

THE TASK MASTERS

**THE RN FORCES
SAFEGUARDING
THE GULF**

**COILED SPRINGS
MARINES GEAR UP
FOR HELMAND**

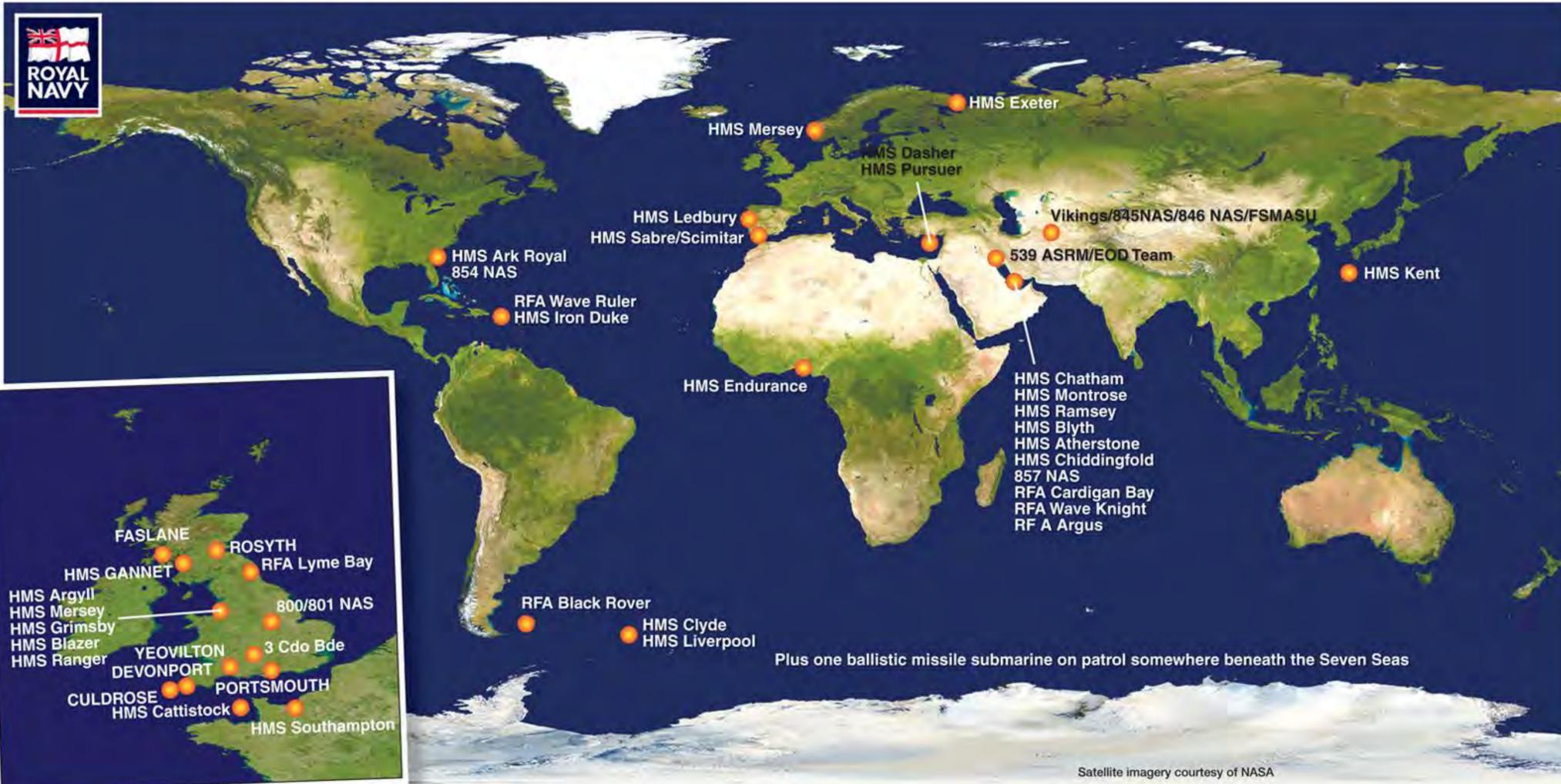
**STRAIT TALKING
LIFE ON THE ROCK**



A Pacific 24 sea boat from HMS Chatham races away from the Al Basrah Oil Terminal in the northern Gulf. The frigate's patrols form one strand of a concerted RN effort to bring security to the waters of the region. See pages 25-27 for details.

Picture: LA(Phot) Chris Winter, FRPU West





Fleet Focus

THERE'S a distinctly green 'tint' to our September edition... and it's only the appetiser for next six months.

Before September is out, **3 Commando Brigade** begin deploying to Afghanistan where they will relieve the Army and take over Britain's peacekeeping mission in Helmand.

The last act before heading east was a huge Mission Rehearsal Exercise, or MRX, in Wiltshire and Wales involving the entire brigade (see page 4) and its many eclectic parts, the most diverse of which is probably the **Commando Logistic Regiment** (see pages 14 and 15).

From MRX to JTFX... 3,000 miles away flagship **HMS Ark Royal** was home to an equally eclectic mix of formations, this time from the US Marine Corps, plus the Baggers of **854 NAS** for an amphibious Joint Task Force Exercise, or JTFX, off the Eastern Seaboard of the USA (see opposite).

A few hundred miles to the south, **HMS Iron Duke** bagged her second drugs bust in a month (admittedly minus the drugs, the suspects probably ditched the bales over the side). It took some sharpshooting from the marines to bring the go-fast boat they were using to a halt (see page 6).

Drug trafficking at sea is not purely a problem in the Americas; it is increasingly becoming an issue in the Gulf region. **HMS Montrose** scored the biggest bust of the year (and also the most demanding; see page 25).

Montrose is currently attached to the 'forgotten fleet' of **CTF 152** which safeguards the southern Gulf and is currently under RN control (see pages 25-27).

At the other end of the sea, **HMS Chatham** continues to protect Iraq's oil platforms with **CTF 158**. Both ships - and both task forces - fall within the vast realm of the **UK Maritime Component Command** in Bahrain (see pages 25-27).

Already in Afghanistan are the Sea Kings of **845** and **846 NAS**, providing aerial support for British forces (see pages 8 and 9).

Ice ship **HMS Endurance** is edging up the west coast of Africa for her summer 'tour', while her more typical domain is being ruled by HM Ships **Clyde** and **Liverpool**, which have both been in South Georgia (see page 10).

It's been the pleasure of a plethora of RN warships to chaperone the magnificent Tall Ships on their 2008 tour. **HMS Southampton** caught up with them in Rouen, then (deep breath) **Argyll**, **Blazer**, **Ranger**, **Grimsby** and **RFA Lyme Bay** in Liverpool (see page 18), and finally **HMS Mersey** sailed with the sailing ships from her namesake river to Norway (see right).

Not all Royal Marines are deploying to Helmand this autumn. Some are recently back (**40 Commando**, who were treated to a VIP tour of London; see page 24) and some have constant global commitments (**Fleet Protection Group RM**, who've been training in Belize; see page 13).

NATO duties are just beginning for **HMS Ledbury** which has joined an international minehunting force (see page 6)... while they've just ended after seven months for **HMS Somerset**, which finally returned to Devonport (see page 7). Also home after a lengthy deployment is destroyer **HMS Edinburgh**, which was greeted by cheering families and typical summer weather (wind, dark skies etc; see page 7).

HMS Kent sailed over the wreck of the previous **HMS Exeter** (recently discovered by an Australian team) in the Java Sea with some of her survivors aboard to pay her respects (see page 32).

Half a world away, today's **HMS Exeter** was remembering the sacrifices by the wartime generation first in Iceland, then in northern Russia (see page 16).

If that all sounds a bit chilly, then head to the Rock, mainstay of the RN for over three centuries. We take a look at life behind the scenes in Gib (see pages 20-21).

And finally, the clouds did part briefly for **Meet Your Navy...** although it was the men and women of the RN who really shone (laboured journalistic cliché No.663 - Ed), while **RFA Lyme Bay** was on best form across the North Sea in Den Helder (see pages 22-23).



● Return of the days of sail... a Tall Ship as seen through one of HMS Mersey's portholes

A Tall order to follow

WHILE a substantial naval force had the pleasure of chaperoning the majestic Tall Ships out of the Mersey, one vessel was charged with guiding them safely to Norway.

Fishery protection ship **HMS Mersey** was selected as the escort for the sailing ships... but only after a bit of nimble 'driving'.

The ship was ordered to bring up the rear as the sailing vessels departed Liverpool for the Parade of Sail - a simple manoeuvre on paper.

In reality, it meant racing at 20kts down a river ebbing at 4kts with sailing ships everywhere.

"It felt like driving down the wrong way of a dual carriageway at 70mph," said Lt Cdr Allan Wilson, Mersey's CO.

Head-on collisions avoided, Mersey safely followed the Tall Ships out of the estuary and made her way eventually to

Lough Foyle in Northern Ireland where this leg of the race would actually begin, ending some 850 nautical miles away off the coast off Måløy in Norway.

At 15-minute intervals, the ships slipped away from the bay, dropping their sails from their main masts to gather speed, leaving spectators with a sight they would never forget.

The next stop was the Minches. Expecting the usual strong winds and choppy seas, they didn't come for the sailors and many Tall Ships even found themselves going backwards due to the strong tidal streams in the area.

Mersey, on the other hand, was having a great time, basking in the sunshine and enjoying the flat calm seas. She even found time to conduct some perry buoy manoeuvres, allowing the two Tall Ship race officials on board to con a 2,100-ton warship.

Away from the Minches, winds picked up towards the Orkneys and Shetlands. This proved a communication problem as the stragglers, still in the Minches, were some 300 miles behind the race leaders and Mersey's race officials were struggling to pick up all of the positions on the radio.

The passage to Norway was not without incident. The *Jolie Brisse* suffered a flat battery, which limited the use of not only their navigation systems but also her electrics and navigation lights.

That meant a 25-mile trip for Mersey to another ship first to collect a charger, then 80 miles back the way she had come to reach the *Jolie Brisse*... except that sighting the vessel was proving tricky as the sailing ship unable to use her radio.

Luckily the Shetland Coastguard Helicopter stepped in, collected the charger from

Mersey and delivered it to its destination.

Next up was an exchange of sailors with *TS Royalist*. Unbeknown to Mersey, the sailing vessel's water plant had packed up, so the six women who came across to join the warship not only brought their dirty washing for Mersey to clean but had also brought their toiletries and towels for a well-earned shower.

Once cleaned up, they had the chance of driving the River class around at high speed, much to the annoyance of the rest of the ship's company who were trying to get their heads down during a Sunday routine.

The final hours passed without incident and Mersey handed over race duties, including the two officials, to a Norwegian Coastguard vessel before heading south to do what she does best: fishery patrol off the coast of Lowestoft.



● Wild Geese return... A CH 46E Sea Knight of HMM-774 prepares to set down on Ark after picking up US Marines from ashore

The force of July

LAST year it was Lusty.

This time around the honour of being the launchpad for US Marines fell to her sister HMS Ark Royal as she headed to the Eastern Seaboard for war games with the Americans.

And that means lots of Americanisms, acronyms and other idiosyncracies from across the Pond, so please bear with us...

One hundred and forty men of 3/9 India Coy, USMC, (that's India Company, III Battalion 9th Marine Regiment) called Ark - or R07 as the Americans quite often like to refer to her - their home in July for Joint Task Force Exercise (JTFX) 08, a major naval war game stretching from the shores of Virginia to Florida.

On top of the *Semper Fi* guys - fresh out of boot camp - the carrier was joined by two American helicopter squadrons (start of acronym-filled bit): CH-46 Sea Knights (mini, naval Chinooks) of the 'Wild Geese' - HMM-774 (that's Helicopter Medium Marine) Sqn - and two MH-60s (Blackhawks)

from HSC-26 (that's Helicopter Sea Combat) Sqn, better known as the Chargers. (End of acronym-filled bit.)

This is all getting a bit American. So you'll be pleased to know that there were 600-plus Brits aboard as Ark's ship's company, plus the men and women of 854 NAS and their airborne surveillance and control Sea Kings.

After embarking the Americans at Norfolk Naval Station - the world's largest naval base - Ark headed out to sea to join the rest of impressive JTFX force.

She linked up with the USS Iwo Jima expeditionary battle-group; like Ark, Iwo Jima is a springboard for launching men and material ashore, except that she's twice the size. For good measure, the group had two more assault ships, the new USS San Antonio and the older USS Carter Hall, plus an escort of cruisers, destroyers and one hunter-killer submarine to protect them.

And then the 'fun' began.

Having practised a full-scale helicopter assault - including the tricky task of finding a lone serviceman left behind - Ark then carried one out, putting the entire USMC company ashore.

There can be a lull after that initial assault. So to keep the carrier's crew on their toes, they had to deal with a substantial number of 'prisoners' brought from the mainland... and a substantial number of 'casualties'. The odd fire and flood was thrown in for good measure.

And while the sailors worked their socks off below decks, the aircraft handlers and Flyco worked their socks off on the flight deck: during the US forces' stay on board, helicopters took off or landed 540 times in just a week.

"The exercise provided a very realistic training environment for both Ark Royal and Coalition forces - one which closely replicates the operational challenges routinely encountered around the world," said Ark's CO Capt Mike Mansergh.

India Coy's CO, Lt Col Dan Greenwood, was

delighted with his time alongside the Brits.

"The knowledge that the ship's staff possess and the professionalism of each and every member of the ship's company have ensured that all our training was first-rate.

"Working with the Royal Navy on the Fleet flagship has been a success in every area."

If conducting a major multinational exercise was not quite enough for the Ark team to deal with, 40 staff from the Fleet Operational Assurance Visit flew on board to check that the carrier's team were capable of taking the ship into harm's way if necessary. They left thoroughly satisfied.

And although Capt Mansergh took Ark across the Pond, he didn't bring her back to Portsmouth; he handed over command of the ship after two years to Capt John Clink.

Now back from summer leave, his ship's company are gearing up to lead Joint Warrior exercises (previously known as JMC and Neptune Warrior) off the Scottish coast next month.



● A naval airman guides a Sea Knight on to Ark's flight deck and (left) a 'Bagger' Sea King of 854 NAS warms up with a Black Hawk and Sea Knight behind it




GLOBAL REACH

They do run, run, run... and row

LONG before the first rays of light banished the Mediterranean darkness, half the sailors and Royal Marines of HMS Bulwark were lined up on the jetty in Gibraltar.

There was a surprisingly high take-up rate for the traditional 'top of the Rock race', 2½ miles horizontally and 1,250ft vertically to the summit of the imposing peak which gives Gibraltar its nickname.

Twenty-one minutes and forty-six seconds later and Sgt Craig Moodie of 4 Assault Squadron Royal Marines, Albion's inherent commando unit, was first to the top (four minutes slower than the record time).

In all, 180 runners set off... and made it to the summit, including 48 Rock virgins, officer cadets on initial sea training with the assault ship.

They could have picked up tips from the ultimate Rock race expert: Bulwark's Executive Officer Lt Cdr Gareth Parry.

He first ran in 1978 as an AB in HMS Apollo... and has a certificate for completing the run at every rank up to his current one.

Although he did vow 'never again' after his 30th anniversary run, Bulwark is returning to Gib next year...

He is surrounded by a fairly athletic bunch on Bulwark. On the way to Gib from the Baltic, where she'd been exercising with Russian marines, the ship passed through the Kiel Canal.

And that provided an excuse for another race: could the ship's company row the length of the famous man-made waterway (61 miles to be precise) faster than Bulwark could cover the distance?

The answer was a resounding 'yes'. Rowing in relays with Commanding Officer Capt Jeremy Blunden covering the final 1,000 metres, the sailors and marines achieved their target with the ship herself a good 16 miles from the canal's exit into the North Sea.

Southampton goes home

THE men and women of HMS Southampton marched through the centre of their namesake city as they exercised the right to its freedom.

The Portsmouth-based destroyer made the short hop along the Solent to meet the people who built her (Southampton was born at the Vosper Thornycroft yard in Woolston, now moved to Pompey) and supported her since she was laid down on Trafalgar Day 1976.

Despite the short distance between her home port and affiliated city, it's been 18 months since the ship was last in Southampton Water.

Front-line duty in the South Atlantic kept her busy for most of 2007 while maintenance and exercises in the UK have devoured a great deal of her time in 2008.

Her sailors marched around the heart of Southampton, bayonets fixed, Colours flying, bands playing – as the Freedom charter permits them – beginning and ending at the Civic Centre.

"Freedom means more to me and my ship's company than the right to march through the streets," CO Cdr Richard Morris told the city's great and good from the steps of the civic offices.

"It is recognition of the long association between the people of the city, her schools, charities, cadet forces, business community and local government, and the men and women of my ship who share the proud and illustrious name of Southampton."

■ HMS Southampton in Rouen, page 18

● (RM) Band of Brothers... A Royal Marines musician takes a breather during the Mission Rehearsal Exercise

Picture: LA(Phot) Pete Smith, FRPU East



'Universally ready...'

"ARE we stood down yet, boss?" a weary Royal Marine asks from the turret of his Viking, cooking in the blazing Wiltshire sun.

"No, you're still on show." The last act of a two-week battle exercise for the men and women of 3 Commando Brigade about to head to Helmand was perhaps the most daunting: performing, for want of a better word, for the media.

Yet away from the flashes and bangs, the men of Kilo Company 42 Commando barreling out of the back of Sea Kings and Chinooks, the Vikings and columns of trucks and tankers kicking up dust, the Apache gunships blowing things up, never have the Royal Marines been better prepared for a tour of duty in Afghanistan.

This month the green berets begin taking over responsibility for Helmand, keeping the Taliban and insurgents in check and allowing normal life in Afghanistan to flourish.

To prepare for that demanding mission the brigade has undergone five months of training, culminating in two weeks on Salisbury Plain and a 'Mission Rehearsal Exercise', or MRX.

Nearly 6,000 military personnel were involved in the war games which were scattered not only across the entire Army exercise area on the plain – roughly 25 miles end-to-end – but also extended to Sennybridge ranges in the Brecon Beacons; 45 Commando were sent there as the terrain better replicates that which they will encounter in Helmand than the rolling Wiltshire countryside.

Each force heading to Afghanistan has held a final battle exercise before deploying – we're now on the ninth roulement of British troops in Helmand – but, said Col Buster Howes, 3 Cdo Bde's CO, never had it been so "complex and sophisticated".

More than 200 vehicles, Chinook, Sea King and Apache helicopters and Tornado and Harrier jets were committed to the MRX.

Although 3 Cdo Bde were in charge of the exercise – and will head the six-month deployment to Helmand – Royal Marines are

actually outnumbered by sailors, soldiers and airmen in one of the most diverse forces ever assembled by Britain for such a task.

At the peak of the deployment, there will be around 3,000 RN personnel in theatre – Royal Marines, Fleet Air Arm fliers and ground crews from the Naval Strike Wing and Commando Helicopter Force, musicians from the Royal Marines Band, a large number of marine engineers, logisticians, medics, even submariners (acting as drivers).

In all, there 68 different military organisations including 11 major formations coming under 3 Commando Brigade's wing.

Commander-in-Chief Fleet Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope admitted that the large input of non-Royal Marine Commandos to the Herrick deployment was "clearly an indication of how taut the Forces are."

But he continued: "We should be on the front foot, supporting where we can."

"Our contribution in relation to our size is significant – the Royal Navy is playing its part. It's the biggest maritime contribution to land operations in recent years."

The last time the brigade deployed to Helmand over the winter of 2006-07, the green berets took the fight to the enemy.

"When we met the Taliban they were defeated in every single tactical engagement. Now they are aping the tactics used in Iraq," Brig Howes said.

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) – bombs and booby traps – are the gravest concern of troops and commanders, but Brig Howes said his men understood, and accepted, the risk. He continued:

"Is Afghanistan dangerous? Undoubtedly. Are the lads deterred? Not at all. The troops are universally ready – they're coiled springs."

"It's in the nature of young men to consider themselves immortal. They have an adventurous spirit. They would not want to do a 9-5 job – and it would be a nightmare for you if they were doing one."

The emphasis during the this deployment is

very much on rebuilding Helmand, restoring the economy, providing better education, better hospital care to Afghans.

As proof, the demonstration laid on for the media was not of Royals "kicking doors in, daggers in mouths" as one commando put it, but of sitting down and having a cup of tea.

The shura – Arabic for discussion – is a chat between village elders and patrolling Royal Marines and their interpreters and Afghan guides and advisers.

The sides meet on neutral ground outside a village (or in this instance a huge farm shed), drink tea, establish a degree of trust, and then move into the village to continue the discussion.

And then wumm! Black smoke billows across the shed as the Taliban strike. The elders scatter. The Royals turn around and raise their rifles, fanning out around the village, calling in an air strike from Army Air Corps Apache gunships. *Wumm! Wumm! Wumm!*

And then it's time for tea again. It is, of course, a demonstration and rather theatrical at that, but it gives a rough idea of what the brigade will face in Helmand – and some of the firepower they can call upon.

Whitehall has come under fire from the media and from MPs for not providing front-line troops with all the kit they need, chiefly helicopters and armour.

Brig Howes said whilst more equipment would always be welcome, it would not be a panacea for grappling with all the issues and problems in Afghanistan: tackling the Taliban and nurturing economic and social life.

"If you're sitting behind steel, then you will never meet the people," he said.

"Casualties are tough, but they are a price worth paying. Look at the hospitals being built, look at the children surviving their early years."

The personnel deploying are now returning from pre-deployment leave before heading to the sharp end.

"We will fly across the heart of Asia and the great adventure begins," said Brig Howes.

■ Commando Logistic Regiment, page 14

Capital gains Shoreham

HMS Shoreham's tour of Britain took her to the greatest city of them all (*Sheffield? – Ed*) when she navigated the Thames to spend four days in London.

President Quay, next to Tower Bridge, was home to the Sandown-class ship which provided the backdrop for a reception for MPs with the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme, plus First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Jonathon Band and his Army counterpart General Sir Richard Dannatt.

Shoreham's sailors were to have performed a ceremonial sunset to bring the curtain down on the event... but the British summer put pay to that.

Still, it didn't rain for the duration of Shoreham's time in London. Her crew were given free tours of the Tower, while the sailors themselves showed off their ship to RN Reservists from HMS President, local school children and the general public.

The ship is now back home in Faslane where she awaits a new ship's company.

Shoreham's sailors are swapping places with the crew of HMS Ramsey in Bahrain in the final changeover of Sandown ship's companies supporting the Aintree deployment (see page 11 for more details).

Cornwall see Sea Sunday

FALMOUTH was graced with the presence of Cornwall's own warship for three days.

Frigate HMS Cornwall headed up the Fal in the middle of her Operational Sea Training to take part in the town's annual Sea Sunday celebrations.

Sixty members of the Type 22's ship's company joined sailors from University boats Charger, Biter and Express and personnel from RNAS Culdrose on a march through Falmouth.

As for the frigate herself, she was under the scrutiny of Flag Officer Sea Training staff throughout her visit.

The FOSTies don't just assess a ship's ability to deal with fire, flood and war, but also the ability to organise public events, even down to hosting VIPs.

Cornwall also played host to troops from 43 Wessex Brigade as well as RN disaster and emergency specialists to explain to local leaders how the Armed Forces could assist the region in a time of crisis.

Busy birthday

AVIATION training ship RFA Argus has marked her 20th birthday under the Blue Ensign 3,000 miles from home.

The former container ship finds herself east of Suez on her anniversary deployment, supporting the efforts of CTF 150 and 152 in the southern Gulf and Indian Ocean and serving as a home to the surveillance Sea King helicopters of 857 NAS – which played a key role in recent drug busts.

Not content with that, the large auxiliary (28,000 tonnes) has provided fuel and supplies for passing Allied warships, including HMS Edinburgh and Germany's FGS Emden.

New radar

RADAR capable of detecting a snooker ball flying through the air up to 12 miles away will be fitted to almost twenty warships.

Artisan 3D will replace the existing medium-range radar used on the Type 23 frigate fleet, as well as HM Ships Ocean, Bulwark and Albion.

It will also be installed on the future aircraft carriers Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales in a £100m deal with BAE System's Insite arm based in Cowes on the Isle of Wight.

The cost also includes the first decade of support and maintenance for the new kit from BAE.

Heroism of the highest order

THE selfless bravery of Royal Marine Matthew Croucher earned him Britain's highest honour after he threw himself on a grenade to save his comrades.

The 24-year-old lance corporal triggered a booby trap during a nighttime patrol with 40 Commando near Sangin, in Helmand province, in February.

The green beret heard the distinctive click of a grenade pin and immediately saw the booby trap through his night vision goggles.

The reservist had just seven seconds to decide his course of action – and determine the fate of three fellow commandos on patrol with him.

They were alerted by the yell "Grenade. Take cover!" and turned to see their fellow Royal rolling on the ground, using the kit in his backpack and his body armour to take the force of the blast.

Matthew (pictured with his shredded backpack by PO(Phot) Terry Seward of DPR(N) Whitehall) was thrown into the air by the resulting explosion – "the loudest bang I've ever heard" – and fully expected to lose a limb. "It felt like someone had run up to me and kicked me in the back really hard," he recalled.

When he came around 30 seconds later he found his injuries were no worse than a nosebleed and headache. His comrades suffered minor cuts and bruises. His body armour and helmet were peppered with grenade fragments.

"I'd been through this scenario in my mind and realised there was nowhere to take cover and no point running," he said.

"I thought: 'I've set the bloody thing off and I'm going to do whatever it takes to protect the others.' It was a case of having four of us as fatalities or badly wounded, or just one."

Although dazed, the Royal decided to remain at the side of his comrades. Within an hour he was in action as Taleban insurgents attempted to approach the marines' position.

His bravery that fateful day – called "a bit crazy" by his captain in the heat of the moment – received widespread media coverage with Fleet Street tipping the Royal for the VC.

The decoration turned out to be the George Cross, which, as gallantry awards go, is as coveted as the Victoria Cross; the only distinction between the two is that the VC can only be earned in the face of the enemy.

It was, in the words of his citation, "a most deliberate act of self-sacrifice to save his comrades from death or serious injury, wholly typical of the man."

"His magnificent displays of selflessness and gallantry are truly humbling and are the embodiment of the finest traditions of the service."

Matthew is the first Royal Marine to be awarded the George Cross and joins an elite group of 21 living recipients of the medal. As with all GC and VC winners, he also receives an annual payment from the Crown – currently set at £1,495.

In true RM style, the lance corporal is typically stoical about his actions that day. He sent a suitably low-key text message to his mum: *Being put forward for a citation, might meet the Queen...* which he now will do this autumn to receive his medal.

"Being told it was on a par with the Victoria Cross was quite a shock," Matthew said. "It's a great honour but at the same time there are a lot of other heroic acts which go on in Afghanistan which go unnoticed."

He keeps his backpack, shredded by the blast, as a constant reminder of the day he "beat the grim reaper".

Matthew's George Cross was announced alongside a raft of operational honours and decorations – with the emphasis very much on the deeds of 40 Commando and their tour of duty in Helmand.

There were Mentions in Dispatches for Maj

Duncan Manning who, intriguingly, developed "novel and extraordinary techniques" to undermine insurgent troops – and safeguard his own men.

WO2 David Layton drove four times "into the killing zone" on a quad bike to pull wounded comrades to safety.

And Mne Gary Ogden provided vital medical aid to nine casualties in a single action. His combination of bravery and medical expertise "undoubtedly saved lives".

Maj Dan Cheesman, who commanded Bravo Company, was a "warrior and diplomat in equal measure, defeating the Taleban time and again on the battlefield, whilst creating the conditions for lasting development." He is made an MBE.

His Commanding Officer, Lt Col Stuart Birrell, receives the Distinguished Service Order for "leadership, commitment and selfless service of the very highest order".

Mne Mkhusele 'Cousie' Jones proved himself to be "a fearless and resolute leader" who took the fight to the enemy and ensured his fellow green berets were safely pulled out of extreme danger on numerous occasions. He receives the Military Cross.

The men of Alpha Company at Forward Operating Base Inkerman "never failed to prevail in battle and their morale never faltered", thanks not least to their CO's "magnificent leadership". That earns Maj Adrian Morley the Military Cross.

The same award goes to Mne Richard Withers, commander of a Viking Section, who regularly put himself in the line of fire to support his comrades.

Bravery is, of course, not confined to the unforgiving Afghan terrain. The skies above it saw deeds above and beyond the call of duty.

Two naval aviators earned Mentions in Dispatches: Harrier pilot Lt Cdr Toby Everitt frequently showed "no regard for his own safety" in supporting Canadian ground forces; he single-handedly wiped out an enemy bomb-making command team.

His Naval Strike Wing comrade Lt Nathan Gray similarly displayed "superior skill and ice-calm leadership under the most testing of airborne conditions."

Lt Nichol Benzie, on exchange with the RAF, earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for braving ferocious Taleban fire and flying his Chinook into a 'hot zone' to rescue a critically-injured Royal Marine; he repeated his courageous act the next day, rescuing more casualties under enemy fire – this time compounded by a swirling dust storm.

Away from Afghanistan, perhaps one deed stands out especially: the efforts by four divers to save the lives of oil rig support workers when their tug overturned in the Shetlands.

Five of the 15 crew of the Bourbon Dolphin were reported missing when she overturned in April last year.

A team from the Northern Diving Group was immediately flown out to assist the rescue operation, led by WO1 Stephen Strange.

The four-strong team entered the upturned hull of the tug in conditions at the very limit of safe diving and conducted a thorough search for the missing crew – sadly in vain – "fully aware of their personal peril", with the threat of the Bourbon Dolphin sinking at any moment.

Diver John Anderson and LD Stephane Farrell earned the Queen's Commendation for Bravery, their supervisor CPO William Sharp receives a C-in-C's Commendation, and WO1 Strange whose persistence and bravery were especially noteworthy receives the Queen's Gallantry Medal.

Other RN and RM personnel honoured include Capt David Dutton – personal advisor to the head of the Iraqi Navy – for helping to ensure that the Royal Navy is the "partner of choice" in nurturing Iraq's sailors and marines. He is made an OBE.

■ See page 36 for a full list of operational honours



THE ROYAL NAVAL BENEVOLENT TRUST SUPPORTING THE RNBT FAMILY



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Konnichiwa Kent



BLUE skies, azure waters. Yep, it's not Blighty. This is HMS Kent in the US Naval Base on Okinawa in Japan, where the Type 23 frigate called in for two days to take on fuel, water, food and other essential stores.

The visit also allowed the ship's company to enjoy diving, golf, swimming or simply going to one of the beautiful beaches which characterise Okinawa.

The trip to Japan, of course, is not so Kent's sailors can indulge in their sporting passions and sunbathing but so she can take part in major international war games.

■ Paying tribute to Exeter, page 32

Picture: LA(Phot) Owen King, FRPU East



Ledbury reels in a trophy

JUST when you thought you'd escaped fish... you're reminded of them all over again.

All our Hunt-class minehunters are now doing what they should be (the clue's in the title...).

But for years they have been the mainstay of Britain's fishery protection work, alongside dedicated fishery protection ships.

The latter, in the form of the River-class, are now bearing the brunt of the burden.

The Rivers fight for the honour of lifting the Jersey Cup, but the Hunts have had their own silverware to aim for 'doing fish': the Soberton Trophy.

That is now in the hands of HMS Ledbury, a final reminder (now the smell of fish has at last gone) of their days on patrol around the fishing grounds.

The last award of the trophy came in recognition for a demanding 2006-07 which saw Ledbury's boarding team inspect more than 300 trawlers, pass on details of 30 vessels to the authorities, and detain six vessels. In all, fishermen coughed up more than £60,000 in fines for illegal activities.

"It is always gratifying to have your achievements recognised, and the Soberton Trophy is a great acknowledgement of a hard, but nevertheless rewarding, year of fishery protection patrols for the ship's company," said Ledbury's CO Lt Cdr Paul Russell. "We are very flattered to receive this award."

Right, that's quite enough of fish.

Ledbury is now attached to NATO's Standing Mine Countermeasures Group 1 which mustered in home waters (Devonport) after a summer break.

The group, led by HMS Roebuck, is one of two minehunting forces under NATO's direction, patrolling the Mediterranean, Baltic, North Sea, and Atlantic.

Currently attached to the SNMCMG1 are: BNS Lobelia (Belgium), HNLMS Urk (Holland), ENS Admiral Cowan (Estonia) and FGS Homburg (Germany).

Its four-month deployment will take it to the eastern Atlantic (Portugal) then into the Med with visits to Palma and La Spezia lined up *inter alia*.

Sark has 'em

IT IS, apparently, a quarter of a century since a Royal Navy warship last called upon the tiny community of Sark in the Channel Islands.

Minehunter HMS Cattistock became the first Senior Service visitor of the 21st Century when she dropped in for some challenging navigational training.

Although the isle is barely three miles long, there are apparently 40 miles of rugged coastline on Sark, enough to test even the hardest of bridge teams.

Meanwhile, islanders offered a stern test for Cattistock's footballers when the sailors came ashore.

The minehunter men had to settle for a hard-fought second place (ie they lost), but sport aside the visit to Sark (pop. c600) was remarkably relaxing.

"Sark has no cars and relies on tractors and horse-drawn carriages to bus visitors around," explained Cattistock's CO Lt Cdr David Morgan.

"The tranquil pace of life was a far cry from the likes of Bahrain and Dubai where my ship's company spent the first six months of the year."

Cattistock's sailors have recently resumed ownership of their ship – they were in charge of HMS Atherstone in the Gulf, helping to erase mine danger areas from charts of the region.

"After a particularly busy deployment, it was excellent to be able to come back to the UK and have such a fantastic welcome from a truly amazing island community," Lt Cdr Morgan added.

"I think we must have met well over half the island's population."



'No better symbol'

THE highest honour a force can receive has been bestowed upon the mainstay of the Fleet for the first time.

One in four men and women in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary mustered aboard RFA Largs Bay in Portsmouth Naval Base as their force received the Queen's Colour – a specially-adorned RFA ensign which acknowledges the Service's deeds and sacrifices over the past 103 years.

The RFA provides the sustenance which ensures the warships of the Royal Navy can operate in the four corners of the globe, offering fuel, ammunition, spares, food and other supplies whenever and wherever the Fleet requires it.

But increasingly in recent years the RFA has been thrust into the front line; its ships are now being used as the base for anti-drugs operations by the UK in the Caribbean and security operations in the northern Gulf.

And the men and material ferried by the RFA's ships were vital in the Falklands conflict and in both Gulf wars.

The Earl of Wessex represented the Queen at the Colour ceremony, telling those gathered the flag – the Service's ensign with a crown and royal cypher embroidered – represented "a token of Her Majesty's admiration and trust in each and every one of you and the Fleet in which you serve."

In a letter to the RFA, the Queen acknowledged that the wider public probably knew little of the Service's existence or its deeds – but that in its 103-year history, the auxiliary fleet had made "a very great contribution to the nation".

She continued: "There can be no better symbol of your many achievements and proud history than these Colours. As well as giving focus to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's identity, loyalty and pride, they also manifest the deep respect in which you and your vital work are held by the nation."

This is the first time that the Colour has been presented to a largely non-combatant naval service and its ranking officer, Cdre Bob Thornton, said the recognition for his men and women, their families, and sailors of the RFA past, was just reward for "unstinting efforts over the past 103 years whether in peace or war."

He added: "There can be no better symbol of our proud history, of our achievements, of our future, or of our people, than that of a Queen's Colour."

"I am privileged to be at the head of the Service and immensely proud to have been part of it."

Picture: LA(Phot) Caroline Davies, FRPU East

Shooting stars halt drug-runners

ROYAL Marine snipers shot out a speedboat's engine as suspected drug smugglers tried to escape from the boat, but traces of cocaine were found on two of its three crew. It's thought they ditched their cargo overboard during their attempt to escape from the helicopter.

Iron Duke had been on patrol off the coasts of Venezuela and Colombia when she received a tip-off that a 'go-fast' was on the move, and scrambled her Lynx.

After a 15-minute search, the helicopter found the speedboat, partially camouflaged by tarpaulin. After repeated efforts to make it stop, the marines

opened fire as a last resort. "This first 30-day patrol of our Caribbean deployment has been an enormous success. My ship's company are elated at again disrupting the activities of suspected drug-runners," said Commanding Officer Cdr Mark Newland.

"The skill and professionalism of my helicopter crew, and in particular the young Royal Marines who fired the rounds to stop the 'go-fast' is an indication of the talents that lie within the Naval Service."

The three speedboat crew have been handed over to Colombian authorities.

His frigate has been home to Prince William – aka S/Lt

William Wales – who spent two months on attachment to the RN. The Royal was in the back of the Lynx during the drugs chase as an observer.

During the first month or so of her Caribbean deployment, Iron Duke has also stopped a vessel smuggling fuel, assisted a fishing boat in danger of sinking and has tracked four tropical storms or hurricanes, as well as carried out a disaster relief exercise with local authorities on the island of Montserrat

● The 'go-fast' burns after Iron Duke's gunners receive permission to sink it

Picture: LA(Phot) Jay Allen, FRPU East

A Forth for good

TWO front-line ships have left the Forth behind after multi-million pound upgrades.

HMS St Albans spent 15 months in Rosyth in the hands of Babcock, who in turn spent £15m upgrading the youngest of Britain's Type 23 frigate fleet.

Improvements to 'The Saint' include Sonar 2087, the world's best submarine-hunting kit, improved communications equipment, tweaks to the hangar and flight deck to allow the ship to operate Merlin helicopters, a new 30mm gun, and a 'go faster stripe' – a transom flap on the stern which can add up to one knot to the speed and cut fuel usage.

Given the increasing usage of Type 23s in the Gulf, St Albans' air conditioning system has received a thorough overhaul.

The ship conducted several weeks of trials around the UK before returning to Portsmouth to be handed back to the Fleet.

Mine countermeasures vessel HMS Penzance hasn't been out of action quite as long as St Albans.

She sailed to Rosyth at the turn of the year for a £2m 'combined engineering support' period which has made her the tip-top Sandown-class warship, courtesy of improved warfare systems as well as a general sprucing up of her machinery.

While the ship received a revamp, her ship's company have been on a raft of courses, taken several GCSEs, and even headed to southern Germany for the RN's adventurous training programme, Bavarian Surprise.

This month will find her paying a visit to her namesake Cornish town before trials and training resume.

CO Lt Cdr Bob Bruford said his ship had come out of the first spell of tests before summer leave "with flying colours".

His sailors will spend the next five months gearing up for a front-line tour of duty in the Gulf as part of the rotation of Sandown crews in Bahrain under Operation Aintree.

Wet Sausage

THE long road from refit for the Mighty Sausage is finally over with HMS Cumberland re-dedicated in Devonport after 18 months away from the front line.

Brightly coloured awnings were erected on the flight deck – not to keep the sun at bay (as designed) but the rain.

It was bucketing down and blowing a hoolie (*technical terms – Ed*) as more than a dozen former Commanding Officers, families, dignitaries and affiliates from Cumbria gathered for the formal service in Cumberland's hangar and on her flight deck.

One of those former captains, Rear Admiral David Cooke – now Commander Operations to CINC Fleet – inspected the ceremonial guard as the service began.

Of her 18 months away from active service, Cumberland spent 12 in the hands of Devonport's shipwrights, electricians and technicians.

£20m was spent improving pretty much every aspect of the Type 22 frigate – living spaces, machinery, weaponry, main engines.

That work ended at the turn of the year and since then the ship has been conducting extensive trials, followed by two months with the demanding team from the Flag Officer Sea Training – which, you will be pleased to hear, she passed.

"We are rightly very proud of our ship and what we have achieved," said CO Cdr Peter Sparkes.

"Previous commanding officers will no doubt be delighted to see the ship is in such good order. HMS Cumberland is now ready in all respects."

The frigate deploys this autumn for exercises in the Gulf.





Beavers, fish and hamsters

WHILE much of the Fleet enjoyed summer leave, there was little break for the men and women of the Fishery Protection Squadron, epitomised by HMS Tyne.

Save for crew changes every fortnight or so, the River-class patrol ship has been at sea constantly since June – and will remain there until Christmas.

We could tell you that it's been business as usual for the Portsmouth-based warship.

But we'd be lying – new marine conservation regulations mean there's an additional burden to bear for the entire fishery squadron.

"As well as following our normal boarding procedure, we'll now be watching out for protected species such as black bellied hamsters or Eurasian beavers, although more likely to be protecting seals, sturgeons and a little-known fish called a twaite shad which has a pleasant smell of cucumber," explained Tyne's XO Lt Joanna Black.

In another change to traditional fishery protection work, Tyne has taken part in two operations with European patrol vessels.

Sailing with French and Dutch fisheries inspectors embarked, Tyne operated in the southern North Sea checking that special cod recovery measures were being adhered to.

All of this is demanding enough, but Tyne has also had Basic Operational Sea Training to contend with. The ship was the first River class to undergo the new lengthened training package in which every watch combination is fully tested in a full range of possible tasks.

And after being put under pressure, it was time to apply it, chasing down potential submarine commanders undergoing the Perisher course.

Despite such a hectic programme, it hasn't been all work. Tyne made the most of an opportunity to visit London to strengthen links with her affiliated Livery Company, the Worshipful Company of Butchers.

The entire ship's company were treated to a fine luncheon at the Butcher's Hall and enjoyed behind the scenes tours of Smithfield Market, working alongside the butchers long before most Londoners were awake.

A thoroughly successful period of patrols was capped by the award of the Jersey Cup, presented annually for the ship which has made the outstanding contribution to fishery protection.

As the award was announced, Tyne was in action mediating between quarrelling French and British fishing vessels following a dispute over the destruction of gear off the South-west Coast and, in separate incidents, her first aid team of PO Ollie Donovan and Logs Rachael Hine provided medical assistance to two injured fishermen in the infamous 'trouser leg' – the narrow stretch of the British Economic Exclusion Zone which extends 200 miles off Land's End.

The ship also co-ordinated a Search and Rescue operation to find a missing fisherman from the FV Tourmalet; it was called-off after 24 hours in which the lifebuoy was found but not the missing crewman.

There was a another brief break from 'doing fish' when the ship sailed up her namesake river into the heart of Newcastle. One of the highlights was a visit by children with special needs from Hadrian's School, Tyne's affiliated school.

(Storm) force for good



NOT a January storm lashing the shores of Old Portsmouth, but a rather fearsome first day of August 2008.

Actually it did brighten up later on, thanks no doubt in part to the warm welcome for the men and women of HMS Edinburgh, home after six months away.

The destroyer sailed as an escort for HMS Illustrious in the Orion 08 task force initially, but broke away from the carrier in the Indian Ocean and continued eastwards.

She visited Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and Pakistan on the Far Eastern

segment of her deployment, which saw her take part in major exercises in the South China Sea with Commonwealth navies.

The Type 42 also spent some time off Burma with an international task group prepared to offer aid to the Burmese in the wake of Cyclone Nargis; the call for help never came, however.

Just for good measure Edinburgh popped into the Gulf on the way home to conduct security patrols and found three and a half tonnes of drugs stashed aboard a dhow in the

Indian Ocean – one of several successful busts by RN vessels along the 'Hashish Highway' this year.

"My ship's company should be justifiably proud of all that they have achieved," said Edinburgh's Commanding Officer Cdr Gavin Young.

"We've taken part in a number of operations and exercises – all very successfully – and this has further reinforced the Royal Navy's excellent reputation around the world."

