



NAVY NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2021

Double delivery

AN F-35 takes off from HMS Queen Elizabeth as the carrier and HNLMS Evertsen receive supplies from RFA Tidespring during a double replenishment at sea (see pages 19-21)

PICTURE:
PO (Phot) Jay Allen



Inside: ■ RFA Wave Knight joins Haiti aid effort
■ RN Transformation ■ Robot kit trial ■ Talisman Sabre

ISSN 0028-1670 09
9 770028 167191
Off-sale date: SEPT 30, 2021
£3.50

Gold for exceeding Covenant

IN A summer of golds... here's one for the Naval Families Federation which received the highest accolade in the MOD's Employer Recognition Scheme.

A year after achieving silver status, the foundation went one better thanks to its support to the Naval community, and specifically for championing the cause of Naval families in the field of employment.

The recognition scheme was launched in 2014 to acknowledge employer support for the wider principles of the Armed Forces Covenant and the full spectrum of Defence personnel, including Reservists, spouses and Service leavers.

Gold status is reserved for around 500 organisations which have gone beyond the Covenant pledge and shown the highest levels of commitment to the military community, both in their recruitment practices and in their advocacy for employing members of that community.

"We have long championed the case for employing Naval family members, particularly Naval spouses, and our recruitment policy recognises the challenges such families face as well as the impressive skill set they have developed as a result of those challenges," said NFF Chief Executive Anna Wright. "More than 90 per cent of our team have either served or is a close relative of a serving person or veteran, so we walk the walk as well as talking the talk!"

Reservists pass staff course

EIGHTEEN members of the Maritime Reserves graduated from the Advanced Command and Staff Course (Reserve) at Shrivenham.

They passed out with 56 reservists from the other Services, marking the end of 13 weeks of effort over and above managing family commitments and alongside their civilian jobs.

Students tackled subjects as varied as international relations and strategic studies to the nature of modern warfare and the role of UK Defence in an ever-evolving technological landscape.

Supported by King's College, London and eminent guest speakers, the students were encouraged to develop their awareness of global issues affecting the near future and to hone their analytical skills when considering their response to such issues.

Lieutenant Commander Michael Pedley, HMS Wildfire's Executive Officer, was named top student.

This month's winners

THE latest winners of the Senior Command Warrant Officers' reward and recognition breaks are:

Park Dean Resort

Lt Cdr Williamson (HMS Drake); Sgt Shields (47 Cdo); AB Willis (HMS Drake); Cpl Clarke and Sgt Turner (30 Cdo IX Gp); Lt Murphy, PO Brown and WO1 Wheeler (HMS Queen Elizabeth); LNN Brand (PGCE); CPO MacLennan (825 NAS); PO Chapman (Artful); AB King (UK STRATCOM); PO Penney (MCM1 Crew 3); Cpl Morton (CTCRM); PO Walsh (SURFLOT)

Victory Services Club

CPO Smith (RNR Air Branch)



• Captain Chris Smith bids farewell to the team at MOD Caledonia after nine years as the RN's Regional Commander for Scotland and Northern Ireland
Pictures: LPhoto Bill Spurr, FRPU North

Nine of the best from Captain Chris

THERE'S a new 'public face' of the Royal Navy in Scotland and Northern Ireland as the long-standing regional commander stands down.

Since July 2012 Captain Chris Smith has represented the Senior Service at major events, engaged with local, regional and national government, helped to deliver community events and commemorations – including the centenary of Jutland in the Orkneys in 2016 – and supported RN, RM and Maritime Reserve recruiting across his domain.

His nine-year spell as Naval Regional Commander for Scotland and Northern Ireland formally ended at MOD Caledonia in Rosyth on August 18 as Royal Marine Brigadier Andy Muddiman took over.

Members of Caledonia's lodger units, including HMS Scotia, Royal Marines Reserves Scotland and the Band of HM Royal Marines Scotland supported the supersession ceremony.

"It has been a fascinating nine years working with some truly fantastic people



across Scotland and Northern Ireland, and leading a team with a critical role at the forefront of naval engagement in the devolved space.

"The successes that the Service have delivered are testament to their hard work and tenacity. For their unwavering support I am enormously grateful; it is this that I will miss the most as I move on."

Brig Muddiman (pictured inset) has spent three decades as a Royal Marine, most recently serving as Commanding Officer of the Faslane-based 43 Commando Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines.

He's served on operations in Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Iraq, Ivory Coast and Pakistan, sometimes on multiple occasions.

"The months and years ahead will be an exciting time for naval defence engagement in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

"We have a tremendously able and dedicated team here at the Royal Navy Headquarters in Scotland and Northern Ireland, providing essential support to engagement activity in the devolved nations."

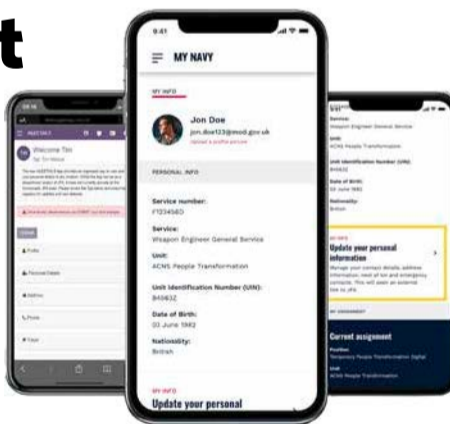
MyDetails latest addition to app

THE latest upgrade to the MyNavy app – which allows personnel to manage their careers and admin and access vital information 'on the go' – is the MyDETAILS section.

This new feature includes viewing and editing:

- Contact numbers
- Passport details
- Emergency contacts and next of kin details
- JPA employment details, including salary, seniority and increment level

Login to MyNavy to access the new feature via your MODNET or personal devices.



The search for SPOC is coming to an end...

GOODBYE SPOC, hello IT Service Centre. And farewell Sally, but give a big hand to Alix...

On October 17, if your MOD IT doesn't work the way it's supposed to, there's a whole new way of fixing the problem.

The new IT Service Centre will replace the current Single Point of Contact (SPOC) – with a much-improved user experience.

At its heart is a self-service portal, with a clear, simple, look and feel. It will be easier to navigate, and you will be able to create your own 'ticket' for an IT issue or problem inside two minutes.

In the past, the help desk was there to fix the problem, focussing on resolving the user's issues.

We are now looking at smarter ways of working; not just fixing the problem, but understanding what caused it in the first place, seeing if there are any wider issues which need resolving so we might prevent

similar issues arising again.

Users will be able to feed back their experience at the point of use, this will enable the Service Centre to continually improve the user experience in 'real time'.

Hand-in-hand with the new Service Centre is a new assistant. Sally is being replaced by a Virtual Agent, Alix, powered by Artificial Intelligence and machine learning.

Alix (pictured) should help to reduce the time waiting in queues and allow you to progress your query around other things you may be doing at that time.

The top tip for interacting with Alix: the more questions you ask, the more you use it, the more Alix learns and understands.

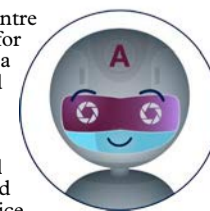
And the more people that use it, the fewer calls to live agents, for a quicker, simpler experience when you need to speak to one of the Service Centre experts.

The switch to the new Service Centre is a huge challenge, but the programme includes

extensive testing and assurance activities to pre-empt potential disruption ahead of going live in mid-October.

As we approach the 'go live' date, you will start to see more information about the new IT Service Centre and how to both contact and interact with it – and we'll have an update in next month's paper.

The Service Centre will be with us for five years under a contract announced last year, under which Capgemini is working with Defence Digital to upgrade and modernise the Service Centre and provide the next generation of services aligned to current and future needs.



Hello! I'm Alix, your Virtual Agent.

If you want to interact with me, simply ask a question. I can help you with many IT queries. How may I help you today



Virtual classes Real impact

HMS Heron's gym has been transformed with the introduction of a new Les Mills Virtual Fitness Suite.

Spinning, body pump, core workouts and yoga/pilates classes are available, each one using a large screen to follow along with the professionals from Les Mills.

Away from pre-programmed classes set up by the gym, users can select a class using an interactive tablet which will automatically begin a session. This 'on demand' exercise enables gym users who may not be able to get to regular exercise classes access to professional workout sessions whenever they need them.

As well as the new suite, the Les Mills affiliation also provides discounted access to "Les Mills on Demand" which allows users to access any online class from the comfort of their own home or as pre-downloaded sessions while deployed or on operations.

"As an air station that operates 24 hours a day it is not always possible for everyone to attend physical-trainer-led classes," said Heron's Chief Clubz Johnathan Wilkins, who oversaw the project.

"The new Virtual Suite is modern and innovating, providing consistency, continuity, and sustainability for the station. It also supports those on remedials who now have access to classes whenever they want"

Among the first users of the new facility, Able Seaman Luke Collison.

"This is brilliant, the classes are hard work and I pushed myself more than I would have if I'd trained on my own," he said. "I'm currently on Royal Navy Fitness Test remedials and this is a really good tool to help me motivate myself and get fitter."

You can Learn@Sea for free with 15 courses

SAILORS and Royal Marines now have free access to a series of courses to help their professional development.

With financial support from Greenwich Hospital, the Marine Society is making 15 of the educational courses available to RN, RM and RFA personnel, waiving the monthly fees which range between £2.99 and £5.98.

The courses provided by the charity's Learn@Sea initiative cover a wide range of subjects at various levels in an attempt to meet a person's developmental needs at whatever stage you are at in your career.

There are core subjects such as Maths@Sea and Writing@Sea as well as

more technical topics including Stability@Sea and Navigation@Sea, while communication and management skills can be improved with the help of Leadership@Sea and Management@Sea courses.

Additional funding may also be available for nationally-recognised Open Awards qualification after completing your Stability@Sea or Maths@Sea and Maths@Sea Plus studies.

To date more than 2,000 seafarers have completed courses which were introduced by the society to provide an easily-accessible maritime education hub.

For details, visit www.marine-society.org/learnatsea or email learning@ms-sc.org.

PACIFIC SPECIFIC

LET the adventure begin. MS Tamar and HMS Spey will be on their way to the Indo-Pacific region. Early this month they're due to depart from Portsmouth Naval Dockyard and strike out into the Atlantic. West, that's right. West. Not East. The Pacific via the Caribbean and Panama, then across to Hawaii. The duo's deployment completes the first chapter of the new era-class story, with all five modern-generation ships peppered around the globe in key strategic regions: HMS Forth (Falklands), HMS Lively (Caribbean) and HMS Trent (Mediterranean/West Africa). Challenging though all of these missions are, they are rewarded by the remit given to Spey and Tamar. "Two thirds of the world is our playground," says tenant Commander Ben Evans, Spey's commanding officer. The patrol area stretches from the eastern seaboard of Canada to the west coast of the US, as far north as the Bering Sea and south to the foot of Tasmania and New Zealand. The ships will not have permanent crews like some of their sisters, but a core crew from whichever port or base can support their needs. Otherwise, however, the draft has been the same as when the Royal Navy operated from Singapore and Hong Kong. "Not too many sailors in the 'small ship' community have deployed to the region – deployments to the Pacific are traditionally the preserve of frigates and task groups. "From what I've seen during my career, a lot of the Navy's current deployment focus has been based in the Gulf," said HMS Tamar's Chief Weapons Engineer Alex Jell. "Those types of deployments are a thing of the past but the chance to go to the Indo-Asia Pacific is an exciting opportunity that

very few in the newest generation of Royal Navy sailors have had the chance to partake in. It will be an amazing experience." Lt Cdr Evans adds: "We are going to places that the Royal Navy has not visited in a long time – that's really exciting. "It is living the advert: join the Navy, see the world. We go to places people spend a lot of money to see. Who doesn't want to go to the Caribbean or Far East? But we are working." Spey and Tamar are not Far East jolly boats. They are not cruise ships. They are working warships, tackling smuggling, drug-running, piracy, terrorism, working with regional allies, providing help in times of crisis, flying the flag for the UK, acting as forward look-outs, gathering information for Navy task groups should they deploy to this part of the world. The ability to 'bolt on' extras – up to 52 Royal Marines or troops in a dedicated mess – or mission-specific equipment on the flight deck to deliver humanitarian aid or help with evacuations, for example makes the vessels "3,000-tonne Swiss Army knives". "If you join us, you will be at sea for nine months of the year. You will be deployed, you will work hard on operations," Lt Cdr Evans stresses. The ships are half the size of a Type 23 but with only a quarter of the crew. "Pretty much everybody on board has two or three other jobs," says Spey's operations officer Lieutenant Tim Wood, who also doubles as deputy navigator and public relations officer. "You get far more responsibility on a small ship, generally one rank lower than in the rest of the Fleet. That's great for developing your career and gives you the chance to lead." Among the sailors hoping to gain bags of experience from the

voyage to Pacific is Scarlett Barnett-Smith, a Merchant Navy Cadet who's on board Tamar as part of a new training programme. "I am extremely fortunate to be able to experience this once-in-a-lifetime passage," she said. "The immensely dedicated crew have been extremely welcoming and helpful, allowing me to grow and understand the responsibilities as a sailor of the Royal Navy. "I look forward to one day seeing

Between the first sailor joining and deploying to her new patrol area, a year will have passed. The bulk of the crew have been together since the beginning of January – just eight months. With a hectic training schedule, plus a commissioning ceremony off Invergordon and Covid restrictions, the crew's families only got to see Spey – for the first and, potentially, last time – shortly before sailing through an open day in Portsmouth Naval Base. There was time to look around living and working quarters, sit in the captain's chair, tour the upper deck (pictured below by LPhoto Lee Blease) dress up as a firefighter, fight off balloon animals, and get faces painted. "We are incredibly proud of HMS Spey. We think of her as the last in the class – and the best in the class," says her Commanding Officer. "Everyone on board has worked incredibly hard to get the ship ready for her deployment. The support of our families has been crucial." HMS Tamar has had slightly longer to prepare for her mission, having commissioned six months ahead of her younger sister. As a result of being operational since last summer, Tamar's been pressed into service in home waters – post-Brexit duties in the Channel Islands, providing security for the G7 summit in Cornwall, developing evolving board-and-search tactics with the Royal Marines (plus 'Gravity Man'). "It has been a huge achievement to generate a new ship, support National tasking, whilst also planning for the journey to the Indo-Asia Pacific," said Lieutenant Thomas Adlam, Tamar's 1st Lieutenant. "The deployment will offer an array of challenges but also a number of opportunities for many of us to see new parts of the world as Tamar remains deployed for a

number of years. "I couldn't be more proud to be a part of this crew." Taking her to the Pacific is Commander Teilo Elliot-Smith, who's previous experience in the region is among the most dramatic in recent RN memory; he was serving aboard HMS Daring back in 2013 when the destroyer was diverted to the Philippines to help in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, making a key difference to the lives of thousands of people. "I have served in this region before, but it is an exciting new endeavour for us as the lead echelon of the Royal Navy's new permanent forward presence," he said. "I am incredibly proud to be given the opportunity to join HMS Tamar and sail with such a talented ship's company on the ship's maiden deployment, extending the global reach of the Royal Navy to the Indo-Asia Pacific. "The ship will operate in this part of the world for the foreseeable future, working closely to strengthen our existing alliances in the region, whilst also embracing the opportunity to support the development of newer relationships along the way." There's a little (fun) rivalry between the two ships – Tamar was first to get the dazzle paint scheme and enjoys the limelight, Spey proclaims herself to be even greener and efficient than her sister, as well as being the 'best in class' as the last of the Rivers to be built. Ultimately, they know that working together they're even more effective than individually. "With our paint schemes, we stand out – we look different," says Lt Cdr Evans. "We'll be flying the White Ensign together in the Indo-Pacific region. People will know that the Royal Navy is back."



// We'll be flying the White Ensign together in the Indo-Pacific region. People will know that the Royal Navy is back. //

LT CDR BEN EVANS, HMS SPEY

HMS Tamar from the bridge as an Officer of the Watch in the Merchant Navy, and will think fondly of the ship throughout my career." Typically there will be just 46 sailors on each ship at any one time, half of them trading places with shipmates from the UK every few weeks. The constant rotation allows the Navy to get the most out of the ships – and gives crews much greater certainty in planning their lives. "You know that you will be home for a quarter of the year, you know when and what you will miss," says Lt Cdr Evans.

That's welcome first 12 particularly after Spey's months.



Find Portsmouth's best engineers

YOU have until the last day of September to nominate the individual or team that contribute the most to supporting Portsmouth-based warships.

Team Portsmouth is looking to recognise engineers who go above and beyond the regular demands to ensure RN vessels are ready for action.

The base is home to the smallest craft in the RN's inventory (fast patrol boats Sabre and Scimitar) up to the largest (the two Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers).

The 2021 Team Portsmouth Engineering Awards – open to serving personnel and civilians – will be presented towards the end of the year, covering seven categories:

- Safety First
- Innovation & Technology
- Inspiring Engineering
- Engineering Excellence
- Trainee Engineer of the Year
- Quality in Engineering
- Engineering Support to Infrastructure

“Our ships need to be more available for more of their lives, and that goes to the heart of what the brilliant engineers of Portsmouth Naval Base do today and what they have done throughout the history of the Royal Navy,” said Rear Admiral Jim Higham, the Chief Naval Engineering Officer. “These awards are our way of recognising that brilliance, so please do recognise your people by nominating them.”

Individuals or teams of up to six people can be nominated using the forms on the Team Portsmouth, Royal Navy, and DE&S intranet sites. They must be employed in Portsmouth Naval Base or a satellite site contributing to work on ships from the city.

Forms are also available from maritime.engineering@baesystems.com, with entries judged by a panel of senior engineering managers.

Advanced course success for RNR

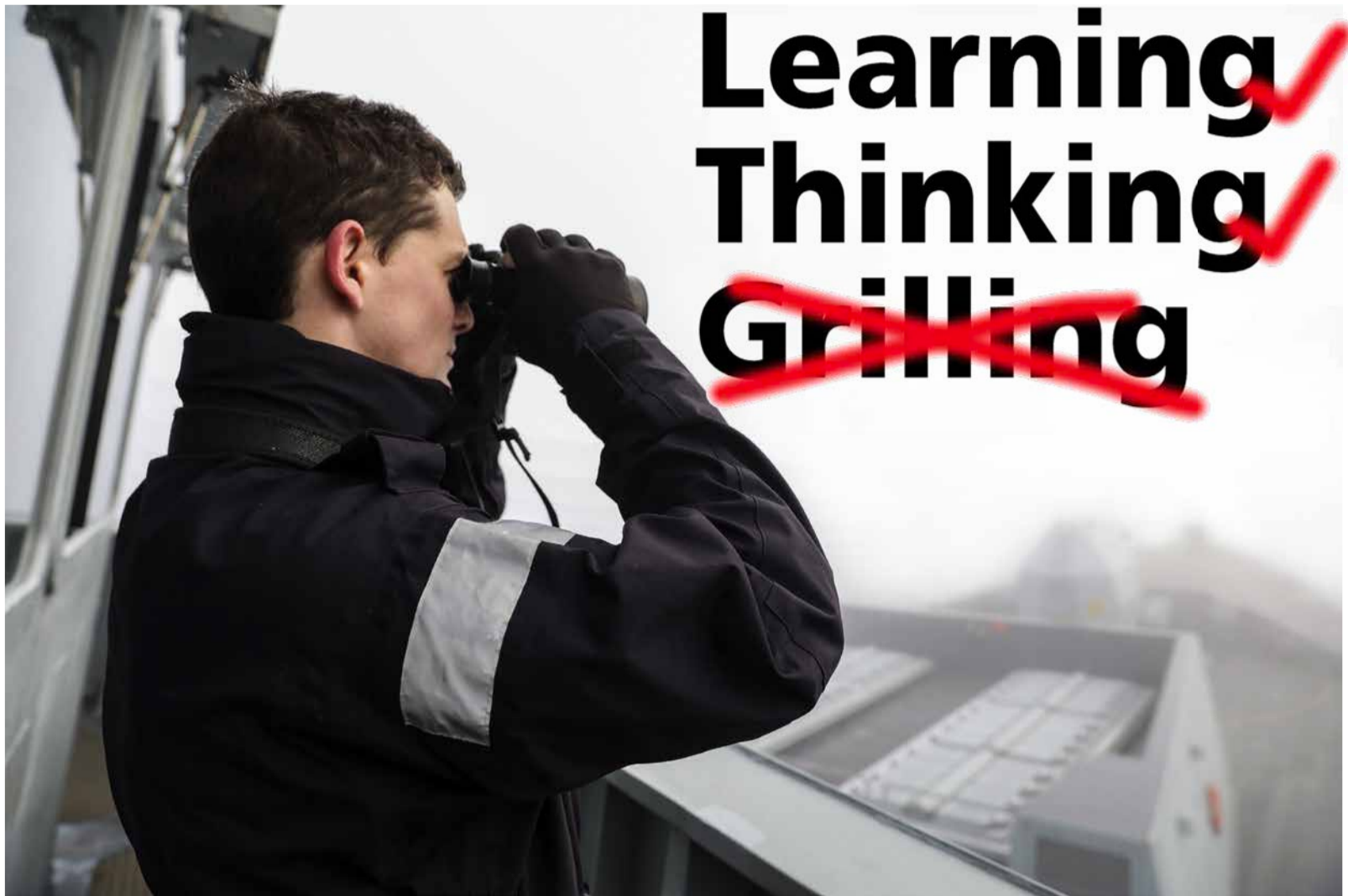
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Supported by King's College, London and eminent guest speakers, the students were encouraged to develop their awareness of global issues affecting the near future and to hone their analytical skills when considering their response to such issues.

Lieutenant Commander Michael Pedley, HMS Wildfire's Executive Officer, was named top student.



TRAINING for the Royal Navy's officers is undergoing one of its biggest changes in decades – mirroring the way industry assesses high-flying candidates.

No longer will officers face a ‘grilling’ from a ship's captain, demonstrating what they have learned during their first concerted spell at sea.

Instead, they will be expected to draw upon all they've accumulated over three months on a front-line warship and explain how they might respond to an emergency, demonstrating leadership, knowledge and the ability to think on their feet.

The detailed assessment is the most significant change to the 12 weeks of Common Fleet Time, which introduces most junior officers to the day-to-day running, routine and life aboard an operational warship – from patrol vessels such as the River-class all the way up to flagship aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Every year around 200 officers undergo the spell at sea – which follows officers' commissioning after completing basic training at Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth – but the actual training package itself had not been reviewed for some time, falling behind the industry standard for equivalent training for junior managers.

• A Young Officer attempts to look through the fog surrounding HMS Defender during training in Norway in 2019

Picture: PO(Phot) Arron Hoare

The Royal Navy's Training Management branch has spent the past two years working with training officers in the fleet and Britannia Royal Naval College to adapt the experience making it more relevant to the Fleet of the 2020s.

// This is a different way of assessing Royal Navy officers, much more modern, much more in line with the commercial world and also much in keeping with the expectations of the candidates themselves.

LIEUTENANT ALEXANDRA HEAD

Leading the refresh is Lieutenant Alexandra Head, working for the Training Management Group.

“A review of Royal Navy workplace training has been due for some time,” she said.

“There is a real spirit of transformation in the Royal Navy right now, and I have relished the opportunities to apply new learning and development doctrine to our at-sea officer training.”

Lieutenant Head continued: “The new assessment is designed to give modern-day learners holistic feedback in line with current coaching and mentoring practices, allowing individuals to identify areas for self-improvement.”

