



# NAVY NEWS

DECEMBER 2023

## STRIKE A LIGHT



An F-35B Lightning jet is launched from HMS Queen Elizabeth on a NATO mission. The UK Carrier Strike Group came under the alliance's command for the first time last month. See page 5

Picture: LPhoto Chris Sellars

Inside: ■ Dauntless double bust ■ Medway's Caribbean return ■ Drone trials

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Images by LPhot Dan Rosenbaum

# NOT A CARIBBEAN CRUISE

**FROM** afar HMS Dauntless might appear to have been swanning around the Caribbean Sea, visiting idyllic paradise islands with sailors sunning themselves in the azure oceans and on golden sands.

But a Caribbean cruise this was not. The Portsmouth-based destroyer returned home from Atlantic Patrol (North) – the name for the Royal Navy’s annual deployment to the region – having racked up notable operational successes, conservation work and proved the success of the Type 45’s major engine upgrades, having been the first of her class to have undergone the significant Power Improvement Programme (PIP).

#### **STOPPING SMUGGLERS**

More on PIP later, but here’s a serving of the ship’s highly fruitful deployment, which by design saw her both provide a reassuring presence to British Overseas Territories during hurricane season (June to November) and hunt down suspected drugs runners.

Dauntless spent more than a month dedicated to countering the illegal narcotics trade across the region – working under the American Joint Inter-Agency Task Force South based out of Key West, Florida, that brings together all US services and international partners under one command to hit smugglers where it hurts.

In all, the ship detained 13 suspects, carried out five interceptions of drugs running boats and four boarding operations... landing 2,048kg of cocaine,





**CLOCKWISE: Drugs smugglers scuttle their boat as Dauntless' sea boats approach; seized cocaine worth £60m is processed on board Dauntless; a drugs running go-fast takes on water after being intercepted in the eastern Caribbean Sea; Dauntless' Wildcat which alongside a Royal Marines sniper team played a vital role in a drugs busts; one of the sea boats departs on a boarding operation**

valued at more than £200m on Britain's streets.

Navy News previously reported on the major £140m drugs bust and the operation that saw Dauntless track an aircraft using her powerful radars, helping US forces capture the plane and its illegal cargo when it landed in the Bahamas.

The latest double blow to traffickers saw £60m of cocaine seized and, in a separate operation, a speedboat scuttled as Dauntless closed in, with smugglers losing their illegal cargo.

After acting on intelligence reports, Dauntless hunted down a 35ft power boat suspected of carrying drugs.

The destroyer launched her Wildcat helicopter and Royal Marines sniper team to zero in on the craft.

When smugglers began to jettison their illegal cargo, their engines were taken out with precision by the commando snipers, bringing the boat to a juddering halt.

That allowed a US Coast Guard team to be dispatched from Dauntless and 11 large bales of cocaine weighing 330kg to be seized.

HMS Dauntless' Commanding Officer, Commander Ben Dorrington, said: "With another bust under the ship's belt I cannot ask for more from my team. Their work ethos and attention to detail remains second to none which shines through on such interdiction operation such as the last few months."

He added: "The ship's company have once again proved their resilience whilst in theatre, being able

to adapt extremely efficiently to the ever-changing environment we work in."

Earlier in the same patrol but in a separate operation, suspected smugglers scuttled their speedboat as Dauntless closed in.

After being guided into position by US maritime patrol aircraft, Dauntless deployed her US Coast Guard detachment to board and search the craft – only for it to turn into a rescue operation when the small speed boat was sabotaged by its crew.

With their alleged smuggling mission foiled, cargo lost, and boat sunk, two people were saved, brought aboard HMS Dauntless where they received medical treatment, food and water, before being transferred to a US Navy ship the following day.

One of Dauntless' officers – who cannot be named for operational reasons – said: "It is imperative that the safety of all personnel involved is paramount, including that of the people suspected of transporting illicit contraband."

"To that end it was vital that with their fast-sinking vessel, we suspended the boarding operation in order to rescue the two souls on the small craft to ensure their safety and lives were not put at risk."

#### **PIP, PIP, HOORAY**

HMS Dauntless was the first of the six Type 45 destroyers to undergo the major Power Improvement Programme (PIP), which involves three highly efficient, modern engines being fitted to ultimately

increase reliability but also give 'headroom' for further upgrades in the future thanks to a notable increase in electrical capacity.

The ship now produces enough electricity to power 2,000 homes, which means the on board sensors capable of tracking targets in excess of 200 miles away are more quickly available for use.

Throughout her Caribbean deployment, Dauntless has been available and reliable – serving as evidence the two-year endeavour of PIP has borne fruit as it is rolled out across the Type 45 class.

HMS Dauntless' Deputy Weapon Engineering Officer, Lieutenant Harry Jukes said: "The additional resilience provided by the third diesel generator gives us increased redundancy in the ship's electricity supply, meaning more availability of sensors to command capable of tracking contacts in excess of 200 miles."

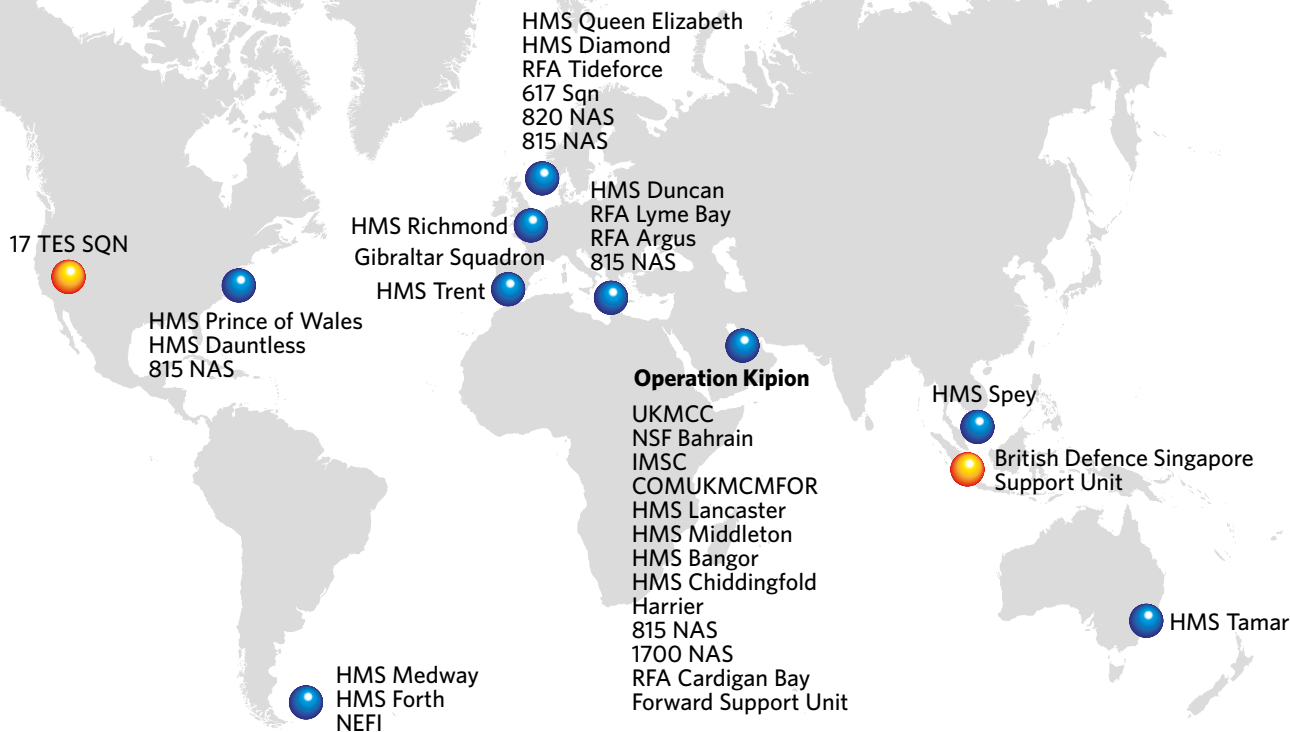
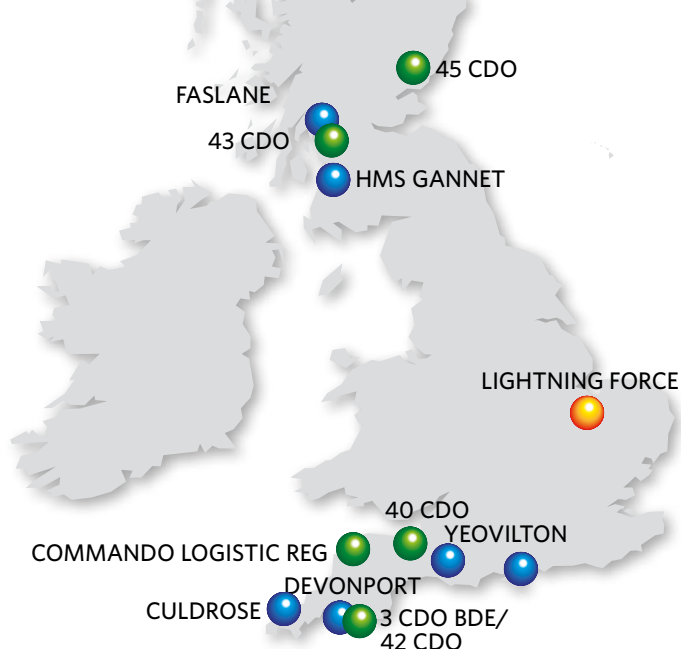
HMS Dauntless' Petty Officer Engineering Technician Ryan Waters added: "The PIP has given much greater resilience to the propulsion plant of a Type 45 Destroyer, improving availability to the Type 45 fleet which provides essential air and missile defence capability to protect the UK's aircraft carriers deployed on operations around the world."

In a nutshell, the Atlantic Patrol (North) has been a successful front-line proving ground for PIP and Dauntless is now available to be at the forefront of any deployment and more notably able to attach to either of the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers, providing world-class air defence.



## Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Hurworth 815 NAS  
 HMS Iron Duke 824 NAS  
 HMS Severn 825 NAS  
 HMS Mersey 845 NAS  
 HMS Tyne 846 NAS  
 HMS Scott 847 NAS  
 HMS Protector RFA Tiderace  
 Coastal Forces Squadron RFA Stirling Castle  
 XV Patrick Blackett RFA Proteus  
 Project Wilton DTXG  
 814 NAS



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



## GLOBAL | MODERN | READY

Well, that's 2023 done. A year when the world, sadly, is more distant from peace and harmony than it was 12 months ago.

And that, of course, places demands on the men and women of the Naval Service, who are as busy, if not busier as the year draws to a close than when the curtain rose.

Certainly Britain's biggest warship has had a busiest period to date – more than a dozen different aircraft types on the deck of **HMS Prince of Wales** in under three months, notably uncrewed aircraft and F-35s (see pages 19-21).

From busy flight decks to one of the busiest ships in the Fleet, patrol ship **HMS Mersey**, which ends 2023 being revamped for renewed duties in 2024 after being available for four in every five days for the first ten months of the year (see pages 14-15).

**HMS Tamar** has been testing the concept of the Navy's PODS programme (shipping containers packed with kit to support specific missions) in a combined exercise off Sydney with the Australians and US Navy, trying new kit and putting specialist dive teams to work alongside leading-edge autonomous systems in between enjoying life in the biggest city in Oz (see pages 16-17).

Her sister **HMS Medway** is coming in from the cold, returning to the warmth of the Caribbean/Americas after most of 2023 spent in the Falklands and environs stepping into **HMS Forth's** boots; the latter's returned to the islands after her refit in Gib (see page 11).

Meanwhile leaving the Caribbean behind is **HMS Dauntless** whose successful six-month stint in the region is up as she heads back for Pompey... but not before giving drug traffickers a bloody nose (again) (see pages 2-3).

**HMS Queen Elizabeth** is already back home after her two-month autumn deployment in northern European waters which ended with her coming under NATO command for the first time during a three-carrier exercise (see opposite).

Frigate **HMS Richmond** is the first submarine hunter to receive the 'Spearhead' upgrade to her towed array – although it wasn't required for her recent activation monitoring Russian activity; the ship kept close watch on the frigate Admiral Grigorovich (see page 6).

The RN has been working with the Government's military labs DSTL with trials in the Solent to develop **Artificial Intelligence** which will allow computers to identify small craft – and determine whether the people aboard are military or civilians by how they act upon reaching shore (see page 6).

The crew of **HMS Audacious** and **RN Divers** have received a national award for their ingenuity in conducting complex repairs on patrol - making repairs previously only ever made in dry dock and keeping the boat on a deployment of national importance (see page 29).

The Corps' 50th anniversary year of its bond with the Dutch marines closed with a joint exercise, Guardian Defender, as the **Commando Helicopter Force** helped train personnel from its Dutch counterpart (see page 9).

Wherever deployed and whatever they were doing, Royal Navy personnel paused on November 11 or Armistice Sunday for the annual **Service of Remembrance**, this year recalling 29 members of the Naval family lost in the past 12 months (see pages 30-31).

Having been pipped at the post last year, Chef Ian Wilson was crowned Forces Chef of the Year at the annual **Joint Caterer** contest (the RN team just missed out on the overall victory – see page 13).

Meanwhile Corporal Jack Crawford, who possesses the 'commando spirit in spades' was named **Royal Marine of the Year** (of 14 candidates put forward) for a myriad of qualities (see page 9).

Meanwhile the **Fleet Air Arm** has named its person of the year. PO Holly Sadler's care, compassion and empathy stood out when helping families through their darkest hours (see page 14).

And half a dozen RN/RM personnel will be heading to Buckingham Palace to receive decorations from His Majesty thanks to their actions on the front line through the latest **Operational Honours** (see right).

Talking of rewards... if you go to the cinema this month or visit a major shopping mall, you might see the RN on the big screen/display boards. **A Celebration of Duty** is a nationwide campaign championing the sense of duty and community engendered by serving in Navy (and you can also catch it online – see page 28).

And finally... as it's our last edition of the year, may we take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support for, and interest in, all the Royal Navy does, and for continuing to read the only publication dedicated to telling its story.

# Rescuers and phot face date with His Majesty



**TWO sailors who saved all five crew of a stricken yacht in a Channel storm lead six Royal Navy personnel recognised for their service on the front line.**

Chief Petty Officer Stephen Froom (pictured below on the left) and Able Seaman Alfie Hulme from destroyer HMS Diamond battled terrible conditions – which saw one of the yachtsmen tossed into the Channel when their vessel broke down and began sinking in November last year – to not just save all aboard, but to get the engines running again.

Each man earns the King's Commendation for Bravery, announced in the latest Operational Honours issued by the Ministry of Defence and approved by His Majesty.

Leading Photographer Belinda Alker (pictured above with some of her imagery) has been awarded the King's Commendations for Valuable Service for her work to support scientific research in both polar regions with icebreaker HMS Protector.

Also receiving a KCVS is Commander Oliver Ayers for his ground-breaking work in frigate HMS Montrose in the midst of the pandemic to develop ways of operating with sailors who were Covid-positive, but not showing the symptoms.

Diamond's rescue – already the subject of a lifesaving award for the ship collectively – saw 54-year-old Chief Petty Officer Froom from Bristol lead efforts to restore power and prevent the yacht Zapopan sink off the Isle of

Wight. Stephen was the first on and last off the yacht, helped rescue three of the five crew, before toiling with shipmates Lieutenant Commander Tom Leonard and Chief Petty Officer Giles Newbon to remove water and restart the boat's engines, as the Zapopan pitched and rolled violently.

"I was initially embarrassed as I don't like the limelight," he said. "I feel proud and humbled to be recognised for something I perceive as just doing my job."

"I felt confident due to the training and experience I have. I viewed it as the job at



hand, which I'd be tasked with and needed to be completed."

Seaman Specialist Alfie Hulme, who's now serving in the Gulf with a minehunter, was coxswain of Diamond's seaboot in the same rescue, using his experience operating the craft in very challenging conditions – darkness, heavy seas and strong winds.

Leading Photographer Alker brought to life for audiences at home the brutal cold and hostile climes faced by the sailors as icebreaker HMS Protector carried out valuable scientific work at the extreme ends of the world.

She captured everyday life and notable moments, and supported surveys of the Ant/Arctic wildlife population – always in challenging, sometimes potentially dangerous conditions.

Originally a hydrographic specialist, Belinda switched to becoming a full-time photographer with the Navy in 2018 and is currently serving aboard the UK's flagship, HMS Queen Elizabeth.

"It's an honour to have been selected and I'm very proud to be recognised," she said.

"It was a privilege to be able to contribute to the work carried out by the Royal Navy in supporting heritage and scientific organisations, as well as showcasing the role of the ship and her sailors on global operations."

Also decorated in the honours list – as Officers of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) – are Royal Marines Colonel Ed Hall and Captain John Punch.



# UNITED NATIONS



“ This is momentous for the UK and the alliance

Commodore James Blackmore, Commander of the UK's Carrier Strike Group



THE UK's flagship came under NATO's command for the first time as a powerful force capable of protecting the alliance's frontiers assembled.

Control of HMS Queen Elizabeth and the UK Carrier Strike Group (UKCSG) of frigates, destroyers, aircraft, including F-35B Lightning jets, and support ships was transferred to NATO to create a potent task group able to operate across a vast area from the length and breadth of the Mediterranean and north to the Baltic Sea.

Three aircraft carriers have been under NATO's command – with the UKCSG deployed to the North Sea, the Italian ITS Cavour and Spanish ESP Juan Carlos in the Mediterranean – knitting together cutting-edge forces ready to shield every inch of the alliance's airspace, waterways and territory.

Warships from 21 nations deployed on the exercise – codenamed Neptune Strike – and were under the command and control of NATO's Naval and Striking Support Forces, a battle staff under the Supreme Allied Commander Europe tasked with rapidly planning and executing operations wherever needed.

Neptune Strike is 'enhanced vigilance activity' – basically showing that NATO remains as strong and relevant as ever and capable of the defensive commitments of the alliance.

Commodore James Blackmore, Commander of the UK's Carrier Strike Group, said: "Deterrence and defence

of the Euro Atlantic is at the heart of NATO, and our enhanced vigilance activity with Neptune Strike is a clear demonstration of that.

"This is the first time a UK Carrier Strike Group has been commanded by NATO in my memory, so this is momentous for the UK and the alliance.

"I look forward to a full week of activity ahead, and much more in the future; we are stronger together."

After a brief pause in her deployment in Portsmouth, HMS Queen Elizabeth wasted little time getting stuck into Neptune Strike during a mock game of cat and mouse with a Norwegian submarine in the North Sea.

HNoMS Utstein was tasked with 'sinking' the aircraft carrier and it was the job of submarine-hunting Merlin helicopters from 820 Naval Air Squadron to stop them.

The exercise tested naval aviators' skill and tactical decision making, combining with a long-range Royal Air Force P8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft to hunt down the Ula-class boat.

The Merlin used their sonobuoys ('underwater ears') to search for the submarine.

Later in the training, the Merlin carried out a rare 'fin transfer' – skilfully hovering over Utstein on the surface and moving supplies and personnel (in this case 820's Lieutenant Rob Templeton) to and from aircraft and boat.

The training means the Merlin aircrew are refreshed in the complex art of evacuating casualties from a submarine on patrol.



Main image: An F-35B takes off from HMS Queen Elizabeth during Neptune Strike, with the HNoMS Utstein in the foreground; Clockwise from above left, a Wildcat from 847 NAS fires its flares; F-35B jets on the flight deck; Wildcats land back on the carrier; HMS Queen Elizabeth; The NATO flag flies from the Fleet Flagship

Pictures: LPhot Chris Sellars and AS1 Amber Mayall RAF



# SHADOW PLAY



Admiral Grigorovich as seen from HMS Richmond

THE Royal Navy has shadowed a Russian warship through stormy seas close to the UK.

Plymouth-based warship HMS Richmond kept constant watch on Russian frigate Admiral Grigorovich, tracking her in the North Sea and maintaining permanent contact.

Type 23 frigate Richmond was in Stavanger, Norway, for NATO trials and training when she was deployed to monitor the Grigorovich.

After first monitoring their activity in the North Sea, Richmond with her 185-strong crew continued to shadow the Russian warship through the Dover Strait and down towards the Mediterranean Sea – all the while contending with choppy conditions in the wake of Storm Ciarán.

“The English Channel is one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes. Close monitoring and shadowing of Russian warships in UK waters and adjacent sea areas encourages their compliance with maritime law and deters malign activity,” said HMS Richmond’s Commanding Officer Commander Chris L’Amie.

“By maintaining a visible and persistent presence, the Royal Navy is demonstrating our steadfast commitment to the NATO alliance and maintaining maritime security, which is crucial to our national interests.”



The bridge team monitoring vessel movements



HMS Richmond’s Commanding Officer, Commander Chris L’Amie, monitors progress



# ALB BE BACK

THE messes, passageways and compartments of HMS St Albans echo to the sound of naval banter for the first time in four years.

Crew have moved back on board the warship to prepare her for renewed operations following a massive revamp in Devonport Naval Base.

