



NAVY NEWS

MAY 2020

Ready to help

Lieutenant Christian Smith, 203 Flight Observer, from 815 Naval Air Squadron, gives the thumbs up as helicopters joined RFA Argus bound for the Caribbean ahead of the upcoming hurricane season. (see pages 2-3)

Picture: LPhot Rory Arnold



Naval Service personnel on coronavirus frontline - Pages 2-3

9 770028 167184 05
Off-sale date: May 31, 2020
£3.20



Leading Medical Technician Adam Smith – HMS King Alfred. Operating Department Practitioner working at Southampton General Hospital. He is currently on duty in the Intensive Care Unit during the battle against Covid-19.



Lieutenant Amy Phelps, a Naval Nurse working in critical care at Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth. Currently working alongside 79 navy personnel round the clock at the hospital during the fight against Covid-19.



Leading Naval Nurse Alistair Fawkes – HMS Sherwood. Deputy charge nurse at Leicester NHS hospital in what has been one of the busiest A&Es in the country during the Covid-19 outbreak.

THE NAVY RESPONDS

IN THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES, THE ROYAL NAVY **CONTINUES TO DELIVER** AT HOME AND ABROAD BUT ALSO ON THE **CORONAVIRUS FRONTLINE**

As usual, the Royal Navy is out there delivering on operations all over the planet but is now also producing the goods on the frontline of coronavirus at home.

These unprecedented times, as the Covid-19 pandemic sweeps the world, has seen the Naval Service respond in kind. Usual service continues in the Gulf, home waters and in the Atlantic and Pacific, but operations have also been tailored in response to the pandemic.

In the vanguard of that is support ship RFA Argus, whose deployment to the Caribbean ahead of hurricane season was brought forward so she could be in the region to stand by if British Overseas Territories need assistance in their fight against coronavirus.

Argus – which is home to a huge hospital facility – left Devonport after some rapid work to ready the ship in early April.

With her vast hangar filled with as many relief goods as the ship can carry, Argus takes crucial disaster stores, but also medical supplies to ensure she is ready to deliver support to local emergency services in their response to the global pandemic.

Argus had been preparing to head to the anyway Caribbean ahead of the fast-approaching hurricane season (June to November).

Commanding Officer, Captain Terence Barke RFA, said: "RFA Argus ship's company, consisting of both Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Royal Navy personnel, will rise to this huge challenge.

"They leave with the additional burden of leaving family and loved ones behind in the UK for what will be a demanding and emotional deployment in an ever-changing environment.

"We understand that there are people in need in the UK Overseas Territories that require our support.

"We are facing a novel adversity that we will have to

overcome together as a team and our bond will come out stronger than ever as a result of it."

Argus's impressive hospital facility provides 100 beds, including intensive-care and high-dependency units, which can be activated at a moment's notice should the need arise.

Embarked on Argus are Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Royal Navy sailors, medics, Royal Marines, and aviators of 815, 1700 and 845 Naval Air Squadrons.

Together they make a formidable force, ready to assist the overseas territories, which may be more vulnerable to the impact of coronavirus because of limited facilities to support their small populations but also fragile economies dependant on the currently non-existent tourism trade.

Already, Argus has been busy. As *Navy News* went to print, she had already stopped in Bermuda to carry out crucial preparations ahead of hurricane season, with embarked Commando Merlins of 845 NAS and the Wildcat from 815 NAS carrying out information gathering sorties to establish

landing site for supplies if aid is needed to be dropped into the islands.

They also worked with Bermudan authorities and the local coastguard on search and rescue training and on tracking and stopping noncompliant vessels.

On the home front, Royal Navy medical staff continue to work alongside the NHS in hospitals across the UK and have responded to coronavirus with their civilian colleagues.

Military doctors, nurses, and medical support staff are well established in NHS hospitals, working in a wide range of areas.

Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth is one location where 79 navy personnel can be found working round the clock.

Normally, navy medics work in the NHS to maintain clinical skills ready for operations and military operations, but the virus outbreak has brought the frontline home.

Being continually held at high readiness means they have responded quickly and have been flexible to where they are

needed most in hospitals.

"Normally it's us sending our people to the frontline from the hospital here, but very much at the moment the frontline has come to us," Commander Alister Witt, the Commanding Officer of Joint Hospital Group South, said.

"We've had to really get our people onto an operational footing to focus on an operation in the home environment where they're actually delivering their key clinical skills to help out something that's a national main effort."

Leading Naval Nurse Sarah Belcher said: "As a military team we're doing a lot more hours than we were prior to the Covid outbreak. A lot of our external training that we're required to do as part of military operations has been cancelled as a result of Covid, so many of those hours we're now spending to try and boost the numbers inside the hospital and the department and support the NHS staff."

Lieutenant Amy Phelps, a Naval Nurse working in critical care, added: "Knowing that you have the skills and experience needed to contribute to this crisis definitely makes me proud, and proud of the whole team I'm working alongside."

Surgeon Captain Barrie Dekker, the Military Clinical Director of the group, and a trustee with Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust, said: "We've all had to change our working patterns. The NHS Trust are virtually all on twelve hour shifts to try and cover the increased workload, so our military staff are fitting in with that as well, making themselves key members of each one of the teams."

In the south west, Merlin helicopters from Culdrose are now acting as flying ambulances and transporters, flying supplies and personnel, helping millions of Britons in the West Country during the pandemic.

The helicopters – typically used for submarine-hunting – are providing round-the-clock assistance to the NHS and South West Ambulance Services, serving a population of more than 4,500,000 people across Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Bristol, Somerset, the Channel Islands and the Isles of Scilly.

Three Merlin Mk2 helicopters and their crews from 820 Naval Air Squadron have been set aside for the task, aided not just by their own engineers and technicians, but the entire support network at the Helston airbase: medics, air traffic controllers, safety and logistic experts.

The submarine-hunting equipment which normally fills the helicopters' cabins has been stripped out so the Merlins can carry several stretchers, passengers and stores quickly, smoothly and efficiently over long distances.

"This is very different from our ordinary role, but jobs like this are in our DNA. We are helping out the nation and the National Health Service during these testing times – it's a real moment for everyone to pull together," said Commander Chris 'Grassy' Knowles, 820's Commanding Officer.

"It demands a real team effort for us here at Culdrose in terms of getting the aircraft and the crews ready, getting all the logistical support in place – providing air traffic controllers, meteorological information, so that we can operate 24 hours a day."

Commander Knowles said efforts had been made to protect crews – "and the whole Culdrose family" from the risk of infection, following medical guidelines for isolating patients and decontaminating the helicopters, equipment and uniforms. "We've had a run through and it was very successful."

His air and ground crew are working 12-hour shifts to be able to respond to the pandemic, carrying NHS paramedics with patients when required.

"This is why I joined the Royal Navy – helping the country in times of need," said pilot Lieutenant Nick Jackson-Spence.

Leading Air Engineering Technician Danielle King added: "This is a very busy but rewarding period for us. We have to keep these aircraft capable of flying around the clock, ensuring we can always provide whatever assistance the NHS needs. Our number one priority is to keep the aircraft and its crew safe, and that means we need to be meticulous in our aircraft maintenance as any mistakes could be costly. It's hard work, but a job I really enjoy doing."

It's the second time in five years the squadron has been called upon to help during a medical emergency. Its helicopters supported the UK's response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa over the winter of 2014-15.

At the same time as supporting civilian authorities, Culdrose's Merlin Force will continue their usual duties; protecting UK waters and safeguarding the strategic nuclear deterrent.

"We are very aware that we have an important role to play in supporting the nation at this difficult time; we will make every effort to provide this contribution and make a difference in our region," said Commander James Hall, in charge of the Maritime Merlin Force.

"We train our people to do this type of task all of the time; it is something that they all have the skills to deliver"



An 820 Naval Squadron Merlin helicopter takes off during their mission to support the NHS during coronavirus



RFA Argus sails from Devonport bound for the Caribbean, where she will stand by to support British Oversea Territories during the coronavirus pandemic



at sea and on land."

Royal Navy Reservists, see facing page and right panel, are also on the coronavirus frontline all round the country in their civilian roles.

They include medical staff at the coal face in hospitals, coastguard personnel, police officers, teachers and those helping pharmacies deliver vital medication and helping feed and rally communities.

Among them is Petty Officer Lee Jones, who is a NHS Principal Clinical Technologist and manages a team of Clinical Engineers in the Hywel Dda Health Board in Wales.

During 15 years in the navy, PO Jones' main role was to carry out maintenance on communications, navigation and weapons systems on board Hunt Class Minehunter vessels.

Now as a reservist, in his civilian career PO Jones works for the NHS and is responsible for ensuring medical equipment is correctly maintained and ready for use during clinical diagnostic and therapy procedures.

He is currently working with new equipment including the Continuous Positive Air Pressure machines or CPAP which are ventilators fed by medical oxygen and used for the treatment of Covid-19 diagnosed patients.

With guidance from the Medical Healthcare Regulatory Agency, PO Jones has also been working on testing and evaluation of a life-saving ventilator machine designed for coronavirus patients.

Elsewhere around the navy, submariners stepped forward to provide advice to the public who are doing their part by self-isolating and staying at home.

Submariners know a thing or two about isolation, spending months underwater at a time, and Sub Lieutenant Andrew Rose, pictured left, who was recently on patrol with HMS Artful, was on hand to give pointers.

The navy's Physical Training Instructors were also on hand to give tips on staying fit at home. Leading Physical Instructor Joel Kirby filmed four short workout films for viewers to watch and emulate at home.

It didn't end there, as Royal Marines Band musicians shared their expertise with four hour-long free music master classes on Instagram.

Musicians shared a little about their career and how they got started in music before hosting their tutorial and end by responding to live questions from followers.

Naval Base Portsmouth have also been contributing to the coronavirus effort, as they handed over a chilled shipping container to Portsmouth City Council.

It will be used to ensure vulnerable residents are provided with food during the national lockdown.

Next month: Bringing Britons home. The sailors who helped evacuate civilians from China, Cuba and Peru in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

ON THE FRONTLINE



Surgeon Commander Richard Bateman – the Commanding Officer of HMS Flying Fox. Consultant in anaesthesia and intensive care at the Bristol Heart Institute.



Leading Naval Nurse Nicole Brown – HMS Forward. Student paramedic bolstering frontline resources.



Lieutenant Commander Dominic Roberts – HMS President. GP on the frontline in London. Here visiting a local estate to provide care.



Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Richard Makins – HMS Flying Fox. Consultant Physician specialising in gastroenterology at Cheltenham General Hospital.

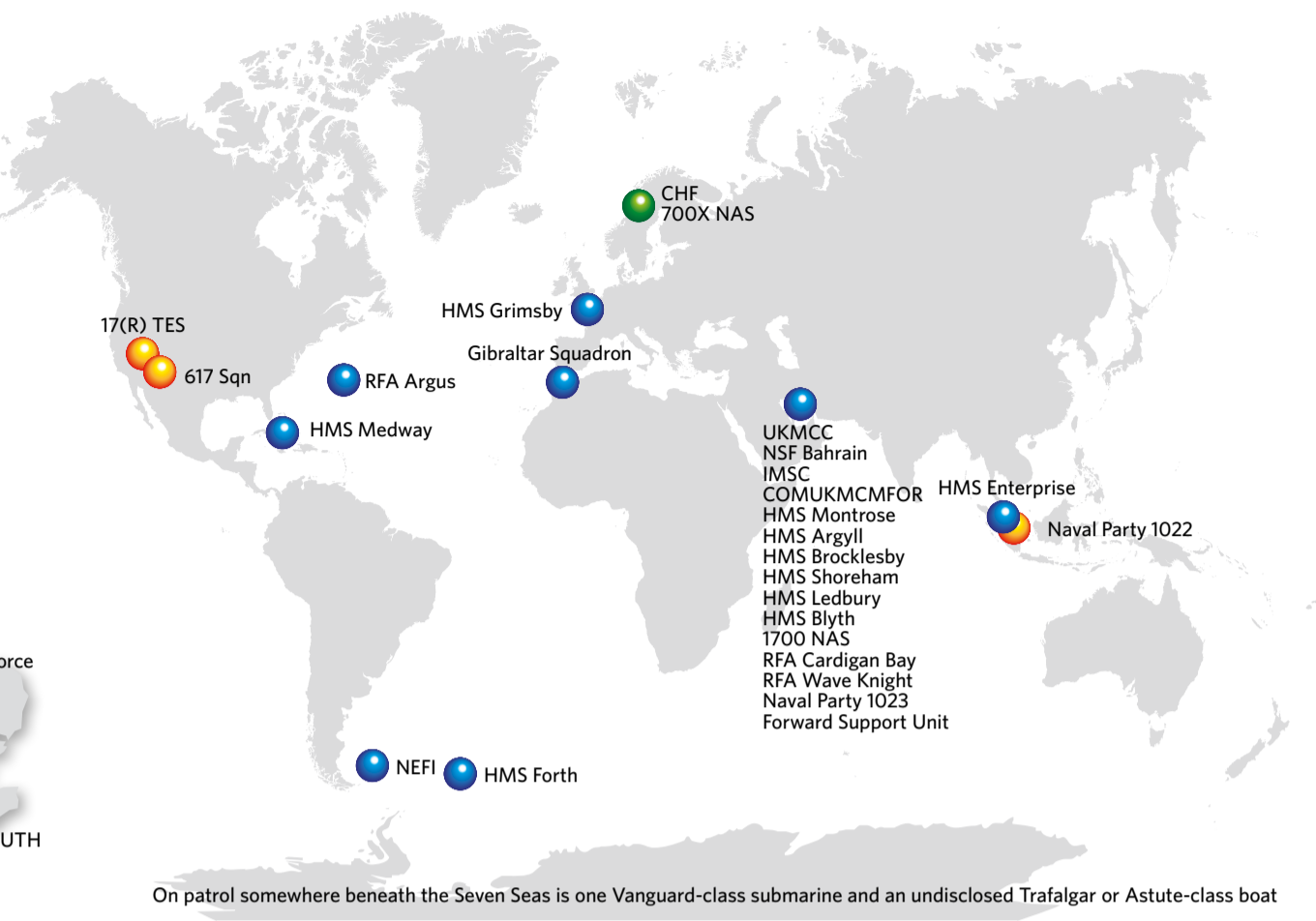
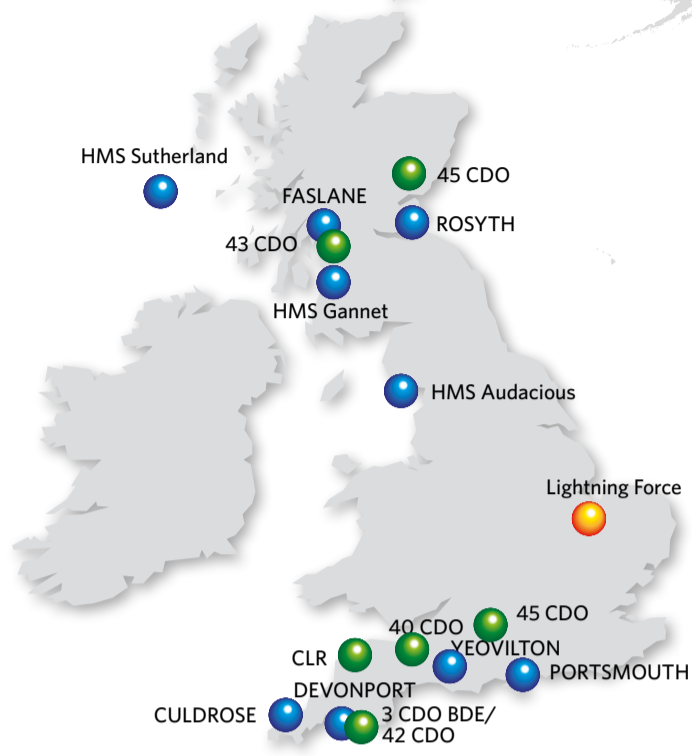


Leading Naval Nurse Anya Collyer – HMS King Alfred. Nurse at Royal Hampshire Hospital, Winchester.

Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Trent
HMS Tamar
HMS Mersey
HMS Tyne
HMS Magpie
HMS Chiddingfold
HMS Lancaster

HMS Richmond
HMS Kent
RFA Tidespring
RFA Tidesurge
RFA Tideforce
814 NAS
820 NAS



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

FLEET FOCUS
Protecting our nation's interests

NAVAL Service personnel are supporting the international effort to cope with the current Coronavirus pandemic, while ensuring that routine, but vital, work continues.