“People today expect modern training. Our sea training needs to reflect that. This is a different way of assessing Royal Navy officers, much more modern, much more in line with the commercial world and also much in keeping with the expectations of the candidates themselves.”

The first group of 80 newly-commissioned officers embarked on the new-look Common Fleet Time at the end of last month.

As well as the new final assessment, the refreshed training involves a considerably shorter/smaller ‘learning journal’ – known in the Navy as a task book – for officers to complete on board.

The training will be much more modular with students gaining work experience in each department, rather

than their chosen specialist branch such as logistics or warfare.

Trainees will be encouraged to shadow senior ratings especially to tap their extensive professional and naval knowledge, and provide vital feedback.

And the final assessment will no longer be carried out solely by the commanding officer; other members of the ship's company will be encouraged to sit on the panel to build their command, leadership and management skills.

The final training package has also been designed so it is robust for the modern age, with templates for development journals and ship-specific assessments hosted on the Royal Navy learning portal, allowing them to be remotely accessed by those who deliver training while ships are deployed.

“This review of our sea-based core training allows our Young Officers to broaden their skills and continue their learning journeys onboard ships, and modern learning and development techniques ensure learners are engaged by their training,” said Colonel Ade Morley, Commandant of the Royal Navy Training Management Group.

“It is essential to a modern Navy that individuals can learn anywhere.”

NFF takes gold The only way is ETICC for RFA engineers

THERE'S gold for the Naval Families Federation which received the MOD's Employer Recognition Scheme's highest accolade.

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ROYAL Fleet Auxiliary apprentices celebrated completing 30 weeks of intensive training ready to begin their careers as engineers at sea.

Training alongside junior Royal Navy sailors, the apprentices came through the Engineering Technician Initial Career Course (ETICC) at HMS Sultan in Gosport.

The course offers a mixture of ‘hands-on’ practical engineering and technical training.

This is designed to equip the trainee technicians with the necessary skills to operate, diagnose, maintain and repair equipment across the flotilla.

In addition, all RFA students received similar instruction to their Royal Navy counterparts, including educational skills, Basic Sea Survival and visits to operational ships.

For the next stage of their training, they will be joining engineering sections aboard their first ships.

“It's been good having a mixed class, as alongside the RFA we've

picked up another ten friends along the way,” said 23-year-old Apprentice (E) Charlie Harper (left), a former stock manager who was looking for “a new adventure”.

He continued: “The theory side was quite hard, it was a bit of a struggle getting used to some of the distance learning due to restrictions around Covid, but the practical elements of the course were good.”

Apprentice (E) Mark Ashcroft (right), 55, said: “I'd been looking for a career change for a long time. I'd been working in IT and felt that now was the right time.”

“I've really enjoyed my time here, with a great bunch of lads, it's been a real eye opener. I thought it was going to be a bit of a struggle, but they've made it so much easier.”

“The distance learning was hard but completing Basic Sea Survival and firefighting was great and really brought us all together and added a bit of excitement.”

RFA Training Officer, Second Officer (E) Russell Downs said: “The class has been outstanding. We normally train two classes a year and this group has performed exceptionally well.”



Power to the people

Empowerment – giving YOU the chance to make a difference, from introducing new working practices to being free to spend your budget as you wish to meet your objectives – is at the heart of the Royal Navy Transformation programme. We hear from a cross-section of personnel who are enjoying the extra freedom and power.

Marine Engineer – and top Scottish Rugby Union referee – Commander Dunx McClement is Chief-of-Staff at FOST Submarines (FOST SM) and a self-confessed ‘empowerment convert’.



From getting it wrong in a previous role I have become big on ‘work-life balance’ and empowering people who work for me to get this right.

I am output focused which means that, while the responsibility is mine, I like to encourage my team to own the task and deliver in a way that suits them. By empowering them to own the task – and the timeline (where at all possible) – I have found it encourages them to deliver in a manner that suits them and gives me a better product. This is an approach that I brought to FOST Submarines and am lucky that this is fully supported by my line management who also empowered and permitted me.

At FOST Submarines I took over a variety of teams: my core sea training team, a submarine simulator team, the Submarine Escape Rescue Abandonment and Survivability Training Facility SMERAS (TF) Team, a small HQ staff, and an Operating Documentation Section.

In addition, I volunteered to establish and run the FOST Submarine Change Agent Network (CAN) – partly out of cynicism at yet more change.

Leading such eclectic teams I looked to empower them to get on with their day job; allowing them to make decisions and forcing me to delegate to the point of feeling uncomfortable (I believe if you aren’t slightly uncomfortable with what you’re delegating you’re probably not delegating – and hence empowering – enough).

Empowering the CAN to talk to their teams in whichever way suited them best, we were also able to reinforce

the message that all members of FOST should be able to feel empowered.

As we started to achieve success, we got junior team members to talk about their experiences, which bred belief and success.

This process has also seen me fully buy in to what Transformation and the CAN are trying to achieve and genuinely feel that ‘it is different this time’.

The art of being a referee is not, as most people think, about knowing when to blow the whistle; instead it’s about knowing and finding reasons NOT to (the referee reference was relevant!).

Doing this empowers the players and lets them get on with playing; we then do as much of our game management in down time (when play has stopped) as possible.

I have found it’s the same with leadership and empowerment. It’s about knowing when NOT to inject or interfere and allowing your team to have longer time between ‘whistles’.

I can then use periods away from the task to provide guidance and direction and draw out learning points for next time.

I’ve found that this has worked well in FOST Submarines. Across all the teams that work for me the feedback is that this makes them feel empowered.

I have been particularly pleased with the successes within the SMERAS Team (see previous YES articles) and in the way that the CAN Group has responded.

I’ve found that truly empowering my teams has not only improved their output and effectiveness but – and way more importantly – their feeling of self-belief and overall well-being as well.

Lieutenant Commander Chris Riley heads the RN Police Special Investigations Branch at HMS Drake and has found empowering eye-opening – and, crucially, effective.



I joined the RN in 2004 and as young sailor, I was quickly indoctrinated into the ‘don’t ask – just do’ mentality, underpinned by the belief that military success was founded on the culture of people following orders without question.

Whilst there is a very clear need for that type of leadership at times; I’ve come to realise it’s rare in practice.

Fast-forward to 2021 and I’m pleased to see that style of leadership reserved for the most demanding of crises and we find ourselves beginning to embrace and understand the benefits of empowerment – but there is still work to be done.

RN Transformation, coupled with returning from Covid 19 restrictions, presented a unique opportunity to re-think how we approach empowerment and really shift the organisational culture to one which embraces change, challenges the ‘norm’ and begins to focus on outcomes rather than the time people spend at work.

As the Officer in Charge of the Royal

Navy Police Special Investigations Branch, I am responsible for leading a team of 25 personnel, held at high-readiness to deploy globally to investigate serious and complex crime.

For me empowerment is about critically analysing how we do business, including people in decision-making and not only being open to challenge but provoking it to get the best out of people.

While we are still getting to grips with the challenges empowerment presents, I’m beginning to see a distinct shift in attitudes, with individuals and teams making decisions and driving ideas forward and realising their individual and collective potential.

As a senior leader, it’s very rewarding and I’ve learnt a lot in a short space of time. At times I’ve been humbled, uncomfortable even.

But any of those feelings are short-lived when you see people begin to grow and realise their own potential. I’m excited for the future and proud that the RN Police are leading the way.

Air Engineering Technician Natalie Cro is a former Reservist who decided to make the RN her full-time career, joining 814 Naval Air Squadron at Culdrose, maintaining their Merlin Mk2s.



Empowerment is not a quick win, it is a fundamental shift in our attitude and approach to doing business that I will commit to for my entire Naval career.

Maybe it is due to my background in other employment prior to joining the Royal Navy, but it surprises me how many of my fellow sailors have issues with the way things are done, yet do nothing to try to change that or to better understand why.

Instead they simply dismiss their concerns with lines like ‘that’s the way it’s always been’. I find this ‘learned helplessness’ really frustrating. It stifles development and breeds disillusionment.

My approach is very much: ‘I can, so I will’. I do not fear failure, nine times out of ten the worst-case scenario is that I am in the same situation I am in at the start, so what have I got to lose?

In my day-to-day work this has enabled some simple yet significant changes to how tasks are completed within my squadron.

Obviously not everything is ripe for change/improvement and I have hit brick walls in other areas. This is fine, as at the very least I have a better

understanding of the issue and can accept there is no scope to change just yet.

Being fully informed is another common frustration at my level, and it is here that I feel Command can do more.

It would be great to see less ‘who needs to know’ and more ‘why can’t everyone know’ when it comes to information distribution.

There should also be more emphasis on pushing this information to personnel, rather than posting on an obscure sharepoint that only the determined will find.

The MyNavy App is a step in the right direction, but I feel there is some way to go in this area.

Empowerment isn’t for everyone, but for those of you who are fed up with constant ‘work for work’s sake’ (such as checks and controls designed solely to catch the ‘naughty five per cent’ but only serve to inconvenience the honest 95 per cent) it is a golden opportunity to be heard, feel valued and continuously improve the lived experience for the many generations of RN sailors yet to come.

3/O(E) Sherwyn Blake is a Change Advocate for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary with the Afloat Support team based in Portsmouth.



He’s convinced that the best results come from front-line people with creative solutions to day-to-day challenges.

The Change Advocate Network (CAN) is part of the Transformation process, encouraging Change Advocates to unleash the potential benefits of empowerment to the organisation.

At any level teams can take ownership, to identify and bring about the required changes at local levels, to overcome impediments to creative solutions leading to progress and positive change.

‘Top-down’ messaging is not always effective with RFA personnel. Transformation and Empowerment won’t develop and grow successfully unless verifiable results can be achieved using a proven method. ‘Seeing is believing’ applies to convince RFA personnel.

At RFA Afloat Support two projects are under way to prove that positive changes via Transformation and Empowerment are possible within the RFA also.

These are very much ‘lead by example’ models to encourage RFA personnel that empowerment can work at any level.

The first project is a Main Engine/Generator Tool Store aboard Tide-class tankers. At present there isn’t any allocated space for the storage of the main diesel engine/generator and propulsion special tools which creates issues with mustering, calibrating and securing them.

On each vessel a different local decision is made to stow these tools. During refits tools have been stolen. Their replacement carries an inconvenient lead time and is expensive. It has an indirect impact on operational

capability when it comes to timely defect rectification options as well as an effect on both unit and departmental morale. A dedicated tool store would alleviate all these problems which can significantly improve output and morale.

The second project is the alignment of mass casualty reporting and ‘kinforming’ for the RFA with that of the Navy.

One of the lessons learned from Exercise Purple Quiver 20 – a mock accident involving a ship – was that the RFA doesn’t have the suitably qualified personnel and administrative resources to properly manage a multi or mass casualty reporting scenario.

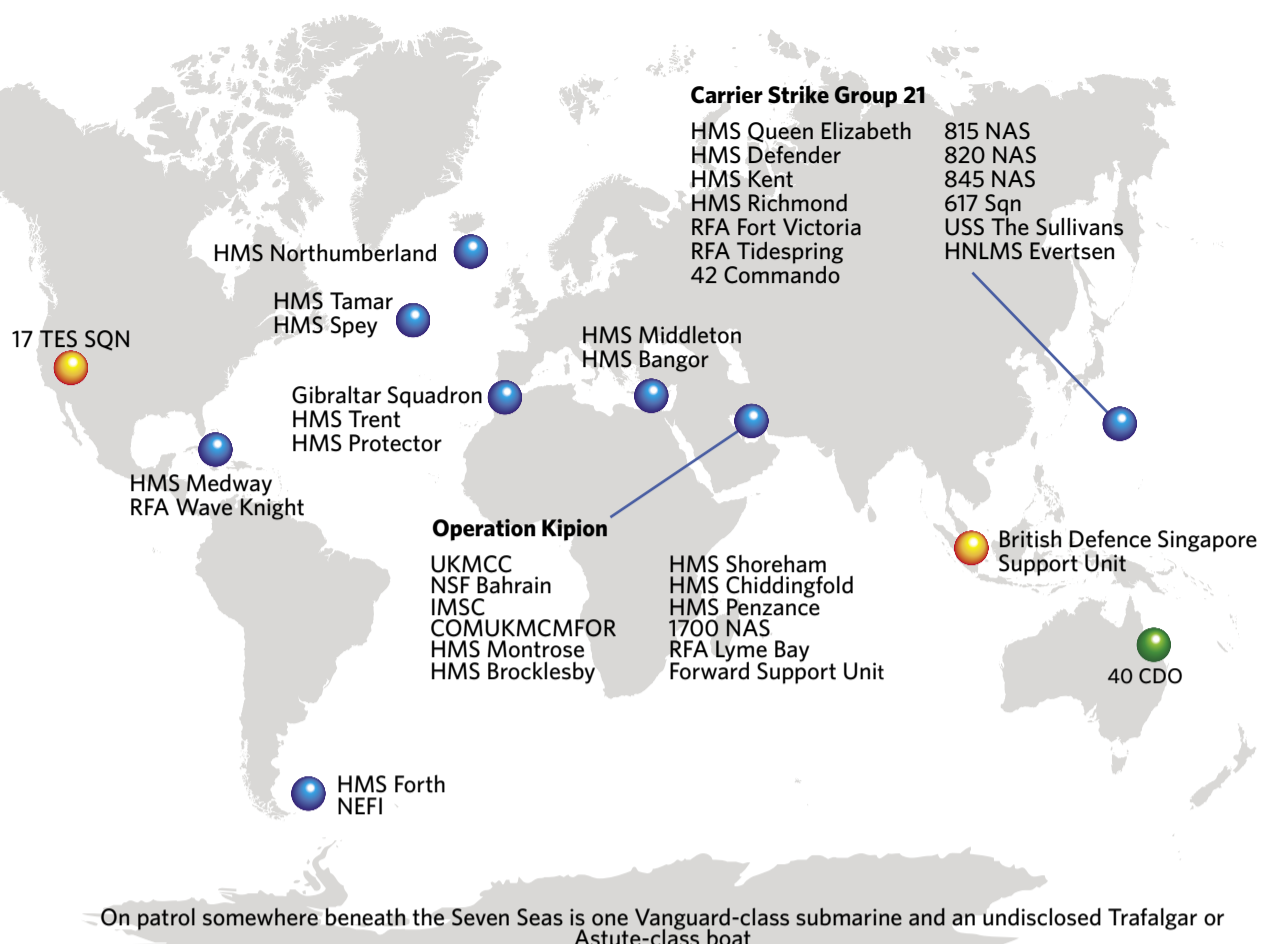
Further, kinforming – informing a casualty’s family – is delegated to a local/regional constabulary, a set-up inconsistent with the aim of the People Vision. The latter pledged to deliver tangible and positive benefits for all our personnel irrespective of fighting and support arms of the Naval Service. It is about placing significant value on all our personnel to improve their lived experience and that of their families. Therefore, this seemed like an achievable first step in that direction.

If the casualty and kinforming system is aligned with the Joint Casualty Co-Ordination Cell (JCCC) and with the Royal Naval Casualty Cell (RNCC), then RFA families can rely upon a central point of access for accurate, up-to-date information for their loved ones and can receive the same care and support as the RN.

Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Portland
HMS Westminster
HMS Lancaster
HMS Argyll
HMS Tyne
HMS Severn
HMS Mersey
HMS Magpie

HMS Sabre
HMS Prince of Wales
Project Wilton
RFA Mounts Bay
814 NAS
815 NAS
824 NAS
847 NAS



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

GLOBAL NAVY

Protecting our nation's interests

THE spotlight this month falls on the unsung heroes of the Carrier Strike Group 21 deployment – RFA Tidespring and Fort Victoria (see pages 1 and 19). HMS Queen Elizabeth dispatched tanker Tidespring on a rapid 'Del Boy Run' into Singapore to pick up supplies for the nine-ship task group. The task group also completed its first major workout since entering the Indian Ocean (see pages 20-21) as it sailed with the Indian Navy for a range of exercises.

RFA Wave Knight is helping relief efforts in Haiti after the country was hit by a devastating earthquake (see page 13). The supply ship is acting as a 'floating petrol station' for US Army Black Hawk helicopters, allowing them to spend much more time concentrating on their rescue and relief mission.

To the Gulf and the three-yearly cycle of trading minehunters for their counterparts has come around again (see pages 14-15). HMS Bangor and Middleton are arriving, while on their way home are Brocklesby and Shoreham. Before she left, divers from HMS Shoreham 'christened' the world's deepest man-made pool ahead of its official opening (see page 15).

Australia next and a dawn beach assault and attack on an airfield brought the curtain down on the country's biggest military exercise (see pages 16-17). Bravo Company, 40 Commando, 'fought' alongside comrades from the host nation, plus the USA and Japan as Exercise Talisman Sabre reached its climax.

Back to the UK and HMS Westminster joined India's frigate Tabar for a work-out in the Solent (see page 11) after the ship visited Portsmouth. Both navies regularly exercise together, usually in the Indian Ocean.

HMS Severn has become the third RN vessel to revert to a historic paint scheme (see page 14). The ship received the 'Western Approaches' livery, which was applied to U-boat destroyers for much of World War 2.

A new robot boat which can quickly survey uncharted waters and gather data has been trialled by the Royal Navy (see page 7). The Otter Pro has been tested at Horsea Island in Portsmouth by the navy's Project Hecla team.

Meanwhile, Royal Marines are trialling fast and agile lightweight vehicles (see page 9) as they prepare for operations in which fast raiding of adversary positions and getting out is key.

A new type of task group – Littoral Response Group – is at the forefront of the RN's amphibious operations of the future and a feature video has been launched to explain what it all means and how it works (see page 28).

A new generation of leaders joined the ranks of the Royal Navy after successfully completing their training at Britannia Royal Naval College (see page 32). The parade was attended by officers' family and friends, the first time guests had attended in a year.

Training for Royal Navy officers is undergoing one of its biggest changes in decades, mirroring the way industry assesses high-flying candidates (see page 4). Detailed assessment is the most significant change to the 12-week Common Fleet Time.

Fifteen years after they formed the vanguard of the Royal Navy's minehunting mission in the Gulf, HMS Ramsey and Blyth were decommissioned in Rosyth (see page 35) during a poignant service.

It was also farewell from the last green Merlin (see page 29) as the last Mk3 carried out a flypast of key sites associated with the helicopter before undergoing a transformation into a Merlin Mk4.

Meanwhile in Scotland, the baton of ensuring Britain's nuclear submarines remain undetected has been passed from one remote range to another (see page 26). The Underway Noise Range at Rona have been closed and a new facility commissioned a dozen miles away at Applecross.

A Royal Navy sailor covering a survival training exercise on Bodmin Moor did not hesitate to act when she heard of a serious car crash (see page 23). Medical Assistant Tayla Darwin helped paramedics deal with multiple casualties.

Royal Marines from 40 Commando and Lympstone provided pomp, ceremony and a match ball for a one-day cricket clash in Taunton (see page 24).

Devonport naval base stalwart Dave Trigger has marked 50 years at the dockyard (see page 32).

Three Sea Cadets from different cultural backgrounds, share their stories about how being part of the organisation has helped them feel a sense of belonging (see page 33).

Finally, a new prize presented in memory of naval historian Professor Eric Grove has been presented at Britannia Royal Naval College (see page 32).

History makers

Protector heads south after foray north

THE Navy's sole icebreaker HMS Protector left Plymouth for the Antarctic – her first visit to the frozen continent since 2019.

With the UK about to be the focus of international efforts to tackle climate change as it hosts the UN COP26 conference in Glasgow, the unique survey/research ship will continue her work supporting scientists from around the world study the impact of global warming.

A major refit – the most comprehensive in the ship's history – confined her to Middlesbrough for much of 2020.

She 'warmed up' for work in sub-zero temperatures by sailing into the Arctic in June to practise crunching ice, venturing further north than any Royal Navy vessel within recent memory – just 1,050 kilometres from the top of the world.

On this deployment, however, her work initially will be concentrated in the warmer climes of two of Britain's South Atlantic territories: Ascension Island – In the middle of the ocean between Brazil and Angola – and, 800 miles to the southeast, St Helena.

Some of the stretches of water around the remote islands have not been surveyed in 200 years, so Admiralty Charts – used not just by the Royal Navy, but seafarers the world over – need updating courtesy of

the latest sonar and surveying equipment Protector carries.

The ship will begin her polar work in December at the height of the austral summer – temperatures can creep just above freezing – visiting UK and international research stations peppered around the British Antarctic Territory, and extensively surveying the seabed here.

In heading into both polar circles and crossing the Equator – an event marked by a colourful, traditional nautical ceremony ('Crossing the Line') – in a single year, the ship's company believe they could be making Royal Navy history.

Commanding Officer Captain Michael Wood said his ship's return to Antarctica "highlights the Navy and nation's determination to contribute to climate science and limit climate change."

He continued: "I am proud of the very hard yards this team made to reset the Ice Patrol Ship.

"It's time now for new adventures at the other end of the world."

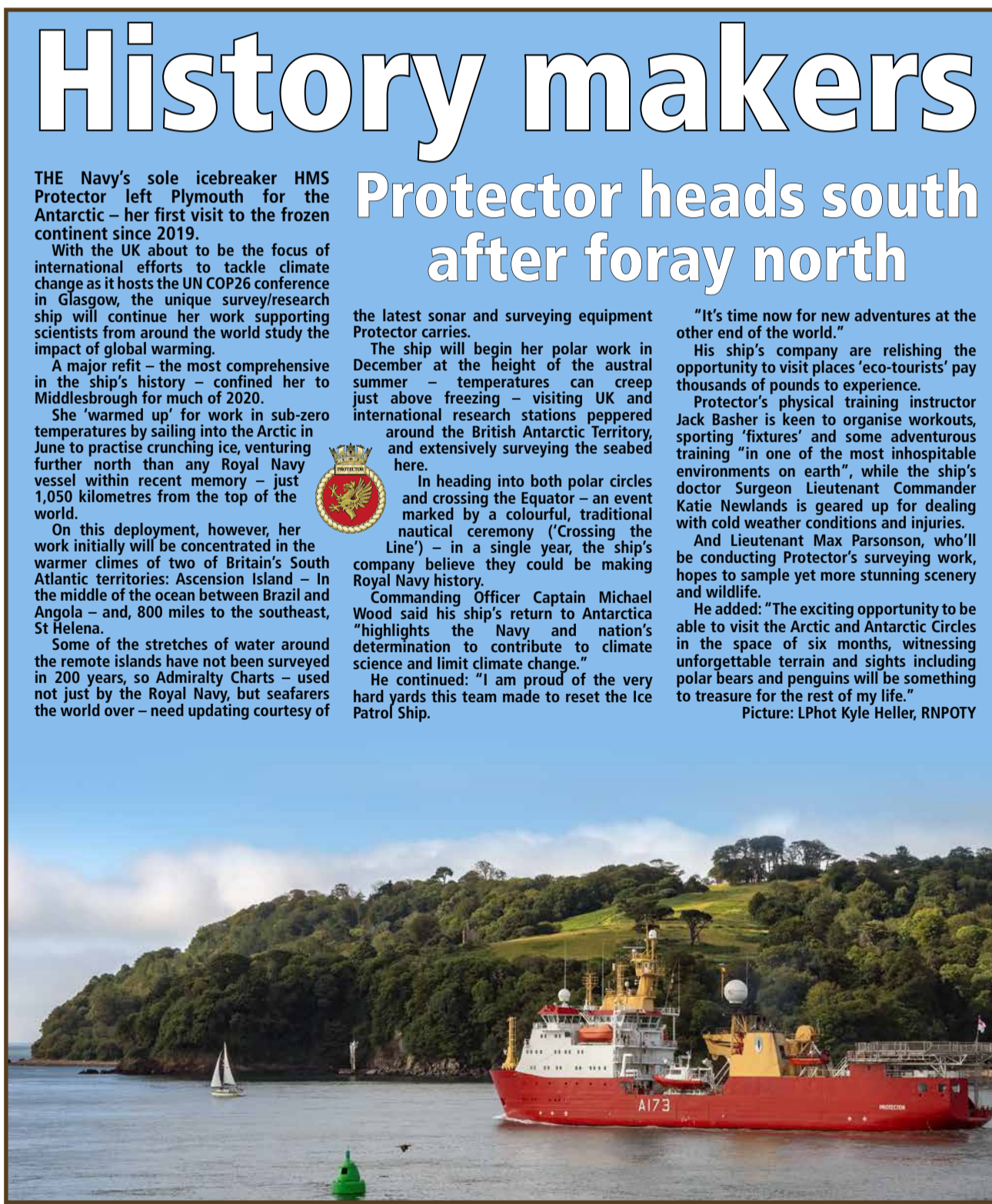
His ship's company are relishing the opportunity to visit places 'eco-tourists' pay thousands of pounds to experience.

