



# NAVY NEWS

OCTOBER 2021

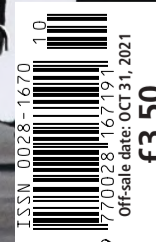
## History makers

AN F-35 takes off from HMS Prince of Wales as the carrier and her sister HMS Queen Elizabeth conduct simultaneous Lightning fast-jet operations for the first time – thousands of miles apart  
(see pages 19-21 and 29)

PICTURE: LPhot Ben Corbett

### Inside:

- **RFA Wave Knight's drugs bust**
- **45 Cdo in Slovenia**
- **Spey and Tamar head to Indo-Pacific**
- **RN photographer's Kabul deployment**



# THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX ...AND INSIDE THE PODS



PODS could be used to carry a squadron of drones or (far right) a portable command centre for a Future Commando Force operation



Second Sea Lord Vice-Admiral Nick Hine made use of the RN's sizeable presence at this year's Defence and Security Equipment International exhibition to review the wholesale changes announced at the event in 2019 – but above all to showcase new kit and ideas, and to rally both the Navy and industries which support it to 'think outside the box' and rise to the challenges of tomorrow.



**IT HAS** become increasingly clear that **underwater dominance, commando forces and autonomous air** are those areas where we must focus our greatest attention if we are to achieve true operational advantage.

Simply, by applying our greatest thinking, resource and effort we will realise the greatest gain and best defence outcomes.

This will require bold decisions – some unpopular – but these decisions will be fundamental to unlocking the potential these areas can deliver to the future force.

Each is underpinned by the enabling need to modernise our culture, an acceptance that this is about strategic prioritisation and a realisation that our resource will always be constrained.

It is for us to make those choices in order to deliver a better Service and the outcome of the IR provides us with an opportunity to realise our transformation ambition, and provide us with the road to follow where the technology and capabilities are already available. We must take this opportunity.

But we must be honest that the delivered reality so far – however successful – has scratched the surface of our ambition – and what is needed. We are modernising but we have not truly transformed.

So the requirement to change remains absolute despite the opportunity that the Integrated Review has presented. We cannot, overnight, simply remedy the decades of under-investment, overcome the burden of maintaining legacy capabilities and bloated systems, or rewrite swathes of policy and processes and misdirected priorities. Nor must we dither.

We are attacking each of these with vigour but we must accelerate if we are to deliver what you all, justly, expect from your Royal Navy.

However, in an institution as old as the Royal Navy trying to effect large, meaningful and lasting change is incredibly difficult. Even as we drive the organisation forward two steps, we are pulled backward one step by the hand of tradition, organisational "sacred cows", caution and censorship – all, regrettably, part of our culture. We must think differently.

For too long we have maintained the status quo, becoming comfortable with mediocrity, and resting on bygone victories and successes. We point to Trafalgar, to Saint Nazaire, to the Nile yet forget that they were enabled by: innovation, inspirational leadership, mission command, empowerment, diversity, competition and calculated risk taking.

Whilst we may talk of these

crucial attributes, we rarely act like this – these very behaviours that catalyse organisational change are no longer a natural part of our DNA.

But it once was – underpinning these greatest successes has always been an inherent desire to transform, challenge and not romanticise over the way things have been done in the past.

Admiral Jackie Fisher was bold enough to claim over 150 of his ships "too weak to fight" and bold enough to act to shift the approach to the threat he faced. By utilising his resources and personnel in a smarter way, the Royal Navy became a stronger, more capable and efficient force by breaking an outdated culture...and with less resource. The principles and lessons remain of use today.

Our current system must not be allowed to reinforce outdated cultural behaviours and constrain modern workplace approaches; diversity of thought; fail-fast behaviours; and challenge that are instinctive amongst world-leading organisations must be embraced.

We are not SpaceX, Amazon or Mercedes F1 but we should learn from what makes them winners and add it to what already makes us successful. We need to refresh our training, our procurement, our doctrine, and our reporting to make organisational progress.

Whilst not decrying hierarchy, orders and direction – it absolutely has a place – the reality is that in the 21st Century we must be smarter and more nuanced in our approach to gain the most from all our people – we must adapt.

Our people are more talented and diverse than ever before: many have had prior work experiences or untapped skills which we are unaware of, let alone use. We may not have the resource of the biggest nations, but our ability to think differently, to think smarter and to maximise the value of all our people will be essential if we are to win, to be more effective, efficient and productive.

I am delighted that we are getting after this: we have launched the 1SL Fellowship to deepen our critical thinking across all our workforce; we have established the Percy Hobart Fellowship to promote digital innovation throughout all levels of the Service; we are about to commence the updated junior staff course which promotes critical-thinking and business skills; we have opened recruitment to consider personnel on the autistic spectrum; and we are building a tool to capture the hidden skills of our people – a true digital profile. Small steps in refreshing our approach and harnessing the talent of all our people.

This really matters. We are at a generational inflexion similar to the shift from sail to steam. We overcame organisational inertia



Sub Lieutenants Henry Rogers and Sam Clarke test a virtual reality simulator at DSEI as the RN makes increasing use of synthetic training

Pictures: LPhoto Barry Wheeler

then and the digital, technological and conceptual leaps needed now require similar ambition and action. If we want to be at the vanguard of the transition from analogue to digital and from digital to quantum computing – we will need to think differently, innovatively and take some risk, be prepared to fail-fast and learn quicker to maintain our operational advantage.

In short, we must think 'Outside the Box' philosophically to gain the edge. For this reason, I am glad to see that the Royal Navy is beginning to think beyond traditional interoperability between nations and branch out toward interchangeability.

Strategically, this is about the way we think, the way we plan, the way we act and the means to do it. It is about purchasing power, collective research and development, an assured supply chain, connected systems, big-data exploitation, combining operational effect – not only acting alongside our partners but as one. This is about using our collective resource (conceptually and physically) to be more productive and deliver better security outcomes. We are on this journey...

Over the past two years, the Royal Navy has been working ever-closer with our US counterparts in developing this methodology building upon our historic and deep maritime relationship. USMC F-35s are currently deployed onboard HMS Queen Elizabeth as part of CSG21 and we have also launched the LondonTech Bridge

which is adding multiple new pathways to accessing UK and US research and development funding through: challenges, Open Calls, Collaboration Events and Hackathons.

And there is more. We are building our industrial relationships: secondees are critical to our workforce; we are reaching out to start-ups alongside the primes to access the very best from the breadth of the market; and we are promoting open dialogue and partnering with the market to build trust, certainty and understanding. We have similar ambition for academia and intend to do more including: student work placements and joint project collaboration to provide opportunity; maintain freshness; support research and development; and remain at the leading edge across numerous areas: digital and data, technology, media, engineering, science as examples.

So thinking differently allows us to act differently and deliver physical capability differently. We must think from first principles about outcomes and the best ways to deliver, with logic, using the means available – a fresh approach to our physical as well as conceptual capabilities.

If I was to ask you to characterise a physical naval fleet, you would propose carriers, air defence destroyers, anti-submarine frigates, mine hunters, patrol vessels, submarines – they all have their historically-defined appearance, they would be employed according to their

class roles, each would need the other to truly work coherently as a fleet. Yet in our modern Navy we value adaptability, system commonality, federation, simplicity, interchangeability, sustainability, lethality and utility: not the traditional way we think of capabilities.

We are already introducing and valuing these themes in some of the emerging classes including the Type 26, the Type 31 and they will be fundamental attributes expected in any future ship procurement.

But we need to go further – this is about a first principles approach to delivering platforms and capability. We have traditionally associated them as one and the same – but why? Because the capability – the missiles, the sensors have always been hard wired, fixed into the ship. The refresh rate for our capability does not support an agile and adaptable response to threat so they have become fixed in their role and used, inconveniently and inefficiently for other roles when needed.

An anti-submarine frigate can't become an air defence destroyer – but why not? This is a prime example of us allowing traditional thinking to dictate, cloud and consequently restrict our ability to be creative or innovative. The development of the submarine fundamentally changed the maritime battlespace and added the underwater domain to warfare – what is the next submarine? What is the next 'game changer'?

Whilst we can't say for certainty, the Royal Navy has a bold lethality ambition and a desire to increase mass and complexity through modularity, digitisation and the exploitation of autonomy. Our vision is to move on from platform-based approaches to provide enhanced: mass; range; flexibility of deployment; qualitative advantage; quantifiable efficiency.

If we are to achieve some of this intent and the technological ambition we set out in our Future Autonomous Fleet 2050 vision, we need to make progress now to deliver towards that goal. To do so, will:

- inspire the next generation of sailors, scientists and engineers to pursue a career in the maritime domain;
- realise our STEM skills ambition;
- stimulate creative thinking and novel ideas;
- provide a platform for dialogue with other leading maritime nations; to highlight UK investment in innovation to support the UK's prosperity/export agenda
- and plot a path to 2050.

So today, we challenge you to think differently, with us, to deliver this ambitious vision. We have always sought modularity

as the nirvana of capability flexibility but have never been able to afford it. So, rather than 'design modularity in' we have chosen to design it out.

Our concept is to simplify the ship: utilitarian, adaptable, common, cheaper. Capability will be defined by the modules you add to or remove from that ship, based upon the operational requirement demanded at that time.

A series of modules to deliver a spectrum of systems and capabilities – 'PODS' – Persistent Operational Deployment Systems. These PODS will be containers housing existing and emerging capability: precision strike, uncrewed air systems, directed energy, communications, minehunting, survey, communications, medical aid and more. The possibilities for industry are endless.

By placing the capability in the POD, the fleet is fully flexible, adaptable to mission, easily upgradeable and maintainable. Exploiting the standardisation of components through a 'podular' design and utilising modern digital and open architecture networks affords the opportunities to develop a new mindset and approach to capabilities. Fundamentally, the deployment of platforms with podular connected capabilities will offer enhanced lethality, sustainability and availability and drive a new prosperity possibility for the UK.

Royal Navy PODS will promote a sustainable system built to accommodate new and next-generation capabilities whilst complementing our ambitious shipbuilding pipeline. They will:

- represent a value-for-money investment;
- accelerate capability insertion periods to hours not months;
- facilitate upgrades; be interchangeable with allies;
- enable short-notice repurposing;
- be a physical representation of multi-domain integration.

The opportunities are endless and offer an opportunity to gain the operational 'edge' in an era of constant competition.

The principle is simple – 'Pioneer, Prove, Procure, Plug and Play'.

Development is already underway and we are working at pace.

We want this to be a partnership: with industry, academia and our international partners.

Join us in not only thinking outside the box but in helping us to think inside the box – there are endless possibilities which we can all share. //

**Future perfect: visionary concepts unveiled and embraced, see page 9**

# KNIGHT TIME

## THE Caribbean in late summer.

Endless golden-white sands filled with bronzed bodies.

Rum cocktails at the bar.

Snorkelling among the reefs with tropical fish and turtles.

The speedboat packed with illegal drugs zipping across the waves.

The scientists on the lip of a smoldering volcanic crater requiring assistance.

The road filled with burning vehicles needing reopening for traffic to pass.

You can guess which the Royal Navy's Caribbean task group grappled with...



**Gotcha:** Wave Knight's US Coast Guard team swoop on drug traffickers

The past month has demonstrated the utility, skill, alertness and resourcefulness of RFA Wave Knight and HMS Medway and underlined why the Navy maintains a permanent presence in the region.

Central to all three peaks of excitement – aside from the men and women on both ships – has been Knightrider, the Wildcat helicopter assigned to Wave Knight by 815 Naval Air Squadron.

It was Knightrider's eagle-eyed crew who sighted a suspicious speedboat heading through the Caribbean Sea towards North America.

The fliers ordered the suspected drug-runners to stop. They did – but also began ditching their cargo.

Eight bales were recovered from the sea by a US Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment embarked on Wave Knight.

Weighed and tested, the bales proved to be 216kg of cocaine with an estimated UK street value of £17.28 million. It was destroyed – as was the go-fast.

Hunting down drug-runners required a keen eye. Flying over a volcano required a steady hand and nerves of steel.

Knightrider flew repeated sorties to the top of active La Soufrière volcano on St Vincent to help scientists better understand both the carnage it wrought earlier this year – and provide warnings to islanders in the future.

The Commonwealth island is still recovering from the April 22 eruption – the first major activity in more than 40 years – which displaced more than 15,000 people.

As well as disrupting the lives of thousands of St Vincentians, the eruption also obliterated the seismometer station set up on the volcano's rim to monitor activity.

Five months later, La Soufrière was deemed sufficiently safe to build a fresh research station.

With her mother ship 20 miles offshore, the Wildcat flew into the Cumberland Playing Fields cricket pitch, which served as a makeshift helipad just seven miles from the volcanic crater. From there Knightrider flew shuttle runs to deliver engineers and their



**Smoke drifts across the crater of La Soufrière volcano - still lively months after a major eruption**

equipment to the rim – rising more than 4,000 feet over the island – where the scientific instruments were installed.

The helicopter also carried out a survey of the areas affected by the April eruption, taking the island's Director of National Emergency Management Organisation, Michelle Forbes, to see the impact of the eruption on the landscape and communities.

The reconnaissance flight confirmed that there's been little change to the volcano since the end of April, while activity is waning – but La Soufrière continues to pose a danger.

High Commissioner Steve Moore said the helicopter's assistance had been "invaluable" in helping authorities' understanding of the disaster.

"It was very rewarding to able to help the engineers re-build such an important piece of equipment. I'm returning to the UK to start training as a principal warfare officer so it was a privilege to have my last Wildcat flight in such spectacular surroundings," said Lieutenant Connor Osborne, Knightrider's Observer – navigator/sensors and weapons specialist.

He and his colleagues from 213 Flight returned to the UK, leaving Knightrider in the hands of 210 Flight, who flew out from 815 Naval Air Squadron.

The new arrivals earned their spurs over three days in mid-September in the Turks and Caicos Islands as the task group rolled out the full panoply of hardware, personnel and relief stores alongside local authorities to demonstrate how quickly they can provide aid in the wake of a natural disaster.

For more than three months Medway and Wave Knight have been poised to intervene in the event of a natural disaster and while they've provided support both to St Vincent and Haiti after the latter's terrible earthquake in August), thankfully they've not yet been called on in earnest.

Wave Knight carries a Crisis Response Troop from 24 Commando Royal Engineers who can



**The Crisis Response Troop work with the Turks and Caicos Regiment to clear wrecked vehicles from a road**

restore communications, put up makeshift bridges, fix plumbing and water supplies, get generators running again and generally provide the brain and brawn needed to restore key infrastructure.

The tanker/support ship can also deliver up to 2,000 disaster relief packages, 150 tonnes of fresh food and up to 380,000 litres of fresh water – enough to sustain around 17,000 people for a week.

In addition to training and testing the task group, the exercise also provided instruction and training for the recently-formed Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment.

"We all considered that the training was excellent, relevant and also exciting," said regimental doctor Dr Dawn O'Sullivan.

"The team from the task group were extremely professional and led by example. The scenarios were realistic and the skills taught to us will go a long way to preparing us for future disaster relief situations – please come back!"

With the Brits they concentrated on initial priorities following a real-life natural disaster, including getting roads open again and raising an emergency communications mast.

"The exercise was a great opportunity to work together and share skills," said Major Dom Gosling, in charge of the Crisis Response Troop.

"It was very much a two-way learning experience, with the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment developing their disaster relief skills and my crisis response team learning about the islands and their people. It was a valuable experience for all involved."

It's the second major exercise the UK task group has conducted this year, having staged a similar workout in Montserrat in early July.

"RFA Wave Knight is highly capable and well suited to disaster relief operations, able to project aviation and surface craft support to remote areas at range," said Captain Ali Clack RFA, Wave Knight's Commanding Officer.

"The ship's communications suite enables command and control to commence before arriving in the area."

Backing up the ships, there are personnel and additional equipment held at very high readiness in the UK, ready to fly into the region and support disaster-relief efforts.



**The Crisis Response Troop treat a 'casualty' while Knightrider flies another back to Wave Knight's sick bay**

Pictures: LPhot Rory Arnold and 213 Flight, 815 NAS



# Trial passes two-year milestone

MORE than 1,000 Faslane-based personnel – and their families – have benefitted in the first two years of an accommodation pilot scheme.

HMNB Clyde is the RN's trial area for the Future Accommodation Model (FAM) – aimed at giving personnel greater choice, freedom and flexibility with their accommodation choices.

FAM is based on need rather than rank or relationship status.

So single personnel, those who are in Long Term Relationships Established or have children for more than 80 nights a year are also considered at pilot sites.

All are encouraged to make use of the private rental sector as well as Service accommodation (single living – such as Holbrook block, pictured left

– and Service family) and owning their own homes.

Introduced at the end of September 2019, FAM has been modified and adapted since the initial roll-out, following feedback from those using the service, such as reducing the amount of time personnel have served and are posted to a trial site to be eligible for the initiative.

Leading Hand Crane who is based in Faslane has benefited from FAM directly.

"I had considered buying a house near Faslane but was put off buying until FAM was piloted. Now I have bought a flat nearby," he said.

"Knowing that I'd get my solicitor's fee back was a big incentive for me." Ros, who works at the Faslane FAM

Cell, believes her family would have benefitted from the scheme had it been available during her husband's 34 years' service as a submariner.

"I know only too well the struggle it was to get on the property market and build a future for our family," she said.

"If FAM had been around when we first got married, then we would probably have taken up the advantage of the private rental sector before purchasing later as FAM provides support to legal expenses and a monthly payment towards a mortgage."

If you're based at Faslane – or going to be drafted there – contact Ros and her colleagues for more information: [people-famcell-cly@mod.gov.uk](mailto:people-famcell-cly@mod.gov.uk).

## Consortia picked for RFA ships

FOUR consortia have been selected to provide the Royal Fleet Auxiliary with the next-generation of ships to keep warships fuelled and stocked up with ammo and supplies.

The Fleet Solid Support ships will be built for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, principally to support Queen Elizabeth-class carrier strike and Albion-class amphibious task groups.

Four contracts worth £5m apiece for the 'Competitive Procurement Phase' have been awarded to develop the design and build of the new ships, which will replace the ageing Fort ships.

The final manufacture contract will be awarded to the UK company acting either solely or as part of a group following this phase.

The contracts will allow the contenders to develop their design proposals and the next stage will seek details of how they would fulfil the wider delivery needs of the programme.

Once this phase is complete, a preferred contender will be selected and a manufacturer contract will be awarded.

The four consortia awarded CPP contracts are: Larsen & Toubro, which includes UK company Leidos Innovations; Serco/Damen; Team Resolute, which includes UK companies Harland & Wolff and BMT; and Team UK, which includes Babcock and BAE Systems.

## New Top Bish

THERE'S a new 'top bish' to oversee, understand and help meet the spiritual needs of Britain's military personnel.

The Right Reverend Hugh Nelson has taken over as Bishop to the Armed Forces, replacing Bishop Tim Thornton, who's stood down after four years.

Bishop Hugh – who also serves as the Bishop of St Germans in Cornwall – was formally licensed by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby at the College of Bishops in Oxford.

## Monthly winners

THIS month's recipients of the Senior Command Warrant Officers' Respite, Reward and Recognition Breaks are:

**China Fleet Club:** AB Bates-Gray (845 NAS) and LAET Hewitt (RAF Marham)

**Union Jack Club:** POs Edwards and Young (HMS Raleigh)

**Park Dean Resorts:** ABs Noon and Keogh (SUBFLOT) and CPO Howells (HMNB Clyde)

And in line for Senior Command Warrant Officers' and RNRMC Long Service Recognition Awards are:

**RNR Air Branch:** Lt Bishop, WO1s Lofthouse and Thompson, CPOs Game and Williams, PO Baxter  
**CF Marine Britannique:** Lt Cdr Castle

# Chid's crew back dual in the sun

SAILORS from HMS Chiddingfold have given their thumbs up to the new crew model supporting front-line operations in the Gulf – and giving them a more settled life back home.

The Fighting Aces – Crew 1 from 2nd Mine Countermeasures Squadron – are the latest sailors to embrace the 'dual crew model' which is gradually being rolled out across the Royal Navy's mine warfare force.

For 15 years, the Royal Navy has maintained a constant minehunting presence in Bahrain: four ships with crews of around 45 sailors apiece. The vessels spend up to 3½ months in theatre, the crews six to seven months, before returning to the UK and taking charge of a sister vessel back in the UK for the next year, before heading back to the Middle East.

As part of the Transformation programme, the dual crew model successfully trialled by HMS Montrose – four months in theatre, four months in the UK on leave/undergoing courses/performing training – was introduced to the minehunter community last year based on sailors' feedback.

The big difference of the 'dual crew model' is that back in the UK, the sailors are not assigned to a sister ship, but enjoy leave, complete professional courses and regenerate, then return to Bahrain.

It means a much more predictable programme – giving sailors greater ability to plan their lives in the short and long term – without the 'random spanner in the works' operating a warship in home waters can bring.

It's caused the VO rate for leading hands to drop from 12 in June last year to just four last month.

The Fighting Aces have just



Mine warfare specialists from the Fighting Aces check their drills aboard HMS Chiddingfold in the Gulf  
Picture: Alex Griffiths BFBS

completed their first regeneration to resume work in the Gulf and provided positive feedback of the experience.

"It offers stability, letting you know what events you can make and plan your life better," said sonar and Seafox operator Able Seaman Will Mead.

"Getting advance notice of when I am required for duty is a big plus – it means I can make plans with friends and family that they know won't change at the last minute."

The regeneration allowed him to get in "lots of phys and lots of running" – he represents the Navy at cross country – and on the morale front "it was the first time that I got to spend a long, unbroken period of time with my girlfriend."

Crew 1's navigator Lieutenant Andrew Bonham added: "I really

enjoyed being able to go on holidays and see friends, but also have a little down time during the day while my partner was at work."

"Leaving someone at home while deployed is often hard on them, so having the capacity to help with running the house while she was at work was a great chance to be able to give back."

This was echoed by numerous shipmates who said that the ability to help with childcare and school runs has been positive for family balance, as well as alleviating the financial costs of frequent daytime childcare.

Mid-way through regeneration Crew 1 took part in a week of combined adventurous training around Exmouth, including paddle boarding, Nordic skating, cycling, mountain biking, rock climbing and kayaking.

"It was really good to see everyone again and just a great laugh in general," said AB Mead.

Crew 1's Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Christopher Sharp, who has seen the crew from the early stages of Operational Sea Training through to the full deployment rotations, said: "One of the biggest challenges in any ship is balancing the requirement to consistently deliver the highest levels of operational capability and readiness when deployed whilst providing the ship's company predictable, stable time to recharge and be with family and friends."

"The dual crew model has unequivocally maximised both – eight members of my ship's company requested to extend their assignments in Crew 1 because of it."

## Silent Service looks beyond the Astutes

EARLY work has begun on a successor to Astute-class hunter-killers – even before all the current-generation boats have been delivered.

BAE Systems and Rolls-Royce have each been given £85m to start thinking about the design and capabilities of a new class of submarine which will eventually take over from the Astute class.

Over the next three years 350 designers, engineers and shipwrights will carry out design and concept work, work which will help Whitehall determine how it replaces the Astutes when they begin to reach the end of their active careers.