Operations have been tailored in response to the pandemic, but usual service continues at home and across the globe, with RFA Argus (see pages 2-3) heading to the Caribbean earlier than planned to stand by if British Overseas Territories need assistance. Military medical staff are working in NHS hospitals, while other personnel help the vulnerable in their communities (see pages 2-3).

Training continues at HMS Raleigh and BRNC (see page 13) with passing-out parades being livestreamed to families.

Royal Navy Transformation continues with HMS Forth (see pages 18-19) making her first visit to South Georgia since arriving in the Falkland Islands, where she is operating from as part of the Forward Presence programme.

One of Forth's younger sisters, HMS Tamar, became the fourth second-generation patrol vessel to join the Royal Navy (see page 9). She sports a giant red lion motif on her hull to celebrate her West Country patronage.

At the vanguard of the Forward Presence programme is Type 23 frigate HMS Montrose (see page 23), which has been at sea almost continuously since the turn of the year, keeping merchant shipping safe and halting illegal activities in the Middle East.

The frigate has been joined in the Gulf by sister ship HMS Argyll (see page 11), a year after her last patrol of the region.

Commando Helicopter Force completed their high-intensity training on their annual Arctic workout, Clockwork (see pages 16-17). Wildcats from 847 NAS worked with the British Army's Apache helicopters in the punishing deep freeze. The squadron then joined 845 NAS and their Merlins for the Norwegian-led Exercise Cold Response.

HMS Grimsby joined NATO allies off the French coast (see page 9) for her second spell of searching for unexploded wartime bombs and mines in six weeks. The task group located and dealt with eight devices off the coast of Normandy.

Back in the UK and the Royal Navy's newest submarine, HMS Audacious, arrived in her homeport of Faslane (see page 5). Built in Barrow, she is the fourth of seven Astute-class submarines built to safeguard the nation's nuclear deterrent.

Down to the south coast and the navy's largest survey ship – HMS Scott – sailed into Falmouth (see page 6) following her epic Atlantic adventure during which she spent 95 days continuously at sea in the North and South Atlantic Oceans, plus the Caribbean.

Nine British ships completed a concentrated operation to shadow seven Russian vessels in the English Channel and North Sea (see page 7). Type 23 frigates HMS Kent, Sutherland, Argyll and Richmond joined HMS Tyne and Mersey, along with RFA Tideforce and Tidespring and HMS Echo for the large-scale operation.

HMS Sutherland and her Merlin helicopter from 814 NAS then went on to take part in Perisher (see page 7), the demanding course which determines whether prospective commanders are equipped to go on to command submarines.

More than 700 students have 'graduated' from 700X NAS, learning to use small 'quadcopter' drones (see page 20). The sailors and marines received instruction from the RNAS Culdrose-based squadron.

The work of sailors across the Naval Service has been recognised in the 53rd operational honours list (see page 21).

F-35B Lightning jet pilot Lieutenant Commander Stephen Collins discusses his experiences of flying the fast fighters from the deck of aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth during her recent Westlant deployment (see page 15).

The current and former Commanding Officers of HMS Queen Elizabeth met the Queen for her final official duty (see page 6) before she moved to Windsor Castle at the start of the Coronavirus outbreak. Cdre Steve Moorhouse and Capt Angus Essenhigh updated the monarch, official sponsor of the carrier, on the warship's activities.

Finally, former Royal Marine Stephen Martindale saved the life of a motorist suffering a cardiac arrest (see page 22). The driver's son, a serving Royal Marine Reservist, has thanked Stephen for his quick actions. And the crew of RFA Tideforce went to the assistance of a stricken sailor aboard a Dutch-flagged ship (see page 6).

Stepping up in uncertain times

THIS month, we had intended to give you an view of Naval life from the perspective of our Royal Navy and Royal Marines Reserves.

However, like most of you, our plans have been completely overturned by the COVID-19 pandemic, so we will have to postpone that until later this year.

Instead, we thought it was worth updating you on what your Royal Navy is doing as part of the ongoing efforts, and to thank you for what you are all doing.

The response from across the Royal Navy has been fantastic, and people have stepped up in the way that you always do.

This was perhaps best summed up by HMS Defender, who returned home after nearly eight months away and immediately reported: "Ready to respond as necessary to support the COVID-19 effort."

We have been called on to assist in a variety of ways so far. RFA Argus has sailed for the Caribbean, with aircraft and personnel from 845, 815 and 1700 Naval Air Squadrons and Royal Marines embarked.

Her role for now is to augment HMS Medway in support to the Overseas Territories for the hurricane season, but she will be able to re-role rapidly into a COVID-19 support platform if the medical situation in the region deteriorates.

Three Merlins from 820 NAS are acting as flying ambulances and transporters for supplies and personnel in more remote and inaccessible areas across the South

VIEW BRIDGE from the BRIDGE

West, Channel Islands and the Isles of Scilly. Our medical services continue their roles embedded within NHS trusts, where they are busier and more critical than ever. And 3 Commando Brigade remain at readiness to support operational requirements wherever they are needed.

Nearly 1,000 reservists have volunteered in various specialist capabilities, and our civil servants and contractors continue to support both the COVID-19 effort and our ongoing operations.

And we have seen how well our industrial partners have managed to carry on delivering, even with the difficulties imposed by social distancing and the need for extra protection, with both HMS Tamar and HMS Audacious sailing for sea trials.

Of course, alongside all this, our normal operations are continuing, and you can read more about what we are doing throughout this month's Navy News as usual.

The Royal Navy's people have shown themselves to be hugely adaptable, cheerful and resilient throughout all this, and we are embracing technology to help us. Training has continued at HMS Raleigh and at BRNC Dartmouth, and we have held passing out parades via video link.

The first Virtual Admiralty Interview Board has just gone live. Most of the Service are now using the MyNavy app to keep themselves updated, and remote working and video conferencing has become normal for many.

We also know that these are uncertain times. This is why we have contacted all those with their notice in or coming to the end of their engagements, and offered options to remain in the Service.

We are also welcoming applications from those who left recently and wish to rejoin.

If you left within the last two years, the process could take as little as half a day to complete. If you would like to come back, then please do get in touch with your local careers office.

Finally, thank you for all that you are doing. Whether you are staying at home and protecting the NHS, travelling to work to carry out critical roles or on notice to support COVID-19 operations, you are all delivering a vital service.

Look after yourselves and each other, stay well, and carry on showing the spirit and ethos of the Royal Navy.



● HMS Defender returned to Portsmouth after eight months away

Audacious era begins



THE Royal Navy's newest submarine sailed into her new home as state-of-the-art HMS Audacious arrived in Faslane.

The hunter-killer – fourth of seven Astute-class submarines built to safeguard the nation's nuclear deterrent by hunting down hostile threats – completed her short maiden voyage from Barrow where she's been constructed.

Before leaving the BAE yard in Cumbria, Audacious went through a thorough assessment to make sure all her systems and machinery met the highest safety and seaworthiness standards.

Her 130 crew prepared for the boat's first sea voyage by conducting a 'fast cruise' – simulating they were in the water and demonstrating their ability to respond to all emergency situations they might encounter: collisions, fires, floods and machinery failures demonstrated the team work and leadership which is key

to their submarine's capability.

Checks and assessment complete, the £1.5bn submarine was formally handed over to the Silent Service and the Blue Ensign – flown by vessels in government service – was replaced on the flagstaff by the White Ensign.

"It's been a hard slog to get here, going through the launch and trim dive, which has finally got us to this point," said marine engineering 'wrecker' Chief Petty Officer O'Callaghan.

"It's very gratifying to now be joining the Fleet and putting the boat through her paces with a crew I'd serve with anytime."

"The final couple of weeks before sailing, everyone came together and it felt like a proper ship's company."

On the 215-mile journey to Clyde



Naval Base – the home of the UK's submarine flotilla – marine engineer Engineering Technician Beattie-Nash received his Dolphins, the badge which marks a fully-fledged submariner.

"I'm glad I joined Audacious at such a busy time," he said. "It's thrown me in the deep end with everyone else but it's been fantastic for learning about the boat and its capabilities."

"It's also provided an excellent opportunity to complete my training for my apprenticeship".

Equally proud is junior officer Lieutenant Woliter, who's been assigned to Audacious through much of her construction.

"Such a milestone! It's a rare occasion that new submarines are brought into service and an even rarer one to have helped out so I'm incredibly proud."

Welcoming Audacious into Faslane was the head of the Submarine Service, Commodore Jim Perks.

"HMS Audacious is right at the cutting-edge of technology, built here in the UK by our own people."

"She will provide the country with remarkable security at sea to protect our nation's interests."

"I am especially proud of our submariners who have worked tirelessly to inject their heart and soul into Audacious to ensure she delivers the very best for our nation."

The crew – motto "always bold, always careful" – will now conduct training ashore in the base's hi-tech simulators before taking Audacious back to sea on further trials.

As the fourth boat in the class – taking her place alongside Astute, Ambush and Artful – Audacious is the most technologically-advanced submarine ever

to serve under the White Ensign.

"Arriving in Faslane is an important milestone in the history of HMS Audacious. It marks the end of years of hard work and commitment from a number of organisations but, more importantly, it is the beginning of the next leg of our journey to operations," said the boat's first Commanding Officer Commander Louis Bull.

"Whilst many more days of concerted effort lay ahead for the Royal Navy and our partners in industry, we should acknowledge the enormous contribution from all parties involved in the build process that has made today possible."

"Now, HMS Audacious will look to the future. The benchmark for my ship's company and me is to deliver this capability through to operations so that we can support the defence of the United Kingdom and her interests."

Picture: LPhot Pepe Hogan



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Richmond ready with her new propulsion kit

HMS Richmond is gearing up to safeguard the nation's future flagship.

The frigate has spent six weeks undergoing trials and training after a major overhaul in readiness for escorting new aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth on her maiden operational deployment.

Plymouth-based Richmond is earmarked as one of the escorts assigned to the carrier battle group when it sails next year.

The ship completed a lengthy refit in the hands of Babcock in February, since then she's been testing the newly-fitted systems.

As well as receiving many of the upgrades which the rest of the frigate flotilla has enjoyed (notably replacing the aged Sea Wolf air defence missile with the new Sea Ceptor), Richmond has been fitted with new engines to act as the test bed for the next generation of warships.



Richmond is the first Royal Navy vessel to be fitted with the PGMU propulsion system – a new generation of diesel generators, accompanied by a fully-modernised control and surveillance system, making it easier to control and monitor the engines and diagnose any problems.

The same system will be used to power eight Type 26 frigates, led by HMS Glasgow, being built as replacements for Richmond and her submarine-hunting sisters.

During the trials in testing conditions in the Channel – including a battering from Storm Jorge and a 33° roll which tested the 'sea legs' of Richmond's 200-strong ship's company – the new propulsion system proved itself to be reliable, more efficient and generated more power for the ship's weapons and sensors – vital as technology upgrades means they will demand more power in the future.

During her trials, the ship has worked with Merlin and Wildcat helicopters, tested her submarine-hunting towed array sonar – run out of the ship's stern in a long tube – for the first time in several years.

"It has been fantastic to get through the work-up period and feel part of an effective team," said Engineering Technician William Christopher, one of the sailors who ensured the complex array was successfully tested.

Commanding Officer Commander Hugh Botterill said that so far, his ship's work-up had shown "not only that PGMU is the answer to propulsion for the Royal Navy's future frigates, but also that Richmond is a highly capable anti-submarine asset in her own right."

Although his ship is focused on being ready for standard frigate duties, Commander Botterill said his men and women also stood ready to help their nation.

"We live in extraordinary times. I have a full ship's company of firefighters and first aiders. So, who knows what will be next for my crew and me, but we are ready for whatever the request is."

Tanker helps sick sailor

CREW of one of the Naval Service's biggest tankers provided vital medical aid to a stricken sailor off Portland.

RFA Tideforce picked up a distress call from the coastal freighter Sea Shannon after a crew member inhaled noxious fumes while cleaning rust in the cargo hold.



The SOS reported the Dutch-flagged ship, bound for Ghent in Belgium, was running low on oxygen for treating the sailor's injuries.

Tideforce, which has been carrying out aviation training off the Devon and Dorset coasts, was only a few miles away and sailed to meet up with the Sea Shannon.

Once close, she sent her rescue boat across to the small freighter with her Medical Technician – the equivalent of a paramedic in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary – aboard.

Med Tech Anthony Hendley found the sailor was in poor shape, but lucid and his injuries were not life threatening.

He provided oxygen from Tideforce's sickbay to help the crewman until Coastguard helicopter Rescue 175 from Lee-on-the-Solent in Hampshire arrived on the scene, and a paramedic was lowered down.

They winched the sailor aboard the helicopter and flew to hospital ashore, while Med Tech Hendley returned to his tanker.

Queen updated on future flagship

THE Queen's final official duty before retiring to Windsor Castle due to the coronavirus outbreak was to host the captains of her warship.

As part of Her Majesty's Audiences, she welcomed Commodore Steve Moorhouse and Captain Angus Essenhigh – previous and current Commanding Officers of HMS Queen Elizabeth – to Buckingham Palace for a chat about the activities of the future flagship and her 700 men and women.

The Queen is the Official Sponsor of the 65,000-tonne strike carrier. She formally named the ship in Rosyth in the summer of 2014 and was guest of honour at the commissioning ceremony in November 2017.

It's the duty of all warships to keep their Lady Sponsors apprised of progress, by hosting them aboard, providing regular reports, or in this case, enjoy an invitation to

the sponsor's residence.

Cdre Moorhouse outlined the achievements of the Portsmouth-based warship last autumn and her training with Navy and RAF pilots in UK F-35 Lightning strike fighters off the Eastern Seaboard of the USA and Capt Essenhigh, who took over from Cdre Moorhouse in January, explained the work currently taking place aboard the carrier – including recent trials with the same stealth jets in UK waters for the first time – and the road which lies ahead for her men and women.

"It was most gracious of Her Majesty to grant us an audience and allow us to update our sponsor on our recent progress, as well as preparations for our global deployment in 2021," Capt Essenhigh said.

After the reception for the naval officers, the Queen joined the Duke of Edinburgh at

Windsor for Easter Court, a week earlier than planned, as a precaution.

From there she issued an official statement to reassure the nation:

"At times such as these, I am reminded that our nation's history has been forged by people and communities coming together to work as one, concentrating our combined efforts with a focus on the common goal.

"I am certain we are up to that challenge. You can be assured that my family and I stand ready to play our part."

HMS Queen Elizabeth and her ship's company also stand ready – alongside the rest of the Royal Navy and Armed Forces – to provide military aid to the civilian authorities in the current crisis.

"We onboard stand by, as always, to protect and assist the people of our great nation," said Capt Essenhigh. "United we will conquer."



Great to see you, Scott

THE Navy's largest survey ship sailed into port for the first time since before Christmas as she returned to Falmouth from an epic Atlantic adventure.

HMS Scott arrived back in Britain at dusk – the first landfall for the first time since December 22 in Punta Arenas in Chile after 95 days continuously at sea.

Without a traditional homecoming due to the coronavirus situation, the returning 48 sailors, led by Commander James Baker who hails from the Cornish port, instead received a free delivery of pasties from port staff who will now get to work carrying out maintenance on the 430ft-long vessel.

The Devonport-based ship is used to scour the world's oceans gathering data which assists both military operations and can also update seafaring charts produced for mariners worldwide.

She's been away from the UK since the beginning of June last year, focusing her efforts in the North and South Atlantic Oceans, plus the Caribbean.

Although Scott herself has been deployed for nearly ten months, her 48 crew have not been away for longer than around 20 weeks; one third of the ship's company changes roughly every ten weeks to sustain the 13,000-tonne vessel on long-term operations.

It's the first time in eight years that Scott has visited the South Atlantic, beginning in the fearsome

waters between Antarctica and the southern tip of the Americas – Drake's Passage – where the ship helped the Chileans in the search for a missing C130 Hercules aircraft using state-of-the-art sonar scanners and other sensors.

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.

The 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.

During her time around Britain's South Atlantic territories, her sailors visited remote communities and paid their respects to their forebears lost in the 1982 Falklands conflict, notably laying a wreath over the wreck of frigate HMS Antelope.

Scott also called at the Azores, Boston, Gibraltar and Rio De Janeiro in her nine-and-a-half months away, sailing just short of 16,000 miles – roughly two thirds of the distance around the world – since her last port visit in Chile in December.

"Having sailed 13,187 nautical miles since she was last alongside a jetty, HMS Scott has made the most

exploring both hemispheres," said her Executive Officer Lieutenant Commander Tom Becker.

