



NAVY NEWS

MAY 2013

V IS FOR VICTORIOUS

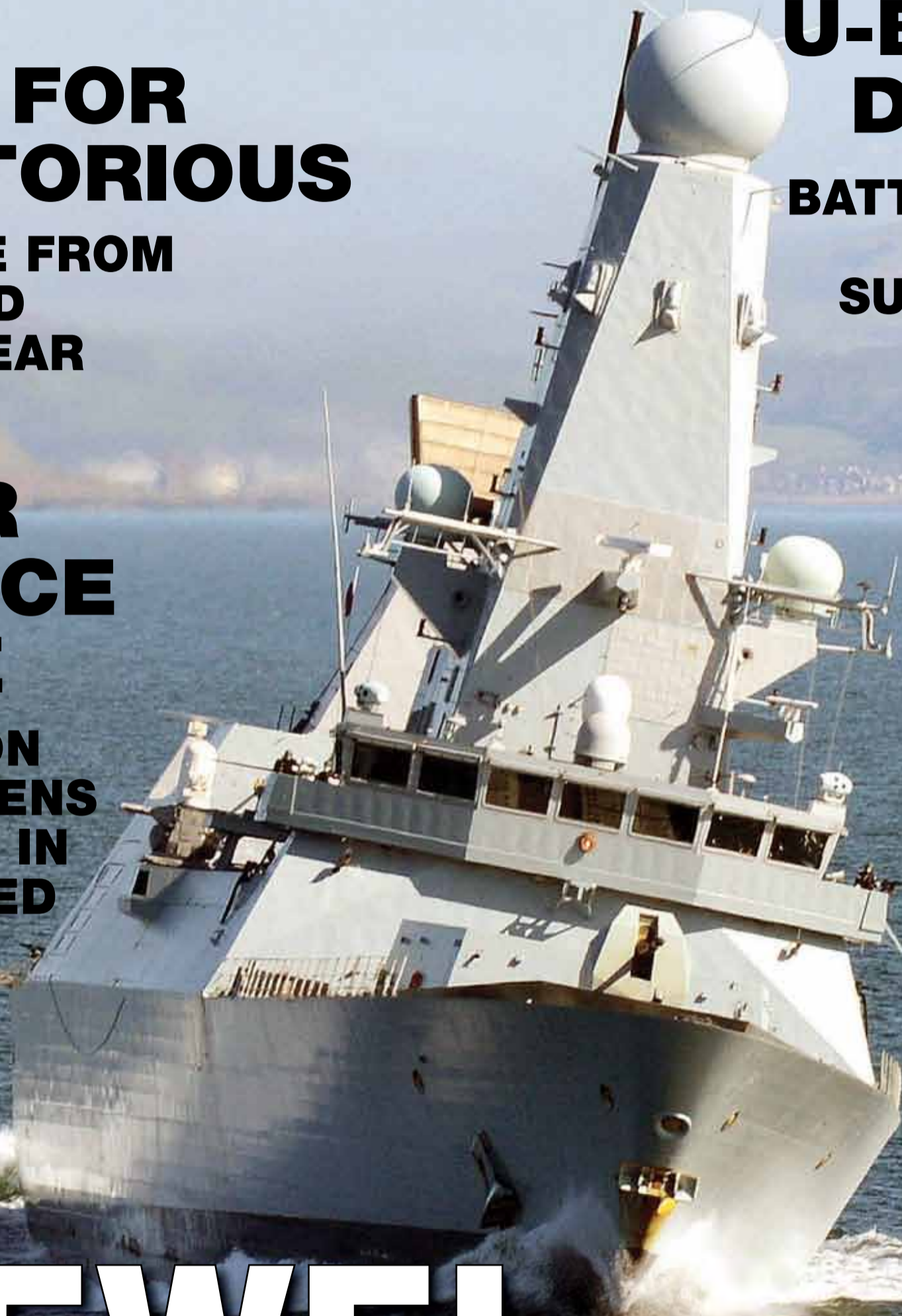
PRAISE FROM PM AND TOP GEAR

LAIR FORCE ONE

DRAGON SHARPENS CLAWS IN THE MED

U-BOATS' DEFEAT

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC SUPPLEMENT

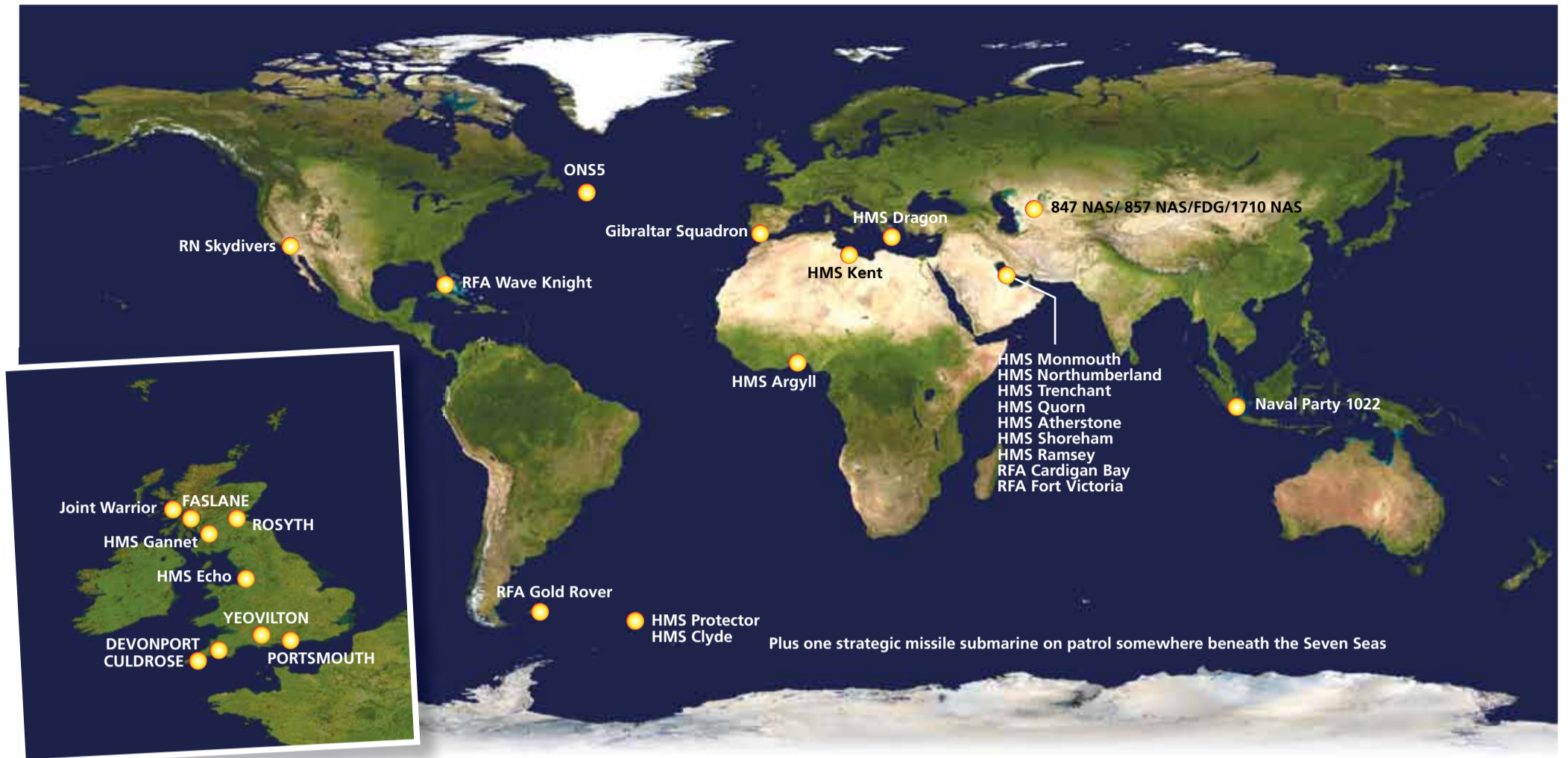


JEWEL PURPOSE

HMS Diamond heels to port as she takes evasive manoeuvres to avoid a swarm attack of fast boats and jetski in the Firth of Clyde. The Type 45 destroyer was one of 15 Royal Navy vessels taking part in Joint Warrior, the biggest military exercise in North-west Europe this year. See page 5.

Picture: LA(Phot) Dean Nixon, HMS Illustrious





THIS is an historic month to reflect on achievements.

Achievements past. Achievements present. Seven decades ago the Battle of the Atlantic reached its climax with the struggle for Convoy ONS5 – the 'Trafalgar of WW2', when the tide of battle turned against the U-boat permanently.

We remember that battle in our historic **Battle of the Atlantic 70** supplement (see the centre pages).

Today's Navy will this month be remembering those sacrifices in London, Derry-Londonderry and finally Liverpool; to launch events in the latter city, survey ship **HMS Echo** headed up the Mersey and hosted veterans of the battle (see page 6).

Personnel from across the Naval Service lined the route and carried the coffin of **Baroness Thatcher** when the former premier was granted the distinction of a ceremonial funeral (see page 5).

And celebrating achievements present? Well, the Royal Marines of **40 Commando** deserve – and received – praise, as they hauled down their standards and the Corps' 12-year mission to Afghanistan ended (see page 6).

Numerous RN personnel were singled out for their bravery from the sands of Helmand to the wilds of the Western Approaches in the latest **Operational Honours** (see page 14).

And why stop with the praise there? NATO, Whitehall, the Prime Minister and, er, the *Top Gear* team, were fulsome with their tributes to the bomber force as the 100th V-boat deterrence patrol was completed by **HMS Victorious** (see opposite).

The SSBN's latest stint carrying out the Navy's ultimate mission lasted 88 days – which is a cakewalk for T-boat crews like **HMS Trenchant**; unless world events get in the way, she's due to finish an 11-month deployment this month (believed to be the longest ever by a hunter-killer – see opposite).

Above the waves, a lot's been happening off and around the Scottish coast with the latest **Joint Warrior** exercise (still ongoing as we went to press) involving a cast of thousands (see page 5; we'll have a special feature in next month's edition).

HMS Kent became the first RN frigate into Tripoli since before the rule of Gaddafi (see page 7) as she makes her way east to relieve **HMS Northumberland** on counter-piracy patrol in the Indian Ocean.

Also off African shores, **HMS Argyll** linked up with a French amphibious group and visited Ghana (see right).

HMS Monmouth will be home in Devonport this month after completing her seven-month stint in the Gulf (see page 4), while new destroyer **HMS Dragon** has been sharpening her claws ready to take on the Operation Kipion mission (see pages 20-1).

Sacrifices a decade ago in Iraq were remembered by members of the 'Bagger' community, honouring the men of **849 NAS** killed in the opening days of Operation Telic when their Sea Kings collided (see page 18).

HMS Protector upheld the dying wish of a former sailor by returning a small piece of stone to the grave of fabled explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton in South Georgia (see page 10).

The big red survey ship wasn't the only visitor to the remote archipelago; **HMS Clyde** also dropped in during a rare departure from her normal stomping ground of the Falklands (see page 11).

Sixty years of RN support to NATO's headquarters in the Mediterranean have come to an end with the closure of said HQ in **Naples** – its duties have been assumed by the command centre at Northwood (see page 10).

Also passing into history is the 'round' 4.5in gun. The very final round from that gun came from the barrel of **HMS St Albans**; once she emerges from refit, she'll have the angular 'Kryten' in its place on the forecastle (see page 27).

And finally... April 9 2013 marked the final day in service after 43 years for **Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope**, who bade farewell to the Royal Navy and handed over to his successor as First Sea Lord, **Admiral Sir George Zambellas**, with a moving ceremony aboard **HMS Victory** (see pages 18-19).

Picture: LA(Phot) Pepe Hogan, HMS Argyll



SOMEWHERE off the West Coast of Africa, the French corvette Hénaff leads the assault ship FS Mistral and HMS Argyll – giving the British ship a rare chance to slot in with a French task group.

The Plymouth-based Type 23 is on an Atlantic patrol (north and south), although the bulk of her several weeks away so far have been focused in the waters off West Africa, promoting the fight against piracy and drug smuggling by working with the region's navies and law enforcement agencies.

The latest stage of that effort was lined up in Ghana – and on the way Argyll encountered the French force.

The opportunity for some *interopérabilité* with the Hénaff (officially Lieutenant de vaisseau Le Hénaff) and the Mistral (which is a cross between HMS Ocean and HMS Bulwark) was too good to turn down.

After some close-quarter manoeuvres, testing the skills of the bridge and navigation teams, the highlight of the encounter was a co-ordinated gunnery serial in which Argyll and the French corvette both fired their medium-range guns against a large floating target.

With friendly rivalry the order of the day, the two warships fired in turn to see who could get closest to the target (and Argyll haven't told us who won which suggests (a) they're being very gallant or (b) they lost).

Her 815 NAS Lynx, which had provided safety cover during the gunnery, then conducted a series of deck landings onboard the Mistral, before turning to a photographic role in order to get some aerial shots of the Anglo-Gallic formation.

After the rendezvous with the French, Argyll headed into Tema, Ghana, and supported ongoing efforts to keep the waters of the Gulf of Guinea safe.

The frigate acted as the venue for a conference by the think tank Royal Institute of International Affairs – more commonly known as Chatham House.

Delegates discussed tackling issues as wide-ranging as piracy, drug trafficking and illegal fishing

off West Africa. After the cerebral bit; some action and demonstrations showed what a Type 23 frigate can do.

Forty-five members of the Ghanaian Navy were invited aboard to develop their maritime skills.

Sessions in fire-fighting, damage-control, seamanship and boarding other vessels were provided by Team Argyll and this was warmly received by their fellow mariners.

Meanwhile, 19 of Argyll's sailors donned camouflage rig and headed to the jungle to participate in warfare training.

The Ghanaians have huge experience and are experts in the field (well, jungle) and wanted to pass on survival techniques to their guests... who weren't put off by the prospect of spiders, snakes and other exotic creatures.

"It was an amazing experience and a real eye-opener," said ET Alex Jay.

"We were taught how to make water when there's none around and how to lay booby traps in the jungle.

"Luckily, I didn't come across any spiders because I'm terrified of them and although they showed us how to cook a python in an ant hill, we didn't have to eat it."

The ship's football team also tested their skills against a Ghanaian navy team. Played on a testing pitch, in the 36°C sunshine and with only eight players per side, the game finished goalless.

On the final evening in Tema a formal reception was held onboard with the Ghanaian Minister of Defence, Hon Min Mark Woyonko, as the guest of honour.

Departure from Tema didn't end Argyll's Ghanaian adventure, for she sailed in company with the GNS Garinga for some manoeuvres and helicopter ops with the frigate's Lynx.

The aircraft carried out winching on to the Garinga – an exercise seldom practised by the Ghanaians – before the frigate's boarding team had a crack at getting onboard and searching the African warship.

Late Arctic blast keeps Gannet busy

THE unexpected cold snap in late March led to ten emergency sorties for HMS Gannet inside two and a half days as the rescuers helped stricken communities in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Sea King crews moved eight people to safety and ferried mountain rescue teams, medical staff, power and telecommunications engineers and vital supplies to some of the worst-hit areas over the weekend of March 22-24.

Five of those calls alone were to the Isle of Arran and a further two to Northern Ireland.

The Prestwick-based fliers faced the worst weather on the first day of the snap; in heavy snow they flew to Arran to deliver radios, then carried ill people back to hospital in Kilmarnock.

Shortly afterwards, the helicopter was heading for Galloway to pick up a heart-attack victim. The snow was so bad over land that the helicopter was forced to route along the coast – a much longer journey. Even doing that, however, the helicopter was unable to battle through and, with fuel critical, returned to base.

"It was absolutely the worst snow I have ever flown in. When we got back on the ground at Prestwick, the whole of the front of the aircraft was covered in ice," said Flight Observer and Gannet's CO Lt Cdr Andy Drodge.

At first light the next day he and his team were back on Arran moving the emergency services around, checking the island's roads to make sure no-one was trapped in their vehicles, and delivering vital aid to outlying communities.

"With that much snow the problem is trying to work out what's underneath it and whether we can safely land the aircraft on it. Some things are obvious, but others are very difficult to see until you're virtually on top of them," said pilot Lt Cdr Lloyd Shanahan.

"The snow does really change the way the landscape looks – there's a lack of visual references, which can be very dangerous."



● Mr Cameron studies the hi-tech systems in Victorious' control room, observed by CO Cdr John Livesay and (right and above right), the V-boat makes her way back to Faslane, mission complete
Pictures: PO(Phot) Ian Arthur, RNR Air Branch

Silent to a T

ONE week you're having your praises sung by the premier.

The next you're getting a personal greeting from the presenters of Britain's most popular motoring show.

Which must come as a bit of a shock to the bomber community, because in an already Silent Service, they're the quietest of the lot.

The completion of the 100th patrol by a Vanguard-class deterrence submarine was something worth shouting about.

The premier thought so. So too the outgoing First Sea Lord. And the Defence Secretary.

And NATO's Secretary General. Yes, the men of HMS Victorious had praise heaped upon praise – but of the aforementioned leaders, only the PM delivered his thanks in person.

He joined the V-boat for the final few hours of her 88-day tour of duty, upholding a continuous at-sea deterrence by the Silent Service going back to the end of the 1960s.

Although Mr Cameron was only aboard fairly briefly, he had sufficient time to chat with some of the 135 crew – and presented Dolphins (the badges which mark someone out as a qualified submariner) to several rookie deeps.

Among them 22-year-old ET Charlee-Ben Ryman, who was on his first deterrent patrol – and was also named Victorious' best trainee.

"The learning curve while on patrol was incredibly high and it was difficult to have no contact with loved ones," said the junior rating. "Luckily several of the people I went through the submarine qualifying course with are also on board and everyone works together as a team."

Overseeing ET Ryman was 'bomber' veteran 54-year-old WO2 John Horton, who was on the inaugural Vanguard-class patrol back in the '90s.

The senior rating was completing his 12th deterrent patrol in a Silent Service career going back to 1976.

"Over the years the changes and upgrades in technology have been huge and that means that with each patrol there is always a new challenge and something else to learn," he said.

WO Horton, who lives in West Dunbartonshire, says that the biggest hardships during a deterrent patrol lie with the crew's families.

"To be honest, my wife, Theresa, has the hardest bit," he said. "She doesn't know exactly when I am returning from sea and the only contact is one way through 'family grams' which are vetted and which we can't reply to because the submarine needs to stay silent."

"When I left for this patrol our daughter, Stephanie, was pregnant with twins and could have had them by now. I could be a grandfather once again and don't even know it!"

As for Victorious' Commanding Officer, Cdr John Livesay, he says Mr Cameron's visit isn't just significant for his boat, but for all four V-boats.

"We share the honour with the hundreds of dedicated submariners, families and support staff who have contributed over the years," he added.

"It was a pleasure to be able to show the Prime Minister around the submarine and he was undoubtedly impressed by the challenges our people face in delivering deterrence."

Delivering deterrence – the mission, aptly, is codenamed, Operation Relentless – is something the Silent Service has performed since June 1968 when HMS Resolution left Faslane (the round-the-clock constant presence actually began in April 1969, ten months after Resolution's inaugural patrol).

Since then well over 300 patrols have been safely and successfully completed, first with the quartet of R-boats – Resolution, Revenge, Renown and Repulse – until 1996; thereafter the mission has been the exclusive domain of the V-boats.

Vanguard herself carried out the first V-boat patrol at the end of 1994, followed by Victorious in 1995, Vigilant in 1998 and finally Vengeance in 2001.

Of Victorious' milestone, the premier said: "I want to thank all those who provide our deterrent: the submariners, the families who support them and the 20,000 people who work onshore. All play their part in maintaining this nation's ultimate weapon of defence."

His words were echoed by Defence Secretary Philip Hammond: "Just because the Cold War is over doesn't mean we should drop our guard or weaken our deterrent. No-one knows what threats we may face in the future: powerful nuclear arsenals remain while a number of non-nuclear states are attempting to acquire nuclear weapons that could threaten us."

Such sentiments were reinforced by NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who said that over the past 45 years, the "constant vigilance and professionalism" of the crews of the Royal Navy's ballistic boats – armed first with Polaris and, today, Trident missiles – had "helped ensure the freedom and security of the allies".

And he stressed that the V-boats would "continue to play a crucial role" in helping NATO "both deter and defend against threats to our alliance."

All this praise is very gratifying. But you can't beat a thank-you delivered from a field on the Tanzanian-Kenyan border by the *Top Gear* team.

Just minutes after finishing filming their Africa Christmas special (which actually aired in early March...), the trio of Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May filmed a 90-second message to thank the submariners for their efforts defending our nation.

Before departing on each of those stealthy missions, the V-boat's skipper writes to various celebs before his submarine departs on patrol as a morale boost; last year the Man City fan succeeded in persuading his favourite team to bring the Premiership Trophy aboard – to his delight and the chagrin of the United supporters aboard.

This time around, it was the team behind the Beeb's top-rated car show who responded... and offered some top tips to the crew.

"Make sure your submarine always does what it says on the tin," says James.

As for Jeremy – who's been filming with the RN this year, joining HMS Westminster off Norway for a documentary on World War 2 Arctic convoys – he says he always wanted to serve in boats, while his diminutive colleague Richard was "born to be a submariner," but couldn't be one because he's "quite scared of stuff".

"We would like to wish you all the very best on your long and difficult voyage," says Jeremy. "Thank you very much for all you do – we're very grateful."

THE crew of HMS Trenchant laugh at 88-day patrols. You could squeeze three such stints into the T-boat's latest mammoth tour of duty.

By the time you read this, they'll have smashed the 300-day barrier. By the time the hunter-killer is due alongside in her native Devonport, she'll have done about 11 months (which makes it possibly the longest T-boat patrol in history).

Trenchant sailed on June 22 – one month

before the London Olympics and nearly six months before the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge announced they were expecting their first child.

Since then she's carried out operational patrols and international training exercises have been entwined with port visits to Fujairah in the UAE, Christmas and New Year in Bahrain and a quick trip around the Indian Ocean, including a visit to the remote UK territory of Diego Garcia.

Trenchant has worked with seven Royal Navy warships – frigates Westminster, Sutherland, Northumberland and Monmouth, new destroyer HMS Diamond and minehunter Quorn, before encountering Dragon – as well as various American units (including one submarine, USS Providence) and one French submarine (FS Casablanca).

The T-boat has also received plenty of high-profile visitors, hosting everyone from admirals and various defence attachés to the crew's family members and military personnel from the US and Australia.

Due to the length of Trenchant's tour of duty, most of her crew have been rotated – but ten submariners have done the full Monty.

Specialist sonar rider Lt Cdr Graham 'Yorkie' Thorley has passed another milestone: a grand total of 5,000 sea days in his career – that's more than 13½ years at sea.

He joined up aged 16 and has worked his way up through the ranks through multiple submarines – and multiple classes of submarine – to serve as the specialist sonar rider on Trenchant. Although he claims "It's just my job", he should be justifiably proud of his achievement.

Sonar controller PO Ignatius Oberholzer, who's been aboard for the duration of the deployment, has notched up one million metres – that's 1,000km, 621 miles or roughly the distance from Plymouth to Hamburg – on one of Trenchant's rowing machines.

Twenty-nine members of the crew earned the coveted Dolphins while deployed. A few received them when Britain's then most senior sailor – and former submarine commander – First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope visited Trenchant.

Over £750 was raised, through a variety of means, for the boat's chosen charity – the Derriford Neo-Natal unit in Plymouth.

By the nine-month mark, the crew had chomped more than 16,000 sausages and got through 30,000 teabags, while it would take a good broody hen laying two eggs per day about 18 years to produce the 13,000 eggs that were eaten onboard since leaving the UK.

Another constant presence has been Cadet Echo, the boat's mascot – a yellow duck which was given to Trenchant by her affiliated Sea Cadet unit, TS Echo in Llanelli.

He's taken part in all events and activities aboard, even earning a Crossing the Line certificate when the boat sailed over the Equator.

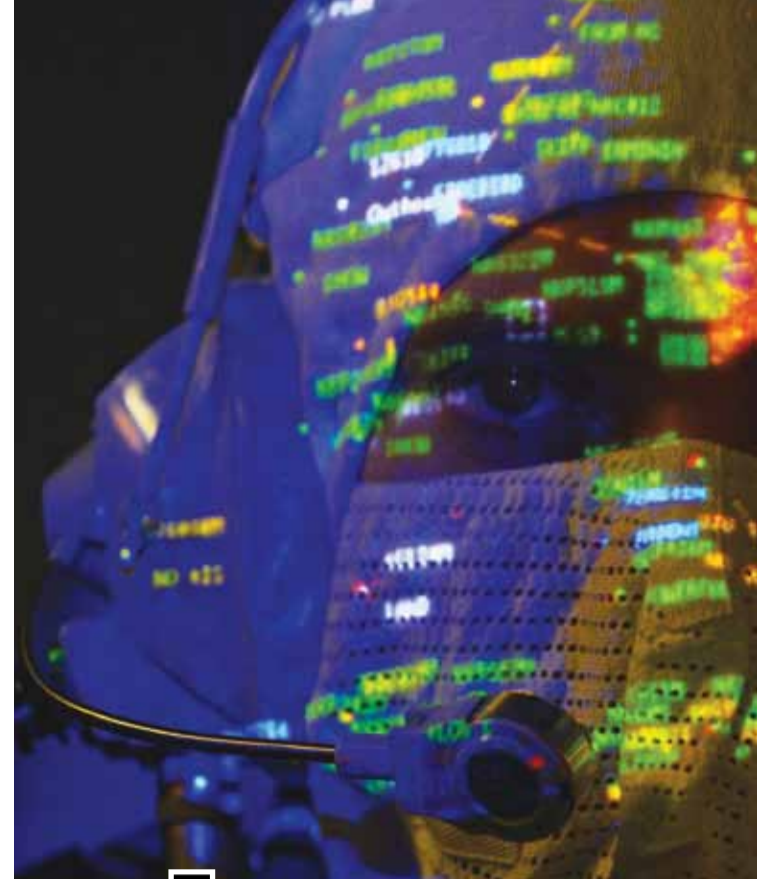
Lt Cdr Stuart Barrie, the weapon engineer officer and another crew member of the 'Black Watch', who's also been onboard since June 22, said: "It's been an enjoyable deployment so far with lots of varied tasking and experiences."

"However, it's always tough being separated from family, especially during the periods when we are without communications with home – which can be as long as seven weeks. I've been fortunate that my wife and children have visited twice, including Christmas in Bahrain."

He added: "The lads deserve a huge amount of credit for all that we have achieved, and everyone onboard is looking forward to getting back home."



● HMS Trenchant puts in a rare appearance on the surface towards the end of her 11-month deployment
Picture: LA(Phot) Dave Jenkins, FRPU East



Monmouth mosaic



AND what a colourful mosaic it is, despite the frigate's pseudonym.

Blue, orange, red, green contacts on the displays in the ops room.

Ochre flying suits. Sepia-toned sunsets.

Big green flying machines. Grey ones too.

A smattering of green berets.

A good 180 blue No.4s. Whites if you're on ceremonial duties ashore.

A hell of a lot of black gold.

And a lot of battleship grey (which isn't that colourful, admittedly).

As her Gulf tour of duty concludes this month (she should be handing over to Dragon any day) HMS Monmouth can reflect on seven months painted in a myriad colours. And they can reflect on a job well done.

Like fending off the world's most fearsome helicopter. Two of them in fact.

The Kuwaiti Air Force sent a pair of Apaches against the Plymouth-based frigate during a day of high-octane training at the head of the Gulf.

The gunships staged a series of low-level simulated attacks against the Black Duke to test the reactions of both Monmouth's ship's company and the aircrew.

The Apache raids were sandwiched in the middle of exercises with the Kuwaitis.

The Black Duke linked up with the Kuwaiti Naval vessel Al Ahmadi for a series of complex Officer of the Watch manoeuvres which tested the signalling and ship-handling skills of the bridge teams.

After the Apaches, another helicopter moved in – this time an AS332 Super Puma Search and Rescue helicopter, also of the Kuwaiti Air Force, which carried out winching exercises from Monmouth's flight deck.

The exercises in the northern Gulf come hot on the heels of

two days of demonstrations and exercises laid on for students from the Kuwaiti Staff College – which educates not just its country's own future military leaders, but those of many states in the region, and beyond.

So Kuwaitis, Australians, Bahrainis, Canadians, Egyptians, Jordanians, Omanis, Pakistanis, Qataris, Saudi Arabians, South Koreans, Sudanese, and Brits filed aboard to experience rapid roping, pirate take-downs, boarding team action, fire-fighting and, er, logistics.

Ok, so the latter's not very action-y. But ignore supplies and you come a cropper. Ask Rommel...

In the first five months of her patrolling, the Black Duke took on board nearly 3,000 cubic metres of fuel (that's three million litres... or enough black gold to fill the tanks of over 54,000 Ford Focuses), while the chefs in the galley served up 90,000 meals to the 200 souls onboard.

Which means regular replenishment is crucial.

Generally speaking, patrols in the Gulf don't last too long – you're never too far from Dubai, Bahrain, maybe Muscat, where food (and mail) is invariably waiting on the jetty.

The main broadcast pipe of "Clear Lower Deck, Store Ship" brings the whole ship's company on to the upper deck with a look of eager anticipation on their faces.

"Forming a human chain from the delivery vehicles to the store rooms, provisions are manhandled aboard with the impressive efficiency of a well-oiled machine," says Monmouth's weapon engineer officer Lt Cdr Steve Gilmore.

"Issues of ice lollies go a long way to lift morale, particularly as the storing can involve shifting two tonnes of spuds in the blistering Arabian heat."

Getting the stores on board is the easy part; the real skill lies in the members of the logistics department who order it, account for it, issue it, log it, cook it and serve it. That's when they're not carrying out secondary duties such as damage control officer, fire-fighter, boarding team member, first aider, and flight deck officer.

Such as the snake of sailors lugging boxes of tomatoes is quite

a sight, it pales compared with a replenishment at sea – particularly a 'double-header': ammunition and fuel simultaneously.

"Maintaining two transfer lines made steering the correct course particularly challenging, as the tension on the thick steel wires acted to drag the two ships closer together," explained LPT Danny Card, Monmouth's clubz and Special Sea Dutyman ship driver. "My driving had to correct for this. When the loads came across I needed to compensate by up to 15 degrees of wheel to just keep the ship on a steady course."

There was even an element of drama as a small but stubborn fishing dhow stopped directly in the path of the replenishing vessels.

A well-drilled series of whistles and blasts initiated the emergency breakaway procedure as the vessels disconnected with a calm efficiency, manoeuvring around the obstinate fisherman and reconnecting to complete the transfer of ammunition and fuel.

Hmmm, maybe logistics are more action-packed than we first thought.

You have to be there to truly understand all this, of course. To really 'get it'... hence the staff course visit.

"Spending time at sea on a warship is the only way one can truly understand how the Royal Navy and maritime forces can achieve our strategic goals," explains Monmouth's CO Cdr Gordon Ruddock.

"Of course, we all enjoy showing off what we can do, but the value of demonstrations like this has been to assure our friends in the region of the United Kingdom's commitment to ensuring peace and stability in the long term."

And when not reassuring the leaders of tomorrow, the Black Duke has been reassuring the fishermen of today.

Unlike her sister Northumberland, Monmouth hasn't bagged any drug runners this deployment.

The bulk of her work has been 'approach and assist visits' to dhows and other small craft plying their trade in the Gulf.

Such visits are carried out by



pictures: la(phot) will haigh, hms monmouth



the frigate's 'blue' (RN) boarding team, consisting of volunteers from the ship's company, in conjunction with the 'green' (RM) boarding team from 43 Commando.

The teams discuss the challenges faced by the small boats operating in the region and are often able to learn the sort of invaluable grass roots information that the ship's sophisticated sensors are unable to detect.

"Over the course of an average day we'll conduct between five and 20 'approach and assist' visits to fishing and trading dhows of various sizes," explains Lt Chris Marsden, the Black Duke's boarding officer (and also her deputy logistics officer).

"The boats' crews are generally pleased to see us and we are often able to help out by providing them with supplies and information ranging from deteriorating weather conditions to the latest cricket scores!

"In return they are able to provide us with details of any suspicious activity in the area, which we can then act upon."

The Gulf is classed as an operational theatre – which means the crew are in defence watches (six hours on, six hours off).

That is pretty demanding. Physically demanding if you're one of the boarding team, toiling in the very sticky engine room compartments, or on your feet for hours on end on the bridge or upper deck guns.

Mentally demanding if you're in the ops room. Yes it's air conditioned. Yes, it's quite a calm atmosphere.

But staring at banks of computer displays, each showing unique information which, to the untrained eye, is a jumble of letters, numbers and lines, for six hours at a time is mentally draining.

After six hours it's time for the watch change and a seamless handover of information occurs quietly and effectively to maintain constant surveillance and preparedness around the clock.

But not for much longer, for the Black Duke is on her way home.

She'll be back in the bosom of Devonport Naval Base shortly – in time to celebrate her 20th year of service on May 20.





● HMS Edinburgh returns to Portsmouth after her final deployment
Picture: LA(Phot) Gaz Weatherston

Edinburgh closes another chapter

THE sun shines on the righteous – and after ten days of gloom on the south coast it shone brilliantly on an early spring morn for HMS Edinburgh.

Britain's last Type 42 destroyer completed her final deployment by sailing into Portsmouth after six months patrolling the Atlantic.

In doing so she brought the curtain down on nearly 40 years of service – and sacrifice – on operations around the globe by a class of warship which earned the honoured title 'the fighting 42s'.

For Edinburgh, her final tour of duty was a routine stint around the North and South Atlantic, adding the final few thousand miles to an odometer which has just short of 800,000 miles on the clock.

She arrived with a flourish. Some suitably Scottish music courtesy of the Band of HM Royal Marines – just about audible over the cheers of the several hundred family members and friends on South Railway Jetty – and jets of water from the tugs helping Edinburgh into port.

The Fortress of the Sea carried out maritime security operations around the Falklands and South Georgia, and supported counter drugs efforts off West Africa, and flew the flag for Blighty in South

Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas, including a final port of call in New York.

"Returning home after a long period of operations is always a special event and, as the ship's company is reunited with families and friends after six months away, they can reflect on a job well done and take some well-deserved leave," said the destroyer's final Commanding Officer, Cdr Nick Borbone.

"However, as this also marks the end of the operational life of the Type 42 destroyer, this deployment has been particularly poignant for all of us on board.

"I am extremely proud of the way the team in Edinburgh has, through sheer commitment and dedication, upheld the reputation that this exalted class has earned over the past four decades, and also upheld the reputation of the Royal Navy."

Media get air day preview

PLANNERS at Yeovilton were unveiling their plans for this year's Air Day to the media as *Navy News* went to press.

Apart from the Royal Navy's finest – including Lynx, Merlin and the legendary Fairey Swordfish – visitors to the spectacular show, on July 13, can expect to see the Red Arrows, the Royal Jordanian Falcons display team and a Swiss Air Force F/A-18C Hornet, amongst others. See www.royalnavy.mod.uk/yeovilton-airday for further details.



Central role for military at funeral of Lady Thatcher

MORE than 700 members of the Armed Forces took part in ceremonies associated with the funeral of former Prime Minister Baroness Thatcher.

Whether ranged along the route of the funeral procession, lining the steps of St Paul's Cathedral or bearing the coffin itself, members of all three Services were represented in prominent roles.

That was particularly so for two members of the ten-strong bearer party, which was made up of men from units and stations with particular links to the Falklands Conflict in 1982.

The two Naval Service representatives, at the front of the party, were AB Thomas Baker, of RN Air Station Culdrose, and Cpl John Caulfield RM, of 40 Commando, pictured above by PO(Phot) Owen

Cooban.

Baroness Thatcher's coffin was moved by hearse from the Palace of Westminster to the Church of St Clement Danes, where it was transferred to a gun carriage of the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery.

From there, accompanied by a Royal Marines Band, the cortege passed eastwards along Strand, Fleet Street and Ludgate Hill to St Paul's, with bands from the three Services – including a second from the Royal Marines – playing alongside route-liners.

Six further members of the Naval Service joined six each from the Army and RAF, and Chelsea Pensioners – members of the Royal Hospital, where Baroness Thatcher's ashes will be laid to rest alongside those of her husband Denis in the hospital grounds.

Warriors clash by land, sea and air

'EXERCISE' does not seem quite adequate when trying to sum up Joint Warrior.

'Exercise' might give the impression of going through the motions, a dry run, a bloodless, pale imitation of the real thing.

That is not how it seems to those in the thick of it all.

Those sailors at action stations, preparing to fight off an air attack as they battle high seas and raging winds.

Those commandos tumbling out of the back of a Hercules a few hundred feet above an old RAF range in the south-west corner of Scotland.

Those highly-trained sonar specialists doing their best to pinpoint a dangerous submarine on the loose as their ship pitches and tosses around them.

The Naval Service brought an impressive range of kit and personnel to Scotland for the war games under the watchful eye of Commander UK Task Group Cdre Paddy McAlpine and his staff.

From Type 45 destroyer HMS Diamond and assault ship HMS Bulwark to veteran minehunters HM Ships Brocklesby, Hurworth, Pembroke and Grimsby, from ship's flight Merlins to Jungle Sea Kings, and a force of Royal Marines, it would be an impressive undertaking if it were simply a dark blue venture.

But add the RAF and Army to the mix, plus various troops,



● Jungle Sea Kings ferry Royal Marines of 42 Commando ashore from HMS Illustrious for an early-morning live fire exercise
Picture: PO(Phot) Ray Jones

aircraft and ships from a dozen more nations – Canada, Poland, Netherlands, France, Germany, USA, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Belgium and Brazil – and you have a maritime force of more than 40 ships and four submarines in Scottish waters.

They were joined, *inter alia*, by substantial elements of 3

Commando Brigade RM, Dutch marines, the French Foreign Legion, the Charles de Gaulle's air group and P3 Orions to name a few – around 12,500 men and women in all.

Joint Warrior swept from aerial ranges in the North Sea to the Pentland Firth, Cape Wrath, down through the Outer Hebrides, Firth

of Clyde and into the Solway Firth.

As *Navy News* went to press Royal Marines were staging an assault at Cape Wrath, backed by gunfire from HM Ships Diamond and Westminster, while more assaults were pressed home further south.

See next month's *Navy News* for comprehensive coverage.



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An Echo of the longest battle



VETERANS of the longest and most bitter struggle the nation has endured at sea joined HMS Echo in Liverpool last month to start the countdown for Battle of the Atlantic 70th anniversary commemorations.

Fresh from gathering data in the Irish Sea, the survey ship sailed up the Mersey to help launch this month's events.

Liverpool will be the focal point of five days of events – the final of three cities to host national commemorations.

Guests of honour at the launch were merchant sailors Alec Owens and Albert Owings, both 89, who described their awful experiences to underscore the terrible nature of the struggle.

The Atlantic battle – waged from the first day of WW2 to the last – cost the lives of 30,000 men in the Merchant Navy; one in six became a casualty.

"It was a dangerous time and I was lucky, very lucky," said Mr Owings. "U-boats were sinking ships faster than we could build them."

"The Battle of the Atlantic was of vital importance as so many of our supplies came from America, including many thousands of soldiers. If we hadn't won, I think we'd be speaking German now."

Rear Admiral Chris Hockley, Flag Officer Regional Forces, who is overseeing this May's commemorative events, says as well as remembering past sacrifices, the anniversary is intended to remind Britons of the importance of the sea.

"The message that the Royal Navy is keen to make sure everyone understands is that the sea is our fundamental and strategic lifeline – as it was so important in the Battle of the Atlantic," he said.

Events in Liverpool take place over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend (May 24-28), where up to 25 Royal Navy and international warships will gather.

The main commemorations will be Sunday May 26, with a Cathedral service, a march through the city by current Naval and Merchant naval personnel as well as veterans, and a flypast from a Royal Navy Historic Flight Fairey Swordfish – one of the aircraft which was the mainstay in the struggle against the U-boat.

Other events will be held in London (May 8-13) and Derry-Londonderry (May 10-12), both of which will be attended by Royal Navy warships.

Specific details are still being confirmed; for more precise information – and much more concerning the Battle of the Atlantic then and now – visit the Royal Navy's dedicated website www.royalnavy.mod.uk/boa

Picture: Sgt Barry Pope RLC



The first and the last

UNDER a sullen sky more suited to their native Somerset, the men of 40 Commando salute as the White Ensign is lowered for the final time at HMS Price in Helmand.

This is an historic moment in over a decade's operations in Afghanistan – for this is the end of a mission involving some 14,000 Royal Marines, from the first weeks of the War on Terror back in 2001, through Operation Jacana and seven of the 17 Operation Herrick tours of duty.

It is a mission which has cost the lives of 61 Royal Marines alone.

The Norton Manor men were the very first green berets into Afghanistan in the autumn of 2001, just weeks after the September 11 atrocities.

They secured Bagram airfield and went on to patrol the streets of Kabul.

And in April 2013, 40 was the very last commando unit to serve there.

Over the Afghan winter of 2012-13, the White Ensign and 40's own Globe and Laurel standard has flown over Main Operating Base Price (renamed HMS in honour of the Royals'

Senior Service roots) in Nahr-e Saraj.

The lowering of 40 Cdo's standards at Price was a moment for all in the Corps – and beyond – to reflect on achievements and sacrifices.

Green berets have been awarded nearly 200 honours for their acts of bravery and distinguished service in Afghanistan, including a George Cross, seven Distinguished Service Orders and ten awards of the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross, including one posthumously.

In a personal message, outgoing First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope told the Royal Marines they had been "a key part of the Afghanistan effort since the UK committed to the region in 2001 and I would like to thank them for serving their country so valiantly, showing determination, commitment and courage."

"It has not been easy – with the many successes there have also been a number of sacrifices."

"Our thoughts and continued support are with those who were injured and their families and we will never forget those who paid the ultimate sacrifice."

"The seminal contribution made by the Royal Marines has undeniably helped the Afghan Army strengthen its capability and with that brought greater stability

to the region."

This final tour of duty demanded the ultimate sacrifice from one Royal – 27-year-old David O'Connor from Havant, killed in October – as well as two soldiers from the Gurkhas attached to 40's battlegroup: L/Cpl Siddhanta Kunwar and Lt Edward Drummond-Baxter, killed by someone in the uniform of an Afghan policeman.

Such sacrifices – and those by men who had gone before them – had not been in vain, 40 Commando's Commanding Officer Lt Col Matt Jackson told his men, praising their "absolutely exemplary" efforts.

He continued: "Working together over the winter, we have given the Afghan Army and the Afghan police the confidence in their own abilities to operate together."

"More importantly, we have given them the belief that they can operate independently from us; they now know that they are good enough to face down any future challenges that lie ahead."

"This is in no small measure due to the sacrifice made not just by the 61 Royal Marines who have lost their lives in this campaign, but by all Service personnel."

His words were echoed by his Chief-of-Staff, Maj Karl Gray.

"We have sadly lost many outstanding marines and soldiers during this campaign and, although only a small comfort to the families of the bereaved or injured, I can honestly say that these tragic losses have not been in vain," he said.

"Everyone who has served here has made a difference, not only in Afghanistan but also to the security of the UK by preventing Afghanistan being a haven for terrorists."

In 40's 12-year presence in Afghanistan its mission has progressed from one of fighting the Taliban and suppressing the insurgency to training and mentoring Afghan police and soldiers in preparation for the transfer of power to native forces.

In the past year, the number of UK bases across Helmand has reduced from 80 to 12 as they are handed over to Afghan forces or dismantled, such as 40's Patrol Base Clifton, now Camp Eagle in the hands of local security forces.

"The hard work of 40 Commando Royal Marines in Afghanistan over the winter has led to impressive progress in the capabilities of Afghan forces as they take on security responsibility, with decreasing

levels of assistance from UK and ISAF forces," Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said of the end of 40's tour of duty.

"The courage of the Royal Marines, and indeed all of our Armed Forces who have served in Afghanistan over the past decade, has been truly outstanding. Their commitment has made sure that transition of security to Afghan control is deliverable by the time we end our combat operations in December 2014."

As for HMS Price – now MOB Price under Army command in the shape of 1st Battalion Royal Regiment of Fusiliers – it too is expected to be transferred to the Afghans in due course.

Although this is the formal end of the Royal Marines' presence in Afghanistan, some commandos will remain serving in Afghanistan on an individual basis, working alongside their colleagues from other Services to train and mentor Afghan forces. In addition, there's still a permanent RN presence at Camp Bastion in the form of the eye-in-the-sky Sea Kings of 857 NAS and, for the next few weeks, the Lynx of 847 NAS.

There will be a chance to show your appreciation for 40 Commando on May 16 at a medals parade through the heart of Taunton, just down the road from Norton Manor camp.

Final F35 prototype airborne

THE third and final of the Navy's prototype next-generation jump jets has taken to the skies of Texas for the first time.

ZM137 is the last demonstration model of the F35 Lightning II to be ordered by the UK and will be used to train pilots and maintainers to fly, fight and look after the hi-tech aircraft.

The prototype lifted off from the tarmac at Naval Air Station Fort Worth in Texas – next to the huge Lockheed Martin works which builds the stealth fighter – with the company's chief F35 test pilot Alan Norman at the controls.

After a series of further test flights and checks by both Lockheed and the MOD, the trials variant will join its two older sisters, ZM135 and ZM136, at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida; they were handed over to the UK last year.

Around a dozen Fleet Air Arm and RAF maintainers are working at Eglin, plus pilots Lt Cdr Ian Tidball and Sqn Leader Frankie Buchler.

The latter recently became the first British military pilot to fly an F35 after undergoing conversion training with the US Marines Fighter Attack Training Squadron (VMFAT-501).

Lt Cdr Tidball, a veteran Sea Harrier pilot with 1,300 hours in the cockpit of the legendary jump jet, was due to become the first full Fleet Air Arm aviator flying the jet as we were going to press.

Two RNR reservists in their 'day jobs' as test pilots have flown the F35 – Cdr Simon Hargreaves and Lt Cdr Peter 'Wizzer' Wilson.

Once training at Eglin is completed – probably next year – the British team is due to decamp from Florida to Edwards Air Force Base in California where, having learned how to fly the F35, they carry out operational tests to prepare it for front-line service.

The FAA and RAF are due to start receiving front-line F35s in 2016.

When not deployed with HMS Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales, the jets will be based at RAF Marham, near King's Lynn, the MOD has decided.

Work will be carried out to determine the precise investment needed at the air base to support this fifth-generation fighter – two generations ahead of the Harrier, and one ahead of the Tornados currently based at Marham.

The F35 is due to be operational at Marham from 2018 – the same year the Lightning will begin trials with HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Around 60 qualified fast jet pilots in the RN and RAF will be needed to support the Queen Elizabeth initially when she enters service towards the end of the decade.

Ta-ta to RN SAR

MORE than six decades of Royal Navy Search and Rescue duties will come to an end by early 2016 as a civilian firm takes over.

Bristow Helicopters will run the lifesaving service jointly provided by the RAF-RN and Coastguard from 2015 in a ten-year £1.6bn deal.

Fleet Air Arm Search and Rescue duties – currently performed by 771 NAS at Culdrose and HMS Gannet in Prestwick – will be phased out by the time the Sea King Mk5 is retired in March 2016.

In their place, helicopter rescues will be carried out by Bristow from ten bases around the UK: Sikorsky S92s at Stornoway and Sumburgh, and new bases at Newquay, Caernarfon and Humberside airports; AgustaWestland AW189 helicopters will fly out of Lee-on-the-Solent, Prestwick, and new bases at St Athan, Inverness and Manston airports.

Making the announcement – in the 60th anniversary year of Navy Search and Rescue missions – Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin paid tribute to FAA and RAF crews who risked their lives on a daily basis so others might live.

"The service they have provided has been exemplary and the country owes them all an enormous debt of gratitude," he told fellow MPs.

"The decision to cease military involvement in search and rescue in the UK was not made lightly. But with the Sea King nearing its 40th year of service, the time has come to change the way the service is provided and the aircraft used."

Mr McLoughlin said Bristow had been selected thanks to its long-standing experience of search and rescue provision in the UK: over the past three dozen years its helicopters have flown more than 15,000 missions around these islands and rescued over 7,000 people.

The original reorganisation of search and rescue provision under consortium Soteria was shelved by the government in 2010. It began looking again at the future of the lifesaving mission in the autumn of 2011.

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THIS is a sight not seen in more than 40 years.

This is HMS Kent berthed in the port of Tarabulus, Tripoli – the first Royal Navy frigate to do so since before the Gaddafi era.

The Portsmouth-based Type 23 paid a short goodwill visit to the Libyan capital as she was making her way east to take up the fight against piracy in the Indian Ocean.

Kent spent three days in the port, hosting official receptions, a press conference, representatives of UK trade and industry, Libyan politicians, officials and civic groups.