After nearly 20 years of constant service in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Gulf, The Saint arrived in Plymouth in 2019 to begin preparations for the refit, known as a midlife upgrade, led by defence firm Babcock.

The scale of the work needed as well as the sheer technical complexity of the ship and the multitude of interconnected systems involved has required around 1.2 million working hours by sailors, civilian engineers and shipwrights, software specialists and many more.

Some 350 structural enhancements to strengthen St Albans and allow her to carry new equipment have been carried out, demanding more than four kilometres of welding.

All four diesel generators have been replaced, meaning the ship can produce more power, the main engines removed, overhauled, and reinserted – a complex engineering feat, and a first for her project team.

More than two dozen new pumps with four kilometres of pipework have been fitted, and some 10,000 square metres of paintwork refreshed – that’s the size of a football pitches.

And LED lighting has also been installed throughout the ship – more efficient, more reliable, and brighter.

On the fighting front, all weapons and sensors have been upgraded. The original Sea Wolf air defence system has been replaced by Sea Ceptor which, together with a new air-search radar, Artisan 997, makes St Albans far more capable at tracking (more than 900 potential targets at

ranges beyond 100 miles) and taking them out if necessary.

One magazine has been adapted for the future anti-surface guided weapon system – successor to Sea Skua – which has recently entered service, aviation facilities enhanced to support the latest variants of Merlin, Wildcat and most NATO maritime helicopters.

And as a dedicated submarine hunter, the ship has been fitted with Sonar 2150 in place of 2050, which can detect underwater threats at greater range and is easier to operate.

And the living spaces for the 185 men and women – messes, bunk spaces, toilets, showers, galley – have been ripped out and replaced.

Looking forward to getting her shipmates into shape – physically and collectively as a fighting team is Leading Physical Trainer Mabli Davies.

“I’m embracing the challenges ahead as stepping stones for personal and professional growth,” she said. “With a focus on fostering the well-being of our crew, I eagerly anticipate our evolution from a group of individuals to a cohesive and resilient team.”

The upgrades will make HMS St Albans the Royal Navy’s most advanced frigate when she returns to sea over the winter to begin trials, working all the way through to front-line training allowing her to deploy around the globe again.

Senior Naval Officer Lieutenant Commander Byron Linn said: “This marks the start of a journey that will bring St Albans back to front-line operations. A huge amount of work has been completed by my ship’s company, Babcock and other supporting contractors to get to this point, and it was important to mark the occasion properly.”

“Our focus now is to prepare St Albans for her return to sea. We have a long journey still to complete but my team are ready for the challenge.”

# AT THE TIP OF THE UNDERWATER SPEAR

A SERIES of trials are underway to enhance the way the Royal Navy detects and tracks underwater threats.

HMS Richmond and Merlin helicopters from Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose have been helping the Royal Navy’s Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Spearhead trials team in developing new tactics to battle underwater foes.

Recently, Mercury Trials held as part of the wider Spearhead programme saw data from sensors used by warships, helicopters and uncrewed systems integrated together to better detect and identify evading submarines and make it harder for them to remain hidden.

This UK multi-static sonar capability was tested by Type 23 frigate Richmond and Merlin Mk2 helos in waters off the south coast, alongside industry partners Dstl, Thales, QinetiQ, BAE and Ultra.

It saw the ship’s engineers, underwater warfare experts and industry partners living and working together onboard for a couple of weeks conducting extensive trials and data gathering.

As a fully operational advanced anti-submarine warfare ship,

Richmond provides the perfect platform to facilitate these advanced trials. The crew relish the fascinating opportunity to be directly involved with a programme that is key to developing innovations in underwater technology and future anti-submarine warfare.

During the at-sea trials, the frigate simultaneously used her towed array, along with a Merlin Helicopter, to trial cutting-edge sonar networking while collecting a significant amount of underwater data. When processed, this information will contribute to upgrades in submarine detection capabilities, networking, and help to develop AI to support information compilation and decision making.

Lieutenant Commander Antony Lofts, from the ship, said: “Our team of underwater warfare experts and the whole ship’s company are looking forward to taking these trials further and, in time, integrating the new technologies and solutions into developing doctrine and tactics to sustain the Royal Navy’s operational advantage in the Underwater Battlespace into the future.”

Lieutenant Commander Jonnie Barnes-Yellowley, from the Spearhead team, added: “The

Royal Navy is a world leader in the operation of Anti-Submarine Warfare capabilities.

“However, recent developments in underwater threats means that it is imperative for the navy to exploit the latest technology developments in order to maintain its leading edge. This means we can continue to protect the nation’s critical national infrastructure.

“Recent investment in technology by DSTL now means that the Royal Navy has the opportunity to develop multi-static sonar systems which will integrate tactical ASW units to improve detection performance and present unique challenges to underwater systems seeking to evade detection and threaten our way of life.”

The Anti-Submarine Warfare Spearhead trials team are also looking at getting cutting-edge technology in a faster timeline – getting equipment to the frontline of operations quicker than traditional procurement processes.

They also look to solve real-world military problems, not only with new kit but using existing systems to give the Royal Navy the edge in the underwater battlespace.



HMS Richmond, above, and the trials team from QinetiQ, Thales, BAE, Ultra and DSTL, right







TO starboard just a few hundred feet below Lieutenant Commander Rory Cheyne is HMS Prince of Wales.

For his penultimate flight in the cockpit of an F-18, the Fleet Air Arm officer – who’s spent six years on exchange with the US Navy – flew over Britain’s biggest warship, conducting fast-jet trials off the US Eastern Seaboard.

It’s as close as the 34-year-old from Somerset could get to the 65,000-tonne aircraft carrier.

Due to the Portsmouth-based warship being designed keel-up around the F-35B and its impressive short take-off/vertical landing capability, there are no arrestor wires/catapult aboard to host jets like Rory’s Super Hornet.

So a fly-past it was.

Rory joined the RN ten years ago with the goal of becoming a helicopter pilot... but after completing basic helicopter training at RAF Shawbury he was selected for fast jets.

At the time, that meant joining the Long Lead Specialist Skills Programme – the unique link with the US military which kept the flame of fast-jet carrier aviation alive in the UK in the decade between the demise of the Harrier and the advent of the F-35.

After completing advanced jet training on the T-45C Goshawk at NAS Meridian in Mississippi, Rory converted to the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and a three-year tour of duty on Strike Fighter Squadron 34 – VFA-34 – known as the Blue Blasters (blue from their tail colours, blasters from carrying nuclear ordnance in a previous incarnation).

His attachment to the squadron, based at NAS Oceana in Virginia Beach – next door to Norfolk Naval Base – ends this month.

It’s seen him fly on operational sorties in eastern Europe/eastern Mediterranean/Balkans during an extensive stint of carrier operations.

“Flying with the Prince of Wales was a fantastic way to end my tour out here – very much a unique and once in lifetime experience!” said Rory.

“I’ve thoroughly enjoyed integrating with the US on a front line F-18 squadron, but perhaps the best experience was deploying for 9½ months on USS Harry S Truman.

“I’ve learned a huge amount about how the US operate across the world and I’m looking forward to bringing this experience back to the Royal Navy.”

His next draft is on the staff of the UK Carrier Strike Group, planning and advising strike missions from either HMS Queen Elizabeth or Prince of Wales.

*Laying the groundwork – see pages 19-21*

# ROOM WITH A VIEW






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# THE BEST BOOTNECK OF 2023

A Royal Marine who embodies what it means to serve in the Corps has been commended for his actions by the most senior Royal Marine.

Commandant General, General Gwyn Jenkins, awarded the multitasking Corporal Jack Crawford the Royal Marine of the Year Award for 2023 at the MOD's Main Building in London.

Cpl Crawford, who serves with 353 Troop training team at the Commando Training Centre in Lympstone, stood out during a very difficult sifting process of 14 Royal Marines who have excelled across the year and throughout their careers.

Jack – who has been a Royal Marine for ten years – “epitomised the Corps’ values of excellent, integrity, self-discipline and humility” after producing the Combat Communicators course for both Commando Duties Marines and Landing Craftsmen in 47 Commando.

Jack also maximises his lived experience in the Royal Marines by volunteering for every opportunity.

Most recently he participated in a ski march finishing at the Matterhorn, Switzerland and finished 2nd of 174 overall in a joint USMC / UK shooting competition.

During the Normandy Commemorations in June 23, Cpl Crawford was used as the interpreter on 47 Commando’s visit to Port-en-Bessin.

In perfect French, he fluently translated all VIP speeches to a majority French audience throughout the high-profile, five-day trip which thoroughly enhanced the reputation of the Corps in preparation for the 80th D-Day anniversary next year.

Jack competes for Great Britain in individual precision rifle shooting and is also the chairman of the sport, organising GB individual precision shooting events and is in the process of establishing the sport as a recognised discipline within the Royal Marines.

Jack and his wife, Isobel, who he lives in Plymouth with, visited the Commandant General and the Corps Regimental Sergeant Major in MOD Main Building along with other separate award winners and was presented his citation in person.

Cpl Crawford said: “I do not feel worthy of this accolade and there are many others more deserving of it.”

The Royal Marines of the Year award was established in 2020 to recognise the exceptional work of one Royal Marine in particular who has shone in the past year and has most personified what it means to be a Commando. It is sponsored by Honorary RNR Captain Keith Knowles.

As part of his award, Cpl Crawford wins a Bremont Royal Marines watch and will have a preferential draft in his next assignment.

**Previous Royal Marine of the Year winners:**  
**2020: Marine Jack Duer, 43 Cdo FGPRM.**  
**2021: Corporal Matthew Speedie, 45 Cdo.**  
**2022: LCpl Niall Jefford, 40 Cdo.**



Commandant General, General Gwyn Jenkins presents Corporal Jack Crawford with the award

# REFORGED



DUTCH and British pilots have reinvigorated bonds dating back to World War 2 during two weeks of intensive sorties over the skies of the South West of England.

Flying from Royal Navy Air Station Yeovilton in Somerset, aviators from the UK’s Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) and the Royal Netherlands Air Force’s 860 Squadron launched missions that laid the foundations for joint operations across the globe, starting in the Arctic Circle from January.

The joint training – the second in a series of exercises codenamed Guardian Defender – saw the UK’s Commando Merlin and Commando Wildcat and Dutch NH-90 helicopters operate together, learning how one another work, sharing knowledge and expertise to ultimately create a joint force able of operating side-by-side on the frontline.

This combined training comes on the 50th anniversary year of the UK Netherlands Amphibious Force – Europe’s oldest force of its kind, which has seen the two nations share training, tactics and kit since 1973.

That relationship has sometimes laid dormant, but the flights this autumn have rekindled historic ties, which began during World War 2 when 860 Naval Air Squadron (as it was previously known) was in British service but comprised of Dutch pilots who had escaped mainland Europe to take the fight back to the Nazis.

The squadron was transferred to the Netherlands in 1946 after operating the Fairey Swordfish and later the Fairey Barracuda as a bomber/reconnaissance squadron.

Lieutenant Commander Pete Straker, 845 Naval Air Squadron’s Senior Warfare Officer, said: “Building on the success of the first iteration of the exercise, part two aimed to provide increased force cooperation opportunities.

“Overall it was hugely successful, with elements of most of the functional areas in Commando Helicopter Force working together and helping to support the Dutch.

“860 Squadron departed for the Netherlands having completed all their individual training objectives and again extolling the huge benefits they get from operating out of Yeovilton alongside CHF.

“The exercise has moved CHF/860Sqn integration another step forward, putting the partnership on a strong foundation for Exercise Nordic Response in the Arctic early next year.”

Across two weeks of activity, Dutch pilots worked with 846, 845 and 847 Naval Air Squadrons – which make up the Commando Helicopter Force – to bring together a range of complex skills that culminated in a mock helicopter assault.

During this final assault, a Dutch Anti-Armour patrol were brought in by a NH-90, guided into position at night by the Commando Mobile Air

Operations Team (MAOT) – which guide helicopters to the best possible landing sites to complete their objectives, allowing assault forces to enter the area.

The best landing site was recce by the MAOT while working in tandem with a Commando Wildcat that was providing reconnaissance and feeding information on the picture on the ground to pave the way for troops and equipment to be landed.

The assault by the Anti-Armour team moved quickly with objectives taken rapidly, before Merlins, Wildcat and NH-90 combined to extract forces back to base.

As part of the overall training, a Dutch sergeant was given training by the Commando MAOT team to qualify him as a helicopter handling specialist – working on the theory of the role and building up the final tactic scenario which tested him in a ‘real-world’ setting.

“The interaction and proven interoperability between UK and NL aviation and ground assets has reached a level where both parties are comfortable operating in the same airspace, with positive comms between air and ground assets and full understanding developed for terminal guidance and helicopter landing site recce capability,” said Lieutenant S Watson, the officer in command of the Commando MAOT.

“The next step will be to exploit these relationships in the challenging environment of Norway.”

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# Coming in from the cold



Main image: HMS Medway at Drygalski Fjord in South Georgia; Clockwise from above: A seaboard operation; Personnel help set out boulders to mark the Falkland Islands' association with HMS Leeds Castle; Paying their respects at the HMS Coventry memorial; At Mount Harriet during a battlefield tour; Personnel in a rigid raider



WARM, azure waters beckon for the first time in nine months for HMS Medway after the Royal Navy patrol ship completed her Falklands patrol.

The River-class vessel is returning to her normal stomping ground of the Caribbean having filled in for her sister ship HMS Forth.

Forth arrived in the Falklands as the Royal Navy's permanent presence patrolling the islands at the beginning of 2020.

By the beginning of this year the South Atlantic weather and general wear and tear of 24/7/365 operations meant the ship needed an overhaul.

With no docking facilities in the islands, Forth was sent to Gibraltar and HMS Medway stepped into her shoes having performed a similar role in the Caribbean for the past two years.

The Falklands mission is focused on reassurance to and support for the island community, visiting the outlying hamlets, settlements and individual farms and conducting joint training with RAF, Army and authorities on a host of tasks: search and rescue support, fishery protection and general maritime security in the area.

Experience of boat operations in the islands of the Caribbean served the ship well in visiting the inlets and bays of the Falklands to meet the local populace.

The RAF in particular proved vital in getting to know the 700+ islands, regularly taking Medway's sailors up for 'acquaint' flights to understand the size and topography of islands which cover an area roughly half the size of Wales... but with a population not half as numerous as Torpoint.

"From this unique vantage point, we witnessed the breathtaking beauty of the pristine coastline, jagged cliffs, and rolling hills," said Lieutenant Tom Murphy, Medway's Gunnery Officer.

"These awe-inspiring flights ignited their spirits, reminding them of the vastness and power of the world they protect."

It's impossible to serve in the islands and not immerse yourself in their history, especially the 1982 conflict (one of the tasks of the RN patrol ship is to maintain the memorials in some of the more remote locations, such as Sea Lion Island (HMS Sheffield) or Pebble Island (HMS Coventry)).

Medway spent 105 days on patrol

around the Falklands and neighbouring South Georgia, adding more than 16,500 nautical miles – equivalent so sailing three quarters of the way around the globe – to her tachometer.

The several visits to South Georgia with its unique blend of rugged landscapes, abundant wildlife – including massive colonies of king penguins, fur seals, and numerous bird species – and fascinating history proved the highlight of the ship's 'loan period' to the South Atlantic for many crew.

Sailors took advantage of guided tours to the old whaling stations which showcase remnants of a once-thriving industry and providing insights into the island's past.

As well as offering an insight into the island's history, the tours lay the foundation for understanding the fragile ecosystem and the importance of conservation efforts in this remote part of the world.

"We've formed memories to last a lifetime," said Tom. "We've been enriched by the vivid historical narratives, invigorated by helicopter flights, and I don't think any of us can ever fail to be charmed by the penguins."

"The Falklands have offered everyone on HMS Medway a unique fusion of adventure, education, and connection to the natural world, reminding us, once again, of the profound privilege of serving in the Royal Navy."

The ship has now formally handed back responsibility for the islands to HMS Forth after a 10,000-mile journey from The Rock via the west coast of Africa.

Medway is now making her way back to the Americas, also heading 'home' for a period of maintenance following her spell in the South Atlantic, before resuming her regular patrols supporting British citizens in the region's overseas territories, working with allies on counter-narcotic operations and being on hand to offer support in the event of natural disasters such as hurricanes.

"I am extremely proud of the dedication and professionalism demonstrated by my crew during our time in the Falkland Islands," said Commander Jon Fletcher, Medway's Commanding Officer.

"Their hard work and commitment to our shared goals were fundamental in ensuring Medway left a positive legacy. We're all now eagerly anticipate our return to the Caribbean."







Culinary Specialist 1st Class Luis Sanchez, Leading Petty Officer at the Secretary of Defense Mess, Pentagon, Virginia, and Royal Navy Leading Catering Services Sam May, Royal Navy Embassy, prepare dishes at the Anglo-American dinner aboard HMS Victory

# GOLD PLATED

A ROYAL Navy chef wowed judges to be crowned the best in the military – a year after narrowly missing out on the title.

The Royal Navy Culinary Arts Team performed well in the high stakes' environment picking up 25 medals over the two-day event, where all three Armed Forces culinary teams competed at Exercise Joint Caterer in Stoneleigh, Warwickshire.

The competition is the pinnacle of military fine dining with each busy kitchen being packed with different smells, people, and ingredients, all competing to produce the most exquisite meal.

When plated, the judges scrutinise the works of art produced and have the difficult job of critiquing each dish and declaring a winner.

The big winner of the day was Leading Chef Ian Wilson who was named Inter-Services Senior Chef of 2023 (Unofficially, the best chef in the military).

Ian – who's assigned to the Navy's special hospitality team – is used to working in a high-pressure environment and serving up the finest food.

In 2021, he led the kitchen for the G7 Summit in St Ives, catering for many world leaders including US President Joe Biden.

Gold was Ian's goal for this year's event – and having won it, he's already looking at his next challenge.

"When they called my name, I felt ecstatic, I am so happy, I was so close last year but there was one big fault which meant I lost points," he said.

"To win this year and put Senior Inter-Service Chef to bed is good. Now I am focusing on the next big challenge: National Chef of The Year."

What did he serve to scoop the title? To start: turbot with samphire, peas and smoked bacon, pickled onion, oyster poached in Vermouth cream and chicken skin, curry sauce,



Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Brittney Boatman, galley Watch Captain at Naval Base Ventura County, Point Mugu, California, prepares dishes at the Anglo-American dinner aboard HMS Victory.

potato crisps, dill oil and lemon foam.

That was followed by a main course of cep-rolled venison loin, venison tartelette with celeriac, confit potato, stuffed morel, parsnip and tonka beans, pickled blackberries and venison and morel sauce.

And to finish off the three-course treat: spiced pumpkin cake, poached pumpkin, chocolate crèmeux, blueberry compote, pumpkin seed brittle, cacao nib, hazelnuts and crème fraîche sorbet.

After cooking up a storm in this year's competition Ian admitted that his work doesn't come home with him, and he won't be head chef on Christmas Day this year.

The team picked up several other medals, including Petty Officer Gina Towler-Harbor, whose take on the classic fish and chips earned her a gold medal in Open Plated Sustainable Fish.

Her twist on the British Friday-night favourite included pan-fried hake topped with pea puree (which took over two weeks to create!) and pickled quail's egg – fair to say, it was more complex than your average chip shop.

Gina has been competing since 2014 as part of the Culinary Arts team but this was her first gold. She has previously achieved silver and bronze but has always been aiming for the top step of the podium.

"It's all I've ever wanted to achieve; you never go into the competition wanting a bronze you always want the gold. When I realised, I had won gold it was an amazing moment. I couldn't quite believe it. It felt surreal. Then I had the gold medal in my hand, and it suddenly became very real"

Team Captain, Chief Petty Officer Scott Furber, praised his chefs for their constant team presence and brilliant teamwork.



Ian Wilson's dessert of spiced pumpkin cake, poached pumpkin, chocolate crèmeux, blueberry compote, pumpkin seed brittle, cacao nib, hazelnuts and crème fraîche sorbet.

The judges agreed with Scott, awarding the Royal Navy the Team Ethos Award – maintain the RN's outstanding record of taking it every year since the title's inception.

"A proud moment for me is watching the rates who have never competed before come off stage with big smiles on their faces," Scott said.

Speaking of 'sweet victory', this year the Royal Navy team were joined by their American counterparts to prepare a symbolic Anglo-American dinner night onboard HMS Victory Five US Navy chefs assisted in the preparation of the annual dinner for senior American and British Military personnel in October on the world's oldest commissioned ship.

Assisting chef for the dinner night, Petty Officer Brittany Boatman, said: "It was definitely a once in a lifetime experience. We have worked with UK chefs, who have accomplished amazing things in their military career, that can't say they cooked in the world's oldest commissioned ship – like we now have."

"We feel very lucky in such a short time to be part of one of those dinners."

The Royal Navy team welcomed their US counterparts into the Culinary Arts team two weeks prior to the dinner night and competition, as a result both teams learnt a lot of new skills from each other.

Team member, Petty Officer Luis Sanchez, said: "The Royal Navy have been such gracious hosts, from the moment we arrived they have been very interested in what we have to share and our differences."

