



NAVY NEWS

MARCH 2012

HOME GUARD

BREAKING THE ICE

PROTECTOR DEBUTS IN ANTARCTICA

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CANAL DASH

DARING EAST OF SUEZ



picture: la(phot) simmo simpson, frpu east



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FLEET FOCUS

Protecting our nation's interests

SIC semper praedones.

Thus be it ever to pirates, for we begin our monthly round-up as the curtain comes down on the RN's winter surge against the Somali scourge. The four-month crackdown by a combined RN-RFA-Royal Marines-Fleet Air Arm force on **RFA Fort Victoria** has been the most successful concerted effort by the Navy yet in the ongoing struggle with the modern-day buccaneers (see pages 4-5).

Although Fort Vic's counter-piracy mission is over (for now), the waters east of Suez remain the focal point of the Fleet's efforts.

HMS Daring made her inaugural passage of Suez to reach her operational theatre (see page 18) – she probably passed **HMS Somerset** on the way through the Red Sea as the Devonport-frigate is homeward bound; she paid a short visit to Jeddah as one of her last acts in theatre (see page 40).

Thoughts of home are still some way off for **HMS Argyll**, who has continued her work in the Gulf (see page 40) both at sea (a major exercise) and ashore (restoring British Servicemen's graves).

And at the opposite end of the temperature gauge... in the Northern Hemisphere forces are mustering for NATO's regular winter test in Norway, Cold Response, which this year features HM Ships **Illustrious**, **Bulwark** and **Liverpool**, plus the **Commando Helicopter Force** and **42 Commando** (see right). While Lusty stocked up on ammo in Scotland, Bulwark acclimatised in the Baltic, paying an unscheduled visit to Kiel when the threat of ice thwarted her attempt to sail into Hamburg (see page 9).

And in the Southern Hemisphere... **HMS Protector** has made her debut in Antarctica, breaking ice for the first time and visiting numerous international research stations (see the centre pages).

A few thousand miles to the northeast, **HMS Montrose** paid a very rare visit to the remote birdlife paradise of Gough Island as she made her way across the South Atlantic (see page 31).

In home waters, **HMS Iron Duke** has successfully completed initial trials with **Wildcat**, the next-generation Lynx, laying the groundwork for helicopter operations well into the middle of the century (see page 8).

Also on the 'things to come' front, the successor to the air defence missile **Seawolf**, named **Sea Ceptor** (short for interceptor) has been unveiled (see page 8), while yet more sections of **HMS Queen Elizabeth** have slotted into place on the Forth as the future carrier increasingly takes shape (see page 10).

And talking of carriers... with just days left in her active life (she pays off this month) **HMS Liverpool** was activated as the Fleet Ready Escort to keep an eye on the task group of the Russian carrier Admiral Kuznetsov as it headed north through the Atlantic (see opposite).

After spending the past year at the 'University of Merlin' trainee aircrew from **824 NAS** headed to sea for 'finishing school' aboard RFA Argus off the Cornish coast (see pages 14-15).

Patrol craft **HMS Trumpeter** paid her respects to the heroes of the Channel Dash at 70th anniversary events off Ramsgate (see page 35) and is also our Ship of the Month (see page 12).

The Duchess of Cornwall honoured **naval medics** for their deeds in Afghanistan on a visit to HMS Excellent (see page 17); the medics will be putting their experiences in Helmand into practice this month during a major exercise aboard Argus (see right).

Also on the life-saving front, **HMS Gannet** remain the busiest rescuers in the land for the fifth year running (see page 6)

An overview of all the above operations, missions and training is offered by the new **Commander-in-Chief Fleet**, Admiral George Zambellas, who has vowed to eradicate much of the red tape dogging his men and women (see pages 18-19).

And finally... it's been far too long since we featured roving teddies in these pages. Well, this month we have two: Rocky, mascot of **HMS Triumph** (see page 33), and Prince Bishop of **HMS Bulwark** (see page 9).



Picture: LA(Phot) Pepe Hogan, FRPU North

Another slice of Arctic role

WITH her escorting tugs and the smoke from her four Rolls-Royce Olympus engines adding colour to a grey February day, HMS Illustrious makes her way up Loch Long.

Lusty spent a few days at Glenmellan – about five miles from the loch head and home to an ammunition jetty – loading stores and weapons she'll need for winter training.

She's one of three British warships now converging on the fjords for Exercise Cold Response, a test of more than 15,000 personnel – 2,000 of them Britons – from a dozen nations in the Arctic Circle.

It's the first time in two years Britain's taken part *en masse* in Cold Response which tests the abilities of allied nations to fight in a particularly hostile environment (even in March temperatures regularly dip below -30°C).

In addition to Illustrious, the Navy is sending its flagship, HMS Bulwark, escorting destroyer HMS Liverpool, the helicopters of Commando Helicopter Force – who deployed back in January to a Norwegian airbase at Bardufoss south of Tromsø to acclimatise – Culdrose-based Merlins and Royal Marines of Kilo Company, 42 Commando, from Bickleigh, near Plymouth.

As well as the green berets, the British ships are serving as the springboard for Dutch and US marines, and Norway's *Kystjegerkommandoen* – an elite amphibious unit similar to the Royal Marines, but fewer than 100 strong.

Cold Response reaches its climax between March 10 and 22 and will be played out in the fjords between Harstad and Tromsø – nearly 200 miles inside the Arctic Circle – beginning with small-scale exercises and landings, building up to a larger scale 'invasion' to forge a beach head and push inland.

From Britain's point of view, the exercise is aimed at

- testing Illustrious' ability to serve as the nation's on-call helicopter carrier now she's taken over from HMS Ocean
- testing Bulwark's ability to serve as the nation's on-call assault ship (and command/flagship) now she's taken over from her sister Albion
- testing the ability of the staff Commander UK Task Group, based in Plymouth, to choreograph land, sea and air forces in the most challenging environment imaginable
- renewing the skills of sailors, air and ground crew and Royal Marines to fight in Arctic conditions
- honing the long-standing relations between the Royal and Dutch marines.

Cold Response is the second run-out for the UK Response Task Group, the naval force formed under the 2010 Defence Review and which proved its worth last year during operations off Libya.

"This exercise offers an excellent opportunity to operate alongside our Dutch colleagues – and strengthen the capability of the combined UK-Dutch amphibious forces in challenging conditions," said Cdre Paddy McAlpine, Commander UK Task Group, who visited the Netherlands earlier this year to fine-tune plans for Cold Response.

Once the war games are over the British units will return home briefly before sailing to north-west Scotland to take part in Joint Warrior, the twice-yearly international exercise run from Faslane Naval Base.

Supreme test for medics

THE biggest test of naval medics at sea in two years will be played out in the Channel this month.

Around 150 personnel from the medical world will converge on Britain's dedicated casualty treatment ship, RFA Argus, for the three weeks of Exercise Medical Endeavour.

Many of the medics are freshly returned from Afghanistan and will use their experiences dealing with battle casualties in the field hospital at Camp Bastion in a similar facility aboard Argus.

The auxiliary features a state-of-the-art centre – officially it's not a hospital, but the Primary Casualty Receiving Facility – split over three decks, with an operating theatre, CT scanner, X-Ray facilities, an intensive care unit, high-dependency ward and two general wards. In all, it can cope with 100 patients.

The aim is to provide life-saving support and stabilise the wounded so that they can be flown back to the UK for long-term care – just like in Helmand.

The Primary Casualty Receiving Facility was last used for real during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but even in peacetime it has a permanent staff looking after it and is at five days' notice to be activated.

Its team look after some 2,500 different items in the store, while making sure that some 600 pieces of machinery work properly.

Medical Endeavour will see doctors, nurses, anaesthetists, medical technicians, RM musicians acting as casualty handlers, joining Argus to bring the centre to life – for some it will be their first taste of life at sea – while actors and sailors will play the part of casualties.

Staff will be expected to deal with the full range of injuries anticipated in a 21st Century conflict – in this instance conflict off the fictional country of Gwamalia in the Horn of Africa: wounds caused by gunfire, home-made bombs, burns and also troops psychologically traumatised by war.

Although no operations will be performed, for the sake of realism, patients will be left in the theatre for the same length of time as their operations would last.

Shadow in the spotlight



THE end is in sight for veteran destroyer HMS Liverpool – but she is proving her worth to the Fleet.

Following her successful deployment off Libya last year, you could be forgiven for thinking that the Type 42 had earned herself a downhill run to decommissioning. But the Portsmouth-based warship remains at the forefront of UK defence – as can be seen in these images taken by LA(Phot) Simmo Simpson as Liverpool escorted a Russian task group, headed by the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov, north from the South West Approaches.

Due to decommission at the end of this month, already this year Liverpool has conducted a period of maintenance in her base port, and an influential and high-profile visit to London.

On sailing from the capital, Liverpool was activated as Fleet Ready Escort.

Her duty was to intercept the Russian group, which had recently passed through the Strait of Gibraltar, and see them safely past UK waters into the North Sea.

Following a handover from the French warship FS Lieutenant de Vaisseau Le Hénaff, Liverpool established her position between the UK and the Russian flotilla, shadowing them as they steamed

north past Land's End and Ireland.

The task group of two warships and five support vessels was making its way home to the Northern and Baltic Fleets of the Russian Navy.

The Admiral Kuznetsov is a conventionally-powered 58,000-ton carrier which was commissioned in 1990.

She is capable of operating a mix of Sukhoi Su-25 Frogfoot close air support aircraft, Su-33 Flanker D fighters and Kamov Helix airborne early warning and anti-submarine helicopter variants.

Accompanying the carrier was another Admiral, the 8,900-ton Udaloy II-class destroyer Admiral Chabanenko, a workhorse of the Russian fleet and usually based at Severomorsk.

It is essential for the UK to maintain a military presence in her waters, especially as an island nation.

And Liverpool was well placed to carry out this duty, following her stint off the north coast of Africa as part of Operation Ellamy, the campaign to protect the people of Libya from forces loyal to Col Gaddafi.

On completion of her escort

duties, HMS Liverpool was due to conduct a series of training exercises in the UK and Norway.

These will include a place on the group taking part in the annual cold-weather exercises close to the arctic Circle off the coast of northern Norway – Exercise Cold Response.

She will also conduct an emotional final visit to her namesake city, close to the yard where she was launched in September 1980 – Cammell Laird, just across the Mersey in Birkenhead.

The Crazy Red Chicken, holder of the coveted Fleet Destroyer Effectiveness Flag, is due to decommission in Portsmouth Naval Base on Friday March 30.



● (Top) HMS Liverpool shadows Russian aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov

● (Right) Last month we featured birds taking a break on the decks of HMS Liverpool off Libya. This month's destroyer-related wildlife is a dolphin playing in front of the ship's bow

● Liverpool turns away from Admiral Chabanenko





pictures: la(phot) kyle heller

LAST month we brought you an almost minute-by-minute account from HMS Somerset on patrol in the Indian Ocean.

This month, a blow-by-blow account of Friday January 13 2012 aboard RFA Fort Victoria on counter-piracy patrol off Somalia.

The day began, writes *Lt Jenny Coley*, with a normal morning shift for the bridge watch-keepers and other duty personnel...



Flight engineers are preparing the Lynx with weapons necessary for boarding operations – a complete role-change from the previous day's surface surveillance role.

Stewards are readying breakfast for 207 people, while the chefs are busy baking for the day ahead

28-year-old weather observer AB Gemma Williams from Swansea is preparing the morning forecast. "Understanding the weather is key to the planning and execution of counter piracy operations such as this one," Gemma explains.

"All aspects of the operation rely in some form or another on receiving correct information about the weather, from deploying the helicopter, to firing weapons, to being able to launch the sea boats for the Royal Marines.

"On Friday January 13 the weather conditions were perfect."



Call the Hands coincides with the pipe: Hands to Boarding Stations.

Breakfast is interrupted by 'Weapons crews close up'.

Stewards leave the dishes and head to the upper deck to man the weapons systems as the ship approaches a location where a suspected pirate action group has been spotted.

The Clearway – recently the site of a whole-ship charity marathon run – now fills with personnel.

Royal Marines Commandos don bullet-proof vests, helmets, lifejackets and weapons, ready for boarding. During the previous days they've been practising fast roping, small arms weapon training, fitness and boat-handling skills.

Deck crews close up at cranes to lower the marines' boats into the water.

The bridge fills with the extra manpower teams needed for both the manoeuvring of the ship (look-outs and weapons crews), and operational conduct of the boarding operation.

All personnel put on bullet-proof vests and helmets. There is a notable presence of comms personnel, who are vital for maintaining links with both the Royal Marines boat crews and the helicopter crew.

In the operations room, the team has been preparing since mid-day the previous day when the first information of a possible pirate attack was received.

They've scrutinised intelligence reports and drawn up plans. As the senior ship in the task group, Fort Victoria tasked the nearest CTG 508 asset, USS Carney, to intercept the suspected pirated dhow.

By 0700 on Friday 13, the operations team have finalised the 'Concept of Operations', had

it approved by both the NATO commander based in the Turkish Ship Geresun and the UKMCC headquarters in Bahrain and agreed a timeline for the operation.

"We learned from the British-flagged merchant ship, the Happy Bird, that it had been under attack by pirates," counter-piracy operation commander Capt Gerry Northwood explains.

"I then assigned USS Carney, the closest unit, to investigate while closing the position in Fort Victoria.

"Carney was able to find and identify the dhow overnight, so that in the morning, we could close its position and board it using the Royal Marines boarding party."

At this stage the operations room team are requesting the rules of engagement, an ongoing process throughout the boarding operation, with continuous communications between CTG 508 and UKMCC to ensure everyone is fully aware of the progress of the operation and to maintain situational awareness.

They're also monitoring and coordinating with ITS Grecale, another CTG 508 asset, which was investigating another suspected pirate action group in the area (200 miles away – so right next door when put in the context of the Indian Ocean...)

Surg Cdr Richard Heames closes up on the bridge ready to advise the command on medical priorities and receive communication of casualties direct from the medics at the sharp end. Information is passed back to the hospital to prepare them to receive casualties as required.

Lt Cdr Richard Carnell (Emergency Department Nurse Practitioner) is embedded with his team on one of the Pacific boats with medical equipment and drugs to deal with any casualties on scene within minutes.

The remaining hospital staff prepare to receive casualties. Led by a consultant emergency physician, two trauma bays are set up with radiography and the laboratory on standby in case the casualties need X-rays or blood urgently.

The operating theatre is prepped with anaesthetists and surgeons immediately ready to undertake damage control surgery if required.

The first overt action: bridge watchkeepers close-in manoeuvring in a show of force against the suspected pirates on board the Yemeni dhow.

It has no effect. The pirates do not alter course, or slow speed or even seem to react at all to Fort Vic's presence.

Action Lynx, Action Lynx

Helicopter airborne, in the counter-piracy role, with M3M machine gun and RM sniper on board to provide graduated warnings to suspected Somali pirates in the Yemeni dhow.

With the Lynx launched, the officer of the watch positions the ship to create favourable conditions for sea boat launch.

The Lynx fires flares – to no effect, beyond a dramatic firework display.

The helicopter steps up its warnings, with shots across the bows of the dhow – which continues to try to escape. Further



● Fort Victoria's policewoman LReg Carol Morton-Harrowsmith gathers forensic evidence on the dhow while commandos guard the 14 suspects – with the supply ship in the distance providing cover

warning shots by the sniper on board the Lynx also fail to deter the pirates in any way.

At each stage the rules of engagement are checked up the command chain – everyone has to be very certain that the correct legal process has been followed.

After what seems like an interminable wait – with the ballsy dhow occupants showing no sign of deviating from their course, despite the presence of the two huge grey military ships and a helicopter circling overhead – one of the Somalis decides to get out of his sleeping bag on the dhow's bridge roof and get dressed in full view; another casually hangs up his laundry in the bows of the dhow...

It's not until the Royal Marines are unleashed and race over to the

dhow in their fast boats to board it that the dhow finally shows some sign of paying attention to our presence with a slight alteration of course to starboard. Within seconds of the marines scrambling aboard, the pirates raise their hands and surrender.

The commandos quickly secure the dhow and amongst the filth and cockroaches, numerous weapons including RPG launchers and machine guns are discovered.

Once the dhow is secure, it's the task of LReg Carol Morton-Harrowsmith to secure the crime scene and gather and mark evidence, supported by LA(Phot) Kyle Jeller. They will spend more than seven hours on board processing the evidence – fighting sea sickness as the immobile dhow is an unstable platform.

A battle won, but the

THE Royal Navy's winter crackdown on piracy was the most successful yet, but the world cannot relax its guard against the threat.

That's the message from the senior officer who led a four-month counter-piracy surge by UK naval forces in the Indian Ocean to strike at Somalia-based pirates.

Capt Gerry Northwood, who commanded the effort from supply ship RFA Fort Victoria and could call upon specially-trained Royal Marines Commandos and a Lynx from 815 Naval Air Squadron, said the concerted effort was the most successful counter-piracy operation by the UK by a large margin.

Operating under the wider banner of NATO's Operation Ocean Shield, one of several international task groups striving to hold the pirates in check and keep the sea lanes open, the force – which at times was joined by other Royal Navy units operating east of Suez, including HMS Somerset:

- disrupted the actions of seven pirate groups
- freed 43 sailors held hostage
- handed over 36 suspects to the Italian and Seychelles authorities for prosecution
- seized two dhows, two whalers and six skiffs.

Capt Northwood (pictured right) said the successes were down to "good planning, having the right people with the right kit on board,



and a little luck."

RFA Fort Victoria's successes, from the release of the crew of the Italian merchantman Montecristo last autumn, to the

recent handover of 14 suspects to officials in the Seychelles (see the main feature above) have served once again to highlight the menace posed by modern-day buccaneers in Somalia, and efforts to stop them.

Of the pirates themselves, Capt Northwood said: "Some were very well organised, moving from dhow to dhow as they continued their search for vessels to hijack."

In the case of the Montecristo, Fort Victoria arrived on the scene in the nick of time.

Although the ship's crew had retreated to a secure citadel aboard, the pirates were doing everything in their power to force the men out, trying to set fire to compartments and cabins and smoke the sailors out of their safe room.

The pirates, Capt Northwood

The Royal Maritime Club
(Formerly The Royal Sailors' Home Club)



-NOTICE-

The 148th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Maritime Club, Queen Street, Portsmouth, will be held in the Trafalgar Ballroom of the club on Tuesday 24th April 2012 at 1030. Commanding Officers are requested to encourage maximum attendance from their ships and establishments. ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

anatomy of a pirate take-down



"Initially I had to be firm with the suspected pirates" says 37-year-old Carol, "but once they settled in and accepted my position of authority I was able to show them a more approachable side to my role."

"The conditions I had to work in on the dhow were challenging, to say the least, but it has been a professionally rewarding experience for both myself and my team. This is what we trained for."

Almost everyone aboard the dhow suffer sea sickness due to the vessel's movement – but they continue to carry out their duties.

Back on board Fort Vic, the whole ship continues normal routines: lifeboat drills, ship's husbandry, fire-fighting practice – with extra duties thrown in.

Most of the ten chefs aboard (one RN, the rest RFA) have been up since 6.30am. All but two of them form the Standing Sea Emergency Party or act as stretcher bearers. This Friday, the duty night cooks have been called in to assist with extra food/bag meal/pirate food requirements.

"We are so used to coping when something happens, we have a duty plan if excess people are required so that just swings into action and they get on with it," explains Chief Chef Neil Turner. "Keeping everyone well fed is really important for the morale on board."

Once the boarding is complete, the chefs provide bacon rolls for everyone who's missed breakfast, plus bag meals for the personnel working on the pirated dhow as well as coolers of rice for the pirates, together with plenty of water.

It's now time for everyone to

take stock of the day's events.

"For my team in the ops room, Friday 13 was the culmination of three days of intensive operations which saw the disruption of the pirated MV Liquid Velvet, an investigation of a suspected drug smuggler and finally the successful take down of this pirate action group," says a delighted Lt Cdr Pete Brotton, staff operations officer.

On the bridge, Fort Victoria's Commanding Officer Capt Shaun Jones RFA, is beaming.

"I am extremely proud of the way in which my crew and helicopter in tandem with embarked Royal Marines were able to successfully capture these Somali pirates.

"To manoeuvre such a large ship at speed in close vicinity of a nimble dhow takes extreme concentration and skill; my team were never found wanting. The Somalis certainly found Friday 13 unlucky for them!"

The 24 hours on Fort Vic have been periods of intense activity interspersed with periods of high expectation/anticipation/preparation. Last-minute changes. Adrenalin surges, and ultimately satisfaction at the prospect of a legal outcome and a job well done.



The work of the Royal Marines boarding team is far from over.

The commandos man the dhow overnight, guarding the 14 occupants.

The pirates are singing Phil Collins songs; the marines spend the night singing with them – as the dhow sickeningly rolls through 40 degrees, it helps pass the time in very arduous surroundings.

On Fort Vic, the boat deck crews support the Royals at shift change times, launching and recovering the boats as required.

SATURDAY JANUARY 14



The processing on to Fort Vic begins. It's a slick constabulary operation closely supervised by the leading regulator.

The pirates are embarked, searched, processed, given medical attention, and moved to the holding area, where they shower, change into numbered white overalls, and remain until transferred ashore for prosecution.

Ft Vic's 'souls aboard' tally increases from 207 to 221 with the extra 14 'guests'.

RFA bridge watchkeepers are transferred to the dhow to sail her alongside Fort Vic. It has been a struggle to sail her, as they've had to contend with leaking bilges and smoking engine.

Mind you, the marine engineering department on the supply ship have also been busy, repairing two alternators following a major lube oil leak and some general wear and tear.

They've had to postpone their planned maintenance for the day to close up for boarding stations.

Some of their manpower had to form the Standing Sea Emergency Party, three engineers have to man the engine spaces – usually unmanned and fully automated.

However, during close manoeuvring operations, when the captain is using the engines to move the ship for boat ops, and the engines are clutched in and out to maintain the position on

the dhow, the team has to close up to attend to potential problems arising in controls can be resolved/assessed as soon as possible.

Once the boarding is complete, the ME department has to go to one engine so Fort Vic can reduce speed sufficiently for the dhow (now under RFA control) to keep up with the ship.

TUESDAY JANUARY 17

The dhow is handed over to the Yemeni Navy so it can be returned

to its owner.

SATURDAY JANUARY 28

Fourteen suspects – among them one dubbed Six-Toe Joe by the tabloids, thanks to his surplus digits – are handed over to Seychelles authorities for prosecution.

While aboard Fort Victoria, the detainees have received three meals a day – porridge for breakfast followed by steamed rice or pasta with fish and vegetables

for lunch and dinner.

The actions of Fort Victoria – and the stance taking against the scourge of piracy by the Seychellois authorities are praised by Foreign Secretary William Hague.

He says he's "very grateful to the Seychelles for their agreement to prosecute these suspected pirates."

He continues: "Their commitment to the fight against piracy has helped avoid a situation where these individuals were not held to account for their actions."

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war is not over...

explains, are motivated purely by money.

RFA Fort Victoria uncovered evidence of new properties springing up along the Somali coast, funded by ill-gotten gains.

"Some pirates deny everything, claim they are simple fishermen. Others regard themselves as warriors who are prepared to 'tough it out'."

"When the latter realise that we are more heavily armed than they are, they believe there is no loss of honour in surrendering – and accept that it's 'game over'."

The Royal Navy-RFA-Fleet Air Arm-Royal Marines task force on Fort Victoria set out to disrupt piracy, enhance Britain's counter-piracy skills – and enhance Britain's reputation.

The four-month surge, says Capt Northwood, has achieved all

that – aided by support at home and abroad to tackle the piracy scourge.

He continued: "The combined effort of all the civilian and military authorities, the fact that pirates are being prosecuted, that merchant ships are taking steps to protect themselves, all of this is having a real impact."

Figures provided by NATO confirm this.

Taking January as an example, in 2011 six ships were hijacked, another 29 were attacked, while the actions of ten pirate groups were disrupted.

During the same month this year, not a single ship was captured by pirates, all four attacks made failed, and another nine groups were disrupted.

Overall, two dozen vessels were captured in 2011 – roughly half

the number of 2009 when the NATO mission began.

"It's too early to say we have won the battle of piracy," said Rear Admiral Hank Ort, Chief-of-Staff at NATO's Northwood headquarters.

"We know that if the navies go away, the pirates will come back. What we can say is that we are making the seas safer for legitimate maritime traffic."

His views are echoed by Capt Northwood:

"Piracy is back to the level it was in 2009 – but the pirates remain a potent threat. There are still people volunteering to become pirates, the income they receive from ransoms is significant.

"We need to maintain our watch on piracy – we cannot relax our guard."

Brock stars rewarded

JUST as the people of Libya continue to reap the fruits of their freedom so too do the British sailors who played a key role in supporting their struggle for casting off the Gaddafi yoke.

A few days after HMS Liverpool was rewarded for her seven-month stint by being named the Fleet's best destroyer, the crew of HMS Brocklesby were collecting a similar trophy: Britain's best minehunter.

Until relieved by HMS Bangor, the Portsmouth-based warship kept the sea lanes to the besieged port of Misrata open alongside other NATO minehunters.

That mission saw the ship's company involved in the first live mine-clearance operations within range of enemy artillery and rockets since the Al Faw peninsula in Iraq in 2003.

Brocklesby found – and destroyed – one mine which pro-Gaddafi forces laid off in the approaches to Misrata, and thus helped to ensure that humanitarian aid continued to flow into the city by sea.

All of which was far from expected as 2011 began; the Hunt-class ship had originally sailed on a routine six-month deployment with NATO's long-standing Mine Countermeasures Group 1 which patrols European and Mediterranean waters exercising, practising and frequently dealing with unexploded ordnance from wars past, rather than wars present.

The rapidly-developing events of the 'Arab Spring' across the countries of North Africa saw her reassigned at short notice to Operation Unified Protector and Operation Ellamy with a series of tasks off Libya.

Brocklesby's 155-day stint earned the ship's company the Mine Warfare Trophy and Surface Fleet Efficiency Pennant – previously held by Faslane-based HMS Blyth. The pennant now flies on Brock every day for the next 12 months.

Those awards were handed over by Rear Admiral Duncan Potts, Rear Admiral Surface Ships, and Capt Mark Durkin, Captain Minor War Vessels and Fishery Protection, as part of the annual presentation of Fleet Efficiency trophies and standards.

Rear Admiral Potts commented on the great achievements over the last year, particularly in operations off Libya, which demonstrated the crew truly warranted the award.

In particular he stressed the importance of recognising the constant efforts of small ships and the mine-warfare community in the Gulf as well as the Med.

Since returning from her Libyan mission last summer Brocklesby has undergone a spot of maintenance and is now exercising and training around the UK as part of her regeneration for her next deployment.



Picture: LA(Phot) Paul Halliwell, FRPU North

Been busy. Again.

AIRCREW of HMS Gannet stride away from one of their distinctive red and grey Sea King – the busiest military rescue helicopter in the country for the fifth year running.

The Prestwick-based Sea King fliers were called out no fewer than 298 times last year – rescuing or helping 240 souls in the process.

One in every six of the 1,798 rescues flown by the eight Royal Navy and RAF search and rescue units in 2011 was made by the team at Gannet.

The Fleet Air Arm's other SAR unit, 771 Naval Air Squadron at RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall, was scrambled 244 times last year – which means that overall, naval aviators accounted for three in every ten rescue missions flown by the Armed Forces in 2011.

As for Gannet, whose domain covers 98,000 square miles of Scotland, northern England, Northern Ireland and the Irish Sea, the extreme operational tempo in the past five years has seen the unit's Sea King Mk5s respond to 1865 call-outs, which led to the rescue of 1,575 people.

Gannet's Commanding Officer Lt Cdr Debdash Bhattacharya said 2011 was actually a relatively quiet year by the unit's recent standards: over the past five years his Sea Kings have averaged 372 missions annually.

"It is with huge pride that I am

Stand-out rescues of 2011

JANUARY – a young fisherman is given life-saving treatment by a Gannet paramedic before being airlifted to Glasgow, after his foot became entangled in a fishing net, dragging him over the side of his boat and underwater for around ten minutes.

– rescue of climber Adam Potter who fell an astonishing 1,000ft down Sgurr Choinnich Mor in the Nevis Range and survived. He was treated initially on scene by HMS Gannet's paramedic and a visiting doctor before being transferred to Glasgow. Undeterred by this 'mishap', he went on to conquer Mount Everest later in the year.

APRIL – seven people and a dog rescued in the face of rising tides from the cliff base near Fingal's Cave on Staffa after their boat capsized.

MAY – aircraft diverted from routine medical transfer of an elderly woman from Gigha to Glasgow to rescue two people, one with a broken arm, from a 50ft two-masted yacht

at anchor off the island, after they became stranded on board in a gale. A difficult winch manoeuvre with the yacht's masts pitching violently in the fierce seas and strong wind. All three were successfully transferred to Glasgow.

OCTOBER – hours old baby airlifted to Glasgow from Oban in atrocious weather – helicopter operating at night in low visibility had to abort two landing attempts before making it third time lucky.

DECEMBER – lone walker lifted to safety from Beinn Sgualair in Argyll in dark, sub-zero conditions with negligible visibility in cloud, after sustaining an ankle injury. The helicopter was forced to ascend exceptionally slowly and perilously close to the mountain's rock face, which was the only visual reference available. The crew was then immediately retasked to assist Glencoe MRT with a further two climbers lost on the notorious Aonach Eagach ridge.

able to commend and thank the whole team at HMS Gannet – from the aircrews to the engineers, the met office to the administrative staff, and all the other supporting personnel like security staff – for once again maintaining and running this well-oiled operation which saves lives at a moment's notice in often-terrible conditions across an area of 98,000 square miles," he added.

"2011 was actually a slightly quieter year, though no less taxing for the crews. Nonetheless, this

is an exceptional achievement and one of which each and every person involved with operations at HMS Gannet should be extraordinarily proud."

The official figures compiled by Defence Analytical Services Agency show that Gannet's average call-out was to a distance of 53 miles from the unit and

lasted one hour and 35 minutes. In all, its helicopters spent more than 600 hours on rescue

The longest and farthest flung sortie of 2011 was a medical evacuation at Wick in Caithness – many miles outside the unit's usual coverage area – which lasted 20 minutes short of 12 hours and involved a round-trip of 465 miles.

The Queen's ship sails again

ON A sullen winter's day on the South Coast, HMS Lancaster slipped her moorings to begin sea trials, the first time she'd sailed since September 2010.

In the intervening 16 months, the ship's company and engineers, technicians and shipwrights at BAE Systems have carried out £22m improvements and upgrades to the 21-year-old warship.

On the 'crunchy' side of things, Lancaster's received several major upgrades to her weapon systems and sensors, including new, fully automatic 30mm close-range guns on either side of the ship, the latest version of the Seawolf air defence missile system – effectively doubling its range – and a new ship's brain, the command system which deals with the masses of information from the frigate's myriad sensors.

On the engineering side, the warship's received four new diesel generators, while all four turbine engines have been overhauled, anti-fouling paint applied to the keel and the addition of a transom flap on the stern – an underwater spoiler, for want of a better description, which makes her cut through the sea faster and hence more efficiently.

And most importantly of all... the ship's shop, better known as the NAAFI, has received its first revamp in two decades. Billed as a 'mobile mini supermarket', it sells everyday items from sweets and crisps to duty-free cigarettes and toiletries.

"It is a vital component of the morale of the ship's company," say WO1 Matt Fisher, the ship's Executive Warrant Officer.

"The importance of a successful canteen cannot be over-emphasised and the enhancements achieved

today will do much to ensure a little of our home comforts travel with us."

During the refit period, a little under one quarter of the normal ship's company of 180 souls remained with Lancaster to work to ensure that sufficient ship-based knowledge was on tap, among them WO2(ME) 'Judge' Duery.

"It has been a very busy refit period which has seen some dramatic changes to the ship, although the biggest change is in the ship's company as we have over 80 per cent brand new to Lancaster," he said.

"We have trained very hard to be ready for sailing and are keen to show what we can do." Lancaster's Commanding Officer, Cdr Steve Moorhouse, added: "I feel extremely privileged to command Lancaster as we emerge from an extended refit period with state-of-the-art weapon technologies, powerful engines and a Ship's Company that are well trained and highly motivated.

"I am extremely grateful to BAE Systems for their hard work in returning the ship to me ready for our departure and I look forward to putting Lancaster to the test during our forthcoming period of sea trials."

As with all her sisters in the 13-strong class of Type 23 frigates, Lancaster is named after a duke: the Duke of Lancaster, a title which has been held by the monarch since the days of Henry IV at the end of the 14th Century.

To mark the ship's association with the Queen, HMS Lancaster departed on her sea trials with a new flag flying from her mast – that of the Duchy of Lancaster, donated by Paul Clarke, the Chief Executive Officer of the Duchy and his wife, Vanessa.

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Deep understanding

IN THE heart of the most advanced warship Britain has ever sent beneath the oceans the head of the US Navy learns about the potency of HMS Astute.

Admiral Jonathan Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations, joined his British opposite number First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope on the first of the UK's new breed of hunter-killer submarines for her sternest test yet: an exercise with one of the US Navy's counterparts to Astute, the brand-new USS New Mexico.

The two boats played a two-day game of cat and mouse in the Bahamas trying to out-flank, out-maneuvre and outwit each other during Exercise Fellowship 2012.

The aim of the workout at the specialist AUTEC ranges – the Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center – was to see how two roughly similar boats fared against each other; there could be no better test for either Astute or the New Mexico.

With two of the world's most potent submarines sparring for the first time, the opportunity to witness the unique exercise, billed by the Americans as 'the future of undersea superiority', was one not to be missed by the two admirals – both submariners.

At 7,400 tonnes and 97 metres long, Astute is about 20 metres shorter and displaces 400 fewer tonnes than the New Mexico. Both carry more than three dozen weapons – a mixture of torpedoes and Tomahawk cruise missiles, plus, in the Virginia-class boat's case, Sub-Harpoon anti-ship missiles.

It's the raison d'être of both submarines to hunt – and kill – potential enemy boats (hence the hunter-killer tag); in addition they can launch missile strikes at land targets and gather intelligence.

Before there can be any thought of such operations, however, Astute has to complete her trials. The Faslane-based submarine is spending the winter on the other side of the Atlantic on her most comprehensive trials package yet.

She's already successfully fired a Tomahawk on to a target on a US range. Now, after an inaugural visit to Norfolk, the world's biggest naval base, Astute has moved to the warmer locale of Andros Island in the Bahamas, home to AUTEC, a facility regularly used by British submarines and frigates to test their sonars and torpedoes.

And what better test than a comparable foe? Astute's Commanding Officer Cdr Iain Breckenridge relished the opportunity to test the mettle of his men and machine against New Mexico.

"To have the chance to go up against what is a very capable and very proven submarine, the Virginia-class USS New Mexico, has been really good fun," he enthused.

His counterpart on the New Mexico, Cdr George Perez, said the American had "enjoyed every minute" of working with Astute.

"It's a great opportunity to take this boat out against what we in the submarine community consider is the best competition out there."

Certainly the two admirals were impressed by the performance of both boats – and by the ongoing fruits of long-standing links between their respective silent services.

"Here we are on the AUTEC range with the best that the United Kingdom can deliver to the future in submarining terms and the best that the US can deliver to the future in submarining terms, both recognising we need to continue to advance to keep up with the challenges the future will undoubtedly bring to us," said Admiral Stanhope.

"By doing so we undoubtedly demonstrate the huge and deeply significant links that we have."

He and Admiral Greenert observed the crews of both boats (98 on Astute, more than 130 on the New Mexico) play out a series of scenarios, to test their tactics, their kit and the abilities of the respective ship's companies.

"With the Royal Navy getting together with the US Navy you have the best out there operating together with cutting-edge technology and cutting-edge tactics, and that's important for each of us to see what we have and see what we're made of, and I would never miss this opportunity – not while I'm Chief of Naval Operations," the American admiral said.

With thanks to Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Peter D. Lawlor, Chief of Naval Operations Public Affairs.



Jessica Soanes

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Son of Seawolf unveiled

GO AHEAD, make my day...

This is your very first look at Sea Ceptor – the next-generation air defence missile for the Fleet.

The MoD has announced that it's signed a £483m deal with defence firm MBDA to equip the current generation of frigates – and the future Type 26 Global Combat Ship – with a new shield against aerial attack.

Sea Ceptor (short for Sea Interceptor) is designed to deal with multiple incoming targets at the same time, launching from a vertical silo and accelerating towards the threats at three times the speed of sound, knocking them out of the sky up to around a dozen miles from its mother ship.

The system uses a new UK-developed missile and can protect an area of around 500 square miles over land or sea.

It will replace the battle-proven Seawolf which successfully defended Type 22 frigates in the Falklands and has subsequently been fitted to the entire Type 23 frigate fleet.

Although Seawolf has undergone a revamp recently which effectively doubles the missile's range, it's due to reach the end of its active life in 2016.

With that in mind, a replacement is needed – hence the contract with MBDA to develop Sea Ceptor over the next five years.

The deal will sustain around 500 jobs in MBDA and its supply chain across the UK in places such as Stevenage, Filton and Lostock.

"This new weapon system will equip our frigates to deal with the type of sophisticated missile threat expected in the coming decades," said First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope.

"Investment in advanced defence technology, such as Sea Ceptor, is vital to ensure the Royal Navy's continued ability to defend the UK's interests wherever necessary."

After being fitted to the 13 Type 23s in service (the oldest, Argyll, will serve until around 2023, the youngest, St Albans, until 2036), Sea Ceptor will be installed on the Type 26s, replacement for the 23s, which begin to join the Fleet at the beginning of the next decade.



And I'm feline good...

THE groundwork for the Navy's next-generation helicopter has been completed after 20 days of demanding trials for the state-of-the-art Wildcat aboard HMS Iron Duke.

The Portsmouth-based frigate sought the most challenging weather conditions around the UK as she took the Wildcat – successor to the long-serving Lynx – to sea to help write the rulebook for the new helicopter.

From 2015 Wildcat will be the principal helicopter used by Royal Navy frigates – including Iron Duke and her Type 23 sisters – and destroyers on operations around the globe.

Prototype ZZ402 paid a brief visit to Iron Duke just before Christmas, when pilots and technicians tested some of the basics – could the flight deck recovery system pull Wildcat into the hangar (yes it could), did Wildcat fit in the hangar (ditto), can it be easily refuelled and rearmed, 'talk' to the frigate's command systems (affirmatives again).

Although Wildcat looks like the

final variant of the Lynx, the Mk8, currently in service with the Fleet Air Arm, it is classed as a new aircraft – it handles differently for a start, not least thanks to new engines and the distinctive tail boom which marks Wildcat out from its forebears.

As a result, a new rulebook has to be written to define what are known as 'ship-helicopter operating limits' – the guidelines for safe Wildcat operations by day and night in various weather conditions and with different payloads.

For that, Wildcat needed to go at sea. It enjoyed two ten-day periods of trials aboard Iron Duke, one in mid-January, the second at the beginning of this month, ranging from the waters off the South Coast to the Western Approaches, Irish Sea and northern shores of Scotland as the frigate searched for suitable weather conditions to lay down the limits for safe Wildcat operations.

In all Wildcat touched down on Iron Duke's flight deck 390 times, including 148 night landings – 76 of them using night vision goggles.

The prototype's two Fleet Air Arm test pilots assessed and scored the difficulty and workload

required for each landing in each different weather condition or sea state, while a myriad of sensors recorded more than 4,000 different items of data from the helicopter's engines, rotor and transmission.

These included video feeds from all the crew positions, stresses and strains from all over the airframe and rotor blades, engine and gearbox parameters and undercarriage loadings.

The crew scores and reams of data are now being analysed by experts (it'll take them until towards the end of the year) to set the limits for day and night operations by Wildcat at sea in various conditions and with various payloads.

In addition to the test pilots, two flight test engineers, aircraft and stress engineers, instrumentation experts, ship's flight (to carry out maintenance on the prototype and move it in and out of the frigate's hangar) – a good 30 extra souls in all – squeezed aboard the Type 23, which was fitted with accurate ship motion and wind sensors for the tests.

The trials team used the opportunity of operating Wildcat

at sea for the first time to test its mission systems, night-vision cockpit and navigation systems, paving the way for the helicopter's front-line duties in three years' time.

From Iron Duke's viewpoint, the new helicopter certainly impressed.

"Wildcat is a very capable aircraft, a completely natural successor to the Lynx, and once fully mature will provide significantly enhanced capability to the maritime domain," said Cdr Nick Cooke-Priest, the frigate's Commanding Officer.

"Ideally suited to the nature and breadth of naval operations, commanders should be very excited by Wildcat's potential."

While Wildcats work their way along the production line at AgustaWestland's Yeovil factory, ZZ402 will continue her trials, carrying out tests of radar, electro-optics, navigational kit and conduct missile firings.

The first of 28 naval variants of Wildcat is due to be delivered to its future home at RNAS Yeovilton ten days before Christmas for trials with 700W Naval Air Squadron.



No idling in an idyll for Echo

THIS near-picture-postcard scene is HMS Echo departing an island paradise.

Paradise is Mahé, largest island in the Seychelles archipelago.

Much as Mahé is an idyll, beloved by holidaymakers, honeymooners *et al*, the survey ship wasn't in town to soak up the Indian Ocean sun – but to work with the Seychellois Coastguard in the on-going fight against piracy.

Echo has devoted most of her 13 months away from home in Devonport improving our understanding of the waters and shores east of Suez by updating charts of the region's seas.

Alongside in Port Victoria in Mahé, her ship's company enjoyed a rare spot of respite – and more importantly interaction with locals.

The survey ship hosted nine personnel – a mixture of officers and ratings from the Seychellois Coastguard Forces; they spent the day learning how to fight fires alongside the hydrographic vessel's sailors, led by Echo's damage control expert PO 'Shady' Lane.

PO Lane and his emergency party demonstrated the importance of each of the fire



fighting positions, from the initial attack party to a re-entry team.

The Seychellois force got fully involved in the training, getting hands-on experience with the RN's methods of fire-fighting and equipment.

A number of the coastguards also put to sea in Echo's Pacific 22 sea boat, to experience the thrill of high-speed (upwards of 35kt) sea

boat operations.

Echo's Commanding Officer Cdr Mike O'Sullivan, said: "It was great to take the opportunity to renew Echo's close relationship with the Seychellois Coastguard."

"A greater understanding between the Royal Navy and the Coastguard teams helps us to work closely together in ensuring the safety of navigation

for all mariners sailing the Indian Ocean."

Echo also embarked a number of sea riders for the day – although in this case they were not from the Navy's training teams, but the British High Commission in the Seychelles.

This provided an opportunity to allow those who prosecute pirates to get a taste of what life is like on the ocean waves, demonstrating a number of dramatic scenarios commencing with emergency calls to hands, leading to a fire on the ship, which was successfully extinguished.

One visitor from the High Commission commented: "It is quite amazing how efficiently and successfully these incredibly dangerous incidents are dealt with. "For these people to go into what could be potentially life-threatening situations – without even the blink of an eye – must be a testament to the training they receive."

The embarked members of the High Commission also talked to the ship's company about how they made every effort to bring suspected pirates to justice – and had seen to date a 100 per cent conviction rate.

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Kiel over(joyed)

THE nation's flagship paid an unexpected visit to the home of the German Navy after winter weather thwarted efforts to visit the country's greatest port.

Ice on the Elbe meant HMS Bulwark could not sail into Hamburg as planned at the beginning of her winter mini-deployment (much to Hamburgers' disappointment apparently – the city's principal newspaper, the *Abendblatt*, was very keen to see the assault ship).

Indeed, the cold snap (or should that be cold schnapps?) dominating northern Europe meant few of Germany's ports were open – but Kiel was, so Bulwark passed through the Kiel Canal linking the North Sea with the Baltic and made landfall in the home of the Deutsche Marine.

Bulwark's surprise visit excited the local media – who promptly dubbed her the *Eis-Flüchtling* (ice refugee) and celebrated the appearance of "a behemoth in Tirpitz Harbour", while one Kiel naval buff observed, with a hint of *schadenfreude*: "Hamburg's port is left with nothing" (we're sensing a spot of rivalry between the two ports...).

Anyway, Bulwark spent a few days at the

naval base's Scheermole (named after the WW1 German naval leader) which was covered by a thick blanket of snow.

It was a balmy 0°C in Kiel – sufficiently warm for her Royal Marines Commandos to go for a run around the city in T-shirts (more sensible members of the ship's company donned warmer attire for their keep fit sessions).

The unscheduled visit to Kiel allowed the ship's company the chance to pay their respects to generations past.

Kieler Nordfriedhof Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery is the last resting place of 983 British personnel who were killed in WW2.

The dead were mostly on RAF bombing raids – as one of the Third Reich's principal naval bases, Kiel was subjected to ferocious attacks which levelled much of the city.

In addition to fallen airmen, however, there are numerous Senior Servicemen laid to rest here, not least many of the 127 souls lost when destroyer HMS Esk sank after hitting a mine off the Dutch coast on September 1 1940.

Bulwark's commanding officer Capt Alex Burton laid a wreath at the central monument in the cemetery, which was blanketed in snow, creating a fittingly peaceful atmosphere for the solemn occasion.

"The legacy of WW2 is enduring, owing to

the bravery and courage of Servicemen like the soldiers, sailors and airmen buried in Kiel," said Lt Paul Meacher, Bulwark's gunnery officer.

"That same bravery and courage is still displayed every day by our colleagues across the globe."

And on a lighter note... Kiel was the first port of call for Bulwark's unofficial mascot, a teddy bear donated by the people of her affiliated County of Durham when the ship visited last year.

Like his furry forebears, notably HMS Newcastle's legendary Salty, Prince Bishop (or simply PB to most aboard) will report on Bulwark's travels for the youngsters of Durham Trinity School.

In Kiel, PB toured the sights of the port – and posed with junior German officers. He'll be putting in an appearance at various ports and locations as Bulwark continues her flagship duties.

Next stop for PB (and the ship...) was the Polish port of Gdynia on the western shores of Gdansk Bay as Bulwark acclimatised to the cold, for this month she leads British input to Cold Response, NATO's winter war games in the fjords and valleys of northern Norway.