On the civilian side, the aim is to foster good relations with this fledgling republic; on the military side, the goal is to forge long-standing relations with the country's armed forces.

Kent isn't the first RN ship to call on Tripoli since the fall of Colonel Gaddafi

– that trail was blazed by survey ship Echo last summer – but this was much more of a formal affair, and the first by a RN warship, rather than hydrographic vessel.

Despite the African heat (30°C), Kent's footballers hit the pitch to take on the Libyan Navy.

The visitors triumphed 5-3 and now have a trophy back aboard the Type 23 to mark the occasion, courtesy of their hosts.

As well as hosting official events, Kent's ship's company had the rare chance to sample the sights of Libya past and present (currently, the country is not recommended as a tourist destination by the Foreign and Commonwealth office).

The highlights were a trip along the coast to Al Khums and the Roman ruins of Leptis Magna and Tripoli's medina (or

old town) – the largest such quarter in any North African country.

"It was great to see the old quarter of Tripoli – all I'd seen previously were pictures of the more modern city," said Kent's marine engineer officer Lt Cdr Tom Canty.

"The people we met were incredibly friendly and it was a chance to stock up with all-important rugs, fridge magnets and postcards."

Kent's CO Cdr Ben Ripley took away similar impressions from his ship's short visit. Throughout, he says, his men and women "were humbled by their generosity of spirit."

Tripoli was the frigate's second port of call since departing the Solent in late March.

The first was Gibraltar, after a 1,000-mile passage when Kent flashed up

her 30mm automatic cannon, machine-guns and Miniguns for some gunnery practice. The barrels glowed red for 13 hours during a series of continuous live-firing shoots in the Bay of Biscay.

On the Rock, she took on board supplies and fuel and also hosted the ship's first Commanding Officer, Cdre John Clink, who took the Type 23 from commissioning through to her maiden deployment to the Gulf a dozen years ago. He's now Commander of British Forces in Gibraltar.

For some of the ship's company, like AB(SC) Zoe Sandover, Gib was their first overseas run ashore.

"I'm lucky to have been offered the opportunity so soon after joining just over a year ago. To go to Gibraltar – even for a short time – was a great experience and I look forward to future stops along the way," the junior rating said.

Picture: LA(Phot) Joel Rouse, HMS Kent



Great Scott returns

SHE sailed three days before Christmas. And three days after Easter, survey ship HMS Scott returned from her stint surveying the waters of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

During her three months the hydrographic vessel was away from her home base of Plymouth, she collected data from over 7,200 square miles of the sea floor – an area almost three times the size of Devon.

It was the first time in more than four years that she'd ventured east of Suez and marks her return to a traditional survey cycle: summer in the Middle East,

winter in the Atlantic. Scott's CO Cdr Pat Mowatt praised his ship's company and stressed the ongoing need for surveying the poorly-known seabed – in all parts of the ocean:

"The ship's company have done a good job, but the work continues. We are back for only a short time in Plymouth before we deploy again – this time to the North Atlantic to continue deep water surveying during the calmer waters of the spring and summer.

"The Royal Navy's deep water ships and deep-working submarines operate worldwide all the year round and therefore we need to continue our important work ensuring the charts which use our data are up to date and provide safe navigation during their vital deployments and exercises."

The data gathered on this latest deployment will be fed back to the UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton, which publishes charts used by the Royal Navy and many of the world's mariners.

Scott herself is now undergoing a spot of maintenance on systems and machinery before deploying to the North Atlantic after a visit to her affiliated city of Swansea.

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Ciao to Naples



● The NATO flag is lowered for the last time and (below) the unique setting for the Naples headquarters



POSING for the camera for a final group shot, these are some of the last Royal Navy personnel assigned to NATO's maritime headquarters in Naples – an HQ now closed, bringing to an end six decades of naval history.

The Allied Maritime Command Naples, a mainstay of peacekeeping operations since the early 1970s, and with a lineage going back to the days of Mountbatten in the '50s, ceased to be at the end of March.

With a reorganisation of the alliance's various headquarters, a single naval HQ at Northwood has been formed.

It stood up at the end of last year, allowing for four months of transition and the transfer of Naples' duties to the Middlesex headquarters, such as Active Endeavour – the fight against crime, terrorism, drug and people trafficking in the Mediterranean.

With the transfer and transition complete, it was time to haul down flags and formally close down the base.

The final commander of the Naples command centre, Italian Vice Admiral Rinaldo Veri, addressed personnel from 19 NATO nations present, including Britons; RN personnel have served at the headquarters in its various guises throughout its lifespan.

"For over 60 years from the eastern shores of the African continent to the Strait of Gibraltar, from the Gulf of Sirte to the northern reaches of the Adriatic and all the water in between, NATO maritime forces on, under and above the sea have contributed immeasurably to the safety and security of the alliance and our partners," said Admiral Veri.

The closing ceremony was an occasion which moved the 17 final Senior Servicemen serving there,



● Fourteen of the final 17 RN personnel at Naples led by Rear Admiral Jon Westbrook (front row, centre)

ranging from leading hand to rear admiral.

"I've loved my time here. It's sad that somewhere with so much history is closing down," said LS(Sea) Steve McDonald.

Cdr Charlie Neve, head of the military co-operation branch, added: "NATO's 60 years of Maritime HQ presence in the Mediterranean has significantly increased and enhanced the levels of maritime cooperation with our non-NATO partners in the region."

"As NATO moves to 'net-centric' methods of maritime situation awareness, our partners' contributions to the overall security of the Mediterranean remain valuable tools which the new NATO HQ at Northwood will be able to fully utilise."

Although this is the end of Nisida and some RN personnel have returned to the UK, others have moved to Joint Force Command Naples.

The headquarters traces its history back to NATO HQ Allied Forces Mediterranean, opened in Malta in March 1953, led by Earl Mountbatten of Burma.

With Greece and Turkey joining the alliance and France, Italy and the UK already members, the Med became an integral part of NATO's defensive structure.

It moved to Italy in 1971 as HQ Allied Naval Forces Southern Europe, firstly in temporary accommodation, then to a permanent home on the island of Nisida – an inactive volcano with a flooded crater just west of Naples.

Since then the HQ has been at the heart of numerous NATO operations in the Middle Sea and around its shores:

- Sharp Guard – embargo operations against the former Yugoslavia from 1992-1996;
- Active Endeavour – counter-terrorism operations the length and breadth of the Mediterranean (2001 onwards);
- Allied Provider – a NATO task force provided close protection to World Food Programme chartered vessels delivered humanitarian aid to Somalia in 2008;
- Unified Protector in 2001 protecting civilians in Libya by enforcing an arms embargo and no-fly zone.

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Small stone, huge honour

HMS Protector honoured the dying wish of an old sailor by returning a stone to the grave of Britain's greatest 20th-Century explorer.

Seventy-six years after the small piece of granite was taken from the grave of Sir Ernest Shackleton, the crew of HMS Protector put it back in its rightful place.

In doing so, they upheld the wishes of Joseph Collis – the man who took the stone in 1937... and regretted it ever since.

On January 11 1937 the junior sailor was serving in his first ship, the cruiser HMS Ajax (later famous for her role in the Battle of the River Plate), when it anchored at Grytviken in South Georgia.

The crew went ashore to visit the whaling station, look around, and visit the last resting place of Sir Ernest Shackleton, buried in Grytviken cemetery overlooking King Edward Cove.

When they returned to the Ajax, which was carrying the Governor of the Falkland Islands on an inspection tour of South Georgia, young Joseph had a souvenir: some green granite.

Mr Collis died last November aged 95 and at his funeral his son Malcolm recounted his father's deep remorse at taking the stone – and made a promise to return it to its rightful owner.

Keen to ensure that he fulfilled the promise that he had made during his father's eulogy, he contacted the executive officer of the government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and asked for his assistance.

Touched by Joseph and Malcolm's story, the South Georgia officials were happy to assist and eventually the granite piece reached WO Andy Welch at HMS Collingwood, who was off to the South Atlantic to take up a post there.

He gave said stone to the first



● Capt Rhett Hatcher returns the small piece of granite to Shackleton's snow-covered grave in South Georgia, 76 years after Joseph Collis took it as a memento

Picture: LA(Phot) Arron Hoare, HMS Protector

Royal Navy ship bound for South Georgia, which just happened to be the Navy's Antarctic research and survey ship HMS Protector.

As part of her second year around the frozen continent, the Portsmouth-based icebreaker was carrying out survey work around the remote island, gathering hydrographic data and supporting ongoing environmental and conservation



work (more about that from HMS Clyde, see opposite).

It fell to her new Commanding Officer, Capt Rhett Hatcher, and the South Georgia Heritage Trust to replace the stone to its rightful place after an absence of more than 75 years, ending the stone's 8,000-mile journey and fulfilling a son's promise to his father.

"To know that the stone has finally returned to its rightful

place after 75 years is very fitting and I would like to thank the Royal Navy for helping my late father fulfil his long-held wish," said Mr Collis.

Capt Hatcher added: "Returning the stone to Shackleton's grave was an excellent finale to our period working with the Government of South Georgia and members of the South Georgia Heritage Trust."

"HMS Protector was pleased to be able to carry the stone on what was the last leg of its long journey."



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The Clyde-o-scope of Atlantic life

GOOD Friday, somewhere in the South Atlantic – and no Easter break for the front-line Fleet.

The Falklands' permanent patrol ship HMS Clyde takes on fuel from RFA Gold Rover to sustain her mission.

And while both the veteran tanker and the River-class warship are well used to these waters and the South Atlantic environment, Clyde has been hosting a few novices to the world of the RN's mission in the region recently.

She struck out into the open Atlantic to pay a routine visit to South Georgia, dropping off supplies and fisheries officials.

Her crew were also asked to carry out observations of the abandoned whaling stations at Leith and Stromness – just up the coast from the 'capital' Grytviken – when they were asked by the South Georgia Government to assist the Salvesen family.

Alastair Salvesen and his son George had been visiting South Georgia supporting an environmental project.

The Salvesens have links with the island which date back over a century and the start of the whaling industry – in which Christien Salvesen was then a leading name.

The firm was also pioneering in eco-philanthropy (it donated the first penguins to live and breed in a zoo anywhere in the world – Edinburgh), something the Salvesen family has continued long since it

quit whaling in the 1960s and moved into general shipping, transport and logistics.

The seas around South Georgia are now managed to promote recovery of its fish and whale stocks, while ashore the South Georgia Heritage Trust is trying to eradicate the island's rat population, with funding from Mr Salvesen (see page 16).

"It is something I care passionately about and I think it is important that we put something back to preserve the species that were originally there," he said.

Due to severe weather the Ernest Shackleton, a research ship for the British Antarctic Survey, was unable to sail in time to meet the air bridge that Alastair and his party were due to catch.

Clyde and her crew were happy to offer them passage back to the Falkland Islands.

Mr Salvesen is the largest farmer of rainbow trout in the UK and a member of the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers which is an affiliate of the Fishery Protection Squadron.

But this was his first taste of life aboard a River-class ship (Clyde's three slightly-smaller sisters, Tyne, Mersey and Severn, safeguard fishing stocks around the UK).

"It is surprising how much more than fishery patrols these ships and their crews are capable of!" he said after stepping ashore in the Falklands.

During the 800-mile journey, Clyde's crew were

able to introduce him to some mainstays of RN life, notably flight deck sports and uckers.

Once back in the Falklands, Clyde embarked some fish out of water: personnel from 1564 Search and Rescue Flight, 460 Port Troop and other units from Mount Pleasant.

The visitors joined in Falkland Sound by helicopter as part of a routine personnel transfer and stores drop, with virtually no wind and the sea as flat as a millpond (ie uncommon Falklands weather).

Shortly after the airmen and troops arrived, they were treated to the sight of a pod of about ten short-finned pilot whales surfacing not 20 metres from Clyde, followed swiftly by dozens of Commerson's dolphins.

"I have never been this close to a dolphin before, not even in an aquarium!" said Pte Faulkner. "It is hard to remember that they are wild animals when you see them so close to the ship."

The following day the guests got to see all aspects of daily life aboard Clyde: machinery and switchboard breakdown drills, watching officers of the watch conduct ship-handling, and receiving a brief on the navigation system, prompting the observation by Pte Owens of 460 Troop: "I wish the landing craft had a system that was that good."

LET Lawrence then oversaw his guests practise firefighting on the flight deck: "Handling a water wall that chucks out 40 tonnes of water an hour is no easy

task and the guys gave a good account of themselves."

After sunset the ship moved to the north of Falkland Sound to conduct a night-time training exercise. Moving out of the comparatively sheltered waters of the channel into the increasing South Atlantic swell made it an uncomfortable evening for some of the guests; one of the soldiers confessed to having been sick non-stop for nine hours.

The following morning, however, the weather was relatively benign and with virtually no swell, Clyde negotiated the narrow channel into Choiseul Sound, which separates the bulk of East Falkland from the peninsula of Lafonia.

Once the ship was safely in the Sound, training serials continued with a main machinery fire exercise; Clyde made use of her guests to bolster her first aid party, as well as 'boundary cooling' the fire to prevent it spreading from the confines of the engine room.

And that was three days at sea. Clyde returned to port and put her guests ashore.

"When you're not being sick it is really quite good fun!" Pte Faulkner told the sailors as he departed.

Clyde's Commanding Officer Lt Cdr Marcus Hember was delighted at the opportunity to show off what his patrol ship – and crew – can do: "It is really important to engage with the wider military community at all levels in order to foster awareness. These men were very keen – and a credit to their services. It was great to see them getting stuck in, and a pleasure to have them on board."



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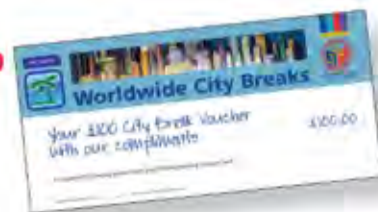
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The hard-worked killer

WHILE her modern-day namesake basks in the limelight in Portsmouth Naval Base as Britain's newest warship, 70 years ago this month the fifth Royal Navy vessel to bear the name Duncan was in the fight of her life.

Built as a flotilla leader, Duncan was one of nine D-class destroyers – whose names included Daring, Defender and Diamond, just like today – ordered in 1931.

And of those nine ships, Duncan would be one of only two of the Ds to survive WW2 – underlining the terrible toll the conflagration took on the Royal Navy.

The first years of her career epitomised the languid days of the Empire between the wars with stints in the Mediterranean, then on the China Station.

That halcyon period was rudely interrupted by the storm of war in the summer of 1937 as the Japanese invaded China.

By mid-August, the Japanese were bearing down on Shanghai. Duncan was among the force of international warships and liners which moved in to evacuate European nationals.

Duncan and sloop HMS Falmouth shuttled up and down the Whangpoo to Woosung, where liners waited to take the civilians to safety.

They did so under attack from Japanese guns – artillery and naval fire. An Associated Press correspondent marvelled at the stoicism of the British 'bluejackets' who calmly escorted and shepherded the terrified civilians through heavy rain to the waiting warships "with bombs falling on both sides of the Whangpoo River and shells screaming overhead".

When war came, Duncan was dispatched initially to the Med, spending the first three years of WW2 either in the Middle Sea, in Gibraltar, off Africa or on occasional escort duties to the UK.



She safeguarded military transports to Greece, supported Malta convoys, and the invasion of Madagascar in 1942.

As 1942 drew to a close, the decision was taken to convert her for duties in the North Atlantic.

Two of her gun turrets were ripped out (*the photograph, courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, shows her post-March 1940 – when her pennant number was changed from D99 to 199 – but pre-November 1942*); one was replaced by 'hedgehog', a multiple mortar launcher which propelled up to 24 small mortar bombs into the water, and the other by extra space for depth charges.

By April 1943, after a brief period of trials and work-up off Tobermory, the proving ground

of ships assigned to the Western Approaches, Duncan was ready to join the Atlantic battle with Cdr Peter Gretton – one of the Navy's legendary U-boat hunters – in command.

Convoy ONS5 from Britain to North America was the baptism of fire for the new-look Duncan.

Foul weather hampered the crossing such that the destroyer was reluctantly forced to break away early – and before any U-boats were sunk – because she was low on fuel.

In her one night of action, however, Duncan drove off attacks by four U-boats inside an hour.

She rejoined the fray ten days later to escort SC130 to the UK. It proved to be another pivotal convoy battle: not a single

merchantman was lost, but three U-boats were destroyed and a fourth damaged.

Duncan and HMS Snowflake claimed the destruction of U381, depth charged to destruction south of Greenland on May 21.

That autumn, in similarly cold waters off Iceland, another combined attack – this time Duncan was in company with HMS Vidette, with support from a Liberator bomber – finished off U274.

And a week later, U282 succumbed to a pummelling from Duncan, Sunflower and Vidette. Once again, not a single U-boatman survived.

Duncan's first six months in the Atlantic took a heavy toll of the ship – she needed a six-month

refit before returning to the line of battle.

Despite being assigned to the Western Approaches Command once more, the final year of the war never matched the intensity of April through to October 1943. Duncan only escorted four convoys in the final 12 months of the conflict.

Within five days of the war's end, it was decided the hard-worked destroyer was no longer needed; she was immediately placed in reserve. Come September 1945 she was struck from the list – although it would be four more years before she was broken up.

In all, the fifth HMS Duncan earned five battle honours and escorted more than 30 convoys during World War 2.



Spartivento 1940
Malta Convoys..... 1941
Mediterranean 1941
Atlantic 1941-45
Diego Suarez 1942

Class: D-class destroyer
Motto: *Secundis dubusque rectus* (Upright in prosperity and peril)

Pennant number: D99 (and from March 1940, 199)
Cost: circa £225,000 (around £12m today)
Affiliate: County of Angus
Builder: Portsmouth Dockyard
Laid down: September 3 1931

Launched: July 7 1932
Commissioned: April 5 1933
Sold: September 1945
Displacement: 1,400 tons
Length: 100m (329ft)
Beam: 10m (33ft)
Draught: 3.8m (12ft 6in)
Speed: 36kts
Range: Up to 5,870nm at 15 kts

Complement: 175
Propulsion: 2 x Parsons geared steam turbines generating 36,000shp
Armament: 4 x 4.7in Mk9 guns ('A' and 'Y' turrets removed in 1942), 1 x 3in anti-aircraft gun, 6 x Oerlikon 20mm anti-aircraft guns, 'Hedgehog' anti-submarine projector, 98 depth charges

Battle Honours
Facts and figures

IWM PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORIES

SEE, the Conqu'ring Hero Comes!

A murky late February day in 1944 and a welcome perhaps unlike any other in the Battle of the Atlantic for the 2nd Support Group – the Navy's No.1 U-boat killers.

Our final Atlantic-related dip into the Imperial War Museum's magnificent photographic archives takes us to Gladstone Dock, a vast man-made complex of locks and basins stretching for a good few miles along the right bank of the Mersey at Bootle.

Entering the docks at the head of the group, Her Majesty's Ship Starling, her loudspeakers blaring out Capt Frederic 'Johnnie' Walker's signature tune: *A-Hunting We Will Go*. Struggling to be heard amid the tumult, two bands.

The dockside was crammed with the men and women of the Western Approaches Command, cheering wildly. They'd strung out signal flags: **JOHNNIE WALKER STILL GOING STRONG**.

Waiting on the dockside, Walker's family – his wife Eileen, daughter Gillian (an Admiralty driver) and his son Nicolas, serving in Starling's sister HMS Woodcock – and First Lord of the Admiralty (the MP in charge of the Navy) Albert Victor Alexander.

The reason for the celebrations is provided by the official Ministry of Information caption: 'Atlantic battle record-breakers welcomed home. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr A V Alexander, welcomed home the 2nd Escort [sic] Group, commanded by Captain F J Walker, CB DSO and two Bars, RN, in HMS Starling, from its record-breaking U-boat hunt in which six enemy submarines were destroyed.' (The second bar was presented to Walker by Alexander that very day...).

The terse caption, of course, gives little insight into the drama of the group's patrol which found a rich hunting ground south-west of Ireland.

January 31: U952, depth charged by HMS Starling, Wild Goose and Maggie. Sunk with all hands.

February 9: U762, U238 and U734 – all depth charged, again without a single survivor.

February 11: U424 sunk by depth charges from Wild Goose and Woodpecker. No survivors.

February 19: U264, depth charged by Starling. All 52 men aboard saved.

Walker's only loss for what he called a "sock in the jaw for Dönitz" was HMS Woodpecker, torpedoed on February 20. She sank a week later – but not a man from her ship's company was killed.

For all the pomp and ceremony greeting his group's return, Walker eschewed personal adulation. Alexander may have hailed him as "our leading submarine ace", but Walker rejected such tags. "Please don't call me the ace U-boat killer – that formidable character is a thousand Jack Tars."

Certainly Walker possessed a finely-tuned weapon of war in his Support Group. But by 1943 and 1944 pretty much every ship in the Western Approaches Command was a well-oiled machine. Where Walker stood apart from his contemporaries was his mission. Standard instructions to convoy escorts were to ensure the merchant ships got through – "the safe and timely arrival of the convoy" mattered, and nothing else. Walker turned the orders on their head:

The object of the Second Support Group is to destroy U-boats, particularly those which menace our convoys.

Our job is to kill – and all officers must fully develop the spirit of vicious offensive. No matter how many convoys we may shepherd through in safety, we shall have failed unless we can slaughter U-boats. All energies must be bent to this end.

And kill U-boats Johnnie Walker did. No Royal Navy officer killed more in WW2. At least 20 U-boats were sunk either by Walker personally or by the groups he commanded.

But killing U-boats unfortunately killed Johnnie Walker. He suffered a fatal stroke in July 1944 aged 48. More than 1,000 people attended the funeral service at Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral before HMS Herperus, a battered Atlantic warrior, took Walker's body out to sea and committed it to the deep.

And for 2nd Support Group, the killing went on; eight more U-boats fell victim to Johnnie Walker's methods, if not Walker himself, before the war's end.

■ THIS photograph (A 22014) – 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.





1921-2011

You stood up for my rights.

Thank you.

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.**

If you've served and need help, support or advice The Royal British Legion are always there for you too. Call them on 08457 725 725 or visit britishlegion.org.uk

Shoulder to Shoulder
with all who serve



Reg. Charity No. 219279

Recognition past and present

WE'LL begin with the present – and personnel honoured from the sands of Helmand in the latest series of Operational Honours for deeds above and beyond in the line of duty.

Lt Cdr Al Nekrews defused a series of complex devices in Afghanistan over a 16-hour period, despite soaring temperatures and threat of attack – just one episode in a seven-month tour of duty in Afghanistan which earned the 40-year-old the *Queen's Gallantry Medal*.

The diver was the RN's first 'High Threat IED Operator' – experts who are trained to work on particularly complicated, sensitive devices; hitherto, it had been the preserve of the Army's bomb disposal teams.

Lt Cdr Nekrews led a four-man team in one of Helmand's most challenging districts, Nahr-e Saraj.

On May 25 last year, the team were dispatched to the scene of an explosion that had injured a British soldier.

They discovered what appeared to be a rug draped over barbed wire protecting a ditch.

"Inside the rug were two devices configured in an unusual manner," said Lt Cdr Nekrews. "My number two, LD Craig Waghorn, was responsible for operating the robot, but due to the harsh operating conditions the remote actions were extremely challenging.

"When Craig had done all he could with the robot I had to make a manual approach to defuse the devices.

"It took 16 hours to defuse it



● (L-r) Lt Cdr Al Nekrews relaxes after a demanding IED patrol; Capt Jim Higham enjoys some rock climbing in Afghanistan; and Sgt Tony Russell tends to a rescued fisherman in the back of a 771 NAS Sea King during a SAR sortie

over two days – we got around three hours sleep and then were back out again. I was completely absorbed in what I was doing, but it was extremely high pressure. It's just me at the target end – it was reaching about 40°C and we were under constant threat of further explosive devices or attacks by insurgents."

The bomb disposal expert continues: "We regularly operated under accurate enemy fire while defusing devices. So we were expecting some kind of attack. The Army's infantry did an exceptional job of protecting us throughout the tour but it can still feel rather hairy."

Once the devices were defused, Lt Cdr Nekrews handed them over for intelligence-gathering purposes.

A clearance diver by trade, Lt Cdr Nekrews is delighted to have paved the way for others in his branch – and to receive the QGM, news of which he toasted with a glass of bubbly.

"I am really proud of what I have achieved – and my family are obviously all delighted as well. I should also praise the efforts of my team, LD Waghorn and Sgt Craig Simpson – I always trusted their judgement and it was invaluable to have that support."

Also in Afghanistan, Capt Jim Higham receives the OBE for his efforts in helping to forge closer links with the country's government.

He led the International Security Assistance Force's Key Leader Engagement Team in Kabul, where he helped corral

the efforts of the international community in building more effective links with President Hamid Karzai and the Afghan Government.

"My role was to ensure that the president, key members of his government and religious leaders understood what it was we were trying to do for them and why," he explained.

"We worked hard to build effective relationships between key ISAF Commanders and influential members of Afghan society and these links proved vital in helping to overcome the inevitable setbacks that both sides face when fighting a complex counter insurgency."

A weapon engineer officer by trade, more recently Capt Higham has helped to develop strategies

to counter rocket attacks and roadside bombs in Iraq and Afghanistan and spent 18 months as the military assistant to the Minister for the Armed Forces.

Of his 12 month deployment with ISAF he added: "It was an incredible job and allowed me a privileged insight into how this fascinating country is starting to turn itself around after decades of conflict."

Royal Marine aircrewman Sgt Tony Russell earned the *George Medal* for saving the lives of two yachtsmen in July 2011.

Their boat, *Andriette*, was over 80 miles off the Scilly Isles, foundering in heavy seas with no steering and an unserviceable engine.

Rescue 193 of 771 NAS at Culdrose was scrambled. It found

the *Andriette* pitching and rolling violently as it was lashed by high winds, mountainous seas and rain squalls.

Despite the hazards, Sgt Russell volunteered to go down to the liferaft to pluck the sailors to safety.

He was immediately engulfed by the Atlantic and lost communications with the *Sea King*.

The green beret succeeded in hauling himself into the raft and then secured the first survivor with a strop so he could be winched into the relative safety of the helicopter.

The raft then capsized and the remaining survivor was lost from sight. With little regard for his own safety, Sgt Russell went back down and, despite the buffeting from the waves, was able to swim to the upturned raft.

He dived under it and surfaced in an air pocket – but his comrades in the helicopter were unable to see what was going on and decided to winch him up. That caused the raft to flip over – luckily with the other yachtsman inside.

Sgt Russell was entangled in ropes and had to cut himself free – which he did, before swimming back to the remaining yachtsman, placing him in the strop, and completing the rescue.

"It was an extremely difficult and tense rescue, the whole crew onboard the helicopter worked well as a team in what was technically an extremely difficult rescue," said the NCO, who's now serving with CHF at Yeovilton.

"At this point my training and professionalism just kicked in, I was their last chance, their last hope."

'You are a group of heroes, thank you'

AND recognition past.

Last month we brought you news of the first Arctic Star being presented – fittingly to Cdr Eddie Grenfell, the sailor synonymous with the campaign for the belated medal.

A few hours later and Prime Minister David Cameron was making similar presentations to some 40 veterans and their families at No.10 before attending a reception for Russian convoy survivors aboard HMS Belfast – herself a veteran of those awful journeys 70 years ago.

"I can't think of a group of people that I am more proud to have in Number 10 Downing Street," the premier told the Arctic veterans.

"I am only sorry that it has taken 70 years to get to here and to say thank you for what you did.

"You were involved in the most important struggle of the last 100 years when you were supplying one of our allies in the battle to defeat Hitler and to defeat fascism in Europe.

"You are a group of heroes, thank you."

Survivors of those Russian convoys complained – rightly – that the Atlantic Star did not truly reflect the mission or the dangers faced delivering aid to the USSR between 1941 and 1945.

Four million tons of supplies – including over 5,000 tanks and 7,000 aircraft for use by Soviet forces fighting against the Nazi armies on the Eastern Front – were carried to North Russia through temperatures as low as minus 30°C.

Late last year, Mr Cameron announced that a medal would be struck posthaste after years of pressure from convoy veterans – distinguishable at memorial parades by white berets to represent the ice and snow of the Arctic.

And posthaste, the Royal Mint produced said medals (as well as a clasp for Bomber Command veterans, who were also unduly snubbed in the immediate aftermath of WW2).

Gavin Elliott, the Mint's Commemorative Coin Head of Production, said his colleagues



● Premier David Cameron chats with Arctic convoy veterans (l-r) Jock Dempster, Lt Cdr Dick Dykes and Frank Bond aboard HMS Belfast at a reception following presentation of their Arctic Stars

Picture: Imperial War Museum

were treating each Arctic Star struck with great care.

His team produces up to 40,000 medals a year for the MOD, such as the Afghanistan Service award – upholding a tradition of campaign medals going back to Waterloo in 1815.

"Each medal is individual – it's important that the quality of the medal is right. Each one is handled with great care and attention.

"We take great pride in what we are doing. We're very conscious that this is very important to those who will be receiving the medal."

Although nearly seven decades



have passed since the last WW2 campaign medals were produced, Mr Elliott said the bronze awards had not changed.

He explained: "They are made in exactly the same way as the 1939-1945 stars. Bronze is our traditional metal and we are producing these new stars in the traditional manner."

It is thought between 200 and 400 sailors – all now in their late 80s at their youngest – survive from the four-year-long campaign, a mission Churchill acknowledged was "the worst journey in the world", and are eligible for the Arctic Star.

Among the oldest recipients of

the Arctic Star is Admiral of the Fleet Sir Edward Ashmore – First Sea Lord in the mid-70s and, briefly, Chief of the Defence Staff in the Queen's Silver Jubilee year.

It was for his duties as First Lieutenant of HMS Middleton, escorting convoys to Archangel in 1942, that the latest medal to add to a glittering array of decorations and awards was presented.

Cdr Alec Parry from Navy Headquarters on Whale Island presented the 93-year-old admiral with the medal at the latter's home in Froxfield, near Marlborough.

Admiral Sir Edward has close links with Russia. His mother, Tamara, grew up in St Petersburg and he proposed to his future wife by telegram while in Archangel during a break from convoy duties in 1942. The couple celebrated their platinum wedding anniversary 70 years later on 11



Remembered on canvas too

THE plight of the Arctic Convoys and veterans prompted one Fleet Air Arm veteran to put paint to canvas in their honour.

Robert Bearman, who served as an armourer between 1945 and 1947, hopes to find a worthy home for this depiction of a Russian convoy under Luftwaffe attack.

"It doesn't matter how many books and the like you see and read – you cannot really imagine what these convoys were like, so I thought a visual record would help bring to light why these heroes deserve the recognition and a medal for their bravery," he said.

Mr Bearman has produced more than 125 paintings of aircraft, warships and submarines over the years which have been signed by some legendary veterans, such as Tuskegee Airmen (the black fighter pilots with the distinctive red-tailed aircraft who escorted US bombers over Europe in WW2), and a Falklands artwork which Lady Thatcher put her name to.

The works of the 85-year-old amateur artist can be found in the Frankton Museum in Bordeaux, where there's a painting of HMS Tuna – the submarine which dropped the 'Cockleshell Heroes' at the mouth of the Gironde – signed by her skipper Dick Raikes.

Mr Bearman would now like to donate his painting – measuring 24in (61cms) wide by 18in (41cms) to an association or suitable museum.

He can be contacted through the Navy News offices.

December 2012.

■ You can download an application form at www.veterans-uk.info/arctic_star_index.htm, write to

The Arctic Star, MOD Medal Office, Imjin Barracks, Innsworth, Gloucester, GL3 1HW, or freephone 0800 085 3600.



● AET Oxley falls to earth above Perris airfield in Southern California

Perris in the spring

A GROUP of Naval personnel have really fallen for their new sporting interest.

Hardly surprising when they learned their new skills in one of the most popular skydiving centres in the world, which just happens to be in Southern California.

The 21 Royal Navy and Royal Marines ratings and officers, along with four Army instructors and two civilians, based themselves at Skydive Perris, which describes itself as “California’s only skydiving resort center.”

There they learned the art of free-fall parachuting, making the most of the area’s Mediterranean-type climate to clock up over 800 drops.

“Perris Valley boasts some of the best skydiving training facilities in the world, including an on-site vertical wind tunnel,” said AET George Salmon, the leader and organiser of the expedition.

“The aim of the exercise was to introduce new personnel into the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Sports Parachute Association (RNRMSPA) and to provide challenging outdoor training for Service personnel.”

But for the complete beginners in the group, their first experience of skydiving was undertaken indoors, just a few feet from *terra firma*, before moving on to the real thing.

“Being accommodated on the drop zone meant we were in the perfect location to get into the true sportsman’s spirit that skydiving is all about,” said George.

“Perris has a great working relationship with the British



Armed Forces which allowed us to carry out an excellent routine on a daily basis.

“Starting by watching the sun rise over the dew-covered grass with the shadow of the 100ft-tall wind tunnel casting around the car park, we got on with our morning ground-training drills and as soon as that first call was made to get manifested on a flight we got going with our jump programme.”

“On completion of a day’s training we would all sit around in a group by the bar and pool and debrief on the day’s activities – and, of course, watch the bloopers from throughout the day and let the banter begin.”

The 16-day expedition’s primary objective was to get the beginners through their ground training and consolidation jumps in accordance with British Parachute Association requirements.

Also high on the list of objectives

was to allow intermediate students to develop new skills while perfecting their techniques.

And underpinning Exercise Iron Eagle 2013 was the enduring adventurous training ethos of controlled exposure to risk and the development of a range of personal attributes, including leadership, teamwork, physical fitness, moral and physical courage.

Skydive Perris uses relatively large aircraft – including Twin Otters and a Skyvan – allowing larger groups to jump together as well as getting more people into the air at one time, and skydivers can start their descent from as high as 12,500ft above the desert.

All targets were met, with more than 800 skydives being completed – the group spent more than 13 hours in freefall in total.

“There was, of course, also some stand-down time for everyone to absorb the local culture and take a break from the rigorous training routine,” said George, an engineer with 814 Naval Air Squadron.

“The weekend provided a great opportunity to visit the USS Midway, a US Navy aircraft carrier museum ship in San Diego.

“The visit really put into perspective just how alike our allied armed forces are, and that we are all made of the same metal.”

George organised the trip with the help of the Black Knights Royal Artillery parachute display team, and supporting funding was provided by a number of sources including the Sports Lottery, AT Fund, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, Redeveloping Lives and the RN Air Station Culdrose Welfare Fund.



● Lt Daisy Adams, Capt Steven Ward and Cpl Stuart Story in a hybrid, combining belly-down and vertical skydiving



● AET McCann is happy with this drop over Skydive Perris

● Mne Potter enjoys a Level 7 descent, putting all the skills he has learned into practice

● The Iron Eagle team line up for a group photograph at a quiet spot on the Perris Valley airfield



Dockyard patronage extended

THE Prince of Wales has agreed to take on the patronage of the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust for a five-year term.

Admiral Sir Ian Garnett, Chairman of the Trust, said: "This underscores our reputation as a nationally-important heritage destination with a strong future."

Prince Charles became patron of No1 Smithery – then known as the National Museums at Chatham project – in April 2006, and that patronage extended further in July 2011 to take in the Command of the Oceans project, which is centred around the find of the ship's timbers of the Namur.

For more details of the trust and activities at the historic dockyard in Kent, see www.thedockyard.co.uk

Monumental development

An HISTORICAL group has announced the discovery in Corsica of an important item of Nelson memorabilia.

The 1805 Club, which seeks to find and preserve monuments of the Royal Navy from the Georgian era, said that they had identified a marble memorial commissioned by Capt Horatio Nelson in 1794 in Corsica to fellow officer Lt James Moutray.

Nelson commissioned only one other memorial, to Capt Edward Parker in 1801 in Deal, Kent.

The Moutray memorial, which will now be conserved in partnership with the Corsican authorities, is also a silent witness to one of the great unrequited loves of Nelson's life – James's mother Mary, the wife of Capt John Moutray, former commissioner of the naval dockyard in Antigua.

Clubz drives sport in heat of Bahrain

LIFE at the UK Maritime Component Command (UKMCC) in Bahrain can be, in military parlance, 'crunchy'.

Managing the Royal Navy's contribution to maritime security in the Middle East – warships, submarines, aircraft and personnel – means a 24-hour watchkeeping routine and a demanding battle rhythm.

Diaries full of crucial meetings, operational requirements and the harsh environment mean that some personnel can find it difficult to make the most of the many personal development (PDev) opportunities that exist.

One individual who is (literally) driving the British contingent on is the resident Leading Physical Trainer (LPT) or 'Clubz'.

That is because LPT Danny Kerr, the current incumbent, has a primary role as a force protection driver to the UKMCC Commander, Cdre Simon Ancona.

Outside his main duties, LPT Kerr is the physical training instructor to all Bahrain-based RN personnel, which includes the Forward Support Unit, minehunters and any visiting ships and submarines.

Part of Danny's remit is to ensure there is ample opportunity for people to engage in competitive sport as well as other personal development activities – all of which contributes to maintaining morale.

As this has to be done around driving jobs, prior planning, good

diary management and effective communication are all essential – skills that are drummed into PTIs during their training at HMS Temeraire in Portsmouth, home of the PT Branch.

Facilities at the American Naval Support Activity Bahrain, where UKMCC is one of many 'tenants', are varied and of a high standard – the centre is home to more than 6,000 military and civilian personnel from the United States and allied nations.

UKMCC have held a number of notable sporting and adventurous training events, including weekly football fixtures against local teams, touch rugby, spinning sessions, TRX (suspension training) classes, X-Fit, Royal Yachting Association sailing courses, SCUBA diving, cricket matches, softball tournaments, team marathons and table tennis.

Danny said: "One of the many events that stood out was the HMS Atherstone vs USS Gladiator Half Iron Man competition.

"It consisted of six competitors from each ship completing a 1.2-mile swim, a 56-mile bike ride and a 13.1 mile run for charity.

"The heat was very severe on the days of the event, and it was refreshing to see so much support coming from all nationalities within the base.

"The total amount raised for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) was £900, and for the local Bahrain charity approximately £3,710."

Another highlight on the UKMCC sporting calendar was the nine-a-side football league and



● LPT Danny Kerr, UKMCC's resident Clubz

knockout competition which ran from September to December last year.

Ten teams from the four corners of the earth entered, with games played twice a week in the relentless heat.

The UKMCC team – captained by Clubz himself – stormed their way to the final and emerged as competition winners.

Clubz led from the front by winning the Golden Boot as the highest overall goalscorer.

Danny said: "The games we played were all highly competitive as everybody wanted to win.

"The standard of football was pretty high, and playing in that heat sometimes felt unbearable.

"We worked very hard, and it was a proud moment for all involved when we lifted the trophy – UKMCC dominated world football in Bahrain!"

A UKMCC team was also entered into the famous Bahrain Team Marathon.

This involved 156 teams, with 16 runners per team, completing a 3km leg as temperatures reached a cool 39°C.

The route included the Bahrain Formula 1 motor racing circuit and areas in and around the desert.

UK runners were spurred along by the hundreds of supporters, and UKMCC finished in an impressive 56th place in a field which included international-standard runners, running clubs and local schools.

Some very good times were set – and again Clubz showed his mettle, being beaten on his leg by only seven other runners – a fact that UKMCC are still reminded of on a daily basis...

HMS Sultan exercises freedom

TWO hundred sailors from HMS Sultan exercised the freedom of the Borough of Gosport by marching through the town.

The parade – the first in eight years – marked Gosport Borough Council's recent updating of the original freedom status, which was granted to the engineering training school in 1974.

The change reflects the base's expansion over the years; it now houses separate schools for marine and air engineering.

Cdre Mark Slawson, HMS Sultan's Commanding Officer, said: "I am delighted that Gosport Borough and HMS Sultan were able to celebrate the close links that the town and the establishment enjoy.

"The celebration of the Freedom of the Borough is an event that we had been looking forward to for some time, and it was pleasing to see so many people lining the streets."

The parade, led by HMS Sultan's volunteer band, culminated with Cdre Slawson and the Mayor of Gosport, Cllr Richard Dickson, taking the salute outside the town hall.

The parade started at Falkland Gardens and made its way to the parade ground at Timespace via the Esplanade de Royan for a 20-minute service.

On completion the sailors marched along the Esplanade and through the High Street, finishing at David Lawrence Square.

South Georgia wildlife safeguarded

IT is likely that the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary send more people to South Georgia than any other organisation.

One such visitor was Capt Roger Robinson-Brown, a retired RFA captain, who said: "In 35 years at sea and on holidays South Georgia is, and will always be for me, the number one place on earth I have visited."

Part of the attraction of the South Atlantic island is the wildlife – but that has been threatened by the migrating rat population, introduced by the whaling fleets, to other areas of the territory.

When Capt Robinson-Brown retired ("many years ago") he became involved with the South Georgia Heritage Trust, a charity set up to preserve the "extraordinary wildlife of South Georgia."

And that charity is involved in a large-scale rat eradication programme, based on the distribution of

bait by helicopter – the blue bait used is designed to be not seen or eaten by birds.

The removal of rats from the equation should mean that chicks of native birds will once again thrive.

Trials were funded by a \$1.2m private donation from the United States, while former whaling company Salvases, which moved out of the industry in the early 1960s and is now a major transport and logistics organisation, have funded the continuation of the programme.

Areas of the main island where helicopter baiting would not be effective – such as the former whaling stations of Husvik, Stromness and Leith around Stromness Bay – are baited by hand.

For more details of the trust and to see the newsletter of the South Georgia Habitat Restoration Project see www.sght.org

HMS COLLINGWOOD

OPEN DAY

featuring The RNRMC Field Gun Competition

Saturday
1 June 2013
0930 - 1700

Tickets	Adult	OAP	Family (2+3)
Advanced	£6.00	£4.00	£17.00
On the day	£8.00	£5.00	£21.00

Advanced tickets: Gosport & Fareham Tourist Information Offices and News Offices
www.royalnavy.mod.uk/Collingwood-Openday

*Free Buses
*Free Fun Fair



● The BFBS Op Ice Cream van alongside HMS Bulwark last summer, when the assault ship was the Command and Control HQ for the maritime security operation for the Olympic and Paralympic sailing regattas off Weymouth in Dorset
Picture: LA(Phot) Joel Rouse

Cold comfort from BFBS

THE British Forces Broadcasting Service will be handing out 'vanilla-flavoured morale' again this year as Operation Ice Cream gets back on the road.

For the fourth year running any unit can call on the desert-camouflaged ice cream van to hand out free cones at events for Service families.

Those with troops deployed on Operation Herrick will get top priority.

The Officer Commanding Op Ice Cream, Chris Pratt, said: "2012 was an amazing year for providing our 'vanilla-flavoured morale' to Forces families and to troops deployed on Op Olympics.

"It was our busiest year yet and the Op Ice Cream team is looking forward to dishing out lots of smiles again throughout 2013."

Op Ice Cream can cater for events with up to 1,000 people and normally stays for two hours, depending on the location.

While the van is on a base, there's even the option

of recording a message or dedication for a loved one on BFBS Radio.

Since 2010, the vehicle – made especially for BFBS by old family firm Whitby Morrison, the world's largest manufacturer of ice-cream vans – has covered more than 50,000 miles in the UK and across Germany, and the team has served up over 90,000 cones.

During London 2012, Op Ice Cream completed a special mission, as 4,500 free ice creams were served to troops working at the Olympic Games.

If you would like to book Op Ice Cream for an event, contact Chris at Chris.Pratt@bfbs.com

BFBS entered a 'new era of broadcasting' last month as the organisation embarked on a new ten-year contract to deliver TV and radio programmes to the Armed Forces.

Full details of platforms and programming for BFBS, which has been broadcasting to the Forces for 70 years, can be found at www.bfbs.com



Commemorate your Ship, Squadron, Commando, Establishment, Association or loved one with a lasting paving stone dedication.



The National Memorial Arboretum is the UK's year-round home of Remembrance. It is a tranquil living memorial at the heart of our nation; a place where service and sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Situated prominently within the Arboretum, **Heroes' Square** will be a major part of the new visitor development and as such will play host to the Armistice Day Service and other major events of commemoration throughout the year. You are invited to dedicate one of the beautiful, hardwearing Yorkstone Scoutmoor stones that will be engraved and laid in the square before it opens in 2015.

Today, you could become a part of this special place by dedicating a paving stone in **Heroes' Square**.

There are two sizes to choose from:

- A large stone dedicated to your Ship, Squadron, Commando, Establishment or Association and engraved with your crest or logo (*main image*).
- A smaller stone bearing the name of a family member or friend who has served their country (*inset image*).

A limited number of paving stones are now available on a first-come-first-served basis, so make sure you don't miss this unique opportunity. **To create your own lasting dedication, complete and return the form below today.**



Find out more today at
www.thenma.org.uk/pavings

The management of the NMA reserves the right to refuse any application they feel inappropriate. Images shown here are artists impressions. The National Memorial Arboretum Company Limited is part of The Royal British Legion family of charities. Registered Office: Croxall Road, Alrewas, Staffordshire, DE13 7AR Registered in England - Company No: 2927443 VAT No: 806 6197 19 Charity No: 1043992

My dedication. Limited availability – please respond today

My details. (Please print)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____

Email: _____

I wish to dedicate a paving stone to my Ship, Squadron, Commando, Establishment or Association. Price £3,000

Name of Ship/Squadron/Commando/Establishment/Association: _____

Founding or significant dates: _____

I can supply a logo or crest **YES** **NO**

- Please make cheques payable to **NMA Appeal**
- Please complete this form and send it to: **National Memorial Arboretum, Croxall Road, Alrewas, Staffordshire DE13 7AR**

I wish to dedicate a paving stone in memory of an individual.

Price **£600**

First name (or nickname): _____

Initial: _____

Surname: _____

Rank: _____

Post nominals: _____

Military Unit if not RN: _____

Years of birth/death: _____





'A privilege to ser

THE torch of Naval leadership has changed hands as Admiral Sir George Zambellas took over as the nation's most senior sailor – and his predecessor as First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, left the Service after an illustrious 43-year career.

In the great cabin of HMS Victory – where Nelson planned the triumph at Trafalgar over two centuries ago – Admiral Stanhope formally handed over the chains of office to his successor, his flag was lowered and that of Admiral Zambellas was raised.

The highly-charged ceremony aboard the 18th-Century man o'war, which serves as the flagship of the First Sea Lord, followed an emotional final morning in the Royal Navy for Admiral Stanhope.

After discussions with his US and French counterparts – American Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert and Amiral Bernard Rogel – and the Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir David Richards, Admiral Stanhope made a farewell address to staff at the Royal Navy's headquarters on Whale Island in Portsmouth.

He told those mustered around Leach Building's atrium he believed the RN had "a fantastic future", just as it had provided him with a fantastic career.

He continued: "The Royal Navy's sense of purpose and strength of ethos have made for a hugely varied and rewarding 43 years, during which I have enjoyed being a part of an organisation that makes a positive difference around the world.

"Throughout, it has been a privilege to serve with and an honour to lead such brilliant people – sailors, marines and civil servants."

After the valedictory, Admiral



● A wave from Admiral Stanhope as HMS Smiter sails past the ships of the Portsmouth Flotilla
Picture: LA(Phot) Gaz Weatherston

and Lady Stanhope joined HMS Smiter for a farewell sail past of warships of the Portsmouth Flotilla, who manned ship, doffed caps and gave three cheers – the Navy's time-honoured salute.

Admiral Stanhope has been at the helm of the Royal Navy since July 2009. In a career which began in 1970, he commanded two submarines (HMS Orpheus and Splendid), the frigate London and carrier Illustrious.

His successor as First Sea Lord joined the Navy in 1980, served as a helicopter pilot, then commanded HM Ships Cattistock, Chatham and Argyll, before taking charge of the UK's amphibious forces, helping to introduce assault ships Albion and Bulwark into service. Most recently he held the second most senior post in the RN, Fleet Commander.

Paying tribute to his predecessor, Admiral Zambellas said: "We owe Sir Mark a huge debt of gratitude for his unstinting professionalism, his strategic vision and leadership of the Royal Navy.

"He has worked tirelessly for

the Service for over 40 years and leaves a legacy of a highly-capable, efficient and globally-deployable future Fleet. It is a privilege to succeed him."

Aboard HMS Victory, Admiral Stanhope was surrounded by what he called his "maritime family": his own family, the heads of the French and US Navies and the Royal Navy's three most senior officers – incoming First Sea Lord, the Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Phillip Jones and Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral David Steel.

Britain's outgoing ranking sailor sat at Nelson's table in the great cabin of his flagship and formally handed over command to Admiral Zambellas.

It was the first time Victory has hosted the ceremony – until last year she was the flagship of the Second Sea Lord. Today she flies the standard of the First Sea Lord, the Cross of St George.

The last act of Admiral Stanhope's Naval career took place on Victory's quarterdeck.

