



NAVY NEWS

JULY 2023

MAGICAL MERLINS

Two Merlin Mk4 helicopters from 846 NAS follow their counterparts from the Portuguese Air Force in a four-ship formation over the capital Lisbon during Exercise Montijo Merlin. See pages 16-17

Picture: PO Phot Kyle Heller

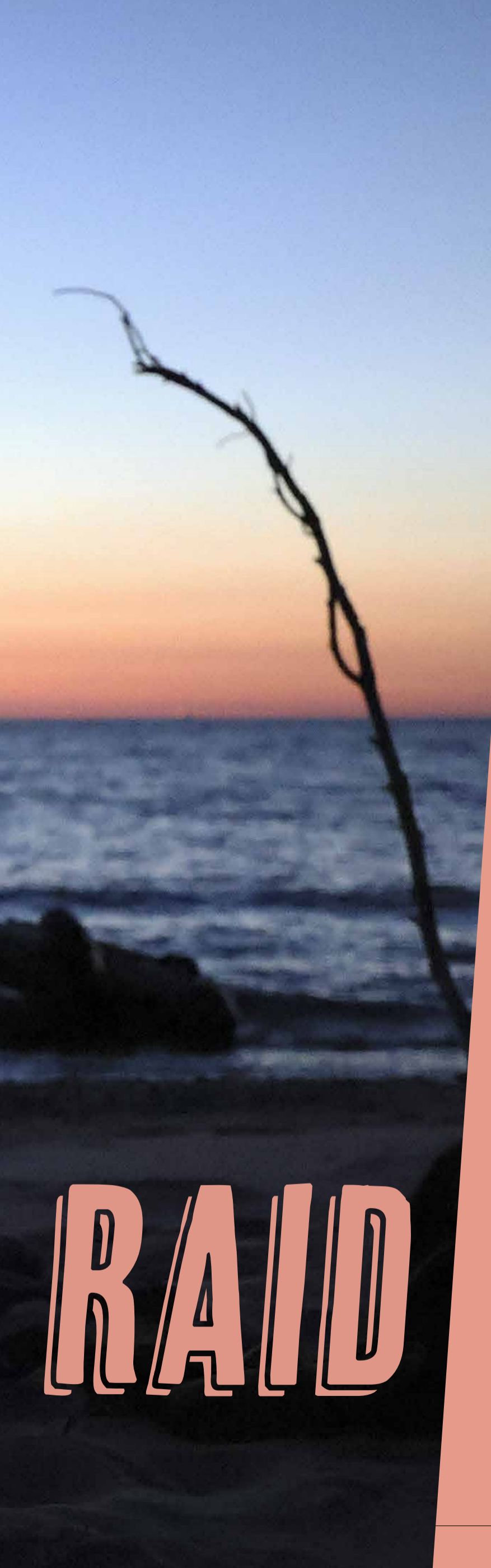


Inside: ■ HMS Defender's formidable display ■ HMS Lancaster strikes again

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TOGETHER WE



RAID

ROYAL Marines have once again been showing their expertise with a series of raiding exercises in the Baltic.

Commandos and UK amphibious flagship HMS Albion have been working with NATO allies in the Baltic Sea in large-scale annual exercise Baltops involving 6,000 troops from 19 nations.

X-Ray Company from Arbroath-based 45 Commando raided Poland's northern coastline and called in rocket strikes in a series of exercises codenamed Condor Strike.

Commandos landed silently from HMS Albion on to a beach on the Pomeranian coast at Ustka, two hours' drive west of Gdansk, to reconnoitre a forest, paving the way for marine forces from across the alliance to come ashore.

The Commandos cleared the path for their allies, providing invaluable intelligence before United States Marines and troops from Italy, Poland, and Romania were guided into position on the coastline.

Commandos sent co-ordinates to the task force at sea for American HIMARS rocket launchers to unleash a barrage of fire and fury, striking targets and allowing NATO forces into the area.

X-Ray Company launched from HMS Albion – the assault ship at the head of the Littoral Response Group (North) alongside landing ship RFA Mounts Bay, meeting up with the Shore Reconnaissance Team of the specialist Surveillance and Reconnaissance Team, known as the eyes and ears of the UK Commando Force.

They had scouted the coastline for the best landing places, laying the groundwork for safe passage inland for large NATO forces.

47 Commando Raiding Group used their small inflatable raiding craft to bring their fellow Royal Marines ashore, along with US Marines.

The scenario also saw a bombardment from US Marine Corps HIMARS prior to the ground troops moving onto the objective.

148 Battery from 29 Commando Royal Artillery sent target co-ordinates to the task force at sea, who relayed the information to the USMC, showcasing how NATO can operate effectively together.

That was also underscored by the presence of Golf Company from 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines, US Marine Corps, who worked alongside the 45 Commando team on Albion throughout Baltops.

"Working with the Royal Marines and Navy has been a fantastic experience," said the USMC Company Commander Major Ryan Rullman.

"We have progressively strengthened our ability to work together at the tactical and operational levels, and successfully integrated our primary command and control systems."

Captain Marcus Hember RN, Commander of the Littoral Response Group (North) Task Group – and also Commanding Officer of HMS Albion – said the UK force's time in the Baltic had underlined the UK's commitment to the region and the collective might of NATO.

"In bad times, good friends turn up; the UK's commitment as a NATO ally to Baltic and Northern European security is steadfast and this exercise is just another example following on from months of Albion and LRG(N) working closely with our Allies and partners in the region," he continued.

"We have shown we are stronger together."

Lieutenant Colonel Edward Hall, Commanding Officer of 45 Commando Royal Marines and Commander Land Forces Littoral Response Group (North) added: "Integrated by design as an amphibious naval force, Royal Marine Commandos and the Royal Navy have a long history of working together by sea, air and land to deliver a comprehensive, agile and flexible response wherever it is needed."

"Baltops 23 is an important opportunity for us to exercise this capability with our NATO allies, reaffirming our commitment to security and stability and proving that

together we are stronger.

"The UK Commando Force and USMC have significant experience of working together and this presents another opportunity to build on our shared history."

Earlier in the month, HMS Albion linked up with Challenger 2 tanks, Apache gunships and Wildcat helicopters from the Army, and RAF Typhoons in Estonia.

They chose the headland at Paldiski – a couple of dozen miles west of the Estonian capital Tallinn – for the combined demonstration.

RAF Typhoon fighters, plus Army Air Corps Apaches and Wildcats – currently deployed to Tapa in Estonia rather than their regular bases at Wattisham and RNAS Yeovilton – flew in a tight formation overhead.

And on the water Royal Marines transported the Queen's Royal Hussars and their main battle tanks from the shore into HMS Albion's cavernous dock to be off-loaded – a rare sight and opportunity to show how British Army tanks can be moved by the Royal Navy's amphibious experts.

Capt Hember said: "It is not often when the Royal Navy, RAF and Army are in the same place at the same time with major assets.

"This gave us the opportunity to test how we can work together on the sea. Proving again that the Royal Navy can move Army heavy equipment on and off a shoreline whilst being safely covered air by the RAF and Army Air Corps."

In addition to the combined land-sea-air workout around Paldiski, X-Ray Company deployed ashore for training on an Estonia range, culminating in a day of live-firing exercises.

The commandos tested various weaponry, including Javelin anti-tank missiles, grenade machine-guns, mortars and heavy machine-guns.

This built on an earlier exercise which saw commandos carry out a dusk raid on the beach at Kaberneeme, on the north coast of Estonia.

As the last glimmer of light disappeared on the horizon, they manoeuvred in small raiding craft across the calm seas dimly lit by the setting sun's amber glow.

The beach raid scenario saw 45 Commando facing off against Estonia's Armed Forces, with an Estonian naval missile unit acting as the commandos' 'adversary'.

It was a valuable opportunity for the commandos, swiftly infiltrating hostile territory to secure information, confuse the enemy and strike a high value target.

Capt Hember said: "This exercise has been a great proving ground in demonstrating the flexibility of amphibious ships like HMS Albion, enabling fast and lethal strikes by our embedded Royal Marines in 45 Commando whilst seamlessly supported by the ship and its crew.

"We've demonstrated our ability to exercise with our regional partners adding significant capability and shown we can 'turn up when needed'."

Officer Commanding X-Ray Company, Royal Marines, Major Lee Stewart, added: "The support of the crew from HMS Albion is critical to land operations, the integrated approach with both Royal Navy and Royal Marines working as a team make amphibious warfare so effective."

Two RAF Typhoon fighter jets were on station to provide close air support, information, surveillance and reconnaissance during the exercise – enabling invaluable integrated training between land, sea and air.

Aviators of IX (Bomber) Squadron and their Typhoons are currently stationed at Ämari Air Base, having flown NATO air policing missions recently with German Allies – resulting in several intercepts of Russian aircraft transiting close to Estonian airspace.

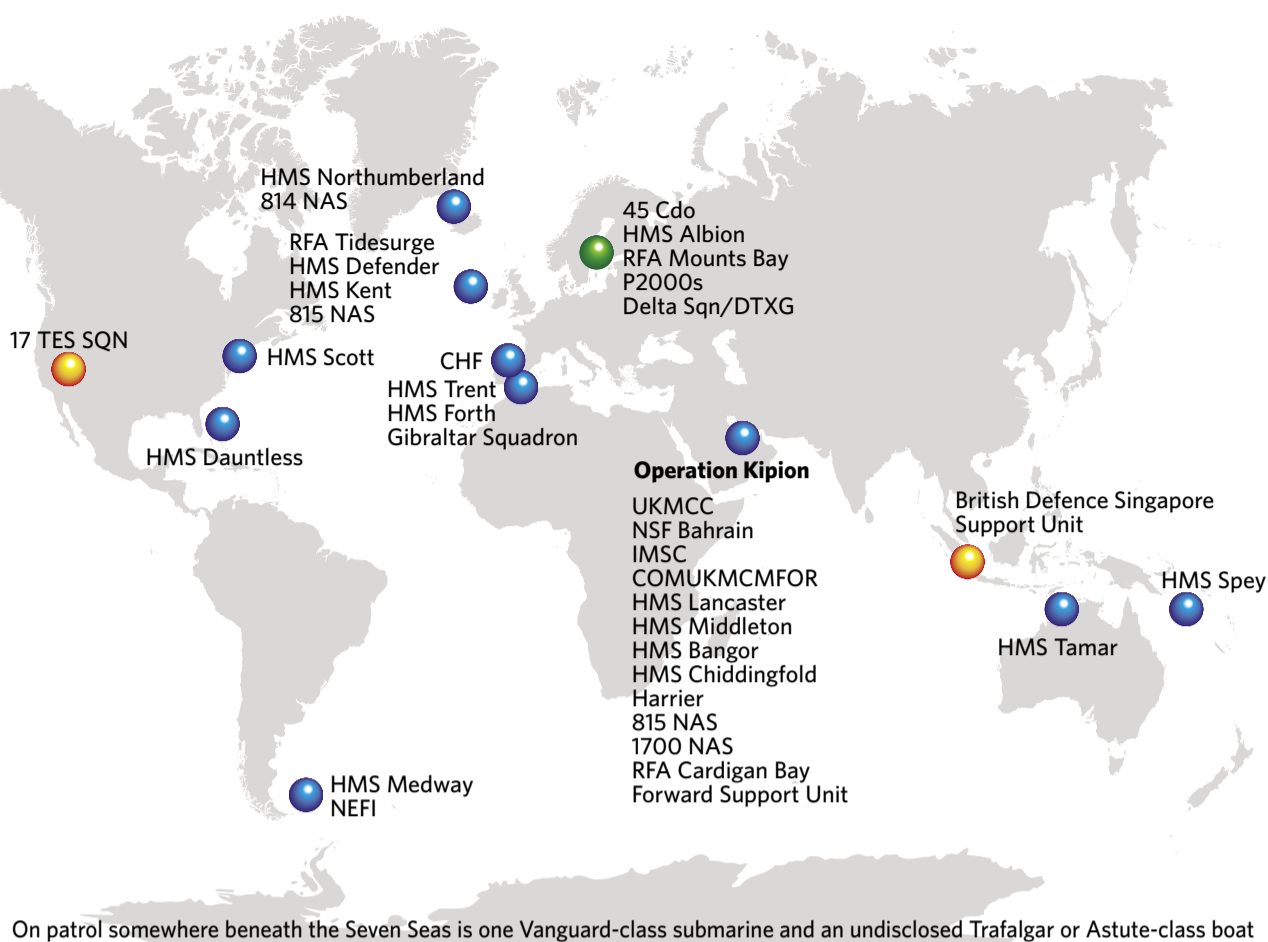
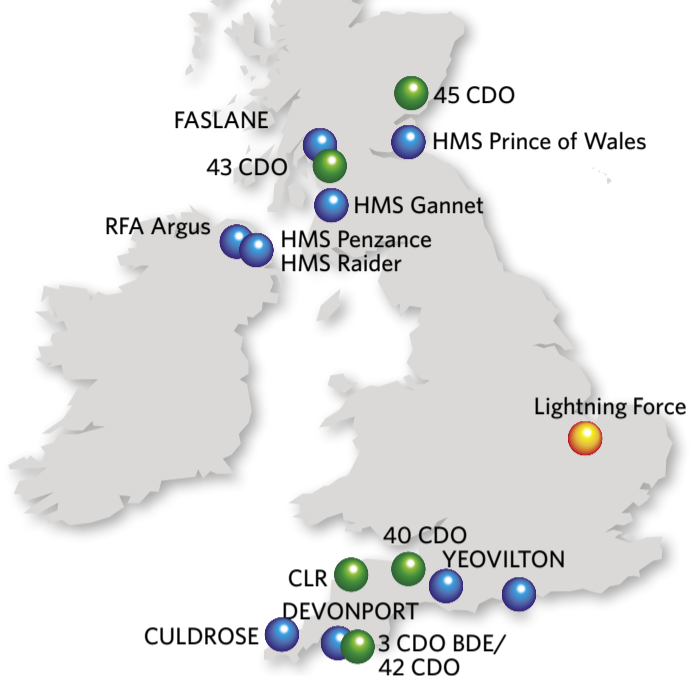
Spring Storm saw more than 1,500 UK troops deploy for Estonia's largest annual military exercise, which includes 14,000 troops from 11 NATO countries.

The exercise followed combined Royal and Estonian Navy-RAF training which saw the host nation call up Typhoons to 'attack' HMS Mersey as a test of seamless cooperation.

BALTOPS REAFFIRMS OUR
COMMITMENT TO SECURITY AND
STABILITY AND PROVING THAT
TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Richmond 824 NAS
 HMS Hurworth 825 NAS
 HMS Iron Duke RFA Tiderace
 HMS Severn
 HMS Portland
 Coastal Forces Squadron
 XV Patrick Blackett
 Project Wilton
 814 NAS
 815 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 half of 2023 over already... and we're just warming up...

It was warm in Portugal where the aviators of the **Commando Helicopter Force** joined their Portuguese comrades for some combined training on the Iberian Peninsula – notably in and around Lisbon, allowing for some stunning sights and experiences (see pages 16-17).

It was warm too in the Baltic, where **HMS Albion** – heavily in demand all year – enjoyed the UK's primary role in the Baltic's largest military exercise, Baltops, leading **45 Commando**, **P2000s** and **RFA Mounts Bay** (see pages 2-3).

Also in the region, divers of **Delta Squadron/Diving and Threat Exploitation Group** took the plunge to help clear historic ordnance which still blights Baltic waters (see right).

It's warm much of the year (and certainly warmer than Blighty) on the Rock where **HMS Cutlass** and **Dagger** are beginning to push the boundaries and expand the horizons of the RN Gibraltar Squadron (see page 27).

It was warm and sticky in the bush of Brunei, just what the Royal Marines of **40 Commando** wanted as they tested their jungle combat and survival skills (see pages 14-15).

The unique experimentation and trials ship **XV Patrick Blackett** is beginning to make her mark from testing quantum technology which will enhance navigation to assessing and tweaking new and/or upgraded radar systems for the Fleet (see pages 7 and 19).

And it's rarely anything less than warm in the Middle East where the forces of the **UK Maritime Component Command** have been heavily committed – from frigate **HMS Lancaster** again proving her worth as a drugs-buster by, er, busting drug runners... to RN vessels (Lancaster again, plus **HMS Bangor** and **Middleton** and **RFA Cardigan Bay**) staging focused patrols in the Strait of Hormuz (see page 11).

Elsewhere, survey ship **HMS Scott** crossed the Pond to represent the UK at New York's celebration of those who risk their lives at sea: Fleet Week (see page 9).

On the Type 45 destroyer front, **HMS Dauntless** has crossed the Atlantic and is now ready to respond to natural disasters across the Caribbean with the annual hurricane season upon us while **HMS Duncan** has departed Portsmouth for the Mediterranean on NATO duties having completed extensive training (see page 6). **HMS Defender** has nothing to prove to anyone having underlined her combat abilities by downing an incoming jet drone during NATO's largest maritime air defence workout, Formidable Shield, off the Outer Hebrides (see the centre pages).

Not content with some Sea Viper excitement, **Defender** was asked to join a US carrier battle group with **RFA Tideforce** and **HMS Northumberland**, operating in the narrow waters of northern Norway to protect USS Gerald R Ford (or perhaps that should be the Gerald R Fjord – see page 5).

Congratulations to those of you singled out in the first **Official Birthday Honours** approved by HM The King (see page 13).

And congratulations to **HMS Prince of Wales**, whose sailors are now Freeman and Women of the City of Bristol after being bestowed its highest civic honour. They paraded through the streets to celebrate (see page 13).

The RN has teamed up with leading universities to harness leading-edge sports science and cut medical downgrades, especially musculoskeletal injuries (see pages 28-9).

And finally, thousands of sailors past and present converged on Merseyside to pay their respects to those who delivered victory over the U-boat 80 years ago (see pages 30-1). The magnificent anniversary events Liverpool hosted – with **HMS Defender** again leading RN representation – were a fitting curtain call for the greatest generation (with all in their late 90s at their youngest, this is likely to be the final major **Battle of the Atlantic** commemoration attended by veterans).

Divers join NATO allies to clear mines

ROYAL Navy divers are making vital Baltic Sea shipping lanes safer by recovering unexploded mines and torpedoes as part of a NATO security mission.

Specialist divers are involved in a multinational explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) exercise hosted by Latvia, operating closely alongside the hosts and teams of experts from Estonia, Lithuania, Germany, Belgium, Canada and the US.

Delta Squadron of the Diving & Threat Exploitation Group safely recovered two ground mines and one torpedo two days into the exercise, already increasing the safety of the region.

“The aim is to continue our close working relationships and to make the sea lanes safer by identifying and disposing of historic maritime explosive ordnance, much of which is a legacy of WWII,” said Chief Petty Officer James Roberts.

“All nations are working together, contributing to the planning, identification, confirmation and recovery of explosive ordnance, building operational capability and increasing the ability to operate as a coherent task group.”

The aim of the exercise – codenamed Open Spirit – is to clear the Baltic Sea from sea mines, torpedoes, and other explosive remains from both World Wars and the Cold War.

The Baltic was the scene of heavy fighting during these conflicts and was heavily mined, while air bombardments, naval gunfire and submarine warfare only added to the ordnance lying on the seabed.

The dangerous ordnance is hunted using cutting-edge autonomous



underwater vehicles – submarine robots packed with the latest sensors that create images of the underwater objects.

Each piece of ordnance removed, and every inch of the seabed mapped, ultimately makes the region safer and helps the Baltic nations understand their own backyard – ensuring they are able to spot changes if new mines are laid.

CPO Roberts added: “From the most junior seamen to senior operators, working closely with our partners and allies

demonstrates the resolve and commitment of the UK and all NATO to regional Baltic security.

“It's fantastic to be working with our friends in the Baltic again, this constant drumbeat of exercises allows real relationships to grow, bound by our shared values, stronger together and ready to defeat aggression.”

Exercise Open Spirit has taken place since 1997 and rotates between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

IN THE FJORDS WITH USS GERALD R FORD

Vestfjorden, Norway

THE Royal Navy formed a protective ring of steel around the world's largest warship in the Arctic Circle during combined security exercises in the high north.

Submarine hunter HMS Northumberland, Type 45 destroyer HMS Defender and tanker RFA Tideforce are well-versed in escorting Britain's aircraft carriers, and joined the US Navy's Carrier Strike Group 12, whose flagship is the largest warship ever built, the goliath USS Gerald R Ford.

During the week connected to the task group, the British trio combined with NATO allies in Vestfjorden – a 96-mile long fjord off the north-western coast of Norway – to train with the 100,000-tonne Gerald Ford as she continues her Atlantic Ocean deployment.

Alongside Norwegian stealth corvette, HNoMS Steil, Northumberland and Defender – with their respective prowess in underwater warfare and air defence operations – first posed as 'enemy' forces to test the allied task group before switching to protecting the aircraft carrier from anti-ship missile attacks and from air assaults from US Navy F/A-18s.

"Having worked with the US Navy multiple times in the past, this is the first time I've personally provided an escort to a US Navy supercarrier," said Lieutenant Baily Denyer, one of Northumberland's Officers of the Watch.

"The experience has been surreal, escorting the world's largest warship ever built. Being given the opportunity to drive Northumberland within 500yds of USS Gerald R Ford for the photographs is definitely one to remember."

Northumberland and Defender worked closely with Norwegian frigate HNoMS Otto Sverdrup, cruiser USS Normandy and destroyers USS Thomas Hudner and USS



Ramage to escort Gerald R Ford as a multinational air force descended onto the task group.

This marked the start of Exercise Viking Trident, a large air defence exercise that saw the Carrier Strike Group defend against multiple waves of 'hostile aircraft', including Norwegian F-35s, US Navy F/A-18s and US Air Force B1-B supersonic bombers.

The task group was also able to work together on seamanship, navigational and warfighting exercises, proving their ability to operate seamlessly together.

RFA Tideforce carried out multiple replenishments, keeping the task group supplied and refuelled.

"This has been an outstanding opportunity to integrate with a US Carrier Strike Group alongside

our Norwegian allies and I am incredibly proud of the professionalism and high standards set by the crews of Tideforce, Defender and Northumberland," said Commander Will Edwards-Bannon, Northumberland's Commanding Officer.

HMS Northumberland is currently deployed on operations in the North Atlantic and High North.

PREPARING FOR UNPREDICTABILITY



ROYAL Navy engineers have sharpened their ability to rapidly repair aircraft during operations around the world.

Portsmouth-based 1710 Naval Air Squadron has no aircraft of its own but is made up of scientists and engineers from across all three services, along with civilians, who specialise in keeping aircraft flying – and providing modifications – while on punishing operations worldwide.

