



# NAVY NEWS

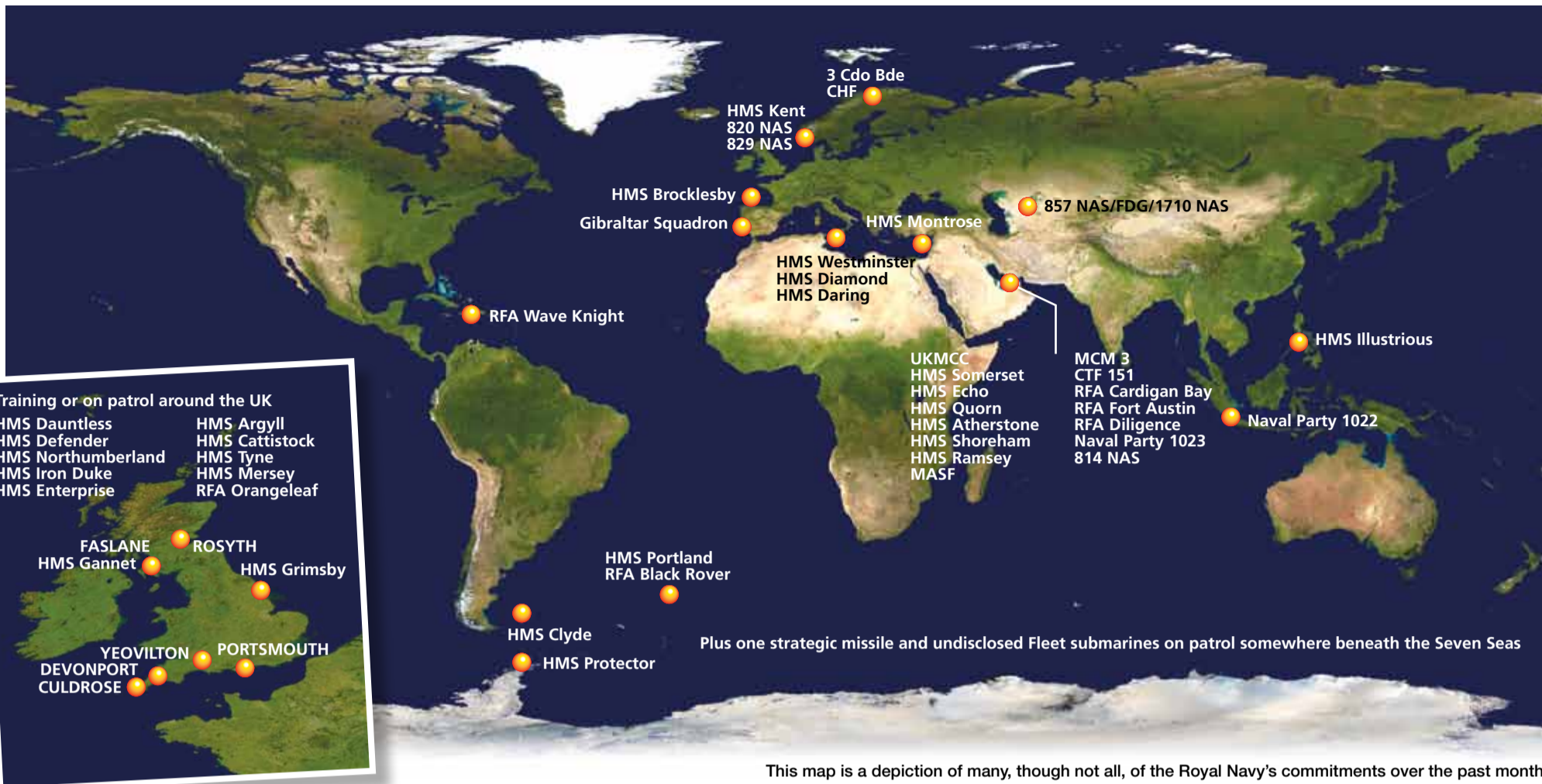
MARCH 2014

● *Mne Lewis Cooper of Bravo Company, 40 Commando, carries sandbags as he wades through floodwater at Northmoor, Somerset. Nearly 1,000 Naval Service personnel have been carrying out flood-relief work in the south of England. See pages 20-21 for details*

Picture: LA(Phot) Rhys O'Leary

# WADING IN





This map is a depiction of many, though not all, of the Royal Navy's commitments over the past month

**Training or on patrol around the UK**

HMS Dauntless  
HMS Defender  
HMS Northumberland  
HMS Iron Duke  
HMS Enterprise

HMS Argyll  
HMS Cattistock  
HMS Tyne  
HMS Mersey  
RFA Orangeleaf


**FLEET FOCUS**

Protecting our nation's interests

**WATER, water everywhere – and not just in the sea.**

The weather continues to dominate 2014 as winter storms batter the UK and bring more flood misery in the process.

Hundreds of Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel have been deployed in the fight against the floods in the south of England, Operation Pitchpole (see pages 20-21).

And the search and rescuers of **771 NAS** battled dreadful conditions to rescue French and Portuguese fishermen after their vessel hit rocks on the north Cornish coast (see right).

Ferocious storms delayed the Portsmouth-based minehunter **HMS Brocklesby** from leaving the French port of Brest for her NATO duties (see page 4).

Facing drier but far colder weather, the men and women from **3 Commando Brigade** are in Norway for their regular exercise testing Britain's ability to fight in the harshest of environments (see opposite).

In non-weather-related goings-on... There are devious schemes afoot at **HMS Raleigh** where a £1m giant green box is currently being fitted out to replicate the inside of a merchant vessel – with hidden holes to test board-and-search teams (see page 10).

**HMS Montrose** continued her mission in the eastern Med as she escorts merchant vessels carrying toxic materials as part of an international effort to dispose of Syrian chemical weapons (see pages 4-5).

**HMS Daring** spent a week with the Charles de Gaulle battle group as the French flagship made her way from the Red Sea to the Med – and the Type 45 made her way home (see page 6).

**HMS Portland** stopped off in the Cape Verde islands to take part in a board-and-search exercise with both the Verdean and US Coast Guards (see page 7).

Her sister **HMS Somerset** is settling into her new role east of Suez (see page 8) where she's taken over from **HMS Westminister**, whose crew ensured an action-packed final month in theatre firing dummy torpedoes, fending off pirates and swarms of attacking destroyers (see page 9).

Staying in the Type 23 frigate world **HMS Richmond** slipped through the Panama Canal to begin the long journey home to Portsmouth, which is where she should be by the time you read this (see page 8).

Half the Merlin force at Culdrose – **820** and **824 NAS** – have now converted to the Mk2 and are hailing the new-look submarine-hunting helicopter as a 'quantum leap forward' (see pages 14-15).

The mess decks of **HMS Ocean** hum with human life again as Britain's biggest warship welcomes back its crew following a £65m, 15-month refit (see page 6).

**HMS Talent** returned to Plymouth after the hunter-killer's five-month patrol in the Gulf and Med (see pages 4-5).

Crew from **HMS Lancaster** were among volunteers who had their world turned upside down during two days of trials held with the RNLI. The lifejacket trials saw sailors take to boats which were then capsized in the rescue service's escape training centre (see page 16).

Continuing the training theme, warfare personnel from destroyer **HMS Duncan** helped the USS George H W Bush carrier battle group prepare for deployment – from a computer suite at **HMS Collingwood** where simulators connected to those in the US and Germany for a week-long exercise (see page 17).

And finally... the fight against pirates continues in the Indian Ocean where the Royal Navy is at the 'beating heart' of a European force targeting a 'scourge' which threatens the lifeblood of the European economy (see page 18).



# 'For all those in desperate need...'

**THIS is the wreck of the fishing vessel Le Sillon, dashed on rocks on the north Cornish coast.**

And on the right are five of its six crew, rescued by the fliers of 771 Naval Air Squadron who battled terrible conditions to save them in one of the succession of storms which barreled through the Western Approaches last month.

Le Sillon was caught in one such storm – a series of waves smashed windows on its bridge, injuring the skipper and eventually causing the boat to lose power and steering.

The Padstow lifeboat responded to an SOS and, despite gusts of 60mph, took the stricken fishing vessel under tow about five miles off Trevoze Head.

In the foul weather, the line parted – as witnessed by the crew of Rescue 193 who'd arrived overhead to assist with the rescue.

Le Sillon was once again adrift and unable to turn into wind. Assessing the only clear winching area would be the forecastle, resulting in the pilots losing all visual references over the pitching and violently-rolling deck, the Sea King's crew elected to winch the fishermen from the water.

The Padstow lifeboat took up station close by to pick up any crew members the helicopter was unable to reach.

"The plan was for me to go down on the winch and get the rescue strop around the crew one-by-one, bringing them up safely to the Sea King," said aircrewman PO Russ 'Patch' Adams.

"The sea state was pretty rough – I reckon there was an eight-metre swell. I was swinging around a lot and on some of the lifts I was dragged along the wave tops and underwater. It did seem we were working at the limits."

Patch went down six times into the sea, rescuing five of the six fishermen; the sixth jumped into the water and was eventually picked up by the lifeboat.

"The final person – the master of the ship – jumped but swam around the front of the boat and was caught by the swell," said Lt Cdr Dickie Calhaem, one of Rescue 193's two pilots.

"He disappeared off into the blackness. Patch was in the water and unsure exactly where this man had gone. I called the lifeboat and they scooted round and picked him up."

The crew of four French and two Portuguese nationals were cold, shaken but mostly unharmed. The skipper was taken to hospital to have glass removed from his feet and his crew were flown to Culdrose. Le Sillon was washed up at Park Head, near Porthcothan, the following morning.

The dramatic rescue was timely for it came as the annual statistics were revealed for the military and civilian helicopters in action across the UK in 2013.

Despite providing just one sixth of Britain's search and rescue force – two of 12 bases – naval personnel accounted for nearly a quarter of all sorties, 586 missions.

As has been the case for much of its recent history, Prestwick-based HMS Gannet was the busiest unit north of the border – 329 sorties and 327 people assisted – and the second busiest in the UK (RAF Valley in Anglesey tops the rescue 'chart' for the second consecutive year with six more sorties than Gannet and 352 people helped).

And 771 proved to be England's most in-demand SAR unit: 257 call-outs, helping 212 souls, making the Cornish fliers third on the list.

Its Sea Kings were airborne, on average, for an hour and a half per sortie, which usually took them three dozen miles from Culdrose, while Gannet's call outs were typically longer (just shy of two hours) and took the red and grey whirlybirds 56 miles from Prestwick.

"The men and women of the RN SAR Force – whether they maintain the aircraft, fly the rescue missions or perform a supporting role – can be justifiably proud of the outstanding job that they perform day in day out, often in the harshest of weather and environmental conditions. Undoubtedly it is one of the most rewarding jobs for all those involved," said Cdr Andrew Rose, Sea King Force Commander.

"The red and grey livery of the Royal Navy's Search and Rescue Sea Kings in the skies above Cornwall, the Isles of Scilly, Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England is a reassuring sight to all those in desperate need of their services."





**THERE** you are on the sofa, wrapped in your cardie, cup of cocoa in your hand, roaring fire, an old movie on the telly, bemoaning how much you hate winter...

But winter is FUN. Just ask the marines... Yes, you get to tear around the frozen countryside at nearly 40mph. You can learn to ski, learn to live off the land, making fires in the open using branches. If the conditions are right, you'll be treated to the spectacular, ethereal sight of the Northern Lights. And you'll get to jump into ice-cold water, then clamber out again (ok, the last bit doesn't sound too much like fun...).

This month the men and women of 3 Commando Brigade will knuckle down to Exercise Cold Response, the regular test of Britain's ability to fight in the harshest environment known to man alongside their Norwegian hosts and, for the 2014 work-out, Dutch and Swedish forces.

Before there can be any thought of fighting in the Arctic, however, you have to live in the Arctic. And move in the Arctic.

Although the green berets - and 45 Commando especially - are Britain's cold weather specialists, 75 per cent of personnel deployed to Norway are new to the Arctic.

So the prelude to Cold Response is Exercise Cetus 14 at Asegarden, a Norwegian Army base just outside the picturesque port of Harstad, 150 miles inside the Arctic Circle, a three-week training package with the emphasis on survival. You can't fight if you're dead from hypothermia...

For much of the training, temperatures were surprisingly mild - at times as 'warm' as -3°C (-30°C is not uncommon in these parts in the depths of winter; anything lower and even the commandos shut up shop).

But three degrees below zero is more than enough to sap the heat out of you. You must be able to put up a tent - or build a makeshift shelter with branches, or dig a snow hole if there's no time - start a fire, kill animals and forage for veg, and avoid the pitfalls of frostbite.

It's down to the Corps' elite teams of mountain leaders to impart this knowledge and, after a week's instruction, it's time to see if their instruction has paid off.

"They hand over their bergens and only take what they can carry in their pockets like string survival kits, basic first aid kits and a knife - which is the critical tool they will need," explains mountain leader Sgt Steve Thomas.

"If they maintain a good fire they will survive and that is what this is all about, working as a team.

"They will maybe get one or two hours shut eye sharing fire watch, boiling up water and cooking on their makeshift cookers."

From boiling to icy water. No-one in the brigade can head out on exercises in the Arctic without mastering the dreaded ice-breaking drill: a hole cut in the ice of a frozen lake.

The question: could you extricate yourself from the water should the ice break beneath you?

To be more precise: could you extricate yourself and your bergen from the water, recite your service number, rank and name, then dry yourself off?

"After the initial shock of getting in it wasn't too bad," said CPO Chris Pitt. "I'm just glad I've done it now. We'd been waiting two weeks since our survival week to do this so we just wanted to get it over."

Once out of the hole, there's a roll in a pile of snow to get rid of the water before a trip to the 'ice bar' for a tot of rum, a toast to the Queen, God bless her, then comrades help you out of your wet clothes and into dry ones, while keeping an eye on you for the signs of hypothermia.

Having mastered the basics of living in the snow, it's time to move on to moving in the snow. You cannot carry a 70lb bergen and rifle and trudge any great distance in the snow. Skiing is the only practical solution.

For ski virgins - and that's most of the green berets on Cetus 14 - there are training slopes at Asegarden before they can move out into the wild wastes of Troms

county (which is four times the size of Devon but with one tenth of its population).

"Most people haven't skied before," explains ski instructor Capt Tommy Roberts, who's on his 18th Norway deployment. "The first thing we teach them is just to stand up on skis.

"It's completely alien to them to be able to master moving on skis. Then they have to move with a 70lb bergen and a weapon." Alien. Or as Capt James Smith of 42 Commando puts it "very different".

He adds: "We are very conscious that we will have to do this carrying a weapon and a bergen. Skiing is the fun part, everyone wants to learn and to get good at it."

But unless you're Bode Miller or Franz Klammer, it's all a bit pedestrian (or rather ski-estrian).

If you're feeling the need for speed on skis, then only the ski-doo will, er, do.

Skis at the front, caterpillar tracks at the back, the ski-doo (also known as a snowmobile) gives you speed (up to 60kmh - 37mph) and range (over 150km - more than 90 miles). Oh, and it's one hell of a buzz.

It's used principally for long-range reconnaissance, six-man teams moving around the Arctic terrain at speed, sometimes working independently, sometimes hauling sleds, and sometimes a chain of marines (known as ski-oring).

"We attach a rope onto the back and if you have guys on skis with poles you can pull them - it allows us to get a lot more men into the field quickly," explains C/Sgt John Rutherford, a mountain leader on his tenth deployment to Norway.

Now that's got to be more fun than sitting on the sofa...

With thanks to Rebecca Ricks



pictures: po(phot) sean clec, rnpoty3



# To coldly go

## Bon voyage, Brocklesby

FOR the minehunter has spent nearly as long in Brest as she has in Portsmouth this year due to foul weather hampering the start of her NATO duties.

The Hunt-class ship belatedly left her home port (as a result of the winter storms) to take up her position in NATO's minehunting force in the Med...

...and got as far as Brittany before the next wave of storms moved in, so she took shelter in the French Navy's Atlantic home on the penultimate day of January.

She was still there on February 1. And February 8, by which time she was jokingly being referred to as FS Brocklesby at Fleet HQ...

In fact, it was the third week of February before the winter storms abated sufficiently (and for a sufficient period) for Brocklesby to make a break for it in company with German minehunter Weilheim, which joined the Portsmouth-based ship in Brest to take shelter.

Even then, it was no plain sailing for the 44 souls aboard Brocklesby – four to six-metre-high waves are less than fun in a 750-tonne ship.

Anyway, when the minehunter does finally make contact with Standing Mine Countermeasures Group 2 (she was Lisbon-bound as *Navy News* went to press), she'll be with the international force until late spring, ranging around the Middle Sea.

Its job is to be ready to deal with any present-day mine threat should it arise, as well as get rid of any historic ordnance the ships come across.

After six months in the Gulf last year aboard Brocklesby's sister HMS *Atherstone* as part of the rotation of minehunting crews in the Middle East, the ship's company went through thorough training back in the UK ready for NATO duties.

"Having only recently joined Brocklesby – my first ship – it has been brilliant to put all my training immediately into practice and learn from my shipmates," said 23-year-old AB(D) Ben Gaskell.