Four boats are currently in service – the newest, HMS Audacious, was formally commissioned last month.

No.5 (HMS Anson) is undergoing final trials and testing in Barrow, where the last two boats (HMS Agamemnon and Agincourt) are being completed.

All seven Astutes will be in service by 2026 and each is expected to serve for at least a quarter of century – taking the class into the second half of the 21st Century.

HMS Astute herself has already been in service over a decade and given the complexities of building nuclear submarines – plus the pace of technological change (the RN is also investing in its first crewless submersibles) – preparing for the next generation of boats needs to start now.

"Designing and building submarines is one of the most complex and challenging feats of engineering that the maritime industry undertakes," explained Ian Booth, head of the Submarine Delivery Agency.

"It is essential that work on the next-generation underwater capability commences as early as possible. This relies on some of the nation's most experienced defence nuclear experts from the very beginning of the design phase."

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said awarding the two contracts marked "the start of a new journey for the Royal Navy's submarines. British designers and engineers will lead the way in developing submarines for our Royal Navy."

"This multi-million pound investment ensures that this vital capability will be ready to replace our Astute class submarines as they come out of service."

BAE will focus on the design and construction of the new class – known as the SSNR (Submersible Ship Nuclear Replacement) programme – while Rolls-Royce in Derby will concentrate on the development/production of the boats' reactors.

## New IT help centre goes live on October 17

ARE you ready for the Service Centre?

Because from October 17, if your MOD IT kit doesn't work the way it's supposed to, it's your first – and overarching – port of call, 24/7/365.

The Service Centre replaces the existing SPOC (Single Point of Contact) and you'll notice some distinct changes:

- A new clear, easy-to-use self-service portal through which to raise an incident – or speak with an expert via live web chat.
- You can monitor progress of incidents and request a call-back through the

portal.

■ A new 'virtual agent', Alix, will be on hand (replacing the existing 'agent' Sally) to offer advice and help with common issues and problems.

A shortcut to the Service Centre – in the form of Alix's avatar (pictured) – will appear on your desktop in the run-up October 17. Just click on the icon to access the centre from the seventeenth.

Alix is a marked improvement over her predecessor. She's able to:

- chat with you in a conversational way and learn over time to provide the most efficient resolution possible;
- draw on her knowledge to help you resolve your problem;
- direct you to a live web chat with an agent or book a call back;
- raise an incident for you;
- provide you with updates on your existing tickets and trigger reminders or escalations;
- keep you posted on major





# Reservists press down on the accelerator

FOR the first time Reservist officers and ratings passed out side-by-side after completing their training.

Prince Michael of Kent formally welcomed the latest batch of freshly-trained volunteers to the Royal Naval Reserve family in the unique combined passing-out parade at Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth.

The Commodore-in-Chief of the Maritime Reserve inspected the successful personnel who had all completed accelerated training packages, which reduced civilian-to-sailor conversion times from one year to just five weeks for ratings and from two years to eight weeks for officers.

That intensive training was carried out at HMS Raleigh, BRNC and aboard the nation's newest aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales.

Over several weeks, the Reservists developed their leadership skills and ability to work as a team and grappled with challenges unique to Naval life, such as weapon handling, seamanship and damage control.

"I arrived at Britannia Royal Naval College as a civilian with no military bearing and I have transformed into a Royal Naval Officer over the course of just eight weeks," said Midshipman Jade Widdows, a 27-year-old PE teacher from Portsmouth – and also a semi-professional footballer.

"I can wholeheartedly say that in this time I have evolved as a person and have made friends for life. The course challenged me from start to finish, but I would encourage anyone looking to go down the Reservist officer path to take up the opportunity."

Able Seaman John Dixon was named best recruit and Able Seaman Megan Phillips received the

Endeavour Prize as most-improved recruit.

"I formed some truly lasting friendships with the men and women I trained alongside over the past five weeks," said 35-year-old John, who is employed by the Department for Work and Pensions.

"It was a complete surprise to receive the award for best recruit and I'm feeling over the moon. I could not have done it without my shipmates' help and support.

**// This course has pushed me further than ever before – physically and mentally – and I have achieved what I thought I could not. //**

**ABLE SEAMAN AMELIA HUGHES**

"The greatest highlight of the course was completing the assault course at Raleigh, covered in mud, soaked from head to toe but still smiling. Those memories will stay with me forever. For anyone thinking of joining, just do it!"

Able Seaman Amelia Hughes, 18, who has just finished college and will be embarking on medical training at Sheffield University, echoed his feelings.

"This course has pushed me further than ever before – physically and mentally – and I have achieved what I thought I could not," she said.

"The biggest challenge for me was the activity on Dartmoor. Picking up my packed Bergen, I thought I could not possibly carry this weight across the Moor. However I did it – with the

help and support of my shipmates. It was a great sense of achievement. I am very much looking forward to getting stuck into my new reservist career."

Midshipman Harry Nuttall-Owen won the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association Sword of Honour and Midshipman Louis Curtis was named most-improved cadet.

Sub Lieutenant Alec Richardson received the MacRobert Sword for demonstrating maturity and emotional intelligence which shone through his quiet demeanour to reveal a natural talent for leadership.

And Able Seaman Richard Morris from Portsmouth unit HMS King Alfred was awarded the MacRobert Bosun Call. He used his extensive knowledge and experience to support other members of the team throughout his initial training course and passed out of Raleigh with the highest grades and standards on the course, receiving the Captain's Prize.

As well as being inspected by Prince Michael, those passing out were addressed by the Commander Maritime Reserves, Commodore Mel Robinson.

"I am so proud of the sailors and officers passing out today. They have pushed themselves to the very edge of their abilities and have successfully completed their initial training courses, meeting the same exacting standards as their Regular counterparts," she said.

"As our newest sailors and officers start their journey as part-time members of the Royal Navy, they will live by and demonstrate the values and standards of the Royal Navy."

Since its introduction in 2015, the accelerated officer programme has provided the RNR with more than 200 new leaders, while the speeded-up package for ratings has delivered over 30 fresh sailors in its first year.



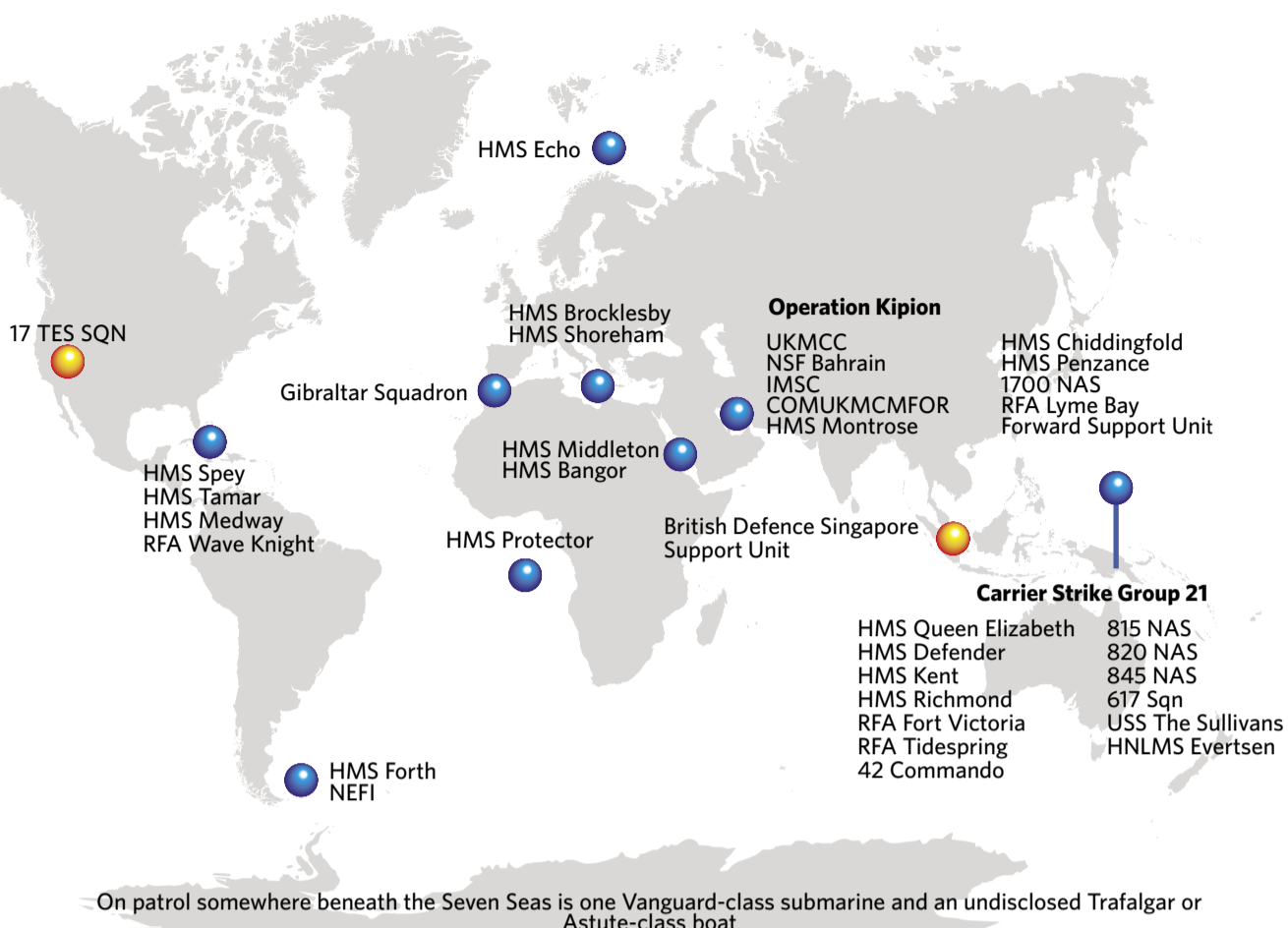
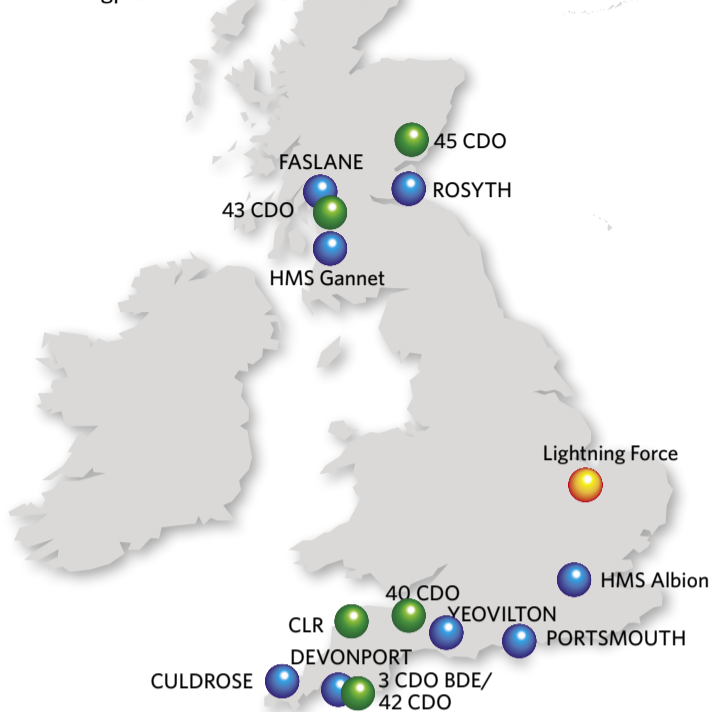
Pictures: Lieutenants Matt Aylmer and Gregory McFarlane



### Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Prince of Wales  
HMS Portland  
HMS Lancaster  
HMS Argyll  
HMS Tyne  
HMS Severn  
HMS Mersey  
HMS Magpie

HMS Sabre  
HMS Magpie  
HMS Trumpeter  
Project Wilton  
RFA Mounts Bay  
814 NAS  
815 NAS  
824 NAS



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



## GLOBAL | MODERN | READY

THE future Royal Navy is the focus of this month's edition, kicking off with a design challenge for young engineers (see page 9).

Students from UK Naval Engineering Science and Technology envision a Future Autonomous Fleet involving drones based in the stratosphere; an uncrewed fast attack craft housing smaller autonomous boats; an aircraft carrier propelled by both sea-based biofuels and wind power; and an underwater stealthy "mothership" at the centre of the future fleet.

New kit and ideas were the focus of a speech by Second Sea Lord Vice-Admiral Nick Hine at this year's Defence and Security Equipment International exhibition (see page 2), where he rallied both the RN and industry to 'think outside the box' and rise to the challenges of tomorrow.

At the heart of the Royal Navy's immediate future are the carriers HMS Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales, who made history with simultaneous F-35 fast-jet operations while thousands of miles apart. HMS Prince of Wales (see page 1 and 29) was continuing her work-up in the North Sea while older sister HMS Queen Elizabeth continues to lead her Carrier Strike Group in the Pacific (see pages 19-21).

Personnel responsible for rescuing downed pilots or those stranded behind enemy lines – 845 NAS and 42 Cdo – have taken part in night training raids on the Pacific island of Guam (see page 27). The units are based in RFA Fort Victoria during CSG21 and used the six-day port visit to launch a training mission.

Patrol ships HMS Spey and Tamar have begun their deployment to the Indo-Pacific region (see page 11). The two warships have sailed from the UK on a mission which will see them deployed across a vast area, from the eastern shores of Africa to the west coast of the USA, for the next five years.

Royal Navy photographer Petty Officer Ben Shread tells of his 15 days in Kabul, documenting the evacuation of thousands of Britons and eligible Afghans (see page 13). He and his RAF colleague Flight Lieutenant James Langan, captured imagery used by television news outlets, newspapers, websites and media agencies around the world.

Minehunters HMS Bangor and Middleton have been fine-tuning for Gulf security missions on their 6,000-mile journey to their new base in Bahrain (see pages 14-15).

Sailors from HMS Chiddingfold have given their thumbs up to the new crew model supporting front-line operations in the Gulf (see page 4).

Royal Marines have completed rigorous mountain training during a rare visit to Slovenia (see pages 16-17). 45 Commando worked with Slovenian and US forces as they perfected specialist skills ahead of their deployment to the Arctic early next year.

HMS Protector has begun her 2021-22 deployment in earnest – with no snow or ice in sight (see page 23). The ice patrol ship is spending the next month working around two British tropical islands in the mid-Atlantic.

Cocaine worth more than £17m has been seized by the Royal Navy's Caribbean Task Group (see page 3). RFA Wave Knight intercepted the suspect craft before launching her sea boat carrying US Coast Guard Law Enforcement personnel.

Two Royal Navy ships have been welcomed back into the fleet (see page 7). Frigate HMS Portland was rededicated in Devonport, while patrol vessel HMS Severn was recommissioned in London.

Also in London was HMS Albion (see page 28), where personnel visited the Tower of London to take part in the Ceremony of the Constable of the Dues, watched on by the warship's Royal Sponsor, the Princess Royal.

Reservist officers and ratings passed out side-by-side for the first time after completing their training (see page 5). Prince Michael of Kent formally welcomed the latest batch to the Royal Naval Reserve family at Dartmouth.

The Submariner Memorial Appeal held the ground-breaking ceremony for its new sculpture at the National Memorial Arboretum (see page 25). The memorial will give the RN's 5,349 fallen submariners a fitting tribute.

One of the darkest hours in the history of women serving in the Royal Navy was remembered in Yeovilton – 80 years on from the tragedy (see page 30). Serving personnel and veterans gathered at the Fleet Air Arm Memorial Church to remember 21 members of the Women's Royal Naval Service – better known as Wrens – killed when the SS Aguila was sunk on its way to Gibraltar.

Finally, Royal Navy sailor Petty Officer Scott Falkiner, who discovered he could paint while recovering from a family trauma, is using his new-found talent to raise money for the Royal British Legion (see page 24).

# Back to his roots to hand over role

THERE'S been a change at the top of the Royal Navy as Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd handed over the reins of Fleet Commander to Vice Admiral Andrew Burns.

Watched by First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, a ceremony took place at Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth – which the outgoing Fleet Commander once commanded – to formally transfer the second most senior post in the Royal Navy.

The Fleet Commander is responsible for commanding all operational elements of the Royal Navy – ships, submarines, Fleet Air Arm, Royal

Marines, and Royal Fleet Auxiliary – and acts as Joint Commander for the North Atlantic Operating areas.

VAdm Burns assumes the role of Fleet Commander with a rich operational background and was a previous Director Develop, ready to command the Navy of the future which is Global, Modern and Ready.

He previously commanded the Amphibious Task Group and was Commander United Kingdom Strike Force, and Rear Admiral Surface Ships. He is also the Royal Navy's Chief Naval Warfare Officer and Gender Advocate.

on the Ministry of Defence in London, including two years as the Military Assistant and Deputy Principal Staff Officer to the Chief of Defence Staff, the Deputy Head of the Directorate of Operational Capability and as a desk officer for the Future Surface Combatant project (now Type 26 frigate). He has also instructed at the Maritime Warfare School, HMS Collingwood.

First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Tony Radakin said: "Thank you Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd for everything you have done as the Royal Navy's Fleet Commander."

VAdm Kyd added: "None of this is possible without the officers, ratings, marines and civil servants, whose dedication, resilience and leadership I have been so fortunate to work with and command.

"As ever, the greatest lesson is that you need to take your people with you, command them well and treat them with courtesy and respect. I am indebted to every Jack one of them."

**// I hand over the watch with pride at what is being achieved by the Fleet across the world. //**

VICE ADMIRAL JERRY KYD

Adm Kyd joined in 1985 as a seaman officer and, after fleet training, his early years were spent at sea with operational deployments to the Gulf, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Caribbean, Baltic, Indian Ocean and wider Atlantic.

Commands at various ranks have included HMS Monmouth, Ark Royal and Illustrious. He has served as captain of BRNC and upon promotion to Rear Admiral in November 2018, he was appointed Commander United Kingdom Maritime Forces and Rear Admiral Surface Ships.

Appointed Fleet Commander in March 2019, VAdm Kyd said: "It has been a distinct privilege being the Fleet Commander and I now hand over the watch with pride at what is being achieved by the Fleet across the world."

VAdm Kyd has been at the centre of the Royal Navy's return to carrier strike operations, first as Commander of United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group in 2015 and then as the first Commanding Officer of HMS Queen Elizabeth the following year.

His shore-based appointments centred



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# Back in the fold



TWO Royal Navy ships have been welcomed back into the fleet. Frigate HMS Portland was rededicated in Devonport, while patrol vessel HMS Severn was recommissioned in London.

The Type 23 Duke-class frigate, underwent an extensive refurbishment and upgrade period carried out by Babcock International.

Commander Surface Flotilla, Commodore Tim Neild said: "It is really great to be with you on this rather auspicious occasion, in which we herald a new dawn in the history of HMS Portland."

"In her 20 years of service she has steamed nearly half a million miles, and delivering world-class anti-submarine warfare operations, alongside many of our key partners and allies."

"I'd like to congratulate each and every one of you for the hard work and pride which you have all poured into every aspect of the delivery of HMS Portland, throughout her extensive refit."

Commissioned in 2001 the Royal Navy's second-youngest frigate has been busy since emerging from Devonport's Frigate Support Centre late last year. After completing her last deployment in 2017 – to the North and South Atlantic – the ship was handed over to Babcock in 2018 to start her refit in the frigate sheds on the River Tamar waterfront.

In the three years since, the ship is the first for her class to have her electric propulsion motors removed, rewired and replaced, the Sea Wolf missile system has been ripped out and Sea Ceptor installed in its place, the 997 surveillance and 1084 navigational radars added, and new to the Royal Navy a 2150 hull mounted sonar to sharpen her anti-submarine warfare teeth.

For good measure, machinery and IT systems onboard have also been overhauled, as well as mess decks redesigned from their original 1980s layouts, meeting the needs and expectations of 21st Century sailors.

HMS Portland's Commanding Officer, Commander Tim Leeder said: "It is a privilege and an honour to command such a capable, enthusiastic and incredible team of sailors in Portland."

"They should be proud of their achievements in readying her for entry back into the fighting arm of the Surface Flotilla. Although COVID has limited our numbers today, I am delighted to be sharing this day with the Portland affiliations, their involvement coupled with that of our absent families really enable us to deliver on operations in the New Year."

Berthed alongside world-famous wartime cruiser HMS Belfast on the Thames near Tower Bridge, HMS Severn was recommissioned in a traditional naval ceremony in the heart of the nation's capital.

Severn arrived in the Pool of London after a short maintenance period in Falmouth Docks. There shipwrights applied a unique paint scheme, mirroring ships who waged the Battle of the Atlantic 80 years ago.

The combination of blue-grey and green-grey on a background of white and light grey is known as the Western Approaches paint scheme.

Severn has been fully operational since July last year following comprehensive regeneration.

She was originally decommissioned in October 2017 after 14 years' service, chiefly patrolling UK fishing grounds.