To ensure these specialists are ready for action, the squadron headed to the scenic Bramley Training Area in north Hampshire for Exercise Black Cat.

A retired Lynx helicopter was the squadron's main focus, carrying out hands-on repairs and offering a valuable opportunity to mimic a deployed aircraft that had taken damage.

This prepared the squadron for the demands of operational engineering, ensuring they can

make repairs rapidly under pressure, deal with casualties and potential ambushes by the 'enemy'.

Ultimately it means the repair section can continue to play their indispensable role in the Royal Navy and across defence, providing rapid repair for UK military aircraft.

Commander Nicholas Almond, the squadron's commanding officer, underscored the importance of this exercise.

"It's vital for our squadron to prepare for the unpredictability of operational deployments," he said.

"Our ability to respond quickly and effectively to repair needs is key to sustaining the operational effectiveness of military aviation."

The training not only focused on refining technical skills but also on developing field craft abilities and logistics under challenging conditions, meaning spare parts can be

brought to where they are needed on the front line.

Exercise Black Cat simulated the squadron's support to a damaged aircraft, including battlefield casualty drills and ambush response, to test the squadron's adaptability.

Guided by British Army members of the squadron, the repair section of the 1710 NAS have worked to enhance their skills, hasten their response times, and strengthen team bonds.

After the successful completion of Exercise Black Cat, 1710 NAS is now returning to its base at HMNB Portsmouth.

The squadron members carry with them not only improved skills and resilience but also a strengthened sense of camaraderie.

This exercise has ensured that they stand ready to uphold their motto: "Repair, Sustain, Enhance", embodying the essence of their service and their ability to respond.

THE Royal Navy's most advanced destroyer has deployed to the Caribbean to support island communities during hurricane season and counter trafficking in the region.

HMS Dauntless left Portsmouth – waved off by loved ones – with brand new engines after becoming the first ship in her class to undergo the Power Improvement Programme which ensures the Type 45 destroyers have more reliable, robust engines, generating the power to propel the 8,500-tonne warships through the water at speeds in excess of 32kts – and power the cutting-edge equipment on board.

The Type 45 destroyer was declared ready for operations last month after nine intensive months of training, passing all demanding trials, tests and finally a gruelling assessment of her crew and all weapons and systems.

The ship will be in the Caribbean to respond quickly to natural disasters during the region's hurricane season from June to November, while visiting island communities as a reassuring presence, working with local services and authorities to ensure the most rapid and effective aid is provided should Nature strike.

Dauntless will also patrol the Caribbean to counter illicit activities, in particular working with US Coast Guard and other law enforcement agencies in the ongoing fight against drug trafficking in the region.

After several years out of action followed by nearly 12 months of intensive training at sea, the destroyer's Commanding Officer Commander Ben Power said Dauntless was raring to prove herself on the world stage again.

"It has been a phenomenal journey taking the ship from Liverpool following the upgrade to the power and propulsion system through to our departure on time for operations, which highlights the performance of the equipment and the dedication and hard work of the crew," he added.

Chef James Bascran is among those who's helped

bring the destroyer back to life.

"I have served as a chef with the ship through all the major phases of the regeneration from picking the first meal that would be cooked and served on board through to preparing to feed over two hundred people that are at their action station in under 75 minutes, it is great to now be taking the ship on deployment," he explained.

The three new efficient engines – replacing two original diesel units – proved their reliability during the ship's Operational Sea Training (OST), with the ship available throughout and missing none of her planned days at sea.

It meant Dauntless completed that training off the South Coast in only four months, regenerating quicker than expected and faster than most of her fellow Type 45s.

While in the Caribbean, she will also head for Exercise Unitas and mark the 200th anniversary of the Colombian Navy.

Unitas (Latin for "united") is the oldest and largest maritime exercise in the region dating back to 1959 as a South American and US regional exercise designed to demonstrate a united stance against the spread of the Soviet Union's influence and presence in Latin America.

The exercise continues to be the most important naval exercise in the United States Southern Command area of responsibility, promoting partnership and demonstrating joint commitment to the region.

Pictures:
LET Brad Rushton,
POET Ryan Waters
and Paul Compton

PIP, PIP HOORAY, DAUNTLESS HEADS SOUTH



...as Duncan returns to the fold

READY for renewed duties with NATO is destroyer HMS Duncan, formally rededicated in her home base of Portsmouth.

Sponsor Lady Marie Ibbotson – who launched the ship on the Clyde in October 2010 and has followed HMS Duncan's progress ever since – was the guest of honour, joining affiliates, friends and families to celebrate the warship's successful regeneration.

After leading a NATO task group around the Mediterranean in 2018/19, Duncan underwent a two-year revamp in her home base.

Since the turn of the year, her 200-strong ship's company have been readying the ship – the Fleet's newest destroyer – for renewed operations.

Having completed the Royal Navy's premier test and assessment of ships and their crews, Operational Sea Training, off Plymouth, the destroyer was dispatched to the Mediterranean to take part in a major French/NATO exercise, Orion, involving more than two dozen warships operating across a vast area of the northern Med for two weeks where the action never stopped.

Orion formed the final part of HMS Duncan's regeneration with 11 staff embarked to coach and mentor the ship's company.

Test passed, it allowed the ship to celebrate her rebirth. After the formal ceremony returning Duncan to active service, guests were treated to lunch and a comprehensive tour of their affiliated ship.

For some, the visit marked a welcome return to Duncan after many years, for others, such as the

students of Manchester University Royal Naval Unit, this was the first time on a Royal Navy warship.

Engineering Technician George Cordon, the youngest member of the ship's company, cut the rededication cake, sharing the knife with Kim Martin, whose husband Ben is Duncan's Commanding Officer.

"I was proud to be part of such an important milestone in the ship's life and we're now looking forward to getting out on operations after all the preparation," George said.

The following day, Duncan opened her gangway to families, giving the loved ones of those who serve on board the chance to experience a little of what life is like in a Type 45 destroyer.

Duncan's nearest and dearest were given free rein to explore, with their hosts keeping a watchful eye.

"While cutting-edge equipment and rigorous training are crucial to our operational success, it is our people and the support of their families that remain the Royal Navy's most valuable component," said Commander Martin.

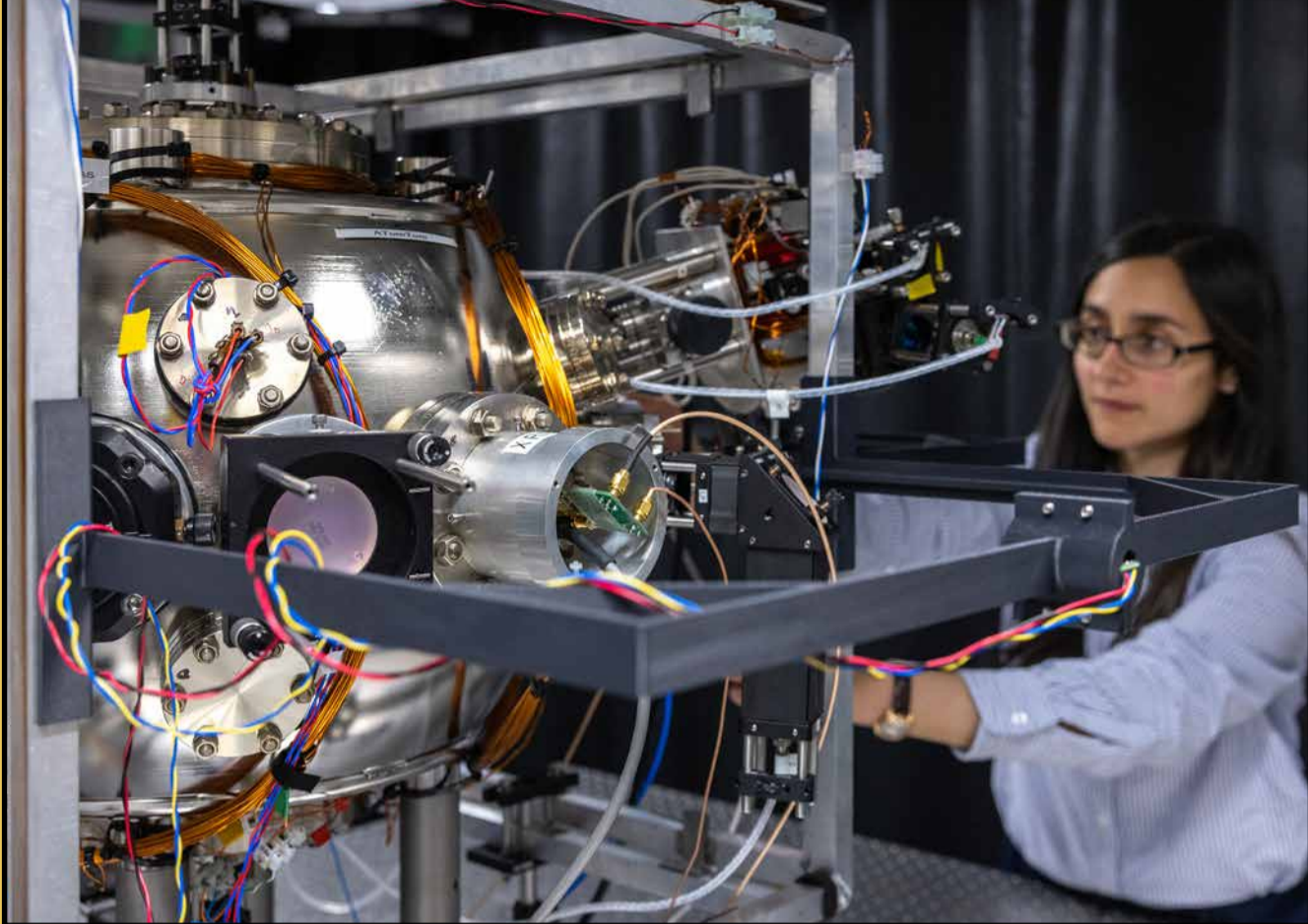
"They have shown commitment, professionalism and perseverance through Duncan's regeneration and will do so again during the deployment to come."

The ship's first deployment will be the same as her last: flagship of NATO's Standing Maritime Group 2 operating in the Mediterranean, though the geopolitical situation has changed substantially since 2018/19.

Pictures: LPhot Lee Blease



INTO THE QUANTUM REALM



THE Royal Navy has teamed up with Imperial College London to test a cutting-edge navigation system.

A prototype quantum sensor, developed by academics at Imperial College London (pictured left), was used on Royal Navy experimentation and trials ship XV Patrick Blackett.

The technology has the potential in the future to provide GPS-free navigation, making it less susceptible to jamming, imitation or other sabotage.

The partnership between NavyX, the navy's technology and experimentation experts, and Imperial College London is in early stages but is a big step forward.

Commander Michael Hutchinson, Commanding Officer of XV Patrick Blackett, said: "Working with Imperial College London on this project has been an exciting and interesting opportunity for all of us."

"So far, the testing has gone well but the technology is still in its very early stages. It's great to be a part of Royal Navy history."

While many navigation systems rely on global satellite systems, such as GPS, which use signals from satellites orbiting the earth, the quantum sensor is a new type of accelerometer which measures how an object's speed changes over time.

By combining this information with rotation measurements and the initial position of the object, the current location can be calculated.

Conventional accelerometers are

used in many different devices such as mobile phones and laptops. However, these sensors cannot maintain their accuracy over longer periods of time without external reference.

The quantum accelerometer uses ultracold atoms to make highly accurate measurements.

When cooled to extremely low temperatures the atoms start to display their 'quantum' nature, resulting in wave-like properties. As the atoms move through the sensor, an 'optical ruler' is formed by using a series of laser pulses. This allows the acceleration of the atoms to be precisely measured.

The experiment by Imperial College London and the Royal Navy is the first step towards understanding the application and use of quantum-enabled navigation in areas which have poor or no satellite coverage.

Dr Joseph Cotter, lead scientist on the quantum sensor from the Department of Physics at Imperial, said: "Access to the Patrick Blackett provides us with a unique opportunity to take quantum sensors out of the lab and into the real-world environments, where they are needed."

The sensor was used in a Qinetiq-developed Navy PODS (Persistent Operational Deployment System) – interchangeable modules (shipping containers) that can be loaded onto different vessels to provide extra space for technology and kit for specific operational tasking.



Pictures: Thomas Angus, Imperial College London

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NEW YORK SPOTLIGHT FALLS ON SCOTT



Main picture: HMS Scott berthed at Pier 88; Clockwise from above, a group of HMS Scott's sailors in Times Square; Paying their respects at the 9-11 Monument; Enjoying a game at the Yankee Stadium; Hosting visitors during New York's Fleet Week



BRITAIN'S biggest survey ship entertained – and enlightened – thousands of New Yorkers during a visit to the Big Apple.

HMS Scott represented the Navy and nation at New York's Fleet Week – an annual event celebrating and commemorating the service and sacrifice of personnel from the US Navy, Marines and Coast Guard.

She sailed into New York Harbour following the assault ship USS Wasp and accompanied by Canadian coastal defence ship HMCS Glace Bay, Italian frigate ITS Virginio Fasan, four training vessels used by the US Naval Academy at Annapolis and US Coast Guard Cutter Warren Deyampert.

Guiding the ship through one of the world's busiest waterways and past one of the best-known waterfronts on the planet was Scott's Navigation Officer, Lt Daisy Kelly-Fletcher.

"It was an incredible opportunity to conduct the pilotage up the Hudson, passing iconic sites such as the Statue of Liberty and Brooklyn Bridge," she said.

Scott – whose role is deep oceanographic survey – has been in Gibraltar most recently for maintenance, after an intense period of data gathering in the Atlantic.

She was given a plum berth on the River Hudson at Pier 88, just a mile from Times Square, for much of the six-day maritime event.

From the moment the ship arrived, her 50-plus crew were royally hosted by the US Navy, Marines and Coast Guard with invitations to Rock the Fleet in Times Square, a string of receptions and galas by New York's Mayor, the closing bell ceremony at the New York Stock Exchange, the Athletics Club and the USS Intrepid

(to name a few) as well as a multitude of sporting events, not least a trip to Yankee Stadium to see one of the world's most famous baseball teams in action.

On a more solemn note, six of Scott's sailors joined US Navy and US Coast Guard sailors and US Marines on a three-kilometre memorial run to the 9-11 Monument to pay their respects to the victims of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

On Memorial Day – the last Monday in May and akin to Remembrance Day in the UK, except it's a public holiday – the survey ship's crew stood side-by-side with their US counterparts at parades throughout the city.

In return for American hospitality, Scott opened her gangway to New Yorkers and fellow service personnel, welcoming more than 10,000 people aboard during the week, providing displays explaining her capabilities and the importance of the survey data she collects.

"This has really been one of those 'pinch yourself moments'. The city really embraces the occasion and the warm welcome by everyone we have met has made memories that will last a lifetime," said Ian Hindley, one of HMS Scott's hydrographers.

Commander Tom Harrison, Scott's Commanding Officer, added: "New York Fleet Week has been an incredible event to take part in.

"As the threat to our shared values increases, deepening defence ties with our closest ally is more important than ever. The crew have represented the Royal Navy to the highest standard and received a fantastic welcome from this great city."



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COME on, Navy News, you printed this photograph in last month's edition...

Royal Marines boarding team. Sailors. Sacks of illegal drugs. Dead of night in the Arabian Sea. Crew of HMS Lancaster posing.

But no, not the same image. Similar.

That's because we're keeping the heat on in the Gulf - evidenced by another month of notable successes.

Frigate Lancaster continued where we left her: preventing the flow of drugs from the Middle East.

It remains the most conspicuous success, underlined by £10m of illegal narcotics seized in back-to-back busts by Lancaster, upwards of £70m captured by her parent RN-led task force.

The frigate deprived traffickers of more than seven tonnes of hashish, heroin and methamphetamine in dawn and dusk raids - on the same day.

First, the Royal Marines boarding team found 3.5 tons of narcotics after tracking a suspect vessel since before sunrise.

That evening, Lancaster's Wildcat spotted another craft and the boarding team sprang into action once more to seize a further 3.7 tonnes of illegal drugs - hashish, packed in 376 bags.

"I am immensely proud of my entire team for their efforts in successfully executing two boardings, in challenging conditions, and inside of 12 hours," said Lancaster's delighted Commanding Officer Commander Tom Johnson.

"It was a real team success; bringing together the efforts of my team with those of a vast range of international support organisations who have all worked tirelessly to

achieve this result."

His ship is one of several operating under the banner of the Combined Maritime Forces - the multi-national coalition of more than 30 countries committed to security across the Middle East region.

Among the numerous task forces carrying out those security operations is 150, headed by the Royal Navy's Captain Jim Byron and his staff based in Bahrain.

Lancaster's actions brought the task group's successes in the past month alone to seven strikes against traffickers, and some £67m of illegal narcotics destroyed.

A French warship proved to be even more successful than Lancaster, striking four times in a run of operations spread over a four-week period in the Indian Ocean. The result: 2.2 tonnes of heroin, ¼ tonne of methamphetamine intercepted... and criminal gangs denied an estimated £54.5m (UK wholesale market value).

"This has become our calling card - putting good people, next to bad people, to stop them doing bad things," Cdre Byron said.

"This period of focussed operations, working in lockstep with our French brothers-in-arms has been particularly successful. Together, we have made a real dent in the international criminal trade in drugs which could have been destined for our home shores."

Aside from some good intelligence and vigilance on the part of crews and fliers monitoring vast swathes of the Indian Ocean, the drugs busts owe a good degree of their success to well-honed board-and-search

operations.

The RN can call upon a tradition going back centuries, but especially the past 15 years in the Gulf region, from stamping out the scourge of piracy off the Horn of Africa to intercepting illegal arms and drugs hauls.

Royal Navy lawyers, engineers and commandos invited partner nations committed to the Combined Maritime Forces to join them in Bahrain, making use of the US Coast Guard's bespoke board-and-search training facilities.



As well as the Brits, personnel from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Pakistan and Italy were all keen to learn/share their experiences.

Royal Navy marine and weapon engineers showcased and shared skills in the maintenance of small boats - key to every

successful boarding operation - instructing in the theory of engine repair as well as getting hands on in an interactive experience, taking apart and rebuilding an outboard engine.

Training then shifted to the US Coast Guard's 'ship in a box' facility, where Royal Marines of 42 Commando - the UK's specialist in board-and-search ops - demonstrated how to deal with scenarios which commonly occur when undertaking boarding operations.

A Royal Navy lawyer was on hand to explain how such operations are in accordance with international law.

"Working with our international colleagues has been a fantastic experience to share our skills and learn from each other," said Marine

Loom, "I've learnt a lot."

He and his comrades made use of a dhow in the warehouse - the traditional fishing vessel used in the region, which is frequently used in smuggling because it blends in - to teach searching and boarding.

The Marines hid objects in places where they have found contraband in the past to teach participants to search locations they would not normally consider, thinking outside the box.

Finally all participants moved on to Italian frigate Luigi Rizzo for a capability's demonstration followed by a tour and a run-through of how the Italian Marines Boarding Team conducts such operations.

Also bread and butter to RN vessels operating east of Suez (or anywhere else for that matter) is guaranteeing the safe passage of merchant shipping.

The narrow entrance to/exit from the Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, is one of the world's most important seafaring 'choke points' - global trade would be severely affected if the safe passage of shipping is threatened.

The overall situation at Hormuz veers and hauls, but with recent instances of harassment of some shipping passing through the 'gateway to the Gulf', there's been a focused effort by CMF warships in these waters.

HMS Lancaster, support vessel RFA Cardigan Bay and minehunters HMS Bangor and Middleton were committed in the southern Gulf and strait alongside the UK's regional allies in the region to enhance the security and safe passage of merchant vessel.

Between 60 and 70 large merchant ships travel through the Strait of

Hormuz daily - as well as countless smaller vessels; on a typical weekday there are at least 1,800 ships at sea between the shores of Qatar in the west and the Gulf of Oman to the east.

The Royal Navy's senior commander in the Middle East witnessed the international operation for himself from the USS Paul Hamilton.

The US Navy destroyer embarked the senior US, French and British naval commanders in the Middle East - US Fifth Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, Vice Admiral Emmanuel Slaars and Commodore Philip Dennis, UK Maritime Component Commander, who's normally based in Bahrain.

Lancaster and the Paul Hamilton passed each other on patrol, demonstrating the commitment to a unified approach to keeping the crucial waterway open.

"Ships under my command regularly patrol the vital waters of the Gulf and Indian Ocean to demonstrate the UK's commitment to freedom of navigation, maritime security, and the free flow of trade. I was delighted to join my US and French Naval counterparts in demonstrating this commitment," Commodore Dennis said.

Lieutenant Commander Chris Chew, HMS Bangor's Commanding Officer adJusyded: "HMS Bangor has been conducting operations in the Gulf for over 18 months.

"Our sailors are highly skilled, efficient and experienced - allowing them to work effectively alongside Gulf Nations to provide security in the region."



LEVEL PEAKS

CLOTHING

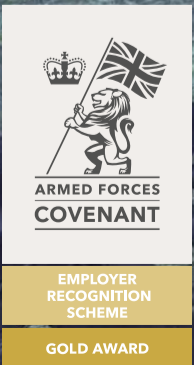
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MARITIME



King's first birthday honours revealed

SAILORS key to ensuring the smooth running of Royal Navy operations around the world are among three dozen personnel honoured by His Majesty the King in his first Official Birthday Honours.

Men and women from a host of units and bases from across the navy and Royal Marines have had their hard work and commitment to going the extra mile rewarded.

A handful of the recipients are responsible for getting Royal Navy ships to the front line of global operations from contributing to HMS Dauntless' engine upgrade to seeing the new patrol boats delivered to the Royal Navy Gibraltar Squadron.

Commander Charlie Barrow drew on two decades' experience – especially his widespread knowledge of patrol ships – to help bring back a permanent Royal Navy presence to the Indo-Pacific region after a hiatus of a quarter of a century.

For the past two years the Batch 2 River Class patrol ships have been at the forefront of the Royal Navy's programme to deploy warships in areas of key strategic interest to the UK – South Atlantic, Caribbean, Mediterranean/West Africa and the vast Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

From before the ships left build the 44-year-old, from Worthing in West Sussex, has been instrumental in ensuring the programme has been a success, in particular laying the groundwork for HMS Tamar and Spey's joint mission to the Indo-Asia-Pacific.

The 'forward deployed' programme is now regarded as the benchmark for Royal Navy operations around the globe.

Commander Barrow's efforts earn him the OBE.

