



NAVY NEWS

NOVEMBER 2023



HMS Dauntless at anchor in Little Bay, Montserrat, at sunset during the Type 45 destroyer's patrol of the Caribbean Sea.

See pages 14-15

Picture: LPhot Dan Rosenbaum

'BEAN THERE DONE THAT

Inside: ■ TRENT IN AFRICA ■ NATO EXPERIMENTS ■ SPEY IN THE PHILIPPINE SEA

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This is why we are here: to increase the capability of the world's most advanced fifth-generation stealth fighter alongside the UK's fifth-generation aircraft carrier

US Marine Corps pilot Major Paul Gucwa acknowledges the signal from Chief of the Flight Deck Damian George: *Go for launch.*

And thus does Britain's biggest warship begin stretching the envelope of fifth-generation aircraft carrier operations.

But that's only one element of an autumn pushing the boundaries of piloted and pilotless naval aviation... while tightening our bonds with our US allies.

We left HMS Prince of Wales last month leaving Cornwall behind having landed and launched a crewless aircraft for the first time at sea.

Ten days and 3,000 or so miles later and after a pitstop in Mayport, the flight deck came to life with a succession of helicopters.

The US authorities made extensive use of the flat-top as she made her way to Norfolk, beginning with the US Coast Guard's HITRON.

The Helicopter InTerdiction squadRON and its Dolphins are in the vanguard of the fight against drug smuggling in the Americas – and frequent visitors to RN/RFA ships operating in the region, especially

when accompanied by a Law Enforcement DETachment (LEDET) who carry out the boardings.

Three Dolphins (the US counterpart to the Dauphins the RN uses at FOST) dropped in on the Prince of Wales.

At the controls of one, Lieutenant Commander Bob Fleming, the first Fleet Air Arm exchange pilot with the squadron, building on his extensive experience in Wildcats with 815/825 NAS.

"HMS Prince of Wales invited HITRON aboard and we jumped on the opportunity for US Coast Guard pilots to experience landing on a UK carrier," said Lt Cdr Fleming.

"It is something very rare for the US Coast Guard. Everyone enjoyed it immensely and we got some great photos."

He's not the only exchange pilot welcomed back (briefly) into RN arms.

With HITRON gone, enter 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing and their unique tiltrotor Osprey MV-22s.

Osprey is no stranger to RN flight decks – they've been using them since the days of the 'Harrier carriers'... though there's obviously

much more deck space on a ship three times bigger than its predecessors.

Otherwise, US crews need to get used to the RN's ways of working: different deck layouts, procedures, radio calls, lighting and so on to earn the right to safely operate from our carriers.

And as with HITRON, so with 2nd MAW – there's a Fleet Air Arm pilot on exchange.

He has a wealth of front-line experience in Merlin Mk2s and trained Fleet Air Arm pilots of the future at RAF Shawbury and 705 NAS before coming the exchange on the MV-22.

"The key difference is that the US Marine Corps views the MV-22 as a fixed wing asset which can land and take off vertically – as opposed to a helicopter that can fly faster and further," explained the pilot whom we cannot identify for security reasons.

The MV-22 has a similar payload capacity to the Merlin Mk4 used by the Royal Marines – a couple of dozen troops fully kitted out – but can carry them higher, faster (up to 150mph) and further (upwards of

400 miles) into battle.

With the Osprey flying 90 per cent of the time in 'airplane mode', it's treated and flown as such (the fast jet community had a lot of influence on how it is operated, especially low-level tactics and formation flying).

And some of the controls and manoeuvres in the Osprey demand actions the reverse of those helicopter pilots are used to.

So unless a former F-35 pilot fancies a change, "learning to operate a MV-22 is a complete restart for any future Royal Navy exchange pilot," he warns.

His crew was one of 14 from the air wing who qualified to operate from the deck of HMS Prince of Wales – and they thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

"They say ship is huge, very clean, awesome...the deck and Flyco team are great. Everyone I met afterwards has been glowing in their praise of the crew and of the ship.

"They were especially grateful for the hospitality shown to the Marine Corps personnel whilst onboard and also very impressed with the professionalism of the deck team.

'I've never had chains attached to quickly...'

"All of these pieces together added up to a very positive view of HMS Prince of Wales and of the Royal Navy in general."

Just for good measure there was still time to squeeze in flight deck operations involving Super Stallions, UH1 Super Hueys and AH-1Z Vipers before sailing into the world's largest naval base, Norfolk, Virginia.

Observing the entry were junior US Navy warfare officers embarked on HMS Prince of Wales for a short exchange.

Drawn from destroyers USS Donald Cook and Winston S Churchill (*more about her on page 38*), the ensigns integrated fully in the ship's routines, enjoyed life in the wardroom, where they were also quick to integrate into mess life on board. And while they appreciated the bar (the US Navy is alcohol-free) they were particularly impressed by the carrier's tech.

"It's been great seeing how you operate on the bridge; the automation and technology on board is amazing," said Ensign Rowell from the USS Donald Cook.





TOP DECK

"It's my first time coming in to Norfolk Naval Base, and to be able to tell people I did it on the British carrier is amazing. Everyone has been so friendly."

The ship's arrival in Norfolk marked the switch from rotary-wing operations to fast jet and the crux of the Westlant deployment as personnel and kit were embarked for a month of F-35 trials (which are ongoing now).

And while F-35s have the wow factor... they can't match a matelot's best friend.

For a few hours, it was all hounds of deck as the carrier hosted four-legged friends and became HMS Prince of Tails (sorry).

Norfolk-based charity Mutts with a Mission seized the opportunity with the British carrier alongside embarking kit and personnel for the F-35 trials to show what four paws, furry coats and wagging tails can do for morale.

The charity was established to help US military personnel relax, relieve stress and generally break down barriers thrown up by the tension of being on operations, using our canine friends.

In fact two of the charity's dogs, Ike and Sage, are currently embarked on USS Gerald R Ford and USS Wasp as part of the ships' welfare teams. They are handled by either the ship's chaplain or a member of the Welfare Team, alongside a handler provided by Mutts with a Mission.

Sadly, there's no permanent doggie presence on HMS Prince of Wales – but just bringing the dogs aboard for a few hours was a morale raiser.

"I wanted to keep them all," said 24-year-old air engineer AET Harry Thomas, on his first deployment. "They made me feel like I was back at home. I've got two dogs at home and made me realise I miss them."

Leading Survival Equipment Technician Kelly Boddie added: "They just bring joy, it doesn't matter where you are or what you're doing."

Merlin helicopter pilot Lt Phill Fordham said: "You could see our sailors' eyes light up when they were petting the dogs and even some tears being shed."

"I have followed Mutts with a Mission over the past couple of years, since they placed the first full-

time facility dogs on US carriers.

"The charity have been incredibly supportive of this visit and I hope this can be the first step towards a similar programme in the Royal Navy."

Dogs don't like lightning (remember to keep yours indoors on Bonfire Night, folks). HMS Prince of Wales does.

Two specially-modified F-35Bs flew aboard once the carrier had departed Norfolk.

Supported by around 200 personnel from the F-35 Integrated Test Force based at Pax River in Maryland, and flown by three test pilots, over four weeks they complete trials with the Lightnings begun several years ago when HMS Queen Elizabeth debuted in these same waters.

Those final trials - Development Test phase 3 or DT-3 - involve taking off and landing with various weapon configurations and fuel loads, experiment returning from 'missions' still carrying missiles/bombs – rather than ditching them in the ocean – and practising landing by rolling to a stop on the flight deck rather than touching down vertically.

At the same time the ship herself is seeking out bad weather and heavy seas to determine the limits at which Lightnings can be launched and recovered.

Thanks to the specialist instrumentation in both the aircraft and on the ship, by the time aviation experts, pilots and scientists have analysed all the data gathered, the UK's two aircraft carriers should be able to launch more sorties by more-heavily-armed stealth fighters faster in more extreme weather conditions – increasingly the striking power of the nation's most powerful warships.

"Our team has trained extensively to prepare for this day, and I was honoured to bring the capabilities of the F-35B back out to the Prince of Wales," said F-35B test pilot Major Paul Gucwa USMC, the ITF test team project officer.

"Our planning, training, and preparations were focused on conducting a successful sea trial and ultimately contributing to the carrier continually developing to keep it at the cutting edge," Major Gucwa added.

F-35 ITF chief test engineer Andrew Maack added: "We are

excited to be under way with the crew of Prince of Wales and honoured to contribute to the aircraft carrier's trials of pushing the boundaries of 21st century carrier operations."

Watching from the bridge, Captain Richard Hewitt, HMS Prince of Wales' Commanding Officer, witnessed the approach and vertical landings of the stealth jets.

"This is why we are here," he said. "Over the next few weeks we will work together with the F-35 programme to increase the capability of the world's most advanced fifth-generation stealth fighter alongside the UK's fifth-generation aircraft carrier."

"During this phase of our deployment we will see the jet develop advanced landing and takeoff techniques, allowing it to recover heavier, turn around faster, and launch with more weapons."

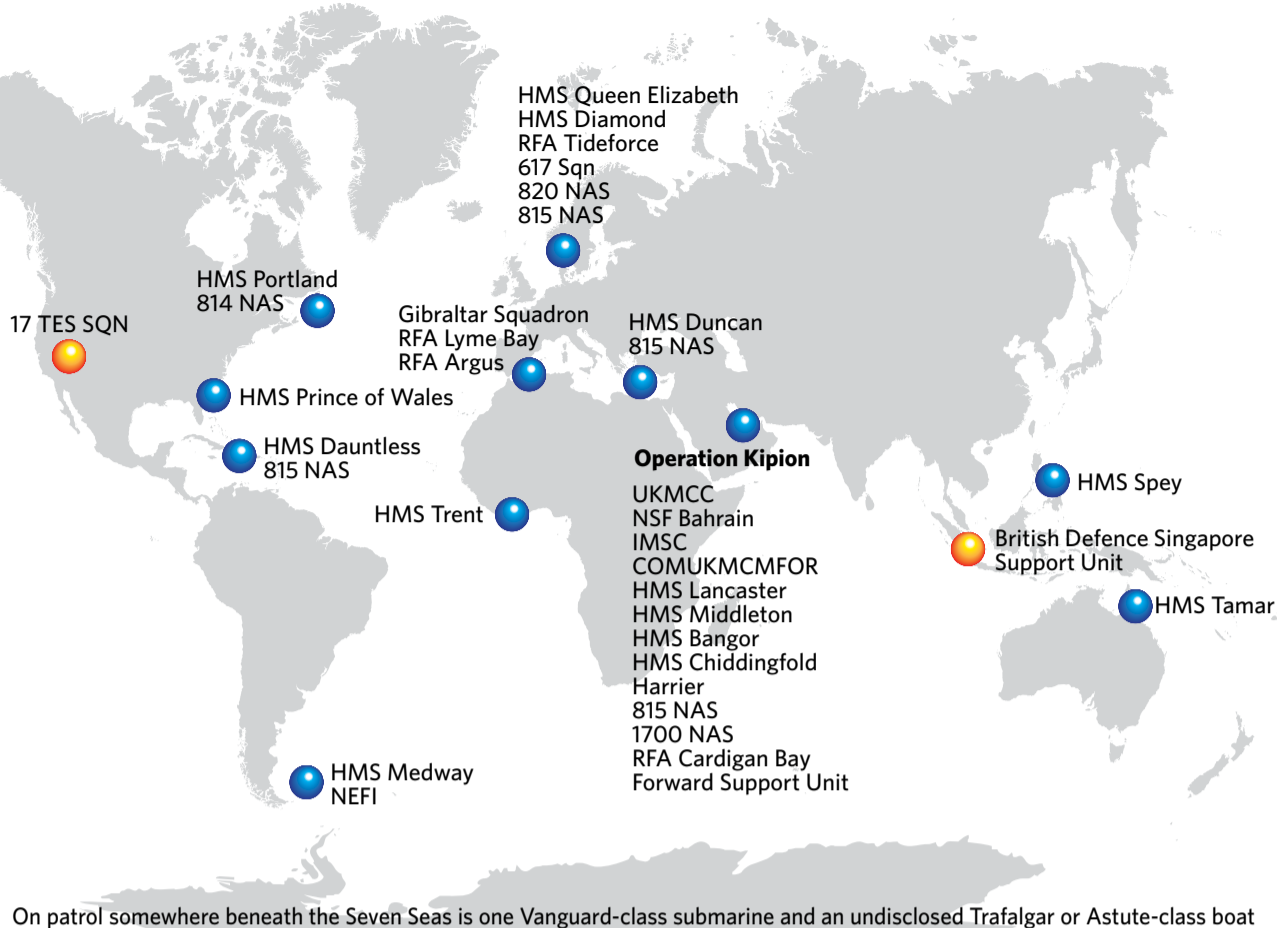
I think we're going to need a bigger envelope... and we haven't even got on to this month's Mojave drone trials...

Pictures: LPhotos Finn Stainer-Hutchins and Unaisi Luke, HMS Prince of Wales, and Dane Wiedmann, US Navy



Training or on patrol around the UK

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



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



GLOBAL | MODERN | READY

OPERATIONS and exercises across the globe are making for a busy time for the men and women in the Royal Navy.

Ships and units continue to be deployed around the world for various autumn programmes, working along allies and partners to promote security and stability.

The nation's flagship **HMS Queen Elizabeth** is well into the second half of her Exercise Firedrake deployment after a brief break in Gothenburg, Sweden (see pages 22-23).

Her younger sister **HMS Prince of Wales** is in the thick of her autumn trials and training with a host of air power from the USMC's Ospreys to specially-adapted F-35s which are on (and off) the deck right now jabbing at the boundaries of fifth-generation carrier aviation (see pages 2-3).

Further north along the Eastern Seaboard, frigate **HMS Portland** celebrated our ties past and present with the Royal Canadian Navy at Fleet Week in Halifax (see right).

Trials and experimentation ship **XV Patrick Blackett** has returned home to Portsmouth after taking part in NATO's largest test of autonomous maritime tech and future systems, REPMUS, in the ship's first overseas visit (see pages 16-17).

Adding an extra level of security and surveillance to UK waters is unique underwater surveillance ship **RFA Proteus** which was dedicated alongside HMS Belfast in the presence of sponsor Akshata Murty, businesswoman and wife of the Prime Minister, and the Duke of Edinburgh (see page 7).

HRH has also been visiting personnel in the Gulf in his role as Commodore-in-Chief of the RFA, thanking sailors aboard **RFA Cardigan Bay** and also minehunter **HMS Middleton** for their constant efforts in the Middle East (see page 9).

Meanwhile in Bordeaux his oldest brother, His Majesty King Charles III, paid a lightning visit to **HMS Iron Duke** on the final day of a State Visit to France by The King and Queen (see page 9).

HMS Duncan continues her leadership of NATO's Standing Maritime Group 2 in the Mediterranean which has re-formed and re-grouped after dispersing around the region for the past month (see opposite).

And her sister **HMS Dauntless** continues her island hopping around the Caribbean advising on disaster relief support without (touch wood) being required too much to assist in the aftermath of regional storms so far this year (see pages 14-15).

For the second year running, **HMS Spey** flew the flag for the RN by participating in the largest naval exercise in the Philippines, Sama Sama ('together' in one of the local tongues - see pages 30-31).

Half a world away, her sister **HMS Trent** is about half-way through her West African mission with recent activity concentrated on Grand African Nemo, a French-led multinational security exercise in the Gulf of Guinea (see pages 20-21).

Service in the RN offers some wonderful opportunities (first-class adventurous training around the globe - see page 29) and the occasional odd one... like driving sheep across a London bridge on behalf of your affiliate as recruits from **HMS Raleigh** found (see page 19).

There can be few more rewarding prospects than an exchange opportunity with a partner Navy - and few more interesting such exchanges than serving as navigator in the destroyer **USS Winston S Churchill**, a post permanently assigned to a Royal Navy officer. The current incumbent, Lieutenant Jules Caithness, offers an insight into the role (see page 38).

We bid farewell to one of the longest-standing squadrons in the Surface Flotilla with the end of MCM1 - **1st Mine Countermeasures Squadron** - as it transitions to autonomous systems with the Mine Threat Exploiting Group, established to harness tech in place of traditional Sandown-class vessels (see page 29).

HMS Scott and **HNoMS Fridtjof Nansen** - both named for fabled polar explorers (Robert Falcon and the eponymous Norwegian late Victorian pioneer Arctic adventurer) - met up off Plymouth during training (see page 6).

Initial plans for next year's **80th anniversary commemorations of D-Day** - sadly likely to be the last milestone event attended by those who were there - have been unveiled (see page 11).

And finally, let us remember **Cdr Bob Hawkins** who served the RN for 46 years and died suddenly last month (still serving). He's graced these pages on several occasions down the years and was the epitome of a Royal Navy stalwart/legend (see page 29).

Warmest of welcomes for frigate in Canada

ROYAL Navy frigate **HMS Portland** received a warm welcome in Canada at the first International Fleet Week in Halifax.

The submarine hunter departed her North Atlantic stomping ground, having tracked Russian Navy vessels there alongside the RAF's P8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, and headed for Nova Scotia.

Arriving in Halifax, sailors lined the upper deck in procedure alpha as **HMS Portland** took her position next to US Navy destroyers **USS Porter** and **USS James E Williams**.

The ship's Engineering Warfare Officer, Warrant Officer First Class Paul Statham said: "I've never seen a welcome like it... the recognition from the Canadian Navy and people of Halifax was a highpoint in my 25 years in the navy."

Once in Halifax, the capital of Nova Scotia and a port on the Atlantic Ocean in eastern Canada, **HMS Portland's** commanding officer, Commander Ed Moss-Ward, presented a crest on behalf of the HMS Belfast Association to HMCS Sackville and the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust in recognition of the ships' shared operational history.

The Royal Canadian Navy shares battle honours with HMS Belfast for action in the Arctic, North Cape and Normandy during the Second World War.

HMCS Sackville - a museum ship and only surviving Flower-class corvette - served with distinction as a convoy escort in the Battle of the Atlantic.

"It was a genuine privilege to attend the inaugural International Fleet Week with HMS Portland in Halifax," said Cdr Moss-Ward.

"The city is proud of its maritime tradition and close ties to the UK, and particularly the shared history of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Navy."

"The visit was an opportunity to strengthen the relationship with one of our closest NATO allies."

HMS Portland opened the gangway to the public, including to youngsters from Techsploration, which aims to increase the number of young women working in science, engineering, trade and technology-related occupations.

They were given a tour of the ship, while a series of mutual visits by sailors from the navies represented in Halifax also took place.

Fleet Week included a rugby fixture between a Royal Navy Rugby Union XV and North Atlantic Select XV, which the RN lost 29-15 in a competitive contest.

International Fleet Week closed as ships



saluted the Commander of the Canadian Navy, Vice Admiral Angus Topshee.

Fleet Week provided the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Armed Forces as a whole, an opportunity to showcase Halifax as the new NATO base for the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic.

"Everyone was so friendly, warm and welcoming; it made me proud to be attending Fleet Week with Portland representing the Royal Navy," said Leading Engineering Technician Sophie Hutchison.

"Halifax was the best run ashore I've had. I've never seen anything like it."

Portland has since departed Canada and has returned to northern European waters to join HMS Queen Elizabeth and the UK's Carrier Strike Group.



