since leaving the Royal Navy in 1989.

Dave has helped many cadets and volunteers become instructors at Derwenthaugh Boat Station, giving them confidence in their own abilities and has started a sailing development programme.

He's now been recognised by the Royal Yachting Association, receiving a Lifetime Commitment Award.



Livingstone, I presume?

A Jarrow Sea Cadet is probably still recovering from his efforts in raising more than £400 for veterans

Aged just 16, Cadet Livingstone has managed to run over 60 miles over the course of the last month.

His efforts in aid of the Poppy Appeal will not go unnoticed, in his plans to become a marine engineer with the Royal Navy.

Great work

CONGRATULATIONS go to Able Cadet Swift of Stroud Sea Cadets, who has received the Top Cadet Award for 2020 from the Honorable Company of Gloucestershire.

She is due to receive the prize and a certificate at the Lord Lieutenant's Awards ceremony

Also honoured at Tewkesbury Sea Cadets, who won a unit award.

Kitchen aid

LEICESTER Sea Cadets have received £4,000 from the Morrisons Foundation to help restore their kitchen and leaking roof at their facilities in the city.

A leak damaged the kitchen and toilets at the site on Ross Walk, close to the River Soar.

But weekend catering courses can begin after lockdown restrictions are eased after the grant from the charitable arm of the supermarket giant.

A full repair of the roof will be carried out as well.



Perfect Peter

GUERNSEY Sea Cadets have introduced a new trophy to honour the contribution of its volunteers, donated by its outgoing Officer in Charge.

The award made to the volunteer with the greatest all-round contribution to Guernsey Sea Cadets was given to Probationary Sergeant Peter Morley.

Peter began his military life as a Royal Marines Cadet in 2012 and is now a

uniformed member of staff.

Sgt Morley rose to the rank of Cadet Sergeant and was a Lieutenant-Governor's Cadet from 2016 to 2017.

Lt (SCC) Philip Nicol-Gent, RNR (pictured, left) donated the trophy after stepping down as the Officer in Charge of TS Sarnia this January.

His successor Sgt (SCC) Matt Bourgaize hosted the ceremony

Dylan's eyes on prize

A FORMER Sea Cadet from the North East of Scotland has shown his talents, winning a prestigious academic prize.

Stonehaven's Dylan Coolahan has just graduated from the City of Glasgow College with an HNC for in Nautical Science.

But he also received the Principal's Prize for Outstanding Academic Achievement.

Dylan became a Sea Cadet in his home town when he was just 11 and is now set for a life in the marine industry.

"I was absolutely delighted to hear I was receiving a prize," he said.

"A very good way to finish what has been a great three years of training."



New bus for Rickmansworth



RICKMANSWORTH and Watford Sea Cadets are celebrating after generous backing from the West Herts Charity Trust helped supply a new minibus.

CO Marlene Rhodes said: "It is something our unit has wanted for a long time and the dream has become a reality."

The trust supports local charities in the area and is a successor to a former transport training company in the area.



Sailors return to palace duty

A CONTINGENT of 37 sailors – drawn from across the Navy – took over Public Duties at the Queen's Berkshire residence following an inspection by the Army.

The three officers, two senior ratings and 32 sailors stood in for the Foot Guards for two weeks in December.

It was the third time since 2017 that the Royal Navy has provided guards to the Royal Palaces – although the scale was reduced with a smaller division due to the pandemic.

Having paraded at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday the same group has remained in their 'Covid bubble' for training and were declared ready for the guarding duties following an inspection from the Army's Household Division in Windsor's Victoria Barracks.

"The guard is made up of sailors from ships, submarines and the Fleet Air Arm from across the country and for everyone, including myself, this is a new and exciting experience," said Lieutenant Commander Oliver James, the Guard Commander.

"The sailors and training team worked exceptionally hard to prepare us to take on this responsibility and I am very proud of their efforts."

Picture: LPhot Dan Rosenbaum

Farewell, wartime mine



ROYAL Navy bomb disposal experts detonated a wartime mine trawled up by fishermen in the Firth of Clyde.

The team from Northern Diving Group, based at Faslane, sprang into action after the wartime device – laid by a German submarine off the island of Ailsa Craig – was recovered.

The trawler's seven crew were evacuated by Troon Lifeboat and Rothesay Coastguard Rescue Team while the vessel was sailed to Etrick Bay on the Isle of Bute to meet with divers.

They declared the mine, which still contained around 350kg of explosives, to be in pristine condition and decided a controlled detonation at sea was the best solution.

They coordinated the lowering of the ordnance to the seabed off Etrick Beach, before a controlled explosion sent it – and mud and water – high in the air.

"Considering it had been in the water for around 80 years, the mine's condition was remarkable," said Lt Cdr Mark Shaw, Commanding Officer of Northern Diving Group.

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On the move

QUESTION: When were the Brecon Beacons ever found in North Devon?