"I've been doing lots of diving and underwater bomb disposal. Now I am really looking forward to deploying and doing the job for real."

WITH the winter sun going down on the eastern Mediterranean, HMS *Montrose* glides past the ro-ro ferry MV *Taiko*.

This is as serene a scene as you will witness on any of the Seven Seas.

But appearances can be deceptive.

The *Taiko* is carrying toxic chemicals away from Syria. HMS *Montrose* is safeguarding her – a mission described by the frigate's commanding officer as "the hardest and crunchiest" in his career.

While Britain – southern England especially – was in the grip of floods and bad weather, and the media's attention was drawn thereto, in the eastern Med the Royal Navy was at the very heart of a mission of global significance.

Three cargo loads of chemicals have been safely escorted out of Syria for destruction as part of an international effort to eliminate President Assad's chemical weapon capability.

Devonport-based *Montrose* joined ships from Denmark and Norway to shepherd two merchant vessels carrying substances through the eastern Mediterranean as part of the United Nations mission to remove the potential ingredients from the war-torn country.

To date, the multi-national task group has completed three 'pickups', escorting the merchant ships *Taiko* and *Ark Futura* to the Syrian port of Latakia to collect the chemicals.

To put those chemicals beyond use forever, they are being loaded on to the ro-ro ferries, with the warships escorting them to Gioia Tauro, near the south-western tip of Italy, where the dangerous materials will be transferred to a US Government vessel, MV *Cape Ray*, for subsequent treatment – a process known as hydrolysis.

Almost two months into Operation RECSYR (REMOval of Chemical weapons from SYRIA), and with the British frigate due to hand over duties to HMS *Diamond* as *Navy News* went to press, *Montrose's* Commanding Officer Cdr James Parkin says the



Pictures: LA(Phot) Alex Knott, HMS Montrose

mission has been amongst the most challenging the Royal Navy has carried out in many years.

"This is a mission of global significance. These materials need removing. We are doing a job with the eyes of the world upon us, so we need to ensure we do it well," he said.

"This is the real deal. It's probably the hardest and crunchiest mission I have known in my career. We are at the highest state of readiness – people back home in the UK perhaps don't realise that. These are busy waters – and this is a demanding and very real task."

The self-proclaimed 'most Scottish ship in the Navy' had been in the Gulf since August, working with the UK's allies and keeping the sea lanes free, when she received instructions at the turn of the year to head for the eastern Mediterranean at full speed to support the Syrian mission.

The Danish-led operation sees the merchant vessels go into port

to load substances – dubbed 'horrible ingredients a' and 'b' by *Montrose's* ship's company – which are toxic, but not chemical weapons on their own, unless they are mixed.

While the flagship HDMS *Esbern Snare* and HNoMS *Helge Ingstad* have accompanied the merchant ships into Latakia, *Montrose* has remained outside Syrian waters, providing additional security.

Even from international waters a dozen miles from the Syrian coast, the signs of ongoing civil war are all too obvious.

"There are the visual signs of what's happening – flashes from explosions, smoke plumes rising. We see activity daily, and it's particularly evident at night," Cdr Parkin said.

Flight Commander Lt Joe Sharples, who's in charge of *Montrose's* Lynx helicopter, added: "As aircrew of the Lynx during this globally significant event we have been kept busy conducting patrols to safeguard

the area.

"Having left home last August, it has been a long seven-month deployment, but even now my senior engineer, CPO Paul Roe, and his small team of highly-skilled air engineers continue to maintain our helicopter to a superb standard in difficult conditions.

"Their families at home should be justifiably proud of their efforts."

In addition to the Danish-Norwegian-British effort, there are also Chinese and Russian warships working independently of the RECSYR task group, but with the same aim. Relations with both the latter are both "cordial and professional" says Cdr Parkin, whose ship received greetings from the Yancheng when the PLAN frigate's sailors marked Chinese New Year.

"It's a change of operational tempo compared with the Gulf and has thrown up different

challenges which I think everyone has dealt with really well," says officer of the watch Lt Chloe Lea.

Apart from the odd logistical stop in Cyprus, the ship's company of 200 men and women have been working 12-hour shifts since early January.

"For the last few months we have been going around the world doing a job I love – which has been quality," said AET Carwyn Jones, who maintains the Lynx.

"Now we are involved in something really important for the world in general, so my mum will be proud!"

Life aboard the Type 23 off Syria "isn't dull," says seaman specialist AB Johnny Murray.

"Being where we are, it's been non-stop action. The chemicals aren't coming out of Syria as quickly as we thought they would but Jack being Jack we just get on with it, manning our positions



# 'No better bunch of fellas in the Silo'

WHAT a stirring sight in a wintry Plymouth Sound.

Tugs *Forceful* and *Faithful* and a police launch shepherd HMS *Talent* into harbour after the hunter-killer completed five months on patrol in the Gulf and Med.

Around 100 families and friends – accompanied by a bugler and bagpiper – were not deterred by freezing rain and gales lashing the West Country.

They crowded the jetty in Devonport naval base, waving 'welcome home'

banners to greet the 130 crew: submariners old and bold, and submariners new and fresh faced.

During the deployment 27 crew earned their Dolphins – the mark of a true deep – among them ET(WE) David Webb from Neath, who received his badge of honour from *Talent's* CO Cdr John Aitken on the very day of the boat's arrival back in Britain.

"It's a great day of double celebrations, for us to be home and to get my dolphins.

I've missed my new daughter – she's only nine months, so I've missed a lot of her life and longing to see her again," said David.

"But I'm very proud to be a true submariner at last. It was very hard work learning everything about how a submarine works and what to do when something breaks down and what everyone else does on board, so we can all operate as safely as possible."

WO2 Mark Craddock from Torpoint hugged his two sons

Ben, 15, and Carl, 12, as they ran into his arms on the jetty.

"It's so good to see Ben and Carl – we've got a lot to catch up on. And I'm hoping to spend a lot more time with them as this is probably my last submarine sea-going deployment.

"I wasn't expecting to be away for Christmas, so it was a surprise to have to be away with *Talent* – which didn't put me in my sons' good books."

Ben said: "Dad's missed GCSEs, Christmas and my

birthday and lots more. It's not good for him to be away so much. But it's good to see him again and hopefully for a bit longer this time."

ET(ME) Rob Turner scooped his excited three-year-old son Tommy into his arms as he was mobbed by his girlfriend Jessica Herd and his parents when he stepped ashore.

"I'm really happy to see my family again. Tommy's grown a little I'd swear. I think the family are planning a welcome home party – I'd just be happy for the

simple things like a proper bed and normal food," said Rob.

"We'll be making the most of seeing friends and family again as I've not got much leave before we begin work again."

Jessica added: "It seems such a long time he's been away. I'm happy to see him back safely. Tommy's so pleased to see his dad again."

The deployment began with a period of training and exercises in the Mediterranean aimed at generating the fighting capability of her 130-man



Picture: LA(Phot) Joel Rouse, FRPU West

# Mission is 'the real deal'



● Montrose and HNoMS Helge Ingstad escort the Ark Futura and (above) the Type 23's ops room team monitor the situation



ready to react as required.”  
 Montrose's Operations Officer Lt Cdr Ben Evans added: “I am bloody proud to be here doing what we are – this is definitely the culmination of my career so far.”  
 “It's no exaggeration to say that doing this job, with these guys, makes me achingly proud to be part of the best ship in the best navy in the world.”

Cdr Parkin says such comments underline the high morale of his men and women, asked to do a difficult and demanding job at the tail end of an already-demanding deployment.

“My ship's company have reacted really well to the intense work that this mission has demanded. They are fully aware of the importance of what we're doing,” he added.

Montrose has received specific praise for her efforts

from Sigrid Kaag, who heads the UN Joint Mission set up to remove chemical weapons from Syria. She visited the frigate in Limassol, where she told the ship's company they should be “proud of their courage and commitment, which speaks volumes for the UK's vision for international peace and security.”

“The UK's contribution to peace and security through its significant contribution to Syria's chemical weapons elimination and destruction is most meaningful and significant.”

Which is the eloquent, diplomatic way of putting it.

Or in the words of seaman specialist AB Jack Harvey: “RECSYR may sound like a type of dinosaur but there's nothing prehistoric about what we're doing here: this is cutting-edge stuff!”

● The Norwegian frigate Helge Ingstad breaks away from Montrose during manoeuvres while (above) a heart-stopping view of the Type 23 from the cockpit of her Lynx



## ent Service'

crew, simulating attacks with Talent's Tomahawk missiles and Spearfish torpedoes.

A highlight for a few deeps was the chance to spend time aboard HMS Dragon when the submarine worked with the ship on trials and exercises with US Navy warships.

Both Christmas and New Year were spent in Bahrain, and there were visits to Souda Bay and Dubai during a patrol of more than 30,000 miles (and 20,000 sausages and three tonnes of spuds...).

“We had a fantastic deployment and I'm proud of HMS Talent and what we've achieved,” said Cdr Aitken, who hails from Northumberland.

“My ship's company are the best I've ever worked with. They've done a fantastic job. This is my last submarine sea-going job and I couldn't have had a better bunch of fellas to see us through.”

His boat is now undergoing maintenance in her home port before renewed sea training.



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## O – what a lovely warship

THE White Ensign flies over Britain's biggest warship for the first time since 2012 as HMS Ocean hums with human life again.

The mess decks of the Mighty O are alive with banter once again after more than 150 sailors and Royal Marines – the latter from 1 Assault Squadron – marched in file on to Ocean for the first time in over a year.

Moving back aboard the ship in her home base of Devonport is the most important milestone in the helicopter carrier's £65m, 15-month refit by defence firm Babcock.

Welcoming aboard his ship's company – some of whom had been helping the extensive revamp – was Capt Tim Henry, who assumed command of Ocean at the end of last year.

"Those of you who are returning will see major changes and will have to re-learn your way round the ship because of the new bulkheads and layout and new systems," he said.

"I will be working with and alongside you every step of the way. We all want to go back to sea and that is our goal where we will begin sea trials."

The carrier's revamp – described by the Babcock team as equivalent to refitting three Type 23 frigates – has included a full refurbishment of her flight deck, hangar and aviation facilities, an overhaul of much of her mechanical and engineering equipment, and replacement or refurbishment of many of her communications and weapons systems. There's also a bigger sick bay, enlarged galley and dining area.

Following sea trials testing both the ship and her sailors, the crew will undergo intensive training under Flag Officer Sea Training off the South-West of England.

By the end of 2014, Mighty O will be the UK's sole on-call helicopter carrier; veteran HMS Illustrious, which has performed the duty while Ocean has been going through her revamp, is due to pay off after more than 30 years' service in the late autumn.

# 'This pivotal theatre'

BRITAIN'S second most senior admiral has praised the work of the Royal Navy's minehunters – "at the very tip of the spear" of Britain's warships deployed in the Gulf.

Four ships – HMS Quorn and Atherstone from Portsmouth, and HMS Shoreham and Ramsey from Faslane – keep the sea lanes safe and work with British, Coalition and local naval forces.

Britain has maintained a permanent minehunting presence in the Gulf – two ships initially – since late 2006, with the vessels changing places every three to three and a half years, while crews swap places with their counterparts back in Britain every six months or so.

Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Philip Jones – who is responsible for providing all ships, squadrons, units and Naval Service personnel for operations at home and abroad – visited units based in the Gulf to thank them for their efforts and to get an update on their work.

The Gulf region and Indian Ocean have been the crucible of the Royal Navy for more than 30 years – and the crux of the Fleet's mission since the turn of the 21st Century in particular.

There are currently more than 1,000 sailors, airmen and Royal Marines deployed in the region, with more than ten Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships and Fleet Air Arm squadrons deployed there.

The mission – Operation Kipion – is choreographed by the Senior Service's headquarters in Bahrain, the UK Maritime Component Command.

As well as visiting the HQ, Admiral Jones had the chance to meet some of the recently-arrived minehunter crews and witness their training.

"The work of the mine countermeasures cadre in theatre remains at the very tip of the spear of our forward-deployed and highly-regarded capability



● Admiral Jones chats with senior rates aboard HMS Westminster  
Picture: LA(Phot) Dan Rosenbaum, HMS Westminster

within the Gulf region and it was a privilege to see how well they, and all who support them, are going about their work," the admiral said.

The most recent work involving the Bahrain-based mine force saw Her Majesty's Ships Quorn and Shoreham, plus their mother ship RFA Cardigan Bay – which provides fuel, food and supplies for the minehunters and serves as their command ship with a battle staff aboard – head into the Gulf with USS Gladiator, one of the US Navy's Avenger-class minehunters also stationed in the region, for a week of exercises.

The joint training gave the Royal Navy ships an opportunity to develop their seamanship and navigation skills with their transatlantic cousins and learn a few things about how they carry out their business.

After sailing together from Bahrain the ships proceeded in a column to their exercise area to conduct various manoeuvres, often just hundreds of metres apart – a vital skill if the ships were required to work in narrow

seas where there's a mine threat and precise navigation is essential.

Quorn and Shoreham practised a light-line transfer – a method of transferring and replenishing stores at sea, with the two ships only 36 metres apart.

After the ships were connected the two commanding officers maintained a naval tradition by sending across a gift and a handwritten note.

The week-long exercise also allowed some of Quorn's 43-strong ship's company to experience time at sea on the



## Millions into Merlins

ONE third of a billion pounds will be spent turning RAF Merlins into Fleet Air Arm ones to carry Royal Marines into battle.

Whitehall announced a £330m investment in the nation's Merlin fleet allowing the RAF's 'green' Mk3 models to be converted ready for front-line operations with the Commando Helicopter Force.

The 25 upgraded Merlins – the Mk4 – will replace the venerable Sea King Mk4s which are due to be retired in two years' time.

The RAF Merlin can carry two dozen troops with kit, or in a 'flying ambulance' role, 16 casualties on stretchers. It can lift artillery pieces, Land Rovers, or five tonnes of equipment slung beneath it if required. It also features a stern ramp for troops to climb on and off.

To convert them for the RN, the 25 helicopters will receive new glass cockpits and avionics, a folding main rotorhead and tail, and improved undercarriage.

Royal Navy and Royal Marines air and ground crew are already working and training side-by-side with their RAF counterparts on the green Merlin at RAF Benson.

The aircraft are due to be formally transferred to the Fleet Air Arm this autumn and will move to the Commando Helicopter Force's home at RNAS Yeovilton in due course.

Meanwhile, in the grey Merlin world... the Mk2 is in line for an upgrade to provide the future fleet with '3D' coverage as it's turned into the Navy's 'eyes in the sky'.

A version of the new Merlin will be converted to take the place of the Sea King Mk7.

The baggers' retirement in 2016 means a successor to the Airborne Surveillance and Control aircraft is needed to provide airborne early warning for HMS Queen Elizabeth or Prince of Wales battle groups.

Whitehall is speeding up the process to buy the replacement, pumping an initial £24m into Crowsnest – a Merlin Mk2 with Airborne Surveillance and Control kit – 18 months sooner than originally planned.

The investment is good news for the team at RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall, says Cdr Ben Franklin, who's been involved with the helicopter for more than 15 years and is now Commander of the Maritime Merlin Force.

"We already protect the Navy from threats on the surface and underwater. With Crowsnest, we have the added dimension of the sky. Merlin will be able to do it all.

"Anything which makes Merlin better, more useful, more versatile is great for the force. I am passionate about Merlin. It is a great aircraft. As far as I am concerned: the future is bright, the future is Merlin."

Defence firm Lockheed Martin – which oversaw introducing the original Merlin Mk1 and now the improved Mk2 into service – will again oversee the project.

Whitehall has given it £24m to run a competition to design, develop and demonstrate the system which meets the Navy's requirements – it could be an external sack like the baggers, or possibly a radar fitted to the main body of the helicopter.

Whichever design is chosen, Crowsnest will be on the front line by 2019, with the Queen Elizabeth herself also entering service by the end of the decade.

Up to five Crowsnest Merlins will fly from the carrier as part of its air group, alongside nine Mk2s providing protection against submarines and surface ships.

● Merlin Mk2 feature, pages 14-15

## Reactor sites shortlisted

FIVE sites across the UK have been shortlisted by Whitehall for storing waste from decommissioned nuclear submarines.

There are 18 disused boats – from HMS Dreadnought through to HMS Turbulent – currently stored afloat in Devonport and Rosyth, but the vessels can only be dismantled once their reactor components have been safely removed.

The potential sites for holding that radioactive waste are already used for storing such material.

They are the Atomic Weapons Establishment sites at Aldermaston and Burghfield; Sellafield; Chapelcross in Dumfriesshire and Capenhurst in Cheshire.

Public consultation will be carried out later this year before Whitehall makes a decision.

Whichever site is picked, it will be used to store the reactor components of 27 boats in total – there are nine more due to pay off by the end of the 2020s – until after 2040 when the UK's Geological Disposal Facility comes into operation.

## L'audace, l'audace...

BRITAIN'S most advanced warship spent seven days safeguarding the most powerful surface ship in any European Navy as HMS Daring joined the Charles de Gaulle battle group.

The Portsmouth-based destroyer – in the final few days of her nine-month global deployment – attached herself to the French flagship as she made her way from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.