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GANG REUNITED

THE gang is back together...

After almost a month dispersed throughout the Mediterranean region on individual duties, NATO's Royal Navy-led task group re-formed.

All seven ships in Standing Maritime Group 2 – commanded from Portsmouth-based destroyer HMS Duncan – have joined forces for a collective show of resolve.

Duncan and her staff, led by Commodore Paul Stroude RN, took charge of the task group from the US Navy back in July.

Under the Americans' leadership, the group had experimented with dispersing its vessels throughout the Middle Sea to provide greater coverage and security across waters more than four times the size of the North Sea.

It's regular practice east of Suez where the Royal and US Navies operate with the Combined Maritime Forces to patrol some 2½ million square miles of ocean with a small number of major warships.

Having enjoyed relative independence, the seven vessels assigned to NATO's premier Mediterranean naval force are now back operating closely together.

They spent a week getting used to each other once more courtesy of a comprehensive and high-intensity training package.

This challenged them through a variety of increasingly-complex integration scenarios, including: tactical communications and manoeuvring, live gunnery, air defence, surface warfare and replenishment-at-sea.

Around 1,500 personnel from six nations are assigned to the seven ships,

headed by the 200-plus souls on Duncan. She's joined by Spain's ESPS Méndez Núñez, ITS Margottini (Italy), FS Surcouf (France), TCG Yavuz (Turkey) and two support ships: Germany's FGS Frankfurt Am Main and the Spanish ESPS Patiño.

"Each nation brings its own capabilities and unique strengths to the group," Commodore Stroude said.

"The opportunity to train together so as to be able to understand and maximise these attributes, while reinforcing our common tactics and procedures, is vital to maintaining the ability of these NATO ships to operate together. This in turn is key to our success as a task group."

The recent addition of the Patiño has significantly increased the group's ability to remain at sea for sustained periods, on top of the fuel and supplies already provided by Germany's Frankfurt Am Main.

In a demonstration of this capability, Duncan, Méndez Núñez and Surcouf conducted a complex replenishment-at-sea with Frankfurt Am Main, simultaneously pumping fuel to two ships, while also transferring personnel via helicopter.

Another key part of the week's integration training saw the force's five-strong force of helicopters rack up dozens of hours of flying, extending the range and scope of their ability to monitor the Med well beyond the ships themselves.

After numerous landings on each other's ships throughout the week, air and flight deck crews have shown that they are well prepared for combined operations.



ABOVE: HMS Duncan and ESPS Mendez Nunez viewed from FS Surcouf. TOP LEFT: Commander Dubois and Commodore Paul Stroude salute from FS Surcouf's bridge as HMS Duncan sails past. TOP RIGHT: A sailor onboard HMS Duncan prepares to launch the ship's starboard sea boat

PROTECTED against the elements by what must be the world's largest black bin bag, this is a huge section of HMS Dreadnought on the move.

In fact, this section of the first of the Submarine Service's next-generation strategic deterrent boats is the largest segment or 'mega unit' of Dreadnought yet completed. It's also the longest section of

a submarine moved through the streets of Barrow-in-Furness from BAE Systems' fabrication facility to the cavernous Devonshire Dock Hall which dominates the skyline of the Cumbrian town.

No-one at BAE Submarines has moved a submarine section of this size (22 metres long) in 30 years, when a low-loader carefully

transported the 34-metre-long fore-end 'mega unit' of HMS Vengeance, the last of the Vanguard-class submarines.

With those beginning to near the end of their active lives, four successors will be built, of which Dreadnought leads the way, ahead of HMS Warspite and Valiant (also under construction), with work yet

to start on Boat No.4, HMS King George VI.

All will be assembled under cover in the dock hall – 260 metres long, 58 wide and 51 high, making it almost large enough to accommodate the Titanic – where the final two Astute-class submarines, HMS Agamemnon and Agincourt, are in the later stages of

construction/completion, and where the 'mega unit' will take its place on the Dreadnought build line.

Dreadnought is due to enter service in the early 2030s while the V-boats begin retiring after four decades carrying out Operation Relentless, the UK's strategic deterrence mission.

Picture: BAE Systems



Sub stops traffic

New hall for frigate assembly

WORK has begun on a huge new ship hall which will transform construction of the Navy's next-generation frigates – and beyond.

When complete, two Type 26 frigates will be built side-by-side in the new facility – considerably speeding up construction of a class of ship which will safeguard the Navy from submarine attack well into the 2060s.

Eight Type 26s have been ordered – all named after major UK cities, led by HMS Glasgow.

The bulk of the construction is carried out at BAE's Govan yard, before the ships are transferred to the firm's facility at Scotstoun for completion, testing and acceptance.

The existing sheds at Govan only allow for fore and rear sections of the frigates to be built under cover – the giant segments are then joined together on the standing at Govan (currently occupied by HMS Cardiff).

That means for months on end the ships are exposed to the elements – slowing/restricting work on the vessels, which will replace the eight dedicated submarine-hunting Type 23s.

Work on the foundations – filling in a basin – has been completed and piling started on the new hall which is more than one and half times the length of Hampden Park pitch at 170 metres long and ten wider at 80 metres across.

Once complete, the New Ship Build Hall will be equipped with two 100-tonne cranes and a further two 20-tonne cranes, with up to 500 workers employed per shift on frigate construction.

As well as being spared batterings from the weather, ships will emerge from the new hall in a more complete state.

The new complex is part of a £300m investment in BAE's facilities on both sides of the Clyde, not least increased digitisation of work processes.



'Explorers' meet off Plymouth

YOU'VE probably heard of Scott and Amundsen.

Well here's Scott (*foreground*) and Nansen – two present-day ships named after legendary figures in polar exploration.

The two vessels exchanged formalities as they passed through the South West Exercise Areas together – HMS Scott gearing up for renewed survey operations after summer in maintenance, while the Norwegian frigate is undertaking Operational Sea Training.

Scott takes her name from Royal Navy officer and Antarctic explorer Captain Robert Falcon Scott whose bid to become the first man to reach the South Pole was trumped by Nansen's friend Roald Amundsen in 1911, with all of Scott's five-strong party dying trying to return to base camp.

Back in the 1990s, Scott was honoured with Britain's largest survey ship – which specialises in deep ocean study.

As for Nansen, he was an inspirational figure to both Scott and Amundsen thanks to his pioneering exploration of the Arctic in the mid-1890s.

Nansen – who was also a leading figure in Norwegian nationalism, a diplomat and scientist – has islands, mountains, even craters on the Moon and Mars bearing his name, was given a class of the Royal Norwegian Navy's new class of frigates in the 00s, led by the eponymous flagship.

And like many other Norwegian warships (and NATO allies), HNoMS Fridtjof Nansen

is taking advantage of the world-leading training delivered by Fleet Operational Standards and Training to provide ships and their crews with the skills, confidence and collective understanding and know-how to deal with any issue on deployment, from coping with fires and floods... to all-out naval warfare.

The encounter off the coast of Plymouth underscores the long-standing relationship between the two nations/navies (the RN has worked extensively with Norwegian forces this year, most recently flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth operating off the fjords).

"The meeting of HMS Scott and HNoMS Fridtjof Nansen at sea is a symbol of the enduring bonds that connect our two nations and our shared heritage of exploration in the world's polar regions," said Commander Sam Nightingale, Commanding Officer of HMS Scott.

"It serves as a reminder of the dedication and courage of explorers like Fridtjof Nansen and Captain Robert Falcon Scott, whose legacy continues to inspire us."

His counterpart on the Nansen, Commander Stian Schnelle, added: "It is a privilege to sail alongside HMS Scott, and we are honoured to commemorate our shared legacy of polar exploration."

"Our meeting is a symbol of our commitment to working together to address the challenges of the 21st Century, just as the explorers Nansen and Scott did in their time."

Picture: Ray Jones, FOST

Diamond award for storm rescue

SAILORS of HMS Diamond have been singled out for their actions helping the crew of a yacht which started sinking in a storm in the English Channel.

The destroyer's crew collected a commendation for their swift work in the dark to help all five crew of the yacht Zapopan which was taking on water off the Isle of Wight.

Diamond took three crew aboard suffering from severe sea sickness while her boarding team helped the remaining two sailors – heading from Hampshire to Honfleur in France – restore the engine and raise the mainsail.

Those actions on the night of November 10, 2022 earned the Type 45 destroyer a crew commendation from the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society at its annual Skill and Gallantry Awards.

With the ship currently deployed to Scandinavia in support of HMS Queen Elizabeth's Carrier Strike Group autumn deployment, it fell to Commander Peter Barfoot – Diamond's Commanding Officer at the time, now serving at FOST – to collect the award on behalf of his former shipmates.

"I am extremely proud of the team and what they achieved in very challenging conditions to save the lives of five sailors and bring the yacht safely back on the night of November 10 last year," he said.

"I feel honoured to have been able to represent them in collecting the Crew Commendation from the Shipwrecked Fishermen and Mariners' Royal Benevolent Society whilst the ship is away on operations. I look forward to delivering the award to the ship on her return later this year."

Of the rescue, Captain Justin Osmond RN, Chief Executive of the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society, said: "Over the course of a long night, the crew of HMS Diamond worked doggedly, demonstrating the highest standards of seamanship, teamwork and adaptability to overcome an extremely challenging situation in arduous conditions. As such they are fully deserving of a crew commendation for their outstanding efforts."

On the night in question, Diamond had sailed from Portsmouth and soon after responded to a Mayday call from the Zapopan and its five crew as the yacht took on water southeast of St Catherine's Point on the Isle of Wight.

It quickly became clear that a boarding team would be required to assist the flooded and drifting yacht. Conditions were poor, with gale force winds and heavy seas, and embarking on to the yacht would be particularly perilous in the dark.

The initial boarding team focussed on evaluating the crew's condition, while also assessing whether the vessel could be saved. It was decided three of the yacht's crew, who were struggling with acute sea sickness, would be transferred back to HMS Diamond.

Once the boarding team had the necessary equipment, they restored engine power, while also raising the mainsail, both of which helped to provide greater stability.



SURVEILLANCE SHIP'S GRAND ENTRANCE



Above: RFA Proteus arrives in London; Right, Sponsor Akshata Murty with Cdre David Eagles, head of the RFA; Left, Akshata Murty with the Duke of Edinburgh to her left during the service

Pictures: Cpl Tim Hammond



BRITAIN has a new ship dedicated to underwater surveillance in areas of UK sovereign interest.

Dedicated at a ceremony in the heart of London, RFA Proteus will serve as the launchpad for remotely-operated vehicles and a home to a suite of specialist capabilities similar to those found in the oil and gas industries.

The ship, which will be operated by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary – the crucial support arm of the Royal Navy – was formally dedicated on the Thames in the presence of the RFA Commodore-in-Chief, Prince Edward, The Duke of Edinburgh, and businesswoman and wife of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Akshata Murty, who will be Proteus' sponsor throughout the ship's active life.

A ship's sponsor is an honorary title which is served to bestow good luck on a ship. The sponsor is regarded as a permanent member of the ship's crew, and attends key moments in a vessel's life.

Proteus will serve as a testbed for advancing science and technological development enabling the UK to maintain the competitive edge beneath the waves.

"It is a huge honour and responsibility for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary to be charged with crewing and operating RFA Proteus and delivering her unique, sovereign capability in partnership and collaboration with our Royal Navy, Defence and Government agency colleagues," said Commodore David Eagles, head of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

"Bringing a ship into service is a demanding endeavour which relies on a diverse, multi-skilled team, strong leadership, and unflinching determination. Proteus is no different and I pay tribute to the men and women in the UK, military and civilian who have contributed to this project

and made today possible."

"It is a privilege to be the sponsor of RFA Proteus as she comes into service," said Mrs Murty.

"The Royal Fleet Auxiliary are unsung heroes of our maritime security, and I am incredibly proud of all those who have worked on her to date, and all those who will serve on board in the years to come. I look forward to a long and rewarding relationship with Proteus and all associated with her."

It's just 11 months since the MOD committed to invest in Proteus – named after the god of rivers and water in Greek mythology – as the first ship in its Multi-Role Ocean Surveillance (MROS) programme.



Since arriving at the Cammell Laird yard in Birkenhead in January, the 6,000-tonne vessel has undergone conversion and alterations ready for her unique mission.

Crewed by 26 Royal Fleet Auxiliary officers and sailors, augmented by 60 Royal Navy specialists responsible for the undersea surveillance, survey and warfare systems, the ship began life as an oil rig-support vessel.

The ship left Merseyside last month to undergo trials and training off Portland before heading to the capital to berth alongside iconic wartime cruiser HMS Belfast for the service of dedication.

"It is a huge honour to be able to bring RFA Proteus to the City of London for her official naming ceremony," said her Commanding Officer Captain Martin Jones RFA. "To be berthed at such an auspicious location alongside HMS Belfast on the River Thames, is a unique opportunity to present the RFA to the public eye and allow the ships company to enjoy the sights and sounds of London."

Proteus is equipped with a flight deck and a 1,000-square metre cargo deck, plus a heavy-duty crane for lifting and lowering operations.




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The Duke of Edinburgh with junior officers during his visit to Bahrain

Duke thanks personnel for their efforts in the Gulf

THE Duke of Edinburgh visited the hub of Royal Navy operations in the Middle East to thank personnel for their continued efforts supporting regional security.

His Royal Highness – who is Commodore-in-Chief of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the Royal Navy's vital support flotilla – called in on two ships operating from Bahrain, plus the Senior Service's regional base in the Kingdom.

The Naval Support Facility is the hub for everything the Royal Navy does from Suez to the western seaboard of India, responsible for up to 1,000 personnel either at the base in Mina Salman in Bahrain, or aboard RN/RFA ships deployed to the region (currently three minehunters, frigate HMS Lancaster and RFA Cardigan Bay).

Cardigan Bay is at the heart of everything the UK's mine warfare forces do in the Gulf region.

Although designed to support Royal Marines amphibious operations, she's proved equally useful as floating headquarters and support vessel for the UK's three Bahrain-based minehunters, as well as UK and allied dive teams and a home to autonomous mine warfare systems – among other duties.

Having been welcomed to Bahrain by the RN's senior officer in the region, UK Maritime Component Commander Commodore Phil Dennis, Prince Edward was shown aboard the Bay-class ship for a tour and, more importantly, a chat with the ship's company.

"I introduced His Royal Highness to the people on board who deliver the highest standard of operational maritime support to the Royal Navy – and our coalition partners, not only in the Gulf region, but throughout the world," said Cardigan Bay's Commanding Officer Captain Simon Herbert RFA.

"His Royal Highness's personal involvement in the RFA as Commodore in Chief has been influential. It was a privilege and an honour to welcome him and detail some of the exceptional capabilities and flexibility that the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and RFA Cardigan Bay have demonstrated on operations.

"We have been enormously excited over this opportunity to welcome his Royal Highness and are delighted that he will be able to support and inspire our exceptionally



talented workforce for years to come."

One of the vessels Cardigan Bay is responsible for supporting is Hunt-class minehunter HMS Middleton, the Duke of Edinburgh's next port of call.

Again His Royal Highness talked to members of the 45-strong ship's company about their vital role in ensuring maritime security and freedom of navigation within the region.

"It provided an amazing opportunity for some of our more junior sailors to meet His Royal Highness and discuss Middleton's contribution to ensure the free flow of commerce into and out of the Gulf over our five-month operational deployment," said Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Alexander Knight.

"And as the Commodore in Chief of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, we were able to demonstrate to the Duke of Edinburgh just how closely we have been working with RFA Cardigan Bay as part of the UK Mine Countermeasures Force in the Gulf."

The visit concluded with a look around the Naval Support Facility itself – home to and workplace of several hundred personnel daily, offering key engineering, logistical and operational support to any Royal Navy or RFA vessel operating in the region.

As well as chatting with personnel, he presented four with medals for their long service and operational endeavours.

THE KING AND I

THE Royal Navy provided a fitting backdrop to the final day of the King and Queen's three-day state visit to France by hosting a visit by Their Majesties in Bordeaux.

Frigate HMS Iron Duke hosted a reception for the King and Queen while the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines Lympstone provided the musical accompaniment on the neighbouring jetty.

Arriving in south-west France from Paris, the King and Queen were welcomed to Iron Duke by a Royal Guard and the National Anthem performed by the Royal Marines Musicians.

Once onboard the Portsmouth-based frigate – and with the Royal Standard hoisted to mark the occasion – the King and Queen were led to the warship's flight deck for an official reception attended by members of the local Bordeaux community, representatives of veterans charities within the Bordeaux community, and local government officials.

The Royal visitors chatted with guests as well as members of Iron Duke's 200-strong ship's company.

"It has been the greatest privilege and honour for HMS Iron Duke to be able to support Their Majesties' first state visit to France since the Coronation," said HMS Iron Duke's Commanding Officer Commander James Wallington-Smith.

"The visit is an opportunity to mark our long standing relationship with our friends in the Marine Nationale and wider French Armed Forces. It reinforces our shared values and continues to ensure our navies are evolving to be ever more interoperable, capable, and sustainable."

Among the Royal Guard for the King and Queen were Engineering Technicians Laurynas Berenis and Harrison Smith, responsible for maintaining the frigate's



complex weapons systems and sensors.

Both were part of the crew accompanying the gun carriage at the funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 12 months ago and were subsequently decorated by the King with the Royal Victoria Medal (RVM).

"It was an honour and a privilege to be part of the Gun Carriage crew for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's funeral," said Laurynas.

"Receiving the RVM from HM the King was a surreal moment that will never be forgotten. To now also be part of the Guard of Honour for His Majesty's state visit to France is an extremely proud moment."

Harrison added: "I feel very proud to have been awarded the RVM, and now being a part

of the guard of honour for His Majesty The King's visit to Bordeaux is something I could have only dreamed of."

Throughout the Royal Marines Musicians – normally based at the Commando Training Centre in Lympstone in Devon – drew on their repertoire of military, classical and contemporary tunes.

HMS Iron Duke, which has recently completed a major refit and represented the Royal Navy at the DSEI defence exhibition in London's ExCeL Centre in September, berthed at King Louis XVIII Quai on Bordeaux's historic waterfront.

Pictures: LPhot Gareth Smith

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Royal Marines step off landing craft on to Gold Beach, June 6 1944

Last salute to D-Day heroes

MAJOR international commemorative events on both sides of the Channel will mark the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings.

D-Day 80 will be a large-scale celebration of those who ran the gauntlet of Hitler's vaunted Atlantic Wall and helped begin the liberation of western Europe from the Nazis.

The Ministry of Defence will work with the Royal British Legion, Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Normandy Memorial Trust to host commemorations worthy of the sacrifices made and the scale of the operation.

With the number of those who were there dwindling by the week, these are likely to be the last major commemorations attended by veterans/members of the Greatest Generation.

Claire Horton, Director General of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, said organisers were determined to ensure events would serve as "a fitting tribute to those who paid so costly a price to free our world from the yoke of tyranny, while acknowledging the service of the last of that Greatest Generation – our attendant veterans – and inspiring the next

generation in the value of working together to build a peaceful world."

For the first time, the new British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer will host commemorations for a major anniversary of D-Day.