ANSWER: When the Royal Navy temporarily shifted its outdoor leadership centre from Wales to the West Country.

With restrictions in Wales, the sailors and Royal Marines who run the Navy's unique adventurous training outpost moved 150 miles from Tal-y-bont to the Royal Marines base at Chivenor near Barnstaple.

The Outdoor Leadership Training Centre provides more than 3,200 sailors and Royal Marines with a chance to develop leadership and teamwork skills through adventurous training.

Students live under canvas for up to five days – come rain or shine – living mainly on ration packs and newly-taught skills. They are challenged with activities including caving, gorge walking, mountain biking, abseiling as well as hill trekking, with staff on hand to throw in the odd Practical Leadership Task, to help develop leadership and teamwork skills.

The team were hoping to resume courses in Wales as the country came out of its 'firebreak', but with ongoing restrictions – and the never-ending demand by the Navy and Royal Marines for leaders – they were ordered to move to

England with all moveable equipment and, after searching for a suitable location, picked North Devon.

Chivenor's native Commando Logistic Regiment helped the team with equipment, such as generators and lighting and provided extra food, and agreements with local land owners sorted out in record time to allow the AT to take place.

The result is that the same/similar activities are being offered until at least Christmas from Chivenor in makeshift, but perfectly liveable/workable conditions.

The camp has been flattened twice by autumn storms, but even so more than 270 officers and ratings/other ranks have already received training in North Devon.

It brought a mini-boost to the local economy too with trainees popping into local cafes on occasions during 30-mile bike rides to escape some of the worst of the winter weather.

And the Tal-y-bont team joined in activities and events on camp and locally, taking part in a remembrance parade and provided AT activities and training for marines based at Chivenor in addition to their regular courses.

"It has been a pleasure to be hosted by hugely-supportive people at Chivenor – and

it has measurably benefited the officers and ratings of the future," said Captain Peris Roberts RM, in charge of the Outdoor Leadership Training Centre.

The quick, temporary transfer to North Devon has also underlined the importance of the leadership course to the entire Royal Navy – especially as it is growing, and numbers passing through the centre are set to rise to nearly 4,000 men and women every year.

"The centre is a brilliant leadership arm of the Royal Navy – the fact that every rank in the service has to qualify here to gain promotion is testament to that," Capt Roberts explained.

"The course is now the first point at which junior officers and ratings collide in small sections and undergo arduous tasks. It offers both an appreciation of the other's capabilities and potential limitations. That improves their operational effectiveness.

"It is staggering how effective this is in developing some students and we feel humble watching it first-hand."

If you're interested in attending the OLTC, contact CPO Craig Horsman (NAVY OP TRG-RNLA OLTC CSI) Lt Cdr Christian Evans (NAVY OP TRG-RNLA HQ OPS) or Lt Simon Gurney (NAVY OP TRG-RNLA ROSQN LTO2).



Powerboat accreditation for reserve unit Cambria

CARDIFF-BASED HMS Cambria has passed a rigorous assessment to earn accreditation as a Recognised Training Centre for Powerboat Operations by the Royal Yachting Association (RYA).

Accreditation by the RYA is an important step in the journey to return waterborne training to the RNR and builds on the successful arrival of Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats to RNR training units in Cardiff, Newcastle

and Liverpool, with more planned this year.

HMS Cambria can now train Reservists in a range of core maritime skills, including navigation, seamanship and boat handling, and radio communication, culminating in the award of the internationally-recognised RYA Powerboat Level 2 qualification.

Commodore Mel Robinson, who is originally from Pembrokeshire, is the Commander of the Maritime Reserves

and said: "This is an exciting and hugely important milestone in the transformation of the Maritime Reserves, enabling us to better support the Royal Navy on operations, at home and around the world."

Commander Carolyn Jones, who assumed command of HMS Cambria last year, said: "I am hugely proud of the Cambria team for all their hard work, which has clearly paid off with this RYA accreditation."



Trio up for Polar Bear challenge

MEMBERS of HMS King Alfred's Command Team are undertaking an open-water swimming challenge in the waters of the Solent over the winter.

Lieutenant Commanders Sarah Royston (Executive Officer), Nancy Trevethan (Operations Officer) and Erin Perry (Public Relations Officer) are taking part in the Polar Bear challenge which runs from November 1 to March 31 with the aim of completing a set number of swims and distances in the sea over the winter.

The rules forbid the use of wetsuits, only allowing a standard swimsuit, swim hat and goggles, which makes the challenge extra chilly! While Lt Cdr Sarah Royston is an old hand at open water swimming, Lt Cdrs Perry and Trevethan only took up the sport in September.

Lt Cdr Nancy Trevethan said: "Exercising with friends is wonderful and gets you out of your comfort zone. We encourage each other to get in even when our brains are telling us it's a mad idea."