"It has been an incredible opportunity to see the evolution of our patrol ships," said the Portsmouth-based officer.

"I visited HMS Tamar when she was still in build and the idea of a new, persistent global presence was still being developed.

"The immense effort made by the ship's companies and our partners in DE&S and BAE Systems to prepare the vessels for years on the far side of the world – at a time when Covid was making everything more challenging – was a wonder to behold. I will always remember being a part of it.

"I am honoured to be recognised for my part in this incredible journey but reflect that without the hard work and commitment of many people – in and out of uniform – none of this might have happened."

Lieutenant Commander Amy Glover has been made an MBE for her efforts to fit new engines to HMS



Both made MBEs... Above Lt Cdr Amy Glover confers with her two deputy marine engineering officers on HMS Dauntless and (right) the RN's Engineer of the Year, WO2 Jamie Dougal



The full list of RN recipients is:

Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (KCB)

Vice Admiral Rick Thompson

Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (CB)

Rear Admiral Jim Higham

Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE)

Commodore James Dean
Rear Admiral Tim Woods

Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE)

Commander Charlie Barrow
Commander Ian Danbury
Colonel Jon Dowd RM
Captain Des Hiron
Captain Stephen Large

Lieutenant Colonel Michael Scanlon RM
Commander Fergus Walker

Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE)

Lieutenant Zach Blow
Warrant Officer 1 Andrew Cornish RM Band Service
Petty Officer (Diver) A R Coulson
Warrant Officer 1 (Mine Warfare) John Cowan
Warrant Officer 2 (Engineering Technician) Jamie Dougal
Sergeant James Dunlop, RM Band Service
Chief Petty Officer Victoria Glassey
Lieutenant Commander Amy Glover
Lieutenant Commander Anthony Lofts
Sub Lieutenant Aadaiah Providence-Culzac
Petty Officer Weapon Engineer

(Engineering Technician) B J Turner-MacDonald
Captain R I Watson RM
Major C A Webber RM

Royal Red Cross

Commander Karen McCullough

Meritorious Service Medal (MSM)

WO1AET M Fairbank
WO1WS(AWT) M A Marshall
CPO(D) D L May
WO2 J Morrad
WO1ET(WESM) D Murphy
WO1ET(WE)P Nation
WO1COXN(SM) A Patton
WO2 RM J R Piner
WO1 RM J Tooley
WO1ET(MESM) J Turner
WO1ET(ME) M R Wallace

Dauntless. As the marine engineering officer of the Type 45 destroyer, she was instrumental in ensuring the success of the ship's Power Improvement Programme.

The major overhaul saw the installation of three new efficient engines – replacing two original diesel units – to ensure the 8,500-tonne destroyer has a more reliable, robust source of power.

Lt Cdr Glover is now deployed with the ship to the Caribbean where Dauntless will support British Overseas Territories during hurricane season and counter drugs trafficking in the region.

"When I was initially told, I was completely speechless," she said.

"Now I've had time to reflect, I'm so very proud. For me, it represents years of hard work and sacrifice of many amazing people who I've had the privilege to serve with both at sea and

ashore in support of these incredible ships."

She added: "My family and friends will be over the moon. They have always been so proud of me and my career in the Royal Navy.

"I could not have done it without them and their unwavering support, patience and understanding."

Lt Cdr Glover has spent almost half of her career serving at sea or working ashore in support of the Royal Navy's fleet of Type 45s.

And she's excited to see Dauntless back on operations.

"One year ago we sailed down the River Mersey for first-of-class sea trials. I never dreamed that less than a year later we would deploy on operations. We are ready to provide hurricane and disaster relief support," she continued.

"It represents an exciting new chapter for Dauntless and the Type

45s which I'm very proud to be a part of."

Another engineer who excels is Warrant Officer 2 Jamie Dougal. Already the Royal Navy's 'engineer of the year', he too has been made an MBE, in his case for introducing new fast patrol boats HMS Cutlass and Dagger into service.

The boats are now the backbone of the Royal Navy Gibraltar Squadron, patrolling the waters of the Rock on a daily basis.

His citation said: "Bringing into service the two new Cutlass-class ships, his engineering acumen was fundamental in overcoming defects and generating the associated engineering policy, doctrine, and operating procedures.

"Keeping the programme on track against a demanding schedule, he delivered the new ships."

Carrier crew are the pride of Bristol

HUNDREDS of servicemen and women marched through the heart of Bristol as the Royal Navy's largest warship was granted the City's highest honour.

Three hundred sailors and Royal Marines paraded through the city – the first opportunity to exercise the Freedom of Bristol, which celebrates the aircraft carrier's affiliation with the West Country powerhouse – with bayonets fixed, drums beating and Colours flying.

Carrying those Colours (pictured right by LPhot Unaisi Luke) was 35-year-old Petty Officer Ilana Veneti, who found the occasion "an absolute privilege and honour".

She continued: "As a petty officer in the Royal Navy Police, I don't often get the opportunity to participate in ceremonial duties, so I welcomed the occasion to lead the parade through Bristol and represent my ship."

Petty Officer Luke Witts, who choreographs the movements of F-35 jets and Wildcat, Chinook and Merlin helicopters – plus whichever other aircraft use the carrier's sprawling flight deck – as an aircraft handler was thrilled to march through his home town.

"As a proud Bristolian, being part of the celebration and parading in Bristol, representing HMS Prince of Wales is a massive sense of achievement," the 34-year-old said.

"Marching through my home city is something I never thought I would do so the planning and organising has definitely been worth it in the end."

Captain Richard Hewitt, the carrier's Commanding Officer, said watching his men and women on parade was "a huge honour and privilege. It further demonstrates the link between one of the Royal Navy's strike carriers, and one of the UK's iconic maritime cities.

"The welcome we received from the people of Bristol is a testament to the commitment and discipline demonstrated today from the sailors and would not have been so spectacular without the hard work from all those involved in organising the event.

"The affiliation we have with Bristol, through the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Mayor, and Bristol City Council, is testimony of our steadfast friendship for the next 50 years."



Dutch bonds

AS PART of the continued celebrations to mark the 50th Anniversary of the relationship between the Royal Marines and the Netherlands Marines Corps (NLMC), a contingent of Dutch Young Officers' have visited the UK to conduct training with their British counterparts.

During their initial week in the UK, NLMC young officers visited the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines (CTCRM) which has a long-distinguished history of training Dutch Marines.

Here the young officers experienced aspects of the vigorous commando training programme including the endurance course and infamous bottom field assault course.

CSgt Robert Ford, the UK Exchange Instructor for the Praktische Opleiding Tot Officieren der Mariniers (POTOM) Course, said: "Bringing the young Dutch Officers to CTCRM to conduct the Royal Marines Commando tests is a great way for both nations to share some hardships and develop stronger relationships between our new Young Officers."

Following an intense week of training at CTCRM, the young officers deployed together to participate in Exercise Crash Action.

As Europe's oldest integrated military force, combined training exercises are conducted frequently and form an integral part of the long-standing friendship.

On the exercise, Maj Martijn Sluis, OC POTOM Course said: "The joint integrated exercise between the RM and NLMC is an excellent way to build common ground in a challenging environment building lasting friendship through adversity. A tradition lasting longer than 20 years, this synergising cooperation entails the incorporation of teamwork; sharing dangers, burdens, risk and developing more opportunities in the future."

Upon successful completion of the joint training programme, CSgt Ford said: "These six weeks in the UK training alongside the UK RM will build long lasting interoperability between the two nations, conducting commando tests, long yomps and raids on buildings together which will ensure both nations can work seamlessly in future operations."



...and French connections

SINCE 1995 the 9th Marine Infantry Brigade, in France and UK Commando Forces have shared a close relationship.

The Lancaster House agreement of 2010 further cemented their relationship as two complementary amphibious forces able to operate together within the context of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force.

Recently, CTCRM was honoured to welcome Brigadier Hervé Pierre (pictured below), Commander 9th Marine Infantry Brigade, to attend the King's Squad Pass Out Parade for 334 Troop as the Inspecting Officer.

Brigadier Pierre marked the occasion by highlighting the long-standing relationship between the UK and France. He said: "The Troupes de Marine of France and the Royal Marines share a common bond, and our individual and glorious history over four centuries are evident."

In total, 36 recruits were on parade, having all successfully passed the vigorous 36-week long training programme. Upon completion of the military parade, the order 'Royal Marines, to your duties, quick march' was given, marking the moment they had now officially become, Royal Marines.

Brigadier Pierre congratulated the newest Royal Marines into the Corps. He said: "Now is a time for you all to celebrate your achievements and enjoy your future within the Royal Marines. Take every opportunity to exploit all that service life has to offer you."



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THE TIGER

ROYAL Marines patrolled deep into the jungles of Brunei to sharpen their ability to fight and stay alive in the sweltering humidity.

Taunton-based 40 Commando spent six weeks in the dense jungle as they prepare for operations across the Indo-Pacific later this year.

The commandos operated in oppressive and relentless 90-100% humidity in temperatures between 27-32C, initially acclimatising to their unforgiving surroundings before gradually building up to a mission in which they travelled by boat and helicopter into the thickest parts of the jungle.

There, they gained a foothold and carried out reconnaissance missions before detaining an 'enemy high-value target' to complete their jungle training.

"The jungle environment brings unique challenges," said Sergeant James McKiernan RM, 40 Commando's Jungle Warfare Instructor.

"The mass number of trees and limited visibility creates problems with even the simplest of navigation tasks, also the amount of 'unfriendly' flora and fauna can create numerous amounts of problems both tactically and in general.

"The heat is comparable to desert campaigning but when mixed with 80-95% humidity creates a unique sauna-like atmosphere which obviously drains a human a lot quicker than we would like.

"Difficulty in logistics means you must be laden with a vast amount of kit so that you can both survive and operate effectively with little to no resupply."

The jungle training involved around 140 troops from 40 Commando's Charlie Company as well as enablers from the unit's Information Warfare Company, Armoured Support Group and 29 Commando Royal Artillery.

They were supported by British Forces Brunei, made up of the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

Phase one involved the commandos acclimatising to the extreme environment - learning how to survive, navigate, understand jungle tactics and carry out live firing at the ranges.

Commandos abseiled from a helicopter in a clearing to finish the opening stage, a vital skill used to get into combat across the jungle.

Phase two saw the commandos deploy into the jungle for the best part of two weeks to build on their individual skills.

The teams carried out 72-hour patrols, getting water from streams and coming into contact against an 'active enemy'.

This phase also saw the teams practising methods to get into battle in the jungle.

This included riverine work in small boats, which has some parallels to amphibious beach landings with which UK Commando Forces are so familiar, as well as using helicopters to abseil into clearings in the jungle canopy.

With navigation and movement by foot being particularly arduous in the jungle, such insertion methods are key to allow forces to manoeuvre more effectively.

To round off this phase, teams conducted Live Fire Tactical Training; the jungle is one of the most challenging and exciting environments for this, with visibility and movement being restricted and troops having to have increased situational awareness to effectively conduct assaults on enemy positions.

Having completed several weeks of challenging and developmental training, the teams were deployed to some of the deepest and thickest jungle that Brunei has to offer to conduct their final exercise.

They journeyed into the jungle by boat and helicopter, establishing a foothold in the jungle before proceeding to conduct patrols and build up a picture of the area and any enemy presence.

The exercise concluded with a coordinated assault onto an enemy camp to detain a high-value target, which tested not only individual and team skills, but also wider command and control over long distances using new communications equipment.

"This was my first time in the jungle, and it's been a great experience," said Marine Leivesley, of 40 Commando's Information Warfare Company.

"We've all found it really challenging, just dealing with the heat is hard enough and you're constantly checking yourself for leeches and insects.

"But it's been good to be able to see this part of the world, I would never have come here otherwise. Abseiling out of a helicopter into the jungle has got to be my highlight."

Picture by: CSgt Ross Tomsen

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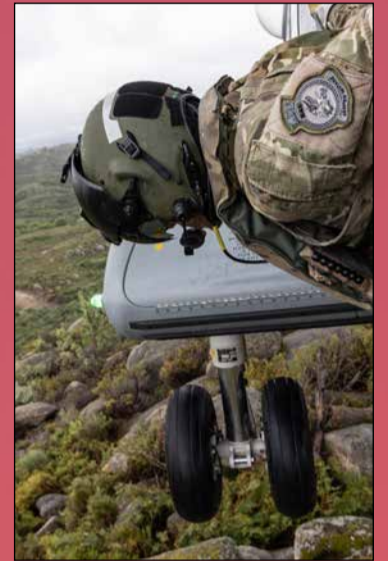
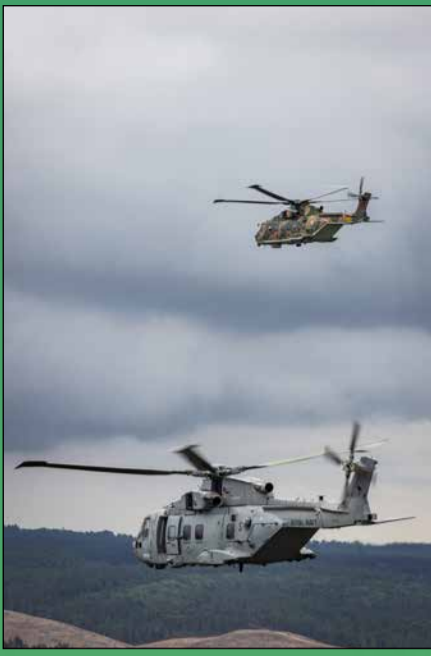
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SCAN ME





Pictures: PO Phot Kyle Heller, CHF



Bridging the gap

Junglie flyers join forces with Merlin counterparts in Portugal

MERLINS fly in formation over the Ponte 25 de Abril Bridge in Lisbon to confirm an enduring partnership between 846 Naval Air Squadron and Portugal's 751 Squadron.

Both squadrons fly the Merlin and met up when the Junglie flyers headed to Lisbon for Exercise Montijo Merlin.

The exercise, based out of Montijo Airbase, just across the Tagus River from the capital, was primarily aimed at providing the student pilots and aircrew of 846 Operational Conversion Flight (OCF) experience of deploying through continental airspace – essential skills as they move forward to the front line where they will be operationally deployable at five days' notice.

The exercise also enabled the formalising of an affiliation between 846 NAS and 751 Sqn during a momentous year of anniversaries, not only for both squadrons but for the long-standing relationship between the United Kingdom and Portugal.

"Before I took over Command of 846, I knew that 2023 was an important year for the squadron as on April 1 1943 it was formed, making this the 80th anniversary," said Commander Richard Bartram, Commanding Officer of 846 NAS.

While researching the squadron's history he discovered that following World War 2, 846 NAS was renumbered 751 NAS.

Delving further and although 751 NAS has been consigned to the history books, a 751 squadron was still in existence with the Portuguese Air Force and by coincidence was also equipped with the EH101 Merlin.

"The main role of 751 squadron whose motto 'Para Que Outros Vivam – That Others May Live' is to provide search-and-rescue coverage, often at very long range, around the Portuguese coast and from the Azores and Madeira way out into the Atlantic.

"846 NAS

and the Commando Helicopter Force's main role is to provide a Littoral Air Assault capability to Commando Forces.

"It was quite clear that although we fly ostensibly the same aircraft, there was much we could learn from each other in how we operate. It also provides my OCF students the ideal opportunity to plan and execute a continental landaway."

The Yeovilton-based squadron took three Merlin Mk4/4As aircraft to Lisbon, via Bilbao and Porto.

"Montijo is perfectly placed to conduct numerous training serials that we need to be proficient in," said Cdr Bartram. "From low flying to air gunnery, mountain flying, winching and fast roping to ships at sea, the training estate available to 751 Sqn is impressive with easy access to all of it within an hour's flying time. The biggest bonus is the excellent flying weather they have for most of the year."

With familiarisation flights, including an overhead transit of Lisbon International Airport, low flying and tactical pairs work, completed on the first day it was time to move on to mixed formation work with the Portuguese. A mixed formation of two 846 NAS Merlins and a 751 Sqn Merlin headed out to the mountain training areas, conducting basic formation, keeping procedures and some low flying serials enroute.

"751 Sqn don't often get to practice their formation flying; for us it's our bread and butter and so this was the perfect opportunity for them to gradually work up their formation flying skills while

showing us where they conduct their mountain flying training," added Cdr Bartram.



With mountains extending up to 6,500 feet the formation split into single elements to practice flying to mountain peaks - an essential skill for operations in Norway, coming back together to conduct some low flying on the way back to Montijo.

Aircrew from 846 also had the opportunity to fly with the 751 during their SAR training sorties. Witnessing simulated casualty evacuations from large container ships transiting the shipping lanes off Lisbon, cliff winching on the Portuguese coast and stretcher recoveries from the sea. One of the 846 aircrew also helped pilots from 751 rescue a swimmer.

The highlight of the week came with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two Commanding Officers of 846 NAS and 751 Sqn, setting out the affiliation and the bilateral agreement of how it is hoped the two Merlin squadrons can continue to work together in future.

Witnessed by Chris Sainty, His Majesty's Ambassador to Portugal, Colonel Diná Azevedo, the Base Commander of Montijo and Lieutenant Colonel Kian Murphy, Defence Attaché to Portugal and Cabo Verde, Commander Bartram and Major Silva signed the MOU before taking to the skies in a mixed formation flight around the iconic Lisbon waterfront.

With the departing civilian air traffic being held at Lisbon International Airport for the momentous flight, 751 Sqn led the way and the four-ship Merlin formation took in the Cristo Rei statue, Ponte 25 de Abril and Vasco de Gama suspension bridges, as well as the Portuguese coast before returning to Montijo to conduct a formation flypast of the station headquarters.

"Exercise Montijo Merlin has achieved an incredible amount in a short space of time," said Cdr Bartram.

"We've achieved all our training goals and, both in the air and on the ground, the aircrew and engineers from both squadrons have learned an incredible amount about how each other operate.

"This is a momentous year for 846 NAS, 751 Sqn and the UK and Portugal relationship - it's the 650th anniversary of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty.

"It has been fantastic to forge this bond with a squadron that not only has shared the same 'number plate' as us, but with this MOU we will not only further develop an enduring two-way association and exchange ideas and best practices for operating the Merlin, but also further deepen this long and storied relationship of friendship, union and alliance dating back 650 years - we will definitely be returning."



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ON THE RADAR



Picture: LPhoto Edward Jones



Picture: LPhoto Stuart Dickson

ROYAL Navy experimentation ship XV Patrick Blackett is testing new radars and software which will create a safer and better-supported solution to the equipment currently used by the Fleet.

The distinctive black and dark grey vessel had the two pieces of kit strapped to her deck for a series of tests and trials along the south coast.

The larger of the two radars, RT1084 currently installed on Type 23 frigates, is used to support navigation while the smaller RT1083 system is destined to replace the existing RT1007 for navigation and aviation used across multiple ships, including Hunt-class minehunters.

In a first for the navy and the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), the radar was loaded on to Patrick Blackett for a thorough assessment ahead of its installation.

In the past, the equipment would have gone from the factory floor to testing ashore and then onto the desired ship and any problems would have had to be sorted in the field – or force the ship to return to port.

But with Patrick Blackett available for this sort of work, any teething problems can be sorted

ahead of final installation.

Blackett's commanding officer Commander Michael Hutchinson said this type of work is exactly what the vessel should be utilised for.

"Testing new equipment such as the radars is one of the reasons Patrick Blackett was procured by NavyX," he said.

"We have at our disposal a dedicated testbed that we can use to support these sort of trials. It means we don't have to take up the time of the Type 45s or 23s.

"We can get as much evidence as possible for the full replacement programme by taking these radars to sea and using them in real-world scenarios."

Patrick Blackett and her ship's company of five sailed to Cowes and used the new navigation radar to manoeuvre and navigate around yachts, jet skis, tankers and other traffic in the Solent.

Chris Evans, who's been working on the project for DE&S, added: "The real-world application Patrick Blackett can offer is important.

"Before we didn't have the ability to test some of this technology at sea and make tweaks and any necessary changes. All this had to be done once installed on the ship which wasn't ideal.

"Now, we can take it to sea and test it in a dynamic environment which hasn't been an option in the past."

The two radars have been loaded onto a PODS (Persistent Operational Deployment System) to replicate the height they would be on the Hunt-class ships, with all the software, wires and data screens able to be stored inside when not in use for the trials.

This trial comes two weeks after Patrick Blackett worked with Imperial College London to test a quantum navigation system.

Commander Hutchinson added: "The ship has demonstrated in the past few weeks that it can work on future technologies very much in the early stages of development, but with the huge potential, all the way through to equipment that we need in the here and now.

"Her ability to shift seamlessly from one trial to another is crucial to the way we operate and allows us to progress this important work for the navy.

"We have an interesting and growing workload for the remainder of this year and the success we are now seeing is a result of the very hard work of the NavyX team, both onboard and ashore."



INTO THE VIPER



A Royal Navy warship destroyed a jet drone during the world's largest test of naval and missile defences.

HMS Defender deployed to Scotland's Outer Hebrides for Formidable Shield 2023 to test missiles, systems, sensors and software against ballistic, subsonic and supersonic targets, alongside 13 NATO and partner nations.

The Type 45 led the Royal Navy's participation as a dedicated air defence destroyer designed to shield a task group, culminating in a firing of her Sea Viper missile system – the £1bn warship's primary weapon – during a mission to locate, and destroy a drone designed to be difficult to track and intercept.

Petty Officer Cameron McDonnell controlled the Sea Viper missile fired from Defender against the highly-maneuvrable drone – designated Bruiser 9384 – which travels at hundreds of miles an hour. 'Bruiser' is the NATO codeword for an anti-ship missile.

"It's my role to provide missile and air defence," he explained. "We've been using experimental hardware and software to push our sensors to the limit, ready for the fight of tomorrow.

"We've tracked ballistic, subsonic and supersonic targets while working with our allies and partners.

"The final stage saw HMS Defender conduct a live missile engagement against an uncrewed aerial vehicle."

HMS Defender provided an umbrella of protection, calculating that a threat was approaching using her distinctive radar systems: the Sampson (the spiked ball atop the distinctive main mast) and the Long Range (large black rectangle) which, combined, make the Type 45s world-leading air defence ships, giving them the ability to track hundreds of targets as far as 250 miles away.

All of this cutting-edge technology makes up the Sea Viper system, which gives Defender the ability to accurately find and track a target before firing the missile itself, known as an Aster 30.

As they tracked Bruiser 9384, PO McDonnell sprang into action, launching a Sea Viper missile against the target.