Protector's physical training instructor Jack Basher is keen to organise workouts, sporting 'fixtures' and some adventurous training "in one of the most inhospitable environments on earth", while the ship's doctor Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Katie Newlands is geared up for dealing with cold weather conditions and injuries.

And Lieutenant Max Parsonson, who'll be conducting Protector's surveying work, hopes to sample yet more stunning scenery and wildlife.

He added: "The exciting opportunity to be able to visit the Arctic and Antarctic Circles in the space of six months, witnessing unforgettable terrain and sights including polar bears and penguins will be something to treasure for the rest of my life."

Picture: LPhot Kyle Heller, RNPOTY



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Otter trialled for survey operations

(No, not an animal)

A NEW robot boat which can be used to quickly survey uncharted waters and gather data has begun trials with the Royal Navy.

The Otter Pro has been put through its paces at the Defence Diving School, on Horsea Island, Portsmouth, by the navy's Project Hecla team (inset).

They were testing the use of the remote-controlled vessel for conducting underwater survey operations where, with a range of sensors, it could gather data on the water around it and objects on the seabed.

In the tests at Horsea Lake, the Otter Pro was able to collect sonar imagery of a number of wrecks (main image) – detailing evidence of decay and structural collapse on a sunken day cruiser, motor boat and helicopter.

Its sensors also picked up swim lines and seabed erosion caused by divers.

During its first hour in the water, the vessel, controlled by trained RN personnel, proved its ability to deploy and gather survey information quickly and effectively – surveying an area the size of the pitch at Fratton Park.

Commander Graham Mimpriss, Royal Navy lead

for the trials, said: "Although the Otter Pro is being operated to enable Project Hecla to refine future operating concepts of uncrewed surface vehicles in future military surveying application, it has begun to prove itself as being superior to existing portable systems.

“”
This first trial has begun to demonstrate positive benefits of uncrewed surface vehicles for surveying

Commander Graham Mimpriss

“Using a rapid response context, this vehicle was mobilised within an hour of arrival having been transported to the site in a van.

“The team on its first outing surveyed Horsea Lake (7,000 square metres) in 40 minutes and then generated a viable product within an hour.

“This was achieved with a team of three without the need for a boat or jetty facilities for launching or recovery. During surveying, two of the team acted as pilot and looked out for the vehicle and the third was processing the data in near real time.

“Our existing platforms would be hard pressed to match this performance in a rapid response scenario.”

The next stage of the trials will see the Otter Pro, from RS Aqua Ltd, tested in a more complex environment and its near-real time data processing will be refined. The Project Hecla team will also further examine the Otter's Norbit multi-beam echo sounder and different sonar systems.

Cdr Mimpriss added: “This first trial has begun to demonstrate positive benefits of uncrewed surface vehicles for surveying and also highlighted changes the Royal Navy would need to make to training, personnel employment and logistics for enable full exploitation of offboard technologies.”



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RAZOR SHARP

COMMANDOS TRIAL NEW ULTRALIGHT VEHICLES



FAST and agile lightweight vehicles have been trialled by Royal Marines as they prepare for operations in which quickly raiding adversary positions and getting out is key.

The American-made Polaris MRZR-D4 – pronounced m-razor – is an ultralight 4x4 off-roader that can carry up to four commandos and reach speeds of 60mph for rapid movement across the battlefield.

It is ideally equipped for raiding missions that Royal Marines are now focusing on as part of their modernisation and restructuring, which will ensure they are ready to counter the threats of a modern era.

The marines have been trialling these vehicles across the sand dunes at Branton Burrows in North Devon – a place where the latest amphibious warfare techniques have been worked on since it was used for preparations for D-Day in World War 2.

Warrant Officer 2 Chris Burge, the commando force's master driver, said: "Because of the Littoral Strike concept and the transformation of the commando forces, Royal Marines are trialling the light mobility vehicle and with that we are using the MRZR-D4 as a proof of concept.

"Today we are at Branton Burrows where we do our driver training and with the MRZR-D4 we are currently doing the basic operator courses for the Vanguard Strike Company.

"The MRZR-D4 is going to be used as an agile, nimble vehicle designed for smaller teams to get across the battlefield.

"It hasn't got armour protection, so with that it's more for manoeuvre and agility than for weapons systems.

"The guys are loving it. It's something new and the capability is better than what we usually have. The guys are on the ground now understanding limitations and the capability across arduous and demanding conditions."

The MRZR lacks the armour and carrying ability of the tracked Viking all-terrain vehicles – the main troop and mortar carriers of the Royal Marines' Armoured Support Group – but their purpose is to get to enemy positions quicker, and get out faster too.

The turbocharged diesel vehicle can be used to carry supplies and equipment – like ammunition, water and fuel – for commando missions, but can also be fitted with machine guns and grenade launchers for added firepower.

It can be used for quick attacks and withdrawals,

but also for logistical resupply and casualty evacuation and also helpful is that it can fit in Chinook helicopters, meaning marines can be dropped quickly to their location with the MRZR.

This vehicle is being assessed for its usefulness as commandos begin to operate in small teams of up to 12, moving quickly across the battlefield to hit enemy infrastructure – like radar or missile installations.

Royal Marines have recently experimented with swarms of drones to support these missions.

An array of autonomous systems operated underwater, on the water, in the sky and over land to help Royal Marines Commandos as they carried out training raids on a number of complex 'adversary' positions in Cumbria and Dorset.

The uncrewed systems were used on missions at the Electronic Warfare Tactics facility at RAF Spadeadam on the border with Northumberland and off the south coast in training areas around Lulworth Cove and the Defence BattleLab.

The marines have also recently rolled out the small all-terrain CanAm 6x6 vehicles to move mortars and their crews rapidly around the battlefield, avoiding detection and bring down a hail of fire and fury on enemy positions.



A Royal Marine from 40 Commando working with the MRZR-D4 vehicle. Picture by PO Phot Si Ethell

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Indian Summer

This is an impressive 'top-down' view you probably won't recognise. You might (just) be able to identify the jetty (Portsmouth's South Railway).

The ship? India's Tabar. The frigate is dressed overall to mark the 74th anniversary of the Commonwealth nation's independence – hence the gathering of the bulk of her 300 crew on the flight deck for an official reception.

A hovering Royal Navy drone captured the occasion on camera – as it did Tabar's entry into Portsmouth two days earlier.

Among the dignitaries attending proceedings, India's High Commissioner to the UK, Gaitri Issar Kumar, and RN Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd to discuss the two navies' training – and increasing Anglo-Indian cooperation in the Indian Ocean.

Admiral Kyd told his hosts that the Royal Navy enjoyed a friendship with its Indian counterpart "which runs deep and is highly valued."

"Recent engagement – encompassing ten ships and two submarines in the Bay of Bengal is a fantastic example of the level of cooperation between our two

Pictures: CPO(Phot) Owen Cooban, Lt Cdr Rob Kent, Sub Lieutenant Michael Robinson and AB(WS) Matthew Lamb

nations at sea."

Both navies regularly exercise together – usually in the Indian Ocean, less frequently around the UK – and with the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific region, underlined by recent activity of HMS Queen Elizabeth and her carrier strike group as well as the deployment of HMS Tamar and Spey on extended patrols, co-operation at sea between London and Delhi is likely to snowball.

Already a key marker in the two navies' diaries is the annual Konkani exercise, normally hosted by the Indians off the coast which gives the workout its name.

But when Indian warships venture to Europe, the RN returns the favour.

So when Tabar departed Portsmouth after her weekend break, HMS Westminister was waiting for her in the Solent.

Upon reaching the open waters of the Channel they conducted Officer of the Watch Manoeuvres, deft, close manoeuvres, sometimes at high speed, to test bridge teams



enemy below the waves.

"My crew and I relish the opportunity to collaborate with units from partner nations who we do not regularly see in UK waters, such as the INS Tabar," said Commander Louise Ray, Westminister's Commanding Officer. "We are always keen to engage with foreign units and conduct complex multi-disciplinary exercises with them to mutually improve our ways of working and broaden our experience."

Konkan comes on the back of a large-scale exercise in the Bay of Bengal involving the UK's Carrier Strike Group, led by flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth and with the Royal Navy stepping up its east of Suez presence in the next few years (a Royal Marines Littoral Response Group in the Indian Ocean and patrol ships HMS Tamar and Spey based in the Indo-Pacific region permanently) there is likely to be increased Anglo-Indian naval interaction/co-operation.

"Throughout the jam-packed day



of serials, it was clear that both units were learning from each other and the professional attitude to getting the most out of each and every serial was tangible," said Lieutenant Commander Rob Kent, Westminister's Weapon Engineer Officer.

"It is clear that the interaction between the Indian and Royal Navies continues along its very positive trajectory this year. This bond looks to only get stronger as the RN forward deploys more capabilities to the western Indian Ocean and wider Indo-Pacific regions."

Tabar – whose name in Sanskrit means battleaxe – arrived in the UK fresh from a spell in the Baltic (including participation in Navy Days in St Petersburg and a visit to Stockholm), and a foray into the fjords to work with the Norwegian Navy around Bergen.

While in Portsmouth, members of the 300-strong ship's company were paying their respects to World War 1 and 2 fallen, immortalised on the Naval Memorial on Southsea Common.

Indians served with distinction in all theatres of war: at its peak in WW2, the then Royal Indian Navy counted 20,000 personnel.

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Salvation comes from the heavens

FORMER inhabitants of a handful of the 136,000 buildings destroyed look up to the skies for salvation as a Fleet Air Arm Wildcat flies over Haiti – once again tortured by Nature’s fury.

And once again, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary was on hand to help.

In 2010, amphibious ship Largs Bay – now under the Australian ensign as HMAS Choules – delivered thousands of tonnes of aid in the aftermath of a quake which left an estimated 160,000 people dead.

Eleven years later, RFA Wave Knight was in the vicinity on counter-drugs-smuggling patrol when the earth six miles down 100 miles west of the Haitian capital Port au Prince shifted even more violently than in 2010. When it settled a few seconds later, at least 2,200 people were dead.

The tanker – flagship of the UK’s Caribbean task group, which also includes patrol ship HMS Medway – joined US relief efforts on the Tiburon peninsula.

Initially, Wave Knight served as a ‘lily pad’ for Black Hawk helicopters from the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment, Joint Task Force-Bravo based at Soto Cano in Honduras – nearly 1,000 miles from the epicentre of the quake.

By offering 10,000 litres of fuel to the helicopters, the ship helped to ‘turbo charge’ relief efforts in Haiti, sparing the Black Hawks lengthy journeys back to base to refuel, allowing them to spend much more time concentrating on their rescue and relief mission.

But after a couple of days, Knightrider, the ship’s helicopter (213 Flight/815 Naval Air Squadron) joined the Black Hawks over Haiti.

Aboard, Captain Jake Lott, a Royal Engineer who’s in charge of the specialist disaster relief team of soldiers, engineers and Royal Marines embarked on RFA Wave Knight, and task group photographer Leading Seaman Rory Arnold whose imagery is pored over by those directing the relief mission.

“Engineer reconnaissance and conducting damage assessment is a core part of the Crisis Response Troop’s skillset. It’s great to see it being put to such good use,” said Captain Lott.

Leading Photographer Arnold added: “Knowing that my work is being used to assess the areas damaged by last week’s earthquake is humbling. It’s great to see my training being used to help those affected.”

The Wildcat – callsign Knightrider – is

embarked in Wave Knight for precisely such missions, but can also be used for moving supplies, aid and personnel around if required.

The Flight Commander, Lieutenant Commander Eifion Parri, 213 Flight Commander “The Wildcat is a brilliant intelligence-gathering aircraft – and it’s been great to use it to full effect. Embarking a photographer and Commando Engineer to gather imagery and conduct the damage assessment has shortened the time taken after the flight to feed analysis back to 228 Regiment and Joint Task Force Bravo. “It’s great to know that our work as a team is being used to prioritise the aid efforts ashore.”

The Royal Navy task group has trained extensively since forming in June, working with authorities, emergency services and military across the Caribbean to be ready to respond to disaster – with one eye firmly on the Atlantic hurricane season.

Already, Wave Knight has delivered tonnes of aid to the people of St Vincent after their lives were turned upside down by a volcanic eruption.

Disruption and destruction in Haiti are on a different scale.

“Events in Haiti are a tragedy, but disasters like this are precisely why we have Royal Navy assets deployed to the Caribbean – to provide vital relief and assistance to people when asked for in times of crisis,” said RFA Wave Knight’s Commanding Officer Captain Simon Herbert RFA.

“By providing the aviation facilities and fuel necessary to enable our partners to provide humanitarian support over a wider area and for a much longer period – my ship’s company are effectively turbo charging their relief work.”

US Army Colonel Steven Gventer, commander of Joint Task Force-Bravo, said Wave Knight had been “outstanding in supporting us and the people of Haiti.”

RN Task Group Commander Brian Trim said the collective efforts by his team was “reducing suffering in the communities affected by this disaster.”

He continued: “The tragedy ashore in Haiti shows why we need to be ready for disaster relief operations. I’m proud of the Task Group’s response.”

“We’re ready for more challenges ahead, with new tasks in the coming days.”

Pictures: LPhot Rory Arnold, RFA Wave Knight



Vote for your favourite pic

NAVY NEWS readers have the chance to vote for their favourite photograph in this year’s prestigious Peregrine Trophy awards

We have shortlisted six photographs for the Navy News People’s Choice Award, sponsored by Greenwich Hospital, which recognises images which have had a major impact on the publication, the official newspaper of the Royal Navy, over the past year.

The Peregrine Trophy’s primary purpose is to encourage the production of eye-catching, powerful imagery that can be used in the media to demonstrate the operations and activities of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines.

To vote, visit www.facebook.com/royalnavy The competition closes at midnight on September 25.

More chances to win, see page 25



PO Phot JJ Massey captured this fantastic lightshow by HMS Queen Elizabeth during the fleet flagship’s visit to Glen Mallan in Scotland



Dolphins joined HMS Tamar off Portland as the Batch 2 River-class offshore patrol vessel carried out training. Picture: LPhot Alex Ceolin



A member of the Shore Reconnaissance Team from 30 Commando photographed in the Arctic by PO Phot Si Ethell



LPhot Belinda Alker photographed personnel from HMS Protector as they pulled sampling equipment across the ice as the patrol ship carried out ice-ramming trials in the Arctic



HMS Lancaster is photographed by LPhot Dan Rosenbaum being blasted by snow during a winter storm in the Baltic



LPhot Will Haigh was on hand to capture Royal Marines from 45 Commando as they fired mortars during an exercise on Salisbury Plain

Sentinel safeguards 960 ships

FOUR hundred million tonnes of cargo – fuel, food, vehicles, white goods – were safely transported thanks to a Royal Navy-led operation in the Gulf.

Over four months the international Operation Sentinel task group has ensured nearly 1,000 merchant ships sailed safely through two hot spots without incident.

The naval force – which at times has included the Royal Navy's Gulf-based frigate HMS Montrose as well as the former HMS Clyde, now serving with the Bahraini Navy – was commanded from March to July by Commodore Adrian Fryer and his international staff.

He's now handed over tenure of the mission, which is run from Bahrain, to fellow Brit Commodore Gordon Ruddock.

Sentinel is chiefly responsible for the safe passage of shipping through two key narrows or 'choke points': the Bab al Mandeb at the foot of the Red Sea and Strait of Hormuz.

Around 50 ships a day pass through the BAM, 115 sail into and out of the Gulf every 24 hours: tankers, gas carriers, container ships, car carriers.

Should either become blocked or unsafe for merchant shipping the impact on the UK alone – which relies on regular supplies of liquid natural gas from the Gulf for example – would be severe, while this spring's accidental blockage of the Suez Canal cost global trade more than £280m per hour, or £6bn per day.

Under Cdre Fryer, the task group has kept an eye on 960 merchant ships which fly the flag of the nations committed to Operation Sentinel's parent body, the International Maritime Security Construct: UK, US, Albania, Bahrain, Estonia, Lithuania, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Those 960 ships passed safely through both straits, carrying 400 million tonnes of cargo – slightly less than the total amount of cargo passing through UK ports every year – to their destination as a result.

The task force also sends out around 2,500 radio messages every month providing the latest updates and warnings about potential dangers.

Cdre Ruddock vowed to continue the work of his predecessor given the vital nature of the task force's to the region and global economy.

"Anything that rocks the confidence in nations' ability to sustain stability within our communities needs to be taken seriously," he said.

"CTF Sentinel is charged with executing its mission diligently and does its part to keep open the arteries of trade in this region."

Killer touch added to HMS Severn

HMS Tamar and Spey may dazzle, but HMS Severn vanishes – that's the theory at any rate as the patrol ship becomes the third RN vessel to revert to an historic paint scheme.

Ahead of her recommissioning ceremony in London, as *Navy News* went to press, the ship received the 'Western Approaches' livery – as applied to U-boat killers through much of World War 2.

The combination of blue-grey and green-grey on a background of white and light grey was first applied to destroyer HMS Broke in 1940 and was subsequently 'worn' by ships operating in the namesake approaches – extending about 1,000 miles from the UK into the Atlantic – to make it difficult for German U-boat commanders to spot them, especially in heavy seas.

HMS Severn (pictured below leaving Falmouth by Bob Sharples) is the first vessel to receive the paint job since World War 2 and while radar makes the use of maritime camouflage largely irrelevant, it is a tribute to sailors of the Battle of the Atlantic who operated in the same waters Severn regularly ploughs.

"Dazzle paint is really World War I, designed to confuse the enemy through a periscope or range finder," explained Commander Phil Harper, Severn's Commanding Officer. "This scheme is designed to camouflage, to hide ships at sea."

It was applied in Falmouth Docks by the same team who gave HMS Tamar and Spey their new/old look in time for their deployment to the Indo-Pacific region at the end of the month.

By then, their first generation sister Severn will officially be back in the RN family.

Although the Portsmouth-based ship has been fully operational since July last year following comprehensive regeneration, she's not been able to hold a formal recommissioning service; lockdowns and Covid restrictions have repeatedly scuppered plans, but her date on the Thames is now set in stone.

Severn was decommissioned in October 2017 after 14 years' service, chiefly patrolling UK fishing grounds to ensure trawlers were sticking to regulations.

However, 12 months later she was later deemed too important to UK defence to be disposed of; in November 2018 the Secretary of State announced that she would return to the Fleet.

That she did last summer following a refit and regeneration. It's the first time a Royal Navy vessel has been brought back to life since the Falklands conflict in 1982.

HMS Severn's primary role in her second life is a combination of navigation training, protection of UK waters and fishery protection.

Since returning to active service she has conducted six Fleet Navigator Officer Courses and one Specialist Navigator Course, training over 50 navigators, including international students from Chile and New Zealand.



Heading out

SO THAT's two out and two coming in.

The three-yearly cycle of trading minehunters in the Gulf for their counterparts has come around again.

Arriving in their home of Bahrain around now – and remaining there until at least 2023 – are Her Majesty's Ships Middleton and Bangor.

And home by the time our next edition arrives in your letterboxes, HMS Brocklesby and Shoreham.

All have faced journeys of 6,000 to reach their respective destinations – meeting up en route to transfer any Gulf-specific kit and for the returning crews to pass on useful information and tips to their successors.

HMS Bangor is home to Crew 8 from the 1st Mine Countermeasures Squadron. They been on board for a year in preparation both for the journey and the mission once they get to Bahrain.

The 45 men and women aboard have taken the 600-tonne vessel from the depths of maintenance through to a fully-operational warship after completing training.

She's got all her hi-tech sensors and equipment finely tuned on the NATO ranges in Stavanger, Norway.

And she's paid a visit to her namesake port – the one in Northern Ireland, not Wales – to catch up with friends and affiliates before heading off to the Middle East.

"It's been a very busy year for Crew 8 and HMS Bangor," said Lieutenant Commander Rob Couzens, the ship's Commanding Officer.



● HMS Bangor deftly manoeuvres as she leaves the jetty in Faslane on a beautiful day on Gareloch and (top) Middleton strikes out into the Solent in equally-fine weather

"We started with getting the ship ready to proceed to sea after a very in-depth maintenance period, conducted operational sea training which tested the ship and crew to extremes – all while dealing with the effects of Covid and the difficulties that created including separation from loved ones."

"Crew 8 has fought hard and got HMS Bangor ready to deploy on operations and we are all very much looking forward to our transit out to the Gulf and what the rest of the year has in store for us."

Middleton too arrives in the Gulf after an extended refit period which sees her bazing a trail for the minehunting community courtesy of new tech installed: ORCA, which improves the Hunt-class ship's ability to locate

and destroy mines.

Petty Officer Luke Brady, one of the ship's two Mine Hunting Directors, said: "ORCA makes it so much easier to find and identify underwater contacts."

"This means we can classify objects as threatening or non-threatening without necessarily having to send our remote-controlled submersible, Seafox, to investigate further, saving us time and allowing us to focus on clearing genuine mines."

Covid restrictions prevented a traditional departure ceremony, Commodore Tim Neild CBE, Commander Surface Flotilla, addressed the crew before they departed, and family and friends gathered on the sea front to wave-off loved ones.

The mission for all four of the RN's Gulf minehunting force – plus mother ship RFA Lyme Bay and a specialist staff – is to



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Down, down, deeper & down

BEFORE leaving Bahrain, divers from HMS Shoreham 'christened' the world's deepest man-made pool ahead of its official opening.

The team from the minehunter were invited to plunge 60 metres – 197ft – to the bottom of Deep Dive Dubai to showcase the UAE's newest tourist attraction, which also doubles as a safe training environment for divers of all abilities.

The divers – normally found conducting fingertip searches of the Gulf seabed for mines or placing explosive devices on unexploded ordnance to render it safe – took advantage of their ship's visit to the nearby port of Jebel Ali to test the waters of Deep Dive Dubai, days before it opened to the public.

The visit was prompted by Leading Diver Liam Pullman who asked the attraction's bosses if there was a hyperbaric chamber on site.

Although Shoreham is fitted with such a chamber – to treat divers in the event of decompression sickness – it's always useful to know where these rare facilities can be found ashore.

Contact with Deep Dive Dubai snowballed and, although the attraction wasn't quite open, led to the RN team being invited to enjoy some leisurely activities whilst testing their tanks, stepping away from their day-to-day routine.

Set in an abandoned sunken city ready to be explored, state of the art lighting and sound systems created alternative ambiances around the facility, offering an exciting change of scenery – and considerably clearer waters – from operating in the Gulf and Arabian Sea.