The Charles de Gaulle has been working east of Suez on her Operation Belleau Wood deployment, including linking up with the American flat-top USS Harry S Truman and frigate HMS Westminster for a large-scale exercise of air and naval power.

Those exercises continued when the nuclear-powered French carrier left the Gulf region and began her journey to the Middle Sea, encountering Daring as she made her way across the Indian Ocean from the Maldives.

The week in company with the Charles de Gaulle – which counts several Royal Navy personnel among her ship's company – was part of the 'lesson learning' for the Anglo-French Combined Joint Expeditionary Force which will be formed in just two years' time.

To that end, the Charles de Gaulle's own Super Étendard and Rafale jets hurled themselves at the carrier force in a series of air defence exercises to see whether Daring and the flagship's other escorts could fend off the incoming attackers.

Waiving any language difficulties aside, slipping into Charles de Gaulle's *groupe aéronaval* – the French counterpart of a British carrier strike group – was helped by the fact that Daring's French equivalent was also part of the task force.

The FS Forbin is a Horizon-class frigate – similar to the Type 45s, for the British warships started life as a combined Anglo-French-Italian project before the UK went its separate way about 15 years ago – which, like Daring, is charged with defending a task force against air attack.

Once through Suez, the British and French went their separate ways with Daring making a beeline for Malta, where she's now arrived – only the second Type 45 destroyer to visit Grand Harbour after HMS Dragon called in there late last year.

Having visited nearly two dozen ports around the globe and clocked up 38,000 miles while working with 15 navies, Daring was due to return home to Portsmouth at the end of last month.

● Daring (nearest the camera) and FS Forbin flank the Charles de Gaulle with the tanker FS Meuse following  
Picture: Thomas Vindevoegel, Marine Nationale



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APPROACHING the sleek, if slightly weather-worn, hull of a Cape Verde Coast Guard ship, HMS Portland's Lynx prepares to lower a board-and-search team in the mid-Atlantic.

The islands were the second stop for the Devonport-based warship as she begins her North and South Atlantic patrol.

Portland left the Verdean port of Mindelo with a local boarding team embarked. Offshore they fast roped on to the cutter Guardiã, watched by three observers from the US Coast Guard.

HMS Portland's Boarding Officer Lt Simon Fraser said: "I thoroughly enjoyed the

opportunity to work alongside our allies in the fight against the illegal drugs trade.

"Both the US and Cape Verdean Coast Guards, as well as the Judicial Police and Maritime Police, are highly experienced in these operations and we were all able to exchange ideas to ensure the continued success in preventing the flow of drugs into Africa and Europe."

The two ships sailed to patrol the waters around the archipelago of ten volcanic islands.

During the patrol, teams from Portland spent time aboard the Guardiã conducting training in firefighting, damage control, seamanship and navigation.

The exercises and advice were geared at helping develop the skills of the Guardiã's crew.

"The teams on the Guardiã were incredibly keen to learn about the practices the Royal Navy uses," said CPO Scott Allan.

"We were impressed with the enthusiasm they showed throughout the training."

The training also included first aid and board-and-search-drills, with the teams from the three nations discussing procedures and sharing ideas.

"This patrol demonstrated the RN's support of the international commitment to preventing the flow of illegal narcotics," said Lt Cdr Richard Gray, F79's

Operations Officer.

"We enjoyed working with our allies from Cape Verde and the US and we are looking forward to working with them again later in the year."

The vessels were conducting exercises on behalf of the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (Narcotics) in Lisbon, with HMS Portland at 30 minutes' notice to conduct boarding operations to prevent illegal drugs from entering Africa and Europe.

Lisbon was the first port of call for the Type 23, to visit that crime-fighting HQ, meet staff from NATO's Naval Striking and Support Forces, based in the Portuguese capital; its deputy commander is the RN's Rear Admiral Tim

Lowe who brought a group of 20 officers from 11 nations aboard Portland for a visit. And fish and chips.

The frigate's footballers dispatched local side Lisbon Crusaders 5-2.

And to celebrate Britain's long-standing relations with the country – the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty was signed in 1373 – Portland's CO Cdr Sarah West followed the tradition of nailing a brass plaque bearing the ship's name on to a barrel of rum.

On sailing from Lisbon, the ship conducted an exercise with the frigate NRP Corte Real, which also gave some Portlanders the chance to sample life aboard a Portuguese man o'war.

Picture: LA(Phot) Caroline Davies

## 'Black' Diamond heads east

ON A dank January night, HMS Diamond slipped out of Portsmouth ready to begin her second tour of duty in the Gulf region.

After three weeks of training with FOST off Plymouth in a very blustery and wet opening to 2014, the destroyer paid a whistle-stop visit to her home port to load final stores and ammunition before heading for warmer climes.

Diamond is relieving HMS Montrose (which was the RN's Gulf guardian, but more recently has been in the eastern Med helping to remove chemical weapons from Syria).

With pantries, storerooms and magazines topped up, the Type 45 left the Solent in the dead of night to begin a six-and-a-half-month stint in the Middle East – where her maiden deployment was in 2012.

Since then, there has been a considerable turnover in the 236-strong ship's company of sailors and Royal Marines, from Commanding Officer – now Cdr Andy Ingham, who's taken over from Cdr Ian Clarke – down to new able seamen, such as 20-year-old steward Rachel Batty from Bromham in Bedfordshire, on her first deployment.

"I'm excited but nervous at the same time as I don't know what to expect. I'm sad to leave my family but am looking forward to the challenges ahead," she said.

Once she gets to the Gulf, Diamond's time away will be a mix of working with international navies operating in the Gulf region, to teaming up with the military of Middle East nations, flying the flag for the UK, and generally keeping the sea lanes safe.

"Whilst it has undoubtedly been difficult for us to say goodbye to our loved ones, I and my crew are looking forward to the task in hand and doing what the Royal Navy does best," said Cdr Ingham.



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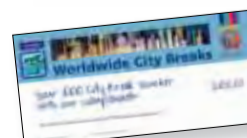


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# RFA tanker thwarts drugs runs

THE blow that the Royal Navy and RFA has struck to drug lords in the Americas this winter now stands at almost £240m after two more cocaine seizures in three weeks by RFA Wave Knight.

The tanker and its US Coast Guard allies pounced first on a speedboat in the Caribbean, halting it with disabling fire before recovering 45 bales of cocaine.

The illicit cargo would be worth more than £60m on the streets of Britain.

The hunt began when a USCG Ocean Sentry patrol aircraft spotted a 25ft boat carrying suspicious packages racing through international waters south of the Dominican Republic.

With the Sentry overhead monitoring, Wave Knight and a Coast Guard helicopter embarked on the tanker gave chase.

The helicopter fired warning shots in an attempt to stop the boat, but as the crew were observed throwing bales overboard the decision was made to use disabling fire on the vessel.

Wave Knight quickly launched one of her sea boats with a USCG team to board and question those on the suspect vessel.

At the same time the tanker launched a second boat to haul in the ditched bales, recovering 45.

Four crew of the go-fast were detained, while the haul of drugs was checked; it totalled around 1.25 tonnes of cocaine.

The cocaine and detainees were handed over to USCG cutter Sitkinak off Puerto Rico, and subsequently landed in Florida.

Three weeks later and a smaller haul – 170kg, with a street value of £8.5m.

Wave Knight was on patrol in the Caribbean Sea off Jamaica when her helicopter spotted a 10m speedboat, whose two-man crew was seen to be jettisoning packages into the sea.

Warning shots forced the smugglers to stop, and an exhaustive search resulted in cocaine being found hidden aboard.

The crew were arrested and detained on Wave Knight before being transferred to the USA for authorities to deal with them.

“Wave Knight’s latest cocaine seizure rounds off a very successful patrol and underlines the effectiveness of multinational counter narcotics operations in the Caribbean,” said Capt Duncan Lamb RFA, Wave Knight’s CO.

“The ship, US Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment and armed Coast Guard helicopter working together present a formidable obstacle to the smugglers.”

The interdictions mark the first time an armed USCG helicopter has embarked on a foreign military vessel in support of the international effort to halt the flow of drugs.



● Royal Marines and sailors practise fast-roping techniques from HMS Somerset’s Lynx

Picture: LA(Phot) Ben Shread



● Mne Arben Islami

Picture: WO2 Richard White RM

## Kosovo to the Corps

IN war-torn Kosovo a teenager first encountered the Royal Marines – and such was the impact that, 14 years on, he has earned his own green beret.

It was 1999, in the Kosovo War, that 14-year-old Arben Islami saw NATO troops – including Royals – in his country as part of the campaign to end the persecution of ethnic Kosovo Albanians.

He fled Kosovo shortly afterwards, his hopes resting on an uncle who lived in the UK.

Living in Birmingham, he adapted to British life – and never forgot his encounters with the Royal Marines.

Now, at the age of 28, he has just passed out and can proudly wear the green beret.

Arben said: “As children we saw the Marines in Kosovo and I knew I wanted to be one.”

“Then I fled and came to the UK. I didn’t have the intention at the time as I was just a young kid but when I got indefinite leave to stay here and became British I knew I had to.”

“I wanted to join up and give something back to the country that helped me so much.”

Arben joined the Corps the day after he was granted British citizenship in July 2012.

After ten weeks of training at CTC in Lympstone he got engaged, and decided to become a Royal Marines Reservist.

Having passed the tough Commando Course, Arben said: “I’m very honoured to be part of the Corps, and I just can’t express my happiness enough.”

“It is a huge privilege, particularly coming from another country, to join the Royal Marines because they are one of the best forces in the world.”

## Brazilian admiral hosted by RN

THE Commander of the Brazilian Navy has been given an insight into the Royal Navy’s operational capability and training during a visit to the UK.

Admiral Julio Soares de Moura Neto spent seven days visiting RN establishments to strengthen the strong defence relationship between the two countries.

He met First Sea Lord Admiral Sir George Zambellas at the MOD in Whitehall before later being hosted at a reception on HMS Victory in Portsmouth.

Admiral Zambellas said: “In 2012, the Prime Minister identified ‘maritime defence’ as a key area of cooperation between the United Kingdom and Brazil.”

“This reflects the step change in our bilateral relationship with the Brazilian Navy in recent years and our agreed ambition to achieve even more.”

“Admiral Moura Neto’s visit this week has been key to this, exploring industrial and navy-to-navy opportunities, strengthening further our practical partnership and deep friendship.”

Admiral Moura Neto toured HMS Collingwood and Sultan, while at Navy Command HQ on Whale Island he was briefed on the future of the Royal Navy.

Later he was hosted by 1SL on board Type 45 destroyer HMS Dragon, while his whistle-stop tour also took in Rosyth, where the Queen Elizabeth is in build, and Clyde Naval Base.

# ‘That’s why I joined’

HMS SOMERSET has completed her first month on operations in the Gulf and Indian Ocean – and it has been a busy period for the Devonport warship.

The Type 23 frigate sailed from the UK on January 9, and is now on task in the Middle East.

Having now officially been handed the baton from HMS Westminster in Fujairah, in the United Arab Emirates, the crew are now doing the job they have spent the last year preparing for.

CO Cdr Mike Smith said: “The last month has allowed HMS Somerset to settle into her new role East of Suez.

“She is now ready to respond at a moment’s notice to any multinational tasking.”

During the first month the crew have been constantly put through their paces – including a comprehensive programme of training and exercises during a brief visit to the NATO base at Souda Bay in Crete.

The ship used the ranges to attune sensors and other kit ready for operations in the Middle East.

And boarding teams fine-tune their skills at the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operations Training Centre, where classroom instruction and weapons training are provided before sailors move on to more action-packed serials.

The centre has two *pièces de resistance* – a former Greek Navy training ship now used for board and search practice, and weapons which fire ‘simunition’, simulated

ammunition, which behaves almost like the real thing.

Somerset’s green (Royal Marines) and blue (Royal Navy) boarding teams joined forces with the Greek Navy to practise a variety of techniques they use to board suspect vessels.

“One day I am working in the galley at sea and the next I am out in a helicopter conducting boarding training in Greece, so this is a massive change of scenery,” said Chef Rory Fraser.

“We have learnt so much as a team from the various instructors and I have enjoyed it all.”

Just for good measure, the

frigate’s Lynx decamped the short distance to Chania airbase where boarders practised fast-roping techniques.

“The few days’ instruction were particularly useful – they built upon the skills the teams already had and we took full advantage of the expertise available at this NATO facility,” said Lt Tom Loxton, Somerset’s Boarding Officer.

“The ship’s boarding teams will make up a vital part of Somerset’s operational capability over the coming months.”

Somerset has conducted two Replenishment at Sea (RAS)

serials to date, one with American tanker USNS Laramie to refuel and the second with RFA Fort Austin to transfer stores.

Writer Matthew Clark, who forms part of Somerset’s RAS team, said: “These were my first RASs outside of training in UK territorial waters and I was pleased to have used my skills with a United States tanker.”

“It was very different completing a RAS for real outside the training environment, in the sun and in foreign waters – this is the kind of experience that made me join the Royal Navy in the first place.”

● HMS Richmond makes her way through the Panama Canal

Picture: LA(Phot) Gaz Weatherston



## Ocean odyssey ends

HMS RICHMOND was due back in her home base of Portsmouth as *Navy News* went to press after a busy Atlantic deployment which saw her steam more than 33,000 nautical miles.

The frigate visited seven foreign countries (Portugal, Cape Verde, South Africa, Panama, Colombia, Bahamas and the USA) and five British Overseas Territories (Ascension Island, St Helena, Falkland Islands, Tristan da Cunha and South Georgia) during her seven-month odyssey.

She conducted maritime security operations in the Atlantic, Antarctic, Eastern Pacific and Caribbean Sea, and her CO, Cdr Robert Pedre, said: “We have been honoured to undertake defence diplomacy on five continents, hosting an array of senior dignitaries.”

The hosting continued throughout the deployment – one of the warship’s last ports-of-call was at Nassau in the Bahamas, where Princess

Michael of Kent – on holiday in the tropical islands – took the salute at Ceremonial Sunset.

Just before that visit the 20-year-old ship made her first transit of the Panama Canal, which this year celebrates its centenary.

The main passage covers a total of 48 miles and is 26 metres above the level of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, which the canal connects.

Richmond’s Navigator, Lt Chris Daly, said: “Despite being Richmond’s first transit through the Panama Canal, it is a well-trodden route by Royal Navy warships.”

“Nonetheless, as a navigator it was certainly one of my highlights of this deployment.”

Her final stop was at Fort Lauderdale in Florida to stock up for the last leg of the deployment – though she still managed to fit in some training with the United States Coast Guard before making the long haul home across the Atlantic.

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Fast American Navy patrol boats charging up and down.

F18s, Super Etendards and Rafales tearing in, armed to the teeth, hoping to knock out equally-determined grey messengers of death.

And an RFA 'floating workshop' lumbering along at under 10kts, needing protection as it runs the gauntlet of pirate alley.

If you want your last month in theatre to go quickly (and after six months away, the sailors and marines on HMS Westminster probably did...) then a succession of high-octane, all-action, whoosh, bang, whizz (technical terms...) exercises will do quite nicely.

The whoosh came courtesy of her Sting Ray torpedoes, making a brief – and rare – appearance outside their launch tubes (just forward of the hangar where they spend the bulk of a deployment).

The Magazine-Launched Torpedo System is one of a Type 23's last lines of defence against an underwater threat (ideally the sonar arrays should have picked up a submarine long before it gets within range to pop off a torpedo of its own).

A klaxon sounded as the launcher doors opened and high-pressure air propelled the red-tipped dummy out over Westminster's side before a small drogue parachute opened and slowed its descent into the ocean.

The bulk of Westminster's deployment has been spent patrolling the Indian Ocean on the hunt for pirates/smugglers/terrorists and other criminal elements, as well as providing assurance to law-abiding mariners.

So the chance to do something a bit 'warry' was jumped on.

"It was a thrill to receive the order 'Engage' and actually fire the dummy torpedo from the weapon panel," said PO(UWW) George Linchan, who went through well-rehearsed drills in the ops room.

"Shore-side training, where you carry out touch drills, prepares you, but it is nothing like the real event. To actually press the 'fire' button and launch really adds a sense of realism to the training."

CPOET(WE) 'Gunter' Batten, whose team looks after the system and prepared the Sting Ray for launch, added: "It's good

to actually see a training variant of the torpedo leave the tube, demonstrating that the weapon system works.

"I get a great sense of satisfaction and achievement knowing that all my hard work in maintaining the system has paid off."

Ok, so that's the sub-surface threat dealt with.

What about Arleigh Burkes bearing down on carrier battle groups?

The American destroyers broke off from their normal duty of protecting the most powerful surface ship on the Seven Seas (USS Harry S Truman) to fend off air attacks from Super Hornets and try to smash through her escorting cordon of warships (Westminster among them) to sink the flat-top.

And just for good measure they tried to pick off the Charles de Gaulle as well, also exercising in the same waters.

Now that is quite a gauntlet to run.

Truman is the launchpad for upwards of 90 jets, propeller-driven planes and helicopters.

And there are at least two dozen fighters and fighter-bombers on the flight deck of Charles de Gaulle.

Within minutes of the exercise start, HMS Westminster's radar displays filled with contacts as USS Harry S. Truman launched F/A-18 and E-2C aircraft to protect the carriers and search for enemy ships.

