



NAVY NEWS

OCTOBER 2023



F-35B Lightning jets from 617 Squadron land on HMS Queen Elizabeth as the fleet flagship sails north at the head of the UK's Carrier Strike Group

See page 5

Picture: LPhoto Chris Sellars



LIGHTNING FORECAST

Inside: ■ DAUNTLESS AND LANCASTER DRUGS BUSTS ■ CARRIER DRONES D

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DECK TO THE FUTURE



THIS is the future of naval aviation.

Handlers lash a HCMC drone down on the deck of His Majesty's Ship Prince of Wales... the first aircraft to land on a Royal Navy carrier without a pilot in the cockpit.

In fact, not only was there no one in the cockpit, but there was no one at the controls – no one on deck or ashore with a radio control. AI was in the pilot's seat.

In fact, in some sort of multidimensional Marvel universe way, HCMC is one future for naval aviation.

Or rather one element of a potential future for naval aviation.

Such aircraft could buzz around carrier strike groups

delivering supplies, sharing the skies with Merlins, Wildcats, F-35s launching on the edge of their weather windows, returning from strike missions with some of their payload, while armed Mojave drones take-off laden with bombs and missiles.

(1) It's not science fiction.

(2) It's years, not decades away.

Britain's biggest warship sailed from Portsmouth in late August determined to push the boundaries of flight.

The bulk of her effort – this month and next – takes place off the Eastern Seaboard of the USA.

First US test variant F-35s, practising more advanced take-off and landing techniques



tested, allowing the stealth fighter to return to the carrier faster and heavier (i.e. with more fuel and weapons aboard). In theory that will cut the time between sorties, allowing the ship to launch more strike missions, faster.

And for good measure those jets will be launching and landing in heaviest sea states, proving the ship they can operate the F-35 in the harshest environments.

And then, next month, enter Mojave – potentially the Fleet Air Arm’s first venture into armed drones.

The Mojave can carry a 1,500lb payload of missiles, rockets or bombs. More importantly, it has been specifically designed to land

and take-off from short runways.

The trials will determine whether that includes the 901ft-long flight deck of a Queen Elizabeth-class carrier.

Certainly the HCMC drone had no trouble with setting down on Prince of Wales.

It only needs 150 metres or so of runway – a little over half the length of the flight decks on the UK’s Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers – to land or take off.

Designed by W Autonomous Systems (WAS), it’s a twin-engine light alloy twin boom aircraft, capable of carrying a payload of 100kg up to 1,000 kilometres (620 miles).

The idea is that it, or similar pilotless aircraft, operate as an

integral part of a carrier task group, transferring stores and supplies – such as mail or spare parts – between ships, without the need to launch helicopters.

Drones are cheaper to operate, eliminate any potential risk to aircrew – such as in bad weather – and keep the hi-tech Merlins and Wildcats free for operational sorties, such as hunting hostile submarines or surface vessels which are threats to the carrier strike group.

Southampton-based W Autonomous Systems is a leading-edge British firm developing long-range, heavy-lift autonomous drones for defence. Their drones incorporate a ground-breaking autopilot system, eliminating

the need to be controlled remotely by trained pilots, and are designed to operate in the most challenging environments.

After 18 months of extensive preparations ashore by the combined RN and WAS trials team, and attaining endorsements and authorisations from the Civil Aviation Authority, the HCMC drone took off from Predannack, the satellite airfield of RNAS Culdrose, and after a flight of about 20 minutes, touched down safely on HMS Prince of Wales.

Once its symbolic payload of naval memorabilia was removed by crew, the aircraft was turned around and it was re-launched back to

Predannack.

For all those involved – from the trials team up to carrier’s Commanding Officer Captain Richard Hewitt, it’s not *if* the RN will operate flights of drones from the carriers, but *when* – especially as the ships will be around into the 2060s by which time “operating autonomous drones like this will become the norm”.

Capt Hewitt continued: “We are all proud here in HMS Prince of Wales to achieve this – a fantastic milestone for all involved and the first of many firsts on this deployment to shape the future of Royal Naval Carrier Strike innovation as we prepare for our strike group deployment in 2025.” It almost makes training

with the US Marine Corps’ Osprey tilt rotors next month seem old hat...

Their work aboard – yet more tests expanding the flight envelope – will assist the carrier when she sails on her global deployment in 2025, leading a carrier strike group.

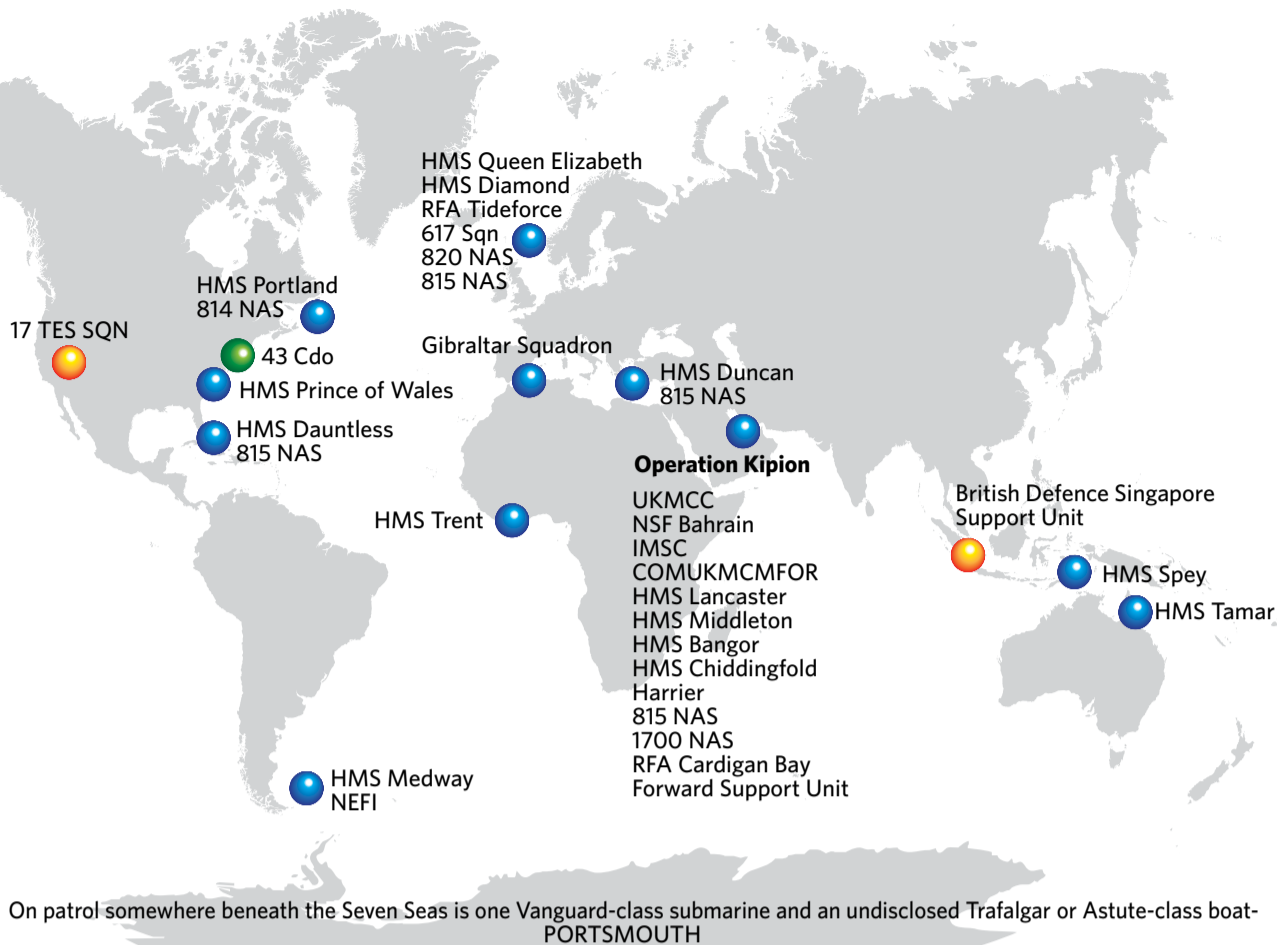
For Wings – Commander Air, Commander Martin Russell – this autumn is about as good as it gets.

“My team are really excited to tackle the final phase of testing which will expand the F-35’s awesome capabilities even more – and to be the first to land and launch new types of drones on our deck. The deck team are ready and raring to go.”

Picture: LPhot Unaisi Luke

Training or on patrol around the UK

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



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



GLOBAL | MODERN | READY

WELCOME to autumn and the crux of the Royal Navy's operations for 2023. Every one of central tenets of the Service's mission in the mid-2020s (and beyond) is currently on active duties: two carriers - deployed; a Littoral Response Group - deployed; all five second-generation OPVs - deployed; a potent presence in the Gulf - deployed; units heavily engaged in the protection of the mother isle; one nuclear deterrent submarine - deployed. And much more to boot.

So, let's begin with the big ticket items. His Majesty's Ships **Queen Elizabeth** and **Prince of Wales**.

The UK flagship is now chilling (literally rather than metaphorically) in the Norwegian Sea on the first stage of her autumn deployment (see *opposite*) in company with JEF/NATO partners/allies, destroyer **HMS Diamond** and tanker **RFA Tideforce** plus F-35s and Merlins.

It's a bit warmer for her younger sister as Britain's biggest warship pushes back carrier aviation boundaries off the Eastern Seaboard of the USA (see *pages 2-3*). Having successfully landed and launched a fixed-wing drone for a UK carrier first, there's the F-35 envelope to push. Some more fixed-wing drone trials (this time, the RN's first dalliance with one capable of carrying weapons), and a spot of MV-22 Osprey action.

From the Prince of Wales to the Princess. HRH paid her first visit to the Fleet Air Arm since being named the Service's Honorary Commodore-in-Chief. She was treated to a short, but action-packed visit to **RNAS Yeovilton** to begin learning about naval aviation - and meeting those behind it (see *page 13*).

There was, unsurprisingly, a bit of a media scrum around the Royal visitor. And there was interest too in another famous Katherine, Jenkins that is, the best-selling Welsh opera singer whose support as an ambassador for the Forces over the past 20 years was recognised with the title of Sponsor of new frigate **HMS Cardiff** (see *page 13*).

It's been a bad month for those who like to peddle drugs to fund their criminal activities as the RN took (at least) £143m illegal narcotics from them - a go-fast snared in the Caribbean (courtesy of **HMS Dauntless** and US Coast Guard), a dhow boarded by **42 Commando**, watched over by a Wildcat from **815 NAS**, all delivered from **HMS Lancaster** in the Arabian Sea.

Dauntless remains on call for the Atlantic hurricane season (which has so far, touch wood, skirted British territories in the Caribbean);

Lancaster is again underlining the usefulness of the permanent 'big ship' presence in the Indian Ocean - 4th drugs bust of 2023, plus regional engagement and training, most recently with the Pakistani Navy and a visit to Karachi (see *page 6*).

Further north **HMS Chiddingfold** and **Bangor** have been busy on mine counter-measure duties, despite the punishing heat of the Gulf in high summer. Bangor's crew not only proved adept in locating mines but also stricken turtles, spying one rare breed caught in discarded fishing nets, rescuing the distraught creature (see *page 9*).

Pushing eastwards, **HMS Spey** and **Tamar** are now into the third year of their Woodwall deployment to the Indo-Asia-Pacific and are expanding their roles this autumn, with the latter hosting a dive team - testing the Navy's PODS/adaptable mission bay concept which is central to the agility of RN vessels into the mid-21st Century (see *pages 14-15*).

The duo's (slightly) older sister **HMS Trent** is in action off West Africa on her Interlock deployment which focuses on safety and security in the continent's waters... used by £6bn of UK trade every year (see *page 19*).

Her 'bolt-on' for the autumn deployment is a detachment of **Royal Marines** whose Corps comrades back in Blighty are getting to grips with a new rifle, lighter, quieter, more accurate than the SA80, the Knight Stoner (see *pages 16-17*).

It's still being introduced into service - and only certain units will receive it, so **43 Commando** used their traditional arsenal for the annual exercise with their USMC United States Security Force Regiment on Tartan Eagle (see *pages 16-17*). Both units are charged with protecting their nation's nuclear arsenal/boats in port.

There is, of course, no higher duty than safeguarding the Mother Isle. The Deputy Prime Minister was reminded of that duty - and the men and women who perform it 24/7/365 - when he joined a **Vanguard-class boat** returning from a nuclear deterrent patrol in Faslane (see *page 11*).

And further afield, **HMS Portland**, **HMS Tyne** and RAF Poseidon P8s have been working together to monitor Russian vessels in the North Atlantic and North Sea as part of the constant vigil by the RN (see *page 7*).

PAYING RESPECTS TO ONE OF THE RN'S GREATEST FOES

UPHOLDING Nelson's historic watchword of 'humanity after victory', sailors on Britain's biggest warship paid their respects to one of the Royal Navy's greatest 20th Century foes.

HMS Prince of Wales paused over the wreck of the Bismarck, Hitler's flagship, to remember more than 2,000 German sailors lost when the battleship was pounded to a watery grave by the guns of the Royal Navy in May 1941.

The act of remembrance some 500 miles west of Brest concludes the tribute made by the crew of the Portsmouth-based aircraft carrier to the 3,500-plus sailors and aviators of both sides who were killed in the 'Bismarck chase'.

The carrier sailed over the wreck of HMS Hood in April last year on her way to Reykjavik and remembered the 1,415 souls killed when the Bismarck's shells penetrated the battle-cruiser's armour plating and detonated a magazine.

The then brand-new battleship HMS Prince of Wales was damaged in the same action - hit by shells from both Hitler's flagship and the escorting cruiser Prinz Eugen - which killed 13 men.

With his ship damaged, his guns malfunctioning and outmatched by his foe, the battleship's Captain John Leach broke off the battle.

He had, however, thwarted Bismarck's plans to raid shipping in the Atlantic. Leaking fuel thanks to a shell hit from HMS Prince of Wales, the German battleship made for the safety of port in occupied France.

It would have made it but for the bravery of Swordfish crews who threw themselves at the battleship, crippling its rudder and causing Bismarck to steam in circles.

On the morning of May 27 1941, the Home Fleet closed in for the kill.

The Bismarck action is one of only two battle honours earned by the King George V-class battleship during her short career.

Repaired, she would cross the ocean that summer with Premier Winston Churchill aboard for a meeting with President Roosevelt - resulting in the signing of the Atlantic Charter, which laid the foundation for the post-war world, including the United Nations.

After another battle honour for taking part in the Malta convoys, the battleship was lost at the hands of Japanese aircraft in company with HMS Repulse in the South China Sea in December 1941.

Eighty-two years later, her namesake carrier is making her maiden crossing of the Atlantic for extensive trials off the Eastern Seaboard of the USA involving crewed (F-35 stealth fighters, MV-22 Ospreys) and pilotless (Mojave drones) aircraft.

Echoes of 1941 resonate strongly with the aircraft carrier. A fragment of one of Bismarck's shells which struck her predecessor can be found in



HMS Prince of Wales (1941)



HMS Rodney engages Bismarck



Surrounded by splashes from shells, Bismarck belches thick black smoke from the many fires aboard



Survivors from Bismarck are rescued after the battle

the captain's cabin while the battleship's bell is also aboard for the crossing. It survived the shell strike which wiped out most of the bridge team, witnessed the signing of the Atlantic Charter and was recovered from the wreck site by Royal Navy divers - to save it from grave robbers - 20 years ago.

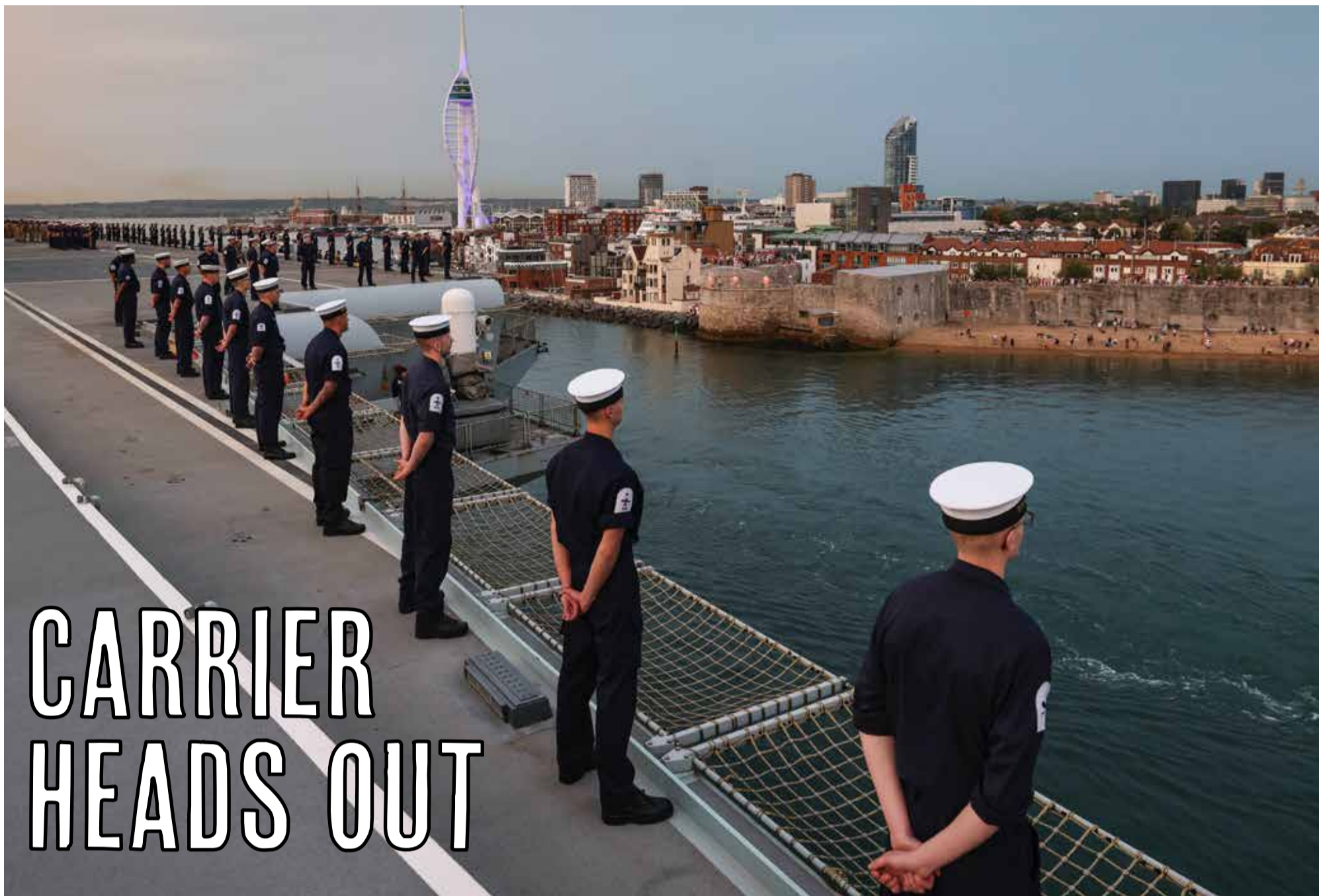
Today's HMS Prince of Wales is taking it back across the Atlantic as a symbol of the joint history with the US.

"HMS Prince of Wales and 820 Naval Air Squadron have a shared history as we share the same battle

honour - Bismarck 1941," explained the carrier's navigator Lieutenant Commander Chris Poulson.

"But this is not just their story, because we are living the HMS Prince of Wales and 820 stories. We are turning the page, we are living and writing the next chapter in the story. This is not their bell that we are taking to America; it's our bell we're taking back to America."

HMS Prince of Wales will be deployed in the USA until she returns to Portsmouth shortly before Christmas.



CARRIER HEADS OUT

BRITAIN'S flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth sailed from Portsmouth to head north and lead a Carrier Strike Group deployment alongside ships from partner nations.

The aircraft carrier, with her F-35 Lightning II stealth fighters and Merlin and Wildcat helicopters, will lead a mixed group of warships from various nations as they head to the Norwegian Sea and waters of northern Europe.

The UK Carrier Strike Group deployment comes as HMS Prince of Wales departed Portsmouth for the United States, where she will undergo trials and operate a multitude of aircraft and drones.

First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Ben Key, said: "It is great to see HMS Queen Elizabeth deploying once again to exercise and operate with our allies and partners, demonstrating our commitment to maintaining free and open use of the oceans for all."

"With HMS Prince of Wales having deployed last week, both our aircraft carriers are at sea this

autumn operating with F35-B Lightning, ensuring the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force remain ready to deliver the nation's conventional strike capability."

Commodore James Blackmore, Commander of the Carrier Strike Group, added: "It is with much eagerness that the UK Carrier Strike Group is now assembling for deployed operations – the first time the UK CSG will be under my command. This autumn's deployment showcases the UK's capability to operate at range from the UK and demonstrates our continued commitment to North Atlantic security."

"The Carrier Strike Group is an agile and highly capable force and we are excited to be heading to the North Sea and North Atlantic along with our International Partner Nations to reinforce security across the region."

HMS Queen Elizabeth and the Carrier Strike Group will conduct activities alongside international partners, including through the Joint Expeditionary

Force (JEF) framework – highlighting the utility and strength of JEF.

A series of sorties will also be carried out by 617 Squadron – the Dambusters, the joint RAF-RN Lightning stealth fighter formation from RAF Marham – and the strike group will take part in various port visits and defence engagement events.

Captain Will King, HMS Queen Elizabeth's Commanding Officer, said: "It is an extraordinary privilege to have command of one of the Royal Navy's most capable ships and to lead a dedicated and highly skilled crew on operations."

"As we sail to the north leading a coalition of nations in our unwavering commitment to peace and security in Northern Europe, we stand together as a formidable force for stability in these waters."

The 65,000-tonne carrier and her Strike Group will also join NATO allies for exercises and training in the

North Atlantic.

The deployment will mark the second time the Royal Navy flagship has led an international carrier strike group, after her deployment to the Indo-Pacific in 2021.

Leading Medical Assistant Billie Grisdale is looking forward to learning more about the ship and her embarked jets during this deployment.

"The upcoming deployment means it is currently an exciting time to be part of HMS Queen Elizabeth's crew; after a busy training period we will have the opportunity to go to sea which is what we look forward to the most," she said.