"It was also nice to see that some things are the same, sailors are sailors, we speak the same maritime language. It made it easy to know where the heads are."



Ian Wilson was named Senior Chef of the Year





## Holly's passion for compassion

THE care, compassion, empathy and selfless efforts of Petty Officer Holly Sadler during naval families' darkest hours earned her the title of 'Fleet Air Arm sailor of the year'.

Rear Admiral Steve Moorhouse, the Royal Navy's Director of Force Generation, formally presented the framed commendation in recognition of Holly's exemplary support, in particular, to three bereaved Yeovilton families, who's serving people were assigned to Commando Helicopter Force (CHF).

The 33-year-old from Wensleydale in North Yorkshire spent nearly a decade as an ops room warfare specialist, serving in frigates HMS Montrose and Somerset, then passing on her knowledge to fellow sailors at HMS Collingwood and supporting training in FOST.

In 2021 she changed careers and joined the Royal Navy's Family and People Support arm, relocating to Yeovilton as one of two specialist welfare workers on the air base.

Royal Navy welfare specialists provide accessible support services which strengthen and enhance the resilience and resourcefulness of Naval Service personnel, their families and communities.

This can range from providing a safe space and listening ear to shipmates experiencing personal challenges, through to guiding families to help available if they are struggling with specific issues and playing a key role when there's a death in service.

Tragically, CHF has lost three members of the Fleet Air Arm family during Holly's time at Yeovilton.

Phrases such as "professionalism and dedication shone through", "simply superb", "brilliant" and "dedication, compassion, and self-sacrifice" pepper her commendation for the title of sailor of the year.

This work has required the senior rating to draw upon all of her capacity and demonstrate considerable resilience and resourcefulness working in direct support to families facing the most challenging of circumstances.

Routinely spending time away from her own young family, she has worked to ensure the highest standards of service delivery at times when it is needed most.

In sum, says her citation, Holly demonstrated "exemplary compassion, empathy and selflessness, to ensure the individuals and their families received a level of support far beyond what would ordinarily be expected.

"PO Sadler has consistently demonstrated first-rate dedication, sensitivity, and commitment to Yeovilton personnel and their families in the most challenging times possible, for her unparalleled support, humility, and selfless nature, she is strongly recommended for formal recognition."

## Phalanx for the upgrade

NEARLY £18m will be pumped into the Royal Navy's Phalanx Gatling guns to keep pace with the latest threats.

Defence firm Babcock has won a three-year contract to maintain and upgrade the automated guns, which serve as the penultimate line of defence against missile, air and fast-boat attacks for much of the Fleet.

The Close-in-Weapons System spews out 60 20mm armour-piercing shells every second – 3,000 rounds a minute.

The gun is fitted to all four capital ships, all Type 45 destroyers, all RFA Tide-class tankers, Bay-class support vessels and aviation training/casualty treatment ship RFA Argus.

Babcock, which has provided support for Phalanx for 17 years, has been awarded £17.9m to maintain, upgrade and provide spare parts for up to 41 weapon systems for the next three years.

The work will be carried out by the firm's weapons team in Devonport.

Question: which Royal Navy ship has been at sea for four out of every five days in 2023?

Won an award for humanitarian efforts?

Visited 16 ports in eight countries?

Supported efforts to curb people smuggling, worked with NATO and Joint Expeditionary Force allies?

Trained the Navy's top navigators?

Reinvigorated ties with affiliates with a hometown visit?

Monitored Russian ships passing the UK?

And taken part in the world's biggest music event/party?

If you're thinking a flagship or capital ship? Or maybe a Type 23, workhorses of the Fleet? A big fat X.

But if you were to pick a smaller vessel, agile, nimble, flexible, with a crew of 40+ souls ready for anything, say HMS Mersey... you'd be bang on.

The Portsmouth-based patrol ship has brought down the curtain on active ops for 2023 by sailing into Falmouth for an overhaul/mini refit... allowing her crew to take a breather.

In fact, 2023 actually began in 2022; Mersey opened the year as she had ended last, on Operation Isotrope – the government operation to stop illegal people trafficking

in the Channel.

It was a challenging mission rewarded at the time with a visit to the Netherlands, and, later in the year, a commendation from the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society for 'meritorious actions in rescuing others'.

Mersey spent more than 120 days attached to the operation, responding to more than 650 incidents alongside the RNI and Border Force, helping recover both people, but also abandoned craft, mostly at night, and mostly in poor conditions.

"The tasking was constant and due to the size of the crew involved everybody to be called on day or night," said Lieutenant Alex Collins.

"The seamanship department felt the brunt of the workload in what was a very demanding environment; due to the improvised nature of the craft used by the migrants, density of shipping in the Dover Strait and often unfavourable weather conditions, recovery serials were inherently dangerous.

"Despite the challenges faced many on board found the tasking to be rewarding as, unlike some of our other duties, the human impact of the operation was immediately evident."

Seaman specialist Able Seaman Jordan Ralph said: "I really enjoyed the run ashore to Amsterdam – we spent

## ON THE MERSEY BEAT



235 days at sea out of 300

31,590 nautical miles steamed



That's Land's End to John O'Groats 52 times

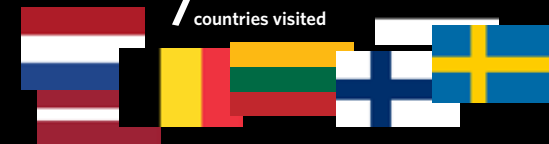


That's Land's End to John O'Groats 52 times



3,331 hours underway - or 138 days

7 countries visited



five days there and were able to enjoy activities such as the Ajax FC stadium tour and canal cruise around the city. There's a vibrant scene across the city with lots of trendy bars and restaurants."

In March and April the ship was dispatched to the Baltic to work with NATO/Joint Expeditionary Force allies, notably Sweden, Finland and the three Baltic states, and train with locally-based RAF

assets (notably a Typhoon interceptor).

In each nation the ship hosted VIPs, native media and military personnel and was warmly embraced despite frequent sub-zero temperatures.

Particularly enjoyable was Helsinki, where sailors were invited to the Finnish Naval Academy on the island of Suomenlinna fortress, one of Finland's premier tourist



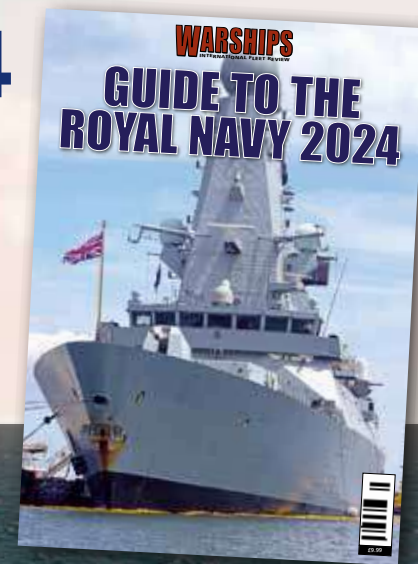
# REFLECTING ON 2023

## GUIDE TO THE ROYAL NAVY 2024

A mixture of warship profiles, commentary and analysis, including:

- Assessment of the Royal Navy
- Update on the Type 31 Frigate programme
- The rise and illogical fall of the amphibious forces
- Lessons offered by conflict in Europe

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attractions as well as the old officers' mess in the country where they tried the 'Russian roulette' vending machine – so called because whether it delivers a drink is pot luck...

"It was fascinating to learn about the shared history of the island and the Royal Navy," said Lt Collins. "After apologising for bombarding the island during the Crimean War, we headed for a lunch of pea soup and traditional Finnish pancakes."

The ship's been asked to step in her for her sister HMS Severn on a couple of occasions to run the seagoing phase of the specialist navigation course (for navigators looking to safely guide capital ships through challenging waters),

with the wonderful people of the city amidst the backdrop of the Eurovision song contest," said Chief Petty Officer Lee 'Bungy' Williams, assistant marine engineer officer.

The year's other big party – the Coronation – was missed as Mersey was conducting her primary role: safeguarding the mother isle by monitoring the progress of Russian ships past the UK, one of several times she's been activated this year... including in the final weeks before entering maintenance in Falmouth.

"I've really enjoyed the ships duties escorting non-NATO warships as they pass through the UK's area of interest," said Able Seaman Stella Layton.

"I attended the ship's

Mitchell is delighted by everything his ship and his men and women have accomplished in 2023 – once again underlining the versatility of the class.

"Called upon –

## “ This is a small ship's company of men and women who have delivered everything – and then some

mostly conducted in the lochs and inlets of Scotland which allowed a rare visit to Scapa Flow to pay respects to the RN of WW1 and WW2.

There's been no warmer welcome all year than from Mersey's hometown visited in April (freedom parade through the affiliated borough of Sefton) and again in May (for Eurovision).

"Being in Liverpool felt like coming home. It was a pleasure to spend a few days

photographer course and since then I've had plenty of opportunity to practice the skills I learnt by collecting imagery observing foreign vessels."

The River-class ship's engines will be overhauled, accommodation upgraded and systems renewed ready to give Mersey another lease of life to get back to what she does best and protecting home waters.

Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander James

frequently at short notice – to respond to emergencies or evolving situations around home waters, Mersey's circumnavigated the UK three times during the past few months.

"Behind all of this is the small ship's company of men and women who have delivered everything – and then some – of what has been asked of them.

"We're looking forward to our next venture in Falmouth

and some deep maintenance to breathe a new lease of life into the ship to allow her to get back to the front line within the next few months."



## Christmas Card Appeal

Every year the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society pays over £1M in grants to the dependants of those lost at sea, as well as sick, disabled and retired seafarers struggling to make ends meet. Following the extremely difficult last few years we are now in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis which is blighting the lives of many who feel helpless and vulnerable - particularly in the often marginalised and forgotten seafaring community we serve. Please help us to continue our important work – **thank you.**

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# TAMAR PROVES VERSATILITY AGAINST STUNNING BACKDROP

PAST. Present. Future.

In the space of four weeks in and around Australia's largest city, HMS Tamar embraced the three ages.

The Past? Well that's an easy one. Trafalgar Night and the traditions and values which don't just underpin the Royal Navy but also many Commonwealth and allied navies.

Born of the Royal Navy shortly before WW1, the Royal Australian Navy continued to mark Nelson's triumph. But by the late 20th Century, the tradition had largely faded, save for veterans' groups sporadically holding dinners.

So Tamar's visit to Sydney was both a perfect way to remind our Down Under cousins of a memorable day (and night) in the RN calendar... and also a perfect way to thank the RAN for its hospitality.

Indeed, since arriving in the western Pacific at the beginning of 2022, Tamar and her sister ship HMS Spey have frequently availed themselves of

Australian hospitality, training opportunities and port/naval base facilities.

Sydney was no different: a plum berth at HMAS Kuttabul, the east coast home of the Australian fleet and as locations for naval bases go, not too shabby; the two icons of the harbour, the opera house and the arch bridge are no more than a mile away from the castles of steel of the RAN and visiting friends.

And so it was that almost within hearing distance of Sydney Opera House, members of the Royal Marines Band Service introduced guests - among them Governor-General David Hurley and High Commissioner Vicki Treadell - to the finest British military musicianship.

The occasion also celebrated the dedication of a man who's served the Royal and Royal Australian Navies collectively for more than half a century, Commander Nick Doyle. Before transferring to the RAN, among his former ships HMS Tamar, the then naval base in Hong Kong,

where he served as a gunnery officer in 1997, the year the colony was returned to China.

From the past to the present. To be more accurate, the present and future.

For after Trafalgar Night, Tamar began preparing for a test of future capabilities: UK-specific (RN PODS/Type 26 'mission bays', new autonomous systems) and collective (working with our closest allies to better safeguard our underwater infrastructure).

Run under the auspices of the AUKUS partnership (A for Australia, UK for, er, UK, and US... well, you get the picture).

The strategic partnership between the three nations has hitherto largely focused on developing the successor to the Astute-class submarines.

But it doesn't stop there.

Monitoring/protection of underwater/deep sea/sea bed infrastructure has become an increasing security issue worldwide in recent

years, with the UK investing in a new, sovereign capability, RFA Proteus, currently undergoing trials/tests/development.

In addition, various remotely-operated and autonomous/crewless systems are being assessed or introduced into service both with the RN and her allies.

To test those systems, the ability to deploy them half-way around the world and operate them side-by-side with our partners, the Australians hosted an exercise in waters off the coast of New South Wales.

It also allowed a run out of the Royal Navy's new 'PODS' programme, designed to expand the capabilities of today's - and tomorrow's - warships.

Two mission PODS - Persistent Operational Deployment Systems - were dispatched to Australia.

Roughly the same size as a shipping container each POD contains equipment and support for

a dedicated operation which a ship wouldn't normally perform, such as minehunting, launching surveillance drones, perhaps kit for a Royal Marines boarding team or raiding party.

It's a concept central to the design of and proposed operations by the Royal Navy's next generation of frigates, the Type 26 and 31.

In this instance, the PODS carried diving equipment and underwater autonomous systems for use by the expert dive teams: 39 Royal Navy and US Navy Dive Team, hydrographers and Royal Marine communications specialists, all embarked on Tamar.

On top of the Brits and Americans, an Australian dive team joined the new Australian Defence Vessel ADV Guidance with current and experimental underwater equipment.

Described as a combination of "exercise, tactical development and demonstration all in one", the workout rolled out crewed and uncrewed, autonomous and remotely-operated





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A Mojave drone is moved into position ready for the first trial on board a Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carrier

Image by LPhoto Unaisi Luke

# INTO THE UNKNOWN

## IS THIS the future?

With the sun rising over the eastern horizon, handlers and engineers prepare a Mojave drone for launch. No nation beyond the United States has attempted this. To launch - and recover - a large, uncrewed aircraft from the deck of a carrier.

We've launched small Banshee jets to test air defences. Or Pumas. So small they can be launched by hand just as you might throw a paper dart.

A few rotary wing devices have been used to ferry supplies to Royal Marines in the field.

We've even seen drones deliver spare parts from shore to ship.

Mojave is in a different league. Bigger. Wider. Heavier. Punchier.

No drone its size - nine metres long, with a wingspan of 17 metres (six metres wider than an F-35B Lightning stealth fighter) and weighing more than 1½ tonnes fully loaded - has ever flown from an aircraft carrier outside the US Navy before.

There are no catapults to assist a launch. No arrestor wires to slow a landing aircraft down.

So Mojave has been specially-adapted from the MQ1C Gray Eagle to operate from a short runway; HMS Prince of Wales may be the UK's biggest warship, but her flight deck isn't much more than 950ft long.

After months of preparation, calculations and planning

by everyone from the drone's manufacturers, US firm General Atomic, to the Navy Develop/NavyX experts looking to harness the latest tech to give the RN the lead over its adversaries, to the ship's company themselves, trials day, November 14, came around.

And it was too windy off the coast of Virginia. Luckily, being Brits, we'd factored in bad weather... and set a second day aside.

And November 15 was a perfect day off the Eastern Seaboard. Perfect for moving Mojave from the hangar, via the lift, to the deck and, hey presto, into the sky.

Okay, so it took a bit more than that, but the key points are.

1. Yes, you can launch a large drone.
2. And, once its completed its mission - flown remotely by a pilot at a computer terminal - it can safely land back on board.

The question now: what we do with it while in the air? Longer range monitoring and surveillance? Intelligence gathering? Strike missions alongside or independently of F-35s?

And that's what's getting folks excited.

The trial off the coast of Virginia further unlocks the potential of the UK's Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers.

"The Mojave trial is a European first - the first time that a Remotely Piloted Air System of this size has operated

and from an aircraft carrier outside of the United States," said Rear Admiral James Parkin, Royal Navy Director Develop, whose team planned the trial.

"The success of this trial heralds a new dawn in how we conduct maritime aviation and is another exciting step in the evolution of the Royal Navy's carrier strike group into a mixed crewed and uncrewed fighting force."

The Royal Navy's Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral Martin Connell, said embracing autonomy was "the next logical step to ensuring that the Royal Navy can continue to fight and win in an increasingly-complex operating environment".

He continued: "With so many international partners interested in the results of these Mojave trials on board HMS Prince of Wales, I am delighted that we are taking the lead in such exciting and important work to unlock the longer-term potential of the aircraft carrier and push it deep into the 21st Century as a highly-potent striking capability."

Mojave is not - and will not - enter front-line service with the Fleet Air Arm.

It's a demonstrator, a prototype.

Weighing around three tonnes, and made by US company General Atomics, Mojave is capable of performing numerous long endurance missions from medium altitude.

Continues on page 20-21





# A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE



*Continued from page 19*

It's from the same family of aircraft as the Royal Air Force's new Protector RG Mk1 (unveiled a few days after the Mojave trials).

Commander Martin Russell, in charge of air operations aboard HMS Prince of Wales as Wings/Commander Air said his department were buzzing at the prospect of a new 'toy' with which to play.

"During a deployment centred around experimentation and expanding the envelope of the Queen Elizabeth class, this is one of the highlights.

"Integrating the Navy Develop and General Atomics personnel into the Prince of Wales team was key to enabling such a large Remotely Piloted Air System to operate from the deck during this trial, with the capability feeling like a glimpse into the future of these ships."

These past two months off the USA have been the busiest - and most fruitful - in the carrier's relatively short career.

Mojave was loaded aboard the ship just days after the hangar was emptied of kit to support four weeks of F-35 trials.

Known as DT-3 (Development Test, phase three; phases one and two were conducted aboard HMS Prince of Wales' older sister HMS Queen Elizabeth) they saw F-35s from the US-based Integrated Test Force and flown by US Marine Corps aviators flying on and off the carrier's deck carrying different payloads - including fully 'bombed up' with a full complement of (dummy) weapons - in varying weather conditions.

The key tests involved 'shipborne rolling vertical landings' (SVRL) - rather than coming to a hover before slipping across the deck over the landing spot and dropping gently down, an F-35B lands rather like an

aircraft touching down on a runway, using a combination of vertical thrust and brakes to bring it to a halt.

It means a Lightning can return from a mission without having to dump fuel or ditch unused ordnance.

That means less time to refuel/rearm between flights - increasing the carrier's ability to launch strike sorties.

In all 60 rolling landings were conducted, including ten by night. Other trials successfully completed include: 20 backwards landings (facing towards the stern), ten at night; nearly 150 take-offs by day and night in various weather conditions/sea states.

Experts on both sides of the Atlantic will analyse the masses of data collected over the coming months, but the ship's command team are confident the trials have 'expanded the envelope' of F-35 operations.

The goal has been simple: the launch more strike missions faster at the limits of poor weather by day and night.

All make for very arresting visuals.

Take 'beast mode': an F-35B fully loaded. To the max. Topped out. Maximum effort.

every pylon occupied by a weapon, the internal bomb bay bristling.

Fully loaded, the F-35B can deliver 22,000lb of destructive and defensive power: air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles and conventional and laser-guided bombs.24ft)

If you're struggling to imagine a 22,000lb payload... it's the equivalent of the heaviest bomb carried by a WW2 Lancaster bomber (the Grand Slam or 'earthquake' bomb).

And it's nearly three times more than the UK's last carrier-borne strike aircraft, the Harrier GR9, over a decade ago.

For the trials, the modified F-35B from the US Navy's

Integrated Test Force was loaded with a combination of inert 500lb Paveway IV laser-guided bombs and inert 1,000lb Paveways in the weapons bay.

To date, F-35s have been taking off from the 350ft marker on the deck (roughly in line with the end of the forward island).

Depending on a whole host of factors (including weather, wind over the deck, humidity) a fully-loaded Lightning might need a full run-up to the ski jump to get airborne... which means starting all the way back at the 850ft marker... which isn't too far from rear end of the flight deck.

Captain of the Flight Deck Warrant Officer 1 John Etherington - who has experience of deck operations on Nimitz-class US carriers - was the sailor giving the 'go' to the pilots.

"It was impressive, launching the jet, all bombed up from the back of the flight deck," he said. "It's exciting to see us pushing the boundaries of UK naval aviation."

At the controls of F-35s in Beast mode were US Marine Corps pilots Major Paul Gucwa and Lieutenant Colonel Mike Lippert.

This is the fourth time the latter has worked with the UK's carrier force - three times helping HMS Queen Elizabeth develop her Lightning capability, now with Prince of Wales.

"It's a pleasure to see the continued progress in operating capability - there has been undeniable growth and progress," he said.

"Major Gucwa and I took great pleasure in continuing to expand the warfighting capacity of Britain's biggest warship."

It's the first time a full run-up has been tested. And it's also the first time bombs (albeit inert, practice models)





# FUTURE

Images by LPhoto Finn Stainer-Hutchins and LPhoto Unaisi Luke



have been dropped by aircraft launched from Prince of Wales.

The results of the many tests and trials conducted this autumn won't be fully known until well into 2024.

But the gut feeling aboard the ship is hugely positive. "The four weeks at sea on DT-3 have been the busiest HMS Prince of Wales has ever seen," said Commanding Officer Captain Richard Hewitt.

"The test points achieved will not only improve UK F35-B operations, but those of our F35-B programme partners and allies as well."

