



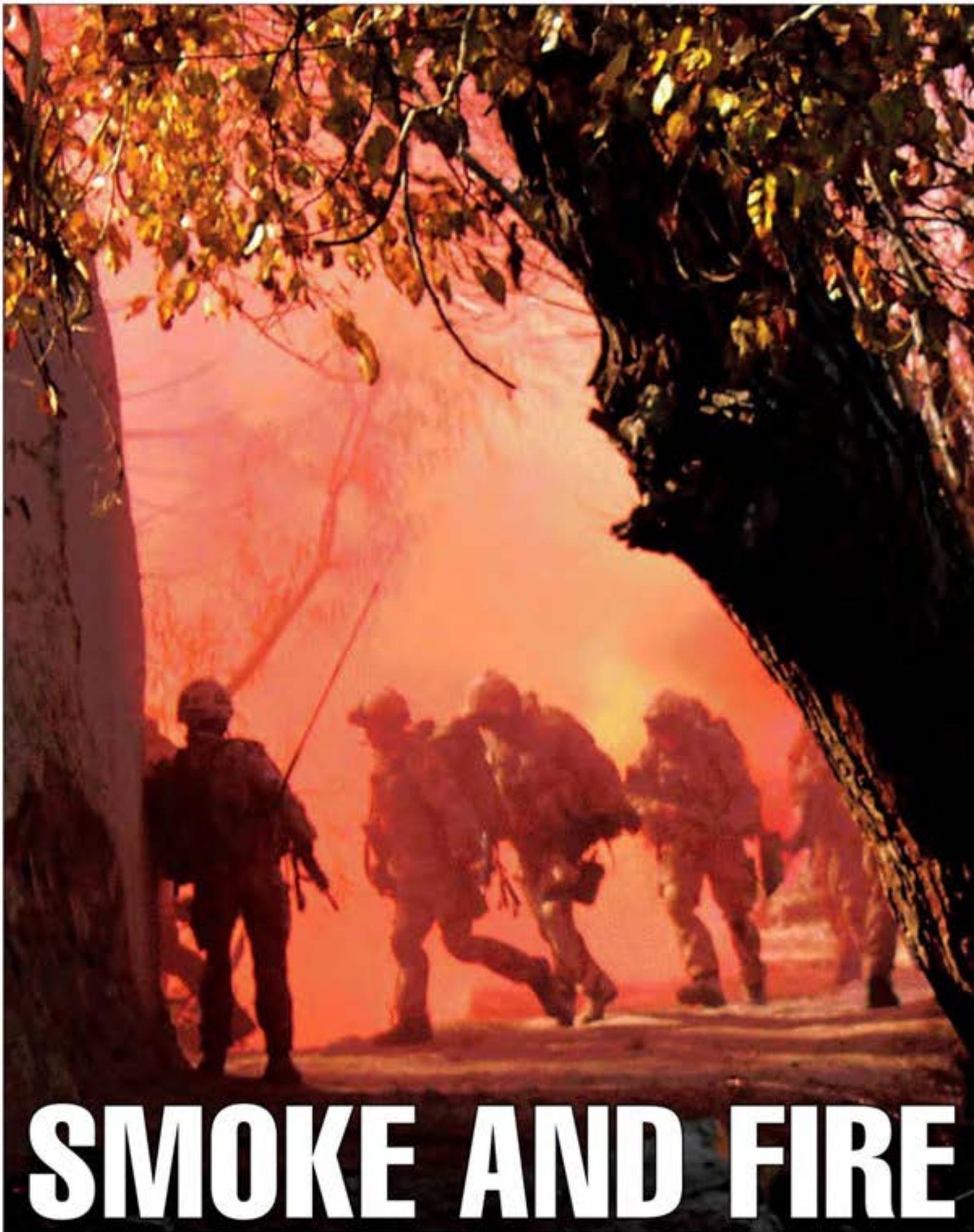
NAVY NEWS

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SMOKE AND FIRE

ROYAL Marine Commandos overran a Taliban stronghold, killed a terrorist leader and numerous supporters, seized a weapons cache and drove the rebels out of a town in the heaviest month of fighting with insurgents in southern Afghanistan.

The new year began with 3 Commando Brigade and 800 Naval Air Squadron on the offensive in the troubled province of Helmand as British forces put the Taliban on the back foot.

In a concerted effort across the province, a series of operations ousted Taliban forces from strongpoints and hideouts in a bid to re-establish law and order – plus essential services.

The largest assault saw more than 100 green berets of the Brigade Reconnaissance Force and soldiers from the Light Dragoons storm what was believed to be the Taliban's principal base in the Garmsir region of Helmand.

A four-hour operation



saw BRP snipers target two Taliban compounds as Apache helicopters and NATO aircraft were called in to blast the depots with pin-point strikes which did not damage neighbouring buildings.

Elsewhere in Garmsir, 45 Commando stormed a Taliban fortress, again with potent aerial support, following two months of intelligence gathering.

The month of heavy fighting has not been without casualties, sadly.

Four 3 Commando

● (Above) Mike Company, 42 Commando, storm through the smoke of Kajaki in northern Helmand during a successful operation to wrest control of the region from the Taliban

LA/Phot) Gaz Faulkner, 42 Commando

Brigade personnel have lost their lives in action against the Taliban: three Royal Marines – Mnes Richie Watson and Thomas Curry and L/Cpl Mathew Ford – and one Royal Engineer, L/Bdr James Dwyer.

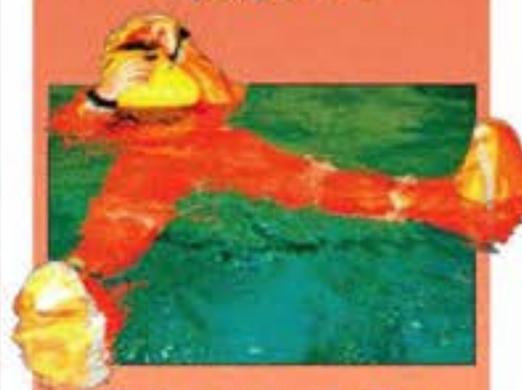
■ Leave no man behind, page 5
■ In the line of fire, pages 10-11



Masters of all they survey: away with the hydrographers – centre pages



Save all your kisses for me... St Albans at the Boat Show – page 14



Freeze a jolly good fella: inside the Institute of Naval Medicine – page 41



... and Polly's jolly cold at the Pole – page 15



Fleet Focus

WE SHALL begin our panoramic sweep of the activities of the RN and RM with a look at the small ships whose work is often (unfairly) eclipsed by the 'big guns'.

Her Majesty's Ships **Blyth** and **Ramsey** have begun their work in the difficult waters of the Arabian Gulf; the two Sandown-class ships form the Aintree task group which will spend up to three years operating in the region, perfecting mine-hunting techniques in waters generally regarded as among the most difficult in the world for such activities (see page 9).

A shorter deployment has begun for **HMS Brocklesby**; she is spending six months on NATO duties in the Arctic, Baltic and North Seas (see page 4).

The North Sea is the traditional domain of the Fishery Protection Squadron; there you could find **HMS Severn** busting British and foreign trawlermen for flouting the laws of the sea while **HMS Mersey** conducted her duties in Brixham as storms battered the Channel (see opposite).

Also on fishery duties has been **HMS Cattistock**, but she briefly returned to her usual role as a minehunter to deal with a WW2 mine off the Suffolk coast.

The RN's much-touted 'force for good' role was in evidence throughout the festive season with Sea Kings of **771 NAS** and **HMS Gannet** called upon to rescue stricken mariners (most missions had happy outcomes), while a sizeable force including **HMS Portland** broke off exercises to search for a missing fisherman off Weymouth (see right).

The hydrographics squadron was widely dispersed at the turn of the year: **HMS Echo** was farthest east, enjoying Christmas in Hong Kong; her sister **Enterprise** could be found in Cameroon, while **HMS Scott** was also in African waters, largely off Cape Town and Durban. Further south **HMS Endurance** has continued her work surveying Antarctic waters and dropped off her Royal Marines in South Georgia to retrace Shackleton's footsteps across the islands 90 years ago (see centre pages and page 15).

The Royal Marines of **3 Commando Brigade**, ably supported by **800 NAS** until the middle of last month, continue to bear the burden of grappling with the Taliban (see pages 10-11), sadly not without casualties (see page 5).

In the Gulf **HMS Sutherland** continues to provide vital protection for Iraq's two principal oil terminals, while the **Naval Transition Team** trains the Iraqi Navy and **845** and **846 NAS** provide constant aerial support and cover for British forces around Basra. All received a visit from the First Sea Lord before Christmas, while the Basra forces also had opera sensation Katherine Jenkins and comedian Joe Pasquale drop in to raise spirits (see page 4).

Sutherland will soon be joined in the Gulf by Type 22 frigate **HMS Campbelltown**, which left Devonport at the start of the year; also leaving the Hamoaze was **HMS Montrose** which will be away for seven months on NATO duties around the Mediterranean, where destroyer **HMS Gloucester** is already on patrol (see pages 4 and 16).

Fresh from her exertions off the African coast, new landing support ship **RFA Mounts Bay** has been getting used to life inside the Arctic Circle, taking vehicles to Sorreisa, near Tromsø, for winter exercises (see page 16).

Closer to home Mounts Bay's sister **Lyme Bay** is taking shape on the Clyde and Largs Bay has just been commissioned (see page 17), while **HMS Dauntless**, the second of Britain's Type 45 destroyers, was due to slip into Glasgow's great artery as we went to press; there'll be a report in our next edition.

Flat-top **HMS Ark Royal** is being put through her paces in the English Channel as she prepares for operational duties following her refit (see opposite).

HMS Albion probably enjoyed the most publicity this past month without leaving her berth; the assault ship hosted Prime Minister Tony Blair for a much-quoted speech on the future role of Britain's Armed Forces (turn to page 8 for details).

And finally... There are two new Fleet Air Arm squadrons on the scene after the 'bagger' Sea King formation 849 NAS was split into three - 854 and 857, plus 849. See page 26 for more details.



● A 771 Sea King from Culldrose takes part in a Search and Rescue exercise on the Thames
PO/Photo: Andy Gedge, DPF/16 Whitehall

Stormy weather

STRONG winds ensured the rescuers of 771 Naval Air Squadron had their busiest festive season in years with ten major call-outs.

The Culldrose-based Sea Kings of the Ace of Clubs squadron were in almost constant demand as the weather, bad luck and bad planning conspired against Christmas ramblers, fishermen, sportsmen and American submariners.

The latter needed assistance when they were swept off the US attack boat *Minneapolis-St Paul* which departed Devonport just after Christmas.

The crew were working on the outer casing of the submarine when they were knocked overboard by waves. Two submariners are believed to have been trapped and battered against the boat by their safety harnesses; two shipmates were able to swim further away.

A 771 Sea King joined a tugboat and a lifeboat in the rescue mission; all four men were eventually fetched ashore, where two were pronounced dead at the scene. Their comrades were treated for relatively minor injuries in HMS Drake's sick bay.

On New Year's Eve a Sea King found itself scouring the north Cornish coast at Trevone Bay near Padstow. Twenty-four-year-old holidaymaker Christopher Hunt from Derby went to watch waves being forced through a blow hole - and was carried away by one.

In foul conditions - ferocious seas, low clouds and wind - 771 joined lifeboat crews in a day-long search for Mr Hunt but to no avail.

Most rescue missions by the squadron had happier outcomes, thankfully. A couple walking on Dartmoor who became disorientated and lost were found not far from Princetown suffering from the effects of mild hypothermia; the squadron's night-vision goggles played a crucial role in locating the walkers.

Nine kayakers also fell victim to the bad weather between Land's End and Sennen Cove. Their craft capsized in heavy seas and their rescue demanded two lifeboats plus a 771 helicopter. All nine sportsmen were plucked from the sea; one was treated in hospital in Truro for mild hypothermia.

On New Year's Eve the Sea King scrambled to rescue a Spanish fisherman from his boat after he suffered a severe injury to an arm.

The boat was 150 miles west of the Scilly Isles,

battered by 30ft waves. Despite these difficulties, the aircrew succeeded in winching the crippled fisherman on a lightweight stretcher; he was treated by an ambulance service paramedic before being transferred to a waiting ambulance on the mainland.

And finally... A search for an 84-year-old pensioner in Newquay who disappeared amid a ferocious nighttime gale. Night-vision goggles proved essential in the search. Fortunately the octogenarian was found safe and well.

"We've been very busy over the festive period - we've been called out to many more missions than in previous years, largely due to the unpredictable weather and strong gales," said Lt Cdr Martin 'Oz' Rhodes.

"The Cornish coast is very attractive to many people and challenging conditions, strong winds and bad weather often draw those with a passion for extreme sports to the area.

"Many of our crews share such passions and while we hope they are careful, we are here to help if they get into difficulty. We do ask that people are sensible about the conditions and are fully prepared for all eventualities."

■ A SEA King from HMS Gannet in Prestwick was scrambled at 6pm on Christmas Day to help police and mountain rescue teams find two missing Dutch climbers. The pair became disorientated and unable to move as they scaled Castle Ridge, close to the summit of Ben Nevis.

Low cloud prevented the helicopter from reaching the climbers, but they were able to ferry three 'sticks' of mountain rescuers to the nearest possible point.

The Sea King was airborne again at 2am on Boxing Day to return to the summit of Ben Nevis to lift the climbers and rescue team.

Four RN/RFA vessels broke off exercises near the Dorset coast to help in the search for missing fisherman Peter Lynham.

The 20-year-old from Weymouth was laying crab pots with his father when he went overboard.

Frigate HMS Portland, minehunter HMS Queen, fishery protection ship HMS Tyne and a Lynx from RFA Fort Victoria helped local Coastguard and lifeboat teams in the search for Mr Lynham; it was eventually called off as storms battered the Dorset coast.

■ Dramatic rescue off Cornish coast, page 8

The best things go in threes

A DANK, miserable day in Plymouth saw HMS **Campbelltown** depart for a three-month tour of duty in the Gulf region.

The ship will join the Allied task force carrying out Operation Enduring Freedom - the sweep of waters from the Horn of Africa to the Gulf to find terrorists, smugglers and other ne'er do wells.

The Type 22 frigate has just given a mini overhaul by the team at DML in Devonport - handy as 2007 will be an exceptionally busy year for the vessel.

Upon returning from the Gulf, **Campbelltown** has a trip to the Baltic lined up before another sortie to the Middle East bookends the year.

Also leaving Devonport was **HMS Montrose** which will be away from home for seven months as she joins NATO's Maritime Group 2 in the Mediterranean on a combined 'force for good' and anti-terror patrol - checking movements on the high seas by merchant vessels - with warships from Allied nations.

Apart from keeping tabs on traffic on the high seas (notably at 'choke points' such as the approach to the Suez Canal), the Type 23 frigate will be working with Allied nations and navies in the Mediterranean/Levant region.

Another ship beginning a hefty tour of duty is minehunter **HMS Brocklesby**, also on NATO duties.

The Portsmouth-based Hunt-class warship left the Solent last month bound for German waters initially with Mine Counter-Measures Group 1.

From there the small ship heads to Norway, first for the Arctic Circle on exercises, then to the southern North Sea to clear WW2 ordnance, chiefly mines.

A major exercise is lined up for the Baltic and Polish waters in May (but before then the ship will be back in Pompey for Easter leave).

Other visits lined up before the deployment ends in June include Holland, Belgium, Sweden and Denmark.

■ **Campbelltown** in Gibraltar, page 16

Bang goes another one

YOU never forget your true purpose... just ask HMS Cattistock.

She may be 'doing fish', but that didn't stop her sending a WW2 mine to kingdom come. The Portsmouth-based minehunter is currently assigned to the Fishery Protection Squadron, but she scurried to the Suffolk coastline after a fisherman thought he snared a mine off Felixstowe. The trawler lowered the warhead back into the sea then raised the alarm.

Cattistock spent 24 hours sweeping the seabed with her 2193 sonar. When it picked up a strong contact, the ship sent her robot submarine to investigate.

"Visibility on the seabed was terrible and the operation wasn't helped by strong winds and tides," said Cattistock's CO Lt Cdr James Barnes.

Eventually the outline of a German GC influence mine in remarkable condition appeared on the video screen in the operations room.

A diver attached a 4lb charge to the weapon, then returned to Cattistock which withdrew to a safe distance as the mine was exploded, sending a plume of water 80ft into the air.

Barely had the Cattistock dealt with the mine than she resumed fishery protection work. As she approached a British trawler close to Holland, the vessel upped nets and began to scarper.

Cattistock gave chase and passed the fishing boats details on to a nearby Dutch fishery protection craft who stopped the errant trawler; their inspection team found a substantial haul of undersize fish aboard; a prosecution is impending.

As for Cattistock, she returned to Dutch waters shortly afterwards for a welcome visit to Amsterdam.

Testing times for Ark Royal

CARRIER HMS Ark Royal has been formally welcomed back into the arms of the Fleet, taking "her rightful place in the front line".

Senior officers from Fleet Headquarters in Portsmouth, led by Deputy Commander-in-Chief Fleet Vice Admiral Paul Boissier, conducted a final inspection of the famous flat-top before officially accepting her back into service.

Ark had been out of action for more than two years; the last nine months of that inactivity was consumed by a £20m overhaul in Rosyth which upgraded the 23-year-old warship for Harrier strike and commando carrying operations for the next decade.

The ship ended 2006 with a flurry of trials as Chinook and Apache helicopters landed for the first time post-refit, and the Harrier GR9 bomber made its first touchdown on the flight deck.

Those trials and exercises have persisted into the New Year; Ark's current trial is to pass the stiff test posed by the experts of the Flag Officer Sea Training, who will be judging the ship's company on their ability to operate the carrier in her new main role as a commando assault ship.

On top of the traditional six-week BOST (Basic Operational Sea Training) package, the FOSTies threw in a two-week series of amphibious exercises.

Ark can now carry up to 400 Royal Marines, serving as a companion ship to HMS Ocean (she doesn't, however, have a landing craft facility).

Once FOST is over, the ship will spend the bulk of the spring and summer perfecting her new commando role before taking over as NATO's on-call command ship in late summer - effectively NATO's flagship.

"I'm delighted we've successfully returned to our rightful place in the front line," said Ark's CO Capt Mike Mansergh.

● Christmas lights... Her Majesty's Ships Severn, Tyne and Mersey alongside in Portsmouth for the festive break



Bustin' makes us feel good

HMS Severn snared three fishermen flouting international laws during two weeks of hectic patrols in European waters.

The arrests of Belgian and Dutch trawlers and a British scalloper came on the eve of more good news for the Fishery Protection Squadron: the trio which form the backbone of the squadron, Severn, Mersey and Tyne will serve for another five years.

Severn is the middle sister of the trio. In a combined operation with the Dutch coastguard monitoring suspected illegal activity in the North Sea, the ship's boarding team joined the Netherlands' patrol vessel Barend Biesheuvel as they trailed a Belgian trawler.

The boarders pounced on the Mooise Meid in particularly foul conditions, clambering over the Belgian trawler's side much to the fishermen's surprise.

The boarding party, led by Severn's First Lieutenant Lt Jim Lovell, immediately found the Mooise Meid was using illegal nets - blatantly using 'blindings' which increase haul amounts by targeting under-size fish.

Chatting with the crew, the boarders found that the ship was working on behalf of the Belgian Fisheries Scientific Institute - who were horrified to learn that the skipper was using illegal nets to gather data, rendering it invalid.

"The skipper said that he believed he was safe using his illegal nets as it was too rough for boarding operations," said Lt Cdr Rex Cox, Severn's Commanding Officer.

"He'd underestimated the determination of the RN and Dutch coastguard."

The vessel was detained in Lowestoft where magistrates fined the skipper £10,000 and confiscated much of his gear, costing him in total around £45,000.

Despite gale force winds in the North Sea, Severn headed back out to sea the same day, hiding in the shelter of gas and oil rigs before stealthily pouncing on a Dutch boat, Cornelius Senior, which was under-reporting her catch.

Right turn, Clyde

THIS is the first sight of new Falkland Islands patrol ship, HMS Clyde, at sea.

The souped-up River-class warship will sail south this summer to relieve HMS Dumbarton Castle permanently of her duties around the remote islands.

Clyde, which unlike her older sisters has a flight deck, headed into the Channel for the first time at the end of 2006 to conduct five days of sea trials.

She was due to be handed over to the RN as Navy News went to press on a lease basis from her builders, the VT Group.

After operational sea training and exercises around the UK to hone her crew, Clyde will head for the South Atlantic hopefully in time for 25th anniversary commemorations of victory in the Falklands.

It's possible that Clyde may never return to UK waters when she departs; VT hopes to maintain and overhaul her in the Americas or South Africa.

Picture: VT Group

She too was detained in Lowestoft, where officials from the Marine Fisheries Agency issued the skipper with two written warnings.

Heading back to Portsmouth for some well-deserved leave, the ship carried out the final boarding of 2006 by the entire Fishery Protection Squadron.

This time it was the Western Belle which fell foul of Severn's diligence.

She was detained in Shoreham after a significant quantity of under-sized scallops were discovered on board.

"It was a challenging patrol to end the year. My ship's company put in a magnificent performance in some atrocious weather. The results speak for themselves," Lt

Cdr Cox added.

Few, if any, units in the RN/RM are busier than the Fishery Protection Squadron. HMS Mersey alone was on patrol in UK waters on 210 days in 2006 (she was actually on duty 320 days in all last year), averaging three boardings every two days.

She bagged 13 fishing vessels not playing by the rules - transgressions included under-reporting of catches to illegal fishing gear.

The squadron was the last to tie up in Portsmouth before Christmas; the Rivers were almost the first out of Pompey too after the festive break (HMS St Albans beat them by a day, but she had a date at the London Boat Show lined up, see page 14).

HMS Tyne slipped away from Portsmouth to patrol the North Sea, while Mersey headed west - into a gale where winds fluctuated from Force 8 to Force 10.

Some boardings were conducted, but most of the foul weather was ridden out in the safety of Brixham harbour.

And just because Mersey wasn't at sea didn't mean she couldn't safeguard European fish stocks.

"Not since the Cod Wars of the 1970s has the issue of cod stocks been so widely discussed in the media," said Mersey's CO Lt Cdr Jonathan Lett.

New regulations were brought in across the EU last month to ensure stocks do not dwindle any further - which means more work for the qualified British Sea

Fisheries Officers (BSFO) in the squadron.

The powers of the BSFOs extend to land, so while Mersey sheltered from the storm her fish experts inspected trawlers arriving in Brixham to offload their hauls at the Devon port's bustling fish market.

As for the future of the River class, Whitehall has agreed to extend the lease of the trio until 2013 in a £52m deal clinched with the VT Group.

The ships are leased from the Portsmouth shipbuilders under a five-year deal which is due to expire next year.

By renewing the deal now the Navy reckons it can save more than £8m over the five-year extension contract.

Tristan and Eddie

NO, we are not rewriting an ancient fairytale. The Tristan in question is the remote Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha; Eddie is Type 42 destroyer HMS Edinburgh. The warship paid a brief visit to the British dependency during a break in the lengthy journey from South Africa to the Falklands. Despite the bad weather, the ship's company were ferried ashore to pose for pictures in the island's principal settlement, Edinburgh of the Seven Seas, which claims to be the most remote town on the planet. During the stay one of Eddie's sailors fell ill and had to be taken back to South Africa for hospital treatment. It was the second time in Cape Town in a short period; on her first visit Eddie joined forces with the country's new frigate SAS Amatola for two days of exercises, which should serve the African vessel in good stead ahead of her undergoing FOST training in Devonport this year. Africa has now been left behind as Eddie concentrates the remainder of her deployment in the Americas.



● Special filter... LA(SS) Nick Baker works on a modified cover to keep the sand out of one of a Jungle Sea King's air filter system at Basra airbase



Gloucester on ceremony

POIGNANT ceremonies marked the first month away from home for the men and women of HMS Gloucester. The 'Fighting G' has taken over from HMS York as Britain's representative in a NATO force prowling the Mediterranean for terrorists and criminals. The Portsmouth-based destroyer took a brief break from those duties to pay their respects to a former Gloucesterman. It was the last wish of Kenneth McDonald that his ashes be committed to the deep. And so it was that off Naples the ship's company gathered on the flight deck for a service to do just that, led by the Rev Andy Duff. Mr McDonald, a former Royal Marine, served as a bandsman and stretcher bearer on the wartime cruiser; he was one of the few to survive her sinking off Crete in May 1941, but spent the rest of the war as a prisoner. He rejoined the RM Band at the war's end and eventually retired as a bandmaster.

Heat and guests

THE northern Arabian Gulf is probably the last place you'd expect to experience Arctic conditions. We are not referring to ice, snow and temperatures to make your bits drop off. We are referring to the US supply ship Arctic which has been keeping HMS Sutherland topped up while she knuckles down to her nine-month Gulf deployment. That said temperatures in the region aren't especially warm at this time of year: the frigate's crew and their Royal Marine and Fleet Air Arm counterparts ashore in Iraq have regularly been enduring temperatures between 5°C and 15°C (still rather warmer than Blighty - Ed). Such temperate temperatures did, of course, not stop traditional Christmas festivities amid the sands. A traditional yuletide was enjoyed by the sailors and marines attached to the Naval Transition Team (NaTT) in Umm Qasr. The team is training the Iraqi Navy to take over maritime security in the country's waterways and northern Arabian Gulf. Such training was set aside for

two days as the festivities set in, kicking off with a Christmas Eve quiz. The big day was marked in typical fashion. Officers served ratings their Christmas dinner (turkey with all the trimmings, naturally), and then all who were still awake after their hearty meal sat down to Steve McQueen in *The Great Escape*. Christmas Day was made all the merrier thanks to: 1) Santa (aka US Marine Gunnery Sergeant Boomer) and 2) welfare boxes crammed with gifts and food sent from the UK. Prior to the Christmas celebrations, RN units in Iraq welcomed a flurry of VIPs from the mother country. First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Jonathon Band paid a flying visit to Sutherland to rally the crew and present a long service medal to LCH 'Dixie' Dean for 15 years' exemplary service. In Umm Qasr the admiral chatted with RN personnel at the home of the Iraqi Navy; he watched the fledgling force conduct boarding operations on their new 'board, seize and search' trainer and was given a tour of the

Umm Qasr base. And in Basra, the 70 men and women of the Commando Helicopter Force (Iraq) - elements of 'Jungle' Sea King squadrons 845 and 846 NAS - explained how they maintained a high sortie rate in punishing conditions. The CHF has played a vital role since the invasion of Iraq four years ago; today its principal mission is to provide support and air cover for ground troops, and to have one helicopter and crew ready to launch in an instant if there's an emergency. Most recently, the Sea Kings were airborne in force during the much-publicised 'search and arrest' sweep in the Basra area while ground troops found weapons and detained several suspected insurgents. Lt Cdr 'Oz' Smith, 845's executive officer and detachment commander, said conditions in Iraq were "demanding for numerous reasons". He continued: "There's the threat, the flying conditions, the operational tempo - all combine to test the aircrew and engineers to the limit. Teamwork's essential." With leisure time sorely limited,

what is left is maximised. Soldiers and RAF personnel were rather baffled by the squadron's celebration of Taranto night (not least because they feared the explosive re-enactment of the raid might trigger the base's mortar alarm attack; thankfully, it didn't). Other entertainment assumed a more formal format. Squeaky-voiced comedian Joe Pasquale and Welsh opera star Katherine Jenkins staged two gigs at Basra air base as part of a tour organised by the British Forces Foundation. Barely had the opera diva left the stage than PM Tony Blair and Chief of Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup appeared (mercifully, they didn't sing...) to thank the Jungle teams for their unwavering efforts. The 846 NAS element of the helicopter force is now back in the UK as part of the continuing roulement of personnel; their 845 comrades swap over next month. Meanwhile other Jungle Sea Kings can be found far from the rainforests; helicopters and personnel are currently deployed in Bardufoss in northern Norway on Arctic training.

Gloucester arrived in the Mediterranean in time for ceremonies to mark the fifth anniversary of Operation Active Endeavour. The destroyer dropped anchor off Nisida island, home to NATO's maritime headquarters near Naples, and sent a platoon of sailors ashore for ceremonies which were attended by numerous dignitaries including Commander-in-Chief Fleet Admiral Sir James Burnell-Nugent. The ship spent five days in Naples in the run-up to Christmas. Gloucester's rugby team demolished the NATO Lions 41-7, while their shipmates preferred to sample the sights of Sorrento, Pompeii and even Rome. The RN has had an almost constant presence on Active Endeavour since its inception; jointly, the NATO force has interrogated 83,000 vessels and boarded more than 100 of them. The operation was launched in the wake of the September 11 atrocities; it's one strand of a concerted effort in Europe, the Middle East and Asia to stop terrorists, smugglers, and traffickers moving by sea.

Red Rose stops immigrants

A JOINT operation by frigate HMS Lancaster and the Maritime Police of the Turks and Caicos islands prevented illegal immigrants from entering the islands. Lancaster's Merlin helicopter gathered intelligence in the air while the ship's Pacific 24 RIBs conducted surveillance work on the water, work which led to the arrest of 43 suspected illegal immigrants. On land, sailors met the islands' disaster relief organisation to discuss plans to cope with a hurricane should it strike the Turks and Caicos. Another 30 sailors got stuck in to refurbish the juvenile delinquent centre - an old police station - so that it can be used by youngsters who are currently held in an adult prison. Lancaster in Florida, page 13

Lightning strikes a deal



BRITAIN is to press ahead with the successor to the Harrier after clinching a deal with US defence chiefs. The Americans have agreed to share vital technical details about the Joint Strike Fighter - crucial if the UK is to operate the fighter-bomber. The Joint Strike Fighter - also known as the F35 Lightning II - will be the mainstay of the Fleet Air Arm and RAF's 'fast jet' wings from the middle of next decade. It will provide the punch for the RN's two super-carriers, HMS Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales. The £140bn project had stalled, however, over 'technology transfer'. Whitehall is only interested in the strike fighter if it can maintain, repair and upgrade the aircraft on its own terms. Defence Secretary Des Browne and Defence Procurement Minister Lord Drayson said Britain and the US had come to an agreement over what it calls 'operational sovereignty', which would give the UK the necessary information to integrate the jet into Britain's combat and command systems. That meant the UK could go forward with the huge project (reportedly the biggest military programme on the planet at present). Nine nations are developing the JSF: Britain, the US, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Turkey. Around 2,400 of the aircraft are expected to roll off the production lines eventually, with up to 150 bought by the UK, entering service next decade. More than 100 British companies have a stake in designing and building the aircraft, worth more than £15bn to the UK economy.

● A prototype F35 on a test flight above the Californian desert
Picture: Lockheed Martin

NAVY NEWS
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Leave no man behind

TOO long absent, the RN returned to the front pages of many newspapers and magazines as 2007 opened... but the stories made bleak reading. We shall begin our look at the papers with the Daily Telegraph's dark 'Navy to cut its fleet by half':

THE Government has admitted that 13 unnamed warships are in a state of reduced readiness, putting them around 18 months away from active service. A further six destroyers and frigates - Type 22 frigates Cumberland, Chatham, Campbeltown and Cornwall and Type 42 destroyers Exeter and Southampton - are being proposed for cuts. Two mine counter-measures vessels and two RFA tankers are also under threat. "The Royal Navy is on its knees without immediate and proper funding. I cannot see how it can recover," said Steve Bush, editor of Warship World magazine. - Daily Telegraph

THE Royal Navy may suffer heavy cuts and lose as many as eight warships as a result of an internal review of all spending by the Armed Forces. An internal document outlining the cuts says that six destroyers and frigates will be mothballed. Two other ships might be put into "reduced readiness" to achieve a total saving of £250 million. - The Times

IF IT carries on like this, it won't be long before we'll be able to fit all the grey hulls into Portsmouth Naval base in one go - assuming, that is, the base itself is not closed. - Portsmouth News

PROMOTION for Royal Navy officers is to be frozen for five years in a cost-cutting measure that has caused fury in the Fleet. Morale is plummeting as officers stand to lose more than £10,000 a year in pay. An official Navy document passed to this newspaper states that all promotions to the rank of Lieutenant Commander or above will be halted until 2012. A serving lieutenant commander described the freeze as "an absolute outrage". He added: "People who have worked extremely hard and given their careers to the Navy, have bled for the Navy, are now being rewarded like this." - Daily Telegraph

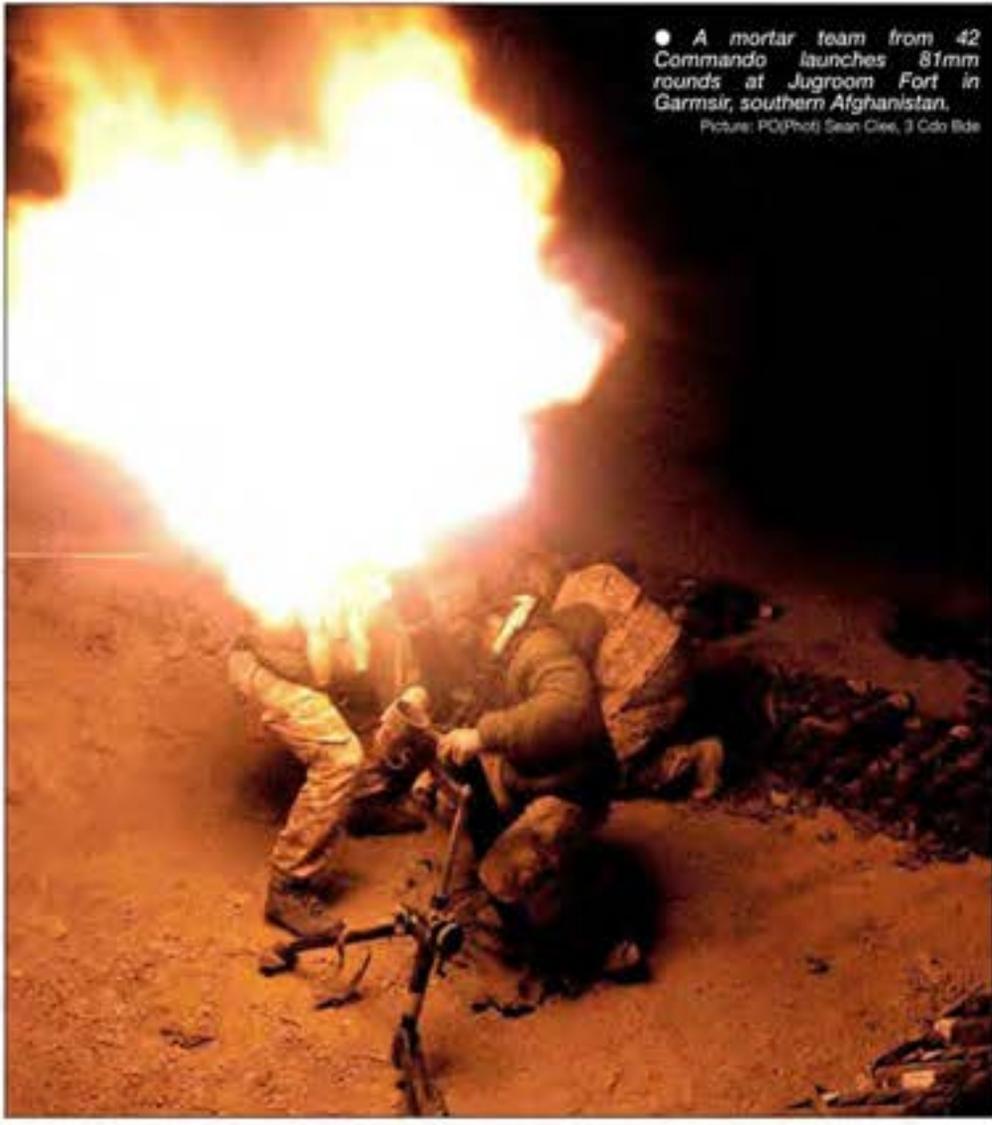
As is often the case with Fleet Street, these articles aren't entirely accurate... Turn to page 8 for the Prime Minister's interview with our editor. And on the plus side when it comes to things financial:

PORTSMOUTH Naval Base chiefs are on track to slash running costs by £13m this year. A 'war on waste' has seen the dockyard's energy bill out by ten per cent. Staff are moving out of older buildings into more environmentally-friendly ones. "Everyone here is pulling together to make savings in all areas," said a spokesman. - Portsmouth News

ROYAL Marines staged a dramatic helicopter rescue to recover the body of their comrade killed as British forces stormed a Taliban fortress.

Marines strapped themselves to Apache gunships to return to Jugroom Fort in Garmisr when they realised L/Cpl Mathew Ford was not with them as they pulled back to regroup. Sadly, they found the NCO was already dead; he was killed as Royals dismantled from Viking armoured vehicles and began the assault on the Taliban stronghold under withering small arms fire. A 200-strong British force - Zulu Company, 45 Commando, mounted in Vikings, plus elements of the Light Dragoons and Brigade Reconnaissance Force, stormed Jugroom in the lawless district of Garmisr. Taliban insurgents held Jugroom and had driven the local civilian populace away from the area. After a two-month intelligence-gathering operation, British troops struck, bolstered by heavy gun support from the Royal Artillery and aerial firepower courtesy of Army Air Corps Apaches. The attacking force had already crossed a river and was assaulting a walled compound when L/Cpl Ford was killed. Comrades said the Royal was leading his section to close with the enemy when he was hit. The 30-year-old joined the Corps six years ago and served as a driver with the Commando Logistic Regiment before qualifying as a heavy weapons specialist with 45 Commando in Arbroath. "Mathew was a popular and gregarious young Royal Marine. His professionalism, reliability and selflessness, as well as his sharp wit, marked him out from the crowd," said his Commanding Officer Lt Col Duncan Dewar. L/Cpl Ford was the fourth man from 3 Cdo Bde to be killed in Afghanistan in the past month. In the north of Helmand, Mne Thomas 'Vinders' Curry was killed in close-quarters fighting with insurgents near Kajaki. The 21-year-old from East London was awarded the Commando Medal as the man on the initial training course at Lymington who best embodied the spirit of the Corps. As befitted his name, Vinders had a huge appetite but was the first to laugh at jokes at his own expense. "Thomas was a glowing example of what a Royal Marine represents," said his Commanding Officer Lt Col Matt Holmes. "He was also self-effacing, utterly unselfish and cheerful. His country has lost a brave, selfless servant who contributed much in his short time." Mne Richie Watson, of Kilo

Company, 42 Commando, was fatally wounded by small arms fire when his troop ran into the Taliban during a patrol of the Now Zad area. Despite being swiftly evacuated by helicopter to the British hospital in Camp Bastion at Lashkar Gar, the base of British operations in Helmand, he was pronounced dead by medics. Colleagues described the 23-year-old from Surrey as someone who left an indelible mark on anyone he touched. "He was a passionate man who loved life - he was always the front man on a run and the first to lead his fire team into the assault," said Lt Col Matt Holmes. "He radiated enthusiasm for his work, inspiring those around him." Mne Watson only joined the Royals in June 2005 and was drafted to 4 Troop Kilo Company in April last year to prepare for the Afghanistan deployment. L/Bdr James 'Doobs' Dwyer had made good progress in his brief career in 3 Cdo Bde's associated artillery unit, 29 Cdo Regt Royal Artillery. Born and brought up in South Africa, he enlisted in the Army in July 2003 and a year later joined 29 Cdo Regt. He took his responsibilities as a junior NCO seriously yet never lost his infectious sense of humour. He was also a talented squash player, representing both the Royal Artillery and Army competitively. "James was a bright and motivated young man - extremely popular within the regiment," said Lt Col Neil Wilson, 29's CO. "He would have undoubtedly progressed rapidly through the ranks. He'll be sorely missed by all members of 29 Commando Regiment." Despite these losses, staff at 3 Cdo Bde say the New Year offensive has taken the fight to the enemy - and defeated him on every occasion. "Our intention was to show the insurgents that they are not safe anywhere - that we are able to reach them and attack whenever and wherever we choose, even when they think they are at their safest," said Lt Col Rory Bruce. "We are not allowing the Taliban to re-group and re-arm over the winter." After the offensive in Garmisr to drive the insurgents out, Allied forces remained behind to safeguard the area - allowing locals forced out by the Taliban to slowly return and resume their lives.



● A mortar team from 42 Commando launches 81mm rounds at Jugroom Fort in Garmisr, southern Afghanistan. Picture: PO(Phot) Sean Clee, 3 Cdo Bde

in the line of fire, pages 10-11



● Clockwise from left... L/Bdr James Dwyer, L/Cpl Mathew Ford, Mne Thomas Curry and Mne Richie Watson



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Opinion

We'll keep our side of the bargain

THE headlines this past month have made bleak reading.

Ships to be mothballed or sold off, a slow-down on officers' and senior ratings' promotions, sub-standard accommodation, not to mention the Grim Reaper's continuing toll in Afghanistan and Iraq.

So the Prime Minister's assurances to Navy News that the future carriers are safe and the Navy will not be mothballing six surface ships are welcome indeed.

The Prime Minister left his audience in Plymouth in no doubt that the UK must retain her status as a global power – prepared to use force if necessary in the interests of democracy and freedom.

The Government needed to spend more on equipment, personnel and conditions, he acknowledged.

And in return, the military – and the public – needed to accept that conflict and casualty might be a part of life in uniform.

This part of the bargain has never been in doubt.

Our men and women will continue to meet danger and deprivations with their customary courage and good humour – so long as they believe their work is valued and that the Armed Forces are adequately funded.

They might well say what Winston Churchill said six decades ago: "Give us the tools and we will finish the job..."

A round, unvarnished tale

FOR the fourth time Navy News has picked up an award for its efforts to turn military jargon into everyday language.

Judges of the Plain English Campaign decided we were worthy of an 'Inside Write' award for producing a newspaper in, er, plain English.

The judges said that our mix of well-written and concise features, clear, attention-grabbing headlines and striking photos holds the readers' interest and prevents them from switching off.

That said, at times the language in Navy News is perhaps not 'plain' enough (although some members of the team use rather plainer English than others...)

Ploughing through MOD-speak remains a constant battle. Officers still talk of being "tasked" to do something ("ordered" or even "asked" would suffice) acronyms abound and sometimes baffle us, and yes, many of the articles on the 2-6 pages (written by the Navy for serving people) go over our heads.

It is, of course, a difficult balancing act. We aim to write for everyone, from the veterans in their 70s and 80s to the 17-year-olds walking through the gates of Raleigh for the first time.

Neither would be slow to tell us if they thought our standards were slipping (see the letters, right) and some readers take exception to the puns and attempts at humour.

Our goal throughout remains constant however. To capture the essence of Jack, Jenny and Royal and champion what they do day in, day out – because if we do not do it, their work will remain largely unsung outside the Service.

The views expressed in Navy News do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Defence

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● On boarding HMS Bellerophon en route to exile in St Helena, Napoleon inspected a Captain's Guard of Royal Marines. He is reputed to have said "How much might be done with a hundred thousand soldiers such as these!" – a painting by Capt Hicks

Picture: Trustees of the Royal Marines Museum

History lesson for Royal...

THE letter from 42 Cdo RM (January) was really a rather sad reflection on our times.