Filled with 14 million litres of fresh water at a very pleasant 30°C, the man-made pool is 15 metres deeper than any counterpart around the world. Some 56 cameras are positioned at various depths to provide keepsake mementos.

"Our drills always have to be up to scratch. Clearance divers are trained to dive to profound depths in zero visibility, on a closed-circuit rebreather system and go up against magnetically and acoustically activated mines," said 28-year-old Liam.

"Getting the chance to practise them in a world-class facility like this was such a fantastic opportunity for the team and me.

"Where we usually dive you can barely see your hand in front of your face. Here you can see all the way down to 60 metres."

Pictures: Jarrod Jablonski, Deep Dive Dubai

and heading back



● Commodore Ed Ahlgren thanks Shoreham and Brocklesby's crews for their endeavours and wishes them Godspeed, before Shoreham leads the way home (top) as Brocklesby's crew perform Procedure Alpha (above right)

remain at the top of their game, ready to locate and neutralise underwater devices should anyone try to threaten the safe passage of merchant shipping in a part of the world key to the UK's economy and interests.

In addition, the force frequently works alongside Britain's allies and partner nations in the region supporting wider regional security, honing their ability to work seamlessly with other navies, and flying the flag for the UK at international events.

All of which Brocklesby and Shoreham have done with aplomb.

To give an idea of how busy these small but key warships are, Brocklesby alone has sailed 150,000 nautical miles, completed six crew changes (all

40+ sailors trade places with UK-based counterparts every few months) and taken part in 18 operations and exercises.

And we haven't even mentioned how tough the weather conditions are (it was 40°C when the pair left Bahrain).

They departed the UK Naval Support Facility almost three years to the very day that they arrived in Bahrain.

The ships sailed with praise from the Royal Navy's senior officer in the region ringing in sailors' ears.

"HMS Brocklesby and HMS Shoreham have done a tremendous job over the course of their three years in the Gulf, protecting global shipping from underwater threats," said Commodore Ed Ahlgren, UK Maritime Component

Commander.

"These ships have been crewed by many hands over that time, always with the highest levels of skills and professionalism, their operational success is testament to the quality of the Royal Navy's world-class minehunting community."

In recent months, the pair have had one eye fixed firmly on the future: Brocklesby played a key role in the development of the latest autonomous systems, likely to replace the current generation of ships, whilst Shoreham's previous crew returned home to Scotland to begin conversion to the Royal Navy's new autonomous Mine Hunting Capability.

"Brocklesby has been home to just over 190 sailors in her time out here and been a real

driving force in providing a forward presence, trialing autonomous systems, as well as delivering a mine-hunting contingency capability," said Lieutenant Commander Dan Lee who's bringing the ship home to Portsmouth with Crew 6 from the city's 2nd Mine Countermeasures Squadron.

Faslane beckons for Shoreham. "It has been a great experience to operate out here, and I'm grateful to everyone who has supported us throughout," said Lieutenant Commander Rich Kemp, in charge of Crew 5 1st Mine Countermeasures Squadron.

Once the two UK-bound ships reach home they'll undergo a period of maintenance before rejoining the fleet in 2022.

Pictures: LPhot Kevin Walton,



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CAN'T YOU HEAR...



A DAWN beach assault and attack on an airfield brought the curtain down on Royal Marines' involvement in Australia's biggest military exercise.

Bravo Company, 40 Commando, 'fought' alongside comrades from the host nation, plus the USA and Japan on the northern Queensland coast as Exercise Talisman Sabre reached its climax.

Few workouts around the globe match the exercise either in scale or scope as it involves air, sea and ground forces across a vast area, staged every two years.

The Norton Manor-based marines took part in the 2019 exercise and once again accepted the invite as part of a wider package of training in Australia.

Covid restrictions limited overseas boots on the ground in 2021 to 2,000 personnel, otherwise the fortnight-long exercise was impressive in its scale and scope, extending from the Coral Sea along several hundred miles of the Queensland coast into the hinterland, and (less tangibly) into space and cyberspace.

As for firepower, well basically non-stop heavy metal thunder, Down Under: tanks, F-35s, F-18s, assault ships, Patriot missiles, B-52s, howitzers, gunships, bombs, cannons, mortars and HiMARS.

HiMARS is the US military's impressive multiple-rocket system – for World War 2 buffs, think Red Army Katyushas/Stalin's Organs on steroids: a five-tonne truck carrying a launcher for up to half a dozen missiles able to strike at targets as close as 1½ miles away... or as distant as 180 miles.

Directing some of that fire and fury were artillerymen from 29 Commando who were invited to join Australian and US Marine Corps counterparts on the ranges at Shoalwater Bay.

It's the task of forward observers and Joint Terminal Attack Controllers of bringing a devastating hail of iron and lead accurately down on enemy positions.

And what a selection of air and naval weaponry was at their disposal – mostly aimed at uninhabited Townshend Island.

Gunner Sam Rees, who's attached to 40 Commando, relished the opportunity. "Training with naval gunfire – which I don't think I'll have the opportunity to do again – was really good. I really enjoyed it," said Sam.

"It was different from what I normally do. It was good working with the different nations out there, to see how they do things differently.

"I was calling in the missiles and the rockets on the helicopters – I'd say it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Despite being scaled down by the pandemic, there were still 17,000 personnel involved from seven allied nations (Canada, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand

completed the septet).

It was all played out in the depths of the Australian winter – the equivalent of late January back in the UK – with temperatures in the 20s. That's Celsius, not Fahrenheit...

Living and operating in the field side-by-side with allies not only introduced troops to different tactics and kit but also ration packs and lingo.

"I do appreciate the witty banter from the British and Australian side, but as far as our tactical and technical proficiencies, I think we are very similar," US Marine Corps Captain Kurt James who was directing the fire support alongside the commando gunners.

He tucks into the MRE (Meal Ready to Eat – also dubbed Meal Rarely Edible/Meal Rejected by Everyone), while Aussies delight in the CR1M (Combat Ration One-Man) for which you require one Field Ration Eating Device (FRED – a spoon-cum-tin opener-cum-bottle opener).

And the delights inside? Well, there was a considerable debate over the merits of the Americans' jalapeño cheese spread and Australia's Bega cheese in a can...

Certainly Gunner Rees was impressed with the fare served to our Commonwealth cousins in the field.

"Amazing! I'm gonna take some with me for the next exercise," he said.

Talisman Sabre reached its climax nearly 400 miles up the coast around the sleepy coastal village of Forrest Beach and the small town of Ingham – the subject of a combined assault by Australian, American, British and Japanese amphibious forces.

Or as 40 Commando cheekily described it: "A day at the seaside."

Locals watched the silhouettes of landing craft ferrying troops and kit ashore from HMAS Canberra – a sort of hybrid HMS Albion/HMS Ocean – and HMAS Choules (the former RFA Largs Bay, named after Australia's last WW1 veteran) as the sun rose over the eastern seaboard.



BEACH BOYS: 40 Commando and allies move ashore on a landing craft as part of a dawn assault



ON TRACK: Bootnecks moving inland after crashing ashore on a Queensland beach



CAN'T YOU HEAR THAT THUNDER?



SCOPING: A commando calls in air support to hit enemy positions during Exercise Talisman Sabre



YOU CAN HEAR THIS THUNDER: US Army and Marines launch rockets at the Shoalwater training area



TACTICAL TACHE: A soldier of 29 Commando in the thick of it during exercises calling in air support

Red, blue and green lights on the shore – carefully positioned by the pre-landing force – guided the craft to their disembarkation points.

Marine Matthew Owen, who's spent several weeks aboard the Canberra was in the first assault wave.

"The landing craft were different to ours," Matthew said.

"It was pretty deep when we got off, though back home they would probably drop us out further."

Once ashore, the force was expected to push ten miles inland – on foot or in armoured personnel carriers landed by the amphibious force – and capture the airfield at Ingham, to serve as an 'air head' for future operations.

Further down the coast at Bowen, Royal Marines accompanied Australian and Japanese soldiers in a night assault on a former coal processing plant before clearing the town's showground of 'enemy' forces after US Marines had seized the local airfield, swooping in aboard Osprey tiltrotors.

The goal of Talisman Sabre is to make sure that whenever the participants are working together, they are all reading from the same playbook – probably never more important than in an amphibious assault.

"These types of skills don't come easily, they take a lot of training to make sure that our people are highly capable," said Australian Major General Jake Ellwood, in charge of his nation's Deployable Joint Force Headquarters. You can't take for granted that you can just do it on the fly; it's something that must be worked at."

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SLING INTO ACTION



The nation's flagship turned to Del Boy to support its mission to the western Pacific Rim.

HMS Queen Elizabeth dispatched tanker RFA Tidespring on a rapid 'Del Boy Run' into Singapore to pick up all the supplies for the nine-ship task group for the next leg of its maiden deployment across some 3,000 miles of ocean from the Malay peninsula to the island of Guam.

The tanker sailed into the naval base at Sembawang in Singapore for a whistle-stop stock-up, before rejoining the task group to pass those supplies around the force – known in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary as a Del Boy Run (short for 'delivery boy run' rather than any connections with David Jason and his crafty Cockney wheeler-dealer).

Although most media focus is on the warships, F-35 Lightning jets and air power at the heart of the task group, crucial to the seven-month deployment are two unsung Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships: Fort Victoria and Tidespring.

The former is a one-stop-shop providing most of the group's needs – fuel, food, ammunition, spare parts, replacement engines and the like – while fleet tanker Tidespring focuses on supplying the warships with fuel, although she also carries fresh water, food and stores.

There were 31 pallets of food for the flagship alone including 3,500 litres (61,60 pints) of UHT milk and half a tonne of pasta ready to be loaded aboard Tidespring

And there were further pallets of food for RFA Fort Victoria (four), HMS Kent (three), HMS Richmond (five) and the Dutch ship HNLMS Evertsen (six)... plus six for Tidespring herself, and stocks for the ship's NAAFI shop to boot.

Also awaiting collecting: 240 sacks of mail – a mainstay of morale across the task group with letters and parcels from home – 20 pallets of spare parts to fix items and machinery throughout the force and 55 pallets of general stores/supplies for Fort Victoria, which is the group's 'floating warehouse'.

Everyone aboard the tanker – from her Commanding Officer Captain 'Dickie' Davies through to the entire 'deck department' and Royal Navy personnel from 1700 Naval Air Squadron, normally responsible for helicopter operations – chipped in with the loading effort.

“““

The fact we achieved such a feat of self-sustainment while operating 8,000 miles from home... is all the more remarkable

Captain 'Dickie' Davies

Once Tidespring had caught up with the task group, it took two days to distribute the deliveries around the group.

It took three hours for Merlin helicopters to ferry 52 loads of supplies to HMS Queen Elizabeth – slung in huge netted bags beneath the aircraft... while simultaneously refuelling both the carrier and the HNLMS Evertsen... while F-35B Lightnings were being launched... and another two-and-a-half hours to deliver supplies to HMS Kent and the Dutch frigate.

"The difficulty here was moving the fresh produce from the containers on the main deck to the flight deck but with a lot of joint effort, they were brought via the stores ramps and the lift into the hangar where they were 'netted up' and covered in freezer covers to keep them cool in very hot and humid temperatures," explained Capt Davies.

The final replenishment was a more traditional line transfer of 80 nets of supplies passed to RFA Fort Victoria... which was replenishing HMS Defender at the time.

The loads were shifted in just 102 minutes after dark – and with the entire formation turning in company to remain clear of a squid fishing vessel plying its trade.

Although such operations are bread and butter for both the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary, they require a huge logistical effort stretching all the way back to the UK, underlining the national effort supporting the Carrier Strike Group 21 deployment.

The Merlin transfer – known as a Vertical Replenishment or VERTREP – proved to be particularly impressive.

"This was the first time in serving memory a UK Strike Group had vertically replenished 25 tonnes of fresh provisions, essential stores, F-35B spares and two tonnes of mail from a Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel to multiple Royal Navy and partner ships," said Commander Jenny Curwood, the task group's logistics commander.

"The fact we achieved such a feat of self-sustainment while operating 8,000 miles from home, concurrently launching F-35B jets on blue water operations, is all the more remarkable, but just another day's work to continue sustaining this Strike Group at sea and at reach from the UK."

The bulk of the task group is now in Guam in the Pacific enjoying a few days break from operations.



RFA Tidespring and a Merlin Mk4 helicopter deliver stores to the Carrier Strike Group. Picture: POPhot Jay Allen

Pictures: POPhot Jay Allen and LPhot Dan Rosenbaum

Turn over for more updates on the Carrier Strike Group



Main image: HMS Queen Elizabeth conducts a RAS with RFA Tidespring and HNLMS Evertsen. Below left: Carrier Strike Group ships train with the Indian Navy. Pictures: PO Phot Jay Allen and LPhot Unaisi Luke



INDIAN SUMMER FOR CARRIER STRIKE GROUP

THE UK's Carrier Strike Group has completed its first major workout since entering the Indian Ocean.

Led by flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth, the task group sailed with the Indian Navy for a range of exercises in the Bay of Bengal.

The series of close manoeuvres and drills saw the Royal Navy aircraft carrier, frigates HMS Kent and Richmond, RFA support ship Fort Victoria, the Dutch frigate HNLMS Evertsen and US Navy Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS The Sullivans sail with the Indian destroyer INS Ranvir, frigate Satpura, corvettes Kulish and Kavaratti and replenishment ship INS Jyoti.

Over the course of a busy two days, the ships conducted a range of air, surface and sub-surface exercises. In total, 12 ships took part in the training along with more than 30 aircraft and 4,500 personnel.

Leading Engineering Technician Jagjeet Singh Grewal is a Marine Engineer on HMS Queen Elizabeth and works to ensure the carrier's F-35 Lightning jets and helicopters are safely fuelled for flying operations.

His family have a long history in the Indian military. He



said: "It feels good to be exercising with the Indian Navy as we have worked with many nations so far."

"It is good to know I am maintaining my family links while working with the Indian military. My grandfather and grandfather-in-law served alongside the British Army in the Second World War and received a Mention in Despatches, the Burma Star, Africa Star, War Medal and Defence Medal. My father served in the Indian Air Force and currently my wife's brother and uncle are serving in the Indian Navy."

The aim of the exercise was to see how the UK and Indian navies could work closely together, with both countries committed to freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean and surrounding regions.

Commodore Steve Moorhouse, Commander United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group, said: "As HMS Queen Elizabeth and her Carrier Strike Group cross the Indian Ocean, it is only natural that we should exercise with the



Indian Navy.

"Britain and India are two prosperous and outward looking democracies, committed to security, freedom and the rule of law, here in the Indian Ocean and beyond. The best way to achieve this is through active maritime partnership, with navies that are ready and able to work together."

THE next phase of a busy programme at sea has begun for the UK's Carrier Strike Group as they left the Mediterranean and headed east.

The task group led by Portsmouth-based carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth has spent the past few weeks working with allied and partner nations in the Indo-Pacific region.

For many of the ships, their transit has been without port stops (see page 19 on how they managed to stay at sea) giving them maximum time at sea to conduct a range of exercises and operations.

After training with the Indian Navy, the ships continued east – passing through the Strait of Malacca (between Malaysia and northern Indonesia).

While some of the UK ships practised manoeuvring with the Royal Malaysian Navy and vessels from Singapore, HMS Richmond carried out training with a frigate from Thailand and their helicopter.

Cdr Hugh Botterill, Commanding Officer of the Type 23 frigate, said: "HMS Richmond's interaction with Thailand is an important part of the Carrier Strike Group 21 deployment, demonstrating the UK's commitment to ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) co-operation."

"The Indo-Pacific is critical to the UK's economy and security, and Richmond is proud to be playing our part in building regional partnerships."

"During our time in the vicinity of Phuket we completed an exercise with Royal Thai Navy frigate HTMS Kraburi and their S-76B helicopter. Though any direct engagement was curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we enjoyed this brief professional collaboration with our Thai colleagues."

For HMS Queen Elizabeth, she passed through the Strait of

PASSAGE TO THE PACIFIC



From left: HMS Kent conducts a RAS with RFA Fort Victoria. HMS Defender takes part in a live firing exercise. HMS Queen Elizabeth sails with Malaysian ship KD Jebat

Pictures: PO Phot Jay Allen and LPhot Dan Rosenbaum

Malacca with Malaysian frigate KD Lekiu before meeting up with Singapore frigate RSS Intrepid, corvette Unity and landing platform dock Resolution.

Commodore Steve Moorhouse, Commander UK Carrier Strike Group, said: "The Royal Navy has huge affection for Singapore based on our history together, but Singapore is also a beacon of enterprise in a region that is growing in strategic importance.

"We are grateful to Singapore for supporting an important logistics stop for RFA Tidespring as we continue our programme at sea."

That logistical stop meant Tidespring was able to top up the other ships with vital stores including spare parts, fuel and mail. Frigate HMS Kent took more than 900 cubic metres of fuel from both Tidespring and RFA Fort Victoria.

Deputy Logistics Officer, Lieutenant Ollie Tribe said: "A lot of preparation and, at times, dynamic problem-solving is required to ensure we can remain at sea and ready to deliver operational effect, especially for a deployment of this magnitude.

"Receiving food, fuel, medical supplies, engineering

stores, personnel movements and much more; all of which are essential and need careful coordination. It is logistics that allows us to sustain operations anywhere in the world."

Like Kent, many of the ships of the Carrier Strike Group spent some time alongside in Guam for some rest and recuperation.

The journey to Guam gave HMS Queen Elizabeth's air wing of British and American F-35B strike fighters to prove their ability to conduct a high tempo of flight operations across the open ocean.

Captain James Blackmore, Commander of the Carrier Air Group, said: "The ability to launch, recover and sustain flying at distance from land is demanding. For the pilot, there is no option to divert to friendly airfields: the only place they can land is back on the carrier.

"Conducting these operations, day and night, for weeks at a time, is testament to the skill of the aircrew, the competency of the Strike Group and our confidence in the reliability of our aircraft.

"Few other navies can do this, particularly while simultaneously operating helicopters and replenishing at sea. It gives the Royal Navy the ability to operate at a time and place of our choosing, offering true flexibility and freedom of manoeuvre."

As Navy News went to print the CSG was in the second week of exercises with US allies

which started with F-35 stealth jets and warships unleashing their firepower during high-octane live firing.

HMS Queen Elizabeth, HMS Kent, HMS Defender and HNLMS Evertsen of the CSG – which is currently on a seven-month deployment to Indo-Pacific and back – linked up with the Expeditionary Strike Group 7 and the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit in the Philippine Sea in waters close to an uninhabited tropical island for two days of intensive gunnery training.

The windswept Farallon de Medinilla outcrop – in the middle of the Mariana Islands in the western Pacific – was struck by weapons fired from three F-35 jet squadrons (two from HMS Queen Elizabeth and the other from amphibious assault ship USS America) and the naval guns of HMS Kent, Defender and HNLMS Evertsen.

This barrage was called in by specialists from the United States Marine Corps – known as Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) – who landed on the island tasked with coordinating firepower from the F-35s and warships, bringing a hail of lead and steel down on targets across the island.

This was the fiery opening phase of two weeks of training with US allies for the UK Carrier Strike Group, who are fresh from a port visit to Guam, the largest and southernmost of the Mariana Islands.

The intensity of the exercises increased throughout the two-day training, with air support being drawn in from F-35s on the first day before the CSG ships arrived offshore the following morning and established communications.

The training wrapped with F-35B, mortars and naval

gunfire being coordinated together in an impressive showing of firepower.

Lieutenant Commander Conrad Rolfe, one of HMS Kent's Principal Warfare Officers, said: "It was fantastic to demonstrate the ability to coordinate joint fire support with US Expeditionary Strike Group 7 today, making use of ships from the UK and the Netherlands, as well as F-35Bs. And what an amazing way to conduct my first live Medium Calibre Gun firing."

US Marines landed on the island and set up mortar positions, before establishing radio communications with the force of allied ships spread out across the waters west of the island.

From there, the marines radioed in targets for Kent, Defender and Evertsen to launch salvos at from their naval guns, the 4.5in Mark 8 for the British ships and Oto Melara 127 mm/54 dual-purpose gun of the Dutch ship.

"It was a privilege to take part in this joint exercise which showed how HMS Defender can quickly and seamlessly integrate into any multi-national task group and contribute effect," said Commander Vincent Owen, Defender's commanding officer.

"For HNLMS Evertsen, it was a unique opportunity to conduct live joint fires with UK and US partners," said Royal Netherlands Navy Commander Rick Ongerling, Evertsen's commanding officer.

"It is seldom that this variety of nations and weapons systems have the opportunity to train together.

"It was awesome to witness the combined firepower."

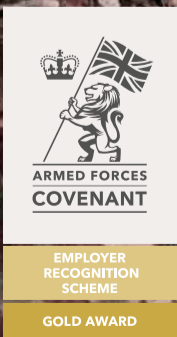




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Twins reunited online to celebrate passing-out

TWIN sisters Jess and Amy McLenaghan were reunited by the power of modern communications for the latter's pass-out parade as an air engineer.

As newly-qualified Air Engineering Technician Amy, left, stood to attention along with her class from 764 Initial Training Squadron at HMS Sultan, a video message of congratulations was beamed from the UK's flagship.

Jess, pictured right, completed the same course just over a year ago and is now maintaining the Merlin Mk2 anti-submarine helicopters of 820 Naval Air Squadron aboard

HMS Queen Elizabeth in the Indo-Pacific.

"I'm so proud to see you pass out of HMS Sultan," Jess told her twin. "Throughout your course, I've seen how hard you've been working, but also how much you've enjoyed it."

Amy – who was taken by surprise by the message – was, understandably, delighted to see her sister.

"We both wanted to join the Royal Navy," she said. "We were both in the Sea Cadets for six years and our grandad was in the Army, so we had a military connection, plus we're from Portsmouth."

"Jess joined in May 2019 and it was so emotional as we'd never been apart before. We weren't used to it all then, I'm kind of used to it now, but I still miss her loads."

"There are pictures up of her here everywhere and it's a weird feeling. We haven't spoken much since she's been away, but she has told me how much she's enjoying it and how excited she is about me doing the same, I'm just so proud of her."

Having learned the fundamentals of aircraft and helicopter maintenance at Sultan, Amy now moves to the Commando Helicopter Force.



Medic helps crash victims

A Royal Navy sailor covering a survival training exercise on Bodmin Moor did not hesitate to act when she heard of a serious car crash involving a family.

Medical Assistant Tayla Davin jumped into her duty vehicle with her medical kit and immediately headed for the crash, which closed the A30 dual carriageway in Cornwall just west of Jamaica Inn.

Two cars had collided and one had left the road – the emergency services took over an hour and half to free one of the drivers.

The 24-year-old arrived just after the first ambulance and helped the paramedic from South Western Ambulance Service deal with multiple casualties in the road.

She said: "I arrived not knowing what to expect. There was a family who had got out of the car. They were just on the ground but the driver was still trapped."

"I spoke to the paramedic who directed me to triage the family. I was just supporting them and giving them pain relief. They were complaining of back pain and there was fear they may have had spinal injuries."

"I helped package them up for transit to hospital, getting them prepared and making sure they had the spinal collars and pelvic

bindings."

As part of the medical team at RNAS Culdrose, MA Davin is trained in trauma and emergency care, and provides cover in case of emergencies at the airfield.

Earlier this year she was part of the military who assisted the NHS during the coronavirus pandemic, working in the intensive care unit at Royal Bristol Infirmary.

