A ROYAL MARINE barks orders during amphibious exercises at Bull Point in Plymouth as HMS Bulwark completes months of training. The assault ship assumes the mantle of the nation’s flagship from her sister Albion this month. See page 23 for details.

Picture: LA(Phot) Martin Carney, HMS Bulwark
GLOBAL REACH

Fleet Focus

SO THAT’S the end of summer, 2011. And quite eventful its waning weeks were, dominated by events in Afghanistan and off Libya, as the men and women of the Naval Service – Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary – continued to make sacrifices to bring stability to those troubled lands.

The work supporting the UN mission off Libya from helicopter carrier HMS Ocean along with destroyers and corvettes, was profiled on page 6 (the former has re-taken her place in the line following maintenance, the latter recently returned from Libya’s new flagship into Tripoli), while the smallest RN presence in the region, minehunter HMS Bangor, is not forgotten (see page 7).

Adults and children alike have been celebrating her tenth birthday in Liverpool and Chester, enjoying probably the plum deployment of all the university boats, while closer to home, HMS Dauntless, was the star attraction at the DSEI defence fair in London – the former (see opposite page 14) has re-taken her place in the line of the 45s, but a vital job protecting the Navy’s precious naval infrastructure.

The beaches of Dorset and Hampshire have witnessed the pounding of heavy boots, with demonstrations by exercises by the full-timers from assault ship HMS Bulwark, while the smallest RN presence in the region, minehunter HMS Pembroke has been showing what she can do – to staff at the RN’s regional command centre and Foreign Office Minister Alastair Burt (see page 10).

As for the lead 45, HMS Daring, she hopped across the Channel to visit her affiliated island of Guernsey (see page 23), as Bulwark – continued to make sacrifices to bring stability to those troubled lands.

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From Afghanistan we hear about some of the good work going on between the local peoples and 2 Commando Brigade to build goodwill and trust in the country’s future, and the motivational power of the Royal Marines to bring troops to the ground in the landlocked country (see page 8).

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SO THIS must be symmetric warfare...

Cutting through a remarkably calm English Channel on her way to her future home for the first time is HMS Dragon, ship No. 4 in the £6bn Type 45 programme.

And she is, her Commanding Officer Cdr Darren Houston proclaims, the most complete and most capable of the futuristic destroyers yet handed over to the Royal Navy.

That handover came shortly after the ship made her inaugural entry into Portsmouth Harbour on the final day of August, 2011.

There were some 100 early risers – largely, though not exclusively, relatives of the ship’s company – on the Round Tower in Old Portsmouth to witness the occasion.

She glided past the historic gateway to Portsmouth Harbour with the Red Ensign flying and with distinctive red dragon motifs on her bow.

Both are now gone.

The afternoon of her arrival, Dragon was formally handed over to the Royal Navy for safekeeping for the next 25-plus years, and her mixed RN-civilian crew was replaced by an entirely Senior Service one (there were some 100 Dragons waiting on the jetty to join the ship for the first time).

The transfer to the RN marks the end of nearly six years’ work by shipwrights, technicians and engineers in Portsmouth and on the Clyde (the first steel for the ship was cut back in December 2005).

Around 100 BAE employees watched the ship leave BAE’s Scotstoun yard, where she’s been fitted out since launch.

And the two fiery banners? Well, now Dragon’s officially one of Her Majesty’s Ships, the motifs are deemed ‘inappropriate’, compromise the Type 45’s camouflage (although at nearly 9,000 tonnes with a distinctive silhouette she does rather stand out visually...) and maintaining them could prove costly.

So dragons be gone by the time you read this (much to the disappointment of some of the ship’s company and quite a few Welshmen – the destroyer, aptly, is affiliated with Cardiff – who had petitioned for the mythical beasts to be retained)...

More importantly, of course, is turning this 500ft leviathan into a sleek grey messenger of death – which means a lot of training for the 180-strong ship’s company in the months ahead.

Dragon has already come through two extensive periods of sea trials while still in BAE’s hands – during which she surpassed all previous expectations (and, to date, the entire Type 45 programme has proven to be more capable on trials than anticipated) – so she arrived in Portsmouth, says Cdr Houston, “in top condition for the rigours of the next stage of her sea trials and the challenges ahead.

“Dragon is eager to play her part and we can start operating the newest and most advanced warship in the world.”

While Dragon was paying her first visit to Portsmouth, her older sister Dauntless became the first 45 to sail into the capital.

The ship was the star naval attraction at the Defence and Security Equipment International show at the ExCel Centre in London’s Docklands – widely regarded as one of the world’s premier showcases for defence firms and technology.

Indeed some 1,300 companies from 50 nations were looking to attract interest from the 25,000 visitors.

In the case of Dauntless, she was at the event to represent, in the words of her Commanding Officer Capt Will Warrender, the future for the Royal Navy and “the newest military technology.”

He continued: “The ship represents the finest shipbuilding skills the UK has to offer and is a great example of the high standards and capabilities of the British defence manufacturing base.”

He will be taking Dauntless to sea on her first operational deployment in 2012, as will his counterparts in Daring and Diamond – the first three Type 45s are all classed materially ready for front-line deployments.

Still being fitted out on the Clyde are ships five (Defender) and six (Duncan), which will be handed over to the RN in 2012 and 2013 respectively, thus bringing to an end the ten-year programme to replace the veteran Type 42 destroyers.
Kent floods up

THIS is the very bulbous bow of HMS Kent – as seen through the fish-eye lens of LA(Phot) Ben Sutton – in dry dock in Rosyth. On this very day was the very bulbous bow of HMS Kent before the deck was flooded and the waters of the Forth carressed the hull of the 4,500-ton frigate once more. The 107 days high and dry in dock at the Babcock yard at the slouching shipyard at Rosyth, and Kent’s refit passed a key milestone.

A SUBMARINER who killed an officer during a “murdurous onslaught” while serving in Afghanistan has been sentenced to life in prison.

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WITH a tour of duty looming in the challenging waters east of Kuwait, HMS Argyll showed families what the frigate will be doing in her six months away – minus the warm weather.

A SUBMARINER who killed an officer during a “murdurous onslaught” while serving in Afghanistan has been sentenced to life in prison.

IT HAS been a bitter month for Kilo Company, 42 Commando, with the loss of baz Weston – a popular and - non-commissioned officer (NCO) – and a young Royal Marine who was fatally wounded by small arms fire.

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“Well, we have been living the dream,” said Baz of the latest series of Big Brother.

“Baz was so much morale in the Devonport-based Type 23 took 87 days to be dry docked at Rosyth for a mid-life upgrade.

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Scott of the, er, Atlantic...

Daring does a Channel dash

Illustrious guest visits Lusty

Kenya helps tackle piracy

NO MORE ice for the Navy's biggest survey ship, which has just completed its regular duties of peering into the depths.

After a couple of seasons surveying waters around the Mediterranean, which left an impression on the HMS Scott, it was heading out into the Atlantic to chart slightly deeper waters.

The Detonport-based vessel – at 13,500 tonnes and 430 long the fifth largest in the Royal Navy's fleet – is enjoying a week's training and trials off the South Coast before heading into the deep Atlantic for a prolonged period of deep-water surveying.

Scott is the Navy's sole deep bathymetric survey ship – which means she can measure the depth of the water with pinpoint accuracy and map the ocean floor in the Seven Seas where existing data is sparse.

Families and friends (plus at least one canine) stood at Devil's Point in Plymouth to wave off the ship's company as well as the skipper on his last sail before they sailed yesterday.

The ship is fitted with a suite of advanced sensors and can survey an area twice the size of France – 60 square kilometres/68 square miles – of ocean floor every hour, looking for navigational, gravitational and bathymetric data simultaneously.

Since returning from the polar region in the spring, Scott has been in her home port undertaking maintenance following her exertions in the southern ocean – the longest period, apparently, she's ever spent in Devonport.

Her crew have been honing their skills through extensive training, from sharp-shooting to vital seamanship skills which include working on the bridge team simulator and damage control exercises to developing the specialist skills of the surveyors through practical training ashore, including support from the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office.

After all that, the ship is, says Capt George Tabart, her Commanding Officer, “in fine fettle to return to her main role of ocean survey.

Picture: LaPhill, James Crewe, FIFI: EEU

Albinon's belated birthday

AFTER loading the RN's keynote deployment of the year (Caugur 11) and before she hands over flagship duties to her sister later this month (see page 23), HMS Albion visited Liverpool so she could call upon her nearby affiliated city of Chester.

The assault ship was spending six days on the Mersey, berthed at Liverpool's impressive cruise liner terminal as she went about her business.

The visit was part of the Devonport-based warship's tenth birthday celebrations.

She was actually launched in March 2001, but was a bit busy this spring to mark her birthday officially, heading an amphibious force to the Mediterranean and Middle East and, for a short time, taking part in operations off Libya.

So six months later, the ship's company took part in a Freedom of the City parade through the historic heart of Chester before being invited to a civic reception.

Guests of honour at the marzooso were: the Princess Royal, who launched Albion during a trip to the Mersey in 2001 and has followed the ship's progress avidly ever since; Chester's Lord Mayor Councillor Eleanor Johnson and Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire David Briggs.

Once her visit to Merseyside was over, the ship opened her gangways to view vaccinations.

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On her nearby affiliated city of Liverpool so she could call upon her nearby affiliated city of Chester.

Until her departure from Merseyside, she performed a pageant of skills for the ship's company, including a display of massed forces and a flypast by the Royal Air Force. Albion's plaudits went to the RAF for their professional and sporting display.

Picture: DefEx

GLOBAL REACH

NAW NEWS, OCTOBER 2011 5

DARE TO EXPECT MORE...
At the going down of the sun...

HEADING into the Mediterranean sunset, an Army Air Corps Apache gunship carries out a dusk training mission as her launchpad, HMS Ocean, prepares to take her place in the line of battle once again.

For a short while Britain’s biggest warship bowed out of Operation Unified Protector for some much-needed TLC in Crete.

Specialist engineers (RN and civilians from Babcock) from her home base of Devonport were flown out to Souda Bay to carry out essential repairs and maintenance.

Now they’re done, Ocean’s back at sea and ready to return to the coast of Libya to continue in whatever role is necessary to see the job finished.

The Mighty O departed Devonport in April in support of the Cougar task force deployment to the Mediterranean and Middle East, the first work-out for the UK’s new Response Force Task Group, formed under last year’s Defence Review.

The helicopter assault ship never left the Middle Sea – her Apaches, deployed for the first time at sea, were deemed an invaluable asset in the campaign against Colonel Gaddafi’s forces in Libya.

She’s been attached to the NATO operation now for three months, prompting a visit from Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral Charles Montgomery, to thank the hundreds of men and women aboard for their unstinting efforts.

He spent two days aboard the helicopter carrier, enjoying top-level briefings – from Cdre John Kingwell, Commander of the United Kingdom Task Group, and Ocean’s CO Capt Andrew Betton inter alia – as well as chatting to the rest of the ship’s company, Royal Marines and Army Air Corps personnel.

And, in a popular move, he made himself available throughout his time on board to answer questions on personnel and training issues – which is his remit – as well as wider defence matters.

“I am immensely proud of all of the sailors, soldiers, airmen and marines serving in HMS Ocean,” said Capt Betton.

“Everybody has worked tirelessly since we sailed in April to contribute to our evolving mission, so having the opportunity to demonstrate our professionalism and brief the Second Sea Lord on this unique ship’s capability was an honour.”

And talking of honours...

It fell to HMS Liverpool to escort the first Free Libya warship into Tripoli, just days after the capital fell to rebel forces.

And it was quite a moment – not least as the veteran destroyer’s spent most of the past five months stopping warships leaving Libyan ports.

The Al Hani is the only Libyan frigate in working order. The Russian-built warship fell into rebel hands when Benghazi was seized during the opening moves of the civil war. Her sister, the Al Ghadabia, was knocked out by an RAF air strike in Tripoli harbour last month.

Flying the flags of Free Libya and with most free spaces on the upper deck packed with soldiers ready to support comrades already on the ground in Tripoli, the Al Hani was escorted by NATO warships from Benghazi, across the Gulf of Sirte, first to Misrata, then 120 miles further west to the capital.

It fell to Liverpool to accompany the ship on the final leg of her historic journey, exchanging ceremonial in a close pass of the Al Hani. The Libyan sailors and soldiers responded with enthusiastic waving and shouts of thanks from the frigate’s upper deck.

“As the Al Hani became visual on the horizon, Free Libya flags flying, it was clear that not only her ship’s company were onboard – the upper deck was crowded,” said Liverpool’s Commanding Officer Cdr Colin Williams.

“It was a significant milestone in the rebel campaign – to take a former Gaddafi warship into the capital – until very recently held by Gaddafi – shows the extent of the achievement by the Libyan people...”

And talking of significant milestones... the Crazy Red Chicken has passed the 100-day mark on her Libyan duties (by now well past – it’s nearer 130 days...) since relieving HMS Cumberland back in April.

In that time she’s gone to become a well-oiled fighting machine, carrying out varied missions from enforcing the arms embargo to support of the no-fly zone and air strikes against the Libyan government’s military machine, and a significant amount of naval gunfire support.

“The sight of personnel calmly donning white anti-flash suits in the middle of the night has become commonplace,” said Cdr Williams.

“To work this hard has required sailors to show stamina and resolve.”

Throughout the challenging Libyan mission, Cdr Williams says he’s been struck by the attitude and sheer professionalism of the 240-plus men and women under his command – and that it’s clear to all that they’ve achieved something worthwhile on their 100+ days on patrol.

“I am immensely proud to have had the opportunity to command them – they have once again proven why the Royal Navy remains a benchmark for others to follow,” he added.

“The real sense of pride in seeing tangible results ashore as a result of our actions at sea is felt by all onboard.

“When we took over from Cumberland, the besieged city of Misrata was under imminent threat of collapse. Since then we’ve seen the rebels push the pro-Gaddafi forces back, allowing shipping access to the port and a semblance of normality to return to these once-troubled streets.”

There were – in the third week of September – just a handful of pro-Gaddafi strongholds still refusing to give in to Free Libyan forces, chief among them the former dictator’s birthplace, Sirte.

But in the preliminaries to the fighting for the port, 230 miles east of Tripoli, Liverpool was ordered to sail close to coastal positions occupied by troops still supporting the dictator.

The Portsmouth-based warship fired star shells over two suspected vehicle check points; the light cast on them confirmed the intelligence reports – and caused the pro-Gaddafi troops to hastily climb in their vehicles and disperse.
IT’S easy to get sucked in by the death stats.
Her Majesty’s Ships Ocean and Liverpool have bagged most of the RN side of headlines since the Libya mission began at the end of March – although minehunter Brocklesby did step into the limelight when she disposed of a mine off Misrata.
And steadily doing her bit for the past three months and more, unsung, unheralded, has been Brocklesby’s relief, HMS Bangor.
The Faslane-based warship has divided her time between keeping the sea lanes to Misrata open – the city was under siege on-and-off from mid-February until rebel forces finally secured the surrounding area at the end of August – and monitoring shipping entering Libyan waters as part of NATO’s Unified Protector.
The three months on patrol have demanded the utmost from the 38 men and women aboard the Faslane-based minehunter.
Working in six-hour shifts round the clock is demanding enough, but even more so for the sailors who man the upper deck guns: the 30mm main gun, the fire-spewing minigun (it can fire up to 2,000 rounds a minute) and the general purpose machine-guns.
In addition to the white anti-flash worn by their shipmates, they must also wear steel helmets and body armour in temperatures now regularly in the mid-to-high thirties Celsius – nearly 100°F.
“The body armour and helmets are very heavy and the stress this causes in the extreme heat is unbelievable,” said diver AB(D) James Oakley; when not doing the ‘day job’ he’s helping his shipmates manning the minigun or machine-guns.
“It feels awesome to play such an integral part in ship’s safety. We do our best to maintain 360˚ cover at all times – it’s satisfying to know that you’re playing your part in helping to keep your shipmates safe.”
Since joining Unified Protector, the Sandown-class vessel has conducted six different patrols off Misrata to allow humanitarian aid to arrive by sea.
“We spend so long training for times like these that it is fantastic to get a chance to do our jobs in a real, high-threat environment,” said PO(MW) Steven ‘Stirling’ Moss, one of two minehunting directors on the vessel.
“Uncertainty is always just around the corner, but our job, clearing the way so that humanitarian aid can reach civilians caught up in the conflict makes me feel that I am really making a difference.”
Further out to sea, the emphasis is on maritime security operations – ensuring all shipping is conducting lawful business on the high seas.
Each vessel – whether it’s a small fishing boat or large merchantman – must be identified and questioned by Bangor to ensure that there are no breaches of the arms embargo in force.
To maintain Bangor’s presence off Libya for such a sustained period, the ship has had to call upon her Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary ‘friends’.
Twice supplies have been delivered by helicopter – no mean feat as there really isn’t much clear deck space on a Sandown-class ship and the aircraft produce tremendous downwash for the sailors 20ft below trying to grab hold of the delivery – as well as by tanker RFA Orangeleaf (at 40,000+ tonnes the largest vessel on the RN/RFA books... and displacing 80 times more than Bangor) and from helicopter carrier HMS Ocean.
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On two occasions the minehunter has ‘rafted up’ with the Mighty O. “The weather was perfect, but the challenge was no less daunting as Bangor neared the overwhelming side of Ocean,” explained Lt Heather Thomas, Bangor’s navigating officer. Fuel was supplied via the landing craft fuelling points – which proved ideal for the Sandown-class minehunter. Bangor was also able to take advantage of other stores aboard the helicopter carrier.
“Ocean’s 22,000 tons and 700 people weren’t going to miss the relatively meagre fuel and fresh produce requirements of a 500-ton, 38-people Sandown,” Lt Thomas added.
And so Bangor, like Ocean, Liverpool, Fort Rosalie and Orangeleaf, remains on patrol off Libya.
“It’s a good feeling, knowing that I am making a real difference to the civilians in Libya,” said AB Oakley. “I am enjoying my first deployment and can’t wait to see what else it brings.”