After inspecting a Guard of

Honour formed of ratings drawn from the Portsmouth Flotilla, the admiral saluted as his flag was lowered and the strains of *Auld Lang Syne*, performed by the Band of HM Royal Marines, echoed around the Victory amphitheatre.

With the flag hauled down, it was carefully folded, then presented to the outgoing First Sea Lord by 25-year-old AB 'Jude' Law, of Victory's ship's company.

As Admiral and Lady Stanhope departed the ship, senior officers from the three navies and their staffs stood on the side of the quarterdeck to give a final wave.

And then, at the stroke of 1pm, a new Cross of St George was hoisted on Victory. With the flag billowing in the stiff easterly breeze, HMS Victory's Commanding Officer Lt Cdr Rod Strathern could report to Admiral Zambellas: *Your flag flies from Victory's main mast, Sir.*

Admiral Sir George set about his new task immediately with a personal message to all in the Naval Service.

He expects his sailors and Royal Marines to show "quiet confidence in our absolute authority as the maritime experts – explaining clearly, simply and honestly what we need to get the job done."

The admiral stresses that key to the RN's success in coming years will be its ability to work ever more closely with its sister Forces in the UK, and the nation's allies.

"We are stronger in partnership than when acting in isolation. Seeking partnerships should be instinctive and part of our ethos. I have no patience for petty, inter-Service rivalries."

He also urges his men and women not to "get bogged down in management process".

He continues: "I want to see new ideas which focus on our readiness for the fight and which excite the people I lead.

"If those ideas have to be radical, then so be it."

Remembering the Redrats

SAILORS past and present paused on March 22 to remember the crews of two Sea Kings killed in the opening hours of the Iraq campaign ten years ago.

Most tenth anniversary commemorations of the beginning of Operation Telic were low-key affairs, but services marking the loss of Redrat 34 and Redrat 35 – the callsigns of two 'bagger' Sea Kings which collided on patrol off the Al Faw peninsula – drew a sizeable number of veterans, families and friends.

All seven souls aboard the two helicopters – six from A Flight, 849 Naval Air Squadron, and one US Navy exchange officer – were killed instantly.

Their airborne surveillance and control helicopters had been monitoring enemy movements in the air and on the ground, in the process supporting the assault on Al Faw by Royal Marines of 42 Commando.

In near-arctic conditions at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire – forcing part of the service into the chapel – invited guests and squadron comrades from 2003 read tributes to the crews of Redrat 34 and 35.

The Revs Simon Springett, padre at 849's Culdrose base in 2003, and Tudor Botwood, chaplain on HMS Ark Royal, from which the two ill-fated helicopters flew, led the act of worship and recalled the shock felt in Cornwall and aboard the carrier. Vice Admiral Alan Massey, Ark's captain at the time, shared his personal thoughts and how the ship coped with the tragedy.

The climax of proceedings was the dedication of an 'anniversary bench' to the Redrat crews who never returned (*the inscription on the memorial plaque can be seen below*).

Lt Cdr Dave Crimmen, senior pilot of A Flight at the time of the collision, remembers the fateful day. "We were a close-knit group – then all of a sudden there was this accident. It's important to remember the men who died. It's an emotional time for a lot of us who were serving at the time."

He and 14 fellow 849 personnel past and present cycled over 400 miles from the squadron's Cornish base to raise money for Royal Navy and Royal Marines charities. They pedalled their way across eight counties, through rain, snow and gale-force winds to reach the arboretum in time for the anniversary memorial service.

While the wider 849 family shivered in Staffordshire, Telic veterans gathered aboard HMS Monmouth on patrol in the Gulf to pay their respects.

■ The frigate's weapon engineer officer Lt Cdr Steve Gilmore served as the combat system engineer aboard Ark Royal;

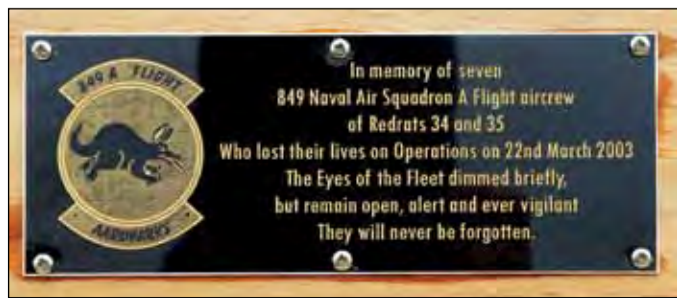
■ PO(SC) Paul 'Stavros' Statham served as a stores accountant aboard HMS Chatham as she carried out Naval Gunfire Support in support of landed troops, maintaining station on the gunline close to the Iraqi coast;

■ POET(WE) Will Barbrook was an OM(MW) aboard HMS Ramsey helping to clear the Shatt al-Arab waterway to allow aid into Umm Qsar, and was later involved in recovery of the lost airmen's bodies from the crash area;

■ LS(AWW) Antony 'Buster' Brown served as part of the force protection team on supply ship RFA Fort Victoria, which also supported the Merlins of 814 NAS;

■ and AB Stuart 'Mac' Mackenzie served in RFA Argus as an air engineer supporting the Sea Kings of 820 NAS.

As a wreath was cast into Gulf waters by Cdr Gordon Ruddock, Monmouth's Commanding Officer, Lt Cdr Gilmore paid tribute: "To our fallen shipmates from 849 A Flight – and to others lost in the Iraq conflict – may we say: Rest in peace in the knowledge that your professionalism, dedication and ultimate sacrifice will never go unrecognised or be forgotten." Pictures: LA(Phot) Dean Nixon, FRPU West



'The best quality men and w

THE Navy News team has, as you would hope, a pretty good overview of what the Royal Navy is doing and where.

HMS Monmouth? In the Gulf and due to be relieved any day by HMS Dragon on her maiden deployment.

Argyll? Nudging her way down the west coast of Africa.

40 Commando? Returning from Afghanistan.

But all 85-plus ships, submarines and Royal Fleet Auxiliaries? The 15 Fleet Air Arm Squadrons? All the Royal Marines units?

Nope. A precise picture, no, that's beyond our intellect.

For that you have to go to the Royal Navy's number two, Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Philip Jones.

"I am expected to have a minute-by-minute handle on the deployed Fleet, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I know how long they've been deployed for, how long they've got left, how well they are doing," he explains.

A test. Chiddingfold?

Sailed earlier this week after being in refit since 2011.

Montrose?

BOST.

And so on.

"On any one day we have about 40 ships, submarines, naval air squadrons and Royal Marines units away from their bases; some deployed, some on exercises, some training. That's about 8,000 people out of 30,000, and 40 units out of about 110," the Admiral explains.

"There is no other navy which works its ships as hard, not even the French or the Americans. They do not have as many commitments in as many parts of the world for the size of the fleets they have compared to the Royal Navy."

Worked especially hard in recent years have been our Trafalgar-class submarines; a nine or ten-month deployment east of Suez is the



● HMS Shoreham's ship's company salute as Admiral Jones visits the Gulf-based minehunter during a major defence exhibition in Abu Dhabi earlier this year
Picture: LA(Phot) Maxine Davies, HMS Northumberland

norm, not to mention the boats' other commitments.

Still waiting in the wings are the A-boats, Astute and Ambush; the former has undergone more than three years of trials, the latter over six months' worth.

With two of the T-boats already paid off and Tireless due out of service later this year, the big question: *when will the Astutes take their place in the line?*

"The Astutes are on the cusp of being operational. Astute herself is on her second hot weather trials. Once those are done and she's gone through operational sea training, she'll be available for operations by the year's end.

"Ambush is coming up fast behind her – after her own hot weather trials and operational sea training. She too will be ready for operations in early 2014.

"It's rather like the Type 45s –

there comes a balancing point. In the space of about a year we've gone from no 45s deploying, to four of them on operations and all six delivered to Portsmouth."

The other 'big ticket item' looming on the RN horizon is HMS Queen Elizabeth, rapidly approaching completion in her dry dock in Rosyth.

"It's very easy to be seduced by the Boy's Own nature of Queen Elizabeth. With 37,000 tonnes already in the dock she's bigger than anything we have," says the Fleet Commander.

"She's a tribute to our shipbuilding industry, sections the size of a Type 45 destroyer built in different parts of the UK, moved to Rosyth where they fit together with millimetric precision."

He continues: "But people will be our biggest challenge. By the middle of next year she'll have a

crew of 150 and 400 or so when she starts sea trials in 2016.

"Many of them will come from HMS Illustrious because many of the skills are the same – although we'll require fewer marine engineers and a larger air department."

A facility at Collingwood which can simulate the carrier's navigation, air traffic control, communications and mission planning, logistical support and engineering maintenance systems is being used to train future crew, and also to unearth any potential problems.

Aircraft handlers, air engineers, flight control teams scheduling fast jet operations and fighter controllers are already under training in the USA.

Around 60 qualified fast jet pilots in the RN and RAF will be needed to support Queen

've, an honour to lead' Back at sea after a year and a half



MORE than a year after she was last on open water, minehunter HMS Chiddingfold is back at sea after a mid-life upgrade.

The Portsmouth-based ship had been out of action for 572 days (that's 18 months and three weeks).

Since disappearing from the scene back in 2011, when she returned from a three-and-a-half year stint in the Gulf, the Cheery Chid has received Caterpillar C32 diesel engines to replace her old Napier Deltics... essentially creating a new class of Hunt.

The replacement engines are more efficient, reliable and significantly reduce emissions.

Her machinery monitoring systems and computers have been given a thorough revamp too, obsolete equipment has been stripped out and all 750 tons of her have received a general spruce up.

The ship's company moved back onboard in November, since when they've been readying themselves and all of Chid's new systems for her first sea date in over 18 months at the end of March.

"I am immensely proud of the effort my crew have put in over the last 572 days to get the ship to this point," said Lt Cdr Richard Rees, Chid's CO.

"Our upgrades mean we will soon be 'Leading the Hunt' with our increased serviceability and reliability."

Chid's operations officer Lt Tom Wall added: "The ship has been transformed in the past few months, from little more than a shell in dry dock to the seagoing warship we see today and it has been a real pleasure to be a part of this transformation."

women I have known'

Elizabeth when she enters service.

The RAF is putting the bulk of its future F35 aircrew through Typhoons; the Fleet Air Arm has around a dozen pilots flying F18s with the US military. Several of each will soon be training on the F35.

IF THE carrier project is a huge national undertaking, so too the interest in it. Few things prove as popular on the Royal Navy's website as updates reflecting Queen Elizabeth's construction or the F35 jets which will fly off her deck.

But while some of the British public might be excited by the prospect of the largest warships ever to hoist the White Ensign, they have little concept of what the carriers will do.

"People have this extraordinary inability to acknowledge that we are an island. This 'sea blindness' is not something unique to Britain - I find it's shared by Ireland, by France, even by the USA.

"The Royal Navy has a strong reputation. People like the Navy, they want a Navy - their sentiments for the Navy are strong but their understanding of what the Navy does is quite low."

At least part of this is perhaps down to RN reticence to blow its own trumpet.

But for the past decade almost all media attention on British military operations has been focused on Iraq and Afghanistan.

Even when 50 per cent of the personnel on the ground in Helmand were drawn from the Senior Service, says the Admiral, "if you're wearing combat fatigues, people assume: Army."

With the mission to Helmand drawing to a close, however, there is the potential for greater exposure of what the Royal Navy does.

"There will be something of a void for Defence following Afghanistan," says Admiral Jones. "I hope that there will be a greater focus on our operations and we can champion more of what we do than perhaps we think we can.

"When Afghanistan ends, we will barely break stride, we will be doing much the same thing as a Navy as we are doing now, and as we have been doing for the past few years."

The crucible of effort will remain east of Suez, as it has been for most of the past 30 or so years, to protect the nation's supply lines.

It's a classic mission from the days of Nelson, Jellicoe and Beatty, Noble and Horton, and into the Cold War. The theatres of operations shift, the technology changes, but not the overall goal.

"People don't realise how fine the supply thread is - oil, natural gas, general cargo," Admiral Jones explains.

But he adds: "We are not just protecting distant waters, choke points like the Horn of Africa, we're also keeping our own waters safe."

"Pretty much every week we are arresting illegal trawlers, supporting counter-terrorism operations against suspicious vessels, keeping our ports open."

HOME waters are not only perhaps the least understood of the RN's operations, but also the most challenging.

A ship, squadron or Royal Marines unit deploying around the globe knows the start and end date of its mission. By and large, those dates are generally fixed.

But in the UK, when undergoing training, exercising, when on call to be the Fleet Ready Escort or the Lead Commando Group, there is much less certainty. Programmes change with much greater regularity.

The Admiral calls it 'churn' - and he's striving to tackle it.

"There is much more 'churn' in the UK than when a ship is deployed," he explains. "That's something we are trying to deal with. Our important task is to make life back in the UK more bearable."

Churn is, of course, bad. It's bad for morale. It's less of an issue right now given the country's straitened financial situation, but

once the economy picks up...

"I look at ways of alleviating the burden on the ships and people," says Admiral Jones. "Every time we come up with a theory, we go out into the Fleet and test it."

"If people are not getting from the Navy what they joined it for, retention will be an issue."

Right now, however, the Fleet Commander is buoyed by the sailors and marines he has met since taking the reins at the end of November.

"Over a six-month period I hope to have visited everyone," he says. "That's not a burden, it's a fantastic part of the job. And the sense that I get from those visits is that people love what they are doing. It brings you alive to what we are doing."

He joined the Royal Navy in the late '70s, a Fleet geared almost exclusively to the demands of the Cold War.

Thirty-five years later, and after service in the Falklands War, operations in the Adriatic in the '90s, commands of HM Ships Beaver and Coventry and the UK's Amphibious Task Group, the Admiral finds a Navy "smaller than I would have expected it to be" thanks to the Age of Austerity.

"But I'm gratified by its quality. What I do find now is that we have a better Navy. It's a Navy which is much more operationally focused. It is much more professionally focused. It is better trained, and the quality of the men and women is the best I've ever known."

"I have never known a group of young sailors and officers who have thought more carefully about the career they have chosen."

"They are of a higher quality than I have ever seen: highly-skilled, highly-attuned people. And our junior rates don't just want to know what they are doing, they want to know *why* they are doing it."

"Ship for ship, submarine for submarine, man for man and woman for woman, it is a better Navy and a better-motivated Navy."

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ROYAL NAVY. ROYAL MARINES. MERCHANT SEAFARERS. FISHERMEN.



Dragon

SO what did you do in your first month at work?

Probably had an induction. Endured death by PowerPoint explaining the organisation.

Sorted out things like pay, email addresses.

Were 'treated' to the staff canteen.

Felt a bit lost, but by the end of those four weeks were starting to find your feet.

HMS Dragon can beat that. And how.

In the first four weeks of her maiden deployment she

- was serenaded out of harbour by the skirl of bagpipes (yes we know they're Scottish, not Welsh...)
- of fighter controller Lt Francis Heritage, standing on the bridge roof performing *The Skye Boat Song*;
- let rip with every weapon aboard with the exception of her Sea Viper missiles;
- honed fire-fighting and flood drills;
- practised the boarding operations which will be the mainstay of her six months in the Gulf;
- paid a whistle-stop visit to Gibraltar – 22 hours, long enough for some sport, the infamous Rock Race, and perhaps a run ashore;
- flew around the snow-capped mountains of Crete (well, her Lynx did);
- the ship sailed through Suez for the first time, while her crew rowed the length of the great maritime artery.

Yes, if you're going to deploy, start at a high tempo and never let up.

Barely had the sights of Gunwharf, the Spinnaker and Round Towers faded from view and the ship was out of earshot than the gunnery teams were getting ready to make a din with some live-firing training.

Flashed up (in order) were the 4.5in crowd-pleaser, then the 30mm automatic cannon, a series of Phalanx shoots by the automated Gatling gun spewing out up to 3,000 20mm rounds a minute at incoming foe (in this instance an air-towed target), before things went manual as the upper deck gunners aimed with their Miniguns (Phalanx sans automation) and GPMGs at killer tomato inflatable targets.

"It's really good to train with such a powerful weapon system," said 21-year-old AB(EW) Andrew Bennett from Southampton.

"I was an aimer on a Type 42 but this ship is really stable so the system is really effective.

"This is my third deployment, but the first time I've headed East. I'm really looking forward to seeing the sights and undertaking some adventurous training in between patrols."

Meanwhile in the ops room... The warfare team used the latest generation of 'gaming' technology to overlay intricate scenarios on to the real world picture seen on their hi-tech displays – in essence replicating a Thursday War, but without the physical jets and ships to play with.

And for good measure the Royal Navy/Royal Marines boarding team (the latter courtesy of 43 Commando Fleet Protection Group) were leaping out of the side of Dragon's Lynx.

"Fast roping is an exhilarating experience – a great adrenalin rush combined with a sense of achievement after each exercise," said 36-year-old PO(AWT) Damian Demaine from Halifax.

"We have to do five jumps from at least 20 feet every two months and I'm really looking forward to working with the Royal Marines and the rest of the Navy team to build on all the training we've done so far."

All this action pretty much devoured every minute of the 1,000-mile passage to the Rock. As this was HMS Dragon's first overseas visit there was a lot to pack in while the ship conducted a sovereignty patrol, replenished fuel and ammunition.

The destroyer fielded rugby, football and netball teams against local sides, coming out on top in the rugby (a "Welsh win" in a similar fashion to the Six Nations) but was defeated in the other two matches.

The overnight stay also allowed the early risers a chance to undertake the Rock Run, attended by almost a quarter of the ship's company (including one in a Dragon costume...). Only the fact that the Type 45 was sailing two hours later prevented more from taking on the mountain.

Once HMS Dragon slipped her lines, her Lynx was actioned for a "sovereignty fly past", followed by an overfly of the ship with the legendary Rock of Gibraltar as a backdrop – providing just one memorable image of many in the coming six months.

Next stop, Souda Bay in Crete, just a few days later – but for a slightly longer stay.

Crete is traditionally the final port of call for any east-of-Suez-

bound RN ship, thanks to its NATO ranges.

The NATO base on the eastern Mediterranean island is home to a specialist training complex for boarding teams and FORACS (FORces sensors and weapons Accuracy Check Site) which 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 ships have been using the ranges at Souda Bay since 1984 – indeed they couldn't give a FORACS for any other test site if they are sailing through Suez...

While the sensors were being checked, the destroyer's Lynx made the short flight to Chania airfield, home to the Hellenic Air Force's 115 Fighter Wing (and international flights – it's a joint civilian/military airport).

In what was mostly glorious weather for the week, the Mk8 Lynx, call sign Draco – which is, as we all know, Latin for 'dragon' and the name of a starry constellation... although younger readers will probably think more of Harry Potter's foe – experienced flying across the full beauty of the island, from the crystal blue Mediterranean waters, up the scenic tree-lined gorges to peaks tipped by snow.

The aircrew were pushed to the limit in the 8,000ft mountains, traversing razor sharp ridges and dealing with the 'curious' local winds, benign 10kt breezes on one side of the mountain quickly became 50kt monsters on the other.

"The flying was incredible, a bit bumpy at times but it's training that you just can't get back home in the UK," said Flight Observer Lt Laura Cambrook.

She and her fellow WAFUs squeezed in just shy of 18 hours in four days.

With skills fully honed, Draco and her crew returned to D35 ready for the onward journey through Suez and beyond.

"It gave us a great opportunity to fine tune our flying skills and the hosting from the Greek Air Force was second-to-none," said Flight Commander Lt Cdr Paul Ellerton, of 815 Naval Air Squadron.

"It's a well-trodden path for Flights passing through the Med – but it's still great training, especially for my first-tour aircrew who gained valuable experience from the planning through to the execution of the detachment."

And so to Suez. While D35 was powering south, down the 100 miles of the man-made waterway



n's din



linking the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, the screams of 'Maximum effort' echoed around the destroyer's hangar.

LPT 'Quinny' Quinn (the Royal Marines must have nicknamed him...), Dragon's resident club-swinging, was urging another exhausted, sweat-soaked sailor to dig that little bit deeper and smash through the 2,000-metre barrier on a rowing machine.

Quinny's Team Dragon were the latest bunch of RN 'athletes' attempting to row the entire length of the Suez Canal in the fastest possible time.

Eighty-one Dragons – a mix of ship's company and Royal Marines who are the sword of her boarding party – split the 100-mile/162km length of the canal into 2km 'snippets'.

They even paid at least £2 per head for the privilege, thus raising over £200 for the ship's charities – although it was clear that many were rowing for pride and bragging rights in the mess decks.

So pride of place to Mne Andrew Coan, the fastest man on Dragon, posting an impressive time of 6m 54s.

The quickest female rower – AB(CIS) Sophia Burns – was 1m 5s behind. All together, those 81 athletes posted a combined time of 10h 37m.

The words of AB Burns probably sum up the feelings of all 81 rowers: "I'm used to rowing short distances at speed but the heat in the hangar just sucked the energy out of me."

And so on into the Red Sea. Smiting pirates. Strangling the Hashish Highway. Stopping people-trafficking. Protecting shipping lanes and the lifeblood of our nation – oil, natural gas, consumers goods.

Now how's that PowerPoint presentation going?...

pictures: la(phot) dave jenkins, hms dragon



Coffee and bishcuits raise cash

TALENTED chefs on HMS Daring have helped to serve up a donation of more than £4,000 to the RNRMC.

During their seven-month deployment in support of Op Kipion in the Gulf during 2012, HMS Daring's Padre, Rev Charles Brunzon and his team worked tirelessly to raise money for the charity.

Much of the cash raised was achieved through weekly 'StarClubz and Bishcuits' coffee mornings which brightened up the 139 days spent at sea.

LPT Radford (Clubz) and Rev Brunzon (Bish) brewed premium coffee and hot chocolate, while the chefs created crowd-pleasers that included freshly-baked cakes, pastries and traditional scones with jam and cream.

During their 34,643-mile deployment, Daring visited 12 different countries on her mission to protect international shipping and work with regional partners.

The tasty treats on Saturday standees proved to be irresistible and LCH Window took great pleasure in presenting Hilary Jukes, the RNRMC charity co-ordinator, with a cheque for £4061.13.

LCH Window said: "It is always a pleasure to be able to give something back to an organisation which provides so much support to us when we are away."

The RNRMC has also made a 'minor amenity grant' of £5,000 to HMS Daring from the Naval Service Amenity Fund, a subsidiary fund of the RNRMC, to help with the upholstering of seats in the Junior Rates Mess, along with a display plaque.

CONTACT RNRMC

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023 9254 8289

Join us on Facebook: search for 'Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity'

www.rnrmc.org.uk



Picture: LA(Phot) Will Haigh

Blistering run

A ROYAL Navy petty officer has completed the challenge of running 1,000 miles around the blistering hot upper deck of HMS Monmouth, raising thousands of pounds for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

PO James 'Dutchy' Van Der Linden completed his marathon of marathons as the frigate patrolled the Arabian Gulf (above).

As the Black Duke left Plymouth back in October, Dutchy set himself the target of pounding 1,000 miles around the upper deck.

Running an average of six miles a day, he completed the distance in 167 days, dealing with extreme heat, wind, rain and finally extreme fatigue as his body protested.

Occasionally he was forced to take unplanned 'rest days' simply to let his weary body recover.

"I never really doubted I could do it," said Dutchy.

"Sometimes the end really did seem a long way off. Now that it's

all finished, I'm just happy I don't have the knees of an 80-year-old."

The rest of the sponsorship money has still to be collected, but the final sum is expected to reach over £3,000.

With nine laps equating to approximately one mile, his lap rate was just over 33 pence per every one of the 9,000 times he

passed under the ship's 4.5in gun on the foc's'le, looping around the flight deck at the stern.

It is still possible to donate through www.virginmoneygiving.com/DutchyVanDerLinden

HMS Monmouth is undertaking a seven-month deployment to the Gulf region as part of an international effort to

deter piracy and smuggling, taking her turn to provide the standing commitment to maritime security in the region.

Having handed over the duty to another Wales-affiliated warship HMS Dragon, the Black Duke is due to return to the UK this month, just before she celebrates her 20th year of service.

Rocky road to Gibraltar

OVER £2,500 has been raised by a team from Naval Command HQ and the Commando Logistics Regiment Medical Squadron (CLR Med Sqn) after achieving a cycle challenge that took them (including the occasional reversal of direction in strong headwinds) 1,500 miles from Barnstaple to Gibraltar.

Cycling an average of 80 miles a day in all weathers and across all terrains, the team tackled 2ft deep snow on the mountain ranges.

Team member Lt Matt Faye said: "It was a bit like the tortoise and the hare, with the young Marines pitted against the oldies."

"They might have been fastest during the first week, but we soon matched them with our steady pace when they started showing signs of wear and tear, particularly on the hill stages."



● The cycling squad which rode from Barnstaple to Gibraltar

"I'm delighted to have raised so much money for the RNRMC, which is a charity close to my heart."

"Having been a medic and funeral officer during my 15 years in the Service, I've seen the benefits that the RNRMC gives to the Royal Navy and am proud to have always been enrolled in the

charity's Payroll Giving Scheme."

The team is already planning its next fundraising adventure – possibly in Italy, cycling from the Alps to the toe of the boot.

"It's suitably challenging and we like the idea of Italian coffee breaks along the way..." added Matt.

Alabare for care

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity has awarded a benevolence grant of £20,000 to Alabare Christian Care and Support towards their new Hampshire Home for homeless veterans in Portsmouth.

On leaving the Armed Forces, transition into civilian life can be difficult, with some veterans facing problems such as financial difficulties, unemployment, lack of skills, and depression.

Alabare provides support and accommodation, enabling them to achieve stability in their lives through improved health and lifestyle, training, and employment.

One veteran says: "If it was not for Alabare... I would still be feeling unsafe and vulnerable on the street, cold, hungry and scared."

For more information about Alabare, see: www.alabare.co.uk

Frontline charities can apply for a RNRMC benevolence grant by contacting RNRMC Head of Grants: anne.carr@rnrmc.org.uk or tel: 02392 548093.

Don't just sit there – StandEASY now

GOT 30 minutes to spare between May and August?

Whether you are serving on shore, at sea or on deployment, get involved in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity's annual StandEASY campaign this summer.

All you need to do is spend just half an hour, either on your own, in a team or with friends and family, doing anything you can think of to raise funds – from a sponsored physical challenge or fun event, to a raffle or a cake sale.

Standeasy in Jackspeak – Naval parlance – means either the most relaxed stance when on parade, or a period of relaxation built into the normal work routine.

Last year's RNRMC StandEASY saw 45 teams take up the challenge, and between them they helped raise just over

£10,000.

This year the charity hopes to significantly beat that figure.

RNRMC Chief Executive Robert Robson said: "It would be wonderful if every ship, unit and establishment could get involved in this campaign."

"All the money raised from everyone's 30 minutes will go towards the charity's crucial work now and for years to come for all our Naval family, past and present."

Register to the StandEASY campaign now and if you raise over £500 by August 31, you could be in with a chance of winning up to £500 towards your team-building activities.

To register contact the RNRMC Fundraising Team on 023 9254 8289 or email fundraising@rnrmc.org.uk

Reading Force rewards

A NAVAL Nurse discovered an ideal way to engage with his young daughter while he was separated from his family during a three month deployment in support of the Olympics last summer.

Reading Force is a shared reading activity that helps to bring Service families closer together.

Taking part is free for all Armed Forces, Reserves, Cadets and ex-Services children, families and friends, whether at home or away on deployment, or working away on exercises or training.

The charity encourages Service families to enjoy sharing a book together and completing a free Reading Force scrapbook as a memento.

Families can choose from the recommended reading list, or choose any book.

CPO(NN) Michael Taylor said: "Katie and I chose the book *Skyhawk* by Gill Lewis, and it soon became our special shared project."

"It very quickly became our focus of telephone conversations and emails over the three months I was away."

"We'd discuss how far we had got to in the book, and when I got back we put together our scrapbook."

To their delight, Katie and Michael's completed scrapbook won Reading Force's 2012 National Prize, including a trip to see the award-winning West End theatre show *Matilda*, which they both declared was "fantastic".

Katie said: "My Dad's away quite a lot and I always miss him."

"It was really fun to have a chance to do this together – we really enjoyed it."

"I drew a picture that illustrated every chapter in our scrapbook."

"I won the competition the same day I got a reply from my favourite author, Jacqueline Wilson, so it was a really brilliant day."

This year's Great Reading Force Competition closes on September 30 and winners will be announced on Monday October 21.

To get a free scrapbook and take part in the scheme contact: www.readingforce.org.uk



Coastal kayakers

ROYAL Marine Ricky Thomas and former Welsh rugby union captain Paul Thorburn will join 15 paddlers on a challenging nine-day sea kayaking expedition around the west coast of Wales this month in aid of Armed Forces charities.

"We are delighted to have received support from Sea Kayaking UK, based in Anglesey."

"The owner, Nigel Dennis, has kindly given advice and will be loaning much of the equipment – Triton double kayaks and paddles."

The team has received welcome support from Sport Wales and additional sponsorship from Red Lion Foods.

The route will take in some of the most stunning coastline around the British Isles.

Averaging 30 miles a day, the team will start at Plas Menai, concluding their journey some nine days and 270 miles later at Landguard Bay in Swansea.

Virtually all of the team are novices, some with no canoeing or kayaking experience.

To sponsor the group, see <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/menaitomumblesmadness> or www.bmycharity.com/menaitomumblesmadness, and follow them on Twitter @Menai2Mumbles

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Relief role for air base

A NAVAL air station played a central role in supporting the charity ShelterBox in an exercise testing and selecting relief workers who deliver their life-saving green boxes in the aftermath of worldwide disasters.

Volunteers spent a week under canvas in sub-zero conditions at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, completing hours of rigorous activities including disaster role-play, fitness tests and enduring minimal sleep patterns to simulate real-life crisis situations.

Culdrose took on the role of the essential supply hub while volunteers were tasked with organising stores, people and vital equipment within a scenario requiring the emergency shelter boxes to be delivered to disaster victims in the area.

The volunteers were required to negotiate with Royal Navy personnel and use the information provided to find the stash of ShelterBoxes.

ShelterBox was founded by Tom Henderson, a former Royal Navy search and rescue diver on 771 Squadron.

He saw that most aid responses to disasters required food and medicine to help people survive the immediate aftermath.

In some cases little or no assistance was available to victims in terms of proper shelter during the first few days, weeks and months as they tried to rebuild their lives.

ShelterBox was launched to fill that void.

From humble beginnings, with a shipment of 143 boxes to the Gujarat Indian earthquake in 2001, ShelterBox has grown to the extent that the organisation delivered more than 13,500 boxes when the South East Asian tsunami struck in 2004, with a value of £6.75 million.

Each large green ShelterBox is tailored to the specific disaster, but typically contains a large tent for an extended family, blankets, groundsheet, water storage, cooking utensils, a basic tool kit and a children's activity pack.

The charity has responded to almost 200 disasters in more than 75 countries.

Ross Preston, head of operations, was a Royal Marine for 18 years before joining ShelterBox.

He got involved after an improvised explosive device left him with spinal damage, ending his military career.



● Mids Sam Cooper and Ellie Blackwell pick up donkey bonus points on the Padstow Dash

Tireless team are no donkeys

FOLLOWING the re-dedication ceremony of HMS Dasher in their affiliated town of Padstow, 15 members of the Bristol University Royal Navy Unit took part in the 'Padstow Dash'.

It was not just a simple charity race, involving teams racing from Padstow in Cornwall to Bristol – 150 miles – in the quickest possible time.

Generating some intense rivalry, the URNU students formed three teams named Merlin, Tireless and Somerset.

This year's Dash organisers, Surg Sub Lt Sean Vanstone and Mid Jess Railton, also set key challenges on the route which, if achieved, would gain more points.

Braving fierce rain, sleet and snow showers, the officer cadets tackled a number of tasks such as protecting a fragile object (an egg) on the trip, seeking a ride in a police car, sourcing Cheddar cheese from Cheddar Gorge and proving that they had fed a donkey.

With donkeys proving elusive for some, the Tireless team scored the highest points for completing

all the tasks set en route, and also managed to achieve the second fastest time of eight hours from start to finish.

Bristol URNU have raised just over £700 for their chosen charity, Children's Hospice South West, and are still collecting – see the website www.justgiving.com/padstowdash

The Padstow Dash is now an annual URNU event which tests teamwork, improves divisional cohesion and helps to develop initiative and leadership skills amongst officer cadets.

Nightie shift

IS there anything funnier than a grown man in a onesie?

Red Nose Day saw Babcock employees Hayley Packer and Steve Matthews taking "do something funny for money" to a new level at HMS Collingwood.

Organisers invited staff to wear quirky 'onesies' or pyjamas to work at the Integrated Training Support Centre (ITSC) and carried out a bucket collection, raising £352 for the charity.

Joining the fun were Babcock employees Lisa Lade and Karen Reid, hosting a Cake O'Clock party and conducting a Jessie J's hair-raising sweepstake.

The homemade cakes raised just over £60.



Red-nosed Royal recruits



RECRUITS at the Commando Training Centre RM at Lympstone entered into the spirit of Comic Relief events by donning red noses.

The young trainee Marines bought the noses to wear during their tough training, which included the challenging assault course high ropes (pictured) and boxing.

The lads' sense of humour was also evident in the King's Squad

149 Troop in drill training for their Passing Out Parade as they donned red noses – but thankfully the comedy noses were not a feature of the formal parade.

Also included in the charity event were the red-nosed recruits' physical training instructors on the 'Death Slide', part of the high-wire 'Tarzan' course and over a water obstacle designed to refine rope skills.



● Surg Cdr Alan Bowie busks for Comic Relief

Doc and Roll...

IT'S not every day a guitar legend named Bowie gets to play at RNAS Culdrose, but Red Nose Day saw a legend in his own lunchtime put a special show on in aid of Comic Relief.

Surg Cdr Alan Bowie swapped his surgical instruments for a more tuneful one to entertain sailors and raise money during Red Nose Day.

'The Busking Doc' picked up his faithful old six-string guitar and performed in the Culdrose

Wardroom, entertaining his fellow officers and staff.

He said: "I started playing guitar in 2007 when I was on a Herrick tour in Afghanistan and, if I'd practiced more, I would be pretty good by now."

"I am very much of the 'Three chords and the truth' school of playing."

"Medics have a long tradition of performing vaguely comic songs for hospital review and thought it would be fun to try it out this year".



Picture: Davenport Express

LAF launches Traf

THE Royal Navy has 'commissioned' a new Trafalgar – not a submarine or warship but a brand new narrow boat to join HMS Nelson's canal flotilla.

Trafalgar will be owned by Nelson's Leisure and Amenities Fund (LAF) alongside the Emma, Andrew and Lafter.

Cdr Tim Ash, Executive Officer of Nelson, the LAF's Graham New and Bill Grier accepted the keys of Trafalgar from Roger Preen, managing director of Calcutt Boats at their marina in Davenport, where Trafalgar was built.

After a champagne christening in -5°C, the Trafalgar cut a swathe along the ice-bound canal with her RN crew proudly embarked.

Writer Sophie Corp, who took the helm on the first leg, said: "It was so cold you could hear the ice cracking around the boat."

The boats provide holiday and adventurous training opportunities for serving and retired Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel and their families, and are available to other people directly supporting sailors and marines in their work.

Cdr Ash said: "The boats can access a wide choice of routes from Calcutt's marina."

"I spent a week at Easter exploring the Warwick area, and my family really enjoyed the experience."

Writer Daniel Crabb said: "It's a great way to learn boat-handling skills – more relevant to us as sailors than sleeping in a bivvy in the Brecon Beacons..."

To book, call 02392 824050 or contact the LAF Manager at: LAFNELSON@btconnect.com

For information about the boats see www.calcuttboats.com

Blue Light discos pay dividends

MOD POLICE from Clyde Naval Base raised £500 for a local children's rugby team by running the popular Blue Light Discos for teenagers in nearby Helensburgh.

Loch Lomond's mini-rugby team received the cheque from the Community Liaison Officer, PC Russell White, during one of their regular training sessions at the Vale of Leven Academy.

The cash will help the club stage a tournament for local primary schools, providing expert coaching and prizes.

PC White said: "The money is raised from the proceeds of our Blue Light discos."

"We currently run one disco a month at the Drumfork Centre in Helensburgh and we regularly see up to 300 youngsters attend."

"The discos are held in conjunction with all the blue-light services and provide a safe, drug and alcohol-free night out for secondary school pupils."

"It has been a highly successful initiative and it's great to be able to put the money raised towards encouraging sport and fitness among local kids."

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Fast-track engineering experience

A YEAR 7 class at a Gosport school had the chance to build their own versions of a supersonic car when a Royal Navy officer called by.

Lt Thomas Middleditch wanted to give something back to the engineering community, and after some enquiries found himself in front of 30 11 and 12-year-olds at Bridgemary School, part of a STEMNET - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network - day.

He knew he would have to catch their attention early on, and decided the best way was through the Bloodhound SSC (Supersonic Car) project, an international education initiative which will attempt to push the world land-speed record up to 1,000mph some time in 2014.

The pupils were hooked - and their enthusiasm for underlying engineering principles (drag, thrust, aerodynamics and so on) was translated into balloon cars which were designed, raced and optimised (with room for sponsors' logos).

Lt Middleditch said: "I found the whole day very rewarding and hopefully the children now have a better idea of the exciting career opportunities that studying STEM subjects, and particularly engineering, can unlock."

The officer plans to maintain his links with the school through their STEM Club.

Anyone interested in becoming a STEM Ambassador should contact IMechE Volunteer Development (www.imeche.org/learning/volunteering/overview) or STEMNET directly (www.stemnet.org.uk).

Royals tackle gorilla problem

ROYAL Marines lent their expertise and fitness to a Devon zoo when staff asked for help building a climbing frame for Western Lowland gorillas.

The assault engineers from the Commando Training Centre RM at Lympstone, near Exmouth, answered the SOS, using the project as part of their training course.

Paignton Zoo's existing gorilla frame was starting to fall apart after years of enduring the strain of daily use by extremely powerful and heavy animals, which can weigh up to 200kg.

Being extremely fit and strong, the Marines were also the ideal workforce to erect heavy timber poles and bolt them together into a gorilla-proof structure.

The ten Royal Marines, on an Assault Engineers course at Lympstone, had to drag massive timbers through the gorilla pens and onto the 'Gorilla Island' at the zoo, one of the largest in the UK.

The team's chief instructor, C/Sgt Kevin Bateman, said: "I was keen to get the course involved in as many varied projects as possible."

"This job was not so much of a technical engineering task, but did provide the students with hands-on experience and showed them the planning involved in working alongside civilian



Picture: Ray Wiltshire

agencies."

As assault engineers they would normally train on demolishing structures, blowing their way into compounds in places like Afghanistan and negotiating their way through enemy minefields and safely tackling booby traps.

In this case they put their skills to a constructive purpose

and helped the community, both human and animal.

Zoo visitors were treated to the rare sight of Royal Marines at more peaceful work than they are used to.

Kevin said: "This task allows the public to see the Royal Marines working outside the normal environment in which they

may associate us, and highlights us getting involved in helping out the local community."

Jenny Paton, from Paignton Zoo, said: "It was fantastic to have the marines help us with this."

"It would have taken the zoo staff months to do this job and the gorillas seem very happy with their new frame."



Commodore departs by yacht

THE commander of the Royal Navy's ships and submarines in Plymouth was given a rousing farewell on his final day at work.

Cdre Jake Moores (above) left Devonport Naval Base as Commodore Devonport Flotilla.

The former submarine commander retired from the Royal Navy after 37 years of service which included stints on hunter-killer Trafalgar-class boats and the Trident-missile Vanguard-class strategic nuclear deterrent submarines, commanding the Faslane flotilla in Scotland and commanding the Royal Navy's officer training centre, Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth.

As a special treat his staff organised for Cdre Moores and his wife Julie to finally depart the naval base on a 45ft Princess yacht for the short sail up the Hamoaze to Mayflower Steps on the Barbican, in the heart of historic Plymouth.

He was waved off by Devonport Flotilla HQ staff and crews of Devonport ships and submarines.

Cdre Moores is succeeded by Cdre Richard Farrington.

Medal for Nigel

A CIVIL Servant who has worked at RN Air Station Culdrose for 33 years has been awarded the Imperial Service Medal.

Nigel King joined the staff at the air base in 1979 as a handyman in the married quarters before moving to the mail room, where he spent 28 years before retiring.

The medal and citation were presented by Culdrose CO Capt Willie Entwisle.


Family time in class

A BROTHER and sister from the Caribbean island of Dominica have been reunited in the classroom at HMS Raleigh.

LLogs Daryl and Amy Durand were both selected for a five-week training course at the Defence Maritime Logistics School to prepare them for promotion.

Although the siblings live in Portsmouth, they do not work together and both have their own interests at the weekend, so they appreciated some time together on the course.

Daryl, who joined up in 2005, will deploy for around seven months when the course finishes, while his younger sister, who joined in 2008, is studying law through the Open University and has ambitions to become a logistics officer.



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Submariners and soldiers gather for their five-day yachting course at Kiel

Deeps learn to sail Kiel boats

SEVEN trainee submariners from Corporate Squadron at HMS Raleigh had their first experience at sea during a week's adventurous training alongside soldiers in Germany.

The trainees have yet to serve beneath the waves - and probably wished that was where they were as the five-day Competent Crew course started at Kiel Training Centre (KTC) amidst Baltic blizzards.

Living and working aboard yachts alongside 35 members of the British Army, the sailors learned how to manoeuvre the boats, nautical terminology, and how to conduct themselves on board.

AB Chris Griffith said: "We were split into groups when we arrived, which at first was quite daunting because we were asked to form a crew with people we didn't know."

"However, we soon gelled together and formed a strong team with high spirits. Morale was buzzing

all week.

"Working with members of the Army was a great experience and really opened my eyes."

"We all tend to keep to our individual Services, but being with them made me realise that fundamentally we are all on the same team and have similar values."

"Overall it was an exhilarating experience. Although it was extremely cold, everyone involved had a fantastic time."

KTC is an adventurous training centre for the Armed Forces, located in northern Germany, and more than 1,500 Servicemen and women use the facility each year.

The centre runs sailing, diving and power boating courses from March to November, and a range of shore-based courses throughout the year.

Yachts are provided by the British Kiel Yacht Club, which was formed after World War 2.

24 : MAY 2013

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Culdrose tribute to Ed

A MEMORIAL service at RN Air Station Culdrose allowed friends, shipmates and close family members to gather from across the country to pay a special tribute to POAEM Ed Curtis (above).

Ed died last year and his funeral was held in Leeds in November, but such was the strong feeling to pay homage to a true Fleet Air Arm personality that a memorial day – A Day for Ed – was specially organised at the Cornish air base.

A stone was unveiled in the memorial garden, and a service and a celebration of his life was held in the Warrant Officers and Senior Rates mess.

Ed Curtis joined the Royal Navy in 1971 and served at Culdrose with short spells at sea on HMS Ark Royal and at Lossiemouth in Scotland, where he worked on Phantoms, the Royal Navy's carrier-based fighter bombers.

But Ed always considered Cornwall to be home during a 39-year career.

Whilst at Culdrose he worked on Sea Kings with 706, 810, 814 and 824 Naval Air Squadrons, and Maritime Aviation Support Force (MASF) as well as the station flight with Sea Devons and Chipmunk fixed-wing aircraft.

Ed was also a member of the Fleet Air Arm field gun crew, running the Royal Tournament competition at Earls Court in 1976, 1982, 1983 and 1985.

On leaving the Navy in 1994 he took a job as the front desk officer at Camborne police station and later a firearms licensing officer with the Cornwall Constabulary.

But he missed the camaraderie of his service days and joined the RNR Air Branch, taking on full and part-time service at Culdrose with the Air Engineering department.

Lt Chris Long, who knew Ed for much of his Culdrose career, said: "Ed was one of life's true gentlemen – polite, well-mannered, a lovely terrier of a man, an inspiration to all he met, a class act, always smiling, not an ill word to say about anyone, a top guy."

Nephew in, uncle out

ONE in, one out – as fledgling logistician Will Beck completes his initial training, his uncle PO Simon Maleary is contemplating life after the Royal Navy.

Will, who finished his ten-week initial training at HMS Raleigh in March and is going on to train as a steward, was inspired to join up by hearing Uncle Simon's stories.

PO Maleary is also at Raleigh, working in the Initial Training School, but watched Will's progress from afar to be fair to both his nephew and Will's classmates.

Simon joined up in 1991 at the age of 16, and has served in frigates and aircraft carriers. He is due to leave the Service next year.

That is not the end of the family's Naval connections – Will's other uncle and Simon's brother, Matthew Telfer-Maleary, joined the Royal Navy in 1996, transferred to the Royal Marines in 1999 and left the Service just over ten years ago.

Matthew was also at Will's passing-out parade.

Second twin wins Observer's wings

AN IDENTICAL twin has realised his dream by following in his brother's footsteps as a Navy aviator.

Lt Alex Tuckwood was awarded his wings at 702 Naval Air Squadron in RN Air Station Yeovilton as brother Lt Neil Tuckwood watched with pride, having won his own wings just eight months earlier.

Alex joined the Royal Navy in October 2007 and started basic Observer training in July 2010.

He was selected after 32 weeks basic air navigation training at RN Air Station Culdrose to join 702 NAS, training on the Lynx helicopter.

He said: "It has been a long journey. I have wanted to be a military aviator from a young age, so it's a great feeling after five-and-a-half years of training to achieve my wings."

"I look forward to joining the front line alongside Neil, a Sea King Mk 7 Observer, currently serving at Culdrose."

Their parents were there to see the second award of wings in the family and father Pete Tuckwood said: "I am extremely proud."

"I have two very bright individuals who have done very well in what they have achieved and what they plan to do."

"I would never have expected up to the age of 20 that they would follow the same path."

"This is the end of a long, hard route, and they can now move on to the proper job."

Lt Amy Webb gained her Observer wings alongside Alex, and is also looking forward to the challenges of performing her role



● Identical twins and Royal Navy Observers Lts Alex (right) and Neil Tuckwood

Picture: LA(Phot) Caroline Davies

on the front line – Observers are essentially the warfare tacticians and specialists in an aircraft, working alongside the warfare officers and pilot, getting the right weapon to the right target at the right time.

Lt Webb said: "I am absolutely

delighted to finally be joining the front-line Lynx squadron of the Fleet Air Arm.

"I decided I wanted to be an aircrew officer in the Navy when I was 12 years old, so it's amazing to have achieved one of my life goals."

Making up the quartet of wings recipients at Yeovilton were Lt Joshua Overn USN, who joined 702 NAS to begin Lynx conversion training, and Lt Lee Holborn, who was fulfilling an ambition to fly which he has held since the age of nine.

Engineer honoured for valuable service

An engineer from Clyde Naval Base has been honoured with a Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service.

WO2 Liam Stanley won the award for work undertaken while serving in the Sandown-class minehunter HMS Ramsey.

Between February 2011 and July 2012, while deployed with the vessel in the Gulf, the engineering technician was Marine Engineer Officer and Chief of the Boat.

During that time he set the "highest standards in tackling a number of technical challenges" ensuring the ship and her crew maintained its effectiveness.

Operating a sophisticated minehunter in the punishing environment of the Gulf in the summer months is a difficult task, both in terms of engineering and demands on the individual.

From January to May 2012 a series of engineering challenges emerged, but WO Stanley's strong performance, and his paternal leadership style and natural authority, ensured Ramsey was able to fulfil all her requirements.

Perhaps his most notable success was in that May when, on 12 days of operations in the Gulf of Oman, far from shore in 40° Celsius, he found pragmatic solutions to six separate and

significant engineering problems.

RN minehunters have been continuously based in the Gulf for more than six years, with crews changing every six months and the ships moving on after three years.



● Surg Lt Cdr Andy Vale and CPO Suzie Cook in Gibraltar

Brief encounter

A ROUTINE boat transfer to HMS Scott from the naval base in Gibraltar gave Surg Lt Cdr Andy Vale and his girlfriend CPO (SR) Suzie Cook a rare chance to see each other after almost three months apart.

The couple met over two years ago when they were both serving in Scott, the Royal Navy's ocean survey vessel.

Andy was posted to Gibraltar in November to become the Deputy Principal Medical Officer at the Princess Royal Medical Centre whilst Suzie remained with the ship.

The couple were able to spend Christmas together before Suzie deployed on an operational tour east of Suez to carry out survey work in the region.

Suzie tied the sea boat up alongside in Gib, and as she came up the stairs Andy surprised her with a bouquet of flowers.

The couple managed to spend a few minutes together before Suzie had to get back into the sea boat bringing personnel that had joined them in Gibraltar to the ship.

The couple will get the chance to spend a bit longer together in a few weeks when Suzie flies out to Gibraltar for some mid-tour leave.

Warfare acquaint

STUDENTS from across the country visited HMS Collingwood to sample life in the Warfare Branch of the Royal Navy.