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



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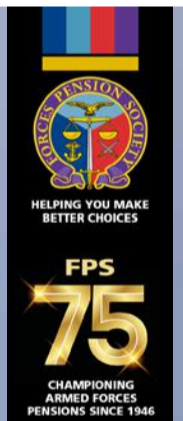
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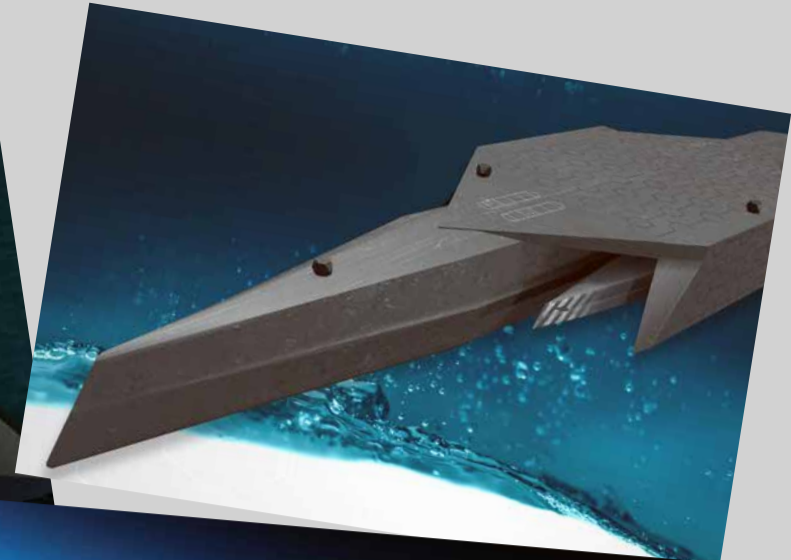
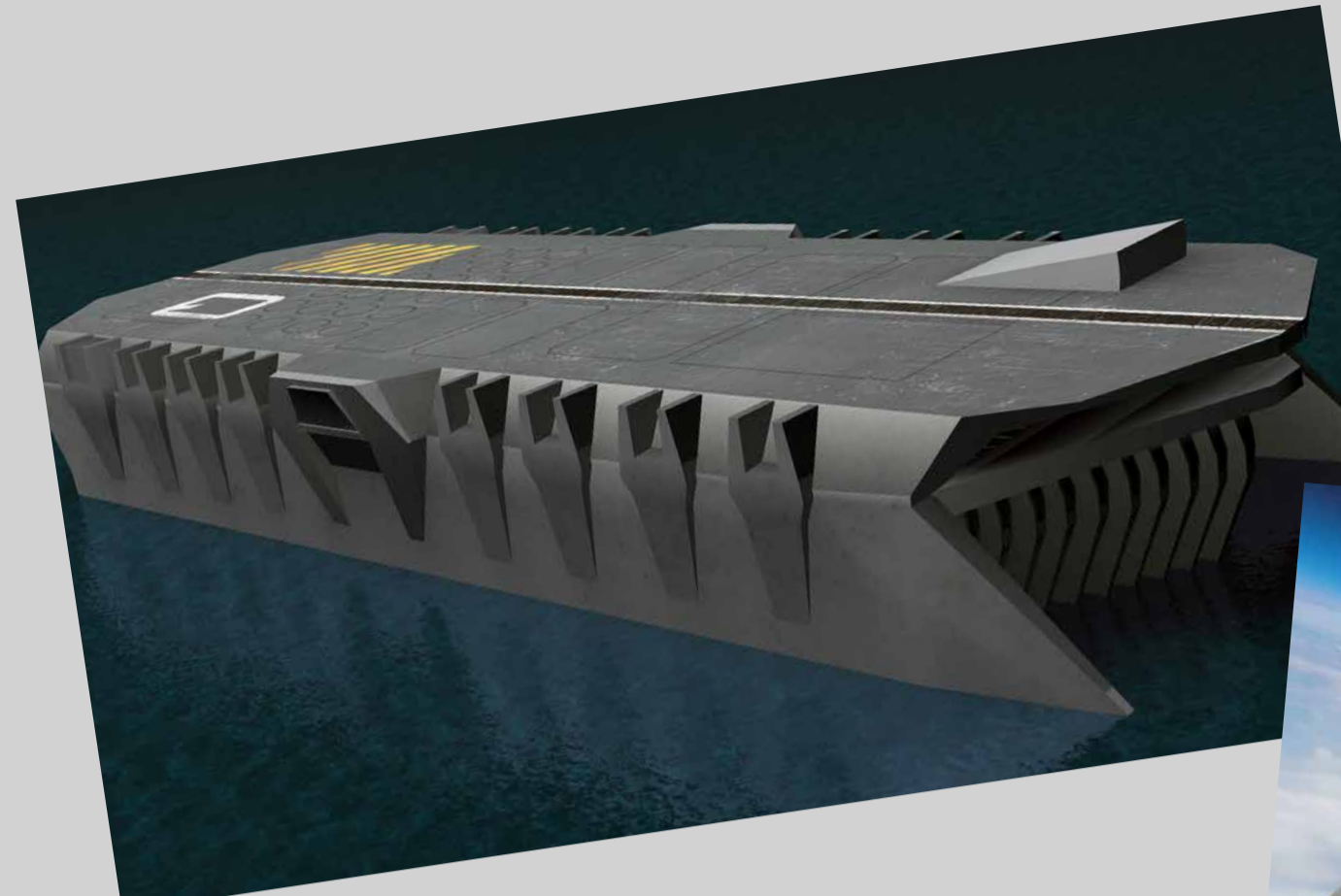
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# THE FUTURE NAVY? THIS IS HOW YOUNG ENGINEERS SEE IT

The future of the Royal Navy and how it could further embrace autonomous technology, including drones, was at the heart of a design challenge for young engineers.

The competition tasked them to come up with a concept for a Future Autonomous Fleet that could shape how the navy operates in the next 50 years.

Talented engineering students from UK Naval Engineering Science and Technology (UKNEST) see drones based in the stratosphere; an uncrewed fast attack craft housing smaller autonomous boats; an aircraft carrier propelled by both sea-based biofuels and wind power; and an underwater stealthy "mothership" at the centre of the future fleet.

Their ideas and concepts come as the Royal Navy is continuing to evolve its approach to future technology and how it can be innovative in the coming years.

Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Nick Hine said: "In a future scenario if we find ourselves unable to compete traditionally in terms of mass, and we do not have access

to the resources required to be competitive in terms of tech, we must think differently if we are to regain operational advantage.

"The young engineers who worked on this project are thinking radically and with real imagination – which is exactly how the Royal Navy is thinking too."

With no limits on their imagination, the UKNEST students took the current innovative work of the navy and expanded on it – designing a station sitting in the Earth's stratosphere armed with fast combat drones to be launched at a moment's notice; increased use of artificial intelligence to assist with low-level planning and underwater transport units that can carry anything from munitions to food.

Other ideas from the UKNEST project included a landing craft-shaped vessel able to launch missiles and crewed submarines which also uses "gills" to extract hydrogen from the ocean for powers. And an autonomous surface vessel was also part of the plans with laser weapons and interchangeable modules.

Fiona McIntosh, 24, one of the young engineers who took part in the challenge, said: "The collaborative nature of the project, coupled with us being unconstrained in the ideas and technologies we discussed, really helped us base our concept on technologies we thought would be key to innovation over the coming decades."

"The sessions were really interesting and it was great to see all of the concept designs in a presentation to senior Royal Navy Officers at the end."

"It was encouraging to see that the designs had some similar features and the groups had envisioned similar technologies being utilised by the future fleet. Hopefully we'll see some of our ideas incorporated into future platforms."

Although these designs are decades away from being a reality, the Royal Navy is already looking at bringing one aspect of the vision into use within the next ten years.

Work has started to bring interchangeable modules, also known as Persistent Operational Deployment

Systems (PODS) to the navy fleet and create the idea of a 'plug and play' warship, see page 2.

The PODS, similar in design to a shipping container, will enable Royal Navy ships of all sizes to be more adaptable and versatile. With their introduction, aimed to be delivered via a heavy-lift drone or autonomous boat, a ship could receive the equipment it needs and be re-tasked quicker than if it had to go into a port to load kit. The containers will be able to house things like an autonomous boat for surveillance and reconnaissance, quadcopter drones to deliver supplies, humanitarian aid and disaster-relief stores or medical equipment. It could then become an additional sick bay or be used as a control centre for Royal Marines operations.

## Navy to trial drone-busting laser guns as part of £72.5m contracts

ROYAL Navy frigates will test laser weapons to shoot down drones as part of a £72.5m investment in futuristic weaponry.

Three contracts have been awarded to UK industry to produce advanced laser and radio frequency technology.

Part of the Novel Weapons Programme, and known officially as 'directed energy weapons', the project could enhance firepower and reduce the risk of collateral damage.

The first laser kit will undergo testing on a Type 23 frigate and will detect, track, engage and counter a drone, while the Army's Wolfhound armoured vehicle will also host a laser demonstrator to investigate its capability against crewless aerial vehicles and other air threats.

The radio frequency tech will be used by the Army, hosted on a MAN SV truck to detect and track a variety of air, land and sea targets.

The systems are powered by electricity and operate without ammunition, significantly reducing operating costs, increasing endurance and providing unprecedented offensive and defensive flexibility to personnel on the frontline.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Jeremy Quin, said: "We are investing £6.6 billion in research and development across Defence over the next four years, reaffirming our commitment to provide the Armed Forces with truly advanced capabilities."

"Directed Energy Weapons are a key element of our future

equipment programmes and we intend to become a world-leader in the research, manufacture and implementation of this next-generation technology."

Negotiated by DE&S and awarded to consortia headed by Thales and Raytheon UK, the four-year contracts will create at least 49 new jobs and sustain 249 jobs. The new technology will be integrated into the Royal Navy and Army for testing between 2023 and 2025.

The experimentation will focus on operation and maintenance of these new systems and will provide knowledge and experience to assess whether directed energy weapons can be fully embedded on other Defence assets in the future.

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**FAREWELL: HMS Spey, left, and HMS Tamar sail into the Solent**  
Pictures by LPhot Lee Blease



# DAZZLING DUO OFF TO THE PACIFIC

## HMS TAMAR AND SPEY LEAVE PORTSMOUTH FOR LONG-TERM MISSION

**P**ATROL ships HMS Spey and Tamar have begun their deployment to the Indo-Pacific region to bolster Britain's presence in the area.

The two warships have sailed on a mission which will see them deployed across a vast area, from the eastern shores of Africa to the west coast of the USA, for the next five years.

Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd, was at HM Naval Base Portsmouth to wave them off as they begin final preparations on the south coast.

Spey and Tamar will arrive in the Pacific on the back of the maiden deployment by HMS Queen Elizabeth and her strike group which have spent several months working alongside the UK's allies and partners in the region.

They will act as the eyes and ears of the Navy – and nation – in the region, working alongside Britain's allies, carrying out security patrols to deal with drug-running, smuggling, terrorism and other illegal activities, joining in exercises with other navies and armed forces, and flying the flag for Global Britain.

No permanent home has been assigned to the pair – instead they will make use of bases and ports in the Pacific region which best meets their needs and mission.

Their patrol area embraces both the Indian and Pacific oceans, extending as far north as the Bering Sea and south to the foot of Tasmania and New Zealand.

They are sailing across the Atlantic and into the Pacific from where their patrols of their new 'home' will begin in earnest.

"Two-thirds of the world is our playground," said Lieutenant Commander Ben Evans, HMS Spey's Commanding Officer.

"We are going to places that the Royal Navy has not visited in a long time – that's really exciting."

Lieutenant Thomas Adlam Royal Navy, HMS Tamar's 1st Lieutenant, added: "The deployment will offer an array of challenges but also a number of opportunities for many of us to see new parts of the world. I couldn't be more proud to be a part of this crew."

The crews will be joined by extra personnel – up to 52 Royal Marines or troops in a dedicated mess – or mission-specific equipment to deliver humanitarian aid or help with evacuations, depending on their mission, a versatility which makes the vessels

"2,000-tonne Swiss Army knives".

Each ship is crewed by 46 sailors, with half the crew trading places with shipmates from the UK every few weeks.

The constant rotation allows the Navy to get the most out of the ships, with the crews at sea for up to nine months of the year, while the vessels themselves ready for operations all year round.

"A lot of the Navy's current deployment focus has been based around the Gulf," said Leading Weapons Engineer Alex Twidell, serving in HMS Tamar.

"The opportunity to go to the Indo-Asia Pacific offers an exciting opportunity that very few in the newest generation of Royal Navy sailors have had the chance to partake in. It will be an amazing experience."

His Commanding Officer, Commander Teilo Elliot-Smith, added: "I am incredibly proud to be given the opportunity to join HMS Tamar and sail with such a talented ship's company on the Ship's maiden deployment, extending the global reach of the Royal Navy to the Indo-Asia Pacific."

"I have served in this region before, but it is an exciting new endeavour for us as the lead echelon of the RN's new permanent forward presence."

"The ship will operate in this part of the world for the foreseeable future, working closely to strengthen our existing alliances in the region, whilst also embracing the opportunity to support the development of newer relationships along the way."

The hulls of both Tamar and Spey have received retro World War era 'dazzle paint' – making them distinct from most other warships around the globe.

Lt Cdr Evans said: "With our paint schemes, we stand out – we look different. We'll be flying the White Ensign together in the Indo-Pacific region. People will know that the Royal Navy is back."

The sister ships are the last of five in the River class at the forefront of the Navy's programme of deploying its vessels for several years at a time in key strategic regions of the globe.

HMS Forth patrols around the Falklands and South Atlantic, HMS Medway is part of the UK naval task group in the Caribbean and HMS Trent conducts security patrols of the Mediterranean and off West Africa.



**TOP: Tamar passes Round Tower in Portsmouth as she and HMS Spey, bottom, heads on an enduring mission to the Indo-Pacific**

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# MIRACLE OF DELIVERANCE



Over 15 days at the end of August, more than 1,000 personnel from all three Services successfully evacuated thousands of Britons and eligible Afghans from Kabul as Taliban forces seized control of the country.

Operation Pitting was the biggest airlift conducted by the RAF since Berlin more than 70 years ago. In more than 100 flights, more than 14,000 people were flown out of Afghanistan in trying, often harrowing circumstances.

Petty Officer (Photographer) Ben Shread (*left*) and Flight Lieutenant James Langan (*right*) joined the troops on the ground to tell their stories – and those of the people they rescued – to the world.

The images and video footage the pair captured during more than a fortnight on the ground were used by television news outlets, newspapers, websites and media agencies around the globe. This is the story behind the headlines.



“My overall feeling is one of pride, I could not be prouder of the compassion and commitment I have witnessed first-hand from the men and women of our Armed Forces and the incredible bravery of the Afghan people. I was grateful for the opportunity to tell their story with honesty and empathy,” said Ben.

In more than a decade as an award-winning photographer/videographer with the Royal Navy, the senior rating has recorded the actions of the Navy from the Arctic to Antarctic, the Middle and Far East, and USA.

He was also loaned to No.10 to serve as the prime minister's official photographer – under both Theresa May and Boris Johnson – and has covered events as high-profile as G7 summits, the UN General Assembly, President Trump's State visit and a general election.

Now he is serving at the Joint Information Actions Group – teaching media operations and content capture training to national and international students, both at home and abroad. He also fulfils the role of lead photographer on the combat camera team... which was mobilised for Pitting.



The two-strong team embedded in numerous, diverse units while in Kabul from patrolling with the Parachute Regiment, to loading and processing evacuees with the Royal Air Force freight movers and spending a day and night in the hospital theatre with the deployed medics to effectively tell all their stories.

In many instances they downed cameras and volunteered to assist with aircraft loading, evacuee processing and other tasks specific to military branches, ensuring that they were participants and not just observers.

“The work was mentally as well as physically demanding, moving that many people and troops in 40-degree heat under phenomenal pressure and time constraints,” says Ben.

“There were harrowing scenes unfolding right in front of us, wherever you looked there was something going on, it gets quite overwhelming and gives you a sense of helplessness that plays on your mind.



“I take solace in the fact we've collectively saved over 14,000 people from an uncertain future under the Taliban. My thoughts go out to the ones we couldn't get out and the 13 US Marines and the US Navy Medic that will never come home.

“As a photographer, one important lesson I have learnt – and try to pass on – is to listen to and trust your instincts. I let that guide me and it's not let me down this far. There are moments that stick in your mind that are good and bad: good was six-year-old twin girls and their family who we managed to capture from them getting out of the crowd and followed them all the way to wheels up. Seeing the tears of joy on their faces when buckling up the seatbelts on the aircraft will stay with me forever.”

James, who teaches military-public affairs at RAF Halton, said Pitting was “the proudest moment of my career. We were privileged enough to tell the stories of some Afghans and British service personnel, but the work we did as an organisation ensured over 14,000 people got to safety and the opportunity to start new lives.

“I'm still overwhelmed by what we managed to achieve, our initial target was the evacuation of 5,000 personnel and in the end, due to the dedication and empathy of our people, we evacuated over 14,000.

“Those 14,000 can now live their lives in dignity, free from oppression. I'll always look back and remember for a short time in August 2021, militaries from across the world worked together to achieve one of the biggest operations in history and not to conduct an act of war, but to conduct an act of humanity. In the end we got people out, we saved lives.”



Both are amazed at the widespread coverage – more than 20 front covers in 18 days in UK newspapers, hours of footage on rolling news channels and imagery plastered across news sites on the internet – their efforts received.

“I was awestruck at the reach of our work, people whose stories we were telling one day were catapulted to the media stratosphere and broadcast globally the next,” said James.

“But it was a privilege to act as a vehicle for these stories to be told. And in many cases it ensures the good work our service personnel do doesn't go unrecognised. The hard work and sacrifice of many is now forever consigned to posterity.”



Ben adds: “On a professional level, I have never seen this unprecedented level of coverage in the press from a combat camera team of only two people.

“I enjoyed a lot of coverage when I was the prime minister's photographer, but nothing compared to the concentrated exposure we received from this operation.

“It was an unbelievable effort from all involved and one I will never forget.”



# M34

## MAKING A SPLASH MINEHUNTERS LIMBER UP FOR GULF MISSION

**T**WO Royal Navy minehunters and their 90 sailors have been fine-tuning for Gulf security missions on their 6,000-mile journey to their new base in Bahrain.

HMS Bangor and HMS Middleton sailed together to the Gulf to continue 15 years of continuous deployments of Royal Navy Mine Counter Measures Vessels in the region, where they will work with allies and partners to keep sea lanes open, hone mine-warfare skills and generally promote peace and stability.

The pair, which carry on board new cutting-edge kit for their missions, take over from HMS Brocklesby and HMS Shoreham after their three-year stint on operations.

After meeting for their voyage outside Falmouth, Bangor

and Middleton have since used their long voyage to prepare further, after gruelling Operational Sea Training earlier in the year in Scotland, for their mission ahead.

The ships have tackled the Atlantic Swell in the Bay of Biscay, sailed into Lisbon at sunrise for a brief logistics stop where the two crews met in person for the first time and, after sailing round the Cape St Vincent, headed into Gibraltar.

During their journey to The Rock, the sailors – some just out of basic training from HMS Raleigh – carried out gunnery exercises and dealt with fires and equipment failures as part of drills to keep them razor sharp for their operations ahead.

Bangor and Middleton ramped up their training in the Mediterranean, with further gunnery and firefighting exercises before a stop in Augusta, Sicily, and the onward journey to Souda Bay, Crete, to begin the next phase of their

journey through the Suez Canal and into their new area of operations. There was also an opportunity to cool off in the Mediterranean Sea with 'hands to bathe' on one of the hottest days of the year, giving the crews a break from the rigours of training.

Middleton's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Neil Skinner, said: "The vast majority of Crew 7 came together over a year ago as a group of individuals. Going through the rigours of preparing to deploy, and overcoming a host of challenges along the way, has been a turbulent journey.

"But it is this process that has now gelled us as a very tight-knit team, able to take on any challenge faced. It is a privilege to now see the crew finally making the most of the opportunities and looking forward to being on operations. Every member of the team have stepped up to the mark and



**ON THE WAY: HMS Bangor as seen from HMS Middleton on their 6,000-mile voyage**



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**OFF TO THE GULF: Crew 8 from the 1st Mine Countermeasures Squadron with HMS Bangor**

I could not be more proud of them."

HMS Bangor is home to Crew 8 from the 1st Mine Countermeasures Squadron, while it's Crew 7 of the 2nd Mine Countermeasures Squadron currently on HMS Middleton.

These sailors – 90 in total with 45 on each ship – will be deployed using a new 'crewing model', which will see them rotated in and out every four months, meaning crews are kept fresh and ready for future operations after intensive Gulf missions. Leading Engineering Technician (Marine Engineering) Ian 'Blood' Reid, of HMS Middleton, said: "The new four months rotation model is a real boost. It makes planning my life so much easier, as I know exactly how long I shall be away and when I shall be home.

"This is particularly important as I have a young

family at home – stepping away from the longer six or nine-month deployments and knowing when I can book holidays makes a real difference."

Both crews have worked tirelessly to get the ships and themselves ready for operations, including working with new command systems – known as ORCA (Oceanographic Reconnaissance Combat Architecture) – which will help highly-trained Mine Warfare Specialists and Clearance Divers in locating and destroying mines.

The cutting-edge ORCA system has seen new consoles installed in the operations room and bridge and works with the powerful sensors on board to increase the ships' situational awareness during their operations.

ORCA allows the Mine Warfare Officer in the Ops Room to have increased situational awareness in comparison

with the previous NAUTIS system, with a radar picture and navigation charts being integrated into the display.

In addition, a more user-friendly interface allows training to be conducted at a lower level, leading to a skilled junior crew. PO (Mine Warfare) Peter Holt, said: "Having spent the last few months training with ORCA it is clear that it represents a step change in our capability. With the additional time spent at home and the new command system, Crew 8 will be more focused and capable as part of the mine countermeasures contribution."

Sandown-class HMS Bangor and Hunt-class Middleton take over from HMS Brocklesby and Shoreham, joining HMS Chiddingfold, Penzance, Montrose and RFA Lyme Bay as part of Operation Kipion.

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**HANGING ABOUT: A Royal Marine on a river crossing before conducting a raid in the Slovenian mountains**



# SLOVENIA



# 45 COMMANDO COMPLETE MOUNTAIN MISSION

**R**OYAL Marines swapped their usual Scotland mountain warfare training ground for a rare foray into the wilds of Slovenia as they prepare for their Arctic deployment next year.

Yankee Company of 45 Commando, the Royal Marines' specialists in cold weather and mountain warfare, headed for the stunning Slovenian mountains for two weeks of intensive training to push themselves ahead of a challenging winter on operations in Norway.

The marines based themselves at Bohinjska Bela Barracks – a NATO centre of excellence for mountain warfare – and headed on missions into the Triglav National Park, in the northwest corner of the Balkan state.

The Green Berets spent a fortnight working closely with the Slovenian 132nd Mountain Regiment and the 1st Battalion, 157th Mountain Regiment of the US Colorado National Guard on exercises known as Triglav Star.

The commandos and allies focused on core skills like vertical assaults, river crossings and casualty evacuations, working at high altitude across arduous terrain under the stewardship of Royal Marines and Slovenian Mountain Leaders.

The exercises ended with an attack on Blegoš Mountain that is still home to old Yugoslav fortifications of the Rupnik Line that was designed, although failed, to defend against attacks during the Second World War.

Major David Johnston, in command of Yankee Company, said: "The exercise has been an excellent opportunity to really test Yankee Company.

"Working with NATO partners we have deployed into unfamiliar terrain and have enhanced the capability of the company.

"Under the Royal Marines and Slovenian Mountain Leaders we have trained to operate in an Alpine environment.

"Working at high altitude in arduous steep terrain is a challenge in itself. Operating tactically is another layer of complexity. Team leaders have been tested to ensure that they maintain a covert posture navigating through enemy lines, across huge obstacles where if they make a mistake the consequences are severe.

"The Royal Marines provide the UK defence's sole mountain and cold weather warfare capability. This has been an excellent testing ground before we deploy to Norway to push our capability even further."



45 Commando's marines are held at constant readiness to deploy around the world at short notice and, as the UK's Arctic and mountain warfare specialists, must be ready to fight in the world's most unforgiving environments.

The Slovenia deployment was a prime opportunity to share knowledge with allies and more intimately understand how fellow troops operate in the mountains to develop each-other's tactics and approach.

Yankee Company seized the opportunity and in the second week of training carried out a challenging Situation Training Exercise, which puts commandos in a specific scenario which they need to navigate through to achieve objectives.

Warrant Officer Second Class Ian Freeman, Y Company Sergeant Major, said: "Having the opportunity to train in an alpine, high mountainous environment and develop alongside NATO partners has really enhanced the company's experience and skillset to operate in the mountains.

"It has been challenging for the exercising troops and whilst learning new skills and techniques they have rose to the challenge and performed admirably. Y Coy are now in an even better place to conduct operations in a mountainous environment."