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The famine and the feast

ROYAL Marines from 42 Commando helped their Afghan comrades celebrate the end of the month-long holy month Ramadan in traditional style with the festival of Eid.

In a specially-erected tent not far from Patrol Base 5 in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand, Afghan National Army troops invited the men of Kilo Company, local elders and muslims to a feast of rice and chicken and handed out gifts to local children.

Throughout Ramadan Afghan soldiers, who are devout Muslims, did not eat or drink during the hours of daylight in accordance with their religion.

As the Afghan National Army gets more experienced and capable, we will start to hand over ISAF presence here and the insurgents had control. Our focus is providing security in the villages of the protected community by deterring the enemy and building the capacity of the Afghan forces.

Now locals regularly see both Royal Marines and Afghan soldiers on the streets helping to keep the insurgents at bay.

Eight months ago, there was no International Security and Assistance Force presence in the area around the patrol base. Now locals regularly see both Royal Marines and Afghan soldiers on the streets helping to keep the insurgents at bay.

“Music always makes you feel good and it raises morale. It was excellent for everyone here in the hospital,” enthused Cdr Carol Betteridge, the Commanding Officer of the Role 3 Hospital.

During their month-long tour of Afghanistan, the band has performed in a wide range of locations: from forward operating bases in Helmand to a large ISAF camp in the capital Kabul.

Five of the visiting musicians have previously served in Afghanistan but not Major Smallwood who returns to the UK with his first impressions of Helmand.

“I am thoroughly enjoying getting around the area of operations, meeting all the soldiers and Royal Marines. Hopefully, we’ve been able to give them a bit of a boost with a bit of entertainment and by putting on a show!”

THAT’S the band rather than a comment on life in the troubled province of Afghanistan...

Donning pork pie hats, the Band of Her Majesty’s Royal Marines six things up a bit in the hospital at Camp Bastion – one of a string of gigs performed across Afghanistan for troops on the front line.

A 15-strong band was flown out to numerous outlying bases to ensure all units of 3 Commando Brigade – in charge of operations in Helmand since April – and their supporting Army and RAF formations have enjoyed live music.

The band, comprising a rhythm section, two vocalists and a host of instruments, did not just perform at Bastion, but also headed to numerous outlying bases to ensure all units of 3 Commando Brigade – in charge of operations in Helmand since April – and their supporting Army and RAF formations have enjoyed live music.

The band's composition is exciting, with a mixture of pop and rock, and the audience loves it. The band's music is very popular and was written and assembled from a CD by one of our surgeons!”

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A 15-strong band was flown out to numerous outlying bases to ensure all units of 3 Commando Brigade – in charge of operations in Helmand since April – and their supporting Army and RAF formations have enjoyed live music.

The band's composition is exciting, with a mixture of pop and rock, and the audience loves it. The band's music is very popular and was written and assembled from a CD by one of our surgeons!
HAVE you ever wondered what HMS Protector looks like from directly overhead? Well now we can satiate your curiosity because the ice ship’s photographer LA Arron Hoare climbed in the back of a helicopter as the survey ship conducted her first aviation trials off Plymouth.

Although Protector won’t carr a helicopter on her maiden deployment to the frozen continent there’s no danger to accommodate one, the ability to operate a whirlybird is a prerequisite for the ship taking her place in the front line.

Over two days the ship conducted various manouevres with a Dauphin from the FOST Helicopter Support Unit (the helicopter unit which, er, supports, FOST), testing command and bridge teams, flight deck officers and crew.

Aside from their skill and expertise, the Protectors were helped by the ship’s “dynamic positioning system” – computers which accurately maintain her position and heading with impressive accuracy, even in heavy weather.

The net result? The ship is now cleared to operate the FOST helicopters and will in the near future, take it to the next level by launching, recovering and refuelling Lynx Mk8 helicopters – the mainstay of aerial operations by the Navy’s frigate and destroyer fleet.

It’s the latest step down the road which is steadily turning a civilian support vessel into a Royal Navy ice patrol and survey ship.

The icebreaker, formerly MV Polarbjørn, has spent the spring and summer steadily being converted into a hydrographic survey ship to plug the gap left by HMS Endurance which nearly sank during a flooding incident in late 2008.

The ship now boasts miniguns (Gatling guns) and General Purpose Machine Guns to protect herself, Pacific 22 sea boats and their cradles, new communications kit, the Navy’s standard digital map system WECDIS, used for navigation by surface ships and submarines in place of traditional paper charts, and – crucially for Protector’s impending mission to Antarctica – a multi-beam echo sounder for hydrographic surveys.

The red plumb

On ice patrol with Protector, 1959-60 style, pages 32-33

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Pembroke on public show

A MINI rainbow (minus the rain or, er, bow for that matter) is created as downsweep from an SH-60 Sea Hawk whips up the waters of the Gulf during a UK-UMinehunting exercise.

Three of Britain’s quartet of minehunters joined in the workout (Ramsey on the left, Pembroke on the right and, out of shot, HMS Ocean) while the Americans committed aircraft from their specialist Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron HM15 plus Avenger-class minehunter USS Gladiator—like the RN vessels a seemingly constant presence in the Gulf.

The American naval forces come under the banner of the US Fifth Fleet which directs operations from an impressive modern headquarters in Bahrain—home to the SRN’s chief of staff—although it’s also home to the USS Bataan, the US Marine Corps’ amphibious task force. A visit from the two types of military forces is the Combined Maritime Forces, the three international naval task groups (150, 151 and 152) which strive to keep the waters east of Strait of Suez safe and free.

In the case of the Saint, the pertinent number is 152, responsible for the entire Gulf from the shores of Iraq to the Strait of Hormuz, working alongside the other navies and coastguards in the region to ensure the safe passage of mariners.

“Everybody onboard understands that the important work we are doing in the Gulf, helping to secure these important trading routes is vital to both the UK and the rest of the world,” stresses the frigate’s operations officer, Lt Cdr Will King.

“Whilst we go about our business, building our understanding of the area, we will remain at a state of high readiness, able to react to any event whatever it may require of us whether it’s humanitarian relief or military combat operations.”

YOU never forget your first rat pack.

We’re not sure whether that’s a good or bad thing, but it’s the thought that counts.

In the heat of the Gulf, HMS St Albans’ boarding team hand some food to the crew of one of the countless dhows plying their trade in these waters—part of the hearts and minds effort by the Saint to show she’s here to help.

Hence this AA—Alongside Assurance—visit, one of hundreds carried out by the Portsmouth-based frigate on her patrols around the Gulf.

Sailors and Royal Marines draw up in the Type 23’s sea boats alongside the fishing dhows, discuss any blazing issues, and present gifts of food and water—always welcome in the sweltering conditions experienced this time of year.

The ship’s doctor is also on hand to assist with any medical issues under our commitment to assist ill mariners.

If it sounds a bit touchy feely, it’s an indispensable way of gaining the trust and respect of local mariners—and above all, to find out what’s going on.

Whilst the presence of a warship can represent a substantial deterrent to smugglers, the Saint needs to single out criminals from the law-abiding fisherman and merchants that ply their trade in the area.

Not only is it the Gulf and its coastal region the single largest source of crude oil in the world with hundreds of supertankers transiting through every day; it’s also at the crossroads between Europe, Africa and Asia, making it an important route for trade among these continents.

And yes, you can use all that wizardry and gadgetry with which St Albans brittles, The infra-red cameras, radars, the 829 NAS Merlin with its surveillance suite, the satellite imagery beamed in from headquarters alongside other intelligence reports.

Or you can have a nice chat with fishermen. There’s always room for the human touch.

“We normally visit over ten fishing dhows a day and the people we meet onboard are always glad to see us,” said LCpl Ben Glover, one of the Royal Marines Commandos in the Saint’s ‘green’ boarding team.

“It’s amazing to watch the effect that giving them just a simple ration pack can make.”

These guys are obviously used to living on the bare essentials, so a bit of cold water and food goes a long way.

“The fishermen are normally happy to chat with us and every little thing we learn about their way of life can potentially help us boat the smugglers.”

His ship is currently operating under the banner of the Combined Maritime Forces, the three international naval task groups (150, 151 and 152) which strive to keep the waters east of Strait of Suez safe and free.

The ration revolution

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RIDING the choppy waters of the Clyde, HMS Dasher – one of the half of the Faslane Patrol Boat Squadron – makes her way out to meet the most potent weapon in Britain’s military arsenal.

With her sister HMS Pursuer, and a cluster of raiding craft from the Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines, Dasher endorses Operation Impenetrable – safeguarding the nation’s strategic deterrent on the surface.

Impenitent ensures that the Royal Navy’s quartet of ballistic missile boats – HMS Vanguard, Vengeance, Vigilant and Victorious – are escorted up and down the Clyde, providing an outer ring of steel to meet the most potent weapon ever to be deployed by man.

The small 25-year-old boat is the fifth and final ship of the P2000 class. Dasher was crammed with sailors, eager to prove her worth as a key asset of the Clyde, Dasher and Pursuer. Both boats were sent to Cyprus to safeguard its waters and Allied shipping using them – the island was a crucial hub for anti-aircraft and brutal weapons back home to the UK when they were no longer needed in the Mediterranean.

Rather than resume her pre-Cyprus duties – like the rest of the P2000 fleet, Dasher served a University Royal Naval Unit, in her case Bristol – she was assigned to Impenetrable.

In addition to protecting the bombers, the boat carries out similar duties in support of warships and submarines using Clyde Naval Base.

The small 25-year-old boat is the fifth and final ship of the P2000 class. Dasher in a line going back to the end of the 18th Century. The first was an 18-gun sloop of 1797 which became a convict hulk in 1832 and is now stored in a shed.

Next came a wooden paddle packet of 307 tons, launched at Chatham Dockyard on 15 December 1897 and sold in 1908. A late Victorian destroyer, launched at Poplar in November 1914, was the third Dasher in a line going back to the end of the 18th Century.

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A PARTY of VIPs was shown the ropes when University reservists from the East Coast staged a special demonstration day on board a Royal Navy patrol boat.

The distinguished guests, including the Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, Dr Ingrid Roscoe, took part in a training and rescue exercise on board Anchor-class vessel HMS Explorer on the Humber.

Organised by the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) in Yorkshire and the Humber, the day allowed students from the universities in Leeds, Hull and Sheffield to show the type of training they undertake as part of the Yorkshire Universities Royal Naval Unit (TURNU) while studying.

Students from other universities in the region within reasonable travelling distance are also welcomed.

While under the wing of an URNU, students are members of the Royal Naval Reserve, as officer cadets or honorary midshipmen, though there are special conditions attached to that membership.

The exercise presented an opportunity for Dr Roscoe to take the wheel and drive Explorer down the Humber before handing over to the ship’s company to witness a rescue serial with a Sea King of 202 Sqn E Flight from RAF Leconfield in Beverley.

Two of the URNU midshipman reservists, Heather Thexton, of Leeds University, and Rebecca Renshaw, of the University of Hull, were winched from the bridge deck of Explorer into the aircraft and then returned to sea level.

Other guests attending the day included Cdre Richard Beaumont, Naval Regional Commander Northern England, Cdre David Horton, the Lord Mayor of York, John Holby, High Sheriff of East Riding of Yorkshire, Charlotte Britton, West Yorkshire Chair of the Institute of Directors, Dr David Sands, University of Hull and Dr Roy Millington, Sheffield Military Education Committee.

HMS Explorer, currently commanded by Lt Dafydd Bryden, is based at Hull Marina, though the URNU itself has a HQ at Carlton Barracks in Leeds.

Although small by RN standards – the Anchor-class boats displace a little over 50 tons when fully loaded – Explorer operates up and down the East Coast of England and can range further afield on the longer summer deployments, recent trips have included the Netherlands, Belgium, France and the Baltic nations.

The RFCA in Yorkshire and the Humber is a community-based regional organisation which has a remit to advise the Defence Council on Reserve issues.

Besides promoting and supporting Reservists and cadets in the region, it also helps bridge the gap between the military and civilians, particularly employers of Reservists.

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URNUS in the Baltic – p28
A rare chance to let rip with Monmouth’s ‘Kryten’ 4.5in main gun

Sister action

THE sisters in question being Her Majesty’s Ships Monmouth and Somerset, who’ve traded places on the Fleet’s most important mission presently: keeping the sea lanes of the world open for ships to sail safely.

It was off Aqaba in Jordan that the Black Duke handed the counter-piracy baton to her Devonport sister Somerset.

For the former thoughts turned to home (which the Black Duke will be entering just about the time you read this).

For the latter, thoughts turned to the demanding task at hand – although in fairness, Somerset’s ship’s company have thought about little else since leaving Devon.

Pretty much since the moment she left the jetty wall, F82 was pushed to the limit to ensure the 200 men and women aboard were ready for the rigors of the mission east of Suez, above all that weight with their upper body strength alone as they slither upwards typically on to a ship below – so hand-in-hand with the practice boardings, there’s a lot of keep fit.

In Somerset’s hangar, ropes have been rigged so the boarding team can conduct ‘hang tests’ – ie rapid roping minus the helicopter and massive drop.

Nor has there been any let-up for ship’s company not involved in boardings (which, admittedly, isn’t many – boarding operations are viewed as a ‘whole ship’ manoeuvre) as the frigate’s physical training instructor, LPT Vicky Jarvis, has a thorough fitness regime in place.

She oversees four training circuits a day – two for the boarding parties, two for the ship’s company.

The first real test of Team Somerset came as she left Gibraltar, where one of the Rock’s patrol boats, HMS Sabre, decided to play the part of ‘MV Star’, a small coastal freighter and a rather obstinate one at that.

The Star’s ‘master’, Lt Adam Stevenson, stonewalled the frigate as she hailed the vessel. He had engine problems, he explained, was behind schedule and wished to make for Algeciras at full speed. He was not at all keen to be visited by a boarding party.

Somerset’s operations room team weren’t satisfied and subjected the Star to a barrage of questions.

“What nationality are you?”

“How many crew?”

“What is the cargo?”

“Do you have any livestock on board?”

“Yes, a ship’s parrot.” (Which wasn’t necessarily true…).

Minutes later two RIBs packed with sailors and commandos were buzzing about the Star, before the green berets stepped on to her aft deck – and forced the crew to lie down on it.

The commandos quickly found a (toy) submachine gun, some (fake) drugs and a quantity of (fake) ammunition, but the Star’s crew continued to be obstructive and the boat’s violent pitching and rolling in the heavy swell gave the green berets rather green faces…

Perhaps it was the onset of seasickness which was the reason it took the boarding team half an hour to locate the prize: an officer cadet hiding in the engine room.

Once he was located the training ended, Star was once again HMS Sabre and the debriefing began.

“We learned a lot from this,” a Royal Marines sergeant told Sabre’s crew. “We’re not used to working on such small boats and yet this is very similar in size to the craft we’ll be boarding on this deployment.”

Lt Stevenson was glad Sabre – a distinctive sight in Gibraltar waters thanks to the shark’s teeth painted on her bow – had been of use to the frigate and her boarding parties.

“We enjoy helping RN ships prepare for their deployments – and it provides us with a greater variety of work,” Sabre’s CO said.

All of which is bread and butter to the ship’s company of HMS Monmouth. They’ve been doing this day in, day out, minus the odd break, since the spring.

Much of what the Black Duke carried out during her five months on patrol off Suez is, sadly, classified (which is why her appearances in these pages have been rather spasmodic).

That does not, however, mean we can’t tell how busy she’s been.

So how busy has she been?

As of mid-September she’d...
The monsoon season is about to close in on a suspected pirate mothership in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean region. Much of Monmouth’s time was spent establishing the ‘pattern of life’ on the waters of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean – understanding what is fishing and what might be a pirate mother ship (because the two look pretty similar). Those suspicions proved well-founded. The boat ignored every warning Monmouth issued. It did not ignore a boarding party of commandos and sailors, who promptly freed 17 men held hostage – and detained several suspected pirates. Most encounters with shipping in these waters, thankfully, were less dramatic. Much of Monmouth’s time was spent establishing the ‘pattern of life’ on the waters of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean – understanding what is fishing vessel and what might be a pirate mother ship (because the two look pretty similar). THAT ‘pattern of life’ is about to get a whole lot busier.