Lt Cdr Erin Perry added: "It can be painful getting in but is such a rush once you get used to it. And the feeling of achievement afterwards is immense, it makes you feel like you've really accomplished something amazing."

Lt Cdr Sarah Royston said: "We've had to adjust because of lockdown and now alternate swimming together so we're only in pairs, but we're very much looking forward to swimming all together again. The water is currently about 12°C and whilst it will only get colder, we're determined to complete the challenge."

The benefits of open water swimming have featured in the media recently, including improved physical and mental health, even going so far as suggesting it can help combat depression and dementia.

Lt Cdr Royston said: "Woolly hats and hot water bottles are essential for afterwards."

Lt Cdr Trevethan added: "Along with a hot drink and cake!"



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T: 02392 690112 F: 02392 660852 E: rnbt@rnbt.org.uk www.rnbt.org.uk





● Above, a lead 'pillow' for the guns, below, lifting dolphins are still looking stunning after all this time



● The dive team, from left to right, CPO(D) (Rtd) Danny Daniels (skipper), Fran Hockley (JSSADC), Jason Keveren (ex-RM), Scott Yeardley (ex-RN), John Potten (JSSADC/ex-Army), Paul Downs, and Dom Robinson (JSSADC/ex-Army)

● Left, the crest of King George I, right, a massive bronze 46-pounder gun on the seabed

GLIMPSES OF AN EARLIER VICTORY



DOMINIC ROBINSON, the Officer in Charge of the Joint Service Sub Aqua Centre at HMNB Devonport, is also part of the civilian Plymouth Sound branch of the British Sub Aqua Club. He, along with two of his colleagues, completed a challenging dive on the wreck of HMS Victory 1737.

HMS Victory is one of the most famous ships in the world and a major UK tourist attraction which many tens of thousands of people per year queue up to visit in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

Few people realise that the current ship, which was laid down in 1759, was the fifth Royal Navy ship to bear that name.

Her immediate predecessor, built a mere 30 years earlier, was also a first-rate ship of the line which served as the flagship of the Channel fleet.

The similarly-sized HMS Victory (1737) carried 100 guns and was crewed by 1,150 men, including Admiral Sir John Balchen.

She was the last Royal Navy three decker to carry bronze cannons as, in an echo of modern times, a drive to reduce costs meant that future ships had iron cannons.

Unfortunately, a dispute between the Admiralty and the master shipwright who built HMS Victory (1737) resulted in a vessel that required several refits before she passed her sea trials.

Eventually accepted in 1740, she vanished with all hands when the fleet was scattered by a gale on October 3 1744 whilst returning from Spain.

Wreckage that came ashore on the Channel Islands so convinced the authorities that she had hit the infamous Casquet rocks off Alderney that they court martialled the lighthouse keeper.

Fast forward to 2008 when the wreck was



● A happy Dr Fran Hockley begins two-and-a-half hours of decompression

located by a commercial salvage company in the middle of the Channel. Her identity was confirmed when two of the extremely distinctive and rare bronze cannons were recovered.

Although this finally solved the mystery, it isn't clear whether the poor lighthouse keeper was ever pardoned!

My interest in HMS Victory (1737) was sparked when I realised that it was possible to dive the wreck site.

With the seabed at 78 metres she is well beyond most sports divers and even the capabilities of the RN Clearance Diver branch who are limited to 60 metres.

Fortunately, using the training and safety procedures for civilian Closed Circuit Rebreathers (CCRs) that have been developed by the British Sub Aqua Club (BSAC), our amateur team regularly dives in depths of up to 100 metres, and beyond.

Based around the local club Plymouth Sound

Divers branch of the BSAC, we are mainly ex-services with representation from the Navy, Marines and Army.

Organising a dive to HMS Victory is a significant challenge as there are only a relatively small number of days per year when the conditions are suitable for diving this far out and at this depth.

Not only does the wind need to be light and the sea state slight but neap tides are also required to provide a long enough period of slack.

Further complexity is added by the requirement for this to occur on a weekend when a suitable boat has been booked and the team are all available – having conducted their work up training.

To give ourselves the best possible chance, planning for the dive commenced over the winter 2019 with four potential weekends identified although without any expectation that the weather would deliver.

Much to our surprise and great joy, September provided us with a gorgeous day where the surface and underwater conditions made the nine-hour round trip from Plymouth to the site achievable.

The day improved dramatically as we descended towards the seabed where the in-water visibility was in excess of 20 metres.

Passing the 60 metre mark, the massive four-metre-long 42-pound bronze cannons could be seen scattered on the sand and individual exclamations of excitement could be heard through the mouthpieces of divers.

Despite nearly 300 years under water the cannons remain in pristine condition and, on those that have no concretion, the beautifully detailed royal crests and lifting dolphins can be seen. Muzzle tampions remain in place and it is very likely that the guns are still loaded.

Although the cannon are undoubtedly the main attraction, it was surprising how much else remained on the site.