Partially funded by the UK Government, the memorial was inaugurated by President Macron of France and then Prime Minister Theresa May during commemorations for the 75th anniversary of D-Day in 2019.

The memorial officially opened two years later on 6 June 2021 – with the world still in the grip of the Covid pandemic, making 2024 the first time the completed structure the first opportunity to hold one of the milestone anniversary events.

Among those hoping to attend is 98-year-old Jack Quinn (pictured inset), coxswain



of a Royal Marines landing craft overnight in June 1944.

He landed specialist clearance divers ahead of the main invasion waves on D-Day so they could clear mines on the beaches.

"As veteran ambassador for the British Normandy Memorial – and having visited the memorial several times – I am delighted that we will finally be able to remember all our fallen comrades of the Normandy campaign in this very unique and poignant setting for the first time on a major D-Day anniversary," he said.

In addition services – supported by members of today's Armed Forces – will take place at Bayeux Cathedral and the nearby Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, last resting place of more than 4,000 UK/Commonwealth personnel. And for those unable to make the pilgrimage to Normandy, events will also be hosted in England; details will be announced in the new year.

Nearly 200,000 naval personnel – more than

half of them Royal Navy, plus 25,000 Merchant Navy seaman – manned an invasion force of almost 7,000 vessels, from battleships and cruisers pounding German positions, through more than 4,000 landing craft and a good 1,500 supporting vessels.

The ring of steel drawn around the invasion fleet, plus Allied air cover – including Fleet Air Arm patrols – largely protected it from the German Navy, but losses in the attacking waves of landing craft were heavy: one fifth of 47 (Royal Marines) Commando was wiped out in the initial assault wave at Gold Beach.

Along the coast at Juno Beach, fellow Royal Marines suffered heavy losses as they stormed and captured the seafront village of Langrune-sur-Mer.

In all upwards of 10,000 men on both sides were casualties on the first day of the invasion; at least 100 sailors and Royal Marines with no known grave are honoured on Portsmouth Naval Memorial alone.

Normandy veterans wishing to attend events (on either side of the Channel) should register their interest at www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/remembrance-events/d-day.

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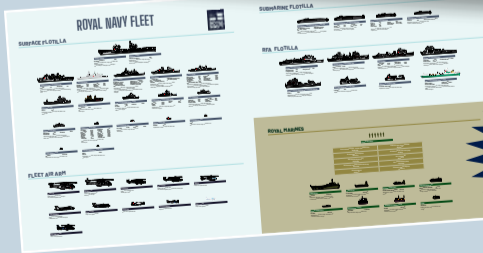
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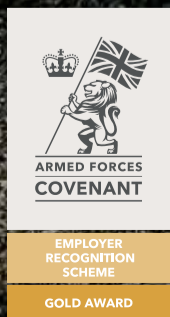


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WE HAD A BLAST - NOW OVER TO YOU



1st Mine Countermeasures Squadron was decommissioned at HMS President in London



The Commanding Officer of HMS Pembroke, Lt Cdr Briscoe, hands over the ship's ensign to Commander MCM1 Commander Daniel Morris

PICTURES: LPhot Chris Sellars

THE baton has passed from current to future mine warfare experts as one long-standing force passes into Royal Navy history...

...Replaced by a new, equally-specialist unit harnessing the white heat of technology to hunt – and neutralise – mines faster, more effectively and also even more safely into the mid-21st Century.

1st Mine Countermeasures Squadron – commonly abbreviated to MCM1 – has formally decommissioned after 57 years of dedicated, and successful, service around the world, making way for autonomous systems and specialist 'mission system teams' as part of the new Mine and Threat Exploitation Group (MTXG).

Established in 1966, over the squadron's 57-year lifespan, some 39 Royal Navy ships have come under its command – first Ton class vessels (largely replaced by the mid 80s), later Hunts and most recently the current Sandown-class mine warfare vessels.

Those ships have been deployed under UK and NATO command at home and around the globe, from homeland defence in UK waters to protecting sea lanes of northern Europe, the North Atlantic, Mediterranean and Gulf.

Among the names to serve in the squadron, future Second Sea Lord Admiral Sir John Brigstocke (Commanding Officer of HMS Upton in 1970) and Lieutenant Charles Wales (Commanding Officer of HMS Bronington in 1976)... today King Charles III.

The squadron's duties – though focused on hunting mines – have extended to the search for and recovery of civilian aircraft, submarine surveillance, boarding operations around the UK and preventing smuggling into Northern Ireland during The Troubles (Op Grenada).

In 1984 the squadron carried out its first live operations, hunting mines in anger as part of Operation Haring which saw its ships operating in the busy bottleneck of the Gulf of Suez.

That was followed by more active operations in both Gulf Wars (1991) and (2003), and clearing live mines off the coast of Libya during the country's civil war in 2011.

For the past 17 years, MCM1 has largely rotated through three regular/constant missions: providing a constant presence in the Gulf, safeguarding home waters and supporting NATO's Mine Countermeasures Group 1 patrolling Northern European waters.

With the advent of new autonomous systems which can scan waters for mines largely without putting sailors in harm's way – spearheaded by Project Wilton – and the new minehunting 'mother ship' RFA Stirling Castle, the decision was taken to gradually phase out traditional ships, beginning with the Sandown class.

Of the original 12 Sandowns built for the RN

and serving under the MCM1 badge, there are now just two operational: HMS Penzance – earmarked for paying off next year – while HMS Bangor will remain in the Gulf until around 2026. Both now operate under the new MTXG.

HMS Blyth and Pembroke have recently been sold to our NATO allies Romania, while Grimsby and Shoreham now fly the Ukrainian Ensign.

In their place, Project Wilton has been operational since April, supporting mine warfare operations in home waters; its craft will serve as a vital stepping stone to more advanced equipment to be delivered next year as the Mine Hunting Capability role-out gathers pace as



Lt Charles Wales pictured with his father the Duke of Edinburgh in 1976
Below: HMS Bicester deals with an Iraqi mine in 1991



RFA Stirling Castle enters service, expanding the operational capability and significantly extending its range and sustainability on-task. Mission System Teams will operate sophisticated small vessels which can be controlled remotely – and eventually fully autonomously – removing personnel entirely from the mine field.

Equipped with a variety of sensors and payloads, the suite of capability including autonomous underwater vehicles and remotely-operated vehicles enables the operators to gather huge amounts of data far more quickly than conventional methods.

Other Mission System Teams are operating the Operational Evaluations Unit in the Gulf from both RFA Cardigan Bay at sea and, ashore, from the Naval Support Facility in Bahrain, further demonstrating the utility and versatility of the equipment, working alongside the US Navy which has considerable experience in automated minehunting systems.

A formal ceremony at London's Reservist HQ HMS President marked the squadron's demise (Portsmouth-based MCM2 will continue to operate Hunt-class vessels for several years yet as the ships have undergone/are going through major upgrades).

Commander Dan Herridge, who heads MCM1's successor, said the old squadron had "served us well and laid the foundation for the mine warfare cadre to spearhead the Royal Navy's journey into deeper autonomy.

"It's a truly exciting time take command of the group as the Royal Navy transitions from conventional mine countermeasures vessels into our future delivery of a fundamentally-important capability.

"Interim mine countermeasures is where we are now and we have much to learn with our international partners and allies, but this is a bold step in the right direction and it is uplifting to see the enthusiasm of our operators as they start to get their hands on new and exciting kit."

There's naan better – Lancaster serve up Navy's best curry night



WHERE will you find the best curries?

Birmingham? London? Leicester? Lancaster.

HMS Lancaster, crowned the Royal Navy's curry kings.

To mark National Curry Week, Fleet Catering Services Warrant Officer Carl Neville set galleys across the land and at sea the challenge of delivering the ultimate Indian experience – with a prize to the galley team who impressed him most.

Traditionally in the Royal Navy, Wednesday is curry night (just as on Friday it's fish and chips, steak dinner on Saturdays, roasts on Sundays).

No team rose more to the challenge than PO Sharon Farrant's chefs and caterers aboard HMS Lancaster who, says Carl, "knocked it out of the park – raising the bar on their already high standards". His jaw dropped when he saw the lengths the frigate had gone to in creating not a curry night, but a curry extravaganza.

They did so at sea. On patrol. Hunting down drugs smugglers in the Indian Ocean.

Carl was looking for creativity, visual appeal, range and presentation to earn the coveted £150 prize.

So what did they produce to earn his praise?

Well, four main meat dishes: beef madras, tandoori chicken quarters, lamb coconut korma and masala king prawns, plus a dhal vegetarian option. Plenty of jasmine rice. And a host of the usual sides: poppadoms, samosas, naan, bhajis.

And if that didn't get the Red Rose's crew in the mood, the dining

room, the senior rates' dining room was suitably decorated with Indian-themed objects, curtains and the like...

And that's how you earn the accolade of 'Best Curry Night in the Fleet'.

"I thought this would be a fantastic opportunity to showcase an enhanced themed evening meal at sea...even more apt that Lancaster's next port visit is in India!" Sharon said.

"With limited fresh produce onboard the chefs continue to impress me with their creativity and desire for producing culinary dishes with passion.

"We are all very much looking forward to the next visit and some local purchase of some traditional Indian spices."

Among those appreciative of the chefs' efforts, weapons engineer Leading Engineering Technician Mikey Sampson.

"After a long day on board, the curry extravaganza night really boosted morale – mine and all the personnel on HMS Lancaster," he said.

"This was a truly spectacular performance from our chefs who were able to present us with such food in this demanding and tense area of the world.

"The chefs should not only get credit for their appetising curries but most importantly the presentation of the dining Hall, which was surrounded with flags and portraits of India. With choices of curry and multiple options of sides, including poppadoms accompanied by mango chutney, what else could you ask for?"

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HMS DAUNTLESS helped three British territories in the Caribbean prepare for the wrath of Nature as hurricane season reaches its climax.

The Portsmouth-based destroyer has been deployed to the Caribbean since May and, as well as providing a notable security presence working with allies and partners and countering the narcotics trade, has visited island communities to reassure and carry out work to lessen the risk of widespread damage during a storm.

The Type 45 destroyer completed work in the Bahamas earlier in the deployment but her most recent patrol of the Caribbean Sea took her to the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and Anguilla to provide reassurance and offer assistance, plus the opportunity to explore these paradise islands.

"It has been an immensely insightful to visit the United Kingdom's overseas territories in the Caribbean," said HMS Dauntless' Commanding Officer, Commander Ben Dorrington.

"By engaging with the local authorities we are able to have a far better idea of how we would provide support in the event of a natural disaster."

The Royal Navy is a regular presence in the region during hurricane season and has often come to the aid of communities in need in the wake of destructive storms.

Last year, HMS Medway and RFA Tideforce delivered drinking water and made repairs as the Turks and Caicos Islands recovered from damage caused by Hurricane Fiona and, before that, RFA Wave Knight supported the international relief following Haiti's devastating earthquake in 2021.

It isn't just limited to Caribbean islands: RFA Argus assisted disaster relief efforts in Honduras after Storm Eta swept the Central American nation in 2020.

Before that RFA Mounts Bay was in the region for two years and, notably, was at the heart of Operation Ruman, the military support to people affected by Hurricane Irma in 2017.

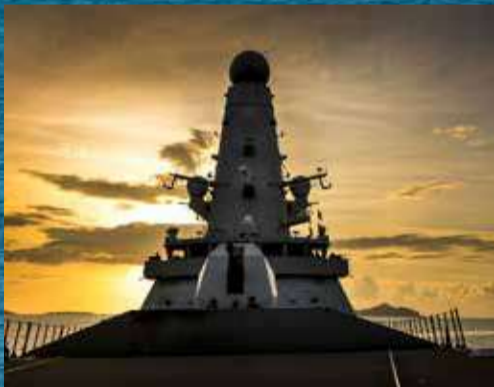
The ship continued her patrol throughout 2018 and was involved in relief efforts after Hurricane Dorian in 2019 before handing duties over to RFA Argus.

Now it's HMS Dauntless and her team who stand ready to respond if the worst were to happen.

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

In the British Virgin Islands, the Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Team from Dauntless hosted personnel from the island's disaster management committee to discuss planning for a joint response to a hurricane and other natural disasters.

The British Virgin Islands stop included visiting Virgin Gorda



DAUNTLESS' CARIBBEAN PATROL



where the distinct large rocks in the national park form beautiful above-ground caves. The ship's football team also played against a local team, losing 2-1.

MONTSERRAT

The ship sailed east to the volcanic island of Montserrat, where the HADR team met Royal Montserrat Defence Force personnel for planning and a look at measures against natural disasters, including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and hurricanes or tropical storms that could potentially impact the island.

A tour of the once-bustling capital, Plymouth, provided a stark reminder of the power and danger of Mother Nature.

The danger of a volcanic eruption on Montserrat – known as the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean for its lush vegetation – never goes away.

When long-dormant Soufrière Hills volcano erupted in 1995, it destroyed the island's airport, rendered the capital Plymouth uninhabitable and prompted two thirds of Montserrat's population to flee.

Now the island's remaining populace have carved out new lives in northern Montserrat, built a new airport and established a new capital (Brades) – but they continue to live in the shadow of the volcano... which continues to smoulder.

A HADR exercise took place, with members of the ship's company, Royal Marines and members of the RMDF hiking across steep mountain roads 16km from Plymouth to Little Bay in order to provide assistance, tackling extreme heat and torrential downpours along the way.

Able Rating Alejandro Stewart-Barreiro, said: "The visit was a great occasion for our ship's company to travel somewhere new and also to take part in the gruelling hike in demanding conditions."

"The island is not somewhere many people have heard of, and to meet up with the Royal Montserrat Defence Force made for a great bonding HADR exercise. The walk was definitely not easy, especially walking up what the Montserrat personnel



described as 'Death Hill'.

"At the beginning of the hike, being dropped off within the exclusion zone of the volcanic island, you could see first-hand the remains of the buildings destroyed by the 1997 volcanic eruption; that was a big eye opener."

While the HADR exercise took place, Cdr Dorrington and three of the ship's company engaged with school children, giving them insight into the life in the armed forces and experiences at sea.

ANGUILLA

Two islands visited, one to go... this time it was northwest to Anguilla.

The ship remained at anchor throughout her stay, with tenders running people to and from the vibrant island, not least the Governor of Anguilla who enjoyed lunch aboard and received a tour of the destroyer.

It was a chance for some downtime for the ship's company as they prepare restart counter-narcotics operations. Dauntless' last patrol saw a bust of £140m of cocaine and the ship helped US forces seize a drugs-running aircraft using the Type 45's powerful radar systems.

IMAGES: left: HMS Dauntless arrives in the British Virgin Islands at dawn; TOP LEFT: ship's company are given an exclusive tour of Plymouth, Montserrat, which was destroyed by a catastrophic volcanic eruption in 1995. TOP RIGHT: HMS Dauntless' Bridge team prepare to take the ship into the British Virgin Islands at dawn during a port visit. RIGHT: British Virgin Island's disaster management team meet with Dauntless

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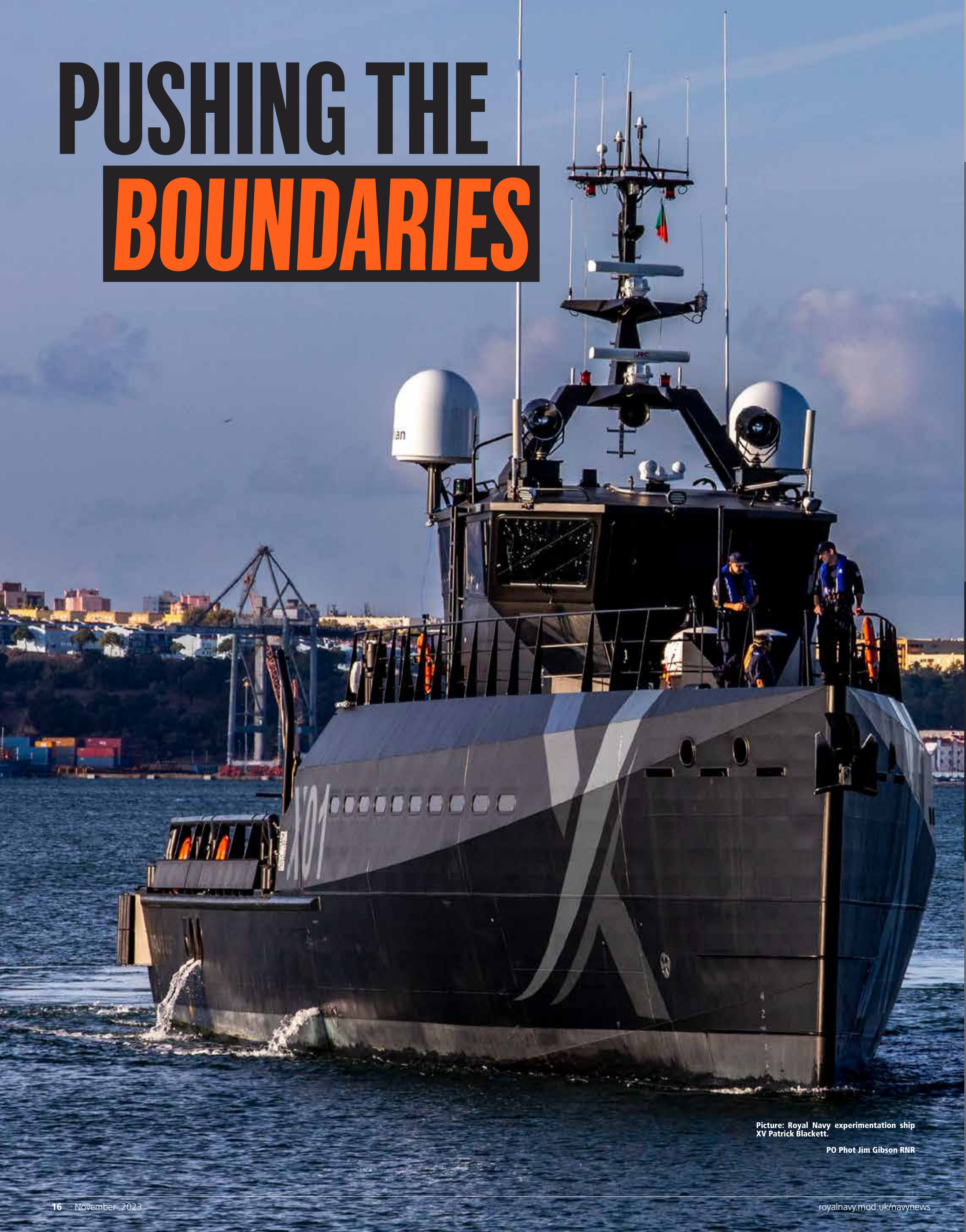
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PUSHING THE **BOUNDARIES**



Picture: Royal Navy experimentation ship
XV Patrick Blackett.

PO Phot Jim Gibson RNR

EXPERIMENTAL SHIP MAKES OVERSEAS DEBUT

THE Royal Navy has played a central role in combined multinational exercises in Portugal which experimented with nearly 100 uncrewed systems.

Over three weeks, more than 15 nations came together for the biggest autonomous war games of the year, with the Royal Navy deploying members of the Royal Navy Develop Directorate (who lead on the development of future warfighting capabilities in the navy) alongside experimentation ship XV Patrick Blackett; divers from the Diving and Threat Exploitation Group; and other specialist units.