Picture: LA(Phot) 'Simmo' Simpson, FRPU East

Royal killed by 'friendly fire'

A ROYAL Marine who died in an assault on a Taleban stronghold was probably killed by a comrade.

L/Cpl Mathew Ford was fatally wounded as men of 45 Commando stormed Jugroom Fort in Helmand in January last year.

The attack provoked headlines around the world as the commando's comrades clung to the sides of Apache helicopters to recover his body.

Twelve months on from the Royal's death, a Board of Inquiry studied the attack on Jugroom.

The board considered statements from 87 witnesses and other documentary material before deciding that L/Cpl Ford was most likely killed by a burst of machine-gun fire from a gunner in a Viking armoured vehicle, convinced he had seen the enemy shooting from where his comrade was located.

"There is no suggestion of negligence on the part of the gunner," the board reported, saying the commando's briefing had been "hurried" and that he had become "disorientated" in the heat of battle.

The board also found that although 3 Commando Brigade had received comprehensive training before heading to Helmand, that training was based on Iraq and Northern Ireland – entirely different theatres.

The result, said the board, was that "lessons were learned the hard way" – lessons which have now been incorporated in training and operational procedures.

The inquiry also found that Zulu Company, who led the attack, had not worked with Vikings before which caused "friction".

An edited version of the Board of Inquiry report can be found at news.mod.uk



● Many nappy returns... Four new additions to the Somerset family with their dads (l-r) CPO Fraser Thompson, Lt Cdr Steve Quantrill, Lt John Conlin and PO McCafferty

Picture: LA(Phot) Sean Barlow, FRPU West

Going ga-ga in Guz

AS THE lines were cast and the gangway lowered into place on HMS Edinburgh in Portsmouth Naval Base, 180 miles to the west – and under slightly-less leaden skies – the welcome was no less warm for HMS Somerset.

Around 500 friends and family were waiting for the frigate on the jetty in Devonport, at least half a dozen more than had waved her off on a bleak mid-January day.

The warship has welcomed six new additions to the extended Somerset family, born just before or during her seven-month NATO tour of duty in the Mediterranean. The 'little uns' were waiting for dads and aunts as the frigate returned.

AB Lisa Campbell, one of Somerset's supply team, was handed two-month-old niece Rhiannon as she stepped off the ship.

"She's gorgeous – exactly what was expected," said the 21-year-old, enjoying her first deployment.

"It was wonderful – I really enjoyed meeting the Italians, Greeks and visiting Malta."

Logistics Officer Lt Cdr Steve Quantrill was able to fly home for the birth of his son Ruari. Five months later dad, mum and son were reunited.

"It might be mixed feelings for him though," said his wife Natalie. "Now he has to get used to all those nappies, just as I have."

And on that point, let's leave babies behind and return to more steely, nautical matters. Somerset slipped away from the West Country in mid-January to join

a NATO task force prowling the Mediterranean for ne'erdo wells, monitoring maritime trade and promoting international co-operation on the high seas.

A chunk of her time was devoured keeping tabs on shipping off the shores of North Africa, compiling a comprehensive picture of movements to ensure that no vessel carried an illegal cargo.

The NATO deployment is among the most varied in the naval calendar: 28 port visits in nine nations (including rarer places such as Koper in Slovenia and Albania, alongside the more usual stop-offs in France and Italy), plus major international exercises where Somerset used her state-of-the-art sonar to hunt (and find) 'enemy' submarines.

There were no new additions to CO Rob Wilson's family while away, but there was an extra Wilson on board. The captain's 12-year-old daughter Tabitha sailed into Devonport with her dad's ship.

"She had a wonderful time playing on all the equipment and having a go at operating all sorts," Cdr Wilson said. "I'd say she would be an asset to the Navy."

As are the rest of his ship's company already, of course.

"This deployment has been challenging, fun and rewarding and it's demanded much of my sailors – and they have delivered in every regard," Cdr Wilson added.

"They have proven themselves to be excellent ambassadors for the Royal Navy and the nation. I'm fiercely proud of each and every one of them."

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In at the deep

ROYAL Navy top brass can often be heard announcing that it is a very short step from the training unit to the front line.

And fledgling flier Lt James Coleman is the proof.

For within three months of being presented his wings, Lt Coleman found himself flying in one of the most demanding aviation environments in the world – Helmand province in Afghanistan.

Following an intensive pre-deployment training programme, which included the use of Display Night Vision Goggles (DNVG), mountain flying and weapons training, he deployed with A Flight 846 Naval Air Squadron of the Commando Helicopter Force as part of Joint Helicopter Force (Afghanistan).

Thrown in at the deep end, he had a lot to learn, in a very short timescale, as the challenges of flying over the badlands of Helmand are rather different from those of Dartmoor or Wales.

Both 845 and 846 NAS are currently deployed in Helmand, and are committed to this theatre of operations for some considerable time.

Using flying techniques honed over years of front-line operations in hostile country, the Sea Kings regularly fly into territory where enemy forces operate.

Lt Coleman explained: "We generally fly in a two-aircraft tactical formation, not only for mutual support but also to enable flexibility in tasking."

"I have landed in some very confined areas, extremely close to



my playmate.

"With heavy re-circulating dust, in strong gusting winds, precision flying and teamwork are essential if we are to complete tasks quickly but safely."

The risks were highlighted recently when a Sea King was damaged in such a landing.

Flying with Apache gunship support, the Sea Kings conduct repeated tactical climbs and descents for long transits and low-level concealed approaches and departures in order to protect both crews and passengers from Taliban attacks.

The squadron's base in Afghanistan, Kandahar airfield, is a massive airport which numerous forces from around the world consider home.

When 845 and 846 NAS were deployed in Iraq, the accommodation was extremely austere and the base was regularly under attack from mortars and small arms fire.

Whilst Kandahar has received some incoming fire, the accommodation is considered pristine by many of the more experienced members of the squadron.

It is, however, the flying that remains the most challenging factor.

"Apart from the Taliban and foreign fighters, the first issue is temperature," said Lt Coleman.

"Fatigue sets in very quickly, not only for the aircrew, but also the aircraft and ground crew."

"The searing heat by mid-afternoon is 42°C, which severely affects aircraft performance, as well as making cockpit conditions very uncomfortable."

"Whilst the Sea King HC4+ has been considerably modified to increase its performance, you only have to load it with one soldier in full kit, who can weigh in excess of 300lbs, not including weapons, then multiply it by ten men, the standard number in a troop, then add aircrew and fuel and you've got an aircraft operating at the edge of its flight envelope."

Flying outside the base has provided the aircrew an enviable view of the surrounding awe-inspiring landscape.

Whilst the Commando Helicopter Force train in the snow-capped mountains of northern

Norway, it is the dust of Helmand Province that tests the skills of both the pilot and aircrewmen.

"Advanced flying techniques, like downwind and 'creep' [slow and very low] departures, were invaluable within the first hour of my initial operational sortie," said Lt Coleman.

"Running and towering [vertical climb] take-offs and zero-zero [slowing down and losing height at the same time to touch down at zero speed] landings are amongst other useful tricks used in the hot and high environment in a heavy aircraft."

When training at 848 NAS, Junglies learn to fly a single pilot standard, aided by their aircrewmen, operating all radios, defensive aid suites, mission command and navigation.

However, due to the increased threat from small arms or rocket-propelled grenades, the missile threat and the danger of hitting an obstacle at low level, the standard operational crew here is two pilots plus an aircrewman.

So when flying as the 'handling' pilot, the responsibility for communications and navigation are assumed by the more senior aircraft commander in the left-hand seat.

Lt Coleman observed: "Albeit awkward to begin with, I found it very important to remember this fact in order to avoid a good





end

slap when attempting to change radio frequency or make my own command decisions..."

For the pilots of CHF, every aspect of a sortie has to be considered before launch.

In addition to standard protective flying clothing, aircrew also carry a 'down-bird' kit consisting of rifle and pistol, webbing, lots of water and ammunition, helmet, more water, body armour and a small amount of rations.

Should the aircraft have to shut down away from Kandahar, two sets of night vision goggles for ground operations and a DNVG HDU (Head-up Display Unit) are also carried in the event that the crew is re-tasked for night operations.

This is not a major issue in the UK, but night flying is particularly dangerous in the desert and mountains of Afghanistan due to the lack of ambient light.

During the 'red illum' period, when the light levels are extremely limited, night flying is especially challenging in the low-contrast terrain.

Throughout their flying training, Navy pilots learn alongside their Army and RAF counterparts. The same can be said for Afghanistan.

Joint tasking and operations routinely take place between Sea King, Lynx, Chinook and Apache aircraft, backed up by the Close Air Support provided by Joint Force Harrier.

Nearing the end of his first deployment, Lt Coleman reflected on his experience in Afghanistan.

"Four years of flying training has finally brought me to an operational theatre.

"With no end-date for operations in Afghanistan, I know I will deploy again soon.

"Hopefully I will return with a little less trepidation and at least I won't be the new guy."



● Clockwise from top left: Desert sands and mountain snows are often encountered during the same mission; RN Sea Kings share Kandahar airfield with an eclectic range of aircraft, including the Antonov AN-124 freighter; a spectacular Afghan landscape; recirculating dust is one of the aviator's biggest problems; a Sea King is propped up with sandbags after damaging its undercarriage; the featureless terrain is a danger in low light and darkness; the Jungly Sea King HC4+



● Ominous skies, ominous seas and a ruddy great iceberg as seen from HMS Liverpool returning from South Georgia



The bergs and the bees

NORMALLY you'll find HMS Endurance dodging huge slabs of ice while Liverpool and Clyde enjoy more temperate climes.

But who says such things are set in stone?

Not the planners at Fleet HQ, who decided to dispatch the Red Plum to the warmth of West Africa and Clyde and Liverpool to a land of a snow and ice.

That's where we last caught up with the patrol vessel and destroyer, plus their trusty tanker RFA Black Rover, in our August issue, beginning a disaster relief/emergency exercise.

Equally important, however, was a chance to test the speed with which units based in the Falklands, more than 850 miles away, could respond to the need to defend South Georgia against a hostile invader, Exercise Cape Reach.

So a sizeable number of troops from the Roulement Infantry Company plus the Falkland Islands Defence Force (the islands' militia/Territorial Army) squeezed aboard Liverpool before being landed by Lynx.

Sea power is, of course, key to any successful defence of South Georgia, but so too is air power.

Hercules based in the Falklands flew round trips to air-drop supplies on to the ice-laden isle, even in the depths of the austral winter.

While Liverpool led the

operation, Clyde was sailing the 80 nautical miles around South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands carrying out fishery protection duties – laws of the ocean must be enforced even so far from the mother country.

"This is one of the most inhospitable and challenging maritime environments in the world and the ability to provide defence of our most southern dependencies in the midst of a South Atlantic winter would test the ship and its team to their limits," said Cdr Craig Wood, Liverpool's CO.

"Exercise Cape Reach demonstrated the ability of a warship – in this case two warships – to transit hundreds of miles, with a land force embarked, at short notice, that provides the UK's very real ability to operate in often very inhospitable conditions with all the arms of the military."

With South Georgia successfully 'defended' it was time to go home – easier said than done.

The transit home, weaving in between icebergs (think Titanic), bergy-bits (the size of a house) and growlers (the size of a kennel), was one that would test and prove the capacity and professionalism of everyone onboard.

Iceberg lookouts, watchkeepers, operations room and damage control teams all had to exercise the highest vigilance and only once

Liverpool and Clyde were clear of danger could their companies relax.

"At one point, the task at hand was driven home by the fact that in an area but 12 square miles in size, there were in excess of 50 different icebergs showing on the ship's radars," said Cdr Wood.

That's something HMS Endurance is all too familiar with – but at the moment it's heat, humidity and creepy crawlies rather than snow and ice which the ice survey ship has to contend with.

After a spell of TLC in Simon's Town, South Africa, the Red Plum has begun inching up the west coast of the Dark Continent.

The survey ship is using her hi-tech equipment to improve charts of African waters, but above all she is spreading the word about the possible impact of climate change – something which her work in Antarctica has given her a unique insight.

The brightly-coloured vessel was visiting Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria for a series of seminars and discussions on the role of climate change – and explaining how developing nations could make better use of the sea for the benefit of all.

Her stop in Accra, Ghana, coincided with an eight-day United Nations conference – the Convention on Climate Change – and the ship played host to military, political and scientific leaders.

It will be years, decades perhaps, before efforts to tackle climate change have tangible results.

Some problems in Africa demand immediate results – and they got them.

A substantial number of

Red Plummers headed to the Orphans Cry Orphanage in Takoradi in western Ghana to refurbish the building.

The Red Plum is on an 18-month deployment away from Portsmouth; rather than return to the UK at the end of the Austral summer, the ship headed to South Africa once her work around Antarctica was done for a period of maintenance.

That unique overhaul in Simon's Town spared her a long journey home (and chopped the fuel bill down substantially) and gave her ship's company several weeks to soak up life around the Cape.

The ship's small Royal Marine detachment spent five days with the newly-formed South African Maritime Reaction Squadron which performs a mix of force protection, security and interdiction operations.

The commandos shared their experience of unarmed combat and entering hostile buildings, first showing how they did it, then taking the South Africans through the various steps on unarmed fighting and what it can be used for.

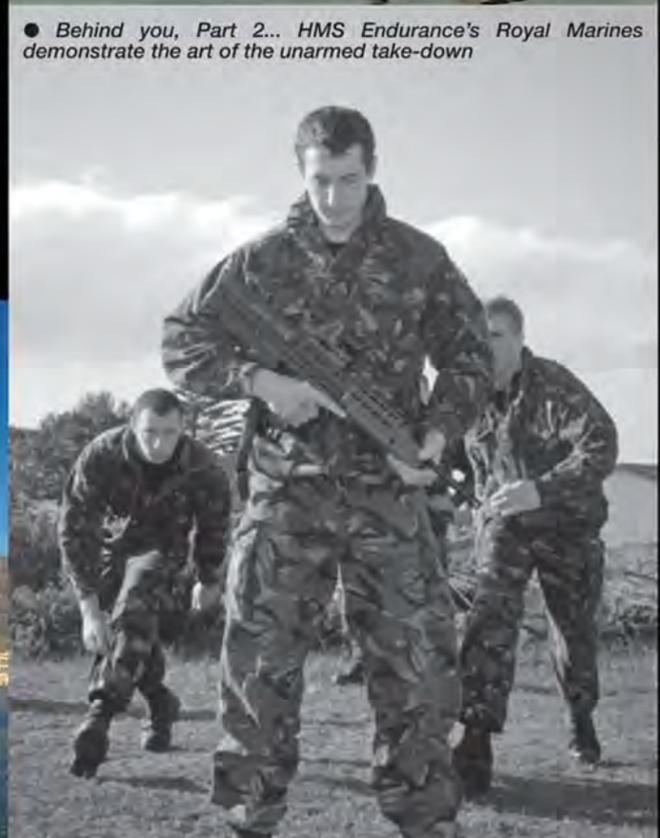
The Reaction Squadron stepped up from simple parries to a two-man guard take-down (which involves, er, taking down a guard stealthily).

Once it became clear that the South Africans had mastered these basics, they were shown how to clear out a building occupied by the enemy – a skill which is equally relevant in the maritime world, with ship's compartments replacing rooms.

The week with the MRS also gave the Royals a chance to brush up their skills before returning to sea; Endurance is conducting maritime security operations up the west coast of Africa as well as her more traditional survey work.



● Behind you, Part 1... Two Imperial cormorants look decidedly unimpressed by the appearance of HMS Clyde in South Georgia



● Behind you, Part 2... HMS Endurance's Royal Marines demonstrate the art of the unarmed take-down

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● Endurance leaves Cape Town after a brief fuel stop bound for Ghana
Picture: LA(Phot) Kaz Williams, HMS Endurance

The Blyth spirit

BRITAIN will keep a considerable minehunting presence in the Gulf on the back of the success of the Aintree task force.

When Her Majesty's Ships Blyth and Ramsey complete their tour of duty this winter after more than two years, two sister ships will be sent to replace them.

The Bahrain-based duo – who have been bolstered since earlier this year by HMS Atherstone and Chiddingfold – were dispatched to the Middle East to work with the region's navies and grapple with the Gulf's mine legacy from past conflicts.

Key to the deployment has been rotating the ship's companies of all eight Sandown-class mine countermeasures ships through Blyth and Ramsey.

That's something which will be achieved when the current custodians of the two vessels hand over for the final leg later this summer.

The current roulement has arguably been the most high profile – and successful, with RN ships and Allied navies completing survey and mine clearance work at the head of the Gulf, finally erasing the mine spectre which has haunted maritime trade for decades.

Since that success – which we featured at length in our June edition – there has been no let-up in activity by the Aintree ships, which have just spent a week with USS Peleliu, four US minehunters and minehunting US helicopters on exercises.

Organisers plonked (*technical term – Ed*) 20 practice mines in Gulf waters for the force to find – and destroy. Outnumbered, the Brits were not outgunned.

Eleven of the 20 mines were dealt with by the two RN ships, earning the accolade "Britain leads the way in mine warfare" from the Americans – "illustrating the Royal Navy's strength and strong reputation for mine warfare" said Lt Cdr Tim Green, HMS Blyth's Commanding Officer.

"After years of working in colder European waters, we're building up expertise in warmer climes."

Working in the Gulf is helped by the fact that many of the region's navies emulate or model themselves on the RN – and send their officers to the UK for training.

"Most of the navies in the Gulf don't have big ships – carriers, amphibious vessels and the like – they have patrol craft run by lieutenant commanders, and that makes it easier for us."

Blyth and Ramsey are experts in deep-water mine clearance; the two Hunts in Bahrain are their shallow-water counterparts. "The combination of the two is

unbeatable," Lt Cdr Green enthused.

"We work very hard in very challenging conditions. My team are a first-class bunch. They're all stars, every one of them. They'll go home with feathers in their caps and Telic medals on their chests."

Those 'very challenging conditions' have now passed their zenith (or nadir, depending on your perspective).

Temperatures were topping 50°C (122°F in old money) in July and August; in the ship's machinery spaces they were nudging 60°C (140°F).

"The tempo of operations stays the same," said Lt Cdr Green. "We go out on patrol come what may. But it can be challenging hunting mines in these waters and in these temperatures. And it puts a tremendous strain on my men."

The sandstorms, CPO 'Tony' Curtis, Blyth's weapon engineer officer baulked, "are of biblical proportions – you can't see 50 metres in front of you. And the sand gets everywhere, it's like a fine talcum powder."

Blyth's sonar, for example, doesn't care much for such warm water (it's around 34°C – or 14°C warmer than you'll find around the UK in high summer) in the surface layer, but once lowered (it's a Variable Depth Sonar) into the cooler water it's first class.

The environmental impact on machinery doesn't end there. "The sand means there's a lot of cleaning to be done on the upper deck – equipment has to be stripped down, cleaned, greased. The miniguns are a nightmare to clean, it's half a day's work per gun," said CPO Curtis.

"In this heat, you'll burn your hands if you pick up metal – you have to keep tools in water. Sweat gets in your eyes and stings."

Still if you can't stand the heat, stay in the kitchen. "The temperature's actually much more bearable in the galley," says Diver Craig Maddock – the 'Steven Seagal of HMS Blyth' (he's a trained diver and he's handy with a kitchen knife).

In fact, this deployment he's spent more time in the galley than anywhere else – it's part of the small ship ethos to chip in and help the chefs, sorry logisticians (catering services preparation).

"The hardest part is timing all the food accurately. But it's what we do – it's typical of life on a small ship, everyone mucking in."

Blyth's divers don't care much for the marine life – box jellyfish (rather venomous), sea snakes (ditto), four-metre-long sharks (teeth). The frogmen have 'anti-sting suits' (which is fine for jellyfish and sea snakes, but won't necessarily save you from Jaws).

But if you can put up with the heat, the tempo, the sand and things which slither, bite or sting, then it's

actually not bad.

"Living out here is East meets West. You have your McDonald's, your Costa Coffees, but Bahrain has retained its culture rather more than say Dubai," said Lt Chris Flaherty, Blyth's Executive Officer.

"The lads have learned a bit of Arabic and that has gone down really well with the locals."

CPO Curtis added: "I have loved this deployment. It's gone really quickly – we've been incredibly busy. Every day is different."

"Above all it's a great ship's company – this is my third small ship, and it's the best. There's a great craic on board. The lads will be sorry to hand over Blyth – we've done eight months of good work and have eight months of good stories to tell."

The final custodians of Blyth and Ramsey will bring the pair home next year, while two more Sandowns (Pembroke and Grimsby) will head for Bahrain to replace them – Britain's minehunters in the Gulf, like their bigger cousins patrolling the oil platforms, are here for the long haul.

"As sailors you don't often appreciate how valuable your job is. Here we've had a tangible effect – we can say: 'Yes, these waters are clear of mines'. That's incredibly satisfying," said Lt Flaherty.

His CO added proudly: "We have made a lasting contribution to stability in the region. In years to come, people will read history books and see what we did."

Forces for good, pages 25-27



New Saab 9-3 Saloon range: Urban – from 16.7 (16.9) to 39.2 (7.2), Extra-urban – from 39.2 (7.2) to 64.2 (4.4), Combined – from 26.2 (10.8) to 52.3 (5.4). CO₂ Emissions from 147 to 259g/km. New Saab 9-3 Convertible range: Urban – from 16.3 (17.3) to 36.7 (7.7), Extra-urban – from 36.7 (7.7) to 60.1 (4.7), Combined – from 25.4 (11.1) to 48.7 (5.8). CO₂ Emissions from 154 to 266g/km.

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A first for action

AS YOU read these words the men and women of HMS Ocean will be casting off the lines to take the leviathan back to sea.

The helicopter carrier has spent the past 12 months out of action – but that doesn't mean she's not been a hive of activity.

In the first decade of her life, the helicopter carrier (officially a 'landing platform helicopter') has been exceptionally busy at the forefront of RN operations around the globe, notably Sierra Leone and Iraq.

That busy-ness left its mark and so last autumn she entered dry dock in Devonport for a £30m revamp at the hands of DML (since renamed Babcock Marine).

That work is now at an end: Ocean boasts a new galley, much improved living spaces, overhauled machinery and weapons systems and, most noticeably to the outside world, a fresh lick (or rather licks) of paint on her hull – above and below the waterline.

Once trials and training are completed this autumn and winter, Ocean will re-take her place at the hub of Britain's amphibious assault force.

The ship traces her heritage back to 1761, but precedent for today's Ocean was set in October 1956.

With a dozen Whirlwind and Sycamores of the Joint Experimental Helicopter Unit aboard, the ship made good speed for Malta to embark the men of 45 Commando.

They were promptly carried ashore by the dozen helicopters as reinforcements for 40 and 42 Commandos, already ashore in Egypt during the Suez campaign.



● Turning at speed in the Caribbean before entering refit last year
Picture: LA(Phot) Ray Jones

Jointly with HMS Theseus, Ocean landed 425 men and 23 tons of supplies in Britain's first helicopter assault.

It was the fifth Ocean's second war of the decade. In 1952 she'd broken light carrier records by launching 123 operational sorties in a day off Korea.

But then records were nothing new to Ocean V: Lt 'Hoagy' Carmichel became the first pilot of a piston-engined aircraft to down a jet, a MiG15, while the legendary naval aviator Lt Cdr Eric 'Winkle' Brown became the first pilot to

land a jet aircraft (a De Havilland Vampire) on a carrier at sea.

The fifth Ocean finally ended her days in the reserve fleet before being broken up in 1952.

No such slow fate awaited Ocean IV, a pre-dreadnought which was dogged by the tag 'unlucky' – chiefly due to strikes and problems with her construction (including the collapse of 90ft of her hull).

Finally finished, she sailed for the China Station (and received a battering from a typhoon).

When Britain and Japan became allies in 1905, Ocean was

recalled home and spent the next decade in either the UK or the Mediterranean.

And it was there that she met her demise on the evening of March 18 1915.

The fleet was sent to bombard Turkish batteries in the Dardanelles. When HMS Irresistible struck a mine, Ocean was sent in to tow her to safety... but found it impossible.

Ocean then hit a mine and was soon out of control, leaving her crew with no choice but to

abandon her. She sank in Morto Bay before the day was over.

The Ocean story begins a century and a half before in Chatham when the first bearer of the name, a 90-gun second rate, was laid down in 1761.

She served the Crown loyally for three decades, most notably at Ushant in 1781 when the RN pounced on a French convoy of reinforcements bound for the Caribbean – and seized all 15 ships.

The second Ocean distinguished

Ushant.....	1781
Suez Canal.....	1915
Dardanelles.....	1915
Korea.....	1952-53
Al Faw.....	2003

Class: Ocean Class Landing Platform Helicopter
Pennant number: L12
Builder: Kvaerner, Govan
Laid down: May 30 1994
Launched: October 11 1995
Commissioned: September 30 1998
Displacement: 21,750 tonnes
Length: 203m (667ft)
Beam: 34m (113ft)
Draught: 6.6m (21ft)
Speed: 18kts
Complement: 370
Range: 8,000 miles at 15kt
Propulsion: 2 x Crossley Pielstick diesels
Embarked forces: 9 Assault Squadron Royal Marines, 4 x LCVP landing craft
Capacity: Space for up to 800 Royal Marines/Tailored Air Group personnel, vehicle deck for up to 40 x Land Rover, 34 x trailers and 6 x 105mm guns
Armament: 3 x Phalanx close-in weapon systems, 2 x 20mm guns, passive decoys
Helicopters: flight deck can accommodate helicopters up to Chinook size

Facts and figures

herself in the Mediterranean as Collingwood's flagship for three years; she ended her days as a coal hulk in Chatham.

Sail gave way to steam in HMS Ocean III, a 50-gun ironclad notable for her record distance achieved under sail (243 miles) en route to the China Station. Her career was brief – she was obsolete within five years.

With thanks to Joyce Knowlson, author of HMS Ocean: Peacetime Warrior, known as 'Mother Ocean' to a generation of the ship's company.

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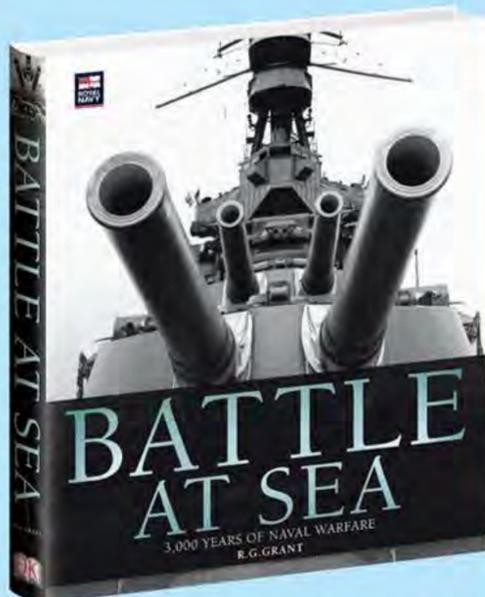
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Post to Navy News/battle at Sea Competition, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth, Hants, PO1 3HH or e mail your answer to: marketing@navynews.co.uk



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HEROES OF THE ROYAL NAVY No.53

Lt Cdr Edgar Cookson VC

GREAT cities have often seemed tantalising prizes to armies.

Napoleon and the Wehrmacht were both bedazzled by Moscow. The former reached it... and lost; the latter never did and also lost.

In 1915 the Commonwealth armies were mesmerised by two great cities of the Middle East: Constantinople and Baghdad.

By late summer, the drive on the capital of the Ottoman Empire had finally failed; the Allies were bogged down on the Dardanelles peninsula and contemplating withdrawing.

Baghdad, on the other hand, was still within their grasp. A sizeable force, led by Charles Townshend and his 6th Indian Division, was making good progress along the Tigris.

'Lucky' Townshend, whose ability was considerably surpassed by his self-importance, had scored a decisive success at Al Amara in high summer, a success which spurred him on – and spurred on his master in Basra, General John Nixon, a commander of stupefying incompetence.

On to Baghdad was the slogan – and by the dying days of September the force had reached Kut al Amara, 120 miles further upstream. The town itself fell to Townshend, but the shores of the Tigris – and hence the river itself – were still in the hands of the Turks.

The Tigris is the vein of modern-day Iraq. It was the vein of Mesopotamia nine decades ago. And it was the lifeline of Townshend's forces.

A rag-tag collection of steamers, launches, tugs and barges accompanied Townshend's advance at every step – the Tigris Flotilla, far grander in name than in appearance or reality.

Appearances, of course, mattered little. The flotilla was vital to Townshend's march on Baghdad. Its guns could support the battle on land, or they could dispatch Turkish gunboats and steamers.

But outside Kut, at Es Sinn, the flotilla faced a formidable obstacle. The Turks had hauled a huge cable across the river, barring free passage. Just for good measure, they sank a dhow midstream and lined the banks with cannon and rifle.

The plan to dislodge the Turks was less than subtle: barge or blast the sunken dhow out of the way.

The task fell to HMS Comet, a paddle-steamer armed with single 12-pounder and 6-pounder guns and a couple of 3-pounders. Command had fallen upon her CO, Lt Cdr Edgar Cookson, by accident. Comet's first captain was recovering from the exertions of the Mesopotamian campaign. His successor had fallen ill. Cookson filled the breach.

He was no poor substitute. The 31-year-old

had earned the DSO for a rather courageous reconnaissance mission under the Turkish guns in the spring; the raid had also earned him a serious wound.

Now recovered, after dark on September 28 1915 he led Comet against the Turkish barricade.

The Mesopotamian night proved no shield. As Comet bore down on the dhow at full speed, she summoned a hail of fire and steel from both banks of the Tigris.

The dhow would not be moved. Cookson fell back and began blasting it with his guns, again to no avail. There was but one solution – to cut the steel cable holding it in place.

Edgar Cookson would send no man to do what he was not prepared to do himself. He demanded an axe, leaned over the side of his steamer and began hacking away at the hawser.

It was a courageous act – and a suicidal one, for the full force of the Turkish fire fell upon this one man. Riddled with bullet holes – and with the cable still firmly holding the dhow in place – Cookson was hauled back on board by his shipmates.

"I am done," he told them. "It is a failure. Return at full speed." Minutes later he died.

In time, the Turks would fall back on Kut. Townshend would push on to the gates of Baghdad, stall, then retreat to Kut where he chose to stand his ground. He was encircled, endured a five-month siege and capitulated before enjoying a comfortable internment as a prisoner, admirable treatment not afforded his men.

Edgar Cookson was laid to rest in Al Amara, alongside more than 4,000 other victims of the bungled Mesopotamia campaign. He was gazetted in January 1916 for an act "of most conspicuous gallantry".



Where the wild things are

WHILE Max might well have been sent to bed without any supper, the wild rumpus was only just beginning for the men of the Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines amid the Central American jungle of Belize.

More than 100 Royal Marines from the Clyde-based unit journeyed in and out of weeks to where the wild things are in equatorial South America.

The ten-day expedition, led by Maj Jamie Summers, honed the jungle-fighting skills of the 110 men from FPGRM and another 40 RM Reservists in the humid atmosphere of the dense forest all around.

After a brief three-day period of acclimatisation at the British Army Training Support Unit Belize, the Marines plunged into the jungle to get to grips with the searing heat and

saturation humidity.

And as to the wild things? Well, the FPGRM's usual Scottish haunts don't feature such unusual wildlife as tarantulas, snakes, lizards, giant ants and monkeys...

Burdened with full combat gear (not wolf-suits sensibly) and all necessary equipment, the Marines trekked, tracked and fought through dense jungle and across rivers before setting up camp in hammocks beneath the lofty jungle canopy.

And each morning they would pull back on their clothes, still soaking from the previous day's humidity and river-drips, in the familiar wet-dry routine of this challenging environment.

● *Royal Marines from FPGRM exercise in the jungles of Belize, photographed by LA(Phot) Kelly McAlinden*



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UNLEASH THE

BACK in February 1976, as the eyes of the world were fixed on Innsbruck and the XII Winter Olympiad, Britons could be found humming a quirky tune from an American one-hit wonder.

... We gotta great big combat logistic patrol, truckin' through the night...

Apologies to C W McCall, but the convoy is dead, long live the Combat Logistic Patrol.

The change of name for a column of vehicles ferrying food, ammunition and material to front-line units reflects the changing nature of the Commando Logistic Regiment.

Logistics. Etappe. Baggage column. Baggage train. Rear area. Supply column. Whatever the name, through history it's had a pretty bad reputation – often unfairly – among the fighting troops bemoaning the cushy, safe life of troops 'in the rear with the gear'.

Except that in the world of Iraq and Afghanistan, there's no rear. There's no front. There's still gear.

"We are all in the front line now," says Col Andy Maynard, Commando Logistic Regiment's Commanding Officer.

"The job is very much combat logistics, because that's the reality of Helmand."

Hence the name 'Combat Logistic Patrol', arguably the most visible aspect of the regiment's work.

"The patrols are tremendously complex because of the sheer scale of what they have to deliver – anything from 60-100 vehicles of different types, with many tonnes of

equipment and materiel – to the remotest parts of Helmand province," says Col Maynard.

Indeed, a CLP can stretch for three or more miles, deploy for days on end and trundle along at speeds as slow as 2½mph – less than yomping speed.

So they're big, they're sluggish, they kick up great columns of dust visible 20 miles away. They're prime targets for the Taliban.

One in three columns moving between bases in Helmand comes under attack from insurgents, who'll use bombs, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire to halt or hinder the trucks' progress.

"The Taliban are not stupid. They can't take on heavily-armed infantry, but they can attack a slow-moving column," says Lt Dan Couldridge, a REME engineer serving with the regiment.

"With the clouds of dust, you can see these columns for miles. It's

like having a great big arrow pointing down."

Big targets need big protection. They get it.

Gunships are the angels on the column's shoulders, while Land Rovers, the new Jackal ("Land Rovers on steroids") and Vikings are as much a part of

any CLP as a tanker, truck, or JCB.

And each man or woman in the column is a warrior first, driver, signaller, medic second.

At each stop, they dismount, or pop out of the roof of a cab and brandish their SA80 rifles.

Their biggest fear is summed up by a single acronym: IED, improvised explosive device – bomb.

"This is not a game. This is real life," says Mne Matt Drummond.

Mne Roland Hawksworth adds: "What bothers all the blokes are land mines and IEDs. We're not scared of the Taliban in a fight.

"IEDs are the coward's way of fighting."

When at Camp Bastion, the hub of British operations in Helmand, Mne Hawksworth will be catering for 2,000 people every sitting as a chef, dishing up a 'Janner kebab' (pasty) and tank traps (meat ribs) among other delicacies.

Temperatures in Helmand at their height won't be as bad

as on Salisbury Plain in July where an extensive Mission Rehearsal Exercise gave the regiment – and the rest of the British force deploying to Afghanistan this autumn – a taste of what is to come.

It topped 63°C (145°F) in the CLR galley tents; in Bastion there's the luxury of air conditioning and extractor fans.

(One luxury they don't have in Bastion is a supermarket just down the road; personnel taking part in the war game on Salisbury Plain were expressly reminded walking into the galley 'Tesco is out of bounds...')

But at their worst, temperatures in Afghanistan will fall to -20°C.

Whatever the weather, the troops at the British outposts – Forward Operating Bases – scattered around Helmand will need support: food, ammunition, water.

The regiment has four distinct sub-units to meet their needs: Logistic Support Squadron, Medical Squadron, Equipment Support Squadron and the Landing Force Support Party.

There's probably no unit in the British Armed Forces more eclectic – as demonstrated by the unique make-up of the CLR and its myriad of cap badges.

Most – about 60 per cent – are Royal Marines, but there are also dozens of Royal Navy ratings, mostly engineering technicians, many of whom volunteered to work as drivers and engineers for this demanding and landlocked deployment.

Thirty-six musicians from across the Band Service volunteered for a tour of duty in Helmand (they will spend three months each rather than six for the majority of personnel deploying).

Some will work as drivers, others as first-aid specialists, and a new Joint Force Medical Group comprised of men and women will go out on patrol with the Royal Marines.

The wider Medical Squadron – almost 400 personnel strong – is drawn from all three Services who have been mobilised, equipped and trained to provide medical cover at the hospital in Camp Bastion and to the out-stations.

The hospital squadron primarily comes from sickbays in ships around the UK, augmented to form a hospital, with anaesthetists, doctors, and



LOGS OF WAR

nurses brought in from various locations in order to train and form a unit.

To these medics, musicians, and matelots, soldiering does not necessarily come naturally – and that's meant some gruelling training.

"We need to go right down to brass tacks – how do you put your webbing together? How do you maintain your rifle in the desert and react to enemy contact?" explains Lt Col Steve Crouden, CLR's second-in-command.

For those arriving at the regiment – and this includes some Royals from other parts of the Corps – there is, according to Lt Col Crouden, still some of the old prejudice about being 'in the rear with the gear'.

"There's been a stigma associated with logistics. Commandos who volunteer don't have that prejudice, particularly now that our business is so much more focused, but in the wider audience of 3 Commando Brigade we're still up against it," he says.

"Our business is more dangerous now because there is no straightforward line in the sand where the enemy are. They move amongst you all the time, so the guys who formerly would have been in the rear echelons are now operating among enemy territory and they are required to have the same skills as the guys in the front line."

Logistics, says CLR's Capt John Ford, are "something people take for granted".

He adds: "People need feeding, people need equipment – the troops and the locals. Delivering it safely gives you a huge sense of achievement."

"What was once 'in the rear with the gear' is now something which punches for effect."

The Mission Rehearsal Exercise on Salisbury Plain has formed just one slice of the Helmand training 'pie'.

The regiment's home at Chivenor on the north Devon coast may seem a long way from the austere landscape of Afghanistan, but the local terrain has some useful features in common.

The high sand-dunes near Braunton, a mile or so from camp are surprisingly similar to the sandy tracks in much of Afghanistan, and provide a suitable area to test the regiment's DROPS – Dismountable (Is that a word? – Ed) Rack Offload and Pickup System – trucks and their drivers.



DROPS are hydraulic-lifting vehicles used for shifting large loads in rough terrain. They can also recover vehicles from deep sand and ditches and can be loaded and offloaded independently, without the need for forklifts or cranes to do all the lifting and shifting.

More than two dozen matelots – engineers to be precise – will be deploying with the DROPS troop to Helmand.

Conditions in Afghanistan will be a challenge to the drivers.

Much of the driving is done by night for safety reasons.

There are no metalled roads, and taking heavy vehicles in convoy up steep ridges where the sand is deep requires nerves of steel.

Training on the dunes near Braunton, the DROPS lorry leading the column attempted to climb a steep hill four times until, with wheels spinning and sand flying, the driver gave up and backed down the slope.

"This is realistic training, because it's the sort of thing which happens all the time. The only solution is turn round and find another route," says Maj Marcus Taylor, OC of the Landing Force Support Party.

"This is what it's like out there – up to a point. But now imagine doing all this at night, in pitch-darkness, possibly with insurgents around, without any lights."

Before any CLP leaves camp, every vehicle receives an inspection from the Engineer Support Squadron – the last thing you want is a breakdown in bandit country. Prevention is better than cure...

The squadron's vehicle mechanics and technicians – aka spanner rankers (hopefully we heard them correctly...) – typify the eclectic nature of the regiment ("infectious inclusivity" Col Maynard calls it).

There are marines. There are pongoes (from REME). There are matelots.

ET(ME) Aaron Farrington is one of the latter. After three years at sea, he's now fixing Land Rovers and the like.

"Working with the marines is great – they're a very professional bunch," he enthuses.

"We know the basics of engineering, of course. The Royals know these vehicles and it means we've

picked up some extra skills for the day when we leave the Service.

"I'm looking forward to a life-changing experience. I want to take in what's going on in the world, to experience new cultures."

For the engineer, there's little difference between exercises and the real thing – vehicles break down, vehicles need maintaining.

Except in Helmand, the wear and tear goes through the roof.

"Everything in Helmand requires moving by road or air. As you can guess, our guys are busy," says Lt Couldridge.

"It's hot, sandy, dusty. The terrain is harsh on the suspension and sand and oil mixed together create a corrosive substance.

"The vehicles get a pounding – they're out there all the time."

For CPO Richard Carey, this will be his second time in Afghanistan – but it's still a welcome change from life at sea.

"It's a lot different from a stoker's watchkeeping role, but the marine engineering skills are transferable," he says.

"The principle is the same – if something breaks down in a ship it needs fixing, and it's the same in the desert."

Nevertheless, it's a tricky job in a difficult environment; changing an engine on a WMIK Land Rover, for example, takes a four-strong team the best part of five hours.

"Not all the lads here are volunteers – it's not possible, because we have to marry the commitment to the ships' programmes," says CPO Carey. "But even the lads who didn't volunteer have warmed to it."

The 18 'Bandies', as the rest of the RN likes to call them, are volunteers to a man (and woman).

"We've had to learn about off-roading, engines, driving. We're well prepared for it – and it's something I wanted to do. It's something I can look back on later in life," said Musn Ellie Wilson, normally an oboist with the RM Band Plymouth.

Her colleague Musn Andy Hall, a pianist and clarinet player, adds: "It's been a while since the Band was seen doing the 'green' side of the job. We're

looking to raise morale out there where we can by performing."

Indeed their instruments are already *en route* (although a keyboard is going east in place of a piano...).

The musicians are part of the eclectic mix (there's that word again) being taught to drive by CLR regulars such as Sgt Terry Bettoney.

"I had my reservations," he admits, "but I've been pleasantly surprised."

"It's been quite an experience – and for some of the volunteers quite an eye-opener."

"It's not just about driving, it's about knowing the vehicle, maintaining it. There's first aid to learn, communications, how to deal with the IED threat."

"I have no doubt that we're 100 per cent prepared and that everyone will pull together."

Everyone pulling together is something you'll hear time and again chatting to the men and women of the CLR.

"There's some good banter between the matelots and bootnecks – the matelots are good lads, the booties are good lads," says LD John Carroll – a Royal Marine who completed tours of duty in Iraq, Bosnia and Kosovo before becoming an RN diver.

His ultimate boss, Col Maynard, agrees.

"I pay tribute to RN ratings' professionalism and dedication. They've taken on the ethos of the commando spirit in terms of supporting the battle groups in these forward locations and they've taken it on wholeheartedly."

No-one on Salisbury Plain underestimated the difficult nature of the task to come – Helmand is, says Col Maynard, "one of the most hostile environments in the world."

No-one on Salisbury Plain failed to mention how comprehensive the training package had been, be it in Wiltshire, in Devon, at the School of Transport in Leconfield.

"We've done everything we need to for this deployment," LD Carroll says succinctly.

And now comes the acid test.

● *The formation formerly known as a convoy pauses on Salisbury Plain... A Combat Logistic Patrol practises self-defence during a break in the Mission Rehearsal Exercise*

Picture: LA(Phot) Pete Smith, FRPU East



Not quiet on the Wewtern front

THE green berets of 42 Commando earned the highest honour a unit can receive for raising the public profile of the Senior Service.

Each year ships, establishments and RM units fight for the Desmond Wewtern Fleet Award, named in memory of the last naval correspondent in Fleet Street (and a Royal Navy reservist).

Commander-in-Chief Fleet Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope headed to Bickleigh barracks near Plymouth bearing a crystal decanter on a plinth of oak made from the timber from HMS Victory – the physical manifestation of the Wewtern award. (The decanter is presented containing the equivalent of a bottle of port and it is a condition of winning that it is “never allowed to run dry”.)