This included heavily concreted iron work, large quantities of timber and various lead objects, one of which may have been a gun pillow.

There was also a massive copper kettle and galley bricks which, if we had forgotten, reminded the dive team that HMS Victory (1737) was home to over a thousand men.

What to us was an incredible dive site was also the scene of an awful tragedy in 1744 and the last resting place of over a thousand souls.

Deep technical dives require lengthy mid water decompression, and the total in water time was just over three hours of which 35 minutes were spent at depth.

This is an equation that fills most divers with horror but is the reason why this HMS Victory, unlike her more famous namesake, will only ever be visited by a small handful of people.

Report and pictures by Dominic Robinson



£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the November edition of *Navy News* (right) was the seaplane tender HMS Albatross, which was renamed Hellenic Prince in 1948. Tim Scott, from the West Midlands, wins £50 for sending us the correct answers.



This month's mystery ship (above) is an Insect-class gunboat launched in December 1915.

1. What was her name and 2. in 1937 which incident did she become involved in?

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

During the COVID-19 pandemic we will also accept emailed entries to bm@navynavynews.co.uk with **January Mystery Ship** in the email header.

Coupons and emails giving the correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

Entries must be received by February 14. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted.

Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our March edition. The competition is not open to *Navy News* employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 311

Name

Address

My answers: (1)

(2)

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- If you are sending your notice via email, please include your full address and telephone number.
- Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.
- Please send in reunions at least two months (preferably three) before the month of the event. There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.
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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Swap Draft columns in February's Noticeboard must be received by **JAN 14, 2021**

Deaths

Dibnah, Kenneth John CPO. Served June 1959-October 1982 including HMS Scarborough, Puncheston, Minerva and Bronington. Served in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Northern Ireland and at Dryad, Vernon, Pembroke and Victory. Member of the Ton Talk Association. Died November 20, aged 78.

Pat Whiley LS. Served from 1956 to 1968 in HMS Ganges, HMS Vernon, HMS Alamein, HMS Vanguard, HMS Bulwark, HMS St Angelo, HMS Zest, HMS Aurora and HMS Victory. Joined the RNA in 1984, rejoining in 2002. Member of Norwich Branch since February 12 2002 and Life Member since 2018. Died November 26, aged 79.

Michael 'Mick' Sharratt MEA(L). Served from 1964 to 1982 in HMS Totem (1965), Renown (66-68), Dreadnought (72-84 AND 78-80), Resolution (76-77), HMS Caron, Dalrymple, Collingwood, Excellent, Dolphin, Vulcan and Neptune. Died November 24, aged 78.

Frederick (Fred) John Wilesmith (FCY). Served from the late 1950s to the early 1980s in numerous ships and establishments, including HMS Walkerton, Mercury, Ganges and Tamar. Died November 25 after a long, brave battle with a number of illnesses. Much loved husband, dad, grandpa and shipmate. RIP Pops.

Rear Adm Richard H Burn. CB AFC. HMS Heron, Saker, Centurion, Procurement Exec, Min of Aviation Supply, Min of Technology. Died October 4, aged 82.

Surg Rear Adm (D) Frank R B Mathias. HMS Vernon, St Vincent, St Angelo, Dolphin, Daedalus, and

Victory. Dir RN Dental Service. Died November 18, aged 92.

Capt (Cdre) Duncan D Knight DSC. HMS Blackpool, President. Dir Surface Warfare, NATO NAPLES. Died November 8, aged 100.

Capt (Cdre) Peter G J Murison. HMS Eagle, Manxman, Euryalus, Blake, Warrior, Eskimo, Fearless, Challenger, C-in-C Fleet, NATO, Capt FPS, Nav Sec. Died November 19, aged 84.

Capt Derek A P O'Reilly OBE. HMS Mercury, Osprey. NATO. Dir Naval Signals. RNC Greenwich, Defence Attache The Hague. Died November 8, aged 93.

Capt Colin M Robinson. HMS Figgard, Fearless, Sultan, Pembroke. DGNMT. RCDS. AIB, Nav Sec. Died November 23, aged 93.

Cdr Mary J J MacCall. HMS Seahawk, Daedalus, Fulmar, Heron, Collingwood, Ark Royal, Nelson. DGNMT. Dir Oceanography and Met. Died November 2, aged 77.

Lt Cdr Julian H J Bass. HMS Sheraton, Vernon, Euryalus, Hampshire. Died November 17, aged 87.

Lt Cdr RNR Peter J Beresford DSC VRD. Unattached RNR. Died December 9, aged 97.

Lt Cdr John E Hammond OBE. RN Hospital Haslar, Plymouth, Gibraltar. Inst Naval Medicine. HMS Centurion, and Ganges. Died November 24, aged 90.

Lt Cdr Kenneth J Yearling. HMS Caledonia, Excellent, Intrepid, Defiance, Drake. CSCBS. NATO. Died October 26.

Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNOC

Rear Adl John G R Musson CB.

HMS Cavalier, Forth, Daedalus, Kent, Nelson, Cochrane. RCDS. DNOA(S&W), FONAC, CFS, VCNS,DFSD. Died November 23, aged 81.

Capt Colin M Robinson. HMS Figgard, Fearless, Pembroke. DGNMT. RCDS. Adty Interview Bd, Nav Sec.

Lt Cdr RNR J A Walsh. RNRV. **Lt Cdr John C A Mudford MBE.** HMS Cossack, Cerberus, Campania. Died November 20, aged 98.

Peter Gibbs, AB. Joined aged 17 in 1942. Served throughout WW2 in HMS Wellington. Died December 8, aged 95.

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association

Jim McCabe, LS. HMS Bulwark 1964/67. HMS Albion 1971/72. Died April 1, 2019.

Allen McGregor, LA. HMS Centaur 1962/64. HMS Bulwark 1967/69. Died April 3, 2020.

Captain M Jones WEO. HMS Albion 1971/72. Died March 15, 2020.

Barbara Brabant. Associate Member. Died August 16.

Reginald John Kemp, LA. HMS Centaur 1954/56. HMS Albion 1964/66. Died September 17.

Mike Hutchinson AB. HMS Bulwark 1963/67. Died October 1.

Les Hutchin, AH3. HMS Centaur 1954/56. Died September 19.

Michael Warner LAM. HMS Albion 1957/58. HMS Bulwark 1966/67. Died October 14.

Peter Dear SBA. HMS Bulwark 1954/1958. Died October 31.

Submariners' Association

John Deeth WO (MEA(EL)). Served from 1966 to 1988 in HM Submarines Walrus (twice), Revenge, Conqueror, Courageous, and Superb. Member of Leicestershire & Rutland Branch. Died November 11, aged 77.

Derek Tranter PO(ME). Served from 1949 to 1955 in HM Submarines Artful, Andrew, Scotsman, Tudor, Trenchant, and Seneschal. Member of Gosport Branch. Died November 18, aged 90.

Alfie Miller AB SD. Served from August 1943 to September 1946 in HM Submarines H.50, Safari, Stubborn, and Truncheon. Member of Dolphin Branch. Died November 19, aged 95.

Alan West CERA. Served from May 1954 to August 1971 in HM Submarines Sturdy, Scorcher, Springer, Explorer, Alcide, Warspite, and Swiftsure. Member of Barrow-In-Branch. Died November 20, aged 89.

Michael Sharratt CPO MEM(L). Served from October 1964 to February 1982 in HM Submarines Totem (1965), Renown (1966 to 1968), Dreadnought (1972 to 1974 and 1978 to 1980), and Resolution (1976 to 1977). Member of Derbyshire Branch. Died November 22, aged 78.

Brian Lewis CEM1. Served from November 1956 to December 1982 in HM Submarines Turpin, Thermopylae, Rorqual, Finwhale, Narwhal, Cachalot, Andrew, and Osiris. Member of Plymouth Branch. Died November 24, aged 82.

Reunions

738 Kings Squad, Royal Marines. Our reunion will take place from August 12 to 14 2021. I have contacted 18 members so far but are after details of the following: Andrewartha; Bateman; Cheney; Comper; Denver; Ellis; Graham; Lambert; Merry; McFarling; Plant; Saunders.

Roger 'Taff' Sheppard
01656 670224
shep9409@gmail.com

HMS Londonderry. A reunion of the first commission July 1960 to October 1962 is planned for the Royal Beach Hotel at Southsea from June 18 to 21 2021. If you served on her during this first commission and are

interested in joining us please get in touch with Brian Coward (email brianward39@btinternet.com) for details.

HMS Liverpool Association: Next year's reunion will be held on June 12. For membership details contact the secretary John Parker at info@hmsliverpoolassociation.org.uk or call 02392 521222.

RMBS 1/70 and 2/70 Squad. A joint 50th anniversary reunion of 1/70 and 2/70 squads is planned for August 2021 in Deal. Contact Nick Buckley on nickbuckley55@aol.com

BRNC Entry Sept 1980 40th anniversary reunion dinner, BRNC Dartmouth, March 27, 2021. Details from Cdr N J 'Nobby' Hall, neil.hall324@mod.gov.uk

HMS Undaunted, Eagle and Yarmouth Associations: Annual reunion, Hallmark Hotel, Midland Road, Derby, April 23 to April 26 2021. Contact Alan (Whiskey) Walker on 01268 548041, whiskey666@outlook.com
HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association: Reunion will now take place on May 7-10 2021 at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea. Contact Secretary Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email askhamd3@gmail.com

globalnet.co.uk or telephone 0207 222 7574

Gerald Smith and James Murphy: I am trying to find out details about my grandfather who may have used two names, Gerald Horace Patrick Smith and James Michael Murphy. Gerald was born on August 4 1901 and died in February 1949. He served in the Royal Navy and when he died the doctor who certified his death said he was at least 20 years older than he claimed. Gerald, who was from Ireland, also said he had saved the life of a man called Fred Key while in service and they remained friends until he died. James was born May 5 1878 in Ireland but I cannot find a record of his death. I would appreciate any help in this search.

