



NAVY NEWS

JULY 2022

Defender heads Baltic force

Type 45 destroyer HMS Defender led a US Navy task force during the largest joint military exercises of the year in the Baltic.

(see pages 2-3)

Picture: LPhot Lee Blease



Inside: ■ Audacious mission ■ Divers deliver ■ Patrolling paradise

ISSN 0028-1670 07
9 770028 167191
Off-sale date: JULY 31, 2022
£3.50

NATO'S ANNUAL SHOW OF BALTIC MIGHT

HMS DEFENDER AND P2000S LEAD THE CHARGE

ROYAL Navy warships alongside NATO allies have shown the alliance's staunch commitment to Baltic security during the largest military exercises in the region this year.

Portsmouth-based Type 45 destroyer HMS Defender provided the firepower and leading-edge technology, while six of the smallest craft in the Royal Navy's inventory – Archer, Charger, Explorer, Exploit, Ranger and Smiter – provided the speed, agility and numbers to swarm around participants in Baltops 22, which involved 47 warships from 16 nations, including Sweden and Finland.

More than 7,000 military personnel were put through their paces in operational training across 13 days designed to forge closer bonds between NATO allies and partners and protect the security and prosperity of the Baltic and its nations.

The NATO ships and around 89 aircraft – the most ever on Baltops – pitted their wits against each other in testing warfare scenarios, battling threats beneath, on and above the waves.

The six P2000 patrol ships were used to swarm around groups of much larger warships, emulating an assault by small attack craft, while a Swedish submarine lurked under the surface and was hunted and hunter for the anti-submarine warfare phase of the exercises.

"It was a privilege to act as a flagship for Baltops 22 and highlights the importance that the Royal Navy places on working with allies and partners in the Baltic Sea," said HMS Defender's Commanding Officer, Commander George Storton.

"As a state of the art Type 45 Destroyer, HMS Defender has a well established reputation for delivering global operations. This period,

once again, proves the professionalism, dedication and readiness of Defender's ship's company."

"Each engagement provided valuable lessons, strengthened relationships and improved the task group's ability to command, integrate and employ a combined combat-credible force at sea," added Weapon Engineer Officer Lieutenant Commander Carl Marin-Ortega.

For the first time, the Baltops task group carried out a mass casualty evacuation. Actors with fake injuries added to the realism as the allied forces worked together to help casualties.

HMS Defender was involved in anti-submarine warfare exercises but also operated in her main role in air defence, including leading Task Force Six Four (CTF 64) of the US Sixth Fleet, which deals in defending against attacks by missiles and fighter jets.

The Type 45 destroyer has powerful, cutting-edge sensors and Sea Viper missiles that counter threats and can knock moving targets out of the sky from up to 70 miles away, making her well-suited to duties at the spearhead of the specialist task group. CTF 64 commander, Commodore Jonathan Lipps of the US Navy, and his staff were on board Defender to command the group, which was made up of American, Swedish, Finnish and Lithuanian warships.

Cdre Lipps said: "Train as you mean to fight couldn't be a more apt dogma as we mixed the exercise with the real picture."

"The task group conducted multiple air defence exercises utilising Defender's state of the art radar system, and tracked live assets while we Replenished At Sea with USNS Patuxent."

Lieutenant Commander Tom Parsons, HMS Defender's Principal

Warfare Officer, added: "HMS Defender is the epitome of this multinational exercise; not only do we have the US Battlestaff embarked, but we have two Swedish Officers experiencing how the Royal Navy and NATO deliver operations and exercises: a truly joint mission."

Warships from NATO partners, Finland and Sweden, were for the first time in control of ships in a NATO task group, leading the way during mock battles against surface and underwater threats.

The 51st Baltops exercises also coincided with the 500th anniversary of Sweden's Navy and, to mark this milestone, the Swedish hosted the pre-sail conference in Stockholm.

Once Baltops wrapped up, HMS Defender and the six P2000 patrol ships headed to Kiel, Germany.

Participating nations included Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Prior to Baltops, to demonstrate their swarm credentials, the P2000 boats of the Coastal Forces Squadron subjected Defender plus Lithuanian, Latvian and Norwegian ships – all Joint Expeditionary Force partner nations – to concerted 'attacks'.

Baltops forms the crux of a two-month deployment by the half-dozen P2000s – the first time the squadron has been able to visit the continent since the pandemic.

In the past few years, the RN's small boat flotilla has been transformed its old name of 1st Patrol Boat Squadron replaced by the historic Coastal Forces Squadron, its role shifting from giving undergraduates a taste of life with University Royal Navy Units to front-line operational roles, such as protecting Gibraltar's territorial

A shadowy HMS Defender sails in the Baltic Sea soon after the sun sets during the annual NATO Baltops exercises

Picture by LPhot Lee Blease



Pictures by LPhot Lee Blease and LPhot Ben Corbett



waters, helping train NATO ships for missions and patrolling home waters as required.

The boats are normally crewed by a core of five sailors, but have welcomed an eclectic mix of additional crew aboard for the Baltic mission.

The sextet have embarked an array of trainee warfare officers – some in the early stages of their education, others about to be tested to become qualified Officers of the Watch; despite a P2000's size, the principles of watchkeeping are exactly the same as on a frigate, carrier and even submarine.

Their size also allows visits to ports not called at by larger warships – which means crew do not have the detailed navigation information available for those bigger harbours, while the ability to understand a chart and visualise it in real life is a skill which takes time. The boats also need no help with tugs – so trainees can practise berthing and casting off. As with navigation, the principles are the same, only the scale is different from a frigate or destroyer.

Also earning their spurs are a small group of weapons engineers who've joined the deployment while waiting for their first major assignments.

With no weapons engineering 'department' on such a small craft, they've joined in general engineering and seamanship duties – something they will rarely get to do.

"This deployment marks the end of months of planning, allowing us to deploy and engage with multiple navies," said Lieutenant Martin Head, in command of HMS Exploit.

"There have been some fantastic and rewarding days – such as training with our Joint Expeditionary Force partners, allowing us to improve our capability together – and fantastically warm welcomes in some truly fantastic cities: Antwerp, The Hague, Hamburg, Copenhagen."

All six boats have embarked students from University Royal Naval Units for longer exposure to life at sea; they're responsible for defence engagement during some of the port visits, ordering food supplies, helping out on the upper deck and, as they grow in confidence, taking the helm. And for the first time a dedicated chef has joined for the deployment with CS Adams has from minehunter HMS Ledbury loaned to Exploit.

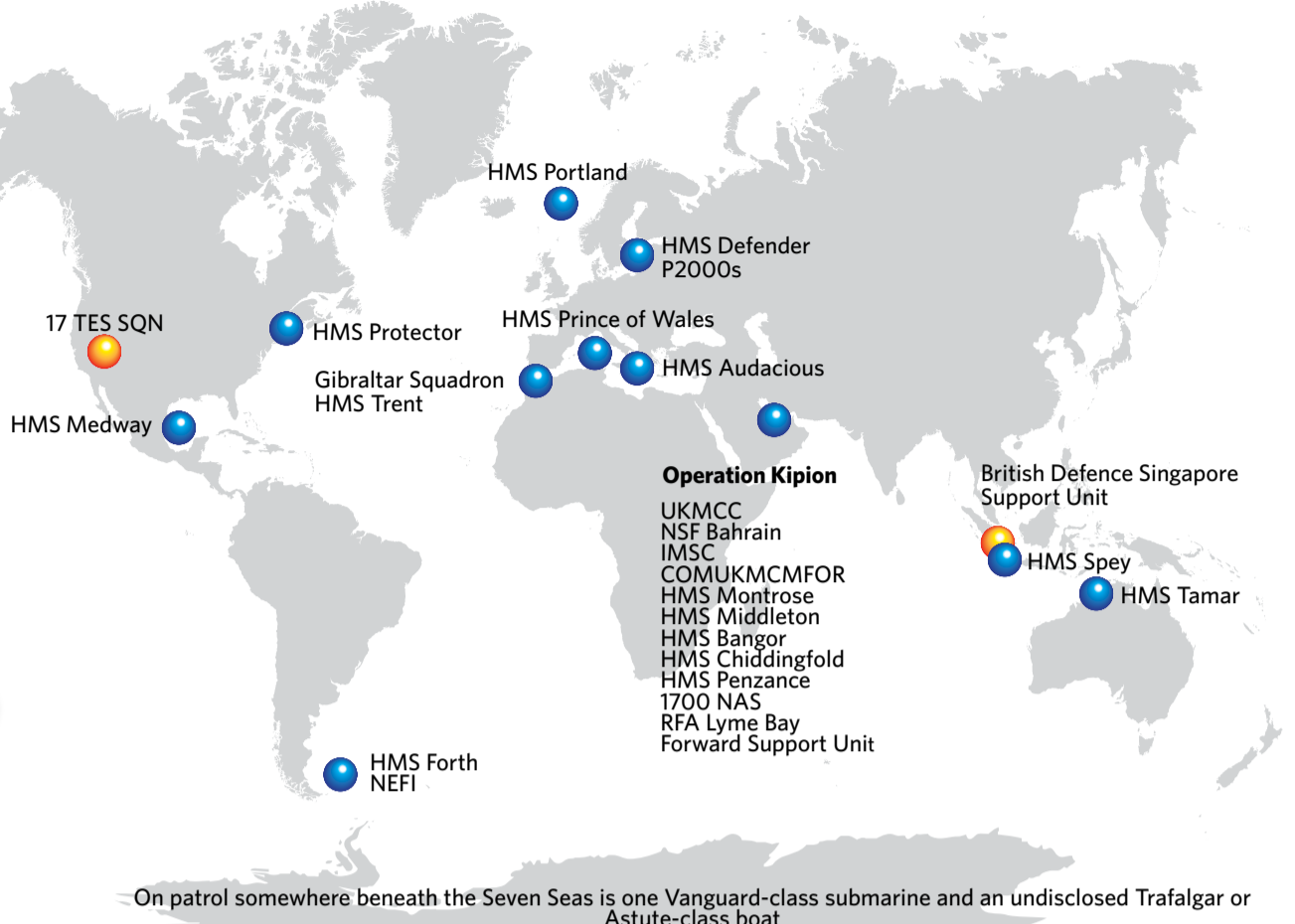
Traditionally, the executive officer cooks for his or her shipmates on a P2000; the addition of a chef frees them up for planning and watchkeeping... and the top-notch meals served up is a boost to morale.

Another novelty for this deployment is the presence of a mobile workshop to meet the six vessels' engineering needs: a container strapped to a trailer hauled by an HGV. It joined the six boats in Warnemünde, northeast Germany, to support their mid-deployment short maintenance spell ahead of Baltops.

Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Lancaster
HMS Scott
HMS Dauntless
HMS Duncan
HMS Tyne
HMS Mersey
HMS Severn
HMS Brocklesby

HMS Magpie
Project Wilton
RFA Tidesurge
RFA Argus
814 NAS
815 NAS
824 NAS
825 NAS



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



GLOBAL | MODERN | READY

ROYAL Navy destroyer **HMS Defender** is leading a UK Navy task force during the largest military exercise in the Baltic this year (see pages 2-3). The Type 45 is serving as the flagship of Task Force Six Four of the US Sixth Fleet for Baltops.

Ahead of the exercise Defender was lead warship for a Joint Expeditionary Force Task Group swarmed by P2000 boats from the Royal Navy's **Coastal Forces Squadron**.

Royal Navy divers joined NATO allies in Lithuania for a two-week workout dealing with the latest bomb and mine threats (see pages 19-21). Personnel from **Delta Diving Unit** taught and practised identifying and neutralising a range of explosive devices in the water and on land.

The Royal Navy's newest and most advanced nuclear attack submarine, **HMS Audacious**, carried out NATO security patrols in the Mediterranean on her maiden operational deployment (see page 5).

As the Royal Navy's new Astute class sails on operations around the globe, submarines **HMS Talent** and **Trenchant** were decommissioned at Devonport (see page 5).

All Astute-class boats are to receive boosted **Tomahawk** missiles as part of a £265m upgrade to the submarines' premier long-range weapon (see page 15).

The Royal Navy's destroyers are to be given extra – and enhanced – firepower to fend off the latest threats from ballistic missiles to fast-moving speedboats, jet skis and attack craft (see page 14). All six Type 45s will be fitted with the **Sea Ceptor** missile system on top of crucial upgrades to the destroyers' principal weapon, the **Sea Viper**.

Royal Marines 'fought' over the barren landscape of Iceland as they practised rescuing pilots shot down behind enemy lines (see page 16). Fresh from the largest military exercise in Norway in 30 years, commandos remained in the cold north to join their American counterparts and the Icelandic Coast Guard in staging helicopter raids to 'recover' colleagues in the face of both a hostile environment – and 'hostile' forces.

HMS Protector flew the flag for Navy and nation in New York's annual naval celebration (see page 11). The icebreaker, survey and polar research ship spent over a week in the Big Apple, joining American allies at the city's Fleet Week.

Almost ready to begin a record-breaking 14-month mission which will keep her at sea until the end of next year is veteran survey ship **HMS Scott** (see page 11). The fifth largest surface ship under the White Ensign (only aircraft carriers and assault ships are bigger) has completed a three-month £7.5m revamp in Falmouth to prepare her for the most demanding deployment in her 25-year career.

Sailors who have kept the Gulf free of mines for 15 years non-stop celebrated their achievements aboard Nelson's flagship (see page 13). Thousands of Royal Navy sailors – not just mine warfare experts but chefs, engineers, logistic specialists and seamen – have spent months on end in the searing temperatures of the Middle East (as high as 55°C at the peak of summer) ensuring no harm comes to shipping and trade flows freely.

Two Royal Navy officers have joined the largest floating hospital in the world for a four-month humanitarian mission around the Pacific (see page 6). Captain Charles Maynard and Lieutenant Lesley Hailey are embarked on the US Navy's hospital ship **Mercy** – part of a 700-strong team who form the staff of **Pacific Partnership 22**.

Offshore patrol vessel **HMS Trent** has been pushing aircrews to the limit (see page 9) as she helps write the rulebook for helicopter operations.

We take a look at the work of a small contingent of Royal Navy personnel based on the remote Pacific island of **Diego Garcia** (see page 34). Forty-one RN and RM deliver a number of functions for the 2,000-strong population, comprising US military personnel and Filipino contractors.

Game-changing innovation was on show at **Project Stormcloud** as the Royal Navy continues its commitment to deliver the latest technology to the front-line of operations (see page 14).

The RN and the US Navy are also celebrating the official opening of a new innovation hub (see page 15) in London called **Tech Bridge**.

The 40th anniversary of the **Falklands Conflict** saw many services of commemoration at home and abroad, with the main UK focus on the National Memorial Arboretum (see pages 30-31).

Finally, it's your chance to have your say on the **MyNavy** app (see pages 28-29), as it takes its next step.

More than a uniform

SAILORS are receiving a new uniform at the start of a £78m revamp of their clothing.

More than a thousand personnel on operations in hot climates now wear the new working uniform – designed to be cooler and more practical in the sweltering conditions they face.

The rest of the Royal Navy will be issued the uniform – known as Rig22 – by the end of 2023, but improvements will continually be made based on feedback from sailors as part of a ten-year programme.

The aim is to supply clothing which can withstand the rigours of life at sea and, at the same time, be more practical and better fitting than the uniform it replaces.

"We understand just how important having the right kit is," said uniform project leader Georgina Davies.

"We really appreciate the complexities and emotional attachments people have to the uniform and that's why the uniform improvement project is something I feel very passionately about.

"The team want to deliver the best uniform that we can and the project is the way we hope to achieve this.

"This is a continuously evolving project and we will no longer allow for any part of the uniform to stand still for decades without being reviewed.

"Uniform is not simple and getting it right is challenging and complex. But we are committed, and we will work hard to ensure that the money is spent where it really matters."

It is the second major change to the Royal Navy's daily working uniform since World War 2 and is the most significant in terms of investment and the level of improvements.

Around £38m has been spent on new unisex shirts and trousers that come in a wider range of sizes and have a better cut.

A further £40m will go on replacing other elements, such as boots and belts, while a new Gore-Tex foul weather jacket and thermal layer will arrive this autumn.

"We have carried out thorough research and testing and this is the best uniform that industry can offer to meet our requirements," said Warrant Officer 1st Class Lee 'George' Reeves.

"This is a major investment in our people. The new uniform is lightweight, more breathable, will fit more people better, and has lots of good features designed specifically for our sailors."

The new clothing is made from flame-resistant Nomex – also used in the suits of F1 drivers, which allows the body to breathe.

Feedback from more than 7,000 personnel has been incorporated into the final design, with three different fabrics tested extensively by 130 sailors on warships in the Gulf at the height of summer, where temperatures can



Sailors aboard HMS Montrose were among the first to test the new uniform in the searing heat of the Gulf

reach 55°C.

Sailors from HMS Montrose were among the first to test the new uniform and feed back to the team developing it.

The Type 23 frigate is deployed in the Gulf long-term, keeping sea lanes open and tackling drug smugglers.

It means the new clothing has been tested in some of the most rigorous conditions the Royal Navy faces.

Warrant Officer First Class Simon 'Bagsy' Baker said: "It is nice to wear straight out of the packet and feels light and airy. When compared with PCS (the old working uniform) it looks smarter.

"In the hot climate of the Gulf, it performs head and shoulders above PCS making any firefighting and emergency duties far more comfortable.

"Above all, the feedback received is being listened to and actioned to ensure that Rig22 is the best uniform yet."

Engineering Technician Robert Forster, who is a Marine Engineer, said: "Although I don't work in Rig 22 all of the time, I like

the new rig, the lighter material is cooler and easier to maintain.

"The uniform is smart and looks very presentable. There are issues with sizing that need to be addressed particularly with the shirt being too tight under the arms.

"I like the rank slides being on the shoulders, as it makes it easier to identify ranks. I would like to see a Velcro patch on the arm to identify branches also."

The project team have already responded to feedback and made some amendments to the uniform, including:

- Extra sizes of trousers and shirts.
 - Repositioning of buttons for better collar fit.
 - A loop on the shirt for hanging.
 - Increased pleat size in the shirt for better movement under the arms.
 - Velcro mounted White (for Royal Navy) or Blue (Royal Fleet Auxiliary)
- Watch a video about the uniform at: <https://youtu.be/za29Avfvtc> and keep up with improvements to the uniform on Defnet and Defence Connect



■ HMS Audacious departs Souda Bay in Crete ahead of training and operations in the Mediterranean. The Astute-class boat has completed her first operational deployment.



■ The Princess Royal at the decommissioning of HMS Talent and Trenchant
Picture by: LPhot Juliet Ritsma

HELLO AND GOODBYE

AS HMS AUDACIOUS COMPLETES HER FIRST OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENT, WE SAY FAREWELL TO TWO OLD FRIENDS...

THE Royal Navy's newest and most advanced nuclear attack submarine carried out NATO security patrols in the Mediterranean on her maiden operational deployment.

HMS Audacious is the fourth of seven new cutting-edge £1.3bn Astute-class submarines, which are the largest, most advanced and most powerful attack submarines ever operated the Royal Navy.

The submarine joined her sisters – HMS Astute, Ambush and Artful – on the front line for the first time in January after formally being commissioned in September 2021, spending months in the depths of the North Atlantic and Mediterranean.

Audacious left her home of Clyde Naval Base in Scotland and, after two months of intensive sea training designed to test the boat's equipment and sailors to the limit, left the waters close to the UK bound south for the Med.

After loading Tomahawk missiles – just one part of the Astute-class's powerful armoury alongside the Spearfish heavyweight torpedo – in Gibraltar, Audacious sailed into the Mediterranean and completed exercises with NATO allies, including training with Greek, Turkish and United States allies.

The training tested Audacious' ability to evade, track and engage her foes underwater and on the surface.

It offered NATO allies the chance to pit their wits against a nuclear attack submarine – a relatively rare training opportunity for many navies, as they looked to hunt down Audacious beneath the waves.

"These exercises helped HMS Audacious to demonstrate her prowess as the newest, most capable SSN that the UK has to offer while also strengthening NATO capability and interoperability and demonstrating our resolve towards NATO Missions," said Commanding Officer, Commander Jim Howard.

Audacious followed this up by carrying out a period of NATO operations to provide security to the region, something the Royal Navy regularly carries out alongside allies and partners.

Before her foray into the Med, Audacious carried out essential training off the coast of Scotland, during which submariners were put through a range of mock crises on board, from fires to floods, to ensure they are ready to work together and respond calmly in a real emergency.

Final trials were completed, too, which thoroughly tested systems on the cutting-edge boat to make sure they will stand up to the stresses and strains of extended operations.

The Astute-class are capable of circumnavigating the globe while submerged, producing their own oxygen and drinking water to sustain the crews on arduous and lengthy deployments.

Making sure all equipment is ready for long-term action is vital before Audacious stepped off on operations.

Audacious' first deployment also marked the completion of qualifications for many crew members, which sees them learn the location and function of hundreds of valves aboard and 'earn their dolphins' to become fully-fledged submariners.

Fresh from her own deployment to the Arctic, in which she carried out a number of missions including sub-surface stealth raids with Royal Marines Commandos, sister submarine HMS Ambush joined Audacious as she limbered up for full operations off the Scottish coast.

The two submarines went head-to-head in underwater battles, going toe to toe in a range of warfare scenarios and training together.

As Audacious and her sisters continue to sail on operations around the globe, submarines HMS Talent and Trenchant were decommissioned at Devonport Naval Base. Crews from both nuclear-powered attack boats paraded in Plymouth for the final time in front of HRH The Princess Royal – HMS Talent's patron – as well as high-profile guests

and former commanding officers.

Trenchant's operational career came to an end last year, while Talent completed her final patrol earlier this spring. Both boats served for 32 years with distinction. As hunter-killer submarines, it was their mission to protect first Polaris, now Trident – the country's Strategic Nuclear Deterrent – and to detect, track and classify targets.

The boats are capable of gaining intelligence, covertly inserting troops ashore, or striking at enemy submarines and ships with Spearfish torpedoes and targets ashore with Tomahawk cruise missiles.

HMS Triumph remains in service, but the Trafalgar class has been replaced by the seven state-of-the-art Astute-class submarines. Four Astutes have been commissioned, soon to be joined by number five, HMS Anson, which has completed successful diving checks. Like the T-boats before them, they are deployed around the globe daily: HMS Astute sailed to the Pacific and back with the Carrier Strike Group last year; HMS Ambush launched furtive raids by Royal Marines in Norway's fjords as part of wider UK/NATO operations in the Arctic this spring; and newly-commissioned HMS Audacious has been on patrol in the Mediterranean having reached full operating capability on 4 April.

Commodore James Perks, Commodore Submarine Service, said: "The Trafalgar Class developed a world class reputation and defended UK interests unstintingly across the world's oceans. The Astute submarines have now taken up the baton, continuing to protect the UK from threats with deeply professional submarine crews.