"After spending so many months tracking suspect dhows, it was good to get back into some air defence," said Leading Seaman (Above Water Tactical) Stuart Brien, who was monitoring the displays in Westminster's operations room.

"It was impressive to see my radar display light up with contacts which showed our own systems were working well and that the exercise was very much under way."

Westminster launched her Lynx helicopter – callsign 'Swordfish' – to locate the opposition forces with its SeaSpray radar, while the frigate readied her Harpoon missiles to target aggressors which came within range.

The anti-ship missile can hit enemy ships up to 80 miles away – racing to their targets at just under the speed of sound and striking them with a 221kg (488lb) high explosive warhead.

After several hours of flying and ship manoeuvres, the

opposition was successfully 'neutralised' by the carrier group.

The Truman and Charles de Gaulle are big, fast (as warships go), and capable of spewing a hail of fire and steel back at any potential aggressor.

RFA Diligence is big. Er, that's it (yes, she's got cannons and Miniguns, but it's not the same as a squadron of F18s ruining your day with a Harpoon, cruise missile, etc etc ad infinitum).

She is, however, very valuable to the RN's east of Suez operations (chiefly, though not exclusively, as a depot and engineering ship for our duty nuclear submarine in the region).

But what if she were to come under attack from small, agile terrorist or pirate forces?

That was the premise behind Falcon Defender which saw Westminster, US Cyclone-class patrol ships Chinook and Carney, Seahawk helicopters and Bahraini warships try to shield Dili.

"With Seahawks buzzing overhead and US Navy ships roaring past, this was by far the

most exciting and realistic exercise I have seen so far this deployment. I enjoyed every minute of it," enthused AB Jack Vant, one of Westminster's force protection team manning the guns on the frigate's upper deck.

On the bridge, the ship's navigator Lt Rob Couzens was equally impressed.

"It was quite a sight watching all these vessels sailing together at speed and quite inspiring to see our allies working alongside us so well."

After all that action, you could really do with a nice cup of tea and a sit down.

Say in Fujairah, where there were some friendly faces waiting to greet them.

Already alongside in the emirate port, HMS Somerset, ready to take over the reins from Westminster as one of the RN's two major warships on Operation Kipion, codename for the UK's security mission east of Suez (the other is HMS Montrose, although she's in the eastern Med escorting chemical weapons from Syria presently).

The brief stop in the emirate allowed Westminster to transfer essential stores and for her ship's company to pass on vital information and experience to HMS Somerset to allow her to take up the fight against piracy, narcotics smuggling, and terrorism on the high seas where the 'capital ship' left off.



pictures: la(phot) dan rosenbaum, hms westminster



## Royal medals for CHF

THE heir to the throne presented the wings of the Royal Marines – the men and women of the Commando Helicopter Force – with medals for their service in Helmand.

Some 49 sailors and Royal Marines from the Yeovilton-based force marched from Wellington Barracks to St James' Palace, barely a quarter of a mile away, where the Prince of Wales presented them with Afghanistan Operational Service medals (pictured above by PO(Phot) Des Wade).

And just for good measure, Prince Charles also presented 12 personnel with Long Service and Good Conduct medals for 15 years' exemplary service.

Personnel honoured were drawn from 845 Naval Air Squadron (Jungle Sea Kings) and 847 NAS (Jungle Lynx, which have now been retired to be replaced by Wildcats) and were in theatre in the first half of 2013 supporting the mission on the ground.

Among those receiving his medal from the Prince of Wales was Cdr Andrew Harcombe, who was also awarded a Joint Aviation Group commendation for his actions with 847.

During the chaos of villagers scattering amid one Lynx operation, the officer's air door gunner spotted someone picking up a heavy sack.

The suspicious character was followed on the helicopter's cameras until he buried it in a hole in the ground.

The crew marked the location and then guided troops there over complex terrain. When the cache was uncovered it contained huge amounts of ammunition, electronics and weapons. The discovery of the cache – due in large part to the skill of the crew – probably set back the insurgency in that district for months.

"The Commando Helicopter Force once again excelled themselves by undertaking an exemplary tour on Operation Herrick, providing constant and vital support to the British and Afghan ground forces in a thoroughly professional manner," said Capt Nial Griffin, CHF's Commanding Officer.

"The honour of the Operational Service Medals being presented by the Prince of Wales was an excellent opportunity to thank CHF personnel for their outstanding work in Afghanistan and extend that thanks to their families for their continued support."



## Awe and awning

WHAT a glorious sight to behold.

Yup, the sun – making a very rare appearance this winter. Almost as impressive as the sight of its rays dancing on the surface of the Avon is HMS Exploit making her way towards the iconic Clifton Suspension Bridge.

The Wales University boat made the short hop from her home at Penarth across the Severn estuary to make her way to Cumberland Basin in the heart of Bristol for a weekend of flying the flag for the RN in the great West Country city.

"The passage up the River Avon was particularly impressive in the sunshine and despite the high winds elsewhere, the river was calm," said Mid Phil Coventry, Exploit's senior midshipman for the visit.

"The CO let me pilot the ship up the River, alongside the lock and into Cumberland Basin. To enter the basin you must pass through one large lock and wait for two bridges to be swung to allow Exploit through."

Phil was one of 12 midshipmen P2000 embarked side-by-side with Exploit's five-strong RN crew for the weekend visit.

Once alongside in Bristol, the combined ship's company made preparations for an official reception by rigging an awning on the (very small) quarterdeck, preparing food and cleaning their ship ready to embark guests.

Unfortunately the gales and driving rain prevented the reception being held under the awning... so the 20 guests (including Naval Regional Commander Wales and Western England, Cdre Jamie Miller) were squeezed into the relatively-small superstructure of the P2000.

"The reception was a huge success in flying the flag for the Royal Navy in an important maritime city – and served as a precursor to other big ship visits later in the year," said Exploit's CO Lt Si Shaw, who welcomed Bristol's Lord Mayor Cllr Faruk Choudhury, High Sheriff Dr Shaheen Chaudhry and deputy mayor aboard his compact and bijou vessel.

After the reception, the P2000 sailed back down the Avon and across the Bristol Channel to her homeport with RNR ratings from Bristol's HMS Flying Fox embarked.

"The best ambassadors for the Royal Navy and the URNUs are our people," said Si.

"My midshipmen always enjoy the chance to talk about the URNU and their ship, with this reception being no exception.

"Welcoming 20 guests aboard a 20m-long, 5m-wide patrol ship is no mean feat!"

## Please say cheese

PREFERABLY while reading a copy of *Navy News* in an unusual location...

In a year of anniversaries (70 years since the D-Day landings, 100 since the outbreak of the Great War, and 350 since the Royal Marines were born), the Royal Navy's official newspaper celebrates its 60th birthday (admittedly not on quite the same scale as the aforementioned events...).

Over the years – as it still is in 2014 – the paper has been distributed and read around the world. Sometimes in some very strange places and situations... If you have a picture of

someone reading *Navy News* in a strange place (and from our postbag down the years, many of you have), send it to us with a brief description – there are one-year subscriptions up for grabs as prizes for the best, which we will feature in our June edition.

Try to keep them clean...

Closing date is April 25 2014, and you can post your entries to Where Do You Read Us?, *Navy News*, Mail Point 1-4, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY, or email a high-resolution image to us at [edit@navynews.co.uk](mailto:edit@navynews.co.uk).



● A carpenter fits out one of the facility's mock bunk spaces featuring numerous hiding places

Pictures: Dave Sherfield, HMS Raleigh

# Jack in a box (of tricks)

SEND a thief to catch a thief.

And to catch a smuggler or drug runner?

Think like one.

It's the mantra behind a £1m giant box rising above the south-eastern tip of HMS Raleigh which should give Royal Navy board and search teams the edge on the front line of maritime security.

'Ship in a box' – it's yet to be given a more inventive name – plugs the gap between training on land and training at sea for sailors and green berets who deploy east of Suez.

Board and search operations are the mainstay of what the Royal Navy does east of Suez especially: inspecting dhows and merchant vessels for contraband such as drugs, arms and people, as well as curbing pirate activity off the Horn of Africa.

They've produced some notable successes – regular pirate take-downs by the Royal Marines (notably over the winters of 2010-11 and 2011-12) and millions of pounds of drugs seized by HMS Northumberland and Westminster on the 'Hashish Highway'.

The bust by the latter in the spring of 2012 was (a) substantial and (b) time-consuming, not least as the narcotics were secreted away in a hidden compartment: smugglers do not wear striped jumpers and carry bags marked 'swag'...

So while the interior of ship in a box mimics the superstructure of a merchantman – a warren of passageways and compartments: cabins, mock engine rooms, a galley, cargo holds and mess areas – nothing is as it seems.

You have to be a little bit devious.

"It's not devious," project manager Alan Joyce points out. "It's imaginative. Thinking like a smuggler."

And how.

His team of carpenters and designers have come up with a myriad of hiding places: false bulkheads, sliding walls which reveal hidden compartments akin to mediaeval priest holes, spaces between bunks, under engines, some opened by 'switches', others by simply pulling panels away.

A fully-honed board and search team would be expected to scour the facility in about eight hours – although boardings in the real world have been known to last more than four times longer.

So while it's not the full monty, ship in a box will be a marked improvement on what is currently used for training boarding teams at Raleigh.

Much of the 'hands-on' training is carried out in the Cossack building – part of whose upper floor represents part of a merchantman – or former minehunter HMS Brecon off Jupiter Point, before moving on to practising with merchant vessels off Plymouth.

Ship in a box will plug the gap between the basic instruction in Cossack and the training at sea, with the added bonus of the ability to fast rope from a helicopter on to the top of the facility and use 'simunition' – simulated ammunition, which possesses most of the characteristics of the real thing, minus the blood.

"I am itching to use this – I'll be the first person rapid roping on to it," says Lt Chris Carter, Officer Commanding 1 Assault Group Royal Marines Board and Search School.

His team will get their hands on the facility at the end of this month.

It comprises 21 ISO containers – identical to those used on cargo ships – stacked to create a three-



● Project manager Alan Joyce (left) and Lt Chris Carter in front of 'ship in a box'

storey superstructure, crowned by a bridge. It rises some 12 metres above Trevol Jetty and has been painted green to blend in with the local greenery (as much as any big metal box can merge with Nature).

The complex has been built by the same team, FES, who erected a similar facility used by the boarding teams of 43 Commando Royal Marines at Faslane.

The facility north of the border is mostly empty inside, however, and has no space for personnel to rapid rope.

"This is much more exciting than the complex in Scotland – that's just a box," says Lt Carter. "With the 'ship in a box' you actually have a proper merchant ship with every type of compartment you'd expect to find for real."

"Although Cossack mirrors part of a ship, it's really a building. We'll still use it to train people. But this new facility will really test them as a team in an environment that's as real as we can make it."

Once his team have tested the ship in a box and come up with scenarios, the first students are due to pass through the complex after Easter.

"This is all part of the massive investment in board and search in the Navy. Ten years ago it was a three-day course at Cossack building. These days, the training lasts three weeks."

"There's been a quantum leap forward in the way we do our business."

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# Cardigans aren't boring



**Class:** Bay-class landing platform dock (auxiliary)  
**Pennant number:** L3009  
**Builder:** BAE Systems, Govan  
**Launched:** April 2005  
**Commissioned:** December 18 2006  
**Displacement:** 16,160t  
**Length:** 176.6m (579ft)  
**Beam:** 26.4m (86ft)  
**Draught:** 5.8m (19ft)  
**Speed:** 18kts  
**Complement:** 60 (RFA)  
**Propulsion:** 2 x Wärtsilä 8L26 generators producing 4.5MW; 2 x Wärtsilä 12V26 generators producing 6.7MW  
 2 x azimuth thrusters  
 1 x bow thruster  
**Armament:** 2 x Phalanx automated Gatling guns  
 2 x 30mm cannon  
 4 x Miniguns  
 6 x GPMGs  
**Helicopter:** Currently 1 x Mk8 Lynx  
**Amphibious support:** 1x Landing Craft (Utility) or 2 x Landing Craft (Vehicle and Personnel); Mexeflote powered rafts  
**Amphibious capacity:** 356 troops (up to 700 temporarily)  
 Up to 24 Challenger 2 tanks or 150 light trucks

EVERY few years a new set of slogans and phrases appears to describe the work and mission of the Senior Service.

Presently, we're a 'force for good' with 'global reach' while our ships, squadrons and units are busy 'protecting our nation's interests'.

Our equipment is 'modern and relevant' (admittedly, we'd be a little perturbed if it wasn't...), while our men and women are 'ready to fight and win' (ditto...).

As for our ships, they're 'flexible and versatile'.

You may – or may not – agree with the various watchwords. But you'll be hard pressed to find anyone who suggests that RFA Cardigan Bay is not 'flexible and versatile'.

So, just how flexible and versatile is Cardigan Bay?

Well, she was built – as were her three Bay-class sisters (now two as Largs Bay was later sold to the Australians as HMAS Choules) – to replace the aged 'Knights of the Round Table' in support of amphibious operations.

And she's done that, notably on the RN's Cougar amphibious deployments.

They've been the exception, rather

than the rule, however, for the seven-year-old vessel, which has spent more than half her active life stationed in the Gulf.

She's now into the second year of her second extended stint in the Gulf (she was there between 2007 and 2010) and isn't due back in the UK until mid-2016.

Her principal mission is to provide 'afloat forward support' for the four British and five American mine warfare vessels based in Bahrain.

That means meeting their needs – fuel, water, food, ammunition, spare parts and engineering – to keep the minehunters at sea for sustained periods.

And should there be any visiting minehunters from other navies in the region – such as those converging on the Gulf for the now-annual International Mine Countermeasures Exercise – she's happy to let them 'raft up', berthing alongside the amphibious ship.

Hand-in-hand with this primary mission is acting as the floating home for the Mine Countermeasures Battle Staff who direct the movements and actions of HM Ships Shoreham, Ramsey, Atherstone and Quorn.

At the end of 2013, Cardigan Bay

was instrumental in trials for the RN's new 'flying camera', the ScanEagle unmanned aircraft which is being deployed operationally in the Gulf this year for the first time.

And on the more typical flying front... the ship now has a Lynx Mk8 flight from 815 Naval Air Squadron embarked – plus a 'Tactical Air Shelter' (aka temporary hangar).

Given the fact that she's designed to accommodate 350 troops (and kit) – and up to 700 at a push for short periods – the ship regularly acts as a floating hotel, providing quarters for arriving and departing minehunter crews during the six-monthly rotation of sailors.

And just for good measure, visiting military and civilian personnel supporting the UK's Gulf mission also make use of Cardigan Bay's facilities... as do senior staffs and VIPs when the vessel acts as a secure conference centre.

Although the ship's amphibious role is mostly on hold in the Gulf, her loading dock remains in use – sometimes hosting US patrol boats, at other times British and foreign diving teams, whose boats can easily ride in and out of Cardigan Bay courtesy of her lowered

stern ramp.

The dock area – which can store up to two dozen Challenger 2 main battle tanks – also provides workshop space and storage for both the Forward Support Unit (the RN engineers who help look after the UK's Gulf minehunter force) and the Fleet Diving Group when it's embarked.

All of which (and probably a bit more) helped L3009 earn the title of 'RFA Ship of the Year' for 2013.

Only one other ship in the Naval Service has been named after the great Welsh bay.

HMS Cardigan Bay was a Bay-class anti-aircraft frigate which joined the Fleet in the final six weeks of WW2 (and hence arrived too late to see action).

She spent her early years of service in the Med, before moving to the Far East, earning her sole battle honour in the Korean War.

She remained in the region for the rest of her career once the conflict ended, returning to the UK in 1961 to be paid off and broken up the following year.

● *Cardigan Bay in company with the American minehunter USS Devastator during last year's IMCMEX war games*

Picture: LA(Phot) Simmo Simpson, FRPU East



## PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORIES

THIS is undoubtedly one of the most sleek submarines ever to scythe through the waves or ride beneath them.

And also the most dangerous.

Our trip through time with the photographic archives of the Imperial War Museum rewinds the clock 60 years this month and the Silent Service's brief (and unsuccessful) dalliance with a new propulsion system.

HMS Explorer, launched on March 5 1954 (and her sister Excalibur, which ran down the Barrow slipway 11 months later) was an attempt to harness technology the Germans had introduced at the very end of WW2 in a desperate gamble to tip the balance in the war at sea back in their favour.

The Type XVII U-boat was powered by high test peroxide – or HTP, a concentrated hydrogen peroxide.

Burned with diesel oil to produce steam, which in turn powered turbines, HTP propelled German submarines underwater at speeds of up to 25kts, whereas the U-bootwaffe's standard battlewagon, the Type VIIc couldn't manage one third of that.

No Type XVII ever entered the fray of battle – the boats were still under trials when the war ended and those completed or under construction were scuttled or wrecked.

One, U1407, was subsequently raised by the British and put into service as the aptly-named HMS Meteorite.

During three years of trials, Meteorite sufficiently impressed the Admiralty for it to invest in 14 HTP boats, two as unarmed experimental craft, the rest operational.

Meteorite's crew were rather less than impressed. HTP proved to be

volatile and Meteorite herself difficult to handle. One assessment described her as '75 per cent safe'. Or 25 per cent unsafe...