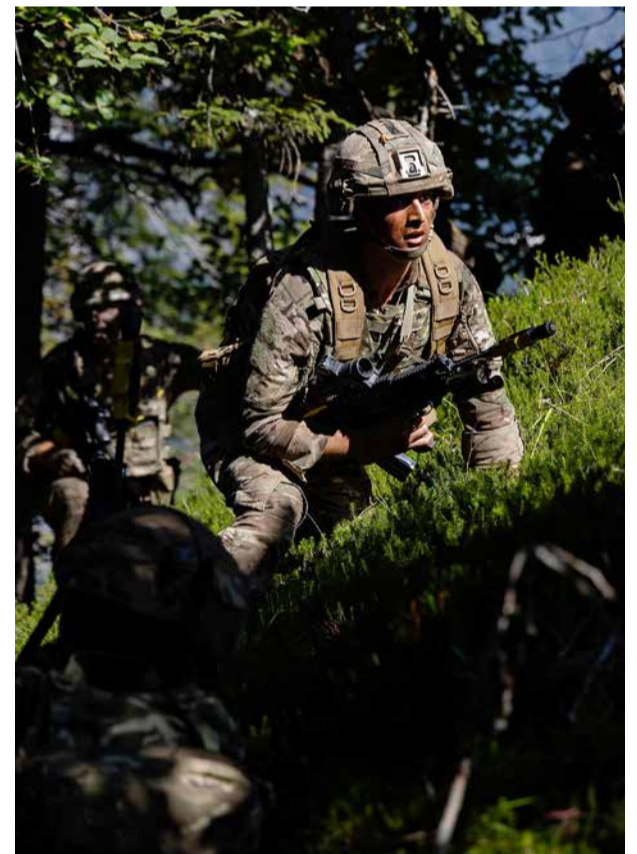
Yankee Company took the opportunity also carry out some adventurous training across the breath-taking landscape of the Slovenian mountains, before returning to the UK.

The rest of 45 Commando will soon carry out their own arctic preparations on mountain training activity in Scotland.

• 45 Commando have a new Commanding Officer with Lieutenant Colonel Ed Hall taking over from Lieutenant Colonel Innes Catton.

"Taking command of 45 Commando is a landmark moment in my career and is a truly exciting prospect," said Lt Col Hall.

"I am now responsible for getting the best out of the outstanding people we have based here in Arbroath, so that we can continue to deliver as a commando unit for the nation."



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: A Royal Marine in the zone during a raid in Slovenia; Royal Marines from Yankee Company after conducting a raid in the mountains of the Triglav National Park; A Royal Marine moves into position during a mountain raid**

Pictures by LPhot Kevin Walton

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# LET'S JET IT ON



● **Main:** F-35 jets from HMS Queen Elizabeth train and refuel with jets from USS Carl Vinson  
**Below:** The UK's Carrier Strike Group trains with the Republic of Korea Navy

Pictures: PO Phot Jay Allen;  
LPhot Unaisi Luke



JET squadrons flying from aircraft carriers HMS Queen Elizabeth and USS Carl Vinson have flown together during joint sorties over the Pacific Ocean.

The Carrier Strike Group with HMS Queen Elizabeth at its heart are currently deep into the Indo-Pacific leg of their seven-month deployment that has taken them across the globe working with allies and partners in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and into the Pacific.

Their latest foray has seen them work alongside ships from the Republic of Korea Navy during three days of events near Busan, which included joint maritime manoeuvres, with Commander of the UK Carrier Strike Group, Commodore Steve Moorhouse, thanking the ROK for “their enthusiastic support to the CSG21 deployment”.

Prior to that, though, the USS Carl Vinson and HMS Queen Elizabeth’s air wings put on an impressive display of air power, as jets from the carriers trained to work seamlessly together by practising techniques, tactics and procedures, which included mid-air

refuelling.

It’s the first time the US and UK carrier strike groups have worked together and it saw the two F-35B Lightning jet squadrons from Queen Elizabeth work closely with four F-35C Lightnings, five F/A-18 E/F Super Hornets, two EA-18G Growlers and an E-2D Advanced Hawkeye from USS Carl Vinson.

It was the first time the UK Carrier Strike Group has interacted with the ‘C’ model of the F-35 jet, which is intended for catapult launches from aircraft carriers opposed to the short take off and vertical landing versions that HMS Queen Elizabeth operates.

Colonel Simon Doran, US Senior National Representative to the UK CSG, said: “Integrating United Kingdom and US Marine Corps F-35Bs into a flight with US Navy F-35Cs continues to reinforce the tactical flexibility of the F-35.

“Additionally, the mission further demonstrates the F-35’s ability to support distributed maritime operations, refuelling 5th generation aircraft from Super Hornets

allows the United States and our allies to operate stealth fighters inside contested areas where legacy platforms could be vulnerable.”

The UK Carrier Strike Group then looked to the Korean peninsula and exercises with the Republic of Korea Navy.

“CSG21 has taken us from the Atlantic Ocean, through the Mediterranean, across the Indian Ocean and has brought us here to the Western Pacific for a series of exercises and engagements with regional partners, including the Republic of Korea,” said Cdre Moorhouse.

“The UK, like the Republic of Korea, is an outward-looking trading nation committed to contributing to the maritime security which underpins global prosperity.

“By sailing here we make clear our determination to work with like-minded nations in support of an open and transparent system of international rules.

“Our aim is to strengthen the ties between our two countries and pave the way for closer cooperation in the future.”

# CROWNING GLORY



## EXERCISE PACIFIC CROWN ROUNDS OFF CARRIER STRIKE GROUP'S TIME IN JAPAN

**HMS QUEEN Elizabeth and some of her Carrier Strike Group escorts have topped off a busy period in Japan with joint exercises in the Pacific.**

Britain's flagship was joined by Type 45 destroyer HMS Defender, Royal Fleet Auxiliary tanker RFA Tidespring and Dutch frigate HNLMS Evertsen for the training with Canadian ship HMCS Winnipeg and Japanese ships JS Ise and JS Izumo.

Exercise Pacific Crown (*main picture*) saw F-35B stealth fighters embarked on HMS Queen Elizabeth perform a flypast with the Japanese F-35A variant of the jets while the ships conducted close-maneuvring training.

The three-day exercise comes after HMS Queen Elizabeth spent time alongside in Yokosuka.

Commodore Steven Moorhouse, Commander of the UK Carrier Strike Group, said: "Our visit to Japan is seen as a cornerstone of this deployment and a demonstration of the UK commitment to investing in our partnership with Japan.

"UK and Japanese vessels are working together in Exercise Pacific Crown, demonstrating our shared resolve, deepening our co-operation and enhancing the interoperability between our armed forces.

"These joint exercises help us to develop our tactics

and procedures to allow us to pursue increasingly complex and integrated co-operation."

He added: "UK and Japan have a shared recognition of the importance of an open and free Indo-Pacific, which is why I am delighted to be here, bringing our cutting-edge capabilities to work alongside those of our Japanese partners to uphold peace and security in the region."

HMS Queen Elizabeth's visit to Yokosuka marked the first time a non-US aircraft carrier has visited the base since 1992.

While there, the ships hosted British ambassador to Japan Julia Longbottom along with the Fleet Commander of US 7th Fleet, Vice Admiral Karl Thomas US Navy, who visited members of the US Marine Corps embarked on board.

The UK Carrier Strike Group worked closely with 7th Fleet recently as they conducted joint F-35 jet flying serials together with USS Carl Vinson (*see page 19*).

The next three days saw the ship host Japan Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi who came on board with senior military figures from the Japan Self-Defense Force.

He said: "It was the greatest honour to get on board HMS Queen Elizabeth. Japan and the UK share

universal values such as democracy and the rule of law and also strategic benefits."

Prior to HMS Queen Elizabeth's stop in Yokosuka, the Carrier Strike Group had spent time at sea taking part in Large Scale Global Exercise 21.

It saw a powerhouse naval force of warships, aircraft, sailors and marines from the UK, United States and Japan converge for milestone exercises in the Pacific Ocean.

The UK warships led by HMS Queen Elizabeth worked with the USS America-led United States Expeditionary Strike Group 7 and two ships from Japan's Maritime Self Defence Force to prove the ability of the three navies to operate effectively together.

Several US Navy sailors joined HMS Queen Elizabeth at the start of the training to get a taste of life on the fleet flagship, while HMS Defender temporarily came under the command of the American task group.

An F-35B Lightning jet from the British carrier also landed on USS America as UK and US squadrons from

both ships worked closely together, while helicopters from around the task group learnt to operate seamlessly with ships from allied nations.

These exercises mark a significant moment in the Royal Navy's increasing presence in and focus on the Indo-Pacific – patrol ships HMS Tamar and HMS Spey are deploying to the region on a long-term mission.

It was a big moment in the UK Carrier Strike Group's seven-month global deployment.

Captain Angus Essenhigh, Commanding Officer of HMS Queen Elizabeth, said: "Conducting exercises with ships of the Japan Maritime Self Defence Force and the US Expeditionary Strike Group 7 is another milestone for HMS Queen Elizabeth.

"We have shown our ability to work with our allies and as we get accustomed to operating in the Indo-Pacific again these relationships will be important for all future Royal Navy ships operating in the region."

The collective 12-day workout closed with the allied ships sailing in formation in a demonstration

**“”**  
These relationships will be important for all future Royal Navy ships operating in the region

Captain Angus Essenhigh



of naval might.

HMS Queen Elizabeth took up the lead position flanked by Japanese Hyuda-class helicopter destroyer JS Ise and amphibious assault ship USS America.

Frigates and destroyers of the UK Carrier Strike Group, HMS Defender, HMS Kent, USS The Sullivans and Dutch ship HNLMS Evertsen, followed closely behind with Japanese destroyer JS Asahi and ship USS New Orleans.

The ships then bade each other farewell, with sailors from HMS Queen Elizabeth lining the carrier's upper deck and a 'three cheers for the Japanese ship JS Ise' as they sailed past.

US Navy sailors joined HMS Queen Elizabeth two weeks' earlier in Guam and as the ships reunited for the exercises, Merlin helicopters of 820 Naval Air Squadron flew to USS America to return the American personnel as part of flight operations between the ships.

Lieutenant Matthew James, a pilot in 820 Naval Air Squadron, said: "It was great to work with the USS

America and operate from a different deck, as well as mixing it with different aircraft such as the SH60 Seahawks."

The opening two days saw HMS Defender, HMS Kent and HNLMS Evertsen carry out intensive gunnery training in waters close to an uninhabited tropical island; working closely with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit of the US Marine Corps, who are based out of Okinawa in Japan.

Defender was tasked with providing air and missile defence to the USS America and her task group, while the destroyer was also on standby to recover aircrew in the event of an incident during take-off or landing; a role known as "Plane Guard".

During this phase, an F-35B from Queen Elizabeth landed on USS America to load ordnance, refuel and continue on its strike mission, while Defender received supplies and stores from USS America – believed to be the first time a British warship has carried out a Replenishment at Sea with a US amphibious ship.

Commanding Officer of HMS Defender, Commander

Vince Owen said: "Defender took part in several unprecedented evolutions and my ship's company rose admirably to this new challenge.

"By conducting this joint exercise we have demonstrated the UK's commitment to the Indo-Pacific – an area critical to global peace and prosperity – and the Royal Navy's flexibility and ability to work with the UK's allies and partners in the region."

Meanwhile, HMS Kent was getting stuck into a range of gunnery, with the ship's minigun and .50 calibre machine gun getting a work out, including on a night firing exercise.

The embarked Royal Marines boarding team from Kilo Company 42 Commando carried out a 9mm pistol live firing, before they fired an array of weaponry from the ship's Wildcat helicopter from 815 NAS.

HMS Defender's Wildcat joined in the exercises too, tooled up with her new Martlet missile system attached, as the helicopter prepares for the first firing mission of the Lightweight Multirole Missile in an operational theatre.

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# Mitch marks 43 years in RN



A VETERAN of Sierra Leone and Yugoslavia, Commander Mitch Vowles has come to the end of a 43-year RN career.

A young Mitch got on the train in Carmarthen on July 4 1978, arriving in Plymouth where he was picked up and driven to HMS Raleigh.

He passed out six weeks later with the formidable Bosun's Call award for being top of his class and he achieved the same result, top of the course in phase 2 training.

He passed every exam and course he's ever sat in his career and has amassed 32 different qualifications, along with a huge number of competencies and courses.

Twenty-year-old Mitch was serving in HMS Ajax – destined for the Falklands in 1982 – when he was switched with a colleague aboard HMS Cardiff, which headed to the Far East.

As a Senior Upper Yardman, Mitch was commissioned in the late 90s for his unique knowledge of operation rooms afloat and his expansive understanding of the LINK communications system.

A successful Officer of the Watch in HMS Ocean, despite his failing sight and maturing years making the night watches a particular challenge, he was always full of spirit, even with 'Bootnecks' who made every day a particular challenge.

Mitch also served in HMS Bristol, Chatham, Glasgow, Arrow, Bicester, Southwick, Nelson, Beaver, Orkney, Hecla, Euryalus, Royal Arthur, and Drake. Mitch was the RN's man in the south in the Libya campaign and led the press conferences at JFC Naples, which was where he served his final posting.

During Mitch's leaving do, Colonel Andy Page, the Senior UK National Representative in Allied Joint Force Command Naples, said: "Captain Barry Doig is in no doubt that without Mitch's wise counsel and one-to-one naval coaching while a junior officer, that he would not have progressed beyond his short-term commission and the rank of Lieutenant."

"He wishes to convey his deepest gratitude from Northwood and is sorry that Covid regulations preclude him joining us tonight. That said, he is also aware that Mitch has had a previous leaving the RN dining out, in Naples too, and it was attended by the then ISL; when in fact Mitch knew that his career manager had sought approval for an extension of service and that he was not actually leaving the RN but liked the dit value of ISL attending his (not) leaving run ashore!

"Sadly, after more extensions of service than he had "all night ins" at sea, Mitch will depart after a very rich career."

Mitch is married to Sue and they have a son Thomas, daughter Becka and three grandchildren, with a fourth due next year. The couple are looking forward to spending time at their house in Abruzzo, Italy.



## Protector in paradise

THE Royal Navy's sole ice ship has begun her 2021-22 deployment in earnest – with no snow or ice in sight.

HMS Protector is spending the next month working around two British tropical islands in the mid-Atlantic to help preserve the environment and map waters last charted 200 years ago.

The distinctive red-and-white survey ship has arrived off St Helena – 1,100 miles south of the Equator and a similar distance from the west coast of Africa – for an intensive period of surveying and patrolling fishing grounds.

She'll also conduct similar fishery patrols around Ascension Island, 800 miles to the northwest.

The waters around both islands are protected by the government's Blue Belt programme – part of a wider United Nations initiative to safeguard 30 per cent of all oceans by the end of the decades.

The sea off St Helena is home to yellowfin, bigeye, skipjack and albacore tuna and wahoo, while a protected area twice the size of the UK has been created around Ascension Island to protect green turtles, swordfish, sharks, tuna and marlin.

Technology, such as monitoring AIS transponders, which give away the position of vessels over 300 tonnes, and satellite imagery, are used to

keep an eye remotely on any illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

But Protector will spend a protracted period patrolling around both islands as a very visible deterrent.

At the same time, her hydrographic teams are out with their sensors, sonar scanners and sampling and measuring equipment looking for any potential hazards to seafarers.

Some waters around St Helena have not been surveyed since Napoleon was exiled to the island in the early 19th Century.

Protector's sailors will have the chance to get ashore and see some of the islands – Ascension is home to just 800 souls, St Helena to around 4,500 – and the opening of the new airport on St Helena will permit one third of the ship's company to trade places with shipmates from home. The regular rotation of crew helps to sustain Protector on patrols far from home for longer periods.

Once her work in the mid-Atlantic is done, Protector will continue south to begin her traditional austral summer duties around the Antarctic Peninsula, supporting the work of British and international scientists studying the frozen continent and its impact on the rest of the planet.



## Buddies fulfil dream of honour

A plaque in memory of a Royal Marine who lost his life in a diving accident was unveiled in Gibraltar.

Corporal Johnny Stanworth, from the Royal Marines, lost his life in 1971 at the age of 22 while diving on Europa Reef. An extensive search by Royal Navy Clearance Divers, several Royal Navy vessels as well as Spanish Naval vessels and helicopters took place, but sadly was unsuccessful.

More than 30 family, friends, veterans and guests gathered at Europa Point for the special memorial ceremony, which was held exactly 50 years ago to the day he died.

The project to dedicate the memorial to Johnny has been two years in the making, thanks to the determination of former diving buddies Tony Ward and Pete Wilkins.

Tony has spent the last two years getting permission from Gibraltar Government officials, family members and military bosses, and working through COVID-19 challenges, to get the green light for the memorial.

Tony, 74 from Northampton, said: "In 1968 I was on the same swimmer/canoist course as Johnny and I had a lot of respect for him."

"He would have gone far in the Royal Marines. Johnny was awarded the Kings Badge at the age of 18 in his Royal Marines Commando training."

"Back in 2019 his friend Pete Wilkins mentioned that there is no grave or memorial for Johnny on the Rock."

"We agreed that it was about time something was done to rectify that, and, perhaps a memorial plaque in Gibraltar might be appropriate."

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

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## Ben's big challenge to help SSAFA

FORMER Royal Marine Ben Wright is taking on the Bob Graham Round to raise awareness of Armed Forces personnel and veterans affected by mental health conditions – with funds raised going to SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity.

The Bob Graham Round is a formidable ultra-distance running challenge, covering some 66 miles over 42 of the highest mountains in the Lake District – and all within 24 hours.

It is a tough challenge, and as Ben explained “To put it into perspective, less than 2,500 people have successfully completed ‘The Round’, but more 4,000 people have summited Mount Everest and at least 500 people have been launched into space.”

Ben added: “Attempting the challenge in this way is intended to highlight the unique mindset instilled into our Armed Forces personnel, a mindset that enables them to carry out the highly demanding training and operational roles asked of them.”

“However, characteristics of this same mindset can also create challenges, particularly during the transition from the military into civilian life, preventing some of our very best soldiers, marines, sailors, airwomen, and airmen from asking for help during times of need.”

“And this is why I am taking on the Bob Graham Round: to raise funds for SSAFA because

it provides that vital support to service personnel and veterans, and their dependents.”

To support Ben's challenge, visit: [justgiving.com/fundraising/armed-forces-round](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/armed-forces-round).

To find out more about SSAFA, visit [ssafa.org.uk](https://www.ssafa.org.uk)



## Hi son, and goodbye

NORMALLY Sandown-class sailors are reunited with their families in Faslane.

But Chris Wragg finally met his son Cameron again after a 12-month gap in Bahrain, as father waved son off safely in HMS Shoreham.

Sub Lieutenant Cameron Wragg is a junior officer helping to bring the minehunter back to the UK having completed her three-year stint in the Gulf.

And his dad is the waterfront manager at the RN's base in Bahrain, the UK Naval Support Facility, home to five warships and one RFA support ship.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the duo had not seen each other in 12 months. When Cameron found out he would be drafted to HMS Shoreham, he and his father realised that they would see each other again.

Originally from Lochgilphead, Chris left the Royal Navy in 2012, and now provides technical support to the UK Mine Countermeasure Force (two Sandown-class, two Hunts) operating from Bahrain.

His son joined BRNC Dartmouth in 2019 to commission as a Warfare Officer, making him the fourth generation of armed forces in his family.

He's joined Shoreham for his 'Specialist Fleet Time' training before qualifying as an Officer of the Watch.

Thoroughly enjoying his first overseas deployment as part of his training pipeline, he chose warfare because of its diverse roles: “It is very exciting to have my first deployment in a warship based overseas and particularly exciting to have one which is so close to my father.”

His dad added: “My wife and I are incredibly proud of Cameron. It has been his ambition to join the armed forces since he was a young boy and we are very happy he chose to join the Senior Service.”

Shoreham is sailing home in company with HMS Brocklesby on the 6,000-mile journey to the UK, with the outward-bound HMS Bangor and Middleton taking the place of the duo, see pages 14-15.



## Frigate hosts elite guard

THE commander of Bahrain's elite Royal Guard Special Force was given an insight into the work of the Royal Navy in the kingdom – and wider Gulf – on a visit to HMS Montrose.

Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al Khalifa was given a comprehensive tour both of the frigate – 2½ years into a maritime security mission in the region – as well as the neighbouring UK Naval Support Facility.

The NSF is the hub of all Royal Navy operations in the Middle East, home to four minehunters, an RFA support ship plus Montrose, plus the regional headquarters, the UK Maritime Component Command.

It's also home to British and RAF personnel serving in Bahrain.

Sheikh Khalifa was given a tour of the establishment, a visit to HMS Montrose which was alongside and a tour of the UK Headquarters, led by UKMCC Commander Commodore Ahlgren.

“It was my pleasure to

welcome Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al Khalifa to the Naval Support Facility. We discussed our enduring partnership, the capability of HMS Montrose and explored opportunities for greater collaboration.”

Sheikh Khalifa was welcomed aboard the frigate by a Guard and Royal Salute before receiving a comprehensive tour of the warship and watching an impressive Royal Marine boarding demonstration.

“I was delighted to host His Highness Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al Khalifa onboard to demonstrate the capabilities that we offer to maritime security in the region,” said Commander Paul Irving, the frigate's Commanding Officer.

“The Kingdom of Bahrain has an enduring relationship with the United Kingdom which percolates across all areas of defence and security and the Royal Navy is proud of our strong and enduring links with the Bahrain Defence Force and Royal Guard.”

# Great Scott, an arty way to help

A ROYAL NAVY sailor from Camborne, who discovered he could paint while recovering from a family trauma, is using his new-found talent to raise money for the Royal British Legion.

Petty Officer Scott Falkiner has set himself the challenge of painting 200 individual watercolour/acrylic poppies, for sale with a price-tag of £75.

The 31-year-old said: “I've been painting for just over a year now and I've really taken to it. I just want to use this new skill to raise as much money as possible for the Royal British Legion.”

“I think everything they do to provide for Service and ex-Service personnel is exceptional.”

“There is a legacy of past conflicts and for those that have suffered, support and assistance will be required for the foreseeable future and with costs continually increasing, it is vital that we continue to support the charity.”

PO Falkiner joined the Royal Navy in 2011 and currently works as a drill instructor at HMS Raleigh.

The married father of two paints three poppies at a time on 10 by 14 inches watercolour paper.

The individual paintings measure 3.9 inches by nine inches. Each batch of three takes approximately three and half hours to paint. PO Falkiner started on this batch of paintings in June.

He was introduced to painting as therapy for mental health problems, following complications during the birth of his second son, Arthur. PO Falkiner nearly lost his wife and baby.

Paramedics had to stop the ambulance on the way to hospital as baby Arthur began to appear. Thanks to them and the doctors and midwives, both survived, but hours later the couple were given the devastating news that Arthur had suffered brain damage to the right



frontal lobe.

Following Arthur's diagnosis PO Falkiner shut himself off from the world and was later identified as suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. To aid his recovery he was given a place at Tedworth House; a facility then run by Help for Heroes. His place was funded by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines charity.

PO Falkiner said: “I went to Tedworth House for a week and there was a range of activities. There was also the chance to speak to other people from across the Armed Forces and swap experiences.”

“On the Wednesday we went down to an art

classroom for three hours. I had no intention of doing any artwork, but because I had time on my hands I thought I'd try something.”