"As we look back with appreciation at the service provided by HMS Talent and HMS Trenchant, we can also look forward with excitement to the future. We have some of the best attack submarines in the world in the Astute class and developments in submarine training mean that we will continue to have the best men and women sailing and fighting them, protecting our nation far into the future."

Following Talent's initial workup period, in 1991 she sailed straight to the Mediterranean and played an active role in the first Gulf War, with the boat's efforts praised by the US officer commanding the submarine task group, Admiral Ryan, who personally congratulated the crew.

Lieutenant Commander David 'Freddie' Fox, Talent's last commanding officer, said: "This was an emotional day for many of the ship's company. I am well aware of the bond shared by all who have worked onboard Talent throughout her time in the Fleet. Numerous port visits, exercises, memories and stories are all interwoven into the rich and inspiring history of a submarine which has maintained a steady vigil on the forefront of the defence of the United Kingdom and indeed, the world. The dedication, fortitude and commitment shown by the ship's company over the years is commendable and Talent will be sorely missed now her Ensign has been lowered for the last time."

Both boats have spent much of their time away from her base port of Devonport – without the regular access to communications with loved ones back home that their colleagues in the surface fleet have enjoyed, especially with the advent of email and phone calls at sea.

"All of this success would not be possible without the unwavering support of families and loved ones back home – it's often an overlooked sacrifice, but nevertheless one which the men who have served on her will not forget," Lieutenant Commander Fox added.

Members of Talent's affiliates that the boat has built up over the years were represented at the ceremony, among them Hope House Hospices, the boat's chosen charity, the Intelligence Corps and the town of Shrewsbury.

Trenchant's career has been no less impressive, the memories imprinted on her crews just as vivid. Commander Gareth 'Bats' Batsford said she had provided "sterling service to the RN over an illustrious career.



■ HMS Audacious flies the NATO pennant as she departs Crete bound for operations in the Mediterranean



■ HMS Talent and Trenchant were decommissioned at Devonport Naval Base
Picture by: LPhot Eddie Damulira



The planes in Spain...

HAVE a distinct whiff of déjà vu about them...

There was the welcome sight (and sound) of AV8Bs – the US-built version of the Harrier – roaring between HMS Prince of Wales and SPS Juan Carlos I during a review of international naval might in the Gulf of Cádiz in front of the Spain's ruler, Felipe VI.

His navy hosted a large-scale exercise off the Spanish coast, curtain-raiser for a NATO summit in Madrid, with the king embarked on the carrier named after his father for the Royal Salute which signalled the start of the Flotex22 exercise.

"Being able to formally recognise the Spanish Royal Family, saluting King Felipe VI from the bridge of HMS Prince of Wales was a real honour," said Captain Rich Hewitt, the British carrier's commanding officer.

"Coming only two weeks after our celebrations for our Queen's Platinum Jubilee, operating alongside the Spanish flagship represents another milestone in the operational journey of HMS Prince of Wales."

The Spanish Armada's salute ended with a flypast first by a couple of Typhoons, then a formation of F-18s, and finally a trio of Harriers, which operate from the deck of the Juan Carlos.

It's been nearly a dozen years since a Harrier rumbled up the ski ramp of a Royal Navy carrier.

Retired at the end of 2010, the iconic aircraft is still missed by some, and still evoking vivid memories for some more experienced sailors. Petty Officer "Whiskey" Walker said: "Seeing the Spanish Harriers fly past for the Royal Salute was striking, although they felt quieter than when I used to work with them."

"I'm really looking forward to operating with the even more impressive – and louder – F-35 Lightning later this year."

His ship is earmarked to cross the

Atlantic to take part in a series of exercises, trials and training off the Eastern Seaboard of the USA.

Until then, there's the small matter of serving as NATO's command ship for 2020, hence her involvement in Flotex 22 alongside five nations and around 20 ships, including the alliance's Mediterranean task force, Standing Group 2.

Flotex is described as like the UK's biannual Joint Warrior exercises "only warmer": temperatures in the 20s Celsius at sea, in the 30s alongside.

It features many of the same serials and set-piece exercises too: large-scale amphibious landings and close tactical manoeuvres in the relatively confined waters of the Gulf of Cádiz, Strait of Gibraltar and the Alborán Sea. The ability of NATO groups to bolt on to

improve collective training adds several extra dimensions - and raised numbers taking part to more than 4,000 allied personnel.

Prince of Wales' involvement in the exercise is focused on command and helicopter operations (frequent Lightning is forecast when she crosses the Pond in the autumn...)

In anticipation of embarking the F-35s, two Merlin 'Crowsnest' helicopters trained with the carrier before she headed to the Med.

Taking over from the 'bagger' Sea King – and keeping their trademark radar 'bags', Crowsnest acts as the fleet's eye-in-the-sky able both to identify potential threats... and pinpoint targets for the Lightnings to take out, be they in the air or on the ground.

The ship also conducted training with the distinctive Osprey tiltrotors (part plane, part helicopter) from the US Air Force base at RAF Mildenhall, as well as more regular visitors: Merlin Mk2s of 820 Naval Air Squadron (guardians against submarine threats) and Chinooks from the Royal Air Force's 27 Squadron.



HMS Medway's seaboats captures suspected traffickers during a counter-drugs exercise

Medway makes ready in Mexico

ALL set for the Atlantic hurricane season – which is now, once again, upon us is the UK's Caribbean patrol ship HMS Medway.

She made the most of her two-week involvement in the region's largest naval exercise, Tradewinds, which tested every mission she is likely to be called upon.

Medway has been operating in the Caribbean/Gulf of Mexico and off the USA's Eastern Seaboard since the beginning of 2020, providing support to the UK's territories in the region such as Bermuda and the Turks and Caicos Islands, and working with allies and partners.

The ship is on hand to support the fight against drug trafficking and providing humanitarian aid in the event of a natural disaster – highly likely given the frequency with which storms leave devastation trailing in their wake.

Tradewinds 2022 was hosted jointly by Belize and Mexico, with Medway joining other participating ships on the island of Cozumel off the Yucatan Peninsula before putting to sea for the crux of the exercise.

Throwing their hats into the exercise ring were ships and personnel from more than 20 nations – not just those with territory on the shore of the Caribbean/Gulf of Mexico, but also countries with an interest in wider regional security such as Canada, Brazil and Suriname.

Medway worked directly alongside ships and patrol craft from Mexico (ARM Veracruz), Canada (HMCS Harry DeWolf) and the USA (USCG Isaac Mayo).

After combined formation, boarding, gunnery and rescue, the exercise moved up several gears with counter-narcotics training as Medway played first poacher, then gamekeeper to test the ability of other navies/authorities in tracking fast-moving craft trying to evade detection... before demonstrating her own skills in strangling such illegal activity.

Able Seaman Kaj Carter, one of Medway's seaboat coxswains, relished the chance to test his boat driving skills against formidable 'opponents'.

"Conducting counter-illegal trade exercises as both "opposing forces" and stopping that trade was a great way to test my skills as a coxswain and the capability of Medway's sea boats," he said.

"Working with the US Coast Guard and Mexican Navy is an experience I look forward to repeating throughout Medway's deployment and future exercises."



ARM Uxmal and USCG Cutter Isaac Mayo follow HMS Medway during gunnery training

Trainee warfare officer Sub Lieutenant Jack Hammond was loaned to two other ships to broaden his experience.

"Tradewinds has been a fantastic opportunity to hone the skills I have learned over the last eight months, but spending time on HMCS Harry DeWolf and USCG Isaac Mayo on exchange proved professionally and personally rewarding – especially with the Isaac Mayo allowing me to take to the helm," he said.

Commanding Officer Commander Chris Hollingworth said his ship and the men and women aboard had made full use of an excellent international workout.

"Exercise Tradewinds is a key building block in ensuring HMS Medway's preparation for Atlantic Patrol Task (North) Tasking," he added.

"It has exposed my crew to realistic scenarios and allowed us to work within a multinational task group. My team's response to the training has been superb and has helped to build confidence in our ability ahead of real-world tasking."

RN involvement in Tradewinds wasn't limited to Mersey. Two sailors and a Royal Marine from the International Maritime Training Team joined US Coast Guard personnel in sharing their knowledge and expertise to law enforcement agencies from across the Americas.

They face challenges the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and US Coast Guard deal with around the globe: smuggling,

drug running, people trafficking.

The Brits and Americans helped participants safely and effectively operate small boats and develop the necessary skills to conduct fast pursuits of suspect vessels – and insert boarding teams to conduct searches when they apprehended them.

While the Brits focused on boat handling by 21 sailors, the Americans concentrated on law enforcement for a further 20 students; US Coast Guard Law Enforcement DETachments, or LEDETs, regularly join RN and RFA vessels in the Caribbean in the ongoing struggle against the illegal drugs trade.

After classroom and practical training, the two weeks of instruction to personnel from Belize, Jamaica, St Lucia, Barbados, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Dominica and Suriname culminated in a successful boarding operation.

"As with maritime operations, joint and combined delivery of training offers huge opportunities and benefits for the trainees and the instructors," said Lieutenant Commander Howard Clark, Officer in Charge of the IMTT.

"There is a great sense of satisfaction in turning a raw trainee in to a competent small craft coxswain and enhancing regional maritime security."

His is the RN's only training team dedicated to delivering maritime training overseas to international maritime agencies.

Though just six strong it has deployed to more than 30 countries, training more than 3,200 personnel.



THIS is the rare sight of the *kyokujitsu-ki* – the ‘rising sun flag’ – billowing in UK waters.

Flying it are the JS Kashima and Shimakaze, together the Overseas Training Cruise 2022 squadron, here sandwiching survey vessel HMS Enterprise, while patrol ship HMS Mersey is nearest the camera (*in the hands of Leading Photographer Dan Rosenbaum... leaning out of an 815 NAS Wildcat from Yeovilton*).

The quartet linked up off Portland Bill at the start of a week-long visit to the UK by the Japanese duo who’ve sailed half-way around the world on their goodwill/training mission, working with friendly and allied navies on the way.

The pair had already linked up with the French and Royal Navies in the Mediterranean on their way to UK waters, notably Britain’s biggest warship, aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales, as she led NATO exercises off the Spanish coast.

The encounter off Dorset focused on the ability to communicate and orchestrate the

coordinated movements of the warships in close proximity.

The four ships had hoped to exchange sailors for the four hours of combined training for a brief taste of life aboard each other’s vessels, but weather conditions ruled out the boat transfer.

“It was a pleasure being able to train with the Japanese Self Defence Force as they operated in the UK waters,” said Lieutenant Commander Nicholas Radue, HMS Mersey’s Executive Officer.

“Exercises like these not only provide an excellent training opportunities for our respective Fleets but also strengthen the bond between our two countries. We wish the Japanese Self Defence Force fair winds and following seas in the rest of their deployment.”

Exercise complete, the Shimakaze headed into Portsmouth for a five-day visit, while the Kashima enjoyed a plum berth on the Thames next to HMS Belfast as she called on the capital.

The squadron re-formed upon sailing for further training with the RN, this time HMS Severn, the Fleet’s dedicated specialist

navigation training ship.

A spokesman for the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force said the training cruise visit to the UK was a direct result of last year’s deployment of the UK Carrier Strike Group to the Indo-Pacific, which saw flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth call on Yokosuka, near Tokyo.

“Defence cooperation between Japan and the UK – which has a long history and tradition – evolved to a ‘new level’ last year with the UK Carrier Strike Group visiting Japan,” he added.

“Japan-UK defence cooperation contributes not only to the security of Japan, but to ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and the international community, as well as addressing global challenges.”

The Royal Navy has increased its presence in the Pacific in recent years, culminating in last year’s carrier strike group deployment and the newly-arrived patrol ships HMS Tamar and Spey, the first permanent appearance of the White Ensign in the region since the handover of Hong Kong a quarter of a century ago.

Duncan’s deed saves stray Channel yacht

SAILORS from HMS Duncan battled rough conditions to save a yacht drifting out of control into the middle of the English Channel.

The Portsmouth-based destroyer responded to a plea for help from the Coastguard after the yacht, with one person aboard, was reported heading out to off Weymouth with no working engine, power or communications – and in worsening seas.

The Type 45 was anchored in Weymouth Bay around 5.30pm on June 18 amid trials and training following an extensive maintenance period.

Despite sustained wind speeds of 30-35 knots, worsening sea conditions and reducing visibility, the ship launched one of her Pacific 24 sea boats with a crew of seaman specialists, an engineer and a medic aboard.

The motor yacht in distress was drifting rapidly offshore in the wind and tide around Portland Bill and had no flares or working radio equipment onboard.

The sea boat was about to abandon the search as conditions worsened, until Leading Engineering Technician Jack Davies spotted the yacht’s mast in the growing gloom.

He boarded the vessel, reassured and supported the sole sailor aboard and repaired the engine in difficult conditions.

“The conditions were challenging but the team and I had the right kit, in the right place at the right time to answer the call from the Coastguard,” said seaman specialist Petty Officer Adam Drozdowski, the sea boat’s coxswain.

Medical assistant Petty Officer Tom Austin added: “It took real skill to put us alongside in the heavy sea without hitting the other vessel, with waves crashing over the front of the boat.

“The individual onboard was in the later stages of shock and clearly in a dire condition. I’m glad that we were able to make a difference.”

After restoring power to the vessel, the team handed the situation over to the RNLI Weymouth lifeboat team, before returning safely back to HMS Duncan.

“It was really good to put everything I’ve learned into practice under some really testing conditions,” said Jack.

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RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

HMS Trent has been pushing aircrews to the limit as she helps write the rulebook for helicopter operations around the globe.

The patrol ship has served as a testbed for two weeks of intensive trials with a Wildcat helicopter – callsign Gauntlet – in the Mediterranean, testing the aircraft in different weather and sea conditions, with different weights and loads by day and night to determine the limits at which aviators can safely operate.

The ship is one of five second-generation River-class patrol vessels, deployed from Mexico to Singapore at the forefront of operations underlining the UK's global ambitions, with Trent assigned to the Mediterranean and West Africa.

It's not the first time helicopters have worked with – or landed on – one of the quintet. But this was by far the most extensive test with the information collected allowing not just Wildcats to operate from the River-class vessels, but also help larger Merlin helicopters and similar NATO/allied aircraft.

That expands the ship's potential role and missions, hugely benefiting operations as varied as search and rescue, board and search/maritime security, delivering humanitarian aid and launching commando raids.

A specially-modified Navy Wildcat helicopter – which supports the missions of Royal Navy destroyers and frigates around the globe – was dispatched with an elite team of pilots and QinetiQ scientists. Their goal? To determine what aviators call Ship Helicopter Operating Limits – the boundaries for safe flying.

Four test pilots from the Rotary Wing Test and Evaluation Squadron and two QinetiQ flight test engineers – all from MoD Boscombe Down – provided the air crew, supported by a couple of test engineers, two QinetiQ flight physicists and an analyst were required for the flying and science on board Trent, while 815 Naval Air Squadron – the front-line Wildcat unit – provided more than 20 engineers and technicians to maintain the hi-tech aircraft.

Trent made use of both the western Mediterranean and Atlantic as she sought the wind and sea conditions the aviators needed.

In all, the helicopter landed – and took off from – Trent's flight deck more than 200 times in as many different circumstances and conditions as possible, day and night (the latter with and without night vision goggles).

A series of sensors on the Wildcat and the patrol ship's superstructure recorded crucial details – many of them not normally available to the air or ship's crew – with a good two terabytes of data (that's enough space for more than a quarter of a million songs for your MP3 player).

To define the limits at which a helicopter can operate, there's a specific scale to assess the best possible combinations of an aircraft's weight, the motion of the ship and relative wind.

"One of the certainties of this type of flight test is that in flying to find what is appropriate for front-line use, test crews will inevitably find what isn't," explained Commander Chris 'Grassy' Knowles, Commanding Officer of Boscombe Down based Rotary Wing Test and Evaluation Squadron.

Team Trent enjoyed the novelty of extended operations with a helicopter – getting used to guiding the Wildcat safely on and off the deck, refuelling it, communicating with the crew, loading and unloading kit.

"As my first time on board a warship, I have really enjoyed it," said Air Engineering Technician Conor Sinclair from 1700 Naval Air Squadron, which provides units and ships around the Navy with extra personnel for specific missions.

"It's a completely different experience and way of operating from normal squadron life. It has been really full, but I've made sure I've been topping up the tan when I can."

Engineering Technician Kieran McTernan acted as the 'badger': fuelling and supporting the aircraft whilst it is on the flight deck, which also means responding to an emergency.

"This has been a whole new learning experience for me, which is always exciting after four years in the Royal Navy," he said. "I have really enjoyed the challenge and the responsibility that has come with the flying trials."

While the team at Boscombe Down analyse the data and write the operating manual, Commander Tom Knott, HMS Trent's Commanding Officer, is in no doubt the trials will benefit the day-to-day operations of the Overseas Patrol Squadron.

"This extra string to the patrol vessel's bow will support her wide range of operations – humanitarian aid and disaster relief, interdiction operations, counter piracy and counter narcotics, boarding operations and so much more," he added.



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FALKLANDS
1982 - 2022

MAIDEN MANHATTAN



HMS Protector flew the flag for Navy and nation in New York's annual naval celebration.

The icebreaker, survey and polar research ship spent over a week in the Big Apple, joining American allies at the city's Fleet Week – a mixture of celebration and commemoration of the US Navy, its men and women, their service and sacrifice.

Held for nearly 40 years – though postponed by the pandemic since 2019 – the event allows the US public to see their ships and meet their personnel – with the invitation frequently extended to the USA's closest ally.

Protector is on a long-term deployment, spending the austral summer around Antarctica, and above the Equator when it's summer in the northern hemisphere. In both halves of the globe, the mission is largely the same: to update maritime charts and collect scientific data about the oceans, wildlife and global warming.

The distinctive red-and-white scientific and research vessel was piped up the Hudson River by navigator Lieutenant Ben Flack and enjoyed a plum Midtown berth for eight days on her first visit to the Big Apple.

The 34th iteration of Fleet Week – New York's largest seafaring festival – was focused on 'celebrating the sea services', reminding the city's nine million inhabitants that their nation's security and prosperity depends on the US Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard... in which they are regularly supported by their Royal Navy allies.

Protector's sailors and Royal Marines enjoyed the hospitality of the US Navy

and US Coast Guard, were invited to the premiere of the Top Gun sequel, enjoyed Broadway shows and baseball games, attended official parades, visited museums and sampled New York's legendary sights.

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime trip and event; an unbelievable couple of days in the city that never sleeps and memories I will never forget," said Catering Services specialist Harry Martin, who works in Protector's galley.

Marine engineer Petty Officer Paddy Shingleton added: "The visit to New York was a once-in-a-career opportunity for me having served 22 years in the Navy."

In return for American hospitality, the ship opened her gangway to New Yorkers, welcoming thousands aboard, providing displays and stances explaining what the Plymouth-based ship and her ship's company have achieved since leaving home ten months ago.

"This has been a fantastic opportunity for my ship's company to see one of the world's great cities after a busy Antarctic season," said Protector's Commanding Officer Captain Milly Ingham.

"We have been welcomed with open arms by the residents of the city and by our brothers and sisters in the US Navy, Marine Corps and Coastguard."

"The ship will visit northern polar waters for the second time in two years this summer and this visit has cemented the bonds of friendship between our Services in preparation for closer cooperation and integration in the High North."

Main picture: Henry Kaden



FIT IN FALMOUTH

ALMOST ready to begin a record-breaking 14-month mission which will keep her at sea until the end of next year is veteran survey ship HMS Scott.

The fifth largest surface ship under the White Ensign (only aircraft carriers and assault ships are bigger) has completed a three-month £7.5m revamp in Falmouth to prepare her for the most demanding deployment in her 25-year career.

Once trials and training are complete, the Plymouth-based vessel – unique in the Royal Navy for her ability to accurately survey vast expanses of ocean to great depths – will head out into the North Atlantic.

While deployed, her crew intend to spend over 200 days at sea, surveying half a million square kilometres of ocean and seabed (that's roughly the size of Spain)... beating the record she set on her 2021-22 survey 'season'.

The ship has been in dock in Cornwall since she completed that mission back in March – her most successful/prolific since she was commissioned in 1997.

The team surveyed an area of 400,000 square kilometres – more than one and a half times the size of

the UK and sailed a distance of nearly twice around the globe, hoovering up data about the Atlantic which will assist Royal Navy operations. Those efforts earned Scott the title of the Navy's best survey ship.

Whilst that data benefits the Fleet, the Atlantic weather and high tempo of operations took their toll of the ship and her machinery.

The period in the hands of Falmouth's A&P has allowed deep maintenance and technical upgrades on almost all of Scott's systems, cleaning and repainting all ballast tanks, overhauling engines, generators and pumps.

Living quarters and facilities for crew have been refurbished, ventilation improved and, not least, the ship's hull re-painted from bow to stern – and, being in dry dock, allowed crew a rare glimpse of their ship from below to appreciate the sheer size (131 metres long, 21 wide and 13,000 tonnes in all).

"Overall, it has been a really successful – and very busy – maintenance period and HMS Scott is in a great state to get back out to sea," said Officer of the Watch Lieutenant Naomi Stevens.

The engineering team worked around the clock alongside A&P



employees and also Royal Navy Reservist engineers to complete the comprehensive revamp.

"There have been some long hours but it is exciting to see how good the ship looks. We're ready for our next deployment" marine engineer Michael Munday, aged 22.

Scott is now undergoing trials/training off the South Coast before deploying later this month.

"We've achieved a huge amount during this life extension docking period."

"The team have worked diligently alongside their A&P counterparts and the ship is now in an excellent condition to deploy for another record-breaking period of military data collection. We're all excited to get back to sea and back on deployment" said Commanding Officer Commander Tom Harrison.

While the engineers and civilian contractors were working hard to repair and improve the ship the survey team conducted a training survey of

Falmouth docks to practice some of their land-based survey skills.

The data was recorded and sent to the UK Hydrographic Office. A tide pole was also fitted onto the jetty so tidal observations could be conducted.

"It was a great experience getting to practice skills which we don't often use and being able to help train junior surveyors," said LS(HM) Cochrane.

Many of the sailors on board managed to get time out to enjoy some adventurous training.

First was the paddle boarding courses at the watersports centre in Falmouth, where ship's company were trained in how to take others out around the bay.

"A very fulfilling experience, exactly the reason I joined the Royal Navy. I look forward to using the skills I learned to help enrich my fellow sailors," said Lt Kinghorn.

Some personal also managed to go to the Naval Outdoor Centre Germany (NOCG) for a week of adventurous training, some doing a week of

mountain biking and others a week of mountaineering.