"This was the first road traffic collision I'd been to," she added.

"We do get training for these kinds of emergencies but we don't get much experience."

"I was feeling nervous because I hadn't experienced that situation. I've had casualties before, but it's always been one at a time – this was five or six at once."

"I know all the paramedics from the ambulance service and the doctors from the helicopter were very appreciative. While this was a one-off experience for me, it made me appreciate that they go through this day to day."

Firefighters from Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service freed the driver and the whole family was airlifted to Derriford Hospital by Cornwall Air Ambulance. MA Davin went

back on duty.

Chief Petty Officer Leigh Goodgame, the practice manager at RNAS Culdrose's Medical Centre, said: "MA Davin did not hesitate when she stepped forward to provide medical assistance to a family involved in a crash on the A30 in Cornwall, despite already being on duty to provide medical cover for a training exercise."

"This was the first road traffic collision this junior medical assistant has ever attended. She assisted the paramedic crews for more than two hours and dealt with multiple casualties. I know they were grateful for her assistance."

"MA Davin has already had a busy year. She contributed in helping the NHS during the coronavirus pandemic by working within the intensive care team at Bristol Royal Infirmary."

"Her professionalism, positive attitude in caring for others and her unassuming nature should be applauded and be an inspiration to others."

MA Davin joined the Royal Navy three and a half years ago. As well as working at RNAS Culdrose, she has served on the carrier HMS Prince of Wales.



Deep dive for Royal

PRINCE Michael of Kent visited the Royal Navy Submarine Museum in Gosport to catch up with developments over the past five years.

The prince last visited the museum which, like its parent National Museum of the Royal Navy, has recently re-opened with the lifting of pandemic restrictions, back in 2016.

So curators, conservators and the visitor welcome team gave Prince Michael, who was accompanied by Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Nigel Atkinson, a comprehensive overview of what's changed since. Among the highlights was the museum's newest exhibition, Silent and Secret which explores the history of the at-sea deterrent.

He also went aboard the Navy's first submarine Holland 1, to learn more about the conservation challenges facing the team looking after a vessel which commemorates its 120th anniversary later this year.

And the royal guest also paid his respects at the Wall of Remembrance in the memorial garden to see and view recent additions made possible by the kind generosity of the Friends of the Submarine Museum.

"The prince took time to chat with members of the museum's team of volunteer guides about the important work they do telling their first-hand experiences of the submarine service to our visitors and took a quiet moment visiting the Garden of Remembrance," said Sarah Dennis, Executive Director of Resources at the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

Banger race for vets

THE first ever Veterans Banger Rally is taking place this month to raise money for charities, including SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity.

Ex-Forces car 'banger' enthusiasts will be hitting the roads around England and Wales in an outlandish array of colourful vehicles to raise money for charity in the first ever Veterans Banger Rally.

The event will start at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on September 7 and is set to finish at the Royal British Legion club in Halton, Runcorn, on September 11.

John McGowan, the Rally organiser and a Royal Navy veteran, said: "I suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and depression after leaving the Navy and wondered what I could do to pick myself back up. This would be the same for many other service personnel as well when leaving the Forces."

"The idea for the rally came to me as a way for likeminded people to have enormous fun away from life's daily routine and re-experience the camaraderie of Service life while raising money for military charities. The Veterans Banger Rally was born."

For more information or to find out how to get involved, visit veteransbangerrally.co.uk or email veteransbangerrally21@gmail.com.

You can also visit their Facebook page at Veterans' Banger Rally 2021.

BZ to Kian for his grand effort



HAVING raised over £1,000 for the Great Tommy Sleepover, eight-year-old Kian Roche received a Commander British Forces Commendation from Commodore Steve Dainton, Commander British Forces.

Kian first found out about the Great Tommy Sleepover through the youth club based in HELM Point, Four Corners, Gibraltar.

The Sleepover is an event which challenges families to sleep outside for one night to raise funds for The Royal British Legion Industries. It also aims to increase awareness of homeless ex-servicemen and women.

Kian took his sponsor form home to his parents and asked them to help him raise money. As Kian's immediate family are veterans, they were keen to back this worthy cause.

His enthusiasm to support the Great Tommy sleepover was also mentioned to his family in the UK who willingly supported Kian in his fund-raising venture.

This was especially meaningful as Kian's uncle, also a service veteran, had received support from the Royal British Legion upon his return from Afghanistan.

He invited all his work colleagues to support his young nephew.

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

Naval Children's Charity

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

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

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



Marines deliver for cricket fans

From cakes and buns to Great North Run

A ROYAL Navy Chief Petty Officer from South Shields is set to take part in the Great North Run this month to raise money for the Down's Syndrome Association.

CPO Sean 'H' Hetherington, 47, was inspired to take part in the run by his sister, Sarah, who was born with Down's Syndrome.

The self-confessed lover of cakes and biscuits suffered a heart attack five years ago and on his road to recovery made the decision to live a healthier life, which included more physical activity.

He said: "I was inspired by my sister's ability to achieve, so decided to challenge myself to completing the Great North Run 2021 - something way out of my comfort zone."

"Sarah's disability has not stopped her from doing anything she has wanted to do; karate, swimming, badminton, getting a job, competing in the Special Olympics, crocheting blankets for dogs and nightclubbing to name but a few. To do all of this, has obviously been a challenge for Sarah but she perseveres to achieve her dreams."

Donations can be made on H's Virgin Money giving page at: <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/SeanHetherington>



Great help from Ronda

SENIOR rate Ronda Crampton-Reid was singled out by the most senior officer on the Rock for her efforts in Gibraltar in the wake of Brexit.

The Petty Officer Supply Chain received a Commander British Forces Commendation from Commodore Steve Dainton for assisting the Headquarters British Forces over the past six months.

Since January, Ronda has helped with the extra stores and their management stocked by British Forces in preparation for the UK's departure from the EU.

Vastly experienced and with a real zest to get things done, she drew upon her extensive supply chain knowledge, conducted a review of the main stores account, addressed legacy issues and developed new ways of working for the logistics team on the Rock.

She set her sights on delivering bespoke training and created user guides for reference purposes.

Her foresight, leadership and effective coaching and mentoring have led to improved collaborative working between all those involved with supplies and logistics on the Rock.

Cdre Dainton praised Ronda's "outstanding performance", saying she had gone far beyond the job description, resulting in "a significant improvement" in the warehouse and stock-taking.

ROYAL Marines from 40 Commando and Lympstone provided pomp, ceremony, and not least the match ball to a one-day cricket clash in Taunton.

Playing to a full house at the town's County Ground, the Band from the Commando Training Centre supplied the music and marching...

And the commandos from just up the road in Norton Manor provided the brawn to entertain the crowd ahead of Somerset's clash with Yorkshire in their Group B Royal London One-Day Cup encounter.

The team from 40 Commando organised hands-on activities involving some of their kit before showing that you don't need weapons to be lethal courtesy of a breathtaking display of some of their unarmed combat fighting skills.

The day was also a chance for a Royal Marines Cricket Team reunion hosted by Somerset County Cricket Club before 40 Commando produced a special match ball delivery.

The marines' appearance at the ground was the result of an initiative launched two years ago by Somerset County Cricket Club and 40 Commando to enable the two organisations to work together to help each other - and the wider community.

"It was fantastic to be able to host the Royal Marines - they were such an integral element of the matchday experience. It's absolutely crucial that we work collaboratively with our valued partners in order to be able to help them showcase everything that they have to offer," said cricket club Commercial Director Caroline Herbert.

"The Marines play a big part in our community and we look forward to working with them in the future and the benefits they bring to the region."

40 Commando's Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Andy Dow added: "40 Commando is an active member of the community and has a long-standing relationship with Somerset County Cricket Club. This event was the perfect opportunity to celebrate that relationship."

This year, members and supporters can expect to see Royal Marines from 40 attending various events and sharing their skills, as well as appearing on matchdays for a wider fanbase to enjoy.

As for the cricket... rain limited the match to 20 overs apiece with Yorkshire hitting 158/5 before the hosts responded, reaching their target with just five balls to spare for a five-wicket victory and two points in the bag.



Gruelling Dartmoor run



HMS Raleigh Warrant Officer First Class Stephen Scarratt took part in his first ultramarathon, running 36 miles across Dartmoor for charity.

Stephen, who runs the damage control/sea survival school at the Torpoint establishment, took on the Dartmoor Crossing ultramarathon to raise money for Breast Cancer Now.

He was spurred to help the charity after his wife Teresa was diagnosed with the disease earlier this year. She subsequently underwent surgery in March and is now making a good recovery.

The run started at Belston, on the northern edge of Dartmoor, and took runners through Postbridge, Hexworthy and Princetown towards the finishing line in Ivybridge.

It's by far the longest distance the 40-year-old from Plymouth has attempted after taking up running four years ago.

Competitors have 10½ hours to complete the distance and must carry a first-aid pack, survival bag, waterproofs, spare top and sufficient food and water, weighing in at around 6kg.

"The terrain is tough," says Stephen. "The first part is across the northern moor, which is all high and has a lot of bogs. The middle section is woods and then it's back on the open moor again and trails."

"It's quite a mixed bag, but I've done a lot of training up there."

"When they say you can experience all four seasons on Dartmoor in a day, I've been out there and done that during my training."

He had hoped to raise £200... but is already beyond £700. If anyone wishes to support him, visit: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/stephen-scarratt-dartmoor-ultramarathon>

Air engineers abseil in aid of RBL

A GROUP of enthusiastic Royal Navy Air Engineering Technicians from HMS Sultan abseiled 100 metres down the iconic Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth in aid of the Royal British Legion, in its centenary year.

Raising money under the nickname 'Operation Downfall', a total of nine students, who are undergoing Phase 2A training within Royal Naval Air Engineering and Survival Equipment School, completed the challenge along with two Divisional Officers who came along to support.

The event was organised by AET Adie Harris in memory of his grandfather Rodger Harris. A Royal Navy veteran, Rodger was also a champion and regular fundraiser for the RBL in the family's hometown of Corby, Northamptonshire.

Adie said: "I chose to support the Royal British Legion in this fundraiser as my grandad, who was ex-Royal Navy, heavily supported them."

"He sadly passed away while I was in Basic Training at Raleigh, so this is my way of honouring him. I am so glad to have the support of my class."

"The RBL supports people from right across the Armed Forces community, including veterans and their families, so anything we raise will go to a really good cause."

Claire Smith, Community Fundraiser for



Hampshire & the Isle of Wight at the Royal British Legion, said: "We would like to say a huge thank you to all those who completed this daring challenge to help raise funds for the RBL."

"This generous support will enable us to create better futures for the Armed Forces community, not just today but for the century to come."

Pictures: LPhoto Kevin Walton

Above left, the nine abseilers with Claire Smith, right, of the RBL; Right, Abseiler AET William Pool waves during his abseil

Summer fun for Clyde kids

CHILDREN of Naval Base workers took part in this year's Kings Camp.

The popular summer activity camps operated out of Lomond School Sports Hall with up to 100 kids passing through their doors each week to make new friends and take part in pastimes designed to promote an active, healthy lifestyle.

Sponsored by RNRMC and Captain of the Base, Captain Nick Gibbons, with grants provided by the RNRMC, the event provides a wide range of sports and activities for children aged five to 17 over the three weeks.

"I always look forward to Kings Camp taking place at Lomond School," said Chief Petty Officer Murray Anderson, who helped organise the event. "I love the energy from all the kids and it's clear from the outset all kids and staff alike thoroughly enjoy themselves. An example to us all. Full credit to all at RNRMC."



More chances to win award in photographic competition

ENTER your photos for this year's Peregrine Trophy.

Formed in 1919, the Royal Navy Photographic Specialisation is one of the oldest in the Service.

It has been recording the history of the Royal Navy for the nation in every major war and conflict since the end of World War 1. Since 1962 a competition has been held annually to recognise the best photographers in the Service.

For a number of years the RNRMC has sponsored the Friends and Family category, awarded for the best image depicting heart-warming moments between Naval Service personnel and their friends, family, children and loved ones. This year this category has been expanded to four entry groups:

- Royal Navy Professional Photographers
- Royal Navy Amateur Photographers, including Royal Marines, RFA and MoD Civil Servants
- General Public (over 18s)
- General Public (under 18s)

Prizes

- £300 Amazon vouchers – Royal Navy Professional Photographers
- £200 Amazon vouchers – Royal Navy Amateur Photographers, including Royal Marines, RFA and MoD Civil Servants / General Public (over 18s) / General Public (under 18s)

Rules

- A maximum of three images may be submitted. Entries must be accompanied with a completed entry form.
- Awarded for the best image depicting heart-warming moments between Naval Service personnel and their friends, family, children and loved ones.
- Service personnel can find out more detail and how to enter via RNTM.09-015/21.
- Instructions how to enter the general public groups is detailed below.
- The closing date for all categories is September 25. All imagery entered is to have been captured between May 1 2020 and Sept 15 2021.

An awards ceremony is being planned for later in the year.

For more information and to enter the competition, visit www.rnrmc.org.uk/royal-navy-photographic-competition

Cash for Scotty's Little Soldiers

A CHARITY for bereaved British Armed Forces children and young people, has been awarded a £15,000 grant from The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity and funding partner Greenwich Hospital.

Scotty's Little Soldiers was founded in 2010 and offers relief from the effects of bereavement to children and young people who have experienced the death of a parent who served in the Armed Forces.

The charity supports Army, Navy, Marines and RAF children from birth to 25 years old through Scotty's four Family Programmes.

Funding from RNRMC and Greenwich Hospital will go towards these programmes, specifically for the children of Royal Navy and Royal Marines service personnel, and help Scotty's fulfil their promise to enable bereaved Forces children and young people to access the very best emotional health and wellbeing support, have outstanding development opportunities and the chance to smile again.

Each of Scotty's Family Programmes has a specific purpose:

The **Smiles** programme is all about fun and engagement and includes activities, gifts and group events, which have the purpose of making bereaved Forces children and young people smile again and reminds them they aren't alone and are part of a supportive community.



The **Support** programme looks after emotional health and wellbeing and includes information and guidance on childhood bereavement for parents and carers, and 1:1 professional bereavement support for children and young people.

The **Strides** programme focuses on the education and development needs of bereaved Forces children and young people. This includes promoting a positive attitude to learning and providing opportunities to develop life skills. It also includes a range of small educational grants.

The **Springboard** programme provides support to young adults ages 18-25 and assists with opportunities

to develop their education and learning, build a career and enhance life skills.

The RNRMC is the principal charity of the Royal Navy. It exists to support sailors, Marines, and their families, for life.

Since 2007, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity has funded projects and facilities that support those who serve today.

It also works closely with partner charities, distributing millions of pounds annually to organisations which care for Royal Navy and Royal Marines children, families, and veterans.

Greenwich Hospital has been

supporting the Royal Navy since 1694 providing charitable support including annuities, sheltered housing, and education to serving and retired personnel of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines and their dependants.

Mandy Lindley, RNRMC Director of Relationships and Funding, said: "The RNRMC is committed to supporting the families of those serving in the Royal Navy and our work with Scotty's Little Soldiers is an important element of this."

"Our partnership has developed over the past few years and we are very pleased to award Scotty's Little Soldiers with a further £15,000 grant, which will enable Royal Navy children who have suffered awful loss to be supported by Scotty's excellent series of programmes."

Nikki Scott, Founder of Scotty's Little Soldiers said: "We are so grateful to RNRMC and Greenwich Hospital for their generous grant. We really value the relationship we have with them and their continued support."

"Their funding makes a huge difference to the children we support who face a number of challenges as a consequence of the death of their parent."

To learn more about Scotty's Little Soldiers visit: www.scottyslittlesoldiers.co.uk

Pascal completes cycle ride

A ROYAL Navy officer completed a 2,000km solo, unsupported cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats in aid of the Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity in support of military mental health.

Commander Pascal Patterson completed an epic cycle ride from Land's End to John O'Groats, stopping at military bases and wild camping along the way.

Cdr Patterson, 39, was originally due to complete the ride with fellow Stars and Spokes cyclist Lt Cdr Dan Waskett but went solo after his cycling partner was deployed on operations just seven days before the ride start date.

"Riding solo required me to adjust my approach, calling for an increase in both mental and physical resilience," said Cdr Patterson.

"I wanted to cycle via the three Navy base ports of Plymouth, Portsmouth and Faslane, this added an extra 600km to the standard Land's End to John O'Groats route.

"Mental health is increasingly important in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines community, for personnel and their families. I saw this as an

excellent opportunity to support the vital work done in this area," he added.

He and Lieutenant Commander Dan Waskett, originally planned to take on a 5,000km ride across the USA, however this has been postponed due to Covid.

In 2022 they will be riding entirely unsupported from San Diego (California) to St Augustine (Florida), across the USA from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

This ride will again raise funds and awareness for military mental health.

Pascal and Dan joined the Royal Navy on the same day in January 2005, and continue to serve.

Since joining, both have enjoyed varied and challenging careers as aircrew officers, deploying all around the world on frontline operations.

To sponsor Stars and Spokes, visit justgiving.com/fundraising/starsandspokes or follow them on starsandspokes.com or on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @starsandspokes

Supporting RN community

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity have been generously supported by the Edinburgh Military Tattoo's charitable wing since 2012.

Incredibly, this has remained unwavering throughout the pandemic and last year the RNRMC were awarded £71,000 by The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo (Charities), despite the event being cancelled.

Enduring support, such as that provided by the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo (Charities) Limited, meant that there was no disruption to the RNRMC's grants programmes, distributing £7 million over the course of last year.

At the outset of the pandemic last March, RNRMC Trustees approved the creation of a Hardship Grant to support those beneficiaries of the charity adversely affected by the crisis whose needs could not otherwise be met by emergency funds or measures put in place by local and central government, or by other charities.

To date, some 190 separate grants totaling in excess of £600,000 have been paid out through the Hardship Fund providing a genuine lifeline for some and making life more bearable for those contending with lockdown with a serving partner

deployed on operations.

As a result of these grants:

- computer equipment was provided to enable children from low-income beneficiary families to participate in virtual home-learning;
- thermal imaging equipment has been purchased and installed to help keep veteran care homes safe whilst enabling precious visits by loved ones;
- the purchase of small electrical items enabled Royal Navy veterans in sheltered housing to prepare meals in their own rooms whilst communal kitchens remain off-limits;
- passing-out parades have been live streamed to proud family members unable to attend in person;
- the RNRMC's contribution to the costs of Covid-related funerals has helped to give affected Royal Navy families the time and space to grieve properly and to come to terms with the terrible and tragic impact of the disease.

Without the generous and continued support of organisations such as the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, the RNRMC's ability to help to the Royal Navy community would certainly be reduced.



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THE baton of ensuring Britain's nuclear submarines remain undetected by our foes has been passed from one remote Scottish range to another.

Every class of Royal Navy nuclear submarine – from the prototype HMS Dreadnought through to the latest Astute-class hunter-killers – have used the ranges on the Isle of Rona to reduce the noise they make when submerged.

Now that task will be carried out at a new specialist facility a dozen miles away on the Scottish mainland at Applecross.

The Underway Noise Range at Rona – callsign 'Hotel Sierra' and located in the Raasay Inner Sound – was set up in 1959 as the existing noise ranges in Loch Goil and Loch Fyne were unsuitable for the new larger, faster nuclear submarines about to come into service.

The site was chosen because it offered relatively sheltered waters with good access for submarines.

Beyond ensuring several generations of boats were ready for front-line duties, the ranges have also been used to measure the noise emanating from torpedoes, including Tigerfish (in service from 1979-2004) and Spearfish, the current mainstay of the Silent Service.

And the noise ranging has also extended to the surface fleet with new aircraft carrier HMS Prince

of Wales among the most recent vessels to make use of the hi-tech facilities.

Any submarine being assessed sent two crew members ashore to work alongside the acoustic analysts and engineers to monitor the overnight ranging activities.

At times as many as 30 personnel could be found on site – provided with a seemingly endless supply of cakes and biscuits between the three main meals a day by the catering staff, plus some extra cakes to take back on board.

Submariners returned to their boat so well fed that they dubbed the terminal building 'The Land of Milk and Honey'.

Engineers spent 12 days on Rona and nine days off to support the ranging, although during lockdown they've been on the island for up to six weeks at a time.

As a thank-you for their dedication, they were presented Dolphins – typically reserved for qualified submariners – catching the Silent Service's trademark brooch in their teeth from a glass containing a tot of submarine whiskey.

Head of the Submarine Service
Commodore
Jim Perks

performed the honours of closing the old facility and, later in the day, commissioning its successor.

"For over 60 years the staff at the Rona Underway Range have been instrumental in ensuring UK submarines are ready to deploy on operations," he said. "Their skill and dedication in checking the signature of our submarines has allowed past and future submarine commanding officers to fully understand their boat's capability in delivering patrol aims."

"The new updated facility at BUTEC (North) will remain a key part of the generation of UK submarines now and into the future."

Plaques, a clock and barometer, plus other artefacts, historic pictures and memorabilia – including a seabed model of the underwater space – will be donated to the RN Submarine Museum in Gosport.



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A DROGUE parachute slows the descent of a Mk54 lightweight torpedo seconds after it was dropped by the new guardians of the UK's strategic deterrent.

A Poseidon P8 from 120 Squadron dropped the practice weapon into the Moray Firth – the last act in a simulated attack on a submarine.

It's the first time the American-built aircraft – a militarised version of Boeing's 737/800 airliner – has tested its primary weapon system.

As Poseidon is of US stock, she drops the Mk54, rather than the UK's standard lightweight torpedo Sting Ray (used extensively by the Fleet Air Arm and surface fleet).

It's 9ft long, a little over 12in in diameter and races through the water at speeds in excess of 40 knots,

delivering a blow of 108kg TNT to its target.

But not on this occasion. The ZP805 – known as Fulmar in a nod to Lossiemouth's 26-year spell as a Fleet Air Arm base, HMS Fulmar – launched a REXTORP: Recovering Exercise TORPedo.

With no propulsion and no warhead, it landed safely in the water and floated there until it was recovered.

Wing Commander James Hanson was at the controls of Fulmar for the drop and hailed it as a "major milestone in the Poseidon programme".

He continued: "This event was very significant for the anti-submarine warfare capability of the UK, proving the lethality of Poseidon.

"On the whole, we are going

from strength to strength here at Lossiemouth, working with our partners in the Royal Navy and across NATO."

Poseidon is just one layer of the defensive ring around the Navy's V-boat fleet, which also includes Merlin Mk2 helicopters from Culdrose, Type 23 submarine-hunting frigates from Portsmouth and Plymouth, and A and T-boat hunter-killers beneath the waves.

By the end of the year, the Poseidon fleet at Lossiemouth will be complete with the delivery of the final four aircraft.

Although owned and flown by the RAF, the Poseidons are a strategic asset given their mission, with RN personnel among the crew.



Poseidon swaps his trident for a torpedo

Picture by PO Phot 5i Ethell



A NEW type of task group is at the forefront of the Royal Navy's amphibious operations of the future and a feature video has been launched to explain exactly what it all means and how it works.

The two new 'Littoral Response Groups' have responsibilities the world over and restructures the RN's amphibious capability to make it better-suited for its current demands within UK defence and NATO.

These task groups are designed to continually place commandos where it matters most in the world, so they are constantly training with allies and are better located to react to world events, if required.

The video breaks down how this will work and can be viewed on Royal Navy and Royal Marines social media feeds – from Facebook to YouTube.

Earlier this year – from April to June – the first deployment of the Littoral Response Group (North) took place, as they headed to the Baltic and back, working with allies and partners along the way, as well as taking part in the annual Baltops exercises, the largest yearly workout of naval assets in the region.