Pictures: LA(Phot) Martin Carney, HMS Bulwark, and Olaf Francke/ www.myholstein.de/schiffsbildersammlung/26-militaerschiffe/1309-i-15-



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Carrier superblock fitted out



● The bulbous bow of HMS Queen Elizabeth can be seen from the control cab of the Goliath crane in Rosyth

IT STILL doesn't look like an aircraft carrier, but the build programme for the future HMS Queen Elizabeth is gathering pace.

The first of the Royal Navy's two aircraft carriers is nearing the end of Dock Cycle A, the first element of the three-phase assembly programme at the Babcock yard in Rosyth.

And the result of Dock Cycle A will be a structure which equates to around a quarter of the ship.

To get there, smaller blocks and peripherals had to be assembled in the massive new dry dock, towering over which is the specially-commissioned Goliath crane.

Lower Block 03 and Central Block 03 were married up with sponsons 3, 4, 5, 6a and 6b.

The focus of attention has now shifted to integrating all the sponsons and fitting out the interior of Superblock 03 with everything from electrical supply and ventilation to desks, beds and other such 'home furnishings'.

Looking ahead a year, Dock Cycle B will see the integration of the blocks that make up the forward section of the carrier by the spring of 2013.

And if all goes to plan, the following year will see Dock Cycle C and the completion of the hull. Programme Director Geoff



Searle said: "Every major section of HMS Queen Elizabeth has now either been built or is under construction."

"In Rosyth, the heavy lifts for the first superblock have all been completed."

"Inside the block, thousands of metres of pipes have been installed and cables pulled into place, and the cabins are only missing mattresses and curtains."

"Detailed compartment inspections, which ensure that everything is exactly as it should be and ready to be handed over to the Royal Navy, have begun."

"However, there's still work to do before this section can be considered complete."

This year is going to be busy for the Aircraft Carrier Alliance, the industrial partnership which sees Babcock, BAE Systems and Thales UK working with the MOD as members of a massive project which represents one of the biggest engineering undertakings in the UK.

Geoff said: "This spring the two 800-tonne sections which make up LB05 will be barged from Portsmouth to Rosyth."

"They will be closely followed by the second mid-section block, LB02."

"A real heavyweight, this section weighs in at around 6,000 tonnes."

"When LB02 arrives at Rosyth we'll flood the dry dock so we can float out the 12,000-tonne Block 3 currently being assembled."

"Then we'll manoeuvre LB02 in, and re-dock Block 3 behind it so integration work can get started."

Rosyth workers have also been constructing sponsons for the next cycle of assembly later this year.

In Devon, staff at Appledore are preparing to send the next batch of sponsons to Scotland.

On Merseyside, work on flight deck sections is progressing rapidly, and preparations are being made to move one to Rosyth this summer.

And in Portsmouth the navigation island is coming together, and outfitting is under way on the lower decks and bridge.

Teams across the Alliance are also continuing to design, develop and test key systems.

The electronic mission systems are being checked at the Alliance's test facility at HMS Collingwood, while the Integrated Platform Management System - which controls power generation, propulsion machinery, damage control and firefighting systems - is undergoing a stringent programme of tests in Bristol.

Work on HMS Prince of Wales is also well under way.

More than 65 units for LB03 are being built at Govan, the bulbous bow section is in hand at Appledore and work on LB02 was scheduled to begin in Portsmouth as *Navy News* went to press.



● Part of the bridge of HMS Queen Elizabeth is moved at Portsmouth late last year
Pictures: Aircraft Carrier Alliance



● Superblock 03 from the floor of the dry dock at Rosyth (above) and from the control cab of the Goliath crane (right)

Navigation channel analysed

WHILE the Aircraft Carrier Alliance gets on with the job of building the Royal Navy's two new aircraft carriers, work is also under way to prepare the infrastructure at their home port.

A drilling rig is spending six weeks in Portsmouth Harbour and its approaches sampling the sea bed along the navigational channel into Portsmouth.

Deep Diver is sinking 27 boreholes to a depth of 32m at various points along the route before it is dredged to make it deeper and wider during 2014-15.

These boreholes will provide a more detailed understanding of the geology of the area to be dredged.

Capt Iain Greenlees, the man in charge of the transformation project to prepare for the arrival of HMS Queen Elizabeth in 2016, said: "The carriers will use the existing channel to approach the harbour."

"But because of their size, the channel needs to be both deeper and widened by removing the edges of the banks at the eastern end of Spithead anchorage, allowing a more direct approach to the entrance."

"We will also be deepening the pockets at the berth and ensuring that there is a suitable turning circle at the top end of the harbour."

He added: "Work so far has identified this to be the route which balances best navigational safety, lowest environmental impact and cost."

"The analysis of these final boreholes will complete our detailed understanding of the work that will be required and allow us to apply for final approval and run a competition for the work."

Capt Greenlees said the first construction work would be the replacement of telephone cables from Southsea to the Isle of Wight in 2013-14.

"We expect to be moving around 3.5 million tonnes of the sea bed in 2014-15," he said.

"It is important that we understand its structure to ensure any material that can be reused or contains contaminants for separate disposal is localised."

The rig, brightly-lit at night, works 24 hours a day, using a noise-suppression system to keep disturbance to a minimum.



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I'm Aron. In 2007 I was badly injured by an IED while serving in Afghanistan. I was given 3 months to decide whether to keep my leg or have it amputated to relieve the pain. In the end it came down to a pen and a bit of paper. Pros and cons. Pros won. Then I was told I wasn't 'disabled enough' to get Disability Living Allowance. I've always worn a poppy since I was a little kid. I thought the Legion might help. Their adviser helped me appeal the decision, fighting my battle for a whole year. I received the reinstatement of my DLA in September. It's hard going from being a soldier to a househusband but finally things are looking up.

The Legion help thousands of people like me every year. But they can only afford to because you wear a poppy. **Thank you.**

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Battle Honours
Facts and figures

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Motto: My challenge is borne by the air
Class: Archer-class Patrol Boat
Pennant number: P294
Builder: Watercraft, Shoreham
Commissioned: November 5, 1988
Displacement: 49 tonnes
Length: 20 metres (68ft)
Beam: 5.8 metres (19ft)
Draught: 2 metres (6ft)
Speed: 20 kts
Range: 550 nautical miles at 15kts
Complement: Up to 18
Propulsion: 2 x MTU V12 diesels
Armament: can be fitted with 1 x 20mm Oerlikon

HERE'S one to ponder. Which Royal Navy warship is likely to fly the flag in more foreign ports in 2012 than any other?

Darling of the Fleet, HMS Daring, on her much-heralded maiden deployment, or maybe capital ships such as Illustrious or Bulwark?

Nope. We'll be surprised if any vessel flying the White Ensign has a better itinerary this year than HMS Trumpeter, whose ship's company will see most of the ports of northern and north-west Europe in 2012.

The P2000 patrol craft serves the various colleges and universities of Cambridge as well as the University of East Anglia in Norwich as 'CURNU' – the Cambridge University Royal Naval Unit.

In doing so she's one of 14 Archer-class boats which serve University Royal Naval Units from Aberdeen to Southampton, Swansea to East Anglia.

Trumpeter originally served with the Gibraltar Squadron, protecting the Rock, until HM Ships Scimitar and Sabre were sent to the Med in 2003.

Back in UK waters, the ship served Bristol University until 18 months ago, when she traded places with HMS Raider. As one

of the 'turbo' P2000s Raider moved to Plymouth from where she can assist FOST training as well as support her West Country university.

And in return the good students of East Anglia received Trumpeter, which is based at Haven Marina in Ipswich.

A full-time crew of five – one commanding officer, executive officer, a navs-yeoman, marine engineer officer and one weapon engineer officer – looks after Trumpeter, plus a unit coxswain at the URNU's offices in Cambridge and four training officers (two ex-RN personnel, two former URNU members).

The unit is currently 'maxed out' with students – there are 51 undergraduates on its books, as many as it can look after.

"It has been a great year for recruiting," enthuses Lt Tom Jenkins, the unit's Commanding Officer – because given the demands of studying at Cambridge it's not always been easy in the past to fill all the places.

Perhaps they were tempted by the prospects of Trumpeter's two deployments in 2012.

All URNUs put to sea at universities' Easter and summer breaks, giving students a more in-depth taste of life in the Royal Navy than the usual weekend running.

Trumpeter will be away for four weeks at Easter, covering the coasts of Normandy, Pas de Calais and Belgium. She'll spend several days in Normandy, sailing into Caen, allowing the students to pay their respects around the battlefields of 1944, as well as up the Seine as far as Rouen, Normandy's historic capital. At the other end of the deployment route, the patrol boat will call in at Bruges and Ostend.

As for the summer deployment, it's a cracker. Twelve weeks in company with sisters Explorer, Example and

Ranger with the goal of reaching St Petersburg (1,200 miles as the crow flies, a good 1,400 miles each way by sea). The quartet will hug the southern shores of Scandinavia on the way out, the northern shores of Europe on the way back.

It will be one of the longest (if not *the* longest) summer deployments attempted by P2000s (one a few years ago made it to Gib) – and will also see the four vessels representing the UK at Kiel Week, the world's largest sailing event.

"The great thing about P2000s is that we can fly the flag in places where the Royal Navy does not generally go – we can have a big impact, relatively speaking, for small ships," said Lt Jenkins.

Before thoughts turn to the Neva, Hermitage, and Church of the Saviour on Blood inter alia, however, there's the small matter of the May Ball to celebrate.

On May 4 the unit mirrors the traditional end-of-term May Balls with 'Mayday, Mayday, Mayday', a glittering open evening run by the students at which there'll be a mini casino, band, string quartet and much more to give local dignitaries an insight into what the unit gets up to.

More details about the unit's activities can be found at www.srcf.ucam.org/curnu/index.shtml.

As for the ship, the current HMS Trumpeter is the only one of the three vessels bearing the name to begin her career with the same moniker.

The first Trumpeter began life as the USS Bastian, an escort carrier built in Seattle and transferred to the RN under the Lend-Lease Agreement in 1943.

She spent her brief Royal Navy career mainly operating in the waters of north-west Europe, supporting minelaying missions off Norway, strikes on the Tirpitz, and the very last offensive naval operation in Europe in WW2: Operation Judgment, against a German U-boat base in northern Norway just four days before the war's end.

Trumpeter was then dispatched to the Far East, but arrived only in time to take part in the re-occupation of Malaya and Singapore. With the war over, she was returned to the US Navy, who sold her. The ship spent the rest of her 25-year career as a merchantman.

The Trumpeter name was resurrected in 1947 when Landing Ship (Tank) 3254 was renamed until 1956 when she was sold to the Ministry of Transport and re-titled again, this time as the Empire Fulmar.

Picture: Arthur Light, HMS Victorious Association



IWM PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORIES

WITH a Sopwith fighter on her forward flight deck and a Sea Scout Zero U-boat-hunting blimp on her aft landing deck, this is HMS Furious – here living up to her nickname HMS Curious – part-way through her metamorphosis from battle-cruiser to aircraft carrier.

This photograph from the archives of the Imperial War Museum dates from March 1918 when the 22,000-ton warship was recommissioned following her second conversion.

It was on Furious that the first landing by an aircraft on a moving warship was achieved in the summer of 1917. Five days after his feat, Sqn Cdr Edwin Dunning was killed trying to repeat the daring landing in his Sopwith Pup fighter.

To land, Dunning had to manoeuvre around the superstructure and set down on a flight deck barely 160ft long – and hope shipmates could catch his plane and hold it down. As he tried to make his third landing on Furious, his Pup was caught by an updraught, toppled over the side and Dunning drowned.

Furious had been laid down on the Tyne at the Armstrong-Whitworth yard in the summer of 1915 as the final of three Courageous-class battle-cruisers – light, fast and heavily-armed. Only Courageous and Glorious were completed as planned, but not Furious.

Unlike her sisters with their 15in guns, two turrets with 18in guns were planned for Furious.

Only one such turret was ever installed, for in the aftermath of Jutland the Admiralty was looking at making good the shortcomings of its existing seaplane carriers (small, sluggish). Covetous eyes fell upon the almost-complete Furious, now in the latter stages of fitting out.

Her rear turret was installed as planned, but not the forward; a hangar with workshops was built, as was a lift to carry aircraft up to a wooden flight deck just forward of her superstructure. Come June 1917 she was ready to join the Fleet.

Dunning's death prompted Admiralty constructors to ponder how to improve Furious.

The solution: remove the aft turret, build a rear hangar, lift and much larger flight deck – some 300ft long – as a landing area. Just in case any aircraft overshot the deck, they would be stopped by a huge arrestor net, seen in the photograph just behind the funnel.

It took under four months to complete this second conversion, after which the hybrid aircraft carrier was committed on operations in the North Sea – with some success.

It was from the deck of Furious that half a dozen Sopwith Camels successfully attacked the German Zeppelin base at Tondern (today Tønder in southern Denmark) – the first carrier strike mission in history. The Camels destroyed two airships and one balloon, catching the Germans by surprise.

By the time of the Tondern raid, Britain's first true aircraft carrier – she enjoyed a full-length flight deck from bow to stern – HMS Argus, was nearing completion, while the first purpose-built carrier, HMS Hermes (again with a full-length flight deck, but also with the island superstructure which would become the trademark of all the world's aircraft carrier) was under construction.

As such 'Curious' was a bit of a curiosity and post-war there was considerable debate over her fate until the decision was taken to remove her superstructure in the mid-20s; her sisters Courageous and Glorious were also converted.

All three saw action in WW2, but only Furious survived. She took part in the ill-fated Norwegian campaign, the North Africa landings and strikes against the Tirpitz before being placed in reserve in the final months of the war and scrapped in 1948.

■ THIS photograph (Q 20640) – and 9,999,999 others from a century of war and peace – can be viewed or purchased at www.iwmcollections.org.uk, by emailing photos@iwm.org.uk, or by phoning 0207 416 5333.





PM meets RM

PREMIER David Cameron listens to accounts of war from men recently returned as he thanks the green berets of 3 Commando Brigade for their deeds in Afghanistan.

The Prime Minister visited RM Stonehouse in Plymouth – brigade headquarters – where he talked with personnel and viewed some of the kit used by the Royal Marines both in Helmand and on amphibious operations around the globe.

On display was the commando's armoured vehicle, the Viking, and an Offshore Raiding Craft – which are used to safeguard Britain's nuclear deterrent, support amphibious operations and have recently been successfully used in the fight against piracy in the Indian Ocean.

As well as meeting Royals from the brigade, Mr Cameron spoke to 30 Commando Information Exploitation Group – comprised of around 450 specialists whose intelligence gathering in Afghanistan led to the discovery and destruction of 5,725kg of explosives – enough to make 800 improvised explosive devices.

After talking with the marines, Mr Cameron headed inside nearby Devonport Naval Base to tour HMS Vigilant in the yard's impressive submarine refit facility.

Vigilant is coming to the end of a three-and-a-half-year refit – the third of four Vanguard-class ballistic missile submarines to undergo a mid-life revamp in the specially-constructed facility.

Since arriving on the Hamoaze in the autumn of 2008, the Faslane-based leviathan has received a new reactor core to power her to the end of her operational life in the mid-2020s, as well as around 80 significant upgrades.

Joined by Vigilant's commanding officer Cdr Mark Lister and Director Submarines Rear Admiral Simon Lister, Mr Cameron was shown some of the 16 Trident missile tubes, machinery space, radio room and control room.

His visit to the Royal Navy done, Mr Cameron popped into Morrison's supermarket in Plymstock on the way home to pick up some fish and vegetables for the Number 10 evening meal...

Picture: PO(Phot) Sean Clew, RNPOTYx3

Come in Crew 8, your time is up

IT'S from sun and sand to sub-zero temperatures for the crew of HMS Middleton who are home in Portsmouth after a seven-month stint in the Gulf.

The latest changeover of crews of Britain's long-term minehunter presence in the Gulf saw one 45-strong ship's company fly home... and counterparts from HMS Cattistock fly to the Middle East to take charge of the Hunt-class warship.

The Royal Navy maintains four mine warfare ships in the Gulf: two Hunts from Portsmouth (Middleton and Quorn), two Sandown-class ships from Faslane (Pembroke and Ramsey).

While the ships spend three or four years at a time in the region, their crew are replaced every six or seven months.

So farewell Crew 8, who've been on Middleton since last summer... hello Crew 2.

During their seven-month deployment, Crew 8 sailed Middleton in excess of 7,000 miles – enough to cover the distance from Bahrain to Portsmouth – consumed over 10,000 sausages and fired more than 69,000 rounds of ammunition in gunnery practice.

All of this was achieved in some of the world's most challenging conditions for mine warfare operations where the heat (in excess of 50°C at its worst) tests sailors to their physical limits, and the murky waters pose major challenges.

Middleton worked with naval forces from United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, strengthening ties with some of the UK's key strategic partners in what is a vital part of the world for UK interests.

Crew 8 also took part in the Cougar 11 deployment, the new annual workout of the Navy's Response Force Task Group, the UK's maritime quick reaction force, when it exercised in the southern Gulf.

"It has been an exceptionally challenging 12 months for my crew, initially serving in HMS Atherstone in the UK where a busy schedule saw us bring the ship out of refit before conducting shakedown, Joint Warrior and Operational Sea Training," said Lt Cdr Andy Ingham, Crew 8's CO.

"The tempo of operations has not abated during the seven months in the Arabian Gulf in HMS Middleton.

"What has struck me throughout has been the consistent hard work, cheerfulness and professionalism which my team has brought to their roles."

After leave his sailors will take charge of Cattistock in Portsmouth in the early spring.



Dan dares to join Marines

"BEATEN up, frozen and run ragged."

That's how TV presenter and historian Dan Snow described a day with the men of Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines as he learned about the birth of the commandos in the Scottish Highlands.

Dan joined the green berets to film an upcoming feature for the popular magazine programme *The One Show* – and the marines obliged by giving him an insight into their gruelling training regime.

The segment for the show will focus on Achnacarry Castle the spiritual home of the commandos – and ancestral home of the Clan Cameron – near Spean Bridge.

Between 1942 and 1945 the castle and environs served as the Commando Training Depot where the elite forces not just of the UK, but also USA, Free French, Poles, Czechs, and other foes of Nazism underwent rigorous training which culminated in a live-fire 'opposed landing' on nearby Loch Lochy.

Seven decades on and Dan didn't have to undergo that... but the Royal Marines did indeed have the "tender welcome" for him that he'd feared.

The team from FPGRM – who provide protection for Britain's ultimate weapon as well as the specialist boarding teams at the forefront of the nation's fight against piracy, smuggling and terrorism on the high seas – put Dan through his paces, kitting him out with uniform, webbing and rifle, so that he could get a taste of wartime commando training.

He ran a speed march, received (well, was on the receiving end of...) close-combat instruction and undertook a river crossing (pictured above by LA(Phot) Paul Halliwell of FRPU North).

When possible, he conducted interviews – and posted exasperated tweets on social network website Twitter as he became increasingly exhausted, such as suggesting that the Royals might have weighed his uniform down with mercury...

At the day's end he tweeted: "I just waded across a river. In the snow. I have been beaten up, frozen and run ragged. Her Majesty's Royal Marines have defeated me."

Dan's feature is due to be broadcast on *The One Show* on BBC1 in early April.



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Finishing

"I GUARANTEE when I open the back door, your eyes will pop out as if they're on stalks," CPO Tiny Hart imparts to his students, Sub Lt Carl Stephens and LS 'Connie' Conibear. "This is not Predannack."

It's not. It's about 30 miles south of the Lizard. It's a bitterly cold, but bright, February Saturday. And in a few minutes two would-be Merlin crew will be winched on to the pitching, rolling deck of RFA Argus.

"Most of all," says Tiny, "enjoy it. Right, open the cargo door."

And with that the side door of Merlin, callsign Excalibur 2, slides open, subjecting the back of the cabin to an icy blast and revealing the stern of Argus about 50 yards away.

This is the first time the trainee observer and aircrewman have done this for real. At sea. From the back of a Merlin.

And it'll be the very last time they do it in a Merlin Mk1 for the two student aircrew are among the final 18 men and women to learn how to fly and fight the first generation of the Fleet Air Arm's newest helicopter.

Later this year the Mk2 – same on the outside, a different beast on the inside – arrives at RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall, home of the Merlin since the late 90s.

Before we start mourning the passing of the Mk1 and hailing the new king, there's the small matter of Royal Navy operations to support around the globe with the existing Merlin.

Which is why the students of Course 1/11 – each course selects its own name and badge, in this case 'The Sub Busters' with a 'borrowed' Ghostbusters' logo – have joined Argus for five intensive weeks off the Cornish coast.

We last caught up with the students in the autumn when the emphasis was on the impressive simulators at Culdrose where roughly 60 per cent of Merlin training is carried out. The rest demands the genuine article.

But it's only right at the end of their training – up to four years for pilots, three for observers, two for aircrewmen – that the students get to work with real Merlins on a real ship.

And excellent as the simulators are (the cockpit trainer is mounted on hydraulics for added realism), there is



Last year we visited the 'University of Merlin' at Culdrose. With classes and simulator time finished, 18 students from 824 Naval Air Squadron flew aboard RFA Argus in the Channel for their final training. **Richard Hargreaves** and **LA(Phot) Dave Sterratt** joined them.

no substitute for real English Channel seas, real February wind, real matelots, real Merlin downwash and a real leviathan of battleship grey.

"It feels very familiar, it feels like the simulator, but then you're hit by a sudden rush of blood: this is a lot more serious than a simulator," says student pilot Lt Rich Beaumont.

Fellow pilot Sub Lt Will Legge adds: "There's 100 times more variation in the real world, things that you cannot plan for. And if things go wrong, you cannot just press 'reset'."

Nothing matters more than the first deck landing: safely putting a Merlin on Argus' deck.

"The first deck landing is the milestone. You are pretty nervous beforehand. The deck looks tiny," says Sub Lt Legge.

That's not just a question of perception. Argus might be 28,000 tonnes, but thanks to her substantial superstructure she does pitch and roll quite a bit. And over the years the large flight deck has been shrunk as additions and alterations have eaten into it. Today there are landing spots for three helicopters.

Having touched down safely by day, the trainees must do the same by night – the whole five-week spell on Argus, due to conclude at the beginning of this month, is crawl, walk, run.

So the opening days are dedicated to flying a helicopter at sea, the later sorties are focused on operational missions: submarine hunting, surface searches and the like.

Today, we're still on the basics – if flying a 15-tonne £40m helicopter at sea is ever basic.

So with the cargo door open, Tiny Hart encourages Sub Lt Stephens and LS Conibear to conduct a hi-line transfer: lower a long rope with a hideous propensity to turn into a "snake's wedding", as CPO Hart puts it – a tangled mess.

The line has a weighted bag at the bottom and a small flag with pictograms – not entirely dissimilar to Ikea instructions – so stricken mariners of all

nationalities can understand.

It will not save your life – it merely serves as a guideline for the aircrewman to follow when he's winched down.

The Merlin is guided into position visually by the aircrewman or observer leaning out of the door, providing a constant running commentary to the pilot – with distances in feet and yards, none of that new fangled metric rubbish.

*Right ten yards.
Right five yards.
Easy.
Easy.
Steady.
Come to 50ft.*

The hi-line is lowered mandraulically – fed from the hand and guided on to a tiny spot on Argus' deck a couple of feet square, to simulate the small deck on a yacht.

Once in the hands of the rescuee, it's time for the aircrewman to be winched down, holding on to the line all the way down.

This is where the real world trumps simulation. There is no hi-line transfer simulator.

Today's training session ends abruptly. There are four 90-or-so minute sorties to fit in before nightfall.

"Twenty minutes in the air goes like that," says CPO Hart, clicking his fingers. "Time just flies by."

Despite running out of time, he's reasonably happy with today's session, in particular with the firm instructions Sub Lt Stephens gave to pilot Lt Gregg Weal... another trainee.

"A good observer must have confidence – confidence in his own ability and confidence to give orders because in these situations, you're in control."

The senior rating is one of nearly two dozen experienced aircrew and upwards of 70 engineers from 824 NAS, the Merlin training squadron, who are needed to guide the 18 students and support three helicopters for five weeks. Add to that the 80 RFA and 30-plus Royal Navy members of the ship's company.





g school

As the Navy's aviation training ship, Argus is used by all of the Fleet Air Arm's helicopters to teach trainees the art of flying at sea.

No Merlin can leave the deck without the approval of the RFA sailors on the bridge. The buck ultimately stops with Commanding Officer Capt Gerrard Patterson RFA: it falls upon him to say 'yay' or 'nay' to a sortie.

While he doesn't get involved in the minutiae of aircrew training, he does what he can to help the students along.

"It's important to chat to them, to sit down, have a coffee, calm their nerves," he explains. "We have seen people like them many times. It's about settling down. We're here to help."

So too the permanent RN detachment on board – handlers, engineers, chefs, weapons engineers, medics: 49 men and women in all, under Senior Naval Officer Lt Cdr Spike Hughes.

"Flying is not the end of the working day," he points out. "There are aircraft to move, to maintain, the deck has to be prepared for the following day's flying."

The five-week detachment means long hours for all.

Around 90 minutes before each sortie there's a half-hour-long briefing. A good 90 minutes before that the engineers and handlers have moved the helicopter into position on the flight deck, spread the folded rotor blades whose tips near the speed of sound when running at full power, fix the folded tail boom in place, fill the fuel tanks.

"It's very busy," says 36-year-old LAET Andrew Grove, who's spent 14 years looking after Sea Kings and Merlins.

"Merlin's a good aircraft, but there is always something to do because of the busy flying programme.

"You also still see new faults which we've not come across before. If it were a Sea King there would be some old and bold chief who'd come up with the answer – he's seen it all before – but Merlin's not been around that long.

"It's cold, wet, raining, not an interesting place, but I love going away. This is what I joined up to do."

As well as give the student aircrew experience, the detachment on Argus is an

opportunity to give the engineers a sample of life at sea.

While some of the 824 detachment enjoy single and two-berth en-suite cabins with TVs, many do not and are accommodated in the more austere 18-man messes... which is probably better because it's more akin to the real naval world.

Recently-qualified AET David Braithwaite, 27, is on only his second spell of sea time maintaining Merlins.

Much as his training at Culdrose is invaluable, there are things you can't teach in the classroom or hangar, such as just how dark the flight deck is at night or that the sea = bad for helicopters.

"Corrosion," he sighs. "The salt is terrible. In the morning you can run your fingers over the rotor blades and the salt comes off. It's only once you're on board you realise just how important it is.

"The other thing you learn is that everything takes much longer, everything has to be stowed.

"Being at sea is a good experience. You work much harder, but you learn a lot more. You also get to know people a lot better because you're all living close together."

That's something which is important to the instructors: they're not just interested in how the students perform when airborne or planning missions.

"We're also looking at coping with strain, how they interact on board," explains Lt Cdr Mike Currie, Sea Flight Commander – and the senior instructor aboard.

"You see them outside the cockpit, warts and all."

It is a long road to this point. Pilots will have passed through Dartmouth, gone through 'grading' at Yeovilton – where instructors decide whether they have the ability to assimilate the vast amount of information they'll be taught – then learned the basics of flight at Barkston Heath in Lincolnshire, before the fundamentals of helicopter flight at Shawbury near Shrewsbury.

Only after all that, in November 2010, did they get to grips with a Merlin itself.

Observers learn the nuts and bolts of their job with 750 NAS, also at Culdrose, before joining the 01/11 Sub Busters last January to learn the specifics of a Merlin.

As for the aircrewmembers, they're already matelots, selected for promotion to leading hand and looking for a change of career. The current batch of hopefuls began their training in the summer of 2010.

Once in the hands of 824, it takes 648 hours to train a Merlin pilot – including 164 hours in the simulator, 98 in a real cockpit. Observers spend 121 hours in the sim and 92 airborne and more than 450 hours in the classroom, while to produce an aircrewman – whose main task is to work the combat systems alongside the observer – requires 123 hours in the synthetic Merlin, 71 hours in the skies, and nearly 400 hours receiving instruction on the ground.

For the five weeks on Argus – officially the Operational Flying Training Embarkation – there's one-to-one tuition with students assessed on each sortie. If they fail it, they can try again. Fail it a second time and they're issued a warning. Three warnings, and they've failed the course – although that's pretty rare at this stage in their fledgling careers.

"This is where we put into practice all that has been taught previously – it is almost the final hurdle," says Lt Cdr Currie of the intensive course.

"You have to have a certain temperament to succeed, a certain Fleet Air Arm ethos, but the pilots, observers, aircrewmembers, they are all individuals. There's no one trait and we're certainly not trying to produce carbon copies of ourselves."

These will be the final 'Merlin virgins' to pass through 824 for some time. When the Mk2 arrives, the squadron will be the first to learn how to operate it.

Once the trainers are trained, they can begin passing on their expertise to the rest of the Merlin community, beginning with 820 Naval Air Squadron.

It will be a couple of years yet before the Mk2 begins to deploy on the front line, so don't write off the original model just yet.

"There is no comparison with other aircraft out there," says Lt Cdr Currie, who has 1,800 Merlin flying hours under his belt. "It's pretty awesome when it comes to what it can do – especially the variety.

"Things have moved on since the Mk1. It has served us well – and still serves us well – but it's time to move on."





● Capt Steven Webber RNR

Officer is first to attend course

A CAPTAIN has become the first Royal Naval Reservist to attend the Royal College of Defence Studies in London.

Capt Steven Webber is one of a specially-selected cohort of students from around the world who study at the renowned college, a component of the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, based in Belgrave Square.

The year-long course attracts 90 of the top defence candidates from around the world, with students coming from as far afield as Belize, Japan, the Middle East, Austria, Canada, Israel and China.

Students are selected with one eye on their potential to rise to the top of their respective organisations, and Capt Webber was one of 30 UK students on the course.

The aim of the course is to prepare senior officers and officials to become future leaders from the private and public sectors for high responsibilities in their respective organisations, by developing their analytical powers, knowledge of defence and international security, and strategic vision.

During the course the students study strategic leadership, strategy, politics and world affairs.

Keys posts in exotic places

WITH Maritime Reservists putting in shifts around the world, *Navy News* will be taking a closer look at some of the tasks undertaken by specialists in the Royal Naval Reserve.

Next month we will focus on operations on the Rock with the activities of two ABs in the Gibraltar Squadron.

Future editions will look at the role of Reservists in the UK Maritime Trade Operations office in Dubai, and in the running of a forward logistics site in Djibouti.

Frostbite stokes up the heat on Tyneside

FOG on the Tyne – the fog of war that is, thanks to a realistic military exercise complete with pyrotechnics.

HMS Calliope in Gateshead was transformed into a diplomatic building in the fictitious state of Portlandia for the purposes of Exercise Frostbite, which drew maritime reservists from as far afield as Belfast, Glasgow, Leeds and Nottingham to join their colleagues on the banks of the Tyne.

Much to the bemusement of shoppers at Newcastle Quayside's market, a local uprising necessitated the protection of the Royal Navy while crucial political negotiations on the country's future took place.

The citizens of Newcastle were at odds with the Gateshead community, which featured a number of asylum seekers, and the civil strife started to heat up.

That meant the aforementioned reports and smoke of pyrotechnics from firecrackers and smoke grenades, with angry local protesters and armed reservists testing their counter-terrorism skills as the United Nations did its best to mediate between the warring sides in a powderkeg atmosphere.

With sniper and machine gun assaults being staged by dissidents, trying to prevent the talks going ahead, reservist personnel protected the perimeter of the Portlandian compound, although the defenders sustained some injuries – another useful piece of training in terms of casualty evacuations and battlefield first aid.

The organiser of the 36-hour exercise, CPO Steve MacLennan, was determined to make the training exercise as realistic as possible for the reservists.

"Today's Royal Navy can be called upon to react to a number of scenarios anywhere in the world at any time," he said.

"This exercise gives our newer members the chance to role play realistic situations in a controlled, safe environment based on real rules of engagement."

As part of the exercise the reservists had to cope with angry protesters, press photographers looking for that defining image, armed attackers and worried



● (Above and below right) Royal Naval Reservists tackle a terrorist threat in Gateshead – part of a Maritime Reserves exercise hosted by HMS Calliope
Pictures: Simon Hobson, NCJ Media

asylum seekers – all simulated by various colleagues and supernumeraries.

The exercise also tested the management skills and command leadership of the reservist team, giving them the chance to think and communicate under pressure in a volatile and dangerous situation.

To ensure that participants faced realistic language difficulties could be included, five German Territorial Army reservists played the parts of terrorists and dissident locals.

One of the five, *Gefreiter* Oliver Prasser from Berlin, said that they had all enjoyed their subversive visit to Tyneside.

"Despite being arrested by the RNR on a number of occasions, we have all enjoyed the famous Tyneside hospitality and the camaraderie of our British friends in the Royal Navy.

"This has been a tremendous exercise where all sides have shared their experiences and gained a lot of new skills."



Community pledge to Services

THE Commanding Officer of HMS Sherwood represented the Royal Navy and Royal Naval Reserve at the signing of a new Community Covenant in Nottinghamshire.

Cdr Martin Clegg met representatives from Broxtowe Borough Partnership, Voluntary Action Broxtowe and the local community as they signed the Community Covenant pledge to demonstrate their support for the local Armed Forces community.

Brig Andrew Williams, Commander 49 (E) Brigade, based at Chetwynd Barracks in Chilwell, led other representatives from the Armed Forces in Nottinghamshire in responding on behalf of the military community.

The Leader of Broxtowe Borough Council, Cllr Milan Radulovic, said: "I believe that this Community Covenant will help link our local forces and the wider community in which they live and work to reinforce the council's message and corporate priority of bringing people together."

The Armed Forces Covenant between Broxtowe and the military is part of a national initiative to promote greater understanding between local Armed Forces and civilian communities.

Cdr Clegg said: "I was both pleased and honoured to represent the Royal Navy community – both Reserve and Regular – at this important local event."

"I believe it is crucial to strengthen the bonds between the Armed Forces and the civilian community and I am delighted with the commitment Broxtowe Borough has made in this area."

A Community Covenant is intended to complement, at local level, the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the nation, the Government and the Armed Forces.

The aim of the Community Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the Service community in their area and promote understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community.

The RNR recruits people from all walks of life into roles as diverse as submarine operations and amphibious warfare.

If you live in the East Midlands and are looking for a new challenge or you simply want to find out more about your local RNR unit call HMS Sherwood on 0115 9296373.

Global reach and a balanced force

SAILORS, marines and aviators from the Maritime Reserves are constantly delivering on operations.

Since 2003, at any one time approximately ten per cent have been deployed on operations worldwide.

Tasks have ranged from intelligence support in the Falkland Islands, counter-narcotics in the Caribbean, running Forward Logistics Support in East Africa and protecting the oil rigs of the northern Gulf to supporting the NATO mission in Afghanistan in support of Operation Herrick.

Locations that reservists have been employed in over the past decade span the entire globe and include worldwide operational deployments, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Gulf, Djibouti, Gibraltar and the Caribbean.

The Maritime Reserve delivers trained sailors, marines and aviators across a range of specialisations. They have a primary function, but also have a track record of flexibly delivering additional capability, often utilising their civilian skill sets – a recent high-profile example being that of air engineer Mich Ping, who used her paramedic skills to save life in Afghanistan, as featured in last month's *Navy News*.

Reflecting this flexibility, many individuals have been deployed outside their specialisations, having been trained specifically for the roles undertaken in theatre.

The Royal Navy now reflects the new Whole Force Concept, ensuring that it is supported by the most sustainable, effective, integrated and affordable balance of regular and reserve military personnel.

Offering a range of capability held at lower readiness levels than that provided by their regular counterparts, elements of the Maritime Reserve are activated when required.

In many cases the individual reservist is indistinguishable from their regular counterparts.

This architecture ensures that the wide range of skills required in the maritime environment are delivered in the most cost-effective manner.

The Maritime Reserves provides a critical capability to operational capability.

Immediately after the Security Defence and Security Review 2010 an independent commission – Future Reserves 2020 – considered the UK Reserves Forces and reported in July 2011.

The FR 20 vision is to provide a reserve force that is an integral element of the whole force, optimised to deliver assured capability across all military tasks on operations at home and abroad – harnessing for defence the widest pool of talent in the UK.

It should be a force for good in the community, effectively representing Defence and society, sustained by good formal governance safeguards and an appropriately resourced and equitable reserve proposition.

In the report is the enticing prospect of an expanded Maritime Reserve Force, significantly better-funded and resourced, along with new roles and training opportunities with a promise of increased civilian protection employment in law for both individual reserves and further support for the



employers of reserves personnel.

Following the Government's ringing endorsement of the recommendations of the report, the Maritime Reserves HQ staff have commenced a programme tackling the key challenges towards implementing the

recommendations accepted recently by the Ministry of Defence.

As the plans for all three services are drawn together, the MOD is expected to announce the programme formally, to commence from April 2012.

Medals for medics

THE Duchess of Cornwall has a close link with the medical branch – she is Commodore-in-Chief of the Royal Naval Medical Service.

She flew into Portsmouth to spend the morning presenting medals to medics who have recently returned from Afghanistan.

Families and friends gathered at Whale Island to watch more than 200 men and women from all three Services parade, by far the greatest number coming from the RN, which led the joint medical support for Op Herrick 14.

Some of those on parade were receiving a medal for their first tour of duty, others had already completed several.

All were logistics and medical specialists who provided trauma care, first aid and logistics support to UK and coalition forces.

The medical support was not confined to the hospital in Camp Bastion – men and women from the Close Support Medical Regiment also accompanied 10,000 foot patrols across Helmand, and provided medical care in many forward locations.

Among those receiving medals was Cdr Carol Betteridge, of Queen Alexandra's Royal Navy Nursing Service.

As CO of the military hospital in Camp

Bastion, she was responsible for running the hospital and all its multinational staff.

During the six months of Herrick 14, 374 people worked there, including clinical staff from the USA, Denmark, and Estonia.

Cdr Betteridge said: "Running the hospital was a great challenge, involving people from 61 units, four nations, regulars, reservists and civilians. It was a great example of teamwork in action."

She added: "This is a very special day for us in the Naval Service, because the general public think of land operations in Afghanistan as being Army-specialised, but in fact the Royal Navy has been out there since it all began."

"We can offer skills from land to maritime – it makes us unique."

Among her colleagues at the hospital in Camp Bastion was CPO Tony Thurgood, one of only a handful of highly-specialised RN biomedical scientists.

CPO Thurgood was responsible for the clinical testing and management of in-theatre blood supplies at the hospital.

He said: "This was the third time I had been there, and every time I go the organisation gets bigger and more complex."

"My job involved transfusion support for

the US/UK and coalition forces, also for the Afghan forces and Afghan civilians. We do not differentiate – everyone receives the same high standard of medical care."

He said: "It's hard work, you're working every day, seven days a week, and for that reason you could not deploy for more than a few months at a time."

During Herrick 14, the Navy also took command of the Joint Force Support HQ, under the leadership of Cdre Clive Walker.

The logistics specialists have deployed continuously to Afghanistan to provide the full range of functions without which the Services in theatre could not operate – from catering, accommodation and food to supplies and postal services.

The parade was held on the quarterdeck of HMS Excellent and the Duchess, wearing a raspberry pink wool coat with black fur-trimmed hat and black patent boots, arrived by a helicopter of the Queen's Flight.

After the medals had been presented, there was a short service led by Fr David McLean, who had been Chaplain to the Joint Medical Group for Op Herrick 14.

The Royal Marines Band CTC was there in two roles, providing music and on parade in the Bandies' role as casualty handlers.

Other medals were presented by Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Charles Montgomery, Surgeon General Surg Vice Admiral Philip Rafaelli and Chief Naval Logistics Officer Rear Admiral David Steel.

Vice Admiral Rafaelli said: "During this past year members of the Defence Medical Services have continued to provide an excellence in medical care in Afghanistan that is at the very forefront of emergency casualty care, the envy of civilian colleagues, and delivering to a standard unsurpassed anywhere in the world."

The RN Medical Services comprise more than 1,400 men and women from all medical disciplines, who provide medical care to the RN and Royal Marines at sea and on land.

Primary care is provided through 21 medical centres ashore and 46 vessels afloat.

Hospital care is provided in partnership with the NHS, primarily at MOD hospital units in Plymouth, Portsmouth, Frimley Park, Northallerton, Peterborough, and Birmingham.



Pictures: LA(Phot) Simmo Simpson



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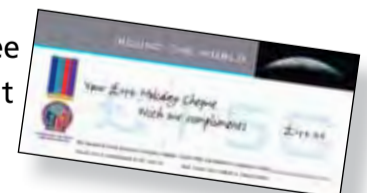
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Keeping

THE new Commander-in-Chief Fleet, Admiral George Zambellas, has a simple philosophy: *Let people get on with their job.*

Since taking up his responsibilities for all aspects of Fleet Operations in January, he has clearly signalled his intentions: Put operations first, be prepared to take risks, and only do that which what needs to be done.

Talking to *Navy News*, he said: "When I talk to sailors, Royal Marines and our RFA colleagues I am struck by how good their morale is when they are preparing for or on operations.

"Where they do get downhearted is in dealing with the bureaucracy and seemingly 'for the sake of it' processes that characterise much of their time back in base port or within their units – harbour hassle and red tape.

"That's something I hear a lot, so I intend to cut down on it – and I have challenged others to do the same. If we are to make lives easier, we need to find new ways of doing things. I want Admirals to lead the fight – and show the way."

If it doesn't seem the easiest time to take over the Navy's top operational job, following the SDRS with its much-criticised carrier capability gap and a bruising series of redundancies, there's no hint of pessimism on the part of the new Commander-in-Chief.

On the contrary, he is full of optimism that the Navy's case is strong. "The Royal Navy is pivotal to national prosperity and success. We are essential to national security. Why? Because, in our interdependent society and world, we help protect the economy, we provide security at sea, we help prevent conflict, we promote partnerships, we provide humanitarian assistance, and we are ready to fight.

"If you look at the strategic circumstances we're in now, I believe that there is a real focus on the importance of the sea and a clear recognition among Ministers of how much the Navy contributes – whether it's protecting the Olympics, innovative and effective maritime operations off Libya last year, success against pirates and drug smugglers or in the hundreds of other operations we carry out every year."

He added; "The maritime domain is complex, specialist and dangerous. But it is our domain and we own it.

"We've fought for years to get better investment in the Fleet, and the new ships, submarines and aircraft used to come into service are a major re-capitalisation.

"I pay credit to all that hard work."

Over the next few years the Navy will see a massive programme of new equipment, with the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers, Type 45 destroyers, Astute-class submarines, jets and helicopters, the successor to the Vanguard-class, the Type 26 to replace the Type 23s and the next-generation of support shipping all either delivered or in build.

Admiral Zambellas said: "The equipment that is being procured for us is extraordinary compared to what it once was. When I joined up, there may well have been 50 frigates, but most of the time the equipment was poor.

"We had twin-barrelled guns, with one barrel giving up when you fired the other, the helo might get airborne for as little as eight minutes before it ran out of fuel and the communication systems were awful. In my first frigate, the captain was admonished for telling the truth and saying the most advanced thing in his ship was his pocket calculator.

He added: "You just can't say that now. Today, we've got fewer frigates – that's life – but they're fantastically capable. The equipment programme is really impressive and all of these new ships, submarines and aircraft are a forward investment that speaks volumes for the relevance and authority which the nation seeks from the Navy.

"If you're a first-division nation you've got to have a first-division Navy."

As a former helicopter pilot, Admiral Zambellas is just as

focused on the carrier programme and the future of the Fleet Air Arm.

He said: "I do detect a pessimism in some quarters of defence about the carriers, and I find this surprising when you consider their agreed strategic role and the substantial progress being made – not least the fact that tens of thousands of tonnes of steel are already being formed into the building blocks of the Queen Elizabeth-class.

"The 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review committed the UK to a future carrier capability because the utility of what we call 'carrier strike' was recognised and its place at the heart of our national defence posture was understood.

"The visit to Stokes Bay last spring by the US carrier USS George H W Bush cemented in the minds of many the wisdom of continuing our investment in carrier-based air.

"And then, the utility of maritime strike operations was demonstrated, as sea-based and flexible, with the Army and Navy bringing together more than ten years of attack helicopter integration work into operational effect off Libya – a complementary and very effective contributor to the NATO air campaign.

"We also have FAA personnel serving on exchange with the US and on carrier operations in the Gulf and in the skies over Afghanistan.

He added: "As for the Fleet Air Arm, it's intrinsic to the Navy and it's here to stay. There is a significant transformational challenge ahead of the FAA – every single type of helicopter the Navy operates will be changed or upgraded in the next five years – but it is also a once-in-a-generation opportunity to establish very strong foundations for the future of maritime airpower in this country and the unique expertise we in the Navy bring to the table.

"The Fleet Air Arm is getting the investment it needs because it makes a massive contribution to the entire range of defence activities, from countering pirates and drug smugglers to battlefield operations whether in Afghanistan with Lynx, Sea King Mk 4 and the SKASaCs, or off Libya where two of the Apache pilots were Navy aircrew and the attack helicopters were protected by FAA airborne surveillance."

HOW does CinC Fleet respond to the observation that there has been a feeling in Royal Navy for some time that the Navy's work is largely unseen and unsung, and that 'sea-blindness' prevails among the general population, albeit with spikes of interest – for example, there is considerable excitement in the national media at the moment about the Strait of Hormuz and the Falklands?

Both regions are in fact routine business for the Navy, as Admiral Zambellas points out.