The mountaineering group climbed three peaks over 1,800m over four days, with an overnight stop in a cabin at 1,750m

"NOCG was an amazing experience, everyone should do it at least once in their naval career," said AB (HM) Livingston



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Crews of the four current Middleton, Chiddingfold, Bangor, and Penzance, their engineering support team, and the command staff form up at the UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain

'cause you're hot then

SAILORS who have kept the Gulf free of mines for 15 years non-stop celebrated their achievements aboard Nelson's flagship.

Thousands of Royal Navy sailors – not just mine warfare experts but chefs, engineers, logistic specialists and seamen – have spent months on end in the searing temperatures of the Middle East (as high as 55°C at the peak of summer) ensuring no harm comes to shipping and trade flows freely.

With its supplies of liquefied natural gas and oil alone the region is crucial to the economy of the UK, but it is also a hub of international seagoing trade – cars, luxury and electronic goods, food and more – between the Indo-Pacific and Europe.

The slightest disruption to that flow of traffic would cost as much as £6bn every day.

So since the end of 2006, the Royal Navy ships with their specialist teams and cutting-edge sonar and sensors have surveyed seabed covering an area more than five times the size of Greater London – more than 3,500 square miles – to both remove any mine threat along key shipping routes and provide a clear understanding of key Gulf waters, making it easier to spot any changes in the future.

To sustain the force in the punishing conditions of the Gulf for more than a decade and a half, the minehunters each complete a three to four-year tour of duty before returning home to the UK, while their crews of 40-45 souls have traded places with their colleagues on sister vessels training in home waters.

The mission, originally called Operation Aintree, today Operation Kipion, began with two minehunters dispatched to Bahrain to help deal with the aftermath of a quarter of a century of conflict and tension in the region and ensure key routes were mine-free.

The force was subsequently doubled in size, given a mothership and a dedicated command/battle staff and, since 2018, has enjoyed a permanent new home in the form of the UK Naval Support Facility Bahrain.

In all, the Bahrain minehunters have completed 617 missions and their crews have collectively spent 2,800 months (more than 230 years) deployed to the Gulf.

Among the hunters' first and most important missions was opening up the waterway to Iraq's key port of Umm Qasr at the head of the Gulf in 2008.

The Khawr Abd Allah was heavily

mined in both Gulf conflicts. Together with the US Navy, the RN force made a concerted effort to declare the waters safe. Over six weeks they located and classified 2,000 underwater contacts over an area spanning the size of the Isle of Wight.

Lieutenant Commander Neil Skinner was involved in that effort aboard HMS Blyth (pictured below with USS Gladiator as a sandstorm descends) and is back in Bahrain 14 years later in command of HMS Middleton.

"To have found myself entering an Iraqi waterway and undertaking live Operations so soon in my career was an exciting experience, and something that was shared by the entire crew," he said.

"It is fascinating to see how things have evolved. Some very young and junior sailors who were with me in HMS Blyth are now back out here now in much more senior positions, having spent most of their careers in the Gulf supporting this enduring enterprise.

"Whilst facilities, supporting infrastructure and amenities in Bahrain have dramatically improved in this time, the value in maintaining a forward deployed mine warfare presence remains unchanged – and it is the ever-impressive sailors of the mine warfare community who have ensured its continued success."

Commander Daniel Morris, the current commander of the mine warfare force in the Gulf – roughly 300 Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary sailors – added: "Fifteen years of unbroken tasking is a monumental achievement and I am hugely grateful for the hard work and support.

"I've been part of the mine warfare community for a little over 16 years, so I very much feel part of this commitment. I've seen first-hand the effort from the crews, and I've seen the organisation evolve."

Aside from their core role, the RN minehunters have worked extensively with their US Navy counterparts – also based in Bahrain – plus other navies either based in the region or with a vested interest in its safety and security.

The British ships regularly take part in combined exercises with the Americans, as well as Oman's premier annual naval workout, Khunjar Hadd (or 'Sharp Dagger'), and the signature International Maritime Exercise which draws in like-minded mine warfare experts from around the world annually, playing a vital role in honing the collective skills of over 30 nations to keep shipping lanes

open for the free flow of global trade.

To thank minehunter crews and their supporting staff, Gulf veterans are being invited aboard HMS Victory today in Portsmouth where Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Andrew Burns will celebrate the successes of the past 15 years.

And those deployed in the Gulf gathered before the Royal Navy's senior commander in the Middle East, Commodore Adrian Fryer, the UK Maritime Component Commander, to receive his thanks for their often unsung efforts.

"The continuous presence of Royal Navy mine countermeasures vessels in Bahrain is a real representation of the UK's enduring commitment to stability in the region, which includes some of the most important maritime trade routes in the world," he said.

"It would be wrong to underestimate the amount of work required to maintain this capability, with our ships being ready for operations on a continuous basis, often in punishing environmental conditions.

"Many of the sailors in this community have deployed multiple times over the past 15 years and I pay tribute to their commitment, and that of their families, in keeping the Royal Navy at the forefront of mine countermeasure operations alongside our partners and allies."

Petty Officer (Mine Warfare) Luke Brady from HMS Middleton is among the sailors who've served in the Gulf on multiple occasions:

"It is great that we are able to celebrate a full 15 years of continuous mine warfare presence in the region," he said. "Kipion deployments have formed a major backbone of my career and personal development over many years.

"Over that time I have seen my ability to perform in the mine warfare sphere rapidly develop while also over time gaining a greater understanding of why our presence in the region is as vital today as it was 15 years ago."

Over the past 15 years, advances in technology have allowed minehunters to integrate remote mine disposal systems alongside traditional clearance divers.

With both the Royal and US Navies investing heavily in uncrewed systems – keeping human beings out of the minefield – the future of operations in Bahrain will be a blend of the traditional and the autonomous: crewless vessels, run from a portable operations hub either on land or sea, towing sonar, rapidly surveying stretches of water and, if any mines are found, dealing with them.



you're cold

OH HOW HMS Grimsby would have appreciated just a little of that Gulf sun...

Temperatures have been in the 20s and 30s for them too. Fahrenheit not Celsius.

The yang to the yin of mine warfare operations in the Gulf is a year to 18 months in home/northern European waters, often attached to NATO.

Which is where Grimsby could be found for a good chunk of spring 2022 as the latest RN vessel attached to NATO's permanent minehunting force in northern Europe waters, SNMCMG 1.

Grimsby took her place alongside allied ships from Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Belgium and Denmark, ranging from the Skagerrak and Kattegat to the Arctic Circle off the Norwegian coast.

The most demanding and varied element of her deployment was joining forces massed for the largest exercise hosted by Norway in 30 years, Cold Response: 27,000 personnel (3,000 of them Royal Navy), more than two dozen ships from nearly a dozen nations.

The exercise not only showcased the unique capabilities of Grimsby and the mine warfare group, able to navigate through the tight Norwegian fjords and inner leads where larger ships would be unable to follow, but also the 'sum is greater than the parts' element of working as a group, clearing much broader tracts of water than individual vessels might achieve.

HMS Grimsby was still able to demonstrate her lethality (within the confines of the exercise admittedly): she claimed the only 'kill' of an 'enemy' surface combatant by a minehunter, with a Norwegian Skjold-class fast patrol ship dispatched by the superb marksmanship of the gunnery team.

The Brits also worked with the Estonian Navy, carrying one of the latter's REMUS 100 autonomous sonar system to scan waters for mines – without risking sailing a ship into a possible minefield.

"As the ship's diving officer, it was great to see the novel ways in which our dive team were able to work both with new systems and with our NATO allies too," said Lt Dan Earland, who's also Grimsby's operations officer.

"It hasn't always been easy in the extreme conditions of the High North but the team stepped up to the plate with gusto."

Working in such a cold and sometimes inhospitable environment has been demanding for Grimsby at times, but it also gave her crew were able to have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of travelling to wild places usually untouched by tourists: catching the Northern Lights, skiing and snowboarding, and also sailing up Geirangerfjord – between Bergen and Trondheim, a UNESCO World Heritage site beloved by cruise ships (pictured top).

It was, said mine warfare specialist Able Seaman Tommy Maclean, "probably the most beautiful place I've ever been," as the ship glided between sheer cliffs and snow-capped peaks of the fjord.

After concluding her work in the High North the NATO minehunting force headed south for Danish waters and the southern Kattegat.

A highlight of this included a 'Swedish Tennis Court' Exercise, in which task group ships were divided into teams and were tasked with detecting other units, whilst remaining undetected themselves in order to score a 'kill'.

"This sort of exercise was great as it really encouraged some lateral thinking, such as how best to use geography and topography to our advantage, and also how to deceive and confuse the 'enemy'," said Grimsby's Navigating Officer, Lieutenant Jack Patterson.

"It's not often that mine countermeasures vessels take part in scenarios like this so it was good to experience a different type of warfare than the minehunting that we're more used to."



Added bite as Sea Viper gets £300m upgrade



THE Royal Navy's destroyers are to be given extra – and enhanced – firepower to fend off the latest threats from ballistic missiles to fast-moving speedboats, jet skis, and attack craft.

All six Type 45s – HM Ships Daring, Dauntless, Diamond, Dragon, Defender, and Duncan – will be fitted with the Sea Ceptor missile system on top of crucial upgrades to the destroyers' principal weapon, the Sea Viper.

Each destroyer carries up to 48 Sea Viper missiles, each held in a vertical-launch silo on the forecastle, each capable of taking out aerial threats at ranges up to 75 miles away, accelerating out of its launcher to reach speeds in excess of four times the speed of sound.

It relies on two distinctive radar systems – the Sampson (spinning spiked egg) and Long Range (large black slab) – which are able to track hundreds of targets as far as 250 miles away.

The £300m-plus package to upgrade the system – known as Sea Viper Evolution – covers the Aster 30 missile itself as well as the Sampson radar and the command/control system.

It will support 54 jobs in the UK at sites from the Isle of Wight to Hertfordshire, Bristol and Bolton.

The evolution upgrade is designed to deal with the increasing threats posed by anti-ship ballistic missiles, ensuring the Type 45 is able to defend the Fleet – especially Carrier Strike Groups – against complex air threats now and in the future.

“Sea Viper has proven itself to be an outstanding weapon system during its first decade in service, providing the Royal Navy with

formidable lethality against aerial threats,” said Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Andrew Burns.

“Those threats are constantly evolving – and we must adapt and improve not to match them, but to defeat them decisively.

“This upgrade to Sea Viper ensures the Type 45 destroyer remains the world's leading air defence warship, protecting not just Royal Navy vessels but also our allies operating alongside us.”

The investment follows recent contracts awarded to introduce Sea Ceptor – already fitted to Type 23 frigates and being installed on successor Type 26 warships – increasing the Daring class' missile arsenal by 50 per cent from 48 to 72.

Lieutenant Commander Stephen Ashley, weapon engineer officer on HMS Duncan – the most advanced Type 45 in the Fleet following her recently-completed refit – said all six ships in the class would benefit tremendously from the missile upgrades.

“The ability to almost double the size of the missile loadout on a Type 45 will be a real game changer for ships facing near-peer adversaries, particularly with the surface mode offered by Ceptor which will significantly bolster our ability to defeat fast attack craft,” he explained.

“The new maritime ballistic missile defence capability will really increase our ability to operate freely in the more hostile parts of the world, as we can now see and engage these high-end missiles.

“It will also deepen our role with NATO as we can now integrate into the wider allied ballistic missile defence network.”

Royal Navy storms ahead...

GAME-changing innovation was on show as the Royal Navy continues its commitment to deliver the latest technology to the frontline of operations.

VIPs from across the UK and abroad, including the 2nd Permanent Under Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Ben Key, and Defence Attachés from the United States, Canada, France and Australia attended an event dubbed Project Stormcloud.

The Royal Navy's Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) challenged two of the biggest global technology giants, Microsoft and Amazon Web Services (AWS) to demonstrate how industry could bring new, state-of-the-art Cloud-based technology into the hands of the warfighter quicker than ever before.

Chief Technology Officer Brigadier Dan

Cheesman said: “We have been challenging industry, we have been challenging big tech, particularly AWS and Microsoft, two of the biggest companies in the world, to show us the way.

“We have been learning by doing, by bringing big tech, small companies and Navy personnel together with other partners across defence to try and embrace technology in a completely revolutionary way.”

Held at 40 Commando's base in Taunton, Somerset, the tech giants showcased how Edge Cloud computing could allow new technologies to be incorporated into frontline services.

They also demonstrated how drones, software and cloud technology can enhance missions ranging from warfare operations to humanitarian assistance.

Brig Cheesman added: “The trials

undertaken during Stormcloud demonstrated how the Royal Navy continues to adopt new technology more quickly and cost-effectively, mirroring the success of companies like SpaceX.

“We have taken lessons from and worked with industry to make us more able to get after the technology we see in our civilian lives in a better and more coherent way, and to get it to the frontline - to the war fighter.”

AWS, partnered with more than 20 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), focused their efforts on showcasing how Edge Cloud technology could incorporate apps, drones, communication systems and cloud software to support the Royal Navy in humanitarian disaster missions.

Meanwhile, Microsoft utilised a different pathway by demonstrating how Edge Cloud technology could be incorporated into a



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Command Mission System (CMS), allowing the rapid integration of different technology into the CMS to enhance warfighting capabilities.

Stormcloud, with AWS, Microsoft and their range of partners, will progress further over the next year, to incorporate ideas from across Defence.

The Stormcloud event comes as the Royal Navy continues its commitment to embracing technology and operating at the forefront of innovation.

OCTO have continually collaborated with industry partners to identify what equipment could be adapted for use in Defence and how to accelerate it to the frontline.

An example of this is the Royal Navy's PODS (Persistent Operational Deployment System), which was first launched at DSEI by then Second Sea Lord Vice-Admiral Nick Hine and was also on show at the Stormcloud event, demonstrating that the capability is now a reality.

Based on the design of a commercial shipping container, Navy PODS are interchangeable and can house specialist equipment and technology needed for various missions.

They can be adapted to house drones, humanitarian aid, be work space for a strike team or control centre and can be operated as a "plug and play" system for the Offshore Patrols Vessels and the future Type 26s and Type 31s frigates.

For Stormcloud, the PODS showed a range of drone feeds as well as virtual reality technology.



Pictures: LPhot Lee Blease

...and also joins US in tech project

THE Royal Navy and US Navy are celebrating the official opening of a new innovation hub.

The London-based Tech Bridge will see both countries working together to embrace technology and see greater investment between their navies.

Launched in 2020 in a virtual ceremony, the project has already made strides in closer collaboration between the UK and the United States with trials on uncrewed underwater vessels using sensors to feed back key information.

The Tech Bridge is a joint initiative between the US Navy's Office of Naval Research Global (ONR(G)) and the Royal Navy's Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) and both teams have welcomed the hub's official opening.

Rear Admiral James Parkin CBE, the Royal Navy's Director Develop, said: "The London Tech Bridge does exactly what it says on the tin."

"Being in London, right next to the strategic headquarters of our Armed Forces, and at the heart of this great global city, allows exposure not only to the latest thinking in Defence innovation, but

provides physical access to those varied organisations conducting some of the most exciting technological research and development anywhere in the world.

"As such, it's all about tech - sharing our understanding of exciting developments in autonomy, materials, platforms, sensors, processing, and concepts, and unlocking the Royal Navy's connections to those world leading academic, industrial, and public sector organisations in the UK, towards achieving our common goals.

"And perhaps most importantly, it's a figurative Bridge, one that permits the Royal Navy to reach across the Atlantic into the US Navy, and vice versa."

"The opening of the London Tech



Bridge's innovation hub represents a new way for great minds to come together in a unique atmosphere, share ideas and technologies, and foster more effective research collaboration," added Chief of Naval Research Rear Admiral Lorin Selby, of the US Navy.

"This joint US-UK partnership is critical to advance new ideas and keep our naval forces dominant. We're looking for partners with strong curiosity, a passion for action and a passion for scientific and technological excellence."

The London Tech Bridge's new location saw a "Tea and Tech" event, kicking off a monthly session with industry in specified technology areas, allowing companies to pitch their ideas and technology.

They are looking for the latest new technologies in AI and Autonomy, Directed Energy and Green Energy, Advanced Manufacturing, Maintenance and Sustainment - which can benefit the Sailors and Marines of both of their navies.

The Tech Bridge network is already well-established in the United States with the US Naval Agility Office (NavalX) and spans 18 national and international locations.

Submarines' missile revamp

THE striking power of the UK's hunter-killer submarines is being enhanced with the latest cruise missile system.

All Astute-class boats are to receive boosted Tomahawks as part of a £265m upgrade to the submarines' premier long-range weapon.

The missile has been in service with the Royal Navy Submarine Service for a quarter of a century, and has been used successfully to strike targets during operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and, most recently, the 2011 Civil War in Libya.

The Tomahawk Land Attack Missile - commonly abbreviated to TLAM - remains at the forefront of the UK's conventional arsenal and provides a precision strike capability unmatched in terms of range, accuracy and survivability.

Its manufacturers have upgraded the system from the existing model, Block IV, to V, to ensure the missile remains effective against future threats - and defences - ensuring Tomahawk remains as effective and relevant as it was since it was first deployed.

As a result, the UK's stockpile of Block IVs will be turned into Block Vs from July in a five-year programme.

"The Tomahawk Land Attack Cruise Missile is a cutting-edge system which provides the UK

with real strategic and operational choice," said the Royal Navy's Director of Submarines Rear Admiral Simon Asquith.

"Able to be fired from a stealthy UK nuclear attack submarine, the system's exceptional range, accuracy and survivability provides the UK - alongside our US Allies - with a world-beating precision strike capability."

At 5.6m long and weighing a little over two tonnes, Tomahawk travels at just shy of the speed of sound, striking targets with pinpoint precision at ranges of up to 1,000 miles from its launch platform: historically Swiftsure and Trafalgar-class submarines and, for the past decade, Astute-class boats, based at Faslane.

Among the enhancements on the Block V missiles will be the improved ability to block attempts to jam/divert the Tomahawk from its target.

Alongside upgrading the missile itself, the command systems on the boats and support ashore will also be modernised to meet the demands and requirements of the enhanced Tomahawk.

The first upgraded Tomahawks will be delivered to the Fleet by 2024 with a test firing planned by an Astute-class boat the following year.

Hub opening aims to drive innovation across defence

A NEW hub designed to spark innovation and push the boundaries of technology used by UK Armed Forces has officially opened in Dorset.

The Defence BattleLab will foster collaboration between the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force as well as those working in industry and academia sectors.

By utilising the same space, the facility will see closer ties and creativity to push new technological boundaries.

Facilities at the Defence BattleLab include access to the UK's only multi-domain ranges at Lulworth, comprising 15,000ft of cleared airspace, available sea area and a live fire capable range; a live trial and showcase workshop for digital and physical technology; three 5G testbeds which will allow for testing in a secure, closed network and more than 100 rentable desks for companies.

Defence Procurement Minister, Jeremy Quin said: "As the pace of technological change continues to spiral, Defence must be forward leaning and innovative in its approach.

"Collaboration and innovation will be the catalysts to maintaining advantage over our adversaries. The BattleLab will bring together the best talent and

expertise in industry and push technology boundaries to equip our Armed Forces with the latest state of the art kit."

The Defence BattleLab is a joint project between the Defence Innovation Unit, single Services, Dstl, DASA, Dorset Council and Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership.

Since soft launching last summer, the site has hosted numerous Hackathons, defence technology showcases and workshops across emerging technologies for all areas of defence.

The facility seeks to take advantage of Dorset's location, with Portsmouth, Plymouth, Bovington, Blandford, Warminster and Salisbury Plain all in easy reach.

Head of NavyX, the Royal Navy's innovation experts, Colonel Tom Ryall said: "Our commitment to meaningful innovation is measured in actions not words and the Defence BattleLab is a shining example of this.

"As a centre of excellence for collaboration between SMEs and Defence users, it's a vital cog in the developing Defence innovation ecosystem and vector into wider networks.

"It brings together the most innovative companies with users, under one roof, and alongside a world class test range."

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ROYAL Marines leapt ten feet from Chinook helicopters into the Bristol Channel as they tested some of their most daring commando skills.

The marines from Taunton-based 40 Commando were picked up by Royal Air Force helicopters on the dunes of Braunton Burrows in North Devon to practise what is known as 'helicasting'.

It's a technique which gets commandos into the action quickly, dropping them from the back of helicopters into the ocean – from where they use their rapid raiding craft to strike at the enemy ashore.

The training took place alongside 47 Commando – the Royal Marines' small boat raiding specialists – to keep marines sharp for operations around the world.

Helicasting takes immense skill and team-work – from those dropping into the raging surf, to the small boat teams and, of course, the pilots who hover their aircraft just above the waves to allow the commandos to deploy.

The technique is used to quickly get troops ashore but also to access routes inland which a foe would regard as unpassable for conventional forces.

The helicasting drills were just one part of intensive training for 40 Commando that will prepare them for regular deployments around the world – from desert to jungle – as they begin to operate as the new Littoral Response Group (South), which concentrates on operations east of the Suez Canal alongside regional allies and partners.

The commandos were put through swim tests prior to the Chinook drop, leaping into water carrying webbing and rifle from ten feet, to simulate the jump from the helicopter.

They then had to tread water before swimming 200 metres wearing their full uniform and boots.

Charlie Company also worked closely with Offshore Raiding Craft (ORCs) of 47 Commando to hone their close-quarters battle skills.

They were put into a range of tactical scenarios before rapidly extracting via the ORCs, which can zip across the water at 50mph and are equipped with machine guns and grenade launchers for speedy getaways and fire support to those ashore.

MAKING A SPLASH

MAKING TRACKS

ROYAL Marines faced extreme conditions as they skied deep into Sweden's frozen wilds to practise rescuing casualties buried by avalanches.

Arbroath-based 45 Commando – the mountain and extreme cold weather warfare experts of 3 Commando Brigade – spent two weeks sharpening techniques needed to locate and extract casualties buried by up to 2.5 metres of snow from avalanches alongside troops from hosts Sweden, the USA, Denmark, Latvia, France and Belgium.

It put into practice many of the survival skills the commandos nurture during gruelling months in northern Norway every year, including shelter building, navigating frozen lakes and alpine skiing.

The Swedish hosts – specialists from the Norrbotten Regiment – admitted the heavy snowfall and appalling visibility at the Abisko National Park were the worst conditions faced on the course in almost a decade.

"It was a real challenge keeping everyone moving enough to avoid cold weather injury and it demonstrated good drills from the commandos that they were never at risk of becoming casualties themselves whilst working hard to help the weaker group members," said Marine Harry Mafham, who was part of the Yankee Company group in Sweden.

"Even constructing the shelters was difficult as the late-season snow had frozen almost rock solid at points."

The training became increasingly complex as the two-week exercise progressed as the allied group skied for days into the mountains and built shelters to protect them from deteriorating weather.