Kay Smith
Smith_kay@sky.com or 07887 872009.

HMS Valiant. My father Peter Berry served in the boat in the 1970s and 80s and I would like to have a copy of the original 'Skimmer Killer' drawing by Harry McGroarty, which features a shark jumping out of the water about to punch a frigate.

Juliet Berry
goolie40@hotmail.co.uk

Anson 35s: I am trying to contact the Scribes who joined up with me in August 1976 (D161). Our WAFU classmates managed a meet up in 2016 and we want to get the whole class together, if we can, in 2021 on our 45th anniversary. Contact Guy Musgrove on Facebook or email guy_musgrove@hotmail.co.uk

Ask Jack

HMS Arethusa: I would like to contact three men from the ship who were onboard in 1988 and that summer took part in the Netherlands Navy Days at Den Helder. My parents met the three in a restaurant and spent a nice evening aboard their small yacht, Sovereign. The following day my parents were welcomed aboard the Arethusa. My mother died recently and I would like to surprise my father by trying to contact the three and, hopefully, they could speak to my father online. My father still has a picture of the Arethusa, right, and my parents often spoke of that summer.

Nicoline van der Vijver
nvdvijver@gmail.com
or my father
wim.souvereinij@gmail.com

MARK J Swain. I was a member of the Australian Navy who undertook apprentice training at HMAS Nirimba, which was the Royal Australian Navy Training Establishment (RANTE) located at Quakers Hill, New South Wales. My intake (July 1978) is organising a reunion and I have been asked to try to track down one of our intake that later joined the Royal Navy. Mark was English and joined the July 1978 intake as an apprentice Marine Technical Propulsion sailor. Mark completed his apprentice training and spent time in the Australian Fleet and reached the rank of Leading Seaman MTP before he returned to the UK. Other members of our intake have tried in the past to establish contact with Mark however to date these efforts

Ian Jones (Spike)



spike62@y7mail.com

HMS Ganges Class 283, January 2 1961: It is 60 years since we first met in January 2021. I am in touch with a number of members and we are thinking of possibly meeting up in the Birmingham area. If there are any members who are interested in a class reunion next year, please contact me.

Alan Barry
Barryaj@virginmedia.com

THE Mountbattens: The author of the biography of Earl Mountbatten of Burma and his wife Edwina would like to talk to anyone who has information about them. Dr Andrew Lownie at lownie@

Duncan sailors inspired by Somme sacrifices

SAILORS from HMS Duncan were inspired by sacrifices on the Somme to raise more than £2,500 for veterans.

A six-strong team from the Portsmouth-based destroyer spent eight hours on rowing machines on behalf of the Royal British Legion.

With the annual poppy appeal hit by the pandemic, Duncan's crew wanted to help plug the gap.

They fell upon the five-month battle of the Somme in 1916 - one of the darkest hours in British military history - and decided to row one kilometre for each day of the battle on the Western Front: 141 kilometres in all. Two rowing machines were set up outside

the HMS Nelson's, a target board was erected with some milestones to reach, such as 49 (the number of Victoria Crosses awarded during the Battle of Somme) and 95 (the number of Falkland veterans' deaths which can be attributed to suicide).

Surface Flotilla's Commodore Tim Neild watched the first rowers - Duncan's Executive Warrant Officer Daniel Castle and Leading Physical Training Instructor Mathew James - dip their oars in the (virtual) water.

The rowers were regularly rotated to maintain a rapid pace - helped, on occasions, by passers-by who jumped on the spare machine to power past their target to

cover 263 kilometres when the eight-hour challenge ended with Duncan's CO Cdr Hugh Harris cheering the team over the line.

Aside from the rowers, other members of Duncan's ship's company grabbed buckets and poppies and set themselves up around the dockyard to fund raise in addition to a Just Giving page set up, collectively bringing in £2,548.

"Row to Remember was a chance for the ship's company to come together through a physical challenge whilst helping raise funds for an amazing charity," said LPT James.

"Everyone gave their best effort and I am incredibly grateful for all the kind donations and support we received."

The Enigma of Dieppe Bernard's war

THE Dieppe Raid in August 1942 remains one of the most controversial events of World War 2 – especially in Canada whose troops suffered most of the heavy casualties incurred, writes Prof Eric Grove.

Canadian historian Professor David O'Keefe has over recent years been developing an interesting thesis that explains the raid as primarily motivated by an attempt to capture German code material to assist British cryptanalysts to counter the four-rotor Enigma that had defeated Bletchley Park since February 1942.