The first exercise, Repmus 23, focused on the development of Maritime Uncrewed Systems and technology before NATO's Exercise Dynamic Messenger looked at how to employ new systems to be used in the real world, including the protection of critical undersea infrastructure.

It saw ships, personnel, units and equipment come together from host nation Portugal as well as Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Germany, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States; plus partners Sweden and Ireland.

The exercise also gave Portsmouth-based XV Patrick Blackett the chance to sail overseas and do her first foreign port visits and take part in her maiden deployment outside of the UK.

Based in Troia, south of Lisbon, the exercise saw individual shoreside command centres (representing Virtual Ships) receiving operational data and information from different assets, set up by the UK, US, Portugal and Spain.

It tested how more than 90 NATO assets from a range of countries can work together, practising how to communicate and pass tasking of the autonomous and uncrewed equipment to each other, depending on needs and priorities.

The different kit gathered data, deployed payloads, carried out surveillance and reconnaissance and intercepted target craft.

The Royal Navy was responsible for tasking and commanding a range of air and surface drones ranging from hand-held copters to the Thales/Schiebel S-100. In Sesimbra, the focus was underwater activity and Naval Mine Warfare.

Simon Lewinton, the UK Head of Delegation and Royal Navy lead for the exercise, said: "The splitting of Command and Control into physically separated Virtual Ships is another leap forward for Repmus 23.

"The operational experimentation of uncrewed systems, this year, in a more representative NATO task group structure has relied on integration between NATO partners and driven the UK's leading engineering. This gave the virtual task group a common operating picture, including data feeds from each nation's unmanned assets.

"As with last year, this development will continue through Dynamic Messenger, where we will exercise with autonomy commanded by NATO at sea."

The Royal Navy also sponsored a number of UK industry partners to demonstrate their technology concepts, including BAE Systems deploying a Stingray Torpedo from the Malloy T600 drone – a heavy-lift version of the T150 and Thales/ESROE.

Royal Marine Malloy T400s, currently used by the Royal Navy for dropping supplies to ships and Royal Marines in the field, were used to conduct simulated casualty evacuations and ammunition resupplies.

Working with the Portuguese Navy, the Royal Navy also sponsored a number of UK industry partners to demonstrate technology concepts in support of the protection of Critical Undersea Infrastructure (CUI), including Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) technology from Saab and Nokia in the UK, supported through their parent organisations in Sweden and Finland.

The overnight amphibious serial, saw the Portuguese Marines assault a nearby training village and were equipped with the UK's Future Commando Force's Tactical Awareness Kit (TAK) to provide operational advantage.

Meanwhile at sea, autonomous boats similar to the Royal Navy's Madfox zipped around alongside XV Patrick Blackett.

Standing out with her black paint work and unique role in trialling new technologies, it was Patrick Blackett's maiden overseas deployment. She joined 10 other NATO warships on the exercise.

She hosted a range of kit on board, including sonar buoys used by the German Navy, which were launched as part of underwater exercises.

Commander Michael Hutchinson, commanding officer of XV Patrick Black and part of the navy's NavyX team, said: "Our time in Portugal has allowed us to work with NATO allies to test maritime autonomous systems.

"We've been doing all sorts while here including lots of work with air, surface and sub-service autonomous systems and new technology, along industry partners. It's showing how ships like Patrick Blackett can work with a lot more autonomy and how it can contribute to the future navy."

"It's great to be overseas after a busy few months of us doing lots of important work," Commander Hutchinson added.

"The ship is an experimentation platform so exercises like this are our bread and butter. We can use this deployment to work out what these autonomous exercises look like and how we can learn.

"It's important to have an asset which is dedicated to that role."



Pictures: (top to bottom) autonomous boats off the coast of Troia, in Portugal; Malloy T-600 heavy-lift drone; the Royal Navy's shoreside 'command centre'; Commander Michael Hutchinson, commanding officer of XV Patrick Blackett, keeps watch; XV Patrick Blackett sails past Italian ship Stromboli; autonomous boats off the coast of Troia.

PO Phot Jim Gibson RNR





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Brother takes Tim for a spin

WHEN they said 'take your brother for a quick ride', is this what you had in mind?

As the Welsh landscape whizzes by in a blur, Royal Navy Reservist Lieutenant Commander Tim Taylor (in the rear seat) takes to the sky with his brother Paul – known as Giz – a pilot in the RAF.

Their chariot of choice is the turbo-prop Texan T1 trainer – not especially fast by fighter pilot standards (top speed 316kts, compared with an F-35 Lightning (1,066kts) or a Typhoon (1,147kts) – but what a rush: jinking, twisting and turning as low as 250ft, performing aerobatic loops and rolling manoeuvres with G Forces up to six times the force of gravity – mentally and physically demanding, but something all RAF and Fleet Air Arm fixed-wing pilots must contend with.

And both Taylor brothers should know – given both their experience and their current roles.

In a varied career in first the RAF, then the Fleet Air Arm Tim has nearly 40 years' experience in the cockpit – including Tornado F3 in 25(F) Squadron, notably on Op Granby / Desert Shield (Gulf War I) and on Op Deny Flight over the former Yugoslavia with 29(F) Squadron.

He flew Sea Harriers 'on loan' from the RAF to 899, 800 and 801 Naval Air Squadrons and, seeing the light, switched to the Fleet Air Arm in 1999 after 15 years with the Air Force.

And he's stayed in naval aviation ever since – although since 2003 as a reservist with the air branch (recently renamed HMS Pegasus).

When not assessing whether would-be aviators possess the 'right stuff' to serve as pilots or observers via 727 Naval Air Squadron, the grading unit based at RNAS Yeovilton.

His younger brother is a flight lieutenant based at RAF Valley in Anglesey, passing on his experience as a Qualified Flying Instructor on 72 Squadron flying the Texan T1.

"It was fantastic to fly with Giz again – our first turbo-prop flight together," said Tim. "Low-level flying through Wales, then some aerobatics, what a great experience!"

"This was an extremely rewarding, exciting and privileged opportunity to see and experience the flying training system and aircraft used by future RN fast-jet pilots.

"We only achieved this through the great support from HMS Pegasus and RAF Valley. Many thanks to all involved."

In his civilian career Tim flies corporate jets with ACASS Ireland based at Farnborough. He joined the Royal Naval Reserve to gain an insight into the Military Flying Training System and experience flying the Texan T1 turbo-prop basic fast jet training aircraft.

After the Sea Harrier was retired he switched to the Hawk with 736 Naval Air Squadron at Culdrose and, since 2015, the Grob Tutor with 727 NAS.

The Taylors have shared cockpits before: in a Tornado F3, Sea Harrier, Hawk and a handful of civilian aircraft.

"We've now flown together in seven different aircraft types. I'm not sure how many other brothers have managed this," Tim added.

There's the chance to make it eight this month, all being well clambering into the cockpit of a vintage Hawker Hunter under the auspices of Military Registered Civil Owned Aircraft (MRCOA). With Paul leaving the RAF in the near future, possibly making this their last chance to fly together.

Picture above by Matt Bright Aviation



Join the Navy, see the wool

RECRUITS from HMS Raleigh found themselves herding sheep across one of London's iconic river crossings as they helped an affiliate celebrate an ancient right.

The Torpoint establishment is bound with one of the nation's oldest livery companies, Worshipful Company of Woolmen... who invited the sailors to join them on their annual drive to celebrate the relationsheep.

Just as a freedom ceremony allows military units to march through their affiliated towns or cities with bayonets fixed, drums beating and all that that, so livery companies enjoy some historic (and unusual privileges).

Such as driving sheep across Southwark Bridge one day a year. The ritual has been conducted since medieval times, when sheep farmers drove their flocks across London Bridge into the City of London to sell them at market. Freemen of the City were excused

the bridge toll that had to be paid by other people crossing the bridge, in recognition of their status as local traders.

These days it's much more of a ceremonial affair – and a reminder to Londoners of the importance of farming to UK life and trade.

Fifty North of England Mule Sheep were driven across Southwark Bridge by the Worshipful Company and their special guests, including the Raleigh personnel and celebrity chef Richard Corrigan.

The sheep were selected from a 600-strong flock on a farm in Bedford, chosen for their personalities and calmness under pressure – which they needed when the sailors were offered the chance to drive them across.

"It was a great experience, and not something I thought I would be doing on joining the Navy, but it was brilliant to be able to represent the Service and talk to such a

wide range of people," said AB2 Jacob Priest.

"To then have the chance to herd the sheep across the bridge, it was pretty surreal but so much fun! Definitely something I'll remember!"

The sailors got in the mood for their unusual tasking on the long coach journey (sadly not Shearings...) up from Cornwall by listening to Lady Baa Baa, Ed Sheeran, classics like Rock Around the Flock, or watching EweTube, all under the tutelage of Lieutenant Commander Matt Cullen.

"I often tell recruits that the thing I love about being in the Royal Navy is the opportunity to do random stuff that normal people don't get to do," said Lieutenant Commander Matt Cullen.

"I'll be honest, of all the unique things I've done in my career, driving sheep across the Thames is about as random as it gets."



Paint up, Pompey!

SAILORS in Portsmouth stepped in to help Pompey in the Community – the charitable arm of the city's famous football club – with an ambitious project.

Named after a soldier, D-day veteran and life-long Pompey fan who died aged 100 in 2019, the John Jenkins Stadium is a mixture of football ground/pitches and community hub.

When complete, the stadium will allow the club – which already provides coaching and training programmes to more than 36,000 people every year through its existing outreach/community arm – to vastly enhance and expand what it offers to locals.

The new complex, which is redeveloping the Moneyfields ground in the district of Copnor in the northeast of the city, will feature two 3G all-weather football pitches for use by Moneyfields, Pompey Women and the community.

There's also a gym, dance studio, boxing facilities, clubhouse, classrooms and a social club in the complex.

And the surrounding grounds will be landscaped and used for food growing projects, planting fruit trees and a 'Tiny Forest', one of Earthwatch Europe's latest environmental initiatives.

The buildings are largely complete externally, but given the community nature of the project, the club has turned to volunteers to help with the fitting out.

Tim's testing time is over

COLLEAGUES at Culdrose bade farewell to Lieutenant Commander Tom Wallis – the pilot who's signed off EVERY Merlin helicopter before it returns to front-line service.

As head of Culdrose Flight Test for more than three and a half years, it's been his task to fly – and assess – every Merlin Mk2 emerging from deep/long-term maintenance.

These additional and independent checks also take place every year – including on the commando-carrying Merlin Mk4s.

Lt Cdr Wallis brought bags of front-line experience with him to Flight Test: an extended stint with the Flying Tigers of 814 Naval Air Squadron in the Middle East, and two years with the Maritime Counter Terrorism Flight.

He won the 2021 Baroness Platt of Writtle award for most outstanding Incorporated Engineer in recognition of the 'Best Overall IEng' application across all professional engineering bodies.

He describes his time with the unit as "a career highlight" thanks to the experienced, skilled team he worked with at



Culdrose.

"The engineering effort involved in operating the Merlin Mk2 is monumental, but the result is an incredible capability which will continue to be integral to defence for many years to come," he said.

Aside from Merlin test pilot duties, Lt Cdr Wallis helped organise the move of Culdrose's wardrobe to its new home, and posted a very respectable time of 11 hours 57 minutes completing an IronMan triathlon in Tallinn, Estonia.



MISSION

AFRICA





Pictures by LPhoto Matt Bradley // Words by Lt Craig Purvis

HMS TRENT has called on three West African states as part of the latest phase of her deployment to forge closer friendships and build stronger maritime partnerships with coastal West African nations.

The 2,000 tonne patrol ship trained with regional navies and forces during the international Grand African Nemo exercise; a workout in the Gulf of Guinea to develop the skills and techniques required to disrupt and deter illegal activity, such as piracy and smuggling, in the region.

Trent, the third of the Royal Navy's Batch 2 Offshore Patrol Vessels, dazzled guests from ambassadors, politicians and defence leaders to schools and orphanages. Through ship tours, flight deck receptions and capability demonstrations, including the embarked Puma remotely-piloted air system from 700X Naval Air Squadron and the Royal Marines Boarding Team of 42 Commando, the ship's company provided partner nations and forces an insight into Trent's role and potential in the region.

The patrol vessel, forward deployed as the spearhead of Royal Navy operations in the Mediterranean and West Africa, worked with the Ghanaian Navy on departure from Tema, Ghana. A series of officer of the watch manoeuvres were conducted to enhance seamless interaction and cooperation and 700X launched Puma to demonstrate the importance of multi-domain capability in maritime security operations.

Naval Airman (Aircraft Handler) Michael Page, who is based at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose in Cornwall, said: "It has been an amazing and interesting journey getting to deploy to the West Coast of Africa.

"As a Naval Airman, I wouldn't usually be able to experience small ships, but being at 700X and working with the Puma lets me deploy to any ship." Naval Airman Page has served in the Royal Navy for two years, and is Puma's pilot and maintainer.

The Royal Navy last visited Côte d'Ivoire over a decade ago. His Majesty's Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire, Her Excellency Catherine Brooker, said: "Fantastic to work with our Royal Navy colleagues on HMS Trent during her visit to Côte d'Ivoire, the first Royal Navy ship visit to the country in 11 years. It was an opportunity to broaden our defence engagement, meeting the team in charge of the international counter-terrorism academy and hosting members of the Parliamentary UK Friendship group and local children.

"Of course, there was also the football match between the British navy and Ivorian marines. I am grateful to the ship's company for their all their hard work. We look forward to continuing our valuable cooperation (and our football re-match!)." Rounding Africa's western-most coastline towards Senegal, Trent's commandos carried out a series of high and low vertical assaults on Trent to sharpen skills as part of their core role as the Royal Navy's boarding specialists.

Capable of boarding vessels with high sides, the Royal Marines use a mix of fixed and caving ladders

HMS TRENT'S MISSION TO THE GULF OF GUINEA

to board their target. Safe in the knowledge of constant over watch with the Puma drone airborne, they're able to determine the vessel's intentions, and make an informed assessment of the likely actions and reactions required.

Lieutenant Max Tanner, the marine in charge of the boarding team, said: "It's been a pleasure to be a part of HMS Trent's deployment to West Africa. The Royal Marines Boarding Team has fully integrated with the ship and, alongside 700X, has been a key enabler for the ship's maritime security operations. We've enjoyed training with regional partners and demonstrating 42 Commando's capabilities."

Equipped with 5.56mm C8 assault rifles and 9mm glock pistols, the team of seven trained to systematically search and secure the boarded vessel, in this case HMS Trent ensuring they are ready to respond to a real life situation, including counter piracy and illegal narcotics operations.

It wasn't all working hard and no playing hard. Trent's football team's West Africa campaign saw them play friendly matches with their ship's hosts in all three nations, and in all cases the hosts emerged victorious (including a 4-0 thrashing in Senegal!).

After a gruelling programme of Defence Engagement, Trent joined with navies from across West Africa and Europe, as well as Morocco, Brazil and the United States in annual air and maritime exercise Grand African Nemo – a test of regional capabilities and an opportunity to develop the necessary skills, joint understanding and cooperation with regional and international partners to promote maritime security and freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Guinea.

HMS Trent worked with navies from Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia and Senegal. For countering piracy, smuggling and illegal migration off West Africa, RHIBs, fast patrol boats and offshore patrol vessels came together to train and learn for a safer and more secure Gulf of Guinea.

"It was great to be able to take part in Grand African Nemo 2023 and support training for several African nations in the Gulf of Guinea," said Lieutenant Ben Hunter, HMS Trent's Operations Officer.

"After spending the past few months operating off West Africa contributing to maritime security operations, to be able to build on this by participating in such a large exercise to develop the security infrastructure and contribute to

boarding training has been very satisfying. A highlight was exercising with the Gambian Navy. After visiting them in August and assisting in getting one of their ships back to sea, to then conduct training with them was incredibly rewarding."

With Trent playing the role of a 'vessel of interest', harbouring potential illegal migrants or under siege by pirates, the boarding teams worked together with 42 Commando's Royal Marines to enhance their cooperation and coordination, as well as techniques and knowledge sharing, all under the watchful eye of 700X's Puma and guided by a French Navy Falcon 50 Maritime Patrol Aircraft. Fortunately for HMS Trent, their efforts paid off with the ship liberated from her captors and of stowaways in short order.

Puma's embarkation in HMS Trent is first overseas deployment of RPAS on the Batch 2 River-class OPV.

Alongside supporting the Royal Marines Boarding Team. HMS Trent's flight commander, Lieutenant Chris Windsor from 700X NAS, said: "It has been a privilege to support Trent's deployment to West Africa. 700X has provided a capability that has enhanced what the ship has been able to achieve in this part of the world. The work we have conducted, and the lessons we have learned, will provide a springboard for Puma operations on forward deployed units across the globe."

For the final installment, Trent once again joined forces with the Senegalese Navy for a series of Officer of the Watch manoeuvres, a third and final attack by pirates, and ultimately a customary ceremonial sail past to mark the conclusion of Grand African Nemo 2023.

Summing up this latest phase of Trent's forward deployment her commanding officer, Commander Tim Langford, said: "I am extremely proud of the work conducted by my team to further existing boarding capabilities of the Batch 2 Offshore Patrol Vessels, including the integration of remotely-piloted aerial systems and a 42 Commando RM boarding team.

"this will provide a baseline for future operations in the GoG and wider African region. It has been a privilege for us to work with our partner nations and to demonstrate the RN's commitment to improving maritime security in the region."





NORTHERN SORTIES FOR CARRIER AIRCRAFT

FROM firing live weapons on Swedish ranges to playing a game of hide and seek with the Norwegians, it has been a busy few weeks on the flight deck of UK flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Shortly after leaving Portsmouth, the carrier and her embarked jets and helicopters proved their ability to provide the “punch” of the UK Carrier Strike Group during a series of simulated strike missions alongside international partners.

Sailing in the North and Norwegian Seas and joined by Type 45 destroyer HMS Diamond; Royal Fleet Auxiliary tanker RFA Tideforce; Norwegian ships HNoMS Otto Sverdrup and HNoMS Maud; Dutch ships HNLMS De Zeven Provinciën and HNLMS Van Amstel; and Belgian frigate BNS Louise Marie, the carrier led combat-style training in northern Europe.

It saw HMS Queen Elizabeth’s F-35 Lightning fighter jets of 617 Squadron, the Dambusters, Merlin helicopters from 820 Naval Air Squadron and Wildcat helicopters from 815 and 847 Naval Air Squadrons carry out simulated missions, from defending against air threats to suppressing enemy air defences and strike attacks.

The activity came as part of Exercise Cobra Warrior, the Royal Air Force’s largest annual exercise, which saw the different units face different tasking each day – from destroying a target to rescuing down aircrew.

This included the embarked F-35s tasked to find surface-to-air threats and destroy them; fly ahead of any strikes to clear the air and allow a clean run to the target and provide close cover to deter hostile fighters. It would have seen a simulated target represent a threat with protection – the job of the fighter jets would be to destroy it without loss.

The carrier and her helicopters also proved their ability to support any serious medical incidents within the task group including life support, advanced resuscitation techniques and trauma surgery – known as a Role 2 Afloat Team.