With the order to launch given, the missile burst from its silo in a flash of fire, thunder and smoke, accelerating in a matter of seconds to more than three times the speed of sound as it arced into the Atlantic sky.

"Five seconds to impact," PO McDonnell relayed over the radio. "Viper assessed kill. Bruiser 9384 splashed. Destroyed. Destroyed. Destroyed."

Each Type 45 destroyer carries up to 48 missiles, each held

VIPER ASSESSED *KILL* // BRUISER 9384 *SPLA*



SEASIPER'S NEST

in a vertical-launch silo on the forecastle at the front of the ship and capable of taking out aerial threats at ranges up to 75 miles away, manoeuvring for the kill at G forces no human can withstand.

Defender also helped push the boundaries of missile and air defence – and her Sea Viper system, ensuring its abilities against a variety of difficult-to-intercept incoming targets.

The ship used a special 'link' network to provide target details to an RAF Typhoon and shared a target 'track' with frigate HMS Kent, via satellite.

Lieutenant Commander Carl Marin-Ortega, HMS Defender's Weapon Engineer Officer, said the successful firing was crucial not just for today, but for the future of the Fleet's air defence.

The missile system is undergoing a £300m upgrade to ensure the Navy is protected from the latest threats, including anti-ship ballistic missiles. Known as Sea Viper Evolution, the enhancements to both the radar and missile will support 54 jobs in the UK at sites from the Isle of Wight to Hertfordshire, Bristol and Bolton.

"Every year we try something new, something harder; to challenge ourselves and our equipment," Lt Cdr Marin-Ortega explained.

"Not only do we work and train with our national allies and partners but we have furthered the development of our own sovereign capabilities – I was fortunate enough to work previously on the Sea Viper Evolution project which was announced last year and now, being the weapon engineer officer at sea, experimenting and gathering data for it is very satisfying.

"It not only ticks the box as an engineer, but as a war-fighter we get to work with our allies and rehearse the reduced timescales we would see with supersonic and ballistic targets.

"The exercise culminated in the firing, which has been the highlight of my time on board so far."

Reflecting on a visit to Formidable Shield last month, Minister for Defence Procurement, James Cartlidge MP, said:

"Formidable Shield is a hugely important exercise and I was honoured to see first-hand the cooperation between our Allied nations.

"Hosted in the Outer Hebrides, and bringing together aircraft, naval ships and more than 4,000 military personnel from 13 NATO nations, Formidable Shield truly demonstrates our effective collaboration in defending and deterring against emerging threats."

Pictures by LPhot Matt Bradley



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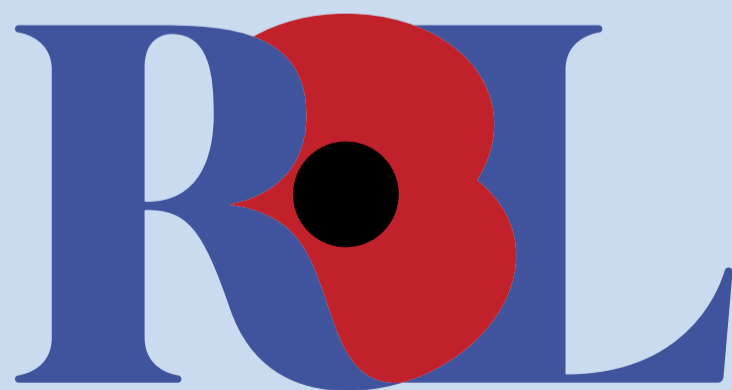
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Torre Vieja toast HM in style

THE Coronation of HM King Charles III was marked in style by shipmates of the RNA's Torre Vieja Branch... which is (give or take) 935 miles roughly directly south of Buckingham Palace.

And like His Majesty's big day in London, the celebrations on the Costa Blanca were filmed by Valencia-based television channel A Punt.

They recorded the 56 shipmates and guests enjoying a cava reception, high tea, rendition of the specially-choreographed 'King Charles III Coronation Waltz', performed by John and Julie Clements and Linda and Steve Rodgers, a toast to the new monarch and finally a raffle, all at the Lakeview Bar and Restaurant in Ciudad Quesada.

For many, this was a once in a lifetime event, which is why many shipmates wanted to salute the occasion and celebrate it in a befitting style.

Background music followed the official Coronation playlist produced by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Loyal Toast was performed in Royal Navy style with the traditional passing of the port, and proceedings closed with a raffle offering prizes ranging from cufflinks and brooches, to a Coronation flag and two-hour photo session.

If you missed the occasion – or wish to recap on events – you can watch some of A Punt's coverage via the branch's Facebook page.

Bodmin's big day with Tricia

REPRESENTATIVES of the Bodmin branch of the RNA s/m Patricia 'Tricia' Cornwell were among 50 guests packed into the town's Borough Arms to mark her 90th birthday.

The former nurse at St Lawrence's Hospital was introduced to the world of the Senior Service in her 50s by her second husband Vic.

He sadly passed away in 1998, but that has not deterred her from attending RNA meetings and functions as Tricia continues to enjoy the support and camaraderie of the RNA, not least the many weekends away the branch has organised.

Portland dance the night away

PORTLAND RNA's annual dinner dance was attended by 60 members, plus guest of honour s/m Ron Burdekin and his wife Yvonne.

Ron is chairman of No.4 Area and Portland wished to extend the invitation as a gesture of thanks for his ten years' service.

A superb four-course dinner, provided at Portland Masonic Centre, was followed by the customary toasts and speeches. S/m Ron was presented with a photograph of Portland with the event annotated, while his wife Yvonne received a bouquet of flowers.

Entertainer Mike Walker provided the music and the dance floor was soon filled with shipmates from all around the locality.

Flag saved

THIS historic flag will soon be on display in naval museums having been saved for the nation at the last moment.

Thanks to grants and donations the Museum of the Royal Navy snapped up the 170-year-old standard flown by sailors who set out in vain to find a legendary, missing expedition.

The flag of Henry Kellett was fixed to his sled as he attempted to find the doomed Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin and the 129 men of HMS Terror and Erebus, lost in the late 1840s when they tried – and failed – to find a navigable route from the Atlantic to Pacific via Canada's fabled Northwest Passage.

Sledge flags were common among Arctic/Antarctic explorers, rather like a ship or unit's crest or the mission insignia of the Apollo moon missions.

Kellett never found Franklin or his men but did at least survive his time on the Canadian ice – as did his sledge pennant, which was put up for auction last year with an asking price of around £120,000.

The government imposed an 'export bar' to allow UK museums, galleries or institutions to find time to raise the dough.

That the museum did – it exceeded its target in fact, with the extra money allowing the flag to go on tour at its sites in Hartlepool and Belfast as well as the main museum in Portsmouth, once it's undergone some conservation as it's currently in a fragile state.

The museum's conservator Rachel Trembath explained the delicate process.

"The flag will be sent to a



specialist textile conservator, who will remove the metal pins securing it to the backboard," she said.

"It will need to be stabilised and issues particularly around the fragile right-hand edge will be addressed. The decision to clean the flag will have to balance the long-term preservation needs with the historical significance of the staining and ingrained dirt. The flag will undergo testing for light sensitivity so we can display it safely."

Measuring 595mm by 885mm and bearing the inscription auxilium ab alto – 'help from on high' – the flag was made from silk in a rich green colour, with an Irish harp embroidered in golden thread, reflecting Kellett's heritage.

The green has faded over time due to exposure to light, but the flag remains in fairly good condition with a small crudely sewn repair which was likely

performed by a member of the search party whilst on the ice.

Plans are now underway to display the sledge flag, alongside artefacts from HMS Erebus (whose wreck was only found a decade ago by the Canadians), and dates will be announced soon.

"Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Kellett's sledge flag and Franklin's expedition represent courage and fortitude in the face of adversity – core elements of our national identity that echo through our history," said Professor Dominic Tweddle, the museum's director general.

"They also reflect the British and global obsession with finding and navigating the Northwest Passage, as well as the Royal Navy's role in expedition and exploration from Captain Cook to Darwin and HMS Beagle, to HMS Challenger in 1872, and continuing today with HMS Protector."



Scapa Flow museum battles for top prize

A SMALL museum which celebrates the Royal Navy's principal base during both world wars has been shortlisted for a top national prize.

The centre at Scapa Flow in Orkney, which reopened last year after a £4.4m revamp, is up against four other new or refurbished museums for the coveted title of Museum of the Year.

Located on the island of Hoy, the museum tells the story of how the sparsely-populated area was transformed by the advent of the kernel of the Royal Navy – battleships, cruisers, destroyers and more – and thousands of sailors both ashore and at sea.

The huge natural harbour also witnessed tragedy and drama: the torpedoing of HMS Royal Oak in 1939, the death of the first man to land on/take off from an aircraft carrier; the scuttling of the bulk of the German Fleet at the end of WW1.

The other four shortlisted museums for Museum of the Year 2023 are The Burrell Collection art museum in

Glasgow; the elaborate former home of Victorian artist Frederic Leighton in London's Holland Park; Belfast's MAC arts centre; and the Natural History Museum.

Judges, including TV presenter and Roman historian Mary Beard, will announce their decision at the British Museum in London on July 12. Beyond a prestigious title, the winning museum will also receive £120k.

In addition to being shortlisted, the museum has signed an agreement with the National Museum of the Royal Navy to share experience and expertise in naval history and telling the Senior Service's story.

47 Cdo RM remember Stevan

ROYAL Marines from 47 Commando (Raiding Group) remembered a comrade killed in a tragic accident in Hong Kong.

The Corps' specialists in amphibious operations made the short journey from their home at RM Tamar in Devonport to the China Fleet Country Club across the river in Saltash to celebrate the short life of Marine Stevan Dickinson.

Stevan was serving with 3rd Raiding Squadron RM – forerunner of today's 47 Cdo – in the colony, joining comrades on regular patrols of Hong Kong waters.

He died on May 22 1988 when he slipped down a steep bank while off duty and was impaled on a bamboo stake.

A memorial plaque to the green beret was originally installed at the China Fleet Club in Hong Kong.

When the club closed in 1992 and relocated/was reborn as the new China Fleet Country Club in Saltash, some of the artefacts and memorials were brought back to the UK and re-homed – including Stevan's memorial.

Ten members of 47 Commando attended the service with their Commanding Officer, Colonel Richard Maltby, and the Corps Chaplain, the Rev Simon d'Albertanson, who led a short service in Stevan's memory.

China Fleet Trustees and Company staff were also in attendance, along with the new chairman, Rear Admiral John Weale.

"Our affiliation with the Royal Navy is a very significant element of what we do here" said Admiral Weale.

"There is a deep bond between the Trust, the Royal Navy, and the Corps. We also retain an important relationship with our local community and our ex-serving Royal Navy and Royal Marine beneficiaries."

Urchins in the footsteps of the fallen



TWENTY-EIGHT members of Liverpool's Royal Naval Reserve Officers' Club – often better known by their nickname, the Sea Urchins – crossed the Channel to pay homage to sailors and marines of the Great War.

The veterans followed in the footsteps of the Royal Naval Division – sailors turned soldiers who fought extensively on the Western Front and Gallipoli – as well as paying their respects in Zeebrugge and Ostend, locations of the first commando raids in 1918.

The latter action sought to prevent U-boats reaching the North Sea via a canal by blocking the entrance to the port at Zeebrugge – including using Mersey ferries to deliver and recover the raiding party attacking the harbour facilities.

The raid failed to block the port – as did a raid along the coast at Ostend in May 1918. The Sea Urchins laid a wreath at the HMS Vindictive Memorial – the bow of the cruiser which led the attack serves as a monument in the port to this day.

At the same time as the Zeebrugge Raid in 1918, the

Royal Naval Division was locked in a life and death struggle with the German Army on the Somme – for the second time.

It first fought here in the closing stages of the first Battle of the Somme in 1916. The Sea Urchins paid their respects at the grave of AB JW Billington, killed aged 21, on the River Ancre that November – just days before the offensive ended for the winter.

Originally from Birkenhead, Billington volunteered with the Mersey Division of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (forerunner of today's Royal Naval Reserve) and is remembered on the honours board at HMS Eaglet.

He's laid to rest in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery at Beaumont-Hamel on the Ancre (pictured).

Between its actions on the Somme sector of the Western Front, the Royal Naval Division was also pitchforked into the hell of Passchendaele in the autumn of 1917.

Wreaths were laid at the Menin Gate in nearby Ypres, with the Exhortation read by Commodore Rod Walker RNR.



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Campaign strikes a chord

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity's 2023 Stand Easy campaign was a great success, with Naval bases across the country taking part to help raise awareness for mental health.

So far, the campaign has raised more than £4,000 for the Naval community, with money still coming in.

HMNB Clyde, HMS Raleigh, HMNB Devonport and many others held coffee mornings throughout May to encourage people to down tools, unwind and chat with colleagues, friends and family – not to mention to show off their baking skills!

Supporting mental health within the Royal Navy community is a central strand of the RNRMC's work.

Through partnerships with a wide range of military and civilian organisations they provide quality care and support for those suffering from complex mental health issues, funding treatment, counselling, and outreach services.

From improving social spaces on ships and bases, to helping elderly veterans remain connected, RNRMC funded projects help combat the causes of mental health issues such as loneliness and isolation, as well as managing the effects.



Dragon roars for OCs at leadership exercise

MORE than 80 Officer Cadets' (OCs) from the Wales and west England region joined forces in their annual Command, Leadership and Management (CLM) event, Exercise Dragon Strike.

The weekend took place at Okehampton Battle Camp on Dartmoor where their teamwork and leadership were put to the test through challenging extended leadership scenarios, based on the assessed leadership training exercises at BRNC.

The aim of Exercise Dragon Strike was to expose OCs to challenging environments in order to provide experience of leadership and teamwork under pressure. This included the development and assessment of communication skills, team spirit, and adherence to RN Core Values (C2DRIL).

The first stage involved the OCs setting up their own HQ, gathering and using intelligence so they could build a tactical picture of the area. Using this tactical picture, they then would deploy teams onto the Dartmoor area and to the Roadford Lake Activity Centre to conduct assessed Practical Leadership Tasks (PLTs) that supported their Mission. Along the way Staff would intervene and pose as civilians, protestors, and enemy forces; all designed to test their reactions and responses to different situations.

A constant flow of "suspicious enemy activity" kept the teams alert causing them to relocate their HQ, conduct search and rescues and provide constant patrols through the camp. Away from the camp teams were conducting Maritime Ops on Roadford Lake. Using rowing boats and canoes the teams would have to complete PLTs with the added complexity of dealing with the water.

One of the biggest challenges the OCs faced was the peaceful protest put on by the staff acting as a group of people from the local area. The 'Elders Against Armies' protested against the presence of the students in their 'Glorious Nation'; demanding they leave immediately. The biggest challenge for the OCs was to remain calm, collected and focused on their task, while dealing with the protest outside their HQ.

The weekend culminated with all OCs having to construct a helo landing site, protect it and await rescue from the enemy forces in the area.

The Staff supervising the event were all impressed by the display of leadership and teamwork from all that attended the weekend. Many different leadership styles were demonstrated showing the diversity among the OCs. All of the URNU training pillars, Militarisation, Marinisation, CLM and Sports&AT were covered during this event. This allowed the OCs to step outside their comfort zones and develop mentally, physically and their own leadership styles.

Glasgow students hold fast in swamp

URNU Glasgow were the third University Royal Naval Unit to take on the Hold Fast Challenge in response to URNU Birmingham throwing down the gauntlet.

The activities are based on the rigorous fitness training that Royal Navy Clearance Divers undertake, making for a tough day of circuits, carrying Oppos and the unit pulling themselves through the "Swamp".

Just outside of Perth, the team at Hold Fast Elite were waiting with wetsuits and flippers, getting stuck straight in. Officer Cadets and training staff, including the Commanding Officer, started with a brief of the expectations of the day; kit displayed and carried properly, and checking that everyone was fit and ready between each activity.

"This was a great way to teach the OCs the importance of discipline and attention to detail, which are vital as a diver," said OC Greta Harris.

Splitting into teams, a warmup of circuits was next, running to the end of the lake and swimming back again to practice with the flippers. Once warm, OCs carried their Oppos, large containers of water to simulate the heavy equipment normally carried by divers.

They then alternated taking lake dips and doing shuttle runs and demonstrated their teamwork pulling each other out of the slippery lake bank.

Different team leaders volunteered themselves for each of these activities, and everyone had an opportunity to support their team, making sure no one was left behind. The official 1,000m lake swim was shortened slightly but this made it no less difficult or chilly! Next came the "Swamp", and a few lucky OCs got to practice being casualties as their team dragged them out of the muddy water.

Then came the main event, the timed Hold Fast Challenge! All the exercises done throughout the day were to prepare us for the log carry through the swamp, across the lake, and carried back to our starting line.

Each team had their own log and weren't permitted to help another team with the load, but this didn't stop OCs from cheering each other on at the end. Every unit member who took part finished with a great time of just over 23 minutes, only 9 seconds short of URNU Northumbria.

Instructor Robert Hinton and his team ran the fantastic day, with lots of smiles through the grueling activities.

OC Harris added: "URNU Glasgow was praised for demonstrating the can-do attitude that the Hold Fast Challenge aims to develop, by pushing ourselves to the limit, both mentally and physically. We did ourselves proud and showed off our camaraderie and teamwork."

Check out the videos via Twitter @URNUGlasgow and on the Hold Fast Elite social media pages on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

If you want to find out more about the unit, search for "URNU" on the Royal Navy website.



Quality family time thanks to RNRMC

THE RNRMC awarded a minor grant to the British Loan Service Brunei RN Community to enable Naval families to get together and spend quality time doing various activities.

Five families have formed a small Naval contingent in Brunei, ranging from young families to older couples with their oldest member being almost 60 years old, and the youngest one merely a one-year-old.

The families have been isolated from the UK, and from each other during the Covid lockdowns and have now found an opportunity to spend some quality time together by having a family away

day.

Karen O'Rawe said of the event: "All five naval families took a boat ride out to Pelong Rock, where we snorkeled in clear water, giving us beautiful views of the corals and marine life.

"We then went to Pelumpong Spit for a lovely picnic spread of sparkling juice, chicken rice, fruit and hummus.

"Jet skiing was the highlight for many of us, especially Liz Dickson, who didn't want to give the jet ski back!

"The children were all able to ride the jet skis with the adults, and Jack Stevens was even allowed to drive one with a guide.

"We missed Maddie who was a bit young but she joined us later for a swim at the Yacht Club.

"We had so much fun at our Navy away day.

"Thank you so much for enabling us to do something so special.

"Loan service in Brunei is quite a stressful posting at times, and this day reminded us of the unique things we can do here and helps us deal with the more difficult aspects of life here.

"We really do appreciate the funding. Thank you so very much."

The families are pictured during their picnic at Pelumpong Spit.

Invite to train like an RN field gunner

ROYAL Navy Field Gun has been part of navy life for well over 100 years. It encapsulates the Navy's spirit of championing physical and mental courage, discipline, leadership and teamwork.

The event sees teams of 18 – who have been training for months – race to assemble a field gun and run with it, disassembling, and reassembling as the competition requires.

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity is inviting people to train like a Field Gunner and run, row, or ride 7,488 metres (the number of nautical miles from Portsmouth to Port Elizabeth where the challenge originated) every day for 18 days (the number of people in a Field Gun team).

If weightlifting is more your thing, you could deadlift, bench press or squat 1,300kg (the weight of a field

gun) every day for 18 days. Or, get creative and come up with your own challenge based on the numbers 7,488 and 18.

Participants are welcome to take part on their own or as a team. For the official crews, why not take on the 'Virtual Crews Challenge' and help to make a difference while training for the real thing! Get together with your crew to complete a challenge including Rowing, Gun Pulls, Wheel Running and Shell Sprints.

Taking on this challenge and raising vital funds for the charity ensures that the RNRMC can continue to make a positive difference to the lives of those who serve or have served in the Royal Navy.

For more information or to register, please visit <https://www.rnrmc.org.uk/virtual-field-gun>.

Donate every time you use new credit card

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity has partnered with Currensea to launch its first Charity Debit Card which allows people to donate with every transaction.

"Powered By" Currensea and Mastercard, the RNRMC can now issue its own branded cards to drive engagement and donations from supporters, allowing everyday spending to support the Royal Navy community.

Currensea acts as a layer in front of your current bank account – all you need to do is link your charity debit card to your existing debit account when you sign up.

Your card helps you donate by rounding up your purchases

and your travel savings. Every time you buy something, you can donate to the RNRMC. When you spend, Currensea collects the funds from your bank account via Direct Debit. The card is completely free and transactions are protected by Mastercard's 120-day chargeback protection.

Card users can also benefit from savings of at least 85 percent in bank fees on every foreign transaction and gives you extra security, making your bank work that bit harder for you.

For more information on the Currensea RNRMC card, please visit <https://www.currensea.com/partner/the-royal-navy-and-royal-marines-charity>.

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FOR the first time Gibraltar's new patrol ship broke the bonds keeping her in the territory's waters and crossed the Strait.

HMS Dagger completed her first overseas visit since commissioning last July with a visit to Tangier in Morocco.



She normally works with her sister Cutlass and several RIBs as guardians of UK sovereignty in the waters – collectively they make up the RN Gibraltar Squadron, who are on the Rock around the clock.

Dagger is the most recently commissioned Royal Navy surface vessel and made light work of the 40 nautical-mile crossing thanks to her three waterjets and Volvo Penta engines pushing her along at over 40 knots.

Once in Africa, her crew received a hearty welcome on their arrival into Tangier by the local authorities and the Marine Royale, the Moroccan Navy.



Although short, the ship's visit has opened the door for more trips to Tangier and elsewhere.

The combination of Covid and the introduction of the new patrol craft have kiboshed what were fairly regular visits to Morocco until recently – something the Gibraltar Squadron is looking not merely to revive, but expand.

It's keen to conduct joint training

between Cutlass and Dagger and similar Marine Royale patrol vessels.

"Everyone assumes that the Royal Navy Gibraltar Squadron are on a permanent tether to the Rock. Although our main tasking is protecting the sovereignty of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters, conducting wider regional engagement with our allies as part of a global, modern and ready navy, is also extremely important," said Lieutenant H Kilby, Dagger's Commanding Officer.

"HMS Dagger was given a fantastic welcome by our Moroccan friends and the Royal Navy Gibraltar Squadron are already looking forward to our next visit later this year."

The squadron also operates several Pacific 24 RIBs – mainstay of Royal Navy sea boat operations around the world – to support the sovereignty patrols as well as conduct general duties around the Rock.