"Whilst I am away I intend to engage fully with the embarked squadrons who provide specialist knowledge on all aspects of aviation, continue with my own personal development utilising the educational team onboard, and spend time with the many friends and colleagues I have got to know from different departments across the ship."



AS BAGGERS DROP IN

THE Royal Navy's 'eyes of the fleet' - enhanced Merlin Mk2 helicopters with powerful radars - have joined the UK's flagship for her autumn deployment.

Two Airborne Surveillance and Control (ASaC) helicopters, delivered through the Crowsnest programme, have been significantly upgraded with new software ahead of joining HMS Queen Elizabeth.

The UK flagship left Portsmouth to head north, leading a task group of partner nations and exercising her F-35 Lightning stealth fighters and Merlin helicopters.

Flying more than a mile above the carrier strike group, the ASaC aircraft use their radars, lowered underneath the fuselage in a domed bag – which earns them the nickname 'Baggers' in the rest of the rest of the Navy – to look 'over the horizon'.

The helicopters' highly-trained crews look for possible air and surface threats – and can

be used to coordinate defence and strike operations.

Commander Aidan Riley, who commands the Merlin Helicopter Force, said the system had received "considerable capability enhancements" since Crowsnest debuted on the carrier's maiden deployment to the Pacific in 2021.

He continued: "The deployment of this year's carrier strike group is a significant milestone for our ASaC capability. The helicopters and their crews are an integral part of Merlin Helicopter Force alongside our trusted and hugely experienced antisubmarine warfare experts."

Each Merlin has a crew of three – one pilot and two observers (the tactical operators) from 820 Naval Air Squadron, which is based at RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall. They are embarked alongside the ship's complement of submarine hunting Merlins and anti-surface warfare Wildcat helicopters.

Commander Riley added: "We have an intensive aircrew training programme in place here at Culdrose which in the last couple of years has introduced a new generation of 'baggers' into the fleet. Operating from the carrier and her escorts, the men and women of 820 Naval Air Squadron present a formidable defence, protecting the carrier task group from possible threats above and below the water."

Keith Bethell, Director Helicopters for Defence Equipment & Support which manages the Crowsnest Programme, said: "We have been working very closely with our industry partners and the Royal Navy to upgrade and mature Crowsnest since it was a key element of the maiden carrier strike group deployment in 2021."

"With mission system software improvements and the operational experience gained by Merlin crews on other deployments last year, it promises to be a valuable wide-area surveillance and threat reduction asset."



Pictures: LPhoto Chris Seller

CLOSING IN FOR THE KILL

ONE day you're hosting VIPs, offering them crudites and keeping them entertained with small talk and amusing anecdotes of Life in the Blue One.

The next you're drenched in sweat on a honking dhow, pitching and rolling, a foul odour of rotting fish mixed with cigarettes and diesel oil, lugging around more than 200 sacks each weighing a couple of kilos.



Such is the variety of life for HMS Lancaster.

Diplomats one day. Drugbusters another.

The Red Rose bagged her fourth bust of the year – nearly £3m of hashish and heroin – barely hours after leaving Pakistani waters, switching instantaneously from training/exercises to front-line focus.

And as it's bust no.4 of 2023, it's a well honed drill.

Take one warship (Lancaster) operating under the banner of an international maritime force (Combined Task Force 150) which is focused on stopping smuggling, drugs especially, in the Arabian Sea/northern Indian Ocean.

Add a pinch of hi-tech sensors of a Wildcat helicopter and on-the-ball aircrew with sharp eyes scouring the seemingly endless expanse of ocean.

Throw in a dhow and a handful of crew making their way sluggishly across the ocean – well away from normal trade routes or fishing areas.

Now a dash of Royal Marines from 42 Commando, board and search experts par excellence, and a couple of Pacific 24 sea boats.

Give them, say 30 minutes to clamber aboard the suspect vessel to secure said craft and crew.

Time for some additional ingredients: half a dozen sailors, trained in the art of smelling a rat and knowing where to find hidden stashes of drugs.

And simmer for several hours, in temperatures of 40-plus Celsius (which is about Gas Mark ¼... but more than unpleasant enough for smugglers and sailors alike).

When ready serve up: 200-plus bags of various weights and colours but most importantly, when tested and tallied back on Lancaster's flight deck: 260kg of heroin and 200kg hashish. Yours for just under £3m. Or rather not because it's now been

destroyed and the proceeds won't be funding criminal or terrorist activities.

Now we've just focused on perhaps ten per cent of the crew of the Type 23 – based in Portsmouth, but operated by Plymouth-based Port Crew under the forward-deployed crew rotation model – but it's a whole ship effort.

From start to finish requires the involvement of the entire ship's company: from the engineers of the embarked Flight maintaining the Wildcat, to the caterers who ensured the boarding team remained hydrated and sustained, and the marine engineers who ensured that Lancaster's sea boats remain operational around the clock for just such an operation.

"I continue to be proud the teamwork of the whole ships' company, and their ability to achieve successful interdictions such as this one today. It is a true team effort that requires a lot of moving parts to come together as a well-oiled machine, ultimately to stop the distribution of illicit narcotics," said Commander Chris Sharp, HMS Lancaster's Commanding Officer.

"This success is shared with our international partners in Combined Task Force 150 who provided



essential support to the operation."

Indeed, the Bahrain-based international maritime force – currently commanded by the French Navy, with a Royal Navy contingent working within the international staff – has overseen all four of Lancaster's drugs hauls: a double seizure in June bagged £10m of narcotics, while the previous month the crew intercepted £2.5m of drugs, bringing the tally in 2023 to more than £15m of illicit drugs never reaching their destination.

In addition, the ship also

intercepted an illegal arms shipment.

"This great seizure demonstrates once again the operational effectiveness of Combined Maritime Forces and illustrates the United Kingdom and France's common commitment to regional maritime security alongside their regional and international partners", said Captain Yannick Bossu, Commanding Officer of CTF150.



It came on the back of a "jam-packed" few days in and off Pakistan.

Lancaster joined two Pakistani warships in the Arabian Sea for some combined training, after a short visit to Karachi.

The two Commonwealth navies work regularly together in the region on maritime security operations as part of the international effort to strangle criminal activity – notably arms and illegal narcotics smuggling – but this is the first time in 2023 Lancaster has had the opportunity to train directly with the Pakistani Navy.

Exercise Whitestar, which also involved the frigate PNS Taimur and corvette PNS Aslat, was relatively short but featured a "jam-packed" schedule from the moment HMS Lancaster exited the breakwater", said the frigate's navigator Lieutenant Mike Duncan.

The crew immediately launched their Wildcat helicopter and both Pacific 24 sea boats with Royal Marines of 42 Commando aboard.

The coordinated 'assault' meant that the helicopter and boats simultaneously 'pounced' on the Pakistani frigate to demonstrate the board and search techniques used by the Royal Navy to such effect – and which reaped rich rewards a few

hours later.

The all-action opening "set the tone for the next 24 hours," said Mike as the two frigates were put through their paces in a series of joint activities, including intricate manoeuvres in close proximity, before the two navies converged again for a photoshoot to bring the curtain down on Whitestar. Sailors from the participating ships also traded places to sample life in the respective navies.

The diplomacy and goodwill elements of Lancaster's spell with the Pakistanis came in Karachi.



Despite being in town for just one day, the whistle-stop visit allowed time for a remarkably spritely 98-year-old Pakistani WW2 veteran, former Corporal Faiz Ahmed, to cross the gangway and tour Lancaster, while sharing his wartime experiences with the 9th Punjabi Regiment with crew.

"Working with our Pakistani friends and colleagues gave us all a superb opportunity to maintain our relationship as partners, operating together in the Arabian Sea for the collective security of the region,"

said Commander Chris Sharp, HMS Lancaster's Commanding Officer.

"Our navies are well aligned with lots of shared doctrine and culture so operating together was seamless. My ship's company also had some time to sample the warm and generous hospitality of Karachi and the people of Pakistan. I hope we have future opportunity for joint operations under the Combined Maritime Forces."

Lancaster's ceremonial party were kept on their toes during a busy day of hosting VIPs, senior British and Pakistani officers and diplomats, led by British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, while the BBC's Urdu channel and Pakistani national TV featured the visit

"In a volatile world it's important that friends stick together and support each other," the High Commissioner said.

One of 18 female junior rates on Lancaster, AB(SC) Leni Milne, was among the sailors showing Karachi schoolchildren – predominantly girls – around the warship ending up on the bridge where the young visitors could try out the captain's chair.



"It was great fun to engage with these girls," said Leni. "They were friendly and chatty, and had plenty of questions about life in the navy, especially as female personnel. The tour lasted around 45 minutes but in that time I think both us and the girls had learnt something about each other's cultures."



TRACKING

THE BEAR



Russian destroyer Severomorsk is photographed by a P8 Poseidon aircraft from RAF Lossiemouth



Russian corvette Boikiy is tracked by a P8 patrol aircraft and HMS Portland



Russian cruiser Marshal Ustinov photographed from a P8

ROYAL Navy warships and RAF patrol aircraft tracked Russian Navy vessels in the waters close to the UK in a concerted monitoring operation.

Portsmouth-based HMS Tyne reported on the movements of three Russian ships as they sailed south through the North Sea and English Channel.

The patrol ship first shadowed Merkury, a Steregushchiy-class corvette, through the Strait of Dover and the UK's exclusive economic zone from August 12, before intercepting Smolny-class training ship, Perekop.

Tyne was later activated to track Akademik Nikolaj Strakhov, taking over duties from NATO warships as the research ship sailed through the Dover Strait and into the English Channel.

Meanwhile, Plymouth-based HMS Portland and P8 Poseidon aircraft from RAF Lossiemouth were in the North Sea and North Atlantic working together to monitor Russian ships and submarines, including corvettes Boikiy and Grad, cruiser Marshal Ustinov, the Udaloy-class destroyer Severomorsk and others.

With their collective arrays of powerful sensors for locating and tracking, the submarine-hunting frigate and maritime patrol aircraft formed a formidable duo for locating and monitoring operations, allowing for constant surveillance from the sea and air.

Having detected a ship or submarine, the aircraft can communicate the position, allowing a warship to intercept and track.

Royal Navy ships and aircraft routinely conduct training with the long-range RAF patrol aircraft, enabling a seamless transition to operations to protect the sea areas around the UK.

Lieutenant Sam Charleston, one of HMS Portland's Bridge watchkeeping officers, said: "It was rewarding to conduct operations protecting UK waters and interests. The team worked hard in rough weather and difficult conditions."

"This is my third time conducting this type of operation and I enjoyed seeing the wide-area search capability that the P-8 brings and working with the RAF aircrew."

Commander Ed Moss-Ward, HMS Portland's Commanding Officer added: "P8 aircraft operating with a Type 23 frigate with an embarked Merlin helicopter provides the UK with a world-leading anti-submarine warfare capability."

Many of the Russian vessels were associated with the Russian Navy Day, which was held in St Petersburg on July 30.

HMS Tyne's Executive Officer, Lieutenant Ryan Grieg, said: "Tyne is one of the busiest ships in the fleet, and the operations she has executed over the last few weeks are a reflection of the hard work and dedication delivered by her ship's company all year round."

"She has again demonstrated her alacrity and flexibility in proving herself as an efficient asset providing assurance and security in UK home waters."

HMS Portland visited Belfast following their mission in the North Atlantic.

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QATAR LESSONS

MINEHUNTERS SHARE KNOWLEDGE DURING GULF EXERCISE WITH QATARI NAVAL FORCES



MINEHUNTERS HMS Chiddingfold and HMS Bangor practised close manoeuvres and force protection in a series of exercises with the Qatari Emiri Naval Force.

The Royal Navy mine counter-measure vessels, based in the Gulf, worked alongside personnel and units from Qatar in the nation's home waters to share knowledge and expertise.

The exercise was split into two parts – with the first phase seeing the Ships' Companies visit each other's vessels to compare what capabilities they have and how they operate their ships.

This included the Qatari Emiri Naval Force's newest ship Offshore Patrol Vessel QENS Sheraouh-Q62.

Chiddingfold and Bangor then headed to sea from Umm Al-Houl Naval Base with QENS Sheraouh where they also worked with the Qatari Coastguard.

They practised sailing in close quarters, to test the skills and abilities of the ships' bridge teams, and force protection.

Lieutenant Commander Andrew Platt, the Commanding Officer of HMS Bangor, said: "It has

been a rewarding experience for my ship's company to operate alongside our Qatari partners in their home waters."

"It was a particular privilege to be the first UK units to exercise at sea their newest vessel, the Musherib-class Offshore Patrol Vessel 'Sheraouh-Q62'."

Reflecting on previous operations with Qatar, Lieutenant Commander Matthew Teare, Commanding Officer of HMS Chiddingfold, added: "This exercise has allowed us the opportunity to work closely once again with our partners in the Qatari Emiri Naval Forces.

"This builds upon the relationships we developed during our support to maritime security at the Qatar FIFA World Cup in 2022.

"Exercises such as these ensure we can communicate effectively at the tactical level and are the foundations of closer ties in the future."

With the exercise now complete, the UK ships have resumed their tasking in support of Operation Kipion within the Gulf – focused on ensuring freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce.

DIVERS SAVE TURTLE IN DISTRESS

ROYAL Navy divers rescued a stricken turtle after eagle-eyed shipmates spotted the creature in distress as their ship patrolled the Gulf.

Crew of minehunter HMS Bangor jumped into the water to remove fishing nets which had wrapped around the turtle – impeding its progress.

Beyond being alert to potential dangers and threats wherever they operate, bridge teams on Royal Navy warships are also trained to look out for marine life wherever they operate – and minimise any possible impact a ship's actions might have.

In this instance, navigator Lieutenant Sean Harvey spotted the turtle and alerted Bangor's dive team – out in one of the warship's small boats and on alert to disarm or blow up underwater bombs and mines.

Divers Joe Musker and Harry Thomas stepped to the fore and after carefully bringing their boat up to the turtle, then began the intricate job of removing the floats and nets which had wrapped around the creature's neck.

Had they not acted, the turtle would most

probably have drowned as it was struggling to come up for air.

"While we're deployed to the Gulf we get the opportunity to see a large variety of marine life, though few are so impressive as the sea turtle," said Sean.

"When we came across one in such distress it was an easy decision to help. Our embarked Dive Team, normally used to swimming down to inspect or neutralise threats on the sea bed were more than happy to use their skills instead to rescue this distressed turtle.

"It was immensely gratifying to see it happily swim away having disposed of the netting that had been entangling it – and littering the ocean."

It's the second time in a fortnight the Royal Navy has helped out a creature which is regarded as endangered or threatened by conservationists depending on the location and species.

Earlier this month, crew of HMS Dauntless cleared 200kg of rubbish from a nesting ground for turtles in Curacao in the Caribbean – work which earned them worldwide plaudits.

Like plastics littering the oceans, the problem of unwanted fishing nets and kit is widespread – it has an official name, Abandoned, Lost or Discarded Fishing Gear, and acronym: ALDFG.

It's typically the result of poor awareness among the fishing community... coupled with poor waste management facilities both onboard and onshore to dispose of the equipment safely.

"Unfortunately, abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear is becoming increasingly common," said Dr Imogen Napper, a marine scientist and lieutenant in the Royal Navy Reserve.

"It has the same impacts – ecological and socio-economic – as other forms of marine litter but as fishing gear is designed for one purpose, namely to catch fish, it is considered more harmful than other forms of marine plastic since it has the potential to continue catching marine fauna by 'ghost fishing'.

"It's really heartwarming to see the Royal Navy increasingly engaged with environmental matters over the past year."



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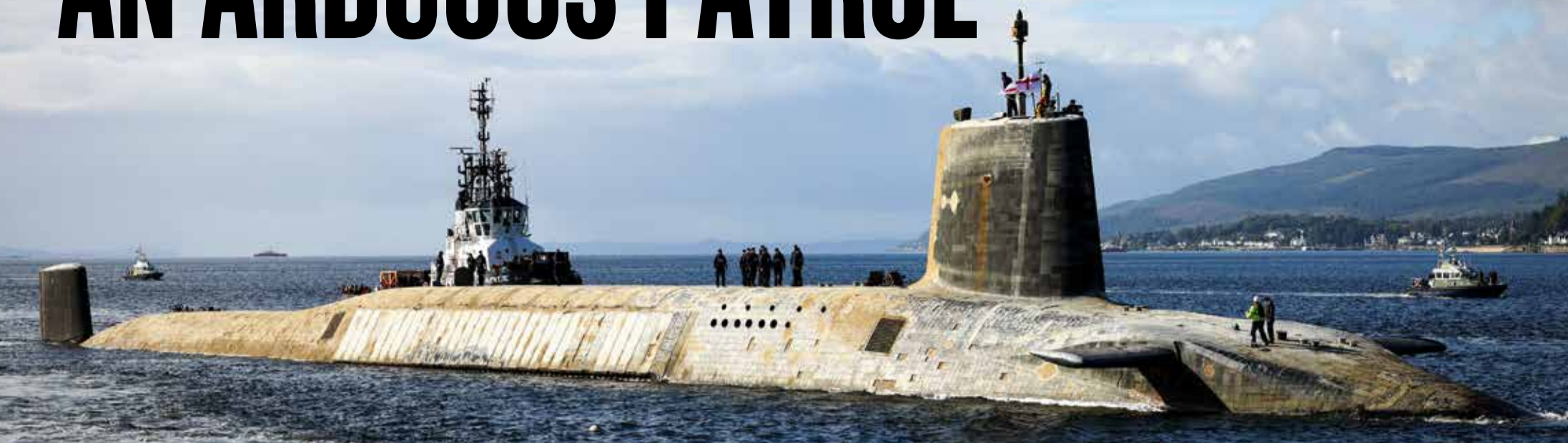
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AN ARDUOUS PATROL

Pictures by LPhoto Bill Spurr



THE Royal Navy's latest nuclear deterrence submarine patrol was welcomed home at Clyde Naval Base by head of the Senior Service and the Deputy Prime Minister.

Deputy Prime Minister, Oliver Dowden, and the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Ben Key, pictured right, were in Scotland to greet the Vanguard-class ballistic submarine on completion of their silent mission beneath the waves carrying the Trident missile system.

It comes on the 55th year of Operation Relentless, under which a British submarine carrying the nation's ultimate weapon has patrolled the world's oceans, unseen, undetected and ready to strike since 1969.

Operation Relentless is the longest sustained military operation ever undertaken by the UK. Known as the Continuous at Sea Deterrent, it is the unyielding responsibility of the Royal Navy and the Submarine Service to ensure these patrols of national importance never cease.

The Vanguard-class submarine returning to Clyde was waved home by families and has already been replaced on patrol by one of her sister boats.

The First Sea Lord, said: "It's a great privilege for me to welcome home the returning Ship's Company. They have done an exceptional job and I never fail to be impressed by their dedication and professionalism. I also pay immense tribute to their families and thank them for their support."

"We should never underestimate the huge national effort that goes into this endeavour. It is through the commitment of all of those across the Defence Nuclear Enterprise, our industrial partners and across Government that we are now in our 55th year of unbroken deterrent patrols."

Deputy Prime Minister, Oliver Dowden, said: "I am

delighted to be here to welcome home our sailors as they return from patrol. The Continuous At Sea Deterrent is enormously important to the United Kingdom and I am humbled by their service. I do not underestimate the demands on our people and their families in their commitment to delivering this capability."

A new class of ballistic submarine – the Dreadnought class – is currently under construction and is expected to replace the Vanguard-class by the 2030s, ushering in a new era of at-sea deterrence. As one of the most complex engineering projects ever undertaken in the UK, it supports the Prime Minister's priority to grow the economy by supporting tens of thousands of jobs across the country, with 13,500 in the north-west of England specifically.

HMNB Clyde has developed from a military port, established during World War II and will become the Single Integrated Operating Base (SIOB) for the UK submarine fleet.

This will include the new Dreadnought-class, as well as the four Vanguard-class and five Astute-class Royal Navy submarines already base-ported at Clyde. The Submarine Escape, Rescue, Abandonment and Survival (SMERAS) Facility is also based at the site which, with the development of the Future Submarine School well underway, will improve the quality of life for the submariners living and working at Clyde.

Meanwhile, preparation work has started on HMS Victorious ahead of a major planned refit, which will keep the bomber on nuclear deterrence patrols into the 2030s. It's part of a Vanguard-class maintenance programme, taking place in Devonport Naval Base in Plymouth at a specialist facility run by Babcock.

The programme sustains 1,000 jobs in the southwest of the UK and it's ultimate purpose is to ensure work is carried out on the Vanguard boats, modernising and improving them before they are phased out for the Dreadnought submarines to begin their duties.



A member of the ship's company with the Deputy Prime Minister, Oliver Dowden, and First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Ben Key



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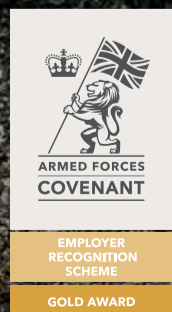
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WELL, here's some welcome inflation.

Having pulled the cord on the Fleet Air Arm's standard issue life jacket (tip: *don't inflate inside the cab*), the Princess of Wales learns about the work of the small, specialist survival equipment branch - one stance in a whistle-stop introduction to the world of naval aviation.

Having been named Commodore-in-Chief of the Fleet Air Arm in the summer, Her Royal Highness took the opportunity to immerse herself in the Fly Navy world with a very high profile (more than three dozen media were on hand) inaugural visit to RNAS Yeovilton... leaving behind three "very jealous" children, she told Leading Air Engineering Technician Chloe Chapman, who were disappointed they were not joining her "to look at the really cool planes and put the *Top Gun* soundtrack on for the school run, which gave me a little insight into her personal life".

The princess spent a good bit of time chatting with the 700X engineer who talked about life in Cornwall and, with her Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Marcus Pennant introduced the royal visitor to the Banshee drone - used for developing tactics to defend the nation's aircraft carriers against air attacks.

"She was fantastic, genuinely interested, really personable and for me it was a great opportunity and a privilege to meet her," said Marcus.

Banshee wasn't flying today. When it does, it's loud.

Not, however, as loud as an F-35B Lightning which 'buzzed' Yeovilton's control tower in *Top Gun* fashion to get the princess' visit off to a flying start (pun intended).

HRH was introduced to the tower's air traffic controllers who safely oversee movements in the skies around Yeovilton as well as on the ground... and then tried her hand at guiding a Wildcat safely back to base under the sure guidance of those same controllers.