The 22-strong team have the specialist knowledge and skills to deal with a range of potential medical emergencies and are supported by the Merlin helicopters which can do casualty evacuations to and from the carrier.

Commodore James Blackmore, Commander of the UK Carrier Strike Group, said: “CSG23 is off to a great start. Integrated training within the air and maritime environments, and alongside our European allies, has demonstrated the capability and agility of UK Carrier Strike.

“We now head further north into the Norwegian Sea to enhance our interoperability through training with JEF partners to demonstrate long-range strike activity using F-35B Lightning aircraft from the Carrier with our key allies Norway, Finland and Sweden.

“Throughout the first phase, CSG has integrated ships from the UK, Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands. Thank you to all our partners and allies who have

worked with us on this mission so far; our shared endeavour of deterrence and defence of the Euro-Atlantic region is the cornerstone of CSG23.”

Other activity during the ship’s first few weeks at sea saw the Wildcat helicopters obtain their Carrier Deck qualifications with a series of day and night landings and take-offs; US Air Force Ospreys refreshing their skills to take off and land on the vast deck and the ship practice surface warfare skills by finding, targeting and tracking hostile threats.

The flight deck continued to be abuzz as the carrier’s air group took part in further exercises and training off the coast of Norway.

While the F-35 Lightning jets joined Norwegian Special Forces for combat missions and fired weaponry on Swedish ranges, the carrier’s Merlin and Wildcat helicopters played a game of hide and seek with a Norwegian stealth corvette.

Then, in a first for a helicopter launched from a Queen Elizabeth-class carrier, 820 Naval Air Squadron launched a training torpedo to test a weapons system.

The range of activity comes as the UK Carrier Strike Group, ramped up its work alongside allies of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF). Sailing in the fjords of Norway and a port stop in Gothenburg, Sweden, gave the task group the opportunity to tighten its bonds with fellow JEF nations.

JEF is a high-readiness task group committed to regional security that can respond to crises either alongside or independent of NATO.

As part of showing its support to the force, HMS Queen Elizabeth met with up with Norwegian frigate HNoMS Otto Sverdrup to practice close manoeuvres and sailing together.

It was then the turn of Merlin from Culdrose-based 820 NAS and Wildcats from Yeovilton-based 847 NAS to show their abilities in an advanced game of hide and seek.

They trained with Norwegian stealth corvette HNoMS Steil, with the Merlins labelled the ‘guardians’ and tasked with giving situational awareness and providing the Wildcats with the location of suspect vessels.

The Norwegian Skjold class is a fast patrol boat and their thermal cam nets, knowledge of the fjords and anti-ambush tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) means if they don’t want to be found, they won’t. Add in the complex terrain, and the exercise gave a realistic training scenario for the UK flight crews.

Next up, 820 NAS performed a first for a Merlin launching from a Queen Elizabeth-class carrier by launching a Training Variant Torpedo (TVT) abeam of Type 23 frigate HMS Portland. Observers Scott Wilson and Tobias Williams dropped the TVT to test external weapon processes and delivery systems.

The torpedo was collected by Portland’s sea boat and returned to the warship.

Meanwhile, the F-35 Lightning stealth fighters took part in Norwegian-led Exercise Phoenix Strike which saw the jets work with Norwegian Special Forces for a variety of mission scenarios. This included air-to-air tactical intercepts and deterring enemy air defences. They also used the sorties as a chance to meet up with a UK Voyager to re-fuel.

After finishing their work in Norway, the F-35s carried out live strike missions in Swedish ranges. They fired Paveway IVs – air to ground precision-guided bombs using laser and GPS technology for accurate hits – alongside Swedish Armed Forces.

Wing Commander Stew Campbell, Commanding Officer of 617 Squadron, The Dambusters, said: “617 Squadron have enjoyed an extremely successful five weeks embarked in HMS Queen Elizabeth. We have experienced a graduated and increasingly complex training package that has seen us qualify multiple new pilots in carrier operations both day and night, take part in both UK and foreign led large force exercises and employ live ordnance on an air-to-surface range.

“617 Squadron always enjoy our embarked periods as operating from an aircraft carrier is the pinnacle of aviation activity and we are proud to be a part of it.”

HMS Queen Elizabeth took a pause in her deployment with a port stop in Gothenburg, Sweden. It is the first time a carrier of this class has visited the city.

While there, she hosted events committed to the Joint Expeditionary Force to forge deeper bonds between the nations’ armed forces.

Captain Will King, Commanding Officer of HMS Queen Elizabeth, said: “After a lengthy time at sea, my ship’s company and I were delighted to arrive in Gothenburg.

“We looked forward to hosting defence engagements events to strengthen our long-standing defence connections with Sweden and enjoying a well-earned rest to experience the city.

“For many it was their first visit to Sweden and for some it was a welcome return to a city they visited with then Fleet Flagship HMS Ark Royal in 2007.”



“ WE HAVE EXPERIENCED AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX TRAINING PACKAGE ”



Main picture: F-35 Lightning fighter jets fly over Sweden ranges; *clockwise from top:* Target is destroyed by Pathway IV air-to-ground bombs in Sweden ranges; personnel load a Training Variant Torpedo (TVT) onto a Merlin helicopter; a Merlin helicopter launches the TVT; HMS Diamond sails in the North Sea; a US Air Force Osprey takes off from HMS Queen Elizabeth; the Pathway IVs wait to be loaded onto F-35 Lightning jets; HMS Queen Elizabeth sails with Norwegian frigate HNoMS Sverdrup; F-35 pilots after taking part in exercises; Merlin and Wildcat helicopters train with Norwegian stealth corvette HNoMS Steil; Merlin helicopter trains with Norwegian stealth corvette HNoMS Steil.
Pictures: LPhoto Belinda Alker; LPhoto Chris Sellars; AS1 Amber Mayall RAF.



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Sailors host Trafalgar Night in the United States



Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel stationed in the United States joined their colleagues in celebrating Trafalgar Night thanks to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

Each October since the early 19th Century, officers in the Royal Navy have gathered to commemorate the historic Battle of Trafalgar of 1805, a tradition that strengthens the bonds among sailors worldwide.

Nelson's famous victory is celebrated with fervour in mess decks, ward rooms and now, because of RNRMC's Trafalgar Night at home, in the comfort of people's dining rooms.

This year, RNRMC was able to support 10 Royal Navy and RAF stationed at NAS Patuxent River, in the United States, to come

together and have a night of Trafalgar celebrations with their families before being deployed in late October.

RNRMC recognises the importance of this tradition and the significance it holds for naval families, especially those stationed far from home.

Lt Cdr Lewis Roach said: "It was such a great and rare opportunity to get our small community based here at Pax River (USA) together, a fantastic night was had by all involved.

"Guests were also fortunate enough to share the evening with their partners, giving them a brief insight into what a true military mess dinner is like.

"It's very easy to feel isolated from the rest of the UK military

where we are and therefore it's really important to keep our traditions going strong and it simply would not have been possible without the RNRMC, we are immensely grateful for the support shown."

By helping to make this gathering at NAS Patuxent River special, RNRMC has not only contributed to the well-being of these families but also helped forge stronger connections among the Royal Navy's global community.

This event serves as a shining example of how RNRMC's support can help bring together Naval families across the world, strengthening their ties and ensuring that the spirit of Trafalgar Night lives on.

To find out how RNRMC brought Trafalgar Night to people's home this year, head to our website: rnrmc.org.uk.

Support for Commonwealth and foreign personnel with maiden event

ROYAL Navy personnel from the Commonwealth and nations outside the UK were supported at a maiden event held by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

Sailors and their families were invited to a day full of information and a world-class buffet lunch at Worthy Down with a range of stalls and activities highlighting how the charity and other associations can support those in need.

The event was held after the RNRMC was successful in its application to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust for £100,000 to provide support for foreign and Commonwealth Royal Navy personnel.

The RNRMC, Aggie Weston's, the Naval Families Federation and other navy charities worked together to organise the event held at the School of Logistics Policing and Administration in Worthy Down.

The event particularly focused on the Immigration Adviser Service provided by the NFF and the pastoral support provided by Aggie's while the RNB, Sail and the Naval Children's Charity also attended with information about the support they can give.

Although hosted at Worthy Down, the immigration advisers, pastoral workers and other support services are available throughout the Royal Navy and Pete Hawley, NFF immigration adviser, shared how he has supported families through the complex immigration system.

There has been a growing demand for the free immigration adviser service and the RNRMC is pleased to be able to support additional capacity through its own and the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust funding.

The additional resource comes in the form of another immigration adviser who has now been recruited.

Sophie Raza, who came into the role in the spring, said: "It is a real pleasure to have joined the Naval Families Federation as a trainee immigration adviser.

"Being a navy wife myself, I understand the difficulties faced by serving personnel and their families. I am delighted to have joined the team to be able to support our non-UK families with their immigration journeys; from spousal and children's visas

to citizenship or visit visas for families.

"It's wonderful that the NFF now have additional capacity to support Royal Navy and Royal Marines families with their immigration queries and I am thankful to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and the RNRMC for funding their project."

In an interview conducted by Chris New, chief executive of Aggie's, Chloe Lefore, the pastoral worker at Worthy Down, talked about the challenges of time zones that many foreign and Commonwealth personnel face.

Often, they have to get up in the middle of the night to phone family members at a time when they would be home and available.

She shared how she supports new Royal Navy personnel by welcoming them to the site, sharing information with them, and helping them to form friendship groups.

Chris also interviewed Patrick Mhlongo from South Africa, one of the talented chefs who prepared the wonderful food for the event.

He shared his experience of being so far from family or friends, and how much he enjoyed the Church Café, and the other events Chloe ran because they helped him to form friendships and social networks.

RNRMC believe that a strong and inclusive naval community is crucial to the continued success of their services and they are steadfast in upholding this commitment.

They congratulated and thanked the personnel of the Food Services Training Wing at Worthy Down for preparing such a spectacular buffet for all in attendance and are proud to support Foreign and Commonwealth personnel alongside AFCFT, NFF and Aggie's.

To enquire about NFF's Immigration Service, please email immigration@nff.org.uk.

To find out more about Aggie's pastoral support, please visit aggies.org.uk/pastoral-work

To find out more about the support RNRMC provides for serving personnel, their dependents and veterans, please visit rnrmc.org.uk.



Christmas shop now open

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity's Christmas shop is now open.

From Christmas cards, such as the one illustrated above, to Christmas decorations and stocking fillers, there's something for everyone.

The online store has soft toys, a kit to build your own Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carrier, clothing from ties to leggings and range of water bottles and flasks with different navy and marine-themed designs.

You can also buy a gift card with values up to £100.

Support your navy family this Christmas by ordering from the shop at royalnavyshop.co.uk/collections/rnrmc-products or scan the QR code below using your mobile phone.



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OFFICER Cadets from London and Solent URNU joined the RNR in the annual Maritime Reserves National Leadership Weekend based at Crowborough Training Area.

Being our own syndicate, we worked together to complete numerous tasks of an unfamiliar nature within defined time windows.

Activities included simulated casualty recovery, assembling a large tent (once blindfolded and guided by fellow cadets), how to report covert operations to the media, and several others.

Personally, I enjoyed our second stance in which the syndicate was divided, each half on either side of a small ravine; one recovered the 'casualty' to administer basic first aid, while the other constructed

a makeshift stretcher to hoist the casualty across via pulley for further medical treatment. The designated IC truly took control of the scenario, delegating personnel and issuing resources with careful skill.

By rotating the IC and Deputy IC for each task, every OC had the opportunity to further develop command and leadership, both valuable lessons strengthened through the University Royal Naval Unit.

Following my own turn as IC with consequent feedback, I understood the elements I could improve in future PLTs to deliver effective evolutions.

This experience is certainly something I would recommend and encourage continuation of within the URNU.

OC Sullivan (2nd Year URNU London)

Keen to support our veterans

AS Scotland's foremost provider of care for veterans and their spouses, Erskine Veterans Charity provides unrivalled nursing, residential, respite and dementia care in three care homes, one in Edinburgh and two within Erskine Veterans Village in Bishopton, 20 minutes from Glasgow.

Erskine has been one of URNU Glasgow's charity beneficiaries from the unit's fund raising for a number of years.

During the last year the unit has organised many events to fundraise for various charities including a cocktail evening, poppy collections in Glasgow city centre, the Glasgow 26 miles Kiltwalk, and even bungee jumping.

During these, Officer Cadets work to provide as much support as possible to the charities, whether it be through bucket collections, online fundraising or assisting in running events such as formal dinners.

Supporting charity is a key part of the URNU

objectives and Officer Cadets are always keen to get involved and help out in any way they are able.

This year Officer Cadets of URNU Glasgow have raised the fantastic sum of £645.88 for Erskine Veterans Charity, which was formally presented to the charity during a visit to the Erskine Veterans Village where the OCs were able to see how the money raised is well spent to provide services for veterans in need.

A/OC Lewis Donnan said: "Having recently taken over the position of charities representative, I am very much looking forward to working closely with Erskine Veterans Charity to help them continue the incredible work they do to support veterans of the British Armed Forces."

Jim Watret, Erskine Veterans Charity, Community Fundraiser (West), added: "Thank you very much to URNU Glasgow for all the support and we look forward to working with them once again in the near future."

Fun at the regatta

URNU Officer cadets travelled to Dartmouth from across the country to assist with Dartmouth regatta preparation and management.

The event was coordinated by Lt Stewart and OCs were accommodated at BRNC, which provided a great insight for OCs interested in joining the RN upon completion of their degrees.

OCs worked with the regatta team in a variety of evolutions; they assisted with setting up and taking down stalls, closing roads, public engagement, the racing committee, and harbour patrol. OCs took part in a number of the races and assisted in the running of a variety of competitions.

OCs had the privilege of hosting captain BRNCs cocktail party for the community and nurturing the development of the college's relationship with the local community of Dartmouth. OCs were able to develop their professional communication skills and further their militarisation and marinisation learning, including international sailing standards.

Overall, OCs worked hard with the regatta committee, adding value to the event, and gaining invaluable personal experience.

OC Brock, URNU Devon

Malta history tour

OFFICER Cadets from URNU Belfast & Virtual units travelled to Malta for five days as part of a Maritime Power Study trip.

Led by the CO and Coxswain, OCs attended sites of historical interest from the Great Siege of 1565 to the Battle of the Mediterranean in WW2.

They had to research, prepare and deliver a talk during each site visit, linking the site to the Principles of War and drawing lessons from the past into relevance for current conflicts.

Acting Midshipman O'Brien said: "This was a great opportunity not only to develop our knowledge of Naval Operations but also how the lessons learned during Op PEDESTAL in WW2 can be related to modern naval warfare."

The unit Cox'n, CPO Johnson said: "Travel to new places, all over the world – OCs from both Belfast and Virtual units have grasped the opportunity and have been living the adventure."

"Having recently visited the archipelago of Malta the OCs have seen and heard how Malta has played a key role in Naval history for centuries, absorbing the culture and forging friendships for life."

The CO, Lt Cdr McWilliams, added: "This MPST was the culmination of months of careful preparation and planning, but the feedback from the OCs had been phenomenal and the benefits to their understanding of the relevance of past conflicts is immense."

Reservists out in force for NATO conference



A RECORD number of UK reservists attended this year's NATO reserve forces conference in Helsinki, Finland.

More than 70 senior non-commissioned and commissioned officers from all three Services attended the event, which was being held in Finland for the first time.

They joined participants from more than 20 NATO and partner nations, including Ukraine.

During the conference UK attendees were able to take part in a number of different activity streams, including a senior rates' meeting, junior officer and junior medical officer conferences, a civil-military cooperation exercise, and a military skills competition.

Lieutenant Colonel Jules Vere-Whiting, acting head of the UK delegation, said: "The summer conference is the highlight of the international opportunities offered by the UK Reserve Forces Association to service personnel across the country."

"It was wonderful to see our people, of all ranks, interacting with and learning from their overseas colleagues."

The programme involved a range of activities, including field visits to Finland's military bases at Suomenlinna and Santahamina, lectures from international experts in geopolitics, and opportunities for reservists to present their own work and research.

Royal Navy Reservist Sub-Lieutenant Parsons said: "Attending the Young Reserve Officers' Workshop this year was insightful and a great privilege. It's important to remember that these officers will be leading their country's reserve forces and there's a huge amount that we can learn from each others' training, structure, and management."

The meeting was the first to take place since the accession of Finland to NATO.

The UK Defence Attaché in Finland, RAF Wing Commander Steve Boyle, said: "It's fantastic to see UK Reservists in Finland. With 900,000 reservists on the books, and now a NATO member, it's an ideal place to be hosting this year's meeting."

Next year's summer conference will take place in Tallinn, Estonia. Interested reservists should follow the UK Reserve Forces Association on X, formerly known as Twitter (@UK_Reserves) or on Defence Connect to keep abreast of upcoming opportunities.

Pegasus personnel mark first anniversary

RESERVISTS have marked the first anniversary of the commissioning of HMS Pegasus.

The Royal Naval Reserve Air Branch was commissioned during a ceremony at RNAS Yeovilton, with Prince Michael of Kent as guest of honour.

This was the first commissioning of a ship, albeit a stone frigate, under a King since 1948.

The commissioning aligned the Royal Naval Reserve Air Branch with all other Maritime Reserve Units after 43 years delivering direct operational support to the Royal Navy.

HMS Pegasus has continued to support the Fleet

Air Arm and wider Royal Navy and has been active in RNAS Yeovilton, RNAS Culdrose, HMS Queen Elizabeth and more.

In the past 12 months the Air Branch had a change in Commanding Officer when Commander Chris Mahony handed over to Commander Louis Wilson-Chalon in September.

Commander Chris Mahony said: "It's an absolute honour and privilege to handover to my good friend and colleague of 30 years."

The men and women of the Air Branch includes all trades and specialisations of the Fleet Air Arm.

Registered charity number: Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund 1850182



Naval Children's Charity

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



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

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



RAF award for Mark's service to aviation

THE head of the RAF has singled out a veteran Royal Navy flier for 37 years of dedication to naval – and broader military – aviation which is “unsurpassed”.

Commander Mark Davies has served his nation in the home and foreign skies, in posts at home and abroad since the mid-1980s.

Many of the current seamless interactions between the RN, RAF and their allies – especially the US military – are down in part to the work the aviator has carried out, particularly in staff positions.

As commanding officer of 702 Naval Air Squadron two decades ago, he was praised for his leadership during a challenging period helping to introduce the latest variant of the Lynx helicopter into service set against chronic personnel shortages. He met every target and was praised by the then head of the Fleet Air Arm.

He later served in the Pentagon where he headed an Anglo-US anti-submarine warfare programme.

As the only non-US member on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations – the US Navy's equivalent of First Sea Lord – he reinvigorated and led effective working relationships between the United Kingdom and Pentagon-based directorates.

In 2015 Commander Davies was posted to the US Navy Carrier Strike Group training organisation, offering timely and well-considered advice to senior officers, and played a critical role in integrating four NATO partners into a complex carrier group training evolution.

Most recently, Commander Davies has been at the forefront of air-maritime integration development at the Air and Space Warfare Centre, increasing collaboration and cooperation between the Services.

In the words of his Chief of the Air Staff Commendation citation throughout his career Commander Davies has been “an incredibly committed individual, an outstanding officer with a huge intellect, boundless capacity, and an unquenchable determination to add value”. His efforts have led to “significant gains” to operational capability and international relations.