He first published his findings in a book, *One Day in August*, in 2013. Since then he has carried out further research and the product is *One Day in August: Ian Fleming, Enigma and the Deadly Raid on Dieppe*, published by Icon Books (ISBN 978-178578-630-3)

The key figure in the book is Ian Fleming, creator of James Bond. Fleming, a stockbroker and journalist was recruited as assistant to Admiral Godfrey, Director of Naval Intelligence, and was soon promoted to commander in the RNVR.

Andy Boyd, whose great book I reviewed last month summed up Fleming brilliantly: "He was a supreme fixer who made things happen, a showman and supreme networker, with the easy confidence to try selling anything to anyone. adept at working the Admiralty and Whitehall bureaucracy and producing well crafted policy and operational papers. He was also a fertile source of ideas, many mad but some brilliant."

Among the latter, as O'Keefe argues, were a series of 'pinch' operations to capture cryptographic material. Among the most 'mad' was the earliest, Operation Ruthless, a plan to lure a German rescue vessel to a captured German bomber which would crash close by it leading to the capture and murder of the rescue vessel's German crew to take their code equipment, covertly, back to Britain. Probably happily, this highly dubious – and illegal – operation never took place.



● The shingle at Dieppe is littered with Canadian dead, burning Landing Craft Tank, and knocked-out Churchill tanks of The Calgary Regiment (Tank)

this book falls. Losses to U-boats certainly increased in 1942 but this had nothing to do with loss of signals intelligence and everything to do with an offensive against unescorted ships off the American coast which the US Navy could not – or would not – defend. Despite the intelligence problem the convoys still sailed virtually unscathed

It was here I began to lose faith in the author's arguments, something reinforced by basic factual errors in his account of the St Nazaire raid, confusing motor launches (MLs) with motor torpedo boats (MTBs).

However, I find it hard not to agree with the author's critique of Mountbatten's Combined Operations HQ which began to rely "increasingly on daring 'mission impossible' operations of a *Boy's Own* nature to offset their limited assets." They were thus "neglecting the very basics of strategy: the balance between firepower and manoeuvre as they tried to reach their goals. From this point onward, deception, boldness, and fighting spirit, underpinned by surprise, supplanted rather than enhanced the basics. The earlier operations in Norway and more recently at St Nazaire had shown how much could be achieved with few resources when, and if, all elements came together like clockwork. Now they were poised to rely far too much on the elusive element of luck and the overwhelming need for surprise particularly in pinch raids." Combined with Fleming's ideas for impossible operations the stage was truly set for the Dieppe disaster.

The author provides a detailed and convincing description of the origins and development of Operation Rutter which morphed into Operation Jubilee. There is still debate about how far 'pinching' was the sole major objective of Jubilee.

Boyd, based on O'Keefe's earlier book, thinks not, but other distinguished historians such as Stephen Prince, the Head Of Naval Historical Branch and General Julian Thompson have been convinced, as their comments show.

Certainly this is a book to be taken seriously and Dieppe veterans find it a convincing explanation for an otherwise inexplicable massacre. The book is good value at £25 for 476 pages and is a recommended and stimulating read.

THE GROVE REVIEW



Instead a 'pinch doctrine' was developed in 1941 to take advantage of chance, opportunities offered by other operations and actions primarily designed to capture this material. Examples of the latter were the pioneering commando raid on the Lofoten Islands and Admiral Holland's capture of a weather ship. Then there was the complementary, and rather overrated 'pinch by chance' of the material in U110 and later operations against the weather and supply vessels deployed to support Bismarck.

These successes allowed intelligence to contribute to a first victory in the Atlantic in 1941, although the provision of convoy escorts throughout was as vital. Then there were more raids on the Norwegian coast which yielded useful material before the U-boat communications system was revolutionised by four-rotor Enigma.

The real impact of this can be easily overestimated, a trap into which the author of



LIEUTENANT Bernard Upton was still sailing his Fairey Atalanta yacht single handed when in his 90s and doing 20 minutes of 'Navy exercises' every morning.

He died following complications after falling on the pavement in a rainstorm in 2017, whilst posting the manuscript to his book.

Now his nephew Richard James has penned *A Sailor's Life Story* (£7.99 including P&P from rsjamesix@gmail.com) about his uncle.

Bernard volunteered to join the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve as an Ordinary Signaller in November 1939, aged 20, but within two years was a junior officer serving on minesweepers.

Assigned to HMS Cromarty, he sailed with her as part of the operations to capture Madagascar – at the time a Vichy French colony.

The flotilla cleared a channel and then continued to sweep for mines during the two-day battle with Vichy forces as well as rescuing downed aircrew.

