



# NAVY NEWS

FEBRUARY 2020



## White-out

A VIKING from Armoured Support Group Royal Marines conducts driving training in the snow and ice at Setermoen in Norway during the Green Berets' winter deployment (see pages 20-25)

Picture: PO (Phot) Si Ethell

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**FREE INSIDE: PULL-OUT AND KEEP FLEET POSTER 2020**



Pictures: Royal Australian Navy



**AIRCREWMAN** Leading Seaman Ben Nixon averts his gaze from the conflagration devouring Morton and Jerrawangala National Parks – 125 miles southwest of Sydney – unwilling, for the moment, to watch his homeland being devoured by the seemingly-unstoppable wildfires raging through southeast Australia.

Looking away isn't an option for the young sailor's Flight Commander, trying to guide his MRH90 helicopter through smoke and flame.

This is the third month Lieutenant Commander Nick Grimmer has endured such conditions.

His flying suit reeks of smoke and burning. So too his helicopter.

This is about as far away from pinging as the pilot might expect to be.

The 35-year-old is on a three-year exchange with the Royal Australian Navy's Fleet Air Arm,

swapping the submarine-hunting Merlins of 814 Naval Air Squadron for troop carrying MRH90s of 808 Naval Air Squadron.

The Australian squadron, based based at HMAS Albatross, 100 miles south of Sydney, is a dedicated disaster relief/aid unit.

This austral summer it found itself in action. On its doorstep. Crews expect to be called upon to help during the bushfire season, which typically begins in November.

What they – and most Australians – did not anticipate was the scale of this year's fires.

808 have been in constant action since the first blazes flared up in November, providing assistance to people whose lives have been threatened by the fires.

The fliers were given a few days' rest over the festive period to recuperate.

But as crews got ready to enjoy new year celebrations, they were recalled to duty as the fires threatened to engulf a succession of towns and communities in southeastern Australia; Nick Grimmer's Flight – one helicopter, five aircrew and 14 engineers – was ordered to join the amphibious ship HMAS Choules.

Residents of the small town of Mallacoota fled to the beach when the flames could no longer be held back. They spent a few days on the sands before the Choules arrived to take them off.

The bulk of the evacuees were collected by landing craft; Lieutenant Commander Grimmer's helicopter launched to search for people still cut off from the beach as well as to survey the extent of the conflagration and the damage it had caused.

"People tend to look after their properties until the very last minute. When the time comes to leave, the roads are often already blocked by fire so there's no escape. People either retreat to a 'cocoon' in the



● Lieutenant Commander Nick Grimmer takes a break from sorties and (top left) the terrifying view from the cockpit

centre of their homes, or they look for evacuation. Saving them in the nick of time is extremely gratifying," the naval aviator explained.

The Choules – formerly in UK service as RFA Largs Bay – was turned into "something of a Noah's Ark" as alongside around 1,100 people evacuated from Mallacoota were 117 dogs, four cats, a parakeet and a rabbit. They were safely transported along the coast to Melbourne.

"Watching people – everyone from a baby of two months to an elderly lady in her 90s – get off in Melbourne, relieved, saying 'goodbye', 'thank you' and shaking everyone's hands was very gratifying, definitely the highlight and made all our efforts seem worthwhile."

Despite wall-to-wall global media coverage, Lieutenant Commander Grimmer says nothing can prepare anyone for the reality on the ground.

"The scale of the fires are phenomenal and the devastation is truly horrific. At times it seems the entire horizon is on fire with flames up to 50 or 60 feet high, and smoke, everywhere you look," he added.

“““

The scale of the fires are phenomenal and the devastation is truly horrific. At times it seems the entire horizon is on fire.

LT CDR NICK GRIMMER

conditions, with crews expected to make life-and-death decisions on almost every sortie.

"You have to fly low because of the visibility – then suddenly you find yourself in thick smoke and are forced to either turn back or climb rapidly to avoid running into mountains. There's a fine line between what you can do and what is not possible, with risks being constantly re-

evaluated.

"It's frequently difficult to breathe. Your clothes, in fact the entire aircraft stinks of smoke and everyone is exhausted. But it's also by far the most rewarding thing we've done."

Lieutenant Commander Grimmer spent six months in Sierra Leone as part of Britain's efforts to halt the spread of the Ebola virus in 2014-15 – another challenging but rewarding mission – but nothing in his 12 years in the Royal Navy compares with the past two months in southeastern Australia.

"Every day you go through the spectrum of emotions – from intense lows to highs," he explained.

"And every day you are making life-and-death decisions: can we get in there to evacuate people or not? There are times we have to say 'no' because the smoke is too thick.

"On one occasion, we winched down our aircrewman. There were two elderly gentlemen, the flames were lapping at their porch – they were just 50 to 100 metres away. They had no escape, but we safely evacuated them."

And then there is the much-publicised plight of Australia's animals dying in their huge numbers.

"I'm an animal lover and seeing the impact on wildlife is heart-breaking – all too often we are seeing dead animals who have succumbed to the fires in fields we are landing in."

Yet for every such tragedy there is a triumph – small on the grand scale of the disaster, but personally heartwarming.

"We recently winched down our aircrewman from 150 feet to a man on his porch. He was fine, his house was safe, but his wife had fled the fire a few days before. She had no idea whether he was alive or the house was standing due to no power or communications. We were able to tell her both were safe – that was a wonderful feeling."

# FLIGHTS INTO HELL





# Taste of the tropics

## Medway heads west as younger sister makes home debut

WAVING goodbye to the cold for several years are the crew of HMS Medway which left Portsmouth for the Caribbean.

Not two months after the first of the new generation of patrol ships, HMS Forth, headed to the Falklands to replace HMS Clyde (see pages 16-17), her younger sister sailed for the warmer climes of Britain's overseas territories in the West Indies/North Atlantic.

She'll stay there as long as required by the navy/government, carrying out a three-pronged mission: a winter and spring dedicated to counter-narcotic works with international partners; summer and autumn on disaster relief stand-by for the frequent storms which barrel through the region; and all-year-round flying the flag for the UK.

In taking up station in the Caribbean, Medway frees up RFA Mounts Bay which has been on patrol for nearly three years – she returns home for maintenance before resuming her 'day job': supporting amphibious operations by the Royal Marines.

HMS Medway's Commanding Officer, Commander Ben Power, pictured far right, said deploying came off the back of a whirlwind few months for his ship.

"It has taken an extraordinary effort to get Medway ready to deploy. Since leaving Scotstoun we have conducted the fastest generation of a

surface ship in recent memory – this has only been possible due to the commitment, loyalty, grit and hard work of my superb ship's company. I am indebted to them and their families," he said.

While Medway is deployed, members of the ship's company will spend ten weeks on board and then four weeks off in rotation, allowing them to enjoy leave or undertake courses and training, without disrupting the vessel's busy programme.

A few weeks earlier and sister ship HMS Trent – the third of the second generation patrol ships – made her debut in Portsmouth.

With HMS Tamar and Spey still to come, the quintet at the heart of the RN's new 'forward presence' strategy is taking shape, with the goal of stationing the vessels in areas key to the UK's military, political and economic interests around the globe.

For now, however, Trent's eyes are fixed on home waters and getting through trials and training ready to perform any mission from fishery protection through to anti-smuggling, border patrols, counter-terrorism and counter-piracy.

Aside from a crew of 40, there's space for up to 50 troops/Royal Marines; the flight deck can accommodate Wildcat and Merlin helicopters; there's a 30mm automated main gun; and flat out the engines push Trent along at a good 24kts.

"The ship's company and our partners in BAE

Naval Ships have put in a tremendous amount of work to ensure she is ready to be accepted into the fleet," said Lieutenant Commander James Wallington-Smith. "It is a great privilege to be the ship's first commanding officer and I am proud of what has been achieved thus far.

"Trent now enters the next phase which will see her develop into a warship, being made ready for sustained patrol operations in the new year."

Trent's newest joiner, Sub Lieutenant Hugh Brook, added: "It is an incredible experience to be part of HMS Trent's maiden voyage and I am looking forward to spending more time at sea driving the ship."

HMS Trent is due to be formally commissioned later this year in the presence of crew's families, affiliates and Lady Sponsor Pamela Potts, who formally named the warship on the Clyde at BAE's Scotstoun yard in March last year.

She joined Trent upon the ship's arrival to see the Blue Ensign – the flag of a vessel in government hands – hauled down and the White Ensign hoisted in its place, an historic moment in the warship's history also witnessed by friends and family.

They welcomed Trent at Portsmouth's South Railway Jetty – and were given a tour of the brand-new ship once the gangway was across.

Trent conducted her first sea trials over the

summer, before returning to BAE for final tweaks and completion of fitting out ahead of the ship's company moving aboard a couple of months ago to begin turning Trent into a working warship.

■ The Christmas plans of 40 men and women aboard HMS Tyne were interrupted by the Russian Navy.

The patrol ship, top right, was called upon to leave her native Portsmouth on Christmas Eve to keep watch on the Smolnyy-class training ship Perekop which passed the UK on December 25.

Tyne met up with the 41-year-old vessel off the Thames estuary and remained with the Russian as she passed through the UK's area of interest.

"National security doesn't stop for Christmas - we had bags packed and were ready to go," said Commander Jon Browett, HMS Tyne's Commanding Officer.



Picture: LPhoto Joe Cater



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## Proposal as Kent back in homeport

THERE were cheers, tears and at least one proposal of marriage as HMS Kent returned home to Portsmouth.

A four-month stint guarding shipping entering and leaving the Gulf ended – and with it a hectic 2019 for the frigate – when she came alongside the naval base's South Railway Jetty, where well over 200 friends and family were waiting on a blustery, grey December day to be reunited with their loved ones.

Second down the gangway behind the frigate's Commanding Officer Commander Andrew Brown was Leading Engineering Technician Jordan Andrews.



The leading seaman from North End in Portsmouth claimed he'd won a raffle to get ahead of his shipmates...

...But on the jetty, to the applause of the rest of the 200-strong ship's company, he got down on his knee, whipped out a ring he'd purchased in Dubai, and asked his long-term girlfriend Charlotte Winsor, a nurse at the city's Queen Alexandra Hospital, to marry him.

"Proposing today was always part of the plan – I thought I would make the most of the homecoming. I'm so pleased she said yes!" said an emotional Jordan.

Having clocked up 46,100 miles at sea in 2019 and guided his ship into and out of 17 ports, Commander Brown was delighted his men and women could finally enjoy some rest, mission accomplished.

"I could not be prouder of the ship's company who have all repeatedly risen to every challenge presented to them," he said.

The bulk of Kent's time was escorting merchant shipping through the Strait of Hormuz – gateway to/exit from the Gulf – to prevent any untoward interference to vessels.

Kent carried out 28 passages of the narrow waters, accompanying nearly two million tonnes of merchant traffic.

## Red Rose returns to Portsmouth

THE crew of HMS Lancaster have bought their frigate back to Portsmouth.

The Red Rose warship – named after the Duke of Lancaster... better known as Her Majesty The Queen – spent a spell in extended readiness before being transferred along the south coast to Plymouth, where she's undergone a two-year revamp to allow her to resume front-line duties until her successor enters service.

Big-ticket items fitted while in the hands of Babcock in Devonport are the Artisan 3D radar and vastly-improved air-defence capabilities provided by Sea Ceptor, replacing the veteran Sea Wolf system.



The hull was cleaned and coated with anti-fouling paint to prevent marine life attaching itself, the main 4.5in gun serviced, engines and machinery overhauled, new systems installed, and the bridge, messes and other communal areas revamped.

"The journey to take HMS Lancaster from engineering project, to ship, to warship is well under way," said Commander Will Blackett, the frigate's latest commanding officer, who'll take his ship's company to sea in earnest this year to really test the revamped warship and her crew.

She will see out the remaining years of her service life as a Portsmouth frigate until replaced by one of the five Type 31-class warships being built to replace the same number of general purpose Type 23s... while eight Type 26s will take the place of the eight specialist submarine-hunting variants of the Duke-class which are being concentrated in Plymouth.

# Rocking around the clock



**GIBRALTAR-BASED** sailors proved their readiness and ability to defend the Rock after a week-long workout with the territory's other protectors.

The RN Gibraltar Squadron – a couple of dozen personnel crewing fast patrol boats HMS Sabre and Scimitar plus three Pacific 24 RIBs – linked up with their waterborne counterparts from the Gibraltar Police, plus the RAF and troops of the Royal Gibraltar Regiment.

The imaginatively-titled GIBEX19 was designed to see how well the military units on the Rock could collectively respond to not one, but two simultaneous major incidents: a vehicle crashing into an aircraft at the RAF-run airfield leading to an inferno... while at the opposite end of the runway another careless driver had careered into the Bay of Gibraltar, trapping several people in his submerged car.

That was the climax to the exercise which opened with the various forces carrying out independent training before combining their equipment, skills and experience for the double-disaster.

Highlights of the squadron's training included 'fast pacing' drills with three Pacific 24s approaching HMS Sabre at various speeds, 'touching on' before peeling off, resetting and doing so again.

"Fast pacing allows the RIB coxswains to practise precise ship handling at high speed in close proximity to another vessel," explained Leading Seaman David Gee, the squadron's senior RIB coxswain.

There were also opportunities for some gunnery funnery with live and blank firings of the weapon systems on board all craft and participation in a simulated search and rescue.

The blank firings took place inside the Bay of Gibraltar with a Pacific 24 taking on the role of the 'enemy' as HMS Scimitar practised defending her sister ship.

The squadron works with the Defence Police on a daily basis to safeguard the Rock's territorial waters.

Link ups with the RAF and Royal Gibraltar Regiment are less frequent, so Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Kyle Walkley and his team enjoyed the broader experience... all the time also upholding their core duty of protecting Gib.

"The exercise provided us with a great opportunity to get out on the water and train hard with our colleagues in the Gibraltar Defence Police, as well as interacting with RAF Gibraltar personnel on the airfield and Royal Gibraltar Regiment on land. "At the height of GIBEX, I deployed all of my units – HMS Scimitar, Sabre and all three Pacific 24s, along with two police vessels in a strong demonstration of the maritime capability that British Forces Gibraltar has to offer."

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## Injured sailor airlifted from Enterprise

SAILORS on board HMS Enterprise were ready to act when one of their own had to be winched up into a helicopter after falling ill.

While she does not have an aircraft of her own, the ship's company knew what to do when the US 7th Fleet sent two HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters to pick up the casualty and take him to shore.

The incident happened while the Echo-class survey ship was sailing in the Asia Pacific, south of Japan.

With one of the sailors on board needing urgent medical treatment ashore, Enterprise used her strong relationships with her US and Japanese counterparts to ensure he got treatment in just a few hours.

The sailor had an irregular heartbeat and it meant the ship needed to make a bold alteration of course towards Okinawa, Japan, where a medical team were waiting. With the care and welfare of their shipmate at the centre of their thoughts, the ship's company rose to the challenge

and were ready to call "hands to flying stations".

Operating so far from home, the crew relied on effective pre-deployment training and regular on-board training to ensure they were ready to act when the time came.

With the Pave Hawks inbound, HMS Enterprise was prepared to receive the US Air Force pararescueman onto her deck and complete the Casevac (casualty evacuation) successfully. The helicopters then signalled their departure and made for the US Naval Hospital on Camp Foster Okinawa.

Here, the sailor was assessed and then sent on to a Japanese hospital where his condition was deemed not to be as serious as first thought. He is now recovering back in the UK.

HMS Enterprise Commanding Officer Captain Cecil Ladislaus said: "I am proud of the professionalism and commitment of our fellow nations and of our sailors, without whom we could have been facing a very different situation."

## Handling lessons

AIRCRAFT handlers from Culdrose spent a fortnight with the Omani Navy ensuring sailors from our Middle Eastern ally's navy could safely operate Super Lynx helicopters at sea.

The Royal Navy of Omani has 14 ships with flight decks – each one requiring a fully-qualified team to guide in, lash, unlash and launch the Lynx, as well as cope with emergencies.

The students faced classroom work at Sultan Bin Said Naval Base in Wudam and then had hands-on experience onboard one of the Omani navy's patrol vessels, RNOV Khassab.

They were taught – and assessed – to the same exacting standards of professionalism and safety expected of Royal Navy

flight deck teams.

Chief Petty Officer Paul Bryant said the Omanis were eager students – and quick to pick up the skills taught by his team: six men qualified as flight deck officers.

He said: "This course was last delivered more than a year ago so it was very much in demand to maintain the operational capability of Oman's ships with flight decks."

The course was run by 1700 Naval Air Squadron, which deploys expert teams of sailors to allow flying operations on Royal Navy and RFA vessels – as well as bolstering ship's companies where needed with additional personnel: chefs, stewards, weapon engineers, logistics experts and medics.

# Defender strikes

## Warship nets record haul of crystal meth

**SAILORS and Royal Marines dealt a blow to terrorists with a record haul of crystal meth in the Middle East.**

The crew of destroyer HMS Defender pounced on a suspicious dhow as they swept the Northern Arabian Sea for smugglers and traffickers.

A day-long search by the Portsmouth-based warship's boarding team ended in success with 11 bags of crystal meth discovered – worth an estimated £3.3m on the streets of the UK.

Defender has been deployed to the Middle East since August last year, devoting the bulk of her time to safeguarding merchant shipping entering and leaving the Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz.

Shortly before Christmas, however, she joined an international task force dedicated to stopping terrorists smuggling arms, people or drugs – the latter are used to fund illegal activities – in the Indian Ocean.

Defender's success came thanks to the alertness of her helicopter crew during a dawn patrol over the Northern Arabian Sea.

Their Wildcat located a dhow on its own, not flying any flag or showing any evidence that it was carrying out any fishing.

That prompted the destroyer to investigate, sending Royal Marines across in sea boats to secure the dhow and its crew, and Royal Navy sailors to conduct a thorough search of the vessel while the Wildcat hovered overhead to provide protection.

The sailors located 11 mail-bag-sized sacks, some weighing between 15 and 20 kg, suspected of containing crystal methamphetamines. The total haul came to 131kg.

"After all the training and preparation, it was fantastic to have the opportunity to demonstrate our capability with a successful boarding," said Lieutenant Ben Clink, in charge of the Royal Marines detachment aboard Defender.

The destroyer's Commanding Officer Commander Richard Hewitt added: "I am really proud that Defender has been able to interdict such a significant quantity of drugs and prevent it reaching the UK streets.

"It goes to show that even over the festive season, the Royal Navy is at sea 24/7 protecting the UK's interests and this has been a real boost for the ship's company."

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● Above, personnel line up on HMS Defender with the drugs seized from a dhow, pictured below



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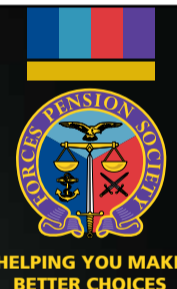
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# Small boats...

# ...big plans



**A £900,000 museum celebrating the Royal Navy's 'Spitfires of the Sea' will open in Gosport next year – centrepiece of a £30m redevelopment of a former ammo depot.**

The Coastal Forces Museum – featuring two restored vintage launches as well as a wealth of contemporary memorabilia – will breathe life into a disused mine store at Priddy's Hard as the site undergoes an 18-month

transformation, completing regeneration work begun more than 20 years ago.

The huge site on the western shore of Portsmouth Harbour was home to one of the Navy's most important ammunition and armament depots for more than two centuries.

The navy vacated Priddy's Hard in 1988 after ten years of winding down activities on the site.

It remained largely derelict

for the next decade until the Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower reinvigorated some of the buildings around the 18th Century camber basin and grand magazine. Other structures were pulled down to make way for a dozen residential blocks.

But since then redevelopment has largely stopped – until now. Site owners Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust have been given the green light for the second stage of the depot's

transformation.

That includes the first official exhibition dedicated to Coastal Forces, being established under the banner of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, the umbrella organisation for the four principal Senior Service museums.

The Spitfires of the Seas display is due to open in spring 2021, with two veteran 'greyhounds' at its heart:

Coastal Motor Boat 331 which was built in World War 2 but represents the design of WW1-era craft, she was based at HMS Hornet in Gosport throughout her active life.

Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) 71, built in Portsmouth for the Royal Norwegian Navy, but commandeered by Britain on the outbreak of war. She saw extensive action in the Dover Strait and North Sea – including attempting to stop the breakout of German capital ships in February 1942 ('the Channel Dash').

In addition, the National Museum has acquired the huge collection of personal effects, papers, decorations and objects gathered by the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust over the years.

And visitors will be surrounded

by a 'filmatic experience' recreating what it was like to be on the bridge of one of these fast craft.

Given the size of the force and its exploits, Dr Dominic Tweddle, Director General of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, says the story of these motor launches is ripe for telling.

"Coastal Forces were an important component of the Royal Navy through both world wars. They attracted people looking for a bit of 'derring do' because the missions they performed were brimming with excitement and often action. These are the stories we want to tell," he said.

"Although the boats were built by the thousand, there are not many survivors. The boats were expendable – they were not built to last. Those which did survive the war were often converted into houseboats and are beyond saving.

"While the restored boats form the nucleus of the exhibition, the collection we have inherited from the Coastal Forces Trust is very impressive and really evokes what it was like to serve in these craft."

Small, fast gun boats and torpedo boats were used in coastal/confined waters through

both world wars – from famously attacking the Soviet Fleet in its base at Kronshadt, near St Petersburg, to rescuing downed aircrew and fending off German E-boats throughout World War 2.

At its peak in 1944, Coastal Forces numbered over 2,000 boats of various types, crewed and maintained by 25,000 officers and men.

They fought an estimated 900 actions between 1939 and 1945, sinking around 400 enemy vessels, laying minefields, intercepting coastal convoys, taking part in clandestine raids, dropping off and recovering spies from occupied territories. In doing so, one in every 12 boats was lost.

Among those who served in Coastal Forces who went on to widespread fame and acclaim were Avenger Patrick Macnee, Bond film/Battle of Britain director Guy Hamilton and the second Dr Who, Patrick Troughton.

The relocation of the Coastal Forces Museum is part of a broader plan to finish the redevelopment of the sprawling former armament depot site, to include a restaurant, visitors' centre, holiday home and residential properties.

## ...and RM Museum needs £5m

ROYAL Marines need up to £5m of your money to fulfil their dream of opening a new museum in Portsmouth.

For three years their story has gone untold as their old museum in Portsmouth closed... in preparation for a new one opening in the city's historic dockyard.

They were counting on a handout from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help with the £10m cost of the move – but 18 months ago the bid for lottery cash was rejected, leaving the museum in limbo.

Museum bosses hope to pay for the majority of the move by selling the former museum building at Eastney – plus a second, hopefully-successful, bid for lottery funding.

But that still leaves them at least £1.1m short (or £5m short if the lottery application fails a second time) – prompting the big push for donations.

The museum closed in April 2017 as the 150-year-old building was no longer suitable for displaying the Corps' vast historical collection – more than two million artefacts going back to the birth of the marines more than 350 years ago – maintenance was proving prohibitively expensive and it could not properly accommodate people with disabilities.

On top of that, the location of the former officers' mess in Eastney meant the museum pulled in fewer than 40,000 visitors every year... whereas tourist numbers in the historic dockyard have doubled in the past decade to nearly one million.

The plan is to take over Boathouse No.6 overlooking the Mast Pond, and replace the Action Stations exhibit which has been housed there for 20 years, although the iconic Yomper statue in front of the site and the Royal Marines' memorial garden will remain in place and continue to be maintained.

A five-strong team of experts is cataloguing, scanning, assessing the condition and finally safely storing everything from the smallest medal to cannon.

But the broader move is on hold until the funding gap can be plugged.

"We want to create a museum fit for modern

audiences, something that is really vibrant, that engages people, not just a 'regimental museum with display cases,'" explained Simon Williams, heading the fundraising drive for the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

In addition, the new museum – like the old one – will serve as a venue for reunions and commemorations, plus performances by the RM Band Service.