Commander Jamie Elliott, who planned and oversaw the trials, said that more than 150 tests were carried out, all of which "will inform any future decisions about F35-B operational clearance to take off and land heavier, operate in heavier sea states, and turn the jets around faster for more sorties."

US Marine Corps Major Alex Horne was one of the handful of pilots conducting the aerial manoeuvres which garnered the much-needed data.

"It was a brilliant opportunity to fly aboard HMS Prince of Wales and participate in flight trials designed to contribute to pushing the boundaries of 21st-Century aircraft carrier operations," he said.

"It was great to witness first-hand the interoperability of the F-35 and the carrier in conditions ranging from high deck motion to high wind over deck, and from heavyweight and maximum weight launches to slick wing night flying."

A 180-strong team supported the tests which Andrew Maack, Chief Test Engineer at Pax River, the US air base which is home to the F-35 Integrated Test Force, hailed as "highly successful".

"I was proud of how the team collectively performed

from day one.

"Team members recognised the value of our mission, appreciated the importance of this detachment, and committed to the hard work to ensure we accomplished safe, secure, and efficient flight test aboard the UK's newest aircraft carrier."

It's not just the RN and US Marine Corps keenly interested in the results of this autumn's trials.

The F-35B has also been bought by the Italians and Japanese for operations at sea.

The former are building up their carrier capability, while the latter will be sailing the same waters as Prince of Wales has occupied for the past few weeks this time next year.

Japan is modifying its Izumo-class helicopter carriers so they can operate the F-35B.

To see what's in store, Captain Sato Tsuyoshi, Izumo-class special modification programme lead, and five colleagues were shown every aspect of life aboard Prince of Wales, not least deck operations.

The two navies have been forging an ever-closer working relationship over the past decade, with increasing visits to Japan by RN vessels (not least HMS Queen Elizabeth herself on her 2021 maiden deployment) and Anglo-US-Japanese naval agreements.

"Hopefully it is the first of many such collaborations which might one day lead to full interoperability between our respective carrier strike groups – it is quite possible we will one day see a Japanese F-35B landing on the deck of HMS Prince of Wales," said Lieutenant Commander Roderick Royce, who hosted the Japanese delegation.

Captain Sato said the spell aboard Britain's biggest warship had added another vital piece to the huge jigsaw involving operating F-35s at sea.

"It's been an exciting study on board, seeing fixed wing operations as well as the traditions of the Royal Navy.

"The team have been so welcoming and without your support our study into operating F35-B for the Japanese Self-Defence Forces would not have been as successful."

So with the F-35s and Mojave now gone, it must be nice and quiet, the handlers can take their gloves and surcouts off and put their feet up.

Not quite.

Pretty much every minute the ship has been at sea, air power's been pounding the deck (more than a dozen different types in all).

Indeed, almost the entire inventory of US Marine Corps aircraft (minus traditional carrier jets) have treated the Prince of Wales' flight deck as their own.

Vintage Hueys. Viper gunships. A lot of MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor. The mighty Super Stallion (which is in beast mode when it's normal configuration, such a leviathan of the sky it is) as 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (24MEU) took advantage of the carrier's presence within range of their east coast air bases to get some sea time in and earn deck qualifications.

In between all this there have been VIP visits, memorial services, rugby matches, a little down time, stress relief dogs, Trafalgar and Taranto Night shenanigans, even a spot of *interopérabilité* with the French Navy who sent their new tanker Jacques Chevallier across the Pond for some training.

She conducted a double replenishment at sea with Prince of Wales and USS George Washington - in all some 200,000 tonnes of naval awesomeness steaming along harmoniously... and purposefully.

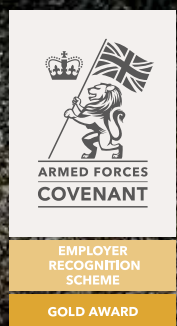
A Briton. A Frenchman. And an American. There's got to be a punchline there...



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# LEVEL PEAKS



# Royal recognition for Royalist Jack

SAILORS from Devonport joined Plymouth WW2 veteran Jack Glover as he celebrated his 100th birthday.

With a card from their majesties the King and Queen, Jack was surrounded by friends, family and Commander Martin Malone, Executive Officer of Devonport Naval Base, and Base Warrant Officer Warrant Officer 1 Steve Harvey for an unforgettable centennial bash in one of Plymouth's premier hotels.

The man all were gathered to honour served in every theatre of war – Atlantic, Arctic, Mediterranean and, finally, the Far East – during the Navy's and nation's sternest test.

Originally from Leeds, Jack served aboard Dido-class cruiser HMS Royalist, seeing action in the Atlantic theatre and the Arctic Convoys as well as escorting aircraft carriers launching strikes against the German battleship Tirpitz hiding in Norwegian waters.

The ship also saw action in the Mediterranean, taking part in the landings in southern France and the Aegean before deploying to the Far East, taking part in the liberation of Rangoon, Burma, and once again supporting carrier groups of the Pacific Fleet in the final battles with the Empire of Japan.

Aboard HMS Royalist Jack's job was a message decoder, responsible for communicating with Naval HQs and other warships, as well as intercepting signals from the German Navy.

Weather conditions and sea states on the Arctic Convoys were severe for both the ships and the men onboard who were also at action stations, contending with attacks from the Luftwaffe and U-boats as well as the elements.

Eight decades later, he believes as a decoder he had an easier – though still demanding – job than his comrades



"I was operating inside the ship, so I wasn't exposed to the Arctic weather, so I had a fairly easy time really," Jack said.

"I just remember the bunks being so close together. You could literally wake and put your feet into someone else's breakfast."

He described serving in the convoys as "a dangerous job and we were all under threat."

"But we were young and more interested in getting to the nearest port and having a beer."

Some things don't change in the Royal Navy."

Jack's close friend on board Royalist was Alistair MacLean (pictured on the left of the inset picture with Jack), who went on to write best-selling novels and screenplays including

*HMS Ulysses* and *The Guns of Navarone* (both of which drew

on experiences in Royalist) and the ultimate WW2 spy/adventure movie *Where Eagles Dare*.

"I identified myself in them and in a lot of what was going on there, as I was with him at the time. I was interested, I was part of that story," continued Jack.

At the end of the war, Jack returned to his life as an accountant and with his wife moved to Brazil where he worked for a paper production company for four decades before returning to the UK.

Among present-day sailors joining Jack for his milestone birthday party was Commander Martin Malone, HMNB Devonport's Executive Officer.

"It was an absolute pleasure and an honour to be part of Jack's 100th birthday celebration. Sharp and witty with a fascinating



wartime career!" he said.

"He is wished all the very best from the Naval Base Commander Devonport, and the wider naval family."



Cdre Jo Adey presents Alice and Edward Botting with an Arctic Star on behalf of their late great-grandfather

## Family history project results in medal for relative

DETECTIVE work by two youngsters ensured their great-grandfather was finally recognised for his WW2 naval deeds.

A family summer holiday project led brother and sister Edward and Alice Botting to John Townsend, who served extensively with the Royal Navy in World War 2, especially in the Arctic.

He never received specific recognition for his time on what Churchill called 'the worst journey in the world', escorting convoys to northern Russia.

When campaign medals were awarded to participants at the war's end, none was struck for the Arctic convoys. Despite different objectives – to help sustain the Soviet Union's war effort against Nazi Germany – the Arctic theatre was included in the broader Battle of the Atlantic, whose veterans were awarded the Atlantic Star.

It wasn't until 2012 that the Government finally awarded the Arctic Star to veterans following years of campaigning – but the decision came too late for the Townsend family; the WW2 veteran had sadly been dead more than two decades.

John from Herne Hill in London joined the Royal Navy in 1940 and was commissioned into the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve the following year. After the war he joined the Navy full-time, rising to the rank of lieutenant commander.

When Edward, nine, and seven-year-old Alice came across their great-grandfather's story, they set about rectifying the omission, reviewing original correspondence, service records, photographs and naval charts found in the two family homes in London and Gosport.

They identified that their great-grandfather had served in cruiser HMS Naiad and battleship HMS King George V inside the Arctic Circle.

They submitted their research, supported by documentary evidence, to the Ministry of Defence, which agreed that John Townsend qualified for the Arctic Star.

The medal was formally presented to the children – in the presence of their parents Daniel and Sarah and great uncle Andrew, who lives in Gosport – at HMS President, the headquarters of the Royal Naval Reserve in the capital, by Commodore Jo Adey, Commander of the Maritime Reserves.

She spent some time with the children, listening to their story, talking about their experience and that of their great-grandfather, before surprising them with the medal.

The children were also invited to be part of HMS President's sunset ceremony on a glorious evening looking out across the Thames and Tower Bridge.

"People who served in the Arctic had to face very tough conditions, so they must have been very brave," said Edward and Alice, who live in London.

"We are very pleased that our summer holiday project helped our great-granddad to get this medal for what he did."

"We never had the chance to meet him, but we think he'd be very proud. It was a privilege to have the medal presented to us at HMS President, and a really memorable occasion."

Commodore Jo added: "This is an incredible story spanning generations of the Botting and Townsend families' history. That two young people were able to produce such irrefutable evidence that their great-grandfather had served in the Arctic Convoys and then make the Ministry of Defence take action, 80 years later, is wonderful."

"The Royal Naval Reserve – and the ship's company of HMS President – are honoured to be able to present the Arctic Star to recognise John Townsend's service, and to reward our young detectives for their work."

## Falklands return is Adey to remember

ROYAL Marine brothers Paul and David Adey returned to the Falklands to re-enact an iconic moment from 1982 – and honour comrades.

The two commandos had not been back to the South Atlantic islands since they fought their way across East Falkland and liberated the capital Stanley in 1982.

The Adeys were reunited in the grounds of the Governor's residence, a meeting charged with high emotion as neither man knew if the other was still alive having been separated during the landings at San Carlos.

That reunion took place amid the euphoria of victory and the

formal raising of the Falklands flag.

Forty-one years later, the brothers recreated that reunion thanks to the permission of current Governor, Alison Blake.

And on Remembrance Sunday, the Adeys laid a wreath at Stanley Cenotaph on behalf of the RMA – The Royal Marines Charity.

David is one of the original defenders of Stanley from the initial Argentine invasion in April 1982, Naval Party 8901.

The 70-strong unit put up a "courageous and gallant defence" of Government House – the seat of UK rule in the islands – despite being "outnumbered, outgunned and outmanoeuvred", until they

were ordered to down arms by Governor Sir Rex Hunt to spare unnecessary bloodshed.

Taken prisoner, the Naval Party were repatriated and many returned to the Falklands two months later with 3 Commando Brigade.

David, a driver with the Naval Party, was assigned to Juliet Company 42 Commando as a rifleman.

Ten weeks after surrendering Government House, David was among the group famously pictured raising the Falklands flag once again.

Just out of shot when the same historic image was taken, David's brother Paul.

He served as a Corporal RM

Signaller in the Divisional HQ of the late Maj Gen JJ Moore RM. He had landed as part of 3 Commando Brigade HQ and Signal Squadron, before quickly moving to provide a communications base station for the Royal Marines' Mountain and Arctic Warfare cadre.

The brothers' paths had earlier metaphorically crossed as David was flying back to the UK from Uruguay, while Paul was on his way to Ascension Island aboard the ill-fated support ship RFA Sir Galahad.

By a quirk of fate, they briefly met up a few weeks later on SS Canberra at Ascension before going their separate ways upon landing at San Carlos.





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SCAN ME



# Historic setting to mark Battle of Trafalgar



THE RNRMC and White Ensign Association marked Trafalgar Night at the Painted Hall at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich.

The Princess Royal attended with celebrated historian, Dan Snow giving the keynote speech.

More than 300 guests attended this special event including the Chief of Defence Staff and event headline sponsors; BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin, Babcock International and Capita.

Guests enjoyed 'Parading of the Beef' and chocolate 'Ships of the Line' as well as witnessing mess beatings by the Corps of Drums from the Royal Marine Band Service and the singing of sea shanties.

Andrew Jameson, Chief Executive of the RNRMC, said: "Iconic surroundings steeped in tradition is an extremely fitting way to commemorate this most famous Naval battle 218 years later. As the Principal Charity for the Royal Navy we were honoured by the presence of our Patron HRH The Princess Royal and very proud to co-host this event with our close friends and colleagues at The White Ensign Association.

Stuart Wright, Chief Executive of the White Ensign Association said: "There is no more fitting place to commemorate the exploits of Admiral Lord Nelson two centuries ago than where he lay in state after the Battle of Trafalgar.

"The generosity of grants from the RNRMC helps the WEA in its work assisting all who serve or have served in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary, and their families. It is therefore a privilege to co-host this event."



## Cutting their way to recovery

RNRMC has come together with RMA – The Royal Marines Charity to provide funding for Chainsaw Maintenance and Crosscutting courses for Royal Naval personnel in recovery.

These courses are an excellent example of the innovative and holistic support offered to sailors and marines in recovery.

They provide an opportunity to learn valuable skills in a supportive, outdoor setting.

Ant Mackeral, the instructor, provides all the necessary instruction and equipment, earning high praise for his teaching and coaching techniques.

What makes this course particularly noteworthy is the personal journey of Ant, who is currently recovering from long covid.

His willingness to share his own battles with mental health adds a unique dimension to each session. His honesty resonated with participants, who appreciated the chance to connect with someone who had faced similar challenges.

Ant said: "I love my job and love that I am able to bring these aspects of myself along with the skills and knowledge that I have gained over the past 30 years, I just want for people who come on my courses to have the opportunity to talk and share. The chainsaw and the cutting merely helps open that door."

Feedback from participants underscores the positive impact of the Chainsaw Maintenance and Crosscutting course.

One participant said: "It was really good for my physical and mental health to have a couple of days to develop myself and learn a new skill. It was really good to get out of the rehab environment and focus on something other than my injury."

# Make an effort, you won't regret it

"If you're thinking of having a go at Company of Makers (CoM) workshops, I'd say, 'Do it! Do the workshops! Everyone's so friendly and supportive. Even if you feel really nervous and anxious at first, it's worth it because you will find a bit of you again.'"

The journey of coping with a partner's PTSD can be overwhelming, both mentally and practically.

For Jenny\*, the partner of a Royal Navy veteran struggling with PTSD, the task of caring for her husband while managing her own well-being took a toll.

"We've been together a long time, 35 years. My partner went to the same school as me, he was four years older than me. When he left, he joined the forces.

"He was a softy, really. But like so many, I think he thought at 16 when he signed-up he was going to see the world and you know, ended up very differently.

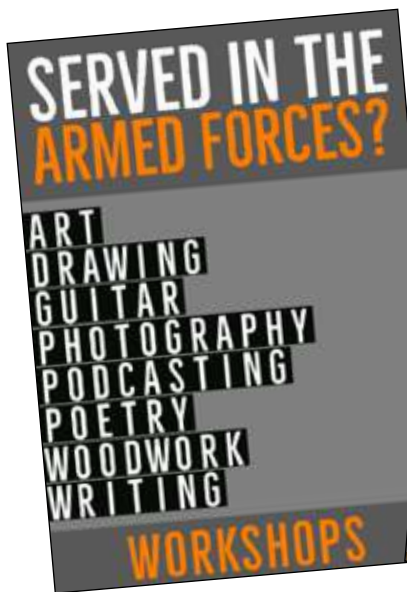
"Some people cope with different things differently. Their brains are wired differently to be able to shut things out and cope with different stresses. Some people don't get PTSD, but others do. He's been suffering for about 12-15 years now.

"He's not a bad person. He's a lovely person. We had years together as this one man and then suddenly he became a completely different person...still lovely, but it's not the relationship it was, and it never will be again, and I've had to accept that I'm never going to get him back.

"This is who I've got now. And that's the hard bit when you hear the young partners of service people and veterans who are at the beginning of the PTSD journey.

"It's not living but you know, I'm glad we've survived it. But you look back at trying to hold it together, it's hard work and I was too exhausted to reach out."

RNRMC is dedicated to ensuring that people like Jenny and her partner receive the best support available.



"That is why we have decided to fund CoMs' Creative workshops. We are delighted to hear that since joining CoMs' evening drawing workshops nine months ago, Jenny's outlook on life has changed for the better. She explains:

"I [now] have time where it's just for me. I haven't even got to leave the house because the workshops are online. It's very relaxed and it's not about creating a masterpiece. It's about just giving yourself time to shut your brain off from all the other stresses of life."

The workshops provide a safe and non-judgmental environment where participants can channel their emotions and experiences through various creative mediums.

Jenny, who had always enjoyed being creative but had put it aside in the face of her husband's struggles, found herself reconnecting with her passion.

After progressing in the drawing workshops for several months, Jenny's confidence increased so much that she also joined CoM's painting workshops,

"Both workshops have and are, helping me so much...above all, they give me real 'me time' to shut out everything else that's happening, calm my brain down and escape into an activity that I would never have had the confidence to attend a class in.

"Honestly, I can't really put into words what it's done for me. This, apart from Ripplepond, is the first thing that has been

offered to me, for me, without having to fight every step of the way for people to listen and realise that those of us that live with, or support a veteran or service man/woman, need to be cared for too. It's been very tough at times. So once again a huge thank you for all you are doing for all of us!"

As Jenny delved into the world of drawing, she realized that a page and a pencil became her sanctuary. Through each workshop she attended, she found solace, release, and a renewed sense of self.

Through participating in Company of Makers creative workshops, Jenny discovered that nurturing her own well-being was not a selfish act but a necessity. The emphasis on self-expression, community, and creative exploration in the workshops empowered her to navigate the challenges of PTSD and has inspired her to register for CoMs' poetry course in the Autumn.

CoM works diligently for everyone that takes part in their workshops, tailoring the support they receive in order to increase knowledge and understanding of their lived experience.

RNRMC is proud to fund CoM and to showcase the transformative impact their workshops have on the lives of veterans and their loved ones. Jenny's story serves as a testament to the power of creativity in nurturing mental well-being, fostering resilience, and bringing hope to those navigating the complexities of supporting a partner with PTSD.

Interested in taking part in one of CoMs' workshops or know someone who would be? Want to know more about the services they offer? Visit their website to find out more information: <https://companyofmakers.com/workshops/>

\*All names have been changed to protect the privacy of these individuals.

# It's time for the panto bus....oh yes it is

Since the middle of November this year, the casts of Aladdin, Dick Whittington and Cinderella have been visiting military families bases across the UK and Cyprus, sparking laughter and festive joy.

The pantomimes are produced by the British Forces Foundation (BFF) and are made possible once again thanks to RNRMC funding, this tour not only showcases the remarkable talents within the fleet but also serves to boost morale and acknowledge the sacrifices made by sailors, marines, and their families during the holiday season.

Mark Seymour, BFF's project Director, said: "The BFF Panto Bus – now in its ninth year – is incredibly popular and especially important to those communities where families and loved ones are separated by operational deployments over the festive period.

"We receive more requests for shows than we have the money to deliver, so the support the BFF

receives from RNRMC guarantees their people are at the front of the queue when it comes to allocating tour dates.

"We are extremely grateful to them for recognising, over many years, the value of the BFF Panto Bus to their communities and the joy it brings."

Mandy Lindley, Director of Relationships and Funding, said "The BFF Panto Bus is more than a show; it's an experience that brings joy, laughter, community and connection.

"Through our support, we aim to make this a tradition within bases across the UK and Cyprus, making it accessible to as many families as possible. We are proud to be a part of creating memories that will last a lifetime."

There are a few performances remaining, so head to our website to check available dates. [www.rnrmc.org.uk](http://www.rnrmc.org.uk)



## Combat isolation at Christmas

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity has launched their first major Christmas appeal this year to highlight the plight of families and those who are separated by service at Christmas, and throughout the year.

RNRMC is hoping to secure donations to continue to help combat isolation and loneliness as well as boost morale for the naval community.

These donations will help us support families and provide Christmas meals and events for those who are away this Christmas.

You can donate online at [www.rnrmc.org.uk/donate](http://www.rnrmc.org.uk/donate)



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# CASUALTY EXERCISE FOR URNU CADETS

OFFICER cadets from URNU Birmingham along with Officers from Jolly Division, also based in the Midlands area, were offered a unique opportunity to take part in Exercise Charion Certify.

The mass casualty exercise was held at Towthorpe Lines, north of York, and saw military medical personnel from the 21st Multi Role Medical Unit complete their six weeks of intense training with a realistic scenario.

The cadet's involvement in this exercise saw them become casualty actors – being professionally dressed up with an array of medical conditions and complaints and then asked to play out their injuries as real to life as possible as to simulate a real-life incident.

The cadets that volunteered came mainly from a medical studying background and the exercise exposed them to how the military medical family work.

It also gave them an opportunity to network with regular service nurses, operating department practitioners and trainees from all over the country and across all three services who provided the casualty actors with specialist medical knowledge suited to the exercise.

This baseline knowledge of medicine helped the cadets make the exercise more immersive for the participants, resulting in a more effective training serial.

As part of the overall experience the cadets got to witness the makeup process, and saw skills that can be carried forward to future casualty simulations at the unit (RYA First Aid).

They also had the chance to learn and practice the ATMIST model for casualty handovers (Age, Time, Mechanism of Injury, Injuries, Signs & Symptoms and Treatment) and got to see the difference between current NHS and military processes.