A group of 18 potential officer candidates travelled to Fareham from as far afield as Scotland and Plymouth for the two-day acquaint.

The students, who are intending to join the Senior Service as Warfare Officers once they have passed their Admiralty Board interviews, attended demonstrations on the communications equipment used in Type 23 frigates and Type 45 destroyers.

They also toured the sport and recreation centre and the Leadership Academy.

Collingwood is the home of the Maritime Warfare School, which provides training to officers and ratings in various specialisations including weapon engineering, communications and warfare.

Trainers achieve milestone

TWO Royal Navy flying instructors at the Defence Helicopter Flying School have passed the 2,000-hours milestone.

Lts Ian Chudley and Jim Fraser are Qualified Helicopter Instructors (QHIs) with 660 Squadron at the school, based at RAF Shawbury in Shropshire, where pilots for all three Services receive initial training on rotary-wing aircraft.

Lt Chudley gained his wings in 2005 from 771 Naval Air Squadron and spent one tour on Sea King Mk 5 search and rescue helicopters before flying the Mk 7 Airborne Surveillance and Control version with 857 NAS in Afghanistan.

He has held the post of Officer Commanding 660 Squadron and is soon to return to 771 NAS at RN Air Station Culdrose.

Lt Fraser started his career with 702 Naval Air Squadron Lynx Operational Conversion Unit, moving on to the Lynx of 815 NAS.

He is now Officer Commanding A Flight at 660 Squadron.

The pair were presented with special certificates marking their milestone by Air Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford RAF.

Education in isolation

NO man is an island, according to poet John Donne – but pupils in Hampshire were encouraged to imagine their schools were completely isolated for an educational challenge.

'My School is an Island', run by Seavision and charity EDT, encouraged the 90 Year 8 pupils to highlight the challenges, such as transport and resources, faced by their schools if they were surrounded by the sea.

This helps them appreciate the issues for bigger islands such as the Isle of Wight or even Britain.

It also allows pupils to see the practical application of science and engineering in everyday life.

The competition, supported by the Royal Navy and part of a wider Go4SET programme, was launched with a special session at HMS Collingwood in early March, and is due to run until the middle of this month.

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HMS Ulysses gale tragedy remembered

I WOULD like to draw your attention to an article in February's edition of *Navy News* on page 25, *Heroic Tug Rescue*.

This article is wrong in its context. It did happen on the date in the article, and the location is correct, but the sender of this letter got the ship's name wrong.

It was not HMS Undine, it was HMS Ulysses (F17) – I know as I was cable party on HMS Ulysses; we were the third ship in line, out of four ships to put to sea that morning.

I had been detailed to unload potatoes from a small Maltese boat, passing the sacks onto the guard rail for other shipmates to take them from me.

We were all ready to slip the forward and aft buoys to go to sea. On the Tannoy the captain said to let everything go fore and aft.

With that the engines started and I climbed over the guard rail to get back on board ship.

I had to cut the Maltese boat free which did not go down well with the Maltese boat-owner.

Over the Tannoy came a message for cable party to go forward.

The quarterdeck officer told me to remain on the quarterdeck to prepare it for sea.

Three times I argued with him to let me go forward as I was cable party and had been piped for, and three times he told me to remain on the quarterdeck; finally he told me to go forward.

As I was running forward by the 4in gun, I saw a shipmate in the sea on the starboard side and I threw a life belt to him but it hit an awning wire and came back on board.

I threw it again, it landed by him but he made no attempt to get to it.

I then ran back towards the quarterdeck shouting: "Man overboard!" The klaxon was sounded to inform the bridge.

Crew swept away

I READ your article regarding *Truculent collision recalled* in February's edition of *Navy News* but feel that your statement that "some died when the boat sank, others escaped but were swept to their deaths in the icy river" is not quite the case.

No-one died in the Truculent – all 60 crew members plus 18 dockyard officials left the submarine alive.

Five crew were swept overboard from the bridge by the force of the collision (four officers, including

Forgotten Deeps

I READ your report on page 9 of the February issue regarding submariners wearing the deterrent patrol pin.

Currently the pins are only given to deeps who have sailed on more than 30 days patrol.

Would it be possible to back-date the recognition badge to the forgotten submariners who completed the same patrols in the diesel electric boats?

Many patrols lasted 70, 80 or 90 days with no luxury showers, constant water and food shortages and all of us suffered from BO.

Do other veterans have tales to tell without breaking the you-know-what rules?

We did have a veterans' branch, but disbanded when Dolphin was closed and most have now crossed over the bar.

– Bill Burns, ex-LME
Co. Durham

Before I realized, I was outside of the stern guardrail about to dive into the mountainous seas to get to my shipmate but I was grabbed by my shoulders and stopped.

I had to scream at the top of my voice, (because of the noise of the wind and rain) to let me go in with a heaving line tied to me but the officer refused my request.

As we were drifting towards the rocks, the engines started up, slow ahead.

We were now on our way past Grand Harbour entrance and the tug Sea Giant was alongside HMS Ark Royal in the harbour. The rain was so bad, we could barely see her 18in signal lamp signalling to us.

Sea Giant put to sea and a Maltese seaman dived in and got the body out that I was going to dive in for.

He was awarded the BEM but you don't think of earning medals under these circumstances.

The captain shut the upper deck down that day, and all upper deck doors remained closed for the remainder of that day.

As I was my mess deck's rum bosun, I got my messmates their rum but nobody wanted it that morning so I sat there and drank the lot.

I relive this event on most days and it still brings tears to my eyes as that quarterdeck officer probably saved my life that morning.

One lad swam ashore and when we met up three months later he said that he turned to see the ship's bows under the sea and the stern was out of the sea half way along its keel and both screws were like aircraft propellers spinning in the air.

This is a true story as it happened. We lost two shipmates to the sea that morning.

– F J Burt
Ex AB HMS Ulysses

the captain, and one leading seaman).

The 73 remaining onboard after the sinking escaped from the after ends of the boat, some wearing DSEA sets, some 'free breathing', there not being sufficient Davis Escape sets for everyone.

The number of survivors totalled 15, of these ten were picked up by Divina's boat, the five men from the bridge were rescued by a Dutch ship, the Almdijk, on her way up river to Surrey docks.

The 63 men who died were swept away on an ebbing tide in freezing cold water in the estuary as far as Sheerness, or out to sea. Some were never found.

The men on the sunken submarine thought that rescue was at hand on the surface, but news of the sinking reached no-one until over one hour after the collision and sinking, when rescue attempts were organised.

– Brian H Jackson (Ex-RN
1952-57),
British Columbia, Canada



Gun turret view of Op Pedestal

I READ with much interest Lt Cdr C F T Poynder's letter in the January issue of *Navy News* relating to his experience while serving in HMS Kenya during Operation Pedestal.

At that time I was serving in HMS Nigeria as a leading seaman with an action station manning the right gun of 'A' Turret.

Nigeria had been deployed from serving in Northern patrol and Russian Convoy duty to form part of Operation Pedestal, with Rear Admiral Burroughs (6th Cruiser Squadron) embarked.

After fueling we joined with the main part of the convoy to pass through the Strait of Gibraltar at night – hoping not to be detected.

The first day in the Med was reasonably quiet, and then it all began to happen.

After continuous air raids, with shipping casualties, the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle was torpedoed and quickly listed heavily to port.

At that time we were stationed ahead in formation with the other three cruisers, Kenya, Cairo and Manchester, behind a further formation of destroyers.

From Nigeria, we could see the aircraft sliding off the flight deck of Eagle and in a matter of minutes she had sunk.

The following day, August 11, enemy action increased with more shipping casualties.

Towards dusk there was a lull

and Admiral Burroughs spoke over the Tannoy and said: "Tomorrow is the start of worse shooting and I expect a good bag."

Unfortunately the 'good bag' was not what we had anticipated, as at about 1700 on the 12th, Nigeria was torpedoed on the port side which took out the lower steering position, the transmitting station and flooded B magazine and the fo'ard boiler room.

She listed very heavily and was temporarily out of steerage control, but by super damage control and counter-flooding, she was saved.

Unfortunately we lost 72 of our company – the youngest a boy seaman aged 17.

HMS Ashanti came alongside to transfer the Admiral who left us to round up the convoy to continue the passage to Malta.

Nigeria turned to return to Gibraltar at best speed, conducive with her damage, and hoping that we were not heavily attacked as we could not use our main armament – four triple 6in guns – for fear of breaking the ship's back.

With good fortune we returned to Gibraltar safely and after some time berthed on The Mole.

While other ships were occupying the dry dock, we took our time and had a temporary repair sufficient to steam to Charleston, South Carolina for full repair.

– Cdr E J Sawkins RN Rtd,
Bishops Castle, Shropshire

Shocking injuries

MANY thanks, as ever, for a frightfully good read. I wish the *Navy News* had been as good in my days in the mob, 50 years ago.

I read with interest April's article on the medical training in Devon.

I took part in some of the operations in Borneo in the 1960s; Sarawak, Brunei – all those.

We had good medical services, wonderful chaps, but it was all rather basic – nothing like the facilities you have today.

The CO told us we would probably see some horrible things but we'd be fine. Keep our chins up, stiff upper lip and all that. Have a drink afterwards... that sort of thing.

Nothing can prepare you for the sight of your first casualty. Dead or alive. Awful and terrible. If only we had those Amputees in Action chaps. Training with them, now that would have taken away some of the shock. Oh, but they were different days back then.

I was a bit surprised that you censored the photographs. War is terrible. Please show people how it is. Maybe that way we won't send our sailors to war again.

Thank you once again for an excellent newspaper and I'm already looking forward to your next issue.

– Derek 'Dickie' Davies, Lt (rtd)

Editor Mike Gray replies: We thought long and hard about how much blood, bone and gore – albeit simulated – to show in our pages, bearing in mind it is not the type of images you would normally see in Navy News, and some of our readers may have had a nasty shock. We also noted the possible reactions of victims of such injuries and their families, and took advice from military medical experts, which is why we eventually decided to pixellate the most graphic examples.

We have published similar, unpixellated, images before on at least two occasions in the past decade. In these days when horrific, harrowing images are available in just a few keystrokes on the internet, were we too cautious? We take your point, Lt Davies, and admit it was a very close – and subjective – call.



Each month Pussers Rum are offering to courier a bottle of their finest tipple to the writer of our top letter. This month's winner is Derek 'Dickie' Davies.

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, nor can we reply to every one.

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.



Surveying in Suez

I WAS a Leading Seaman Survey Recorder on board HMS Dalrymple when the British and the French invaded Port Suez in November 1956.

Dalrymple entered the Suez Canal while fighting was still going on.

Our job was to get our 26ft survey boats in the water and plot the wrecks, some of which were submerged (including dredger *Louis Perrier*, scuttled at Port Said in 1956, pictured right).

Some 51 ships and boats were sunk in the canal.

After a few days an agreement was reached by all involved and the United Nations.

Under UN direction, we then began the operation of clearing the wrecks, staying there until about March 1957, when a navigable channel was cleared.

PS: Reading the letter from Lt Cdr Tony Fletcher on the



subject of HMS Egeria.

I was one of his first crew and stood by her while she was finished at Cockenzie in Scotland.

There is a new Echo and Enterprise – why not an Egeria?

– A G Webster
Cliftonville, Margate

Flash protection in Comet

PRIOR to the Suez Campaign I had an emergency deployment to HMS Comet, a C-class destroyer minelayer.

At the time of Suez, her mine rails were removed and a 4.7in open single-barrel turret was placed on Q Deck. This also married up with the A and B guns up front.

On joining to make up wartime crew, we were issued with anti-flash protection, which included head and shoulder covering, gloves, a respirator and helmets. I will always remember the weight of the shell and the brass cordite.

– P J Fowes, Ex-L/S Clearance Diver
Evesham, Worcestershire

Marking the Navy's day

LAST month, the MOD's 'Image of the Day' showed airmen marking the 95th birthday of the RAF on April 1. The day was also listed in the MOD Diary.

Never marked by the MOD are the 'birthdays' of the Royal Navy or the Army, because the dates are lost to history.

Royal Marines do mark their formation on October 28 1664 – it's their 350th anniversary next year – but the Corps is too modest to mark birthdays in between the centenary and half-centenary; the Royals were doubtless too busy in action on most birthdays, anyway, to think about cakes and candles!

So, not to miss out, perhaps dates should be selected to mark the founding of the Royal Navy and Army?

An annual Navy Day may help to raise the profile of the Senior Service in sea-blind Britain.

The Bill of Rights 1688 first allowed for a standing army in England but regiments were raised, as required, before that.

A British Army came into being with the Acts of Union, effective on May 1, 1707, so perhaps it's "Happy 306th Birthday" to our soldier friends this May Day.

Harder to date is the founding of the RN, although of course a truly British Navy came into being that same May 1 in 1707.

An English navy was a creation of the Restoration of the Crown on May 29, 1660, but how to embrace the "founding father of the Royal Navy", General-at-Sea Robert Blake, appointed in 1649, or the Armada of 1588, the establishment of the Council of Marine (Navy

Board) in 1546 or Woolwich Dockyard, established 1512 to build the Great Harry, let alone the post of Lord High Admiral dating from the early 1400s?

Consider the origin of the Fishery Protection Squadron in 1379 and the appointment of the first English 'admiral' in 1297.

Some will claim foundation of a modern navy attributable to King John (1199-1216), or to King Richard the Lionheart, who built the first dock in Portsmouth in 1194.

The loss of the White Ship off Barfleur on November 25 1120 gives an exact date but it's no occasion to celebrate.

Surely the contenders must be King Alfred's attack on the Danish longships in 897 or the sea battle between factions of the Dalriata tribes around our coasts in 719, the earliest recorded sea fight in home waters? The latter offers a 1,300th anniversary in six years' time, of course.

I favour 897 as the founding year for our Navy but what date?

Perhaps the Order-in-Council of July 9, 1864, which abolished squadron colours for ensigns and reserved the White Ensign as the sole ensign of the Royal Navy, provides a date to anchor the Andrew's birthday.

Amalgamate the two and July 9 897 is contrived; 9/7/897 looks neat and shipshape. Your readers will doubtless have other ideas but will the Royal Navy's 1,116th birthday feature in the MOD's Defence Diary for 9 Jul 2013?

Lester May (Lt Cdr RN – rtd)
Camden Town, London

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The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the MOD

Britannia celebrates anniversary

FORMER Royal Yachtsmen celebrated the 60th anniversary of the launch of HMY Britannia by raising a flag on their old ship in Leith.

Exactly 60 years to the minute after Britannia was launched by the young Queen Elizabeth at 2.15pm on April 16 1953, veteran Yotties Ellis 'Norrie' Norrell and Albert Deane raised the Association of Royal Yachtsmen flag – the ship is also the group's HQ.

Many members of the association return year after year to the Yacht's home in the Port of Leith, Edinburgh, to spend time talking to visitors and helping maintenance teams keep the ship in good condition.

She was built at the John Brown yard in Clydebank and after commissioning in January 1954 spent the next 43 years conveying members of the Royal Family on official overseas tours and family holidays, while also supporting British interests worldwide.

Although never used in its official secondary role as a hospital ship, the Yacht helped evacuate more than 1,000 civilians from the civil war in Aden in the mid-1980s, and one of her last duties was to take the Prince of Wales and the last Governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, away from the former colony after its handover to China in July 1997.

Britannia decommissioned on December 11 that same year in Portsmouth, having steamed more than a million nautical miles and made almost 1,000 official visits at home and abroad in her 43 years.

The 60th anniversary celebrations included a huge ship-shaped cake, music and special activities.

Jacks in the box

HMS WESTMINSTER had a new communications fit just before her latest deployment east of Suez.

It might look a little anachronistic in the digital age, but a BT payphone kiosk looks like a popular addition to the ship's inventory.

Westminster's affiliations with her namesake city allow her to capitalise on London and British icons.

One of those icons will now be in pride of place on her flight deck when she goes alongside overseas – and not simply for decoration, as it will be connected to the ship's internal comms system in harbour to be used by the quartermaster.

The box was originally scheduled to be loaded on board before she sailed from Portsmouth to London, but high winds delayed the operation.

So the K6 kiosk, which stands over 8ft (2.4m) high and weighs three-quarters of a tonne (762kg), was shipped along the River Thames by barge and lifted on to the frigate to the entertainment of a crowd of bemused onlookers.

BT Payphones CEO Steven Hughes said: "It's fantastic to see our red kiosk joining the ranks of the country's high streets as we protect the UK's interests worldwide."

"HMS Westminster travels the globe representing the UK and helps support people who find themselves in dire emergencies."

"We are really delighted to provide a kiosk that can be used by the crew when they are docked."

"Our red kiosks really capture the public's imagination and many have been adopted around the UK and used in unusual ways, but



● Sailors from HMS Westminster wait for the ship's CO, Capt Hugh Beard, to finish his call in the newly-arrived red telephone kiosk

Picture: LA(Phot) Guy Pool

being aboard a working Navy ship is going to take some beating."

Lt Cdr Mickey Rooney, Westminster's Weapon Engineer Officer, said: "We couldn't be prouder to be carrying an icon of the country's high streets as we protect the UK's interests worldwide."

"Following two years of

counter-piracy and anti-terrorist patrols from the Arabian Gulf and Indian Ocean to the Atlantic we will be embarking on the next chapter of our adventure in the summer which will see us return East of Suez.

"Carrying the phone box to each and every nation we hope will bring the very visual reassurance that Britain is on hand and inevitably all will be well."

The K6 'Jubilee Kiosk' commemorated the Silver Jubilee

of the coronation of King George V and started to appear in 1936.

Designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, who also designed Battersea Power Station, the K6 is made of cast iron with a teak door, and was the first such telephone box to appear widely outside London.

Its combination of relative elegance and durability made it a huge success, and despite subsequent designs (the ill-fated K7 and the K8 of 1968) has never really been supplanted.



Big Night follows big day

NOTTINGHAM is promising a Big Night Out after the Big Day...

The Midlands city is hosting this year's national Armed Forces Day event on Saturday June 29, which will include a parade and drumhead service in the city centre, flypasts, a living history camp, displays of military vehicles past and present, live entertainment and a veterans' marquee.

Many of the activities are based around Victoria Embankment, beside the River Trent.

Once the day's programme is finished the Big Night Out starts, with entertainment, discounted activities and special offers on food and drink around the city.

For more details on Nottingham's programme go to www.mynottingham.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=14510

Armed Forces Day is the culmination of a week-long programme of celebrations during which communities around the country show their appreciation for the Armed Forces of today, the veterans of yesterday and the cadets who represent the Servicemen and women of tomorrow.

Hundreds of events are planned, from major cities to villages, from Scotland to the West Country.

To check details of Armed Forces Day events in your area, see www.armedforcesday.org.uk

St Albans rounds off

FOUR-five engage – for the last time.

HMS St Albans has shot her way into Naval history – bringing an end to 40 years of gunnery with the legendary 4.5in Mod 0 gun.

For four decades the distinctive gun in its rounded turret – fitted to all Type 42 destroyers, Type 23 and later Type 22 frigates – has been the Fleet's principal weapon against targets ashore.

It has pummeled targets with pinpoint precision from the Falklands to Libya, with up to 25 high-explosive shells leaving the barrel every minute, streaking at over 1,940mph or over 2.5 times the speed of sound – towards targets 25km or 15.5 miles away.

Over the past decade, however, the Mod 0 has been phased out and replaced by the angular Mod

1 (nicknamed Kryten after the *Red Dwarf* character with similarly linear features), which is an electrical system using hydraulics only to ram the round into the breech and has a lower radar signature.

St Albans is the last RN warship fitted with the old gun – and it fell to her to fire the final round from the final round gun.

The frigate was making use of NATO ranges near Bergen and loosed off a final few bursts from the trusty gun – making a total of just over 2,100 shots since she entered service 11 years ago.

Overseeing the final shoot was the frigate's deputy weapon engineer officer Lt David Howe.

"Since joining the Royal Navy as an artificer apprentice in 1996 I have always had a keen interest in Naval gunfire," he said.

"I was fortunate enough to be the captain of the gunbay in HMS Norfolk when the first Mod 1 firings took place at sea in 2001. As a stroke of luck I am now in the last ship to fire the Mod 0 gun."

The Vickers 4.5in Mk8 gun, originally designed as an anti-aircraft weapon, was introduced in the early 1970s to replace the 1930s-era twin-barrelled Mk6 gun.

The Mod 0 was first fitted on Type 82 destroyer HMS Bristol – and subsequently became the gun of choice for the RN.

Its primary role is to provide Naval Gunfire Support against targets ashore, but it can also be used against surface ships.

As Britain's youngest Type 23, St Albans is the last to undergo her mid-life revamp – when she'll swap her round 4.5in for a Kryten.



Royals joined by the King

ROYAL Marines musicians wowed 15,000 music-lovers over three days at the Royal Albert Hall.

Three of the five RM bands were represented by 120 bandmen on stage for the annual Mountbatten Festival of Music.

Audiences enjoyed a varied programme including *The King*, a medley of Elvis Presley hits, allowing B/Cpl Brian Lloyd to display his vocal abilities.

Wartime favourites the Andrews Sisters also appeared – courtesy of Musn Linsey Carnegie, B/Cpl Hannah Trudgeon and Musn Lizzie Merrell, singing

three of their hits.

The grand finale included *The Battle of the Atlantic Suite*, performed against a backdrop of archive footage.

The festival raised thousands of pounds for the RM Charitable Trust Fund and the children's cancer charity CLIC Sargent.

RMCTF spokeswoman Jo Whitwood said: "The festival was a huge success – the audiences were amazed at the versatility of the Royal Marines musicians. They certainly know how to entertain and put on a fantastic show."



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● Stonemason Nick Hindle working on the Armed Forces Memorial

Names carved in stone

THE annual process of engraving the names of British Servicemen and women who were killed on duty or through terrorism in 2012 onto the Armed Forces Memorial was under way as *Navy News* went to press.

Stonemason Nick Hindle carefully traced the characters of each name to be engraved before picking up his hammer and chisel to chip away the Portland Stone of the memorial, part of the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire.

The names of those killed will be read out and dedicated in a special service for families later in the year.

The arboretum, part of The Royal British Legion family of charities, is the UK's year-round centre for remembrance, and the Armed Forces Memorial, dedicated in the presence of the Queen in 2007, is the nation's tribute to the 16,000 men and women who have been killed on duty or as a result of terrorist action since 1948.



● S/M Vera Read celebrates with shipmates and family

Celebration for Vera

NORWICH branch members gathered at Edmund Bacon Court to celebrate S/M Vera Read's 100th birthday.

Vera's husband served in the Royal Navy and was a member until he died in 1983. Vera has remained a member ever since.

Standing down

THE Deputy National President of the RNA has resigned his post.

S/M Adrian Nance regrettably tendered his resignation at the March meeting of the National Council, citing increased charitable work and family and domestic reasons in arriving at his decision to step down.

Lack of motion but no inertia

SHIPMATES who are perplexed by points of order and all at sea over amendments can look forward to National Conference next month with some confidence.

The draft agenda for the RNA's major annual gathering, this year hosted by Area 10 in Liverpool on June 15, reveals that there are no branch motions for discussion – the first time this has happened in at least a decade.

There are just two National Council motions on the agenda, all of a technical nature – one, split into two parts, implements the principle of a decision at last year's conference in Newcastle over eligibility of appointing associate members as delegates to conferences and area meetings, the other relates to time-frames for consideration of motions for national conferences.

That points to the possibility of a shorter conference than in recent years – but there is still plenty for shipmates to consider on the day.

The main speaker will be Rear Admiral Duncan Potts, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Capability), and the Chief Executive Officer of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, Robert Robson, will also address delegates.

Gathered shipmates will hear that the association's finances have fared well despite the age of austerity, with strong income from legacies and further cost controls resulting in a small operating surplus, which can be added to an

increase in value of reserves.

Membership was down again, but by less than the figures seen in recent years – 2012 ended with almost 19,000 signed-up members of the RNA which, with just over 33,000 serving members gives a grand total of just over 52,000.

Looking at the details, for the first time in many years the RNA saw an increase in full members

(ex-Service), although a decline in associate members – in part a result of branch closures – is noted as a "cause for concern".

The conference will be held in the Concert Hall of St George's Hall, close to Lime Street Station and the (now fully-booked) Aldelphi Hotel, where most of the delegates and observers will be staying.

The Sunday Service will be held in the Church of Our Lady and St Nicholas – 'St Nick's', or the Sailors' Church, which overlooks the Mersey – and the parade which follows will proceed along the waterfront, ending at the statue of Capt Johnnie Walker, famous for his aggressive pursuit of U-boats during the Battle of The Atlantic.

Consort at Collingwood

VETERANS who were involved in the Yangtze Incident celebrated their final reunion with a trip to HMS Collingwood, Fareham.

More than 50 members from the HMS Consort Association, made up of ex-serving Royal Navy personnel and family who came in place of members who are no longer with us, visited the Phase 2 establishment for the day.

The trip was organised to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Korean War and acted as a final reunion for members who had served on either HMS Consort or HMS Amethyst.

On arrival, guests were welcomed by the training base's Executive Officer, Cdr Andy Phenna, in the Wardroom.

Once the annual catching up had taken place and light refreshments enjoyed, the visitors formed into groups and toured the base's facilities, including the Close Range Weapons Training Unit and the Bridge Simulator.

Dennis Mumford, an ex-Petty Officer who tried his hand at the General Purpose Machine Gun, said: "The facilities here are good."

"I was a Radar Operator and it's been 40 years since I did anything like that."

Part of the visit was a scheduled trip to Endeavour Building, which encompasses items from HMS Consort, including a map used by the crew at the time of the Incident, when HMS Amethyst came under fire from Communist forces on the Yangtze River in April 1949 and was trapped for ten weeks until she made a daring



● A visitor from the HMS Consort Association gets to grips with a weapons simulator at HMS Collingwood

dash downriver to freedom.

Consort was the ship Amethyst was due to relieve in Nanking, and she was also hit by shore batteries as she attempted to take the damaged Amethyst in tow.

More than 20 died in Amethyst, ten in Consort and three more in Black Swan and London, two other ships that attempted to reach the trapped sloop.

Veteran Jim Finch who was a Chief Gunnery Instructor and served in Consort between 1947 and 1949 spoke of his time onboard during the Yangtze Incident.

"I remember the first shell that hit the ship in the Petty Officers mess at deck level," he said.

"The shell scarred the deck and had it been a foot lower, I wouldn't be standing here today."

"It's interesting to see what weapons are in use today

compared with what we used – it's been fascinating."

The visitors met with students from the Maritime Warfare School who are training to become Warfare Officers, and also attended a short church service to pay respect and reflect on those who lost their lives in the war.

As their visit ended the veterans thanked staff for their efforts and presented Cdr Phenna with a copy of the book *Loyal and Steadfast, The Story of HMS Consort*.

S/M Terry Hodgkins, association secretary and reunion organiser, said: "It has been fantastic – everyone involved seems to have loved their time here."

"It's the biggest reunion I have seen and the highlight was most definitely the bridge simulator."

"In the 21 years we've been organising these this has been the best."

Mess dinner for former SAR crew

AN INVITATION to a special mess dinner has been issued to former Royal Naval Search and Rescue aircrew.

The Commanding Officer of 771 Naval Air Squadron is hosting the dinner, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of RN SAR, in the Wardroom at RN Air Station Culdrose on Friday May 31, 7pm for 7.30pm.

Rig will be Mess Undress/black tie, and the cost is £40 per head, with any profits going to the RN SAR 60K Fund.

Anyone interested in attending should contact Lt Alex Stevenson on 771nas-dsaro@mod.uk

Statue at heart of commemorations

THERE are well over 300 events taking place this year in Derry-Londonderry, the 2013 UK City of Culture – but one cluster of dates is of particular interest to Royal Navy veterans.

The city is one of three focal points for the Battle of the Atlantic 70th anniversary celebrations, along with London (May 8-13) and Liverpool (May 24-28).

Londonderry branch is the driving force behind anniversary events on May 10-12, with the unveiling and dedication of the Sailor Statue as one of the

highlights.

That takes place in Ebrington Square at 12.30pm on Saturday May 11, and will be followed by a band display.

Saturday evening sees the 70th Anniversary gala dinner in the Corinthian Ballroom of the City Hotel.

Friday's programme includes commemorations for HMS Laurentic in County Donegal, including a visit to Fort Dunree, overlooking the mouth of Lough Swilly, a Royal Navy haven during the Great War.

Sunday brings a parade, which musters at 10.15am, and at 11am a service of commemoration at All Saints' Church. After lunch a wreath will be cast onto the River Foyle at the Peace Bridge.

See June and July's *Navy News* for reports on commemorations, and for more details of events see www.royalnavy.mod.uk/News-and-Events/Special-Events/Battle-of-the-Atlantic



Lee leads Officers' Association

THE Officers' Association has announced the appointment of Lee Holloway as its new Chief Executive, who will succeed the current incumbent, Maj-Gen John Sutherland, on August 1.

Founded over 90 years ago, the Officers' Association is the only charity dedicated exclusively to supporting officers and ex-officers and their dependants from all three Services.

It achieves this by providing employment services for Service leavers and ex-serving officers at all stages of their working lives, and benevolence services in the form of financial and welfare support.

Lt Cdr Lee Holloway joined HMS Ganges in 1973 at the age of 15 as a Junior Seaman (2nd Class) and saw service in the Falklands in HMS Broadsword before being commissioned in 1986.

His final appointment was as Staff Operations Officer to Flag Officer Scotland and Northern Ireland (FOSNI) based in Faslane.

Leaving the Royal Navy in 1993 Lee has worked in the financial service sector and has extensive experience in the defence and security domain.

Since 2006 Lee, who holds a Masters degree from Cranfield University, has had the lead for business development within RUAG Electronics, based in Zurich.

Maj Gen Sutherland said: "This is an extremely testing time for serving and ex-serving officers."

"Lee Holloway's experience in the commercial sector, as well as his varied and impressive Naval career, brings the OA a new perspective."



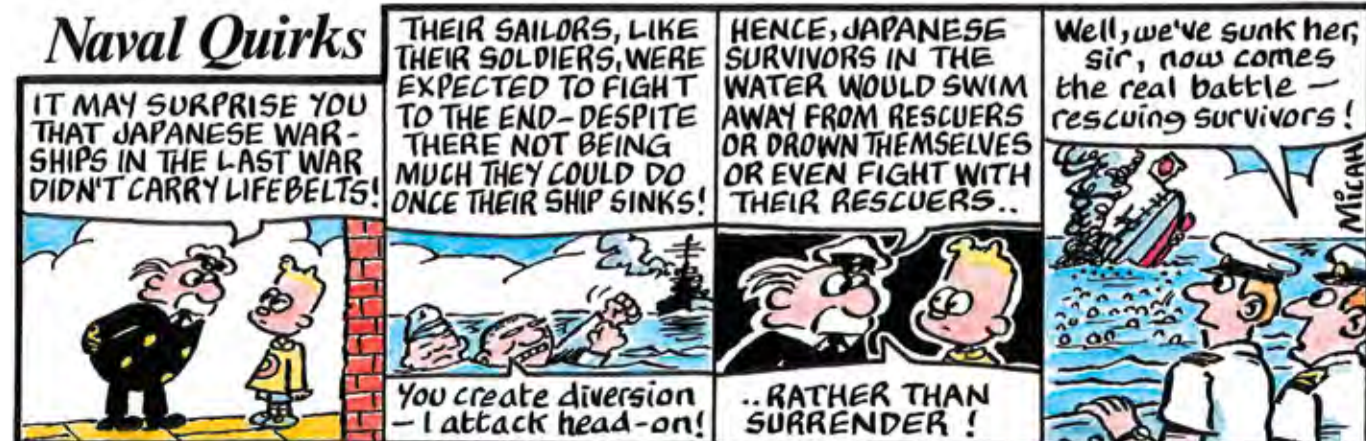
Don's 50th at Derby's 51st

AT THE 51st AGM of Derby branch a 50 Years Membership Certificate was presented to S/M Don Marshall by branch president Cdr Jerry Hall.

S/M Don (above) joined Derby shortly after it was formed and became an active member of the committee.

He took over the chairmanship of the branch during a difficult time, when the then Derby RNA Club was struggling to exist.

For his services he was previously awarded Life Membership and became a vice president of the branch.



↓ RNA HQ, Room 209, Semaphore Tower (PP70), HM Naval Base, Portsmouth PO1 3LT.
↓ admin@royalnavalassoc.com
↓ 023 9272 3747
↓ www.royal-naval-association.co.uk

Ajax veterans look to 75th anniversary



● Newport (Gwent) branch chairman S/M George Blackborow (right) presents the certificate to S/M Eddie Linton

Honour for Eddie

DURING their March meeting, members of Newport (Gwent) branch awarded honorary life membership to S/M Eddie Linton in recognition of his dedication and long service.

S/M Eddie was an 18-year-old able seaman serving in HMS Mourne when the River-class frigate was torpedoed by U-767 on June 15 1944.

Mourne, part of the Fifth Escort Group, was protecting the western flank of the D-Day beaches during Operation Neptune, the maritime element of the invasion.

The ship blew up immediately and fewer than 30 of Eddie's shipmates survived from a ship's company of 150.

After spending several hours in the water, the survivors were picked up and taken to Devonport.

Eddie suffered facial injuries and deafness, and was transferred to the Royal Naval Hospital at Stonehouse for treatment.

He was demobbed in 1947.

Diamond date

BLOXWICH branch celebrate their diamond jubilee on November 30.

A church service is planned at 6pm, to be followed by a dinner-dance at Walsall Football Club.

Shipmates and standard bearers are very welcome to attend – further details can be obtained from branch secretary Christine Hinder on 01922 473613.

NEXT year sees the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate, where an allied fleet consisting of HM Ships Ajax, Achilles and Exeter took on the German pocket battleship Admiral Graf Spee.

The ships, under the command of Cdre (later Admiral Sir) Henry Harwood, provided Britain with its first victory of World War 2, lifting the spirit of the nation and setting the standard for future battles.

The action also featured in the film of the same name.

As part of the anniversary commemorations, the HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association has joined forces with the River Plate Veterans and Families Association.

Events will include the dedication of a memorial in the national Memorial Arboretum at Arewas in Staffordshire next April.



● Ajax veterans at their 2012 reunion with their ship's name plate – which brought back happy memories of time spent cleaning it... From left, John Hitchen, Bill Slader, Joe Collis (who served in a pre-war commission, and who died a fortnight after the reunion), Mike Turner, Kenneth Byram, Dennis Talbot and Roy Turner

The memorial patron is Capt Stephen Harwood, the younger son of Henry Harwood.

The associations have set themselves a target of £15,000 and, whilst well on their way, more

is needed.

One member has donated prints of a line drawing of the later HMS Ajax – a Leander-class frigate – which are available as a limited print through the website www.hmsajax.org

for £20 including post and packaging.

In June 2014 members, families and friends will visit the town of Ajax in Ontario, Canada, for a series of civic functions.

The town of Ajax, which is named after the wartime cruiser, has a long association with both her and the later frigate, which visited in 1976.

On the 75th anniversary of the battle – Saturday December 13 2014 – a luncheon will be held in Portsmouth.

Anyone who would like to become a member of the association, would like to make a donation or generally become involved can do so by contacting the association through the website www.hmsajax.org or by email to h.m.s.ajax.rpv@gmail.com, or by writing to chairman Peter Danks at 104 Kelsey Avenue, Southbourne, Emsworth PO10 8NQ.

Leanders federation is formed

LEANDER-class frigates saw service from 1963 until the 1990s, and thousands of men served in the 26 ships of the class commissioned by the Royal Navy.

In addition it saw service in Australia (where it was known as the River class), New Zealand, the Netherlands, India, Pakistan, Ecuador, Chile and Indonesia.

In the UK there are now a number of ship's companies associations carrying forward the names of some of these ships.

However, some ships are not represented, and people who served in them have no association as either the groups are aimed at individual specialisations or a specific commission.

For some time now it has troubled S/M Colin Bates, secretary of the HMS Dido Association, that there were Leander crewmen with nowhere to go and no group to join, so after discussions and some thought, at Colin's behest there have been two small meetings at the Nautical Club in Birmingham.

'Leander men' came to the meeting not to represent individual ships but with a mind to put together a federation of Leander-class frigates to support the various associations or the smaller groups and the individuals who have no group or associations with regard to directing them toward an association to which they can affiliate.

It was proposed that the federation should promote the activities of the different individual groups and associations.

By co-ordinating and disseminating this information it allows more people to become involved and that is the life blood of all associations – a stronger, unified voice can bring many advantages.

Part of the aim of the federation was fulfilled on the day of the last meeting, as one of the people attending had served aboard Leanders but had no association, and it was noted that there were others who could not attend but were fully supportive.

It was also suggested that one purpose of the federation should be keeping the role of the Leander ships and crews during the Cold War and other modern-day conflicts in the public mind.

In the planning is a two-night federation cruise from Liverpool to Dublin with runs ashore in Dublin.

Scheduled for December 19 2014, it is open to all comers, their wives and partners, of all ship's companies of the Leander-class associations as groups, and as individuals.

The cruise is to take place on the Fred Olsen lines MS Boudicca, which at 679ft long and 28,372 tons tends to dwarf the Leanders (372ft, up to 3,300 tons) and is probably more comfortable than the bunks the sailors used to have.

There is a website which is available to see and is being updated; you can find it at www.federationofleanderclassfrigates.co.uk

Speakers waiting

THE Apostleship of the Sea – also known as Stella Maris – is a charity which supports seafarers worldwide.

It provides practical care through a network of port chaplains and volunteer ship visitors.

In the UK there is a team of 14 port chaplains, any of whom would be very pleased to visit any RNA branch and speak to shipmates about their work.

For more information, and to arrange a talk, please contact John Green at johngreen@apostleshipofthesea.org.uk or telephone 07505 653801.

For further information on the charity see website www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk or facebook page www.facebook.com/AoS.GB

Medal arrives in the nick of time

ONE veteran's Arctic Star arrived in the nick of time.

S/M Eric Lawton hoped to get his medal before the annual reunion of the HMS Indefatigable Association in Portsmouth – and it duly arrived just days before the Yorkshire-based veteran headed down to Portsmouth to see his old oppos.

It is something of a pilgrimage for 88-year-old Eric and his family – and this year saw five generations of Lawton boys travel down to the South Coast from Halifax, as his great great grandson Ethan was born last July.

Eric was an apprentice plasterer before joining the Royal Navy as a stoker in August 1943.

He served on several ships, including aircraft carrier HMS Indefatigable during Russian convoys.

After the war he returned to the building trade and later started his own

business in the late 1950s, retiring at the age of 70.

Eric is a member of several associations, including the RNA, and regularly attends meetings in Yorkshire, Birmingham and Portsmouth.

The latter is the annual meeting of the HMS Indefatigable Association, which is generally held over three days in Portsmouth in March.

Although he is not that mobile he still manages to get to many monthly meetings, and he still joins in parades using his disability scooter (pictured right).

It is not just Eric who makes the effort to get to Portsmouth for the March get-together – his elder son Paul usually makes the long trek south from Orkney, but this year flew in from Alicante in Spain to be with him.

Eric's son, grandson and great grandson followed him into the building trade.



Area award for Pat



MARKET Harborough branch were joined at their most recent meeting by S/M Alan Fletcher, secretary of Area 8 (left of picture).

Alan was there to present S/M Pat Middleton, secretary of the branch, with the Shipmate of the Year Award for Area 8.

Pat is an ex-petty officer communications who served at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, the Admiralty and in Malta Comcen between 1956 and 1962.

Also in the picture is the chairman of Market Harborough branch, S/M Mike Middleton (right).

Members of the branch meet up at the Angel Hotel in the town on the first Sunday of every month at 7.15pm.

Surprise for Yvonne

MEMBERS of Falmouth branch enjoyed a busy March, beginning with a party of eight attending the annual Area 4 reunion at Bideford.

The highlight was the presentation to branch social secretary S/M Yvonne Burdekin of the Jacqui Ward Memorial Trophy, which is presented annually to 'the lady member of No 4 Area who has contributed most to the aims and objectives of the RNA.'

Nominated by branch chairman S/M Mick Stevens, Yvonne was totally unaware of her nomination until the presentation was made (pictured right).

Members also enjoyed a tour of RN Air Station Culdrose, culminating in lunch in the Wardroom.

Numbers attending were limited, but the branch is hoping to arrange a second visit for those unable to make it first time round.

The branch monthly meeting saw members of Cornwall RAFA join shipmates for a talk by David Spencer-Evans, chairman of the Spitfire Society, who gave a talk on the development of the aircraft and its maritime version, the Seafire.

There was a good turnout of shipmates for the parade to mark the 71st anniversary of the raid on St Nazaire, which this year was combined with marking the 70th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic.

Led by the Volunteer Band of HMS Seahawk, the



parade marched from The Moor to Prince of Wales Pier for a short service and wreath-laying, followed by a march through the town to the Watersports Centre for a civic reception.

And the pace looks unlikely to slacken – events on the horizon include Cornwall Armed Forces Day in Falmouth (June 22), Sea Sunday (July 21), the fireworks boat trip in August and the branch Trafalgar Dinner on October 18.

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in our March edition (right) was HMS Loch Killisport, which helped fight the fire on board Italian tanker MV Argea Prima in May 1955.

Tony Pullan of Wanborough correctly identified both ships and wins our £50 prize.

This month's mystery ship (above) played an active wartime role in both the Mediterranean (including the fabled Pedestal convoy to Malta) and the Far East, being damaged in several attacks.

After the war she carried a legendary British sports squad to Australia – and the successful team took their nickname from the ship, which was scrapped in the mid-1950s.

(1) What was the name of the ship, and (2) what was the sport played by the travelling sportsmen?

We have removed her pennant number from the image.

Complete the coupon and send



it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH. Coupons giving the correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner. Closing date for entries is June 10. 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 July edition. The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 219

Name

Address

My answers (1)

(2)

Green shoots seen in the Logs Branch

THE annual Logistics Branch Roadshow rolled out in February and March to update logisticians across the country on what is happening in the branch.

Branch Manager (Cdr Ellie Ablett) and Career Managers (Cdr Phil Waterhouse, Lt Cdr Dave Johnston, WO1 Paul Dungey and PO(CS) Rab Allan) travelled over 2,000 miles and briefed over a fifth of the branch in Faslane, Northwood, Yeovil, Abbey Wood, Plymouth, Culdrose, Portsmouth and on board HMS Illustrious.

Not bad considering over half of the branch are assigned to seagoing units or serving on operational tours overseas.

The team was supported by the regional Career Management Cells (CMCs), who provided briefings on junior ratings' career management issues.

Chief Naval Logistics Officer Vice Admiral David Steel and his deputy, Cdr Mike Bullock, were particularly interested to hear the feedback and questions raised.

The key message was to demonstrate the green shoots of recovery and genuine optimism for the future, following 24 months that have seen two tranches of the redundancy programme, very high augmentation requirements and painful gapping and churn as change programmes deliver their post reductions in every part of defence.

The Logistics Branch continues to be held in high regard in the joint and maritime arenas, reflected in the continued demand for logisticians, including operational tours and new roles in support of Royal Marines.

Another sign of the recovery was the offer of Extended Career (EC) for the first time since 2010 to some cadres within the branch and the increased use of Extensions of Service (EoS) by



Drafty's corner

Career Managers.

Good promotion prospects at all ranks/rates and steady recruitment levels remain the priority.

However, having quickly reduced the overall size of the branch as directed following SDSR10, the branch is now in a position to offer opportunities for further service.

The 2013 EC signal was issued on March 7 and a further tranche of EC may be offered following the promotion signals this month and next.

While EoS does not result in the individual being eligible for promotion, it does make them eligible for EC and once on EC they may become eligible for promotion once more.

The Logs Branch roadshow presentation is on the Maritime Logistics Gateway on the defence intranet at this link: <http://artdteams.tafmisweb.tafmis.rmil.uk/teams/dcl/dmls/default.aspx>

To arrange a visit by the team to your unit, contact WO1 Paul Dungey (93832 8785/02392 628785).



● Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral David Steel powers up for the RNFT strength test, conducted under the watchful eyes of Temeraire's CPOPT Baz Sloan and Lt Cdr Arty Shaw
Picture: LA(Phot) Guy Pool

2SL and Flags set standards

THE new Royal Navy Fitness Test (RNFT) has been put under the scrutiny of the Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral David Steel.

Joining members of the staff from HMS Temeraire, the admiral conducted the new RNFT, pleading his relative age as mitigation for what he anticipated would not be a performance of any merit.

Against stiff competition, especially from his Flag Lieutenant, Capt Simon Long RM, he didn't do too badly, with an 'Excellent' pass – compared to Simon's 'Very Good' pass.

Introduced in January, the test follows extensive research by the Institute of Naval Medicine into the type of tasks expected from all members of the Naval Service, male or female.

The new RNFT is made up of two parts; the old 'beep' test (or Rockport Walk or mile-and-a-half run) and the new upper-body strength test, involving carrying two power bags of 20kg (each roughly the weight allowed for a suitcase in the hold of an aeroplane) over four shuttles of 15 metres within one minute.

The strength test simulates lifting two drums of 'AFFF' firefighting foam between various locations on a ship at sea.

Vice Admiral Steel, who is a keen runner, was in no doubt as to the suitability of the new test:

"The bottom line is that the RN fitness test needed adjusting to reflect what is required of us at sea," he said.

"During an emergency, the requirement to move loads, such as AFFF drums around ships at speed is fundamental.

"The new RNFT ensures we are capable of undertaking such a task, safely."

The changes made to the fitness test come at a time when the whole way in which the Navy promotes fitness and the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle is under review.

Admiral Steel said: "I'm keen to promote policies that ensure not only that we are fit to do our jobs but also that we look after ourselves more generally.

"Being physically fit is an obvious requirement for all of us in the Armed Forces and given all the facilities available for PT and AT, we should not lose any opportunity in using them."

Running alongside Admiral Steel and his Flag Lieutenant was the CO of HMS Temeraire, Cdr Russ Freeman, along with Regional Physical Development Officer Lt Cdr Joe Wood and ET(ME) Liam Bickerton, representing a true cross-section of ages.

All recorded a very high standard of fitness.

Lt Cdr Arty Shaw, a key driver of the new test, said: "We've seen a big shift in support, with PTIs being given the resources to provide and conduct intervention training. Commanders are being very supportive to those on remedial fitness packages.

"But at the end of the day, it's all about encouraging our people to get fitter – a fit body means a fit mind and a better job done all round."

Careers opportunities in welfare support team

THE recruitment process is under way for volunteers for sideways entry into the Family Service Branch (FSB).

FSB is the Service element of Naval Personal and Family Service (NPFSS) and Royal Marines Welfare (RMW) and provides specialist welfare support and advice to Service personnel, their families and to the chain of command.

Following a rigorous selection procedure and a seven-month training course commencing in January 2014, candidates can expect to be involved in a wide variety of work that might include bereavements, physical illness, working with casualties, relationship issues, child-centred concerns (including child protection), coping with

separation, mental ill health and community-based initiatives.

NPFSS and RMW have offices in most Royal Navy and Royal Marines establishments and are attached to Joint and RNR units throughout the country.

There are career opportunities for secondment to social work degree-level qualification and progression for commissioned rank.

The minimum entry level is Leading Hand passed by Petty Officer who have completed Senior Rates Leadership Course.

Full details are in RNTM 093/13, including the requirement for personnel to obtain manning clearance from source branch before applying.

There are no vacancies for RMW in this recruitment round.

Managing the human dimension Milestone achieved

A NEW senior MOD post has been established to manage the 'human capability' of the Ministry of Defence.

The appointment follows the recommendations of the Defence Reform Review, which stated that higher priority was needed to look

after people working within the department, defining personnel as a vital strategic resource.

The role of Chief of Defence Personnel (CDP) has been taken up by Lt Gen Andrew Gregory who started work early last month.

He will take on all the current functions of the DCDS (Pers and Training) in respect of policy on Service personnel and their training.

He will also own the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) which will come under the Defence Business Services organisation in April 2014.

While the first CDP is uniformed, the appointment of CDP will rotate between the three Services and Civil Service.

Under the Whole Force Concept, civilian personnel policy will transfer to CDP in April 2014.

CDP will continue to develop and take forward the work on the New Employment Model for both the Regular and Reserve components of the Armed Forces.

The responsibilities of the role of Chief of Defence Personnel can be found in DIB2013/23.

JOINT Forces Command (JFC) is now fully-manned and ready to fulfil the entire range of its responsibilities in support of defence's objectives for current operations and future contingencies.

JFC declared Full Operating Capability (FOC) on April 2 and marked the significant milestone at Northwood Headquarters in North London.

A key task for the Joint Forces Command is to help ensure that lessons and experience learnt on front-line operations are absorbed into the development of future concepts and capabilities, helping the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force to build on their strengths in the future.

The creation of the JFC was recommended by the Defence Reform Review, as part of the most significant programme of change across the Ministry of Defence in a generation.