This response group mission continued to develop the Littoral Response concepts and contributed to the continuing evolution of the UK's commando forces, which are centred on the Royal Marines.

Lieutenant Colonel Innes Catton, Commanding Officer of 45 Commando and Commander Land Forces for Littoral Response Group (North), said: "Routine operations for a Littoral Response Group could be anything from normal capacity building and partnering with our allies through to conducting special operations on behalf of UK Special Forces; and, of course, moving into crisis response, so anything from humanitarian aid, disaster relief through to limited intervention and, of course, to full war fighting against a peer adversary."

Captain Simon Kelly, Commanding Officer of HMS Albion and Commander Amphibious Task Group of Littoral Response Group (North), said: "The LRG has a responsibility that spans the whole of Europe that is in contrast to LRG South, which will deploy over the next couple of years which has a focus, I would say, on the other side of the Suez Canal all the way into the Indo-Pacific region."

"This is all part of the Royal Navy's forward presence programme, which sees units more permanently based forward around the world."

Check out the video at [YouTube.com/RoyalMarines](https://www.youtube.com/RoyalMarines).

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Farewell Tor



CREW of Q for Quebec acknowledge the waves from the few dozen folk who've made the trek to the 518ft summit of Glastonbury Tor.

This is the last time they – or anyone else for that matter – will have seen a green Merlin.

After two decades' service, first with the RAF, more recently in the hands of the Commando Helicopter Force, the last Mk3 carried out a flypast of key sites associated with the helicopter.

For two hours, Q for Quebec (ZJ132) performed a farewell tour of southern/south-west England before touching down at the Leonardo works in Yeovil ready for its metamorphosis.

There Q for Quebec will undergo

the transformation into a Merlin Mk4, the last of 18 machines to receive the upgrade the wings of the Royal Marines.

Over the past decade, the Commando Helicopter Force has upgraded its entire inventory of aircraft, replacing both the trusty Sea King and the nimble Lynx with 21st Century successors: Merlin and Wildcat.

While the Wildcat was designed and built for operations at sea from the outset, the Merlins were transferred to the Fleet Air Arm from the RAF.

The battlefield Merlin is faster, has a longer range and can carry more Royal Marines into action – two dozen troops, plus kit – than the venerable Sea Kings, which were

retired in 2016.

But to fully support the commandos on operations, the Merlins had to be 'marinised' – converted for flying at sea, including fitting a folding rotor head and a folding tail boom – to fit in warship hangars; three folded Mk4s have the same footprint as one unfolded Merlin.

Quebec's 'farewell tour' took it past Glastonbury Tor, Deptford Down on Salisbury Plain – where air and ground crew hone many of their skills – RAF Benson in Oxfordshire, home to the Merlins during their Air Force careers, then back briefly to Yeovil, before being handed over to the folks at Leonardo.

Six crew were along for the ride: aircraft captain Lieutenant Fred Durrant, pilot Lieutenant Commander

Ollie Trowman, crewmen Petty Officer Lewis Meadows and Sergeant Ross Howling RM, and two flight test engineers: Petty Officer Darren Riley from the Royal Navy and Mark Hazzard from Leonardo.

When the programme is completed Commando Helicopter Force will have 18 Mk4s with folding parts as well as a fully-modernised 'digital' (computerised) cockpit, sensors and instrumentation. It's anticipated that the remaining seven may be 'adapted for folding' at a later date.

The upgrade – turning the green Merlin Mk3 into the sea grey Merlin Mk4 – has proved to be both an engineering and organisational challenge as helicopters were needed for training and front-line duties... at the same time as needing revamping,

demanding a concerted co-ordinated effort by CHF, the Merlin Delivery Team from the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation and the helicopters' manufacturers.

A specialist group – the Merlin Fielding Team – was formed at the helicopters' home in Yeovilton to oversee the complex transition: engineers, aircrew, instructors and experts.

It was instrumental in ensuring that the Mk4s which emerged from the Leonardo factory were just what the two Merlin squadrons needed not just now, but for the next 20 years.

At the peak of the multi-million-pound programme, as many as 15 helicopters were in various stages of conversion.

Picture: Lee Howard

'Wonderful tribute' to RFA Capt Rob



FAMILY, friends, former colleagues and senior officers joined RFA Mounds Bay for a memorial service off Portland to remember a hugely-popular former commanding officer of the support ship.

Mounds Bay was Captain Rob Anders' final command of several RFA vessels, during a life dedicated to the sea, his family and Warrington Wolves.

So the ship was the obvious choice for a service celebrating his life – ended just before Christmas at the age of only 49 by a brain tumour – before his ashes were

committed to the deep.

Joining Capt Anders' widow Phillipa and the couple's children Nell and Will, were the head of the RFA Commodore David Eagles, his predecessor Commodore Duncan Lamb, and Director of Naval Force Generation, Rear Admiral Martin Connell.

As Mounds Bay left Portland Port, RFA Chaplain, Reverend Andrew Corness led a service of thanksgiving, with a moving eulogy delivered by Cdre Eagles, highlighting Capt Anders' devotion to his family and very successful sea-going career.

As Commanding Officer of Mounds Bay in September 2019, Capt Anders' was the first ship to arrive on the scene of devastation in the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian had battered islands with winds of up to 185mph, causing the worst natural disaster in the area in living memory.

In the days which followed, more than 6,000 people were helped by the ship's team – RFA, Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Engineers and Royal Logistics Corps and Fleet Air Arm – in some of the worst hit areas of Great Abaco Island and surrounding region.

As well as a busy professional life and duties as a husband and dad, Rob was also a keen Rugby League fan, a member of the Executive Board of RN Rugby League and an avid supporter of Warrington Wolves, 'The Wires' flag was flown from the yardarm of Mounds Bay throughout the ceremony.

"The events onboard Mount Bay have provided us with lasting memories and my kids and I are so humbled that today has been made possible," said Mrs Anders.

"A truly wonderful tribute to a much-missed husband and dad."

Picture: LPhoto Robert Oates



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Tampion idea keeps Hood alive

YOU can help keep the memory of the Royal Navy's greatest inter-war warship alive – by owning a replica piece of her.

Film producer and designer Andy Poulastides is recreating the tampions (or tompions) which once protected the guns of the Mighty Hood from the elements.

The originals plugged the muzzles of her eight 15in gun barrels – the main armament of the battle-cruiser – when not in use, to prevent sea and rain penetrating. Each one was adorned with the ship's badge – a black rook placing a claw on an anchor.

The tampions lie with the wreck and 1,415 souls at the bottom of the Denmark Strait after Hood's fateful encounter with the Bismarck in May 1941.

To mark the 80th anniversary of the tragedy, Andy (pictured below) came up with the idea to support the ship's association – which keeps alive the significance of Hood and her service to Britain, and sustain her link to today's RN.

He created a prototype solely from pictures, working out what it would look like in three dimensions. A 3D computer programme was then used to 'print' a version in resin, from which a mould was struck.

The full 15in brass tampion was created from that mould, in a process called 'cold-casting.' Several hours of hand-finishing, burnishing and painting followed – a process very like getting a ship's brass-work ready for an admiral's inspection.

The entire design and production process took over four months. Once ordered, a replica takes over 20 hours to cast and finish.

Just 51 tampions are being produced – to match the ship's pennant number. Each one will be made to order, numbered and unique, and presented with an explanatory document, along with a Letter of Recommendation from the President of the HMS Hood Association, Rear-Admiral Philip Wilcocks, whose uncle Eric was among those lost when the battle-cruiser blew up.

The replicas cost £850, with 20 per cent of the money raised going to support the work of the association.

To order one, visit www.admiraltystores.com or contact the association's honorary vice president Rob White on at rob@maritimefilmsuk.tv / 07771 837423.



Saluting courage

EIGHTY years to the day that sailors left Liverpool on 'the worst journey in the world', wartime Allies salute the sacrifices made on wartime Arctic convoys.

Representatives from the UK, United States, Canada and Russia were among those who gathered at St Nicholas' Parish Church in Liverpool to remember nearly 3,000 sailors who sacrificed their lives to deliver vital aid to the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945.

They ran the Nazi gauntlet and faced horrendous weather conditions – snow, ice, sub-zero temperatures, weeks of perpetual darkness in winter and little hope of rescue if they went in the water – to reach the ports of Murmansk and Archangel.

The mission – which began on August 12 1941 with the first convoy, Operation Dervish, sailing from the Mersey – was dubbed 'the worst journey in the world' by Winston Churchill.

The Royal Navy's senior engineer Rear Admiral Jim Higham and Regional Commander for Northern England and the Isle of Man Commodore Phil Waterhouse led tributes on behalf of the Senior Service alongside personnel from HMS Eaglet, Liverpool's Reservist unit.

They were joined by Defence Minister Baroness Goldie, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Minister Wendy Morton, military representatives from Russia, the USA and Canada – ships and personnel from the latter two nations took part in the convoys – and Liverpool's Lord Mayor among other dignitaries.

After the service wreaths were laid at the Arctic Convoys Memorial in the church grounds before participants moved to the nearby Western Approaches Museum, from where the battle against the U-boat was directed for most of World War 2.

"In a war of national survival, the operational and logistical challenges for the Arctic Convoys were tremendous and we should all admire the courage of both the Merchant Fleet and the Armed Forces as they faced the harshest conditions imaginable," said Lieutenant Colonel Guy Balmer RM, the RN's Deputy Regional Commander.

"From a local perspective, it demonstrated the depth of support the City of Liverpool has always, and will always, give the Armed Forces."

Commemorations concluded at Liverpool's town hall with a reception for 150 people, where two Arctic veterans the guests of honour.

The heavily-guarded Dervish convoy reached northern Russia without incident – it caught the Germans by surprise and they made no efforts to attack it.

But they did attack many of the subsequent 77 convoys which came within range of U-boats and German bombers based in occupied Norway.



From Dervish to Dorset

GIVEN the passage of time, there are few living links with Operation Dervish.

One can be found in the small Dorset town of Gillingham, where locals laid on a surprise for former sailor Horace Erridge to mark his 101st birthday.

Commander Rich Sturman – Commanding Officer of front-line Commando Merlin squadron 845 NAS – and logistics officer Lieutenant Commander Gary Turner made the half-hour journey from nearby RNAS Yeovilton to present Horace with a framed picture of the Royal Navy's flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth.

A supply rating, Horace was assigned to Britain's first aircraft carrier HMS Argus, working in the cipher room and he was also in charge of the air stores.

After missions to the Mediterranean, the carrier was dispatched to the Arctic in August 1941 on the first Russian convoy, delivering two dozen Hurricane fighters to Murmansk.

"My job was keeping records and stores down in the lower deck and I saw very little of the Arctic. We were at action stations, but we were escorted by the aircraft carrier



HMS Victorious and four destroyers and apart from rough seas it was really a quiet trip," Horace recalled.

"On the way, a team of RAF technicians worked flat out assembling the aircraft and as we approached Murmansk we could hear them as each plane was safely flown off from our flight deck by RAF pilots to a Russian air base."

Argus never returned to the Arctic, but the Russian Government has decorated Horace three times for his service, medals he wears proudly on his jacket alongside six

others presented by the UK Government for his World War 2 service.

Horace remained with Argus, which returned to the Mediterranean, before subsequently serving in West Africa and the Fleet Air Arm base at Inskip in Lancashire, where he met Hilda, a Petty Officer Wren who became his wife.

In quieter times, Horace played drums with the ship's band and with Royal Marines musicians and enjoyed hockey.

He left the Navy in 1946 but remained a reservist.

Picture: LPhot Dan Shepherd

Sixteen Royal Navy warships were lost and 1,944 Senior Service personnel were killed, while 85 of the 1,400 merchant ships which took part in the Arctic runs were sunk, a loss rate 17 times higher than in the Atlantic campaign. More than

800 merchant sailors died. Their sacrifice was not in vain. Over four years, they delivered four million tonnes of supplies to the Soviet war effort – about one quarter of the total aid they provided to the USSR between 1941 and 1945.

The 7,000 aircraft and 5,000 tanks, plus trucks, cars, fuel, medicines, metals and other raw materials helped the Soviets to defeat the Germans on the Eastern Front.

Picture: LPhot Kevin Walton



Surprise for WW2 vet Jack

WW2 DEMS gunner Jack Rapkins was recognised by his Plymouth RNA Branch shipmates for his dedication over the years.

The 96-year-old was surprised at the end of the AGM in the branch's temporary home of the China Fleet Country Club at Saltash.

The club's Chief Executive Officer Gordon 'Gee' Hannah – also from the gunnery world – gave an eloquent and informed speech before singling out the nonagenarian to receive the Certificate of Appreciation (and for good measure he threw in afternoon high tea at the club).

Jack joined the Royal Navy in 1942 aged 17 and trained as a gunner to serve on Defensively-Equipped Merchant Ships (DEMS) serving on convoys in the Arctic, Atlantic and Mediterranean.

It was in the latter that he experienced his worst hours as a sailor: watching on in horror from his gun platform, he witnessed eight troop ships go down while the convoy resolutely steamed on toward the Suez. It was not until 1947 while in the port of Charleston in the USA that Jack finally received his de-mob notification, his ship eventually returned to Cardiff.

Instead of going home he was charged with decommissioning, removing and returning the guns and ammunition.

Care home takes shape

CONSTRUCTION of a new care home for former sailors is nearing the half-way point, with the facility on track to open next year.

Admiral Jellicoe House – named after the former First Sea Lord and admiral who led the Grand Fleet into battle at Jutland – is due to open in the spring, in time for the 100th anniversary of the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust.

The facility on Locksway Road in Portsmouth is the flagship project of the trust, which was founded by Lord Jellicoe and provides accommodation for naval veterans through an almshouse in Hornchurch, Essex, and Pembroke House in Gillingham.

Work on the £2m complex in Portsmouth began in January and despite the pandemic, the new home is on track for a spring 2022 opening with the ground floor of the three-storey building almost complete.

Naval Quirks

TWO THINGS ABOUT THE 1912 BATTLECRUISER HMS NEW ZEALAND: ① SHE WAS PAID FOR BY THE PEOPLE OF NEW ZEALAND...

...THO' THE LAST PAYMENT WASN'T MADE TILL 1958 – 36 YEARS AFTER THE SHIP WAS SCRAPPED!

AND ② SHE WAS GIVEN PROTECTION IN BATTLE BY A MAORI CHIEF – AND IT WORKED!

SHE CAME THRO' THREE MAJOR BATTLES IN WWI VIRTUALLY UNSCATHED!





River Plate passes into history

THERE are now no living links with the Royal Navy's first major victory of World War 2.

Basil Trott (pictured above opening a card from the Queen on his 100th birthday) was believed to be the last of around 2,000 Royal Navy sailors and Royal Marines who cornered Hitler's prized pocket battleship Graf Spee off South America in December 1939.

It was from Y Turret on HMS Exeter, where Basil – who's died in Cambridge aged 101 – served as a gunlayer that the shell which helped seal the fate of the German raider.

He also faced the horrific task of recovering the body parts of some of his 58 shipmates killed in the action, placing them in weighted hammocks for burial at sea.

As Exeter made for the Falklands to effect repairs, news reached the cruiser that the Graf Spee had been scuttled in the estuary of the River Plate, which gave the battle its name.

During one of the harshest winters on record and the general monotony of the Phoney War, the South Atlantic triumph was widely celebrated, but Basil played down the fuss. "We fought a battle which we had been trained to do and just felt we had done our duty."

Basil Trott joined the Royal Navy as a 15-year-old boy. Assigned to Exeter as a gunner, he found himself helping the people of Concepcion in Chile in 1939 when an earthquake left 30,000 dead. The sailors rescued 800 civilians from the rubble and were belatedly decorated by the South American nation.

After leaving Exeter, Basil served in the cruiser Kenya, destroyers Wallace and Solebay, and remained in the RN post-war, seeing action in Korea aboard HMS Comus, finally retiring after a stint as the gunnery officer of the frigate HMS Whitby.

In civvy street he worked in local government in Gosport and Portsmouth before retiring to Spain and, more recently, Cambridge.

And although he played down his role in 1939 battle, in later life he served as chairman of HMS Exeter's River Plate Families Association, recorded his memoirs for the Imperial War Museum, appeared on a BBC documentary and was honoured for his role in the battle alongside shipmates and colleagues from HMS Ajax and Achilles.

The new town of Ajax in Canada was named after the cruiser and the majority of its streets bear the names of crew members of the three ships.

Trott Lane was dedicated in 2003 with Basil present to see the street sign inaugurated.



Pinnacle patrols back on the agenda

NEARLY ready to resume patrols of Portsmouth Harbour is 224, last of a breed of small vessels which served the Fleet a century ago.

The 112-year-old boat, owned by the National Museum of the Royal Navy, is thought to be the sole surviving steam pinnacle, carrying officers, men and stores between shore and ship – in 224's case, battle-cruiser HMS Inflexible.

Inflexible was scrapped in 1921, but her pinnacle

remained in service until 1949, spent 30 years in private hands and, in a neglected state, was snapped up by the museum where volunteers eventually restored her to her Edwardian glory.

Covid halted her activities so 224 has been revamped at Hornet Services Sailing Club in Gosport. Once her annual boiler certificate is renewed, 224 will be back in the water and steaming around Portsmouth Harbour and the Solent.

Always part of our family

THE lives of two World War 2 veterans were celebrated in funerals at Exeter Crematorium on the same day in what has been described as the "Navy family coming together".

The last act in Douglas 'Dougie' Tune's long life was set to be a very low-key affair as the 97-year-old former Royal Marine had few family members.

A plea on social media for a Naval presence at his funeral fell on fertile ground, resulting in serving Royal Marines and sailors plus veterans bidding farewell (they're pictured below forming a Guard of Honour).

Dougie (top right) was involved in the plans for the D-Day landings and was awarded the Italy Star and the War Medal for his wartime service.

Brigadier Paul Denning, a trustee of the Royal Marines Charity, said: "There is no such thing as a Royal Marine without a family, the marines are a very close-knit family."

"We just thought it important one of our brothers who had served his country had people to say goodbye to him. Any British serviceman would quite rightly have people from his regiment or service come to say goodbye. Doing it with flags, military style and tradition is very fitting."

Dougie's carers said that they were "over the moon" with the response to their plea. "He was a very private person, but he was just Dougie, happy-go-lucky, he was great. He was a strong person who deserved the best send-off we could give him and that's what he got."

Ken Caunter, who died aged 96, saw extensive action in the second half of World War 2. (His daughter Carol is pictured right with her father's medals and AB(SE) Jimmy Kenrick from the Naval Regional Command.)

On the first night of his training at HMS Collingwood, the Luftwaffe bombed the establishment and the neighbouring barrack hut took a direct hit, killing those inside.

Ken (bottom right) and his class cleared up the damage and, when they completed training 12 weeks later, were "quite prepared to take on the Germans single handed!!"

After completing training as a gunner on Whale Island in Portsmouth, Ken was assigned to HMS Scourge and twice sailed to Russia on Arctic convoys in seas so rough lifeboats were regularly smashed, while the destroyer rolled so badly crew feared she'd never right herself.

Among Ken's proudest possessions: a 'Blue Nose Certificate' – issued by the Navy to anyone who crossed into the Arctic Circle (a tradition maintained today).

Scourge survived the ordeal and was assigned to the D-Day invasion fleet, taking up position off Sword Beach on June 6 1944, where she hammered German defences until she'd used up every shell.

The ship subsequently escorted Churchill, French leader de Gaulle and King George VI across the Channel from Portsmouth as the leaders visited the beachhead.

Ken served with distinction during WWII – he told his family that he never regretted being in the Navy during the war. "I saw many countries and lots of people. I lost a number of friends killed in action - I was very lucky having some very close encounters but I guess somebody must have been looking after me."



Keith brought boats into the atomic age

THE man who helped propel the Silent Service into the nuclear era has died at the age of 96.

Naval constructor Keith Foulger headed the team designing Britain's first nuclear boat, HMS Dreadnought.

In 1958, after President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan had signed the UK-US Mutual Defence Agreement, Mr Foulger's team was sent to the Electric Boat Company at Groton, Connecticut.

His task was to ensure that the aft of Dreadnought, which was identical to the USS Skipjack and housed the American S5W reactor, would fit the British-designed fore end.

It was, said Mr Foulger, "the most exciting and fascinating job any constructor could wish to have".

The two ends proved to be significantly different: in the British design, the bow section was dominated by a large sonar array and new-design torpedo tubes for use at great depth; the bridge fin was further aft than in the US boat; the hydroplanes were fitted on the hull rather than to the fin; and new materials including a special steel, QT35, were introduced, which required improved welding practices.

These changes gave better control at periscope depth, and enabled Dreadnought (pictured being launched on Trafalgar Day in 1960) to dive to a greater depth and more often than any previous British submarine.

Born in Colchester in May 1925, poor eyesight prevented Keith Foulger from following his dream of joining the Navy.

Instead he joined the Royal Corps of Naval Constructors, studied at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, obtained a first-class degree in Naval Architecture and joined the submarine design team at Bath.

He worked on the experimental hydrogen-peroxide-powered boat Explorer (nicknamed Exploder) and on the design of the successful class of diesel-powered Porpoise class.

After his experience with Dreadnought, his expertise proved vital in designing the first all-British nuclear submarine, HMS Valiant.

He went on to oversee first the Swiftsure-class of hunter killers, then their successor Trafalgar-class before being given responsibility for all submarine construction.

Finally, in 1983-85 he was Director of Naval Construction, with the equivalent rank of rear-admiral, an office with historic links to the Master Surveyor of Tudor times.

Upon retirement Mr Foulger spent a decade as chief naval architect on HMS Victory, overseeing her restoration and repair.

For his 90th birthday his family arranged a visit to the nuclear submarine Talent, when he negotiated all the ladders and enjoyed a fish and chips lunch in the wardroom with her officers.



Bikers try Foxtrot

FALKLANDS veterans met up with a Falklands veteran when they dropped in Portsmouth as part of a UK-wide tour of memorials to the 1982 conflict.

The South Atlantic Medal Association Airborne Forces Ride of Respect 2021 is a motorcycle tour by former paratroopers of monuments and sites connected with Operation Corporate, of which there are a good number in the Portsmouth area.

Most are statues, memorials or plaques, but the historic dockyard is home to one of the few surviving pieces of military hardware left from the South Atlantic conflict, Foxtrot 8.

The landing craft from assault ship HMS Fearless was one of a flotilla of vessels which ferried troops and kits ashore in San Carlos Bay in May 1982, beginning the ground campaign which ended with the liberation of Stanley just over three weeks later and the surrender of Argentine forces.

Foxtrot 8 was on display in the mast pond in front of the Action Stations building – earmarked as the home of the new Royal Marines Museum – but she's now been restored to working order and is certificated for carrying passengers around Portsmouth Harbour, running out of Boathouse 4.

As a potential rehearsal for 40th anniversary commemorations next year, one biker, former Marine Graeme Golightly, travelled with his motorcycle the few hundred yards from the Camber to land in style on the slipway next to HMS Warrior.

One former Para recalled that back in 1982, the ramp failed on craft he was travelling in and the entire platoon got completely soaked as they had to jump overboard in full kit and wade ashore.

Families return for Dartmouth parade



Proud moments

A NEW generation of leaders joined the ranks of the Royal Navy after successfully completing their training at Britannia Royal Naval College.

The newly-qualified Young Officers marked their formal commissioning on parade at the college in Dartmouth, in front of their families and friends – the first time guests had attended a passing-out parade in a year.