Clocking up 28,494 miles on patrol (using up more than three million litres of fuel in the process), Monmouth, Black Knight, was launched on 140 sorties – 206½ hours airborne or more than eight and half days. And in the galley the chefs chopped, boiled, roasted and mashed 16,250kg of potatoes (which is about the weight of ten Ford Focuses), grilled 1,134kg of steak, fried 2,016kg of sausages, baked 2,280 loaves of bread – all washed down with 59,400 cups of tea.

But the most important statistic of all: 17 hostages freed. Following an intelligence tip-off, the Black Duke closed in on a suspected pirate mother ship (because the vessel and what might be a pirate mother ship look pretty similar). Which is exactly what Monmouth said too as the two ships formally handed over duties off the historic port of Aqaba and the Black Duke passed on tips to her successor. “HMS Monmouth has done a fantastic job over the last six months,” said Somerset’s CO Cdr Paul Bristowe. “It is now time for Somerset to take up the tasking and I have complete confidence that we are ready to deliver what is required of us.”

“My ship’s company have given their best to ensure that Monmouth was ready for the many challenges we faced on operations, and I am immensely proud of their commitment and professionalism: they are a credit to The Black Duke and the Royal Navy.” With pirate duties done, the Black Duke began the three-week journey home via one pitstop (Cyprus) to drop off her advance leave party (they take charge of the ship when she returns to Devonport on October 3) and two ‘post operation decompression visits’. The latter allow the ship’s company to relax and let their hair down after the strain of five months east of Suez. Palermo in Sicily and, more popularly, Barcelona were picked. In Catalonia, Monmouth collected PACAS (not tapas) for the final leg of her deployment: parents and children at sea, to give them a taste of life in the Black Duke... and a taste of Biscay.

Meanwhile, somewhere east of Suez... AFTER exercising with the Jordanian fast patrol boat King Abdullah, Somerset headed south through the Red Sea and a rendezvous with Saudi Arabia’s HMS Taif. As a key link between Suez and the open waters of the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea is one of the world’s busiest and most important shipping lanes. So after conducting some deft handling manoeuvres, the combined crews of the Somerset and Taif (pronounced tie-eef) maximum use of their rendezvous by honing boarding drills, culminating in the Saudi ship’s captain allowing the commandos to demonstrate how they board and search, after clambering aboard from their frigate’s two sea boats.

Practice over, the green berets shared tactics with their fellow marines. After a traditional exchange of ship’s badges and formal salute as the two frigates sailed in company, the ships went their separate ways with HMS Taif’s captain Cdr Fahad Al-Shomrani declaring it had been “a pleasure to work with the Royal Navy.” Amen to that.
FORCE (MASF) were rather busy, Bay-class amphibious ships to Fort Vic, Wave-class tankers and begun a sustained counter-piracy guardian, and RFAs Argus and Lynx on a disaster relief/counter-ship's 815 Naval Air Squadron on Wave Ruler supporting the and Atlantic Oceans, the Gulf, the Mediterranean, the Indian (deep breath) home waters, needs them.

And medics – wherever the Fleet ops room experts, engineers providing help to reach the heights). support flying operations – hence ships and land bases around the world. But its role has expanded to making MASF was set up initially to provide aviation specialists for the front-line men and women of 21st Century warfare. MASF contributions for a year

ONE of the Navy's unkin - but vital - units has marked its first birthday with a bit of cake and coffee. Will the Coldstream HQ did, the front line of the Maritime Aviation Support Force (MASF) were rather busy, committed across the globe on operations. MASF was set up initially to provide aviation specialists for ships and land bases around the world. Will the Coldstream HQ did, the front line of the Maritime Aviation Support Force (MASF) were rather busy, committed across the globe on operations.

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We don't do 'grin and bear it'

We don’t do ‘grin and grins’

THE last time the people of Ledbury showed their appreciation of the men and women in the ship which carries the town’s name around the world it was ‘chuckin it down’. But when sailors from HMS Ledbury returned to Herefordshire to parade through the historic market town, the gods were smiling on them. Around 1,500 people – that’s one in eight of the town’s population – lined the streets to applaud the ship’s company who were exercising their right of freedom of the borough. The ship herself cannot negotiate the muddy gorge with a small stream running to the harbour district – by Ledbury’s Mayor Cllr Allen Conway.

The Avon is not an especially navigable river; it’s only passable for larger vessels in a relatively brief period straddling high tides. “At all other times, the river’s nothing more than a deep, muddy gorge with a small stream running to the sea,” explained navigator S/Lt Matt Millyard.

Luckily he got all his calculations spot on and the ship safely arrived at her destination. Once alongside, there were more guests to host: 40 VIPs who were treated to tours of the vessel, accompanied the ship’s company through to Arnolfini in the heart of the city’s rejuvenated passage to Bristol – a short hop from Avonmouth in Bristol for the duration of the stay.

The ship herself cannot negotiate the River Lea; she berthed 40 miles away in Bristol for the duration of the stay. She was joined for the last stretch of her passage to Bristol – a short hop from Avonmouth to Arnolfini in the heart of the city’s rejuvenated harbour district – by Ledbury’s Mayor Cllr Allen Conway.

There are many things that the oldest operational vessel. Meanwhile in Ledbury… In addition to the freedom parade (surprisingly, despite the ship’s longevity, only bestowed as recently as 2007), there was a clash on the football field between a select XI from the minehunter and Ledbury Town; the latter won, says S/Lt Millyard “by a score too great to print”, although the wounds of defeat were healed somewhat by a hog roast and drinks at the rugby club.

As for the march past, it saw music provided by the South-west Sea Cadet Band and youngsters from TS Ross and Antelope accompanied the ship’s company through the streets as did local Army cadets and Royal British Legion veterans, with Lady Darnley, Herefordford’s Lord Lieutenant taking the salute.

And as with the football clash, the parade was followed by generous local hospitality with plenty of food (lots of homarmies pies from the RBL) and drinks laid on, Some sailors went back for third and fourth helpings and, we’re told, “there was not one unhappy matelot to be found”.

Meanwhile the ship had avoided the ship for the past eight months and are preparing the vessel for a deployment with a NATO minehunting force in January, so a few days with their affiliated town was a very welcome break from lots of training.

“We’re going back to sea with HMS Ledbury and the ship safely arrived at her destination. Once alongside, there were more guests to host: 40 VIPs who were treated to tours of the vessel, accompanied the ship’s company through to Arnolfini in the heart of the city’s rejuvenated passage to Bristol – a short hop from Avonmouth in Bristol for the duration of the stay. She was joined for the last stretch of her passage to Bristol – a short hop from Avonmouth to Arnolfini in the heart of the city’s rejuvenated harbour district – by Ledbury’s Mayor Cllr Allen Conway.

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The Martians have landed!

So within an hour the ops room of HMS Daring can become that of HMS Ocean; or perhaps HMS Kent and HMS Argyll could jostle forces with veteran destroyer HMS York.

On the day the new complex was formally unveiled, York's crew were in full flow in an exercise.

For anyone familiar with the interior of a Type 42's ops room, the set-up seems somewhat spacious and bright in comparison, but all the units are arranged in the appropriate sequence and it doesn't take long for the mind to adjust to the immersive environment.

As the lights lifted for end of exercise, headsets were pulled off and voices are heard: “That was emotional, that was”, “That was bang on.”

It is impressive as you see a build-up depicted on an overhead screen, with the physical switches, lights and readouts that are characteristic of ops rooms life, there to be switched on in a touch.

The MCTS, designed and built by defence firm BAE Systems, can be found at Cunningham Building in HMS Collingwood, and in Discovery Building in HMBN Devonport.

But don’t let the distance fool you.

A ship's company in Devonport can be tackling the same exercise in the same virtual battlespace as the crew of a destroyer in Collingwood – and indeed with allies and coalition partners as needed.

Cdre Tim Lowe, the commodore of the Maritime Warfare School, introduced the new training system stressing: “This is a revolution in the way we do our Naval training.

“With this system, we are delivering premier league footballers – the best striker, the best defender, the best goalkeeper – to the Fleet.”

Of course, the arrival of the MCTS martians at Collingwood means a farewell to the Cook simulators at the former HMS Dryad.

Cunningham Building in Southwick Park closed its doors to the last training course at the end of July.

For many the final closure of the Cook simulators may seem like the end of an era, but Cdr Bill Evans, the officer commanding the Warfare Training Group, admits that he is “very impressed” by the new system.

He said: “Cook looked and felt somewhat familiar, although – of course – it is somewhat higher tech.

He praised the flexibility and adaptability of the new system, and the improvement in training and procedures.

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As well as different ships operating in the same scenario in the same room, or even in different counties, there are a team of roleplayers who can take up a variety of supporting roles in the exercises, whether filling missing billets or bringing a whole new vessel into the mix.

For anyone who remembers Dryad, the Warpost debriefing room in Collingwood will seem somewhat familiar, although – of course – it is somewhat higher tech.

Ian Carter explained: “We can playback what people have done – the worst direction, driving you towards the submarine.

“Funnily enough – wind, tides, the whole of the environment, it's never in their favour...”

The trainers array the martians – the staff's name for the consoles, not ours before anyone asks – into the appropriate layout for any of the major classes of current Naval ship.

The ECTs mirror the expected form of classroom-based training, although again networking offers flexibility in classroom usage and set-up.

Last words to Cdre Lowe: “When I first joined Collingwood there were a lot of questions from the team about losing the Cook training.

“But once put into the training here, and once they realised the versatility of what they can do here – they wouldn’t go back.”

At HMS Collingwood nothing.

Rather than flitting for the hills, the local populace of warfare trainees are flocking to get to know the new visitors.

The ‘martians’ are, in fact, modular computer blocks – more akin in appearance to Pixar’s Wall-E than anything out of ‘In the Name Of the World’ – and are a key element of the new Maritime Composite Training System (MCTS).

The blocks can be swiftly rearranged, refitted with different keyboards, and with screens that represent accurately the different keyboards, and with screens that rearranged, refitted with different keyboards, and with screens that rearranged, refitted with different keyboards, and with screens that rearranged, refitted with different keyboards, and with screens that rearranged, refitted with different keyboards, and with screens that rearranged, refitted with different keyboards, and with screens that rearranged, refitted with different keyboards, and with screens that
HMS Heroes sets the standard

YOU might see an unusual standard on parade during November’s remembrance ceremonies on Plymouth Hoe.

Children in the Plymouth area have banded together to form HMS Heroes – although in this case HMS stands for Her Majesty’s Schools.

The Plymouth group has 1,500 members from different backgrounds, drawn from 14 schools and seven schools in the area – and is keen to share its experience with other regions.

For the latest News, see the ‘Beat the Block’ contest in the ‘Scouse’ this week.

Information on all events is available on the group’s Facebook page.

Oars for good

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A FORCEnG GOOD

Central London sanctuary

THERE aren’t many places to stay in central London which offer superb accommodation, food and facilities for as little as £40 a night, but the Victory Services Club is one of them, and is keen to spread the word within the Royal Navy.

The club, in Seymour Street, near Marble Arch, is a registered charity offering accommodation and dining facilities for retired and serving members of all ranks of the Armed Forces.

The ‘Haven for Heroes’ scheme offers a special room rate of £32.50 per night for a single en-suite room, £45 for a double and £65 for a family room for those returning from Afghanistan.

Serving personnel can join the Victory Services Club free of charge – they just have to fill in an application form. Membership can then be extended to parents and children over 18, at modest annual rates. It is also open to all veterans, reservists, widows and widowers.

The club hosts an all-ranks lunch for the RN last month, attended by Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Tony Leeman and his wife, and publicised the work to the Service.

For details see www.vsc.co.uk.

Dars for good

A MAGNIFICENT gesture at the College Farm pub at Watchfield near Swindon raised £2,500 for the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund (RMCTF).

The pub is at one of the villages on the former training route from RAF Lyneham to Oxford.

Class act by Sultan team

CHILDREN at Lee-on-the-Solent Junior School returned to bright scenes at the end of last week, thanks to some timely help from HMS Sultan.

While the pupils were enjoying their summer holidays, students on the Petty Officers’ Air Engineering Technicians qualifying course painted and renovated four rooms.

LAET Liam Ball, who led the team, found some time in the training schedule for a community project and approached the Hampshire school whose headmistress Mrs Claxton was delighted to have the Navy’s help.

School caretaker Mike Newman, who provided help and guidance, said: “The rooms look great and the children loved having fresh new classrooms when they returned in September.”

Bastion to Blighty

“REMINED me again whose idea this was?” asked Sgt Lt Alex Scott as she took one arm to one arm of her Sea Cadet, the ‘Beat the Block’ challenge.

She then explained to the group of four RN General Duties Medical Officers of why she had decided to enter the UK’s longest running challenge.

The H4H Northern group, of which the school is part, will be managed by Lawrence Dallaglio, Jason Leonard and Ieuan Evans, managed by Lawrence Dallaglio, and is a constituent of the 2012 Olympic Games.

The club was formed in 1930 to encourage real ale drinkers and discuss the pub.

The club has been in operation for more than 25 years and is now a social and cultural hub for the local community.

The club’s mission is to preserve and promote the rich history and traditions of the local pubs, as well as providing a meeting place for like-minded people to share stories and experiences.

Service families can find out more about the service at www.h4h.org.uk.

Pubs to help

THE Four Horse team at the College Farm pub at Watchfield near Swindon raised £2,500 for the Royal Marine Charitable Trust Fund (RMCTF).

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THE beating hearts of Sea Cadets from across the country are set to beat as part of a nationwide challenge to raise money for charity.

Six Engineer Lieutenants are logging miles to raise money for their chosen causes.

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THE Mark 6 Explosive Ordnance Disposal suit is something of a distinctive bit of kit... and participants in this month’s Great South Run may be somewhat surprised to see two men tackling the run in the full 70lb suits.

No surprises, then, to discover that these men are part of the Navy’s Bomb Disposal Unit, SUD2, based in Shoreham in Portsmouth.

CP0(D) Ian ‘Scouse’ Fleming and Lt Cdr Al Nikrews will be covering the distance in the hefty suits to raise money for BLESMA, the veterans’ organisation that helps people who have lost limbs serving their country.

Scouse said: “Obviously there’s a lot of servicemen coming back from Afghanistan, and we’ve got lads out on the ground doing IDE (improved explosive device) work.”

“Great South Trudge” THE ‘Screws Loose’ team at the College Farm pub at Watchfield near Swindon raised £2,500 for the Royal Marine Charitable Trust Fund (RMCTF).

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Adventurous break for happy campers

CULDROSE-based 771 Naval Air Squadron had fun in the sun recently, along with a series of other adventure training and team-building events.

First day at the COs’ Summit Camp at Pendle, near Newquay, squadron members were able to take part in a variety of the Squadron’s many activities including archery and paintballing, mountain biking, golf, deep-sea fishing and surfing.

While all of this was good fun, there was a serious purpose too – the aim was to strengthen the camaraderie and excellent working relationships within the squadron and also raise money for charities.

PO/CMN Shaun ‘Bougie’ Knights, one of the event organisers, said: “My young son regularly trains with Newquay Juniors Football Club, so we thought it would be a good idea to have a summer camp as an ideal opportunity to arrange a friendly football match between a 771 NAS XI and a Newquay AFC XI to raise funds for the Help for Heroes charity and as a fitting finale for the summer training camp.

Lee said: “My young son regularly trains with Newquay Juniors FC, and having seen all the hard work during last season, we wanted to help raise funds and help for Heroes seemed ideal.”

We had a series of raffles and the prizes have been kindly donated from local companies.

There is also a website for anyone who may wish to make a contribution: www.bemycharity.co.uk/newquaysports

All the funds raised will be given to ST Dunstan’s, the charity for blind ex-servicemen and women, and WAGS on their wall, visit www.justgiving.com/ARMS of late.

We are all thankful for the support we received from the community.

The Bootneckettes

First, the Bootneckettes. It took over eight hours for a group of seven deeps, the idea

At the request of the Forestry Commission, we hasten to add. This month’s highlights are

A Divers blow up trees...

The Victorious Services Club

Central Location
Heart of London's Central Location

Every Occasion
Every Occasion

For more information on military charity please ring
0207 616 8334/8305 or email events@vsc.co.uk

www.vsc.co.uk/events

£30 - reunite package

includes: room hire, dinner, half bottle of wine

€35 - regimental 2-course dinner includes: room hire, dinner, half bottle of wine and a glass of beer or wine for the table

£40 - regimental dinner

includes: room hire, dinner, half bottle of wine and a glass of port

Demand high - book your event early

For more information, please ring 0207 616 8334/8305 or email events@vsc.co.uk

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WAGS to riches for the Bootneckettes

TWO groups of WAGS – wives and girlfriends of Royal Marines – are digging for gold on the homefront.

First, the Bootneckettes. It took over eight hours for a group of seven deeps, the idea

about getting their kit in front of the camera, but all the girls were put completely at ease.