The West Country commandos were winners of the trophy by some margin – and deservedly so – for their efforts on and off the battlefield of Helmand during their 2006-07 deployment.

As 42's citation points out, “a unit can simply be in the right place at the right time, and this may be said of the deployment to Helmand Province”.

But what the unit's media team – Lt Paul Youngman and photographer LA(Phot) Gaz Faulkner – did went far, far beyond what might be called ‘fortuitous coverage’.

“Every opportunity was exhausted to project 42 Commando RM into every corner of the media market,” says the citation.

“Every conceivable opportunity for positive publicity was taken before, during and after the operational tour, and the resultant media articles spoke for themselves.”

Those included the acclaimed documentary, *Commando: On the Front Line* (which also spawned a successful book and DVD), a series of features in *Warship International Fleet Review* magazine, substantial documentaries on BBC News and News 24, as well as coverage in every major national and international newspaper throughout the deployment and even Valentine's Day messages played on BBC Radio Devon. LA(Phot) Faulkner also provided arguably the defining image of the war in Afghanistan.

What was also key to 42 winning the Wewtern award, however, was innovation. The Royals never forgot

that the most important bond of communication was between the men and their families back home.

And so the Bickleigh Royals embraced the Senior Service's families website, RNCom. Lt Youngman monitored the site and sent relevant information back to families and friends. As the deployment to Helmand reached its climax, more than one in every two ‘hits’ on RNCom were aimed at 42 Commando's sections of the site, including a discussion ‘forum’, used by more than 350 families.

And talking of families... with deployment in Afghanistan imminent once more (see page 4) the unit invited friends and loved ones into their base at Bickleigh for a families day.

The rain held off and an estimated crowd of 2,000 enjoyed a perfect summer's day while they made the most of the various fairground activities.

Small mini-me Royal Marines threw themselves around a children's airsoft range, hog roasts crackled, paintballs whizzed, marines and corporals, their brothers and sisters all did battle on the bumper cars, and rapid trips to Tesco ensured the event did not run out of beer (pew – Ed).

Family participation was the order of the day, with the dog show, and displays throughout company offices all reinforcing that critical concept of the Service family.

Among the tangle of dogs, children and extended families many new relationships were formed, and old ones refreshed.

Many questions were asked and answered too, while Commanding Officer Lt Col Charlie Stickland explained to everyone how the unit was geared up for Helmand, the risks involved and stressed once more the vital bond between his men and their families back home.

“The inclusion of our families in the run-up to our forthcoming tour is absolutely fundamental to our ability to conduct ourselves at peak performance over the next few months,” said Lt Alex Burlingham, 42's education officer. “The day was about the wider 42 Cdo family getting to know each other, for mutual support, and for us to say ‘thank you’ in advance for their unwavering support as we conduct our business overseas. What a great day.”



Fire and ice

ECHOES of cold wars – and the Cold War – have dominated HMS Exeter's summer.

The Portsmouth-based destroyer has spent the past few weeks paying homage to men who braved formidable seas, formidable temperatures and formidable foe on the Atlantic and especially the Arctic Convoys.

Exeter's odyssey began in Iceland, a vital staging post in efforts to cast a ‘lifeline across the Atlantic’ – and the rallying point for many convoys bound for the Russian ports of Archangel and Murmansk.

The destroyer's visit to the capital Reykjavik coincided with an international conference – five days of talks, lectures and discussions by the world's leading naval experts and historians on the importance of the Arctic runs six decades ago.

The guests of honour were not the dignitaries and literati, however, but the men who made history, the convoy veterans.

They and Cdr Paul Brown, Exeter's CO, joined representatives from Russia, Iceland and the USA at a memorial service and wreath-laying ceremony.

Another monument to the fallen of WW2 received a makeover courtesy of the Exeter team.

The sailors restored a rose arch, the metallic gateway to a rose garden and cenotaph, tidied flower beds, polished a plaque and erased graffiti (sadly not just a British malaise) from a memorial bench.

These days, visits by RN vessels to Iceland's shores are infrequent, so the destroyer men and women made the most of their time sampling the island's unique volcanic geography, including visits to waterfalls, geysers, hot springs and a volcanic crater.

“It was very humbling to have been in Reykjavik for the conference and to have met some of the veterans,” said Cdr Brown. “It meant a great deal for me and my ship's company to be part of the wreath-laying ceremony and to remember those who lost their lives in what were extremely arduous conditions.”

The destination for many who sailed on the Arctic runs was the Kola Inlet – the destination, too, of HMS Exeter.

The road to Russia took the destroyer to the fjords of northern Norway (a luxury not afforded the Arctic Convoys as this land was occupied by the Nazis between 1940 and 1945).

These days tourists pay hundreds of pounds to cruise the narrow Norwegian waters. Or if you're in the RN, you can do it for free.

Of course, D89 isn't a cruise ship. She had to exercise with the Norwegian Navy and Air Force on her passage to the Arctic port of Harstad. The latter sent F16 jets to ‘beat up’ the Falklands veteran almost daily, keeping the warfare and weapons engineering branches on their toes.

Thankfully, things were rather more tranquil in Tjotta Fjord where the destroyer dropped anchor and her crew got their rods out for a spot of fishing. The catches were promptly devoured during a flight deck barbecue.

Having topped up with fuel (and squeezed in the odd round of golf on a Harstad course), the sailors turned north then east bound for Russia.

That journey took her over the resting place of HMS Edinburgh, lost in the spring of 1942. The ship paused for a service of remembrance, led by padre James Tabor. It was high summer in the Arctic, the seas were rough, the skies overcast, the temperature cool – a reminder to all aboard that conditions for men on the Murmansk run were grim all year round.

By the time Exeter passed 78°2'N, she was encountering her first sheet ice. But that didn't stop the gunnery team who decided on a spot of target training. A splash target was rigged up on the flight deck initially (its creators received a thorough soaking) before being cast into the ocean for the close-range guns to dispatch.

Next stop, the port of Severomorsk, home to the Russian Northern Fleet and its 75th anniversary celebrations.

In its life spanning three quarters of a century, the Russian Northern Fleet has been friend, foe and now friend once more.

Long after the fall of Communism in Russia, Severomorsk remains a ‘closed town’, with access limited to visitors. Not so Murmansk, a short distance away in the Kola Bay. Although it's not the most attractive of cities – and the wet weather didn't help – the Russians extended a warm welcome to the Brits, who wandered around in rig.

There was Russian hospitality too in Severomorsk itself: plenty of vodka toasts were exchanged between Exeter's sailors and their Russian hosts.

The visit reached its climax with Russian Navy Days, a mix of pomp and ceremony and naval theatre.

Senior Russian officers inspected the international force mustered for the event – Exeter was joined by ships from Norway and the USA – before sailors marched through the heart of the town.

Then it was back to the shore for the high point of anniversary festivities.

Visitors to RN events such as Meet Your Navy and Yeovilton Air Day are used to ‘dynamic displays’ (invariably Royal Marines putting terrorists or drug-runners down).

The Russians like to do something rather more grandiose. The audience were treated to an impressive display of firepower: a Kilo-class submarine surfacing in the bay, a salvo of rockets fired from FRS Yunga, a frigate, and FRS Rassvet, a corvette.

If that wasn't enough bangs for your buck (or rather ruble), then guns blazed ashore and a Sonya-class minesweeper dropped a depth charge.

With the explosions, bangs and flashes over, the ships threw their gangways open to visitors and, in return for their hospitality, Exeter's sailors were invited to sample Russian food and attend a concert by a Pink Floyd tribute band.

“For most of my ship's company this was their first visit to Russia,” said Cdr Brown. “The hospitality of the Russian people has been second to none.”



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People. Leaders. Grit.

ON SATURDAY May 12 1962, Douglas MacArthur addressed the long grey lines of cadets at West Point.

His theme was constant, encapsulated in three words: *Duty. Honour. Country.*

The Royal Navy's new Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral Alan Massey, is determined to encapsulate his term in office under the banner: *People. Leaders. Grit.* He explains:

■ **People:** "Our people are superb, but we need to recruit and retain more of them, focused in the right areas, with the right skills."

■ **Leaders:** "Success is delivered by good leadership at all levels: we need our leaders to be the best trained, so that our people are the best led."

■ **Grit:** "We need lots of it to underpin the robustness demanded by front-line operations from the strategic deterrent to Afghanistan and Iraq."

Personnel issues – recruitment, pay, service conditions, family life, accommodation, sport, training, retention measures – go hand-in-hand with front-line issues.

If you do not attract, hire, look after and keep your people, says the admiral – who succeeded Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns in July – you won't be able to man the Navy for today's and tomorrow's needs.

And at present, the Navy is undermanned.

"The RN is carrying a number of gaps, including some in the front line. We are stretched. We need to do something more to address this, otherwise it will affect the way we do our jobs and the quality of life of our personnel," says Admiral Massey.

The Royal Navy needs a trained strength of around 36,000 people,

but is currently some 1,200 men and women short across the board – although there have been some small improvements in some areas as a result of recent initiatives.

Some areas are more stretched than others – 'pinch points': for example nuclear watchkeepers, AB divers, Royal Marines, warfare leading hands and aircrew.

These are problems – the admiral steadfastly refuses to call them 'challenges'. And they need to be tackled. As for the solution, Admiral Massey is looking to reinvigorate the recruitment and retention of our people.

"Recruitment is not just my issue – it's the whole Navy's issue. We have to push all the recruiting levers forward," he stresses.

Some 3,500 people join the trained strength of the Naval Service each year and current recruiting figures are healthier for the Senior Service than the other two Forces.

Nevertheless, the new Second Sea Lord has already set targets to increase fresh blood in the RN and RM by between ten and 15 per cent over the next three or four years. To that end, the admiral would like to put more resources into careers offices.

"Our careers teams around the UK are excellent, but I believe we can boost their delivery if we can get extra people, preferably straight from the front line, in our careers offices," he explains. "We need people there from the generation – and preferably from the regions – that we're recruiting in."

The people the Navy is mainly trying to recruit are 'Generation Y' (people born after 1980) – the internet, X-Box, YouTube generation whose aspirations, needs and demands are different from those who are already well established in the Royal Navy.

"These are people who want 24/7 access to Facebook, who want to work for a socially-responsible

organisation, and who want to be challenged and stimulated," the admiral explains.

"They want more flexible careers, where they can move in and out of regular employment."

"Why don't we, for example, try to keep a connection with Service leavers, perhaps involving reserve status, perhaps offering easier ways to re-enter the Navy? Maybe some of our women might serve for longer if they had access to better childcare arrangements."

The key, says the admiral, is flexibility.

He continues: "We need to offer people more modern career packages if we can. This is not about being pink and fluffy – this is hard-nosed, sensible management."

Recruiting more people is all well and good, but the training establishments also need to be able to cope with the influx – and so has the front line.

"And there's little point finding the fresh blood if the old and bold are streaming out of the gates," the admiral warns.

The Navy can afford to lose no more than about nine per cent of its men and women every year through retirement, medical discharges and people handing in their notice.

At present the figures stand at just under seven per cent for officers. It's higher for ratings – the Navy is losing one in ten every year, which is too many.

"If everyone in the RN stayed one job longer, we probably wouldn't have a retention issue," the admiral points out.

Recent initiatives such as the Service Personnel Command Paper and wearing uniform more often in public should give the Forces a higher profile, while a series of new measures, from compensation to extra educational funding, will ensure that Service personnel receive fairer treatment

in society.

But there is no magic wand to fix retention – and throwing money at people is not the whole answer, as a recent MOD survey of military personnel revealed.

We can certainly learn from big business – indeed the admiral spent some time working with Shell, city bank UBS and Tesco to see how they recruit and manage the careers of their staffs.

"When you look at what these major companies offer, then you realise that we have a fight on our hands – but there are still plenty of unique benefits to life in the Royal Navy," he explains.

"If we get things right, then we will remain a very attractive option for young people looking for a rewarding career," he says.

"And, at present, promotion opportunities are better than they have ever been in many branches."

As for grit and leadership, they pretty much go hand-in-hand.

"We need quality leaders – from the leading hand level upwards. We need to invest more in training people to be leaders through life, something my predecessors have started," says the admiral.

"We also need to put focus on putting grit into the Navy: robustness, a bit more mental and physical toughness. In the final analysis, we are a fighting force"

For that grit, the admiral believes more sport and adventurous training exercises, such as Bavarian Surprise, are a proven way to inject resilience, competitive spirit, toughness: "Our men and women come back from these exercises better, stronger people."

The most recent Continuous Attitude Survey by the MOD – a snapshot of a whole range of issues affecting all three Services – revealed some areas of low morale in the RN, better spirit in the RM, but also that most sailors and marines are still proud to serve.



● Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns (sitting) hands over as Second Sea Lord to Vice Admiral Alan Massey aboard his flagship, HMS Victory
Picture: LA(Phot) Alex Cave, FRPU East

"We take these surveys seriously – there's no smoke without fire. These findings will help us pay attention to areas where our people feel we should do better. But I'm reassured by the 'proud to serve' bit. There is real pride and ethos out there – you only have to look at something like Meet Your Navy in Portsmouth in July."

On balance, however, the Admiral – who led HMS Ark Royal during the 2003 invasion

of Iraq – says there are far more positives than negatives in the Senior Service of 2008.

"Fundamentally I believe we are the best navy around, and the closer you get to the front line, the more compelling and impressive we are," he says.

"My job is to keep that front line manned with well trained, motivated, proud and tough people – and I'm really looking forward to getting to grips with it."

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● A 702 NAS Lynx dances under leaden Cornish skies at Culdrose Air Day
Picture: PO Bob Sharples, 829 NAS



● The Mighty 90 – HMS Southampton – takes her place among Tall Ships and warships on the Seine at Rouen



Best in show

ROUEN. Capital of Normandy. Historic port on the Seine. Place of judgment for Joan of Arc, now a saint.

You do not, thankfully, have to go back to 1431 to find a saint in Rouen. July 2008 would suffice.

HMS Southampton – aka The Saint (and also The Mighty 90) – joined a colourful mix of battleship grey and Tall Ships as the latter vessels gathered for the prologue to the 2008 race.

The destroyer was the first warship to arrive on the Seine for the week-long spectacle, firing her saluting gun for each of the fine sailing ships she passed on her way to her berth.

The Tall Ships are an enormous draw wherever they go (see later) and Rouen was no exception.

Interest in those leviathans rubbed off on Southampton, and how. At the final count, 50,000 people had been shown around the destroyer during the three days she was open to the public.

Those who did not visit the Type 42 perhaps saw her sailors taking part in an inter-faith church service and eight-kilometre (five-mile) parade along the waterfront.

Rouen was not all parades, handshakes and fireworks, however.

In the cemetery of St Sever on the southern edge of the old Norman city lies Sapper J W 'Billy' Ford.

A keen footballer in his native Uttroxteter, he volunteered for the Army in 1914.

The Royal Engineers accepted him. Billy Ford was "just the type of man who would revel in a fight with the Hun".

Which is exactly what he did for the next three and half years until he was gravely wounded in the German spring offensives of 1918.

He was sent to a French hospital in Rouen but succumbed to his wounds at the age of 43, leaving a widow and four children – none of whom he had seen since joining up.

It is a tragic story, and one repeated more than 880,000 times in the Great War, but what makes it pertinent to HMS Southampton is that his great grandson commands the vessel.

And Cdr Richard Morris could not visit Rouen without paying his respects to Billy Ford.

"Delighted as I was to be able to bring my ship to this fantastic event, the most humbling experience was visiting my great grandfather's last resting place, commemorating him and all those who laid down so much that we can enjoy this fantastic spectacle today and in years to come," he said.

The week in Rouen ended when the Tall Ships sailed down the Seine bound for their next port of call, Liverpool...

... which is where six RN/RFA vessels mustered to greet them.

An estimated 500,000 people lined the north and south banks of the river to see the magnificent vessels depart in a Parade of Sail – led by HMS Argyll.

Warships began to gather for the spectacle five days earlier. University boats HM Ships Blazer and Ranger were the smallest; next,

size-wise was HMS Grimsby, then Argyll and finally RFA Lyme Bay.

The Tall Ships Race is more than a 'mere' parade – it's a nautical festival and for two days Argyll and Lyme Bay opened up their upper decks to the public, while ashore the Band of HM Royal Marines Scotland provided appropriate musical entertainment.

Argyll, which spent the earlier part of 2008 safeguarding Iraq's oil platforms, impressively hosted more than 9,500 visitors over the open weekend (to put that in perspective, flagship Ark Royal welcomed 5,000 people during her solitary open day in Liverpool earlier this summer...).

The most senior of those 9,500 visitors was the Duke of York; the retired naval officer chatted with the ship's company – and toured some of the Tall Ships berthed on the Mersey, as did his sister, the Princess Royal, who was also in town for the spectacle.

Not all the sporting action was confined to the water. Argyll's team convincingly won the football tournament arranged for the participating vessels. Matelots who preferred to watch rather than join in toured Anfield, home of Liverpool FC, and watched the St Helens-Wigan clash, one of the highlights of the Rugby League season.

The highlight for all, of course, was that Parade of Sail, a procession of all the competitors in the race into the Irish Sea.

Argyll led the way, escorted by fire tugs blasting jets of water, while the saluting guns of Lyme Bay echoed across the estuary.

With the sailing ships departed, Argyll and Lyme Bay hotfooted it away from the Irish Sea for two more very public engagements.

The frigate made for Meet Your Navy in Portsmouth (where 9,000 people came to tour the ship; see page 22), while Lyme headed to Sunderland (see below).

The two shows, said RPO George Kerrison, had been "fantastic".

He continued: "It's been our chance to meet people and the lads seemed to have enjoyed this – they've been able to talk about what we've done, how we live and shown off some of the modern kit we have."

If you wanted to put the kibosh on a major public event, just insert the word 'air' in the title.

It's not been a good summer for air shows (come to think of it, it's not been a good summer, period).

Southend. Wet. Fairford. Rained off. Waddington. Curtailed. Yeovilton. Wet, windy. Sunderland. Fogged out. Culdrose. Low cloud, drizzle.

Yes, for all the Herculean efforts, for all the planning, for all that mice and men endeavour to achieve, the gods conspired against the good folk of Cornwall and Culdrose Air Day.

Although woeful weather has been a recurring theme at air shows in 2008, the Fleet Air Arm has fared better than most forces on display.

So while many of the fixed-wing attractions were parked firmly on the Culdrose tarmac (although Tornados did wow the crowds), the Lynx, Merlin and Bagger Sea Kings did their bit in the leaden Cornish skies.

Despite the disappointing weather, more than 16,000 people turned up – and praised organisers for resolving traffic problems around the airbase 12 months ago which blighted the 2007 show.

Four hundred and seventy miles to the north-east, RFA Lyme Bay

and HMS Southampton appeared in the Wear estuary for Sunderland International Airshow.

Or at least we're told Southampton appeared.

For much of the show, she was about two miles offshore, but she might as well have been 100, for thick fog (or 'sea fret' as they call it in these parts) descended for the entire weekend, so thick, says airshow buff Mick Britton, "not a glimpse of her was to be caught".

Not a glimpse, that is, unless you're a TV viewer; local TV broadcast a weather bulletin from the destroyer's fo'c'sle (we're guessing the word 'fog' might have been mentioned on several occasions...).

The Saint had an important role in an action-packed demonstration. AWACS aircraft, Tornados, Hawks, Chinooks and Sea Kings, plus Lyme Bay and Southampton were all lined up for a display on the waterfront.

As it was, all the air input to the demo was chopped... which isn't necessarily a bad thing if you're ten HMS Southampton sailors and Royal Marine Commandos who promptly grabbed all the attention in a scaled-down display.

The former played renegades taking UN personnel hostage; the latter stormed from the sea and promptly rescued the peacekeepers.

The Black Cats Lynx display team were grounded, save for a quick flight to conduct a weather check, but at least the RN static displays (a Sea King Mk6 and a vintage Wasp) and the not-so-static displays (Commando Display Team, the Band of HM Royal Marines Scotland and the field gunners of HMS Neptune and Caledonia) proved popular.

If you wanted good weather, you really needed to go to Scotland (a phrase you won't often see in these pages).

There was plenty of activity in the skies of East Lothian for the National Museum of Flight's annual show at East Fortune, 20 miles outside Edinburgh.

Pilots Lts Simon Hammock and James Bullock, observer Lt Cdr 'Florry' Ford and aircrewman PO Marcus Wigfull plus their Sea King flew across from HMS Gannet, Britain's busiest Search and Rescue unit, to carry out a simulated rescue, before setting their helicopter down for the Scottish public to peer inside.

ROYAL NAVY
Meet Your Navy wasn't the only major international event which thrust the Senior Service into the public eye this summer. From Land's End to John O'Groats (or, more accurately, Helston to Edinburgh) and even on the Seine, our men and women have put their best feet forward.

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It's been our chance to meet people and the lads seemed to have enjoyed this.
– PO George Kerrison, HMS Argyll



● Fire tugs blast jets of water over HMS Argyll as she and a Lynx lead the Tall Ships' Parade of Sail past the Liver Building
Picture: Lt Cdr Al Campbell

news in brief

■ **SAILORS** from HMS Dauntless took a break from training to carry out important renovation work at Queen Elizabeth Country Park in Horndean.

The Type 45 destroyer's crew took time off during firefighting training to restore an 18th-Century shepherd's caravan ahead of the park's annual show.

Cdr Giulian Hill said he was keen for the ship to start building relationships with the local community.

Dauntless will start sea trials later this year, ready for entry into Portsmouth in early 2010.

Park manager Tim Speller said: "The sailors all worked extremely hard and can be proud of their achievements."

■ **FIFTEEN** students attending the Advanced Command and Staff course at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham have completed an astounding one million metre rowing endeavour.

The event raised an almighty £9,300 which has been split evenly between the Hope for Heroes charity and Macmillan Cancer Support.

The event was completed in 72 hours, with each participant rowing 70km each.

The students from all three Services were expected to continue their studies when not rowing – including attending lectures and finalising dissertations.

■ **YOU** may be familiar with the term 'WAG' from the celebrity world, but here is a new type – the Royal Marine WAG.

A group of 22 RM wives, girlfriends and fiancées are to take part in the seven-mile RM Commando Challenge in Devon under the name 'Team Essence'.

Having successfully completed last year's three-mile challenge, they are now hoping to raise at least £2,000 for Help for Heroes this year.

If you want to make a donation, visit: www.justgiving.com/team_essence

■ **NEARLY** £1,000 has been raised for the Army Benevolent Fund and the Sailor's Society thanks to collectors at the Army vs Navy Rugby Match.

Mrs Pamela Jones, her husband and her sister took the collection and would like to thank South West Trains for allowing them to collect on the station.

They extend their thanks to the generous supporters who donated on the day.

■ **TRAINEE** sailors from HMS Raleigh have been helping to clear, level and widen an area of pathway in Torpoint.

The trainees have been working on the project organised by the Torpoint and Rame Lions Club, alongside the club's members and volunteers.

HMS Raleigh's LS Laura Washer said: "It is a great way for them to develop their team-working skills in a practical situation outside of the training environment."

■ **A TEAM** from HMS Sutherland have lent a hand refurbishing a popular local footpath in her affiliated county.

Twelve of the ship's company have spent a week away from the frigate working on the Braehead footpath near Helmsdale, Sutherland.

Lt Lorna Cooper said: "We were really looking forward to getting away and being able to give something back to the local community."

■ **LET ALISTAIR** Mckean of HMS Sultan, and Martyn Allan of BRNC Dartmouth will be attempting a cycle ride from Lands End to John O'Groats in seven days.

Martyn's mum was diagnosed with cancer last year, and the two have decided to take up the challenge of raising money for Breakthrough Breast Cancer Research which she supports passionately.



● Members of the Royal Navy and United States Navy at the start line Picture: LA(Phot) Chris Winter

It ain't half hot

NORMALLY we don't do things by halves in the northern Gulf, but in this case, we'll make an exception.

Teams of Royal Navy and US military personnel ran 13 miles and 192 yards – a half marathon – in Iraq.

Actually, when we say 'in Iraq', we mean 'off Iraq' – the Khawr al Amaya oil terminal at the tip of the Gulf.

Now throw temperatures touching 40°C into the equation. And the constant threat of terrorist attack.

A half marathon constitutes 28 lengths of the rickety, war-torn structure, but there was no shortage of runners – 25 in all – with teams such as 'Deceptively Slim', 'Team Awesome' (must be Americans – Ed), and 'Big Cheese' (fittingly Cdre Duncan Potts and his chief-of-staff).

The run had to begin at 5.00am so all the runners could be over the finish line by 7.30am – when temperatures were already reaching 40°C.

Some runners did the 'whole nine yards'; others ran a relay, but everyone ran at least seven miles.

"It was not a race but the natural competitive nature of military personnel turned it into a more competitive finish," said CPO Andy Patton, one of the event organisers.

Andy himself was unable to run due to a knee injury, but completed his own feat of endurance – cycling 35 miles in 114 minutes on an exercise bike parked at the marathon's finishing line.

The runners – plus friends and family – reached their target of

£2,500, with the money going to the Big Salute, which divides cash between BLESMA, Combat Stress, Veterans Aid, St Dunstan's and Headley Court.

Although the race managed to hit its target, you can still donate via the website which can be found at www.justgiving.com/ctf158marathon



● Logs Mike Smith and the organisers of the Promise Dreams run

Stretch isn't 'armless'

MORE than 300 people crossed the finish line at the Wolverhampton Run for Dreams this year, including one honourable guest...

Logs Mike 'Stretch' Smith of HMNB Portsmouth completed the five-kilometre charity run dressed as Nelson, accompanied by footballers Steve Bull, Don Goodman and TV presenter Suzi Perry, who all organised the run.

Stretch is hoping to reach a total of around £150 for the

charity Promise Dreams, which helps terminally ill children.

He said: "I trust that the more pedantic readers will forgive me some artistic license in my turnout, specifically in that I elected not to amputate my arm."

Wolves legend Don Goodman said: "Despite the heavy rain, everyone had big smiles on their faces."

For more information about the charity, visit their website at www.promisedreams.co.uk



● Wall of fame... the RN cyclists pose alongside the Roman ruins

Roman conquerors

THREE ex-service personnel were part of a group that has completed a 174-mile bike ride from Ravensglass to Tynemouth for the Help for Heroes Fund.

Following the Hadrian's cycle route, former CPO Lou

Armstrong, former RM Commando Paul Bramley and former PO Chris Armstrong RNR, raised over £1,200.

They pass on thanks to all those who sponsored them during this year's Army vs Navy rugby match.



● Mud, mud, glorious mud...

Navigation with a twist

TWO teams from HMS Sultan have raised money for a Multiple Sclerosis charity after navigating their way through a wet Welsh forest – whilst carrying an MS sufferer in a wheelchair.

The Snowdonia-based MS Challenge 2008 aims at raising as much money as possible for the Solent MS Therapy Centre.

By fastening the wheelchairs to a carrying frame, the two teams were able to carry their passengers across the ten-kilometre course.

One of the passengers, Hazel Russell, said: "I am always impressed with how HMS Sultan

approaches this fabulous event. Teamwork and morale are always sky high which is why they enjoy it so much."

The two teams worked tirelessly to carry their passengers over fallen trees, through ice-cold rivers and into neck-deep lakes of mud.

One of the competing team members, Lt Andrew McAllister said: "The money raised goes towards a fantastic cause and everyone involved has enjoyed themselves enormously – I'm looking forward to next year already."

A date with Red Plum

ICE-SHIP HMS Endurance has added her support to a £1.3 million appeal for Teenage Cancer Trust (TCT).

The funds raised from the appeal will go towards a specialist treatment centre for young people with cancer at the Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust.

HMS Endurance has produced a calendar of striking images from her time in Antarctica, and all proceeds will go towards the Southampton Appeal.

The new unit – the first of its kind in the south of England – will provide teenagers with some of the best care facilities in the country.

To donate to the appeal, or find out how you can get involved, visit www.teenagecancertrust.org

Meanwhile, senior ratings on HMS Endurance are proud to sponsor the older generation by making the Falklands Veterans Foundation (FVF) their chosen charity during the ship's first 18-month deployment.

The FVF is the first UK-based charity committed to providing financial help and advice for veterans and their families.

Bogged down

CAPT Mark Beverstock is used to the hustle and bustle of HMNB Clyde, but has recently gone back to school to learn about "boggy swamps."

Paying a visit to KangaRhu Pre-school – a school for children of Service families – Captain Beverstock, of HMS Neptune, also took time to talk to the young Kangas, and discovered the fun to be had in learning.

In 2002, the FVF set out to establish Project Stanley – a house in the Falklands for veterans and their families to visit in order to remember fallen comrades, and face their demons from the war.

Construction can now begin on the £267,000 centre, which will overlook Port Stanley harbour.

A dog called Derby

THE SUBMARINERS Association (Derbyshire) is aiming to raise £5,000 to sponsor a guide dog puppy to commemorate the launch of the City of Derby's affiliated submarine HMS Ambush.

The puppy – called 'Derby' – will undergo training to become a guide dog for the blind.

The association hopes to raise the money in time to coincide with the launch of HMS Ambush, granted affiliation to the city after its previously affiliated boat HMS Sovereign was decommissioned.

Terry Hall of the Submariners Association (Derbyshire) said: "Our initial suggestion was to name the guide dog 'Ambush', but it was explained very politely that shouting out 'Ambush' in a very loud voice, while exercising a guide dog in a recreational area could sort of cause confusion!"

"We could not think of a name more appropriate than Derby, which will sum up the origins of the sponsorship."

For information on how to donate, you can send an email to derbypuppyappeal@yahoo.co.uk

Scilly sail

A JOURNEY from the Isles of Scilly to St Michael's Mount, Cornwall has been undertaken by former RN sailor Tony Clee, who after overcoming throat cancer himself was raising money for Cancer Research UK.

To find out more about the journey, visit www.scillysail.com

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The good

WHAT does the name Gibraltar conjure up? To Jack on a two-day visit, perhaps a run ashore, a clamber up the Rock the next morning to visit the apes and work off the sore head – and then home or away.

Gibraltar is usually the first or last stop from the UK, and so it's a traditional place to let off steam. But most visits last only two or three days, so although sailors get to know some of the bars on the Rock, they don't see what goes on in the garrison.

"Working here gives you an entirely different perspective from what the sailor sees when he comes in for a two-day visit and leaves with a bit of a hangover and a bit of sunburn," said Cdre Matt Parr, Commander British Forces Gibraltar.

"If you're here permanently it's a much more interesting, multi-layered place to live and work." For a start, Gibraltar doesn't belong to the Navy, although 300 years of history have knit an enduring bond on both sides.

This was after all the place which Nelson called "the good old rock," and the Gibraltarians are famous for their affection for the Navy (not to mention their tolerance of Jack's runs ashore).

But British Forces Gibraltar is a joint command, run by the Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood, and staffed by Navy, Army and RAF.

One of its most important duties is to run the RAF airfield, which as the only one in Gibraltar is also used by commercial flights. Another is to maintain training facilities for visiting British Army units, as well as the Royal Gibraltar Regiment.

Gibraltar has a way of making itself invaluable to British interests in every century. During WW2 the airfield was vital to the Africa campaign – it was only from here that aircraft could guard the Strait against U-boats, assist relief convoys to reach Malta, and carry paratroops to Africa.

And in another of those odd quirks of fate, the caves and tunnels which were doggedly excavated by the Royal Engineers in the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries have proved very useful in the 21st for training infantry soldiers for Afghanistan – OTAC, or Operations in Tunnels and Caves, is now an important feature of infantry training on the Rock.

In a review of post-Cold War Gibraltar in the early 90s, its principal roles were identified as maintaining a headquarters; running an RAF airfield; berthing nuclear warships; gathering intelligence, and maintaining the Royal Regiment of Gibraltar. Force protection has emerged as another in the early 21st Century.

Maintaining all this requires a garrison employing nearly 1,400 military and civilians, and an annual budget of over £45 million.

"Gibraltar's strategic position is fantastic," explained Cdre Parr. "It's right at the entrance to the Mediterranean and the only deep water berth in the Med under our control, as well as one of the very few operational berths for nuclear submarines."

"Of the UK's three permanent joint overseas bases, it's more of a naval base than the others, as we have all the facilities for refuelling, light repairing, and ammunitioning."

There are about 60 RN ship visits a year. Most call in to refuel, carry out minor repairs and take on ammunition.

Ships making longer visits, like HMS Albion, which stayed for 11 days in July, can enjoy all the shore-based facilities, from sport, adventurous training, and tourism. There is also a new state-of-the-art hospital, should they need it.

Princess Royal Medical Centre opened in February – the same day that the famous old 200-bed Naval Hospital closed its doors. It was too big for current needs and becoming too expensive to run.

The new medical centre employs 64 tri-Service staff – in

fact most of Gibraltar's naval personnel work here. It is an 11-bed high-tech hospital with decontamination facilities in case of nuclear accidents, an isolation ward and intensive care bed.

For more routine requirements it offers dental care, health visiting and midwifery – with a scale of midwife to mother which the NHS would envy.

"This hospital is so good that a visiting AB asked me if it was a private clinic," said Surg Cdr Martin Randle, the hospital's first Commanding Officer, who was in charge of the move from the old hospital.

He said: "We closed the doors of the old hospital and opened this one on the same day – we were doing surgery within an hour of opening."

"We can deal here with almost any surgical and medical emergencies. We have five consultants, one obstetrician and a paediatrician."

He added: "Defence Medical Services have been the Cinderella for a long time, but this is a fantastic hospital. I feel blessed to be the first CO of this place."

Meeting all the visitors' needs, operational and social, is a full-time job for the staff in British Forces Gibraltar HQ.

"We are social planners, travel agents, sports reps – you name it," said CPO Neil 'Fez' Parker, Staff Assistant Maritime Ops, who with Leading Seaman Mark Herbert arranges programmes for visiting

ships, Sea Cadets and units.

"We arrange diving training, SPAG [Submarine Parachute Assistance Group] team exercises, parachute drops and live firings, and then we also set up football and cricket matches for visitors and Sea Cadets, transport for visiting ships, accommodation, and airport collection."

"We liaise with the Tourist Board and deal with the embassies to arrange clearances, we sort out tunnel trips and caving expeditions – it's a pretty busy job."

The military garrison in Gibraltar grew to meet the needs for a much bigger Fleet, and 300 years of military history have left an infrastructure which is too large for the 21st Century.

Some of the plants which were feats of engineering in their time are now showing their age – the massive King's Lines fuel stores are currently out of use, awaiting expensive refurbishment (the current plan is to transfer them to the Government of Gibraltar which will repair them and keep some for RN use) and the power station occasionally needs some TLC from ships' stokers to keep it working.

It is also the only MOD site in the world which still generates its own power and makes its own water.

Maintaining all this is expensive in money and manpower, although the garrison is now a fraction of the size it used to be. In the 1960's, there were 2,000 RN here – now there are just 180.

Cdre Parr explained: "When I first came to Gibraltar 25 years ago the MOD owned just over three-quarters of the land mass."

"We're left now with a fraction over 30 per cent and most of that is the airfield, so we've scaled down hugely."

"I think the infrastructure is what we need for today. We don't dock ships or do refits any more, we lost that capability half a generation ago, but in terms of supporting ships we have pretty much what we need."

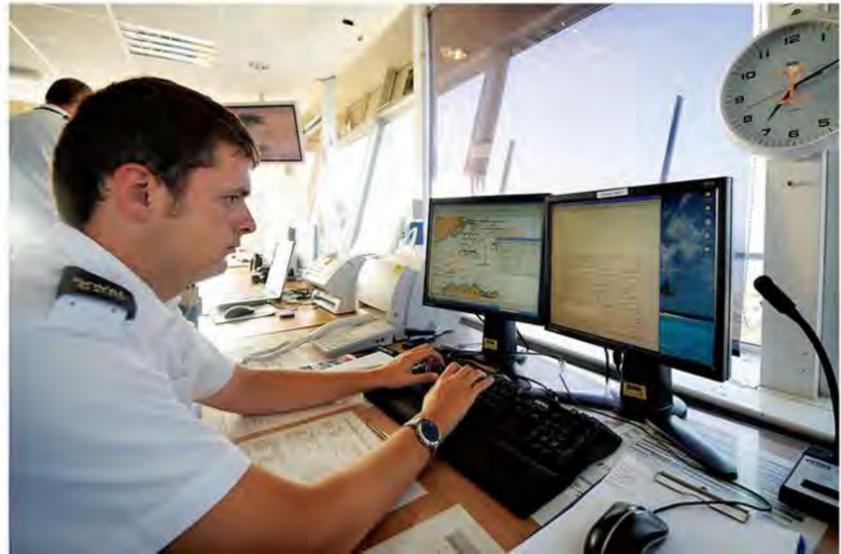
He added: "Our fuel depot at King's Lines is offline, temporarily, but once we work out what we're going to do with it there will be a 'get well' plan and the Navy will be getting their fuel again."

"Gibraltar is the only place where they can get the pure fuel that suits the engines. The ammunition depot is fine."

The Armament Depot is one of Gibraltar's strangest places. About 30,000 kilos of ammunition is stored in tunnels and caverns in the depths of the Rock, where there are 33 miles of tunnels (more than the 28 miles of road

The design of the place means that, even packed to capacity, nothing should spark a chain reaction.

Defence Medical Services have been the Cinderella for a long time, but this is a fantastic hospital.



Old Rock



outside). All the armaments and ammunition are carefully stored, checked and delivered to ships and units by a team of 13 MOD staff.

"If you wanted to create an ammunition depot you couldn't really do better than this, because the temperature is controlled, there is 10,500 cubic metres of space, and the access is good," said Roy Smith, the officer in charge of the Armaments Depot.

He added: "The design of the place means that, even packed to capacity, nothing should spark off a chain reaction. Despite the quantity of stocks, they are unlikely to harm anyone."

Another vital role for Gibraltar, which has emerged since that post-Cold War review, is force protection.

Nearly 80 per cent of the world's shipping passes through the narrow Strait, making it a vulnerable point for terrorist attacks on warships and merchantmen. It is also a prime spot for smuggling and people trafficking.

Of all this shipping, 99 per cent is identified by the team at Windmill Hill Signal Station.

Originally the station was set up by Lloyds of London, who paid the Navy £100 a year for their reports – probably a good deal in the late 18th Century.

Nowadays the information is passed to the Lloyds Maritime Intelligence Unit and the £100 goes to feed Scat, the ship's cat.

Here at the station, almost on top of the Rock and with a commanding view over the Strait, a team of 28 RN specialist communicators monitor every vessel which passes through.

"In addition to nearly 200 ships every day, there are 3,000 ferry crossings to and from North Africa a year, and a total of about 70,000 ships passing through the Strait every year," said Lt Jamie Walker, Officer Commanding Windmill Hill.

He added: "Every ship of 500 tonnes and above has its own AIS – Automatic Identification System, which tells us where it's from, and where it's registered. It all builds up a picture of the maritime traffic through the Strait."

He added: "It can be bleak up here – you're seeing it on a good day, but in January and February the wind is so strong it blows seawater all over our windows even at the top of the rock. But it's a very interesting job for communicators."

While the signal station monitors the shipping from its vantage point at Windmill Hill, the Gibraltar Squadron guards the Strait on the water.

The Rock used to have its own guardship, but now the squadron, whose main purpose is to provide

force protection and security, is the only resident seagoing unit.

Gibraltar beefed up its force protection significantly in 2003, when the former Northern Ireland Fast Patrol Boats Grey Fox and Grey Wolf were commissioned as HMS Scimitar and HMS Sabre and sent to the Rock.

The 19-strong team work in shifts and are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Squadron's two ships and three Arctic 24 RIBs, with their impressive top speed of 55 knots, provide force protection and a well-armed visible presence.

After a while you get to know the traffic here, you recognise the fishing boats, and you get a feel for something that doesn't look right.

"We put to sea every day, to reassure lawful vessels and deter would-be terrorists and smugglers,"

said Lt Toby Waite, CO of Sabre and Senior Officer of the Gibraltar Squadron.

He added: "After a while you get to know the traffic here, you know what to expect, you recognise the fishing boats and the usual vessels, and you get a feel for something that doesn't look right."

The squadron's skills range from seamanship and communications to GPMG firing – Sabre and Scimitar are fitted with two General Purpose Machine Guns and Bowman communications.

For CPO Dave Wade, marine engineer of Sabre, who maintains the RIBs, it is much more varied

and interesting than his previous postings, which were mostly on carriers.

"There's never a dull day with the squadron. One day you're out on patrol, the next you're escorting a warship," he explained.

"We're a very close-knit team, and there is a lot of responsibility. There aren't many jobs where an engineer gets to drive a boat – but I do here."

Another vital element of force protection is the Command Diving Element's clearance diving team, six divers led by CPO Steve 'Scouse' Vernon.

Every time a warship is due alongside, they carry out preliminary safety checks of tugs and the berth. Once the ship arrives, they search the hull for suspicious objects.

They also do some of the work that ships' divers used to do, such as engineering checks, and are responsible for disposing of any unexploded ordnance found below the high-water mark.

Lately they have been training divers from the Moroccan Gendarmie in security and force protection.

"Morocco is a key country to the UK and most of our links are funnelled through Gibraltar because of our proximity and because the Royal Gibraltar Regiment have had 20 years of training there," explained Cdre

Parr.

"The scale of exercising with the Moroccans has built up dramatically over the years. It is mostly Army, but also RN helicopters and the Commando Helicopter Force.

"We set up a local initiative last year for our divers to go across and train the Moroccans in counter-terrorist techniques, and it's a very rewarding relationship."

For divers who like the warm, clear waters of the Mediterranean and sailors who love messing around in (fast) boats, the Gibraltar Squadron seems like a dream job – perfect weather most of the year, and plenty of seametime.

But like other postings in Gibraltar, there is a surprising shortage of volunteers.

"I think people don't know we exist, so they don't put us on their preferences on JPA," said Lt Waite.

He added: "It is a very rewarding job, and offers responsibility – and a bit of fun. If they saw what we did, I'm sure we would have more people coming forward."

"For anyone who enjoys seamanship and being part of a small, very close-knit team, it's an ideal job."

The common gripes about Service life in the UK – poor quarters and health care – do not apply in Gibraltar.

There is no commuting and

plenty of time for family life – but overseas postings can be difficult to fill, explains Cdre Parr.

He said: "People are less able to up sticks and move nowadays. There are many reasons – it could be children, relatives, working wives or husbands.

"But from my perspective the vast majority of people who come here really love serving in Gibraltar.

"There are good facilities, the lifestyle is fantastic and it's not as though you're at the ends of the earth – there's a flight back to the UK in two hours, and Spain and Morocco are both on our doorstep.

"The local population are incredibly supportive, they turn out for parades, and you wear your uniform in the street.

He added: "We work hard, but there is plenty of time for fun and adventurous training, and the Navy gets to do those things that sometimes we don't appear to have the time and energy to do in the UK.

"In some ways, Gibraltar is what the Navy should be like."

● **Opposite page:** (top) Gurkhas of 94 Squadron, Queen's Own Gurkha Logistics Regiment train in the tunnels inside the Rock; (bottom) sailors in Windmill Hill Signal Station monitor the Strait of Gibraltar; HMS Scimitar patrols around Gibraltar. This page: (top) Stone faces of the Rock and Sabre; and (below) the Gurkhas land at Rosia Bay



Pictures: Cpl Ralph Merry RAF, Command Photographer and 2iC Media Ops HQBF Gibraltar



Meet with approval



EVERYWHERE you went, there were smiling faces. And not just among the visitors. The smiling faces were in uniform too.