After climbing Latnjacorru – a mountain with

views north into nearby Norway and south towards Sweden's highest peak Kebnekaise – conditions forced the group to tie themselves together to reduce the risk of losing one of the patrol in the poor visibility.

After navigating a frozen lake, the patrol began digging a snow cave, which took eight long hours to in worsening weather.

That was relative comfort compared to the more rudimentary 'snow graves' the commandos constructed on subsequent nights.

"Although it took some time, sleeping in the shelter was comfortable and out of the elements," said Marine Joel Hayes.

"Moving from that location the following day, we continued with avalanche scenarios and digging into snow graves. The weather turned even worse, offering only 15 metres' visibility, and having spent that night in the snow grave we much preferred the cave."

During the descent, the patrol stopped in a hut to warm up and were checked by medics before finally coming off the mountain for reindeer stew and relax in a sauna.

Prior to their mountain mission, the group were taken through lectures on avalanche risks and techniques and issued beacons, probes and shovels.

"We found this training very beneficial; our knowledge of the beacons and using them improved as we got to watch the Swedish Mountain Leaders, many of whom regularly assist in avalanche rescue parties," added Mne Mafham.

"Having absorbed their knowledge and processes, there is scope to incorporate it into our annual Norway training."





Royal Marines from Mike Company, 42 Commando, take part in Joint Personnel Recovery (JPR) training alongside their US Marines counterparts in Iceland
 Pictures by: LPhot Mark Johnson

THAT'S WHY BOOTNECKS GO TO ICELAND ... (not the supermarket)

ROYAL Marines 'fought' over the barren landscape of Iceland as they practised rescuing pilots shot down behind enemy lines.

Fresh from the largest military exercise in Norway in 30 years, commandos remained in the cold north to join their American counterparts and the Icelandic Coast Guard in staging helicopter raids to 'recover' colleagues in the face of both a hostile environment – and 'hostile' forces.

Joint Personnel Recovery – rescuing downed aircrew, their passengers and, if necessary, their equipment from behind enemy lines – is a mission relatively new to the Royal Marines, brought about by the advent of the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers.

A dedicated unit has been formed from 42 Commando based at Bickleigh near Plymouth specifically for the mission, a unit which has trained extensively around the world, frequently making use of the expertise of the US Marine Corps.

They've trained in Virginia, Guam, Belarus and with the first foray by the new carriers into the Arctic Circle – HMS Prince of Wales has been operating both in the Atlantic and northern Norway – the commandos extended their skills and experience by practising similar rescue missions in an unforgiving, frozen landscape.

Iceland sits on the edge of the Arctic Circle with temperatures just below zero by night at this time of year... and barely above it by day.

It also hosts an annual exercise with the US military,

Northern Viking. This year the invitation to participate was extended to the Royal Marines as well as other NATO allies including France, Germany, Norway, and Portugal.

The exercise is aimed at demonstrating the collective ability of allied nations to defend not just the land of fire and ice, but also the sea lanes across the Greenland-Iceland-UK 'gaps' in the North Atlantic, with individual phases focusing on operations as varied as amphibious landings, search and rescue, and delivering humanitarian aid.

Mike Company embarked in assault ship USS Arlington – similar to the Royal Navy's HMS Albion and Bulwark – from where they flew into Iceland in Super Stallion helicopters (double the weight of the commandos' Merlins and capable of carrying more than twice as many troops) to recover stranded personnel, 'fighting' shoulder-to-shoulder with their American counterparts.

"Conducting these exercises in Iceland proves the wider utility of our winter warfare training that we conduct in Norway," said 23-year-old Captain Sam Gorton of Mike Company, 42 Commando. "And Northern Viking has been a great opportunity to deepen our strong relationships with our US Marine Corps cousins."

"We aspire to conduct Joint Personnel Recovery training in every challenging environment, from the jungle to the urban, and after a full winter's training in Norway and now Iceland we can confidently contribute to the Royal Navy's presence in the Arctic."



Royal Marines from Mike Company, 42 Commando, recover a casualty during their deployment in Iceland



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LITHUANIA BOMB AND MINE EXERCISES ENSURE DIVERS ARE...



ROYAL Navy divers have spent two weeks being put through their paces in Lithuania as they practised how to identify and diffuse a range of bombs and mines.

The exercise, known as Open Spirit, comes as the Diving and Threat Exploitation Group have been implementing new ways of carrying out their crucial operations.

Working alongside NATO allies, they carried out training in derelict buildings, forests and ports around Klaipeda.

The unit's commanding officer Commander Sean Heaton highlighted the importance of his team's work.

"The relevance of what the Royal Navy and our NATO partners have been doing here in Lithuania, could not be clearer," he said.

"Putting Royal Navy Bomb and Mine Disposal Divers from the Diving & Threat Exploitation Group, through these challenging scenarios ensures we are operationally prepared, and able to respond with agility to any threat to UK and NATO interests."

See next page for more >>>



...MISSION READY



Pictures: LPhoto Lee Blease



The sky is clear blue and the sun is shining but for the team of three divers scouring the port seabed for historical ordnance, the water is a different picture.

Visibility is low and the murky waters in Klaipeda, Lithuania, average 9C this time of year.

But diving in a range of waters is what the Delta Diving Unit, of the Royal Navy's Diving and Threat Exploitation Group (DXTG), do best.

They are experts in not only searching for ordnance from previous conflicts but also in identifying and dealing with potential live threats which could cause damage to key infrastructure.

In Lithuania, the divers joined NATO allies for a two-week workout dealing with the latest bomb and mine threats. The unit spent time teaching and practising how to identify – and neutralise – a range of explosive devices in the water and ashore.

Alongside their Canadian, Lithuanian, US, Dutch and Estonian counterparts, the divers were put through their paces in a number of real-world scenarios.

Both on land and at sea, they trained in responding to and disarming improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and conducting explosive ordnance disposal safely.

The Lithuanian armed forces set up a series of "incidents", perfect for the diving teams to share their knowledge and expertise.

One morning saw the divers called to search for an underwater mine close to the important Klaipeda Port. The dummy device was earlier planted by the Lithuanians and it was the job of Delta Diving Unit to find it below the surface.

With their equipment ready, a team of three entered the water and began searching the bottom of the port for anything out of the ordinary. Using skills they learnt at their base at Portsmouth's Horsea Island, they quickly found something suspicious to report on.

This sort of work is the 'bread and butter' of the unit's activities but doing it abroad in unknown waters and with devices they might not have seen before was a good learning curve for all involved.

Leading Diver Paul Rimmer and Petty Officer Alex Talbot enjoyed the range of tasking they faced.

"We have had IED tasking every day but the Lithuanians have also asked us to clear jetties and ports of historical ordnance," said PO Talbot.

"There has been a nice variety and it's been good interacting with other nations and seeing how they do things."

Leading Diver Rimmer added: "It's been good for the young lads, some of whom are on their first multi-national deployment. It's really useful for them to see some of the IEDs and mines that have been set up and to get the chance to dive in unfamiliar waters."

Able Seaman (Diver) Alex Bonato worked closely with personnel from Canada and Lithuania during several exercises both in forests and lakes near Klaipeda.

In a wooded area close to the west coast city, roadside IEDs had been planted and camouflaged in the undergrowth. Working alongside the other nations AB Bonato demonstrated how to safely neutralise the bomb after unearthing it and working out which type of IED it was.

He said: "The way we operate is pretty similar to our NATO allies, but working with them has taught me things and I have been able to share our techniques with them too."

"I have worked alongside them and other allies in a number of scenarios from multiple IEDs hidden along a forest path to floating mines located near ports.

"With current threats around the world, this work is really important. It is about getting used to working with our partners and learning from each other.

"Seeing how they set up devices, it being different to how we would, expands our knowledge and ensures we're prepared for anything. It has been really useful."

Delta Diving Unit split their time in Lithuania for Exercise Open Spirit from land-based threats to sub-surface and on the water threats. They used robots and autonomous vessels to aid with their operations including Remus – a torpedo-shaped submersible which can survey and map possible ordnance.

The exercises were conducted as real-to-life as possible with IEDs made using everyday materials – reflecting what the divers could face on operations – then planted at possible places of interest around Klaipeda.

During the course of the two weeks, the unit also cleared public ports and ferry jetties of historic ordnance from previous conflicts. The Baltic coastline was the scene of intense fighting in both World Wars, but especially in 1944-45.

AB (Diver) Ryan Teal said: "It has been interesting doing all the searches and seeing what old war ordnance is knocking about.

"It is something new to me as this is my time being deployed with the team and doing this kind of job but it's been really good. Finding ordnance from the Second World War was exciting.

He added the exercises in Lithuania have helped him understand more about his role and the responsibilities of the Royal Navy's diving units.

"Every time we do something, we learn something new," he said.

"Although historic ordnance searches have been one part of this deployment, we have been searching and preparing for IEDs and doing explosive ordnance disposal too.

"Practising for these sort of operations is important because you want to feel prepared for any threat as best as you can. We know real-life will be different but these sort of exercises make sure we will be ready."



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Deep's shine

A SLICE OF Hollywood glamour descended on the Glasgow Hilton Hotel as the Submarine Oscars returned after a two-year hiatus.

The venue provided all the glitz and glamour you would expect for an event named after the iconic Hollywood showpiece. The red carpet was rolled out, black ties tied, and the stage set for a fantastic evening of celebration and recognition for serving submariners, their families, friends, and affiliates.

Many awards were presented on the night, with Commodore Jim Perks CBE, Head of the Royal Navy Submarine Service, doing the honours.

Speaking of the return of the annual awards he said: "It is fantastic that we are once again able to come together as a cadre and community to recognise the sterling contribution of the Submarine Family."

The annual event, which was established in 2017, had a two-year break during the height of Covid restrictions. During that time the Submarine Service continued to deploy on global missions and maintained the nation's continuous at sea deterrent uninterrupted as it has done every day for over 50 years.

Commodore Perks continued: "This event has not been held since the pandemic, and it is so important to all that we are able to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of those who provide continued support to the Submarine Service."

"From corporate partners, charities, fundraisers, families and those who are committed to improving the lived experience of our submariners and their loved ones, thereby ensuring we continue to deliver on behalf of the nation. I thank you all."

The awards presented at this year's event were:

The Valiant Trophy: Sponsored by Rolls-Royce Submarines in recognition of the submarine crew which excelled under the demands of Operational Sea Training.

This year's Valiant trophy was awarded to the crew of a Fleet Submarine SSN for rising to the task of generating an operational unit from a sea trial and developing a culture of continuous development, which was maintained with gusto throughout shore and sea training. This ultimately delivered them directly onto operational tasking.

The Conqueror Trophy for operational excellence: Sponsored by Thales, along with the trophy comes a contribution to the winning unit's welfare fund.

The crew of a Fleet Submarine SSN picked-up the award this year, in recognition of outstanding efforts made by the crew and how they demonstrated indomitable determination to deliver success on behalf of the nation.

The Submarine Family award: The Submarine family award is presented for outstanding support to the families of deployed submariners.

This year it was awarded to Lt Will Rogers RN and received on his behalf by his Commanding Officer, Commander Steve Brian. As the newly-appointed Families Liaison Officer, Lt Rogers acted as the single point of contact for the 165 families of a Vanguard class SSBN for their recent deployment and made himself available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

His Commanding Officer said: "Lt Rogers borne the entirety of this responsibility exceptionally well and has responded to the compassionate concerns of more families and loved ones than should ever be expected of one individual."

Royal Navy family and people support award: Awarded to the individual who provided the highest level of support to the submarine community.

This year the award was presented to Lt Adrian 'Fez' Parker for his tireless support of families of deployed Submariners.

Lt Parker was always eager and willing to help where possible and worked continuously to help families and deliver the best quality support available. Often working outside of normal hours, he provided help wherever it was needed, striving to seek more effective ways of working and provide constant support to the families of deployed personnel.

The Sovereign Bowl: Initially gifted to HMS Sovereign



from Rolls Royce on the submarine's first commission in 1974, the trophy is now presented annually for superior performance during Manoeuvring Room Training.

This year's award was won by a Fleet Submarine SSN for showing an outstanding receptiveness to training and maintaining a positive attitude throughout all training serials.

Submarine Engineering award: Awarded to the crew which demonstrated engineering excellence in support of operations.

The crew of a Fleet Submarine SSN received this year's Engineering award. The Fleet Submarine crew was awarded this prestigious prize for maintaining the Submarines mechanical and electrical systems for long periods of time at sea, ensuring the Fleet Submarine achieved unparalleled success whilst deployed on operations.

The Thomas Tunnock award: Sponsored by Sir Boyd Tunnock CBE, grandson of Thomas Tunnock and owner of Tunnock's confectionery. Awarded to those identified as providing the greatest influence of morale on board thereby generating the required component of Operational Capability.

Coxswain Kev Longhurst was this year's recipient. Longhurst joined a Vanguard-class SSBN at the outset of an unprecedented period. Isolation rules had required the boat's crew to spend extended periods of time away from their families to maintain operations effectively.

Coxswain Longhurst worked tirelessly to lift the spirits of the boats crew and their families in the face of an unprecedented global pandemic.

Part of Coxswain Kev Longhurst's citation read: "Longhurst is a genuine force for good and demonstrates all that is great about the Submarine Service."

The Naval Families Federation Award: Awarded to Naval Families Federation (NFF) advocates who enable Naval Families to thrive in the local community.

Jenny Rowe and Samantha Davies, two Aggies Pastoral workers for the Clyde area, received this year's award. Throughout the lockdown period the two of them went above and beyond in supporting families, checking in on families and delivering supplies were needed throughout the whole of the national lockdown.

The Orpheus Award: Sponsored by RB Safety Consultants and awarded to the individual or group who have made a significant contribution to submarine safety during the year, either at sea or in the support arena.

This year's recipient was the Medical Assistant Submarine branch (MASM). Under the unique challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic a combined effort was required from the MASM Branch to bring about the correct practices to ensure outbreak management of COVID-19 minimised the disruption to Submarine Operational Capability.

Report: LPhoto Stevie Burke
Pictures: LPhoto Bill Spurr



Parents present sons with Green Berets

PROUD parents of two recruits from Commando Training Centre Royal Marines, not only witnessed their sons complete their final Commando test, but they also got to present them with their well-earned Green Berets.

Recruits Daniel Tait and Brodie Paterson, along with squad mates from 137 Troop, completed the gruelling 30 mile yomp across Dartmoor and were pleased to see the familiar faces of their beaming parents.

"It's emotional, yes very emotional and a very proud moment," said Dan's mum Michelle Tait, who with her husband Lee and fellow father Des Paterson, could not stop showing their delight.

Both dads wore their own hard-earned coveted Green Berets in honour of the new members to the Commando family.

"I served in the Corps for eight years, as a general duties Marines and on Landing Craft," said Lee.

"I didn't think he was interested in the Royal Marines as a kid, but once he joined the cadets, he became more focused."

"This is the start of his career and stuff he will do in the Corps, will set him up for the rest of his life. We are very proud of him."

Commandant of CTCRM Lympstone, Royal Marines Colonel Simon Chapman reminded the new Commandos in his address: "Forty years ago today Royal Marines were fighting in the Falklands, many had yomped across open country, similar to what you have covered today on Dartmoor, and then fought in the final battles of the conflict."

Des Paterson, a Commando trained Naval Medic, who followed his son's progress through recruit training with contacts he knew at the Commando Training Centre, said: "It's a very proud moment for me and I am so delighted."

Taste of air life

STUDENTS from Bucklers Mead Academy in Yeovil took part in a week of work experience at Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton.

The school gave students a rare opportunity to see military personnel at work and give them a rare insight into how the base operates.

Arriving early, they saw and experienced first-hand the type of careers available to them, including roles in Aviation, Air Engineering, Logistics, Aircraft Handling, Air Traffic Control and Fire Fighting.

Some of the highlights the students particularly enjoyed was working with the Yeovilton-based helicopter squadrons, both the Army and Naval Air Squadrons operate from the base with Wildcat and Merlin helicopters.

The week ended with a special question-and-answer session hosted by RNAS Yeovilton's most senior officer Commodore Niall Griffin, the Commanding Officer of RNAS Yeovilton and his Executive Officer, Commander Jamie Dible along with head of the Air Department, Commander Mark Scott.

Sub Lieutenant Harry Darker, who hosted the students throughout the week, said: "This week has been a fantastic opportunity for the students to be able to engage first-hand with military personnel, and see what life is really like on a busy Naval Air Station."



Makeshift midwife is thanked

PETTY Officer Martin Harvey found himself acting as a makeshift midwife when he helped a woman who had unexpectedly given birth.

It's among the more remarkable stories of experience on the front line with ambulance staff in Wales – work recognised this week by senior figures at RNAS Culdrose.

The senior rating, pictured right, – an experienced aircraft handler from 1700 Naval Air Squadron – was one of 19 sailors from the Cornish air station mobilised to assist the civilian authorities when the pandemic put unprecedented pressures on staff.

For three months earlier this year, the 35-year-old from Glasgow was paired with a paramedic as a volunteer ambulance crewmember in Rhyl, covering emergency calls across north Wales.

"We were in the ambulance when we got a red (high priority) call of a woman complaining of stomach pains," recalled Martin, who's part of a team supporting flying operations on the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship RFA Argus.

"We were on our way to the house when we got stood down from it. We were blue-lighting to another call but then got sent back again. We were the second crew to arrive."



"I walked inside, and this woman was sitting there, holding a baby – with the umbilical cord still attached. It was totally unexpected apparently. I talked to her and made sure she was ok. I took her blood pressure and did all the checks. She and the baby were fine."

He and his 18 shipmates, who all worked as ambulance drivers in Wales over the past 12 months, were invited to join Culdrose's Commanding Officer Captain Stuart Finn for a 'thank you' for their efforts helping NHS colleagues.

Lieutenant Commander Graeme 'Geordie' McCutcheon, from Jarrow, is a helicopter pilot and instructor with 750 Naval Air Squadron. He worked out of Carmarthen and Aberystwyth covering the south of the country and praised the paramedics who they worked alongside every day.

"We were doing 12-hour shifts which are brutal - and we always ran over time," he said. "I'd often overrun by three hours."

"The jobs just didn't stop coming. Even when you want to go off shift, they just keep coming in."

Registered charity number: Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund 180182

Naval Children's Charity

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

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

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



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Fun way to say thank you

The gates of Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose at Helston in Cornwall were opened to families for a day of fun and games to say thank you for the support, effort and dedication they give to the personnel who work at the air station.

The Families' Fete Day was only made possible by the financial generosity of the station's industry partners, Leonardo and Serco, and the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

A spokesman for RNAS Culdrose said: "With more than 1,000 people in attendance on a sunny mid-May afternoon, everyone was able to enjoy the entertainment and activities provided by the departments at the air station as well as the kindness of the local business and companies across the south west."

"This inaugural event provided opportunities for naval charities to build their relationships with the families of RNAS Culdrose to be able to provide great support in the future when personnel require it."

"A great thanks to Lieutenant Commander Keith 'Daisy' Adams and Warrant Officer Bryn Martin for organising this event. It had been postponed three times over the last two years. We hope to do this all again next year."



Pictures: PO Phot Paul A'Barrow



This course has changed my life

SUPPORTING the health and wellbeing of the Royal Navy community is central to the aims of the RNRMC and for serving personnel, being removed from active service due to injury or illness can be an incredibly challenging period.

With a wide range of cases to deal with, from life-changing physical injuries to complex mental health struggles, the Royal Navy's recovery programme for wounded, injured and sick (WIS) personnel requires a sophisticated support approach.

Thanks to RNRMC grant funding, a wide variety of therapies, activities and retreats can be offered to aid the rehabilitation of WIS sailors and marines.

In spring 2022, the RNRMC funded a health and wellbeing retreat for a group of WIS personnel. Attendees spent two days in a peaceful corner of Cornwall and took part in yoga, meditation and cold water training.

The group also had the opportunity to engage in social activities and discussion about their recovery experiences and learn about breath and posture management.

Participants found the retreat to be useful in their recovery and for some members of the group the course had a significant effect on them.

One participant, Sam, describes their experience: "I can honestly say that this course has not only changed my outlook, but

my life too. Prior to going on this retreat I was dealing with a lot of stress from being medically discharged from the Navy and trying to decide what my next steps would be.

"Since I am under therapy for an existing mental health condition, this added stress was not helping me get the best results. It turns out that the Thrival Instinct Living Yoga Method Retreat was what was missing! This weekend provided the best form of isolation and escapism from life to really take time to focus on my mental and physical health.

"Firstly, the location truly could not get better, St Nectan's Glen is a magical place full of wonder and mystery with various meditation rooms, gardens and seating areas which all provided a great place to relax during the free time.

"Due to its remote location, the only sounds that can be heard are from the wind, birds and the waterfall.

"The food provided was fresh and you could tell a lot of care was taken to create healthy and filling meals.

"I would say the best thing about the accommodation was the fact that after the site was closed to the general public, we had the area to ourselves which meant that you could take a peaceful wander and really let your mind go.

"Prior to attending this course I did not know much about the holistic world and was

not sure what to expect. In the past, I have been very guilty of not letting my mind fully open to new experiences.

"Rob's energy was fantastic and truly motivational and his passion for what he teaches really helps you open your mind, drop your ego and focus on yourself.

"The classes were well structured and taught at an easy pace. Rob explained everything thoroughly and helped to explain why we were doing every movement and how it was helping us.

"We were not forced to get involved in any of the activities and Rob really emphasised how the weekend was about us and we should do whatever we found relaxing.

"Everything Rob taught is something that I will take away and use in my day-to-day life, including the breathing exercises, the sun salutation and, somewhat reluctantly (in a good way), the cold water plunges.

"I have always believed that there are a few people that you meet throughout your life that will make a substantial impact on you.

"The skills and passion that Rob provided makes me believe that he is one of those individuals.

"He has set me up with the right tools to live a more relaxed life and full-filling life. I honestly can say that

"I have never felt this relaxed, calm and focused."

RNRMC grants for Falkland events

THIS year saw the Falklands Conflict reach its 40th anniversary and to mark this milestone, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) established a new fund to support the participation of veterans and their families in commemorative activities and events.

Over £100,000 has been distributed by the RNRMC to more than 30 organisations and associations, reuniting Royal Navy and Royal Marines veterans, many of whom having not seen each other since the Falklands Conflict 40 years ago.

Thanks to the RNRMC's Falklands 40 fund, commemorative events have taken place across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as several overseas.

Among these was a particularly poignant event in the Falkland Islands; a commemorative Officers' Mess Dinner to mark the 1982 Falklands 'Landing Day' with invited veterans from the 1982 conflict.

Cdr John Childs RN from the British Forces South Atlantic Islands said: "Veterans were visibly moved by the positive reception they received and very much humbled by the occasion."

"They were also very willing to engage in conversation and share their experiences, which is always a therapeutic experience even if it is occasionally uncomfortable."