“I looked up an artist who paints animals wearing glasses in acrylics. I decided to give it a go, started mixing colours together and adding layers and before I knew it, I'd made this piece of artwork.”

“I really enjoyed it and zoned out from all the problems I had. I just switched off and I took to painting just like that. I went to the classroom again and again and by the Friday, when it was time to leave, I'd completed three pieces of work.”

Now PO Falkiner has an art studio at home and in his cabin at HMS Raleigh and has expanded his talents using acrylic and watercolours to paint animals and landscapes, while taking every opportunity to improve.

In doing so he has raised money for Cornwall Animal Hospital, taken commissions and made copies of his artwork for sale.

PO Falkiner said: “I'm now in good place, but I wouldn't be here today without the support and commitment of my wife, Elodie.”

“We've moved home to Camborne and now have family support. We didn't think that Arthur would be able to walk or talk; the doctors thought that he may have cerebral palsy, so there was a lot of uncertainty about not knowing.”

Nearly two years on, Elodie and Arthur are doing well. Arthur, to the amazement of his doctor and physiotherapist, is walking and talking, ticking all the boxes for a child his age.

PO Falkiner said: “The hardest thing now is to get Arthur to stop running.”

If you would like to help Scott's fund raising campaign for the Royal British Legion email [Scott.falkiner100@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Scott.falkiner100@mod.gov.uk). Also stay up to date with the progress through his Instagram page [S.F\\_Artwork](https://www.instagram.com/S.F_Artwork)

Report: Nicola Dunwell

## Apprentices unveil iconic super car



TWO Royal Navy apprentices have unveiled a fully restored 1980's Aston Martin Bulldog super car.

It follows an 18-month total nut-and-bolt restoration, which saw technicians at Classic Motor Cars in Bridgnorth, Shropshire, spend more than 6,000 hours working on the car.

Aston Martin planned that the car would become the fastest production car ever, running at 200mph. But it fell short at just 191mph and due to financial constraints, the project was axed.

“It became something of a mythical beast,” said project leader Richard Gauntlett, whose father Victor Gauntlett, was MD at Aston Martin when Bulldog was axed in the 1980s.

He added: “It disappeared from view when it was purchased from Aston Martin by a Middle Eastern buyer. Over the years

Bulldog was 'sighted' in various locations around the world before turning up in the United States where it was bought by Phillip Sarofim, who has flown to the UK for the unveiling of the car.”

Air Engineering Apprentices, Lewis Delaney, 27, from Wales and Andrew Earl, 23, from Norfolk, who are both based at RNAS Yeovilton, unveiled the car after the Corps of Drums from the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines, Portsmouth, carried out a “Mess Beatings” to announce its presence.

The apprentices were accompanied by Warrant Officer Baz Firth, who said: “It was an easy choice to select these two AETs to help unveil the Bulldog as it was an excellent opportunity to recognise and reward their good efforts and for them to see the engineering involved in such a special restoration.”





# Work starts on tribute to deeps

THE Submariner Memorial Appeal held the ground-breaking ceremony for its new sculpture at the National Memorial Arboretum, in Staffordshire.

The turf was cut by 100-year-old Diana Mayes, whose submarine CO husband Lt Gordon Noll RN was lost along with his 35-strong crew in HMS Untamed in the Clyde on May 30, 1943.

Joining Diana was a member of HMS Vigilant's port crew, Chef Jack McHugh, one of the youngest serving submariners in the service.

Six standard bearers and Gill Molyneux – widow of Lt Cdr Ian Molyneux – were also present.

The speech was given by Deputy Commodore Submarines Captain Irvine Lindsay RN.

The Submariner Memorial Appeal has raised the majority of its £440,000 target to fund an evocative sculpture by Paul Day,

which will finally give the Royal Navy's 5,349 fallen submariners – most of whom have no formal grave – a fitting memorial at the arboretum.

It is due to be dedicated by The Duke of Cambridge, Commodore-in-Chief Submarines next Spring.

The Duke of Cambridge said: "The National Memorial Arboretum has become the nation's centre for remembrance, a place where everyone can gather to honour those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country."

"It is therefore right that the Submarine Service has a fitting memorial to honour and remember all those who have given their lives in this most demanding branch of our Armed Forces, and acknowledge the sacrifice of their families."

Diana Mayes said: "At last the bravery and fortitude of HMS Untamed's young crew, who faced dangers not of their making, can be recognised."

"And my heartfelt gratitude to and pride in all submariners."

The appeal is being supported by A-list actor Colin Firth, who played Commodore David Russell in the film *Kursk: The Final Mission*.

He said: "Even in peacetime, the hostile environment submarines operate in means that it only takes one small mistake for disaster to strike."

"That, combined with long periods of separation and the complete lack of communication with loved ones, makes life for those onboard and their partners and kids back home especially hard."

The Submariner Memorial Appeal, supported by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, is currently trying to raise over £400,000 to fund and maintain the memorial, which will replace the current small plaque.

For more information visit <https://www.submarinermemorial.uk>



## Family days back at last

IN late August families of those serving on HMS Spey were invited to come aboard the ship for one of the first families days in the UK since before the COVID pandemic.

The RNRMC recognises the morale-boosting value of families days to those serving and their loved ones and the charity have funded many events over the years.

On this occasion, an RNRMC grant provided the catering, children's entertainment and marquee hire to HMS Spey.

HMS Spey's Navigating Officer, Lt Mike Royle, said: "Today was a great opportunity to show my family around my ship – the only time we'll be able to hold this sort of function during the next few years due to the nature of our deployment."

"My father-in-law is a former Royal Navy Marine Engineer Officer and he really enjoyed visiting to catch up on the latest technology, although my son, who is 11 months old, just wanted to sit in the captain's chair and push buttons!"

"It was brilliant to see supporting organisations attending the event as well – it's really important to ensure our families have a support network accessible to them whilst we're away on the other side of the world and we appreciate the effort they expended to make this event a success."



## Aggies help families get crafty

FOUNDED in 1876, Aggie Westons is a charity with plenty of experience supporting the Royal Navy.

'Aggies' is a key member of the family of naval charities and as such, RNRMC grants help fund many of their services for serving members of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and their families.

While the RNRMC have provided significant funding support to Aggies' day-to-day pastoral work, small grants for additional services and events can make a difference too.

In order to respond to need rapidly, the RNRMC distribute hundreds of small grants every year across the Royal Navy community for a vast range of activities and events.

Following the relaxation of

COVID restrictions in early summer 2021, Aggies' Portsmouth team were keen to expand their summer provision to the local community.

To help enable this, the RNRMC provided funding for a crafting event, which took place close to local Service Family Accommodation.

Families from across Portsmouth were able to enjoy time getting creative with other service families in a safe and supportive environment.

Families Pastoral Worker, Alex Watts said: "Thank you to the RNRMC team for the prompt turnaround in providing funds."

"We very much appreciate all that RNRMC does in supporting these local seasonal projects – a small amount of money goes a very long way."





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# GUAM, GOLF, GET SOME ROYALS AND JUNGLES IN THE PACIFIC ON CSG21

**T**HOSE charged with rescuing downed pilots or those stranded behind enemy lines have been staying sharp for their operations with night training raids on the Pacific Island of Guam during the UK Carrier Strike Group deployment.

845 Naval Air Squadron and Royal Marines of 42 Commando are based on RFA Fort Victoria during CSG21 and, if the need arises, they would launch from the support ship to bring back isolated personnel – from downed F-35 pilots to British citizens whose welfare is at risk – as a specialist recovery force.

These missions are known as Joint Personnel Recovery and, while rarely carried out, those responsible for them must train hard to be prepared in case they are needed.

And so, during a six-day port visit to Guam, 42 Commando and 845 Naval Air Squadron launched a training mission as the sun set to rescue two British diplomats who were stranded in the clubhouse of an abandoned golf course, which used to be the US Navy's Admiral Nimitz Golf Course but now provides the perfect location for certain military exercises.

The dense jungle that surrounds the area provided the first great challenge, as the pre-selected landing sites for 845's Commando Merlin helicopters were a no-go despite the best efforts of the pilots.

It meant that the commandos – of Juliet Company – were ultimately dropped much further from their objectives than expected.

Tropical thunderstorms and the challenging terrain made



things even more tricky and, as darkness fell, it meant the commandos had virtually no light to guide them.

After navigating through head-high elephant grass, the commandos pounced on the clubhouse, clearing enemy forces – played by a contingent from 845 NAS – from the mock 'embassy' in the pitch darkness.

The marines rescued the two diplomats, also played by 845 personnel, and also captured two enemy troops with a Commando Merlin extracting those on the ground in three waves back to Fort Victoria.

"I was playing one of the diplomats that had to be rescued so I set up in the 'safe room'," said Air Engineering Technician George Briggs.

"The Royal Marine Commandos arrived with a lot of fire power, before we knew it we were escorted to a Commando Merlin Mk4 for extraction to a ship."

The squadron have also carried out live firing of the Merlin's general purpose machine guns to keep aircrew qualified and ready action. Some of the engineers got to experience firing the weapons too.

AET Briggs said: "Shooting from a helicopter was amazing, something I never thought I would do and I'm really glad we got the opportunity. Hitting the target is very tricky as the rounds don't move as you would expect; I think we were all getting the hang of it in the end though."

In between exercises and sorties, the squadron have also been able to focus on some fund-raising for Cancer Research, hosting a race for life around Fort Vic's flight deck.

They managed to raise £2,000 for charity and you can still give to their cause here: <https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/page/atlantas-giving-page-1>.






[cancerresearchuk.org/page/atlantas-giving-page-1](https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/page/atlantas-giving-page-1).

AET Atlanta Wright, who organised the event, said: "This is really close to my heart as my Nan had lung cancer. So many of us are affected by it, whether it is that you know someone or survived it yourself, it reaches us all in so many different ways; that is why it was such an easy decision for me to organise it."

"It was great to see people from all departments of the ship taking part and I am happy to say that around one-hundred of us ran on the day and we managed to raise £2,030. Hopefully this will show people that you can put together a fund-raising event wherever you are, no matter how big or small, they all help."

FROM FAR LEFT CLOCKWISE: gunnery exercises over the Pacific; Royal Marines head for night raids from Fort Victoria; a Merlin helicopter flies in stores; inside the the cab as 42 Commando head to Guam







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# Deeds which Echo down the decades

**HMS Echo returned to waters where sailors once faced Nazi bombers and U-boats to pay tribute to the first Arctic convoy 80 years ago.**

The Devonport-based ship paused in the middle of the Barents Sea to remember the men of Operation Dervish – and the thousands who followed them, delivering vital aid to the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945.

Echo has been conducting survey work in the High North, including searching for the wreck of one sunken WW2 cruiser and updating existing information about another, HMS Edinburgh.

Over her wreck Echo's crew held a service of remembrance. As Commanding Officer Commander Adam Coles cast a wreath into the Barents Sea (pictured top right), the Russian cruiser Marshal Ustinov – which was sailing nearby – signalled the Royal Navy vessel in admiration of the men of 1941-45.

The crew of the Ustinov praised a generation which "served with great honour, bravery and determination... in the face of Fascist invaders.

"To all those who sacrificed themselves in the fight against our common enemy, the memory of them and our warriors will forever live in our hearts.

"Congratulations on the 80th anniversary of the Arctic convoys to all Royal Navy servicemen, may they always be held high above us all."

Hydrographic specialist Able Seaman Cameron Siddall said: "It has been fascinating learning about the history of the Arctic Convoys, particularly as HMS Echo operated in the very same waters that were traversed by the brave merchantmen and warships 80 years ago."

Petty Officer Calvin Spencer's great uncle was an 18-year-old sailor aboard destroyer HMS Matchless which rescued six sailors from the German battlecruiser Scharnhorst on Boxing Day in 1943.

"My grandad says Frank would never speak about anything he witnessed on the Arctic Convoys," he said. "Seeing the conditions up here myself, during the summer months, without even being under the threat of enemy attack, I can only imagine the horror the brave sailors from both sides went through."

Even in late summer, temperatures are barely into double figures at 72 degrees North, while anyone ending up in the water will lose feeling in their fingers and toes inside five minutes, be unconscious inside 30, and probably dead within an hour.

Echo used her sensors to conduct the first survey of the wreck of HMS Edinburgh in 40 years (pictured centre right). The cruiser was scuttled in May 1942 after a German submarine blew apart her stern as she carried gold back to Britain (pictured bottom right).

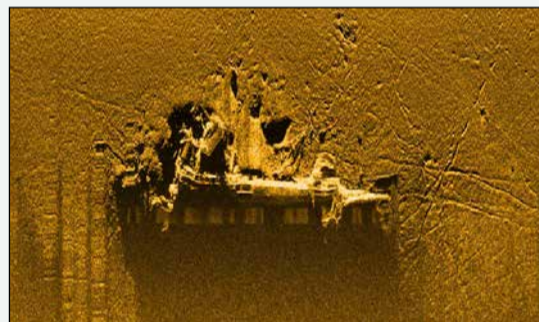
Weather conditions and the depth of the wreck – 245 metres down – meant that although the wreck was clearly identifiable, finer details could not.

Sailing over the wreck was especially poignant for Echo. Her wartime forebear, an E-class destroyer, had accompanied Edinburgh on an earlier convoy. As she escorted a merchant ship into Murmansk, she was attacked by a couple of German bombers and two men were swept off the forecastle as the ship took evasive action.

The survey vessel also spent 32 hours looking for cruiser HMS Trinidad, also lost in May 1942.

Trinidad is thought to lie 440 metres down, but could be anywhere in nearly 400 square kilometres of sea bed – and she's only 170 metres long.

"The survey work has been really rewarding, from collecting the data to producing a finished product. The search for HMS Trinidad was especially exciting," said Leading Seaman 'Bill' Bailey, one of Echo's hydrographic specialists.



Commander Coles added: "While the search for Trinidad was ultimately inconclusive, it was still a good chance to utilise Echo's survey equipment.

"The wreck investigation on HMS Edinburgh proved a chance to gain valuable data for the UK Hydrographic Office, as well as to remember an important part of the Royal Navy's heritage, including commemorating the many people who lost their lives during the Arctic Convoys."



## Albion pays her 'Dues'

AMPHIBIOUS assault ship HMS Albion visited the Tower of London to participate in the Ceremony of the Constable of the Tower, watched on by her Royal Sponsor The Princess Royal.

Princess Anne, who launched Albion in Barrow 2001, witnessed the ship's company pay the Constable of Tower of London their 'Dues'.

The ceremony is a tradition that dates back to the 14th Century when naval ships passing into London were ordered to pay a levy to the Constable of the Tower.

The Royal Navy paid this levy in the form of a ceremonial barrel of wine. The current Constable of the Tower of London, General the Lord Houghton of Richmond, received the 'Dues' in exchange for protection from the Tower's guns. Lord Houghton, the 160th Constable, believes it is a great reminder of the capital's diverse history.

Before the ceremony started, Princess Anne presented a number Long Service and Good Conduct awards.

Receiving his 2nd Long Service and Good Conduct Clasp, in recognition of 35 years service in the Royal Navy, was Chief Petty Officer David Axford.

CPO Axford, the senior Communications and Information Systems Specialist onboard Albion, said:

"It was a massive honour to have met HRH Princess Anne today, in the historic Tower of London. I am delighted to have had the privilege to mark such a major milestone in my career in such a special way."

On completion, the Princess Royal observed the ceremony as Albion's sailors marched through the tower, led by their captain.

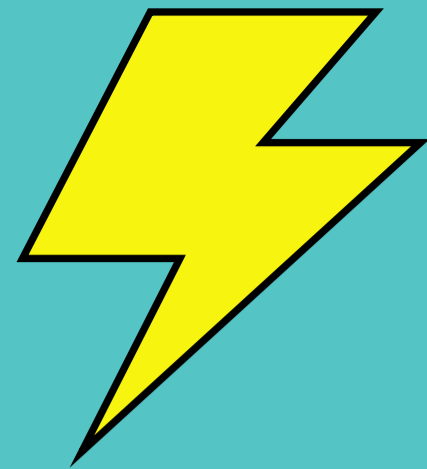
They presented their levy on Tower Green to the accompaniment of the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines. On completion of the ceremony the barrel of wine was marched into the New Armouries where the ship's company had the opportunity to meet their Royal Sponsor.

Captain Simon Kelly, Commanding Officer of HMS Albion, said: "I was honoured today to have led Albion's ship's company in performing this ancient ritual, paying our 'Dues' to the Constables of the Tower of London for our passage along the Thames as we support London's International Shipping Week.

"This rare privilege was made even more special as it was witnessed by our Royal Sponsor HRH Princess Anne, and we were delighted to have had the opportunity to host her after the ceremony in such historic surroundings."



# THE PRINCE IS PRIMED



## Royal Navy's newest carrier nearly ready for action

**T**HE Royal Navy is on the brink of having two operational aircraft carriers for the first time since the Invincible-class era.

HMS Prince of Wales spent the tail end of the summer with her foot to the floor moving through the gears as she accelerates towards becoming fully operational and joining her sister ship HMS Queen Elizabeth at the sharp end.

It started with the arrival of F-35B Lightning jets from 207 Squadron for intensive training and included the completion of tough operational sea training, ending with participation in Exercise Joint Warrior to get Britain's newest aircraft carrier used to working as part of NATO and with allied navies.

One of the highlights of her time at sea was a moment of history as both Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers conducted F-35B flight operations at the same time – 7,000 miles away from each other.

While HMS Queen Elizabeth launched her jets from 617 Squadron and the VMFA-211 of the US Marine Corps in the Pacific (more on them on pages 19-21), 207 Squadron's aircraft were flying from Prince of Wales in the North Sea.

The Marham-based squadron – who are responsible for training new generations of F-35 pilot – embarked three jets and brought with them the whole complement of infrastructure needed for carrier flights, with 140 staff including engineers and pilots from across the RN, RAF and Army.

The squadron flew round-the-clock operations to get the ship and the air wing working seamlessly, but they also kept their instructors' qualifications for aircraft carrier flights updated so that they can keep the flow of new pilots to the front-line going.

At the same time the ship was completing a range of testing scenarios to get her ready for operations on Carrier Sea Training with Fleet Operational Sea Training staff.

The Queen Elizabeth-class carriers had previously embarked the fifth-generation jets but never have the two 65,000-tonne behemoths launched the fighters from their flight decks at the same time until now.

"This is an extraordinary achievement for the Royal Navy and represents the true global reach we have in this current era," said First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin.

"It demonstrates the enduring strength of our alliances and partnerships and is the result of decades of work and dedication to achieve this feat with the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers."

"It's brilliant to see F35s operating from our flight deck and to have our friends and colleagues from the RAF and the Army on board with us," said Captain Steve Higham.

"UK Carrier Strike is, at its heart, an inherently joint venture and one that



## HMS PRINCE OF WALES

is going fantastically well.

"We already see 207 Squadron as part of the HMS Prince of Wales team and they have brought alive our latest FOST Carrier Sea Training package by simultaneously conducting F35 pilot qualifications.

"HMS Prince of Wales is rapidly moving through the gears as the UK's contingent strike carrier ahead of operations as the NATO command ship in 2022."

Wing Commander Scott Williams, in command of 207 Squadron, added: "This embarkation marks the start of 207 Squadron's affiliation with the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers for decades to come.

"Developing our relationship with the ship's company, who have been very welcoming, has enabled us to re-qualify our pilots in operations at sea ensuring that they can continue to train the next generation and grow the UK's maritime strike capability."

Once the jets left it was time for HMS Prince of Wales to make her debut at Joint Warrior, the largest military exercise in the UK, which takes place in waters north of Scotland.

Commando Helicopter Force's Merlin and Wildcat helicopters replaced the F-35s, as the aircraft carrier became a focal point in the large-scale exercises.

As *Navy News* went to print, Prince of Wales was facing down a range of crisis and conflict situations that are designed to replicate real-world operations.

The task group on Joint Warrior will carry out intelligence gathering, reconnaissance, anti-smuggling and counter-terrorism operations, plus work on humanitarian assistance and evacuation missions.

Part of Joint Warrior will see 12 NATO allies work on Exercise Dynamic Mariner, which is designed to test allied forces reactions to crises as part of a NATO Response Force, which can deploy quickly, wherever needed.

The exercise brings together 20 ships, two submarines, seven maritime patrol planes and aircraft as well as personnel from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, the UK and the United States.



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** a thumbs up from the ops room as HMS Prince of Wales completes sea training; an F-35B jet from 207 Squadron about to take off from the aircraft carrier's deck; night flights for the F-35Bs during a busy phase of flight training; a first aider heads to take care of a casualty during operational sea training

**Pictures by LPhot Ben Corbett and PO Phot JJ Massey**





## CWGC to care for British Normandy Memorial

THE impressive new memorial to Britons killed liberating Normandy in 1944 will be cared for by the guardians of the nation's war dead.

From this month, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission takes over maintenance of the British Normandy Memorial, which was dedicated in June.

The monument at Ver-sur-Mer, overlooking what was codenamed Gold Beach in 1944, has been created over the past five years as the sole site of memory honouring all 22,442 men and women under British command lost in the Battle for Normandy between June 6 and late August.

One in ten of those casualties was a sailor or Royal Marine.

They and their comrades feature on the roll of honour, spread across 160 columns which line the walkways leading to the centrepiece of the £30m: a courtyard and statue of three troops charging ashore.

Now the memorial is open to the public, the commission has been appointed to ensure its upkeep with gardeners, stonemasons and other specialist staff taking on the routine maintenance, inspections and care of the iconic site.

"Our local teams will ensure the British Normandy Memorial remains a fitting place for families and visitors to pay their respects," said Claire Horton, Director General of the War Graves Commission.

"Our century of expertise in caring for some of the world's most important memorials and commemoration sites stands us in great stead to ensure the sacrifice of all those who fell here is never forgotten."

The monument has been funded by the LIBOR penalties imposed on banks, fundraising by veterans and the public and private donations.

**MANY** happy returns to Vic Taylor who celebrated his 100th birthday (1) with a card from Her Majesty and (2) with a cake in the surroundings of the Royal Naval Association Club in West Bromwich.

The Arctic convoy veteran is – not surprisingly – the oldest member of the branch which he's been attending for many years to catch up with shipmates and keep abreast of modern RN developments flicking through the pages of Navy News. Vic served in H-class destroyer HMS Havelock and left the RN in 1946.



## Unique gift takes the biscuit

A MULTI-MILLIONAIRE biscuit tycoon joined forces with Royal Navy personnel to come up with a unique gift for one of his employees.

Sir Boyd Tunnock, owner of Tunnock's bakery – known around the world for its teacakes, snowballs and caramel wafers – met several naval personnel and mentioned his senior manager had

served on HMS Ark Royal during his time in the Royal Navy.

One of the sailors, who had a turbine blade from the carrier, then arranged for it to be made into a clock, which was presented to Sir Boyd by an RN writer.

As a 'thank you' Sir Boyd donated £1,000 to the MS Society in Helensburgh.

# Wrens wartime tragedy tribute

**ONE** of the darkest hours in the history of women serving in the Royal Navy was remembered in Yeovilton – 80 years on from the tragedy.