I don't know what sort of training they receive at Lympstone these days but they are surely taught nothing of the history of the Corps. So here it comes, Royal.

You are absolutely right when you say the Corps was formed over 300 years ago but from there on you veer wildly off course. The Corps was formed to provide a land-fighting element to the Navy – an elite force of soldier/sailors who could function at sea and on land.

For centuries the Royal Marine could hand, reef and steer, hoist, haul and sway away alongside his shipmates despite having the requisite frontal lobotomy and the issue of vast amounts of pipeclay (blanco) and enormous studded boots.

In addition to this the RMs manned one of the ship's big-gun turrets – usually X or Y turret, provided the manpower in the magazines, most of which were hand-draulic, and manned a number of the AA weapons on the upper deck.

This state of affairs lasted into the 1960s when, sadly, the last of our beautiful cruisers suffered the agonies of the cutters' torches in the breakers' yards.

This meant that the Navy was faced with making a momentous decision.

With the loss of the big ship there was now very little place for the Corps of the Royal Marines. And then some 'jobsworth' wizard came up with the idea of creating the RM commando.

Almost overnight the RM Infantry Training Centre at Lympstone became the RM Commando Training Centre, but the fact of the matter is the change of name was purely a 'fancy waistcoat' exercise.

Nothing really changed except instead of wearing the honourable blue beret of the RMs, everyone was now swanning around in green berets and calling themselves Commandos.

Another little 'home truth', Royal. Despite the fancy waistcoat you are no more Commandos than any other Light Infantry.

In fact, that is exactly what you are.

You may be good. You may even be among the best, but you are purely and simply Light Infantry.

The RMs haven't taken part in a Commando operation since 1945 and that in conjunction with large numbers of Army Commandos and RN Commandos. Not in Korea, not in Suez, Aden, Cyprus, Indonesia

– not anywhere at any time.

And, just to finish off, Royal – the Royal Marines are, like the Fleet Air Arm, a part of the Royal Navy.

For quite a while now most Leathernecks have served ashore in their jolly little commando units and come under the Army Act for discipline, but the Head Honcho of your branch is an Admiral and at any time you can be summoned back to take your proper place as soldier/sailor.

Good luck out there in Afghanistan, Royal, and may all the Gods of War be with you.

– Gerald Toghiani, former Master at Arms, Westonzoyland, Bridgwater

...SURELY this Marine doesn't want to be a Pogue?

The Royals have been an integral part of the Royal Navy for a few hundred years now and of course, before the MOD got in on the act, the Admiralty paid our wages! We even speak the same language.

I am, and always was, proud to be 'a soldier and a sailor too' and so were my oppos and many of the young Marines I meet nowadays.

I know you have a very unpleasant billet at the moment, mate, but try to stop dripping, and 'soldier on'.

You might get a bit of sailing later.

Best of luck to you anyway.

– J R Cann, Great Baddow, Essex

...PERHAPS the Marines of 7 Troop should recall which desk they approached in the recruiting office (perhaps they failed the first test and went to the Army desk).

Perhaps they should recall that they are normally carried to battle in large grey ships in which their oppos drive the landing craft.

Why do they love to whizz around the ocean in their rigid raiders?

Why was it the Royal Marines who were the protectors of the ships' officers in Nelson's time?

Maybe the boredom of Helmand could be broken up by a few education and history lessons from senior NCOs and officers?

– A Jarvis, former CPOMEA EL EM, Nottingham

We had almost (but not quite) as many letters and calls about this as about our mistake about Illustrious (see opposite). We can't print them all, for reasons of space, but will publish them on the web at www.navynews.co.uk

Don't believe the Germans

FORGIVE an amateur, non-Navy individual for daring to contradict your newspaper, but I feel I should point out a major error in your account of the attack by U47 in October 1939 (December).

Prien did not hit Repulse, for the simple reason that Repulse was in Rosyth when the attack was carried out.

She had been in the Flow on October 12, and was duly spotted by a German reconnaissance, but subsequently sailed.

The only warships of any size present when Prien entered the Flow were the seaplane tender Pegasus, moored in the same area as Royal Oak, and the AMCs Voltaire and Rawalpindi, moored in Hoxa Sound.

The Home Fleet, consisting of Repulse, Hood, Nelson, Rodney,

Furious, Newcastle, Sheffield, Aurora and 12 destroyers, had recently carried out an unsuccessful operation intended to intercept Gneisenau, Köln, and nine destroyers, after which the Commander in Chief, Sir Charles Forbes, took the bulk of the fleet to Loch Ewe, probably because he had doubts about the security of Scapa Flow.

Royal Oak herself was too slow and elderly to operate with the main fleet, and had suffered storm damage whilst patrolling between Orkney and Shetland with two destroyers, which was the reason for her presence on October 13/14.

Incidentally, the log of U47 is a thoroughly unreliable document. The references to the light and to the feverish activity contradict

the reports of both survivors and rescuers, all of whom emphasise the darkness and the silence.

Although the Admiral commanding Orkney and Shetland, Sir Wilfred French, did subsequently despatch destroyers, these did not arrive until well after U47 had left the scene.

Whether the log was doctored for propaganda reasons in Berlin, or whether the ambitious Prien sought to exaggerate what was already a remarkable achievement, will almost certainly never be known.

– Geoff Hewitt, Penwortham, Preston, Lancs.

The account of the sinking of HMS Royal Oak was based on the log of U47 and Prien's memoirs, Mein Weg nach Scapa Flow – evidently not reliable sources...

It's a long way to draft a rating

WITH reference to the longest joining routine (January) I was serving in HMS Peacock when I was accepted for loan service in the Royal Australian Navy.

I left Malta in October 1947 and took passage in MT Empire Trooper (formerly German, captured by HMS Belfast in 1939).

After a stop in Tobruk I waited in Port Said for three weeks until, by coincidence, HMS Belfast arrived. I joined her for passage to Singapore with stops at Aden and Colombo.

There was a ten-day wait in HMS Terror when I got a passage on a small Blue Funnel ship that traded among the islands. I shared a cabin with three boy scouts on their way to a jamboree.

We arrived in Fremantle on Boxing Day where I was accommodated in HMAS Leeuwin until New Year's Eve.

An overnight journey took me to Kalgoorlie where we changed train on to a narrow-gauge railway. At that time each state had a different gauge railway.

A three-day journey across the Nullarbor plain, where the railway line is dead straight for over 450 miles, to Port Pirie, an overnight stay in an Army Barracks and next day an overnight journey to Adelaide.

Here there was a three-day wait, at that time rail passengers had to have a seat ticket, it was holiday time and no seats available.

Next was an overnight journey to Melbourne where I met my brother for the first time in 22 years. The Rail Transport Officer gave me a five-day break, then it was an overnight journey to Sydney to join HMAS Penguin.

It had taken me 14 days to cross Australia and three months since I left HMS Peacock.

No wonder there were signals flying, asking what had become of the draft!

– George Woodley, Ryde, Isle of Wight

IN reply to your January correspondent, no!

On March 18 1952, 24 ratings and myself left Portsmouth by rail to Southampton, where we embarked the Troopship Daners for Hong Kong, calling at Aden, Colombo and Singapore.

On arrival at Hong Kong we were transported to Stonecutter Island where we spent 14 days under canvas.

Then took passage in a tramp steamer to Kure, staying overnight at HMAS Commonwealth.

Next day we caught the midday train to Sasebo, arriving on board HMS Whitesand Bay, at approx. 21:30 on May 15.

I call this my 2-2-2 journey. On reflection some years later, I worked out that the Navy had lost 1,400 man/days, but there weren't the passenger planes then that we have today.

– Jan Roud, Romsey, Hants.

Slow seep of sleep in sickbay

I WELL remember the interest and concern within the ship as Arethusa's Wasp flew Surg Cdr McLeod to HMS Londonderry and during the subsequent operation in Hampshire's sick-bay (*The Time of Your Lives*, January).

What we did not know until later was that the assembled surgical team were slowly being sent to sleep by their own anaesthetic.

A hasty A&A for County-class sickbay ventilation followed.

– Simon Fraser, Aberdeen, Fife

CLASSIC JACK

BY TUGS

I AM NOT SENDIN' ANY VALENTINE CARDS!

WHY'S'AT?



I SENT FIVE LAST YEAR AND ONLY GOT FOUR BACK



Albert Hall parade was a good show

AS THE State Ceremonial Training Officer for the Royal Navy, I would like to make the following points to Mrs P Blake and her comments about the Albert Hall ceremony (January).

The RN November Ceremonies Contingent had no small, rather obese Junior Rates in the show. However, on reviewing my DVD copy of the show two Junior Rates did get out of step on the arena floor.

This was accidental and as with all ceremonial events we can train for many hours but the young sailors only get one bite of the cherry and if it goes wrong they have to recover as quickly as possible, which both did on this occasion.

For some of the young sailors this was the first time they had performed in front of a large audience and TV cameras, which is a very daunting task, however, they all performed well.

After watching the RN part of the DVD a number of times, I could not see the Senior QARNNS sister eating her gobstopper or acting in an unprofessional manner.

However, I then let the DVD run and watched an Army Medical Corps Sister who was chewing a sweet of some sort for most of her time on screen.

The clue for Mrs Blake is the fact that this lady was wearing a red top to her ward uniform and the QARNNS wear Navy blue.

- WO1(AWW) Barker, State Ceremonial Training Officer, HMS Collingwood

LETTERS to the editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent's name and address, not necessarily for publication.

E-mail correspondents are also requested to provide this information.

Letters cannot be submitted over the telephone.

Given the impressive volume of letters, we cannot publish all of your correspondence in Navy News.

However, we do try to publish many of your letters on our own website www.navynews.co.uk

We look particularly for correspondence which stimulates debate, makes us laugh or raises important issues.

Please try to keep your submissions as brief as possible - our space is limited.

The editor reserves the right to edit your submissions.



Pay attention, Navy News

IT'S amazing how things have changed since I left the Navy over 40 years ago. Back in those days when we stood to attention our feet were together and our hands were by our sides. The Illustrious crew are standing with their feet apart and their hands behind their backs. We used to call that "standing at ease".

- Pony Moore, Droxford, Hampshire

...ILLUSTRIOUS' crew stand to attention (January) Oh? Really? Who taught you your foot-drill?

- Alistair White, S/Sgt REME (Retired) Eastleigh

...HAS the drill been changed since my days in the Andrew? Surely the matelots are at ease on the flight deck?

- W G Clarke, Wokingham, Berks

...I KNOW things have changed since I left the Andrew in 1960, but if they are standing to attention, what is standing at ease?

- C Brown, former L/Seaman, Burton, Carnforth, Lancs

...OUR Chief would have had forty fits if we stood "at ease" when hands on port side had been called to attention!

- Kent Tomoy

...NOW my forces' service is negligible compared to (I am sure) all your readership, but it is clear even to me that the crew are standing at ease.

- Alan Rowland, St Leonard's-on-Sea, East Sussex

...WE HO Ords at Ganges were taught a much less relaxed attitude by the Chief GI.

- A K Tamon, former AB, Crawley, West Sussex

...HANDS behind your back, legs astride, means, or used to mean for people of my age group, "Stand Easy". Legs together, arms by your side, thumbs in line with your bellbottoms - then you were At Attention.

- Neil Duffy, Kirkstall, Leeds

You are all so very, very right and we were all so very, very wrong - Ed.



● Lt Gen Sir Robert Fry RM

There's room in the Regiment

JUST before Christmas I had the privilege of attending the Sovereign's Parade at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as Colonel, the Special Reconnaissance Regiment.

Is there any precedent for a serving RM, or indeed RN, officer to be acting as regimental colonel of an army regiment?

Your readers may be interested to know that the Colonel, Commanding Officer and Regimental Sergeant Major of the Regiment are now all members of the Naval Service, with room for plenty more.

- Lt Gen Sir Robert Fry, Department of War Studies, King's College, London

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● Sailors not at attention on the flightdeck of HMS Illustrious

See more letters on page 39

We won't mothball the Fleet

MEDIA reports of savage cuts to the Royal Navy are misleading and exaggerated, the Prime Minister told *Navy News*.

Interviewed in Plymouth after his speech on the nation's defence needs, Mr Blair said he could reassure readers of *Navy News* that there were no plans to mothball six surface ships, nor to cancel the future carrier programme, as some national newspapers had reported.

He said: "We're not mothballing ships. There will be changes in the degree to which all ships are ready for operations - that's a matter for the Navy to sort out."

"We've got to utilise the assets we've got, and in respect of the carriers, they're a very important part of our future capability."

He added: "I think a lot of this is on the basis of leaks or comments that don't, when you look into them, turn out to be factually correct."

"We've got the largest warship-building programme we've had for decades under way, but the ships will change - you have different types of ships, but that's for the experts to decide according to the capability we need."

The Prime Minister's speech, *Defence Perspectives*, was the latest in a series of lectures he is giving around the UK under the title *Our Nation's Future*.

After the speech, which he gave to members of the Royal United Services' Institute and guests in HMS Albion, RUSI members opened a defence debate with a question and answer session.

In his speech, Mr Blair underlined his determination to preserve the UK's standing as a global power.

He said: "There is a case for Britain in the early 21st Century, with its imperial strength behind it, to slip quietly, even graciously, into a different role."

"We become leaders in the fight against climate change, against global poverty, for peace and reconciliation; and leave the



● Prime Minister Tony Blair speaks to an audience of guests and members of the Royal United Services' Institute on board HMS Albion

demonstration of 'hard' power to others."

He added: "But in reality, that's not how the world is."

"So my choice is for Armed Forces that are prepared to engage in this difficult, tough, challenging campaign, to be warfighters as well as peacekeepers."

A 'hard' defence policy needed money, the Prime Minister acknowledged, and defence spending would have to be increased.

He said: "The covenant between Armed Forces, Government and people has to be renewed."

"For our part, in Government, it will mean increased expenditure

on equipment, personnel and the conditions of our Armed Forces, not in the short run but in the long term."

"On the part of the military, they need to accept that in a volunteer armed force, conflict and therefore casualty may be part of what they are called upon to face."

The Prime Minister paid tribute to the men and women of the Armed Forces, whose determination and extraordinary spirit never failed to inspire him.

"Indeed, very often those with the most dangerous tasks are those most up for it, most resolute," he said.

Mr Blair appeared to throw

out a lifeline to the three Naval Bases, Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Faslane, when he said during a television debate that it was "inconceivable" to do without one of them.

But the full report on the bases and how they might be made more efficient, was due to be published later this year, he said.

During his whistle-stop tour of South West defence establishments, the Prime Minister visited the RM Commando Training Centre at Lymington, and Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth, where his visit is thought to be the first by a serving Prime Minister in the college's 102-year history.



● Crew from MSC Napoli arrive safely in RNAS Culdrose after a high seas rescue
Picture: PO(Phot) Ian Richards

771 dash to the rescue in high seas drama

TWO Royal Navy Sea Kings scrambled to rescue the crew of a crippled cargo ship as January storms lashed the British Isles.

The container ship MSC Napoli began to take on water worryingly about 40 miles south of Lizard Point in Cornwall.

The English Channel began pouring through a hole 3ft x 18in in the Napoli's side and her 26 crew took to the lifeboats, fearing the vessel would sink.

Within minutes two Sea Kings of 771 Naval Air Station from RNAS Culdrose were on the scene despite ferocious conditions in the Channel - the wind was gusting up to 50mph and the waves and swell were up to 50ft.

The aircrews found the lifeboat being tossed about and although the Napoli's sailors were safe, PO(ACMN) Jay O'Donnell, who was winched down to the craft, decided evacuation was the best course.

Over the next 45 minutes Rescue 194 winched 13 merchantmen to safety; when it was finished Rescue 193 moved in to haul the remaining 13 sailors, including Napoli's master.

"Once we came alongside the lifeboat, we were going up and down 50ft in the dips of the swell and tops of the waves while we tried to remain on station," said pilot Capt Damian May RM.

All 26 Napoli crew were safely ferried back to Culdrose where they were wrapped in blankets, given warm food and drinks and dry clothes.

After some phoned their



● Surg Lt Cdr Matthew Turner cares for one of the rescued crewmen

families to recount their rescue, all were taken to the Seamen's Mission in Falmouth and later to a local hotel.

"I am very proud of my crews for conducting a textbook rescue in such demanding conditions," said 771's Commanding Officer Lt Cdr Chris Godwin.

As for the 62,000-tonne Napoli, she was bound for Portugal carrying 2,400 containers when cracks had begun appearing in her hull - cracks which developed into a sizeable gash through which water poured in.

Tugs were sent to salvage the vessel which was listed as carrying a dangerous cargo, including pesticides.

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800 NAS back but Harriers remain

THE men and women of 800 Naval Air Squadron are back in Blighty from Afghanistan, after almost four months supporting the Royal Marines and other forces against the Taliban.

But while 800 are home, their Harrier GR7s remain in theatre, with the RAF's No.1 (F) Squadron taking over the protective aegis for British and international forces.

The operational tempo has been high, with sorties stretching across the country - although the majority of work has been centred around the hotspots of Kandahar and Helmand.

The bomber role has become second nature to the former Sea Harrier squadron, dropping 540lb bombs, 1,000lb laser guided bombs and firing air-to-ground rockets.

After a brief period of well-earned rest, the squadron will be back to work at their home base of RAF Cottesmore.

Next will be a return to their natural environment when they join carrier HMS Illustrious in the spring.



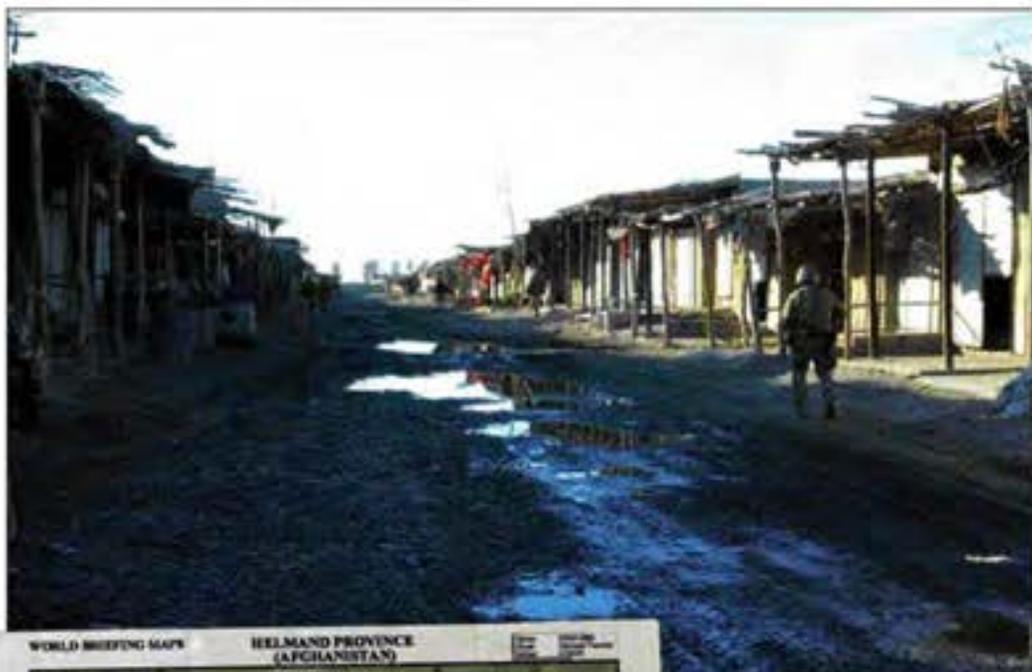
● A fully-loaded Harrier GR7 on the tarmac at Kandahar Picture: PO(Phot) Sean O'Leary



● Shaw patrol... (Above) An Afghan boy watches as Sgt Baz Shaw of Lima Company, 42 Cdo, searches a village in Kandahar province, Southern Afghanistan and (below) India Company, Command Support Group, moves through a village in the the Garmsir region



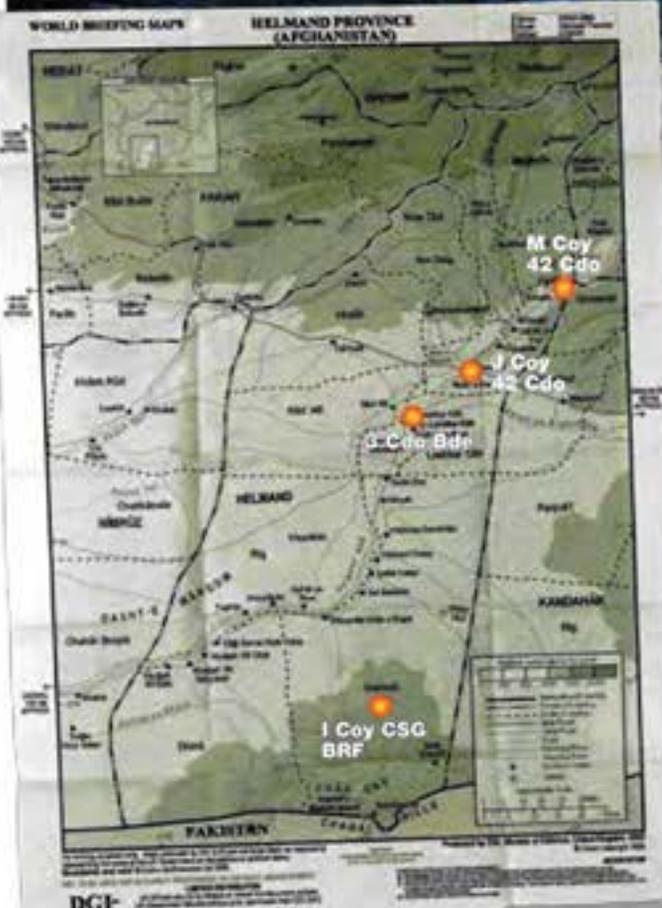
● Helping Hands... (Top) Capt Edward Hands, Officer Commanding 8 Troop, Lima Company, 42 Cdo, chats with a village elder near Kandahar and (above) a WMIK Land Rover of India Company on patrol in the Garmsir district



ROYAL Marine Commandos killed a suspected terrorist leader, wiped out scores of insurgents and seized a large arms cache in a fierce month of fighting with the Taliban among the mountains of Afghanistan.

Pictures by **LA(Phots) Andy Hibberd** and **Gaz Faulkner** and **PO(Phot) Sean Clew**, 3 Commando Brigade

In the line



STRETCHED along a 100-mile course of the Helmand river valley from the relative lowlands of Kajaki to the heights of Garmsir, the men of 3 Commando Brigade have been locked in mortal combat.

2007 opened as 2006 ended – on the offensive against the Taliban fundamentalists and insurgents who threaten to disrupt everyday life in southern Afghanistan.

Helmand province is among the most lawless in this land, so a series of sweeps have been unleashed by the brigade, based at Camp Bastion in the regional capital of Lashkar Gah, to crush the insurgency.

Mike Company, 42 Commando, launched Operation Clay against the Taliban in and around the town of Kajaki in northern Helmand.

A 110-strong force of Royals, bolstered by Royal Engineers and TA soldiers, set out to re-take the town and to pave the way for engineers to restore electricity to nearly two million Afghans.

Outside the town on the Helmand river stands Kajaki Hydro Electric Dam; the American-built structure was damaged during the 2001 bombing campaign.

With Taliban activity in Kajaki,

engineers were unable to effect repairs to the dam, hence the need for Operation Clay.

The assault began with commandos seizing an observation post above Kajaki which gave the Royals a broad field of fire and excellent views across the valley.

From there, Mike Company swept through caves to the north-east of the town which were – correctly – thought to be a Taliban stronghold.

When the commandos came under heavy fire from the insurgents they pulled back, regrouped, then moved into the neighbouring village of Khalawak to drive the Taliban out of there instead.

As the front-line troops pressed forward, in Kajaki itself, 59 Independent Commando Squadron Royal Engineers and their TA counterparts 131 Independent Commando Squadron began building a checkpoint and forward base for Allied forces to use.

It took the engineers 36 hours to erect the checkpoint; the small base will be used by British forces to carry out checks on vehicles passing through the town and serve as a strongpoint for patrols. In the long term the aim is to hand control of it to the Afghan National Police.

While the engineers toiled by day and night – often coming under fire from insurgents – the commandos continued their thrust to expel the Taliban, concentrating their attention on a terrorist training camp in the village of Kajaki Olya.

The Taliban didn't take too kindly to this and brought rocket-propelled grenades and small

arms fire to bear on the advancing marines; the Royals responded with withering 81mm mortar fire, machine-gun bursts and rocket fire of their own.

"Initially we were pinned down, but managed to suppress the enemy before gaining entry to the compounds," explained 2/Lt Barry Kerr, Officer Commanding 11 Troop, Mike Company.

"Once in we cleared the area, pushing the enemy back as we swept through. The lads worked extremely well throughout the operation and the intelligence suggests that Taliban forces took a hard blow and were overwhelmed."

That intelligence also suggests that the local Taliban leader was killed, as well as many of his cohorts during Operation Clay; British casualties totaled just a single man with a gunshot wound to his hand.

The key aim was to defeat the Taliban, force them out of Kajaki and create a safer environment to allow engineers to restore hydro-electric power to the area.

"A programme that will switch power on in 1.8 million homes will start – without this operation that wouldn't have been done," said Maj Oliver Lee, 3 Commando Brigade's Operations Officer.

"This will treble the amount of land which can be irrigated, significantly increasing the swathe which can be exploited by crops other than poppy."

Thirty miles to the southwest, a sizeable Allied force – Juliet Company 42 Commando, Estonian troops and soldiers from the Afghan Nation Army – were

scouring ground outside Gereshk, a hotbed of Taliban activity, when they were attacked by insurgents.

Upwards of 50 Taliban fired guns, mortar rounds and RPGs; the Allied troops responded in kind, then called in Apache gunships and GR7 Harriers of 800 Naval Air Squadron, plus artillery support.

One commando Viking armoured vehicle was struck by an RPG during the five-hour fire-fight but not seriously damaged, while the Taliban fled their positions, leaving a substantial weapons cache behind including AK47s, grenades and bomb-making equipment.

"This was the fiercest fire-fight Juliet Company had been involved in – primarily due to the weight of fire that we came under," said company commander Maj Ewen Murchison.

"At times the Taliban were as close as 40 metres away – close enough for us to physically see them."

On its first front-line deployment, Viking is proving to be a major asset for the Royals.

Not only does it give the green berets mobility, it also provides much better protection against small arms fire – and more.

Troops on the ground are in no doubt that the tracked vehicle has saved lives – and spared men maimings.

"It's a phenomenal piece of hardware – nothing matches it. We've been out here three months and would have lost considerably more blokes without it," said Sgt Maj Simon Williams.

"British soldiers are coming



of fire...

home to their sons and daughters without missing limbs and – most importantly – alive thanks to Viking.”

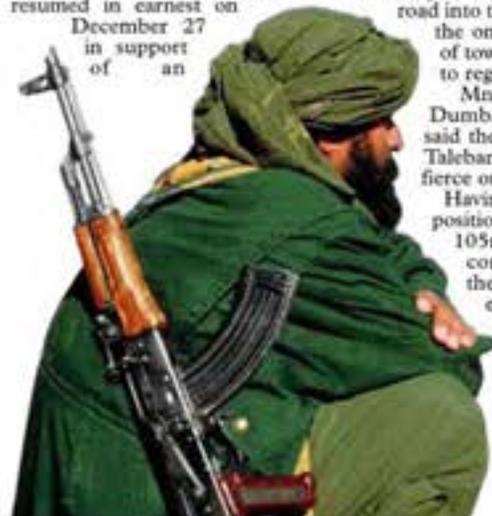
Mine John Westwood said enemy mortars had landed barely six feet from a Viking he was in and it hadn't left a scratch on the vehicle.

“Small arms fire just bounce off her like stone chippings.”

Overhead hover the guardian angels of 800 NAS.

The squadron has had just two days off from major operations – December 25 and 26 – since it arrived in theatre at the beginning of October.

Bombing operations resumed in earnest on December 27 in support of an



Allied offensive in the Panjwai district, but chiefly over Helmand.

Unsurprisingly, the Taliban didn't take a break from insurgency over the festive season.

Troops from India Company, Command Support Group, grappled with Taliban insurgents throughout Christmas in the southern district of Garmisr.

The Royals were subjected to regular sniper fire, rocket propelled grenades and small arms fire as they attempted to wrest control of the region from the Taliban's hands.

Garmisr was once a thriving centre of commerce, but the formerly bustling streets have been all but deserted since insurgent activity flared up. The principal road into the district centre and the only bridge in and out of town are both subjected to regular sniper fire.

Mine Eddie Cain from Dumbarton in Scotland said the skirmishes with the Taliban had been particularly fierce on Christmas Eve.

Having pummeled Taliban positions with mortar and 105mm shell fire, the commandos thought they had subdued the enemy.

But the insurgents used dried-up canals and trenches to get within 200 yards of India Company's position and then opened fire with RPGs and rifles.

“We jumped

behind the foot-tall sandbag wall to return fire, only to be beaten back by the bullets ripping through our protection,” said Mine Cain.

“Rolling back from the trench I realised a round had passed through my shirt just missing my shoulder – for the second time in three days.”

It took the combined fire of the commandos' machine-guns and a 50 calibre gun mounted on a WMIK Land Rover to subdue the insurgents in a battle which lasted long into the night.

The fierce fighting with Taliban contrasts sharply with the Royals' attempts to win over the local populace.

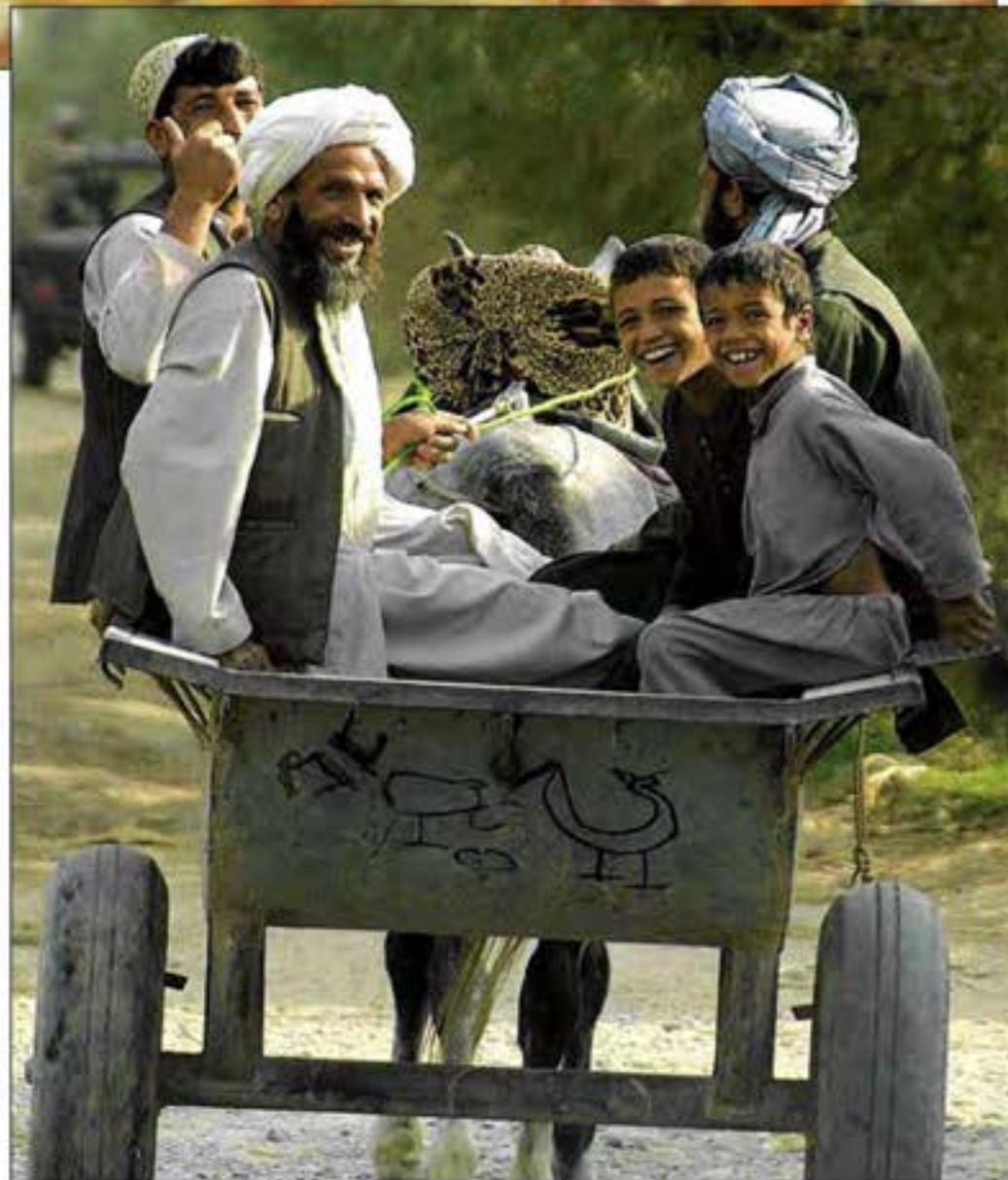
Capt Tom Evans-Jones said the way his men swapped from war to peace missions almost effortlessly had been outstanding.

“The men were able to immediately switch from aggressive action to winning the hearts and minds of locals which is essential to what we are trying to achieve,” he added.

“We have to provide security and stability so that the local populace can rebuild their lives in this town which used to thrive without fear of the Taliban.”

The Royals have been greatly aided in the fighting by the guns of 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery who beyond pounding Taliban positions have also fired smoke shells to cover the marines and fired star shells by night to illuminate Helmand when needed.

Visit www.navynews.co.uk/articles/2007/0701/0007011101.asp for video footage of the marines in action in Afghanistan



● Full metal Kajaki... (Top) Troops of Mike Company, 42 Commando, clear out Taliban positions near Kajaki and (above) a mule hauls locals along a dirt track in Helmand

● (Left) A soldier from the Afghan National Army takes a break from operations

Fort for good



THIS year sees fleet replenishment ship RFA Fort George wrapped up in feverish activity as the auxiliary travels waters as diverse as the Baltic and the Mediterranean, the Channel and the Atlantic.

The ship will initially be found in the Baltic undergoing training with the NATO Readiness Force (NRF).

A call to Gothenburg in Sweden will be followed by a voyage over the pond to the US for a joint task force exercise, followed by more exercises in the Mediterranean later this year.

Fort George and her sister ship RFA Fort Victoria have a distinct character to the two other Forts in the RFA fleet.

These ships combine the roles of fleet oilers and stores ships.

Fitted with replenishment rigs amidships, Fort George is able to transfer fuel and stores to two ships simultaneously with the oft-referred-to technique of RAS (or replenishment at sea).

In addition Fort George boasts an expansive two-spot flight deck, and space in the hangar for three Merlin-sized helicopters.

Helicopters add the vertrep - or vertical replenishment -

technique to transfer supplies from ship to ship.

The RFA's traditional crew of 95 officers and ratings is bulked out with a further 15 from the Royal Navy and 24 specialists from the Defence Logistics Organisation.

These numbers can be almost doubled when a helicopter squadron is embarked, with crew numbers swelled by an additional 90 RN aircrew and support staff.

Originally designed to support frigates on anti-submarine patrol, Forts George and Victoria, despite their size, are both quiet and stealthy with low acoustic and low radar signature.

This Fort George is not the first in the Naval service, although the tenure of her predecessor was somewhat brief.

The trawler Fort George was hired as a decoy ship for use in 1917 to 1919.

However the current Fort George has made a name for herself in recent years with her humanitarian work.

In March 2000 with five Sea Kings embarked she played a key role in Operation Barwood, the flood relief work in Mozambique.

Together with her Sea Kings from 820 Naval Air squadron she was awarded the Wilkinson Sword of Peace for her work in the



● RFA Fort George (centre) conducts a dual replenishment at sea with HMS Albion and RFA Sir Percival during exercise Joint Winter 2004

disaster-struck country.

A few months later she was diverted from NATO exercises in the Bay of Biscay to support Operation Palliser, the British effort against the rise in rebel activity in the West African nation of Sierra Leone.

More recently she joined with HMS Invincible and other RN ships for Marstrike 05, carrying 820 NAS once more, but now equipped with the latest Merlin helicopters.

Facts and Figures

Class: Fleet replenishment ship - auxiliary oiler

replenishment

Pennant Number: A388

Builder: Swan Hunter, Wallsend-on-Tyne

Lloyds classification: +100A1 DTam Oil Cargoes; Ice

Class 1D (c.c.); +LMC; UMS; IGS +Lloyds RMC

Laid down: March 9 1988

Launched: March 1 1991

Commissioned: July 16 1993

Displacement: 36,580 tonnes

Length: 204 metres

Breadth: 30.4 metres

Draught: 9.75 metres

Speed: 18 knots (normal), 21 knots (max)

Complement: 95 Royal Fleet Auxiliary, 15 Royal Navy

and 24 Defence Logistics Organisation personnel

Propulsion: Two Crossley-Pielstick PC2 diesel engines

Armament: Two 20mm GAMBO1 guns; two Phalanx

close-in weapons system (CIWS)

Aviation: Two spot flightdeck for Merlin, Sea King or

Lynx

Flight deck letters: FO

Capacities: DIESO - 9,840m³; AVCAT - 2,451m³; Lub

oil - 136m³; fresh water - 380m³

Stores: Ammunition - 2,893m³; victualing - 1,360m³;

Naval - 454m³; miscellaneous - 1,020m³



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HEROES OF THE ROYAL NAVY No.34

Lt Thomas Wilkinson RNR VC

ON February 14 1942, a small ugly Yangtse River steamer in the Java Sea 100 miles south of Singapore faced a Japanese convoy bearing down on it.

The Li Wo's skipper, the recently-drafted Lt Thomas Wilkinson RNR, turned to his crew and said: "A Japanese convoy is ahead. I am going to attack it - we will take as many of those Jap bastards as possible with us."

Only three months earlier the coal-burner had been requisitioned by the Admiralty as the auxiliary patrol vessel HMS Li Wo. Her master Captain Tam Wilkinson became Lt (Temporary) Thomas Wilkinson RNR.

The day before the solitary, small Li Wo took on the Japanese convoy of cruisers, destroyers and troopships, some 3,000 people fled from Singapore as it became obvious that the Japanese would take the island.

Wilkinson's ship was crewed by a motley assortment of Forces' men, principally survivors of the loss of the Prince of Wales and Repulse and stray men from the Army and RAF units.

The ship was armed with just two machine guns and one 4-in gun - which only had the force of 13 practice and a scant handful of semi-armour piercing shells.

HMS Li Wo set off from Singapore at day-break on the fourteenth, one of 40 small boats that scattered for safety after Black Friday.

But the Li Wo had one massive strength - most of the other craft lacked men with knowledge of seamanship and navigation and fell prey to the numerous reefs and shallows that lay strewn across their path to freedom.

And Li Wo had machine-guns manned by an RAF Flight Sergeant and his team of experienced gunners who drove off four onslaughts by attacking Japanese aircraft.

However, Tam Wilkinson's ship did lack one crucial element - luck.

The Li Wo found itself in the midst of not one but two Japanese convoys, and even the deft manoeuvrability of this Yangtse craft was cramped by this fleet of Japanese ships



● Lt Thomas Wilkinson RNR, master of HMS Li Wo

scattered across the sea before it.

With the backing of his entire ship's company, Wilkinson decided to fight to the last - with his unlikely warship, his mix-and-match crew, and his dummy shells.

His only aim was to do as much damage as he could as he went down fighting.

Battle ensigns flying, the little Li Wo took on the bulk of a Japanese 5,000-ton transport, slamming its limited shells into the hull and starting a fire that spread rapidly throughout the ship.

With her armament gone, the Li Wo did not abandon the fight, and Wilkinson ordered his ship driven straight into the side

of the troop ship.

Locked in a steel embrace, Li Wo eventually struggled free and limped away, under pursuit by a Japanese cruiser and her ravaging guns.

As the crew abandoned ship, one survivor recalled seeing Tam Wilkinson still stood on the bridge as the ship listed to port, then disappeared.

The British men's ordeal was not finished as their little ship sank beneath the waves - the Japanese drove their ships among the survivors, raking the water with machine-gun fire.

From the crew of 86, only ten men survived to limp ashore on Banka Island with boat and rafts. But even this was no escape - the Japanese were already there and in just a few days all ten survivors were prisoners of war.

The valiant actions of all on HMS Li Wo against the unbeatable odds won honours, but the temporary Naval officer encapsulated all.

Initially Wilkinson was mentioned in despatches in December 1946, but this was cancelled one year later with the award of a posthumous Victoria Cross, the last of World War 2 to be gazetted.

The citation declared that the Victoria Cross was bestowed upon Wilkinson in recognition of the heroism and self-sacrifice displayed not only by himself but by all who fought and died with him.

HMS Daring is virtually ready

SAILORS are geared up for fighting fires and plugging holes in the hull of the RN's latest warship.

Don't worry, there's nothing wrong with Type 45 destroyer HMS Daring.

But the ship and her sisters have been 'virtually' created by computer boffins, who have turned the plans of the state-of-the-art destroyers into a 3D simulation sailors can 'walk' through using a keyboard and a mouse.

The entire ship has been recreated from foc'sle to engine room – not for fun as a game to pass the hours but as a serious part of Type 45 training.

Around 90 training courses are lined up for sailors who will join Daring; some will be conducted on the vessel herself, some are already being delivered courtesy of the 3D software created by firm Virtualis.

"All safety equipment and pipe work is portrayed," explained Lt Cdr Matthew Solly, training manager for the Type 45s. "It presents an extremely useful tool for firefighting and damage control."

"It's an extremely effective way of becoming acquainted with the layout of the ship and the locations of important machinery and hardware – it should be possible for firefighting teams to undertake 'mission rehearsal' before actual exposure to a fire."

"It could allow the ship's engineers to determine the most effective way of extracting major items of equipment while weapons engineers can see where all the sensors and weapons systems are located."

Meanwhile in the 'real' world, HMS Dauntless – the second of the D-class destroyers – was scheduled to splash into the Clyde as *Navy News* went to press.

Dauntless was due down the slipway on the at BAE System's Govan yard on the afternoon of January 23 after Lady Burnell-Nugent, the wife of Commander-in-Chief Fleet Admiral Sir James Burnell-Nugent performed the launching honours.

Just down the river Dauntless' older sister has been undergoing her final series of trials and tests in a newly-upgraded dry dock nearby.

Daring sits in dry dock at BAE's Scotstoun yard (where she was also built) and is having her power and propulsion systems tested ahead of going to sea this summer, while the old dry dock she vacated will be occupied by her sister.

"We are all very proud of the achievements that have been made bringing Daring together and we are looking forward to the completion of this final set of test," said Ian Pike, BAE Systems Naval Ships' operations director.

Revamp for Diligence

THE Navy's floating garage will continue to provide vital engineering support to the front-line fleet into the next decade.

RFA Diligence is to receive a £16m overhaul to extend her lifespan, taking her out of action for the next 12 months.

The ship was originally built as a repair and support vessel for North Sea oil rigs, but was chartered by the UK to provide support to the Falklands task force – and has remained in RFA hands ever since.

Diligence has rarely been in UK waters in recent years and beyond serving as a forward repair ship in operational theatres (notably the Gulf), she has also served as a forward base for minehunters and for the Iraqi Navy.