Still, the Navy pressed on, spending more than £2m (upwards of £180m today) on the trials boats.

It was four more years after Explorer's launch that she could finally truly undergo sea trials. Thanks to her ultra-sleek hull design and the HTP-powered engines, she achieved the magical 25kts submerged (nearly 29mph).

And she proved to be no more popular with her 41 crew than Meteorite before her.

The engine room was unmanned while under way – perhaps best as flames danced along the top of the combustion chamber when running, while the HTP – held in special bags outside the pressure hull had a habit

of going off.

All of which earned the submarine the dubious nickname 'Exploder', while her younger sister – dubbed 'Excruciator' – was equally dangerous.

Even before both boats began their trials, they were surpassed by new technology.

In 1952, the US Navy had laid down its first nuclear-powered boat, USS Nautilus, which could almost match Explorer for speed beneath the waves, sans explosions...

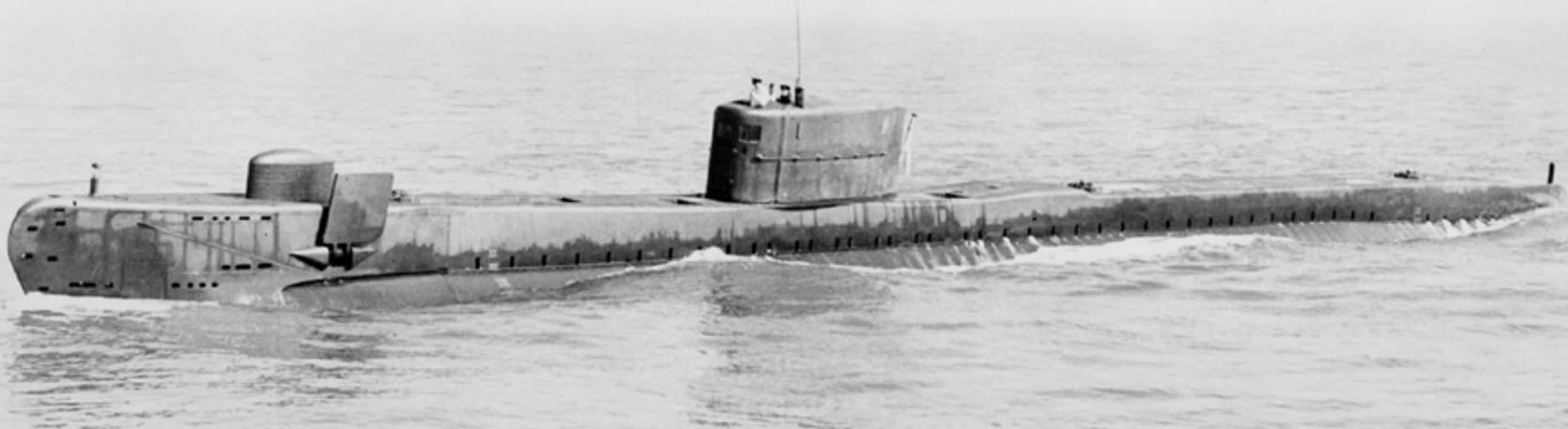
The same year that Explorer began her trials, London and Washington signed a treaty sharing nuclear expertise. Within 12 months, the RN's first nuclear submarine, HMS Dreadnought, was being built – and Exploder and Excruciator were consigned to the history books; both were paid off in the early '60s and subsequently scrapped.

The HTP boats have joined the ill-starred WW1 K-class ('K for calamity') on the list of the 'world's worst warships' (one officer acidly remarked that the RN would be better served if its foes introduced them...) – an unfortunate, but sadly justified, tag.

HMS Sidon was wrecked when an HTP-powered torpedo exploded in Portland Harbour, killing 13 men.

The Russians persisted with HTP in their torpedoes – and their nuclear submarine Kursk paid the ultimate price when a leak of the volatile fuel caused catastrophic explosions in August 2000.

■ This picture (A 33512) – and 9,999,999 others from a century of war and peace – can be viewed or purchased at [www.iwmcollections.org.uk](http://www.iwmcollections.org.uk), by emailing [photos@iwm.org.uk](mailto:photos@iwm.org.uk), or by phoning 0207 416 5333.



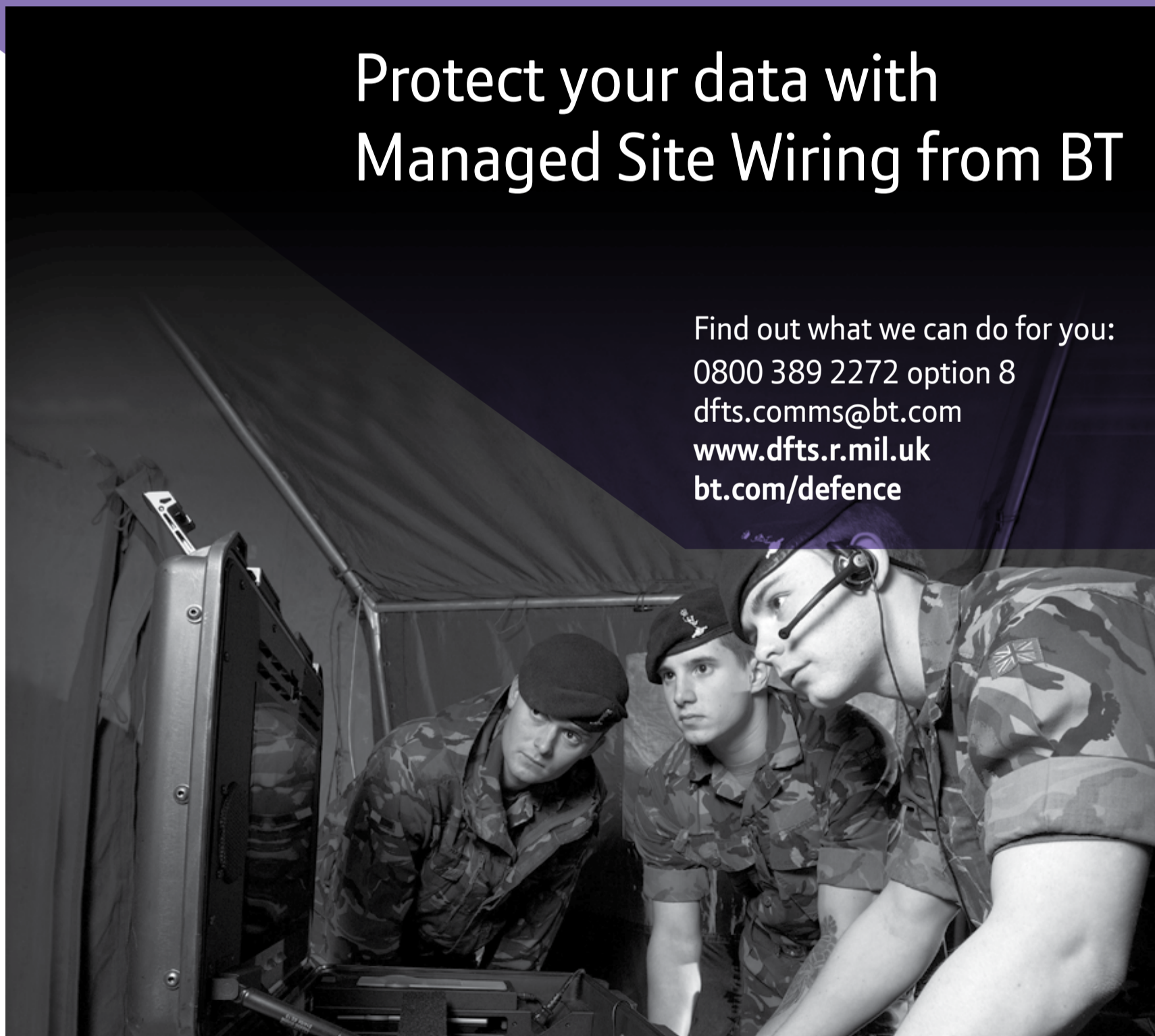
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# Spellbinding



**THERE'S** always something slightly reassuring about old-school tech.

It doesn't break. And if it does, a bloke called Ted wearing a flat cap and carrying a screwdriver, hammer and soldering iron will probably fix it.

In the fading light of a late afternoon in February, amid the banks of full-colour, crystal-clear large video displays – seven in all – being monitored by pilot Lt Cdr 'Bouncy' Castle and observer Lt Cdr Steve 'Hosey' Hayton, a couple of small pointers glow a yellowy-green: a small wind-up clock, analogue's last stand.

It is the only nod to the old world in the next-generation Merlin – and it's quaintly reassuring. If everything else goes *kaputt*, at least you'll know the time...

Otherwise, the Merlin Mk2 is digital. A decade ago some media (incorrectly)

branded the Type 45 the iPod warship (so-called because you could charge your iPod in your bunk – yes, plugs are wonderful modern inventions...).

Merlin Mk2 is the iPhone or iPad helicopter. Big bright touch screens, minimal buttons and switches. No you can't play *Angry Birds* before you ask...

Rewind 15 years and the first generation Merlin was the Fleet Air Arm's leap into the digital age. Mk2 is *über* digital.

Because think back to technology at the end of the '90s. No tablets. No iPod, let alone iPad and iPhone. The internet was mostly dial-up. Flat screens cost an arm and a leg. Wifi was a Brummy talking about his other half. The console Merlin observers and aircrewmen used featured two A4-size colour screens (with text in a lovely 1980s font...). It was revolutionary.

But what was state of the art then looks state of the ark now.

And if you're behind the technological curve in warfare, you lose. Bloody April. The invasion of Poland. Both Gulf Wars. The side with outdated kit and outdated ideas gets whipped.

Even in its first incarnation, Merlin today remains the submarine-hunting helicopter of choice. It's still on the front line in the war against smuggling and people trafficking east of Suez.

"Look at what we did in the Olympics: Merlin flew more than any other helicopter. Look at what we did in the Philippines. Merlin Mk1 is a bloody good aircraft," says Cdr Nick Gibbons, in charge of 824 NAS, the squadron which provides the Navy with all its trained Merlin pilots. And observers. And aircrewmen. And engineers.

*There's a 'but' coming...*  
"But Merlin Mk2 is a quantum leap forward."

It's a £750m leap forward. Over the past couple of years, the original Mk1s have been hauled out of the line and sent to AgustaWestland for conversion from 1 to 2.

The first Mk2s are ready for front-line duties with 820 NAS now. By this time next year, the original Merlin will

be retired and the entire front-line fleet will be the second generation model.

So what do you get for £750m? Well, you get a cockpit similar to a 21st-Century commercial airliner: wall-to-wall computer displays ('glass' in aircrew terminology; when they refer to Merlin's 'glass cockpit', it's nothing to do with the big windows...).

As a flying experience, the Mk2 is "a little bit faster and the navigation system is better", says hugely-experienced pilot Lt Cdr Tony Morris (who's flown the Mk1... and the Lynx ... and the Sea King).

"Merlin is still the most stable aircraft out there – and by far the most comfortable in a hover."

And flying by night in the original Merlin makes use of the Mk1 eyeball – the lights in the original cockpit are not compatible with night vision goggles (unlike the rest of the Fleet Air Arm). Not so in the successor. In a couple of months, Merlin pilots will be donning goggles and flying on and off RFA Argus off the Cornish coast to earn their NVG 'spurs'.

All well and good. But it's in the back of the cab that the bulk of the £750m has been spent. This, not the cockpit, is the business end of Merlin.

You see, the pilot 'just' flies. It's thanks to the observer and aircrewman that all that wary wizardry comes to

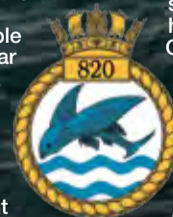
life. It's the observer and aircrewmen who turn a 14-tonne flying grey brick into a 14-tonne flying grey messenger of death.

In the Mk2, there are two small screens per operator. And a big one. Full colour. Modern font. Tracker balls. Point and click like using a mouse. Touch screens (actually laser-break screens – touch screens don't work if you're wearing aircrew gloves; these work by intersecting invisible laser beams criss-crossing the displays which really is rather clever...).

"When the Mk1 was introduced, we said: if you can give this a camera, bigger TV screens and an anti-surface capability, then you'll have one hell of an aircraft," says Cdr Ben Franklin, Commander of the RN's Maritime Merlin Force. "And that's what we've got with the Mk2."

While Bouncy and Hosey (this is starting to sound like a kids' TV show...) are guiding the helicopter safely around the Cornish coast, aircrewman CPO Jay O'Donnell is moving the pointer around his screen with his roller ball, making a few clicks and running through a baffling (to the untrained eye...) series of displays: radar, sonar, sonobuoy settings.

Jay is from the analogue world – he started out as a pinger in Sea King two decades ago but as a self-confessed techno-buff he's moved with the times. The Mk2 is, he says – like everyone connected with it – "a huge step forward".





Jay's probably better known for his Search and Rescue duties with 771 NAS (you can read about them in his memoirs *Rescue 194*). At heart, however, he's a pinger. He started on Sea Kings – "very physical, a basic computer with a few lines on an orange screen". The observer would lay an acetate over it and mark it with a chinagraph pencil. "You'd step off a mission with your face covered in war paint..." So when the Merlin appeared at the end of the '90s it was "a giant leap into the digital age".

He continues: "The first Merlin was cutting edge in the '80s and '90s, it was at the forefront of technology. It was a great aircraft.

"But this is the future. It's leap, leap, leap years ahead of what we had on the Mk1. Big screens, Windows-based, intuitive."

In the right-hand seat at the 'fighting' console, observer Lt Jimmy Lovell, who spent four years in the back of a Mk1 before switching to the newer model, nods.

"It's much more akin to the iPhone generation, so it's relatively easy to convert."

One trick the Merlins are particularly proud of: radar profiling – using radar to create an image of a contact.

Remember *Daredevil*? A comic-book hero turned into a (rather-less-than-inspired) film. Blind martial arts expert Ben Affleck could 'see' thanks to his acute sense of hearing.

Well, that's radar profiling (ish). It turns sound into vision. A contact isn't just a blip on the radar screen – it becomes a 2D representation. A sweep of Plymouth Sound produces the outline of a ship. And if you know

your ships, it's clearly a Type 23. There's no need to fly there and visual inspect it – and were it a foe, put the helicopter in danger.

In the right conditions the Mk2's radar can produce some stunning results: a sortie over Plymouth resulted in a black and white radar picture of the city, naval base and sound more akin to satellite or Google Earth than a radar.

Could a Mk1 do this?

"You'd get a radar sweep with green dots..." says Cdr Gibbons.

A couple of months ago the team at 700W NAS bewailed the disinterest in some quarters of the RN at the arrival of Wildcat, successor to the Lynx.

Other than its martial mottled light/dark grey livery and a distinctive tailplane, Wildcat looks a lot like the helicopter it's replacing. Hence the shrug of the shoulders: *It's just a Lynx...*

Well, the new Merlin has a bigger image problem. It's big. It's grey. There's no mottling. There's no fancy tailplane. Other than a couple of tubes – and you'd have to be a *real* Merlin spotter to notice them – it looks exactly the same as what's gone before for the past 15 years.

"Don't be fooled by it looking the same as the Mk1," says Cdr Franklin (who relishes having the title 'M' in the Fleet Air Arm world – and quite likes his 007 locker number at Culdrose...).

"Inside Mk2 is a completely different beast. It's like rewiring your house and filling it with shiny new white goods."

Cdr Gibbons adds: "It looks the same, sounds the same, flies pretty much the same. It's grey and got 'Royal Navy' painted on the side. But look inside, look at the consoles, that's where you see the investment has been made.

"If I was the captain of a Type 23 or 45, I'd want a Merlin Mk2 on the back."

In a few months we'll be able to ask them, for the new Merlin is undergoing some major tests.

As *Navy News* was going to press so the most important anti-submarine exercise of the year was drawing to a close off the coast of Norway.

For the first time the Mk2 left UK shores, joining one of its older sisters, HMS Kent, and warships, helicopters and five submarines from across NATO, including the host nation, Germany, France and Poland for Exercise Dynamic Mongoose (which isn't that dynamic as submarine hunting is painstaking... and features no mongooses).

Playing with a quintet of foreign boats tickled the Merlin force's taste buds.

But what really has them salivating (figuratively, thankfully...) is Deep Blue (which you must say in a Barry White-esque low voice for added excitement value), the biggest anti-submarine exercise of its kind this century.

Indeed, probably not since the days of the Cold War have so many Royal Navy helicopters been sent to sea on an aircraft carrier for the purpose of hunting submarines.

Nine Merlins – eight of them Mk2s – will join HMS *Illustrious* and go a-huntin' in the Atlantic in June.

"Nine Merlins on one carrier is a sight no-one has seen – and one no-one involved will ever forget," says Cdr Franklin.

"We're looking forward to it big time – the younger guys especially. They've heard all the stories about what we did back in the days of the Cold War because, if the balloon goes up, this is what we do."

For three Merlins to hunt submarines continuously around the clock – using either their 'dipping sonar', lowered into the Atlantic, actively looking for boats, or passive sonobuoys ('underwater ears') listening for them – nine helicopters are needed, hence

the size of the operation.