Passing out were 47 Officer Cadets, who had completed a 29-week intensive course designed to test them in a variety of scenarios: in the classroom, on Dartmoor, the River Dart and at sea on board an operational warship.

They were joined on parade by 19 new officers for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary service and 15 former ratings selected for promotion to the Officer Corps. Both groups had completed their own bespoke training course.

The parade also included ten members of Dutton Division, who attended BRNC as part of a relatively new commissioning scheme for Warrant Officers. The division is named after Lieutenant Commander Brian Dutton, a highly-decorated bomb disposal expert recognised for his bravery in the UK and the Falklands Conflict.

Lt Cdr Dutton, who died in 2018, aged 86, joined the Royal Navy as a 15-year-old boy seaman. He was commissioned and specialised as a mine clearance diving officer in 1969. Lt Cdr Dutton was awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal in 1974 for his part in rendering safe a wartime mine. He was also awarded the Distinguished Service Order as the leader of the team who removed a 1,000lb bomb lodged in the magazine onboard HMS



Argonaut during the Falklands campaign. Captain BRNC, Captain Roger Readwin, said: "When we were looking to name the new Division, we felt that Lt Cdr Dutton would be a fitting figurehead for Warrant Officers to look up to when they attend Dartmouth. We were delighted that members of Lt Cdr Dutton's family could join as guests for the parade."

Vice Admiral Paul Bennett was the VIP inspecting officer, taking the salute almost 36 years to the day of joining BRNC himself as an Officer Cadet. He was taking part in one

of his last engagements before retiring from the Service, following a career spanning five decades.

He said: "It was a huge privilege to take the salute on this special day, it brought back memories of standing on the parade ground myself 36 years ago."

"All Royal Navy officers have a special bond with BRNC Dartmouth; it delivers essential training, but also forges relationships that are a bedrock of our careers."

"For me therefore as I leave the Service, it is an especially poignant moment."

First recipient of award in memory of Eric

A NEW prize presented in memory of one of Britain's foremost naval historians has been presented at Britannia Royal Naval College.

The award, sponsored by the *Naval Review*, was made to honour Professor Eric Grove, who passed away in April, aged 73.

Prof Grove became a civilian lecturer at BRNC in 1971, after completing an MA in War Studies at King's College London. In 1980 he became the first Dartmouth academic to spend a year at the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. Prof Grove left in 1984, but made regular visits over the years, to give lectures to Officer Cadets under training, as well as writing for *Navy News*.

The Professor Eric Grove Memorial Prize will be made termly to the Officer Cadet who produces the best Strategic Studies essay during training.

Officer Cadet Matthew Brunyee was the recipient of the first award, presented to him by Prof Grove's widow, Mrs Swee Poh Grove.

Mrs Grove was invited to BRNC along with the couple's two daughters and son-in-law.

Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, a former First Sea Lord, represented the *Naval Review* and the ceremony was also attended by Rear Admiral Iain Lower, Director Strategy and Policy.

OC Brunyee, 20, from Falmouth, said: "I was quite surprised, but honoured, to receive this award. I have an avid interest in naval history, and I was delighted to receive



● Capt Roger Readwin, Mrs Swee Poh Grove, OC Matthew Brunyee, Adm Sir Mark Stanhope and Rear Adm Iain Lower; Right, Professor Eric Grove

an award in memory of Professor Grove. I now hope to pursue an in-Service MA in this field."

Rear Admiral Iain Lower said: "Professor Eric Grove developed a dedication that became a devotion both to the institution of the Royal Navy and to the people within the Naval family."

"As a critical friend, able to both advocate and challenge, Eric's has been a life of service that has led to a legacy of enduring

significance and wisdom for which we are eternally grateful."

Captain Roger Readwin, Captain BRNC, said: "Prof Grove had an impact on the development of hundreds of Naval leaders during his time here as a lecturer and beyond as a visiting speaker."

"We are delighted to be able to honour his memory in this way and are grateful to the *Naval Review* and the Grove family for joining us for the inaugural presentation."



Master marks 50th year at Devonport

WHEN naval base stalwart Dave Trigger started work at Plymouth's Royal William Yard in 1971, he could never have imagined that 50 years later he would be one of Devonport's key players as its wharfmaster.

Celebrating an impressive half century with the Royal Navy, larger-than-life Plymouthian Dave believes he's been lucky to have worked with some amazing people along the way.

Responsible for the comings and goings of ships and boats in Devonport, Dave can always be found arranging riggers to tie them up, connect them to shoreside support, as well as liaising with dignitaries.

"My first day was August 16 1971, a Monday. I joined Royal William Yard in an area called Section Five, which was basically loan clothing for the Royal Navy," Dave recalls.

"I was 16 and encouraged to come into the victualling yard by my family – there were five generations of them in Royal William at the time. One of my uncles was the blacksmith and another was a manager. It felt like a family business."

Back then Royal William was still the main victualling and stores yard for Devonport Naval Base, supporting the Royal Navy and Royal Marines in and around Plymouth as well as supplying food and clothing for ships deploying globally.

"The training has stayed with me, it's something you never forget. Another thing about Royal William was its history. Originally meat was slaughtered in the yard then packaged up into tins for storage or issued fresh to the ship's cooks."

"Over the years it was a world leader, preparing food for ships off on long voyages. We found evidence from Captain Scott's expeditions to Antarctica, where rations, clothing and equipment were specially developed and packed in the yard."

After training, Dave's job involved packing uniform items for the Navy.

In 1975 he was sent to the dockyard for a short assignment, but in the end lasted three years, working with frozen food.

A particularly proud time was during the Falklands conflict, when ships were prepared and turned around in record times. His department worked non-stop for days, managing and providing essential supplies for the south-bound task group.

Dave has also worked at the Royal Navy's Supply Depot at Wrangaton, near Ivybridge. Here, trains would bring in vast quantities of stores and food that had been shipped across the country. It was repackaged in usable pallets to be sent to the ships or stockpiled for use at a later date.

"The sea flows through my veins, I'd grown up near the sea and was a lifeguard at Bigbury in my younger days, as well as an Auxiliary Coastguard and served on the Plymouth Lifeboat, so my roots have always touched the water," says Dave, who became wharfmaster in 2002.

"People are really what makes this job though. I've worked alongside and met everyone: admirals, royalty, Defence Ministers, MPs, VIPs from all over the place, ship's captains and sailors and marines from all nations, and everyone has a job to do. We are all working together which really makes me proud."

He was awarded the MBE in 2006 – his second visit to Buckingham Palace as in his youth he picked up a Gold Duke of Edinburgh's award from Prince Philip.

"Over the past ten years we've undergone a lot of changes in the way we work, we've embraced many changes and we're better for them," Dave continues.

"I'm really keen on youngsters taking over, we have got a great legacy, which has been built in the dockyard, making sure we can produce the best we can for Devonport and the Royal Navy."

Sailor honoured for saving driver's life

A SAILOR from HMS Sultan has been decorated for helping to save the life of a van driver on Hampshire's busiest motorway.

Chief Petty Officer Stew Jayes was riding his motorcycle along the M27 one day in November 2018 when he noticed a delivery van collide with the central reservation and continue, apparently out of control.

The 43-year-old marine engineer rode his motorcycle alongside it and, seeing the driver was unresponsive, used his bike to keep other vehicles out of the van's path.

When the van finally came to a halt in the motorway's outside lane, Stew parked his bike and ran across three lanes of traffic to help.

He found the driver not breathing and with no pulse. Due to the vehicle's position and the traffic still flowing in the other two lanes, Stew decided the safest place to help him would be in the carriageway.

Organising other drivers to help, he extracted the driver and immediately began performing CPR, continuing until the emergency services arrived and took over.

As a result of Stew's quick actions,

bravery and first aid skills, the van driver made a full recovery and has since returned to work.

And, nearly three years later, it's resulted in a Royal Humane Society award for Stew, who works as a mentor and guide to trainee engineers at the Gosport establishment.

The senior rating, whose hobbies include cycling and motorcycling, was presented with the Royal Humane Society testimonial by Sultan's Commanding Officer, Captain John Joyce, watched proudly by his wife Holly and six-year-old son Frankie.

"It's been quite a while since the incident but I'm still just as proud that I was able to help that gentleman that morning," Stew said.

"As a member of the Royal Navy, the first aid and emergency training I've received and situations I've encountered over the years combined to enable me to assist that poor man in his time of need."

Stew joined the Royal Navy in 1997 and has served throughout the Seven Seas, including the Far East, Caribbean, Arctic and Antarctica, as well as on land in Afghanistan.

One big happy family

ONE of the best things about Sea Cadets is the mix of personalities, strengths, talents and cultural backgrounds each cadet brings. Three cadets from different cultural backgrounds share their stories about how being part of Sea Cadets has helped them to feel a sense of belonging.

Leading Cadet Marykay, 16, Enfield Unit

"I was born and raised in England but I am of Nigerian descent.

"I speak English, French and Yoruba, one of the main languages spoken in Nigeria. I'm very proud of my Nigerian heritage – it's a culturally diverse country with rich traditions.

"I have been a cadet for five years. I am currently the only cadet of Nigerian descent in my unit but I think the charity is very

welcoming to cadets of minority ethnic backgrounds.

"For example, I remember some Sikh cadets who joined a few years ago. Their religion requires them to wear turbans, but this wasn't a problem. They wore a turban in the same colour as their uniforms and put their beret badge on their turban.

"My unit is a place where we can all learn and grow together. We encourage each other to try new things. Being part of Sea Cadets has enabled me to gain

many qualifications, skills and achievements.

"I have taken part in courses in Marine Engineering, First Aid, Kayaking and Adventure Training.

"Being a cadet has taught me a lot about teamwork and how to be an effective leader. I've made a lot of new friends. I also enjoy

My unit is a place where we can all learn and grow. We encourage each other to try new things.

LEADING CADET MARYKAY

volunteering and social action projects to give back to my community.

"My most significant moments with Sea Cadets have been at the

2019 Trafalgar Day Parade, becoming a Leading Cadet and receiving a Deputy Lieutenant of Enfield Borough award from the Mayor.

"I was very motivated to become a Leading Cadet as I wanted to be one of the first cadets of Nigerian descent to reach this position for my unit.

"I hope to be a role model for other cadets from minority backgrounds. And I plan to achieve much more – this is just the beginning!"



Cadet Kajetan, 17, Crewe Unit

"I was born in Nowa Sól, western Poland. At first, it was difficult to adjust to life in the UK as I didn't speak English and so it was hard to make friends.

"But as time went on, I got used to the school system and got on quite well. I am now fluent in English. I also speak some German and Spanish.

"I found out about Sea Cadets after watching the 2017 Remembrance Parade in Crewe's town centre. I joined up the following week! Everyone was very welcoming at my first parade night, and I was encouraged to join in.

"I've now been a sea cadet for almost four brilliant years.

"Crewe Unit is like a family, we all look out for each other and help each other out.

"My Commanding Officer and the other instructors and volunteers put a lot of time and energy into making each parade night a success.

"Sea Cadets has helped me to develop my confidence – before joining, I was quite shy and anxious. Being a sea

cadet has also taught me leadership skills and how to help others.

"My most significant experience was taking part in a district rowing competition. We didn't win but the teamwork and team spirit we showed is what being a sea cadet is all about.

"I like how Sea Cadets allows you to participate in lots of different competitions across many different disciplines.

"I've made lots of friends through Sea Cadets and I've learnt a lot of different things, ranging from piping to first aid.

"I'm thinking about taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award next, as well as a Physical Training or an Engineering course. I hope to become a civil or automotive engineer one day, and possibly go on to become a Sea Cadets instructor.

"I'd like to say to anyone new in the country thinking about joining Sea Cadets: go for it! You will learn new skills, meet new people and grow as a person."

As told to Michelle Pellegrino, Senior Communications Officer Media & PR, MSSC

Sea cadets has helped me to develop my confidence - before joining, I was quite shy and anxious.

CADET KAJETAN



Cadet Kasumi, 13, Kingston Unit

"I am half German and half Japanese. I go to a German school and speak Japanese, German, English and some French too.

"I found out about Sea Cadets as my father and brother used to paddle past the Kingston Unit building while out kayaking. My brother joined up and, when I turned ten, I decided to join as well.

"Everyone made me feel welcome and I soon felt comfortable. Being part of Sea Cadets helped me a lot. Chatting to the other cadets, going on camping trips and other activities really helped me to learn English.

"I've been a cadet for three years now and I've learnt many new skills. My favourite activity is rowing and I've participated in two rowing competitions so far. I also really enjoy kayaking.

"Sadly, I'll have to say goodbye to Sea Cadets soon, as my family and I will be moving back to Germany. I would recommend Sea Cadets to other young people. It's a lot of fun, you'll make new friends and learn so much. It also teaches you to be disciplined and to respect others, which are qualities that will help you throughout your life."

Chatting to the other cadets, going on camping trips and other activities have really helped me to learn English.

CADET KASUMI

SEA CADETS Volunteer, donate or even leave a legacy. sea-cadets.org or call 020 7654 7000

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SAAB

Farewell to hunting duo

FIFTEEN years after they formed the vanguard of the Royal Navy's minehunting mission in the Gulf, Her Majesty's Ships Ramsey and Blyth passed into history.

The two sister ships were decommissioned in Rosyth during a poignant service marking their long service around the globe.

Both Sandown-class mine countermeasures vessels have served extensively during careers spanning 21 years and 175,000 miles for Ramsey, 185,000 miles over 20 years for Blyth, supporting operations in the Middle East, around the UK or on NATO duties in northern European and Mediterranean waters.

Dozens of affiliates and friends joined the crews, RN leaders and Deputy Chaplain of the Fleet Reverend Martin Evans, with music provided by the Band of HM Royal Marines Plymouth.

HMS Ramsey left her home port at Faslane for the final time in August last year, sailing to Rosyth where she has undergone work to prepare her for formal decommissioning. Blyth passed down Gareloch for the last time a month ago.

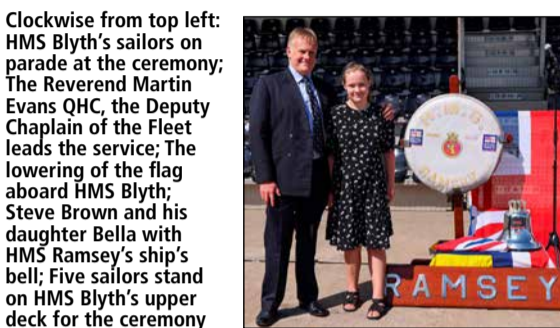
The two ships were the first sent to Bahrain when the government decided a permanent minehunter presence was required in the Gulf – a presence which continues to this day.

Ramsey's final Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Joel Roberts praised "a great ship".

He continued: "HMS Ramsey has given 21 years of operational service to the Royal Navy and throughout her life it has been the members of her ship's company, the people, who have made her what she is.

"It is time to say farewell to a ship that has been both a home and a way of life to so many.

"She will undoubtedly be missed, but rather than being sad, today is about



Clockwise from top left: HMS Blyth's sailors on parade at the ceremony; The Reverend Martin Evans QHC, the Deputy Chaplain of the Fleet leads the service; The lowering of the flag aboard HMS Blyth; Steve Brown and his daughter Bella with HMS Ramsey's ship's bell; Five sailors stand on HMS Blyth's upper deck for the ceremony



remembering her duty and celebrating her 21 years of distinguished service."

Blyth and her crew worked right up to the end, most recently in the Middle East, as well as a deployed period in the Baltic and national tasking along the UK coast.

Her Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Simon Henderson said: "The whole crew are immensely proud of what this ship has achieved in her lifetime and particularly over the last few years.

"Our final entry into Rosyth was a sad one bringing to an end the ship's life under Royal Navy Command, but we reflect on the many achievements that we have accomplished together, and

we look forward to new opportunities to come."

Among the VIP guests was 12-year-old Bella Brown from Kilcreggan, christened onboard HMS Ramsey in 2010 in the traditional naval manner using the ship's bell as a font.

Her name will now be engraved on the bell which will be presented to the Isle of Man town of Ramsey – the ship's affiliate – for public display.

Bella said: "I have been lucky enough to visit HMS Ramsey recently and to regularly see her operating in the Clyde and I am sad to see her decommissioning. I hope the ship will go on to similar happiness and success in the future."

The ships are being replaced by the expanding Project Wilton drive to introduce autonomous/uncrewed boats and systems into minehunting – an initiative being pioneered at Faslane where three boats are already in service.

Blyth and Ramsey meanwhile will enjoy a fresh lease of life in the Black Sea. Once further work is completed on the two vessels, they'll be transferred to the Ukrainian Navy.

Meanwhile following summer leave, Blyth's crew will take charge of HMS Grimsby for another period of operations later in the year.

Pictures: LPhot Barry Wheeler

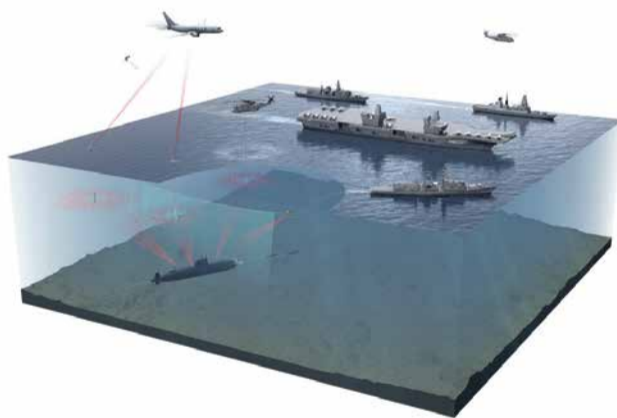


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Young Gunners are put through their paces by RN

ARSENAL'S U18s team spent a day learning resilience and teamwork with the Royal Navy and Royal Marines on a short pre-season tour of the Plymouth area.

After winning a 4-0 win over Tavistock, the young Gunners spent the morning with Colour Sergeant Mike Beaton – better known as the Commando Chef – learning about his Royal Marines career and how his commando training enabled him to overcome difficult obstacles. Mike explained how the resilience that he learned in the Royal Marines is vital when competing in professional sports, imparting important lessons to the young players.

The players then put these ideals to the test in a series of Practical Leadership Tasks set out by Royal Navy personnel. The footballers were blindfolded and

led through a number of activities by their teammates, highlighting skills in effective communication and leadership – vital both on a football pitch and a warship.

“We had a talk about leadership and other life skills and how that is important for all of our players, both as individuals but as they grow through the journey with Arsenal and as teammates” said Mark Walter, Player Care Manager of the U18s.

“The Leadership tasks that the Navy put the boys through showed that the key was communication and working as a team, which was brilliant to see.”

Player Reuell Walters added: “It’s been a really cool experience; we’ve had a talk with Mike which enlightened us on the journey that he went through joining the Royal

Marines at such a young age. We learned a lot from him, he’s grown up basically away from home from 16, he’s experienced a lot of things in his life that most people would never experience themselves and it’s just been a really refreshing talk to have.

“The exercises were quite fun. Trying to guide each other through obstacle courses and attempting to make shapes with ropes to try and become one as a team and understand that sometimes you might not be in charge.

“We’re so happy. We’ve spent a lot of time at home so honestly so happy to get back outside and to start playing football again”

The young Gunners went on to a 1-1 draw against Plymouth Argyle’s U18s the next day.

Golfers are back in great style

SEVENTY-FIVE players took part in the 2021 Royal Navy Golf Championships at Saunton GC.

Despite a number of last-minute changes the week was as full and eventful as it ever is.

The Matchplay contest saw the Fleet Air Arm take first place, with the Eastern Region second and Royal Marines third.

The Strokeplay event is played over four rounds and for the first time the women played their competition over four rounds too.

In the early rounds, LWtr Ryan Moore, Cpl Rich Ebbage and Mne Alfie Fletcher led the group with some really good results.

RN Team Captain POPT Mike Setterfield was also sitting high up on the leader board. With just a few shots separating the top echelon, the event was going to go to the wire.

After three rounds, LWtr Moore had a four-shot lead, with Mne Alfie Fletcher close on his tail, but Ryan held his nerve to be crowned RN Golf Champion for the second time in this competition.

From the Strokeplay rounds, a compilation of named team player scores resulted in a team winner. This year, there was no closely-fought contest as the Royal Marines certainly led the field in this area throughout.

Scoring a combined total of 1,433 points, they beat their nearest contender by 31 points.

In the women’s event, Lt Cdr Lauren Hulston was, for the first time in many years, under some pressure to win this year.

After just one round, there was five shots separating four of the five women.

Lt Cdr Hazelle Garton certainly had her eye on the trophy with a score of 95 in the second round put her firmly on top of the leader board.

Lauren took the RN Golf Championship title for the 11th successive year beating Lt Cdr Hazelle Garton by four shots.

The general competition was won by CPO Richard Willis, with WO Patrick Dinmore finishing second.

Anyone for netball?

WANNABE netball players are needed for the Royal Navy.

A series of trials takes place at HMS Nelson in Portsmouth on September 25-26.

For information contact RNNetball@gmail.com



Cadets are all shipshape at Temeraire

SOUTHAMPTON URNU hosted Officer Cadets from Bristol University, as part of the annual University Royal Navy Unit sports event at HMS Temeraire.

Fixtures throughout the day included hockey, netball, basketball, football and athletics. Despite Southampton’s best efforts, they were beaten by a triumphant Bristol URNU side that now progresses into the final round of the competition.

Southampton’s OC Rebecca Nigh, said: “The URNU sports weekend is one of the many events that [we] look forward to each year.

“It’s a great chance for our Officer Cadets to excel in various sports, and an opportunity to compete in ones we otherwise wouldn’t have tried outside of the unit. We would like to thank Bristol URNU for being such great competitors, and look forward to future events with them.”



Home victory

A ROYAL Navy sports team took on the RAF, Royal Gibraltar Regiment, and Army Minor Units for Commander British Forces Gibraltar Cup Competition.

The full day of competition began with the Rock Run, which was one by Cpl Rogers in a time of 20min 25sec.

The pistol shooting was next, followed by five-a-side football, both won by the RG.

The next event saw the RAF win the volleyball contest.

In the afternoon the events were focussed around the Helm Point swimming pool and Western Beach.

RG won the swimming and superstar events, while the AMU took the honours in the tug-of-war contest.

The final event was the stand-up paddleboarding relay, begun by Cdre Steve Dainton.

At the end of the contest the RG were victorious, followed by the AMU, RAF and RN.



EIGHT Royal Navy and Royal Marines drivers were in action as the Armed Forces Race Challenge returned after a 19-month break.

The drivers were contesting the Inter-Services round at Snetterton and seven RN drivers qualified with ease.

But CPO Sean Graham was forced to withdraw with engine issues.

Mne Adam Dewis (Vauxhall Astra) had an excellent session qualifying first in Class B and second on the grid overall.

LH Seb Unwin (BMW 330) and Lt Cdr Keith Attwood (Mini Cooper), also had a productive qualifying being second and third in Class C respectively, with Lt Cdr Mike Wells (Toyota MR2) and CPO Gareth Moss (Mazda MX5) replicating this in Class D.

The start of a race is pretty chaotic, even more-so with the numbers of cars on the grid, packed much closer than what you see in F1 or Touring Cars. It was only by some quick reactions from the field that RN driver CPO Steve Hutchings (Peugeot 106) came off unscathed in Race 1 when his gearbox failed as he was pulling away.

Initially for the remaining RN and RM drivers the first couple of corners saw the drivers file through without issue, but no more than a third of the way into

the first lap second-place starter Adam lost power and fell down the order.

Seb and Keith found themselves in a tense battle with each other for second in Class throughout the race with only half a second separating them for the majority of the race.