Meet your Navy drew in crowds of 35,000 over its three-day course, as people from across the UK enjoyed the opportunity to mingle with the Senior Service at Portsmouth Naval Base.

The slightly grey start to the first day did not deter the visitors who packed into the Hard at Portsmouth waiting for the Naval Base's imposing Victory Gates to open.

Inside British ships from the Navy and RFA jostled alongside foreign ships, including guests from as far afield as Brazil and Japan.

I'll admit, confesses Helen Craven, I'm not a huge fan of dynamic displays – repeated experience has taught me that they tend to be a barrage of inaudible commentary with long pauses between activity.

But even I was caught up in the arrest of the drug-runners in Portsmouth Harbour – a Serco catamaran assumed an uncharacteristic role as a drug-running 'go-fast'.

Overhead a Sea King Mk 7 kept a wary eye on the runner in its airborne surveillance and control role. A grey Lynx raced alongside to halt the vessel's race to shore. Two off-shore raiding craft and a RIB full of Royal Marines harried their prey. And then the 'jungly' Sea King Mk 4 of 846 NAS, gravid with green-clad Marines, dropped her burden on to the boat.

People were packed along the upper decks of the Naval ships to watch this display, then talk to the people on board who live out these dramas for real in their working lives.

One of the issues that the Navy faces in terms of profile is that so much of its work is done 'over the horizon', at sea, off foreign coasts, in distant theatres. Meet your Navy brought the British public face-to-face with the Navy, RFA and Marines that they fund and support.

While the Dutch populace (*see opposite*) enjoy the luxury of their Navy Days for free, this quite simply is not an option for the British Royal Navy.

Running an event like Meet your Navy, providing facilities, big screens, toilets and seating in a working Naval base costs money, even with hefty support and sponsorship from commercial partners such as BVT and the Historic Dockyard.

But it's no secret defence spending is focused on the 'teeth' out there and not the 'tail' back here.

The crowds enjoying the sights and the sounds of the Royal Navy's past, present and

future saw good evidence of where their money was being spent – even looking into the future from the bridge of a future carrier in a simulator.

Visitors initially arrived in the Historic Dockyard where cheerful musketeers announced with smoke and explosion the past that built the Navy of today.

The larger ships drew, as ever, long queues of people, their wait relieved by the matelots and marines who stood and chatted among their numbers.

The skies were also alive with the past and present – with historic aircraft, search and rescue helicopters, and other displays.

And the ground suffered the mark of heavy boots with field-fun displays and screeching tyres as Royal Marines from 40 Cdo and RMR City of London efficiently protected a 'celebrity' from the onslaught of cheerful fans and psychopathic gunmen.

Meet your Navy offered up to the public a current reality that goes far wider than grey ships and Jolly Jack

It's not often – fortunately perhaps – that you get to see the Navy in action on your doorstep. It will be a two-year wait for the next big event in Plymouth.

But it will be worth waiting for...

Pictures: LA(Phot) Caroline Davies



Sublime Bay

LYME Bay may not be bristling with weapons, like HMNLS De Ruyter or USS Elrod, writes Mike Gray.

Her biggest assets – a vast vehicle deck and boat dock – may not have been on show.

But the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's newest ship was a good choice to fly the flag for the UK at Dutch Navy Days.

The Landing Ship Dock (Auxiliary) was one of three foreign ships (the others represented the USA and Belgium) alongside the jetties at Den Helder, home of the *Koninklijke Marine*.

And her hosts had given the 16,160-tonne ship a prime slot, on one side of the slip where the all-action dynamic display was played out twice a day, which made Lyme Bay a popular viewing platform.

Opposite her was the Dutch landing ship Johan de Witt, and just across the jetty was the Rotterdam, both step-sisters of Lyme Bay and a reminder of the close links between British and Dutch amphibious forces.

The British Bay class was based on the design for Rotterdam, and the hulls are similar, although the superstructures are quite different – and all three dominated the skyline as visitors poured into the base in their thousands.

The big ship and her three RFA sisters are building an equally big reputation for themselves.

Lyme Bay had just emerged from the exacting task of impressing the FOST team in the West Country during Exercise South-West Leopard, stepping in at short notice to replace a foreign assault ship.

Despite her lack of bodies – the 69-strong crew had to be augmented because of the sheer complexity of the exercise as well as the relentless workload – she headed to the Netherlands with a burgeoning reputation.

Her relief captain, Capt Kevin Rimell RFA, said: "We have to sing the praises of this ship. As a class they are incredibly capable – we have proved how versatile they are."

"Granted, with high-tempo exercises we have to augment, but no one should lose sight of the fact that the Navy gets good value for money out of these ships."

Dutch Navy Days Organisers were pleased by the overall attendance – in indifferent weather – of 180,000, slightly down on last year.

The Dutch Navy believes taxpayers should be given the opportunity to see the navy their euros pay for, and *Marinedagen* is the mainstay of that policy.

Large areas of the Den Helder base are thrown open to the public free of charge, and the Dutch respond in their thousands.



Some drive, some come by train and use the free shuttle bus, many more walk or, perhaps inevitably, come by bike.

According to Lt Pauline Handgraaf, a PRO for the Dutch Navy, the event provides an opportunity for potential recruits to test the water, but for most it is simply a nice – and cheap – day out with the family.

Among the highlights were the twice-daily dynamic displays, when Lynx helicopters were thrown around the sky, Dutch marines stormed ashore with guns rattling, a self-propelled gun chugged from a landing craft, and marines conducted a high-speed, daring routine in RIBs.

Children enjoyed hair-raising switchback rides around a sandhill course in Haggglunds all-terrain tracked vehicles, tugs toured the harbour and Dutch marines ran a climbing tower and zipwire.

A handful of visitors to Lyme Bay were slightly bemused there was not more to see on the auxiliary.

And British officers agreed that ideally there would have been a Sea Cadet party to escort or direct visitors, opening up the cavernous vehicle and boat decks, or a landing craft to add interest.

But most visitors cheerfully clambered the stairs to the bridge, with up to 50 at any one time poking around, pressing buttons, peering at displays and asking intelligent questions in good English.

Crew members had wondered how long it would be before a child found the button to sound the ship's whistle – all were proved wrong as it was a man in his

50s who grinned at the booming horn.

Other controls had to be isolated as an innocent finger sent out a distress signal from the ship, and others set off man overboard and general alarms.

But there was no impatience, no irritation from either hosts or guests – most RFA men and women insisted they were enjoying themselves, and the hard-working sailors and officers kept up an impressive charm offensive.

Officers' caps were placed on young heads as children sat in the Captain's chair, engine controls were pushed and spun, and requests and questions were asked and answered with polite smiles.

For RTO Debbie Oliver – formerly wardroom bar manager at RNAS Culdrose – it was just another good reason why she joined the RFA.

Debbie (47), whose brother is a warrant officer in the RN and whose son Adam is serving in HMS *Illustrious*, went to sea late in life, having celebrated her 40th birthday before even considering the RFA.

But now she could not even contemplate the thought of working ashore.

"I love what I do, and it is a bonus to get paid for it as well," said Debbie, who is making the switch from rating to officer.

"Right from day one it was fantastic – I loved it. And although this is a steep learning curve everyone has been so patient teaching me."

The Dutch laid on free entertainment, including a live band, for visiting sailors every evening after the gates closed.

Lyme Bay just managed to put out a football team to take on the USS *Elrod*, which resulted in a diplomatic 3-3 draw.

AB John Roberts scored a screamer (although I promised not to say in which goal), although 3/O Richard Allan will remember the match for other reasons, having dislocated his shoulder.

On the final day the crew had to work round an unscheduled replenishment.

As the visitors were invited to leave to allow the ship to sail a woman was found sitting in the corner of the bridge breastfeeding her baby.

Preparations carried on around her, with care being taken not to disturb them, and on completion mother and baby were escorted to the gangway and ashore, and Lyme Bay got under way for her next high-profile task, starring at the start of the Tall Ships Race at Liverpool. By coincidence, the race ends in Den Helder.



● From top: three amphibious ships – Johan de Witt, Lyme Bay and Rotterdam – dominate the Den Helder skyline; 3/O Richard Allan defies a dislocated shoulder to talk to visitors; a Den Helder worker cycles through the base to prepare for the final day of *Marinedagen* as dark clouds loom behind Lyme Bay; crowds gather to watch the dynamic display





Noble actions

THERE was a Lord Mayor, a chaplain, an MP, a Page 3 girl and some Royal Marines.

Not a Bernard Manning joke, but two very different days in the life of the men of 40 Commando who were hailed by their fellow Brits.

Fresh from their tour of duty in Helmand, the Norton Manor-based green berets were granted the honour of a homecoming/freedom parade in nearby Taunton.

More than 400 Royals marched through the streets of Somerset's county town, cheered on by thousands of locals – and not-so-locals, with families of loved ones travelling from all over the land to witness the parade.

In an age when sportsmen, movie stars and even *Big Brother* contestants are elevated to the status of gods, a colourful sign waved by a young girl as the commandos marched past put it all in perspective: *You're our superheroes.*

Mayor of Taunton Cllr Tim Slattery agreed. "The freedoms and privileges that we in Taunton enjoy today are a direct result of your noble values and noble actions," he told the marines.

40 Commando were led through the damp streets of Taunton by the band of HM Royal Marines Lympstone to the town's Burma war memorial for a traditional drumhead ceremony (pictured left by LA(Phot) Al Macleod) conducted by the unit's chaplain, the Rev Stuart Hallam.

The unit lost three men in Afghanistan – Lt John Thornton, Cpl Damian Mulvihill and Mne David Marsh, all victims of Taliban bombs. Their families were present at the ceremony, as were some of the Royal Marines seriously injured in Helmand, including Mnes Joe Townsend, Mark Ormrod and Ben McBean.

It's not just the men and women of Taunton who appreciate 40 Commando's sacrifices in Helmand. So too do the folk of London.

The green berets of Bravo Company headed to the capital in desert fatigues to sample some political and military history. Oh yes, and there was a Page 3 girl to greet them...

The Royals were given a VIP tour of the Houses of Parliament by their local MP, Jeremy Browne, a tour of a brewery, a free ride on the London Eye, and tours of the MOD headquarters in Whitehall, the nearby Cabinet War Rooms and the Imperial War Museum.

"Wearing desert camouflage made sure we got lots of attention. People kept coming up to us in the street and shaking our hands," said Mne Gary Mitchell.

His boss, 2/Lt Tom Williams, added: "The reaction of people in London was excellent – they congratulated us on our efforts in Afghanistan and wished us well.

"The visit to London gave the company a chance to experience some military history but also to learn about the larger picture of government and help the marines understand the job we do and the decisions that shape it."

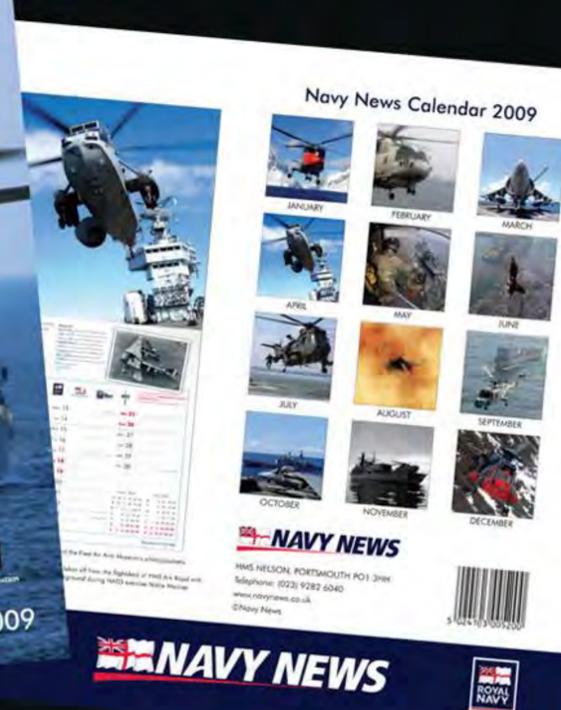
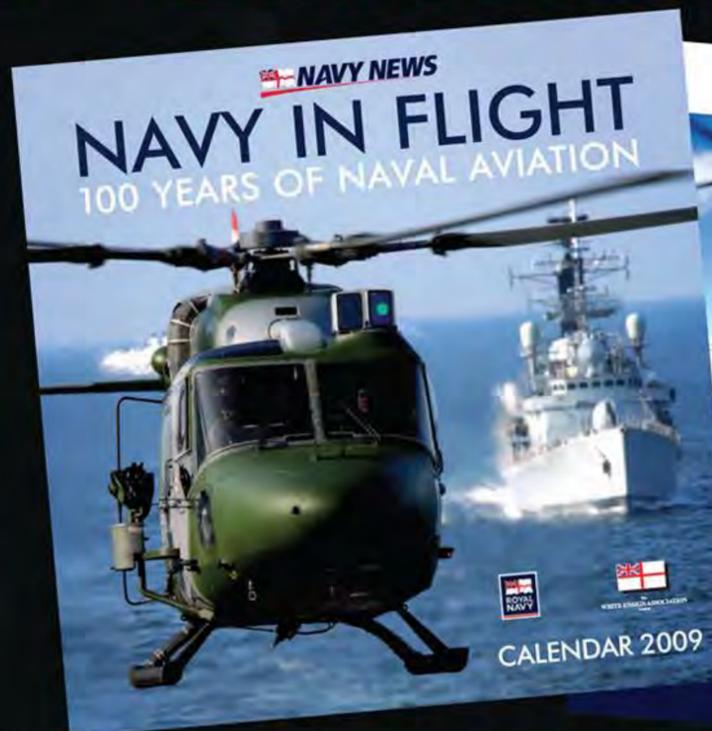
And the Page 3 girl? You might remember blonde Danni (the Royals certainly do...) from Lympstone when she attempted the commando assault course last year.

There was no mud this time but plenty of admiring glances in Trafalgar Square this time. The model proved quite popular too...

North of the border, Bravo's sister company Alpha headed to the Commando Memorial at Spean Bridge to pay their respects to the three comrades lost in Helmand, laying a small plaque embossed with the Globe and Laurel at the foot of the monument.



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● Anatomy of a drugs bust... Montrose's boarding party approach the suspicious dhow (left); one of the team crawls into a secret compartment (above) and the fruits of their labours (right) £20m of drugs piled up on the boat's upper deck

Forces for good

SUNDAY April 20 and Monday April 21 2008 are days which will probably not register much on the historical Richter scale.

Westminster was all of a flutter, as Westminster tends to be, over the 10p tax rate.

Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton were trading insults (again) in the race for the Whitehouse.

The ubiquitous (and troubled) singer Amy Winehouse was in the news once more – this time for the right reasons, nominated for several awards.

Former deputy prime minister John Prescott revealed he had battled with bulimia for years.

And off the coast of Somalia, Swedish skipper Johan Lillkung was returning the 88ft yacht Dolphin to Spain after wintering around the Seychelles and Maldives.

Lillkung and his crew were uneasy. A week earlier, before casting off from the Maldives, the skipper had checked with the International Maritime Bureau in Kuala Lumpur.

Since the French yacht Le Ponant had been seized, the Bureau told the Swede, there had been no more pirate attacks.

But that, Lillkung thought, was two weeks ago.

Now Dolphin was bearing down on the Gulf of Aden – branded 'Pirate Alley' by mariners. And with good reason. More than \$2.5m has been handed to mauraders since the turn of the year.

With night shrouding the gateway to the Red Sea, Suez and the world beyond, Lillkung and his crew studied the Dolphin's radar anxiously or scanned the horizon with binoculars.

The radio crackled into life.

Merciful God, cansomebody help us, the pirates are boarding. Merciful God, help us please.

There were chaotic sounds aboard the Faisal Mustafa, a dhow bound for India, shouting, then silence. The radio went dead.

A few minutes later, the Dolphin heard the comforting sound of HMS Chatham's Lynx overhead.

The Dolphin continued on her way towards Djibouti, passing through waters guarded by the German frigate Emden.

Seven hours later, more radio chatter. Another Mayday, this time from a Japanese tanker.

The Takayama was peppered with small arms fire and her hull penetrated by a rocket-propelled grenade.

The 'night of the pirates' was not yet over. A small merchantman was seized by marauders just off the Somali coast. Half an hour later, more bloodthirsty raiders boarded a Spanish fishing boat.

"Our only comfort is seeing helicopters flying overhead once in a while and the occasional warship," Lillkung recorded in his log.

And then it was Dolphin's turn. Little more than two dozen miles off the shores of Yemen, two small speed boats began racing towards the yacht.

Lillkung immediately flashed an SOS. Within ten minutes a Spanish warship was barreling down on Dolphin's position and a US Marine Corps aircraft was overhead, buzzing around the suspicious craft – which had closed to within a mile of the yacht.

In the space of 20 hours, 'Pirate Alley' had lived up to its name: five attacks on shipping or near misses.

Amid tax rows, bulimic politicians and soul singers, there was barely, if any, space in



While the Navy's strength in Afghanistan ebbs and flows, it maintains a constant – and sizeable – presence in the Gulf, and not just the waters off Iraq, as Richard Hargreaves reports.

the news columns for the night and day of the pirates.

Hardly surprisingly, a frustrated Johan Lillkung pleaded in his log: *Politicians of the world, do something.*

Why should 'the politicians of the world' care?

Why should we here in our comfortable homes in the UK worry about thieves and marauders holding yachtsmen, fishermen, and tankermen to ransom 3,000 miles away?

Because these waters are the lifeblood of our country, as surely as are the Strait of Dover, the North Sea, the Solent.

"When trade in the seas here stops, then trade in the UK stops," Cdr Andy Hogben, Commanding Officer of HMS Montrose, says succinctly.

Not convinced? Well, cast your mind back to the autumn of 2006.

Arriving in Felixstowe docks was the Emma Maersk 3, a rather unassuming name for the largest container ship on the seven seas.

Piled high on its decks were 11,000 containers – 3,000 for Britain, the rest for other European states.

Inside were MP3 players, batteries, toy dinosaurs, guitars, computers, sofas, pet food, cutlery, tea, frozen chickens and lamb, mussels, tuna, noodles, biscuits.

Had anything halted Emma Maersk's progress, then Christmas truly would have been cancelled.

It was not. The leviathan arrived safely. She came from China. She came via the Indian Ocean – like two out of every three ships which do business in great waters.

On the high seas, the Indian Ocean is the crossroads of the world.

But it's also 'Pirate Alley'. And the 'Hashish Highway'.

And that explains why, in time honoured fashion, the Navy's here.

Two years ago there were three ships under the command of the UK Maritime Component Commander – the Bahrain-based staff who direct maritime security operations in the Gulf and Indian Ocean. Today there are 14 warships, auxiliaries and air squadrons under the control of Cdre Keith Winstanley and his team.

It is a domain dissected

between three distinct international naval forces – Combined Task Forces 150, 152 and 158:

- 158 safeguards Iraq's two oil terminals;
- 150 casts its net from the coast of Kenya to the Strait of Hormuz and the shores of Pakistan;
- 152 is something of a 'forgotten fleet' – undeservedly.

For a start, its realm is B I G. 65,000 square miles of 'big' – from the southern border of Kuwait to Hormuz.

And secondly – and more importantly – it's the fuel pump of the world.

We have banged on about the importance of the two oil platforms at the tip of the Gulf – the Khawr Al Amaya and Al Basra terminals – month in, month out.

But Iraq's two platforms – important as they are to that country's economic future – are the tip of the, er, oil field.

Two out of every three barrels of oil produced come from the oilfields of the Middle East.

Each day 2½ million barrels of oil pass through the Strait of Hormuz – that's \$4bn daily.

If that's not enough to make your jaw drop to the floor, 40 per cent of the world's gas also comes from here (the UK is a major customer, for example, of Qatari gas).

"If you want to pick an area which defines globalisation, then this is it," explains Cdre Peter Hudson, the British commander of CTF 152.

More attentive readers of Navy News will recognise the Commodore as Commander Amphibious Task Group (or COMATG in the wonderful world of RN acronyms).

Equally astute readers of Navy News will also recognise that there's no amphibious task

group in the Gulf presently.

But with the Royal Marines either just back from Afghanistan (40 Commando), or about to deploy to Afghanistan (3 Commando Brigade), there's not a great deal for an amphibious task group to do...

It would, of course, be wrong to have an experienced staff stuck back in Plymouth when there's an important naval job to be done.

So the commodore and his team have swapped the imposing stone edifice of Stonehouse for a sandy-coloured portable cabin in Bahrain.

"The UK makes a significant contribution in the Gulf and it's quite right that we do so," Cdre Hudson stresses.

"Our 'parish' is the area which makes the world tick.

"For the countries in this region, this is a vital task.

"Maritime trade can only go on if the environment is secure and safe."

Ah yes, maritime trade. As well as being home to just shy of 1,000 oil and gas platforms and installations, the Gulf region is also increasingly a hub for trade on the high seas.

Three decades ago, Jebel Ali was a fishing village between Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

Today, Jebel Ali is the eighth largest port in the world, used by 128,000 vessels each year. It deals with three times more trade than Britain's principal port, Felixstowe.

And Jebel Ali is not alone. Trade at Fujairah on the east coast of the Arabian Peninsula is mushrooming. Bahrain is booming. The skylines of Abu Dhabi and Dubai are dominated by cranes as yet more high rises go up.

These cities, states and emirates – and others – follow what the men and women of

Continued on page 26



● 'These dhows are filthy, hot, there's little food, little water, and our lads get right in the thick of it'... HMS Montrose's boarding party inspect a suspicious vessel in the Gulf of Aden, watched over by the mother ship

Continued from page 25
CTF 152 do, if not avidly, then at least regularly.

But the wider world?
Search Wikipedia – the sprawling internet encyclopædia – for references to the naval forces east of Suez. CTF 150 and 158 are there, but not 152.

So the 'forgotten fleet' then?
"People know about the 150 task force because they pass through the area if they're heading for the Gulf or the Far East and the work of 158 is publicised, but it's almost as if there's a blank between Hormuz and the northern Gulf," sighs Montrose's Cdr Hogben.

Capt Malcolm Cree – 152's 'afloat commander' – agrees.
"People know what happens in the north of the Gulf, they know what happens outside the Gulf.

"CTF 152 is probably not as tangible, but in the future, what we are doing here will be recognised. It is of crucial importance for the future."

It's also of crucial importance for the here and now.

CTF 152 is not a task group in the traditional sense. You will not find the ships bunched up à la illustrious Orion 08 force earlier this year.

The ships operate independently – it's their aim which is common, or as Cdre Hudson puts it, "The sum of the parts should be greater than the individual."

But how do you police 65,000 square miles of sea?

Well, for a start, you have to concede that with half a dozen ships, you cannot patrol the entire Gulf – but you can concentrate your efforts in specific stretches.

Secondly, and vitally, you must understand what Cdr Hogben calls the 'pattern of life' – the daily goings on in these waters.

"It's about knowing what is normal first so that you can spot the abnormal," Montrose's CO explains.

Fishing inside the Gulf is not the same as outside it, for instance. Here dhows, not skiffs, are the order of the day and they scatter pots filled with bait to catch their prey.

And even in a region where fuel is 'dirt cheap' (it'll cost you little more than £5 to fill up a 4x4 in Bahrain, for example), there's quite a bit of petrol smuggling; the price varies considerably among the Gulf states. There's a lively black market, too, in dates and cigarettes.

Then there's what Cdre Hudson calls 'maritime mugging' – piracy. In the Gulf it's more bully boy than anything else: stealing kit from vessels such as GPS systems, radios, phones, fish.

It is not the task of the CTF 152 ships to put a clamp on such activities – they're really after the bigger fish.

But knowing it goes on helps to complete the big picture – and putting a stop to it wins the hearts of local mariners.

The small fish remain just that. There's no evidence to link the small-time smugglers with the more sinister drugs/terrorist trade.

But the presence of the proverbial 'bobby on the beat' has the desired effect – the criminals generally stay away when there's 3,500 tons of battleship grey nearby.

"Our presence should be like dropping pebbles in a pond – the ripples should move outwards," says Cdr Hogben.

Monitoring trade is just one strand of 152's mission, however.

Equally important is safeguarding the infrastructure of the Gulf: oil and gas platforms, power stations, water desalination plants. Think: protecting the Iraqi oil platforms, then multiply it several hundred times and you have an idea of the scale of the challenge.

It's not surprising, then, that the task force has recently been carrying out exercises to defend these platforms.

And although the RN has a wealth of experience to call upon, as Montrose's CO points out, "you cannot use the same tactics and methods to defend the platforms here as you do off Iraq."

There are, however, some constants in task forces 158 and 152. For a start, both are international (although 152 is a much more diverse affair – Bahrainis, Pakistanis, New Zealanders for example have all served with it).

And climatic conditions are similar. At this time of year, that means hot.

"This is a punishing environment," says Cdr Hogben.

"The boarding teams return to Montrose physically drained and absolutely drenched. We're going to weigh some of the party just to see how much weight they lose during a search.

"The sea temperature is about 34°C which means it doesn't cool the machinery and the ship is running at maximum effort.

"It never ceases to amaze me that I get cold water in the shower every morning – there must be a wizard on board somewhere."

There is no magic wand to bring order to 'Pirate Alley' and the 'Hashish Highway', just eternal vigilance.

On paper it is a daunting task – a myriad of nations, a myriad of issues (piracy, drug-running, arms-running,

people trafficking) scattered across two and a half million square miles of ocean.

These are all issues which extend far beyond the maritime sphere – they are military, political, social, economic, ideological.

"These are problems which will not go away," says Cdre Winstanley.

"They are more than simply maritime issues, the root causes of many of these issues are ashore but the practical manifestations present themselves in the maritime arena. They are issues that we have to deal with."

The tide of refugees from Somalia is never-ending. Each year 30,000 Somalis seek to escape their chaotic homeland, paying unscrupulous traffickers between \$50 and \$150 to take them to Yemen.

Many never reach Yemen's shores.

"The traffickers are ruthless. They will shoot people or dump them over the side into the sea," Cdre Winstanley explains.

"In the past couple of weeks alone, American warships have provided assistance to vessels with 100-150 refugees on board."

Much more lucrative is the trade in narcotics.

Last month the US and UK military lifted the lid on the Allied campaign against drug traffickers in the Indian Ocean.

Drug-busting operations have been a mainstay of RN patrols in the Caribbean for years.

Just as there are few parallels between the northern and southern Gulf, so strangling the 'Hashish Highway' is a very different proposition from curbing traffic in the Caribbean.

For one thing, CTF 150's realm is more than twice the size:

There are many more nations bordering the shores – and many more nations committed to the police action (more than 20 navies have sent ships to join Combined Task Force 150 at times).

And then there's the enemy. These are far busier waters.

"At least 95 per cent of the vessels are doing perfectly legitimate business – that's hundreds and hundreds of dhows," says Cdre Winstanley. "Finding the enemy is the classic needle in a haystack scenario. They don't make it easy for us."

Indeed they do not. There are no dodgy looking sailors in stripey T-shirts carrying sacks marked 'swag'.

It's an unremitting, painstaking task. And it is one which reaps dividends once you've established the 'pattern of life' here.

Which is exactly what Montrose did from the moment she arrived in the Gulf of Aden.

"We started out talking to the Yemeni fishermen," explains Cdr Hogben.

"They set out at sunrise in small boats, hunting for tuna, and return at sunset. They wear balaclavas to protect their faces from the sun. They come hurtling at you, get within 200 metres of your ship, cutting across your bow."

Balaclavas. Small boats moving rapidly, cutting across the bows of merchantmen. On the surface, these are the tactics of pirates and terrorists.

Indeed, as yacht skipper Johan Lillkung confided in his log, the mood of many mariner in the Gulf of Aden is "erring on the side of paranoia".

Cdr Hogben adds: "We were getting calls from merchantmen: We're being attacked."

In the cases Montrose investigated, the 'attackers' were Yemeni fishermen, chasing shoals of tuna. They make perhaps \$20 a day for their efforts.

"It is a fascinating way of life," says Montrose's CO.

"But the fishermen were frightened by our presence until we started talking to them, while merchantmen don't like boats hurtling towards them, cutting across their bows. There are a lot of nervous merchant ships out there, understandably."

Thanks to the work of Montrose if not less nervous, then merchant sailors should at least be better informed about what to expect in waters off Yemen.

And thanks to building up that comprehensive picture of fishermen's habits, Montrose knew that when she came across a dhow moving against the flow "something was up."

Confirmation that 'something was up' came when the frigate sailed up to the run-down vessel.

The presence of a 3,500 tons of grey steel, guns, missiles and helicopter has a habit of (a) putting the willies up sailors or (b) at the very least grabbing their attention. The dhow's crew kept their heads down and continued as if everything was normal.

The result was a visit from a Royal Marines and Royal Navy boarding party.

"These dhows are filthy, hot, there's little food, little water, and our lads get right in the thick of it."

In the end, the traffickers were undone by a measuring tape, a piece of paper, a pencil and some good old British nous.

Every inch of the vessel was measured and mapped out. The numbers didn't

tally.

As it turned out the dhow was hiding a secret compartment, barely a couple of feet wide. Inside were sacks and sacks of hashish and a little heroin – ten tonnes of narcotics in all, worth £20m on the streets.

It was the largest seizure by any Royal Navy vessel east of Suez in recent years or as Cdr Hogben put it "a good day for us, a bad day for the criminals."

Each sack had to be removed and counted on the dhow's deck before one by one, they were ripped up and its contents tossed into the Indian Ocean. It took a team of 20 sailors and marines over nine hours – in 40° heat.

"My sailors could see the tangible results of their efforts, although I don't think it sank in until about 24 hours afterwards," Cdr Hogben says.

The criminals too will feel the tangible results of the Allied anti-drugs sweep in the Indian Ocean.

For the most part, they come from the Makran coast which straddles Iran and Pakistan, leaving in speedboats and dhows (the latter are up to 35 metres – 115ft – long), heading south and west.

Unlike the comparative narcotics trade in the Caribbean, the money filters back not to drug barons for their personal aggrandisement, but invariably to terrorists and extremists.

Despite this year's clutch of successes by Allied warships, it's far too early to talk of 'victory'.

"The enemy will chop and change tactics all the time," Cdre Winstanley warns.

"I liken it a little to Bletchley Park during the war. We will have successes, but we must not be surprised if the enemy adapts and we go through some lean periods.

"It's a long, drawn-out operation and we must be prepared to be in this for the long haul. It's a game for thinking people."

Visible in the heat haze just south of Al Basrah Oil Terminal, the Mighty At 'Em manoeuvres adroitly.

On the bridge of HMS Chatham, the electronic chart – WECDIS – is crisscrossed by lines of demarcation, clearly showing where Iraqi and Iranian territorial waters are, plus zones claimed by the latter.

It also shows the depth of water, ship locations, underwater hazards and other essential details. With only several metres on average under Chatham's keel, the incredible accuracy of WECDIS together with the information it provides at a glance, enables her to be navigated on the edge of the envelope.

Sometimes the ship needs to use

"A good day for us, a bad day for the criminals."
– Cdr Andy Hogben



her speed to intercept fishing dhows or other (potentially suspect) vessels, chasing them out of the exclusion zone. With close to 5,000 tonnes of metal hurtling at around 20 knots to save the terminals from a potentially mortal blow, the confidence WECDIS provides is a weapon in itself.

If the Royal Navy deployed a smaller vessel to the northern Gulf then it would not have the endurance, the weapons to deal with an intruder if need be – or the sensors to detect the threat in the first place. Therefore, despite the navigational hazards a Type 22 frigate faces, it is truly a ship fit for task. The superb seamanship that has been the hallmark of the British fleet for centuries remains a key asset in the post 9/11 world.

These are waters that even the mighty US Navy fears to tread with its major warships – they draw too much water – hence the Americans' 9,000-tonne on-call missile cruiser is stationed in deeper waters.

In the shallower waters, Chatham is working with small US Coast Guard, US Navy and Iraqi Navy patrol craft, which can enforce the Coalition will in waters in which even the Type 22 frigate cannot venture (although her embarked small boats can).

And in these shallower waters, the Iranians like to venture. Their Revolutionary Guard Corps in armed speedboats, Iranian colours flying from their sterns, came within a few hundred yards of Chatham as the warship patrolled on the edge of Iraqi waters.

On Chatham's upper decks sentries and gun crews stared back at the defiant Revolutionary Guards who refused to respond to radio interrogation from Coalition vessels, except to hurl insults of a scatological and anatomically invasive nature.

It would be easy to be lured into a state of complacency – believing that it is all just a game, but of course, as the HMS Cornwall incident showed, it can all turn very serious in a split-second.

Chatham's Commanding Officer, Cdr Martin Connell, is glad that the Royal Navy did not retreat from the northern Gulf following that rather black day.

Almost 18 months on from the episode, he believes "the ghost of the Cornwall has been laid to rest."

Cdr Connell explains: "Perhaps the safest thing to do after that experience would have been to change the posture of the forces up here – don't take that risk, don't send out boarding teams.

"Thankfully, we have not gone down that route. I do understand that the Royal Navy cannot afford to make the same mistake again. Can I guarantee that what happened to Cornwall won't happen again? Yes, I can. Can I guarantee there will not be some kind of other incident? No, I can't."

And so, there is no zone of relaxation in the Gulf. Maintaining an ever-vigilant watch over a period of several months is no easy task, especially through a cruel Arabian summer.

On the upper-deck LET(WE) Liam Kealey continues daily rounds of the weapons, cleaning them to combat sand the consistency of talcum powder, mixed in with gun oil, together with the remorselessly corrosive action of salt water. Having served in Chatham since May 1999, Liam was in the frigate when she bombarded Iraqi troop positions in the nearby Al-Faw Peninsula during the Iraq War of 2003. "The daily routine up in the northern Gulf can be a real challenge, but somehow we keep going," he said. "Some days are very uneventful, but on others there is loads happening."

Fellow weapons technician Steve Durrant is reminded regularly by his family back home of how poor the UK summer has been. "Everyone keeps saying bring some sun back, but having had nothing but that out here for months I say 'no chance'."

Executive Warrant Officer Garry 'Scooby' Drew, a veteran of nearly 27 years' service in the Royal Navy, is full of admiration for the youngsters he serves with. A key member of the command team, EWO Drew looks after the welfare and morale of the ratings, in his own words "providing a sympathetic ear" for their concerns, large or small.

"Trying to maintain the morale and enthusiasm of the ship can be a challenge," he acknowledges, explaining that people pull an average 84 hours on watch a week when on patrol in the northern Gulf.

"No beer is issued because of the alert state and there are very few opportunities for barbecues on the flight-deck, or ship's quizzes, or other things we might normally do to relax people.

"Every day I walk the patch, speaking to people and finding out what bothers them. Morale is generally good, as they understand why they are here and it is an important job, but there can be small problems."

A 30-minutes-per-week allowance

on a telephone account card helps, enabling sailors to use phones in the ship to contact loved ones and being sent DVDs, newspapers and magazines from home also helps take the edge off the routine.

"You could say that the problem is that the task we are doing is boring," says EWO Drew. "However, I see being bored as a good thing – because if the ship is operating well and deterring the threat then nothing happens."

Given the physical and mental demands of operating in such an environment, you're going to want to let your hair down.

And even if the British public don't necessarily appreciate what we do in the Gulf, the locals do.

The team behind the Emirates Palace Hotel in Abu Dhabi – arguably the world's most luxurious/expensive hostelry – certainly do.

When Montrose was in town, its sailors were invited to use the hotel's sporting facilities for free (this is a place typically frequented by Premiership football teams – a cheap room will cost you a mere £180 for a night; the most expensive suite a jaw-dropping £5,700).

Volleyball, football, cricket – "on the best pitch I have ever played", as one Montrose put it – are all on offer, and if that exhausts you in the 50°C midsummer heat, the staff will kindly run you from one end of the hotel to the other (it's roughly a mile long) in electric buggies...

Of course, such luxury isn't always readily available.

Now you may (or may not) have already read about the chaps on the Khawr Al Amaya oil terminal who ran a half marathon for charity (see page 19).

Half marathon? Pah! Ask LLogs (Catering Services (Preparation)) – aka Leading Chef – 'Bobby' Ball about the real deal.

Yes, he ran around the upper deck of Montrose more than 182 times in the full glare of the Gulf sun, the crowning achievement of a day of fitness aboard the frigate.

His PO, Gary Smith, organised a series of marathon challenges – challenges to which more than half the ship's company rose.

They, however, began their marathon relays, 10km runs, bike rides and rows at 6.30am to escape the full brunt of the

Gulf heat.

Even at that time in the morning it was 28°C (82°F) with a less-than-pleasant 70 per cent humidity. By mid-day temperatures were hitting 45°C (113°F)... which is when Bobby was out there.

As leading chef his morning was devoured by preparing breakfast for 200 shipmates, followed by the small matter of assisting a RAS to take on 200 tons of fuel.

Nevertheless, he reached his goal in just over five hours; his shipmates completed nine marathon relays, three half marathons and 51 various 10km challenges.

Not to be outdone were Montrose's Royal Marine detachment who ran a marathon in spring relays, covering the distance 35 seconds faster than individual world record holder Haile Gebrselassie.

In Bahrain, the hub of Allied operations in the Gulf, the only record broken seemingly is the ever-rising cost of oil – currently around \$130 per barrel.

It's a source of celebration for locals whose economy is booming; it's a source of worry for the world beyond whose economies are stagnating or worse.

If there is any consolation for the wider world, it is this: without the three Allied task forces safeguarding the seas east of Suez, fuel prices could be a hell of a lot higher.

And that, together with the mountain of other maritime trade, is 'the reason why'.

"The Gulf is the lifeblood of this region," says Cdre Winstanley as he prepares to step down after two years in charge.

"We continue to punch above our weight in the Coalition and I believe it's worth the effort."

In those two years, the commodore and his team have been at the maritime centre of numerous events and have seen considerable progress. The team itself has grown in size to reflect the increasing RN contribution in the Middle East and recent additions of a Deputy UKMCC, Legal advisor, Policy advisor and a number of deployable staff officers mean the small UK footprint brings increased 'added value' in the maritime environment.

In the same time frame the commodore has seen training with the Iraqi Navy and Marines move up several gears. Iraqis now do most of the searches of tankers using the oil platforms.

They provide 'point defence' – manning the guns – of the Khawr Al Amaya terminal which, despite improvements, remains "a bit Waterworld-esque," Cdre Winstanley says.

The Iraqi Navy is expanding at pace. Destroyed in the first – not the second, the first – Gulf War, it is now approaching the size of the Royal New Zealand Navy in terms of people. Next year it will receive new patrol ships and increasingly assume duties performed by Allied warships around the platforms.

Its rebirth and growth has been supported to a very large degree first by RFA Sir Bedivere and, more recently, RFA Cardigan Bay. Both ships have, says the commodore, "been fundamental to maintaining progress towards Iraqi Navy transition. The RFA contribution really has been outstanding – and while there is still much work to do I think this is a real good news story."

There have, of course, been darker moments – the Cornwall incident, for example.

But when the dust settled, there was never any question that British warships would continue to patrol the Iraqi oil platforms – or the wider Gulf region.

As Cdre Winstanley is quick to point out – while the collective strength of the Maritime Coalition in the Gulf is impressive – and the overall effect is certainly "greater than the sum of the parts," only two Navies operate in all three areas in the Middle East, those of Britain and the United States.

This effort together with taking command of the Coalition forces in the region demonstrates to all our continuing commitment to maintain lawful maritime order in an area vital to regional and world economic stability.

The commodore's tour of duty has seen many notable and historic events including Bahraini command of CTF 152 – the first Gulf Co-operation Council Navy to command a Coalition Task Force.

This was followed by another first, when Cdre Hudson and his staff took command of that same force in early June.

"This is a job worth doing. It is the Royal Navy's primary mission – denying the use of the sea by unlawful organisations," Cdre Winstanley stresses.

"If you want to be a premier-division Navy, then you want to be operating here." As he is fond of quoting to his Coalition colleagues, "If not here, then where? If not now, then when?"

With thanks to Iain Ballantyne, editor of Warships International Fleet Review (www.warshipsifr.com), for providing material from HMS Chatham.



picture: [aphot] chris winter, frou west



A face for good

I WAS in Victory Barracks when *Navy News* was first published and I have been a loyal reader ever since.

The poster (above) shows a painting from 1950 by A R Thompson, RA. I was selected from among the HMS St Vincent boys to be the model for a Royal Navy recruiting poster.

I served 22 years in the Navy. My time included the command of HMS Yarrton. During the appointment, Yarrton became the first RN ship to circumnavigate the island of Bahrain.

I ended my career as Staff Gunnery Officer to Command Naval Forces Gulf.

After retiring from the Navy, I spent 22 years in financial services then emigrated to Vancouver in 1993, where I began a third career in the film industry as a 'bit' actor.

As the other photo (below) shows, at the age of 75 I am still in uniform. I am playing the role of a Washingtonian (circa 1776) in the TV series *Masters of Horror*.

— Cdr Anthony Davidson (Retd) RVM RN, Gibsons BC, Canada



Prince of Wales

CAPTAIN LEACH was not the first commanding officer of HMS Prince of Wales (*Remembering Capt Leach*, July).

Capt Hamilton commissioned the ship in Birkenhead, having joined her on October 5 1940.

He was promoted to Rear Admiral, and reluctantly left the ship soon after January 30 1941.

I have this information from the memoirs of my father, Cap (E) L J Goudy, who was the Engineer Officer from September 1938 (when the ship was in build) until December 1941.

— John Goudy, Victoria BC, Canada



● HMS Hood alongside in Gibraltar in 1938, as pictured by Fred White, who served in the ship at the time. Now 91, Fred lives in Weymouth and has kindly donated his memoirs and photograph album to us; you can see images from the latter on our website

Force for Hood

I AM sorry that Dr Taylor did not take my constructive criticisms of his Hood book in the way they were intended (*Letters*, August).

I was certainly not 'splenic' or 'indignant' when I wrote them, and no offence was intended.

I do, however, stand by them. We can never be sure about the dynamics of Hood's sinking but there is evidence for the ideas that I began to develop at sea about Hood's wreck – and which were accepted by almost all my colleagues on the expedition that found and examined it in 2001.

Equally, my conclusion on the evidence of those I have had the privilege of meeting who served in Hood is that she was indeed generally a happy ship.

I called Ted Briggs when I saw the headline 'Hood was not a happy ship,' and he could not have disagreed more. I hope it is not 'rank bad scholarship' to prefer the evidence of an actual survivor to that of a Communist agitator.

History is an 'argument without end' and it is best therefore to carry it out in a moderate and civilised manner.

Dr Taylor has produced an

impressive and worthwhile piece of work. He has no reason to be quite so sensitive.

— Eric Grove, University of Salford

...GOOD FOR Bruce Taylor! Once again it appears that Eric Grove has been brought to book, held to account, and precisely shown up for his arrogant, self-opinionated disregard of fact, namely his review of Bruce Taylor's book on Hood.

Whilst I cannot take on board a lot of Bruce Taylor's 'revelations' on Hood – ie, 'in a pitiful state,' you cannot work a ship up to 28 knots, two knots under her designed maximum, 3,000-odd ton overweight, due for refit, if she is in a pitiful state.