With the squadron's RIBs in the water daily, it means their crews are some of the best and most experienced in the RN.

And that, plus the generally favourable weather conditions, makes Gibraltar the perfect place to send Royal Naval Reservists for a week of refresher training as Pacific 24 coxswains.

Ten general warfare

reservists were put through their paces – not just by the RIB crews, but also Cutlass and Dagger – from man overboard exercises to keeping pace with the Cutlass-class craft.

All the reservists were trained in operating the RIBs – 25½ft long and capable of 38kts flat out – so the trip to Gib was a refresher which will allow them to serve as Pacific 24 coxswains with all eight River-class Offshore Patrol Vessels as well as to the RN Gibraltar Squadron itself.

Their Training Officer, PO(SEA) Ryan Scott is from HMS President and a former regular who served in HMS Tyne and with the Gibraltar Squadron.

"This opportunity has been invaluable for the team to make their mobilisation to the Fleet seamless and ensure that they are ready to deliver operations at sea with their regular counterparts," he said.

The squadron's Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Simon Holden said reservists were vital to the success of the small unit – so it made perfect sense for Rock team to help out.

"We couldn't deliver on operations without the permanent support of the Royal Navy Reservists based here in the squadron," he explained. "It's great for my team to be able to give back to the training cycle providing operationally-ready coxswains to the Fleet."



DAGGER STRIKES WITH CUTLASS

Keeping it in Spencer family



A CORNISH family with strong Royal Navy connections welcomed another member to the Senior Service, as their son completes his training at CTCRM.

Proud dad Warrant Officer First Class Jim Spencer, who lives in Cornwall and is currently a Royal Navy Phase 1 instructor at HMS Raleigh in Torpoint, watched his youngest son Joe complete the elite Commando Training course.

A former pupil of Duchy College, where he studied Public Services, the 24-year-old battled through injuries, setbacks and illness to complete his intensive training and receive his coveted Green Beret.

So tough was his journey through his 18 months of training, at one point he was asked by his father what had not been broken yet? "My spirit Dad," was the reply, "It's a state of mind!"

As well as his proud dad, Joe's elder brother Leading Naval Airman

Charlie Spencer, currently working at RAF St Mawgan, witnessed the Pass-Out and both warmly congratulated him on completion of the parade.

Unable to be present was Jim's stepson Air Engineer Technician Billy Kelland, who is based at RNAS Culdrose but was deployed on operational commitments.

Now a fully-fledged member of His Majesty's Royal Marines, Joe has moved on to 47 Commando RM based in HM Naval Base Devonport, where he will be part of the Royal Marine Landing Craft team.

"We are a Royal Navy family to the core," summarised Jim "and it is humbling to see what Joe has battled through to get here today." Reflecting on the achievements of all three sons, he added: "I could not be prouder. To see the boys in uniform is awesome and I hope they all have just as many opportunities and adventures as I have had in my 32 years."



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



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

Frigate training needs set

SAILORS assigned to the Royal Navy's next generation of submarine-hunting frigates will have to get to grips with mastering 63 new systems.

Experts from BAE Systems – which is constructing and fitting out eight Type 26 frigates at Govan and Scotstoun on the Clyde – has worked with many RN personnel including the crew of the first ship, HMS Glasgow, and Defence Equipment & Support to come up with the training the ships will need.

When they enter service later this decade, they'll replace the eight dedicated submarine-hunting Type 23s which have served the RN since the late 80s.

Technology has moved on apace since then and embraced in all aspects of the 26s, from greener, more efficient engines, to new sensors and command system and a 5in main gun (replacing the trusty 4.5in which has been the mainstay of the Fleet for half a century).

New tech and systems means new training programmes, with 63 specific areas singled out, spanning all aspects of the new frigates, including the main engines, auxiliary systems, air weapon handling system, mission bay handling system, main hangar, compressed air, platform management system, integrated navigation and bridge system, fixed fire system, bow sonar and, helicopter handling system... to name a few.

The task now is to develop bespoke training in those 63 fields to help the Type 26s into service.

Brooke Hoskins, Director of Products and Training Services at BAE, said her team had already spent six years devising and developing the requirements for the 26s.

"It's a huge achievement. Our training capability is an important element of our Maritime business – the Type 26 programme is a great example of the important role training plays in enabling smooth entry into service of another class of platform for the Royal Navy."

Commander Phil Burgess, HMS Glasgow's Senior Naval Officer, says when delivered the training will be of huge value to his ship – and the entire class.

"We have been working closely with those developing training and now have a clear path to recognising and formally recording senior, qualified, experienced personnel to allow safe and efficient transfer of HMS Glasgow to an RN crew."

Thanckes' new tanks

A FIVE-year project to upgrade fueling facilities in Devonport has completed, ready to support the Fleet of tomorrow.

The depot at Thanckes – which sits on a peninsula just north of Torpoint and opposite Devonport's No.4 Basin – has undergone an overhaul on a similar scale to that completed in Gosport last year to serve the needs of Portsmouth-based vessels.

Work carried out at Thanckes includes replacing a 60-year-old jetty with a new 280-metre structure fitted with the latest technology for fuel handling and ship-to-shore transfers, and meeting the latest safety/environmental regulations.

The site has also benefitted from the installation of a modern firefighting system, including a new 3½km pressurised main and associated fire-drenching system, fed by a brand-new pump house and two freshwater storage tanks with up to eight hours capacity – all situated to ensure minimal visual impact on the harbor skyline.

The best media work rewarded

THOSE who strive to keep the Royal Navy – and broader marine issues – firmly in the public eye were recognised at the annual Maritime Media Awards.

Now in their 27th iteration, the awards are split into two distinct sections – one honouring the external media, the second focusing on the efforts of RN and RM ships/units/squadrons to promote their work worldwide.

Top prize in the latter – The Desmond Wettern RN Media Award, named in memory of naval reservist and legendary Fleet Street naval correspondent – went to the team on HMS Defender for wide-ranging efforts to promote her activities, including global coverage she received operating in the Black Sea in 2021 after being buzzed by Russian forces.

Beyond bragging rights, the Type 45 destroyer now holds a crystal decanter on a plinth of oak made from timber from HMS Victory with instructions that the port-filled decanter is "never allowed to run dry".

In addition to the overall winner, there are separate awards for the best surface ship (Protector), submarine (not awarded), unit (814 NAS), best use of the web (HMS Albion),

with the collective efforts of RNAS Culdrose and HMS Montrose (Port and Starboard) highly commended.

As for the broader awards, presented by Falklands veteran Rear-Admiral Dr Chris Parry, American journalist Elizabeth Kolbert received the coveted Desmond Wettern Award for best journalism for incisive and thought-provoking articles for the *New Yorker* on ocean acidification, pollution, over-exploitation and other maritime environmental issues.

The Babcock International First Sea Lord's Award for Best Use of Digital Media was awarded to the National Oceanography Centre for its *Into The Blue* podcast.

The Mountbatten Award for Best Book was won by American author Alysha Rooks for *The Black Joke: The True Story of One British Ship's Battle Against the Slave Trade*.

And the Donald Gosling Award for Best Television or Film Production was awarded to Alessandra Bonomolo and Tom Cook for *Why Ships Crash*, which focused on the complex series of events which led to the blocking of the Suez Canal by the container ship Evergiven in 2021.

Glasgow's provost sees T26 progress

GLASGOW'S first citizen visited the Navy's new frigate which will soon carry the city's name around the world once more.

The Lord Provost of Glasgow Councillor Jacqueline McLaren called on HMS Glasgow at Scotstoun, where the leading-edge submarine hunter – the first of eight in her class – is undergoing completion.

As that date nears and the ship gradually comes to life, so the ship's company are forging ties with the city, its institutions and schools – ties which will last for a quarter of a century or more.

Hosted by the frigate's Senior Naval Officer Commander Phil Burgess, the Lord Provost joined the ship's company for a 'stand easy' chat.

Cllr McLaren showed keen interest in the history of HMS Glasgow's predecessors – her office is home to a painting of the previous ship of the same name, the Type 42 Destroyer which served in the Falklands campaign four decades ago.

And she was especially interested to learn the ways in which the ship's company were engaging with her home city.

Sailors have trained as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Ambassadors and are engaging with children at Holy Cross and Gowanbank Primary Schools in Govan – an outreach programme which aims to inspire the engineers of the future; Cllr McLaren learned about the programme and underlined that Glasgow had a proud history as a centre of engineering excellence and that outreach had an important part to play in continuing that heritage.

Another beneficiary of HMS Glasgow's support is the charity Place to Be, which provides mental health assistance to children and young people. Chosen at the request of the Princess of Wales – HMS Glasgow's ship's sponsor – it's received cash via fundraising events, including from participation in an ultra marathon.

Having been briefed on the impressive, powerful capabilities and future role of the frigate – and the efforts and skills of the engineers designing and building the ship, the Lord Provost's visit concluded with a guided tour of Glasgow.

This was the chance to see the equipment and systems she had learned about in the briefing, and see the level of co-operation between stakeholders in the project, and their collective commitment to engage with the city of Glasgow for the benefit of all.

After presenting a commemorative plaque to Commander Burgess, the Lord Provost said: "It has been an amazing morning, I am very impressed with the ship and I look forward to returning for the naming ceremony and seeing her completed."



Funeral honours

UNDER peerless skies in the grounds of Windsor Castle, His Majesty The King personally decorates sailors and Royal Marines involved in the last act of his mother's life.

Some 142 men and women of all ranks and branches received the Royal Victorian Order or the Royal Victorian Medal (silver) for their role in the state funeral of Queen Elizabeth II last September.

They were recognised for their role drawing the State Gun Carriage which carried Her late Majesty's coffin and for their services throughout the funeral.

In total, 132 junior rates, three chief petty officers, one warrant officer and three officers from a range of ships, establishments and units were decorated.

On the day of the funeral, some 98 sailors pulled the State Ceremonial Gun Carriage with another 40 marching behind the vehicle acting as brakes.

Commodore Catherine Jordan, head of culture at the Royal Navy and the most senior officer to take part in the funeral, said: "It was a tremendous honour for us all to play a part last September and we were very proud to represent our Service and Defence at such a significant and important event."

"Since that momentous occasion we have all returned to operations, training or other employment and it's been great to get together again, with our families, and a further honour to be presented our Royal Victorian Order medals personally by His Majesty King Charles III today."

"There were so many others who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to get us ready for the funeral and in the right place doing the right thing for which we are also grateful. Our people are our greatest asset



and their performance and this special recognition by His Majesty is wonderful."

Commander Nicola Cripps was one of the officers of the gun carriage and was also made a member of the RVO. She added: "As the funeral cortege passed through the crowds fell silent, and the connection between people became very apparent."

"Individuals would reach out and touch each other as they saw the gun carriage pass, so it meant as a group, as a body of men and women, we were really united in that unique experience of taking the Queen to her final resting place."

Rear Admiral Jude Terry, Director People and Training – and the Naval Officer responsible for the Royal Navy's involvement in Operation Bridge – said no-one who took part in last September's ceremonies would ever forget them.

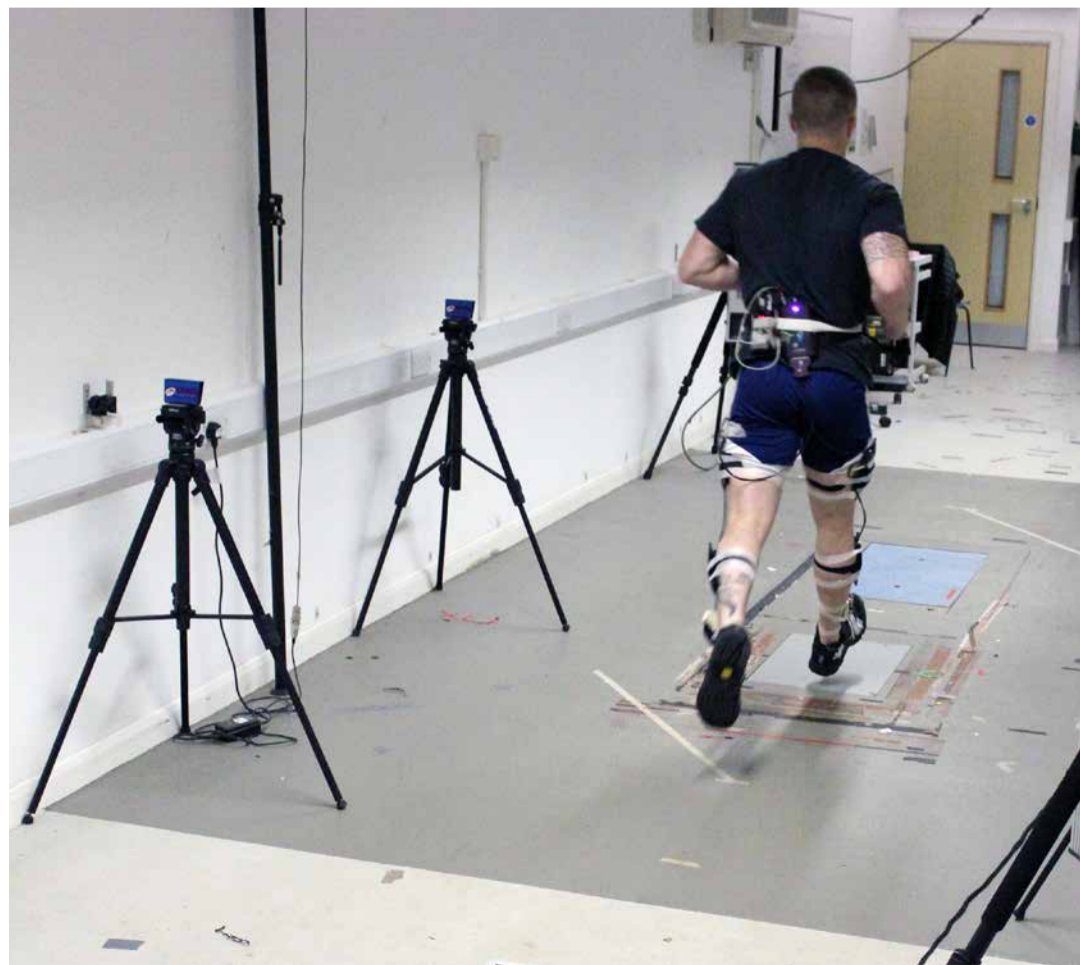
"I look back with enormous pride and reflect on how impressed I was by the activities of the whole team who delivered across so many roles for this event," she added.

"To see so many different personnel from such diverse backgrounds, across all ranks, units and branches come together from the four corners of the UK to support activities surrounding the funeral was truly inspiring."

"It is humbling that these amazing ambassadors who were at the forefront of the Royal Navy's contribution have been subsequently honoured by His Majesty."

Royal Victorian Order honours are in the Monarch's personal gift, awarded for service to the Royal Family.

Picture: PO(Phot) Joel Rouse, MOD



One all-inclusive package, please

THE man who's the driving force behind E-Sports in the Royal Navy has been named 'person of the year' in the Service's inaugural inclusivity awards.

Commander Gordon Jones, who serves at the Maritime Operating Centre in Northwood, was singled out for his drive to support others and creating a better lived experience for RN personnel.

Through his expertise – and in his own time – he both established and now chairs the Royal Navy Video Gaming and E-Sports Association which is going from strength to strength.

Cdr Jones was one of ten individuals and organisations recognised at HMS Collingwood, which also hosted the RN's first inclusivity conference.

The awards were attended by First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Ben Key and the RN's Director People and Training Rear Admiral Jude Terry.

Judges were impressed by the talent, quality, and diversity of nominees and the breadth of entries – all ranks, rates and grades across the RN and Civil Service.

Petty Officer (Writer) Rebecca Fyans who works for People and Training at Navy HQ in Portsmouth receives the 'Inspire Me' award; as a Service carer advocate, she held roadshows focusing on chronic conditions and Disability in Defence (CanDiD) network and RN Enabled.

The 'outstanding contribution' award was presented to **Lieutenant Gemma Winterton**, serving at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham. Described as 'a force of nature' for improving the lived experience of neurodivergent people across the MOD, she organised the RN Neurodiversity Network's first hybrid conference, which triggered two key changes across Defence.

The RFA's **Elliot Stephens**, a Seaman Grade 1st Class, earned the 'collaborative working' award for going 'above and beyond'



ensuring bespoke training courses never conducted by RFA personnel before to help generate two new auxiliary vessels.

HMS Anson's **AB Ross Lloyd-Bennett** is the RN's 'emerging talent'. As the Compass Network's vice chair of communications, Ross has transformed the way Compass projects are seen through social media, while his skill, dedication and talent have injected new life into their campaigns.

Petty Officer Kelroy James (RNAS Yeovilton) receives the 'innovation' award for his work championing and helping ethnic minority personnel, recruiting members for the McKinsey Connected Leaders Academy which allows access to leaderships tools to help personnel achieve their full potential. Placed 3rd out of 40 personnel undertaking the Percy Hobart Fellowship in 2022, he's also a member of RN Change Advocate Network and promotes change initiatives within his departments.

Petty Officer Alexis Jones

(HMS Albion) earned the 'enduring support' award. He quickly but quietly promotes diversity and inclusion, recently establishing an arm of the RN Commonwealth network on board HMS Albion. One of the pioneers of the Rastafarian movement in the RN, Alexis supports Commonwealth personnel on immigration, naturalisation, passport, driving licences, joining the RN and getting on the property ladder.

The 'promotion of inclusivity' title went to **Surgeon Lieutenant Lucy Wallett**. Heading the UK Commando Forces Women's Network at Commando Logistics Regiment, she has tirelessly dedicated her time and effort to achieve meaningful change.

Portsmouth-based **2nd Mine Countermeasures Squadron** earn the 'inclusive teamwork' award for fusing culture from personnel from four continents, with a common aim and ethos to foster an environment where looking out for people is second nature.

Lieutenant Graham Kerr (NCHQ) collects the 'RN ally' award for his exemplary vision and perseverance which has ensured the delivery of critical outputs on wide-ranging topics, including the application of practices for Rastafarian Royal Naval personnel and culturally-appropriate hair styles. He also founded the first Race Diversity Network in the RN.

Leading Weapon Engineer Al Murrell from NATO Marcom at Northwood receives a 'special recognition and lifetime achievement' award for his tireless work over three decades to create an inclusive culture in his workplace and throughout the Service. Al is a founding member of the first Defence D&I network and has been a leading light in the development of the network into what is now known as Compass.

To find out more about any of the networks mentioned, visit <https://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/defnet/Navy/Pages/D-and-I-Announcements.aspx>.

New head for carrier force

ONE of the nation's most senior aviators is at the helm of the UK's most potent naval forces.

Commodore James Blackmore (pictured) is now in charge of the UK Carrier Strike Group – flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth and her air group spearheaded by F-35B Lightning stealth fighters, plus destroyers, frigates and support vessels – after taking over from Commodore Angus Essenhigh, who's been in charge for the past 18 months.

With additional ships and aircraft from the UK's allies, the Carrier Strike Force can comprise of 10 ships and submarines or more and in excess of 30 F-35s and helicopters, operated by around 3,700 personnel, deploying for six months or longer.

It's the task of the Portsmouth-based staff of the strike group, who move aboard the carrier when she deploys, to coordinate and choreograph the task force's actions and movements.

Under Commodore Essenhigh's direction, the group deployed on Operation Achillean last autumn, including the first visit by HMS Queen Elizabeth to Oslo.

Promoted to Rear Admiral, he now moves on to take over as the National Hydrographer at the UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton – following in the footsteps of his father who was the Royal Navy's senior hydrographer in the 1990s.

"It's been a huge privilege and very fulfilling to command the UK Carrier Strike Group – the apex of the UK's conventional warfighting capability," said Admiral Essenhigh.

"My time in post has seen us exercising to maintain our very-high readiness status, enhancing our interoperability with NATO and codifying the outputs of the core staff. My personal highlight was Operation Achillean which was an excellent opportunity to bring together the complex array of capabilities that make up the UK Carrier Strike Group and to operate with like-minded allies and partners.

"I'm looking forward to my next venture at the UK Hydrographic Office; this will be a complete change of direction and will bring new challenges in an exciting new role."

Superseding him, Cdre



Blackmore is one of the most experienced naval aviators, a Harrier pilot who has also flown F/A-18 Super Hornets with the US Navy, been in charge of air operations on HMS Queen Elizabeth, then commanded the entire air wing which deployed with the carrier strike group to the Pacific in 2021.

"I am honoured and privileged to today take command of the United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group. We are in a time more than ever when the Royal Navy must be ready to face increasingly competitive and modern challenges across the globe, and I am truly confident in our ability to project British sea and air power from our Strike Group centred on our Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers," Commodore Blackmore said.

"Having previously served with the Carrier Strike Group as Strike Warfare and Air Wing Commander (CAG) during Operation Fortis in 2021, this will be an exciting opportunity to see Carrier Strike capability grow under my tenure over the next three years."

He takes charge of the force as it gears up for an annual autumn deployment, this year in the waters of northern Europe with the UK's allies in the Joint Expeditionary Force.

That will be followed by Steadfast Defender 2024, one of the largest and most important workouts in the NATO calendar as the carrier strike group begins preparations for a global deployment in 2025.

THE APPLIANCE OF SPORTS SCIENCE

THE Royal Navy is embracing cutting-edge sports science and technology to dramatically reduce injuries which impact the front line – and cut short careers.

Working side-by-side with leading academics from Exeter, Bath and Southampton Universities, from this autumn it is looking to reduce musculoskeletal injuries across the Navy and Royal Marines.

Half of personnel who are medically downgraded suffer from a musculoskeletal injury – anything which is muscular/bone related, such as a twisted knee or hip injury. They are caused by overuse, playing sport, physical training or simply poor working practices.

The result is sailors and Royal Marines are unable to perform regular duties – putting demands on the rest of the Navy to fill their shoes – and potentially lengthy, costly and demanding rehabilitation.

The Royal Navy Musculoskeletal Mitigation Programme will attempt to prevent these injuries and, where it cannot, improve recovery and rehabilitation – delivering more

people, more ready, more of the time.

From the autumn, specialist exercise laboratories – featuring state-of-the-art movement screening equipment, including force plates, pressure plates and motion capture camera systems (similar to the one at Exeter University being tested by a Royal Marine, left) – will support the biomechanical screening of personnel.

They will be installed at the Royal Navy's training establishments; HMS Raleigh in Torpoint; Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth and the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines in Lympstone.

An additional laboratory will be based in the Portsmouth area to capture personnel at later stages of their general training, with satellite facilities across UK Royal Navy and Royal Marines' units.