"We also want to use the cinema/auditorium for functions, we want the boathouse to host functions, school visits and activities, to use the building as a community hub," Mr Williams explained.

The fundraising is aimed both at corporate sponsors, trusts and foundations as well as individual donors; one initiative is to encourage people to 'adopt' objects in the collection – an idea similar to crowdfunding whereby lots of small

donations help towards a much larger goal.

"This year marks the 80th anniversary of the first commandos forming – today's Royal Marines inherited their legacy – so this is the right time to get the marines' story back out there," Mr Williams added.

"There is so much to learn from the Royal Marines – their spirit, their ethos, their approach to life."

If the fundraising and lottery bid prove successful – the museum

will learn this spring if it has cleared the first hurdle, resulting in a more detailed application being submitted – work can begin converting the boathouse next year with a goal of opening the new museum in early 2022.

Donations can be made at [www.justgiving.com/campaign/newroyalmarinesmuseum](http://www.justgiving.com/campaign/newroyalmarinesmuseum) and you can learn more about the new museum at [www.newroyalmarinesmuseum.co.uk](http://www.newroyalmarinesmuseum.co.uk).



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Model shown is a Fiesta ST-3 3-Door 1.5 200PS Manual Petrol with optional Full LED Headlamps.  
Fuel economy mpg (l/100km): Combined 40.4 (7.0). \*CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 136g/km.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.

\*There is a new test used for fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> figures. The CO<sub>2</sub> figures shown, however, are based on the outgoing test cycle and will be used to calculate vehicle tax on first registration.

# WINTER WARM UP

**DON'T LOOK DOWN:** A commando undergoes vertical assault training in Snowdonia during Exercise Winter Walker

## **MOUNTAIN training is a vital first step to being prepared for the wilds of the Arctic Circle.**

The winter deployment in northern Norway is a real test of endurance in one of the most unforgiving environments known to man.

To make sure Royal Marines and a mix of Army and Royal Navy ranks were ready to step off to the high north, they headed to Snowdonia to undergo eight days of arduous mountain training.

This is to make sure they are physically and mentally ready for the extreme cold and harsh terrain in Norway.

At the same time marines from 30 Commando Information Exploitation Group undertook vertical assault and abseiling at the iconic Dewerstone Rock on Dartmoor in preparation for their own Arctic missions.

Right now, Royal Marines are testing their combat and survival skills in temperatures as low as -30c, living in the wilderness but also tearing across fjords in small boats on commando raids deep into the mountains.

That will eventually lead to Norwegian war games Exercise Cold Response, where marines will launch amphibious raids onto the Nordic coast by sea and from the air.

Before any of that could happen, though, the marines, sailors and soldiers of 3 Commando Brigade underwent these mountain tests in the UK.

"Mountain Training in Snowdonia has provided us with a range of unique and useful skills, and the opportunity to work with the Royal Marines in an interesting and varied environment," Lance Corporal Nabil Toumi said.

"It has also given us the chance to work in one of the most beautiful and picturesque parts of the country, and experience some of the best mountain ridges and scrambles the area has to offer. It will be a vital in preparing the unit for deployment to Norway."

The commandos use the difficult mountainous terrain to test basic skills such as navigation and casualty evacuation alongside vertical assault and river crossings, which are specialist skills unique to the Royal Marines.

Vertical assault training is used to pass vertical obstacles, whether it be a cliff face or a mountainous feature inland. The skill uses advanced climbing and abseiling techniques to cross the obstacle undetected and catch the enemy unaware.

The technique was developed by the first commandos during World War Two, to launch raids against German forces behind enemy lines. Modern technology has improved the equipment used but the basic principal has changed very little since the first commandos.

Mountain training is carried out annually in both Scotland and North Wales to ensure the marines are fully prepared to deploy to the harsh Arctic environment of Norway to conduct warfare training.

The marines have a long history of operating in mountainous and Arctic environments, stretching back to the Cold War era, when the commandos were tasked with holding the Northern flank.

Lance Corporal James Mundy said: "Brigade Mountain Training has been a great opportunity for all ranks to work together from different units and cap badges. It has given other units a chance to see how Royal Marines operate in a cold weather and mountain environment."

*Surviving, see pages 21 and 25*

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## ... and Royal honour for SETT veteran

A SUBMARINER who helped search for a missing Argentine boat, two Royal Marines dedicated to helping injured, wounded or traumatised comrades and veterans are among nearly 30 Naval Service personnel honoured by the Queen.

The 2020 New Years Honours list rewards more than two dozen experienced officers and senior leaders, volunteers and stalwarts of the many branches of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines.

**Warrant Officer 2nd Class Brian Dent** of 30 Commando, based at RM Stonehouse in Plymouth, has devoted the past five years of his career to supporting some of the most badly injured, sick or wounded military personnel.

He acts as a military liaison officer at the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre in Stanford Hall, near Loughborough; it has taken over from Headley Court as the place where the forces' most seriously injured are helped back to fitness.

Fellow Royal Marine **Colour Sergeant Samuel Sheriff** from the Commando Training Centre at Lympstone, near Exeter, set up the charity REORG to help both serving personnel and veterans suffering from mental health problems or physical disabilities.

Royal Navy **Warrant Officer 1st Class Nick Sharland** is the Warrant Officer Naval Service – the most senior of all the 25,000 ratings and ranks in the Navy and Royal Marines.

He acts as the adviser and right-hand man of the First Sea Lord when it comes to morale, discipline, training and any other issues affecting the non-officer cadre of the Naval Service.

**Warrant Officer 1st Class Steve Thorpe** is one of the Silent Service's most experienced submariners with 34 years under his belt in almost every class of submarine operating since the mid-80s.

He also proved a key member of a team sent to Argentina in late 2017 to help the international search effort looking for the missing submarine ARA San Juan and has since helped raise money for the lost crew's families.

All four men receive the MBE for their efforts.

"There's a fundamental pride in being a submariner – it's a unique job in a unique environment. I am immensely proud to be receiving the MBE," said Warrant Officer Thorpe, aged 51, originally from Sheffield, but now living in Fareham.

"Despite the sad outcome and the loss of 44 submariners in the San Juan, it was an unforgettable experience.

"The Argentine military and people were welcome – and appreciative of the assistance offered. There's a mutual respect between submariners whatever the nation, a common bond so you understand what your counterparts or their families are going through."

The full list of Naval Service recipients:

**Knight Grand Cross in the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath**

Admiral Sir Philip Jones

**Companion of the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (CB)**

Major General Tim Bevis RM

Rear Admiral Tim Hodgson

**Commander of the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE)**

Rear Admiral Martin Connell

Commodore Andy Cree

Captain Tim Neild

Brigadier Matt Pierson RM

**Officer of the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE)**

Commander Andy Donaldson

Commodore Henry Duffy

Colonel Garth Manger RM

Colonel Paul Maynard RM

Captain Michael 'Rocky' Salmon

Commander Dan Simmonds

Captain John Voyce

**Member of the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE)**

Warrant Officer 1 David Annan

Warrant Officer 2 Brian Dent RM

Commander Justin Hains

Acting Captain Mark Hankey

Commander Andy Perks

Commander Justin Saward

Acting Commander Sue Seagrave

Warrant Officer 1 Nick Sharland

Colour Sergeant Samuel Sheriff RM

Lieutenant (Sea Cadet Corps) Janice Spicer RNR

Lieutenant Commander Adam Spike

Warrant Officer 1 Stephen Thorpe

**Queen's Voluntary Reserve Medal (QVRM)**

Lieutenant Will Benbow RNR

**Ordinary Member First Class Royal Red Cross (RRC)**

Commander Ian Kennedy

# Sun sets on SETT

## End of an era as training tower closes

**FOR the last time the team who teach submariners how to escape from a stricken boat gather at a Gosport landmark before the iconic structure closes this month.**

Tens of thousands of submariners have passed through the Submarine Escape Training Tank (SETT) since July 13 1954 when the first man ascended the 100ft column of water to simulate emerging from a sunken submarine.

With the entire submarine flotilla moving to Faslane – as well as advances in submarine design, escape training and changes in the way rescues are handled – the SETT is no longer required.

The tower was built between 1949 and 1953 as part of a wholesale revamp of submarine escape training, prompted by a report drawn up by Captain Phillip Ruck-Keene just after World War 2.

The loss of HMS Thetis – on the eve of war – and HMS Truculent – sunk in the Thames after colliding with a Swedish tanker in January 1950 – both with heavy loss of life, as well as many other submarines accidents and experiences played a significant role in the lessons taught.

Using the tank, submariners are expected to escape without breathing apparatus; they use a specially-designed escape suit to breathe as required.

Today the tank is just one element of the UK's submarine rescue capability, which also includes the Submarine Parachute Assistance Group

(who leap from aircraft into the water to help crew who've escaped from a boat as taught in the SETT), and the NATO SM Rescue System (NSRS) 'Nemo', based in Faslane.

The Royal Navy stopped pressurised ascent training in the 900,000-litre tank in 2012, but still uses the facility for non-pressurised drills and teaching. It's thought the escape tank has been used more than 150,000 times in its 66-year life.

In the SETT's existence, only one British boat – HMS Artemis – has been lost (she sank at her moorings in an accident in 1971, ironically just a stone's throw from the tower), without any casualties.

In its place, opening later this year, is the Submarine Escape Rescue Abandonment and Survival Training Facility (SMERAS TF). The team will be moving en-masse from Gosport to Faslane, leaving a skeleton team behind on the south coast.

"2020 marks the end of an era, so it's a poignant moment for all of us," said Lieutenant Commander Gareth 'Griff' Griffiths, in charge of the team.

"We're look forward to carrying the lessons of our past many years into the future of submarine escape, rescue, abandonment and survival training.

"Our success is due, in no small part, to our commitment to one another and the unique perspective of being submariners."

At the heart of the replacement complex at Faslane is a huge 'abandonment and sea survival training environmental pool' where various weather conditions and sea states can be replicated in the safety of an indoor pool.

Main image: LPhot Barry Swainsbury



● Above, rescue boats gather around the stern of the HMS Thetis

Picture: Royal Navy Submarine Museum



● Prince Charles surfaces in the SETT in January 1972



# Sailors peak in Caribbean

## Downtime follows high-tempo operations

DON'T say we don't bring you variety in these pages...

You want sailors in diving masks and snorkels and a cuddly toy on top of a tropical mountain? You got it.

Personnel from RFA Mounts Bay used their winter break in Curacao to scale the island's highest peak while the amphibious ship underwent maintenance.

RFA Mounts Bay is on a long-term mission assisting Britain's overseas territories in the region, spending roughly one half of the year ready to respond to natural disasters (chiefly hurricanes and tropical storms), the other half working with US law enforcement agencies dedicated to stopping the flow of illegal drugs from South to North America – and the wider world.



Embarked throughout the relief mission phase of her deployment (May-June onwards until the end of the year) is a mixed military team of Army engineers, Royal Marines, soldiers who operate the Mexeflote powered raft and a Wildcat helicopter flight from 815 Naval Air Squadron.

Collectively, they form the ship's dedicated Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) Troop – over 120 men and women – who work side-by-side with authorities across the Caribbean to explain what help they can offer... and see what facilities are available to them should the worst happen.

The ship and her team were only called upon once during the 2019 hurricane season, helping the people of the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian barreled its way through the islands.

The ship is gearing up for a spring and summer dealing with drug runners as part of the international effort to prevent trafficking of illegal narcotics in the Caribbean.

Having spent the autumn on hurricane watch, Mounts Bay sailed in to Willemstad to prepare for the counter-drugs mission by undergoing a spot of



maintenance and reconfiguration.

The bulk of the troop left the ship in Willemstad, Curacao, where Mounts Bay underwent her end-of-year overhaul ready for operations with the US Coast Guard and their Law Enforcement DETachment (LEDET) who carry out boardings of any suspicious vessels the auxiliary comes across on her patrols.

Capt Kevin Rimmell RFA, Mounts Bay's Commanding Officer, said the ship was sorry to see most of the troops – maintenance teams have remained on board – depart.

"The ethos of 'Team Mounts' brought all the elements of the embarked forces together – many took on additional responsibilities as part of the ship's team, including tasks such as welding, as well as bolstering the first aid party and taking part in gunnery exercises," he explained.

"This level of integration paid dividends when the ship was called upon to deliver aid to the stricken inhabitants of the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian. All the parties worked tirelessly, hand-in-hand, to provide the much-needed assistance."

As well as local contractors, that work has demanded input from the RFA sailors aboard – but in their spare time, they've had the chance to explore the Dutch

territory which is little bigger than the county of Rutland.

The northern tip of Curacao is dominated by Mount Christoffel, which rises 372 metres above sea level.

The hike began as a walk, turned into a scurry and eventually became a climb as the sailors faced ever more challenging terrain – in temperatures of over 30 degrees Celsius.

"It was certainly not the walk in the park some had assumed and was challenging in places," said Third Officer Jamie Turnbull.

"We scratched elbows, grazed knees and ankles, squeezed through gullies and then with a final grunt we emerged at the peak and were greeted with some amazing views of the island."

Accompanying them on the climb was the ship's cuddly toy mascot Coo, pictured left, and some diving kit; after the heights of Christoffel, the sailors headed to the beach at Westpunt where they shared the waters with locals and turtles.

"They moved gracefully through the water, nonchalantly brushing inquisitive snorkellers aside and were a joy to behold and almost seemed to be posing for photos," Jamie added.

"It was fantastic to see these beautiful animals and share their space with them and we were all beaming as we talked about it."

"We returned to Mounts Bay with smiles on our faces and great memories of Curacao."

Mounts Bay is due to be relieved in the Caribbean later this year by new patrol ship HMS Medway as part of the Royal Navy's forward presence initiative, permanently deploying ships in regions around the globe key to the UK's interests.

### KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @RFAMountsBay, @RFAHeadquarters and @RoyalNavy on Twitter



● Personnel from Mounts Bay helped residents of the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian ripped through the islands



## THE MASSED BANDS OF HER MAJESTY'S ROYAL MARINES

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## Big change, litorally

AFTER 54 years, one of the Royal Navy's longest-standing task forces is going through its third name change – and dropping the word amphibious.

What since 1997 has been the Commander Amphibious Task Group (normally abbreviated to COMATG) is now COMLSG – Commander Littoral Strike Group.

It's still based at RM Stonehouse in Plymouth, still has Commodore James Parkin at the helm, still calls HMS Albion its home when deployed and still calls upon 3 Commando Brigade as its fighting punch.

But the name change is part of a shift in the way amphibious operations are conducted in the 21st Century – and mirrors other shake-ups in senior commands including the merger of two (COMUKMARFOR and COMUKAMPHIBFOR) to form COMUKSTRKFOR – Commander UK Strike Force – under Rear Admiral Andrew Burns.

It oversees Cdre Parkin's littoral group... and its flat-top counterpart, the Carrier Strike Group under Cdre Steve Moorhouse.

COMLSG traces its history to 1966 and the Commander Amphibious Warfare (COMAW), established in the Far East, moving to Fort Southwick in 1971 as part of the withdrawal from east of Suez, and to Stonehouse in 1991. It's carried the COMATG title since 1997.

In its 2020 iteration the staff comprises 35 personnel from all three services including staff officers from the Netherlands, Australia and France.

## QE 1st in OX12

SAILORS from Britain's future flagship will parade through the streets for the first time this spring.

The men and women of HMS Queen Elizabeth will exercise the highest civic honour – Freedom of the Borough – by marching behind the Colours and Guard, with bayonets fixed, next month.

London? Or Edinburgh perhaps – both are the aircraft carrier's affiliated cities.

Nope. The answer is the small market town of Wantage in Oxfordshire, 41 miles from the nearest open waters and not an obvious choice to be linked with the Portsmouth-based leviathan.

But last autumn, civic leaders invited the carrier to accept its offer of freedom – an offer sparked by a longstanding association with another Portsmouth warship, HMS Royal Oak.

Each year Wantage folk pay tribute to the battleship, in particular two local men – Marine Verdun Pierpoint and Able Seaman Joseph Wilkins – who died when the warship was torpedoed in Scapa Flow.

The 80th anniversary of the tragedy last autumn prompted civic leaders to consider a permanent affiliation with the Royal Navy – offered to, and accepted by, the 65,000tonne leviathan.

The parade begins at midday on Saturday March 21, led by the Band of HM Royal Marines, and hopefully concludes with a fly past of serving and vintage naval aircraft, plus a jump by the RN's parachute display team, the Raiders – weather, serviceability and operational commitments allowing.



# Heart of 'wood

**FORMER commanding officers joined serving personnel in Fareham as HMS Collingwood kicked off its 80th birthday year.**

What started out as a temporary wartime base has become a mainstay of the modern Royal Navy and a key employer in south-east Hampshire.

The first trainees passed through the gates of Collingwood – then on the southern outskirts of Fareham – on January 10 1940 (one day after HMS Raleigh in Torpoint), established to meet the demands placed on the Navy by World War 2 – then just four months old.

One thousand new sailors passed through the gates every week, initially for wireless/telegraphy training and later in the war for instruction in radar.

Wartime conditions were rudimentary: barrack blocks were built to accommodate 10,000 sailors for up to ten weeks at a time.

Because the base was built on marshland it was susceptible to flooding, the blocks were mounted on plinths, the heating rarely worked in the wooden barracks (each built for just £600), and on day one there was just a single secretary and solitary typewriter in the entire establishment.

Collingwood was established as a 'hostilities only' base – due to be dismantled once peace returned. But at the end of World War 2 the Admiralty decided the base had an important role to play in training sailors for the nascent Cold War.

The establishment was extensively rebuilt in the 1970s and 1980s – especially the hub of the training and administration area – so few of the original 475 buildings on the site still remain.

But the church is one of them – and the obvious setting for a service of thanksgiving for all those who have served at Collingwood and died in the line of duty either on the base (it was bombed during the war including one raid which claimed the lives of 31 ratings) or on the front line.

Previous commanding officers paying their respects at the service led by the Chaplain of the Fleet, the Venerable Martyn Gough, were: Andrew Trevithick, Charles Crawford, Commodore Andy Jordan, Mike Mansergh, Commodore Rob Vitali with Admiral The Lord Boyce.

They joined the current Commanding Officer Captain Catherine Jordan, the Mayors of Fareham, Mayor of Gosport, and the COs/heads of local military establishments – Sul tan (Captain John Voyce), Institute of Naval Medicine (Captain Beth Crowson) and De-fence Munitions Gosport (Gary Tuff).



● Former Commanding Officers join current CO Captain Catherine Jordan after the service: Andrew Trevithick, Charles Crawford, Commodore Andy Jordan, Mike Mansergh, Commodore Rob Vitali and Admiral The Lord Boyce and (below) an aerial photograph of divisions formed up on Collingwood's parade ground on an unspecified date during World War 2

Pictures: Keith Woodland, HMS Collingwood, and Imperial War Museum



"It was an honour to be invited to the service to celebrate HMS Collingwood's 80 years. Over this period of time, training across the Navy has been centralised here which means HMS Collingwood is now at the very heart of today's Royal Navy," said Admiral The Lord Boyce who served as First Sea Lord and Chief of Defence Staff and whose father served at the base in the 1940s.

The commemorative service was the first in a series of events to be held throughout 2020 to celebrate Collingwood's continuing tradition of equipping sailors with vital sea-faring, warfare and engineering skills.

Today, Collingwood is the RN's largest training establishment, chiefly teaching warfare and weapon engineering, but it also acts as the alma mater for physical training (based at HMS Temeraire in Portsmouth), RN and Defence diving (Horsea Island in Portsmouth), chemical, biological, radiological, damage control and firefighting training (at HMS Raleigh in Torpoint and HMS Excellent in Portsmouth)

and board and search/military training (in Faslane, Raleigh and Excellent).

On top of that, the Newgate Lane base itself is home to numerous 'lodger' units such as the RN's Leadership Academy, the Maritime Warfare Centre and the Band of HM Royal Marines Collingwood.

On a typical day you will find 1,700 military personnel on site – plus 1,100 civilians – with just shy of 33,000 sailors and Royal Marines passing through Collingwood every year having undergone some form of training or course.

HMS Collingwood's current Commanding Officer, Captain Catherine Jordan said, "It is an honour to be Captain of HMS Collingwood in its eightieth year.

"As we reflect on the vital service this establishment has given over the years, I'm pleased to be taking it forward into a new future, modernising training and encouraging all our personnel to reach their full potential within today's Royal Navy."



## BOSTing makes us feel good

READY for all that 2020 might throw at them after a hectic end to 2019 are the men and women of Britain's flagship.

HMS Albion kicks off the roaring Twenties with the (very) rare distinction of having passed Basic Operational Sea Training early.

One week was shaved off the RN's long-standing assessment of whether its ships are ready to deploy on operations, so impressed were the team from the Flag Officer Sea Training.

So instead of the requisite six weeks, Albion's five-week workout ended with disaster in Plymouth – promptly dealt with by her sailors and marines.

For more than two decades the navy has exploited a series of disused buildings at Bull Point to train ship's companies – and more recently the emergency services – in not just how to treat casualties or extinguish fires, which should be bread and butter to well-honed sailors and Royal Marines, but to co-ordinate the relief effort so that the right people receiving the right help at the right time... rather than simply tackling the first problem you come to.

And Bull Point features a dazzling array of problems to tackle simultaneously: cars aflame or crashed into rivers, downed power and telephone lines, flooded and collapsed buildings, injured, distraught and stunned civilians (played by a mix of local volunteers and students on the public services course at Loughborough College).

Ahead of the fictitious Hurricane Freda sweeping through the site, Albion first faced the task of plucking more than 130 civilians from a danger zone (something her sister Bulwark did for real in Lebanon in 2006).

Each civilian has to be processed – to ensure they are entitled for evacuation – fed and accommodated on board, with any carrying illness/diseases isolated to prevent an outbreak.

Once complete, the ship's company threw themselves into the disaster-relief mission at Bull Point.

In the space of just six hours, the crew restored the electrical supply, rescued/accounted for all 'residents', provided medical assistance for more than 50 casualties, provided hot food for all the hurricane's victims, cleared a runway for aid flights to arrive and saved two-dozen people from a stricken vessel in the Hamoaze.

The two-day disaster-relief training closed a busy year for Albion with two major exercises off northwest Scotland in the spring and autumn and a summer spent leading a UK task force to the Baltic.

"Notwithstanding a particularly demanding year – and numerous 5am starts throughout the training period – the ship's company rose to the challenge and dealt admirably with everything that was thrown at it," said Commander John Brennan, the ship's weapon engineer officer.

"It was an exemplary performance and testament to the fantastic team who make up HMS Albion, the Fleet's flagship."

The assault ship is now gearing up to lead the Royal Navy's involvement in this year's Arctic winter exercises with NATO forces in northern Norway at the end of this month.



Picture: LPhoto Alex Ceolin

## This one's for you, Barry

A 40-plus-year friendship between Wales-based Royal Naval Reservists and the people of the Vale of Glamorgan reached its climax with a celebratory parade.

The men and women of HMS Cambria bade goodbye to Barry, the town which has been their home since 1980, with a final freedom parade through the seaside town ahead of a move just up the road to a new facility in Cardiff Bay in May.

More than 60 members of Wales' only Maritime Reserve Unit, together with a

Ceremonial Guard, marched from Kings Square to the Civic Offices, led by the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines Commando Training Centre Lymstone, in celebration of the Freedom of the County of the Vale of Glamorgan, bestowed on them in 2012.

"Our relationship with the Vale and the town of Barry has been excellent and strengthened over nearly 40 years of being located here. We very much intend to maintain these strong links," said Commander Steve Fry, Cambria's CO.



**A NEW naval era has begun in the Falklands as HMS Forth begins her first patrol around the islands.**

After a 9,000-mile journey from Portsmouth, the 2,000-tonne patrol ship arrived in the South Atlantic islands ready to take on duties after HMS Clyde retired just before Christmas.