JFC brings together over 20,000 military and civilian personnel to ensure that joint capabilities are correctly prioritised and prepared for operations.

In addition to thousands of personnel working in Cyprus, Gibraltar, the Falkland Islands and the British Indian Ocean Territory, Joint Forces Command also includes the Defence Academy at Shrivenham in Wiltshire and Defence Intelligence and cyber capabilities.

About 10,000 other sailors, soldiers and airmen deployed on operations, such as those in Afghanistan, continue to be commanded by the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ), just one part of the new organisation.

For more details on the organisations that make up the JFC and their full range of responsibilities see DIB 2013/25 on the Defence Intranet.

X-Factor boost

THE Chancellor's announcement on X-factor pay came just as April's *Navy News* went to press, but the news deserves our attention.

The increase of 0.5 per cent to X-factor pay will be implemented with effect from May 1.

Galaxy 06/13 and DIB 2013/19 update the revised rates of Service pay, including the one per cent increase announced on March 14 which became effective on April 1.

X-factor is a pensionable addition to base pay that recognises the relative disadvantages of conditions of service experienced by members of the Armed Forces compared with civilian employment.

The 0.5 per cent increase to X-factor will apply to Regular Forces, mobilized reservists, Full Commitment Full Time Reserve Service and the Gibraltar Regiment Regulars.

The level of X-factor for Military Provost Guard Service, Home Commitment and Limited Commitment Full Time Reserve Service remains unchanged.

Portal for People

A NEW information service called The Helm has been launched for Naval Service personnel on the RN Intranet site.

Clicking the icon of the ship's wheel on the home page of the intranet site will access the 'People Portal'.

The portal is designed as a one-stop shop for all personnel-related subjects.

The Second Sea Lord and his staff are working on a wide range of initiatives to deliver the best possible benefits and terms and conditions of service in the context of wider challenges.

Keeping Naval Service Personnel and their families informed is one of 2SL's top priorities.

Galaxy 11/13 provides more information.

Duke Class

THE Duke of York unveiled a plaque at the new Waterfront Education and Resettlement Centre and met several sailors studying online at the facility at Portsmouth Naval Base.

Located close to HMS Victory, the centre has 26 computers available for e-learning courses, free internet access, dedicated tutor rooms and offices for staff.

Lt Cdr Beki Lancaster, in charge of the education centre, said: "The Duke was clearly impressed with the range of opportunities available and the fact that it is being achieved by such a small dedicated team."

E-learners can undertake maths and English courses for promotion and other studies including NVQ and IT qualifications.

Tutor support from qualified staff is on hand with advice available on personal and professional development – from GCSEs to a Master's degree.

At HMS Nelson's accommodation site, a twin facility offering similar education and resettlement opportunities was also refurbished.

Get in touch

To feature in the *Navy News*' Two-Six pages contact Navy Command Media – Internal Comms Staff Officer:

Lt Cdr Emma McCormick, 93832 8809, FLEET-DCS-INFO-IC 302

Navy Media and Comms were due to change all their role titles and email addresses as Navy News went to press.

The new Internal Comms email will be: (Dii) NAVY-MEDIACOMMS-IC-TL or (External) NAVYMEDIACOMMS-IC-TL@mod.uk

In the May edition of TwoSix TV:

- 1SL talks about the future of the Naval Service
- Fighting Arm focuses on the RFA and Submarine Service
- Introduction of the new alcohol breathalyser
- Battle of Atlantic Commemoration
- Personnel Support Brief included

Available on DVD through the Divisional Chain, online on the Two Six TV YouTube channel and via The Helm on the RN Defence Intranet.

Preserved Benefits: key considerations

THE Forces Pension Society (FPS) answers your questions about Preserved Benefits:

Q: What age do you believe you should be entitled to receive the preserved pension benefits payable to you as a result of your Armed Forces service?

A: There are various ages that such awards are payable: first, there are those who served on the AFPS75 pension scheme – they receive their terminal benefits at age 60 for all service given up to, and including, April 5 2006.

For service given from April 6 2006 to your exit date, preserved benefits earned for that portion of service are payable from age 65.

If you gave service on the AFPS05 pension scheme then preserved benefits are payable at age 65, and for those with service under the new AFPS15 scheme who leave with preserved benefits, they will become payable when the individual reaches State Pension age (whenever that might be).

Q: How do I make sure I receive my preserved benefits when they become due?

A: You must ensure that you contact the Service Personnel and Veterans' Agency in Glasgow, approximately three months before they become due.

Let them know that you are due to receive your preserved benefits in three months' time, and ask them how would they like you to claim those benefits.

Q: What happens to my preserved benefits if I should die before they become payable?

A: Let us look at each scheme in turn:

AFSP75 pension scheme

If you are not in a marriage or civil partnership on the date of your death, then your preserved pension will die with you.

However, the lump sum is payable and will be passed to your estate to be divided in accordance with your wishes in your will (make sure you draw one up if you have not already done so).

If you are in a marriage or civil partnership then 50 per cent of the value of your pension on your date of death will be paid to your wife or civil partner.

AFPS05 pension scheme

If you are not in a marriage or civil partnership or a relationship that would not deem your partner (same sex or opposite sex) to be classified as an 'eligible partner', then your pension will die with you, but your lump sum will remain payable into your estate.

If you are in a marriage or civil partnership, or a relationship that would deem your partner (same sex or opposite sex) to be classified as an 'eligible partner', then your spouse, civil partner or eligible partner will receive a dependant's pension valued at up to 62.5 per cent of your pension entitlement on your date of death.

AFPS15 pension scheme

This is identical to the AFSP05 scheme except that there is no automatic lump sum payable.

All Armed Forces personnel, serving or retired, are eligible to join the FPS. If you would like to join, see www.forcespensionsociety.org or call us on 020 7820 9988.

New RN system is step forward

THE Service Complaints Commissioner, Dr Susan Atkins, has published a critical assessment of the Services complaints system.

Her fifth annual report urges the MOD to grip the outstanding issues.

However, the Commissioner has noted that the Royal Navy demonstrated the best record for dealing with complaints, having changed their processes.

The new RN system is focussed on resolution, admitting mistakes and seeking to rectify the problems, and causes of problems, as speedily as possible.

Dr Atkins commented that the Navy had significantly improved the timeliness of its decisions since the Director of Naval Legal Services was given personal responsibility for complaints.

While the majority of Naval Service complaints are about personnel administration, the Navy has diverted more resources to resolve complaints and in 2011, 78 per cent of cases at Level 2 (Navy Command level) were upheld in whole or in part.

In 2012 no cases at level 2 were appealed to Level 3.

Key conclusions in the 2012

report note that five years since the establishment of the Service Complaints System, across the Services, it is still not working efficiently, effectively or fairly.

The Commissioner said confidence in the system is a key issue with more anonymous reports of bullying, harassment and discrimination and fewer formal complaints of that nature recorded.

Fear of the adverse consequences to the individual complaining is cited, while she said that "the system is neither swift, nor easy to use, focusing on process rather than justice and losing sight of the individual in many cases."

Although a 24-week timeline target was set for the resolution of all complaints, the Commissioner said she was not optimistic about the Services' ability to meet the timeline under the current complex system, which becomes particularly complicated when Service personnel were employed in an appointment where their Line Manager was from a different Service.

In compiling her 2012 report Dr Atkins visited many Royal Navy units and establishments, travelling out to the Falkland

Islands to visit ships and personnel deployed, to better understand the way of life and conditions that Service personnel work under.

Amongst the 15 specific recommendations the 2012 report makes is a repeated call from both 2010 and 2011 for an Armed Forces Ombudsman.

Despite being endorsed by the House of Commons Defence Committee, this recommendation has not yet been acted upon.

She also recommends that an Ombudsman should have the powers to deal with complaints by families of personnel about how the Service person has been treated whilst in the Armed Forces.

The Ministry of Defence welcomed the report and is considering fully with the Services, the findings and recommendations made and will provide a formal response in due course.

The MOD said it was committed to the role of the Commissioner who is independent from the Chain of Command and has a right of access to the Secretary of State.

To read the report in full, see <http://armedforcescomplaints.independent.gov.uk/>

NAVAL FAMILIES FEDERATION

Fine reward for award-winning team

GOOD NEWS from the NFF offices, (Emma Prince reports).

We are delighted to announce that we have been awarded £343,500 by the government, from the fines levied on banks for attempting to manipulate the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) benchmark.

We will use the funds to reach further afield and engage with families living in their own homes all around the country.

We also intend to highlight the work of the Armed Forces Covenant at a local level by engaging with local authorities, NHS trusts and school governors.

An award-winning team

We are also delighted to have received news that the NFF has been awarded the Second Sea Lord's Commendation. This prestigious award acknowledges our achievements and our commitment to support families, and hope that the endorsement will strengthen our position as we continue to take families' concerns forward to policy makers. We are over the moon about the award.

A Year in the Life of the NFF

Look out for our annual report *A Year in the Life of the NFF* in the next edition of *Homeport*. The report is our chance to inform you of what we have been doing and who we have been talking to

Association) as part of a rebrand aimed at improving awareness.

Families have always been at the heart of what SSAFA does and they have been put at the centre of the new brand – the new strapline highlights the charity's commitment to families as well as those who serve.

The change of name is supported by a new logo (pictured).

SSAFA provides lifelong support to anyone who is currently serving, or has ever served, in the Armed Forces and their families.

They can provide practical, emotional and financial support.

Proposed new childcare scheme and how may it affect you

The government is proposing a new childcare voucher scheme. It is receiving a lot of positive press but if only one parent is working, you will not qualify.

Our counterparts in the RAF Families Federation have written a helpful guide comparing the current scheme with the proposed new scheme:

Current scheme

Childcare vouchers can be used by parents with children up to the age of 15 years (16 if disabled);

It is only available via employers (the Armed Forces are signed up to the scheme);

The scheme can save parents over £1,000 a year on childcare;

Payment for childcare comes from pre-tax and National Insurance income, for example: £1,000 of salary-after tax and National Insurance is only worth approximately £700. The same £1,000 in vouchers gives a gain of £300;

The vouchers are available per parent so two working parents could double the gain;

Basic (20 per cent) taxpayer: £55/week vouchers, maximum annual gain £930.

Higher (40 per cent) taxpayer: £28/week voucher, maximum annual gain £620.

Top (50 per cent pre April 6 2013) taxpayer: £22/week voucher, maximum annual gain £600;

The number of children has

no relevance; the limits are the same whether you have one child or several;

Vouchers aren't specific to each child and have a long expiry date;

The vouchers are usable at any nursery, playgroup, nanny, child-minder or au pair as long as they are registered and regulated.

Proposed new scheme from autumn 2015

Some parents in the UK will be able to claim back up to £1,200 a year for each child. That is 20 per cent of childcare costs up to a maximum of £6,000 per child per year. For every 80p families pay in, the government will put in 20p up to the annual limit on costs for each child of £1,200;

Parents will be able to open an online voucher account with a voucher provider and have their payments topped up by government;

The plan is to phase the new system in from autumn 2015, with children under five helped in the first year. The scheme will then build up over time to include all children under the age of 12;

To be eligible, both parents will have to work – or the one parent in the case of lone parent families. In two-parent families where one parent does not work, families will not receive support;

Each parent must be earning less than £150,000 a year;

Vouchers would extend to include self-employed people for the first time;

Parents will be able to use the vouchers for any Ofsted-regulated childcare in England and the equivalent bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland;

Full details of the new scheme will be proposed in a consultation before being finalised.

Changeover

Parents who already claim childcare vouchers through the old scheme will be able to continue to do so if they wish, but it will be closed to new claimants who will be moved to the new tax-free childcare scheme.

This new scheme has the potential to have a negative impact

on Service families where many are placed in a position where it is just not possible or practical for both parents to work.

You may wish to consider the option of signing up to the existing scheme sooner rather than later. You can register at www.modchildcare.co.uk

If you have any questions about your current childcare vouchers contact Sodexo: 01276 687 000.

The Partner Employment Project

A two-year project on partner employment (married and unmarried) has been launched.

It will look at partner training and education, including placement and career development services; access to national employment support, including interaction with national childcare initiatives; and employment support to partners during the Service person's transition.

The project aims to strengthen the financial position of Armed Forces families, leading to improved domestic stability and reduced family welfare concerns, and greater home ownership.

This will enable the Service to better retain personnel, support the wider New Employment Model offer, and support the Armed Forces Covenant by ensuring Service personnel and their families face no disadvantage. A Recommendation Paper will be produced by the end of October 2013. Check our website for project updates.

SFA – local assistance

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and MODern Housing Solutions (MHS) recognise the need to provide a means for Service families to talk face-to-face with their staff about accommodation issues.

Following successful trials, Customer Assistance Points (CAPs) are being established in key locations around the country. The CAPs are in addition to the DIO Housing Allocations Service Centre (HASC) and the MHS Helpdesk already in place. In addition to the existing CAPs

in Plymouth, Larkhill and High Wycombe, approval has been granted for a further 11 CAPs, located at: RAF Brize Norton, RAF Cosford, Catterick, Portsmouth, RAF Marham, RAF Waddington, RAF Wyton, London, Colchester, Shorncliffe and Aldershot.

For more information on your nearest CAP contact your local HIVE; a link to the RN/RM HIVEs is available via our homepage: www.nff.org.uk

SFA: Free safety checks to protect your family

If you are living in Service Families Accommodation (SFA) you benefit from a comprehensive repair and maintenance service that includes regular, free safety checks – such as checking gas appliances.

The MOD has a legal obligation to carry out these inspections and occupants are therefore required to provide access as required by your Licence to Occupy.

It is also in the interests of the safety of your family.

However, some families continue to fail to permit access to contractors. If you fail to permit access or you miss a service appointment you will be left a warning card.

If this happens it is essential that you ring the number on the card or contact your maintenance Help Desk immediately to arrange a new appointment.

Safety checks protect your family, so please make sure you are around to allow access or ring the maintenance Helpdesk to rearrange an appointment.

See www.nff.org.uk, which is regularly updated. We are also on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Alternatively e-mail: editor@nff.org.uk to subscribe to our quarterly *Homeport* magazine, or e-mail info@nff.org.uk for our e-update sent every other month.

Contact us

We look forward to hearing from you on: admin@nff.org.uk or telephone: 023 9265 4374. Postal correspondence can be sent to NFF, Castaway House, 311 Twyford Avenue, Portsmouth PO2 8RN.

Where to look

- Galaxy 11 – Launch of RN People Portal
- Galaxy 10 – 1SL Intent
- Galaxy 09 – 1SL Hauldown Message
- Galaxy 08 – Naval Service Casualty Cell
- Galaxy 07 – Joint Strike Fighter Basing
- Galaxy 06 – Update on the Pay Rise and X-Factor Awards
- DIB 18/13 – Successor to CDS appointed
- DIB 19/13 – Chancellor's Budget Statement – X-Factor
- DIB 20/13 – Publication of Service Complaints Commissioner's fifth annual report
- DIB 21/13 – Armed Forces Day –100 Days to Go
- DIB 22/13 – Chancellor's Budget Statement – Public Sector measures
- DIB 23/13 – PUS and VCDS define of the 3* Chief of Defence Personnel
- DIB 24/13 – The New Operating Model for Defence
- DIB 25/13 – Joint Forces Command becomes fully operational
- DIB 26/13 – New arrangements for Performance Management
- DIB 27/13 – Red Tape Challenge

RNTMs

- RNTM 072/13 – RN Aptitude Dates for volunteers to serve with 148 (Meiktila) Cdo FO Bty RA
- RNTM 076/13 – Terms of Service – Update on the use of Accelerated Notice Periods in the Naval Service
- RNTM 077/13 – UK Search and Rescue (UK SAR) Aircrew Managed Transition
- RNTM 083/13 – Fires and Floods reported in HM Ships, Submarines and RFAs – Analysis for 2012
- RNTM 084/13 – Pregnancy Testing on Female Submariners
- RNTM 088/13 – Naval Service Casualty Cell (NSCC)
- RNTM 091/13 – RN Submarine Command Open Golf Championship 2013
- RNTM 094/13 – Financial Awareness Briefings by the Royal British Legion
- RNTM 095/13 – Survival Evasion Resistance Extraction (SERE) Level A Training DVD – Updated Mar 13

DINs

- DIN2013DIN01-075 – LGBT Conference, June 28 2013
- DIN2013DIN01-074 – Armed Forces Compensation Scheme medical expenses provision
- DIN2013DIN05-015 – Formation of Joint Forces Command Global Administration Unit (JFCGAU)
- DIN2013DIN01-050 – RN and RM Officer Training Regulations
- DIN2013DIN01-053 – Long Service Advance of Pay Review of LSAP Waiver Premium
- DIN2013DIN01-056 – JHC restructuring
- DIN2013DIN01-058 – Terms of Service – Use of Accelerated Notice Periods in the Naval Service
- DIN2013DIN01-063 – Armed Forces Covenant (Libor) Fund
- DIN2013DIN07-059 – Organisation of International Events for Volunteer Reserve Forces
- DIN2013DIN10-020 – RN Golf Championships
- DIN2013DIN10-022 – RNRM Angling (Sea Boat) Championships

Tackling red tape

TIRED of bureaucracy? Not as efficient in your day-to-day working as you could be? Is there a way these blockers could be resolved, removed or reduced?

The Red Tape Challenge has been launched to submit ideas and proposed solution through GEMS Online – see DIB27/2013 for more details.

Register with the site to submit a suggestion. Once received, the Red Tape Challenge campaign team will work with the owner of that area to assess the idea.

If approved an implementation plan will be developed. As with other GEMS ideas, reward and recognition options are available.

Contact Stuart Laws, at Transformation-DRUBBI-6@mod.uk



Lifelong support for our Forces and their families

on behalf of RN and RM families.

The summer edition of the magazine will be out in early June.

SSAFA Forces Help changes its name

The Armed Forces charity SSAFA Forces Help has changed its name to SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families



Puncher pair visit home

IT MAY only have been a brief visit, but for Lt Chris Stevens, it was a return to his roots.

Chris (above) is the Commanding Officer of HMS Puncher, the Universities Royal Naval Unit's fast patrol vessel for universities in London.

He grew up in Weymouth, Dorset, attending Budmouth Technology College before joining Dartmouth in 2004.

So it was something of a special occasion when Chris sailed Puncher into Weymouth in company with HMS Explorer.

They berthed in the vicinity of the Royal Dorset Yacht Club, and were joined by HMS Dasher shortly afterwards.

The ships were undertaking their Easter deployment, with Weymouth being the first of 14 ports the ships were due to visit along the south coast of the UK, the Channel Islands and northern France.

"I was immensely proud to be able to bring my ship and crew into my home town of Weymouth," said Chris.

"I have very strong roots in south Dorset, and this felt like a proper homecoming for me."

The patrol vessels carry a full-time RN crew of five, augmented by up to 12 university students at any one time.

But it was no cruise – the deployment allowed some 20 students in total to put in practice what they have learned on shorter deployments and drill nights with their URNU, including seamanship and navigation.

One student in Puncher was Mid Angus Francis-Coleman, who also grew up near Weymouth.

He said: "Although I have been to Weymouth before in HMS Puncher, it is still a great feeling to return to my home town and I am proud to wear the Naval uniform in a town that would not normally be visited by an RN warship."

Snowbound group exploit Olympic link

BIRMINGHAM URNU's annual weekend away at the University of Birmingham's outward bound centre in the Lake District turned into an adventure for the 30 midshipmen, their training officers, coxswain and Commanding Officer.

The university maintains a 45-bed adventurous training centre at Coniston Water near the village of Torver, which the URNU booked for a weekend.

Unfortunately, the isolated location of the Priestly Centre was almost their undoing...

"We had tried to arrive early in the Lake District to avoid the heavy snow forecast, but the snow came through quicker than expected," said Mid Chris Rigge.

"When we were about ten miles away from the centre, the road ahead was blocked and impassable because of the snow.

"We gave some assistance to other motorists who also found themselves stuck, but we couldn't

get up the hill ourselves, so we turned back to the last village and waited for the Boss to arrive in the second van."

CO Lt Si Shaw takes up the story: "When I arrived at Greenodd, the snow was already pretty thick and showing no signs of abating.

"The coxswain and I got everyone to the nearest pub to warm up – by chance the pub was called the Ship Inn – whilst we discussed plans B, C and D for the weekend if we couldn't get to our accommodation – to be honest it was almost like a leadership task from BRNC..."

"The situation at this point was looking bleak.

"We were stuck in an isolated village, with the road to the AT centre now closed, the students were in the pub and the roads to the nearest town were increasingly hazardous in the now-blizzard conditions.

"We elected to tell the

third vehicle to turn back for Birmingham as they were still on the M6."

By this point, the local police had set up a road-block near to where the two vehicles were parked – but then fortune smiled down upon the URNU party.

"The Boss went down to talk to the police on the road-block and, by the slimmest of chances, in the middle of nowhere in Cumbria, the Boss knew the policeman manning it," said Mid Charlie Edwards.

"As the CO approached the police, one of them turned round and said 'Simon, what are you doing here?'"

"PC Reed had served in Exploit during Operation Olympics off Weymouth during the summer as the embarked police.

"The Boss and coxswain discussed the situation with PC Reed and he explained during snowy conditions Cumbria Police hired Land Rovers from a local garage.

Etiquette education

STUDENTS of Wales URNU hosted their annual Martinique Mess Dinner in the Marble Hall of Cardiff's City Hall.

Wales URNU's Martinique dinner celebrates the battle honour of their ship HMS Express.

Months of organisation by the students went into planning and executing a highly-valued event in the naval calendar whilst still continuing with their university studies.

Almost 120 attended the dinner, 53 of whom were guests of the unit, representing all branches of the military and civilian world, and included the Mayor of Glamorgan and members of the Welsh Livery Guild.

As a unit the students proudly hosted guest of honour Maj Gen David Hook RM as well as the Lord Lieutenant of South Glamorgan Dr Peter Beck and the former Lord Lieutenant of South Glamorgan Capt Sir Norman Lloyd-Edwards.

The event allowed Wales URNU cadets to develop close links with the local community and universities while representing the RN.

Hosting enables the cadets to gain confidence in social scenarios and develop their adaptability to work in many different areas.

Some students go on to careers in the Royal Navy

and some go on to a variety of leading roles in the civilian sector; here, civic and business leaders were able to be introduced to the future leaders of the RN, industry and government.

It was also an opportunity for cadets to learn the traditions of the RN and mess dinner etiquette.

The event is mandatory and an essential part of completing midshipman task books, which enable students to be promoted from Officer Cadets to Honorary Midshipmen – a vital part of their training programme on top of their sea time in HMS Express.

Mid Ben Allen, Wales URNU's Senior Midshipman said: "This rare opportunity to host the Lord Lieutenant of South Glamorgan and Maj Gen Hook was seized upon by all members to showcase the very best of Wales URNU."

Lt Ben Power, CO of Express, said: "Celebrating the battle honours earned by HMS Express is an extremely important occasion within our calendar.

"It provides a formal training opportunity for midshipmen of Wales URNU, but of equal importance is the opportunity to host distinguished military and civic guests from within Wales.

"We are at the forefront of flying the RN's flag within Wales."

Tracker pays its tribute

DURING a cold March weekend HMS Tracker, of the Faslane Patrol Boat Squadron, marked the 70th anniversary of the loss of escort carrier HMS Dasher in the Firth of Clyde, between Ardrrossan and the Isle of Arran.

The sinking of the ship, with the loss of 379 men, was marked by a wreath-laying service coordinated with the ferry Caledonian Isles at the site of the wreck, followed by a short memorial service in Ardrrossan Cemetery.

The remembrance continued on the Sunday with a ceremony at the Dasher Memorial Gardens ashore.

Faslane PBS maintains a strong affiliation with North Ayrshire, and although the current HMS Dasher left the squadron last autumn to resume URNU duties with Bristol Universities, the ship's companies of Tracker and Raider have developed close ties with the Dasher 1943 Association, who meet every year in Ardrrossan to mark the event.

The CO of Tracker, Lt Cdr Sam Nightingale, said: "My crew and I were honoured to be able to pay our respects to our fellow servicemen during these events.

"It was a sombre occasion for reflection on the ultimate sacrifice made by the brave sailors, who died in the most tragic of circumstances – a reminder of the dangers faced by all at sea and a celebration, too, of the determination at the time, as now, to ensure free movement of goods and services to and from our island nation."

HMS Dasher was lost when, having dashed out at the start of a convoy, a massive explosion caused her to sink rapidly in the Firth of Clyde on March 27 1943, with almost 380 men drowning or succumbing to injuries, burns (from ignited fuel on the surface of the sea) or hypothermia.

Almost 150 sailors were rescued, but the cause of the explosion has never been determined – various theories include a crashed aircraft or faulty construction.

"He spoke to his superiors and they agreed to transport us to the AT centre in the hired 4x4s.

"The Boss has a habit of been quite jammy, so we were not surprised by this lucky turn."

Once the unit finally arrived at the Priestly Centre, the weekend's training could begin in earnest.

Activities were significantly hampered by snow, but still on offer were cross-country skiing, rafting, canoeing, orienteering and snowcraft, though increased risk of avalanche put mountaineering on the Coniston Fells off the agenda.

Forming into three groups, the students finished the weekend by designing, and building three rafts in the snow, and finally 'racing' each other around the lake while the CO and coxswain watched in warm clothes from the bank.

"The students threw themselves into all the activities despite the weather – even the raft building in the freezing conditions on an early Sunday morning which involved some swimming in the cold lake. Kayaks turned into ice breakers in some parts of Coniston Water and the students managed to build an igloo with the snow," said second-in-command CPO Mick Archer.

Lt Shaw thanked the RNRMC and Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for helping fund the trip.

He also thanked Cumbria Police, in particular PC Reed, and Lake District Land Rover for ferrying them to the centre.

"All the police who served in Exploit during the Olympics were fully integrated into my ship's company and this has paid dividends, establishing friendships that can be used in the future," he said.

"We've booked again for 2014 – but we'll check the weather forecast in advance next time..."



● Liverpool URNU students (right) listen to a briefing on board HMS Talent
Picture: LA(Phot) Dean Nixon

Students given tour of nuclear submarine

A TOUR of a submarine and the facilities used to train submariners were amongst the highlights of a three-day visit to the South West for members of Liverpool URNU.

The group of seven, who signed up for the URNU during their first year at Liverpool University, were invited on to HMS Talent, alongside at Devonport.

Their tour included the boat's main control room, sound room and manoeuvring room.

In each compartment one of the crew was on hand to give a comprehensive brief and explain how each area feeds into the role of the submarine as a whole.

Mid Fred Flood said: "It was fascinating to be on board a nuclear submarine and catch a glimpse into the lifestyle and working environment of Royal Navy submariners."

Earlier the group had toured the RN Submarine School based at HMS Raleigh in Cornwall.

There they were shown how submariners are taught to load torpedoes and missiles using a

training facility which mirrors the equipment found on board.

Mid Prateek Bathula said: "We've had lectures at university on the theoretical side of combat systems, so coming to a facility like this and seeing the real-world application has helped to make sense of all the complicated formulas."

"The fact that you are able to work on these systems as an Engineer Officer in the Royal Navy makes it an enticing career prospect, but for the moment I want to concentrate on graduating before deciding my next step."

The group also visited frigate HMS Sutherland, the Military Training Unit at Raleigh and BRNC.

Lt Ian Critchley, CO of Liverpool URNU, said: "The URNU is all about introducing the Royal Navy to students during their time at university, not necessarily as a career option, but to give them an understanding of the Service which they can take with them in the future."

FIVE PAIRS OF TICKETS TO BE WON!!!

ROYAL NAVAL AIR STATION YEOVILTON INTERNATIONAL

AIR DAY

SATURDAY 13 JULY 2013



RNAS Yeovilton's award-winning International Air Day takes place on Saturday 13 July with a spectacular flying and static display. Participants already confirmed include Swordfish, Sea Fury, Wildcat, Royal Jordanian Falcons, Red Arrows, Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and a rare appearance by the Swiss Air Force F/A18C Hornet – undoubtedly one of the stars of the show! The finale to the event will be the renowned Commando Assault Demo with plenty of pyrotechnics!

There's plenty to enjoy on the ground too, including the Royal Marines Band, interactive military displays, classic and military vehicle exhibitions, funfair, simulators, helicopter pleasure flights, trade stalls and much more.

Enter our competition and you could be one of five lucky winners of a pair of adult tickets to this internationally famous event. Simply answer the question below, complete the entry form and post to: Yeovilton Air Day Competition, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth, Hants. PO1 3HH or email your answer and details to: bm@navynews.co.uk

Closing date: 7 June 2013

Question: Which air force is providing the F/A18C Hornet display at this year's Air Day?

Answer.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

Phone.....

Email.....

Entries must reach the Navy News office by 12 noon 7th June 2013. Five entries will be drawn at 15.00. Each lucky winner will be notified by email, phone or post and will receive a pair of adult tickets by post direct from the Air Day office. The decision of the judges is final and there is no alternative prize. Employees of Navy News are not permitted to enter the competition.



TICKET HOTLINE: 08445 781 781
Tickets also available from www.royalnavy.mod.uk/yeovilton-airday



Picture: LA(Phot) Caroline Davies

Darren gets a dunking

FORMER England cricketer and *Strictly Come Dancing* star Darren Gough (*above*) was well and truly dunked in the RN's Underwater Escape Training Unit (UETU).

Darren arrived at Yeovilton to carry out basic underwater training with RN personnel, the like of which all military aircrew have to undergo and which could mean the difference between life or death in a crash into water.

In support of the Maritime Reserves recruiting strategy, Darren, now a presenter for the independent radio station Talk Sport, called in to gain first-hand experience of the underwater training aircrew go through.

Having received a safety brief Darren made his way poolside to enter the mock cabin, designed to replicate larger helicopters such as the Sea King and Merlin.

Darren said: "When I watched the video I felt quite nervous – it makes you realise what can go wrong when you're in the sea."

Following his first 'dunking' he said: "That's the first time done – it felt really weird."

Initially the lights are on in the pool area and the cabin remains upright throughout as those on board have to knock out the nearest window and exit, swimming up to the surface as if in a crash-landing at sea.

Progression through various accident scenarios culminates in the cab being inverted and the pool area plunged into darkness.

Darren said: "I enjoyed the dark one – survival just kicks in. It's all down to survival and how it makes you feel, you can hold your breath for longer than you think."

"It feels a lot longer when you are under there – ten seconds feels like 40!"

Having completed the full cycle of training, being submerged six times, Darren said: "In sport we're always told to control the controllable and unfortunately I can't control under there."

"You are thinking 'if I don't get out I'm going to drown'. It's very disorientating."

Lt Cdr BJ Smith, of the base's survival equipment section, said: "The purpose of the UETU is to give confidence in the event of an aircraft ditching in water so that aircrew can carry out habitual reactions to escape."

They train 8,500 people a year in the dunker – all three Services and international defence forces.

T45 cruises the Thames

OPPORTUNITIES for early responsibility abound in the Royal Navy.

So it will be no big surprise to see an able seaman at the helm of a Type 45 destroyer on the upper reaches of the River Thames...

AB Mat Beck, a junior rating at HMS President's Medway Division satellite unit, is part of the A Team Boatyard's Big Thames Cruise, which will see a 1:32 scale model of HMS Daring head upriver from Beale Park near Pangbourne on May 6, passing through Oxford before turning at Lechlade and steaming downriver as far as Teddington.

From there it is expected to return to Beale Park on May 17.

AB Beck's roles include acting as skipper of the support boat and occasionally taking the helm of the model on non-tidal stretches.

The 5m model was built by Alan Noble, and will be cruising to raise funds for charity.

See www.ateamboatyard.co.uk for more details.

Calliope is streets ahead in North East

THE Commanding Officer of a Royal Naval Reserve unit in the North-East is hoping the public can help uncover RN connections all around them.

Cdr Andy Collier, of HMS Calliope, wants people to play their part in building up a picture of the way that the Royal Navy has left its mark on the region's streets and landmarks.

Calliope, the RNR unit in Gateshead, has a ship's company of around 120, and covers a wide expanse of the region from the Scottish Borders down to Leeds and as far west as Cumbria.

The North East has a proud association with the Royal Navy – notable examples include Lord Collingwood from Morpeth, who took command at Trafalgar after the death of Nelson, the World War 2 submarine base at Blyth and of course, the hundreds of ships built on the Tyne, including HM ships Ark Royal, King George V and Newcastle.

Cdr Collier is keen to engage the North East public by asking them to think about the naval connections hidden in their local street signs and landmarks.

"There are literally thousands of streets named after famous vessels or naval battles," said Cdr Collier.

"For example, in Newcastle we have Nelson Street near to the Theatre Royal, and we also have Hood Street nearby, which was

named after Admiral Hood and also one of our most famous battleships.

"We'd love members of the public to help us by sending in a photo showing them alongside a naval-related street sign – the more obscure the better."

The unit is aiming to create a dedicated element within their Facebook page where the public's photos can be displayed in an online gallery, and one lucky winner will receive a VIP guided tour of the unit and the chance to take part in some of their activities.

For details see the HMS Calliope Facebook page.

There has been a Royal Naval Reserve presence on Tyneside since 1905, when Tyne Division of the RNRV was formed.

Its first training ship was corvette (later cruiser) HMS Calliope, sole survivor – through superb seamanship and fine engineering as she struggled out of harbour to safer open seas – of the 1889 Samoa hurricane, which wrecked or badly damaged the other dozen vessels in Apia harbour.

The ship was for many years berthed at Elswick in Newcastle upon Tyne.

In 1951, the original HMS Calliope was replaced by HMS Falmouth which was renamed Calliope and was kept at the same berth at Elswick.

The unit moved ashore in 1968 to its current location, retaining the name HMS Calliope.



● Cdr Andy Collier in Hood Street, Newcastle

Taking Pride in their training

THE Pride of Bristol training vessel has given young Royal Naval Reserve ratings experience of the 'cruel sea' in the Bristol Channel.

Seven trainees from RNR unit HMS Flying Fox spent a busy weekend on exercise on board the ship in the South West practising the basic seamanship skills required by the Royal Navy.

The exercise was a typical weekend that young personnel have volunteered for as part of their parallel lives in the Reserves.

A combination of young professionals and recent school-leavers have joined Flying Fox and are now taking on board the challenge of demanding seagoing training.

The Pride of Bristol has historic links with the West Country, including a period when she was used for landing craft navigation training by the Royal Marines.

She is now a registered charity, providing character-building sea training for underprivileged groups of youths and fun/educational trips for special needs schools in addition to supporting RNR training.

RNR instructor Lt Ian Woodward said: "We had a fantastic weekend."

"The seven recruits were introduced to the sea and by the end had become an effective crew."



● The Pride of Bristol sails under the Clifton Suspension Bridge

First Lieutenant Lt Kevin Williams RNR added: "We put them through some difficult training, including watchkeeping, first aid at sea, firefighting and general seamanship skills – all of it surrounded by the cruel sea."

Training for a reservist is a tough challenge but allows the ambitious and those looking for more from life an opportunity to learn and develop skills that can be used in the work place, to have enormous job variety and plenty

of travel opportunities.

Recruit Elliot Ridge, aged 17, said: "The recruitment literature said it would be a life without limits, and I certainly was stretched and loved the fact that I was paid for this weekend."

A milestone in the snow of Norway



● Lt Cdr Ric Fox RNR (right) in Norway with Lt Cdr Matt Punch, OC the RN Training Facility at Bardufoss

REACHING 6,000 hours of flying is a major milestone for any aviator – and Reservist Lt Cdr Ric Fox achieved this milestone in Northern Norway.

Deploying to Norway for six weeks and on his eighth winter visit, Ric was part of the instructional staff teaching front-line Sea King aircrew Arctic flying skills and environmental qualifications.

Ric retired last year after 34 years of service, and is now serving with 848 NAS as a Qualified Helicopter Instructor whilst also flying commercial helicopters for Vantage Aviation.

"I am delighted to be back flying a military aircraft with the RNR Air Branch and not a desk, as I was in some of my last few active service assignments," said Ric.

"The detachment to Norway marks 25 years since I first trained with 845 NAS and it's great to be back training so many gifted aviators."

The Officer Commanding the RN Training facility in Norway, Lt Cdr Matt Punch, said: "A previous CO of 848 NAS and Chief of Staff in the Commando Helicopter Force HQ, Ric has utilised his vast aviation acumen during this deployment and provided exceptional direction to his students."

"Indeed, Ric was also on hand to demonstrate these attributes during a flight with Rear Admiral Philip Jones, Controller of the Navy, who was visiting Norway to gain a greater understanding of what the base offers in the way of facilities and training."

Firefighter loves life as a commando

HAVING a job with Tayside Fire and Rescue Service might seem exciting enough for most people – but not for one Royal Marines Reservist based at the Dundee detachment.

C/Sgt William Stoops, a reservist since 1989, recently returned from Exercise Black Alligator in California's Mojave Desert, where he was one of a team delivering a medic instructor's course for regular Marines from 42 Commando.

C/Sgt Stoops has racked up a fair few qualifications in his part-time commando role.

He's one of the few assistant parachute jump instructors in the Royal Marines, is a cold-weather warfare instructor and he's also jungle warfare trained, which all makes a change from his day job as a watch manager with the Fire Service.

"The exercise was part of a build up to 42 Cdo taking on the role of Lead Commando Group in 2013, which means they're the spearhead amphibious unit, ready to deploy anywhere in the world at short notice," he said.

"Delivering the team medic's course to them was therefore an essential part of that exercise."

"The RMR is a massive part of my life – since joining I have seen, done and accomplished things that I could never have hoped for in a purely civilian life."

He continued: "When I go away with the RMR I can put all my problems such as work, family etc, into a box that, once I close it doesn't get opened until I get back."

"I can then focus on the military work, which presents a whole new set of problems, until I step out of my uniform and reopen that box to my civilian life."

"But when I reopen it I am able to look at those problems in a different way – a Royal Marines way – which really helps."

His first deployment was on Operation Haven in 1991 as a member of 40 Cdo, helping to establish a safe haven for the Kurds in northern Iraq.

He returned to Iraq again in 2003 with 42 Cdo and has visited Brunei and Sierra Leone, Norway, the United States, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Turkey, Italy, and Canada during his long career.

Joining the RMR was a family tradition.

His father was a Royal Naval Reservist for 20 years and his grandfather was a member of the Home Guard, manning an anti-aircraft battery and taking pot shots at the Luftwaffe.

C/Sgt Stoops concluded: "If you want a challenge, which achieving the Green Beret is, then the Royal Marines Reserve can deliver that."

"It certainly has done for me for the past 23 years, and still does."

Be different in uniform

UNIFORM to Work Day is Wednesday June 26, and is an opportunity for Reservists to wear uniforms to their civilian jobs, as well as Regulars and Reservists working in the MOD.

The day, which forms part of the build-up to Armed Forces Day, recognises the important role the Reserve Forces play in both the community and the Forces.

Reserve forces have made a substantial contribution to operations in the recent past, and their part in supporting defence and security is set to grow.

Supporting the campaign is simple – Maritime Reserves should consider wearing their Naval Service uniform to work on June 26 wherever possible.

Reservists are encouraged to get in touch with their Unit PRO to indicate if they wish to be featured in the MOD's media and marketing campaign.

Deaths

Vice Admiral Sir Norman Ross Dutton King. Aged 13 he attended Dartmouth in 1946 and served in HMS Indefatigable...

Capt Harold Malcolm 'Mac' Collier. Went to sea 1933 as an articled apprentice with Andrew Weir's Bank Line. After four years passed his Second Mate's Certificate...

Capt Peter Graham Lachlan. Joined as a special entry cadet in 1937. Midshipman under training in the months before the war on the South America station...

Capt David Smith OBE. Joined Cadet Training Ship HMS Conway 1942 becoming a Midshipman RNR at Greenwhich...

and was second-in-command of the newly-rebuilt aircraft carrier Eagle (1965-67) East of Suez which included the Beira patrol...

Capt Andrew Robertson Mackie VRD RNR. Joined 1940 aged 19 and served in HMS Pimpernel (Atlantic and Mediterranean) participating in Arctic Convoys...

John Francis Arthur St Aubyn DSC, the 4th Lord St Levan. Joined the Naval Cadets 1938 and at the end of his second year, upon learning of the Dunkirk evacuation...

Cdr Victor 'Vic' George Sirett OBE. Joined as an Aviation Cadet (Pilot) 1951 and completed flying training in Pensacola, Florida. 1953-71 he flew the Firefly, Avenger, Gannet, Hiller, Whirlwind, Wessex Mk1...

Fleet Air Arm's premier annual award for his accomplishments as CO of 7005 Squadron when introducing the Sea King helicopter into service. Retired in 1983...

The Revd Patrick J P Helyer Chaplain (CofE). Assistant Chaplain Mission to Seamen, Glasgow (1941-42), Chaplain RNRV HMS Tartar, Quality and Ashanti (42-46) then Vicar of St Nicholas-at-Wade...

Cdr John Kennedy 'Jake' Hall Hall. Entered the RN as a 13-year-old cadet. Qualified as a marine engineer officer at Manadon 1951 and served in HMS Ceylon based in Trincomalee, Ceylon 1953...

Ronald 'Ron' Swift Legion D'Honneur. Served in LCT(S) 17 and HMS Saunders. LST & Landing Craft Association. March 6. Vernon Morris. Served in LCG(M) 108...

John Richard 'Bob' Matthews. Served HMS Ajax 1939-42, including Battle of the River Plate and one of few survivors within HMS Ajax & River Plate Veterans Association...

Capt Peter Harris. First president of Falmouth RNA when it was re-commissioned in 1982. Aged 86.

Lt Cdr Geoff Scarlett. Joined HMS Royal Arthur then HMS Ceres training for supply & secretariat branch. Served 787 NAS and was POW on board Ben Lomond during the germ warfare trials off Scotland...

Ronald 'Ron' Charles Mead. Served two years in Home Guard before joining RNR. His landing craft was beached on D-Day and had to wait under attack until the rising tide refloated it...

Gerald Judge CPOWTR. Served 1951-73 in HMS Theseus, Warrior, Gurkha and Decoy; also at Mercury, Cochrane, Fulmar, HM Naval Base Portsmouth, CinC Malta and RNTT Mombassa...

Alfred William Harper Stoker. Served 1950-59. HMS Daring. Chairman and Life Member of Nuneaton RNA. March 12. Aged 81.

John William Mills Able Seaman. Served 1950-59. Nuneaton branch. March 17. Aged 80. George Riley. Regular soldier, joined Army 1935 and served throughout WW2 in the Western Desert, Italy and fought at the Battle of Monte Cassino...

David John 'Pash/Baggy' Baker CPO BT 1st Class. Served 1948-70 HMS Anson, Royal Arthur, Pembroke, Solebay, Surprise, Broadswold, Safeguard, Barneath, Barcarole, Barbican, Ausonia, Dolphin, Narvik, St Vincent, Victory and Layburn. Past president of Oadby RBL and treasurer of RNA Wigston...

Peter 'Pete' Prigmore Ldg/Sto. Served 1951-58 in HMS Dampier, Belfast (Korea), the Rhine Squadron and Loch Alvie. HMS Belfast Association, RNA HQ roll and Aged 82.

March 9. £5,000 - AB B Wardle; £1,500 - LH P Dobson; £500 - AB K O'Sullivan. March 16. £5,000 - Lt M D Shutter; £1,500 - Marine T A Bryars; £500 - AB R Smith. March 23. £5,000 - Lt Cdr C O'Neill; £1,500 - PO E Thompson; £500 - AB S Morley.

March 30. £5,000 - Lt Cdr P Harper; £1,500 - Mne J Edgar; £500 - Cpl A Roberts. April 6. £5,000 - Lt Cdr C Evans; £1,500 - Lt Cdr B Aldous; £500 - CPO G Cullen.

Operational Honours

The list recognises service on operations in Afghanistan and national operations for the period 1 April 2012 to 30 September 2012. Naval Service recipients of operational honours were: Capt James Alexander Glancy, Royal Marines (Conspicuous Gallantry Cross) Acting Cpl Gerard Wood, Royal Marines (Military Cross) Lt Cdr Craig Sweeney, Royal Navy (Air Force Cross) Sgt Anthony Russell, Royal Marines (George Medal) Lt Cdr Alan Neil Laurence Michael Nekrews, Royal Navy (Queen's Gallantry Medal) Acting WO2 Timothy John Houldley, Royal Marines (Queen's Commendation for Bravery) Capt James Godfrey Higham, Royal

previous vice chairman of Watford branch. March 19. Aged 78.

Phillip 'Lofty' Green POSM. Served 1947-54 HMS Swiftsure and Kenya. HMS Kenya Association and a founder member, past chairman and serving president of Grantham RNA. March 14. Aged 83.

Dave Emmett AB. Served 1948-56 in destroyers. Vice president Uxbridge RNA. March 29.

Submariners Association. K L 'Ken' Crocker ERA1. Submarine service 1953-69 in Auriga (54-55, 61-64), Astute (56), Springer (57-58), Totem (58-60) and Alliance (60-61). Gosport branch. Aged 82.

W H 'Bill' Fortune Cook. Submarine service 1942-46 in Spark, Statesman, Subtle, Stratagem and Torbay. Norfolk branch. Aged 88.

GH 'George' Green Sto.Mech. Submarine service 1942-46 in Vox, Sceptre (42-44), H50 (45) and Sanguine (45-46). Lincoln branch. Aged 90.

D D S 'Dennis' Peel PO.LTO. Submarine service 1941-44 in Taku, Unbroken and Talbot. Gatwick branch. Aged 91.

Algerines Association. Wilfred Dean LSA(S). Served in Lioness. August 5. Aged 82.

Tom Mountford AB. Served in Flying Fish. March 7. Aged 87. Brian Avery AB. Served in Romola.

HMS Gambia Association. John 'Jock' McGinn M(E)1. Served on board 1952-60. December 2012. Phillip Farr Plumber. Served on board 1957-58. October 2012.

Dave Fawson Boy/Junior Seaman. Served on board 1942-43; saw the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay. January. Dave Lister REM1. Served on board 1958-60. Social secretary. November 2012. Tony Murray EM1. Served on board 1949-52. January.

Eric Phillips Cook. Served on board 1950-52. 2012. Lt Cdr Arthur Robinson RNR. Served as an ERA on board 1941-43 and was part of the ship's handover to the New Zealand Navy. President of the association. February.

Tony Sladin REM. Served on board 1957-58. October 2012. Fred Tonks M(E)1. Served on board 1956-57. February. Vivienne Stevens. Organiser of association raffles for many years. December 2012.

HMS Serene Association. Eric Harrison ERA. Served on board 1944-47. 2012. Aged 84. Len Holman ERA. Served on board 1944-47. 2012. Aged 90. Larry Gallagher W/T. Served on board 1944-47. 2013. Aged 87.

Ask Jack

Engine Room Artificers and Shipwrights, S50 entry: The group will be holding a reunion marking the 50th anniversary of joining, and would like to make contact with the following: Phil Burnden, Steff Collick, Pete Emery, George Haigh, Francis 'Paddy' Hood, Robbie Johnstone, Pete Kingnorth, Malcolm Paddock, Vince Palmer, John Rodwell, Barry Rose, Bob Stewart, Sam Thurbon, Brian 'Scouse' Wallace, Charlie Warburton and Andy 'Oscar' Wilde. If anyone can help contact any of the above, please contact Don Fawcett at donald.fawcett@ntlworld.com or write to: 15 Devon Road, Copnor, Portsmouth, PO3 5ET or tel: 023 9269 2964.

Eric Baker: Jim James is seeking information regarding Eric, who was Best Man at his wedding in December 1954. At that time they were both LEM(A)s. They last met when he was serving in HMS Eagle and Jim was in HMS Ark Royal in 1958. Eric was from Dulwich in London. Contact A M (Jim) James, 20 Turnpike, Helston, Cornwall TR13 8LR or tel: 01326 553506.

HMS London (D16): Tony Denley served in HMS London as Royal Marine Bugler 1969-70. He is looking to acquire a copy of the ship's company photograph from that time. Tony is in the middle at the top - the only bootneck on board. CPOGI Plumb and POGI Buck Taylor were his seniors; his part of ship was small arms store, 3N Mess. He would be grateful if anyone can help - any expenses will be paid. Contact Tony on 01823 324917.

HMS Wakeful: In May 1953, 12 boy seamen joined HMS Wakeful in Scotts Yard, Greenock, where she had just completed a conversion from a wartime destroyer to a type 15 A/S frigate. With it being 60 years ago, D Woolner was wondering how many of them are still around. Their names and home towns are as follows: Allen (Oldham), Coull (Aberdeen), Irving (Manchester), Jackson (Hull), Kenyon (Scotland), Livermore (Leicester), Miller (Sherburn in Eimet), Mears (Wolverhampton), Norton (Leeds), Roslyn (Derby), Teanby (Leeds, now deceased) and Woolner (Bradford), the youngest boy on board. Contact D Woolner at d.woolner@sky.com or write to 9 Rawson Street, Wyke, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD12 8PH.