As well as assessing movement, fitness and health behaviours of personnel as they join the Service, data collection will be repeated at the end of training, after one year of service, and – if they should suffer injury – as close to the point of injury as possible.

Data gathering is also planned

at milestones through a person's career to understand and inform the development of pan-organisation, logistically-feasible, context-relevant, person-centred health and performance interventions.

The Royal Navy has a pioneering rehabilitation unit at HMS Drake in Plymouth, assisting personnel from all three Services back to fitness – but it only intervenes once someone is injured.

The Musculoskeletal Mitigation Programme will ensure timely data gathering, analysis and reporting, to translate research – across a broad spectrum of fields and subjects including exercise physiology, biomechanics, health behaviours, social psychology, epidemiology and health economics.

"Musculoskeletal injuries account for about half of personnel across the Navy who are medically downgraded and unable to perform their regular duties," said Lieutenant Colonel Erik Nielsen RM from the Institute of Naval Medicine – the Royal Navy's specialists in health and fitness – who heads the programme with Dr Jo Fallowfield.

"They stop sailors going to sea, they

stop Royal Marines deploying, and they require long and very expensive rehab – which doesn't always guarantee success.

"Through this work, collaborating with some of the UK's leading universities, we want to develop a whole systems approach to reduce the prevalence of these injuries and improve the health outcomes and lived experiences of our people as well as creating and enduring cultural change."

James Bilzon, Professor of Applied Human Physiology at the University of Bath, added: "Musculoskeletal injury among Service personnel is a clear challenge for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines and, of course, for the individuals directly affected.

"Based on our previous research, we know there are evidence-based ways to design and evaluate new interventions that can mitigate these risks and improve individuals' long-term musculoskeletal health outcomes.

"We're delighted to be using our insights and experience, including working with other uniformed services to explore this in a military context."



Pictures: LPhotos Unaisi Luke and Kev Walton, Stratus Imagery and Liverpool CC



MEMORIAL MOSAIC ON THE MERSEY

IF IT was the last hurrah, well, it was a belter.

The 80th anniversary commemorations of victory in the Battle of the Atlantic are likely to be the last at which those who fought it could attend.

Where once they numbered in the tens of thousands, today they are reduced to the hundreds, probably fewer, all in their late 90s or older.

Only around half a dozen were able to make the pilgrimage to Liverpool one last time.

But, oh, it was worth it.

The three days of events in Liverpool – the principal merchant port during the battle, and home to the headquarters of the naval command which defeated the U-boat for much of the titanic struggle – will live long in the mind.

Blessed by glorious weather throughout, patronised by thousands of visitors, and peppered with memorable events.

They began in Our Lady and St Nicholas' Parish Church and a service of thanksgiving – not just for the mariners lost, but those who survived and those who supported them – the shipwrights who built the ships, the dockers who loaded/unloaded the cargo, the families at home who provided the moral support, forever wondering if their loved ones would survive running the gauntlet of U-boats.

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal led those giving thanks, joined by national, international and local dignitaries and leaders, including Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Ben Key.

After the service, the dedication of a memorial and garden of reflection – which replace a much smaller and far less accessible monument – where the Princess Royal told those mustered that it was crucial the story of the Battle of the Atlantic was "properly told".

The Royal Navy provided a Royal Guard for proceedings.

Guests were treated to a fly past from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and vintage Swordfish from the Navy Wings collection as the ceremony ended – the first of several appearances by the classic aircraft over the memorial weekend.

More moved than most to see the new memorial unveiled was one of the few surviving Atlantic veterans able to attend this weekend's events, John Dennett.

He was delighted that his home city has made a huge effort to mark the 80th anniversary, and especially

remember the merchant sailors: 36,000 were killed and some 3,500 merchant ships sunk.

"We must never forget the sacrifice of the merchant ships," stressed John, who served as an anti-aircraft gunner in the Royal Navy.

"They are the heart of Liverpool. Speak to anyone in the area and there will be someone in their family who was once a merchant seaman. It is only right that we should never forget them and I'm glad that Liverpool has been the first to acknowledge it."

The battle he survived was the longest battle. The hardest battle. The most wasteful battle. Upwards of 5,000 vessels – merchant ships and their cargoes of the fields and workshops of the world – warships, submarines on the seabed.

And then there's the human cost: at least 100,000 lives – a good 70,000 Allied sailors (split roughly 50/50 between warship crews and merchant seafarers) and 30,000 U-boat crews. However infamous the cause they fought for, three out of four German submariners never returned home.

There is no animosity now, as Captain Chris Peschke, Naval Adviser at the Canadian High Commission in London, explained.

"These events are an act of remembrance for all sailors who all did something incredibly hard.

"Our enemy is the sea – it will kill you faster than any foe. There are ties between all sailors, regardless of their nationality: all face hardships and danger at sea.

"The important thing is that now we are all allies and good friends."

A small German contingent took part in events across the weekend, including the memorial unveiling in the parish church grounds.

"In Germany, as you can imagine, this is a period in our history which we are not proud of," said Captain Wolfgang Heuer, the German Naval Attaché in London.

"But it is an honour to be here not just as an act of commemoration, but also reconciliation."

Indeed, there as befits one of the great ports of the world marking a battle which, despite its title, raged in the Seven Seas from the first day of war in Europe to the last, there was a strong international flavour to 80th anniversary proceedings.

Polish consul general Michal Mazurek joined veterans groups in unveiling a memorial to his countrymen who served in the Atlantic in warships – such as the

destroyer Blyskawica or legendary submarine Orzel – merchant vessels and also with the RAF's Coastal Command. More than 400 Poles died at sea.

Polish sailors fled to Britain after their country was overrun by the Nazis. So too the Danes. And the Norwegians. Then the Dutch.

Representing his countrymen was Hubert Nijgh who has spent more than 20 years ensuring that the sacrifices of Dutch merchant sailors between 1940 and 1945 are remembered.

He found the weekend in Liverpool "a very special and impressive experience – and sometimes quite emotional".

He continued: "During the laying



Our enemy is the sea – it will kill you faster than any foe. There are ties between all sailors, regardless of their nationality: all face hardships and danger at sea.

Captain Chris Peschke, RCN

of the wreath, I found myself among veterans who had lived through it and might have escorted my grandfather's convoys.

"In the midst of them and representatives of other foreign merchant marine veterans and of officers and seamen from the Royal Navy, the United States, New Zealand, Australian and French navies, we paid our respects to all who sacrificed their own today for our tomorrow."

Our today – and tomorrow – was represented by a smattering of warships: destroyers HMS Defender and FS Bretagne, berthed at the cruise liner terminal near the Liver Building, patrol boat HMS Biter at Albert Dock, the US destroyer USS Ramage a bit of distance away at Canada Dock.

As well as showing off their

kit, quarters and general living conditions on board, Defender's ship's company seized the opportunity to highlight the work the RN does to preserve today's maritime lifelines – out of sight, and often out of mind of the general public.

The Type 45 welcomed well over 1,000 visitors, among them Bernard Mycock and Caroline Howard from Buxton in Derbyshire who praised the RN for the "absolutely brilliant" opportunity to see a state-of-the-art warship and meet her 200 men and women.

"The whole event has been great – a brilliant opportunity to come onboard. We've found it really interesting," said Caroline.

"It also makes you feel really proud – it's very important to remember what was done for us."

Though principally focused on air defence, in a 21st-Century Battle of the Atlantic HMS Defender would potentially fulfil the role of WW2 escort carriers.

Flight Commander Lieutenant George Lunn explains: "We are returning to maritime strike – something the Swordfish used to perform against German shipping in the Battle of the Atlantic.

"We've replaced a squadron of Swordfish with one Wildcat to carry out that role, operating from a destroyer like Defender, and the Sea Venom missile has effectively replaced the Swordfish's torpedo."

Warfare specialist Able Seaman William Brand feels a strong connection with the Battle of the Atlantic, from serving in ships at the forefront of technology – "both at the limit of what was or is capable for the time" – to a family connection.

"This is really important to me as we can leave our mark in history just as my grandfather did, not only carrying out the tradition of the Royal Navy, but also the family tradition which binds us to the Service and binds us to the country, and why we remain the Senior Service to this day."

For Defender's Commanding Officer Commander Peter Evans the weekend was a mix of homecoming – he hails from Wallasey, just a mile from the ship's berth on the Mersey, with around 20 of his crew also drawn from Liverpool and the North West – thanksgiving to veterans and a chance to highlight the work of today's RN to the people it serves.

"Defender is a modern-day combat escort, so escorting out in the Battle

of the Atlantic would absolutely have been our task," he said.

"People probably don't realise that 95 per cent of the UK's trade goes by sea, and 98 per cent of the world's data passes through undersea cables – and it's ships like Defender and her fantastic sailors who provide that security."

A short distance from her berth, a large-scale drumhead service gave serving sailors and veterans from around the world the opportunity to pay their respects on the final day of proceedings.

A forest of flags and standards from veterans groups – numbers bolstered by the annual gathering of the Royal Naval Association in the city – rose above spectators who saw, first, the Battle of Britain's Memorial Flight make its third appearance of the weekend, then the Swordfish performing its first of two displays of the final day.

Attention then shifted to Exchange Flags, the imposing office block complex which houses the Western Approaches Command, headquarters of the Atlantic battle.

Around 1,000 sailors (British, French, American from the three major warships attending events on the Mersey), reservists of Liverpool's own HMS Eaglet (among other units), veterans' groups and cadets began their march through the heart of the city before passing a small number of Atlantic veterans, who took the salute.

There was still time before the waterborne finale to look around Defender or Bretagne, or sample a taste of serving in today's Armed Forces courtesy of the various stances and displays at the 'military village' in front of the Liver Building.

As the stalls and stands shut, the lighthouse vessel Patricia began moving down the Mersey, leading a 'parade of sail' of boats, with tugs sending fountains of water arching over the Mersey in appreciation – and a flypast from a Swordfish to the sound of the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines Scotland performing a Beat Retreat marked a fitting end to the 80th anniversary.

"I think it's been fantastic and gone spectacularly," said Gary Doyle, Chairman of the Battle of the Atlantic Memorial Trust

"The event has gone from strength to strength and Liverpool has really embraced it. And look at the performance of the military personnel over the weekend – out of this world."



Kendal mark 80th birthday

KENDAL Sea Cadets reached an important milestone, celebrating the unit's 80th anniversary – and their future is looking brighter than ever.

"Eighty years as a youth organisation is a really important achievement," said Kendal Unit's Commanding Officer, CPO (SCC) Cath Brooks.

"The only time people see what we do is when we do a parade and not what we do in the background."

And there's certainly a lot of going on in the background, with cadets taking part in a range of fundraising activities for good causes as well as fundraising for its own unit. The unit plays an active role in its local community, regularly taking part in parades and helping out in any way they can, such as supporting the NHS by washing ambulances.

The unit makes use of five vessels to give cadets boating experience: two motor boats, two yachts, and the Sea Cadets flagship, TS Royalist, where cadets get the opportunity to spend a week working as part of the crew.

Kendal Unit's sea cadets recently joined other cadets from the Lakeland District qualified in either piping, basic mountain biking, basic seamanship, or basic engineering. Cadets can also join the unit's musical band as well as catering classes. Earlier in the year, some of Kendal Unit's cadets gained work experience on the TS Royalist as cooks.

Kendal Unit was initially set up as a boys' organisation but expanded to include girls in 1988. The unit also have a newly-created junior section so that children from the age of nine can join in on the nautical adventure and fun.

Cath Brooks has been the Commanding Officer of Kendal Sea Cadets for five years, but she has been involved in the group for over 20 years. Her children joined Sea Cadets some 20 years ago, with one of her daughters still involved in the youth charity – she is now working as an administrative officer for Sea Cadets.

"Kendal Unit is very much a family unit and the life skills our young people learn prepares them well for the future," added Cath. "It also gives them a sense of belonging, confidence and respect for others. There's a strong sense of spirit of adventure and fun here."

"I love rowing and being part of the band, which I joined as a junior," said Jack, 11. Abigail, nine, added: "I am enjoying doing all the activities, making friends and the staff are very nice."

"It's a great place to make new friends and try out new things," said Jack, 15.



... as does 'granddad' Bill

LIEUTENANT (SCC) Bill Mullin RNR has devoted almost 40 years of his life to helping generations of sea cadets gain important life skills – and although he's just turned 80, shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon.

The father-of-two and grandfather of four has played a key role in both Irvine and Ayr Sea Cadets units.

He was a sea cadet himself before joining the Royal Navy as a stores accountant in 1960. Bill served in the Far East and worldwide as a submariner, where he was based in Faslane, before leaving the navy in 1970.

"I went back to the cadets in 1984 at my wife Isobel's suggestion and offered my services for a couple of nights a month – and suddenly found myself a sub-lieutenant," recalls Bill.

"I was an instructor at Ayr Unit, then in 1985, I was asked to go to Irvine Unit as Commanding Officer, as it was under threat of closure. Irvine Unit only had four cadets and two officers, but we managed to turn it around quite quickly, and we had 20 cadets within a couple of months."

Bill led Irvine Unit until 1995 along with running the Sea Cadets national engineering school at HMS Gannet in Prestwick full-time for nine years. He then returned to Ayr Unit, where he was Commanding Officer from 2011 to 2015 before returning to Irvine Unit, where he is currently an instructor.

During his time at Sea Cadets, Bill has met numerous dignitaries and members of the Royal Family, including the late Queen Elizabeth and King Charles. Through his connections, Bill has also been able to offer cadets some special trips, such as flights in Royal Navy helicopters and trips on the Royal Yacht Britannia and the frigate HMS Argyll.

Bill said: "I've thoroughly enjoyed my time as an instructor and Commanding Officer at Sea Cadets. One of the nicest things has been to meet former cadets who remember me and have brought their own kids and even grandkids to join. Sea Cadets is such a worthwhile organisation and I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone who would like to make a difference to young people's lives."

Sub Lieutenant Robert Duncan (SCC) RNR, Commanding Officer of Irvine Unit, said: "Bill is a great asset to Sea Cadets and Irvine Unit in particular. He is always willing to offer help and support where needed. The cadets love his engaging stories from over the years."

Captain Neil Downing, Captain Sea Cadets, wrote to Bill to congratulate him on his birthday, saying: "The impact that you have had in many roles has been immense and I hope that you will continue to make a difference in the lives of our young people for many years to come."



Sea hive boost for biodiversity

SEA CADETS have installed a sea hive to give a helping hand to local aquatic animals who live in the lake next to the Sea Cadets Thrapston Boat Station in Kettering, North Northamptonshire.

Four junior sea cadets, aged between ten and 12, gathered at Thrapston Lake alongside the boat station manager, staff members and volunteers as well as Mr David Francis of SeaHives Ltd, who was there to provide his expert guidance in the assembling and installation of the sea hive.

Sea hives are artificial reefs designed to resemble the aquatic environment, which will provide surfaces for lake-dwelling creatures such as freshwater fish and shrimps to settle on.

"The cadets were very enthusiastic, did a great job with the assembling of the hive and asked lots of questions," said Thrapston Boat Station Manager, Neil Hartwell.

The cadets themselves have taken ownership of this project, and not only with their hands-on approach in building and setting up the hive. The young people will be monitoring the variety and quantity of aquatic creatures that move into their newly-installed hive over the coming months.

"We drilled the different parts of the hive and put screws in so it would stay together before putting it in the lake," said junior sea cadet Jack (9). "It was fun to build but also quite hard. It's important for the fish to have a place to live."

Daisy, nine, said: "It was exciting to build the hive and we learnt lots of new things. It's important to help lake creatures and I hope loads



of them will move into the new home we built for them!"

"It was very helpful to have David [from Sea Hives Ltd] here so we knew what to do," added James, nine.

"All the juniors at Thrapston Unit are very excited about monitoring the sea hive and keep an eye on what creatures will move in," said John, ten.

David Francis of Sea Hives Ltd said: "The Sea Cadets Eastern Boat Station, based at the southern edge of Thrapston Lake is an ideal location to test the potential ecological benefits of sea hives in a fresh water environment.

"So it was with great enthusiasm that four junior sea cadets recently set about assembling a sea hive uniquely designed for the shallow waters at the edge of Thrapston Lake. The task was successfully completed by the cadets, with much attention to detail, team work and perseverance."

"The cadets skilfully used various materials and tools, while learning about the origin of the sea hive concept, which is aligned with the broader environmental objective to reduce, reuse and recycle materials wherever possible.

"The sea hive was suspended from the boat station pontoon later that day, at an ideal time of the year for it to be occupied by fish and invertebrates after the cold winter months. Because Thrapston Lake is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) the cadets and the Environment Agency are looking forward to seeing how the sea hive benefits the local environment."

The sea hive project follows local and national forums among the cadets, called Cadet Voice, where the young people decide on the issues closest to their hearts to action. Being more environmentally responsible emerged as one of the young people's top priorities.

The first sea hive was set up at Sea Cadets Port Edgar Station (near Edinburgh) at the end of March. If the current projects prove successful, more sea hives will be set up at other Sea Cadets locations across the country.



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Biggest parade of the century...

SEA Cadets from across 30 units for London Area were joined by Southern Area as well as guest platoons from RAF Air Cadets, Army Cadet Force, Police Cadets, Fire Brigade, St John's Ambulance cadets and scouts at the Lower Grand Square of the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, in what was dubbed "the biggest cadet parade of the century".

Held on the first Bank Holiday Monday of May, the colourful event marked the final day of celebrations for the King Charles III's Coronation and the launch of The Big Help Out, with cadets playing their part to inspire everyone to get involved in volunteering.

The colourful event was attended by the former Second Sea Lord and Governor of Gibraltar, Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns, as well as senior Royal Navy officers, who had a good view of proceedings from the Grand Square Steps. The event also featured a musical band, Royal Marines Cadets and junior cadets from London and Southern Areas.

Before the parade, the cadets said three cheers for the new king, who is a former naval officer and a passionate supporter of all types of volunteering. King Charles wrote a letter to London Area cadets and volunteers, thanking them "for their loyal greetings sent on the occasion of their Parade celebrating the Coronation".

His Majesty also wrote: "I much appreciate your kind words and greatly value your continued support... I send my warmest good wishes to all those who are present today at the Old Royal Naval College for a most memorable and successful event."



event."

Sponsors of the event included The Greenwich Foundation for the Old Royal Naval College, The Royal Society of St George, The Honourable Company of Master Mariners and Greenwich, Deptford & Rotherhithe Sea Cadets unit.

London Area staff are grateful to all the volunteers who worked so hard to make the parade a success as well as all the family members and friends who came to support them on the day. Lima Company cadets and volunteers also featured on BBC London News that same evening – BZ to everyone involved.



Blue plaque marks maritime heritage

IT WAS a proud day for South Shields Unit as the Mayor of South Tyneside unveiled the blue plaque at their unit building on the South Shields riverside.

Built in 1936, the TS Collingwood Sea Cadets base in Wapping Street was used as an operational shore base for the RNVR during World War 2. It also supplemented the facilities for the training ship HMS Satellite.

The blue plaque was unveiled by the Mayor of South Tyneside, Councillor Pat Hay. Also attending were the deputy mayor, Councillor Richard Porthouse and the Deputy Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear, Colonel Ann Clouston as well as the unit's cadets, staff, volunteers and supporters.

It was the Chair of South Shields Unit, John Eltringham, who nominated the building to receive recognition from South Tyneside Council for its historical significance.

"Anyone walking along the riverside from the Customs House to Littlehaven probably hasn't given the rather austere and underwhelming pre-war building at Comical Corner a second glance," said John at the event. "But the truth is, it's the last remaining part of what was the shore-based drill ship HMS Satellite that trained thousands of seafarers during its time in service. It made a huge contribution to the war effort in training naval gunners on armed merchant and Royal Navy ships as well as being a part of the Tyne defences in its own right."

"It's in memory of this that the blue plaque is important not only to us but the maritime heritage of South Shields."

The building was used to train seafarers for several decades until the HMS Satellite shore base closed in 1959 and the RNVR disbanded.

Since then, the building has been used by Sea Cadets to provide nautical adventure and fun for young people. In 2021, the original figurehead from the 1854 HMS Satellite vessel was restored and is now on display on the unit's deck.

Fishguard's farewell to respected Lieutenant

FISHGUARD Sea Cadets and the local community are mourning the death of the unit's Commanding Officer, Lt (SCC) Chris Peake RNR, who passed away unexpectedly on 12 May.

Lieutenant Peake was loved and respected for his unwavering dedication, hard work and kindness. He joined Fishguard Unit at the age of 11 in 1981. At the age of 18, he came a volunteer for the unit, driven by a desire to give back and help young people grow in confidence and skills. He devoted more than 40 years of his life to Sea Cadets, finding great joy and fulfilment in shaping the lives of hundreds of young people.

In April 2023, Lieutenant Peake was honoured with the Fishguard and Goodwick Mayor's Award for Outstanding Citizen of the Year. Mayor Sharon McCarmey, explaining her choice, praised his remarkable contributions to the Sea Cadets and his selfless work as a volunteer for the town. The Mayor also expressed her profound sadness at his sudden passing. In a statement released on behalf of the Fishguard and Goodwick Town Council, she conveyed their heartfelt condolences to his family and everyone at Fishguard Sea Cadets.

Fishguard Unit said: "All of us at TS Skirmisher were devastated at the untimely passing of our Commanding Officer, Lt (SCC) Chris Peake RNR and we extend our sincere condolences to his family. Lt Peake has been an inspirational leader at Fishguard Sea Cadets, his priority always being to see the cadets develop, improve their skills and get the most from their time with us."

"He firmly believed in the value of what Sea Cadets could offer young people, having benefitted from that experience himself. He was always encouraging and supportive to the cadets and volunteers at the unit, devoting much time to the development of both. His vision for the future of the unit was to be able to offer more opportunities with better resources and we will strive to fulfil that aim as the best way to honour his memory."

Going for gold at Buckingham Palace

FORMER and current Sea Cadets from Bridgwater and Kettering Units were invited to Buckingham Palace to receive their gold Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Awards.

The former cadets from Bridgwater Unit – Jemima (19), James (20), Oliver (22), Emily (25) and Thomas (27) – are all siblings. They completed their DofE programmes at different times but decided to wait until they had all achieved their gold awards so they could attend the palace together.

One of the siblings, Oliver, has dyspraxia and worked hard to improve his strength, posture and coordination over the three award levels.

"The DofE taught me resilience and that you don't have to be good at reading and writing to achieve amazing things," said Oliver. "I did horse riding for my bronze, silver and gold. I've worked on this skill all the way up and have become a competent rider. I still enjoy riding now."