"The veterans alluded that most of the time they feel comfortable talking about 1982, but that periodically one particular event or conversation might trigger an upsetting episode."

"One former RFA officer said that he had been in two minds about turning up but was so glad that he did and that the occasion had surpassed all his expectations using the phrase 'spectacular'."

"The RNRMC grant made a prestigious event come together. It took any worry or embarrassment away with regards financial arrangements for the veterans including the logistic arrangements for their arrival and departure for the evening."

Support for deeps

A NEW organisation for serving and veteran submariners has been established following co-operation by three affiliate associations.

The Submarine Family, supported and overseen by the RNRMC, brings together the Submariners Association, We Remember Submariners and the Friends of the Royal Navy Submarine Museum.

Membership fees have been waived and the new fund remains linked to the three affiliates through www.submarinefamily.uk

The website serves as a one-stop shop where users can join for free, access a special members area, sign up for a newsletter and find details of how to apply for funding. It also includes a permanent virtual book of remembrance.

"We need to build a network of support for our own family, members of which are our greatest asset," said TSF Operations Manager John Lewis.

"Uniting everyone in the family together to deliver the best support for one another is far and away the best way to do this."

"It doesn't matter if it is families supporting each other when their loved ones are deployed, on operations on an SSN or SSBN, or providing an outstretched hand to support our retired submariners and their dependants in a time of need."

"We have always done this, and done it well, but now we will have a single place which we can call home and be to either offer support ourselves, or find out what other support is available."

The broad range of issues that the TSF will support members with is likely to include health and wellbeing, housing support, family support, getting visitors access to HMNB Clyde, advising new submariners should pack on their first deployment, accounts of what the submariners of today get up to and lots more besides.

Charities hub a success

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) opened the doors to their very own 'Charities Hub' in Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard.

Located in Boathouse 5, the space was transformed into an interactive area where visitors could learn more about the RNRMC's work supporting the Royal Navy community.

The event followed on from the opening of an RNRMC Charities Hub in Plymouth.

The hub comprised of numerous family activities, such as the opportunity to explore a real Royal Navy Life Raft and learn more about how they are

used at sea from serving Naval personnel.

Many visitors also contributed to a 'Message in a Bottle' activity, writing a heartfelt message to Falklands Veterans. These messages were made into decorative bunting, which was then displayed at the Royal Naval Association's (RNA) Falklands 40 Commemorative Dinner.

The RNRMC Mascots, Toots, Boots and Nelson, were seen greeting and taking photos with guests, whilst there were prizes to be won at the 'Spin the Wheel' activity.

Overall, the event saw nearly 4,500 visitors through its doors.

Team-building day in Gib

THE Royal Navy in British Forces Gibraltar participated in a Navy Command Leadership and Management Team Building Day.

Over 75 RN personnel took part throughout the day with most of them gathering at The Tower at 7am to start the walk up to the Top of the Rock.

Commander British Forces Gibraltar, Commodore Steve Dainton, gave a speech and set the Navy personnel off.

The event was funded by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity to support all RN personnel in BF Gibraltar. It provided the RN with an

opportunity to bring all personnel together post the COVID 19 pandemic, boost morale, deliver some mandated training in mental wellbeing and diversity & inclusion, coupled with an afternoon of teambuilding and fun on the water with boat rides and paddle boarding.

Later there was a presentation of prizes to RN personnel who took part in the RN paddle boarding races.

First prize was awarded to Leading Seaman Lord Brown, 2nd prize to AB Megan Yarrington and the 3rd prize to Leading Seaman Emily Grindrod.



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Navy mark Platinum Jubilee at home and abroad



ROYAL Navy personnel took part in a number of events to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

On deployment in the Gulf, on patrol in the Atlantic, safeguarding home waters or undergoing training at bases in the UK, sailors lined up on parade grounds and flight decks to celebrate Her Majesty's 70-year reign.

Few places in the entire Armed Forces have closer personal and emotional ties with Her Majesty than Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth, spiritual home of the Royal Navy's officer cadre:

Her great grandfather Edward VII laid the foundation stone of the imposing red-brick college on the hillside above the town and River Dart in 1902:

Her father, the future George VI, passed out of Dartmouth having completed his training as a junior officer a decade later;

As did her cousin, the future Lord Mountbatten, who was also the uncle of Prince Philip of Greece, whom the Queen famously met at Dartmouth on the eve of WW2 and who was her husband for more than 70 years;

She visited on numerous occasions between 1964 and 2011 in her role as Lord High Admiral of the United Kingdom;

Her two eldest sons passed out of the College in 1970s;

And most recently her grandson, the Duke of Cambridge, went through accelerated officer training at Dartmouth as he learned about the roles of all three Armed Forces.

So a tribute on the parade ground, pictured top left, in front of the College by Officer Cadets and the establishment's full-time personnel seemed more than fitting.

"Throughout the long life of Her Majesty, the story of Britannia Royal Naval College has been intertwined with her own – from generations of her family passing out to her many inspirational visits, which have been so warmly appreciated by all who live and work at the College," said Captain Sarah Oakley, Captain Britannia Royal Naval College.



The frigate, pictured above, is named after The Queen in her capacity as Duke of Lancaster.

She launched the Portsmouth-based warship in 1990 and has visited on several occasions since, as well as being kept regularly informed of HMS Lancaster's progress.

Her sister ship HMS Montrose, pictured left, joined in the celebrations whilst returning from a successful counter-drugs patrol in the Gulf of Oman.

The parade grounds at HMS Sultan and Commando Training Centre Royal Marines provided ample space respectively for trainee engineers at the Navy's School of Engineering in Gosport to take a break from lessons to spell out 70 and form two large propellers, and 105 trainee Royal Marines determined to earn the coveted green beret to create a large 70.

More than 200 personnel, of which 50 percent were Royal Navy Reserves, supported by the Royal Marines Corps of Drums, marched in London at the Platinum Jubilee Pageant alongside members of the Royal Air Force, British Army and military personnel from across the Commonwealth.

Marines Edward Briggs and John Mansfield have just earned their coveted green beret after completing 32 weeks of Royal Marines recruit training on Friday and found themselves in the guard for the pageant.

John said: "It's not the normal first day for a marine on the job, so it's quite a proud moment."

Edward added: "I don't think many marines would get a chance to do a parade like this, so it's quite a privilege to do something like this on my first week as a fully-fledged marine."

The Royal Navy was involved in events all around the UK. Royal Fleet Auxiliary support ship RFA Mounts Bay was part of London events, too, berthing on the Thames and welcoming on board school children for The Big Jubilee Lunch and hosting tours.

Royal Navy's amphibious flagship, HMS Albion, berthed in Edinburgh and attended ceremonies at Edinburgh Castle, celebrations in Princes Street Gardens, hosted the Princess Royal, and was open to visitors.

Patrol ship HMS Tyne – after sailing her namesake River Tyne for the first time in ten years – was in the heart of Newcastle at Spiller Wharf, while sister ship HMS Severn was in Cardiff and HMS Pembroke was in Belfast.



Pictured from top left, HMS Albion in Leith, where she welcomed the Princess Royal; Sailors took part in the Platinum Jubilee Pageant; RFA Mounts Bay berthed in London; HMS Severn visited Cardiff; Views of Buckingham Palace and the Mall during the flypast, taken by Lt Andy Duffield, of 845 NAS; Royal Marines Bandmen and women who took part in the celebrations in London.



On HMS Queen Elizabeth – formally named by The Queen in 2014 and commissioned in her presence three years later – 308 sailors, nearly half the ship's company, were marshalled on the flight deck.

As with the rest of the Royal Navy, 250 sailors on the flagship were presented with Platinum Jubilee medals – awarded to personnel with more than five years' service – in the carrier's cavernous hangar.

And all members of the ship's company aged over 18 also celebrated 'Splice the Mainbrace' – a tot of rum – awarded by Prince Charles in recognition of their achievements last year on the carrier's successful maiden deployment.

More than half the crew of HMS Lancaster – on patrol in the Atlantic – formed up on their much smaller flight deck for their tribute.



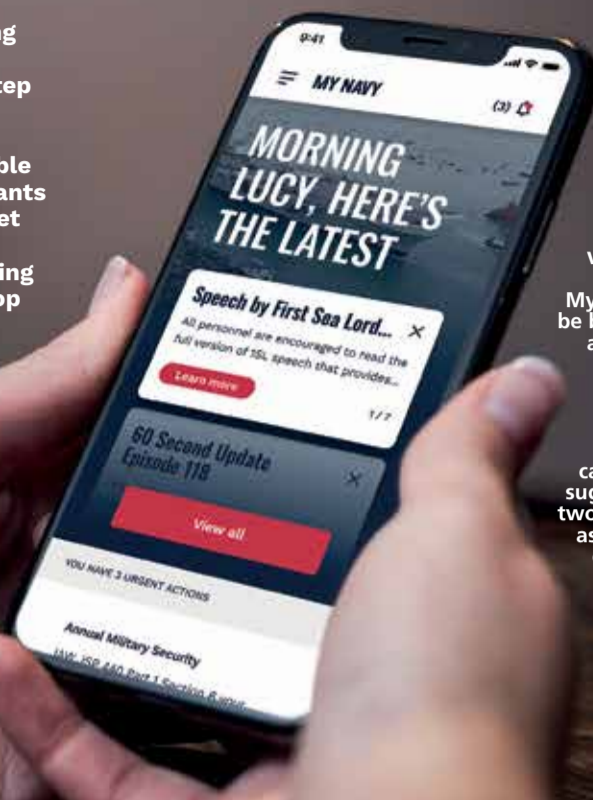
The Navy's personnel empow



The MyNavy app launched with the aim of bringing the experience of Navy life into the 21st century. The last few months have seen it take the next step forward.

Since last autumn, the app has been made available to the whole force, including Reserves, Civil Servants working under Navy Command, and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. It's added a click-and-collect uniform service, a healthcare feature, and a way of reporting your Covid vaccination status. And all this is on top of the pay, promotions and career management services that it launched with.

Now the team, led by Lieutenant Commander Morgan Long, wants to know what else would make users' lives easier.



"In January, we launched Have Your Say, which is a free, open-access way for MyNavy users to make suggestions and offer feedback, which they can do anonymously if they want.

"The way we evolve MyNavy in the future will be based on the insights and feedback we get from users," Lt Cdr Long explains.

A great example of how fast the team can respond to user suggestions came within two weeks: a lot of users asked whether MyNavy could show they were in-date for specific competencies – and if they could print information out? The team created a feature which downloads your competency list to your phone with two clicks; you can print out a hard copy, or use the download as proof.

The team has now launched the Leadership Centre of Excellence, which allows people to take ownership of their

leadership development. The first phase is a searchable repository of over 400 relevant resources: podcasts, videos, books and articles. These can be 'favourited', creating a personal learning library which can be accessed at your leisure, any time, anywhere.

Helen Evans, lead strategist at MyNavy's digital programme partner Great State, says at least six new areas are under development or discussion for this year.

"We're working on support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, talking to experts about what the process should be, and listening to the experiences of survivors," she says.

"We also want to encourage the take-up of Standard Learning Credits, which are often under-utilised because people don't know how to apply for them.

"Then we're going to make it possible for people to book duty travel from their phone – replacing the complex existing process and the physical form would be a big win.

"Moving between assignments is another very



Excellence in engineering

FIVE individuals and teams have received commendations from the Navy's senior engineer for their outstanding achievements in 2021.

Rear Admiral Jim Higham has issued Chief Naval Engineering Officer commendations to those who efforts he believes deserve public recognition and acknowledgment on or in support of the front line.

Aboard HMS Medway in the Gulf of Mexico, **Marine Engineering Technician Jack Sheppard** prevented a fuel leak from becoming far worse – at great personal risk. He was drenched in fuel as he tried to stop the leak, buying time for shipmates to switch to generators and stop the patrol ship suffering a total electrical failure and preventing the risk of a serious fire.

Already known aboard Medway for his hard work, diligence and willingness to learn, his actions following discovery of the leak, says his commendation, "took great courage; without a moment's thought, Sheppard twice put himself in danger to save his ship and shipmates.

"His meticulous attention to detail in discovery of the incidents and tenacity and selflessness in dealing with these potentially-dangerous situations are in the finest traditions of the Marine Engineering branch and Royal Navy; Sheppard is a credit to both."

Efforts delivering "remarkable levels of engineering support" to Royal Navy ships based out of Bahrain earn **Chief Petty Officer (ET(ME)) Robin Cairns** of Forward Support Unit 02 his commendation.

As the engineer responsible for air conditioning plants/refrigerators in minehunters in the Gulf, he expected to be in high demand during the Middle East summer when soaring temperatures put those systems under extreme stress.

Last summer in the Gulf saw record temperatures and, with a changeover of minehunters, he was called upon to support not four but six ships for a period.

It led to a demand for his time and experience far greater than ever before – in harsh working conditions for hours

on end.

Acting Chief Petty Officer (ET(WE)) Craig Beadnall is commended for stepping up to the plate on HMS Montrose, impressing FOST staff with his knowledge and impressing the frigate's command team with his drive, knowledge, work ethic, technical ability and leadership. As a direct result of his outstanding efforts, HMS Montrose was never 'off task'.

And despite his heavy workload and challenging deadlines, the senior rating always found time to talk through matters with the men and women under him – professional and personal matters.

HMS Victorious' Tactical Weapons System Ordnance Section are collectively recognised for preparing the boat for a maintenance period, then guide Victorious through that work – always "with teamwork and a positive attitude, disregarding hardships".

And the engineers and technicians of **845 Naval Air Squadron's B Flight** are singled out for their work to prepare their Merlins for last year's Carrier Strike Group deployment to the Indo-Pacific, then maintain the helicopters to the highest standard throughout the seven-month mission.

In particular, the engineers had to replace a main rotor gearbox on one Merlin Mk4 – a challenging job back at base in Yeovilton, and something never performed at sea before.

The work was completed in HMS Queen Elizabeth's hangar in temperatures of 37°C and 85 per cent humidity... while contending with Covid restrictions without most of the tools and support equipment, held aboard RFA Fort Victoria.

Having completed the task, the team logged the critical engineering lessons which will serve future generations faced with the same challenge whenever the two carriers deploy.

A revised and updated RNTM on reward and recognition for engineers – RNTM 09-009/21 Reward and Recognition within the Royal Navy Engineering Branch – offers for information and guidance on awards and will be revised annually.

Westminster visits Bahrain

MPs and Lords from across the political spectrum joined sailors, soldiers and airmen to understand life and front-line operations in the Gulf.

Thirteen members of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme spent a weekend at the UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain – hub of RN operations east of Suez – to meet personnel of all ranks and experience who deliver Operation Kipion daily.

Although Bahrain is primarily a Royal Navy base, the Army provides security for the facility and the RAF runs a small but crucial air hub to support naval operations as part of the wider UK security mission across the Middle East.

Visitors were briefed by the Royal Navy's commander on the region, Commodore Adrian Fryer, UK Maritime Component Commander, who gave the 'big picture' overview of the operation and the challenges facing personnel, before moving on to visit two ships alongside: minehunter HMS Bangor and frigate HMS Montrose.

Both crews provided capability demonstrations to show the operational role of the vessels as well as tours to give a sense of life aboard.

"When we were onboard HMS Montrose speaking to the young men and women, it was a really impressive demonstration of what excellent training can do and what instilling confidence in young professional people does," said Dave Doogan, SNP MP for Angus.

Throughout, the visitors had the opportunity to sit down informally with a full spectrum of RN, RAF and Army personnel and get a sense of their lives (pictured on Montrose).

"A lot of people feel very distant from Westminster. One of the things



we are trying to do here is come and connect directly with people who are serving in Bahrain," said Peter Kyle, Labour MP for Hove and Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The politicians also chatted with RN engineers of the Forward Support Unit to get a sense of the logistical and engineering support required to sustain the five UK ships deployed in Bahrain.

"It really is about getting in amongst what is going on, understanding the challenges that people on the ground face and trying to make sure we can connect that back to Westminster," said Ben Everitt, Conservative MP for Milton Keynes North.

The parliamentarians also met military personnel serving at the British Embassy in Bahrain and, for an international view of operations, the Combined Maritime Forces and the International Maritime Security Construct which run key multi-national naval operations.

"This was an invaluable opportunity to brief members of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme on the Royal Navy's important contribution to – and leadership of – the International Maritime Security Construct and its associated Task Force Sentinel," said Commodore Don MacKinnon, commander of IMSC.

"At the same time the visit also demonstrated to our naval personnel the genuine interest and engagement our elected representatives from Parliament have in the UK Armed Forces and our military operations overseas."

For Commodore Fryer, the weekend gave the politicians "a unique opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the complex maritime picture in the Middle East and just how valuable our presence here is in promoting regional stability and maintaining the security of the global commons and upholding international rules-based order."

Powerment tool

manual process, and can be really difficult, so we're talking to people across the Navy to find out what the process should be.

"And we're starting to look at the problem of access to WiFi on ships. We want to make it easier for people to use MyNavy when they're at sea but as you can imagine, this comes with many constraints."

On top of all this, there will be greater emphasis on making communications through the app – such as Daily Orders – more targeted and personalised to the individual user. And in case all this seems like a lot to find your way through, the team is testing a feature which will introduce new users to MyNavy and help them get the most out of it.

Covid 19 and Lockdown proved to be the moment when the app came into its own.

"As we went into the first lockdown, the Navy found itself in a very difficult position. It has a very diverse workforce spread out across multiple countries and locations, on platforms at sea and under the sea, and it needed to find a way to

account for its workforce's Covid status," explains Lt Cdr Richard Burns who headed the MyNavy app programme before Lt Cdr Long.

Having been adapted to act as a Covid reporting tool – allowing everyone in the Service to log in daily to update their virus status – MyNavy was subsequently enhanced to allow personnel to view their NHS number and record vaccination details.

That data flowed through into the defence medical system, and once again command across the Navy had a really clear picture of the overall health and readiness of its people. All this demonstrated the power and flexibility of the app... and prompted the Second Sea Lord to demand more from MyNavy:

- it had to be available to the Whole Force;
- it had to become the internal communications tool;
- it had to offer uniform ordering.

All of these have been delivered.

Covid also revealed another role for MyNavy: the pandemic dramatically increased the pressures on the mental health and

wellbeing of Navy staff and their families.

MyNavy provides regularly updated content and links to services which can help – inside and outside the RN.

One message the MyNavy team received showed just how important this can be.

"I had been struggling personally with a lot of stuff and needed help but didn't know where to turn. Having access to the right information and advice through MyNavy on my phone really helped me get the support I needed when I needed it."

Lt Cdr Long sees this as the heart of MyNavy's future; a single seamless access point to find what you need for your Service life, whenever you want or need it.

"MyNavy is about providing a platform and a voice for the Whole Force to be able to identify problems, to ask for enhancements or improvements based on their experiences, and to make this a better organisation to work in," he says.

"We believe that MyNavy should be so useful it saves you time every day; so empowering you can control your Naval experience; and so personalised you always feel valued."

"Great to see a service responding to feedback and actually making it better.

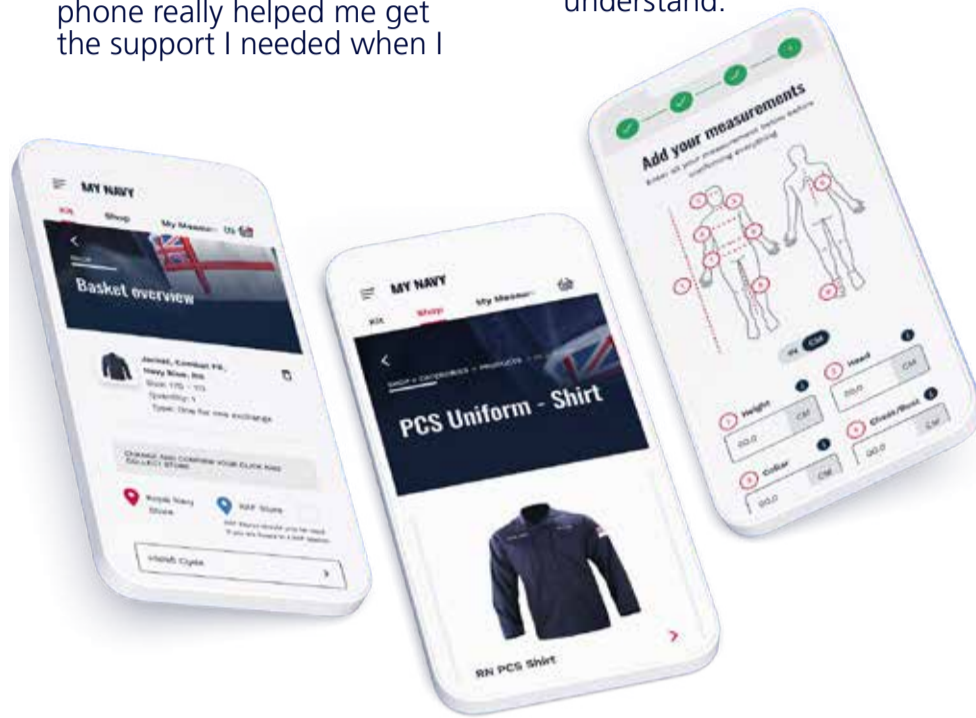
"I think it's excellent – strong example of the Service moving into the current century and something we clearly need

"Thank you for making MyNavy the place to go. Having access to the right information and advice through MyNavy on my phone really helped me get the support I needed when I

"Impressed the Royal Navy is embracing tech like this.

"Removing the need to submit expenses claims, PCPs (career plans), using long-winded spreadsheets and email-chains is a massive boost to efficiency and removes one of the biggest blockers for reservists: paperwork.

"Intuitive information, easy to understand.



Jubilee honours for 23 personnel

THE very public Platinum Jubilee celebrations (page 27) were accompanied by private moments of joy for a select group of 23 naval personnel, recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Lieutenant Commander Nathan Geddes is made an MBE for his time in HMS Defender, including last year's the Carrier Strike Group deployment.

The citation highlighted Lt Cdr Geddes' efforts as Marine Engineer Officer while Defender was in the Black Sea and had to outmanoeuvre hostile forces. The "positive impact of his professionalism, dynamic and inspiring leadership has been felt across UK Defence," it added.

Commander Simon Cox is "knocked for six" by the award of the OBE for his efforts leading UK and US mine warfare forces on challenging operations keeping some of world's key shipping routes open and free of mines in the searing temperatures of the Middle East.

And when back in the UK he has helped completely overhaul how the Royal Navy trains and deploys its mine warfare specialists to the Middle East, which has helped to maintain round-the-clock operations in the Gulf.

"I was hugely fortunate to be surrounded by brilliant people who delivered outstanding results both on operations against the most serious of threats, and back in the UK to transform the entire force during the pandemic – they were simply magnificent," he said.