The tri-service aspect of the exercise gave the cadets an idea of how inter-service events are run and managed and allowed them to compare similar roles in each military arm.

Each cadet had their own unique experiences while on the exercise, from a clamshell thoracotomy to an emergency craniotomy.

The cadets shared their experiences with each other and discussed the medical decision making for each event.

The wide range of clinical and psychological conditions dealt with in the exercise allowed the cadets to explore many different options for their own future specialties and to have in-depth discussions with experts in their fields.

This linked closely with many of the modules the students were studying at university, and provided a rare opportunity to apply their knowledge of emergency

medicine and intensive care practices they otherwise would not have had.

While casualty acting was the main focus of the exercise, many of the cadets found it helpful to experience a hospital setting from the patient's perspective – helping them to better understand how their decisions will personally affect patients in their care.

Overall, the exercise provided officer cadets the opportunity to witness a fully operation field hospital in full flow, with members from all three services working together to provide medical coverage to a potential war zone.

All the cadets played their parts well as casualties with many performances being Oscar worthy and they received high praise from the training team for their outstanding maturity, overall engagement with the exercise and the lift in moral they brought to the whole experience.

Sqn Ldr Wells (SO2 Aeromed) said: "The opportunity this gives my personnel to pass on their relevant and current operational knowledge to those at the start of their journey within the military has been outstanding for them and positively commented on by your personnel."

"Having medically savvy personnel attend as casualty actors is a force multiplier for us and has fundamentally enabled successful exercise delivery."



## Spreading the word about URNU Cadet opportunities

THE latest round of talks which share what opportunities the URNU can offer cadets was held in Scotland.

The Military Education Committee (MEC) events give the Armed Forces units the chance to engage with the Edinburgh universities and spread the message about the opportunities they offer to the students.

The MEC is important to the URNU in overseeing the work of the service units, advising the universities on matters relating to military education, and have been a vital link with the URNU in matters ranging

from student welfare to recruitment.

The latest talks were hosted at Queen Margaret University in Musselburgh and featured a talk from guest speaker and former RAF Flight Lieutenant, Mandy Hickson (pictured below).

She is the author of the best-selling book *An*



*Officer, Not a Gentleman*, the inspirational journey of a pioneering female Tornado pilot.

Additionally, OCdts from all three service units presented to the audience their experiences and the personal development opportunities offered to them in their time.

Officer Cadet Isla McPherson, a second year Teaching student at University of Edinburgh, told the audience about the opportunities she has been afforded thus far and how they have helped her confidence, communication and leadership skills.



## Support for Remembrance

STAFF and Officer Cadets at URNU East Scotland offered their support to several Remembrance events in the lead up to Armistice Day.

In the first of many events, they attended the Dundee Festival of Remembrance in Caird Hall. Invited by the

Royal British Legion Scotland, A/SLt Stockman, A/Mid Bowyer, A/Mid Wither and A/OC Weir represented the URNU alongside other representatives from the Armed Forces, Cadet Forces and Emergency Services.

It was a poignant event for those involved and one the cadets felt privileged to be involved in.

A/Mid Sam Bowyer, a second year science student at St Andrews, said: "This was an impressive and sobering event."

"There were some exceptional performances and acts of sombre remembrance for those who have lost their lives serving their country and those who continue to serve in the Armed Forces."

"You could not feel unmoved by the whole experience and it was great that we were able to support this event for the second year running."

In addition to volunteering for Poppy Scotland around the region by selling merchandise, URNU East Scotland also supported additional Remembrance events in Edinburgh, Dundee, St Andrews and North Berwick.

## Units join forces for weekend



URNU Northumbria and Yorkshire joined forces and completed a joint New Entry weekend for this year's new entrants.

An introduction to the Royal Navy, it covered all mandated lectures, uniform upkeep, introduction to principal leadership tasks and the navy swim test.

A big shout went out to the Senior Training Officers and staff who were on hand from both units to ensure the weekend went well.



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](http://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk)  
023 9263 9534  
[caseworkers@navalchildrenscharity.org.uk](mailto:caseworkers@navalchildrenscharity.org.uk)





# BRINGING THE CARIBBEAN TO THE BALTIC

SAILORS on board the Fleet Flagship marked Black History Month with a series of events celebrating their ship's, navy's and nation's diversity while on operations.

There are more than ten Commonwealth nations represented among the 1,000 or so souls aboard the Portsmouth carrier.

HMS Queen Elizabeth's autumn deployment presented the perfect opportunity to showcase the black community's contribution to life in the UK, from music and dance, to art, literature and cuisine in a packed week of events.

"It is a chance to dispel myths, challenge stereotypes and foster understanding," said Able Seaman Calisha Velox who works in the carrier's galley.

Events started with a church service full of traditional choruses and religious songs from the Caribbean and beyond hosted by marine engineer PO Ratu Seru and logistician Able Seaman Kendra Austin with the chorus delivered by the seven Fijians serving on board.

A games night brought ranks and rates from all messes and backgrounds together to enjoy pastimes popular to the Caribbean Islands including lively rounds of dominoes, and other traditional board games with karaoke and a well-received selection of savoury commonwealth finger foods and music adding to the atmosphere.

The ship's company also enjoyed a 'Commonwealth Cookout' which saw chefs, many of whom hail from Commonwealth countries, serve a feast including curried goat, jerk chicken, macaroni pie and rice and peas, a great opportunity to explore different cultures during dinner, or scan if using naval slang.

The overarching theme of this year's events – "Celebrate our sisters – every achievement is a success" was explored during a presentation night educating sailors about the lives and achievements of pioneering black women including Harriet Tubman, Ida Wells, Rosa Parks, Mary Seacole, Wangari Maathai and Lilian Bader.

Harriet, a film inspired by the true story of abolitionist Harriet Tubman, best known for her efforts in freeing slaves via the 'underground railroad' in pre-Civil War USA was the selection of the ship's monthly movie night.

"Black History Month empowers me as a black woman by showcasing the achievements of black women who have broken barriers and made significant contributions to various fields," said Able Seaman Michaelea Dougan, who serves in the carrier's catering services department. "Their stories inspire others to strive for excellence and push for positive change."

Celebrations culminated with a cultural event marking the 44th anniversary of Independence for St Vincent and the Grenadines on October 27, the country more than 40 of HMS Queen Elizabeth sailors call home.

"It will sound really cliché but it has been such an eye opener coming from the Caribbean and experiencing the culture shock as is often the case in a new place," said marine engineer Warrant Officer Myron Campbell.

"When I joined the navy, Commonwealth personnel arranged meets either at a friend's house or on the base just to catch up and maintain that sense of community and togetherness. Fast forward a few years and we have the Commonwealth Network which allows us a space to grow and a forum where we can express issues or concerns, share our cultures and embrace the diversity of our separate nations all whilst continuing to represent ourselves and the RN in a positive manner.

"Knowing that we are supported both within the Network and the wider RN shows how far we have come as a community and provides personnel from our community with the assurances necessary to continue to deliver at the very highest levels."

■ Meanwhile in Portsmouth, the 44th anniversary of St Vincent's independence was also celebrated by six personnel serving in the Career Management Cell, who decided to bring a taste of the Caribbean to the dockyard. Literally.

Making use of the dockyard galley, the team toiled over pan, stove and oven to produce jerk chicken, chicken peleau, chilli chicken, soya chunk peleau, codfish cakes, beef patties, vegetable roti and chick roti, macaroni pie, banana bread, coconut slice and a selection of soft drinks.

The get together for around 30 personnel and families wasn't purely about top-notch Caribbean grub.

Writer Courtney Sampson took the lead to present a brief history and reasons why independence was – and remains – so important to the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines.

And the event was accompanied by the playing of traditional songs and music, dancing and singing along.

"The event gave others who know nothing of their culture or the food a chance to enjoy it with them," said Chief Petty Officer 'Ronnie' O'Sullivan. "It was an excellent demonstration of cultural awareness, diversity, inclusion, and education – the coming together of all people to celebrate and, more importantly, learn why they were celebrating."



# A DUTY WE ALL SHARE

Royal Navy personnel who give back to their communities are the focus of a new media campaign.

Aired at locations across the UK – starting with the gigantic digital billboard dominating London's Piccadilly Circus on one Saturday afternoon last month – the campaign highlights the sense of duty shared by sailors, Royal Marines and veterans.

Developed jointly with London-based independent creative agency Hijinks Collective in collaboration with the Royal Navy's communications team, 'A Celebration of Duty' tells the story of seven individuals who are serving, or have served in the regular or reserve Royal Navy and Royal Marines.

As well as a series of short films concentrating on their individual stories, the collective sense of duty they feel and share is captured in an overarching film.

That premiered in Piccadilly Circus and from there it's being rolled out across the UK, shown in cinemas and indoor/outdoor advertising spaces across the country, including some of the nation's largest shopping centres.

Among those featured are Dr Imogen Napper, a marine conservationist and lieutenant in the Royal Navy Reserve. She works with National Geographic and Plymouth University researching the impact of plastic pollution around the world and her PhD research was instrumental in the ban on microplastics in cosmetics to help clean up our oceans.

Another inspirational story is that of former Royal Marine Captain known by his stage name, Tip Cullen. Tip served for 30 years before re-training as an actor and now works closely with the Soldiers Arts Academy, giving serving and former military personnel a route into the arts.

And Colour Sergeant Mike Beaton – known to thousands of social media users as the Commando Chef – is driven to educate young people against knife crime, hosting free cooking classes up and down the country with the catchphrase: "Knives in the kitchen and not on the streets".

Others in the spotlight are:

- Lieutenant Izzy Rawlinson, who in 2024 will lead Team Valkyrie, the first all-serving military women's team to row an ocean with a 3,000-mile row across the Atlantic;
- former Marine Captain Jon White, who lost three limbs serving in Afghanistan but has gone on to be a para athlete and a leadership consultant;
- Portsmouth-based Petty Officer Bex Fyans, who was awarded an MBE in 2020 for her commitment to disability, inclusion and diversity issues;



**Lt Cdr Mark Bannister** from Winchester joined the Maritime Reserves in October 2022 and is currently a full-time reservist at Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth where he's in the Maritime Trade Operations Branch.

Alongside his role in the Navy, the 46-year-old also volunteers for South Central Ambulance Service, South Western Ambulance Service Foundation Trust and the RNLI – and previously volunteered with St John's delivering Covid-19 vaccinations to members of the public. When he's not helping to save lives, he can be found running. Or cycling. Or enjoying mountaineering.

- and Reservist Lieutenant Commander Mark Bannister (see the box above)

Both the overarching and individual films about each person can be viewed at: [www.royalnavy.mod.uk/celebrate](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/celebrate).

"Since joining the Royal Navy communications team I have been blown away by the talent we have in-house," said Alix Vonk, Head of Communications and Influence at the Royal Navy.

"This collaboration and working with the Hijinks team has allowed us to push that talent and shape new thinking.

"This beautiful campaign sets out with true impact the authentic stories of the real people of the Royal Navy and their incredible sense of duty. I love that we are discovering new ways to bring the wider public into our world to better understand what our people do day to day in the UK, as well as at sea and overseas."

Tamryn Kerr and Marc Allenby, Co-Founders and Chief Creative Officers at Hijinks Collective, said: "Seeing the work that we co-created with the Royal Navy go live is a real moment of Hijinks history.

"As an agency we set out to create culture, not campaigns and this piece of work is just that.

"Hearing all of the incredible stories of people going above and beyond to serve not only the Royal Navy but also their local communities was a joy. Getting to work with those same people to bring this campaign to life was a privilege."



## On course for a gong

TEENAGE chef Elizabeth Coult is lined up for a national award thanks to her dedication and skill on board the nation's flagship.

The 19-year-old Royal Navy chef from Sheffield has been named Intermediate Apprentice of the Year for the Southeast region – ahead of the national awards, when she's up against other regional winners.

She and her galley shipmates aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth – Elizabeth's first ship after completing training – are responsible for providing around 1,000 men and women on the Portsmouth-based warship with three meals a day, cooked and served on time and to the highest of standards.

"It feels good to be seen and recognised for all my hard work whilst completing my apprenticeship. It's definitely a shock to get this far in the awards as I never expected it. It has made me realise I should be proud of myself for all I've achieved so far."

Beyond feeding the ship's company, the chefs support functions and high-level defence engagement events, be that in Portsmouth, deployed or whilst in a foreign port.

"Over the past year I have constantly volunteered for as many opportunities as possible," Elizabeth said.

"So far I have been able to help run the catering for a formal function on board and I've run the bakery on a few occasions, which saw me mentoring other sailors. I managed to complete my work place task book in only five months – well ahead of the allotted 12 months."

Elizabeth decided to try a career catering in the Royal Navy in 2021, joining HMS Raleigh aged just 17.

"My original college course was cancelled in the pandemic. Initially I wasn't sure what I was going to do. All I knew for sure was that I wanted to be a chef as I have always had a passion for cooking since a young age.

"I saw an advert on TV for the Royal Navy, after doing some research and seeing their apprentice programme, I knew if I joined I would be able to travel the world whilst doing what I love."

The Royal Navy is ranked third for apprenticeship employers in the country, with nearly 7,000 personnel across the Service currently undertaking their apprenticeship, three quarters of them in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects.

Over 98 per cent of Royal Navy ratings are now enrolled on an apprenticeship programme for their specialist training in their chosen careers with over 20 options available.

This gives sailors the opportunity to develop job-specific skills while gaining a range of vocational civilian qualifications.

As they learn a trade, working and earning a salary, they have the opportunity to study and complete this qualification, which will open opportunities for a range of other civilian and military qualifications.

## Rewards reinvigorated

THE Reward, Recognition and Respite scheme – which gives personnel and their families a free UK holiday – is being given fresh impetus.

The holiday/short break initiative was introduced a few years ago by the Senior Command Warrant Officers, supported by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, China Fleet Club, Parkdean Resorts, Union Jack Club, Victory Services Club and the Royal Maritime Club.

With Covid now finally behind us, the recognition programme is being relaunched to remind personnel – and divisional officers and line managers – that free rewards are available for those most deserving or most in need of a short break.

The scheme's aim is to recognise not only the Service person but also their families for the extraordinary sacrifices and support they provide while spouses/partners and loved ones are deployed around the globe.

The award also looks to recognise families which may have gone – or are going – through difficult times and where time away may help.

You could win:

- a three- or seven-day break at one of 19 Parkdean resort locations
- a three-night stay in a self-catering apartment at the China Fleet Country Club in Torpoint.
- a weekend break at the Union Jack and Victory Services Clubs in London and the Royal Maritime Club in Portsmouth.

Families awarded a Parkdean break may enjoy the holiday with or without the recipient if deployment means they cannot go, and perhaps invite another family member (eg grandparents) or a friend to join them.

And the RNRMC have agreed to assist with travel costs up to a maximum of £100 (mileage at 25p a mile from your home address, while receipts will be needed for train fares).

All ranks and rates, regular and Reservist personnel and families can apply for a break – or friends/colleagues/line managers etc.

Full details about the reward scheme can be found in [RNTM 09-031/23](http://RNTM 09-031/23).





## An Audacious repair mission

ROYAL Navy divers and submariners were commended for their ingenuity for overcoming engineering challenges which kept a hunter-killer submarine on vital national tasking for an extra six months.

Marine engineers and Diving and Threat Exploitation Group's Charlie Squadron made complex underwater repairs – that usually need a dry dock – to HMS Audacious during the boat's historic 11-month patrol of the Mediterranean.

For their skill and effort working inside partially flooded ballast tanks – the critical source of buoyancy keeping the submarine afloat – they received the prestigious Churchill Medal Award from The Institution of Engineering and Technology.

The advanced hunter-killer submarine was on operations away from her base on the Clyde two days short of a year, making it the longest ever deployment of any Astute-class submarine.

Defects are commonplace during any deployment, but 3,000 miles from home and on rigorous national tasking – in response to Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine – there was an extra burden on the engineering department.

The scale and intricacy of the repair had only ever previously been attempted in a dry dock in the UK but, given the importance of Audacious' mission in the Med, it was unacceptable for the boat to be unavailable.

The team developed highly sophisticated ways of working, allowing divers and the boat's engineers to enter the cramped main ballast tanks and make repairs on the mechanism that sits just above the waterline, has no natural ventilation or lighting and has a maximum of one metre headroom (see the picture).

It took the team 19 days to complete the repair, with Audacious able to continue her deployment in the Med for another six months because of their work.

The boat's Commanding Officer, Commander James Howard, said: "The dedication, innovation and engineering professionalism demonstrated by the team in the face of extreme pressure and under challenging conditions is truly outstanding.

"Their actions made a direct and significant contribution to operational availability and strategic capability, and they are considered highly worthy of recognition."

The nomination for The Churchill Award added: "The team's ability to deliver such a precise repair with limited support in incredibly challenging conditions and with considerable operational constraints displayed outstanding levels of dedication, exacting engineering standards and ultimate professionalism under significant pressure.

"It is a testament to the team's technical prowess that they efficiently delivered an enduring repair which restored the system to design intent and delivered correct operation throughout the remainder of the deployment."

The Churchill Medal Award is the most prestigious award for engineering and innovation in the Armed Forces, presented on behalf of the Joint Professional Engineering Institutions.

## Engineers eye up future T26 support

ENGINEERS from Devonport headed to the Clyde to help plan the support required by Navy's next-generation frigates.

All eight Type 26 frigates – led by HMS Glasgow – will be based in Plymouth when they begin entering service from 2028 onwards.

Beyond the team of skilled weapon and marine engineers on board, maintenance, repairs and other work needed to sustain the advanced submarine hunters will be carried out by Fleet Support Unit Charlie (FSU(C)).

They made the near 1,000-mile round trip to Scotstoun, where HMS Glasgow is being fitted out and tested, with the aim of learning about the ship and her systems before she enters service in 2028.

The FSU(C) team provide effective and continuous operational engineering support to all active warships based in Devonport, improving platform availability, sustainability, supporting operations and force generation.

The visit consisted of a

presentation on HMS Glasgow and the Type 26 programme, delivered by the ship's Senior Naval Officer, Commander Phil Burgess, focusing on the programme and current work.

"It is vital that we start building the communications between ourselves and the support structures across the Royal Navy," he explained.

"We need to ensure that when HMS Glasgow and her sister ships join the fleet, engineers at FSU will already know what to expect and how we can best work together to deliver and sustain the capability."

And in turn the FSU team outlined to Team Glasgow the unit's current structure and functions and future engineering support capabilities to HMS Glasgow ship's company so the frigate's crew know what will be on hand locally when the frigate makes Devonport her home.

A tour of the ship provided the engineers from FSU, a glimpse at the size and scale of the Type 26s – roughly 50 per cent larger than the vessels they replace.



Families of HMS Albion's crew eagerly await the assault ship's return to Devonport in July after her Baltic deployment

Picture: LPhoto Edward Jones

# Families: PSIT up and take notice

**ARE you serving and have children? Have you heard of PSITs? Did you know they can help you?**

If you didn't... well you do now.

Parent Support and Information Teams operate from all three naval bases, providing support, information and guidance covering a host of topics, concerns and issues to personnel serving in the UK and overseas.

It's their job to ensure that all service parents are supported and signposted appropriately and provided with relevant information regarding maternity, shared parental and adoption leave, dual service parents policy, assisted conception and much more.

**Portsmouth (Orion Block, HMS Nelson):**

managed by WO Rosie Dodd, this PSIT oversees units and establishments in Poole, Wiltshire, London, the Home Counties, the Midlands, Lincolnshire and Norfolk.

The team ensures that all parents under its umbrella are provided with regular updates and information pertaining not only to their locality but also policy updates, events and briefings. Outreach sessions are provided at other shore establishments in the area for those unable to travel to Nelson. There are weekly 'Bumps and Babies' sessions (attend either in person or via Zoom), seasonal gatherings, coffee afternoons and 'Swap Shops' where parents can exchange baby goods and items, as well as regular weekly swimming sessions at HMS Temeraire.

**Faslane (primarily Admin Block, HMS Neptune):**

managed by CPO(NN) Colette Green, it provides over-arching care and support to all Service families in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North of England. Events are held at both Drumfork Community Centre and Faslane and include: cakes and cuddles, walks and talks around the local area, a circuit-based class as well as a 'mums' run'.

**Devonport (Seymour Block, HMS Drake):**

Managed by CPO(WTR) Miriam Charlton, the PSIT provides support across the West Country: 'bumps and babies', the maternity fitness suite (open six days a week) which including a breastfeeding area.

The fitness suite runs classes each lunchtime

(Monday-Wednesday) which mothers and babies can join in, including aerobics, Zumba and yoga. And one-to-one 'return to fitness' plans are available upon request with the resident PTI's.

There are also a weekly 'walk and talk', social gatherings, seasonal parties for the families, and family swimming slots in the pool in Endeavour Building.

In addition to the PSITs, there's also the **Royal Navy Parents Network** which provides support to all RN parents at home and deployed, offering advice, views and information on family issues.

It was established to improve retention, encourage and enable individuals to achieve their potential and provide an opportunity to gather feedback to make a positive contribution to shape future personnel policy.