"Our endurance and reach demonstrates the versatility of delivering military effect at sea, in a unique vessel and in some of the world's most hostile environments.

"The ship's company have shown themselves to be flexible, they've engaged with our international partners, notably supporting the Chilean authorities in the search for the missing C130."

Just ten days after returning from an Atlantic deployment – Scott began a revamp at Falmouth shipyard A&P.

The ship had to enter the dry dock at high tide and then carefully manoeuvre into place over specially-positioned blocks which would suspend her over the dock bottom once the water was drained.

That operation alone took six hours, before the sluice gates were opened and the water pumped out, allowing engineering teams a rare opportunity to assess, maintain and clean these usually-submerged sections of the hull.

The ship's overhaul will be carried out by a mixture of ship's company, a special team from the MOD's DE&S support organisation and engineers and technicians from A&P Falmouth.



Task group on frontline

AS the Royal Navy prepared to help the NHS and other government departments deal with the response to the coronavirus outbreak, nine British ships shadowed seven Russian vessels in waters around the UK.

The Navy completed a concentrated operation to shadow the Russian warships after unusually high levels of activity in the English Channel and North Sea.

Type 23 frigates HMS Kent, HMS Sutherland, HMS Argyll and HMS Richmond joined Offshore Patrol Vessels HMS Tyne and HMS Mersey, along with RFA Tideforce, RFA Tidespring and HMS Echo for the large-scale operation with support from NATO allies.

Lieutenant Nick Ward, HMS Tyne's Executive Officer, said: "As the Armed Forces are helping the NHS save lives in the UK, it's essential the navy continues to deliver the tasks we have always performed to help keep Britain safe.

"This is very much part of routine business for HMS Tyne and represents one of the many roles our patrol vessels perform in support of the Royal Navy's commitments.

"This is our core business and represents an enduring commitment to uphold the security of the UK."

As the Navy's logistics specialists and military planners work with the wider Armed Forces to help the coronavirus response effort, Royal Navy sailors and aircrew were monitoring every movement of the Russian ships using state-of-the-art radar, surveillance cameras and sensors, allowing them to track their course and speed as they passed the British Isles.

They were supported by Merlin and Wildcat helicopters of 814 and 815 Naval Air Squadrons.

Portsmouth-based HMS Tyne, pictured with one of the Russian corvettes, spent

more than a week working in the English Channel, in often challenging seas, keeping a close eye on the Russian vessels as they passed the south coast.

Three Steregushchiy-class corvettes, two Ropucha-class landing ships and two Admiral Grigorovich-class frigates were observed during the operations, plus their supporting auxiliary ships and tugs.

HMS Sutherland, fresh from a demanding period of Arctic training on Exercise Cold Response, watched over the Russian presence as part of her duties with NATO's Standing NATO Maritime Group One – a very high-readiness task group made up of frigates and destroyers which patrols northern European waters to provide a reassuring presence.

The Devonport-based frigate's Merlin helicopter carried out a number of intelligence-gathering sorties over the

Russian ships as they passed through the Channel.

HMS Sutherland's Operations Officer, Lieutenant Hannah Lee, said: "Our successful integration into the maritime group proves our ability to adapt to task group operations at short notice.

"Having proved we can work together and contributed once again to NATO operations, we now look to return to UK national tasks in support of the very highest defence priorities."

NATO duties also saw HMS Sutherland support the French carrier strike group, led by aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle in recent weeks.

HMS Sutherland, working alongside French, Norwegian, German and Danish ships, then carried out surface and air defence exercises as well as carrying out joint gunnery training.



FIGHTING CLAN PLAY ENEMY IN PERISHER

SAILORS, submariners and naval aviators are pitting themselves against each other off Scotland to pick commanders for the UK's ultimate military mission.

Frigate HMS Sutherland and her Merlin helicopter, from Culdrose-based 814 NAS, plus one submarine are committed to Perisher – the demanding course which determines whether prospective commanders have the 'right stuff'.

Those who pass the assessment will go on to command submarines carrying the nation's nuclear deterrent – or the hunter-killer submarines used to protect them from hostile threats.

Much of Perisher – officially the Submarine Command Course – takes place in classrooms and simulators ashore as an experienced skipper and his staff put a select group of officers through their paces.

For the final few weeks, the course

shifts to a submarine with real warships posing as adversaries to give the students and the hunters a thorough workout.

For Sutherland aka the Fighting Clan, pictured,

anti-submarine warfare demands near-total silence and total concentration.

The Plymouth-based frigate runs out (or 'streams') her towed array sonar.

Aboard, crew keep noise to a minimum – mainly by retiring to their bunks, leaving only those needed to operate the ship safely and the operations room team hunting the submarine on duty.

Hand-in-hand with Sutherland's hunt, her Merlin helicopter drops sonobuoys in the ocean and, to pinpoint a submarine's position, hovers and lowers a 'dipping sonar'. If successful, the aircraft's crew either drop depth charges or, more likely, launch Sting Ray torpedoes to eliminate the threat.

Throughout, the hunters do

not merely have to locate the submarine, they have to bear in mind how salty the water is, how deep it is and its temperature – all of which have a marked impact on the effectiveness of sonar.

"Playing the submarine's enemy, the ship and Merlin provide a powerful anti-submarine warfare capability which makes it difficult for the submarine to evade and complete its missions," explained Lieutenant Commander Tim Strickland, the Merlin Flight Commander aboard Sutherland.

Both the helicopter crew and the ship's submarine-hunting team have relished the opportunity to 'play' with a live 'foe'.

"While there always has been an intense – but friendly – rivalry between the surface and submarine fleets, there also has been a large amount of professional respect and admiration," said Lt Cdr Dan O'Connell, HMS Sutherland's principal underwater warfare officer.

"Being an active part of Perisher has been a great opportunity for the Fighting Clan to test herself against the best potential submarine commanders that the Royal Navy has to offer, and allowed Sutherland to remain at the cutting edge of anti-submarine warfare.

The course's nickname either derives from periscope – or from the 'perishing' drop-out rate. Typically fewer than half of the prospective submarine commanders make the grade.



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Boom with a view

ON A beautiful early spring day, divers from HMS Grimsby send a leftover from World War 2 to kingdom come – 75 years on.

The Faslane-based minehunter joined NATO allies off the French coast for her second spell of searching for unexploded wartime bombs and mines in six weeks – eliminating a potential danger to shipping, especially the builders of a new offshore wind farm earmarked for the site.

A two-week stint off Le Tréport, near Dieppe, concluded Grimsby's assignment with NATO's Mine Countermeasures Group 1 alongside flagship FGS Donau, BNS Bellis, HNLMS Willemstad, HNoMS Otrá and France's Andromède.

In March, the force cleared the approaches to Oslo, but was unable to detonate the 38 pieces of ordnance due to their location.

There were no such issues as the group shifted to the Normandy coastline.

Its waters were heavily mined and bombed – by both sides – during the six years of conflict between 1939 and 1945 and although thoroughly swept and cleared down the decades (nearly 1,000 mines were cleared in the first two months of the Normandy invasion in 1944), wartime ordnance continues to be found; roughly one in three mines laid in World War 2 remain unaccounted for.

There is at least one fewer sea mine in the Seine Bay thanks to Grimsby's efforts – one of eight munitions located by the NATO force and neutralised.

Grimsby's clearance divers plunged into the chilly waters (just 4°C) and placed a

charge on the mine, then fell back a safe distance and detonated it – triggering the explosive in the aged ordnance, and throwing up a huge fountain in an otherwise calm sea.

"We are all aware of the coronavirus which is having a major impact back home, so it is great to show everyone that we are continuing to crack on and find mines and keep the sea lanes safe," said Grimsby's Gunnery Officer Lieutenant Ben Hunter.

In all, 94 objects were located by the NATO group as it scoured 26 square miles of sea bed – an area roughly the size of Derby.

Closer inspection by divers or by robot submersibles such as Grimsby's Seafox revealed eight of those objects to be aged munitions, which were safely dealt with.

Lieutenant Commander Tom Gell, Grimsby's Commanding Officer, said that despite the lockdown on land caused by the coronavirus, the crew of the Faslane-based warship and their NATO comrades had continued their duties as normal.

"Even with the coronavirus pandemic, NATO and the Royal Navy carried out their missions and maintained the defence of all NATO nations," he said.

"The group is a potent minehunting force, at very high readiness to respond to any incident or threat that could emerge – and that was being maintained even in the face of the pandemic."



Not any old lion

SPORTING a magnificent giant red lion motif to celebrate her West Country patronage, this is Britain's newest warship: HMS Tamar.

The fourth of the Royal Navy's second-generation patrol vessels made her maiden entry into Portsmouth after dark, so even die-hard ship buffs probably didn't catch her debut.

But if they missed her passing Round Tower, they – and you – certainly won't mistake her on future occasions through the rest of 2020 conducting her trials and training.

Added to both port and starboard superstructures below the bridge is a huge red lion (three metres by two/10ft by 6ft in old money).

The creature – which features on the ship's badge – dates back to Richard, Earl of Cornwall, in the 13th Century and appears on the crests of the two counties separated by the warship's namesake river.

Ok, that's the history lesson done. What about the present and future.

Well, the ship has now been formally handed over to the Senior Service, allowing her to replace the Blue Ensign with the White, hoisted for the first time during a visit to the River Tamar.

Her 40-strong ship's company – assisted by builders BAE – brought Tamar to life in just four weeks – a pace unseen in peacetime.

One month after moving on board, they were guiding the ship down the Clyde, bound for Portsmouth.

She did so as the most environmentally-friendly warship since the days of sail.

As the fourth ship in her class, Tamar (and No.5, Spey) feature some differences from their predecessors, notably a special filter which reduces her diesel exhaust emissions by

90 per cent, allowing her to patrol seas which are subject to strict emission controls.

She and her second-generation sisters are larger, faster and able to stay at sea for longer than the original River class (Tyne, Severn and Mersey) which remain in service, largely on fishery protection duties in home waters.

Tamar carries a 30mm main cannon, can conduct helicopter operations and can embark up to 50 personnel, in addition to about 40 crew, half of whom will trade places with their shipmates who'll fly out from the UK every few months to sustain Tamar on an extended patrol far from the UK.

Affiliated with the Cornish county town of Truro, the ship is earmarked for long-term duties around the globe under the Royal Navy's growing Forward Presence programme.

Older sisters HMS Forth and Medway are currently in the Falklands and Caribbean respectively. Trent, Tamar and Spey's patrol regions are to be announced.

"It's a great achievement for both the ship's company and our partners in BAE Naval Ships who built Tamar to arrive at Portsmouth Naval Base and begin her generation into a multi-role patrol vessel," said Lieutenant Commander Michael Hutchinson, Tamar's first Commanding Officer.

"While many of our colleagues across the Armed Forces are already supporting the NHS as part of the response to the coronavirus, our current focus is on bringing Tamar to readiness so that the Royal Navy's mission to protect our long-term national interests at home and overseas continues."

A formal commissioning ceremony will take place later in the year.



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Between The Rock and a hard place



A YEAR after her last Gulf patrol, HMS Argyll is back on the beat tackling illegal activity in the Middle East.

After a dash from her home in Plymouth via Gibraltar (below, patrolling the east shore of The Rock with the RN Gibraltar Squadron) and Crete, the frigate has begun a six-month stint east of Suez tackling drug running and smuggling and keeping the sea lanes open.

Since returning from her previous Middle East mission, the frigate and her 200 sailors and Royal Marines have been heavily engaged in home and European waters from helping the people of Antwerp celebrate the 75th anniversary of their liberation to demonstrating future naval technology as the 'mother ship' for robot boats at the DSEI trade show in London.

Argyll spent the winter undergoing operational sea training off Plymouth to prepare all aboard for the rigours of a front-line deployment, interspersed with engine changes and a complete rebuild of her galley.

Families waved the ship off from Devil's Point in Plymouth on March 10, since when the ship has linked up with destroyer HMS Defender – returning from the Middle East – in Gibraltar, tested her sensors on the NATO ranges in Crete, then headed through the Suez Canal and into her operational theatre.

"I've been in the Navy a few years and it's good to finally deploy after a comprehensive – and busy – build up. It's an exciting and interesting time to be deployed and

I'm glad we are making a positive contribution in the world," said Weapon Engineering Technician James 'Beans' Pilbeam.

"We're all thinking about everyone at home and I miss all my family lots, but I know they are proud of me for what we're doing."

As part of her security mission, she'll join sister ship HMS Montrose, which is operating out of Bahrain as part of the Royal Navy's Forward Presence initiative to station British warships around the globe on long-term patrols.

On the journey east, the ship's company joined in the 'Clap for Carers' thank-you to NHS staff dealing with the pandemic back home, gathering on the forecandle to applaud while their Wildcat launched a spectacular display of

flares overhead.

Argyll's boarding team of Royal Marines and sailors conducted frequent exercises from scrambling up rope ladders and rapid roping from the Wildcat to scouring the scores of compartments aboard the frigate; almost every British warship dispatched to the Indian Ocean in the past few years has scored drugs busts after intercepting suspect dhows.

"Less than a year after returning from a nine-month deployment, HMS Argyll is once more in the vanguard of a globally-deployed Royal Navy as we head to the Middle East for a follow-up deployment," said the ship's Commanding Officer Commander Andrew Ainsley.

"More than 30 years after her launch, HMS Argyll and her people continue to deliver for global Britain in a rapidly-evolving world."



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OUR FUTURE FRONTLINE

Training of sailors and marines continues so we can support the country in times of need

Words by Nicki Dunwell // Pictures by AB Jack Harding & Craig Keating

W

hile the Royal Navy supports efforts to combat coronavirus, the next generation of sailors and marines continue training in order to fill key roles. Medics, chefs, supply chain specialists and engineers – the men and women our country will call on in times of emergency – are among those passing out of training.

Amid the pandemic, phase one instruction continues at HMS Raleigh, the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines and Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC) – with medical precautions taken in line with guidance from Public Health England.

The Royal Navy is focused on looking after its people while maintaining our duty to protect and serve the nation.

Under normal circumstances, those completing training would mark the occasion with passing-out parades attended by their family and friends.

But due to the COVID-19 outbreak, these parades are now taking place behind closed doors with an online live stream and DVDs made available for families to follow at home instead.

Captain Roger Readwin, the Commanding Officer of BRNC, told one group of newly-trained officers: “Now is your moment to add to the Royal Navy’s long, proud history, to serve your nation, to live up to the example set by the thousands of leaders who have passed through this magnificent college for more than a century, to lead sailors in some of the most challenging times our nation has faced.

“Some of you will be involved almost immediately in the national effort to deal with the coronavirus. All of you will play your part in some way.

“And when this pandemic passes, which it will, you will continue to be there for your nation, ensuring the safety, security and prosperity of the British people.”

The effects of coronavirus led to a rather surreal pass-out parade for one naval officer.

Sub Lieutenant Matthew Poxon, *pictured right*, was left unable to join his BRNC classmates for their passing-out parade as he was in self-isolation on the big day.

A separate parade was organised instead, and SLt Poxon made history by passing out on his own, *pictured bottom left*.

The 29-year-old said: “It was quite daunting marching out

onto the parade ground by myself, with the rest of the cadets and staff watching from the ramps. At least I couldn’t be out of step with the rest of my division.”

Sub Lt Poxon joined the Royal Navy in 2010 as a rating. He reached the rank of Petty Officer, serving in HMS Dauntless and Diamond before being selected for officer training.

Before starting training at BRNC, Sub Lt Poxon spent a year studying for a degree under a joint initiative between the Royal Navy and the University of Portsmouth.

He earned a first-class honours degree in mechanical and manufacturing engineering.

“I learned a huge amount from training and from the staff. Capt Readwin told me to look after my people and serve with pride and that’s definitely a recommendation I intend to follow.”

Capt Readwin added: “My staff and I thought it was important to recognise Sub Lt Poxon’s achievement and afford him the same rite of passage as his fellow cadets.

“There is also an important lesson here for fellow officer cadets under training – good leadership is about looking after not only the team but also every single individual.”

At HMS Raleigh, dozens of sailors – including naval nurses and medics – are completing their basic training.

Captain Richard Harris, the Commanding Officer of HMS Raleigh, said: “We continue to train sailors to support the country in times of

need, as so many of our people are doing right now in helping the NHS save lives during the coronavirus outbreak.

“While this passing-out-parade and currently those planned for future recruits will be held without their families to share in the pride and joy of their achievement, it in no way undermines their great efforts and readiness to serve their nation.”

Air Engineering Technician Michael Guthrie was among those completing training. The 19-year-old is the fourth generation of his family to join the Armed Forces.