Cromarty and 14th Minesweeping Flotilla were subsequently transferred to the Inshore Squadron based in Alexandria – just as the Battle of El Alamein started on October 23 1942. Six days later, Bernard was certified as Officer of the Watch with Cromarty, designated to provide support to Eighth Army as it advanced. The eight minesweepers in the flotilla completed the longest continuous minesweeping operation in naval history, covering 1,800 nautical miles (3,334kms) and opening six major ports. The flotilla also escorted convoys to Malta, sweeping for mines in daylight and fighting off enemy aircraft attacks at night.

Next the flotilla was assigned to the invasion of Sicily, during which Cromarty and HMS Seaham captured the Italian submarine Bronzo, assisted by the cruiser HMS Uganda. Cromarty attacked a second contact with HMS Pendant, sinking an Italian submarine.

Having been in the thick of the action for over 18 months, Cromarty was lost on October 23 1943 in the Strait of Bonifacio between Sardinia and Corsica, having struck a mine.

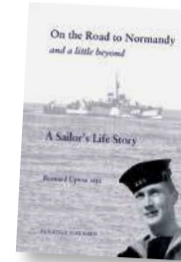
Five officers and 20 ratings were lost; 61 crew, including the commanding officer and Sub Lieutenant Upton, survived.

Bernard Upton spent over an hour in the water, leading his men before he was rescued (for which he was awarded the MBE). As the senior, uninjured surviving officer, he had to write to his Commander-in-Chief regarding the circumstances of the loss – an incredible account which is the highlight of the book.

After convalescing in Malta, the young officer was eventually sent to the USA for a course on the latest ASDIC (today sonar) technologies, then joined minesweeper HMS Florizel, part of the armada massing for D-Day. Packed with generating equipment for countering magnetic mines, her ship's company also included a contingent of scientists.

In the final weeks of the war, he was assigned to HMS Loch Tralaig which found herself escorting surrendered U-boats under Operation Deadlight.

His last RN duty was command of HMS Gleaner, whose duties including taking enemy poison gas ships from Bremen to 40 West to be scuttled.



Notes from a fascinating musical career

I WONDER how many people trying to occupy their time during lockdown thought of writing a book – and I wonder how many completed it, writes John Hillier, former editor of the *Globe & Laurel*.

A Musical Life in The Royal Marines: The Memoirs of Major John Perkins (Amazon Books, £9.99 ISBN 979-86516-46227) is one lockdown project that has come to fruition. This is a fascinating and detailed story of a 35-year career in military music, which would hold the interest of civilians and military people alike.

It would also be of interest to the RM General Service to give an insight into the mysteries and inner workings of the RM Band Service.

The author takes us through from

the time he joined as a boy at the age of 14, his training and experiences as an instrumentalist, then on to his successes as a conductor, composer, arranger and recording enthusiast.

Seven years of his life were spent travelling the world with the Royal family on board the Royal Yacht Britannia. These stories alone are worth reading but he goes on to tell of his time as a Director of Music, which is not all plain sailing but comes with many achievements.

In addition to the excellent 'lamp swings' of tales on board Britannia, there are just a few other highlights worth listing here. The current excellent band facilities in HMS Raleigh are testament

to his guile and tenacity, and although receiving no credit for going it alone, the Plymouth Band today enjoys some of the best rehearsal and recording facilities in the country.

He also tells of the devastation and sadness in the aftermath of the Deal bombing. He was appointed Secretary of the Relief Fund sharing responsibility for the dispersal of the £1.2 million donations, necessitating close contact with the bereaved families. Although this took a personal toll on his life, the fund was wrapped up with total success.

His musical successes are numerous both as an instrumentalist and as a conductor. His many and varied

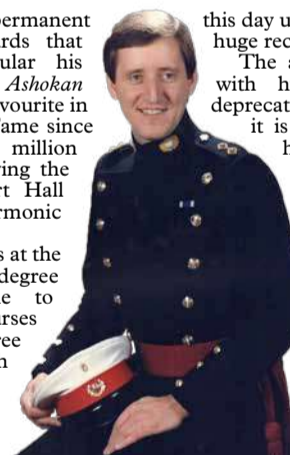
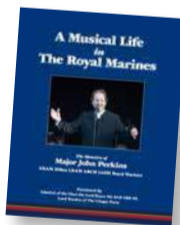
recordings are a permanent reminder of the standards that he attained. In particular his violin solo version of the *Ashokan Farewell* has been a firm favourite in the Classic FM Hall of Fame since 1977, selling over one million copies and saw him playing the solo at the Royal Albert Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Administratively, he was at the head of negotiations for a degree accreditation programme to get RMBS training courses recognised to degree status with Portsmouth University up to Masters level. Many musicians have benefited under this scheme, which remains to

this day unique in the Services and a huge recruiting tool.

The account of his life is told with humour and some self-deprecation. Whilst the majority of it is good reason for acclaim, he does not shy away from his own failings or things which went wrong.

He confesses to having a built in self-destruct button! It is an extraordinary and diverse career with many twists and turns which provides captivating interest from page one to the end. A really enjoyable book, which is highly recommended.



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