Membership is open to all mothers and fathers serving in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Maritime Reserve and Royal Fleet Auxiliary. It's accessible via a moderated RN Forum page and also a monitored Outlook mailbox.

Serving parents can ask questions and share information with each other and also request to be signposted to an appropriate agency. See [forum.royalnavy.mod.uk](http://forum.royalnavy.mod.uk) for more details.

And don't forget the **Service Parents Coaching Network**, set up in the autumn of 2018 with appropriately-trained Service coaches who are parents and empathetic to the needs of fellow Service families, offering credible support at the right level and at the right time.

The coaches offer support to parents who have returned to work from parenting leave – it's ideally suited to those who've returned to work within nine to 12 months, helping them feel valued, empowered and confident to overcome any challenges presented to them.

You can access the network directly – no need for approval from a line manager/divisional officer.

The coaching network has a website on DefNet and this contains biographies of all of our volunteer coaches. SPCN is also linked through other service networks and is accessible through the HELM.

Contact your PSIT representative for details of its services in your area. For details of the support and coaching network, contact [Rosemary.Dodd658@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Rosemary.Dodd658@mod.gov.uk).



## Atlantic round trip for Merlin fixers

SPECIALIST helicopter engineers flew an 8,000-mile round trip to rapidly fix a windscreen – and ensure HMS Prince of Wales continued key fast jet trials.

A three-strong team was transferred between the UK's two carriers – on opposite sides of the Atlantic – to carry out the infrequent repair, which kept the Merlin helicopter firmly on the ground, unable to carry out its varied tasks.

The carrier is conducting a series of trials with F-35B Lightning stealth fighters, as well as drones, and a string of US helicopters and aircraft off the Eastern Seaboard throughout the autumn.

The Merlin Mk2s of 820 Naval Air Squadron are vital as a link between the carrier and shore (moving people and supplies), as well as performing numerous other duties: monitoring submarine/surface threats, search and rescue, casualty evacuation when needed.

For those of you not fully acquainted with the cockpit of a Merlin Mk2 helicopter, what we might call a windscreen comprises four large windows: two directly in front of the pilots, two 'canopy windows' overhead (separated by a bank of dials and switches along the cockpit 'ceiling').

Although it's not a common job, replacing the large pane is more complex than the regular work carried out on the helicopter by the squadron's engineers – and requires specialist intervention.

Enter the engineers of 1710 Naval Air Squadron, based in Portsmouth. They perform a series of unique repairs and modifications of helicopters from all three Services, as well as offering scientific/engineering advice. They were assigned to the UK flagship on her autumn deployment to Scandinavia/northern European waters when they got the call from HMS Prince of Wales to replace a Merlin canopy window.

The squadron is doubly-deployed on both UK carriers presently, performing anti-submarine and general duties on each ship and, courtesy of the Crowsnest model embarked on HMS Queen Elizabeth, airborne surveillance and control.

Several helicopter/commercial airliner flights later and Lieutenant William Kemp, Chief Petty Officer John Collins and Petty Officer Gavin Hutchinson were in the hangar of the Prince of Wales off the eastern coast of the USA and the Merlin was soon airborne again with a fresh canopy.

"The successful operation of the 1710 NAS team serves as a reminder of the Royal Navy's dedication to maintaining a high level of readiness – and the vital role that 1710 NAS play in supporting naval operations," said Lieutenant Tobias Barnicoat, one of the squadron's dedicated repair officers.

"As the global security landscape evolves, the flexibility and capabilities of units like 1710 NAS will continue to be crucial in ensuring the readiness of the Royal Navy's carrier strike groups."



# ROYAL NAVY RE



Pictures: (Main picture) A sailor from HMS Duncan at the Souda Bay military cemetery. PO Phot Lee Blease; (below clockwise) The service of remembrance at RNAS Yeovilton. PO Phot Kyle Heller; Sailors on HMS Dauntless' flight deck; a wreath laying ceremony on HMS Prince of Wales. LPhot Finn Stainer- Hutchins; personnel from HMNB Devonport. LPhot Barry Swainsbury; HMS Spey holds a minute silence. Lt Cdr Roster. (right clockwise) Sailors mark Remembrance Sunday in London. PO Phot Joel Rouse; Sailors from HMS Duncan at the Souda Bay military cemetery. PO Phot Lee Blease; A sailor on HMS Dauntless; HMS Queen Elizabeth marks Remembrance Day with a service. LPhot Chris Sellars; The Band of HM Royal Marines Portsmouth march past the Cenotaph in London. Sergeant Rob Kane.



IN THE the sun of Souda Bay, New South Wales and the western Pacific, the driving rain of the Hoe and Helston, or a crisp autumn morning in Edinburgh and Inverness, wherever serving personnel of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxilliary were on Remembrance weekend, they honoured their forebears – and remembered friends and comrades no longer with us.

All deployed units and personnel at home and abroad, some alone, some with their local communities and veterans groups, held memorial services or took part in acts of remembrance.

In London, royalty and statesmen and women, admirals and generals, officers, NCOs and senior ratings to privates, able seamen and marines all paid homage to those who have – and continue to – put their lives on the line for the safety and security of the UK.

At the Cenotaph in London more than 800 personnel from all three Services took part in national Remembrance Sunday ceremonies in Whitehall attended by His Majesty the King, the Prime Minister and Heads of the Armed Forces.

The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery fired a minute gun from Horse Guards Parade at 1100 to begin two minutes of silence, ended by the strains of The Last Post performed by a bugler from The Royal Marines Band Service performed The Last Post.

The Band of HM Royal Marines Portsmouth and The Central Band of the Royal Air Force joined The Massed Bands of the Household Division to perform music as around 10,000 veterans marched past the Cenotaph.

Ceremonies in western England were battered by wind and rain. Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby led the service on a drenched Hoe – and was struck by the impressive turnout despite the inclement weather.

"What struck me most forcefully, and I can't remember

anything like it other than formal events in London, was that sense of community around the Armed Forces we had today, it was very striking indeed," he said.

Naval Base Commander Brigadier Mike Tanner was among those laying wreaths at the imposing Naval Memorial. With the Band of HM Royal Marines Plymouth providing a fitting soundtrack to proceedings.

Sailors from Reservist units HMS Scotia and Dalriada represented the Senior Service on the streets of Edinburgh and Glasgow respectively.

On the west coast, the crew of HMS Penzance joined locals in the port of Oban for the town's annual ceremony.

And men and women of the Mine Threat and Exploitation Group cemented their new affiliation with the city of Inverness by attending various Remembrance events in the capital of the Highlands.

At sea in the western Pacific, HMS Spey's ship's company held a traditional flight deck ceremony led by Executive Officer Lt Cdr Bridget Macnae – three hours after the crew of her sister ship HMS Tamar conducted their Remembrance Sunday service at sea on the east coast of New South Wales following recent exercises with the Australian and US Navies.

And crew of Type 45 destroyer HMS Duncan joined NATO representatives at the stunning setting of Souda Bay military cemetery, last resting place of 1,500 Commonwealth Service personnel, almost all of them killed during the German invasion of Crete in May 1941.

In the United States, HMS Dauntless' ship's company gathered on the flight deck for a moment of reflection while in Charleston. Meanwhile, north in Virginia, HMS Prince of Wales held a service in the hangar. It was led by HMS Prince of Wales's Chaplain,



# MEMBERS



Chaplain William Gates, with support from Chaplain Mark Mander. In true naval tradition, ship's company of 1,116 men and women dressed up in their number 1s, smart and proud for the service.

HMS Prince of Wales' sister ship HMS Queen Elizabeth held a similar ceremony as she continues to lead the UK Carrier Strike Group.

A smaller gathering also took place over the weekend at the Merchant Navy Memorial in Tower Hill.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel – led by the head of the Service Cdre David Eagles – and Royal Navy sailors from nearby HMS President, London's Reservist headquarters represented the Naval Service to remember in particular the victims of the two Battles of the Atlantic in particular.

The memorial – located in the gardens of Trinity House, the seafarers' charity, a site close to the docks and Thames waterfront during the heyday of the Port of London – honours 36,000 Merchant Navy personnel lost at sea in the service of their country.

SLt Callum Silvester led an HMS President Guard of Honour for the memorial service remembering nearly 12,000 seaman, sailors, and fishermen lost in WW1 and approximately 23,800 souls lost a generation later in the second global conflagration, all of whom have no known grave.

Fleet Air Arm personnel at RNAS Yeovilton joined the air station's Commanding Officer Captain Duncan Thomas for their annual service. Personnel from HMS Heron, Commando Helicopter Force, Wildcat Helicopter Force and 1 Army Air Corps formed the Remembrance Parade accompanied by traditional military music by the HMS Heron Volunteer band including Last Post and Reveille.



Picture: LPhot Matthew Bradley

## Submariners pay tribute with service in London

SERVING and veteran Royal Navy Submariners travelled to London to remember those submariners who have gone on "eternal patrol".

Hundreds of members of the Silent Service attended events at Westminster Abbey and at Middle Temple Gardens to pay their respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

This year marks the centenary of the first ever Submariners Memorial Service held in 1923 following the establishment of the National Submarine War Memorial in 1922. Ever since, the Submariners' Remembrance has been held the week before the nation's main Remembrance commemorations to allow Submariners to attend both.

Events are held over two days with serving submariners and veterans gathering for the Dedication of the Poppy Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey on Saturday.

The main event is the Remembrance Parade the following day and is attended by members

of the Submariners' Association, serving and veteran submariners and Commodore (Cdre) Paul Dunn, Commodore of the Submarine Service.

"Once again the annual Submarine Remembrance Service brought together all generations of The Submarine Family," he said.

"From our youngest 17-year-old submarine trainee to a war veteran now aged 100, the weekend celebrated those submariners who continue to deliver our enduring mission whilst remembering those who have gone before us."

Following the parade at Middle Temple Gardens, a Service was led by the Reverend Steven Dray, the Submarine Association Chaplain, with prayers read by the Reverend Mark Street, Chaplain for the Submarine Flotilla.

During the ceremony there was a two-minute silence, wreath laying, and the reading of the roll call of submariners lost.

- THE names below are Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel on the Active List, Reservists and Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel who died during the period 1 November 2022 – 1 November 2023:
- The Admiral of The Fleet, The Lord Michael Cecil Boyce KG GCB OBE DL, 6 November 2022
  - Leading Hand Owain Hywel Rogers, 13 November 2022
  - Corporal Ryan Matthew Curtis, Royal Marines, 28 November 2022;
  - Leading Hand Daniel Christopher Cox, 7 December 2022
  - Leading Hand Callum James Gilbert, 7 December 2022
  - Commander Alexander Tremain Rogers, 7 January 2023
  - Warrant Officer 2 James Savell, 28 January 2023
  - Leading Hand Benjamin Andrew Thomas, 31 January 2023
  - Lieutenant Commander Carl Young, 4 March 2023
  - Chief Petty Officer Stephen Brown, 15 March 2023
  - Colour Sergeant Richard Thomas Melia, Royal Marines, 8 April 2023
  - Chief Petty Officer Stuart Brett, 16 April 2023
  - Petty Officer Jon Paxton, Royal Navy, 19 April 2023
  - Engineering Technician (Marine Engineer) Dominic Twaites, 14 May 2023
  - Lieutenant Commander Joanne Mary Chambers, 2 June 2023

- Motorman John Woods Boyd, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, 25 June 2023
- Engineering Technician (Marine Engineer Submarines) Dion James Smith, 19 July 2023
- Marine Harrison Owens, Royal Marines, 31 July 2023
- Seaman Grade 1, John Irving, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, 7 August 2023
- Lieutenant Commander Simon Kirkham, Royal Navy Reserves, 8 August 2023
- Leading Hand James Oliver Madeley, 9 August 2023
- Able Seaman First Class Steffan James Rees, 29 August 2023
- Lieutenant Mark Derek Wilson Simpson, 29 August 2023
- Petty Officer Gerald Jenkins, Royal Navy Reserves, 5 September 2023
- Petty Officer Roy Cadman, Royal Navy Reserves, 24 September 2023
- Commander Robert Hawkins MBE, 8 October 2023
- Seaman Grade 1, Iain Trill, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, 16 October 2023
- Lieutenant Commander Richard Daniel William Smith, 26 October 2023
- Petty Officer Peter Clabby, Royal Navy Reserves, 30 October 2023





# CADETS IMPRESS AT TRAFALGAR DAY CELEBRATIONS

HUNDREDS of cadets from all across the country gathered at Trafalgar Square for their biggest and most spectacular event of the year, Trafalgar Day.

Thousands more joined the cadets for the parade, musical performances and wreath-laying to commemorate Admiral Lord Nelson's victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. This year marked the 218th anniversary of the battle.

The cadets were the stars of the show, their moment to shine after many months of hard work and training.

Singer Louise from Sefton Sea Cadets, who gave a stirring solo performance at this year's event, knows a thing or two about all the preparation that goes into it – she's participated in the celebrations for the past six years.

Louise is one of a set of triplets, who all joined Sea Cadets as children and "thrived" within the youth charity. Aged 18, Louise promptly joined her unit as a volunteer to pass on her skills to the cadets.

She said: "Sea Cadets has given me a real sense of belonging and the confidence to pursue my passion."

For MC Harry, 17, from Walsall, this year is his first time marching in the Royal Marines platoon at the parade. "I'm feeling a bit nervous – I've been polishing my boots for a fortnight," he said, as he made his way to Trafalgar Square.

Cdt LCpl Gurtej, 15, a Royal Marines cadet from the Sikh community who is part of Sutton Coldfield Unit, said: "As a drum major, I have been training for five months for Trafalgar Day.

"I've experienced mixed emotions...proud to be selected, excited about coming to London and marching down the famous parade route, and nervous as it will be my first time representing my unit as such an important event."

LC Keira, 16, who joined Swansea Sea Cadets when she was ten, has finally fulfilled her long-time goal of taking part in Trafalgar Day. Both her mum and dad have served in the Royal Navy.

Keira said: "It's been my dream to join the Royal Navy and follow in my parents' footsteps since I was old enough to understand the concept. My family is so proud of me for having been selected to take part today."

Another first-timer in this year's event is LC Ollie, 16, from Sefton, who joined Sea Cadets during the COVID pandemic. Ollie, who is transgender, has family connections within Sea Cadets.

"My grandad is the Commanding Officer of my unit and he's been such an inspiration for me. Everyone at Sea Cadets has been very supportive of my transitioning."

PO Cdt Kori, 17, from Poole Unit said: "This is my third year at the national Trafalgar Day parade. I've been very lucky to do something different every year.

"I've been involved in the drill for the past two Trafalgar Days and I have also been part of the parade staff. I was very excited this year when I was given the honour to lead the Guard Band as drum major.

"This is such an important event for me, it's continuing in tradition. As a sea cadet, I think this is truly a special experience."

LC Tyler, 17, from Lincoln dreams of studying Nuclear Engineering and joining the Royal Navy. He's been taking part in Trafalgar Day celebrations ever since joining Sea Cadets, aged ten.

"The excitement has never changed, and the pride I feel is what makes the long time on my feet worth it," said Tyler.

"Trafalgar Day represents the success of the Royal Navy and the continuation of its influence. I am immensely proud of my country and Trafalgar Day is one of the best opportunities to show this."

The event was attended by the Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Patricia McAllister and Representative Deputy Lieutenant, Mr Kevin Traverse-Healy at Pall Mall E (adj. National Gallery and North Steps), who were greeted by Admiral Sir Philip Jones GCB DL. Rear Admiral Angus Essenhigh was the Reviewing Officer, who was greeted by Captain Neil Downing RN, Captain Sea Cadets.



**Pictures: (Top) Trafalgar Day Celebrations in London; (below clockwise) Cdt LCpl Gurtej; LC Tyler; LC Keira; LC Ollie.**



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## Success at first Corps family weekend in three years

MORE than 3,000 people flocked to the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines in Lympstone for the first Corps Family Weekend held there since 2019.

The action-packed three days included lots of fun activities for all age groups, including unarmed combat displays, rugby and football matches and inter-unit tugs of war.

The event had been cancelled twice before due to the Covid-19 pandemic and then

cancelled again last year, following the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

But this year, the event was back for families to thoroughly enjoy.

The Band of the His Majesty's Royal Marines was front and centre stage and treated participants to highly-skilled with Concert and Marching Bands, Corps of Drums and buglers showcasing their musical talents.

The event also featured performances by the RMA Fijian Commando Brotherhood and Military Wives' Choirs as well as a spectacular fireworks display.

Organised by RMA – The Royal Marines Charity, the eagerly-anticipated event also hosted hundreds of children over the three days.

They were among the over 2,000 people from the south-west area that benefitted from a generous £15,000 donation to RMA from the Advanta Foundation to enable three Unit Families' Days in Lympstone, Chivenor and Plymouth.

Advanta Foundation is a charity set up by the wealth management company Advanta Wealth Ltd.

Five representatives of the charity attended the family weekend in Lympstone.

LCpl Cameron, 16, said: "I enjoyed my weekend in Lympstone.

"It was nice to meet other cadets from all over the country and spend my weekend with them, including my unit.

"The fireworks were amazing and I enjoyed the music that went along with it. Personally, I really enjoyed the five-a-side football competition – mainly because we won! It showed that we can have rivalry with other units in a friendly way.

"Sunday's parade was great too, it was good to be all in one big parade, it brought everyone together. Overall, it was a great weekend."

Cdt Sgt Liam, 17, added: "It was a pleasure to see first-hand the work the RMA does.

"The event was an opportunity to take part in competitive sports and speak to recruits actively in training. The cherry on top for me was meeting the Commandant

General."

The weekend culminated with the the Corps Family Day Parade and Service, which was attended by General Gwyn Jenkins, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, Commandant General Royal Marines and President of RMA – The Royal Marines Charity, and his family.

Ben Curry, Chief Executive of RMA – The Royal Marines Charity, said: "We sincerely thank everyone involved in making Corps Family Weekend such a fantastic success, and especially to Advanta for their generous support for all three Unit Families' Days this year.

"It has been particularly special to see everyone back having such a great time.

"Having been cancelled for the past three years, it was wonderful to see so many of the Corps Family travelling all the way to Lympstone from near and far, from all parts of all four countries of the Union, to again enjoy and share remembrances in one others' company."

"We are the Marines' combined charity and Association and so the weekend was also a perfect time for us to personally thank all those who so generously give of their time throughout the year to support us in so many ways."

Gillian Piggot, Committee Chair for the Advanta Foundation, added: "We had a wonderful few days. It was fantastic to witness first-hand the Corps' spirit and see the impact of our donation on serving members, veterans and their families.

"We look forward to exploring further ways to develop and deepen our partnership with RMA."

## Sea Cadets Padre receives top award for 50 years service

LONG-SERVING Beccles Sea Cadets Unit Chaplain Padre Michael Leigh Pearson RNR has been awarded the Sea Cadet Medal.

The 86-year-old was awarded the medal by the Captain of the Sea Cadet Corps, Captain Neil Downing RN, for especially meritorious service.

Cadets, volunteers and friends of the unit were also present to celebrate this special occasion.

Padre Michael, who has been part of the charity since 1970, was praised for his dedication in supporting cadets and volunteers for over 50 years.

Joining the Combined Cadet Force as a cadet in 1949, he went on to join the Royal Navy for ten years – serving with both Navy and Royal Marines units as a sick berth attendant.

Padre Michael has provided care and support to the Beccles branch of the Royal Naval Association, the Fleet Air Arm Association, and the regional Royal Marines Association.

He joined the Sea Cadet Corps in 1970 and has held wide-ranging unit roles throughout Suffolk & Norfolk District and Eastern Area, as a Commanding Officer, District Officer and as the Area Chaplain.

"He has devoted himself to the wellbeing and development of young people and offered invaluable pastoral support to his fellow volunteers in the organisation," said a public statement issued by Beccles Sea Cadets.

"All have benefitted from his compassion, giving up his time to conduct funeral services for veterans across East Anglia."

Captain Downing offered "his sincerest thanks and warmest congratulations on an

award that has been earned with such distinction" and praised Padre Michael's "immense contribution which has had a significant beneficial impact on so many people, of all ages, within the Sea Cadet Corps".

Beccles Unit's Commanding officer, Sub Lieutenant (SCC) Michael Brown, said that the award was "truly well-deserved for a lifetime of service".

This was the first time that the medal had been awarded in the last eight years.



## Fundraiser in honour of former commanding officer

TWO members of the Parents and Supporters Association of Fishguard Sea Cadets have smashed their £2,500 target after completing an impressive 186 miles of coast path in just two weeks.

Rachel Thomson and Kay Anstee completed their mission to walk the whole of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path with the aim of setting up a bursary in memory of Fishguard Unit's much-loved Commanding Officer, Lt (SCC) Chris Peake RNR, following his sudden death earlier this year.

"Chris was a hugely inspirational figure to countless young people including our own," said Rachel.

"One of Chris's passions was that every cadet should have the opportunity of experiencing an offshore voyage.

"Chris worked tirelessly in obtaining bursaries for each Cadet to subsidise the cost of these voyages."