It will also demand the efforts of around 200 personnel, including 18 aircrew – two pilots, one observer and one aircrewman each.

So far around half the Merlin force has converted to the souped-up version: 824 first (training the trainers), then 820 – one of two Merlin squadrons which deploy en masse. Still to go, 829 (which provides Type 23 frigates with their flights, in the same way 815 NAS supplies Lynx) and the Flying Tigers of 814, 820's counterpart. By this time next year, the Mk1 will be history. Everyone will be flying its successor.

To feed the Fleet Air Arm with trained Merlin air and ground crews you need:

- one procedural cockpit simulator (replica, fully-functioning cockpit);
- one dynamic cockpit simulator ("the best X-Box in the world") which is the same as the above with the addition of hydraulics and realistic graphics and housed in what looks like a giant golf ball with the top chopped off;
- one rear crew trainer (back half of a Merlin to recreate the observer/aircrewman's console; it (a) vibrates (b) talks to the dynamic simulator so you can 'fly' a simulated mission as an entire crew;
- six Merlin Mk2s;
- 280 men and women – of which nearly 250 are RN aircrew and engineers (the civilians turn the instructions of the 824 aircrew ("I want to teach students how to do x or y") into a syllabus which instructors can teach... and students can understand. It's highly specialised ("Hogwarts-based dark science" in the words of the squadron's CO) and utterly indispensable.

And with all this 824 is expected to provide the RN with

- ten fully-qualified new pilots, observers and aircrewmen a year (two courses of five personnel each)
- four personnel converting from other aircraft types
- ten aircrew requiring refreshers after a time away from flying
- around 300 engineers and technicians: rookies, refreshers, promotions, learning new systems.

It takes just shy of a year to fill in the 'blank sheets' – the *ab initio* pilots and observers who arrive at Culdrose from basic helicopter flying/maritime observer courses – creating fully-fledged Merlin crews.

They spend 18 weeks getting to know the basics of the aircraft – how to operate it safely by day or night on land and at sea (which means normally joining RFA *Argus* for a few weeks off the Cornish coast).

After learning to fly the Merlin, it's time to learn to fight it, otherwise it's just a big grey thing which throbs around in the skies.

The bulk of the 'fighting' element of the training is spent on Merlin's *raison d'être*, submarine hunting (17 weeks); there's six weeks on above-water warfare (including a spot of gunnery funnery courtesy of the M3M machine-gun and Royal Marines snipers); and finally six weeks on the 'utility' role: search and rescue, load carrying (as used extensively in the Philippines late last year).

Somewhere off the Lizard, Jay's getting excited.

With a sonobouy – 'underwater ears' – dropped in the water, Jay clicks through a couple of menus and before you know it a multi-coloured sonar display appears on the main screen. At the foot of the moving readout, a series of red pixels – a contact. Merlin's computer has flagged it as a potential threat.

"The computer's good, but it's never as clever as us," Jay winks. "We have the knowledge and experience."

He lifts up the lid of his desk – which isn't just a sheet of metal as in the Mk1, but a box with compartments for keeping stuff in, like old wooden school desks (minus the ink well) – to remove a pad and scribble a few notes.

"The desk is brilliant – simple, but really handy storage space," the senior rate says.

There's one drawback. "They took away the cup holder," Jay laments.

Some people want the moon on a stick...





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*Command: Modern Air/Naval Operations* – which features a fiery Sea Dart launch from HMS Edinburgh on the cover of the disc version (£61.99 plus tax) – is available to buy at [www.matrixgames.com/products/483/details/Command:ModernAirNavalOperations](http://www.matrixgames.com/products/483/details/Command:ModernAirNavalOperations) (or download from the same address for £51.99 plus tax)...

...or you can have a go at winning one of four copies kindly donated by the makers.

To win, tell us the codename for the UK's operation to liberate the Falklands in 1982.

Send your entries to Command Competition, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth, PO1 3HH, or email them to: [bm@navynews.co.uk](mailto:bm@navynews.co.uk) – using ‘Command Competition’ in the subject line.

Entries must be received by midday on Friday April 11 2014.



● Ratings from HMS Lancaster during lifejacket trials at the RNLI Sea Survival Centre in Poole

Picture: LA(Phot) Hamish Burke

# Sea boat revolution

THE RNLI have been helping Royal Navy experts with trials of sea-safety equipment and techniques.

The trials were aimed at assessing the advantages and disadvantages of automatically-activated lifejackets over manual activation within sea boats.

A team of willing volunteers from HMS Lancaster joined Royal Naval Reserve sailors from HMS King Alfred and sea survival experts from Navy Command HQ and MOD Abbey Wood for the two days of trials at the RNLI Sea Survival Centre at Poole in Dorset.

This revolutionary facility allowed the test ‘guinea pigs’ to have their world literally turned upside down in the centre’s RIB escape training facility.

The tests concentrated on the ability of individuals to escape from an upturned boat at sea and the ease with which the current range of lifejackets in service with the MOD allowed this to happen.

The test subjects were put through their paces in a series of drills, from the most benign daylight conditions to the worst night-time wind and sea states.

Each lifejacket test was filmed and the results recorded for further evaluation.

“We are basically revalidating

our policy on the manual activation of lifejackets in boats,” said CPO ‘Blood’ Read, the Navy Command HQ Seamanship specialist in charge of the trials.

“Our initial findings seem to support the retention of a manual activation jacket.

“As a comparison we have also trialled the RNLI’s own lifejacket – and have been impressed by its capabilities.”

The opportunity was also taken to conduct four-metre jumps into the pool, simulating entering the water from the deck of a ship, and helped prove the effectiveness of the latest modifications to the General Service Hazardous Duty Lifejacket.

“The RNLI has given us invaluable assistance in the continuing programme to improve our sea-safety equipment, and we are extremely grateful for their loan of this first-class facility,” said Cdr Jim Buck, the Fleet Seamanship Officer.

“This has been fantastic opportunity for us and demonstrated the utility such a facility has in training boat crews.”

The programme continues with plans for a future trial utilising the Royal Navy’s own Pacific 24 and the incorporation of capsizing training in the future.



● Lifejackets are tested in jumps from the 4m platform at the RNLI training facility in Poole

Picture: Steve Day

## US visit continues carrier links

SENIOR members of the US Navy and US Marine Corps have visited the Queen Elizabeth during the final stages of the carrier’s construction in Rosyth.

The visitors were led by Vice Admiral Nora Tyson – the first woman to command a US Navy aircraft carrier task group; she was in charge of USS George H W Bush when the enormous flat-top exercised with HMS Dauntless back in 2011.

She was joined aboard the RN’s 65,000-tonne future leviathan by Vice Admiral David Buss of the US Naval Air Forces, and Lt Gen Robert Schmidle – the

US Marine Corps Deputy Commandant for Aviation; his Corps is flying the same variant of the F35 Lightning II fighter as Fleet Air Arm and RAF pilots who will operate from the deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth.

After meeting representatives of the RN’s Carrier Strike team, the Aircraft Carrier Alliance and the ship’s company, they were given a tour of the ship.

The Americans are providing the RN with extensive support to help Queen Elizabeth and her sister Prince of Wales into service, from British and US pilots training side-by-side to RN and RAF engineers supporting

USMC F35 trials aboard the USS Wasp and Fleet Air Arm aircraft handlers working on the decks of American flat-tops.

In the longer term, as part of an agreement signed by Whitehall and the Pentagon, the aim is for US aircraft to be able to operate from the RN’s two carriers and vice versa.

“Our relationship with the US Navy and US Marine Corps is alive and very well. They are providing significant support to the UK as we deliver carrier strike and both of us are learning how to embark a new type of aircraft on our flight decks,” said Capt Simon Pettit, Queen Elizabeth’s Senior Naval Officer.



● An engraving of the sinking of HMS Hogue

## Tributes to lost cruisers

THREE days of commemorations on both sides of the Channel this September will mark one of the most severe blows to the Royal Navy’s pride in 100 years as part of Great War centennial events.

Chatham’s Historic Dockyard will be the focal point of events in the UK with relatives of those who served in the cruisers HMS Hogue, Aboukir and Cressy gathering for various events, including releasing 1,459 poppies – one for every man lost when the three ships were sunk by a German U-boat in September 1914.

The cruisers were on patrol roughly 40 miles west of Den Helder, providing a shield for the transport of men and materiel to the British Expeditionary Force on the fledgling Western Front.

All three ships were obsolete and heavily crewed by reservists and trainees – facts which earned them the tag ‘the Live Bait Squadron’ within the rest of the Grand Fleet.

On September 22 1914 that label proved to be all too prophetic as Aboukir was torpedoed by Otto Weddigen in U9. Hogue and Cressy moved in to pick up survivors, convinced their sister had struck a mine. Instead, the German U-boat picked off both cruisers.

The whole action lasted only 90 minutes, but cost the lives of 62 officers and 1,397 men. Just 837 sailors were rescued.

On Sunday September 21 this year, descendants of the three ships’ crews will meet in Chatham – home of the cruisers before the sinkings – to remember their forebears and watch the premiere of a documentary about the tragedy.

The following day, there will be a drumhead service in the historic dockyard, the release of poppies and music from the Band of HM Royal Marines.

After a day’s travel to the Netherlands, Dutch historian and author Henk van der Linden – who has been instrumental in raising awareness of the disaster in his native land – will lead tributes in The Hague area.

Some of the dead from the Cressy were washed ashore on the Dutch coast and interred in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in ‘s-Gravenzande, near the Hook of Holland.

Those who wish to attend any of the events should contact [threecruisers1914@chdt.org.uk](mailto:threecruisers1914@chdt.org.uk) or [h.van.der.linden@tip.nl](mailto:h.van.der.linden@tip.nl).

More details about the disaster can be found at the Live Bait Squadron Society’s website, [www.livebaitsqn-soc.info](http://www.livebaitsqn-soc.info).



# NAVY NEWS

## SHIP of the MONTH

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# Navy joins US battle unit – without leaving the UK

## Support for those facing trauma

WARFARE personnel from HMS Duncan helped a US battle group prepare for deployment – from a computer suite in the UK.

The team from the Type 45 destroyer took part in a trans-Atlantic exercise – without the ship or her personnel having to set foot outside of the UK.

Duncan's operations room team manned a simulator at HMS Collingwood in Fareham to connect with simulators in the US and Germany for a week-long exercise with the USS George W Bush Battle Group and German Naval units.

The exercise also allowed the Maritime Battle Staff to rehearse their role, prior to deploying to the Middle East.

The Fleet Synthetic Training (Joint) is a key part of the training package for every US Carrier Battle Group prior to their deployment.

It was the Royal Navy's first participation in FST-J for some time and the first time the Service had used the Maritime Composite Training System to connect to the US network.

Rear Admiral Ben Key, Flag Officer Sea Training, hosted a VIP day, which saw a number of senior Officers from across the RN, RAF, Army and JFC, visit the Maritime Warfare School at Collingwood, to see how modern simulated training is conducted.

Rear Admiral Key said: "While training at sea can never be completely replaced by simulation, the Royal Navy's participation in FST-J marks an important step forward in how future collective training at sea will be delivered.

"The success of the exercise demonstrates the increasing importance of networked simulation as an invaluable tool to exercise and thus improve our ability to operate with our international friends and allies."

Lt Ben Ransom, the lead planning officer for the event who acted as the RN liaison officer in Dam Neck, Virginia, said: "This successful participation in FST has been the result of many months of planning across diverse areas of the MOD, such as DSTL at Porton Down, Fleet Commitments, Maritime Battle staff and the Maritime Warfare School.

"It is extremely impressive to see HMS Duncan integrated into a US Carrier Strike Group when they are physically some 5,000



● Crew from HMS Duncan took part in a trans-Atlantic exercise from a computer suite at HMS Collingwood

Picture: Keith Woodland

miles away. The success of this exercise has demonstrated how important simulation is to future training."

The exercises are due to become a regular event, allowing Royal Naval Warfare Teams to operate with their US and NATO counterparts in a realistic environment, without any ships having to go to sea.

The system can not only effectively simulate every ship type the Royal Navy currently has, but, with the upgrades due to be incorporated in summer 2014, it will be able to provide realistic training for both the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers and the Type 26 Global Combat Ship, before either vessel is actually in service.

The system provides more than 160 different specific configurations for different operator roles, in support of 84

training courses for personnel of all ranks and rates.

Simulators are also in Devonport, which enables Plymouth-based ships to conduct simulation training without the need to travel to Portsmouth.

■ A new computer training package has cut a warfare course from three days to a few hours.

PO(AWT) Luke Searle visited the US Navy Base in San Diego in 2012 to train on MIDS for Ships and then helped to introduce the system at Collingwood.

"This is very clever, a picture paints a thousand words and this is great. It's ideal for teaching," said PO(AWT) Buster Brown, after being shown how to use the new system.

MIDS (Multifunctional Information Distribution System) is used on all RN ships and used at Collingwood to teach petty officer career courses.

## Testing time for Iron Duke

AND we have lift off...

With the instantly-recognisable seafront of Ryde in the background, HMS Iron Duke's Flight Deck Officer waves off a Lynx Mk8 – and the Portsmouth frigate takes another step towards front-line operations.

The ship spent all of 2012 and the first half of 2013 out of action undergoing a major revamp in her home base, since when she's been training and conducting trials to prepare her to deploy later this year.

Among the many tests and assessments to pass, the ability to safely operate helicopters is paramount to the operations of Royal Navy warships around the globe.

In a series of tests, spread over a few days, the Type 23 frigate proved herself capable of operating aircraft – either her own, or 'visiting' helicopters.

The ability of the ship's company to safely land and launch a helicopter at sea can



make the difference between life and death – whether it's taking the sick or injured to hospital (from other ships and vessels at sea as well as from her own team) this ability gives her the flexibility to operate safely at sea.

The series of tests Iron Duke endured included the entire ship's company reacting to a helicopter crashing on board, rescuing the aircrew and ensuring the frigate itself was safe: a damaged or

burning helicopter on the back end of a warship is bad enough for the pilot and observer, but also for the 180-strong crew of a newly-refurbished ship.

With the tests passed, Iron Duke has shifted the focus of her work-up from the Solent to Plymouth Sound and the Channel for the next two months.

She's now in the hands of the Flag Officer Sea Training organisation.

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# Tackling the scourge

REAR Admiral Bob Tarrant is a busy man.

Not only is he Commander UK Maritime Force, heading up the Royal Navy's Maritime Battle Staff – a team with crucial links and influence far beyond the Senior Service – but he also leads the European Union's counter-piracy operation off the coast of Somalia, EU NAVFOR (Operation Atalanta).

In future editions we will look at the work of the Maritime Battle Staff in more detail, but we start off the Horn of Africa.

MOCK executions. Vile conditions. No prospect of escape, and no prospect of release. Hundreds of days of monotony and terror.

Scores of hostages will readily confirm that modern pirates have nothing of the dash and derring-do of the swashbuckling legends from the so-called Golden Age, such as Captain Morgan, Calico Jack and Captain Kidd.

No, the pirates operating in the waters off East Africa are criminals – and, in the eyes of Rear Admiral Tarrant, “a scourge” which threatens the lifeblood of the European economy.

That is why the European – and wider international – response to high-seas piracy has been tough and well-equipped.

And for those who might suspect overkill – a sledgehammer to crack a nut – the simple facts are sobering.

Some 80 per cent of international trade goes by sea, generating around £230bn per year.

And 95 per cent of global trade passes through just nine vulnerable maritime chokepoints – one of which is the Bab al Mandab strait, between the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, forming a vital link between the Indian Ocean and Middle East and the Mediterranean via the Suez Canal.

“Around 5,000 ships a month transit through the Bab al Mandab strait – and 90 per cent of UK imports come by sea,” said Rear Admiral Tarrant, Operation Commander European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Somalia.

“That chokepoint, and piracy, and confidence in freedom of navigation, are absolutely crucial to the UK and the EU.

“Add to that 20 per cent of UK gas is coming from Qatar, it means that this is a vital artery for us in the global market place.”

The Admiral, who reckons he spends about 70 per cent of his time on EU business at present, has command of a force of up to ten ships from various nations, depending on the time of year, covering a vast expanse of ocean between the Bab al Mandab strait in the Gulf of Aden down to the Seychelles and Tanzania.

“Our principal role is to protect merchant shipping, particularly ships of the World Food Programme,” said Rear Admiral Tarrant, who previously commanded ice patrol ship HMS Endurance and Combined Task Force 150.

“We are protecting UK and

EU interests in the Western Indian Ocean.

“This protection is very much in the interests of the UK economy.

“Just think of anything in your larder, in your garden shed, in your garage – the chances are most of it came through the Bab al Mandab strait.

“The issue is that we are an island – in fact, the whole of Europe is an island and is affected by it.

“The front line is not the Channel; the front line for the Navy is the security of the global economy and the trade network is the sea.

“It is a global economy, and a lot of it is based on taking raw materials in, adding value and re-exporting it.

“A big percentage of the cars produced in the UK are exported from here, and go back through the Bab al Mandab strait, for example.

“So there is a direct link between freedom of navigation and jobs in the UK.”

Although the number of pirates in the region is relatively small, their reputation has a chilling effect.