I respect the research he so obviously did. I have read practically everything that's been written on her in the last 45 years.

I certainly would not put any stock at all in what Mr Grove writes on her after his opinions (and that is all they are) on events in 1940, and his laughable theory on how Hood was lost.

— Peter French, Shaftesbury, Newport, Gwent

...IT IS most unfortunate that the recent articles by Eric Grove and

Bruce Taylor have prompted the headline 'Hood was not a happy ship,' particularly at a time when the HMS Hood Association is arranging for the construction and installation of a memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, in Alrewas, Staffordshire, to be dedicated later this year in memory of the 1,415 officers and ratings who died on May 24 1941 when HMS Hood was sunk in action with the German battleship Bismarck.

It is inevitably the case that there can be an occasional disgruntled member of a ship's company, but in my experience as a junior officer in HMS Hood in 1938-39 she was, despite her age, a happy ship, which is confirmed by other surviving veterans – and this needs to be recorded.

— Cdr Keith Evans (Retd), Vice Chairman, HMS Hood Association, Haslemere, Surrey

...I DECIDEDLY lost confidence in Professor Eric Grove several years ago when on TV he distinctly said that during the Bismarck action Hood's aircraft was aloft spotting for her.

I'm sure many others noticed this howler too.

— Frank Mantle, Halesworth, Suffolk

Wonderful Tristan Malay delay?

The photograph of Tristan da Cunha (May 2008) is a credit to the LA(Phot).

In April 1959 I was a Third Mate on a tramp ship, Teakbank, on passage from Cape Town to Montevideo; we called at Tristan to land some stores and a passenger – the new administrator and his family.

They used whaleboats made on the island from canvas and driftwood, they used cattle to haul the boats up from the beach – there was no harbour at all, just a small landing beach. The islanders sailed over to neighbouring Inaccessible and Nightingale Islands to collect birds' eggs (about 20 miles) and sent off homing pigeons to indicate their safe arrival and departure to their women folk at home on Tristan.

One unforgettable sighting of one of the world's most remote settlements, and a glimpse of their life before it changed forever. A wonderful memory.

— Capt C Winterton, Cambridge

I WONDER if I can ask if any of your readers who qualify to be awarded the Pingat Jasa Malaysia Medal have actually received it?

I served onboard HMS Barrosa from 1962 to 1963, she was based in Singapore and we spent a lot of time between there and Tawau in Borneo ferrying troops and patrolling off the coast.

I, like the rest of the ship's company, was awarded the Borneo GSM.

In April 2006 I sent my application for the PJMM to the secretary of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans' Association to be processed and forwarded on.

Two years and five months later I still haven't heard anything.

I am aware that there is a delay in awarding the medal but I wonder if any of your readers are in the same boat, if you'll excuse the pun.

— Brian 'Tommy' Tucker, ex PO (R), France

Polar heroes

ERIC William Kevin Walton, (*Heroes of the Royal Navy No.52*, August) is, like so many recipients of gallantry awards, a modest and unassuming man, a founder member of the Albert Medal Association in 1966.

He is one of only two Engineer Officers RN to be awarded the Albert Medal.

It was quite characteristic of him that he declined to exchange his Albert Medal for the George Cross in 1972.

He is now the only living person still wearing the Albert Medal for Gallantry in Saving Life on Land, with its distinctive red and white ribbon (although your illustration showed the blue and white Gallantry in Saving Life at Sea ribbon).

When he went to the investiture wearing what King George VI considered was the wrong ribbon, the King, being something of an authority on medals and ribbons, thought he should have been wearing the blue and white ribbon of the Albert Medal for sea service.

Although the place where Lt Walton performed his act of gallantry was frozen ice over the sea, he was awarded the land medal. This led to a light-hearted exchange between the two men.

Kevin Walton has also been awarded the Polar Medal. His family is thought to be unique in that his son has also been awarded the Polar Medal, this being the only instance of its award to a father and son.

— Michael O'Brien, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire



● Replication's what you need... The model HMS Warspite undergoing sea trials (or should that be lake trials?) in Poole Park

Sweet 16 (ft)

WE ARE two model boat enthusiasts who thought your readers might like to see our most recent build.

Having completed a seven-foot model of HMS Hood and an equally large one of the Bismarck, we came across a 16ft submarine model from a boat builder in the Midlands, and after a trial run in his prototype, decided to make our own model of HMS Warspite.

Tony built the conning tower and Kevin modified the trailer and we rebuilt the hull, which is made of plywood and includes a rotating radar scanner and navigation lights, dummy periscopes, aials and a fin.

The power is supplied by a modified 12-volt electric outboard motor using a leisure battery with

steering by a pulley system.

Access is via a lifting deck which opens to allow the operator to lie prone inside with his head inside the sail looking out through a screen giving the appearance of the model being radio controlled.

A rear facing video camera and two way communications with the shore help control the boat, while from a safety point of view a life jacket is worn and a fire extinguisher installed.

Successful sea trials have been carried out on Poole Park in various weathers and the submarine has performed faultlessly.

We now plan to build a larger 24ft model of a U-boat from World War 2.

— Tony Ferguson, Kevin Patience, Poole, Dorset

Tattoo hoo-ha

I READ in my morning paper about a young guy from Portsmouth who passed all of his entrance exams to join the RN, only to be turned down at the final hurdle because he had a tiny Gothic 'H' tattooed behind his left ear.

A Navy spokesman said: "Tattoos visible when wearing parade uniform are a bar on entry."

I joined in 1964, when we had a recruiting office in Hartlepool, and I had very visible tattoos on the backs of both hands, namely a panther's head on my left, and a galleon on my right.

Also a die at the base knuckle of each index finger, the 1960s swallows between thumb and forefinger, and a small sleeper ring in my left ear.

All of these were merely listed as 'visible distinguishing marks' and were otherwise never even discussed at my interviews.

Despite having all of these, I was always chosen as a member of the Ceremonial Guard wherever I served, including Whale Island, and a Royal birthday ceremony in Hong Kong.

It's well-known that all of the Services are having problems with recruitment and retention, so I was quite surprised to hear about his ruling.

— Doc Holliday, ex-AB QA2, Hartlepool

opinion

THE ROYAL Marines of 40 Commando had a heart-warming welcome when they returned from Afghanistan and marched through Taunton, where thousands of people turned out to cheer.

Of course, links with the local community and Norton Manor Camp are very close, so they might have expected a heroes' return in their home town.

What they didn't expect was an almost equally warm reception in London. But the Royals of Bravo Company were surprised by the response in the capital.

As Major Dan Cheesman said: "It was overwhelming. Not long ago we wouldn't have worn our uniforms in public. Now

we just can't shake enough hands."

Bravo Company spent a day touring the attractions, including the Houses of Parliament and the Imperial War Museum, followed by free rides on the London Eye, and a visit to a brewery.

Perhaps what they didn't expect was to become an attraction in themselves – but then it's not every day you get a company of Royals in full desert camouflage on the streets of London.

It shows, as Meet Your Navy showed, that the oft-lamented gap between the public and the Armed Forces becomes much narrower when they're able to meet.

CLASSIC JACK

BY TUGS



● A salty sea dog poses with two younger members of the naval community during Meet Your Navy
Picture: LA(Phot) Caroline Davies, FRPU East

Meet lovers

MY PARTNER and I spent a wonderful three days at Meet Your Navy in Portsmouth. The kindness we experienced from all whom we came into contact with made our stay from the outset.

We would like to express our sincerest thanks to the submariners we met at the gate for all the help they gave us, also to the lady in the ticket office and those at the side entrance who pointed out that I was disabled and should be treated with care.

I particularly wanted to show my partner where I was drafted from, in 1940, Victory Barracks, and also the HMS Nelson bell (having served in the battleship HMS Nelson).

I had a word at the gate and straightaway the policeman let us in and photographed us by the bell. To all these people, we both send our sincerest thanks.

The organisation was wonderful and our stay in the Maritime Naval Club very happy.

- Denys Carden and Jill Davies, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex

...MY SON Sam and I had a fantastic time and enjoyed every minute. We would like to express our thanks and gratitude to all the staff who have worked very hard making the event a success.

'In the company of such a fine group'

I WAS recently shown your June issue with the letters about HMS York.

I was appointed to this ship on August 25 1939 and was the only Reserve officer to board until after the Norwegian campaign in 1940.

The photograph is the York, originally the ship had three narrow funnels, the centre one was removed and the base trunking led onto the larger front funnel.

The reason was to accommodate the platform for the Walrus spotter aircraft which was in position when the ship escorted the first convoy from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Liverpool in the second week of

We would like to thank the crews of the ships for their hard work making the visits run smoothly. The organisation was superb throughout the weekend and we think this has been the best one we have attended yet, and we have attended numerous Navy Days in Devonport and Portsmouth.

The displays by the re-enactors was amazing, as were the model boats whose builders' skill was incredible, the demonstrations in the arena and on the water were incredible as were the Red Arrows with their breathtaking skills.

Well done to everyone - their hard work in putting on an event like this was appreciated more than words can tell.

- Daryl and Sam Dobbs, (aged 15), Tuffley, Gloucester

...I FELT I had to write, could you please pass on congratulations to the crew of HMS Southampton and RFA Lyme Bay for the brilliant display they did on the beach at Sunderland Air Show (see page 18), although we could not see the ship, or any aircraft due to fog, the display on the beach made the day.

A good insight into what the guys get up to - well worth the trip just to see that.

- Jan Gray, via e-mail

World War 2.

In those days there was no air cover mid-Atlantic. The only aircraft to hand was the unarmed spotter plane, our Walrus, to extend our vision beyond the horizon.

It was a happy ship commanded by men who all achieved great heights, including that great leader Casper John, with his outstanding ability both in command and socially.

It was indeed a great honour to be in the company of such a fine and able group in times of trouble.

- Lt Cdr Ronald Crisp, (Retd) RNVR, Shipton-under-Wychwood, Chipping Norton

LETTERS to the editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent's name and address, not necessarily for publication. us to publish it. Given the volume of letters, we cannot publish all of your correspondence in Navy News.

E-mail correspondents are also requested to provide this information. Letters cannot be submitted over the telephone.

If you submit a photograph which you did not take yourself, please make sure that you have the permission for



We do, however, publish many on our website, www.navynews.co.uk, accompanied by images.

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

The editor reserves the right to edit your submissions.

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A Naval Charity for ALL service and ex-service personnel of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, QARNNS, and their Reserves

'ONCE NAVY, ALWAYS NAVY'

Ganges memorial dedicated

ONE of the largest ex-Service associations has dedicated a memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas.

The HMS Ganges Association boasts almost 4,000 members worldwide, and more than 200 of them, their families and friends attended.

Guest of honour was Mrs Peggy Dunlop, wife of the late Capt Murray Dunlop, president of the association and the last Captain of HMS Ganges.

After the chapel service, conducted by padre the Rev John Waller, the congregation moved to the site of the memorial.

Association standards and two Sea Cadet units, from Burton-on-Trent and Stafford, provided a Guard of Honour – and members noted that the youngsters paraded to their usual high standards.

A fly-past by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight preceded the sounding of the Last Post and Reveille.

The chaplain blessed the memorial and adjacent bench, dedicated to Capt Dunlop; his widow said how much the association had meant to her late husband.

Stone recalls Bruce boys

A MEMORIAL stone for all who served at boys training establishment HMS Bruce from 1947-50 has been dedicated at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

The service, attended by 23 members, families and friends, is situated in an area known as the Royal Naval Review.

Members were delighted with the memorial, which was produced by stonemasons A&J Memorials of Oldbury.



● Delabole branch held their annual croquet match at St Kew, the home of branch president Admiral Alec Weir – and home advantage ensured that S/M Weir and Chris Hore won the trophy for Delabole, with St Austell branch members S/Ms Francis Marley and John Durnford taking second place after beating last year's winners, Launceston. With the weather proving inclement, the decision to erect tents proved a wise move, and the barbecue and real ale were very popular

Jack and Suzie are signed up

VETERANS of the HMS Crane Association have adopted two crane chicks at the Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) in Gloucestershire.

The association contacted WWT last year when a project was announced to reintroduce the European common crane to England as a breeding species.

Cranes had been native to Britain up to the 16th Century, when draining of the fenlands and over-hunting led to their extinction as a wild species – crane was a favoured delicacy of Tudor nobles.

A group from the HMS Crane Association visited Slimbridge to become better acquainted with their namesakes.

They were particularly impressed by the special measures devised by keepers to prevent chicks from becoming too used to human contact, as this might put them at risk when released into the wild.

The aviculturists have made a feeder which resembles the head of a mother bird, by modifying a litter picker, and when entering the bird pens, the keepers dress in a camouflage suit of dull grey to simulate the plumage of an adult bird.

The association has now adopted two chicks – Jack (for Jack Tar) and Suzie, as in Suzie Wong, the celebrated hostess of the Wanchai area of Hong Kong, in tribute to HMS Crane's long service in the Far East.

HMS Crane was the last of the Modified Black Swan sloops of World War 2 fame.

She sank two U-boats in the Battle of the Atlantic and was present at the Normandy Landings and at the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay.

Her other claim to fame is that she was the first – perhaps the only? – ship to shoot down a jet without use of radar-controlled guns, when mistakenly attacked by Israeli Mystere aircraft during the Suez campaign.

Her final actions were bombardments in Korea and during the Malayan Emergency.



● Former Chief Mechanician Roy Lidgett demonstrating the crane feeding drill at Slimbridge

Sea Sunday at Littlehampton

LITTLEHAMPTON branch held their annual Sea Sunday parade, led by the band of the Nautical Training Corps TS Implacable.

Members and civic dignitaries marched behind branch standards to the Pier Head where a service was conducted by the Rev Caswell.

During the service wreaths were cast from the Harbourmaster's launch into the River Arun to commemorate all those lost at sea.

After the parade a reception was hosted by the branch at their headquarters, the Maltravers Social Club.

High interest

CRAWLEY branch held a Veterans Day service of remembrance in the town's Memorial Gardens.

Around 30 shipmates and their standard attended, along with a section of Crawley Sea Cadets and ex-Service associations.

Branch chaplain S/M Gordon Kitney conducted the service, which attracted a good deal of interest from both the general public and the local media.



● The new plaque at Swaffham War Memorial

Local reminder of Service sacrifice

MEMBERS of Swaffham branch were ahead of the curve when it came to one of the motions debated at the National Conference in Dundee.

Motion number six urged the Association to approach local authorities to have suitable inscriptions added to war memorials to include those members of the Forces killed in conflict after World War 2.

Swaffham shipmates had already made their move by the time of the Conference.

"Although the Queen unveiled the new National Memorial Arboretum Memorial last year, we wanted something more local and personal, not only to remember those Service personnel, but also to help teach the younger generations the tradition of remembrance, and what it is all for," said branch secretary S/M David Harman.

The project, initiated by branch

Branch round-up

chairman and standard bearer S/M Ernie Heritaget, was supported by the local Royal British Legion and Swaffham Town Council, which gave a grant towards the cost of the stone – which had to be sourced in Italy to match the existing memorial.

Many Service and ex-Service groups were represented at the dedication of the plaque, including 30 standard bearers, and members of King's Lynn Sea Cadet unit.

After the unveiling and dedication, wreaths were laid – including one by a woman whose son was recently killed in Afghanistan.

The event was rounded off by three passes from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.

Cheshunt celebrate 20

CHESHUNT branch celebrated the 20th anniversary of its re-formation with a buffet and dancing.

In his address, president S/M Victor Everest said that the majority of members are now associates, "enjoying the experience of community, comradeship and respect that is offered."

As serving members have been getting older, the associates have been responsible for keeping the branch on an even keel.

And in recognition of their

sterling efforts, Certificates of Appreciation were presented to S/Ms Marion Joy and Vera Everest, who have been instrumental in raising thousands of pounds for branch funds and charity, and to S/M Dave Wiltshir, co-joined with his wife Jenny, who organise social events.

Members of the branch – previously the RN Old Comrades in the 1960s and the Lea Valley Group before that – then went on to hit the dance floor.

Drumming up support

MEMBERS of Liskeard branch promoted the aims and objectives of the RNA at the Royal Cornwall Show, using their display trailer.

The fine weather brought out a good crowd of people to view the photos and information, and several potential new members were provided with application forms.

Assistance in manning the stand came from members of Bodmin, Launceston, Torpoint and Rame, Falmouth and St Austell branches.

How Yeovilton has changed!

A GROUP from the Yeovil branch of the Association of Wrens have paid a visit to RNAS Yeovilton to see just how much the air station has changed over the years.

They were shown the single living accommodation block, the air

traffic control tower, the underwater escape training unit and the FAA Museum, among others.

They also enjoyed lunch in the Senior Rates mess, where they chatted with serving personnel about their time at the base.

Rum do for founders

SHIPMATES Bazz Crimlisk and Geoff Brewin were both presented with a bottle of Pusser's Rum at a party and social afternoon to celebrate the Scarborough branch's 30th anniversary.

Both Bazz and Geoff, who were given their gifts by branch chairman S/M Ernie Holtby, were founder members of the branch.

Choir at Crosby celebration

CROSBY members hosted a Veterans Day celebration at the Crosby Club in Liverpool.

The well-attended event started with a parade of standards and a short service, and other highlights included a presentation

of medals and other awards, and a performance by the Choir of the Irish Guards.

A mural depicting events from the Suez Conflict to the Falklands, produced by prisoners at Altcourse, won much praise.

Rachel is signed up

Teenaged record-breaking transatlantic rower Rachel Flanders has been signed up as an honorary member of Bolton branch.

The 17-year-old was part of a four-woman crew who rowed 3,000 miles from the Canary Islands to Antigua in 74 days, becoming the youngest to achieve this feat.

In a ceremony at the Bolton Sea Cadet HQ, Rachel was presented with her honorary membership badge.

Branch secretary S/M Jan Thomas said: "Rachel showed real determination and courage.

"It is only when one has served at sea for any length of time that her seamanship can be appreciated."

The branch has recently changed the venue of its messdeck meetings to the Derby Ward Labour Club.

Naval Quirks

IN THE COAL-BURNING FIRST WORLD WAR ERA, THE TASK OF COALING A SHIP WAS DREADED..



..THE BATTLESHIP HMS 'AGINCOURT' CREATED A RECORD BY LOADING 1,600 TONS OF COAL IN 4 HOURS – THAT'S 400 TONS AN HOUR!



THIS BEAT THE PREVIOUS RECORD SET BY THE GERMAN 'VON DER TANN' SO THEY WERE GIVEN THE SAME REWARD THE KAISER HAD ISSUED – A PIECE OF GERMAN SAUSAGE EACH!



JUDGING BY THE TIME YOU'VE TAKEN TO PUT THAT COAL ON THE FIRE..



..I CALCULATE IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN YOU JUST OVER 34 YEARS TO COAL THE 'AGINCOURT..'



Chard stalwart is rewarded

A LONG-serving branch secretary has been rewarded for his efforts.

S/M Roy Lovell (pictured above, right) was presented with his vice president's jewel and certificate by Chard branch president S/M Jim Noble (left).

The presentation acknowledged S/M Roy's 21 years as branch secretary, and among the 70 members and guests who witnessed the presentation were National Chairman S/M David White and Cdre David Pond.

Tasmanian date

THE Tasmanian Division of the Fleet Air Arm Association is extending an invitation to attend Kapyong Day, on April 24 2011 in Launceston, Australia.

The three- or four-day event will mark the 60th anniversary of the FAA, taking its date from the time 805, 808 and 817 NAS were taken on board HMAS Sydney in 1951.

The year 2011 also marks the centenary of the Royal Australian Navy.

For further details, keep an eye on the website www.faaaa.asn.au

Falklands flyer

FALKLANDS veterans who wish to return to the islands to pay their respects can now fly to the South Atlantic at a discounted rate.

Holders of the 1982 South Atlantic Medal are now entitled to an indulgence passage to the Falkland Islands if they travel on RAF or MOD-chartered aircraft – the so-called Airbridge which replaced ships when the Mount Pleasant runway was completed.

The scheme is up and running this month, with the first

available southbound flight being September 4.

Former CPO Joe Erskine, a veteran of the Falklands campaign, said that the new scheme is to be sponsored and administered by the South Atlantic Medal Association 1982 – SAMA(82) – and is restricted to medal-holders only.

Next of kin, relatives and travel companions are not eligible, and applicants do not have to be members of SAMA(82).

For an application pack, apply in writing to the Sponsor, SAMA

(82) Indulgence, 33 Charlton Court, Brancote Road, Prenton, Birkenhead CH43 6XE.

Telephone enquiries should be made to 07730 267307, Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm only.

Aircraft fly around six return flights a month from RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire to Mount

Pleasant airport, part of the main British military complex, nearly 40 miles from the capital Stanley.

Flights stop to refuel at RAF Ascension Island in both directions, and total flight time one way is 18 hours.

The normal adult economy air fare stands at around £1,500.

Respects paid in Normandy

VETERANS have once again paid their respects at the RN/RM Memorial in Normandy on the anniversary of D-Day.

The service, in Ouistreham, commemorated the part played by the crews of the landing vessels which transported the Allied soldiers and their equipment south across the Channel on June 6 1944, and for the remainder of the war.

The Normandy landings would not have been possible without this massive invasion fleet of more than 4,000 vessels – the largest and most complex amphibious landings the world has known.

Thoughts also went back victims of other landings such as Narvik, North Africa and Anzio.

Founder Maurice Hillebrandt spoke of his indebtedness to 1 Assault Group RM for their support of the services.

Among those attending were Col George Foster RM, recently appointed CO of 1 Assault Gp RM, along with members of the unit.

Many members of the LST and Landing Craft Association made the trip to France, among them many Normandy veterans.

Around three dozen RN officers and sailors from HMS Sultan, and ten members of the France Nord branch, also attended.

Back with the Mob

VETERANS from Saltash branch have been sharing their experience of life in the Royal Navy with new recruits under training at HMS Raleigh.

The new initiative helps trainees learn about the Navy's heritage and culture.

S/MS William Tate (91) and Reg Samways (88) have been regular visitors to the Torpoint training base over the past few months, talking of their experiences and watching as the trainees have developed into sailors.

Both men are veterans of World War 2, and their visits have been welcomed by the new recruits.

Trainee AET Lou Carter (26) said: "It makes me feel really proud to hear what they have achieved, and it's made

me think that I could achieve something similar.

"My grandad was in the Royal Navy.

"Sadly he's passed on now and didn't really talk about his time in the Service, but I know he had similar experiences to Mr Tate and Mr Samways."

NA Todd Richards (18) said: "It's been really good to have them with us during our training.

"I think we all realise that we have some very big boots to fill."

S/M Tate said: "This has been wonderful and absolutely worthwhile.

"I am 100 percent Navy and I have enjoyed every second of being back with the Service."



● S/MS Nobby and Helen Hall

Farewell to Nobby

CYPRUS branch has bid farewell to two of its founder members.

Nobby and Helen Hall have departed the holiday island for a similar destination across the Atlantic.

Nobby will be taking up a new appointment this month as Assistant Commissioner of Police in the Turks and Caicos Islands, a British Overseas Territory in the Caribbean, south-east of the Bahamas.

Until the AGM in January Cyprus vice chairman S/M Andrew Noyes will helm the branch.

And it was police matters which occupied members at their recent meeting at Episkopi Garrison, when Deputy Chief Constable David Turner of the Sovereign Base Areas Police presented an account of his force's structure and responsibilities – including the protection of nesting turtles and local law on dog control.

HQ move date

FROM 1ST October 1 the Headquarters of the RNA will move from Chelsea Manor Street, London, to Room 209, Semaphore Tower, Building 1/040 PP70, HM Naval Base Portsmouth PO1 3LT.

Telephone numbers have not been allocated as yet, but will be advised as soon as known.

National Conference reports

ASSOCIATION Treasurer S/M Barraclough once again reported to National Conference that expenditure exceeded income, this time by around £38,000.

S/M Barraclough said the deficit was more than forecast, but praised the high standard of housekeeping by HQ.

The greatest source of income remained subscriptions, which fell – as expected – from £235,000 in 2006 to £220,000 in 2007, but there was an "encouraging" increase in tax reclaimed through

the Gift Aid scheme.

The report to delegates at Dundee declared that membership had fallen by 1,381 to 24,590, although there was a belief at HQ that there could be a substantial number of 'ghost members' whose status is not clear.

It was also reported that 19 branches (13 UK branches, one overseas branch and five clubs) decommissioned in 2007 while five branches commissioned – three in the UK and two overseas.

S/M Terry Halder spoke of

issues concerning RNA clubs, including new legislation on smoking and gambling.

S/M Rita Lock outlined the work of the Association in charities and welfare during a busy year.

A total of 84 grants were made to individuals, covering areas such as funding course work fees, respite care and providing disability aids.

The RNA also donated £1,000 each to Combat Stress and Troop Aid and £15,000 to Help for Heroes.

S/M Lock expressed the gratitude of the National Council to the RN Benevolent Trust, the Royal British Legion and SSAFA Forces Help for their continued help and support.

S/M Alan Robinson reported that attendances at ceremonial events in 2007 had been generally lower than in previous years, although in some cases the postal strike was instrumental in making life difficult for attendees and standard bearers.

While acknowledging that ceremonial is an important part of Association life, contributing to both *esprit de corps* as well as helping with publicity, there was a need to consider the high average age of membership when planning parades and events.

S/M Steve Caulfield, the National Communications and Public Relations adviser, said that a revised PR strategy, which had been considered desirable, would be deferred until relocation plans for Headquarters were finalised.

However, S/M Caulfield reported that the day-to-day publicity activities of branches was continuing, helping promote the Association and its work.

Veteran, aged 25

AN ex-Navy man said he was proud to have been chosen as one of the 'faces' of Veterans Day.

The story of Condor Ferries electrical engineer Noel Tomlinson, who spent four happy years in the Royal Navy, was used as the subject of a short film to illustrate the contribution of veterans to society.

He is particularly pleased as, at 25, he says does not conform to the usual Navy veteran image of a man in his 60s with a big white bushy beard.

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in our July edition (right) was HMS Galatea. She was correctly identified by Mr A Fairley, of Portsmouth, who also identified the mystery buccaneer as Captain Pugwash, thereby winning our £50 prize.

This month's vessel has a famous name which is shared with a major ship in the Fleet of the 21st Century.

What is the name of the ship, and what is the name of the current RN warship which now bears her pennant number – the number has been removed from this photograph.

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH. Coupons giving correct answers will



go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

Closing date for entries is October 17. 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 November edition. The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 163

Name

Address

My answers



The Royal Naval Association
Once Navy Always Navy
Unity, Loyalty, Patriotism and Comradeship

Who can join?

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Serving and Ex-Service members of RN, RM, QARNNS, WRNS, Reserves RFA and RNXS
- Associate members
Others in sympathy with our objects especially families

What does the Association do?

We:

- Support the Royal Navy
- Maintain Naval traditions
- Enjoy social activities
- Re-unite shipmates
- Remember the fallen
- Help the disabled
- Look after the needy
- Cheer up the distressed
- Stand together in unity

How to join

Write to RNA HQ
82 Chelsea Manor Street
London SW3 5QJ
Tel: 020 7352 6764
Fax: 020 7352 7385
www.royal-naval-association.co.uk







● Air engineers work on HMS Kent's Lynx under the setting sun and (below) the ship's company pay their respects to the men of HMS Exeter



A spirit of inspiration

FOR decades, ships of the Royal Navy have paid their respects over the last resting place of 840 souls lost when the Prince of Wales and Repulse went down.

Now they can do the same for the 64 men killed when another legendary British warship sank in Far Eastern waters.

Back in July we reported that a team of divers had found the wreck of HMS Exeter, a good 60 miles from her estimated position when lost in the Java Sea in 1942.

The cruiser's part in the Battle of the River Plate is well known. Her fate at the hands of the Japanese less so – and it was with that in mind that four of her survivors made the pilgrimage to the Far East to join frigate HMS Kent for an emotional service of remembrance.

The small band of veterans joined dignitaries including British Ambassador to Indonesia, Martin Hatfull, Commodore Portsmouth Flotilla, Cdre Andrew Cameron, and Kent's ship's company on the flight deck of the Type 23 and cast wreaths into the fateful waters after ship's chaplain Rev David Roissetter had conducted his service.

LET(WE) Ben 'Dusty' Miller hosted his 1942 counterpart, AB Joe Asher. Mr Asher was serving in one of Exeter's turrets; Ben serves in the frigate's gunbay at action stations.

"It definitely gave me a much better perspective of the sacrifices these old boys made for us. It made you think: Could I endure so much? I'd like to think we would keep fighting on," said Ben.

Mr Asher shared his wartime experiences with Kent's junior rates' mess. "It was the first time I've ever seen a messdeck so attentive," said Ben. "Joe got a lot out of it – he said it was one of the highlights of being aboard."

Mr Asher and the handful of other veterans who attended the service were presented with a White Ensign 'flown' on the cruiser's wreck by Australian diver Kevin Denlay, one of the team who discovered the sunken leviathan.

"Being able to hand over the flag that flew over the wreck to the veterans and see the emotion and what it meant to them was a highlight," said Mr Denlay.

"Even though they lost in 1942, the crew put up a gallant fight and their sacrifices should not be forgotten. What is good about this discovery is that it has ensured lots of youngsters know about HMS Exeter."

The ship's loss was merely the beginning of the tragedy for Exeter's survivors who spent the rest of the war as prisoners of the Japanese, many at the Macassar camp, including Thomas Jowett's father, a pom-pom gunner on Exeter.

He attended the ceremony on Kent and says the location of the cruiser's wreck has provoked worldwide interest in Exeter from her former crew and their families. Mr Jowett hopes to organise a reunion next year as a result; he can be contacted on TJ@blackpool.ac.uk.

For Kent's CO, the Java Sea ceremony – and the deeds of the cruiser – were something "from which every man and woman on board can draw inspiration".

Cdr Simon Hopper continued: "While the technology the Royal Navy uses now would be unrecognisable to a 1942 sailor, the spirit and traditions of the Service we are in remain the same."

Away from solemn acts of remembrance, Kent has been visiting Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia as part of her Far East deployment, working with the region's navies and policing the high seas.

The first substantial port visit of the deployment was Kuala Lumpur where her sailors shared their knowledge of boarding operations with the Royal Malaysian Navy.

A party from Kent was also dispatched to a local orphanage to revamp inside and out, clearing out a pond, erecting shelves and fixing some electrical hiccups.

Next stop was Singapore and a lengthy break to allow maintenance work on the ship while her sailors lapped up a night safari (aka visit to a zoo in the dark) and downed the odd Singapore Sling.

Indonesia and the port of Surabaya offered by far the most colourful welcome of all the nations visited to date: the ship was met by a band and dancers.

The colour didn't end there, for a group of very brightly attired youngsters, some in white, some in luminous green, from local schools toured the frigate, while the sailors headed to a nearby Islamic school to plant trees, tidy a yard and play sport with the children.

Grown-up sport was on offer too, courtesy of the local university volleyball team who proved to be too strong for Kent's ladies.

And then it was time to put frivolity and fun aside as the Exeter veterans joined them for the memorial service.





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● The last salute... HMS Exeter veterans George Gaskell (left), Joe Asher (centre) and Rob Rae (right) lay a wreath for their fallen shipmates on HMS Exeter
Pictures: LA(Phot) Owen King, FRPU East

awards in brief



● GEMS winners PO David Garner and CPOMA Michael Bosworth at the IWM

THE GEMS awards recognise ideas from across the whole of the MOD that improve the way the MOD does its business. This year there are two Naval joint winners for suggestions that most improve safety – CPOMA Michael Bosworth and PO David Garner.

CPO Bosworth devised a way to use both the Neil Robertson stretcher and the Baxstrap Spinal Board to better improve the transport of a casualty with suspected spinal injuries.

PO Garner suggested that 'ski grips' be added to the overhead firefighting tool, resulting in better use of the equipment, greater effectiveness in firefighting and less exhaustion for the firefighters themselves when dealing with overhead fires.

LWEA Douglas Owen received the Rutherford Trophy at HMS Collingwood for his hard work in becoming the apprentice who had made the most progress during training.

AWARDS were presented by Rear Admiral Submarines, Rear Admiral David Cooke to the top warfare students at the RN Submarine School.

Winners included: Lt David Burrell, who won the Richard Howard Johnston Memorial Sword because of his excellent performance in the advanced warfare course; Lt Martin Toland, who won the Lord Fieldhouse Memorial prize as the top student on the intermediate warfare course; and Lt Alastair Harris who won top marks on the basic officers training course.

FORMER First Sea Lord Adm Sir Jock Slater has been awarded an honorary degree by the University of Southampton in recognition of his contribution to defence.

FOUR members of HMS Ark Royal's ship's company have been presented with laptops by the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights in recognition of their innovation and efficiency – AB(CIS) James, Log(CS) Reynolds, LMEA Kursner and ET(ME) Trevelion.

RESERVIST Acting S/Lt Joanna Cabbage has been presented with the Incape Shipping Services Trophy in recognition of her status as top student during her preliminary logistics course at the Defence Maritime Logistics School at HMS Raleigh.

THE Cudrose Award for Special Endeavour has gone to CPO David Hillier who used his extensive knowledge about the aircraft to transform the understanding of engineers at the Cornish base about how aircrew fly and operate the Merlin helicopter.

LOGS Nigel Wightman has been deemed a safe pair of hands on board assault ship HMS Bulwark, where he has received the award of Standing Sea Emergency Party Man of the Year – for which he received an engraved tankard. (With an award title like that, we hope the engraver used a small font – Ed.)

awards in brief



● WO Hugh Porter and daughter S/Lt Nancy Porter

Picture: LA(Phot) Del Trotter

Find a few familiar faces

ON HIS last day in the Royal Navy, WO Hugh Porter walked out of HM Naval Base Clyde making one last salute to an officer as he went.

The 50-year-old could not quite keep the smile off his face as the recipient of his final mark of respect was his own daughter, S/Lt Nancy Porter.

Hugh, who spent 32 years within the service, was the Base Warrant Officer, the most senior sailor at HMS Neptune who carried a silver-tipped cane to mark his status.

And although Naval regulations demand he salute all officers, the pecking order at home is somewhat different.

"I know, when we go home, that I am still her dad – and that I can tell her to clean up her room. But I am very proud to see her in her officer's uniform – who wouldn't be?"

Nancy admitted: "My dad knows more about the Royal Navy than anyone I know and he has spent his career at the level which provides the very backbone of the Service."

"I know he had to salute me, but he is still my dad, and we had to fight hard to keep our faces straight – or better still, we just avoided each other."

"My sister Grace is 20 and a junior rate, so we are a bit of a seagoing family."

She added: "I think dad would have to salute me, just to keep the peace..."

MEANWHILE a brother and sister duo are just starting out their military careers with the Royal Marines Band Service.

David and Kristina Hedley are experienced musicians with the Sunderland Symphony Orchestra

Paul earns his wings

ALTHOUGH the headquarters of 1 Assault Group RM in Poole are rather more concerned with water, one of their civilian members has long had his head in the clouds.

Paul Soper read about Flying Scholarships for the Disabled on the Defence Intranet, and decided to apply for a scholarship. After a gruelling three-day Final Selection Board at RAF Cranwell, Paul heard the news that he had been chosen for a full, six-week scholarship in South Africa.

Paul said: "This involves 45 hours flying training, and 37 hours ground school, incorporating about ten exams."

"I'm very much looking forward to this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, as it will be the fulfilment of a lifetime's ambition."

The charity, which allows disabled people to enjoy flying, was set up in 1983 in memory of Gp Capt Sir Douglas Bader DSO* DFC*.



● CPO Ian Lister of Newcastle Careers Office with new recruits Katrina and David Hedley

and the Gateshead Youth Orchestra.

But their hearts are set on a career within the Band of the Royal Marines.

Katrina, who plays the clarinet, said: "I can't wait to get down to Portsmouth and start my training."

"I always knew that I wanted to pursue a musical career and joining the Royal Marine Band Service will ensure that I get to play with some of the most professional musicians in some of the most exciting venues in the world."

David, who plays the oboe, added: "The Royal Marine Band has such a great reputation in the world of music and it will be a real privilege to be a part of that."

"It is a bit daunting leaving my family, but at least I'll know one other person when we get to Portsmouth."



● Pilot Lt Cdr Martin Lanni stands in front of a Gannet Sea King

Caught on film

CHANNEL 5 TV series *Highland Emergency* will feature Search and Rescue pilot Lt Cdr Martin Lanni.

The 30-episode series began in August focusing on the work of the different rescue organisations that serve the Scottish Highlands. Naturally key among these is HMS Gannet at Prestwick, which in 2007 won the title of the busiest search and rescue station in the UK since records began.

"I am delighted that HMS Gannet is highlighting the work of the Royal Navy Search and Rescue in Scotland and the Lake District as part of this national television programme," said Lt Cdr Lanni, who has been second

in command of the station for over 18 months.

He added: "And I'm proud to have been part of it all. I love my job and we all get enormous satisfaction from being able to help people around Scotland, northern England and Northern Ireland."

"We come across people in all kinds of need, whether it be a pregnant woman who has to be evacuated from one of the islands to hospital or a lost climber caught out as the mist falls, an injured person in a road traffic accident, or the crew of a stricken boat – the variety is huge."

Highland Emergency can be found on Channel 5 on Tuesday nights.

Secret Service for your eyes only

A NEW exhibition has been opened by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall at Bletchley Park entitled 'From Bletchley, with love'.

Naval officer 17F acted as liaison between Bletchley Park and the Director of Naval Intelligence throughout World War 2 – of course, he is better known under his real name of Ian Fleming, who rose to the rank of commander during his wartime service with the RN Volunteer Reserves.

Fleming's favourite Churchill quote reads: "In the high ranges of the Secret Service work, the actual facts in many cases were in every respect equal to the most fantastic inventions of romance and melodrama."

"Tangle within tangle, plot and counter-plot, ruse and treachery, cross and double-cross, true agent, false agent, gold and steel, the bomb, the dagger and the firing party were interwoven in so many a texture so intricate as to be incredible, and yet true."

All these themes and Fleming's involvement with the secrets of Enigma and Ultra form the core of the new exhibition at the wartime codebreakers' centre.

Find out more online at www.bletchleypark.org.uk or call 01908 640404.

Antipodean adventurers



ASSAULT ship HMS Bulwark's return to Devonport heralded a last look for her Longlook guests from the Royal Australian Navy.

The annual event, Exercise Longlook, sees sailors from the UK, Australia and New Zealand swap places to experience life in a different hemisphere.

S/Lt Jodie Turkenburg, PO Lannah Coleman and LS Darren Pretious spent four months on board the amphibious ship, working off the north coast of Scotland, exercising with the Danes, Swedes and Germans in the Baltic, and on patrol in the Mediterranean.

This mix of cultures has been a big success with the visitors.

S/Lt Turkenburg said: "We've worked with eight countries, from the French to the Russians. Each Navy has such different equipment and procedures."

"I was particularly impressed with the Swedes' landing craft the CB90s which do more than 30 knots fully laden."

However there is one area where the British and the Australian sailors do differ...

"The Brits may be good at socialising," said LS Pretious, "but we're better at cricket, rugby and barbies!"

PO Lannah Coleman, LS Darren Pretious and S/Lt Jodie Turkenburg of the Royal Australian Navy bid farewell to HMS Bulwark

Picture: LA(Phot) Pepe Hogan



Hotel chain offers deal

MALMAISON Hotels are offering a special deal in the form of a 'Heroes' Welcome Home'.

The chain is offering 50 per cent off at its dozen hotels, observing that "the best of the best deserve the best."

The deal means a rate from £59 per room per night, bed and breakfast, plus 20 per cent off all food and drink for all the men and women in the Army, Navy and Air Force.

And as Malmaison Hotels put it: "Surrender to this great offer!"

"Stand at ease, wind down and let Malmaison show thanks and recognition to you all for your fighting spirit and your determination in the war in Afghanistan and Iraq."

To book a room, call 0845 365 4247 and quote "Forces".

The offer is subject to availability, terms and conditions.

Details of hotel locations are available at the company's website, www.malmaison.com

Last chance for Surprise

EXERCISE Bavarian Surprise, the adventure training and activities package open to all RN and RM personnel, still has places available for its remaining weeks.

Among the activities on offer are kayaking, mountain-biking, and climbing.

If you want to try your hand at those, your first point of contact should be your PT Office or ship's PTI who will be able to give you more information and an application form.

You can go online to www.englishguesthouse.co.uk and follow the links to Bavaria Surprise, or contact the team on 0790 0443128 or by email to paulgellender267@mod.uk

Navy News will run a feature on Exercise Bavarian Surprise in October.

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 Gregor Birse (Fleet Media Ops), 93832 8809.

RN heads Pride London contingent

A STRONG Naval Service team joined colleagues from the Army, RAF and MOD Civil Service for the annual Pride London Parade.

The Navy has been showing its sister Services the way, having marched in uniform at Pride for the last two years, but Army and RAF colleagues finally showed up in uniform for the first time this year and the 50-strong contingent received a rapturous welcome from the crowd, estimated at more than 800,000 strong, in Central London.

The Pride march, led by London Mayor Boris Johnson, is one of the world's most colourful parades.

After marching through London, the military detached from the main parade and conducted a formal march-past of the Cenotaph.

The aim of the Pride London festival is to promote equality and diversity, to foster a sense of community within the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender population and, through the promotion of understanding and cooperation, to eradicate all forms of discrimination faced by minority groups.

The Royal Navy was the first Service to join Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme in 2006, followed by the RAF in 2007 and now the Army in 2008.

To find out more about the Naval Service's Equality & Diversity policy and forthcoming related events, contact your Unit Equality & Diversity Adviser (EDA), visit the E&D website on RNWeb, or contact the RN E&D Policy Team at the Navy Command HQ.



● The Royal Navy contingent heads the Pride London parade

BOIs go joint as new SIs

WHEN things go wrong it is necessary to find out precisely what happened, and why, so that lessons can be learned and a repetition avoided.

The Navy has for many years convened Boards of Inquiry (BOI) to investigate serious accidents and incidents.

Under the Armed Forces Act (AFA) 06, BOIs are to be replaced by a new joint Service Inquiry (SI), which will give the Services the power to investigate internally any matter to find out what happened and prevent it happening again.

This new procedure will be introduced on October 1 as part of the early implementation of parts of AFA 06.

The inquiry will be convened in response to incidents resulting in death and serious injury, maritime and air accidents and near-misses where death or serious injury has been narrowly avoided.

Joint inquiries can be convened into matters of interest of more than one Service – for instance, an accident involving a Naval aircraft carrying Army personnel.

A board of officers and warrant officers, headed by a president, will examine the evidence and interview witnesses as they establish the facts, come to conclusions and make recommendations.

Anyone being selected to be a board member or president of the board will receive a full briefing when the SI is convened.

New publication *JSP 832 – Service Inquiries* is the main reference, available on the MOD intranet from October 1.

For the RN, Ship's Investigations will continue to look into incidents where there are lessons to be learned but which do not merit a full Service Inquiry.

An updated Yellow Guide for use when the new Service Inquiry system comes into effect will be available on the RN intranet.

Collingwood in the spotlight

A ONE-day international conference is to be staged on September 13 to look at the role of Nelson's successor in the war against Napoleon.

The Collingwood Years, organised by the 1805 Club at the Maritime Warfare School, HMS Collingwood, will see scholars and historians examine the role of "consummate strategist" Vice Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood in the period 1806-10.