Her successor is the first of five second-generation River-class ships built with the goal of stationing them long-term around the globe, protecting UK interests/citizens, working with regional allies and flying the flag for Britain.

Forth picks up where her predecessor left off, working with the RAF and Army units based in the Falklands, providing reassurance to locals, visiting inhabitants of the outlying islands, and supporting the territory's authorities in everything from ceremonial events through to assisting with emergencies.

Even before the ship arrived at East Cove Military Port – about 30 miles southwest of the Falklands' capital Stanley – she was working with two RAF Typhoon interceptors to see how the air and naval forces can work together.

Once at the remote port, the Commander of British Forces South Atlantic, Brigadier Nick Sawyer, was on hand to welcome Forth to the islands, stepping aboard to chat with Commanding Officer Commander Bob Laverty and his team.

"Arrival at East Cove was met with excitement for those who had never operated in the environment before," said Commander Laverty.

"And it was met with enthusiasm by all the ship's company who were looking forward to making an impact in an operational theatre, as well as taking advantage of the

fantastic adventurous training, wildlife and rich history the Falkland Islands have to offer.

"For me, it's fantastic to be back and the presence of HMS Forth signifies both posture and the continuous UK commitment to the Falklands."

Then it was time to start getting acquainted with the islands, its wildlife and its defenders; the RAF showed the sailors around one of their A400M transporters stationed at Mount Pleasant; the people of Stanley (figuratively) rolled out the red carpet for Forth's debut in the capital (the obligatory exchange of official shields between Governor Nigel Phillips and Cdr Laverty); and the seal populace of Bertha's Beach rolled on their (rather large) stomachs when the sailors paid the beauty spot a visit.

The journey to the Falklands took Forth to Gibraltar and Mindelo in the Cape Verde Islands.

In the latter, the ship's company paid their respects to British sailors buried in the Municipal Cemetery, where AB Craig Pollock paid tribute to fellow naval reservist T Henderson, laying a wreath on the grave of the 17-year-old Shetlander who died serving with cruiser HMS Donegal on convoy duties in 1916.

The ship's company also had time to explore the island, from encounters with the local wildlife and bartering in the markets, to enjoying the magnificent beaches and climbing Mount Verde. A highlight for most was the opportunity to snorkel with turtles in Sao Pedro Bay.

For Forth's policeman, 22-year-old Able Seaman Ben Coomber this was exactly what he signed up for.

"These kind of experiences are the reasons I chose the Royal Navy. It was incredible swimming with the turtles and seeing them

in their natural habitat in such crystal-clear water!"

From Cape Verde, the ship faced a 16-day, 5,200-mile voyage to her new home – a journey which meant she was at sea over both Christmas and new year.

Sailors turned their flight deck into an outdoor cinema to watch *Die Hard* on Christmas Eve, followed by the naval tradition of officers serving the turkey dinner to their shipmates the next day.



**These kind of experiences are the reasons I chose the Royal Navy.**

ABLE SEAMAN BEN COOMBER


"It's a Christmas I will definitely remember," said 29-year-old gunnery officer Lieutenant Ian Copland, experiencing his first festive period at sea.

"It was different, but enjoyable with a real family environment on board."

That included passing over the Equator and upholding the nautical tradition of the 'Crossing the Line' ceremony, paying homage to King Neptune and his band of dubious characters from under the ocean, followed by a 'hands to bathe' – allowing all on board to swim in the Atlantic with nothing beneath them but more than 4,000 metres of water.

WHICH is just the sort of work HMS Scott normally finds herself in as she collects data from the oceans to support the navy's front-line operations...and not the shallower confines of San Carlos



  
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Water. Britain's biggest survey ship entered the bay to pay her respects to HMS Antelope, one of four Royal Navy warships lost in 1982 during the Falklands' liberation.

Ten metres below the now-calm waters of the natural harbour, sitting upright, almost snapped in two, is the shattered hull of frigate HMS Antelope, torn apart by a series of explosions after bomb disposal experts triggered an unexploded device, in turn detonating the ship's magazine.

The horrific sight which the blast left – a once-proud ship snapped with thick black plumes of smoke rising above San Carlos Water – provided one of the iconic images of the Falklands conflict.

Nearly 40 years later, Scott's crew mustered on the quarterdeck for a service of thanksgiving—probably the most emotional moment in her first, fortnight-long patrol of the remote British territory. Scott helped plug the gap between long-standing Falklands guardian HMS Clyde (see below) departing the islands... and her successor HMS Forth arriving to pick up the baton.

It's the first time in eight years that Scott has visited the islands, arriving just in time before Christmas to pick up the mail (cards, presents) waiting for her.

She typically spends summers in the North Atlantic, winters east of Suez hoovering up as much data about the oceans as possible with her state-of-the-art sonar scanners and other sensors – information which is fed back to the experts at the UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton for study and inclusion in future charts,

documentation and guides used by Royal Navy warships on operations.

This winter's work, however, began in earnest in the fearsome waters between Antarctica and the southern tip of the Americas – Drake's Passage – where Scott helped the Chileans in the search for a missing Hercules aircraft.

Her sailors located – and recovered – several pieces of wreckage, as well as survival equipment and one of the crew member's bags, all handed over to Chilean authorities when the ship visited Punta Arenas before sailing for the Falklands.

The Plymouth-based ship spent New Year's Eve off the remote New Island at the western edge of the Falklands, welcoming 2020 with a rendition of *Auld Lang Syne* on the upper deck.

The first duty of the Twenties was a visit to nearby Weddell Island, home to around 50 people, to reassure them of the Royal Navy's presence in the Falklands.

Fifteen members of the ship's company were landed by small boat and met with some residents to wish them well for the new year, learn about life in this isolated part of the world, and enjoy their first close encounter with penguins.

"Having been tasked as Falkland Island's Patrol Vessel for two weeks already, it was fantastic to finally have the chance to take some of the ship's company ashore to meet some of the residents who live here. Weddell Island is a beautiful place and everyone who made it ashore there thoroughly enjoyed it," said Scott's doctor, Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Joe Callaghan from Cornwall who led the visit.



# SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST

AND what of the Falklands' constant guardian for the past 12 years?

She's now plain Clyde, no HMS, retired from Royal Navy service within minutes of completing the epic journey from East Cove to Portsmouth – trailing a long, thin decommissioning pennant for the very final leg from Outer Spit Buoy into harbour.

Able Seaman Reece Backshall spent seven months with the ship on his first deployment in the Royal Navy, including a visit to Rio De Janeiro on the way back to the UK.

"It's a small team so we're close and everyone gets on with everyone else.

"It's been a perfect first deployment; I thought I was just going to do six months in the Falklands, but it turned out we were decommissioning the

ship as well and I got to visit other continents."

The only warship to have been built in Portsmouth this century, Clyde hadn't seen home since she sailed south to relieve the Castle class as the Royal Navy's constant presence in the Southern Hemisphere back in 2007.

The mission – one now picked up by HMS Forth – to offer assistance and reassurance to the Falklands' inhabitants, explore the outer reaches of the archipelago, and also maintain a presence in South Georgia.

Since 2007, the crew have changed places with shipmates back in the UK an estimated 25 times. It's thought around 800 sailors have served aboard her.

"HMS Clyde has been a very good ship, so reliable and she's

had to be – the South Atlantic's not a forgiving place," said her final Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Richard Skelton, who also served as her second-in-command five years ago.

"It's hugely bittersweet for us, homecoming is always emotive; the separation from families is possibly the hardest part of the job, and the joy of seeing of them is brilliant. She's been away from Portsmouth for just over 12 years, and to come back to families just before Christmas and decommission her on the same day makes it doubly poignant."

That ceremony was attended by around 200 guests, including former commanding officers and the

ship's Lady Sponsor, Lady Dunt, who named her in the same naval base back in 2007.

Clyde will now be stripped of personal belongings and prepared for her handover to BAE Systems, who built her, for the next phase of her life.

"More than 800 members of the squadron have served in Clyde, experiencing life in the southern oceans for over six months at a time, providing many of them with unique and special memories from an outstanding part of the planet," said Commander Simon Pressdee, in charge of the Fishery Protection Squadron, parent unit of the entire River class.



## KEEP UP WITH THE SHIPS

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# FLYING INTO THE FUTURE

## 700X Naval Air Squadron have been putting drones through their paces to see if they have the potential to enhance the Royal Navy



THEIR job is to test and operate drones for possible use by the Royal Navy.

And 700X Naval Air Squadron have been working hard over the past few months to trial unmanned equipment and its suitability for future operations.

Based at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, 700X has taken to the sea in the latest step of its pioneering adventure into remotely-piloted air systems.

They headed out for a week of trials on board the fishery protection ship HMS Mersey.

700X commanding officer Lieutenant Commander Justin Matthews said it was a hugely exciting time to be at the cutting-edge of UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) technology.

“These remotely-piloted systems can act as an extension to a ship’s suite of sensors and potentially as a weapon delivery platform,” he said.

“We’ve set up this new flight to test that concept as a capability. We want to be able to demonstrate how you could take any generic UAV, fly it from a ship, and get its information back in a meaningful way.

“Although we continue to work with industry, this is about the Royal Navy flying a Royal Navy UAV from a Royal Navy ship. That is a fabulously exciting concept.”

The team are using an existing air system known as Puma, which can be launched and recovered from ships.

Lt Cdr Matthews added: “The Puma is just one air system. It can stay up for two-and-a-half hours and it has a really good camera.

“Will we use it the future? Well, it’s a starting point.

“For the Royal Marines for example, this is an awesome piece of kit. In other areas, we need to assess its utility across the differing requirements of vessels.

“It’s important to remember that new technologies are coming through all the time. The most important aspect of our work is not about the air vehicle itself however.

“While we’ve done some work already on civilian boats, this trial is about how a Royal Navy ship can use these remotely-piloted-vehicles.

“We’ll be exploring how you get the information back in a way which can make a difference.

“It needs to go to the operations room or the bridge. What is the best way of launching and retrieving these vehicles which is not going to impact the ship?

“These are the kinds of issues we have to

tackle. I am especially pleased that we will be back on Mersey, because 700X previously went on board the same ship during an operation and used quadcopters.

“This is a natural progression to move into this more sophisticated air system.”

700X plays the lead role in all aspects of remotely-piloted systems, such as testing and evaluating drones from industry at Predannack airfield on the Lizard peninsula, close to RNAS Culdrose.

To help the squadron get to grips with remotely-piloted aviation, they spent time in the USA.

In Huntsville, Alabama, they received training on the Puma and Wasp air systems and learned how to operate the aircraft in various scenarios.

With a mixture of classroom and practical training, the team learnt how to launch and recover the vehicles in a variety of modes from purely manual to autonomous.

Back in the UK, they put these skills into practise, launching the Puma at Predannack – a landmark moment for the team.

The squadron also recently hosted a visit by an admiral from the Brazilian navy, who was keen to see for himself the progress made by the Royal Navy.

In a recent joint exercise with NavyX, the Royal Navy’s experts in getting unmanned technology rapidly to the frontline, the squadron supplied the air power with live video of ‘enemy soldiers’ passed back to headquarters, ahead of the Royal Marines storming a beach in north Devon.

The marines working with 700X will also be taking systems on exercise to Norway soon.

The other major aspect of the squadron’s work is in delivering training courses across defence from RNAS Culdrose in the use of quadcopters.

The squadron’s team of instructors train not just naval personnel but also the Army and RAF in the use of these useful drones on the battlefield.

An important milestone was being marked this month when 700X will have taught its 700th student.

Lt Cdr Matthews added: “I think we are in a very exciting time and I am really pleased with the progress we’ve made so far. As we move forward and take this technology to sea, we are leading the way in developing a new capability for the Royal Navy. We are at the start of that adventure.”

“As we move forward and take this technology to sea, we are leading the way in developing a new capability for the Royal Navy”  
- Lieutenant Commander Justin Matthews



### Puma

- Length: 4.6ft
- Wing span: 9.2ft
- Weight: 6.8kg
- Endurance: 2.5 hours



## Minehunting taken to new levels on Clyde

THE Royal Navy has a new way of hunting mines and surveying waters.

Project Wilton, which uses autonomous systems and equipment to carry out operations, has now been handed over into service, with naval personnel joining the team.

This handover marks a significant milestone for the navy as it looks to move into digitally-driven, autonomous mine warfare and survey work.

It follows a successful demonstration last year of an autonomous boat fitted with a towed side scan sonar

that was controlled remotely from a command centre ashore at Clyde Naval Base. Live operations on the Clyde are due to start from March.

Commodore Mike Knott, assistant chief of staff Maritime Capability, said: “This exciting project handover is a real step forward in realising our ambition to make mine hunting safer and more effective through the use of autonomous and robotic technology.

“With equipment and personnel now operating on the Clyde, the transition to widespread use of

autonomous systems in mine counter measures (MCM) is becoming a reality and places the Royal Navy MCM community at the cutting edge.”

Royal Navy personnel with now be stationed at Clyde Naval Base and initial operations are being carried out, including survey work using autonomous underwater vehicles. Targets will be laid and surveyed to support the joint UK/French MCM trials programme.

The full Project Wilton system will comprise of three boats (two

autonomous and one manned) and multiple autonomous underwater and remotely-operated vehicles.

This kit will supplement the Royal Navy’s current minehunting missions carried out by the mine countermeasures ships of the Hunt and Sandown classes.

The work builds on the ongoing trials of unmanned and autonomous technology carried out by the Royal Navy, Defence Equipment and Support and Defence Science and Technology Laboratory.



● Project Wilton trials on the Clyde

Picture: LPhoto Will Haigh

# YOU CAN'T FIGHT IF YOU CAN'T...

# SURVIVE

**T**HE Arctic is increasingly a region of great curiosity and that puts the cold weather specialists of the Royal Marines in an important position.

As the 'big thaw' continues, Arctic Ocean shipping lanes are opening up and natural riches previously out of reach can begin to be plundered.

That, unsurprisingly, means Arctic nations are preparing for what the future may hold as the area gets busier.

As governments turn their attentions to the untapped potential, so too are they working out what they will need militarily.

Norway have moved troops further north and so UK eyes have also looked in that direction.

There has been a underlining of the UK's commitment to security in the Arctic in the last year and, naturally, that responsibility has fallen at the snow shoes of the winter warriors of the Royal Marines.

For 50 years or more, the Green Berets have worked continually in the high north.

Not only that, but several commando raids took place in World War Two along Norway's coastline.

It's almost a home from home.

## **SURVIVE, MOVE, FIGHT**

The tradition and depth of knowledge is already there and now the marines are integrating closely with the Norwegians.

There is very little different from what they have done for years and years. They know this mission inside out.

Now, the next generation of commandos are getting their Arctic training and so the tradition will continue.

And while the region 'heats up' in more than one way, Royal Marines are there ready and equipped to fight in a place unique in its challenge, where the sun barely rises and temperatures plummet to below -30°C.

The first mission is to learn to survive.

For the most part, fighting and winning here is about 'out-surviving' the enemy.

As 3 Commando Brigade's highest readiness unit, it is 45 Commando at the forefront of this year's winter deployment, but they are also joined in the region by the small boats of 47 Commando, Commando Logistics Regiment and 30 Commando Information Exploitation Group.

All ranks must go through the survival course, a commando's rite of passage.

"Overcoming this demanding environment presents its own challenges. The survival phase of training includes learning how to construct snow shelters, navigating by the stars and how to trap animals in a survival situation," said Lieutenant



*CHILLY CHIPS: A Royal Marine chops potatoes for dinner during the survival phases of the winter deployment.*

Alex Saunders (Royal Navy) of 45 Commando.

The initial phases on the Arctic training concludes with the infamous ice breaking drills. Commandos have to plunge into a hole in the ice and climb out of the icy water unassisted using their ski poles.

This brutal part of the training is designed to help Royal Marines recognise and reduce the risks of cold shock: a physical response to being immersed in cold water that can rapidly incapacitate and even kill.

Crossing a frozen lake or river can bring a tactical advantage but comes with a huge risk, so ice breaking is about preparing for the eventuality of being suddenly dropped into bracing water.

"It was my first-time doing ice-breaking drills. It's a marine's rite of passage and so I'm really happy I got the opportunity to come to Norway and take part in this exercise," said Lance Corporal Angus McKenzie.

"I'm really looking forward to the rest of the training and seeing what Norway has to offer."

After rewarming from their dip through the ice, the marines head further into the wilderness to build and live from shelters.

They are left with the clothes on their back and a day pack with warm kit. That's it. The rest is up to them.

## **COLD RESPONSE**

Next is learning to move and fight (more on that in next month's *Navy News*) and once the Cold Weather Warfare Course is complete, it is onto Exercise Cold Response at the end of this month and into March.

Royal Navy ships will also be in the Norwegian Sea with Royal Marines embarked on various ships on a multinational task group on the Norwegian-run exercise.

It is about continuing the work of the Baltic Protector deployment from last year and will see NATO allies and partner nations flex their muscles in the strategically important Arctic.

For marines, Cold Response is about testing their specialism in amphibious raiding.

## **THEN AND NOW**

Royal Marines will be acting as commando forces, much like their forebears did during the war, launching on small boats or helicopters and working in small teams to disrupt the enemy in land.

This is all part of the continuing evolution into the Future Commando Force.

It focuses on the traditional commando raiding skills, but also equips marines with new technology and kit designed to aid their missions.





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**AIRCRAFT CARRIER**  
QUEEN ELIZABETH R08

Displ. 70,600 tonnes Length 280m Beam 70m

Phalanx gun systems, 30mm close-range guns, Carrier Air Wing of F-35B fighters and helicopters.

PRINCE OF WALES R09

Displ. 73,600 tonnes Length 284m Beam 73m

Phalanx gun systems, 30mm close-range guns, Carrier Air Wing of F-35B fighters and helicopters.



**TYPE 45 DESTROYER**

DARING	D32	DRAGON	D35
DAUNTLESS	D33	DEFENDER	D36
DIAMOND	D34	DUNCAN	D37

Displ. 7,350 tonnes Length 152.4m Beam 21.2m

4.5" gun, Sea Viper missiles, Harpoon missiles, Phalanx gun systems, 30mm close-range guns, torpedo defence system, Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.



**TYPE 23 FRIGATE**

KENT	F78	IRON DUKE	F234
LANCASTER	F229	WESTMINSTER	F237

Displ. 4,900 tonnes Length 133m Beam 16.1m

4.5" gun, Harpoon missiles, Sea Ceptor missiles, anti-submarine torpedoes, 30mm close-range guns, Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.



**RIVER II CLASS PATROL SHIP**

FORTH	P222	TAMAR (build)	P225
MEDWAY	P223	SPEY (build)	P226
TRENT	P224		

Displ. 2,200 tonnes Length 90m Beam 13.5m

30mm close-range gun.



**RIVER CLASS PATROL SHIP**

TYNE	P281	MERSEY	P283
SEVERN	P282		

Displ. 1,700 tonnes Length 79.8m Beam 13.6m

20mm close-range gun.



**HUNT CLASS MCMV**

LEDBURY	M30	MIDDLETON	M34
CATTISTOCK	M31	CHIDDINGFOLD	M37
BROCKLESBY	M33	HURWORTH	M39

Displ. 750 tonnes Length 60m Beam 10m

30mm close-range gun, remote-control mine disposal system.



**ARCHER CLASS PATROL BOAT**

EXPRESS	P163	BITER	P270	PUNCHER	P291
EXPLORER	P164	SMITER	P272	CHARGER	P292
EXAMPLE	P165	PURSUER	P273	RANGER	P293
EXPLOIT	P167	BLAZER	P279	TRUMPETER	P294
ARCHER	P264	DASHER	P280		

Displ. 54 tonnes Length 20.8m Beam 5.8m



**SCIMITAR CLASS PATROL BOAT**

SCIMITAR	P284	SABRE	P285
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Displ. 26 tonnes Length 16m Beam 4.4m

Machine guns.



**LANDING PLATFORM DOCK ASSAULT SHIP**

ALBION	L14	BULWARK	L15
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Displ. 18,500 tonnes Length 176m Beam 28.9m

Phalanx gun systems, close-range guns, landing craft, embarked military force.

Basing to be confirmed



**TYPE 31 FRIGATE**

Ship 1 (planned)	Ship 4 (planned)
Ship 2 (planned)	Ship 5 (planned)
Ship 3 (planned)	

Displ. 5,700 tonnes Length 138.7m Beam 19.75m

57mm gun, Sea Ceptor missiles, 40mm close-range guns, Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.



**TYPE 26 FRIGATE**

GLASGOW (build)	SHEFFIELD (planned)
CARDIFF (build)	NEWCASTLE (planned)
BELFAST (build)	EDINBURGH (planned)
BIRMINGHAM (planned)	LONDON (planned)

Displ. 6,900 tonnes Length 149.9m Beam 20.8m

5" gun, Sea Ceptor missiles, Phalanx gun systems, 30mm close-range guns, torpedo defence system, Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.



**TYPE 23 FRIGATE**

PORTLAND	F79	MONMOUTH	F235
SUTHERLAND	F81	MONTRORSE	F236
SOMERSET	F82	NORTHUMBERLAND	F238
ST ALBANS	F83	RICHMOND	F239
ARGYLL	F231		

Displ. 4,900 tonnes Length 133m Beam 16.1m

4.5" gun, Harpoon missiles, Sea Ceptor missiles, anti-submarine torpedoes, 30mm close-range guns, Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.



**COASTAL SURVEY SHIP**

MAGPIE	H130
--------	------

Displ. 37 tonnes Length 18m Beam 6.2m



**AUXILIARY OILER & REPLENISHMENT SHIP**

FORT VICTORIA A387

Displ. 35,500 tonnes Length 203.5m Beam 30.4m

Phalanx gun systems, 30mm close-range guns, Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.



**FLEET TANKER**

TIDESPRING	A136	TIDESURGE	A138
TIDERACE	A137	TIDEFORCE	A139

Displ. 37,000 tonnes Length 200.9m Beam 26.4m

Phalanx gun systems, 30mm close-range guns, Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.



**SOLID SUPPORT SHIP**

FORT ROSALIE	A385	FORT AUSTIN	A386
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Displ. 23,384 tonnes Length 185.1m Beam 24.1m

Phalanx gun systems, 30mm close-range guns, Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.



**FLEET TANKER**

WAVE KNIGHT	A389	WAVE RULER	A390
-------------	------	------------	------

Displ. 31,500 tonnes Length 196m Beam 27.8m

Phalanx gun systems, 30mm close-range guns, Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.

# Fleet 2020

## FASLANE



**OCEAN SURVEY SHIP**  
**SCOTT H131**  
 Displ. 13,500 tonnes Length 131m Beam 21.5m



**ECHO CLASS SURVEY SHIP**  
**ECHO H87 ENTERPRISE H88**  
 Displ. 3,470 tonnes Length 90m Beam 16.8m  
 20mm close-range guns.



**ICE PATROL SHIP**  
**PROTECTOR A173**  
 Displ. 5,000 tonnes Length 89.7m Beam 18.0m  
 Machine guns.



**LANDING CRAFT**  
**LCU Mk10** 10 vessels  
 Displ. 240 tonnes Length 29.8m Beam 17.4m  
 Capacity: 1 x 65 tonne Main Battle Tank, 4 x vehicles, or 120 troops



**LANDING CRAFT**  
**LCVP Mk5** 23 vessels  
 Displ. 8.2 tonnes Length 15.7m Beam 4.3m  
 Capacity: 6 tonnes of stores, or 35 troops

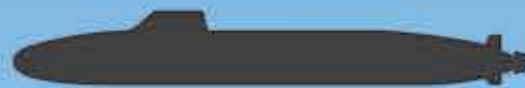


**PRIMARY CASUALTY RECEIVING SHIP & AVIATION TRAINING**  
**ARGUS A135**  
 Displ. 26,421 tonnes Length 175.1m Beam 30.4m  
 20mm close-range guns, helicopters.