Serving personnel and veterans gathered at the Fleet Air Arm Memorial Church to remember 21 members of the Women's Royal Naval Service – better known as Wrens – killed when their ship was sunk on its way to Gibraltar.

The loss of the SS Aguila – and other ships in the badly-mauled convoy – in August 1941 prompted a wholesale change in the way military personnel were transported overseas in World War 2.

The Aguila was a veteran steamer which carried fruit, cargo and passengers on a regular route from Liverpool to Lisbon, Madeira and the Canary Islands.

In August 1941 she left for Portugal and Gibraltar with nearly 1,300 tonnes of general cargo and almost 100 military personnel embarked.

Among the passengers: nine female officers and 12 ratings of the Women's Royal Naval Service, the latter all hand-picked chief wireless telegraphers assigned to the communications centre at the naval air station in Gibraltar.

Also aboard, a solitary Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Sister and at least 15 sailors and Fleet Air Arm personnel drafted to carrier HMS Ark Royal.

After four days in company with 22 other merchantmen in Convoy OG71, she was sighted by a German aircraft and the next day the vessels ran into a 'wolfpack' of eight U-boats.

One, U-201, torpedoed the Aguila 341 nautical miles southwest of Fastnet Rock in the small hours of August 19.

She broke in two and went down within two minutes, taking 145 souls with her.

Corvette HMS Wallflower rescued ten people, including Aguila's Master Captain Arthur Firth, and one of the Royal Naval contingent, while tugboat Empire Oak picked up the remaining six survivors.

Three days later she too was torpedoed – and those survivors were lost.

One in three merchant ships in the convoy fell victim to German submarines – as well as two escorts. The disaster led the Navy to stop using civilian vessels to transport personnel.



Above, the congregation bow their heads during the service; Left, some of the Wrens lost on the Aguila, and below, the roll of honour



E.J.Waters C.J.Slaven M.Grant P.M.Smith  
M.W.Barnes Quarters  
P.Bocca M.G.Norman Sister E.E.Shepherd  
D.D.Bonson R.Wells C.M.B.Beaumont



"I believe that the Yeoward family who owned the SS Aguila would be extremely moved knowing that even after 80 years the loss of the ship and those on board are still remembered," said Association of Wrens member Caroline Snell.

Her grandfather became a Director of the Yeoward Line and knew the SS Aguila's Master.

She continued: "This tragic event that took so many lives left an invisible scar on Captain Frith that he bore for the rest of his life."

The loss of the 21 Wrens prompted a fund-raising campaign which led to enough money being raised to pay for a new escort ship, HMS Wren, launched the following year...

with leftovers paying for a RNLB boat after the war, Aguila Wren, which served in Aberystwyth and Redcar for 20 years.

The women are also immortalised on the Aguila Memorial – a giant wren on a granite obelisk – at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

Pictures: PO(Phot) Dan Shepherd

## Badges presented to Chatham as memento

BADGES which once travelled the world on HMS Chatham are finally 'home' – donated to her namesake naval town.

Crew of HMS Trumpeter delivered the two oversized versions of the crest, fixed to the funnel of the Type 22 frigate for more than 20 years until she was decommissioned in 2011 during a three-day visit to the Medway.

One badge is now part of Medway Council's small HMS Chatham memorial collection, the other is with Chatham Historic Dockyard having somehow survived the trophy hunters and ship breakers when the frigate was paid off.

The crest given to the council will be available for residents to view at the St George's Centre, Pembroke Road, Chatham Maritime, on Tuesdays alongside two of the frigate's bells, a painting of the Type 22 and some of the flags she flew.

Lieutenant Ben Wood, Trumpeter's Commanding Officer, said: "We are delighted to be able to support the Naval Regional Command in this little piece of history. We are the only Royal Navy vessel based in the area and like to visit areas connected with the Service: Lowestoft, Harwich, Ramsgate and Chatham.

"Both my dad and uncle served on HMS Chatham in the 1990s and 2000s and enjoyed their time aboard her."

Cllr Howard Doe, Medway Council's Armed Forces Champion, said: "Medway is incredibly proud of its long-standing military connections and



Medway councillors Alan Jarrett (left) and Howard Doe with one of the two funnel badges presented to Chatham folk

we are committed to doing all we can to continue to support our armed forces community.

"I would encourage residents to visit the crest, when it is on display at the St George's Centre, and find out more about HMS Chatham's history."

The second badge will go on public display in the historic dockyard's Steam, Steel and Submarines gallery.

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## Manx hero honoured with stamps

IF YOU like (1) Nelsonian days of sail and (2) stamps, then the Isle of Man Post Office has come up trumps for you.

To mark the 250th anniversary of the birth of Captain John Quilliam, the Isle of Man Post Office has produced six commemorative stamps.

The Manxman served as First Lieutenant on HMS Victory at the Trafalgar – it's claimed he he steered Nelson's flagship into battle.

Manx designer Colleen Corlett has created six stamps narrating Quilliam's life and achievements (he went on to serve through most of the Napoleonic wars and became a member of the Manx parliament).

Her artwork is accompanied by text by historian and Quilliam's biographer Frank Cowin.

The collection is available as Set, Sheet Set, Presentation Pack (limited to 1,100) and First Day Cover (limited to 1,500) with prices ranging from £8.90 to over £130 for sheet sets.

For more information visit [www.iompost.com/quilliam](http://www.iompost.com/quilliam).

## Sea Urchins rededicate memorial

THE President of the RNR Officers' Club, Liverpool (the Sea Urchins) – Lieutenant Commander J Glover – and 40 Club members, their families and families of past presidents assembled at the National Memorial Arboretum for a service of rededication.

The plaque and tree were commissioned by the Club in 2016 on behalf of Mersey Division.

The service was conducted by the Rev Simon Douglas Lane, the son of Lt Cdr Charles Douglas Lane, President 1939.

Simon is also the Honorary chaplain to the Conway Club.

Should anyone wish to see the plaque on their next visit to the Arboretum, it is in the Cherry Tree Avenue next to the Armed Services Wood.

## 'Military Glastonbury' brings in the dosh

A three-day festival organised by serving and veteran RN/RM personnel on the Wiltshire-Dorset border pumped more than £11k into SSAFA's coffers – more than double the total raised at the pre-pandemic event in 2019.

Royal Navy veteran Gary Hall and his wife Yvonne, and Royal Marine Colour Sergeant Ian Smith led the team organising the Fun in the Field festival in Berwick St John, near Shaftesbury.

Some 500 people from all services come together to enjoy musical performances, entertainment, food, and traditional games.

Acts on the bill this year included sea shanty band The Dorset Wrecks, The Lee Travis Trio, Loose Connections, and the Royal Navy Volunteer Band conducted by Sergeant Kirsty Flew RM.

"After 18 months of blood,

sweat and tears from our brilliant administration team working behind the scenes in organising every detail and preparation in readiness for this year's festival, we as a team appreciate the 'Fun in the Fielders' for their huge support enthusiasm and generosity throughout the weekend," said Gary and Yvonne.

"It was so fantastic to see like-minded people enjoying each other's company whether they knew each other or not.

"To be able to donate such a huge amount to SSAFA is unbelievable but also incredibly satisfying in the knowledge that we all did this, and each and every one of you should take a bow and give yourselves a huge pat on your back.

"We smashed it!"

Feedback from the audience on social media was also extremely positive.

From Kevin: "Fantastic. BZ admin and all of those that worked so tirelessly to make this happen, but don't forget that as good as this is, the opportunity that you afforded all of us to be able to get together, to share, and to have so much fun, is worth its weight in gold, roll on the next one."

And from Jenny: "Without you I would not have found myself. I was lost when I left the RN and thought I could do it. I found myself in the field my first year and have not looked back. I now know I have lots of unconditional friends! So, I thank you all very, very much!"

Pictured soaking up the atmosphere at Fun in the Field are: Georgia Oliver, SSAFA Senior Special Events Officer, Sue Rollo, Branch Vice Chairman, SSAFA Wiltshire, and Lizzie Rossiter, SSAFA Events Officer



21st-Century successors to John Payne – holding a commemorative display with his wife Jill – join the WW2 P Party member at the Diving Museum in Gosport and, inset, Mr Payne prepares to plunge into Antwerp Harbour in 1944 to clear the port after its capture by the Allies

# Divers meet last P Man

THE last surviving World War 2 bomb disposal diver was honoured during a visit to the Diving Museum in Gosport.

John Payne, now 96, was on the first 'P' Party, 1571 Group – a select team of divers who cleared mines and unexploded bombs from harbours and ports in occupied Europe.

He was on the Normandy beaches following D-Day, helping to secure the Allied bridgehead and, along with others, saved many lives.

Mr Payne, who was presented with a commemorative frame honouring his work, said: "The equipment was very comfortable. You could dive for hours but that was unnecessary.

"Anything is dangerous if you don't take care. You had instructions of what to do and that's all."



Mr Payne, who attended the event with wife Jill, started training as a clearance diver in 1943 and was one of up to 100 P Party divers. He left the Royal Navy in 1946 and now lives in West Sussex.

P or Ports Parties – who were effectively human minesweepers, making harbours safe before troops went in – paved the way for the modern-day Royal Navy mine clearance divers.

Members of the Fleet Diving Unit, led by Warrant Officer 1 (Diver) Si Crew, joined Mr Payne at the museum.

WO1 Crew said: "I looked at the equipment that he was wearing: a canvas suit, a mask with really limited visibility and a diving set that I probably wouldn't even have used in the bath.

"To look at what he dealt with on the D-Day beaches, it's absolutely unbelievable."



## T21 memorial overhauled

FALKLANDS-based sailors tidied up the monument to crews of Type 21 frigates ahead of next year's 40th anniversary of the conflict.

A team of seven personnel who support UK operations in the South Atlantic climbed Campito Hill which dominates nearby San Carlos Water – scene of several days of bitter battle between the liberating fleet and Argentine aircraft in May 1982.

The summit of the now-calm waters is crowned by the Type 21 Memorial, honouring frigate crews whose ships formed a ring of steel around the amphibious forces landing men and material at San Carlos.

HMS Ardent was bombed repeatedly on the first day of the landings and eventually sank, while the demise of HMS Antelope – torn apart when attempts to de-fuse an unexploded bomb detonated it – provided some of the most haunting, iconic imagery of the war.

Those killed are commemorated in a memorial typical of those which pepper the Falklands: a rocky cairn crowned with a cross, plus a plaque honouring the fallen.

"After seeing the iconic pictures of HMS Antelope, I was proud to go and remember those who were lost during the conflict and I felt it was important to see the area and feel the history," said Leading Writer James Yates.

The team performed routine maintenance on the remote memorial, cleaned the plaques and replaced wreaths that had been dislodged by the elements.

They also found a number of items that had been left by previous visitors and ensured they were returned to their original place on the memorial.

"Looking at the various trinkets, plaques and a bottle of rum left for shipmates lost, shows the Naval character, pride and comradeship that always follows us wherever we go," James added.

Work done, the sailors unfurled a White Ensign and held a short service of remembrance.

The flag has now been flown back to the UK and presented to Antelope's Commanding Officer, Captain Nick Tobin, who received it from Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd.

"I shall treasure the ensign and am most grateful to all those servicemen and servicewomen involved," Capt Tobin said.

Picture: Cpl Amy Lupton RAF



# Festival connects families with sea

**GOSPORT Sea Cadets played a key role at the Gosport Marine Festival, which saw over 3,000 people hitting the town's waterfront.**

Organised by Portsmouth Harbour Marine in partnership with Gosport Borough Council, the free community event aimed to inspire locals to connect with the sea and encourage people – especially children and young adults – on to the water.

More than 350 did just that, trying out different water-based activities, including sailing, kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding.

The event was launched by former First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band and the Mayor of Gosport, Councillor Mark Hook.

The programme of onshore entertainment was kicked off by a Sea Cadet and Scout parade in the Millennium Timespace with the Rose and Thistle Pipes and Drums. Later in the morning, Gosport cadets performed the *Sailor's Hornpipe*.

"Gosport Sea Cadet Unit was very pleased to be representing the MSSC again at this year's Gosport Marine Festival, a bi-annual local event," said Sub Lieutenant (SCC) RNR, Floss Rundle.

"Our staff, volunteers and cadets put on an amazing spread of activities ranging from a hornpipe and club-swinging display to raft building, first aid demonstrations and on the water activities.

"We worked with the local Scout groups to create a vibrant and engaging display of what we offer to young people.

"Everyone thoroughly enjoyed



the day and can't wait to put on an even bigger and better show for the people of Gosport in two years' time.

"As the Unit's Executive Officer, I was extremely proud of the enthusiasm and energy put in by everyone involved."

Barry Easton-Corke, Gosport Marine Festival Chairman, said: "We're delighted with the turnout at the event. Now in its fifth iteration, the festival is as popular as ever with hundreds of young people and their families getting out on the water.

"The festival gives anyone who'd like to give something new a try the chance to get out on the water in a fun, friendly and safe environment.

"This area is surrounded by water, and we want to encourage

as many of the young people in the area to participate in the different activities available along the coast.

"Many just don't have the opportunity, which is what the festival is all about, giving them that opportunity."

Children and young people could also take part in a number of land-based hands-on activities, such as learning how to bandage and how to make a knotted keyring.

Visitors were also able to get aboard several historic vessels moored in Haslar Marina for the festival, including *Medusa*, one of the first vessels to arrive at the Normandy beaches ahead of the D-Day landings, the junk yacht *Boleh* designed and built in 1948, WW2 High Speed Launch 102 and

a landing craft.

New to this year's event was the Inspiration Zone, bringing together local marine companies offering careers advice to young people wanting to work in the marine industry. Companies who exhibited included, the Royal Navy, Marine Concepts, Seldén Masts, Qinetiq and the Andrew Simpson Foundation.

"It's been a fantastic opportunity for companies to show what they do and to expose young people to what the opportunities are from a career perspective on the Gosport peninsula, and Portsmouth Harbour more generally," said Christopher Groves, underwater business development lead at Gosport-based Qinetiq.



## Cadets prioritise mental health

LIKE many others, PSgt Stuart Hurlston, the Detachment Commander of Altrincham and Sale Royal Marine Cadets has been working hard during the pandemic to ensure the wellbeing and mental health of cadets remains a priority.

In England alone, over 350,000 children access specialist mental health services in a year.

PSgt Hurlston said: "I quickly realised that at the time children and young adults most needed professional and informal support, it was least available.

"I made the proactive decision to complete a number of courses including: psychological first aid, Covid awareness and promoting resilience.

"This enabled me to be better equipped and more capable of establishing better communication and foster a more positive outlook amongst the cadets."

PSgt Hurlston continued to explore ways to engage his cadets and contacted a Royal Marine Commando veteran, triple amputee and motivational speaker Mark Ormrod.

Mark was only too pleased to support and recorded a short personalised video addressed to the cadets and team at Altrincham Unit... and the cadets were totally blown away by his video message on positive mental health.

In addition, PSgt Hurlston has developed and delivered 'Positive Outlook Training' and within the detachment he is already starting to recognise the benefits and improvements this has made to individual cadets.

Commander Charlie Bagot-Jewitt, Area Office for the North West Sea Cadets said: "I am so pleased to hear this. Stuart's proactive approach to mental health is a wonderful example of everything that Sea Cadets stands for in supporting our young people and is, I am delighted to say, in no way unique either. Thank You, Stuart."

## Ducks hit the water for derby day

AN HISTORIC Duck Derby saw 3,400 plastic yellow ducks drifting down the Thames, below Boulter's Lock in Maidenhead.

Maidenhead Sea Cadets released the ducks, then proceeded downstream to catch the winning duck and the 'runners up'.

The local Sea Cadet unit has been supporting the annual Lions Club of Maidenhead Duck Derby for the past 40 years.

"The event primarily attracts families with young children making it our most important on-the-water community event of the year," said Lt (SCC) Chris Edge RNR, Commanding Officer of Maidenhead Sea Cadets.

"Over the years we have improved our strategies for both releasing and catching the ducks and have to maintain a vigil to ensure no rogue ducks get lost or stuck in the trees!"

After the race, the Maidenhead sea cadets proceed downstream to catch all the thousands of plastic ducks, which are carefully stored away until the following year.

Cadet Charlie said: "We use shopping baskets to scoop the ducks out of the river and put them into our boats. We

have a stall and welcome many visitors. We try to encourage new people to join us too. It's a fabulous day on the water, showing our community some of the things we get up to."

LC Tasha said: "The Duck Derby is one of my favourite events in the Sea Cadet calendar. I have been involved for five years now."

"My inspiration to join Sea Cadets actually came from visiting the Duck Derby with my family when I was younger. I watched the cadets having fun on the water and wanted to join."

"Thousands of yellow ducks bobbing up and down on the River Thames is a wonderful sight! It's a true family event, bringing old and young together to raise money for charity. We as cadets have so much fun chasing and rescuing the ducks from our kayaks. We also get to have a great day on the water showcasing what we love most – boating and helping our community."

Families can participate by buying tickets for the duck race, with cash prizes for holders of tickets for the first three ducks. The charity event also features a duck hunt for the children, train rides, a fun fair, and a Punch and Judy show.



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# Craig's fundraising efforts reach new heights

A YOUNG Sea Cadet from the Whitehaven Unit has raised over £1,000 for his local unit by completing an epic challenge to scale England's tallest peak.

Craig Palmer, 12, climbed up to the summit of Scafell Pike, which stands at 978m above sea level, in order to help Whitehaven Sea Cadets raise funds towards a new facility.

After setting himself an initial target of £200, Craig set about seeking sponsorship from friends and family before setting up an online page to widen the appeal. In less than two weeks, he had raised an impressive £1,000.

"I wanted to help my Sea Cadet unit raise money to find a new home so decided to do a sponsored walk," Cadet Craig said.

"I found the walk very hard but I enjoyed the challenge of it knowing that it was helping raise money for such a good cause. I'd like to say a huge thank-you to everyone who sponsored me."

The former SCC Whitehaven on Old New Quay was damaged beyond repair by a tidal surge during winter storms in December 2013, which saw wind speeds reach over 90mph. The local community came to their rescue and the local Sea Cadets paraded

temporarily in Whitehaven Police Station before moving to their current location on a temporary basis.

PO (SCC) Stuart McCourt, Commanding Officer of the Whitehaven Sea Cadets Unit said: "All of us at the unit are really proud of Craig, he has shown real determination to complete such an ambitious challenge. Thank you so much to all those who have supported him, every penny raised moves us even closer to our ambition of having our own facility once again."

If you would like to support Craig's fundraising efforts visit <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/17687>



# New captain at the helm

SEA CADETS are delighted to welcome the new Captain Sea Cadets, Captain Neil Downing RN, who formally took up post on October 1 2021.

The supersession event was held in Dartmouth in South Devon, a location that has a strong maritime heritage and with which the Royal Navy has had links with for the past 150 years.

The ceremonial handover of the role took place on board the Sea Cadets flagship, TS Royalist at Dartmouth's Town Quay.

It was attended by Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope and Lady Stanhope, Marine Society and Sea Cadets CEO Martin Coles and around 25 cadets from the local unit as well as Cadet Force Adult Volunteers.

Captain Philip Russell RN stepped down as Captain Sea Cadets after six years of helping to steer the Sea Cadets experience.

"I feel incredibly privileged to have served as Captain Sea Cadets," he said.

"It has been a time of great success for the charity as we have grown steadily through investing in infrastructure, equipment and our volunteers.

"The proof of our success is clear in our amazing cadets and it has been a real pleasure to meet and encourage so many of them over the years."

The outgoing Captain said some of the highlights from his time with Sea Cadets included attending the commissioning of TS Royalist and visiting 220 Sea Cadets units across the UK.

Capt Downing said: "I am delighted to have been appointed as Captain Sea Cadets and to have the opportunity to continue the excellent work undertaken by the charity and by my predecessor, Captain Phil Russell.

"I am really looking forward to visiting units so that I can meet as many cadets and volunteers as possible, hear about their experiences, and see how we can work together to continue to make Sea Cadets the best that it can be."

Capt Downing was born in Bangor, County Down. He joined the Royal Naval Reserve at HMS Caroline as a Midshipman in January 1987, while studying at the Queen's University of Belfast as an RN Bursar.

Having completed his initial training, he undertook sea training in a number of mine counter measures vessels, before qualifying as an officer of the watch and small ships navigator in 1993. After the 1994 restructuring of the RNR, he was assigned to the OPS (MW)(SEA) Branch.

Having acted as New Entry Course Officer at HMS Raleigh on six occasions, he undertook the role of Training Officer for the Officer Programme for



Captain Phil Russell, left, welcomes his successor Capt Neil Downing aboard TS Royalist in Dartmouth

Undergraduates and Students (OPUS) from 1999 to 2002.

Promoted Lt Cdr in 2000, he made the transition from sea to shore and was subsequently appointed as a Battle Watch Captain with the Mine Warfare Battlegroup, completing various exercises in this role.

During his time on HMS Caroline, Capt Downing took on a variety of roles prior to being appointed to the Senior Management Team, as Unit Training Officer (Initial).

In 2009, the decision was taken to decommission Caroline as an RNR unit and for the division to reform as HMS Hibernia. Playing a key role in the decommissioning and subsequent re-commissioning process, he took on various management responsibilities

prior to becoming the Unit Training Officer.

Away from Hibernia, he worked with the Mine Warfare Training Group from 2005 to 2007 taking responsibility for the development and delivery of the S/Lt(MW) Qualifying Course.

In 2009, he took on the role of Lead Instructor for the S&NI Regional Defence Instructor Trainer Courses and was subsequently tasked with leading the Reserve Instructor Training Team.

In 2012, Capt Downing was appointed as the RNR Instructor Manager, with responsibility for the management and development of all Initial Naval Trainers as well as the Quality Assurance of training delivered within INT across the RNR.

On promotion to Cdr, in April 2013,

he took responsibility for both Officer and Ratings' Phase 1 Training.

He took Command of HMS Hibernia in July 2016 and was subsequently appointed to the role of Commander Universities at Britannia Royal Naval College in July 2019.

In parallel with his RNR progression, having graduated with a degree in psychology and trained to be a teacher, Capt Downing was quickly promoted to his first principal's position.

He has now taught in the primary and special sectors throughout Northern Ireland for over 30 years, gaining experience in small, medium and large school settings.

He was the chair of the Speedwell Trust for nine years prior to founding and acting as the chair of Supporting

Our Families Together (SOFT), a consortium composed of 20 statutory, community and voluntary organisations offering support services to young people from across Mid-Ulster.

As a past member of the Shared Education Learning Forum Steering Group and the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, he has gained a clear understanding of the demands placed on schools and voluntary sector organisations that are working to meet the diverse needs of the pupils and young people in these challenging times.

Capt Downing recently stood down as the chair of two charitable trusts, but still plays a lead role in several community organisations near to his home.

## Happy 100th to RN veteran Reg

CADETS and staff from Ramsgate and Broadstairs Sea Cadets attended the Royal British Legion Home in Broadstairs to celebrate the 100th birthday of former Royal Navy sailor Reg Smith.

Reg was born in 1921 and working as a post office clerk when war broke out.

Aged 18 he and his best mate decided to join as they thought it would be an adventure.

Reg joined the Navy in 1939 and served with the Staff of the Commander in Chief Home Fleet.