HMS Wessex: My father served in the second HMS Wessex during World War 2, the first being sunk at Dunkirk. Prior to being posted to Wessex he was in HMS Trondra. As you can imagine, he had many photos of the crew and/or places that the ships went. The photos have been lost and I wonder if any readers who served in Wessex or Trondra during World War 2, or their families, would be willing to send copies of photos to

Reunions

June 2013 Second HMS Manchester Association: The 12th reunion will be held in the WO SR & SNCOs Mess, HMS Nelson, June 8-9. For details see www.2ma.org.uk/ or contact Steve Swaine at stevie27@hotmail.com tel: 01634 684717 or Ian Tidbury at iantids@ntlworld.com tel: 023 9225 3859.

July 2013 Type 42 Association: Reunion on July 13, 1400 to 2000, gates open 1330, at the Sports Field, HMS Excellent, Whale Island, Portsmouth. AGM between 1200 and 1300. Contact the secretary at kim.limehan@yahoo.co.uk or tel: 07977 641122 or write to T42 Office, Unit 9, 48-50 Elm Grove, Portsmouth PO5 1JP.

British Pacific & East Indies Fleets & KG5 Associations: Reunion September 6-8 at the Britannia Hotel, Coventry. Same format, including happy hour, and at last year's prices. Further info from John Grossett on 01943 600588 or Alf Lonsdale on 01293 432049.

HMS Orion Association: Reunion at the Holiday Inn, Plymouth, September 7-8. Details from Kay West at kay.west28@btinternet.com or tel: 0116 259 2171.

Algerine Association Reunion: WRNS, RNA Groups NVA Assn: The Autumn Break will take place September 16-23 at Mill Rythe Holiday Village, Hayling Island. En-suite accommodation and facilities for the disabled, cost is £224 per person, half board with entertainment each evening. All welcome, bring family and friends. For details contact George Hutchins MBE on 01456 450659 or Mike Hutchins on 01903 766895.

HMS Crane Association U23/F123 (1943-62): Reunion and AGM at the Gateway Hotel, Nottingham, September 27-29. All ex-Cranes and friends welcome. This year will be the 70th Birthday of her commissioning. Details from Joe Smith at cranebird@btinternet.com or Tony Nuttall on 0115 952 6363.

HMS Eagle, Commissions 1952-72: Note: Change of venue. 'Friends of HMS Eagle' are holding a 41st Anniversary 'Nautical Experience' weekend reunion at the Menzies Dyce Hotel, Aberdeen, September 27-29. After the successful last six reunions held around the UK, all 'Eagles' plus wives/partners and guests welcome to celebrate the 41 years since the carrier decommissioned in Portsmouth in 1972. 'Meet and Greet' on Friday evening in the 'McKensie Room', various tours from the hotel throughout Saturday, with a very nautical Gala Dinner, Dance and entertainment in the Ballroom Suite, with Sea Cadet Unit involvement, and Colours, Ceremonial Sunset and Up Spirits. Hotel accommodation at extremely good rates. Contact Bill Melvin (Ex-LPTI) at bill.

HMS Ark Royal Communicators 1973-1977: Reunion takes place in Cardiff September 13-14. All Sparkers, Buntings and Gollies from that period are welcome. For further information please contact Jeremy Smith at jsmith@greenford5.fsnet.co.uk or 5, West Ridge Gardens, Greenford, Middlesex, UB6 9PE or 07789 375611.

HMS St Vincent Association: AGM at St Vincent College, Gosport, and reunion dinner at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea, on October 12. Further details from Soapy Watson at soapy.watson@hotmail.com and booking forms are available through Isle of Wight Tours on 01983 405116 or see our website at www.hmsstvincentsassoc.org

My father. Please contact Gwyn Roberts at groberts9850@hotmail.com or write to 339B Stone Road, Stafford ST16 1LB. HMS Wilton Ship's Bell: Does anyone know the whereabouts of the ship's bell of the minehunter HMS Wilton, which was sold for disposal in 2001. My daughter was the first child to be christened on board, with the bell being used as the font. Her initials and christening date were subsequently engraved inside the bell, and if it's on display somewhere, I'd like her to be able to see it. Contact Carl Graham at carl.graham@electronicseahorse.com or tel: 07873 245490.

Royal Marines Portsmouth Lodge: We would like to bring to the attention of any Brethren visiting or on duty in the Portsmouth area that we meet regularly at the Cosham Masonic Centre and they are most welcome to come along. We are also able to provide information to anyone interested in or wanting to find out more about Freemasonry. Those interested should contact: The Secretary, Mr David Colbourne at dcolbourne@lineone.net or tel: 023 9226 2561.

HMS London 1966-69: Can anyone who was on board HMS London 1966 to 69 remember the approximate date the ship visited London? We tied up to fore and aft buoys just off Greenwich College. I am trying to trace an old photograph taken at Bass Charrington Brewery. Contact ex-LOEM John T (Knocker) White (GP Mess) at jilydog2@hotmail.com or tel: 00357 96580042 (Cyprus).

Entries for the Deaths column and Swap Drafts in June's Noticeboard must be received by May 13

Talking Navy News goes digital Navy News is available free of charge as a digital file on memory stick or email from Portsmouth Area Talking News for those with difficulty reading normal type. Contact 023 9269 0851 and leave a message with a contact number, or email patn-rec@hotmail.com. A speaker that will take a USB plug is required but this can be obtained from the Talking News, or the file can be played back through a computer.

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Tiger to host big parade

TRAFALGAR Day is the most important date in the Royal Navy calendar – and Leicester unit are already planning for this year’s anniversary.

Because for the first time in their 76-year history the unit will have the honour of hosting the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire District Trafalgar Day Parade.

The event will take place in the city centre, with a service being held at Leicester Cathedral.

“It is a highlight of the Sea Cadet calendar and a fantastic opportunity for cadets across the county to display their talents before Leicester’s public and visitors,” said Ian Dix, of TS Tiger.

“The event is free and we very much welcome past and present members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines to attend the parade and service.”

The parade takes place on Sunday October 20, the day before the anniversary itself.

Cheshunt rewarded

SEA Cadets from two areas joined their air and Army cadet colleagues in collecting awards from the Royal British Legion in Hertfordshire for their efforts during last year’s Poppy Appeal.

Cheshunt won the Sea Cadet unit award in the Lord Lieutenant’s Cadet Poppy Appeal Challenge, raising almost £2,500, while Hitchin were runners-up with just over £2,100.

The individual winner and runner-up both came from Cheshunt unit – Cdt Mitchell Walker raised just over £750 while Cdt Robert McCardle was less than £20 behind Mitchell.

Two other units received certificates of appreciation – Stevenage (raising almost £1,100) and Rickmansworth and Watford (just over £170).

Dolphin for Daniel

POC Daniel Cutler, of Birmingham Sherbourne unit, has been awarded the Mercia District Dolphin Trophy for gaining the highest marks on a district advancement board for cadet petty officer in 2012.

The award, a plated replica of Nelson’s Column complete with lions, was presented by Mercian District Officer Lt Cdr (SCC) John Bayliss RNR – who was celebrating 40 years in the Corps – at the District Drill and Piping competition.

Daniel, who is currently the Lord Mayor’s cadet for the City of Birmingham, was the only candidate throughout the year to gain a credit pass of the ten candidates boarded.

Health and wellbeing in Portrush

CADETS from Portrush unit in Northern Ireland got involved in a health and wellbeing initiative involving many young people from across Coleraine Borough.

The cadets, with the help of the Public Health Agency via the Networks Involving Communities in Health Improvement Project, threw themselves into a number of activities for the scheme.

Saturday morning was spent playing football, followed by canoeing and kayaking on the cold water of Portrush harbour in the afternoon.

The unit is also getting involved in the Corps’ New Ship Appeal to build a replacement to tall ship TS Royalist.

Portrush are staging a ‘Lough Neagh to Coleraine sponsored rowathon’ to help meet the £250,000 target – the 400 or so units have been set that specific target as part of the overall £5.6 million total.

To make a donation contact the unit on 028 7082 5999 or email portrushseacadets@btconnect.com



Barnsley secure a burgee

FOLLOWING a successful Royal Navy Parade, when cadets took the chance to show off their skills to Cdr Stuart Watt (Deputy Area Officer Eastern Area), VIPs and other guests, Barnsley unit has now heard they have been awarded a much-coveted burgee.

Cdr Watt was given a tour of the unit and inspected cadets and instructors before he saw a practical display which included an insight into Royal Marines cadet training, mountain biking, a display of Colour Party drill and a show of Royal Marines uniforms that included a special appearance by ‘Miss Globe and Laurel’...

The evening finished with the annual presentation of awards, including best junior cadet (New Entry Joshua Smith), most boating hours (LC Rosie Clark), most improved cadet (AC Nathan Pitcher), commando spirit (MC1 Joe Myers), best RMCD cadet (Cpl Danny Milne) and best cadet (MC1 Myers).

LC Clark spent her half-term holidays at HMS Raleigh undertaking her Cadet Petty Officer advancement board.

During the week Rosie and nine other leading cadets from around the country undertook assessments in drill, practical leadership tasks and their ability to instruct, with each cadet giving the rest of the group two lessons, one theory and one practical.

Rosie passed the course and has thus achieved the highest rate available to a cadet.

Alan lifts civic award

IN recognition of his special service to the community through his work with New Romney and District unit, Officer in Charge CPO (SCC) Alan Bell was presented with a certificate and a £100 cheque by the High Sheriff of Kent, Michael Bax at a ceremony held in Chilham Castle in conjunction with Kent Community Foundation.

CPO Bell was put forward for the award by the Town Mayor of New Romney, Cllr Roger Joyne, and New Romney Town Council.

Alan Bell is the first representative of the Sea Cadets in East Kent to receive the award, and apart from dedicating ten years of his life to the Corps and providing help and guidance to the youth of Romney Marsh, he has also donated the cheque to his unit funds to buy equipment.

Vigilant Gosforth

GOSFORTH unit has won the Vigilant Trophy for 2012.

The trophy is presented annually to the best unit attending the Royal Navy’s New Entry training facility over the course of the year.

During their week at HMS Raleigh in Cornwall, Gosforth cadets enjoyed a wide range of activities, including firefighting, sea survival, drill and damage control.

LC English – who recently returned to Raleigh for his POC course, said: “We are all very proud to have won this trophy.”

“The cadets and staff are a great team, and all our hard work paid off.”

Lt Cdr (SCC) Lee Sanderson RNR, the CO of Sea Cadet Training Centre Raleigh, will present the trophy in due course.

Snap decision

TIME is getting short – with winter finally abating it is time to get the camera out and put your entry in to the Royal Navy’s Peregrine Photographic Awards.

There is a special Sea Cadet category, and all to play for – closing date is May 14.

See March or April bulletins at www.scheadquarters.com for rules and entry details.

Maltese quartet take square-rigger to sea

FOUR cadets from Malta GC unit of the Sea Cadet Corps had an adventurous ten days on the UK-based square-rigger STS Tenacious.

The ship, which is 65 metres long and displaces some 586 tonnes, belongs to the Jubilee Sailing Trust – the brainchild of Christopher Rudd, a schoolteacher and sailor who wanted to give the disabled children he taught the same experiences his able-bodied students had.

In June 1996 the keel of Tenacious was laid by the Duke of York in Woolston, Southampton, and she was launched in February 2000 – she is believed to be the largest wooden tall ship of her kind still afloat in the world.

Since then Tenacious has taken nearly 12,000 people sailing, of whom nearly 3,000 were physically disabled and 1,000 wheelchair users.

Sub Lt (SCC) Keith Marshall RNR, together with Cadet Ruth Vella and MCs Nicholas Aquilina, Alex Bonnici and Jillian Spiteri, joined the ship in Grand Harbour and were met by the Ship’s Chief Mate, who issued them with the necessary sailing gear.

Early on the second day the ship put to sea and the cadets, together with a number of young people with special needs, underwent seamanship training and other drills.

The first stop was in Siracusa where the cadets had the chance to look around, then they sailed for Riposto, a municipality of Catania, where they visited Mount Etna.

They sailed again on the morning of Day 7 returning to Grand Harbour on the ninth day, signing off early the following morning.

The Maltese cadets had first-hand experience of sailing the ship, climbing the masts, hauling sails and took turns at the ship’s wheel.

The visit was made possible through the efforts and financial sponsorship of the Temple Bar Lodge in the UK and John Marshall, one of the vice-presidents of the Malta GC Unit.



● Cadets Ruth Vella and Jillian Spiteri try their hands at the ropes on board TS Tenacious

Meanwhile, members of the unit have paid a courtesy visit to the British High Commissioner for Malta, Robert Luke.

The group, headed by unit chairman James Davis and CO Lt (SCC) Donald Montebello RMR, congratulated Mr Luke on his new post and offered the patronage of the unit.

Mr Luke confirmed that he was very happy to accept, thus following in the footsteps of the

last five High Commissioners.

Several topics were discussed during the meeting at the British High Commission in Whitehall Mansions, the highlight of which was bilateral relations between the High Commission and the unit.

Also at the meeting were staff and committee members and the High Commissioner’s Cadet, AB Nathan Barbara.

Serving at HMS Raleigh

MEMBERS of the Corps have been showing off their culinary expertise as the finale to a training course held at HMS Raleigh.

Cadets from Cardiff and Bury were on a Cooks and Stewards Second Class course delivered by instructors Lt (SCC) Annie Kay RNR and PO (SCC) Caz Owen, based at the Defence Maritime Logistics School.

The highlight of their week was a buffet lunch prepared for eight guests including the CO of

Raleigh, Capt Bob Fancy, and his wife Sarah.

Raleigh is home to the National Sea Cadet Training Centre, providing 19 residential courses for cadets using the whole range of training facilities at Raleigh, including the fire fighting units and the firing ranges. Courses also include seamanship and navigation.

Raleigh also hosts events for cadets such as swimming galas, summer camps and drill competitions.



Training and safety boat launched

MEMBERS of Henley unit gathered on the bank of the River Thames to officially launch their new training and safety boat.

The state-of-the-art plastic rigid-hulled power boat is believed to be one of the first of its kind in use in the Corps.

“It gives us a more up-to-date and capable craft to allow both training of cadets and also for assisting in major events held in Henley-on-Thames,” said CO Sub Lt (SCC) Newman RNR, who has now left to move overseas.

“The cadets have been working hard raising money towards this boat,” said unit chairman Phil Fletcher.

“We were helped by Berkshire Freemasons and the National Masonic charity to raise the funds to allow us to buy it right now, and it means that Henley’s Sea Cadets will be using the boat from this spring and not having to wait another six months to a year to

collect the money needed.”

All local cadets will benefit, as Sub Lt Newman explained: “Being based here on the river our base is used by many other cadet units for all sorts of training on the river.”

“This hugely effective safety boat makes us able to put more cadets out on the river.”

Martin Peters, the head of Berkshire’s Freemasons, said: “It was a pleasure to be able to help.”

“Henley Sea Cadets helped us to organise a major fundraising event last year at the Chiltern Centre and we felt that we should offer some support.”

“When they told us what their main fundraising effort was it was a perfect fit.”

Pouring a splash of champagne over the bow of the new boat (pictured right), Mr Peters named it The Berkshire Freemason, adding: “It was a real honour that the Sea Cadets decided to



name the boat after the County Freemasons.”

Mr Fletcher also thanked the other groups present who help to support the unit.

“I am quite overwhelmed with

the level of support today,” he said.

“From ex-Sea Cadets to local Rotarians and other groups it is a huge turn-out – thank you for your support.”

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Bradford juniors are the winners

THE Junior Section of Bradford unit has been awarded the Evelyn Cleverly Award for the best junior section in the country.

The Deputy Lord Mayor of Bradford, Cllr Mike Gibbons, presented the Juniors with their shield at a special awards ceremony, telling them: "You are a credit to the Cadets, to the city and to yourselves and your families."

Bradford was one of the first units within West Yorkshire to form a Junior section, and it has proved to be a major factor in the unit's retention rate, with the majority of the Senior section having been a junior for at least six months.

So prized are the places that the unit is currently adding eight-year-olds to its waiting list to ensure acceptance into the Corps.

Four cadets were also awarded insignia marking their promotion: Ashleigh Sutcliffe, Ummar Younis and Abbas Younis (all aged 15) to Leading Cadet, and the Lord Mayor's Cadet Lorna Zurek to Petty Officer Cadet.

The evening was a fitting start to celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of the formation of the unit.

Further events include a birthday party as *Navy News* went to press, a mess dinner in September and the annual Trafalgar Day Parade in October.

The Cleverly Award is a shield, presented by Mrs Evelyn Cleverly, a Vice President of both the Sea Cadet Association and the Marine Society & Sea Cadets, commemorating her involvement with the Girls Nautical Training Corps/Contingents between 1970 and 1981.

The shield is awarded annually to the unit with, in the opinion of the Captain of the Sea Cadet Corps, the best Junior section in the country.

Bronze wings for students

THIS year's National Aviation Acquaintance course took place at the Sea Cadet Training Centre Weymouth, and all 12 cadets gained their bronze wings after an intensive week of ground school which included a variety of aviation subjects as well as flight simulator training.

As part of the course the students had the chance to take a 45-minute flight in a Jungle Sea King of 845 Naval Air Squadron, though poor weather grounded the Navy's Grob fixed-wing aircraft.

The cadets were presented with their wings by Cdre Martin Westwood, who had just retired as Assistant Chief of Staff (Aviation).

Top student Sgt Daniel Smith, of the Royal Marines cadet Detachment at South Shields, was presented with a watch donated by Sekonda UK, and he will attend a silver wings flying course with 727 NAS later this year.

Rowers take lead in ship fund campaign

AS CADETS and staff prepare for action in the Corps-wide rowathon for the New Ship Appeal, the total pledged towards a replacement for TS Royalist has passed the half-way mark.

The main Row the World effort was due to take place as *Navy News* went to press, with units challenged to complete a grand total of 24,900 miles in 80 hours.

Around 170 units have signed up, and one of the flagship efforts is that of the Headquarters staff team, who hope to row 100 miles from Abingdon to HMS President in the heart of London.

In the North of England, the units of Northumberland – Ashington, Gosforth, Newburn, Newcastle East, North Shields, Wallsend and Whitley Bay have been practising on the Tyne in preparation for the big day.

Ten Trinity 500 boats are due to row in two legs, with up to 100 cadets taking part.

The district is aiming to raise £5,000 in sponsorship.

Olympic gold medal-winning rower and Royal Navy officer Lt Pete Reed has also sent an exclusive message of support.



● Northumberland Sea Cadets pulling their Trinity 500 boat downriver of the Scotswood Bridge on the Tyne

Lt Reed, who won gold as part of the Great Britain coxless four team in Beijing in 2008 and London in 2012, said: "Good luck to Sea Cadets who'll be rowing round the clock to pick up 24,900 miles – it is an enormous challenge!

"Just stay focused on that target of raising money for your new sail training ship and that'll keep you going.

"Best wishes and Olympic strength."

The ultimate prize is to make a telling contribution to the fund for a new sail training ship which will replace TS Royalist.

Much of the £5.6 million has been raised from corporate sources, but the Corps was keen to ensure that those who will benefit most from the new ship – Sea Cadet units and their members – would also be part of the fundraising effort.

The target set was £250,000, and as of mid-April just under £140,000 had been promised.

Another individual who is taking on a considerable challenge for the cause is Surrey District Officer Lt Cdr (SCC) Kevin Milligan RNR, who is aiming to single-handedly row 100 miles in



● Northumberland Sea Cadets pulling in a Trinity 500 boat on the River Tyne below the disused Scotswood Railway Bridge

total at his local gym.

Kevin has so far rowed over 68 miles and raised over £625 towards his target of £800 – but he feels if the pledges keep coming he can raise £1,000 for the appeal.

In addition, he said that Surrey District were planning a sponsored walk on Sunday May 19 and are currently busy gathering sponsorship for all the staff and cadets involved.

Meanwhile, around the UK, other units and members are organising events off the water and outside the gym.

People like PO (SCC) Michelle Blackburn of Harrogate unit, who raised £455 by doing a bag pack, while St Albans raised £941.21 by doing a street collection.

Royal Marines Cadets are also getting in on the action.

A team of RMCs are planning to walk from Kinlochewe to Dundonnell in the North West Highlands – a distance of approximately 35 miles – and hoping to raise £2,000 in the process.

Six volunteers and eight cadets from Bravo Company, RMC,

Sea Cadets NW are taking on the challenge, and you can support them at www.justgiving.com/NWArea-charity-trek

Fundraising scaled new heights when Weymouth SCTC took on Mt Kilimanjaro and Everest.

The team climbed the equivalent of the summit – some 5,895m – in a 12-hour session starting at 9am, quickly ticking off lesser mountains on the way.

By 11.15am they had reached the summit of Ben Nevis, and went on to achieve Kilimanjaro at 5.20pm.

They then went a further 2,952m to reach the top of Everest.

By 8pm the team, made up of Weymouth staff, were 880m short, meaning they had to make 110 ascents of the wall in the last hour – the average had been 92 per hour to that point.

With everyone tiring it seemed a big ask, but lots of encouragement from the floor pushed the team forward to achieve the highest climb rate per hour of the day with an incredible 192 ascents, which not only meant they achieved the summit of Everest but went a further 656m above it... raising well over £3,000 to boot.

West Yorkshire District, organised by Antony Devine, put on a district fundraising and recruitment event in early March at the White Rose Shopping Centre, raising £2,500.

Their target is to reach £5,000 by doing a repeat event in October.

Further afield, Hong Kong Sea Cadets donated £1,000 to the appeal – having joined the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant last year, as well as taking part in the International Exchange Programme, they were keen to help the Corps get that new ship.

You can support the appeal by going to www.justgiving.com/row-the-world or text Ship Ahoy08 to 70070 and include your amount, for example £3.

Buxton's drill hall is opened

FOR at least the past decade Buxton unit has been exploring the possibility of extending its HQ building.

This dream became a reality in March, when the unit president, the Duke of Devonshire, formally opened the new drill hall during the evening of the annual inspection.

The Duke congratulated the unit and said everyone concerned should be very proud of having achieved such a magnificent project – within budget – especially in the current economic climate.

He was most impressed by the high standards of the cadets, both in the inspection and the display which followed.

In 2010 new committee member Trevor Johnson, chairman of Buxton and High Peak RNA, organised a campaign to raise the balance of funds needed for the new building, and the unit is grateful to him for this effort and for having acted as project manager.

The unit also thanked all the local firms, charitable organisations and individuals who have contributed to the fund, and to those who supported them in the NatWest Community Force Award competition which enabled them to win the first prize of £6,275.

The cadets will now be able to engage in a wide range of new activities, especially in the winter months – but it does not all stop there, as plans are laid for the next phase of modernising the original building.

At the end of the evening a presentation was made by Miss Laura Hallam of an award in memory of her father, Leslie Hallam, who served in the former commando carrier HMS Bulwark.

This award is made annually to a cadet who made a special contribution to the unit during the year, and the latest recipient was POC James Halsey.

Buxton has now been awarded a burgee for the sixth year in succession.

A clasp and a cheque



● Lt (SCC) Annie Kay RNR receives her clasp from Capt Bob Fancy at HMS Raleigh

IT WAS fitting that long-serving staff member and Sea Cadet Annie Kay was presented with her clasp for 18 years' service as a course instructor to the Sea Cadet Corps by the Captain of HMS Raleigh, Capt Bob Fancy, at the Cooks and Stewards Second Class Course lunch at the DMLS Stewards School.

In her time at Raleigh Lt (SCC) Annie Kay RNR, to give her her full title, has helped to train thousands of cadets who visit Raleigh for the Naval Acquaintance and cooks and stewards courses on offer.

Meanwhile, further west into Cornwall, the activities of a golf club have been of benefit to the Sea Cadet Corps.

Whitsand Bay Golf Club have donated £2,812.88 to the New Ship Appeal, and former club captain Dave Fairbrother presented the cheque to Lt Cdr (SCC) Lee Sanderson RNR, the

Commanding Officer at the National Sea Cadet Training Centre at HMS Raleigh.

Dave chose the Sea Cadets as the golf club's charity of the Year in 2012 and funds were raised by club members.

Dave said: "Having been a foster carer for 11 years I'm aware of the shocking statistic that some 70 per cent of under-privileged children are at risk of getting into trouble with the law.

"For those who get involved in a good youth organisation the chances are that they are less likely to.

"As an ex-Serviceman – I was in the Army – and with a personal connection to the Sea Cadets I know that it offers great opportunities for young people in a disciplined and safe environment.

"When I had the opportunity of choosing a charity to support during my captaincy, Sea Cadets were my first choice."



● From left: Dave Fairbrother, Joyce Pinhay (club ladies' secretary), hotel manager Paul Phillips, Lt (SCC) Micky Shone RNR, Executive Officer NSCTC Raleigh, Lt Cdr (SCC) Lee Sanderson, CO NSCTC and Judith Hill, Trusts and Foundations Manager MSSC

Charity ball at Beccles

BECCLES unit held their annual Charity Ball, where more than 100 people joined them at the Waveney House Hotel in Beccles.

The evening began with Captain Sea Cadets Capt Mark Windsor being piped 'on board' by LC Bacon and AC Thompson.

Guests were then seated, following the Dinner Call, when PO Gibbs, LC Buchanan and L/Cpl Lees gave a presentation on what Beccles Sea Cadets is all about.

Capt Windsor then gave an after-dinner speech and the evening was rounded off with dancing.

The unit was delighted to be able to present Capt Windsor with a cheque for over £500 to boost the New Ship Appeal for a replacement for TS Royalist.

More recently the unit hosted their annual awards evening, where cadets are rewarded for all their hard work during the previous year.

It was also an opportunity to award promotions, good conduct badges and other specialisation and proficiency badges.

The event was well supported, with more than 100 people in attendance in addition to the ship's company, and the guest list included local MP Peter Aldous, the Mayor of Beccles, and representatives of local organisations, as well as parents and friends.

Unit CO Lt Cdr (SCC) Joe Meadows RNR was pleased to announce that Beccles had been awarded the District Cup for the second year running.

At the recent Area Conference Beccles was placed as second best unit within Eastern Area and also as unit best prepared for Captain's Rounds within Eastern Area – a great result for TS Brave.

Prizes for the best

STONEHAVEN and District unit capped a busy month by holding their Best Cadet presentations at their headquarters, TS Carron.

The presentations were made by the Senior Staff Officer for the Northern Area, Cdr (SCC) Ian Wilson RNR, who has responsibility for all Sea Cadet training matters in Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland.

Until recently Cdr Wilson had been CO of neighbouring Peterhead unit and Assistant District Officer for Grampian, and this was his first official engagement since taking on the role of SSO earlier this year.

The main awards were:

Best Junior Cadet – Leading Junior Florence Craig; Best Cadet (aged 12-14) – Cdt Angus Bruce; Best Cadet (14-16) – AC Heather Bruce; Best cadet (16-18) – LC Ross Lawson; Bella Christie BEM Endeavour Trophy (for the highest-placed runner-up) – AC Ella Wallace; Martin Thomson Memorial Trophy (for best sporting contributor) – AC Heather Bruce; David Berrisford Shield (top shot in .22 category) – LC Ross Lawson; Laurence Mitchell Inter-Divisional Trophy – Port.

The presentations usually take place in February but were put back this year to allow the biannual Royal Naval Parade to take place.

This inspection was carried out by Capt Peter Adams RN (rtd), the newly-appointed Area Officer, and as a result of his visit the unit was awarded its 47th burgee in 59 years of operation – and an unbroken run of 32 in achieving this highest efficiency award.

Stonehaven also retained the Area Officer's Cup, which is awarded to the second highest-scoring unit in the area.

Unit CO Sub Lt (ACC) Sean Fraser RNR said everyone was looking forward to a busy period, fundraising for a new waterfront HQ and preparing for the unit's Diamond Jubilee next year.

RAF and French brushed aside

Continued from back page

The response from the RN was immediate, pushing the French back into their own 22m, they gained a third penalty which was converted by the trusty boot of Pascoe, 9-3.

Things now started to go badly for the French as they struggled to deal with the attacking lines of the Navy and their discipline started to slip. The touchline official saw some foul play at the lineout which led to the French being down to 14 men for ten minutes.

The Navy kicked to the corner for a five-metre lineout which led to a trademark 'catch and drive'. Priddey secured the ball at the back of the maul to score the first try of the night, converted by Pascoe, 16-3.

It was clear that new cap AET John Lamsin (Culdrose) was struggling, which gave Thompson a chance to enter the fray for his senior XV debut.

Thompson was straight into the action and almost scored from his first touch, but the French defence was to deny him his 'Cinderella' moment. This was a short respite for the French as Humphrey crossed in the corner on half-time for an unconverted try. The RN went in at the break with a commanding 21-3 lead.

As the teams returned to the pitch Welling replaced fellow Royal Jack Foster on the wing and added a Senior RN cap to his Combined Services one.

The second half did not live up to the first as both teams seemed to stall, but the RN still maintained the upper hand, which frustrated the French and eventually led to them receiving a red card.

2012 U23 captain ET(WE) Tom Davies (Collingwood), was another player awarded his first senior XV cap as he replaced Humphrey at full back.

The Navy coaches started to make the changes to try to unlock the game, moving Gaz Evans from prop to No.8 and bringing on AET Kye Beasley (Culdrose) in the front row. Evans made an immediate impact as he picked up from a stable scrum and made good yardage.

Mne Josh Terry (RM Poole) came into the front row and there were more new caps on the night with Logs(SC) 'B' Buinimasi (Devonport) replacing Tichias in the centre. POAET John Court (Culdrose) replaced MA Laird due to an injury in the final minutes of the game.

The final play of the match saw the French throw everything at the Navy line and eventually be rewarded with a converted try to make the final score 21-10 – allowing skipper Pascoe to lift the Babcock Trophy aloft again for the first time in two years.

The RN's director of rugby Cdr Andy Kellett said of the victory: "We started well and the tempo we played at was something we have been working on during the training camp and in games leading up to this fixture."

Six of the best Drubbing in Dallas

Continued from back page

fashion to their first goal. Despite the brave goalkeeping of AB Adam Bee saving several attempts by Shattuck, he eventually succumbed to yet another low close range shot with which he stood very little chance.

3-0 at half-time was going to be extremely difficult to come back from given the Navy's defensive errors and their lack of firepower going forward.

Things improved in the second period; the sailors performed better than in the first half.

Mellows and Steele both came close but saw their shots saved easily by the Shattuck keeper.

Shattuck proved to be a difficult team to break down and, with two goals in rapid succession, they comfortably won the game.

There was not much that Navy coach Wallace could say that would excuse the Navy's defensive performance – the group teams were of an exceptional standard.

RN Seniors vs Army

Scott Sampson was the RN hero as he hit back to draw 1-1 with the Army at Westleigh Park.

Both teams went into the game on the back of defeats by the RAF. But it was the Army, buoyed by a hat-trick from former Pompey striker Lee Bradbury, which set up a 3-1 win for the Army Veterans against the Royal Navy Veterans earlier in the day, who started brightest.

And it took a last-ditch save from keeper POPT Matt Shortt to prevent a Jason Bates free-kick putting them ahead.

Callum Wilkinson fired low past the post as the Army continued to press. Then Shortt had a lucky escape as a deep cross slipped through his fingers and out for a corner.

But it wasn't long before the Army finally hit the front. Three minutes before the break Andrew Cottam headed home from a free-kick. Back came the RN and Army keeper Luke Cairney made a terrific diving save to stop a thunderous effort from LPT Ross McEvoy.

They continued to press after the break, too, and Sampson grabbed an equaliser on 54 minutes. Army keeper Cairney blocked a shot inside the area but Sampson was the quickest to react to knock in the rebound from six yards.

Jay Hubbard then rattled the Royal Navy crossbar from a corner and Bates curled a free-kick narrowly over but the defences held firm to leave the honours shared.



RN captain Mne Al Gouick closes down an Army forward during the sides' thrilling 3-3 draw

A SIXTH Inter-Services outdoor hockey win in ten attempts is the proud record of the current RN senior men's squad (2004, 05, 07, 08, 11, and now 13).

It completes a clean sweep for RN coach POPT Sammy Howard on top of November's indoor title, writes Alan Walker, RNHA.

The RN and Army took to the Aldershot field first and trainee pilot Richard 'Ginge' Jenkin and Mark 'Geronimo' Stanton gave the Navy a comfortable two-goal lead with their usual aplomb.

The Army bounced back with three to take the lead. With 20 minutes left, the Army looked to have the match sewn up but Stanton struck with only two minutes on the clock for a 3-3 draw, allowing both teams to live to fight another day.

The soldiers returned to the pitch to face the Air Force, bagging a 2-1 win in the process, meaning the RN had to better the scoreline to take the title.

There followed a ten-goal extravaganza which had to be seen to be believed. The Navy got down to business through LET(ME) Danny Makaruk on eight minutes – sheer class from the Welsh international.

The RAF's C Burden put away a corner four minutes later to level.

The remarkable Stanton raced away from the restart to bury the Navy's second.

The RAF replied through Selman at a corner. The flame-haired Jenkin had no problem climbing into the shooting seat to score again for the RN to go 3-2 up. This was only minute 22 of 70. On minute 28 the dangerous Brocklehurst equalised for the RAF to make it 3-3.

It was then that the Navy team

captain, gritty Scots international RM mortarman Alan Gouick (45 Cdo) decided that a wee bit of Scottish leadership by example might not go amiss.

In what turned out to be the turning point of the competition, inside three minutes he had buried a short corner and converted a penalty stroke for a 5-3 lead for the RN.

Two strong defences emerged now to keep each other out. RN keeper Sgt Steve Payne had never looked so assured – as well he might with seven Royal Marines in the squad of 16.

Deep into the second half now, tackles were flying in all over the pitch, the tempo was rising. Someone was going to score soon, hopefully no-one was going to be sent off.

The RAF's Andy Selman was first to crack when his 49th-minute green card became a 56th-

minute sending off.

Recognising the man-up situation, the flying Jenkin sensed that a chance might be there for the taking.

Good work was being done by Makaruk and Rowan Edwards and after Sean Trevethan had come close; the predatory Jenkins was on hand to triumphantly make it 6-3.

Jenkin's exuberant celebrations did not impress the umpire who judged a temporary suspension to be appropriate.

It was now the RN's turn to be a man down, but Gouick and co were standing no nonsense and kept the RAF at bay until Jenkin returned.

Would you believe it? The RAF then converted a corner for 6-4 as the final whistle sounded. The Navy's 6-4 was better than the Army's 2-1 and the trophy was theirs.

REVIEW

Germany's Titanic Army vs U-boats

THE GROVE REVIEW

OFTEN referred to as 'die deutsche Titanic' – the German Titanic – the sinking of the liner Wilhelm Gustloff in January 1945 is the greatest loss of life in a single ship in maritime history.

"What hurt me most was everybody would talk about the Titanic," one survivor recalled. "My mother said: 'I was on a boat that sank.' And people snickered. I feel the ridicule to this day."

Comparisons with the Titanic are inevitable – and not entirely accurate. There is no iceberg, no maiden voyage, no millionaires, no wireless to immediately convey news of the tragedy.

The loss of the Gustloff is probably more akin to the sinking of the troopship Lancastria, bombed off St Nazaire in 1940: a desperate evacuation, an overcrowded ship, an enemy attack, a terrible loss of life and a cover-up by the authorities.

At least 4,000 people went down with the Lancastria. The toll on the Gustloff is believed to be over 9,000 – there's no precise figure – which makes it about six times greater than the Titanic.

Such numbers are difficult to

comprehend, but Cathryn Prince puts a human face on this tragedy in *Death in the Baltic* (Palgrave £16.99, ISBN 978-0-230-34156-2).

Pre-war, the Gustloff was one of Hitler's 'dream ships', a 25,000-tonne cruise ship built by the Nazis to give ordinary Germans the chance to experience holidays beyond the shores of their homeland.

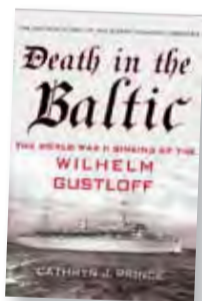
After serving as a hospital ship and then as floating accommodation for trainee U-boat crews for most of WW2, at the beginning of 1945 the Gustloff was brought back to life as part of Operation Hannibal, the evacuation of Germany's eastern provinces as the Red Army overran them.

The thousands of refugees who streamed into the port of Gotenhafen (today Gdynia in Poland) had already endured treks of up to a fortnight in the bitter Baltic winter by the time they boarded the Gustloff on January 29.

As they did so, the police moved among the throng hauling out suspected deserters while Nazi bigwigs commandeered the finest suites aboard. Ordinary civilians were "lying like sardines" in whatever space they could find.

When the Gustloff sailed for Kiel on January 30 – the 12th anniversary of Hitler's rise to power – over 10,000 people are thought to have been aboard; the crew stopped counting at 6,000.

Just after Hitler's annual radio broadcast was transmitted through the ship by loudspeakers, the Gustloff was hit by three torpedoes from the Soviet submarine



S13.

Prince paints a gruesome picture of what happened next: screams, panic, people crushed, secondary explosions, sailors firing guns trying to maintain order – almost all played out in darkness as the ship's lights failed.

There was no orderly evacuation. Rafts and lifeboats were lowered in haphazard fashion. Hundreds of passengers were trapped behind the thick glass on the promenade deck where they drowned "trapped like fish in an aquarium".

The Gustloff went down in under 90 minutes. Not 1,000 souls aboard survived.

There was no mention of her loss in the German media. It was a good 18 months before many families officially learned the fate of their relatives.

Despite the jacket blurb the Gustloff story isn't "untold" – it's been told extensively in books in German especially (thanks largely to the efforts of steward Heinz Schön who survived the tragedy), and on a couple of occasions in English; but this is a very worthy addition to that body of literature.

IN THE chaos that the U-boats caused when they turned from attacking convoys to massacring unescorted merchant shipping off the American coast in early 1942, the US Army Air Force became involved in anti-submarine warfare.

At that time the US Navy only controlled shore based flying boats; land-based aircraft that could be used as patrol bombers for anti-submarine warfare were controlled by the USAAF's First Bomber Command, writes Prof Eric Grove of the University of Salford.

These were pressed into service and eventually, in October 1942, a fully-fledged USAAF 'Anti-Submarine Command' was activated, based on RAF Coastal Command.

This only lasted a year – as in August 1943 it was decided to give the land-based long range maritime patrol role to the Navy. The USAAF Anti-Submarine Groups continued to operate until October.

The bureaucratic in-fighting that surrounded the Anti-Submarine Command is a classic case study of the remarkable 'Chinese Warlordism' which has historically permeated the American defence establishment.

It is interesting in this regard to see how good the often fraught Royal Navy-Royal Air Force relationship appeared from across the Atlantic.

This is but one aspect of a very interesting official history of the Command, written by Arthur

B Ferguson, ACAS Intelligence of the Historical Division of the USAAF, in 1945.

This has now been reprinted as a slim 181-page paperback *The War Against the Nazi U-Boats: The Anti-Submarine Command* (Premiere, £12.50 ISBN 978-1607467502) in the series 'Lost Histories of World War 2' edited by L Douglas Keeney.

The document covers both the force's controversial background and its activities and organisation. Some interesting issues emerge.

British readers will find the apparent devotion of the US Navy to convoy set against the USAAF's desire for a more 'offensive' approach a useful counter to the usual picture of Admiral King's reluctance to introduce convoy in his home waters.

It is clear that the USN had learned its lessons well, even at the expense of keeping air assets in waters from which U-boats had disappeared, at least for a time.

The Army airmen champed at the bit at not being allowed to attack U-boats in areas where they were operating.

The book thus raises the old question of how 'defensive' convoys are when they draw U-boats to their destruction by assets operating in support.

Contrary to the author, I was quite pleased that the Navy rather than the USAAF usually got its

way. I was also left wondering if the mid-Atlantic gap might have been closed earlier with the USAAF's very long range B-24 Liberators.

The only problem with this fascinating volume is the absolutely atrocious standard of production.

The text is riddled with errors, apostrophes having been introduced where I am pretty sure they did not exist in the original.

This is irritating but far more important are clear errors in quoting aircraft types, convoy numbers and even years.

These are repeated throughout the reset work. The unamed proof clearly went prematurely to production; there are even editorial instructions left in the text!

All this makes the work very hazardous for the uninitiated who may not recognise convoy ONS5 as 'OWS-5' This is a great shame in a republication of an important original document.

Otherwise, it is fascinating and stimulating but please use with great care and double check every fact!

This is a fascinating account of a too-little-known aspect of the 'Battle of the Atlantic' that we shall be commemorating in Liverpool this month.

We shall be exploring other new dimensions in the 'Battle of the Atlantic Remembered' historical conference to be held on 23-24 May as part of the BOA70 events in Liverpool.

Anyone who wants to attend, please contact jedynakiewicz@msn.com for information and booking details.



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'A cracking start...'

THE 2013 motorcycling season for the Royal Navy road racing team kicked off at Brands Hatch, battling it out in GB Racing Combined British Military Services Championship.

Taking on the RAF and Army, the RN fielded a number of determined and focused riders, gunning to make amends for last season. Team boss Bill Callister (No.194) climbed on to a blisteringly-fast Honda Fireblade; Karl Dyer (No.44 - pictured above by PO Dutchy Holland) was astride a BSB Superstock 600 spec Yamaha R6; Stevie Mac (No.45) took charge of a well-sorted Suzuki GSX-R600; Colin Wilson (No.31) had a choice of wet or dry Suzuki GSX-R600's; and finally Frank Gallagher (No.47) racing Bill's Honda CBR600RR from the 2012 season.

**Race 1 Saturday
Motodex Performance first Pre-National 600**

Track conditions were far from ideal, making wet tyres the order of the day. Karl was full of confidence after placing himself tenth on the grid and all of Team Navy were fired up to earn as many points towards the Combined Military Services Championship as they could manage.

Between the lights going out and the first turn Karl was down to 17th. Head down and completely focused on getting a top-ten finish, he pushed hard, getting good drive out of Druids and putting it up the inside of a number of riders going into Graham Hill bend on each lap.

After getting a good start Colin maintained his form and started making steady progress up the field. He got as high as tenth place by lap six. By the ninth, Karl had made up lost ground and latched on to the back of Colin. An aggressive move up the inside, again at Graham Hill Bend, dropped Colin back to 11th for a few laps but Colin out-braked Karl going into Druids and held it to the chequered flag with a race best of 58.760. Karl crossed the line in 11th, just two seconds behind with a best lap of 59.007.

Stevie Mac's race didn't go to plan, despite setting a 59.412 on his third lap. On the next lap he was side-swiped going into Druids, causing him to go into the gravel, ending his race.

Frank earned himself a ten-second jump-start penalty by getting over excited and driving the bike forward - ever so slightly - when the lights came on. After they went out though Frank was up to 6th place by lap eight, where he was dicing with Antony Charley and Tom Daisly. The three riders traded places on numerous occasions throughout the race leaving Frank to take the flag in seventh place with a best time of 58.242. With his penalty, he was relegated two spots.

**Race 2 Saturday
Motodex Performance first Pre-National 600**

A dry line was beginning to appear on the track, but it was still greasy - there was a 50/50 split of bikes on drys and wets.

Karl, Colin and Frank all opted for dry; Stevie Mac stuck with wets - and after the first lap it looked like the right decision.

Karl progressively moved backwards down the pack to end up 18th of 28. Colin struggled to put down any power without the rear stepping out and finished in 16th. Frank retired on lap three with mechanical issues.

Stevie Mac used his wets to good effect and catapulted himself up to 11th place in four laps, maintaining this position until the end; he missed out on a top-ten finish by just half a second.

**Race 1 Saturday
The Bike Insurer Thundersport GP1**

After an 'all hands on deck' effort to get Bill's bike back in a fit state - including the removal of the steering damper - Bill took to the grid in 33rd place.

Even with very little time to get accustomed to the substantial hike in power of his new machine, the Royal Marine appeared to 'out pin' from the start.

Having worked up to 17th place by the second lap, he started putting in consistent 57/58-second laps. After a race-long battle with No.19 Blake Woulds, which saw lots of paint swapping on numerous occasions, Bill brought his bike home in 17th place, with a race best of 57.505. This earned him 19 valuable points towards the GB Racing Combined Military Services Championship.

**Race 1 Sunday
Motodex Performance first Pre-National 600**

With the Mega Laps (personal best lap time from the previous day) from Saturday's racing dictating the grid positions for Sunday's races the Navy riders were in a strong position to make an impact on the Inter-service championship points table.

The opening race of day two saw Frank, Colin and Karl on the third row of the starting grid in tenth, 11th and 12th places respectively. Stevie Mac was right behind, on the fourth row, in 13th.

A poor start from both Stevie Mac and Karl lost them a number of places going into Paddock Hill bend. By the second lap, Karl was back up to 13th after making good passes between Druids and Graham Hill Bend.

Stevie Mac followed close behind, before beating Karl at his own game and passing him where he thought he was strongest - on the exit of Druids. The pair went on to take the flag in 12th and 13th respectively.

Colin had a good start and worked up to ninth position for a couple of laps, before mechanical trouble forced his retirement on the eighth.

Frank was on a mission from the moment the lights went out. Some high-quality passes in the early stages of the race helped him up to seventh before some clear track and a small gap to the machine behind him allowed him to throw in his best lap of the weekend so far (57.391) on lap 11. After chasing down Michael Tustin, with four laps to spare, Frank lined him up and made a great pass to finish just 0.2 seconds ahead, in sixth.

**Race 2 Sunday
Motodex Performance first Pre-National 600**

The last pre-national race of the weekend provided some of the most exciting and fun racing of the weekend.

Karl got away cleanly and worked up to tenth by the fifth lap. Stevie Mac, who had started back in 19th, caught Karl on the seventh and was piling on the pressure, forcing Karl into a mistake - and allowing him to slip through; he held ninth place to the flag.

After a final four-lap battle with Dean Young, Karl fought his way back to tenth position, but Dean managed to gap Karl by half a second by

the flag, to relegate him to 11th.

Colin, who had been forced to put the wet wheels on to his spare (dry) bike, quickly turned his second row grid spot into a comfortable sixth. That said, had the race been a lap longer, Frank, who was running between two-three seconds a lap quicker than Colin and had come up from 19th, would have surely taken that sixth spot.

**Race 1 Sunday
The Bike Insurer Thundersport GP1**

After a front runner's bike developed a huge leak in the early stages of the race, throwing oil on the track from the start line, through Paddock Hill Bend and up round Druids, the race was red flagged and rescheduled.

Bill lined his Blade up on a reduced grid in the *crème de la crème* - Thunder Sport GP1 class. With pale lines of cement dust residue - clearly marking the areas to avoid - spread around a substantial section of the track, the field set off on three sighting laps.

Five riders ended up going off into the gravel - Bill wasn't one of them, happily. After a cautious start by the whole pack, Bill was up to 13th place by the third.

A lot of riders took it steadily around the majority of the circuit - highlighted by the fact that Bill dropped back to 15th and only posted a best of 1:02.477. Even with some very demanding conditions out on track, Bill was gaining valuable points towards the team championship - unlike many riders who were parked up in the paddock, having been caught out earlier in the day.

**Race 2 Sunday
The Bike Insurer Thundersport GP1**

Track conditions had improved for the last race of the weekend. Having got to grips with his snarling beast, Bill was on the pace immediately, posting consistent 57-second laps. After a race-long dice with No.169 Daniel Murphy, Bill held on to 12th.

Overall it was a cracking start to the season for the RN road racing team - every rider showed a massive improvement, and with a new collective team focus and determination throughout the weekend, it promises to be an awesome 2013 race season.

In rod we trust

KESTREL and Hawk at Westwood Lakes were the venues for the 2013 Combined Services-MOD angling clash.

With the winter weather and temperatures still biting, anglers who reacted to the conditions and looked for any feeding fish came out on top.

Hawk Lake dominated proceedings and produced the top three anglers on the day. Venue regular Baz Bright (Garbolino RAF) made a good draw of peg 10 count and took a mixed bag to the scales, recording 49-06-0 for the win.

Second spot went to J Bowlan (DSRA Black) on Peg 20 with 45-12-0, and in third place AET J Gaylard (Maver Royal Navy) on Peg 9 managed to place 43-05-0 on the scales.

If you are interested in representing the Navy at angling or want some more information, then please contact CPO J Harvey at: curnucx@btconnect.com

Welsh rare treat for Lancaster

FIVE crew from HMS Lancaster left the Red Rose frigate behind in Portsmouth to enjoy AT at Talybont in Wales - and shake off the exertions of BOST and DCT.

The week began leaving a snowy Portsmouth with the team wondering whether they would actually get out to do any adventurous training, especially with more snow forecast. However, once out of Hampshire, the snow passed, writes LPT Robbo Robinson, HMS Lancaster.