Moving into one of Yeovilton's hangars, the Princess of Wales was shown Merlins (Mk2 anti-submarine, Mk4 Commando) by air and ground crew who outlined the roles of both the machines and the men and women behind them.

Air Engineer Technician Danielle Beckinsale, who maintains Merlin Mk4s, explained how busy her 845 Naval Air Squadron was - currently deployed in the Middle East, gearing up for a winter in Norway.

"I've never met royalty before and wasn't sure what to expect, but she was very down to earth," the 20-year-old said. "She was really, really nice, really genuine and interested in the role of a female engineer."

Was it her most memorable day in her Royal Navy career? "Every day is a good day in the Navy - I love the lads I work with, love my squadron," said Danielle.

The Royal visit ended at the Wildcat Training Centre, where personnel learn and practise a variety of skills including aircraft engineering, flying and weapon loading.

The princess met a Wildcat Flight, witness weapon loading in the impressive trainer, then took a 'flight' in the state-of-the-art Wildcat helicopter simulator to close the visit.

And with that the introduction to naval aviation was over. The children would have loved it... but FAA personnel also enjoyed the occasion.

"For me, every day that you become a bit immune to what you do," said Leading Survival Equipment Technician Louise Evans-Hughes who showed the princess the life jacket - which resulted in the most memorable images of the visit.

"It's nice to be remembered and some of the things that you're doing."

For Yeovilton's Commanding Officer Captain Duncan Thomas, the three-hour visit is merely the beginning of "a long and rewarding relationship" with Fleet Air Arm's Commodore-in-Chief.

"We provided an initial introduction to our wonderful servicemen and women who work in the Fleet Air Arm here, as well as a demonstration of some of the exceptional capabilities the Fleet Air Arm operates for the Royal Navy," he said.

"We've all been hugely excited by this opportunity and I am delighted that Her Royal Highness will be able to support and inspire our exceptionally talented sailors, aircrew and wider workforce family for years to come."

Pictures: LPhoto Gareth Smith

IF THE cap fits...

Under gunmetal skies Welsh mezzo-soprano Katherine Jenkins adds colour to a drab day in Cardiff Bay as she is unveiled as the Sponsor of the Welsh capital's new warship.

The singer - the biggest selling classical artist this century - has agreed to become an ambassador for the frigate and all who serve aboard.

The Navy invited Katherine to take up this honour - a life-long commitment - due to her work with the Armed Forces around the globe over the past two decades, including twice performing on the UK's flagship, HMS Queen Elizabeth.

The singer was treated to a tour of the waters around Cardiff courtesy of patrol boat HMS Express - the only British warship permanently based in Wales - then was shown around HMS Cambria, the Navy's headquarters in Wales.

"This is a particularly proud and poignant moment for me given that my Dad was part of the Navy. It feels like a real full-circle moment, and I know that he was with me today," she said.

"I have always felt it such a privilege to support His Majesty's Armed Forces and their families, and the experiences I have had with them over almost 20 years will forever be amongst my most cherished."

Katherine said she had been "inspired" by the RN team in Wales and above all "humbled and honoured to be announced as the Sponsor of HMS Cardiff."

"It is a lifelong role and I look forward to making more memories through this impressive new ship and serving with love and dedication."

It is a role often, but not exclusively, performed by royalty - the Princess of Wales is the sponsor of HMS Cardiff's sister ship HMS Glasgow - or prominent citizens, such as the wives/partners of senior military figures and political leaders.

Regarded as a permanent member of the ship's company, sponsors attend key moments in a vessel's life - such as launch, commissioning ceremonies, homecomings from operational missions - are kept regularly informed of the sailors' activities and deeds, send messages of support in return in hard and challenging times, and generally act as ambassadors for and champions of the crew and their ship.

HMS Cardiff is already affiliated with her namesake city following a visit by civic leaders to Govan to see progress on the ship last month.

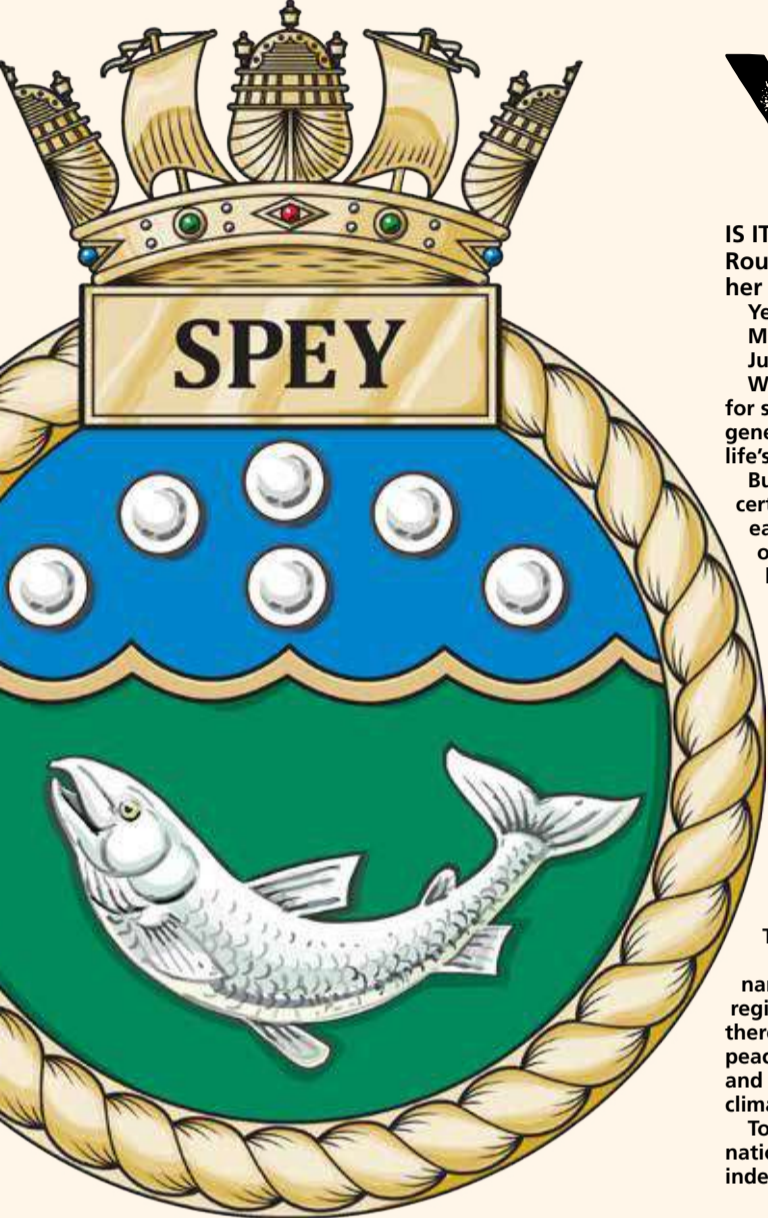
"We are thrilled that Katherine will be the ship's sponsor for HMS Cardiff which is affiliated to the capital city of Wales. I am certain that she will be an outstanding advocate for the ship wherever HMS Cardiff serves around the globe," said Brigadier Jock Fraser Royal Marines, Naval Regional Commander for Wales, Western England and the Channel Islands, who has helped forge ties between the new ship and her namesake city.

"Having recently visited HMS Cardiff in-build, I know that Katherine can look forward to supporting a ship's company working in a world-leading vessel."

As for the ship herself, well the second of the Royal Navy's eight Type 26 anti-submarine frigates is now a 'whole ship' after her bow and stern were joined on the hardstanding at BAE's Govan facility and received her main mast last month.

Picture: LPhoto Matt Bradley





YOU AIN'T SEEN

IS IT really two years since they passed Round Tower, first HMS Tamar, then her younger sister Spey.

Yes it is. More, in fact. Just shy of 25 months deployed. Whether or not it's the best deployment for sailors assigned to the five second-generation Offshore Patrol Vessels, well, life's what you make it.

But the Indo-Asia-Pacific mission is certainly the most varied: scope (from the eastern seaboard of Africa to the shores of California); climate (largely tropical, but Spey endured temperatures of -25C in South Korea last winter); colourful (a traditional warm Pacific welcome in pretty much every island visit); interactions (navies and agencies large and small, from the mighty fleets of the USA and Japan, to emerging nations like Timor Leste).

There's a good chance you've not heard of Timor Leste. There's a good chance most of HMS Spey's crew hadn't heard of the small Pacific nation ahead of their visit.

Indeed, the last time the Royal Navy appeared off the country's coastline... Timor Leste didn't exist.

Even under its pre-independence name of East Timor, it probably only registers with those who've been there (HMS Glasgow briefly supported peacekeeping efforts 30 years when unrest and the struggle for freedom reached a climax) and students of the region.

Today Timor-Leste is one of the youngest nations on the planet, finally declaring independence after decades of Indonesian

– and, before that Portuguese – rule just over 20 years ago.

Located about 400 miles northwest of the Australian city of Darwin, the country occupies the eastern half of island of Timor – hence it was known as East Timor before independence – and is roughly three quarters of the size of Wales but with a population just four times the size of Cardiff.

Spey spent three days in the capital Dili – a visit which may have been a first, but also echoed many Spey and Tamar have enjoyed: a colourful welcome on the jetty, VIPS (in this instance President Jose Ramos-Horta and the UK's newly-appointed Ambassador (Designate), Dominic Jermy) and hospitality off the chart.

While the ship took on fuel and supplies for the next leg of her mission, the gangway was opened to local school children, the country's Navy – with Spey's navigator Lieutenant Rachael Graveson championing the role of women at sea – and local dignitaries for a ceremonial sunset.

Spey's footballers took on the host nation's navy (honours in the broiling heat were even) while her medical team visited a Dili hospital to discuss potential support and assistance should Timor-Leste be hit by a natural disaster.

And thus were laid the foundations for future visits and, potentially, training and operations with Timor-Leste's authorities – very much the bread and butter of Operation Woodwall, the official name of the Tamar-Spey mission, forging new friendships, renewing historic ties, working with the UK's allies across the region to

tackle a range of security issues, providing disaster relief where needed, supporting remote Overseas Territories (such as the Pitcairn Islands) and clamping down on activities impacting the environment, such as illegal fishing, plastic pollution and climate change.

As the third year of Woodwall begins, there's a mix of more of the same for Spey patrolling the waters of central/eastern Asia, culminating in her participation (for the second year running) in one of the largest international military exercises staged in South East Asia, Sama-Sama. Jointly hosted by the Philippines and United States Navies, with invitations extended to allied nations with a vested interest in regional security.

Meanwhile, HMS Tamar is concentrating her efforts this autumn – spring in the Southern Hemisphere – in and around Australia and Oceania.

She has a pivotal role to play alongside the Royal Australian and US Navies in an exercise focusing on 'seabed warfare', using a combination of divers and autonomous underwater vehicles to conduct mine countermeasure operations, and monitor critical infrastructure such as pipelines and communication cables.

Tamar will nearly double the size of her crew when she embarks a teams of divers and underwater vehicle operators for the exercise – highlighting the 'plug and play' modular design of the River-class ships which have been designed to 'bolt-on' new capabilities as they become necessary – drones, divers, autonomous systems, disaster relief stores – depending on the mission they are conducting (it's a concept



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N NOTHIN' YET

fundamental to the RN's next-generation classes of frigates).

"The seabed warfare exercise is an exciting opportunity for Tamar and will be our largest embarkation of equipment and mission operators to date," said Commanding Officer Commander Teilo Elliot-Smith.

"It is a real test of the platform's modular design. It is not just about the ship being able to embark a capability, we have an entire operating concept to develop with lessons learnt by the Ship, and the teams coming onboard, being incorporated into future ships such as the Type 26 and Type 31 frigates, so that the Navy can operate more dynamically and efficiently in the future."

Restoring a permanent Royal Navy presence in the Indo-Pacific for the first time since the return of Hong Kong to China a quarter of a century ago poses logistical challenges: maintenance and support in distant ports and bases, taking on fuel in harbours rarely visited, delivering replacement parts to a part of the world beyond the UK military's traditional logistical support chain.

And then there's the human factor. Half the crew on each ship trades places with counterparts flown out from the UK every month. That's a lot of air miles, jet lag and lengthy flights from Heathrow to some far-flung destination.

And it's a lot of time away from home – nine months each year for both ship's companies.

The reward? Well, in addition to the usual (serving the nation, the unmatched comradeship of the military), it's experiences you can't buy (or if you

can, you're loaded): parts of the world few Britons have seen, alongside more familiar, but still distant destinations such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, and Australia. Timor-Leste for example. Or Vanuatu. The Pitcairns. French Polynesia.

/// Between us we have sailed across three quarters of the globe, and routinely patrol over half of it, visiting some amazing places on the way. ///

LEUTENANT SAM WILLIAMS

Collectively the sister ships have visited more than two dozen nations large and small, called in on 30 ports, put 120,000 nautical miles on the clock (enough to sail three times around the globe).

"In the past two years, Tamar and Spey have truly lived the old adage of 'Join the Navy and see the world'," said Spey's Navigator Lieutenant Sam Williams.

"Between us we have sailed across three quarters of the globe, and routinely patrol over half of it, visiting some amazing places on the way.

"The political and diplomatic effect that these ships have around the world is astonishing and the opportunities this permanent deployment offers, from the most junior sailors to the command team alike, is unrivalled."

And while some of the images might

suggest one perennial Rodgers and Hammerstein musical for the ship's companies... Spey and Tamar are not decorative. They're operational. Ambassadorial. Industrial – promoting UK firms. And, of course, Royal Naval – promoting the Senior Service.

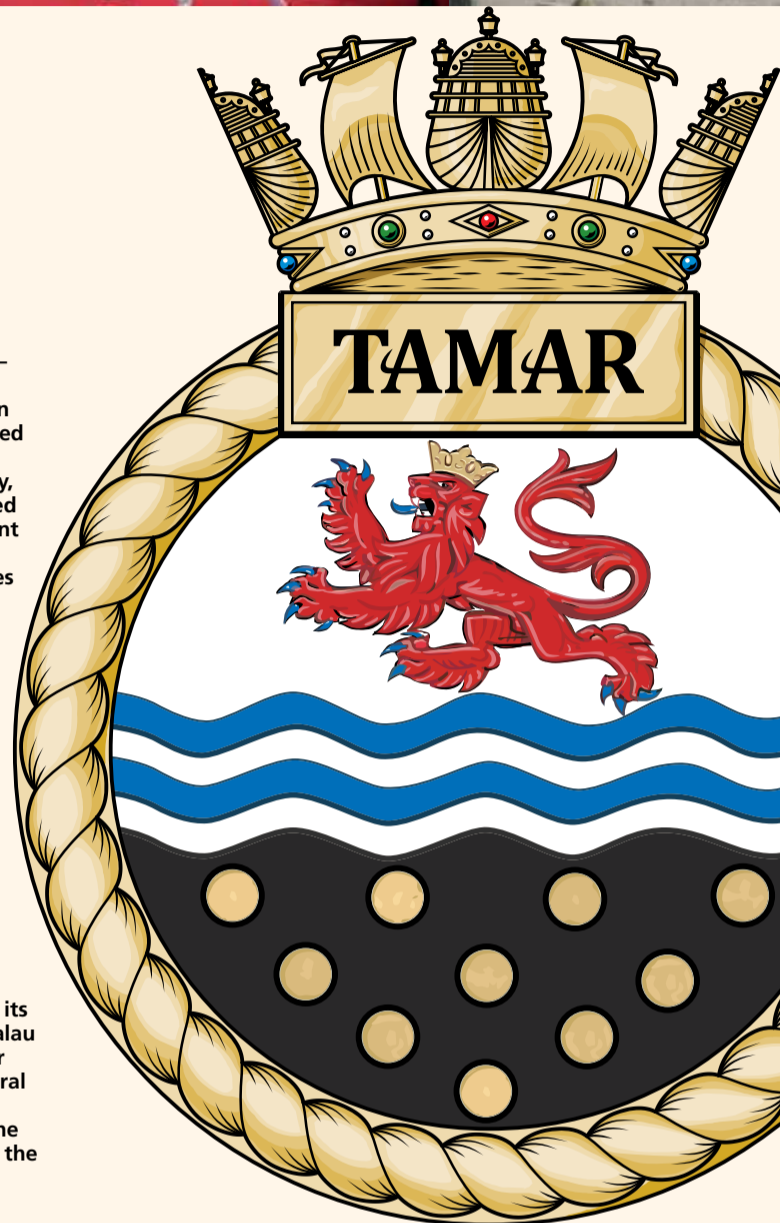
Indeed, the duo have provided aid in the wake of natural disasters, supported environmental efforts such as tackling illegal fishing, monitored water quality, helped update seafaring charts, worked with a string of navies and enforcement authorities, taken part in numerous exercises large and small with our allies and partners, flown the flag for the UK and made a lot of new friends.

And we've skipped a lot in that round up...

"It's been an incredible two years so far and we've achieved so much," Lieutenant Commander Matt Millyard – who's been both Executive Officer of HMS Tamar and Spey's temporary Commanding Officer.

"From operations monitoring oil imports to North Korea, patrolling the vast sea areas of the South Pacific for illegal fishing, and delivering Covid vaccines to the Pitcairn Islands, to visiting some of the most beautiful places on earth: from Diego Garcia for its incredible beaches; to the Islands of Palau for untouched beauty and crystal-clear waters; or Japan and Korea for a cultural experience unlike anywhere else.

"The future for Tamar and Spey in the Indo-Pacific remains just as exciting as the past two years."



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STEALTHIER AND DEADLIER

A NEW RIFLE HEADLINES A HOST OF KIT ADDITIONS

BRITAIN'S elite Royal Marine Commando Forces will be stealthier and deadlier thanks to a new assault rifle.

The Knight's Stoner 1 (KS-1) rifle (designated L403A1) headlines a host of new kit additions for the UK Commando Forces in 'lead strike teams' – those responsible for raiding and amphibious operations worldwide.

More than a thousand of the new rifles have been bought from US producers Knight's Armament Company and come with advanced optical and thermal sights as well as suppressor (silencer) systems to make Commandos harder to trace and more formidable in combat.

The Commando Force regularly deploys around the globe in all extremes of environment – arctic, desert and jungle – reacting to crises and conducting a range of complex operations, including counter piracy and terrorism, drugs busts and humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

It means there is a need to put top-end kit in the hands of these specialist warriors to give them the upper hand on the battlefield.

A new rifle, night vision goggles, tactical communications systems, battlefield vehicles and 'survivability systems', including new helmets, communications and suppressors which make the force more difficult to detect, are to be rolled out as the Royal Navy makes an initial investment in new kit for its elite, very high readiness fighting force, with plans for a longer-term procurement programme from 2024.

Captain Nick Unwin RN, Commando Force Programme Director, said: "Delivery of quality equipment such as we see today is a genuine increase in capability and capacity for the UK's Commando Force Strike Teams and offers significant tactical advantage to the user.

"The Commando Force Programme is delivering change across all areas of amphibious operations; this is just one small



A Royal Marine Commando tests new kit, including new rifle, during training Cyprus

part of the wider change programme we are all embarked upon as we adjust to evolving threats and challenges."

Alongside this new rifle and a new helmet made by Gentex, Commando Forces will take delivery of the new Fused Binocular Night Vision Device produced by L3Harris, giving them a significant advantage over their adversaries in night-time littoral operations, or as they move in darkness through confined spaces during boarding operations.

Again, more than a thousand have been procured and the systems feature advanced low-light image intensification with a fused thermal input – which means the devices include both night vision and thermal sensor superimposed into a single image for the operator – that far outperforms older systems currently used by the UK's Armed Forces.

Commando Forces are also exploring how to use the night vision kit alongside digital communications systems, providing a live feed to the goggles to help commanders assess the battlefield and make decisions.

Meanwhile, advances are being made with upgrades to the Sharpshooter rifle.

The Lewis Machine and Tool L129A2 rifle is an improvement on the well-established Sharpshooter with new Leupold scopes and HuxWrx suppressors, making it more accurate and quieter.

It is also equipped with an Envision Technology ballistic calculator and a Pixels-on-Target thermal sight. Each Commando Strike Team will comprise two designated expert shooters equipped with these upgraded rifles.



A Royal Marine of the Surveillance and Reconnaissance Squadron uses the new rifle in the Arctic during the winter deployment



Commandos use new kit in Cyprus exercise

STEPPING UP

ROYAL Marines have completed rigorous training honing the skills vital to protecting the UK's nuclear deterrent.

Marines of 43 Commando Fleet Protection Group are on duty 24/7 365 days a year, tasked with guarding the UK's ultimate weapon and the Vanguard-class submarines that carry it.

These specialist commandos are based at Faslane in Scotland, from where the submarines operate, and are required to be experts in a range of tight and closed-quarters combat environments.

A yearly exercise – named Tartan Eagle – alternates between the UK and US, and keeps the marines from both nations, who are committed to this specialist role, razor sharp for their duties.

During two weeks of training in Chesapeake, Virginia, the marines shared kit, knowledge, techniques and procedures to ensure they are at the cutting edge of their trade.

The exercise came to an intense end as the marines put all the skills into practice on a final mission, facing down a group attempting to sabotage vital national infrastructure.

"We cordoned off the area so that our Recapture Tactics Team could clear through the building, dealing with occupants ranging from armed individuals to civilians working in the area," said Marine Beckett.

The US Marines were drawn from the Kings Bay and Bangor

Naval Bases, in Georgia and Washington respectively, where the USA's own nuclear deterrence is based.

The first week was spent on the ranges where the US Marines Corps instructors introduced the UK marines – from 43 Commando's O Squadron – to their weapons systems, the M4A1 rifle and Sig M18 pistol.

The week culminated in a competition shoot, which Royal Marines won 3-1, before downtime together in Virginia Beach and Washington DC.

The second week saw the training ramp up into studying complicated military doctrine for closed-quarters battle and using live ammunition in a shoot house – parlance for a building used for teaching/refining combat skills in a tight environment.

The commandos worked on clearing stairways and rooms – with differing setups and obstacles to tackle.

"This massively improved our operational capability and let us put skills we had rehearsed while at HMNB Clyde into practice," said Marine Beckett.

"This is a type of training we don't get to conduct while back in the UK, giving us a unique experience to take back home."

The Squadron has since returned to the UK for immediate deployment on operational tasking and will help host the US in the UK part of the exercise in the near future.