Reg said: "In response for volunteers for hazardous duties I volunteered for combined operations. This turned out to be the Second

Front and on June 6 1944 our party crossed to Normandy on the liberty ship Samos.

"The ship was hit and on June 7 the crew joined up with Canadian forces landing at Juno beach, eventually travelling across Europe"

Reg stayed in Hamburg helping the clear up operation and was finally demobbed in 1946. Reg was awarded both the Legion d'honneur from France and the Russian Ushakov medal.

The birthday party was arranged by drill instructor PO Maddie Pegg who works at the home.

The event was incredibly emotional with Reg being presented with Navy gifts by the cadets.





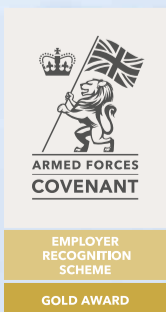
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# LEVEL PEAKS



# Royal Navy are kings of the castle as they down RAF

**THE Royal Navy beat the RAF in the Inter-Services T20 cricket tournament held at Arundel Castle.**

The RN elected to bat and Lt Leo Buscombe and Lt Cdr 'JP' Jonathon Parker opened.

The RAF bowled accurately and fielded tightly, with runs slow to come by, which was especially frustrating as the first five overs were in Power-Play.

JP made several attempts at a big hit but couldn't find the middle of the bat and both openers worked hard for their runs with dashes between the wickets.

It was obvious that they were becoming increasingly frustrated when Leo was cleaned bowled for 25 in the eighth over...the RN only had 41 runs.

The clouds were slowly beginning to clear, with crisp shadows beginning to form over the ground as AB 'Johno' Johnson joined the fray.

JP just missed a stumping out and then Johno hit an enormous six over mid-off and also forced hard running between the wickets.

At the end of the 11th, short of breath, JP stepped back, swiped at the ball and missed, his wickets tumbled and off he walked after scoring 22 – with the Navy on 65 for 2.

On came Cpl Brendan Streater, who immediately gets off the mark with a cheeky single and later a much-needed boundary after a fielding fumble.

Spurred on, he hit a six through mid-on and then over-stretched himself, missing the ball and was stumped out,



Left, Royal Navy players Lt Cdr Jonathon Parker and AB Johno Johnson notch up some runs; Above, the Royal Navy Inter-Services team

for 11 with the Navy on 75 for 3 off 12.

In walked the captain, Lt Rob Wigley, who ran hard after Johno, who made a quick run for a single, only to be cut short by a great piece of fielding and a hard and accurate throw that knocked the bails into the air, and Johno still a yard to make to the crease; the Navy were now 77 for 4.

Next, AB Will Crossley and Rob was immediately caught at square leg for just one run and walks off slowly back to the pavilion, clearly upset with himself; the navy are 77 for 5.

LLogs Shorn Bobb, who played an initial defensive shot, then got into his usual style of swinging big hits but, was unable to find the boundary and was out for five after a terrific drive into the bowler's hands.

In came LCpl Sam Hewitt and every run was being fought for, with hard running between the wickets and tight bowling and fielding by the RAF.

Will was stumped out for eight, and was replaced by Lt Si Morris, who put on a much-needed 15 runs before Sam was run out, taking the Navy to 114

runs off 18 overs for eight wickets.

Now, it was the turn for the RAF, who made a positive start scoring eight runs off the first over.

The Navy needed to tighten up their bowling and fielding. In stepped Shorn Bobb, who put down a ball at a terrific pace, with the batsman edging it to the keeper...first blood; but, the RAF still made good progress and were soon 25 for 1 off 2 overs.

CSgt Jon Grasham struggled to make headway, then Rob Wigley came on and there was a dreadful fumble as the ball

was hit high into the air and the keeper collided with another fielder and missed the catch.

Nonetheless, the Navy kept the pressure on and the RAF score was kept down to 53 for 3 by the ninth over; then Lt Dougie Naylor came on, who not only bowled incredibly tightly with only 11 runs from his four overs, but he took a remarkable catch at square leg, turning the game in the Navy's favour.

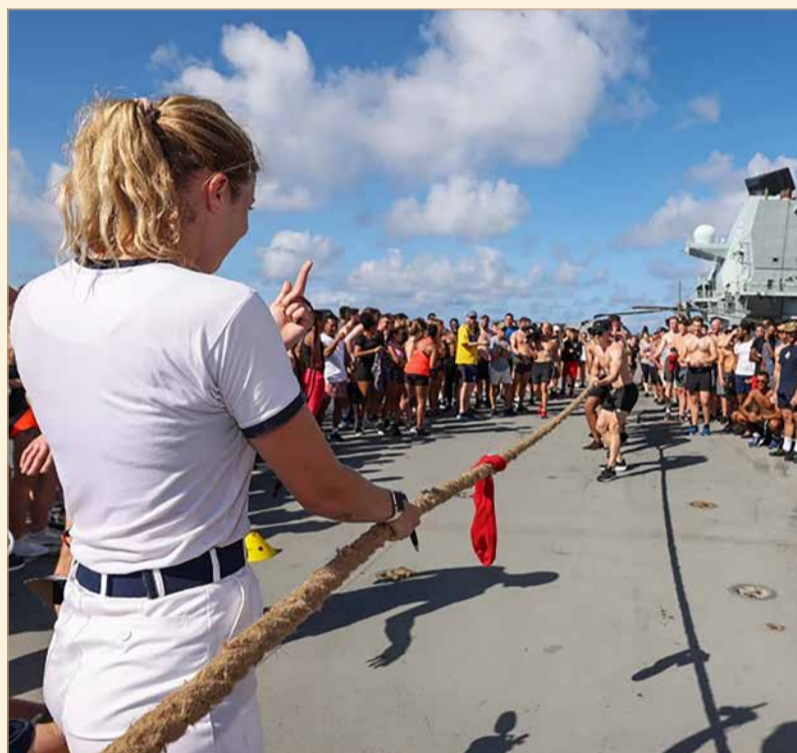
The RAF were now 87 for 4 off 14 overs – the Navy kept a tight grip on the game and soon the RAF needed 28 from the remaining 18 balls.

The tension was palpable and as much as the RAF tried to find the boundary, the Navy kept their cool ultimately leaving the RAF requiring a six off the last ball – they could only manage a single and the Navy scored a memorable win, winning by four runs.

The next game was between the RAF and Army, which the airmen won decisively and then the Army played the Navy, winning by eight wickets; ultimately resulting in the Army winning the tournament on run-rate.

The tournament was a huge success, with Arundel proving to be an excellent venue; however, it is planned to hold the next IST20, once again, at the home of cricket, Lord's, next year.

If you are a cricketer and want to join in this positive journey of the RNCA, contact any of the above or the Senior Team Manager, Cdr Mark Smith (Performance Gp NCHQ), Smith, Mark Cdr, [Mark.Smith814@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Mark.Smith814@mod.gov.uk) or Lt Cdr Daisy Adams, [Keith.Adams912@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Keith.Adams912@mod.gov.uk).



## Power to the junior rates

WITH HMS Queen Elizabeth 200 nautical miles South of Japan, the skies were blue, sun was shining, seas were calm and the flight deck was heating up for a day of competition offering the opportunity for mess decks to compete head to head to determine who was the fastest, strongest and fittest on board.

Out of the 1,600 personnel, the Fleet Flagship is home to both ship's company and Embarked Forces who were able to get away for an afternoon and compete in two toughly-fought events.

First up was a 'Super Teams' competition seeing 15 teams from across the mess decks complete a series of fitness challenges in the fastest possible time.

Eight exercise stations spaced apart on the flight deck, testing individuals' CV, strength, speed, and robustness in an attempt to get through the course in the quickest possible time, whilst those not competing cheering on from the sidelines throughout the day.

Male and female teams competed head to

head in five heats of three.

First person up had to row 500m as quickly as possible. Not only did they have to row but they then had to get themselves off the rower and sprint to the next person to tag them into the race.

The next exercise was the jumping hurdles: team members had to conduct 100 jumps in order to move forward to tag the next member.

The hurdles saw certain individual's legs turn to jelly whilst others sailed through to the next stance. Powerbag thrusters were next to come going into 30 full depth squat movements then pushing the bag up above the head. With no repetitions starting to be called out, you could start to see the competitive edge coming out in all the teams.

From thrusters to Ab mat sit ups this exercise really tested team member's core strength with 100 full repetitions of touching the floor behind the head and in front of the feet before getting up and tagging the burpees in.

Thirty burpees then had to be performed with chest all the way to the floor with a jump and a clap at the end of the movement. Whilst some teams' burpees were on fire others were starting to look like a very strange superman...

Fifty reps of strict overhead press were next up and had to be conducted with arms fully extended above the head with the powerbag.

There were some great facial expressions going on at this point and some people even starting to shake.

Tensions were really high between teams now as supporters were gathering, cheering and encouraging everyone to beat the team next to them.

Next up were hand-release press-ups, 30 of these had to be done before moving on to the last and final movement of the race; the sprints – probably the most important part of the race as this could either win or lose the competition for some teams.



Teams had to run a 30m shuttle six times before the timer on the stopwatch was stopped for a final time.

With teams absolutely gunning for it and putting maximum effort in to secure the fastest time. There were some extremely fast-paced people finishing the race and some very hot and sweaty teams.

Following Super Teams, the ship's brute force and strength came to the stage to compete in the tug of war to determine the strongest mess on board the mighty Queen Elizabeth.

Some tough competition, rope burns and a lot of sweat saw each team compete in the best of three pulls with some decisions going right down to the wire.

The crowd of supporters played a big part in cheering on the competitors creating an intense and electric atmosphere bringing what was a fantastic day to a close.

The winners of the Super Teams competition was 7J Mess with a speedy time of 8.42 and winning the competition by only a one-second margin with 6F following in a

close second place with 8.43.

The winners of the tug of war competition were 7F showing that youth and fitness are just as important as size and strength with a narrow victory over the Seniors' Mess.

CPOPTI Daz Hoare said: "This flight deck competition was a great way to get different parts of ship and different mess decks out in the fresh air, away from their desks and work and challenge themselves.

"With so many different units and teams on board HMS Queen Elizabeth, it was great to see how competitive it got between all the messes!"

LPT Lauren Parsons added: "Organising an event of this size has its challenges, but it is worth it to see the strong efforts put forward for an afternoon of flight deck sports.

"Everyone involved and everyone who was able to get some time to come up to the flight deck to support had an enjoyable afternoon and were certainly talking about the events well after the competition, which is what we like to see and hear."

Pictures: LPhot Unaisi Luke

# Not just fighter pilots go Top Gun

TRAINEE naval aviator Theo Dodds proved to be 'top gun' as the best shot among nearly hundreds of Service competitors on the world-famous ranges at Bisley.

Midshipman Theo was one of 588 civilian and Service competitors taking part in the 152nd Imperial Meeting at the National Shooting Centre, finishing fourth overall.

As the highest scoring Service person at the ten-day competition, Theo was also presented with the Challenge Trophy.

The competition is the pinnacle of the Target Rifle calendar and tests every aspect of a competitor's skill, using a .308 target rifle with iron sights and a sling to shoot at 300, 500, 600, 900 and 1,000 yards.

The 26-year-old went on to shoot for the Welsh team in the National match where he

was the top scorer, helping his squad to only its second victory in over 140 years.

At the same meeting the trainee Fleet Air Arm observer was awarded his first senior GB cap through the Great Britain Kolapore team, named after the Rajah of Kolapore who presented the National Rifle Association with £100 as a prize in 1870.

The GB team were victorious competing against both Guernsey and Jersey's top teams to finish five points off the record with a score of 1191 out of 1200.

"It was an amazing experience to be part of such an impressive team, something I've been chasing for a very long time," said Theo.

"To be one of the only currently serving representatives of the Navy present made my results in this competition feel that much

more special."

To complete the week, Theo shot in the prestigious HM Queen's Prize final having shot to be in the top 100 competitors from a field of 613. The aviator finished with a highly respectable score of 146/150.

Originally from Sevenoaks, the midshipman joined the Royal Navy in September 2020 and is currently undergoing officer at Britannia Royal Naval College.

Before joining up he was British Long Range Smallbore Champion in 2019 as well as triumphant in the X Class Aggregate, the youngest person in history to "do the double".

Mid Dodds has now been selected as part of the senior GB squad for the 2024 World Championships in South Africa.



## No bananas key to landing a catch

SIX of HMS Sultan's best self-labelled anglers set off from Gosport Marina for a day's fishing, writes *Mid Warburton*.

The 28-degree sun bearing down on us, we smothered ourselves in sun cream while waiting for the skipper to meet us.

Not long later we boarded the 'Indie', the skipper said: "If you have any bananas on you eat them or leave them on the jetty before we go."

Apparently, it's a guaranteed bite-less day with a banana present (17th Century superstition).

At 17kts, the Indie flew to a good spot for mackerel and, after half an hour there with no luck we continued to a shipwreck about a mile off Sandown.

We used fresh squid as bait and tried for anything that would bite. Two hours in with no action, we noticed that a smoothie contained 3/4 of a banana, so it was inhaled and almost on cue, we brought up the largest 1 1/2ft lesser spotted dogfish in the sea (it's essentially a small shark).

Unfortunately, this was the only bite of the day, so we headed back to port.

Although only one fish was caught, it was a great opportunity to get out on the Solent during beautiful a summer's afternoon.

We managed to get three midshipmen, two chiefs and one RM colour sergeant out for a great afternoon and they all had a fantastic time.



## Angling for success

A GROUP of Phase 2 Trainees at HMS Collingwood participated in a day of grassroots angling at Southwick Park Lake.

LPT Mike Payne led the day with the assistance of PO (AET)(SE) Callum Watkins and LS(SEA) Ryan King.

In total 16 carp and one tench were caught. AB Oakley was the angler of the day landing the two biggest fish without any assistance.

If you are interested in participating in grassroots angling contact LPT Mike Payne ([michael.payne168@mod.gov.uk](mailto:michael.payne168@mod.gov.uk)).



# Dressage divas

EARLIER this year Navy News reported how RN equestrians were excelling in a virtual international Dressage competition against the Netherlands' military riders.

This online Armed Forces Nations League culminated in a thrilling finale, when the top five British riders formed a national Tri-Service team and performed brilliantly to win against their Dutch counterparts.

Competitors were judged by a British and Dutch judge resulting in an average score counting towards team results.

RN riders AB Robyn McFadden on Red Hot Chili Pyper and Lt Cdr Suzanne Clark on Ballinamurra Billy rode great tests which earned them first and second place overall, highly influential in the final team standing too.

Following quickly on heels, or should we say hooves, of this success the RN's Dressage riders formed a team for the Inter-Service Dressage Leg (one of four competitive legs held over the season in different equestrian disciplines).

The RN, Army and RAF nominated teams of four riders to complete dressage tests at the UK Armed Forces Equestrian Championships, held at Bury Farm Equestrian Village in Buckinghamshire.

At this juncture it is worth mentioning that within the space of two days competitors experienced extremes of weather (scorching 30°C day temperatures and an evening of torrential rain which turned the outdoor manèges into water features). The storm that descended on the first evening also swept away tents and gazebos and flooded out one of the stable barns.



Clockwise from top, Lt Cdr Vic Sollitt, Surgeon Sub Lt India John, members of the RN team with their rosettes

This resulted in all hands turning-to for several hours with brooms to keep flood water at bay and redirect it into drains as well as clearing out sodden stables and re-bedding the horses down.

The next morning the sun shone very strongly – and helped dry out the ground conditions – as if the previous evening's challenges had never happened!

The Inter-Service Dressage tests were ridden in the International Indoor Arena and saw all 12 riders from the three teams ride at their competency level in British Dressage tests from Novice through to Advanced-Medium.

Surg Sub Lt India John, riding her sister's Grayswood Orlando, were the first ever combination to ride the highest level test in an Inter-Service leg and achieved a phenomenal 72 per cent. This significantly contributed to the team score, along with

very solid performances from other team riders, Lt Cdr's Jill Monnox, Suzanne Clark and Vic Sollitt on their own horses, which enabled the RN Team to triumph over the other Services.

While the RN was riding high on its' Team Dressage achievements there was also individual Showjumping and Dressage classes being competed over the two days.

Jabeena Maslin Equestrian hirelings travelled up to allow non-horse owners to compete and saw several development riders experience their first competitive outing in uniform.

All in all it was a great Championship which saw every RN rider take home a rosette – and some a bucketful.

RN personnel wishing to enquire about equestrian opportunities should contact: [royalnavydsje@gmail.com](mailto:royalnavydsje@gmail.com)

# Paddling perfection

THE last two months have seen a wave of activity from the Royal Navy Paddling Association (RNPA) with new members, new achievements and a revival of fierce competition with the Army and RAF.

The middle of August saw the various RNPA disciplines coming together for a multi-activity development camp at the National Water Sports Centre, Nottingham.

Beginners, intermediates and old hands alike joined to refine and develop their skills on the River Trent and national White Water course.

Freestyle coaching and white water introduction was delivered by guest instructor Lowri Davies (European Freestyle Champion and current GB No.2), whilst marathon and sprint coaching was delivered by Mid Emily Hewitt (Former GB kayaker). Another group was taken by paddling guru Rob King on their British canoeing water sports leader course, enabling them to conduct AT back at their units.

The week was a huge success with free-stylers in marathon boats, and vice versa, ending in a few swims and further appreciation for the respective disciplines.

Of course, the top paddler still had to be decided, and thus the debut competition of Taff-Cross (TAF-X) resulted in paddlers getting down the rapids in various configurations, ways and with very differing results, won skilfully by PO Pipes.

A special thank-you goes to not only the guest coaches, but the RN Sports Lottery for their generous funding of the week.

The Inter-Services Marathon and Sprint Kayak Championships were held over the first weekend of September, alongside the national competition at The National Water-Sports Centre, Nottingham.

Our RN Team was particularly small this year due to deployments, but still packed a potent punch and met the competition of the much larger RAF and Army teams.

The competition kicked off with the marathon race on the River Trent, with the RN fielding two men's K1, a very novice and wobbly men's K2, a women's K1 and women's K2.

Well done to Mid Fitzhenry and LPT Roche for the women's K2 win, AET Aspell for the women's K1 win and Cpl Baker for third place in the men's K1.

The sprint racing began on the Saturday with the RN recording wins from Mne Bicknell (K1 1000m, K1 200m), the men's K4 of Capt Maddocks, Cpl Baker, Lt Richardson and Lt Mahony, Mid Hewitt (K1 200m), the women's K4 200m of Mid Hewitt, AET Aspell, LPT Roche and Mne Deathridge and the women's K2 200m of Mid Hewitt and Mne Deathridge.

Sunday saw similar success with wins from Mid Hewitt in the women's K1 500m, women's K2 500m crew of AET Aspell and LPT Roche, men's K1 500m Mne Bicknell and the final victory of the women's 500m K4 Mid Hewitt, AET Aspell, LPT Roche and brand new paddler LH Rook.

The final scores showed a revival of competition from the RNPA, which has not been seen for a significant number of years.

The RN placed second overall, comfortably ahead of the Army and only three points behind the RAF, not bad for a core team of seven matelots and booties.

The RN certainly rules the waves, but can start adding race lakes and rivers to its fame!

The RNPA is always on the trawl for more members to join its ranks. Once a member, you have access to all different types of paddling at all levels, exposure to paddling experiences you will never forget and to national and world-class coaches.

From never having stepped into a kayak to national competitors, the RNPA can support your training as well as facilitate British Canoeing courses to refine and progress your paddling career.

E-mail RNPA secretary Lt Alex Riddell [RNPA.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:RNPA.secretary@gmail.com) for more information on how you can be part of the RNPA.

Report: Lt Patrick Richardson



## Soaring success

SEAHAWK Gliding Club was looking to qualify new instructors to secure its future and had three willing volunteers to complete the course.

A small club, based at RNAS Culdrose, normally only able to operate at weekends, in a part of the world not known for its soaring conditions, plus Covid, meath there were significant challenges to get them through the process.

Meanwhile, it transpired, the BGA were looking for an opportunity to trial a new flight instructor course syllabus that they have been working on for the future – could it be run successfully over a continuous two-week period?

Colin Sword, Chairman of the BGA Instructors' Committee, assisted by Don Puttock and Helen Fraser, went to Cornwall to run an FI course alongside the club's annual *ab initio* courses, which are sponsored by the Fleet Air Arm Officers Association, at Predannack Airfield.

Fortunately, the weather played ball, the kit held up and Mike Fox, BGA Standards Manager, conducted the three students' assessment of competency check flights at the end of the course. All three candidates were assessed as having reached the standard required to be rated BGA Assistant Category Instructor.

For more information about what Navy Gliding can offer you check out the NavyFit website or contact the Secretary, RN Gliding and Soaring Association at [sec@rngsa.com](mailto:sec@rngsa.com)



## Kings of the castle

OFFICERS took on ratings as personnel from Southern Diving Unit 1 took part in an adventurous training day.

Five competitions took place, including capture the flag, team death match, six-man castle defence, and colour-coded barrel flip.

The juniors were victorious in the death match, while the castle defence contest proved the most ruthless as six people defended a 'castle' with the remaining 15 trying to gain control.

The games over, personnel celebrated their day with pizza.



## Game for round of golf

THE Royal Navy Physical Branch Association Scotland held its annual golf championship at Burntisland Gold Club in Fife.

Golfers from through the UK attended and, following play, the players enjoyed a reunion at the Charleston Hotel.

## Tracking pastime from karting to motorbiking

I have been part of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Motorsport Association since 2015 when I joined the Royal Navy Karting Team, writes CPO Adam Myhill, pictured left.

I competed in the Inter-Service Endurance Karting Championship for two years and enjoyed myself, but my real passion has always been motorbikes. At this point I had never owned or even ridden a motorbike but at the age of 35 I was determined to get my licence.

I passed my big bike test in February 2016 and have never looked back, and once I was confident on the road; I attended the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Road Racing Team Grass Roots Trackday at Mallory Park in 2019 and I was absolutely hooked.

Since being with the Road Racing Team I have done five more track days and although I was apprehensive going racing, all the team have been extremely supportive and encouraging. I finally decided to take the plunge at Donnington Park because I was familiar with the track.

I spent the Friday test day familiarising myself with the bike and the Donnington park circuit, having experienced racers on similar machinery made it so much more beneficial than just doing a track day. I was able to follow others and slowly I gained confidence throughout the day.

Saturday morning was qualifying, and it was my first real opportunity to compare my ability to the other riders. I was pleasantly surprised to end up 23rd of 27 in the 500 Freshman Class with a 1:29.895 lap time.

My first-ever motorcycle race was a nerve-racking event, the Freshman Riders were combined with the veterans to make a grid of 40 and I started 37th.

Launching off the line and towards Redgate, I tentatively followed the chaos ahead of me and was shocked to see people throwing their bikes at the scenery on the first lap.

I spent the race chasing the riders ahead of me, desperately seeing where I could gain time but with the whole weekend ahead of me, I was reluctant to take any risks and finished 32nd (19th in class), but also last over the line.

Race two commenced in a very different way, I got a much better start and gained a few places but as we hurtled into turn one, I saw a bike ahead catapulted through the air and a rider on my inside sat his bike up which resulted in both of us quickly heading for the gravel trap.