It seems that their efforts to

endure heatwaves, torrential rains and blistered feet have been well worth it.

Rachel and Kay set out to raise £2,500 for the sea cadets to take part in offshore voyages.

So far, they have raised £3,340 through their JustGiving page, exceeding their target by 133%.

Over 100 people so far have rallied to support this worthwhile cause and donate what they can.

Kay added: "In this way for future years there will always be funds available for cadets towards the cost of offshore voyages in Chris's name."

Rachel and Kay had lots of adventures to share about their coast path challenge, including spotting seals and their pups, having to detour to avoid the firing at Castle Martin range and sleeping in tents and youth hostels along the way.

They even slept overnight at TS Skirmisher in Fishguard, a place that the late Chris Peake knew very well, having volunteered there for over 30 years.

"I was absolutely delighted to be part of the welcome for Kay and Rachel at the end of their fundraising walk," said Chief Petty Officer (SCC) Steve Hughes, who stepped in as acting OIC from the sudden death of Lieutenant Peake until the new Commanding Officer, SLt (SCC) Charles Mustoe RNR was appointed.

"They have made an amazing effort for such a good cause. On behalf of the unit and cadets, thank you so much."

Lieutenant Peake died suddenly on 12 May 2023. He was admired and respected by his cadets, their families and the wider community for his dedication, hard work and kindness.

Lieutenant Peake was given a hero's farewell at his funeral, with a guard of honour and huge crowds both inside and outside St Mary's Church in Fishguard.

You can donate to the Chris Peake Bursary Fund for Offshore Voyages by visiting [justgiving.com/page/rachel-thomson-1692725555806](https://www.justgiving.com/page/rachel-thomson-1692725555806)





## Mission possible for Luke

A TEN-year-old boy who has fought leukaemia saw one of his dreams come true thanks to Royal Navy personnel.

Luke Garnett, son of veteran Darren Taff Garnett, was taken to Goodwood motor circuit in West Sussex for Mission Motorsport.

The visit was organised by WO1 Barry 'Baz' Firth, RNLA Executive Officer.

Luke is now free from cancer but has been left with other complications that, as a result challenge him and his family daily.

Knowing that Taff and Luke are both passionate 'petrolheads' a day as guests of Mission Motorsport was arranged at Goodwood, part of their Invitational Day in support of serving and former military.

Arrangements were made to collect the guests for the day, in what they believed would be Baz Firth's Volvo!

Imagine their faces when they arrived to collect them in a Lamborghini Aventador and a Sutton CS800 supercharged Mustang!

Taff and Luke were treated to a wonderful collection of cars with Taff getting a chance out on the track for three 'hot' laps in a Porsche Cayman hitting 135mph on the Lavant Straight.

During lunch, Luke and Taff enjoyed taking part in the taxi charity for Military Veterans parade lap. Three laps of the track as part of a parade of London black cabs. The fleet of cab drivers had volunteered to transport the Chelsea Pensioners and other Veterans from London to Goodwood for the event.

They then enjoyed a tour and brief in the Spitfire hangar. Seeing the silver Spitfire which has 50 combat missions under its belt and a world record.

After that, Taff and Luke were both able to drive the Lightning McQueen split control car with Luke at the wheel and dad on the pedals. They even managed to shave their lap times down to an impressive 59 sec per lap in the coned challenge.



# Restoration is in nick of time

THE world's most famous warship was in far worse condition than experts believed when they started their £45m revamp, with rotten wood reduced to 'potting compost'.

On the eve of the anniversary of her finest hour – leading the Fleet to a decisive triumph over the Franco-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar in 1805 – the team heading the restoration of HMS Victory have revealed how urgent the overhaul was.

The ship is undergoing the most comprehensive overhaul in her recent history, a ten-year project to restore her to how she looked as Nelson's flagship in time for the 100th anniversary of her opening as a museum in 2028.

Much of the ship is currently hidden behind protective tarpaulin, having much of her rigging, masts and sails removed.

The conservation team began work on her hull in May 2022 when scaffolding was erected around much of the ship to allow her to dry out – Victory is now drier than at any time in her 250-year-plus history – work to be carried out in all weathers and for visitors to watch the shipwrights at work.

The restoration of the hull focuses on replacing decayed planks and damaged frames.

Andrew Baines, the project director, said the scale of the decay was worse than imagined.

"Although a cursory look at Victory in early 2022 might have given the impression that the ship was in good condition, in reality a thin skin of paint and filler masked planking that was almost entirely rotten on the ship's starboard side," he said.

"As soon as the outer, sound, layer was removed, the team of shipwrights were confronted with material that no longer resembled timber and was much closer to potting compost."

The decayed wood has been removed – but in doing so it's revealed that the rotting had spread to the frames to a much greater extent than had been assumed, meaning more repair and replacement work.

And while traditional shipbuilding methods fared Victory well for most of her career, more recent restoration work – after 1955 – perhaps caused as much harm as good. Nothing fitted or installed



before the mid-50s needs replacing.

"Unfortunately, however, the materials and workmanship of the post-1955 material has helped contribute to the quantity of rot in the hull, and will largely be replaced," Mr Baines said.

Fortunately, the National Museum of the Royal Navy – which looks after Victory on behalf of the Royal Navy – has carried out considerable research to understand the most appropriate materials to be used and how to minimise the risk of water getting into the timber, rot and insect infestation.

That cutting-edge scientific work comes alongside traditional methods used by shipwrights and riggers, conservators and archaeologists, documenting each stage of the revamp to learn as much as possible about the hull – and to assist future generations maintain and restore Victory when required.

All the degraded planks from the ship's central section have now been removed, the frames are drying and detailed surveys of Victory as she stands now carried out ahead of the next stage of the renovation: replacing those frames and planks.

"Much work remains to be done, but we are on track to complete the project in a little less than ten years, at a cost of £40-£45million," Mr Baines said.



## Barney's new beat

IN THE 538-year history of the Yeoman Warders of the Tower of London – better known as Beefeaters – only one previously served as a Royal Navy air engineer.

(Admittedly aircraft only arrived on the scene in 1903... and naval aviation six years later.)

Anyway... that person is Ryan 'Barney' Barnett, the Tower's newest Beefeater and guardian of the Crown Jewels.

Barney, from Yeovil in Somerset served for 25 years in the Fleet Air Arm as an aircraft engineer, seeing the changing of the guard on two iconic naval aircraft: first the Sea Harrier and then the Lynx helicopter, progressing to the latter's successor Wildcat until 2020, when he became the Air Weapons Senior Maintenance Rating aboard HMS Prince of Wales until he left the Royal Navy in April.

"Having served almost 26 years in the Fleet Air Arm, I felt incredibly proud every day to put on my uniform and do the job I loved – servicing and maintaining some iconic aircraft, such as the Sea Harrier FA2 and the Lynx helicopter. I have made friends for life and have wonderful memories that I'll cherish forever," Barney said.

He now joins the prestigious Yeoman Warders – created in 1485 by Henry VII. Today the Yeoman Warders help to bring the history of the Tower of London to life for visitors on their famous tours as well as carrying out ceremonial duties.

"Wearing this special uniform at His Majesty's Royal Palace and Fortress the Tower of London is a boyhood dream," Barney says of the new chapter in his life.

"Working with like-minded people, I already feel part of the team – it's like I've never left the military. I am delighted to be working here and I'm looking forward to making many more friends and memories at the Tower."

Applicants for the role of Yeoman Warder must have served at least 22 years in the armed forces, hold the Long Service and Good Conduct medal, and have reached a certain rank in their service before being selected for interview and a rigorous selection process.



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# Farewell to Fred

THE Royal Marines family and number of men who witnessed D-Day first-hand is one smaller today with the passing of Frederick 'Fred' Fitch.

Barely 19, on June 6 1944 the marine machine-gunned German strongpoints on Sword Beach to provide cover for British troops on his landing craft.

Wounded in the hand by shrapnel as he opened the bow door of his craft for the men to storm ashore, he watched the first three soldiers gunned down by the enemy, before the remaining troops landed safely.

Fred's landing craft then returned to its parent ship HMS Glencarn but on the way – against orders – crew rescued the survivors of another landing craft which was sinking.

Back on board Glencarn, Fred had his wound dressed and was given a berth in the Padre's cabin to sleep off the pain-killing drugs.

Within a few days he was back at work transferring troops and equipment to the shore. On about the third day his landing craft was tasked with carrying female American nurses to Omaha Beach further along the coast.

The craft could not get up the beach and the nurses insisted on being carried through the surf. Though small in stature, Fred was told to lift a rather large nurse – but as she climbed on his back, he toppled forward and ditched her into the sea.

When she surfaced she told Fred that he was on a charge, something he reported to his Sergeant Major back aboard HMS Glencarn. "Don't worry about it, she's probably dead by now," the senior NCO told



him. The nurse's fate played on Fred's mind for a long time.

Paying tribute to Fred, the Commandant General Royal Marines General Gwyn Jenkins, said his exploits on Sword Beach "exemplified the Commando spirit that we continue to instil in our Royal Marine Commandos today, one of courage, determination, unselfishness and cheerfulness in the face of adversity, Fred and others like him will be remembered by generations to come.

"We can reflect on the feats of Fred and the many veterans like him. An ardent supporter of the Marines through-out his life we owe Fred and fellow veterans an incredible debt of gratitude." Originally from Tooting in

London, Fred worked as an aircraft assembler in Dagenham, Essex, before joining the Royal Marines in June 1943.

Upon passing out of the Infantry Training Centre Royal Marines at Lympstone, he was posted to HMS Helder, the Raiding Craft Flotilla Base in Brightlingsea, Essex and, in March 1944, Fred was posted to 543 Assault Flotilla on the LSI(L) HMS Glencarn, then undergoing training in Scotland.

Once operations in Normandy were over, Glencarn was earmarked for Pacific Fleet and final battles with Japan. Tokyo surrendered before the ship arrived in theatre.

As a 'Hostilities Only' conscript, Fred was discharged from the Corps at the war's end. He eventually married, settling with his family in Norwich where he became an active member first of the RM Association (1994) then, from 2008, the city's Royal Naval Association branch.

An active member of both, he raised well over £20,000 for the RMA over 15 years, standing outside stores, tin rattling, and regularly sharing his wartime experiences with anyone who wished to hear his stories.

He returned to the beaches for the last time courtesy of the RMA for the 75th anniversary of the Normandy invasion in 2019, since when his health gradually declined – ruling out regular appearances at association meetings and functions.

He passed away at Norfolk and Norwich Hospital on Saturday 28 October 2023 – the Corps' 359th birthday – "just to make sure we wouldn't forget him" some of his fellow marines quipped.

# Morph for your money

THIS may look like a weather-worn copper statue... but it's actually a state-of-the-art body scan which will literally help shape the future of the Royal Navy.

Personnel from HMS Raleigh are the first in the UK to undertake anthropometry surveying, a modern body scanning process which will give scientists and experts a better understanding of military body types across a variety of backgrounds and trades.

The data gathered will be used to make improvements to uniform and kit, especially body armour to ensure it is fit for purpose, plus some of the equipment they use.

This survey was last undertaken in 2007, since when a shortfall has been identified in the information gathered relating to females, submariners and ethnic minorities.

Sixteen years later, technological advances and new scanners allowed the team – working on behalf of the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation – to take around 160 measurements digitally courtesy of two 3D scanners, in addition to some two-dozen manual measurements, something that could not be undertaken with the naked eye.

"It's important that equipment designers have access to the latest data regarding body shapes and sizes," explained Laird Evans, human factors specialist at DE&S.

"Although body shapes and sizes may not have changed substantially in the past 15 years, they will have changed to some extent and even small changes may prove significant when designing military equipment."

The process involves the recording of body measurements using traditional methods before a 3D airport-style scanner was used to photograph the individual in several poses.

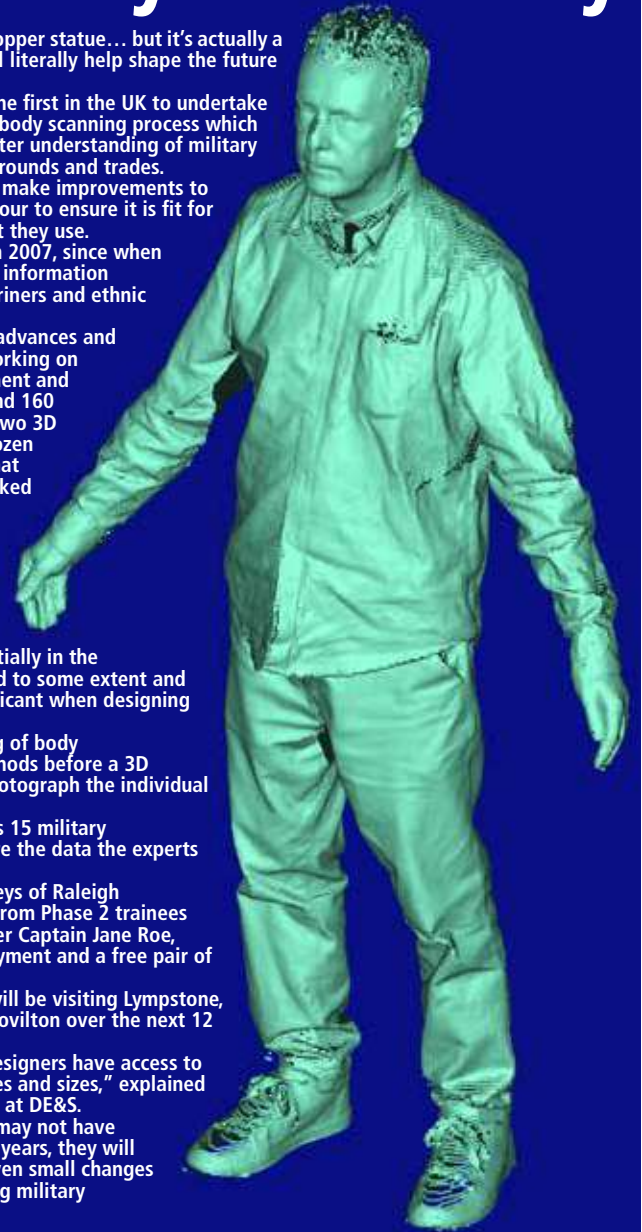
More than 2,750 volunteers across 15 military establishments are required to ensure the data the experts require is gathered.

Over a two-week period 119 surveys of Raleigh personnel were conducted, ranging from Phase 2 trainees all the way up to Commanding Officer Captain Jane Roe, with volunteers receiving a small payment and a free pair of shorts.

The anthropometry survey team will be visiting Lympstone, Portsmouth Naval Base and RNAS Yeovilton over the next 12 months.

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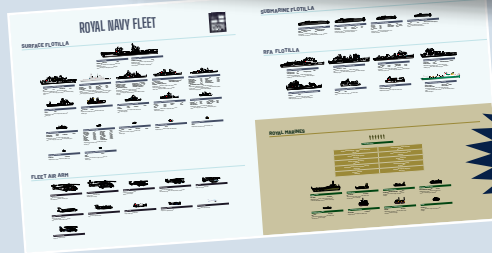
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# RUNNING REPAIRS

MECHANICAL problems almost spoil the British Super Sport season finale at Brands Hatch for Royal Navy biker Sergeant Charlie White.

The motorbike was still in pieces when the warmup session started, but some quick thinking, scrambling for spares around the paddock, meant the True Heroes Racing and Royal Navy Royal Marines Road Race Team were able to put the bike back together and get some vital laps in to ensure Sgt White was able to get some racing in on day two of the event in Kent.

Sgt White said: "As we started at the back of the grid for race two, we had nothing to lose and felt we could only go forward."

"The race started well as I gained some positions off the line and some into turn two and three, with the help of some incidents."

"We chipped away at the 16 lap race, being cautious of the cold 10 degree track temperature which caught a good handful of riders out."

"We managed to finish 25th, which wasn't a season's best but was a race where we gained as much as we could."

"Big thank you to all the sponsors we helped the team out this year and the people who made it all possible. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes to enable True Heroes Racing and the Royal Navy Motorsport team to be able to compete at the British Championship."

Sgt White continued: "Its tradition to finish the season at Brands Hatch, as it's the most southern circuit in the hope of getting better weather conditions as the weekend always lands in the middle of October."

"As the main event, the superbike race, for the weekend was on a knife edge the crowds this weekend were as big as anyone had seen, despite the rain and hail predicted over the weekend."

"Day one for the super sport grid was conducted in the usual way of two free practice sessions. Not much track time was completed in these two sessions as heavy and cold rain disrupted free practice one and free practice two had mixed conditions with parts of the track being completely dry and standing water under the trees."

"If you gambled for tyres towards the end of the session you were lucky to get a quick time, but it was not worth the risk for us. So not much was gained within a set up, but we finished the day in 29th."

"Day two started with qualifying, and with the rain overnight the track was drying slowly with the cold weather."

"As it was qualifying and if you didn't get in the top 40 that meant your weekend was over so we risked it by putting dry tyres on in the hope it was just dry enough to get temperature in the tyres and put in a reasonable lap time. Ending the session in 34th was slightly disappointing but we were happy to make the grid and hope to push on in race 1 later in the day."

"Just as lunch time and a few hours before race one, the heavens opened, and the track had a mixture of rain and hail. As quickly as it started it stopped but it meant the track would be damp for the rest of the day's races."

"As we rolled to the grid for race one we noticed an issue with the quick shifter and blipper. The team tried to fix the issue on the grid, but unfortunately the sensor had failed on the bike. On the warm up lap I tried to work around it but the sensor was cutting the bike out on the straights and decided to return to the pits. Due to having a technical this meant we would start from the back of the grid in race 2 on the Sunday. The team had a long night trying to resolve the issue and having believed we had sorted it."

"The final day of the season, the team were preparing the bike and noticed the repair work from the previous day had not gone to plan. With less than an hour to go until warm up we were scrambling around the paddock trying to find spares and get it fixed. The warmup session had started and the bike was still in pieces. With half the session gone the team got



the bike back together and managed to get some laps in to find the bike worked as it should. It was a good effort from the mechanics of True heroes racing and the Royal navy royal marine's road race team."

Meanwhile, the final round of the No Limits Racing season brought AB Harry Morris and team back to Donington Park, this time for a bash on the GP configuration, which features the notorious Melbourne Loop.

"With the track having recently been resurfaced, it felt brilliant all the way round," said AB Morris.

"With it being October, it was expected to be a miserable and wet meet, however the weather surprised us all and gave us a mini heatwave."

"There wasn't any practice time for this round due to there being a track-day on the Friday, so we jumped straight in to qualifying on Saturday morning. It was all feeling a bit clunky to begin with but I managed to find some flow and refresh myself with the circuit and picked up 13th for race one."

"Race one was as expected from a newcomers class with some questionable overtakes and 7 DNFs. I dropped back to 15th by the end due to a couple mistakes on my behalf but overall there was some good racing."

"Sunday kicked off with the military race qualifying which left much to be desired. I ended up in 20th for the start however this did prove helpful with finding some new lines and different techniques during the race."

"Starting 16th for race two was probably the best of the weekend for me, with some great battles meaning I got some practice in with riding within a group. Ultimately I managed to get through and secure 14th which I was happy with."

"Shortly following race two we had the final military race which followed the tradition of being a combination of some really great close racing and absolute chaos. There were no major incidents, but there is certainly no love lost in the GB "Racing Inter-services Championships when we're all fighting

for the same bit of tarmac."

"Rounding off the weekend was my last newcomer race, which topped the season off nicely. I just missed out on the overall top 10 but still very happy with what I have achieved this year. I wanted to thank Team Captain Adam and all the RNRMRRT team for allowing me to get a start in racing. I can't wait to get stuck into the 2024 season."

If you fancy joining the team either as pit crew or on two wheels, contacts us on Facebook or Instagram, or email [RNRMRRT@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:RNRMRRT@hotmail.co.uk) to get involved.



## WALSH ON SONG

Royal Marines Bandies need poise and accuracy to produce spectacular music performances.

Evidently that comes in handy on the archery range too, given Colour Sergeant Claire Walsh's memorable campaign.

Claire only picked up the bow for the first time in April but has scooped a medal at almost every competition since - even winning a few.

She said: "Picking up a compound bow at Easter for the first time, I was not overly confident to enter any competitions for the season."

"However, with a lot of persuasion, I was convinced to enter a few to see how it would go, so I was playing catch up, especially with the ranking point competitions, as I did not start these until June."

Some highlights of Claire's first-ever outdoor season include claiming Inter-Services victory, five archery GB Awards, the Red English Cross Archery England Award and achieving 37th place in the national rankings.

The last competition of the season for Claire was the Inter

Counties, where she shot for the Hampshire B Team.

"As the RAF also had a team competing, I could wear my Royal Navy shirt and represent the force during the qualification rounds on both days," she said.

"It was important to show a presence at a national level event."

The Inter Counties competition involved the top three archers from each country, with a significant amount of GB and highly skilled archers in attendance.

Claire qualified in 6th place, beating two GB archers, and only placing behind GB and England archers.

An incredible achievement made even more impressive by the short time Claire has been involved with the sport.