In short, says the citation: “Commander Davies' contribution over 37 years to air-maritime integration – both in the United Kingdom and in many overseas appointments – is unsurpassed.”

The award, announced in the King's Birthday Honours last year, was presented by the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Rich Knighton. And there may be a bit of banter among fellow WAFUs about the certificate's wording “for exceptional service... to the Royal Air Force”!



Rising from the depths

FOR a service which spends 99.9 per cent of the time out of the limelight, there was the chance to shine in the limelight at the annual ‘Submarine Oscars’.

With almost no public recognition for their duties, the Oscars – officially the Submarine Service Awards – is the opportunity to recognise those who do their business beneath the waves... not forgotten those who remain behind at home supporting them.

The ballroom of Glasgow's Hilton was ‘maxed out’ – 350 guests – as the red carpet was rolled out and serving and retired submariners, their families, friends, and affiliates all dressed up in their best bib and tucker for an evening of glitz and glamour to celebrate the very best in the service.

The head of the Silent Service Commodore Paul Dunn performed the duties of Master of Ceremonies as well as presenting a succession of awards.

Recognised were:

■ **HMS Vigilant (Port)** crew collected the Valiant Trophy as the first crew to excel in every element of Operational Sea Training in more than ten years.

■ **HMS Audacious** picked up the Conqueror Trophy for operational excellence in the underwater battlespace during her Mediterranean deployment last year. Her marine engineering department took the Submarine Engineering Excellence Award for their outstanding work throughout that mission.

■ **HMS Artful** possesses an equally-impressive marine engineering department. Their superior performance during Manoeuvring Room Training earned them the Sovereign Bowl, collected on the night by Lieutenant Commanders Paul McElroy and Sam Cameron.

■ **Nicola Trollope** received the Naval Families Federation Award for her continued support to all within the naval community.

■ And **Emer Flett** left the Hilton carrying The Royal Navy Family and People Support Award in recognition of the role as Service Pupil Advisor and



providing the highest level of educational care to the children of the submarine community.

■ **HMS Triumph's Chief Petty Officer Iain Hamblin** won the Thomas Tunnock award for having the greatest influence on morale on board the last T-boat, thereby generating an essential component of Operational Capability.

■ **Petty Officer Robert Evans** received the Orpheus Trophy on behalf of HMS Ambush's weapons section. Sponsored by RB Safety, it recognises those who have made a significant contribution to submarine safety.

■ **Chief Ellie Brown** was singled out by the Submariners Association Award which is presented to the Vanguard-class submarine trainee who has displayed the qualities and ethos of the submarine cadre and stood above their peers during initial training – in her case for displaying determination to succeed during Submarine Qualification.

■ **Gill Molyneux** presented the The Molyneux Prize in memory of her late husband. Awarded to the Astute-class submarine trainee who displayed the qualities and ethos of the submarine cadre and stood above their peers during initial training, it went to **Able Seaman Jack Viner** (pictured above

with Mrs Molyneux) for displaying courage, loyalty, discipline, integrity, and respect for others throughout training.

■ And finally, the impressive fundraising efforts of **WO1 Dave Bathgate** who established the charity Military Vs Cancer and brought in more than £250k so far earned him the Dean Rogers MBE Submarine Family Award for making a significant contribution to the wellbeing of the submarine community.

“It was a real privilege to host the Submarine Awards and my thanks go to everyone involved in the organisation of the evening,” said the Commodore.

“Gathering so many people from the Submarine Family together to recognise those individuals who have been at the forefront of submarine operations and also supporting our serving members and families made for a very special evening.”

Chief Petty Officer Mark Jones, the event planner said; “It's been a pleasure to organise an event of this scale, bringing the Submarine Service, industry partners and affiliates together for a night of enjoyment whilst strengthening liaison.”

A raffle on the evening also meant some of the guests left with impressive prizes, among them a hamper with £600 worth of items from Bremont UK, a bespoke piece of submarine art from Military in Art, a weekend break in the China Fleet Club in Devon and a Mulberry handbag worth more than £1,000.

Gemma's praised as network celebrates

AN OFFICER who champions neuro-diversity in the Forces was singled out as the Naval Servicewomen of the year – as the network championing the role and impact of women at sea celebrated its tenth anniversary.

Lieutenant Gemma Winterton (pictured), serving at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham, was described as “a force of nature for improving” the lives of neuro-distinct/diverse personnel across the three Services.

She organised a key conference on the subject – which acknowledges that the human brain functions in diverse ways – leading to the first support network in the Army, as well as support for students at Shrivenham.

Challenging inequality wherever she finds it, throughout her career Gemma has also supported students to give them every possible opportunity to reach their maximum potential, acting as an advocate for adaptive learning and demonstrating good practises and ways to help people succeed in learning and the workplace.

All of which led to the junior officer being applauded and honoured at the gala dinner at the Victory Services Club in London to mark the Naval Servicewomen's Network's tenth birthday.

“I feel very honoured to become the Naval Servicewoman of the year,” Gemma said. “All I have done is to help make the RN more inclusive and for the RN to better understand those who are neurodistinct.”

The network was established in 2013 in the wake of an eye-opening report commissioned by the Navy's Diversity and Inclusion team which revealed that recruitment and retention of women was in decline – despite the equality of opportunity offered by the integration of the Wrens and sea service for women some 20 years previously.

“I realised that part of the solution was about women helping themselves and each other, as well as collectively helping the Navy be the best employer of women that it could be”, the now-retired Commodore Ablett said. “A professional network is a great way to connect women serving all over the globe to achieve these aims.”

With its motto of Share, Inspire, Empower, the NSN supports Servicewomen across the Naval Service including the Royal Marines and Maritime Reserves and collaborates with the Herald Network which represents women of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

It organises events at a local and national level, from major conferences attended by more than 200 Servicewomen and men, sharing their experiences and listening to keynote speakers, to professional development (for officers beginning in 2014, for junior ratings 2019).

LWtr Izzy House was instrumental in organising the latter: “It has been great to



organise these events for junior servicewomen and the feedback has been very positive about the impact it is having to their career focus and motivation.”

The annual awards were introduced in 2020 to raise awareness and celebrate Servicewomen and their allies/advocates in the Royal Navy and across Defence.

Due to its growing breadth of experience and knowledge, the NSN has been approached by both other navies from other nations and other networks across government in the UK to form new partnerships.

The network also works closely with its Army and RAF Gender Network counterparts to bring cohesion across Defence and share ideas and opportunities with fellow servicewomen in other organisations.

Most recently, the network was recognised for its contribution to the MOD's response to the House of Commons Select Committee report into the lived experience of Servicewomen, advising the Secretary of State for Defence, bringing about much-needed changes to policy.

As the NSN embarks on its second decade, there is still work to be done to continue to empower Servicewomen in their careers and to enable the Royal Navy's drive towards equity and inclusion for all.

Anyone wanting to volunteer should email the committee at NAVY-NSWomenNetworkMailbox@mod.gov.uk.

Lantern app lights way to domestic abuse support

THE Britannia Lantern app has been added to MyNavy offering information and guidance to support those who have experienced or know and/or manage someone who's experienced domestic abuse and/or sexual violence. It's born out of the very personal and distressing experience of a serving member of the Royal Navy who when reaching out for divisional support, advice, guidance and care felt

that access to and awareness of the relevant information and support options could be better collated for their particular needs.

This App will help individuals, friends and others to understand the issue and support mechanisms available.

The app offers guidance in three key areas: I'm here for myself, I'm here for someone else and I'm here to learn.





All go in Allgau

WITH the Bavarian plain extending behind him, Royal Marine Jake enjoys klettersteiging in Germany's Allgau as he battles back to fitness.

Ten days in Bavaria broadened horizons and boosted confidence for six Royal Navy personnel striving to recover from illness and injury.

Tom, Curtis, Jake, Victoria, Waas, and Aaron headed to Wertach – about 60 miles outside Munich – to aid their recovery and rehabilitation.

The Army Adventurous Training Group organised a series of physical activities and challenges, including rock climbing, klettersteiging, kayaking and canoeing.

The six RN personnel were part of a larger group of 15 Servicemen and women, assisted by a team of Army Regular and Reserve instructors.

Those attending suffered from a range of conditions and injuries – spinal, head, mental health, and the effects of a sudden brain haemorrhage among others.

The majority of their adventurous training was focused on the rivers, lakes and crags in the Allgau region – although the team also ventured over the border into Austria.

“This has been of massive benefit to me, both the rock climbing and other activities,” said Curtis. “I have been given back my confidence and my eyes have been opened to what can be achieved.”

“I hope that I may be able to keep this going after I leave the Naval Service to pursue a civilian career.”

Another student added: “This has been a big part of my recovery, doing things that I had not previously done before and being out in some challenging situations. I’ve found it one of the better parts of my rehabilitation, seeing how much it is possible for me to do as I recover.”

Expedition organiser Major Richard Goodbody said: “No two groups are the same, but I am always humbled and inspired by courage and determination of the participants and this group has been no exception.”

“The confidence and self-belief generated by both the climbers and canoeists is a testament to the value and utility of adaptive adventurous training.”

The use of AT to assist Personnel on Recovery Duty (formerly known as Wounded, Injured and Sick (WIS) personnel) has been taking place for more than a decade.

Contact nicholas.richardson706@mod.gov.uk.



‘Wherever you went, there was Bob...’

THE Royal Navy has lost one of its biggest characters, champions and tireless workers with the sudden death of Commander Robert ‘Bob’ Hawkins.

In a career spanning six decades Bob, who died suddenly in early October, served in a slew of ships, held posts around the world, and experienced the technical and social changes which transformed the Navy from the one he joined at the age of 17 in 1978 to the one he continued to serve devotedly today.

Small ships or large – from P2000s and Hunt-class minehunters, destroyers and frigates, through to helping to bring carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth into service as her First Lieutenant (pictured above) – Bob tackled every posting and assignment with passion, commitment and forthright opinions.

The bulk of his career was spent in the mine warfare community. He qualified as a mine warfare/clearance diving officer in 1982 and much of the next quarter of a century would revolve around serving in, directing the actions of or training minehunters.

He later imparted much of his knowledge and expertise in mine warfare both with the arm of the then Flag Officer Sea Training organisation dedicated to preparing small ships, including minehunters, for front-line duties (once in the 90s, again a decade later), and spent four years assisting the Royal Saudi Navy with its Sandown-class minehunter programme.

His commitment to the subject – and the wider Royal Navy – earned him a date with Her Majesty in 2007 to receive the MBE.

After qualifying as a principal warfare officer, Bob was assigned to frigate HMS Brilliant in 1993 and served in the Balkan crisis – as featured by documentary maker Chris Terrill in the namesake TV series.

A generation later, Chris would feature Bob once again in his series on bringing HMS Queen Elizabeth into service.

In between, Bob served as HMS Iron Duke’s Executive Officer, shared his mine warfare expertise with a NATO staff in Brussels... and again with the US Navy, in particular the use of autonomous systems and clearing mines in very shallow waters.

He served on the staff of UKMCC, helping to oversee the RN’s most important

minehunting mission beyond home waters, joined allies in Penang in planning a series of exercises in the region involving Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the UK (Five Power Defence Arrangement).

And he commanded the Faslane Patrol Boat Squadron, charged with protecting the nation’s most important military assets, Vanguard-class nuclear submarines, and other RN and allied warships operating around HM Naval Base Clyde.

His most recent posting was as Commanding Officer of HMS Caledonia in Rosyth and chief-of-staff to the Royal Navy Regional Commander for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

This is barely a precis of a 46-year career – or touches on the man himself. Away from the RN, Bob was involved with the leadership of the Scout Association at home and abroad, and volunteered in Youth Justice in Scotland. He loved rugby (especially revelling in the RN’s infrequent victories over the Army), took minehunter veterans under his wing as chairman of the Ton-Class Association and championed the successful campaign to erect a memorial at HMS Vernon – now the Gunwharf Quays shopping/leisure complex in Portsmouth.

“Bob Hawkins made an immediate impact upon his arrival in HMS Caledonia, much as he has done throughout his long and industrious career,” said Brigadier Andy Muddimann RM, Naval Regional Commander Scotland and Northern Ireland.

“He will be sorely missed by the many whose lives he touched inside the Royal Navy and beyond and not least as a true gentleman and a leader.”

Bob’s friend of more than 40 years and fellow former mine warfare officer Rob Hoole added: “Bob was the personification of a naval officer; an inspiring leader and a true gentleman.

“His integrity was matchless and he could connect with anyone from admirals to the most junior sailor.

“He also had an innate sense of fun combined with a mischievous sense of humour. He seemed omnipresent too; wherever you went, there was Bob.”

He leaves behind his wife Trudy and four grown-up children, two daughters and two sons.

Wish you were here?

AND who wouldn’t want to swap Faslane for the clear blue waters of Fitzroy Island or Pompey for mountain biking through Queensland?

Enjoyable as these experiences are, they’re also character building... which is why they are classed as adventurous training, not a holiday.

Crews of both HMS Spey and Tamar benefited from the experience and knowledge of the Deployable Regional Unit AT instructors who organise challenging but enjoyable outdoor activities to ships and RM units and offer that little bit extra to personnel on lengthy deployments far from home.

Cairns is about as far from home as you can get – more than 9,400 miles from the vessels’ base of Portsmouth, and 1,200 miles north of Sydney.

But once you get there, what opportunities for AT: in the water, on the hills, beaches and rainforests.

With the patrol ships undergoing maintenance, many of the ship’s companies were stood down, allowing for AT action: trekking, mountain biking, snorkling and paddle boarding.

Personnel threw themselves into various once-in-a-life-time opportunities including snorkling on the Great Barrier Reef, trekking on Fitzroy Island, Mount Sorrow and Walsh’s Pyramid, cycling around the Cairns area, or encountering



huge salt water crocodiles in Daintree National Park.

For many, like Tamar’s Able Seaman Robert Stevenson, the highlight was snorkling on the world-famous barrier reef.

“It was the most amazing opportunity and not many people in the Navy have ever got to do it,” he said.

“The AT instructors made the day extremely enjoyable and stress free. They really looked after us

throughout. The whole package was very memorable and I would really recommend the opportunity to do something similar to other members of the RN”.

Shipmate Lieutenant Nathan Davies added: “We spent the entire day out on the water, snorkelling on three different dive spots on the same reef, it was the most amazing bit of swimming that I have ever done. All in all it was certainly one of my best days in the Navy!”



"IF YOU'RE going to come in, can you take your boots off because I've just had the carpet done..."

Well, that's one way to throw hard-as-nails marines off guard.

Another is a garish shirt, colourful tifter and sandals.

Then again a shipmate wearing a t-shirt with cannabis leaf motifs and 'OPIUM' in bright yellow letters doesn't really help your cause.

Still, Lieutenant Rhys Tanner did his best to throw a combined US-Filipino boarding team off the scent as they scoured HMS Spey.

The young officer and four colleagues were selected to play the crew of a rogue fishing vessel (as portrayed by Spey), attempting to smuggle drugs and arms across the Philippine Sea.

For the five 'fishermen', it was probably the most fun part of a two-week exercise their ship was invited to join: Sama-Sama.

Run jointly by the US and

Philippine Navies, it's a large, wide-ranging international workout focused on the security and prosperity of the region... and the ability of partner nations to support and safeguard that peace.

Spey took part in the sixth Sama-Sama - 'Together' in the local lingo Tagalog - last year and evidently impressed for the invitation was extended to join the seventh iteration.

The exercise drew in international allies committed to and with a vested interest in a flourishing Philippines: Canada and Japan joined the UK in providing warships alongside the joint hosts.

Before there could be any action at sea, participants spent a week ashore at a variety of Maritime Training Forums to discuss and share standard operating practices in subjects such as medicine, legal concepts, engineering, logistics and public affairs.

It also allowed some ceremonial duties and glad-handing with Spey hosting UK Ambassador Laure Beaufils, and Lt Gen Arthur Cordura, Vice Chief of Staff, Philippines Armed Forces, among other VIPs while alongside in Manila.

Participants then put to sea for manoeuvres off the coast of Luzon, Philippines, with the emphasis on joint cooperation and the combined response of several allied countries with naval vessels and maritime surveillance aircraft to build up a picture of what was happening across a broad expanse of ocean.

Sama Sama's varied programme spanned not only warfighting tactics (above, on and below the waves), but also a variety of 'policing' (such as board and search) and humanitarian training activities,

including a large-scale rescue operation.

Japanese destroyer JS Akebono acted as the hub while Spey, with the help of HMCS Vancouver's CH-148 Cyclone helicopter, searched and recovered an 'exercise survivor' played by a floating 'dummy' in the seas off the Philippines.

"It was really impressive seeing such a large number of allied warships. It's not every day that we get to see such a gathering of ships from so many different navies come together," said warfare specialist Able Seaman Alfie Williams.

In tandem with her sister ship HMS Tamar, Spey is one half of two Offshore Patrol Vessels now into their third year of operating around the Indo-Pacific, reinvigorating the Royal Navy's - and UK's - presence in a region of key importance to our

economic well-being and security.

Both vessels spend most of their time operating independently or with one or two other ships from the UK's many partners and nations in regions, so for Lieutenant Hayden Kyle-Davidson, HMS Spey's Operations Officer, larger-scale workouts like Sama-Sama were seized upon by the crew.

"For the crew of Spey, the opportunity to return to Exercise Sama-Sama for a second consecutive year has provided a chance to further integrate with a significant number of other nations whilst continuing to develop our great working relationship with the Philippine Navy alongside the many other allies and partners participating in the exercise."

Participating assets included the cargo/ammunition ship USNS Wally Schirra, US Navy Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Dewey, a P-8 Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft,



SAMA LOVIN'

Philippine frigate BRP Antonio Luna, Japan's Akebono and Canadian frigate HMCS Vancouver. Personnel from Australia, France and Malaysia also took part in Sama-Sama 23, making it the largest in the exercise's history.

"We are grateful for the bonds of friendship with the Philippine Navy that have grown stronger this year during Sama-Sama," said Commander Matthew Court, Spey's Commanding Officer.

"The joint exercises in company with Antonio Luna, Vancouver, Akebono and Dewey, have been rewarding and further demonstrate what can be achieved with collaboration and partnership.

"Both HMS Spey and Tamar represent the UK's commitment to our persistent regional engagement, and strength of our defence and security cooperation within the Indo-Asia Pacific region."

Pictures/words: Lt Cdr Shaun Roster



60th birthday celebrations in Malta as unit looks to build post-Covid



MALTA Unit (TS St Paul) is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, and, after having to trim their sails during the pandemic, it's now fair winds and following seas for this Eastern Area Sea Cadets unit.

Established in 1962, Malta Unit has a strong maritime heritage, historic connections to the Royal Navy and the Royal Family and played a crucial role in World War Two.

It currently hosts 23 cadets and 16 adult volunteers. PO (SCC) John Chetcuti officially took command of the unit in November 2022.

Four new staff members have also recently joined the team, three of who were once cadets at the unit.

"We are increasing our numbers of cadets and instructors after the COVID-19 pandemic had left an impact on attendance," said PO (SCC) John Chetcuti, OIC of Malta Unit.