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TURES

THIS is what being forward deployed is all about.

Variety. Different places. Different people. Different navies. Different kit. Different experiences.

Pretty much every week there's been a new location for HMS Trent as she knuckles down to her Interlock deployment focusing on collective security of West African waters and friendships with its numerous nations, many of them bound with the UK as members of the Commonwealth.

The third of the RN's five second-generation River-class left Gibraltar in early August to spend the rest of 2023 working in, around and off West Africa – waters through which around £6bn of UK trade passes annually.

With no helicopter embarked – the River-class have flight decks for temporarily hosting aircraft say for rest and refuelling (aka lilypadding) – drones are providing the longer-range situational awareness/overwatch for Trent.

She's embarked a Puma Flight which despite its size (just 4½ft long, though with a wingspan of 9ft) has an impressive endurance (two hours), during which time it gathers live footage fed directly back to the mother ship, allowing sailors and Royal Marines to make accurate tactical decisions.

It is, says Flight Commander Lieutenant Chris Windsor, proving to be an asset to Trent.

"Our deployment has provided an excellent opportunity to provide an enduring remotely-piloted capability for this deployment and future support to the Batch 2 Offshore Patrol Vessels."

We had to look up Trent's first port of call (thanks Wikipedia/Google Maps): Banjul, capital of The Gambia at the mouth of the river which gives

the country its name.

It's one of the smallest capital cities (pop.31,000) in the world and home to the nation's small naval force (500 personnel) who are chiefly responsible for security/fishery protection duties, performed in a series of patrol boats.

Trent delivered damage control, medical and board-and-search training with their hosts, while marine and weapons engineers used their skills to put in order kit which had been either broken or not even installed on the Gambian vessels.

One navigation radar was returned to working status after being out of action for several years, while a new radio system was fitted and tested – successfully, for the team made contact with a Gambian Army unit.

"The Gambian Navy were delighted with what we achieved over the three-day period," said Lieutenant Craig Lines, Trent's Weapon Engineer Officer. "Not only did we restore capability that had been unserviceable for a number of years, we installed and set to work new equipment that had been provided with no installation solution."

The ship's Medical Officer Surgeon Lieutenant Zara Dyar added: "The medical team thoroughly enjoyed working with the Gambian Navy to share understanding of first aid and practical aspects of medical care onboard warships."

Before departing there was time to hand over 11,000 Gambian Dalasi – about £150 – to help out the Kairo Konko Scout unit, a famous 5-3 victory over the host nation's combined forces football team and a narrower 1-0 triumph over the navy side.

Next stop: Cape Verde, a 600-mile voyage out into the central Atlantic. Here HMS Trent's boarding team from 42 Commando came into their own, seizing the opportunity to train not just with the Coast Guard, but also the local police and National Crime Agency – the island chain is one of the key routes into Europe/Africa for the illegal narcotics trade in the Americas.

The Royal Marines demonstrated high vertical assault and close-quarters drills, using Trent's sea boats to assault the patrol ship's wings, sharing tactics which have regularly paid dividends in the Caribbean and Arabian Sea.

"This was a really useful exercise which allowed my boarding specialist team to operate and exchange working practices and operating procedures with the Cape Verde force," said Lieutenant Max Tanner Royal Marines, in charge of Trent's commando detachment.

"The Cape Verde team were engaging and we built strong relationships with them which we hope to capitalise on moving forward."

Trent's Commanding Officer Commander Tim Langford added: "The ability to operate seamlessly with the Cape Verde Coastguard is a measure of the flexibility and professionalism of both Trent's ships company and the



Members of Trent's ship's company salute at the Commonwealth War Graves in Cape Verde



HMS Trent's ship's company work with the Gambian Navy and forge closer bonds, including a football match which Trent won 1-0



HMS Trent alongside in Gambia



Royal Marines boarding specialists working with counterparts from Cape Verde

Cape Verde Forces."

In Mindelo, the ship's company paid their respects at the civic cemetery, the last resting place for nine Commonwealth Servicemen and merchant sailors in both world wars.

The Cape Verde visit concluded in the capital Praia with a capability demonstration which, says Lieutenant Scott Mordue – Trent's Marine Engineering Officer – "a career highlight" as the sailors and marines impressed VIPs, military leaders and the British consulate.

Her time in Cape Verde done, the ship returned to Africa, beginning with Sierra Leone – the first RN visitor to the country since 2015 (RFA Argus spent six months successfully helping to curb the spread of Ebola through the Commonwealth nation).

Having laid on another capability demonstration, the ship's company headed to the outskirts of the capital Freetown, home to the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary.

The chimp-tastic venue proved a hit with the sailors (even though the inhabitants are prone to hurling rocks at visitors and succumbing to any ailments they might have for their immune systems are similar to human's).

"What a great day out," enthused Petty Officer Hayley Shakeshaft, responsible for Trent's comms systems. "It was amazing to see what the volunteers do to help the Chimpanzees, and the scenery was amazing."

Back in port, the ops room and command teams visited the headquarters of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces Maritime Wing to discuss their work in countering maritime insecurity across the region, while Trent's engineers were called upon to assist as they had done in The Gambia.

"The skills that the Navy have equipped me with have allowed me to assist the Sierra Leone Navy in fixing their outboard motors," said Engineering Technician Bryn Kirby.

His boss Lt Mordue added: "My team really impressed me with their work ethic in some pretty arduous working conditions. I really had a sense of satisfaction when I looked at what my team had achieved – this was certainly a 'good Navy Day'."

And so with a happy send-off from Sierra Leone sailors, HMS Trent sailed on the next leg of Interlock. Next destination: Lagos, Nigeria.



BUSTS & TH



HMS DAUNTLESS and her powerful radars came into their own when a suspected drugs running aircraft took off from an airfield in Venezuela.

The Type 45 destroyer's state-of-the-art sensors have the ability to track targets at huge range – usually hostile jets or missiles – but in the first recorded 'kill' for the class, Dauntless tracked the aircraft as it made its 1,500-mile journey, over the Caribbean Sea and handed information to US authorities to ensure the capture of the plane and its illegal cargo of 500kg of cocaine on arrival in the Bahamas.

One of HMS Dauntless' officers (who cannot be named for operational reasons) coordinated the operation.

The officer said: "It shows that not only are we able to disrupt the flow of drugs at sea but have the ability to sense and track air traffic, suspected of transporting drugs."

"This also highlights the importance of taking an interagency approach to counter narcotics, as our US counterparts were able to seize the aircraft upon arrival at its destination."

This unique operation came hot off the back of a major £140m bust during Dauntless' Caribbean Patrol.

The Portsmouth-based warship hunted down a drugs-running go-fast and seized 1,230kg of cocaine, deploying her Wildcat helicopter, Royal Marines and a US Coast Guard team to stop and search the smugglers' boat.

Dauntless has been deployed to patrol the Caribbean Sea and intercept drugs smugglers and disrupt their illegal activities across the region, while also providing a reassuring presence to British Overseas Territories during hurricane season, which runs from June to November.

The ship's Commanding Officer, Commander Benjamin Dorrington, said: "The successful counter illicit trafficking operation demonstrates the value of working with partners such as the US Coast Guard and the professionalism of the ship's company of HMS Dauntless."

The first operation began when Dauntless' advanced radar system alerted sailors to the presence of a suspect vessel.

Acting quickly, Dauntless closed on its position, launching its embarked helicopter.

The US Coast Guard team deployed when Dauntless moved in, with the helicopter providing cover overhead.

One of the ship's team: "It was great to see how Dauntless has integrated with

multinational partners. I am proud to be part of a successful team that tracked and identified the vessel.

"We see the effect of drugs and the effort it takes to combat it, so it is excellent to tackle the problem closer to the source."

The deployment of HMS Dauntless underscores the UK's commitment to working with international partners to tackle drug trafficking head-on and protect regional and global security.

As Dauntless continued its counter narcotics operations in the Caribbean, it stands as a symbol of the UK's dedication to safeguarding the region and combating all forms of illicit trafficking.

Commander Dorrington added: "I am immensely proud of what we have achieved, with her advanced technology and highly-skilled team, HMS Dauntless is making significant strides in disrupting trans-national criminal organisations and protecting the lives of countless individuals affected by the drugs trade."

Following her drugs bust action, Dauntless visited the Bahamas to help prepare defences for hurricane season four years on since a devastating storm hit the islands.

She sailed into capital Nassau, where in 2019 RFA Mounts Bay helped more



Images by LPhot Gareth Smith and LPhot Dan Rosenbaum

E BAHAMAS



than 6,000 people during the UK's mercy mission in the wake of Hurricane Dorian, a catastrophic Category 5 storm that left more than 70,000 homeless and caused billions of pounds worth of damage.

This year, the Type 45 destroyer is deployed to the Caribbean in the same role Mounts Bay was back in 2019 – providing firstly reassurance to island communities but ultimately humanitarian and disaster relief if a storm were to sweep the region.

Sailors from Dauntless teamed up with the Royal Bahamas Defence Force and the ship's embarked US Coast Guard team to support efforts in building hurricane defences and assist the islands' young and old, via community goodwill group Lend a Hand and the Rotary Club.

Lieutenant Commander David Shine, who coordinated the activity, said: "It was a special privilege for the ship's company of HMS Dauntless to work with members of the local community in Grant's Town, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force and volunteers from Lend a Hand and the Rotary Club.

"To have achieved so much as a team, bringing together skills and knowledge across a variety of back-grounds and cultures was an immensely rewarding experience for which I am very proud."

A community clean up saw two 30-foot skips filled with debris that would have otherwise caused potential harm in a hurricane.

The clean-up also cleared the way for new structures to grow and support more citizens in the community.

More than 45 volunteers from the ship's company led literacy classes with the children and group activities.

Hurricane shutters were constructed for the homes of senior citizens which now act as an additional layer of protection for islanders.

Dauntless had a busy period alongside in the Bahamas, arriving in Nassau on the day the new Governor General of the Bahamas, Cynthia 'Mother' Pratt, was appointed and hosted a group from the Governor General's Youth Award.

The ship hosted a discussion with key people from the LGBTQ+ community in the Bahamas and conducted a faith visit with Bishop Laish Boyd, Bishop for the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands.

Many Royal Bahamas Defence Force Officers are trained in the UK at Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, and the visit provided an opportunity for members of the ship's company to reconnect with their Initial Naval Training classmates.

Many sailors were hosted at the Coral Harbour Base and a celebration was

hosted on Dauntless, attended by the Commander of the Bahamas Defence Force, Commodore Dr Raymond King.

Lieutenant Commander David Shine added: "Four years ago, RFA Mounts Bay provided disaster relief to the Bahamas. It is important that we continue to build this fantastic partnership with our friends in the Royal Bahamas Defence Force."

British High Commissioner to The Bahamas, Thomas Hartley, said: "On the fourth anniversary of Hurricane Dorian it is poignant we welcomed HMS Dauntless to the Bahamas.

"The Royal Navy was the first international responder in 2019, and was able to deploy engineers, Marines, fresh water, and logistics support at short notice.

"HMS Dauntless offers the same capability if a hurricane was to strike this season too.

"And much more, this visit provided an excellent an opportunity to showcase the Best of British – projecting our values and demonstrating our commitment to building the strongest links with our Caribbean partners.

"Thank you to the people of Nassau for welcoming the crew so openly – I am glad this has given us the chance to bring Britain and the Bahamas closer together."

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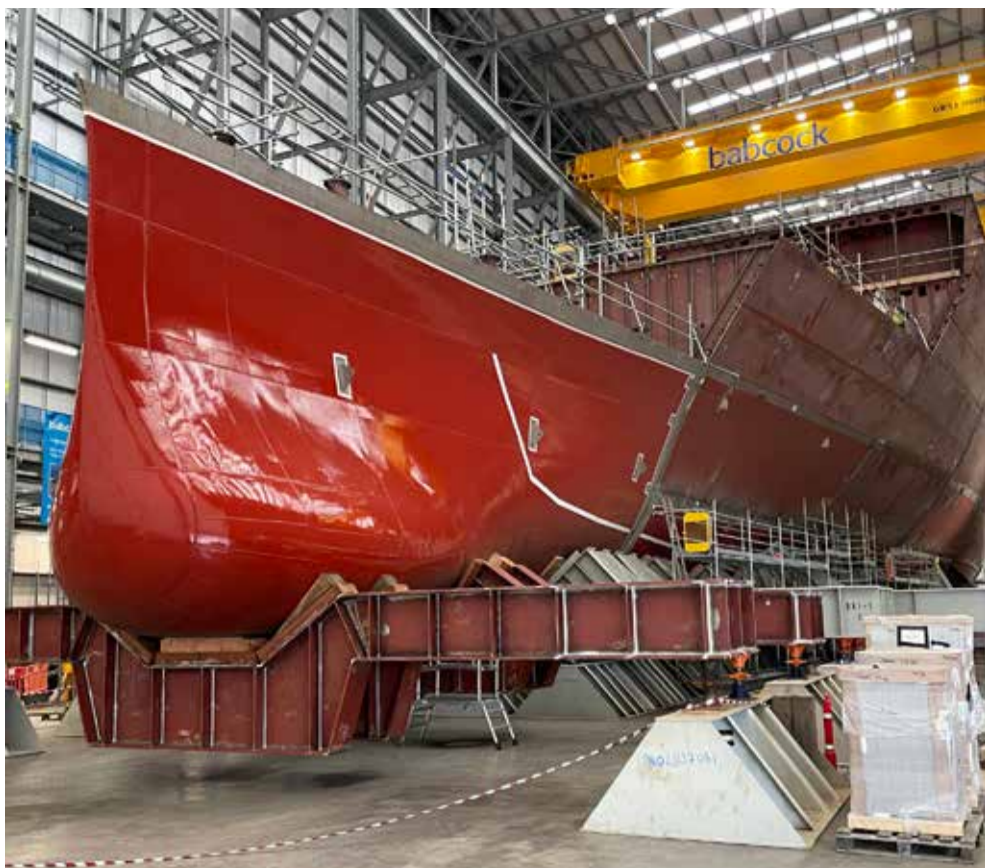
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Take a bow for Inspiration

GLEAMING in its red paint and complete, this is the bright, bulbous bow of HMS Venturer, the first of the Royal Navy's new Type 31 frigates.

Under 18 months since her keel was laid, Venturer is beginning to resemble a warship as the giant units and blocks which make up the vessel are slotted into place with pinpoint accuracy by Babcock at their Rosyth site.

The bulbous bow (not quite as bulbous as, say, the RN's aircraft carriers but still distinctive) is a marvel of marine engineering which modifies the way water flows around the hull, reducing friction as the frigate cuts through the oceans, reducing fuel usage and helping to extend the range, while also supporting the vessel's stability.

Taking shape beside Venturer is the second Type 31 HMS Active, with several lower hull sections of the ship already constructed in situ in the assembly hall – fittingly named the Venturer Building.

She stepped (metaphorically) into the limelight and out of the shadow of her big sister last month when her keel was officially laid, eight months after the first steel was cut.

Hundreds of friends and family watched as HMS Active's Senior Naval Officer Commander Chris Couzens and first-year electrical fitter Robbie Dick, the youngest apprentice at

the Babcock facility in Rosyth, placed a symbolic coin beneath the frigate's keel.

It's a traditional nautical ceremony aimed at blessing a vessel with good luck. The keel coin was specially-commissioned, designed by a daughter of one of the team involved in Active's construction, and will be presented to the ship's company when the frigate is ready to sail later this decade.

From the construction viewpoint more important, keel laying marks the move into the Type 31 programme's multi-ship phase – two warships being built simultaneously in the hall.

"Type 31 is an incredibly important programme for Babcock, our Royal Navy and Ministry of Defence customer and for the wider UK Shipbuilding industry," said John Howie, Babcock's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer.

"We see first-hand the dedication and commitment from our team here in Rosyth, and we are hugely proud to be able to share this traditional ceremony and programme milestone for HMS Active with our customer, families and friends."

When complete the duo – the first two of five in their class – will be longer (by about five metres) and heavier (circa 1,000 tonnes) than the Royal Navy's existing Type 23 frigates... but with around half the crew.

All five Type 31s – the

Inspiration class, for their forebears committed deeds which inspire (in Venturer's case, her predecessor was a WW2 submarine which sank a U-boat while both were submerged) – will conduct general-purpose duties around the globe when in service later this decade, are being built by Babcock in Rosyth.

Units – or blocks – are constructed in separate manufacturing areas at Rosyth, then carefully moved on what the shipwrights call self-propelled motor transport (SPMTs) – powerful remote-controlled low-loaders which can move sections up to 250 tonnes in weight, or heavier if more than one is used.

They are normally moved upside down for ease of transport, taken to the paint hall and, once painted, the enormous Goliath crane (the largest in the UK, dominating the skyline of the Forth's northern shore) turns the blocks around ready for transferring into the assembly hall to join the rest of the ship.

Among the sections now in place on Venturer are her spine/backbone – the lowest parts of the frigate, such as the bow and keel, including Grand Blocks 01 (which includes the rudder and transom) and next to it 02. And structural work is nearly complete on the 30-metre-long (100ft) flight deck designed for Merlins and Wildcats.

Antarctic waters.

But for every other problem seafarers might face such as fire, flood, machinery breakdowns – and the ability to fix them independently, hundreds of miles from the nearest base or port (there's no 24-hour recovery service around the frozen continent) – the team at Fleet Operational Standards and Training provide the scenario and assessment.

Sailors and marines – commandos are embarked as the ship's specialists in living and working in an extreme cold weather environment – are also tested in their ability to help out in times of emergency ashore: natural disasters are just as likely around Antarctica, although the region is sparsely populated.

Last year the ship's company found themselves



Glasgow host Ack-Ack Archie

THE past met the future as WW2 veteran Archie Hazledine shared his experiences in HMS Glasgow with crew of the namesake new frigate.

The 98-year-old Royal Marine gunner from Oxford was treated to a VIP tour of the BAE yard in Scotstoun, where the ninth ship named after Scotland's great industrial city is being fitted out.

Archibald 'Archie' Hazledine served in HMS Glasgow No.7, a Town-class cruiser (and sister of HMS Belfast, the museum ship on the Thames), in the closing months of World War 2.

He specialised as an ack-ack (anti-aircraft) gunner, a role he'd performed defending airfields during D-Day.

Glasgow took part in the Normandy operation, but Archie was only assigned to her after the invasion, when she was refitted to prepare her for the war in the Far East – not least to bolster defences against Japanese Kamikaze suicide attacks.

The revamped cruiser was sent via Gibraltar, Malta and the Suez Canal to the Far-East to participate in the final invasion of the Japanese home islands.

As it was, Japan sued for peace after the two atomic bombs were dropped, and formally surrendered before Glasgow arrived in Singapore.

Instead, the ship was redeployed to the Indian Ocean but damaged her rudder in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and had to go to Simonstown for dry dock repairs. Archie spent a very enjoyable few months in South Africa (where he happily remembers the absence of rationing) before being demobbed and sent home on a troopship.

Post-war, Archie returned to Oxford and became teacher.

Logistics specialist Chief Petty Officer James Oakley and Petty Officer Kieran 'Woody' Woodward, Glasgow's chief boatswain's mate, hosted Archie throughout and ran through the wide range of capabilities that the new class of frigate will offer the Royal Navy when it enters service.

The wartime cruiser relied on men like Archie and his marksmanship and reactions with the Oerlikon, pumping out up to 300 20mm rounds a minute.

Today's Glasgow will call upon



Sea Ceptor anti-air missiles and 30mm automatic guns to deal with any aerial threat.

"It was an absolute pleasure hosting an old HMS Glasgow shipmate" said Woody. "Archie was really interested in the flight deck – much larger than a typical frigate's – and he was fascinated to learn that it is capable of landing the RAF's heavy lift Chinook helicopter."

"He also showed a keen interest in the mission bay and asked lots of really good questions about how it will be used and the flexibility that it brings."

Before he was called up, Archie was an air-raid warden in Oxford and recalls the night of the Coventry blitz – November 14 1940 – when he was on fire watch on the Oxford Castle mound, hearing the German bombers fly over and the glow of fires on the horizon the night Coventry burned.

"It was fantastic hearing about Archie's experiences during the war," James said. It was a pity that the visit had to end actually – we would have been very happy to exchange stories with him all day!"

The new HMS Glasgow is the first of eight Type 26 anti-submarine frigates being built by BAE Systems for the Royal Navy, replacing the existing Duke-class ships from later this decade into the mid-2030s.

New gallery showcases rebuild

VISITORS to the Fleet Air Arm Museum can see the painstaking work going into rebuilding an iconic wartime torpedo bomber.

A new gallery has opened showcasing Barracuda Live: The Big Rebuild – a project which has been running for half a century as experts and enthusiasts in naval aviation recreate a Fairey Barracuda.

Despite more than 2,600 Barracudas rolling off the production lines – aside from the FAA, it also served with the French, Dutch and Canadians from the second half of the war through to the mid-1950s – no intact example survives.

But since the '70s, following the excavation of a WW2 crash site in Northern Ireland which recovered substantial elements of Barracuda DP872, a small voluntary team at the Yeovilton museum has been working on a rebuild, piece-by-piece.

Wherever possible, authentic Barracuda parts are recovered from wreck sites – on land at sea – and subjected to a rigorous conservation process to stabilise and de-corrode them, preserving their historical significance.

"The technical skills and knowledge of the conservation team are outstanding and expanding all the time when working with this material," said Diana Davies, the National Museum of the Royal Navy's Head of Conservation.

"The conservation of these wrecks is revealing so much information that cannot be found anywhere else except on the physical remains of the aircraft themselves.

"We want to use all this information to engage with the people who flew and operated Barracudas, their families, and anyone who has an interest, to tell all strands of the story and connect with our audiences on all levels – archaeological, technical and emotional."

"I can't think of anyone else attempting this anywhere else – people do build aircraft and vintage ones of course, but not from archaeological wreckage."

The project now has a new home: the Arthur Kimberley Viewing Gallery which, as the name suggests, allows visitors to watch the volunteers at work and see how far they've progressed.

It takes its name from a Telegraphist Air Gunner who flew in Barracudas of 827 Naval Air Squadron on Arctic Convoy duties.

Aged just 20, he was posted missing in action when his Barracuda vanished on an anti-submarine patrol amid treacherous weather conditions.

Thanks to the generosity of his descendants, the Burge family, this project has received a much-needed boost, returning it to the public domain.