He said: “I joined the Royal Navy for a stable career in a varied and challenging environment. I am proud to follow my family in what has developed into a tradition.”

“”
We continue training sailors to support the country in times of need, as many of our people are doing right now helping the NHS save lives

CAPTAIN RICHARD HARRIS



AFRICAN ADVENTURE



A TEAM of sailors and Royal Marines experienced the climb of a lifetime when they took on Mount Kenya as part of adventurous training.

The group, mostly from Commando Training Centre RM, enjoyed stunning scenery, picturesque lakes and incredible wildlife while in Africa.

Despite suffering altitude sickness, they kept their high spirits as they made it to the summit of the 5,199m mountain.

Lieutenant Jamie Powell-McCrae shares how the team got on...

Arrival in Kenya

The bus journey through Kenya to get to Nanyuki, at the foot of the mountain, was an explosion of colours, sounds and smells.

For many in the team, Africa was a totally new experience and this drive flashed by with the windows captivating our attention. Sometimes thriving cities; at others endless plains stretching into the horizon, while some still showed similarly-endless slums.

At British Army Training Unit Kenya, we had a day in hand to get over the journey and sort out the last of our kit. Throughout this period we could see Mt Kenya reaching into the sky above the camp's rooftops; an imposing and sobering sight.

Day One

We set off up the national park's road track and into the montane forest, where elephants and buffalo are at large, and settled into our first night

of camping.

Out came the ration packs and some team morale which shattered the peace of the jungle. This was quickly dissolved however when our guide took our daily heart-rate and blood oxygen saturation levels.

Even at this stage, our first step up the mountain at 3,000 metres, we were all showing signs of altitude sickness – this was of course laughed off and we retired to our tents early.

Day Two

Our first full day of climbing saw us break through the tree line and ascend Mt Kenya's slopes. The landscape and the views were stunning and we made good progress.

Before we reached camp, we took a quick detour to see a waterfall which was nearly 100m in height, shrouded in foliage and that cascaded into the plunge pool.

Many photographs and much staring later, we continued our journey. Arriving at our campsite we made ourselves at home then took the sharpening plunge into Lake Ellis, hardly feeling its proximity to the equator at 3,500m.

Day Three

The next day we again set off in search of Lake Michaelson.

Step after step we climbed, often impervious to the natural beauty around us. We continued most of the day, then as the clouds gathered we made the steep descent into the paradise that was Lake Michaelson. Fed on one side by a river and

naturally dammed on the other, the lake is a silver mirror of calm, dropped within a sheer-sided crater.

Day Four

Rising early the next morning, with our guide still baffled at our constant punctuality and high spirits, we began the ascent from the lake.

We took this slowly, using the guides' advice to move "poley, poley", or slowly, slowly. Good advice in this oxygen-deprived environment.

We climbed 1,000m, marvelling at the landscape of jagged cliffs, deeply scarred valleys and bizarre alien trees. The views were all the more stunning because they were unchanged and unspoilt.

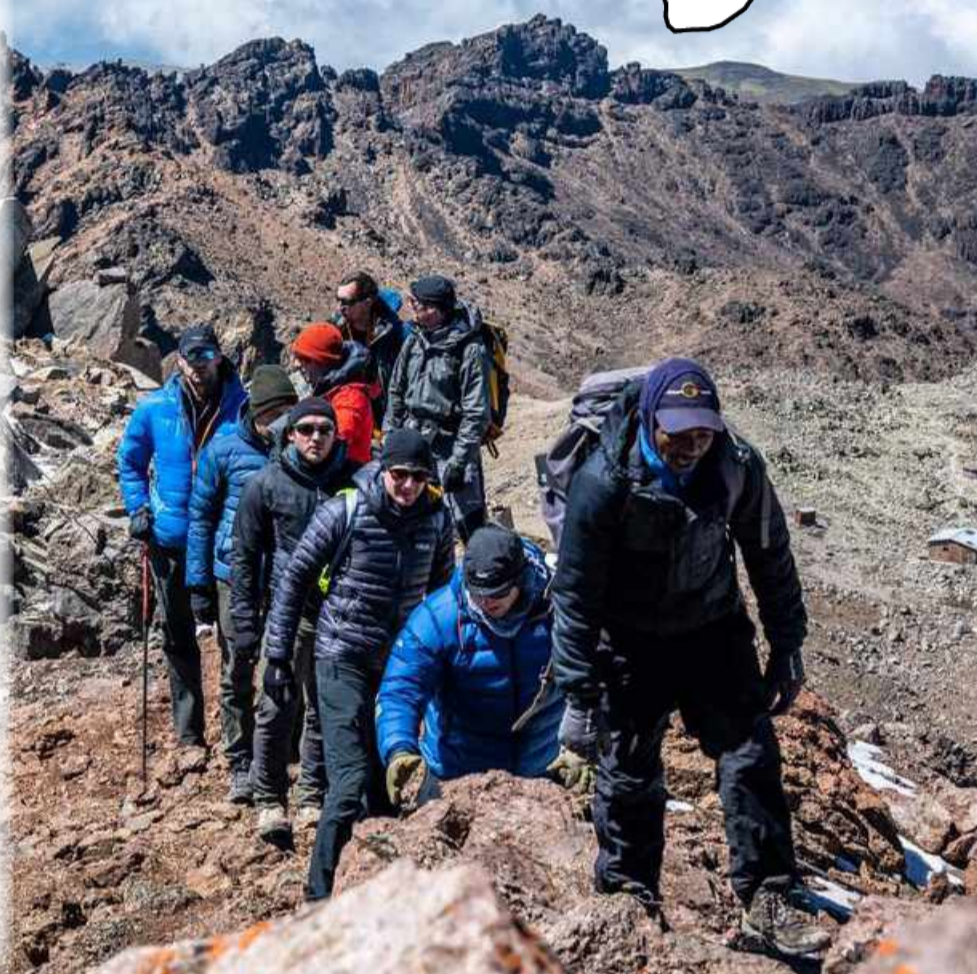
Our final night on the mountain was spent in a hut 200m immediately below the summit. Splitting headaches caused by the altitude meant we had a difficult night. But no-one wavered, and when the decision was made the next morning to take advantage of the weather and summit, we were more than keen.

The Summit

The climb was steep all the way to the peak, with spiralling drops on either side and in places, thick ice which made the ground treacherous.

An hour after setting off we were at the summit, amazed by the views, and trying to think of something profound to say to match the gravity of the occasion.

We had all done it and were all in good order. This is what adventure training looks like. This is how a life less ordinary feels.



“ ”

We could see Mount Kenya reaching into the sky... an imposing and sobering sight



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A Q&A with F-35 Lightning jet pilot Lieutenant Commander Stephen Collins, call sign 'Lothar', on flying from HMS Queen Elizabeth.

What is it like to fly from the carrier?

It's always a mixture of excitement, there's some anticipation. Sometimes there are nerves. There's hard work in achieving the mission or the serial or the test point, or doing the part of the flight you're trying to execute as well as you can and that results in hard work, getting your head down and trying to remember pieces from the brief and mission plan and training before that and then not screw it up.

Hand in hand with that, there's just a sheer fun factor of lining up before the ramp on the carrier. Converting the aircraft into the STOVL (short take-off and vertical land) mode, where the nozzles are angled downward, the engine spins up, the lift fan, you can start to feel the aircraft change and vibrate. You now push the power up and you can feel that she's getting ready to get airborne. You're holding it against the brakes. You're then waiting for the flight deck officer to give his last signal and point you down the deck.

That whole time the anticipation is building, your heart rate is building, you're a little bit scared, the ship's pitching and you can see beyond the carrier to where you're about to go and then you slam the throttle open. You start to feel the jet spool up, you release the brakes and you really start to accelerate towards the end of the deck.

As you go off the front end, instantly you switch to getting on with the mission. It's worked, I'm airborne, all the nerves have disappeared. You've now just got to

maintain your composure and get on with the procedure. I level the nose, accelerate, start talking to my wingman, check in with air traffic control and all the other stuff that goes along with flying a mission. I'm completely focused now.

It's all about business at that point.

What kind of speeds do you do?

The aircraft is quite slow to begin with as you go off the front of the aircraft carrier. It's about 60-80 knots, which really doesn't feel like it's fast enough. My experience in the past has been using an aircraft that used a catapult to launch off the front end. That was a real kick up the backside and you're doing 150-plus knots.

Whereas now you're accelerating all the way up to the front end of the ramp and, of course, the aircraft is designed to work at these slow speeds in its short take-off configuration. We have a lift fan providing thrust from the front and a nozzle that's pointed downward. The wings are only providing a portion of the thrust and the rest is being done by the engine and lift fan.

It does feel slow to begin with but quickly she begins to accelerate and you convert from short take-off and vertical landing mode into conventional mode and the aircraft is back to being a fighter aircraft. She starts accelerating pretty quickly once you get past 300 knots. Four hundred knots comes pretty quick and at 500 knots you can start raising the nose and you can climb from sea level up to 30,000ft in just a matter of a few minutes.

You've also got the afterburner available which really

starts to accelerate the aircraft. Often we can be past the speed of sound in pretty short order, in less than a minute or so. Over Mach 1.0 is no problem, but we run out of speed as we get much faster than that. Again, it's a trade-off between how much fuel we want to burn to stay in that supersonic region. We can definitely get there, but we'll be burning our fuel much quicker, which means we'll be out of the fight and coming home much more quickly.

What we like to do is stay around that supersonic region but not far into it, so we can apply just a bit of use of afterburner when we need it so we're ready to deploy an air-to-air missile or execute a one-versus-one merge to start air combat manoeuvring. We have the energy in the airspeed package to do that, whereas when we aren't required to do that we like to slow down, we'll be at around 350 knots or so, which is still plenty fast but we're not wasting fuel and we can still stay in the airspace for more than an hour, or more, if required, especially if we have airborne tankers around.

Do you get to do any classic dogfighting? How different is it from Top Gun, for example?

It is a bit different from Top Gun. I've not had a lot of time to just play beach volleyball without my shirt on and just wearing dog tags, but there is always the next port call.

We are always operating to get the most out of the assets we have available. If we do have enough aircraft to get airborne and simulate a threat for us and it's within our current mission requirements, then we'll go out and do the two-versus-two, one-versus-two or two-versus-four. Whatever

we'd have available.

This would be for air combat manoeuvring, which you would often talk about as dogfighting, where we may setup specific fight scenarios, or we would just have it as a fluid fight as it would potentially happen in the real world. Where you'd arrive at a merge from a number of miles away having never seen the aircraft but using only your radar and other sensors to arrive at that visual engagement. Now it's more of that Top Gun scenario. It's one aircraft against another and you're flying your aircraft to the maximum of its performance envelope. You're looking to manage where your aircraft's nose is going, so you can get your weapons cued onto the threat, so you can employ a missile or a gun, or just maintain positional advantage against that threat while that aircraft is trying to do the same thing to you.

As you can imagine, it gets into a pretty dynamic scenario with jets looping and rolling around one another, but we make sure we do so in a professional manner and we never go outside that safe bubble to make sure we don't have a hit between the two aircraft. Our weapons are all simulated. I'm not actually trying to shoot down someone out there because that would make you very unpopular very quickly in a training scenario. We also set a minimum altitude, so we're safe as we're executing the high-energy manoeuvres.

There is definitely an element of that classic Top Gun style fight but it's certainly much more professional that it's displayed in movies or television shows, even if under threat of bravado you may hear otherwise from fighter pilots in the bar.

Listen to the full interview
at [YouTube.com/RoyalNavy](https://www.youtube.com/RoyalNavy)

P I L O T



THE ARCTIC PIONEERS



Commando Helicopter Force have put the seal on 'pioneering' high-intensity training on their annual Arctic workout, Exercise Clockwork.

The wings of the Royal Marines – who fly the Commando Wildcats and Merlins – are adept operators in one of the planet's most inhospitable environments, and Clockwork serves as their yearly top-up of the deep freeze.

On the 51st edition of the extreme cold weather flying training, the Wildcats of 847 Naval Air Squadron continued their work with the British Army's Apache attack helicopters of 656 Squadron Army Air Corps.

This work, known as 'Attack Reconnaissance Teaming', has undergone rapid development, according to 847 NAS's Commanding Officer, Major Ian Moore Royal Marines.

Wildcats are tasked with finding enemy positions using their state-of-the-art battlefield reconnaissance abilities and laser-targeting kit, before the potent Apache strikes and destroys targets.

He said: "This winter deployment has proved an excellent vehicle for advancing 847 NAS's warfighting capability in the Arctic.

"The squadron is now adept at both operating and, crucially, fighting in our aircraft in this most challenging of environments.

"A particular highlight has been the rapid development of the Attack Reconnaissance Teaming concept, which has seen Army Apache and Wildcat learn how to exploit and maximise their respective capabilities, and then work together to multiply the find-and-strike effect for the primary customer, in this case 3 Commando Brigade.

"This work is truly pioneering, and has never been done before in the Arctic or amphibious arenas."

The training included the Apache's firing their Hellfire missiles for the first time in Arctic as well as its 30mm cannon.

The Wildcats let rip with its own .50cal machine guns during their own live firing training at Setermoen Ranges, which saw them work with ground forces from the United States Marine Corps and Norwegian Armed Forces.

After completing the demanding Clockwork training, the CHF fliers progressed to Norwegian-led Exercise Cold Response, in which Wildcat and Apache put their earlier work into practice in hunting down the enemy across the Norwegian wilderness.

Merlins of 845 Naval Air Squadron, after their own Arctic training, moved onto Dutch ship HNLMS Johan De Witt for Cold Response.

From there, the Merlins flew inland in support of 45 Commando's Battle Group, who were forging a path from the coastline on fjord raids, backed by Wildcats and Apaches.

Using their unique skills as battlespace managers, the Wildcats, meanwhile, provided support to ground missions, including reconnaissance of landing zones for the Merlins to come in and drop marines and supplies.

"The opportunity to deliver integrated air packages consisting of RAF Chinook, Commando Merlin, Apache and Commando Wildcat in a large-scale multinational exercise context has been very well exploited," added Maj Moore.

"The utility of Wildcat as a multi-role aircraft, especially as an airborne mission command asset and a control of joint fires platform, has seen 847 take a leading role in most of the joint aviation missions.

"This serves to highlight the flexibility of the aircraft, the extremely high level of training of the aircrew, and thus the great value of Commando Wildcat in amphibious operations."

Before sorties could be flown, the fliers had to learn to survive, move and fight on the ground in the Arctic freeze on the cold weather course run by the Royal Marines Mountain Leaders.

"Keeping the aircraft flying can often involve long hours out on the line," said Air Engineering Officer Lieutenant Holmes.

"The men and women of 847 NAS were no doubt tested physically and mentally during the course, but it has enabled them to carry out their duties in pretty bleak conditions."

Once up in the air, aviators and engineers new to the Arctic began learning what it takes to operate in the freezing temperatures and across the challenging terrain.

This included taking off and landing in deep snow, often producing complete 'whiteout' conditions with the downwash from the main rotor blades – a challenge even for the most experienced Arctic aviators.

Mountain flying in strong winds and poor visibility, load lifting, and tactical formation flying at night are other vital skills required to complete the course and set the conditions for a subsequent range package and Cold Response.



Pictures by PO Phot Des Wade

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New fund for submariners in need

THIS is the first sight of the Royal Navy's new patrol ship in one of the most starkly beautiful – and remote – places on the planet to fly the Union Flag.

For the first time since arriving in the South Atlantic, HMS Forth crossed 850 miles of icy ocean to patrol the waters around South Georgia.

The distant archipelago forms part of the territory 2,000-tonne Forth, which entered service last year, must reassure and, ultimately, protect.

The patrol ship spends the majority of her time around the Falklands as part of the Royal Navy's Forward Presence programme, but several times a year she breaks away from the islands and heads to South Georgia for a mix of military training, providing support to the island authorities and British Antarctic Survey scientists.

Once a hotbed of whaling and also the last resting place of Sir Ernest Shackleton, today South Georgia is a wildlife haven largely frozen in time (the last whaling station closed in the mid-60s) and popular with eco-tourists and the

Antarctic cruise ships which venture this way.

An RAF A400 maritime patrol aircraft was sent aloft from Mount Pleasant to scout the 850-mile stretch of southern ocean between East Cove and South Georgia; the waters are prone to growlers (small chunks of ice) and larger 'berg bits' – remnants of much larger icebergs.

Roughly 100 miles from Stanley – a slight diversion from the direct route to South Georgia – Forth stopped over the wreck of SMS Scharnhorst.