Commander Maritime Reserves, **Commodore Mel Robinson**, who has been



Lt Cdr Nathan Geddes MBE, pictured with his wife Nicola and (right) an OBE for Cdr Simon Cox



made a CBE as architect of the transformation of the Maritime Reserves at every level.

Rear Admiral Simon Asquith, now Director Submarines, is made a Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath for his contribution to Joint and Navy operations over three decades.

Director Strategy and Policy, **Rear Admiral Iain Lower** is also made a CB for his leadership during his 30-year career in the Royal Navy. He has strengthened key relationships nationally and internationally, and set the conditions for Royal Navy transformation and the future strategic agenda.

OBEs have been awarded to:

Colonel Alistair Carns RM for his vital contribution to the understanding of hostile state actors' activity against the UK's maritime capability.

Commander Paul Jamieson, commanding officer HMSTalent. **Captain Graham Lovatt**, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff

Operations, Permanent Joint Headquarters, for the roles he played in events including Lebanon, Iraq and Ukraine.

Commodore Andrew Rose, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff for Joint Plans, Permanent Joint Headquarters, for his work including the Carrier Strike Group deployment.

The following are made MBEs:

Warrant Officer 1 Logistician (Catering Services) Jason Bignell, for his work in limiting the spread of Covid19 at HMS Drake in Devon.

Lieutenant Commander Richard Burns, for his work in developing and delivering the MyNavy mobile application for Royal Navy personnel.

Lieutenant Commander Jonathan Fletcher, for his leadership as Commanding Officer 2nd Mine Countermeasures Squadron, Crew 8.

Commander Michael Forrester, for overseeing the maintenance period of an Astute-

class submarine at HMNB Clyde.

Lieutenant Commander Amy Gilmore, now Operations Officer aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth, for her work in helping deliver the return of the UK's global carrier strike operations, and to the future of the Wildcat Force.

Warrant Officer 1 Amanda Knight, for her work as military liaison officer at Staffordshire County Council during the Covid19 pandemic.

Lieutenant Commander Steven Lovatt, for overseeing HMS Dauntless's Power Improvement Project.

Lieutenant Colonel Jon Ridley for his contribution to the Royal Marines Band Service.

Commander Nicola Wallace, senior aircraft engineer and deputy continuing airworthiness manager, Commando Helicopter Force.

Lieutenant Commander Simon Henderson, **Lieutenant Thomas Horton**, and **Lieutenant Commander Nicholas Stratton**

A Royal Red Cross award is bestowed on **Lieutenant Frederick Miller** of Queen Alexandra's Royal Navy Nursing Service. He is made an Ordinary Association of The Royal Red Cross, Second Class, for his work as nursing leader and advisor to Command Logistics Regiment. He made telling contributions during four consecutive winter deployments in the High North.

Warrant Officer 1 Andrew Walker, of the Royal Naval Reserve, receives the Queen's Voluntary Reserve Medal for contributing to the success of the Royal Naval Reserve Command Leadership and Management Team.

1SL presents first commendations since pandemic

THE First Sea Lord personally commended three dozen sailors, commandos and civilians for their exemplary service.

Admiral Sir Ben Key invited the stand-out personnel and their families to a special event at Admiralty House in Portsmouth Naval Base to celebrate their achievements.

A ceremony was held at nearby Victory Building, with 36 personnel – 31 sailors, one civilian, two commandos, one naval reservist and a US Marine – picked out by the head of the navy.

In the first commendations in two years – due to the pandemic – personnel involved in making HMS Queen Elizabeth's maiden operation deployment a reality, battling the global health crisis, disaster relief operations around the globe and individual acts of bravery or ingenuity were selected for awards.

Among those awarded was **Lieutenant James Carver**, a Wildcat Flight Commander from 815 Naval Air Squadron, who showed impeccable leadership in disaster relief and counter-drug-trafficking operations.

Lt Carver led 203 Flight on missions across the Caribbean while deployed during hurricane season with RFA Argus in 2020.

203 Flight helped seize more than 5,373kg of cocaine and 28kg of amphetamines worth more than £400m in eight separate drugs bust operations.

The navy fliers also flew intelligence gathering sorties over ravaged areas of Honduras in the wake of hurricanes Eta and Iota.

Lt Carver showed an ability to deliver results in an incredibly demanding operational environment.

"We deployed for eight and a half months at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, which proved very challenging for the personnel and families," he said.

"We enjoyed significant success during counter-illicit-trafficking operations with the US Coast Guard, provided support to Honduras in the wake of two major hurricanes, and worked with the British Overseas Territories.

"The flight delivered when it mattered in very exceptional circumstances, and I was fortunate enough to lead a team of highly motivated and professional personnel."

■ A raft of warrant officers have also been decorated, presented with the Meritorious Service Medal in recognition of their commitment:

WO1AET SKC Barnett; WO2 S Barrett; CPOET(WESM) MJ Bayliss; WO1 DR Buckley; WO2 M Cunningham; WO1WS(AWT) SJM Dalton; WO1AET M Dickinson; WO1(MA) K Donnelly; WO2 CM Goodridge; WO1 CS Gratton; WO1ET(WE) DA Horler; WO1ET(WE) S Howlett; WO2ET(WESM) JD Kilbey; CPO(MW) J Morton; WO1 MJ O'Sullivan; CPO(AET)(M) T Othen; WO1ET(MESM) SL Shorthouse; WO2(D) GW Spence; WO1AET AJ Swash; CPOLOG(SC) A Thompson; WO2 C Waite; WO2 JL Walker; WO1ET(WE) SJ Webster; WO2 JL Wilson; WO1ET(WE) D Wollington; WO1 JJ L Wright.

'You will always find a

Picture: Cpl Ash Reynolds RAAF

WAS it really 40 years ago?

We can still remember searching the atlas. *Not in Scotland, then...*

We can still remember the crowds on the Hot Walls or Devil's Point.

That endless journey south. Snippets of news on the World Service.

Surely they'll sort it all out. But then we counted them all out – and back again.

The Belgrano was torpedoed. And then, no, not the Sheffield.

We remember the near misses, Glasgow's lucky escape, the growing tension.

We still shudder at the

thought of 'Bomb Alley'.

The roar of jets passing our ships at treetop height, the chatter of small arms fire, the whistle of the bombs as they somersaulted through the air before ripping through our steel hulls as if they were tin cans.

If we were lucky, they failed to explode. If not...

We can still see the flames, hear the cries of shipmates, taste the acrid smoke, smell the burning rubber, plastic, flesh.

We can still taste the fresh air when we escaped the inferno, the elation – or relief – at the sight of the helicopter

or the life raft, remember the words of the nurse or doctor.

We still remember the bleak beauty of San Carlos.

The wind. The rain. The sleet.

We still remember that hideous sight of HMS Antelope exploding, still smoking the next morning, her back broken yet defiantly refusing to sink.

We still remember the awful twenty-fifth of May.

The lugubrious voice of the MOD spokesman on the World Service announcing the loss of HMS Coventry.

And then the Atlantic Conveyor, her vital cargo of

Chinooks to ferry troops over the wilds of East Falkland now mostly on the seabed.

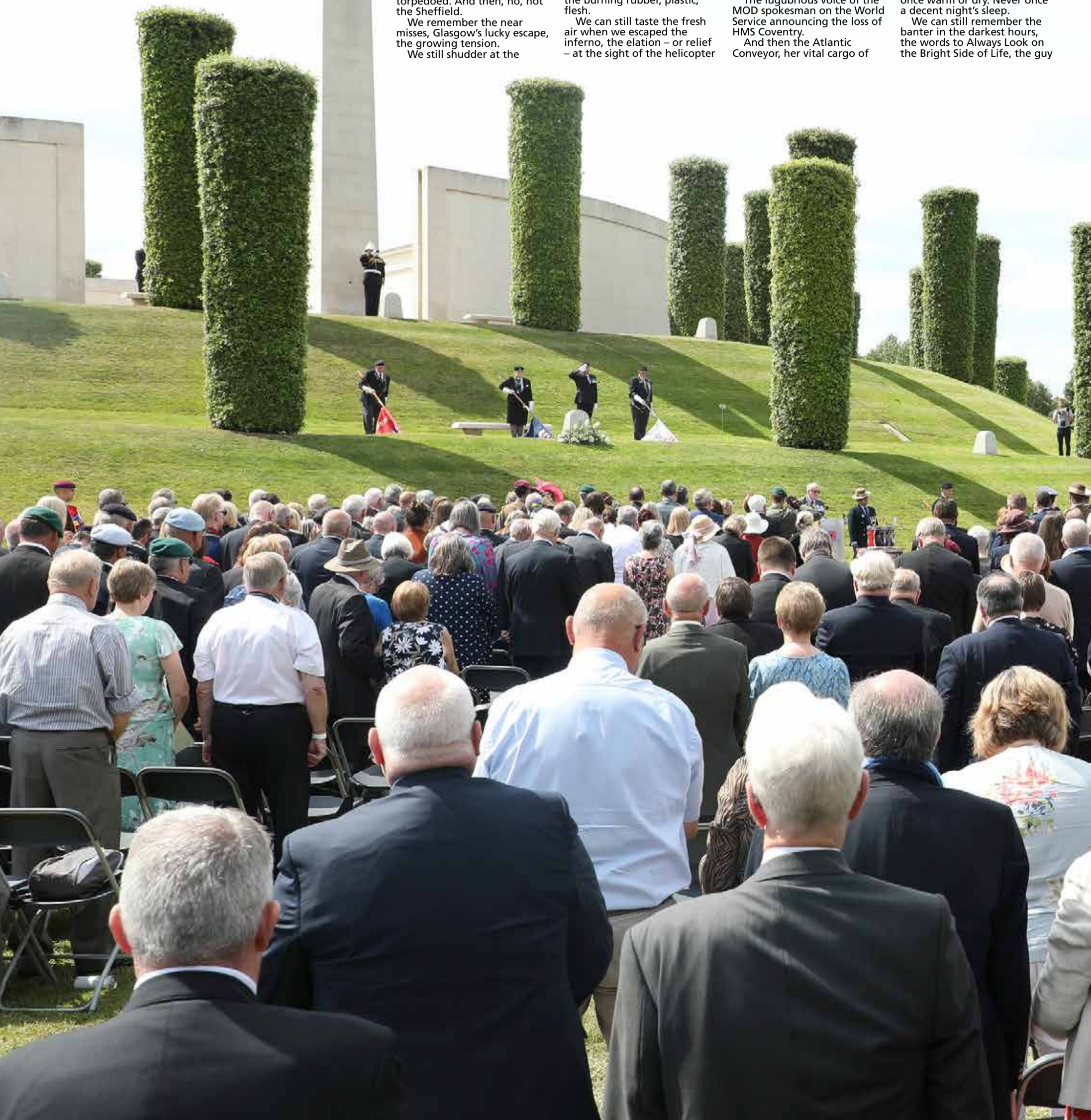
We'll have to bloody well walk then.

We can still feel the dampness in our clothes and the boggy terrain under foot. For days on end. The yomp.

We can still taste the corned beef hash washed down with weak, lukewarm tea.

Resting our head on some clump of grass, a rock. Never once warm or dry. Never once a decent night's sleep.

We can still remember the banter in the darkest hours, the words to Always Look on the Bright Side of Life, the guy



home from home in the Falklands'

with the funny accent or walk.

We still remember the comradeship, the bond, unique among serving personnel. *I've got your back.*

We still remember the star shells which bathed this alien landscape in an eerie light.

We remember the fear, the adrenalin surging through our bones as we swept up a mountain under the protective umbrella of a rain of steel and high explosives from the fleet out at sea.

We're cold. We're wet. We're tired. *But so is the enemy.*

We still remember falling on his machine-guns, his mortars, his well-entrenched positions. The smell of cordite. Grenades exploding. Tracer carving its way through the night like beads of pearl on a necklace.

Gary Green still remembers. Then a 19-year-old signaller/radio operator. Today a 59-year-old lieutenant colonel... and one of the last of generation of 1982 still serving.

He was invited to address the Royal British Legion's national act of

commemoration at the Memorial Arboretum – an event synchronised with proceedings 8,000 miles and two seasons away in Stanley.

He remembers "extraordinary feats of heroism, decisive leadership from junior non-commissioned officers", and above all the "aggressiveness, courage and determination of the Marines" in storming Mount Harriet, one of the final set-piece battles which delivered victory.

"The Falklands War was an experience I will never forget. Harsh conditions, survival, the move to Mount Kent and the attack on Mount Harriet have remained constant in my thoughts throughout my 42-year career in the Royal Marines," he says.

"Forty years on, I remember the sacrifices made and those that did not return and, on this 40th anniversary of the war, I particularly think about the families that lost their loved ones."

He – and we – still remember the taste of victory, the dejection of a beaten enemy, trudging into captivity.

We still remember the fall of Stanley. We remember the relief more than the joy.

But we remember the islanders, their joy, their gratitude.

We still remember coming home. The crowds. The cheers. The parade through London, the trips to the Palace to receive this medal or that.

Above all we remember the gaps in our ranks.

We still remember the faces. And the names.

We still feel the guilt. We survived. They didn't. *What if we hadn't swapped duties? If I'd been drafted to Sheffield or Coventry or Ardent, instead of them?*

Some of us have slain our ghosts. Others are still struggling. We help them as best we can.

We get together each April. Or May. Or June.

We pay our respects.

We share stores. *Do you remember...?*

Yes, we still remember.

And each year our hair gets a little greyer. Or thinner. The waistlines perhaps a little wider. Our once-sharp eyes

needing a little help with glasses. Our minds a little wiser. Our chests a little fuller with medals.

Until suddenly, yes, it was 40 years ago.

We've left the Corps or the Navy behind – well most of us – and forged new paths in the civilian world.

The ships and aircraft of 1982 are all gone too. And the leaders, some retired, some at eternal rest. The uniforms have changed. The country has changed.

But not that much. The sailors and Royal Marines of 2022 share the same ethics, pride, bond, sense of duty, training, commitment.

They would do what was asked of them and rise to the challenge as we did.

And they remember.

Memories fade, the endeavours do not, carved into the history books, honoured, commemorated, venerated.

May 4 will always be the day they got the Sheffield. May 21, the Ardent. June 8, Sir Galahad and Tristram. And so on.

They maintain the memorials – weathered by time and the elements, they are cleaned, restored, renewed, the names legible once more – cast wreaths over wrecks, plunge into the depths to replace the tattered White Ensigns on twisted hulls.

They remember in Portsmouth. And Plymouth. Hull. Faslane. Lichfield. Liverpool. Pangbourne. At HMS Sultan. And Collingwood. Culdrose. Yeovilton. And countless other places.

And in the Falklands. Especially in the Falklands.

June 14, the last day of the conflict and the day when Falklanders celebrate the freedom granted them through the sacrifices of British servicemen and women.

Ten-year-old Leona Roberts was one of those liberated. She still remembers. Daily.

"What the task force did for us in 1982 resonates in the hearts and minds of Falkland Islanders every day," she told those gathered at the arboretum.

"The love that we feel

and our gratitude for the sacrifices made, for the courage, dedication and professionalism shown in restoring the freedom of our islands is undiminished by the passage of time – and will never lessen."

Mrs Roberts is today a member of the islands' government, which used the occasion to bestow on every holder of the South Atlantic medal the freedom we returned to them 40 years ago.

"You will always have the warmest welcome, a family ready to help you and a home from home in the Falklands," she pledged.

They still remember. And they are still grateful. Eternally.

For full coverage of Falklands 40 events, anniversaries, interviews with veterans, visit the dedicated section on the Royal Navy website: www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/features/falklands-40





Tewkesbury's tribute to one of their own

ON THE 40th anniversary of the Falklands War, Tewkesbury School remembered all those impacted by the conflict and paid special tribute to ex-student, Seaman Matthew James Stuart, who tragically lost his life on HMS Argonaut.

Matthew died on May 21 1982, his 18th birthday, when his ship was badly damaged whilst patrolling in San Carlos Bay.

Headteacher Mr Watson was joined by Matthew's mother and sister for a commemoration held at the school.

Year 9 pupil and Sea Cadet Brendan, hoisted the HMS Argonaut flag at the front of the school and laid a commemorative wreath at the tree planted in Matthew's memory.

Brendan represented himself impeccably and his parents and Sea Cadet unit were justifiably proud of his involvement. Staff member, Mr Jerry Brown was also present. Jerry, an ex-submariner, said a few words in memory of 'the fallen' and Mrs Stuart paid further tribute. They said their thoughts are with Matthew's family and all those associated with HMS Argonaut, during this time.

BEM for volunteer

LIEUTENANT Stephen Hutchinson, RNR Chair, Accrington and District Unit Sea Cadets has been awarded with a British Empire Medal (BEM) for voluntary service to young people in Lancashire.

Lieutenant Hutchinson, who is from Burnley, has given half a century of service to Sea Cadets.

"I am honoured to accept the award of the British Empire Medal on behalf of everyone who has worked so hard during the last two-and-a-half years to move from our old premises into our new ones," he said.

"With fundraising, building works, and keeping our young cadets interested during the pandemic, I couldn't have done it without some strong individuals behind me to see it through, for which I am truly grateful. I've worked in an adult capacity for Sea Cadets and the community for the past 50 years and can honestly say that I've never been bored and enjoyed every minute of my time with the group."

Week out on the water

SEA cadets from Norfolk and Suffolk have embarked on a seven-day journey on the sea.

Nine sea cadets from Wells-next-the-Sea and three from Beccles joined the crew on the TS John Jerwood, which forms part of the Sea Cadets' offshore fleet.

The 12 cadets, all aged between 12 and 16, journeyed up the coast from Lowestoft to get first-hand experience of life at sea including steering the ship, navigating, practical seamanship, chart work as well as working in the engine room and galley.

Cadet Joel, aged 12, said: "I enjoyed being on the helm and learnt so much about being at sea and everything that is involved to make sure people are safe and the ship maintained. I also gained my Offshore badge!"

Cadet Kieran, 12, said: "I had a great experience on John Jerwood. I really enjoyed the navigation and the watches. It has inspired me to pursue this as a career!"

Ordinary Cadet Henry, 15, added: "It inspired me to become a better leader and helper to those around me."



Jersey crew rescue rowers who capsize

A CREW of Jersey Sea Cadets on a safety boat course with an off-duty RNLI crew member rescued an islander after their rowing vessel capsized in St Aubin's Bay.

They managed to pull one of the two casualties from the water. The other islander, whose foot was trapped under the small vessel's footplate, was rescued shortly after by a RNLI crew.

Jersey Coastguard asked the St. Helier inshore lifeboat (ILB) to launch after receiving a mayday call from a two-person rowing vessel that had capsized. The St Helier ILB launched and was underway to the casualty vessel within five minutes of the initial page. An ILB crew member entered the water, freed the casualty and helped them into the assisting vessel.

Both islanders were assessed and treated for cold water exposure by the crew before being transferred to the ILB. They were then taken back to St Helier Harbour where a team of paramedics was waiting for them.

PSgt Nick Skelhorn (SCC) from the Sea Cadets Jersey Unit (RMCD) was one of the people involved in the rescue.

"When we heard the mayday call for two rowers who had capsized their rowing boat



second rower who was still stuck in the water. He was OK but it was clear he was cold. It was at this point we became aware of the RNLI arriving who immediately put a crew member in the water to assist in removing the rower's foot from the foot plate and release him from the boat. We recovered the second rower from the water onto our rib and shortly after another RNLI crew member (an off-duty paramedic) transferred to our rib to begin their assessment.

"Both rowers were transferred to the RNLI rib and taken back to the harbour where an ambulance crew were waiting. David and I then proceeded to recover the upturned rowing boat and towed the rowing boat, accompanied by the main lifeboat which had launched, to the Jersey Rowing Club slip.

"I was extremely relieved that the outcome was positive and that both rowers were shortly released from hospital having been assessed and treated for the effects of cold water. I am glad that David and I were close by and able to assist, it was also hugely beneficial for me to be a part of a mayday from start to finish as I have gained valuable insight, although it's not something I would wish to do again anytime soon!"

leaving one rower with his foot trapped, unable to release his foot, we proceeded to the location where the rowers had stated they were in difficulty," he explains. "It was agreed that, if need be, I would enter the water.

"On arrival at the scene we located the two rowers, we ensured they were both OK and proceeded to pull the free rower into the rib. We were aware that the RNLI had now launched their rib and would be on scene within a few minutes. After a quick assessment of the rower we had pulled from the water it was ascertained he had no visible injuries and was suffering from cold water immersion."

PSgt NICK Skelhorn continues: "I attended to him while David spoke to the

Unit marks 80th anniversary

The unveiling of a new dedicated memorial for HMS Albacore and a commemorative service for the ship was held at Memorial Gardens in Ashford town centre.

The service was led by the Chaplains of the Ashford Sea Cadets and Mayor Elect, which included the ceremonial presentation of the new HMS Albacore flag to the Mayor. This year marks the 80th anniversary commemoration for both HMS Albacore and the Ashford Sea Cadet Unit.

Ashford Sea Cadets band performed both before and after the ceremony with a repertoire of music spanning the seven decades of the Queen's reign.

Captain of the Sea Cadets, Captain Neil Downing RN attended on behalf of both the Sea Cadet Corps and the Royal Navy. Captain Neil Downing RN and the Mayor inspected the platoon of cadets.

Interpretation panels are being installed by the new memorial to tell the story of Warship Week in 1942, HMS Albacore and the 80th

Anniversary of Ashford Sea Cadets.

In Britain's time of need, the people of the Ashford borough came together and staged a successful week of fundraising in February 1942. On June 16 1942, HMS Albacore, the borough's chosen warship and crew were officially adopted and later that month the Ashford Sea Cadet Unit was established and affiliated to HMS Albacore.

During the war, despite being under constant bombardment, the crew of HMS Albacore patrolled the Mediterranean north of Africa sweeping mines and clearing the waters to enable the Allied invasions of North Africa, Sicily and Italy. This ultimately led to HMS Albacore earning battle honours in North Africa (1942-1943), Sicily (1943), Salerno (1943) and Anzio (1944).

More information about the history of Warship Week 1942, HMS Albacore and the Ashford Sea Cadets can be found at the Ashford Borough Museum or by visiting www.ashford.gov.uk/Albacore.



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Cadets mark jubilee

CADETS around the country celebrated their Patron's 70th anniversary on the throne in many creative and colourful ways, from parades and street parties to beacon-lighting, musical performances and, of course, by getting out on the water!

SCC Highlights of the jubilee celebrations include having First Class Dado from City of London Sea Cadets reading at The Queen's Jubilee Service of Thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral and sea cadets saluting the Prince of Wales in The Mall along with other cadet forces.

Sheppey, Stoke-on-Trent Sea, Shirley and Sheffield Sea Cadets Units have all been honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK.