“After hours of hair and make-up, each picture was shot in a matter of minutes – hard to believe when you see the end result.”

Navy News is publishing the WAGS calendar on Monday 19th

WAGS organise Becci Bandelier...
Reservists’ solar power

IT IS all very well training with all the kit, all the weapons and all the climate.

That’s why the Arctic warfare specialists in the Royal Marines head off to Norway in the depths of winter – you cannot replicate those conditions outside a deep freeze (and it’s difficult to launch a meaningful attack inside a deep freeze).

And that is why a group of 78 Royal Naval Reservists, mainly members of the Seaman Reserve Branch, and two reservist medics and a chaplain, made the trip from RAF Brize Norton to Cyprus to conduct Exercise Helios Encounter 2011.

The purpose of the exercise was to qualify members of the branch in the first part of the new Basic Close Combat (BCC) course, featuring the SA80 A2 rifle, and First Aid Level 2.

With blue skies and fierce sunshine virtually guaranteed, it also gave realistic exposure to the heat and stress which Servicemen and women would encounter on operations in theNear to Middle East – far higher than you would find even in the hottest summer in the UK.

Every RNB unit in the UK was represented, from HMS President in London to HMS Flanders as Lashburn.

A course of such ambitious scope also required the pooling of the collective resources of the Seaman Reserve’s most experienced senior ratings to train the training staff.

In this regard Helios Encounter was a true ‘gathering of the clan’, as the exercise was commanded by the Branch SO1 Cdr David Bucknell, with Regional Force Protection Officer (East England) Lt Suzanne Wood as 2IC.

However, as acknowledged by Cdr Bucknell, the brains and organisation behind the course was WO Hurlow, the branch WO Trainer.

Upon arriving at RAF Akrotiri, personnel were transferred to RAF Dhekelia in the east of the island, to allow access to its extensive range facilities.

But with less than a day to acclimatise to training in temperatures of more than 40°C, work began on weapon drill practice, rifle maintenance and calibration.

These are all straightforward tasks for the competent reservist, but the combination of soaring heat and full fighting order (body armour, webbing, helmet, ammunition and rifle) was to prove demanding for even the fittest of participants.

The next day was the first of a week’s intensive live fire training on Dhekelia range.

Firers were required to achieve groupings in a variety of physical stances, at distances ranging from 50 to 300 metres.

This was not limited to fixed targets, with some shots involving ‘pop-up’ targets, requiring soldiers to apply all the marksmanship principles they had learned in achieving ‘snap’ and rapid-fire shots.

All personnel learnt that shooting is a science, with multiple factors to consider, always compounded by the roasting temperatures.

Fortunately, there was a wealth of experience in the instructors, and more than one firer exceeded their own expectations.

All Shaw said: “I never expected to suffer so much with training in full combat gear in this heat.

“It really knocks it out of you, but I feel now that I am better prepared not only with my firing ability and confidence with the SA80A2, but also a greater understanding of how to handle operations in conditions found in the Gulf or Afghanistan.”

Training was not limited to the day, with students required to complete evening sessions in the Dismounted Close Combat Trainer simulator, as well as PT sessions conducted by ex-Royal Marine PO Shaw.

The latter were the rare occasions where the troops were not required to muster in full Fighting Order...

The intensity of the course was further compounded by the frequent power cuts caused by the explosion at the Cypriot island’s power generation plant, which wiped out half the island’s power generation capability, and so frequent power cuts caused difficulties in fully calibrating the island’s power generation.

The latter were the rare occasions where the troops were not required to muster in full Fighting Order...
The contribution made by the Royal Naval Reserve in Wales was top of the agenda when the Secretary of State for Wales met the Commanding Officer of HMS Cambria.

Cdr Simon Cottam told Cheryl Gillan MP that the volunteer specialists consolidate the full range of naval capabilities. "I am delighted to meet Cdr Cottam, who commands an essential unit as well as the Maritime Reserves. Naval Air and Submarine Services including the Royal Marines, the Devonport area over the centuries. The CO of HMS Vivid, Cdr Ian Pethick, with artists Gary and Thomas Thrussell, is situated at the unveiling of the new Devonport Heritage Trail plaque.

A PLAQUE to celebrate Devonport’s naval heritage has been unveiled by the Commanding Officer and Ship’s Company of the Plymouth Maritime Reserve unit HMS Vivid.

The Devonport Heritage Trail plaque marks the special relationship between the Royal Navy and the Devonport area over the centuries. The plaque, designed and made by Cornish artists Gary and Thomas Thrussell, is situated at the end of Richmond Walk at Mutiny Cove in Devonport, near the site of the old Mutiny Cove and the site of the old Royal Navy base’s South Yard.

The plaque forms part of the Devonport Heritage Trail, which links historic and cultural points of interest in Devonport. The Heritage Trail was created by Plymouth City Council in partnership with the Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership and the local community, who have been involved in every part of the project. The plaque is intended to be an entertaining way to explore the local area, once an important part of the town in its own right.

Speaking as the plaque was unveiled, the CO of HMS Vivid, Cdr Ian Pethick said: "This was an exciting opportunity for some of the ship’s company to work with some very creative artists and make something that is a credit to the Armed Forces."

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The reservists conducted amphibious landings from landing platform dock RFA Mounts Bay, with more than 100 maritime reservists and recruits from units including RMR Tyne, RMR Bristol and RMR Mersey combining to form a force for good and stage beach assaults to liberate the innocent civilians. They were supported in their objective by around 30 officers and ratings of the Amphibious Warfare, CIS and Logistics branches of the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR), meaning that more than 100 maritime reservists were involved, making it one of the RNR and RMR’s biggest exercises of the year.

The drama on the beach, staged as part of the Bournemouth Air Festival, unfolded as the commandos fast-roped from a Sea King and came ashore in landing craft and right inflatable boats. The reservists conducted amphibious landings from landing platform dock RFA Mounts Bay, with more than 100 maritime reservists and recruits from units including RMR Tyne, RMR Bristol and RMR Mersey combining to form a force for good and stage beach assaults to liberate the innocent civilians. They were supported in their objective by around 30 officers and ratings of the Amphibious Warfare, CIS and Logistics branches of the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR), meaning that more than 100 maritime reservists were involved, making it one of the RNR and RMR’s biggest exercises of the year.

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Trainees build a makeshift radio mast on top of Scraesdon Fort

Recruits show off the ‘map’ of Scraesdon created using ration pack boxes, helps, leaves and anything else they can find and (below) you never forget your first combed flesh hash...


It’s a bit moving and all that, and the first of three new outdoor exercises introduced to the extended and revamped course which takes a Cyrus on day one and eleven weeks later turns them out as a fledgling sailor. 

Basic training for ratings was overhauled this spring with the emphasis on more combat training – sailors are increasingly being deployed on the front line far from the comfort of what’s left of HMS Raleigh. No more in handy… atop Scraesdon to do a bit of Brecon, those left behind in the fort are erecting a radio mast (those wooden beams have come from a well-honed ship’s company natural home).

The fort didn’t see any action in the Second World War. It’s proving much more useful now in its dilapidated state as a training area for Royal Marines, ships passing through Operational Sea Training and now it appears, one of course, they have to get into one.

Instructors have laid an improvised explosive device on the bridge leading into Scraesdon, so the recruits have to find an alternative route. 

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YOU just can’t beat a quiet late summer’s morning in Hampshire.

And there’s nothing like one (although, despite the forbidding sky, it is late summer, the first week in September to be precise...).

Two Vikings of the Royal Marines Armoured Support Group roll on to the shingle at Browndown Beach near Gosport, part of the large disembarkation forces seen earlier in the day.

These are the final moments of six months of extensive tests, trials, exercises and training for Bulwark, which is due to overtake her older sister HMS Albion which has performed the role since HMS Ark Royal’s premature demise last year.

Before there could be any thought of being proclaimed flagship, however, there was the small matter of Operational Sea Training, the last hurdle Bulwark had to overcome since emerging from a £30m refit at the beginning of the year.

As well as being a protracted and very thorough work-out for the ship and ship’s company, OST has permitted some useful trials for other elements of the Royal Navy’s armoury.

The Royal Marines have tested whether it’s feasible to move a Viking from ship to shore without the need for an intermediary (ie landing craft).

The green berets have also been testing the CB90, a Swedish fast attack craft on loan with 1 Assault Group Royal Marines, using Bulwark’s floodable well dock as a base.

Two of the 40kt boats have been loaned to the Corps, which has spent the past few months evaluating them to see what lessons can be incorporated when Britain designs its planned future ‘force protection craft’ which are capable of arguing off enemy fast boats and destroying commando forces.

All of this is pretty challenging to direct, however well equipped the 18,000-tonne assault ship is. Throw some very "particularly inconsiderate weather conditions" into the mix, and you’re testing the max. But, done with Bulwark plus the FOST staff to the limit.

The FOSTies are tough taskmasters, but were evidently suitably impressed by Bulwark because she passed her ordeal, much to the delight of her Commanding Officer Capt Alex Burton.

"I’m immensely proud of what we’ve achieved since starting our training, and how hard the ship’s company have worked throughout," said Capt Burton.

The FOST seal of approval means (a) Bulwark can deploy, if required, and (b) can relieve her sister HMS Albion as the flagship.

"We still have plenty of challenges ahead as we prepare to take on the responsibility of the Royal Navy’s flagship, but we are ready to deliver whatever may be required in the future.”

That immediate future involves a brief visit to Brest in Brittany to pick up around 100 French Marines before heading north to the Clyde to take part in the second of this year’s Joint Warrior exercises, a combined air-sea-land war game run from Faslane.
The Tigers, Company 2 Battalion Princess of Wales’ Royal Regiment. The Tigers, as the regiment’s known, (a) prefer warmer climates and (b) prefer the land to the sea – the passage to South Georgia was a bit sporty and the soldiers set foot ashore proclaiming they were glad they were in the Army...

Also glad to get ashore was journalist Liz Roberts, who joined the destroyers for the trip south to record programmes for Falkland Islands television and radio about the day-to-day life of a warship patrolling this part of the world. While she was off gathering material and the Tigers were conducting cold weather training, the ship’s company were meeting the local human and wildlife populace – the former in the shape of the British Antarctic Survey scientists who operate a research base at King Edward Point.

All returned to the ship Newsweeked by the beauty of the island – and conscious that it should not be spoiled by visitors. “South Georgia’s a unique – and fragile – environment. It needs protection in every sense of the word,” said Edinburgh’s commanding officer Cdr Paul Russell.

“We had to be very conscious of ‘bio-security measures’ when landing personnel.

And so back to the comparative hubbub of the Falklands (population about 100 times greater than South Georgia). It’s also a whole lot warmer than Grytviken. A balmy 7˚C in September (compared with 2˚C in South Georgia).

Perfect conditions, then, for a spot of sport. A duathlon (run/bike/race) was held for ‘Hart Dyke’s Heroes’ who put up a valiant fight against Argentine air attack before succumbing to two bombs on May 25.

Coventry had been dispatched to the waters off West Falkland to act as a forward shield for ships in San Carlos Water, where the Argentines did their utmost to halt the liberation of the islands – striking at the Royal Navy’s invasion force over five bitter days.

They could not stop the landings, but they did sink and cripple numerous ships, among them HMS Ardent, bombed and sunk, and HMP Antelope, blown apart when an unexploded bomb was triggered during efforts to disarm it.

The sacrifices made in May 1982 are honoured at San Carlos Cemetery, where a wreath was laid by Edinburgh’s ship’s company at the Falklands where the Fahion Water was laid by Edinburgh’s ship’s company.

pictures: ([phot] Kyle Heller, frpu east, and the south african air force
Fortress of the South Sea

pictures: la(phot) kyle heller, frpu east, and the south african air force

the force from air attack.

the Operation Corporate task

played a pivotal role in shielding

now alas all out of service –

destroyer's chaplain Fr Charles

company and a service of

high-explosive will. And probably

spoil your day, 4.5in of lead and

monthly workout.

The gun was fired up for its six-

about a mile range of Edinburgh.

the surface of the ocean within

shred anything in the air or on

put your faith in Phalanx, the

hand of Jack and Jenny, you can

exercises by day and night. (Segue...

To ensure no craft slips

vulnerable to assault from the air

bombing attacks on the Fortress

carried out a series of mock

air defence skills.

Mount Pleasant to practise her

Typhoon jets based at

advantage of the RAF

Edinburgh took

attacks the Fleet.

aircraft or missile

to ensure no enemy

leaps and bounds:

42 destroyer remains

Edinburgh's older sisters –

Or if you don't trust the steady

rugged deck (a large

throw from the heart of Cape

Ysterplaat, the South African Air

disembarked and decamped to

on board to fly friends and family

Great ocean.

waters than her first crossing of

South America and on into the

across the South Atlantic towards

make the 4,000-mile passage

second half of the destroyer's

rested and raring to go for the

plenty of downtime for the ship's

fortnight's TLC for the ship and

in days gone by.

and much loved home to the RN

and much loved home to the RN

miles from Cape Town,

her second visit of the

deployment to Simon's

The ship's Lynx flight

The protracted stop on the

That second half will see her

as the destroyer paid

as the destroyer paid

also paying a visit to the Cape).

part in a tri-nation tournament

teams – football, rugby, netball,

boulder.

an angle) on top of a giant

setting their Mk8 down (at quite

some low-level, formation and

treated their British cousins to

African Super Lynx. The hosts

to fly in company with South

Edinburgh's flight the rare chance

Cape was invaluable.

airborne in the skies over the

Cape was invaluable.

Even better, it allowed Edinburgh's flight the rare chance to fly in company with South African Super Lynx. The hosts treated their British cousins to some low-level, formation and finally mountain flying, which concluded with the 815 chaps setting their MiG down (at quite an angle) on top of a giant

The destructor's sporting teams – football, rugby, netball, volleyball and basketball – took part in a tri-nation tournament with the South African and German Navies (the latter were also paying a visit to the Cape). Sadly for British honour, the South Africans proved too strong... but Edinburgh did edge the Germans on the football pitch.

The mini-Olympics wasn't the only physical exertion occupying the ship's company in South Africa. On the day the destroyer entered port, 18 members of the ship's company were huffing and puffing away on Day One of a 90-day rowing epic.

Between them the sailors have vowed to cover 8,054 miles on the destroyer's rowing machines – the distance from the Falklands to Portsmouth.

Whatever the sea state, the 18 sailors will be putting in eight kilometres a day on the machines over 90 days, all in aid of the charity Blisters which helps premature and sick babies across the UK.

Moving in an emotional sense was a visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery in Dido Valley, just north of Simon's Town.

A six-strong guard accompanied Cdr Russell to lay a wreath at the memorial honouring the British Servicemen and women who were stationed at Simon's Town and are laid to rest there.

Throughout Edinburgh's fortnight in South Africa, the Royal Navy proved to be extremely accommodating.

“Simon's Town was key to ensuring that we're in a good material state for the remainder of our deployment – the South Atlantic is a harsh environment in which to operate and the extreme low temperatures and significant sea states all take their toll on our equipment,” said Cdr Russell.

“The support given to HMS Edinburgh by the local community at all levels, from the use of sporting facilities and clubhouses to logistical and infrastructure assistance is a true example of the long-lasting ties that exist between the UK and South Africa.”

The support from the South Africans extended beyond their shores. About 400 miles to be precise.

With the Fortress of the Sea ploughing through the South Atlantic, the ship was buzzed by a South African Air Force Gripen jet.

The pilot flew 400 miles from his home base just so he could practise with the destroyer.

He was eager to carry out mock attacks on a fully worked-up

upwash...

...and the ops room and upper
dock gun crews were keen to

play with a fully worked-up jet

capable of flying at twice the

speed of sound.

With the air defence exercise

over, the pilot reported to the

pilot that his long transit had

been well worth it.

And so Edinburgh's third

transit of the South Atlantic

deployment draws to a close.

The latter stages of her seven

months away from home take

her into the Pacific via the

Papuanian Canals.

After inching her way up the

west coast of South America, the

destroyer will pass through the

Panama Canal, into the

Caribbean and finally home in

Portsmouth in time for Christmas.


demonstrates its Cape ability over South Africa before (below) setting down in an unusual spot

A sailor struggles through the morass on bike as does his

shipmate on foot during Bertha's Beach Dirty Dash while (above)

Cdr Paul Russell pays his respects at Dido Valley cemetery near

Simon's Town

A shell leaves Edinburgh's 4.5in main gun during a spot of gunnery practice

the South Sea

company and a service of

reminiscence was led by the

destroyer's chaplain Fr Charles

Bruce.

Edinburgh's older sisters – now alas all out of service – played a pivotal role in shielding the Operation Corporate task force from air attack.

Nearly 30 years on and the raison d'être of a Type 42 destroyer remains the same – although the technology inside the ship has moved on in leaps and bounds: to ensure no enemy aircraft or missile attacks the Fleet.

so to that end, Edinburgh took

advantage of the RAF Typhoon jets based at

Mount Pleasant to practise her air defence skills.