The goal of the rebuild – a non-flying Barracuda – will complete the collection of Fairey aircraft in the museum's inventory, and plug a gap in its WW2 story.

'Barracuda Live: The Big Rebuild,' is included with a valid museum ticket.

Protector passes test in preparation for polar probe

THE Royal Navy's sole icebreaker has completed 'pre-season training' ahead of another Antarctic summer of scientific research.

Devonport-based HMS Protector has completed her annual overhaul and training assessment ahead of heading south on the 8,500-mile journey to the Antarctic Peninsula.

The distinctive red-white survey ship returned to the UK in the spring after 18 months away. After undergoing maintenance on Teesside following exposure to the harsh Antarctic environment, Protector has undergone trials and training building up to a couple of weeks of intensive, bespoke assessment off Devon.

The Plymouth Exercise Areas in August cannot, of course, replicate the cold and attendant problems of operating in sub-zero

Antarctic waters. But for every other problem seafarers might face such as fire, flood, machinery breakdowns – and the ability to fix them independently, hundreds of miles from the nearest base or port (there's no 24-hour recovery service around the frozen continent) – the team at Fleet Operational Standards and Training provide the scenario and assessment.

Sailors and marines – commandos are embarked as the ship's specialists in living and working in an extreme cold weather environment – are also tested in their ability to help out in times of emergency ashore: natural disasters are just as likely around Antarctica, although the region is sparsely populated.

Last year the ship's company found themselves

digging out one polar research station and its small team of scientists after an unexpectedly heavy dump of snow.

On Protector's return to the ice this austral summer – winter in the Northern Hemisphere – there's more heavy labour planned by clearing rubbish left by previous generations of explorers/scientists.

In addition, the ship will help the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust stabilise an historic research base and prevent damage to the environment, support scientists researching marine life and deliver fuel and stores to the main British Antarctic Survey base at Rothera.

In addition the ship will constantly update existing charts of Antarctic waters using her state-of-the-art suite of sonars.



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Rivers, deeps, mountain high

DON'T look down.

Unfurling a banner championing the two charities he's supporting – the RNRMC, and Macmillan Cancer Support – at the summit of the Matterhorn, arguably the world's most recognisable mountain though far from its highest, is Leading Hand Lars Atkins.

He's one half of a two-strong team of Royal Navy submariners who sought to scale one of the world's trickiest pinnacles for two worthwhile causes.

Lars – who worked for Merseyside police before joining the Silent Service last year – is something of an adrenaline fiend: he's a qualified free diver and spear fisher, ultra marathon and fell runner. Last year he added high-altitude mountaineering to his repertoire and scaled Mont Blanc, the Alps' highest mountain.

Having accomplished that the 24-year-old set his sights on "the most recognisable mountain on earth" (thanks in part to the logo on Toblerone bars) in company with fellow deep Harry Goodliff.

At 4,478 metres – 14,692ft – and spanning the Italian-Swiss borders, the Matterhorn is not quite half the height of Everest, but a much more demanding/deadly prospect than the world's tallest peak.

"The Matterhorn has claimed the lives of 500 climbers – compared to 322 lives on Everest – due to the sheer drops and brittleness of the rock on the mountain," Lars explained.

"It is a very technically demanding – there is no point where a climber can hike or walk up it, you are always climbing. Due to the altitude oxygen levels are less than half those at sea

level (or found on UK mountains), so fatigue and sickness is a factor that every climber must push through."

And that proved to be the case: Harry chose to abandon his summit attempt when a combination of altitude and exhaustion hit him hard, leaving Lars to continue.

He scaled Mont Blanc in under 12 hours (most people take up to a week) and Lars was driven by the same speed and determination to conquer the Matterhorn.

He faced both a race against time – thunderstorms were predicted to close in on the summit imminently – on top of already challenging-conditions which saw the sub-zero temperatures leave wet climbing ropes coated with a thin layer of ice.

Just 178 metres from the peak, he too was almost overwhelmed by the physical and mental exertion not just of the ascent but the seven weeks of training and preparation which had gone into the climb.

Lars persisted, and reached the summit, to unfurl the charity's flag, take the requisite snapshots and video footage – but there was little time to reflect on his achievement.

His speed – and the worsening weather – made him the only one of a few people that day to conquer the Matterhorn.

Four fifths of the climbers were caught on the mountain when the forecast storm set in – ten minutes after Lars had returned to base camp.

The duo set out to raise £5,000 from their climb. They've hit their target – but are still taking donations via: <https://gofund.me/85df3ea6>.



URNU students walk on (break)water

EIGHT students from Devon University Royal Naval Unit (URNU) gained rare access to Plymouth historic breakwater for the final mile of an epic charity coastal walk on behalf of the Service's premier charity.

Officer Cadets from Plymouth and Exeter universities hiked the South West Coast Path from Land's End to Plymouth – covering 167 miles over ten days – and raising more than £1,300 for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity and the Defence Medical Welfare Service.

The students, including seven hikers and one driving a support vehicle, set off from Land's End and headed east.

Day 1 was a wet-and-windy 19 miles to Penzance, through some particularly narrow and thorny paths.

Legs then took the walkers to Porthleven, Lizard Point, Coverack, and Falmouth (after a lot of climbing) which served as the half-way point.

Further legs via Portloe, Polperro and Portwrinkle brought the team within touching distance of the finishing post: Smeaton's Tower on the Hoe, via the

Cawsands and the breakwater.

The impressive 1,560m-long structure – accessible only by boat with permission from the MOD – was built at the height of the Napoleonic Wars to provide a safe anchorage for the Fleet and it's one of Britain's largest freestanding marine structures, acting as an artificial reef and home to many marine species.

The final leg of the walk was organised by Warrant Officer 1 Alex Orr from Naval Regional Command Wales and Western England, who secured permission to land on the breakwater and use of a local boat charter – Silverline – as well as invite the Lord Mayor of Plymouth Mark Shayer to welcome the walkers home.

"The opportunity to get on here is obviously very rare," he said. "It brought everyone together for the end, it was brilliant and that's the feeling that everyone's got from it – teamwork and camaraderie," said Devon URNU's Josh Mellors.

Picture: LPhot Barry Swainsbury

Bobbie takes on neurodiversity role

RNRMC has appointed Bobbie Branson as its 'Neurodiversity (ND) Navigator' – a dedicated point of contact to guide you towards the right support when you need it the most.

Serving can be challenging – even more so for families, particularly those with neurodiverse children.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the RNRMC commissioning team and invaluable input from the ND Parents Advisory Group, the RNRMC is enhancing support in this crucial area.

The ND Navigator will provide invaluable assistance to serving personnel and their dependents.

While the primary focus is on families, Bobbie will also be available to support all service personnel and those transitioning from service.

The role is a cornerstone of

the charity's commitment to neurodiversity support within the RN by building a "community of experience".

Bobbie will also work with RN FPS to streamline information and communication channels and provide expert guidance to those serving and their dependents.

The RNRMC aims to create a more inclusive environment where the naval community feels supported and empowered, thus reducing instances of isolation, improving mental health and well-being, and promoting sharing invaluable knowledge and resources within the ND naval community.

See www.rnrmc.org.uk/news/afcf-awards-rnrmc-funding-neurodiversity or contact Bobbie directly on Bobbie.Branson@rnrmc.org.uk.

The RNRMC expects...

RNRMC is bringing Nelson to your doorstep this month with its 'Trafalgar Night at home' initiative.

By signing up, you will be able to immerse yourself in an evening of festivities, commemorating the legendary Battle – and simultaneously supporting the RNRMC.

To take part:

1. Visit: www.rnrmc.org.uk/trafalgar-night-home to register!
2. Plan your event. Set a date, decide on dinner and invite your nearest and dearest.

3. Get your pack which has everything you need to celebrate Nelson's famous victory from the comfort of your own home. Opt for a postal or digital pack on the sign-up page.
4. Have fun with the theme and host your dinner any way you want – the charity can provide recipe ideas.
5. Donate. In return for your terrific Trafalgar Night, ask your guests to donate to the RNRMC as a thank-you.

Free will writing offer

HAVE you made your Will? If the answer is 'no', then take advantage of the RNRMC's free will offer this autumn – it could save you at least £150.

The charity has linked up with expert will writers Guardian Angel who will write your will for free online, over the phone or in person.

Some wills can be more complex depending on your circumstances and these may be referred to a fee-paying service.

The charity is also encouraging participants to leave a gift in their will to the RNRMC when they take advantage of this offer.

Visit www.gawill.uk/rnrmc for more details.

Honorary titles

BIG names from the world of politics and business have agreed to take on key honorary roles.

Former senior diplomat and Honorary Colonel RM **The Lord Mark Sedwill**, Baron Sedwill of Sherborne, joins the RNRMC as vice president.

Simon Pillar, who comes from the world of finance and oil/engineering is a new vice patron as is **Sir Bill Thomas**, chairman of the RNRMC for six years, who has also headed publicly-listed and privately-owned firms.

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Past, present, always Navy

MORE than 400 members of the Naval Family – serving personnel and veterans – marched past the Cenotaph on Whitehall at the Royal Naval Association's Biennial Parade.

Serving sailors from HMS Collingwood and HMS Sultan, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and London Reservist unit HMS President joined veterans from a dozen Naval Associations including Association of Wrens, Association of Royal Yachtsmen, Submariners Association and the Merchant Navy Association, plus members of the Belgian Naval Association, parading through the capital.

Collingwood and Sultan each provided marching platoons of 65 sailors, plus senior ratings and Commanding Officers (Captains Tim Davey and Jo Deakin, respectively).

Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Martin Connell took the salute, the Royal Naval Volunteer Band Association provided music and Chaplain of the Fleet, the Venerable Andrew Hillier KHC, conducted the service.

In addition, Admiral Connell signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Royal Navy and the Royal Naval Association.

"The RNA is committed to supporting, implementing and promoting the ethos of and values of the Royal Navy.

"I was delighted to sign a Memorandum of Understanding which recognises the special relationship between the Association and the Royal Navy that significantly supports many serving and former serving sailors and their families."

The RNA is the largest collective group of Royal Naval veterans, serving personnel and their families, with more than 18,000 members spread around nearly 250 branches in the UK and overseas.

It provides people with a link to the Royal Navy access to a life-long community of like-minded and supportive individuals.

"The parade is an important opportunity for the Royal Naval Family; serving, veterans and families from across the country and across the RN disciplines to pay their respects both to each other and those who made the ultimate sacrifice," said Captain Bill Oliphant, RNA Chief Executive.

"Once you join the Navy you join a life-long community of like-minded and supportive Shipmates. 'Once Navy Always Navy'."

For more information on the RNA, visit linktr.ee/rnassociation



Great-grandad, grandson and great-grandson united at the parade while (below) generations apart, but a common bond – a serving sailor and veteran share dits



(Below) RNA National President Vice Admiral Duncan Potts addresses all present in Whitehall



RNA Vice President WO1 Claire Robson in front of the Cenotaph



Emily challenges the best in the world

OFFICER Cadet Emily Wright (Bristol URNU) represented the Para British Sailing Team at the Allianz Sailing World Championships in Braasemmermeer in the Netherlands.

This is the biggest event in the para sailing calendar and was unique this year as it was combined with the Sailing World Championships in The Hague, giving the para sailing community a brilliant platform to showcase its skills and integrate into national sailing teams.

The event started with a couple of training days, followed by a combined opening ceremony in The Hague.

Despite being a little late off the start line on the first two races, Emily and sailing partner Adam Billany (pictured on the left of the photograph) secured fifth and third place finishes in their RS Venture Connect for fourth



position overall.

The second day was plagued by shifting winds, fierce competition and some unlucky boat issues for sixth and eighth-place finishes.

Back on form on Day 3, the pair posted fifth and third-place finishes but a tough fourth day

on the water left them in tenth position overall – though only a point behind the team in eighth.

A sixth place in the final day's racing meant Emily and Adam completed the event 11th – "a result I am extremely proud of considering such a competitive fleet," the naval cadet said.

Global insights from symposium

OFFICER Cadets from London, Wales, Cambridge and Yorkshire attended the three-day Combined Naval Event in Farnborough.

One of the largest conferences/symposiums of its type in Europe, it saw 1,500 attendees from more than 50 nations listen to nearly 200 speakers and inspect around 150 exhibitors.

Topics covered included: underwater defence and security, the future surface fleet, submarine technology, surface fleet technology and naval damage control.

The conference began with an address from Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Martin Connell encompassing the current and future Royal Navy.

Thereafter, Officer Cadets had the chance to attend lectures on the wide-ranging subjects from the threat of our adversaries to the development of autonomous sea-going vessels.

Throughout cadets had the chance to meet and ask questions to a range of civilian and military experts, encompassing a panoply of subjects... and take full advantage of the extravagant 'freebies' available at exhibitors' stands.

Overall, the event gave them opportunity to learn more about not only the Royal Navy but other navies, including interacting with representatives of the latter.

Good morning, campus as virtual team hit the Rock

URNU Virtual, a UK URNU unit which primarily provides interaction via bi-monthly online sessions, is now extended its reach to the Rock.

It's agreed to provide the benefits of URNU membership to students at the University of Gibraltar.

Commodore Tom Guy, Commander British Forces Gibraltar, was invited by University Vice-Chancellor Professor Catherine Bachleda to present the URNU offer at the Freshers' Fair held in the Europa Point Campus.

"It is an honour to be the first University Service Unit to establish at the University of Gibraltar, and we hope that this will lead to many opportunities for prospective Officer Cadets,"



said Lt Cdr Barry McWilliams, CO of URNU Virtual.

URNU Virtual's two-year offer revolves around delivering a programme of leadership and management training, ending

with the opportunity to gain a Chartered Management Institute qualification in the first year, followed by RYA Day Skipper preparation training in the second.

Registered charity number: Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund 1150162

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



New bish for RFA

IT'S a parish of upwards of just 2,000 souls yet spans at least two continents.

Taking over as the chaplain of one of the UK's largest – and simultaneously smallest – 'parishes' is the Reverend Eddie Wills (pictured).

He's been assigned the role of Chaplain of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Known affectionately as 'bish' by fellow seagoers, chaplains provide both spiritual and moral support to sailors and Royal Marines, leading Sunday services and key events such as commissioning/naming ceremonies, as well as offering a listening ear to shipmates.

Just one chaplain is assigned to the RFA with the parish spanning not just the flotilla of Tide-class tankers and assorted support vessels, but also shore establishments (the service doesn't have a home port, but does frequently use Falmouth and Portland in addition to Royal Navy bases).

Most of the RFA flotilla is currently in and around home waters, with a Bay-class vessel supporting mine warfare operations in the Gulf.

After a busy spring in and around northern European waters, RFA vessels will deploy again this autumn in support of carrier and Royal Marines operations across Europe, the Mediterranean and Middle East.

Rev Wills steps into the shoes of Rev Michael Pons who says he "thoroughly enjoyed" his 18 months with the RFA.

"I have sailed on all but one RFA ship, visited them all except Proteus – the new ocean surveillance ship – visited nearly all the RFA shore establishments, had the privilege to lead numerous Falkland 40 remembrance services, including one at the National Arboretum, have helped numerous RFA personnel and have made many new friends.

"From a chaplain's perspective it is a great job."

His successor has been a Naval chaplain for nearly a decade, after answering the calling to train as a minister following a first career as a countryside/park warden.

As a 'bish' he's served extensively with Portsmouth-based ships – including UK flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth – as well as three spells at RNAS Yeovilton in Somerset.

He reckons he is probably the only Royal Navy chaplaincy Service to have skinned and butchered a goat using stone tools he made himself, drives a kit car and is a self-confessed fan of *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who*.



Putting the 'navy' into Scandinavia

THE Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo was the spectacular backdrop as the head of the Royal Marines hosted fellow defence leaders from Finland, Denmark and Sweden.

Commandant General Royal Marines, General Gwyn Jenkins (pictured just to the right of the bell), welcomed Chief of the Finnish Navy, Rear Admiral Jori Harju

and his wife, Mrs Irja-Liisa Harju.

Also in attendance – and highlighting the long-standing relationship between the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and High north partners – were Lieutenant General Kenneth Pedersen, Danish Chief of Defence Staff and Brigadier General Dennis Peder Dag Ohlsson, Head of the Swedish Amphibious Corps.

These key allies, alongside members of the Royal Marines Charity and honorary officers (Colonel David Watt RMR), who have provided life-changing support to the Royal Marines family throughout the years, were treated to the Royal Marine tradition of Mess Beatings by buglers from the Royal Marines Band Service before dining in the impressive stateroom

aboard Royal Yacht Britannia.

The group moved from the Ocean Terminal to the Esplanade of Edinburgh Castle to watch the annual showpiece tattoo at British, Commonwealth and international military bands and artistic performance teams took centre stage. The evening included a flawless performance by the Royal Marines Band.

PETC sounds good

THREE warships waged a virtual war as synthetic training using satellite comms stepped up a level.

The operations rooms of His Majesty's Ships Queen Elizabeth, Kent and Diamond were connected so they could operate together, linked with Portsmouth Technology Park to test Platform Enabled Training Capability.

PETC as it is known connects RN ships simultaneously via satellite communications whether they are together (as they were for the trial, in Portsmouth Naval Base), or scattered around the globe.

The trial – delivered by QinetiQ, Inzpire and BAE Systems – allowed crews to conduct realistic training against a peer adversary.

For the first time the crews of the Carrier Strike Group were able to train against threats and tactics expected should they ever go up against a peer adversary.

The trial used real-world geographies, accurately simulating peer adversary platforms and weapon profiles to stimulate the ships sensor against which the operations teams had

to work together to defend HMS Queen Elizabeth.

This is the first time some of these threats had been seen by a ship's company.

The scenario used threat data in all domains, above water, surface and underwater to give the most realistic representation of what could be experienced in the real world.

This was all done while in the operations rooms, making it feel very real to the crews involved.

"The PETC concept poses a significant increase to the synthetic training capability for the Royal Navy, transitioning our ability to train and prepare our warfighting teams for the current threats faced in today's rapidly evolving maritime battlespace," explained the PETC lead for the Royal Navy, Lieutenant Commander Stephen Gowling.

"Whilst the use of simulation to train our ship's crews is far from new, the ability to train them collectively across multiple geographically dispersed units, from their own organic operations room, will be a step change."

Lt Cdr Gowling continued: "Through the development

of PETC, we aim to provide our Maritime Task Groups an ability to train against realistic and representative threats in an immersive environment, whenever and wherever."

As an alternative to fully live or shore-based synthetic training, PETC is allowing the Royal Navy to demonstrate how synthetics can be used to create a fully immersive training environment within a ship's own operations room.

The use of this synthetic training environment means training can take place on deployment, across a number of vessels that may not be geographically close by, presenting opportunities for ships from multiple international forces to practise together.

PETC aims to provide more opportunities for training alongside international partners within a wartime environment, while offering significant time and cost savings – as well as environmental benefits due to the ships and crews not having to travel to the same extent for the synthetic collective training, compared with live training.



Reservists feel need for speed

TWO dozen men and women are ready to begin their adventures as Royal Navy Reservists after completing their initial transformation from civilians.

Friends and family converged on Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth and HMS Raleigh in Torpoint respectively as cadets on the eighth Accelerated Officer Programme and trainees undertaking the third Accelerated Rating Programme passed out.

The relative accelerated programmes – nine weeks of 'militarisation' and 'marinisation' for officers, five for ratings – condenses the traditional two-year package, providing reserve units with trained personnel more quickly.

Training concludes with a pass-out parade, typically Britannia Royal Naval College for Officers and HMS Raleigh for Ratings. On this occasion, for the first time in history, RNR Officers joined the parade alongside their Regular Service counterparts.

"Having the opportunity to pass out with our Regular Service colleagues was a real honour," said Midshipman Lewis Riste,

who named top cadet on his course. "The atmosphere and sense of occasion, made for a truly once in a lifetime experience."

"What made it even more special was passing out as a full team of 12, who all started this adventure together six weeks prior."

Among those passing out at Raleigh Able Seaman Alan Begg said: "The ratings programme is a compressed course squeezing weeks of training together which creates a lot of pressure to test how you perform and cope with the dynamic nature of military life."

"It was a very informative and encouraging course, with experienced staff and the opportunity to push yourself all the while making friends for life."

At passing out, MacRobert's awards were presented to the top reservists who have just completed their Initial Naval Training in 2022: the sword to HMS King Alfred's Sub Lieutenant Sophie Nashford, the Bosun's Call to Leading Naval Nurse Sandi Bern (HMS Dalriada).

For FAM now read NAM

AFTER a trial run across the Forces – including the Faslane area – the Future Accommodation Model will be introduced across the Services to improve the choice of housing available to personnel and their families.

Re-branded the New Accommodation Model (NAM), it's intended to modernise accommodation entitlements, improve the standard of Single Living Accommodation and provide a framework to update overseas accommodation.

Following the pilot, NAM – introduced next March – will include:

- Needs-based allocation of family accommodation, based on the size of the immediate family instead of rank;
- Service personnel in an established long-term relationship will be entitled to accommodation on the same basis as those who are married or in a civil partnership.

■ Parents who have children with a main home elsewhere can access service family accommodation, providing the children visit for more than 80 nights a year.

■ Greater flexibility for personnel to request the type of home which works for their family.

■ Improved standards in Single Living Accommodation with a minimum standard agreed across the estate.

■ In addition to the Forces Help to Buy, the New Accommodation Offer will provide further support for first-time buyers, refunding up to £1,500 of their legal expenses.

■ Financial support for weekly commuters who are maintaining a primary home elsewhere, irrespective of age or marital status.

The MOD is already looking at how to implement NAM overseas, including pilots of needs-based accommodation at selected locations.

There's more to Bournemouth's air show than aircraft alone...



NOTHING quite says 'air show' like Royal Marines churning up a sandy beach in their Viking armoured amphibious vehicles.

Commitments around the world, summer leave and preparations for both carrier deployments meant no front-line RN aircraft were able to wow the crowds at this year's Bournemouth Air Festival (in fact no aircraft were able to wow anybody on the opening day due to foul weather).

There was a vintage Fleet Air Arm presence over the remaining three days (a Fairey Swordfish and a more

recent Westland Wasp helicopter, both provided by Navy Wings, who performed as a pair and separately) and on the ground, a 'Navy Village' where visitors could chat with Royal Marines and sailors and learn about their work worldwide, and watch the commandos' rumble around a display arena.