I managed to keep the bike upright and slowly trudged back to the track, but the race was then red flagged. Lining up on the grid

again I was determined to be more aggressive and subsequently fluffed the start. My anger at myself motivated me to push harder and I managed to pass two other riders to finish 31st (19th in class) and NOT last!

I made some changes to the bike overnight and went into Sunday looking to go faster and race three did not disappoint. I was careful on the first two laps and once the chaos had settled down, I got my head down and pushed. In the following eight laps I passed six other riders and coupled with other incidents I finished 26th (16th in class) and improved on my qualifying lap by 2.4s with a personal best of 1:27.518.

Race four was absolute carnage with nine of 36 riders failing to finish. I started well but got stuck in a battle with another rider which meant we got split from the pack. Once past him, I was unable to bridge the gap to the other riders and finished 25th (14th in class).

The final race on Sunday was the British Military Inter-Services and being on my little 50hp CB500 against 1000cc and 600cc sports bikes meant that I had little hope of gaining positions, but ultimately, I was very proud to even be on the grid.

I completed the race with only one close call. Starting 32nd on the grid, I finished 28th overall.



£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the August edition of *Navy News* (right) was the Bay-class frigate HMS Owen, which was originally named Loch Muick, and then Thurso Bay, when she was reordered.

Rocky Webster from Somerset wins £50 for sending us the correct answers.

This month's mystery ship (*above*) was a Type 21 frigate which was the first of her class to be fitted with Exocet launchers in B position.

1. What was her name and 2. What was she renamed when sold?

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 [bm@navynews.co.uk](mailto:bm@navynews.co.uk) with **October Mystery Ship** in the email header.



Coupons and emails giving the correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

Entries must be received by November 14. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted.

Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our December edition. The competition is not open to *Navy News* employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 320

Name .....

Address .....

My answers: (1) .....

(2) .....

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

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If you are sending your notice via email, please include your full address and telephone number.

Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.

Please send in reunions at least two months (preferably three) before the month of the event. There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.

Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.

The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Swap Draft columns in October's Noticeboard must be received by  
**OCTOBER 16 2021**

Deaths

**Natasha Blaker, radio operator.** Joined as a WREN in 1989 and served for nine years at HMS Raleigh, Mercury, Warrior (Northwood), Fort Southwick (HMS Dryad) and HMS Collingwood. Died September 4, aged 49.

**David MH Lingard, Cdr.** Served for 37 years in DTS, RNEC Manadon, HMS Lion, Euryalus, Lincoln, Halifax, Nova Scotia, BRNC, Arrow, Centurion, Falkands, Avenger, Mount Wise and as Attache in Ankara. Died September 1, aged 79.

**Alfred James 'Fred' Coates, MAA.** Served in many ships, notably MAA of HMS Ajax when ship visited town of Ajax in 1976. Coat of Arms Lane in Ajax is named after him. Died July 29.

**Vic Coombes.** Joined RN aged 18 in 1939 and served in Malta during the Siege of Malta and was seriously injured. He was a member of the Glasgow Branch of the RNA and marched proudly in the annual Armed Forces Day parade and Remembrance parades in Glasgow. Died aged 100.

**William Murray 'Bungay' Williams.** Joined RN in 1948 as radar operator and qualified as a PT instructor in 1957. Served in HMS Roebuck, Lagos, Dido, Vincent, Raleigh and Ganges. Qualified as CPO in 1967. Transferred to RN careers service in Liverpool in 1971 and became senior advisor in the Plymouth office. Left service in 1986. Died at Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, on August 26.

**Lt Cdr Colin J Crowther.** HMS St Angelo, Heron, President, Heron, Centurion. Died July 26, aged 81.  
**Cdr David M H Lingard.** HMS Collingwood, Euryalus, Lincoln, Arrow, Avenger, Centurion, FO Plymouth. Service Attache Ankara. Died Sept 1, aged 79.

**Cdr John L Muxworthy.** HMS Victory RNB, Sirius, Drake, Neptune, Nelson, Vernon, CinC NAVHOME, CinC Fleet. Died July 23, aged 79.

**Lt Cdr Michael A Phelp.** HMS Puma, Artemis, Trump, Dolphin. Dir Gen Ships. Died July 26, aged 93.  
**Cdr Peter L Poland.** HMS Zest, Liverpool, Loch Craggie, Warramunga, Burnaston. DN Ships. Died Aug 30, aged 98.

**Maj RM Stuart L Syrad OBE MC.** RM Eastney, Poole. HMS Terror, Fearless. 41 Cdo RM. ATURM. CTCRM. Died Aug 23, aged 88.

**Inst Lt James E Tilley.** HMS Condor. Died Sept 3, aged 83.

Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNO

**Lt RNR J D A Robbie.** Clyde Div RNR. Died Aug.  
**Lt Cdr Bernard L Cooper.** HMS Ceres, Bellerophon, Cochrane, Excellent. Died Aug.

**Lt Cdr Peter F Cattrall.** HMS Daedalus, Fulmar, Hermes, Falcon. Died Aug.

**Lt Cdr Terence M Pendrous.** HMS Raleigh, Triumph, Arethusia, Cleopatra, Drake, Ardent, Defiance, Dir Gen Ships. Died Aug.

**Dai Rees.** Joined RN aged 16 as artificer apprentice, passing out top of his course as REA AIR in 1963. After 18 months as a watch supervisor on 766 NAS, he joined Dartmouth to begin flying training. After Linton, Brawdy and Yeovilton he joined 892, 893, 750 and RAF 32 Squadron C Flight. He was one of the first naval officers on 32 Squadron and the first to gain an Air Support Command "B" VIP category and flew the then Prime Minister after six months. On leaving the

Royal Navy in 1973 he joined MAM Aviation at Heathrow and a year later became Chief Pilot and Commercial Director. He built the company from one to eight HS125 and started an air engineering company which at its height was the largest of its kind in Europe, servicing 40 aircraft. He managed Falcon 900 aircraft from 1987 to his retirement 22 years later obtaining the first Bermudian Air Operators certificate. He played a significant role in the opening of Farnborough Air Sciences Museum and was President of Hook and Odiham RFC in its early years Member of Fleet Air Arm Officers Association. Died September 2, aged 78.

Submariners' Association

**Robert D Wells CPO Coxn.** Served Aug 1949 to Mar 1958 in HM Submarines Artemis, Taciturn, Alaric, Anchorite, Upstart, Telemachus, and Seraph. Member of Essex branch. Died August 3.

**Frederick Charles Weatherington ME(1).** Served Apr 1958 to Feb 1966 in HM Submarines Seascout 1958 - 1960, Andrew 1960, Anchorite 1960 - 1961, Tactician 1961, and Aeneas 1962 - 1966. Member of Gosport branch. Died August 8.

**Alex B Last AB GL3.** Served 1953 to 1957 in HM Submarines Trespasser 1954 - 1955, Artful 1955, and Seraph 1955 - 1957. Member of Lincoln branch. Died August 10.

**Terry W Chamberlain LRO.** Served Mar 1957 to Feb 1962 in HM Submarines Sleuth, Narwhal, Trenchant, and Tudor. Member of Gosport branch. Died August 18.

Reunions

**HMS Glory Association:** A reunion takes place at the Aston Court Hotel in Derby on October 22 to 23. For details contact Bernie Cohen. [B.cohen2@ntlworld.com](mailto:B.cohen2@ntlworld.com)

**HMS Cleopatra Old Shipmates Association:** Our 36th AGM and reunion is planned for November 5 to 7. Contact Honorary Secretary Warwick Franklin at [warwick\\_franklin@outlook.com](mailto:warwick_franklin@outlook.com) or ring 01752 366611.

**HMS Undaunted, Eagle and Yarmouth Associations:** Annual reunion, Hallmark Hotel, Midland Road, Derby, October 28 to November 1, 2021. Contact Alan (Whiskey) Walker on 01268 548041, [whiskey666@outlook.com](mailto:whiskey666@outlook.com)

HMS Troubridge Final Commission Association

Ask Jack

**Uniform:** Royal Navy uniforms, *pictured right*, belonging to either my grandmother or great-grandmother, were found in the attic of my father's home. I would like to hear from anyone who can tell me anything about them.

Susan Brown  
[Suzebee18@hotmail.com](mailto:Suzebee18@hotmail.com)

**HMS Diana and Vigo:** I am researching family history and would like to get in touch with any RN personnel who served with my father CPO Sam Bell on either HMS Diana or Vigo and also from any who took part in the Montebello nuclear tests.

David Bell  
169 Truro Drive, Plymouth, PL5 4TR, 01752707177 or email [Fortitude1944@btinternet.com](mailto:Fortitude1944@btinternet.com).

**HMS Rooke:** I served on HMS Cavalier doing a long refit at Gibraltar from 1964-65, and was billeted in the shore establishment of HMS Rooke, sadly which is no more. I have been trying to get some photographs of the establishment as I will hopefully be visiting in August. If any *Navy News* readers has pictures of Rooke from around that time that they could send me, it would be appreciated.

Sid Anning  
53, The Queen Mother Court, Borstal Road, Rochester, Kent ME1 3JF.  
[sidanningd73@gmail.com](mailto:sidanningd73@gmail.com)  
07592132614

**1966-69:** Our reunion will be at the Royal Beach Hotel, Portsmouth, from October 8 to 10 2021. Contact Bryan Pace at [Romft1@GMail.com](mailto:Romft1@GMail.com) or our website [HMSTroubridge.com](http://HMSTroubridge.com).

**HMS Neptune Association:** Annual member's meeting takes place at the National Arboretum on October 16 at 11.30am. For further details see [www.hmsneptune.com/news](http://www.hmsneptune.com/news) or contact organiser Christine Pitman-Corner at [cecorner@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cecorner@yahoo.co.uk)

**HMS Carysfort reunion:** This will be held at the Royal Beach Hotel Southsea, from November 26 - 28 2021 and is open to all who served in the ship throughout her seven commissions (1945 - 1969) and their wives/partners. A one, two or three-night package is available or join us for the Saturday night gala dinner only. Contact SF Events Ltd at The

Withholt, Paul Mead, Stroud Gloucs GL6 6PG Tel: 01452 813173 or email [associationmembers@sarahfletchervents.co.uk](mailto:associationmembers@sarahfletchervents.co.uk). Details can also be found at [www.hmscarysfort.co.uk](http://www.hmscarysfort.co.uk) or [hmscarysfort@gmail.com](mailto:hmscarysfort@gmail.com)

**HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association:** The 2022 annual reunion venue is confirmed at the Red Lea Hotel in Scarborough, from May 13 to 16. Contact Secretary Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email [askhamd3@gmail.com](mailto:askhamd3@gmail.com)

**HMS Mohawk Association.** Our next reunion will take place at the Mercure Dolphin Hotel in Southampton from Friday March 25 to Monday March 28 2022. For details call IOW Tours on 01983 405116 or contact Bob Proud via e-mail at [rob.proud@mypostoffice.co.uk](mailto:rob.proud@mypostoffice.co.uk)



connect, please contact me directly.  
David Cannon  
[dcannon8bells@outlook.com](mailto:dcannon8bells@outlook.com)

**Deptford Town Hall.** The building, built in 1905, is decorated with a range of naval sculpture by Henry Poole, including figures of Sir Francis Drake, Robert Blake and Lord Nelson. Poole was also responsible for the carved work on the three Naval War Memorials at Plymouth, Portsmouth and Chatham. The old Town Hall is now used by Goldsmiths University and a student group has called for the removal of the statues because of their associations with slavery. Goldsmiths is holding a public consultation on the proposal (closing date 17 October) - to register your views go to <https://consult.gold.ac.uk/public/deptford-town-hall-statues/>

**HMS Norfolk:** I am after information about the ship's first commission. I was in the Royal Navy for six years, then in the RFA for seven. I joined Norfolk while she was being built at Swan Hunter on the Tyne in 1970 until 1972. When we arrived in Portsmouth in January 1972 I am sure we stayed alongside for about six months or so. The only time I recall us going to sea was for Sea Slug trials and a visit to Malta.

Dennis Gilmore  
[dennisgilmore@live.co.uk](mailto:dennisgilmore@live.co.uk)

Bonnie twist to the sale of Nelson's sword



LORD Nelson's fighting sword was being offered for sale at Chelsea Antiques Fair as *Navy News* went to press.

Furthermore, new research has discovered a claim that the blade once belonged to Bonnie Prince Charlie.

The historic weapon, with a price tag of £50,000, was being sold by leading maritime antique dealer Charles Wallrock, *pictured*, of Wick Antiques in Lymington, Hants.

Researching its history, he found an account written by Horatio, third Earl Nelson, which stated that his famous ancestor, who died a hero at Trafalgar in 1805, was gifted the sword by Cardinal Henry York, who said his brother Bonnie Prince Charlie had used it all his life.

And while the claim cannot be corroborated and the story is on the face of it incompatible with the known dates, it remains a curious account.

What is certain is that Nelson gave the sword to his relative William Maurice



Suckling, whose family still possessed it when the third Earl wrote his account.

It then passed down the family and was ultimately bought by Mr Wallrock, who said: "There is no doubt that this was Nelson's sword - he may well have used it in action against the French."

"The curved steel blade is just short of 24 inches and dates from the 17th Century. It is mounted into a later silver hilt, hallmarked 'Nixon', London 1752. "That the fairly ordinary blade was

remounted in silver by Nixon certainly suggests it was deemed important.

"It retains its leather scabbard and has now been mounted in a display cabinet befitting its importance.

"The third Earl's account was based on a previous history from 1823, but Maurice Suckling had died three years earlier so was never able to state whether there was any truth in it.

"The account states that Bonnie Prince Charlie's brother - Cardinal York - was in Italy on the run from Napoleon Nelson was cruising off the coast in 1796 and decided to help him, even though he was a Catholic.

"The last of the Stuarts was in rags, so Nelson invited him on board, looked after him then set him ashore with money to defray his expenses.

"When they met again in Genoa, Cardinal York gave him the sword as a thank you for his generosity. He told him it had belonged to his younger brother."



## President Duncan takes helm

NATIONAL President Vice Admiral John McAnally has handed over the helm of the RNA to Vice Admiral Duncan Potts after two decades in post.

Adm Potts (*pictured*) was born in Malta in 1961 and joined the Royal Navy in 1979, qualifying as a Principal Warfare Officer (Underwater) in 1988.

He commanded Type 22 frigate HMS Brilliant, Type 42 destroyer HMS Southampton and the 4th Frigate Squadron while in charge of Type 23 HMS Marlborough as a captain.

As a Commodore he was Commander UK Task Group and commanded the coalition task group in the Northern Gulf.

And as a Rear Admiral he was Commander UK Maritime Forces, during which time he led NATO's High Readiness Force Maritime and, for 18 months, the EU's counter-piracy operation in the Indian Ocean at the height of Somali piracy.

Also as a Rear Admiral he served as the Royal Navy's Head of Capability.

During his early career Adm Potts served on exchange with the US Navy, and has served his country globally, for the past 20 years predominately in the Middle East region.

He also has extensive Joint experience where he has worked in MOD as Captain Navy Plans and as MA to the Vice Chief of Defence Staff, and has been head of plans at the UK's Permanent Joint HQ.

As a vice admiral from 2014-2018 he was DG Joint Force Development for UK MOD where he worked to ensure UK forces could integrate with each other, wider allies and partners across overnment, and was also Director General of the UK's Defence Academy.

Since retiring from the RN in 2018 he has become a Director of Universal Defence and Security Solutions, and chairs the Public Weather Service Customer Group.

Vice Admiral McAnally, meanwhile, assured shipmates that although he was no longer in charge, he would still be a member of the Association, and he thanked branches and clubs around the country and beyond for the hospitality they had shown him over the past 20 years.



An impressive display of standards as shipmates hold the annual service which traditionally closes the RNA's conference

Pictures: Nigel Huxtable, RNA

# It's good to be back

**THERE was a sense of change in the air at the RNA annual National Conference at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Nottingham, writes Mike Gray.**

One of the highlights of a busy weekend took place at the very end of the business agenda on Saturday, when National President Vice Admiral John McAnally handed over the reins to Vice Admiral Duncan Potts (*see the story, left*).

The outgoing President left an organisation which is expecting a rise in overall membership numbers for the first time in years as the effects of a decision to end national subscriptions start to be felt – a move backed by a short-term funding guarantee by the RNRMC.

This was the first face-to-face AGM gathering for two years, as the 2020 Conference was held online, though the video option was still made available, and a dozen of the 75 official delegates, representing branches from around the UK, took part remotely.

The business of the day was completed relatively quickly – there was just one National Council proposal to consider, a tweak to the Supplemental Charter which allowed for valuable continuity in the roles of National Chairman and National Vice Chairman.

The proposal was accepted unanimously.

The swift conclusion of business allowed delegates and observers to enjoy a range of presentations about the Navy past and present, and a new initiative to help banish loneliness in older Naval veterans.

Following a welcome from the Lord Mayor of Nottingham, Cllr David Trimble, Cdre Rob Bellfield, Naval Regional Commander Eastern England, gave an honest and upbeat

## It's good to be back (Pt 2)

HUNDREDS of RN veterans paraded in central London last month for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic began.

The Naval Associations Parade in Whitehall, hosted by the RNA, allowed shipmates to come together to remember all those from the Royal Navy community who have died in the past 18 months, whether from Covid or other causes, and have not had the ceremonial send-off they so deserved.

Capt Bill Oliphant, RNA General Secretary, said: "It's been an incredibly difficult couple of years, and today was a poignant but well needed opportunity for us to gather together in solidarity to remember the members of our community that we have lost, especially during the pandemic."

"Our community have deeply regretted not being able to give traditional Naval send-offs to our comrades who have crossed the bar, so today we march for them."

The salute was taken by Rear Admiral Phil Hally, Director of People and Training, and a short service was held at the Cenotaph by the Chaplain of the Fleet, the Venerable Andrew Hillier, and also Honorary Chaplain to the RNA.

The serving Royal Navy was represented by two platoons of trainee sailors from HMS Sultan in Gosport and HMS Collingwood in Fareham, their Commanding Officers, and the Band of the Royal Marines HMS Collingwood.

As well as the Royal Naval Association, those who marched included members of the Wrens Association, the Submariners Association, the HMS Ganges Association, the Fleet Air Arm Association, and many of the smaller ships associations.

As shipmates drifted away after the pageantry, Capt Oliphant said: "The parade was a complete success."

"With more than 50 standards and more than 400 personnel from across the serving Royal Navy and the wider Naval family of associations on parade, it was quite a spectacle."

appraisal of the current disposition of the Royal Navy.

His assessment was confirmed later in the programme by a world premiere of the RN Presentation Team's latest blockbuster production – a thought-provoking film overlaid with commentary from steward Able Seaman Loren Jackson and Royal Marine Lance Corporal Kai Baker, under team leader Lieutenant Ollie Johnson.

RNA Welfare Programme Manager Lynda Pearson organised a presentation about

Sparko TV, in which Sparko CEO Orit Eyal-Fibeesh demonstrated the many benefits of this television-based internet package which allows elderly Naval veterans to easily keep in touch with relatives and shipmates, access tailored content such as Naval films and video, and take part in virtual communal activities such as bingo, quizzes and special interest meetings.

An historical perspective was provided by S/M Ralph Dodd, who, at the request of RNA General Secretary S/M Bill

Oliphant, delivered a 'fireside chat' about the Royal Navy's status in the build-up to World War 2 and the early months of the conflict.

These chats were introduced during the first pandemic lockdown as a means for members to meet online and learn about a wide range of Naval topics, and the series, delivered by shipmates as well as some experts and specialists, continues to be a Monday evening staple.

There were some new names amongst the winners of the President's Awards for Recruiting and Gift Aid Returns.

The Sword of Honour for the Area with the greatest increase in membership in 2020 went to Area 10; the Brigg's Dirk for larger branches was won by the City of Glasgow, the Brigg's Rose Bowl for branches of 30 members or fewer went to the City of Salisbury; the Certificate for larger overseas branches was won by Port Philip Bay in Australia, while the Certificate for smaller overseas branches was won by Japan. Area 9 took the Tasker Bowl for Gift Aid returns.

Another changing of the guard at the end of the Conference saw Central Office stalwart S/M Nigel Huxtable succeeded as Membership Support Manager by Sara Field, a former Chief Writer with 25 years' service in the Royal Navy, who has been Nigel's deputy since the start of the year.

Both Vice Admiral McAnally and S/M Nigel were given a rousing send-off at the gala dinner that followed the AGM, and sincere thanks were expressed to the organisers of the Conference and to staff at the hotel.

Sunday saw a church service in the hotel's Royal Suite, led by the Venerable Andrew Hillier, Chaplain of the Fleet and Archdeacon for the Royal Navy as well as Honorary Chaplain to the RNA.

## Ceremonial team's efforts recognised

The Royal Navy's State Ceremonial Team based at HMS Collingwood have been presented with a special commendation recognising their contribution to some of the nation's most important State events.

Acknowledging their exceptional work in leading and organising several very-high-profile ceremonial events, all of which generated excellent public recognition for the Royal Navy, the presentation of the award was delayed by Covid until last month when the commanding officer of the Fareham establishment, Captain Catherine Jordan, was finally able to acknowledge the team's efforts formally.

"Their leadership, commitment and unwavering application of the highest standards has ensured that two periods of guarding Royal Palaces, November Ceremonies, D-Day 75 commemorations, the Edinburgh Tattoo and many more events were executed flawlessly," reads the citation.

On presenting the award Captain Jordan addressed the team, saying "This is great recognition for your continued professionalism executing so many local, national and international events to the highest standard."

Warrant Officer 1st Class Darren 'Eddie' Wearing, the State Ceremonial Training Officer, who leads the team, said he and his team were "honoured and privileged" by the recognition.

## Collingwood help Paul to £100k target

SAILORS from HMS Collingwood's Victory Squadron took part in two days of sporting challenges to help raise funds for Lieutenant Paul Killpartrick.

Paul, who until recently served at the establishment, has been diagnosed with an incurable brain cancer and needs to raise £100,000 to undergo life-extending treatment not available on the NHS.

Personnel took on a 'Lift CWD (1882)' (the former ship, weighing 9,500 tonnes) and to 'run to the Emirates', home of Paul's beloved Arsenal.

In all the sailors 1,118,503kg and ran 103 miles (five more than the actual distance required) during the 16-hour challenge.

They raised £663.16 across the Collingwood site, with another £205 donated via [justgiving.com/crowdfunding/serenshope](http://justgiving.com/crowdfunding/serenshope) – which has helped Paul hit his £100k target.

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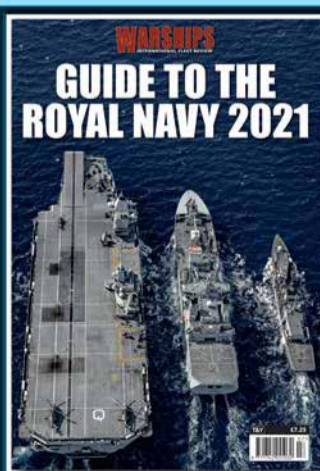
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