Speaking about what she learnt during her DofE, his sister, Jemima, said: "The DofE helped me realise how important communication and teamwork skills are and this especially helped me when thinking about my future career. I am now hoping to become a dance teacher and I will use these skills every day."

Four cadets from Kettering Unit – AC Rosa, AC Naomi, LC Amelia and AC Charlie – also celebrated their achievements in style by being

invited to Buckingham Palace to receive their gold Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) award.

Karen Cragg, the DofE Lead at Kettering Sea Cadets, said: "It was great to see all four sea cadets together again at Buckingham Palace. It was a fitting culmination of their progression together from bronze through to gold, with one cadet taking the challenging route as a gold direct entrant. What a fantastic afternoon!"

To successfully complete the gold DofE young people need to complete a 12-month programme of volunteering, a physical and skills section, an expedition and a shared activity in a residential setting away from home.

LC Amelia said: "The gold DofE has helped me to develop my skills and to build my confidence within Sea Cadets, but also in everyday life. I will forever remember the opportunities I got from doing my award."

AC Naomi added: "My invitation to Buckingham Palace was a special afternoon with good friends I have made on my DofE journey. It was amazing to see a variety of uniformed groups and to listen to the two military bands was very inspiring. It was well worth all the hard work."

Charlene, Rosa's mother, who has five daughters at Kettering Sea Cadets, said: "It's only when you get the phone call to go to Buckingham Palace that you realise how important and what a massive achievement this is. The experience has

been so good for Rosa's confidence and allowed her to be with her peers and friends, which was especially important after Covid. Rosa was so committed she even gave up her family holiday in France. I am so proud and delighted."

Sub Lieutenant (SCC) Adam Rowlands RNR, the Officer in Charge at Kettering Sea Cadets Unit, said: "Four fantastic young people have had the privilege of attending Buckingham Palace to officially receive their gold DofE award. A lot of hard work and effort has gone into getting here, not just from the cadets themselves but from the adult volunteers who guided them. This is just one of the great achievements young people can experience when they join the Sea Cadets."



Buzzing to save the bees

CADETS from Whitehaven Sea Cadets were buzzing with excitement as they launched a national campaign to encourage hundreds of sea cadets and other young people to plant seed balls to save the bees.

The unit's formal name is TS Bee and they want to make sure that their wild namesakes have plenty of spaces to thrive.

Their #SaveTheTSBees campaign has involved sending over 8,000 'Beebomb' wildflower seedballs to over every Sea Cadets unit in Great Britain and many other youth groups. TS Bee's ambitious aim is to create over 10,500 square feet of wildflower spaces for bees and pollinators.

OC Connor from Whitehaven Unit said: "Bees play such an important role as pollinators and yet there are less and less of them every year. Given our unit name, we decided to take a stand and help bring them back. Helping the environment has been at the heart of the project – we have used

biodegradable envelopes, packing and labels and even our flyers were printed on seeded paper which will create even more flowers for the bees to thrive."

Whitehaven Unit received funding from the Cumbria Community Foundation and Sellafield Ltd Transforming West Cumbria #CanDo programme, which helped to make the bee-saving campaign possible.

Whitehaven Town Councillor, Edwin Dinsdale, visited the unit while the cadets were hard at work preparing the seedball packs. The councillor was presented with his very own pack for which he thanked the cadets, saying: "This is a great environmental initiative and I would strongly encourage everyone in Whitehaven and countrywide to fully support this campaign."

To follow the progress of TS Bee's bee campaign, visit the unit's Facebook page (@WhitehavenSCC) or on Instagram (@WhitehavenSeaCadets).



Closure threat over huge energy bills

DUNDEE Unit could be forced to close after 85 years of service over "crippling" energy costs.

The unit says it has received a whopping £23,000 bill for gas and electricity in the coming year - more than four times the previous amount.

The unit's Commanding Officer, PO (SCC) Barry Ross, said: "We have received notification that our gas and electricity for this year will cost us £22,800 - which is £1,900 a month. The cost for the previous year was £5,000 - so we have been dealt a rise of more than four times what we were paying."

"There is absolutely no way we can afford that kind of money. This is a crippling energy cost and one we don't know how we could possibly pay."

The Sea Cadets unit, which is based at the Port of Dundee, is due to celebrate its 85th anniversary this October - but there are concerns that it may be forced to fold before the autumn milestone.

The unit currently has 52 cadets who, thanks to the unit, are able to take part in sailing, windsurfing, camping and musical bands as well as many other activities. Since it was first established in 1938, Dundee Sea Cadets has supported thousands of young people develop in skills and confidence, make new friends and support the local community.

The mother of one of Dundee Unit's cadets, Jenna Mitchell said she is horrified by the news. "As a parent, I would say [the unit] is a lifeline to many children," she said. "The group keeps the costs very low to help parents and it keeps the kids engaged and off the streets."

Proud moments at Wellacre opening

WELLACRE Academy, in Flixton, hosted the official opening of the first ever Wellacre Royal Navy Combined Cadet Force (CCF) Unit.

Wellacre is delighted to have been a part of the school's CCF Expansion Programme since September 2019.

The unit is made up of an ambitious and enthusiastic group of 47 students - the largest Contingent since the unit's inception in 2019, who have not only been taught the Royal Navy core values of commitment, courage, discipline, respect, integrity and loyalty, but also uphold them in their daily lives.

Parents, carers, families, staff, and governors joined the ceremony, which was officiated by Inspecting Officer Lt Green, HMS Biter, supported by School Staff, Instructor Ward and Contingent Commander Baker.

During the ceremony Petty Officer Jack, Year 10, ably led the parade, with Cadet Oliver, Year 9, playing the ceremonial pipe whilst Leading Hand, Bradley, Year 9, raised the flag.

The Section's Non-Uniform Volunteers, Miss Harvey and Mr Clare, then co-ordinated a series of command drill demonstrations for parents and families to watch and enjoy.

Inspecting Officer Lt Green said: "I'm really impressed to see what the team at Wellacre has done - the staff and, particularly, the CCF cadets. To all the parents, you should be really proud of your children and everything they're doing here."

Special mention to Cadet Ethan, Year 9, who was awarded a Commander's Coin from Biennial Review Officer, Lt Green, in recognition of his progress as part of the Section and his demonstration of the Royal Navy core values, which also run alongside the school core values too.

Principal Mrs Sharrock added: "We are immensely proud of our CCF Royal Navy section and the formal recognition of the opening in this flag raising ceremony is a really fitting tribute to the hard work of Contingent Commander Baker and SSI Ward, who have been supported by Miss Harvey and Mr Clare this year, and Chief Petty Officer Urie - our Area Instructor - from the start.

"The Section continues to thrive and I know it provides a sense of pride, belonging and achievement to all these young people and makes a significant contribution to our wider development curriculum.

"Thank you to all the cadets and all they do to enrich the school and wider community through your endeavours. We are all really proud of you."



OFFICIAL: Wellacre Unit officially open after ceremony at Wellacre Academy.



Chief Petty Officer Urie, Inspecting Officer Lt. Green, Contingent Commander Baker, Principal Mrs Sharrock and SSI Ward



A Merseyside visit to Mersey

THE Cadets of Belvedere RNCCF in Liverpool were pleased to be invited on board HMS Mersey in May.

She was in Liverpool to support Merseyside Police, providing Explosive Ordnance Disposal and High Assurance Venue Search leading up to the Eurovision Song Contest Grand Final which was taking place that evening at the M&S Bank Arena.

We were privileged to be able to have an in-depth tour of all areas of the ship and got to speak with the Ship's Company about their jobs within the Navy and life on board.

HMS Mersey was lit up with blue and yellow lights in support of Ukraine who won the Eurovision Song Contest last year.

To be on HMS Mersey, situated on Liverpool's world-famous Waterfront on such a fabulous weekend was such a privilege and something that cadets and adult volunteers will remember for years to come.



HMS Mersey lit up in Ukraine colours during the Eurovision Song Contest



Cadets visit HMS Mersey in Liverpool

A trip to see the flagship

TWELVE members of the Oundle School Combined Cadet Force, Navy Section, probably one of the most land-locked CCF's in England, visited HMS Queen Elizabeth which had returned to Portsmouth for scheduled maintenance.

Senior Cadet Harry Tulley in Upper 6th gives his account of the visit: "After arriving at HMNB Portsmouth we were taken onboard by an officer and two ratings all three of whom were currently serving on the ship. We were given a couple of hours tour where we were able to see crucial parts of the ship.

"First, we were taken to the engine room which was described as the heart of the ship. Onboard HMS Queen Elizabeth the engine room is fully digital and able to control four diesel engines which are powerful enough to power a medium-sized city.

"Following this we were able to visit the bridge, which is where the ship is commanded, and see where the captain and navigators sit. After a walk on the flight deck we visited the operations room where we heard about how she can track the locations of other ships, before finishing in the hangar which is large enough to fit two Type 23 frigates side by side. Everyone that was a part of this visit thoroughly enjoyed it and feel privileged to have been given such an amazing opportunity to be onboard a ship which is at the heart of the Royal Navy."

Cadet Harry Ruffitt, in Lower 6th, added: "Seeing the aircraft carrier with my own eyes instead of on Google Images was incredible! I was overwhelmed by the sheer size of the ship especially the flight deck where we went up the ski-jump which was both awesome and a little disconcerting given how high up we were. I was constantly in awe, whether it be the size of the hangar or the technology on the bridge. I couldn't have had a more wonderful time."



TOP: Cadets working on Medusa. ABOVE: Medusa at sea

Cadets encouraged to get involved with Medusa

CADETS are being encouraged to get involved and sail with D-Day veteran Medusa to help hone their skills.

Medusa has a rich history. She was built and commissioned in 1943. She was one of 464 Harbour Defence Motor Launches (HDML) built during WW2 to defend harbours against submarines.

As the threat never materialised, she was used for other duties including convoy escort, agent landing/recovery, as well as offensive operations.

Medusa's rich wartime service included Exercise Fabius at Slapton Sands, navigational leader for Omaha Beach on D-Day, escort to a minesweeping squadron out of Rosyth and finally taking the surrender of Ijmuiden and then first Allied vessel to Amsterdam.

For her D-Day role, Medusa carried the most advanced navigational systems then available, including "Outfit QM" (later known as Decca Navigator), Gee and an active radar reflector (Type 78T).

Only 20 vessels carried Decca which underlines the importance of her role: to act as a homing beacon at the entrance to a cleared channel leading to the beaches.

In later years she was purchased by a group from Portland who looked after her for many years until the Medusa Trust was formed in 2002.

She is now owned and operated by the trust and works out of Haslar Marina, Gosport, with a

team of willing volunteer crew/maintainers.

She is allowed to operate commercially up to 20 miles from safe haven and with a maximum of 15 persons on board.

As she is built with a manned engine room and no automation, it takes a minimum core crew of six to operate her.

She spends on average 50 days a year at sea with one long deployment which is either to the D-Day beaches for 6 June or Guernsey for Liberation Day on 9 May.

Medusa led the way out of Portsmouth in June with HMS Blazer and HMS Dasher to support the D-Day events in France.

Most importantly Medusa helps with cadet training, but you can also see her on TV and film - you can spot her in the film, Dunkirk - and working with the RN Coastal Forces Squadron.

The Medusa team is keen to increase their cadet involvement.

Medusa is a great platform for cadets - although small at 72 feet, she has to be operated like a bigger ship.

All of this means that teamwork and communication is key as well as being a great afloat experience on an historic craft.

If you wish to know more or take advantage of what Medusa has to offer, please visit www.hmsmedusa.org.uk and contact Chairman and Captain, Lt (CCF) Alan Watson OBE or contact HQ CCF RN/RM for any CCF RN cadet involvement.



PENZANCE JOINS PARTY

.... AND RAIDER
TAGS ALONG

ROYAL Navy Mine Counter Measures Vessel HMS Penzance welcomed visitors at the Sea Bangor Festival.

The Sandown-class mine hunter and her 40-strong crew lowered the gangplank for one day, inviting onboard ticketed visitors to learn more about how they protect vital shipping lanes from the threat of maritime mines.

Also attending the popular festival, although not open to visitors, was Royal Navy Patrol Vessel HMS Raider, one of two Archer-class ships that make-up the Faslane Patrol Boat Squadron.

The Commanding Officer of HMS Penzance, Lieutenant Commander Timothy Castrinoyannakis, said: "The entire crew were excited to be attending the Sea Bangor Festival and for the opportunity to welcome members of the public onboard.

"Maritime trade routes are like superhighways with much of our energy and goods reaching us by sea. HMS Penzance and other ships of the Royal Navy work hard to keep these highways open and protected.

"The Sandown-class mine hunters are remarkable vessels, and it was great to give people an insight into what we do and what it's like to live and work onboard a ship."

Part of the First Mine Counter Measures Squadron (MCM1), HMS Penzance is specially designed to neutralise underwater threats. Operating the latest sonar technology and the Seafox mine disposal system, the ship is regularly deployed around the world to hunt and destroy mines.

Launched in 1997, the ship has a range in excess of 2,500 miles, weighs 600 tonnes and is operated by a crew of around 40 highly trained Royal Navy sailors.



Sailor receives her gold DofE award

SAILOR Maya Leworthy, based at HMS Collingwood, Fareham, received her Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Maya, who grew up in West Somerset with her parents and older brother where she did her GCSE's and A-Levels at West Somerset College, completed her Bronze DofE award at the age of 13 through her school and in year ten decided to complete her Silver Award.

During her college experience, Maya was offered the opportunity to complete her Gold Award which consisted of a five-day residential at Kilve Court in Somerset.

"I have really enjoyed all of my

experiences with the Duke of Edinburgh Award and it has given me many skills that were useful during basic training," said Maya.

"It feels like a really good achievement especially after doing Bronze and Silver and then doing Gold through COVID, and having now started my phase 2 training in the Royal Navy."

Maya joined the Royal Navy in December 2022 to travel the world and meet new people. After completion of basic training at HMS Raleigh, she passed out and is now currently based at HMS Collingwood, where she will complete her Phase 2 Training as a

Warfare Specialist (AWW). Since being at HMS Collingwood, Maya has represented the Royal Navy in the King's Coronation as a stretcher bearer.

Maya was invited to Buckingham Palace to receive her Gold award, accompanied by her Father Philip Leworthy.

She was honoured to be one of the first people to receive the award from the new Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Edward.

"It's such a great achievement to have celebrated. I developed some good skills and made some great friends which I feel definitely set me up for life in Naval training."



Tribute paid to Naval Division

SAILORS from HMS Collingwood, Fareham, attended a special service at Collingwood Corner Naval Division Memorial, Blandford Camp, Pimperne.

The ceremony was in memory of the 63rd Division, 2nd Brigade, Collingwood Battalion, who were initially trained at the Dorset Camp, before they were almost totally destroyed during fighting at Gallipoli.

Commander Darren Lucas, Commander Weapon Engineering Training at HMS Collingwood, represented the Commanding Officer of HMS Collingwood, Captain Tim Davey, at the services and laid a wreath on behalf of the establishment.

He said: "It is an honour to remember the bravery of the Collingwood Division and keep their memory alive. We must never forget their sacrifice and valour."

At the outset of World War One the Royal Navy called up every member of every type of RN reserve organisation, which found themselves with many more men than berths on ships or establishments. The Army did the same.

The then First Sea Lord, Winston Churchill, enacted a concept considered prior to WW1, that a division of Naval Infantry should be formed. The task of the Division was to seize and hold ports to enable the Royal Navy to operate from them. The Royal Navy had a long history of operations ashore. Lord Nelson received his eye injury and arm injury while operating ashore, not on a ship.

The Division initially formed in tented camps at Walmer (1st Brigade) and Bettehanger (2nd Brigade) near Deal in Kent while awaiting the building of a permanent camp at Blandford. The Crystal Palace was also taken up as a Royal Naval Division (RND) location.

The Division consisted of 3 brigades. The first and second brigades were composed of the 'reservists' called up (including some Army transfers). The third brigade was formed from battalions of the Royal Marines Light Infantry.

The RND were deployed to Antwerp in October 1914 to take over trenches from Belgians surrounding Antwerp. Savaged by German attacks, the Division withdrew but many men were lost or interned (Neutral Netherlands) or seized as POW.

Reformed at Blandford Camp, built in the meantime and occupied from November 1915, the Battalion retrained and, issued with tropical kit, were sent to the Dardanelles (Gallipoli Campaign), ordered by Winston Churchill.

On June 4, 1915 at midday the RND first wave advanced against Turkish trenches, the second wave left at 12.15. By 12.45, 1,060 officers and men of RND lay dead. The Collingwood Battalion received so many casualties that the remaining men were used as Battle Casualty Replacements and the Battalion never reformed. The memorial at Blandford Camp is to the Collingwood Battalion primarily.

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From left, LH Unasi Luke; AB Chris Lee; OC Ella Bartlett; AB Robbie Sheppard in action at the Royal Navy Martial Arts Championships held at HMS Temeraire in Portsmouth

IT'S ALL KICKING OFF

ROYAL Navy and Royal Marines martial artists assembled at HMS Temeraire for the Royal Navy Martial Arts championships.

Competitors in Taekwondo and all styles of Karate competed in individual and team events involving Patterns and sparring for TKD / Kata and Kumite for Karate.

A high standard of both arts was in evidence throughout the day and this was reflected in a tightly fought and competitive tournament which was a credit to the participants.

Lt William Tatham took first place in the Karate Kumite Male category, with Officer Cadet Ella Bartlett victorious in the women's event.

CSgt Bernard Mabey who is the events manager for the occasion said: "The high standard on display today shows the commitment and dedication of our association members and this will hopefully result in another good showing at the Inter-Service competition."

A big thank you to the CO and Staff at HMS Temeraire for hosting, Sensei M. R. Dewey 8th Dan Karate SEKU, Mr F. Miller VI Degree ITF Taekwondo and their teams for officiating and supporting.

If you want to get involved with Navy martial arts from complete beginner to any experience level then: Search for NAVYFIT martial arts or on Facebook

look for RNRMMMA or email: Bernard.Mabey980@mod.gov.uk

Results:

Karate:

Dan Grade Kumite Male: 1st Lt William Tatham; 2nd LH Matthew Kearney

Dan Grade Kumite Female: 1st OC Ella Bartlett; 2nd LH Unasi Luke

Kyu Grade Kumite: 1st Lt Cdr Chris Moore, 2nd LH Carl LaRoche

Individual Dan Grade Kata:

Male: 1st AB Chris Lee RN; 2nd Lt Tatham

Female: 1st OC Bartlett, 2nd LH Luke

Team Kumite: 1st Navy "A": WO1 Mark White / Lt Cdr Moore / OC Bartlett; 2nd Navy "B": LH Kearney / Lt Cdr Anthony Gilroy / LH Luke

Team Kata: 1st Navy "A": AB Lee / LH Luke / LH LaRoche RN; 2nd Navy "B": WO1 White RN / Lt Cdr Gilroy / OC Bartlett

Mixed Grade Kumite: 1st Lt Tatham, 2nd LH Kearney

Taekwondo Results:

Dan Grade Sparring: 1st AB Robbie Sheppard, 2nd AB Josh Rayns

Individual Dan Grade Poomse: 1st AB Sheppard, 2nd Sub Lt Dave Hewitt.



American Football has new fans

MILITARY personnel are helping to grow the sport of American Football across the Armed Forces.

The growing popularity was underlined by a combined UK Armed Forces (Tri-Service) American Football squad challenging the US Air Force based at RAF Lakenheath to three Flag Football matches.

Eight players and one coach joined the Royal Navy American Football Association (RNAFA) President (Cdre Prest) and Chairman (Cdr Court) in representing the Royal Navy in their first competitive match.

The team joined their Armed Forces colleagues at RAF Wittering the day before the fixture to commence a mini-training camp, enabling the players to integrate with their Army and RAF players and to demonstrate to the Head Coach (Army) their ability to start the first fixture, the following day.

A structured day of offensive and defensive training culminated in a full positioning scrimmage that ensured the UK Armed Forces Team were ready to compete against their American opposition.

At the end of the day's training, the players were given the honour of being presented with their UK Armed Forces game shirt, which was sponsored by the New York Jets American Football team, a great benefit for the players, who, as a Royal Navy team are only 18 months into development as a squad.

The following day the group arrived at RAF

Lakenheath, where they were superbly hosted by their US Forces colleagues, both on and off the field. All three games were highly competitive but also played with the highest respect for each team.

The first game showed the UKAF team's progression in American Football as they quickly went into a 12-0 lead in the first half. In the second half, the USAF battled to get back into the game, and with seconds remaining, they scored a winning touchdown, winning game one 20-18.

Game two was also a physical but close game, with the USAF coming out triumphant.

The tournament's final game saw the UKAF lay a marker down in their AF progression with a 13-6 victory.

RN representatives were CPO Fletcher (EXEC), PO Pritchard (HMS Collingwood), LET Scott (HMS Collingwood), PO Adamson (HMS Neptune), LAET Parsley (RNAS Yeovilton), SLT Shelton-Davidson (HMS Sultan), AET Killner (QNLZ), LAET Smith (QNLZ), AB Truslove (HMS Collingwood).

Before the next US fixture, the UK Armed Forces will hold the inaugural Inter Services American Football competition this autumn, with Army v Navy (at Oxford) on September 22 and Navy v RAF (at Portsmouth) on October 13.

Training is open to players of any standard or experience, so if you want to try a new sport, then email your interest to RNAFA_official@outlook.com
Picture: Chris Coope (AAFA Photographer)



ROYAL MARINES TRIUMPHANT



ROYAL Marines cricketers cruised to victory in the Inter Regional 20 over contest.

The thwack of leather on willow and the cries of 'howzat' could be heard on a gloriously warm and sunny day at the historic ground and home of Royal Navy Cricket, at Burnaby Road, Portsmouth.

A total of four closely-fought matches in a T20 tournament between Eastern Region, Fleet Air Arm and Royal Marine CC were played over a two-day period.

In the first match, Eastern were put into bat by the FAA, scoring 137 for 8, ETME 'Viv Richards' making a notable 39.

This was then followed by tight bowling and fielding by Eastern and the FAA couldn't quite catch their total, scoring 130 for 8 with AET Ben Johnson making 35.

In the second match against the RMCC, Eastern were put into bat, making 159 for 7 and again ETME 'Viv Richard' being their leading scorer on 56.

This was then followed by a very strong performance by Mne Marks (66 not out) and Mne Taylor (51 not out) who made 153 for 2 in 15 overs.

The next day on another gloriously warm and sunny morning, the RMCC were put into bat by the FAA who scored a modest 135 for 7, the highest scorer for the RMCC being CS1 John who scored 62.