Most recently she could be found off Sierra Leone with the Vela task force.

All this work has taken its toll of the 25-year-old ship; her accommodation areas, galley and engine room all need an overhaul.

Birkenhead yard Northwestern Shiprepairers and Shipbuilders won the contract to revamp the ship; the deal will sustain 100 jobs on Merseyside.

Florida quays for Lancaster

CHRISTMAS and New Year in Florida?

Sounds like a warm, fun place to be.

Wrong. The crew of HMS Lancaster were battered by the wake of a tornado while the ship berthed in Port Canaveral for the festive season.

At one point the Portsmouth-based frigate contemplated riding out the storm at sea rather than alongside.

But the tornado struck land up the coast from the port (where it wrecked 200 homes and killed two Florida residents); its tail lashed the Type 23 frigate with fierce winds and torrential rain – and then it was gone as if it had never been.

Of course, Brits being Brits they weren't going to let a small matter like a tornado spoil their Christmas.

Nope, the tree was decorated, the cards strung up on string slung from the deckheads, the champagne chilled nicely in the fridge and the strains of *Bing does Christmas* echoed around the passageways.

Lancaster took ten days' leave from drug-busting duties in the Caribbean, permitting some wide-ranging activities.

Some crew were invited to shoot at a police hand-gun range. The only two criteria required were (1) previous experience of shooting (2) no history of mental health problems. Those two questions out of the way, the sailors began blasting for half an hour.

Other sailors could be found in the Outback Bowl in Tampa on New Year's Day for an American Football clash between Tennessee and Penn State, attended by 65,000 screaming fans.

As the crowd sang the *Star Spangled Banner* for all it was worth four US Marine Corps jets roared over the stadium, a quartet of parachutists jumped from planes and landed on the centre line.

Then the announcer asked for any military personnel on leave from duties abroad to stand up – the applause they received was louder than the thunderous cheering which followed the end

of the anthem.

"The applause rang on and on – such a difference to the response our own Armed Forces have back home," said Lt Emma Garey.

Such a reception for military personnel was typical throughout Florida; the sailors enjoyed free entry to the Busch Gardens theme park and were generally lauded by locals as they toured the state.

"Everywhere we went people all wanted to shake our hands when they found out what our job was," Lt Garey added.

"It sounds corny but I was personally thanked for being a 'Member of the Coalition' on a number of occasions and after getting over my standard English reserve, I actually found it a nice compliment."

We last came across the Red Rose ship in company with her sister Iron Duke off Sierra Leone; the latter was returning home from the Indies after a six-month patrol in the war on drug runners.

Lancaster has taken her place, but before she did so she made an unscheduled stop in Barbados (*it's a hard life – Ed*).

As she neared the Caribbean, Lancaster responded to a distress signal from a yacht.

It had lost a crew member overboard and although the sailor had been recovered, he had spent five hours in the water and was in urgent need of medical treatment.

The frigate's medical team visited the yacht and brought the casualty back to the ship, deciding that only hospital treatment would suffice for his condition, so Lancaster made a bee-line for Barbados which was then still two days' sailing away (or a week away for the yacht).

The ill sailor was transferred to hospital where he's recovering.

Barbados and Canaveral are now distant memories; the frigate has most recently been operating off Puerto Rico working with American agencies in anti-drug sweeps.

You can read Lt Garey's internet diary at www.blogtoday.co.uk/bloghome.aspx?username=Lancaster

■ Lancaster's Lions mauled in Barbados, page 47



● Lancaster's Merlin approaches the frigate during a boarding exercise off Puerto Rico
Pictures: LA(Phot) Luis Holden, FRPU Whale Island

towergate wilsons

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● Where's the fire? A sailor dons a mask during a CODEX – Crash on Deck Exercise – to deal with the ship's Merlin crashing into the flight deck

ExCel-lent way to begin 2007



● Oh what a lovely wharf... (l-r) OM(W) Sam Thompson, LAC Natalie Stainthorpe and MEM 'Des' Cupid tour Canary Wharf during St Albans' visit to the London Boat Show

● (Below) HMS St Albans alongside the ExCel Centre with numerous luxury yachts to keep her company
Pictures: PO(Phot) Mark Hipkin, DP(R)Navy Whitehall

SHE wasn't the most luxurious vessel on display.

But she was the largest and most expensive. And the only one bristling with missiles and a ruddy great 4.5in gun.

Frigate HMS St Albans basked in the publicity if not the sunshine for ten days in January as the Senior Service's most visible representative at London's International Boat Show – the largest annual showcase in the UK for all things nautical.

Barely had the 180-strong ship's company recovered from their New Year's hangovers than St Albans was departing Portsmouth bound for London.

Having negotiated the Thames as far as London's docklands, the ship passed through a series of locks before finally berthing alongside the ExCel Centre near Customs House.

The show opened with a race between champion yachtsmen and women Dame Ellen MacArthur (an honorary RNR officer), Alex Thomson and Mike Golding around a timed course; Dame Ellen proved the quickest and celebrated aboard St Albans by spraying her competitors with champagne.

Another famous yachtswoman taking advantage of the RN's hospitality was Dee Caffan.

Dee famously became the first woman to sail the 'wrong way' around the globe (against the prevailing winds); she hopped aboard the frigate for a radio interview, then toured the ship and chatted to crew.

A further VIP guest was junior defence minister Derek Twigg, paying his first visit to a Type 23 frigate.

He also took the opportunity to meet the ship's company, including a member of his Halton constituency, LCH John Lloyd, who hails from Widnes.

There were plenty of 'ordinary' visitors, too. Fifteen thousand to be precise.

Every day of the show Britain's youngest frigate was opened to the public, with tours provided not merely of the upper deck but also the bridge, ship control centre (the marine engineering hub) and the operations room.

All, said Alan Morgan, chairman of the boat show's organising company, came away impressed by the Senior Service.

"We've received nothing but praise from the public – they seem to have been particularly impressed by the enthusiasm and professional knowledge of the sailors," he added.

"As the country's premier maritime event it's very fitting that the Royal Navy is here; it's an



● What are the lottery odds again...? MEM Des Cupid settles in behind the wheel of a £1.2m Sunseeker yacht, watched by his shipmates LAC Natalie Stainthorpe and OM(W) Sam Thompson



integral part of the maritime community." St Albans' CO Cdr Mark Newland said his men and women spent "a tremendously busy ten days" at the show.

"I think it's safe to say that we enjoyed every minute of it. It's fantastic for us to have the opportunity to show the British public around the ship and give them a flavour of life aboard a modern warship," he continued.

"But there are other perhaps less obvious reasons for being here.

"The Royal Navy has a natural connection with people who work in the maritime industry and the show provided us with the opportunity to strengthen those links."





● C/Sgt 'H' Howley leads the Royal Marine Commando detachment of HMS Endurance across South Georgia, following the route Shackleton took nine decades ago

Picture: LA/Photo Kelly Whybrow, HMS Endurance

To the limits of endurance

CAPTAIN Scott famously called it 'the last place on earth'.

But it's actually been rather busy there recently as a flurry of Senior Service personnel hauled, huffed and puffed their way across the ice and snow to the very foot of the earth.

A four-strong team led by Capt Sean 'The Ice Man' Chapple RM – the first British military team to make a return journey to the Pole – hoisted the Union Jack, White Ensign, the flag of the RM Corps and a replica of the standard flown by Capt Scott on his ill-fated expedition, at 2.18am on the day after Boxing Day.

Barely had Capt Chapple's team lowered their flags than Lt Polly Hatchard unfurled the White Ensign at the same location, thus becoming the first British Servicewoman to reach 90°S.

Both sets of explorers were following in the footsteps of immortal names in polar exploration.

For Capt Chapple and his fellow icemen – Maj Paul Mattin, Surg Lt Cdr Andy Brown and Mne Craig Hunter – it was a chance to honour Capt Scott.

For Lt Hatchard – aka 'Polar Polly' – it was a chance to follow the route Ernest Shackleton took on his Nimrod expedition.

He fell short of the Pole by just 97 miles; the goal for Lt Hatchard (RNAS Yeovilton) was to retrace his steps then reach the foot of the earth by the same route.

Her slog across the Antarctic was rather shorter than the Polarquest team; it set out to reach the Pole unaided by dogs or vehicles, using only human strength to cover the 700 miles from the Patriot Hills to the world's end.

That they did on December 27 after 44 days on the ice dragging sledges weighing around 20 stones across Antarctica.

After hoisting their various flags, the explorers held a service of remembrance for all those who have lost their lives in the quest for Antarctic exploration.

"Before I left Patriot Hills a quote was read to me: A long journey in good company is short," said Capt Chapple. "This has been a short journey."

"Arctic and Antarctic exploration is such an important part of



● Pole position... The Polarquest team at the foot of the earth (l-r) Maj Paul Mattin, Surg Lt Cdr Andy Brown, expedition leader Capt Sean Chapple RM, and Mne Craig Hunter

our national and Naval heritage that I felt very privileged and honoured to stand at the location of Capt Scott's polar camp to remember him and his party."

The South Pole remains every bit as hostile as it did in the days of Shackleton and Scott, although there is now a research station a stone's throw from the geographical pole itself where all mod cons are available if needed.

The return journey was rather faster than the outward trip; the team

used kites powered by the Antarctic wind to send them scurrying over the ice at breakneck speed.

That said, the inward-bound journey has been far from easy going.

"Kiting is both physically and mentally demanding, taking 100 per cent concentration to control the kite in and out of its power zone and skis to steer a course through obstacles.

"All of us had some quite hard falls. On one occasion I saw Paul lifted ten feet off the ground – it was only his

sledge rope trace that limited the height. He was shaken but unhurt, just bruises and aches."

Polar Polly and her team set off where Shackleton's journey ended and hence she took just eight days to reach the Pole – a journey she likened to "being on a giant white treadmill".

She celebrated New Year's Eve on the ice with the polar research station glimmering on the horizon.

"I brought a party popper and cracker for each team

member to enjoy with some heavenly cherry brandy which tasted like ice-cold nectar," she said.

The pole itself was reached the following day, January 1.

"I'm overwhelmed with pride and emotion – pride to be the first military female to the South Pole and pride to do it in the centenary year of Shackleton, but there's a far greater emotion to have done this for so many women to raise awareness of breast cancer," she added.

Also following in Shackleton's footsteps were the Royal Marines detachment of HMS Endurance.

They headed for South Georgia, not the South Pole, as they recreated the explorer's legendary trek across the mountainous island to find help for his men trapped during the doomed 'South' expedition.

With no specialist kit, the Irishman nevertheless covered the 30 miles from King Haakon Bay to Stromness, raised the alarm and thus saved his party when the original ice ship Endurance was crushed by pack ice.

The commandos were rather better equipped for the trek than Shackleton: first-rate kit, rations, portable cookers, as well as being at the peak of fitness, of course.

For the past three years bad weather has prevented the commandos carrying out the trek (codenamed Exercise Shackleton's Trail); this winter, the gods were good but it's still a forbidding experience.

We say that the gods were good... but there was nevertheless a whiteout to contend with, plus rain which battered the tents one night so much that they collapsed, then there were crevasses to cross, glaciers to negotiate, angry fur seals to bypass on the beach at Stromness, a river to wade through and some boggy grass akin to Dartmoor before the Royals were finally picked up by a dinghy from Endurance.

Back on board the ice ship, the Royals were toasted by CO Capt Nick Lambert who gave each man a glass of champagne.

■ You can read Polar Polly's 'ice diary' at www.navynews.co.uk and the Polarquest team's 'ice log' at www.polarquest.co.uk



● Sled heaven... Capt Chapple hauls his pulk across the Antarctic wasteland and (left) Pole winner... Lt Polly Hatchard becomes the first British servicewoman to reach 90°S

Mounts Bay blows hot and cold

AFTER a brief 'pit stop' in her home port of Marchwood to offload commandos and kit after exercises in Sierra Leone, new landing support ship RFA Mounts Bay made her first journey inside the Arctic Circle.

Four hundred Royals were itching to depart after the Vela deployment to West Africa; they and all their equipment were offloaded at the Sea Mounting Centre in Southampton Water in just seven hours.

Barely had the green berets gone than more stores were loaded aboard.

The ship was called upon for winter wargames in northern Norway - Exercise Clockwork - which meant delivering plenty of military kit to Sarreisa, near Tromsø, a good 250 miles inside the Arctic Circle.

The ship's CO Capt Ross Ferris decided to shave 24 hours off the journey north by travelling up the coast rather than heading through the fjords - a wise move as a low pressure system was closing on Sarreisa; hopefully there would be time to discharge the cargo and make a dash to the south before the weather set in.

"We lost the sun as we entered the Arctic Circle and wouldn't rise again for four days," said 3/O Alex White.

"This and the near freezing temperatures came as an unpleasant surprise to those of us who had got used to the hot sunny weather of equatorial climates.

"But being this far North did have its advantages as we were privileged enough to

witness the Northern Lights."

The cargo was successfully offloaded on to the jetty before the storms arrived; there was even time for 3/O White to hop ashore and take a few photographs for the ship's album - while his shipmates closed the stern ramp and readied to sail.

Fortunately, they realised the officer wasn't aboard before departure and opened the door.



This was a lightning visit to the Arctic.

As soon as the cargo was ashore, the landing ship - one of four replacements for the aged Knights of the Round Table - made straight for Portland.

Despite the rapid unloading in Sarreisa, the ship still found herself sailing into the storm as hurricane-force winds (up to 60 knots) buffeted Mounts Bay.

All she could do in the situation was slow to five knots, hope to and hope to ride out the storm.

That she did, but it wasn't until she reached the Shetlands that the ship stopped rolling.

The busy autumn ended in Portland harbour for some well-earned Christmas leave, allowing Capt Ferris to hand over to his successor Capt Trevor Iles.

"Mounts Bay has had a fantastically successful first year in operation, covering many thousands of miles in almost every weather condition imaginable," said 3/O White.

"In the past three months alone we have covered 14,000 miles, between just north of the Equator and inside the Arctic Circle."

● RFA Mounts Bay offloads cargo in the winter gloom of the Arctic Circle in Sarreisa near Tromsø

Picture: 3/O Alex White, RFA Mounts Bay



Between a Rock and a Rock race



WHILE Britain was lashed by storms and snow flurries, the men and women of HMS Campbeltown basked in the winter sunshine of Gib, their first port of call on the road to the Gulf.

This wasn't, of course, a pleasant winter break for the Type 22 frigate.

No, 61 of her ship's company felt the urge to run the 2.7 miles up the winding road to the top of the imposing natural landmark.

SA Ben Medlin was the first sailor to the top on this occasion, avoiding the unwanted attention of the legendary Barbary apes to post an impressive time of 25 minutes; PO Sonia Higgins was the first female to finish in 35m 18s.

"That was really, really hard but I've done it and I've set a time I'm determined to beat next time," said Weapon Engineer Officer Lt Cdr Alan Eddie.

"The views alone make it worthwhile on such a lovely day." There will be a chance for the Campbeltowners to beat the times set on the Rock when they return to Gibraltar on their way back from the Gulf.

Since Gib the Devonport-based frigate has moved east to Crete where the ship bumped into (not literally) HMS Gloucester on the latest stage of her Mediterranean anti-terror deployment.

It was a brief and unexpected meeting between the two vessels as they topped up with fuel - and allowed Boote brothers LPT Ian and OM Mark Rooney to momentarily say 'hello'.

Ian is serving in Campbeltown; his younger brother is aboard Gloucester, the sole ship he's served in during his six years in the RN.



● The apes of wrath... SA Omar Gilchrist powers his way up the Rock - past a famously fearsome ape and (top) HMS Campbeltown alongside in Gibraltar as seen from The Rock

"I never thought when I got up this morning that I would be seeing Mark today - we haven't crossed paths in the Navy since he joined, it has been great to see him," said Ian.

As for Gloucester, she had enjoyed New Year in Piraeus, Athens' port.

After completing all the domestic duties, such as ditching gash and embarking mail, sailors

headed into the heart of the Greek capital for the turn of the year party. They soaked up culture as well as beer by hitting the tourist trail and visiting the Acropolis and Olympic stadium.

From Piraeus it was on to Crete for that rendezvous with HMS Campbeltown in Souda Bay, then Gloucester's NATO work resumed in earnest with the ship assuming the role of task group flagship.



It's bonkers in the Navy

... OR PERHAPS not, but that's what the team behind the TV series *Balderdash and Piffle* want to know.

The BBC2 show, presented by journalist Victoria Coren (graciously pictured above but we didn't think you'd complain), looks at the origin of some of the more unusual or colloquial words in the English language to help the team behind the *Oxford English Dictionary* (the *Jane's Fighting Ships* for word buffs).

Since the first series of the programme, researchers have been deluged by suggestions surrounding the etymology of 40 words and phrases in fairly common usage from 'spending a penny' to 'Glasgow kiss' and 'the dog's b****ks'.

The evidence the team has collected suggests at least five phrases may well have a naval origin:

- Bonkers** - may have been used as early as 1948 in the RN to describe someone being a bit drunk
- Flip-flop** - apparently it means an electrical circuit or somersault before being used by sailors in the 50s and 60s to describe sandals
- Glamour model** - has been around since at least 1981, but there's plenty of evidence from the pages of *Navy News* of scantily-clad models long before that (*Great days - Dep Ed*)
- Jack the Lad** - does this come from an 1840's sea shanty *Jack's the Lad*?
- Round robin** - as in a circular newsletter; evidence suggests it began life as a naval petition signed in a circle.

'Bonkers' doesn't appear in *Jackspeak*, Rick Jolly's bible of Naval slang, although 'bonk' does.

It's got nothing to do with hitting or sex, rather a sudden change in the direction of a Sea Wolf missile (smaller changes in trajectory are apparently 'mini bonks').

Anyway, if you can provide some answers - the *B&P* and *OED* teams want written evidence; verbal evidence, anecdotes and memories alone won't convince the boffins.

E-mail balderdash@bbc.co.uk or write to Balderdash & Piffle, 132 Grafton Road, London, NW5 4BA.

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Extra lease of life for Sultan

THE home of naval engineering has been given a ten-year reprieve under a huge shake-up of defence training.

But most of the learning taught by HMS Sultan in Gosport will cease by 2017 as Whitehall concentrates engineering schooling in South Wales.

Defence Secretary Des Browne revealed that the Metrix Consortium had won a MOD contract to oversee the provision of training, the last act in the Defence Training Review.

Under the deal struck with the firm, RAF St Athan will be transformed in the coming decade into a 'defence academy' at the heart of a £14bn revolution in the way the three Services train their men and women.

Metrix's plans were picked ahead of rival consortia which favoured RAF Cosford and Blandford in Dorset.

At present defence training is spread across 27 sites around the UK; Whitehall's aim is to reduce that figure to a few core sites, ultimately fewer than ten.

The first step of that change will chiefly affect the RAF and Army with training presently delivered at a smattering of sites such as Arborfield, Bordon, Cosford and Blandford largely transferred to St Athan by around 2013.

Electro-mechanical engineering training for the Senior Service will remain at Sultan until 2017 when it will be relocated in St Athan.

All aero engineering training conducted at the Gosport base will move to Wales between 2011 and 2017, but the MOD has not yet decided what to do with nuclear engineering training currently provided by Sultan for Britain's submariners.

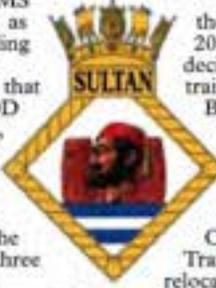
RN photography, currently taught at RAF Cosford, is likely to move to St Athan ultimately.

Under the deal with Metrix, the firm will take over management of the Communication and Information Systems Training Unit, but it does not intend to relocate the unit.

Mr Browne told fellow MPs that around 200 experts had been consulted as the MOD drew up plans to transform military training.

Metrix, he said, had been chosen because its bid offered the best balance between meeting the future needs of specialist defence training and value for money for the taxpayer.

The second stage of the shake-up - the details of which are being worked out - will affect logistics, personnel administration, policing, language, intelligence gathering and photography training.





● Tugs usher RFA Lyme Bay up the Clyde past BAE's Scotstoun yard, where Type 45 destroyer HMS Daring is taking shape in dry dock

Picture: BAE Systems

Time for Larg-er and Lyme

SOME things are meant to remain incomplete.

Gaudi's incredible Sagrada Familia in Barcelona.

Schubert's 8th Symphony.

Dickens' *Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

And others, well others you just have to finish.

We would never claim RFA Lyme Bay captures the artistic imagination; truth be told she's a rather blocky, bulky vessel.

She does, however, capture the military imagination. She's also unfinished - for now.

But six months hence the landing support ship will belatedly join her three sisters on the high seas, finished by a different yard from the one which cut the first steel on her four years ago.

Lyme Bay arrived on the Clyde in July after Whitehall decided to end Swan Hunter's involvement with the ship, then still at least a year from completion - and with costs rising.

Whitehall placed her in the hands of BAE Systems at Govan, which had already built two of her sisters: Mounts Bay is already on active service (where she has

received plaudits for her work off Sierra Leone), while the Clyde yard was applying the finishing touches to Cardigan Bay.

The team could have just picked up tools where Swan Hunter left off, but it didn't.

When Lyme Bay arrived on the Clyde, BAE decided to look at the ship, all 540 compartments of her, root and branches.

Time spent in planning is time saved in action. The result is that the MOD will get its hands on Lyme on August 31.

Fingers crossed, the Govan team is hoping to beat that deadline by a couple of months.

The BAE team has been spurred on in its efforts by "outstanding" feedback, said project manager Scott Jamieson, from sailors and Royal Marines working with Mounts Bay off Africa.

The Vela deployment was the first test of the new class of landing ships (in nautical jargon Landing Ship Dock Auxiliary), successors to the worthy Knights of the Round Table.



"They're big and boxy but don't judge them on the outside - judge them on the inside," said Scott forthrightly.

"Don't judge them on the presence they have on the horizon but on what they can deliver over it."

And don't confuse them with HM Ships Albion and Bulwark.

Yes, they have a cavernous vehicle deck, sprawling flight deck, a dock for landing craft, but the Bays are not assault ships.

They have no command and control function and the dock can only accommodate one landing craft at a time, not two.

All four RFA ships were built to a design agreed by Whitehall and Swan Hunter.

Swan were awarded the contract to build two of the Bays, BAE the remaining two vessels.

Different yards do things in different ways.

They use different contractors for supplies and kit. They have different methods of working, different standards.

It has taken the BAE shipwrights

around three months to get their heads around finishing what someone else began.

And while shipbuilding is a competitive industry, there is sympathy among the Govan workforce.

"I feel sorry for the guys at Swan Hunter," said ship manager Allan Smith. "You have to."

The Tyne yard's loss is Clyde's gain.

Around 300 engineers, welders, electricians and shipwrights are beavering away on the 16,000-ton vessel pretty much around the clock.

The quartet are, to all intents and purposes, identical.

So do you get *déjà vu*? "Déjà vu?" said Allan. "What's *déjà vu* three times? This is my third Bay Class."

Although this may not be 'their ship' outright (it will be interesting to see which yard is listed as builder in the next edition of *Jane's Fighting Ships*), the Lyme workers are determined to finish her with aplomb.

"The important thing is



attention to detail," said Allan.

"We want to make this one the best."

His boss agrees.

"Lyme Bay will be the best of the bunch - we've learned lessons from the three previous ships," Scott added.

"As far as we're concerned, we'll have great pride in her."

As Lyme Bay nears belated completion, the other landing support ship built by Swan Hunter has been officially welcomed into service with a dedication ceremony in Portsmouth.

Largs Bay is the second of the four-strong class to join the Fleet.

Ship's sponsor Lady West, the wife of former First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Alan West, and head

of the RFA Cdre Bob Thornton joined Largs Bay's CO Capt Ian Johnson RFA, sailors, affiliates and guests in the huge loading dock for the service of dedication (it was the middle of December after all), led by the Rev Mark Jackson, Chaplain to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

"Many organisations and many hours of work by many people were needed to bring Largs Bay to this stage," said Capt Johnson.

"After intense but successful sea trials my ship's company are looking forward to getting this highly capable, state-of-the-art ship out to sea doing what she is designed to do."

The third ship of the quartet, Cardigan Bay, is undergoing trials ahead of being handed over.

Blowing hot and cold - a change of temperature for Mounts Bay, see opposite



● Standing in the dock of a Bay... The ship's company of RFA Largs Bay gather for the camera to celebrate the commissioning

Picture: LA(Phot) Dave Griffiths, FRPU Whale Island

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IN YEARS gone by we have entrusted the nation's security to names such as Drake, Nelson, Wellington, Cunningham and Montgomery.

At Culdrose, they put their faith in Pearl, Oddball and 'Ansome.

They are expected to keep the unwanted invader at bay, even if the only 'firepower' they possess are sharp talons, a spine-chilling shriek and a rather nasty beak.

Still, thousands of airmen owe their safety to the 'warriors' of the Bird Control Unit - and their keepers.

"I like to tell people we are a pre-emergency service - we're out there to stop the fire station and sick bay being called in for things like bird strikes on the airfield," explains the unit's supervisor Sahra Thomas.

"We're not the fourth emergency service, we're out there dawn till dusk pretty much 365 days a year."

Her team, beyond the skilled handlers (officially 'bird controllers'), comprises hawks and falcons.



STRIKES used to be commonplace in Britain. Now they're a rarity, thanks in part to the bird control unit at RNAS Culdrose... **EMMA CLAY**, a journalism student at University College Falmouth and daughter of WO(ACMN) Stephen Clay based at the Cornish air station, reports.

falcons, ranging from nine months to 17 years old, scarecrows (but remove the image of Wurzel Gummidge from your mind), a Land Rover, and a shotgun.

There were nearly 28,000 'movements' at Culdrose in 2006, mostly Merlin and Sea King helicopters taking off or landing, but also fixed-wing Hawks (used by FOST for Thursday Wars and other training exercises) and Jetstreams for observer training.

Determined to play havoc with such activities are rooks, crows and annoying gulls.

Bird strikes are a constant threat; they invariably cause more damage to the bird than the aircraft, but if the creatures fly into engine intakes in particular, the results can be devastating.

The last severe case in Britain was an RAF Nimrod lost shortly after take-off at Kinloss base in 1980; the two pilots were killed, but their fellow crew managed to escape.

Thankfully there has been no comparable incident in the 32-year history of the Culdrose unit, but that doesn't mean the Cornish air station is devoid of hits: on average around a couple a year.

"Bird strikes do happen - most of the time they just bounce off or do a little bit of damage, but you do get the other end of the spectrum and you can lose a multi-million pound aircraft and - in an extreme case - loss of life," said Sahra.

That there are so few such strikes at Culdrose is down to a concerted effort; the hawks and falcons are backed-up by faux birds (bio-acoustic 'scarecrows' which simulate the calls of various birds to scare them away) and a Land Rover.

The vehicle has clocked up more than 100,000 miles as it patrols the roads, standings and runways of Culdrose (impressive considering the airbase only has a perimeter 4½ miles long)

The last resort is the shotgun; you don't really want to blast away at an American laughing gull or golden plover.

"We can shoot anything that comes across the

airfield that poses as a flight safety hazard," said Sahra.

"If we think a bird is going to take a life, whether it is protected or not we have the authority to use all means necessary - but this is a last-case scenario."

Birds are not quite as 'bird brained' as some people might have you believe. Over the years several species have started to become immune to the electronic scarecrows: rooks, crows and jackdaws especially.

And if birds are not stupid, why do the hawks and falcons not simply up wings one day? Sometimes, they do - but not often.

"These aren't tame birds - they are wild birds which are tolerant," explained Sahra.

"You can imprint them when you raise them from an egg, but if you have something that spooks them and they go and the tracking doesn't work, the chances of getting them back are slim.

"In the fifteen years that I have been at Culdrose, two birds have gone and not returned."

The unit is mirrored by a similar team at the RN's other air station, Yeovilton. At both, the bird teams are vital to the smooth - and safe - running of the Fleet Air Arm.

"The bird unit is essential to the running of a safe airfield. Because of our location on the Lizard, Culdrose plays host to large numbers of wild birds which can present a major hazard to the lives of aircrew and cause extensive damage to aircraft," said Capt Phillip Thicknesse, Culdrose's Commanding Officer.

"The unit is a key part of the team at Culdrose; all of the staff are highly-focused on the crucial business of flight safety."

A key part - and also one that many of the air base's personnel perhaps overlook.

"It's one of those jobs where people look out the window and see us driving around the airfield. Quite often the blokes have their elbow out of the driver's window, and it looks like a real doddle," said Sahra.

"They think: 'Anybody can



scare a bird'. It does take a special kind of idiot to know where that bird has come from, where it's going to, how it's going to get there and, if you use any of the bird control methods we use, how it's going to react.

"I love my job - my favourite part has to be flying the birds."

Close encounters of the bird kind... (Below) Two Culdrose handlers with their birds of prey and (below left) an inquisitive look from peregrine falcon Dusk

Pictures: LAF/Photo Carl Osmond, RNAS Culdrose



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Southampton is welcomed home

TYPE 42 destroyer HMS Southampton went home just before Christmas.

For the busy port on the Solent does not just share the ship's name - it was also the city where she was built and commissioned.

A warm welcome awaited the warship as she made the short trip from her home base of Portsmouth, the first such visit in almost two years.

The two-day visit was part of a week of events, which included an Affiliates Day, when guests joined in Portsmouth and travelled west along the Solent, watching demonstrations of everything from ship defence to firefighting en route.

Among those on board were the Mayor of Southampton, Cllr John Slade, members of the Worshipful Company of Fletchers and children from Mill Hill School.

On arrival at the Western Docks, Southampton hosted an official reception, and the following day it was the turn of schoolchildren and Sea cadets to climb on board.

Southampton was built at the Woolston shipyard of Vosper Thornycroft in 1981, and several members of the current ship's company hail from the city.

One was AB Nathan Challis, who said: "I have been on here for four years, and it is brilliant."

"I wanted to be on HMS Southampton so I could represent my home town. This ship is like our home away from home."

Nathan and his colleagues will



be able to learn a little more about their ship's heritage, thanks to the presentation of a book written by the son of a wartime sailor.

Alfred Davis was a commissioned gunner in the wartime cruiser, and died when that Southampton was attacked by German dive-bombers in the Mediterranean in January 1941.

His son Neville has written the biography of his father, entitled *Commissioned Gunner RN*, and handed a signed copy to the CO of the destroyer, Cdr Richard Morris.



● HMS Severn passes under Tower Bridge on her way up the Thames. The River-class fishery protection vessel spent a week in London on a goodwill and educational visit before heading back out on patrol. Picture: PO (Phot) Terry Seward (Defence DPF9)

MWS gears up for synthetic warfare

Divers to survey Ardent

A DIVING team from the Defence Diving School (DDS) in Portsmouth was due to deploy to the Falklands to survey of the wreck of HMS Ardent as Navy News went to press.

The survey of the Type 21 frigate will be conducted 25 years after she was lost during Operation Corporate - the retaking of the islands from Argentina - in 1982.

As part of the survey a small commemorative ceremony will be held to remember those who were lost during the conflict.

The team of divers will be led by Lt Richard 'Soapy' Watson, the Clearance Divers Course Officer at DDS.

His team includes RN and Army personnel from both DDS and the Superintendent of Diving's staff, some of whom were serving during the Falklands Conflict.

As this year marks the 25th anniversary of the campaign, members of the DDS felt it would be fitting to raise the ensign on the wreck of Ardent and position a plaque on her.

Former First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Alan West, Ardent's CO at the time, has given his backing to the project.

Ardent, commissioned in 1977 and displacing 2,700 tons, lies upright and intact in some 35m of water with a minimum depth of 18m.

A designated war grave, a prohibited area exists within 100m of the wreck.

Ardent was operating south of the British landing at San Carlos Water in Falkland Sound on May 21 1982 when she was attacked with bombs and rockets by Argentinian aircraft.

She caught fire and subsequently sank with the loss of 22 lives.

Museum is a credit

THE Royal Marines Museum has been awarded Accredited Museum status by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).

The MLA sets nationally-agreed standards for UK museums, and the award demonstrates that the RM Museum, at Eastney in Portsmouth, achieves high standards across a wide range of criteria, from good management to visitor services.

THE OPS Room is quiet as hunched figures study their screens, searching for the first sign of a threat.

Guns and missiles are armed and ready, and the chatter of communications between the Royal Navy flotilla and the American carrier task group subsides.

Surface radars scour the horizon while airborne systems push the range further out, granting the command teams a few more precious seconds of warning.

The weather is typical of a North Atlantic winter, but seasickness, fortunately, is one thing these sailors will not have to battle, as the only thing rolling outside their Ops Room is the traffic on the B3385.

Welcome to the Common Synthetic Environment, a theatre of war which exists only in cyberspace, but which is hoped will lead to better, more cost-effective and imaginative training.

And the system at the heart of the British side of things is the Maritime Composite Training System, or MCTS, a jewel in the crown of the Maritime Warfare School at HMS Collingwood.

MCTS takes a long-established capability and carries it far beyond what was once thought possible.

Think of the difference between a Commodore 64 and a top-spec dual-core Pentium system today and you will get the picture.

And what a picture - because virtually anything is possible in this digital duel between the Blue forces of the Royal Navy and the US Navy, and the Reds of... well, of anyone you want them to be.

Where once a sailor, or command team, would hone their Ops Room skills on a fixed arrangement of ship-specific equipment in the Cook simulators at HMS Dryad, now the scenarios can be tailored *ad infinitum*.

Two Type 23s and a Type 42 on picket duty for the Americans? No problem - the Warfare Team Training (WTT) facilities at MCTS - three at Collingwood, two at Devonport - will be able to be quickly reconfigured - in terms of layout and appearance - to represent the operations rooms of several classes of ship.

Why not throw some aircraft and a submarine or two into the scenario for good measure? Weather conditions too benign?



Then mix it up a little.

And while the British sailors go about their tasks at Collingwood, their American colleagues are doing the same in Virginia - fighting side-by-side in a small patch of imaginary ocean while in reality separated by thousands of miles, all watching the same simulated battle unfold on screen.

No fuel costs, no long passages to rendezvous; it sounds perfect.

This type of link-up has already been achieved using the Cook simulators, but MCTS can take it further.

The system at the MWS is not the real thing, after all; the best training environment would be on board your own ship.

When HMS Daring enters service that possibility will become reality, because the Type 45s could be networked into proposed later phases of MCTS, whether alongside or at sea.

The powerful new destroyer could be cruising in the Indian Ocean, but she could hook up to the MCTS and be sucked into a scrap with enemy forces in an ersatz North Sea within minutes.

MCTS Phase 1 is being procured for the Defence Logistics Organisation by the Maritime Training Systems Integrated Project Team.

It is being developed by the Seabridge consortium, led by BAE Systems Insyte, in partnership with Aerosystems International, EDS, Flagship Training, MDA and Serco.

The £100m contract was signed in December 2005, and will support warfare training for the first ten years of MCTS's life. Building work at Collingwood began in December, with work due

to start at Devonport next month.

MCTS is intended to support the Versatile Maritime Training concept of 'delivering training at the point of need'.

The five WTTs can be used by individual trainees on career courses, by sub-teams of trainees working together by scenario, or by a ship's entire warfare teams, to enable them to conduct continuation training.

The facility could be used by Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) to test warfare teams under an attack of an intensity which has not been possible so far, throwing in far greater numbers of simulated assets than can be physically summonsed for Thursday Wars.

In addition to the WTTs, MCTS will also provide electronic classroom facilities to teach the theory which underpins modern warfare skills, tailored to everybody from Able Rating Warfare Specialists, through to Principal and Air Warfare Officers.

These flexible classroom-based

training facilities can host many different training courses.

This flexibility matches that of the training programme itself, as trainees are given generic training until the last possible moment before 'targeted employment module' training is delivered specific to the role they will conduct onboard a specific class of ship.

This gives a little breathing space for naval manpower planners, who will have greater flexibility in drafting people to the ships where they are needed most, and to better match the individual's preference for a specific draft.

Cutting the turf for the new MCTS facility at Collingwood, Cdre Charles Montgomery, CO of the MWS, said: "Today marks a major milestone in the continuing modernisation of RN training."

"The MCTS will be state-of-the-art, and will hugely increase the effectiveness and efficiency with which the MWS achieves its mission - training officers and ratings for the Fleet."

Joint team wins award

A JOINT MOD/Devonport Management Ltd team has won an award for the completion of a highly-complex and challenging project in support of nuclear submarines.

The team has been awarded the Chief of Defence Logistics Commendation for their handling of the Future New Facilities project at Devonport.

The award was made for two major aspects of the work - the safe demolition of a seven-storey building and the construction of a unit vital to refuelling boats.

Despite the difficulties faced, both elements were delivered on time and with more than ten per cent cost savings.

Room boom

ALMOST 4,000 new single-living bed spaces are to be built as part of the next phase of the MOD's Project SLAM initiative.

The £335 million contract to provide accommodation for 3,800 Servicemen and women - including facilities at RNAS Culdrose and CTCRM at Lymington - has been awarded to the Debut Services Ltd consortium, led by Bovis Lend Lease and Babcock Support Services.

Phase 1 of SLAM - Single Living Accommodation Modernisation - has already delivered more than 7,000 bed spaces, many of them for the Royal Navy.



● Chris Golds' model of Concorde, due to appear at a show at the Fleet Air Arm Museum Picture: SWNS

Flights of fancy at museum

HIGH-speed passes by Concorde could be among the attractions at a show staged at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton.

Not the real thing, sadly - but an impressive model, nonetheless, powered by four fan 'jets' and capable of 100mph.

Built by retired RAF pilot Chris

Golds, the scale model is due to appear at a display organised by the British Model Flying Association on Saturday February 10 (doors open at 10am, flying display scheduled for noon).

Weather permitting, another radio-controlled model to appear alongside Concorde will be a B52

with a 20ft wingspan. The show will feature all aspects of modelling, from plastic aircraft to steam-propelled boats and radio-controlled aircraft.

With some 2,000 visitors expected, this event has become the premier model show in the South West.

A FORCE FOR GOOD

Channel dash for Falklands cash

IN ONE of those quiet moments in the Falklands, three women from the three Forces were pondering ways of making charity cash, when the suggestion came up to swim the distance of the Channel in the Mount Pleasant pool.

CPO Emma O'Dell RN, Sgt Pat Abel (Army) and Sgt Max Martin (RAF) plunged into the challenge – literally.

The three swam 256 lengths in relays, with such a regular rhythm that they made it seem an almost effortless task to those on the sidelines.

The peacefulness of their swimming was only interrupted by the squeaking of marker pens as their laps were ticked off, and the occasional bellow at a startled swimmer to let them know they only had one length to go before a rest.

The three and their long-distance swim raised £1,800 for Macmillan Cancer Relief.

Devonport turns pink

IT WAS ladies' night in Devonport Naval Base when 400 female employees and their female guests enjoyed an evening of glamour in aid of Breakthrough Breast Cancer and the Plymouth Women's Refuge.

A few men – Royal Navy officers, Royal Marines and firemen from Camels Head Fire Station – were allowed to attend the evening, but only as cat-walk escorts for the evening's modelling show.

Oh, and the base's PT department who put on a traditional hornpipe for the ladies – that turned into an untraditional Full Monty...

The night raised some £8,000, and organiser CPOPT Natasha Pulley said: "I have been overwhelmed by the effort and support of everyone involved, and the success of the evening."

Mutual support

THOSE living with multiple sclerosis within the Service community have help on hand through Mutual Support, the Armed Forces' Support Group of the MS Society.

Set up by Sue Smith, ex-RN, along with Kim Bartlett and Susanne Chrichton (both former RAF), the organisation has grown from small beginnings to some 300 members, serving, retired or Forces' families.

Find out more online at www.mutualsupport.org.uk.



Smiles for Santa: minehunter HMS Shoreham dons the largest Scottish Santa hat to start the Santathon campaign in aid of children in Africa. In the foreground stand Rear Admiral Philip Wilcocks, flanked by charity chairman Rev Neil Galbraith and Inverclyde Provost Luciano Rebecchi.

Shoreham lets her hair down for Santa

NAVAL regulations were bent in HM Naval Base Clyde when unusual headgear was donned for the Glasgow Santathon.

The largest Santa hat produced in Scotland (16ft long with a 3ft pompom) graced the grey head of little minehunter HMS Shoreham.

It wasn't only the warship which received this honour however.

In an unusual move, Rear Admiral Philip Wilcocks, Flag Officer for Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland, declared that the 3,000 sailors and marines in Scotland could wear a Santa hat as part of their normal rig.

The Santathon, an annual event run by charity Glasgow the Caring City, aims to raise £150,000 to support ten projects that focus on

the children of Africa.

The charity's chairman Neil Galbraith said: "Glasgow the Caring City has been involved in Africa for the last five years."

"The first request we ever got was for one computer for a school in the townships outside Capetown."

"Since then we have delivered over £15million of aid – goods in kind such as ambulances and fire engines, direct finance, work teams, education and health projects, and buildings."

Rear Admiral Wilcocks said: "This is a charity which already has a proven track record of success."

"The Royal Navy is not without its traditions, but it can also let its hair down from time to time, and we are delighted to give our support."

"Right in the middle of the

campaign, our sailors and marines can wear Santa hats as part of their naval rig.

"Not that I am issuing any orders, you understand..."

To date, the Santathon has raised some £10,000, a good start to the goal for 2007 of £150,000.

To find out about the charity, visit www.glasgowthecaringcity.com or tel: 0141 637 4168.

Donohue do run run run

FIVE marathons and five half-marathons in just seven months have kept CPO(D) Paddy Donohue busy raising money for charity Children with Leukaemia.

The diver has netted almost £5,000 for the national charity – and says it would be higher if all the people who sponsored him paid up (apparently you know who you are).

Each year the senior rate chooses a different charity for which to fundraise, and is in the process of choosing his 2007 beneficiary – any reports that his charity selection is based purely on the attractiveness of the T-shirt are pure speculation...

As well as raising money the diver has been spending money, as he has paid his own way in each of his marathon runs, costing him over £1,200.

If you want to support him, he can be reached at the Faslane Northern Diving Group on (mil) Faslane 3309.



Marathon man CPO(D) Paddy Donohue



Officer Cadet Tom Storey RNR of Aberdeen URNU loses some leg hair – all for Pudsey Bear and the BBC Children in Need appeal

Archer's 'bear' legs

PUDSEY Bear paid a call on Aberdeen University Royal Naval Unit in the form of gingerbread

bears and cakes, baked by the students for charity sale.

But all that pudding pleasure came at a cost for four 'willing' volunteers who decided to bare their limbs in a sponsored leg-waxing session.

The evening, supported by members of the Aberdeen Officer Training Corps and University Air Squadron, garnered £220 for the BBC's Children in Need.

Ark Royal padre gets spooked

REV John Hill RN, chaplain on board HMS Ark Royal, spent the two days around Halloween – or in its more Christian form All Saints Eve – walking 50 miles through the French countryside to raise money for the HCPT – The Pilgrimage Trust.

Along with 32 other walkers and a seven-strong support team, the Naval chaplain travelled to Lourdes for a two-day trek through the countryside around France.