Offshore, P2000s HMS Exploit and Ranger made the short trip from their temporary home in Poole Harbour carrying affiliates and visitors across Bournemouth Bay as part of their engagement duties.

Visitors who stayed until the day's end – flying or not – were the RM Band performing a Beat the Retreat in the Lower Gardens, as well as an un-armed combat display from the Commando Recruitment team.

The festival remains one of the best opportunities for the public to see the Senior Service and Brigadier Jock Fraser RM, the Royal Navy's Regional Commander for Wales, Western England and the Channel Islands, underlined its importance by attending the opening ceremony – held indoors due to the first day's

inclement conditions.

For him the free air show is "a hugely important entry in the Royal Navy engagement calendar".

He continued: "It provides a fantastic opportunity for our sailors and Royal Marines to interact with the communities we serve."

"We had encouraging welcome to the Royal Navy village on the beach, and the public got up close with some of the equipment we use and asked our sailors and Royal Marines what it is like to serve around the globe today."

FACING UP TO NEW CHALLENGES

BRITISH and allied warships face a challenging new world order when they undergo demanding training at the hands of the Royal Navy.

Warships undertaking Operational Sea Training – the benchmark for every Royal Navy, Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel and many NATO allies to pass prior to deploying on operations anywhere around the world – will be tested on how they respond to a complex new scenario which better reflects the world of 2023 and beyond.

It replaces the existing backstory which thousands of sailors and hundreds of ships undertaking OST have experienced for the past 28 years.

The old scenario – the fictional nations of Brownia and Ginger at loggerheads with the latter proving increasingly bellicose and warships called upon to perform a series of tasks to ensure the safe passage of shipping, dubbed Operation Renaissance – no longer adequately reflects the global geo-strategic situation and the challenges and tasks Royal Navy and Allied warships potentially face today.

So the war fought at sea, on land, and in the air – especially on a Tuesday and a Thursday – is finally over. The final acts of aggression between Ginger and Brownia were suppressed in mid-July by the German frigate FGS Oldenburg.

Despite scoring multiple hits on every Royal Navy, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, and international allies' warships, which have put to sea over the past 28 years, Ginger forces once again failed to keep pace with the advances in capability and tactics needed to stay relevant in today's modern operating environment.

They were regularly rebuffed by the professionalism and determination of NATO sailors (aided by the timely delivery of action snacks) but the final defeat came because Ginger no longer represented, as an enemy, the relevancy and operational challenge that we needed, in order to deliver on current and future operations.

Replacing the long-standing scenario is a new 'background story': four fictitious nations with competing domestic and international ambitions requiring naval intervention under the banner of 'Operation Mayflower'.

It's been developed by the experts at Fleet Operational Standards and Training (FOST) in Devonport in conjunction with Inzpire Defence Limited.

While the new scenario won't affect some of the core fundamentals of Royal Navy training – such as how sailors cope with fires, flooding and equipment breaking down, it will introduce modern warfare threats, such as in the cyber and electromagnetic domains, affecting how sensors, systems and weapons are operated.

It will also test Command teams more in higher level Command and Control, giving them additional freedoms in deciding courses of action whilst better understanding the ambiguity that often results from this.

And it allows the FOST

team, who will continually refine and tweak the training scenario as required, to deliver what warships and their crews need in a challenging and relevant geopolitical environment, preparing them for contemporary operations.

"This change is long overdue," said Captain Andrew Canale, Captain FOST (Ships).

"I am pleased with the way my team combined with Inzpire to develop a new, modern and contemporary strategic exercise scenario that better reflects the world we live in today and prepares our ships and those of our international partners for the operational challenges of tomorrow.

"This work has been a significant undertaking, conducted over several months and to an excellent standard."

This is one of several collaborations between FOST (Ships) and Inzpire. Both have already combined effectively to develop improved gunnery training against autonomous targets on an instrumented sea range to improve marksmanship, and on future synthetic training solutions under the Platform Enabled Training Concept (see *opposite*).



Don't forget the merchant marine

STANDING beneath the bow of an LNG tanker as she undergoes a hull painting in Singapore is former RN charge chief turned merchant sailor Stuart Ramsden.

He is a member of a not small community which has served under both the White Ensign and Red Ensign – and wishes the dedication and sacrifices of the latter are recognised and appreciated by the public as much as the uniformed services. Merchant Navy Day on September 3, presents the opportunity to do just that.

The date was chosen as the anniversary of the outbreak of war between Britain and Germany in World War 2... and the first day of the Battle of the Atlantic, the conflict's longest battle (the Germans opened it by (in)famously sinking the liner Athenia that very first day.

Public and private buildings are encouraged to fly the 'red duster', the mercantile marine', while parades and ceremonies take place in key ports such as Liverpool, Southampton and London (where Tower Hill is the focal point for commemorations).

Most of the wartime generation have passed now, sadly, but the day remains an opportunity to remind Britons that the sea is the nation's lifeblood, and men and women make sacrifices upon it daily.

Stuart uses the occasion to bang the drum on behalf of the MN... and RN... and Royal Naval Association (Eastbourne Branch).

He spent 22 years in the Royal Navy, latterly serving as a Charge Chief MEA in HMS Westminster, bringing the frigate into service in the mid 90s. And upon leaving he remained at sea, serving as an engineer with a major oil carrier.

"Having been born in Eastbourne and spent all of my younger years by the sea, at the outset, all I ever wanted to do was to go to sea to work," he said.

His merchant career saw him serve aboard tankers, very large crude carriers and finally liquid natural gas (LNG) ships which have taken him to countries as varied as Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, Singapore, South Africa and New Zealand.

"In 2000 my wife decided to try a trip at sea with me as you can in the MN, and continued to accompany me for the next 15 years or so. I worked with seafarers from many different

countries and cultures, which is always enriching, and consequently have many good friends across the world."

While the armed services make a powerful impression each November during Remembrance ceremonies, the Merchant Navy's deeds are less well known.

"I think most people who know their history are well aware of the sacrifice that Merchant Seaman made during the convoys of World War 2," Stuart said.

"I don't think many know that there are tens if not hundreds of thousands of Merchant Mariners at sea on any one day.

"People do not realise that virtually everything that they eat or buy, dry goods, cars, fuel etc are transported by sea and Merchant seafarers go unrecognised until things go wrong.

"It still remains a hard and hazardous job, as in the Royal Navy. It involves months at a time away from families, this was exacerbated during the pandemic when, many personnel who were at sea at the time suddenly found they could not get relieved with flights shut down and many ports not allowing personnel in or out. Personnel were spending upwards of six to nine months on the vessel when it should be three or four.

"It was an extremely difficult time for not only the seafarers but also companies as we tried everything possible to get personnel relieved."

Merchant Navy Veterans who hold the Merchant Navy Association Veterans Badge are eligible to join the Royal Naval Association.

■ Also marking the occasion were three representatives from Wansbeck RNA who attended commemorations for local merchant seaman who gave their lives during the two world wars – and since, raising the flag and holding two minutes silence in their honour.

Presiding over the event was Councillor Liz Dunn, who read the epitaph before participants made for the community centre for refreshments.

Normally there would have been cadets from Ashington also in attendance, but this year they were not available. However the service is still important to remember the seaman who transport food and supplies around the world.

The flag was raised this year by Dave Armstrong, who is an ex Fusilier from Ashington.

WW1 destroyers discovered

THE wrecks of two WW1 Royal Navy destroyers – plus a merchant ship accidentally sunk when rammed by a British warship – have been identified by divers in Orkney.

HMS Hoste and Negro sank within hours of each other after colliding in December 1916 as they returned to the Fleet's base in Scapa Flow, taking 55 souls with them.

And all aboard the small cargo steamer SS Express died when she was accidentally rammed and sunk by destroyer HMS Granville.

All three wrecks – plus a fourth, as yet unidentified vessel – were found between Orkney and Fair Isle by the Lost in Waters Deep Expedition, a team of civilian divers determined to give peace of mind to families of seafarers by formally identifying lost vessels and their crew in Scottish waters.

Last year the divers discovered torpedo gunboat HMS Jason, sunk by a mine in the Inner Hebrides in 1917.

This year, after extensive research in the archives and consultation of contemporary records and surviving ship's logs by researcher Kevin Heath, the divers embarked diving support vessel MV Clasina in Orkney – and found the three wrecks they set out to discover.

"The dive team is delighted that we were able to prove Lost in Waters Deep remarkable research and help to honour the memories of everyone who died," said expedition leader Will Schwarz.

Joining him in the cool Orkney waters was Lieutenant Commander Jen Smith, serving at Northwood, who's also a keen amateur diver and wreck explorer.

"Seeing both HMS Hoste and HMS Negro on the seabed was really moving – this is the first time in more than 100 years anyone has seen these ships," she said.

"I felt a sense that the lost sailors were no longer alone. When I saw the bell of HMS Negro, it occurred to me the last time that bell was rung was probably to sound 'Abandon Ship' on that fateful night."

Neither wreck was touched or disturbed by the divers, but they were extensively photographed and filmed. Their findings will be passed on to authorities and a detailed account of the expedition given at the Guz.tech diving conference in Plymouth in November.

"The fact that these wrecks have finally been found and identified is solely due to the commitment of a small group of civilians, who dedicate huge amounts of their own time and resource to this endeavour," Lt Cdr Smith added.

"If it wasn't for the efforts of the Lost in Waters Deep team, the final resting



The ship's bell of HMS Negro lies amid the detritus of the wreck on the Orkney seabed

place of our lost sailors may never have been found. We are most grateful for the work they do and that the relatives and decedents of those lost now know the final resting place of their loved ones."

Both Hoste (pictured below) and Negro lie around 100 metres (330ft) down. Hoste had been in service a month – and Negro was not much older – when the two ships sailed from Scapa Flow, the Royal Navy's key base in both world wars, for exercises just six days before Christmas in 1916.

In the small hours of December 20, HMS Hoste suffered steering problems and was ordered to return to base, escorted by Negro. The two ships collided when Hoste was unable to manoeuvre, due to a steering gear defect, and Negro unable to avoid her.

Not only did HMS Negro smash into Hoste's stern, but the collision also caused the release of depth charges

which detonated and crippled Negro and she sank fairly rapidly. Hoste was initially able to slowly proceed under her own steam, but a few hours later the worsening sea state caused the ship to break in two and she was also lost.

All but four of the 138 sailors aboard Hoste were rescued, but Negro lost 51 officers and men.

And two Royal Marines gunners were among all 13 hands killed when the small steamer SS Express was struck by destroyer HMS Grenville in darkness in February 1918. The SS Express had an important role during the war as a supply vessel for the Orkney Islands, and has a special connection with Orcadians with almost all of her crew local men.

More information on the vessels and their crew can be found on the Lost in Waters Deep website, www.lostinwatersdeep.co.uk

Pictures: Rick Ayrton





Tales of the 'Ancient Mariner'

CHARD branch bade farewell to two popular members as Ken and Rosemary Parker prepared to leave for pastures new.

Ken is the son of one of the most remarkable characters in the history of the Royal Navy in the 20th Century, William George Parker BEM.

Born the year Queen Victoria died, George joined the RN before the end of WW1 (but saw no action) and went on to serve for the next 43 years, retiring in 1961, by which time the three-badge AB had earned the nickname 'The Ancient Mariner' and was something of a legendary figure.

Ken told shipmates that he never met his father until he was seven; so much did his dad enjoy life at sea that even when granted shore leave, he would often arrange with his oppo to send a telegram to say he was recalled to his ship.

The present-day Parkers have made their mark in the four years they been members at Chard and were rewarded by shipmates before departing: a crest of HMS St Kitts (pictured), which Ken's dad served in upon for at least seven years in the 40s and 50s, and was already a near-legendary figure... with his fame reaching the ear of Lord Mountbatten, Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean.

Rosemary received a Chard RNA Pennant and photographs of members, including from a visit to frigate HMS Somerset.

After a gap caused by the pandemic, the hotly-contested Bodmin and Delabole Croquet trophy was finally up for grabs again.

Five Cornish RNA branches fought over for the trophy which was original contested between Delabole and Bodmin (hence the name) back in 1985.

Today the event is hosted by Cornwall Croquet Club at Porthpean with Camborne and Redruth, Liskeard (this year's winners, holding on to their title), and St Austell (this year's runners up) joining in.

Both the semi and final were fiercely contested, with one hoop lasting over 45 minutes.

Fifty-three years have passed since the daily rum ration in the RN ended. And ever since Black Tot Day (July 31) has been commemorated by associations.

Redruth and Camborne marked the anniversary with a minibus trip (S/M Jack Russell at the wheel) to the Cornwall War Museum near Camelford, where they were royally hosted by the proprietor Steve, displaying his many exhibits.

The group were then shown around Treguddick distillery near Launceston, taking full advantage of the opportunities to taste the extensive range of spirits on offer, which in turn helped shipmates commemorate Black Tot day.

Celebrations continued back in Redruth with a meal at a local inn and Up Spirits.



Motor boat roars again

ONCE the scourge of the Russian Fleet, visitors to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard can now see a WW1-era Royal Navy torpedo boat in the water.

Coastal Motor Boat 4 sank a cruiser in the home of the Russian Navy in the face of furious defensive fire, earning its skipper Lieutenant Augustus Agar the nation's highest military decoration.

Over a century later a working modern-day replica has been painstakingly built by Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust and a team of three dozen volunteers.

For six years they have laboured to recreate one of the 'Spitfires of the Sea' as such craft became known a generation later.

The original boat (pictured in her prime, bottom right) was retired after her exploits in the Gulf of Finland and has been a museum piece ever since in the hands of the Imperial War Museum.

For the past four years, she's been loaned to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and displayed in Boathouse 4, which is dedicated to the Royal Navy's use of small boats.

The carbon copy - CMB4R (R for replica) is the brainchild of Rodney Agar, the nephew of the original motor boat's most famous commander.

LIBOR funding - the massive fine imposed on banks by the government for illegal activities - has turned his dream into reality.

Despite boat building of such craft long since passing into history, a team of dedicated enthusiasts, assisted by the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, who dug out the original plans from 1915, have produced a high-quality replica.

"The team have predominately used traditional boat building methods," explained shipwright David Griffiths. "Boats from this era were not built to last - they had pretty short life expectancy, as you can imagine."

"CMB4R is meant to look the part, but is finished using 21st Century technology to better preserve it for future generations."

At 40 feet long, capable of speeds approaching 40kts (over 45mph - nearly twice as fast as the cruiser she sank), and armed with a single torpedo, the wooden craft had just a pair of machine-guns to defend its three crew from enemy fire; there



The reconstruction team near the end of the project to recreate the iconic motor boat in Boathouse No.4 was no armour.

In the summer of 1919 the motor boats were deployed in the Baltic, supporting anti-Bolshevik forces in the Civil War raging following the Russian Revolution.

Under Lieutenant Agar, CMB4 took part in several raids against the Bolshevik Fleet, including in its stronghold at Kronstadt Naval Base.

Chief among his exploits was crippling the cruiser Oleg with his solitary torpedo after evading heavy fire from covering destroyers which peppered the small motorboat.

Nevertheless, Agar persisted with his attack and his foe rolled over and sank in just 12 minutes, though all but five crew survived.

His deed earned him promotion to lieutenant commander and subsequently the Victoria Cross.

Pictures courtesy of Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust



Milestone for Maxey

CREW of Britain's newest submarine have sent best wishes and a few presents to one of the nation's oldest submariners on a milestone birthday.

Alec 'Maxey' Maxim celebrated his 100th birthday in Romford, Essex, in the company of friends, family and veterans, including fellow deeps, and the appreciation of the men and women of HMS Anson, the brand-new Astute-class hunter-killer which joined the Silent Service earlier this year and is undergoing training.

With individual bunks, nuclear power and nearly 8,000 tonnes submerged, Anson is a world away from the boats the Royal Navy trained, then sent men like Alec to war in eight decades ago.

Alec spent a decade in submarines - in war and peace - after following his father and uncles into the Senior Service in 1941, beginning training for submariners in Gosport and then Blyth in Northumbria.

Once qualified as a submariner, Alec was assigned to new T-class boat HMS Templar in the final stages of construction/commissioning at Barrow.

Under the command of Lieutenant D J Beckley, Templar took part in the invasion of Sicily (Operation Husky) in the summer of 1943, conducting patrols to protect convoys from interference by Italians, operated off Beirut, then passed through Suez and joined the RN fleet operating in the Indo-Pacific for the remainder of World War 2.

Templar proved to be the scourge of Japanese warships and merchant vessels across the region, not just damaging and sinking vessels, but also supporting a string of operations and raids throughout occupied territories, dropping off and picking up spies.

Alec remained with the Silent Service post-war. HMS Templar returned to Malta where he met his future wife Nina.

When he was discharged in



August 1948, the Maxims - now a young family - returned to England on the SS Orduna.

As Alec was on the regular reserve, he was called back two and a half years later and returned to submarines (HMS Scythian).

His 18 months on the boat were eventful - she became stuck in the mud off Bristol and later ran into an uncharted rock in the Irish Sea.

He finally left the RN behind in 1952 and eventually found long-term employ with HM Customs and Excise before retiring in 1988.

He and Nina lived in Malta for the next decade, before coming back to the UK for good in 1998. Sadly, Nina passed away in 2003, but Alec enjoys an active family life which includes six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

He's also feted at Submariner Association and veterans' events... which have also allowed him to bend the ear of the honorary head of the Service, Commodore-in-Chief Prince William.

Raleigh return

DID you serve at HMS Raleigh and fancy a trip down memory lane - while encouraging a new generation of Royal Navy sailors?

Then a new initiative introduced by the Torpoint establishment this autumn will be right up your street.

Once a term, the base is going to open its gates for a small number of former personnel to revisit old haunts, as well as watch a group of recruits pass out of basic training on Raleigh's sprawling parade ground at the beginning of their naval careers.

Raleigh's Commanding Officer Captain Jane Roe is keen to open up access to the site for veterans, but also to show them how training has evolved to meet

the expectations of young men and women of 2023... and meet the demands of the Fleet in which they serve.

There will not be the chance to visit old blocks, dine in the senior rates' mess or drop in on the bar, or visit some of the more distant training facilities like Jupiter Point, the fire school or Pier Cellars.

But you will watch a training video to show how the RN of 2023 turns civilians into sailors, watch successful recruits receive their epaulettes, and tour a messdeck which is home to trainees for ten weeks.

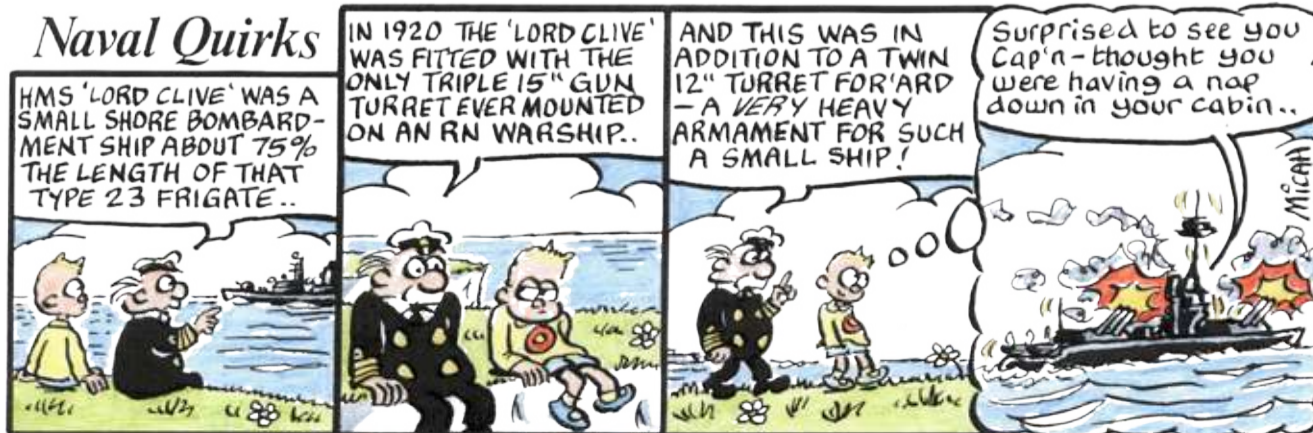
After eating (paid for by yourself/or a packed lunch) you'll move to the parade ground (or drill shed if it's raining) for the passing-out parade.

Throughout you'll be hosted by members of local Royal Naval Associations who also provide moral and physical support to trainees to help them attain their goal of passing out.

The first opportunity to 'return to Raleigh' (Friday October 6) is already booked up.

Space is limited to 15 veterans, plus one friend/carer, with allocations made on a first-come, first-served basis.

Contact christopher.cleary680@mod.gov.uk with these details: Veteran's full name and post nominals, date of birth, your date of entry into the RN at HMS Raleigh and your final rate/rank held.





South West area take home Navy League Cup

HUNDREDS of sea cadets from across the UK descended on the ExCel Centre in London's Docklands for the much-awaited National Combined Regatta.

Cadets from the six areas competed against each other in rowing, sailing, paddlesports and powerboating on the River Thames.

The young people had been training hard for months in regional heats to make it to the finals.

"We started rowing in December last year, so it's been a long time. I've been rowing all year to prepare for this," said LC Sandy, Salisbury Unit (Southern Area).

"It's my first time attending the National Combined Regatta, I've met a lot of people and really enjoyed the event. It's such a positive and supportive atmosphere."

POC Jamie from Fleetwood Unit (North West Area) said: "I competed today in the rowing bat handling. It went a lot better than last year, I didn't crash like I did last year and conditions have been a lot better."

"My favourite part of the day was seeing old friends. I've met a lot of people through my time at Sea Cadets and seeing everybody together again is one of the best things."

The competition was fierce but in the end, South West Area won the overall title and took home the coveted Navy League Cup.

After the event, everyone gathered in the ExCel Centre to receive medals and trophies from Captain Sea Cadets, Captain Neil Downing RN, and Sea Cadets Chief Executive, Martin Coles CBE.

BZ to all the cadets who participated and represented their units and Areas to such a high standard.

A big thank you to all the amazing volunteers for making the event possible and ensuring cadets were so well prepared for it.