The first day in Wales was a 'quality mountain day' beginning and started early, in a very white Brecon Beacons.

Even though it was dry, the bitter wind made the chill factor -30°C, which challenged the team's grit and determination - but they pushed through, knowing that a large hot chocolate was waiting for them back at the accommodation.

Luckily the weather calmed down, making day two a lot more fun. The hour's drive down to the Forest of Dean was well worth it where a man-made off-road mountain biking course catering for riders of all abilities awaited the five matelots.

After all the boring bike checks, it was time to get out and smash the course. It had just installed a brand new skills course, so it was rude not to start on there. Clubz put the guys through the paces in a comprehensive warm up, ensuring the team were competent to go out on the big boys' course.

The course had it all: winding forest tracks, berms and some thrilling downhill to finish, which everyone enjoyed, even if it took them out of their comfort zone.

"It was a long challenging day, however the downhill section at the end was superb - a little daunting at first, but a great thrill, definitely recommend it to anyone," said ET(ME) Jordan Tremain.

After a good night's sleep, it was time for rock climbing to push the comfort zones again - and it certainly did that.

A great day of indoor climbing, consisted of abseiling, an introduction to bouldering and belay climbing, including some challenges to keep the guys competitive.

"A great challenging week away, giving me an introduction to AT within the RN," said ET(ME) Stuart Phillips.

After a fun-filled week away, it was time to go back to the ship, with most falling asleep in the back of the van, always a good sign of a top week of adventurous training.

"An action-packed week, a top week of team bonding. I will definitely be going AT again," said AB Downing.



Two halves and a full one

SAILORS from Falklands' patrol ship HMS Clyde took part in two of the most southerly races in the world - and one of the most dangerous.

Her crew had a stab at the South Georgia half-marathon, then lined up for the Stanley Marathon, officially the southernmost marathon in the world.

They also took part in the Cape Pembroke half-marathon (pictured above) - less demanding than the other two races, but it does skirt the edge of a minefield.

Nine hundred miles from the Falklands, with a population of about 30 (mostly scientists) and rugged mountains whose peaks are almost always snow capped, South Georgia poses a formidable challenge for any runners.

The half marathon begins with a climb up the 600m (1,968ft) high Brown Mountain which overlooks the abandoned whaling station at Grytviken; the final part of the ascent heads up the slope at a 45° angle.

At the summit, the Clyde athletes raised the White Ensign briefly, ran for about a mile along a ridge, then scrambled down scree and a grass slope (which was 1:2) - or rather three of the four runners did. The ship's assistant operations officer Sub Lt Dan Coultas injured his knee and couldn't make it down.

His three shipmates returned to help, using the flag as a bandage and makeshift splint to help him down the mountain, before Clyde's marine engineer officer Lt Steve Taylor carried him over a bog to a nearby beach, where the unfortunate runner was collected by one of HMS Clyde's boats... while the ship's navigator fought

off territorial fur seals.

With the rescue over, the run continued to King Edward Point, past a WW1 gun emplacement, the wreck of a Puma helicopter and the grave of explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, before fading light and deteriorating weather brought an end to the race with ten miles completed.

Participation in the Stanley Marathon was less dramatic. Some 137 runners and relay runners lined up for the race which began in the Falklands capital, headed out to its small airport, along the length of Stanley Bypass, up Sapper Hill, back to the airport, then into the town again.

The weather - unusually for the Falklands - was good, but the high temperature of 16°C was bad news for the runners causing some to cramp up.

"The heat took the edge off my pace - I couldn't go any faster than ten-minute miles without cramping up," said Lt Taylor. "It didn't help my morale that at this point turkey vultures started circling overhead - like they do in cartoons."

The runners were buoyed by enthusiastic support from Stanley's residents, who cheered the RAF's Flt Lt Andrew van Kints across the line first in 2h 51m. Cpl 'Bradderz' Bradley posted the slowest time of the day (9h) but he was weighed down by a 45kg bomb disposal suit. The event raised more than £3,000 for the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness.

And the minefield marathon? That heads out from Stanley to the airport and then on to the Cape Pembroke peninsula, whose beaches were soon with extensive minefields in 1982.



● Sgt Gaz Evans makes a break for the RN during the comprehensive defeat of the RAF
Picture: Paul McCabe

RAF and French brushed aside

BEATING the French and the RAF. It doesn't get much better than that in the world of RN Rugby Union.

Well, apart from a triumph at Twickenham.

The annual Army-Navy was taking place just after this edition went to press – but the omens were good.

The 2013 Inter-Services championship opened at the new home of RAF Rugby, RAF Halton, writes Maj Steve Melbourne.

As play developed the RAF had a scrum inside their 22m – it should have been an easy clearance. However, miscommunication between the backs and the pressure from the Navy backline saw the ball fumbled over the RAF line and Mne Nathan Huntley (30 Cdo IX Gp) touched down for the first score of the game: 0-5 on five minutes.

The RAF backs started to move the ball around and the back three looked effective in attack – it was from one of these attacks that the airmen scored their first converted try: 7-5.

The Navy attacked via Sgt Gaz Evans (RMR London) and Mne Dom Taylor (42 Cdo) which caused the RAF defence to work hard to try to contain them. A run of penalties against the Air Force had referee Andrew Small speaking to the RAF skipper. It was from one of these penalties that Huntley drove the ball into the RAF five-metre-line. A 'catch and drive' from the lineout saw LA(AH) Ben Priddey (Culdrose) crash over for a trademark try, converted by POAET Dave Pascoe (Culdrose): 7-12.

The RAF were not to be outdone and using their scrum applied pressure on the Navy, winning a penalty try from a Navy infringement in a five-metre scrum: 14-12.

The lead was short-lived as Pascoe converted a penalty after the RAF were judged to be 'holding-on' in the tackle: 14-15.

AET Jon Humphrey (845 NAS) continued to cause the RAF defence a great many problems whilst ET(ME) Dale Sleeman (HMS Raleigh) and his direct running lines opened their defence time after time. However, it was Huntley who was to score next as he attacked the RAF defensive line, saw the gap and glided through for his 2nd converted try: 14-22.

On the half-hour point Sleeman again broke the RAF line, this time finishing off the move to make the score 14-27 at the break.

The Navy opened the second period at a greater tempo which saw some excellent play between the forwards and the backs. Again Priddey was on hand to touch down for his second try of the afternoon, converted by Pascoe: 14-34.

It was to be Humphrey who again showed his pace, as he found a gap and turned on the afterburners to leave the RAF defence in his wake. Just in case he needed it, there was great support from Mne John Marlin (42 Cdo), but Humphrey was clear over the line. Pascoe converted: 14-41.

The RAF backs put together a good passage of play that

eventually led to an unconverted try: 19-41.

The RN started to make some changes as POAET John Court (Culdrose) came on for international prop NA(AH) Kyle Mason (Devonport). Capt Stu McLaren showed exactly why he was selected as he came into the fray for CPOAET Chris Thompson (Sultan), who had performed fantastically.

McLaren immediately turned over the RAF ball, Sleeman saw the gap down the right wing and broke free. Only some good cover defence by the RAF stopped Sleeman but Huntley was on hand to score his hat-trick, which was converted by Pascoe: 19-48.

Mne Setareki Raumakita (SEME Bordon) and Mne Greg Welling (RMASC) replaced MA Sam Laird (RAF Henlow), whose workrate during the afternoon was of the highest order, and Mne Jack Foster (40 Cdo).

As the game entered the last ten mins ET(WE) Ian Cooper (Collingwood) replaced Taylor and Logs(SC) (Silivenusi) Buinimasi (HMNB Devonport) came into the centre for Mne Matt Tichias (42 Cdo). This also saw AB (WS) Tom Davies (Illustrious) replace Huntley. To maintain the pressure, Humphrey moved to stand-off and Davies slotted into the full-back role.

The RAF on the other hand were to finish the game with 14 men following a yellow card for a dangerous tackle, which spurred on the Navy. It was from an overthrown RAF lineout that Cooper collected the ball and crossed the try line for a converted try: 19-53.

Although beaten, the RAF never gave up and in the last play of the game they crossed the Navy line for a converted try, making the final score 26-55 to the Royal Navy.

Victory over the Air Force came hot on the heels of victory over the French as the 1st XV snatched back the Babcock Trophy from their Gallic opponents.

The Marine Nationale have never won on British soil but were looking to emulate their 2012 performance when they outshone the RN by 24-3.

At Burnaby Road in Portsmouth it was the hosts out of the blocks the quickest.

After some early possession, they caught the French offside, allowing Pascoe to open the scoring with a penalty for a 3-0 lead on just three minutes.

Although the Marine Nationale held the upper hand in the scrum set pieces, the Navy had the power of Sleeman and new cap Tichias in the centre who caused the French defence significant problems.

It was one of these forays into the French defensive line that led to the second score of the game as Pascoe again slotted over a penalty kick for a 6-0 lead.

The French came back strongly from the restart and winger Staub made useful ground to earn a penalty, which was duly converted by Sauton to pull back to 6-3.

Continued on page 38



● The exceptional AET Ross Taylor demonstrates his skill under the Tignes floodlights
Picture: PO(Phot) Owen Cooban, FRPU East

Boarders line up with Britain's best

MEN and women from the Royal Navy Snowboard team gave a superb account of themselves at the British National Competition in France, writes Maj Kenny Craig RM.

Providing the lion's share of riders for this season's Combined Services Snowboard Team, the heavy Senior Service weighting in the team was vindicated by some exceptional results.

The Navy's dominance is hardly surprising following the outstanding season that the RN team has had so far.

The March edition of *Navy News* featured the success of the RN snowboarders at the Inter-Services event in Meribel.

So it was no surprise that Navy riders dominated selection for the Combined Service Team heading back to France for 'The Brits' – the annual British National event.

Held in Tignes in the last week of March, it saw the best riders from the UK do battle

across SBX, slopestyle and half-pipe disciplines. The standard of competition at The Brits is exceptional and the fact that Servicemen and women compete alongside Olympic hopefuls such as Jamie Nicholls, Billy Morgan and Aimee Fuller illustrates how talented our snowboard athletes truly are.

Returning to captain the CS team was RN snowboard stalwart Lt Mick Hawkes with AET Ross Taylor, Mne Ian 'Sandy' Sanderson, LPT Lucy McKenna and Surg Lt Steph Ingram – half the ten-strong Forces squad.

SBX promised to be the team's strongest event and supporters were not disappointed. AET Taylor again demonstrated his exceptional talent, battling through several heats to make it to the four-man final against Team GB's No.1 and 2 riders and their coach, 'Jimbo' Foster, who had come out of retirement to show his team exactly how it's done.

In the end, it was Jimbo's experience that paid off on the highly-technical course, with him taking gold, but Ross stunned the other finalists and crowd by leaving the top GB riders in his wake to take silver.

Podium positions did not stop there. Lt Hawkes scored two bronzes in the Masters' category for SBX and Slopestyle, demonstrating that old dogs can indeed learn new tricks.

Mne Sanderson was unlucky, attempting by far the team's most technical trick, a frontside 720 rodeo. Had he landed it cleanly, he would have certainly finished in contention for the podium.

LPT McKenna represented the ladies strongly with an impressive sixth place in the SBX, again against fierce GB-level opposition.

More details on the sport can be found at www.rnwsa.co.uk and www.facebook.com/snowboardnavy.

Drubbing in Dallas

RN U19s vs Solar Chelsea Academy

IT MUST be daunting to a young sailor who turns up in a far away place to play in an international football tournament and your first opposition is wearing a Chelsea FC kit.

That's exactly how the first game of the Navy's Dallas Cup experience went.

On a very cold Texan day with winds gusting up to 35mph, the RN were as ready for their first game as they could be.

After winning the coin toss, the Navy opted to defend the half with the strong wind against them – they knew it would be a tough challenge, but Manager WO1 Marty Wallace was confident that the squad was defensively prepared enough to cope with Solar Chelsea.

But on three minutes Solar bagged their first goal. Slightly nervous, the Navy defenders were a little over zealous with their initial tackling and caught a Solar player at the edge of the Navy's penalty area resulting in a direct free kick.

Despite a well-placed wall, the Solar midfielder managed to curl the ball perfectly into the far corner of the Navy's goal – far out of reach of the Navy keeper AB Bee (HMS Portland).

The next ten minutes were desperate for the sailors, but they soon calmed down when they got to grips with the way the US team played and the far from perfect playing surface.

The Navy's first opportunity on goal came after 15 minutes when ET Power (Tireless) latched on to a pass by ET Waddicor (Sultan)



ONSIDE with Lt Cdr Neil Horwood, RNFA

and his shot well saved by the Solar keeper.

Solar grabbed their next on 18 minutes when the RN failed to clear the ball from their six-yard area. The ball fell kindly to the Solar left midfielder who drilled the ball in to the back of the Navy goal from close range.

Good defending and some brave goalkeeping kept the Solar academy side from scoring any more goals in the first half.

The second period started badly for the sailors – a badly-weighted back pass by the Navy's left back gifted another Solar goal in the first minute.

Not dejected, the RN pressed Solar back into their own half and looked likely to be the next team to score.

A decent cross was made after some good work down the left from ET Goode (Sultan) but it was just out of reach for ET Lee (Collingwood) to latch on to.

Next, Power struck again, only to see his shot in the safe hands of the Solar keeper.

Still Solar looked the stronger team and despite some heroic defending by the Navy's centre backs, ET Twidale and AET Coyle (both from Sultan), the sailors eventually conceded a fourth goal; one of the RN defenders was judged to have fouled a Solar player inside the penalty box. The resulting kick gave Bee no chance.

Overall, this was a harsh introduction to the Dallas Cup for

the young Navy side.

RN U19 vs PAC Tigres

Coach Wallace made a couple of changes to his starting 11: Dallas Cup debuts were given to ET Steele (Sultan) and AET Mellows (Nelson).

The game was not five minutes old when Tigres scored their opener. The RN's defence were slow to react to the run of the Tigres striker, who used his pace to outrun his markers and fire his powerful shot low into the Navy's goal.

This inspired the sailors to go on the offensive and for the next 20 minutes, the RN virtually camped in the Tigres' half.

With a strong wind behind them, the Navy worked hard to not allow Tigres to keep possession.

Despite shots from ET Mellows, Power (Tireless) and Lee (Collingwood), the Navy could not score.

Five minutes before half time, Tigres did grab a second; once again, the speed of the Tigres players outwitted the Navy's defence and they came forward in numbers, breaking through the defenders to shoot once again low and beyond the reach of the Navy keeper.

Wallace was forced to make his first change at half time through injury, a re-shuffle was required and the players were commended on their first half performance despite the two-goal deficit.

Sadly further defensive errors led to two goals for Tigres in quick succession. The third came from an unusually-quickly-taken corner which caught both the Navy's defence and goalkeeper napping; the fourth equally from a defensive mistake, which allowed the Tigres forward to finish neatly one-on-one with the Navy keeper.

In true Navy fashion, the sailors never gave in and continued to play some neat football, but close to the end, when the RN had gambled by pushing forward for an attacking corner, Tigres broke away and scored a fifth.

Overall it was a disappointing result against another strong American team, with four goals the results of errors.

RN U19 vs Shattuck St Mary's

The third and final group match was against a private boarding school from Minnesota, ranked No.1 in their State.

Although both teams were officially out of the group stages and could not go through, neither wanted the wooden spoon.

The RN started extremely well, looking likely to score... but as with all the previous games, the sailors were lacking confidence up front and the forward players struggled to keep the ball and any shot missed the target.

It was 30 minutes in to the game when Shattuck got their goal: a long ball from their centre back caught the Navy's right back, Musn Sanders (RMSoM), off guard and the speedy Shattuck striker shot low from close range to beat the AB Adam Bee.

It was not long before Shattuck scored their second in similar

Continued on page 38

BLACK MAY

BEATING THE U-BOAT

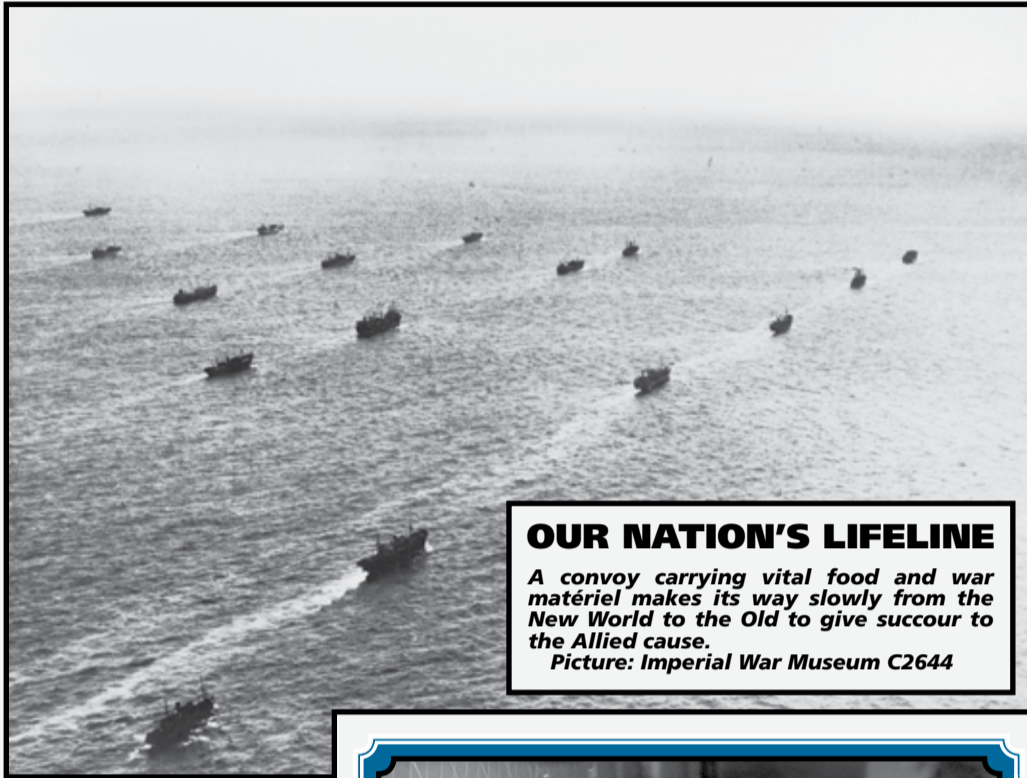


THE RELENTLESS FOE

The Atlantic rages – as it often does. This photograph, taken from the bridge of V-class destroyer HMS Viscount, gives a good idea of ferocious weather conditions while escorting a convoy. During this convoy, ONS165, Viscount rammed and sank U69. There were no survivors.

Picture: Imperial War Museum A 13374

NEW CONVOY RUNS DÖNITZ'S GAUNTLET



OUR NATION'S LIFELINE

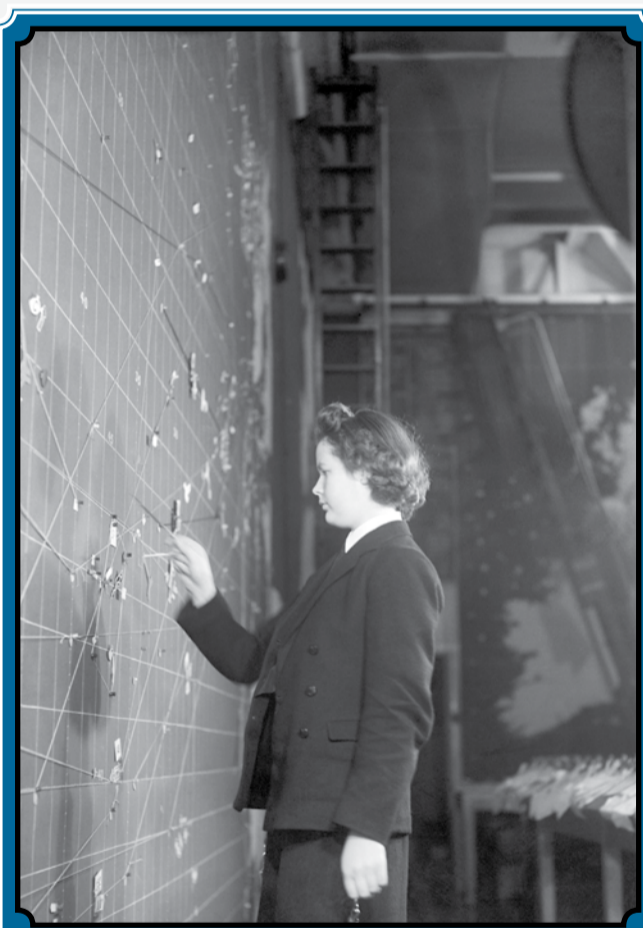
A convoy carrying vital food and war matériel makes its way slowly from the New World to the Old to give succour to the Allied cause.
Picture: Imperial War Museum C2644

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SHE'S GOT HER EYE ON THOSE ENEMY BOATS!

This Wren is marking the position of a suspected U-boat on the giant map at Western Approaches Command in Liverpool.

Liverpool is a sage choice for the headquarters of Western Approaches Command – it is Britain's gateway to the world. Three or four convoys a week arrive on the Mersey. Originally based in Plymouth, the command had moved to Lancashire in March 1941 to direct the battle for the North Atlantic trade routes.

It has chosen Derby House, an imposing six-storey brick building a couple of hundred yards from the famous Liver Building, as the place whence to direct the fight against the enemy boats.

Staff have given the complex the nickname 'the citadel' or 'fortress'. The outer walls are three feet thick, the roof seven feet thick. The entire complex – a warren of 100 rooms covering 50,000 square feet – is bomb and gas-proof. Of those 100 rooms, one dominates: the operations room.

Those who work in it – and there are typically 50 Wrens on duty alongside sailors, Naval officers, Royal Marines and personnel from RAF Coastal Command – oversee the situation map which identifies the positions of convoys, escorts and U-boats.

Picture: Imperial War Museum A 25743

EARLY on the afternoon of April 22 1943, Peter Gretton manoeuvred his ship up to a 5,000-tonne Norwegian steamer, the *Rena*, in the middle of the North Channel.

From the bridge of HMS Duncan, Gretton called across on a loud hailer. On the wing of the *Rena*, Cdre Kenneth Brooke, listened to his instructions and passed advice and guidance back to Gretton. Brooke did not find the *Rena* to his liking. His accommodation was fine. But the crew were evidently unused to convoy duties. Worse, they didn't speak much English.

It was Brooke's duty to guide 43 merchant ships across nearly 3,000 miles of ocean to Nova Scotia. And it was Peter Gretton's duty to ensure those 43 ships – under the umbrella of Convoy ONS5 – reached their destination safely.

On this same Thursday, there were 113 U-boats at sea. A couple of dozen were homeward bound. A handful more were leaving Brest and St Nazaire to begin their *Feindfahrten* – sorties (literally 'journeys against the enemy').

Some, though not all, of these inexorable forces would join battle over seven days straddling the end of April and beginning of May 1943. It was a battle waged across more than 750 miles of ocean in nameless tracts of sea, often between antagonists who never saw each other. And when it was over and the bed of the Atlantic was littered with the wrecks of nearly 20 ships and submarines, this nameless battle on a faceless ocean had turned the tide of the Battle of the Atlantic inexorably in the Allies' favour.

Slow progress anticipated

ONS5 – Outbound North (Slow) 5 – was a typical outbound convoy: an assortment of freighters and steamers of differing speeds and sizes. Most flew the Red Ensign. A few were American. A handful of Norwegians like the *Rena*. A couple of Dutch. A Panamanian. Dane. Yugoslav. Almost all were aged – and almost all carried nothing in their cargo holds but ballast.

The destination was Halifax in Canada, where some of the steamers would put into harbour, others would continue to ports on the Eastern Seaboard of the USA.

The convoy's designation 'slow' was an apt one: top speed 7½kts – "which it never reached", Gretton pointedly remarked two decades later. With the forecasted weather – bad and getting worse – it could take three weeks to reach Halifax.

Initially, six escorts were assigned to shepherd ONS5 across the North Atlantic – escort commander Duncan, the frigate HMS *Tay* and four corvettes *Pink*, *Sunflower*, *Snowflake* and *Loosestrife*. They would be joined beyond Iceland by WW1-era destroyer HMS *Vidette* and, later still, a couple of escort groups rallying from St John's in Newfoundland.

Peter Gretton's 'flagship' was a war-weary D-class destroyer, a dozen years old, veteran of the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. Duncan had been given a fresh lease of life for Atlantic duties: gun turrets had been ripped out and replaced with the two principal weapons against the U-boat – depth charges and Hedgehog anti-submarine mortars. She was still far from suited for convoy duties – in particular her limited range. She would need to refuel before reaching North America, providing the Atlantic permitted.

As for the rest of his force, the four Flower-class corvettes were small, invaluable workhorses, but poor seakeepers and slower than a surfaced U-boat. Only HMS *Tay*, a River-class frigate which had entered service the previous summer, could be considered truly up to the challenges posed by the U-boat menace.

If it was a motley force Peter Gretton commanded, at least Escort Group B7 had been hardened over the winter by the dreadful Atlantic weather and blooded in March while escorting HX231 from New York to the UK. The convoy lost 13 ships *en route* to the Old World; in return, a solitary U-boat had been sunk.

PETER'S OUR MAN!

Three decades later Peter Gretton recounted that he considered the outcome of HX231 "all right" – which gives an insight both into the terrible losses the Merchant Navy suffered and the stoicism of the men charged with protecting them.

Gretton was a career officer with 12 years service to his name, a veteran of the Norwegian campaign, the Malta convoys and one Atlantic tour of duty in charge of the destroyer HMS *Sabre*.

Personally brave – he'd earned the DSC for leading a shore party during a revolt in Palestine in the inter-war period – the 30-year-old Gretton was given command of an escort group.

Before taking charge of his group, Gretton headed to Western Approaches Command in Liverpool for a course on the art of U-boat hunting. It proved to be a revelation.

Peter Gretton quickly realised that Western Approaches was a backwater. However much Churchill and the newspapers banged on about the importance of the Battle of the Atlantic, the Royal Navy seemed to treat the fight against the U-boat as a second-class war.

"The Home and Mediterranean Fleets got all the best officers and it was considered somewhat unfashionable to be in the Western Approaches Command," wrote Gretton. The result? As far as Peter Gretton could tell the Battle of the Atlantic was waged by "failures, many retired officers and many incompetents". There were some young go-getters, a few senior officers, but "good regulars were desperately few".

Among the latter, Capt Gilbert Roberts, a former gunnery officer turned tactician, who played out



convoy battles real and imaginary on a large table, drawing upon the experiences of escort commanders and staff officers. In doing so, he would effectively write the rule book on hunting the U-boat.

Some 5,000 officers of all ranks passed through Roberts hands on a week-long course known as 'the game'. The result was that 5,000 officers shared the same appreciation of the Atlantic battle – and shared tactics to defeat the U-boat.

Roberts impressed Peter Gretton

immediately. He was a man who fully understood his craft and possessed the ability to impart his knowledge with "theatrical flair". Any man who took the week-long tactical course Roberts ran left much the richer. "Above all," Gretton wrote 20 years later, "he made a number of very stupid officers really think – sometimes for the first time in their lives."

Gilbert Roberts is a name largely forgotten outside the narrow confines of naval history. Not so the admiral who arrived at Derby House at roughly the same time as Peter Gretton.



Scourge of the enemy again

IN CHARGE of Western Approaches Command is Admiral Sir Max Horton.

He's taken over from Admiral Sir Percy Noble – very much a 'people person': polite, caring, eager to listen. Noble is a figure largely confined to the history books – and often forgotten in the Atlantic story.

By the time he handed over to Horton, he presided over a sizeable 'empire': 1,000 staff in Derby House alone, plus over 170 escorts. The Battle of the Atlantic may well have been won with Noble at the helm.

Noble, however, was needed in Washington to promote Anglo-American naval co-operation – and for that he probably was the right man for the job.

And so too his successor at Western Approaches, a much more forceful character – blunt, direct.

"The scene in the great plotting room at Derby House, with every yard of the Atlantic marked and the walls covered with the symbols of convoys, U-boats, escorts and all sorts, changed with the arrival of Max Horton," staff officer Anthony Kimmins recalled.

Whenever a convoy battle raged, Horton fired off a string of curt questions: Where is? What is? Why is? Why not? Why the hell not?

"If you knew your job, all was well," one staff officer wrote. "If you didn't... God help you."

Work for Horton began late at night – that was when the U-boats typically attacked. Only then would he appear in his office overlooking the operations room.

Horton spent his days playing golf (he famously hit a hole in one at the Royal Liverpool across the Mersey in Hoylake while being interviewed by *Life* magazine), dined, and enjoyed a spot of bridge, before taking his place in the command centre.

Above all, it was Horton's 'former life' as a Great War submariner – he famously initiated the tradition of flying the Jolly Roger after a successful patrol – which marked him out from his predecessor. He

Continued on page iii, column 1

BATTERED BY NATURE – AND BY ADOLF'S MEN

'The night promised to be a busy one'

FOR the first six days of the passage west, ONS5's only opponent was the weather. It was, Peter Gretton wrote later, "consistently adverse". And when it wasn't merely adverse it was "extremely bad". On the 26th, it was the latter. At mid-day, the ships were making just 3kts, a couple of hundred miles south of Iceland.

The gale blew itself out late the next day, and by the morning of April 28, ONS5 was 250 miles southwest of Reykjavik, ploughing along – briefly – at almost top speed.

But at the same time as Kenneth Brooke was filing his mid-day situation report, HMS Duncan began to pick up a U-boat's transmission from somewhere ahead of ONS5. Gretton charged ahead through hazy weather – visibility was no more than three miles. Nothing. U650 had vanished.

But she was out there. And if she was, there were likely to be more.

And there were. U650, which had only recently entered the fray after leaving Bergen in Norway in the middle of April, had flashed a signal to U-boat command in Berlin, a call to arms.

She was one of 16 boats assigned to a U-boat Gruppe, or group. History has come to know them as wolfpacks. This particular pack – Group Star – was 16 U-boats strong, but they were struggling to respond to U650's clarion call in the rough weather. As night fell, only four had joined her for the hunt.

But that still meant five submarines lying in wait.

Although ONS5 was within range of aircraft based in Iceland, the weather thwarted all flying. Before nightfall, Gretton sighted at least one U-boat on the surface. It dived before Duncan could make an effective attack.

Otherwise, the wolves were gathering at their leisure, Peter Gretton observed. With typical RN understatement he wrote: "The night promised to be a busy one."

'Anticipate'

Aboard HMS Pink, Robert Atkinson read a signal from Duncan: *Anticipate*. It was all that was needed. By this stage in World War 2, the convoy escorts were a skilled machine, their practices well-honed. Atkinson decided it was time for tea and let his men grab some food before clearing lower decks and briefing them.

"There's going to be a hell of a battle tonight. I'm not sure how many of us will see daylight. I intend to see it if I can." He urged his men to don their warmest clothing and rest until 1am. Some men slept, many did not. All were ready for action come 1am.

RN 1 – Reich 0

The wolves were, in fact, early. They closed in for the kill just before the witching hour.

What followed is a rather confusing night of battle – typical for

Scourge of the enemy again

Continued from page
i, column 6

understood the mindset of the U-boat commander.

It meant, Anthony Kimmins observed, that "he seemed to have an uncanny pre-vision of what the enemy would do next."

After six months in charge of Western Approaches, Max Horton could see the writing on the wall for the U-boat. Three and a half years of war had honed his convoy escorts into a potent fighting force, while aircraft flown from bases ashore and small 'escort carriers', joining the Fleet in increasing numbers, were becoming proven U-boat hunters.

The time had come, Max Horton reasoned, not to defend convoys but to kill U-boats.

the Atlantic. Fleeting contacts. Depth charge attacks. Oil slicks. Torpedo wakes streaking through the night. Certainties were few – except for one. By the time the first glimmer of light appeared on the eastern horizon, a little after 4am, no ship in the convoy had been sunk.

Gretton reckoned that his force – Duncan, Sunflower, Snowflake and Tay – had thwarted at least half a dozen attempts by the Germans to penetrate the escort screen and sink the merchantmen.

HMS Duncan alone made four attacks that night – in less than an hour. "The ship was pitching and rolling badly – the seas were washing down the quarterdeck, soaking the men there, while the heavy and cumbersome depth charges were difficult to reload," Gretton recalled.

He kept his men apprised of the battle via loud hailer – "there is nothing worse than working on blindly, literally in the dark as to what is happening".

At one point, Duncan tried to ram a U-boat – "a splendid method of sinking submarines" – the escort commander observed. It was, but it invariably inflicted great damage on hunter as well as hunted. With Duncan 1,000 miles from the nearest harbour, the ocean evidently swarming with U-boats, and the convoy far from its destination, Peter Gretton chose not to ram. Instead he dropped a pattern of depth charges as the U-boat disappeared in a swirl into the depths of the Atlantic.

The records show that four U-boats tried – and failed – to attack ONS 5. Two limped away badly bruised from their encounter. One, U528, was further crippled by bombing a week later and eventually sunk.

RN 1 – Reich 1

With daylight, Peter Gretton breathed a sigh of relief. The weather was improving. The convoy and escorts had regrouped after their exertions of the night. Duncan's commander retired to his cabin to sleep. He was there not five minutes. The alarm sounded: *Ship torpedoed astern*.

The victim was a 6,200-tonne American freighter, the McKeesport, whose forward hold imploded when the torpedo from U258 impacted. For half an hour, the crew toiled to save her, before abandoning their efforts – and abandoning their ship. All but one of them got off safely, picked up by the rescue trawler Northern Gem.

There was no time to prosecute U258 – the convoy continued towards the New World.

The opening round in the Battle for ONS5 was over.

Jews still defy SS oppressors in Warsaw

The uprising by Jewish fighters in the Warsaw ghetto has entered its third week, reports from Poland suggest.

An estimated 1,000 freedom fighters are holding at bay a force of Nazis at least twice as strong under brutal SS general Jürgen Stroop.

Up to 400,000 Jews were thought to have been squeezed into the ghetto – an area of just 1.3 square miles – where they have lived in appalling conditions since 1940.

Most of the ghetto was cleared out by the SS overlords last year, but small numbers of Jews have remained.

They have been valiantly fighting overwhelming German forces since April 19. Berlin claims just 17 soldiers have been killed to date. (AP)



OUR BOYS – EVER ALERT

On an open bridge – exposed to all the Atlantic might throw at them – officers of a convoy escort keep watch on their priceless flock.

For now, however, Peter Gretton was focused solely on defence. With Kenneth Brooke, he began marshalling the disparate merchantmen in ONS5 into formation.

"It is difficult – unless one has seen it from the air – to visualize the size and clumsiness of these vast convoys," says Cdr Peter Gretton, commanding officer of an Atlantic escort group.

Arrayed in a dozen columns of half a dozen vessels each, a convoy is large, unwieldy, sluggish, difficult to marshal, even more difficult to command.

"Manoeuvring this mass of ships took time – and much time too was needed to get signals around the convoy, even by flags," says Gretton.

Before dusk Gretton signals orders for the coming night to the merchantmen and warships under his charge – hoping all will receive and follow his instructions.

"Night was the anxious time for an escort – especially in bad weather," he says. "On a dark night it was by no means easy to keep in station – and it was not rare to find one or even two escorts adrift at dawn."

And that's if Adolf's boys haven't struck during the hours of darkness...

Picture: Imperial War Museum A 5667

The Atlantic fights back

'Blowing like the bells of hell'

In the coming days, it was the steep Atlantick which was the convoy's greatest foe – not the U-boat. There never was a good day's passage throughout the convoy – just consistently bad weather with the odd lull "sandwiched between the gales," Gretton recalled. The forecasts he received were "shocking" and the merchantmen – always sluggish – were becoming slower and slower.

By the first day of May, the Atlantic was at its most furious. "The wind was blowing like the bells of hell," wrote Gretton. The ships were barely making any progress – "at times we seemed to be moving backwards".

Aboard HMS Pink AB John 'Snowy' Pells was tasting life on his first ship – and his first convoy duty. He had not enjoyed the experience so far. "In rough weather the boat, being flat-bottomed, was battered and rolled a lot. It was scary to see the metal ship's sides bending in and out. Sea water would be washed down below and sloshed across the mess decks as the boat rolled."

In heavy seas, ONS5 made perhaps 20 miles a day. "The weather was so bad – there were times when the convoy was literally stationary," recalled sick bay attendant Howard Goldsmith of HMS Snowflake. "Although the engines were turning, the screws were turning, we were just sitting there, stationary."

"People don't realise the tremendous power of the sea – unless you've seen what it can do." The storms tore away the fresh meat lockers welded to Snowflake's upper deck – there were no fridges aboard; it was the only way of keeping meat cool. All that was left when the storm passed were the welding spots; the lockers and meat were gone.

And as for marshalling the freighters and steamers in strict formation, it was now impossible. From Duncan's open bridge, the escort commander watched "the convoy melting away before our eyes".

When the storms abated, Gretton was finally able to corral his scattered ships – aided by a long-range Liberator bomber from Iceland. But the rough seas had done more than just hinder the progress of ONS5. They thwarted Gretton's hopes of refueling. By the morning of May 4, Duncan's tanks were almost empty. Her captain had two options: make for Newfoundland, or stay with the convoy and be towed when the fuel ran dry. "After much heart-searching, I decided that Duncan had to go," he recalled two decades later. He handed over command of his group to HMS Tay and turned for St John's. The mood aboard the destroyer was as foul as the weather. "We felt we left the group in the lurch and were thoroughly ashamed of ourselves," Gretton admitted, "though there was really no-one to blame except the staff who had decided in the 1920s the endurance of such destroyers."

Before this first Tuesday in May had passed, three more of ONS5's escorts had left the merchantmen, their fuel tanks dry. It left barely half a dozen warships shielding the convoy which, at a sluggish 6kts, was still four days' sailing from Newfoundland and over a week from its destination of Halifax.

There were now more than 50 U-boats waiting for the approaching convoy – 29 forming a line 400 miles long ('Group Fink'), and further to the west, two dozen submarines gathering off Newfoundland to form a second line ('Group Amsel'). On the afternoon of May 4, three Fink boats spied ONS5.

THE REAPER'S GRIM HARVEST

Waged from the first day of the war to the last, the Battle of the Atlantic took a terrible toll of ships and souls from all the warring nations

188 Royal Navy escort vessels equipped with ASDIC were sunk during the war (139 destroyers, 11 sloops, ten frigates and 28 corvettes)*

In 1943, U-boats sank **12** escorts

30,000 Merchant Navy sailors were killed – around one in six became casualties

1,700 RAF Coastal Command aircraft were lost

6,000 Coastal Command personnel were killed

757 U-boats were destroyed by the Allies

There were no survivors from **429** U-boats lost at sea

Over the course of the war, **2 out of 3** U-boat men never returned

* These figures include ships lost in the Arctic, Far East and Mediterranean

Inside the Reich's sub headquarters

IN U-BOAT headquarters in a villa near the Hotel am Steinplatz in the affluent west Berlin suburb of Charlottenburg, the men directing the *U-bootkrieg* (U-boat war – rarely do the Germans refer to it as the Battle of the Atlantic) are sensing victory.

“The initial conditions for a convoy battle had never been more favourable,” said staff officer Günter Hessler as he watched small flags clustering on a gigantic map of the Atlantic – closing in for the kill.

U-boat command has divided the ocean into grids, 900 kilometres (560 miles) square. Each square has a two-letter identification tag – AB, AC, AD, AE and so on. And each of these 8,100 square kilometres of ocean is divided by nine and nine again. Using the letters and four digits, rather than latitude and longitude, a boat can pinpoint its position without the enemy being able to identify it – in theory.

Each small flag moves around the board as U-boats are marshalled and *Gruppen* – groups, or to Britons, wolfpacks – formed to intercept a convoy. Each radio signal apprises Karl Dönitz and his staff of anything from a boat's location to defects, number of torpedoes, successful attacks and enemy counter-measures.

“It was an anxious feeling to watch the big situation maps and follow the boat of a fellow skipper, somebody one knew well, with whom perhaps one had even trained,” says Peter ‘Ali’ Cremer.

Cremer is a U-boat ace recovering from the physical and mental scars of commanding U333 last year.

By the spring of 1943, many of Cremer's contemporaries have been killed, captured or placed in staff appointments like himself.

The *U-bootmann* of May 1943 is not the *U-bootmann* of September 1939 or even May 1942. Many of the aces are gone – Prien and Schepke (dead), Kretschmer and Henke (captured), Topp and Merten (shore jobs).

The aces have grabbed the glory – personal audiences with Hitler, the award of the Knight's Cross, appearances in the weekly newsreels and glossy propaganda publications such as *Das Reich* or *Signal* – and they've deserved it. Three in every ten ships sunk has fallen victim to the guns or torpedoes of the top 30 U-boat aces – who represent just two per cent of all submarine commanders. Over the course of the war, three out of every four U-boats have never even damaged, let alone sunk, a merchant ship.

The typical U-boat captain of May 1943 is aged in his mid-20s and, after 12 months' training, joined the *U-bootwaffe* (U-boat arm). They have served as the ‘first watch officer’ (executive officer) of a boat commanded by an experienced U-boat captain and, if they impressed, were selected for the commander's course in the Baltic.

The men he leads are a similar age, drawn from across Germany – and from across German society. They are as much a cross-section of the nation as were the crews of Royal Navy vessels pitted against them. They've received up to nine months' training and whether seamen or *Techniker* (engineers or technicians), they are, by-and-large, volunteers.

And in the spring of 1943, they are beginning to lose faith. Nearly ten boats a month are being lost – 19 in February '43.

When U659 and U439 collided off the coast of Spain, just nine men from the two boats escaped. The survivors were picked up by the Royal Navy and interrogated back in the UK – where secret microphones recorded their conversations.

“They will make a fine mess of things this summer,” Bruno Arendt, a



Single-minded – enemy sub chief Karl Dönitz

23-year-old *Bootsmann* (petty officer) in U659, fumed to Helmut Klotzsch, bosun of the other unfortunate boat. “As soon as they come out, they're sunk.”

Klotzsch nodded. “I know a bosun who is now on his 16th patrol.”

“Well, let him get that over safely, and then he'll go on his 17th – and that will be the end of him.”

Klotzsch nodded again. “It's a tragedy. The whole business of U-boat sailing has simply become a job for convicts.”

The few survivors of U659 and U439 blame incompetence for their misfortune. Other U-boat men are grasping at bizarre explanations to account for the growing toll of boats such as depth charges attached to buoys which are set to explode long after a convoy has passed.

Ruthless Karl

Grossadmiral Karl Dönitz has no time for such rumours. “The man who allows his healthy warrior and fighter instincts to be humbugged ceases to have any powers of resistance,” he signalled his boats.

Such admonishments are typical of Dönitz – as they were of the entire National Socialist regime. When the tide of war turns against them, they turn on their own people.

To anyone who's watched the landmark documentary series *World at War*, Dönitz comes across as a slightly manic, wizened old man with deep-set eyes who speaks in halting English.

A submariner in WWI, he's risen between the wars to become head of the U-boat arm and, in early 1943, head of the entire German Navy. He's austere, rarely shares a joke – there are few pictures of him smiling – and, above all, single-minded.

As far as Dönitz and his staff estimated, Britain needed 50 million tons of imports each year. Her merchant marine comprised around 12 million tons of shipping. In the Naval Staff's reckoning for the British to be brought to their knees, U-boats and surface ships have to sink 800,000 to one million tons of shipping each month.

At the beginning of the war Dönitz told Hitler he needed 300 boats to strike Britain a mortal blow, to wage a ruthless *guerre de course* against the Empire's supply lines.

In May 1943, Karl Dönitz commands a fleet of 432 U-boats, 239 of them in the front line. But still he isn't winning – and never will he hit the 800,000 or magical one million tons figure. He came close – 745,000 tons in November 1942. But even in March 1943, widely regarded as the most terrible month for Allied fortunes in the Battle of the Atlantic, ‘only’ just shy of 600,000 tons of shipping was sent to the bottom.

Strike him dead: Dönitz tells boats to be mercile

U-BOATS' AWFUL OF MERCHANT

AS THE blanket of night shrouded the Atlantic on May 4 1943, the strain on those 'too few ships, all too hard worked' had been compounded by days of seasickness and the exhaustion of defence watches (four hours on duty, four hours off). Nor was there any air cover on offer. The omens for ONS5 appeared ill. "The convoy," one senior British officer observed, "seemed doomed to annihilation".

Karl Dönitz sought to hasten that annihilation. Shortly before 9.30pm, he signalled the boats of Group Fink:

I AM CERTAIN THAT YOU WILL FIGHT WITH EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT. DON'T OVER-ESTIMATE YOUR OPPONENT BUT STRIKE HIM DEAD.

And strike him dead the U-boats did.

Death in the Atlantic could be unexpected and instantaneous. The freighter *Lorient* simply vanished after dark on May 4. One minute she was lumbering along at the back of the convoy, the next she was gone.

No trace of her was ever found. No SOS was sent, no flash of fire lit up the night, no boats put in the water, no debris. Maybe she vaporised. She probably fell victim to U125, which signalled to headquarters that it had sunk a 4,000-ton ship steaming on its own.

The only certainty is that after night fell on May 4, nothing was heard of the 47 men aboard the *Lorient*.

The crew of another straggler, the freighter *North Britain*, fared slightly better – but not much. As the *Lorient* disappeared, U707 closed in on ONS5 from astern. The sight greeting Günter Greschel was “a few shadows”. Among the silhouettes, the 4,635-ton steamer *North Britain*, which had struggled to keep pace with the convoy in bad weather, compounded by engine trouble.

Struck astern, the ship sank in barely 70 seconds. For a brief moment she stood perpendicular to the ocean, then vanished.

Death of the Harbury

The third blow to strike ONS5 this night came from the tubes of U628. “No-one saw the track of the torpedo which struck my ship,” the master of the SS *Harbury*, one W E Cook, reported to the Board of Trade six weeks later – surviving skippers of all sunken merchantmen were interviewed about their experiences.

“There was a loud explosion, no flash was seen, but a huge column of water was thrown up.”

The force of the blast ripped the hatches off one of *Harbury's* holds, which immediately flooded, bulkheads gave way and her engine room flooded. Convinced his ship was doomed, Cook ordered all confidential documents over the side and prepared to abandon ship. Within 20 minutes, Cook had the bulk of his crew off and away in the boats. With a couple of shipmates he made a final check of the 5,000-tonne ship for crew, trying to shout above the noise of the onrushing water. No-one responded – and with that Cook decided the time had come for him too to leave his ship.

As the *Harbury* went down, Hartwig Looks made his move on ONS5. The bow tubes of his U264 launched a ‘fan’ of torpedoes: two at a 6,000-ton target, another brace at a 5,000-ton steamer – both just 1,500 yards away.

The ‘6,000-ton target’ was the American SS *West Maximus*, nearly 25 years old. The first torpedo took off part of her stern, the second shook the *West Maximus* from end to end, buckling her decks, causing bulkheads to give way.

Not half a minute later, Looks hit his 5,000 tonner – the British steamer SS *Harperley*. Ever since the *Harbury* had been struck, the crew of the SS *Harperley* had been at action stations. The heightened state of alert did not spare them a double blow: one torpedo in the engine room, another near the foremast. The crew had seen neither U264 nor the eels she loosed. Nor did *Harperley's* master, Capt J E Turgoose, remember a violent flash or column of water. The twin explosions were “more of a dull thud”. They weren't even powerful enough to smash the window panes in Turgoose's wheelhouse.

Hartwig Looks' double hit, however, had mortally wounded the steamer. She heeled over rapidly to port. Turgoose got his men off in just eight minutes. From their lifeboats they watched the *Harperley* disappear by the head.

Northern Spray: Our Saviour

In the night there was the sporadic flicker of lights – a torch here, a red light there. Four of *Harperley's* survivors heard the moans and shouts of two of their shipmates in the water. They managed to haul one into their boat, but not the second. Twenty-eight-year-old gunner AB Cyril Laking drifted into the night. He was never seen again.

HMS *Northern Spray* – a trawler turned submarine hunter – came across a



raft and a lifeboat taking on water. The souls in the boat, the few survivors from the *North Britain*, were apathetic and exhausted; they showed no desire to climb aboard the trawler. After a few minutes, the line parted and the boat drifted away. It was a good hour before it was found again – this time with just 11 men aboard.

Through the final hour of darkness, the haul of survivors grew: men from the *Harbury* on a raft (including W E Cook), some men from the *Harperley* – though not her radio operators. They were seen briefly clinging to an upturned lifeboat in the night. Come dawn, they were gone.

In all, the small trawler picked up 143 souls from four stricken vessels. “I was beginning to wonder where to put others if there were any more, as the mess decks and ward room and all cabins were jammed tight,” her captain Lt J Donner wrote. His crew slept on deck that night. Indeed, the men of the *Northern Spray* did everything they could to help the shipwrecked mariners. They provided clean clothes, the cook served 300 meals at one sitting, all served by one man, Herbert Damsell, from his utterly inadequate galley; he even refused help from his counterparts rescued from the sunken vessels. “All the survivors had recovered from the effects of exposure and all had healthy appetites. They asked for – and got – two or three helpings at lunchtime.”