The seasoned walkers strode out ahead, but John was among the main body of walkers who were determined just to complete both days of the walk.

An apt challenge ensued as the group tried to recall how many hymns and songs had 'walk' in the title or main body.

The padre's walk has collected almost £1,500 for the charity that provides an inspirational holiday to the pilgrimage centre of Lourdes for children who are disabled or with special needs.

Anyone wishing to support Rev Hill can write to him at the Chaplain, HMS Ark Royal, BFPO 212.

BRITISH LIMBLESS EX-SERVICE MEN'S ASSOCIATION

Frankland Moore House, 185-187 High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex RM6 6NA

Tel: 020 8590 1124 Fax: 020 8599 2932

email: headquarters@blesma.org website: www.blesma.org

BLESMA aims to give ex-Service men and women who either lost limbs, the use of their limbs, or one or both eyes as a result of service or after service, in any branch of Her Majesty's Forces or Auxiliary Forces, a counselling and caring service and help in everyday problems. We also assist their needy dependants, in particular their Widows.

At the outbreak of World War II and all conflicts since, many Members of BLESMA went to War young and whole. They came home disabled for life. Whilst we do not wish to receive new Members, due to the current conflicts in the Gulf and Afghanistan and as service life takes its inevitable toll, it is unavoidable that we shall do so.

What do our Members get from your generosity? They get happiness, peace and security, advice, representation, rehabilitation and fellowship. Our two Residential and Care Homes provide permanent residence care and co-residence for the Members as well as a break for relatives from nursing care.

All this costs money, a large amount of money. We receive no Government Grants and rely wholly on the generosity of the public. Please consider making a donation now or a legacy in the future for those that gave so much and ask for so little in return.

75 YEARS OF SERVICE 1932 - 2007



Charles Tobias of Pussers' Rum with the Second Sea Lord and associated guests

A rum do for Sea Lord

CHARLES Tobias, founder and current owner of Pussers' Rum UK, hands over to the Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral Adrian Johns, a cheque for US\$45,014 (£22,919) for the Sailors' Fund.

Each case of rum sold brings \$2 of royalties for the aid of sailors, through the Fund that grants around £400,000 for amenities for serving RN ratings and RM other ranks.



Picture: LA(Phot) Dave Griffiths

Strike up the Band

CHILDREN from the Mary Rose School in Portsmouth were delighted when ten students of the Royal Marines School of Music arrived to regale them with Christmas carols and other music.

The children, who all have learning or physical difficulties, enjoyed an hour of music before having the chance to chat to the Marines and take a close look at their musical instruments (pictured).

Peter Best of the school's staff - who spent 31 years in the Band Service - said: "The school is extremely grateful to the Royal Marines who are particularly busy at this time of year, but have squeezed this visit in at short notice."

Marc gets his century

DEVONPORT Naval Base's Marc Craig set himself the challenge of running 100 miles in 2006, collecting £950 for St Luke's Hospice in Plymouth on the way.

At the end of his 14 races, he said: "I never had a total in mind when I first started the challenge but I'm absolutely delighted in raising £950 and all the hard work has paid off."

"Hopefully the money will help what is undoubtedly a very fine and hard-working charity."

Marc chose the hospice after it gave support to two of his grandparents who suffered with cancer and spent the last few weeks of their lives in the hospice.

Culdrose lights up

THE friends and family of RNAS Culdrose at the Culdrose Community Centre ensured that the year had a good start when they presented donations of £150 each to representatives of Shelterbox and the Helston Town Lights.

Get packing

TRAINEES from the Phase 2 Training Group at HMS Collingwood got packing - packing groceries for shoppers at the Asda supermarket in Fareham.

The youngsters gave up their time to pack bags for charity Childline, which provides a free, 24-hour helpline to children in distress.

The trainees raised £645 during their evening's labours.



● Lt Cdr Colin Nicklas looking rather happy to have completed the Snowdonia marathon

Colin's uphill struggle

DESCRIBED as the toughest marathon in Europe, the Snowdonia Marathon was a hilly start to the long-distance running career of Lt Cdr Colin Nicklas.

He admitted: "I had always thought that travelling 26 miles was what cars were invented for!"

"Earlier this year I decided that I was going to run a marathon then I might as well make it a tough one."

AN appeal for bone marrow donors on HMS Victory netted more than 30 sailors for the Anthony Nolan Trust register.

The register allows doctors to identify suitable donors whose bone marrow can be used to treat illnesses such as leukaemia.

The session on board Nelson's flagship was open to both Service people and members of the public, and was arranged by CPO Ben Casey.

Ben plans to hold another session in the warmer summer months to add yet more names to the life-saving register.

Lt Cdr John Scivier, Commanding Officer of HMS Victory, said: "We were delighted to offer the opportunity to do something so meaningful."

"If just one person who gave up their time and a drop of their blood is able to help save an adult or a child we will know we have made a tremendous difference."

If you are interested in registering, call 020 7284 1234.



● CPO Ben Casey of HMS Victory gives a blood sample to Corinne Harrison of the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust on board Nelson's flagship - find out more on www.anthonynolan.org.uk

Picture: LA(Phot) Jannine B Hartmann

Dog days for Raleigh recruits as Tiffy calls

CANINE recruit Junior Able Guide Dog Tiffy returned to HMS Raleigh in Cornwall to meet her Naval sponsors.

Bred with money donated to the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association by Raleigh's Figgard Division, Tiffy will be a fully-fledged guide dog by July.

Lt Catherine Priestly, Figgard Division Training Officer, said: "It was great for us to see Tiffy again and hear about the progress she is making."

"The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association has been Figgard Division's adopted charity for over 50 years and it is really great for the trainees to meet up with the result of their fundraising efforts."

These efforts have not stopped, with Cdre John Keegan, Commanding Officer of Raleigh,

presenting the charity with a further £2,000 raised through a variety of means, including a sponsored 'lie-in'.

Tiffy's trainer Pat Reed said: "Tiffy is doing very well and should make an excellent guide dog."

"These dogs do a wonderful job and if it wasn't for people like the recruits at HMS Raleigh we wouldn't be able to breed and train them."

"The dogs make such a lot of difference to partially-sighted or blind people, allowing them to lead reasonably normal lives."

Pat was presented with a selection of dog leads crafted by sailors at the Seamanship school in the Cornwall establishment.

Find out more about the charity at www.gdba.org.uk on the web.



● Regulators from HMS Nelson served Christmas dinner to pensioners at the Wesley centre
LA(Phot) Emz Tucker

Reggies serve up a cracker

OLD and young alike in Portsmouth benefitted from the attentions of the Royal Navy Police in the run-up to Christmas.

Five Reggies from HMS Nelson spent four hours serving up a pre-Christmas dinner to older people in the city on behalf of charity Fratton Live at Home.

The Christmas dinner proved a big success for all 70 diners and an excellent start to the season's celebrations.

RPO 'Taff' Jones said: "It all went very well. It was a superb day."

"I like having a chat with the old boys anyway. They were delighted to see us all in uniform."

The charity, managed by a former Naval Master at Arms Craig Beetlesstone, organises events and clubs to keep older people in the city involved in the community and prevent social isolation.

Craig, a cancer survivor, in another fundraising effort, walked from Portsmouth to Reading to deliver a Christmas card between the respective football teams.

He was accompanied by MAA Gavin Moulds of HMS Excellent and two former Reggies on the lengthy walk, who expect to raise in excess of £1,000 for the Fratton Live at Home charity.

The young weren't forgotten amid all this festive cheer, when Capt Osborne and Taff Jones paid a call on the children of the Cockleshell Community Centre Eastney to hand-deliver a PlayStation 2 to keep the youngsters occupied on these cold winter nights.

If anyone in the Gosport or Portsmouth area wants to get involved with charity Fratton Live at Home, please contact Craig on 023 9278 0500 or by e-mail to frattonliveathome@hotmail.co.uk.

Get set to scale Baby Everest

NORTHWOOD is being mobilised to scale Everest. Well, a corner of it at least...

PO John Murray and Cpl Mike White RM will trek Everest's high passes in October to raise money for neonatal specialist baby care units in Arrow Park Hospital in Merseyside and Watford General Hospital.

In addition to the climbers, members of the Fleet Operations Division at the Northwood Headquarters are throwing their weight behind their efforts with events planned throughout the year, including a charity dinner, summer barbecue, fun runs and entertainment nights.

Find out more about the Baby Everest challenge at www.jollybean.nhs.uk.

Row row row your Vanguard...

SUBMARINE HMS Vanguard became a row boat for two of her personnel during her recent patrol, when the two ratings took to the boat's rowing machines to each cover 100,000m for the ship's charities.

LtStd Andrew 'Steady' Steadman-Brown and CPO(S) Jim Maaskant rowed for over nine hours, netting more than £450 for the Islay and Jura Sick Children's Fund and the Islay Disabled Activities and Endeavours Fund.

CPO Maaskant said: "It started as a bet, and then led to this charity event for over 100,000m."

The time on the (fake) oars led to one unexpected side-effect, when 'Steady' complained of pins and needles in the backside from sitting down for too long...



The Royal Navy & Royal Marines
Children's Fund

Registered Charity No. 1075015

PATRON: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

The RN & RM Children's is a National Charity based in Portsmouth. We care for children of men and women who have served or are serving in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines.

Originally set up as an orphanage, we now assist children with a wide range of needs and at times of family crisis.

Applications can be made at any time. Those seeking assistance can contact the office direct for an application form:-

Monique Bateman
or Laurene Smith
RN & RM Children's Fund
311 Twyford Avenue
Portsmouth
PO2 8RN
Telephone: 023 9263 9534
Fax: 023 9267 7574
Email: rnchildren@bconnect.com



Matelot's Molly

RENOWNED dog show Crufts will feature the companion of Naval veteran Tony Higbed.

An Oerlikon gunner on MTBs and MGBs during World War 2, his hearing began to deteriorate from the age of 50.

Now aged 82, Tony has Molly, a hearing dog for the deaf, who has been shortlisted for the competition

Friends for Life at Crufts.

The BBC has made short films about each of the contestants which will be screened in the early part of March.

The Coastal Forces veteran will parade Molly in the main arena on Sunday March 11 and viewers can vote for the dog they wish to win.

The former matelot is putting out a call to all within his Service - Vote for Molly.

The telephone number for voting will be available from early March, keep an eye on the BBC for details or check out the Kennel Club website at www.thekennelclub.org.uk online.

A gem of an idea at Culdrose

TWO Naval engineers at RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall have come up with a 'Gem' of an idea that will save the Royal Navy in the region of £500,000.

CPO Paul Breen and PO Simon Green designed and manufactured a specialist tool to service part of the rotor assembly of the Merlin helicopter.

The keen-eyed men worked in the Hydraulic Bay at Culdrose and noticed that as part of routine maintenance, dampers from the rotors had to be sent to Italy for servicing, each time at a cost to the MOD of £8,000.

The two designed the tools to do the job at Culdrose themselves, rather than sending the dampers abroad - meaning significant savings for the Navy in time and money.

The two were presented with their Gem awards - an MOD scheme that recognises bright ideas - by the Commanding Officer of RNAS Culdrose, Capt Philip Thicknesse.

RFA top at Raleigh

RFA NEW recruit Andy Parsons, top student on an initial seaman-ship course at HMS Raleigh, became the first recipient of the Petre Trophy.

The award was presented by Irene and Geoffrey Petre in memory of their son Mark, an RFA seaman who was lost from RFA Orangeleaf near the coast of the Isle of Man in 2005.

Andy said: "I feel really pleased to receive the award. The training has been brilliant."

Jessica Psaila and her cousin Zac Castle spent three days at sea on board HMS Liverpool, getting to grips with Naval life (and serious seasickness)...



● The author Jessica Psaila and her cousin Zac Castle on board destroyer HMS Liverpool

Say hello, wave goodbye

AS PO Nigel Wells nears the end of his 22-year naval career, his wife Emma is just starting out.

The couple were both interested in joining the Navy, but with Nigel already in the service, Emma put her ambitions to one side and went into the banking trade.

A spell in Gibraltar in 2003 reminded Emma of her childhood ambitions, and she was pleased to discover that the upper age limit for new recruits was 37.

The 36-year-old mother of three has now finished her basic training at HMS Raleigh, netting the Owen Cup as the top recruit for her entry.

She said: "I've definitely made the right decision in joining the Navy. I've loved my training so far, and wish I'd joined up years ago."

"I think being older has helped me during the training as I haven't had to learn the personal organisation skills necessary to complete the course.

"Sometimes it has been hard living with lots of young people, but I think my experience as a mum has helped.



● The Wells family - new recruit Emma and Naval old and bold Nigel with their children Megan, Jack and Louis

"In fact, although we have all bonded well as a team, on some occasions it has been just like being at home."

Husband Nigel said: "I've very happy for Emma. She put in a lot of effort before joining up and is

now reaping the rewards.

"It's a good life and I hope she does well."

Emma can be found at the Defence Dental Service Training Establishment at Aldershot training as a Dental Surgery Assistant.



● Cdr Mario Carretta, Lt Cdr Kev Dodd, Lt Cdr Fraser Hunt, Maj Del Stafford and Lt 'Whiskey' Walker benefit from a cooling shower

Cool down for high fliers

THE REWARD for reaching milestones in flying hours is usually not a dousing from the flight-deck hoses on HMS Ocean.

Topping the league for members of the Tailored Air Group (TAG) on board Ocean was the Commanding Officer of 846 NAS and the TAG, Cdr Mario Carretta, with 4,500 hours of flying and his 1,000th deck landing.

Following his lead were Lt Cdr Fraser Hunt (TAG Executive

Officer) and Maj Del Stafford (TAG Training Officer) who had each reached the 3,000 hour mark.

Next was the CO of 820 NAS, Lt Cdr Kev Dodd, who has notched up 2,000 hours in the air.

Last, but not least, Lt 'Whiskey' Walker totted up his thousandth hour during the TAG's deployment to West Africa.

The five share a total of 13,500 hours of flying experience.

Painting the town blue

DULL grey walls in Baghdad's International Zone have been brightened up by the deft brushstrokes of Lt Cdr Vince Noyce.

"Anyone who has been to Baghdad knows just how depressing the concrete walls can be - they line all the roads and surround every building," he said.

The Brigadier's courtyard area now features a mural based on Pigeon Point in Tobago - although any temptations of scantily-clad bathers were resisted in favour of beach towels depicting the Iraqi and Coalition nations' flags.

● Lt Cdr Vince Noyce brightens up Baghdad



A Norfolk-born Naval hero... but not that one

A MINISTRY of Defence Guard at Portsmouth Naval Base is on a mission to turn the spotlight on a true naval hero, born in Norfolk and shot on the deck of HMS Victory... but it's not the hero that you already know.

Vice Admiral Sir Christopher Myngs is the distant ancestor of MOD Guard Geoffrey Minns, who has spent years researching

the history of this 17th Century hero (although Myngs was considered by the Spanish government a common pirate).

Such is the modern Minns' dedication, that he has commissioned a painting based on the Sir Peter Lely portrait that hangs in the National Maritime Museum, that will feature in an exhibition at Myngs' hometown in Norfolk.

Psaila sailor

AFTER travelling for six hours by coach my cousin, Zac Castle (15), and I were not only very tired but also extremely anxious at the prospect of spending a few days on board HMS Liverpool with the Royal Navy.

Our aunt Lt Cdr Fiona Shepherd, who organised our naval acquaintances, met us in Liverpool at the coach station.

Without a minute to spare she told us exactly what we would be doing that very evening - this came as a surprise to us as we thought we would be having a well-needed early night. Our work experience was well under way.

Within 25 minutes of boarding Liverpool we were thrown in at the deep end. We rapidly ate dinner, were shown our messes and given borrowed uniform which was vitally needed for the forthcoming evening.

Our first task on the ship was to become Navy Stewards for the evening; local businesses in Liverpool were invited for a cocktail party.

Our first evening onboard went very well and to finish it off we watched the ceremonial sunset. What a great end to our first night

on board HMS Liverpool.

Zac spent his first full day in the galley with the chefs. He was shown how to cook and serve meals for over 200 people.

He learnt that the Navy chefs work as a team to produce quality nutritious meals. His day consisted of helping senior chefs prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner, more commonly known to the shipmates as 'scran'.

We both learnt that there is an entire language used within the Navy called 'jack speak', which not surprisingly confused us at times! This, however, added to the fun of the whole experience.

Whilst Zac was cooking in the galley I was helping one of the ship's company give local children a tour of the ship, which taught me a lot.

We went up to the bridge and learned all about the navigation and steering of the ship.

After struggling down ladders we showed them the mess I was staying in. They were all shocked to see the compact living conditions.

I spent the rest of the day on the bridge with the captain and his team of officers as we set sail for

Portsmouth. We waved goodbye to Liverpool and began our first experience and journey at sea.

As soon as the ship moved Zac and I, not to mention about 25 per cent of the ship's company, felt seasick. We suffered quite badly being new joiners and not used to the motion.

However this didn't put us off - we insisted on carrying out the tasks given to make the most of our time on board.

We went on rounds with the leading Reggie and the XO. This was our chance to be nosy and see where everyone lived.

We were invited by the XO to have dinner in the wardroom. We felt privileged as normally only officers are allowed to go in there.

I chatted with Surg Lt Louise Cockram who is the medical officer onboard. She was more than happy to give me a tour of the sickbay plus some good advice.

She told me all about emergencies and how they deal with it. I hadn't realised that everyone in the navy is first-aid trained in the event of an emergency.

The women in the mess that I was staying in, 3 Delta, were all very friendly and welcoming.

Especially LReg Marie Maddocks, who kindly cleaned up after me when I was sick!

I asked them lots of questions and learned about life at sea and how hard it is to be away from home.

OM Rachel Wright told me all about what life is really like at sea and never failed to make me laugh, even when I felt rather dizzy and sick.

OM Colleen Dunne looked after me throughout my time in their mess and happily lent me her best uniform.

I don't know what I would have done without their smiles and support so I thank them for making my experience on board memorable. I've had a truly amazing adventure.

Zac agreed: "This experience has been both fulfilling and enjoyable, it has encouraged me to join the Forces in the future.

"I admire the people on the ship for the hard dedicated work they do."

My time on board has certainly taught me a lot. I have total respect and gratitude to everyone involved in the Navy, and all the Armed Forces for that matter.



● All became clear in the Christmas Question of Sport

Mystery marine

A MYSTERIOUS figure joined Portsmouth's Royal Marines Band in December - who couldn't play a note!

Suitably (and subtly) filmed for BBC quiz *Question of Sport*, the mystery was cleared up in their Christmas special when yachtswoman Ellen MacArthur was unmasked as the cornet player.

Callum hears distress call

A YOUNG woman is dragged into a dark alleyway in Burnley, but a passer-by hears her screams for help - and fortunately that passer-by was Recruit Callum Krzysik of the Royal Marines.

Callum's courage and quick-thinking as he tried to stop the armed man has won him the Second Sea Lord's Commendation and the respect of the Lancashire Constabulary.

The man pulled a large knife on the 17-year-old Marine and threatened to attack him, but Callum would not be daunted.

The assailant fled, and Callum gave chase, calling 999 on his mobile phone and giving the police (literally) a running

commentary on the man's route.

Despite his efforts, the man managed to shake off his pursuer in a wooded area, but because of Callum's bravery one 16-year-old girl was saved from a predator.

At the ceremony on board HMS Victory, Callum said: "I'm just happy that the girl is OK, and I'm honoured to have received the commendation from the Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral Adrian Johns.

Lt Col Phil Sampson, the Commanding Officer for the Commando Training Centre Lympstone said: "This is a fine example of the behaviour we try to develop here at CTCRM.

"For one so young and relatively inexperienced, Callum displays a remarkable example of our commando ethos."



● Recruit Callum Krzysik RM



● One of our younger readers, Jack Nelson Wood

Little boy blue

WITH a name like Jack Nelson Wood, it's not surprising that this youngster has developed a taste for *Navy News* within hours of being born.

Father LWtr Slinger Wood said: "We wanted a nautical link and figured what better to name him than after England's Greatest Sailor."



● Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Adrian Johns shares a joke with World War 1 veteran Henry Allingham

Veteran's memories recorded for FAA

HENRY Allingham, World War 1 veteran of the Royal Naval Air Service and believed to be the only living survivor of the Battle of Jutland, visited the Fleet Air Arm Museum to add his memories to the museum's recorded reminiscence archive.

The 110-year-old was accompanied by the Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Adrian Johns in his role of Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm.

The veteran spent four years in the Royal Navy, serving in HM ships *Brocksley* and *Kingfisher*, and on the Western Front with 12 Squadron.

Museum director Graham Mottram said: "We are honoured that Mr Allingham visited the museum.

"He is a remarkable man, both in terms of his great age but also the wealth of his experiences which pre-date man's first

powered flight," added Graham.

Ninety years later, the veteran of the Great War was reunited with planes of the type that he worked on throughout his naval career.

It wasn't only Henry Allingham who saw familiar faces at the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

Museum employee Robin Harper left the Navy in 1989.

As he gazed at the new centrepiece to the museum's Falklands exhibition, he suddenly realised he recognised an old friend.

"I looked nostalgically at this remarkable Lynx helicopter thinking I used to service and maintain helicopters like this, and then I recognised its serial number and realised that I actually worked on this one!

"It was like meeting an old friend after 26 years apart. It seems time has treated my helicopter more kindly than me!"

Chatham salute for Falkland's grave

EIGHTY-year-old Jack Collings got in touch with submarine HMS *Trafalgar* last year to ask if someone on board would look for the grave of his father during the submarine's visit to the Falkland Islands.

Jack's father, Shipwright A C Collings, said goodbye to his son in the early winter of 1939 before deploying on HMS *Exeter* down to the South Atlantic.

On Christmas Day, Jack heard that his father had died as a result of injuries sustained during the Battle of the River Plate against the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee*.

Since that day, Jack had hoped to make the long journey south to visit his father's final resting place, but his last hopes were dashed a few years ago when his planned visit was cancelled due to his ill health.

Plans on board the submarine to lay a wreath were also dashed when circumstances made it impossible to land a shore party on the Falkland Islands during their visit.

But although *Trafalgar* didn't have the chance to come alongside at the Falklands, they contacted a fellow Devonport ship and asked HMS *Chatham* to carry out Jack's wishes and remember the sacrifice of his father in the early days of World War 2.

Capt James Morse, the Commanding Officer of *Chatham*, led a party to the grave himself to lay a wreath as a relative of his, S/Lt Clyde Morse, was killed on the gunnery platform of the *Exeter* during the same battle.



● WO 'Tanzy' Leigh takes part in an American submarine escape exercise from USS *Los Angeles* in the cold waters of Alaska

Los Angeles to Alaska in 10 secs

FOR THE first time in three decades, the US Navy conducted a submarine escape training exercise from one of their nuclear-powered submarines, and the second man to reach the surface was the Royal Navy's WO 'Tanzy' Leigh.

The warrant officer, who is an instructor at the Submarine Escape Training Tank (SETT) in Gosport, was one of just seven people who took the quick route to the surface from attack submarine USS *Los Angeles*.

With the boat down to a depth of 130 feet, it took just ten seconds for the Navy man to break the surface of the water at the US Navy's South-east Alaska Acoustic Measurement Facility in Ketchikan, Alaska.

WO Leigh said: "A group of 20 US personnel visited us at the SETT as part of their training for the exercise.

"Lt Cdr Bob Mannion, who is in charge of the SETT, and I were delighted to be asked over to Alaska to support the Americans during their training.

"I spent three days on USS *Los Angeles*, the first submarine of her class, and was the second person

Culdrose care

A CALENDAR from RNAS *Culdrose* will keep local residents safer on the roads.

The calendar features road safety tips and drawings from local children who entered the competition organised by the air station's Motor Transport section.

The winners each received an art set and a tour of the air station, seeing inside the air traffic control tower and the fire-station, and visited 771 NAS, 750 NAS and the FRADU Hawks, where they sat in the pilot's seat.



● C/Sgt Si Atkinson RM won a gold medal at the Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg with his sugary underwater scene

Si's gold medal is fishy business

TWO from the Senior Service, C/Sgt Si Atkinson and POCA Ryan Hopper, were part of the Combined Services Culinary Arts Team for the 2006 Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg.

The event started well with a gold medal for Si Atkinson for his stunning sugar centrepiece of a coral reef - carried with great caution from the UK where he had prepared it.

He deserved a gold medal just for getting it there in one piece... The team's successes piled up

with their hard work in Hell's Kitchen producing more gold medals for the hot menu and the cold buffet.

Now in the running for the overall prize and the World Cup itself, the atmosphere at the presentation ceremony could have sparked up a flambé and whipped up a mousse - but the team lost out to Switzerland in the final cut.

"To finish second at the World Cup was a fantastic achievement," said Si, "and the best we have ever achieved."

THE ART OF THE MILITARY BAND | VOLUME 3

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The Band of HM Royal Marines School of Music
conducted by Lieutenant Colonel F Vivian Dunn
CWO ONE FRANK BEN



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Global view



● HMS Scott nears Cape Town

ONE SQUADRON of Royal Navy ships has been conspicuous in home waters, only one is to be seen off Devon.

Three of the vessels of the Surveying Squadron are scouring the sea beds in home waters, only one is to be seen off Devon. HM Ships Scott, Echo and Enterprise deployed to the far corners of the world last year, and early in 2007 can be found off West Africa, in the Indian Ocean and the Far East.

Capt Ian Turner, Hydrographer of the Navy and Captain of the Surveying Squadron, is proud of his ships.

"We have a modern, effective squad of ships capable of operating independently around the world, equipped with the latest multi-beam sonars and towed oceanographic equipment to measure the sea bed as well as the structure and movement of the water column above it," said Capt Turner.

Their work supports the Royal Navy's global reach, providing the charts and other information to allow British warships and submarines to operate safely wherever they are sent.

"71 per cent of the earth's surface is covered by water, yet the vast majority of the sea bed remains unsurveyed to modern standards," said Capt Turner.

"It's strange to think that we know more about the surface of the moon, because we can see it and measure it from satellites, than we do about the sea bed under our oceans.

"That's because the oceans are between 3,000 and 5,000 metres deep - and we need to use ship-based sonar to systematically gather a picture of what it is like on the sea bed.

"And that takes time."

HMS Scott was designed to operate in

Ships of the Surveying hard at work far from Navy News catch

ocean waters, and her surveys occasionally detect uncharted sea-mounts.

Often caused by undersea volcanoes, they can rise from the ocean floor to surprisingly shallow depths and pose a real threat to ships and submarines.

HMS Echo and her sister Enterprise are best suited to shallower coastal waters where depths are less than 200 metres.

Here the priority is to make sure vessels can navigate safely, and additional information is collected to support Naval operations such as mine clearance and amphibious landings.

Surveying takes time, which is why these ships are designed to stay at sea for prolonged periods.

The crews are divided into three watches, with two on board at any one time with the third back in UK.

A typical cycle of 30 days at sea followed by a five-day port call to fuel and rotate crew members means the ships spend most of their time where they were designed to be - at sea.

But apart from a presence in key regions, the ships also help promote goodwill, providing assistance and training as well as practical survey work to update harbour charts, vital to the economy of the host nation.

Scott has been voracious in her data-gathering efforts in both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans over the past few months.

In the North Atlantic alone she captured more than 46,000 square miles of ocean floor.

The latest leg of her deployment began in November - though it got off to a shaky start with a member of the ship's company going down with acute appendicitis, requiring a 180° course change and a heroic evacuation in a storm by a helicopter from 771 NAS.

Christmas was spent in Cape Town, then she battled out into mountainous seas and high winds to continue her work.

One bright spot in the storms was the news that the ship's Commanding Officer, Cdr Steve Malcolm, had been awarded the OBE - a reflection, he said, of the efforts of the entire ship's company, their families, friends and affiliates.

New Year's Day saw 20-metre waves (Sea State 9, the roughest you can get, and as high as Scott's bridge) - and Force 11 ('violent storm') winds.

Most on board had never experienced such extreme conditions, which stopped the survey work - but she was soon back in action in the Indian Ocean as the weather improved.

To complete the Squadron picture, HMS Roebuck, which was off Africa last year in support of the NATO Response Force and in advance of Operation Vela off Sierra Leone.



Echo makes her mark

LAST year HMS Echo completed a significant amount of survey work around the Iraqi offshore oil platforms in the Gulf to help improve safe navigation in this congested sea area.

Since then she has headed steadily towards the Far East, with port visits in Vietnam, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Russia and Japan along the way.

● Santa, in the shape of S/Lt James Howard, of HMS Roebuck, delivers presents to HMS Echo in Hong Kong (left)

The visit to Ho Chi Minh City was used to further relations between the UK and Vietnam, and to help the development of a bilateral charting agreement.

Some of the ship's company headed out to the north of the city to see the Viet Cong Cu Chi Tunnels - a relic of the Vietnam War - while others sampled some of the local delicacies, including deep-fried scorpion and rice-field rat.

Another month at sea was followed by a change of crew at Manila, in the Philippines, where Echo was escorted in by the BRP Emilio Jacinto, formerly Hong Kong patrol ship HMS Peacock.

This was the first visit by a British warship for some years, and many on board enjoyed the vibrant night-life.

Three weeks of rough weather, thanks to Typhoons Durian and Etra, ended with a Christmas break in Hong Kong.

Into the New Year and Echo was still heading east, with Vladivostok and Yokosuka - where she will help celebrate the port city's centenary - on the agenda before she leaves the Far East in April for a scheduled docking period.



● (Above) PO Cuthbert, of HMS Echo, emerges from the Viet Kong Cu Chi tunnel system north of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam



● (Right) Lt Cdr George Tabart, Executive Officer of HMS Enterprise, presents text books, computer equipment and other educational material to the Ahantaman Senior School at Sekondi, near Takoradi, in Ghana

ew

by its lack of presence at its of far-distant oceans, while of the two Squadron have been their Devonport base. es up with them.

She is currently running from Devonport, updating charts of the South Coast exercise areas.

HMSML Gleaner is surveying the approaches to Newcastle as part of a programme to update surveys of UK ports.

Finally the survey work carried out by HMS Endurance – not strictly part of the Surveying Squadron – is still of interest to Capt Turner.

"The ship is in the middle of an extended deployment to the Antarctic Peninsula this year," he said.

"This coincides with a world-wide effort to improve our knowledge of the polar regions during International Polar Year, 2007-2008.

"In particular the ship will be surveying a number of uncharted areas that are increasingly being used by tourist ships to see some of the most beautiful and unspoiled scenery on this planet.

"Any marine accident could have a major impact on the environment, so better charts are urgently needed to keep ships safe."

As *Navy News* went to press, Endurance was hosting a visit by the Princess Royal in Antarctica.

Following the ship's brief stand down in Rio de Janeiro over the festive period, the ice patrol ship is once again off the Antarctic Peninsula.

Full report on the visit next month



● HMS Echo at anchor in Hong Kong (above)

Ship garners support

HMS ENTERPRISE has just visited Duala in Cameroon – the first Royal Navy visit in ten years – and helped survey the port approaches.

She undertook similar surveys in the Gambia last year.

Christmas dinner was enjoyed a week early at sea, with the officers waiting on the ship's company and serving the food.

She then put into Tema in Ghana, where the ship also delivered practical help to a local school.

On Christmas Eve the Executive Officer, Lt Cdr George Tabcart, and LMA Darren Farr delivered books, computer equipment and other educational supplies to the Abantaman Senior School at Sekondi – all of which had been collected and donated by Plymouth High School for Girls.

Mrs Evelyn Osei, the school's headmistress, asked that the best wishes of her pupils be passed on to the Devon school, and LMA Farr replied that "HMS Enterprise is thrilled to have played a small part in assisting in the excellent link between our two cities."

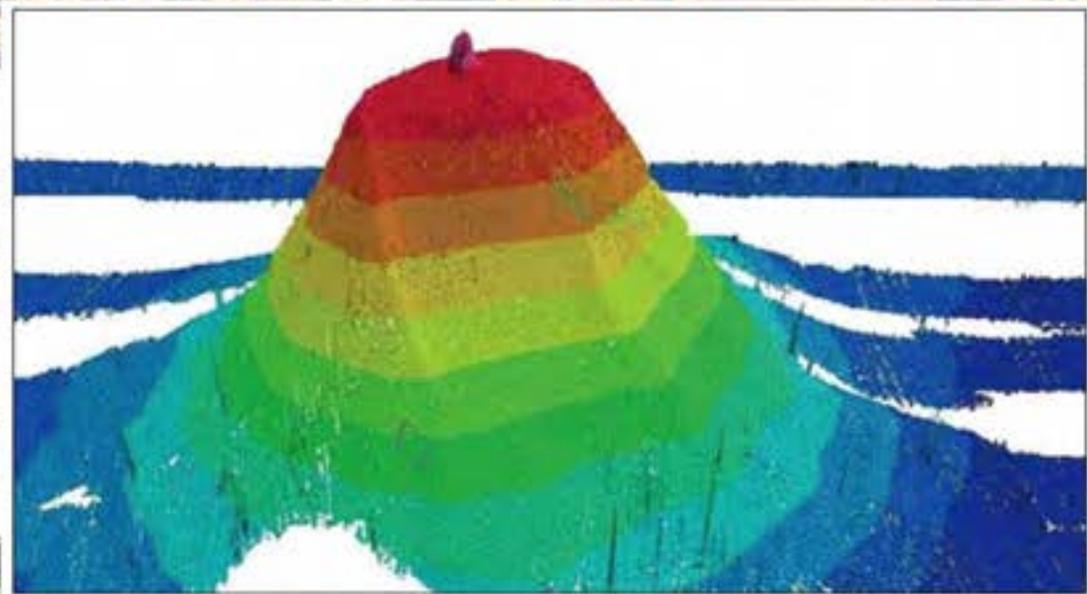
There was an environmental project to undertake as well, with a team from Enterprise helping a local scheme run by the Ghana Marine Turtle Conservation Project, which aims to protect the turtle eggs which are laid on Ghana's beaches.

The team spent a busy night on a beach, with traditional Naval signalling skills, along with torches, helping lure the odd disorientated turtle back to the sea.

New Year was spent at sea – though the day was made special for the youngest member of the ship's company, MA Glassey (19), who was rapidly promoted to Captain for the day while Commanding Officer Cdr David Robertson had to serve morning tea and lunch to his new 'boss'.

After an alternative command brief and a little ship-handling, the new captain was also generous enough to allow Hands to Bathe – most welcome in the African heat – and finished her big day with a mock Captain's Table and a quarterdeck barbecue.

● No, not an exotic pudding – the top of this seamount in the South China Sea (right) lies 100 metres below the surface in general depths of 500 metres. The image shows the shallowest depths in red and deepest in blue. It is safe for surface navigation, but a real danger to a dived submarine. Echo reported the danger and a chart correction was quickly issued.



● MA Glassey, the youngest sailor on board HMS Enterprise, was promoted to Captain for the Day at New Year



● Members of the ship's company of HMS Enterprise on a sightseeing trip in Vietnam



● 727 Naval Air Squadron arrives at its new home, RN Air Station Yeovilton, after the short flight from Roborough in Plymouth. Five two-seater Grob Tutors from the squadron, which is responsible for grading potential Naval aviators before they undergo formal training, were accompanied by a de Havilland Chipmunk T10 of the RN Historic Flight – the Royal Naval Flying Training Flight, which was commissioned as 727 NAS in December 2001, was equipped with Chipmunks until 1994.

Picture: LA(Phot) Paul A'Barrow (HMS Heron)

Changes in the air

WEST Country air stations saw a reshuffle of Naval squadrons as 2006 came to a close.

One involved a physical move to a new home base, the other saw two old squadrons re-emerge as their parent unit was split into three.

First to up sticks was 727 NAS, the former RN Flying Training Flight, whose main role is the selection and grading of potential Naval aviators.

The unit had been based at Roborough in Plymouth since its inception – it was originally created by gathering the various Tiger Moth aircraft at bases around the country which were used for recreational flying.

Now the squadron has flown the nest and settled into a new home at HMS Heron in Yeovilton.

As the RNFTF, the unit graded flyers during the week, with weekends being devoted to recreational flying.

The combination of grading and leisure flights continued through the Chipmunk era, until December 2001 when 727 NAS came into being, and the focus



remains on assessing young RN and RM officers, the majority in their last term at Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth.

Subsidiary tasks include the provision of refresher training to helicopter pilots in fixed-wing flying techniques before they convert to jets or become Qualified Flying Instructors; navigation training is given to Royal Marines selected to become aircrewmembers for the Commando Helicopter

Force, and the aircraft are used by Air Engineer Officers for practical studies.

The squadron also operates the popular RN Special Flying Award Scheme, designed to encourage youngsters to become a naval pilot or observer.

Further west at HMS Seahawk two more squadrons have returned to the Fleet Air Arm fold.

At a formal ceremony at RN Air Station Culdrose, attended by Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Adrian Johns, 854 and 857 Naval Air Squadrons were recommissioned.

The two new squadrons were formerly the front-line A and B Flights of 849 NAS, the Airborne Surveillance and Control (ASaC) specialists.

Training pilots to fly the Mark 7 Sea Kings was the task of the 849 NAS Operational Control Unit, a role which is now the sole function of the new leaner 849 NAS.

Splitting the old unit into three autonomous squadrons demonstrates the importance of ASaC capability to the RN and



● Lt Cdr David Biggs, Commanding Officer of 854 NAS, and Lt Cdr Peter Jefferson, the Commanding Officer of 857 NAS

Picture: LA(Phot) Carl Osmond (HMS Seahawk)

the other Armed Forces, and should make the new set-up more efficient.

The ceremony at Culdrose included a short flying display, followed by a parade and the formal commissioning of the squadrons by Admiral Johns.

As well as members of the squadrons and their families, guests included veterans from World War 2 who were members of the original 854 and 857 NAS.

Among them were former Avenger pilots Raymond Wadmore (82), Eric Rickman (84) and Walter Barnard (83), who were fascinated by the capability of the Sea Kings.

"It has been a terrific day – highly-organised like the Navy always is," said Eric.

"It has been very interesting indeed to come and compare how different the Navy is to when I joined up."

Admiral Johns said: "It is a great privilege to be here for this very important occasion as we re-commission these two former squadrons."

"The two flights have been operating as autonomous units for many years and need to be recognised in their own right."

"The new structure recognises all that they have done and will continue to do."

"It is important for the Navy, for the squadrons and the individuals who serve on the squadrons."

That fact was reiterated by those in the squadrons themselves, people like AEM Peter 'Cheez' Stilton, who said: "We already work well as a team, but it will be nice to have our own squadron number."

Cdr Rocky Salmon, Commander Sea King, said: "As a former CO of 849 B Flight I am delighted to hold the appointment of the Force Commander during this time of change, when these units will be recognised not as flights but independent, flexible, highly-capable squadrons in their own rights."

"The ASaC community will continue to support operations around the world, whilst looking ahead to the introduction of the Future Carrier and the Maritime Surveillance and Control platform that will eventually replace the Sea King Mk7 and continue to deliver air power from the sea for many years to come."



● Jack Harris gets a bird's-eye view of proceedings from the shoulders of POAEM Neil Harris, of 854 NAS

Analysing the numbers

727 NAS appeared as a Fleet Requirement Unit in May 1943 at Gibraltar, with detachments in Tafaraoui (Algeria) and Bizerta (Tunisia), using Defiants, Hurricanes and Swordfish.

It disbanded in December 1944 but re-formed in April 1946 at Gosport, providing air courses for non-flying sub-lieutenants and RM officers.

The squadron, which operated Tiger Moths, Seafires, Harvards and a Firefly, disbanded in January 1950.

In 1956 727 re-formed as the Dartmouth Cadet Air Training Squadron with Sea Balliols, Sea Vampires and a Sea Prince.

The squadron was again disbanded in December 1960.

849 NAS began life in the

summer of 1943 in the USA as a torpedo bomber reconnaissance unit, flying Avengers, and acted as a strike force during the D-Day period.

Moving east, 849 struck at targets in Sumatra and Japan at the end of the war, disbanding in October 1945.

Seven years later 849 re-formed at Brawdy in an Airborne Early Warning role, operating Douglas Skyraiders in A and B Flights – autonomous flights are a feature of its history – and re-equipping with Gannets in 1960, before being disbanded again in 1978.

It re-appeared with Sea Kings in 1984, the result of re-commissioning 824 D Flight which had been a temporary

solution to the lack of airborne warning so apparent during the Falklands campaign.

The new Mk 7 ASaC Sea Kings were introduced in 2002. **854 NAS** enjoyed a brief but lively wartime existence, forming in the US in January 1944 with Avengers.

It carried out anti-shipping patrols in the Channel then switched to the Far East, attacking targets in Sumatra, but disbanded in December 1945 with three Battle Honours.

857 NAS had an even shorter life, winning two Battle Honours at Palembang and Okinawa in a similar role to 854 NAS.

It officially formed in April 1944 in the US, and disbanded in November 1945.

Training in the round

LEARNING to fly helicopters is rather like climbing hills; the moment you conquer one summit there is another, higher one just beyond.

So it is for the potential Naval aviator. He or she submits to the grading process with 727 Naval Air Squadron, recently relocated to RNAS Yeovilton (see page 26 opposite), and if successful will be pointed in the direction of RAF Barkston Heath, home of the Defence Elementary Flying Training School (DEFTS), close to Cranwell in Lincolnshire.

If they still measure up, they either opt for the fast-jet route through RAF stations Linton-on-Ouse and Valley, or they head for RAF Shawbury for a career in rotary-wing aircraft.

With up to 60 hours flying in the bank, they are back to square one, though time spent aloft in a conventional aircraft is not wasted.

"They need to start on fixed wing in order to learn airmanship, awareness and captaincy of the aircraft," said Lt Cdr Simon Pipkin, the Commanding Officer of 705 Naval Air Squadron, which handles advanced helicopter training at the Shropshire airfield.

"More hours in the air equals a better pilot, because they are not just learning the mechanical skills - there is more to it than that."

So after the Slingsby Firefly they got to know at Barkston Heath, fledgling Naval helicopter pilots find even the docile single-engine Squirrel HT1s of the Defence Helicopter Flying School (DHFS) quite a challenge.

For that reason students go through almost a month of ground school training to familiarise themselves with principles and techniques of helicopter aviation.

Early on they are introduced to the power plant that will keep them aloft, a beautiful cut-away model of the surprisingly small Turbomeca Arriel gas turbine engine - and very quickly learn how to treat it with respect.

In the early days the risk of engines being written off through 'overtopping' on start-up was a problem - the manual throttle brings mixed blessings, as it can be cranked up too hard on a cold engine and cause damage, but it is also highly responsive in practice forced landings, for example.

Simulated cockpits and virtual systems now drum the correct procedure into pilots from the start - only one engine has been lost since 1998, while five were lost in the preceding four years.

After a course of lectures from former pilots, navigators and crewmen, all ex-Services and now working for FBH, the students will have an in-depth understanding of how the helicopter works and how its systems interact.

Fully primed, the students are by now itching to get airborne.

And whatever the hue of the uniform, that opportunity comes with a move to an Army Air Corps squadron for nine weeks of basic helicopter handling.