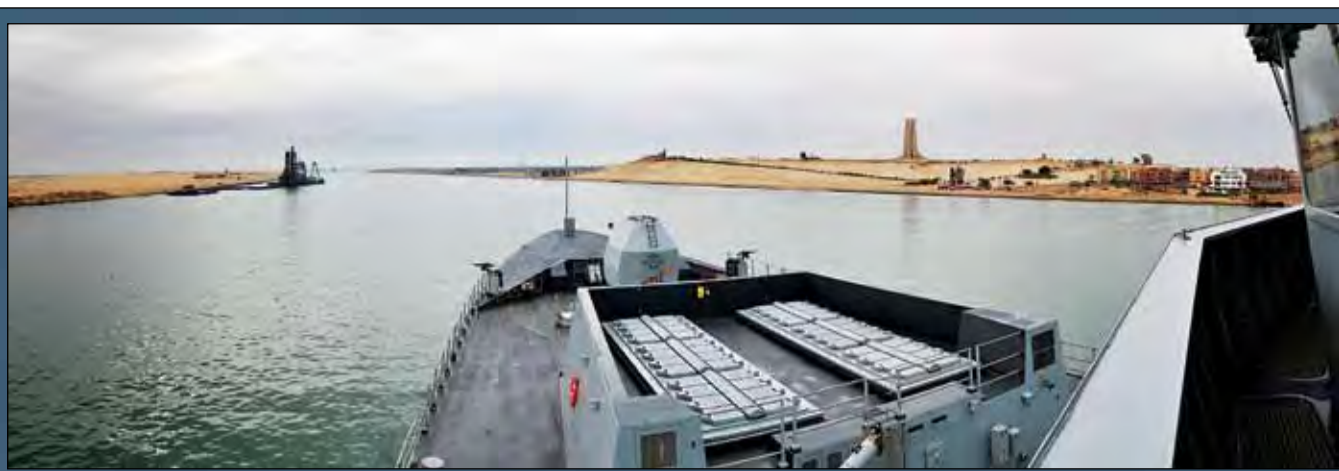
He said: "I don't want to go into operational specifics but as you know, we have been operating in the Gulf day in, day out for over 30 years.

"It is our persistent presence which provides regional reassurance, and an important contribution to stability and security.

"The same holds true in the South Atlantic. I'm often asked whether we can attend to our responsibilities down South at the same time as we are protecting UK interests in the Gulf and the answer is 'Yes. We've been doing both for decades.'

"We play our full part in the South Atlantic alongside the air and land forces which are also permanently stationed in the region.

He added: "People don't tend to realise how far the strategic and operational context in the Falklands has changed, compared to what it was 30 years ago; our capabilities, our readiness, our physical presence are all significantly improved. We're differently postured for defence, but strong."



A T45 at 30°E

WITH the dominating twin pillars of the Great War memorial to those who defended these narrow waters towering over her, HMS Daring makes her inaugural passage of the Suez Canal – the latest 'first' in her maiden deployment.

It took 12 hours for the Type 45 destroyer to cover the 120-mile length of the canal, emerging in the Gulf of Suez – and officially enter her area of operations.

As one of the world's 'choke points' – narrow stretches of water (in the canal's case just 205 metres/670ft across) through which high volumes of maritime traffic pass – Royal Navy ships and submarines using Suez are on alert with upper-deck guns manned throughout the passage.

The ship's force protection teams were at full readiness during the 12-hour transit, supervised by the Gunnery Officer, Lt Jason Hannigan.

"We have trained repeatedly to prepare for this demanding passage. The team performed well and the ship made the transit through the Suez exactly as planned: it was a particularly proud day for me in my career in the Royal Navy," he said.

Being on the upper deck did permit them to catch some impressive sights, among them the imposing memorial on Lake Timsah, near Ismailia, to those who defended the canal in the Great War, and the 404m (1,325ft) span of the Suez Canal Bridge (also known as the Friendship Bridge) which binds Africa with Asia – and is pictured below.

With its 70m (230ft) clearance there was plenty of space even for Daring, whose Sampson radar (the large spiky spinning egg on top of the Type 45's trademark main mast) sits around 30m (100ft) above the warship's waterline.

"Some of the sights from the canal were spectacular, particularly passing under the Friendship Bridge. HMS Daring made a remarkable sight and was part of long convoy of large merchant vessels of all descriptions," said her Commanding Officer Capt Guy Robinson.

Given the post-Suez mission, there could be no thought of sailing through the canal without receiving a final 'service and MOT'.

For that you need a good 'garage', and there's none better in the region than the NATO FORACS (FORces sensors and weapons Accuracy Check Site) range in Souda Bay, Crete.

FORACS tests the myriad of sensors, communications, radars and sonars to ensure they're in full working order, allowing NATO ships to pass crucial information to each other accurately; RN warships have been using Souda Bay facility since 1984.

The NATO complex is also home to the Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Centre, whose *pièce de résistance* is a former Hellenic Navy training ship, the Aris, now used to allow visiting ship's companies to hone their board and search skills – for board and search will be at the heart of Daring's seven-month deployment.

The Type 45 destroyer's RN and Royal Marines boarding team took their training to the next level courtesy of 'simunition' – simulated ammunition, which possesses most of the characteristics of the real thing, minus the blood – vessel clearance drills and practising approaching pirate vessels.

As this is Daring's first tour of duty there's considerable interest

in all the ship does – from a sizeable turnout when she left Portsmouth earlier this month, to a bevy of high-profile visitors.

Among the latter was the head of the Hellenic Navy, Vice Admiral Kosmas Christidis, who belatedly took up an offer made by his British counterpart three years ago to look around Britain's first Type 45 destroyer.

The admiral and his staff were given a comprehensive tour of the 8,500-tonne warship, as was Cdre The Hon Michael Cochrane, Commodore Portsmouth Flotilla who's responsible for all Pompey-based warships and visits as many as possible on deployment to see how they're faring and to talk with the ship's company.

In Daring's case, she's fighting fit. Literally. As well as being Britain's first Type 45 destroyer, crammed with 80 per cent of equipment that's new to the Royal Navy, she's also the first to receive the new Spartan Rig.

The rig is being tested by Daring's physical training instructor LPT Simon Radford and the ship's company as part of a trial ahead of a new 'strength test' which will be introduced into the Royal Navy in January 2013.

Also on the 'fit for life' front, the ship's football team managed to get ashore for a match against Souda Bay Naval Base.

In an epic confrontation (the ship's description, not ours) Daring were victorious 2-1.

LS(AWW) Adam Sommerville, one of the goal scorers, said: "It was a tough match against a well-worked-up side, we were really grateful for the game and it was a good chance to get ashore during the busy programme."

The first stop once through Suez was the Jordanian port of Aqaba – famously liberated by Lawrence of Arabia a century ago... and today home of the Royal Jordanian Navy, giving one of the UK's longest-standing allies in the region the chance to 'play' with the cutting-edge warship.

Daring's Royal Marines seized the opportunity to conduct board and search exercises alongside Jordanian counterparts on a specially-built training ship.

The Royal Navy's senior commander east of Suez, Cdre Simon Ancona, UK Maritime Component Commander, flew to Aqaba to meet Capt Robinson and crew as well as senior Jordanian Naval personnel.

D32 hosted more than 75 guests and VIPs, including the UK's Ambassador to Jordan, for whom a demonstration was laid on.

This was followed by a visit by the King of Jordan's youngest son, Prince Hashem. Ship's tours were provided for Aqaba schoolchildren and Jordanian naval trainees.

The visit to Aqaba gave Daring's crew a short period of downtime on their seven-month deployment. A large number of them visited the dramatic ruins at the ancient city of Petra, carved into the rock 60 or so miles north of the port.

AB(CIS) Chrissy Howie said: "Having visits like this after working for long periods at sea is fantastic.

"The ruins were amazing; seeing such ancient sites in the sand-swept desert was a rare opportunity."

Her ship has now taken her place alongside other allied warships and auxiliaries under the banner of the international Combined Maritime Task Forces, striving to keep criminal activities on the waters of the Middle East in check and to foster close relations with the region's many nations.

Pictures: LA(Phot) Keith Morgan, HMS Daring



Britain in the first division



● The new CinC Fleet chats with LCH Paul Pringle in HMS Illustrious' galley during a visit before she sailed for winter exercises in Norway and (below) paying a visit to the carrier's Flyco

Pictures: LA(Phot) Dean Nixon, HMS Illustrious

"There is no doubt about the UK's continued commitment to the Islands and those who live there."

However, the fact remains that a smaller Navy, however capable, cannot match its historic global reach. One of the challenges of the Commander-in-Chief's job will be concentrating the Navy's efforts on what needs doing most.

He said: "True, the Navy won't be as big as we have been used to, and its global footprint will be tightly focused on the regions where our national interests are most closely engaged."

"It is this uncertainty about the world which needs a balanced Fleet – at a scale which is strategically credible and which is held at appropriate readiness."

He added: "We can't keep doing things as we have in the past. We will have to change shape and we will have to prioritise the things we do. That is a challenge for politicians to determine, and for the Navy to achieve."

"Our ambition last year was to take some of the pressure out of the operational programme, but this was frustrated to some extent by the events of the Arab Spring, not least in Libya."

"In the event, we did in fact have sufficient capability to meet

the range of missions that fell to the Naval Service – thanks largely to our foresight in preparing and activating the Response Force Task Group and the fact that some of the capability reductions envisaged by SDSR had not yet taken effect."

For several years a frequent complaint among Service personnel has centred on this relentless pace of operations, exacerbated by the recent round of redundancies.

Admiral Zambellas said: "I don't under-estimate the impact of this range of missions on our people, and I'm thinking about the Naval Service in its widest sense – the surface flotilla, the Royal Marines whose operational tempo both serving at sea and ashore has been extraordinary; the Submarine Service, which continues to meet the demands of lengthy deployments; our RFA colleagues who are right there in the front line as ever; and our civilian support staff, from HQs to operating bases, contractors and industry partners. Everyone is working very hard to deliver for the country."

"Our people really believe in what they do – and despite the pressures, want to do it well."

"And I am very aware that

the last few years have been far from easy for our people and their families. The Navy Board's focus throughout the redundancy programme has been to make sure that people are as well-informed as possible about the process and their choices; to be completely transparent about the process; and to treat those being made redundant with the dignity they deserve while ensuring they get the support they need.

"We also need to make sure that our people can be confident in the care they receive if they are injured on operations, confident in the kit and the force protection we give them, wherever they are serving and whatever the mission."

Promoting his principle of 'Mission Command' will, he believes, remove some of the burden of processes and allow people to take more responsibility. He has no doubt at all that they will rise to the challenge.

He explained: "Look what's happened in Helmand and Libya – we're prepared to use violence for strategic purposes, yet when it comes to everyday management, it's almost as though someone throws a switch inside the head and people become so much more cautious."

"We must re-introduce to the

way we manage our business the same inventive, confident, disciplined, aggressive spirit that is so instinctively apparent on operations. And we must be ready to accept that in releasing the reins, mistakes will be made – but making and learning from mistakes is essential to the growth of experience and authority."

"If they are doing their best, if they are learning from them, then mistakes are OK – they are part of change."

He said: "I'm a pretty challenging sort of character. I think being challenging is what our Service has always been known for, it's kind of instinctive to me."

"The Navy spirit hasn't been knocked out of people, it's completely there – and the unsinkable humour."

"Our youngsters are our future and I have never been more confident that they will match and exceed what my generation has achieved."

He added: "I think this job 20 years ago might have been much grander, but I don't think it was intellectually challenging in the way it is now, for all of us. With the combination of leadership, business and change opportunities it's a terribly exciting place to be."



Into the heart of darkness

IN 2000 Captain George Zambellas was in command of the frigate HMS Chatham (pictured above with HMS Illustrious) when she was sent to Sierra Leone on Operation Palliser, initially to help with the evacuation of non-combatants, then to support the Government, subsequently to support the release of hostages held by the rebel 'West Side Boys.'

He said: "Sierra Leone was a Joint operation – with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to the fore. Although there was no Colonel Kurtz waiting at the end of the river, there were horrors and risk. The West Side Boys were a brutally vicious bunch, chopping the limbs off children, brutalising them and genuinely threatening Freetown. A 'classic' terror campaign."

"The then Brigadier David Richards, the one-star joint force commander, was operating tactically and politically at the same time, and had the forces he needed to reverse the situation."

"My small contribution was as a potential source of naval gunfire to support the fighting inland, where the Marines and Paras were busy in jungle warfare."

"In an attempt to get our ship to bring its guns to bear we realised the nature of the contact battle was too far inland to achieve a traditional coastal guideline, so the then Cdre Neil Kilgour said 'do you think you can go up the river?'"

"We looked at the charts, there had been a 1960s buoyed channel which went up to a disused jetty used for mineral extraction by small coasters. So off we went."

"When we got round the first corner, there were no buoys. They had all been nicked for scrap and we had no idea what the depth was like or where the channel boundaries were because the huge flood waters had shifted sandbanks around, and the low lying land and mud banks had no useful navigation marks."

"We just went up as far as we could, in darkness, with some rudimentary navigation techniques, before we ran out of water. It was an extraordinary experience because a Batch 3 Type 22 is not small, and I didn't quite know how to turn her around and I kept thinking: 'If I get stuck on a mud bank up this river, it's not going to kill anyone but my God it's going to embarrass the operation and the Navy...'"

"We would have been stuck there for months until they'd found some way of getting us off."

"We slipped past Freetown in the darkness and went upriver by night and it was extraordinary. There was a tropical storm raging, and lightning. The boys and girls loved it, quietly professional on the bridge, in the ops room and in the engine room, but ready for anything – just what they joined for – and cracking terrible jokes – typical Navy."

"We eventually three-point-turned our way out and came out before first light, and next night did same thing again, without getting stuck. Lucky really. And, sadly, we still couldn't get the gun within range."

Capt Zambellas was awarded the DSC, thereby becoming the first Commander-in-Chief since Admiral Lord West to hold an operational honour.



Seeing the bigger picture

GEORGE Zambellas was born in Swansea in 1958 and educated at Stowe and Southampton University, where he read Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering.

When he joined the Royal Navy in 1980, he had no grand plan beyond a short service career as a helicopter pilot, and his initial tribal instincts were firmly with the Fleet Air Arm.

He explained: "I joined the service as Supplementary List (short career) aircrew and spent the first ten years focused entirely and exclusively on flying, so my roots are firmly established in the Fleet Air Arm, its character, its aspirations and its prejudices."

"I can't pretend this strong tribal interest isn't still there, because maritime aviation is difficult and dangerous. It is not like flying to a stationary airfield. But, with the breadth of my subsequent experience, there's a discipline involved in making sure I look after all corners of the Service."

He explained: "After being shoved, elbowed and pushed from the back of the ship to the front, I was told to get my ticket, and

become a 'proper' seaman officer!"

A series of commands followed, starting with HMS Cattistock. In 1993, he was posted to Northwood as a Fleet aviation operations officer before promotion in 1995 and command of the frigate HMS Argyll.

After serving in MoD Centre Staff and Higher Command and Staff Course, he became Deputy Flag Officer Sea Training, responsible for training Royal Navy and foreign warships and auxiliaries.

In 2005 he commanded the Amphibious Task Group. He said: "When I became amphibious commander in 2005 I could see that our inadequate understanding of the land force perspective was one of our greatest weaknesses and we had failed to capitalise on the opportunities that it gave us."

"And by going to be the amphibious commander I immersed myself in that, I got to know the Royal Marines pretty well and that's been an enduring professional and personal pleasure for me."

"So what I feel I can bring to the game is a genuine pan-tribal perspective. The area I am

least qualified to speak about is the Submarine Service, but as I spent my first ten years trying to sink them, I have a rough idea of what they look like and how they operate, and I am learning fast now about the submariner community and culture, which has changed a lot too."

His political instincts were sharpened in 2002-04, when he had the opportunity to work as Personal Staff Officer to two Chiefs of the Defence Staff, Lord Boyce and Lord Walker.

He said: "It was a really big moment in terms of my apprenticeship in defence, as it allowed me to see the entire machine in its operational, political and departmental context and work out what I could and couldn't do and where I could try to help."

"I have always enjoyed the political perspective, which is part of the maritime viewpoint, because we think as a 'borderless' capability. It's not learned, just built in. On operations, we think regionally, not locally. It's intuitive and I don't find it difficult to see things that way."

"As the PSO, you don't of

course own the plan, but what you see and what you learn is extraordinary. Then, when you're ready, and working with the team, you can try to help influence outcomes."

In 2006, as a rear admiral, he was appointed Chief of Staff (Transformation), leading the change programme to design and deliver the Fleet's new approach to the generation of maritime capability and support to operations. "This was a fascinating time – just the beginning of our journey."

In 2007, he was Commander United Kingdom Maritime Force and, in October 2008, Chief of Staff (Operations) at the UK's Permanent Joint Headquarters at Northwood.

Promoted vice admiral in January 2011, he was appointed Deputy Commander-in-Chief Fleet, Chief of Staff to the Navy Command Headquarters, and the Chief Naval Warfare Officer.

In January this year George Zambellas was promoted full admiral and became Commander-in-Chief Fleet and Commander Allied Maritime Command Northwood.

Out of sight, out of mind...

WHEN the first tremors of the Falklands Conflict were felt more than 30 years ago there was a good deal of ignorance about the dispute in the UK.

Some apparently believed the Falklands to be a group of islands off Scotland.

It did not take long for the familiar outline of the islands to burn themselves into the public consciousness.

The South Atlantic archipelago of some 700 island covers an area of 4,700 square miles – a little smaller than Northern Ireland.

There is a population of around 3,000, the majority of whom live in the capital city, Stanley (and it is a city, by virtue of its cathedral).

The rest are scattered in tiny settlements in 'Camp', as the countryside is known.

And it is this population which lies at the heart of the dispute between Britain and Argentina, as the UK Government stands firmly by their right to self-determination – and the Falkland Islanders stand firmly by the *status quo*.

The Falklands lie 300 miles from the nearest point on the South American mainland, and contrary to popular belief are not a particularly wet and cold place – the temperature ranges from 24°C to -5°C, and with an average of 23in of rain per annum it is drier than Bristol and sunnier than many places in the UK.

It is, however, a windy place – the average wind speed in Stanley is 16 knots, and gales are frequent, particularly in the austral winter.

The early economy of the islands depended very much on its position on the route round Cape Horn; first as a resupply post, then as a coaling station in the days of steam.

When trade dropped off, diverted through the Panama Canal, agriculture (particularly sheep farming) took over, but the modern Falklands economy now sees a greater share of income from fishing rights and tourism.

The presence of wildlife such as penguins, seals and sealions draws tourists, who also visit the battlefields – many sites remain as they were when the fighting ceased in 1982.

There has also been a rapid rise in the number of cruise liners visiting Stanley.

Bridge-building with Argentina in the 1990s has given way to a deterioration in relations in more recent years; both the British Government and Falkland Islanders express regret at this trend, and have repeatedly said they will seek opportunities to work more closely with Argentina in areas of mutual interest in the South Atlantic – but only if these areas do not infringe upon the British sovereignty of the islands.

A tale of Desire and far-flung territories

NO ONE can be sure who first discovered the Falklands.

Signs of human activity that long pre-dates European involvement have been found, but no evidence remains of any settlements.

The islands possibly featured on 16th Century maps, but the level of inaccuracy means there is

no certainty over which islands or land mass they refer to.

Elizabethan navigator and explorer John Davis is a contender for the first sighting.

Although best-known for his Arctic voyages, the English adventurer accompanied privateer Thomas Cavendish on an ill-fated voyage to seek a route to China via

Cape Horn in 1591.

Beset by winter in the Magellan Straits, Davis' ship *Desire* (120 tons) became separated from Cavendish and, running before a storm on bare poles because the rigging was in such poor repair, Davis was driven into a group of islands which could have been the Falklands, arriving on August 14 1592.

However, the earliest sighting that has been conclusively authenticated was by Dutch sailor Sebald van Weert in 1600.

Yet it was almost a century later, in January 1690, that the first recorded landing took place.

English privateer John Strong landed a party from his ship *Welfare* at Bold Cove on West Falkland, seeking food and water.

Strong named the channel dividing the two main islands Falkland Sound, after sponsor Viscount Falkland.

By the 1720s the islands in the archipelago were variously known as Hawkins' Land, the Sebaldines (after the aforementioned Dutchman), the Anican Islands, the Coast of the Assumption, Les Iles Nouvelles and Belgia Austral.

At around the same time, Royal Navy strategists were turning their minds to practicalities; Cdre George Anson noted the value of the Falklands, even in peacetime, as a staging post for expeditions to the Pacific, let alone as a stronghold near the rich Spanish trade routes.

By this time the Treaty of Tordesillas had become virtually meaningless.

That curious treaty, signed in 1494, allocated new lands beyond Europe into Spanish or Portuguese hands, no matter who discovered or claimed it, depending on which side of a specific meridian they fell.

As the treaty stemmed from papal decrees and made no allowance for other nations, it was given a stiff ignoring by the English, the French and the Dutch, and as Spanish and Portuguese power and influence waned, other countries staked their own claims with little hindrance.

It was actually the French who first settled the Falklands in early 1764, with Breton nobleman de Bougainville establishing a colony of around 30 people on East Falkland.

He sailed in April but his ships returned in the January of the following two years with more settlers.

De Bougainville named the islands les Isles Malouines after his home port, St Malo – hence the Argentine name of Las Malvinas.

But pressure from the Spanish, in part citing the Treaty of Tordesillas, led the French to hand over their new colony for around £25,000 compensation, and Fort St Louis officially became Puerto de la Soledad on April 1 1767.

However, by this time there was another thriving settlement, this time at Port Egmont on Saunders Island, north of West Falkland.

Established in January 1765 by Cdre John Byron's expedition, which claimed the haven and neighbouring islands for King George III, Port Egmont became a permanent settlement the following year when Capt John MacBride's flotilla arrived to take possession of the Falkland Islands and explore it further.

In late 1766 the British discovered Fort St Louis; both sides reiterated their claim to the archipelago, but agreed to differ and parted on good terms.

Another meeting, this time in 1769 between the Spanish of Puerto de la Soledad and the British, did not go so well – again, both parties claimed the islands, but the Spanish returned to Port Egmont in 1770 in force, throwing out the British.

But with Britain threatening war with Spain, the settlers were allowed to return to Port Egmont the following year and all their belongings were handed back.

The British withdrew again in 1776, this time on economic grounds, but they left a plaque asserting their claim to the islands.

The Spanish did likewise in 1811, leaving the Falklands to transient groups of sealers.

In November 1820, Col David Jewett, an American, claimed formal possession of the islands in the name of the Government of Buenos Aires, but only stayed for a few days. At that stage the Government of Buenos Aires, which had declared independence from Spain in 1816, was not recognised by Britain or any other foreign power.

The Islands remained uninhabited until June 10 1829 when the Buenos Aires Government outlined its claim to the islands – 'inheriting' them from the previous Spanish administration – and giving Frenchman Louis Vernet commercial and political rights. Britain protested that her sovereignty had been violated.

Vernet's rule was ended when, having arrested three American ships in a sealing dispute, a visit by the USS *Lexington* in 1831 broke up his settlement at Puerto de la Soledad.

The apparent political vacuum resumed until September 1832, when the Government of Buenos Aires appointed Juan Mestivier as civil and political governor on an interim basis.

The British once again protested to Buenos Aires that this appointment infringed British sovereignty over the Islands, and in January 1833, HMS *Clio* arrived at Puerto de la Soledad and told the 24-man garrison that had arrived with Mestivier to leave – Mestivier himself had by that time been murdered by his compatriots.

British control was reinstated, and the islands have remained under British administration – with the exception of two months in 1982 – ever since.

Surrender telex is up for auction

A COPY of the original Falklands Conflict surrender telex, announcing the laying-down of arms by the Argentine forces under *General de Brigada* Mario Menéndez in June 1982, is to be sold at auction early next month.

The Bonhams Marine Sale takes place immediately following the 30th anniversary of the Argentine invasion of the Falklands on April 2 1982.

Sent by the commander of the British land forces, Maj Gen Jeremy Moore to the Government Communications HQ in the UK on June 14, the text of the document reads:

"HQ LFF1 Port Stanley. In Port Stanley at 9 o'clock pm Falklands Island time tonight 14th June 1982, Major General Menendes [sic] surrendered to me all the Argentine Forces in East and West Falkland, together with all their impedimenta.

"Arrangements are in hand to assemble the men for return to Argentina, to gather in their arms and equipment, and to mark and make safe their munitions.

"The Falkland Islands are once more under the government desired by their inhabitants. God Save the Queen. Signed JJ Moore. Msg Ends."

The Chairman of Bonhams, Robert Brooks, said: "Not since the Second World War has British territory been invaded by foreign force and then liberated following military action – between April and June 1982 the world was thus mesmerised by the unexpected and extraordinary events unfolding in the South Atlantic.

"This remarkable document encapsulates perfectly the very moment of total capitulation by Argentina's 12,000-strong occupying forces in the Falklands – it is a rare find of great historical importance and will excite considerable interest from around the world."

Merchant Navy display

AN EXHIBITION marking the Merchant Navy's contribution to the Falklands campaign will be staged in Central London in April and May.

More than 70 Merchant Navy-manned ships took part in Operation Corporate, transporting troops, equipment and supplies 8,000 miles to the front line.

The exhibition, organised by the Wellington Trust, will be staged on board HQS Wellington on the Victoria Embankment, opposite Temple underground station.

It will include photographs, documents, books, flags and other memorabilia, mostly from private collections of individuals who volunteered to sail south.

The ship will be open each Sunday and Monday from April 1 until May 28 between 1100 and 1700, and will cost £3 per head (under 16s free).

Organised groups may visit at other times by prior arrangement – contact info@thewellingtontrust.com



● Sir Max Hastings with members of 45 Commando RM at Ballachulish Quarry in Lochaber
Picture: LA(Phot) Andy Laidlaw

Journalist is back with 45 Commando

ROYAL Marines from 45 Commando in Arbroath welcomed a special guest to a recent mountain training and abseiling serial at Ballachulish Quarry near Glencoe in Scotland.

The guest in question was journalist and broadcaster Sir Max Hastings, who had embedded with 45 Commando at the start of the Falklands Conflict back in 1982, and who – with a BBC film crew – was now making a documentary

on the legacy of that conflict, 30 years on.

Despite a fear of heights, Sir Max scaled the slate cliff faces to talk to young members of Command Company, who were being put through their paces by the unit's crack team of Mountain Leaders.

CO Lt Col Mike Tanner, who was overseeing the event, said: "Sir Max asked the guys to remark on what the conflict means to them, men who weren't even born at the time of the Falklands War.

"It was a successful day's filming, and we were delighted to host Sir Max, especially given his history with our unit."

One of the cameras used by the film crew was similar to that seen in the recent BBC programme *Earth Flight* – a 'hover-camera' costing £10,000 – which provided aerial pictures using a remote control.

Sir Max's programme is due to screen in the first week of April.

From scrap to conflict...

THE first rumblings of the Falklands Conflict were heard on the barren, remote shores of South Georgia, 700 miles east of the Falklands.

Derelict whaling stations were still managed by a British firm under Crown leases, and a contract was signed with Argentine scrap metal dealer Constantino Davidoff in 1978 giving him an option on the old equipment.

That option was taken up in 1981, but there were diplomatic irregularities from the outset, culminating in a party of workmen and Argentine marines landing from an Argentine Navy ship on March 19 1982 at Leith on South

Georgia, raising an Argentine flag and defacing a notice warning against unofficial landings.

Ice patrol ship HMS *Endurance* was ordered from Stanley the following day with a small detachment of Royal Marines, and on arriving at South Georgia kept a watching brief as the diplomats laboured thousands of miles away.

But in the cold south the heat was rising; an Argentine corvette took up station between South Georgia and the Falklands in case *Endurance* removed the landing party; simultaneously, Argentine naval and amphibious forces were taking part in major exercises in the River Plate estuary.

Argentina, misreading the signs (including Defence Secretary John Nott's announcement of the axing of the UK's ice patrol ship), believed a short, unopposed military intervention would bring about the long-desired possession of the islands, diverting attention from the economic and social woes at home.

But contingency plans were honed in Europe, with RN warships and support vessels earmarked in case the situation escalated.

On March 31 intelligence clearly indicated that Argentina was preparing for an imminent invasion, and the final diplomatic efforts were made, including a

direct appeal to President Ronald Reagan to use his influence on the leader of the Argentine Government (the infamous *junta*), General Leopoldo Galtieri.

By this stage a regular roulement of Royal Marines in the Falklands was under way, but Governor Rex Hunt asked that the outgoing troops remain – a total of fewer than 90 commandos.

Endurance was ordered to head back to Stanley, and back in London politicians and senior Naval officers waited to see what effect the last-minute diplomatic flurry of activity would have.

They would not have long to wait...



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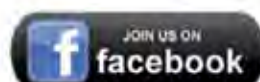


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Japanese link for 829 Squadron

A FORMAL link has been established between 829 Naval Air Squadron and a Japanese unit.

Squadron 111 of the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force signed a sister squadron agreement with the Culdrose-based squadron, which provides helicopters for ships' flights.

829 operates the Merlin aircraft – the Royal Navy's version of the EH-101 which the Japanese squadron uses for minesweeping and transport operations.

Squadron 111 previously flew the Sikorsky MH-53E Sea Dragon, and in August 1996 formed an affiliation with US Naval Squadron HELMINERON Fifteen (HM-15) – the Blackhawks – in order to exchange information on issues such as air safety and airframe maintenance.

With the recent introduction of the Japanese Merlin – the MCH-101 – the Japanese force has been planning to promote an information-sharing link with the Royal Navy.

That process began in earnest last May when the Royal Navy made an official approach with a proposal to share information, and the process of cementing the affiliation was achieved through the offices of the British Defence Attaché in Tokyo, Capt Andy Edney.

Capt Edney and the Commanding Officer of 829 Squadron, Cdr Martin Bravery, paid a visit to Squadron 111 late last year, with formal briefings and tours during the first day and an evening at a traditional Japanese hostelry by way of introducing Japanese culture to the squadron boss.

On the second day Cdr Bravery gave his hosts an overview of the way the Royal Navy operates its Merlins, including safety management systems, and the visit concluded with the formal signing on an agreement, with a promise of future exchanges of information and further visits.

Neptune service

PERSONNEL at Clyde Naval Base remembered the loss of 764 men who died 70 years ago when the cruiser HMS Neptune struck a mine in the Mediterranean.

The ship was leading a raiding squadron off Tripoli in shallow waters when it hit the mine – only one man survived the sinking, making it one of the worst RN losses in World War 2.

The name has since been taken up by Clyde Naval Base, and short act of remembrance was held at the establishment's main mast to recall the loss of seven decades ago.



● The restaurant of the Royal Sailors' Rest in Portsmouth

Pastoral workers stay true to Aggie

GONE are the music halls, the grog shops, the dingy little pubs and the various other 'houses of ill-repute' that used to crowd round the gates of the Victorian dockyards.

Gone are the grand oases of calm reflection and Christian ethics which appeared in the midst of the 'houses of ill-repute'.

Indeed, in some cases, gone are the dockyards that provided trade for both types of establishment.

But despite the massive social changes to both society and the Royal Navy, the spirit of Aggie Weston and the Royal Sailors' Rests lives on.

The history of RSRs – known throughout the Navy as Aggies – dates back to the 1870s, although the 'Mother of the Navy' and her sister had by that time already set up a coffee bar for troops to relax in while stationed in the Westons' home city of Bath.

Her first link with the Navy came when a soldier showed a letter from Aggie – who kept in touch with soldiers she had met – to a troopship sick bay attendant, who asked if Aggie would mind writing to sailors as well.

In 1873 she went to Plymouth, where she was struck by the number of sailors kicking their heels and succumbing to the temptations all around them.

Having met Sophia Wintz, a like-minded woman who became her lifelong friend and collaborator, Miss Weston's Naval project started modestly, with small numbers of matelots being invited to afternoon tea at the home of Sophia's parents.



● Dame Aggie Weston

There appeared to be a demand for such home comforts for men tired of spartan conditions on board ship and with nowhere to relax ashore, so in 1876 Aggie took over a disused grocer's in Fore Street, near a dockyard gate, and converted it to a sailors' home – a public house without alcohol, along the lines of the soldiers' coffee bar-cum-retreat in Bath.

The aim was to provide clean, affordable accommodation, a square meal, encouragement to embrace temperance and, when at sea, personal contact with someone who cared, all of which chimed with her beliefs and the Christian ethics of the nascent RSR.

Bible classes were run, but there was no obligation to attend.

Others sprang up in Naval centres including Portsmouth and Chatham, and her venture was noted by Queen Victoria, who summoned Aggie to the Palace to bestow royal approval.

When Aggie died, days before the end of World War 1, she was afforded the singular honour (for a woman) of a full Naval funeral.

At their height, the RSRs were a major element of Naval life, with grand establishments found around the UK and even as far afield as Singapore.

With a temperance upbringing, Aggie took particular pleasure in the fact that two pubs in Plymouth had to be demolished to make way for an extension to the Rest.

But with improvements in standards of accommodation and food on board ships, and barracks ashore, the focus of the Rests changed.

But Aggie's is still there, though many people do not realise it, said Theresa Pratt, RSR Development Director.

The organisation is aiming to raise its profile, with the emphasis back on the familiar Aggie Weston's brand.

Around 15 years ago the charity moved away from bricks and mortar and into the bases where they could provide services that serving men and women and their families still needed.

"We work closely with the Chaplaincy Service to provide a home from home, only this time inside the wire," said Theresa.

"We provide a space where we do not serve alcohol, but coffee and a nice place to relax away from the working environment.

"We are a Christian charity but you will not get the Bible shoved down your throat.

"There will be Bible classes running, because that's what Aggie did, but if you just want to come along for a coffee and a chat then that's fine – it is basic Christian hospitality.

"These places are manned by pastoral workers who can provide a listening ear or wise counsel to people, and can advise, and maybe signpost them on to others services if they think it necessary.

"The message is look out for your local Aggie's, often badged as The Haven, The Sanctuary or with Royal Marines, The Rock.

"We work with the families as

well. We have 16 pastoral workers in 11 bases across the country, from Culdrose to Faslane.

"Each of these individuals or teams vary – Collingwood and Sultan deal mainly with trainees, for example, whereas in Poole the worker tends to deal with wives of Royal Marine, offering support.

"We do still have one property left – Braeholm in Helensburgh, which is run as a guest house, near the married quarters patch, with 17 rooms.

"We will not turn anybody away, in the spirit of Aggie's, but it is purely geared to the Royal Navy. We are the only charity that purely serves the serving personnel – we do not deal with veterans."

The "golden cord of friendship" extends to running such facilities as the Champions Club in Gosport, including a youth group, a mums and toddlers group and after-school care, based at St Mary's Church, serving the Naval community in Rowner.

Some Aggie's centres also organise curry nights, film nights and other such activities on a local basis, depending on demand and interest in each location.

Aggie's, along with the RNRM Children's Fund, also supports workers at Widewell School, of which about 50 per cent of pupils are from Service families.

"A lot of people have been helped by pastoral workers without even knowing that they were Aggie's workers," said Theresa.

Aggie's is looking to throw its weight behind the Storybook Waves project – the RN part of the Storybook Alliance charity, under which a parent who is due to deploy or away from home for prolonged periods can record a favourite story for their offspring.

The recording is digitally spruced up, has sound effects added and then burned on to a CD for the child to treasure while Mum or Dad is away.

Demand for pastoral workers has never been higher, working closely with the Chaplaincy Service and NPFS to provide support to serving people and their families.

Factory Block is demolished

ONE of the few original buildings from the RN Artificer Training Establishment at Rosyth is being demolished.

The Factory Block at MOD Caledonia dates back to 1940, but had proved to costly to maintain, so is being torn down to provide extra space for development.

In the heyday of tiffy training, there would be some 400 artificer apprentices in Caledonia at any one time, and they would spend up to 70 per cent of their time in the Factory Block.

With electronic technology on the rise, artificer training moved to HMS Sultan in 1985, and the bulk of work at Rosyth changed to ship refit work – though HMS Queen Elizabeth is taking shape close to the old building.

Steam up at Chatham

THIS year's Medway Festival of Steam and Transport at Chatham Historic Dockyard has a railway theme – and boasts more attractions than ever before.

The event, which takes place over the Easter weekend (Sunday April 8 and Monday April 9) features the dockyard's own locomotive Ajax, the 1895 Aveling and Porter Sydenham and 1936 Peckett in steam, as well as a guest engine – Victory – returning to its home yard following extensive restoration.

A steampunk village, drawing together Victorian design, science fiction and a sense of fun, will offer an exhibition of steampunk art, and traders selling fashion items, accessories, gadgets, books and music.

A live Folk and Blues music stage will keep visitors entertained

Expedition nearing final stage

THE British Services Antarctic Expedition was entering its final phase as *Navy News* went to press.

The 24 Servicemen and women had fewer than seven days of mountaineering time left before they had to turn their attention to preparing for the return journey north.

With the weather remaining kind, the three teams of eight were well placed to make the most of their final opportunity, the main objective being the Lliboutry Glacier under clear skies, although as usual there was a biting cold wind.

One team of four, Red 2, had ventured around 20km from Base Camp 2 and were attempting to climb a peak on the Boyle Mountains.

At the same time Green 2 and a composite Red/Green team were preparing to head out to explore and seek out potential mountaineering objectives.

A separate composite Red/Green team was planning to reach the summit plateau of the Boyle Mountains from the south, while Blue Team remained occupied with the science objectives of the expedition – with some significant success.

They had a scientist on board the yacht *Australis* from the British Antarctic Survey base at Rothera to assist with some of the sampling programme.

With the clock ticking, individual members of the expedition – seven of the 24 are from the Naval Service, with four from the RAF – are looking to fulfil the last of their ambitions.

Expedition leader Lt Col Paul Edwards RLC said: "I now truly have an insight into how Scott and his men must have felt early on during their return from the pole, tired and defeated in the race to the Pole, but unbowed and trusting to a safe return.

"Our fate will not be the same as theirs, but an understanding of their hardships and emotions will live with us."

The expedition aimed to combine scientific research with exploration and the first ascents of a number of peaks on the frozen continent, while also raising money for Help for Heroes.

www.bsae2012.co.uk

Early warning of AEW anniversary

A SQUADRON open event and cocktail party will be held on Friday September 14 to celebrate 60 years of 849 NAS as an airborne early warning (AEW) unit, and 30 years since the introduction of the first two AEW Sea Kings.

All current and past aircrew and AEOs of the AEW and Sea King Airborne Surveillance and Control community are invited.

The day should include a flying display and performance by a Royal Marines Band.

Anyone wishing to attend this ticket-only event should contact Lt Cdr 'Ronnie' Biggs at 849 NAS on 849nas-anyface60@mod.uk supplying contact details and a brief summary of their time in the AEW community.



Picture: LA(Phot) Allen

Navy salutes the Queen

A 21-GUN salute rang out across the mouth of Portsmouth Harbour as the Royal Navy marked the 60th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne.

The salute was fired from Fort Blockhouse in Gosport (above) at midday by four specialist gunnery instructors from HMS Collingwood at Fareham.

Cdr David Hilton, Base Services Manager at Portsmouth Naval Base, said: "It is tradition for the Royal Navy to mark important anniversaries of the Royal Family in this way.

"Also in keeping with tradition, the ships alongside in the Naval Base were 'dressed overall' with colourful flags stretching the entire length of the ship."

The custom of Navy gun salutes dates back to the early days of sail when ships visiting foreign ports would discharge their guns before entering, proving they were empty and that the visit was peaceful.

The portable 19th Century gun at Fort Blockhouse has been firing salutes since it was acquired by the Navy in 1957.

RN in Diamond Jubilee Parade of Muster – p37

Working in partnership to provide a better quality of life



Liz's long burst

(Jackspeak: a lengthy conversation that is mostly one-way)

SO here we are – speeding along to the first day of spring and heading even faster towards our busy summer period of events.

The first quarter of 2012 has been very varied and surprising.

We had a very slow start to payroll-giving signups in January, but I am happy to report that we are almost back on target, thanks to a big effort in February from HMS Raleigh and Devonport.

We have also joined forces with the Royal Marines Band, Portsmouth, to produce a charity CD in commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee (visit our online shop – on sale this month) and we are partnering with our friends in the Army and RAF charities to launch a UK-wide schools programme – the Red, White and Blue Day.

On the events side, we all had a wonderful time with Jim Davidson at his *Together for our Forces* concert at the Plymouth Pavilions together with the other celebrities who kindly gave up their time – Jethro, Bobby Davro, Rick Wakeman, Claire Sweeney and of course the Band of the Royal Marines.

We can't thank them enough for all the money raised for us. We have lots of events coming up and welcome any volunteers to come along join us over the summer months.

With March being the end of the financial year for many businesses, I thought it would be interesting to tell you all about our commercial and corporate partnerships and how they are supporting us, and you can read all about them in our Chief Executive, Robert Robson's article (right).

And, if you read my column last month, you will have seen that we have launched a Navy-wide Fundraising Trophy.

All details can be found on our website, and you will see posters popping up around the establishments to promote this – so please get involved.

Finally, I wanted to tell you about our most exciting project of the last few weeks.

With the generous help and support of the team at Captain Naval Recruiting and DMC-PR Navy who allowed us to video during downtime in their filming schedules and working with CTN on the production, we have produced our first promotional video.

Please visit our website and watch it – I would be really interested to hear what you think about it – so email me your thoughts and if you want to link to the video in your Facebook account and share with your friends please do.

Liz Ridgway
Director of Fundraising and Marketing,
The Royal Navy
and Royal Marines Charity
liz.ridgway@rnm.org.uk
or fundraising@rnm.org.uk

Working across the boundaries

WORKING together is what the RNRMC is all about, writes *Chief Executive Robert Robson*.

It doesn't matter if it's with grey hulls, commando units, boats or squadrons, or indeed with all the charities we work with; all of us get out of bed in the morning to find new ways to do more to make the charity a success.

One of the many fun aspects of the job is talking to new partners about our role in helping our sailors and marines and their families.

A crucial part of the conversation is to sell the naval story and by doing so, tell our own part in that story.

It's incredible that as soon as I start to talk about the role of the Service today, or in history, people's interest perks up.

We can trade on that proud history but it is the stories of today that open eyes and so often leads to offers of help.

MBDA were our first corporate partner and we benefit from their annual fundraising dinner to the tune of around £22,000.

Our partnership with the Aircraft Carrier Alliance, a consortium of tens of companies, led by BAE Systems, Thales and Babcock alongside the MOD was our first experience of working with companies.

It has been, and continues to be, an amazing experience as the sheer enthusiasm within the Alliance completely blew us away last year.

In their first fundraising push they organised a Bicycle Race around Scotland to Beat the Block being towed from Glasgow to Rosyth.

Their initial estimate of raising £10,000 was smashed, with a total of over £36,000 achieved.

Plans are afoot for something new in 2012...

In addition, the Thales Charitable Trust have made us an annual grant which we use to support our fundraising and marketing efforts.

We are delighted to have been chosen by the employees at media company, CTN, as the charity of the year in 2012.

As the makers of Two-Six they

really *get* the message and we are looking forward to doing many things together.

We have formed a very strong corporate link with BAE Systems who have made an extraordinarily generous grant of £150,000 over three years.

We have a refreshingly new arrangement to work with them on projects we get asked to support and then making a link between the two.

So, when you are on the climbing wall at HMS Sultan, or enjoying the fishing off Gib or watching that new 3D cinema in Culdrose it's not only us you should thank!

Our oldest corporate link has to be with *Pussers Rum*, who have supported the old Sailors or "Tot" Fund since 1968.

That fund is now part of the RNRMC but the link is as strong as ever and we have received over £25,000 a year to help us fund activities.

We really value the historical connection, even if it makes the afternoon after collecting the cheque a little hazy to remember!

A major development in 2011 was our spread north of the Border, where we gave our first Benevolent grant to Erskine.

I was delighted when the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo asked to hear about us and added us to the list of charities they fund so generously.

The £40,000 cheque will make a huge difference in helping the increasing number of Scottish charities coming to us for help and we value our new friendship enormously.

We'll be putting staff on the ground in Scotland this year so watch this space.

The desire to help has also led to a number of Foundations and Trusts giving us their support.

The P F Charitable Trust enabled us to establish our fundraising capability in 2010 with a £120,000 grant over three years.

The Gosling Foundation provided £50,000 for our projects (and cheered up HMS Vanguard and RMR London) and the



● The theme of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo last year was 'Of the Sea', and the Naval service featured heavily

Picture: LA(Phot) Sally Stimson

Hintze Foundation donated over £32,000 to our cause last year.

All this has happened in just two years, and so it goes on.

We have now begun our discussions with Babcock and look forward to working with them in their other locations as well as through the Aircraft Carrier Alliance.

As our name spreads, more and more charities come to us for assistance and so our ongoing support to you and your families will only be possible by creating friendships and relationships in so many different places.

Just over a year ago we were very pleased to be approached by Help for Heroes (H4H), who asked for our assistance in channeling the funds they had raised to the wounded as fast as we could.

In a new partnership, our Head of Grants, Anne Carr, worked with the team at H4H, the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund and the RMA to get the money to where it is needed.

The grants we make cover everything from enabling families to be as close as possible to their wounded or sick sons and daughters, to funding courses for those on the Recovery Pathway.

It's an extraordinary example of charities working together and in just 12 months Anne distributed £820,000 to the men and women at the Naval Recovery Centre in HMS Drake. Of this sum £245,000 came from the RNRMC and the Royal Marines charities.

Of course I cannot possibly write an article like this without thanking the closest partner of all, the Royal Navy.

The endorsement of the Navy Board is something we are truly proud of and your ever increasing fundraising efforts are something we just *love* helping you with – to nick a phrase from last month's article!

So, we have begun the journey. More and more of you are helping us and I wanted to share with you how you are joined in your efforts by so many others.

I'll finish as I started – working together really is the way ahead!

SAVE THE DATE
1
JUNE



RAISE FUNDS... AND THE CUP!

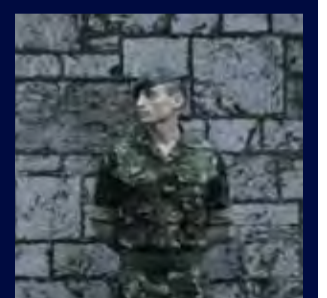
RAISE FUNDS FOR RNRMC AND YOU COULD WIN UP TO £4000 FOR YOUR UNIT AND GET TO LIFT THE CUP!



VIDEO LAUNCH



Visit our website to view our new video that introduces the charity that supports the whole of the Naval family; this includes the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Maritime Reserves, QARNNS, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and former WRNS.



CONTACT US
Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity
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HMS Excellent
Whale Island
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO2 8ER

www.rnm.org.uk

Where does your money go?

Each year, we grant out about £5 million – of which we grant about £2 million to the serving RN and RM. These grants include paying into your ship, submarine, squadron or RM unit's welfare fund twice a year.