The cruiser – one-time flagship of Admiral Graf von Spee – was sunk by Royal Navy battle-cruisers in December 1914, revenge for the Germans' destruction of a British squadron in the Pacific at Coronel the previous month.

The wreck was discovered last year and Forth was the first British warship to visit the site. She carried a wreath on behalf of Scharnhorst's finder, Mensun Bound, and Lady Alexandra Norton, great, great niece of Admiral von Spee.

It was cast into the grey wastes after a service of remembrance on Forth's flight deck, in the presence of Brigadier Nick Sawyer, Commander of British Forces South Atlantic Islands.

The brigadier was one of two dozen guests aboard Forth for the South Georgia patrol – soldiers, air force personnel and civil servants – who made use of the 51-bunk embarked forces mess which makes the ship better suited to carrying troops/commandos than smaller HMS Clyde whom she replaced at the turn of the year.

Although the weather was remarkably favourable for the crossing, the landlubbers spent much of the time in their pits.

Despite the detour and pause for the ceremony, the ship still covered the distance to South Georgia in 53 hours.

Forth's first sight of the territory was Bird Island – popular with BBC wildlife documentary makers for its rich avian life – before continuing down the north, then east coast of the mainland, accompanied by albatrosses, seals and whales, one of which decided to leap out of the water repeatedly as it passed the warship.

Forth was unable to berth in Grytviken as the jetty at King Edward Point was being revamped so it could accommodate British Antarctic Survey's new research ship Sir David Attenborough (aka Boaty McBoatface).

Instead, Forth dropped anchor outside the cove and used her boats to ferry teams ashore.

Conducting foot patrols by day and night, they carried out a full survey of access and

infrastructure around the immediate and local areas. Forth's visit coincided with a cruise ship in the natural harbour. The ship's company enjoyed their chance to explore the hills overlooking Grytviken, paid homage at Shackleton's grave, and chatted with tourists and guides from the visiting vessel.

A brave few chose to chance the 4°C waters, finding a safe gap between the inquisitive adolescent fur seals which lined the shore in every direction.

Barely were the sailors in then they were out again... and straight into the sauna in the BAS research facility to warm up again.

"It was such a wonderful opportunity. I feel very privileged, but it was very cold swimming with seals and king penguins," said communications specialist Leading Engineering Technician Hannah Chenery.

"For many of us, South Georgia was a once-in-a-lifetime experience," said Lieutenant Matt McGinlay, Forth's 1st Lieutenant.

"The variety and abundance of wildlife on this remote, strictly-controlled island was fascinating. Nature is slowly reclaiming the grounds of the whaling station that fell silent in 1966.

"Many of the buildings have been removed for safety, but the inner machinery remains – a stark reminder of the brutal business that fueled the industrial revolution.

The island remains a gateway to Antarctica, but its purpose has now changed from commercial significance to a site of outstanding natural beauty and scientific study."

Government Officer Paula O'Sullivan hosted a number of HMS Forth's officers for dinner ashore... and the ship responded in kind the following day.

"The visit was a good opportunity to meet key personalities, integrate and begin to build the bonds of friendship," said Forth's Commanding Officer Commander Bob Laverty.

"We introduced Forth to the area, integrated with local officials and scientists, and conducted reconnaissance to update our military understanding of the islands."

And for Forth's bosun, Petty Officer (Sea) Les Grundy the rare foray to South Georgia was quite simply "the best run ashore in the Royal Navy without alcohol".

Pictures: Rifleman Evans, 1 Rifles



KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @HMS_Forth and @RoyalNavy on Twitter



Crews help kids

BAHRAIN-based minehunting experts turned to Plan B when the pandemic kiboshed a fundraising sporting event followed by trophy giving and social gathering to raise money for the Amelia-Mae Foundation, which helps children suffering from neuroblastoma – a rare and aggressive form of childhood cancer.

Instead, the Mine Warfare Battle staff – who oversee the operations of HM Ships Ledbury, Brocklesby, Shoreham, and Blyth – in the Middle East set up a stall at the hub of RN efforts in the Gulf and asked for donations.

The result: personnel from across the RN community in Bahrain dipped into their pockets to the tune of £360... bringing the battle staff's fund-raising on behalf of the foundation to more than £2,300.

Neuroblastoma affects around 100 children – normally those under five every year.



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Kick the bad habit

BIG Cig turned up at HMS Drake to remind sailors and Royal Marines of the dangers tobacco poses.

Cigarettes remain the UK's biggest cause of preventable deaths (about 80,000 people every year...) and Big Cig has long been a staple of the RN's campaign to help smokers in the service give up.

That drive has been given extra impetus by the Navy's goal of making its establishments smoke free by the end of 2020.

To spur tabbers on to quit with that deadline looming, Big Cig did the rounds at HMS Drake – spurred on by the base's dental and PTI departments.

The former demonstrated smoking's effects on dental/oral health... and the latter put Cig through his paces to show the impact on physical health.

"It was great to see the reaction to the awareness campaign from HMS Drake and the dockyard and also people approaching us to ask how to reduce or quit their smoking habit," said organiser LPT Joe Collin.

Rewards and Recognition

SENIOR Command Warrant Officers' Reward and Recognition for sailors who have stood out as excellent role models for their peers and subordinates.

Victory Services Club Reward Package

CPO A Cheal (HMS Drake)

Union Jack Club Reward Package

CPO M Campbell (Defender)

RNRMC Herbert Lott Awards

PO Gallienne (Defender)

PO Jones (Defender)

Lt Cdr Bowmer (Artful)

Lt Jenkins (Artful)

Lt Martin (Artful)

CPO Scott (Artful)

CPO Robbins (Artful)

PO Tyrer (Artful)

LET Hooly (Artful)

LET Clancy (Artful)

LET Moysey (Artful)

AB Charman (Artful)



Delivering X-tra on the front line

THERE are now at least 700 X-men and women across the Royal Navy – all qualified to fly drones thanks to a small team of experts at Culdrose.

700X Naval Air Squadron has passed the 700-student mark in teaching fellow sailors and Royal Marines to use small 'quadcopters' – not merely to fly the small devices, but to use them to the Navy's tactical advantage on the front line.

The 700th successful operator of a Remotely Piloted Air System – the official military terminology for these small robot devices – was AB Sean Esson from the Fleet Diving Unit.

Like the 699 students who went before him, Sean received instruction from a mix of aircrew, air traffic controllers, engineers and a Royal Marine, who teach the first part of the course in the classroom, on the basics of how to fly remotely and how to use the technology for tactical benefit.

Then students take to the skies for practical training from nearby Predannack airfield, further down the Lizard peninsula. Their last test is a training mission on the spectacular, rocky coastline of north Cornwall.

Handing over the 700th certificate, 700X's Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Justin Matthews said: "This is an important milestone for us, as we continue to increase the capability of this technology across the whole of defence.

"There is no doubt that remotely-piloted technology is the future and we are making

significant strides in this field of expertise. As we move forward, we shall continue to research, develop and test these systems, especially in their use with the Royal Navy."

While 700X's 700th student was earning his 'wings', a team from the squadron were getting their blue noses as they tested drone technology in the Arctic to see how the Puma system coped with the harsh environment of northern Norway.

700X worked alongside Royal Marines from 29 Commando Royal Artillery, raiding specialists 47 Commando, 45 Commando and Royal Navy flagship HMS Albion. In each scenario, they wanted to see how Puma performed and reacted to below-freezing temperatures and icy landing sites.

On the water, as part of unmanned trial Exercise Autonomous Advance Force (AAF), Puma was launched from a 539 Squadron landing craft for the first time. Data and information from its flight was fed to HMS Albion using an artificial intelligence system – also a first for 700X and Puma.

The squadron also worked alongside a fleet of Norwegian stealth corvettes, testing how Puma might be used on amphibious operations.

"The Arctic proved to be a testing and challenging arena and provided a great deal of information in the successful operation of Puma," said Lt Cdr Matthews.

"700X will be looking ahead to the next stages which will include flying from larger ships and follow-on work from AAF."

Pictures: LPhoto Joe Cater



Chart-topping apprenticeships

THE Royal Navy has been recognised as the nation's No.1 achiever when it comes to delivering apprenticeships.

Almost nine out of every ten sailors and Royal Marines achieve their goal of a qualification upon completing their training – far higher than the national average.

As a result, the navy has been ranked first among large organisations – with 1,000 or more learners – delivering apprenticeships to the next generation.

With a success rate of 88 per cent – the national average is 64.7 per cent – over the 2018-19 academic year, the Royal Navy tops the National Achievement Rate Tables.

The tables, which ranked the Senior Service third in the previous academic year, provide the Education and Skills Funding Agency validated achievement data for every apprenticeship provider.

"The news that the Royal Navy has the UK's best apprenticeship achievement rate of any large provider is fantastic recognition of the quality of our offer, the dedication of our personnel and, most importantly, the determination of our apprentices," said Colonel Ade Morley Royal Marines, People and Training, Director of Training.

"A timely piece of good news, this is yet more evidence of how well our personnel are supported and should serve as a reminder that many of our apprentices today, as well as learning valuable skills, are employing those skills to support the nation during the COVID pandemic challenges."

Apprenticeships are delivered across the Royal Navy and Royal Marines across all branches of the Service.

Twenty-four-year-old Air Engineering Technician George Dean from Church Stretton in

Shropshire (pictured) is learning to maintain Merlin helicopters at RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall.

Like his colleagues, he's undergone ten weeks of training to learn the basics of being a sailor at HMS Raleigh in Torpoint, then understood the fundamentals of air engineering at the Navy's engineering school, HMS Sultan, in Gosport.

At Culdrose, he is learning the specifics of maintaining the submarine-hunting Merlins with training squadron 824 NAS.

They will each have already completed ten weeks of basic training at HMS Raleigh at Torpoint and then 23 weeks at HMS Sultan at Portsmouth, before joining Culdrose's 32-week engineering training programme.

"My role is to help repair the Merlin in the hangar and make sure the flight capability of 824 is at maximum readiness at all times, he said.

"There are so many jobs involved: component location, fault diagnosis, ground-runs, before-flight testing, after-flight testing – there are so many different parts that all come together to make a working aircraft.

"A lot of the time it comes down to one-on-one apprenticeship-style learning. Often you'll get selected by a leading hand for a single big job, and you'll spend all day on that job learning from him.

"In the navy, everyone wants to help you. If you are willing to put the effort in, no one will ever say 'no'."

All apprenticeships across industries align to the same framework to make sure apprentices in the UK are trained to the same level.

In the navy, a specialist apprenticeship team oversees the programme working side-by-side with provider Babcock Marine Training.

Help to buy widened

SINCE April 1, an extra 1,400 Naval Service personnel are eligible to apply for the Forces Help to Buy scheme.

Now regulars who have completed 12 months service from their date of enlistment and completed Phase One training can apply.

The change in rules brings all three services in line.

There is no change to the application process and administration of the scheme. Details can be found in JSP 464 Chapter 12 and the JPA user guide.

Personnel who had submitted an application up to and including March 31 are unaffected by the change.



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Services go digital to help with pandemic

THE way service personnel can access primary healthcare is being brought in line with the NHS to make access easier, starting with 'digital triage' and video consultations.

eConsult gives personnel access to healthcare advice and the ability to book a telephone consultation online... which may result in a patient being asked to come in to a medical centre to be seen face-to-face.

Patients must not attend in person without first seeking advice from DPHC staff: you will have now received a text about how to access the service.

The service econsult.net/primary-care/ and modgovuk.sharepoint.com/teams/3695/DefenceHealthcareDeliveryOptimisation/SitePages/eConsult-Resources.aspx – is now live across almost all 109 defence medical centres.

Defence Primary Healthcare is also introducing an online video consultation app, AttendAnywhere. Secure and confidential, initially the service will focus on mental health provision.

With many Naval Service personnel and civil servants working from home a website has been specially designed to help them adjust to the new environment.

Created in partnership with the Royal Foundation, www.headfit.org assists users in developing a proactive approach to mental fitness, enhancing mood, drive and confidence, and mitigating the stresses of everyday life.

The site comprises a series of tools or activities that can be easily incorporated into anyone's daily routine with the aim of establishing healthy habits that will, in turn, help the user to unlock potential, achieve personal goals and reach optimal well-being.

HeadFIT has been designed to enhance and complement existing and emerging mental fitness/resilience initiatives including formal training interventions.

Accelerating the launch of HeadFIT is an opportunity to better support personnel during this challenging time. Doing this digitally is a necessity for personnel working remotely during the outbreak and will continue to allow 24/7 access to valuable self-help tools from personal electronic devices once business as usual returns.

The HeadFIT website will continue to be evaluated using feedback from early users of this site alongside that formally provided by pilot participants.

Front-line deeds are recognised

FROM ensuring the protection of British-flagged shipping in the Gulf to handing out life-saving aid in the Caribbean, the work of sailors from across the naval service has been recognised in the 53rd operational honours list.

Recipients include the former Commanding Officer of RFA Mounts Bay Captain Rob Anders (pictured inset) who was at the helm of the ship during a three-year deployment to the Caribbean. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE).

During his time in command, the ship was called to deliver vital humanitarian aid to the Bahamas after the islands were devastated by Hurricane Dorian last year.

Capt Anders said he was humbled by the OBE but added the ship's company "earned the award more than he did".

"A ship will only be effective if it's a team – everyone on Mounts Bay no matter which service was part of that team," he said.

"The engineers who went ashore, the Army's Royal Logistics Corps team that took them ashore or the embarked flight that identified where to help and flew in some marginal conditions to deliver aid to more remote areas.

"Throughout it all the Royal Fleet Auxiliary team supported this. You take away any part of that and the whole enterprise fails."

Talking about his time as commanding officer, he added: "I truly learned about the privilege of command. Every member of that crew was amazing, they performed beyond what was expected and never complained – I am immensely proud of what they achieved and the difference they made."

Meanwhile, the former Commanding Officer of HMS Montrose – still deployed in the Gulf as part of the RN's Forward Presence pilot initiative



– Commander Will King (on the bridge of the Type 23 in the main image by LPhot Rory Arnold) was also appointed an OBE.

Montrose was at the centre of global events last summer when tensions in the region rose dramatically and the Royal Navy was sent in to accompany British-flagged shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, including fending off an attempt to interfere with the tanker British Heritage.

"I did what

any other tactical commander would have done; but I feel honoured to be recognised and very privileged to have had such a strong ship's company with me when the going got tough," said Commander King, now serving at FOST in Devonport.



His Executive Officer Lieutenant Commander Sam Nightingale and Marine Engineer Officer Lt Cdr Jamie

'Frankie' Vaughan have also been rewarded for their efforts last summer, each receiving a Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service.

Other recipients of an Operational Honour included the former Commanding Officer of HMS Astute Commander Ben Haskins who was appointed an OBE. He served as the hunter-killer's captain for 19 months, during which time the boat was awarded the Conqueror Prize for Operational Excellence.

And Commander Gus Carnie received a Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service for his complex work in Afghanistan which included making plans for the future of the Afghan National Police.

Warrant officers shake-up

THE Royal Navy's warrant officer cadre face major changes over the next five years under the RN's transformation programme.

The entire package of changes is aimed at ensuring the Warrant Officer 1 rank remains one to aspire to – and continues to have a key influential status.

At the same time, the shake-up is intended to remove the 'glass ceiling' at the WO1 level, giving senior ratings a fairer, more progressive career, slicker commissioning process and more attractive officer employment. The changes should also improve stability and the work-life balance.

Within two years Warrant Officer 2s will return in all RN branches/specialisations, with the first promotions announced around April 2021.

There will be a streamlined commissioned Warrant Officer 1 scheme allowing career progression to lieutenant and above, and a new 'executive branch' will be introduced from September to replace Common Appointments.

And in future, personnel selected for WO1 will be offered a tailored ES3 to allow a minimum of five years' service – or up to the age of 55 – upon promotion if their current end of service date does not already support it.

Further details can be found in Galaxy 03-2020.

The Force is with us

THE new National Cyber Force is now in place to help both protect the navy and, if necessary, go on the offensive.

The force – operated jointly by the military and GCHQ – has been established to pool the best intelligence and technology resources in the country to counter our foes in cyberspace as well as build up the nation's offensive cyber capability.

The new organisation stood up on April 1 but its leaders expect it take up to a decade to fully realise its potential, building on extensive work already carried out over the past six years which have ensured the UK is a 'top tier' cyber power.

"The force will transform the way in which the UK conducts cyber operations by bringing together defence and intelligence to keep the UK safe in a way that is unique amongst our international partners," said General Sir Patrick Sanders, Commander, Strategic Command.