**LANDING SHIP DOCK (AUXILIARY)**  
**LYME BAY L3007 CARDIGAN BAY L3009**  
**MOUNTS BAY L3008**  
 Displ. 16,160 tonnes Length 176m Beam 26.4m  
 Phalanx gun systems, 30mm close-range guns.

## FLEET AIR ARM



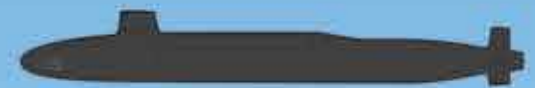
**DREADNOUGHT CLASS BALLISTIC MISSILE SUBMARINE**  
**DREADNOUGHT (build) WARSPITE (build)**  
**VALIANT (build) KING GEORGE VI (planned)**  
 Displ. 17,200 tonnes Length 152.9m  
 12 x tubes for no more than 8 Trident D5 ballistic missiles, torpedoes.



**ASTUTE CLASS FLEET SUBMARINE**  
**ASTUTE S94 ANSON S98 (build)**  
**AMBUSH S96 AGAMEMNON S99 (build)**  
**ARTFUL S95 AGINCOURT S100 (build)**  
**AUDACIOUS S97**  
 Displ. 7,400 tonnes Length 85.4m Beam 9.8m  
 Torpedoes, Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles



**TRAFALGAR CLASS FLEET SUBMARINES**  
**TRENCHANT S91 TRIUMPH S93**  
**TALENT S92**  
 Displ. 5,208 tonnes Length 85.4m Beam 9.8m  
 Torpedoes, Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles



**VANGUARD CLASS BALLISTIC MISSILE SUBMARINE**  
**VANGUARD S28 VIGILANT S30**  
**VICTORIOUS S29 VENGEANCE S31**  
 Displ. 15,985 tonnes Length 149.9m Beam 12.8m  
 16 x tubes for no more than 8 Trident D5 ballistic missiles, torpedoes.



**SANDOWN CLASS MCMV**  
**PENZANCE M106 RAMSEY M110**  
**PEMBROKE M107 BLYTH M111**  
**GRIMSBY M108 SHOREHAM M112**  
**BANGOR M109**  
 Displ. 484 tonnes Length 52.5m Beam 10.5m  
 30mm close-range gun, remote-control mine disposal system.



**ARCHER CLASS PATROL BOAT**  
**TRACKER P274 RAIDER P275**  
 Displ. 54 tonnes Length 20.8m Beam 5.8m  
 Machine guns



**ISLAND CLASS PATROL BOAT**  
**RONA MULL**  
**AORSA**  
 Displ. 19.9 tonnes Length 14.9m Beam 4.1m  
 Machine guns



**MERLIN HM2**  
 Length 22.8m Speed 167kts  
 Weapons: Anti-submarine torpedoes, machine guns.



**MERLIN HC3/4**  
 Length 22.8m Speed 167kts  
 Weapons: Machine guns, 24 troops.



**WILDCAT HMA2**  
 Length 15.2m Speed 157kts  
 Weapons: Anti-submarine torpedoes, anti-ship missiles, machine guns.



**WILDCAT Mk1**  
 Length 15.2m Speed 157kts  
 Weapons: Anti-tank missiles, machine guns, 8 troops.



**F-35B LIGHTNING II**  
 Length 15.7m Speed 1,060kts  
 Weapons: 7,000kg of bombs, missiles, 25mm cannon pod.



**KING AIR 350ER**  
 Length 14.2m Speed 312kts



**HAWK T1**  
 Length 11.9m Speed 550kts  
 Weapons: Sidewinder missiles, 30mm cannon pod.



**TEXAN T Mk1**  
 Length 10.16m Speed 316kts



**GROB 115 TUTOR**  
 Length 7.59m Speed 182kts



**GROB 120TP PREFECT**  
 Length 8.4m Speed 245kts

## MOD SEALIFT



**POINT CLASS STRATEGIC SEALIFT RO-RO**  
**HURST POINT ANVIL POINT**  
**HARTLAND POINT EDDYSTONE**  
 Displ. 23,235 tonnes Length 193m Beam 26m  
 8,000 tonnes of vehicles, 668 containers, and up to four Chinook, Wildcat or Merlin helicopters.



# PROJECT FIREFLY

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For further information contact the Firefly team at:  
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**THE JOURNEY DOES NOT HAVE TO END!**







## Diamond day out for brave Finlay

A WISH came true for Finlay Kalter as he relaxes in the captain's chair aboard HMS Diamond.

The little boy, from Pontypool, who has cancer, was welcomed aboard the Type 45 destroyer as part of a request to Dreams & Wishes, a charity which grants wishes to seriously-ill children.

Here Finlay talks about his day out in Portsmouth.

When I was in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, the ship I looked at was HMS Victory, which was Nelson's flagship.

This ship is 300 years old and has loads of cannons. Next, we looked at HMS Warrior, which was the first ever iron-made battleship, it needed 16 men just to steer it!

While we were looking around HMS Warrior, we had a phonecall, that the Officer of the Day would like to show us around the Type 45 Destroyer HMS Diamond.

We were escorted through the Naval Dockyard by a lady who was one of the ship's company.

HMS Diamond was in dry dock. When we arrived at the ship, the Officer of the Day and some of the crew saluted and whistled me, mum and dad on board.

The first thing we had a look at was the Bridge. The Officer of the Day let me sit in the Captain's seat, which was like a racing seat you can get for X-box.

He also let me sit in the chair that controls the movement of the ship. After that, we went down to the chill out place – the Officer's Mess – we had a drink and I had my picture taken holding an SA80.

Next we went to the Secret Room that I shall not say about. We then went to the front of the ship where the huge 4.5 inch MK 8 gun was. We also saw where the Harpoon and the Sea Viper missiles are launched from.

Lastly, as we walked back down the gangway, we were piped and saluted off!

I really enjoyed my time in Portsmouth and aboard HMS Diamond. Thank you to the crew of HMS Diamond and the Royal Navy.

from Finlay.



# Alec playing the generation game

A ROYAL NAVY recruit from Plympton has become the sixth generation of his family to join the Naval Service.

Leading Hand Alec Tobin arrived at the gates of HMS Raleigh in September and has now completed ten weeks intensive training to give him the skills he will rely upon throughout his career.

The course culminates with the passing-out-parade when Alec's guests included his father, Warrant Officer Steve Tobin, who is currently serving with Flag Officer Sea Training in Scotland, and his grandfather, Wilf, a former Chief Petty Officer who saw service in the Falklands conflict.

Alec's great-grandfather was a CPO engine room artificer, escaping from two torpedoed ships during World War 2. His great-grandfather was a Master-at-Arms and his great, great, great grandfather was a Sergeant in the Royal Marines.

The 23-year-old said: "I joined the Royal Navy to have a career rather than just a job."

"I wanted a progression ladder to climb and have the chance to give something back to my country."

"The past ten weeks have been brilliant and strangely enjoyable. I've had many unique experiences."

"It's been very challenging at times, but equally as rewarding. I've met some great people and I'm overjoyed and extremely proud to have passed-out of training."

Warrant Officer Steve Tobin joined the Royal Navy in 1986 as a Radio Operator 2nd Class.

He joined the Submarine Service during training and has served on four submarines. WO Tobin has also served ashore within the Royal Navy Submarine School at HMS Raleigh and in London.

He said: "It was a hugely proud moment for both my father and I to see Alec pass out from basic training."

"I hope he finds his experience in the Royal Navy every bit as fulfilling and rewarding as every Tobin that has gone before him."

Alec has joined the Royal Navy on an accelerated apprenticeship scheme and in the future will work on submarines, like his father.

The fast-track scheme will give Alec a level 3 apprenticeship in engineering.

He will also have the opportunity to complete a foundation degree in mechanical or electronic engineering.

With the first phase of his training complete Alec will transfer to the Naval Base in Plymouth to begin his submarine qualification.

The Royal Navy's Initial Naval Training course is underpinned by nine Core Maritime Skills that are the foundations of naval life and underpin operational effectiveness.

Recruits are taught the basics of Naval discipline and customs. They learn about navigation and are given the chance to take the helm of their own medium sized inflatable boat during a waterborne orienteering exercise. Royal Navy personnel can also be called upon to play a vital role in land-based operations, so recruits undergo training in basic combat skills which includes survival in the field.

Fitness is a key component of the training and is delivered using a disciplined method of military fitness which focuses on developing co-ordination and individual physical strength and endurance.

As the course progresses the recruits take part in three extended exercises to test their skills and understanding of the principles they have been taught.

Details of career opportunities within the Royal Navy are available online at [www.royalnavy.mod.uk](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk) or by calling the Recruitment Line on 03456 00 53 02.



## Glimpse of life behind the lens

A CLYDE-based Royal Navy photographer popped along to a Helensburgh Scout Group meeting to show what life is like "through the lens".

Leading Photographer Stevie Burke, 35, attended a Helensburgh Scout Group meeting to show the young Scouts what photographers in the Senior Service do and to show off the kit and equipment they use when deployed around the world.

The Scout group were also given a few hints and tips on how to take the best snaps for their upcoming charity calendar.

Stevie, from Hull in East Yorkshire, said: "It was a great evening with the children really engaged, and they loved trying on all of the kit and equipment that I brought with me."

The Helensburgh Scout group will all be taking pictures throughout the year to put together a charity calendar.

After giving a brief on life as a photographer in the Royal Navy, Stevie gave some practical lessons to the young Scouts. This involved showing them some tips and tricks using their camera phones and getting them to carry out some tasks together.

Stevie, who has currently deployed with Arbroath-based 45 Commando Royal Marines, added: "It was great to see the children really engaged when we carried out the practical camera lessons."

"Everybody has a camera on their phone, and it was nice to show them different ways of using it."

"All of the children were having loads of fun jumping around and taking pictures, it was good to see a group of young kids enjoying photography."



The Naval Children's Charity

dedicated to supporting children whose parents serve or have served in the Naval Service

We help children with a wide range of needs and at times of a family crisis. Applications can be made at any time either directly by contacting the office or visiting our website and downloading an application form, or through RNRM Welfare, SSAFA.

Our book, *Zoe and the Time Rabbit*, to help younger children understand the long separations that can be a part of Naval Service, is free – just email: [book@rnrchildrensfund.org.uk](mailto:book@rnrchildrensfund.org.uk) with your name and address and we can send you a copy.

311 Twyford Avenue, Portsmouth P02 8RN t: 023 9263 9534 e: [caseworkers@rnrchildrensfund.org.uk](mailto:caseworkers@rnrchildrensfund.org.uk)  
[www.rnrchildrensfund.org.uk](http://www.rnrchildrensfund.org.uk) Registered charity number 180182 Patron: HRH The Duke of York, KG

## Trio complete tough aviation training

TWO Royal Navy observers and an RAF navigator have graduated after completing the tough training course at RNAS Culdrose's 750 Naval Air Squadron.

SLt Scott Wilson, SLt Sam Burton and Fg Off Harry Greensill received their certificates from Culdrose executive officer Cdr Martin Barlow.

Fg Off Greensill picked up the Daedalus Trophy for highest overall grades for airborne sorties and SLt Burton was awarded the Westland Trophy for the highest levels of motivation and enthusiasm.

The two navy students graduating from 750 NAS both joined the Royal Navy in 2017. They

completed their initial officer training and started flying training last year.

This consisted of Common Core Ground School at RAF Shawbury and 15 hours in the Jupiter helicopter at RAF Valley before commencing training at Culdrose.

The RAF student graduating joined the RAF in 2017. He completed initial officer training and started his flying training in 2018 at RAF Cranwell, before commencing training at 750 NAS.

While at 750 NAS, the students flew around 45 hours in the Avenger aircraft and 30 hours in the ground-based training environment.

## Gifts cheer up disadvantaged children

MORTAR men from 45 Commando helped bring some cheer to ill and disadvantaged across Aberdeenshire by helping to sort and deliver presents.

Some 25 Royal Marines from RM Condor in Arbroath headed up the A90 in three vehicles to lend a hand to Cash for Kids, which provides thousands of families across the county with help from clothing vouchers and beds and bedding, to

dedicated equipment for youngsters with special needs and a little festive joy.

The marines helped by collecting and dropping off gifts all over Aberdeen and arranging gifts at the charity HQ into age groups, getting them ready to be delivered to the children.

"This was a fantastic opportunity for us to give back to the area," said Lance Corporal Dan Stewart.

# Living the dream on the Liberty

**EVERY now and then, a young Royal Navy officer will be given the opportunity to sail with another navy.**

**Far less frequently however, is the opportunity to sail aboard an Argentine tall ship. Sub Lieutenant Joe Avery, the second Royal Navy Officer to sail with the 340ft, three-masted ARA Libertad, writes about his time on board.**

I was not the only invitee; between Cadiz and Dublin we were joined by officers and cadets from Italy, Portugal, Belgium, France and South Africa. Additionally, personnel from the Argentine Air Force, Army, Gendarmerie, Federal Police, and Merchant Navy were among the crew.

The Libertad, which means 'Liberty' in English, departed Buenos Aires in the summer. The first port visit on her transatlantic and transequatorial voyage was to Tenerife. She then continued to Cadiz, where I embarked.

My first night onboard was slightly blurred thanks to being offered copious quantities of Fernet, a strong Italian spirit highly popular among the Argentines. I hope I did the RN proud by remaining on two feet that evening.

From Cadiz, we sailed to Lisbon, across the Bay of Biscay to Brest, up the River Scheldt to Antwerp, then across the English Channel and up the Thames to Canary Wharf.

After a whistle-stop tour of the "wonderful city" of London, we sailed to Dublin where I would reluctantly disembark. Subsequently I would not take part in her storm-ridden transatlantic voyage to Boston or her continued adventures to Miami, Barbados and Brazil before she returns to Buenos Aires.

The Libertad serves the Argentine Navy as a training ship. There are three elements to her crew; an officer cadre, qualified ratings, and midshipmen who receive their training onboard.

"Inviting personnel of other ships is very important because sharing conversations with them makes you understand other cultures and ways of life. These experiences improve you as an officer [and] contribute to the international relationships of our country," says Midshipman Ezequiel Peyret.

Whilst the Argentines consider us to be a highly professional and well-equipped navy; their own prowess at seafaring should not be underestimated. Before joining the fleet, they study for five years at their Naval Academy, and their sea survival training involves living on starvation rations for five days at sea in a full life-raft.

The midshipmen aboard the Libertad represented the top-scoring tier from their academy. Many spoke excellent English, although I was determined to (attempt to) speak their native tongue. During my four weeks onboard, my Spanish-language skills (and Google Translate) were tested to the limit.

The Argentines share with us a clear passion for rugby and football. Above these, however, their true passion is the 'asado'. This Argentine-style barbecue involves various methods of grilling meat, and is central to the Argentine 'Gacho' culture. An asado was held at each Port Visit.

The ship is a thing of beauty; a steel-hulled, full-rigged tall ship with a displacement of 3,765 tonnes, and painted gleaming white.

Despite some unfortunate weather conditions, much of our journey was still conducted under sail. I was lucky enough to be invited up to the topsails on several occasions.

The four weeks I spent aboard the Libertad were undoubtedly the highlight of my naval career thus far.

I believe the value of sending our personnel to experience other navies cannot be underestimated.

The Royal Navy remains a global navy, and I sincerely hope that exchanges of this kind continue.



# Heroes on both sides honoured

## Graf Spee's flagship found

THIS is one of the Royal Navy's greatest 20th Century adversaries – last seen 106 years ago.

Sitting upright on the seabed about 100 miles southeast of Stanley, this is the cruiser Scharnhorst, flagship of Admiral Graf von Spee, whose squadron was scourge of the Royal Navy – until cornered in the Falklands in December 1914.

The wreck, lying some 1,600 metres (5,280ft) down, was discovered by marine archaeologist Mensun Bound, the first success in a search by the Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust to locate all four German ships sunk in the battle.

The team had hoped to find the sunken squadron – heavy cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, plus light cruisers Nürnberg and Leipzig – in time for the centenary of the sinkings in 2014; the battle is a seminal moment in Falklands history, second only to the 1982 conflict, with December 8 commemorated each year as 'Battle Day'.

The search six years ago drew a blank, but just three days into a renewed attempt late last year, four deep-sea robot submarines and high-tech side-scan sonar on their mother ship, the search vessel Seabed Constructor, located the Scharnhorst while searching an area of seabed the size of Somerset.

"The moment of discovery was extraordinary," said Mr Bound. "We are often chasing shadows on the seabed, but when the Scharnhorst first appeared in the data flow, there was no doubt that this was one of the German fleet."

"You could even see the impact crater. We sent down a remotely-operated vehicle to explore and almost straight away we were into a debris field that said 'battle'. Suddenly she just came out of the gloom with great guns poking in every direction."

"As a Falkland Islander and a marine archaeologist, a discovery of this significance is an unforgettable, poignant moment in my life."

While the maritime heritage trust now campaigns to ensure the Scharnhorst is protected, naval historians are poring over the images and footage of the wreck to see what fresh light they shed on the cruiser's final hours.

In 1914 she led the German East Asia Squadron, a thorn in the Royal Navy's side throughout the opening weeks of the Great War.

When a Royal Navy force eventually found the squadron off Chile in November, it was decimated by Graf Spee's more powerful and more modern ships at the Battle of Coronel. Some 1,600 British sailors and marines were killed.

The Admiralty's response was to dispatch two battle-cruisers – Invincible and Inflexible, faster and far more powerful than any of Graf Spee's ships – to hunt down and destroy their foe.

That they did on December 8 1914 off the Falklands. All but one of the German vessels, SMS Dresden, was sunk, with 2,200 men lost, including Graf von Spee and his two sons.

"The discovery of SMS Scharnhorst is bittersweet," said Wilhelm Graf von Spee, head of the family. "We take comfort from the knowledge that the final resting place of so many has been found, and can now be preserved, whilst also being reminded of the huge waste of life."

"As a family we lost a father and his two sons on one day. Like the thousands of other families who suffered unimaginable loss during World War 1, we remember them and must ensure that their sacrifice was not in vain."

Such was Graf Spee's fame in 1914, his deeds were immortalised by Germans in books and films and then by the 'pocket battleship' laid down by the resurgent German Navy in the 1930s (see right).

Pictures courtesy of the Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust

**UNFORGETTABLE. Memorable. Far exceeded expectations. Unique. A privilege.**

These are just some of the comments made by people who travelled from Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Germany to the banks of the River Plate for a never-to-be-repeated few days commemorating naval heroes on both sides of the battle lines.

Eighty years ago, the crews of HMS Ajax, Achilles and Exeter clashed with the crew of the 'pocket battleship' Graf Spee off the South American coast.

The battle lasted barely an hour. The ensuing drama in Montevideo little more than three days. Yet the Battle of the River Plate resonates across the decades: a story of bravery, determination, political intrigue and humanity which continues to fascinate.

"The grandson of the foreign minister in 1940 told us there are three things visitors to Montevideo want to see: the football stadium where Uruguay won the first World Cup; the Andes museum dedicated to the 1972 plane crash; and the Graf Spee," explained Peter Danks, who served in the post-war Leander-class frigate Ajax and became associated with veterans of the 1939 battle as a result.

It's thought that there are just four men out of the 3,000 or so participants in the action still with us 80 years on. None were able to make the lengthy journey to South America – but many of their descendants, friends and supporters were.

The HMS Ajax and River Plate Association spent three years planning events in Uruguay and Argentina. Their 41-strong group was joined by a party from New Zealand (Achilles was heavily crewed by Kiwis) as well as relatives of German sailors, led by General Enrique Dick, President of the Graf Spee Association and the Langsdorff family – descendants of the Graf Spee's commanding officer.

They were taken to the spot that the German vessel was blown up by her crew – about five miles off the western shore of Montevideo Bay – where wreaths were cast into the waters.

There is nothing to see in the River Plate of Graf Spee any more, but ashore relics recovered from the wreck are scattered around historic sites in Montevideo – one of the German ship's anchors, a 6in gun and the range finder from the top of the main mast.

Not on general view, however, is the eagle 'figurehead' which once adorned the pocket battleship's bow. The figurehead – weighing one third of a tonne – is kept locked away; the group was invited to inspect it (but take no photographs) eight at a time.

Tributes to the men of 1939 were paid in the English Cathedral with a service of thanksgiving, words by British Ambassador Ian Duddy and the unveiling of a memorial plaque, followed by a visit to the British Cemetery, where three of HMS Achilles dead are buried and, with the German Ambassador, to Montevideo's North Cemetery, last resting place of 36 of Graf Spee's crew.

Raylene Liufalani, New Zealand's Ambassador to Uruguay, said the battle had played a seminal moment in the history of her country.

"This battle was the first time that a New Zealand unit had struck a blow against opposing forces in the war," she said. "The men that died just offshore were some of the first of 11,000 New Zealand casualties in World War 2. Given our small population at the time, this was a significant loss of life for New Zealand and its impact was felt deeply."

With events in Uruguay concluded, the parties took a two-hour ferry ride across the River Plate estuary to Buenos Aires where the



● German and British relatives and dignitaries gather at Capt Langsdorff's grave for a service of commemoration

Picture: Pablo Levaggi

final act of the seven-day drama took place in December 1939.

It was to the Argentine capital that the German ship's crew were taken when she was scuttled. They were interned, while their captain Hans Langsdorff committed suicide.

He and a member of HMS Exeter's crew are buried in Argentina's National Cemetery, Chacarita, the setting for the last acts of commemoration and reconciliation, attended by Germans, Britons and Argentinians.

Throughout, the 80th anniversary events drew sizeable crowds, dignitaries from Britain and Germany, and the media – including a documentary crew following Langsdorff's daughter, Dr Inge Nedden, who is campaigning vigorously to see her father belatedly honoured in his native land.

Scorned by Hitler, whose nihilistic tendencies demanded Graf Spee fight to the death with all her crew going down, today Langsdorff is seen by both sides as a man of humanity whose decision to scuttle his ship saved thousands of lives, British as well as German.

Dr Rüdiger Nedden, Langsdorff's son in law, said three or four generations of Germans and Commonwealth citizens owed their existence to the decision by Graf Spee's captain not to fight to the death.

"When we honour Hans Langsdorff, we celebrate life, we celebrate the living," he stressed.

To underline that point Shaun Collier, the Major of Ajax – the Canadian new town named in honour of the British cruiser – presented a framed painting of the town to the family of Graf Spee's captain and a replica street sign of Langsdorff Drive to the Graf Spee Association.

In a town of more than 100,000 people, roads are named after those who served at the River Plate, but Langsdorff's is the sole German so honoured.

For the British attendees, it was one highly-emotional moment among many.

"After nearly three years of planning, the whole trip was brilliant and far exceeded my expectations," said Malcolm Collis who organised the visit.

Louise Ashton's grandfather Charles Woodhouse captained HMS Ajax in 1939.

"Friday December 13 2019 will stand out as one of my top memories for ever," she said.



● The British group pays its respects at the English Cathedral in Montevideo and (below) Caroline Tibbs and Louise Ashton, granddaughters of HMS Ajax's captain Charles Woodhouse, in front of the roll of honour

Pictures: Peter Danks



"Nothing disappointed and there were some great surprises along the way, everything was even better than anticipated!"

"I learned a lot more about the Battle of the River Plate and feel very proud of my association with this remarkable piece of history through my grandfather."

And from the Mayor of Ajax: "I knew the history of the battle but I didn't truly understand the significance until this trip. I met some new friends and enjoyed unique events that very few will ever have the privilege of experiencing."

"Truly a once in a lifetime opportunity that I'm so glad Rose and I were able to attend."

## Y Basil received a birthday card from The Queen...



PROUDLY holding a birthday card from the Queen is one of the last living links with the Battle of the River Plate is Basil Trott, whose gun dealt the crucial blow to Hitler's prized pocket battleship.

It was from 'Y' Turret – the last working main guns aboard cruiser HMS Exeter – that the shell which stopped the marauding actions of Graf Spee was fired in December 1939.