660 Sqn AAC provides a comprehensive introduction to the art of rotary-wing flying with a com-

Instructor killed in helicopter crash

A CIVILIAN instructor died when two Squirrel aircraft crashed at the DHFS last month, leaving three others injured, one a Naval officer. Staff at the School have expressed their sorrow at the death of John Gammons-Williams, a highly-experienced former RAF aviator with 660 Squadron AAC.

A Board of Inquiry has been convened.



● Squirrel helicopters of the Defence Helicopter Flying School in the skies over Shropshire, and mixed cap badges on a field exercise from RAF Shawbury (top right)

bination of classroom work, simulators and around 35 hours in the air - more than five hours solo.

Although designated an Army 'squadron', the unit - like its Shawbury sisters, 705 Naval Air Squadron and 60 (R) Squadron RAF - has a purple make-up, with staff from all three Services and civilian instructors who provide continuity over the years.

There is also instruction in 'crew resource management', as many will go on to work in a multi-crew environment.

This includes imbuing everyone, officer or rating, with the confidence to recognise a problem and raise it with the pilot, whatever the difference in Service or rank.

Then they head a few miles west to the Nesscliffe training area for Exercise Griffin Challenge - a chance to appreciate landing sites from an earthbound perspective.

"They start to learn what areas we can get into, based on the five Ss - size, shape, surface, slope and surroundings," said Lt Cdr Adrian Coulthard, Chief Ground Instructor for the School.

"They do the reconnaissance in the field, and later, with 705, they will do it from the air.

"Some of the sites, such as Pigeon Wood, look very small but we can get a Chinook in there.

"However, they must look at the surface - parts of Pigeon Wood are not so good, with a 15 degree slope at the top and only seven degrees at the bottom.

"Communication is important, and they also get to see the guys fly helicopters in; they think 'Crikey, I will be doing that in a while...'

"They also have to bivvy out; if they join the Joint Helicopter Force they may have to bivvy beside the aircraft, so they learn these additional skills in a scenario based on a non-combat evacuation scenario."

Personal development and leadership training are also on the curriculum, with students delivering a formal brief to a senior officer and planning their own Adventurous Training expeditions overseas.

Then comes the part they have been waiting for - getting their hands on the controls.

"The Squirrel has a 98 per cent serviceability record - it



Tri-Service ethos is key factor

THE DEFENCE Helicopter Flying School (DHFS), based at RAF Shawbury in Shropshire, consists of a ground school unit and three squadrons, one from each of the three Armed Forces.

Budding aviators generally arrive at Shawbury from elementary flying training at RAF stations Cranwell and Barkston Heath, having completed at least 40 hours fixed wing but no rotary experience.

Trainees start with 660 Squadron Army Air Corps and progress to 705 Naval Air Squadron.

RAF students - and some RN personnel - then move on to 60 (R) Squadron RAF, while Navy and Army pilots move to conversion units to train on aircraft they will eventually fly.

A fourth section of DHFS, the Search and Rescue Training Unit, is based at RAF Valley in Anglesey.

THE DHFS was conceived as part of the 1994 Defence Cost Studies, during which it became apparent that joint training would be more efficient, would allow aircrew of the three Services to be familiar with the different ways squadrons operate, and allow the early dissemination of best practice.

Although key posts are rotated between the Services, at present the school has a healthy Dark Blue bias, either through RN officers or others with a Fleet Air Arm background.

The new Commandant of the DHFS is Capt Martin Westwood RN, who took over last month.

is very, very reliable and a very good little trainer for the people coming through," said Capt Neil Bishop, second-in-command of 660 Squadron.

"Nothing we do is surplus to requirement - there is no fat on this syllabus, as we are the foundation for all future rotary training.

"And it is an Army Air Corps squadron, so we try to show them how an Army squadron works - and there is a good chance they will bump into an old course mate out in Afghanistan, or somewhere like that."

An Army major - currently Maj Gary Hickson - heads the squadron, and the two Flight Commanders are from the RN and RAF.

660 is the only squadron at Shawbury which teaches exactly the same syllabus to all students, whether a novice Army corporal who may go on to Apache or a Royal Navy officer who has flown a two-seat Tornado.

Students tend to fly once a day, although that can be increased if the weather intervenes - winter courses have an extra week built in to cope with poorer conditions, but the courses have to finish on time

as conversion units await the new pilots and the front line beckons.

With anything up to 25 helicopters in the air at Shawbury at any one time, it can be a busy place, but long hours on simulators and in preparatory work pays dividends by the time the students get to their first sortie.

Although the new pilots are generally well-motivated, there is a safety net in the form of the warning system - air warnings, which form part of a remedial learning process, ground warnings, which provide motivation for extra training, and character and leadership warnings, which tend to weed out incompatible candidates before they reach the front line.

Every opportunity is given to trainees to pick up the knowledge they need, even down to flight safety posters on the walls above urinals (though you would need a pretty impressive bladder capacity to memorise the details printed on *Engine Failure in the Hover or Engine Fluctuation*).

With the basic skills mastered - and a battery of tests on the ground and in the air confirm that - the students are ready for another steep learning curve.

This is delivered by 705 NAS, which teaches them how to use the aircraft, rather than just fly it. Next month - 705 NAS takes students to a higher plane



● Squirrels of the Defence Helicopter Flying School on the apron at RAF Shawbury



'ONCE NAVY, ALWAYS NAVY'

Chelsea Pensioners join in at Cheshunt

AT THE annual Cheshunt branch dinner, Chelsea Pensioners Sgt Bill 'Paddy' Fox and Bill Lumsden were guests of honour, along with serving submariners MEM John Hanks, a branch member, and MEM McArdle.

Following an excellent meal, S/M Joe Wright, Master-at-Arms of the Gangway, was honoured with life membership for 24 years of service, S/M Jenny Wiltshire won the award 'Shipmate of the Year' for her contribution to the social life of the branch, and a certificate of appreciation was awarded to S/M Margaret Morsley.

Bill Lumsden, a Normandy veteran formerly of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, was wounded and blinded in both eyes at the Battle of Caen.

One eye was later saved, and he returned to duty on VE Day to a post in Germany.

Later invalided out of the Army, he joined the Chelsea Hospital in 1996.

Paddy Fox, from Co Tipperary in the Republic of Ireland, followed his brother and joined the 15th/19th Hussars.

He served in the Regiment for 38 years and has been a resident of Chelsea Hospital for the past five years.

Safe haven for ship memorabilia

THE HMS Constance Association, which disbanded in October because of a diminishing membership, has found a safe haven for its documents, photographs and other memorabilia in the Library of the Historic Dockyard, Chatham.

Its archives, which can be consulted, contain a great deal of interesting material.

Birthday surprise for Les of the Eagle

LES Daniels never stopped spinning yarns to his wife Val about the enjoyable time he had aboard HMS Eagle during the ship's final commission in 1969-72.

Les served aboard the carrier as a Flight Deck MEM.

As his 60th birthday drew near Val planned on giving him a surprise party in Warrington and decided that if a reunion could be arranged with some of his old shipmates, it would be the best present he could have.

With this in mind, she got in touch with ex-POPT Mike Ellis - who was not over-enthusiastic about helping to organise an Eagle reunion after 34 years.

Having lost most of his grey hair as Ops Officer with the Trafalgar 200 team, he knew what a daunting task organising such a reunion would be.

He changed his mind, however, when he got in touch with 'Jock' Melvin, one of the former 'club-swingers' of the Eagle, who pointed out that organising events at the drop of a hat was exactly the job of club-swingers.

So plans went ahead.

Numerous emails were sent to contacts and an advert placed in *Navy News*, and in no time stokers, Royal Marines, Seamen, bunting-tossers, Greenies and even NAAFI staff "came crawling out of the woodwork", and the reunion was under way.

A generous offer to help with ceremonial requirements came from the Sea Cadet unit TS Obdurate in Warrington, commanded by Lt (SCC) Tina Stanier RMR.

Former Marine Bugler Les Barrett offered his services for ceremonial sunset and ex-Royal Navy photographer Danny du



● Birthday boy Les Daniels (left) and Nelson's Chief Bosun, Mike Ellis, chat to the youngest member of TS Obdurate, Cdt Chris Naylor. Other members of the Warrington unit are (far left) CPO(SCC) Paul Ellison, (centre) L/Cpl Mne Tom Jackson, and (far right) Keith Spencer

Feu, former LSEA in Eagle's Boat Party, volunteered his PR and photographic skills.

Unknown to Les, a motley crew of Eaglets converged on Warrington on the day of his birthday and partook of the first of several 'Up Spirits'.

Meantimes, Mike and Danny went to the former Warrington Working Men's Club to sort out a welcoming piping party and 'Ceremonial Sunset'.

Roughly an hour before the birthday boy arrived there was a moment of panic when it was discovered that there was no facility to hoist or lower the Ensign.

However, thanks to the Sea Cadets of Obdurate, the problem was solved in time.

Les Daniels was speechless when they piped him aboard, and following an enactment of the Death of Nelson, by Mike Ellis (Nelson's Chief Bosun for

the occasion), and a recital of Nelson's Prayer by L/Cpl Mne Tom Jackson, the reunion ended with an excellent Ceremonial Sunset parade by the Sea Cadets and staff, with a musical rendition by ex-RM Bandsman Les Barrett.

More than 70 shipmates and guests attended the birthday party-come-reunion, which promises well for a 35th anniversary gathering of Eaglets and another celebration in the near future.

Shipmate honours VC winner

SHIPMATE Doug Turk, chairman of the HMS Morecambe Bay Association, pays an annual visit to the battlefields of France and Germany.

On a recent visit to Vis-en-Artois Memorial in the Pas de Calais, he laid a cross in honour of CPO George Prowse VC DSM, who had no grave but whose name is inscribed on the memorial, on behalf of his Association.

He also placed a cross at the Royal Naval Division Memorial in Gavrelle, where the Division fought and captured the village from the Germans.

This year he hopes to visit Zeebrugge, where his father, CPO E Turk, was wounded in the raid.

President welcomed

MEMBERS of the City of Ely branch extended a warm welcome to their fourth branch president, Cdre 'Bill' Kelly RN, whose family are now adopted 'Jannets'.

His arrival swells the educators or 'schoolies' to two, the other being Cdr Anthony Mizen RN, who, as to be expected, masterminds the branch Quiz Night.

Cdre Kelly, who was born in Ely and attended Soham Grammar School, hopes to attend as many meetings as possible, though living some distance away.

Run ashore

IN KEEPING with the spirit of goodwill, members of Carshalton branch, accompanied by the Mayor and Mayoress of Sutton, made their annual run ashore to the Royal Chelsea Hospital to entertain the residents with Christmas carols followed by a Sods Opera.

Veterans meet next generation

A PARTY of nine veteran submariners, all members of the Exeter branch of the Submariners Association, spent an enjoyable day at HMS Raleigh, including a tour of the Submarine School.

The nine, who have clocked up more than 70 years between them, found the Dolphin Attack Simulator an interesting way of teaching today's young deeps, and were most impressed by the quality of the young men joining the Service today.

Exeter branch boasts 33 members, and meets on the third Thursday of every month at the White Ensign Club in Exeter.

New members are always welcome to join the branch, which first formed in 1964.

For more details, contact Phil Jays on 01392 877413.

Vidal is remembered by her friends

IF THE Royal Navy's only purpose-built survey ship to be built at Chatham is largely forgotten, at least her valiant deeds are kept alive by the Friends of HMS Vidal.

Many of them served in the ship in her glory days, spent surveying the West Indies, the Gulf and beyond, as well as UK waters.

She is remembered not so much for securing safe passages for the world's shipping, but for claiming, during her first commission, the Isle of Rockall for the British Empire.

Friends of HMS Vidal, who number 190 of all ranks and commissions, meet with their president Sir David Haslam (the first Jimmy on the 1956-68 commission) for reunions around the country, and welcome other ex-Vidals to join them.

Details can be obtained from Claire and David Parker on 0208 673 5392 or by visiting the website mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/friendsofmsvidal/

HMS Vidal was a Naval design from the very start, and she was the first survey ship to be equipped with a helicopter flight deck and a hangar, allowing for aerial survey photography and for the transfer of sailors to and



● Survey ship HMS Vidal

from shore observation facilities.

The ship, which was powered by four Admiralty-design diesel engines, was also fitted with an air-conditioning plant to allow for operations in both tropical and polar conditions.

She was launched in July 1951 at a cost of just under £1.4 million, and was the first British naval vessel to be built equipped from the beginning for cafeteria messing.

She was originally built with

an open bridge, but that was enclosed during refit in 1961.

Vidal displaced 2,200 tons when fully loaded, and had accommodation on board for almost 200 people.

She carried three survey motor launches equipped with echo-sounders - Stys, Pike and Rattlesnake.

After a career which spanned three decades, no buyer could be found for the veteran ship, so she was broken up in Bruges in 1976.

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in our December edition was Type 16 frigate HMS Teazer, originally designed as a destroyer.

The £50 prize goes to M Noonan of Southsea.

This month's ship is pictured in 1961, the year she was converted into a minesweeper maintenance ship.

Later that same year she sailed to her new home, Singapore, where she remained until she was scrapped in Hong Kong in 1970.

Can you name her, and her sister ship, which was scrapped in Hamburg in 1965?

The correct answer could win you £50.

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3RH. Coupons giving correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

Closing date for entries is March 9. More than one entry can be submitted, but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our April edition. The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 144
Name
Address
My answers: 1.
2.

Naval Quirks comic strip. Panel 1: 'WHEN THE DECISION WAS MADE IN 1915 TO EVACUATE THE 120,000 ALLIED TROOPS ON THE GALLIPOLI PENINSULA...'. Panel 2: '...THE GENERAL STAFF ESTIMATED THE LOSSES WOULD BE 50,000...'. Panel 3: '...IN FACT, THE RN TOOK THEM ALL OFF WITH ONLY ONE FATALITY AND THAT WAS DUE TO AN ACCIDENT...'. Panel 4: 'I'M PLEASED TO HEAR IT - 'COS WE'RE ABOUT TO DO ANOTHER ONE!'. Signatures: MICHIE, MICK.



Funding boost for Veterans Day cities

SHORTLY before Christmas, representatives from 15 UK cities gathered in Birmingham to hear the Veterans Minister Derek Twigg announce plans to mark the second national Veterans Day on June 17 2007.

The Minister pledged to provide up to £10,000 to each of 15 'flagship' cities which are invited to draw up plans to mark Veterans Day.

The events will focus on engaging the local community, particularly young people.

The MOD will continue to support smaller community events around the UK, many of which will be linked to the 25th anniversary of the Falklands Conflict.

The 15 flagship cities are: London, Newcastle, Hull, Leeds, Blackpool, Birmingham, Nottingham, Norwich, Southend, Portsmouth, Weymouth, Plymouth, Cardiff, Dundee and Portlaoise in Northern Ireland.

Busy time in Cornwall

MEMBERS of Redruth and Camborne branch and their two branch standard bearers were kept busy throughout November attending commemorative and Remembrance parades and wreath-laying ceremonies in a number of venues.

As guests of the Camborne Conservative Club, they attended a veterans evening which included a parade of standards followed by entertainment and an excellent raffle.

They also attended the laying-up of the Penzance standard in Madron Church.

The branch has sadly closed due to a decrease in membership.

HQ study recommends move to Pompey

A STUDY into the location of the Association's headquarters has resulted in a recommendation to move to Portsmouth.

The National Council had directed General Secretary Cdr Paddy McClurg to analyse the HQ in Chelsea, and he concluded that the premises and the location were inappropriate.

With a much smaller RN presence in London, a base in the capital was becoming less and less attractive.

The HQ consists of an adapted flat in

a shared building; the five small rooms all interconnect (reducing privacy) and the largest meeting room can only cater for nine people, meaning outside venues had to be hired.

With rudimentary IT facilities and no training rooms or storage space for RNA-linked merchandise, as well as higher costs associated with London, S/M McClurg's report came up with a wish list for accommodation and locations.

Among the locations considered were

Leith, Birkenhead, Chatham, Portland and Plymouth, but all failed on at least one criteria, leaving Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard as the recommended choice, with the sale of the Chelsea lease helping to fund any move.

New premises would probably provide a reception area, a meeting/training facility, an information centre, a retail sales outlet and office accommodation.

A Relocation Working Group has been set up to take a relocation plan forward.

Never too late for a medal

IT IS never too late, as S/M George Fleming, secretary of the Ireland branch of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association (NMBVA) confirms, to apply to the Medals Office of the MOD for Service medals.

It was 42 years before he sent in an application and, having proved his eligibility, he has received the GSM (Borneo) and the NGSMB (Brunei).

Having convinced Philip Price, a fellow shipmate who served with him in HMS Lincoln in the Far East, to apply for the medals which are due to him, Philip has now - 43 years on - received the same medals as George.

He is also due a third - the Pingat Jasa Malaysia (PJM) medal - when the Malaysian High Commission visits Belfast to present this medal to other veterans.

Bernard is VIP guest of Royals

A SINGULAR honour was conferred on 88-year-old S/M Bernard Hallas RM, secretary of the York branch.

He was invited by Col Paul Denning RM, Commanding Officer of the Fleet Protection Group RM at Faslane, for a three-day visit and attendance at their Remembrance service.

The visit, instigated by the Group's chaplain, the Rev Mike Hill, surpassed S/M Bernard's wildest expectations.

In keeping with the status conferred on him, he was met on arrival by a Royal Marines staff car, taken to the Group's reception centre, introduced to the officers and later ensconced in a three-room apartment in the Officers' Quarters.

During the following days, with the Rev Mike Hill by his side, he was granted permission by Maj John Dowd RM, OC of Fardrum Squadron, to go 'inside the wire' and meet Royal Marines of the Rapid Support Group.

Members of this specialist force eat, sleep and relax with their weapons by their sides, and can secure an area within seconds.

On the invitation of the Commanding Officer of HMS Vengeance, he had a tour of a Trident submarine which S/M Bernard said was "like entering another world".

Later, placed in the Cox'n's seat of a ten-seater inflatable, he traversed the loch at a high rate of knots.

Throughout his stay, former Cpl Bernard Hallas RM dined daily in the Mess Wardroom, toured various sections of the base and met Marines of all ranks.

On the final day, feeling reluctant to return home, he attended the Remembrance Service of the FPGRM and gave a short talk on the past, and how it was when he joined the Corps.

The final evening was given over to a celebration organised by the 'Seniors', where he was feted like a king, and showered with gifts, including a framed photo of his first detachment parade, a photo of his first ship in 1936, and a framed colour photo of HMS Warspite, the second love of Bernard's life.

S/M Hallas says his visit to Faslane will stay with him for the rest of his life.

He thanked Lt Col Mark Maddock RM for his farewell gift of an FPGRM plaque, Rev Michael Hill RN for never leaving his side, and the Royal Marines for the welcome and hospitality extended to him.

S/M Hallas ran away from home and enlisted in the Royal Marines in 1935.

Following training he joined HMS Resolution as a gunner on the massive 15in turrets and served on contraband control around Spanish waters during the Civil War.

During World War 2 he was posted to the Flagship of the Mediterranean, HMS Warspite, serving more than four years aboard her.

For his service in the Royal Marines, which took him around the world twice, he boasts a chestful of service medals.

Dinner is delight for Plymouth

THE PLYMOUTH branch annual dinner dance, held in the WOs and CPOs' Mess of HMS Drake, was a stylish and enjoyable occasion.

Guests included Lord Mayor Cllr Michael Fletcher, Mayoress Mrs Sally Cresswell, Association Chairman S/M David White and his wife Monica, and branch president Cdr Simon Lister.

Following a superb meal and the traditional toasts, S/M Eric Rattle was honoured with life membership in recognition of his long service to the branch.

Members and guests then danced to music by Le Band.

Chairman S/M Bob Palmer thanked all who had contributed to the success of the evening, especially social secretary Sue Gutteridge and her committee and her husband Arthur, the branch secretary, and to the Sea cadets of TS Golden Hind, as well as Mess President S/M Harry Hooper for the use of the excellent venue.

In a Pickle

THE PICKLE Night held annually in Gibraltar is regarded as one of the Navy's foremost celebrations, and this year it fell to the Royal Naval contingent of DCSA to organise.

The event was presided over by Mess President WO1 Brian Parry (OC DCSA Gibraltar CDA).

The Mess was transformed into HMS Pickle by a team of volunteers led by WO1 David Walker - and the result was fantastic.

The ship's company and guests enjoyed an evening of excellent food, music by the Rooke Volunteer Band, more than a little Naval theatre and excellent speeches.



● From left: S/Ms Arthur Norman, Brian Webster and Peter Johnson - Peter, the secretary of the Derby branch of the Submariners Association, was acting RPO to ensure no sleight of hand between measure and glass - a thankless task

Late news of Trafalgar

BETTER late than never comes this report on the Derby branch gala 'Trafalgar' dinner, enjoyed by 132 shipmates and their wives.

The guests of honour included the Mayor and Mayoress, Cllr John and Mrs Pamela Ahern, and Rear Admiral Sir David Haslam, the branch president.

Mess president was S/M Len Owen, a member of the branch

and national chairman of the Fleet Air Arm Association and chairman of Derby FAA Association, whose guest was Cdr Bill Dean RN, Commander Joint Force Harrier at RAF Cottesmore, who proposed the toast to the Immortal Memory. S/M Tom Smith, branch chairman, proposed the Loyal Toast.

Cadets from TS Kenya provided the piping party.

Ramsgate twins with Dutch group

THE TWINNING of Ramsgate branch with that of the Zeeland (AVOM) branch of the Netherlands was a happy occasion for shipmates, who welcomed a party of 24 Dutch sailors to the ceremony.

Friendships forged will be renewed when members of the branch visit their Dutch oppos in the near future.

S/M Peter Fox was invited to London to receive his Veterans badge from the Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram.

Peter, who served in the Navy from 1962 to 1985, saw service in numerous vessels, including HM Ships Alderney, Ocelot, Orpheus, Enterprise, Endurance and Hydra.

Concerns are voiced over Haslar remains

NORTH Manchester branch member S/M John Donnelly is concerned about the closure of St Luke's Church and the Royal Hospital Haslar, and what may happen to the caskets containing the ashes of the men and women who died in the service of their country which are held there.

They are, he believes, deserving of a proper and fitting RN burial, and to ensure that the remains of these men and women are treated in a proper and dignified way a list of all the caskets containing their ashes should be made available.

If the ashes of a family member, or someone known to you, are still in the crypt of the church, please ring the Haslar Chaplaincy on 023 9276 2266 as soon as possible.

NAVY NEWS 2007 CALENDAR

From the icy Antarctic to the sizzling tropics: The "Navy Worldwide" is the theme of the 2007 Navy News calendar. Full colour photographs of ships, submarines, helicopters and hovercrafts are featured against a variety of stunning and atmospheric global locations. Each of the photographs is accompanied by a table of interesting facts and figures.

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Teachers try Base tour for themselves

TEACHERS from Plymouth have been given a behind-the-scenes tour of Devonport Naval Base to see how the new guided tours can help the city's schoolchildren.

The tours have been running since late summer, and have attracted up to 1,300 people through the gates.

Visitors enjoy a 'windscreen tour' of the base, spanning a timeline which starts in the late 17th century in the South Yard and ends with the 21st century Navy at the north end the complex, where they get the chance to board an operational warship.

The heads of department of some Plymouth schools tried the tour for themselves, meeting MOD and DML representatives before taking the bus tour that ended on board Type 23 frigate HMS Northumberland.

The group now aim to work with the base's Visitors' Centre to develop ways in which tours can be tailored to the needs of schoolchildren, supporting the National Curriculum.

Plymouth's Senior Education Adviser Bill May said: "The visit offered a wonderful opportunity to see how the Royal Navy has adapted to the huge technological changes that have taken place."

"The Royal Navy's pride in being a part of Plymouth - its history, its present and its future came through overwhelmingly."

"There are so many ways in which young people of all ages could benefit from such a visit."

Cdr David Helyn, from the Visitors' Centre, said: "I was delighted to invite members of the local education authority to experience one of our new tours to see the Naval Base and its many facilities for themselves."

"I hope their experience will now allow us to explore ways to work closely with school across the city so we can show pupils both the historic and modern and relevant Royal Navy which is the heart of their city."

The base already has strong links with local schools, welcoming more than 4,500 youngsters through the gates last year alone.

Many of the visits are sponsored by the Directorate of Naval Recruiting in a bid to encourage youngsters to think about joining the Royal Navy as an option for their future careers.

It is now hoped that schools will get involved in the tours and strengthen these community links.

Mum on a mission

A SUSSEX mum has been helping test the NATO crisis response force.

RN Reservist Jenny Coley travelled to the Gulf of Lyon for NATO Exercise Brilliant Midas, in which she had the role of a Media Operations Officer.

The exercise involved 40 ships, five submarines, 16 helicopters, 24 aircraft and more than 7,500 people from ten nations.

Jenny (34), a former Supply Officer in the regular RN, escorted a party of journalists on a whistlestop tour of units from seven of the ten nations.



● Framed by the impressive architecture of Admiralty House, officers of the Joint Force Headquarters reflected on operations ranging from the Indonesian tsunami to the Lebanon evacuation as they dined on Commander Joint Force Operations, Brig Jacko Page. Cdr Bob Fancy, who presided over the dinner, paid tribute to the soon-to-be-General, saying: "Naval officers under his command have been inspired by his intuitive understanding of maritime business, and uncanny grasp of Naval banter, and as such it was fitting that the Senior Service was able to bid farewell in style as he looks to the future and command in Afghanistan."

Picture: Mark Newcomb

Spare a thought for the Widows

ARE YOU looking forward to a well-earned retirement?

Have you considered the possibility of boosting your pension benefits?

Stakeholder pensions are available with the Ministry of Defence's preferred provider, Scottish Widows.

They are also available to partners and/or children.

Stakeholder pensions do not affect Armed Forces Pension Scheme benefits but help individuals maximise their retirement benefits and allow members to save in a tax-efficient way.

The Armed Forces have negotiated a specially-reduced annual management charge of 0.8 per cent.

For further information on this scheme, please contact Scottish Widows Armed Forces on 0845 608 0376 (or +44131 655 6600 if calling from abroad), or email armedforces@scottishwidows.co.uk or see the relevant website at www.scottishwidows.co.uk/armedforces/

Board move

BRIG John Wallace, Commandant of the Defence College of Logistics and Personnel Administration, has been appointed to the Board of Directors of Skills for Logistics, the Sector Skills Council for the freight logistics industry.

Come and speak to the staff on the 'front desk'

DO YOU want to have greater influence on your career direction? Then read on...

Ratings Career Management Advisors (RCMAs) were established to offer impartial one-to-one Career Management and Assignment (formerly Drafting) advice to all Naval Ratings and RM Other Ranks.

They are not Career Managers, although they do work for the Director Naval Career Management (DNCM) in support of the Divisional System.

Their aim is to allow you to have a greater influence on the direction you wish your career to take, and to afford you the opportunity to achieve your own professional and personal goals.

In short they are DNCM's front desk, and should be your first point of contact for any Career Management or Assignment (drafting) enquiry you may have.

All the RCMAs run a barbershop routine - there is no need to make a formal appointment to see them, just come along and take a seat in the waiting area or room.

Or you can contact them by phone, fax and email - details can be found on the RCMA website, which is accessible from the DNCM home page on the intranet.

It should be noted that there are no guarantees associated with any of the qualified advice or guidance you receive from RCMA staff, however it will be accurate and up-to-date.

So what exactly can the RCMAs do for you?

All the RCMAs are now equipped with JPA, and yes, it's not as quick as NMMIS was in terms of viewing potential Sea, Shore and Local Foreign Service assignments (that's the new term for Drafts), but they can still

achieve the same aim. However, that said, looking for potential future assignments is only one facility they offer.

RCMA (RN) staff can:
 Carry out a JPA Health Check:

- Check a rating's employee Preferences & Sea Preference to ensure that they have recorded them accurately on JPA;
- Check the Ratings Future Availability Date (formally ERD);
- Check the ratings Competencies against the Unit Position List / Unique Position Number;

Discuss Career Planning & Direction:

- Provide Career advice regarding training milestones and educational requirements needed for promotion to the next higher rate.

Check Course Availability:

- Identify Professional Qualifying and Command Courses vacancies.
- Identify TEM / PJT vacancies in accordance with the unit's Establishment List (formally Scheme of Complement).

Conduct Termination (formally PVR) Consultation:

- Provide a consultation facility for ratings considering the submission of a request to terminate their engagement. It is recommended that DOs use this facility where possible (before forwarding the rating's request via JPA workflow).

RCMA staffs have considerable experience dealing with personnel considering termination.

Discuss/Identify Branch Transfers Possibilities/Procedures:

- Liaise with Fleet Naval Personnel & Strategy (NPS) to identify branch transfer opportunities and vacancies.

- Brief personnel considering a branch transfer on the Manning Clearance procedure and the pay implication associated with a successful application.

Initiate Swap Assignment Action:

- Liaise with Units/WMOs/

Vital numbers

RCMA telephone numbers are as follows:

- Portsmouth:** 9380 25639/25497 (20098 for RM)
- Devonport:** 9375 67337/65848
- Faslane:** 93255 3302/6133
- Yeovilton:** 93510 5113/5129
- Culdrose:** 93781 2076/2077
- CTCRM:** 93785 4222/4542
- Wittering:** 95351 7841

All RCMAs are fully JPA'd and open for business, so contact them to see what they can do for you. Remember, there are no guarantees - but if you don't ask, you don't get.

Individuals in an effort to facilitate swap-assignment (formerly swap-drafting) action. RCMA staff will ensure swap assignment details are added to the Swap Assignment page on the RCMA website, and passed to other RCMAs for information and display.

Seagoers With Dependant Child/Children (SWDC) Consultations:

- Discuss future assignment options for Seagoers With Dependant Children (SWDC).

- Complete and forward SWDC documentation to relevant Career Manager(s) for consideration and subsequent decision with respect to SWDC sea/shore service liability.

Out-reach Programme:

- They also have the ability to visit Units upon request (where budget, and staff availability permit) to conduct career management briefs and possibly consultations (dependant on JPA access). Visit the RCMA website for more information.

Royal Marines RCMAs were formerly known as Regional Drafting Career Advisors.

They work primarily for the

RM Career Managers in DNCM and provide a career management link between DNCM and the man on the ground.

Whilst the advisors have firm bases in both Portsmouth and CTCRM, and welcome any telephone calls, RM RCMAs will routinely visit units and offer Career Counselling to individuals especially with regard to selection for RM specialisations.

In addition to offering career counselling to RM Other Ranks, all advisors are there to help the RM chain of command with any career management queries that they may have.

RCMA (RM) staff can:

- Provide impartial and unbiased career management advice on the 28 different RM Specialisations available to a RM other rank;
- Check the status of any preference the individual may have recorded on JPA;
- Provide Career advice on educational requirements needed for certain Specialisations and promotion;
- Identify Specialisation Qualification and Command Course dates;

- Brief personnel considering a specialisation transfer on the procedure and the pay implications associated with a transfer;
- Offer one to one Career Counselling Interviews (CCI) covering all of the above issues;
- Provide Career Management advice to any individual who is considering submitting their notice.

The RCMA website was established in April 2006 and has proved to be a great success, not only for Ratings/Other Ranks but also for Divisional Officers and Troop Commanders.

It contains hyperlinks to help the user navigate around the site at speed and can be accessed via the DNCM home page on the intranet. It includes a raft of useful information and opportunities such as:

- Links to BR1992, BR1066 & BR 4 as well as Squad System Desk Instructions;
- Swap Assignment facility where personnel can view potential swaps, or add their details to the Swap Assignment page;
- Access to the RN Jobs list, which from Feb/Mar 07 will have a monthly JPA update feed;
- View Promotion, Extended Career, Branch Transfer Opportunities signals, as well as the DNCM Monthly Non-TMSS Billet signal calling for volunteers to fill non-Squad Sea, Shore and LFS billets;
- RCMA Contact details tel/fax/e-mail/postal addresses;
- What the RCMAs can and cannot do;
- Current Hot Topics and Miscellaneous Issues (these two links include the majority of important and very useful information, which is sub-divided into General Service, Submarine Service, Fleet Air Arm and Royal Marines, to help their customers find what they want.

Allowance aims to get you home

A NEW leave travel allowance for overseas personnel early in their Royal Naval career has been announced by the Ministry of Defence.

The snappily-titled Get You Home (Early Years) (Overseas Assistance) - or GYH(EY)(OA) - is targeted at Servicemen and women in the first three years of their career and whose home is overseas.

It is designed to enable eligible personnel to maintain links with their close family abroad while they adjust to Service life.

Those who qualify may claim actuals up to £400, based on an agreed average value of four GYH(EY) warrants, per return journey per year for the first three years of service.

Commanding officers have been flagging up a problem in this area for some time, but the answer needed to be agreed tri-Service for implementation within the Joint Pay and Allowances (JPA) policy.

The need to help maintain links with nearest and dearest back in the old home town was already recognised in the Get You Home (Early Years) scheme.

The JPA Requirements Steering Group approved the new allowance, proposed by Fleet Naval Life Management, on the basis that GYH(EY) should be extended to allow eligible personnel to transfer these warrants in exchange for a contribution towards the cost of a return journey to a home overseas.

Those serving in Seagoing Longer Separation Qualifying Units (SLQUs) are not eligible for GH(EY) as GHY(S) entitlement is considered sufficient to achieve the objectives of GYH(EY).

However, it was not intended to exclude junior personnel serving at sea from maintaining contact with their home overseas.

Therefore, those eligible personnel serving in SLQUs will also be entitled to GYH(EY)(OA), in exchange for four GYH(S) warrants.

To administer this new allowance under JPA, unit HR admin staff will have to manually alter a person's GYH(EY) entitlement and ensure that four warrants are forfeited for a GYH(EY)(OA) applicant.

The same procedure and number of warrants will apply to those in receipt of GYH(S).

The actual costs associated with the travel element should be claimed retrospectively using the JPA Expenses Claims system.

For personnel with no access to JPA, a manual claim will need to be submitted to unit HS admin staff, including those administered by legacy systems.

The new allowance takes immediate effect, and the new regulations will be included in the next version of JSP 752.



Part of the Royal Navy's new recruitment marketing campaign, appearing in Nuts magazine this month

Campaign advocates a life without limits

A NEW marketing campaign has been launched in a bid to entice people into 'life without limits' in the Royal Navy.

A review of Royal Navy and Royal Marines recruit marketing communications was undertaken in late 2004 by the COI Strategic Consultancy on behalf of the Directorate of Naval Recruiting (DNR).

The resulting recommendations were accepted by DNR, and a campaign was developed on the back of extensive research.

This new marketing campaign was designed to 'reposition' the Royal Navy in relation to a specific set of target audiences, using key messages.

It was also recognised that there should be a common foundation for all recruitment marketing activity, strengthening the overall impact while still seeking to engage particular audience 'segments' of the target group - 16 to 26-year-olds who would not reject a career

in the Armed Forces.

Among the areas examined in the creation of the campaign were:

- The image and understanding of the Royal Navy
- Overall perception of the Armed Forces
- The image of the RN in relation to the other Forces
- Perceptions of isolation
- Compatibility with family life
- Perceptions of homosexuality
- Dynamism

Segmentation - the grouping of sub-sets of 'customers' or 'clients' according to precisely-defined factors - can be problematic in marketing in that it can lead to a fragmented campaign, with different messages failing to dovetail neatly.

In the new Royal Navy campaign, messages are designed to appeal to each segment, but all these messages are facets of the 'core proposal', neatly integrating into a common theme.

And the theme or strategy chosen by the Senior Service was 'one career, many opportunities'.

This, the marketing team believes, has a broad appeal to potential recruits, and also addresses some of the unknowns which can affect the decision of a youngster who seeks a real job, recognised qualifications and flexible employment.

The use of the word 'opportunities' also chimes in with a hint of opportunities for travel and adventure, being paid while gaining qualifications and being part of something worthwhile - all part of the 'big idea' which knits together the different strands of the message.

'One career, many opportunities' is pitched directly against an "overwhelming preconception of the RN within our target audience" of a "grey ship becalmed on a grey sea."

Using real people from the Royal Navy who are similar to those in the target audiences, the campaign will lift the lid on life in the RN, giving a better understanding of the opportunities which arise in the course of their daily lives.

The work may be routine for the Navy, but it is interesting, rewarding and fulfilling in an extraordinary environment, say the marketing gurus.

Those taking part will be from every region of the UK, from every ethnic group, both sexes and from all audience segments, building on the age-old Royal Navy maxim that the best recruiter is Jack or Jill.

Pitching the campaign in the right tone is a crucial factor - planners believe that earlier attempts to imitate the "gruff, authoritarian and directive" signature of the Army's recruitment drive failed as it did not do enough to highlight the difference of a career with the RN or RM, compared to the Army.

Now the Navy has a new voice, and it is one the marketers believe captures the "understated confidence" and equally understated dry sense of humour of the Navy.

Another key element is the 'recruiting brand' which could be used across all campaign materials, and which reflected the 'one career, many opportunities' theme.

So while the Army has 'Be the best' and the RAF pushes 'Rise above the rest', the Navy can now offer 'Life without limits'.

The nationwide RN recruitment marketing campaign gets into full swing this month.

Advertorials will start to appear in magazines, each one tailored to its audience - look out for Navy material in *Loaded*, *Nuts*, *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan*.

And one part of the magazine campaign will be familiar to readers of *Navy News* - our popular 'Inside the Royal Navy' cutaways provide the visual punch, including the Type 23, Type 45 and Merlin.

Two bursts of heavy-duty TV advertising began last month and run through until March, covering all areas except London, where high media costs and a historical enmity make it an unattractive proposition.

Three of the planned five adverts have been filmed, the first of which (*Yeah you're alright really*) features some good-natured rivalry between the pilot and observer of a helicopter, represented by Lt Brendan Spoor, Lt Jon Holroyd and Type 23 frigate HMS Monmouth.

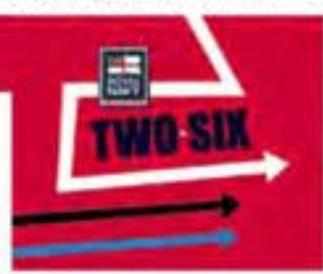
The fourth is due to be filmed this month.

These adverts are also cropping up in cinemas around the country.

And the digital dimension is also taken into account, with activity on sites such as Yahoo, Myspace, Bebo and Guardian Unlimited.

Updated careers publications have been produced, and brochures for the Reserves have also been published.

Other particular areas to be addressed by the campaign include submariners - one of the TV and cinema adverts will cover the Deeps - engineer officers and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.



Defence training centre is opened

THE CHIEF of the Defence Staff has formally opened the Defence Academy's new Leadership and Management Training Centre at Beckett House in Shrivenham.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup said: "This important new training facility will be an asset to the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence as we prepare our military and civilian leaders for the challenges of the future."

Beckett House has been converted into a military and civilian training facility for the MOD and will be the new home of the Academy's Defence Leadership and Management Centre.

This training facility will produce the Armed Forces' future commanders and leaders.

Educational courses have already started running for senior military and MOD officials.

The refurbishment of the building is the latest successful roll-out of the Defence Academy's ambitious development of its world-class campus.

Over the past 12 months work has been completed on schedule and on budget to transform sensitively the Grade II listed building from a library into an impressive and modern training centre, tailor-made for instructing senior management.

The main users of Beckett House are expected to be students and staff of three organisations of the Defence Academy's Defence College of Management and Technology.

These are the Defence Leadership and Management Centre, Defence Business Learning and the Defence School of Finance and Management, which will move from Worthy Down near Winchester during the summer.

The House could also be used by other Government departments and civilian organisations.

RNPT dates

DATES and details of the RN Presentation Team's events this month are:

- **Tues Feb 6:** The Thistle, Altness, Souterhead Road, Altness, Aberdeen;
- **Wed Feb 7:** The Royal Highland Hotel, Station Square, 18 Academy Street, Inverness;
- **Thurs Feb 15:** The Falcon Hotel, Chapel Street, Stratford-upon-Avon;
- **Thurs Feb 22:** Macready Theatre, Rugby School, Rugby;
- **Tues Feb 27:** Northumberland Hall, Alnwick;
- **Wed Feb 28:** HMS Calliope, South Shore Road, Gateshead, Newcastle.

Anyone wanting to book a place at a presentation should contact the RNPT on 020 8833 8020 or email rnpt@gtnet.gov.uk

It's your 2.6

NEED to get your message across to the rest of the RN?

To feature in 2-6 contact Lt Cdr Dave Joyce at Fleet Media Ops on 93832 8809 or Lt Cdr 'A' Ajala at DPR(N) on 9621 85984.



NOTICEBOARD

Where are you now?

HMS Ark Royal: Tony Watson is trying to either contact a current Ark Royal Association or is prepared to help form a new association. Tony can be contacted at tony.watson@btinternet.com or tel: 01290 226431 or write to Pit Stacks, Macclesfield Road, Rushton Spencer, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 0RW.

HMS Brilliant: Seeking MEMN1 Paddy Monty, served in Brilliant, 1st commission and Falklands, also on other type 22s - last heard that he may be working abroad. If any one knows his whereabouts, please contact Rag Briers, HMS Brilliant Reunion Association, on 01337 842580 or our website www.hmsbrilliant.com

HMS Diamond: John Dent is seeking anyone who remembers him from the first commission February 1952 to April 1953. Contact John Dent at john.dent20@btworld.com or tel: 01473 404735.

HMS Ganges 1963, 56 Recruitment Hawke 47 mess, 222 and 223 classes: Six of us have just had a small but successful reunion, and are looking for others of the two classes to increase numbers for next year. So, if you were one of Stan or Terry's boys please contact Mick Matthews at Boogie3@netcscope.net or tel: 01787 311118.

HMS Ganges 1966-67: Fred would like to hear from anyone who was with him at Shotley Gate 1966-67, including Dave and Val Tucker from Essex, Bernard Smith from London, Sandy and Laurie Love from Southampton. Contact Fred 'Loffy' Munson, 59 Windy Nook Road, Sheriff Hill, Gateshead, NE3 6QP.

HMS Ganges, Hawke Division, 49 Mess, 1958: Calling all mess mates from 146 and 95 mess. A few of us are meeting up at the Ganges reunion in 2007 for the first time next year. In 2008 it will be 50 years since we were all together as boys. If anyone is interested in either reunion contact Pete Childs at petechilds@yahoo.co.uk or tel: 01142 867769.

Windmill Hill Signal Station, Gibraltar:

Seeking Norman Bromley who served at the station around the mid-1950s. He came from Durham and would probably be in his mid-70s now. Contact Mario Berry at marioberry@btinternet.com, tel: 07884 352958 or write to 58 Gloucester Road, Kensington, London, SW7 4UB.

HMS Hermes: Seeking Philip Amos, HMS Hermes in the late 1960s, and family. Formerly of Stockton on Tees. He joined in 1965 for 22 years and married Mary. They had a son born in Rosyth in the 1970s. Would love to hear from a member of the family. Contact Mrs A Thomas (nee Watson) at awthomas8533@btinternet.com or write to 12 Rimeswell Road, Fairfield, Stockton on Tees, Cleveland, TS19 7LN.

Terry Loughran: Seeking Terry, son of Lt John William Loughran and Ellen (nee Hargreaves). Terry's aunt has some photographs of his father and a family prayer book which he might like as it is part of his family history. Contact Mrs L J Sedgewick, 5 Aytan Drive, Redcar, Cleveland, TS10 4LA.