"Its bosses also want to underline that while the existence of the National Cyber Force is not a secret, its people, places and capabilities are to ensure all are safe and secure, so please do not connect individual identities with the new set-up."

Bosses also want to underline that while the existence of the National Cyber Force is not a secret, its people, places and capabilities are to ensure all are safe and secure, so please do not connect individual identities with the new set-up.

Do you hear there: Clear lower desktops...

THE coronavirus epidemic has forced all of us to change our routines – even the Royal Navy, which is endeavouring to maintain 'business as usual' around the globe.

We've had virtual Royal Marines Band lessons. Physical trainers offering tips on keeping fit in isolation. Submariners explaining how to cope being cut off from the world.

And now, courtesy of the British team directing an international task group protecting shipping in the Gulf, a virtual 'clear lower deck'.

The Royal Navy officer in charge of the International Maritime Security Construct – the headquarters set up specifically to safeguard merchant ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz – turned to mass video conferencing when he wanted to speak to the 87 people from eight nations on his staff.

From Bahrain, they oversee the actions of numerous warships which provide that reassurance around the narrows which act as the entrance/exit to the Gulf.

Social distancing ruled out a typical clear lower deck, so Commodore James Parkin turned to his laptop and video conferencing software to

impart his non-secret message.

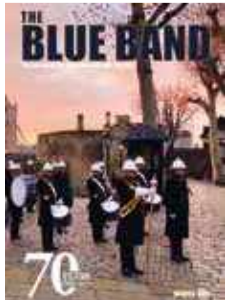
"With the busy schedule that we all have, it's vital that I still have the opportunity to address all staff and an opportunity for them to be able to see and hear their commander as often as possible", said Cdre Parkin.

"There are eight nations in the organisation, and almost 90 members of staff in Bahrain, but the one thing we all have in common is access to our own smartphones and/or laptops.

"For a conversation that does not touch on our mission details, this is a neat solution to the problem of my not being able to look everyone in the eye and telling my team what's going on, and hear from them of their concerns".

Although captains have broadcast systems to address the men and women under their command and, more recently, emails, gathering all the ship's company together to be briefed on important matters retains the personal touch and is frequently used.

For classified conversations and discussions, personnel will continue to use secure secret video teleconferences, which the Royal Navy has called upon for the past couple of decades.



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Ex-commando hailed hero for saving life

A FORMER Royal Marine attributed his time as a commando to helping save the life of a motorist in a car crash.

Stephen Martindale was out cycling near Manchester when he discovered the car in a hedge and the driver in cardiac arrest.

Acting quickly, he rescued the unconscious driver from the vehicle and performed CPR before handing over to emergency services when they arrived on the scene.

The casualty, Andy Harrison, is recovering well and his son, serving Royal Marine Reservist Pete Harrison, has given a heartfelt thanks to quick-thinking Stephen.

A keen cyclist, Stephen was a Royal Marine between 1998 and 2005 and specialised as a landing craft operator.

He said: "The reason I reacted as I did is down to my time in the Corps."

"I saw smoke as I was taking a corner and then saw a car in the trees. I just knew I had to

act quickly. I checked his pulse but he was non-responsive and wasn't breathing.

"After getting him out of the car I started chest compressions and rescue breaths and all the time I could remember what we were taught in training, that once you start you must keep going and you should be working hard to do it properly."

"I kept going for 20 minutes until emergency services arrived and rushed him to hospital."

Stephen, from Bolton, said it was lucky he even came across the crash as he happened to change his cycle route that day.

"I never normally go that way and the roads were completely quiet, no cars were out as everyone is staying at home due to the coronavirus," he added.

Royal Marine Reservist Pete, who joined RMR Merseyside in 2009 and became a commando in 2010, used social media to track down Stephen to pass on the family's thanks.

Like Stephen, he was also a

landing craft operator and has since deployed to Norway.

Pete said: "Stephen is my family's hero and lots of people are keen to thank him. Dad is one of six, has five kids, about 20 nephews and nieces and two young granddaughters so he's loved by everyone."

"We are all keen to say thank you to Stephen."

He added: "I would encourage any serving Royal Marine to get onto the next First Aid 2 course and for any civilian to do an emergency first aid course."

Since the incident, Stephen has received many plaudits from across the Royal Marine community, including a handwritten letter from Major General Matthew Holmes, the Commandant General of the Royal Marines.

He said: "I congratulated him for stepping forward to administer CPR to Mr Harrison, and thanked him for his life-saving actions that reflect well on the Corps."



Charity continues to give support

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity has changed the way it distributes funding during the current pandemic.

Responding quickly, trustees at the charity approved a Hardship Fund to support people and organisations facing situations that were unimaginable not so very long ago.

The fund is already being put to good use for serving personnel, with grants made to ships and submarines, shore establishments, overseas commands and in support of vulnerable Naval families.

The RNRMC are also working with a number of partner charities to ensure funding exists to support both working-age and older veterans, as global economic turmoil turns to hardship for many.

Some examples of how RNRMC grants have already supported the Naval community during this crisis include:

- Live streaming of passing-out parades at HMS Raleigh for family and friends.

- Takeaway nights for serving personnel in isolation from 30 Commando, at HMS Raleigh (pictured right) and on board HMS Audacious.

- Licensing for mental well-being and mindfulness app Headspace for HMS Sutherland's ship's company.

- Facilitating 500 essential food packages to Naval families, veterans, young carers and the homeless, in partnership with Alabaré, KIDS, Agamemnon House and ESS.

- Accommodation for visiting St Vincentian families who are stuck in the UK.

- Additional funding to the Sailors Children's Society to distribute computers to Naval families ahead of the school closures so children could continue their lessons.

- Re-purposed funding to Company of Makers, who run creative workshops with veterans, to buy equipment to set up a podcast.

If you require individual support, please call us on 023 9387 1568 or email info@rnrmc.org.uk



Pilgrimage in tribute to St Hild

TWO Royal Navy personnel walked 48 miles from Hartlepool to Whitby to raise funds for a veterans' charity.

Lieutenant Penny Thackray and WO1 Terry Miller raised just over £600 by walking the Way of St Hild, a pilgrimage route which opened early this year.

The money will go to Veterans at Ease, a North-East-based charity which helps veterans and their families deal with post-traumatic stress disorder.

St Hild was Abbess at Hartlepool Abbey before moving to Whitby to found the new abbey in 657 AD as a double monastery, for both monks and nuns. The route honours the contributions made by female leaders as they pay homage to a significant female Saxon saint.

Lt Thackray said: "St Hild was a great leader in her time, a master administrator and teacher. She was concerned with ordinary people and led both men and women under monastic rule. Hence, we feel walking to raise money for veterans in the North East would be something she would agree with."

The launch of the new route began with a service held at St Hilda's Church in Hartlepool, led by The Rt Revd Sarah Clark, Bishop of Jarrow.

Dignitaries were then taken by sea to Whitby on HMS Example, including Sue Snowdon, Lord-Lieutenant of County Durham, Councillor Brenda Loynes, the Mayor of Hartlepool, Gill Alexander, the Chief Executive of Hartlepool Borough Council and Bishop Sarah with the CO of 1PBS Sqn, Cdr Milly Ingham RN.

Day one of the duo's hike was 27 miles from Hartlepool to Saltburn and was mainly through the industrial landscape of Middlesbrough.

Day two was 21 miles from Saltburn to Whitby over the cliff tops.

WO1 Miller's mother and grandmother, both Whitby residents, were named Hilda after the abbess, so it was particularly special for him.

Lt Thackray's great-grandmother was called Hilda, and her father came from the North East where St Hild began her journey.



“ ”

The reason I reacted as I did is down to my time in the Corps



● Rescuer former Royal Marine Stephen Martindale (left), RMR Pete Harrison and his dad Andy (below left), RMR Pete (below right)



Words: Lt Joe Howell

Naval Children's Charity

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

www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk
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caseworkers@navalchildrenscharity.org.uk

Dig deep to help Deeps' challenge

TWO submariners based at HMS Raleigh need to raise £5,000 to secure their place on a charity winter survival challenge next year.

Lieutenants Robin Goldsworthy and Fred Flood signed up for a challenge, organised by the Royal British Legion, which will take them to the wilderness of northern Sweden, just 150km south of the Arctic Circle.

Lt Goldsworthy said: "The expedition is eight days. We will spend the first half living in a very basic lodge, cooking our meals etc, while we learn to survive in the hostile environment."

"The second phase sees us surviving outdoors sleeping in a traditional tent to start, then graduating to a shelter that we've made from the surrounding trees and the final night we'll be in an ice cave that we've dug."

The two men will be among a 15-strong group taking part in the expedition in February 2021.

To take part the RBL has asked each participant to raise

a minimum of £2,500 and all fundraising must be for the benefit of the legion's work.

Lt Goldsworthy said: "We've paid our initial fee to cover our flights and now we need to raise the money. We've got lots of plans for things we are going to take part in and organise, such as a charity auction that we are hoping local businesses will support. We'd also like to tie something in with the Remembrance services in November by coming up with ideas of how we can link the two."

Originally from Exeter, Lt Goldsworthy, 38, joined the Royal Navy 20 years ago, while Lt Flood is from Truro. The 29-year-old joined the Royal Navy in 2015. Both men currently work as instructors at the Royal Naval Submarine School at HMS Raleigh, passing on their experience of weapons engineering to new recruits to the Silent Service.

Members of the public who wish to support the submariners online, can do so online by visiting: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/goldieandfredicex2021



FANTASTIC MONTHS

FOUR months of keeping merchant shipping safe and stopping illegal activities in the Gulf are up for the crew of HMS Montrose.

The frigate has been at sea almost continuously since the turn of the year, reassuring to merchant vessels sailing through the Strait of Hormuz, or patrolling the Indian Ocean with an international task force on the hunt for criminal activity.

The entire ship's company of 212 women and men – sailors, Royal Marines and Fleet Air Arm personnel supporting the frigate's Wildcat helicopter – changes three times a year as a pathfinder under the Royal Navy's Forward Presence programme.

Starboard crew, led by Commander Charlie Collins, took charge of the ship just before Christmas and have now handed over to their Port crew counterparts; the latter have spent recent weeks training intensively to return to the Royal Navy's support facility in Bahrain – Montrose's home for around three years.

Apart from the eight transits of the narrow waters at the gateway to and from the Gulf, accompanying 14 vessels in the process, the bulk of Starboard crew's deployment has been spent working with Combined Task Force 150, which tackles the drugs trafficking and other illegal activity across the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Gulf of Oman.

"Maritime security operations targeting those involved in illicit activities such as smuggling personnel, weapons, narcotics and charcoal demonstrate to criminals in this region – and around the world – that they cannot manoeuvre freely here and they cannot conduct illegitimate trade without considerable risk," explained Lieutenant Ed, in charge of Montrose's Royal Marines boarding team, normally found at 42 Commando near Plymouth.

The ship bagged drugs with a UK street value of more than £6m when her boarding team searched a suspicious dhow in the Arabian Sea and uncovered more than a tonne of cannabis.

"It was obvious there were drugs on this vessel – they were scattered all over the upper deck, lads were literally tripping over 15kg bags of hash," said Marine Sam.

"After that first successful bust of the deployment, morale couldn't have been any higher. The team felt very proud to be part of this."

The success was pay-off for round-the-clock training by the ship's small detachment of Royal Marines, used to secure any suspicious vessel, allowing Montrose's sailors to perform the search.

The commandos climbed the height of the Burj Khalifa in Dubai – the tallest building in the world – on boarding ladders and have fast-roped from the Wildcat over double the skyscraper's height back down.

They've also fired 4,700 training rounds, spent the collective equivalent of nearly 13 weeks in Montrose's gym and lifted one tonne of weights for every hour they spent there.

Another regular exercise the ship practises is rescuing a sailor who has fallen overboard.

"Jumping six metres into the sea from the ship's side is exhilarating. I can't complain about the sea surface temperature either, an average of 24° Celsius is like taking a bath," said AB Dan Coleman-Pratt, a designated 'swimmer of the watch'.

"The ever present threat of man over board in an operational theatre is high. I'm very proud to have the vital responsibility of potentially saving a shipmate's life if they were to fall overboard."

None have, you'll be pleased to know. Also tested during each man overboard exercise is Montrose sickbay team, led by Surgeon Lieutenant Katherine Richardson.

They've delivered 75 hours of first-aid training to their shipmates so that in the event of a rescue, humanitarian disaster or accident on board, one in every 13 sailors is able to provide medical assistance.

"My team and I have worked hard ensuring the continuing health of the ship's company during arduous times over our two rotations in theatre," Lieutenant Richardson explained.

"On top of that we have been proactive in providing copious first-aid teaching sessions and using exercises such as man overboard, crash on deck and fires exercises to keep our skills well drilled and current."

Given the size of the area Montrose has to patrol – from the tip of the Gulf in the north to the Seychelles in the south, or about seven times the size of the North Sea – the ship has added more than 17,000 miles to her tachometer (the sailing distance from London to Sydney), while her principal radar has scanned an area the size of Africa in the hunt for suspicious activity.

Keeping the 4,500-tonne warship running almost around the clock has placed tremendous demands on the ship's engineers. They performed repairs and maintenance equivalent to 20 weeks' worth of work for a civilian engineer back in the UK.

And the chefs and caterers have kept stomachs full and morale high by cooking 1,600kg sausages (enough to feed a humpback whale, apparently), 20 tonnes of potatoes, and serving 3,000 ice creams which would stretch twice around a football pitch if laid end-to-end.

Pictures: LPhot Rory Arnold, HMS Montrose



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SAAB



Vernon memorial rises from the deep

THIS is magnificent new monument to all those sailors who hunt – and dispose of – mines.

Rising out of the water at the spiritual home of Royal Navy mine warfare and diving, the statue remembers all those who have attempted to keep the sea lanes open and clear mines: by sweeping, by hunting and by plunging into the depths to render them harmless.

The Coronavirus pandemic kiboshed plans for a grand unveiling attended by around 800 members of the diving community

Instead CPO(D) Alex Newnes, Leading Diver Michael 'Dolly' Parton, AB(Divers) Adam Leonard, Connor Whiting, Daniel Mulholland, Thomas Waterhouse and mine warfare specialist AB Charles Wood from the Fleet Diving Squadron on Horsea Island joined a small group of veteran divers and mine warfare practitioners for the unveiling of the statue at Canalside in Portsmouth's Gunwharf Quays shopping, leisure and housing complex by Naval Base Commander Commodore Jeremy Bailey.

Commodore Bailey reminded those present that the statue wasn't merely a monument to past heroes.

"There is still a mine disposal task to be done, either sorting out the legacy issues or making sure that our freedom of navigation on the high seas can be sustained now and into the future," he said.

"On almost every day of every year since World War 2, Royal Navy mine warfare personnel and divers have carried on dangerous work underwater and ashore, in war and in peace, in home waters and around the world.

"In the two world wars, over one million mines were laid and about one third of those were unaccounted for. On average, 12 WW2 mines are dealt with by Royal Navy minehunters and diving units every year."

For nearly 75 years until 1996, the site was dedicated to training clearance divers and the home of the Royal Navy's world-leading mine warfare specialisation.

Despite the long, proud history of HMS Vernon, there was no memorial on the site to mark its naval history and, in particular, recognise the men who trained and served there.

Twelve years ago, Project Vernon was established to put that right. It's taken a massive effort by the clearance diving/mine warfare communities to raise more than £250,000 to turn dreams and sketches into the reality of artist Mark Richards' finished sculpture.

It took a day to install the completed work – the pool, which is about 4ft deep was drained and a triangular lattice erected to hold the statue above the water. The monument features a one-and-a-quarter scale British Mk17 moored mine and two divers wearing equally iconic Clearance Diving Breathing Apparatus.

Under normal circumstances, around eight million people are expected to see the imposing statue every year.

"There is a feeling of great pride and relief among the team of volunteers who have worked so hard over the past 12 years to reach this moment," said a proud Rob Hoole, former skipper of a Hunt-class minehunter and involved in Project Vernon since its inception.

Organisers still intend to hold a formal dedication service and install lighting to bathe the statue in artificial light at night, which is why fundraising isn't quite complete yet.

The latest moneyspinner devised by the team – after a string of fundraising events, including a canoe marathon – is selling replicas of the monument by Mr Richards, behind sculptures of Ernest Shackleton and naval officer/cartographer Matthew Flinders (the man who gave Australia its name).

It can be ordered via the Project Vernon website (delivery is delayed presently as they come from China): www.vernon-monument.org.uk/shop.

Last of a rare breed

THE Royal Navy has lost its last link with a rare breed of men who helped deliver victory over the U-boat.