In January, 40 grants were processed from the Naval Service Help for Heroes Quick Reaction Fund, totalling **£43,912**. The Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund (RMCTF) contributed **£10,031** to this amount.

These were the minor grants awarded to the different establishments and ships from January to February:

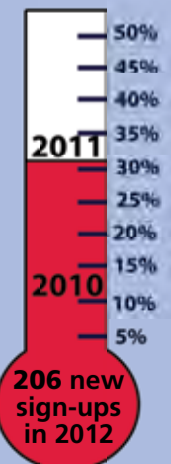
- Commando Helicopter Force HQ Tasking: RN Ski Championships;
 - HMS Vengeance: Decommissioning ceremony and ball;
 - HMS Neptune: Television for Dental Centre Waiting Room;
 - HMS Sultan: Sultan Steam Lorry;
 - HMS Sultan: Sultan Golf Open;
 - HMS Illustrious: Sound and vision equipment (shared with SSV and NT);
 - Fishery Protection Squadron: Fish Ball;
 - Commando Logistic Regiment: CO's Barbecue and Sports Day
- Grants: £13,469**

For further information on grants contact Anne Carr by email at anne.carr@rnm.org.uk, or by phone 023 9254 8093, Mil: 93832 8093.

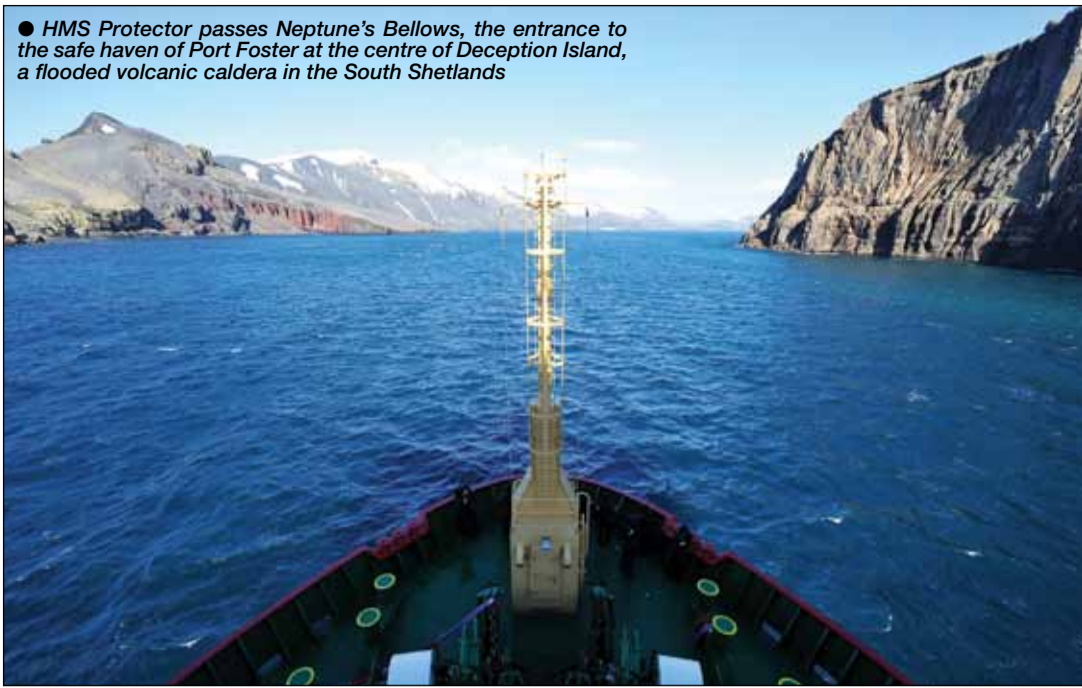
Payroll giving simply means making a regular donation out of your monthly pay.

We're asking for a minimum of £5 a month; if you can manage more, that's great.

We've seen an impressive uptake in numbers over the past year of 20 per cent which is fantastic, but we want to keep improving on these figures so that we can keep improving the lives of the men and women of the Naval Service.



● HMS Protector passes Neptune's Bellows, the entrance to the safe haven of Port Foster at the centre of Deception Island, a flooded volcanic caldera in the South Shetlands



● Protector enters the Lemaire Channel, a strait off the Antarctic Peninsula which has become a top tourist destination



● Protector's CO Capt Peter Sparkes (left), C/Sgt Mick Cowe RM and Lt Simon Lockley on board Terra Nova while visiting the Jubany station

● Looking astern as Protector transits the Lemaire Channel



Protecting and

RED hull, white snow and blue skies – it's a while since we've been able to put together a picture spread of the Royal Navy's ice patrol ship in her natural environment.

In fact the last time we featured a report and pictures of such activities was more than three years ago – our January 2009 edition to be precise.

Because of the tyranny of

Christmas deadlines, by the time the paper was on the streets HMS Endurance had suffered a catastrophic flooding 200 miles off Punta Arenas in Chile which put the Red Plum's Naval career on hold – as it remains today.

But into her wake sailed a new ice patrol ship, which has cut through the ice floes of the frozen continent for the first time under a White Ensign.

HMS Protector's arrival in Antarctica after her long voyage south from Portsmouth coincided with the centenary of Captain Scott RN reaching the South Pole.

She immediately started a programme of work which will see her visiting bases, supporting scientific work and undertaking hydrographic survey work taskings within the British Antarctic Territory over the next few months.

The ship's first task within the frozen wilderness was to disembark stores and personnel for the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) teams stationed on the Antarctic Peninsula.

While in the British Antarctic

Territory, a key part of Protector's duties is to make contact with Antarctic base stations – and while in the far south she does not ignore the others who are enduring harsh conditions to better understand the secrets of the region.



Since their arrival the crew have visited the Uruguayan base, Artigas, and the Argentine base, Jubany.

At Artigas the crew heard that Uruguayan President Jose Mujica was staying overnight.

In the spirit of international friendship, the Commanding Officer of Protector, Capt Peter Sparkes, donated a crate of the ship's own brand of beer – Ice-Breaker – for the President to enjoy that evening.

From Artigas, the crew sailed Protector's workboat Terra Nova to the Argentine base on King George Island.

Humpback whales and penguins greeted the crew as they rounded the headland into Potter Cove, where Jubany station is situated beneath the eye-catching Three Brothers Hill – the 210m-high remains of an ancient volcano.

Here, HMS Protector's state-of-the-art survey motor boat (SMB) James Caird IV operated close in to shore – dwarfed by a spectacular glacier.

On Jubany, the team received a warm welcome and a tour around the facilities.

The purpose of the visit was to hold discussions on local co-operation, and the team met up again onboard Protector the following day.

While hosting their visitors the Protector and Jubany diving teams enjoyed an extremely successful dive in Potter Cove.

Although the weather was challenging and the underwater visibility poor, it was a good opportunity to exercise the navy divers in the cold waters of Antarctica for the first time, and to fortify relations between HMS Protector and the divers based at Jubany station.

The next task was to instal a tidal gauge at South Korea's King Se Jong station to update the tidal knowledge in a busy shipping area.

Currently the tides are largely calculated on two days' worth of historic data collected more than 40 years ago, so this was an invaluable part of HMS Protector's survey

● Motor survey boat James Caird IV operates in the shadow of a glacier at Potter Cove on King George Island



● Protector and Terra Nova at Deception Island



● Mist shrouds the top of Three Brothers Hill above the Argentinian Jubany station at Potter Cove on King George Island



● Protector breaks ice – in the Lemaire Channel – for the first time as a Royal Navy patrol ship



supporting



● Sailors disembark from Protector's sea boat and Terra Nova at Port Lockroy on the Antarctic Peninsula

work to improve hydrographic knowledge of the area.

The James Caird IV undertook her first survey of Potter's Cove using the latest EM3002 MultiBeam Echo Sounder, and data collected will be sent to the UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) in Taunton to update the charts of an area last surveyed manually with a leadline in the 19th Century.

To show how things have changed, the survey team managed to take James Caird IV inland according to the chart as the glacier had retreated more than 2km in the last 150 years.

At Deception Island, a stunning water-filled volcanic caldera that is one of just two in the world, Protector sent James Caird IV to survey the area known as Neptune's Bellows.

It was here that in 2007 the cruise ship MS Nordkapp ran aground and was assisted by the previous ice patrol ship HMS Endurance, amongst others.

LS Chris Smith, the boat's coxswain, said: "Working on the Neptune's Bellows survey was a highly-satisfying job professionally."

"Being part of a team that worked on something this important to the safety of navigation makes all the hard work of being away from my family worthwhile."

A team of four spent two nights at an abandoned Admiralty base, braving gale-force winds with 55-knot (100kmh) gusts to both collect information used for chart-making and satellite-positioning and to record the tidal range.

The team took precise GPS measurements on land to make sure the tide gauge was level.

Once again the information gleaned will allow the UKHO in Taunton to produce accurate charts for ships transiting the area.

Lt Graham Blenkinsop, the officer in charge of the survey boat, said: "The opportunity to survey Neptune's Bellows was fantastic – being able to use the Royal Navy's most advanced survey motor boat and in such a stunning area."

"It was even more satisfying to know that the work we were doing will have a direct impact on the safety of the many cruise ships and research vessels that pass through Neptune's Bellows and to know that we have done our part to make such an isolated part of the world safer for the ships and their crews."

Later, some of the ship's company of Protector visited the Spanish Antarctic station Gabriel de Castilla, meeting base commander Maj Antonio Casals Abraham and his team, who greeted them with a British Union Flag flying next to the Spanish flag on the beach.

After a tour, Lt Cdr Andy Storey, Protector's Operations Officer, presented a ship's badge to the base commander and invited him to dinner with Capt Sparkes and the CO of the Spanish Antarctic patrol ship SPS Las Palmas.

It was in the Lemaire Channel that HMS Protector actually first broke the ice to mark her role as the Royal Navy's ice patrol ship.

And it took four hours to travel

through the passage, with the ice increasing steadily, and seals and penguins on the ice floes.

Protector then moved on to Port Lockroy, a historic British base manned by the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust.

There she delivered vital stock, loaded in Portsmouth, to resupply the base, as well as its Post Office and small shop.

Terra Nova delivered the supplies, and returned to the mother ship with a cargo of building waste to follow Antarctic Treaty and environmental protocols.

The ship's company visited the museum at Port Lockroy, where living conditions from the 1940s and 1950s are preserved with handwritten notes and other memorabilia.

Lt Simon Lockley discovered that his namesake, S/Lt Lockley, was one of the first base commanders there 60 years ago.

Meanwhile, for three days, Protector deployed her cold weather experts, the Royal Marines, to complete their training.

C/Sgt Mick Cowe, a Mountain Leader, said: "The environment in Antarctica offers a unique challenge."

"We are here to provide the appropriate level of expertise to the ship's company, and these few days ashore have helped to consolidate our perishable skill set."

Protector has since recovered scientists from the British Antarctic Survey who were dropped off to investigate global warming.

Her scientific patrol continues...

Pictures: LA(Phot) Arron Hoare, FRPU(E)

● Protector in Maxwell Bay, near Potter Cove on King George Island



Medal matters

I SUPPOSE the fact that there are not many of us left is one reason why there has been little comment in the pages of *Navy News* on the furore about the issue of a special medal for those who served on RN ships and merchantmen on Russian convoys in WW2.

When I learned of the apparent reluctance of the government to strike a special Arctic Convoy medal, I wrote to Prime Minister Cameron testifying from personal experience that those who survived that terrible experience were indeed worthy of such an award.

A reply from Minister Andrew Robathan indicated that the issue was now in the hands of a review committee.

I trust that *Navy News* will lend its influence to the debate as to whether this long-delayed medal should be struck, presented to those who are still with us, and to the relatives of sailors who lost their lives in those long-ago days braving the awful Arctic weather, U-boats, and German bombers on their way to Russia.

– Kenneth Tipner, Ocala, Florida

...AT A recent RNA branch meeting, the situation regarding the Russian/Arctic Convoys was raised.

After hearing about it, to say I was amazed and disgusted must be the understatement of the millennium.

This shocking omission has gone on for too long and needs to be rectified immediately.

It seems very strange that the Russians have commemorated a medal to recognise the valiant efforts of our brave Royal Naval and Merchant seamen, but our country does not reciprocate.

This is a blot on our national conscience and these veterans cry out for recognition both on their behalf and their shipmates who have gone before.

It is the duty and responsibility of every ex-Serviceman and woman to demand action on this issue.

History will never forgive us if we don't rectify this shocking omission.

Justice cries out to be served – let us not disappoint, let us not let them down.

– John Donnelly, RNA (North Manchester Branch)

...TO obtain a full Parliamentary debate on the issue of an Arctic Convoy medal requires 100,000 signatures.

If you care, please sign the petition at <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/5211>

The closing date is August 15 2012.

– Daphne Birkby, Alton, Hants

...CONCERNING the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, it would be appropriate to allow those retired members of the Armed Forces who completed pensionable service during the reign of Her Majesty the opportunity to purchase the medal.

Administration would be made easy by enclosing an application form with the pension notices in April.

The price would include costs incurred plus a donation to service charities.

– Ivan Asprey, Market Harborough, Leicestershire

Writing to you is a risky business

WHAT a magnificent tussle for the Jackpot bottle of rum (February) and what hilarity came from all the contestants.

Do you know the £2.50 cover price for *Navy News* was worth every penny just to read the *Comment* pages.

I have learnt the lesson though, which few contributors to *Navy News* have, it seems.

And that is, if writing to you, be extremely vague about making claims, as from every corner of the world, hairy little ex-RM and RN matelots emerge from their holes to shoot down the unwary, and those brave enough to do it.

You can be sure that if someone says: "Our ship, HMS Whatsit, was the last to leave a certain war-ravaged port in 1942," some ancient rusty bucket, shot full of holes, and flying the White Ensign, will have staggered into it at a later date, tied up to the dock wall, and promptly sunk, only for a US submarine submerged in the harbour, and skippered by John Wayne, to surface, rescue the ship's company, and pinch the title.

Then again, if any senior flag officer thinks that "rank has its privileges," in this paper, let him think again.

Even the Lord High Admiral (begging your pardon, sir) would think twice before putting his head above the parapet to enter the fray!

Take for example the tired old chestnut about the speed of the fastest RN ship.

Vic Everest (January) would have us believe that the BBC and Rear Admirals are all exempt from telling tall stories, when we all know they have turned it into an art form.

I do love the tale though about the splendid Mr Codner (January).

You can tell he was a matelot who knew nothing about equine creatures, to judge by the state of his so-called 'warhorse.'

The poor creature looked unkempt, depressed and emaciated, and absolutely browned off, fit only for the knacker's yard, and devastated with the thought of having to carry such a huge hunk of man.

You get the feeling that the officer could easily have carried the horse into battle.

In the near future though, after



● "Unkempt, depressed and emaciated, and absolutely browned off..." – the warhorse of World War 1, not as glossy as Hollywood's version... (The photo comes from Douglas Jerrold's book *Hawke Battalion*.)

various cutting exchanges, I will watch out for a headline saying *Famous author chased by group of Morris Dancers wielding pace sticks and wearing cheap Christmas cracker caps. Police are investigating.*

In conclusion, I am hurt, wounded even, never to have been told by the Admiralty about the Royal Naval School of Dancing. (Letters, January).

I knew someone who would have made a brilliant choreographer, having once starred as a naval tailor's model.

– W A D McKoy, Morecambe, Lancs

We learnt our lesson long ago on *Navy News* – be very afraid of claiming anything as the first, last, fastest, best, or only.

Meanwhile, enjoy the rum – Managing Editor



Each month Pusser's Rum are offering to courier a bottle of their finest tippie to the writer of our top letter.

This month's winner is: W A D McKoy



Distressed over our flag

IT WAS humbling and impressive to read about the British Services' Antarctic Expedition 2012 and their research activities on the icecap (February, page 10).

Wonderful stuff in the true tradition of the Service.

I therefore hope they will forgive me for mentioning one small thing not quite in the true tradition.

I wonder why they were flying the national flag upside down above the expedition base?

Was it because they were at the bottom of the world and felt upside down themselves?

In the team photograph they certainly did not look to be in distress!

On a more general point, the depth of ignorance about our national flags throughout the country is profound, and I believe the Naval Service has a responsibility to set and maintain the standards all our citizens should aspire to in displaying them.

The standard of flags I have seen flown by some of our other Service and government colleagues (no names, no pack drill) would cause any boss's mate apoplexy.

– Malcolm Farrow, Assistant General Secretary, Forces Pension Society, London

...HOW do we educate our countrymen to correctly fly, portray or show our Union Flag?

Very recently I have had occasion to remonstrate with Marks and Spencer that they are incorrectly showing the flag on handkerchiefs which they are currently selling.

In this particular case, one of the cantons has the white diagonal stripe on the wrong side of the red diagonal stripe. They have promised to take action.

On opening my January edition of *Navy News*, I find on page 3 that the two flags illustrated are upside down and on page 10, one looks to be a pretty dodgy portrayal.

I know these days many flags are

made overseas but that does not exonerate those responsible who initiate their manufacture.

Maybe an Act of Parliament is necessary or, at least, the Board of Trade should get on the ball!

– Robert H Read (Lt Cdr Ret'd)

Liverpool, New York, USA

...I'VE been reading *Navy News* since I was a young boy seaman 2nd Class.

With 23 years' service and leaving as a CPO, not once while in the service did I see the Union Flag flying upside down.

But in the last five years I have seen it flying upside-down in the state of surrender 18 times, the last being in the *Navy News*.

What's going on, is it not taught in basic training?

Come on, take pride in what you do.

– D J Buckland

...I HAVE just picked up my copy of *Navy News* and a quick scan shows the Union Flag upside down at Base Camp.

I have always been led to believe that to fly the Union Flag upside down means distress.

Is this in respect of distress at Base Camp or at the state of the Royal Navy?

– Mike Crowe, President, RN Electrical Branch Association, Sandown, Isle of Wight.

...IF the Union Flag was not flying as a distress signal are we to believe that such an expedition, having serving Naval Officers on its strength, does not know which way up to fly the flag under which they serve?

– Charles P Wraith, San Diego, California

We received many letters on this subject; we think the flag pictured is the right way up... and as to whether it's a Union Jack or flag, we dare not go there – Managing Editor

Battleships Last post

I WAS surprised to see such a glaring inaccuracy in the centrepiece of the *Channel Dash* insert in the February edition.

The *Scharnhorst* was not a 'Schlachtschiff' (Battleship), she was in fact a 'Schlachtskreuzer' (Battlecruiser)

– Tim Scott

Richard Hargreaves, who wrote the feature, tells me: "Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were classed as Schlachtschiffe by the Germans, and as 'battle-cruisers' by the RN." – Man Ed

I WAS sorry to see that the Royal Navy Philatelic Society has closed down.

One of the joys of visiting Portsmouth for *Meet Your Navy* or the Christmas Victorian Festival was to visit the RNPS to see what covers were for sale and spend some money. Buying their nice signed covers, especially those signed by World War 2 veterans, was always a pleasure.

Sadly this pleasure has gone. – Timothy Smith, Chippenham, Wiltshire

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Opinion

'SEA BLINDNESS' isn't a condition which affects readers of *Navy News*, but it does affect many of the general population in the UK.

Its symptoms include a general unawareness of the importance of the sea to our prosperity, trade and defences, and a specific ignorance of the work of the Royal Navy that would have been unthinkable only 30-40 years ago.

However, the new Commander-in-Chief Fleet, Admiral George Zambellas, is confident that the tide is turning in the Navy's favour.

This, he says, is the 'maritime time.' The Navy may be the smallest of the three Services, but it has contributed to every task demanded of defence.

And it is increasingly recognised that only the Navy

has the unique range of skills to operate in the complex, demanding and dangerous maritime domain.

Certainly there seems to be a growing appetite among the media and the public to see more of what the Service does.

For many years we at *Navy News* have visited ships at sea and units on operations, and remarked that the hard work they put in, day after day, goes unnoticed by many of the general public.

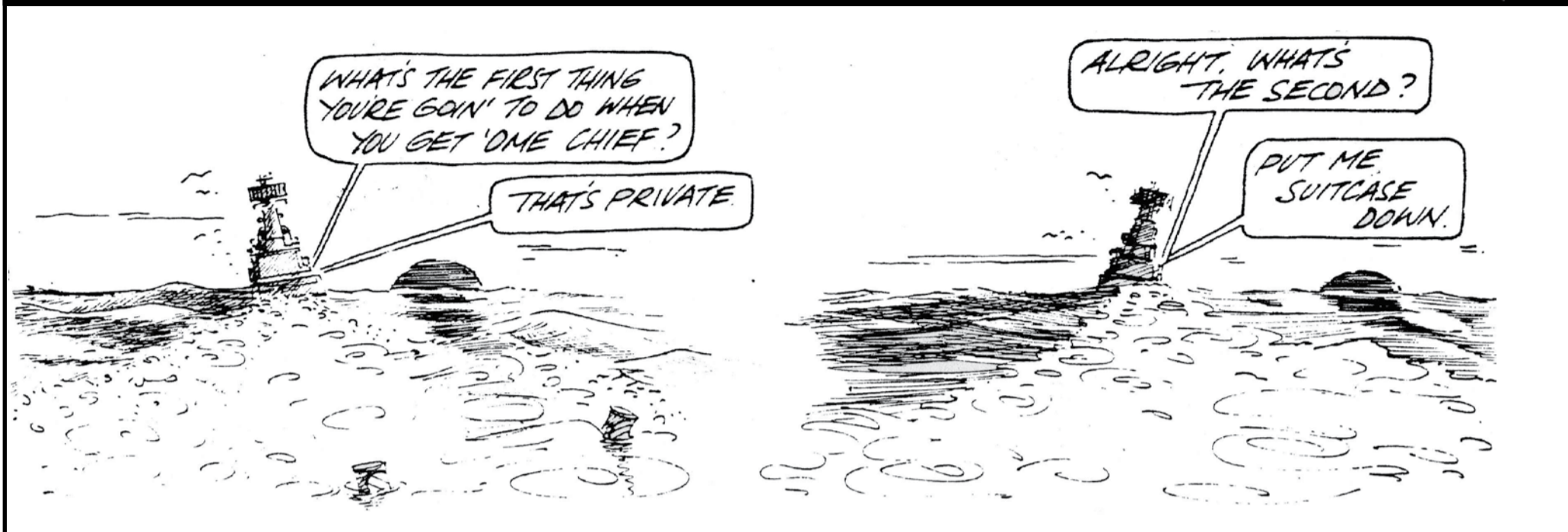
Too often out of sight is out of mind.

Let's hope the tide is indeed turning for the Navy, and bringing with it a keener awareness of its role in safeguarding our island nation.

The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the MOD

CLASSIC
JACK

BY TUGS



● Some likely lads from HMS Blake enjoying a run ashore (and a class newspaper) in Holland in the 1970s. On the right is a youthful George Malcolmson, now archivist at the Submarine Museum, who sent us the photo.

Natty Jacks

STAN Taylor's letter (February) sent my mind flying back to the early 1950s when he mentioned Jack's desire for not conforming to dress regulations when ashore.

I put many hours into 'tiddleyfying' my run ashore rig.

In those days it was not just a case of throwing on a pair of jeans and a shirt with trainers, there was a world out there to impress.

As an ex-Ganges boy I knew only too well what was correct but I had been told that 'rules are for the obedience of fools and the guidance of wise men.'

Cap bent and shaped into a nice bow-wave, tiddly cap ribbon bow close up to the ship's name, as near to the front as possible.

Bleached light blue collar with the joining tape cut to allow the collar to spread, no Lanyard, 12 inch long tapes to attach the 'silk,'

From there to the trousers, which 32-inch bell bottoms, an

old penny being sewn into the bottom to give that extra swing.

Not forgetting the seven or five horizontal creases. The whole uniform, from cap to shoes, purchased from a naval tailor.

None of that thick pusser's serge and pusser's bats.

Just to finish the effect, the cuffs of the jumper turned up to expose embroidered Chinese dragons and a white silk scarf passed through the black silk.

Oh what heady days! You had to be there to see hundreds of matelots strolling through Pompey or Southsea on a Sunday afternoon.

All you oldies will know what I mean. Especially when you turned a corner to be confronted with the Naval Patrol. That could hurt!

Times change but memories remain.

– Mike North, ex-CPO UCI, Ryde, Isle of Wight

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

E-mail correspondents are also requested to provide this information. Letters cannot be submitted over the telephone.

If you submit a photograph which you did not take yourself,

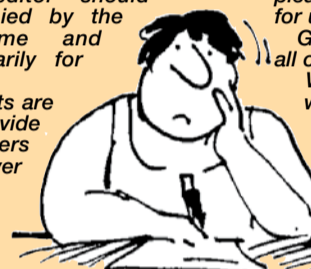
please make sure that you have the permission for us to publish it.

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.



Why is Opal not protected?

I REFER to the article (January) about the desecration of the grave of HMS Duke of Albany, sunk by U27 on August 26 1916 in Orkney waters off the west coast of S Ronaldshay, Orkney.

The MOD was correct in pursuing this case for the prosecution of the divers involved.

However, I was wondering where these vigilant people who reported the desecration of HMS Albany's war grave were, when two divers dived on the wreck of HMS Opal in September 2007?

HMS Opal, a destroyer, was smashed against rocks during a violent storm, again off the west coast of South Ronaldshay, in January 1918, with only one survivor.

The divers recovered a wedding ring with the

inscription *Ernest Stanley Cubiss* on the inside.

The divers traced the relatives of this ring and the whole episode was embroiled in what can only be described as a celebration of the ring's recovery.

The BBC and press were involved in the reporting of this find, hailing it as some kind of victory.

Well, not to me! This was the symbolic act of stealing a ring from one of our shipmate's hands in a brutal act of desecration of a sea war grave that beggars belief.

I voiced my opinion in the local press at the time but received no support.

So I have to ask, where was the MOD and why is this war grave not an official site?

– David Hughes, Chairman, Orkney Branch RNA, Kirkwall, Orkney

Greenies had to branch out

With reference to *The Grove Review* (October) of the book *The Greenie* I would like to comment on one paragraph in which he wonders if the Electrical Branch's creation as a separate entity turned out to be entirely wise?

I served in the Electrical Branch from 1958 to 1967, and I believe it was necessary for the branch to be created as a separate entity.

The sort of equipment, especially the electronics, we had to maintain and repair may not have been as highly complex as the current generation of radar, sonar and communications equipment but, in those days we did not have the self-diagnostic systems available to-day.

We had to find and repair faults, on a component basis, virtually by hand with the aid of a few pieces of test equipment and the ability to read circuit diagrams.

The first electrical testing in the RN was done by having a torpedo-man holding the ends of bare wires.

When he got a shock, they knew the circuit was working.

Very similar to the Marine Engineers ie Stokers. They could/should not have to be distracted by

doing seamen type things like manning guns, firing torpedoes, scrubbing decks, painting ship etc.

It was my perception that the Electrical Branch was resented by the Executive Branch.

There was the normal standard of naval discipline and good order applied to all the ship's crew by the captain downwards, but they had no control over our working parties.

The Executive Branch had been forced to put up with the Engineers, especially during coal ship, and they didn't like the fact that they had to put up with another bunch of Navy personnel who didn't quite fit into their seamanlike ways.

It was not surprising that, eventually, in some areas, the Executive Branch got their way but, where the advance in technology allowed it, the creation of the user/maintainer was a natural development.

A separate, specialist branch was needed in the Royal Navy after the war, when new technologies were being installed throughout the Fleet and the equipment had to be maintained and repaired without assistance from ashore, by highly skilled ratings.

– Richard Richmond, Welwyn, Herts



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A Naval Charity for ALL service and ex-service personnel of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, QARNNS, and their Reserves



● Commando Helicopter Force pilots Lt Cdr James Birchall and Lt Cdr André Milne will be tackling the Marathon des Sables next month

Picture: LA(Phot) Chris Mumby

The draw of the desert

THE famous, or infamous, 'Marathon des Sables' is a seven-day, 150-mile endurance race across the Sahara desert in Morocco, where temperatures can reach more than 120° Fahrenheit during the day and runners are racing across dried riverbeds and rocky ground.

It's not a race for the faint-hearted, in fact it's been described as 'the toughest foot-race on earth.'

So step forward (or run forward, perhaps) two Jungle pilots from RNAS Yeovilton and a Plymouth-based Royal Marine.

First to C/Sgt Darren Handley, who's vowed to take on the challenge this April, in aid of the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund.

Darren, who's currently based in Plymouth, said: "Competitors have to be self-sufficient and run each day carrying everything they need for the remainder of the race in a day sack, including food, clothes, medical kit, and sleeping bag."

"The heat, distance and rubbing wear runners' feet, with blisters, dehydration and heat exhaustion being a major factor to be overcome and survive and complete the event."

He added: "I've served in

the Royal Marine Commandos for over 18 years and been unfortunate enough to have lost friends and colleagues to enemy action.

"I've also experienced the life-changing injuries of fellow marines who sustain wounds leading to loss of limbs, permanent scarring and other severe injuries.

"I would like to do something worthwhile to pay back part of the debt we all owe these brave servicemen."

To support Darren, go to www.justgiving.com/DarrenHandley

And next to the dynamic duo from the Commando Helicopter Force at Yeovilton - Lt Cdr James Birchall and Lt Cdr André Milne.

These two men are running in aid of The Children's Trust, a charity that provides rehabilitation following brain injury.

James said: "We have both raised money for charity before, but this time we wanted to up the stakes whilst completing an event that justifies an ambitious target."

"We would like to raise £12,000 which will help The Children's Trust expand and develop its Brain Injury Community Team."

If you'd like to pledge your support to James and André, visit www.justgiving.com/DesertMarathon2012.

Surprise at Culdrose

ABSEILING needs a strong nerve at the best of times, making the descent face down is even more of a challenge - no wonder it's called the 'Commando Surprise' method.

Encouraged by their Mountain Leader-qualified Royal Marine colleagues, several of the Air Traffic Controllers at Culdrose decided to try the heightened challenge of a 'Commando Surprise' descent when they took part in a team-building and fund-raising day at the air station.

It involved abseiling down the 100-foot outer high wall which forms the outside of their control

tower. Lt Cdr Dave Lambourne decided to take it one step further and abseiled down in his best uniform.

Senior Air Traffic Controller Lt Cdr Simon Smith said: "Team-building events like this have a two-fold benefit in that they boost individual's confidence by successfully confronting and overcoming physical challenges, whilst at the same time raising money for the RNRMC, who are providing such good support to Jack and Royal alike."

The afternoon was organised by PO Paul Hollyoake and raised £207 for the RNRMC.

Women help Hasler

A GROUP of armed forces personnel in Plymouth with long-term illnesses and injuries has been presented with funds by professional women.

Hasler Company has been presented with £1,800 by South West Women In Construction (SWWIC), who all work in

disciplines in the building industry, at a ceremony in HM Naval Base, Devonport.

Maj Steve Melbourne, (Officer Commanding Hasler Company) said: "The support this donation brings to those assigned to Hasler Company cannot be emphasised enough."

Dog watch on Illustrious

SAILORS from HMS Illustrious are aiming to buy a specially-trained dog to improve the quality of life of an injured serviceman or woman.

The team from the Portsmouth-based helicopter carrier have launched a campaign to raise £5,000 to sponsor a puppy for the Petersfield-based charity Hounds for Heroes.

This will pay for a puppy to be specially trained as an assistance dog for an injured or disabled service man or woman to help enhance their quality of life.

Lt Andy Dowling (pictured right), Strike Operations Officer on HMS Illustrious, who is heading up the fundraising initiative, said the idea of working with Hounds for Heroes came from his experience working with a New Zealand assistance dogs charity, during a recent exchange posting, where he saw first hand the enormous benefits a specially trained dog can provide.

He said: "We're delighted here on HMS Illustrious to be able to contribute towards a charity that has such resonance with us as members of the Armed Forces."

"I believe that helping ex-serving personnel, by those who continue to serve, is an exceedingly positive step and that HMS Illustrious can contribute in some small way to helping improve the lives of people is tremendous."

The team kicked off fundraising with a Burns Night supper and plan to raise funds through a series of events in 2012 including



physical challenges like rowing and mountain biking, ship's quiz, race nights and a year long charity draw.

Allen Parton, charity founder and Royal Navy veteran, who met up with the team recently in Portsmouth Naval Base said:

"Not only did seeing HMS Illustrious bring back memories of my own Naval career, but it helped remind me of the enormous importance of the work Hounds for Heroes is doing, and the people the charity will ultimately be helping."

Southampton focus for senior rates

SAILORS from Illustrious presented a cheque for £700 to the Friends of Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) at Southampton General Hospital following a series of fundraising events on board the warship over the past six months.

The fund raising was made possible by the drive and initiative of one of the Petty Officers' Messes on board. Fund raising events included a charity film night, penny for the guy, quiz nights and a raffle. The Mess choose Friends of PICU as one of their members, Petty Officer Karl Spurr, had received fantastic support from the charity when his son was in Southampton PICU in March 2010.

Six hours after he was born, PO Spurr's son, James, was admitted to Southampton PICU for emergency life-saving heart surgery after being diagnosed with Transposition of the Great Arteries TGA.

He underwent a successful operation to correct the arteries when he was just five days old. James returned home safe and well after a further five days recovering in the PICU, much to delight of his proud parents Karl and Vicki.

Petty Officer Spurr, who lives with his family in Portsmouth, said: "Thanks to the work of Friends of

PICU, we were able to be accommodated and fed at the hospital so that we could be with our son during his recovery stage."

"To show my gratitude to the unit for saving my son's life I volunteered as the mess charity rep to raise funds for the unit that helped my family."

"I want to thank all of the crew of Illustrious for their donations over the last six months and am proud to be able to hand over a cheque for £700 to the charity."

The cheque was presented by Petty Officer Spurr to Rosie Mitchell at Southampton PICU. As well as being a Staff Nurse on the Unit, Rosie is also the founder of the charity Friends of PICU.

Friends of PICU are a registered charity, set up in 2006 by nursing staff and parents of children who have been cared for on PICU.

Their aim is to support the children and their families, by providing vital equipment and services that are not normally provided by the statutory authorities.

The charity maintains the family accommodation on the unit, which has recently undergone a major refurbishment programme.

3,100 miles across America in 17 days

THREE men from 771 Naval Air Squadron at RNAS Culdrose are in the midst of serious preparations for a cycle race across America - 12 states, 88 counties, 350 communities - in just 17 days.

Their aim is to raise over £30,000 along the way for the Royal Marines Charitable Trust, the Cornwall Air Ambulance and the Little Harbour Children's Hospice in St Austell.

Cpl Justin Morgan, Damian Barnes and Wayne Davey from the Search and Rescue Squadron are plunging into this epic journey, begun by the cancellation of a ride around the UK for adventurous training.

Justin recalls: "While on SAR duty at 771 Squadron, dripping

to my SWAST paramedic friend Wayne Davey about the UK ride being cancelled, I half suggested an ambition of mine was to ride across America."

"What a mistake, he jumped on it - 'Right, Flash, let's do it, let's smash it!'"

"I didn't know what else to say, apart from 'OK, why not?'"

The two sat down and made a list of what they needed - accommodation, food, flights, maps, routes, drivers, website - and one more rider...

Justin said: "Barnsey is the racing snake Royal Marine Aircrewman who I'd been working with for the last five years. I needed a simple answer, Yes or no? He said yes."

Training has begun in earnest with the cyclists riding up to one-hundred miles on each training ride, spending two hours each day in the gym, plus extra training at home.

Justin summed up: "We are three blokes that are trying to make a difference to others' lives."

"On the way we'll tick off one hell of a life-time achievement and hopefully inspire others."

"We now need to spread the word as loud and far as possible. We have a website that is packed full of information, where you can add your support, follow our progress and make donations."

Find out more online at www.3100miles.co.uk or text RAAM99 £5 to 70070.



Running on the Fort

IN the midst of pirate-busting off Africa, Surg Cdr Rajesh Shah found time for a spot of training on board her flight deck.

The Naval doctor will be taking part in the London marathon next month to raise money for the NSPCC and the Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity.

Pledge your support online at virginmoneygiving.com, and type 'Rajesh Shah' as the friend to sponsor.

Don't miss the Bands

NEXT month sees the Mashed Bands of Her Majesty's Royal Marines perform at the Royal Albert Hall at the annual Mountbatten Festival of Music.

Tickets are available now for the event on April 12, 13 and 14, which always proves a knock-out success.

Profits from the event go to support CLIC Sargent, the UK's leading cancer charity for children and young people.

Buy your tickets online at www.royalalberthall.com or by calling 0845 401 5018.

Haven at Swanage

THE Heroes Haven at Swanage is a specially-designed log cabin holiday home for use by injured Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families.

The chairman of the Trustees of Heroes Haven Swanage, a former Naval man Steve Churchill said: "At the start of this project we never thought that it would have touched so many people in so many ways."

Call him on 0794 677 5549.



● Phil Packer jokes with RM Buglers

Picture: Bugler Lee Kidd

Buglers support Phil's journey

THE Royal Marine Band Fanfare Team Buglers prepare to sound a salute for injured serviceman Phil Packer as he begins his long journey to walk 2012 miles around the UK in 2012.

Phil Packer spent 17 years in the Army, a career brought short after a spinal injury on operational duty.

He has founded the British Inspiration Trust to support young people at rock bottom.

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

Leigh and Megan jump in

TWO junior rates from HMS Nelson decided the best way to approach fund-raising is to make it big, tough, interesting – and scary.

Wttrs Leigh Roan and Megan Price (pictured right) fancied a challenge, something more than a standard run, bike ride or coffee morning.

Their solution was to attempt at least one event every month for seven months – hence the Seven Month Challenge, which will end in May with their first full marathon.

And not just runs – as well as half-marathons and road races the pair are also tackling obstacle courses and cross-country events.

Leigh and Megan are supporting four charities that have a special resonance with one or both of them.

“We picked charities that were really very close to our hearts,” said Leigh.

“These are Macmillan, the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust, Diabetes UK and CLIC Sargent.

“My mum was diagnosed with bowel cancer last year whilst I was two weeks into my basic training.

“It was awful to be away from home at such a difficult time but my mum insisted I carried on with training and my news and stories kept her going.

“Macmillan nurses have offered my mum amazing support from the beginning – when I was not able to be there to comfort her I knew they were and this carried on throughout her cancer treatment.

“Unfortunately over last Christmas leave we found out that mum’s tumour had started to regrow already, and yet again Macmillan have been there every step of the way, not just for my mum but for all of us who are worried for her too.

“My dad and Megan’s gran



and granddad have also been greatly supported by Diabetes UK following diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes later on in life.

“The challenges of adapting their lifestyles were eased greatly by their dedication and support.

“We would love to give something back for all their hard work – I wouldn’t like to be the one telling my dad he had to stop eating chocolate and go easy on the whisky.”

The RNBT was picked because they did charity work for the RNRMC, and once they heard about the Trust’s work there was no stopping them – the pair now sit on a grants committee and see first-hand the work of the Trust and the effect it has on people’s lives.

The final charity was CLIC Sargent, supporting children with cancer, and the pair chose it after doing some research and being struck by the degree of support offered to families during difficult times.

Leigh and Megan have completed four events so far.

They started with the flat, local Gosport Half Marathon in

November, the thought of a cup of buck’s fizz helping them get over the finishing line.

The eight-mile off-road GRIM challenge in December was held over the Army’s wet, muddy vehicle testing track at Aldershot, and although Leigh’s broken arm prevented them taking part in the gruelling ten-mile Rough ‘n’ Tumble; the pair ran ten miles in a forest to make up for it.

Then came the scary part – last month’s GRIM Night Terror, run over the same terrain as the original GRIM but designed for thrill-seekers. Run in the dark, entrants wear head torches, and have to cope with creepy characters along the way, strange howls in the night and the usual mud and water.

They were due to compete in the fast, flat Brighton Half Marathon as *Navy News* went to press, and the next few weeks brings half marathons at Silverstone (at the motor racing circuit) and Hastings, an unforgiving 16-mile cross-country race from Combe Gibbet to Overton in north Hampshire, the 10K Goudhurst road race in Kent and the grand finale – the Edinburgh Marathon in May.

That list is not set in stone – Leigh said they were still open to ideas for other challenges within the timescale.

The pair reckon that by the end of the challenge they will have run around 150 miles in competitions, 350 miles for training, and will have spent more than £300 each in entry fees. They hope to raise at least £500 for each of the charities, but need to find sponsors beyond their circle of family and friends.

Anyone who would like to support Leigh and Megan can do so online at www.virginmoneygiving.com/7monthchallenge.



● London Fashion Week has nothing compared to HMS Edinburgh...

Fortress’ lovelies

IT’S GOOD to know some shipboard traditions still thrive, for example the ability to find an unlikely array of lovely outfits even when in the midst of the oggin...

The beauty contest on board HMS Edinburgh during her recent South Atlantic deployment proves a fine illustration.

The Petty Officers mess on board decided to run a number of events in support of their chosen charity, The Forces Children’s Trust.

POWtr Crash Evans said: “We have just returned from a seven-month deployment from the South Atlantic and whilst this was a busy time operationally there were a few times where we were able to take some downtime and run various flightdeck entertainments.

“We tried to do any event we could think of from Blind Boxing to Horseracing nights.

“PO George Cross put himself forward to have his ‘monobrow’ waxed off – leaving him feeling rather open to the elements.”

Crash adds: “One event that particularly stood out for me was the Miss Edinburgh 2011 competition.

“This involved a member of each mess being voted on looks, grace and a party-piece of their choosing. Now bear in mind here we only have two ladies messes on board – you can imagine the scene!

“Party-pieces included jokes, songs and many choosing to complete a lap-dance for their heads of departments.”

Among the lovelies competing were Miss Understood, Miss Spelt, Miss Happen and our personal favourite from a destroyer, Miss Isle...

The Forces Children’s Trust charity manager, Denny Wise, visited the ship in February to collect a total of £1,016 and to thank all on board for their hard work.

The Forces Children’s Trust is devoted to helping children whose father or mother has died, or has sustained life-threatening injuries whilst serving as a member of the British Armed Forces.

Last words to Crash: “HMS Edinburgh may be on her way out of the fleet – but while there is still ‘smoke in our funnels’ we’ll continue to work hard, and play harder!”



“I ended up blind after a diving incident. But now I enjoy the things most people take for granted, like reading and cooking. And rock climbing!”

Steve Sparkes, Royal Marines

No one who’s served our country should battle blindness alone. That’s why we’re here to help with a lifetime’s practical and emotional support, regardless of when they served and how they lost their sight.

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Helm for heroes

IT'S more than a year since the Royal Navy's Harriers took their final flight, but their legacy lives on – not least in the form of an iconic helmet which raised £2,700 for Afghan Heroes.

The idea of the helmet came to CPOAET(M) Phil 'Frog' Spencer, in September 2010, when 800 NAS were exercising in Cyprus on what turned out to be their final detachment.

In between sunning themselves and assisting with the final pre-Operation Herrick training of a group of Army Tactical Aircraft Controllers, Phil set about creating a one-off piece of memorabilia to be donated to the charity.

With some gentle persuasion he convinced all the 800 NAS pilots to sign a spare Harrier pilot's flying helmet.

The rare and sought-after piece of aviation history was auctioned by Afghan Heroes, which raises funds for injured UK servicemen and women.

Birthday bash raises charity cash

FOLLOWING the success of her 'cake bake' outside the medical centre of HM Naval Base Clyde, dental hygienist Leslie Mooney helped organise another fund-raising event with her work colleagues.

This time the dental department organised a charity night to help raise money for the Meningitis Association Scotland and the Vale of Leven Hospital Cancer Fund.

The night attracted more than 200 guests and doubled as a joint birthday party for Leslie, 50, and her son James, 18.

But for Leslie and James the occasion was more than just a chance to celebrate their milestone birthdays.

Thirteen years ago, Leslie's youngest son, John, died from meningitis when he was only two, and for the past 10 years Leslie has been a cancer patient at the Vale of Leven Hospital Oncology Unit.

"Both these organisations have been a great support to me and my family, and I wanted to give something back," said Leslie.

The fundraising part of the evening consisted of a race night, auctions and raffles, raising £4,500.

Together with the 'cake bake,' which made more than £1,000, the department has held a series of raffles, which along with donations have raised nearly £10,000 for the two charities.

Boat tales

WHEN his two young sons used to ask their Daddy what he did, submariner Harry Nottley hit upon a good idea for explaining to them – he wrote a book.

Sammy the Submarine kept his children amused for years, but once Jack and Owen, had grown into teenagers, the book sat in Harry's loft.

Nearly 16 years later, Harry, now Lt Cdr Nottley, pulled it out of the attic again to get it reprinted and sold in aid of the RNRMC.

Harry explained: "The Submarine School was looking for ideas for raising money for charity, and I was persuaded to get *Sammy* out of the loft to be printed and sold."

He added: "I was delighted at how quickly we sold the initial print run of 100 books. With the second run of books also selling well, I quickly became aware that not all the books were being purchased for young children, and that a significant number were being bought by adults with a Service interest."

Sammy the Submarine raised £450, which together with the proceeds from polo shirts, mugs, coasters, wine and coffee mornings, made a total of £1,514 for the charity.

A night to remember in the ring

A CHARITY boxing night organised by HMS Ambush was a storming success and a sell-out at the box office, raising more than £1,200 for three charities.

The event, organised by LS John Lewis and held in the Coronation Hall in Ulverston, took the form of a dinner and boxing show open to the public. More than 330 locals came, with over 150 people on the waiting list for tickets.

John, who came up with the plan and was responsible for organising and promoting it, said: "The event was over six months in the making from when I first had the idea."

"All of the work and preparation was done in my own time as the submarine and her crew are going through a very busy period as Ambush enters the final phase of the build programme in Barrow."

Lt Jase McEvoy, Ambush's boxing coach, talked through the plan with the Combined Services boxing officials, Army and RN Boxing teams and provided one boxer from Ambush out of a possible four, with some withdrawn due to operational commitments.

John contacted Jeff Mosses, the chief coach from Barrow Amateur Boxing Club, and arranged for the Ambush boxers to use their facilities to train for the big night.

The evening consisted of 12 bouts among members of the



● AB Glen Coe in action in the ring

Combined Services, Barrow ABC and other North West boxing Clubs.