HMS Mercury: Les Noden, originally from Birmingham, was a NS RO trained at Mercury in 1957 and served in Apollo and Wotton until 1959 then reverted to Birmingham RNVWR. His address is 7 St Peters Terrace, Ekins Hill, Brixham, Torbay, Devon, TQ5 95Y, tel: 01803 853561. He would like to hear from anyone who remembers him.

Tal Handaq, Malta: Daphne Wye attended Tal-Handaq RN school, Malta, between 1958-61. She hopes someone remembers her or school and would like to get in touch. Contact Daphne Oliver at doliver@btinternet.com, tel: 020 8303 9261 or write to: 87 Sydney Road, Bexleyheath Kent.

West Country Association of Royal Naval Writers: is open to all past and present members of the branch. Meetings are held three times per year in the form of an annual dinner (Plymouth), summer barbecue/gathering (Plymouth) and AGM weekend (Torquay). For further information, contact the chairman at helenbailey007@btinternet.com or tel: 07899 146770.

Reunions

728(CS) Squad RM (59-60): Proposed reunion in Derby, mid 2007. For more details contact 029 2079 0233.

847 NAS HMS Sembang 1969-71: A reunion is being planned for 847 NAS HMS Sembang, Singapore 1969-71. The reunion is open to all who served in this squadron for these dates. The intention is to have the reunion in the Coventry area. All enquiries to Cliff Jones at 01772 768104 or 07813 916635.

March 2007

HMS Brilliant: Falklands 25th anniversary dinner to be held at the Belgrave Hotel, Torquay, March 16-18. Contact Rag Briers, HMS Brilliant Reunion Association on 01337 842580 or visit the website www.hmsbrilliant.com for other contact addresses.

HMS Cumberland Association: The reunion will be held, March 16-19, at the Queen's Hotel, Southsea. For further details contact the chairman Sam Watson at swat11003@btinternet.com or tel: 01634 235861.

HMS Bluebird Association, Southern Branch: AGM/reunion at the Kistor Hotel, Torquay, March 16-19. Contact Frank Lynch on 029 2048 6063.

RN Engineering Association: 30th annual dinner/dance on March 17 at the Britannia Hotel, Birmingham. Details from Bob Snyders at bobsnyders@btinternet.com or tel: 0121 422 4115.

Went: Reunion to be held in Home Club Portsmouth, Thursday March 22 in aid of WRNS BT for tickets. For further info contact Lt Cdr Phredgast PNB 02392 724927 or sacomeff-malcolm@btinternet.com

HMS Glory 1943-56: Reunion at the Treacem Hotel, Babbacombe, Torquay, March 23-26. More details from Tom Stalard at margaretstalard@yahoo.co.uk or tel: 01303 256457.

RNKS (East Anglia Group): Annual reunion will be at the Shipwreck, Shotley Marina (ex-Enright Block, HMS Ganges) from 25 from 1200 to 1500. Contact Peter Brooke, 7 Penn Close, Capel St Mary, Ipswich, IP9 2UE or tel: 01473 310189.

HMS Illustrious Association (Northern Branch): Reunion at Hacketts York House Hotel, Blackpool, March 30 to April 2. Price is the same as the last two years. 'Happy hour' afternoon and evening. If interested, contact Dixie Dean on 01204 300162.

HMS Protector Association: Grand reunion at the Britannia Hotel, Coventry, March 30 to April 2. Details from D Harris on 01495 718870 or visit www.hmsprotector.org.

April 2007

The Bounty Boys: The association will have what is probably the last reunion and AGM at the Elmbank Hotel, York, April 13-16. More details from Bill Woodward, 8 Rookbury Croft, Leigh Park, Havant, Hants, PO9 5HU or tel: 023 9245 2802.

HMS Decoy Association: The next reunion will be held in Torquay at the Inglewood Hotel, April 20-23. All former Decoy welcome. For further details contact: Al Singleton at alhed.singleton@btworld.com

or tel: 01329 510941 or write to 42 Uplands Crescent, Fareham, Hants, PO16 7JY.

480 Kings Squad Royal Marines: The last 'official' anniversary reunion will take place at the Royal Sailors Home Club, Portsmouth on April 23-25, 60 years after we joined the Corps. Details can be obtained from Len Holmes, 57 Jones Lane, Hythe, Southampton, SO4 6AW, tel: 023 8084 2284 or Peter Hodges at peterhodges@hotmail.co.uk, tel: 023 8237 5621 or write to 11 Goffon Avenue, Cosham, Portsmouth, PO6 2NG.

HMS Glorious, Ardent and Acasta (Glarac): A service for the Fleet Air Arm will take place at St Peter's Church, Martindale on April 29. All former crew, aircrew, survivors, relatives and friends are warmly invited to attend. Details from Vincent Marcroft at vinym817022@hotmail.com, tel: 0161 654 7638 or write to 15 Hillside Drive, Middleton, Manchester, M24 2LS.

May 2007

HMS Conqueror: Reunion will be held in the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool on May 4-5. Discounted rooms are available and wives are encouraged to join us. Although this is aimed at marking the 25th anniversary of the Falklands War patrol all former Conquerors are most welcome. For further details and bookings please contact either Jonny Powis at jonny.powis@btbroadband.co.uk 01436 674321 ext 5906 or 'Terry Cogley' at terrecogley@aol.com 01752 789577.

HMS Sheffield Association: Service and reunion in Sheffield, May 4-7. Shipmates of the cruiser, destroyer and frigates are welcome. Contact Gordon Butters on 01675 463614.

HMS Teribys Association: will be holding their 14th annual reunion at the Royal Sailors Home Club, Portsmouth, May 4-7. All former Teribys are welcome. Contact the secretary, John Finlayson at jfinlayson@btinternet.com or tel: 01752 316909.

HMS Opossum Association: 14th reunion at the Treacem Hotel, Babbacombe, Torquay, May 11-14. Booking enquiries can be made to 01942 824824 quoting reference CWTDRNG and the date. More information from Eddie Summerford, 28 Geymourt Road, Limefield, Bury, Lancs, BL9 6PN, tel: 0161 764 8778 or see the website at <http://www.hmsopossum.org>.

HMS Impregnable/Drake Association: Reunion takes place in Plymouth, May 13-15. For more details contact the chairman at haskings75@btinternet.com, tel: 0121 532 6141 or write to 'Fernie', 79A, Beeches Road, Rowley Regis, West Midlands, B65 6AS.

Z-Class Destroyers Association: HMS Myngs, Zambesi, Zealous, Zebra, Zenith, Zephyr, Zest and Zodiac reunion, May 15-18 at the Royal Sailors Home Club, Portsmouth. For details contact George Murdoch on 0131 331 2086.

Algerines Association: The RN Fleet Minesweepers 1942-69 annual reunion will be held at the Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool, May 17-21. Prospective new members wishing further details should contact George Patience, 97 Balmacrae Road, Drumadroit, Inverness-shire, IV63 6UY.

HMS Concord Association: 13th annual reunion at the Savoy Hotel, Bournemouth, May 19-20. Details from Peter Lee-Hale at pleehale@aol.com or tel: 01249 811405.

HMS Saintes Association: Reunion at the Britannia Hotel, Coventry, May 18-20. All former shipmates and relatives invited. Contact Ron Miles, 38 Cypress Close, Hinton, Devon, EX14 2YV or tel: 01404 43177.

HMS Waspite Association (8803 and SSN 03): The 22nd reunion will be held at the Hotel Rembrandt, Weymouth, May 18-20. For any further information contact the secretary Ivor Davies on 01752 848983.

Deaths

Mrs Richard 'Richie' John Watson, 42 Commando Royal Marines, joined the Royal Marines in June 2005, joining 4 Troop C Company direct from training in April 2006. Described by his CO Lt Col Matt Holmes as "A strong and highly motivated Marine, Richie radiated enthusiasm for his work, and was inspirational, leading his young team from the front into hostile territory. He will be remembered as a warm and passionate man who was ever cheerful, and who smiled through the hardships that he encountered, not least here on operations." Aged 23, December 12 after coming under fire while on foot patrol in Afghanistan.

Surg Cdr Sidney Hamilton, volunteered for the Navy at the outbreak of war and was serving in Ripulse when sunk in 1941, rescued by the destroyer Electra he cared for other survivors, naval hospital in Singapore until appointed principal medical officer of Durban, the last warship to leave Singapore - she was hit three times by dive-bombers before limping in to Colombo where he transferred the wounded to a hospital ship. After a period in the US, he returned to England and was appointed senior medical officer of landing ship Languard Castle. In preparation for D-Day Hamilton set up a casualty clearing station at HMS Turtle in Dorset and finished the war at HMS Hesperides in the Azores. He retired from the RN in 1946, Aged 54.

Lt Cdr John Bridge GC, In 1940 he volunteered for bomb disposal work and was commissioned into the RNRV. In September he carried out the demolition of a very dangerous bomb fitted with a delayed-action fuse in Cornwall and was awarded the George Medal. In 1943 after the invasion of Sicily he cleared Messina harbour of mines and was invested with the George Cross by King George VI. On D-Day+1 he went to Normandy to supervise the clearing of the beach at Arromanches of mines and other explosive devices and at the end of September 1944 he was called forward to the Nijmegen area where he cleared a road bridge of charges - he was the first person to be awarded a Bar to the George Medal for this action, December 14, Aged 91.

Capt Kenneth Cummins, Applied to join the P&O shipping company as a cadet at 15 and was accepted for training in HMS Worcester, joined armed merchant cruiser Mores in 1917, during WW2 he was Chief Officer of passenger liner Viceroy of India, requisitioned as a troopship to land 2,000 men during Operation Torch (allied invasion of North Africa); oversaw conversion of Ile de France to a troopship before making five voyages with 10,000 troops between Europe and America. Admitted as a Younger Brother of Trinity House in 1947, December 10, Aged 106.

Leslie Bartow, Boy Seaman, trained Ganges, Served 1947-57 in Pembroke, Belfast, London (Yangtze), Tamar, Cossack (Korea), Neptune, MMS 1724 and MMS 1728, Gabbard and Diamond, Royal Fleet Reserve until 1962, November 29, Aged 74.

Raymond Parrett, AB, joined at 17 and served for 13 years in several ships. He was the last person to run up the famous signal 'England expects every man will do his duty' on Nelson's flagship HMS Victory when it was still afloat in 1921, December, Aged 103.

James Victor 'Sherlock' Holmes, AB, Served 1961-73 in Victorious and Jaguar, HMS Jaguar association, December 1, Aged 64.

John Young, Served from 1940-47 as a fighter pilot in the FAA taking part in many campaigns including the relief of Malta, the North African landings, low-level sorties in France both before and during the D-Day landings and in the Far East where he commanded 888 Squadron and was mentioned in despatches, September 17, Aged 85.

Denis J Bradbury, LS, Served 1964-73 in HMS Eastbourne, Falmouth and Cleopatra (1st Commission), Portsmouth Field Gun crew 1969-73, November 25, Aged 61.

Royston Frederick Creffield, AB, Served Pheasant 1943-46, and founder of HMS Pheasant Association, December 10, Aged 62.

Peter Parsons, Air Mechanic (C), 804 and 812 NAS, 14th Carrier Air Group, Glory (Korea), HMS Glory and 14th Carrier Air Group Association, November 21 in Queensland, Australia, Aged 78.

Henry Plass, L/A Pilot Mate, 812 Naval Air Squadron, 14th Carrier Air Group, Glory (Korea), 14th Carrier Air Group Association, November 27.

James Robinson, CPO(AH)(ATC), Served in Albion, Eagle, Scylla and Naval Air Stations Yeoville, Cadzose and Brawdy, Aircraft Handlers Association, Martock, October 23, Aged 61.

Robert 'Spider' Kelly, CPO(AH), Served in Eagle 815 NAS, Ark Royal and air stations Daedalus, Fulmar and Yeoville 846 NAS, South Atlantic, Aircraft Handlers Association, September 30 in Spain, Aged 71.

Lt A Ashby, 729 Squadron, and personal pilot to Rear Admiral Morse 1945-48, December 6, Aged 91.

Howard F Bushell, CPO I, Mech, joined at Ganges, Served 1945-70 in King George V, Duke of York, Neriside, Theseus, Victorious (1st and 3rd Commissions), St Vincent, Loch Alvie, Juliar, Wizard, AFD 60, December in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, Aged 78.

John Saunders, Signals, HMS Opportune Association, December 27.

Thomas 'Bilgey' Barnett, Chief GL, Served 32 years, August 22 in Perth, Western Australia.

Peter James Parkinson, L/Seaman IV P2, Served 1946-55 in Ganges, Mauritius, Nonsuch, Dryad, Contest, Mull of Kintyre and Loch Quich, December 29, Aged 76.

Derek Solomon, CPOL, Served 1947-70 in Cavalier and Excellent, RN Engineering Association, December 14, Aged 76.

Roy Fraser, RN Engineering Association, September.

Trevor Wilerton, RN Engineering Association, December.

Victor Biddle, Wireman, RN Engineering Association, Served in Indefatigable and Jamaica, January 4.

Robert George 'Bob' Aves, L/Tel, Joined Ganges in 1951, Served in Valiant, Emerald, Viscount, Dolphin and Seat, HMS Ganges Association, December 23, Aged 90.

Colin Gale, Served three years as a meteorologist in FAA, December, December 17, Aged 60.

Ron Toms, Served during WW2 as Air Engineering Officer in an aircraft carrier. Designed and built the first company-owned supersonic wind tunnel in Europe. Contributed to design of Concorde. Designed the first

missions to Jupiter and Saturn and in 1968 ran the lunar exploration office for NASA. Died in Hawaii, Aged 81.

Frank Garbett, Air Mechanic (S), Served 1942-45 in South Africa, Trincomalee and south-east Asia in 896 Squadron and HMS Empress, Burma Star Association, December 21, Aged 81.

Bill Bracey, AB, HMS Cheviot Association, served in ship 1946, December 18.

Robert 'Gaffer' Garnett, Leading Radar Operator in Hunt-class destroyer Mendip from 1942-46, December 20, Aged 85.

Don Gaver, AB, Served in Ganges and Belfast, HMS Comus Association, December, Aged 79.

Royal Naval Association

Capt Arthur Henry 'Harry' Barton, Linoway, past President, Served 1933-67 in Froisher, London, Queen Elizabeth, Ramilies, Formidable (during strikes on Tripoli and off Okinawa), Tiger (1st commission as Supply Officer), Greenock Naval Base, RNAS Lossiemouth, Australian Commonwealth Naval Base in Melbourne, RN Staff College Greenwich, NATO Fontainebleau France and Admiralty, December 8 in Newfoundland Canada, Aged 90.

Harry James Bradbury, ROME, Bude, Arctic convoys and the Mediterranean, HMS Devonshire, December 9, Aged 84.

Thomas Elby, West Lothian, founder member, Served in Victory, Berwick, Excellent, Eagle, Ark Royal, Gairloch and Alick, December 10, Aged 87.

Herbert Edward Ted Baxter, Bury St Edmunds, chairman, Served 1944-46 with Fleet Air Arm at Raven, December 6, Aged 83.

Alan Ellis, Kentish, founder member and secretary for the past 27 years, December 8.

Geoffrey Charles Power, Chichester, former secretary and treasurer, World War 2 service, November 21, Aged 81.

Syd 'Lucky' French, Crawley, founder member and long-term president, joined RN 1940 and trained in North Wales then drafted to Eglinton; selected for officer training and attended King Alfred; posted to converted trawler squadron at Harwich (east coast duties) and served as captain to HMS44; forefront of Normandy Landings, once taking over as Flotilla leader, Minesweeper Association and president of local branch of the Normandy Veterans Association, December, Aged 94.

William Edward Woods, Birkenhead, December, Aged 73.

T Eynon, Birkenhead, November.

H Betty, Birkenhead, associate member, December.

Athled James 'Jim' Brett, CERA, Dartford, secretary for 30 years and represented branch on committee of local Sea Cadet Corps and at area meetings and annual conferences. Life member. Served 1909-52 last ship Glory (Korean waters), November 27, Aged 86.

Lee Harris, L, Signman, Folkestone, president, Served mostly on Combined Ops ships, November, Aged 85.

John P 'Hong Kong' Turnbull, AB, Aldenham, life member, Uxbridge, chairman, life vice-president, delegate and standard bearer, Served 1946-55 in St Vincent, London, Sussex, Triumph, Reward, Alert and Birmingham, January 1.

Michael John Gillet, VRD, Becotes, December 8, Aged 78.

Jim Cornish, HQ RNA and RBL in both UK and Spain, joined the RN in 1943 training as SBA but finishing as a PO Stoker. Ships included Resolution, depot ship Falmborough Head and the cruiser Sheffield (serving in home water and the Far East), November 30, Aged 81.

Athled Kenneth Davies, AMI, Stourbridge, Served 1945-47 in Merlin with RNAS, December.

Contact sheet

Ministry of Defence: 0670 607 4455, www.mod.uk

Royal Navy recruitment: 0845 607 5555, www.royalnavy.mod.uk

Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277, www.veteransagency.mod.uk

Medals enquiries: 0800 085 3600

RN and RM Service records: 023 9272 7531 or 023 9272 3114

Falklands 25: 0800 169 2277 (Veterans Agency), www.falklands25.com

Royal Naval Association: 020 7352 6764, www.royal-naval-association.co.uk

RNBT: 023 9269 0112 (general), 023 9266 0296 (grants), www.rnbt.org.uk

British Legion: 0845 725725, www.britishlegion.org.uk

RN Community: www.rncommunity.org

Naval Families Federation: 023 9265 4374, www.nff.org.uk

SSAFA Forces Help: 0845 1300 875, www.ssafo.org.uk

Royal Naval Museum: 023 9272 7562, www.royalnavalmuseum.org

Fleet Air Arm Museum: 01935 840565, www.fleetairarm.com

Royal Marines Museum: 023 9281 9385, www.royalmarinesmuseum.co.uk

RN Submarine Museum: 023 9252 9217, www.rnsubmus.co.uk

National Maritime Museum: 020 8312 6565, www.nmm.ac.uk

Imperial War Museum: 020 7416 5320, www.iwm.org.uk

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September 2007

Friends of HMS Crane 1943-62 will hold their ninth reunion at the Royal Sailors Home Club, Pompey from September 7 to 9. Contact John Cantle on 023 9258 2758 for details.

HMS Morecambe Bay: Reunion in Torquay, September 28-30. Contact D Turk, 13 The Crescent, Farnborough, Hants, GU14 7AF or tel: 01252 664694.

October 2007

HMS Cardigan Bay Association: Reunion October 5-7 at Plymouth. Contact Donald Grier on 01294 465192 or Robert Hackett on 023 9273 3064.

HMS Jupiter Association: Reunion October 5-7 at the Seacrest Hotel, Southsea. For full details contact David 'Pony' Moore at ponyjackie@btccol.co.uk or tel: 02392 751183.

HMS Wild Goose: Reunion will take place at Warners, Snares Warren, Hants, October 5-8. Any enquiries to Ken Hayes on 01623 442973.

Friends of HMS Vidal: 2007 reunion October 6 at the Royal Sailors Home Club, Portsmouth. Contact David or Claire Parker on 020 8673 5392 or david@parker1326.freeserve.co.uk for more details. All commissions, and all ranks, welcome.

Navy News on tape

Navy News is available free of charge on tape from Portsmouth Area Talking News for those with difficulty reading normal type. Contact 023 9269 0851 and leave a message with a contact number. No special equipment is needed to play the standard 90-minute cassettes.

THE TIME OF YOUR LIVES

NAVY NEWS looks back through its pages to recall some of the February headlines of past decades...



● "Don't yez be blowing it up till Oi give it a ticket!" says cartoonist Smiles' traffic warden as he rows furiously towards minehunter HMS Bronington

40 years ago

The cold, black depths of Coniston Water were stirred by a team of Naval divers from HMS Safeguard, Rosyth, as they undertook the grim task of trying to locate the body of speed legend Donald Campbell.

On January 4 1967 Campbell's attempts at record-breaking came to an end as his speedboat Bluebird K7 somersaulted and smashed apart in the Lake District water-speed record attempt.

Eight divers from the Scotland and Northern Ireland Command Diving Centre spent ten days searching the dark waters for the wreckage and Campbell himself.

It would not be until 2001 that Campbell's body was recovered and laid to rest in Coniston cemetery.

30 years ago

HMS Yarmouth claimed the "single-engined helicopter world bagpipe playing height record" when it sent L/Cpl Barry Conkerton of the King's Own Scottish Borderers up in their Wasp helicopter.

Once aloft at an altitude of 5,000 feet pressure, the Army man hefted his bagpipes and treated the surrounding air molecules to renditions of *Scotland the Brave* and *Zulu Warrior*.

20 years ago

A white Ford Cortina drifted quietly in the Irish Sea until arrested by HMS Bronington on fishery protection duties.

The car, actually a missile target from the Aberporth military ranges, had broken loose of its moorings and travelled some 100 miles on a jolly jaunt towards the Isle of Man.

The minehunter despatched the vehicle to a watery grave.

Marine's gallantry wins high award

A ROYAL Marine, attached to an RAF squadron, has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his actions in Afghanistan in September last year.

Major Mark Hammond DFC (pictured right) made three attempts to rescue casualties from the Sangin platoon house in Chinook helicopters despite heavy ground fire that crippled one of his aircraft.

The Royal Marine was serving with the RAF's No.18(B) Squadron when the call came in that the platoon house was under attack and one soldier had suffered a life-threatening injury.

As mission leader, Maj Hammond ordered his two accompanying Apache attack helicopters to remain overhead while he took his Chinook in to land for the casualty – under an onslaught of heavy machine gun fire from Taliban weapons.

Once safely back at Camp Bastion, he was called back to Musa Qala to rescue another casualty, flying to a landing site next to the compound that had just been attacked.

This rescue attempt had to be aborted due to the fierce wall of ground fire and rocket-propelled grenades.

Once back at base, it became apparent that his helicopter had been hit by four rounds, including one that caused critical damage to his helicopter's blades.

Undaunted Maj Hammond took over the reins of another Chinook and flew back into the fierce gunfire of the enemy offensive determined to complete the recovery mission.

The Distinguished Flying Cross ranks alongside the Military Cross and the more usual Naval award of Distinguished Service Cross, being awarded for acts of bravery

in combat respectively in the air, on land and at sea.

The New Year honours brought another crop of recognition for the Senior Service.

OBEs were awarded to the commanding officers of HMS Scott and Montrose, Cdr Steve Malcolm and Cdr Tony Watt, and to Lt Col Chris Davis, the Principal Director of Music in the Royal Marines Band Service.

All three men were quick to credit their awards to the efforts and commitment of all those within their ships and service.

Lt Col Davis admitted frankly: "It is wonderful to be recognised, but I still can't quite believe it."

"I have had a ball doing the job for the last 32 years – the award is more about what the RM Band Service has achieved rather than one individual." A sentiment that was echoed by the other senior officers.

Among recipients of the MBE were WO1(MEA) Paul Cornes, who won recognition for his work supporting the submarine fleet at Devonport Naval Base.

He said: "When I opened the letter and saw the heading, it was one of the most surreal moments of my life."

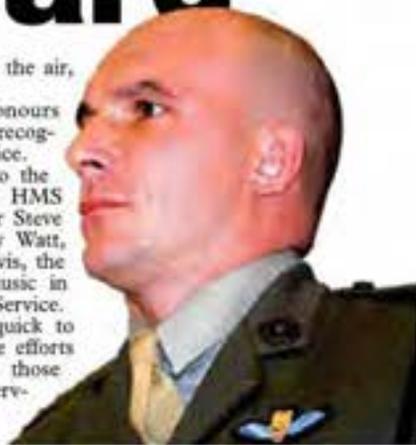
"I didn't know I was being put up for any kind of award but it's great, and I want to thank everyone who has supported me during my career – especially my family."

The smooth management of tricky technical work saw C/Sgt Mark Humphries of CTCRM and Lt Cdr David Maude in Yeovilton awarded with MBEs – their work respectively on the 3 Commando Brigade communications system and Sea King air engineering was described as first class.

It was the sporting arena which brought to the fore WO1(PT) Neal Frame, who received the MBE for his hard work and dedication to sport in the Royal Navy.

Another MBE winner of note, although not actually in the Naval service, is Brian Guttridge – better known throughout the Service as 'Brian the Tailor'.

A fixture on the Naval attire scene for 54 years, Brian claims to be known by thousands of people across the Royal Navy during his



long career. Still working from his offices in Fort Blockhouse, Brian – a youthful 72 – is determined to keep working to the end.

"I want to die doing my job," he said. "I've been lucky in life – I like the job I do."

Brian was nominated by Naval Regulators, one of whom woke him up on New Year's Day with a bottle of champagne to tell him that his name was on the list.

Brian is renowned for one thing in particular – his constant ally, the tape measure. He promised: "When I go to see the Queen, that tape measure will definitely be in my pocket."

THE Cabinet Office announced in December that people appointed to the Order of the British Empire will be able to purchase an OBE emblem, which can be worn on everyday clothing.

The emblem, that can be worn by the 120,000 people who are appointed GBE, DBE, KBE, CBE, OBE, MBE or who hold the BEM, is available at a cost of £15 from Toys Kenning & Spencer Limited of Bedworth, Warwickshire.

For more information visit their website: www.tksmedalsandribbons.co.uk or tel: 024 7684 8866.

"Did you serve in the Falklands War? Living in Kent or Sussex? ITV Meridian would like to hear from you for our 25th anniversary coverage. Please call on 01622 614016"

Liverpool seeking Falklands veterans

ORGANISERS of a Falklands 25 memorial weekend in Liverpool are seeking holders of the South Atlantic Medal and their families.

These medal holders will be given pride of place at a drumhead service in the Anglican Cathedral on the morning of Sunday April 22 which will honour the Red, White and Blue Ensigns.

There will also be a charity concert by the Royal Marines Band CTCRM Lymington at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on Saturday April 21 at 7.30pm.

Tickets are available directly from the booking office on 0151 709 3789.

One of the organisers, Pamela Brown, said that the 25th anniversary of the Falklands campaign was a poignant time for the city, not just for its connections with the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet

Auxiliary but also because the Atlantic Conveyor, lost to an Argentine Exocet missile, was a Liverpool-registered ship.

"There has been excellent co-operation with the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, RFA and Merchant Navy to make this happen," said Mrs Brown.

"Besides the most important people – the veterans from the Falklands – there will also be other VIPs attending both events."

South Atlantic medal holders will get preferential seating in the cathedral, and if you are one, or know of one, you should send details of name, address and reasons for link with the Falklands conflict, in a letter to Mrs Brown at 35 Winston Drive, Noctorum, Birkenhead, Wirral CH43 9RU.

Money raised will go to help seafarers of the future.

NOTICEBOARD

Operational and New Year Honours

Honours and awards to members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines for services on operations in Afghanistan, Northern Ireland, former Yugoslavia, Iraq, and other miscellaneous operations for the period April 1 2006 to September 30 2006

NORTHERN IRELAND

Queen's Commendation for Bravery – Col Sgt Paul Ashton RM

AFGHANISTAN

The Distinguished Flying Cross – Maj Mark Christopher Hammond RM

Mentioned in Despatches – Lt Nichol James Ernie Benzie

IRAQ

Member of the Order of the British Empire – Col Sgt Matthew Paul Woods RM

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service – Cdr Simon Thomas Williams

NATIONAL OPERATIONS

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service – Cdr Michael Paul Paterson

Awards to members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines in the New Year Honours

Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath – Vice Adm Robin Paul

Ask Jack

Admirals Greatore and Beatty-Powell: Sharon was recently shown a photograph taken in 1929 at a place called Hordle in England of a group of men in tennis gear. Admirals Holland, Reeves, Beatty-Powell, Greatore and Erskine. She has managed to trace information on some (like Admiral Holland) but can find nothing at all on Admiral Greatore and very little on Beatty-Powell. Any information on these Admirals (or any others in the photo) would be gratefully received. Contact Sharon War at snw@babsmail.co.za or write to 4 Ceres Street, Panorama, 7500, South Africa.

HMS Cachetol: Brian would like to find out where the bell from HMS Cachetol (1900s build) is now being kept as he would like a photograph of it. Contact Brian Taylor, 10a Bridlington Street, Hurmantly, Filey, North Yorkshire, YO14 0JR or telephone 01723 890425.

North Atlantic Convoys: Eric is trying to get information on his father's service life. His father, Frederick Ellis Robinson, served on convoy duty to Murmansk and Archangel. One of the ships mentioned was HMS Whitehaven J121, though this may have just been one of the ships in the group, not his. If you can help with information contact Eric St John at ericstjohn@bt.com, tel: 01536 790132 or write to Shawley Cottage, Pychley, Northants, NN14 1EH.

Film Footage: Can anyone help locate film footage of the internal workings of battleship main armament? There is excellent footage in *Sink* the Bismarck which was shot on HMS Vanguard, but I wonder if more exists of a similar quality which includes actual firings? This is a personal interest project, due in part to Stephen's own experience in 4.5 turrets and due to the long-held belief that this country never saved a battleship. The loading arrangements are

intriguing and have a genuine air of mystery about them. If you can help, contact Stephen Hislop at stevh4343@btiscall.co.uk or write to 43 Dorchester Court, New Hartley, Tyne & Wear, NE25 0SS.

Highlander, Polka and Leyland: HMS Highlander (H44) Havant-class destroyer; HMS Polka (T138) Dance-class ASW trawler; HMS Leyland (F1103) ASW trawler – I am researching for our local Saxmundham museum these vessels that were 'adopted' by our town in February 1942. Can anyone supply me with photos and/or information about any of these vessels. Contact Mrs B Ferguson at brenda.jan60@btiscall.co.uk or write to 60 Saxon Road, Saxmundham, Suffolk, IP17 1ED.

ML214: The late Thomas Wood served the entire WW2 in ML214, initially berthed at Newhaven escorting convoys, after D-Day crossing the Channel to the US beaches, on the return journeys collecting 'dog tags' from the bodies of US soldiers. After this the Picilla left for the Far East via Gibraltar, Alexandria and Suez, finishing the journey in Singapore. His record shows ML214 as being tender to numerous ships including Aggressive, Forte, Hornet, Skimash and Laika. John would be pleased to hear from anyone who has any information. Contact John Fullard at taylorj@bt.com or tel: 0161 303 1194.

HMS Penelope: During her years of service the frigate Penelope had the honour on three occasions of providing a Royal Escort to HMY Britannia. Can anyone offer information or copies of pictures of two of the events, the first being October 24-29, 1984 at Venice and the second June 23-26, 1990 at Reykjavik, Iceland? Any costs incurred will be met. Contact Peter Rickard at pete.rickard@btopenworld.com or tel: 07756 766605.

Boissier, Rear Adm Philip Lawrence Wilcocks

Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire

As Commander – Cdr Nicholas Edwin Baldock, Cdr Michael Andrew Bowker, Cdr

Anthony Stanley Mikinski

As Officer – Cdr Nicholas John Chahwin, Lt Col Christopher John Davis RM, Col Mark

William Durham RM, Cdr Paul Vincent Halton, Cdr Stephen Robert Malcolm, Cdr George

James Gordon Milton, Cdr Colin Redstone, Cdr Anthony James Landon Watt

As Member – WO1(AWW) Donald Frederick Charles Acton, WO1(CS) Christopher John

Cash, WO1 Eric Ashley Conway RM, WO1(MEA) Paul Derek Cornes, WO1(PT) Neal Robert

Frame, WO1(JWW) Anthony Nicholas Gravett, Lt Cdr Neil Robert Griffin, Lt Cdr Robert

Herry Hawkins, Col Sgt Mark James Humphries RM, Acting Col Sgt Shane Lee Knight RM,

Lt Cdr David Howard Maude, CPO(PT) Peter Wayne O'Keil, WO1(MEA) Nigel Rule, Lt Cdr

Jacqueline Sherriff RNR, Lt Cdr Mark Farnham Traylor

Queen's Volunteer Reserve Medal – WO2 Alan Starr RMR

Royal Red Cross Second Class (Associate) – Lt Cdr Alison Jayne Holman

Sports lottery

December 16: VW Polo – SA1 R L Driscoll, Richmond; £1,500 – MEM1 C S Cotton, Ilkinstown; £500 – OMCS2 S D Farrington, Tracker

December 23: £5,000 – Maj P E Rhodes, FROGM; £1,500 – Bd Sgt D J Boatman, CTCRM; £500 – Mne C D Crawley, Ocean

December 30: £5,000 – PO K J Leech, JWC CIS Stanger; £1,500 – PO T J Stevens, Manchester; £500 – Lt M J Rowson, RAF

Shawbury

January 6: £5,000 – LAEMM M Hanton, Yeovilton 647 NAS; £1,500 – SA1 W H M Smith, Sceptre; £500 – OMW2 M A Garvey, Cornwall

Swap drafts

POSTd D Lashbury, Draft: HMS Nelson, February 2007. Would like to swap for: any Plymouth draft. Contact: 07989 569972 or magicaz@yahoo.com.

OM(UW)1 Gallienne, Draft: HMS Enterprise (current). Will swap for: any Portsmouth-based draft. Contact: 276-ab20 a.dl.mod.uk.

OM(HM)1 Halliwell, Draft: HMS Enterprise (current until December 2006). Will swap for: any draft, preferably Portsmouth based. Requirements: must be Navy Yeo trained. Contact: 276-mat@a.dl.mod.uk.

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

■ Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to – The Editor, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth, PO1 3HH or email: edit@navynews.co.uk. If you are sending your notice in 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 three months (preferably four) before the month of the event.

■ There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.

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Mari-Time Team

OFF the Sussex coast lies the little-known wreck of one of the Navy's first submarines, Holland V.

The renowned Holland I sits, after decades of tender care, restored in all her glory in Gosport's RN Submarine Museum, but this quiet sibling had lain lost among the murk of the seabed until discovery in 2000.

Designated a protected wreck in 2005, two Naval divers, Lt Darren Gosling and Cdr Kevin Hood, were allowed to dive the submarine as part of a team from the Nautical Archaeological Society – their task was to conduct a detailed survey of the wreck.

Lt Gosling said: "This was a great opportunity, and it was an honour to dive the Holland V.

"It is an important wreck both for British maritime history, as well as the Royal Navy."

The team of maritime archaeology experts initially had to clear masses of fishing net and trawler wire from the wreck site before any survey work could begin.

Lt Gosling took detailed and intricate measurements of the lid of Holland V's exhaust box – an object that is missing in the Submarine Museum's Holland I.

He said: "I am hoping that this will lead to the building of a replica that could be used for the Holland I."

Over three days the team of divers laboured to clear the wreck, and monitor its condition within its watery resting place.

The Holland V was ordered along with her four sisters from Vickers in Barrow in Furness at the start of the 20th century – up to then the Admiralty had deemed the submarine a 'damned un-English weapon'.

This Holland ended her days lost under tow in August 1912, having entered service in 1903.

An interesting point to note is that the Hollands, despite their design flaws and basic engineering, never lost a crew member in any circumstance.

It spent the next 88 years in quiet oblivion at a 30m depth off the Sussex coastline, until discovered in 2000.

It wasn't until the next year, when the Wessex Archaeological Diving Unit conducted a sonar

scan, that it was confirmed as the wreck of submarine Holland V.

"I hope that the data which the dedicated volunteer scuba divers from the NAS retrieved from the Holland V will help towards building a better picture and preserving this great wreck," said Lt Gosling.

To find out more about the Nautical Archaeological Society, telephone 023 9281 8419 or visit their website at www.nasportsmouth.org.uk.

● (Main picture) Divers Cdr Kevin Hood and Lt Darren Gosling; (left) the propeller of Holland V; (below) the exhaust box surveyed for the Nautical Archaeological Society



Ladies who launch!

IN a bid to encourage more women to take up the sport of diving, the latest Royal Navy and Royal Marines Sub Aqua Association diving expedition took place amid the volcanic underwater scenery of the Ascension Island.

Twelve divers – four women and eight men – took part in the two-week expedition to the remote island that is often a staging-post for the RN en route to the Falklands but not usually a destination in itself.

The island is a collection of 38 extinct volcanoes, forced up from the mid-Atlantic ridge, and offers an outstanding environment crammed with vibrant wildlife and fascinating wreckage for divers to explore.

The team made sure that they opened their beloved sport up to as many as possible, offering a Try-Dive day to the personnel based on the Atlantic island.

Despite long days, the diving was considered well worth the effort, with a host of sea creatures such as turtles, octopus and moray eels investigating their unusual guests.

The seabed around the island is scattered

with remnants of the island's naval history. One such site was the wreck of the 19th Century HMS Tortoise, that was broken up off the Ascension coast in October 1859.

Initially discovered in 1501 as part of a Portuguese expedition by Joao de Nova Castelia, the Royal Navy claimed the island for His Britannic Majesty in 1815.

The island itself was commissioned as HM Sloop of War Ascension in 1816 with a complement of 65 men – the island was funded by the Navy and administered as a man-of-war.

It wasn't until 1922 that the Admiralty handed over responsibility for Ascension Island to the Colonial Office.

Dive organiser CWEM(O) Martin Smith said: "The team came away from Ascension with not only great memories and lots of stories to tell, but an excellent and incident-free diving expedition."

"If you are interested in diving, more information can be obtained from your local gym or the Joint Service Sub Aqua Diving Centre."

● (Main picture) Lt Cdr Surg Dentist Claire Everitt; LBB Marie Batten by the wreckage of HMS Tortoise; LSA Sarah Piper-Smith with an Admiralty anchor



AN OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFESTYLE.



The Royal Australian Navy is currently recruiting personnel of all ranks to serve on operational ships in a diverse range of areas from technical and engineering to medical and logistics. This presents an excellent opportunity for anyone wishing to further their Naval experience whilst at the same time enjoying the unique Australian lifestyle. That could be you.

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an amazing 70 per cent of the total possible hours. You would probably already know that Australians are truly passionate about their sport. From cricket, rugby and football to swimming and surfing to name but a few. If it's played, we play it. With over 120 national and thousands of local, regional and state sporting organisations, including soccer, you'll feel right at home. While our version of football might be hard to comprehend, you'll soon be following teams with names such as the Lions, Hawks, Dockers and Bombers.

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The Royal Australian Navy will pay for you and your family to move to Australia from the United Kingdom. This includes business class airfares for everyone and a couple of days stopover somewhere along the way, if you wish.

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You'll be required to undergo the Royal Australian Navy induction course and some alignment training in specific systems, machinery and skills. Your Royal Navy expertise is highly valued and will be recognised in determining your starting rank.

After the completion of your training, you will enjoy an excellent salary and benefits, with a generous superannuation scheme.

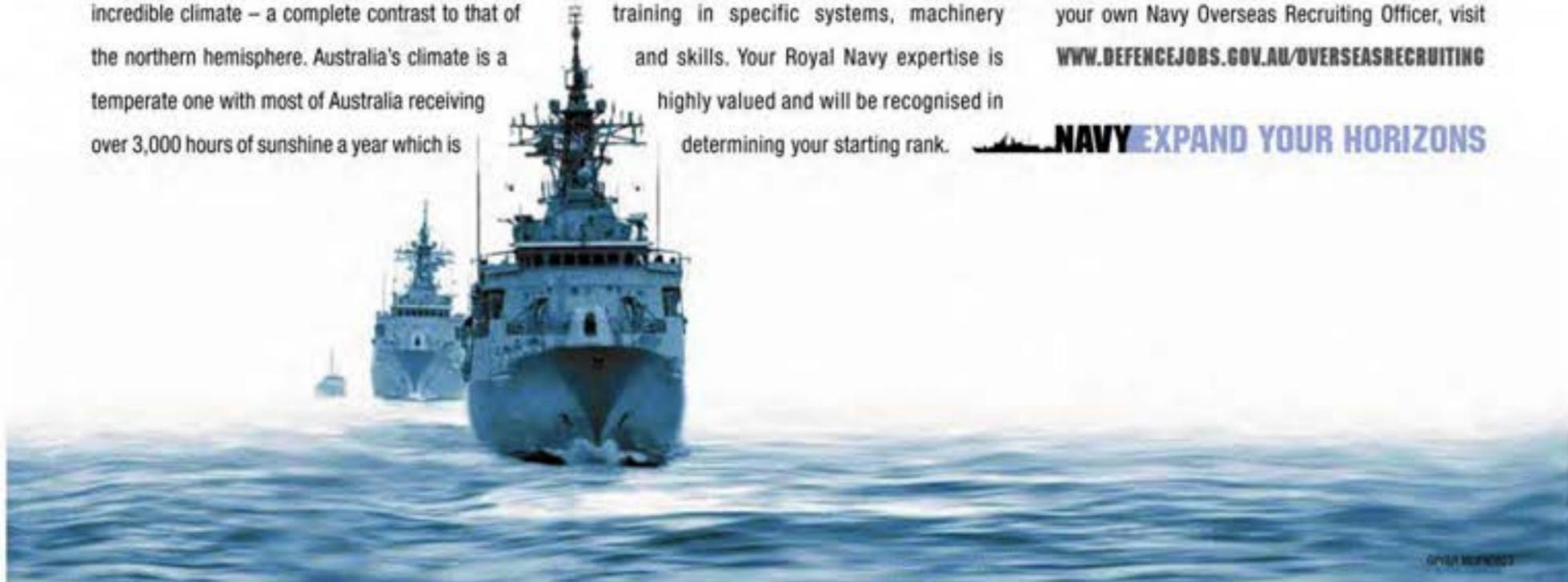
YOUR ELIGIBILITY FOR APPLICATION.

The Royal Australian Navy will accept applications for anyone up to the age of 45. However you can still apply if you're over 45 years of age, but additional entry conditions may apply to meet Immigration requirements. The Navy requires you to serve for at least three years (your employment offer will identify the exact period) and after three months in Australia you will be eligible to become a dual citizen of the UK and Australia. The Australian Department of Immigration will handle all of the necessary paper work.

So if you're looking to further your Navy career while at the same time enjoying the unique way of life only found in Australia, the Royal Australian Navy could be the opportunity of a lifestyle.

For more information or to be put in contact with your own Navy Overseas Recruiting Officer, visit WWW.DEFENCEJOBS.GOV.AU/OVERSEASRECRUITING

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The Director of **Naval Recruiting** is currently seeking RN & RM WOs, Senior Rates and SNCOs to work as Careers Advisors at these locations from 1 April 2007: **Chatham, Cambridge, Norwich, Chelmsford, Ipswich, Dundee, London, Peterborough.**

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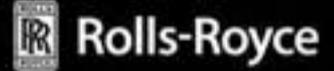
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If you are interested in one of the above positions then apply directly by forwarding a detailed CV, along with covering letter, detailing which position you are applying for to: Michael Pearson, HR Dept, VT Aerospace, RAF Linton on Ouse YO30 2AJ. Email: michael.pearson@vtplc.com Tel: 01347 847711

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Could you run the gun challenge?

DO YOU have what it takes to compete in the challenge of a lifetime?

Are you a team leader or team player? Then this challenge could be for you.

As part of a festival commemorating the 100th anniversary of RN Field Gun, HMS Collingwood will hold a 'Run the Gun Challenge' between March and June.