Lieutenant Commander John Manners, who has died aged 105, is believed to have been the last of the Royal Navy's World War 2 destroyer captains.

As commanding officer of veteran destroyer HMS Viceroy, Manners sank U-1274 just three weeks before the war's end, pummelling the German submarine with depth charges just moments after it had torpedoed the tanker Athelduke off the Norwegian coast.

Among the debris subsequently brought to the surface by the U-boat's demise was a case containing 72 bottles of brandy. One was put in a casket crafted by Viceroy's ship's company and sent to Churchill... who appreciated the "interesting souvenir".

Lt Cdr Manners was one of three brothers to serve under the White Ensign in WW2.

Sherard, who was captured by the Italians following the loss of HMS Bedouin, and Rodney, who served in cruisers, carriers and battleships.

The majority of John's seagoing career was spent in torpedo boats and destroyers



● Lt Cdr Manners greets Crown Prince Olaf of Norway in Trondheim at the end of World War 2

in the Mediterranean, Far East and, when war came, the North Sea especially, firstly in HMS Eglington escorting convoys along England's East Coast.

He commanded two destroyers

– Eskimo for six months, including the invasion of Sicily, and then, for the final 18 months of war and first weeks of peace, HMS Viceroy.

It was in Viceroy that he helped

liberate the Norwegian port of Trondheim in May 1945 and disarmed thousands of German military personnel.

His actions in Norway were honoured by Oslo only last year when they presented a medal and diploma of gratitude to the 105-year-old at his nursing home in Newbury.

John Manners' wartime achievements are only part of a remarkable life story. He juggled much of his Royal Navy career with another passion: cricket.

His performance with the bat for the RN earned him a call-up for Hampshire's county side. He made four pre-war appearances, scoring more than 200 runs, before his naval career took precedence.

He resumed his sporting career post-war, playing into the early 1950s and ending with a batting average of 31 from his 21 appearances for Hants.

Beyond his sporting and naval achievements, Lt Cdr Manners was an accomplished photographer; his wartime photographic archive was donated to the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, while upon retiring from the RN he chronicled rural crafts and life, producing four books on the subject.

The diamond Drewetts

AMID a lot of gloom, sadness and uncertainty presently, here's something to celebrate: 75 years of married life.

Few couples reach this diamond wedding milestone, but former sailor George and his wife Winifred Drewett fall into that special category.

Born in 1921, George trained at HMS St Vincent and then veteran battleship Iron Duke, before joining HMS Nelson in 1939.

He served as a boy messenger to Admiral Sir Charles Forbe, commanding the Home Fleet from Nelson – a demanding job, except for the occasion the admiral gave George the day off when Churchill visited the battleship in Scapa Flow.

In December the ship hit a mine at Loch Ewe. It didn't kill anyone but knocked Nelson out of action for eight months. The blast showered George with cork and paint "like snow". In its aftermath, he manned the air pump to the diver sent down to inspect the damage.

In 1941 George joined HMS Brocklesby in Liverpool protecting coastal convoys from the Mersey around Milford Haven to Portsmouth and the Channel.

Later, he switched to mine warfare, serving in the Mediterranean aboard HMS Aldenham – helping to salvage HMS Eridge by towing her into Alexandria – and in HMS Boston which was supporting Eighth Army clearing mines along the North African coast. In November 1942, off the Egyptian fortress of Mersa Matruh he was on watch as HMS Cromer led a 'sweep' and suddenly disappeared in a silent blinding flash before his eyes. With shipmates, he picked up



survivors and landed them at Alexandria.

George remained in the reserve after the war and was called up again for both Korea and the Suez Crisis before eventually buying his discharge for £24.

In later life, George became president of the 1st Destroyer Flotilla Association and regular correspondent in these pages, championing the wartime role of the destroyer fraternity and the present-day role of the Sea Cadets ("our future if we only show them the way").

Winifred was born in 1924, and the couple still live independently in Shepperton, Middlesex.

The couple have 14 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

Edinburgh marks milestone

AMONG the last events before the UK went into virus lockdown, was the 25th anniversary weekend for the City of Edinburgh branch.

Three days of activities kicked off with an inter-service quiz in the RN&RM Club attended by teams from the RNA, veterans' groups, RMA, Parachute Regiment, gunners, the RN&RM Club and Wrens, with the latter coming out on top.

To mark the silver jubilee, the branch's new bell – once used by QHM Rosyth and loaned by Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historic Trust – was unveiled, having been restored by Geoff Williams of Legion Scotland's Livingston Branch.

Saturday was devoted to the annual general meeting and first quarterly meeting of the Scottish area at the RN&RM Club.

RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant outlined plans to refresh the association, including a possible revamp of its 'Once Navy Always Navy' strapline

to aim at younger members; the RNA is losing an average of 1,000 shipmates every year.

The main event of the weekend was a service of celebration at Canongate kirk, the parish church of Canongate in Edinburgh's old town and a congregation of the Church of Scotland; its parish includes the Palace of Holyrood house, the Scottish Parliament, and Edinburgh Castle.

As well as dignitaries, including Graeme Dey MSP, Scotland's Veterans' Minister, the National Standard, Scottish Area Standard, No11 Area Standard and branch standards from City of Glasgow, Rosyth and West Fife, Forth Valley, Leighton and Linslade, RNA Riders and Inverness Branches plus Legion Scotland standards joined the Edinburgh standard on parade.

The Rev Neil Garner blessed the ship's bell, which will be held by the church and used during services throughout the year.

Following the service,

the congregation retired to Whitefoord House, the Scottish Veterans' residence where a buffet and reception were laid on, hosted by the Lord Provost in his capacity of Admiral of the Forth.

Presentations were made on behalf of the ranch by the its two life members: S/m Kath Taylor presented Susie Hamilton of Whitefoord House a print of HMS Edinburgh passing under the Forth Bridge for all the work she does for naval veterans; and s/m Bob Cumming presented Rev Gardner a copy of the same print.

Branch chairman s/m Stephen Elliot said the weekend would be long remembered.

"Our branch received many plaudits over the weekend, and we thought of our members who were unable to attend due to the health situation sweeping our country," he added. "We told your story/our collective story and we raised a glass in respect of your efforts over many years."



Help build RN WW1 database

THE National Archives in Kew are looking for volunteers to transcribe contemporary handwritten records and help input them into a huge, free online database.

They have teamed up with the National Maritime Museum to create a fully-searchable online resource, which provides researchers with crew lists reconstructed from transcribed service records.

It will give naval historians a greater understanding of the social structure of the Great War Senior Service, where its men were recruited from, their working backgrounds, plus mortality and invalidity rates – not least as many official WW1 naval records were destroyed.

Archivists have digitised 400,000 service records from the ADM 188 (seamen, marines, Royal Naval Air Service; an example is pictured above) and 196 (officers) series, but have only been able to transcribe one in 16 – 25,000 records – to date.

You can view and search the (incomplete) database at royalnavyrecordsww1.rmg.co.uk.

Volunteers will be given unique log-in details for the transcription website, they'll receive transcription instructions and assistance – and project managers are only at an end of an email if anyone needs help.

"All you need to be involved is a computer, internet connection and a willingness to learn – no prior historical knowledge or training is necessary," said Clare Kelly of the National Archives. "Whether you can do a little or a lot, all contributions are welcome."

For information/to register your interest, contact crewlists@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

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



New stability course set to be launched

A NEW course teaching budding seafarers about the buoyancy and stability of vessels at sea is being launched.

The Marine Society is bringing its new Stability@Sea course to its award-winning distance Learn@Sea platform, aimed at students who are new to the maritime sector and are keen to pursue qualifications while offshore.

Stability@Sea is designed to cover all aspects of the buoyancy and stability of vessels and its content is presented in bite-sized topics to provide a necessary building block towards more advanced maritime qualifications.

Content will come in a user-friendly format and students will be tested by a combination of technical diagrams, images and exercises.

A wide range of vessel types will be featured, for a well-rounded understanding of today's maritime sector.

Interim Director of Seafarer Learning for MSSC, Darrell Bate, said: "Stability@Sea is accessible, simple and effective."

"Whether studying towards your HNC in Nautical Science, marine apprenticeships or simply refreshing your knowledge and skills for career progression."

"Our Learn@Sea package continues to grow and meet the needs of seafarers around the world."

For more information on the Learn@Sea products, such as Stability@Sea, please contact info@ms-sc.org



Blowing his trumpet

A FORMER Sea Cadet took his old unit around his current surroundings – the P2000 patrol craft HMS Trumpeter.

Commanding Officer Lieutenant David Vail welcomed ten cadets and staff from Henley Sea Cadets into its base at Ipswich.

The cadets were given a tour of the ship and shown sea survival gear before the ship made her way down the River Stour, passing through Ipswich lock.

During the day-long visit, HMS Trumpeter's crew of five demonstrated a man overboard drill and encouraged the cadets to try their hand at steering the boat.

Picture: Henley Standard

Cadets keep calm and carry on in lockdown

SEA CADETS up and down the land have been maintaining spirits, linking their local communities and keeping up the traditions of the corps during lockdown.

While parades and competitions have been cancelled – and journeys at sea are a long way off – it's been difficult to see a slackening off in activity, with volunteers determined to uphold traditions in unparalleled circumstances.

Among many units doing their bit are Scarborough in their bid to keep the mood up.

Twice-weekly sessions via Zoom have been organised to replace parade nights, with cadets taking part in virtual regattas, training sessions on kit under the banner "Fall In at Home."

A special place was kept for the Easter Bunny herself, complete with N95 mask and "Stay Safe" message.

Sea Cadets have been proactive in tackling the lockdown blues nationally and taking part in the national salute for health workers in the NHS.

One member of the National Band of the Sea Cadets composed a special bugle fanfare to mark the Thursday 8pm #ClapForCarers.

Good mental health practice is being promoted via the #Threefor3 campaign and who better to give advice on combatting isolation than the submariners of HMS Ordacious, who have taken over Sea Cadets' social media channels to share the secrets based on years spent under the ocean waves.



Brave pair helped catch drug dealer

TWO Whitehaven Sea Cadets are to receive a Commendation from Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Cumbria for their courage in helping bring a drug dealer to justice.

In 2019 Cadets James, left, and Kristofer, far left, were travelling to a Sea Cadet course by train.

They had to change trains and were waiting on the platform when they were approached by a man who offered them drugs. The cadets refused but the man became aggressive, grabbing and throwing one of their bags before he moved on.

"When we noticed the same person get on our train, we found a British Transport Police officer who stopped the train from leaving" said Kris.

"We got on the train with the policeman and identified the man, who was then arrested."

James added that he and Kris were able to phone their parents and the unit's emergency contact, before being interviewed.

"It was a bit scary at the time but everything worked out OK."

"The police asked lots of questions, including if we would be willing to give evidence in court if necessary."

"We said that we would, but in the end



that wasn't necessary as the man pleaded guilty."

Petty Officer (SCC) Stuart McCourt, the Whitehaven unit's Commanding Officer praised the cadets' actions and courage, saying that he, and the whole unit, were extremely proud of James and Kris.

"This is a prestigious award – they are the only Cumbrian Sea Cadets, and two of only four in the whole of the North West, to



be selected for a Lord-Lieutenant's Award this year.

"James and Kris really deserve the recognition for their bravery and ability to stay calm in difficult circumstances."

All Lord-Lieutenant's Awards events are currently postponed but it is hoped that the awards will be presented in autumn 2020, subject to COVID-19 restrictions being lifted.

Lauren's marathon

A FARNHAM Sea Cadet is to take on the ultimate running challenge, in aid of her own unit and cadets across the South of England.

Teenager Lauren, pictured, is to run the full 26 miles and 385 yards in September and aims to raise money towards facilities at her home unit, which also act as an important training facility for the wider Surrey District and Southern Area.

Lauren's inspired by her time within Sea Cadets and says she wanted to give something back.

"Personally, joining Sea Cadets was one of the best things I have done; it has provided me with a confidence and experiences that just simply cannot be learnt within a classroom."

"It has provided me with an insight into Royal Navy life, and has helped me lose weight and gain a healthy lifestyle, in just one year, I lost seven stone. Now I am putting myself to the ultimate challenge; running a marathon so I can help those who may be future cadets."

Help motivate Lauren on her run by going to <https://www.gofundme.com/f/26-miles-towards-an-amazing-unit>



Sheriff calls the shots

NORTH West Area Officer for Sea Cadets Charles Bagot-Jewitt has been named High Sheriff of Staffordshire.

Bagot-Jewitt, who spent 22 years in the Royal Navy before volunteering for the Sea Cadets, will become the Queen's representative on all matters concerning the judiciary and keeping law and order.

It's the oldest continuous role the Queen can bestow outside the clergy, dating back before the Norman invasion of William the Conqueror.





Qualifying success for URNU

OFFICER Cadets from Edinburgh URNU spent a weekend in Stonehaven completing their Royal Yachting Association level 2 powerboating qualifications.

Since the weather wasn't conducive for training, the officer cadets finished their first day slightly earlier than originally planned.

However, this gave them the opportunity to then explore Dunnottar Castle and then old parts of Aberdeen, before having dinner in town in the evening and returning back to their accommodation at Gordon Barracks.

In order to allow the officer cadets more time out on the water the next day, they were up and ready to leave the accommodation at 6.30am.

Although an early start, the officer cadets were able to get out in the boats and the weather was significantly calmer than the day before.

Once out on the boats, the officer cadets were shown how to come alongside, complete a MOB exercise and anchor, and as such successfully complete the RYA level 2 powerboating qualification.

On completion of the activity the next task was pulling the boats out of the water, which took far longer than expected!

The officer cadets then cleaned down the boats and set off back to Edinburgh.

Not only did they receive a recognised qualification, but the experience aids their theoretical knowledge when operating in the P2000s and also gave them the opportunity to learn about some of the history Stonehaven and Aberdeen.



Time to name star performers

THE Royal Navy Sports Awards 2020 will once again take place at the prestigious Lords Cricket Ground (Long Room) on the evening of Tuesday December 1.

Nominees for the awards will open in June, when the application form will be released and close in September, so start thinking about your sporting stars in the following categories:

- Team of the Year
- Sportswoman of the Year
- Sportsman of the Year
- Young Sports Person of the Year
- Official, Coach of the Year
- Special Awards

For further details contact Glen Young on Glen.Young132@mod.gov.uk

Riders battle through Norton Manor Camp

PERSONNEL from 40 Commando hosted their first cyclocross event through the woods and across the boggy grounds of Norton Manor.

Cyclocross is a niche form of bicycle racing. Races typically take place in the autumn and winter and consist of many laps of a short course.

The routes often feature pavement, wooded trails, grass, steep hills and obstacles requiring the rider to quickly dismount, carry the bike while navigating the obstructions and remount.

The home of 40 Commando provided a truly testing environment for the race with

riders experiencing all manner of terrains.

The course covered parts of the camp's perimeter trail, muddy woods, boggy sports fields and even the IED lane and sandpit – all requiring different skills to navigate them.

Winner and event organiser Cpl Dan Lyness said: "There can be few if any events that I have taken part in where I have been in direct competition with the Commanding Officer."

Lt Col Simon Rogers, CO of 40 Cdo, finished second, with Lt Murphy in third place.

Report: Lt Simon Williams
Pictures: Mne Joe Burt and Lt Williams



Rowers bring home medals from worlds

ROYAL Navy indoor rowing remained active in training, competition and time trials during the early part of this year.

Medal successes were achieved at the European (Prague) and English (Manchester) Indoor Rowing Championships (EuroIRC and EIRC respectively), prior to the World Rowing Indoor Championships (WRIC) in Paris, where no medals were won, but many strong performances were achieved for individuals and relay teams.

The EuroIRC saw a team of eight individuals racing in 2000m races, winning three medals, one each of gold, silver and bronze.

They also achieved six top-ten placings and four personal bests.

The medallists were WO Tiny Nash (Nelson) first in the men's heavyweight 50+ (6 mins 21.3 secs), Lt Cdr Adrian Long (Sultan) second in the men's heavyweight 30+ (6 mins 13.3 secs pb) and WO Mark Branson (Sultan) third in the men's lightweight 60+ in 7 mins 12.4 secs.

Team Manager Paul Winton (MCTA) was fourth in the men's heavyweight 60+, with POPT Rich Charrett (Sultan) sixth in the men's lightweight 30+.

The EIRC fell just a week prior to WRIC and thus a relatively small team of five competed in Manchester, with many (but not all) sensibly opting to focus on the latter.