The evening had seven members of the Armed Forces boxing, four from the Army Boxing Squad, two from the RN Boxing Squad (AB Glen Coe and AET Richie Price) and one boxer from HMS Ambush (ET(WESM) Kenny Hudson).

The evening was attended by the Mayor of Ulverston, Cllr Pat Jones, and her husband.

The local radio station's breakfast DJ Danny Matthews hosted the charity auction on the night.

The special guest on the evening was current British and

Commonwealth heavyweight champion (at time of print) Tyson 'the Fist' Fury who went into the ring for a quick speech and was a great sport signing autographs and posing for photo's even though he was only a week away from defending his Commonwealth title.

The evening raised £4,201 to be split among the RNRMC, Help for Heroes, and Little Acorns nursery in Ulverston, South Cumbria.

John said: "It was a great success and the Coronation Hall told me they have already had enquiries asking if there will be a similar event next year."

"Over to you, Artful..."

Boxing squad pack their punches

BOXING coach Daz 'The Hatchet' Hoare came up with an ambitious scheme for his boxing squad from HMS Sultan to raise money – hitting a punch bag for 24 hours.

POPT Daz said: "HMS Sultan's very own Commodore Slawson started the event with some great combinations and then passed over to AET Luke Thomas."

"The team were doing three-minute rounds until 9pm when they broke into two groups of four to get five hours' downtime."

"During the small hours the lads then started to do five-minute rounds until all the lads were back together for the last four hours and back to three-minute rounds."

He added: "It was like a rollercoaster ride, we started with very powerful shots but after nine hours the knuckles were starting to hurt but the punches kept coming."

"As soon as a round was finished we had enough time to get a drink and some food then sit down for a few minutes, then it was time to get the gloves back on. It was really nice seeing the sun come up knowing we only had four hours left."

The team had plenty to eat and drink as local supermarkets provided bananas and Lucozade. Sarah Kinge donated a few boxes of cakes and Julie Mcmonagle, POPT Daz Hoare's mother-in-law, provided a spread of food to keep the boxers' energy and morale up.

Daz continued: "During the day and night the team had a stream of visitors that kept the guys' morale



up, along with videos and music.

"With the last two hours in sight the lads started to up their tempo even though their bodies and in particular their knuckles were hurting, the lads dugged deep into their reserves never to let anyone down."

With an hour to go Daz got a text from his father that said he would give the last person on the bag a £1 for every press-up he did in a minute.

With 24 minutes to go it was worked out that Luke Thomas would be the chosen one, and to the cheers of the assembled crowd, he managed 76 press-ups, which Rod Hoare said he would round it up to £80.

On completion of the event all the boxers were treated to a meal at the Cocked Hat where they all talked about their achievement.

Daz said: "On average the guys were throwing around 328-350

punches per round. In total most of the lads completed 60 rounds with the hardcore six completing 80. On average each boxer threw around 20,000 punches. Over the course of the 24 hours 20kg of bananas were consumed along with 60 litres of water."

He added: "This was an incredible achievement from the lads who dug into all their reserves to keep going."

"The commitment, courage and determination shown by these eight lads was nothing short of a miracle, going the distance and going through the pain barrier for two very worthy causes."

The eight, AET Dave Smee, LAET Stuart Connell, ETME Luke Weedon, AET Luke Thomas, ETME Adam Kinge, ETME Robert Maliszewski, ETME Craig Ashworth and POPT Daz Hoare raised £1,200 for the RNRMC and the Kids' Charity.



Hunks lift the minehunter

NOPE this isn't an early contender for one of those 'hunks in uniform' calendars...

These hunks sans uniform are the men of HMS Pembroke who decided they should do 'something big' before they returned to the UK after seven months aboard the minehunter in the Gulf.

That something big was 'lift the ship': using onboard weights and fitness kit they would lift the equivalent of the Sandown-class ship's weight (600 tonnes).

Step forward 10 of the strongest men aboard Pembroke (including CO Lt Cdr Richard Hutchings – who kept his t-shirt on for the above photograph) who answered the rallying cry of the ship's steward – and unofficial fitness instructor – AB(Logs) James Coombes to pump iron and help Pembroke House care home for former sailors, plus the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

'Lift the Ship' took place while the Bahrain-based minehunter enjoyed a short break alongside

in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates after a busy patrol.

"We've had a great tour of duty out here in the Middle East," said 23-year-old James, "and with a stint alongside sunny Abu Dhabi, I thought we should do something special for our Ship's charities that do such brilliant work for the Royal Navy community."

So how did they "lift" the ship? Each sailor had to bench press 20 tonnes, squat 18 tonnes, 'bent over row' lift 15 tonnes and mill press 7 tonnes – that meant each person lifted heavy weights more than 1,700 times.

Amazingly, the extreme exercise session was completed in under two hours. It left the 11 sailors rather tired... but spirits were boosted by the fact that they raised more than £1,300.

While the physical challenge is over the fund-raising continues. Donations can still be made for a short while longer at www.virginmoneygiving.com/team/hmspembroke.



● Trainee submariners from HMS Raleigh at the Trevorder Community Centre

Deepers are a dab hand with the brush

A TEAM of trainee submariners from HMS Raleigh has helped to brighten up the lives of Service families by giving a lick of paint to the Trevorder Community Centre in Torpoint.

Nine deeps from Corporate Squadron spent nearly two days at the centre, painting the main hall and carrying out other minor maintenance work.

And as WO2 Pete Farrell, in charge of the team, pointed out, it's excellent training for what might lie ahead.

"It's skills like these that have been used for many years by the Royal Navy around the world to assist in disaster relief, something that we can be called upon at any time to deliver," he said.

He added: "Having just completed 18 weeks of academic engineering training it was a novel change to get out of the classroom."

"None of the trainees had any previous experience in decorating and it was good to see some of their training come to fruition as they developed their own strategies and put their plan into action whilst working as a team."

Sara Parsons, who works at the centre, said: "I really appreciate all the hard work and enthusiasm from the trainees over the two days."

"Not only have they done a great job, they have also been a pleasure to host. The centre looks fantastic and gives it a new lease of life for 2012."



Remote monitoring

IF YOU'RE looking for isolation you don't get much more remote than this.

This is Gough Island, 35 square miles of UK soil (well, volcanic rock mainly) surrounded by the South Atlantic.

The Falklands are 2,400 miles to the southwest, Cape Town 1,600 miles to the east.

Its eight inhabitants don't get many visitors – unless, perhaps, a Type 23 frigate happens to be passing, say HMS Montrose.

The Devonport-based warship's quest to visit all of Britain's territories in the South Atlantic continues with a patrol around the Tristan da Cunha archipelago. Montrose has already made her mark in Ascension Island and St Helena.

Her ship's company have enjoyed the stunning icy vistas offered by South

Georgia and the even-more-far-flung South Sandwich Islands. And they've been bounced around the windy Falklands.

All of the aforementioned islands or chains are remote, but visited fairly frequently by Her Majesty's Ships.

Even Tristan da Cunha, 250 miles to the northwest, welcomes the White Ensign of the RN – or Blue Ensign of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary – occasionally.

We cannot remember any vessel of the Naval service visiting Gough Island, however, in the past decade.

So what have the Montroses enjoyed which the rest of the Royal Navy has missed?

Well, if you like feathers... The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds describes Gough (pronounced as in cough) as the most important sea bird island in the world, which is why it is designated as a World Heritage Site by the

United Nations.

It features a vast number of colonies of rare birds including almost the entire world population of tristan albatross and Atlantic petrel, plus more common rockhopper penguins and skuas.

All of which were very much in evidence when Montrose launched her Lynx helicopter to conduct an airborne reconnaissance and fisheries patrol of the island's waters.

As for human life, Gough – named after Capt Charles Gough, in command of the 24-gun sixth rate HMS Richmond, when she visited in 1731 – has no native population, but eight scientists and conservationists: two members of the RSPB who monitor the island's bird life and six members of the South African Weather Service who forecast the fronts which are pushed onto the Western African Cape by the strong winds of the

Roaring Forties.

"This has been another unique opportunity for Montrose and her ship's company," said Cdr Jonathan Lett, Montrose's Commanding Officer.

"Just as with our visits to Ascension, St Helena, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands earlier in the deployment, it has been a real privilege to visit one of the most isolated British South Atlantic Overseas Territories as part of our mission in the region."

A few days later and the Rose was in the rather more populous surroundings of Simon's Town for her mid-deployment break.

As well as permitting some much-needed TLC for the ship and some R&R for the 180-plus souls aboard, Montrose's Mk8 Lynx helicopter flew off to spend time with the South African Air Force to help them develop counter-piracy and

maritime security tactics.

The visit to South Africa also coincided with a visit to South Africa by William Hague who was calling in on the Commonwealth nation before heading to Botswana – the first foreign secretary to do so in a quarter of a century.

Aboard Montrose he discussed defence co-operation with senior members of the South African military.

"It was a real honour to host the foreign secretary aboard Montrose, and a fantastic opportunity for him to speak with the ship's company about our work," said Cdr Lett.

"We were able to discuss the UK and South Africa's common commitment to counter-piracy operations.

"Montrose's experience during a 2010 deployment off Somalia allowed us to explore tactics and techniques with the South African Defence Force."



The Union Jack Club more than a shore leave!



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Canty tradition continues

IN 1916, George Canty joined the Royal Navy at the age of 16.

He qualified as a Seaman Gunner at Crystal Palace, and went on to serve aboard Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships or DEMS during the Dardanelles Campaign.

His son, Brian Canty, joined the Navy in the 1950s, and qualified as a PO Radio Electrician at HMS Collingwood.

In 1951 he served in diving vessel HMS Reclaim during the hunt for submarine HMS Affray, which was subsequently located and identified by the first recorded use of an underwater TV camera.

Brian's son Cdr Nigel Canty retires this year after 34 years in the Engineering Branch and nuclear submarines.

As the last of the male line in this branch of the Canty family tree, could this be the end of almost a century of naval service?

Not necessarily – Cdr Canty's daughter Sophie recently became a member of her University RN Unit and could carry on the family tradition.

After his Naval service Brian went on to enjoy a career in the MOD and Diplomatic Service, retiring in 1992 as Governor of Anguilla, one of the UK's last remaining Overseas Dependent Territories (see picture above) – his experiences are described in a recently-published autobiography, *The Lives of Brian*.

Outstanding Workman

THE Tactical Hydrography and Meteorology Course (TACHM) generally has six to nine HM students each year – but competition for honours is tough.

And Lt Ray Workman proved the pick of the bunch when he was declared the BAE Insite TACHM Student 2010-11 at HMS Collingwood.

He was given the award by Cdr Andy Swain, Officer Commanding FOST HM, and presented with a precision barometer, in finest HM tradition, by Richard Elkington of BAE Systems.

Lt Workman achieved a high standard throughout the course, but in particular scored perfect marks on the three-hour theory exam, and achieved an official FOST Very Satisfactory overall during the practical elements.

The TACHM course develops the HM officer from the 'safe' weather forecaster which is produced by the 18-week meteorology course to an environmental specialist able to deliver tactical exploitation of the environment (TEE).

This is the process by which the effectiveness of a military enterprise is enhanced by harnessing environmental factors instead of simply reacting to them.

During the course students are given an Intelligent Preparation of the Environment assignment, delivering written and oral briefs.

The assessment is based on a complex warfare scenario where students are expected to brief the effect of TEE on all aspects of warfare, and it culminates in an embarkation on a frigate or destroyer during Principal Warfare Officer training at sea, allowing them to test themselves under realistic conditions at sea.



● Lisbee Stainton (grey scarf) and Phoebe Gardiner (chestnut coat) on the brow of HMS Vigilant with CO Cdr Mark Lister and the small but select audience

Lisbee rocks the boat

THE O2 Arena on the south bank of the Thames in London's Docklands is a pretty good venue to have on your CV if you are a musician.

And the Royal Albert Hall isn't too shabby, either.

But for a truly memorable gig, you have to come down in size a fair bit, and move a couple of hundred miles south-west to Plymouth.

For the real *aficionado*, you can't beat a concert in a nuclear submarine...

Up-and-coming British singer-songwriter Lisbee Stainton was the musician in question, and the connection was made by WO2 Steve Micallef, Manoeuvring Room Supervisor in HMS Vigilant.

The Trident missile boat is nearing the end of a lengthy refit in Devonport.

Steve saw Lisbee playing support to Joan Armatrading at the Brighton Dome in 2010, then again at a SCOPE charity event which she supported in Plymouth last summer.

Last September the singer emailed her fanbase announcing a 'Living Room Tour', in which she planned to play eight concerts in people's living rooms to audiences of between 15 and 30 people.

The idea was to have a great night out by staying in with a good crowd, a bit of food and a cosy, intimate venue. The response has been such that she has (to date) played more than 20...

Steve was in the process of moving house, so had no living room to offer. Instead, he suggested she might like to play in his living room at his other 'home' – Vigilant.

According to Lisbee's blog (available through her website www.lisbeestainton.com): "It took me approximately ten seconds to decide on my response, which was an unequivocal, absolute 100 per cent yes."

"I've played in some unusual locations in my career so far (at the Scouting centenary on Hayling Island, to a guard outside Norway's Royal Palace in Oslo, in an outdoor amphitheatre in a woodland, to name a few), but to play on a submarine would trump the lot."

"How could I resist?"

Steve's CO, Cdr Mark Lister, supported the idea from the start, so a date was set and on the day in question Lisbee and friend/backing vocalist Phoebe Gardiner turned up at the Naval Base.

By way of an introduction to the Senior Service, the musicians were given a tour of the boat.

"I'm not going to lie, I was blown away by the sheer size of her – the whole vessel resembled a huge tied-down whale," records Lisbee in her blog.

"I've only seen a submarine once before, when I was about six years old – I think it may have been HMS Alliance in Gosport, which is open to the public – but this was something else."

"At around 16,000 tonnes



● Lisbee performs in the Warrant Officers' and Senior Rates' Mess on board HMS Vigilant

submerged and housing approximately 130 men, she is quite a sight to behold, and I would have been happy just seeing the submarine from the outside, but the fact that I was actually going to go inside as well was ridiculously exciting.

"I felt like leaping about like an ecstatic five-year-old."

The sense of wonder only increased on climbing on board the bomber.

"All I'll say is that the inside of a nuclear submarine is jaw-dropping and I spent the majority of the tour parroting 'wow' and 'amazing' over

and over again like a stuck record," said Lisbee.

"I was having such a good time that I almost forgot that I was actually there to play, so at 1900 hours I set everything up in the mess to prepare for the gig."

Lisbee described her audience of two dozen, including the captain, as "very friendly", and was impressed by the enthusiasm of their singing and even some dancing by a handful of sailors.

She thanked Cdr Lister for allowing her and Phoebe to perform on board and making them feel so welcome, and the

crew "for being a brilliant crowd and great gentlemen by ferrying all of our stuff back up the ladder into the open air for us."

She added: "I can't thank Steve enough for treating us so well throughout the day and giving me such an amazing opportunity in the first place."

"This gig has gone on the top of my list of 'unusual places I have played', and was also one of my favourite days ever."

"The girls thoroughly enjoyed their visit onboard and Lisbee has another 25 fans to add to her growing fanbase," said Steve.

That new pusser looks a bit sporty...

ONE of the fastest men on earth has hung up his running shoes and joined the Royal Navy as a junior sailor.

Nigerian sprinter Olusoji Fasuba – the African 100m record holder, 2004 Olympic bronze medallist and indoor 60m world champion – has swapped the track for life as a logistics expert.

The 27-year-old has just completed nine months of training at HMS Raleigh at Torpoint and is now ready to take up his first posting in the logistics department across the water in Devonport Naval Base.

Olusoji, nicknamed Flash by his shipmates, was looking for a more settled life for his family – wife Ngozi, a fellow athlete, and daughter Annabelle, aged seven months.

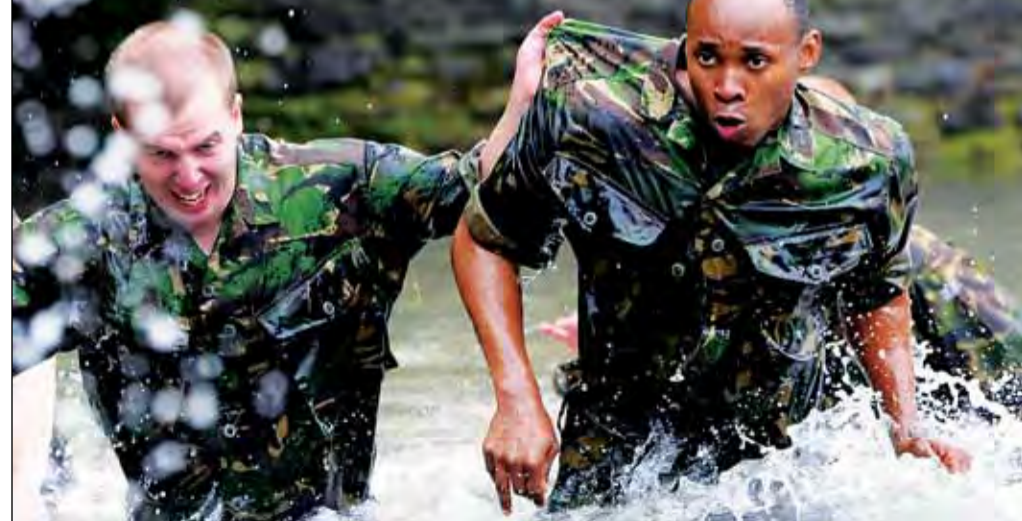
Last May he walked through the gates of HMS Raleigh to begin training as a Logistician (Supply Chain), and last month he walked out, training complete.

Before hanging up his running shoes, the sprinter won bronze medal in the 4x100m relay at the Athens Olympics, golds in the 100m and 4x100m relay at the 2007 All-African Games and gold at the 2008 indoor championships at 60m.

And in 2006, Flash set an African record in the 100m – 9.85 seconds, just 0.13 of a second slower than the fastest man in the world, Usain Bolt – at the Doha Grand Prix.

He is still equal tenth in the list

● Olusoji Fasuba (right) during Exercise Daring Leap, part of irritial training



of the fastest sprinters of all time.

Now living in Plymouth with his family the young sailor said: "I've had a very good career in athletics and been there with the big boys, but I was looking to the future and wanted to settle."

"My father used to work for the Nigerian Navy, so from a young age it was all about the Navy."

"Some of my friends are serving in the British Army and tried to persuade me to join, but for me it had to be the Royal Navy."

"Training has been my way of

life for a long time.

"Growing up in Nigeria discipline is very strict, so that aspect of being in the Navy wasn't really a shock to me."

"It was tough mentally sometimes, and I did question myself about what I was doing, but ultimately I wanted to do it for myself and my family."

During his specialist training Flash was appointed the role of class leader.

He played for Raleigh's football team and lists a week's leadership

training at Tal-y-bont in Wales as one of the highlights of his course.

In his new role Flash will be responsible for ensuring that his unit has everything it needs to operate, ordering and storing millions of pounds worth of equipment, from engineering parts to stationery.

He said: "All my life has been about sport, so I wanted to try something different."

"We were under a lot of pressure to learn a lot during our specialist training, and I surprised myself in

being able to understand it all.

"In this job I'll be working in an office or a storeroom and I'll be able to keep my athletics as a hobby."

"I'm excited about my first posting as I've never had what you would call a regular job and I'm looking forward to actually working in a stores department."

For the future Flash is hoping to complete a full career in the Royal Navy and maybe transfer to the Officer Corps at some stage.

He is keen to apply for British citizenship, and although his priority is his new career and his family, he hopes one day to equal his feat of winning the 60m world indoor title for Nigeria by taking the title for Britain.

The junior sailor has been training at weekends in Plymouth where he has been giving running tips to the younger generation.

Elsewhere on the sporting front, Flash's latest goal is to become a member of the RN bobsleigh team, and he will soon be travelling to Austria for his first try out at the Inter-Service games.

He said: "As soon as I saw the film *Cool Runnings*, I thought: 'I could do that.'"

"I've never done it before, and I may not like it, so I need to build my love for the sport and I've given myself five chances to see how things go."

"I've looked at the statistics and I know I can do it. My ambition is to represent Britain at bobsleigh at a Winter Olympics."



● Cdr Kevin Gomm

Ursine of the times as Rocky joins crew

New man at helm of school

THE new man at the helm of the Royal Navy Submarine School in HMS Raleigh has plenty of experience to call on.

Cdr Kevin Gomm joined the Royal Navy in 1978, and has served in seven submarines – including more than two years in command of Trafalgar-class attack boat HMS Trenchant for which he was awarded the OBE in June 2010.

Neither is Cdr Gomm a stranger to working in a training role – he served as the Senior Warfare Training Officer at the Submarine School from September 1999 and became Head of Training at the Devonport Submarine Command Training Facility in 2003.

Prior to taking up his new appointment, Cdr Gomm served as the Devonport Flotilla Submarine Commander.

Cdr Gomm takes over from Cdr Nick Meredith, who has led the school since 2008 and moves on to take up a new appointment at NATO HQ in Belgium.

The school provides training to weapon engineering and warfare operations specialists.

Courses range from initial professional training to allow deeps to work below the waves to later career courses which prepare personnel for promotion and to use new equipment.

Restoration is on track

FUTURE officers and staff from the System Engineering Management Training Unit (SEMTU) in HMS Collingwood have visited the Dunkirk little ship Dorian in Southampton Docks in support of continuing work being undertaken by trainees of Victory Squadron to help restore the vessel.

The visit by students of SEMC 113 was organised by LS Keith Johnson, the Victory Squadron lead for the involvement with the project, and the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships (ADLS) Restoration Trust, as part of the establishment's commitment to local community projects.

The students have spent much of their time learning the finer points of engineering principles and management since beginning training in September, and so relished the chance to get out of the classroom for a day.

Making the most of an opportunity to get stuck in, the Young Officers, along with LS Johnson, undertook a range of jobs including stripping and sanding the mast, manufacturing new copper bolts for replacement timbers and creating templates for the rebuild of the ship's deck.

The work is voluntary, with all expertise and materials being supplied by society members and charitable donations through the Restoration Trust.

Dorian is one of 11 ships acquired by the Trust, and so there is never a shortage of work. The provision of a steady stream of enthusiastic workers by Collingwood has therefore been a welcome resource for the Trust.

The ADLS aim to have Dorian ready for the 75th anniversary of the Dunkirk evacuation in 2015, before making her part of a museum paying tribute to historic ships and aircraft in Southampton.

WE HAVE a long (and not necessarily honourable) tradition of featuring cuddly toys and mascots in the pages of *Navy News*.

It's true that some within the Senior Service scratch their heads at such mascot-related tomfoolery and get on with the serious matter of defending the nation's interests.

But the sheer imagination and effort which goes into hosting and entertaining bears, frogs, mice and whatever shows that it strikes a chord deep down in the heart of many a sailor.

There was HMS Ocean's ship's cat, whose internet blog proved more popular than the ship's own website...

Fred, HMS Lancaster's 'super exploring frog', who guided the frigate successfully through a counter-piracy patrol (with a little help from the ship's company)...

HMS Chatham's Mighty Mouse showed how much fun you can have with eight inches of plastic.

And there was Salty the Bear, trailblazing, globe-trotting symbol of the Geordie Gunboat whose exploits remain legendary in the annals of RN mascotry nearly a decade after HMS Newcastle passed into history...

Now enter Lt Rocky – donated to HMS Triumph by her affiliate, Triumph Motorcycles – the very first teddy bear to earn his dolphins (admittedly not too many have tried previously...).

The hirsute deep joined the Devonport-based boat last year as she prepared for her current east of Suez patrol.

He was enticed by the prospect of joining a furs for good (sorry) and by the RN's latest slogan 'We are land, sea and bear'...

Rocky's shipmates determined that he couldn't join them on that deployment without his dolphins, so he went through the arduous qualification process.

Initially, he didn't necessarily impress. "If you have time to sleep then you have time to trace a system", said LET Dymond. No exceptions could be made for Rocky on account of his requirement to hibernate.

"If every trainee crawled into his bunk and slept for six months, no one would ever get qualified," Lt Cdr 'Bing' Crosby, Triumph's Executive Officer, growled.



● PO Aaron Donaghy and AB Quinn relax on the casing of HMS Triumph with Rocky the Bear

Ultimately, Rocky was motivated by the prospect of joining a special breed of men... and perhaps the 'golden handshake' bounty.

"We have a long deployment and I need as much money as possible so I can enjoy myself on the few runs ashore which submariners get! Luckily I don't pay any tax, being a teddy bear, so I'll be quids in," the bear is quoted as saying.

Rocky persevered and was soon recommended by CPO Chapman to sit his board in front of Cdr Rob Dunn, Triumph's CO, Lt Cdr Crosby and the engineering heads of department.

After a 90-minute grilling, Rocky came out of the wardrobe with a big grin on his face: he had passed and was now a qualified submariner.

"An excellent oral board," said Cdr Dunn. "He really knew his stuff, and we are happy that he will be safe onboard. Plus he provided some excellent 'nutty' during his board which will always work in your favour – especially chocolate Hobnobs!"

Rocky was awarded his dolphins that very night with ETs Walsh

and Walker and Wtr Pearson. Tradition states that Royal Navy submarine dolphins should be presented in a glass of rum, and caught between the teeth as the tot is taken.

Afterwards he wore his dolphins proudly on his Triumph Motorcycles leather jacket – but only for a while before he got his head down and enjoyed some well deserved rest as a newly-qualified submariner.

When awake, Rocky was now in a position to join in other duties with his fellow warfare officers, spending a lot of his time periscope watchkeeping – a very important job with regards to submarine safety. The other officers in his watch were often 'miffed', however, as every time he needed to look through the mast, the periscope needed to be lowered to the deck in order that the bear could see.

"Who put this 30cm tall teddy in our watch with three six-footers?" fumed one.

Rocky, we're told, was unfazed by such 'dripping sessions' and was soon outshining his peers, on both the periscope and Ship

Control.

Indeed, the mascot matured beyond his years once he qualified, giving the captain and XO advice on navigation and the tactical picture. Some of it was even relevant.

It's not been all work, work, work for Rocky. He was made to feel very welcome onboard, attended church, as well as the carol service – 2011 was his first Christmas away from his den – and, on his first night as a qualified submariner he was honoured to be asked to pick the Saturday movie: *Monty Python's Life of Brian*.

He's also been treated to a run ashore in Bahrain where he let his fur down and enjoyed the sights and sounds of the small kingdom, and even managed to watch Triumph's brave defeat to Bahrain Rugby Club.

As for his shipmates, they're continuing to guide the Trafalgar-class hunter-killer through its lengthy patrol, although they promise to give their furry friend his first taste of a hands to bathe and ship's company barbecue on the next leg of the deployment.



Apprentices study diesel submarine

A GROUP of apprentices from energy giant EDF Nuclear took a good look at the wartime technology of HMS Alliance in order to further their careers.

With industry marking National Apprenticeship Week early last month, the 80 second-year apprentices called in the RN Submarine Museum in Gosport to face their biggest challenge to date by studying the engineering of HMS Alliance, the only surviving A-class World War 2-era submarine left in the UK.

The apprentices, working alongside retired submariners based at the museum, have gone well beyond a standard engineering apprenticeship framework, developing comprehensive maintenance schedules for various systems in the diesel boat.

This project is regarded as one of the best examples in the country of the rigour, scope and skill of the best modern vocational training.

Alex Khan, Managing Director for Babcock Education and Training, said: "Working in partnership with EDF Energy and the RN Submarine Museum enables us to train apprentices to a level that is exceptional."

"The HMS Alliance challenge is part of a number of activities that open up new avenues of learning above and beyond a standard apprenticeship – in technical training as well as team working, leadership and management."

"The skills that they have attained through this project will serve the learners and the power stations that they work for to meet immediate business needs and further challenges, long into the future."

Deep (freeze) knowledge Collingwood hosts careers advisors

THE recent extreme cold weather did not prevent training staff at Britannia Royal Naval College taking to Dartmoor as part of their preparations for the start of the newly-designed Initial Naval Training (Officer) course.

Under the guidance of the Royal Naval Leadership Academy staff from the college, a team of 25 went out to practise some of the new elements of the course and to gain the crucial understanding of what the officer cadets under their care will be experiencing.

Lt Cdr Al Moody, Officer Commanding Initial Naval Training, explained: "The officer training that is being introduced as the next cohort of cadets arrives is of an extremely high standard, and very different from that which most on the staff received."

"The programme of staff training that we've undertaken in recent weeks, particularly the three nights on Dartmoor, has reinforced the quality of the new training, bringing us all to a level playing field underpinned by a duty of care awareness."

"The night spent in a bivouac when the temperature fell to -10°C



● Capt Chris Burr RM, of the Royal Naval Leadership Academy, holds up a frozen pair of trousers of one of the training team

Picture: Lt Cdr Alistair Moody

was a challenge for everyone there", said Lt Cdr Jez Ussher, of the RNLA.

"In addition we carried out the wet/dry drills that night, which proved beyond doubt the value of how and why we do things."

"Everyone involved learned so much and came away with a huge

sense of personal achievement."

Lt Cdr Moody added: "We all know the theory around how we function in extreme conditions and we have now worked as a team through a practical demonstration of that."

"This training illustrated just how we must deal with it."

ONE of the Royal Navy's main training centres has hosted a visit by careers advisors as part of their contribution to National Apprenticeship Week.

HMS Collingwood is the centre for the delivery of all the apprenticeship programmes the RN has to offer, as well as being the home of warfare and weapon engineer training.

The establishment welcomed eight advisors representing 15 secondary schools, colleges and youth organisations in south-east Hampshire.

Their visit included a presentation about the value of apprenticeships to both the Navy and its trainees, which was held in the new Vocational Qualification Centre in Ramsay Building.

A tour of Ramsay Building – which includes modern ICT classrooms, and an education centre incorporating a Learndirect e-learning centre and offices for VT Flagship (Babcock) apprenticeship staff – was followed by the chance to drop in on apprentices undergoing training around the Fareham base.

Cdr Sean Winkle, the RN Apprenticeship Programme Contract Manager, said: "Whilst the thrust of National Apprenticeship Week is to promote the value of providing apprenticeships to employers, I am especially interested in highlighting to young people leaving schools at 16 or 18 that the training provided by the Navy is much more than learning the skills we need as part of a fighting arm of the nation's military forces."

"It also offers an array of valued trades and an opportunity to get a number of nationally-recognised qualifications, many of which are provided through the apprenticeship programmes."

The visitors had the chance to chat to apprentices. Louisa King, a careers advisor for the Youth Support Service based in Havant and Waterlooville, said: "This has been really useful and informative – it's been helpful to meet the trainees and see the environment they're in."

"This will help us feed in to our work when advising young people."



Bert meets true patriot

A FOUNDER member of the HMS Dunkirk Association bumped into a bona fide American patriot when he stopped off in Hawaii on a flight down under. S/M Bert Stenning, who served in the Battle-class destroyer from 1961-63, took the opportunity to visit Pearl Harbor in Honolulu. "I was fortunate enough to meet and speak with 92-year-old Delton E Walling, ex-CSM, US Navy," said S/M Bert.

"He was providing communication signals from a signal tower at Pearl Harbor on the day of the raid."

Delton hitch-hiked 190 miles to Detroit at the age of 19 in 1940 to join the Navy, but was turned down because a boxing injury had left him with a stiff finger.

When he asked how he could get into the Navy, he was told: "Cut it off!" - and at his own expense...

Clutching a note to say where the finger needed to be amputated, Delton found a downtown surgeon who agreed to do for \$20 (though the surgeon gave him three dollars back to pay for a meal).

After Pearl Harbor, Delton served much of the war in troop transport USS Fayette, which saw action in six Pacific island invasions including Iwo Jima.

"Delton is a spritely guy for his age, and very coherent," said S/M Bert.

Birthday cash for memorial

MEMBERS of East Antrim branch and friends at Browns Houston and Williamson got together to celebrate the 90th birthday of President S/M Jim McCall.

S/M Jim served as a Telegraphist, and is a survivor from HMS Prince of Wales, sunk by the Japanese in the South China Sea in December 1941.

He suffered during his time as a prisoner-of-war, and in recent years has been helping former shipmates from the battleship to gather funds for a lasting memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum to those who died in the sinking, in captivity, or who suffered in the subsequent years.

To mark S/M Jim's birthday, the branch made a donation of £90 to the Prince of Wales Memorial Fund, and Browns Houston and Williamson matched it, meaning a cheque for £180 was donated to the Staffordshire arboretum.

New role for David

THERE has been a change at the top of the pile in Area 4.

At the area AGM, held in Truro, Area President S/M Howard Jeffries of Street branch relinquished the position after 20 years in the hot seat.

S/M David White of Portland branch accepted an invitation to take on the role as President.

S/M Howard was invited by S/M Charles H Thompson to join him as an Area 4 Life Vice President in recognition of the outstanding work for the area he and his wife Beryl have undertaken for the area over four decades.

Two other shipmates, Tony Milliner of Exeter branch and Jim Paterson of Plymouth branch, were also awarded Area Life Vice Presidencies.

Conference to consider conferences

THE Conference Study Group (CSG) report on the organisation of future National Conferences has been distributed to branch secretaries for feedback before the Association meets up in Newcastle in June.

The group was mandated in 2010 to look into various aspects of the gathering and to report back to Conference in due course.

Among the issues raised were location, expense and dates.

The locations of recent conferences have brought this issue into sharp focus - between 2006 and 2010 the event was staged in West Wales (Aberystwyth), the West

Country (Torquay), Scotland (Dundee), Northern Ireland (Londonderry) and France (Ouireham), with attendance by delegates falling off steadily until last year in Plymouth.

The CSG has been considering the effects of long-distance travel on conference attendance, as well as the possibility of moving the date to capitalise on slack hotel booking periods, avoiding national holidays and events and yet maintaining the likelihood of good weather.

The nature of future venues was also considered, with Londonderry cited as a good example of a venue combining a large number of hotel rooms, a sizeable dining room and

conference facilities all under one roof.

The possibility of improving the programme and making the Conference more 'delegate-friendly' was also discussed.

The Group is scheduled to air its report at this year's Conference in Newcastle on Saturday June 9, along with a set of guidelines for potential hosts.

If there are no bidders for a particular year - and the National Council is "concerned not to take away the democratic right of areas and branches to bid to host the Conference" - then the CSG suggests the task should be taken on by the Association Management Committee.

Virtual branch: use it or lose it

SNOW, a filthy South Coast cafe, the relative merits of Pussers' rum and scotch... the meeting of the RNA's virtual branch does not have anything so restrictive as an agenda to stick to, writes Mike Gray.

I sat in on a meeting last month to get an idea of how the virtual branch scheme works - and why its champion in the Association is concerned that members should use it before they lose it.

The idea behind the Virtual Branch is simple - each one is a group of like-minded individuals

who have an affiliation with the Royal Navy.

The scheme is open to any paid-up RNA member, full or associate, male or female, who has a phone-line, and is provided free of charge on a fortnightly basis.

If it is particularly useful if you cannot get along to attend a local branch regularly - perhaps through immobility, or distance from the nearest group.

But it is just as useful for someone on their own who feels lonely, or someone who just fancies swinging the lamp and spinning dits with others from

across the country.

In the meeting I 'attended' a handful of people from the South Coast to Orkney checked in one by one and started with a few queries on the main topic of the day - snow.

Introductions were carried out for new members, and immediately links were made - two were at HMS St Vincent at the same time and became muckers, others were Ganges boys.

Two reminisced about a post-war cafe in Sussex where matelots who missed their connection could get a cup of tea then kip

until they could get a milk train to Portsmouth - though they had to put up with cats peeing on them and grubby furniture and fittings.

Members of the Virtual Branch described their Service history; one was a Sea cadet in 1947 who went RNVR at HMS Flying Fox in Bristol, did National Service then returned to the Reserves.

He was a Sick Berth Attendant - "Medical Assistants they are now," he added, "and doing a hell of a good job in Afghanistan."

Charity was the next topic of conversation, with one participant telling how he tried to donate £25 to a military charity online and almost ended up donating one hundred times that amount before he realised his mistake.

By this stage the group were chatting away like old friends; one professed a preference for whisky over rum, there was reference to the merits or otherwise of pusser's tickler (tobacco) and blue liners (cigarettes), a poem about life at HMS Ganges was recited.

Food featured prominently - canteen messing, congealed gravy (it was a long way from the galley to the mess in some ships) and best breakfasts (s**t on a raft or kidneys on toast proved popular) - and there were one or two dits about characters who (allegedly...) did a thriving trade in contraband items.

Post-Navy life on Civvy Street also featured before the group said their farewells and the lines were closed down.

The service is provided by the Community Network charity, but take-up in the RNA since the branch went live last summer has not been as great at National Welfare Advisor S/M Rita Lock had hoped, which means future funding for the scheme is now at risk.

Quite simply, unless there are more takers, the Virtual Branch system will be abandoned.

If you are interested in joining, and helping the Virtual Branch survive, contact RNA HQ on 023 9272 3747 or 023 9272 2983.

Royal Oak ceremony

S/M KENNETH Toop, secretary of the Royal Oak Association, reports that the obelisk commemorating those who died in the loss of the battleship is now complete (right).

The granite memorial stands on a grassed area near the Harbourmaster's Depot on the shore of Scapa Flow, overlooking the spot where HMS Royal Oak was torpedoed and sunk in 30m of water by U47 in October 1939 with the loss of more than 830 men.

The obelisk was paid for by donations from survivors, families of those lost and friends of the HMS Royal Oak Survivors Association, income from lapel pins and a donation from Orkney Marine Services on behalf of Orkney Islands Council.

To mark the occasion, wreaths were laid on the surface of Scapa Flow and the memorial itself was unveiled by Agnes Mountbatten in the presence of members of

Fisgard team changes

THE Fisgard Association, an organisation for ex-RN Artificer Apprentices, held its 15th AGM at the Royal Maritime Club in Portsmouth.

The meeting saw several changes on the committee, including the retirement of the chairman, S/M David Eaton, after ten years in the post.

The new Chairman elected is Ted Sanderson, an ex Fleet Air Arm Artificer.

Both the Secretary, Dirk Barclay, and the Treasurer, Keith Miskins, were re-elected, as was the editor of the association's journal, The Fisgardian - John Stupples - and the association's webmaster Nolly Bland.

Other changes were caused by the retirement through ill health of Social Secretary Richard Owen and the retirement of minutes secretary Harry Brickwood.

A healthy gathering saw for the first time more members wishing to join the committee than places available.

Anyone interested in joining the association should see www.fisgardassociation.org or contact the Secretary, Fisgard Association, c/o Royal Maritime Club, Queen Street, Portsmouth PO1 3HS.

Surcouf appeal

ON February 18 1942 the French 'undersea cruiser' submarine Surcouf, which joined the Free French naval forces in August 1940, disappeared.

There is some dispute about the reason for her loss, with one explanation being a collision with American freighter SS Thomson Lykes in the Gulf of Mexico as the submarine headed for the Pacific.

The boat went down with all hands, and three of those 129 souls were British.

Temporary S/Lt Roger Burney RNVR, Tel Bernard Gough (or Cough) RNVR and POTel George Mitchell were the Royal Navy's 'liaison' team on board the boat.

On May 18 the association For Sailors will pay tribute to the lost seamen with a ceremony at Plougonvelin in Brittany, and are hoping for the participation of families by providing biographical details and photographs.

Any relatives of the three Britons who can help, should contact Capt Stanley at the British Embassy, 35 Rue de Faubourg, St-Honoré, 75383 Paris, or M Georges Kevorkian, Association Aux Marins, Rue des Martyrs, 29217 Plougonvelin, France.

Perth AGM

PERTH branch hosted the Scottish Area AGM at the St Johnstone FC Supporters Club.

The meeting was closed by Area Chairman S/M Brian MacKenzie, of the City of Glasgow branch.



Chatham celebrates Ocelot 50

HMS OCELOT was the last warship built for the Royal Navy at Chatham, going down No 7 Slip on May 5 1962.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of her launch - which also marked the end of more than 400 years of shipbuilding at the royal dockyard in Kent - a special Submariners' Day will be held at the yard on Saturday May 12.

All submariners, past and present, together with former Chatham dockyard workers involved with building submarines (up to the closure in 1984) are invited to enjoy free admission to the Historic Dockyard for the day.

The Ocelot 50 event will also have special discounted tickets for accompanying families and friends.

A service will be held in the Royal Dockyard Church to celebrate and commemorate the last warship built for the Royal Navy at Chatham, those who served in her and the wider submarine community.

The service will be followed by a parade led by the Royal Marines Band CTC (Commando Training Centre), with the salute being taken at the head of Ocelot, now a main attraction in dry dock at the yard.

All submariners are welcome to take part in the parade - plans are being made for an Ocelot contingent and Submariners Association standards to take the lead behind the band.

After the parade a new submarine exhibition will be

opened on the dockside adjacent to Ocelot.

In the early evening there will be a separately-ticketed Beat Retreat and Ceremonial Sunset featuring the Royal Marines Band and others.

Association standards are invited to take part in the final muster parade.

Further details will be released on www.thedockyard.co.uk/ocelot50 in due course, but in the meantime interest can be registered by emailing aalmond@chdt.org.uk or telephone 01634 823816, providing name, postal address, telephone number, email and details of the submarine service.

Further details will then be forwarded directly to them.



the Royal Navy's Northern Diving Unit.

Also attending were the Lord Lieutenant of Orkney and the Norwegian Consul.



Sidmouth celebrates centenary

SIDMOUTH and District Royal Naval Old Comrades Association celebrates its centenary in May this year – and wonders how many other naval associations can match or better that record.

The association was formed on May 8 1912, and now boasts a membership of more than 60, of whom 40 are former Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel.

The rest are associate members – former Merchant Navy, Army and RAF personnel and friends of the association – and, as always, the group is keen to boost its numbers.

Members support Remembrance Day and Armed Forces Day along with the Royal British Legion, and amongst the other functions during the year is a dinner to celebrate Nelson's victory at Trafalgar.

A special dinner will be held on May 8 to mark the centenary, and it is hoped that a retired rear admiral will be guest of honour.

Bench tribute

OVER the past couple of years Bude branch has lost two much-respected shipmates.

Harry Bradbury and Bill Roake were both very good oppos, and within the retiring collection at Bill's funeral the branch was nominated as one of the beneficiaries.

Their shipmates decided to provide a bench with their names engraved on a plaque, and place it in the churchyard.

A small and informal dedication service was held, conducted by the branch and Area 4 padre S/M Rev Russen Thomas, accompanied by branch standard bearer S/M John 'Tanky' Williams.

The hardstanding base for the bench was supplied free of charge by Torridge District Council – a good illustration, according to the branch, of local authority and Association working together.



● HMS Trumpeter keeps station as a wreath is cast on the sea in memory of the men of 825 Naval Air Squadron

Veterans gather to salute brave airmen

VETERANS from the Channel Dash Association and HMS Victorious Association played their part in honouring the 18 Naval airmen who put their lives on the line in the Channel Dash 70 years ago.

Six Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers from 825 Naval Air Squadron took off from their temporary base at RAF Manston in Kent on February 12 1942 with the almost impossible task of sinking three heavy German warships that were running the gauntlet of the English Channel, hugging the French coast in a bid to reach the safety of their home ports.

Led by Lt Cdr Eugene Esmonde and protected by a handful of RAF fighters, the aircraft – slow and ponderous in comparison to the Germans' 300-strong fighter screen – were picked off by enemy aircraft or in the murderous barrage of gunfire from battle-cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen and their escorts.

Of the 18 men who took part – each plane had a pilot, an observer and a Telegraphist Air Gunner – only five survived and were picked

up from the sea.

The German ships continued eastwards, also surviving attacks by RN destroyers and motor torpedo boats, and arrived safely at their destinations.

And although objectives were not met, the action is regarded as one of the most courageous in the annals of the Fleet Air Arm.

The Victorious Association has a special affinity for the heroes of the Channel Dash as the squadron had been based on the carrier when its Swordfish attacked the Bismarck, winning Esmonde a Distinguished Service Order – which had been presented to him by King George VI at Buckingham Palace the day before the action.

Two ceremonies took place in the South-East, with Association member S/M Arthur Light putting to sea in an estuary pilot boat to be present at a Channel Dash Association wreath-laying in the Channel at 1249, marking the exact time of the unequal battle.

Also in attendance was Cambridge URNU patrol boat HMS Trumpeter.

At the same time, former First Sea Lord Admiral The Lord Boyce placed a wreath on a monument at Ramsgate Harbour which was erected just a couple of years ago through the efforts of the Channel Dash Association.

Later that day a fund-raising dinner was held in the officers' mess at Manston – now the Defence Fire Training and Development Centre (DFTDC) – echoing the party thrown for Esmonde on his return from Buckingham Palace.

At the dinner playwright David Kingsmill – who had earlier cast a wreath of roses on to the waters of the Channel – gave a blow-by-blow account of the 825 NAS death ride from the view of a participant, dressed in flying clothes of the day.

David is the grandson of S/Lt Pat Kingsmill RNVR, pilot of the third aircraft in the first formation of three to attack whose burning, shattered aircraft ditched with a loss of engine power as the pilot tried to launch his torpedo.

David hopes the presentation can be worked up into a play or even screenplay.

And the following day a service of remembrance was held at St Mary-in-Castro Church in Dover Castle for all three Services.

And while ceremonies were being held in Kent, members of the Victorious Association and other veterans groups were paying their respects at Esmonde's birthplace in South Yorkshire.

The gallant officer – who won a Victoria Cross from his part in the Channel Dash – was the son of Irish parents, and spent some of his early life in Ireland, but he was born in Thurgoland, near Barnsley, where his father was the village GP.

Veterans and Sea Cadets paraded from a well-attended church service to the village cenotaph (pictured below), then many retired to the Green Dragon pub for a light lunch courtesy of the Yorkshire Fleet Air Arm Association.

Members of the parish council, the pub landlord and Sea Cadet units have all vowed to ensure Esmonde's name is given due prominence locally – a job well done, according to the various veterans' associations present and HMS Victorious Association chairman S/M Stan McLellan.

Commemorations were not confined to the weekend.



● Admiral the Lord Boyce lays a wreath on the Channel Dash memorial in Ramsgate

Picture: Trevor Walhen

On Saturday May 19 a memorial to Operation Fuller – the official British codename for the Channel Dash action – will be dedicated on Marine Parade in Dover.