Turn of the Bristol City

Just before 3am, the SS *Bristol City*, was hit by a torpedo from U358. No-one saw its track – the first the ship knew was a dull explosion, followed by a flash of fire and a column of water crashing down on her decks. The topmast collapsed and the Atlantic gushed into the engine room.

Barely had her master, Capt A L Lamb, gathered his senses than the *Bristol City* was rocked again. Her cargo of China clay was hurled into the air, the

GIVE ME LIBERTY!



The reason why the Germans are failing is simple. They have gravely overestimated the potency of the U-boat – and gravely underestimated the industrial capacity of their foes.

Had the Third Reich grappled with the British Empire alone, it might have strangled the mother country's supply lines.

British shipbuilders could not make good one quarter of the losses the Merchant Fleet suffered in 1942.

But America could. Salvation has come in the form of merchantmen built to a standard British design in American yards.

These Liberty ships – each 14,000 tons – are being produced at an incredible rate.

It takes on average six weeks to build these 440ft merchantmen (as a publicity stunt, one was finished in under five days).

This year, 1943, 18 yards around the USA are toiling on them at such a rate that three are being completed every day.

Efforts to rebuild the decimated Merchant Navy were matched by efforts to build up the forces to protect those freighters and steamers. The combined efforts of the Allied powers had mustered more than 1,000 ships to safeguard the convoys – British and Canadian especially – anything from converted trawlers to purpose-built corvettes and frigates. But the strain of the war in the Atlantic was telling on man and machine. Fewer than half the escorts were fit for active service as 1943 began – and nearly a quarter of those were Great War vintage, like the venerable V and W-class destroyers.

“The real trouble has been basic,” Max Horton wrote in mid-March. “Too few ships, all too hard worked with no time for training and all that that entails.”

BEWARE THE MINES OF U264

These two spiked mines are the emblem of U264 Kapitänleutnant (Lt) Hartwig Looks which is on its third patrol trying to strangle our sea lanes.

So far it's been slim pickings for Looks – just one ship sunk on his first patrol last November, the Greek-registered *Mount Taurus* (6,700T) and he drew a blank on his last sortie, two fruitless months in the Atlantic.

UL TOLL SHIPS

Death in the daytime

Battle rages throughout May 5

SEVEN ships succumbed to the wolves on the night of May 4th-5th - but it had not gone the U-boats' way entirely. Three submarines bowed out of the battle after the hammering they took from ONS5's escorts, while attacks by half a dozen more had been thwarted.

As far as U-boat headquarters in Berlin was concerned, the returns did not match the investment. Karl Dönitz believed the moment had come for another exhortation. By day he urged his boats to strike with underwater attacks. With darkness, however, he expected the Atlantic to be turned into a charnel house.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER NIGHTFALL, THE DRUM ROLL MUST BE TIMED TO BEGIN. ACT QUICKLY OTHERWISE, AS THERE ARE 40 OF YOU, THERE'LL BE NOTHING OF THE CONVOY LEFT. THE BATTLE CAN'T LAST LONG AS THE AMOUNT OF SEA LEFT IS DIMINISHING SO TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY WITH ALL YOUR FORCES.

The wolves responded. A little after 10.30, the freighter Dolius stopped dead in the water as a torpedo ripped into her engine room, flooding it immediately. Bulkheads collapsed, holds flooded, some of the Chinese crew panicked, before regaining their composure as the Dolius' master Capt G R Cheetham tried to organise an orderly evacuation of his ship. Cheetham made a final tour of the steamer to check for wounded crew before leaving her. The torpedoing had cost him his ship and four of his men.

Deadly Sunflower

While the Dolius was dying, HMS Sunflower was giving chase to her attacker after picking up a contact just 1,200 yards away.

The contact - U638 - proved elusive as the ASDIC picked up numerous false echoes. The steady hand of an experienced bosun, the wonderfully-named Mr Pidler, steadied the nerves of the operator and Sunflower began her attack: ten depth charges set to explode at 150ft.

The blasts shook the corvette violently, damaging her engine room and temporarily knocking out her ASDIC. Never again did the ship pick up her contact - for her contact was disappearing into the abyss of the Atlantic. U638 had been destroyed - and with her, all 44 men aboard.

Sunflower now stopped to pick up the Dolius' survivors. Despite the ordeal they had been through, the corvette's Commanding Officer Lt Cdr James Plomer was impressed by the stoicism of the 66 merchant mariners rescued - their bearing was "exemplary throughout". They helped with lookout duties, cleaned mess decks and generally helped the crew - so much so that "the ship was sorry to see them go, in spite of the overcrowding involved".

Pink deadly too

While Sunflower was sending U658 to a watery grave, her sister HMS Pink was subjecting another boat to a sustained attack. Pink had picked up a contact 2,200 yards away thanks to excellent ASDIC conditions - "the sharpest and cleanest I had ever heard," the corvette's commander Lt Robert Atkinson enthused. A 27-year-old former merchant officer, Atkinson left one of the more descriptive official accounts:

Several attacks were carried out and after the fifth attack the submarine was heard to be blowing tanks and on the run out huge bubbles were seen to break surface. This was considered to be the best attack, and it is considered that at this stage the U-boat was in reality finished. Two more attacks were carried out when the submarine appeared stopped and after the seventh attack when ten charges were dropped, no further contact was obtained.

At that point, Robert Atkinson broke

off the attack and decided to rejoin ONS5. As Pink steamed away, she was shaken from bow to stern by a tremendous explosion "like a deep grunt" - "a deep underwater explosion some distance off," Pink's captain wrote. "I can only think that this was the submarine, or some part of it, exploding deep down." Atkinson toyed with looking for debris on the surface, but with the convoy already eight miles ahead of him, he decided to return to formation.

As it was Pink had crippled, not sunk, U358. Having dispatched the Wentworth and Bristol City, Kapitänleutnant Rolf Manke and his boat would play no further part in the battle. U358 spent the next ten days limping back to St Nazaire.

Pink now made best speed to catch up with the convoy. She was still three miles astern of the stragglers when a huge column of smoke began to tower above the convoy.

Shortly before 3pm, a jolt had suddenly rippled through all 423 feet of the hull of the aged cargo steamer West Madaket.

A huge plume of water rose into the air and fell back into the Atlantic. Deck plating cracked, bulkheads buckled. The ship's carpenter quickly ascertained her back had been broken. Within 20 minutes, the West Madaket's skipper had decided to abandon her.

In an exemplary rescue operation, all 61 souls aboard - 40 crew and 21 naval gunners - were picked up inside 45 minutes.

Pink's captain, Robert Atkinson, set about scuttling her, dropping two depth charges. Fifty feet down, they detonated - with terrible effect.

"She split as if cleaved by an axe amidships, sinking in two separate pieces and turning turtle as she sank," Atkinson wrote.

In minutes, there was no trace the West Madaket had ever existed - not even a slick of oil on the surface of the Atlantic.

Awful plight of steamers

On the bridge of the Selvestan, first officer C D Head saw what he thought was a porpoise moving through the water - "it appeared to be spouting water".

The 'porpoise' raced past the bow of an American tanker, then "jumped out of the water". Head realised his mistake. The ship's telegraph rang "Full speed ahead". The wheel turned hard to port, but too late. The 'porpoise' smashed into a hold. Seconds later, the adjacent hold imploded under the force of another hit.

There were no flames, no spouts of water. But the hold hatches were blown off and ballast shot into the air. And then the Selvestan began to settle rapidly by the stern.

There was no chance to launch the lifeboats - a couple of small skiffs and a raft were hurriedly floated off. But so rapidly did the Selvestan die that one engineer was seen running towards a lifeboat only for the ship to disappear beneath him. He was never seen again.

The Selvestan sank in under two minutes. Despite her rapid demise, 40 men made it into the boats and rafts. Her Indian stokers had climbed into Mr Head's boat. They were, he reported to the Board of Trade after his ordeal, "simply no use at all. They just sat in the boat, praying to Allah to save them, but not attempting to do anything to save themselves."

For 45 minutes, the crew drifted with the Atlantic current until HMS Tay plucked them from the water.

Gharinda gone

In those few, terrible seconds when the Selvestan was dying, the death blow was being dealt to another merchantman, the SS Gharinda. Her captain had no forewarning of doom.

"I was having a cup of tea because there hadn't been an alarm for over an hour - I mean it was as bad as that, if you've got a clear hour it's not too bad going," the Gharinda's master Capt Rodney Stone recalled 30 years later.

"Normally when you're in command if you get an hour or two hours' consecutive sleep you're very lucky. You've got your clothes on all the time; you never take your clothes off."



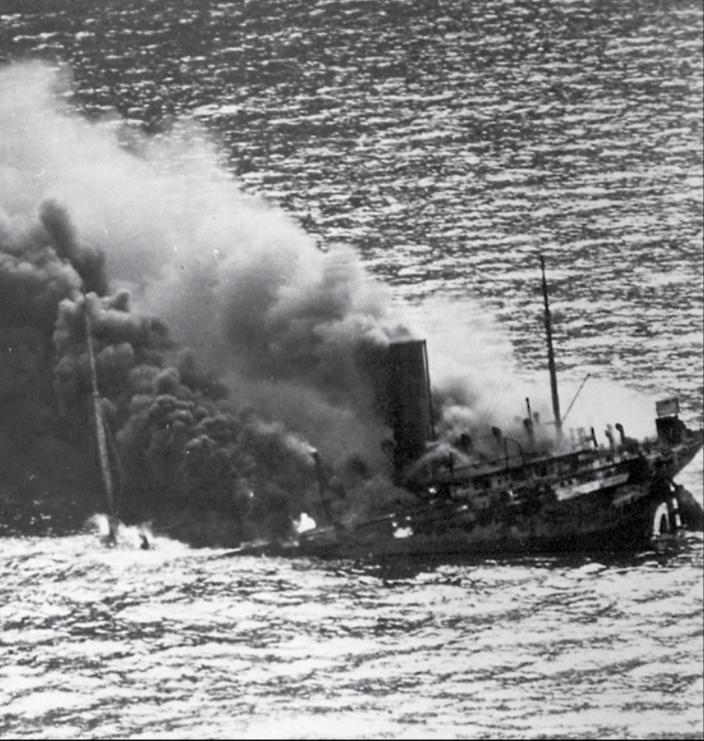
CRAZED SURVIVORS

The look in the eyes of this shipwrecked mariner convey more than any words we might write the horror of being sunk by U-boat.

Well aware of the risks they face, at all times merchant crews carry lifejackets and 'panic bags' - containing rations, a sweater, personal papers, wallet, perhaps a photograph of loved ones.

The Atlantic is rarely benign and never warm - particularly in the northern latitudes the convoys use. Throw oil, debris, wounds and injuries, nerves, exhaustion into the equation, and chances of survival lessen.

These men were lucky - someone stopped to rescue them, but it's no guarantee because THE CONVOY MUST GET THROUGH.



VICTIM OF A BRUTAL FOE

The tanker Dixie Arrow - carrying 96,000 barrels of crude oil - burns after being struck by three torpedoes from U71 off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Amazingly, 22 men survived this inferno - and, despite her broken back, the tanker remained afloat for at least one more day.

Picture: US National Archives

wireless room disintegrated and hold hatches spiralled through the air. Lamb ordered his men to take to the boats. They did so quickly - the steamer was going down by the bow, still driven along by her engines. The master was up to his waist in water when he stepped into a lifeboat with 20 of his shipmates. Five crew struggled into a jolly boat, which tipped over in the heavy swell; two were never recovered. Four more men were hauled out of the water; the red lights on their lifejackets made locating them in the darkness much easier.

The Bristol City died in just nine minutes. However dull the first explosion which mortally wounded her, it was heard several hundred yards away by Capt R G Phillips, master of the SS Wentworth, who was resting in his cabin. He hurried to his bridge and was getting his bearings when his ship juddered. U358 had struck again.

The funnel and wireless shack collapsed and all electricity failed. Worse, there was a gigantic tear running across the centre of the ship. The Wentworth was doomed and Lamb gave orders to abandon ship. He was the last to leave - just before 4am, in broad daylight, with the ship beginning to break apart.

When light came to the mid-Atlantic on May 5, W E Cook looked out on the ocean and saw that his stricken ship was still afloat. With his chief officer and Northern Spray's first lieutenant he went across to inspect the Harbury - perhaps she might be saved after all. Or perhaps not.

"We found there were six to eight feet of water in the engine room and stokehold, the after well deck was under water, with the poop deck just awash," he told his interviewer.

Harbury could not be saved. Cook gathered what useful stores he could then left his ship for the last time. He did not see her sink. No-one did. When aircraft flew over Harbury's final reported position the next day, there was no sign of her.

Two of our ships safeguarding ONS5

V-CLASS destroyer HMS Vidette (Lt Raymond S Hart RN) was built on the Clyde by Alexander Stephens & Sons (Govan) in 1917-18 and served with the Grand Fleet in the later stages of the Great War.

She spent much of the inter-war period in reserve, but was reactivated in 1939 since when she has served with distinction in the North Atlantic and Mediterranean.

During Warship Week in March 1942, she was adopted by the people of Todmorden in Yorkshire's West Riding. Egret-class sloop HMS Pelican (Cdr Godfrey N Brewer RN) is the flagship of the 1st Escort Support Group.

Built for the West Indies Station by John I Thornycroft (Woolston, Southampton) between September 1937 and September 1938, she was pressed into service in home waters instead.

She was damaged by German bombs in Norway in 1940 and had to be towed back to Chatham for repairs, since when she's been employed in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Arctic.

FOE EXPECT NIGHT-TIME MASSACRE

At this point, the Battle of ONS5 was going the way of the U-boat: 13 merchant ships sunk, one submarine lost. And the wolves were gathering - 15 boats waiting for the kill.

Aboard HMS Offa, the wireless operators kept her commander James McCoy informed of the chatter. They could not decipher the radio transmissions of the U-boats - that was for the experts at Bletchley Park. But the sheer volume of traffic by itself was ominous. Having spent an hour and a half chasing the submarine which had claimed the scalps of the Selvestan, Gharinda and Bonde - U266 - McCoy rejoined formation convinced "that the convoy was threatened with annihilation".

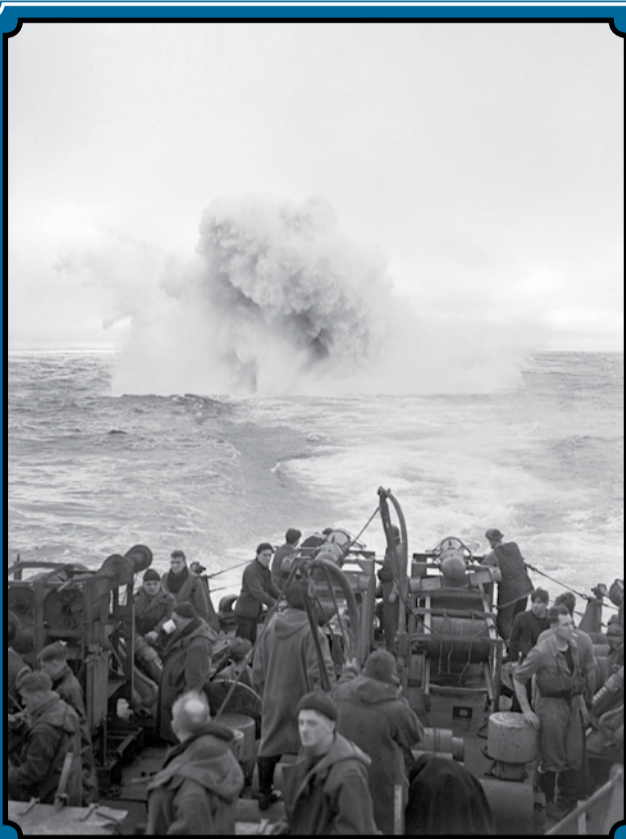
In U264, Hartwig Looks had come to a similar conclusion as he followed the radio traffic. Come morning, Looks deduced, ONS5 would be "absolutely dead".

In Charlottenburg, the duty officers at U-boat headquarters settled in for the night watch. At least 15 submarines were gathered around ONS5 for the kill. "It seemed," wrote Günter Hessler - a U-boat ace, Dönitz's son-in-law and now his operations officer - "that the ensuing night would bring particularly good results."

And then the weather, which had so hampered ONS5's progress, became its salvation. In the final hours of daylight, fog began to descend.

Six German subs sunk in one thrilling night of victory

EMPIRE STRIKES BACK BY ROUTING U-BOATS



GIVE THE ENEMY A DAMNED GOOD LEATHERING!

Give them hell, lads – and the boys of brand-new frigate HMS Starling (Capt Frederick J 'Johnnie' Walker RN) are doing just that, pummeling a German sub with depth charges.

Each charge weighs a quarter of a ton, carrying 290lb of Torpex high explosive. They can be simply rolled off the back of a ship on rails, or fired by special throwers, hurling clusters of five charges in a cross-shape, 40ft apart.

It takes little over half a minute for the devices to reach the maximum depth U-boats are thought to operate at – 500ft.

Hydrostatic pistols, set by the ship's company to detonate at anything from 50ft to 500ft trigger the charge. One exploding within 20ft of a U-boat will kill it, one within 100ft will shake a sub from bow to stern.

The experience down below is anything but pleasant – "as if a giant fist had pounded the boat from above," says Karl-Friedrich Merten, a young officer in U68.

"We shook as if both ends had broken off. The lights went out, of course. The emergency lighting flickered into life in a fraction of a minute. It shed light on chaos in every compartment, particularly the control room which we reached by diving through the bulkhead in the darkness."

But depth charges have to be used carefully. LS Cyril Stephens remembers Flower-class corvette HMS Orchis being "lifted up in the air and dropped down again" by the force of a charge exploding at just 50ft. "A colossal volume of water would come up and, as the depth charges were deeper, it was almost like lightning going across the water. In the daytime, it's a fantastic thing to see."

Fantastic – but actually not that deadly. At best one in 13 depth charge attacks results in a kill.

For a much better 'kill ratio' you have to turn to the Hedgehog (also known as the Anti-Submarine Projector). It's a multiple mortar launcher which propels up to 24 small mortar bombs into the water.

After trials, the weapon has been fitted to convoy escorts since last year.

Each Hedgehog bomb contains less than a quarter of the explosive charge of a depth charge – but it's proved to be a much more efficient and effective U-boat killer.

It only explodes on contact with its prey – crew do not need to know the depth of a German submarine, only its position. One in four Hedgehog attacks results in success.

Picture: Imperial War Museum A 21992

The night of May 5-6 is one of the most stirring and breathless in the Battle of the Atlantic.

It is a night of intermittent contacts; of star shells briefly bathing the swirling Atlantic mist in an ethereal light; of U-boats on the surface ghosting in and out of the fog patches, then diving suddenly; of depth charges and hedgehogs churning up the Atlantic swell. Above all, it is a night of victory – and defeat.

Contrary to popular belief, U-boats typically attacked on the surface – especially at night. They were faster and, given their low profile, difficult to see – with the human eye. But on the night of May 5-6 1943, the Mark I eyeball was of little use – as U707's Günter Greschel fumed in his log: "Pitch-black night, fog, can't see your hand in front of your face." Hartwig Looks in U264 reckoned he could see "50 metres – no more. It was nearly impossible to find the convoy." Greschel, Looks and their fellow wolves were blind – but not their foes.

U531 destroyed

A little after 11pm, HMS Vidette picked up a radar contact 5,100 yards away: U531. At 20kts, the elderly destroyer bore down on its quarry, prepared to ram it. Just 700 yards from making contact, the U-boat dived. Almost instantaneously, Vidette's captain Raymond Hart ordered depth charges dropped, tossed into the swirling waters left by the vanishing submarine. A minute after the first charge detonated, there was a mighty explosion – heard by almost all aboard the Vidette – followed by a column of water towering into the night. The first – and last – patrol of U531 was over. She had sunk nothing.

Hart did not wait for confirmation of his kill. He bore down on another contact – probably U707 – almost immediately, depth charging it too, but not fatally.

U192 destroyed

Around 12.30am, HMS Loosestrife's radar had picked up a surfaced U-boat. The corvette charged through the fog towards its unsuspecting target. Friend and foe were not 500 yards apart when they sighted each other. The foe was U192 which reacted swiftly to the shock, loosing a couple of torpedoes from her stern tubes before crash diving.

Thwarted of the chance to ram the submarine, the corvette ran over the wake left by the diving boat, then dropped ten depth charges. The results were almost immediate. U192 broke the surface before being shaken by a tremendous explosion which rippled along her hull. The night was momentarily lit up by a "greenish-blue flash", while debris was hurled through the darkness.

So powerful was the explosion which tore U192 apart that it lifted the deck plates in Loosestrife's engine room – her stokers were convinced the ship's stern had been blown off.

Just to be certain of her kill, the Loosestrife turned back over the scene of destruction – a dense spreading oil slick and debris. Another U-boat on its maiden patrol had been destroyed – and once again it went down with all hands, 55 in this instance.

U125 crippled

Loosestrife had – just – been thwarted in her efforts to ram a U-boat. Not so destroyer HMS Oribi, whose captain Lt Cdr John Ingram took a gamble. In the fog and confusion of the night action as destroyers and corvettes chased contacts, it was easy to lose contact with friend and foe alike. And right now – about 2.45am – John Ingram had no idea where HMS Sunflower was. When his



These lads know how to hammer those German subs. The crew of a Captain-class frigate celebrate five kills by their escort group on a hunt for our dastardly foe. The crossed scalpels indicate that two operations were carried out by the ship's surgeon while on patrol.

Picture: Imperial War Museum A 28198

ASDIC operator reported a contact at very close range, he took an instant decision: attack. "I swung the ship to starboard and it was with great relief that I saw a submarine slide out of the fog."

Destroyer hit U-boat just behind the latter's conning tower. The force of the impact slewed the submarine around. Her now-battered hull passed along Oribi's port side, heeling over with her bows and con towering out of the water. And then she was swallowed by the night.

Ingram was convinced he had sunk a U-boat. He had not. But he had crippled U125. Unable to dive, she flashed a mayday to U-boat command for help. Half a dozen boats promised to come to the aid of Ulrich Folkers. They would never find him.

U264 thwarted

Blinded by the fog, Hartwig Looks dived his boat and used his hydrophones to try to locate the convoy. Nothing. He surfaced – "very dangerous in dense fog" – only to find a British warship charging down on him, preparing to ram.

"It passed just five or ten metres behind the stern using his searchlight but they couldn't see anything, as we couldn't see more than just the shadow of the destroyer passing our path and then disappearing in the dense fog." Looks recalled.

For the next 90 minutes, U264 was subjected to ineffective depth charge attacks. The only thing the Wabos did was convince Hartwig Looks that the battle against ONS5 in the fog was senseless. With his fuel running low and the convoy increasingly out of reach, Looks turned U264 for home in Lorient.

U125 sunk

After an hour of limping on the surface, U125 appeared as a weak contact on the radar set of HMS Snowflake. The corvette closed to investigate and – at just 100 yards – turned on her searchlights "revealing a 500-ton U-boat swinging rapidly to starboard". Snowflake's captain Harold Chesterman put his wheel hard a-starboard to ram, while his gun crews tried to bring their weapons to bear – but the range was too short. It didn't matter especially. In the glare of the artificial light, it was obvious that U125 was doomed: "The conning tower was buckled,

periscope standards twisted, anti-aircraft gun wrecked, casing hatch torn away and the lid of the after hatch appeared to have been blown away," Chesterman subsequently reported.

He watched as bubbles poured from the submerged aft hatch, while the boat's crew poured out of the forward hatch. Some attempted to man the deck gun – but a show of strength from Snowflake with her Oerlikons, two pounder and even her 4in dissuaded any further thoughts in that direction.

As U125's crew flailed in the oily water or struggled into a tiny dinghy, their boat was rocked by five scuttling charges which condemned her to the deep. Her crew would soon join them. Snowflake asked permission to pick up survivors for interrogation. The request was refused. There were more U-boats out there to hunt – but the numbers were growing fewer.

Attacks driven off

Surprised on the surface, U223 dived just in time to escape being rammed by HMS Offa, before avoiding certain destruction when some of the destroyer's depth charges failed to fire.

U533 was also caught on the surface – or rather in the act of surfacing – by Sunflower, which rode over the boat aft of her conning tower with such force that James Plomer believed he'd sliced the submarine in half. He hadn't – but he had knocked the U-boat out of the battle for a crucial 24 hours.

U630 destroyed

There were other fleeting contacts this night, but they evaded Vidette until shortly after 4am when her ASDIC picked up a U-boat moving slowly, barely 900 yards away.

This time Hart fired Hedgehogs – anti-submarine mortars which exploded not at a set depth, but on contact with their target. At least two hit U630 – flashes briefly lit the Atlantic depths. "This was quite an exhilarating moment and I think I remember striking the First Lieutenant," Hart recalled. Vidette's hydrophones picked up the sounds of the boat's death throes. "U-boat blowing tanks," the operator told Hart. "The noise is very loud, Sir." The rush of air was followed by a succession of metallic bangs, then



Two in one night – U-boat killer Lt Raymond Hart of HMS Vidette

the ocean began to froth and bubble – "a tremendous kerfuffle in the water" Hart called it. The bow of his destroyer "was virtually lifted out of the water" as Vidette sailed over the spot where she'd hit the U-boat. Perhaps U630 was trying to surface. Perhaps. If she tried, she never succeeded. She sank – and with her all 44 souls.

A kill for Pelican

This night of the long knives continued long after sunrise over an Atlantic still blanketed by fog. Thanks to the mist, HMS Pelican closed to within 100 yards of U438, which crash dived in a hail of fire from the sloop. Whether the barrage damaged U438, we will never know. Two depth charge attacks were immediately carried out. The first produced little more than a couple of small spouts of water. The second flurry of charges, however, produced a series of distinct explosions, followed by indistinguishable noises and finally, ten minutes after the charges were dropped, two large explosions – sufficient to shake the Pelican. Thus died U438 and every man aboard her.

U438 was a typical boat on Atlantic duties – Type VIIC – and her fate was typical too. Lost with all hands. She was the last vessel sunk on either side during the struggle for Convoy ONS5. Shortly before midday on the sixth, Karl Dönitz called off the battle against ONS5.

COMING NEXT MONTH

Your first-hand accounts of the Atlantic struggle, contemporary documents and a look inside a U-boat and a Flower-class corvette.
DON'T MISS JUNE'S NAVY NEWS.



FIRST HE ATTACKED US - THEN HE WANTED SAVING...

Obersteurmann Helmut Klotzch yells for help after his U-boat, U175, was sunk by the US Coast Guard Cutter Spencer as the U-boat tried to attack an Allied convoy

ALLIED TRIUMPH

Sir Max Horton hails "an undoubted victory" Despondency in the enemy's camp

The remaining ships of ONS5 continued on their way to the New World, unmolested. Off Nova Scotia on May 12 the convoy split – some ships made for Boston, others for New York and some for nearby Halifax.

In harbour, the warships refuelled and took aboard supplies. The merchantmen loaded with stores and war material to take back to Britain. Those without ships chewed over their fates, such as T R Jones, chief engineer of the sunken Dolius: "We all felt we had received satisfaction for the loss of our ship by sinking one of the eight or nine enemies destroyed in what was, at the time, the biggest convoy battle fought in the Atlantic."

In fact, the struggle for ONS5 wasn't 'the biggest convoy battle fought in the Atlantic' – that distinction probably belongs to the mauled HX229-SC122, which lost over 20 of their 110 ships in March 1943. But every man who'd taken part in this Atlantic battle which straddled April and May 1943 began to grasp its magnitude.

Peter Gretton had missed out on the climax of a battle which was "probably the most stirring of convoy history". He never stopped regretting taking Duncan out of the battle – although the decision was undoubtedly the correct one. Instead he listened to his escort commanders describe the battles of May 5 and 6, read their reports. He may not have been there in person – but Gretton's efforts in the long months before the battle had effectively decided its outcome. "One felt that the long training we had – we had slugged at training and really practised our manoeuvres and various dodges – had paid off and we were beginning to get on top."

HMS Tay's Robert Sherwood, who had taken over the battle when Duncan withdrew, could only agree with his commander's assessment. "All ships showed dash and initiative," he wrote in his official report. "No ship required to be told what to do." After three and a half years of war, the escorting of convoys had reached its apogee.

Well-earned rest

The 'layover' in Canada's ports lasted three or maybe four days – enough time to send a telegram home, enjoy a run ashore and the hospitality of the locals. HMS Snowflake put into St John's in Newfoundland, where a well-tested scheme – 'up homers' – was in force. Sailors queued up and waited for the port's inhabitants to pick them, taking them back to their houses for a drink and a chat. "Those people weren't well off by any means," remembered Howard Goldsmith, "but they treated us like royalty."

Time ashore also meant picking up reading material for the return journey – and Newfoundland's *Daily News* of May 13 made stirring reading:

10 Nazis Subs Destroyed in Convoy Attack
Attacks and Counter-Attacks Extended
Intermittently Over 8 Days and Nights
ENEMY LAUNCHED THIRTY
ATTACKS IN ALL

Talk of 'Black May'

The tally wasn't ten – but it was grim. In Berlin, Karl Dönitz studied the outcome of the battle for 'Convoy 36' as his headquarters classed ONS5, based on the reports of his boats: 16 ships sunk for 90,500 tonnes, a corvette and three merchantmen damaged.

Except that his U-boat commanders were prone if not to exaggeration, then certainly over-estimation. In fact, his wolves had claimed 'only' 13 ships totalling 63,000 tonnes.

It was a disappointing outcome given the strength of forces committed. But the rub was his own losses: six boats destroyed in two days (a seventh, U209, would succumb making for home two weeks later), a similar number damaged.

In sum, for every merchantman sunk in ONS5, a U-boat had been destroyed or damaged. The *Grossadmiral* couldn't even call it a pyrrhic victory. ONS5 was, he conceded, a defeat.

Karl Dönitz blamed not his inexperienced crews in inadequate boats, or Allied technological superiority. He held the vagaries of the Atlantic weather to account: "If the fog had held off for six hours, many more ships would certainly have been sunk. As it was, the fog ruined everything."

With the battle o'er, the Third Reich's most senior sailor decided to rally his men with a personal signal. It was typical Dönitz: half admonishment, half encouragement.

THIS CONVOY BATTLE HAS ONCE AGAIN PROVED THAT CONDITIONS [FOR ATTACKING] A CONVOY ARE ALWAYS MOST FAVOURABLE AT THE BEGINNING.

HE WHO EXPLOITS THE MOMENT OF SURPRISE ON THE FIRST NIGHT AND PRESSES HOME HIS ATTACK WITH ALL MEANS AT HIS DISPOSAL IS THE MAN WHO WILL BE SUCCESSFUL. AFTER THE FIRST BLOW, IT BECOMES HARDER AND HARDER.

IN ADDITION THERE IS THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE WEATHER – AS ON THIS OCCASION WHERE FOG RULED OUT GREAT OPPORTUNITIES ON THE SECOND NIGHT.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR HARD STRUGGLE, ESPECIALLY THE SECOND NIGHT.

While Dönitz displayed an iron will bordering on fanaticism, his staff were becoming jittery. There never had been a battle like ONS5. Even if the *Grossadmiral* himself couldn't see it – or perhaps deliberately refused to see it – his staff officers "could read the writing on the wall only too clearly," Peter 'Ali' Cremer remembered.

Cremer and his colleagues realised the regular situation reports and messages were drying up. The staff officers were perplexed – and alarmed. "Suddenly the boats fell silent, disappeared from the scene without a word – unless the enemy reported their destruction. No-one knew what had

happened. The dead could not speak and those who had managed to survive made vague and contradictory statements."

When the signals stopped, headquarters would radio the missing boat for a response. And when nothing came back, the marker flag was removed.

"Then one knew he had gone," Cremer wrote. "The little flag would be removed from the map and one could only hope that he had fallen into the hands of the enemy as a prisoner."

It was a vague hope: there was not a single survivor from the six boats sunk during the battle with ONS5 – 302 men in all. Before the month was out the death toll would rise.

The log of U-boat command filled with the chilling entries 'Vermisst*' – missing, probably lost – and 'Vermisst**' – missing, definitely lost. A few days later and the details of the missing submarine would be 'put on file'. Perhaps enemy radio might reveal a boat's fate, but invariably they were as much in the dark as U-boat command.

Quietly – and certainly out of earshot of Dönitz – the U-boat staff gave their current predicament a name: *schwarze Mai* – black May.

Sir Max's verdict

It was six weeks before Karl Dönitz's nemesis pronounced judgment on the same battle.

Max Horton had waited for the escorts to return – they had to shepherd inbound convoy SC130 safely to the UK; they did so, without losing a ship – and they sank three U-boats to boot. The returning escorts handed over a welter of material for the staff of the Western Approaches Command: after-action reports, detailed attacks on U-boats, wireless traffic, logs and the like – material which has formed the basis of this feature.

Poring over the reports, Max Horton drew two conclusions: that his men had done everything right; and that just as Dönitz viewed the struggle for ONS5 a defeat, Horton called it "an undoubted victory":

The operations during the passage of ONS5 mark the end of a period of large scale attacks by U-boats; it may well be that the heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy have greatly affected his morale and will prove to have been a turning point in the Battle of the Atlantic.

It is a battle which has no name. There is no land mass or headland sufficiently close to define it. The Royal Navy's official historian, Captain Stephen Roskill – a man not especially renowned for hyperbole – wrote 15 years later: "The seven-day battle fought against 30 U-boats is marked only by latitude and longitude and has no name by which it will be remembered; but it was, in its own way, as decisive as Quiberon Bay or the Nile."

Roskill stopped short of calling the bitter struggle for ONS5 a 20th-Century Trafalgar. It would have been a fitting epitaph.

LOOKS LIKE A TYPE- WRITER – BUT ISN'T!

Our boffins have the enemy licked

This innocuous-looking portable type-writer is Jerry's secret weapon in the U-boat war.

This is an Enigma machine – used by the enemy for all their top secret radio traffic.

The machine uses a series of rotating 'wheels' or 'rotors' to scramble plain messages into apparent gobbledegook.

The settings allow for many billions of combinations – each generating a completely different message. Only if the sender and receiver have identical settings can a message be deciphered.

The Germans think Enigma is unbreakable and it's used by all three of their Armed Forces.

Thanks to Polish mathematicians who acquired a machine before the outbreak of the war, British code breakers at Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire have been able to read many of those top secret signals.

They have been aided in their efforts by the capture of various machines, machine parts, code books and other documentation, as well as a huge mechanical device, the Bombe.

The most famous capture took place two years ago – on May 9 1941 – when a boarding team from HMS Bulldog searched the crippled U110 off Iceland after the boat was brought to the surface. They returned with an Enigma machine and code books.

Much has been made of 'cracking the Enigma code', of Ultra shortening the war by perhaps two years and, especially, of being instrumental in defeating the U-boat.

Code breaking isn't the domain solely of the Allies. A chain of listening posts along the German coast from Friesland in the west to East Prussia in the Baltic feeds a team of analysts in Berlin, the Beobachtungsdienst – typically shortened to B-Dienst (pronounced bay-deenst).

So far, B-Dienst – literally 'observation service' – has proved to be every bit as adept as Bletchley Park at reading the other side's secret traffic.

In March 1943, its cryptographers cracked 175 messages, ten of which directly influenced the conduct of the Battle of the Atlantic. To date, Karl Dönitz reckons the German Navy owes half the intelligence driving its decisions to these code breakers.

As with Ultra, there have been periods of 'blackout' – when changes of codes or ciphers have prevented the Germans reading the encrypted radio traffic.

But the biggest failing of the Kriegsmarine intelligence service has been hubris. Whilst it greedily devours British messages, it refuses to countenance the British are doing the same to German radio traffic.

Men like Ali Cremer challenged senior officers. Had Enigma been broken? He was brushed aside by the head of naval intelligence. "To decipher it, if it was possible at all, would require a colossal technical investment and would be so time-consuming that the results would be out of date and worthless."

DON'T FORGET TO VISIT

THE OFFICIAL ROYAL NAVY BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC WEBSITE
www.royalnavy.mod.uk/boa

OLD BIG MOUTH'S LOST FOR WORDS

Normally he talks big, but Nazi propaganda minister Goebbels is rattled right now – as his diary entries show.

May 14th 1943

The lack of successes by our U-boats is having unpleasant consequences. The defences of the Anglo-American convoys are now so strong that we must concede the U-boat campaign has entered a new phase if it continues. We have to admit some U-boat losses too – even if it doesn't suggest a crisis, it does give us cause for concern. It would be terrible if there was a change in fortunes in the U-boat war right now.

May 17th 1943

The U-boat war has entered a new phase. If we do not succeed in doing something effective to counteract the defences of the English and Americans, then we will have to get used to the fact that sinking up to one million tonnes of shipping in a month is something we enjoyed in the past.

Of course that would also mean that the one weapon which could have been decisive for victory under certain circumstances has been knocked out of our hands. But we've not got to that stage just yet. We'll have to await further developments before making a definite judgement.

Göring takes battle to streets of Merseyside

Almost 4,000 die as Luftwaffe try to sever Atlantic links

Off to war – armed with a shovel

THE reverberations of battle spread beyond the field of conflict itself, and so it was with the Battle of the Atlantic.

For while the Germans and the Allies desperately struggled to stay tactically ahead of their foe on the high seas, the fight was also taken to those who supported and sheltered the combatants ranged against the Axis menace.

This was particularly the case in the North-West of England, where mile after mile of quays and docks along both banks of the River Mersey were pivotal to Britain's ability to wage war.

When Britain went to war with Germany in 1939, the country was importing more than 50 million tons of goods by sea each year, much from the North American continent, and including oil, raw materials and up to half its food.

The Germans rightly saw this as a chance to choke off the flow of imports, so when the U-boat threat developed, shipping was organised into convoys.

From 1940 until the end of hostilities, Merseyside received 1,285 inbound convoys, according to Liverpool city archives – an average of four convoys each week, and with each convoy comprising up to 70 ships, that meant a great deal of activity in the 140 or so commercial berths of the Port of Liverpool.

Western Approaches Command moved to Merseyside from Plymouth in February 1941, setting up in the 100 or so fortified rooms beneath Derby House, part of Exchange Buildings.

From this complex, known as the Citadel or the Fortress because of its gas-proof and bomb-proof walls (3ft thick) and roof (7ft thick), the battle at sea was controlled from the massive Operations Room.

As a combined HQ, it was also home to the headquarters of No 15 Group, RAF Coastal Command, which at the height of the campaign could provide 60 long-range anti-submarine aircraft.

In the run-up to Black May in 1943, the Admiralty had control over more than 550 ships suitable for ocean convoy escort – destroyers, sloops, frigates, corvettes and Fleet minesweepers – in all theatres.

Some 120 of them were allotted to Western Approaches, of which just under 100 were available for use in transatlantic convoys, while another 50 were employed on the 'north-south' runs to Iceland and the Arctic or to Gibraltar and West Africa.

At various times in the campaign, Commander-in-Chief Western Approaches had operational command of ships of nine Allied navies – those of Canada, Australia, Poland, the Free French, the Netherlands, Norway, Greece, Belgium and the United States, as

well as the US Coast Guard.

Ships of the Royal Indian Navy and South African Naval Force were also attached when on passage with convoys through the area.

The minimum working week for shore-based staff at Western Approaches HQ was 51 hours, exclusive of meals and travelling time.

With the recommended day running from 8am to 6.30pm, inclusive of two hours for meals, and the allowance of two make-and-mends weekly if possible, it meant staff had to work seven days a week to achieve this.

Ranged against the Command, its fighting arm and their civilian charges were the so-called 'wolf packs'.

More than 230 operational U-boats were in commission in the spring of 1943, of which more than 190 were allocated to Atlantic operations.

In March of that year, 116 of these killing machines were at sea, with a daily average of 49 in the operational area, guided into position for an attack by long-range surveillance aircraft, by intelligence from ports, or by reports from other U-boats, all of which had to be filtered through U-boat HQ, which moved from Berlin to Brittany in the middle of 1940, on to Paris in early 1942 and then back to Berlin a year later.

At least 750 U-boats saw service in the Atlantic and UK waters (outside the North Sea), and 510 were lost to ships, aircraft, Allied submarines or accidents.

The fear of attack, the terrifying stories of survivors, the colossal tonnage lost by Allied merchant navies, the near misses as torpedoes streaked past a ship, give a sense that Atlantic convoys were suicide runs.

In fact, of 3,150 wartime Atlantic Ocean convoys, just over ten per cent – 330 – were attacked.

And less than one per cent of ships were sunk – 565 escorted and 234 'stragglers' out of 97,776 vessels.

For the Germans, however, the risks were colossal – two out of every three wartime U-Boatmann died.

With Merseyside a crucial hub of endeavour, it is no wonder that Herr Hitler saw the area as a target of the highest importance.

And so, for a period of almost a year and a half – until the Führer turned his attention eastwards – Merseyside was ruthlessly bombed.

So much so that the area was second only to London in the ferocity of the attacks visited upon it.

The first German bombs hit Prenton, a suburb of Birkenhead, on August 9 1940 at Prenton, Birkenhead, claiming their first civilian casualty.

In the following 17 months, bombs killed 2,716 people in Liverpool, 442 people in Birkenhead, 409 people in Bootle and 332 people in Wallasey.

Two particularly intense periods were the Christmas Raids of December 1940, and the May Blitz of 1941.



A statue of Capt Johnnie Walker looks out over the Mersey from Pier Head in Liverpool



The gates of Flotilla House, the ship's bell of HMS Stork and the battle ensign of HMS Fame, flown throughout an attack on a convoy in October 1942 when two U-boats were sunk – one by Fame herself – all displayed in Bootle Town Hall

The latter lasted for seven nights, from May 1-7, and saw 681 German aircraft drop almost 900 tonnes of high explosives and thousands of incendiaries, killing over 1,700 people and rendering 76,000 homeless.

Bootle took inordinate punishment

in the blitzes – four-fifths of the housing in the town was badly damaged or destroyed, leaving some 25,000 people homeless.

Indeed, William Joyce – the Germans' radio propagandist Lord Haw Haw – spoke directly to the people of Bootle in one transmission when he warned them that "the kisses on your windows won't help you", referring to the tape stuck to window panes to minimise injury from flying glass.

Warships occasionally suffered damage during such raids – HMS Hurricane, for example, had been busy on escort duties but was struck by a bomb on May 7 1941 while alongside at Gladstone Dock.

The bomb was thought to have gone down the funnel and through the hull, exploding beneath the ship and causing extensive damage, though fortunately most of the ship's company were ashore and there were few, minor casualties.

Hurricane was repaired and back on convoy duty by January 1942, being in the thick of the action until she was fatally damaged by torpedo in December 1943.

Birkenhead was an obvious target, being the home of the famous Cammell Laird shipyard, which built warships such as HMS Rodney, HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Ark Royal as well as merchantmen which would prove vital on convoy duties.

Some of the smaller minesweepers and escort ships were based in Wallasey and Morpeth Docks, and

major repairs could also be carried out, though other docks along the Mersey were pressed into action to put right minor damage, such as that suffered by ships which rammed U-boats (and occasionally, in the heat of battle, each other).

Merseyside continued to be a powerhouse of industry throughout the war, with factories such as that owned by Meccano at Binns Road easily switching to the war effort.

A Royal Ordnance munitions filling factory was built at Kirby, on the outskirts of Liverpool, between 1939 and 1941, which at its peak employed over 20,000 workers – many of them women – and although it had a good safety record, and produced an estimated ten per cent of British ammunition used during the war, there were still over a dozen deaths.

Other factories in Merseyside were responsible for everything from heavy bombers to radar equipment.

The final raids on Merseyside took place on January 10 1942.

BIRKENHEAD took a battering, during World War 2, with German bomb-aimers looking to destroy shipyard facilities, commercial berths – and railway infrastructure.

The transport system on Merseyside was already well-developed long before 1939, with extensive railway goods yards, sidings and lines spreading out from the vital port to all parts of the country.

So it was that some of the heroism associated with the Battle of the Atlantic campaign took place on dry land – though the courage shown is no less remarkable than that of the men battling to stay on their feet as steel decks heaved below them.

One such example was recognised by the unveiling of a memorial plaque by the Managing Director of Merseyrail, Maarten Spaargaren, at a ceremony in Hamilton Square station in Birkenhead in March.

Four railway workers – Charles Pote, Ernie Irwin, Eric Calverly and Alfred Philpott – were at work in the railway complex at Morpeth Dock on December 21 1940 when air raid sirens sounded at 6.30pm.

They got their helmets on and set out to deal with unexploded bombs and incendiaries, and found a wagon on an ammunition train had caught light.

So amongst other actions that night, as munitions exploded all around them, the four men helped get the burning train shunted to a water tower where it could be made safe.

Had the wagon exploded, much of the surrounding area would have been damaged and many lives could have been lost.

Eric Fenna, the grandson of Alfred Philpott, was a driving force behind the campaign for a memorial plaque at Hamilton Square, the closest station to the former marshalling yard.

Speaking at the unveiling, Mr Fenna – whose uncle was a merchant mariner who was torpedoed twice during the war – said: "While some guys fought in tanks, bombers and battleships, these guys just had small spades..."

Another, more powerful, reminder of the Battle of the Atlantic lies close to the Mersey Ferries' Woodside terminal in Birkenhead, where U534 – now in five pieces – can be seen up close (including the damage done by depth charges when she was attacked on May 5 1945 off Denmark).

Although she did not sink any shipping in her brief career, she is a potent reminder of the U-boat threat.

www.u-boatstory.co.uk



SILENT WITNESS TO THE BLITZ – Rubble from homes and public buildings damaged or destroyed in the Blitz was transported along the north bank of the Mersey to Crosby in 1942 where it was used to strengthen sea defences along the Sefton shoreline. The bricks, stonework and memorials, some still bearing inscriptions, can be seen even now, after decades of tidal scouring – a poignant reminder of the loss of lives, and the loss of a way of life. Picture by Peter Lee, of Wirral Borough Council.

A-hunting out of Bootle

ONE Naval officer who played a crucial role in turning the tide of the Battle of the Atlantic cemented close ties with the town of Bootle which endure into the 21st Century.

Capt Johnnie Walker led ships of his escort and support groups, tirelessly and aggressively throwing his highly-trained flotillas into action against U-boats.

Much of the time his ships sailed from Gladstone Dock in Bootle, *A-Hunting We Will Go* blaring from the Tannoys, and for a period he lived in Flotilla House, just behind the town hall on Oriol Road.

Indeed, the modest garden gates of the house are now displayed on the wall of the hall's council chamber.

Also proudly on permanent display in the chamber are other mementos of the Senior Service's activities from the town, which lend the room the air of a Naval museum.

Hanging from mountings high on the walls along both sides are battle ensigns and other flags from various skirmishes with the U-boats.

Some are tattered and frayed, as was often the case with wartime flags which were not of the highest quality because of war shortages.

They have been preserved and are in exactly the shape they were in on the day they were presented, and each is accompanied by a plaque describing its provenance.

The trophies include:

■ Capt Walker's General Chase signal, hoisted in HMS Kite on July 30 1943 in the Bay of Biscay "on the occasion of the sinking of seven U-boats by escort group under the command of Capt F J Walker" (presented in January 1944);

■ The Battle Ensign worn by HMS Stork in December 1941 throughout a five-day attack on an Atlantic

convoy, during which four U-boats and two Focke-Wulf reconnaissance aircraft were destroyed (presented in July 1942);

■ The Battle Ensign of HMS Hesperus worn at the destruction of a U-boat in the Atlantic on December 26 1942 (presented in March 1943);

■ The ship's bell of HMS Starling, of which Capt Walker was Commanding Officer for many of his forays into the Atlantic. Even today the bell is rung to formally open council meetings.

There is also a small 'shrine' to Walker in the corner of the chamber, with a plaque, a portrait and the old standard of the Captain Walker's Old Boys Association.

And beneath the floor of the chamber is a room which Walker used as his local headquarters.

Not all the memorabilia in the town hall is related to the Atlantic,

one example being an area dedicated to the loss of HM Ships Glorious, Acasta and Ardent in June 1940.

Echoes of the war are still heard decades later.

Former Mayoral Secretary Neil Blair told of an elderly woman who had travelled some distance in bad weather on business at Bootle, and had time to kill before returning home.

Neil offered her a cup of tea and a brief look at some of the historical artefacts in the town hall.

When he started to explain about Capt Walker's role, she gently patted him on the hand and said: "I know dear – I nursed him."

She had been a nurse at the Royal Naval hospital at Seaforth, on the edge of Bootle, where Walker died on July 9 1944, two days after suffering a cerebral thrombosis at the age of 48.

His death was attributed to overwork and exhaustion.