Only in the last couple of laps once coming up on backmarkers did Seb claw a proper lead, with him finally finishing four seconds ahead of Keith.

In Class D Mike battled hard to retain second, but when challenging for the Class D lead, he fell victim to an Army car who snatched second from him.

Mike had to settle for third in Class D. Further back in Class D Lt Si Vernon (Mazda MX5) had a trouble free time in his first race back in three years, whilst Gareth Moss had contact with a barrier forcing him to retire on the final lap.

Back in the pits Gareth and Adam both set to work trying to rectify the issues their cars had during the race, but unfortunately for Steve his gearbox was not able to be sorted.

The rest of our drives checked their cars over in preparation for Race 2 and then set to helping out Gareth with getting his wheels pointing back in the right direction.

Race 2 quickly came around and both

Adam and Gareth made it back to the grid. In a dramatic start, a slow getaway from a couple of the cars in row three saw the field bunch up going into turn two.

This led to one car braking far too late completely misjudging the situation and crash was inevitable and unfortunately Seb was the car that took the impact, ending his race straight away.

Keith was able to avoid the incident and ended up being able to initially take the Class C lead.

Despite a valiant effort he was unable to hold onto it for the class win, losing out to Army driver Jon Candler.

Mike had a much better race and was held off from Class D victory by only 0.1 of a second.

Gareth Moss had a much better race and despite losing his exhaust post a small impact from another car in the closing laps he got the end of the race just in front of Si.

Adam however had mechanical issues again, forcing a retirement after four laps.

Anyone wishing to get involved, either racing or supporting, should contact Lt Cdr Keith Attwood; caracing@rnrmsa.co.uk or visit www.rnrmsa.co.uk and www.armedforcesracechallenge.net



Miles out in front

COLOUR Sergeant Miles Bolton, pictured, was crowned top of the shots as the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Target Shooting Association hosted its first grassroots event of the year.

The event comprised a morning of practical off-range instruction, giving the shooters familiarisation with the rifles, equipment and safe practices, followed by an afternoon of shooting practice and competition.

AB Nicholas Tasker said: “It was a fantastic day all round. As newcomers to Long Range shooting, we were made to feel very welcome by all of the Royal Navy Target Rifle Club volunteers. I can’t wait for the next shoot.”

The event was made possible by a cadre of serving and retired volunteers, including coaches and supervisors from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Rifle Association (RNRMRA) and the Royal Navy Target Rifle Club (RNTRC).

Any serving member of the Royal Navy interested in attending a Long Range Target Shooting Grassroots event should contact Lt Tim Westmaas at timothy.westmaas646@mod.gov.uk for details.

Sailors go back to their roots

ELEVEN Royal Navy and Royal Marines from HMS Heron attended the Grassroots Dinghy Sailing and Windsurfing event.

The event, held at the Andrew Simpson Foundation Watersport Centre in Portland, resulted in many of the participants asking to return.

■ Five RN windsurfers took part in the first round of the UKWA Slalom Championships in Weymouth.

Seasoned competitor Dave Strudwick was joined by Tom Joyce, Rob Clarke and Jonny Kirton making their UKWA slalom debuts in the Amateur fleet.

A large fleet saw plenty of heats and finals and some excellent racing in high winds.

In his first event Rob took a very impressive 8th overall, Dave 12th, Jonny 17th and Tom gained huge experience in his first attempt at slalom.

New this year is the Foil Slalom fleet and Gavin Nicholson was mixing it with some members of the British Sailing Team. Unwell to race the first day, he took the win in his first race and a solid 4th place overall.

For more information on Royal Navy Windsurfing contact the team manager WO1 Dave Strudwick.



Navy victory after 19 years

ROYAL Navy cricketers celebrated a memorable victory over their Army counterparts.

It was 2002 when the Senior Service last defeated the Army so victory was all the more sweet for the Senior XI.

The RN blooded five new caps and captain Lieutenant Rob Wigley was named man of the match for his 67 runs and bowling figures of 4-26.

The Royal Navy lost the toss and the Army were very keen to test the RN's batting.

The RN looking to the future decided to dig deep and the fog lifted when team skipper, Lt Rob Wigley and AET Ben Johnston, both from RNAS Yeovilton met in the middle and started to rebuild not only Navy cricket, but also their own standing to claim a place in the higher UKAFCA Combined Services Cricket Squad.

However, wickets fell again too soon and the RN were facing a long uphill struggle on a pitch which was now two days old.

At 27 for 4 after 18 overs, the RN needed to dig deep and the fog lifted when team skipper, Lt Rob Wigley and AET Ben Johnston, both from RNAS Yeovilton met in the middle and started to rebuild not only Navy cricket, but also their own standing to claim a place in the higher UKAFCA Combined Services Cricket Squad.

After batting with great patience and skill and a superb 127 stand, the RN ship had steadied and you could see the Army wobble after having it their own way for so many years.

With two great 50s on the board and some wagging of the middle order, the RN posted a very challenging target of 187 for 7 off 50 overs.

The Army started off in their usual aggressive start but the RN didn't waver and wickets started to tumble and catches, (yes catches were superbly held).

Blood was spilled by wicketkeeper Brendan Streater, but he never left his post and the team reverted to everything they had worked on during the previous week's training camp at Exmouth CC.

That discipline started to pay off



and more and more wickets fell and eventually the Army fell 23 runs short and victory was the Royal Navy's.

Thanks go to new head coach Don Topley (Essex), supported fantastically well by Lt Cdr Daisy Adams (RN Coach) and Graham McKenzie, the new team sports psychologist who all brought a new dimension to the RN Senior Cricket XI approach.

The team now look forward to

the T20 preparations, culminating in the Inter-Services competition at Arundel CC on September 10.

What was a three-year plan has already provided silverware, but its just the start of the journey for RN Cricket.

If you are a cricketer and want to join in this positive journey of the RNCA, the Senior Team Manager, Cdr Mark Smith at Mark.Smith814@mod.gov.uk or Lt Cdr Daisy Adams, at Keith.Adams912@mod.gov.uk



Loch, stock and three 'smoking' anglers

THE Royal Navy Royal Marines Angling Association welcomed three novice bank anglers to a grassroots fishing event at Lake of Menteith.

Each novice was paired with an experienced angler, all current angling association members.

The day consisted of instruction on boat safety and climate risk assessment, a refresher on casting and the differences of standing on a bank to sitting in a boat and basic boat etiquette, before leaving shore.

The teams then took to the loch, with one boat catching three rainbow trout within half an hour.

By the end of the day eight fish, including a pike, had been caught – and you should have seen the ones which got away!

Everyone returned to the Lodge with a smile

on their face, even those that didn't manage to net a fish but are just looking forward to getting an opportunity to further their experience in Fly fishing. Plus, with the thought of potentially competing for the RNRM team at regional and Inter-Services level, new members should come this year or next.

One of the novices said: "I really enjoyed it and were shown some serious patience when my casting wasn't all that."

"I'm thankful for the handy tips and pointers which ended in me landing my first trout."

"Given the interest created in Faslane, I will definitely be recommending it, not only for the fishing aspect but also the mind space/mental health side of things as it does wonders being out there, pure magic."

Deep-sea fishing boost to personnel rehab

WOUNDED, Injured, Sick Service Personnel (WIS SP) from the Royal Navy Recovery Centre (RNRC) Hasler took part in a deep-sea fishing session.

The activity took place aboard the Patricia Rose Sea Fishing Boat in Plymouth and funded by RN sport grassroots funding.

Recovery activities such as this are an integral part of the recovery pathway for WIS SP designated as complex cases.

Recovery activities are designed to be challenging where possible whilst introducing new skills to the participants. This gives the individual opportunity to gain confidence in their physical / mental abilities and is a great source of morale for personnel who are engaged in a lengthy recovery process which may end in termination of their careers.

The sea fishing activity introduced novices to a new sport, provided opportunity for personnel to integrate following a long absence from the unit due to Covid, induced morale and afforded opportunity for respite away from the daily regime of rehab.

Corporal Ben Phillips RM said: "The fishing recovery activity was



a great opportunity for me to get out and do something different alongside the people I rehab with every day.

"Everyone was a novice too, so it definitely brought us together quicker all having some common (or not so common) ground to work from."

"Not only was it a good teach on fishing, we learnt some genuinely fascinating facts on the local area, some of the sights and actually what's going on under the water."

Colour Sergeant Paul Charles added: "The open water and fresh sea air is excellent for a bit of head space. The ability to be able to catch fish more than once is a great feeling and instils a sense of achievement."

"Great knowledge from the skipper about the fish and history about Smeaton's Tower added real value to the trip and made it a highly enjoyable experience. Genuinely a great afternoon out!"

The silent warriors who made a noise

One unsung ship among thousands

TWENTY years ago, when Royal Marines were sweeping through the caves and mountains of Afghanistan looking for Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, there was talk the SBS were involved.

A colleague rang their HQ and asked for a copy of the unit's crest to illustrate an article.

The two-word response and slamming down of the phone scuppered that idea.

But it's indicative of the Special Boat Service. It shuns the limelight which its Army counterpart often basks in. Histories of the elite unit are few, memoirs fewer still.

The SBS is largely a closed family, but for once an 'outsider' has been invited in to produce **SBS: Silent Warriors** (£25, Harper Collins, ISBN 978-00083-94523).

Author Saul David is one of the nation's premier military historians – a good dozen critically-acclaimed books to his name (he's also a regular on TV documentaries).

The SBS pre-date their more well-known Army counterpart by a few months. It owes its existence to an unconventional junior Army officer, Roger Courtney who demonstrated to the Navy that using only a canoe and his own skill and guile, he could slip aboard a ship, leave proof of his visit, and disappear without alerting the crew – a sort of 1940 version of the Milk Tray Man.

He proved his point at Inverary – then argued the case for the formation of a small unit equipped with canoes to conduct raids on enemy-occupied territory: "a new style of warfare, a Special Force who came from the sea".

Thus was born the Folbot Troop (named after the two-man collapsible canoes used). Its name would change several times: Special Boat Section, Special Boat Squadron and Special Boat Service.

The canoe would become the ultimate symbol of the wartime SBS.

Operation Frankton – better known by the fictionalised big screen account, *The Cockleshell Heroes* – is the SBS' signature raid and features in detail in this new account.

The raid on shipping in Bordeaux in December 1942 was just one of several canoe attacks on enemy merchant and warships that year.

Less well known is a two-man raid on Boulogne harbour that April, Operation JV. Launched from a motor boat, canoeists Gerald Montanaro and Freddie Preece paddled three miles into the outer harbour, fixed mines to the hull of a 4,000-tonne ore carrier then returned safely to the launch. The explosives detonated several hours later. It was, Montanaro recorded in his diary, a "first-rate show!"



● **Geoffrey Lyne ascends from X-23 on D-Day after marking the beaches for the invasion force**

With similar brevity, he also noted that he "nearly sank". It's clear reading through this excellent book that there is a fine line between success and failure in these trailblazing special operations – much finer than in regular military raids.

For all the ingenuity, plans, training and dedication, many raids and attacks failed. Despite its legendary status, Frankton was only a partial success: all but two of the raiders were killed or executed by the Nazis, while most of the vessels damaged were repaired reasonably easily.

One month before Frankton, a joint Anglo-US operation, codenamed Reservist, sought to capture the harbour and disable ships at Oran in French North Africa – part of the broader invasion of the territory (Operation Torch).

Reservist miscarried almost from the outset. The ship leading the attack, HMS Walney, slipped past the outer defences only to fall foul of the inner ones and was soon aflame. Attacks on French vessels leaving harbour with mini-torpedoes launched from the canoes failed to have any impact, while the burning Walney drifted through the harbour. "Topside, the dead were piled three-deep. Below, the deck resembled a charnel house, scarlet with blood of butchered infantrymen." A few minutes later the ship's magazine exploded, she rolled over and sank.

HMS Hartland, which followed Walney into harbour, joined her as a burning wreck and her SBS raiders accomplished nothing.

The entire raid singularly failed, with more than 300 British and US personnel killed, nearly 250 wounded. Of the 11 SBS participants, only one was killed

but the rest ended up in captivity. The French set about sabotaging the harbour. More than two dozen ships and three floating docks were scuttled. It would be well into 1943 before any shipping used Oran harbour again.

A raid to 'get Rommel' may have succeeded, despite bad weather and numerous mishaps.

Geoffrey Keyes, the 24-year-old lieutenant colonel leading the raid, told his men. "If he comes quietly, we'll bring him along. If he doesn't, we'll knock him off." Rommel's headquarters was located and attacked and four Germans killed. None was the Desert Fox, however. He was in Rome conferring with Italian allies.

The SBS' greatest wartime success is probably least well-known: COPP, Combined Operations Pilotage Parties: the folks who scouted the beaches ahead of amphibious landings. Sicily, Normandy, Burma. From 1943 until the end of the war, wherever a beach landing was required, 'COPPists' paved the way.

Elements of today's regular Royal Marines as well as SBS personnel will recognise the description of the COPPs – "the first boots on the ground, the first fins in the sand. These small teams took enormous risk, but changed the course of the war."

Time and again they proved their worth. Reconnaissance of Omaha beach in Normandy in January 1944 led Logan Scott-Bowden to warn Omar Bradley, the US general commanding the attacking American forces, that "this beach is a very formidable obstacle". His words were bloodily prophetic.

The author has been allowed access to the SBS Association's rich archive

(he was vetted), and made use of a manuscript Paddy Ashdown was working on at the time of his death in 2018. He also interviewed the few veterans still with us, not least Jim Booth (who was treated to a 100th birthday celebration by the Royal Marines in July).

In the small hours of D-Day, he sat in a dinghy off Sword Beach sending guiding lights out to sea for the invasion fleet to follow. With dawn on June 6 1944, the dinghy was in full view of the defenders – but they did not respond.

"Suddenly we saw a huge host of ships coming towards us," he recalled. "Thousands of them. It was incredible." Unlike many of his comrades, Jim Booth was never decorated by his country for his actions off the Normandy coast. Decades later the French presented him with the Croix de Guerre – "the only medal I care about".

From the biographies provided at the end of the book, the SBS attracted remarkable characters from the outset. Eccentrics. Adventurers. Pioneers. Founder Courtney "lived hard and died early" having asked an Oxford Don to create a motto for the SBS: *excreta tauri astutos frustrantur...* roughly translated as: bullshit baffles brains (the service eventually settled on the less anatomical 'by strength and guile').

Few did not earn some form of decoration for bravery. Some lived long and fruitful lives. 'Cockleshell Hero' became a champion of disabled yachting,

Ruari McLean, a leading figure in COPP, became one of the country's leading design and typographical expert, redesigning the British passport in the 1960s. Others lives were cut short in the most banal of ways: cycling accidents, falling from a train. Courtney himself fell victim to pneumonia in 1948, aged just 46.

Beyond laying the foundations of present-day Special Forces (who enjoy equipment, communications support and technology the men of 1940-45 could only dream of), the SBS had shifted from some small, almost amateurish 'Boy's Own' club at the beginning into a highly-professional force capable of striking at the enemy or undermining his defences by the war's end. They did so with "a handful of brave and determined men, paddling flimsy canoes, and armed only with knives, pistols and a few sub-machine guns."

They volunteered for missions knowing that capture was always possible, if not likely, and torture and death would follow in most cases – especially after Hitler's notorious 'Commando Order' in October 1942.

"They took outrageous risks in the belief that the benefits were worth it," the author concludes.

A world without Hitler and Japanese militarism suggests they were.



IN THIS month when we commemorate the first Arctic convoy, Operation Dervish, John Chuter's **Unfortunate Occurrences and Knavish Tricks** is a rare insight into the dangers merchant ships faced carrying cargo to the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945.

In November 1941, John Chuter senior – the author's father – signed on for service aboard SS Capira.

John Chuter snr left no account of his time aboard the Capira and rarely mentioned his wartime service to his family.

Instead, his son has trawled the surviving records – official, nautical and personal – to bring the Capira back to life.

Flying the flag of Panama, skippered by a Dane, crewed by men from almost every continent, the Capira was typical of the ships which kept the maritime lifelines of the globe going in World War 2.

The ship, too, was typical of those on the convoy runs: old, overworked, sluggish.

For the first few months after John Chuter joined Capira, she served in the Atlantic before being assigned to Convoy PQ15 with 24 other merchantmen bound for the Soviet Union from Iceland.

The convoy suffered three days of sustained attack, reaching its climax on May 3 1942 when German torpedo-bombers – making their debut – sank two ships and crippled a third (entirely finished off by a U-boat).

Cape Corso, carrying ammunition, was hit by three torpedoes and blew up, turning crew into human torches – a death only slightly quicker and more horrific than jumping into the icy waters and drowning or dying from hypothermia.

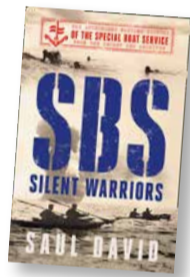
After several weeks in Murmansk – where there was no respite from the war, for the city was bombed almost daily by the Germans, and Westerners were viewed with great suspicion by the Soviet authorities – Capira ran the gauntlet westwards in Convoy QP13 – which blundered into a British-laid minefield off Iceland in fog and lost five merchant ships.

Her luck ran out the following month. Back on the Atlantic run, she was torpedoed by U-609 – one of two vessels sunk by the German submarine on the same morning.

Though Capira sank quickly, only five men died – including one of the Chinese cooks, who refused the pleas of his shipmates to join them in the rafts.

This is a worthy addition to the rich body of literature on the Atlantic/Arctic runs – and focuses on events and actions away from some of the more famous battles (e.g. PQ17 or the crucial months of March-May 1943).

John Chuter snr went back to sea for the rest of the war – and into the post-war period. The U-boat which torpedoed his ship sank no more and was lost with all hands the following February.



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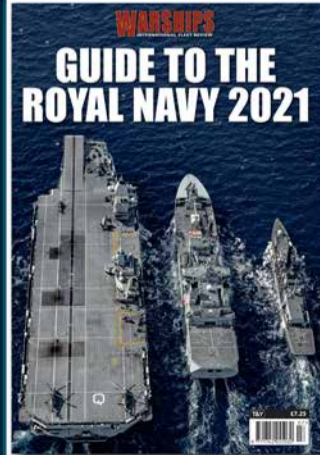
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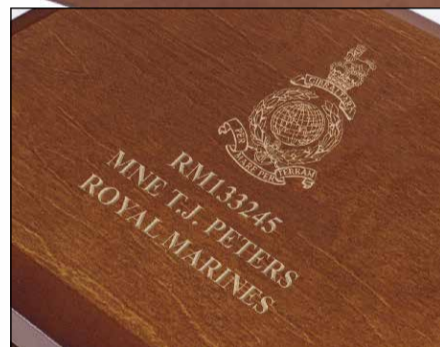
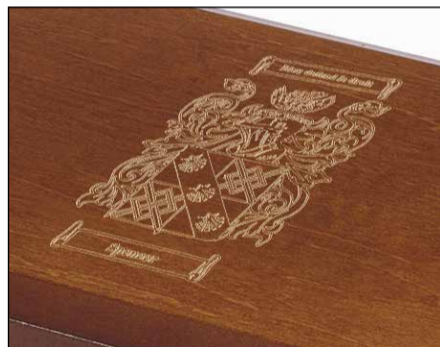
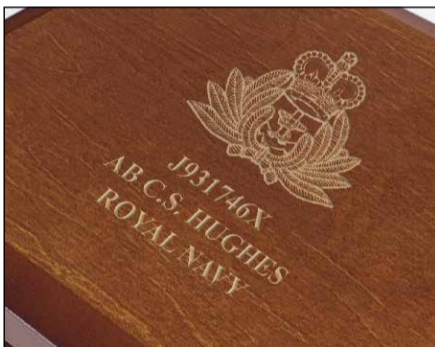
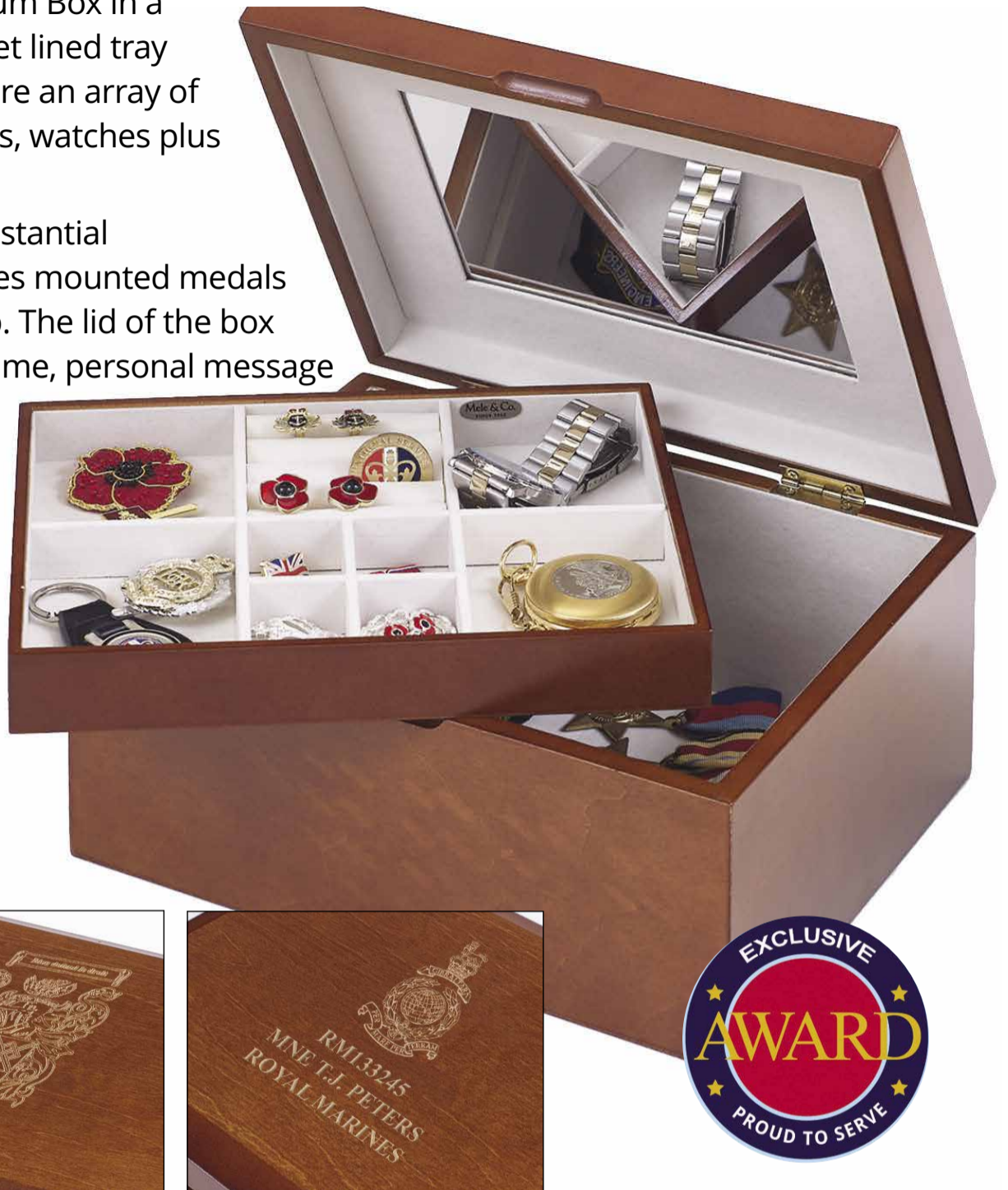
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