The conference fee is £69, and closing date for bookings is September 6.

For details see www.1805club.org

A commitment to the Forces

LAST month's *Navy News* outlined the innovative Service Personnel Command Paper, which was published as we went to press.

There are now further details available from the ground-breaking Paper, which sets out over 40 new measures to ensure that the Forces, their families and veterans are not disadvantaged due to service.

These will be delivered by many Government departments and the Devolved Administrations working together.

Under a beefed-up Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, the upfront lump sum compensation payment for the most serious injuries suffered by soldiers, sailors and airmen in the course of their duties will be doubled from £285,000 to £570,000.

They will also continue to receive the tax-free income for life after leaving the Services.

Besides the changes to the compensation scheme, the Paper contains a raft of other serious proposals, which have the potential to change the lives of Navy personnel both during their military service and when they leave.

These include an entitlement to funding for further or higher education, building on the Enhanced Learning Credits initiative.

This means that Service leavers with six years of service can achieve at least their first A-levels, or vocational equivalent, free from tuition fees.

Alternatively, those who wish to progress to higher levels will have their tuition fees for a first Foundation or full degree paid.

Steps will be taken to ensure that Service families do not, all clinical priorities being equal, lose



● The new proposals will work to eradicate disadvantages for sailors and their families

their places on NHS waiting lists as they move around the UK.

And the Government plans to improve access to NHS dental services for families, including using facilities on military bases and providing mobile services.

Trials are set to begin in England later this year and will continue into 2009.

Help will be provided to Service leavers to get on the property ladder, by extending their Key Worker status for 12 months after leaving the Armed Forces. Access to social housing will also be improved.

The Paper will be rigorously

implemented, with representatives from external groups charged with overseeing its progress.

A Reference Group, which will include representatives of the Navy Families Federation and Service charities, will be set up by the Cabinet Office.

It will meet at least every six months, and report to the Prime Minister annually – and this report will be published.

First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Jonathan Band, said: "I see this as a hugely significant opportunity to deliver improved cross-Government support to our people across the

very wide personnel area, from health care to housing; from education to concessionary travel.

"I am very encouraged by the potential opportunities this affords to advance the way in which our people are supported by the nation they in turn support so very well.

"Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel staff, together with families and veterans groups across the Naval Service, have been deeply involved in providing

advice to this paper and I look forward to seeing the proposals take effect – our people deserve nothing but the best."

Rosier outlook for photos' association

WITH the crashing beat of Royal Marines drummers, the RN Photographers Party and Reunion weekend got off to a upbeat start.

Some 250 revellers and photographic trade guests dined and danced into the early hours at Boathouse No 7 in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

But it was not just a Saturday night party.

More than 100 ex- and serving photographers rendezvoused at the Maritime Club the previous evening for a 'meet and greet', where old friendships were rekindled and new ones started.

And there was a 'survivors' pasty lunch' on the Sunday.

Since the moving of the

Peregrine Trophy competition from Portsmouth to London, it has been difficult to bring ex- and serving photos together socially.

It was with this in mind that the RN Photographers Association was born, driven by Lt Ian Wrightson and the initial committee.

However, few serving members were recruited and numbers

attending party/AGM weekends started to decline, so it was decided to boost membership with a party and reunion weekend.

Ex-CPO(Phot) Danny du Feu, newly-appointed membership secretary of the RNPA, said: "Although the organisation was very much a joint effort, I think special thanks should be extended

to the main driving force behind the event, Lt Cdr Stuart Antrobus (RNPA Social Secretary) and Lt Paul Cowpe and CPO(Phot) Dee Morgan with their team at the FRPU(E) in HMS Excellent, who not only set up the display for the judging of the Peregrine Trophy in London, but then the following day had to dismantle and set up again for display at the reunion."

To add to the pressure, the Phot staff at FRPU(E) were preparing for the move from their temporary accommodation in Portsmouth Naval Base back into a state-of-the-art base on Whale Island.

The move has now been completed, and it was with a dual purpose that the RNPA Membership Secretary, Danny du Feu, visited the new FRPU(E) on membership duties, and met up with friend and ex-colleague, Lt Paul Cowpe, both having served in HMS Illustrious on Global '86.

PO(Phot) Sean Cle, this year's Peregrine Trophy winner, said:



● Danny du Feu learns of the huge advances in RN photography from LA(Phot) Alex Cave and Lt Paul Cowpe (OIC – FRPU(E) Portsmouth)

Picture: LA(Phot) Pete Smith

"This has been a great weekend. "The organisation has been excellent – the Branch should do this more often.

"It was great meeting up with the infamous photos from the past, and serving photos scattered all over the globe."

For those wishing to join the RNPA, write for an application form enclosing a SAE to: Danny du Feu, RNPA Membership Secretary, 57 Westover Road, Leicester, LE3 3DU, tel (mob) 07891 660715, email: danny@ddf-photography.co.uk



● Revellers and the Royal Marines Corp of Drums outside Boathouse No 7
Picture: LA(Phot) Chris Wenham, FRPU(E)





Healthcare watchdog invites feedback

THE Healthcare Commission has been asked to review the services provided by Defence Medical Services in the UK and overseas using standards set by the Government.

They are the same standards that are used to assess the NHS and focus on important safety issues, on clinical effectiveness and on how well services are focused on the needs of patients.

As part of this process, the Commission would like to hear from Service personnel, their dependants and eligible civilians about experiences of care provided by the DMS and what you consider is good or excellent practice and where you consider there is room for improvement.

Information provided will be analysed to identify key issues from experiences of working practices, quality of care and areas of concern.

It will be handled in confidence and individual comments will be non-attributable. It will be stored securely and kept electronically.

The Commission is not able to investigate or follow up individual complaints or concerns for this review, but is still keen to hear from you.

Contact the Healthcare Commission as follows:

- Complete the online feedback form at <https://admin.webforms.healthcarecommission.org.uk/popup/survey.php?sid=661978839>
- Send an email to Feedback@healthcarecommission.org.uk
- Write to Helpline (DMS review), Healthcare Commission, Finsbury Tower, 103-105 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8TG
- Call the helpline between 9am and 5pm BST weekdays, where a member of staff will record your comments. The telephone number is 0845 6013012.

The Commission can receive comments until September 26.

They will look at all information received, and will publicly report what they find independently on behalf of the Service community.

The report will be available on the Commission website when published early in 2009 - www.healthcarecommission.org.uk

RNPT out on the road

THE next RN Presentation Team events are:

- **Weds Sept 24** at the Derby Conference Centre, London Road, Derby;
- **Thurs Sept 25** at the National Space Centre, Exploration Drive, Leicester;
- **Tues Sept 30** at Rothesay Pavilion, 45 Argyle Street, Rothesay, Isle of Bute;
- **Weds Oct 1** at James Watt College, Waterfront Campus, Customhouse Way, Greenock;
- **Thurs Oct 2** at the Park Hotel, Rugby Park, Kilmarnock;
- **Tues Oct 14** at Welshpool Town Hall, Broad Street, Welshpool;
- **Thurs Oct 16** at Best Western The Connaught Hotel, Tettenhall Road, Wolverhampton;
- **Weds Nov 12** at the Holiday Inn Taunton, Dean Gate Avenue, Taunton;
- **Thurs Nov 13** at the Carrington House Hotel, Knyveton Road, Bournemouth;
- **Tues Nov 25** at Longhirst Hall, Morpeth;
- **Weds Nov 26** at the Banqueting Suite, Leeds United, Elland Road, Leeds.

Anyone wishing to book a place should contact the RNPT on 020 8833 8020 or visit the website at www.royalnavy.mod.uk

It's farewell RORRS and hello to SJARs

AS most of you should already know, JPA Appraisal is the new harmonised reporting system for the Armed Forces, encompassing for the Naval Service both officers' and ratings' other ranks' reports.

The officers' system went live at the end of March with the Officers' Joint Appraisal Report (OJAR) and, with hundreds of these reports finalised, the system is now well-proven and working smoothly, writes Lt Cdr Ian Freegard of the RN/RM JPA Appraisal Team.

Now, after a six-month delay to allow for the rectification of some technical and functionality shortcomings, which were causing a few difficulties for seagoing units, the RN/RM are ready to introduce the Servicemen's and Servicewomen's Joint Appraisal Report - the SJAR.

The postponement also gave time to review and introduce a change to the annual Common Reporting Dates (CRDs); thus the group to take the lead in this major step forward will now be the Able Ratings on November 30, quickly followed by Leading Hands two months later.

New CRDs will be:

- **Able Rates:** Current CRD Jan 31, revised CRD Nov 30, first SJAR Nov 30 2008;
- **Leading Hands:** March 31, Jan 31, Jan 31 2009;
- **POs:** May 31, Mar 31, Mar 31 2009;
- **CPOs (tech branches):** Jun 30, Apr 30, Apr 30 2009;
- **WO1s:** Sept 30, July 31, July 31 2009;
- **All RM Other Ranks:** Aug 31, July 31, July 31 2009;
- **WO2s:** Nov 30, Sept 30, Sept 30 2009;
- **CPOs (non-tech branches):** Nov 30, Sept 30, Sept 30 2009.

SJAR is a considerable improvement on RORRS (Ratings/Other Ranks Reporting System). It allows you, the 'Subject', to play a far more active role in the through-year appraisal process, including an opportunity to comment on what your First Reporting Officer (IRO) has written about your performance and potential, along with the new range of recommendations which cover everything from promotion to future training requirements.

The assessment of your performance attributes (rather than competences under RORRS) is also slightly different, with a



• Able ratings are to lead the appraisal revolution, swiftly followed by leading hands

new grading system marking two additional categories of 'Team Spirit' and 'Courage and Values'.

What else is new? Well, simply, no more paper - the SJAR is compiled and moved entirely electronically, so when it is 'released' to you as the Subject, it will appear in your Self Service Employee workflow.

There are exceptions. For instance, if you are deployed to an operational theatre and there is no JPA access, separate arrangements for your report will be made.

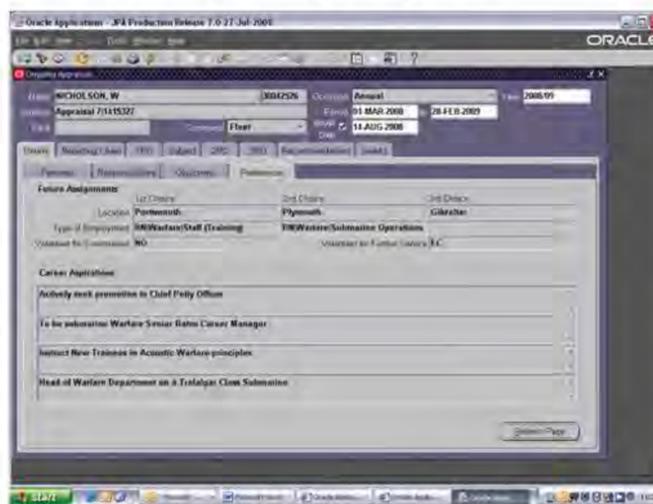
Once completed, the SJAR will be available to you on JPA for printing or to use as you wish.

In addition, the signatory levels for your 1RO and 2RO have also been adjusted.

This is because on an SJAR, your reporting officers have to declare a level of contact they have with your work and, as a general principle, it follows that your line managers are best-placed to be your reporting officers, able to assess your performance and gauge your future potential first-hand.

There will be minimum signature levels, of course, starting at Petty Officer or equivalent as the 1RO, and at least a two-rank separation is required.

Senior ratings will have a 2RO of at least Lt Cdr, while the Royal Marines, who traditionally have their own criteria founded on regimental rather than divisional



lines, will broadly retain their current signature levels.

Remember, a higher signature level does not add weight to your report - it is the degree of contact with your work that has greater importance (see tables below).

So far, so good - but, inevitably, there is a catch, and this is where you come in.

The SJAR pulls across lots of other information from other areas of JPA, such as your job objectives, future assignment preferences and career aspirations - see the

screen shot example above.

So, how do these details get there and who ensures they remain accurate and up-to-date?

Well, of course, it is your report, so you need to take a personal interest in it.

So what do you need to do now?

• Complete the e-learning on the SPVA website (short and sweet...) at <http://www.ipublish.dii.r.mil.uk/nlapps/docs/default.asp?fid=778>

• Input your Personal Objectives (including any secondary tasks) for the reporting period as agreed with your line manager/DO. This bit matters - it's a big part of what you are being reported on;

• Plan ahead if you are in a seagoing or deployed unit - utilise the opportunity to use JPA online whenever it arises;

• Make sure you have received and read the JPA Appraisal introduction booklet - if you haven't received one, contact the Appraisal Team Helpdesk;

• See one of the Appraisal Team's presentations - only 30 minutes long and you can ask as many questions as you like!

Whether you are a subject or someone else involved in the appraisal process at any other level, there is a huge amount of help and information available, pretty much all of which can be found on our website at http://royalnavy.defence.mod.uk/persdivhb/jpa/JPA%20Support/Appraisal_home.htm

If you cannot find what you need in any of the sources above or from your unit HR staff, don't hesitate to contact the RN/RM JPA Appraisal Team Helpdesk on Portsmouth Naval Base (9380) 27465.



• WO1 Vic Parsons

Fisher: Another milestone

FOLLOWING hot on the heels of the success that has been achieved in accelerated Work Based Training trials over the past six months, Project Fisher, the Navy's Flexible Manning initiative, has reached another very important milestone.

The Geographical Squad Pooling trial commenced on September 1, involving the six Type 23 frigates of the Portsmouth Flotilla - HM ships Iron Duke, Kent, Lancaster, Richmond, St Albans and Westminster.

During the trial, the Junior Rates of all six ships will be pooled and administered as a single group, rather than squaddled in six groups around each individual ship.

Junior Rates will then be assigned from the geographical pool to individual units for periods of 18-24 months, interspersed with three to six-month periods ashore.

The way the trial will be undertaken has been devised after extensive consultation with Navy HQ staff, the Waterfront Manning Office and individual ships.

At its heart, the trial seeks to improve the quality of life for junior sailors involved whilst helping to reduce the gapping at sea.

A key component of the trial is the establishment of a new shore office, located in Lancelot Building in Portsmouth Naval Base, which will manage the movement of Junior Rates between the ships and also provide better support to sailors who are based ashore.

Given the importance of the trial, the shore office will be headed by ex-EWO and 2SL CWO, WO1 Vic Parsons, who will lead a team of six who will manage and support all involved in the trial.

When asked about his new role, WO Parsons replied: "I am very excited about this latest Project Fisher initiative.

"I think it presents a golden opportunity to improve the lives of our sailors.

"It is a real team effort between the new shore office, COMPORFLOT staff and the ships at sea.

"Together we are determined to find improvements in the way we currently man our ships and manage our sailors.

"Whilst I can't promise to solve all problems overnight, I genuinely believe that this will deliver a better system for managing and supporting our Junior Rates to enable them to become our Senior Rates of tomorrow."

The Project Fisher Geographical Squad Pooling trial is anticipated to run until mid-2010.

For more details, contact WO Parsons via the Project Fisher website: http://RoyalNavy.Defence.Mod.UK/Fleet_RNWeb/FISHER/Index1.htm

ROYAL NAVY Subject	1RO minimum substantive rank	2RO minimum substantive rank
AB	PO (OR6)	CPO (OR7)
LH	CPO (OR7)	WO2 (OR8)
PO	WO2 (OR8)	Lt Cdr (OF3) or CO
CPO	WO1 (OR9) or Lt RN (OF2)	Lt Cdr (OF3) or CO
WO2 and WO1	Lt RN (OF2)	Lt Cdr (OF3) or CO
RN Officer Candidates	Divisional Officer (CPO or above)	CO

ROYAL MARINES Subject	1RO minimum substantive rank	2RO minimum substantive rank
Mne or L/Cpl	2Lt/Lt RM (OF1)	Capt RM (OF2)
Cpl	Capt RM (OF2)	Maj (OF3)
Sgt	Maj (OF3)	Maj (OF3)
C/Sgt	Maj (OF3)	Maj (OF3)
WO2 RM	Maj (OF3)	Lt Col (OF4)
WO1 RM	Lt Col (OF4)	Lt Col (OF4)
BS Bdsn or L/Cpl or Cpl	WO2 (OR8)	Capt RM (OF2)
BS Sgt	WO2 (OR8)	Capt RM (OF2)
BS C/Sgt or WO2	Capt RM (OF2)	Lt Col (OF4)
BS WO1	Lt Col (OF4)	Lt Col (OF4)
RM Officer Candidates	Maj (OF3)	Lt Col (OF4)



NOTICEBOARD

Honours

The Operational Honours List recognises service on operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Former Yugoslavia and national operations, October 2007 to March 2008:

AFGHANISTAN
George Cross: L/Cpl Matthew Croucher, RMR
MBE: Maj Mark Andrew Bowra, RM; Maj Daniel James Edward Cheesman, RM
DSO: Lt Col Stuart Martin Birrell, RM
Military Cross: Marina Eroni, Sikavou Bulabalu, Cinavilaketa, RM; Marine Mikuseli Jones, RM; Cpl Wayne Robert Lloyd, RM; Maj Adrian Morley, RM; Sgt Paul Andrew Norris, RM; Sgt Dean Charles Sykes, RM; Cpl Christopher Steven Welton, RM; Marine Richard Reginald Withers, RM; Distinguished Flying Cross: Lt Nichol James Enslie Benzie, RN
MID: Cpl Gary Lee Banford, RM; Acting LMA Craig Lloyd Cook, RN; Lt Cdr Toby William Everitt, RN; Lt Nathan John Gray, RN; WO2 David William Layton, RM; Major Duncan Manning, RM; Marine Gary Ogden, RM

QCVCs: Cpl Lee Andrew Houltram, RM; Acting Maj Peter Lawton, RM; Acting Col Sgt Ian McDougall, RM; LS (SR) Julia Ryder, RN; Col Gerard Mark Salzano, RM

IRAQ
OBE: Capt David Dutton, RN
NATIONAL OPERATIONS

MBE: Col Sgt Ross Telford, RM
QCVCs: Col Sgt Greig Ian Gilchrist, RM
QGM: WO1 Stephen Geoffrey Strange, RN

QCB: Diver 1 John Kevin Arnie Anderson, RN; LDiver Stephane Farrell, RN

Assignments

Rear Admiral P A Jones to become Commander UK Maritime Forces on September 22.

Cdre M B Alabaster to be promoted to Rear Admiral and to become Flag Officer Scotland, Northern-England, and Northern Ireland on September 16.

Cdre M Anderson to be promoted to Rear Admiral and to be COMOPS and COM Allied Submarines North on January 13 2009.

Maj Gen J B Dutton to be promoted to Lt Gen in October and to become Deputy Commander ISAF Afghanistan.

Capt G A Mackay to RNAS Culdrose as CO on October 6.

Capt J K Moores to be promoted Cdre and to BRNC Dartmouth as Commodore on September 9.

Capt P J Thicknesse to MWC Southwick as Director on October 14.

Capt K W L Koble to HMS Bulwark as CO on December 1.

Capt R J Thompson to be promoted to Cdre and to Portsmouth Naval Base as Naval Base Commander on November 25.

Sports lottery

July 12: £5,000 - CPOMEML B J Roberts, HMS Westminister, £1,500 - OC M K Mayer, BRNC; £500 - Lt A R A Brown, HMS Ark Royal.

July 19: £5,000 - Mne M J Allman, RAF St Athan; £1,500 - PO(D) P A Shaw, SDU2 Horse; £500 - OM(MW) D V Dean, HMS Cattistock.

July 26: £5,000 - LWtr J Moore, HMS Cumberland; £1,500 - OMW1 N L Ballard, Fort Blockhouse; £500 - Lt M J Reynolds, HMS Collingwood.

August 1: £5,000 - MEM1 I Phillips, HMS Collingwood; £1,500 - WO2WEA W S Holmes, HMS Collingwood; £500 - LWEA M W Lewis, HMS Drake.

August 12: £5,000 - OM S T Robinson, HMS Astute; £1,500 - CPO S P Houghton RNR, RNAS Culdrose; £500 - LOM D R Lee, HMS Westminster.

Entries for October must be received by September 11

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.

Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.

The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

Space does not allow us to accept more than one free insert. Any subsequent notice will have to be paid for at advertising rates.

Deaths

LLogs(CS) Darren Floyd, Serving DBLO HMS Drake, July 12.

Mne Jamie 'The Colonel' Hutton RM, 42 Commando RM, based in Plymouth. The son of a serving Royal Marines officer, he joined the Corps aged 20, won the Charnock Shooting Trophy, and became known as 'The Colonel'. Joined K Company 42 Cdo RM in May 2006, and served in Afghanistan at Gereshik, Nowzad, and Kajaki; he took on specialist qualification as a Royal Marines sniper, and was asked to stay at CTCRM to instruct other snipers. Then joined Recce Troop, 42 Cdo, His CO Lt Col Charlie Stickland said: "He was a dynamic soldier and personally every organisation needs - a surfer, a rugby player, a friend to all and an outstanding operator. The world was at his feet - marked out as a man for the future with his new-found expertise as a sniper and gaining command of an expert Recce Team. The Colonel was a force beyond his years." Aged 23, July 15.

Mne Josh 'Biscuit' Howell RM, 40 Commando RM. Joined the Royal Marines in January 2005, and upon completion of training was awarded the Green Beret and Commando Medal. He deployed to Helmand, Afghanistan, in September 2007 with 40 Cdo as part of Bravo Company Group based in Sangin, where he displayed exemplary composure and courage under fire. His CO Lt Col Stuart Birrell said: "A truly professional, accomplished young man, he was undoubtedly one of the most capable Royal Marines of his generation. Brave, determined and compassionate in equal measure, 'Biscuit' was immensely popular with all ranks and had rapidly established himself as a star of the future." His friends and fellow Marines paid tribute to his humour and his character, describing him as "a top bloke". Norton Manor Camp, Taunton. July 21, Aged 21.

Lt Cdr Malcolm Parkin, Entered Dartmouth 1987 before joining RNEC Manadon for the Naval Engineering Degree Course graduating in 1990. Served in Invincible, Juno and Ark Royal (Bosnian campaign); Sultan as a Staff Officer, DG Ships at Bath and in 2001 appointed to HMS Liverpool as MEO for refit and then to the Gulf. Returned to UK and successfully completed the Dutch language course 2004 prior to appointment as Marine Gas Turbine Manager at the Dutch Defence Material Organisation in The Hague, July 23, Aged 40.

Vice Admiral Sir Tony Troup DSC. Educated at HMS Worcester, the nautical training college on the Thames and entered Dartmouth in 1936. After service in Cornwall and Active in the Far East and Atlantic he volunteered for submarines in 1941 joining the newly-built Turbulent, was mentioned in dispatches for his service in the Mediterranean. He left Turbulent to complete his 'perisher' course and became the youngest-ever submarine captain taking command at 21 years 10 months of the training submarine H32 in 1943; a few months later he was CO of Strongbow based at Trincomalee, awarded a bar to his DSC and after many operations finally nursed his boat for 1,000 miles across the Indian Ocean to Trincomalee where the engineers pronounced her unfit for further service. Post-war, he commanded: Tantalus, Trump and Tally Ho; and was 2iC of aircraft carrier Victorious from 1956-59. After returning to the Far East as captain of HMS Intrepid he then became Flag Officer Sea Training; Commander Flag Officer Submarines and his last appointment was Flag Officer Scotland and Northern Ireland. In 1975 he was appointed CCB and was president of the Submarine Old Comrades' Association, July 8, Aged 86.

Cdr Alec Dennis DSC, Entered Dartmouth 1931 and served in HMS Resolution, and the Admiralty yacht Enchantress before joining Suffolk in the China Fleet. In 1939 he joined Griffin from where he boarded the trawler Polars and managed to retrieve documents giving the procedure for setting the scrambler of an Enigma machine that had been thrown overboard; two days later he returned to Scapa Flow with the captured boat and was mentioned in dispatches. In 1941 was awarded the DSC for gallantry in Greek waters. As 1Lt of HMS Savage at the Battle of North Cape he was again MID for his part in the sinking of Scharnhorst; late 1944 he commanded Valorous in which he earned a third MID for gallantry and devotion to duty in seeking out E-boats and beating off a series of attacks on a convoy. In 1945 he returned to Norway to liberate Kristiansand to take the surrender of 26 U-boats and 15,000 German soldiers. King Haakon VII awarded him Norway's Liberty Medal. He took command of HMS Tetcott but with the return of peace he had a series of minor jobs before retiring in 1957. June 29, Aged 91.

Babs Edwards, Wartime Wren boarding officer. Joined the RNRV training school King Alfred in 1939 and became the paymaster's secretary; she advanced to Leading Wren and 1941 to PO(Pay) and transferred to the mine warfare establishment Vernon where she became coxswain of one of the first WRNS boat crews. Selected in 1943 for a commission she attended RNC Greenwich where she passed out as a third officer and embarked on her career as a boarding officer with a posting to Skirmisher at Milford Haven. Demobilised 1946 she spent a further year working for Allied Control Commission in Hamburg. She became a member of the RNAS teaching radar and telecommunications. June 14, Aged 95.

Capt 'Andy' Palmer DSC, Joined Ganges as a boy seaman. Whilst under training in Leander he won a rifle shooting competition and was sent to the RN College, Greenwich when the Admiralty experimented by taking 12 talented ratings for officer training; he was commissioned as an acting sub-lieutenant in 1937. His first ship as an officer was the sloop Deptford on anti-slavery patrols in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf but on outbreak of war she was redeployed to Atlantic convoy duties. In 1941 she carried out five attacks on U567 and rammed the sloop Stork thinking she was a U-boat; however the CO of Stork, Johnny Walker, treated this as the fog of war and Palmer was awarded a DSC. He served in Belfast and then Catherine where he led the 40th Minesweeping Flotilla into Copenhagen where the Prinz Eugen and Nürnberg surrendered. His expertise in explosives and countermining led to his involvement in destroying 6,800 tons of unstable ordnance on Heligoland. Later that year he joined Chequers and taught at the submarine school Dolphin and helped to develop high-frequency mine-hunting sonar at Portland. His last appointment in the mid-1960s was Commodore Superintendent of the dockyard in Malta and Queen's Harbourmaster. June 5, Aged 91.

Jim Hewett, Chief Control Electrician.

Served 1953-76 in Diana, Eagle, Mull of Kintyre and Malcolm. Chairman HMS Diana Association. June, Aged 72.

Phil Thompson, Able Seaman, Served 1949-56 in Diana, King George V, Gambia and Ramehead. HMS Diana Association. June, Aged 77.

Donald Baxter, Sto. Mech, Served in Peacock 1953-54. HMS Peacock association, July 14, Aged 82.

Vic 'Mac' McKay, POCk, Served 1960-84 in Jon, Barwick, Phoebe, Jupiter and Royal Yacht Britannia; also Chatham, Culdrose and Aldershot. HMS Jupiter Association, July 16, Aged 63.

Harry Hunt, Able Seaman, Joined 1942. Served in Faulknor 1943-46; HMS Faulknor Association, July 5, Aged 87.

Steven Hutchings, CPOA, Served 1975-99 at Ganges, Seahawk, Daedalus, Osprey, Heron, 800 NAS in Hermes 1982 Falklands; 819 NAS at Gannet and Fearless. Last shore base RNAS Yeovilton, July 5, Aged 49.

Lt M C Cooper, Joined Ganges and served 1938-73; sailed from Portsmouth on Enterprise days after war was declared; also served in Tynne, Tamar, Broadswold, Manxman, Pembroke, Lennox, Davenham, Barrington, Dryad and Barrage, March 15.

Trevor W E Ivey, CPO, Served 1942-46 on LCT 7012 as PO engine room (Juno beach D-Day) and served in Singapore with the LCTs after hostilities returning to UK in Formidable, July 29, Aged 83.

Lt Col David Paton, Medical officer. Seconded from the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1941 to No.2 Commando charged with carrying out Operation Chariot, the St Nazaire raid in 1942. Aboard one of 16 Fairmile motor launches built of wood, lightly armed and with 500-gallon tanks of petrol lashed to their decks he traversed 400-miles crossing to the French port of St Nazaire in the Loire estuary running the gauntlet of 80 gun emplacements on the river. In a heavy swell of up to 30ft he jumped from launch to launch to tend to the wounded. He saw action again on D-Day when he landed with the Commandos on Sword Beach as second-in-command of 223 Field Ambulance. July 10, Aged 95.

John 'George' Pearson, CPOMEM. Served 1957-80 in Solebay, Puma, Wiston, Lincoln, Rothsay, Eagle, Rapid, Gavington, Brinton, FSU Rosyth and Sheraton. July 18, Aged 67.

Cyril 'Charlie' Modd, CPO GI Chatham RN Gunnery Instructors Association, July 29.

Lt Cdr David Davies RNZN, Joined the RN at Ganges 1948 as a Boy Tel. Served in Myngs, St James, Indefatigable, RAF Syerston (pilot training) and St Brides Bay; Commissioned Sub Lt 1961, Mercury, Cavalier, Malta, St Vincent, NAS Brawdy; joined RNZN 1973. Amongst the many communication posts held was CO HMNZS Irirangi (RNZN Radio station central North Island NZ). Recently published a history of Irirangi. President of New Zealand branch Ganges Association, July 7, Aged 76.

Edwin Taylor, Served 1943-47 on LSTs and Landing Craft, June 7, Aged 82.

J M M 'Ian' Paterson, CPOMA, Served 1960-82 at RN Hospitals Plymouth and Bighi; Zest, Manxman, Fearless, Ark Royal, Bulwark and with RM Commando units, August 2, Aged 66.

Roger Heasman, Ton Class Association. Ships included Edderton (1955-57), Cyprus patrols, Musketier/Suez, 1956; Bermuda (1958), Pembroke (1959), Chawton (1961 during the Malaysian Confrontation), Dartington (1963), Tiger. He left the Service in 1967, July 7, Aged 72.

ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION
Roger Marsh, PTI, Soham and district. Served in Pretoria Castle and was at D-Day, July 2, Aged 82.

Maurice Hughes, Hon vice-president Purley; Standard bearer 28 years and past chairman for eight years. Served in Indomitable, Defiance and Finisterre, July 4, Aged 77.

Alison Shepherd, PO Wren (Met), Norwich. Served 1973-87. June 29, Aged 52.

Kaye Perfect, Wartime WRAC and Thanet Standard bearer for that organisation. Associate member of Margate RNA, July 31, Aged 83.

Derek Kennard, MSM Chief Writer and Warrant Officer. Served for 43 years in HMS Bermuda, Kent, Albion, 825 Squadron Culdrose, Faslane, Vernon and NATO HQ. Founder member and long-term secretary of Havant branch, July 12, Aged 73.

Roy Dennis Haybittle, WW2 veteran. Served on landing craft on D-Day and Normandy landings. Past president, secretary, treasurer, founder and life member Llandudno branch and club, July 29, Aged 83.

Richard 'Mac' Leese, PO RM(AW). Served 1943-46 at Goldcrest, Waxwing, Berunda, Bambara; also illustrious (1833 squadron), Daedalus, Hummingbird and finally Hornbill (August 1946). Walford RNA and also Walford FAA Association, July 15, Aged 84.

Donald Norman Harwood, CERA, Served 1934-48 in Fishguard, Resolution, Lincoln, Gambia, Oceanway, Tyne and Enterprise. Perth Western Australia branch.

ASSOCIATION OF RN OFFICERS
Capt M S DREWETT, Served: Hasdrubal, Devonshire, Belfast, Constance, Delight, President, Cochrane and Osprey.

Cdr F L Eddy, Served: Argonaut, Roberts, Theseus, Harrier, Euryalus, Dryad, Saker, Rooke and President.
First Officer P Morrissey WRNS
Lt Cdr R G Mudd VRD RNR
Cdr J W Powell DSC, Served: Grebe, President, Merlin, Vengeance, Gannet, Glory, Mounts Bay and Victorious.

Cdr N E Summers, Served: Resource, Barham, Warspite, Victory, Beaconsfield, St Vincent, Ceres, Vanguard, Highflyer, Jamaica and Ganiet.

Lt R J Walker RNRV, Served: Excellent and St Angelo.

SUBMARINERS ASSOCIATION
A F 'Arthur' Skilling, CPO SM. Served 1940-48 in submarines Oberon 1, Telemachus, Strongbow and Shalimar. Middlesex branch, Aged 85.

R C 'Roger' Batchelor, WO RS, Served 1962-87 in submarines Aurochs (1962-63), Finwhale (1963-64), Valiant (1967-70), Repulse(S) (1970-71), Otter (1972-73), Revenge(P) (1973-76) and Sceptre (1983-85). Dolphin branch, Aged 64.

LST & LANDING CRAFT ASSOCIATION
N J Nathan, Served LCT 27.
R A H Cranniss, Served LCA and with LCP(L) Flotilla 701.
P T Barefoot, Served LCT(R) 436 and with LCT Flotilla 320.
H T Mason, Served LCTs 354, 371, 394

and 609.
J J Judge, Served LSTs 413 and 414, HMS Kent and Phoebe, May.

J R Warden, Served with LCT 102 Flotilla, June 10.

R J Wright, Served LCAs, RN Cdo, Brigade and Centaur, June 13.

G R Clark, Served LCT 770, June 19.
D R Hastlow, Served LCT 540 and Coira, June 30.

C T Kitching, Served with LCT(L) Flotilla 702, July 10.
W T Lamas, Served LST 3, BYMS 2063 and Premier, July 15.

S Claridge, Served Chinkara and Vimy, July 16.

ALGERINES ASSOCIATION
Patrick T Walters, AB (SD), Served in Chameleon and Plucky, July 4, Aged 83.

Sub Lt James Moller, Served in Wave, July 7, Aged 83.

Reg Hurrell, Ch MM, Served in Rifleman, July 13, Aged 88.

John Stubbs, Sig, Served in Welfare and Larne, July 28, Aged 93.

Derek Powell, L/Sea, Served in Michael, July 30, Aged 77.

14TH CARRIER AIR GROUP ASSOCIATION
Charles Irwin, Air/Mech, 804 NAS. Served 1948-50 in Ocean and Glory.

Eric Rutter, L/A(AH) 804/812 NAS. Served 1951-52 in Glory (Korea), April 13.

Peter 'Polly' Overall, L/A (SAM E), 'Black Flight' (14th CAG, Night Fighter Unit) 1950; 804 NAS Glory (Korea) 1951. Served 27 years, July 7.

Lt W H 'Bill' Gunner, Pilot, 'Black Flight' (14th CAG, Night Fighter Unit), Glory and Falcon (RNAS Hal-Far) Malta 1950-51. April 28.

Ask Jack

HMS Alaric: Seeking film footage of HMS Alaric, shown on the BBC early 1988, filmed off the west coast of Scotland. Pat Paterson was a cook serving on board at the time. If you can help contact Pat on 023 8036 2347.

Crest Moulds: John has moulds for making presentation size crests (not the crests themselves) that he wishes to re-home. The moulds are for Birmingham (cruiser pentagon and frigate rotor), Superb, Boxer and Beaver. If he needs to resort to postage, P&P would be charged at cost. If you are interested contact John Higgins on 01752 326003 or 07979 885828.

HMS Daedalus: Carol is seeking information regarding her late father, Robert Charles Fearn. He was stationed at Daedalus, Victorious, Hednesford, Sparrowhawk and many others between 1939 and 1945. He would have been 86 had he lived. There may be some of his former comrades around that still remember him and maybe have photographs. Carol would love to hear from you. Contact Carol Fearn Connors at cjukc@comcast.net or write to 5 Lewin Lane, Swansea, Massachusetts, 02777, USA.

HMS Gloucester: When my mother died I found a photo of Ordinary Seaman Reginald George Foster in uniform. I know he died on July 10 1940 when HMS Gloucester sank and that his name is on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. Can someone tell me what happened? I would like the photo to go to his family and have tried family history sites but to no avail. He lived in the Exeter area of Devon. Please can anyone help. Contact Wendy Clifford at research.taylor@yahoo.co.uk or 28 Bindon Drive, Bristol, BS10 6PJ.

HMS Newfoundland, Almiranti Grau: Peter was a member of the ship's company on its last commission returning to Portsmouth around June 6 1959. He then remained on board to de-commission and mothball/put into reserve. Subsequently she was bought by the Peruvian Navy and became the Almiranti Grau. She refitted in Southampton and returned to Portsmouth for sea trials before the ship sailed for Peru. The period Peter is interested in is June 1959 to January 1960. As a member of the Newfoundland Association he is trying to write an article for the association magazine. Seeking information and photographs of this period. Much has been written until she paid off but nothing about the transfer from RN to Peruvian Navy. The association is being wound up next year, he is one of the younger members at 71. Bill Stone is the oldest at 108. Any information please contact Peter Appleyard at peter.appleyard@tesco.net or tel: 01243 587931.

HMS Plymouth: J B Shanley served in the Plymouth and the Eagle, was an RP2 and did two runs for the Devonport team '63 and '72. He was last man over, the 'lucky' one who had to cross before the shear legs dropped. He is about to enter hospital for an operation and would like to take a copy of *The Red Sailor* by Patrick O'Hara with him. If anyone has an intact copy (regardless of condition) for sale or lend or whatever, could they contact S K Hempel at sandra.hempel@virgin.net or write to 15 Glastonbury Close, Belmont, Hereford, HR2 7YL.

Beanie Hat: Douglas Shepherd asks whether anyone has got a beanie hat with a royal navy crest on it. He would like to buy it from you and will include overseas postage. Please contact Doug at bet@kingston.net or write to 20 Elmwood Street #301, Kingston, Ontario, K7M 2Y5, Canada.

John Starkie: Andy is seeking any information regarding his late grandfather John Starkie (may have also been known as 'Jack') who was a Petty Officer Medic during WW2. He was originally from Lancashire and served on a hospital ship in the Med, the name of ship is unknown but it could have been something like Maine. Sadly John passed away in the early eighties back in Lancashire. Andy would be interested to hear from anyone who could shed some light on his service history. If you know John then please contact Andy at aastarkie@aol.com or write to 7 Hibernia Road, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 8DJ.

Whale Island: Lynnette is seeking anyone who knows her family, dad Willem 'Loffy' van Wyk, mum Peggy and children, Stanley, Lynnette, Patricia and Billy. Dad was born in South Africa and mum in Nottingham. They married in 1945 moving to South Africa the following year. They returned to the UK in 1960 to take delivery of SAS President, Kruger/Steyn & Pretorius that were being built for the SAN. Dad trained at Whale Island, where she saw him do the field gun run at Edinburgh Castle. If anyone remembers the family could they contact Lynnette Endean at chris12lyn@yahoo.co.uk or tel: 0172 862 8629.

Where are you now?

HMS Cassandra Association: There's still dozens of you out there. Why not join our thriving association? Contact Cliff Longfoot at ongfoo50@hotmail.com, tel: 0151 226 3675 or write to 50 Graylands Road, Walton, Liverpool, L4 9UQ.

Graham Cook NA A/E: Looking for old shipmates who served with him from 1951 to 1959. He served at or in Bramcote, Lössersmouth, NATSU Abbotsinch, 899 Squadron, Brawdy, Ark Royal, Bulwark and Victory, Remembers Fred Porter, Lucky Hills, Cornelius, Burton, Dave Dawson and many more. He also asks if anyone has an 898 Squadron photo that he could copy. Contact Graham at 26 Reabrook Avenue, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY3 7QA.

HMS Ganges: Where are you Ivan (Ginger) Barnes, HMS Ganges 1949-50 and HMS Lock Lomond 1951-52. Also want PO/Tel's White and Blue badges (Tropical). Contact Peter Cook at peter@talknor.freezone.co.uk or tel: 01603 618806.

Landing Craft Tank: Ex-Leading Writer Donald Green (Scribes), now a Franciscan friar, sailed with Tank Landing Craft of D LCT Squadron through the Mediterranean finally to Port Swettenham in the forties, would dearly like to contact any surviving contemporaries. Contact Brother Donald SSF at donaldssf@freuk.com or tel: 020 7474 5863.

HMS Norfolk: Dave Bruce served in HMS Norfolk and HMS Cleopatra from 1976 to 1981 and is 50 this year. His wife, Linda, wants to surprise him (not if he sees this) by getting news from former shipmates. Some names she recalls are Derek Rose, John Duckworth and Brian Vickers. If anyone can help please contact Linda Bruce at linda.bruce@hotmail.co.uk or tel: 07521 511309.

Royal Naval Electrical Branch Association: There is to reunite you with your old shipmates from the Electrical Mess. This new and rapidly growing association with hundreds of members, has its own blazer badge and tie, all sporting the distinctive flashes of the Electrical Branch and now our own colour newsletter. The website, <http://www.meba.org.uk/> is where you can see details of many members. Our next reunion at Llandudno is looking up fast. A lot of 'Lamp swinging' has already taken place and there will be a lot more. If you are ex Royal Navy Electrical, send your details and the ship you would most like to find your shipmates from, to Membership Secretary and Newsletter Editor, Brian Joy, 237a Tithes Farm Court, Alexandra Avenue, Harrow, HA2 9DN.

Fleming brothers: Christopher is seeking at least one of three brothers; Michael Fleming and his brothers, David (older) and Richard (younger). They all joined the Navy

in the late 1950s or early 60s. Michael and Christopher are of similar ages (66) and lived in Well Street, Great Torrington, Devon. Christopher lived at the fish and chip shop on the opposite side of the road to where the boys lived with their mother. If the brothers read this or someone knows of them could they contact Christopher Stone, 29 Bourne Vale, Hungerford, Berkshire or tel: 01488 683482.

Tony Burcham, Ex Chief (ME) Stoker: Would like to hear from any shipmates or shore-based colleagues who served with him in the Royal Navy from 1950-1973 to enable him to have the opportunity of catching up on the past and present. Tony served in Wren, Bulwark, Tartar, Grenville, Hartland Point, Hermes, Woodbridge Haven and Lofoten and was also drafted to Raleigh, Dolphin, Excellent, Victorious and the Firelighting School on Horsea Island. Please contact Tony Burcham on 023 9226 3816 or via his daughter's email: sueharper2210@btinternet.com

HMS Vernon: Barry is looking for any news of his father, Graham Leslie Robinson (Robbie), who worked as a Cook based in HMS Vernon during late 1970s. He married Ann Metcalf in 1977 (later divorced). He left the Navy and was last heard of working on oil rigs off Scotland in 1980s. Would appreciate any news at all about him. Please contact Barry John Robinson at madbazz2@msn.com or tel: 00 33 6 74 62 67 66 or 023 9229 4535.

Inland Waterways: Seeking information regarding Lt Cdr James Green. Commanded the inland waterways recruitment fleet: replicas of HMS Cleopatra, HMS Renown, HMS London, HMS Sheffield; circa 1927. Would like to hear from Lt Cdr Green or relative and/or anyone else who served on these vessels. Especially interested in who came up with the idea of recruiting in this way, details of the procurement process and when the vessels were retired. Contact Andy Wood at a.wood847@btinternet.com or tel: 0151 334 2209.

HMS Wallace: In 1999, Gordon asked for anecdotes and stories from the ship's history. Many ex-members of the ship's company contacted him, as have many since with requests to put them in touch with their 'oppos'. Gordon will do this provided you send him a stamped address envelope. Names of the original contacts are: Tim (T P) Stofpford, Jack Hogg, John Allen, Raymond Stark, Mike Tuncliffe, A Irlam, M A Faulks, Jack Twycross, Walter A Kinsey, G G Leon and Cdr Brian Wainwright. If you want to contact any of these shipmates contact Gordon Clarke, 40 Globe Avenue, Uphall, West Lothian, EH52 6DX.