The final results are listed below:

PADDLESPORTS

- Boys Junior Winners - The Nottingham Cup - London Area
- Boys Open Winners - The Mike Poole Cup - Northern Ireland

- Girls Junior Winners - The Barbara Simpson Cup - South West Area

- Girls Open Winners - The Ulster Cup - Southern Area
- Cross Challenge Stream - The Bell Davies Cup - Southern Area

- Polo Winners - The Steggall Shield - Eastern Area
- Overall Winning Area - Paddlesport - The Antrim & Down Cup - Southern Area

ROWING (Trinity)

- Boys Junior Winners - The Ridgewell Cup - Eastern Area
- Boys Open Winners - The Hornblower Cup - Northern Area

- Girls Junior - The Wain 1999 Cup - Northern Ireland
- Girls Open Winners - The Burton Cup - South West Area

- Overall Winning Area - Rowing Trinity - The Trevor Dawson Cup

ROWING (Yole)

- Junior Mixed - The Junior Mixed Trophy - South West Area
- Open Mixed - The Luke Musselwhite Trophy - Northern Area

- Single Open Boys - The Single Open Boys Cup - South West Area
- Single Open Girls - The Single Open Girls Cup - South West Area

- Overall Winning Area - Rowing (Yole) - The Badger Cup - South West Area

BOAT-HANDLING

- Rowing Boat-handling - The Mitchell Trophy - Southern Area
- Sailing Boat-handling - The P & O Trophy - North West Area

- Power Boat-handling - The Stirling Wheel - London Area
- Overall Winning Area - Boat-handling - The Stena Sealink Cup - Joint - Southern and South West

- Overall Winning Area - Combined Regatta - The Navy League Cup - South West Area

Maryport unit tackles train strikes to reach national regatta

MARYPORT and Solway Unit showed their mettle, not only by winning district and regional competitions, but by tackling train strikes to ensure they were able to compete in the National Combined Regatta finals in London.

Ten cadets from the unit qualified to compete in rowing racing, powerboat handling, sailboat handling and flat-water kayak in the national finals and represent North West Area.

Their plans were thrown into disarray after yet another train strike was announced for the weekend of the competition, leaving the unit stuck on how to get the cadets to London's ExCeL so they could take part in the Regatta.

The unit decided to launch an appeal on social media and thankfully coach and minibus hire company, Ellenvale Coaches, came to the rescue.

The unit's Commanding Officer, Lt (SCC) Claire Bostel RNR, said: "We are sorted now,

we've had a really good response. We did have train tickets booked with the cost approved by Sea Cadets.

"Obviously, a bus costs a lot more. But we've had a really good offer from Ellenvale coaches for a minibus and driver for a very reduced rate.

"It's left us with a shortfall of £438 but we've had a lot of messages from the public saying they want to help.

"Thankfully, the urgent need for transport is now over."

Maryport and Solway Unit were able to compete in the seaboat handling after winning gold last year – and the unit hoped for similar success this time around.

The cadets were relieved to know they would reach the regatta that they have worked so hard to qualify for, after securing victories at district level in June and at North West Area completions held over various weekends

in July.

"We generally do very well for such a small unit," said Claire.

"There are around 440 Sea Cadets Units in the country, many much bigger than us. We have 26 cadets over the age of 12 and a few under 12. To get 10 qualified is a good achievement."

"This is my third time powerboating at nationals, I have medalled each time," said Zak (17).

"I am really looking forward to competing as we have trained hard all summer. I'm hoping our team achieves gold."

Cadet Katie (15) said: "I am really excited to be going to nationals for the second time in a row and am looking forward to the amazing experience that it is.

"I am proud to represent North West Area."

The unit came home with a gold in sailboat handling from the Regatta.



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Musselburgh Sea Cadets celebrate paddlesports victory



MUSSELBURGH Sea Cadets have come home victorious from the Northern Area Paddle Sports Competition.

The recent event, held at Castle Semple Visitor Centre at Lochwinnoch in the west central Lowlands of Scotland, saw Musselburgh win gold in the K1 Spring Open Boys and K1 Sprint Junior Cadet Boys categories.

The unit took silver in the K2 Spring Junior Boys and K2 Time Trial Junior Boys event. Fourth place was also achieved in the K1 Spring Junior Boys event.

"Not only did the cadets represent Musselburgh Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets, they were also representing Edinburgh District, where we had other cadets from Sea Cadets units within the Edinburgh District," said CPO (SCC) Belle Milliken, Unit Training Officer.

"As part of the Edinburgh District Team, all the cadets worked so hard through all their races. Working as a team, they achieved the overall trophy for Flat Water.

"We could not be more proud of our cadets for all their achievements this year."

All three teams went on to participate in the National Combined Regatta and compete against sea cadets from across the UK.

Cadet of the Year from Trafford is historic first

FIFTEEN-year-old Madison has been named Mayor's Cadet of the Year for Trafford and Greater Manchester – the first-ever cadet to be selected for this role from this area.

Madison, a Corporal in the Royal Marine Cadets in Trafford Sea Cadets Unit, was selected for the major honour from a group of cadets across Trafford.

Cpl Grace will now accompany Cllr Dolores O'Sullivan, Trafford Council's Mayor, at Armed Forces-related events across the borough.

Her first engagement was at Trafford's Battle of Britain Service on September 17 at Sale Town Hall.

She was also one of only a handful of cadets chosen to attend the King's Coronation at Westminster Abbey in London last May.

The teenager was described by her Detachment Commander, Sergeant (SCC) Stuart Hurlston BCA, as "extremely hardworking, always incredibly smart and presentable, considerate, honest, empathetic, and a role model for the younger cadet members."

"She assists with teaching the junior cadets and has been instrumental in helping us as a

unit," said Stuart.

"Madison has overcome adversity and been inspirational to myself and other staff."

Cpl Grace said: "I am so honoured to be given this opportunity as the Mayor's Cadet of Trafford.

"I am excited to see what opportunities this will bring and to represent all Trafford cadets alongside the Mayor.

"I would like to thank all the staff from my unit, especially my Detachment Commander, Sgt Stuart Hurlston for supporting me in getting this role."

The Mayor, who assisted in selecting Cpl Grace as her Cadet of the Year, said: "Cpl Grace is a superb candidate and someone who stands out from the crowd.

"She is a hard-working, dedicated young woman and nothing seems to stop her achieving her goals.

"Cpl Grace has a very distinguished record, one which her family must be so proud, and being selected to attend the Coronation must be one of her greatest accolades. I will be very proud to have her by my side."

Trafford Sea Cadets currently has 33 Royal Marines cadets as part of their unit.



Lord Lieutenant's award for cadet

LCdt Beth Sharp (17) from Huntingdon Sea Cadets (TS Cromwell) has been awarded the prestigious title of Lord Lieutenant's Cadet, seeing off hundreds of other cadets to the award.

She was nominated by her unit, with the Army Cadets panel judging her to be a cut above the rest.

One of the highest recognised achievements for a cadet, the title allows the young person chosen to accompany the Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, Mrs Julie Spence, on a number of high-profile functions and events, including

royal visits.

Beth joined Sea Cadets in June 2018. "It was the best decision I've ever made," said Beth.

"I joined cadets because I grew up having a love for being on and around the water, and I knew that a potential career path for me was the Royal Navy, which is now the career that I am working towards. Cadets became a second family to me and still to this day I continue to meet new people."

She added: "I was honoured to become this year's Lord Lieutenant's Cadet of Cambridgeshire, it is an honour and an achievement which I will forever cherish and be proud of.

"Over the time I have been a

cadet, I have put a lot of effort into everything I do which has enabled me to gain a number of qualifications within cadets.

"Sea Cadets has taught me a lot about myself, improving my commitment and dedication, as well as self-discipline and confidence."

PO (SCC) Malcolm Evans, Officer in Charge of Huntingdon Unit, said: "LCdt Sharp is a valued and dedicated member of Huntingdon Sea Cadets who helps by teaching the other cadets to a very high standard.

"I am extremely proud of Beth's achievement of being awarded the Lord Lieutenant's Cadet for Cambridgeshire."



Unit receives donation to boost inclusivity

BURNHAM-on-Sea & Highbridge Sea Cadets have received £1,500 from Barratt Homes to support their work with young people and boost inclusivity.

These funds will help to ensure the unit can continue welcoming new cadets who want to join but whose parents or guardians can't afford the associated costs.

Andrea Pilgrim of Barratt Homes Bristol, said: "This charity is helping so many young people in this community thrive via inclusive activities (sailing, windsurfing, camping, music and more) which builds respect, self-confidence, teamwork and self-discipline while delivering qualifications for the future."

The donation was welcomed by all those at the unit who were grateful to Barratt Homes.

"These values and this learning all adds up to help us create positive members of society, and positive role models in communities," said Lt (SCC) RNR Dom Gregory, Commanding Officer of Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Sea Cadets.

"We tend to think what we do and the difference it makes is blindingly obvious," he says.

"It's on show to us each week as we watch the young people grow in confidence. But we know that for many who haven't come across Sea Cadets, they might not know this."

"This donation could help support up to 10 families in need access our unit's offer by supporting 50% of the monthly membership fee for a year, so this means a lot to us," said Dom.

"There's always a spotlight on kids when things go wrong, but we feel this donation has put a spotlight on the cadets' commitment and success. On the difference we make to them, and that they make to so many others at home or school or college. They set such a positive example, and that has a ripple effect. It is amazing to watch."

Dom also highlighted how research done around impact (covering newly graduated cadets through to 70- and 80-year-olds) demonstrated the positive effect being part of the organisation had on people's lives.

Food festival helps unit's recruitment drive

THE popular Bridgwater Food and Drink Festival provided a great opportunity for Bridgwater Sea Cadets to engage with the local community and raise its profile.

Giving visitors a chance to sample the best local produce and watch demos by local chefs, the festival also features a range of stalls and entertainment, including Bridgwater Unit's band performance.

"We have attended the Food and Drink Festival for the last couple years, it is on four times a year and takes place in the centre of Bridgwater," says Phil Young, Vice Chair and Trustee for Bridgwater Sea Cadets.

"We always have a stand at the festival as it's a popular event attended by many local people, providing a great opportunity to recruit new cadets as well as adult volunteers."

Following the pandemic, Bridgwater Unit suffered – as many other units did – with a loss of cadets and CFAVs. Attending community events like this has not only significantly boosted the numbers in their ranks but has also helped to raise awareness of Bridgwater Unit and increase the number of donations made to them.

"Another bonus of attending the Food and Drink Festival is we are frequently approached by many individuals who either used to be a cadet at Bridgwater Unit or used to be in the Navy and have some incredible stories to share of their experiences," continues Phil.

Bridgwater Unit had a 'hook a duck' game at the stand to keep children entertained while they talked and provided information on Sea Cadets to their parents. People were also encouraged to try on some of the officer uniforms and play the band's instruments. The stand was proved a great opportunity to promote their Unit Open Day, held on September 2.

OC Alex (16) said: "It is an amazing event that gives those of us who are part of the band an opportunity to practice and perform our routines in front of people and advertise our unit and Sea Cadets as a whole."



Japanese student spreads the message of peace

DARTFORD & Crayford Sea Cadets welcomed a guest exchange student from Japan, and enjoyed a special evening where the young people learned something new from each other.

Sixteen-year-old Yuiha hails from the Japanese city of Hiroshima. She was hosted in the UK by Mr Pat Kelly, the former Chairman of Dartford & Crayford Unit, who introduced Yuiha to the cadets.

"My father is a member of the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force and my grandfather also served in the Maritime Self Defence Force, so I was interested in visiting the Sea Cadets unit," said Yuiha.

"I watched the ceremony

of the colours and watched the cadets parading. They also showed me the various equipment they have."

Yuiha gave a peace presentation at the unit on the devastating effects of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and shared the sad story of Sadako Sasaki, a Japanese girl that became a victim of the atomic bombings at the tender age of two.

She survived for another ten years, dying in 1995 at the age of 12, becoming one of the most widely known 'hibakusha' (a Japanese term meaning 'bomb-affected person').

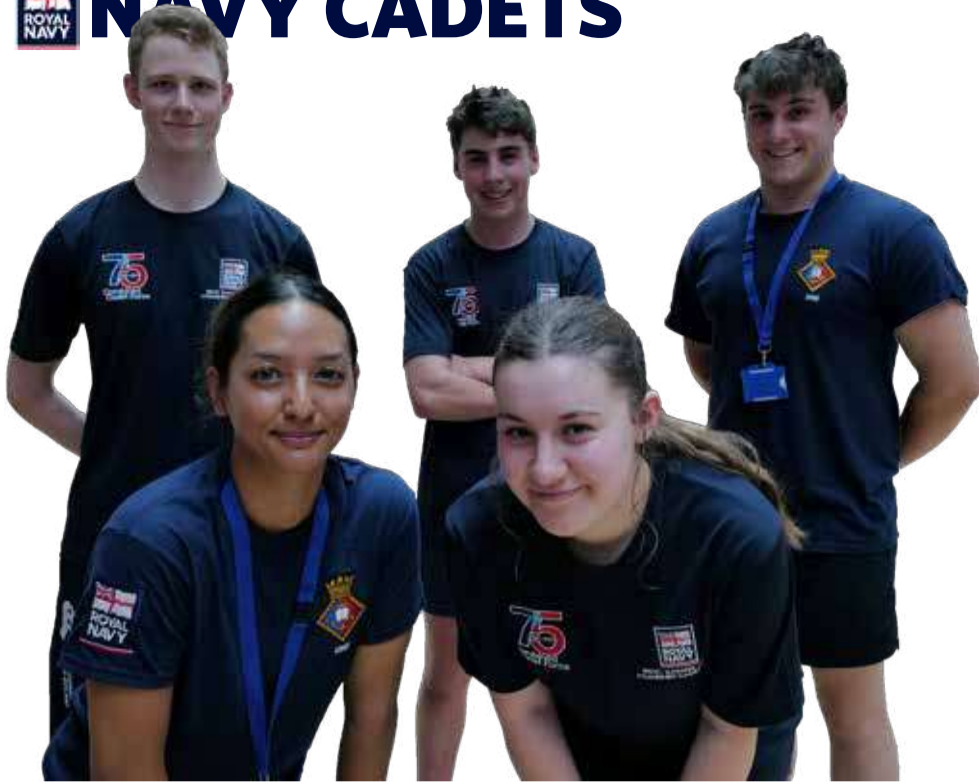
"I feel strongly that Sadako's story should be spread more widely around the world. If we

don't pass on these stories, the same thing could happen again in the future," said Yuiha.

The Member of Parliament for Dartford and the Deputy Mayor of Dartford attended the Japanese-themed evening. The Commanding Officer and cadets from West Kent and London units were also present.

PO (SCC) Kai Sargeson, Commanding Officer of Dartford & Crayford Unit, said: "Yuiha gave an impressive presentation regarding the devastating effects of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

"The cadets really enjoyed the visit and loved making the origami Hiroshima peace cranes too."



Five help out in Dartmouth

FIVE enthusiastic and willing Officer Cadets from University Royal Naval Unit Devon volunteered at BRNC Dartmouth's Combined Cadet Force (CCF) summer camp.

They were helped and supported by another welcome addition – a University Cadet Entrant RN student currently studying at university, but who will join the RN after their studies.

The lively and youthful cohort helped CCF staff alongside five Devon URNU Officer Cadets. Four OCs were tasked with assisting with junior and senior leadership courses, while Mid Henry E and Sub Lieutenant Freya S helped where they were needed – when they weren't organising evening activities.

They arranged two evenings of sport, offering the CCF cadets options including gym games, swimming, and bouldering.

They also ran a scavenger hunt: CCF cadets had to figure out the answers to clues they had to find the next place around the College – learning the location of key parts of the historic establishment and its grounds in the process.

On the final night the officer cadets ran a quiz with a mix of RN-themed and musical questions, followed by a 'best dressed' round as earlier in the evening the CCF cadets had hosted a barbecue in banyan rig. This went down incredibly well and was a brilliant finale to a very successful CCF Camp.

The Officer Cadets were also tasked with organising a sports jamboree for the CCF cadets. It proved a good leadership and planning exercise for Mid Henry E and Sub

Lieutenant Freya S, organising 90 cadets into six groups and making sure they all got a chance at each activity.

The OCs were also involved in activities run as part of the CCF Camps, including acting as simulated casualties in a first aid course.

In doing so, they proved a great help to the RN Area Instructors training staff as the Officer Cadets were able to provide a more realistic aspect to the training, ensuring the CCF youngsters interacted with real people instead of dummies. The OCs were given realistic 'injuries' and instructed in how to act to give the CCF cadets a broad, 'realistic' experience.



Some cadets coped with this aspect better than others and it was useful for them to hear the Officer Cadets' feedback which helped prepare them better should they ever encounter a real-life scenario.

The Officer Cadets also gave an interactive presentation to the CCF cadets about URNU and the different sponsorships available (Defence STEM Undergraduate Scheme and University Cadet Entrant scheme).

This was useful for the CCF cadets in understanding the paths open to them after school, as well as ask questions of people only a few years older than them on their own cadet journey.

Everyone found the addition of URNU and UCE Officer Cadets at the CCF Summer Camp a real bonus and a true insight into how the RN Cadet Force family extends way beyond the school gates.

Cadets thrive during camp time at Excellent

WO1 Raine V, a CCF RN/RM 2023 First Sea Lord Cadet from Belvedere Academy in Liverpool took part in the Summer Adventure Training camp and describes the experience:



It has provided me with invaluable experience that has helped to develop my personal and professional skills.

The ten-day long course focused on mountain biking, canoeing and camping - although we learnt so much more and had the exciting opportunity to go to HMS Excellent.

The course was well-structured, allowing cadets to learn and develop skills at their own pace and letting faster learners to progress through harder skills.

As a senior cadet, I was still challenged by the course, as it was packed with practical

opportunities to develop leadership and teamwork skills.

Even the journey from Liverpool to Portsmouth provided a chance for us to develop our independence. We also learned things that I'd never thought about, such as how to safely remove and place bikes and canoes back on to their racks and how to clean mountain bikes.

I loved getting involved in the activities, which meant it felt less

like learning and more like fun.

The instructors were knowledgeable and eager to help us, and we didn't just learn new skills, but also how to make best use of them. When facing obstacles, we used our initiative to overcome them, choosing the methods most effective.

Towards the end of the course, our instructors surprised us by taking us to Portsmouth's famous 'Mick's Monster Burgers' truck and, on the last night, bought pizzas which went down a treat for 20 exhausted cadets.

It was a privilege to be joined by Lieutenant Commander Jim Moseley on our mountain biking journey; he awarded our badges (pictured inset). Another highlight of the course was being surprised with a tour of HMS Victory.

Overall, I highly recommend this course to anyone who wants to widen their horizons. It was an amazing experience which I will remember for years to come!



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WINNING AT SPINNING Glasgow's rivetting lesson

MORE than 100 Bahrain-based UK personnel hit the gym for a 12-hour fundraiser for a children's charity.

They took over facilities in the US NEX – the sport/leisure/shopping and admin complex which serves allied personnel based in Bahrain – for a half-day Spinathon to raise funds for, and awareness of, the Amelia-Mae Foundation.

The charity supports children and their families affected by neuroblastoma, an aggressive childhood cancer which develops from nerve cells or neuroblasts. The cancer usually starts in a child's abdomen, often spreads to the two adrenal glands – above the kidneys – and can spread to other areas.

It's a charity particularly close to the heart of Lieutenant Commander John 'Ruby' Murray – Amelia-Mae was Ruby's cousin.

The lively two-year-old (pictured right with a favourite cuddly toy) was diagnosed with neuroblastoma stage 4 in September 2012 and eventually succumbed to the illness after a determined fight ten months later.

The Amelia-Mae Foundation was set up in her memory, offering support and guidance for families, as well as a holiday home in north Wales to offer respite.

"This was a tough event, it was amazing to receive so much support from all three services deployed in Bahrain. It was important to me to be able to talk about neuroblastoma and the families we support who have been affected by this condition," said Ruby.

"Raising funds is great and it will enable us to deliver our aims and objectives. However, spreading awareness of the



condition and Amelia-Mae to ensure her and all the other neuroblastoma angels' memories live on continues to be the greatest honour I hold as chair of trustees for this amazing charity."

He was one of four personnel – Lt Cdrs Gunning and Hall, and Lt Stokes – who completed the full 12 hours. Participants were fuelled by sweets, coffees, and some questionable music choices.

Leading Writer Lex Underdown joined several of the sessions and said: "Those who did the full 12 hours looked like they were struggling to walk the next day!"

"It was great to support such a worthwhile cause, and the team did a fantastic job organising the event. We're very grateful to the US Naval Support Activity team for their support to the event."

Also working up a sweat as more than £2,000 was raised were the senior Royal



Navy officers East of Suez: Commodores Phil Dennis, the UK Maritime Component Commander who oversees all RN operations in the region, and Peter Laughton, who heads the IMSC, an international task force which focuses on security around the Gulf.

CREW from HMS Glasgow joined pupils from their affiliated local school in delving into their namesake city's long and proud history of shipbuilding.

Sailors from the new Type 26 frigate – fitting out on the Clyde – accompanied staff and youngsters from Holy Cross Primary School at Fairfield Heritage, a museum dedicated to local shipbuilding.

The river was renowned worldwide through much of the 19th and early 20th Centuries for the ships it produced – with some of the most famous names in seafaring such as liners Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth and the QE2, plus mighty Royal Navy warships like HMS Hood – built on the Clyde.

Today only a few yards remain – including BAE's two facilities at Scotstoun and Govan. The latter occupies the site of the old Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company... whose former offices now serve as the museum/heritage centre.

It features a wide range of exhibits, including ship models and memorabilia, along with images and records of what life was like when the Clyde was the centre of global shipbuilding, with centre co-ordinator Abigail Morris on hand to offer explanations and detailed background.

The display includes an impressive history of the construction of warships for the Royal Navy, and the role that the former Fairfield Yard is playing in the construction of the Type 26 frigate led by HMS Glasgow.

Some of the children were surprised to learn that the new frigate's Lieutenant David Missenden had served on helicopter carrier HMS Ocean – one of the ships whose model was present in the museum – which



was also built at Govan.

After the tour, a discussion on shipbuilding and practical activities designed to give an insight into the way ships were assembled was led by Ian Johnston, a noted author and Clyde historian, who also impressed his visitors with photographs of the river during the heyday of the shipyards.

Helped by the sailors, children tried their hand at various activities: driving a rivet into a mock-up of a ship's side, under the supervision of CPO Marc Seymour (pictured above);

assembling the frame of a ship by laying the keel and placing the ribs so that the plates of the hull could be added; and getting to grips with original riveting tools, including a hammer and rivets.