Then just shy of his 20th birthday was gunlayer Basil Trott, now celebrating his 100th year with his wife Sadie in Cherry Hinton, Cambridge having been honoured by the people of Chile and Canada for his Royal Navy.

Mr Trott served for two years aboard heavy cruiser Exeter, patrolling the waters off South America. The

ship's company provided vital aid and relief in Concepción, Chile, after an earthquake on the eve of war – assistance recognised in 2017 with a medal presented by the Chilean Ambassador in the UK.

A few months later, Exeter in company with HMS Ajax and Achilles cornered Graf Spee off the River Plate estuary. The German warship had roamed at will since the outbreak of war, picking off Allied shipping in the Atlantic and, briefly, Indian Oceans.

Though outgunned, all three British cruisers engaged Graf Spee. Exeter suffered the heaviest losses (61 men killed) with her two forward 8in turrets (A and B) knocked out, leaving Y the last one still in action... long enough for one of the shells to wreck the German

ship's fuel processing system – leaving her with just 16 hours of fuel. Graf Spee sought shelter in Montevideo, was unable to effect the necessary repairs, and scuttled herself a few days later just offshore.

With Exeter needing extensive repairs on her return home, Mr Trott moved on to HMS Kenya and Wallace, took part in convoys to Russia and Malta and remained in the RN post-war, serving aboard HMS Comus in Korea. His final seagoing draft, as a lieutenant, was as gunnery officer of HMS Whitby.

He left the RN in 1956 after a spell as Parade Training Officer at the then Gunnery School on Whale Island and, after short spells as an office equipment salesman and working at Johnson and

Johnson in Portsmouth, he took up a career in local government in Gosport and Portsmouth.

In retirement first in Spain, more recently Cambridge, Mr Trott has recorded his memoirs for the Imperial War Museum, appeared on a BBC documentary about the River Plate action and has been immortalised by the townsfolk of Ajax in Canada with a street named after him, one Trott Lane which its namesake has had the chance to visit.





● The HMS Oardacious team celebrate arriving in Antigua

Picture: Ben Duffy



## Relationships don't have to be bad to be better

WITH the expectation of up to 660 days in every three-year period spent away from home for every member of the Naval Service, there are inevitable strains and pressures on relationships and family life that are faced in almost no other profession.

The support provided by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity is therefore a lifeline for those struggling to maintain their relationships while serving.

For several years the RNRMC have partnered with Relate to provide free and confidential face-to-face, online and telephone counselling to serving personnel, veterans and their families. In 2018, 580 courses of counselling and 1,327 separate counselling sessions were completed thanks to RNRMC funding.

In 2019 the RNRMC's 'Building Stronger Families' portal was launched; a self-directed online learning programme providing a discreet and accessible way for all Naval families to access advice and support when relationships are put under strain.

The RNRMC recently committed £321,840 to Relate over the next three years in order to continue providing relationship support to Naval families. This funding forms part of the RNRMC's new 'Family Support' programme, which will bring together several partner organisations to offer a comprehensive support package for Naval families in 2020.

One user of the RNRMC/Relate service, who wished to remain anonymous, said: "We have been married for over 35 years, but it hasn't all been plain sailing. There have been arguments and it's been tough, but because we've had so many great years together, and we have a lovely daughter, we wanted to make our marriage work. I saw Relate's partnership with the RNRMC advertised, so we both agreed to seize the opportunity and booked seven free sessions.

"The counselling offered by the RNRMC was very helpful. We are still together and our relationship is getting better and better. We still have our differences and can both be strong-willed and stubborn. The difference now is that we try to resolve our differences calmly, and we both agree that this programme has helped us."

To book counselling, call 01302 380279, or to access the 'Building Stronger Families' online portal visit the 'Need Help Now' page at [rnrnc.org.uk](http://rnrnc.org.uk).

## Putting an arm around the whole family

JANUARY'S edition of *Navy News* featured the mountaineering adventures of Joe Winch, as the former Royal Marine reflected on his recent summit of Mount Everest.

For over two years Joe has been recovering from severe Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and his epic Everest achievement marked a significant milestone in his recovery.

However, while mental or physical injuries sustained during service can be hugely traumatic for the sufferer, they can also have a significant impact on their loved ones. Throughout Joe's recovery, his wife Amy has been by his side, but the effects of Joe's illness have made family life difficult at times and have put strains on Joe and Amy's marriage.

"We are critical to Joe's recovery; he needs us there every day to support him. I simply didn't have time to think about myself", said Amy.

Amy received counselling and childcare support from the RNRMC, but it is the RNRMC's funding of the charity Ripple Pond which has really made the difference to her.

Uniquely dedicated to supporting the adult family members of physically or emotionally-injured service personnel, Ripple Pond has a regional network of people going through exactly the same journey of living with a spouse or partner with PTSD. They can share whether they are having a rough day or a good day and meet up regularly to give one another support. So far, the RNRMC have provided almost £10,000 in grants to the Ripple Pond so that they can support the loved ones of Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel with physical and mental injuries.

# We did it!

FOUR British submariners completed an epic challenge after rowing 3,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean in just 36 days, 6 hours, 40 minutes.

The HMS Oardacious team were just a day behind the record-breaking winners – three brothers from Edinburgh – as they rowed into Nelson's Harbour in Antigua, a little over seven weeks after setting out from La Gomera.

The four men – Lieutenant Hugo Mitchell-Heggs from Sheffield, Lieutenant Callum Fraser from Basingstoke, Petty Officer Dylan Woods from Northern Ireland and Leading Engineer Technician Matt Harvey from Kirkcaldy – hoped to raise £125,000 for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

The team embarked upon the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, the 'world's toughest row', on December 12 in their 28ft-long, £50,000 lightweight R45 Rannoch boat.

They faced, at various times, shark-infested waters, waves reaching heights of 40ft, heavy storms, and busy shipping lanes.

Hugo said: "The beginning of the race was tough and go, due to the demise of our autopilot which meant we had to steer manually and took us down to three men for 24 hours, but determination and great team work meant we still managed to remain in the front pack."

Completing 1.5million strokes by keeping to a strict schedule of rowing two hours / sleeping for two hours, 24 hours a day, the submariners overcame seasickness, and blisters and sores.

A few days before the finish a huge wave threw Callum and Dylan out of the boat in their first full-capsize. Dylan chipped a tooth, an oar snapped, the water maker took a big hit, repeatedly turning itself off, and the autohelm was well and truly on its last legs.

Despite the fight, all four rowers had gone through intensive training on what to do in exactly this scenario; they had everything strapped down and strapped on, so at no point were they at any real risk, just a big shock.

At their lowest, the team battled dehydration and extreme fatigue in 40-degree heat, burning 12,000 calories a day and losing around 20 per cent of their body weight.

"It was an incredible challenge for a worthwhile cause and it feels great to be back on land, reunited with loved ones. My gran was told to prepare bangers and mash for our return so that will be next on my list!" Dylan said.

You can still support the team – they were just £24k short of their target when they finished the race – by texting 'NAVY OAR' to 70500 to donate £5 to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.



● Dylan, front, and Hugo, are welcomed by loved ones in Antigua; the team's rowing boat; below, at the start of the race in the Canary Islands

Pictures: GRM



## New sports status for Gulf base

NEW gym kit will shortly be heading to RN ships in the Gulf – recognition of the theatre’s growing importance.

Nearly 500 sailors serve in British vessels stationed long term in Bahrain – minehunters HMS Blyth, Brocklesby, Ledbury and Shoreham, their mother/command ship RFA Cardigan Bay, plus frigate HMS Montrose patrolling the Strait of Hormuz.

Several hundred more RN personnel are based at the new UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain, providing support for those vessels, serving at the hub of British operations in the region (UKMCC) or on the staff of one of the international task forces tackling piracy/terrorism and other illegal activity in the Indian Ocean.

They enjoy the use of impressive gym suites in the NSF, plus facilities (including a pool) at the neighbouring US Fifth Fleet base.

Facilities/kit on the ships is rather more limited... as is space, especially on the minehunters.

The NSF’s clubz Petty Officer (Physical Training) George Wright isn’t able to do much about the space. But he has had Bahrain classed by sporting/fitness bosses as the Navy’s ‘fourth sporting region’ (Portsmouth, Plymouth and Faslane complete the quartet).

The establishment of this new regional group has secured funding to improve and maintain physical training capabilities for crews alongside and at sea.

“The Royal Navy’s commitment to the welfare of its personnel is evident in this well-deserved improvement in facilities and kit,” said George. “A high level of physical health is known to keep our sailors and divers both mentally fit and able to do their jobs to the best of their abilities.”

■ THE £9m new gym at Dartmouth is on track to open this spring after the roof on the complex was finished.

LPT Catherine Forrest was invited to don hard hat, surcoat and goggles to ceremonially drill the final bolt into place on the structure just in time for Christmas.

The new fitness complex will replace the existing gym at BRNC which has served the spiritual home of the officer corps for nearly 120 years.

It features a main multi-sports hall plus various suites with kit to satisfy all sporting needs and can accommodate up to 800 people at any one time.

Ahead of the ‘topping out’ ceremony cadets and staff were given their first glimpse inside the new facility.

## THE Navy’s premier submarine hunters are at the top of their game after their autumn workout in the USA.

Merlin helicopter crews say their three months with HMS Queen Elizabeth’s task group mean they are much better prepared to defend Britain’s future flagships.

The Merlin Mk2 helicopters of 814 and 820 Naval Air Squadrons – normally based at Culdrose in Cornwall – were assigned to frigate HMS Northumberland as well as Queen Elizabeth herself, charged with forming an invisible yet impenetrable ring of steel to prevent any enemy submarine getting within torpedo or missile range.

Despite both squadrons calling on experience in submarine hunting going back more than six decades, the tactics of protecting a carrier group from a 21st Century underwater threat are still in their infancy and evolving.

A series of anti-submarine exercises – firstly a Canadian-led NATO workout off Nova Scotia, then against American Los Angeles-class hunter killers off the Eastern Seaboard of the USA.

“They are fast, agile and able to stay submerged as long as the food lasts – the perfect adversary to train against,” said pilot Lieutenant Nick Jackson-Spence.

Aircrewman Petty Officer Andrew ‘Smudge’ Smith – who helps operate the sub-hunting sensor suite in the back of a Merlin – said the American boats proved to be formidable ‘foes’.

“The US submarines are experts in using the underwater environment to their advantage – they live underwater, we only visit,” he added.

“We had to draw on our training to counter them. Each sortie takes a lot of preparation and planning, but after every flight we learn a little more; helping us to keep the carrier safe.”

The submarine threat is the greatest faced by a carrier strike group believes 820 Squadron’s senior pilot Lieutenant Commander Robert Bond, in charge of the detachment aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth.

“We can – and will, if needed – have aircraft airborne around the clock to counter the submarine menace. Persistence in anti-submarine warfare is the key to success – working with other assets like HMS Northumberland and her towed-array sonar or American P8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft to search for, localise and then attack the underwater



● HMS Northumberland and her Merlin bring a Los Angeles-class boat to the surface

threat.

“This deployment has given us the opportunity to develop our anti-submarine warfare ability, building a foundation which we’ll continue to hone throughout next year. We’ll be ready for the carrier’s first operational deployment in 2021 and relish the opportunity to help make it a success.”

His men and women have returned to Cornwall with fresh ideas and fresh tactics – anything from storing extra sonobuoys (the automated ‘ears’ dropped in the ocean to listen for submarine activity) aboard the tanker to relief aircrew living aboard the escorting frigate to keep the pressure on the enemy below.

That pressure demands supreme efforts – and not just from the four crew in the helicopter; for every hour in the air a Merlin Mk2 requires 60 hours of maintenance in the carrier’s cavernous hangar, work performed by a 60-strong team of engineers, technicians, and avionics experts on Queen Elizabeth.

“The pace of the flight deck has been our biggest challenge,” explained Air Engineering Technician Beth Potter. “We’re working on a busy deck, with multiple aircraft types to tight time constraints – usually at night. Although, at times it’s been difficult, seeing the progress we’ve made is really rewarding.”

Aboard HMS Northumberland, the maintenance burden was carried by just ten mechanics. They put in more than 9,000 hours – individually more than one year’s

work – to support more than 50 sorties by the frigate’s Merlin.

“Northumberland were really welcoming to us,” said avionics expert LAET Katherine Jennings.

“During busy periods we could work hours which took us out of the ship’s routine and everyone did their utmost to keep us going, especially the chefs who kindly kept us well fed!”

The helicopter’s observer Lieutenant Luke Maciejewski said working hand-in-hand with the frigate – equipped with state-of-the-art sonar and a dedicated team of submarine-hunting specialists in the operations room – created a potent combination.

“Living with the people you operate with really helps form relationships which make you a more effective fighting team,” he added.

“This ultimately makes Northumberland – in fact any anti-submarine frigate – a more potent asset when working with her own helicopter seamlessly.”

Although the Mk2 is primarily a submarine hunter, it was called upon to perform other duties while with the task group.

“We’re kept incredibly busy when we’re not training for anti-submarine warfare, supporting the operations room by using our radar and camera to build up a surface picture, moving personnel and cargo around or carrying out search and rescue if required,” said Lieutenant Ben ‘Iron-hoof’ Houghton, who is on his first deployment.

“That variety keeps the job really interesting and it’s a great boost to morale when we are able to deliver mail from home to the ship after a long period at sea.”



## Airmen of the board

INSTRUCTORS

at Culdrose have introduced traditional-style board games to help trainee Merlin aircrew sharpen their minds in the game of cat-and-mouse between hunter and hunted.



Ed Oates, a former Fleet Air Arm observer/submarine hunter and Gavin ‘Mini’ Cooper, who served as an aircrewman, teach the art of the hunt to the next generation of Merlin aircrew.

They decided old school war gaming could give fliers the edge, on top of the instruction in the classroom and time spent on simulators

The pair have adapted the classic boardgame Battleships: one ‘player’ uses the latest tactics, NATO/RN planning, analysis and search grids to find the submarine, his opponent tries to avoid the Merlin’s grasp.

“This is not about playing games,” Ed underlined. “This is about learning by doing.”

“The key thing about the games is that you have to get the science right, because that is the reality.”

“You’ve got to do your maths and you’ve got to make sure your timeframe and the game mechanics are in sync with the maths.”

“The artistic part of designing the game is about making it fun, because it has to be enjoyable too as that is how the human brain works and that is an effective way to learn.”

As well as the cunningly-named Anti-Submarine Warfare game, the duo have also devised a second helicopter search game, ‘Pingers’, similar to the Asian strategy game Go, while a card game teaches NATO codewords in an elaborate version of Snap.

Ten sets each of ASW and Pingers have been produced for aircrew on the Merlin training squadron, 824, who are undertaking the Applied Warfare Course.

“These new war games are a fantastic addition to the Merlin training course and introduce the basics of anti-submarine warfare to the aircrew in a really innovative format,” said 824’s Commanding Officer Commander Martin Russell.

“I can’t praise highly enough the work of Ed Oates and Gavin Cooper, who I know have put so much effort into producing these games.”

“I am sure the trainees will enjoy getting to grips with these games as part of all of their training here at Culdrose in the classrooms, simulators and in real aircraft.”

## ASK YOURSELF:

- Were you made in the Royal Navy?
- Do you want to give others the opportunity to make it in the Royal Navy?
- Are you seeking a rewarding Second Career?

If the answer to any is yes then...

### APPLY TO BECOME A CAREERS ADVISER

Flag Officer Sea Training is currently seeking RN and RM WO’s, Senior Rates and SNCO Service Leavers and former Service (those that left Service under 3 years), to work in Armed Forces Careers Offices which are listed on the map.

Positions are nationwide, employed on Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) (NCS) Limited Commitment.

Salary starts from £30k with promotion opportunities to rise to £43k. FTRS rates of pay apply (Reviewed annually and pensionable).

For more information contact:

POSTN 01929 403172 | Mil 94374 3172 | E-mail [navycnr-rnsrtrainingassist@mod.gov.uk](mailto:navycnr-rnsrtrainingassist@mod.gov.uk)



## RFA female champion honoured

TWO decades' dedication to championing the work of women at sea earned RFA Chief Officer Susan Cloggie-Holden the prestigious Global Seafarer of the Year award at the Lloyd's List Europe Awards.

Susan was the first Royal Fleet Auxiliary Female Champion and is the Chair of the RFA Women's Network. She launched a new Female-to-Female Mentoring scheme for RFA Women, and was a founding member of the Maritime UK Women in Maritime Taskforce.

"I'm extremely proud of this award which I received 19 years to the day after I stepped on board my first RFA ship as a Cadet," said Susan.

"It's a real honour for me to be recognised for the work that I have been doing with regards women in maritime; this work I do not to win awards but to improve the lives of seafarers and also increase gender diversity and equality across the maritime industry."

The awards at Hilton's Park Lane Hotel were attended by 400 industry professionals and were hosted by comedian/actor Hugh Dennis.

## New block on the Rock

TAKING shape now just three minutes from Gibraltar Airport are 17 two-bedroom apartments designed and built specifically for service personnel and their families based at – or visiting – the Rock.

All 17 apartments have full disabled access, are fitted with air conditioning throughout (the average temperature on the Rock is over 20C for most of the year) and can accommodate up to six people in two bedrooms, plus a bed-settee in the lounge.

The complex at Four Corners is being provided by the Gibraltar Naval Trust which has been supporting personnel since 1940, from organising sporting and adventurous training activities to improving facilities and amenities for those stationed on the Rock.

The apartments will be made available to serving personnel, UK-based civilians, veterans from all three services, and families of personnel assigned to or units visiting Gibraltar.

The first bookings for summer 2020 will be taken this month. For prices, availability and booking details, see [www.gibraltarnavaltrust.com](http://www.gibraltarnavaltrust.com) and [modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/defnet/Corp/DINSpersonnel/2017/2017DIN01-041.pdf?search=gibraltar%20naval%20trust](http://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/defnet/Corp/DINSpersonnel/2017/2017DIN01-041.pdf?search=gibraltar%20naval%20trust) for details about criteria/eligibility.

## Guz sailors commended

SEVEN sailors from Plymouth have been commended by their flotilla commander Commodore Rob Bellfield.

Able Seaman Emma Gosford was rewarded for her work as the meteorological observer on RFA Mounts Bay during hurricane relief work in the Bahamas which went far beyond her day job.

Also commended were six members of the Refit Support Group: Chiefs Mark Rae and Lee Cunningham, Leading Seamen Clare Brewer and Rhys White, and Able Seamen Joshua Burdett and Chloe Hutchings for their efforts on frigates in overhaul, as well as support for HMS Bulwark and Monmouth.

# New think tank calls on UK's brightest

THE Royal Navy is inviting the finest military, security and intelligence academics and think-tank analysts to help shape the Fleet of tomorrow.

It opened the new Strategic Studies Centre in Portsmouth Naval Base – a hub for the very latest thinking and ideas surrounding the Navy's contribution to defence and security in the 21st-Century.

Research carried out under its banner is intended to guide future decision making when it comes to naval/defence strategy and policy.

First Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin has established the centre as part of the Navy's transformation agenda.

"The world that we live in is moving faster than ever before and we have a responsibility to remain ahead of our adversaries in terms of conceptual thought as well as delivery on operations," he said.

"This collaboration between the Royal Navy, academia and strategic thinkers will allow us to harness a much greater diversity of ideas and exploit them, not just for the Navy's benefit but ultimately for Defence and the nation as a whole."

Both the Army and RAF have similar initiatives, but not the Senior Service – despite its long-standing reputation for studying and learning from operations around the globe – until now.

The centre is co-located with the Naval Historical Branch which will continue to analyse the past to support present-day operations and guide actions and decisions particularly at the broader 'big picture' level.

By better linking up with the academic world, the Navy assesses that

the intellect and thinking will stimulate greater debate and lead to a better-informed service, allowing it to tap into the latest research and studies relating to naval/maritime/amphibious operations – as well as injecting front-line experience and its own research findings back into academic studies.

"There are fellowships at Oxford, Masters and PhDs funded by the Ministry of Defence, research papers put before the Defence Academy at Shrivenham, but it's all rather dispersed," explained Commander Andrew Norgate of the Naval Staff.

"We want to further harness the Royal Navy's academic muscle and links. It's there already, but it's not necessarily shared with the rest of the Navy – or academia."

"The Naval Historical Branch analyses the past through to the present. The Strategic Studies Centre will build on this looking at the present and future."

The centre is located in Portsmouth Naval Base and has a permanent staff of four sailors/civilians but the location will allow greater use of secondees and reservists. It will focus on academic awareness, studies and research papers, but a longer-term goal is for the centre to partner with other leading institutions to organise conferences and events.

For more information about the centre and details about conducting research under its wing, see [www.royalnavy.mod.uk/strategicstudies](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/strategicstudies) or email [NAVYPOL-STRATSTUDIESCENTRE@mod.gov.uk](mailto:NAVYPOL-STRATSTUDIESCENTRE@mod.gov.uk)

# Apprentices, sign up

TRAINEE air and marine engineers can enjoy a much improved 'learning suite' from the beginning of February – unveiled to kick off National Apprenticeship Week.

HMS Sultan's new-look learning and development hub is much better suited to students learning how to maintain complex avionics and electrical systems in front-line helicopters through to the mighty MT30 Rolls-Royce engines which power the Navy's new carriers – and future Type 26 frigates.

This year's nationwide focus on apprenticeships (February 3-9) is asking potential employees/employers to 'look beyond' traditional routes into the workplace, and to encourage parents and teachers to ditch any outdated preconceptions about apprenticeships to look at what is offered in 2020.

Apprenticeships play a vital role in the recruitment, retention and resettlement of sailors and Royal Marines.

The Senior Service has enjoyed considerable success over the past year on the apprenticeship front: it's currently the third



• A former recompression chamber converted into a relaxation area in Sultan's revamped learning hub

Picture: LPhot Dan Shepherd

best employer in the country when it comes to success rates; Ofsted assessed the 23 schemes it delivers as 'outstanding'; and the Princess Royal welcomed the Navy into an exclusive 'club' of firms and organisations to receive her prestigious training award.

On the personal front, LAET Ben Welsby took gold at the

WorldSkills UK Competition in the aeronautical engineering (mechanical) category and LAET Joshua Morris bagged bronze in the avionics category.

The RN holds its own apprenticeship awards next month, with Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd hosting the winners aboard HMS Victory.

## Pompey's top engineers recognised

THE second Team Portsmouth Engineering Awards celebrated the achievements of all who support ships based in the city – RN personnel, plus BAE Systems and DE&S employees.

The awards are spread across five categories with winners selected from the RN, BAE and DE&S:

- **engineering excellence:** LET (ME) Liam Tucker (HMS Brocklesby); Scott Livingstone, Simon Saunders, Steven Howick, Neil Griffiths, Stephen Cook, and Kathryn Seymour (BAE); Chris Evans (DE&S);
- **safety first:** CPO Craig MacLean (RN); Kat Bruce (BAE); Tom Gilbert (DE&S);
- **innovation and technology:** Lt Cdr Lee Packer, Lt Sean Quigley, S/Lt Elliot

Spencer, PO(ET) Richard Green and ET ME Daron Shallow; Sam Horry, Hans Mai and Ed Micklin (BAE); Cdr Marcel Rosenburg, Steve Carter (BAE), Steve Brown (BAE), Mark Pilkington, Cdr David Wright, Jason Davies (DE&S);

■ **trainee engineer of the year:**

ET (ME) Michael Porter (HMS Dragon); David McGinn (BAE); Chris Dobson (DE&S);

■ **inspiring engineering:** CPO Mervin 'Pete' McNeill (HMS Kent); Bethany Shepherd (BAE).