Reunions

SEPTEMBER 2008
8th Destroyer Squadron Association: 20th annual reunion at the Ocean Room, Spa Complex, Scarborough from September 12 to 14. Details from Peter Lee-Hale at pleehale@aol.com or tel: 01249 811405.

RN(S) PT branch will be having a Golf competition and reunion for all PTIs/former PTIs that have served in Scotland. The mini reunion will be in the WO&S/Rates mess HMS Caledonia on the evening of September 2 and the golf will be on September 3 at Burntisland golf club. Accommodation can be arranged. For further details contact Tommy Wallace at twallace@ms-sc.org or tel: 01383 425045.

HMS Vesper (1917-47): Reunion at Skipton, North Yorkshire from September 12 to 14. Contact the Hon Sec Jean Phillip at 15 Duckett Street, Skipton, BD23 2EJ or tel: 01756 791593.

HMS Wild Goose: Reunion will take place at Lakeside, Hayling Island, Hants from September 26 to 29. Any enquiries to Ken Hayes, 3 Ivy House Park, Henlade, Taunton, TA3 5HR.

OCTOBER 2008
HMS Cardiff Gulf War Crew 1991 Reunion: The third reunion for the crew of HMS Cardiff who served during the Gulf War of 1991 will take place in Portsmouth on Saturday October 4 2008. For further details please contact Mick Gentry at mickthematelot@aol.com or tel: 01582 726115. 'Life was great on the D108'.

EDUCATION

The Best Start In Life



Baroness visits Duke

THE last academic year has been a busy and rewarding one for the staff and pupils at the Duke of York's.

Many trips have taken place abroad as well as at home. There have also been many Adventurous Training exercises and Duke of Edinburgh award challenges.

True to the nature of the school the CCF continues to be one of the strongest contingents in the country.

Staff have been very generous with their time with the organisation of a ski trip to Fiesch and a food/textiles trip to Italy.

The school is very excited about having forged new links with Valley Forge Military Academy and College in Philadelphia this year. There are lots of exciting plans for exchanges and trips between the two famous establishments in the future.

The school's military band has been impressive; performing at the Army Rugby Championships in Aldershot and at Lord's where England were playing New Zealand in the first Test match.

The band comprises pupils from aged 12 all the way to the oldest boys and girls in the Sixth Form and numbers 115 pupils in total. It forms part of the school's rich musical heritage.

Amongst other high profile visitors to the Duke of York's this year Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven made a private visit in April 2008.

Her visit marks a personal expression of support for our Service personnel. In honour of her visit Baroness Thatcher reviewed the whole school on parade and presented the Senior Inter-House Drill Competition Shield. She also presented for the first time the Baroness Thatcher Sword of Honour to the most outstanding cadet.

Baroness Thatcher then met pupils whose parents were actively deployed in the Army, the Air Force and also the son of a submarine veteran of the Falklands War.

The children thoroughly enjoyed the visit and felt that it was a great privilege to meet Baroness Thatcher.

The headmaster said: "Education is all about opportunity and our pupils were able to be introduced and chat informally to one of the outstanding political leaders of our time."

"This is something which will stay with them all their lives."



● Pupils from Old Swinford Hospital school enjoying life

Old Swinford is exceptional

AT £3,075 per term for weekly or full boarding, Old Swinford Hospital offers exceptional value for money.

Situated in the heart of England, with easy access to the motorway network and Birmingham International Airport, Old Swinford Hospital is a state boarding school for boys from 11-18, with girls admitted as day students in the sixth form.

Ofsted recently identified Old Swinford Hospital as outstanding, having gained top marks in all 39 inspection categories and under the Government's Popular and Successful Schools programme it is embarking upon an expansion programme to include a new boarding house, teaching block and extended sports facilities.

Old Swinford Hospital's reputation is based upon excellent academic results, superb facilities and a friendly atmosphere.

An extensive range of activities is provided for all students and there is an ambitious programme of weekend outings so there is always something to look forward to. The popular Cadet Force now numbers over 150 recruits.

A wide variety of sports is available, including minority sports such as golf, archery and fencing. Strong emphasis is placed on developing leadership skills and a sense of responsibility to the wider community.

For further information, please contact the registrar, on 01384 817325 or email admissions@oshsch.com

St John's College hosts author

A WELL-KNOWN children's author has visited pupils at St John's College in Southsea to help spread the word on the importance of reading and writing.

Isle of Wight-based Diana Kimpton, who writes the popular *Pony-mad Princess* series among other titles, joined junior school pupils to speak about her inspirations and experiences whilst writing children's stories.

Junior School headmaster Toby Shrubbsall said: "We were delighted and very privileged that Ms Kimpton shared her experiences and stories; the children were all very excited about meeting one of their favourite authors and the visit most definitely met expectations."

"It's also an important part of our English curriculum at St John's."

"We're fortunate to offer our pupils experiences that are outside the confines of a classroom, but are still very relevant and beneficial to their learning and education needs."

St John's College is an independent, co-educational day and boarding school for children aged two to 18 situated in the heart of Southsea.

Founded as a boy's school in 1908, the college now attracts over 700 pupils and students to its nursery, lower and upper school and sixth form.



WELCOME TO
OLD SWINFORD HOSPITAL

- ✓ Affordability ✓ Academic excellence
- ✓ Top grade in all Ofsted inspection categories
- ✓ Boarding fees just £3075 per term
- ✓ Weekend programme of activities
- ✓ Cadet Force over 150 recruits
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OPEN EVENTS
27th September, 4th October, 9th October
8th November (6th Form) 15th November (6th Form)

For further details contact the Registrar on
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or email admissions@oshsch.com

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- 75 acres of grounds

Contact the Registrar at:
Cranbrook School, Cranbrook, Kent, TN17 3JD
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E-mail: registrar@cranbrook.kent.sch.uk
www.cranbrookschool.co.uk

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 **EDUCATION**

Spirit at West Hill Park

WEST Hill Park is an independent day and boarding school offering continuity of education for girls and boys from 2½ to 13 years of age.

The fine prep school dates from the 18th Century and is set amidst 40 acres of Hampshire countryside, with easy access to air, rail and road links.

Pupils have space to flourish and are encouraged to think independently. The school offers full, weekly or 'flexi' boarding, and provides a homely atmosphere with an open and trusting ethos.

The large boarding house team, which includes a qualified nurse, is led by the resident housemaster and provides 24-hour pastoral care.

Eight pupils have been awarded Academic Scholarships at the secondary schools of their choice. Not only have these eight excelled academically, but they have contributed fully to many other spheres of life at West Hill Park.

Once again pupils have achieved resounding success in the annual Wessex Athletics Championships, in the teeth of fierce opposition.

These spirited youngsters, fought their way to the final and gained a total of 14 medals. All the boys and girls performed with skill and enthusiasm and showed tremendous team spirit.

The school's athletes also broke 21 school records at the recent Sports Day, where prizes were awarded by Mark Hoban MP.



Finding your way into Queen Victoria School

QUEEN Victoria School (QVS) is a non-academically selective, fully boarding, co-educational school for the children of Armed Forces personnel who are Scottish or who have served in Scotland.

A small parental contribution (currently around £1,100 a year) is levied, but there are no fees.

Entry to QVS is decided on the basis of need. The school's reason for existing is to provide continuity and stability of education for children who would otherwise be moved around the country, and perhaps the world, several times in the course of their school careers, as a result of their serving parent's postings.

It is also tasked by the Ministry of Defence with providing for those families who could not otherwise afford boarding education.

In February/March each year the Admissions Board will interview eligible candidates for places in August of that year. The closing date for applications is January 15 in the same year.

This is a deadline which the school adheres to firmly, because of the need to obtain reports on the candidates before the Admissions

Board sits.

Applications can be made at any time before January 15, with most being made in the autumn of the preceding year.

An open morning is held for prospective applicants and their families in September of each year, but visits to the school can be made at any time by contacting the admissions secretary.

There are more places available in P7 each year than in any other year, although it is possible for older children to apply. Each year a small number of places are offered in older year-groups, according to the availability of bed-space.

The pupils are the best ambassadors for the school, and current and past parents can also be very helpful in telling prospective QVS parents what the experience is like.

If you would like to visit the school or find out more, please contact the admissions secretary: telephone (military) 94745 2927 or (civilian) 0131 310 2927, website: www.qvs.org.uk and e-mail: admissions@qvs.org.uk



QUEEN VICTORIA SCHOOL

A Boarding School for the sons & daughters of Scottish and Scottish-based Armed Forces personnel

1908 – 2008 Celebrating 100 Years

Set in 45 acres of beautiful Perthshire countryside offering:

- Stable and uninterrupted co-educational boarding for 10.5/11 to 18 year olds (main intake at Primary 7);
- Quality education for a minimal termly charge;
- Full range of subjects following the Scottish educational system;
- Extensive programme of sport, music and extra-curricular activities;
- High priority placed on pastoral care;
- Warm, friendly and lively atmosphere;
- Easy access by road, rail or air.

Visits to the School are welcome at any time

For a prospectus and further information, or an appointment, please contact:

Admissions' Secretary
Queen Victoria School
Dunblane
Perthshire
FK15 0JY

Tel: 0131-310-2927 Email: admissions@qvs.org.uk
Fax: 0131-310-2926 Website: www.qvs.org.uk



Olympic flame at Rookesbury

CHILDREN at Rookesbury Park School took part in an Olympics Day (pictured above).

From chariot racing on scooters on the tennis courts, to making baklava, known as 'balaclava' by a Year 3 boy, and flags designed by every child to represent every country in the Olympic Games in Beijing, the children paraded around the playing fields and even took part in some wrestling.

Headmistress Pippa Harris-Burland commented: "A day like this really brings learning alive for our children. From children in the Pre-Prep to our Seniors in Year 8, the staff and children worked together. They learned about the nature of pulling together and working to their strengths."

"In the spirit of teamwork, competition and learning about different cultures, and that is what makes us different at Rookesbury; we play to our strengths, we nurture them and we have fun learning along the way."

Small is beautiful at Truro

GOOD teaching clearly plays a very important part in achieving excellent academic results but, at Truro High School for Girls, small class sizes, individual attention and a warm, friendly atmosphere are seen as equally key to a pupil's overall development.

As the only independent day and boarding school for girls in Cornwall, Truro High School is a unique establishment with a proud heritage.

From nursery through to sixth form, pupils' happiness and general welfare are considered of paramount importance.

"We want every girl here to receive an excellent all-round edu-

cation that makes the most of her particular talents and abilities," said headmaster Michael McDowell.

"We regularly top the A-level and GCSE league tables because the girls learn in an environment that is right for them."

The school has just opened a new state-of-the-art boarding house with en-suite facilities in every room.

As well as the more mainstream academic subjects on offer, pupils can choose from a wide variety of extra curricular activities.

For further information, ring Frances Ellison on 01872 272830 or visit www.trurohigh.co.uk

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E-mail: headmaster@doyrms.com Website: www.doyrms.mod.uk

Rookesbury Park School

Co-educational day and boarding 2½ -13 years, Wickham



OPEN DAY - Friday 10th October 10.00 - 1.00

- Balanced curriculum achieving academic excellence
- Sport, music and drama - opportunities for all
- Exceptional rural setting with easy access to M27 J10
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A school with a love of sailing

THE ROYAL Hospital School is a co-educational full boarding and day school for 11 to 18 year olds, set in 200 acres of countryside overlooking the River Stour in Suffolk, England.

As a result of its unique and proud seafaring heritage, the school has a dedicated sailing department second to none. With a fleet of 40 dinghies ranging from beginner boats to Olympic pathway craft, every level of sailing is catered for.

On joining the school, all Year 7 pupils take part in a week-long sailing course when they are taken through the basics, while pupils joining in other year groups have the opportunity to learn to sail in the afternoons.

As a recognised RYA training centre, the highest levels of safety and tuition are maintained and pupils regularly gain qualifications at every level of sailing as well as in power boating, windsurfing and dinghy sailing instruction.

The school also has a fleet of four traditional Cornish Shrimpers. These cruising boats can be seen every weekend of the summer term meandering the local waterways.

Director of Sailing at the Royal Hospital School, Andrew Nutton said: "Sailing is a sport that teaches children the ability to deal with everything that the elements can throw at them."

"To see an 11-year-old helming a dinghy around the reservoir with a smile running from ear to ear after just three days, can only demonstrate how sailing can invigorate every one who has a go."

"I believe that the Royal Hospital School is unique in its commitment to sailing and I am personally very proud to be able to pass on my passion for this most individual of sports."



Not 'just' St John's School

ST JOHN'S School in Sidmouth has a long tradition of Forces children in the school and believes it is well positioned to offer the very best all-round boarding solution to Forces families.

As Angela Parry-Davies explained: "St John's aims to be much more than 'just' a school - it aims to provide an education for life. We work hard to achieve academic success, but we also believe in providing the foundations that will help create rounded individuals who can succeed in any walk of life."

The school is also flexible about their approach to boarding. Angela Parry-Davies said: "We understand that Forces families have particular needs - we try to be as flexible as possible to make sure that the whole experience is as positive for parents as it is for our children."

With a boarding capacity of around 70 children and an additional 200 day children, the school is large enough to offer a broad study programme yet small enough to retain the special family feel that is so valued by all the children, parents and staff.

For more information about St John's, to arrange a visit or simply to talk with headmistress Mrs Parry-Davies, call 01395 513984, email info@stjohnsdevon.co.uk or visit the website www.stjohnsdevon.co.uk

Admiral founded Kelly College

KELLY College, founded by Admiral Kelly in 1877, is proud of its 130 years of service to the Royal Navy. Kelly, situated in the beautiful south-west of England, offers a co-educational full and weekly boarding, and day education for pupils aged 11-18. It is a school of 370 students, of whom half are boarders.

Kelly offers all the facilities of a larger school, while retaining the advantages in the individual care and class size of a smaller school. The Preparatory School is co-educational and has a further 200 pupils aged 2½-11 years. The Prep School shares many of the facilities of the senior school including boarding from Year 5.

Kelly provides a high-quality, well-balanced education with a

strong commitment to a whole range of extracurricular activities.

The staff are fully involved seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Kelly enjoys an established reputation for good academic results (100 per cent pass rate at A-level for the last five years, with 72 per cent at Grades A + B in 2007) and for its cultural and sporting achievements.

One of Kelly's strengths is the range and diversity of its societies and activities - from squash to shooting, debating to drawing, sailing to surfing, public speaking to pottery - with dozens to choose from there is something for everyone to enjoy.

The college invites all prospective families to its annual open morning on Saturday October 4.

CHILTON CANTELO SCHOOL

Chilton Cantelo, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 8BG

"The quality of the pastoral care provided by the school to promote all pupils well-being and development is outstanding"
Independent Schools Inspectorate 2006

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KELLY COLLEGE



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Fee reductions for Service families

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T: 01822 813100

Founded by Admiral Kelly in 1877-
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www.kellycollege.com
Tavistock, Devon

Onwards and upwards at Shebbear

SHEBBEAR College is continuing to enhance its resources. The college unveiled its extensive plan over a year ago, and is continuing on its quest to become the 'Best Small School in the South West'.

Head teacher Bob Barnes said the college, which "never stands still", is continuing to build on its already impressive infrastructure.

The new sixth form centre, library and state-of-the-art science labs have been installed and both the boys' and girls' boarding houses have been upgraded.

Work has finished on a multi-purpose, all-weather play and sports area for junior and kindergarten pupils. The sports hall has been re-roofed with three brand new changing rooms and every class in the school now boasts interactive white boards.

The installation of four all-weather outdoor and four impressive indoor nets at a cost of £50,000, has led Head of Cricket, Andy Bryan, to believe that things can only get better.

"The provision of improved facilities has made a huge difference already this season and, with the opportunity to use the indoor nets throughout the winter, I believe that cricket at the college will go from strength to strength."

The school currently has its highest number of pupils in 16 years and has waiting lists for some year groups.

With small class sizes and recent results that put us in *The Times* top schools in the South West, Shebbear College can ensure your child has the best possible start in life.

Open week will be held October 13-17. Please ring Mrs Rowe on 01409 282001 or e-mail registrar@shebbearcollege.co.uk to make an appointment.



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The new Special Bursary for Forces



With a strong tradition of forces children in the school, St John's offers the very best all-round boarding solution for boys and girls from 7 to 13. In a beautiful location and with extensive grounds and facilities, St John's children live life to the full.

- Special Bursary for Forces
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- Academic excellence
- Strong sporting tradition
- Regular activity weekends
- Beautiful, safe, Devon location
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For details about the Special Bursary call Angela Parry-Davies on 01395 513984 or email her at info@stjohnsdevon.co.uk

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13 ~18

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For more information call 01823 668800 or email admin@wellington-school.org.uk



Silver wings at Wellington

WELLINGTON School sixth former Jake West has become the first cadet at Wellington to receive his silver wings for gliding.

A keen member of the RAF section of the school's large CCF contingent, Jake attended a ten day gliding course run by the RAF over the Easter holidays.

Usually cadets will fly on average 45 accompanied flights before flying solo but after only 33 accompanied launches, Jake was suddenly told that his next flight was solo.

Jake said: "I had no time to be nervous, there was too much to think about. Some bits were alarming but overall it was an incredibly exhilarating experience." Jake hopes to join the RAF to train as a pilot when he leaves university.

You can hear more about Wellington School's CCF – just one of their many extra-curricular opportunities – at the open morning on Saturday September 27.

Beat Retreat treat at King's School

ON a midsummer evening, in the magnificent grounds of Longleat House, the military band of King's School, Bruton, performed Beat Retreat in aid of the Soldiers, Sailors and Air Forces Families Association (SSAFA).

The Cadets also provided a Guard of Honour for the Prince and Princess Michael of Kent and the Marquis and Marchioness of Bath.

A sequence of quick and slow marches was performed as the band manoeuvred around the forecourt with the Tudor house as a spectacular background.

The finale included the *Last Post*, played by Cadet Sergeant Christopher Best and the hymn, *Abide with me*, after which the Marquis of Bath took the salute and the band marched off, followed by the Guard of Honour.

The Band repeated their performance at King's School the following day, when the salute was taken by the headmaster and the president of the Old Brutonian Association, Col Richard Sullivan, late Commanding Officer of the Household Cavalry.

Hazlegrove lies at the gateway to the South West where the A303 narrows as it passes under the shadow of Cadbury Castle and into the heartland of the cheesemakers of Somerset.

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A parents' guide to claiming CEA

THE Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) (Board) is a provision for eligible Service personnel who opt to educate their children in UK boarding schools.

The allowance provides continuity of education for children who would otherwise have to frequently change schools due to parental postings.

The allowance does not cover the full cost of fees; parents must make a compulsory contribution of a minimum of 10 per cent. Parents are free to choose any school on the ASD but where school fees exceed the Allowance parents may find themselves topping it up by a significant amount.

CEAS holds the Accredited Schools Database (ASD) which lists the schools that attract the CEA(Board) allowance.

What you need to do:

1. The Serving parent must check their eligibility and obtain a Mobility Certificate from their Unit Admin Office, counter signed by their Assignment Authority prior to making any claim.

2. Joint Services Publication (JSP) 752 Chapter 9 requires Service personnel to contact CEAS for advice prior to claiming this allowance.

3. Service Personnel should familiarise themselves with JSP 752, Chapter 9 (Education Allowances).

4. Once you have selected the school for your child you must complete a CEA (Board) Certificate Application Form (available from CEAS office or our website www.ceas.mod.uk) and send it to CEAS with a copy of your Mobility Certificate and a copy of a letter from your chosen school offering your child a place.

5. CEAS will issue the Serving parent with a CEA (Board) Certificate on receipt of the completed application and associated paperwork. Certificates are usually issued within two weeks.

6. The CEA (Board) Certificate is then used to make a claim via JPA between July 1 and August 11 for payment before the September term.

Service personnel in receipt of the CEA(Board) may also be able to claim an extra allowance if their child has been diagnosed as having a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia. Contact CEAS if you think this may be applicable to you or for any other advice relating to your children's education.

You can contact CEAS by e-mail: enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk or on the helpline: 01980 618244, 94 344 8244 (Mil) or by fax 01980 618245, 94 344 8245 (Mil).

The helpline is staffed 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, and 8.30am to 4.30pm on Fridays.



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Sceptre refit is well in hand

SPIRITS - and a 4,900-ton submarine - have been lifted at Babcock Marine on the Clyde.

One of the last two Swiftsure-class nuclear-powered submarines in the Fleet, HMS Sceptre, entered the shiplift ahead of schedule and budget.

The nine-month Revalidation Assisted Maintenance Period (RAMP) has involved some 70,000 hours of labour.

The early reactor component inspections and a routine replacement of the 120-cell submarine main battery have been completed.

Also one of the three capability upgrades has been finished, with the other two well advanced.

Originally scheduled to end in January, hard work on the workers' behalf has enabled the docking period to be brought forward by four weeks.

Furthermore, Babcock Marine insists that "all involved are working hard to achieve an early completion."

All secondary and combat weapons system work is progressing to plan, including the process of converting the forward fridges to a more environmentally-friendly alternative. Other defects have been attended to as part of the work package.

The RAMP is being conducted under Clyde's 'One Base One Team' initiative.

HMS Sceptre's RAMP marks the end of an era.

It is the last to be conducted on a Swiftsure-class submarine - her sister HMS Superb is the only other of the class in commission - and it is the last planned docking of a Swiftsure-class SSN in the Faslane shiplift.

THE TIME OF YOUR LIVES

September 1968

Cairngorm Mountain Rescue Association called on HMS Caledonia to erect a storm shelter on top of the Cairngorm Plateau due to the increase in call-outs and rescues. The site was selected at the junction of the three mountain paths at Lochan Buidhe - Yellow Loch - which is the highest area of water in Great Britain. The shelter, created by the M15 and M16 classes of OEMs, was designed to withstand 144mph winds and temperatures of -30°C.

September 1978

The Sea Harrier FRS Mk1 made its public debut at the Farnborough Air Show. The first Harrier in RN colours was put through its paces the month before at Dunsfold by John Farley, the British Aerospace chief test pilot. Also making its public debut at Farnborough was the ski-jump take-off ramp that was later fitted to Royal Navy aircraft carriers.

September 1988

HMV Britannia anchored in Plymouth Sound as the Queen made a visit to Plymouth Naval Base to mark the 400th anniversary of the Spanish Armada. The Queen received a rapturous reception from the sailors of HM ships Brave, Brazen, Cornwall and Turbulent who lined the decks and cheered as the royal motorcade passed. The royal party was treated to a display by 539 Assault Squadron RM and a fly-past by the Sharks helicopter display team of 705 NAS from RNAS Culdrose.



●Champ of the ramp: The Sea Harrier FRS Mk1 takes off with the help of a ski-jump ramp at the Farnborough Air Show



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Gas men power through tasks

FIVE British Gas engineers gave up a day of their time to carry out maintenance work at the Tunbridge Wells unit.

The engineers were all local trade union leaders, and their regional manager Jon Vanns – who is a member of the Corps – wanted to undertake some team-building.

What better place, thought Jon, than a sea cadet unit?

The five helped clear weeds, replaced fittings and felted a roof among other things.

Unit chairman Derek Ireland praised the efforts of the gas men and the volume of work they got through, and explained just how valued such work is to units like Tunbridge Wells.

The engineers were impressed by the range of activities in which the cadets were involved, and the dedication of adult volunteers.

Unit affiliates with Legion

MILFORD Haven unit has officially affiliated to the local branch of the Royal British Legion.

Lt Col Doug Joyce, RBL branch president, presented the affiliation certificate to PO (SCC) William Elliot, Officer in Charge of Milford Haven, for display in the unit.

After the presentation Lt Col Joyce chatted with cadets and had his photo taken with them.



● Capt Jonathan Fry unveils the plaque marking the Tooting and Balham unit centenary

Centenary bash

TOOTING and Balham unit have celebrated their centenary.

The unit started life as the Boys Naval Brigade in May 1908, and was based at All Saints Church in Franciscan Road.

Over the years it has seen many changes, firstly to the name of the organisation, then the structure of the Corps and also with the unit's move to its present home in Mellinson Road.

That was the centre of the celebrations on the Friday night as Captain Sea Cadet Corps and Director of Operations Capt Jonathan Fry, Area Officer Cdr Paul Haines and many of the cadets' parents and carers were

welcomed to TS Constant.

Capt Fry unveiled a plaque to mark the occasion – a first for him, but probably not the last...

The following day the Mayor of Wandsworth, all unit staff and the committee, as well as many staff from neighbouring units, attended another celebration.

The unit had also managed to trace many former members of staff and cadets, which meant there were representatives from as far back as 1932.

These old hands took the chance to see how the unit has developed over the decades, as well as sharing memories with the present generation.



● Pam Jennings, who has been associated with Scarborough unit for more than 20 years, became a lay preacher in 1990, officiating at Sea Cadet parades and ceremonies. One of her sons was a cadet, and is now a chief officer in the Merchant Navy. Earlier this summer Pam was ordained deacon by the Archbishop of York at York Minster, and among the congregation were members of the unit (left), supporting their very own official padre.

CADETS from one of the Bristol units were in for a shock when they arrived for a pulling training session at the unit one Sunday.

The youngsters and staff of the Bristol Adventure unit arrived to find that one of their boats had gone missing – not the first time this had happened.

A glance across the docks revealed the charred remains of a much-loved unit boat.

'Drake', one of the unit's two ASCs, had been stolen in the early hours of the morning and set alight. Further examination of the boat has shown it to be a complete write off.

This was the second time within three weeks that one of the boats had been taken during the night – only this time it won't be coming back.

The staff and cadets of the unit were saddened that surrounds this mindless act of vandalism, particularly those who were using that boat to train for the Area combined regatta that the unit was scheduled to host.



● The remains of Drake, the boat which was set ablaze

...but three more are saved

CDR Keith Hornby Priestnall RNR, president of Burton-upon-Trent unit, was rather surprised to receive a very early morning call from the Third Sea Lord, Vice Admiral Trevor Soar.

But the senior officer had some good news – three of the unit's boats were sitting, roped together, on the weir just outside his apartment

alongside the River Trent.

The boats had obviously been released from the chained and locked moorings, allowing them to drift a couple of miles downriver to the weir, where they stopped because of the low levels of water.

Had the river been deeper, they could have been swept over the weir, severely damaging them.

Unit CO CPO David Nichol put together a rescue team, which retrieved the undamaged boats.

CPO Nichol said the matter had been referred to the police, particularly as the boats were kept padlocked to a metal boom at the training ship; two padlocks were missing, which suggested it could have been vandalism.

Summer camp is staged on Benbecula

CADETS from Northern Area units have held their annual summer camp in the Outer Hebrides.

And those taking part believe this may be something of a first – unless anyone out there knows better...

Around 60 cadets from the Ayr, Paisley, Queensferry and Rosyth units, were based at the Army facilities on Benbecula, one of the Hebridean islands off the west coast of Scotland.

Numerous activities took place on and around West Camp at Balivanich over the course of the week, from cycling to shooting.

Benbecula has long featured on the British military map.

An airfield was built during World War 2, which during the Cold War became the control centre for rocket and missile ranges on the adjoining islands of North and South Uist. That airfield is now Benbecula Airport.

The RAF have also used the three islands as radar heads over the decades.

The Army came relatively late, establishing a camp in 1958.

The military is still one of the main employers, with teams of technicians servicing the missile ranges, used in the Eurofighter development programme.



● City of Liverpool Sea Cadets and Australian Naval Cadets from TS Culgoa about to take a flight in an RAAF Hercules C130

Australia welcomes Liverpool

A DOZEN cadets from Merseyside have been seeing how their colleagues Down Under operate.

The Commanding Officer and 12 sea cadets of the City of Liverpool unit, accompanied by the Deputy District Officer for Liverpool, Lt Cdr (SCC) Paul Rycroft RNR, and two members of staff spent three weeks in Australia visiting the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian Navy Cadets.

The trip was the result of two years hard work and fundraising by the CO, S/Lt (SCC) Eddie Pownall RNR, and the cadets.

During the visit to Sydney the Brits were hosted by the RAN at HMAS Kuttubul and accompanied by the CO of TS Culgoa, Lt (ANC) Kay Aldridge, who stayed with the group throughout.

Whilst in Sydney they attended Chief of the Navy's divisions and spent time on HMAS Ballarat before moving up country to South West Rocks to visit TS Culgoa.

Having spent three days with them they travelled north again to Ballina and spent two days with TS



● SIX former sea cadets are currently undergoing training at the Royal Marines School of Music. All six agreed that their cadet training stood them in good stead and are immensely proud of their old units – as they are of the RM Band Service of which they are now a part. The six are, from left, Msn Tim Scrivener (Dover), Bugler Jamie Ritchie (Dundee), Buglers James Horner and Tom Cartwright (Reigate), Buglers Lee Kidd and Ben Paine (Chatham Marines)



● Cadets from the Hinckley and Northampton and Wellingborough units joined forces to represent the Northampton and Leicestershire District on the water (above), and their combined talents took all the honours at the area regatta in Nottingham. The Hinckley sailing boat handling team put in a particularly good show, winning the top prize for the second year running – though LCs Hartwell, Watton and Parry, and ACs Dodds and Dickins were tested to the limit on the River Trent. CO Lt Neil Hartwell said: "This was a fantastic achievement for our cadets. They all had a great weekend. It was the result of many hours' training." Northampton and Wellingborough will be sending a total of 32 cadets to the national boating finals, which Unit CO Lt (SCC) Chris Read RNR believes is an unprecedented figure



● Lt Cdr (SCC) Paul Rycroft RNR and S/Lt (SCC) Ed Pownall RNR enjoy the sights of Sydney

Lismore, where the parents turned out in force to stage a BBQ.

They headed north again to Tweed Heads, a suburb of the Gold Coast, and a two-day stay with TS Vampire.

On the return leg they were lucky enough to be invited to fly in an RAAF Hercules C130, spending an hour on a low-level flight along the Gold Coast with

the doors open, spotting many dolphins and whales on the way.

Returning to South West Rocks the cadets were able to go sailing with the unit, where more dolphins made an appearance.

Then, after a round journey of over 1,000 miles, they returned to Sydney for another three days before returning home via Shanghai.

SEA CADETS



● Sacha Bamford receives the Top Fin trophy from Lt (SCC) George Bayley RNR

Sacha is Top Fin

A GROUP of cadets and staff members have successfully completed an RN acquaint diving course at Horsea Island – and it turned out to be a particularly memorable week for OC Sacha Bamford, of the Bollington and Macclesfield unit.

The intensive course is based on that taken by Service divers, with participants diving in full face masks and attached to the surface by a lifeline.

Students – who must be a BSAC sports diver or equivalent, be a member of the BSAC and have an in-date sports diver medical to join the course – have to work hard to attain their First Class diver badge and eight points.

And none worked harder than Sacha, who was awarded the trophy as Top Fin – best student on the course – by Lt (SCC) George Bayley RNR, HQ Staff Officer (Diving).



● Members of the Newburn unit TS Tyne helped a Service charity raise almost £800 by packing bags for shoppers at a local supermarket. The event, held at the Gosforth branch of Asda, was organised by the area co-ordinator for SOS – Support Our Soldiers – which sends parcels to front-line troops, to wounded men and women back in the UK, and helps support families. The cadets (pictured above with SOS co-ordinator Kim Blythe, left) worked hard throughout the Saturday, helping raise £787.13, and as far as anyone knows, no eggs were broken!



● Huyton unit have repeated their record-breaking feat of last summer by putting three pulling teams into the national finals. Three of the four teams entered into the Liverpool district competition (above) won – the fourth entry came second – so the open boys, open girls and junior girls progressed to the North West Region event, where they again carried all before them to book their places in the national finals, in London this month.



● Members of Brentwood School CCF spent a day at HMS Collingwood to see how the Royal Navy operates. The 14 cadets and two members of staff from the Navy section got the chance to operate the bridge trainer (pictured). OIC John McCann said it had been a great experience for the youngsters



Bravo, Jonny

● Jonny and his Coribee yacht (right) sail from Skye (above)

TEENAGER Jonny Moore was bitten by the sailing bug when he joined the Kendal unit in Cumbria.

And the 16-year-old petty officer is putting his training to the test by making a single-handed journey round the coast of Britain.

Jonny started his epic 2,000-mile journey in June, after taking his GCSE exams, and hopes to be back at Holyhead, where he started, some time this month.

As Navy News went to press, Jonny was making his way down the east coast of England.

He is using the voyage to raise funds for his unit – full details of how to donate through the Justgiving website are available at www.jonnymooresailing.com

The chairman of the Kendal unit, Alan Brough, said that Jonny's fellow cadets and staff at TS Royalist were all very proud of what he is attempting to achieve.

Jonny believes he is the youngest person to attempt the trip, and hopes it will be a useful personal stepping stone as he considers that his future lies in short-handed offshore sailing.



Fourth time lucky for Lochaber group

AFTER months of waiting and three failed attempts, a group of sea cadets from Fort William finally made it into the skies over their home town in one of the Royal Navy's busiest aircraft.

Originally programmed for last autumn, the visit by members of the Lochaber unit had to be cancelled because the Search and Rescue Sea King helicopter from HMS Gannet was grounded as engineers worked on it.

Two rescheduled flights had to be scrapped because of bad weather.

But this summer finally saw enough good weather (we didn't notice it – Ed) to go aloft in the venerable Sea King Mk 5, taking off from the rescue helipad at the Corpach BSW sawmill site.

With few visits by RN ships to Fort William, it is down to the Fleet Air Arm to fly the flag in the area, and it their SAR aircraft which are often to be seen on rescue or ambulance duties over the mountains and islands of western Scotland.

Despite the helicopter being called out to hunt for a missing walker, a number of cadets were treated to a flight round the area, including the lower slopes of Ben Nevis, as well as over the town of Fort William itself.

As well as being a tremendous opportunity to see round the aircraft, it was also a rare opportunity for aircrew and cadets to meet.

Aircraft captain Lt Cdr Martin Lanni said: "It is great to be able to come to Fort William and meet at first hand the Lochaber Sea Cadets and show them round the aircraft."

"It is not often that we get the chance to meet a sea cadet unit in their own back garden and tell them about our work."

AC Jordan Cattenach, from Onich, said: "It was really fun. It was great to see Ben Nevis from a different angle."

S/Lt Derrick Warner, CO of the Lochaber unit, said: "I cannot say how delighted I am that we have had this visit from HMS Gannet."

"They will see these aircraft flying over the town and its surrounding countryside in all weathers.

"So the chance to see what goes on inside them and to meet the people who actually put their lives on the line as part of their everyday work was fantastic."

"As well as letting the cadets find out about part of the Royal

Navy, I was also keen that they should have a fun time.

"They have all worked so hard over the past year, which culminated in us winning our first Pennant in 29 years, and they really deserved some payback!"

Liner visit

CADETS from the Southampton and Cowes units have been welcomed aboard the new Holland America cruise liner Eurodam.

The cadets were given lunch and a presentation about career opportunities with the company.

This was followed by a tour of the ship by ex-Sea Cadet Chief Officer Mark Rowden, which included the engine room and bridge.

The 86,700-ton ship, which can carry 2,104 passengers, entered service in July.



● From left, PO Daz Craig, Lt Cdr Martin Lanni, Lt Tony Sherwin and Lt Lars Brazier from HMS Gannet with the Oban Sea Cadets

Oban cadets takes flight

OBAN cadets from TS Pharos took to the air with the RN Search and Rescue team from HMS Gannet.

The unit, based at Prestwick in Scotland, not only undertakes rescues at sea – their responsibilities include mountain rescue (Ben Nevis is on their patch), road traffic accidents and emergency evacuations for a range of situations.

HMS Gannet covers a very large and challenging area stretching from Scotland's west coast to the North of England, covering some of the UK's most treacherous stretches of water, as well as some of its most hazardous terrain.

The unique combination of rugged mountains,

islands, rivers, forests, lochs and glens, presented 359 call outs last year alone.

The team rescued 349 people, making it the UK's busiest SAR unit, and the team have already responded to 185 call-outs during the first seven months of 2008.

Flying a Sea King Mk 5 helicopter, the four-strong crew treated the cadets to a 30-minute flight over Oban and up the Sound of Kerrera.

This particular Sea King is something of a veteran – over 30 years old, it was on active service during the Falklands War.

It was a truly spectacular and breathtaking flight and one they are unlikely to forget.

Museum stages WW1 contest

THE Imperial War Museum is offering young people the chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to the battlefields of the Great War.

To commemorate the 90th anniversary of the end of World War 1 the museum, in association with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, is seeking 24 young people from across the UK to visit France and Belgium from November 7-12.

The museum has decided to select these 'Remembrance representatives' through the Lottery-funded *Their Past Your Future* programme, by running a competition, entitled *Away to Remember*.

It is open to youngsters between the ages of 14 and 16, who have to respond to the following questions:

- 1. What impact did World War 1 have on your community?
- 2. What do you think about Remembrance now and in the future?

Entries can be in any format – short films, photographs, art or a written response, and the closing date is September 9.

Winners will be notified during the week of September 15.

Those winners will join a tour, led by experienced museum staff, visiting sites such as the Ypres Salient, Arras and the Somme to discover some of the remarkable stories of men and women who experienced life on the Western Front during the war.

The winners will also have the opportunity to represent their communities at commemorative events to mark the 90th anniversary of the Armistice.

The prize includes a weekend at the Imperial War Museum in London on October 11-12 to prepare for the visit.

Entrants do not have to be studying history at school, but the museum is keen to hear from young people who are interested in finding out more about the lasting impact of World War 1.

That could include an interest in citizenship or the environment, a particular taste for art, design or photography, or someone who has a penchant for politics or geography.

All travel, accommodation, food and fees will be paid by the *Their Past Your Future* project.

To enter the competition see the website www.tpyf.com



● Northampton and Wellingborough cadets clear rubbish and debris from the River Nene

Boating is great, even when it's rubbish

THE prowess of Northampton and Wellingborough cadets on the water is not just confined to the regattas (see story page 45).

The unit also took part in the Northampton Rotary Club dragon boat race, raising £200 for the Northamptonshire and Warwickshire Air Ambulance.

Before that they spent a day cleaning rubbish

from the River Nene as part of their community awareness training.

Unit CO Lt (SCC) Chris Read RNR said: "It is important that our young people are aware of the importance of the river environment and participate in local community events."

The cadets pulled many strange items from the river, including road signs and floating

timber, as well as the usual bottles and bags.

Clearing the debris made the river a more pleasant place to hold the dragon boat festival, as well as reducing the opportunity of paddles and boats becoming snagged.

The unit is looking to expand its waterborne training facilities, and is seeking support in buying new afloat equipment.

North West units step into Lymelight

ENSURING a big ship like RFA Lyme Bay can cope with an influx of visitors means deploying a lot of bodies.

The ship itself cannot cover all eventualities – there are plenty of corridors, doors and ladders where civilians could become lost, and a ship's company of fewer than 70 cannot cover routine watch tasks as well as herd members of the public.

So there was a need for augmentees who are keen, smart, cheerful and knowledgeable in naval matters.

Clearly a job for the Sea Cadets – and into the fray stepped Cheshire and Staffordshire District.

When the RFA landing ship pitched up on the Mersey for the Tall Ships pageant, cadets carried out vital jobs, including security checks of bags at the gangway, welcoming visitors, handing out leaflets and accompanying tour groups.

'Buggymaster' AC Scott Prince, of Winsford and Middlewich unit, also earned a new name – Princess, a recognition of his talent for guarding prams and baby buggies on the jetty.

More than 6,000 people visited the ship over the weekend without hitch.

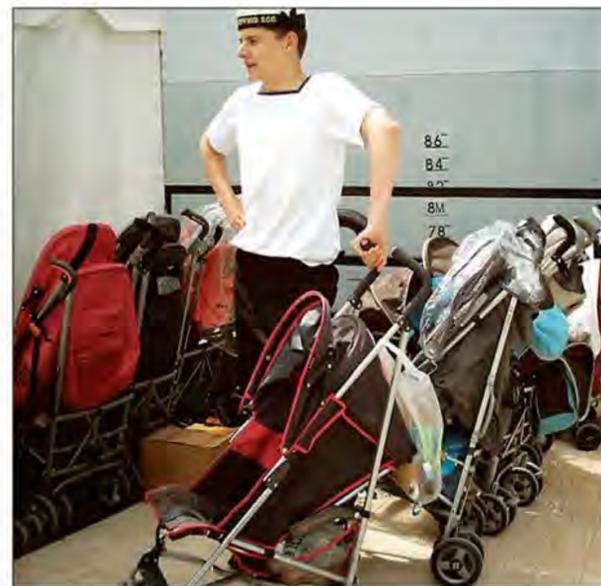
The cadets' reward was to live aboard the ship, and 'goodie bags'.

Members of the City of Liverpool and Huyton and Roby units manned the NW Area recruiting vehicle, and raised more than £1,200 for the Merseyside MSSC branch by raffling a signed Fernando Torres Liverpool shirt.

The same cadets also assisted at an official cocktail party in RNHQ Merseyside hosted by Naval Regional Commander Northern England.

Earlier in the week cadets from Middleton and Chadderton unit displayed their stewarding (sorry, Logistician (Catering Services (Delivery))) skills at a cocktail party co-hosted by Lyme Bay and the RNLI.

With Lyme Bay open to visitors from 10am to 5.30pm daily, and numerous ladders to climb, it was a busy time, but the cadets were delighted at how well they were received by the ship's company – they now hope to bag a trip at sea.



● Buggymaster AC Scott Prince on duty with RFA Lyme Bay

Success for Buxton afloat – and a float

YACHTSMEN and women from the Buxton unit have once again excelled themselves in the North West Area sailing competition.

The landlocked unit managed to gain first places in the Laser and Laser Pico classes and second in the Bosun and Topper events.

Now the unit is hoping that members will be on the team picked to compete for the North West Area at the national sailing competitions, held this month at Carrickfergus in Northern Ireland.

There was also success with a sailing ship on dry land for the Buxton contingent.

The unit won two awards in the Buxton Carnival, thanks to the leadership of PO Becky Luckman and the hard work of the cadets themselves, who built an impressive pirate ship for their float.

Back to the water, Buxton retained the trophy for the Manchester District Open boys pulling competition, staged by the Errwood Sailing Club in the Goyt Valley, part of the scenic Peak District National Park.

The unit's girls took third place, and a large number of cadets took part, despite the poor weather.

Shortly afterwards the cadets gave sailing instructions at Bassenthwaite in the Lake District to 24 pupils each day from Buxton Community School.

This was staged as part of the school's annual activities week.

The running of the unit has been boosted by a donation from Buxton Round Table, which was gratefully received by the management committee and has been put towards the funds for a proposed extension to the headquarters building.

Any youngsters who would like to join the unit and become involved in adventurous activities with a nautical flavour – perhaps even gaining Royal Yachting Association sailing qualifications – should contact the CO of the unit, Lt Bruce Luckman, on 01298 78092.

He would also be very pleased to hear from any adult volunteers who would be willing to help as instructors in a variety of skills.

It's not big – but it is clever...



● Members from 3rd Frodsham Sea Scouts on board TS Bob Allen

IT MIGHT be modest, but it is still a tall ship, and that was what counted for members of the 3rd Frodsham Sea Scout troop.