Two supersonic fighter-bombers of No.1435 Flight carried out a series of mock bombing attacks off the coast of the Sea.

Fortresses are not just

vulnerable to assault from the air
(apologies for that very dubious

segue...). To ensure no craft slips

through her surface defences, the gunners conduct regular exercises by day and night.

The killer tomato (a large

watermelon) was wheeled out to salute

as the destroyer paid

a visit to the Commonwealth

cemetery in Dido Valley, just

north of Simon's Town.

A sailor struggles through the morass on bike as does his

shipmate on foot during Bertha's Beach Dirty Dash while (above)

Cdr Paul Russell pays his respects at Dido Valley cemetery near

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Panama Canal, into the

Caribbean and finally home in

Portsmouth in time for Christmas.
Rocking rolling and racing

Estonian tribute

I RECENTLY visited the Estonian Maritime Museum, which is a fantastic job in tracking Royal Navy ships as they move around the world. The SFNM is funded by the public as a result of the generosity of its members, who donate to the museum.

The corner where the plaques listing the names of naval personnel killed supporting the Estonians in 1918 is well-maintained and the White Ensign over the memorial is clean, as my photo shows.

Captain Michael Barrow, Petersfield

Each month Passer's Rum are offering to counter a letter of the Initials signed to the writer of our top letter. This month's winner is Stephen Scollon
If not Boy Cornwell, who?

I WRITE to comment on the letter from Eddie Summerfold about Boy Cornwell (September).

I forwarded the photograph in good faith believing it to be of Cornwell VC. It was given to me in an oak frame, glass-fronted, after a former Royal Marine friend of mine died.

As you know from my first letter it included a photograph of HMS Chester (September). The photograph of the boys is actually a copy. The writing, Jack Cornwell's, standing HMS Chester 1936-18 and their affectionate Brother Bill is what looks like Sid LLoyd was obviously written on the original photograph. It is also very faded. There is nothing on the back.

The picture of HMS Chester is actually a postcard and has on the inside and you finished working blue suit apart and sew it up with what looked like a new suit.

I remember tales of sailmakers who would take your threadbare working blue suit apart and sew it together so that the worn surface was on the inside and you finished up with what looked like a new suit.

All for 100 blue liners

– Roger Broad, Drayton, Portsmouth

Memories both good and bad

YOUR article The strain of war at sea (Revers, August) brought six years of my life back.

Serving on the lower deck from 1945-46, I witnessed and endured the life you described from cruisers to battleships. HMS Montrose to Prince of Wales to Dorsetshire to Polarium.

I am a survivor of HMS Prince of Wales and Dorsetshire. Montrose was decommissioned due to severe bomb damage.

The actions were only part of the strain – it was the constant sea watches and weather conditions, closed up for four days chasing Bismarck in the Denmark Strait, with a toilet bucket lashed to the guardrail in Arctic conditions, and having HMS Hood blown up some 600 yds ahead – would it be us next?

The Navy's war spanned from east to west, north to south – you could be in any theatre in a short time.

Now at 92 years I still have flashbacks, but it was not about that.

We mucked in together and crossed the Line, and may have an occasion to remember.

We also had runs ashore and met some lovely people:

– ‘Shiner’ Wright, Gloucester
– Ken Tipper, Ocala, Florida

I HAVE just read my letter in the August edition, and also read other stories that bring back memories.

One was the article about the Queen and Prince Philip visiting Bletchley Park to unveil the memorial to the wartime codebreakers there.

Since I was on two of the 300 ‘survivors’ mentioned, one at sea on a destroyer, the other ashore in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), I had a personal interest in that.

I was also interested in the article about the roll of honour containing the names of sailors who were based at Devonport (we called it Guzzo) and wondered if the names of my shipmates on HMS Punjabi, which was a ship manned primarily by men from the Devonport barracks – some of whom lost their lives when the ship was sunk – had been entered.

I also have a picture of the World War 2 HMS Brocklesby, a frigate, and would be interested to hear from someone in company with other Huns including mine, HMS Quorn, off the coast of England and France. The modern minesweeper Brocklesby looks somewhat different to those ships of long ago!

– Ken Tipper, Ocala, Florida

Calpe's bell lives on

YOUR story about the Dieppe Raid in 1942 (Fry, Lines, August) brought my attention to HMS Calpe which was the flagship.

I scanned the whole presentation in the first instance. I have now taken the frame apart and found the following.

The photograph of the boys is actually a copy. The writing, Jack Cornwell's, standing HMS Chester 1936-18 and their affectionate Brother Bill is what looks like Sid LLoyd was obviously written on the original photograph. It is also very faded. There is nothing on the back.

The mystery is still not solved. Who are they?

Tony Davie, RNAS Welling, RMA Reading

Sinister...

WHilst reading Sid ‘Sails’ Elkes’s dit (September) I wondered if there were any left-handed sailmakers’ palms?

I still have my ‘right-handed’ one which occasionally comes in hand.

I remember tales of sailmakers who would take your threadbare working blue suit apart and sew it together so that the worn surface was on the inside and you finished up with what looked like a new suit.

All for 100 blue liners

– Roger Broad, Drayton, Portsmouth

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LETTERS to the editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent’s name and address, not necessary for publication. 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 us to publish it. Given the volume of letters, we cannot publish all of your correspondence in Navy News. 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.
Ominous skies over HMS Puncher in the small Danish port of Sønderborg

Small ships... ...big impact
The sacks trade

SOLDIERS and airmen expect it daily – they’ll certainly kick up a fuss if they haven’t had any for four days.

And mailmen? Well, sailors lower their expectations. They’re happy if they get it once a fortnight – but if they don’t get it at Christmas, they won’t be happy.

We’re talking post (Obviously – Ed) and in the world of military mail, rather like the High Street, Christmas begins in October.

The team at British Forces Post Office – simply BFPO to anyone who sends letters and parcels to our Servicemen and women – are preparing for the annual deluge of mail for those on duty over the festive season, writes Richard Hargreaves.

There will be an estimated 66 ships on the go this Christmas Day 2011 (we’re discounting the bomb-attacks – V-Huat isn’t going to surface just to put up a knitted puller from your gran…), not to mention personnel in Afghanistan (chiefly Fleet Air Arm because 3 Commando Brigade will be home by then).

And it’s down to a team of just nine on the Royal Navy side of things – one officer, two leading seamen and seven civilians – to make sure things get to their destinations in time.

The staff here can expect the amount of post to increase by a third in the Yuletide rush – there will be 800 sacks per day heading out to the 9,000 Britons on deployment in Helmand alone.

Thanks to free postage for parcels up to two kilogrammes to operational theatres and HM Ships in support (all year round) and the Christmas free mail service for operational theatres and ships deployed on Christmas Day, the volume of mail sent from the UK to Service personnel at Christmas has risen by 25 per cent over the past three to four years.

Which is why, says Edward Bean, the Fleet Mail Officer, and his colleagues are under stress two things post early – and no uitelies.

The first advice is obvious, but not always heeded: check dates – this year for deployed ships (1st and 2nd class), ships in their home ports December 16 (2nd class)/December 20 (1st class) – are not long before the big day, but Christmas at the BFPO is the busy time of the year, there are still people posting post at Christmas Eve expecting to arrive in time…

As for the machine, it might seem精神, but it’s not. Look at it this way: would AB Bloggers prefer to get cards and presents from their boyfriends on December 25, or a selection pack from M&S or Tesco – or not get anything at all? (and in the world of military mail, there are, of course, limitations: mail cannot be longer than 105cm or weigh more than 11kg – the restrictions are determined by those in the mail room.

Ideally no ship should go without a postal delivery wherever it is in the world. Given the changeable nature of life in the RN, it’s understandable. It occasionally goes missing, or more likely, misses its original destination because of operations (instead of a few days) in Las Palmas last year, HMS Gloucester spent four hours, the bagged drug couriers in doing so, but it was a few more days… and the post arrived.

Having spent 23 years in the Service, including five on the Royal Yacht in his previous career as a Royal Marines Musician, Lt Bean understands the power of post.

“The morale boost from getting post gets you through the day,” he says. “I naively thought that my family posted a letter and it magically got to the ship. I never thought that if you break one envelope of the mail chain, the system will collapse.

“So to be at this end, it’s really satisfying. You can go home at the end of the day feeling that you’ve made a difference, particularly for the ships on the front line.”

His sentiments are shared by Tilly Clifton, the ship’s office manager, who knows the movements of RN vessels pretty much as well as the First Sea Lord and Commander-in-Chief Fleet and has spent 14 years doing her utmost to ensure the sacks are delivered. Ships offices at sea know her simply as ‘Tilly BFPO’.

“I understand how emotional it is getting your mail. I get emotional if I cannot get it to the ship, especially those deployed at Christmas. But it’s worth it, is it? When it’s Christmas, I think of them as my boys and girls.

“The whole BFPO operation is run by the Army – you can actually be a postie in the Royal Logistics Corps – so for the soldiers, seeing how the Navy deals with mail is an eye-opener.

“To the Army or RAF you expect to get your post delivered maybe three days – certainly at least every three or four days,” explains Lt Col Denis Dillon, deputy head of BFPO. “With the Navy, it’s not expectation, it’s more appreciation - they appreciate the effort that’s been taken to get their mail to them.

But soldier, sailor or airman, there is a common factor. Says Tilly Clifton. “Mail officer. Mail still makes a big difference, that someone’s written a letter, it’s something tangible from home. Don’t undermine it.”

More details on sending mail via BFPO at http://www.army.mod.uk/bfpo
**People**

Unique haul of prizes for Merlin unit

ONE of the Navy’s top officers visited Calidor to see how one squadron bagged an unprecedented four glittering prizes.

Flight safety, operational efficiency and capability are all essential in military aviation units, and Deputy Commander-in-Chief Fleet Vice Admiral George Zambellas is no stranger to the standards set at the Cornish base.

And no unit has done more to tread the path of excellence than 820 NAS, which flies the Merlin.

A HELICOPTER observer who blasted an Argentinian submarine during the Falklands Conflict has just passed a rare aviation milestone.

HMS Daring’s Flight Commander, Observer Lt Cdr Joe Harper, has achieved 6,000 hours of helicopter flight.

The magic number was clocked up whilst flying at night from the flight deck of Daring, the first of the Type 45 destroyers which he had only just joined.

Lt Cdr Harper is one of the most experienced Observers in the Fleet Air Arm, and is the only Observer in the Lynx helicopter force to achieve 6,000 hours.

As Lt Cdr Harper landed after reaching the milestone, the hangar doors were raised to reveal a large 6000 sign held by the ship’s flight and ship’s company of the ship’s company, including Commanding Officer Capt Guy Robinson with a bottle of champagne.

The chefs had also made a cake especially for the occasion inscribed with 250 days – the magic number was clocked up whilst flying at night from the flight deck of Daring, the first of the Type 45 destroyers which he had only just joined.

Lt Cdr Harper said: “Being recognised for achieving this milestone was both very humbling and a great surprise.

“Despite all my hours airborne, and operating the Lynx at sea is still hugely rewarding, especially from such a fantastic platform as Daring. Roll on, 7,000!”

The 6,000 hours were achieved during 32 years of constant service in the cockpit of many of the Royal Navy’s helicopters, in operational theatres all over the world.

Lt Cdr Harper was involved in the Falklands Conflict, where, in the opening engagement he targeted the already-damaged Argentinean submarine ARA Sante Fe with a missile from his Wasp helicopter, scoring a hit.

He became a Qualified Observer Instructor in 1996, training junior Lynx aircrew on 722 Naval Air Squadron, and in 2001 achieved the standard of A2 Instructor, one of the highest levels of instructor in the Fleet Air Arm.

He subsequently returned to operational flying, but has still remained at the lead for developing and teaching new techniques and capabilities for the Lynx Helicopter Force, including the wider introduction of Night Vision Goggles and maritime counter-terrorism operations, both key techniques which he himself will use when Daring deploys on operations early next year.

Lt Cdr Harper has also spent three years as the Naval Flying Standards Flight (Rotary Wing) Assessor or ‘Trapper’, as they are known in the Fleet Air Arm, checking whether pilots and observers still make the grade.

He was delighted to have returned as her Chief Fleet Vice Admiral George Zambellas led to reunions.

A FORMER Royal Marines bandist still has her eye on a break-through recording contract, having won a place in the regional finals of a national singing competition.

Fellowship is open to any defence firm Ultra Electronics, allows a junior officer the opportunity to select and study their own essay for the Naval Review whilst visiting RAN establishments.

It was a fantastic experience to see the RAN up close and to meet a Navy that is, on the surface, so similar to ours but, by digging a little deeper, you find they take a different approach to training and operations,” said Lt Burns.

On completion of his research Lt Burns will write an essay to the quarterly magazine, which celebrates its centenary next year.

The Fellowship is open to any RN lieutenant or RM captain, and potential candidates should see RMTN 22/211, which gives full details of the 2012 award, or contact their career manager.

Left: Lt Cdr Joe Harper (right of helicopter) and pilot Lt Wes Blackwell are welcomed back to HMS Daring by the ship’s flight and ship’s company after the Observer passed the 6,000 hours milestone.

Dubai rendezvous leads to reunions

A JUNIOR officer is back in the UK after carrying out research in Australia, thanks to a prestigious scholarship.

Lt Andy Burns, of the CHF HQ, spent six weeks taking a close look at the Royal Australian Navy, after selecting for the Royal Navy Fellowship.

The award, sponsored by the defence firm Ultra Electronics, allows a junior officer the opportunity to select and study their own essay for the Naval Review whilst visiting RAN establishments.

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Ex-bandie still in the running

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Pilot ends era of the Harrier

IT IS almost a year since the Faslane engineers were shut down at RAP Cottremore after the final flight of the Harrier.

The afternoon of Wednesday December 1 was the end of an era for the British Harrier – but not for Lt Cdr London, the last Harrier pilots.

The former man has belatedly claimed a place in history as the last pilot of these much-loved machines.

Dee given honorary RN rank

RECORD-breaking yachtswoman Dee Caffari has been appointed an Honorary Commander by the Royal Navy in recognition of her service to the Armed Forces.

Dee, who set her third world record this year by sailing non-stop around the world more times than any other woman in history, joins the likes of adventurer Bear Grylls and fellow yachtswoman Dame Ellen MacArthur.

On receiving the news that her appointment had been approved by the Queen, Dee said: “It is an honour to be recognised for my achievements and support of the Armed Forces.

“I have enjoyed the links I have established and maintained with the Royal Navy and look forward to being present at events across the country.

“Having not worn a uniform since school, I am excited about preparing for my role at Dartmouth, being fitted with a uniform and learning to salute correctly.”

One particular link with the Forces has been Dee’s work as an ambassador for the tri-Service Toe in the Water project.

The charity uses competitive sailing as part of the rehabilitation process carried out by the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) Headley Court to re-instate profoundly and traumatically-injured Service personnel to enable life beyond injury.
EXTENSIVE preparations finally over, ice-patrol ship HMS Protector could at last set sail from Port Stanley – a great relief for both the British ships and the local matchees amused for a day, as they chatted coffee to the southern end of the ship. The effort was worth it – "30 of us were entertained... we had a lovely day at the British Athletics Club. Free drinks, chicken and all the trimmings, plus all the Brazilians too!"

After a brief stop in Uruguay it was "ruffling all the way to Port Stanley – everything rolling and pitching all the time" in the stormy Channel.

The stench was awful and one or two of the ships was sick.

"We had a walk around the factory and we were continuously amazed by its beauty and the world and its beauty is out its true natural beauty."

The island is a photographer's paradise, for with the cleaning of the sky and the dawn of the sun, the mountains and 30 brilliant colours began to reflect themselves off the mountains and the ice."

All the colours of the rainbow began to glisten at us across the icy waters in the sun's rays began to sparkle and dance on the snow and ice."

In the space of one day we've seen so much and never have a chance to see the chance.

Above (left) One of HMS Protector's helicopters; left and below the ice patrol ship on its deployment.
ship’s company spaced the mainmast to celebrate the birth of Prince Andrew on February 19. No other story stood out in short order by a British boat. White Ensign painted on display but afloat, reflecting the Argentinians’ claim and asserting Protector’s right to be in international waters.

The Argentinian ship remained for a further hour before abruptly steaming away. “That was one example of the cold war that exists down here and it has been going on for years and will probably continue for years to come.”

Visits to the South Sandwich Islands and South Georgia confirmed the patrol’s the approach of the 5,000 miles in 18 days – but we were looking to reach the northern hemisphere, and Andes, when the railway laid on Lima Cricket Club lived up to its name and valued books captains of Her Majesty’s Ships possess.”

The book, launched in 1824, was aimed at the some of the Royal Navy’s most illustrious commanders, and its content has been revised and updated over the years. The latest edition of Day By Day grows

Published by The History Press on Trafalgar Day, this £9.95 hardback book presents the events which shaped the Senior Service chronologically, day by day, month by month. Compiled by former MOD senior media operations officer Lt Cdr Lawrie Philips RN, the book has been extensively revised and expanded since the last edition, and the format changed to make it easier to use. It covers the Fleet, the Royal Marines, the Fleet Air Arm, the WRNS, the Maritime Reserve, the RAF and the Merchant Navy, and is described by defence expert Vice Admiral Sir Jeremy Blackmore, former Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, as “probably one of the most well-thumbed and valued books captains of Her Majesty’s Ships possess.”