■ **team of the year:** CPO ET (WE)

John Davies, LET (WE) Steffan Howles, WO1 Ian Rickatson, Mark Bray, Richard Barnes, George Mills, Mark Webster, WO1 Pat Dinmore, PO Liam Masefield-Ball and LH Ashley Cole

The latter were nominated by Lt Cdr Packer, HMS Duncan's weapon engineer officer; the team proved that it is possible to conduct an in-theatre exchange of a major weapon system in a compressed timeframe, while overcoming logistical, technical, and personal issues to deliver success.

The RN's Chief Engineering Officer, Rear Admiral Jim Higham, praised the efforts of all winners and nominees.

"Not only is great work done here to get our ships deployed, but there are many satellite units and others roles within the dockyard, such as infrastructure and preservation projects," he said.

"With a globally-deployed navy, the importance of engineering support is illustrated by the fact that three of the award winners are on board Portsmouth ships in the USA, Gulf and the Mediterranean."

## Tim's task force initiative rewarded



ROYAL Marine Lance Corporal Tim Copeman on the UK-led Combined Task Force 150 battle staff receives a Herbert Lott award for efficiency from his commanding officer.

Acting on his own initiative, Tim produced an electronic guide which improved the decision-making process for the task force commander.

He was assistant to the Battle Watch Captain as part of CTF150, which directs complex maritime security operations east of Suez.

Created in 1930, the Herbert Lott Naval Trust Fund was established in order to recognise those in the Naval Service who have significantly improved the way in which the Naval and Royal Marines forces operate.

Commodore Ed Ahlgren said the commando's efforts had not only

served his staff but future iterations of the team in charge of the Bahrain-based task force.

"The production of the package has undoubtedly improved operational capability for the current team as well as for commands in the future."

"Beyond this outstanding piece of work, Copeman has brought the same energy, initiative and efficiency to all other aspects of his duties," said Cdre Ahlgren.

"Recognising his accomplishment here with the award of a Herbert Lott prize does not only mark his individual excellence in this endeavour but also demonstrates that it pays to be an innovator in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines as, regardless of your rank, your work will be noticed and appreciated."

## Take charge of your life

THERE'S now a one-stop shop to manage your career from your smartphone, tablet or home/laptop computer: My Navy.

The first iteration of the web-based My Navy app is now up and running – follow the link from [www.royalnavy.mod.uk/mynavy](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/mynavy) – offering sailors and Royal Marines the opportunity to securely manage their careers, admin and wellbeing via personal devices.

It's not only the first time personnel have been able to shape and control their careers and day-to-day service life like this and is one of the manifestations of the transformation programme the Royal Navy is embracing, giving personnel the flexibility and freedom to manage their Naval lives.

The roll-out version of the app allows you to:

- Find future assignment options
- See Career Manager information
- Find out if you have overdue actions
- View Promotion Boards
- View Pay Statements
- Book leave
- Receive latest alerts
- Provide feedback for future versions

The My Navy team will continue to test and adjust the app to eradicate glitches and ensure it works smoothly for you. If you do come across any bugs – or suggestions for changes/improvements – use the app's 'My Navy mailbox' to report

## Engine sim for Hunts switched on

A NEW simulator suite to help marine engineers on Hunt-class minehunters maintain machinery.

The Huntsman trainer has been installed at HMS Sultan to provide an up-to-date training programme for the ship's main propulsion engines.

Although the Hunts date back to the late 70s and early 80s outwardly, inside they've been constantly revamped and upgraded – including the main engines which were recently replaced across the class.

The new engines feature both electronic management systems and a sophisticated electronic Machinery Control and Surveillance System which monitors the Caterpillar engine, gearbox and bow thruster.

It will be used to train marine engineer officers/ranks in the necessary skills to operate, maintain, diagnose and repair a Hunt's engines.



## Engine gift revs up interest at Penarth

THE Marine Engineering (ME) Department of Penarth Sea Cadet Unit (TS Glamorgan) were in their element thanks to a car manufacturer.

Ford Motor Company's Dagenham Engine Plant, donated a brand-new diesel engine to the unit.

The gift came after hearing of the unit's desire to enhance and improve the cadets' ME training within the three progression levels of the specialisation with a greater level of hands-on experience.

Andy Price, of the unit's management committee, approached Ford to see if they could assist, and the company's response was to generously donate a fully-assembled engine, mounted on a carriage to enable ease of access to every part.

The unit's Commanding Officer, Midshipman Joshua Biundo (SCC) RNR, thanked Ford for their generosity and Mr Price for his endeavors in securing such a valuable asset.

He went on to say: "This unexpected and extremely generous donation will improve the level of training within the ME specialization immeasurably."

"It will allow my team of instructors to give the cadets the highest level of hands-on experience, thus enabling many more of them to gain this valuable qualification."

Midshipman Biundo is pictured unpacking the newly-delivered engine with the unit's ME specialisation cadets.

**STUDENTS** from Southern Area Sea Cadets joined HQS Wellington, a veteran of the Royal Navy's Second World War Convoy protection fleet, for the second weekend of their Institute of Leadership and Management level 3 course.

HQS Wellington, a City of London Livery Company, is moored at Temple Stairs, Victoria Embankment and has been the home of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners since 1948.

The group were hosted by Captain Robin Batt, a Liveryman and Warden of the Honourable Company, who welcomed the Sea Cadets aboard. Captain Batt gave a short presentation on the history of the ship and the part the company plays in mentoring over 250 Merchant Navy Apprentices and Cadets from their initial joining the Merchant Navy right up to qualifying as a STCW95 Master.

Lt Cdr Jon Vanns, Area Staff Officer Leadership, said: "We are most grateful for the patronage of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners."



## RN's top phot returns

WHITEHAVEN Sea Cadets were treated to a talk by Warrant Officer Class 1 (WO1) Rob Harding, a RN Photographic Specialisation Advisor.

Rob, who is himself a former Whitehaven cadet, spoke to the cadets about photographic career opportunities in the Royal Navy and illustrated his talk with a variety of photographs taken during his 20 years as a naval photographer.

On leaving Whitehaven Sea Cadets in the late 1980s, Rob joined Royal Navy logistics, transferring to the RN photographic branch after about ten years.

"Many people don't realise that the navy has a photographic specialisation, but it is there and offers wonderful career opportunities" said Rob, who

has been around the world taking photographs in places as diverse as Kosovo, Sierra Leone, the USA, Afghanistan and Norway.

"It's also fantastic to be back at my old cadet unit and see how well they have coped since they were forced out of their old base on Old New Quay.

"The cadets were extremely polite, attentive, and asked a number of excellent questions. I look forward to my next visit."

Whitehaven unit's Commanding Officer, Petty Officer (SCC) Stuart McCourt said that he was extremely pleased to have Rob visit the unit.

"It's been a pleasure welcoming Rob and hearing about the Royal Naval Photographic Branch."

## Bandies inspire future musicians at Weston

A GROUP of five ranks from the Royal Marines Band Service (RMBS) spent an inspirational weekend at Weston's Sea Cadet Unit.

The Marines gave workshops for youngsters and an insight to life as a Royal Marines bugler.

Warrant officer class 2 (WO2) bugler, Phill Hawkins, who led the group, grew up in Weston and was a drummer and bugler of the sea cadet band, before joining the RMBS in September 1997.

WO2 Hawkins suggested the visit to give something back to the unit which gave him so much as a youngster.

He said: "I owe the sea cadets so much, so I jumped at the chance to come back and work with them again."

WO2 Hawkins has had a high-profile

career and now holds the position of corps bugle major in which he is the senior Royal Marines bugler.

He has served with the RMBS for more than 22 years, played in four of the current five Royal Marines bands based across the UK and has also travelled the world during his time.

One of his roles is to conduct the Royal Marines buglers each November during the National Remembrance Service in front of the Royal Family at the Cenotaph, in London. The Royal Marines Band Service has a reputation worldwide for the standard and flexibility of its musicians and buglers.

WO2 Hawkins added: "These weekends are proving extremely popular with the cadet marching bands nationally and also give those serving in the RMBS the chance to interact

with the cadets and continue to offer music training to anyone who wishes to attend.

"During my time as a Weston Sea Cadet, I was privileged to perform the *Last Post* during the Weston Remembrance parade each year, and I now find myself again privileged to lead the RM Buglers at the national event each year.

"The opportunities and self discipline I learnt as a sea cadet were key in me realising my ambition for a career more than 20 years ago.

"Returning to my home unit is an honour and I hope to help those members who may have a similar future ambition for a career in the armed forces."

Anyone interested in joining the sea cadets can call 01934 635079 or email [westonseacadets@btinternet.com](mailto:westonseacadets@btinternet.com)



• From left, Emma Walton, Janice Spicer and John May, who were all in the New Year's Honours List

# Aunty Madge was role model

**MARINE Society and Sea Cadets were well represented in the New Year's Honours List.**

MSSC Trustee John May DL becomes an OBE for services to young people, while former trustee and current MSSC Vice-President Patrick Stewart MBE receives a CVO for his work as Lord Lieutenant of Argyll and Bute.

The recognition of Sea Cadet volunteers across the country remains one of the highlights of the Honours List.

While three cadets have become recipients of British Empire Medals (BEM), Janice Spicer was made an MBE for her fund-raising efforts to many charities in her native Hull, including Sea Cadets.

Mrs Spicer, 65 and from Hull, joined as a teenager when girls were first admitted in the late 1960s.

After coming back the following week, Janice remained for a near-continuous 50

years period.

"My dad wasn't sure. He huffed that it would be another "week-long wonder" but I knew different," she said.

21 members of Janice's family are now Sea Cadets and despite severe illness in her family, she remains as committed to the Sea Cadet cause as ever.

"I had good role models in a nan who brought up kids on their own and my mum's sister who would take everyone from their street on train for a day's holiday.

"If I'm as good an aunty as our Aunty Madge I'm doing all right. Sea Cadets in a way are my family and this is for them as much as anyone else."

Emma Walton BEM from Grimsby has been honoured for community and voluntary service in helping her local Sea Cadets,

Since getting involved within Sea Cadets in 2015, Emma has helped recruit a new set of trustees, refurbish and sign a 99-year lease on

their building near the Royal Dock, launch a major recruitment drive for both cadets and volunteers, develop partnerships with local businesses and charities as well as raise over £70,000 within four years to secure the future of Grimsby and Cleethorpes Sea Cadets.

All of this, in spite of being a mother of three which was added to by the arrival of Emma and her husband's fourth child three years ago.

She is also chair of Lincolnshire District Sea Cadets and helps to train new chairs across the East of England.

"I do it because I enjoy it. I've made so many friends and when my eldest daughter joined, I started helping out tidying up the unit. "I didn't really know what I was letting myself in for, when I became Chair."

Lieutenant Commander George Wilson, London Region HQSO as well as Chief Petty Officer Stefan Wells from Shirley also received BEMs for sterling work in their communities.

## Chief Cadet joins troop for yomp



THE new Chief Cadet of the Volunteer Cadet Corps, Hon Captain Ant Middleton, made a surprise visit to the Royal Marines Cadet Recruits of 219 Troop, Plymouth Division, RMVCC at Scraesdon Fort, Antony, East Cornwall.

Hon Capt Ant Middleton joined the recruits on their final three-mile speed march, then presented them with their Blue Berets on completion.

Captain Ossie Glover, Commanding Officer for the Plymouth Division, RMVCC, said: "This was a great inspirational morning for the recruits who showed true Royal Marines courage and determination in completing their final exercise with Hon Capt Ant Middleton encouraging them all the way."

The Cadets did a three-mile yomp with Capt Middleton right alongside them, encouraging them along.

On completion of the yomp Capt Middleton Presented them with their hard-earned blue Cadet Beret.

Capt Middleton is an English former soldier, adventurer and television presenter.

He is best known as the Chief Instructor on the Channel 4 television series *SAS: Who Dares Wins*.



# Tributes paid to Ray of sunshine

SEA Cadet veteran Lt Ray Newman received a special award to mark his 65 years in the organisation.

Ray joined the Sea Cadets at the age of 12 and has remained within the organisation every since.

His roles include command at Caterham and Crawley units, but he says his current role as district staff officer for parade and ceremonial has been his favourite as it has given him the opportunity to have a positive impact on thousands of cadets and adult volunteers lives.

The presentation was made during an evening of awards held by Surrey District Sea Cadets at Woking unit.

Unfortunately for Surrey District, Ray has stood down from his role as he has recently moved to the West Country, however, he has promised to travel back to watch the Annual District Drill Competition.

Other presentations made at the event to cadets and adults by the Southern Area Officer Commander Trevor Price RN and SSO Cdr (SCC) Karen Kristiansen RNR included:

Certificates for completing BTEC Awards through CVQO, Bronze / Silver Duke of Edinburgh Awards and National Citizen Service Certificates.

Camberley Unit were presented with a Certificate as the Southern Area Nominees for the National McBeath Trophy.

Captain (SCC) Paul Chapman RMR was presented with his Certificate for being the Southern Area Nominee for the Roddie Casement Sword and Guildford RMCD for being selected to take part in the National RMC Gibraltar Cup Competition in March 2020.

Cdr Price also presented Officers Commissioning Scrolls, Long Service Certificates and Cadet Forces Medal Clasps to other long-serving staff members.

The evening was rounded off with a buffet and soft drinks provided by the team at TS Dianthus – Woking SCC & RMCD.



● Above, Cdr Trevor Price presents Lt (SCC) Ray Newman with his special award; Right, recipients of BTEC awards with Cdr Price and Cdr Karen Kristiansen



● Jackson Miskill welcomes Bruce Coldwell to his troop

## Scouting for pals during stop in USA

A LEADING Hand from RFA Tideforce visited an American Scout troop to arrange for pen pals for his own troop back in the UK.

Communications Specialist Bruce Coldwell popped in on the Boy Scouts of America Scout 1 Troop in Norfolk, Virginia.

Bruce, who is a leader with the 1st Chilwell and Attenborough Scout Group in Nottinghamshire, was asked to give a talk on Scouting in the UK to the all-boys Scout Troop.

Although both troops come under the worldwide Family of Scouts, set up by Lord Baden Powell in 1907, Scouting in America and UK has its differences. The most prominent being that though Scouting in America allows girls to join; the girls have their own organization, whereas in the UK boys and girls are mixed together.

Bruce said: "Although both UK and American Scouts work towards the same principles, the management of the organisations is totally different.

"The biggest difference being

the integration of girls into Scouts within the UK, whereas our US counterparts still have Boys Scouts and Girl Scouts as two separate organisations."

Bruce met Scout Leader Rob Reali and his troop, as well as witnessing the presentation of Boy Scouts of America's highest award achievable for a scout, the Eagle Scout Award, to Jackson Miskill.

Both gained a lot from the evening and Bruce intends to organise an American Scout Night and introduce communications across the Atlantic to 1st Chilwell and Attenborough Scout Group.

"I have been lucky to have participated in Scouting in the UK, Italy and Denmark, but visiting the Scouts at Norfolk, Virginia, has proved to be an excellent experience," said Bruce.

"It was an honour to be part of the presentation of the prestigious Eagle Scout Award to Jackson; the highest award that can be given to one of their Scouts."



● Juniors with the Cleverly Award; Instructors hone their boating skills in Portsmouth Harbour



## Accolades mark end of a fantastic year

NORTHAMPTON Sea Cadet Unit has won the award for having the best Junior Sea Cadet division in the UK.

The unit won the Cleverly Award against Junior Sea Cadet Divisions across the 400 Sea Cadet Units nationally.

The Junior Sea Cadets in Northampton, aged between ten and 12, were recognised for their many fun and social awareness activities that they ran throughout 2019.

The Juniors adopted the local stretch of the river under their project called Operational Otter and studied the wildlife as well as removing lots of rubbish.

The ship's company also praised the efforts of Corporal Jessica Davies as her Royal Marines detachment was awarded most

improved in the Eastern Area awards.

Northampton ended 2019 having organised many activities. The juniors had a fun weekend away, where many of the cadets participated in ice skating and undertook lots of fun activities alongside others from across the county.

The unit was hosted at the local boating station in Thrapston. The normal training at the unit for 2019 concluded with Petty Officer James Cassin being awarded his Level 2 Btec Diploma in Teamwork and Volunteering through the Sea Cadets and also the promotions of Able Cadet Aaron Mansfield to Leading Cadet and Lance Corporal Mostowy to Corporal who both passed their Area assessments in November.

Even the instructors were busy with three of the unit team increasing their powerboat skills on a training course in Portsmouth Harbour.

During November the unit competed in the district five-a-side football competition where the Junior Girls and Senior Girls team won the tournament against Sea Cadet Units from across the county.

The last competition of the year was the District Ceremonial Drill and Piping contest.

Really well done to the team who won their event against stiff competition from Rushden and Market Harborough Units. The team of pipers will join the Sea Cadet Unit Armed Guard of nine cadets in the Eastern Area Regional Competition in 2020.



## Units remain united

FALMOUTH and Penryn Sea Cadets, TS Robert Hichens, and the Penryn Branch of the Royal British Legion updated their affiliation document at a brief ceremony at the Sea Cadet Unit at Commercial Road, Penryn.

Tony Hendra, Branch Chairman, signed for the RBL and Petty Officer Fran Mitchell, Unit Commanding Officer, signed for TS Robert Hichens.

The document reflects the shared values between the two organisations; service, commitment, integrity, teamwork and support. The aim of the Sea Cadets is to give young people the best possible start in life through nautical based adventure and fun.

Among the many activities enjoyed by the cadets, they participate in the annual Poppy Appeal and last year helped to raise over £21,000 in the Penryn Area.



## 'ONCE NAVY, ALWAYS NAVY'

# Home for Liverpool veterans

LIVERPOOL'S Speke House, the city's largest building providing accommodation for veterans, is undergoing a revamp thanks to a £73k handout from a Forces charity.

The facility provides safe, secure en-suite bedsits and flats for up to 48 veterans to help them stabilise their lives and make the successful transition from military to civilian life.

The building – originally put up in the 1960s as accommodation for the elderly – is now being refurbished inside and out through the donation from Forces Support, the bereavement and veterans' support charity.

All flats will be fitted with new windows, communal areas, kitchen, IT suite, laundry, corridors and toilet facilities will be fully redecorated.

Outside, new gates and fencing will be installed, and a bike storage area will also be built.

Since the house was turned into flats for veterans six years ago, it's helped scores of former service personnel get back on their feet: in the 12 months to June 2019 alone, it housed 90 residents – 80 of whom came from a homeless background.

Nearly half left with employment and three quarters moved on to permanent accommodation, either living independently, reunited with family or with the support they need.

■ A new day care service for veterans living in the High Wycombe area has been launched by Royal Star and Garter.

The service will run from the charity's new state-of-the-art home in the town, offering care for veterans and their partners who are living with disability or dementia who do not yet require full-time residential care.

Up to eight guests can join permanent residents in activities organised each weekday, including quizzes, outings, outside entertainment, yoga, art therapy, and movement to music. Healthy meals will be provided and health checks and assistance made available.

The initiative is aimed at tackling social isolation encountered by older people and offer respite to carers, who are often not young themselves.

To make use of the service, contact [hw.enquiries@starandgarter.org](mailto:hw.enquiries@starandgarter.org) or call 01494 927555.



# New magnifier gives Jim fresh lease of life

ENJOYING these pages thanks to a specialist video magnifier and a Scottish forces charity is WW2 veteran Jim Thompson.

Nearly 75 years after being demobbed, the nonagenarian remains keen to keep in touch with present-day naval affairs.

Jim served in Gibraltar working in the signalling tower and then in contraband control with the Royal Navy Patrol Service for two-and-a-half years. He then served in minesweepers in the Bristol and English Channels until he entered civvy street 1946.

The 95-year-old suffers from age-related macular degeneration, which has left him struggling to read.

"I have a black spot in the centre of my eye that I can't see with, but I can get a picture in my peripheral vision. In my right eye I have cataracts," said Jim.

"I get *Navy News*, which I like reading, I like keeping up to date with what's going on. But I was trying to use a handheld magnifier to read it and I was struggling for ages until it ended up tiring my eyes."

Which is where Scottish War Blinded came in. After being assessed by one of the charity's rehabilitation team, he received a free Optelec Traveller HD video magnifier – a portable, lightweight device that can zoom in on text and change colour contrast to suit the reader's requirements – Jim is delighted to be enjoying his monthly naval read once more.

"Now that I've got the Traveller with the stand I can read it again. The magnifier's perfect for me, I'm enjoying it. It's been a lifesaver. I get a lot of letters so it helps me to read those too."

The charity has also provided the former sailor with specialist portable lighting and anti-glare glasses to allow Jim to enjoy his independence – all free of charge (the magnifier alone costs nearly £2,000).

"I just think all the help I'm getting is brilliant. Some of this equipment can be quite expensive, but there's Scottish War Blinded helping me with it for free.

"I hope my sight doesn't get worse, but I know Scottish War Blinded will have things to help me if it does.

"The support and access to specialist equipment is important because it gives you more interests in your life."

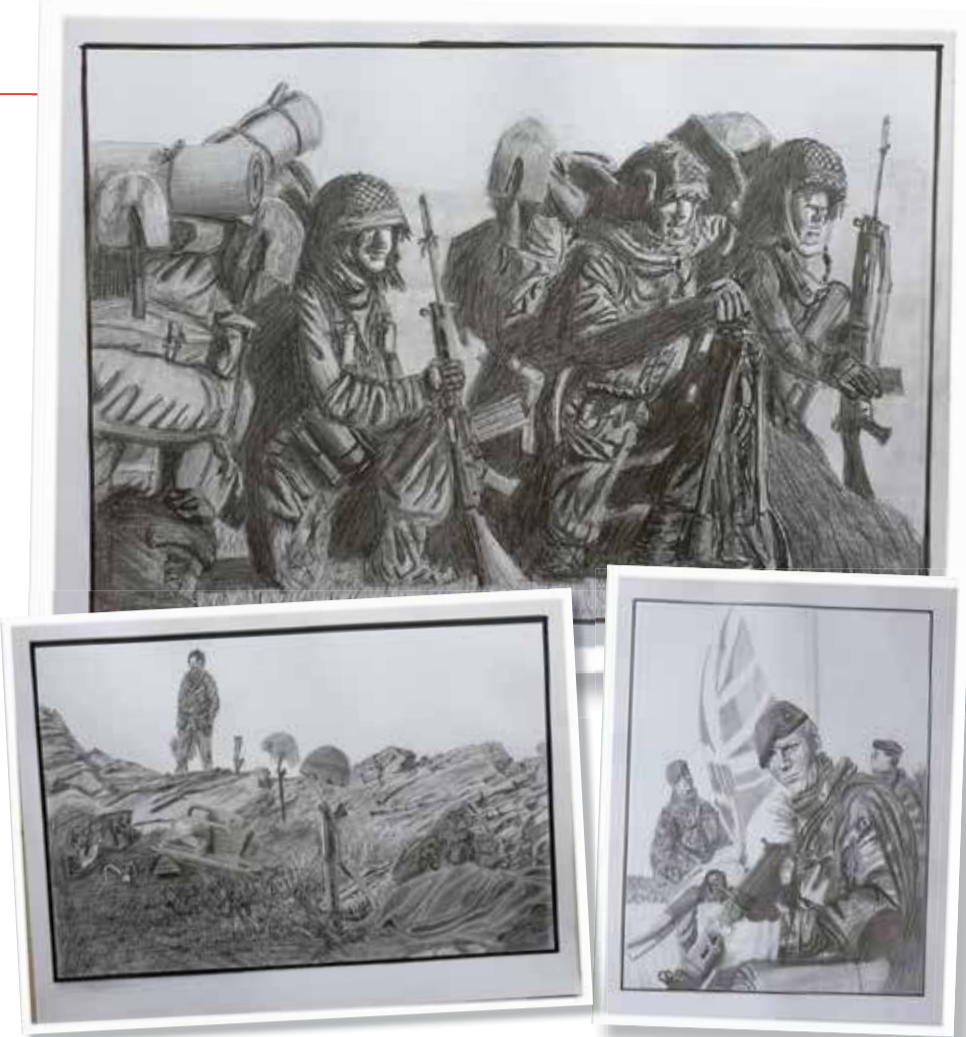
Scottish War Blinded gives free support to former servicemen and women of all ages, no matter if they lost their sight during or after service.