The FAA then fought hard against determined RMCC bowling and fielding, grasping victory in the 18th over with 1 wicket to spare.

This then left the scorers with the headache of calculating the run-rate to determine who would be in the final of this closely competed competition and after careful deliberation the final would be a replay of the FAA vs RMCC.

The FAA won the toss and elected to bat on a bright sunny afternoon with a quick outfield. RMCC had an excellent start with an early and clean wicket of AET Johnson for 1.

Carefully placing their field to accurate bowling, the FAA had to work hard for every run.

Then a quick stumping put the FAA on 8 for 2 off 2 overs; the RMCC tails were up.

The wicket of AET Frost fell to a terrific high catch by CS1 John at long off; the FAA were now 15 for 3 off 4 overs and struggling.

Undeterred, the FAA buckled down and took their runs where they could, losing another wicket at 47 for 4, then there was a careless run-out at 69 off 11 overs.

The fall of the 5th wicket was for 91 in the 14th over AET Ivy who scored a tenacious 13.

The score slowly crept up to 112, when POACMN Woolnough was bowled by Mne Marks; this was a tightly fought game and the FAA settled on an end total of 135 for 6 off 20 overs.

The RMCC started with confidence until LCpl Hewitt drove the ball firmly into the hands AET Anderson at long cover. A second wicket fell at 23, with Mne Marks being caught behind for 3; very much game on.

The FAA then had a bit of a wobble with loose bowling giving too many extras and allowing the RMCC to accelerate to 94 off 10 overs then Mne Taylor was stumped in cow corner for 32; but the damage was done and the RMCC were on the path to a victory.

CH1 John was then out LBW by CPOAET Stokeld for 38. In his enthusiasm to reach the end total quickly, Mne Horne was stumped for 10. RMCC cruised to victory in the 18th over, winning by five wickets with the final batters in play being Cpl Streather (20 not out) and ASgt Parsons (7 not out).

If you are a cricketer and want to join the RNCA, please contact your init PTI or Sports Representative or Lt Cdr BJ Smith (CO HMS Victory) Brian. Smith120@mod.gov.uk

The women's Inter-Services T40 contest takes place at Vine Lane on July 19 at 10.30am, followed by the Navy Cup Final at Burnaby Road at 11am. The men's Inter-Services T50 takes place at Burnaby Road at 11am on August 1.

Clockwise, from top, AET Frost of FAA strikes the ball out to covers; the winning RMCC team; Capt Andrew Ainsley (Chair of RNCA) presents trophy to LCpl Sam Hewitt of RMCC



Swords are crossed in test of mettle

NEWCOMERS made a sharp impression at the Navy Fencing Championships at HMS Temeraire. More than 13 fencers took to the piste in Sabre, Foil and Épée to test their mettle.

For the first time in its long history, the Navy Fencing Championships started with a grassroots session. This was a clear success, as three of the four debutants won medals over the weekend.

Starting with grassroots coaching on Friday, the Royal Navy's musketeer-resembling coach Maciej set to work transforming our novices into duel-ready warriors. Starting off with foil, they learned the fundamentals that let them advance through a weekend of competition in all three weapons.

Shifting from teaching to fighting on Saturday, an electrifying men's sabre final saw Lt Cdr Rubin Nash (46) hold his nerve to defeat a resurgent Lt James Firth (29) 15-12. Next up was foil, with Lt William Hill (30) beating the plucky James to the winning point for a 15-14 finish.

On Sunday, Maj Will Hale RM (48) struck with energy and precision to retain his Épée title, defeating William Hill in the final. Nevertheless, with a foil gold, epee silver and sabre bronze, Hill was crowned the Men's Champion at Arms this year.

This year's championships saw good representation by our female fencers. AET Grace Brown dominated the women's weapons taking strong victories in both sabre and foil on the Saturday; while on the Sunday she fought off a terrific comeback from Cdr Sacha Brooks (47) in the Épée, to win the crown as this year's Women's Champion at Arms.

"This year's RN Champs was a great opportunity to fence new people, and we saw some of our new joiners show their natural talent," said AET Brown. "I feel really lucky to win across the board, but it wasn't easy and was given a run for my money."

The two Champions at Arms will now represent the RN against the Army and RAF equivalents across all three weapons, in the UKAF Fencing Championships in July and August, with the goal of becoming the Master at Arms.



Cdr Brooks awards Lt Hill the Men's Champion at Arms trophy

The amalgamated team "His Majesty's Naval Bases" comprised of Lt Hill, AET Brown (22) and AB(CT) Kay (29) took the Palmer Trophy, knocking out the Maritime Reserves contingent and the unaligned "ROGUE 1" team. This Inter-Unit trophy is normally awarded to a fixed list of larger formation units (E.G. HMNB Devonport), but it was opted to form impromptu alliances to make the most of the time and get some great fencing in.

Lt Cdr Nash, the Royal Navy Fencing Association Chair said "I'm thrilled that this year we had so many new female fencers in the mix, and that all the newcomers competed across the entire weekend in all three weapons. The future of the sport is in good hands, but we are always looking for more fencers espousing the best traditions of the service - discipline, controlled aggression, and camaraderie."

The atmosphere generated was hugely positive. Although unable to run a women's Championships last year, 2023



Miss Trim balletically lunging at Surg Lt Dyar in the Women's Épée Quarter Finals at Arms trophy

has been a resounding success and achieved equal representation.

"I have been delighted by the representation at this year's Royal Navy Fencing Championships" said Royal Navy Fencing President Captain Mark Anderson "Not just by the quality of fencing and standard of the overall competition, but also the enthusiasm which grassroots sports has been promoted and embraced by the fencers from across the Naval establishment."

Commenting on the future of Royal Navy fencing, the Association secretary, Lt Hill said "The committee from the Royal Navy Amateur Fencing Association have worked hard to innovate the approach to RN Fencing Champs, and with a steady flow of men and women's fencing talent we're really optimistic about the future. We're on the lookout for new members who want to have a go; its free to join and equipment and coaching is provided."



"His Majesty's Naval Bases" Team take the Palmer Cup



Lt Hill fending off Lt Firth in an unconventional Men's Foil Finals



Ironwoman Natalie stuns in sun

RESERVIST Lieutenant Natalie Grainger has qualified for the Ironman Triathlon World Championships after smashing 17 minutes off her best time in the Mediterranean heat.

Her performance in the Ironman 70.3 in Mallorca earns her a place in Lahti, Finland, in August where the world's finest amateur and professional Ironman athletes will be competing.

A 'solid' swim 1,900 metres through the bay at Alcúdia, then a 'tough' 90 kilometres on the bike, finishing with a 'fast' half marathon run (21km) ensured the officer was just under 17 minutes quicker than her previous best.

This was in spite challenging weather conditions – very heavy rain, not what you

would expect from a summer race on a Spanish island

This was Natalie's second 70.3, and she completed her first full Ironman (3.8km swim, 180km bike and full marathon) in Copenhagen, Denmark, August 2022.

"70.3 Ironman is a distance which basically means burying yourself in the hurt locker for five-plus hours – not for the flight hearted, but weirdly I love it!

"I'm absolutely ecstatic to qualify for the world champs, hard work in training during this tough winter has definitely paid off.

"Training now starts again though. I generally get through 15 to 20 hours a week, but this will be a lot easier and more fun now the weather improves, and I can get out on the bike more often."



Navy triumph in Gib Cup

MORE than 50 personnel took part in the annual Commander British Forces Cup, where teams from the Royal Navy, RAF Gibraltar and the Royal Gibraltar Regiment battled it out to be this year's winner.

Participants gathered in Devil's Tower Camp and Four Corners, utilising the fantastic sports facilities in both locations, to take part in sports such as tennis, football, water polo, swimming, super teams, paddleboard racing on Western Beach and a good old-fashioned game of tug of war.

The one-day competition, which was opened by Commodore Tom Guy, provides the Armed Forces with a great opportunity to come together and represent their respective units.

The final scores were in, and the Royal Navy came up trumps, winning the competition by a whopping total of 27 points.

WO2 Darren Hunt, from the Joint Physical Development Unit, said: "The level of competition was exceptional, and witnessing the dedication, teamwork, and sportsmanship displayed by each participant was truly inspiring.

"Congratulations to the winners for their outstanding performance and well-deserved victory. Their hard work, perseverance, and commitment have set a commendable example for all of us."



KEITH SHOWS THE WAY AT SILVERSTONE

MIXED RESULTS AS DRIVERS HIT THE TRACK FOR ARMED FORCES CHALLENGE

ROUNDS one and two of the Armed Forces Race Challenge saw the RNRM Car Racing Team return to Silverstone with a large grid of 35 drivers for the season opener after what felt like a long winter break.

Silverstone National circuit is the shorter of the three layouts the circuit has to offer, with a circuit length of 1.64 miles creating some very fast laps, close racing and large amounts of traffic for the lead cars to contend with. With three long straights, fast corners and hairpins to navigate it creates a very exciting race.

All drivers set some very reasonable track times for qualification with WO2 Richard Philips (BMW 116i) qualifying third in class for both races.

Keith (Mini R53 Cooper S) qualified second in class for both of the weekend's races and was tenth overall.

Mne Ben McLaughlin (Renault Clio 172) qualified fifth in class, Adam (BMW 116i) who was struggling for pace over the weekend qualified 30th overall and sixth in class.

Sean (Locost) qualified third in class for race one and second for race two.

The start of race one got with little to no incidents, after a long winter break off the track this was a testament to the skill and awareness of the drivers.

The pack were quick to separate themselves with the lead cars disappearing down the Wellington straight while the midfield and back of pack were still navigating the first hairpin.

Adam did well to defend his position but on the Wellington straight was out paced by the other 116 trophy cars.

Adam had a few little moments down at Brooklands and



Luffield which resulted in him conceding places towards the end of the race.

Ben had to retire from the race due to engine issues which was unfortunate as he was showing brilliant pace.

And to finish off the teams' woes, Sean's oil sump plug found its way loose releasing the contents of his engine on the racing line before spinning out at Brooklands when his rear wheels collected some of the oil and lost grip. Unfortunately, although a new sump plug was found, the short 30 seconds it ran without caused the engine to seize and that was his weekend over.

Overall race one results for the team weren't brilliant with the two DNFs however, Keith managed to secure a second in class and 7th overall which definitely is a great start to his season and Richard finished first against the other 116 trophy cars.

Back in the pits the team were working frantically to fix both Sean's and Ben's cars but unfortunately Sean's couldn't be saved.

For Ben the problem appeared to be that the intake manifold's captive nuts had broken so new nuts and bolts were installed and the car fired straight back up and off to assembly for race two he went.

Race two nearly started with no incidents however just as they were leaving the assembly area Ben's problems came back, from running lean for too long in race one it caused some ongoing issues when demanded from.

Keith and Richard's race went without any issues, and both secured a second in their respective classes.

Adam still struggling for pace didn't make any progress from his starting position but managed to maintain his position and finished just outside a podium place with a fourth in class.

Unfortunately, due to reliability and pace issues the team came out at the bottom of the pack in the team results, but Keith's consistent performance placed him top of the Drivers Championship, ten points clear of second place.

For anyone who would like to view Keith's qualifying lap and other onboard footage from other drivers' vehicles across the race season, they can be viewed on the team's Facebook page – search "Royal Navy Royal Marines Car Racing Team".

Anyone wishing to get involved, either racing or supporting, should contact Lt Cdr Keith Attwood; carracing@rnrmsa.co.uk

For more details visit www.rnrmsa.co.uk and www.armedforcesracechallenge.net

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Deaths

Neville David Johnson, Chief Radio Supervisor. Served from March 1 1955 to December 14 1983 in HMS Mercury, Tamar, Whitehall, HMS Ashanti, Mauritius, Naiad, Comberlant Portugal, Andromeda. York Careers Office. Honorary Life Member of SSAFA and awarded Meritorious Service Certificate for 25 years work as Secretary of Bourne, Stamford and Spalding Branch. Died April 4, aged 85.
Eric Lionel East (known as Ron), LAM (A/E), Regular Service and then SLT RNR. Served from March 1957 to March 1966 before rejoining as reservist. Served in HMS Daedalus, Gamecock, Seahawk, Seahawk (849 HQ), Seahawk (815), HMS Albion (815), HMS Condor, AAC Middle Wallop (Heron), HMS Fulmar, Heron (890), HMS Ark Royal (890), HMS Victory. Died May 19, aged 84.

Peter Cook, PO(Wireless Telecomms). Served between 1949 and 1958 in HMS Ganges, HMS St Vincent, HMS Loch Lomond, HMS Ocean, HMS Highflyer (Ceylon West), HMS Striker, HMS Vanguard and HMS President. Joined RNA in 1995 and served as chairman and committee member of Norwich Branch. Died March 10, aged 89.
Capt (Cdre 1993-4) Stephen Taylor. HMS Palliser, Fiskerton, Sheba, Excellent, Londonderry, Belton, Sheffield, FOF2, Excellent, ASWE, C-in-C Fleet, Manchester, Southampton, Exeter, Dryad, MOD Bath. Died May 21.
Cdr Michael R B Hilton. HMS Porpoise, Neptune, Revenge, Achilles, Nelson, Cardiff, Dolphin, Glamorgan, FO Portsmouth, MOD Bath. Died May 10, aged 86.
Lt Cdr John W W Lewes. HMS Osprey, Goldcrest, Heron. Died May 21, aged 92.

Cdr John E Porter OBE LVO. HMS Jaguar, Dryad, Zulu, Juno, Intrepid, Ark Royal, Cochrane, DSW Latimer, HM Royal Yacht Britannia, ASWE, CINCNAVHOME. Died April 26, aged 86.
Capt Royal Nigerian Navy (Ex RN) James Rawe OBE. Died April 15, aged 97.
Cdr Bryan Rayner. HMS Fisgard, Torquay, Devonshire, Collingwood, Exeter, Sultan, MOD Bath. Died May 16, aged 90.
Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNOC
Capt RM (Local Maj) Alisdair R Murray. RM Plymouth, 45 Cdo RM Arbroath, CGRM. Died June 1, aged 91.

Ask Jack

Commodore Christopher Belton: The Royal Bahamas Defence Force are trying to contact Cdre Belton, who was based in Nassau from 1980 to 1983. Cdre Belton, pictured fourth from left, is believed to have returned to the UK and was based at Devonport until 1985. Anyone who can help locate him is asked to contact Dean. Goodey@fcd.gov.uk

survivors' families about their rescue. We have the names of the seven crew members who were lost but none of the names of the survivors. If anyone has information regarding the survivors, they can contact me by email at gsgipson@msn.com. **Gary Gibson**

College in Dublin in 1982, aged around 18.
William Simpson
Whpsimpson@gmail.com

HMS Lord Austin: I am seeking family or friends of the sailors who served on the trawler which was sunk in the Seine Bay on June 24, 1944. Seven of the 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 that rescued the Lord Austin survivors. I am in contact with the daughter of the Commander and the son of one of the crew of USCG 56 and we are wanting to share information with any of the

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.fairburn@btinternet.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.

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

The ship was stripped beforehand 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, something confirmed to me by Chatham Dockyard Historical Society.
Geoff Robinson
 7 Mountfield, Borough Green, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8HX

Reunions

564 Artificer Apprentice entry: Our 55th reunion will be held in Warwick for those who joined at HMS Fisgard on September 9 1968. For details of the reunion held over the weekend of September 8 to 10 please call IOW Tours on 01983 405116 or contact Clive Adshead at clive.adshead@virginmedia.com

HMS Undaunted, Eagle and Yarmouth Association: The 2023 Reunion Dinner & Dance is confirmed at the Bournemouth Carlton Hotel, East Overcliff Drive, Bournemouth BH1 3DN from Friday October 20 to Monday October 23 2023. Contact Whiskey Walker on 01268 58041 or email: whiskey666@outlook.com or andyjancini@gmail.com for further details.

by dancing & entertainment. For further details please contact Danny du Feu. Email: ddf.photography@gmail.com; Tel: 07711 083465.

HMS Troubridge: Final Commission Association 1966-69 2023 reunion will be at the North Euston Hotel, The Esplanade, Fleetwood FY7 6BN, September 25 to 29. Contact Bryan Pace at Romft1@GMail.com

Loch Class Frigates Association: Our final annual reunion takes place at the Royal Maritime Hotel and Club from October 6 to 8. Contact Andrew Nunn at andrew.nunn@blueyonder.co.uk, phone 0117 9505835 or visit www.lochclassfrigates.com

HMS Lowestoft Association: Our 2023 reunion will take place at the Alexandra House Hotel, Swindon SN4 0QJ from September 29 to October 1. All who served in Lowestoft during her RN service (1961-1985) are welcome to attend (including wives/partners/guests). Book direct with SF Events on 01452 813173, for further details and a booking form please email: admin@hmslowestoft.uk

SERIES 49, HMS Fisgard: A reunion to mark the 60th anniversary of those artificers who joined on September 9 and 10, 1963, is planned for September this year. Venue to be decided. Anyone interested to contact: alan.browne44@gmail.com or the Fisgard Association and Old Caledonia Artificer Apprentices Association.

Royal Navy Photographic Branch: Our reunion takes place at The Liner Hotel, Liverpool from Friday September 29 to Monday October 2. All former and serving photos plus wives/partners and guests are very welcome to help celebrate 104 years since the branch was formed. Meet and greet on Friday evening. Saturday, visits and tours around Liverpool City & Royal Docks. Saturday evening consists of a Nautical Extravaganza experience, gala dinner & traditional 'Up Spirits' enactment, followed

HMS Ark Royal: A reunion is planned at the Wallasey branch of the RNA from Friday November 17 to Sunday November 19. For details please contact Gordon Weir at gordyweir@gmail.com or John Williams at jwill085@gmail.com

Friends of HMS Eagle: Reunion will be held at the Queen's Hotel, Southsea, from October 27 to 29. For details please contact Danny du Feu at ddf.photography@gmail.com or 07711 083465.

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association: The 2024 reunion is confirmed at the Beaches Hotel, Prestatyn, North Wales, from May 10 to 13. Contact Secretary Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email askhamd3@gmail.com

Milestone marked in iconic Swordfish

LIEUTENANT Commander Glenn Allison has marked his incredible 8,000-flying hour in an iconic Fairey Swordfish.
 Lt Cdr Allison, 56, passed the 8,000 hour mark in historic style and was personally congratulated by the Commanding Officer of RNAS Yeovilton.
 The occasion was marked in a very special aircraft, the Fairey Swordfish owned by Navy Wings, a historic aircraft charity based at RNAS Yeovilton.
 On achieving the 8,000-hour mark, Lt Cdr Allison said: "It's always a privilege to fly such an iconic Fleet Air Arm aircraft as the Fairey Swordfish, so I feel very lucky indeed every time I'm allowed to fly her."
 Lt Cdr Allison's Royal Navy career currently spans 39 years after joining the Royal Navy at age 17 as an Artificer Apprentice at HMS Raleigh. After working on iconic aircraft such as Sea Harriers and Lynx helicopters, Lt Cdr Allison decided it was time to pursue his dream to become a pilot.
 He said: "I think the famous quote, 'find a job you enjoy doing and you'll never work a day in your life' certainly

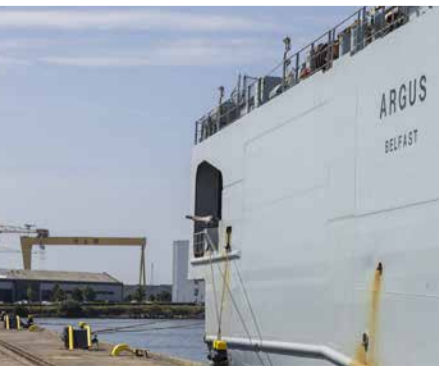
applies to me. My first solo was in a glider at HMS Daedalus in 1986, whilst at the Air Engineering School and although I loved my time as an Artificer, I desperately wanted to fly.
 "Being appointed 'plane captain' of a Sea Harrier FRS1 in HMS Illustrious as an 18 year old apprentice is still one of my proudest moments, along with the award of Naval Wings in 1992."
 Today, Lt Cdr Allison works as an examiner at Naval Flying Standards Flight and still regularly flies with trainee RN Pilots and Observers.
 He said: "I can honestly say the calibre of the youngsters joining the Fleet Air Arm never ceases to impress me. I've hopefully got a few more years in the cockpit before I'm forcibly extracted or retired, but I think the Fleet Air Arm is still producing quality and highly capable young officers and ratings to fly and fix our aircraft, which is great.
 "I've been lucky enough to experience operational helicopter flying in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and the Gulf, which was all hugely memorable, mainly due to the great people I've served with over the years in various Naval Air Squadrons."



Irish visit for veteran RFA

SUPPORT ship RFA Argus spent a few days in her second home when she took a break from training around the UK.
 The unique auxiliary sailed into Belfast and a berth at the historic Harland and Wolff yard – where back in the mid 1980s she spent four years being turned from a traditional container vessel into an aviation training ship where aviators could learn the art of safely operating at sea... and ground crew could learn how to maintain helicopters in an austere, ever-moving environment.
 Since then she's added a second feather to her bow in the form of a 100-bed medical complex including resuscitation and surgical facilities, and a radiology suite

complete with a CT scanner, allowing her to serve as a Primary Casualty Reception Facility (not a hospital ship) in times of conflict.
 The ship hosted a capability demonstration and reception for local dignitaries – including employees of Harland and Wolff – during the short visit.
 "RFA Argus has a long affiliation with the city of Belfast and with Harland and Wolff," said Commanding Officer Captain Richard Davies RFA.
 "She was converted here in 1988 and has Belfast proudly on her side as her port of registry, so being back here for a visit under the backdrop of Samson and Goliath, the Harland and Wolff cranes, is marvellous."



£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the May edition of Navy News (right) was the J-class destroyer HMS Javelin (G61), which lost both her bow and stern due to torpedo damage.



David Webster from Taunton wins £50 for sending us the correct answers. This month's mystery ships (above) are part of the fleet of specialist hydrographic surveying vessels from the 1980s.
 1. What are the names of the three ships.
 Please complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY.
 We will also accept emailed entries to subs@royalnavymail.mod.uk with

July Mystery Ship in the header.
 Coupons and emails giving the correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner. Entries must be received by August 12. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.
 The winner will be announced in our September edition.

MYSTERY PICTURE 341

Name

Address

My answers: (1)

(2)

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

- Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to – The Editor, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY, or email: news@royalnavymail.mod.uk or editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk
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Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Ask Jack columns in next month's Noticeboard must be received by **JULY 12 2023**

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