For while the memorial at Ramsgate specifically recalls the actions of the airmen, the Channel Dash Association is keen that a second, similar, installation should commemorate all members of the Armed Forces who took part in Operation Fuller, which saw total of 40 killed or missing, 27 being from the destroyer HMS Worcester.



£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery submarine in our January edition (right) which took the name of a Visigoth ruler was HMS Alaric.

D Coombs of Gosport wins £50 for giving the correct answer.

This month's mystery ship, at the top of the picture above, was launched just before Christmas 1942 at Birkenhead.

She won battle honours for her work with convoys and off Normandy.

The destroyer was sold to the Royal Netherlands Navy the year after the war ended, and the following decade was converted to a fast frigate.

(1) What was her Royal Navy name, and (2) what was her new name when she joined the Dutch? Complete the coupon and send



it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH. Coupons giving the correct answer will go into a prize draw to establish a winner. Closing date for entries is April 13 2012. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our May edition. The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

Spruce-up for Gosport



● Members of Victory Squadron hold up badges of ships from the Gosport club. Centre is S/M Nobby Clarke, club chairman, while to the right is WO Rea, who organised the work party and is an RMA committee member

PERSONNEL from Victory Squadron at the Maritime Warfare School helped spruce up Gosport branch's club.

The sailors, based at HMS Collingwood in Fareham, took on a range of internal and external tasks, including painting, cleaning, repairing the roof of the main hall and shifting furniture.

Club chairman S/M Nobby Clarke said he was delighted to have the matelots helping him.

He added that the work they did was "fantastic" and he hoped it would help attract members of Victory Squadron to the association.

WO Rea said the provision of the working party would enable Collingwood to further strengthen links with the local branch, and in turn realise the aspiration that Phase 2 students and trainees should broaden their knowledge of the Royal Navy's history and traditions, away from the classroom.

Type 42 organiser aims high

IT MAY be a new group, but the man behind the Type 42 Association is already thinking big.

There are single-ship associations, which the new body does not seek to usurp, but last autumn – with the 30th anniversary of the Falklands Conflict approaching – S/M Bob Mullen thought it would be a good chance for all those who served in the 14 ships of the class to get together.

S/M Bob served in HMS Sheffield in the South Atlantic, and was one of the very last to leave as he was attending to the ropes which lashed the doomed destroyer to a rescuing ship.

He is a member of three Type 42 ship associations and SAMA82, and sees the new organisation as complementary and a good way to keep together a community which operated one of the Navy's most illustrious post-war ships.

Association president Rear Admiral Philip Wilcocks said: "Each and every destroyer has its own distinctive history, yet the force as a whole has formed the backbone of our nation's maritime history over the past 40 years."

"They and their people have fought with honour and distinction in all our major conflicts, and contributed to the success of most of the minor operations, since the first Type 42 became operational in the 1970s."

The response to a call for members has been such that S/M Bob believes the Type 42 Association could rapidly become the biggest such group.

The website, www.type42association.co.uk, will give details of a major reunion planned for July 13 2013 at Whale Island in Portsmouth, where the sports field can cope with up to 5,000 people.

S/M Bob is hoping that the association and website will eventually serve a number of purposes besides keeping former shipmates in touch with each other, including a forum, recruitment and fundraising.

It is hoped a network of local representatives will organise smaller runs ashore in different parts of the country.

A lively Facebook page already has plenty of old pictures, reminiscences and dits, and there are plans to put a memorial photograph gallery on the website.

Hermes raffle plea

THE HMS Hermes Association is holding its annual reunion next month (April 5-9) at the Royal Maritime Club in Portsmouth – and the organisers are looking for special prizes for a grand raffle.

Association social secretary S/M Robert Welch said: "It is a very special year for us, and I want to make it a very special raffle."

"We have attending three members of the ninth HMS Hermes, which was sunk at 1110 on April 9 1942 in the Bay of Bengal, which will be a 70-year-on celebration of their survival."

"On the same weekend we will be marking the 30th anniversary of the Falklands Conflict in 1982 where HMS Hermes played a big role as flagship, and have many of the ship's company attending who were down there in Hermes."

"Our guest of honour at our main dinner and raffle will be Admiral Sir John 'Sandy' Woodward, who was Task Force Commander and who flew his flag in HMS Hermes."

"My request is a raffle prize for a very special reunion and a very special group of men and their ladies."

Contact S/M Welch on 01933 663229, or for more information on the reunion or the association itself contact secretary S/M Richard Tipping on 01752 787997 or email richard.tipping@blueyonder.co.uk

MYSTERY PICTURE 205

Name

Address

.....

.....

My answers (1)

(2)

NFF speaks to the Navy Board about your concerns

IN FEBRUARY Kim Richardson, chair of the Naval Families Federation, briefed the Navy Board. Here is what she told them:

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. As always I am grateful for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Naval Services families.

I would like to caveat my opening straight away by saying that the majority of our families don't actually need anyone to speak up for them. They are their own people.

Our families are, in my view, the most independent and resourceful of the three Services. They get on with it.

So our contact from families usually comes when there is a nagging worry, they have a question they are struggling to get an answer to, they have seen something in the press that bothers them or when they just want to register a concern.

The agenda states that I am giving an Annual Report on the work undertaken by the NFF.

So this time there will be a few stats to demonstrate where I believe we are adding value and, depending on your view, directly or indirectly contributing to operational capability.

Over the last year we have seen a 15 per cent increase in individual issues that have been raised with us.

Why is that? Because we have earned our stripes? Maybe! Maybe because we are now briefing all divisional officers courses and are seen in some areas as a divisional tool.

We rarely get repeat visitors; our new contact more often than not comes from word of mouth.

This is interesting as it supports my view that our families don't make careers out of dripping and moaning. When they get an answer they move on.

The answer they get may not always be what they want to hear, but it helps them determine the path they take thereon in. What do I mean by that?

We are often asked by serving personnel and families about the archaic regulations surrounding entitlement to Service Families Accommodation.

We explain why we are where we are, but then undertake to ensure that during discussions on the future of accommodation which are taking place as part of the New Employment Model, their comments and concerns are registered.

The entitlement of older children to live in SFA, making provision for elderly parents to be allowed to reside with serving personnel in SFA and acknowledging that some families with children who are not married could benefit from being allowed to access family accommodation, are all hot topics.

But we are realists. We understand, because DCDSPers ensures we are well briefed, that putting these cards on MOD's table does not mean it is a given.

What it does mean though is that it will be considered alongside everything else. I think that is important.

In order to inform the work of the Future Accommodation Project we agreed to undertake a survey on housing, looking at the importance of home ownership and attitudes towards SFA.

This piece of work was important, because I am acutely conscious that if we don't contribute a Naval Service family perspective the views of the Army family will take precedence.

We had over 2,000 responses, which was amazing, particularly when compared to the number of responses to the last Families CAS, which was just 1,705.

That says to me our people have a view on housing.

Admiral Montgomery refers to families as the centre of gravity of the moral component of operational capability. I agree.

I don't believe in the old adage that a happy sailor means a happy family. I think it is the other way round.

Ensuring that the family feels safe and well-supported liberates the serving person to get on and do his or her job. I believe the part the NFF plays in doing this is crucial.

At the beginning of the year a sailor contacted us with a housing problem. He had been living in Substitute SFA for six months and had been asked to move at short notice.

He was due to deploy for eight months at the end of the month. His wife was heavily pregnant and they have a toddler. His wife's pregnancy had been

a difficult one. He was worried about being able to make the move before deploying, but was also worried that having made the move he may be asked to vacate the SSFA again six months later, something he felt his wife shouldn't have to cope with whilst he was away.

He had upset the housing information centre staff because he got angry and frustrated when they didn't understand his worries. They had hung up the phone on him.

He remembered his DO saying that if you have tried everything else give the NFF a shot.

To cut a long story short, we helped source a suitable property which unfortunately had to be SSFA again as there was no SFA available to his entitlement, but we liaised with HIC staff on his behalf and gained an agreement that his tenancy in the house would be for 12 months minimum.

He deployed with the ship. She is happy, he is happy, his DO is happy. Good result all round.

NFF commitments on behalf of families have increased by 20 per cent in the last year.

This takes the form of engaging with the wider family at families' days at sea, briefings, and meetings on thorny subjects such as Service voting and giving evidence to the Defence Select Committee.

And yet there is still a perception out there amongst a small cadre of the Naval Service that we are a group of militant, bra-burning, chest-poking, shop stewards, when actually what we are doing

couldn't be further from the truth as I hope to demonstrate to you today.

We aren't experts in anything, but I think we are good at what we do.

Why is housing still our number one issue? Has anything changed in the last few years?

Yes, it has got more difficult for families to get what they want. Applying for SFA and putting down three choices is laughable as it has very much become a case of take it or leave it in our port areas.

This in turn impacts on choice where schools are concerned. Trying to do the best for your family whilst fitting in with what the Service wants has become more difficult.

On the up-side, Base Warrant Officers taking on a housing responsibility has been really good news for DIO, for the NFF and for families.

We take it away at our peril. The system would fall over.

So I am going to be cup half-full on this point and say that I look forward to the BWOs continuing in this role, although they might not always agree with my sentiment.

Information provision is something we must get right.

An example of where it works well is the way Navy News and 2-6 have allowed us to have a regular monthly column.

It is well-received by the Service and I get regular emails from personnel saying they like it.

The Navy's community website has changed. RNCOM as we knew it doesn't exist any more – we don't really have a name for it now so we refer to it as 'forward slash community'.

It doesn't quite trip off the tongue does it?

I am not sure that we have properly invested in this area, nor are we maximising the use of modern means of communication that our families understand.

I am Neanderthal woman where Facebook and Twitter are concerned but that is how our young families speak to one another.

The changes that have taken place within the HIVE organisation have not helped.

What we knew as a tri-Service corporate organisation has now been chopped up into single Service provision.

This has not been a good move for families or the organisation itself.

Information delivery has become a postcode lottery and despite the hard work of some excellent HIVE personnel, I fear that information provision to families has taken a retrograde step.

On the upside, the engagement between the NFF and Navy Command in the build-up to the redundancy announcements has been a triumph in terms of working relationships.

Our focus was very much about the need for timely, appropriate, clear communication. I know

my two counterparts did not have the same level of interest from their single Services.

I think the small number of concerns we have had raised by families post-announcement tells me that the Service got this very difficult process as right as they could.

Interestingly our website visits trebled on January 17 when

the redundancy announcement was made.

People were looking for information and by working together we made sure they got it.

At the last Navy Board I told you that it was early days with the new administration and we were finding our feet with them.

During one of my meetings with our Minister, Andrew Robathan, (Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans) last year I invited him to come to meet families and also meet the good people of Castaway House.

I assured him he wouldn't need a flak jacket...

He came, and the visit went very well. He left saying that meeting the families had made it live for him and he was very grateful.

These meetings with the Minister are important.

He has to listen. Yes, we have access, but we also have influence, and at the highest level. This shouldn't be underestimated. It is important to families.

I have now asked the Minister if we can meet the new Secretary of State in order to begin his induction. I would welcome your thoughts on how I should approach this meeting when it comes.

Under our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant we have undertaken some work with local authorities and councils.

Making them aware of what a Naval Service family is all about is very rewarding and enlightening.

For example a visit to Exeter City Council the day after a visit to Hasler Company allowed me to tell councillors that our injured Royal Marines find themselves being turned down for blue badges, as they complete the forms saying how much they can do as opposed to how much they can't.

We have injured Servicemen climbing Mount Everest and rowing the Atlantic asking for blue badges because they can't open a car door wide enough in a normal car parking space to get a wheelchair out.

The way they complete the form impacts on disability living allowance and carers allowance too, and councils have a part to play in understanding this.

I have to admit that I was not anticipating this increased contact with external partners, the concern I have is that if they all want it, we the NFF, won't be able to meet the demand!

The next 12 months will be interesting.

The Naval Service is busy, there is a lot going on, the unrest surrounding redundancy isn't finished with yet.

I sense there may be increased pressure on RFA and Reservists families, two groups we don't have much contact with.

What can we the NFF, do to help? I would be grateful for any direction you may wish to give me.

I have been in post eight years now, allowing the NFF the benefit of having corporate knowledge and continuity.

We are becoming more integrated into the Command structure, possibly because our outside undiluted perspective has been shown to add value.

I know we have helped lift the workload of NPFS who tend to direct difficult housing issues straight to us.

I also know that we have headed off complaints to the Service Complaints Commissioner and the press, because we have managed to find an answer to something that has caused a family real angst.

It's all about relationships – it's what makes it

work.

Admiral Band said you would understand if I used the phrase 'out to a clench'.

We are not able to expand our team, nor do I believe we need to – indeed expanding as the Navy is shrinking is a poor message for any organisation in my view.

What we will be doing is making some difficult decisions and being selective.

Families will always dictate what we do, that is a given, but how we do it may have to be done differently and this is where I have a plea for you.

Our contact with ships has reduced, only I believe because people are busy and the wider family piece is not necessarily the highest priority.

But a little time invested in this area brings dividends.

It allows the NFF to give good constructive feedback to all the fora where the Naval Service family are represented.

It also allows us to help ensure that families are as well informed as possible and equipped with the information they need to use when they have problems at home, thereby allowing the serving person to get on with his job.

When I speak to serving personnel I can pick out those who will engage and those who won't.

Their body language speaks volumes.

Those who don't probably have very able wives, partners or spouses at home, who would never dream of asking for help or feel their views are their own and not to be shared.

That is fine, but they must also understand that the people working with them may not be in the same position. Their eye may not be on the job because they are focusing on what is going on at home.

I want to help. Anything you can do to highlight the good work that this small team of six are undertaking and encourage engagement would be most helpful and gratefully received.

I would like to close with two comments from people who have seen the benefit.

The first from a Royal Marines Adjutant:

Thank you very much for making space in your busy schedule to come and see us.

If you found it half as useful as we did then I am very pleased. The CO and I have had a number of fruitful discussions about how to make us a central Royal Marine hub for families and welfare since last Wednesday and I am sure I have set myself up for much more work to come.

You would be very welcome to make regular visits if you felt it would be appropriate!

The second is an extract from an email from the CO of a submarine:

Kim

I wanted to share a few thoughts with you:

1. *Happy, well-informed families directly contribute to the fighting efficiency of a platform. It keeps men focused on the job and reduces both PVR and welfare rates.*

2. *If you are open/honest with families and thank them for their support, it is quite remarkable what support they will give and how much they will put up with.*

3. *Holding well-organised whole-ship social events helps to break down barriers and aid communication (children are a great leveller!).*

4. *Looking after the families of our people can be as rewarding as operational success, although I believe that the two generally go hand in hand.*

Whilst this appears to be a glimpse of the blindingly obvious, and I know that you already understand all of this, I thought you might like to hear it from someone at the front line for whom it has been something of a revelation.

I hope all is well at the NFF and that you continue to get the support you need to provide your excellent service to families.

■ Your experiences form the basis of our discussions. To contact the NFF: tel: 02392 654374, e-mail admin@nff.org.uk or write to: Castaway House, 311 Twyford Avenue, Portsmouth, PO2 8RN.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Families will always dictate what we do



...our families don't make careers out of dripping and moaning. When they get an answer, they move on.

...our website visits trebled on January 17 when the redundancy announcement was made.

Applying for SFA and putting down three choices is laughable as it has very much become a case of take it or leave it in our port areas.

Ensuring that the family feels safe and well-supported liberates the serving person to get on and do his or her job

...our undiluted perspective has been shown to add value.



Where to look

GALAXY MESSAGES

Galaxy 03-2012: Defence Reform Implementation And Navy Command Review

Galaxy 04-2012: Olympics – Naval Service commitment update 1

DEFENCE INTERNAL BRIEFS

03/12: Royal Navy Transforming Defence Implementation: First Sea Lord has issued a letter to Commanding Officers about the Navy's element of the Transforming Defence programme, including the changes the Navy Board have agreed to its Command HQ structure and processes.

05/12: The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal: Her Majesty The Queen graciously approved the institution of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal which will be awarded to members of the Armed Forces and MOD Emergency Service personnel who are serving on February 6 2012 and have five years' previous service.

DINS

DIN 2012 DIN01-054: Support Fund for State Schools with Service Children 2012 – This DIN supersedes DIN 2011DIN01-160

DIN 2012 DIN01-041: Guidance for Travel Planning during the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

RNTMS

Issue 01/12 RNTM 001/12: Royal Navy Physical Trainers – Adventure Training Instructors Continuous Professional Development

Issue 01/12 RNTM 003/12: Management of Leave in the Naval Service

Issue 01/12 RNTM 004/12: HMS Liverpool Decommissioning and Disposal

Issue 01/12 RNTM 005/12: Warrant Officer Staff Course (WOSC)

Issue 01/12 RNTM 006/12: Application to Study for the NVQ Level 3 Diploma in Pharmacy Services Skills – RN/RM Medical Branch Personnel (Medical Assistants)

Issue 01/12 RNTM 008/12: Reinstatement of Aircrew Officer Financial Retention Incentive – FAA FRI 3

Issue 01/12 RNTM 010/12: 2012 Logistics Matters Publication – Article Submission

Issue 01/12 RNTM 011/12: Navy Command Personal Injury/Occupational Illness/Near Miss Reporting Procedure

Issue 01/12 RNTM 012/12: Warrant Officers (First Class) Conference 2012

Issue 01/12 RNTM 013/12: Junior Officer Leadership Course 2 (JOL C2)

Issue 01/12 RNTM 015/12: HMS Vengeance De-Dedication Events

Issue 01/12 RNTM 016/12: Stock Check Procedures for Controlled and Accountable Drugs

Issue 01/12 RNTM 017/12: RN Engineers Open Golf Championship 2012

Olympics update

AN UPDATE on the Navy's commitment to the Olympics and Paralympics has been sent out by Cdre Woodcock, Director Naval Personnel, in Galaxy 04-2012.

An element of the Royal Navy's contribution – the 'Formed Unit' – has already begun training on the Thames and coastal waters.

In addition the RN will support the Security team at some of the various Olympic venues.

Personnel committed to these roles will be lodged and virtualised close to their place of work, and receive essential Personnel Admin support.

Additionally a number of volunteers will represent the Service at each of the Olympic and Paralympic events, acting as Flag Bearer parties for the opening, closing and medal presentation ceremonies.

RNTM 304/11 called for volunteers, and those selected will be notified through their line management.

Further detail can be found in Galaxy 04-2012

Navy Command Review latest

STAFF – civilian and military – are urged to keep up to date with the latest information on Defence Reform Implementation and the Navy Command Review.

Every business area in Navy Command has conducted a detailed analysis of their operations over the course of 2011, and this has contributed to the development of a new comprehensive operating model for both Navy Command and the maritime elements of DE&S.

The Navy Command Operating Model is expected to be at Initial Operating Capability on April 1, with Full Operating Capability declared once the model is fully implemented.

Work is still undergoing as part of the review process.

For more information, see Galaxy 03-2012 and DIB 03/2012.



NPFS in action for Marine families

IMAGINE a wife and her babies crying into their cornflake bowls because daddy is going off to war.

Imagine a father meeting a face he knows from Saturday morning rugby and realising that they both have sons in Afghanistan. Now he has someone to talk to.

Royal Marines risk their lives for their country in Afghanistan – but, as the old cliché states, they also serve who only stand and wait.

That is where the Naval Personal and Family Service (NPFS) come in. Mums, dads, wives and children don't have to wait alone.

The organisation's Community Team (pictured right), based in Helensburgh, has recently received plaudits from the families of Royal Marines serving in Afghanistan with 3 Commando Brigade.

Running from March to October last year, the latest tour saw Marines from 42, and Arbroath's 45 Commando – all of which form part of 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines – head to Afghanistan as part of a tri-service and multi-national force.

The Royal Marines continued to improve conditions in the war-torn country, working with partners to lay 47km of roads, refurbish 11 schools and three bazaars, and train 1,300 Afghan uniformed police.

In carrying out this work they were involved in a heavy burden of regular patrols each day, the detection of over 400 Improvised Explosive Devices, and the destruction of more than seven tonnes of homemade explosives.

For those at home news of their loved-ones' work protecting our nation's interests was occasionally sketchy. The hundreds of miles separating them and the difficulty of communicating with an operational theatre understandably led to feelings of uncertainty.

"A deployment is a very difficult period for families," explained Sophia McArdle, NPFS Community Worker. "Those at home undergo stress, anxiety and practical problems.

"We recognise that our families were dispersed throughout the UK, so sometimes they didn't have the same level of support as those in areas where there were military bases.

"The NPFS Community Team helped support them during the deployment by creating an outreach project."

The team held dozens of events

across the UK, including Glasgow, Newcastle and Liverpool. Families were encouraged to attend at the start, halfway through and at the end of the deployment. There was also a families' day held at 45 Commando's headquarters in Arbroath which attracted around 2,000 people.

One family who benefited from the outreach project were the MacKenzies from Erskine. Gordon (49) and Kim MacKenzie (50) have 21-year-old son Mark currently serving with 45 Commando (pictured top).

"Mark is our only son and completed his Commando training back in 2010," said proud dad Gordon. "It didn't come as a surprise to us that he wanted to be a Royal Marine since he was 11."

Gordon and Kim attended the Arbroath families' day where they met hundreds of people from all around the UK who were in the same situation – watching their loved-ones go abroad to fight while they were left behind.

"Afterwards, when we got home, we started to feel very much alone," said Gordon. "If your neighbours or friends are in the same situation it might be different, but for us the common attitude, even among friends, was 'he knew what he signed up for'."

"To us this entirely missed the point. It was Mark that signed up, we didn't."

When the NPFS Community Team invited the couple to attend one of their events in Glasgow the parents jumped at the chance.

"We met the team on the day and they were there to listen and provide information for us. It was so helpful and we realised that we are not alone," said Gordon.

"During Mark's deployment Kim and I went through ups and downs and many sleepless nights. Anyone who has had a son or daughter far away from home and has gotten a phone call from them at five in the morning only for the line to go silent will know the feeling of dread that you experience.

"To have people to turn to close by was a great reassurance."

The NPFS' Lorna Austin said: "During the project we covered practical things like making sure families had contact information and the correct address for parcels, but a lot was helping them understand what their loved-ones were experiencing.

"At events we had mums who were worried because their sons had been to Afghanistan before



● The NPFS Community Team in Helensburgh

and returned a couple of stones lighter. We arranged for Marines from 45 Commando to meet with them and explain what a deployment was like.

"When the guys showed them the equipment – including a 60kg rucksack – and told them that they would need to carry it every day in 50 degree heat, they finally realised why their boys were shedding the pounds."

She continued: "A lot of the troops don't talk about their day-to-day experiences; they just get on with the job. But this can make those at home anxious. They want to share what they're going through. By giving them the information we can bring them closer and get rid of that uncertainty."

One woman who knows about this uncertainty is Joanne McMurdo (28) from Helensburgh. Her husband, Jim (30), is a Royal Marine Corporal with 45 Commando.

Jim has been on operational tours all around the world, but for Joanne, his latest deployment to Afghanistan was particularly difficult.

"We now have two small children – Andrew and Callum – aged three and six months," she said. "No matter how much you try to prepare yourself for them going, when it comes to your husband leaving it is the worst and most emotional time.

"I remember the morning that Jim was leaving for Afghanistan. All of us were crying into our cereal bowls. That first week was the worst of the whole deployment."

Joanne and the kids were given support by the NPFS Community

Team, being invited along to regular events at Royal Marine Reserves in Govan.

"The kids really enjoyed going as they got to meet the children in the same situation," she said. "The events became important milestones for us. With each one we knew that Jim was closer to coming home.

"Eventually we started getting into a routine. Every night we would make Jim a video and send it to him so that he wouldn't miss any of the key parts of the boy's lives, like Callum's first steps and words."

The project saw the small Community Team's workload double; the workers travelling the length of Scotland and Northern England and go above and beyond the call of duty. But for those involved they wouldn't have it any other way.

"The only way I can describe it is as a privilege," said Lorna Austin. "To meet so many of the families and to be part of the outreach project meant we felt as though we had become a small part of their family."

Sophia McArdle continued: "It was about bringing people together. I remember one father who came to an event and suddenly realised there was someone there from his rugby club who also had a son serving in Afghanistan.

"Up until then he didn't have a clue this person he'd regularly chat with was in the same situation. After that he knew he had someone to talk to and who would understand.

"To be able to take part in this project was an incredibly rewarding experience."



RN reaches out

THE Royal Navy joined the MP for Harrow East, Bob Blackman, and community leaders to launch a new scheme aimed at improving opportunities for black children, although the scheme can be accessed by people from all communities.

The Smart Children Clubs scheme focuses on helping parents support their children with vital skills such as reading and writing.

Dr Dwain Neil, a representative of the programme, said: "Parents who belong to the club will help their child excel because it's their local opportunity to encourage each other, to share their knowledge of good habits that help their children to develop a love of reading and get a greater understanding of all aspects of schooling.

"It is their chance to learn from each other what works well when parenting and to grow in confidence in their natural role as the first teachers of their children."

Lt Cdr Micky Norford, the RN Diversity Recruiting Officer, said that the Royal Navy is determined to increase its recruitment of young people from all walks of life and hopes the Smart Children approach will help.

Speaking at the launch, he said: "We want parents to encourage young people to take advantage of the large number of opportunities on offer to British citizens through the Royal Navy to develop portable skills and expertise, and to contribute to the defence of our nation."

The Royal Navy will be hosting a Reach Society Careers Conference for students aged 14 and above and their parents at HMS President, St Katherine's Wharf, Tower Hamlets, E1W 1UQ on Wednesday, April 11.

Readers can find out more details about this and about Smart Children Clubs – which are absolutely free – by visiting www.reachsociety.com.

Deaths

Matthew James Peak. AB CS(P). Joined Royal Navy in February 2006. Served on board Gloucester, Ark Royal and two tours of Afghanistan. Passed away before Christmas 2011.

Vice-Admiral Sir Iwan Raikes KCB, DSC. Entered BRNC Dartmouth 1935 passing out as a midshipman at outbreak of war he served on board Sussex operating in the Indian Ocean. Returning for refit 1940 she was bombed in a Glasgow dock and he transferred to Repulse taking part in the Norwegian campaign. He served briefly in Beagle on Atlantic convoys then volunteered for submarines 1941. Initially served in the submarine Sealion then Saracen (P247) as the torpedo officer sinking U335; he was appointed second-in-command in 1943 aged 22. He continued operating in the Mediterranean supporting Allied landings in North Africa and survived a 40-depth charge counter-attack and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his courage; was also involved in landing three secret service agents in Corsica (Operation Frederick). After returning home for the commanding officer's course he was appointed captain of the ancient training submarine H43 and later commanded the newly-completed submarine Varne. Post war he commanded submarines Talent and Aeneas, then promoted to commander spent two years in Malta and two years as second-in-command of Newcastle in the Far East; upon his return he commanded the Third Submarine Squadron and was promoted to captain. From the the frigate Loch Insh he commanded a frigate squadron thwarting Iraq's claim to Kuwait. In 1965 he was director of plans and operations on the tri-service combined staff of the C-in-C Far East in Singapore at the height of the Indonesia confrontation. His final command was Kent. He was promoted rear admiral and appointed Naval Secretary in 1970 then as Flag Officer First Flotilla he was promoted vice admiral. His final tour was as Flag Officer Submarines 1974-76 and appointed KCB in 1976. December 27. Aged 90.

Capt Lord Mottistone. Entered Dartmouth as a 13-year old cadet. Joined Hesperus in 1941 as Lt David Seely spending time on Atlantic convoy duty then as part of a relief convoy to Malta delivering aircraft to the island. Appointed First Lieutenant of the lease-let destroyer Bazely he helped successfully defend convoy ONS 206 when wolf pack Schifffen was driven off with the loss of six U-boats and only one merchant ship; one of the most disastrous nights of the war for the U-boats. Later he was part of the escort of Convoy SL140 when attacked by 13 U-boats of wolf pack Weddigen, he helped to sink U-648 and two days later sank U-600; the escort group was deployed in the Western Approaches during Operation Neptune to protect the landings in Normandy. In 1944 he specialised as a signals officer then sailed in the Australian destroyer Quickmatch to Sydney where he joined the destroyer flotilla leader Kempenfelt in the British Pacific Fleet for the closing months of the war and the liberation of Hong Kong. Post war he commanded Cossack (1958-

59) and Ajax (1963-65); he was mentioned in despatches for his part in foiling a landing by enemy soldiers north of Kuala Lumpur during the Malayan Emergency. In 1965-66 he was Naval Adviser in Ottawa and 1966 he retired from the Navy in the rank of captain to succeed as the fourth Lord Mottistone. November 24. Aged 90.

Lt Cdr Len Fuller RM/FAA - Hastings SCC, RM and FAA. Served RM 1959-66 in 41, 45 Cdo and aboard Lion; also completed operational tours in Aden. Transferred to the Fleet Air Arm via BRNC, qualifying as an Observer after passing the All-Weather Fighters Course in 1968. Served 893 NAS (Hermes), 766 NAS (as a QOI), 890 and 899 NAS. After converting to the F4K, he served 892 NAS. On the ground he served as A/SOO to FOST, SO to 845 NAS and Air Ops at Portland. In retirement he served the RNR as an Intelligence Officer and as a Defence Courier. Supporter of many Naval charities including SSAFE, also a helper at the FAA Museum. January 9. Aged 70.

Ian Bryce DSC. Joined the Thames Nautical Training College Worcester in 1936 and was Cadet Captain of a team of cadets that helped man Cutty Sark on her last voyage, under tow, from Falmouth to the Thames. In 1940 he was a 17-year old Midshipman RNR in the minesweeper Fitzroy when anchored off La Panne, east of Dunkirk; he was ordered inshore with the ship's motorboat to rescue troops, he made this evacuation trip several times before his 18th birthday becoming one of the youngest recipients of the DSC. Whilst in Cardiff on leave 1941 he was hit by a bomb splinter during an air raid but after a speedy recovery he served three busy years in Orbi, taking part in the raid on Vaagso in Norway; he was with the ship when she rammed U-531 and on D-Day. Postwar he accompanied the Royal Family on their tour to South Africa in the battleship Vanguard in 1947 then transferred to passenger shipping until 1956. In 2005 he published his autobiography, *Shipmates & Mistresses - Bye and Large*; the mistresses were the ships he served in. December 11. Aged 89.

Ernest Pettiford. CPO Engineering Artificer. Last surviving member that was aboard Foylebank off Portland when the ship was attacked in a German raid July 4, 1940; he was badly burned helping injured shipmates; almost 80 were killed, including Jack Mantle VC. Also served in America, India and Malta and after leaving the RN joined the Merchant Navy. January. Aged 97.

Donald Ivor George 'Ben' 'Digger' Bolt. Ordnance Artificer Series 19. Served aboard Hampshire and Yarmouth also loan service to Malayan Navy. Retired 1976 after 22 years. January 12. Aged 74.

Norman Stapleton. Stoker Mechanic on board Amethyst 1949 during the Yangtze Incident. After leaving the RN he became a prize-winning Ballroom Dancer. Founder member HMS Amethyst Association. December 28.

Kenneth Staples. PO EA GS. Served 1943-46 in Caledon, Homes and Mendip spending time in the North Atlantic and supporting the Allied landings in Southern

Italy; finally with the Navy contingent that took the German surrender of the Channel Islands. December 23. Aged 87.

Kenneth 'Bungy' Edwards. Charge Chief Petty Officer. Served 1964-89 aboard Raleigh, Collingwood, Tartar, Lion, Dolphin; submarines Renown and Repulse. He joined Renown as REM1 at Birkenhead in the navigation section, retiring from her as Charge Chief of the same section. January 9. Aged 64.

Robert Charles 'Bob' Johnson. Able Seaman. Served on board Duke of York 1944-46 and a member of the association. Present in Tokyo Bay for the Japanese surrender. January 16. Aged 85.

Jack Hetherington. WO MEM. Served 1954-82 on board Indefatigable, Adamant, as CMEM aboard Danae 1970-72, Defender, Diamond and I/C Rosyth Fire School during the National fire strike 1976. Maralinga Veterans Association (Christmas Island Atom bomb testing) and HMS Adamant reunion Association. January 8. Aged 79.

David Crees. CPO WEA1. Served 1959-83 originally as a Boy Seaman at St Vincent he progressed to Leading Seaman and was selected for training as a Weapon Mechanician in 1966; he joined Caledonia, Rosyth, in the class of WMT14. After qualifying he returned to the Fleet and served in Albion (71-73), Rooke, Gibraltar (73-75), Ark Royal (75-79), Excellent (79-81) and as CPO WEA1 on board Fearless (81-83) including the Falklands conflict. Continuing his association with the Weapon Mechanician branch he eventually took on the roles of Treasurer, Secretary and Social Secretary of the Association. January 9. Aged 63.

David 'Les' Jones. WO1(AH). Served 1959-86 at RNAS Seahawk and in Hermes, Victorious, Albion and Ark Royal. Aircraft Handlers Association. January 5. Aged 69.

John Sherrard. Leading Seaman. Served 1955-64 aboard Loch Ruthven, Theseus, Mull of Galloway, Loch Lomond, Tyne, Vernon, Monkton, Jaguar, Falmouth and Navy Party Kilo. Researched and completed a history of Jaguar (1939-42) which has been accepted into the Archives of the Imperial War Museum and is now a public document. Loch Class Association. January 23. Aged 74.

Kenneth Rowe. Served in the Royal Navy for 23 years, joining in 1949 and leaving in 1972; last posting was in Chatham. February 10 in Guildford, West Australia.

Raymond Moore. Served 1946-53. Served home and abroad including two years under the command of Prince Phillip as a telegrapher. Joined the Civil Service in 1953 and became a manager within the DHSS. Involved in a great deal of voluntary work and as a case worker and chairman for SSAFA was awarded an MBE in 2009. He was also a trustee of Highland Society for Blind People, secretary of Highland Children's Fund, secretary of Inverness Christian Aid, treasurer of the North Amateur Fencing Union, director and on the board of 'Birchwood' Inverness, convener/secretary to the Scottish Episcopal Church (Moray Diocese) and chairman of Inverness Citizens Advice Bureau. A founder member and treasurer of City of Inverness RNA. January 1. Aged 84.

Ronald Harvey. Able Seaman. Served on board Volage during Corfu Channel Incident and a member of HMS Volage Association, Corfu Channel Association and Capenhurst RNA. January 1. Aged 87.

Harold 'George' Dodd. LSA(V). Served 1938-63. Stationed at Christmas Island for two years and witnessed the atomic tests in the Pacific. Upon leaving the RN he served another 25 years in the Merchant Navy. Margate branch. January 17. Aged 88.

Leslie John Darley. CERA. Served 1955-76 at Drake, Fisguard, Endurance, Londonderry, Nelson, Pembroke, Palliser, Undaunted, Victorious and Whirlwind. Rockingham & District RNA. January 23. Aged 71.

Gwynneth Pepworth (née Evans). Leading Wren (Pay Writer). Served 1945-47 joining at Mill Hill holding depot; writers course at Wetherby College, Defiance (three hulks on the Tamar) and Raleigh prior to discharge. Bexhill-on-Sea branch. January.

Kenneth R. Spencer. Officer's Steward. Served 1945-47 joining at Skegness Class 92 then with 821 Squadron FAA; Drake prior to discharge. Bexhill-on-Sea branch. January.

Sydney 'Sid' Jones. Leading Seaman. Served during WW2 mainly aboard Sirius in the Mediterranean (Operation Pedestal) and later joined combined operations with landing craft 111 and MTB 751. Upon leaving the RN he became a master rigger in the London docks and assisted re-rigging the Cutty Sark. Life member president of

Margate RNA since 1997. January 17. Aged 88.

Keith Spencer. LTO. Served 1954-66 at Ganges, Kranji Wireless Station, Adamant, CND, Haslemere, Jaguar and Afrikander. Also served in South African Naval Reserve (CPO). Johannesburg RNA. December 29 in Johannesburg. Aged 72.

Derek 'John' Johnson. Fleet Chief Medical Technician. Served 1956-79 on board Hardy and Naval bases in Portsmouth, Chatham, Singapore, Rosyth, Malta GC and Portland. Made an Associate Royal Red Cross in 1978-79 New Year's Honours List for his services to the RN Medical branch. Secretary and Treasurer of Stoke on Trent RNA for many years and Life member of the RN Medical Branch Rating & Sick Berth Staff Association; also very active on the War Pensions Committee. January 25. Aged 77.

Gerald Scott. AB. Served 1954-82 on board Ganges, Ark Royal, Bermuda and Diana; also Devonport Field Gun Crew and a member of the association. Founder Member Sutherland RNA. January 27. Aged 73.

Brian Ainge. CPO ERA. Served aboard Vanguard. Member of RNA, RBL and HMS Vanguard Association. February 6.

J M 'Mike' Tunnicliff. Seaman Telegraphist. Served 1939-45 on board Ganges, Wallace, Illustrious and Orion; also Atlantic, Russia and Malta convoys. Former chairman of Salford RNA. January 28. Aged 88.

SUBMARINERS ASSOCIATION
John William Wade. Leading Seaman. Served 1954-60 aboard submarines Tresspasser, Amphion, Telemachus, Thorough and Porpoise. Essex branch. January. Aged 77.

H F 'Bert' Allen. Served 1946-56 aboard submarines Sportsman, Sirdar, Artful, Tresspasser, Sturdy, Aeneas, Affray, Scotsman and Sanguine. Founder member of the Essex branch and its serving President. January. Aged 86.

J 'Jim' Wild. Served 1940-45 aboard submarines Taku, Sickle and Shakespeare. Essex branch. January. Aged 92.

FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION
Raymond Charles Carter. CPO Pilot FAA. Served two years with the RAF flying Catalinas then from 1944-46 with the Fleet Air Arm in HMS Urley (RNAS Ronaldsway

– Barracuda torpedo bomber training) and HMS Jackdaw (RNAS Crail – torpedo dropping). Essex branch. January 6. Aged 88.

Victor 'Vic' Ralph Jennings. NA1 AH3(D). Served 1951-58 Port Division Lee-on-Solent. Birmingham branch. December 24.

Don Moore. A/F(L). Served 1940-46 on board Formidable (Far East) and indefatigable (Japanese surrender Tokyo Bay). Long serving Treasurer Derbyshire branch. January 18. Aged 89.

Robert 'Bob' Patch. LAM(AE). Served 1956-86 at Daedalus, Gamecock, Sanderling, Osprey, Heron, Seahawk (814 Squadron), Hermes, Concor, Victorious (893 Squadron) and Victory 1966. Bristol & District branch. December 24. Aged 72.

Kenneth George Whittingham. Acting PO(AA). Served 1944-46 at Gosling (trained as a FAA Mechanic – aircraft Elenheim Seafire, Hurricane and Martlet), RNAS Daedalus (re-classified as Carpenter Joiner – trade on entry to the service), RNADU Keet (Harrier), Workshop WMTU, Kent branch FAA, Gillingham branch RNA and resident of Pembroke House (RNBT home). January 2. Aged 88.

ALGERINES ASSOCIATION
Arthur Gibbs. Ldg/Wmn. Served on board Tanganyika. December 16. Aged 88.

Henry 'Harry' Seaton. PO/Tel. Served on board Aries. December 29. Aged 95.

Peter Lindsey. AB. Served on board Plucky and Rinaldo. January 12. Aged 82.

Frank Sparks. Sig. Served on board Vestal. January 17. Aged 87.

Tom Wall. SM. Served on board Wave. January 23. Aged 82.

Christopher Ship. OD. Served on board Magicienne. February 2.

LST & LANDING CRAFT ASSOCIATION
E L F Busby. Served LCA Flotilla 557 & LSI(L) Langby Castle, Oxford branch. December 16.

P Shadcott. Served LCTs 611, 967, 1020 & 7125 also LST 3520. Tunbridge Wells branch. January 4.

E K T Shirley. Served LCT 684 and Copra. Hockley branch. January 16.

Fred Lee. Served LST 364, Glasgow, Tadoussac and Whimber. Lincoln branch. January 25.

reunion and membership, please contact the Membership Secretary, Judi Collis at malcolmcollis@googlemail.com or tel: 0736 929641. Full details of the reunion, membership and much more can be found on the Association's new website at www.hmsjax.org

HMS St Brides Bay: Reunion will be held at the Leyland Hotel, Leyland Way, Preston PR25 4JX on October 5 and 6. All commissions welcome. Cost is £50 pppn, which includes bed, breakfast and evening meal. Please contact Alan 'George' Dobson at dobson142@ntlworld.com or write to 142 Evering Avenue, Poole, Dorset BH12 4JH or tel: 01202 721678 asap to avoid disappointment.

Type 21 Association: The next reunion will take place in the Royal British Legion, Crownhill, Devonport from October 5 to 7. The weekend is open to anyone who served on a 21 at anytime in their illustrious careers. Contact Steve Parker at mrsparker@hotmail.co.uk or tel: 07928 525468 or see the website at <http://type21club.ning.com>.

Reunions

MARCH 2012
Naval Party 8901: The annual reunion for Royal Marines who served in the Falklands Conflict June 11-15 held at RNAS Culdrose. Anyone who was serving at Culdrose during the conflict and would like to attend or like more information can contact Mark Sharples at 824NAS-obs15@mod.uk or tel: 01326 552938.

HMS Hermione Association will hold its annual reunion from June 14 to 17 to coincide with the 70th commemoration of the loss of the war-time Hermione. It will be held at the Colwyn Hotel, South Promenade, Blackpool. Anyone wishing to join us will be made most welcome that also includes families of those lost onboard. For more details contact the secretary Steve Brotherton at stevebrotherton@yahoo.co.uk or ring 07817 771024 after 1300hrs please.

HMS Kemerton: The 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the 1962-63 commission will be held at Kemerton Village, Gloucestershire from June 22 to 24. Contact Colin Brett at pancho.brett@talktalk.net or tel: 01302 883331 or write to 14 Marquis Gardens, Barnby Dun, Doncaster DN3 1DX.

APRIL 2012
Derbyshire Submariners: As part of a weekend celebrating the tenth Anniversary of the Freedom of the City of Derby to Submarine Service, the Derbyshire Submariners will be hosting ten visiting submariners from Debye's affiliated submarine, HMS Ambush, and it is also hoped sailors from Vanguard, Faslane, Plymouth and a senior Submariner Officer will be able to join us. The weekend programme is to be confirmed but will include an informal Coffee Morning on April 20 at the Jubilee Club, Chaddeyden. The event is open to all. Further details from Terry Hall at nobbyderbyssa@yahoo.co.uk or SAE to Terry Hall, 69 Station Road, Stanley Village, Derbyshire, DE7 6FB.

MAY 2012
HMS Bulwark, Albion, Centaur Association: Did you serve on any of these light fleet carriers? Our association is open to anyone who served at any time on these ships. We send a magazine three times per year and run events including AGM/Social, sea trips with our current ships Albion and Bulwark and anniversary commemorations at home and abroad. Whilst our 'Home Port' is Pompey, this year's AGM/Social will be held at the Hilton Hotel, Blackpool on May 12. We also sponsor sea cadets from our affiliated SCCs on the Training Ship Jack Petchey. Membership is all of £8 per annum. Enquiries to Leigh Easton at ngsto@tiscali.co.uk, see the website at <http://www.bulwarkassoc.co.uk> or write to Glenmoray, Hayford Place, Cambusbarron, Stirling FK7 9JX.

Royal Naval Engineers Association: 20th Annual Reunion at the Nautical Club, Birmingham B15 1ET on May 19. Details from Bob Styants at bob.styants@btinternet.com or tel: 0121 422 4115.

JUNE 2012
HMS Berwick Reunion: Seeking any personnel who served in HMS Berwick during the years 1974-77 whilst Cdr P Hames was the Commanding Officer and who would be interested in a ship's company reunion should initially contact Tony Izzard at suezzard@hotmail.co.uk or tel:01329 282115 (H) or 07802 723745(M).

HMS Glamorgan Falklands Association: Hold their 30th anniversary reunion at Royal Maritime Club, Queens Street, Portsmouth on June 9 2012. Further details and booking forms are available from Alan Bradley at a.bradley@ntlworld.com or visit the website www.hmsglamorgan.co.uk or tel: 023 9288 3075.

RNAS Culdrose Falklands Anniversary:

SEPTEMBER 2012
HMS Indomitable Association: Reunion and AGM will be held at the Stretton Hotel, Blackpool from September 7 to 10. For more information contact Douglas Banks 56 Sheffield Road, Godley, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 2PL or tel: 0161 368 6945.

HMS Eagle – Last Commission 1969-72: Friends of HMS Eagle are holding a 40th Anniversary Nautical Experience weekend reunion at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea, with views overlooking the Solent, from September 14 to 16. After the very successful last five reunions around the country – all Eaglets plus wives/partners and guests are very welcome to celebrate 40 years since Eagle decommissioned in Portsmouth in 1972. There will be a Meet & Greet on the Friday evening in the Intrepid Suite. On Saturday there are various tours from the hotel, including visits to HMS Victory, HMS Warrior, Action Stations etc, followed in the evening by a very Nautical Dinner, Dance and entertainment in the Ark Royal Suite, with local Sea Cadet unit involvement including Colours, Ceremonial Sunset and Up Spirits. All commissions 1952-72 very welcome. Hotel accommodation at very good rates. For details contact main organisers Danny du Feu (Ex-L/Sea/Boats) email danny@ddf-photography.co.uk; Mob: 07966 258103 or write to 57 Westover Road, Leicester, LE3 3DU or Events Sec Bill Melvin (Ex-LPTI) email: bill.melvin@virgin.net; Mob: 07740 439987. See you there!

OCTOBER 2012
HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association: Open to all who served in the cruiser 1935-48 or frigate 1963-84 or are relatives of those who did so, or indeed of those who served on any of the previous Ajax. The 47th annual reunion takes place at the King Charles Hotel, Gillingham, from October 3 to 4. A reunion dinner will be held on the Wednesday evening and a memorial service, followed by the AGM, on the Thursday morning. The association is always looking to increase its membership, particularly frigate crew. For details of the

Ask Jack

HMS Eskimo: Mrs Ranveig Myklebust is from Skjelfjord in Norway and a member of a group that works with a project about WW2, and what happened in the village after the battle of Narvik in 1940. After the battle, some of the ships went to the little fjord Skjelfjord in Lofoten for repairs. Many of the British were buried at sea outside our fjord. I would like to get in contact with the HMS Eskimo Association (if one exists). If you can help, please contact Mrs Ranveig Myklebust at rmnk@online.no or write to Skjelfjord, 8380 Ramborg, Norway.