It has a wealth of specialist equipment it can provide to veterans with sight problems: electronic magnifiers, lighting and Synaptic tablets and phones, to canes, talking clocks, talking watches and cooking aids.

Beyond rehabilitation and outreach workers, the charity also organises reunion lunches for veterans like Jim, who was invited to dine with fellow former military personnel with sight loss at Balbirnie House Hotel, Markinch.

And it runs two activity hubs at the Hawkhead Centre in Paisley and The Linburn Centre in West Lothian.

Visit [www.scottishwarblinded.org](http://www.scottishwarblinded.org) or call 0800 035 6409 to refer a veteran to the charity.



# The thin pencil line

## NEW year, new challenge.

Shed a few pounds at the gym? Find a new job? Finally pop the question?

What about: honour all Britain's war dead in the Falklands?

That's the challenge former Royal Marine Colin Waite from North Shields has set himself: to remember the 255 Servicemen lost in the South Atlantic over six bitter weeks in 1982 – plus the conflict's three civilian victims (islanders accidentally killed during the fighting) by producing 258 pieces of art.

The now 61-year-old drove HMS Fearless' BARV beach recovery vehicle during the 1982 conflict has always sketched – in part to deal with the effects of PTSD. He realised many of his artworks featured scenes from the Falklands.

"I was drawing a picture of Doc [Rick] Jolly outside the Red and Green Life Machine and it reminded me of a long conversation I had with the Doc," Colin said.

"He said sometimes we just



have to do one small act to be remembered and do some good. He was talking about being lowered into the water to rescue someone in 82."

The result is Project 255 which will probably be the most comprehensive artistic record of the war, a body of work based on personal and press/official photographs from 1982, some well known such as the yomper, others less so, such as Colin himself taking a break on the BARV (inset).

He hopes to have the project

completed around the turn of 2020/21, determined to finish despite the effects of arthritis which affects all his joints including hands and fingers, and encouraged by countless friends, family and former comrades.

"There were 255 military and three civilian deaths on the UK side and my aim is to produce 255 mixed art pieces and hopefully three special pieces," Colin continued.

"I decided that life is all about challenges so I set myself a challenge using my artistic skills. I've announced it to the world, so no going back other than giving up and I know that won't happen. I will have days when I'll think 'why?' and want to – but then a new day arrives and a challenge starts."

And when he's finished all the images? Possibly an exhibition, or a book, or a big sell-off, with the proceeds going to charity.

You can follow Colin's progress at: [www.facebook.com/Falklands-1982-Project-255-101501311228315/](http://www.facebook.com/Falklands-1982-Project-255-101501311228315/)

# Cossack's raiders remembered

SAILORS past and present will march through Worthing this month to remember one of the naval highlights of the 'Phoney War'.

In February 1940, boarding parties from HMS Cossack stormed the German tanker Altmark, hiding in a Norwegian fjord, releasing 299 prisoners.

They had been seized by the raider Graf Spee as it picked off Allied merchant shipping in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

When the pocket battleship was cornered off South America (see page 28), the Altmark attempted to run the gauntlet of the British blockade to reach Germany – until it was located in Jøssingfjord, near the southwestern tip of Norway, and Cossack was sent in to free the captive sailors.

Eight Germans were killed in the ensuing action which persuaded Hitler to invade Norway two months later.

Eighty years later and sailors from destroyer HMS Dauntless will join veterans, representatives from the Norwegian Embassy in London, the

Cossack Association and local council officials will parade at Durrington Cemetery in Worthing at 11am on Monday February 17 to pay tribute to all those involved in what became known as the 'Altmark incident'.

There will a 30-minute long service and parade, including wreath laying at the war memorial.

The event is being organised by Falklands veteran Commander Neil 'Nobby' Hall, serving with NATO in Belgium.

"One of the heroes of that night in 1940 was gunner Warrant Officer J J F Smith – he won the Distinguished Service Cross and was the only British casualty, wounded by a booby trap," Commander Hall explained.

Smith – who was 'on loan' to Cossack from cruiser HMS Aurora – was treated by the Altmark's surgeon, survived the war and served in the Navy into the mid-50s. He is buried at Durrington, prompting local veterans to suggest the cemetery as a fitting venue for the 80th anniversary parade.

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## Cardiff case mystery

DO YOU recognise this case? Royal Marine Dave Prichard hopes you do; he's appealing for help in discovering the whereabouts of the cabinet which once enjoyed pride of place aboard HMS Cardiff. Dave, who served as a sergeant at HMS Cambria in Cardiff, visited the Type 42 destroyer HMS Cardiff several times during her visits to the city. He made a number of presentations to the ship, including a mahogany case containing a crystal glass engraved 'The Presidents' Glass' which was attached to the wall in the mess bar.

The case was lost following Cardiff's decommissioning in 2005. Now a new HMS Cardiff (the second Type 26 frigate, laid down last summer) is being built, Dave is keen to find the case and present it to the new vessel when she enters service. Anyone who can help is asked to contact Dave on 029 2079 0233.

## Making covenant history

SHIPMATES from Warwick put their signature to the Armed Forces Covenant (Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Area) – the first branch in the UK to do so.

The Great Hall at the town's Lord Leicester's Hospital was the venue for the occasion, with the document adapted slightly to reflect the association's composition – covenants usually support employment criteria, not relevant to the RNA.

Signing the covenant means the branch is committed to:

- promoting the fact that it's an Armed Forces-friendly organisation;
- providing help and support to veterans in applying for benefits, services and accessing charitable funds
- providing support for the whole Armed Forces family in establishing an immediate social network for the family and a voice within the community
- actively working with partner organisations as part of the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Armed Forces Strategic Partnership
- companionship with like-minded veterans through regular meetings and social events, encouraging mental wellbeing
- offering support to local cadet units
- active participation in Armed Forces Day

Putting pen to paper were Commander Phil Sparke, CO of Birmingham RNR unit HMS Forward and Lt Cdr Bob Stevens, Warwick RNA president, witnessed by Timothy Cox, Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire.

The ceremony was concluded with a traditional toast to The Queen and Warwick branch with a tot of rum for all present.



● **Knocker (nearest the camera, right) applauds recruits for the last time as they complete the 30 Miler**

Pictures: LPhoto Alex Ceolin, FRPU West

# One last yomp for Knocker



FOR the last time in more than 40 years, a new generation of Royal Marines have been spurred on to earn the coveted green beret by one of the legends of the Corps.

At the age of 91, retired Colour Sergeant Peter 'Knocker' White has decided to call it a day – after helping rookie commandos through their final, and toughest test.

Since 1978, every three weeks the former non-commissioned officer has been a mainstay of support for the '30 Miler', the gruelling yomp across Dartmoor in every type of weather carrying 40lbs of equipment and rifle, which recruits must complete in eight hours, young officers in just seven.

"It's physically hard and takes guts to do it. It's

something you never forget," said Knocker, who joined the Royal Marines in 1945 aged 17, having served with the Home Guard in his native Gloucester during WW2.

He competed his commando training in North Wales at Towyn and went on to serve in 44, 45 and 40 Commandos in his career, seeing active service across the Far East in Malaya, Korea, Palestine and Borneo.

Upon retiring from the marines, Knocker continued to work with them, first on Dartmoor at Merrivale Range and then in Headquarters South West Training Areas.

"I started with the 30 Miler when I was working as safety advisor on South Dartmoor, after I retired," he explained. "I'd clear their routes across the moor and felt it important to see them when they were out."

For this final challenge, Knocker was on hand to help out at feeding stations, opened gates and was at the finishing line to applaud the successful recruits. He's retiring to look after his wife.

In all its reckoned he's seen more than 7,000 recruits, young officers become Royal Marine commandos and soldiers, sailors

and airmen pass the All Arms Commando Course – which allows them to don the green beret too.

"It's important for me to keep on going and for the young marines to see an older man like me, out there with them, and they can all possibly do it when they are 91," Knocker continued.

"I like seeing the standards kept up, I like seeing young Marines working hard and I like to see them all finish, so when they meet any other Royal Marines, they all know they've completed something together."

Commando Training Centre Commandant Colonel Simon Chapman joined Knocker at the finish line to thank him for his support – which goes back to at least 1978.

"He's been coming out here almost non-stop for the past 40 years, it's a wonderful achievement," said Col Chapman.

"For much of that time he was actually running with the recruits and young officers. To see someone like Knocker in the middle of nowhere, giving you encouragement, gives you such a boost. He is part of the Royal Marines' family and a true Corps legend."



## Excellent time had by Bognor

MEMBERS of Bognor Regis branch were given a privileged behind-the-scenes look at Whale Island thanks to HMS Excellent's Commanding Officer Commander C Roberts.

He asked the veterans to join him at a presentation ceremony to members of ship's company and civilian staff explaining the modern-day role of the establishment which is home, among other things, to Navy Headquarters in Leach Building, the Phoenix firefighting/damage control training complex and the RN Photographic Branch.

Lieutenant Commander (SCC) P Barker guided the guests around the establishment, explaining how it had changed and grown over the years, and showed shipmates the gun carriage used at Royal funerals and provided them with a detailed history of the vehicle.

The tour ended at Excellent's museum, where shipmates sadly found most of the exhibits had been stowed away because of the presentation that morning; nevertheless there were still quite a few photographs explaining the history of the establishment on the surrounding walls, which kept the members interested.

The visit was the culmination of quite a few busy months for the branch. In May the branch was given an invitation to join the Worthing RNA branch for a memorial service for HMS Hood. The following month shipmates marched along the seafront at Bognor to celebrate Armed Forces Day, followed by a presentation of new colours to T/S Sir Alec Rose Sea Cadet Corps.

The branch was also at the forefront of events surrounding the re-dedication of the memorial to HMS Barbara – a naval gunnery school located on Bognor Regis pier from September 1943 until January 1945. The memorial can be found in front of the pier. It's thanks to HMS Barbara that the Bognor branch enjoys its association with Excellent, one time home of RN gunnery.

In September the branch was invited by the local RAF Association to join a parade and a memorial church service in remembrance of the Battle of Britain pilots, acknowledging the Fleet Air Arm pilots involved/lost in the battle.

## Cherry aims for marathon

HMS Raleigh's physiotherapist, Cherry Powell, is on a mission to raise £2,000 to secure her place in this year's London marathon.

The 55-year-old runner is one of five chosen to run for Walking with the Wounded, a charity that supports armed forces veterans and their families.

She said: "Working at Raleigh with the military, I see the difficulties some people can face returning to civvy street and the charity helps people on their way. I'm also a veteran myself; I was in the Royal Air Force, so veterans' charities are close to my heart."

"I was absolutely delighted when I got the email to say I'd been given a place in the marathon."

Cherry has a number of fund-raising ideas to make sure she meets the target set by the charity. She has a coffee morning planned within Raleigh next month, as well as a bric-a-brac sale and cakes at her local church, Trinity Hall, in Tor Lane, Plymouth, on February 29, at 11.30.

Cherry has set-up an online donation page – <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/CherryPowell>

# Time to reflect



**WITH bright colour – and poignant reflection – sailors and Royal Marines around the UK marked 20 years since the lifting of the ban on LGBT men and women serving in the armed forces.**

Naval bases and Royal Marines units flew rainbow flags from their main masts, sailors attended a House of Commons reception and Portsmouth's Naval Base headquarters lit up in colours to mark the anniversary.

Those who took part wanted to send a clear message – that the Naval Service welcomes all talent to its ranks, regardless of your sexual orientation or gender identity.

Commander Sam Kinsey-Briggs is the co-chair of Compass, the sexual orientation and gender identity network of the Naval Service.

Cdr Kinsey-Briggs, who attended the reception in Parliament, said: "I was honoured to attend this special occasion.

"Celebrating 20 years since lifting the ban with fellow service personnel and our veterans, some who lost their careers, was humbling and inspiring.

"It's about celebrating the wider diversity agenda and contribution all our people make.

"It's especially relevant for me as we celebrate 30 years of women at sea this year too."

Lieutenant Aaron Wilding, who also attended the reception, joined the Royal Navy before the ban was lifted.

He said: "Having joined the navy before it was lifted, I have lived through the transition process and on a personal level I now feel so proud to feel liberated enough to be my true self.

"I spent so many years holding back on who I was but now I feel that being allowed to be myself allows me to give my all.

"I joined the Royal Navy

to serve my country and I have faith that I work for an organisation that stands for honesty, openness and integrity.

"In order to defend our nation, we need to be representative of what that is."

Rainbow flags were raised at key locations across the UK, including the Royal Navy's three main naval bases in Portsmouth, Devonport and Faslane.

Fleet Air Arm personnel at RNAS Yeovilton and Royal Marines from 43 Commando in Faslane also flew the flag to mark the anniversary.

In Portsmouth, the Naval Base Headquarters was floodlit in

rainbow colours for a week and banners adorned lampposts around the base.

Lieutenant Commander Jenny Dunford, from Portsmouth Naval Base, said: "For a while now, generations of people joining the Royal Navy simply don't rate sexuality as a quality of any more importance than eye colour.

"I would highly recommend the armed forces to people of any sexuality and assure them they can be safe in the knowledge that hard work and the ability to bring your whole self to work is the key to reward and our overall operational capability."



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## £50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the December edition of *Navy News* (right) was the Bar-class vessel, HMS Barbican, which was operated by the Royal Australian Navy during World War 2.

Terry Corner from Ipswich wins £50 for sending us the correct answers.

This month's mystery ship is a battle-class destroyer commissioned during World War 2.

1) What was her name, and 2) which admiral's coat of arms inspired the ship's crest?

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY. Coupons giving the correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner.



Entries must be received by March 14. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our April edition. The competition is not open to *Navy News* employees or their families.

### MYSTERY PICTURE 300

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My answers: (1) .....

(2) .....

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Swap Draft columns in March's Noticeboard must be received by

FEBRUARY 16, 2020

# Last Tirpitz raider dies

THE LAST of an elite group of men who led the daring 'midget submarine' attack on Hitler's flagship has died aged 97.

Lieutenant John Lorimer was second-in-command of X-6 - one of three four-man X-craft dispatched to sink the battleship Tirpitz in Norway in September 1943.

Only two of the 52ft-long boats negotiated the extensive defences around the leviathan at her anchorage in Altafjord.

They placed explosive charges under the battleship, but the X-craft were spotted by the Germans, attacked and their crews forced to abandon them.

The submariners told their captors what they had done, but Tirpitz's crew had too little time to react and the battleship was shaken from bow to stern as the explosives detonated.

The ship took on 1,400 tonnes of water, one of her fuel tanks was ruptured and a 15in gun turret thrown off its bearings. The damage put Tirpitz out of action for six months.

The two X-craft commanders subsequently earned the VC for their actions; John Lorimer was awarded the DSO.

All spent the rest of the war in German prison camps, notably Marlag O (for naval officers) near Bremen, where Lorimer was involved in an audacious attempt to escape.

Two fellow inmates fled the camp after an elaborate dummy stood in for them at roll call.

Those escapades became a post-war film, *Albert RN*, while the attack on the Tirpitz was



turned into a semi-fictionalised account on the big screen, *Above Us The Waves*.

On returning to civilian life near Ayr, Mr Lorimer became a forestry consultant - advising on the subject well into his 80s.

He took part in 50th and 70th anniversary events at Kylesku Bridge in northwest Scotland where a memorial cairn was erected; the neighbouring lochs were used by the X-craft to train for their mission.

He also attended the 100th anniversary of the RNR in 2003 at the Albert Hall. And he was guest of honour at Faslane in 2018 for the annual dinner celebrating the Silent Service (pictured above with a commemorative X-craft Commando comic).

# Help find RM's descendants

CAN you help Canadians trace the family of a Royal Marine killed 80 years ago?

Marine William Walter Lambard was one of seven crew of HMS Ajax killed when the cruiser joined battle with the German 'pocket battleship' Graf Spee at the River Plate in December 1939 (see page 28).

Several decades later residents of the new town of Ajax, just east of Toronto, named a street after the 20-year-old, Lambard Crescent - in keeping with the tradition of honouring men who served in the ship, or HMS Exeter and Achilles, in the South Atlantic battle with a road of their own.

On May 11 civic leaders intend to rededicate Lambard Crescent, ideally in the presence of family members. A tree was planted in the marine's memory back in 2000, but without any Lambards attending.

Ajax's historians know little about William beyond the fact that he was born in 1919 to Walter Ernest and Kate Lambard, who died in 1963 and 1937 respectively, and shared the family home in Southsea with his sister Kathleen Mary (born in 1910). There is no known photograph of the Royal Marine.

Anyone who can help the Canadians with their search should contact administrator Brenda Kriz at [brenda.kriz@ajax.ca](mailto:brenda.kriz@ajax.ca)

## Deaths

**Capt Michael D Booth**. DSC HMS Heron, Seahawk, Fife, Bulwark, Penelope, Raleigh, Dryad, Scylla, Nelson, AIB Sultan, BDLS Canada, Service Attache Bonn. FO Surface Flot. Died November 25, aged 70.  
**3/O WRNS Primrose M Campbell (Blower)**. HMS Seahawk. Died December 21.  
**Capt Ian F Grant**. HMS Mercury, Terror, Salisbury, Intrepid, Rooke, DN Manpower and Planning. Died December 21.

**Cdre Alan J Leahy**. CB DSC. HMS Heron, Daedalus, Victory RNB, Neptune. DNAV. Died December 26, aged 94.  
**Lt John T Lorimer RNVR DSO**. Died December 1, aged 97.  
**Lt Cdr Alan MacGregor MVO AFC**. HMS Seahawk, Heron. Died December 11, aged 79.  
**Surg Capt (D) Alan Moore**. HMS Adamant, Rooke, Dryad, Raleigh, Heron, Drake. RM Plymouth. HQ Tg Gp RM. MGRM Eastney. C-in-C Fleet. Died December 3, aged 89.  
**Lt Cdr Ian D C Pearson**. HMS Dryad, Fife, Saker, Minerva, Mercury. Died December 22, aged 85.  
**Lt RNVR Michael J Perry OBE**. Died December 22.  
**Cdr Gavin A Richardson**. HMS Seahawk, Nav Command HQ, 706, 771, 810, 820, 824, and 829 NAS. Died September 23, aged 52.  
**Sub Lt RNVR The Ven Andrew H Woodhouse DSC**. Died

December 15, aged 96.  
**Lt Cdr LD Walton-Waters MBE RN (Retd)**. Died December 11, aged 65.  
**Patrick 'Paddy' McKenna**, AB Gunner. Served from 1957-68. HMS Loch Fada. Captain of the ship's rugby team (only beaten 2/3 times in 18 Months by Ark Royal & NZ Ships) 1965 HMS Delight, Shavington, St Vincent, Excellent and Devonport field gun crew in 1961 and 1964. Died 13 November 13, aged 77.  
**John Cox**, CPO OEA-1. Served from 1956-1978 in HMS Keppel, Malcolm, Cavendish, Anzio, Forth, Jaguar and Torquay, along with Chatham and Portland shore bases. Died December 2019, aged 83. He often said: "Every day was a great day if my name wasn't in the Navy News obits."  
**Lt Cdr Patrick James Ewings Bisset**. MBE. RN (Rtd), formerly Assistant Queen's Harbour Master, Rosyth Dockyard. Died on December 30, aged 86. Predeceased by his wife Rosalie (née Cunliffe-Jones), who died March 6 2019, and survived by his four children, Fiona, Alison, James and Andrew.  
**William 'Wef, Bill, Billy' Edward Foster**, of Lossiemouth. Died on January 1 at Stephen Hospital, Dufftown, following a short illness. Husband to Pat for 57 years, Father to Ruth, Clare, Helen and Richard and grandfather to Peter and Matthew.

**Lt Cdr David John Baden Forsey**. Served from 1949-88. Commissioned June 1962. Qualified as mine clearance diving officer December 1968. Joined as a Boy Telegraphist at HMS St Vincent and Ganges as followed by Swiftsure, Pembroke, Jaseur, FO Med Fleet, Chevron, Mercury, HQBF Tamar, Starling, Bermuda, RNC Greenwich, Tenby, BRNC Dartmouth, Vernon, Houghton, Maxton, COMCLYDE, Vernon, Wolverton (CO), Beauchampton (CO), FOSNNI, CINCFLEET, MOD. Died Newbury, December 28 2019, aged 86.  
**Submariners' Association**  
**Albert Saunders**, Stoker Mechanic. Served 1950-59 in HM Submarines Alcide, Alliance, Andrew, Thule and Taciturn. Member of Manchester Branch. Died on December 10, aged 90.  
**Kelvin Tanton Mech1**, Served Sep 1950 to May 1959 in HM Submarines Auriga, Tarbard and Aeneas. Member of Northern Ireland Branch. Died on December 15, aged 90.  
**Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNOC**  
**Lt Cdr Derek J Freeman**. HMS Tiger, Torquay, Blake, Invincible, Ambuscade, Defiance. RNEC Manadon. Died December 2019.

## Ask Jack

**Alan Bostock and George Simpson**: I am trying to trace the two seamen who were in my mess during the final commission of HMS Troubridge 1966-1969. Our annual reunion will be in October at Southsea.  
[phil.yarwood@gmail.com](mailto:phil.yarwood@gmail.com)

**Ian Robertson**: I am trying to trace a former colleague. We both joined the Royal Marines together on May 6 1975 at Deal, Kent, as part of 211 Troop. We are planning our first 211 Kings Squad reunion in May 2020. I know Ian was from Cheltenham and would be aged 60.  
**David Martin**  
[david.martin.689@gmail.com](mailto:david.martin.689@gmail.com)

**Christopher Wheatley**: I am trying to trace the sergeant, who served in the Royal Marines in the late 1960s to 1980s. He served with Sgt Peter Leonard Riley, who retired in May 1988. Peter, who died in August 2018, was bestman at Christopher's wedding. The last address I had is in Bristol. I think he had two children, with whom we would like to get in touch.  
**Colin Riley**  
63 Elsa Road, Welling, Kent DA16 1JZ

**CPO John Terrett**. We are trying to trace my sister's brother-in-law. He served in HMS Ark Royal in either the 1970s, 80s or 90s. He was born in Middlesbrough and had a brother, Norman, and mother Milly.  
**Alison and Nigel Bryden**  
[Invermill@talk21.com](mailto:Invermill@talk21.com)

**Michael Frampton**. My brother-in-law boxed extensively for the navy during his service in the 60s and was awarded his colours. He would love to get a Imperial Services/ Combined Services cloth badge to sew on to his sweatshirt. He is now 75 and I would love to obtain one for him.  
**Joe Joryeff**  
[joryeffj@gmail.com](mailto:joryeffj@gmail.com)

**HMS Isis. D-87 'That which Remains' 1936 to 1944**. My father was an Army Officer attached to HMS Isis as BLO and survived her sinking on July 20 1944. I am seeking contact with former crew, survivors, families and or descendants. My hope is to join for acts of remembrance in coming years.  
**Angus Beato**  
07966166981  
[angusbeaton@me.com](mailto:angusbeaton@me.com)

**CPSA Jim Asher**. I am trying to contact a former shipmate with whom I served in HMS Cardiff during the Falklands conflict. I served as a CHMEM at the time.  
**Terry Edson**  
[Sallyann.edson@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:Sallyann.edson@tiscali.co.uk)

# When cruisers were bruisers

SEAFORTH of Barnsley, Britain's major maritime publisher, has produced three very handsome illustrated volumes on cruisers and their activities.

The first is **Alan Raven's Cruiser Warfare: The Lessons of the Early War 1939-1941** (320 pages, ISBN 978-1-5267-4763-1, £35).

Overall this is a slightly odd work. Based on very extensive research using a large range of original sources, the first half is a chronology of actions in which British cruisers (and many other ships) were involved from the outbreak of war to the end of 1941, writes Prof Eric Grove.