The following individuals were awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM): Margaret Beacham, Chair at Ryde Sea Cadets Unit for voluntary service to young people in the Isle of Wight; Lt Stephen Hutchinson RNR, Chair of Accrington Unit for voluntary service to young people in Lancashire; Lt Cdr (SCC) Carol Rashleigh RNR, District Officer for Devon for services to the community in Devon.

Cadets from across the country got into the spirit of the jubilee celebrations, such as London Area cadets, who took part in an event at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, provided musical entertainment at the Royal Hospital School in Holbrook and held a cake-designing competition, with the winning designs used to create the cakes to be enjoyed during the festivities.

Cadets from across Southern Area turned out in full force to parade at Winchester Cathedral as part of the Platinum Jubilee Youth Celebration.

A joint Poole and Southampton Sea Cadets band performed before a huge number of onlookers. Hundreds of young people from across Hampshire attended the parade and subsequent service. New Romney Sea Cadets celebrated HM the Queen's 70-year reign by tying 70 knots (seven different knots ten times each), proudly displaying their efforts to their local community at a special jubilee street party.

A recent West Kent District training event at Dartford Lakes included forming the number '70' with their kayaks in honour of the Queen's 70th year of reign.

One of the highlights for South West Area was the Tall Ships Festival, which saw historic vessels sailing into Gloucester Docks. The three-day event attracted huge crowds. Gloucester Sea Cadets competed in rowing races and rowing tug-of-war.

Hereford Unit hosted a dinner to honour Queen Elizabeth II, celebrate 80 years of Hereford Sea Cadets Unit and commemorate the loss of HMS Antelope 40 years ago in the Falklands War. Captain Nicholas Tobin, who was the Commanding Officer of HMS Antelope when it was attacked and sank during the Falklands conflict in 1982, attended the dinner.

Tenby Sea Cadets joined their Mayor in lighting a beacon on Castle Hill after parading through the town; Exeter Unit joined their Lord Mayor in lighting a beacon down on the Quay and Torpoint Sea Cadets opened their town's beacon-lighting ceremony with a parade and musical performance. Similarly, Sea Cadets units across the Eastern Area got involved in lighting beacons for the Queen, including Filey and Sheffield units. Worksop Unit held a sponsored Platinum Rowathon



challenge as part of the Jubilee celebrations, with cadets pitting against each other on rowing machines in Worksop's busy High Street.

The Queen's Jubilee Beacons event in South Tyneside saw Hebburn, Jarrow and South Shields sea cadets (Northern Area) passing a flame along a flotilla of boats on the River Tyne.

Sea cadets also got involved in lighting the 73 mile length of Hadrian's Wall, one beacon for each of Her Majesty's 70 years on the throne, across the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Grampian District Sea Cadets hosted a tri-service parade in celebration of the Queen's platinum jubilee, with cadets from all over the north east of Scotland joining in on the fun.

moments were when she received her Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award at Buckingham Palace from Prince Phillip, and a tour of HMS Antelope and helicopter rides from RAF Credenhill with the ship's flight.

Jane became a Sea Cadet Instructor on her 18th birthday in April 1974. In 1980 Hereford were the first ever fully amalgamated male and female unit, and as a result of their success the rest of the Corp and the GNTC joined as one called the Sea Cadet Corps. Jane was then appointed 2nd Officer in 1981 and was then transferred to Lieutenant (SCC) RNR in 1991/92.

She said: "The best part of being an adult volunteer and member of staff is the long-term affect you have on young people and their future, as well as seeing them develop their careers and a selected few coming back to the unit with their children, or even grand-children."

"This has also included one of my cadets who join as a Sea Cadet in 1981 becoming the current Commanding Officer of the Unit."

As a memento, each cadets received a miniature Platinum Jubilee Medal.



Top honour for Stoke

STOKE-ON-TRENT Sea Cadets and Royal Marine Cadets have been honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK.

The unit, based in the Army Reserve Centre in Bucknall, is one of 400 that are part of the Marine Society and Sea Cadets. Each unit is a stand alone charity that is responsible for raising its own funds. There are both uniformed and civilian volunteers who run the Unit and supervise the training activities. A Unit Management Committee of Trustees oversees the work of the Unit. The Unit is known as TS Talent and has been affiliated to HMS Talent, a recently decommissioned nuclear submarine.

Lt David Eivers, Commanding Officer of the Unit, said: "Our volunteers, like those in all charities, are the key part of our team, helping us to deliver a first class experience to the young people in the organisation. The Queen's Award is a wonderful tribute to many years of tireless work and commitment from so many people."

Admiral Sir Trevor Soar said: As a former Captain of the submarine HMS Talent, I am particularly delighted that Stoke Sea Cadets, TS Talent, has been awarded the prestigious QAVS in 2022. This exceptional Unit is a lifeline to young people in the local community and the dedicated and hard-working volunteers all go that extra mile to make a real difference to the lives of these young people."

Mr Ashley Brough DL, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire added: "I am delighted that the Stoke Sea Cadets have been granted the QAVS. They have presented an exceptional example of what it takes to receive this incredibly prestigious award."

"I was particularly impressed by the commitment of the team and the training and skills being taught that are having a wonderful and lasting impact on the young people in the area."

Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Ian Dudson CBE, will present Stoke-on-Trent Sea Cadets with the QAVS trophy and certificate later in summer. Furthermore, two members of the Unit will be invited to attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace in the summer of 2023 along with other recipients of this year's award.

Winner meets Duke

A FEMALE cadet from Newcastle, Zoe Perowne, had the privilege of meeting Prince William after she won a national competition to inspire a new national memorial to submariners.

Zoe – whose grandfather is a retired submariner – was the winner of the 11-18 year old category of the competition, attended a presentation with Prince William at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Lt Cdr (SCC) Chris Healy RNR, Commanding Officer of Gosforth Sea Cadets, said: "We are immensely proud of Zoe and the excellent submission that she made for such an important national competition. Zoe is a hugely talented young person and everyone connected with Gosforth Sea Cadets is in full admiration of her work."

The Submariner Memorial Appeal is a registered charity set up to create a fitting memorial to submariners who have lost their lives in the service and to the sacrifice of their families.

In 2020, the charity launched a competition to design a fitting monument which commemorates the sacrifice of all those who have died whilst in the submarine service and their families.

The competition's three categories; under 11s, 11-18s and over 18s were open to members of the public of all ages, including to sea cadets across the country.

At the event, the Duke of Cambridge paid tribute to the "continued resilience" of the Royal Navy's submariners and their families as he unveiled a new memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Joy and commemoration for Antelope

THE Officers and Cadets of Hereford Sea Cadet Corp, TS Antelope, hosted a dinner to honour and rejoice 70 years of reign of HM Queen Elizabeth II, to celebrate of 80 years of Hereford Sea Cadet Unit and to commemorate of the sad loss of HMS Antelope, 40 years ago in the Falklands War.

Special guests at the dinner were Rear Admiral Philip Lawrence Wilcocks, CB, DSC, DL, RN and Captain Nicholas Tobin DSC, MA, RN. Captain Tobin was the Commanding Officer in HMS Antelope when she was attacked and sunk during the Falklands conflict on May 23, 1982.

Rear Admiral Wilcocks was a gunnery officer on HMS Ambuscade during the Falklands conflict and is presently a Deputy Lieutenant for the County of Herefordshire and a keen supporter of TS Antelope.

The dinner at the Koffie Pot and supported by the Green Dragon Hotel in Hereford, was attended by Rear Admiral Wilcocks, veterans from HMS Antelope, Staff and Cadets from TS Antelope, the Trustees, and former Commanding Officers.

Lt Cdr (SCC) S J Shiels RNR (Jane) one of the longest serving Adult Volunteers joined the Girls Nautical Training Corp (GNTC) from the Sea Rangers in October 1973. Her most memorable



Glamorgan remembered

SOUTH Wales District Sea Cadets paid tribute to those lost aboard HMS Glamorgan during the Falklands Conflict.

The 40th anniversary of the loss of 14 members of the ship's company saw cadets hold a service at TS Cardiff's headquarters.

The service was attended by several Falklands veterans, including some from HMS Glamorgan.

Wreaths were laid by representatives of the Lord Lieutenants of both South Glamorgan and Monmouthshire, the Lord Mayors of Cardiff and Newport, and the SCC South West Area Officer, Cdr Gary Mills, and by CMEM(M) John Callaghan, on behalf of the HMS Glamorgan Falklands Association.

After the service the wreaths were taken to the Falklands War Memorial in Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Patrolling paradise



WE'LL start with the travelogue bit...

Diego Garcia is the main island of 60 – and the only one with human habitation... although Ile Bodam is supposedly home to a lonely (possibly insane) donkey – in the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Never more than two miles wide... and just 120ft across at its narrowest point, the island stretches for about three dozen miles in the shape of hollow rhomboid... the hollow mostly filled with the waters of the Pacific... which is an average 280C all year around.

The temperature never drops below 150C... and normally hovers around the high 20s. It does, however, rain every other day in winter, every third day at the height of summer.

So basically paradise.

But there are drawbacks. There aren't many places to go – most activity is confined to the northwest tip of the island.

There's a handful of shops, a barber's saloon, baseball pitch, tennis courts, cafe, couple of clubhouses, and a bar.

But if you want the bright lights of a big city... it's roughly equidistant between Mombasa and Singapore (2,250 miles...), while the southern tip of India lies more than 1,000 miles to the north.



Half crab, half coconut... it's a coconut crab...

The population on Diego Garcia varies but usually sits around the 2,000 mark made up of US military personnel, Filipino contractors.

And as it's sovereign British territory, official functions are performed by Britons:

- boats and transport
- police
- customs and immigration
- British Forces HQ.

All delivered by 41 UK personnel, the majority RN and RM.

They are served by a port and a military airfield (possessing



The islands' international airport

the second longest runway in the world).

Comings and goings at both are policed by the Brits in their customs and immigration capacity.

It's a real mix of personalities and backgrounds acting as the 'border force' for the island: a senior rating medical assistant submariner is 'senior customs and immigration officer, assisted by a combination of Royal Marines, sailors and a RAF dog handler (plus hound).

They meet aircraft bringing in passengers from overseas (chiefly Bahrain, Singapore, and Japan), cargo and (most importantly) 'Brit mail'. They also carry out passport control, fishery patrols and search containers when ships arrive bringing equipment and supplies.

The lagoon in Diego Garcia is home to numerous ships based in the island, as well as visiting vessels.

The customs team regularly meet personnel coming ashore – just as at the airport, anyone wishing to set foot on Diego Garcia has to make an immigration declaration and receive a stamp in their passport.

No ship is more important to islanders than the SLNC Corsica, which carries all the food and drink for the store – among other cargo.

Making a regular run between Singapore and Diego Garcia, its containers are searched by the customs officers RAF dog team.

Containers are examined for infectious and invasive species, while any kit and equipment imported for use by BIOT personnel is picked up and transported to its destination.

The port also hosts nuclear-

powered warships on occasions, the Brits must also demonstrate they are capable of dealing with incidents, protecting the vessel itself, but also the crew and the inhabitants on island.

Day in, day out, the island's Nuclear Emergency Response Organisation is one of the main military tasks, even if the risk of a nuclear emergency is negligible.

When a nuclear-powered vessel arrives on island the NERO duty watch remains at an hour's notice to act until the ship or submarine departs. That's in addition to their day jobs.

Nuclear physics is probably the last thing on the majority of people's minds when they get an assignment order for British Forces BIOT.

They see the two submariners (CPOMA and LMA) as part of their joining routine and are often surprised to discover the role that they play on the island, and that they may get some radiation from something other than the sun.

Landing craftsmen, engineers and drivers, risk heatstroke in PPE to ensure that the environment and atmosphere is safe as they move around with monitoring equipment, while general-duty marines run the decontamination party ensuring that anybody potentially contaminated is treated.

"We must demonstrate to the nuclear regulators that we can liaise and coordinate a management plan on island but also to liaise with a multitude of government agencies to coordinate a plan," explains Lieutenant Stephen

Warren, the RN logistics officer on the island.

"If we fail this assessment, we lose the highly-strategic nuclear berth, which would result in nuclear-powered vessels being unable to visit Diego Garcia."

Beyond being a key military staging post in the middle of the Indian Ocean, the island also lies at the heart of one of the largest Maritime Protected Areas on the planet.

It's the duty of the Brits to ensure it remains mostly undisturbed, its waters not blighted by overfishing – which demands regular patrols.

The British Indian Ocean Territory covers 640,000 square kilometres of said ocean. Just shy of a quarter of million square miles. That's the size of France.

During the pandemic, there was a dramatic surge in illegal fishing.

Diego Garcia enjoys protected waters filled with a vast array of exotic fish and coral.

Some marine species can only be found here as this is the perfect habitat in which to thrive.



Taking a dip with a manta ray

If overfished, the marine life will become endangered, so the British authorities must enforce very strict fishing regulations to safeguard one of the last flourishing protected marine and coral reef environments in the world.

To counter criminal activity, the territory uses its patrol vessel, Grampian Frontier (which once serviced oil rigs and is operated by civilians mainly from northern Scotland or Poland).

It's used to deploy a team from Diego Garcia on Outer Island Sovereignty Patrols (OISPs) – sweeps of ten to 14 days to intercept vessels conducting illegal fishing, using Pacific 24 Ribs to search smaller outlying islands for any illegal settlements from which the fishermen sometimes

operate.

Before patrolling the outer islands, personnel must prove they are capable and competent to operate independently.

Every fortnight, Brits are put through paces on what they call Exercise Blue Lagoon: do they know their kit, can they use fins and snorkels, with swimming tests, navigation, boat handling.

The final assessment takes students to one of the deserted islands, where they are expected to swim

another Sri Lankan vessel to be transported back to their home port safely.

At the same time these sovereignty patrols also support marine scientists as personnel use BRUVs – Baited Remoted Underwater Videos – to ascertain the marine life variety within targeted areas.

BRUVs comprise two cameras at each end of an aluminium tube with a bait box hanging off the end of a pole. They are then left for an hour before being retrieved, after the GoPros have captured



Swimming ashore on an outlying island in search of illegal fishing settlements

ashore, explore the island and then return to their boats, navigating the surf and swell.

"When we conduct patrols of the outer islands in the Chagos archipelago, we prevent and halt any illegal fishers overfishing," Lt Warren explains.

"And we ensure personnel working at Diego Garcia are fishing in the correct manner – whether it's using the correct equipment to causes minimal damage to the fish or ensuring people are fishing in the designated zones."

A patrol consists of driving to the most popular/hidden illegal fishing areas to ascertain if trawling is taking place...and if there is, a fine will be issued, the catch and equipment are confiscated.

In March, the team encountered a fishing vessel which had run aground.

Six Sri Lankan fishermen would undoubtedly have died had the Brits not intervened: their fishing vessel was partly sunk and within hours of capsizing.

Dehydrated and hungry, the stricken fishermen were rescued and given first aid onboard the patrol ship before they were transferred to

images.

It is this kind of operation which assists the Diego Garcia's environmental officers to further scientific research and study of the marine ecosystem in this part of the Indian Ocean – and help to protect this amazing marine environment.

"A day in the life here is akin to a ration box lucky dip; you never know what you have until you open it up," says Lieutenant Warren of a draft to Diego Garcia.

"Life on the island is a privilege and all BIOT ranks past and present will agree that it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The Brits are driven by a 'work hard, play hard' mentality. With that in mind 'The Brit Club' – focal point of morale and welfare – has received a much needed-new lease of life thanks to a grant of £13,500 from the NAAFI fund, after Cpl Frankie Simmonds successfully applied.

The building was looking tired after 46 years of socialising. The grant will provide pool tables, dart boards and a new speaker system – all directly impacting and improving the well-being of the serving personnel.



Capital boxing

HAVING already been crowned Tri-Service champion, AET Britney Walker (54kg) joined up with Writer Sophie Colebourn (70kg) to swap their Royal Navy boxing vests for UK Armed Forces colours and compete at the National Boxing quarter and semi-final Championships in London.

AET Britney Walker was drawn against the country's top seed. But, due to her opponent pulling out through injury a few days earlier, she was given a walkover straight through to the semi-final stages and came up against the highly-rated boxer from St Ives ABC – Megan Morris (main picture: Walker in red, Morris in black).

The bout started off cautiously with both boxers testing each other's defences with sharp crisp shots to both the body and the head.

The second round started off fast with both boxers trying to win the exchanges and gain the upper hand.

Walker achieved some success by winning the close encounters, but her opponent Morris was a determined, strong boxer who kept coming forward with shots of her own.

Walker needed to start fast and be the busier boxer during the final three minutes but Morris had other ideas and again kept the pressure on Walker.

In the end Morris ran out the winner, winning by unanimous decision.

Walker's Coaches, Sgt Wayne Brookes and LH Simon Graham, could not have been happier with her performance over the season.

LH Graham said: "Britany has surpassed all expectations. She has been crowned UK Armed Forces Champion and reached the

semi-finals of the National Championships.

"Additionally, she has sparred and trained with the best female boxers from across the country – all within her first full season of boxing."

Having spent a considerable amount of time away from competitive boxing, Wtr Sophie Colebourn (pictured right) was going to have to win her weight category the hard way.

In the quarter-finals she was matched against a Finchley boxer - Patricia Mbata.

In the first round Colebourn quickly found her stride against the very awkward Finchley athlete. Colebourn took the centre of the ring and dominated the round with some slick skills.

The second round started with more of the same, with some good exchanges from both women in the early parts of the round.

However, it was clear for all to see that Colebourn's experience was beginning to shine through, as she started to dominate the contest.

In the third round Mbata came out with all guns blazing, hoping to put the pressure on Colebourn, knowing the bout was getting away from her. To Colebourn's credit she held the centre once again and boxed her game plan, with the judges awarding the Royal Navy athlete a unanimous win.

Up next was a tough semi-final bout against a very good Box Smart Elite opponent - Omarah Taylor.

Colebourn certainly knew her opponent well having sparred and trained with her in recent years.

From the very start, Taylor used her long awkward reach to catch Colebourn, without wanting to engage at close quarters.

The second round started well for the Royal Navy boxer, with Colebourn boxing intelligently behind her jab, and using second and third phases techniques.

However, Taylor responded to the challenge from Colebourn and seemed to step up a gear with several eye-catching shots.

With ring rust and tiredness creeping in, Taylor was just doing enough to win the close encounters, allowing the five judges to award her the win with a unanimous decision.

The Royal Navy's England and Major Panel Referee,

Lt Cdr Graham Blick said: "It is fantastic to see two Royal Navy female boxers competing at the national level.

"They have worked tirelessly, alongside the rest of the RNRM Boxing Squad, to achieve these outstanding results.

"They should take pride in what they have achieved this season and look to take this experience into next year's finals. I fully expect to go further next season."



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Training ramp will give RN athletes a lead in the luge

ROYAL Navy winter athletes are the first in the UK to receive a special artificial training ramp to give them the lead in the luge.

Engineering students from Glasgow Caledonian University – working with local primary schoolchildren – have designed and produced the first artificial luge ramp in the land.

The impressive ramp – 2½ metres high, 13 metres long – was handed over to the RN Luge Team.

It will allow sportsmen and women to practise their starts – seated on a small sled or luge, rocking back and forth on fixed handles – before hurtling down the track, feet first, head facing the sky, at speeds potentially in excess of 85 miles per hour.

The ten-month project is the result of a STEM partnership between the university's Mechanical Engineering department and the Royal Navy, with school children from across Renfrewshire also enlisted to help.

Both undergraduates and pupils met GB luge athlete Luke Farrar and the Royal Navy Luge team lead Lieutenant Commander Emma Miles to discuss the sport and specifications for the ramp.

With no ramp starts in the UK at present, the 15-strong RN luge struggles to train or find flesh blood; it relies on two weeks of novice ice camps every year to find new athletes.

"Luge is the fastest of the three ice disciplines, timed to a 1,000th of a second. Races are won by as little as 0.001 second over the cumulative times from two runs. Such tight margins make for excitement in both racing and spectating as the slightest error can lose the competition," explained Lieutenant Commander Emma Miles, RN Luge team leader.

"Whilst it is the fastest, it is also the hardest and can take athletes upwards of ten years to master and become competitive on the world stage."

The addition of the ramp (easy to assemble/dismantle) will allow the lugers to attend or run grassroots events/summer training camps to recruit more athletes and develop the starting skills/sled handling abilities of existing members.

And although the start ramp has been delivered to the RN, it will be used by winter athletes from all three Armed Forces teams as well as GB Luge, enabling more grassroots events and the ability to identify talent at an earlier age.

Cdr CD Pinder from the STEM Engagement Team at Faslane said he and his colleagues had been "delighted to be able to support such an exciting project that will benefit not only the Royal Navy Luge athletes but also so many young, talented children in the Renfrewshire area."

The project was supervised by senior lecturer Dr Patricia Munoz-Escalona, from the Department of Mechanical Engineering. She said the students had relished the opportunity to grapple with "a project of this magnitude, where they have been able to showcase the knowledge and skills they have gained throughout their years of study, and produce a ramp that will be used by the Royal Navy Luge Team."

"The ramp will also have the potential to be used by the GB Luge Team to help with their preparations for the Winter Olympics 2026."

It's being stored at RNAS Yeovilton but can easily be dismantled and shipped around the country wherever it's needed for training.



Schoolchildren watch a demonstration of the new luge ramp, which will be stored at RNAS Yeovilton for use around the UK

Pictures: LPhot Bill Spurr



A TEAM of sailors and Royal Marines brought home the bacon for the Senior Service in one of the most demanding endurance sports races in western Scotland.

A five-strong mixed Royal Navy/Royal Marines squad from 43 Commando, based at Faslane, limbered up with teams from across the Armed Forces and country for the 39th Scottish Islands Peaks Race.

And 52½ hours later Team Going Commando was the first Service team over the line – ahead of two Army teams... but 14 hours behind the event's overall winners, Team Tangaroa.

The event is a mixed sailing/fell-running adventure race starting in Oban, Argyll, and finishing in Troon on the Ayrshire coast.

With only human and wind power permitted to propel you on, teams sail via the islands of Mull, Jura and Arran, where the running pair have to disembark, paddle ashore and complete a mountain run on each island.

MOD adventure training yacht Gannet was waiting in Oban Bay for the runners to complete a short six-kilometre loop of Oban town, providing a 'Le Mans style' start to the event proper.

The following two-and-a-half days pitched teams into a battle of boat handling tactics, mental and physical resilience, and land/maritime navigation.

Winds ranging from dead-calm to Force 6 challenged the boat crew whilst mist, rain, wind, peat bogs and scree runs tested the runners' mettle.

The RN/RM team clocked-up 180 nautical miles of sailing – including 13 hours at night – navigating past such infamous maritime hazards such as the Corryvreckan whirlpool and the Mull of Kintyre.