Zap Crests: Rob Wightman is trying to source the small printed cardboard ships crests with a foam-adhesive backing. He is looking for the HMS Edinburgh crest. Rob is an ex Chief Seaman Specialist and upon leaving the service became a professional Clown. If he is successful in sourcing these crests he will use them as giveaways during the Edinburgh Festival 2012. Contact Rob at puffin40@talktalk.net or write to 40 Burt Grove, Dunfermline, KY11 8DG.

Sports lottery

January 14: £5,000 – AB1 D J Smith; £1,500 – Cpl D S Cobb; £500 – Maj A C Mansergh.
January 21: £5,000 – Cdr M Young; £1,500 – PO P Purtil; £500 – LH D Beeks.
January 28: £5,000 – CPO L P Goldspink; £1,500 – Mne W D Ratcliffe; £500 – CPO L A Boyce.
February 4: £5,000 – Mne D S Lee; £1,500 – S/Lt B S Bicknell; £500 – CPO A E Mackay.

Assignments

Cdr Christopher M Stock to be CO 814 Squadron at RNAS Culdrose from March 15.
Cdr Timothy 'Tim' Neild to be CO HMS Argyll from May 22.
Cdr Sarah West to be CO HMS Portland from May 22.
Lt Cdr Sarah E Oakley to be CO HMS Mersey from June 22.

Swap drafts

CH1 Bernard Gloster currently serving aboard HMS Dauntless is due to deploy in April. He would like to swap with any Portsmouth-based ship not deploying. Tel: 0779 290 7900.



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Reporting from the Fleet

Trophy lives



Trophy 24882 is a silver model of a horse-drawn chariot with a statuette of Boadicea; it was presented to the Type 22 frigate HMS Campbeltown on her entry into service in 1989.

On the face of it this is an unusual trophy with no apparent link to the ship's badge, which depicts a sprig of myrtle.

However, the connection goes back to World War 2 when the previous Campbeltown was expended in a daring raid on St Nazaire in German-occupied France. That ship, originally the USS Buchanan, was one of fifty old destroyers passed to Great Britain by the United States as part of the Lend-Lease agreement.

St Nazaire was probably the most heavily-defended area of the entire German occupied Atlantic coast; it also had the Normandie Dock, the only one on that coast large enough to take the battleship Tirpitz.

The plan to deny use of the dock to the Germans was simple – a ship packed with high explosives would be rammed into the outer lock gate, her crew and embarked Commandos would land, destroy dockyard infrastructure and re-embark in accompanying motor launches for the return to England.

When the ship blew up the lock gate would be wrecked and adjacent U-Boat pens would also suffer collateral damage.

Campbeltown's outline was altered to resemble that of a German destroyer while the armament and fuel capacity of the accompanying 14 motor launches was also enhanced.

The force, led by Motor Gun Boat 314 and two escorting destroyers, left Falmouth at 1500 on March 26 1942. At around midnight on March 27/28 a planned

air raid started but low cloud rendered it inaccurate – thus rather than taking shelter the defending German troops were fully alert.

Flying German flags the ships approached St Nazaire at five knots; searchlights detected them at 0120 but the confused Germans did not open fire until White Ensigns were hoisted when the fleet was two miles from the target.

At 0134 Campbeltown rammed the lock gates at 20 knots; the force of the impact drove her 33 feet onto the gates.

Casualties were already heavy and less than one third of the 600 Commandos were actually able to land.

Of these, 22 escaped in the motor launches and a further five got away via the Spanish border – the remainder were all either killed or captured.

The explosives in Campbeltown blew up at midday on March 28, killing about 360 Germans including a party of 40 senior Officers and civilians.

The lock gates were destroyed in the explosion and the tidal wave which resulted sank two tankers in the dock.

In spite of the very heavy casualties the raid was a success and the dock remained out of use until 1947.

A total of 89 decorations were awarded, including Victoria Crosses for Lt Cdr S H Beattie (CO, HMS Campbeltown), Sgt T F Durrant (1 Commando), Lt Col A C Newman (2 Commando), Cdr R E D Ryder (Motor Gun Boat 314) and AB W A Savage (also MGB 314).

Often referred to as "the greatest raid of all" the codename for the raid was Operation Chariot – which explains the link between this trophy and HMS Campbeltown.

Eight-legged guest

MORE jungle than Jungly. This is a western black widow spider... typically found in North America... not in deepest Somerset... and certainly not in a Royal Navy helicopter.

Engineers from 845 Naval Air Squadron got an unwelcome surprise as they prepared to work on one of their Sea Kings.

PO Alex 'Scotty' Scott and CPO Daryl 'Daz' Prichard were about to pick up some tools when, luckily for them, they spotted a poisonous black widow spider.

The insect crawled aboard the helicopter when some of the squadron was training at El Centro in California – where Prince Harry was training as an Apache gunship pilot – on a recent exercise.

When the training was done the helicopter was sterilised – know as 'bug bombing' – precisely to avoid such creepy crawlies being introduced to Britain (the same process was used when 845 and her sister Commando Helicopter Force squadron 846, collectively known as the Junglies, returned from Afghanistan for good after four years last autumn).

"I approached the spider, which was about 22mm in diameter, in a typical curious-boy manner, as you do. As I moved in to examine it, it became startled and agitated and began to scurry around – revealing the bright red hour-glass patch on its belly.

"The aircraft I was working

on had recently returned from a detachment to El Centro, California, so alarm bells started to ring. It didn't take long to recognise it as a female black widow – we had previously received a desert safety brief in California.

Thinking quickly, the two engineers managed to capture the creature – to preserve it for official species identification.

Alex continues: "After realising what we were dealing with, we used an element of skill and considerable daring to capture our stowaway rather than squashing it.

"Having secured the offending beast in a jar we informed the relevant agencies so professionals could verify exactly what type of spider it was.

"We were told the female black widow's bite is particularly harmful to humans because of its unusually large venom glands."

Indeed it does – the venom of a *Latrodectus hesperus*, to give it its correct scientific name, is 15 times more potent than a rattlesnake and can cause severe pain to humans if it bites... which it only does if disturbed.

The discovery led to the hangar being fully fumigated, after which a male black widow and an egg pouch were found. The quick thinking of CPO Prichard and PO Scott – and the subsequent actions of Yeovilton's safety team – prevented a potential infestation of the unwanted spiders.



Military sparkle for Queen's Diamond Jubilee

HUNDREDS of sailors and Royal Marines will line up alongside their Army and RAF counterparts for a unique Diamond Jubilee celebration for the Queen.

To mark the monarch's 60-year-reign, her Armed Forces will mount a special Parade and Muster at Windsor on Saturday May 19.

Nearly 2,500 personnel from the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force will parade through Windsor Castle and town before Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh.

They will then muster in the grounds of the great castle for a unique event before an audience of more than 3,000 military personnel, their families, and veterans.

An impressive tri-Service flypast by present-day and historic aircraft will bring the curtain down on the day's celebrations.

The Parade and Muster will be the first time all three Services have visited the Queen

for a dedicated event at her Royal Berkshire home – and it will be broadcast on TV by the BBC.

"Her Majesty The Queen's support and encouragement over the years has created a very special bond between our monarch and her forces. That link is felt by all those who have the privilege to wear Her Majesty's uniform both in the UK and on many varied operations overseas," said Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir David Richards.

"The Parade and Muster will truly be a day to remember. It is an opportunity to highlight the unique relationship The Queen has with the men and women of the Armed Forces and of the role she fills in our lives."

It's the biggest military event staged for the Queen since the International Fleet Review in the Solent in 2005 to mark the 200th anniversary of Trafalgar.

There will not be a Spithead review this year – but there will be a jubilee river pageant on the Thames with RN patrol craft and Sea Cadets taking part in proceedings.

Further details about the Windsor events will be announced later this year. They form just one part of celebrations to mark the Diamond Jubilee, most of which fall over the long weekend of June 2-5.

More information about those events can be found at www.royal.gov.uk or www.direct.gov.uk/diamondjubilee.

War diaries

RESEARCHERS at Naval-History.net have published War Diaries from August 1939 to March 1942, alongside other primary sources as a day-by-day account. This includes diaries from the Home and Mediterranean to the British Pacific Fleets. All can be found at www.naval-history.net/xDKWWS-3900Intro.htm.

1972 1982 1992 2002 THE TIME OF YOUR LIVES

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



March 1972

A RUMOUR that Wrens were to get new uniforms prompted an outburst of poetry from a sailor in HMS Eagle, who penned a long verse of which these were the opening lines:

"Sing a song of sorrow for the charming little Wren,
Who comes to serve her country armed with powder puff and pen,

Who comes to brighten working hours of sailors on the shore,
With her feminine attractions (just that and nothing more).
Now the Chief of Mother Wrens obeying some vile spinster urge,

Was dressing all the little Wrens in yards of pusser's serge."

March 1982

TWO main stories were reported on the front page of Navy News, confirmation that HMS Invincible had been sold to Australia, and that the current Antarctic patrol of HMS Endurance would be her last.

The plan was to send Invincible down under in late 1983, leaving Hermes and the second of the new Invincible-Class, Illustrious, as the Navy's carriers.

There was also much speculation that Fearless and Intrepid might run on longer than intended, but this had yet to be confirmed.

As for Endurance, it would have been nice to keep her, but it was 'a question of priorities,' the then Minister for the Armed Forces told the Commons.

March 1992

THE biggest submarine ever built in the UK, the 15,000-tonne HMS Vanguard, was due to be rolled out from her Devonshire Dock Hall birthplace at Barrow-in-Furness on March 4.

The report read: "A button will be pressed to open the doors of the massive construction hall to allow the Vanguard to emerge slowly into daylight.

"Then by use of a bogies and rail system, the vessel will take some three to four hours to travel the 190 metres to the centre of the shiplift."

Vanguard's naming ceremony was due to take place at the end of April.

March 2002

HMS Westminster twinned up with her namesake, the new state-of-the-art London Underground station, and took home one of the iconic red Tube signs to call her own.

Representatives from the new Westminster station visited the warship for an official ceremony to link the frigate with the underground stop.

Explaining the logic behind the connection, the frigate's Commanding Officer, Cdr David Reindorp, said: "The modern warship is an awesome feat of engineering, operated by a highly skilled, well-motivated team.

"The new Westminster Underground station is a masterpiece of design and operating it safely and efficiently demands equal commitment and skill."

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

- Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to – The Editor, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth. PO1 3HH or email: edit@navynews.co.uk. If you are sending your notice in via email, please include your full address and telephone number.
- Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.
- Please send in Reunions at least three months (preferably four) before the month of the event.
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- The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.
- Space does not allow us to accept more than one free insert. Any subsequent notice will have to be paid for at advertising rates.

Entries for the Deaths column and Swap Drafts in April's Noticeboard must be received by **March 12**

The good shepherd

TANKER RFA Wave Knight met P&O Cruises' MV Arcadia as the latter made her way at 21 knots for Dubai, the latest stop on her 109-night cruise to the Far East and back.

Wave Knight is committed to the ongoing counter-piracy and maritime security mission east of Suez, helping to keep an eye on shipping as well as providing fuel for Coalition vessels engaged in keeping the sea lanes open.

The open decks and balconies of the Arcadia – at 83,000 tonnes nearly three times the tanker's displacement, and home to 2,000-plus passengers and a crew of over 1,000 – were packed with passengers for the sail-past, many waving miniature Union Jacks given to them at an earlier 'Great British Sail-away' Party.

The encounter with the Arcadia was the second with a P&O liner in a week.

Just a few days beforehand, she sailed with the Oriana which was in the early stages of a round-the-world tour.

Aboard Arcadia for some of her east-of-Suez passage was Cdr Martin Ewence – not a holidaymaker, but the ship's on-board RN liaison advisor and counter-piracy link as the liner passed through high-risk areas.

As well as offering advice, Cdr Ewence gave talks and presentations to passengers on the role of the Royal Navy and the international response to piracy.

"We were very fortunate to meet two such magnificent ships within a week of each other," said Captain Chris Clarke RFA, Wave Knight's Commanding Officer.

"The passengers onboard, and the crew themselves, know what important work we, the Royal Navy and the Coalition are undertaking in this part of the world for their benefit and that of the international maritime community."

Silver stars at Yeovilton

YEOVILTON Air Day was named the second best day out in the entire south-west of England at the region's annual tourism awards.

The July aviation spectacular, which last year drew nearly 30,000 visitors, missed out on gold to Bristol balloon fiesta in the 'Event of the Year category' at an awards ceremony in Torquay.

Judges not only assessed what was happening in the Somerset skies at the 2011 show – which celebrated 40 years of the Lynx helicopter – but also the experience on the ground for visitors.

They found that the air day had a groundswell of visitors who came back time and again, while organisers made "year on year improvements" to the show, making it a major draw for tourists.



Jeddah knights

THE long road home from the Indian Ocean to Devonport took HMS Somerset to the Saudi metropolis of Jeddah – the Kingdom's greatest port... and gateway to the Holy City of Mecca.

The Type 23 frigate showed all the experience her 200-strong ship's company had amassed during nearly six months keeping piracy and other criminal activity in check east of Suez during a rare chance to train alongside Saudi Arabia's Special Maritime Border Security Unit.

The ship also took the chance to embark fresh provisions and host a number of Saudi dignitaries to promote Anglo-Saudi relations.

While Blighty was shivering during the coldest snap of the winter, Jeddah was baking; it averaged 30°C during Somerset's visit.

Ideal conditions then for an official reception on the flight deck (pictured above by LA(Phot) Abbie Gadd): a variety of local dignitaries visited the ship to meet her sailors and marines and to strengthen international relations.

And during the day Commanding Officer Cdr Paul Bristowe hosted key members of the Royal Saudi Navy and Border Guard including Rear Admiral Ibrahim Al Diligan, the Deputy Western Fleet Commander and Brigadier Safar Al Ahamar, the coastguard regional commander.

As a busy commercial port, Jeddah is reliant on secure trade routes in the Red Sea and so enlists the help of warships within the area to ensure that the high seas remain safe places for commercial vessels to transit.

The port also provides an ideal opportunity for warships to conduct essential maintenance and re-supply provisions while remaining close to allocated patrol areas.

"Saudi Arabia remains a friendly and important nation within the Middle East; the visit has provided an opportunity for the UK to strengthen its diplomatic bonds," said Cdr Bristowe.

"Our Royal Marines were able to train with the Saudi Maritime Border Unit in boarding methods; this helps demonstrate the concerted international effort to ensure maritime security within the region."

His ship is due home later this month, her tour of duty complete; since slipping away from her jetty in Devonport late last summer, Somerset has fostered good relations with the UAE, Oman, Tanzania and the Seychelles.



Past and present Gulf presence

CHEF Alexander Coathup and ET(ME) Benn Child clear the overgrown trees and shrubs while Lt Ross Morrison carefully removes four decades of Gulf grime and dirt from a gravestone as HMS Argyll honours British dead from an almost-forgotten slice of Middle East history.

These are the grounds of St Martin's Church in Sharjah, last resting place of 12 British Servicemen who died – mainly in accidents – during the days of Trucial Oman.

Until the early 1970s, Trucial Oman – also known as the Trucial States – was a British protectorate before London announced its decision to withdraw from east of Suez.

For 20 years, protection for the states – which have today become the United Arab Emirates – was provided by the British-led Trucial Oman Scouts, a paramilitary force which fought in several skirmishes and battles and subsequently laid the foundations for today's UAE Armed Forces, as well as the country's federal police.

With a televised service of remembrance to honour the sacrifices made by the Scouts imminent, the graveyard required a little sprucing up – and luckily HMS Argyll was in the area on the latest stage of her Gulf deployment.

The graveyard itself is in a small corner of the church's grounds; the frigate men found the area littered with overgrown bushes, rubbish and overhanging trees.

The first task for the team of volunteers was to clear the area of debris and rubbish before tackling the overly-zealous tree growth. Not knowing entirely what they were going to face, the team brought an array of tools from Argyll... although being a warship she's not especially endowed with the tools readily at hand to a keen gardener in Britain.

A wheelbarrow, an essential tool in the average country garden, was needed and Chef Coathup, in the best traditions of the Service, adapted an abandoned shopping trolley into a makeshift barrow.

Once the area had been cleared, ET(ME)s Child, Robert Shiell and Chris Clark trimmed the trees to keep branches above head height, so as not to obstruct the cameras during the service.

The area was then levelled off and the gravestones were given a good scrub to ensure they looked their best. Pastor Ernest Victor was extremely happy with the work and was surprised how much had been achieved in such a short space of time.

"There was an opportunity for us to volunteer to repair the war cemetery in Sharjah and I was keen to get involved," said ET Child.

"I hadn't heard of the Trucial Oman Scouts but I have strong empathy for someone who has served abroad and in a cultural environment so different from our own. It was a good day and we

felt like we had restored a little piece history in the memory of those who had made the ultimate sacrifice many miles from home."

His Commanding Officer, Cdr Paul Stroude, added: "This was a voluntary task for the team involved and one where a few young, energetic and strong sailors can quickly transform an area that had become dominated by mother nature."

"I was proud that it was a group of volunteers that stepped forward to clear up the small cemetery in Sharjah."

"Anyone who has attended the Royal Navy's initial staff course in the last five years and has listened to Brigadier Ian Gardiner's vivid account from his book, *In the service of the Sultan* about the war in Dhofar, Oman, in the 1970s will be only too aware of the important role that small teams of British Officers and NCOs played contributing to the security of the region in the 50s, 60s and 70s."

Fresh from honouring those who safeguarded the Gulf in the past, frigate HMS Argyll knuckled down to the task of safeguarding the Gulf present in a major exercise to protect the region's crucial oil rigs.

She was Britain's participant in the annual Stakenet exercise – taking her place alongside Kuwaiti patrol craft KNS Mobark and Maskan, American Arleigh Burke destroyers USS John Paul Jones and Sterett and patrol ships Chinook and Typhoon for five days.

The region is responsible for between one fifth and one third of the world's oil – the UK, for example, relies on natural gas from Qatar for a sizeable proportion of its energy supply – so the stakes of Stakenet are pretty high...

Run under the banner of Combined Task Force 152 – responsible for maritime security in the entire Gulf and currently under the command of Kuwait's Colonel Khalid Abdullah – Stakenet tested tactics and procedures of the participants to ensure they were well-practised and understood by all.

The exercise, said Cdr Stroude, offered "valuable lessons in the realistic scenario of highly specialist coastal defence vessels of nations, such as Kuwait, having to integrate into task groups with Royal Navy and US Navy blue-water assets deployed in the region."

"This is particularly pertinent since Royal and US Navy units regularly operate together and have a long-standing familiarity developed through NATO – but this is not always the case for the broader combined maritime forces."

"It was a typical example of the exercises that we have been participating in – and which are critical to the ability for the combined maritime forces to operate effectively together."

Colonel Abdullah hailed the exercise as a "great success".

He continued: "Stakenet showed how well the Kuwait Navy can work at sea with coalition partners, working as one team to defend critical maritime infrastructure."



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● The Stakenet force groups together with HMS Argyll flanked by the two Arleigh Burkes on the right

Pictures: LA(Phot) Caroline Davies, FRPU East

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Questions about returning to active service

LT CDR David Marsh from the Forces Pension Society explains how re-employment of AFPS05 pension scheme members returning to Active service after being made redundant, could affect the benefits they were originally awarded.

Those leaving under the AFPS05 pension scheme will fall under exactly the same rules as those of AFPS75 for repayment of their Special Capital Payment except that instead of using their annual salary in the first part of the calculation, they must use their final relevant earnings that were used to calculate their SCP.

AFPS05 scheme members leaving with a Preserved Pension and Lump Sum, but no Early Departure Payments (EDP) will find that re-employment in regular service in the Armed Forces has no effect on such awards. Such individuals will have both periods of service aggregated automatically under the AFPS05 scheme rules. If you received a Resettlement Grant on exit from your original period of service, and re-employment takes place within 30 days of leaving, the Resettlement Grant must be repaid in full.

Re-employment after leaving with an immediate pension and lump sum on exit will see those benefits treated in exactly the same way as somebody leaving under AFPS75 with an immediate pension.

EDP income streams will cease completely. If you are re-employed without a break of at least the period represented by the EDP lump sum, you have to pay back the 'unexpired' portion. For



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example if your EDP lump sum was £54,900 and your salary was £45,750, the value of your EDP lump sum in days is:

$$\frac{£54900}{£45750} = 1.2 = 365 \times 1.2 = 438 \text{ days}$$

Therefore, if you were re-employed 281 days after being made redundant you would have to repay:

$$\frac{(438 \text{ days} - 281 \text{ days})}{438 \text{ days}} = 0.3584$$

$$£54900 \times 0.3584 = £19676.16$$

If you are re-employed under Full Time Reserve Service terms and conditions, then matters are more complicated and you should consider using your Forces Pension Society membership to consult its help desk to find out more about that.

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The forthright Falklands

“I AM starting this diary because I suspect we might be embarking on an unusual deployment.”

Thus did Lt Chris Parry make his first entry on April 1 1982 as he and his HMS Antrim shipmates pondered the prospect of sailing to the South Atlantic.

In recording his feelings – published 30 years later as *Down South: A Falklands War Diary* (Penguin, £20 ISBN 978-06709-21454) – the author was immediately breaking regulations. Personal diaries might fall into enemy hands... “What a load of cobblers!” Parry fumed.

In 1982, Parry (pictured right) was the observer of Antrim’s Wessex helicopter – known as Humphrey. He would go on to eventually command HMS Fearless and the UK’s amphibious task group, eventually retiring just a few years ago as a rear admiral.

In his later career (and outside the RN too), the author became well-known for being forthright with his opinions’.

Rewind 30 years... On April 2 he was rudely awakened at 5.15am by the captain’s secretary who wanted to know if he spoke Spanish.

“Have they invaded the Falklands, then?”

The secretary stonewalled. “Don’t be a tosser, Jeremy! Have they invaded or not?”

They – the Argentinians – had, and Parry was in no doubt about what to do: kick them out, although most aboard the destroyer were convinced that there would be lots of “huff and puff politically” resulting ultimately in the islands being handed over to Buenos Aires.

There was indeed plenty of political bluster, but Antrim found herself in the first action of the campaign to oust the invader, beginning with South Georgia.

‘Humphrey’ found the Argentine submarine Santa Fe on the surface off the remote island and – after some debate deciding whether the boat was or wasn’t HMS Conqueror (it wasn’t...) – the Wessex closed in for the kill.

“What a moment! Every observer’s dream to have a real live submarine caught in the trap with two depth charges ready to go!”

The charges lifted the boat out of the water, before she began careering wildly.

“I was momentarily disappointed that the submarine was not sinking, but at the same time worried about what it must have been like for those inside.”

The Santa Fe was crippled. Further damage was inflicted by Wasps firing rockets and she limped back to King Edward Point, where she was abandoned. By the day’s end the entire garrison on South Georgia had surrendered – prompting Mrs T’s famous “rejoice, rejoice” remarks outside No.10.

The news was relayed to Antrim as the ship’s company dined.

“It was a dazzling moment, to be part of history, if only for a few hours.”

He lamented the lacklustre orders of the day and “wooden signals” from senior commanders urging the men on which failed to live up to the spirit of Nelson. The exhortations were, he decided, “tosh”: *Use Henry V for heaven’s sake...*

At times Parry found the experience of

war exhilarating. “It is edgy stuff but I would not want to be anywhere else right now. I have to admit to an intense thrill. This is serious man’s business and it feels great.”

At others – notably when Antrim was in the middle of ‘bomb alley’ during the landings at San Carlos – he “felt vulnerable and isolated – it all became very immediate and personal.” One of his shipmates, holed up in the tiller flat – an emergency steering compartment deep in the bowels of the ship’s stern – threw a wobbly, so was given a companion to keep him sane.

His ship was fortunate – she was hit by a bomb which failed to detonate.

>Welcome to the *Unexploded Bomb Club*, the Aldis lamp on HMS Glasgow flashed.

Thank you, but I did not apply to join, Antrim flashed back.

Antrim survived – no thanks to the BBC, whose World Service helpfully broadcast why so many Argentine bombs failed to detonate. “You have to wonder whose side the BBC is on,” Parry fumed in his diary. “Surely someone at the BBC has to recognise that this is not a game.”

Mind you, some Army officers – “typical Ruperts,” Parry observed – evidently thought it was a bit of a game too. “We are not going to be fighting,” a couple of archetypal hooray Henrys told the naval aviator (they also made the mistake of thinking he was a corporal...).

Parry exploded: “Listen you fucking idiots, while you’ve been drinking and



Blake – make the author a particularly good observer, with at least one eye on posterity.

He used the long passage home to chew over lessons – most of which remain relevant 30 years later: the need for fixed-wing carriers, the need for something to counter sea-skimming missiles, the need for overseas bases, better media handling, the potency of hunter-killer nuclear submarines (“They frighten the fuzzies”), the need for a British sense of humour.

Above all, the Falklands was a salutary lesson from history: too often armies are geared up for the wrong war – the French, for example, lost in 1940 because they expected a repeat of the Great War...

Having spent a generation facing the Soviet bear, Britain was thrust into an unexpected conflict. “We were prepared for war,” one Army staff officer told the author, “but not this bloody war.”

Still, Britain triumphed and the Falklands were liberated from the *junta’s* yoke. “There are no silver and bronze medals in war,” Parry observed. “It’s the gold medal or nothing. You can’t share that podium – Nelson stands alone on his column.”

With the war won, Chris Parry and his shipmates contemplated the future of the islands they had helped free.

“The general mood was that the Args would continue to snipe at us even after we have captured Stanley, so some sort of force will have to stay down here for a few years.”

Three decades on, ‘some sort of force’ remains and the diplomatic rumbling over the Falklands persists.

Ordinary men, extraordinary lives

TWO life-stories of men born ten years apart offer personal accounts of the wartime and post-war Navy which bring the historical ‘big picture’ to life.

Signalman Jones (*Seafarer Books*, ISBN £9.95 978-1-906266-21-9) describes the naval career of Geoffrey Holder-Jones, who spent most of the Second World War in armed anti-submarine trawlers. He was born in 1915 and died last September at the age of 95.

Danny Marks was born in Malta in 1925. His autobiography, *The Life and Exploits of a Maltese Sailor* (*Appin Press*, £8.99 ISBN 978-1-906205-70-6), is a vivid account of life in the post-war Navy.

Both writers come across as true gentlemen who describe sometimes hair-raising events in an understated and modest way.

Signalman Jones was written by Tim Parker, a fellow officer in the RNVN, but it reads like an autobiography, with Holder-Jones’ very humorous and engaging character shining through.

Parker had the good fortune (for him and for us) to meet Holder-Jones at a reunion in Lancing College (one-time HMS King Alfred) in 2008, and was so captivated by his story that he asked Holder-Jones for his scrapbook and a series of conversations, out of which the book was born.

Geoffrey Holder-Jones was an enthusiastic RNVN signalman when war broke out. He had joined the Mersey RNVN to relieve the tedium of a career selling gentleman’s hats in Liverpool, and spent most of the war in small boats manned by a motley collection of tough and capable sailors, many of them former fishermen.

In 1940 Holder-Jones was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for his part in the Enigma episode in Scapa Flow.

Holder-Jones was a signal rating in the minesweeper *Tritonia*, a former Lowestoft drifter, when the captured German ship *Piroc* was brought into harbour carrying

important papers, including pages from an Enigma cipher pad.

She also carried guns, depth charges, and magnetic mines, and Holder-Jones volunteered to accompany two experts from the mine warfare school in Portsmouth to act as signalman.

He began to suspect what danger he was in when *Tritonia* kept well clear of *Piroc*, and his suspicions were confirmed when the *Tritonia’s* chief engineer came aboard to help the experts – and swiftly left.

“He identified the problem but didn’t hang around. He was in and out of the *Piroc* in minutes. It was a very long day before the deed was done,” he recalls.

Holder-Jones was subsequently awarded the DSM for his part in the episode, and recommended for officer training. When he died in 2011, the obituaries in the national press rightly made much of his DSM, but the reader can almost miss the importance of the incident in the book, so understated is his modest account.

Holder-Jones was clearly an excellent seaman and a good leader. His officer training took place in Lancing College, where capable young men from all backgrounds were turned out as young naval officers three short months – ‘a social experiment on a grand scale,’ as he describes it.

Throughout this excellent book, Tim Parker lets his subject’s modest and likeable character shine through. Holder-Jones clearly had a vivid memory, but his tales are told in a quiet way which makes the grimness of life in the North Atlantic more striking.

One unforgettable sight haunted him all his life – that of 17 frostbitten and deathly-white American sailors in the seamen’s mess of his new ship, *Wastwater*.

“To this day I cannot get those poor sailors out of my mind. All but one had to have their legs amputated. I never saw their captain, he had been locked in one of our cabins, he had lost his mind,” he quietly recalls.

The book isn’t all stormy Atlantic seas and misery. The little trawler *Wastwater* made her way to New York (to be greeted by a US Coast Guard who looked down

on her from the quay and asked: “Say, did you guys really cross the Atlantic in that thing?”) and his descriptions of life and hospitality in what seemed like fat city to a wartime Brit are very entertaining.

Holder-Jones got his first confirmed command in unusual circumstances – his ship *Baffin* was in Canada when an RNR Lieutenant arrived to take command, took one look around, and said “Well that’s no good to me, I can’t stand the cold,” and disappeared into the night. A few days later Holder-Jones was confirmed in command.

After the war Holder-Jones was briefly unemployed and, newly married, had a short spell chipping paint off Brighton pier, for which he was paid 6d an hour as danger money for working over water, a better rate of pay than he had been getting as a wartime Commanding Officer.

Afterwards he became a much-loved teacher and headmaster in Hove, where it seems few of his pupils ever knew about his illustrious wartime career.

Danny Marks, the Maltese sailor, was born a decade after Holder-Jones, in 1925.

He never kept a diary, so when his large family urged him to write an account of his life and naval career, he relied on an excellent memory and checking his facts in the logbooks of the ships he had served in.

Like Holder-Jones, he does not take centre-stage, observing the world around him rather than his personal reactions to it.

And what a world it was, the post-war Navy. Marks started his career as a civilian dockyard apprentice, a highly-competitive career, and ended it as a lieutenant commander.

How he got there is something of a miracle of ability and determination, as his first posting was a complete mistake – he was sent to Warrington for six weeks of square-bashing instead of to the marine engineering course at Portsmouth for eight months of complex technical training.

Nobody realised the error, and Marks did not question it in those days when authority was not much challenged.

His suspicions were only confirmed when he was let loose, as an ERA, among the machinery

and boilers of HMS *Chaplet*, his first ship.

He recalls: “The square-bashing at HMS *Gosling* had served me to no purpose, so much so that when the chief engine room artificer asked me to go and crack open the main stop valve I started looking for a 20lb hammer instead of a wheel spanner.”

As a post-war sailor, Marks’ career gives the lie to anyone who thinks life in the Navy then was a relatively peaceful affair, with a Cold War maintaining an uneasy stand-off.

Deployed in the grand ships of the Mediterranean Fleet rather than Holder-Jones’ battered trawlers, he describes the Royal Navy doing what it so often does – keeping fractious sides apart, and embarking on massive clear-ups.

Marks was involved in the Palestine Patrol – “an episode best forgotten”, Oman, Aden, and Cyprus in the space of a few short years. “It seemed as if we were going from one place to another looking for trouble,” he remarks at one stage.

However, this was also the age of grand naval diplomacy. As the author says in the introduction, he has almost lost count of the all the countries he has visited, and one can only marvel at the reach of the Royal Navy in those post-war years, when it showed the flag over the whole world.

His descriptions of ceremonial visits and particularly the commissioning of HMS *Gambia* in Invergordon in 1957, are vivid indeed, and a sad reminder of what we have lost:

“The Fleet had formed into two columns with the C-in-C flying his flag in Apollo in the centre. At 1130, Britannia hove in sight with her escorting destroyers. The fleet closed range to two-and-a-half miles and fired a co-ordinated Royal Salute.

“Immediately the two columns wheeled outward, increasing speed to 21 knots, then forming into a single column, manned and cheered ship, passing the Britannia at a distance of half a cable.

“On passage, four submarines passed through the columns on

an opposite course, manning and cheering ship.

“The final salute was given by 71 aircraft from the carriers. Flying in perfect formation, the Sea Hawks and Sea Venoms displayed the Queen’s cipher of E11R, and the Wyverns and Gannets followed in diamond formation.”

So much has been lost – but the modern Navy is more meritocratic, and certainly more compassionate. The discipline which both men experienced was heavy-handed in a way unimaginable today, and sometimes lacking in all common sense.

Marks was given 30 days stoppage of leave and a heavy fine for being absent when the telegram recalling him from leave was sent to the wrong name.

Holder-Jones was almost blown up when his ship *Adventure* struck a German magnetic mine in the Thames estuary, killing 16 men and injuring more than 60.

After manning the open bridge on his own for most of the day, burnt, cold, in shock, and wearing only his nightclothes, he felt shivery and out of sorts. He recalls: “The medical officer, seeing my distress, lent me his spare jacket but the commander was having none of it.

“Why are you wearing that jacket Jones? Take it off.” He left the ship as walking wounded and subsequently fainted from delayed shock.

On a final note, it was interesting to have another take on the ending of the rum ration, which even now is cited as a cause of grief for post-war sailors. Marks had more reason than most to be thankful for its demise, as he escaped death by inches when a steam pressure valve burst because the chief ERA had gone to drink his tot and omitted to drain it.

As he drily observes: “The issue of rum ceased in 1973 [sic – actually 1970] when new technology and the introduction of computers necessitated the need for operators to be very alert.

“Pressing the wrong button could cost thousands of pounds of wasted trial missiles, or, in the event of an engagement with



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Callum on the road to leadership

POC CALLUM Malone, of Southwark unit, has worked hard over the past few months aiming high for NVQ qualifications through the Cadet Vocational Qualification Office.

And now the rewards have started to materialise as he has just been awarded the Institute of Leadership Management's Certificate in Team Leading.

The ILM Level 2 Award and Certificate in Team Leading are specially designed to give practising or aspiring team leaders a solid foundation in their formal development as a leader.

The initial Award in Team Leading is a qualification designed to give learners a basic knowledge of the various roles, functions and responsibilities of a team leader and the limits of their authority and accountability.

The next stage, the Certificate in Team Leading, builds and broadens the skills and knowledge gained in the initial award.

Here, practical techniques in motivating teams, plus planning and monitoring their work, are explored.

To gain the certificate Callum (pictured right) attended a week's leadership course at training establishment HMS Raleigh at Torpoint in Cornwall, during which he had to complete a variety of practical and theoretical tasks.

On his return to London there were further paper tasks to complete on the theory of leadership.

Having passed all these tasks successfully, Callum's award was confirmed.



Sea Scout unit in river pageant

THE Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant in June had many more applicants than places available – but the 4th Streatham Sea Scouts (Princess Marie Louise's Own) will be on the river come the big day.

A thousand boats will gather on the river to celebrate the jubilee – the largest such flotilla in modern times, including rowing boats, working boats and pleasure vessels of all shapes and sizes, all decked out with flags and streamers and stretching for an estimated 12 miles.

Factors which counted in the unit's favour included their awareness of safety on the water, and the history of the boat itself.

The Gig Marie Louise is owned and crewed by the scouts, who keep it at their riverside headquarters in Putney.

Marie Louise will be crewed by seven Sea Scouts and one passenger, and for the journey from Putney to Tower Bridge she will be dressed overall in purple to commemorate the royal connection with Princess Marie Louise, who was patron of the group.

The hand-riveted boat was built for the scouts in 1971 in Norfolk, and since then has been lovingly maintained.

Area honour for Reece

A POOLE unit member has been selected as the Navy Board Cadet for Southern Area.

POC Reece Oliver is one of only six cadets across the UK who hold the prestigious honour for this year – each area can select only one candidate.

His duties will be to accompany Navy Board members and very senior Royal Navy officers to special events such as Royal occasions, opening ceremonies, ships visits, formal parades, presentations and awards, recruiting events and cocktail parties.

During these events, Reece's role will be to brief the senior officers on issues relating to the Southern Area.

Since joining the Corps at the age of 12 Reece has taken advantage of many opportunities available to him – he is now a rowing instructor and other qualifications include first aid, communications, adventure training, kayaking, power boating, offshore power and sailing.

During 2010-11 Reece was one of the Mayor of Poole's Cadets.

Reece is currently in the Sixth Form of Queen Elizabeth School, Wimborne, studying for his AS levels, and works part-time in Sainsbury, Ferndown.

But his ambition is to be enrolled on a marine engineering apprenticeship when he leaves school.

Hastings first

THE first cadets from Hastings unit to achieve the BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Public Services have been congratulated by their commanding officer.

PO Paul Huggett and LC Sharna Whitlock registered Distinction* and Pass grades, equivalent to four GCSEs grade A* and C.

Also gaining their diplomas were ex-cadets PO James Copeland, now TS Warsash (distinction), Theodore Harrison (merit) and Lewis Smith (merit).

Lt (SCC) Alison Brennan-Wright RNR said: "This really is a very big 'well done' and the first to achieve these results for TS Hastings.

"This achievement proves their hard work and dedication to the course over a very wide spectrum of learning.

"May I take this opportunity to thank you for all your efforts and continued success in your learning and career progress."

Keen sailor tries yacht and tall ship

ONE cadet from Barnsley unit got the chance to try life on two types of sailing vessel towards the end of last year, and has put her thoughts down on paper.

AC Roseanne Clark spent time on the 11m Bermudan-rigged yacht TS City Liveryman and the square-rigged sail training tall ship TS Royalist, both owned by the Marine Society & Sea Cadets, the Corps' parent body.

Roseanne said: "I am a keen sailor, and have been since before I joined the cadets.

"Over my time in the cadets I have attended many sailing courses, including Start Yachting early in 2011 at HMS Raleigh.

"Towards the end of 2011 I was lucky enough to go on both the TS City Liveryman and TS Royalist.

"My first week was on the TS City Liveryman.

"I joined the Tradewind 35 yacht at Gosport, and we spent Sunday sailing in the sheltered waters around Portsmouth Harbour.

"Due to the weather we were unable to sail on the Monday so we enjoyed a visit to HMS Victory.

"However, the weather improved and we were able to venture out of the harbour.

"During the week we learned new skills such as coming alongside, anchoring and, of course, how to steer the yacht.

"Other highlights of the week were visits to Cowes, Leamington

Legion affiliation

TUNBRIDGE Wells unit has formally affiliated with the Tonbridge branch of the Royal British Legion.

An affiliation ceremony was held at the Legion's headquarters in Priory Road, witnessed by Legion members and cadets and staff from TS Brilliant.

Lt Cdr (SCC) Jon Vanns RNR presented RBL Club President Ken Lloyd with a ship's badge to mark the occasion.

Photo opportunity

KEEP an eye on the Sea Cadets website, Facebook page and www.sccheadquarters.com for details of this year's SCC photographic competition – the deadline for entries will be in May.

Straight back in the groove

CADETS from Northampton and Rushden were straight back into the groove after the Christmas break.

On their return to business the unit received thank-you letters from people who were lucky enough to get one of the 20 Christmas boxes that were dispatched via SSAFA as part of their annual shoebox appeal.

By the end of January almost two dozen Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets from the unit represented the county at the regional Ceremonial Drill and Piping competition, defending a title they had held for seven years.

And the weeks of practice paid off as displays of precision and panache at the Newark Showground brought them their eighth successive win.

As well as winning the Armed Guard event the unit won the Best Guard Commander, and POC Lara Jolley was awarded the trophy for outstanding ceremonial leadership.

POC Joe Barley won top position in the piping competition, where he had to demonstrate the use of the traditional bosun's call.

In addition, the unit's ceremonial piping team won their event for the first time.

As a result, 16 of the unit's cadets go through to the national competition, which is being staged at HMS Raleigh.

Unit Commanding Officer Lt (SCC) Chris Read RNR said: "The competition was extremely close, and standards were very high, and we were only just ahead of Scarborough unit."

He added: "There was a fantastic atmosphere, and we all look forward to next year."

POC Callum Hodgson, from Rushden, said: "I look forward to these events, because you meet up with friends you don't normally see – it's been awesome."

The unit has also been informed that two of its vessels have been chosen to take part in the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant in June.

The cadets will man a Trinity 500 rowing boat, and a narrowboat will make the tricky journey down the Grand Union Canal to participate.

As *Navy News* went to press the unit was expecting a visit by Captain Sea Cadets Capt Mark Windsor, who was due to present the Captain's Cup for 2011 to the unit.

He was also due to recognise the service of three volunteers who have completed 50 years service – Richard Jones, Ernest Shoebridge and Robin Guinness, who have all been instrumental in the unit's life since the 1950s – Messrs Jones and Guinness are both former unit management committee chairmen.

Lt Read said that while the strength of the Corps lay in the variety of opportunities offered to youngsters, "none of this would be possible without the hard work behind the scenes from the unit management committee who provide the resources for our young people to succeed, and to have our three most enthusiastic volunteers recognised by the Captain's Medal for 50 years voluntary service is a great moment of pride for all at TS Laforey."

and Gunwharf Quays.

"On the yachts we did everything from cooking to cleaning – my cook steward skills certainly came in handy.

"My second week myself and another cadet from Barnsley OC Nathan Pitcher travelled to Gosport for a week on board TS Royalist.

"This time we were able to get a little further afield as the weather was better.

"We were able to steer along the coast to Poole, via Cowes on the Isle of Wight.

"The highlight of my week had to be packing the sail away whilst at sea and watching a military helicopter fly past while we were up the mast.

"Both the yacht and Royalist were amazing experiences, due to the living environment and the way of life on board.

"Both weeks were very tiring, but I can't wait to go again."

Joint approach to way ahead

TEAM Leader PJ Thomas from Greenwich Volunteer Police Cadets and LC Jonathan Hemingway from Rickmansworth Sea Cadet unit welcome Chief Inspector Ed Sherry and Cdr (SCC) Noel Wheatley RNR to a dinner at Kingston unit organised by the course participants (right).

As part of a new partnership between the Metropolitan Police Service and London Area Sea Cadets, the first joint Senior Cadet Leadership Course took place in January.

Some 30 members of the Sea Cadets and Volunteer Police Cadets joined forces with trainers from both organisations to learn about leadership in a youth context, pro-social modelling techniques (basically encouraging a desired pattern of behaviour through leading by example), presentations skills, conflict resolution and the role senior cadets play in their units.

The highlight of the course was the formal dinner organised by the cadets where their guests included Cdr John Greene, the London SCC Area Officer and Colonel



Hugh Purcell, the CEO of Greater London RFCA.

This course is the latest addition to the successful London Leaders Development Scheme.

Now in its third year, the scheme provides a wide range of development opportunities for staff and cadets across London Area, including a foundation

programme for senior cadets and staff aspiring to leadership positions in units through to masterclasses for established commanding officers and unit chairs.

Further details about the Scheme can be obtained by contacting LondonLeaders@gmail.com



Loughborough hit by headquarters blaze

Prizes in Facebook campaign

A VALENTINE'S Day competition run on the Sea Cadets Facebook page stacked up some respectable figures, as well as dishing out prizes to cadets.

MSSC Head of Communications & Media Samantha Shaw and Communications Officer Nicola Russell ran the campaign, which asked cadets to change their profile picture to the logo above for the day.

Every hour between 0900 and 1800 – with the odd break for lunch and the like – the hard-working pair posted 'I ♥ SCC' and a codeword which changed throughout the day.

The first five to post won a T-shirt or sports bag.

The competition was also run on the Corps' Twitter feed.

On the Facebook side, the competition garnered 50 new 'likes', and the total of fans and friends of those fans broke through the million mark.

The total reach of the competition – ie the people who saw the messages – was just over 6,000 – up by 1,000 – while the viral reach was 5,000.

The organisers also found that the Facebook page is liked in more than 20 countries, including Thailand, Nigeria, Hong Kong, Canada, Australia and the United States.

And 11 hardened sea dog cadets use Facebook in pirate English...

Look out for further Facebook competitions on high days and holidays throughout the year.

LOUGHBOROUGH unit cadets say they will not be beaten by a fire which devastated the main building at their canalside headquarters.

But the youngsters have a considerable challenge ahead, as around £100,000 will be needed to replace the building.

The fire, which broke out over a weekend last month, was caused by a short circuit in a fridge-freezer.

The main prefabricated building was virtually destroyed in the blaze, along with training equipment and irreplaceable memorabilia.

But the first thing on the mind of the Commanding Officer, Lt (SCC) Kay Adey RNR, is ensuring the unit continues to function as near to normally as possible.

The CCF unit at nearby Loughborough Grammar School have welcomed TS Venomous to their own HQ as a short-term solution – although the Sea Cadets are now looking for a Sea Cadet ensign and a small flagpole to carry out ceremonial duties at their new temporary home.

"We would like to have a new headquarters up and be in it in a year's time," said Lt Adey.

"The site is leased from the council, and we cannot build a permanent structure.

"It has to be of a modular structure because of its position so close to the water – we cannot dig deep footings.

"So once we have raised the money the new building can go straight up."

The money will have to be raised in addition to normal running costs, which for an average Sea Cadet unit works out at over £10,000 a year and comes from the unit's own

fund-raising efforts.

Some of the items lost cannot be replaced, such as a set of World War 1-vintage semaphore flags, historical ships' plaques and rare books, including one published and signed by the former CO of the unit, Lt Cdr (SCC) Bob Moore RNR, who died in 2007.

The trophy cabinet and its contents are also believed to have been destroyed, although staff have still to finish sifting through the material salvaged from the building.

"The kids are absolutely devastated by the fire – some have been in tears," said Lt Adey.

"It's the history we have lost, and the memories in the fabric of the building.

"The building can be replaced – but they are ready to fight back and are strong in their convictions over what they are going to do."

Former cadets and supporters have flocked to the unit's Facebook page, with membership doubling in just days after the fire.