The second half of the book is a set of thematic sections which the author calls 'summaries' – actually analyses of aspects of cruiser warfare such as surface and anti-aircraft gunnery, damage control and the impact of cryptanalysis, and other forms of electronic warfare. The focus is rather blurred with examples later in the war used to make points. There then follow two chapters criticising Italian and German naval performance before a

## THE GROVE REVIEW

brief summary of British cruiser classes which might have come earlier with a bit more detail to explain the nature of the units at the heart of his account. He concludes with sections on weather damage, design and machinery.

The author clearly feels himself a cut above other writers on naval history – 'historians' he calls them, in inverted commas – at least some of whose work he rather provocatively describes in his introduction as "tired excuses for acceptable writing". Dismissive mentions of 'commercial' books seem rather strange. All this means that the reader expects a paragon of historical writing. Sadly, and perhaps understandably, no-one is perfect.

The book has more than its fair share of errors. The author is so fixated with his largely British sources that – contrary to his claims of a wider perspective – he provides a too-narrowly-focused analysis. For some reason he makes a particular point that the destroyer attack on Bismarck (cruiser warfare?) scored hits on the

German ship. These were claimed but they did not happen. It may be a misprint but the Italian battleships in the Battle off Calabria in 1940 fired 13in, not 15in shells. The author invents non-existent naval air arms for both Italy and Germany. Both countries' maritime air forces were under Air Force control, like RAF Coastal Command. There is also an annoying tendency to move from the past to present tense, for no apparent reason.

The book is liberal in its criticism, particularly of the Italian Navy which, as far as the author is concerned, could do little or nothing right. He overstates the effects of the Taranto raid. Italian capital ships were out only days later, hence the Battle of Cape Spartivento that he had discussed earlier. This is an example of the sometimes loose relationship of the various parts of the book. The Italians basically had a 'fleet in being' concept – not a bad idea given their manifold disadvantages. Sir Julian Corbett would have approved, even if the author of this book does not. Its conclusion

that "a fleet in being is not a real fleet – it is a failed fleet" is verging on the strategically illiterate.

Despite all these problems the book is not without its virtues and utility. Its detailed tactical accounts and analysis demonstrate that British cruisers were not as vulnerable to

air attack as many assume.

The in-depth analysis of anti-aircraft gunnery and tactics is ground-breaking and most enlightening.

British cruisers were sunk by air attack but they survived most attacks and the anti-aircraft capabilities protected them and the assets they were escorting to good effect. Cruisers also contributed their

gunfire to surface actions,

not least the sinking of the Bismarck. The gunnery details are fascinating and this is a book from which much can be learned, although the rather strange and self-conscious refusal to use footnotes or end notes undermines its role as a guide to further research

Technical detail on cruisers can be enhanced by a monumental reference book by **Conrad Waters, British Town Class Cruisers: Design Development**

and Performance, Southampton and Belfast Classes (320 pages, ISBN 978-1-5267-1885-3).

Based on archival material, the book analyses in great detail the design and careers of these important ships. He concludes that they "can be considered a successful design" with the flexibility to fulfil unexpected technical and operational requirements, earning a "distinguished service record". The ships were also of great use in the post-1945 navy and, of course, HMS Belfast still survives in the Pool of London.

The final Seaforth cruiser book is rather different: a study of the French armoured cruisers which posed a major threat to the British Empire's maritime trade at the turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries. **French Armoured Cruisers 1887-1932** by John Jordan and Philippe Caresse (272 pages, ISBN 1-5267-4120-2, £40) contains much interesting new material and is essential reading for those interested in this period of naval history.

● **Unidentified British cruisers engage the Italian Fleet off Sardinia on November 27 1940, as seen from HMS Sheffield**

Picture: IWM A 2408

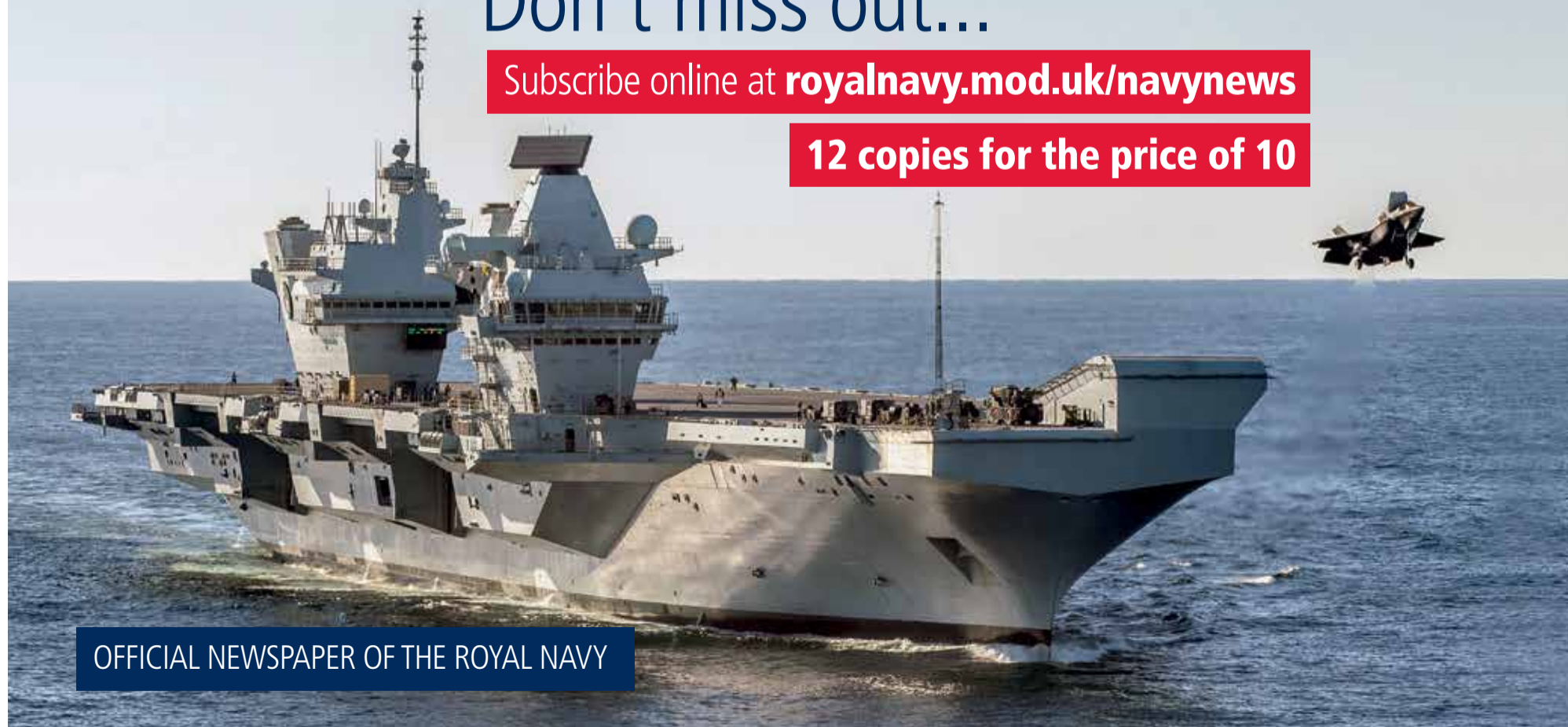


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# Lacing up for 2020



The Royal Navy 10km team are looking to build on their successful 2019 campaign.

The year started off with two 'informal' 10km races; Bristol in May and Cardiff in September.

These events were a chance for the team to get together and represent the Navy in a competitive yet relaxed environment, ready for the more serious Inter-Service fixtures later in the year.

Runner Mathew Hendery said: "In September the RN Athletics Club 10km team headed to Cardiff. The team was comprised of various members of the fleet; Royal Marines, FAA, Surface Fleet, RNR and DTUS.

"With a range of abilities and injury statuses, goals varied widely between getting around the course and smashing PBs.

"A chilly start led to glorious sunshine and

spending most of the race shifting from side to side chasing the shade.

"Being a flat course and a fierce level of competition, the race saw several members improve their 10K PBs and others race competitive times.

"In particular, Jodie knocked 15 minutes off her PB and I managed to shave off four minutes and join the sub-40 club.

"I particularly enjoyed my first outing in the RN vest and am looking forward to competing in future events (hopefully further afield, having today only ventured from Swansea)."

During the year, several members of the RN also represented the UK Armed Forces Team (UKAF) across the country. These included Craig Connor and James Thomas in the Stirling 10km, and Adam Stokes in the Brighton 10km. Adam

was the second RN runner that year to go sub-32, with a time of 31:59.

While on exchange at RAFC Cranwell, navy runner Lieutenant Phil Boak became the first member of the Senior Service to win the RAF Benson seven-mile road race. Lt Boak also won the Lincolnshire Road Running Series, helping Cranwell's men's team take top spot and scoop the college's sportsperson and sports team of the year awards.

Lt Boak was credited with resurrecting the RAF Cranwell running club, which now has around 40 active athletes.

If you are interested in running for the navy, regardless of ability, distance or skill, please email Lt Phil Boak at

[Philip.boak743@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Philip.boak743@mod.gov.uk)



● Racing teams for Cardiff 10km (above); Benson seven-mile race (left) and Brighton 10km (below)



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# Ride out in the country



ROYAL Navy rider Lieutenant Josh Terry makes his way around the Surrey countryside during the annual Army Off-Road Motorcycle Championships.

The two-day event kicked off with trials and a hare-and-hound event ahead of the time-card Enduro race on day two.

The RNRMC Enduro team's resident trials expert Cpl Michael El-Ayouby was on hand to offer some helpful tips from his days as an expert youth rider.

The RNRMET were one of the first to arrive and get setup and it wasn't long before they were into the trials.

Although initially they picked up some penalties, very quickly the team

got the hang of things and in the first round every rider had managed to clear at least one section.

Mne Ollie Harcombe displayed fantastic control of his machine and was one of only three riders on full-size Enduro bikes to make it past the second corner on the particularly difficult graded hill.

The afternoon saw the start of the two-hour hare-and-hound event and the end of the dry weather

With two classes, novice and expert, the team were split between two lines starting 30 seconds apart.

As the flag dropped on the expert class, Mne Harcombe and his Yamaha

250 got caught up in a three-bike crash with Army star Tom Ellwood, allowing Michael to gain a lead and Ollie leaving himself with a job to do to make up the time.

Thirty seconds later the novice class shot off into the rain with WO1 Bill Callister getting a great start on his Husqvarna 350, followed by LAET Aiden Richardson and Mne Luke Callaghan on his big 450cc KTM.

As the race wore on the team smashed in the laps and everybody finished well, including LAET Richardson despite his spectacular attempt at crossing a particularly large tree which luckily was caught on camera

and surely a contender for crash of the year.

The following day saw the start of the main event, a timecard Enduro to include three laps.

Each lap involved a steady 12KM loop followed by a 750M flat-out sprint section which combined with the trials scores would decide the overall winner of the event.

Michael showed fantastic pace from the start and put in a 1:46 on the sprint, but the team were no match for Ellwood of the Army, who straight off the back of a world Enduro title managed a very impressive 1:23 lap.

The Army Championships proved to

be another step in the right direction for the RNRMET, which is currently enjoying a surge of success thanks to the incredible input from the team management in fostering support and sponsorship from the RNRMC and industry.

The added support partnered with a fantastic team spirit and drive to train and compete has seen the team go from strength to strength in 2019 and the huge RNRMET branded awning is now a well-known sight at events across the south west. The aim will be for a podium at the 2020 Army Championships.

Picture: Gooner Snaps

# Oarsome challenge

**SPORTSMEN and women aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth rowed 14,820km to raise more than £2,000 for the RNRMC. AB (WS) Ryan Whatmore describes how it went.**

I thought it may be possible to use the indoor rowers on board HMS Queen Elizabeth to row the distance, port-to-port, of the ship's Westlant 19 deployment.

We needed 30 team members to cover 8km everyday to complete the 14,820km journey and beat the ship back to homeport.

The aim of the challenge, first and foremost, was to raise money for RNRMC and beat the ship back to homeport in Portsmouth but to also get more people into indoor rowing and get fitter over the deployment.

After proposing my concept to the Physical Training Instructors onboard, I was given their full support and advice on how to get started.

The recruitment started slow and with only a month to get a team together, I was worried we wouldn't have the numbers required. However, as word spread, more people became interested in taking part and by the time we sailed we had 45 people on the team, knocking the daily total down to 6km per day, a very agreeable figure.

With the support of the PTIs, they delivered training and technique sessions, rowing programmes and dietary advice suited to the team due to the high level of physical activity we would be doing. Unfortunately, within the first few weeks of the deployment, members of the team started to see the hardship of the challenge or the incompatibility it had with their routines at sea and dropped out, dropping our team down to 38 personnel.

To help cover the distance that was lacking, Lt Mike Hawkins and myself organised an hour-long rowing team relay challenge. It was simple, we had four teams row in relays for one hour and who ever had covered the most distance was the winner. This added some



friendly competition between the teams but also raised money as each team member had to submit a small donation.

After an hour an additional 78km was added to the total an excellent achievement and combined effort from all four teams.

Another idea to bring the distance up was a joint rowing marathon, proposed by LET(ME) Rob Rowston.

Rob heard about a 34km row I did in my off-watch at sea and suggested the idea saying "a marathon is only another eight and a bit kilometres".

Seizing the opportunity, I agreed naively, having never even run a marathon, never mind rowed one. We conducted the marathon next to the dining halls over evening meal times and put out charity buckets next to us to raise more money from the ship's company.

Rob, being an experienced rower, completed his marathon in 3 hours 15 minutes and then I, a rowing rookie, completed it in 3 hours 37

minutes. But this rose over 84 kilometres in additional distance and also raised fairly sore backs and legs the next day.

After hearing about our marathon, LT Mike Hawkins suggested I take part in a 50km rowing relay challenge organised by another team who are raising money for RNRMC, HMS Oardacious.

I declined, however, I did suggest that I would complete the 50 kilometres solo which sparked an idea from Lt Hawkins in the form of a race between a relay team of ten members of the ship's company and myself, even though I vowed to myself I'd never do another marathon, I found myself competing in a 50km ultra-marathon.

I had a 90-minute head start, where I covered nearly 20 kilometres before the relay team began, and then the real race started.

With supporters telling the team and myself how far the other had covered, the team and I realised it was going to be a close finish.

This time round however, I hit the marathon mark at 3 hours 14 minutes, smashing my last time by 23 minutes, all the rowing paid off!

I hit the 50km finish at 3 hours 51 minutes with the relay team mere minutes behind me who finished their 50km at 2 hours 29 minutes, smashing the current top relay team time by four minutes.

With all the achievements and pride involved, we were also able to add 100km to the total.

Five weeks at sea and the prospect of home coming in sight, motivation was starting to dwindle within the team and the daily rowing was beginning to display its effect on the team with members damaging arms, knees and backs.

With the target seeming just out of reach, every member of the team got their distances recorded and counted to discover that we had completed the challenge and beat the ship back to Portsmouth with two days to spare.

We had successfully covered 14,820km and raised more than £2,000 for the RNRMC.

## Masterful displays

NINETEEN Royal navy rowers competed at the British Rowing Indoor Championships, winning two individual medals and three UKAF Inter Services 2k titles.

Setting a high standard early on, WO1 Paul 'Tiny' Nash (Nelson) finished with a bronze in the men's Hwt 50+, in a time of 6 mins 21.5 secs. Nash also took the UKAF men's Hwt Masters 2k title.

CPO Collin 'Mr Plymouth 1992' Leiba (Drake/MCTA) won gold in the BRIC Men's Hwt 55+ 500m in 1 min 22.1 secs. Cdr Dan Connor (JHGS) finished fourth in the men's Lwt 50+ 2k in 6 mins 52.1 secs, taking the UKAF Inter Services men's masters Lwt title. POPT Rich 'Chazz' Charrett (Sultan) was also a fourth-place finisher in the men's Lwt 30+ 2k in 6 mins 51.6 secs.

CPO Claire Drew (JHGS) was seventh in the women's Hwt 40+ 2k in 7 mins 38.2 secs, but was another team member with a UKAF Inter Services title in the women's masters 40+.

Other top-ten finishes included WO Mark Branson (Sultan) seventh in the Men's Lwt 55+ 2k in a personal best 7 mins 15.4 secs.

Lt Cdr Adrian Long (Sultan) last competed for a full season in 2012, where he was the fastest RN 2k racer at the World Championships in Boston. Consistently the fastest RN 2K performer this season, he posted a season's best of 6 mins 14.5 secs to finish eighth in the men's Hwt 30+, just 1 second slower than his 2012 time.

PO Sam Spencer (HMS Queen Elizabeth) was competing in her first major race, having spent a few months on board under the guidance of CPOPT DAZ Hoare. She rowed close to her personal best, finishing 12th in the women's Hwt 40+ 2k in 7 mins 56.1 secs.

Lt Cdr Ruth Guest (INM) rowed 7 mins 53.6 secs to finish 15th in the women's Hwt 30+, with PO Roxane Long (JHGS) finishing eighth in the women's Lwt 30+ 2k in a personal best 8 mins 20.8 secs.

The men's Hwt 40+ 2k has long been ultra-competitive, always attracting large numbers. Leading the way for the Royal Navy was Major Alex Pickett (CNR) setting a personal best of 6 mins 33.0 secs to finish 18th, just ahead of Brig Matt Jackson (3CDOX COMD)'s 6 mins 36.9 secs, with WO Jack Greenan (SULTAN) ecstatic at beating the 7 min barrier for the first time in 6 mins 58.0 secs. Sub Lt Sam Cass (NAS Culdrose) competed in the very high class Men's Open Hwt 2k, rowing 6 mins 24.0 secs to finish 15th in a race where the winner was one of only 2 to go sub 6 mins at the event.

Perhaps the biggest achievement of the RN team was PO Nicola Harper (Sultan), demonstrating what can be achieved through structured training, setting a third consecutive 2k personal best in a race setting.

# Classier on

MORE than 80 sailors and Royal Marines swapped warships and military bases for the dramatic setting of Stubai Glacier to sharpen their Telemark skiing skills.

Personnel from 18 different units across the land volunteered for the annual development camp, this year hosted on the slopes just outside Innsbruck in Austria.

They went through two weeks of intensive training from military and civilian experts on the largest winter camp run by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines in the 13 years it has nurtured the sport, which is still considered a niche alongside its Alpine cousins.

And although the fortnight was chiefly aimed at skiing prowess, improving fitness and fostering team spirit and morale, Exercise White Dagger also taught Royal Marines skills which they will use when they head to Norway on their annual Arctic exercise.

Telemark skiing originated in the namesake region of Norway in the mid-19th Century. A long piece of synthetic fabric – known as a 'skin' – is fitted to skis to allow users to move uphill. The ski binding fixes the toe but frees the heel, making its unique 'lunging' turn very distinctive on a downhill ski slope. The technique is extremely popular among Royal Marines thanks to their long-standing experience of cold weather and mountain training in Norway.

Telemarking is recognised as an official Royal Navy winter sport. Each year White Dagger allows novice skiers to learn and develop their skills under a team of top-quality military and civilian instructors.

The exercise is also designed to support participation by the most junior ranks in the service – personnel who might otherwise never get involved in winter sports.

"White Dagger was a great opportunity for the most junior Royal Navy and Royal Marine ranks – both regular and reservist – to learn a challenging sport," said organiser Warrant Officer Wayne Sear, Royal Marines, from the headquarters of the Littoral Strike Group based in Plymouth.

"The skills and confidence they gain are also hugely transferrable to their military careers."

Under his supervision, what started as a single minibus of keen volunteers in 2005, is expected to reach 100 participants this year.

While interest in Telemarking has

fluctuated over the years in the civilian world, the sport continues to make inroads in the Navy, partially due to the Royal Marines' expertise in the Arctic, but it is also because Telemarking is viewed as a more challenging and aesthetic version of downhill skiing.

Marine Tom Morgan from 45 Commando, based in Arbroath, said: "White Dagger was hoofing and a fantastic introduction to Telemark skiing. It will really set me up for success during my deployment to Norway for Exercise Cold Response."

Leading Seaman Archibald Lucas, from the Submarine Flotilla in Devonport, added: "White Dagger was excellent. For someone who has never skied before, it got me fully involved with the Telemark technique, and it's definitely something I wish to continue alongside my Naval career."

The exercise concluded with a slalom under race conditions followed by a prize ceremony.

After two rigorous weeks of instruction, the sailors and marines cut an impressive sight as they Telemarked down the glacier – Scottish participants especially, dressed in kilts!

The top skiers from White Dagger will be selected for Exercise Telemark Titan, involving both military and Great British Telemark racing teams in France, before progressing on to both the Naval and Inter-Services competitions.

The 2019 season saw the Naval Service Telemark skiers win at the Inter-Services Snow Sports Championships – claiming victory over the Army and RAF for a third consecutive year.

Many of the Royal Marines were also putting their new skills to the test during their annual winter deployment to Norway, culminating in Exercise Cold Response next month.

Report: Lieutenant Colonel Angus Precious RM



# glacier



# Murray's mint

ROYAL NAVY boxer Jake Murray punches his way to victory to earn the top performer award at the HMS Sultan boxing dinner.

The LETME, who beat REME fighter Lance Corporal Bradley Greenwood, was part of a combined Royal Navy team, from Sultan and Collingwood, to take on boxers from REME at MOD Lyneham.

The competition was played out in a highly electric atmosphere, with the show including a display by a Corps of Drums from the HMS Sultan Volunteer Band and a parade of the fighters.

The boxing dinner provides the perfect platform for novice boxers to take those first steps into a competitive boxing ring. In total, nine action-packed bouts were on the card with one all-female navy fight, in addition to the eight Army vs Navy bouts, all consisting of three, three-minute rounds.

The fight of the night turned out to be the clash between Able Rating Samuel Cole (Collingwood) and Craftsman Thomas Hutchinson (REME).

For LETME Murray, it was his third success at HMS Sultan, having represented the Gosport base in 2016 and 2018.

The Defence College of Technical Training oversees both the Air and Marine Engineering training at Sultan and the training of REME engineers at Lyneham. As the evening drew to a close, the Commandant of the College, Air Commodore Adam Sansom was invited to present the winning team with the trophy. With the balance of bouts tied at 4-4, it was the Royal Navy team who had previously won the show who retained the trophy.

Sultan Boxing Squad Coach, Leading Physical Training Instructor Joel Kirby said: "All the boxers fought with great bravery and, considering it was a lot of their first bouts, showed a great deal of skill and class in the ring."

"They put all the hard work in during the weeks leading up to the competition and performed well under the pressure of fighting in front of a crowd of over 500 cheering spectators."

"I couldn't be prouder of our Navy boxers. The preparation for the show has revealed a lot of talented boxers at Sultan with huge potential, not limited to those who made it into the ring. I hope they all decide to stay in the sport, as they could have great futures in the sport, should they desire it."

Results were:

ET(CIS) Ellie Naylor, HMS Collingwood, beat Sub Lt Clare Mawson; L/Cpl Jack Lewis, REME, beat ET(ME) Marcus Houston; CFN Asa Huw Eversley-John, REME, beat LET(CIS) Billy Robbins;

Mid Thomas De Carvalho Gross, Collingwood, beat Spr James Nelson, REME; LET (CIS) Callum McCall, Collingwood, beat Lt Max Heron, REME; ET(ME) Michael Burns, Sultan, beat Spr Anthony Lowe, REME; Cfn Thomas Hutchinson, REME, beat AB Samuel Cole, Collingwood; Spr George Loveridge, REME, beat PO Dave Gibson, Sultan.

Pictures: PO Phot Nicola Harper



● Above, LETME Murray is proclaimed winner; Top right, ETME Michael Burns beat Spr Anthony Lowe; Below left, the RN boxing squad; Below right, AB Samuel Cole lost to Cfn Thomas Hutchinson