The scouts were invited to visit and sail in TS Bob Allen, which was berthed in Liverpool.

At 9m in length and just 7.5 tonnes displacement, TS Bob Allen is the world's smallest tall ship, and is operated by the Little Brig Sailing Trust charity.

Her rig and design, intended for younger sailors, is such that she can be crewed by a skipper and just four hands, and she can be manned by youngsters from the age of ten.

When the Frodsham contingent went aboard, the skipper allowed them to raise their troop's defaced ensign, after which they were given a safety brief.

Then it was on to the matter in hand – demonstrations on how to lower and raise the sails and an explanation as to what the ropes are for.

The scouts were then split into three groups, with each group spending a couple of hours sailing the ship.

At the end of the day the sails and ropes had to be stowed in preparation for the following day.

www.littlebrig.com



● Bijou tall ship TS Bob Allen

Zulus, Lions and admirals

OVER the past 115 years, the Navy Records Society has shed light where it is dark on so many naval matters – especially when it comes to the personal papers of great leaders: Rodney, Beatty, Jellicoe, Keyes, Hawke.

Some subject matter does not, however, warrant a complete volume, hence an eclectic mix of articles and documents find themselves cohabiting.

Naval Miscellany Volume VII (Ashgate, £65 ISBN 978-97546-64314) is the latest offering and eclectic it most certainly is: a dozen chapters ranging from the mustering of ships for Edward I's Scottish campaigns in the 14th Century to the Zulu Wars, Jutland, political intrigue in the Admiralty and the birth of an independent Royal Australian Navy.

Many of these subjects fall well outside this reviewer's limited knowledge; a few do not and there are some real gems within these pages.

The role of Naval brigades in the Boer War have entered naval legend, yet a generation before they fought with distinction in the controversial war against the Zulu people.

Signal Bosun Henry Eason kept a diary throughout his naval career, but the spring of 1879 would be the most eventful days of his life when he and his shipmates from HMS Shah were dispatched to relieve the British garrison in the beleaguered fortress of Ekowe.

War as they say is 99 per cent boredom and one per cent sheer terror, as evidenced by Eason's diary. For much of their time in Africa, the Shahs marched, built camps, were laid low by illness, watched the natives conduct their war dances. Their one per cent occurred at dawn on Wednesday April 2 1879 at Gingindlovu.

A Zulu impi (army), perhaps 12,000 strong, bore down on the 6,000-strong relief force laagered (camped) a good distance from Ekowe. What followed was a lesson of firepower over bravery. The bluejackets poured down an impenetrable wall of machine-gun and rifle fire, even rockets.

In an hour and a half it was all over; the Zulus were decisively beaten. "They came within 30

yards of our trenches against a tremendous fire," Eason recorded admiringly. "I must say the Zulus are a very brave race of people." He corrected himself: "Perhaps it is not bravery but ignorance."

Some of the Zulus pretended to be dead, then lunged at the Britons wandering around the battlefield in the aftermath. The British response was brutal, unforgiving. The wounded were put to the sword, something the native contingent supporting the Empire Army particularly relished.

Another lesson of firepower over bravery came at the British sailor's expense four decades later. Obsessed with rate of fire, the gunners in many dreadnoughts of the Grand Fleet ignored the most basic safety precautions. It would cost the Royal Navy heavily at Jutland.

But it could have been even worse that May afternoon in 1916.

The actions of Maj Francis Harvey, the Royal Marine commanding HMS Lion's Q turret are well known. He earned a posthumous VC for ordering his magazine flooded as fire raged, sparing the battle-cruiser the fate of HM Ships Queen Mary, Invincible and Indefatigable.

But it wasn't only Harvey's actions which saved Lion; the less-publicised efforts of her chief gunner, Alexander Grant, also played their part.

Grant recorded his memoirs 30 years later, memoirs which proved invaluable to Professor Arthur Marder when he compiled his monumental history of the Royal Navy in the dreadnought era. They then vanished for the next three decades, until resurfacing for a new generation of historians to pore over.

They show that he fully realised the danger of stockpiling cordite charges – which propelled the shells from the ship's main armament – in advance of the guns actually needing them. Grant put a stop to it; he even had the foresight to tell his men to take off their shoes (the highly-explosive cordite powder had a habit of being picked up on the men's boots and carried around the ship).

Lion's officers were sceptical, but Grant whipped his gunners into shape; his methods were actually faster than the prevailing routine.

And so his precautions, coupled

with Maj Harvey's self-sacrifice, saved Lion. But Jutland was "a particularly trying experience" for his shipmates, nevertheless.

"There they are, cramped and confined down below in so many small compartments, with no certain knowledge of events," Grant wrote. "They listen to the thud of one enemy shell and the explosion of another."

"This unavoidable lack of occupation, together with the rumours that get about (and they certainly do get about), to the effect that some ship has been blown to pieces, is more than enough to arouse uneasiness in their minds."

Lion's captain that day was one Ernle Chatfield. Four decades later, as an Admiral of the Fleet, Chatfield, became drawn into a long-running political/naval row.

In the late summer of 1940, a French squadron of cruisers and destroyers slipped through the Strait of Gibraltar unmolested.

Less than four months before, the French had been our Allies, but after defeat in six weeks at the hands of the Wehrmacht, they were our foes.

Churchill famously – or infamously – dispatched a potent force to Oran to neutralise the French fleet.

Operation Catapult mauled the French Navy, but it did not eliminate it as a possible threat.

And nor was it a particularly popular operation among the higher echelons of the RN, including one Vice-Admiral Sir Dudley North, Commander-in-Chief Gibraltar.

North did not hold his tongue; he voiced his displeasure to the Admiralty.

The Admiralty was not amused. It was even less amused when that French squadron passed the Pillars of Hercules.

The case seemed clear-cut. North was sacked.

Except that the case was not clear-cut. It was rather muddy.

Bunglings in Whitehall, confusing orders from the



● Admiral Beatty – his cap typically at a jaunty angle – poses beneath the guns of his flagship HMS Lion with his staff in 1916

Picture: D Aldous, Southsea

Admiralty and the unhurried actions of the Foreign Office, unsuited to the demands of total war, conspired with the fog of war to allow the French to escape.

The real villain of the piece – as the letters, documents and other papers reproduced here show – seems to be First Sea Lord Dudley Pound (although Churchill is clearly an *éminence grise*).

The wily Pound took a hard line, perhaps to hide the Admiralty's shortcomings, perhaps in retaliation for North's criticism of Catapult.

North was, the Admiralty's Permanent Secretary warned, "a person of influence who may well start a controversy".

And so it proved. For the rest of his life the admiral fought to clear his name – supported by the glitterati of the Senior Service who complained the "Admiralty machine broke down".

The Admiralty refused North's repeated requests for an inquiry; the affair was still bubbling away 15 years later.

It took Chatfield's intervention to finally twist the government's arm. "Whitehall and Gibraltar were miles apart," he wrote to then premier Harold Macmillan in 1957.

"They threw all the blame on North and failed to disclose the Admiralty's blame."

Macmillan agreed and finally

exonerated North – although the prime minister's endorsement was less than ringing.

The admiral had just cause to be bitter at his treatment, yet he continued to serve his country... joining the Home Guard on his return to Britain.

So there you have it: an interesting and varied mix of articles.

The £65 price tag (admittedly fairly typical in academic circles) will no doubt put many readers off, particularly if they're interested in only one of the dozen subjects on offer.

But within these pages there is something for pretty much every serious naval historian.

Still in Nelson's shadow?

VICE-Admiral of the Red Cuthbert Collingwood is one of the most distinguished officers in the history of the Royal Navy.

He played key roles in the Glorious First of June, the Battle of Cape St Vincent and the Battle of Trafalgar, writes Prof Eric Grove of the University of Salford.

He succeeded Nelson in command of the Mediterranean Fleet and worked himself to death over the following five years, as the Royal Navy maintained its galling and inexorable pressure on the Napoleonic Empire while Britain searched for allies who might defeat the greatest land power in the world.

Sadly, Collingwood would not live to see the tide turn. But no one – not even Nelson – made a greater contribution to eventual coalition victory. No-one trained their crews and fleets better than Collingwood and it is right that the premier training establishment of the modern Royal Navy proudly bears his name.

I was looking forward to reading Denis Orde's new biography, *In the Shadow of Nelson: The Life and Times of Admiral Lord Collingwood* (Pen & Sword, £25 ISBN 978-184415-7822); Collingwood is an interesting man, whose attractions lie in his conscientiousness and humanity rather than the flamboyance and charismatic style of his contemporary.

Collingwood and Nelson were great and genuine friends and were perfect complements to each other, like Beatty and Chatfield in a later age. Unlike the latter pair, they were of equal seniority but, inevitably, 'Cuddy' Collingwood was overshadowed by Horatio Nelson.

The Grove Review

Unfortunately he is in the new book too. There is almost as much about Nelson in it as about its real subject. Collingwood is always described in juxtaposition to his contemporary with discussion of as many (sometimes more) aspects of Nelson's life than Collingwood's.

One might have expected a barrister like Denis Orde to have displayed more focus and discipline, as his efforts in research have clearly been considerable.

Far too much space is expended on extended profiles of participants in the story of Collingwood's life, at the expense of analysis of Collingwood's own career and attributes.

I got quite lost in the discussion of Collingwood's family, with a major digression on a distant relative executed for participating in the 1715 Jacobite rebellion, before it turned to the admiral's true forebears.

It is really quite difficult to follow Collingwood's family background and entry into the Navy. A careful exegesis of the confusion as to why Cuthbert joined the navy was that his well-connected merchant father had little success in trade. In these circumstances, able young sons saw the Navy as a perfect combination of service and profit.

Collingwood was also suitably connected to the Navy by family, a maternal uncle being Richard Braithwaite, later Admiral of the White. Collingwood spent most of his early years in Braithwaite's ships

but Orde provides frustratingly little detail.

One overriding problem with the book is that its author cannot shed the old fashioned prejudices that naval historians have more recently tried to mitigate. This leads at various times to confusion as to why Collingwood had reservations – to say the least – about the antics of Lord St Vincent, who is nowadays regarded with something less than the hero worship that clouds Orde's judgement.

The author also cannot resist juxtaposing Collingwood's wise dictum "Cherish your men, and take care of your stores and then your ship will be serviceable" with a statement (uncited, more of that anon) of the false "black legend" of cruelty and bad conditions in Nelson's (and Collingwood's) Navy.

More seriously for the story he has to tell, Orde does not understand the strategic significance of the Battle of Trafalgar, an engagement that had more directly to do with dominance in the Mediterranean, than it had with an invasion threat to Britain that had gone away (to the Danube to be precise).

This means he has difficulties fully appreciating Collingwood's major successes in the succeeding years in containing Napoleon's remaining sea power and creating strategic problems for the French.

This key period, the most important in Collingwood's career, receives only 25 pages of a 289-page book.

There is all too little discussion of the politico-strategic activity that was his subject's stock in trade and which is largely unappreciated in a popular naval world, that

cannot see beyond a horizon that mistakenly stops with Trafalgar.

Collingwood, like his biographer, came from Northumberland, which perhaps accounts for the extended and repeated trips down the rabbit holes of the lives of the prominent members of north-eastern society. One can also detect perhaps a family prejudice in the attention paid to Sir John Orde, to whom page after page is devoted at the expense of Collingwood himself.

The book is 'all over the place' and would have benefited from good and professional editing. However, the publishers have compounded the author's difficulties. They normally do not like or use footnotes, but on this occasion, they have concocted an amazing mish-mash of referencing where some things are footnoted and others are not. Woe betide any of my students who presented work in such a confused state.

It is all, frankly, unprofessional and it does not do justice to the otherwise high standards of Pen and Sword's production. I hear among colleagues in the field, the dire epithet 'vanity publisher'. Pen and Sword do not deserve this, but they must get their act together quickly.

Those interested in the Nelsonic era will probably enjoy *In the Shadow of Nelson*. The author writes very well when he allows himself to. But I expect I shall not be the only reader, whose heart sinks when yet more irrelevant material appears and 'Cuddy' Collingwood fades back yet again into Nelson's shadow.

There is a good deal of interest in it, but a great admiral like Collingwood deserves better. It is a great pity that, for the want of strong editorial discipline, such clear enthusiasm for the subject has not fulfilled its potential.

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pictures: keith woodland



● You can't beat a bit of bully (offs)... (Clockwise from above) RN captain Lt Dave Potter lunges in to make a block against the Mercians; when life was in black and white... the RN Master Veterans line up; Cdr Heber Ackland attempts to outpace former England international Peter Nail; the U23s charge out from the goal line; hand of friendship... S/Lt Rachel Rake with Mike Smith, long-standing supporter of RN hockey

Raising the banners

IN A seven-day bonanza, the Royal Navy Hockey Association rounded off a highly successful year and warmed up in great style for its centenary season, writes Capt Mark Darlington.

The action-packed programme opened with a PT Qualifying Course. Normally the 'Quals' would spend five days of their six-month course earning English Hockey's Leadership Coaching Award and Foundation Umpire Award.

After a day of intensive coaching and practising under the weathered eye of Combined Services chief coach Lt Cdr Alan Walker, helped by hockey stalwarts LPT Shiner Wright and Mne Alan Thomson, the 19 qualifiers put their new-found skills to the test as umpires and coaches for more than 300 nine to 13-year-olds during a two-day festival of hockey for local Hampshire school children.

"All the wannabe PTIs performed brilliantly and the children had a fabulous time. The past two days have been a superb advert of all that is best in the Royal Navy," said Lt Cdr Walker.

On the fourth day of the bonanza, the men's and women's outdoor Inter-Command tournaments began.

With many players deployed on operations, each Command took great pride in raising its banner and fielding full-strength sides to battle it out against the others.

The five Command team banners, each 3ft wide by 14ft high, dominated the Temeraire skyline and the Command Colours, logo, and the imprinted faces of a number of RN hockey players fluttered in the warm summer breeze.

At the end of the first day in the men's tournament, Naval Air were ahead of the Royal Marines on goal difference, and in the women's competition a combined Naval Air/Scotland team had the edge over both the Portsmouth and Plymouth teams.

With 150-plus players and umpires present for the Inter-Commands, what better time to hold the sport's annual general meeting.

How fitting it was to recall that the U23 and senior men's RN representative teams in their pre-centenary season had both achieved the Inter-Services indoor and outdoor double, the Royal Marines had won the Inter-Command indoor and Naval Air had reached the West of England Indoor semi-finals and won the men's and women's Navy Cup and the men's and women's Tri-Service Cup Winners Cups. The RN women also had five players selected for Combined Services outdoor and had beaten – for the second year indoors – the RAF women.

Day five of seven dawned. Air/Scotland went on to triumph in the women's competition and the Royal Marines and Naval Air met in the last match of the men's tournament.

Both had come to win – Royal seeking to win for a fifth consecutive year, Naval Air to grab the silverware from the green machine.

In an intense and closely-fought game, Naval Air finished strongly drawing 3-3 with the Royal Marines after being 3-1 down.

The result of the competition hinged upon goal difference; the Marines finished just ahead of a bitterly-disappointed Naval Air team.

Meanwhile, third, fourth and fifth place positions had been settled with Portsmouth edging out both Plymouth and Scotland. With the drive and enthusiasm shown by the Scottish clan, led by the redoubtable Lt Gareth 'Jesse' James, it will surely not be long before their fortunes improve.

The weekend arrived, and beneath blue skies and sunshine the RNHA celebrated a wonderful 30-year partnership with Mike and Judy Smith, joint managing directors of Mercian Hockey.

On Saturday, RN representative teams played four matches against Mercian select sides, sprinkled with current and former international players.

Up first were Southgate's Under 18 National Mercian Leagues Champions team, complete with a 52-seat bus load of mums, dads, friends and relatives. This was to be the team to play the RN U23s who did well to hold Southgate to 2-0 until close to full-time. In the dying minutes, both sides went up through the gears with Southgate ultimately winning a splendid match 6-2. Southgate were then entertained to lunch aboard HMS Ark Royal.

The RN veterans took to the field next; WO Nigel Buckley had assembled pretty much an Inter-Service squad to compete against a Mercian Veterans side comprising four former England and Scotland internationals. The final score of 2-2 was a great result at the end of another closely-fought game.

The women's match took place under the watchful and supportive eye of Capt Lynne Gibbon QARNNS, women's vice president, sadly in her last few days in the Naval Service. As Matron in Chief QARNNS, Capt Gibbon has been a strong supporter of women's hockey and it is hoped that she will retain her contact with the team in retirement.

The match ended 4-0 to the Mercianaries – a scoreline which hides the hatful of chances which the Navy women created against far more experienced opposition.

For the senior men's match, Mercian did the Navy proud turning out a mix of past and current internationals against the Inter-Services Champions for four of the past five years.

Lt Cdr Walker was delighted to welcome some of his former England U21 players from 1992-94 who went on to full England and Olympic status. Prominent in a wonderful match were Simon Mason, Ben Barnes, Manpreet Kochar, Mark Pearn, Danny Hall and Simon Faulkner.

This was the outstanding match of the weekend. With three minutes to go the Navy were winning 7-6. By full time, through sheer white-hot brilliance, the Mercianaries had won 8-7.

"This was truly a fantastic game of hockey, and one the RN team will remember for a long time," said RN captain Lt Dave Potter.

A fitting finale to four splendid, superb games of hockey was provided by the Corps Drums of the Band of the Royal Marines Portsmouth who gave a very special and breathtaking display on the running track in front of a packed Victory Stadium.

Sunday dawned – and the years rolled back. Thirty-plus RN master veterans aged between 50 and 76 took on an Army over-50s team in three twenty-minute one-way fixtures.

In some cases it had been more than 50 years since some of the RN team had played together – in most cases they were all from different eras.

All the master veterans experienced the thrill of playing again on what used to be the finest grass pitch in the South of England, superbly prepared for the occasion by the groundsmen at Burnaby Road East.

'Olde Worlde' rules were the order of the day, and Lt Cdr John Gawley (aged 76), complete with blazer and flannels (no white stick!) umpired with Lt Ian Bryan.

Both turned back the clock with roll-ins, hand-stops, bullies-off, penalty bullies, offsides, and everyone back at long corners.

Even Lt Cdr Walker got a run out and it was great to see Admiral John Robertson and his wife Kathleen present and giving their support, just as they did 30 years ago. It was a perfect setting and a splendid match which the Army won 2-0.

The finale to a cracking week's hockey was the RN men and women's sides taking on the Army. Before the start of the senior men's match a 60-year-old Olympic torch from the 1948 London Games was exchanged between the RN and Army captains as a token to signify the formal handing over of the centenary baton from the Army (whose centenary year was just ending).

Army vs Navy senior men's matches are always hard fought affairs. First the Army took the lead, then the RN. With five minutes to go the Army, led by Olympian Guy Fordham and the brilliant Matt Jamieson, were 4-3 up, but in the dying minutes the Navy equalised to level the scores. The Army women won 3-1.

At the end of seven days of intense, action-packed and fun-filled hockey, the RN Hockey Association was ready for its centenary year, which will be launched in the KPMG seven-a-side, 24-team, inter-branch tournament on September 5-7 at HMS Temeraire.

Looking further ahead, the RNHA black tie ball will take place at HMS Nelson on June 5 2009 and an international weekend is planned for July 4-5.

If you would like to play hockey, either as a serving or retired member of the Royal Navy, contact Alan Walker on 02392 724131.



The mighty 90

NINETY athletes from across the RN and RM gathered at HMS Raleigh for the 2008 triathlon championships.

Over the last three years the number of competitors entering at novice level has progressively increased, which ensures that Triathlon remains one of the up and coming sports in the RN.

Early morning dark clouds and strong winds kindly gave way to the afternoon's rays of sun, which helped to make the day an enjoyable one (for most anyway). Swimming was the opening discipline, competitors setting off on the 400m 'dip' at 30-second intervals.

Then it was on to the bike (pictured above, if you were wondering...), down to the small village of Polbathic and back to the Torpoint establishment along the same undulating road a gruelling 13 miles later.

After a quick change, another undulating course beckoned: the three-mile run, a loop which brought competitors back through the assault course gate and a sprint across the parade ground to finish.

Sgt Hayden (1h 2m 22s) and Lt

US' Lyme aid

THE men of RFA Lyme Bay challenged counterparts from the USS Elrod to a game of soccer (aka football) when the two vessels visited Den Helder for Dutch Navy Days.

The much younger Americans proved to be the better side in the first period, going in at the break 2-1 up.

After a half-time team talk, the RFA chaps emerged re-invigorated and banged in two quick goals to take the lead.

They saved the best for last when AB John Roberts slammed a fantastic volley into the corner of the net. It was a strike worthy of a man of the match title... except that it was own net and it pegged the Lyme Bayers back to 3-3 – the final score as it turned out.

Armand Smith (1h 21m) posted the fastest times in the men's and women's novices races.

LMA Mhairi Muir took the open ladies title (by more than five minutes) on 1h 5m 38s; her male counterpart was Collingwood's Lt Kelly who won by the narrower margin of 27 seconds in 59m 28s. WO1 Rickard (1h 1m 55s) posted the fastest over 40s time while Portsmouth were hailed Inter-Command winners.

After a plate of pasta and a well-earned beer, the huge arrays of prizes were awarded by the Captain of HMS Raleigh, Captain Jonathan Woodcock, whose final words of praise were backed up and cemented by the associations chairman Cdr David Pollard. Great event, good feeling, mission accomplished.

The full results can be seen at www.rnmtri.co.uk

Lord's and ladies

THE home of cricket was the perfect setting for the highlight of the season, nay year: the Army-Navy centenary game.

Lord's did not disappoint, and nor did the players with a great day's cricket in front of 6,000 appreciative fans.

The match celebrated the first Services' clash in 1908 and was the culmination of nearly a year of planning and the focus for cricketers from both Services.

Before play began there was a chance for old adversaries to reminisce over a glass of wine and a bacon roll at a reception for players past; some 300 capped cricketers from both sides attended.

The Army elected to bat on what looked like an excellent playing surface. It was. Openers Capt James Fulton and Signaller Stuart Jackson promptly posted a century opening partnership which had the crowd out of their seats.

Fulton went on to attain 115 – his second century at Lord's having posted one some 13 years earlier as captain of Eton against Harrow.

Lt Mark Toogood made a small bit of history as the first bowler to take a wicket at Lord's in a Service fixture since 1972 when he dismissed Fulton.

This was small compensation as Jackson reached his 50 and, supported by quick runs, from Gunner Murray Heyns, helped the Army to post a challenging score of 265-4 with Lt Jonathan Parker from HMS Raleigh picking up two wickets.

The Navy's response was dulled by an excellent opening from the Army bowlers; Signaller David Wade took three quick wickets to leave the RN struggling on 21-3.

Now came the RN fightback, with important contributions from skipper Lt Cdr Paul Snelling (20) and Parker (39) in the face of some good spin bowling from Craftsman Jon Boynton.

Just as the Army were sensing victory Lt Tim Burt (HMS Argyll) came to the rescue with a match-saving innings of 52 NO to guide the RN to 171-8 and an honourable draw.

The match managed to survive the constant threat of rain and raised more than £10,000 for good causes, including Help For Heroes.

Meanwhile on the South Coast, the RN ladies lifted the Inter-Services title for the first time since it was re-introduced nine years ago.

The RAF and Army opened the contest; the latter annihilated the fliers, posting 365-1 before reducing the air force for a mere 130 in their 50 overs.

The airwomen looked to pick themselves against the RN but, after losing the toss soon found



● RN cricket captain Lt Cdr Paul Snelling thumps away a fine delivery from Signaller David Wade as the Navy chase the Army score of 265-4 at Lord's

Picture: PO (Phot) Terry Seward

themselves in trouble.

All the Navy bowlers chipped in, but Hazel Garton took five wickets for just five runs (none of them off the bat!), doing the majority of the damage. The RAF were dismissed for just 85.

Skipper, PO(MA) Emma Boswell and Lt Ursula Frost opened the RN reply... and never left the crease.

The duo reached their target without being dismissed to claim a ten-wicket victory.

On the final day the RN again won the toss, but on this occasion decided to bat.

A steady start from openers Boswell and Frost laid a useful foundation, for Garton (41) to consolidate and a final score of 195 was reached after 50 overs – a competitive target.

The RN bowlers were very confident and set about their task well, dismissing two threatening batswomen cheaply.

After McGill (41) was bowled, the writing was on the wall. The late order batswomen were removed quickly and the previously all-conquering Army side were bowled out for 151, some 44 runs short of the target the RN had set them.

The men's U25s have posted some of the most impressive results this season, with big wins against United Services (Portsmouth) and the Royal Marines, a narrow defeat to Portsmouth University and a tie against Cambridge.

These were all ideal preparation for a match at the Rose Bowl against a Hampshire development side.

That development side turned

out to be half of the county's 2nd XI, featuring one player who has scored a first-class double century, so a big score by them was inevitable.

And it was: Hants notched up 491-4. In reply, the U25s managed a solid 225-9.

That was largely down to an unbeaten 134 from Mne David Upton (Temeraire). Spin bowler ET Sachlan Louis (Illustrious) also impressed with 2-52.

So, there was hope for the U25s Inter-Services at Aldershot, but the Navy did not live up to expectations.

Tight bowling kept the RN's runs down in the opener against the RAF; only Upton managed to get on top of them before finally succumbing for a top score of 33.

The total of 123 was going to be difficult to defend unless the RN bowlers could make early inroads. POAEA 'Daisy' Adams (Nelson) claimed a wicket in the first over to raise hopes, but they were short-lived. The front-line RAF batsmen gradually got closer to the target, reaching it with five wickets and 23 overs to spare.

Next up were the Army, who chose to bat on a wicket that looked as if it could deteriorate later in the day.

Steady progress was made by their opening pair who put on more than 80 runs for the first wicket and it was not until the Army were 134-1 that two more wickets fell to give the RN a little more hope.

Spinners Crichton (Cumberland) and Louis were doing their best to contain the batsmen and both claimed

wickets, but Army batsman M Lewis took the game by the throat and plundered the bowling to all corners of the field, eventually reaching 108 NO, in a total of 315-4.

Once again the Navy's big guns failed to open fire and it took painstaking efforts from J Richards (Portland) and Mne J Grasham (40 Cdo) – each posted scores of 41 – to put a respectable total on the board, but at 181 all out it still fell 134 runs short.

At the establishment level, HMS Seahawk made their fourth appearance in the Navy Cup final in six years at Burnaby Road.

Their opponents, Excellent, were soon ruing failing to catch NA Jeremy Dawes early on: he went on to post a score of 102.

Even when he was dismissed, the Culdrose team found a more-than-admirable replacement – AET Gareth Boyle stepped in to hit an unbeaten 59.

By the time Seahawk's 35 overs were up, they'd reached an impressive 257-4 – a target Excellent were always going to struggle to attain.

None of the Pompey team ever really got going with the exception of Lt Cdr Russ Strudwick (47).

The Seahawk bowlers tore through his teammates, however. AET Neil Chilton (3-25) and Logs Ryan Eddy (3-11) to keep Excellent consistently behind the Cornish run rate.

The airmen finally dismissed their opponents with just over one over to spare, 121 runs short of their goal.

Dawes' 102 quite rightly earned him the man of the match gong.



Record breaker – for a minute

THE RN and RM made a big impact at the annual British national powerlifting single lift championships at Bradford University.

Lt Cdr Simon Wynn (100kg) and LPT Sean Cole (67.5kg) were flying the flag for the Senior Service with the officer up first. Lt Cdr Wynn managed to bench press an impressive 165kg, just 5kg short of the British record, giving him first place in his age group and third place overall.

In the dead lift, LPT Cole (pictured, left, giving it his all) hoisted three and a half times his own body weight – a massive 235kg which broke the BDFPA single lift record... for one minute, when the eventual winner bettered it by 10kg.

Of the 70 dead lift competitors, Sean managed a respectable second place overall.

Both competitors lifted well beyond expectation and have qualified to enter the world single lift contest in Belgium next month. Sean will also be travelling to the USA for the full power world championships in November.

You can learn more about the sport, which is picking up a growing reputation in the RN, www.BDFPA.co.uk or from Lt Cdr Wynn (96218 5220) and LPT Cole (94229 4723).



Picture: PO 'Dutchy' Holland, Phoenix CBRNDC School

Top gun Cotton

THE super Nova of Logs Tracey Cotton – and some pretty nifty driving from the sailor – propelled her to fourth place in the domestic championships.

There was a relatively small field at Standlake Arena near Oxford for the SEGTO (South Eastern Grass Track Organisation) races – ten cars in Tracey's two-litre hot rods class.

The racers faced 18-lap heats and a 22-lap final, with Tracey and her modified Nova beginning the first heat in pole position (her car was the smallest on the track), while the 2007 champion lined up at the back of the grid.

The writer didn't get a very good start, however, and slipped back to third, setting up a tussle

with Alistair Lowe in his pinto-powered Vauxhall Tigra.

He shot past on the home straight with three laps to go, to bump Tracey into fourth place.

In the second heat she got off to a much better start and held the lead, managing to fend off the rest of the field thanks to a quite defensive drive in the closing stages to take chequered flag.

During the day the weather had been a mixture of sunny and rainy spells. Only with the vehicles lining up for the final did it dry out sufficiently for the racers to put on dry tyres.

Once again, Tracey got off to a first-class start, doggedly pursued by Lowe in his Tigra.

He edged past her 12 laps from the end – just before the rain

returned and the track began to lose its grip.

Luckily, the chequered flag came out sooner rather than later and Tracey crossed the line in second place.

She was back on the Oxfordshire circuit a fortnight later for the next round of the domestic championship – this time with a field of just eight cars thanks to other major meetings on the same day.

This time, at least, it was a dry meeting so there was some fast racing in the 16-lap heats and 20-lap final.

Again Tracey started at the front of the grid – and in the first heat managed to pull away from the pack to take the flag.

The second heat saw the sailor

pushed back on the grid closer to the other cars, but only Sammy Mitchell in his pinto-powered Toyota Starlet managed to squeeze past her Nova.

2007 points champion Trevor Harvey in his Clio roared past in the final, setting up an epic scrap with Mitchell for third-fourth place.

He forced his way through with two laps to go, but in doing so left Tracey bouncing off the outer tyre wall, straight in the path of Sean Townsend in his Starlet.

He managed to take evasive action to miss Tracey, who brought her Nova under control and at least held on for fifth place.

Despite that incident the writer managed to finish the day in second place overall on points.

Isle be around

TWENTY sailors and civilians from the Maritime Warfare School at HMS Collingwood as well as the Fleet raced two yachts in the Isle of Wight Round the Island race – up against 1,600 other craft.

Sea Nymph III, skippered by Jim Oxborrow with Lt Simon Blous as mate, completed the 50-mile course in seven minutes short of nine hours.

Electron V, with Lt Cdr Jon Glass at the helm and Lt Ian Kiff as his tactical navigator, had an even more eventful race.

They crossed the line in a smidgin under eight hours... but with one fewer crewman than when they set off.

Lt Colin Darkin found himself in the drink after being caught by a 35kt gust off St Catherine's Point.

Thankfully he was picked up by a fellow competitor... who turned out to be a class winner; what some people will do to win!

Both RN yachts completed the race in very challenging conditions. Aside from those blustery gusts, fog hampered visibility around St Catherine's Point. Ten sailors fell overboard in total and one yacht even capsized.

RL go to Oz

A 27-strong Forces squad will be taken to Australia this autumn to compete in Rugby League's Defence Force World Cup.

The Aussies are celebrating the centenary of the sport Down Under (culminating in the World Cup final on November 16) and have invited sides from across the globe to compete.

The GB Armed Forces have been drawn in a pool against Russia and Papua New Guinea.

Fifteen players from each of the Services will be selected for the squad initially, before it's whittled down to 27 after next month's Inter-Services.

Respected RL coach Ray Unsworth and stalwart of the RNRL WO Wayne O'Kell will coach the side which heads south.



● The RN charge to glory in the Rundle Cup at Tidworth

Picture: LA(Phot) 'Simmo' Simpson, FRPU East

Army fightback thwarted

THE highlight of the Services polo season – the Army-Navy clash for the Rundle Cup – saw the soldiers field a particularly strong side, writes Cdr Arnie Lustman.

Indeed, the Army had offered to allow the RN to bring in a 'hired hand' to match the Army handicap but the Navy maintained that they would prefer to continue the practice of only using serving sailors or marines for this fixture.

Thus the -1 goal Navy team of Cdr Richard Mason, Cdrs Adrian Aplin and Arnie Lustman and Lt Cdr Al Wilson knew they would have their work cut out to beat the much stronger (and younger) three-goal Army team of Lt Paul Blakison, Cpts Philip Kaye and Quentin Hicks and Lt Col Mike O'Dwyer.

Starting with 2½ goals on handicap, and having trained and played well in their last two matches, the RN knew that they could effect a surprise although the odds were certainly against them.

Consequently, from the first throw-in, the Navy played aggressively and exploited a surprising lack of team cohesion in the Army to generate a constant stream of attacking runs.

Tight teamwork soon paid off and Mason was the first to score. Two minutes later Aplin had an excellent run for almost the length of the field and added another goal.

The Navy continued to dominate in the second chukka and, despite an Army goal, extended their lead with two more RN goals; Lustman completed a Navy attack with a very clean shot under his horse's neck and Aplin broke through a heavily-defended Army goal to bring the tally to 6½-1 at half time.

The Navy were not complacent and knew the Army were finding their form. In the third chukka the play, as expected, swung away from the Navy but they managed to effectively contain the Army despite conceding a goal.

In the final chukka the Army completely dominated the play, scoring three goals, but the RN fought back valiantly to hang on and were still in the lead by a goal and a half at the final whistle.

This was a wonderfully-pleasing result. The RN demonstrated how a structured programme of team training and practice could produce a disciplined side which punched well above its weight to overcome a talented but individual Army capability.



Steady Freddie

AS EXPECTED, there was a virtual clean sweep achieved by the Royal Marines golf team at the RN Championships at Trevose Golf Club in Cornwall, writes Cdr Gary Skinnis.

As well as being victorious for the second year running in both the Inter-Command Strokeplay and Matchplay events, the green berets also filled the first places in the individual championship.

The players were met with strong winds all week, mixed with rain for the last two days. Scores were predictably higher than normal and all golfers did well to battle the elements in what turned out to be the most difficult RN Championships since 1996.

This year the event was blessed with the presence of 13 members of the Australian Defence Force for whom the championships represented the hub of a three-week tour of the UK.

The ADF brought some fine golfers; although not eligible for RN titles, they took part in both the matchplay and strokeplay elements of the event. Sgt Steve Rotherham provided the best round of the whole week – a stunning four under par 68 which included three dropped shots on the final two holes. Runner up was Lieutenant Darryl Whitehead, until three years ago an RN player now turncoat and plying his trade in the RAN.

The individual championship promised to be the most open in many years – five-times winner LNN Scott Gilbert and RN captain and Trevose member Lt Guy Norris (771 NAS) were unavailable.

However this should not detract from some excellent performances from a number of players, particularly those finishing in the top ten. Round one saw Sgt Joe Sharp (RM Band Portsmouth) leading the field with a very creditable 76 against a par 72 and a competition scratch score which for all rounds turned out to be 75.

Sharp led by two at this stage from fellow RM Band Service member C/Sgt Freddie Lomas (pictured above) of the RM School of Music and a host of other players within a few shots.

The second round saw the emergence of a surprise package in CPO Paul 'Jumper' Collins (GCHQ). After a first round 80, he put in a magnificent 75 to leap into the lead. Unfortunately he could not continue this form and fell back into the pack on the final two rounds.

Sharp and Lomas continued their steady progress and another of the RM contingent, Cpl Richard Baker (CTCRM) began to come to the fore.

At the half-way stage, just three shots separated the top six players. Lomas now fired in an excellent – and decisive – level par 72 to take the initiative and Sharp's 82 allowed both Baker and LPT Mike Setterfield (RNAS Yeovilton) with 79s to leapfrog him.

With deteriorating conditions and an eight-shot lead, Lomas was never going to play anything but steady, sensible golf in the final round and his respectable 81 was sufficient to gain him his first championship title.

Baker finished runner up, with Sharp in third place while veteran Cdr Ian Yuill (AFPAA Centurion) shot the best final round (77) to leap above a host of players into fourth overall.

The very strong Royal Marines side were always going to be difficult to beat in the team events and the Inter-Command Strokeplay provided them with a runaway victory by an aggregate of 68 shots.

With the ADF team throwing a few spanners into the Matchplay (all the other teams had to play against them) the competition was a lot closer. Three teams could have claimed the title going into the final round: Portsmouth needed a resounding victory against Plymouth to apply pressure on the Royals who were up against Naval Air, themselves capable of winning had results gone their way.

As it transpired, Portsmouth did overcome Plymouth but only by a similar margin to the Marines win over the airmen. Thus both the Royal Marines and Portsmouth ended with three points, the Royals taking the title by virtue of superior 'goal difference' (more games won).

Trevose proved to be an excellent host club, making all the RN players, officials and sponsors very welcome. While a number of the RN top players were not available this year, the event was a huge success and the format remains popular.

Meanwhile, the RN(Scotland) PT branch is holding a reunion and golf day for serving and former PTIs who've served north of the border.

There's a get together in the senior rates' mess at Caledonia on September 2 followed by a round at Burntisland the following day. Details from CPO(PT) Derik Nordon on 01383 425814 or Lt(SCC) Tommy Wallace on 01383 425045.



Next month



Water tanks – a day in the life of RM Instow



Prepared for the Wurst – adventure training in Bavaria



Wave rulers – the surf team head to South Africa

Plus

You can be serious – computer ‘games’ for tomorrow’s sailors

And

Forgotten man o’war – HMS Unicorn



● **Fours for good...** Lt Peter Reed (right) holds his gold medal aloft with his teammates after victory in the coxless fours at the 2008 Olympic Games

Picture: Vladimir Rys/Bongarts/Getty Images

We are the champions

ROWER Lt Peter Reed bagged gold at the XXIX Olympiad to crown a summer of sporting success for the RN.

The naval engineer and his teammates Tom James, Andy Triggs-Hodge and Steve Williams powered past the finish line in the coxless fours, just under a second ahead of the Australian team who took silver.

The Britons were favourites for gold – a status confirmed by their impressive performances in both the heat and the semi-final which they both won.

But in the final, the foursome trailed in the wake of the Australian team for most of the race; the Antipodeans led for a good two-thirds of the race until a final push from the British quartet saw them edge ahead with a couple of hundred metres of the two kilometre course to go. France took the bronze.

“It was the hardest thing I’ve ever gone out to do – by a long way,” said a breathless Lt Reed after the race.

“It was so difficult – we were really on the ropes. But I’m so, so happy. It was the best finish we’ve ever put together.

“I’m very proud to do it for all the people at home who’ve helped – physiotherapists, friends and the Navy. I’m happy for all of them – and for us.”

The 27-year-old only took up rowing at Dartmouth; from there he progressed to the Oxford University team which won the boat race and finally to the British coxless four boat, taking the place of four-time Olympic gold medal winner Matthew Pinsent.

In honour of his RN pedigree, Lt Reed’s teammates dubbed him ‘the commander’.

Throughout all this sporting achievement, the officer has been allowed to put his naval career on hold, although now he’ll be returning to the Senior Service fold.

Sadly there was no medal for the RN’s other banner-waver at the games, Lt Cdr Penny Clark.

After a successful start in the laser radial event – a first, second and third place in three of the opening five races – the officer finally came tenth of the 28 competitors over the nine heats and final medal race.

Half a world away from Beijing, Lt Lucy Abel (pictured right) squared up in the ring

at Greenbanks Leisure Centre, Liverpool, for the third Women’s European Union Boxing Championships.

One hundred fighters from 20 nations gathered in Merseyside with the naval officer chosen to lead the 11-strong English squad.

Easily securing victory over her Finnish opponent in the quarter finals (11-2), Lt Abel faced tougher opposition against Malefaki, a heavy-handed Greek who won her quarter final with a first-round knock out.

The sailor had to box cleverly, carefully choosing her shots and moving, but she always looked in control easing to a 7-2 victory to reach the final.

In the battle for the gold medal, she faced Gratzek of Poland, ranked number six in the world, a rival who defeated her in the first round of the competition last year.

Determined for retribution, Lt Abel started aggressively, not giving the Pole a moment to relax.

A physical fight ensued, but the sailor denied the Pole a single point to win the first EU Gold Medal for England, 4-0.

The officer proved to be a convincing champion having only conceded four points in the whole competition and thoroughly deserved her first major championship gold medal.

The rest of her England team proved that despite their relative inexperience, they were a side to be taken seriously winning eight medals – two gold, four silver and two bronze.

Lt Abel was not the only RN representative involved in these championships.

Lt Cdr Micky Norford (HMS Sultan), a well-respected official within the Amateur Boxing Association and an internationally-qualified referee and judge, is regularly involved in England competitions and on this occasion formed part of the officiating team in Liverpool.

To complete the trio of Royal Navy representation, POPT Stuart O’Connor (Defence Diving School), the current RN Ladies Boxing Coach, has recently been selected as a ladies national coach.

“To be a part of the England women’s team’s biggest success was a great honour and for Lt Abel to be the first gold medal winner in the EU Championships was the highlight of my coaching career so far,” said POPT O’Connor.

Having defeated the world silver medalist in Turkey last month and with her success at these championships, Lt Abel is now in the top ten in the world at her weight.

Despite this achievement, she remains focused on the future.

“I am delighted with my performance in Liverpool as it proves I have the ability to beat the best in Europe and the world but I have no time to be complacent,” said Lt Abel.

“I am straight back into my training regime for an international tournament in Hungary this month which is part of my preparation for the world championships in China later this year.”

Not to be eclipsed by all these international awards, the RN had its own sporting trophies to hand out.

HMS Victory was again the venue for the annual sports awards for the best team, individuals and officials in the Senior Service.

After being nominated for the past three years, the RN and RM Cycling Time Trial team were finally crowned with laurels as sports team of the year.

Over the past four years the cyclists have risen through the ranks of best teams in the UK, scoring successes not merely against the other two Forces, but also against sides containing Olympians, Commonwealth and semi-professional riders. Last year the RN team were ranked third nationally and dispatched the Army and RAF with aplomb in both the ten-mile and 25-mile championships.

Success breeds success and from 80 cyclists six years ago, the association is now almost 350 strong.

One of the team’s stalwarts, CPOPT Sean Childs, was up for the sportsman of the year title. He lost out, however, to Royal Marine Cpl Gary Gerrard who capped a sporting career as an international biathlete and runner with a gold medal at the 2007 world triathlon championships in the 40-44 age group. Not content with that, Gary grabbed gold at the Inter-Service triathlon and silver in the European championships.

Another mainstay of triathlon, LMA Mhaira Muir, was crowned sportswoman of the year. Triathlon is just one of the sports the leading hand excels at – she’s also a force to be reckoned with in the pool and on the bike.

She joined the Royal Navy six years ago with limited sporting experience, but by 2005 she’d won several Inter-Service swimming titles, represented the RN at cross-country and turned her hand to triathlon with similar success. As well as dominating the sport in the Senior Service, she’s represented her country, claiming 28th place (and fourth Briton) in the 2008 world championships.

Sports official of the year is Lt Keith Bowers who achieved considerable success as a fencer before becoming a referee in 2003. Since then he has adjudicated more than 5,000 bouts and he’s now a leading contender to be a GB referee at the 2012 Olympics in London.



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