Claire said: "I am thrilled with how the season has gone, and cannot promise that my progression will continue at such a pace as it has done so far. However, I have learnt a lot and now have plenty to practice during the indoor season."

Next in the sights of this budding archer are the National Indoor Championships this month.



# THERM FRIENDS



THE rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain. And the best thermals can be found in the mountains and the beaches.

Well, at least, that's where the five Royal Navy and two Army paragliders found during their trip to Andalusia in southern Spain.

During a seven-day Adventurous Training exercise, organised by Cdr Jerry Ovens, skilled and more novice pilots were afforded the opportunity to fly cross country in better thermic conditions – rising air needed for staying airborne and gaining height – than are to be found in the UK, providing a valuable learning experience and ideal preparation for next year's competition season.

Thermals are rising air caused by the heating of the ground which then releases pockets of warm

air which rise up to cloud height.

Flying locations varied from mountain sites to the beaches on the south coast of Spain and undertaking up to three hours at a time in the air. Out of the seven days the paragliders managed to fly four days, the weather conditions proved to be too windy on the other days.

On the no-fly days the team visited Ronda, taking in the cultural sites, hiking up to the nearby castle, and receiving theory lessons on how best to fly between thermals in a race.

AB Kyle Fox said: "This was my first opportunity to break away from the hill and go cross country, which provided a big boost to my skills and knowledge.

"We flew in the perfect settings from the beaches along the south coast to the mountains

in the south of Spain."

SLt Max Davidson added: "On our first flight we achieved nearly three hours in the air above Algodonales, this involved flying with up to 40 other pilots and the local wildlife in the air whilst keeping an eye out for the next thermal which proved to be mentally taxing, and good prep for competing next year."

Cdr Ovens said: "Organising a safe exercise has been a challenge, but one that was truly worth it as each flight was unique and the experience gained invaluable. The highlight for me was spiralling up a thermal side by side with vultures and colleagues."

Paragliding is taught by the joint services centre in Bavaria as AT and supported by the Royal Navy Hang gliding Paragliding Association.

# FIGHTERS HEAD FOR LYMPSTONE

FIFTY fighters from the across the UK headed to Commando Training Centre in Lymstone for the Royal Marines Open Judo Championships.

They came from as far north as Newcastle as a wide range of skills gathered – from novice fighters all the way to Olympian Danny Williams.

In a step change, the Championships were also open to civilians.

The 'command level event' was a massive success and saw Royal Marines develop its most junior fighters, providing everyone with at least five fights, but also carry out grading for the most experienced Dan Grades (Black Bets) to progress further.

The whole weekend ran seamlessly with junior fighters in the morning on Sunday up to the heavy weight seniors in the afternoon.

The "Heavy Duty medals" awarded were accompanied by a watch donation for each gold medallist from a London watch maker 'Paul Bowman'.

Every single person who entered and several of the spectators have already shown an interest for next year's open and there are even a few of the junior players seriously considering joining the Royal Marines post A Levels.

Once again supported by not only the Royal Marines Charity but also the British Judo Association who provided the international level officials essential for any competitive event.







## Toasting the immortal memory

COMMANDER Tim Leeder – the former CO of HMS Portland – and his wife Madeleine were guests of honour at Portland RNA's Trafalgar Night dinner.

Dressed in their finest garb, some 55 shipmates packed into the island's masonic hall.

Following a delicious four-course dinner, customary toasts were made, including the Immortal memory, toasted in Silence by s/m Peter Shoemsmith.

There was a presentation to Commander Leeder of a rum tot cup from 1700 and flowers for his wife Madeleine, before a lively session of after-dinner dancing, accompanied by live entertainment provided by Matt Wallace.

■ The Half Moon Pub in Stakeford Ashington was the venue for Wansbeck's Trafalgar Dinner – held on the day itself, October 21.

An excellent meal was enjoyed by all 14 shipmates attending (plus an entertainer, who was very good).

As there were only 14 people celebrating, the branch shared the dining area with other customers, who were introduced to some nautical traditions as a result, including toasts and two raffles (one for a bottle of Pusser's Rum, the other the regular raffle for a 'bottle of something' or box of chocolates).

The staff at the pub were excellent, branch treasurer Ken provided the Sherry and bottle of Pusser's, and Margo Kirsopp, the widow of former Vice President George Kirsopp who died in March supplied a bottle of Woods Rum for the tot.

## Assistance with your will writing

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For more information, visit <https://linktr.ee/rnassociation>



# From the beaches to bombers

**FOUR Normandy veterans were treated to a unique day out reviving wartime memories thanks to the help of a sailor determined to honour the men of 1944.**

Former sailors Henry Rice and Stan Ford, ex-Royal Marine Jack Quinn and Ken Hay, who served with 4th Dorset Regiment, were royally treated as they spent a day in Lincolnshire learning about the RAF's contribution to victory in WW2.

The veterans – aged between 97 and 99, and all Legion d'Honneur recipients – were accompanied by Warrant Officer 1 Baz Firth, who frequently volunteers to help Normandy heroes remember and honour wartime comrades.

Baz, who serves at the RN Leadership Academy based at Britannia Royal Naval College, is a trustee of the Spirit of Normandy Trust, a charity which supports veterans of the 1944 campaign from welfare assistance to trips out – including returning to France to pay their respects.

This time, the trip focused on the efforts of Bomber Command in particular, courtesy of private tours first of their new memorial/museum near Lincoln, then at RAF Coningsby, home to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and one of only two airworthy Lancaster bombers still left.

As former sailors/marines/soldiers, the four veterans learned about the terrible toll of bomber crews between 1939 and 1945 – 58,000 dead, honoured at the International Bomber Command Centre (the veterans are pictured in front of one of the memorial's moving installations).

They – and Baz – were also surprised to learn that the roll of honour and 'walls of names' at the site include at least 11 Royal Navy fatalities, mostly killed in 1940 when the Fleet Air Arm loaned desperately-needed aircraft to the RAF.

As well as raining destruction on Nazi-occupied Europe, towards the end of the war the RAF delivered 7,000 tonnes of food to the Netherlands, where one million Dutch were suffering from food shortages and starvation, resorting to eating pets, rodents and tulip bulbs. The food drop – Operation Manna – was the first such humanitarian mission and, outside Holland, is invariably eclipsed by the horrors/devastation of Dresden.

Lancaster bombers formed the backbone of the force dropping deliverance on the Netherlands. The sight of the BBMF's four-engined bomber brought former soldier Ken to tears for the memories it evoked.

Captured in the fighting liberating north-west Europe, Ken and fellow prisoners of war were marched around Germany to prevent them falling into Allied hands.

The speed of the Allied advance eventually caught up with Ken's column of PoWs, liberating the men. An airlift, Operation Exodus, was arranged, bringing more than 15,000 former prisoners, including Ken, back to the UK.

On May 4 1945, he climbed aboard a Lancaster for the flight home and climbed up to look inside the BBMF bomber – the first time he'd been close to one since that day.

"He told us all of the sheer sight and sound of all those aircraft that took part and broke down, apologising saying he was just overwhelmed remembering it all," said Baz.

For 40 minutes, the veterans were joined on their tour of Coningsby – which included a look at a Typhoon fighter as well as Battle of Britain vintage Spitfires and Hurricanes – by the head of the RAF, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton, sharing their wartime exploits and stories.

And the veterans did the same with memorial flight engineers over a brew, before signing the flight's 'Lest We Forget'.

The visit to Lincolnshire concluded with evening dinner with memorial flight and Coningsby personnel.

"We learned so much from the visit and it was really humbling to see how everyone we met paid their respects to the veterans and could not do enough for them," Baz said.

"It was really special and a very memorable day indeed."

Baz is now looking towards the 80th anniversary when he's due to take 14 veterans back to the beaches – potentially for the last time, sadly, as the final major commemoration, making it a highly-charged visit which will be captured by Chris Terrill, the documentary maker behind a string of series on the RN including HMS Queen Elizabeth.



## Survivor Stan joins Shrivenham service

NINETY-eight-year-old naval Normandy veteran Cyril 'Stan' Ford was guest of honour as the RN led the annual service of prayer and remembrance at Shrivenham.

The Christian communities in the three Services take it in turns to organise the annual event, with the Senior Service taking the leading role in 2023.

Both the Chaplain of the Fleet, the Rev Andrew Hillier, and RM Corps Chaplain Rev Simon d'Albertanson took part in proceedings, the latter opening the service, underscoring the need for Defence personnel to be spiritually anchored in these increasingly turbulent times.

Music was provided by the Royal Marines Band, Defence Academy Military Wives Choir and award-winning gospel artist Monique McKen.

And speaking on the eve of 80th-anniversary commemoration of the D Day landings next year, Stan shared his first-hand experiences of the fighting off the Normandy coast in August 1944.

Stan was manning a gun platform on HMS Fratton – a small commercial vessel converted into a barrage balloon ship to provide cover for the invasion.

The battle for Normandy was almost over when Fratton was torpedoed on August 18. Stan was blown clean off the ship, before being rescued from the water. He suffered a fractured spine and injuries to both legs – he still wears leg callipers today, eight decades on. Reflecting on the losses sustained, Stan said, "I lost my shipmates, 31 of them... they are with me day and night."

The service also provided an opportunity for engagement with wider societies and cultures, with some readings in Fijian and Nepalese, and vocals from Monique McKen, BBC Gospel Artist of the Year 2021. "As a civilian, we sometimes forget the sacrifices made. So it's very special to come to services like this and remember those who sacrificed their lives for us," she said.

For Defence Christians of all traditions, the service creates a vital space in which they can bring their faith and service together.

One of many naval personnel present was Lt Lee Wilcock. Reflecting on his service, Lee said, "Having God as my anchor has enabled me to live this life. My faith gives me a compass and a sense of peace when life is difficult."

The Defence Christian Network (DCN) is a unified, multi-denominational Christian network for military personnel and MOD Civil Servants with the goal of connecting, supporting and inspiring Christians across Defence, making a Christian contribution to diversity and inclusion, wellbeing of civilian and Service personnel, and supporting the MODs engagement with Christians in wider society.

For further information, please contact: [afnetworks-christian-mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:afnetworks-christian-mailbox@mod.gov.uk) Picture: Kevin Schwaerzler, Shrivenham

## Some talented uckers

KEV Atkinson and Buster Brown took the doubles title and former marine Stan Patterson triumphed in the individual Uckers World Championship.

Nearly 80 contestants of all ages from across the Royal Naval Association Membership took part in a contest hosted in conjunction with Uckers Ya Uckers, Pusser's Rum and the Royal Maritime Club in

Portsmouth.

In a rollercoaster competition, which saw some former World Champions knocked out in the first round, Kev and Buster triumphed over Let and Pearl Davison while Bob Field couldn't match Stan in the singles.

Special prizes went to former RM Peter Jones (Snake Eyes winner) and Shirley Smith took the eight-piece crown.

Reference code: NAVY

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## Deaths

**Eric Foden, Chief Petty Officer.** Served 1950-1972. October 20, aged 95.  
**Charles Ian Jennings, Petty Officer.** Known as Ian. Served June 1959-May 1983, then RFA 1988-2003. Trained at HMS Ganges then served at HMS Cambridge, Collingwood, Excellent and Raleigh and in HMS Diana, Osprey, Carysfort, Tyne, Brighton, Bacchante, Hartland Point. Good service strips (1965, 69 and 73) and LSGC (76). Volunteered as a CPO at Manadon Sea Cadets 1983-1987. Died October 11, aged 80.  
**Tillett, Raymond, Leading Physical Training Instructor.** Served 1953-65 in HMS Ganges, Obdurate, Pembroke, Neptune, Jupiter, Vernon, Osprey, Alert, Hermes, Rhyl, Victory (RN

PT School), Cambridge and Drake. Member of Norwich RNA.  
**Warlow, Ben, Lieutenant Commander.** Born and educated in Devonport, joined BRNC in 1957. After training in Vigilant, and Carron, served in HMS Gambia, Bold Pathfinder, Tiger, Tenby, Eastbourne, Rhyl, Ajax and Bulwalk, and also ashore in training establishments HMS Thunderer, Raleigh, Ganges and Pembroke, the Fleet Maintenance Base Defiance, RN Barracks Devonport and Portland. He also served on staffs in the Ministry of Defence, C-in-C Navhome, C-in-C Fleet and Flag Officers Plymouth and Portsmouth. He was afloat in Naval Parties for the Falklands War (RMS Queen Elizabeth II) and the Lebanon

(RFA Reliant). Author/co-author of more than a dozen books on the RN, including Ships of the Royal Navy, Pendant Numbers of the Royal Navy, Battle Honours of the Royal Navy, and several volumes on the Service's links with Malta. Died October 20, aged 85.  
**Smith, Ronald Henry Earl, signaller.** Joined RN aged 18 during WW2, served in HMS Jamaica. Awarded Arctic Star. Died October 22, aged 97.  
**Torrance, Thomas Alexander, Ex CRS.** Served 1955 to 1980 in HMS Ganges, Bulwark, Belton, Cardigan Bay, Sheba, Reclaim, Mercury, Vidal, Ark Royal, Rooke, Montrose, Antrim, Blake among others. Died October 21, aged 83.

## Ask Jack

**Exeter White Ensign Club** will be closing in early 2024 after more than 40 years in the former Holy Trinity Church in South Street. Over its lifespan the club, which serves as a hub for several veterans' groups in the city, including the WRNS, Royal Marines and Submariners' Associations, has collected more than 270 plaques/mounted crests of ships and units. All are being sold for £40 each (including postage and packing), available from the club treasurer at [roc91014@gmail.com](mailto:roc91014@gmail.com) or 07812 789 233. Just name the crest you'd like.

**HMS Lord Austin:** I am seeking family or friends of sailors who served on the trawler which was sunk in the Seine Bay on June 24 1944. Seven crew were lost and the remainder were rescued by US Coast Guard Rescue Flotilla One cutter USCG 56. My cousin Jess Alton Gipson was a crew member of USCG

56 which rescued survivors. I am in contact with the daughter of the Commander and the son of one of the crew of USCG 56 and we want to share information with any of the survivors' families about their rescue. We have the names of the seven crew members who were lost but not the survivors. If anyone has information, they can contact me by email at [sggipson@msn.com](mailto:sggipson@msn.com).

Gary Gipson

**FRADU:** I would like to contact the following former Fleet Requirements and Air Direction Unit Hunter pilots who mounted detachments at RAF Gibraltar from 1980 to 1983: Tommy Thompson, Godfrey Underwood, Simon Willoughby and Derek Morter.  
**Tony Fairburn, Sqn Ldr (Rtd)**  
[tony.fairbairn@btinternet.com](mailto:tony.fairbairn@btinternet.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](mailto:Whpsimpson@gmail.com)

**HMS Plym:** I would like to trace the River-class frigate's unofficial timber crest. She left Devonport reserve in 1951/2 and deployed on Operation Hurricane in the Monte Bello Islands of Western Australia, where she was destroyed in the UK's first nuclear weapon test. The ship was stripped and I have discovered an auction house sold a badge said to be from the frigate (K271) in 2007 but I believe it to be unofficial, confirmed to me by Chatham Dockyard Historical Society.

Geoff Robinson  
 7 Mountfield, Borough Green,  
 Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8HX

## Reunions

**HMS Mohawk Association:** A reunion will be held at the Queen's Hotel, Blackpool, from March 22 to 25. For details call IOW Tours on 01983 405116 or email [rob.proud@mypostoffice.co.uk](mailto:rob.proud@mypostoffice.co.uk)

**HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association and HMS Tenby Association:** The 2024 reunion takes place at the Beaches Hotel, Prestatyn, North Wales, from May 10 to 13. Contact Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email [askhamd3@gmail.com](mailto:askhamd3@gmail.com). For HMS Tenby contact David Macalister on [dmac121dm@gmail.com](mailto:dmac121dm@gmail.com)

**HMS Medway Queen.** Are you connected with the Medway Queen – one of the last large ships involved with the Dunkirk evacuation still with us? The team lovingly restoring the paddle steamer want to celebrate her 100th birthday next year by involving every one who has played a part in bringing her back to life. As well as carrying hundreds of thousands of tourists from the Medway to Southend, Herne Bay and Clacton on pleasure cruisers, she was pressed into service as a minesweeper in WW2. In May 1940 she was sent across the Channel and brought back around 7,000 troops from

Dunkirk, securing her place in naval history. 100th birthday plans include a memorial service at Rochester Cathedral on Sunday April 21 2024. Former crew, staff, anyone involved in the long restoration of the ship or has a story to tell about the ship and their experiences aboard, especially families of Dunkirk veterans saved by the ship should contact Pam Bathurst of the preservation society ([pambathurst@sky.com](mailto:pambathurst@sky.com)) or Medway Queen Preservation Society, Gillingham Pier, Pier Approach Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 1RX.



## Charity reveals plans for new Plymouth home

RNBT, the largest naval benevolence charity, held its annual conference at The China Fleet Club in Saltash. Attendees ranged from representatives of local naval ships and establishments to Plymouth Councilors and charity leaders. RNBT last year gave over £3m, to those in the naval community in need, 19 per cent of payment were to those living in the West Country. This year applications for help are increasing by over 12 per cent. The Trust's message was that they needed everyone's help in making sure that all those in need from the naval community knew who to turn to in hard times. They also told delegates about the new online portal – Lightning Reach – which allows people to ask for help securely on-line, leading to rapid assistance for those in the most urgent need. The conference heard from one particularly grateful couple from Tavistock who praised RNBT for their help: RNBT was 'a real safety net, a

real lifebuoy when we needed it.' There was also exciting news for Plymouth veterans: RNBT is looking for a site to build a care home in the area. Having successfully built a new care home in Portsmouth last year, it is now Plymouth's turn and the search for a suitable site has already started. Commodore Russell Best OBE, RNBT's Chair of Trustees, explained: "We would very much like to be able to build a care home in the Plymouth area and I would love to be able to announce the start of a construction project – but these things take time." He added that the search for a site was already underway. "The site has to be right for us, with good transport links so that staff and residents' families can get to it easily. We are leaving no stone unturned in seeking the right place to start. We have learned to be patient but I would like to enlist your help; if you know of great site of about 1¼ or 1½ acres in size do let us know."

## Ex-Marine's work earns him top award

A FORMER Royal Marine, who joined the Probation Service just over a year ago, has scooped a prestigious national award. Despite having no previous experience of working in the criminal justice system, Gareth Mills beat tough competition to be named Best Newcomer of the Year Winner at the Inspire Justice Awards. Gareth's military background has seen the father of two rocket up the career ladder becoming Veteran Lead within the space of less than 12 months. Upon joining the Probation Service, Gareth was struck by how many veterans were in his caseload. Just a few weeks later, a chance meeting with a fellow veteran and charity founder at the school gates no less, cemented in Gareth's mind that extra support for veterans under supervision would be transformative in terms of their rehabilitation. In partnership with Corporal Andy Reid MBE and his charity Standing Tall, which helps veterans with their mental health, Gareth set about developing a referral process and delivery to ensure veterans on probation can get the mental health support they need. In addition, Gareth is now delivering monthly veteran drop-in sessions to support offenders on probation as well as planning for Armed Forces Day next June to raise money for charity. All of this work is voluntary, something which Gareth has taken off his own back all the while managing a busy caseload. Of their one in a million colleague, Head of Probation Delivery Unit for Warrington and Halton, Kerri Bendon, said: "Gareth is the epitome of a



probation practitioner and the last 12 months has shown what a great asset he is to the probation service and also what a bright future he has ahead of him. We are very lucky to have him within our organisation. "He has stepped into his new role with vigour and enthusiasm to do the best he can for those he works with and his colleagues. He is an excellent team member and supports his colleagues on a daily basis without complaint. "He instils the values of the probation service in everything he does and he clearly enjoys the work he does across his role. "His enthusiasm and commitment is contagious, and his dedication to enabling people to be their best is evident day in day out. "Delivered by Skills for Justice, the Inspire Justice Awards celebrates the outstanding achievements of the justice sector workforce. Now in its second year, the Inspire Justice Awards are sponsored by BT, Unison and SFJ Awards. To find out more visit: <https://skillsforjustice.org.uk/inspire-justice-awards>

## £50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the October edition of *Navy News* (right) was the seaplane tender HMS Albatross, renamed Hellenic Prince in 1948. Peter Sommerville, from Greenock, wins £50 for sending the correct answers.



This month's mystery ship (above) is a Leander-class frigate commissioned in May 1966. What was her name? and what operation did she take part in the year after her commission? 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](mailto:subs@royalnavymail.mod.uk) with December Mystery Ship in the header. Coupons and emails giving the

correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner. Entries must be received by January 12. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted. No correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned. The winner will be announced in our February edition. Please note the Mystery Ship competition will cease from January 2024.

### MYSTERY PICTURE 346

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](mailto:news@royalnavymail.mod.uk) or [editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk](mailto:editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk)
- If you are sending your notice via email, please include your full address and telephone number.
- Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.
- Please send in reunions at least two months (preferably three) before the month of the event. There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.
- Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.
- The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

## ROYAL NAVY NAVY NEWS

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Ask Jack columns in next month's Noticeboard must be received by

December 4 2023