“Hostages are held in horrible conditions, with mock executions, and no certainty about their future. It really is an horrific existence for them,” said Rear Admiral Tarrant.

“The trouble for them is, though piracy only affects a small number of vessels relative to the total number, there is the fear on the part of the seamen on that route through the Bab al Mandab strait.

“People didn't want to do it any more. They were losing confidence.

“A major effort was required



● FV Naham 3, which has been in armed pirate hands since it was seized in the Indian Ocean in March 2012

lifestyle and there will be no reliance on crime.

“That will take time and a lot of input from international community. What is needed is a political and a developmental solution to crime.”

But despite the trend being with the anti-piracy forces, there is no room for complacency.

“On January 18 we stopped a vessel which had been pirated and was being used as a mothership off Oman,” said the Admiral.

“A French warship in our force boarded this vessel and found five suspected pirates who had been attacking ships in our area, and they freed the crew of seven Indians.

“Those suspect pirates have been transferred to the Seychelles for prosecution.

“Pirates are still prepared to use force and are very much looking to capture more ships. That's how they make money.

“Naval forces in the area remain committed to this – if we go back to the nightclub analogy, it would be very much like taking the police out of the town and leaving it all up to the bouncers.

“They can only do so much.”

by the international community.

“For this to work, everybody has to hate the same thing.

“Has anyone got a good thing to say about modern-day pirates? No. They are a scourge.”

Operation Atalanta, which is run from Northwood on the outskirts of London, began in 2008 and has been run by the British from the start – “the Royal Navy is absolutely at the beating heart of European maritime security,” said Rear Admiral Tarrant.

Political direction comes from the EU's Political and Security Committee, to whom the Admiral is directly answerable, and EU NAVFOR operates under a renewable mandate agreed by all 28 member states.

The results are encouraging – piracy off Somalia is in steep decline (see below right) – but that doesn't mean the threat is diminishing.

Admiral Tarrant puts the success of the anti-piracy initiative down to four factors.

“First, the four military forces on the western Indian Ocean are working together.

“Three forces – EU NAVFOR, NATO and the Combined Maritime Forces – all co-ordinate their operations.

“That means there is no wasted effort while dealing with an area which we could fit Western Europe into twice over.

“If I asked you to take yourself to the Eastern Mediterranean from London and find me a particular rowing boat, you would think that sounds mad.

“But that is the type of question we are asking of ourselves. Those are the types of problems we have

to deal with every day.”

“The fourth group involved is the independent deployers – the Chinese, the Russian, the South Korean, the Japanese and Indian Navy ships operating in the Gulf of Aden.

“There is a lot of good co-ordination and deconfliction – a lot of goodwill between the forces to work together.

“Essentially what has happened is the military forces are as well-coordinated as they can be, and are able to stop pirates.

“What I insist on is, where we can, we go for legal finish.

“Piracy is a crime. If you want to deter a crime, the people who have committed the crime should feel the full force of criminal justice.”

The second factor is that the maritime industry takes the threat of piracy very seriously.

“That threat is critical if they make themselves vulnerable,” said the Admiral.

“They follow best practice, including physical security measures, such as barbed wire, and using their speed and staying away from the coast of Somalia – that reduces the threat but increases the costs.

“Thirdly, a significant proportion employs private armed security teams (PASTs).

“I hear a lot of people telling me it's because of PASTs that the threat of piracy has reduced.

“But I am a sailor. I remember going to the disco – they would probably call them nightclubs now – and essentially the PASTs are the bouncers on the door. They keep troublemakers out of the club.

“But we are the police force – we deal with the crime.

“It is not a case of one or the other; both have to work, and there has to be reasonable

cooperation between the two.”

The final factor is that the home of the pirates has changed.

“We now have a Somali Federal Government, with a president – Hassan Sheikh Mohamud – selected by representatives of the country in August 2012,” said Rear Admiral Tarrant.

“Whilst things on the ground remain difficult they have vastly improved.

“Better governance ashore makes piracy less attractive from a business sense.

“I took the president to sea and we spoke about the issue that the causes of piracy are on the land.

“Whilst we know that we are fracturing and really creating problems for the pirates' business model, it has not yet broken.

“We will only break it if we change society and develop things ashore.

“Give these people a better



● The local premiere Hollywood thriller *Captain Phillips* – about a ship hijacked in the Indian Ocean by Somali pirates – on board the EU NAVFOR flagship, Dutch amphibious assault ship HNLMS Johan de Witt, alongside in Oman  
Picture: Evert-Jan Daniels



● EU NAVFOR Operation Commander Rear Admiral Bob Tarrant briefs the President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, on the bridge of force flagship HNLMS Johan de Witt  
Picture: Gerben van Es



● German EU NAVFOR ship FGS Augsburg provides a close escort to a World Food Programme chartered vessel last summer



● RFA Lyme Bay last October while engaged in EU NAVFOR counter-piracy duties off Somalia

## Pirates feel the squeeze

PIRACY attacks on merchant ships off the Horn of Africa reached a peak in January 2011, when 32 ships and 736 hostages were held.

The number of attacks has tailed off rapidly since, though piracy is estimated to have garnered some £135 million since 2008.

The total number of attacks (and larger ships seized by pirates) were:

- 2008: 24 (14)
- 2009: 163 (46)
- 2010: 174 (47)
- 2011: 176 (25)
- 2012: 35 (5)
- 2013: 7 (0).

There are believed to be 50 hostages being held by armed pirates as of last month.

The majority, 28, are from the Oman-flagged fishing vessel Naham 3, which was seized on March 26 2012 and is now inshore in Somalia – the only vessel of size held by pirates.

The remaining 22 hostages are from three ships which were run aground or abandoned.

In their protection role, the ships of the EU NAVFOR have shepherded more than 250 World Food Programme vessels along the troubled shores of Somalia since 2009, allowing almost 900,000 tonnes of food to be delivered.

Rear Admiral Tarrant said part of the EU NAVFOR remit is building the capability of local agencies – RFA Lyme Bay, which recently contributed to EU NAVFOR, was part of the programme – with Somali coast guards and legal officials benefiting.

When Admiral Tarrant hosted Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud at sea, they discussed the potential bonanza which could be gained from the teeming tuna run which passes by the country 3,025km-long coastline – the longest of any mainland African nation.

http://eunavfor.eu

# Warm welcome aboard?

## Leaders met at Droxford

AN EXPERT in the role of women at sea has turned her attention to the presence of Wrens and QARNNS nurses on warships during World War 2.

Dr Jo Stanley spoke at a seminar at the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth on the subject of 'Grog, Darning and gendered un/welcomes'.

"RN vessels in World War 2 exceptionally carried women as semi-members of the crew," said Dr Stanley, a visiting lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of Lancaster and a renowned consultant on women's maritime history.

"Some were Wrens being evacuated or going out to overseas postings.

"Some were naval nurses (Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service) assisting the released British prisoners of war that ships were carrying home as the war ended.

"Women's traditional place on warships had been in ports, as relatives or potential girlfriends taking tea briefly, or as professional performers singing, especially on aircraft carriers.

"They were accepted into the ship because they were temporary delightful visitors and diversions.

"Such women were not sailing and not expecting to become in any way equal members of the ship's community.

"But the exceptional Wrens and QARNNS who sailed were anomalies who had to be

differently accommodated into those closed and traditional masculine institutions.

"That process revealed men's and women's attitudes to something approximating equality.

"Great tension was caused by some Wrens who were seen as transgressing gendered boundaries by expecting that if they worked as men did they should also get men's rewards, including grog – they didn't, however, seek equal pay.

"Wrens on warships were positioned as boys (at best) or troublemakers and spoilers to be got rid of (at worst).

"But some more progressive ships, especially after D-Day when Allied success made officers more relaxed, were proud

to flaunt Wrens on deck as they sailed in a celebratory way into the world's harbours.

"The only accounts of QARNNS on ships show that they were welcomed, and even made honorary members of ship's companies, because they were not challenging.

"They sewed for the men and did not expect to be treated as full participants.

"In other words they behaved as lady visitors traditionally did – gratefully and supportively.

"The outcome was sometimes marriage."

Dr Stanley's paper at the seminar explored three recorded

cases as examples of likely underlying trends in attitudes towards gender on Royal Navy ships during the war.

She looked at the degrees of 'welcome' (including dismay) with which their appearance – as "feminised representatives of civilian and domestic life" – on a warship were handled by the male members of the ship's company.

Dr Stanley also considered what place women could "negotiate in total institutions geared to war, the support of the status quo, and the avoidance of 'weak' emotions?"

[www.jostanley.biz](http://www.jostanley.biz)

## Change of direction for driving instructor

A DRIVING instructor from RN Air Station Culdrose has finally put the brakes on after a career of nearly 40 years.

Ian Callister was presented with a Valedictory Certificate from the CO of Culdrose, Capt Mark Garratt, after completing 17 years at the base as a driving instructor with the Royal Navy School of Flight Deck Operations.

Having joined the Navy in November 1974 from his native Isle of Man, Ian started training as a Naval Airman (Aircraft Handler) and served at Culdrose as well as RNAS Yeovilton.

He also served on board HMS Victory in Portsmouth as a tour guide, and had a draft to the Royal Yacht during the Queen's Silver Jubilee world tour in 1977.

Ian also saw service around the Falklands, gaining a South Atlantic Medal.

He completed another squadron draft to 814 NAS before joining the School as

Chief Instructor and Motor Transport Chief.

Ian left the Naval Service in November 1996 as a CPO(AH), but two months later rejoined Culdrose as a civilian instructor, initially teaching forklift and JCB.

He then qualified as a Defence Driving Instructor to teach large goods vehicles and fire engine familiarisation training.

In 2001 he qualified as a Defence Driving Examiner to conduct tests on car, bus, and all categories of large goods vehicles.

"I've had a wonderful time here at Culdrose," said Ian.

"It's one of those jobs that you just don't want to give up. Teaching Naval personnel to drive is pretty rewarding."

And to celebrate his retirement – what else than hitting the road? Ian has planned a long-awaited driving adventure, hitching up his caravan for some relaxed driving experiences on the open roads of Europe.



● The rescue team on the beach at the Lizard with the stranded calf

## Cattle honours

A SEA King helicopter from 771 Naval Air Squadron helped rescue a stranded calf from the foot of cliffs at the Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall.

The seven-month-old Dexter heifer appeared unharmed after falling from a 100ft cliff by the Lizard lighthouse following a landslip, but had been stuck in an inaccessible cove for five days.

The call to the RSPCA came from the farmer who had been grazing cattle on the cliff top as part of a Natural England project.

RSPCA inspector Jon Phipps advised the farmer to drop wet hay into the cove to ensure the calf had adequate food and hydration.

The following day RSPCA chief inspector Neil Thomas arrived with members of Cornwall Fire and Rescue to see if the calf could be winched up, but this was ruled out, so help was sought from RNAS Culdrose and the RNLI.

The RNLI concluded that the shoreline and cove were too rocky to put personnel ashore.

"Myself and another rope-rescue-trained inspector managed to set a guideline into the cliff and work out a route down to the cove," said Mr Thomas.

"A team of eight comprising four RSPCA members, an animal welfare officer, two Royal Naval personnel from Culdrose and a vet descended into the cove."

It was decided that the only way to rescue the calf would be with the help of the Royal Navy.

771 Squadron were on hand to assist as part of a training sortie for just such an occasion.

Mr Thomas added: "The weather was pretty dreadful, wet and squally with the ground well saturated and unstable because of the landslip – it was OK going down but really difficult climbing back up because the ground kept

giving way.

"The calf was remarkably uninjured and had been able to drink from rainwater puddles as well as eat the hay thrown down."

Weighing in at 100kg, the heifer took a number of people to catch and guide it on to a tarpaulin placed over a helicopter cargo net.

It was then sedated by the vet and the helicopter called in.

The calf was airlifted to a farm on the Lizard, where it was reunited with its mother.

"This rescue was carried out in appalling weather conditions with a very strong southerly gale and frequent very heavy showers" said Mr Thomas.

"The skill and courage shown by the helicopter crew in these conditions was absolutely remarkable and deserving of special recognition."



● A Sea King from 771 Naval Air Squadron with the calf as an underslung load

## Academic sailing

THE Royal Hospital School overlooks the beautiful Stour estuary and is adjacent to a large reservoir and sailing club. As a result of this watery location, and a unique 300-year maritime history, it has become a centre of excellence for sailing.

The school's RYA-accredited sailing academy has a fleet of more than 50 dinghies catering for every level of sailing, from beginner boats like RS Teras to Olympic pathway craft such as the Laser 1 and 29ers.

On joining the school, all 11-year-olds take part in a week-long sailing course where they are taken to RYA level 2. Pupils joining in other year groups can learn to sail in afternoon sessions; those in the sailing squad sail up to four times a week in summer.

Pupils in the elite sailing programme have intensive competition training including the use of GPS tracking and video analysis, individual fitness programmes, dietary advice and transport to competitions. They are also supported by a personal tutor to ensure they balance academic and sailing commitments.

There are regular team and fleet fixtures against other schools and elite sailors compete at national and international level – recent successes have included winning the BSDRA Hoard Shield and Kings Challenge Cup.

The highest levels of safety and tuition are maintained and pupils can work towards sailing power boating, windsurfing and dinghy sailing instruction qualifications. There are also Cornish Shrimpers for coastal cruising at weekends.

For more information please contact the admissions office on 01473 326210 or [admissions@royalhospitalschool.org](mailto:admissions@royalhospitalschool.org)

The Royal Hospital School

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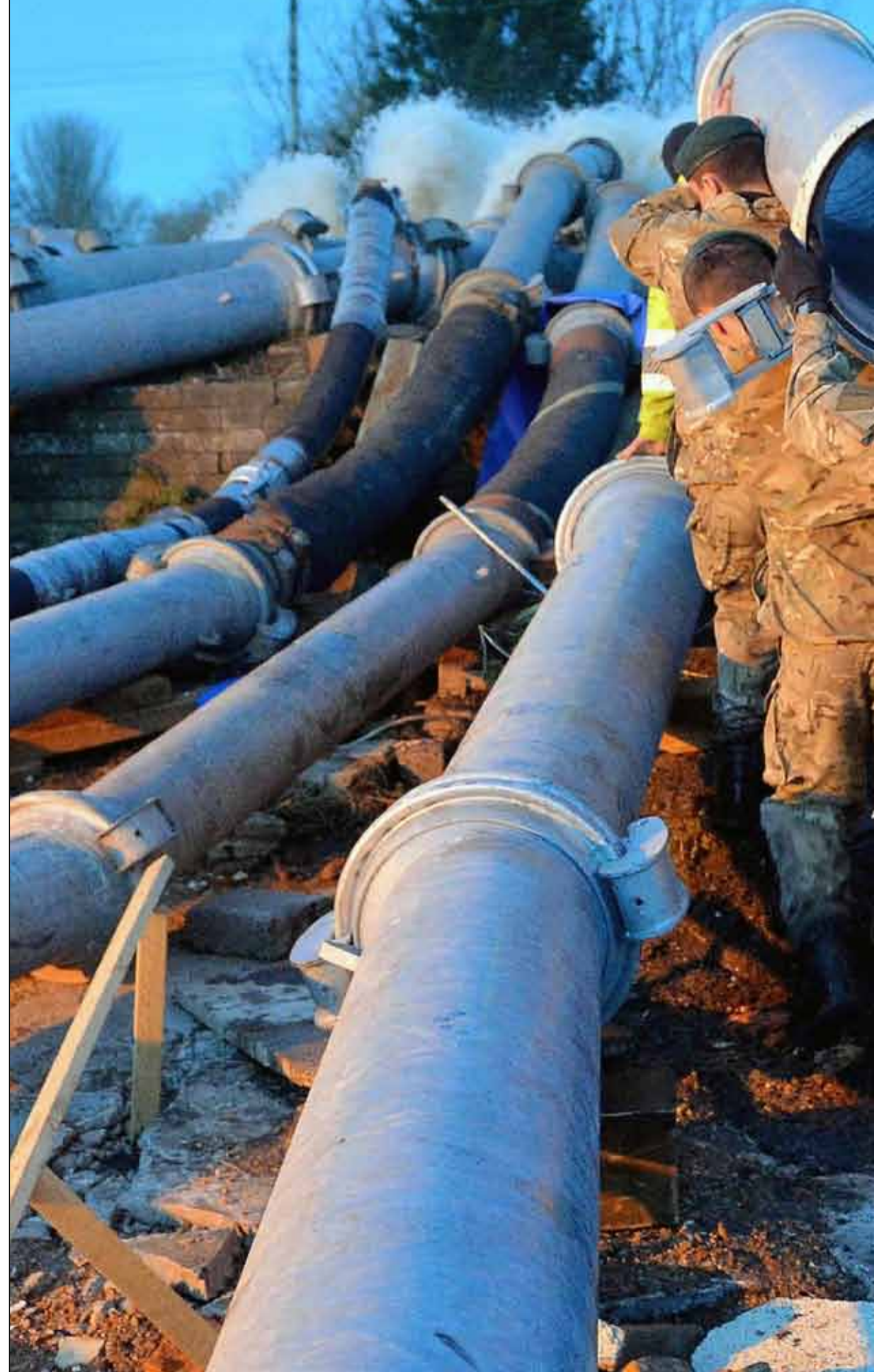
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# Sand and deli

## Sailors and marines help turn



● Right: Royal Marines from 40 Commando install pipes near Burrowbridge, Somerset  
● From top: Sailors from HMS Illustrious unload a truck of sandbags before placing them in front of homes in Romsey; A truck delivers more sand to ratings from Collingwood on sandbag-filling duty in Winchester; Sailors from HMS Collingwood build a sandbag wall in a bid to protect the historic Pilgrims' School from the flooded River Itchen in Winchester

Pictures: LA(Phot) Nicky Wilson and LA(Phot) Rhys O'Leary

# iver n the tide



**AT FIRST** glance it's unlikely anyone would think the market town of Romsey would have much in common with a small tract of land in the Philippines.