HMS Egeria restorer found dead

A RETIRED Royal Navy sailor has died while renovating a former survey ship in the upper reaches of Portsmouth Harbour.

Darren Daz Tully, a warfare specialist with 22 years service behind him, bought the Echo-class inshore survey vessel HMS Egeria with a view to preserving it and opening it up to visitors, charterers and former crew members, as well as using it as a houseboat for his family.

The 42-year-old was found with a head injury on mudflats beside the vessel at Portchester at the end of August, and initial investigations suggest he may have been hurt falling from the ship.

Daniel Heyland, who was helping with the restoration, said: “HMS Egeria was Darren’s pride, life and soul, and helping people was his main aim too.”

Tributes to Daz have been posted on the forum of a website which he set up to chart the progress of his restoration programme on the vessel – www.egeria.tk.

Records online

ALMOST one million 20th-century records from the Merchant Navy have been published online.

The project, undertaken by findmypast.co.uk in partnership with the National Archives, sees details of more than 200,000 ships between 1918 and 1941 invested in a first-class express bus ticket to Santiago, seeing gauchos dressed in ponchos and great friends, and after spending an hour or more...

A gentle ride in the Submarine Service. As photos of the mariners and National Archive images of docks of the period.

As the last day’s searches on the site are free, charges may apply for detailed information including viewing the cards from which the information is taken, and to see individual photos.

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WITH the Royal Navy taking pride of place at this year’s Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo there had to be a role for Scottish-based HMS Unicorn.

The 19th Century frigate is open to the public at her berth in Victoria Dock, but the spirit of the wooden warship was on prominent display as one of her

space figureheads added the finishing touch to a ship-shaped field gun carriage at the tattoo, staged on the Castle Esplanade (pictured above).

The ship, launched in 1824, also lent two 18pdr cannon which were “fired” daily. For more details on the ship see www.frigatesunion.org

Day by Day grows edition by edition

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**Memorial is unveiled to Sportman**

MEMBERS of the Medway Towns Submariners Association were invited to the opening of a new development named Saxon Shore House in Gillingham by David Waters, Naval Liaison Officer (and himself a submariner) for the unveiling of a plaque in memory of HMS Sportman.

The new apartment block was built on the site of a pub called The Sportman, named after the 19th-century vessel which was adopted by the Kent town during their Warship Week in 1942.

HMS Sportman was built in 1941 and served in the Mediterranean and Atlantic (1945) with a good deal of interaction with French shipping – her captain, Lt Richard Bassett, became active in January 2009 to commemorate all those who served on French convoys during the war and who have no known graves.

The branch of the Medway Towns Submariners Association remembers the men and women of the Royal Marines veterans who wish to pay their respects during commemorations following the closure of the RAE Lyneham.

Bassett, marking the end of the town’s official headquarters since 1990, is the final resting place of more than 4,340 service personnel to whom the town of Wootton Bassett, 30 miles from Lyneham at RAF Brize Norton, continues to pay its respects.

**New arrangements for repatriations**

NEW arrangements have been agreed with police and local authorities for Royal Marines veterans who wish to pay their respects during repatriations following the closure of the RAE Lyneham.

**Branch pays tribute in Woolton Bassett**

TWO dozen members of Pershore and District branch attended the Sunset Ceremony at Woolton Bassett, marking the end of the town’s official involvement in the repatriation programme.

The union flag was lowered and handed to the chaplain to be laid on the altar at St Bartholomew’s Church for 24 hours before being handed to RAF Brize Norton.

RNA welfare officer and standard bearer S/M Ardhur Young has represented the branch more than 40 times, along with other standards from across the UK, to pay their respects to those killed on active service as their bodies were driven from RAF Lyneham to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford.

Various branch members have accompanied Arthur Young over the years, and a special plaque was presented to the manager of the Cross Keys pub, which has been a staunch supporter of visiting shipmates.

Branch chairman S/M Ted Annis said it was one of the most moving ceremonies he had ever attended.

**Return to Raleigh for Dave**

A new arrangement has been made for the repatriation of the remains of Dave Tolerton, of Crosby branch, who had a chance to roll back the years when he went to see his great- nephew Kieron Johnson pass out at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.

Dave did his basic training at the Tipton establishment in 1961, and S/M John Whitman, of Plymouth branch, offered to show him round so that he could see how much things had changed.

John is an RNA mentor at Raleigh, who has been a critic of the government’s approach to Defence Spending.

**Time for a tot of RN rum**

WHEN S/M Donald McNee left the Royal Navy – from HMS Lochow, the former minesweeper warship based on the shores of the Firth of Forth, he joined a brewery.

Some years later there was an auction following the closure of the Naval victualling yard at Dalmeny, close to the Lochinvar at Port Edgarton.

The brewery company bought the last stiver of a rumcask and bottled it, remembering old standing ground on the Forth.

**Hermes reunion in Paris**

AROUND 50 members of the Hermes Association gathered at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich for their 25th annual reunion.

The two UK visitors also attended the 75th anniversary of the Royal Air Force titled `Final Turn’ outside St Anthony of Padua church in Headley Way.

Derek, Jim Hawkins and Royal Dragon Guards veteran Johnny Walker have recorded the route, and decided that the Chequers Inn in Brize Norton would be an appropriate gathering point for those doing their best to avoid disrupting village life.

**Once Navy, Always Navy**

FROM the Devon County Office of Exeter on Thursday November 10, 2011

The moment we arrived at 6.30 there were crowds of people who had turned up to pay their respects.

To the community centre situated opposite, RAF Brize Norton, Mr Philip Hope, from the Royal Navy Police, and all approved our new location,” said Derek, adding that all had been in place.

There were representatives from all areas of the community centre situated opposite, RAF Brize Norton, and all approved our new location,” said Derek, adding that all had been in place.

The sight of the Union flag being lowered brought tears to my throat and the whole event really brings home to you the ultimate sacrifice paid by too many.

**Plaque unveiled**

A PLAQUE has been unveiled at the College Farm Inn, Watchfield, near Cirencester, by S/M Terry Brimmell.

The branch VATP opened in November 2010 and has provided an initial food and drink service to all approved personnel to honour the fallen since 1945.

Organised by the RMA Poole branch, the ceremony was attended by up to 40 people and the plaque was dedicated to Andy and Debra and their staff at the pub for their support.

The RMA Repatriation Network intends to open it with family and friends of the Royal Marines, and to share transport information.

Those intending to attend repatriations are asked to let Derek know, and to share transport wherever possible.

**Standard in Paris**

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Plymouth group marks Black Tot Day

MEMBERS of Plymouth branch once again gathered round the rum tun to mark Black Tot Day – the abolition of the daily rum issue in the Royal Navy, which happened on July 31 1970.

While serving members of today’s Royal Navy remain alert to a high degree without the daily tot, RN veterans suffer no such restrictions and turned out in force and in period costume (though in some cases the period was not at all clear) to commiserate with each other at the loss of their favourite supply.

The branch thanked Cellar Trends, suppliers of Pusser’s Navy Rum, and Annette for the provision of a fine buffet; also members of the WOA(SR) Mess at HMS Drake for allowing the use of their superb facilities – and finally thanks to Tony Allen for the evening’s entertainment.

Kenya team get together

VETERANS of the RN Training Team Kenya and their friends gathered at the Church House Inn, Rattery, to relive old memories and practice their kitchen Swahili, picked up during their service training recruits for the Redefining Kenya Navy in Mombasa during the 1960s and 1970s.

A warm welcome was extended to three teams of old boy’s wives Ann Anderson and Ruth Cooper, plus Ann’s daughter Pat Armstrong, who was born in the Catherine Bibby Hospital in Mombasa.

A glass rose bowl, engraved with the names of “Redefining Kenya” members and “(Boys’ wives) friends”), was presented to guest of honour Hilary Hall.

Those gathered again extended their thanks to landlord Ray and his staff at the inn, on the edge of their thank you to Leonard for the use of his facility.

A S A service of thanksgiving and remembrance has been held in the Scottish Highlands to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the first Russian convoy.

Dervish sailed from the UK via Iceland in August 1941, bound for Arkhangelsk in Russia – and the first six merchantmen, plus a fleet oiler, got through safely at the end of August, landing a cargo that included rubber and army boots.

3,000 mariners lost their lives in the bitter cold northern seas as just over 100 ships were lost, more than 80 per cent of them merchantmen.

Many of these convoys assembled at Loch Ewe – hence the memorial, the memorial service, the gathering of hundreds of residents and supporters (including more than a dozen Arctic Convoy veterans) at Cove and the project to create a permanent museum for the convoys, which Churchill acknowledged to be amongst the most dangerous journeys of the war.

Among the VIP guests at the wreath laying ceremony were Prince Michael of Kent, Sergei Krutikov, the Consul General of the Russian Federation in Scotland and representatives of the United States, Canada, Norway and New Zealand.

Maritime and Coastguard Agency emergency towing vessel Anglian Sovereign played her fire hoses offshore and a Coastguard helicopter conducted a flypast at the end of the service, after which refreshments were served at the village hall in Poolewe by the St Morheads volunteers, while the VIPs were entertained by the Harrison family at Pool House.

The chairman of the Russian Arctic Convoy Club Scotland, S.M. Jack Dempster, was presented with an award by Mr Krutikov, who said it was “an honour to receive.”

The Russian Arctic Convoy Museum project team organised the event, with chairman and vice-chairman Francis Russell and Jackie Brookes saying they were delighted with the event, and thanking the community for their valuable support on behalf of the veterans.

More details on the museum project in future editions of Navy News – see www.russianarcticconvoymuseum.co.uk.

Similar ceremonies were held around the UK and abroad to mark the anniversary, including Portsmouth and Arkhangelsk.

Ceremony marks Dervish anniversary

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Up for the antipodes?

SAILORS are being encouraged to sign up for a four-month exchange with the Royal Australian and New Zealand Navies in 2012. Each year a few dozen British sailors head to Australia and New Zealand for sun, sea and surf, and this time round Assals and Kiwis will be the opposite direction for sea and ships.

The aim of the Long Look exchange is to broaden the experiences and professional knowledge of sailors travelling in both directions - which makes it easier for the Royal Navy, Royal Australian Navy and Royal New Zealand Navy to work together and mean personnel will take back fresh ideas about the way their day jobs can be carried out.

The programme runs from January 2 to March 16, 2012, and works on a straight swap basis, with trades that might be for example, trades places with his counterpart from Australia or New Zealand. Typically around two dozen personnel take part.

During their time in the Long Look, LET(ME) Michael Monnington, of HMS Argyll in the engine room of HMS Manoera during Long Look, LPT Dean Goulding from RNAS Culdrose found himself purging recruits, through their paces at HMS Cerberus, the RAN's main training establishment near Melbourne. There, trainees get their first taste of life as sailors (on an 11-month course, our work longer than the equivalent training at HMAS Raleigh for Royal Navy Marine Engineer officers). Early morning physical training begins at 4.45am(!) and Dean found himself in charge of 300 recruits - all on his own.

Four hundred and fifty miles to the northeast, marine engineer LET(Tg)'g' Wilson spent four months in Sydney keeping frigate HMAS Newcastle running as she patrolled the east coast, visiting Brisbane, Mackay, Cairns and herself home city.

On a more poignant note, Long Look sailors looked at the importance of ownership and gathered attitudes towards Service accommodation. Fresh criteria for accommodation will be suggested and suggestions collected.

We received interesting comments via e-mail and on the message board, including the data feedback to the MOD more meaningful.

Many different points were raised with some common themes emerging. The results of the survey have been presented to the MOD, Future Accommodation Project Team, key personnel within Naval Command and Government. The team's report is due to be published in April 2012.

Changes to CEA Governance

Since September 2008, the Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) has, in addition to its roles in providing impartial information, advice and support to Service families about anything to do with their children's education, worked with assignment authorities and Commanding Officers in answering queries of potential applicants to claim the Continuity of Education Allowance – Board (CEA), and of existing claimants in respect of their continuing eligibility to claim the allowance.

CEAS has undertaken much of the administrative work associated with this, the result being its overall performance has suffered and its impartiality in the eyes of the Service community has been compromised.

In the light of these concerns and MOD's continuing determination to ensure that CEA eligibility rules are applications their full potential to improve the lives of Service families are highlighted and, of lives facing the difficulties of basis decisions on information yet to be announced. Watch this space for updates.

Your experiences form the basis of our discussions. To get in touch with the NFF tel: 02392 654374, email admin@nff.org.uk or write to: Castaway House, 311 Twyford Avenue, Portsmouth PO2 9PS.

We look forward to hearing from you.
WALES to proceed with a credible plan and contact feedback.

**Drafty's corner** sponsored by NPT(X) Engineering.

WELCOME to ‘Drafty’s Corner’ sponsored by NPT(X) Engineering. Please purchase a copy of the Royal Navy Management. Drafty invites you to contact him for management issues.

**Based in West Battery, Whitehall, 17 Long Look 2012**, the column is aimed at all Royal Navy personnel and provides a valuable forum for discussion of management issues within the Service.

**The column is named after Drafty’s Corner, one of the most popular pubs in the Royal Navy’s traditional drinking haunt.**

**The corner has been chosen as a metaphor for the Royal Navy’s policy of open source management.**

**The policy is based on the belief that a more collaborative approach to management will lead to better outcomes for the Service.**

**Drafty’s Corner aims to encourage open communication and debate on issues that affect the Royal Navy.**

**The column is written for all Royal Navy personnel and is open to feedback from any corner of the Service.**

**By contacting Drafty, you can share your thoughts and ideas with your peers and contribute to the ongoing debate on how the Royal Navy can improve its management practices.**

**Whether you are a Service provider, a Service consumer, or simply interested in the future of the Royal Navy, Drafty’s Corner is your opportunity to be heard.**

**Contact Drafty through the Royal Navy Management or via email at DraftysCorner@RN.gov.uk.**

**Check out the latest issue of Drafty’s Corner in the December 2011 edition of the Royal Navy Management.**

**Here’s Drafty’s Corner in a nutshell:**

**‘Drafty’s Corner’ is a column in the Royal Navy Management newspaper that invites readers to share their thoughts and ideas on management issues within the Royal Navy.**

**The column is written by Drafty, a Royal Navy personnel, and is open to feedback from anyone in the Service.**

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Prize honours Gerwyn Williams

**Trophy lives**

The taking in early August of Moldavia and Wallachia by Russian forces resulted in the Austrians withdrawing from the Balkans.

The British and French, who had decided to lay siege to and capture Sebastopol; their troops landed on the Crimean peninsula in September, defeated the Russians at Alma that month and then advanced on the city.

This strongly fortified Black Sea port, on the south west coast of Russia, was the main base of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet; it had good anchorages and dock facilities and was well protected by batteries in the Konstantin, St Nicholas and Alexander forts.

The British established a base at Balaklava, the French did likewise at Kamiesch and the Allied fleet blocked the harbour entrance.

On October 9, a British expedition commenced of Sebastopol from the land; the Russians made two attempts to raise the siege but were beaten at Balaklava on October 25 and at Inkerman on November 5.

Meanwhile, on October 17, Dundas had bombarded Sebastopol from the sea – his force consisting of 115 ships, the Turkish, 11 French and 26 Russian.

One of the British ships involved was the wooden paddle- frigate HMS Terrible which had been the Royal Navy’s first ship with four gunports.

She is depicted in action off Sebastopol in Trophy No. 258, which was a significant factor in the final, decisive, victory over the Russians.

**Rear Admiral David Steel, Chief Naval Logistics Officer, presents the Gerwyn Williams Memorial Trophy to CPO Colin Hanson**

A NEW award presented in the memory of a Royal Navy sailor who died while serving was among the prizes presented at the annual awards ceremony.

The Gerwyn Williams Memorial Trophy was donated to the school by the widows of the late Lt Cdr Gerwyn Williams, who died of a voluntary heart condition in September 2009.

Lt Cdr Williams was born in 1977 and joined the Royal Navy as an Assistant Writer in 1994.

Subsequently, he served with the ranks, transferring to the Officer Cadets in 2006.

His first ship was HMS Ark Royal, and it was while serving on the carrier that he met his wife, Rachel.

During his long career Lt Cdr Williams served all over the UK and abroad, including a spell at the British Embassy in Moscow and in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, as well as service in the Baltic.

The trophy is a piece of silver from Ark Royal.

Mrs Williams said: “HMS Ark Royal was very special to him as his home port.

“I wanted something to remember him by and would like to thank all those who raised money to enable us to sponsor the award, and in particular the people at the MOD Saudi Armed Forces Project, RAE, our friends in Saudi and all my husband’s Naval friends.

“I was keen for the prize to go to someone who’d come through the ranks and achieved what my husband did.”