"It was fantastic to see the children engage with the history of shipbuilding on the Clyde," said Commander Phil Burgess, Glasgow's Senior Naval Officer.

"I hope this provides inspiration in addition to that from our previous STEM engagement at Holy Cross Primary School, and that some of those present have a career in engineering. Perhaps they may be involved in building successors to HMS Glasgow in years to come."

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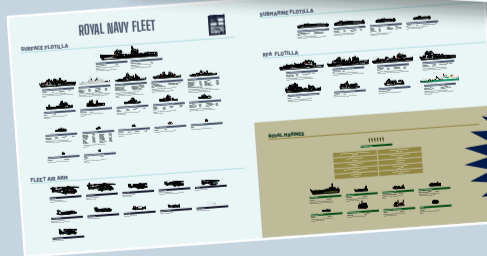
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FLYING FINNISH FOR POWER GRAINGER

RESERVIST Lieutenant Natalie Grainger smashed her Ironman personal best to place herself in the top quarter of athletes on the planet.

Natalie, who serves with HMS Pegasus, completed the Ironman 70.3 Triathlon World Championships in Lahti, Finland, in just over five hours – smashing more than half an hour off her previous best time for the gruelling endurance race.

The event comprised a 1,900m swim, 90km cycle and 21.1km run – 113 kilometres (70.3 miles) in all.

“Flying out to Finland to compete at the World Championships was just a little bit surreal, having trained hard for this over the last few months I knew I was in the best possible shape I could be and was ready to race,” Natalie said.

She was one of more than 2,000 female competitors – 250 of them in her 35-39 year group category.

The lake swim was flat calm, which for Natalie should have been easy.

“It wasn’t the best swim for me, but not my worst. Conditions were great and it set me up okay for getting on the bike... my favourite bit,” she said.

The cycle race climbed 700 metres over its course, but the excellent road surfaces meant it remained a fast course.

On her speedy Lios Javelin she made particularly good progress on the flatter first half of the stage; on the second, hillier phase, she noticed a lot of penalties issued to riders for drafting (riding behind someone else to save energy – basically, cheating and incurring a five-minute penalty).

“One last thigh burning climb before the end of the bike leg, and I knew I’d had a good ride, 2:41 – which is about 30 minutes faster than I’ve managed before in a 70.3 triathlon,” Natalie said.

The final stage was the run – a half marathon in hot weather over hilly terrain, notably a 200-metre climb right at the start which caused many fellow competitors to walk rather than run.

After that initial shock, the first lap passed pretty quickly, and she held a really great pace. At one point she found herself running alongside British Army and RAF triathletes during laps of the Olympic Stadium, though she was a lap ahead of them.

After overcoming a pain barrier at the 18km-mark by the lake and the final kilometre was especially tough, mentally and physically.

Punching through, she grabbed a Union Jack flag from her mum and crossed the line in 5h 8m 15s (37m 19s for the swim, 2h 41m 4s on the bike and 1h 41m 1s running).

That placed her 65th in her age group, and 417th out of the 2,001 women who took part.

“I felt so happy, I knew I had done a personal best time, I knew I’d done well and I was spent,” Natalie said.

“What a feeling – probably the first time I’ve actually enjoyed a race, genuinely smiling and laughing without a care in the world. I love this sport.”



WHITE SETS PB AT CADWELL PARK

SERGEANT Charlie White takes to the track at Cadwell Park during round eight of the British Superbikes...

August Bank holiday weekend brought the British superbikes paddock to Cadwell Park in the Lincolnshire Wolds. Cadwell Park is well known within the racing community for being narrow and technical and always brings great racing with bikes going airborne over 'the mountain'.

If you are unaware of the mountain at Cadwell Park it is worth having a look at on the internet to see how professionals tackle that piece of track.

Day one was the typical test day to get comfortable on the bike and get a good setting for the race days to come. Unfortunately this was hampered by the British summer and the track having its own little eco system like all training areas, so it was constantly going from dry to wet and to dry again.

The morning of day two was qualifying were I put myself 31st on the grid for race one – a sprint over 12 laps – in the afternoon.

Race one started with the usual chaos, as the track is so narrow putting people everywhere but on the racing lines and off the track. As the race settled down, I managed to have a good race swapping riders constantly in a group of three other riders finishing in 23rd position.

Day three consisted of a warm-up session and the main race which was 16 laps. Race two started in a similar fashion to the first race with riders jostling for track positions. I managed to get through the first few corners, gaining a few positions and settled down into a similar group as with race one. I managed to finish race two in 23rd again and getting myself a PB. A big 'thank you' to the team who help get the bike get on the grid and make it work.

If you are interested in joining the RNRM motorsport team, e-mail RNRMRRT@hotmail.com or message us on social media. For True Heroes racing please email charles.white118@mod.gov.uk for more information.



LEGENDS ARE THE KINGS ONCE MORE



THE Royal Navy have retained the Inter Service Cricket Legends Invitational Hundred Festival title.

Following close on the heels of the Men's Inter Service tournament, for the third year running the 'Legends' (over 45s) of Service cricket gathered at the iconic Wormsley cricket ground to contest the Legends Invitational Hundred Festival. Established under the patronage of Sir John Paul Getty within the grounds of his estate, the Festival used the end of the COVID pandemic in 2021 as the catalyst to re-ignite the spirit of comradeship and competition of serving and ex-serving cricketers. Retaining a strong military charity link, this year's Festival had the Armed Forces Equine Charity as its nominated beneficiary.

As defending champions, the Royal Navy benefitted from being able to rest aging bones and aching bodies for the first match of the day as a strong RAF team defeated an experienced Army side. Quickly finding their feet in the second match the Senior Service restricted the Army to just 97-2 from their hundred deliveries before making light work of a rain-reduced chase reaching 49 for the loss of a single wicket from just 27 deliveries built around a swashbuckling 17-ball 36 from Mark Toogood.

With the rain having cleared, the scene was set for the showdown between the sailors and the aviators to see who would lift the silverware. Batting first the RN posted a healthy 119-6 with Toogood again the mainstay (40 from 37) and ably supported by John Batley's controlled 29 not out off 18. With their title on the line, the Royal Navy rose to the occasion and had the bowling of current RN Cricket Association President VAdm Andrew Burns and Chair Capt Andrew Ainsley (2-23) to thank for steadying the ship in the middle of the innings. It all came down to the final set of five deliveries and ageless strike bowler Dave Garbutt restricted the RAF against the odds to just three runs to see the defending champions



retain their crown by a single run.

In a day with cricket, comradeship, and charity as the real winners there was no denying that cricket is alive and well in the broader military community and the RN Legends are grateful to Longman's Cheese for their support to the team and event. The Royal Navy Cricket Club offers social cricket to all serving and ex-serving

members of the naval family and are actively recruiting new members to play, administer, and officiate. If you are interested then please contact RNCC Secretary Mark Smith – markmiff1962@gmail.com.

Photographs provided with the kind permission of Simon Dutton Photography (www.simondutton.com), where other images of the event can be seen.

ARTISTS BRUSH ASIDE COMPETITION AT INTERSERVICES



INA display of exceptional skill, discipline, and teamwork, the Royal Navy's martial arts team emerged victorious at the prestigious Interservices Competition, cementing their status as the best in the military martial arts arena.

The competition, which brings together the finest martial artists from the British Armed Forces, witnessed the Royal Navy's remarkable journey to triumph, highlighting the dedication and training that goes into achieving such a prestigious victory.

The Interservices Competition, an annual event which showcases the martial arts prowess of the three services, was hosted admirably by the Royal Air Force at RAF Digby in Lincolnshire.

It serves not only as a platform for friendly rivalry but also as an opportunity for service members to hone their martial arts skills and represent their respective branches with pride. The competition encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including judo, karate, taekwondo, and Brazilian jiu-jitsu, among others.

The Royal Navy's journey to victory in the Interservices Competition was marked by a series of impressive performances and unwavering determination.

Months of rigorous training, under the guidance of experienced coaches and instructors, prepared the team for the challenges they would face. Their commitment to mastering their chosen martial arts disciplines was evident in their precision and technique.

One key factor in the Royal Navy's success was their ability to work cohesively as a team. While martial arts are often perceived as individual sports, the Interservices Competition features team events which require synchronized efforts and communication. The Royal Navy's martial artists demonstrated exceptional teamwork, ensuring that every member played their part to secure victory.

Several standout moments contributed to the Royal Navy's victory.

The karate squad displayed incredible discipline and precision, securing top honours in the final male team kumite (sparring) event vs the RAF.

The Royal Navy's taekwondo practitioners showcased their speed and agility, with ET Reynolds earning a bronze medal in individual Poomse (Patterns).

In the ever-evolving world of Brazilian jiu-jitsu, Royal Navy team members demonstrated their adaptability and ground-fighting skills, clinching victories with

submissions and positional control.

Kendo LH Toby Nolan of HMS Duncan took gold in the individual event overcoming strong competition from the other services.

Results:

Karate:

Male Kumite Dan grade 1st Lt William Tatham (interservice champion)

Male Kumite Kyu grade 1st LH (CIS) Carl La Roche (interservice champion)

Male individual Kata 2nd LH (CIS) Carl La Roche (interservice champion)

Female individual Kata 1st LH (Phot) Unaisi Luke (interservice champion)

Team Kumite:

RN male team 1st place (interservice champions)

RN/RAF female team 1st place (interservice champions)

Team Kata:

RN male team 2nd place.

Taekwondo:

Poomse: AB Robbie Sheppard 3rd place.

Kendo:

Individual sparring male 1st place LH Toby Nolan (interservice champion)

INVICTUS HEROES RETURN WITH IMPRESSIVE HAUL

THE ROYAL Navy's Lieutenant Commander James Rogers led Team UK to an impressive 70-medal haul at the Invictus Games in Germany.

The event for wounded, injured or sick Armed Forces personnel and veterans, took place in Düsseldorf over seven days in September.

Lt Cdr Rogers lives with ankylosing spondylitis, a long-term autoimmune arthritis condition, which affects his mobility, causing full-body pain and chronic fatigue.

He led a 59-strong Team UK – including his sister Becky York – as captain for second time as they scooped silverware across the ten sports, with impressive hauls especially in the swimming pool and cycling.

Rogers himself claimed cycling gold in the Men's IRB3 Time Trial, with fellow Brit from the RAF, Robert Grantham, taking bronze.

Royal Marines Band veteran Becky earned silver in the Women's IRB3 Criterium Race, adding to the bronze she won in the Women's 100m Freestyle ISE swimming.

She said: "This has been really big for me. When I first got injured and went through multiple surgeries... I have to do exercise to be able to walk and it became a chore and something I didn't always want to do, and I was tired and rundown."

"For me, this was about sport being enjoyable again and having all my family involved."

"The difference in my physical ability over the last six months from doing this has been immense. I'm in less pain than I was, I've got more mobility, more flexibility."

RN veteran Frankie Franklyn was in the wheelchair rugby side to win silver, before hauling another runner's up medal in the Women's IR4 One Minute Sprint in the indoor rowing and scooping bronze in wheelchair basketball alongside fellow RN representative James Wren and captain Rogers.

Navy veteran Jay Saunders was on point at the archery range, claiming silver in the Mixed Team Open Recurve.

Royal Marines veteran Paul Charles made waves in the swimming pool as he collected four medals, winning the Men's 100m Freestyle ISE and claiming silver in the Men's 50m Backstroke ISE, the Men's 50m breaststroke and the Men's 50m Freestyle ISE.

Elsewhere in the pool, navy veteran Danii Stevens came to the games to overcome her fear of water so that one day she could take her son to swimming lessons.

Danii had an accident which left her petrified of the water with a condition known as aquaphobia.

But having her son Henry motivated her to get back in the water.

Danii stated medals were not her target but just to show Henry she could do it and take him swimming.

"I don't want a medal, I just want to take him to a swimming lesson, she said."

Danii swam the 50m Women's Freestyle in 55.35 seconds and said the competition had given her the courage to know that she could "overcome anything".

"Today was really special because I got in the pool and I swam in front of my little boy for the first time," she said.

At the closing ceremony Prince Harry – who founded the Invictus Games, said: "As you have seen and experienced, this week is so much more than a sporting event. It is a platform for positive change."

"The ripple of respect has been felt far and wide and we hope you too are feeling it deeply."

The next Invictus Games will be held in Vancouver and Whistler in Canada in February 2025.



Team UK during the opening ceremony of the Invictus Games in Dusseldorf
Image by: D.J.Young



Team UK celebrate as they win third place of the Wheelchair Basketball tournament at Centre Court, Merkus Spiel-Arena Image by Sascha Schuermann/Getty Images for the Invictus Games Foundation

A GOOD WINTER IN BAHRAIN...

CHIEF Petty Officer Steve Winter came within a whisker of earning bronze against some of Asia's best bodybuilders.

The 49-year-old from Plymouth is deployed to Bahrain supporting Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships.

Aside from being an expert in radar maintenance as a Chief WEM(R) (not many of those still around in today's RN), Steve is also a qualified personal trainer with a degree in nutrition.

He has been lifting weights for 30 years and competing for the past 11.



The senior rating was first Western competitor and first service person to take part in the IFBB West Asian Body Building Championship, gaining special dispensation from the sport's president in Spain to compete.

Over three days in the University of Bahrain, he took on the best Asian body builders in the Masters/over 40s categories, challenging in the classic physique and classic bodybuilding events... and coming fourth in both.

"I am extremely proud of placing fourth in both classes in a non-tested event against athletes of an exceptionally high standard," said Steve.

"My plan for the future is to put on a few more kilos and go 'trophy and sword hunting' in the next age bracket when I turn 50 next year."



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Deaths

Woods, Frederick Alan, Chief Petty Officer. Served 1952-1974. HMS Collingwood, Pembroke, Defender, Bramble, Cavendish, Victory, RNTT Kenya, Ganges, Cavalier, Vernon. Member of Norwich RNA. August 26, aged 89

Knights, Robert John, Leading Radar Operator. Served 1952-1964 at Ganges, Birmingham, Vidal, Narvik, Terror, Mercury, Tilford, Osprey. Twice chairman of Norwich RNA. August 2, aged 86.

Pugh, Michael, Leading Mechanic (Engineering). Served in HMS Tenby 1964-65. President of HMS Tenby Association. August 17.

Ask Jack

Exeter White Ensign Club will be closing in early 2024 after more than 40 years in the former Holy Trinity Church in South Street.

Over its lifespan the club, which serves as a hub for several veterans' groups in the city, including the WRNS, Royal Marines and Submariners' Associations, has collected more than 270 plaques/mounted crests of ships and units. All are being sold for £40 each (including postage and packing), available from the club treasurer at roc91014@gmail.com or 07812 789 233. Just name the crest you'd like.

HMS Lord Austin: I am seeking family or friends of sailors who served on the trawler which was sunk in the Seine Bay on June 24 1944. Seven crew were lost and the remainder were rescued by US Coast Guard Rescue Flotilla One cutter USCG 56. My cousin Jess Alton Gipson was a crew member of USCG 56 which rescued survivors. I am in contact

with the daughter of the Commander and the son of one of the crew of USCG 56 and we want to share information with any of the survivors' families about their rescue. We have the names of the seven crew members who were lost but not the survivors. If anyone has information regarding the survivors, they can contact me by email at sggipson@msn.com. **Gary Gibson**

FRADU: I would like to contact the following former Fleet Requirements and Air Direction Unit Hunter pilots who mounted detachments at RAF Gibraltar from 1980 to 1983: Tommy Thompson, Godfrey Underwood, Simon Willoughby and Derek Morter.

Tony Fairburn, Sqn Ldr (Rtd)
tony.fairbairn@btinternet.com

Johnny Craig: We are trying to contact Johnny for our 40th secondary school reunion. We know he

joined the Royal Navy and served in submarines. He left St Columba's College in Dublin in 1982, aged around 18.

William Simpson
Whpsimpson@gmail.com

HMS Plym: I would like to trace the River-class frigate's unofficial timber crest. She left Devonport reserve in 1951/2 and deployed on Operation Hurricane in the Monte Bello Islands of Western Australia, where she was destroyed in the UK's first nuclear weapon test.

The ship was stripped beforehand and I have discovered an auction house sold a badge said to be from the frigate (K271) in 2007 but I believe it to be unofficial, something confirmed to me by Chatham Dockyard Historical Society.

Geoff Robinson
7 Mountfield, Borough Green,
Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8HX

Reunions

HMS Blake Association: Our inaugural reunion and annual meeting takes place at the Royal Maritime Hotel in Portsmouth on November 3 to 5. Call 02392982182 Ext. 1 to book your accommodation using code GA000510. Details on hmsblake.co.uk and HMS Blake Facebook page.

HMS Ark Royal: A reunion is planned at the Wallasey branch of the RNA from Friday November 17 to Sunday November 19. For details contact Gordon Weir at gordyweir@gmail.com or John Williams at jwillo85@gmail.com

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association and HMS Tenby Association: The 2024 reunion is confirmed at the Beaches Hotel, Prestatyn, North

Wales, from May 10 to 13. Contact Secretary Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email askhamd3@gmail.com. For HMS Tenby contact David Macalister on dmac121dm@gmail.com

HMS Medway Queen. Are you connected with the Medway Queen – one of the last large ships involved with the Dunkirk evacuation still with us?

The team lovingly restoring the paddle steamer want to celebrate her 100th birthday next year by involving every one who has played a part in bringing her back to life.

As well as carrying hundreds of thousands of tourists from the Medway to Southend, Herne Bay and Clacton on pleasure cruises, she was pressed

into service as a minesweeper in WW2.

In May 1940 she was sent across the Channel and brought back around 7,000 troops from Dunkirk, securing her place in naval history.

100th birthday plans include a memorial service at Rochester Cathedral on Sunday 21st April 2024.

Former crew, staff, anyone involved in the long restoration of the ship or has a story to tell about the ship and their experiences aboard, especially families of Dunkirk veterans saved by the ship should contact Pam Bathurst of the preservation society (pambathurst@sky.com) or Medway Queen Preservation Society, Gillingham Pier, Pier Approach Road, Gillingham, Kent. ME7 1RX.

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the August edition of *Navy News* (right) was the Town-class light cruiser HMS Newcastle, which was originally planned to be called Minotaur.

Mike Thomson of Inverkeithing wins £50 for sending the correct answers.

This month's mystery ship (above) is a seaplane tender transferred to the Royal Navy from the Royal Australian Navy and used as a repair ship.

1. What was her name?
2. What was she renamed in 1948?
Please complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY.

We will also accept emailed entries to subs@royalnavymail.mod.uk with October Mystery Ship in the header.



Coupons and emails giving the correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner. Entries must be received by November 12. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted. No correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our December edition.

Please note the Mystery Ship competition will cease from January 2024.

MYSTERY PICTURE 344

Name

Address

My answers: (1)

(2)

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

- Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to - The Editor, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY, or email: news@royalnavymail.mod.uk or editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk
- If you are sending your notice via email, please include your full address and telephone number.
- Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.
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- Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.
- The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

The face that filled a thousand ships

YOU may not know his name, but Tony Davidson inspired thousands of men and boys to join the Royal Navy.

Or visit Navy Days. Or even learn about fitness and morale in the Senior Service.

For most of the 1950s the then junior seaman, who has died aged 90, was the public face of the RN.

Of hundreds of teenagers going through HMS St Vincent in Gosport in 1950, Tony was selected to be painted by A R Thompson of the Royal Academy – a prolific and versatile artist who produced work for the war effort, railway companies, Hollywood (such as Alec Guinness' The Man in the White Suit) and portraits.

Thompson's stylised poster of Tony was used in a series of Senior Service recruiting campaigns under several slogans: 'Make the Royal Navy your career', 'A man's life in the Royal Navy' and (perhaps apocryphally) 'Join the Navy and feel a man'.

A version of the poster featured on the cover of Plymouth Navy Days' brochure 1959 and, most



recently, appears on the cover of Kevin Brown's study of RN fitness and morale in WW2, Fittest of the Fleet.

That alone would be enough for most matelots to spin a good dit, but Tony Davidson had a hatful.

He joined the RN as a junior seaman on TS Mercury in 1949. While serving at HMS Excellent in 1952 he was selected to be part of the gun carriage team pulling King George VI's coffin at



Windsor (his proudest moment, for which he was awarded the Royal Victorian Medal by a young Queen Elizabeth).

He served in Britain's last battleship, HMS Vanguard, frigates Ulysses and Murray, and Ton-class minesweepers Stubbington and Yarnton. In command of the latter, he completed the first circumnavigation of Bahrain.

A keen cricketer and rugby player, he was once famously

flown to Malta for a rugby match, as the only passenger. On taking to the field, he not only captained the team but scored the winning try.

After a spell with HMS Jaguar training gun crews and controlling her armaments, he ended his 22-year Royal Navy career as a commander and staff gunnery officer to the senior RN command in the Gulf.

In civvy street, Tony forged two new careers: firstly, another 22 years working in the financial industry and, in 'retirement', resettling to Vancouver to become an actor/extra in films and TV shows – including sci-fi hits *Stargate* and *X-Files* – having developed a love for theatre while serving in Bahrain (he's pictured aged 75 as a soldier of the American Revolutionary Wars in the programme *Masters of Horror*).

After 19 years in Canada, the family returned to the UK and settled in Cumbria where he spent his final years in fine mental if not physical form.

■ Cdr Anthony 'Tony' Rowland Davidson, June 10 1933-August

A Rayleigh welcoming invitation

DO YOU live in Essex and have a loved one serving in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines?

If so, the men and women of Rayleigh Royal Naval Association would love to see you.

The one thing the branch, which serves the market town between Basildon and Southend-on-Sea, lacks is families of serving matelots at any of its fortnightly meetings.

Shipmates meet every alternate Wednesday at the Royal British Legion Hall, 2 London Hill, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 7HP.

For more information contact branch secretary Michael Burnham at m.burnham@btinternet.com.

In addition to social activities and taking part in key remembrance and civic events in the area, the branch is responsible for a Royal Navy/Royal

Naval Association memorial site at White House Farm in nearby Rettendon.

Known as 'The Living Memorial', the site features a garden, small museum and seating areas with plaques and memorials to many forces, conflicts and people connected with the area, with the emphasis on post-1945 conflicts such as Suez, Korea, the Troubles in Northern Ireland, Falklands, and, most recently, Iraq and Afghanistan.

 **NAVY NEWS**

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Ask Jack columns in next month's Noticeboard must be received by

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