And off-road, the marines ran 101.6 kilometres (incorporating 4,500 metres of climbing/descending), including scaling one Munro (over 3,000ft) and two Corbetts (between 2500ft and 3000ft) in the process.

"The running was awesome – almost marathon distance with 5,000ft of climbing on each run over pathless terrain requiring navigation," said Sergeant Jimmy Keenan.

"It was a unique event. It tests you mentally, having to navigate while tired and running in a harsh environment – visibility went down to 7m at one point! It was hard, fun, and exciting; a real test of cheerfulness in the face of adversity!"

As the first Service team to finish Going Commando enjoy bragging rights and possession of the Pathfinder Trophy.



RAIDERS

THE Royal Navy's only official parachute display team, known as the Raiders, are back for 2022.

Formed in 1983, the team is made up of experienced skydivers across the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, with a complete mix of ranks.

With an overarching aim of PR and recruitment, throughout the display season, the Raiders jump into all sorts of events to add something different to the entertainment programme – for example, families days, sports matches, school visits, airshows, county shows – with many of the team (especially the aircrew) hoping to one day make it onto the deck of the carriers.

All members are volunteers with full-time jobs alongside, but despite busy personal programmes, are all keen to relaunch the team into the new season.

Covid really put a stop to the team – apart from recreational skydiving at weekends, they were essentially grounded.

For every display, several team members will act as groundcrew – communicating with the drop aircraft, and providing commentary to the crowd.

Four new team members completed their CAA Radio Operator's Certificate of Competence, allowing them to give the 'green light' for the display to go ahead by saying to the aircraft "clear drop", after which the team will jump out of the aircraft under the direction of the Team Leader – a big responsibility.

This is an ideal role for those who haven't yet got the minimum jumps required to be a display parachutist (200), and really gets the team juniors involved.

Onto the exciting part – jumping from the aircraft. Over the four-day training camp, the team completed over 100 jumps. To be signed off as safe to display by the team leader, each team member has to prove that they can land within five metres of the target cross, multiple times – which thankfully was achieved.

Accuracy is a skill that is often overlooked with general skydiving, but for the team, is a critical part of training – and conveniently, the team has several gold medallists from the Inter-Services championships.

But it's not enough just to be able to land within five metres of the target. The team aim to maximise displays by including ancillaries such as big flags and

smoke – which provides an extra challenge to the jumper.

With the smoke, it's important to not pull the pin too early – ie, still in the aircraft – as the pilot will not be impressed.

And, to always be prepared for the smoke canister, attached to the skydiver's foot, to catch on fire – a rare but dramatic event, but one that they train and are prepared for. With flags, imagine driving along holding a flag the size of a house out of the window – there's a lot of drag, and they're really heavy.

But they look great on a display, and are perfect to put advertising on – and the team leader usually has the privilege of flying the White Ensign down.

Do you have a big event coming up and want something a bit different?

The team can bring parachutes, smoke and flags (as well as extras, such as a bag of poppies or delivery of a match rugby ball, for example!) and complete the display with a lineup and salute to any VIPs present.

Email the team leader at rnpdt.tl@gmail.com to enquire about booking the team.

The team are always happy to hear from experienced skydivers who fancy trying their hand at display parachuting – a high-pressure but greatly rewarded discipline, and most importantly, with a great group of people.

To jump on one of the displays you'll need 200 skydives minimum – but, the team can start to train much earlier than that, and start more junior members off on groundcrew whilst they train the skills needed to essentially land on a 50p coin. Please get in touch to find out more.

Likewise, if you've never jumped before and want to give it a go – email RNRM Skydiving on rnrmspa@gmail.com to find out more about the different options available, which includes both AT courses and sports options.

For general skydiving and aspiring team members: contact Lt Emma Reynolds on rnrmspa@gmail.com, RN Skydiving (Facebook), or [@skydive_navy_jump_marines](https://www.instagram.com/@skydive_navy_jump_marines) (Instagram)

To book the team and enquire about events: Cdr Dave Lee on rnpdt.tl@gmail.com, [@rnparachuteteam](https://www.instagram.com/@rnparachuteteam) (Instagram), or [@RNParaDisplay](https://www.twitter.com/@RNParaDisplay) (Twitter).

DROP IN



Successful streak continues



The UK Armed Forces Equestrian Association's annual Championship Show took place at Bury Farm Equestrian Centre.

This two-day stay-away show has something for everyone in dressage and showjumping disciplines from grass roots level up and included the first leg of the Inter-Services Team competition.

The performance of all 12 team RN, Army and RAF riders in this first discipline of Dressage demonstrated how far the riders have come in the sport which was only introduced as a competition leg in 2018.

The RN's 2021 'Sports Team of the Year' – the Dressage Team – did not disappoint: Cdr Suzanne Clark, Lt Cdr Vicki Sollitt, Lt Cdr Nicole Sherriff-Vonk RNLN and Surg SLt India John rode superbly to edge ahead of the other Services and win, but with only 4 percent separating total team scores this leg is becoming increasingly tight and is a true reflection of tri-Service dressage talent amongst the equestrian community.

The standout individual performance in the leg was from Lt Cdr Vicki Sollitt on her homebred horse Bravo Zulu (Nelson) who won the top-performing combination.

Vicki has had an incredible six weeks winning and placing in many high-profile dressage competitions, but also as an established amateur jockey she has had equal success in National Hunt racing with her own racehorse.

A runner-up as RN Sportswoman of the Year in 2020 she continues to impress and is a great example of what dedication, talent and bravery can achieve both in the military and civilian sport arenas.

Other RNEA riders had an enjoyable and successful show and Jabeena Maslin brought her hirelings so a number of development riders could experience the competition atmosphere.

Three of the riders were first timers in uniform, which always focuses the mind and adds a little more pressure too, and one young horse owned by LCH Ashleigh Durston was competing for the first time for the RN!

After a break of a couple of seasons due to operational deployments, PO Amy Taylor on her new horse Rumers Cascari (Bruno) jumped great rounds to place well in the two showjump qualifier classes and gain all-important points on the league table for the end of season final at the London International Horse Show in December.

After such a great start to the season we are excited to see everyone progress at single Service Championships and other events where there are opportunities to compete in uniform.

Any RN equestrians who would like to get involved should contact royalnavydsje@gmail.com (owning a horse not necessary but access to one is always a bonus).

Can they kick it? Yes they can



PERSONNEL from across every operating area of the Royal Navy came together at HMS Temeraire for the Royal Navy martial arts championships ahead of the Inter-Service competition which is hosted by the RN this year at HMS Nelson next month. Competitors fought hard in Karate (kumite and kata) competitions and Taekwondo (individual patterns and bouts).

Final results

Karate: Dan Kumite grade: 1st Sub Lt W Tatham RN; 2nd CSgt B Mabe RM.
Kyu Kumite grade: 1st LH R Pollock RNR; 2nd Lt A Gilroy RN.
Dan Grade Kata: 1st CSgt B Mabe RM; 2nd Lt Col b Reynolds RM
Kyu Grade Kata: 1st Lt A Gilroy RN; 2nd LH Pollock RNR
Team Kumite 1ST RM: Lt Col Reynolds / CSgt Mabe / Lt Gilroy; 2ND RN: Sub Lt Tatham / CPO Jack / LET King
Taekwondo: Dan Grade sparring: (F) 1st LCS J Mrozicka RN; 2nd Miss P Vincent Civ
Kup grade Sparring:(M) 1st Cpl R Bevan RM; 2nd CS T Pedley RN
Individual Dan Poomse: (F) 1st LCS J Mrozicka RN; 2nd Miss P Vincent Civ
Individual Kup Poomse: (M) 1st CS T Pedley RN; 2nd Cpl R Bevan RM

The Royal Navy Royal Marine Martial Arts Association is open to all serving personnel (regular and reserves) with an interest in martial arts and supports Karate (all styles), Taekwondo (ITF and WTF), Kendo and other martial arts within the association. For more information on the Association: Royal Navy Royal Marines Martial Arts Association (Sharepoint).

For more information C/Sgt Bernard Maybe RNRMMAA Events manager on bernard.maybe980@mod.gov.uk or visit www.royalnavy.mod.uk/navyfit/sports/associations/martial-arts or www.facebook.com/groups/RNRMMAA



SURF'S UP FOR STARTERS

YOUR CHANCE TO JOIN THE WAVE-CATCHERS

THE past two years have been hard for everyone, not least the Royal Navy's various sports organisations and teams who have had to postpone events or significantly alter the way they get their fix against the backdrop of a global pandemic.

Thankfully, with restrictions now eased across most of the globe, the RNRMSA is once again able to put on a full calendar of events in 2022.

The primary goal of the association is to increase participation at grassroots level, so first and foremost we're running a beginners' weekend from September 17-18.

Taking place over two days at the beautiful, miles-long beach at Gwithian, Cornwall, the aim of the weekend is to take you from zero-to-hero with six hours of professional coaching.

The group camps overnight nearby, and the Saturday evening BBQ and social is always a fun one.

For those who have been surfing a little while and are looking to develop their skills, trips up to The Wave in Bristol also

take place throughout the year. Here, the session (and the waves themselves!) can be tailored to the group in the water to help them practice catch unbroken, 'green' waves, work on turns, or even get barrelled.

Alongside these, two Intermediate Training Days are offered very generously for no cost by the Newquay Activity Centre (NAC). Here, you will be given professional video coaching and the chance to work on manoeuvres or competition strategy.

Growing female participation in our sport is the other big association goal for this year. On the calendar we already have a 'women & waves' style, ladies-only training day at NAC, and are looking to get a second planned in as soon as possible.

Women-only trips to the wave are also on the cards.

October will see the return of our annual RNRMSA Surfing Championships. Open to everyone, surfers compete on Shortboard, Longboard or Bodyboard (or all three, just not at once!) for the chance to get onto the Navy

Team and surf in the Interservice Championships against the RAF and Army next Spring.

Finally, the headline on our 2022 calendar is the Overseas Training Camp to Morocco.

Open to members at any level, the OSTC offers the chance to surf world-class waves in warm water – all day, every day for ten days, to really take your surfing to the next level.

Next year, the biannual Sports Tour will take surfers even further afield. Options being looking at include South Africa, Indonesia, and Costa Rica...

The RNRMSA subsidises all these events, meaning you get maximum surfing value at a reduced cost. But... you must be a member to be eligible for any of it except beginner weekends!

Visit www.surfnavy.com to find out how to join. Also find us on Facebook ([Surf Navy](#)) and Instagram: [@surf_navy](#) and [@rnrmsa_surf_ladies](#)

Report: Lt Cdr Mike Curd RN, Chair of the RNRMSA
Pictures: AB Milne and Lt Cdr Curd



LIKING THE CUT OF YOUR JIB



THREE members of the RN took to the water to tackle their RYA Level 1 & 2 dinghy sailing course at the Royal Navy Sailing Centre (RNSC) at HMS Excellent.

Lt Cdr Kara Wansbury RAN, PO Sam Quinn and OCdt Tom Pinkham were the attendees taking part in the course.

Kara is a Submarine Warfare Officer for the Royal Australian Navy in HMS Collingwood. Sam is a Royal Navy air engineering technician based at HMS Sultan in Gosport. Tom is an OC undertaking his INT training at HMS Wildfire in Northwood. All three had limited experience of sailing dinghy's prior to attending the course.

The course is one of several water-based courses hosted by the RNSC. These range from a half day paddleboard course to a 4.5-day RYA L1 & 2.

Starting off with the basics of rigging the boat, the course progressed through to sailing techniques, including sailing across the wind, upwind and downwind.

By the conclusion of day 3, each member of the course was also (with a few panicky moments for the instructors who were onboard with the attendees in the early stages!) competent in tacking

and gybing.

Performing the manoeuvres outlined above under the watchful guidance of Lee Bitchard (RYA Principal/OIC) and members of his team allowed each participants confidence to grow as the course progressed.

The practical skills were supplemented with a good balance of classroom-based theory introducing the important concepts of meteorology along with the basic rules of the road. By undertaking a valuable forecasting exercise of weather condition for the duration of the course, the attendees were able to foresee weather conditions getting calmer and calmer as the week progressed.

Towards the end of the course, the attendees had progressed to a bit of racing which allowed the crews in both boats to consolidate what they had learn in the previous three days.

The course culminated with all three practicing their capsizing drills, much to the delight of the neighbouring ferry passengers in Portsmouth Harbour! All three were able to right the capsized dinghy's before heading back to shore to de-rig.

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Deaths

Raymond Sidney Moore, AB. Served between 1946 and 1955, joining the RN aged 15. Served in HMS Ganges, HMS Cochrane, HMS Lochinvar, HMS Pembroke (Chatham), HMS Wildfire and on HMS Jupiter, HMS Bulawayo, HMS Sussex and HMS Manxman. After leaving the RN Mr Moore helped run the Fast Minelayers Association. Member of Norwich Branch of RNA. Died April 16, aged 91.

Ronald Ernest Davison, AB. Served between 1942 and 1946 in HMS Ganges, HMS Whitehall, and HMS Redpole. A D-Day veteran who was also in the Far East after VE day and was in the vicinity of Hiroshima on VJ Day. Member of Norwich Branch of

RNA. Died April 19, aged 98.

Lt Cdr David J Simmonds RN/RAN. Joined HMS Fisgard/Caledonia 1951. Served in HM Ships Glasgow, Hound, Charity, Hartland Point, Naiad, Dido, Excellent, Ashanti. Joined RAN 1977-97, serving in HMA Ships Vendetta/Vampire, Melbourne and CTSG Jervis Bay NSW, HMAS Stirling WA. Died April 22, aged 87.

Shirley Haigh (nee Windle). Sick Berth Assistant at RN Hospitals Chatham and Haslar 1949-50, Ward M3 Haslar (zymotics/infectious diseases), HMS Dauntless. Member Skipton RNA for decades. Died June 9, aged 91.

Rear Adm Richard F Cobbold

CB. HMS Kent, Heron, Juno, Fulmar, Osprey, Blake, Mohawk, Brazen, Brilliant, RCDS, DCDS. Nav Sec. Died Apr 24, aged 79.

Cdr Michael N Collis MBE. HM Dockyard Chatham, DG Ships, HMS Fife, Dolphin. CFS. AIB Sultan. Died May 4, aged 95.

Lt Cdr Maurice H Larcombe. HMS Ark Royal, Excellent, Osprey, Daedalus. RAF Wyton. DGA(N), FONAC, C-in-C Fleet. Died April 25, aged 81.

Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNO

Cdre Brian J Adams. HMS Heron, Daedalus, Gurkha, Mercury, Tenby,

Antrim, Malabar, Penelope, DNR, DGNM, NATO. Died May 8, aged 82;

Lt Cdr RNR John P Pressagh RD. HMS Ferret. Died aged 75.

Lt Cdr Roger R Metherell. HMS Dryad, St Angelo, Drake, Raleigh. Died aged 91.

Lt M Vining-Wilson. Died aged 85.

Lt Cdr John D Arkell. HMS Lewiston, Otter, Hermes, Jersey, Kingfisher, Dryad, Cochrane, Sentinel. Died aged 69.

Reunions

HMS Zulu Final Commission 1982-1984: We are arranging a reunion for all the officers of the final T81 commission for Saturday September 3. I have found many of the officers, including those from the Royal Australian Navy, but one or two have not been contacted. If you are one of those please contact me **Sym Taylor** at symtaylor@btinternet.com

HMS Troubridge: Final Commission Association 1966-69 2022 reunion will be at the North Euston Hotel, The Esplanade, Fleetwood FY7 6BN October 3 to 7, 2022. Contact Bryan Pace at Romft1@GMail.com or visit <http://HMSTroubridge.com>

HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association: Reunion and annual meeting takes place at the Union Jack Club in London from October 7 to 9. For details email: h.m.s.ajax.rpv@gmail.com

Loch Class Frigates Association: Annual reunion takes place at The Sketchley Grange Hotel, Hinckley, Leicestershire, from October 7 to 9. For details please contact Andrew Nunn Hon. Sec. LCFA Email:

andrew.nunn@blueyonder.co.uk or tel: 0117-9505835. Membership is open to all who served on any of the Loch Class ships or their variants (Bay Class, Admirals Yachts, survey ships and repair ships). Some of these types of ships have their own 'Associations' but you can always join both.

AREA 3 RN Association: Our reunion will take place at the Holiday Inn, Sittingbourne in Kent, from Friday October 14 to Monday October 17. A Trafalgar Night gala dinner takes place on the Saturday. Ken B Chandler. Kencathcpa@hotmail.co.uk

Undaunted/Yarmouth/Eagle Association: Annual Dinner and Dance Reunion 2022 will be held from October 28 to October 31 at the Holiday Inn Hotel, Castle Road, Cardiff, CF10 1XD. For further details contact Alan (Whiskey) Walker on 01268 548041 or email: whiskey666@outlook.com.

Royal Navy Photography Branch: Reunion

planned for Friday November 4 to Monday November 7 at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea. All ex and serving photos, plus partners, welcome to mark the 103rd anniversary of the branch formation. Contact Danny du Feu. ddf.photography@gmail.com; Tel: 07711 083465.

BENBOW 41: A reunion of the class from HMS Raleigh in October 1982 is planned. Please contact Glenn Gowling on ggowling37@gmail.com or call 07581 468527

HMS Ganges: A 60th anniversary celebration is planned for 54 Recruitment November 1962 Hawke 291 and 292 classes at Chatham in November. Any old boys who are interested please contact Robin Potter at r.potter60@talktalk.net

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association: The 2023 reunion is confirmed at the Queen's Hotel, Southsea, from May 12 to 15. Contact Secretary Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email askhamd3@gmail.com

Ask Jack

STEAD: Colleagues and friends of the late Lt Edward Keith Stead RCNC are asked to please contact his sister Isobel.

Isobel Stead
isobelstead@gmail.com

Johnny Craig: We are trying to contact Johnny for our 40th secondary school reunion. We know he joined the Royal Navy and served in submarines. He left St Columba's College in Dublin in 1982, aged around 18.

William Simpson
Whpsimpson@gmail.com

Peter Pawsey: Geoff Cummings RN (Rtd) is trying to contact Peter, who served in HM Submarines.

Gcumplings10@outlook.com

HMS Kent. My father Ronald Tinsley served aboard the WW2 cruiser, I believe in 1941-1942, during the Arctic Convoys to Murmansk and the attack on Tirpitz. He said very little about his experiences so would love to hear from anyone who had a father or grandfather aboard who may have known him.

David Tinsley
david2tinsley@btinternet.com

HMS Dainty: My father is trying to contact Dave Irwin and 'Crash Carl', with whom he served with aboard HMS Dainty. My dad's name is Reg Grogan.

Lisa Hughes
07834269050

PITTOCK: I have two grandparents who died in action during WW1 and WW2 and cannot obtain photographs of them. One was AB James Arthur Pittock P/SSX5991, who died April 8 1940 on HMS Glowworm. The other was Stoker John Cooper 5685s who died on HMS Vanguard, on July 9 1917. I have tried all records with a nil result.

John Pittock
ex Leading Stoker
johngp46@yahoo.co.uk

Admiralty Civilian Shore Wireless Service: My father Dermot Kirwan worked for the service during WW2 at the wireless stations in Lydd, Cooling Marshes, HMS Flowerdown, Wick, and Jamaica. Does

anyone know anything about the Jamaica one?
Michael Kirwan
MichaelKirwan53@gmail.com

HMS Matchless: My step father served on the Matchless and ran the Matchless Association until his death a few years ago. We still have two of the association's ties and would like to reach any of the veterans (or their relatives) who might treasure one?
Norman.haynes@ntlworld.com

Charity Front Line Naval Chaplain: We are for information about a WW2 'bish', the Rev Martin Martin-Harvey DSC. Records about Martin-Harvey, a temporary RNVR chaplain, are incomplete. He served in the Pedestal convoy to Malta in 1942. Later, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. He went ashore on D-Day, possibly serving with the Royal Marines at the time – he is listed at Bickleigh in 1946. After the war he became the chaplain of St Lawrence College, Ramsgate.

Simon Springett
frontlinebish@gmail.com

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the May edition of *Navy News* (right) was HMS Abdiel, a fast minelayer, sunk by a mine.

Mr G Beck from Aylesbury, wins £50 for sending us the correct answers.

This month's mystery ship (above) was the lead ship of her class, launched in March 1944 at Blyth and which later became an RNVR training ship.

1. What was her name? and
2. What type of ship was she?

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

We will also accept emailed entries to subs@royalnavymail.mod.uk with July 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 August 12.

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 September edition.

MYSTERY PICTURE 329

Name

Address

My answers: (1)

(2)

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

- Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to – The Editor, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY, or email: news@royalnavymail.mod.uk
- If you are sending your notice via email, please include your full address and telephone number.
- Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.
- Please send in reunions at least two months (preferably three) before the month of the event. There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.
- Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.
- The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

 **NAVY NEWS**

Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY

JUL 2022 No. 816: Founded 1954

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Published by Navy News, Navy Command HQ, Portsmouth and printed by Walsstead UK.

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Ask Jack columns in August's Noticeboard must be received by

JULY 12 2022

Memorial stones placed on Dartmoor



TWO memorial stones were lifted into position by Commando Merlin helicopters from 846 Naval Air Squadron.

The commemorative tribute memorials were positioned at the sites of two WW2 aircraft that crashed on Dartmoor in unrelated circumstances during December 1943.

One, a United States Army Airforce (USAAF) B17 Flying Fortress returning from a bombing mission, and the other a United States Navy (USN) Consolidated B-24 Liberator, which had been conducting anti-submarine operations in the Western Approaches. Both came to grief with the loss of all aircrew during poor visibility on Corn Ridge on the western side of Dartmoor.

Commemorating the two crashes has been the brainchild of Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) Ranger Ian Brooker, who first became aware of the wreckage sites 30 years ago and has always wanted to formerly mark on the moor the aircrews that perished.

"It's always been a real dream of mine to remember in stone the losses of the USAAF and the USN aircrews in December 1943, and this is a proper tribute to their sacrifice."

Lifting the stones into place was undertaken by 846 NAS Commando Merlins based at RNAS Yeovilton and the expertise of CHF's Commando Mobile Air Operational Team (MAOT), which was based at Okehampton Camp for this year's Ten Tors Challenge.

"It was a particular tricky operation for us," said Lieutenant Commander Gordon Smith, officer in charge of the MAOT for Ten Tors. "We had to get the stones into a suitable net which could be underslung from a Commando Merlin, flown to the



remote moorland site and then slowly and carefully lowered into exact positions at the sites of both crashes. Such live tasks provide invaluable and rewarding training for the Commando Merlin crews and Commando MAOT."

The stones were provided by the Duchy of Cornwall, with the project being funded by the DNPA and the MOD. The next and final stage will be to formally dedicate the stones in December 2023 – the 80th anniversary of the crashes.