"The unit is still growing and we are proud to see the young ones grow up from junior cadets to senior cadets, with some of them continuing on to become staff members to give back to the unit.

"We also have a number of parents who are former cadets at the unit now bringing their children to the unit to be part of Sea Cadets. It's clear that the unit has touched the hearts of many."

Captain Sea Cadets, Captain Neil Downing RN visited the Maltese unit over the summer to help relaunch TS St Paul at a special awards ceremony and parade night, which was attended by the Deputy British High Commissioner to Malta, Tristan Gilchrist, and the Commander of the Armed Forces of Malta, Brigadier Clinton O'Neill.

"It was an amazing experience to have the Captain at our unit and a great pleasure to meet him," said Cadet Jack, 14, who joined Malta Sea Cadets three years ago.

Apart from encouraging the unit for their achievements and efforts, the Captain was also successful in raising the profile of Malta Sea Cadets during his visit through media coverage – he was interviewed by both Malta Independent newspaper and Television Malta (TVM), the national television station of Malta.

The Captain explained to Malta Independent how Malta had taken quite a hit during the pandemic, as volunteers weren't able to offer the same support as before.

"The unit used to be much bigger but post-Covid it has shrunk. However, it has regenerated really well," he said.

Captain Downing added that because the cadets were so motivated to continue, they used to attend online training sessions with units from the United Kingdom.

This led to a 13-year-old Chanel from Malta Unit volunteering to join the Cadet Voice conference in Doncaster in England last October, where she acted as spokesperson for Malta cadets and painted a picture of how Malta Unit envisions helping Sea Cadets to develop in the future.

"She really did the island proud," Captain Sea Cadets said, going on to praise Malta Unit for doing incredibly well during competitions alongside UK units.

Chanel added: "At the conference, I met new people from various places across the UK, which allowed me to expand my knowledge and open my eyes to many things.

"Being part of Sea Cadets has been an incredibly positive experience for me, filled with friendships as well as life lessons and skills which are not achievable anywhere else."

Malta Unit's cadets also get the opportunity to go on many maritime adventures thanks to their fundraising efforts.

They have access to two RS21 sailing boats, a Trinity 500 sailing boat, three RS Quest sailboats, a new powerboat for rescues, and most recently, a new RIB.

Malta Unit proudly takes part in numerous community events, such as the late Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations held at the British High Commission, Remembrance Day, Trafalgar Day and Malta National Victory Day.

Maltese cadets also carry out volunteer work such as litter clean-ups.

The positive impact that the unit has on the young people in Malta is best summarised by the cadets themselves.

"My experience as a sea cadet has been exceptional – I have been able to learn lots of new skills and make new friends," says Cadet Victoria, aged ten.

"I have been given lots of opportunities from which I have gained valuable lessons and skills, which have helped me in my everyday life like leadership, commitment and problem solving."

"Our unit is constantly improving and adapting to become better," says Jake, 16. "Throughout the four years I have been part of Sea Cadets, I have learnt many things – one element which has truly stuck with me is the importance of discipline in one's life. I am truly happy to be part of this organisation."



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Sea cadets line the route for Royal visit in Aberdeen

SEA cadets from Aberdeen Unit (TS Scylla) and Grampian District played their part in the opening of a new South Harbour in Aberdeen by HRH The Princess Royal.

The Princess Royal had honour of unveiling a plaque to mark the opening of what is now the largest port (in terms of quayside length) in Scotland, which took ten years to build.

The redevelopment of the harbour is a significant milestone in the port's almost 900-year history.

Port of Aberdeen is the final stretch of quayside construction at South Harbour, with the new harbour becoming fully

operational at the end of September.

The Chief Executive of the Port and President of Sea Cadets Aberdeen, Commodore Bob Sanguinetti RN Rtd, gave a few words of encouragement to the 40 cadets lining the route of arrival for the Princess Royal.

He said: "Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal takes a keen interest in the maritime sector, and Port of Aberdeen is truly honoured that she will officially open Aberdeen South Harbour – a momentous occasion for all.

"Aberdeen is one of the busiest ports in the UK and the expanded port will be integral to supporting the nation's drive to

net zero, growth of green trade and maritime decarbonisation."

Erin, 13, one of the cadets who took part, said: "I was honoured to be part of this historic event for the city and the port."

Over 200 guests attended the official opening of the multi-million pound development, including senior representatives from the Scottish and UK Governments, port users and customers, industry, academia, members of the local community and former Port of Aberdeen colleagues.

Lt (SCC) Peter Ritchie RNR, Commanding Officer of Aberdeen Unit, said: "It was a joy to watch our cadets take part



in a new chapter of the port's history.

"I was thrilled that Sea Cadets was invited to join the occasion, alongside business

representatives and supported charities of the port.

"Along with other charities, Sea Cadets Aberdeen were also awarded £7,500 funding to put

towards the regeneration of their headquarters."

The Princess Royal has visited the Port of Aberdeen numerous times over the years.

First World War statue for war horses unveiled in Shirehampton



AVONMOUTH Unit took part in the unveiling of an eye-catching sculpture to honour those involved in the efforts to provide horses for the military during the Great War.

The sculpture, made entirely out of 380 used horseshoes by farrier Jason Baggs, is located in the Daisy Field in Shirehampton (near Bristol), where the horses were once shipped out to the frontline, and is visible from the Portway, the Severn Beach railway and the Avon.

Shirehampton was home to one of the five World War One Remount Centres around the country, set up to train horses for the Western Front, at a time when horses or mules were the main method of transporting people, military supplies and munitions.

The memorial is especially dedicated to the hundreds of thousands of horses and their trainers who passed through the depot on their way to the battlefields, most of whom never returned.

Avonmouth Sea Cadets were charged with guarding the sculpture, concealed under a sheet, ahead of the event.

The cadets played a prominent role in the unveiling ceremony, attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Bristol, Peaches Golding, and Darren Jones MP, who also gave speeches on the day.

Hundreds of people also

gathered on the field for this special commemorative event, despite the rainy weather.

"We were asked to provide a Guard of Honour for the horse statue and we were very pleased to take part in this very special day for the community," said Lt Cdr (SCC) Alison Fowler RNR, the Commanding Officer of Avonmouth Unit.

"Sea Cadets is always well received in the local community and the unveiling was no exception, with many comments on how well turned out the cadets were and how well they completed their role of Guard of Honour."

OC Jack, 15, said: "Personally I really enjoyed the event. "It felt like we were doing something really important."

"It was great to see the turnout of people and I really felt part of the community."

Cdt Callum, 13, said: "I enjoyed marching up to the ceremony and I enjoyed seeing the community come together."

The unveiling of the statue is culmination of several years' hard work and fundraising by the members of Friends of Lamplighters Marsh, while the plinth was supplied by Bristol Port Company.

Residents of the area are still finding shoes of horses and mules from World War One in their gardens.

Barnstaple celebrate 80 years afloat

BARNSTAPLE Sea Cadets invited the Countess of Arran, as vice Lord Lieutenant, the Mayor of Barnstaple and Commanding Officer of RMB Chivenor to celebrate the unit's 80th year.

The stimulus for setting up a Barnstaple unit of the Sea Cadets came in the middle of World War Two when a local young man wrote seeking the Mayor's support.

Despite it being war time the then Mayor, Alderman Charles Dart, personally took charge of a group to raise funds to open and run a unit, obtain sufficient skilled staff to train the cadets and find somewhere that they could hold their meetings.

This was all achieved in just five months and the first meeting of the unit was held in 1943.

During the war 31 cadets from the new unit left to serve their country; 26 joined the Royal Navy, three the Merchant Navy and two were chosen by ballot to work in the coal mines.

In 1946 after the war, the cadets were given their very own gunboat to use as their headquarters. The motor torpedo boat had been completely refitted by Appledore Shipyards and was moored at Mill Quay on the River Yeo.

Perhaps understandably the guns and engines had been removed before they could use it. Unfortunately maintenance and repair costs meant that it had to be handed back to

the Admiralty in 1955 and we had to move back onto land.

The unit's President, Commodore Tim Harris, said "The event was not only to mark a significant moment in their history but an opportunity to thank all those individuals and organisations that had helped set up the unit and kept it running for over eight decades.

"Without people continuing to volunteer their time and skills we would not be able to support the development of young people."

One of the greatest joys for volunteers comes from seeing cadets gain new skills, grow in confidence and make lasting friends.

One of the cadets who joined in the 1940's, Frank Kidwell, still remembered his proudest moment gaining his qualification as a Physical Training Instructor and carried the badge with him 80 years after he had gained it.

To be able to generate lifelong memories for young people was a great privilege.

The Area Officer for the Sea Cadets Commander Gary Mills congratulated the unit on their longevity and the commitment of their volunteers.

They continued to provide nautical fun for young people locally and helped inspire the next generation to come.

The evening closed with refreshments.



Dog rescued by cadets after getting stuck

A MUM has expressed how grateful she is to Stroud Sea Cadets after they rescued her dog from a pond in Cainscross.

The spaniel got into difficulty during a walk out in the evening.

Dog owner Emma said: "Our dog Louie decided to go for a swim in our local woodland park on our way home from a walk.

"He soon got himself into some trouble as the pond was about a metre deep with thick mud."

Emma's daughter, Eliza-Grace, 12, has some friends who are sea cadets and she decided to go to their unit at once.

"I knew my friends at Sea cadets were the best people to come and help me," she said.

The cadets immediately sprang into action, rushing over to the pond to rescue the hapless spaniel.

"I asked one of the most confident kayaker, Samuel, to help," said PO (SCC) Carly Pitcher, Commanding Officer of Stroud Sea Cadets.

"We got the kayak and safety equipment out and went down to the small lake. Samuel worked with Eliza-Grace's dad to kayak over to the dog, call him and drag him back to land.

"I stayed on land with the safety line and helped pull them back in. Everyone stayed calm and worked very well as a team."

Cadet Samuel, 13, said: "Of course I jumped at the opportunity to help out in my community and it was a brilliant experience."

"I can't thank the cadets enough for all their help," said mum Emma, "Sea Cadets is a fantastic organisation that will always go out of their way to help."

Clean-up task as Cadets get involved



IRVINE Sea Cadets joined forces with the Clean Up Crew, Rubbish Paddlers, and Scottish Maritime Museum to clear all of the litter along a stretch of the River Irvine.

The organisations focused their attention on the riverbank that stretches from the Ayrshire Metals site (near the Maritime Museum) all the way round to the railway viaduct, with cadets transporting the rubbish collected on their boats.

"The Big Irvine Riverbank Clean was very successful indeed, with 258 black bags of rubbish collected, 40 footballs, 25 tyres, 21 traffic cones, at least eight shopping trolleys, five big bits of plastic pipe, two wheelie bins, a mattress, a suitcase and a chair all collected," said Sub Lieutenant (SCC) Robert Duncan RNR, Commanding Officer of Irvine Sea Cadets.

"I am very proud of the cadets that took part. They showed great commitment by giving up their weekend to come and support their community."

Cadet James, 12, said: "It was hard work but I enjoyed it. The river looks so much cleaner."

Stunning new slipway for Southampton as firm save the day

SOUTHAMPTON Unit is delighted to have a new slipway to enhance their boating season, thanks to port operating company, DP World, stepping in to save the day.

Andrew Moll, Chairman of Trustees at Southampton Sea Cadets, said: "The unit's old slipway had deteriorated badly and was becoming hazardous. DP World, and their partners Earlcoate, have saved our boating season, as we could not afford to refurbish the

slipway ourselves.

"Thanks to their generosity and work we now have a fantastic facility that supports our kayakers, rowers, and dinghy sailors. It has been a tremendous effort and we cannot thank them enough."

The slipway will greatly add to the unit's facilities, making it easier for their cadets to take part in sailing and maritime activities at their base in Southampton, alongside the River

Itchen.

OC Eleanor said: "As a cadet that is visually impaired I always struggled on the old slipway as there were so many trip hazards and I had to have someone guiding me. With the new slipway I am able to safely and most importantly independently use the slipway for launching the kayaks."

"The slipway has had a huge impact on the unit and the boating that we can offer,"

said Lieutenant (SCC) Lindsay Bassett RNR, Commanding Officer Southampton Sea Cadets.

"It has meant that we are able to safely launch and recover the small boats we use."

Jonathan Scott, Head of Engineering at DP World, said: "We are delighted with the launch of the new state-of-the-art slipway, which will greatly benefit the local sea cadets club. We're proud of our ongoing commitment to support local communities through direct investment."



Jack lands starring role

CCF RN Cadet Jack B has recently taken part in some filming at The Andrew Simpson Centre (ASC), Birmingham at Bartley Sailing Club. Jack is currently on a Work Experience placement at the Centre and has been enrolled onto a Young Leader Programme to further develop his outdoor education and leadership skills.

Early this year the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) carried out the filming at ASC for their new strategy video. They are focussing on everything that the centre does in the day as well as everything that they do at the centre in general.

In the film they focussed on Jack and his involvement in the Young Leader Programme. They looked at what the programme is about and how Jack is, and will be benefiting from, his involvement and what it could lead to for him in the future, and also how it could inspire others across the country to get involved in this new programme.

Jack is a Selly Oak CCF RN Cadet in his third year of CCF.

All his experience in afloat activities has been gained through CCF Cadets and has led him to this point, and hopefully a future career on the water.

This opportunity could be life changing for Jack and had its genesis in the CCF RN.

Newbies visit Dartmouth

THE newest Combined Cadet Force section in the Combined Cadet Force had the opportunity to take its cadets to BRNC Dartmouth.

Northampton International Academy RN Section started in November 2022 and the cadets have been experiencing life in the Royal Navy and being able to get afloat.

The team at NIA arranged the visit so that the cadets could experience first hand what it is like to be a new officer joining the Navy and whilst at BRNC they had the opportunity to take part in several activities including, bouldering, boating, swimming, bridge simulator and the chance to brush up their drill and ceremonial on the famous parade square.

Sub Lieutenants Emma Perry and Wayne "Trigger" Rogers said: "It was great to be hosted at Dartmouth and for the cadets from Northampton to be able to immerse themselves in naval life, Northampton being about the furthest points from the sea it is sometimes hard to be able to bring the Royal Navy to the school but with courses and camps we can take the cadets to the navy."

The NIA are looking to grow the section over the next school year and hope to be able to visit BRNC again in the future.

Volunteer saves the flying day



COMBINED Cadet Force CFAV Lt Adrian P took to the air in support of his RAF colleagues.

Adrian, from Maidstone Grammar School helped to save a flying event.

Four CCF RAF cadets were stranded due to staff illness and just about to miss out on a very rare opportunity to experience gliding at RAF Kenley.

Adrian stepped up immediately to volunteer to support their activity, in a generous display of tri-Service support.

Adrian said: "In the end all four cadets flew the gliders twice spending up to half an hour in the air, each time.

"Lots of happy faces. And then at the very end of the day they asked if I would like to have a go.

"Donning my parachute (ten minutes of training on how to use it), I went up to 1,000 feet and took the controls and flew it around in a couple of wide circles before bringing it down to the final approach of the runway and then the pilot took over and landed. The flying experience was amazing."



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A ROYAL SHOWING FOR NAVY WOMEN

ONCE IN A LIFETIME EXPERIENCE

THE Royal Navy Senior Women's Football team had a royal weekend as they were crowned champions by The Duchess of Gloucester and met football royalty in the form of England's top scorer of all time, Ellen White.

The team played at the CSSC Women's Football Festival, where 18 teams from across the public, private and armed services competed for the title.

The day saw some fantastic football played by the Royal Navy women over eight matches, culminating in a 4-0 win in the final to become the overall competition champions. The Duchess of Gloucester presented the well-deserved trophy to the team.

Royal Navy Women's Manager Glenn Long said: "The ladies were outstanding throughout to win this highly-competitive tournament, they played some very good football and had a ruthless streak in front of goal, scoring an impressive 28 goals in just eight games. This weekend's achievement highlights their strong start to the season and demonstrates their prowess on and off the field".

Ellie Bishop, Royal Navy midfielder, was named player of the tournament for her outstanding performance's throughout.

She said: "It was a brilliant day and great experience to be able to play at St Georges Park and to show Ellen White what Royal Navy Womens football has to offer. The RN Women's football team has a great set-up, from the RNFA, the management and the team and that was shown throughout today. I was shocked at getting player of the tournament with so many great players playing, however its an achievement im proud of, but it couldn't happen without the coaches and players around me. Hopefully this trophy can be the first of many this season."

To top the day off for the team, they met England Women's Football team all-time goal scorer Ellen White and were able to chat tactics with one of the best.

The tournament provided a brilliant opportunity to participate in competitive football for all the teams involved, and the Royal Navy Women look to return next year to defend their title.



HMS QUEEN Elizabeth's golf team were treated to a once-in-a-lifetime experience last month when Andy Stubbs and Scott Evans at Centurion Club, Hertfordshire agreed to host a Ryder Cup style match for the fleet flagship versus RAF Marham.

Having hosted both the LIV Golf & the ARAMCO Team Series in July, both teams were relishing the chance to play such an elite course.

The format was 4BBB with scores from all three matches counting towards an overall score at the end.

In the first match, RAF Marham's Flt Lt Harry Charlton & CT King were beaten convincingly by PO Chris Morris & LCpl Dan Pellow who dovetailed well producing a 6-0 win with Dan himself shooting an impressive 7 over par with 4 birdies along the way.

Match 2, saw the overall deficit halved to 6-3 as HMS Queen Elizabeth's Lt Cdr Lee Sanders & CPO George Bowhill lost 3-0 to PO Rudge & Bryan Banham.

Meaning that anything better than a 2-0 loss in the final match for WO Bob Callow & CPO Stuart Millar would ensure a win for the nation's flagship. Unfortunately for HMS Queen Elizabeth, the final RAF pairing of FS Scott & CT Collins played some inspired golf on the back 9 running off 3-0 winners to bring the overall final score to 6-6.

Honours even and although there was no winning team on the day, captains Chris Morris and Harry Charlton agreed that everyone who took part were winners having played such a wonderful course, with both teams very much looking forward to the rematch next year.



ANGLERS NET ACCOLADES AT INTER SERVICES

ROYAL Navy anglers took individual honours at the Inter-Services fly fishing competition on Rutland Water.

Wet and windy weather conditions on the reservoir made it tough to catch fish, but LH Kev Bowstead took five rainbow trout to secure the trophy for the best individual bag weight. Kev also caught the second-heaviest fish in the main competition.

In the Veterans' match, Chris Anderson's bag of two rainbow trout included the biggest fish overall, a 4lb 4oz specimen, ensuring a win for the RN Veterans.

In the main competition the RN, with 19 fish, were close runners up to the Army who took 22. The RAF finished third with 16 fish.

Outgoing RN team captain CPO Nik Tomkins who leaves the Service imminently, said: "This is the best Inter-Services result for the RN in my 30 years and reflects the steady growth and development trajectory of the squad in the last five years.

"It's an amazing way end to my time as captain and I am looking forward to returning with the Veterans squad."

Making her Inter-Services debut, Chef Emma Forster added: "It has been a great few days. I was so pleased to get a fish on a day when everyone found it difficult."

The RN Angling Association is actively recruiting so if you are interested in trying fishing check out RNTM 10-015/23.



RIDERS GO OUL OUT

ROYAL Navy Royal Marines Road Racing Team Race Report – Round 7 Oulton Park...