Mr Williams and his daughter Louise were invited to the ceremony to present the prize to the first recipient, Lt Glen Miller, aged 24, who undertook the Initial Logistics Officers Course, successfully passing the five-day final assessment to a very high standard.

“Taking advantage of his previous experience in the Navy to support his personal pursuit of other members of his course at the ceremony were a very good team player who was a significant contributor to the overall success of the group, being the first point of contact for all the trainees and a very hard worker.

He regularly conducts bespoke accounting training sessions for ships’ and RNU’s staff and continues to be a valuable asset to his future unit.”

Lt Miller joined in 1993 as a Probationer. He was promoted to the Officer Cadets in 1995 and was currently serving in the Type 23 frigate HMS Kent, where he is putting his training into practice as the Deputy Head of the Logistics Department and as the Command Legal Adviser.

Lt Miller said: “I was not nominated for this award until about three months ago and something I have to admit is extremely humbling.

“Many of the winners were not even nominated for this award and were surprised by the nomination.

“These men and women are the future of the Royal Navy and I congratulate them on their dedication and professionalism.”

**Write here for chance to win**

**THE TIME OF YOUR LIVES**

We flick back through the pages of Navy News to see which stories were drawing attention in past decades...

**October 2011**

**USS Winston S Churchill visiting the UK in 2001**

A NAVAL Command stretching back more than 150 years was to end at sunset on October 31, when the flag of Commander Far East Fleet was due to be lowered in Singapore.

From the following day, Rear Admiral D C Wells, of the Royal Australian Navy, would assume command of the British, Australian and New Zealand ships, land and air forces under the Five Power arrangement for the defence of the republic and its territories.

By the time the flag was lowered, most of the buildings and land of the naval base had already been transferred to the Singapore Government, except for most of HMS Tern and a small area of the stores basin complex.

**October 1991**

**A RESOUNDING moment of naval history was made when HMS London, on deployment to the West Indies, fired the Royal Navy’s last salvo.**

The destroyer was the last operational warship to be fitted with two turrets, and fired all of her 4.5 inch guns simultaneously.

HMS London had made her last deployment in September, and was due to be paid off and sold before Christmas.

She broadside ended a long naval tradition, as it was no more than four centuries before that broadsides had become the accepted form of fighting.

**October 2001**

ONE of America’s most powerful ships, the USS Winston S Churchill, was launched at the Chantiers de l’Atlantique in France at the International Festival of the Sea just five months after she was laid down.

The destroyer, which was built by the historic motor torpedo boat MTB 102, which had carried Churchill and Eisenhower to sign the armistice in 1944.

More than 36,000 visitors queued for hours to visit the ship as it was built, and more than 10,000 visited the docks for the annual competitions for short stories, travel articles and poems.

The competitions, which closed on February 28, 2012, are open to all society members.

Those eligible to join include serving or retired members of the Armed Forces, Civil Service, NHS, Local Government, police service or any public service.

For details of membership send an SAE to Mrs Joan Lewis, 17 The Green, Croxley Green, Herts WD3 1NP or email joanlewis@nspc.co.uk or visit the website www.nspc.co.uk
Sports Lottery

FEBRUARY 2012
The Pentagon Association: 29th Annual Reunion at the New President Hotel, Blackpool, FY 22. Please contact Ray 'Lay' Sheldon, 15 Via delle Rose, 08452 772927, or e-mail: duncan-jackson@hotmail.co.uk for further details.

APRIL 2012
HMS Newfoundland Veterans weekend: to be held from April 13 to 16 at the Barcaldine Hotel, Torquay. Details available through the website at newfoundlandvets.org.uk.

MAY 2012
HMS Falls Flagged Group: 54th Anniversary Reunion for those who trained in HMS Pegasus in 1961-62 will take place at the McDonald’s Restaurant, Balloch, Scotland on May 26.

JUNE 2012
G For Victory Weekend: to be held at the Andalucian Hotel, La Coruña, on June 14-15. Contact Andrew Smart, e-mail: a.s.merchantucer@gmail.com.

July 2012
Fifty Vachs Rowe joins Boys Association. MembersLive! E-mail: info@memorialslive.org or tel: 01743 308483.

September 2012
Ronald Spriggs. A/L S Diver 3-3. Served in the RN from 1940-49, including D-Day and on numerous operations in the Far East. He was killed in a training accident in 1949.

October 2012
A 50th Anniversary of the family of JSWAC and on his rapid promotion he joined D-Day. As a 17-year-old he piloted a Fairey Swordfish, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for a display of extraordinary courage and skill in the face of enemy fire.

November 2012
A 50th Anniversary of the Duke of Edinburgh. He was a pilot in the 1920s and 1930s, and later became an air commodore. He was appointed as a commander in the Royal Air Force and served in World War II.

December 2012
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January 2013
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Police to swear oath of allegiance

A LITTLE piece of history has been made by RN police – swearing allegiance to the Queen.

Thanks to royal prerogative, sailors – unlike the RAF, Army and even Royal Marines – are not required to pledge loyalty to the monarch.

But RN police officers are, thanks to changes under the Armed Forces Act of 2006.

So before August 1 last year, every one of the 300 or so men and women in the RN Police did what all members of civilian constabularies also do, and swore to uphold the law, deter and detect crime or criminal conduct by personnel subjected to military law.

The oath is the latest change to affect the force under the Act, which also allowed for the historic title: Regular Branch, being used by RN police.

The legislation also means that RN police officers are outside the military chain of command whilst conducting investigations, come under Service Provost Marshals who are accountable only to the Defence Council, and must undergo inspections by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary.

The wording of the oath is “I do solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm that as a member of the Royal Navy Police I will well and truly serve Majesty the Queen, to maintain the faith, favour, integrity, diligence and impartiality, upholding fundamental human rights and freedoms wherever these are enjoyed by all people; and that I will, to the best of my power and ability, investigate and report independently and impartially all service offences against people and property; and that while I continue to be a member of the Royal Navy Police I will, to the best of my ability and knowledge, discharge all the duties of that engagement faithfully according to law.”

An Anglo-German

A GERMAN naval officer with strong links to the UK has high hopes of a rising career path after passing a year-long course at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham.

Cdr Chris Clauing was one of 256 students who graduated from the Advanced Command and Staff Course.

Chris was educated at King’s School, Bromley, and Royal Naval College Sandhurst. His father has son Max was born in the UK and has served as a PO3 in German warships, including the former FGS Niedersachsen, and his next post will see him join the Royal Navy as a personnel officer at the RN Maritime HQ at Northwood.

Step into Christmas

FORGET the 12 days of Christmas – it will be the 12 days of Maritime HQ at Northwood.

The tour is hosting the 12th Victorian Festival of Christmas from Friday November 25 until Saturday November 27, offering the chance to step back in time for a Christmas gift market, and to receive a ten per cent discount on tickets booked before October 31.

Visitors will step into AFTER touring the world and wowing crowds around the country, one of the Royal Navy’s veteran helicopters is back home.

On a blustery summer day the Lynx, once of 702 Naval Air Squadron based at Yeovilton, was formally welcomed back to its original home at the former RN Air Station Portland – HMS Osprey, which closed in 1999.

The Westland Lynx (XZ250) completed its service life after 32 years and eight days, during which time it accumulated 7,667 flying hours with 702, 915 and 929 Squadrions and nine ship’s flights operating around the world. The aircraft completed its long life as one of the Black Cats Lynx Display Team, and has taken up its new home as the ‘gate guards’ at the Dean & Reddyhoff Portland Marina, where it is on loan from Yeovilton.

Dean & Reddyhoff hosted the ceremony, which was attended by Lord Lieutenant of Dorset Maj Valentine Lune-Fox-Pinfords, Naval Regional Commander Cdre Jamie Miller, representatives from AgustaWestland, former Commanding Officers of Osprey and serving members of the Lynx Helicopter Force from Yeovilton and many local representatives from Portland and Weymouth.

Guests included the current Black Cats display pilots, Lt Chris Chambers and David Fleming. The Portland Marina already has two strong links with Royal Navy personnel. A Mk8 torpedo is on display, highlighting the fact that Whitehead’s Torpedo Factory opened 120 years ago and where torpedoes from World Wars 1 and 2 were developed and tested.

The last test firing took place in 1946.

It also is the site of a Portland stone memorial, unveiled in 2010, to the 29 men from HMS Illustrious who died on October 17, 1944 when they ‘lucky boat’ capsized in Portland Harbour.

The ceremony was opened by Cdre Jamie Miller, and Lynx Force Commander Cdr Alain Ryan spoke of the history on naval aviation at Portland which stretched back to World War 1.

He said: “This particular aircraft spent much of its life at Portland and embarked in many ships around the world.”

The Lynx was formally unveiled from beneath its battle casings by Cdre Paul Chivers, the commanding Officer of RNZN Yeovilton, and Lt Col Russ Clark, the Observer who flew this aircraft.

Portland Marina’s new gate guardian will remain in place throughout the Olympics in 2012, calling events for which it will be staged locally.

Lynx guards gate to former RN air base

WHEN training at HMS Raleigh are put through their pte-in-training examinations, instructors can be sure they are dealing with expert observants.

Because parade instructors from the Torpoint establishment lifted the best newcomers prize at this year’s British Army prize day competition, held at the Royal Military College Sandhurst.

POs Alan ‘Jonah’ Jones, Lee ‘Fred’ Perry and Chanell ‘Opgie’ Cox were the only RN team taking part in the competition.

They faced stiff competition – apart from the cream of the Army, which apparently spends a good cake.”

“Between lessons and other training, we were put through our paces by drill instructors who are dealing with experts. They trained for eight weeks before the competition, held at the Royal Military College Sandhurst, which was given to Keith Johnson, who was the one that won the overall newcomers prize and it really was a hard one to call.”

PO Jones said the Senior Service got a good reception and were quickly put at their ease. “It was fantastic to win the best newcomers prize and it really was the cherry on the top of a very good cake.”

They trained for eight weeks between lessons and other commitments, coached by WO1 Scott Stephenson, currently with Flag Officer Sea Training.

The Raleigh team was brimming with experience – between them POs Jones and Perry have taught some 2,000 sailors to march and had been becoming parade instructors in 1996, while PO Cox, who qualified in 1999, has passed on knowledge to 800 sailors.

The team routinely carry pace sticks when teaching RN recruits to march during basic training, the pace stick ensures that each sailor takes a uniform step and maintains the regimented line.

At Sandhurst teams carried out a slow march with pace sticks open by their sides and then a quick march.

Navy pacesetters

THE Royal British Legion has launched a pocket-sized baking book for children in particular.

‘Flossie’s Turvy Christmas’ (published above) features recipes from children’s ‘baking star’ Flossie Crums, and is designed to help families mark the 90th anniversary Poppy Appeal while also participating in the act of remembrance.

Helen Hill, of the RBL’s Learning Team, said: “As part of our education and outreach remit for Remembrance, the Legion reaches out to over two million children across the country each year.

“We see our landmark 90th birthday and Poppy Appeal as a great way of having a go to gently introduce families with children of various ages to the importance of Remembrance where children engage in a positive way.

“Funds from the sale of the book, which includes recipes from families, both now and in the future.”

The book is the result of a competition, held at ‘Tasty Peas’, ‘Not Too Tricksy’ and ‘Worth the Effort’ canteens, which included has high Poppy Cupcakes, an 11 o’clock ‘Renaissance’ at the prizewinners, ‘Pirate’s Sponge Cake and a Welcome Home Chocolate and Vanilla Cupcake Tower.

The book, RRP £2.50, is available from www.rblshop.org.uk and www.flossiescrums.co.uk, with all profits being supporting the Armed Forces and their families.

And for those keen to follow the advertising campaign, Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel are already appearing in three books, including the recently-published ‘Flossie Crums, and the Royal Spotty Dotty Cake’.

Trincomalee recognition

FOUR men who worked on the restoration of historic wooden frigate HMS Trincomalee have been recognised for their efforts with a unique local award.

Members of the International Society for Nautical Research visited the ship in Hartlepool to award certificates, trust, and to Les Gilfoyle, Works Superintendent for the project.

They were presented to Capt David Smith RN, President of Hills Trincomalee Trust, and to Les Gilfoyle, Works Superintendent for the project.

He went on to become ship Maintenance Supervisor until retirement in 1999.

A Certificate of Commendation was also presented to Cdre Jamie Miller, who was Senior Technical Officer/Chief Damage Control Officer during restoration work between 1990 and 2001.

A Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Jackie Stevenson on behalf of a group of volunteers, Bill Stevenson, who was project Research Officer from 1987 until his death in 1999.

It is the first time the Victory Medal has been awarded to anyone other than those working on Nelson’s D-Day, and the first time that Certificates of Commendation have been awarded.
**NAVY NEWS, OCTOBER 2011**

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**SEACADETS**

**Diamond days for division**

NORTHAMPTON and Wellingborough unit sent eight cadets to the National Combined Regatta at London which, they believe, demonstrates the quality of the training delivered by instructors on the River Nene.

And it was not just cadets who benefited from the instruction – through the RYA OnBoard sessions in the early summer some 30 children from these local primary schools learned to sail with the unit.

More recently ten Rushden and Northampton Sea and Royal Marines Cadets spent a week on board HMS Bristol in Portsmouth Harbour as part of the Eastern Area summer camp.

Apart from sailing, power boating, pulling and training in seamanship, cook stewarding, marine engineering and first aid, there was a chance to visit ships – including one of Navy's newest destroyers, HMS Diamond, which shares its name with the Rushden division's namesake.

Members of the division also supported the Rushden & Wellingborough Freemasons at various civic events, including the Party in the Park and the Wellingborough Carnival.

Their Northampton colleagues marked the school’s Centenary by assisting the Rotary Club Dragon Boat Festival – in part by providing an enthusiastic crew.

Breaking the triangle

MEMBERS of Chippenham unit visited the fire station at MOD Cheadle to learn top tips – and have a bit of fun.

Under the careful tutelage of veteran firefighter Colin Gordon, the cadets tried out different fire extinguishers on a range of blazes, from chip pans to computers and TVs.

Some dressed in protective clothing (though none could dress as quickly as the professionals, who achieve it in just ten seconds) while others used powerful jets of water to knock over cones.

Chippenham First Lieutenant Robbie Allen said: “It’s an important part of training for cadets to be aware of hazards that can cause fires and what to do if they find one.

“Even with the fire extinguisher drill, heat and fuel and how removing any one of those can extinguish the fire, the MOD Fire Service has been wonderful in showing how it works in practice.”

Beccles cadre starts in style

BECCLES Royal Marines Cadets started their six-month probationary period in style when they enrolled five new recruits and supporters were present to welcome them to their units to take on new responsibilities, whether that was to their units to take on new responsibilities, whether that was to strengthen team-working skills or assuming the role of unit cox’n. The models, of HM ships bedfordian and London, the Admiral’s daughter, serves as an gunnery officer aboard the Fletcher-class destroyer.

And while many units counted it called a day after the official ceremonies were over, local unit members kept entertaining until the bitter end.

These responsible for colours in the trying conditions would have been careful for a comprehensive training day during the summer season got underway, with the following: Training Director, Cdr Brian Mitchell again inviting cadets, the Navy’s Band’s Ceremonial Chief Instructor, to make sure the young cadets were on top of their game.

Model cadets win model warships

TWO cadets from West Kent who excelled at training have been presented with model ships by the Chairman of the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust.

Having successfully passed all the elements of the course and been awarded their Leadership badges, cadets went back to their units to take on new responsibilities, whether that was to become junior instructors for junior cadets, assisting their unit officers or assuming the role of unit cox’n.

And they made a few friends along the way as well.

Top prize

THI Cadet of the Year at a Hampshire unit will have the chance to sail training ship Royalist thanks to a sponsorship deal with the HMS Bulwark, Alton & Civilian Association.

Members of the Rotherham branch of the association met the top cadet, Kelsi Bilups.

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LOUGHBOROUGH was one of the first units to be invited to the new Sea Cadet unit and become the first unit to affiliate with a British Legion branch.

Woodhouse and Quorn was the first link back in 2001, now Loughborough has signed an accord with its namesake Legion branch.

Legion members Nick Wells and David and Diane Hobday presented the CO of the unit, Lt Cdr CCC Kay Adley RNR, with an affiliation certificate, praising the cadets for the support they have given to the Legion over the years.

Lt Adley said the affilliations mean a lot to the unit, ensuring that the young of today never forget those who gave their lives to protect us.

The cadets will be helping both Legion branches in the current weeks by selling raffle tickets for their annual Poppy Appeal.

The unit also welcomed a medal-winner back from the recent Combined Regatta – the first in many years, though the cadets felt the need to apologise.

OC Kieran Martin won a silver medal from the karate print event, a sport he only took up last year, but was overjoyed to see the support for Lt Adley was to say sorry for not winning gold.

Lt Adley said: “The whole unit is very proud of what OC Martin has achieved – he was the only one from the unit to be invited to the Nationals and has shown true commitment to the values of hard work to get there.”
New Amethyst is dedicated to Jack

THE Royal Navy Cadet detachment at Hastings has just been put through its paces – and found to be well up to standard. They completed their annual assessment with a ‘Very Good – Excellent’ award.