The challenge is to work as part of a team of six to eight people carrying a gun across the Cliff and Chasm trail within the Command Training Group at the Fareham base.

You can even compete when convenient for you and your team, slots permitting.

All you need to do is contact Lt Hall on 93825 3917 or CPO Watkins on 93825 3153 to book your team in.

Your times will be published each month and the overall winner will receive a trophy.

All times will be recorded, and the fastest teams will be invited back to compete in the final, which will be held during the Field Gun 100 Day at HMS Collingwood on Saturday June 9.

For more information on this and other events planned to mark the Field Gun 100 anniversary, visit the dedicated website at www.royalnavy.mod.uk/fieldgun100



Up for the 'kop

A ROYAL Navy team is to travel to the land which saw the genesis of the legendary Field Gun competition.

To commemorate the centenary of the Royal Navy Field Gun, and as part of the festival of events commemorating this, a team from HMS Collingwood will travel to Ladysmith in South Africa to compete in the Swartkop Challenge – a gruelling test of strength and teamwork.

The team will depart in April with the task of dragging a 1,250kg 1898 gun up a 120m course on Wagon Hill, the incline on occasions being a ferocious 1:1.

The involvement of the Royal Navy with the Siege of Ladysmith and the South African War is mentioned at every gun run, so this opportunity for the sailors of today to visit the Town is particularly poignant.

The Royal Highland Fusiliers competed in 2005, and remain the only team to draw the original gun with its wooden trail up the original Swartkop.

5 SAI have members of the South African Defence Force Weight Lifting Team in their squad, so weight and power should not be in short supply, although the use of pulleys and tackle will be needed – a factor which was queried by the winning team last year.



● Lt Cdr Mick Malone (left), Officer-in-Charge of the Collingwood Swartkop Challenge team, along with some of the hopefuls seeking a place on the team – all Phase 2 trainees from the Maritime Warfare School

Newcomers to the event will be the SAPS team from Ladysmith, who have a practice schedule in place and will be keen to prove that fitness, strength and teamwork will be additional virtues in the Police Service.

The Natal Carbineers competed last year and have every intention to return to improve their performance – and 'enjoy' the

challenges of teamwork and leadership.

The Natal Field Artillery competed in the inaugural event of 2003, and returned in 2004, and have included the training value in their programme for 2007.

As artillerymen in the SANDF(VF) they are well-placed to put their equipment handling skills to the test.



Sponsor visits HMS Monmouth

THE SPONSOR of HMS Monmouth has visited the ship as it prepares for a long deployment.

During the visit Lady Eaton met members of the ship's company, and presented two awards.

LWTR Steve Reardon was judged 'Man of the Term' for his unstinting work with a new computer system affecting pay of all personnel on board, while CPO Brian Hoyland was 'Man of the Year' for his efforts as the Mess President for the WO and CPO's Mess, the 4.5in gun maintainer and for being at the forefront of charity and sporting events undertaken by the ship.

Monmouth sails at the end of February for a nine-month trip to Australia and the Far East.

RECRUITMENT



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We are looking to start successful applicants on various dates throughout 2007. For more details and an application form, please contact the HR Recruitment Team, W31, The United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, Admiralty Way, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 2DN or call 01823 723353, fax 01823 350493. Additional information about the UKHO, and an application form is available at www.ukho.gov.uk.

The closing date for this tranche is 27th April 2007.



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Lest we forget

Saying goodbye to Palestine



● 40 Cdo parade before General Sir Alan Cunningham in Haifa in 1948, on the last day of the mandate

SEEING the letter from an old 15th Cruiser Squadron contemporary, Vice Admiral Sir Louis le Bailly (November) I am sending you the disc that has sometimes brought tears to the eyes of a lot of old hands. I wrote it about 40 years ago in a fit of nostalgia. I served in Dido for more than two years 1942-44, was sunk in Lively and ended up as Navigator of the Flower-class Vetch.

— Patrick Hamilton, Salisbury

Mr Hamilton's memorable audio disc, with his reading of ships' names woven into a narrative, can be found on the Navy News website at navynews.co.uk

THE LETTER about the birth of the new nation Israel (January) brought back many memories of our time in the Palestine patrols when I was serving in the Hunt-class destroyer HMS Stevenstone.

Great Britain, but certain political elements were not favourable to our presence. One is sad that no-one has tried to arrange any form of reunion for the Palestine Patrol period. Many ships were involved and I recall Talybont, Brissenden, Skipjack, Peacock, Magpie, St Austell Bay and Venus among others.

— John Morrison, Thurlaston, Rugby

and were the last out of Haifa, embarking on LST Striker. We ended up later in the year guarding the Illegal Jewish Camps in Cyprus until the UN allowed them into the new state of Israel. Sadly there seems no end to the troubles in that region.

— Alex Fry, Brenchley, Kent

Wrens kept their heads

A SUNNY day in 1940 or was it 1941? Two Wrens walk along the front at Great Yarmouth. Below them the beach is covered with tangled barbed wire. They are snatching some fresh air before going on duty in the Signal Distributing Office of HMS Watchful — a stone frigate already 'sunk' by Lord Haw-Haw. A minesweeping trawler is offshore making for the harbour. A savage roar as out of the sun comes a Nazi plane. A loud explosion and the trawler has gone. The plane circles and the Wrens throw themselves flat as machine-gun bullets ricochet on the pavement. I was the teleprinter operator on D Watch. We picked ourselves up and went on duty — no counsellors, not needed; we were all in it together. I took the message and went up to the Captain's Office to take the name of the trawler off his movements board. It is a long time ago and I am old. I could have seen it on a film or read about it in a book. But I didn't. I was there.

— Joan Galmady-Hamlyn
3/O WRNS Retired, Bridstowe, Okehampton, Devon

The function was to prevent illegal Jewish immigrant ships from landing on the Palestinian coast. It was a fairly monotonous duty, continually patrolling its coast and that of Lebanon, entering the port of Haifa only to oil. We did enjoy the occasional break at Port Said, or Beirut, a lovely city with its French colonial atmosphere. The Navy performed a very effective and professional duty — Palestine was still mandated to

...OUR unit, 40 Commando RM, paraded on that day in the presence of General Sir Alan Cunningham. We didn't know what to expect at the end of the Mandate, but as things happened it was reasonably quiet. With tongue in cheek, we thought maybe General Cunningham couldn't get off the jetty quickly enough! Our unit soldiered on till the end of June

Hood never proved her worth

IT WAS with sadness that I read the obituary of Major 'Jock' Shand. Born in the same year (1918) and joining up together in 1935, we both embarked on HMS Warspite to spend more than four years together on that wonderful ship. It was apparent that he was destined for higher things and quickly rose in the ranks. He was popular and well-liked and he deserved to be recognised by his superiors. He will be mourned by many of his ex-shipmates. There is one item in the obituary that needs to be clarified. The statement that HMS Hood joined

the Warspite in the second Battle of Narvik is clearly a figment of someone's imagination. The only ships involved were five German destroyers of the Leberecht Maass class and three more of the von Roeder class, all mounting 5x5 inch turrets and 21 inch torpedoes. In opposition we had the Warspite and ten destroyers, Icarus, Hero, Foxhound, Bedouin, Cossack, Punjabi, Kimberley, Forester, Foxhound and the Eskimo. Sadly it has to be stated that HMS Hood was somewhat of a white elephant. The largest warship in the Royal Navy at that time, she never had a chance to prove herself. Apart from firing her massive turrets at the immobile French ships lying at anchor at their moorings in the harbour of Mers el Kebir, she never really fired her guns in anger and unfortunately in her one and only chance to prove her worth, she was sunk in the opening minutes of her engagement against the pride of the German Navy, the battleship Bismarck. Too soon to witness the ultimate destruction of that fine ship. But the Hood at Narvik? Never.

— Bernard Hallas, Haxby, York



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Not Sirte, sir

LOOKING at the painting of the Dido class cruiser (November) I would say to Vice Admiral Louis Le Bailly, "Sir, definitely, not the first Battle of Sirte." This was a night-time action involving Force K from Malta, attempting to intercept a Tripoli-bound convoy. They ran into a newly-laid minefield resulting in a dreadful loss of life. The cruiser Neptune lost all hands except one — he was picked up a few days later by an Italian boat, and the destroyer Kandahar was also sunk with loss of many crew members. There were other ships damaged. As Naiad was sunk before the second battle then it may well have been a Malta convoy that the painting was related to. I took part in the second battle, where Admiral Vian was flying his flag in Cleopatra, and have clear memories of that, swimming for my life off Malta some hours later.

— John Morton, Christian Malford, Chippenham, Wilts

...THOSE of us who were fighting in the Med in those years are now getting on. But on checking with Lord Cunningham's autobiography *A Sailor's Odyssey* the relevant dates seem to be as follows: First Battle of Sirte (as I described) December 17 1941. The Neptune/Kandahar Disaster, December 19 1941. Sadly no battle. Naiad sunk about 2000 hours March 11 1942. Second Battle of Sirte (otherwise often known as THE battle of Sirte) and described by Cunningham as "one of the most brilliantly fought naval battles of the war" (Vian given the KBE) March 22 1942.

— Vice Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly, Bodmin, Cornwall



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20th-Century rocks



Horatio who?

IT'S not a pithy question one would normally utter in the presence of Colin White, director of the Royal Naval Museum and 'Mr Nelson'.

But as he takes charge of the lead museum dedicated to the Senior Service, the authority on Britain's greatest admiral is pushing his idol out of the limelight.

There is no portrait of Horatio in his office, no painting of Victory.

There is, however, a rather worn model of Britain's last battleship, HMS Vanguard, a painting of a Type 21 frigate in action in San Carlos Water and a Great War recruiting poster.

It is part of a conscious effort to emerge from the shadow of Nelson and focus on living history.

"I know people think of me as a Nelson man," said Colin. "There's no Nelson in my office - and that's a deliberate ploy."

"One of the main reasons people come to the historic dockyard is because of Nelson, but by far our strongest collections come from the 19th and 20th Centuries."

"My aim is to do for the 20th Century Royal Navy what we have already done for the Navy of Nelson over the next two or three years."

Hidden in storage vaults and attics is a panoply of artefacts from the past 100 or so years: treadplates, ship's wheels, honours boards, medals; there are oral histories on tape, paintings, memoirs, letters.

Project Vanguard aims to give many of them a permanent public airing, telling the story of the RN between 1900 and 1999 through the eyes of the ordinary sailor, wren and marine.

"The other three Naval museums 'do' the 20th Century. We do not," said Colin. "Now we intend to tell the story of the Navy and Royal Marines in the 20th Century in the proper way here too."

And as anyone in Portsmouth Harbour knows there are some ultimate relics of 20th-Century RN history lying around: Fearless, Intrepid, a smattering of Type 42 destroyers.

None will be joining the RNM inventory, however - much as they would make wonderful attractions.

"People who are enthusiastic about historic ships have often never maintained them. I love old ships, but I'm conscious of the realities of looking after them - they are bottomless pits and you will never earn enough money in gate receipts to pay for them," Colin added.

Nautical talks

RETIRED US Admiral Joseph Callo opens the museum's 2007 programme of lectures and conferences.

He will explode some of the myths behind the 'father of the US Navy' John Paul Jones in a free talk on March 3.

Future conferences are the naval experience of the Falklands war (May 19), Nelson's legacy (September 29) and a day-long seminar on the RN's suppression of the slave trade two centuries ago (October 6).

Tuesdays throughout May will also see informal lunchtime talks in the museum's Falklands exhibition.

Details about the conferences and booking places are available from Julian Thomas on 023 9272 7567.

A 21st-Century 'virtual museum' celebrating the last 100 years of deeds by the Senior Service has opened its 'doors'.

The *Sea Your History* project casts its eye over the rich tapestry of memoirs, photographs, diaries, letters and paintings which chart most facets of life in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines between 1900 and 1999.

An eight-strong team of researchers and historians has spent the past 13 months trawling through the archives of Britain's four official Naval museums - the Royal Naval, Submarine, Royal Marines and Fleet Air Arm - to produce a personal history of the Senior Service in its most challenging century.

To date, around 4,000 items - that's letters, reports, photographs, albums and sound recordings - have been digitised, focusing on 'naval lives'; the finished site will run to 15,000 items.

And if 15,000 items sounds a lot, in reality it's the tip of the proverbial iceberg: the submarine museum holds 4,000 objects from the first century of the Silent Service, plus 120,000 images; the Royal Marines Museum's archive amounts, *inter alia*, to two million photographs and 15,000 books and journals charting the Corps' proud history; the RNM counts 203,254 artefacts on its books.

"The choice of what to leave in and leave out has been very difficult - fortunately we've been helped by the other Naval museums and the Fleet Photographic Unit who've guided us. In the end, we had to be realistic," said Helen Gibbons, overseeing the £660,000 scheme on behalf of the RN Museum.

"I think the team feels very lucky to glance into the lives of some fascinating people."

Most of the material used in the virtual museum has never been given a public airing before.

Researchers have also recorded



90 fresh interviews with RN veterans as part of an oral history project, and have catalogued the museum's holdings so that researchers can more easily see what archive material is available.

As for *Sea Your History*, it coincides with the museum's efforts to focus more on the 20th-Century RN - an era which has often been eclipsed by Nelson and the days of sail (see left).

"It has been great fun - it is a huge task, but a fascinating one, and, at times, a very moving one too, such as the images in a sketch book by a prisoner-of-war in a Japanese camp," Helen explained.

RN Museum director Colin White added: "This is the way museums are going."

"For an exhibition on the Falklands, for example, you might get 100,000 people visiting; online you might get that number in day. Of course, we hope they visit *Sea Your History* and then come into the museums."

The team will put the final strand of the project online next spring (the RN at home and abroad); the second element to 'go live' will be the role of Portsmouth Dockyard in the 20th Century (available next month); 'conflict and change' will be available during the summer.

See www.seayourhistory.org.uk



● Priscilla Fuller volunteered for the WRNS in 1941 and trained as a teleprinter operator. Her duties eventually took her to Basra, where life wasn't all bad - as she describes...

There was an open air cinema and wooden chairs were used by the audience. I was very surprised when I received my first invitation to the cinema and my hostess (local civilian - British) said "and don't forget your pillowcase" I thought this was odd but did as she asked and later discovered that this was used as in a sack race for the prevention of mosquito bites to the legs.

Many strange parties were held for these "off duty" some held by the Army where the floor was concrete. Very tiring on the legs!

Another party was given for girls in poodles. They arrived in large cars with the blinds down and only unveiled when there was no man present. The party took place in a garden and when the houseboys served the tea the girls covered their faces. They were very curious as to how and why we were in Basra and one thought we were "Officers, for the use of."

I myself have bought about a dozen copies and am sending prints to Admirals Tupper, de Chair and Stileman, to the Royal Mail Company, Messrs Harland & Wolf and Captain of the Eaglet. The remaining copies I intend to send as Christmas cards to my various relatives. I would suggest that every member of the ship's company who has a bob to spare might invest in a copy to send to his best girl as a fine memento of our three years in commission.

The artist is well known to you all. Up to date he has only just covered his expenses but I hope shortly to learn that he has made a bit as I consider the picture is excellent and may serve to remind you and your friends during the piping times of peace of the work performed by this good ship.

William Church
Captain RN



● Signalman Phillip Needell, a former bank clerk, served in HMS Almazora patrolling the Denmark Strait, enforcing the blockade of Germany in WW1. He was also a gifted artist producing numerous paintings which he sold to his shipmates - at their captain's encouragement (left)



● Naval aviator Lt John Tulloch 'JT' Cull flew a Sopwith seaplane over East Africa, serving as an artillery spotter for the guns of monitors HMS Mersey and Severn which helped them sink the German cruiser Königsberg in 1915

... We started planing down towards the Mersey though the Severn was much nearer, I did not want to interfere with her fire just now though all shots were falling before the forebridge of the Königsberg. On our way down Flight Sub-Lieutenant Arnold continued very coolly sending corrections, and gave one very important one "H.T. All forward", bringing the Severn shots from forward to amidships, and we had the satisfaction of seeing shells falling on the middle of the Königsberg before we lost sight of her. He also informed the Mersey we were hit and asked them to send a boat...

The original force for good

THE Navy's pivotal role in stamping out the Atlantic slave trade will be commemorated throughout 2007 with a series of major public events.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of Britain outlawing the slave trade (slavery in the UK itself was outlawed more than 40 years earlier).

Central to attempting to drive the business of people-trafficking was the Royal Navy which intercepted slave ships and destroyed slave trading posts in Africa.

At the time many slave ships flew the British flag; but in a three-year period the RN effectively put a stop to British merchants profiting from the practice.

It took another six decades for the trade to finally end and for much of that time the Senior Service was involved in a bitter struggle attempting to intercept the slavers.

During that six-year campaign the Royal Navy freed an estimated 150,000 slaves.

To commemorate the part the RN played, an exhibition begins at the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth on February 3 and running until the year's end.

The Chasing Freedom display draws on paintings, letters, personal accounts and also features two specially-commissioned films on the legacy of the anti-slavery campaign and the abolition debate of the time which involved figures such as Nelson.

There will also be a slavery display at the Empire and Commonwealth Museum in Bristol - a city built on the slave trade - on February 15; minehunter HMS Ledbury will visit Bristol to coincide with the launch. In the same city on March 25 there will be a service of commemoration on March 25 and a simultaneous visit by HMS Cattistock.

Frigate HMS Northumberland will be in London between March 29 and April 2 to tie in with the stay on the Thames of the Kaskelot, a replica slave ship.

Greenwich hosts a 'Freedom 200' musical event on May 19 which will feature the Band of HM Royal Marines and Sea Cadets.

And assault ship HMS Albion will be in Liverpool on June 16-17 for the annual maritime heritage weekend; like Bristol, Liverpool owes much of its development to the slave trade.



● River action... An engraving of sailors and marines fighting slave traders in Africa
Picture: Royal Naval Museum

Testing times in the land of EMU

TO most people the letters 'e', 'm' and 'u' will probably conjure images of an odd-looking bird scurrying over the land or perhaps an irritating 1970s puppet.

To sailors and Royal Marines it can mean only one thing: the Environmental Medicine Unit, one of the world's leading authorities on the impact of the world around us on our fighting men and women.

One of the many important facets of the Institute of Naval Medicine, the EMU team specialises in providing research and advice on a wide-range of issues from fitness levels and training to testing equipment and the design of workplace consoles – in short anything that will improve the operational performance of the Armed Forces.

EMU's probably best known for the 'chamber' – the largest heat chamber in Europe capable of creating temperatures as high as 50°C – and for the 'tank' – a pool capable of being cooled to temperatures of 4°C; both are used regularly to evaluate new equipment and to calculate the effects of extremes of temperature on Service personnel.

Simulations are fine, but there is no substitute for the real environment. An EMU team has visited troops operating in Iraq to carry out tests on personnel *in situ* to see how they acclimatised to the desert heat.

"The effects of the heat should not be underestimated," explained Lt Mark Middleton.

"Any leader should consider the effects when organising any activity, whether it is a parade or storing ship. This is especially important with the way ship's crews are now being continually moved around the globe."

With the current emphasis on operations in the Middle East, it's perhaps surprising that many heat injuries occur not in the desert but back in the UK.

"If it's a humid day in the height of summer you can have real problems," explained Dr Dan Roiz de Sa.

"You are talking about the body getting too hot and cooking from

BEHIND the imposing Victorian façade of Monckton House in Gosport lies the Institute of Naval Medicine, the Royal Navy's authority in occupational health matters – and some of the globe's experts on the way the world around us affects front-line operations.

the inside out. It can damage your kidneys, liver, and central nervous system.

"The Great North Run in 2005 is a good example of this; the race took place on a very humid day. The emergency services were almost overwhelmed because they were not expecting so many people collapsing."

For men and women unfortunate enough to suffer heat or cold injuries, the EMU team offers treatment and assessment in their specialist clinic to help Service personnel back to full fitness.

The impact of heat is just a part of the work undertaken by the EMU team – 'environmental' covers not just climatic conditions but also how Forces personnel interact with their work environment.

Take a bunk space for example. *Is there enough leg room? Is it easy to swing into and out of your pit? Are the seats in the ops room good for your posture in the long term?*

Environmental issues don't just provoke physiological symptoms; the EMU team develops and improves training and evaluation of stress levels amongst Royal Naval personnel.

Innovation also plays a role; EMU staff have been testing 'cool cuffs' – water-cooled sleeves which could be attached to the lower arms of pilots and observers in Iraq.

Studies have shown that the cuffs could almost double the amount of time aircrews can operate safely. They're not necessarily comfortable, but they are effective.

Another area of EMU expertise is developing fitness.

The department has been heavily involved in the training of Royal Marines for the past two decades.

It also holds a Fitness Anthropometric Clinic (FAC) which now forms part of the remedial training cycle for any sailor who fails to make the fitness

grade – personnel will have already had support and encouragement for up to nine months from their units before arriving at the INM.

It's not in the Royal Navy's interests to kick out people it's spent thousands of pounds training, and it's not in the individual's interests to fail the fitness test – thus delaying their career progression.

Instead, after a series of tests measuring body fat and body mass, clinic staff can draw up short-term goals to reduce weight and improve fitness, thankfully, the number of sailors and green berets who need the clinic's help each year is fewer than two dozen. That figure, however, is likely to rise.

"If the obesity trend in society continues then it will impact on the Royal Navy," explained former Royal Marine Jason Lynn, clinical physiologist.

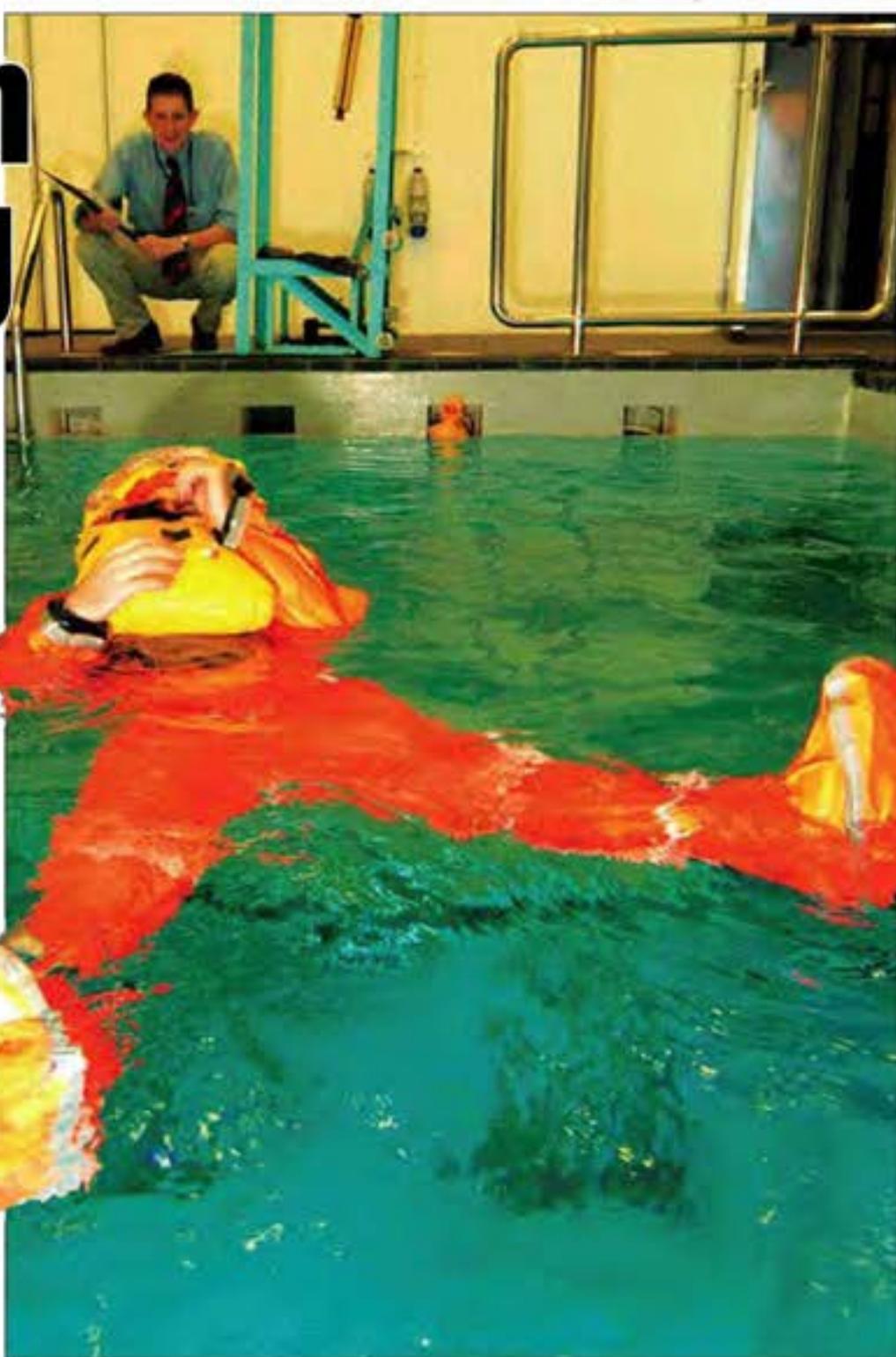
"A fitter Navy and a healthier Navy is a more efficient Navy."

"The pre-fitness tests such as the Royal Marines and Raleigh carry out are a sensible way forward."

At present obesity issues affect the RFA more than the RN and RM – "as a service it's certainly more laid back than the RN," Jason pointed out – but the effect is the same: unfit sailors struggling to pass their medical and unable to carry out their duties because of weight issues.

Perhaps the surprising thing in 2007 is that there's no 'health index' for the Senior Service.

"At the moment, we don't actually know how fit the Navy is because we don't know how many people are 'in date' for their fitness tests – the new electronic administration system, JPA, will provide some of the answers when the recording of fitness levels will



● Tank-ed up... Dr Dan Roiz de Sa monitors a volunteer in an immersion suit in the 'tank', where water temperatures go down to 4°C

Pictures: LA/Photo 'Topsy' Turner, HMS Sultan

be registered by PT staff," said Jason.

Like most of the work done at the Institute, it's behind the scenes – yet it has a direct effect on what happens in the front line.

"The work that EMU and the

rest of the Institute undertakes may not be noticeable to a lot of people around the Fleet but it has a real impact on how the Navy and Royal Marines carry out their business," said Lt Middleton.

■ Advice on operating in

extreme temperatures can be found in the recently updated JSP 539. More information on the Institute and the services available to ships and units can be found on its intranet website, www.inm.rmil.uk



● Dr Roiz de Sa monitors a soldier in kit marching on a treadmill in the heat chamber which can recreate desert or jungle conditions

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Corps mourns a friend

MEMBERS of The Marine Society and Sea Cadets were saddened to learn of the sudden death of former Trustee and Chairman of Development, Vice Admiral Sir Anthony Tippet, in October.

After a very distinguished naval career, Tony Tippet devoted his considerable energy to launching Great Ormond Street Hospital's Wishing Well appeal, and in his spare time to enthusiastically supporting the Sea Cadets.

Barnstaple Unit was honoured to be invited to assist guests and hand out hymn sheets at his funeral, which was attended by many of his former colleagues.

He will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him.

Good end to a bad year

FOLLOWING a year of bad luck – their minibus gave up the ghost and they suffered a breakdown – Loughborough unit at least enjoyed a bit of Christmas cheer when they helped their local Rotary club at a carol service.

Santa arrived with a sack of goodies and the cadets were eager to thank him for the help Rotarians have given them towards raising money for a new minibus.

S/Lt Adey, the Commanding Officer of the unit, read the popular *A Visit From St Nicholas* – and there were more gifts to enjoy when the local Pizza Hut restaurant provided free pizzas for the cadets' Christmas party.

London group trains north of the border

LONDON Area cadets 'took over' the Sea Cadet Training Centre at HMS Gannet – with the approval of the Centre's Superintendent, CPO(SCC) Pat McManus.

The group had travelled north of the border for a successful Class 1 Marine Engineering course.

All nine cadets, who were accompanied by Lt (SCC) George Wilson RNR, CPO(SCC) Mike Dickson and PO(SCC) Peter Savage, passed their respective Electrical and Mechanical specialisations.

The course, as always, featured a number of trips off base, the highlight this time being a visit to the Craigengillan Estate near Loch Doon.

Two 15-minute flights by an HMS Gannet Search and Rescue (SAR) Sea King made the transfer between Prestwick and Craigengillan House, at the heart of the estate.

The estate is within a low-fly zone used by the RAF for training purposes, and the cadets were grateful to the CO of HMS Gannet and staff for their close liaison with the RAF to ensure airspace for the RN aircraft.

After their flight the cadets took a walk through Ness Glen then returned to the House where Lt



● London Area cadets await the arrival of colleagues in the Search and Rescue helicopter from HMS Gannet before walking through Ness Glen in Ayrshire

Cdr (SCC) Briggs RNR – who lives in the South Wing of the building – and his wife entertained the cadets and staff with tea and cream cakes.

CPO McManus returned the

cadets to base in the Centre's minibus in time for the evening meal.

Lt Wilson, London Area ASO(MarE), said they enjoyed an "excellent course and break in Scotland" and that they were

looking forward to taking over again for the first course of 2007, which starts on the 12th of this month.

Among the units represented were Merton, West Ham, Hornchurch and Orpington.

Changes to camera contest

IN 2006 the Naval Photograph Club launched a new competition for Sea Cadets, and the first winners were announced at the Trafalgar Day Parade in London. – Finuala Cameron (11) of Campbeltown and Jessica Hassall (17) of Camberley.

This year's competition will be slightly different – there will now be three prize-winning categories:

● The best photograph of a Sea Cadet activity;

● The best photograph of a ship;

● The best photograph by an adult in the Sea Cadets (uniformed or civilian).

Details will be sent to all units in the spring.

Scouts' honour

SIX SEA Scouts from 3rd Frodsham group – William Dunn, Paul Heighton, Ben Simpson, Graham Thompson, Alex Marsden and Mark Heighton – were presented with Chief Scout Gold Awards at Tatton Park, Knutsford.

Group Leader Gordon Meek said: "The Scouts have all worked hard to achieve this award. We are proud of them and they should be proud of themselves."

Final efforts

Northampton and Wellingborough unit finished 2006 on a high, with six members attending a training cruise off the South Coast in the TS John Jervis, two teams being runners-up in the Eastern Area five-a-side football competition, and the unit being judged best in the region – making it one of the top six in the UK.

Centre has new name

THE SEA Cadet Training Centre at HMS Excellent has taken on the name TS St Barbara after the patron saint of artillerymen.

The name was chosen because Whale Island, the home of HMS Excellent in Portsmouth Harbour, was the Royal Navy's gunnery school, and the church on the island is St Barbara's.

The training centre's new name was officially adopted at a Service of Rededication which was held on Whale Island just before Christmas.

In blustery conditions, Rear Admiral John Borley, Flag Officer Training and Recruiting, unveiled a plaque to mark the occasion.

The service was conducted by Rev Steve Parselle, chaplain of HMS Excellent, and music was provided by the band of Poole unit, TS Drax.

Cadets from Maidstone, Bognor Regis, Portsmouth, Cowes and Ryde took part in the event, which was organised by Lt (SCC) Shelley Faulkner RNR, Superintendent SCTC, and her team – and who laid on a buffet at the end for guests who included Cdre Laurie Brokenshire, Commodore of the Corps.



● The Loughborough quartet prepare to get under way with their fun run warship

Santa-class warship?

STAFF, committee and cadets from TS Venomous got together to join in the annual Rotary Club Santa Fun Run in Loughborough – and brought a whiff of the sea with them.

True to their Royal Navy roots, the four runners – ex-RN Tim Hunting, PO(SCC) John Clements, TI Simon Penver and cadet Matt

Jervis, with help from other staff members – made themselves a warship in which to run.

And while navigating this vessel around the course, they were still dressed in their Santa suits.

The quartet started at the back of the field but finished the 10km course in seventh place.

The sight of the ship cruising along raised plenty of smiles along the route, and the boys had their own dedicated section of cheering onlookers towards the end of the run.

The run, which cost £10 per person to enter, was raising money for local charities supported by Rotarians.

Mayor pays visit to Newhaven unit

THE Mayor of Seaford, Cllr Rosemary Collicot, paid a pre-Christmas visit to the Newhaven and Seaford unit.

Cllr Collicot met two cadets who have achieved prestigious appointments – LC Christopher Taylor, the Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex's Cadet (the second year running a Newhaven cadet has been chosen), and LC Liam Scott, the Mayor of Seaford's Cadet.

The Mayor also presented a Royal British Legion Certificate to S/Lt (SCC) Carol Rogers RNR, who completed the 2006 Poppy Walk and raised £201 for the Poppy Appeal.



● Cadets on parade at the rededication ceremony for TS St Barbara

Training co-ordinator retires

AFTER a stint of more than a decade at TS St Barbara – formerly the National Sea Cadet Training Centre – CPO John Stanley is retiring.

Based at HMS Excellent on Whale Island, John has been the training co-ordinator for Sea Cadet senior ratings across the country.

Alongside his professional role, John has also been fundamental in the running of the Warrant Officer and Senior Rates Mess at the establishment, acting as Social Secretary for the past 18 years.

John was given life membership of the Mess by Base Warrant Officer WO1 Ben Ingiszi, and in return he presented the Mess with a framed painting of TS Royalist passing Greenwich in London.

WO Ingiszi said that people with John's experience and commitment are a rare breed and that he would be greatly missed by all.

● Pictured is CPO John Stanley (left) with WO1 Ben Ingiszi



Bethan defends youths

A CARDIFF cadet has leapt to the defence of beleaguered youths.

OC Bethan Mitchell (15) contacted the *South Wales Echo* and the *Western Mail* saying: "I am writing to you to stand up for the young people of South Wales."

"During 2005-06 South Wales teenagers have been mentioned in the papers and in the news many times, not for the good things we do but the bad side of things."

"The example I'm going to use is teenagers congregating outside City Hall in Cardiff."

"Police have stopped teenagers from meeting here because they have found them drinking under age, smoking cannabis and more."

"This isn't everyone though. Some teenagers do generally just meet friends there because it is a nice area to sit and just relax."

"The news doesn't look at that side of the story."

Bethan believes the lack of inexpensive places to go - like the ice cream bars on the Continent - could explain the situation.

She added that people's fears over 'hoodies' are unjustified - "Hoodies are just designer jumpers with hoods. They don't represent thugs - most people own hoodies," said Bethan.

"In November I attended *Youth Showcase 2006*, a celebration of young people's achievements."

"It involved singing, young bands, beatboxing, MCing, dancing, videos and awards for young people."

"One of the videos mentioned a need for an indoor skateboard park - they mentioned facts like it will get teenagers off the streets and improve young people's fitness."

"The news never mentions these sorts of events. It only focuses on the bad. Not all young people smoke, drink etc."

"We do things like Duke of Edinburgh's Awards, Young Achievers, Sports Clubs, Sea Cadets, and more."

Prison food

CADETS from TS Constant, the Tooting and Balham unit, and TS Challenger (Wandsworth) used the Staff Mess at Wandsworth Prison to train in catering skills.

With the permission of Governor Ian Mulholland, and under the supervision of prison officer Stewart McLaughlin, a PO Instructor, cadets learned about baking, buffet food, beverages, table covers and health and hygiene, among other matters.

The Staff Mess is a facility outside the prison wall.

Formal dinner

ALMOST 40 cadets and 15 staff from TS Illustrious, the Walton and District unit, enjoyed a formal Mess Dinner at the Walton and Frinton Yacht Club.

Unit chairman Tim Adams and Commanding Officer S/Lt Gary Dodd RNR made after-dinner speeches, and badges were presented to LC Karlina Bigwood, who has been promoted to Petty Officer Cadet.

East Anglians take football honours

EASTERN area Sea Cadets held their 2006 five-a-side football tournament at St Ives in the run-up to Christmas - and East Anglian teams proved themselves more than a match for the challengers.

Players attended from across Eastern England, making it the largest competition the area had seen for many years.

As the day progressed towards the semi-final stages, all four East Anglia District sides - from Lowestoft, Norwich, Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich - were still in the running.

As the tension mounted, all four sides made it through to their



● One of the cadets in Vigilant Squadron at HMS Raleigh eyes up the climbing net before tackling the assault course

Picture: Dave Sheffield (RMS Raleigh)

No picnic - but it's better than school

YOU'RE up at 6am, clean your digs for half an hour, are subjected to inspection, spend eight hours in the classroom, on the water or the assault course, then it's in the gym for an hour, another half hour's cleaning and a final inspection, writes *Richard Hargreaves*.

And still it's better than being at school.

Chances are if you want to make progress in your Sea Cadet career, you'll spend some time in the ranks of Vigilant Squadron, the training unit at HMS Raleigh where you earn points towards promotion.

A total of 19 week-long courses are run by the instructors at Raleigh, pretty much all the year round, in subject fields as diverse as seamanship and rope work, navigation and chart work, first aid and sailing.

"This is no picnic," said Lt Cdr Rick Evans, in charge of youth training. "This is a tough course."

Sea Cadets HQ pays your rail fare to Plymouth, where you are met by Raleigh staff; you must find £37 to cover administration costs of the course, however.

If you time it right, you can miss a week of school - but it's not a holiday.

Apart from the long hours, the accommodation is pretty basic with large dormitories to sleep in - although there are games and TV rooms to wind down if you still have energy at the end of the day.

"For someone like me who is thinking about joining the Navy, watching new recruits at work and meeting them is really useful," said LC Louise Barwell, of TS Gambia in Thorne, near Doncaster.

As of the end of September, 4,780 members of the Sea Cadets,

Sea Scouts and Combined Cadet Forces had passed through Vigilant, with the total exceeding 6,000 by the end of October.

Raleigh takes its Sea Cadet role seriously. One in five cadets goes on to join the RN - and once they do sign up, they are three times less likely to drop out during training.

"Cadets are more likely than anyone else to make the Royal Navy their career," said Lt Cdr Evans.

"If we can imbue a young person with the things the Navy looks for then it makes their transition from civilian to sailor so much easier."

"But we don't ram the Navy down their throats. The cadets choose to be here."

So it is better than being at school?

"Yes," a group of cadets doing rope work screamed back at this *Navy News* reporter when he visited Raleigh.

Louise takes centre stage

A SEA Cadet who is making a name for herself as a singer has notched up another notable success.

Louise Orfila featured in the January edition of *Navy News*

after she wrote and recorded a song for *Children in Need*.

The recording session was scheduled to last for an hour, but staff there were so taken with it that they offered more studio

sessions and put a great deal of effort into the final production, which has sold more than 350 copies.

The 14-year-old cadet, a member of the Folkestone and Hythe unit, was in great demand around Kent on *Children in Need* night.

An earlier song of hers, written last year as part of a school project on World War 1, had been sent to the Royal Marines Band for their views.

Maj Phil Watson contacted Louise to say they were so impressed they would like her to sing with the band at the annual Christmas concert in Folkestone.

Louise practised with the Royals a couple of days before the event, then sang two songs at the concert itself, before a sell-out audience of almost 2,000.

The first was an up-beat Christmas song called *Mary Did*

Hard work celebrated at TS Bee

RANK advancements and awards for cadet activities ranging from seamanship to sport were celebrated at Whitehaven unit's annual presentations evening.

TS Bee's Commanding Officer, Keith Crowe, said that the evening was one of the major events in the unit's calendar.

"Our cadets all work extremely hard during the year," he said.

"Although we have regular presentations of, for example, rank advancements, this is our opportunity to recognise and reward outstanding achievement in specific areas."

Most of the trophies were presented by TS Bee's President, rear Admiral Steve Morgan USNR.

Big night for prizewinners

PENZANCE unit have held their annual awards night, combined with their Christmas concert.

The Corps District Officer for Cornwall, Lt Cdr Gary Truscott, attended the function.

Among the winners were:

- Matt Gilmour (Best Male Cadet);
- Alex Brown (Endeavour Cup);
- Ben Henderson (Commitment Cup);
- Terri Dallimore (Swimming Cup);
- Amy Nankervis (Cadet of the Year).

Lt Cdr Stella Trahair thanked all the parents of the cadets and the staff of TS Grenville for their support throughout 2006.

Award for stalwart

A CORPS stalwart in the Yorkshire area has been presented with her City and Guilds Graduateship in Youth Management and Training by former First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Alan West.

Lt Cdr (SCC) Margaret Jones RNR became involved with the Sea Cadets after her son Philip joined at the age of 12, and commanded both Keighley and Huddersfield units before handing over to Philip, now a lieutenant.



● Louise sings at the Royal Marines Band Christmas concert in Folkestone (above) and (right) pictured with Hannah Bennett, who sang a duet with Louise during the concert



Forever the heart of the Royal Navy



Beer, fear and naval gear

I REMEMBER seeing HMS Antrim in May 1982, writes Capt Bob Brown of Fleet Headquarters. My ship Leeds Castle was conducting a heaving line transfer with her inside the Total Exclusion Zone to pass urgently-needed laboil, mail and other stores.

The sight of the rows of 30mm cannon shells along the side of the ship, plugged up with damage control timber, was an extremely stark reminder of what we were up against.

David 'Rowdy' Yates' *Bomb Alley* (Pen & Sword, £19.99 ISBN 1-84415-417-3) brought back a great number of memories from those days 25 years ago when we went to war.

He tells his story through a series of 'dits'. His account of life on the lower deck of a major warship down to the ritual of taking a shower and scrubbing nicks and socks at the same time and the mind-blowing runs ashore tell a very true tale of life aboard and the great characters in them very well – and these are not necessarily all the tales you might have told your mother at the time.

These dits also set the scene for what was to come; the action to recover South Georgia (and liberate the beer), the supremely accurate Naval Gunfire Support at Fanning Head and then the air attacks in Bomb Alley.

Written from the viewpoint of a rating and a non-com with little idea of the strategy of why things were happening or even much detail of what was happening, his is a vivid and compelling account which gives a quite different perspective of what went on to the normal senior officers' reminiscences.

I would certainly recommend it to anyone who was in the conflict, who remembers life aboard the beautiful 'light cruisers' of the County class or who wants a taste of life on the lower deck.

It is written by someone who was there – with honesty and perception.

It tells the story of what it was really like by one who was in the thick of it and has the humour of what used to be known in the Navy as 'the most important single factor' – Jack.

FRIGATES of the Napoleonic wars were the workhorses of the Royal Navy.

Their combination of speed and firepower made them the most powerful members of the 'cruising' fleet that exercised the command of the sea obtained by the activities of the battlefleet, in which frigates also played important roles, writes Dr Eric Grove of the University of Salford.

In his book *Frigates of the Napoleonic Wars* (Chatham, £16.99 ISBN 1-86176-292-5) the well-known historian and publisher Rob Gardner provided a remarkable study in depth of the type in one of its most 'classical' periods, that of the most famous frigate commanders of the Royal Navy's history, men such as Cochrane, Blackwood, Broke and Hoste.

The vagaries of publishing had an important impact on the book, as the author explains in his foreword. It was intended as a companion to his book *The Heavy Frigate* that covered 18-pounder-armed frigates built up to the beginning of the 19th Century and the end of the Revolutionary War.

Rob Gardner's break with Conway's and his creation of the Chatham publishing house led him to re-cast the work.