Events suggested by the cadets to bring in cash include a night-time sponsored walk and an auction with celebrity input.

The unit's priority is to get a new building up; kitting it out with equipment can be addressed at a later stage, said Lt Adey.

"We do have other portable buildings on site which were not affected, although they have no power or heating – we have put the salvaged material in there," she said.

"We might use them over the summer because the boats and safety equipment are all okay, so we can get on the water.

"We are functioning – just – but the kids are determined to come back bigger, better and stronger, because, as they tell me, 'we are Sea Cadets'."



● The main building at Loughborough unit, beside the Grand Union Canal, which was destroyed in an accidental fire

Full-on year for Salford

SALFORD unit celebrated the activities and achievements of a "full-on year" at their annual awards night at their Worsley headquarters.

Over the course of 2011 Salford youngsters visited HMS Caledonia in Scotland, Crosby Sailing Centre in Liverpool and called in on Royal Navy warships.

Cadets competed in windsurfing at the Corps National Sailing Regatta, and they contributed to the community in a number of ways, including raising more than £2,000 for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

The unit awarded six cadets their BTEC Level 2 Diplomas in Public Service, and also won a national award for marine engineering.

The diplomas themselves, and the national award, are due to be presented at the end of this month.

Prizes were presented by Lt Cdr Kevin Heakin RNR, Deputy Lieutenant of Greater Manchester, and Lt Cdr (SCC) Jim Garner RNR, the local Sea Cadet District Officer.

- Winners were:
- Achievement in windsurfing – Ashleigh Hilton;
 - Seamanship Cook of the Year – James Smallbone;
 - Engineering Cook of the Year – Kyle Houlty;
 - Most Improved Cadet – Kyle Houlty;
 - Instructor of the Year – Dave Roberts;
 - Cadet of the Year – Ryan Jackson.

Hartlepool cadets in limelight

TWO Hartlepool cadets have been chosen as the next Lord Lieutenant of County Durham's Cadets for Sir Paul Nicholson.

And with a Hartlepool cadet currently acting as Lord Lieutenant's Cadet, it means the unit now has, for the first time ever, three Lord Lieutenant's Cadets.

This year two cadets are brother and sister – another first – Petty Officer Cadets Matthew and Abigail Moses.

The current cadet is POC Phillip Riley, who has also been the Northern representative Sea Cadet for an international exchange to Hong Kong – another great honour and experience for the unit.

The Lord Lieutenant is the Queen's representative in the North-East, and the cadets are chosen from all local units of Sea, Army and Air cadets.

They accompany the VIP on any of his duties he carries out in the area, such as ceremonial occasions and Royal visits.



● The Malta GC unit drill team rehearse at Luqa Barracks

Picture: Lt Cdr (SCC) Camilleri RNR

Malta Marines triumph in Eastern competition

THE Royal Marines Cadets drill team of Malta GC Unit have just returned to the Mediterranean as winners of the Eastern Area RMC 6+1 armed drill competition.

The drill team travelled to the Newark Showground in Nottinghamshire under the command of CO Lt (SCC) Montebello RMR and 2/Lt (SCC) Cavlan RMR.

The venue hosted the annual Eastern Area Drill and Piping competition, which includes Eastern Area units' Royal Marines Cadets vying for the honours in armed and unarmed drill and Sea Cadets contesting drill, piping and colour party ceremonial categories.

The Malta drill team, which was competing against 11 rivals, has been in training for more than

three months under the guidance and supervision of 2/Lt Rene' Aquilina AFM, who is a long-time staff member of the Malta unit, and A/Sgt Matthew Camilleri.

Lt Aquilina is a serving officer in the Armed Forces of Malta whilst Sgt Camilleri is a former member of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Anglian Regiment, which saw him serving in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Germany before retiring from the Service.

The competition comprised a static and moving drill display, lasting about 12 minutes, by six Marine Cadets and their Guard Commander.

The Maltese cadets not only managed to win the competition but were also awarded the trophy for best Guard Commander, won by L/Cpl Jean Paul Buhagiar.

Maidenhead stalwart rewarded for loyalty

THE Captain Sea Cadets has presented a long service medal to one of Maidenhead unit's most loyal supporters.

Capt Mark Windsor awarded the Captain's Medal for 50 years of adult service to Lt Cdr (SCC) Richard Boardman RNR at the unit's headquarters in Mill Lane, Taplow.

This was only the second such presentation of the new award – the first coming last October – which recognises a volunteer's unwavering commitment and dedication to supporting young people across the Corps.

Dick Boardman joined Maidenhead unit as a cadet in the early 1950s and attended regularly until he was 18, when he became a members of staff as an adult instructor at TS Iron Duke.

On one occasion, Dick and a group of cadets were out on the River Thames in one of the unit's boats when they learned of a person in distress near Boulter's Lock, on the edge of Maidenhead.

The boat set off to offer assistance, and after a brief search Dick spotted a woman in the water so he dived in to help.

For his initiative and bravery in rescuing the young woman, Dick was awarded a gallantry medal.

He progressed through the ranks and eventually rose to become the Commanding Officer of the unit.

Dick said he can remember when the site, near Skindles, was very different from today.

He spent many evenings and weekends with others at the site,



● Dick Boardman and his wife Marian with Capt Mark Windsor, Captain Sea Cadets

helping to erect the main building which still stands there today.

Money was always short so material was donated, salvaged or scrounged, and it is this level of dedication that typifies the quality of volunteering in various youth organisations.

Their objective is to provide a facility that gives young people the opportunity to gain a broad experience of life and realise their potential, building personal attributes such as teamwork, independence and communications skills through

nautical-based activities.

At TS Iron Duke cadets are taught a range of skills, including canoeing, kayaking, rowing, power boating, marine engineering and catering.

The example set by Dick continues today with volunteers giving freely of their time for the benefit of young people in Maidenhead and surrounding areas.

Dick has always been supported by his wife Marian, who for many years was the administration officer of the unit.



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Regatta Mombasa

Survey ship HMS Echo's visit to Mombasa in Kenya presented an opportunity for an enthusiastic sailing team from the ship to challenge the Mombasa Yacht Club to the Triumph Pint Trophy. The trophy was presented to the Club by HMS Triumph in 1967, to be raced for by visiting Royal Navy ships and club members.

It's been 11 years since the trophy was last contested – won by HMS Gloucester. Echo's team, led by Lt Rich Watsham, invited the Yacht Club to compete for the trophy.

In light winds and a slight flooding tide, both RN and MYC teams took to the race start with two Laser class racing dinghies and one 420 class per team. It was decided that the best of four races would be the winner.

A figure-of-eight-shaped course was set with the wind from the north east 5-10 knots at best, becoming almost a drifter by race four.

The Mombasa team consisted of David Mackay and Brian Emmott on Lasers and Teddy Ndaro helming a 420 with John Koyiet and Martin Nelson crewing for two races each.

Echo was represented by Lts Rich Watsham and Mark Taylor in the Lasers with AB Martyn Dewhurst, Lt Rebecca Burghall and Lt Mark Butcher crew swapping in the 420.

After four hours of racing, with the sun setting in the background, both teams retired to the slipway and made their way to the clubhouse for the obligatory after-race tea and cake.

The commodore presented the results with MYC winning races one, two and four on points, however Echo's team took best individual boat on the day with Lt Rich Watsham on 5.25 points with three wins and a third place.

Dave Mackay of MYC came second with a score 6.75 followed by Mr Emmott, Lt Taylor and Ndaro (MYC).

Unfortunately for the visitors, the Triumph Pint in this instance was won back by the club, with condolences made to Echo's gutsy team.

Lt Taylor thanked the club for their hospitality during Echo's stay in Mombasa. The club had an open-door policy for the ship's company to use their facilities.

In an act of good will, teams exchanged a burgee and ship's badge.

Jonah at one with the fishes

RN coarse angling stalwart CPO Nick 'Jonah' Jones has been singled out for his dedication to the sport.

Nick, an instructor at HMS Drake, has represented the Service at home and abroad for more than a dozen years.

Last year he took all four Service fishing titles: RN, Inter-Command, RN team and 'Match Man of the Year'.

For that skill and commitment, the senior rating was presented with the Royal Navy Sports Colours by Submarine School CO Cdr Kevin Gomm.

Broc does BAOC

MINEHUNTER HMS Brocklesby dispatched a team to compete in the London District Championships Orienteering Event at Bordon in Hampshire.

Led by their Commanding Officer, Lt Cdr Jim Buck (pictured right studying a map), the team consisted of three of the ship's officers (executive, operations and navs), one officer under training and four of the ship's divers.

Organised by the British Army Orienteering Club (BAOC), the annual event welcomes around 100 competitors – all gunning for the top spot of London District Champion.

Orienteering is classified in the military as a distinct form of navigation training, which allows a competitor to test their cross-country skills aided only by a map and compass.

The challenge of orienteering is that it makes simultaneous, sometimes conflicting, demands on the physical and mental capacity of participants as they try to maintain a good pace whilst navigating.

There are various courses to choose from with varying levels of difficulty depending on length; level of navigation skill required and terrain crossed. These are colour-coded from brown (the most technically difficult) to red.

Lt Cdr Buck (an avid Naval orienteer) – opted for the brown course – the most arduous to test his skill and speed.

He fared well in his category and was pleased with his final result. The rest of Broc – as first time orienteers – opted for the red course and thought that excessive speed-over-land navigational skills would be enough to claim the top prize.

Splitting into teams, executive officer (Lt Jane) and operations officer (Lt Penfold) flew around the course and came a respectful second in their category trailing the leader by just 49 seconds.

The rest of Broc put in a solid performance as first-time runners. Navigating officer Sub Lt Samuel Fields reflected on the afternoon: "It was a great team-building event that proved to be extremely competitive and challenging, a must for anyone with an interest in the outdoors and with furthering their land navigation skills."

The RN is trying to expand its orienteering influence. There are regular championships for military personnel to participate and compete in organised by the BAOC. Anyone interested should contact Lt Cdr Buck at 241-co@a.dii.mod.uk.



The strong(er) arm of the law

Continued from page 48

The RN/RM first team, brilliantly captained by Maj Steve Congreve RM, made incredible progress as the competition unfolded.

The 67.5kg class was won Jim Roberts (RAF) with an impressive 500kg total. 'Pocket Hercules' Mne Sam Dew (reigning WDFPF under 75kg world champion) lifted astoundingly to total 550kg in the 75kg class, out-lifting his closet rival by 77.5kg.

In the 82.5kg class 'Oliver' Hardy (Army) won with 540kg total, the RN's Tom 'Ginge' Merriman coming a close second.

At 90kg Colin Harrison of the Police hammered the competition with an impressive 625kg total, 50kg ahead of his closet rival.

At 100kg Aaron Hull (Army) took the top honour with the RM's colossal Cpl Rob Cooper pulling a whopping 275kg deadlift and narrowly missing a 292.5kg deadlift to take second and Maj Congreve third.

In the 110kg class the monstrous Martin 'Shiner' Wright (RM) narrowly bested the gargantuan Paul Hooker of the Police, destroying the RN records in the process with a 230kg squat, 165kg bench press and a new record total of 670kg.

The second team also had a record breaker in Lt Rachel Cunningham who set a new ladies deadlift record of 135kg.

Additionally, the four members of the first team along with Lt Cunningham, 'Ginge' Merriman, and LMA Chris 'Doc' Martin from the second team lifted well enough individually to qualify for a place in the BDFPA National Championships later this year.

A team event, the final results showed that the Metropolitan Police had narrowly taken victory (1063.9 points) with the RN/RM in second (1062.4 points) and the RAF third (1039.9 points). The Army's teams, who have previously been the dominant force, had to settle for fifth and sixth place.

Camp Rock pays off

RN Seniors vs Moneyfields

Moneyfields cashed in (sorry) on a poor Navy performance when the Seniors hosted the Wessex Premier Side at Victory Stadium.

This was the first time the two teams had met for many years and a keenly-contested match was anticipated.

The Navy, having not played since the beginning of December, started the game slowly, which Moneyfields capitalised on by taking the lead midway through the first half, and scoring a further two goals before the half-time whistle.

The second half saw the Navy performance improve, but they could not reduce the 3-0 deficit by the end of the game.

RN Vets vs Newport (Isle of Wight)

The RN Vets played host to an experienced and talented Newport side.

The early exchanges were pretty even with both defences on top.

It took until the 20th minute before the first clear-cut chance arrived. Brilliant vision and a fantastic pass from the RN's Lewsey found the overlapping Mike Smith who hit a first-time cross into the box, where centre forward Mark Raybould smashed his shot goal-bound only to see the visitor's goalkeeper make an outstanding save, pushing the ball around the post for a corner.

From the corner Paul Barton leapt high to see his header crash off the crossbar to safety. Half time 0-0.

The second half mirrored the first really with both defences restricting opposite forwards to long-range efforts. However, a great shot from the RN's Bob Brady forced the Newport goalkeeper into yet another stunning save.

In the later stages of the game it was Brady again who spurned a glorious chance to put the RN ahead.

An inch-perfect free kick by Smith was headed wide when it was easier to score. It was just not meant to be...

Overall, this was a good team performance and the only reason the RN were unable to score was down to excellent goalkeeping by the Newport keeper.

RN U23 vs Middlesex FA

An opportunity missed... The U23s travelled to North-west London for the annual fixture with Middlesex FA U23.



ONSIDE with Lt Cdr Neil Horwood, RNFA

The Navy side were presented with a good playing surface and an extremely competent Middlesex team who played some excellent football, moving the ball quickly and causing problems for the sailors' midfield and defensive line.

The Navy weathered the early pressure and tested the Middlesex keeper from range with an excellently-struck free kick for AB Ross Beech (Neptune), forcing the opposition keeper to palm the ball over his own cross-bar.

A swiftly-taken free kick from inside the Middlesex defensive third stretched the RN team and a turn of pace coupled with an excellent finish from the Brazilian-born Middlesex centre forward, saw the advancing RN keeper Mne Tony Baxter (FPGRM) lobbed from the edge of the 18-yard box. The Navy managed to apply some pressure toward the end of the first half but went in at the break 1-0 down.

A couple of changes at half time saw the RN compete ably in the second period: ET Rob Hills (Sutherland) made his presence felt in the centre of midfield and Mne Keelan Gartside (539 ASRM) troubled the opposition with his pace.

A good break from the Senior Service led to Gartside bearing down on goal and forcing the Middlesex keeper to handle outside his area resulting in his dismissal.

The RN now had control of the game with the one-man advantage, but disciplined play and dogged defending from the opposition resulted in the game finishing 1-0 to Middlesex.

RN U23 training camp in Gibraltar

After that defeat, the U23 squad enjoyed a period of warm-weather training in Gibraltar ahead of the 2012 Inter-Service Competition.

The training camp was funded through by the RN/RM Sports Lottery and RNFA, with personal contributions received from all participating players/staff.

The team departed the UK in good spirits and checked into accommodation at Devils Tower Camp (DTC).

Tuesday was taken up with a

session on the 3G pitch at DTC and a session in the well-furnished gymnasium.

After light training on Wednesday morning, the squad played their first game against an experienced Combined Services team (see below) and enjoyed a post-match reception with the opposition.

Thursday began with a squad run up the Rock with all four of the RM contingent running in first, closely followed by LPT Perkins (Raleigh).

The afternoon was deemed to be free time and many of the squad ventured back up the Rock (this time in the cable car) and enjoyed the views and delights of St Michael's Cave.

Friday saw another light training session followed by a full-blooded game against the Royal Gibraltar Regiment (keep on reading).

The squad hosted a barbecue after the game and then enjoyed the delights of a Friday night in Gibraltar.

It was a hugely-beneficial trip that provided an opportunity to prepare for the forthcoming competition with good facilities and reasonably challenging opposition gave a taste of what is to come.

Importantly, the squad had the opportunity to bond and get to know each other properly with a fairly diverse mix of personnel from across the Service.

There were many highlights both on and off the pitch, not least the regular appearance of the players at the Gala Bingo and at least one player managed a £250 win!

Gibraltar Combined Services v RN U23s

The RNU23 started their build-up to the Inter Services with a friendly against the Combined Services of Gibraltar.

On a sunny yet windy day at DTC, the team began brightly with some good football which had the home team chasing the ball.

After six minutes Mne Mike Scott (42 Cdo) went on a dazzling run which saw him brought down 25 yards from goal; the resulting free kick by Beech (Neptune) failed to hit the target.

On 11 minutes a good ball over the top by full back AB Dan Jenkins (Kent) put LPT 'Jack Sparrow' Perkins (Raleigh) in with a half chance which just drifted wide of the goal.

The Combined Services finally got their act together and placed a little pressure on the Navy defence which resulted in a shot at goal after 18 minutes, their first attack of the game.

The Navy still dominated the game which was being run from the middle by Beach and ET(ME) Rob Hill (Sutherland) who were showing some fine vision and a display of passing.

On 24 minutes a shot from AB Scouse Mcloughlin (Vanguard) from 30 yards was again well wide and the RN were now growing rather frustrated at not taking the lead despite so much possession. The CS were now happy to play with 11 men behind the ball, defend and counter-attack.

A corner kick to the Navy was cleared by the home side which resulted in a quick counter-attack and only their second shot on goal in the first half which was easily saved by AB Craig Mulholland (Argyll).

Another good turn and run by Mne Scott, who was now causing problems for the home defence, gave him a clear shot on goal which was hit wide when it should have been converted.

Changes were made at half time: AB Tom Parry (Illustrious) for AET Shafty Longstaff (Nelson) at centre half and AB Steve Harding (Victorious) for Hills in the centre of midfield.

Straight from the re-start the Navy were on the attack with Perkins just shooting over from the edge of the box.

A good floating cross from the right by AB Adam Beckett (Dragon) found Mne Martin Finneron (CLR RM) unmarked in the six-yard box but again the Navy failed to take their chances.

The RN continued to dominate and control the game but were now running out of ideas so another substitute was made, Mne Keelan Gartside (539 ASRM) for Perkins, and straight away he used his pace to good affect.

On 84 minutes the RN came the closest to scoring when a cross-cum-shot by ET Jenkinson deceived everyone and hit the post. The visitors controlled the game from start to finish but just lacked a little imagination in the last third of the pitch and the final result was a 0-0 draw.

Royal Gibraltar Regiment vs RN U23

The RN U23 kicked off their second match of the training camp against a good Royal Gibraltar Regiment side which included four Gibraltar National players who recently defeated the Faroe Islands 3-1.

On four minutes Mne Scott made a good run, rounded the keeper and got a shot away at goal. His striking partner, Mne Gartside, made sure it ended up in the back of the net.

Three minutes later Gartside made it 2-0 with a strike into the bottom corner of the goal.

The regiment came back into the game and were only prevented from pulling a goal back by a good save from ET(ME) Ryan Bigger (Northumberland).

Some sloppy defending on 25 minutes gave the Gib striker a chance which was finished well from eight yards.

A good ball over the Navy defence and a fine finish after 28 minutes levelled the scores.

It grew worse for the Navy after 36 minutes when Logs Chris Murray (Raleigh) brought down the striker just outside the box.

The resulting free kick was converted in great style with an outside of the foot strike into the top corner of Bigger's net.

The Navy kept to their game and after 40 minutes a pinpoint free kick from Beech found the bottom corner to level the scores.

A couple of changes were made at half time: ET Dan Jenkinson (Kent) for Murray and Longstaff for ET Ross Turnbull (Lancaster).

A penalty after 54 minutes was awarded to the regiment following a relatively-innocuous challenge by the RN defence. Justice was served when the kick was put wide.

The Navy seemed to wake up from this and after 61 minutes a good cross from Mne Martin Finneron (CLR RM) on the left was headed in by Gartside for his hat-trick.

LPT Perkins (Raleigh) came on for AB Adam Beckett (Dragon) on 73 minutes to try to bring some calm to a game which was beginning to become overheated.

The Navy made the game safe with five minutes left when Gartside placed the ball home for his fourth goal to seal a well deserved 5-3 victory.

The squad showed good character coming back and winning the game and now have their sights set on winning the 2012 Inter-Service Competition.

Immaculate Concept at Faslane

CLYDE'S Sportsdrome was the venue for the Northern Region Indoor Rowing Championships.

The competition attracted 31 competitors eager to test their fitness on the gym's Concept 2 rowing machines.

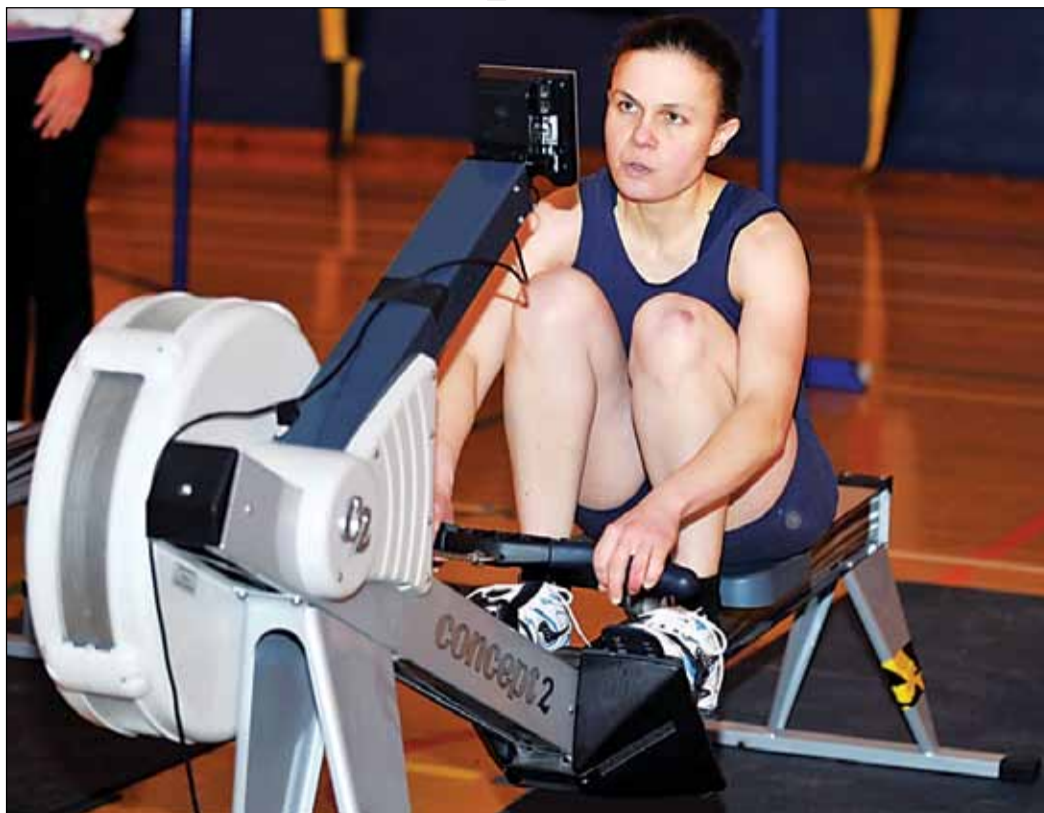
Competitors had to race over 2,000 metres in the individual category, while there was a 4,000-metre race in the team category for up to four rowers and a cox.

CPO Eagles took first place in the men's under-40 event, clocking up a personal best of 6m 49.5s, setting him up well for the World Indoor Rowing Championships in Boston, USA, later this year.

Meanwhile, in the men's over-40s event, Royal Marine Major Clare took first place in 7m 2s.

The ladies' event was won by the Naval Base's Lt Cdr Louise Wooller (pictured right toiling away by LA(Phot) Sally Stimson, FRPU North) with a time of 8m 40.4 seconds.

The team category saw Faslane's 'What-ers' victorious in a time of 13m 11.6s.



Airmen win thrilling Command cup

Continued from page 48

unconverted tries from Larkin, LETME Steve Hillman (Torbay) and ETME Woods to give Plymouth a 24-0 half time lead.

The second half was all Plymouth with another try from Larkin converted by Jenkins.

Tries followed from LETME Alex Thompson, ETME Talemimaleya (Ocean), Mne Scott Puleston (RM Stonehouse) and Mne Conor Main (Ocean). Scotland's only answer was a penalty from LPT Dan Appleby making the final score 3-62.

The Royal Marines entered the 2011/12 Inter-Commands Competition as the holders and with an opening game against home side Portsmouth Command.

Having spent the first two days watching all the teams, there was an expectation that the Royal Marines would emulate their Naval Air Command counterparts and dispatch Portsmouth Command with ease.

Unfortunately for the marines, Portsmouth had other ideas and from the kick-off, the marines failed to deal with the high ball.

From that point on they were under sustained pressure from Portsmouth. It was only after a Portsmouth knock-on that the Marines had some respite. It would be from the scrum that the Marines moved the ball some 20m and following a reset, pushed the Portsmouth pack to their own goal line. From this position the pack eventually gave way and the referee had no option but to award a penalty try which was converted by Mne Nathan Huntley. (0-7)

It didn't take the Portsmouth team long to level the score as ill-discipline following a penalty resulted in the Corps being sent back another ten metres.

From the penalty the Portsmouth forwards drove into the heart of the Corps defence and a quickly recycled ball gave Navy Senior XV player CPO Smallbone a chance to release his centres to great effect.

As the Marines' defence streamed across the pitch, another of the Portsmouth players, CPO 'Cowboy' John, reversed the flow of play and gave ET Becker an almost free run in to score an unconverted try (5-7) after 20 minutes.

The game, although turning into a 'crowd pleaser' due to its intensity, did little for the blood pressure of the Corps' coaching team as time after time the Marines kicked away possession or lost turn over ball in the tackle.

In the 25th minute following a Portsmouth infringement, Huntley gave the Corps a 5-10 lead.

Again discipline let the Marines down and AB Davis converted a penalty to bring the score to 8-10. Just before the end of the half, Portsmouth were reduced to 14 men following a 'yellow card' for a repeated offence, from which Huntley converted the penalty: half-time 8-13.

The second half was a brutal affair as no quarter was given by either team, which kept the physios for both teams busy.

An exchange of penalties saw the Corps go into the last few minutes with a 16-11 lead. The final onslaught by Pompey saw them gain a lineout on the Corps 5m line.

A poor throw-in gave the Corps a 5m scrum but unlike earlier engagements, the Portsmouth pack wheeled the Corps scrum through 90° to turn over the ball.

The Portsmouth scrum held firm and released the blindside wing to score in the corner. The final kick of the game belonged to Davis whose conversion hit the upright. 16-16 full time.

Ten minutes each-way saw no score in the first period but following a rare visit to the Portsmouth half, Mne Seta Raumakita charged down a clearance kick and followed it up to score under the posts; converted by Huntley 16-23.

Portsmouth responded immediately and drove the Corps back into their own 22 with some strong running by MA Sam Laid.

However, the final pass was knocked on and at the same time the whistle sounded the victory for the Royal Marines.

The second meeting of the week between Plymouth and Naval Air saw the former take the game to the NAC from the kick-off.

It was a penalty to NAC after four minutes that eased this pressure as AET Jon Humphries converted to put his side into the lead (0-3).

Still the Plymouth team would not give NAC any ground and made them work hard at every break-down and set piece.

LPT Jenkins combined well with in-form winger ETME Larkins to pressure the NAC at every opportunity. The Plymouth pack continued throughout the game to cause the more experienced NAC pack problems in the lineout.

After 11 minutes a good break down the right saw NAC wing AET Jenkins step inside the Plymouth cover defence to score under the posts. Humphries converted (0-10).

The pressure from Plymouth was beginning to tell as several clearance kicks were charged by the back row of Thompson, Puleston and Plymouth captain,

Hillman.

After 15 minutes the NAC were reduced to 14 men after a yellow card and Jenkins converted the subsequent penalty (3-10). It was just before half time that Jenkins converted another penalty to close the gap to a very creditable 6-10.

From the kick-off to start the second half, Plymouth infringed and gave the NAC some space which allowed NA Hunt to make them pay as he cut down the centre of the pitch. Only a good covering tackle by the Plymouth defence stopped a potential try, but in doing so gave away a penalty; Humphries converted (6-13).

It was not long before the NAC replacement NA Quarnatualio, taking three Plymouth players with him, scored a converted try (6-20). Plymouth continued to press the airmen at every opportunity and Jenkins was a constant source of annoyance to the NAC as he took every opportunity to exploit gaps in their defence.

However, it was to be NAC that exploited a gap on the blind side and skipper NA Priddey seized the opportunity. Some good inter passing and support play provided Priddey with a scoring pass that went unconverted (6-25).

The final play of the game saw Lt Andy Vance cross the line to give the NAC a place in the final against the Royal Marines by a 26 point margin: final score 6-32.

After a third-place play-off which saw Plymouth triumph over Portsmouth 21-10, the Royals and NAC lined up for the Inter-Command final.

From the kick-off, the Marines were under direct pressure from the NAC and only the desperate defence from fly half Capt Tom Glover saved an early try.

Naval Air dominated both the lineout and the scrum set pieces, which meant that the Marines had little from which to work.

The NAC finally cracked the Marines' defence by moving the ball to the middle of the field from a set piece and then reversing the attack down the blind side that put flanker AET Jones (Nelson) in at the corner for an unconverted try 0-5.

Good work and pressure from the Marines' forwards following the kick-off pushed the NAC into their own half and this led to a penalty, which was converted by Glover 3-5.

The usual slick NAC back play was not functioning as well as it had been seen during the early stages of the competition, and the Royals' defence, led by scrum-half Sgt Mark Maddocks, forced NAC into uncharacteristic mistakes.

However, through their

dominance at lineout and scrum, the NAC forward pressure eventually led to a penalty, which gave AET Humphries an opportunity to increase the NAC lead 3-8.

The remainder of the half was a battle between the kickers as first Glover brought the score back to 6-8 and then Humphries ended the half by converting another: 11-6 to NAC at the break.

The start of the second half provided clear evidence that, despite being out-scrummaged, this young team from the Marines had no shortage of commitment; again and again they forced errors from the NAC, but unfortunately this inevitably played into the hands of NAC whose dominance in the scrum was beginning to tell.

Breaks from Hunt, Humphries and 'man of the match' Priddey caused the Marines problems but defensively they kept the NAC away from their goal line.

Glover was to close the gap to two points after the NAC were caught off-side; 9-11. Not one to give up, it was Glover who again tested the NAC with a long-range attempt from the half-way line.

Despite missing the penalty, Glover attempted a Wilkinson-esque drop goal in the dying minutes of the match, only for it to be charged down by the NAC centres.

The NAC kept the Marines pinned down in their own half through effective, penetrating kicks by Humphries.

Kicking the ball into touch, the final whistle blew and NAC claimed the 2011-12 Inter-Command title 11-9.

The Inverdale Trophy was presented to NAC captain NA Priddey by journalist and sports presenter John Inverdale, son of the late Surg Capt Inverdale.

Meanwhile, at the 2011 RNRU AGM, the decision to award Navy caps to the women's team was ratified.

To qualify for a cap, a woman must represent the RN at six Inter-Service fixtures (with the first eligible season being 2008/9) as well as continuously displaying core RN values.

Following the 2010/11 Inter-Service Competition, six members of the women's team were eligible: Lt Victoria Percival, POET(WE) Sophie Roseaman, LS Emma Swinton, AB Sarah Simms, LAWT Sophy Hinds and LAET Pam Williams.

All but the latter two (they were unable to attend due to operational commitments) received their caps from Rear Admiral Phil Jones, Vice President RNRU.



Ooze the boss

FIFTY-six runners headed to Helensburgh Rugby Club for this year's Northern Region Cross-Country League Competition.

Organised by physical training staff at HM Naval Base Clyde, the event attracted enthusiasts from the Royal Navy, Army, RAF, civil service, as well as civilian runners.

Recent heavy rain meant that the nine-kilometre course over the rugby fields and surrounding woodlands was waterlogged – more like a bog-snorkelling competition than cross-country (as evidenced by LA(Phot) Ben Sutton's photograph, above).

Despite a few of the runners losing their trainers to the mud along the way, the competitors were undaunted; it was clear from the very start that leading pack was hungry for a win, using one another to set the pace.

Among the leaders was Lt Walkey from RAF Leuchars, Mr Thompson from Helensburgh AAC and Mr Flemming from HMS Neptune.

The ladies' course consisted of a five-click run and there were some tough battles between Lt Hollingworth from Neptune and SAC Barros from RAF Leuchars.

Leading the pack from the very start, however, was Mrs Henderson from Helensburgh ACC who completed the course in an impressive time of 29.24m.

Overall the team category was won by RAF personnel from RAF Leuchars, with prizes being handed out by Rear Admiral Christopher Hockley, Flag Officer Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland.

LPT Mark Flowers, who organised the event, said: "I would like to say a big thank you to all the competitors, volunteers, marshals and staff who contributed to the event.

"It was a roaring success and well done to all who took part."

National treasures

2012 has begun for the world of female boxing in the RN with its fighters on a high.

Indeed all three members of the RN ladies team who represented the Service at the National Championships returned from Liverpool with medals, writes POAET Dave McElwee.

AB(CIS) Zoe Young (Collingwood) fought extremely well in only her second bout in her semi-final. A close decision saw the local boxer awarded the decision and Zoe had to settle for a bronze medal.

Olympic hopeful Lt Lucy O'Connor fought an impressive semi-final, clearly dominating throughout the contest and winning 43-12 against international Pavlina Zubacova.

In the final CPOET(WE) Carla Palin (Collingwood) lost a close bout 22-18 to Weston whilst O'Connor comfortably eased to victory in her final bout against fellow England international Fliatham 34-18, to claim her fifth National ABA title.

All-in-all, the ladies came away with one gold, one silver and a bronze medal – a fantastic result.

The impressive outcome on Merseyside stems from a series of highly-successful training weekends which unearthed some great raw talent and introduced ladies to the varied training involved in boxing and also allowed some old faces to reconnect and work with new coach POAET Dave McElwee, assisted by LPTs 'Bungy' Edwards and Matt Philips.

Following the positive response to the initial camp, further training weekends were organised which involved female boxers from across Hampshire and Isle of Wight.

This not only introduced Navy fighters to a range of talent and experience in the local area but also gave local boxers and their coaches an introduction to functional fitness and plyometrics thanks to CPO John Murray and LPT 'Paddy' Stephens.

As a result the RN ladies squad are enjoying a positive relationship with other clubs within the local community.

Training sessions for women are run in Nelson boxing gym on Mondays from 5pm.

Boxing is a great sport to use to get fit, lose weight, tone up and boost confidence. No previous boxing experience is required and absolutely no pressure to compete.

Contact the RN Boxing gym on 9380 24290 or speak to your local PTI.

● Collingwood's CPO Carlo Palin towers over opponent Pavlina Zubacova in the Nationals final; she lost the close bout on points



Airmen win thrilling Command cup

PORTSMOUTH hosted the first week-long Royal Navy Rugby Union Inter-Commands Competition with the Royal Marines (holders), Naval Air Command, Plymouth Command, RN Scotland and the home team all vying to win the Inverdale Trophy.

The opening game saw last year's losing finalists, Naval Air Command (NAC), take on Plymouth, writes Maj Steve Melbourne RM, OC Hasler Company.

The NAC team was bristling with talented players who have already seen significant playing time within the RN Senior XV, while the Plymouth Command team under the tutelage of Devonport Services Director of Rugby, Dave Oakley, hoped to improve on previous years' performances.

Unfortunately the game did not go Plymouth's way as the NAC, using some of the best and brightest players in RN Rugby, took them to task as they ran up a 27-0 half-time lead with tries from NA Ben Priddy (HMS Seahawk), two from NA George Quarivalu (HMS Seahawk), Mne Sean Houghton (CHF) and LAET Ryan Cox (HMS Seahawk); AET Jon Humphries (845 NAS) converted one of the first half tries.

The second half continued in a similar vein for Plymouth as the NAC were relentless in attack, from the forwards and backs; this resulted in a second try for Priddy and Houghton with replacement AET Ben Madagan (845 NAS) picking up another, along with RN Senior XV stalwart Lt Andy Vance (HMS Sultan). Humphries was the last to get onto the score sheet and converted all of the 2nd half tries, in turn earning him the 'man of the match' accolade and resulting in a final score of Plymouth 0-62 NAC.

The evening game between Portsmouth and Scotland provided proof that teamwork and the support to the competition were paramount; other commands lent players to the under-strength Scotland team to ensure that the fixture could go ahead.

With these additions it didn't take long for LPT (Dan) Appleby to convert a penalty, giving Scotland a three-point lead.

This was the incentive that Portsmouth needed and under the captaincy of CPO Dane Smallbone (Collingwood), the strong runners were unleashed and Logs Manoa Satala (RM Poole), AB Rodewana (Illustrious), MA Sam Laird (Collingwood) and AB Jones (Lancaster) soon caused Scotland no end of problems.

This led to Rodewana scoring the first try of the game, followed just before half time by AB Ackerman (Illustrious); both tries were converted by Satala giving Portsmouth a 14-3 lead at the break.

Portsmouth took control of the game from the re-start and continued pressure eventually bore fruit when Logs Ratuloko (Liverpool) ran in for an unconverted try (19-3).

The Scotland Captain ET(WE) Cooper had the last word as he scored their only try of the game making the final score 19-8.

This set Portsmouth Command up with a semi-final against the Royal Marines, with Scotland set to take on Plymouth Command for a place in the other semi final, against NAC.

It was always going to be a struggle for Scotland to match a command team that had the opportunity to train and play together regularly.

The fixture was sadly a one-way contest with Plymouth scoring through three penalties from LPT Sion Jenkins (Drake). This was followed by

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Tignes age kicks again

THIS year the heavens were certainly smiling on the competitors and attendees at the RN Alpine Championships held in Tignes.

There were some spectacular days of skiing and riding (that's snowboarding for those not in the know) to be had with more than 800 attending during the two weeks, writes Lt Cdr Rob Taylor, championships director.

The usual mix of racing and instruction took place: 600 lessons for the boarders, more than 1,000 instructional sessions for those on skis.

The racing itself was superb and we saw some fantastic competition this year, spurred on by the added contest that the Australian Defence Alpine Snowsports Team brought to the slopes.

They were visiting once more prior to competing at the Inter-Services in Meribel. Their competition was fierce and there were some very close battles with particular congratulations to Dan Crocker on skis and Amanda Gosling and Bianca Kaden on boards who performed superbly.

The RN overall winners were skiers Mike Gent and Carol Strong and boarders Mark Smith and Stephanie Ingram.

I could bang on about how great the event is but here are two perspectives from senior ski instructor WO2 Gary Perriton and snowboard hill team manager Lt Kieren Mawer.

Gary writes: "The ski instructors delivered a range of packages spanning absolute beginner through novice and intermediate to advanced and race training. Over 75 complete beginners were introduced to the exhilarating sport of alpine skiing and more than 1,000 hours of instruction were delivered overall."

"There is nothing more satisfying than taking a group of individuals who have never experienced the delights and comfort of slipping on a pair of ski boots for the first time."

"After just four and a half days, cheering them on as they haredown the slalom course and 'egg it' through the finish line of the beginner's race! The beginner's package is a four-day course where you will learn to plough, start to parallel and negotiate the myriad of lifts. This should get you on red runs and have the ability to get round the mountain by yourself."

"Last year's beginners and those who hadn't skied for a few years took the opportunity to improve their skills and increase their confidence in the novice and lower intermediate lessons."

"These two-day packages aimed at giving participants more confidence on blues, reds and even their first black run, ironing out some bad habits and introducing carving, short turns and steep terrain."

"Some of the advanced guys were a little surprised to be issued avalanche packs prior to making the best of the off-piste conditions this year – be aware, before you tick the box: advanced really means advanced!"

"Daily race training, delivered by former team member Capt Steve Cotton RM, provided invaluable preparation for the all-important championship races. Race results over the past four years show we have developed good free skiers into good racers and discovered new talent for the RN squad."

"The instruction team consists of serving and ex-serving RN personnel with ski leader or BASI qualifications. A thoroughly enjoyable Championship for classes and instructors alike – look out for the DIN and ensure you get your

lessons booked for next season. If you are interested in joining the instruction team contact me at **Des Ships MCS-UW-ES-NS.**"

Lt Kieren Mawer now describes the snowboard contest "where speed is your friend".

He continues: "Without a doubt 2012 saw the most competitive RNWSA snowboard competition for some time. More importantly was the number of first-timers who competed during race week, pushing their abilities and seemingly enjoying every minute of it."

"Why do we snowboard? Is it the mountains? Being outside with nature? As military types, it goes without saying that we have a natural affinity with being outdoors and in the very bosom of Mother Nature."

"Is it because of the snowboard community? The culture, the scene, the vibe? Snowboarders are a friendly bunch, whether it is a bearded (odd-smelling) seasonaire or a one-week-a-year holiday warrior, we all tend to get along."

"People get stoked for one other, are keen to hear about your progression and essentially, as long as you are enjoying yourself, other snowboarders will be happy for you."

"Is it the image? Let's face it: snowboarding is damn cool! Think how your shipmates and oppo respond when you tell them you've just got back from snowboarding... it's most likely something they've always wanted to try but have never found the motivation. For me it was a mixture of the first two, coupled with a desire for a new challenge on the mountain."

"The first race at the championships is parallel giant slalom. All competitors race down the same course aiming to be in the fastest 16."

"Following that comes the spectacle of two riders going down parallel courses head-to-head. On completion of the first run, they return to the top and race down the other course."

"Next comes the carnage of Boarder-X, a great spectator sport where four riders race down the course at the same time; it requires sharp edges and shaper elbows. Intentional contact is forbidden but you can always guarantee some 'argy-bargy'."

"The competition culminates with the slopestyle event in the park – in accordance with FIS rules there must be tunes!"

"There is no doubt it takes a lot of courage to hit the kickers in the park, but as with the more traditional races, speed is your friend."

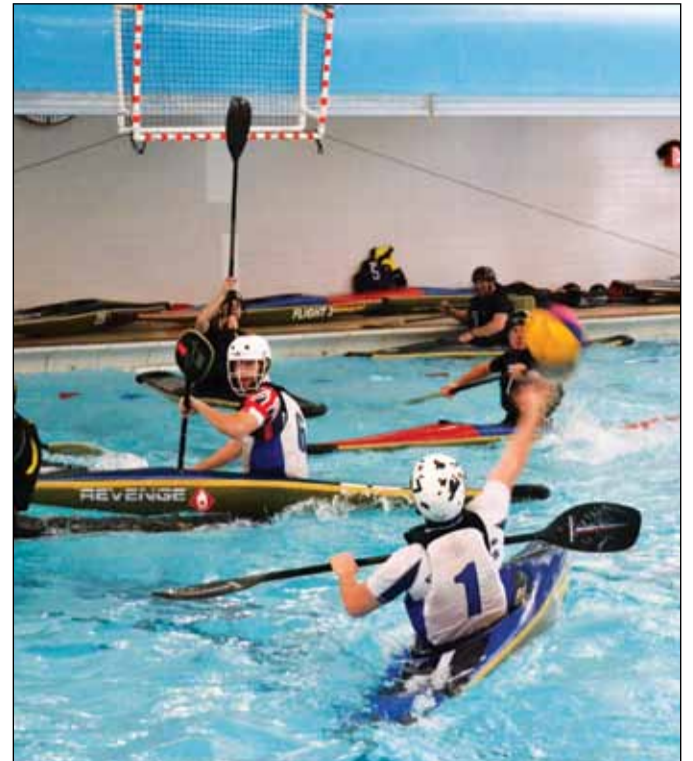
"Hit the kicker too slow and you are likely to not meet the transition and have a heavy landing, in fact the most common coaching tip James Sweet (RN snowboard team coach) gives to people is to speed up!"

"I'm already looking forward to seeing the competition stepped up again next year, faster racing, bigger jumps and bigger crashes. Hard riders, ride hard!"

And back to Lt Cdr Taylor... I'd like to say thanks to all the committee, instructors and hill team as I leave the post of director of the event after four years and hand over to Lt Cdr Martin Gilmore.

There is something for everyone at the event, and we need your attendance and effort. The event would not be as successful as it is without the determination, grit and courage of all those attending (and that's just trying to get travel expenses) so please make a note in your diaries: January 12-26 2013 when the championships will be in Tignes – don't just spectate, participate.

For full 2012 results: www.rnwsa.co.uk/results.html



Pool haul of fame

THE pool at HMS Temeraire was the venue for 2011-12 season Inter-Services Canoe Polo competition, writes Lt Helen Coxon (824 NAS).

Canoe polo is a competitive paddle sport involving a large amount of team work, along with speed and precision. Using a water polo ball, the object is to score a goal by getting the ball into the opponent's goal which is suspended two metres above the water.

Players may use their hands or paddle to propel the ball and tackles can be made with the boat or by attempting to capsize opponents when they are in control of ball.

Polo is a traditionally strong discipline for the Royal Navy Kayak Association and the 2011-12 competition was no exception with three teams from the Senior Service partaking.

Navy A team claimed victory in the men's competition by beating the RAF and then taking on the Army A in a tense match which was reflected in the 1-1 score line.

The Inter-Services men's title win was all the better as the team was at 50 per cent strength – canoe polo rules permit five paddlers on the 'pitch' plus up to three substitutes.

The Navy B team beat their rivals, Army B, with the tournament presenting an opportunity for a number of RN/RM newcomers to represent their service. Meanwhile, the RN ladies completed the clean sweep, taking the honours in their event which culminated in a thrilling 2-1 win over the Army ladies.

The RN went on to retain the Inter-Service trophy under the guidance of A team captain LA(SE) Taff Dolan (847 NAS), pictured above launching a shot at the Army B's goal.

The RNKA is always looking to recruit new paddlers, irrespective of experience, and all disciplines are catered for. To get in touch, find your nearest pool session or the next competition check out the website: www.rnka.co.uk.

The strong(er) arm of the law

FORTY two of the strongest individuals from across the Armed Forces and Police descended upon HMS Nelson for the Royal Navy's turn to host the annual Inter-Services Powerlifting Championships.

The RN/RM fielded two teams made up largely of Royal Marines against some of the top lifters from the Army, RAF and Metropolitan Police as well as guest lifters from Bournemouth University Barbell Club.

The competition couldn't have been closer with the final result coming down to just one point. Continued on page 46



● Musn Jonathan Miller attempts the giant slalom (sadly, he didn't finish...) Picture: Alex Board/Rory Campbell