Making her debut in a national event, LH Kayley Turner (3 Cdo Bde) was an easy winner of the women's heavyweight 30+ 2k in 8 mins 23.4 secs, similarly debuting was PO Sam Spencer (HMS Queen Elizabeth), who took bronze in the women's heavyweight 40+ 2k in 7 mins 59.9 secs.

Winton controlled the men's heavyweight 60+ from the front to win in 7 mins 08.3 secs.

WRIC 20 in Paris was the biggest in numbers (3,000-plus) and highest in standard world championships to date, reflecting the impact of staging the event in Europe for the first time.

The Royal Navy team of 20 set five personal bests at the Pierre De Coubertin Stadium in a pulsating event.

CPO Collin Leiba (MCTA) set the scene in the men's heavyweight 500m 50+ where his time of 1 min 21.8 secs beat



● CPO Collin Leiba in action in Paris; LH Kayley Turner on her way to gold in Manchester, PO Sam Spencer

the existing World Record, but was still narrowly edged into fifth place.

The next highest RN placing was achieved through an outstanding pb by Lt Cdr Adrian Long (Sultan) to finish sixth in the very competitive men's heavyweight 30+ 2k in 6 mins 11.2 secs.

A range of 2k relay races saw all members of the Royal Navy team rowing, some twice, in a combination of men's, women's, mixed, heavyweight and lightweight teams of four, rowing twice each, with short sprints to hand over a relay baton after each leg.

Among the national and high performing rowing clubs, there were also Army and RAF teams which made for added intensity and rivalry.

The RN women's team of CPO Claire Drew (CNR), PO Roxy Long (JHG), PO Sam Spencer (HMS Queen Elizabeth) and AB Abbie Guest (RNRMRA) were the first non-French team to finish in tenth place in 7 mins 37.6 secs, but perhaps more importantly just 0.5 and 1.9 secs

respectively, ahead of two Army teams.

Others to achieve lifetime 2K pbs were men: Lt Nick Howe (3Cdo Bde) tenth in the lightweight 30+ 2k in 6 mins 46.5 secs, Major Alex Pickett (CNR) 6 mins 31.1 secs in the heavyweight 40+, plus women: PO Sam Spencer, heavyweight 40+ in 7 mins 52.3 secs and PO Roxy Long, lightweight 30+ in 8 mins 14.6 secs.

Honourable mentions must go to: Lt Col Tom Blythe (Def Acc) for achieving 6 mins 34.3 secs in the men's heavyweight 40+, realising the benefits of determined application and focus to recover from injury and the equally determined CPO Claire Drew who went close to a pb to finish 11th in the women's 40+ in 7 mins 35.8 secs.

Cdr Dan Connor (JHG) was 11th in the men's lightweight 50+ in 6 mins 56.2 secs and WO Mark Branson (Sultan) was 12th in the men's lightweight 55+ in 7 mins 13.1 secs.

Many of those who have trained and raced over the 2019/20 indoor rowing

season have benefited from structured, periodised training under the coaching guidance provided by Cdr Jim Thomson (NCHQ) within the Royal Navy Indoor Rowing Performance Programme, Paul Winton (MCTA) within the RN Drill Power Target Training Group, and POPT Rich 'Chazz' Charrett (Sultan) within the Sultan Massive!

The latter has proved particularly successful to exemplify the diverse and inclusive aspects of indoor rowing to develop fitness and wellbeing for a wide range of abilities and individuals.

Whilst the racing season concluded prior to the effects of COVID-19 impacting sports events, many RN ergers continue to train in isolation, with five RN teams and many individuals well placed approaching the conclusion of the global Indoor Rowers League (IRL) Challenge Series (eight monthly challenges). There are also two Sultan teams featuring in the upper echelons of Concept2's global Spring 2020 Series.

Stormy ending to RN winter season

Mountain bikers put to the test

MUD, glorious mud ... Royal Marines motorcyclist WO1 Bill Callister is pictured at the end of the final round of the RORE Winter Warmer Series for the Royal Navy Royal Marines Enduro Team (RNRMET).

Having already taken on Storm Ciara the week previous, it was set to be one seriously wet and testing race, not only for the riders, but for the marshals and Dorset Enduro crew.

With a delayed start due to the high winds, the first flag dropped at 11.30am and saw the championship boys disappear out onto the fast and flowy, yet technical and demanding course which lay ahead.

They were followed by the Expert category who did not hold off on trying to chase down the championship riders in front.

Lt Josh Terry RN, Cpl Mike El-Ayouby and Mne Ollie Harcombe battled their way off the line, doing their best to throw down some strong lap times in the expert category.

Next to hit the start line was WO1 Callister in the Clubman category, being chased down by Lt Cdr Max Wilmot in the Sportsman category.

Reduced from three to 2.5 hours, this was still not going to be your average Sunday ride. With a five-mile lap made up of fast yet slick stubble fields, this was a great opportunity for those with a background in motocross to really put the hammer down as the corners began to rut up instantly.

Yet it was the slower and more technical sections through the woods that proved detrimental to most riders. Nevertheless, the famous manmade enduro cross track was where time could be made or lost. With logs, large tires, jumps and of course some rather large puddles, this section proved dangerous with a couple of riders going down and flooding their bikes.

With all five team riders getting a good start, it was Ollie who lead the team for the first hour and a half. Putting in a good shift he was laying out some strong lap times, however Mike was making up time as he got his 2-stroke Yamaha side ways whilst keeping it fully

pinned, he tore across the wide-open stubble fields.

In the meantime, it was Josh who was showing off some of his latest freestyle moves for the spectators whilst getting slightly out of shape over a gnarly log section.

Team manager Bill was holding his own in the clubman category after finding his pace about mid race and giving his Husqvarna 350 something to really think about.

Max was fighting strong in the Sportsman category, and battling his way around the treacherous course. With the ruts getting bigger every lap and the puddles deepening, Storm Dennis continued throughout the race.

Unfortunately, Ollie was forced to take an early pit stop due to a slack chain, allowing Mike to make up valuable time, and less than a lap later the two expert riders were battling each other through the now, very cut up track.

Both lads had handled the conditions well, however the pressure from Mike was too much and Ollie made a mistake out in one of the stubble fields, high siding and knocking the wind out of himself allowing Mike to pass.

Max was struggling with electrical issues throughout the race, and found himself getting to know his kick start rather well.

Meanwhile it was Josh and Bill who were quietly racking up the laps, stopping only for fuel and a clean set of goggles. All be it these wouldn't last long as visibility was by far one of the toughest challenges the team faced.

Yet despite the horrendous weather conditions and extreme challenges out on the track, Bill, Josh and Max all made it home safe. Covered head to toe in liquid mud and grit they returned still smiling.

However, this wasn't the happy ending for all. With Ollie retiring early due to injury after getting cross rutted, and Mike suffering from electrical issues also which left him stranded on his final lap.

That's the winter series over and done with.

Report: WO1 Bill Callister, RM



WHILE the rest of the UK was suffering one of the wettest winters on record, the RNRMCA Mountain Bike team went to Spain for their inaugural Warm Weather Training camp, writes **Sub Lt Joash Clarkson**

Seventeen of the Navy's best mountain bikers from the three competitive disciplines; Cross Country (XC), Downhill (DH) and Gravity Enduro (GE) spent the week in Malaga.

After an incredibly successful 2019 race season, the RNRMCA have the top spot at the Inter-Service competitions firmly in their sights.

To ensure that the mountain bike teams had the best shot at claiming victory this year a rigorous week of training was put together with the help of the cycling company Ride Southern Spain.

The XC team put in some impressive miles in the saddle, tackling some of the steepest climbs in the region and pushing their comfort zone on some incredibly technical descents.

While the XC team were getting the miles in heading up, the DH and GE teams were maximising their time heading down.

With the aid of Ride Southern Spain's fleet of uplift vehicles, they were able to rack up 76 miles of pure descent.

While out on the trails the two teams focused on honing their technical riding taking on large jumps, steep rocky chutes and rock gardens.

Capt Greg Wylie RM, RNRMCA GE Secretary, said: "The inaugural pre-season training camp exceeded my expectations and it will enable the success of the Royal Navy's talented field of riders."

Visit www.navycycling.co.uk for more information.



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Down went the George...

ONE of the greatest disasters in the long story of the Royal Navy happened on the morning of August 28 1782, when the first rate ship of the line HMS Royal George capsized and sank at her moorings at Spithead, writes Prof Eric Grove.

She took with her most of her ship's company and many civilian visitors, male, female and children. Deaths are variously estimated at between about 500 and 1,000. The most notable victim was Rear Admiral of the Blue Richard Kempenfelt, one of the finest minds in the Service's history and designer of the most flexible system of tactical flag signals yet devised. The story was made memorable by the poem by William Cowper, *Toll for the Brave*, whose first verse ends with the famous lines: "And she was overset; Down went the Royal George, With all her crew complete."

The story of this sad affair has just been retold by well-known Naval historian Dr Hilary L Rubenstein. She has produced an admirably-balanced and well-informed account. As well as examining the circumstances of the disaster she looks at Kempenfelt's career. His rise was by no means rapid, being held back by foreign (Swedish) birth, a lack of 'interest' (social connections) and natural reserve. There was also a certain eccentricity. An eyewitness is reported describing the then Captain of the Channel Fleet, effectively Chief of Staff, to Admiral Geary in HMS Victory as dressed in a shabby, snuff-stained uniform and stopping from time to time when pacing the quarterdeck to think deeply in a kind of reverie. By this time Kempenfelt's qualities as the greatest mind in the fleet protected him from this further holding back his career. In September



SINKING OF H.M.S. ROYAL GEORGE AT SPITHEAD AUGUST 28 1782.

1780 he was promoted to Rear Admiral of the Blue (the most junior flag rank) and a year later, after a bout of illness, joined the Channel Fleet and Victory again, now as Third in Command of the 'Grand Fleet' as it was colloquially known. He then led a very successful attack on a French West Indies convoy where he used all his tactical skill to inflict heavy casualties, despite being a weaker force. Sir John Laughton described this as "perhaps the most dashing and brilliant feat" of the RN in the entire War of American Independence. He fully exploited the higher speed attainable by his recently-copper-bottomed ships.

In August 1782 Royal George was part of the fleet intended to relieve besieged Gibraltar. The ship had a defect in the starboard pipe used to admit seawater to wash the decks. It needed replacing but with the fleet ready for sea, dockyard work was out of the question. It was therefore decided to heel the ship so that the pipe could be replaced at anchor. As the author puts it "although the repair was not crucial, and could have been delayed, it was decided that it should be done immediately. How and why this decision was made dodges us."

The decision to heel Royal George looks even stranger given the strong opposition of William Nicholson, an old friend and admirer of Kempenfelt



and now Master Attendant of Portsmouth Dockyard. He was worried about the first rate being more heavily loaded than when previously heeled. He thought that he had convinced the admiral not to go through with the operation but Kempenfelt changed his mind, perhaps reassured by the ship's officers, that it would be safe.

So the tragedy unfolded. The larboard (port) guns were run out to the maximum and the starboard guns brought in amidships. The ship duly heeled with the water about a foot from the lower gun ports. The list, however, increased as casks were loaded from a victualler on the heeled side and, with the wind and sea rising, water began to enter the ship through the larboard ports. This caused a rather panicked response with the ship beaten to quarters to move the guns back. This only increased the weight as men crowded the port side and, as more water came in through the larboard ports, which had not been properly secured, the ship sank further and capsized. Kempenfelt's situation is unknown. Traditionally he was caught writing in his cabin but there are alternative stories. Whatever, the admiral was not among the survivors.

The book examines the subsequent court martial which exonerated the surviving officers and a thorough analysis of why the ship sank. The legacy of the sinking, the clearing of the wreck and the fate of the survivors is then examined in a comprehensive way. The whole book is an informative and absorbing read and is highly recommended. **Catastrophe at Spithead: The Sinking of the Royal George** is published by Seaford (ISBN 978 1 5267 6499 7) for a reasonable £25.

When war swept the Far East

YOU will have to wait for the second volume of Richard B Frank's trilogy to read his interpretation of Midway, but there is plenty to get your teeth into in the opening book of the triptych.

Frank is an American author/historian of the Pacific War who's produced a compelling account of Guadalcanal and a look at the invasion which never was, Operation Downfall, the assault on the main Japanese islands which would have been carried out had the atom bombs failed to force Tokyo to surrender.

Tower of Skulls (WW Norton, ISBN 978-1324002109 £30) covers the conflict from the incident on the Marco Polo bridge which prompted Japan's invasion of China in 1937 through to the eve of Midway in the spring of 1942.

In doing so, he draws upon the latest research and rich sources embracing all the warring nations in the Pacific.

The result is an outstanding opening tome which offers fresh insights and material alongside well-known narratives of the set-pieces of the campaign such as the attack on Pearl Harbor, Bataan and the Coral Sea.

Importantly for UK readers, Frank does not ignore Britain's (largely disastrous) role in these opening moves in the Pacific, from the tragedy of HMS Prince of Wales and Repulse, to the actions off Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) four months later.

As an overview of the war, the author doesn't go into the detail of individual books on these actions, though nor does he reduce them to a throwaway paragraph or two.

He attributes the blow of the loss of Force Z just three days after Pearl Harbor to the Admiralty (not Churchill) and its desire to "project power into the South China Sea". Of the attack itself, the Japanese were favoured by luck (better than expected weather and a fortunate first torpedo hit on the Prince of Wales), but also better training and preparation.

The Japanese sortie into the Indian Ocean in March/April 1942 could have been far worse for the RN's Eastern Fleet but for a combination of luck and intelligence.

Nevertheless, British forces suffered a bloody nose (carrier HMS Hermes, cruisers Cornwall and Dorsetshire sunk, as well as a couple of destroyers and nearly two dozen merchant ships) while the port of Trincomalee was badly damaged... for the loss of 20 Japanese aircraft.

With widespread panic in the cities on her eastern seaboard, this was "India's most dangerous hour" in the words of the British theatre commander Archibald Wavell as the country awaited invasion.

The Japanese planned to come back in June... but then came Midway.



Zeroes and heroes



HOLLYWOOD hasn't had a great recent track record when it comes to putting World War 2 on the big screen.

We've endured the Americans, not the RN, seizing the Enigma machine in *U-571*, *Pearl Harbor* reduced to a love story, and an almost invincible Sherman tank in *Fury*.

So when the man behind *Independence Day* and *Godzilla* decided to focus on the ultimate clash of aircraft carriers, hopes weren't too high for Midway.

But the result (now out on DVD/Blu-ray/streaming) is surprisingly good. Although it condenses six months of the Pacific conflict into little more than two hours, it's historically accurate, it's not too Hollywood (save for the odd cheesy line and a couple of unlikely scenes) and it's not a flagwaver for the US of A.

Central to the story are two British actors – Ed Skrein and Luke Evans – respectively playing dive-bomber pilot Dick Best (pictured and, if the portrayal is accurate, a



● Lt Dick Best in his Dauntless dive bomber delivers the fatal blow to the Japanese carrier Hiryu

somewhat renegade, hard-bitten aviator who cared little for rank) and the more cautious Wade McClusky, commanding the air group on the USS Enterprise, plus intelligence officer Edwin Layton.

It is Layton and his team who helped lay the trap for the Japanese – portrayed accurately as largely honourable men but, unlike the Americans, unwilling to gamble or embrace thinking 'outside the box' when it came to the Midway operation.

All of which makes

Midway remarkably similar to the 1970s all-star (Charlton Heston, Henry Fonda, Robert Mitchum et al) film of the same name.

It is, however, both far superior and differs considerably in many respects. The Japanese (Tadanobu Asano is particularly impressive as Rear Admiral Tamon Yamaguchi, who went down with the carrier Hiryū) speak their native tongue. Their carrier flight decks were not crammed with aircraft (a myth finally dispelled in the



excellent book *Shattered Sword* about 15 years ago). There's no (dreadful and unnecessary) love story in the background. And there's no contemporary footage inaccurately slotted in alongside the movie stock.

What 1976's film did use was real aircraft (alongside models). The 2019 variant relies very heavily on computer graphics (CGI) which allows the director to recreate near-impossible battle scenes as well as bringing the US and Japanese fleets back to life. But at times, it also means Midway looks more like a video game than film.

And it's hard not to think that the sizeable chunk of the film devoted to the Doolittle raid and its aftermath is included because Chinese investors were key to getting the movie made... although the segment is handled much more accurately than in Pearl Harbor.

But otherwise, Midway is much better than most modern Hollywood war films. It's certainly not a tubthumper, it's largely true to history and Dick Best makes for a compelling lead 'character'. After all, he did bomb two Japanese carriers in one day...

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