Originally intending to produce a survey of only 18-pounder ships built up to 1832, the author decided to cover all frigates, including the larger 24-pounder 'super frigate' types (some built from cut-down ships of the line) but over a shorter timescale, ending in 1815.

The new book generally works well but there are some slight problems of conversion. Details are only provided for ships built, acquired or converted after 1803 and the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars proper.

Many frigates which served in this period were built earlier, and indeed the book often refers to earlier times, even to the extent of including lists of ships on the various stations from 1794.

It is a pity that brief details at least were not given of all frigates in commission in the period under review, including those commissioned before 1803.

This is, however, the only criticism of a work that is otherwise a model of its type.

Not only are various ship classes described in excellent depth but



● The legendary frigate action between HMS Shannon and USS Chesapeake in 1813
Painting: Royal Naval Museum

The Grove Review

the details of construction, design, armament and performance receive thorough, intelligent and well-informed analysis also.

The book is, in fact, an excellent storehouse of information on most of the major aspects of warship construction and armament of this period. One could not wish for a better guide.

The book is worth acquiring for the chapter on 'Frigates in Action' alone.

In 32 well-written pages Gardner explains clearly and thoroughly the roles of frigates at this time.

Fleet duties involved strategic and tactical reconnaissance, communications and clearing up during and after fleet actions, forward deployment on blockade work and miscellaneous duties such as despatch carrying and even being used as fast, well-armed transports.

Frigates also acted as heavy support for smaller craft in anti-invasion coastal operations and in offensive amphibious warfare

where the frigates' shallower draught often made them more useful than ships of the line.

Frigates were key assets in the often forgotten littoral operations that gave vital support to that most classic of maritime campaigns in the full sense of the word, the Peninsular War.

The author clearly demonstrates the role played by Sir George Collier's frigates and other small craft in supporting Wellington, both afloat and ashore.

He also puts useful emphasis on the many littoral operations carried out on the coast of Italy and in the Adriatic. This was the classic 'leverage of sea power':

"The sheer mobility of seapower imbued even a single frigate with disproportionate force when exerted against land targets. If one assumes an available landing force of 100 men, then to make the course safe would entail protecting even the tiniest harbour against such a number: whether the enemy chose to do this with men or with fortifications, the result was the same, massive diversion of resources from the land war."

The classic frigate role in exercising command of the sea was the attack and defence of trade.

Frigates were used both to escort convoys and to hunt down raiders, deployed on the basis of good intelligence.

The author is careful to dispose of the legend of the lone frigate captain basing his actions on luck and instinct.

He also points out the strain put on frigate patrols by the trial of strength of Napoleon's Continental System and the British Orders in Council, a period when "virtually every sail had to be chased and probably boarded, in any season and whatever the weather".

Boarding operations are far from a 21st-Century novelty. In 1808-09 HMS Amethyst was

involved in 77 chases in 266 days.

The author makes a convincing case that the often-criticised British frigates of this period had the right blend of characteristics for their duties.

The emphases in their design were on seaworthiness rather than sheer speed in good conditions, sufficient sturdiness to keep the seas for long periods and adequate armament to be exploited by their generally superior crews.

French designs, vaunted in earlier periods, were less attractive by this time. The large American ships encountered in the war of 1812 proved more difficult opponents for the smaller standard frigates on station.

These US ships, however, were the 'pocket battleships' of their day. It was significant that only one of the captured American 'super frigates', President, was deemed worthy of copying, more as a trophy than as a superior design.

She tended to be deployed on the North American Station in post war years to make a point. British designs of large frigates were preferred to be added to the fleet.

It is also interesting that Gardner argues that the association of the Leda class with HMS Shannon's victory over the USS Chesapeake led to a preference for this design in future construction, despite the general superiority of the contemporary Lively class.

The book is excellently illustrated with 150 paintings and diagrams in its 208 pages. These complement the text well and there is also a useful glossary and an impressive scholarly apparatus of footnotes and bibliography.

As Professor Nicholas Rodger said of the original hardback, *Frigates of the Napoleonic Wars* is "one of the most sophisticated analyses we have yet had of the relationship of policy and technology in naval history."



Fact is indeed stranger than fiction...

WE HAVE a colleague at Navy News who has a habit of blurting out the phrase: You couldn't make it up (invariably followed by 'it's political correctness gone mad' – Ed).

And as Chris Pomey shows in *State Secrets* (National Archives, £7.99 ISBN 978-1-905615-04-9) you really couldn't make it up... for Britons have led the world in hare-brained schemes.

A good few have been covered by NN in the past: the iceberg aircraft carrier, birds trained to hunt submarines, pigeon-guided missiles.

But there were so many, many more. Pomey has ploughed through the files of the National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office) to unearth some secret gems... such as exploding chocolate for WW2 commandos and saboteurs.

Whitehall's dalliance with the pigeon is particularly bizarre. All manner of missions were planned from bombing raids (with 2oz explosives) to kamikaze attacks on enemy searchlights.

The birds were even taken aboard HMS *Arethusa* during Britain's A-Bomb tests to see what impact radiation might have on their war potential.

The real 'English Patient', a Hungarian aristocrat Laszlo Almásy, was not a suave, handsome spy, but an unattractive bungler who had a penchant for women and wine. He was no good at spying, too.

But the true story of *Whisky Galore* – in reality the wreck of the SS Politician which ran aground in the Outer Hebrides in 1941 carrying 25,000 quart bottles of spirit – is every bit as comic as the namesake film suggests.

RN personnel sent to guard the wreck plundered it (the RAF also got in on the act ferrying truckloads of booty to the airfield at Benbecula) – and took more than just whisky. The ship was also carrying bicycles, shoes and several hundred thousand ten-shilling notes destined for Jamaica which mysteriously vanished.

Not all the secrets within are uplifting or comical, however.

The hastily-formed Home Guard was every bit the paper tiger the sitcom *Dad's Army* made it out to be.

There were only sufficient guns for barely one in three volunteers with the invasion threat at its gravest in the late summer of 1940.

And for those who complain today about 'big brother' and the threat of identity cards, the forerunner of MI5 was poring over census details as early as 1913 to track down 'aliens'... many of whom were promptly rounded up the following year when war broke out.

Plus ça change...

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Fresh airing for Fleet Air Arm films

FILMS capturing life in the heyday of RN aviation are now available on DVD after sitting in the archives for more than four decades.

The Fleet Air Arm: At War and Peace (DD Home Entertainment, £11.99) focuses on the naval air wing between 1943 and 1959. The disc includes *The Volunteer* (1943), starring Ralph Richardson, a drama-documentary produced, written and directed by Powell and Pressburger. It follows the fortunes of a pilot and FAA mechanic aboard a wartime flat-top.

Richardson is the narrator for *Eagles of the Fleet* (1950), also on the DVD; it looks at carrier exercises off Gibraltar and features footage of Hawker Sea Furies, Fairey Fireflies, and the Navy's first jet fighter, the Supermarine Attacker.

Victory from the jaws of defeat



A ruse by any other name...

THE heroes' feature of *Navy News* has been littered with stories of bravery from men of the Q Ships – disguised merchant raiders sent out to destroy U-boats in the Great War.

Eight sailors earned the VC for their deeds, but invariably the Admiralty's ruse to deal with the U-boat menace was futile as Deborah Lake describes in the excellent *Smoke and Mirrors: Q Ships against the U-boats in the First World War* (Simon, £19.99 ISBN 9780-7509-46056).

The Germans arrived late to the submarine 'race' which gripped the western navies. The first *Unterseeboot*, abbreviated to *U-boat*, only joined the Kaiser's Navy at the end of 1906, five years after HMS Holland 1 was born.

But in 12 years the *U-boottaffe* (U-boat arm) created a reputation for skill – and terror – which still holds historians and enthusiasts in thrall to this day.

What is surprising is how much the U-boat effort in World War 2 mirrors that of the Great War. *Fregattenkapitän* Hermann Bauer, the head of the *U-boottaffe*, had a handful of boats to wage war with in 1914 – as did Karl Dönitz a generation later – and reckoned he needed 222 submarines to effectively blockade Britain (Dönitz estimated 300).

Despite Bauer's trifling force, the Admiralty was gripped by what can only be described as U-boat terror. It grasped at solutions, some sensible, some mad (such as filling the North Sea with effervescent salts to bring U-boats to the surface).

One panacea was the decoy or 'special service' ship, eventually codenamed the 'Q Ship' by the Admiralty.

It was an idea taken from the Middle East, where dhows with hidden guns were used to lure pirates into a trap.

As U-boats observed the rules of the seaways – they surfaced, allowed merchant crews to take to lifeboats and then dispatched the ship to the seabed – they could be blasted out of the water by the hidden guns of a Q Ship.

This is a fascinating world: the book's title is apt, for the art of deception was the key to the success of a Q Ship.

Lt Cdr Godfrey Herbert took great lengths to disguise the tramp steamer *Baralong*: he banned the use of Naval ranks and uniform, he forbade Jackspeak, he encouraged bawdy behaviour.

Baralong had her moment in the summer of 1915 when she blew U27 out of the water as it attempted to scuttle a liner. Herbert, enraged by the *Lusitania*'s sinking a few months before, ordered his men to take no prisoners. They took none.

The 'Baralong incident', as it became known, is proof that both sides engaged in 'total war' on the high seas.

This is a gripping story and the author tells it with pace and panache. Refreshingly, she chooses not merely to recount from the British point of view, but has delved into German archives and memoirs to give us what is perhaps the definitive account of the Q Ship war.

And yet in the end, Q Ships achieved very little. More than 200 saw service between 1914 and 1918 and fought around 70 actions with their foe. They sank fewer than a dozen U-boats – but 44 decoy vessels fell victim to German submarines.

THE Falklands was an odd war.

It was the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time.

It was won by a nation about to scythe its Armed Forces, its Navy especially, against a foe which until most recently had been its friend.

It was fought not in the Denmark Strait or Western Approaches, where the RN was geared up for battle, but 9,000 miles from home waters in the South Atlantic for a chain of islands Whitehall wanted rid of.

Twenty-five years after arguably Britain's finest post-war hour, the story of that war can finally be told from the Government's point of view.

Sir Lawrence Freedman's two-volume *Official History of the Falklands Campaign* (Routledge, £35 and £49.95 ISBNs 0714652067 and 0714652075) runs to more than 1,000 pages and still, as he readily admits, it is not the whole story of the 1982 conflict.

For the most part Britain's official histories have been dry affairs, produced by military men who understood war but not literature.

The inestimable John Keegan complained that Brig James Edmonds and the team charged with explaining the Great War in print in 28 volumes ended up describing one of the "world's greatest tragedies without the display of any emotion at all". (The WW2 histories are little better.)

Sir Lawrence, however, is an historian of merit – and has a nice turn of phrase on many occasions.

Perhaps the biggest surprise is how interesting the run-up to war is (or at least it is as the author presents it): the diplomatic wranglings, bungs, the frustration of the commanders such as *Endurance*'s captain Nick Barker.

But a lively front-line account this is not. It is not the story of Jack and Royal and Tommy.

It is the story of the Falklands war as the commanders (military and civilian) saw it.

And that is no bad thing. There are some fascinating insights within, such as Maj Gen Sir Jeremy Moore's censure of 3 Commando Brigade's CO Julian Thompson as the battle of the beachhead drew to a close for apparently keeping him out of the picture.

Sir Jeremy comes across as a forthright green beret who deplored ill-informed optimism (he told Northwood there was a "snowball's chance in hell" of victory in the Falklands by June 7; he was right) and told his staff back in Britain to keep "interfering busybodies off my back".

It's rare for an official history to feature such disagreements and controversies – and it's to be welcomed that the author does not shy away from them.

The Army felt it was playing *Cinderella* to the green berets, who were apparently given the lion's share of resources (a feeling not borne out by the facts).

And the Fleet? Well, the Fleet was on its last legs (ammunition running low, only a handful of ships undamaged) when Stanley fell.

'Official' does not mean 'sanctioned', thankfully. Official histories in the past were riddled with political (with a small 'p') interference from interested parties (the Great War histories especially).

The author stresses that 'official' here means 'official sources' – war diaries, internal memos, intelligence reports, after-action reports, boards of inquiry findings – which the public is not yet

allowed access to (many should be released, however, in 2013 under the 30-year rule).

And so Sir Lawrence can dismiss the *Belgrano* 'cover-up' once and for all. No incident in the war has been surrounded by so much controversy.

The *Belgrano* became a *cause célèbre* for opponents of the war and the Tory government; Labour's Tam Dalyell was the most vociferous opponent of the cruiser's loss, a deliberate act – he claimed – to "torpedo the peace negotiations".

The author destroys the conspiracy theories of the 'Belgranauts' as he calls them. The cruiser's sinking is complicated, involved intelligence reports, difficult political and military judgments and decisions.

The controversy, however, was fed by "fevered speculation and sheer irresponsibility," the author observes, involving the Navy, the Establishment, freemasonry, Satanists. Only Uncle Tom Cobbley was missing...

The 'conspiracy' boils down to inaccurate or incomplete descriptions given to the world in the immediate aftermath of the *Belgrano*'s sinking; the media clamouring for answers got them; when more information subsequently came to light which were at odds with the initial

reports, a conspiracy was born. All of which is irrelevant to the task force men and women.

The *Belgrano* was a threat and she was dispatched.

One wonders what the media's reaction would have been if a WW2 vintage cruiser had struck the modern RN first...

The *Belgrano*'s sinking was a wake-up call to Argentinian and Briton alike.

This was a war, a shooting war, not some diplomatic 'game' involving Buenos Aires and London.

A month after the Falklands liberation Mrs Thatcher proclaimed that victory in the South Atlantic had demonstrated that Britain was still great, it still possessed "those sterling qualities which shine through our history".

The reality, of course, is slightly different.

"The Falklands was exactly the sort of war that Britain's forces had

not planned to fight," Freedman points out.

Victory in the Falklands was a damned near-run thing; the task force was exhausted by the first week of June 1982 (it should also be pointed out that the Argentinians were exhausted too).

Six ships were lost and 11 were damaged; the toll would have been far heavier had 13 bombs which struck British vessels exploded.

The human toll extends beyond those killed, too. As many as half the veterans of the 1982 campaign suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder; an estimated 300 have taken their own lives.

Above all what is clear from the official history is that the Falklands was a preventable war.

There were enough warnings by military and civilian authorities from the summer of 1981 until the Argentine invasion which could, nay should, have stopped the invasion.

To save a few million pounds (by axing HMS *Endurance* and not bolstering defences in the Falklands) Whitehall ended up spending almost £4bn by the end of 1988 alone on re-taking the islands then fortifying them.

The phrase 'pennywise and pound-foolish' springs to mind, but then that's often the case in Whitehall...

Read *Navy News*' three-part series on the Falklands campaign beginning in our April edition.



The key to the Mediterranean

ONE of the keys to the defeat of the Axis powers in the Mediterranean was fortress Malta and its indomitable people.

The George Cross island, the Pedestal convoys, the crippled tanker *Ohio* escorted into Grand Harbour – all are images readily conjured when you think of Malta's role in wartime.

Yet a generation earlier the Admiralty fretted over the defence of its Mediterranean lynchpin with the clouds of war gathering, as Douglas Austin reveals in *Churchill and Malta: A Special Relationship* (Spellmount, £18.99 ISBN 1-86227-356-1).

Churchill's relationship with Malta began in 1907 as a junior minister in the Colonial Office (a forerunner of today's Foreign and Commonwealth Office) as islanders pressed for self-determination.

By the time he returned to the colony five years later, he was First Lord of the Admiralty and more concerned with how to defend the islands.

As it would be in 1940, the RN was split between defending the homeland and defending the colonies: Germany had just formed a *Mittelmeerdivision* led by two potent ships, *Goeben* and *Breslau*, bolstering the forces of her allies Italy and Austria-Hungary.

As it was, the battle for Malta never materialised in the Great War. *Goeben* and *Breslau* fled to Turkey at the war's outbreak; the Italians sided with the Allies not the Central Powers and thus helped to check Austrian ambitions.

Yet Churchill never forgot the vital role Malta played in safeguarding the Empire's position in the Mediterranean.

This is war as the 'big men' saw it: the politicians, the admirals, the generals, the intelligence chiefs.

The author draws upon countless archival sources – newspapers, private papers, official documents, letters and diaries – to paint a vivid picture not merely of Malta's importance between 1940 and 1943 especially, but also of the pressures of command.

In late 1941, the Admiralty was reluctant to base surface ships in Malta given the threat of the Luftwaffe.

When it did, however – largely at Churchill's insistence – Force K came remarkably close to strangling Rommel's supply lines.

The Afrika Korps was perilously short of supplies until the task group strayed into a minefield and was mauled in December 1941.

Axis convoys began to get through again and the Desert Fox was saved; but for the fortunes of war, he might have been routed a year before Alamein...

As with all his commanders, Churchill never stopped harrying his admirals to strike at the enemy, sometimes with good reason, sometimes without.

Recklessly he urged Admiral Cunningham to attack Axis convoys by day as 1942 drew to a close. Cunningham wisely urged caution; he might lose all his cruisers to German air power. The PM relented.

Today, Churchill remains lauded by the Maltese, while the war leader never forgot Malta's contribution to victory. Given pride of place in the study at his former home at Chartwell is a Maltese shield – "a perpetual reminder of Malta's gallantry".



● The Falkland Islands' flag is hoisted again outside Government House in Stanley at the end of the campaign to liberate the islands

Barrie's age is no barrier

FOURTH place in the 45-50 age category in the Half Ironman UK at Wembley, earned CPO Barrie Whitehead from the Non-Destructive Testing Section at RNAS Yeovilton a shot at competing in the inaugural 70.3 Triathlon World Championship, at Clearwater in Florida.

Six months after his performance in the UK race, Barrie was on the beach at Clearwater in a holding pen waiting for the start.

The senior rating confesses that as he watched fellow competitors going through their pre-race routines, he thought to himself: "Aren't we all a bit old for this type of thing?"

Nevertheless, as the hooter went and the racers strode into the water the adrenaline kicked in and thoughts of being 'too old' were pushed to the back of the mind.

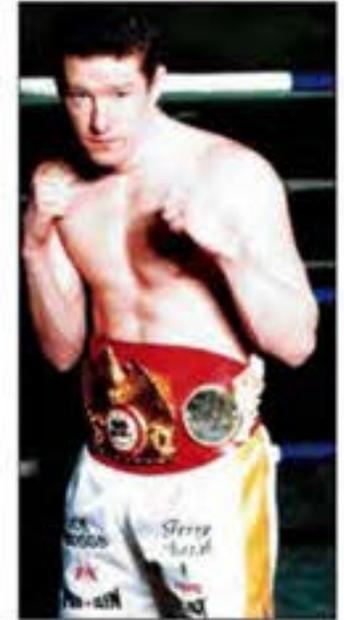
"The swim was okay, if a bit choppy," said Barrie. "The course was straight out and back, and the earlier starters were led back to the beach by a dolphin."

About half an hour later he was on the bike for the second phase of the triathlon, posting a slightly faster time than he'd anticipated in training.

He knew, however, that there would be trouble with the run as he had suffered a recurring calf strain all year and had done very little run-specific training.

After a good start he began to suffer so slowed his pace and just kept plugging away until he crossed the finishing line (and picked up the obligatory White Ensign for that flag-draped-over-the-shoulders shot).

His finishing time was 4h 51m, placing him 43rd overall in his age group.



The gloves are off..

DID you pick up gloves for the RN or RM during your time in the Service?

If so the newly-formed RN Ex-Boxers Association is keen to hear from you.

It aims to bring together former boxers and officials who represented the RN at the Inter-Service or full team match level, as well as any RNBA coaches.

Among those already signed up is former Light Welterweight World Champion Terry Marsh (pictured). Terry fought for the RN in the late 1970s before leaving the Service to become a firefighter and continue his boxing career.

Another founding member of the association is official Rod Robertson who chaired the Amateur Boxing Association of England.

To join contact association chairman Micky Shone at mshone@ms-sc.org or 01752 815139.

More details will be posted on the RNBA's new website, www.rnboxing.org.uk, which is due to be launched at the end of this month.



● Near miss... A close shave for Capt Matt Pinckney on the 'hallowed' wicket in Afghanistan during 45 Cdo's drubbing at the hands of the Afghan Nation Army

Different land, same old story

YOU can change the venue, you can change the opposition, but you can't change the fortunes of English cricket.

While the national side were getting walloped in Australia, the Royal Marines were losing in Afghanistan.

In a lull from operations in Helmand on New Year's Eve, the green berets of 45 Commando decided to challenge the Afghan Nation Army to a one-day international.

The Royals and their supporting Royal Artillery gunners, based in Arbroath, are the Afghan soldier's 'omelette' (Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team), helping to train 3/205 Brigade in the art of war.

Warfare was forgotten on the last day of 2006 as a helicopter landing site in an Afghan camp served as a makeshift ground, with refreshments tent, scoreboard and a PA system.

Both teams kitted up in full whites provided by Gray-Nicholls & Newbery. Bats, balls, pads, wickets and gloves were also donated to enable the clash.

The Royals won the toss and stepped up to the crease with Major Spike Kelly RM doing the Dickie Bird bit as umpire.

Any hopes of re-establishing some pride in the British game vanished like ice cream in the Afghan sun as the first bowler fired some lightning-fast and

accurate balls at the opening batsmen.

It quickly became apparent that the Afghan talk of 'not playing much cricket' was a ruse; the wickets started to fall, each one being greeted with chanting and applause from the growing Afghan audience.

In the end, the UK team scored 56 all out in 14 overs, the highest scorer being Mne Ross Davies with 9 (!).

Somewhat daunted by the task in hand, the UK team took to the outfield.

Hope sprung eternal as the first few overs, bowled by Marine Phil Richards and Marine Mike Ball, showed that we had some pace in the attack as well.

However, the Afghans proved to be as adept with the bat as the ball, using the pace of the bowling and the quick pitch to their advantage. Their target was met within twelve overs and for the loss of only two wickets, leading to a resounding win for the Afghans.

"The skill level of the Afghans was brilliant," said Lt Rob Cooper.

"We soon realised that we were in trouble when they opened the bowling.

"Obviously we were disappointed to lose as badly as we did, but we still managed to enjoy the encounter. It certainly provided a good break from the operational work being done on a daily basis out here."

The game was played in excellent spirits throughout, with friendly banter over the PA system coming from both sides.

A spicy badminton tour

THERE was a sizeable RN presence in the Combined Services badminton tour of India, writes Surg Lt (D) Tom Pepper.

Delhi was the destination for the squad with tour manager Sgt Ian Sim doing such an admirable job of organising everything and myself as OIC - although I was rarely required in that capacity.

The 12-strong squad comprised one soldier, four RN players and seven from the RAF.

The opposition we faced was very tough - the Indian sides included many talented players, a large proportion of whom played badminton professionally.

It was soon apparent that we would have to raise our game if we were to score any successes.

The sports facilities in Delhi were generally very good, except for frequent power interruptions which lent a unique twist to the game.

Despite scheduling the tour for autumn, it was still very hot and humid.

The local players were clearly used to this, but it took our team quite a while to acclimatise... we went through a lot of bottled water.

Even so, the team achieved its gruelling schedule of six matches in ten days, winning three (versus Agra, St Stephen's College and



● Mahal rats... (Clockwise from top left) Sgt Ian Sim, LAET Laurence Seaman, Cpl Mel Shaw, SAC Neil Webb, OC Will Nichol, JT Pete Matthews, Surg Lt (D) Tom Pepper, Capt Alison McLean, Wtr Laura Hood, JT Jo Wright, SAC Amanda Pearson, Lt Jo Webber

Punjabi Select) and losing three (to Punjabi, New Era Republic School and Siri Ford).

The match at Agra was a stone's throw from the Taj Mahal; we could not pass up this opportunity and managed to squeeze a guided tour in just before the tie.

Indian driving was definitely something which took some getting used to - the lanes on the road didn't seem to have any

significance, and sometimes even the direction of traffic was ignored. Add to that cattle wandering across the street, 'tuk-tuks' (three-wheeled Indian taxis powered by lawnmower engines), and it's a small miracle that we all returned in one piece.

Overall, our standard of play increased noticeably, as did our knowledge of the Rajasthan region of India.

Royal recognition for mainstay Neal

EVERYONE connected with Navy football was delighted to see WO Neal Frame made an MBE in the New Year Honours.

Neal has made an invaluable contribution to RN and Combined Services football and to Field Gun running and has been an outstanding ambassador for sport at all levels.

On the pitch, he made 72 appearances for the RN and since taking over as coach has won the Inter-Services competition on three occasions.

In terms of Field Gun running, his credentials are equally impressive; he ran for Devonport 'A' crew three times and was Devonport's first trainer in 1994 and 1999, winning the competition at Earls Court on both occasions; his A crew set a world record time of 2m 40.43s which is unlikely ever to be beaten.

Meanwhile, this year's home Inter-Service match is on Wednesday March 14, kick off at 7.30pm.

The match is due to be played at Fratton Park but if this is not made available we will be playing at Havant & Waterlooville's ground, West Leigh Park, in Havant.

A decision on Fratton Park is expected by the beginning of February once the 4th Round FA Cup has been played and the 5th Round draw has been completed.

Entry to whichever venue will be free.

And finally... The RNFA dinner will be held on June 15 at the Queens Hotel in Southsea. The dinner is open to anyone who has been involved with RN football as an administrator, player, coach, or match official.

Details from our website, www.royalnavyfa.com or from the RNFA Office, HMS Temeraire, Burnaby Road, Portsmouth, PO1 2HB (tel 02392 72671).

NAVY FOOTBALL

Inside with Capt Paul Cunningham, RNFA



● Lt Cdr Alain Bernard (left) and RPO Andy Leddington on the ice for the REME Stallions

Stallions need sailors' help

TWO stalwarts of the resurgent world of RN ice hockey gave their Army colleagues a helping hand on the Canadian ice.

Lt Cdr Alain Bernard (FOST) and RPO Andy Leddington (formerly of the Defence Police College) were selected to play for the REME Stallions as the puck men competed at the John Muise Memorial Tournament in Ontario over two weeks at the tail end of 2006.

The Stallions picked up their third trophy in five years. First they topped their division in the league stage of the contest.

Second place in a round-robin in the next phase of the contest earned the soldier/sailors a place in the semi-final, where they routed Canadian Forces Base

(CFB) Petawawa 10-0.

The final was a much closer affair against CFB London-Halifax. Earlier in the contest the Canadians had squeezed past the Stallions 2-1, but in the decider it was the Brits who triumphed 5-3, a victory capped by a goal struck into the empty net in the dying seconds of the match.

Lt Cdr Bernard was selected for the final's MVP and was named REME's top defender of the tournament.

Meanwhile back in the UK... The RN side, the Destroyers, have resumed training in Swindon. They intend to go on a UK tour in May as a warm-up for the Inter-Services in early June.

Details from www.piczo.com/rnicehockey

Silver lining in League's cloud

Continued from back page
With the clock ticking down there was a brave effort up the hill with Buinamasi going over again but the Rangers held on to win by four points.

This victory kept the Rangers 100 per cent record intact but they were pushed all the way by the RN who for long periods of the game dominated, playing attractive and expansive rugby league.

Every cloud has a silver lining says the proverb and in this case the silver lining came in the form of Stanley Rangers substitute and hat-trick hero Mark Robinson who joined the RN to commence AET training last month.

Record row attempt is go

BY the time you read this, four Royal Marine reservists should be half way across the Atlantic in a bid to break a 15-year rowing record.

Green berets Dom Mee, Pete 'Birdy' Bird, Ed James and Tom Rendell left La Palma in the Canaries on January 14 with the aim of crossing the ocean in under 35 days and eight hours.

A French team set the benchmark back in 1992.

The goal for Dom, a serial explorer and adventurer, and his comrades was to row out into the Atlantic to catch the Trade Winds, which would then whisk them towards the Caribbean and the finish line in Barbados.

"The first few days after the initial adrenaline rush were gruelling," said Dom.

"Our bodies needed to get accustomed to the conditions, but after those first few days of hard graft things became a little easier."

The quarter row in two-hour bursts; one pair will rest while their colleagues strain at the oars.

Besides hopefully setting a new record, the rowers hope to raise thousands of pounds for children's charity Barnado's.

You can follow the team's progress at www.dommee.co.uk

Taff luck for ladies' side

THE last RN rugby union fixture of 2006, the sport's centenary year, saw the gods conspire to try to thwart the women's clash with a Welsh development side in Cardiff.

The gods lost, and a fine game of rugby ensued, with the RN ladies raising the game to a new level.

Paula Bennett-Smith led the team in her usual uncompromising manner, keeping the Welsh on the back foot from set pieces.

The RN came under pressure from the kick off but with some creative kicking from Lou Clarke covering the full back spot they kept the Welsh at bay.

Eventually the pressure told and a move wide to the right gave the Welsh a two-woman overlap which they turned into a converted score under the posts.

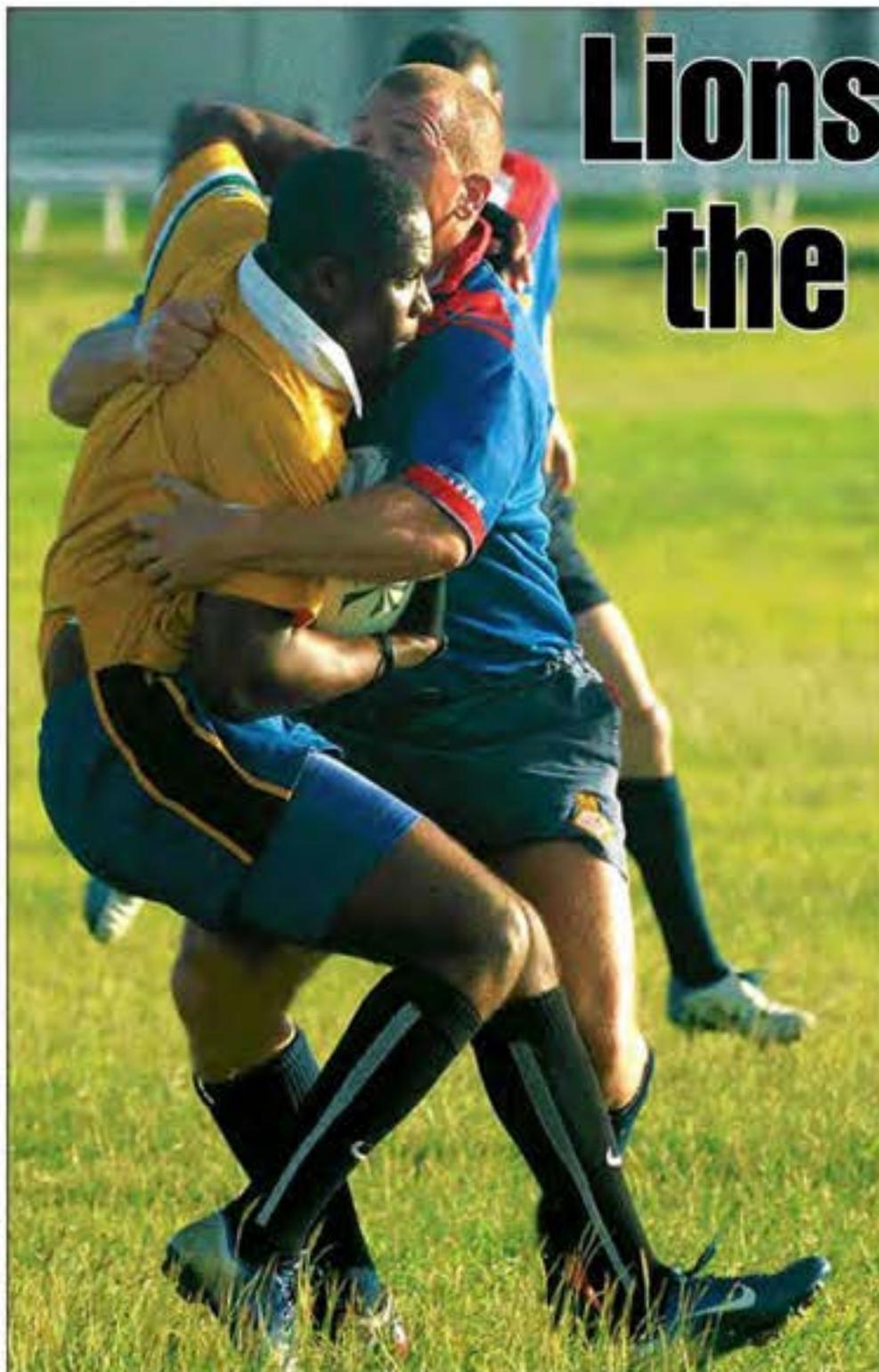
The RN came straight back with their usual passion and determination, but a penalty at the end of the half gave the Welsh a 10-0 lead.

Losing the skipper just after the break was a blow but with a bit of reorganising and the leadership of the team handed over to prop Vic Percival, the RN set about pressuring the Welsh team in all areas.

It was only a brief lack of focus that allowed the Welsh to score; the try was converted.

The RN struck back and after another attacking run by Whitby and a passing movement over wide, debutant Ayeshea Amihere scored in the corner.

It was the last score of the match; the Welsh ran out 17-5 winners.



● A Lancaster Lion (in blue) grapples with a Barbadian national player during the side's narrow defeat
Picture: LAPhoto/Luis Holden, FRPU Whale Island

Lions mauled in the Caribbean

HMS LANCASTER'S Lions opened their winter rugby tour with a bruising encounter in the Barbadian sun.

The Lions - still roaring after their successful tour on Agapanthe 2006 - went into their first match during the frigate's APT(N) deployment with high expectations, writes Lt Emma Garey, HMS Lancaster.

That was until walking into the club house in Barbados to discover that they were playing the national side.

And not just any national side, but one which had recently clashed with the USA and Canada whilst trying to qualify for this year's World Cup.

Nevertheless, Lion's captain LOM 'Max' Boyce confidently led his side on to the field.

The Barbadian team ran out wearing a strip donated to them by the Australian RFC as they had given the majority of their strip away during the World Cup qualifications.

The first quarter saw Lancaster dominate whilst keeping the Barbadian side in their own half although the Lions suffered a massive weight disadvantage to the home side in the scrum.

Well worked play by scrum half OM 'Chuck' Berry took the Lions just metres from putting points on the board more than once.

Berry, obviously benefiting from playing for the RN U23 side, drew praise from the opposition for his diligence and constant work ethic.

A handling mistake saw Barbados turn the ball over and score two tries in quick succession, however, giving them a 10-0 lead at the break.

A rousing team talk at half time by new cap Lt Cdr Mark Sheldon saw Lancaster take to the pitch for the second half a rejuvenated side.

LPT 'Stevie' Homer used superior strength to put their flanker into touch, allowing SA 'Ronnie' Barker to engineer a superbly thrown line out to PO 'Steve' Kirkland.

Quick hands fed this through to Sheldon, playing at No.8, who used his Combined Services experience to power over the line to put Lancaster on the score board.

Boyce, playing in the No.10 shirt for the first time, also inherited the kicking responsibility which traditionally goes with that position - but sent the ball wide of the posts.

The final score stood at 20-5 to the home side - a score which Lancaster could be proud of. The crowd of more than 200 cheered appreciatively as both teams left the field.

The Barbadian team picked OM 'Chuck' Berry as their man of the match, a title the Lions bestowed upon their captain, LOM Boyce.

The Lancaster side have now bade farewell to Lt Cdr Neil Marriott who has provided much-needed speed on the flanks for the last 12 months and also to Lt Emma Garey, who has been club secretary for the past 18 months; both are off to pastures new in the UK.

RAF Akrotiri will be hosting its 23rd floodlit International Rugby 10s from May 28-June 1 and is looking for RN participants.

The event is open to all RM/RN units/ships/establishments, as well as full representative sides.

Teams wishing to compete will be granted concessionary non-paying fares on flights and where possible accommodation will be offered on the airbase.

The closing date for applications is February 16.

Details from Flt Lt Richard Newton on 94120 6734 or via www.akrotirirugbyclub.org.uk/10s

We went to a land Down Under

THE RN volleyball squad took advantage of an invitation to the Australian Defence Volleyball Association's (ADVA) national tournament to compete with the best sides 'Down Under', plus a smattering of guest teams.

Men's and women's sides both made the lengthy trek to Townsville in North Queensland. The women's team faced a tough challenge from the start with many of the opposition teams fielding considerably taller players.

However, with their usual gritty style they produced some memorable play in beating Northern Territories twice but, more significantly, took sets off all the other teams - including the very impressive Queensland side which went on to win the tournament.

The men started with a fantastic 3-1 victory against Queensland (the competition's eventual runners-up) and followed this with 3-0 victories over Victoria, Northern Territories and Northern Queensland, giving them a place in the top four for the second half of the competition.

The final stage proved to be a lot tougher. The hugely-spirited RN side played some excellent volleyball but in all three final stage games were narrowly beaten to eventually finish fourth.

During the ADVA closing ceremony the RN's skill, fair play and sense of fun were widely appreciated by their antipodean colleagues.

CPOAET Nicky Wallace was awarded joint first place in the tournament's 'most valuable player



● A rare moment off court to enjoy some of Australia's sights for the volleyball squad

competition' and WO1 Calum Kerr came a respectable seventh place in the men's competition.

The competition helped not only to maintain a strong relationship with the ADVA but proved a most enjoyable way of improving the standard of volleyball in the RN.

Additionally all the new and younger RN players benefited immensely from the experience. Foreign travel is but one vehicle

which should seek to inspire the next generation of players.

More details on the sport from Lt Stuart Meikle, RNVA Secretary, on 02392 625440.

Women's results:
Round 1: New South Wales (0-2), Northern Territories (2-1), Northern Queensland (1-2), Queensland (0-3)
Round 2: Northern Territories (3-1), Northern Queensland (1-2), Queensland (1-2), New South Wales (1-2)

Final placings: 1 - Queensland, 2 - New South Wales, 3 - Northern Queensland, 4 - Royal Navy

Men's results:
Round 1: Queensland (3-1), Victoria (3-0), Australian Capital Territory (1-2), Northern Territories (3-0), New South Wales (0-3), Northern Queensland (3-0), X-Men (1-2)
Round 2: Queensland (1-2), X-Men (1-2) ACT (1-2)
Final placings: 1 - X-Men; 2 - Queensland; 3 - ACT; 4 - Royal Navy



Tellett like it is

ROYAL Marine Joe Tellett's prowess in the swimming pool earned the 21-year-old a nomination as sports personality of the year in Plymouth.

Aged 16 Joe (pictured above) gave up training for a fledgling competitive swimming career to join the Corps.

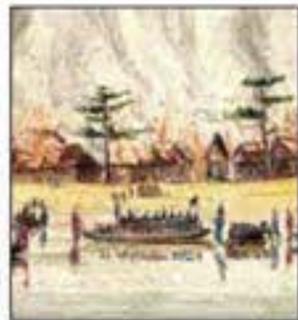
After a three-year break the Royal got back in the pool in 2005 - a wise move as he soon established himself as the fastest swimmer in the Armed Forces.

His career in the marines is on hold as he's now devoting his efforts solely to the pool, training with British national coach Jon Rudd at Plymouth Leander Swimming Club.

The dedication paid off; in 2006 Joe became a national finalist and GB Masters National Champion.

This year the green beret hopes to raise the bar even further, competing at an international level.

Weightlifter Michaela Breeze won the award in a competition run by the Plymouth Herald newspaper.



Deliver us from evil: the Navy's war on slavery - memorial supplement



Big day for Dauntless - Type 45 No.2 takes to the water



Battleship Earl Grey - tea party with a difference for Somerset

Plus

705 takes things to a higher plane

And

@*!% me! - Gordon Ramsay takes charge in Helmand's kitchen

● LA(Phot) Emma Somerfield hurtles down the track



The Igls have planned it

THE Navy's skeleton bobsleigh team begins the 2007 season with its strongest squad in years - ready to defend one title and hopefully wrestle another from Army hands.

Two top-notch coaches have joined the team to whip the skeleton racers into shape ahead of the Inter-Services which this year take place on the Olympic track at Igls in Austria this month, writes PO(D) Sid Lawrence, RN Skeleton Bob team manager.

Last season proved to be very successful in all areas of the team; there was continuing good experience on the ice being gained by all plus a bright future for individuals to compete at a national level.

The team comprises a manager, seven male athletes (three with experience of two seasons' racing) and five female racers (two with some experience of the sport).

The squad has been bolstered by the arrival of two first-class coaches: Rob Watson, who raced for the GB squad

between 1990 and 1997, and Minc Ant Sawyer RMR, a present member of the national team.

They shared their expertise of the sport - likened to racing on a tea tray at speeds upwards of 80 mph with your chin barely 3in from the ice - at an 'ice camp' in Calgary, Canada.

Twelve months ago, the RN fielded strong male and female teams in the Inter-Services at La Plagne in France.

The men's team held first place initially until strong performances by the Army (with two internationals in their team) and the RAF (with one international) squeezed the Senior Service into third place (though only by a fractional margin).

The three-strong ladies squad took the title - each racer clocking up personal bests in the process.

Both male and female teams worked extremely hard to achieve those results last year - some suffered quite bad injuries but were still determined to race on the final day.

The effort and professionalism shown by the team has now put the Royal Navy at the forefront for up and coming Skeleton riders who are going on to compete for places in the GB Team.

The commitment of each individual team member cannot be stressed enough, and the continued motivation and dedication of all members is to be commended.

The RN skeleton championships will take place during the Inter-Service training; last year MA Andy James took first place, the fastest single run

trophy and the Stopford Arms trophy for achieving the fastest speed of the day. The fastest lady overall was LA(Phot) Emma Somerfield although MA Michelle Taylor posted the fastest start time.

On the down side, the team does need a new sled (£1,300), four helmets (£200 each) and eight suits (£70 apiece) for the 2007 season.

Wayne's world is even better

THE driving force behind Rugby League added the MBE to his already long list of awards thanks to the Queen's New Year Honours list, writes RNRL spokesman WO Keith Humpleby.

The recognition for RNRL head coach WO(PTI) Wayne Okell (pictured below) of HMS Raleigh comes at the end of another fine season, the highlight of which was leading the GB Armed Forces Lions squad side on a victorious tour of Australia including a famous toppling of the Australian CS side at Aussie Stadium.

His RN team didn't begin 2007 quite as well, but there was no shame in being beaten by top Yorkshire side Stanley Rangers in the first round of the GMB Union Cup (RL's FA Cup).

The clash was the first match for the team since September and despite the lay-off the side prepared well at Imphal Barracks in York before travelling to Wakefield for the match.

The RN side struck first making full use of the wind and sloping pitch to go 12 points ahead with tries from James Barnes and Danny Johnson converted by Scott Partis.

The home side responded with a couple of tries of their own but a further converted try from RN skipper Steve Lockton gave the Brothers a six-point lead at half time.

The Rangers came out strongly for the second half realising they were in for a fight and struck early on with three tries to take the initiative at 26-18.

Centre Sela Buinamasi clawed the Navy back to within two points with a try converted by Partis but this was cancelled out by the third try for sub Mark Robinson to keep the home side six points ahead.

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● Skeleton staff... The RN male and female skeleton bobsleigh squads pose for the camera during the 2006 championships

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