And that put them third out of the 19 detachments which were put under the microscope. “These results are very hard to come by out of five grades,” said the detachment’s instructor, PO (SCC) Accrington belle.

AN old Admiralty Sailing Craft, lovingly restored by cadets under the guidance of RN veterans, has now been dedicated to the memory of a sailor who was part of the Yangtze Incident.

For six months the youngsters from Teign Valley unit in Devon used traditional boat-building techniques to repair and restore the ACC. They were instructed and helped by members of the Newton Abbott branch of the Royal Naval Association, led by WO Ian Hannington, senior instructor at RN Submarine School at HMS Safari. The Regatta title heads south

Boat is named in honour of Jennie

A NEW boat for Hove and Adur unit has been dedicated in honour of the woman who donated it.

In a ceremony at the unit’s historic boating station Shoreham Harbour, the boat was named after Jennie H after Jennie Hannington from Heathfield, East Sussex, who died in May this year after a long fight against cancer.

The ceremony was conducted by unit chairman Rev Taliker MacLeod in the presence of members of the Hove and Adur unit, family, cadets, staff and parents. The boat was named in traditional fashion with a bottle of champagne by Richard Hannington, Jennie’s uncle, and Linda Hannington, her sister-in-law.

On completion of the formalities, cadets took the boat out in Shoreham Harbour. Aged 16, Jennie was a keen off-shore sailor and strong supporter of youth activities.

She was the great-grand-daughter of the Rev. Hannington, the first Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa who was martyred in Uganda in 1885. The youngest son, Captain Richard Hannington, chairman of the Hove unit, said: “The boat is a ‘Triesty 500’, the newly-introduced training boat for Sea Cadets as a modern replacement for the old Admiralty cutter.

We are extremely proud to have this boat donated to us, and in recognition of Jennie’s generosity, the boat has been named the Jennie H.

We hope the Jennie H will provide essential afloat training for our cadets for years to come. Another local connection with the sea is that Jennie’s father, Richard Hannington, had been commissioned as an RNVR officer and with the RMS Olympic and in 1912.

He went on command to HMS Titanic. The Touch 500, officially launched just this year, were in Jersey training for the 19th detachment of the Royal Marine Cadet Corps. Tony unveiled the plaque in the Christening will be inscribed

AN Old Adm. Sailing Craft, lovingly restored by cadets under the guidance of RN veterans, has now been dedicated to the memory of a sailor who was part of the Yangtze Incident.

For six months the youngsters from Teign Valley unit in Devon used traditional boat-building techniques to repair and restore the ACC. They were instructed and helped by members of the Newton Abbott branch of the Royal Naval Association, led by WO Ian Hannington, senior instructor at RN Submarine School at HMS Safari.

The boat was formally provided, a brass plate was created which dedicated the boat as a ‘living and working memorial’ to Jack French, who died in May at the age of 49. Jack, born and bred a Teignmouth man, was a telegraphist on board HMS Amethyst when the ship was trapped on upper reaches of the Yangtze River by Communist Chinese forces in the summer of 1949. Jack was awarded the DSM for his bravery in saving the ship’s crew and had the constant flow of signals during the ship’s enforced stop-over and the standing dash for freedom for the Communist gunners.

More than 35 members of Jack’s family attended the ceremony at the unit on Sunday afternoon, including Jack’s 82-year-old sister, who had 22 years of service in the Royal Navy on board HMS Conqueror, the destroyer that went to the aid of Amethyst during the Yangtze Incident.

They also toured the Teignmouth Marine Federation’s railway carriage, which was bought by the workmen who made the 1-3-ton boat which sounds the horn.

The cathedral shipboard steps was interrupted half-way up by a briefing on the tower, clock and bells – each of the clock dials is 7m in diameter and the figures on the faces are 0.6ft tall.

The clock tower, which is almost 100ft tall, was built in the mid-19th century after the previous one was blown down. The bell first sounded across Westminster in May 1859, but cracked after just two months. A new bell was poured and the great bell rotated to present an undamaged section for striking the group had gathered their breath at the halfway point to ring out the bell – a ceremony that would have taken a year to complete.

CSgt Mike Conlen, chairman of JustTextGiving, said: “You do not have to be a sailor to help raise vital funds that will give young people the chance to try new skills through nautical challenge and adventure.”

BY texting AHOY10 to 70070, you can give £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 or £10 to help the charity raise money for its soldiers and nurses.

The unit has previously visited Westminster on a couple of occasions. In the few years past, enjoying tours of the palace of Westminster where they experienced the pomp and pageantry of the British parliament.

That included a look at the House of Lords and House of Commons, where they watched the day’s business from the balcony – and later that day saw the debates discussed on news programmes.

They also toured the Tower of London, the Royal Palace of Westminster, and were allowed a close look at the front door of 10 Downing Street.

Their latest foray to London was to climb the clock tower and to see Big Ben itself – although most people use the name to refer to the bell itself. The clock, almost 100m tall, was built in the mid-19th century after the previous one was blown down. The bell first sounded across Westminster in May 1859, but cracked after just two months.

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ONE of the highlights of a Sea Cadet’s career is the possibility of visiting a warship or an auxiliary. Often it will be a P2000 patrol boat, perhaps a fishery protection vessel or maybe even a frigate. The group will pitch up at the jetty, file on board, enjoy a tour and a chat with some of the sailors and then file off again, all completed in a day.

However, nine youngsters from Rye unit spent two days on board the RFA ship Mounts Bay whilst the LSA(D) – landing ship dock (auxiliary) – was attending the Bournemouth Air Show. Mounts Bay is 176 metres long, weighs 16,000 tonnes, and is a very capable ship, her floodable dock allowing her to undertake complex dock manoeuvres in support of Royal Navy and Royal Marines operations and exercises.

The nine cadets stayed at their Rock Channel headquarters overnight on the Friday before the visit, allowing them to leave early for the long journey to Bournemouth. They were then transferred by boat from the pier to the ship.

Whilst onboard, the cadets got a feel for what it is like to live and work on an operational vessel.

They were also able to gain qualifications, with some getting their Heart Start First Aid and Seamanship awards.

Ten-year-old Tom Best said: “It was wonderful, absolutely brilliant and Mounts Bay is massive – it’s the size of a small town.”

The OSC of Rye unit, CPO (SCC) Steve Smith, said: “We like to get our cadets out and about as much as possible, taking part in as many activities as we can.

“I’d just like to thank the CO of RFA Mounts Bay for the ship’s hospitality. The cadets have also asked to thank the members of staff who took them around the ship. They are all volunteers, and without them this like this wouldn’t be possible.”

Ceremonial duties in Ypres

MEMBERS of Turbridge Wells unit have paid their respects to the dead of the Great War during a visit to the Ypres and Tyne Cot cemetery in Belgium.

The two-day trip by coach to the battlefields of the Ypres Salient allowed the cadets and staff to take part in the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate, on the eastern edge of the town.

The gate is a memorial to the British and Commonwealth soldiers who died in World War I and who have no known grave.

Marking the start of a main road Allied soldiers took to the Front, the Menin Gate contains three buildings almost 335 ft above the sea.

The Last Post ceremony has been held every evening since July 1928, with the exception of the occupation of Belgium during World War II.

At 8pm four volunteers from the local fire brigade stepped into the roadway below the arch and played the Last Post (above). Following a minute’s silence, MC Corporal Woodhams, PO Dave Woodhams and Rosemary Hubbard laid wreaths, then unit buglers played the Reveille.

The following day the group moved on to Tyne Cot, where a service was conducted by unit chaplain Dave Ware-Jarratt.

A week under canvas

FOUR teenagers from Rye and District unit spent a week aboard the Royal Navy ship HMS Warrior in Portsmouth. It took a year of fund-raising to get the trip, for 30 cadets and ten staff, off the ground. Staying on board HMS Bristol at Whale Island, youngsters enjoyed a week of watersports, museum visits, a session in Action Stations (including an assault on the climbing wall) and even a trip to Thorpe Park theme park in Surrey.

The display at the air show was made possible by the generosity of Cadetron Borough Council, which allowed the unit to use display space it had obtained in the main arena.

Portrush unit was formed in 1942 in a room over the coal sheds at the harbour in Portrush. 1963 saw the completion of the present building in Dunlace Avenue, which was built by the cadets themselves and a team of volunteers.

The unit attracts youngsters from Coleraine, Limavady, Londonderry, Ballymoney and Moyle.

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THE Electrical Branch of the Royal Navy (EME) which began in the spring of 1942, based on early electrical specialisation with the Marine Engineering (ME) branch, has now been in existence for nearly a decade. The book also spreads the story of the Corps’ musicians since 1950, the year the Royal Marine Marching Band Service, Lt Col Nick Grace.

It is the result of a project (an excellent study of which I recommend) another Time, published by Times Books, which is volume 1 of this proud story of the Royal Marine and Royal Navy Band Service. The cover the book does contain some interesting issues rather than one clearly defined topic, as the hunt began for the archives of the German Kriegsmarine.

THE Electrical Branch of the Royal Navy, for the first time in its history, is being highlighted in a book. Written by John Hirschmann, the 200th anniversary of the Royal Navy’s Silent Service with mixed results). The correct organisation of systems the electron has come to be a dominant factor in warfare, and maintain these increasingly complex systems the results of the interaction of electronics and electromagnetism are a powerful force in modern warfare. Only when one gets to page 95 of the book they help to seal the fate of Germany’s leaders, no longer the former head of the Kriegsmarine, Erich Raeder, driving force behind the invasion of Norway. He was sentenced to life imprisonment at Nuremberg as a result. The unit’s bloodied came at Dieppe – and it was a story as riveting as any spy tale Fleming subsequently sent his fictional creation, the character of the officer worked with and their deeds would provide or offer history. The U-boats’ last hurrah, the author paints a vivid description of a mixture of falsification and hedonism in Fleming’s hands.

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MORE than 60 standards proudly fluttered in the sun in the heart of London as the Royal Naval Association exercised its right to parade and lay wreaths at the Cenotaph.

More than 360 shipmates paraded with 62 area and branch standards, along with the National Standards of the RANA, RNA, Wrens Association and the Irish Naval Association.

The Reviewing Officer was the First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, while the National President of the RNA, Vice Admiral John McAnally laid a wreath, as did Les Dwyer, the President of the Naval Association of Australia, and the President of the Irish Naval Association, Gerry Kennedy.

The service was led by the Chaplain of the Fleet, the Very Rev Scott Brown.

The RNA was joined by their comrades of the Royal British Legion Lutelli band.

The First Sea Lord addressed the parade on completion, then Vice Admiral McAnally called for three cheers for the Naval Service – and had two re-scrubs until it could be heard in Nos 10 and 11 Downing Street, 500 metres away.

Shipmates enjoyed a finger buffet and a libation in the Civil Service afterwards, and had the chance to meet Admiral Stanhope.

The Irish Naval Association contingent lead the singing but the singing competition was declared a draw.

More than 40 members had crossed the Irish Sea to take part in the event, and before travelling on to London they spent the evening with Birkenhead branch, complete with a buffet meal and another singing competition (results not recorded).

The visitors were grateful to their hosts for their welcome, and INAs National PRO Terry Cummins presented the branch with a framed embroidered INA crest.

In his address to the RNA contingent, Admiral Stanhope said that the day was all about “our predecessors, about those on operations, about you and about your families.”

“Today, on a day where beyond our presence at the Cenotaph the world remembers the events of 9/11, we here celebrate the quiet, consistent and heroically undertaken by our Servicemen and women, not only here today, at home and abroad, for the nation and for freedom. Which is why out there, right now, there are over 50 ships and submarines at sea, and nearly 6,000 sailors and Marines deployed on ops, from Afghanistan to the Atlantic, from conducting embargo ops and naval gunfire support providing maritime security in the Gulf and Mediterranean.

“Indeed, the Royal Navy’s contribution, over the last seven months in the Med – to protect the Libyan people, 80 per cent of whom live within ten miles of the coast – is telling.

“Be it, for example, evacuating civilians to safety in our frigates and destroyers, conducting long-range precision strikes from an SSN [attack submarine], undertaking mine-clearance ops by our MCMVs [mine countermeasures vessels], conducting embargo ops and naval gunfire support by our frigates and destroyers, not to mention supporting AH [attack helicopter] and maritime-surveillance missions from HMS Ocean.

“Take HMS Liverpool – well over 100 days on patrol, at action stations on numerous occasions, engaging with the enemy time and time again.

“Today we therefore not only recognise those in Service but it is also an opportunity to honour your accomplishments.

“Every one of you – whether serving personnel, veterans or cadets – should be proud, very proud, of what you stand for.

“Proud of all that you have achieved.

“Proud to be a part of the valuable work and family of the RNA and all those associations and organisations here represented.

“And I might add my thanks to, in particular, the Irish Naval Association for travelling to join us on this auspicious occasion.

“Today, it is appropriate to express our gratitude to our families and friends.

“For it is their immeasurable encouragement and support from which we all draw our strength and resolve.

“Shipmates, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Royal Navy, thank you all for your faithful work in support of your Associations, your continuing commitment to the Naval Service; and, most importantly, your support for our people currently serving this nation.”

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**A summer on the ice**

Continued from page 48

Jesters responded soon afterwards to level the scores but the RN did not flinch, scoring three rapid goals in succession to put the game out of reach of the Jesters.

**Chinese blisters**

Continued from page 48

There were great performances from Gracie Bryce (15th), Andy Jackson (15th), Richard Lomas (2nd), Matt Skelold (26th), Jeremy Guertzen (39th), Alistair King (44th) on their way to the second place, Ben Kadimopolous (6th), Tim Parry (17th), Shawn Gumbert (214th) and Odyl Rishir (43th). The first six members count for the team score and all were having a scorcher. It was a good day out for all concerned and certainly we had earned our tired legs.

More details on the sport at www.rnrmtri.co.uk.

**Faslane ‘Gers role revealed**

HISTORIANS tracing the roots of famous Glasgow Rangers visited Faslane to highlight the boat’s often overlooked role in the football club’s birth.

Three members of the Founders Trail – an organisation which tells the story of the Glasgow gents – were keen to show Faslane and the crew of the Faslane Flotilla.

New Faslane was a naval base here, however, the house was owned by the wealthy Hounslow family, who employed a master gardener, Mr McNiel, and his growing family.

The house was the Meclen clan, members of which arrived in the house in 1893, and his older brother Peter, grew up to play in the club’s first game in 1872.

Peter would subsequently become its secretary and Moses would become its first Scottish international player.

The Rangers historians were given a quick tour of Belmore House by WO Craig Campbell of Faslane’s First Mine Countermeasures Squadron.

“As a life-long fan of Rangers I have been waiting years to see this part of the historic links to the football club. It was fantastic to speak with the guys and learn about the connections. I don’t think I’ll look at my workplace the same way again.”

He joked: “Parthian season has been playing out as Darryl McFadden of MCMC staff highlight the story and intriguing the story was, and has connected the event to the book ‘The Gallant Pioneers!’”

The Founders Trail runs a website tracing the history of the club and also provides a popular guided tour of the areas in Glasgow associated with the early days of the club called an Ibrox Stadium Tour. ‘Gers fans find out more on www.thegallantpioneers.co.uk.
A decade of wizardry – ten years of Merlin on the front line

Have winch, will travel – a spot of exercising with the Kuwaiti Coast Guard for St Albans

A summer on the ice

EVEN though we’ve just gone through the warmest months of the year, it’s been a busy period for the RN Ice hockey team,croft Alnwick of the RNTHS.

After another successful Combined Inter and Tri-Service Championships in June, the Senior Service set its sights on the Trojan Ice Hockey Association Recreation Tournament in Aldershot. It was hoped to improve on last year’s fourth-place finish despite having only seven players.

The Senior Service travelled to Aldershot with the Army Blades, taking part in the first time as a combined team.

Confident and sports two full categories, the reduced numbers of 2010, the Navy started the campaign against local team Don Valley.

With only three points between the teams and a 1-1 draw would be a sign of things to come and despite a 2-0 victory against a weak Norwich side, the Navy’s hopes of going offensively, losing their next two first-round games to Whitley Bay 2-1 (runners-up last year) and Blackburn 2-1.

As its three points against the Army’s seven, the run of equal points, the Navy were keen to avenge their loss.

2-1 draw would have to squawk into the Plate (for the winners of their last game against their head group) or to squeak into the Plate (for the runners-up in their group) and could not finish in the bottom four of the championships, arguably indicating that they had faced more difficult numbers than the other groups.

The only issue was traffic: a shaky performance and 1-1 draw would be a sign of things to come and despite a 2-0 victory against a weak Norwich side, the Navy started the campaign against local team Don Valley.

The key to this process is to get it done quickly but properly. There are always too many people just “checking” their kit for the umpteenth time and generally staring at a continual nervous atmosphere which is produced.

The promised good weather never really materialised and it threatened to rain for the majority of the race. The leg was held into very high winds which made it hard work on some sectors, although the course was a loop and therefore athletes would have a tailwind at some point.

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