Buried deep within the Cheshire countryside is a 2.26-mile-long loop of black asphalt that goes by the name of Oulton Park.

Widely accepted one of the most physically demanding and exciting circuits in the UK, it is loved (and loathed) far and wide. As with most racing series at Oulton Park, track action is limited to Friday and Saturday due to local by-laws preventing racing on Sunday (there are a few exceptions). No Limits Racing chose to limit testing to Friday morning, followed by Qualifying in the afternoon, leaving a full day of action-packed racing for Saturday. The team took it steady on Friday Morning, some learning the circuit for the first time, some learning to ride their bikes in anger for the first time, like newcomer LH Jamieson. Came on his '99 Yamaha R6, having recently gained his ACU intermediate-licence. Jamieson was joined at this round by newcomer and exciting young prospect AB Harry Morris on his CBR600RR; RNRMRRT veteran WO2 Brian Fudge on his pristine Kawasaki ZX6R; third-year racer Lt Cdr Ryan Hughes on the team-owned BMW S1000RR; and long-standing Crew Chief turned racer and Team Captain, CPO Adam Myhill on his rapid 'Trigger's broom' '99 Yamaha R6. The team were also supported by an excellent team of new pit-crew members, our racer turned media whiz, LH Natalie Cro and of course our honorary member and mother of the team, Tiff.

With everyone feeling comfortable and dialled into the lumps, bumps and banked hairpin of Oulton Park, the time had come to step things up a gear. The team's individual class qualification sessions gave them the opportunity to spin some laps with a bit more gusto ahead of the all-important Inter-Services Qualifying Session. With only 10 minutes available to put together their best laps, the results were in: three tenths of a second separated Brian, Harry and Ryan, qualifying 11th (1:51.834), 12th (1:51.948) and 13th (1:52.137) respectively, followed by Adam in 23rd (1:59.171) and Jamieson in 29th (2:11.308). And with that, Friday's track time was finished. The team spent most of the evening working on Jamieson's bike which had developed a serious issue with his rear axle. Some innovative Dremel use and some spare parts assistance from a fellow competitor meant the bike was repaired, scrutineered for safety and ready to race.

On Saturday the team awoke to a beautiful morning and the forecast was for a hot, sunny day. So, after a brisk walk around the 2.26-mile-long circuit, the generators and tyre warmers were on to get the team's super sticky Michelin slicks up to temperature.

Newcomer 600 (Harry) - After starting from tenth on the grid and getting an excellent start, Harry maintained his position but was unfortunately taken out at Lodge corner on lap three. He walked away without so much as a scratch and made his way back to the paddock with his battered CBR. The team rallied round to get it fixed and he was able to make Race 2 just in time. The crash had resulted in him dropping a few spaces on the grid, but another great start and some fierce battling saw him bring it home in 12th.

Pre-Injection 600 (Adam and Jamieson) - With the grid shared with the Newcomer 600 class,



Adam and Jamieson started further back on the grid than their actual position within their class, 7th and 13th respectively. Adam ran a great race, getting more out of his R6 than he used to after having it properly set up on the Dyno over summer, bringing home 7th place and Jamieson finally got to experience his first race start and took the chequered flag in 10th place. With Adam starting race 2 from the same grid position and Jamieson having moved up to 10th based on his lap times, the two took to the track. With more confidence, Jamieson enjoyed his second race, maintaining his position to finish 10th. Adam however suffered a technical issue and retired from the race on lap 6.

Cup 1000 (Ryan) - After qualifying in 25th, Ryan had a decent start and set about working his way through the field (unsuccessfully). After suffering a failure with his quickshifter he had to relearn how to do quick, clutchless up shifts and smooth downshifts, but this sadly slowed him down and unfortunately only made up two places to finish 23rd. The slower lap times meant Ryan started Race 2 in 30th position, but after a strong start and some hard battles, he was able to work his way up to 21st. Again, the quickshifter failed on the final few laps so his progress was halted, but he maintained position until the

chequered flag.

Super Series 600 (Brian) - With a few well-known British Super Sport stars (including Tom Booth-Amos) making up the front rows of the grid, Brian was in tough company. Starting from 15th in class, Brian put in a strong effort and brought home the chequered flag in 11th. Unfortunately, due to a technical disqualification, Brian was forced to start the Race 2 from the back of the grid but again put in a sterling effort to finish the race in 13th in class and beating his best lap time with a 1:50.855.

Inter-Services Race - As the lights went out for the 6th Inter-Services race of the season, the added benefit of electronic launch control gifted Ryan with a great start and was ahead of his RN teammates into the first corner. Brian wasn't going to let him off that easy, and pushed his way through at Cascades and the two made their way towards Island bend with Harry close behind. The power of the BMW gave Ryan the edge down the straight reaching speed in excess of 140mph, but the lighter and sharper steering Kawasaki 600 took the inside line through the banked Shell Oils hairpin. With Brian in his sights, Ryan stayed hot on his heels and finally made the pass that stuck into Hissy's chicane. He then went on to make passes on three

RAF and one Army rider over the next two laps to settle into his finishing position of 8th after a rather lonely remaining 4 laps and achieving his PB lap time of 1:50.582. Brian and Harry continued to battle over the course of the race, trading positions multiple times. Harry became desperate to get past Brian in the final few corners, pushing to his limits, but Brian's experience came to the fore, and he beat Harry to 13th place by 0.087 seconds! Adam and Jamieson had their own battles further down the field, finishing in 24th and 27th place respectively. Unfortunately for Adam, his ability to push for a better position was cut short by a low oil level warning light on his dash, forcing him to wind down on the final lap of the race.

And with that, the Oulton Park round was finished. The event was a real success with a new rider completing his first ever races, and the team welcoming some new pit crew members, all with ambitions to race next year. A huge thanks as usual goes out to our sponsors without which we simply would not be able to do what we do.

Next up: Donington Park GP, 7-8 Oct 23, for the final round of the 2023 season.

If you're interested in joining the team as a rider or pit crew, get in touch on social media or RNRMRRT@hotmail.co.uk.

SHARPSHOOTERS ON TARGET WITH MEDAL HAUL



ROYAL Navy hosted the Inter-Services Long-Range Championships 2023 and brought home the gold.

The RN, Army, RAF, Police Sport UK (PSUK) and the English Shooting Union (ESSU) contested the shoot-out, held annually at Bisley. The event sees both matches between the tri-services and a combined service match against the ESSU.

This year the RN managed to send a team consisting of nine members, made up of both experienced shooters and up-and-coming members who have recently joined the team.

The event saw on the first day saw the individual match and finals with each service managing to get two shooters into the finals consisting of eight

finalists with Sub Lt Theo Dodds and Lt Neil Umpleby representing the RN.

The second day of the event saw the team matches and the UK Armed Forces team vs ESSU and PSUK in which the RN managed to get Sub Lt Dodds and Lt Umpleby in the team with LAET Chris Nunan as a reserve. The UKAF team beat the Police team and narrowly lost to the England team. The RN team finished 2nd in the Inter-service prone matches.

Despite the weekend seeing challenging shooting conditions, Sub Lt Dodds shot consistently strong scores winning multiple medals and trophies and retaining several from the previous year. This is an outstanding achievement with the experienced competition present.

THE NAVIGATOR

ROYAL Navy officer Lieutenant Jules Caithness has the unique responsibility of navigating the US Navy warship named after Britain's World War Two leader.

Jules, from Cambridgeshire, is the navigating officer of USS Winston S Churchill, which recently trained with HMS Dauntless as the Type 45 headed for Mayport, Florida, during a pause in her Caribbean patrol.

The US Navy destroyer always sails with a Royal Navy exchange officer aboard because it's named after Churchill, a nod to the enduring alliance between Britain and the USA and the indomitable wartime leader's family ties in America.

Jules said: "That the US Navy would trust a foreign officer with this responsibility speaks to the reputation of Royal Navy training."

"USS Winston S Churchill has just completed a significant mid-life upgrade and is now the most advanced anti-air warfare and ballistic missile defence ship in the US Navy's arsenal."

"Working on board such a cutting-edge vessel has been a fantastic learning opportunity for me as a Warfare Officer, and the trust reciprocated by the US Navy in a British Officer to navigate the ship is testament to the ongoing strength of the Special Relationship."

"A highlight for me so far has been being nominated as Force Navigator for a task group of six destroyers and a Littoral Combat Ship during a hurricane evacuation."

USS Winston is the only US Navy vessel to have a Royal Navy officer permanently assigned to the ship's company.

The destroyer flies the Royal Navy's White Ensign and Churchill house flag on special occasions, while the crew wear a combined UK/US patch of their arm.

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

Lt Caithness follows a celebrated line of officers who have gone on exchange with the USS Winston Churchill, including Rear Admiral Angus Essenhigh, the UK's National Hydrographer.

Jules lives with wife, Emma, an American attorney from Nashville, Tennessee, and has previously served aboard HMS Diamond, HMS Ocean, HMS Sutherland and HMS Albion.



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Ask Jack

Exeter White Ensign Club will be closing in early 2024 after more than 40 years in the former Holy Trinity Church in South Street.

Over its lifespan the club, which serves as a hub for several veterans' groups in the city, including the WRNS, Royal Marines and Submariners' Associations, has collected more than 270 plaques/mounted crests of ships and units. All are being sold for £40 each (including postage and packing), available from the club treasurer at roc91014@gmail.com or 07812 789 233. Just name the crest you'd like.

HMS Lord Austin: I am seeking family or friends of sailors who served on the trawler which was sunk in the Seine Bay on June 24 1944. Seven crew were lost and the remainder were rescued by US Coast Guard Rescue Flotilla One cutter USCG 56. My cousin Jess Alton Gipson was a crew member

of USCG 56 which rescued survivors. I am in contact with the daughter of the Commander and the son of one of the crew of USCG 56 and we want to share information with any of the survivors' families about their rescue. We have the names of the seven crew members who were lost but not the survivors. If anyone has information regarding the survivors, they can contact me by email at sggipson@msn.com. **Gary Gipson**

FRADU: I would like to contact the following former Fleet Requirements and Air Direction Unit Hunter pilots who mounted detachments at RAF Gibraltar from 1980 to 1983: Tommy Thompson, Godfrey Underwood, Simon Willoughby and Derek Morter.

Tony Fairburn, Sqn Ldr (Rtd)
tony.fairbairn@btinternet.com

Johnny Craig: We are trying to contact Johnny for our 40th secondary school reunion.

We know he joined the Royal Navy and served in submarines. He left St Columba's College in Dublin in 1982, aged around 18.
William Simpson
Whsimpson@gmail.com

HMS Plym: I would like to trace the River-class frigate's unofficial timber crest. She left Devonport reserve in 1951/2 and deployed on Operation Hurricane in the Monte Bello Islands of Western Australia, where she was destroyed in the UK's first nuclear weapon test.

The ship was stripped 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

HMS Blake Association: Our inaugural reunion and annual meeting takes place at the Royal Maritime Hotel in Portsmouth on November 3 to 5. Call 02392 982182 Ext. 1 to book your accommodation using code GA000510. Details on hmsblake.co.uk and HMS Blake Facebook page.

HMS Ark Royal: A reunion is planned at the Wallasey branch of the RNA from Friday November 17 to Sunday November 19. For details contact Gordon Weir at gordyweir@gmail.com or John Williams at jwill085@gmail.com

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association and HMS Tenby 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. For HMS Tenby contact David Macalister on dmac121dm@gmail.com

HMS Medway Queen. Are you connected with the Medway Queen – one of the last large ships involved with the Dunkirk evacuation still with us?

The team lovingly restoring the paddle steamer want to celebrate her 100th birthday next year by involving every one who has played a part in bringing her back to life. As well as carrying hundreds of thousands of tourists

from the Medway to Southend, Herne Bay and Clacton on pleasure cruisers, she was pressed into service as a minesweeper in WW2. In May 1940 she was sent across the Channel and brought back around 7,000 troops from Dunkirk, securing her place in naval history. 100th birthday plans include a memorial service at Rochester Cathedral on Sunday April 21 2024. Former crew, staff, anyone involved in the long restoration of the ship or has a story to tell about the ship and their experiences aboard, especially families of Dunkirk veterans saved by the ship should contact Pam Bathurst of the preservation society (pambathurst@sky.com) or Medway Queen Preservation Society, Gillingham Pier, Pier Approach Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 1RX).

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the September edition of *Navy News* (right) was HMS Powerful, which was renamed HMCS Bon Adventure once sold to Canada.

David Jacob, from Kettering, wins £50 for sending the correct answers.

This month's mystery ship (above right) was a temporarily-chartered roll-on roll-off ferry chartered from Norway by MoD in 1983 to fill a gap left by lost and damaged ships during the Falklands conflict.

1. What was her name? and what was the name of her sister ship?

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 November 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 December 4. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted.

No correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our January edition.

Please note the Mystery Ship competition will cease from January 2024.

MYSTERY PICTURE 345

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
- If you are sending your notice via email, please include your full address and telephone number.
- Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.
- Please send in reunions at least two months (preferably three) before the month of the event. There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.
- Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.
- The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Ask Jack columns in next month's Noticeboard must be received by **November 12 2023**



Collector Craig's bid for record

MILITARY fan Craig Pennells is closing in on his quest to amass a world record number of lanyards.

Craig now has 1,860 but wants to beat the current world record of 3,260 lanyards in a single collection.

Craig, who has previously featured in *Navy News*, said: "I also dream of having tours of military units. I am particularly interested to have my picture taken sitting in the pilot seat of aircraft, wearing pilot peaked caps.

"I would also welcome lanyards from the British Army and RAF."

Craig, who describes himself as having 'autism superpowers' has a shopping list of items he would like to add to his collection, including gizzits from Royal Navy air squadrons, ships and submarines, as well as Royal Navy sports associations.

Anyone wishing to add to his collection can contact Craig at Lanyard.challengercollector@gmail.com



Pupils go electric with racing cars

RED Bull, Ferrari and Mercedes now have competition from students at Woodfarm High School, East Renfrewshire after achieving their Industrial Cadet Silver Awards for building an F24 electric-powered car ready for testing and racing next year.

The engineering project, spearheaded by the Royal Navy's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Team, encourages secondary school pupils from around the UK to take up STEM subjects and develop careers in engineering disciplines.

The Royal Navy have partnered with Greenpower and the Engineering Development Trust (EDT) to provide this Royal Navy Engineering Challenge (RNEC).

Students from several schools and colleges from England, Scotland and Wales are participating, forming after-school clubs to build the cars with support from industry, parents and the RN.

Teams have spent the past 12 months getting the battery-powered car chassis, steering, breaking and electrics built to the point of first laps of testing on school grounds.

Lt Cdr Paul Youngman, Navy Strategy SO2 and Project Lead, said: "We have been working with the EDT for several years now and it is important we are able to use the Industrial Cadets accreditation bronze, silver or gold award as a quality benchmark for RN STEM outreach and education programmes which help to build pathways through education to employment.

"As well as engineering projects the scheme allows the Royal Navy to deliver soft skills, project



management and team building skills. In 2023/24 we are also teaming up with Greenpower to deliver the F24 kit car challenge which will include 15 schools and colleges within the UK, and a number of University Technical Colleges), which are supported by the RN."

The group of 14 pupils from Woodfarm High School organised themselves into teams to conduct research and build the kit cars.

The pupils took differing approaches to project management – one concentrating more on research to develop the project; the other learning and progressing through a more hands on approach.

Workbooks provided by the RN STEM Team offered guidance with designing, building and reporting on project progression leading to presentation of their hard work to the Royal Navy and EDT.

Formal presentations from both teams – the Pink Panthers and Rainbow Warriors – were delivered to Ciara Duffy, Director of EDT Scotland, and Lt Raj Mehon, a submarine engineering officer and STEM Ambassador.

Lt Mehon said: "The students

have clearly worked exceptionally hard over the last year to take this kit and create and develop a really impressive electric car. It was also great to hear them talk openly about their mistakes and how they overcame them.

"Their ideas are vivid and well thought through, and our discussions on project management and safety were great learning opportunities. You can see they all have a bright future in STEM going forward. Can't wait for race day!"

Afterwards the students received their well-earned Silver Award certificates from the Royal Navy.

There are also plans to encourage a younger group of Woodfarm pupils to continue work on the project and hopefully gain their own Industrial Cadet Silver Award.

In 2024, the challenge will culminate with a "Greenpower Race Meet" where the schools and universities will compete for the chequered flag.

Anyone interested in volunteering for RN STEM projects around the UK should contact: Lt Cdr Paul Youngman (Navy StratPol-SO2 UTC Aff) or C/Sgt Will Parker (Navy StratPol-STEM-SNI).

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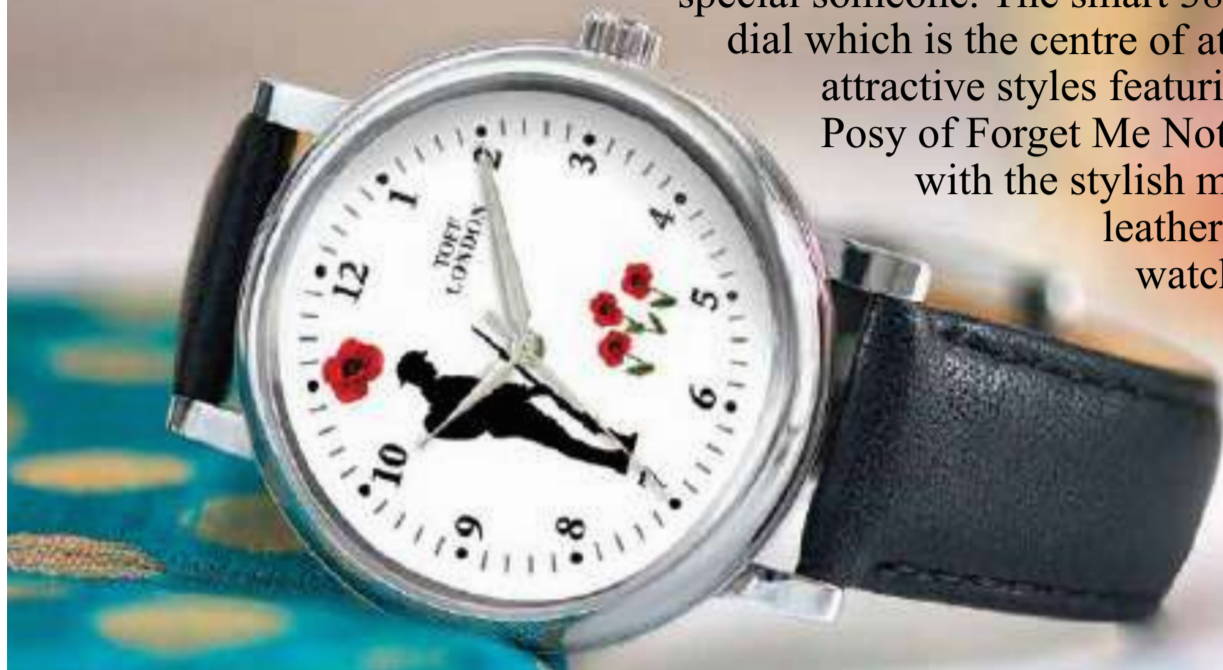
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