The affluent Hampshire town has a population approaching 20,000. Bayas Island has a total population of 3,000, all of whom have very little.

Among Romsey's claims to fame: Lord Palmerston, the 19th century prime minister, was born and lived at Broadlands, a country estate on the outskirts of the town. It was also the base of The Berthon Boatyard, which made collapsible boats from 1870 to 1917 – they were used as lifeboats on ocean-going liners, including the Titanic.

Bayas Island is known for er, very little but fishing – and it was in the path of Typhoon Haiyan.

But these two communities are united by the crew of HMS Illustrious.

Personnel from the carrier took part in the international disaster relief mission in December. Now they have been helping with a crisis at home – flooding in Romsey to be precise.

Residents in Riverside Gardens carried cups of tea to the 100 sailors as they piled up walls of sandbags to protect properties from the River Test.

"It makes me proud to be British," said Matthew Southey, one of the residents who joined in the efforts to carry sandbags from the lorries to the front line of vulnerable properties.

Lt Hugh Biddlecombe, 28, of HMS Illustrious grew up in Romsey and said he was pleased he could help his former home town.

"We are all very pleased to be able to help the local community and do what we can to ease the impact of the flooding for them," he said.

"For me it is personal as well because I grew up here, my parents live here and I have fond memories of the area.

"This has felt very similar to Op Patwin in that we are solving issues for people – and a lot of our work in the Philippines was around problem solving and ensuring the viability of local infrastructure, which feels much like what we are doing here by protecting the local area from flooding."

WO Neil Cassidy, of HMS Illustrious, said: "After working for the past 48 hours to fill sandbags the lads are now able to help residents and meet them, which has significantly boosted morale.

"When we were at the depot we filled in excess of 30,000 sandbags which are being delivered here to us in Romsey, and we are using them to defend the residents from the River Test, which is close to bursting its banks.

"Most of the people on the team were on Op Patwin so there has been a pretty small skill fade between returning home and now using those skills in the UK. Everyone is just pleased they can be here to help and do what they can. The residents have been extremely supportive and interested in us – I think they are used to seeing the river high but this is the highest it has been in a long time."

Lt Kev McMorrow, HMS Illustrious's Air Traffic Controller, said: "It's really nice to be able to help and get involved with helping to protect people from flooding.

"I was part of the team filling sandbags, so it's good to be here now and see it happen from beginning to end.

"Most people here were on Op Patwin so they are all keen to get involved and put those disaster relief skills back into practice again – and being here in the UK it brings it home that it could be any one of us with flooded homes, or our families, so the enthusiasm and determination to help is pretty strong."

The Lusty crew were among around 950 Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel deployed to help communities deal with flooding in the south. A further 2,000 military personnel were on standby.

Royal Marines from 40 Commando have been helping to move and load piping to be used by the Environment Agency to pump away floodwater in the Somerset Levels.

The Taunton-based Marines were asked to shift the 42 pipes, collectively weighing 3.5 tonnes, away from North Moor pumping station to Salt Moor.

Using a flat-bed support vehicle and military lorry from Commando Logistics Regiment, based at RMB Chivenor in North Devon, the Marines used brute strength to shift the piping.

Lt Brendon Ford, of 40 Commando, said: "The military vehicle was the only one that could get through to the pumping station to collect the pipes. Then it was a case of using a bit of muscle to get them onto the vehicle."

As well as the piping, the Marines have been tasked to fill HESCO bastions – used in military fortification in Afghanistan – with sand to ensure a flood barrier in the village of Aller.

They are also assisting the local community with moving and salvaging furniture from homes in the villages of Moorland and Burrowbridge.

Royal Marines from the same unit have also built flood defences in the Alney Island area of Gloucester.

In Berkshire, ratings from HMS Collingwood and HMS Sultan held a sandbag-filling contest at Chieveley before travelling south to Hampshire, where Collingwood personnel helped a school in its battle to keep floodwater at bay.

The Pilgrims' School in the grounds of Winchester Cathedral had already sustained flood damage to its historic Pilgrims' Hall – which dates from 1310 – and grounds as the neighbouring River Itchen burst its banks.

PO Alistair McLeod led a unit of ten Phase Two trainees in filling sandbags and building a wall alongside the river.

The Phalanx instructor said: "It's great for them to see what the Forces are called upon to do. It's also good to see the Navy getting recognition."

The school, which is the choir school of Winchester Cathedral, has 240 pupils and two classes of inquisitive 4-7 year olds trooped out of their plastic-protected classrooms to meet the sailors.

AB James Holden, 20, from Derby, said: "I am happy to help and make a difference to people affected by this crisis."

AB Clare Start, 24, from Driffield, East Yorkshire, added: "I'm glad to be a helping hand to the local community – dealing with a crisis is one of the reasons I joined the Navy."

Floodwater has already claimed much of the school's gardens, along with the children's play area – although there was little water in the outdoor swimming pool...

Estate manager Al Murray said the school had bought 11,000 tonnes of sand, as well as bags, battens and plastic sheeting – some of which had been placed across classroom doors.

Hundreds of sailors haven't actually had the chance to get wet – they have been conquering mountains of sand.

A group of 30 trainees from Collingwood shifted thousands of tonnes of sand from a Winchester City Council depot.

PO James Chisholm said: "Morale is high and they are glad to be helping and be part of the relief effort."

AB Charlotte Morgan, 17, from Guisborough, had a personal reason for wanting to help residents.

"My parents have just built their own home in Lofthouse and it would be awful to think their home could be flooded," she said.

"I am really happy to help – it's so sad to see things like this happen," added the trainee communications and information systems specialist.

Elsewhere in Winchester, sailors from HMS Sultan built a wall of sandbags to keep water at bay from cottages in Water Lane.

Chris Pines, a ward councillor for 33 years, said: "Everybody in Water Lane is over the moon with the support they are getting from the Royal Navy."

Nearby, students at Winchester Art College continued their lessons in the half of the site not under water, as ratings kept an eye on a flood barrier protecting a row of houses adjacent to the college.

A group of flood tourists arrived to take photos of the new art work in the flooded car park – a Loch Ness Monster and several shark fins.

Sailors from RNAS Yeovilton switched from sandbagging to sheep herding to help a farmer rescue four of his flock stranded by rising waters on the Somerset Levels.

"The farmer's trailer was stuck in flood water – so we waded in and recovered that," said Lt Cdr Colin Maude, air engineer officer of 815 Naval Air Squadron, whose more normal duties are supporting Lynx helicopters operating from Royal Navy frigates and destroyers.

"Also he didn't have access to a sheep dog, so we said we'd try to herd them in.

"Easier said than done – but we got them in the trailer. The farmer was very grateful."

Gratitude has been a common theme for home and business owners helped by the Service.

"It is just fantastic to see so many Royal Navy people here helping us – we are very grateful," said Mr Southey back in Romsey.



● From top left: Marines unload sections of pipes near Burrowbridge; Marines in Moorland, Somerset; Lt Col Alex Janzen, CO of 40 Cdo, carries sandbags for a protective wall along the River Tone in Somerset; Sailors rescue stranded sheep in Somerset; Marines strengthen defences in Northmoor, Somerset

CLASSIC JACK



# Musical present for King Neptune

IF I finish my days in the Tower of London, so be it. At my age, pegging along to 93, it would be a new experience in life.

Some 70 years or more ago HMS Hardy was steaming peacefully between Orkney and the Faroes.

It was a dark night and two irate ABs crept into the aft steering compartment where an offending harmonic organ was stored.

The two ABs, much later in life, admitted they were fed up with having to cart the organ along the upper deck for divine Service. So they gave it to David Jones to present to King Neptune.

Capt Bernard Armitage Warburton Warburton-Lee had the ship searched but it could never be found. The ship was lost at Narvik, Norway. Capt Warburton-Lee was fatally wounded and was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

So, if you youngsters in HM Service are ever north of the Orkneys, listen carefully and you will hear coming up from the deep, the Naval hymn, *Eternal Father, Strong to Save*.

I know he did and they are safe on eternity's shore.

George Drewett Shepperton

## Tribute to crew of Thetis

JUNE 1 this year marks the 75th anniversary of the loss of HMS Thetis on sea trials in Liverpool Bay just three months before the outbreak of WW2.

I am not only the chairman of the Liverpool Anchorage Club but also the son of Leading Stoker Walter Arnold, one of only four escapees.

It occurred to me that there is no significant memorial to this disaster and the 99 men who lost their lives, anywhere on Merseyside.

I have approached Wirral Council with the idea of erecting a suitable plinth and was pleased that they were enthusiastic about the suggestion however, you may sense a 'but' coming here, they informed me that all of 2014's history and cultural budget had been allocated to WW1 commemorations.

If I could raise the money, they would run with the organising side. I have indeed raised the necessary cash and the project will go ahead on Sunday June 1.

I am expecting a memorable turnout on the Mersey waterfront on that day with, hopefully, a large RN presence.

Derek Arnold  
The Wirral

# Please don't jest about our efforts

REGARDING a letter in your January issue titled *Sharing the load* by Mr Douglas Banks questioning a photo of a Lt Cdr wading through water during the Philippines relief effort.

Mr Banks questioned if the photo was a publicity shot.

It seemed to be made in jest and, while I really treasure our veterans and their views, I just don't get what "publicity" you could possibly get out of a disaster relief or having a picture of a Lt Cdr wading through dangerously-rocky waters with a heavy shelter pack on his head; one of many delivered to that island and the other different islands that same day at the same time.

It is definitely a picture that sums up some of the efforts of the humanitarian aid HMS Daring delivered and one the



**Each month Pussers' Rum are offering to courier a bottle of their finest tittle to the writer of our top letter. This month's winner is Kay Marsh**

crew themselves would and should be proud of.

It doesn't matter who it was, or what they did; they all did good.

I may seem biased, as I was



December's Navy News

the coxswain of the seaboat that dropped the Lt Cdr and his team off that day and I saw the extent of what they had to go through, to even get ashore - and then

having to keep wading in and out to collect everything and stop the boat getting damaged on the sharp rocks.

It wasn't easy for them at all, but not once did I hear them complain or expect the boat to get in closer. They just got right in there.

This was one of many incredible teams, all mixed in ranks, rates and branches - most of whom went ashore every single day, mucking in together, with no moans or drips, delivering stores and first aid to the communities there. They stayed out there from early in the morning, till sunset most nights.

I do feel strongly about all our ship's company's efforts during the disaster relief.

Nothing should be brought into question regarding something so sensitive in nature.

LS(Sea) Kay Marsh  
HMS Daring

## Pilot instructed to turn left at Blackpool Tower

IN THE February issue of *Navy News*, three items (ESHA handler, a letter from MD Grubb and ATA pilot) revived memories of when I was serving as an AML at Inskip in 1944 and we prepared a Swordfish for flight to South Wales.

Some equipment including the radio was removed. The ferrying pilot was a young ATA

lady. She expressed misgivings as she would be flying by map and ground reference.

I can still picture the three-badge PO putting an arm around her shoulders, then pointing across the airfield and saying "There's the duty runway you've just come in on. That hasn't changed so when you take off, make for that bit of white cloud up there

and do a left turn. You'll see Blackpool Tower straight in front of you, so do another left turn round that and when you look down you'll see the coast. All you have to do is follow that and there's no worry. It'll be a doddle."

I presume the flight was safely made.

D Joynes  
New South Wales, Australia

## Fun and games with Vanguard

MY first memory of HMS Vanguard is of the huge battleship at anchor while working up at Portland

As we passed to windward of her piping the salute 'Sparks' we would push out our empty beer cans on the blind side hoping for a fall of shot under her starboard gangway.

Then, in the Mediterranean, the Vanguard carried out a shoot with the aim of hitting a point several thousand yards short of my destroyer as we zig-zagged at full speed over her horizon.

Our radar showed that she frequently straddled our

'phantom' position with the splashes of her huge bricks. And, having once having recovered the crew of the tug which had been mistaken for a target during battle practice, I hoped Vanguard's gunners would resist the temptation to range on us.

Later, with the Vanguard at Pompey, we would enjoy teasing her gangway staff by bugling our salute as we went past in our survey ship and they had to hastily muster a bugler to respond. Perhaps little things pleased little ships.

Tony Fletcher  
Berkshire

## Phoenix recalled

IN 1864 the noted Nova Scotian woodsculptor of ships' figureheads, George MacLeod, sculpted a 36in eagle to represent the phoenix.

The sculpture, commissioned by the Phoenix Assurance Company of Halifax, Nova Scotia, is now on display in the city's museum.

When I first viewed it it looked strikingly familiar to the phoenix depicted in the crest of 809 Naval Air Squadron, in which I served from 1954-55 - my last draft in the RN.

Ian Vance  
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia



The crest of 809 Squadron

## I like gills and Jills

WITH regard to the letter *Locker Shocker* in the December 2013 issue, the seamans handbook of 1932, still issued post WW2, lists the rum issue as 1/8 pint per day.

This means all ratings, junior and senior, all got the same issue 1/2 a gill. Even for Jack Dusties, it's a question of knowing your gills from your Jills.

I like both.

Ted Hill, Ex-POME  
Essex

## Memories of Osiris

MEMORIES were stirred when reading the contribution from our friend who served on the submarine HMS Osiris in 1965 (December 2013 edition).

I served in HMS Osiris when it was a WT station in the Canal Zone, 1954.

The male personnel lived in tents in the tentlines of 3 GHQ Royal Signals while the 40 or so Wren telegraphists and signallers were billeted at Ladysmith Camp with the Army and Airforce Servicegirls.

Life was made bearable due to the generosity of the RAF who endured our presence at their Phoenix Boat Club on the Bitter Lake and the occasional dance at Ladysmith Camp.

I wonder if anybody else remembers working at RNHQ Fayid.

Frank Clayforth  
North Shields



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](http://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.

# NAVY NEWS

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Royal Marines 350  
1664 - 2014  
Timeless Distinction

## Chance to work for team

THINK you're good at working with a team? Put that theory to the test with the 17k Commando Experience.

The Royal Marines Commando Challenge is a yearly chance to undertake the same training course used daily by the UK's Royal Marines on the way to earning their Green Beret.

This year's event will see the launch of the 17k which is designed for teams of four.

There are also the usual challenges available - 4k and 10k - at Woodbury Common, near Exeter, Devon, over the weekend of September 6-7.

Once a year the public can find out first-hand just what its like to take on such obstacles as Peter's Pool, The Sheep Dip and the Crocodile Pit.

At the same time as getting covered in mud and experiencing the exact same obstacles as the Marines could have done that very morning you will be raising funds for charities - the Royal Marines Charitable Trust and the Devon Air Ambulance Trust.

Entry is £35 per person and a minimum sponsorship of £60 per person.

For details and to register, visit [www.commandochallenge.co.uk](http://www.commandochallenge.co.uk)

## Marine in ocean row

ROYAL Marine Matt Mason is this month attempting to break the Atlantic Ocean Rowing Speed Record.

Matt, 24, from Lancashire, is one of eight crewmen aiming to break the current record of 32 days by at least two days.

They left Grand Canaria in the middle of February to head to Barbados - a total of 2,598 miles - in the Toby Wallace, a lightweight ocean rowing boat.

Matt, who has completed three tours of Afghanistan, is hoping to raise £20,000 for the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund. You can sponsor him at [www.justgiving.com/mattmason12](http://www.justgiving.com/mattmason12)

You can track the progress of the Toby Wallace at [www.oceanusrowing.co.uk](http://www.oceanusrowing.co.uk)



## Only another 1,000-plus kilometres to go..

AND they're off...the 1664 Challenge has begun.

Royal Marines have set off on a 1,664km ski from Porsangermoen down to Stavanger, from where they will sail a yacht to Cadiz, in Spain.

Once there they will start cycling north across the Pyrenees to the English Channel

where they will canoe back to the UK.

Once on British soil, Royal Marines and Army Commandos from the different units will run a total of 1,664km in England, Scotland and Wales, finishing in London on July 25.

Over the course of the five months they are hoping to raise £500,000 for the

Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund (RMCTF).

The Marines, pictured crossing a frozen lake on their way to the Finnmark Plateau, averaged 32km a day for the first couple of days of the ski challenge but have been hampered by white-outs. They are expected to arrive in Stavanger early next month.

# Training the key to cycling challenge

FANCY cycling 350 miles? Not sure if you are up to it? No worries, the Royal Marines will help.

A number of people have already put their names down for the RMRide350 - an endurance road race to raise funds for the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund.

But, according to event organiser WO2 Gordon 'Dug' Hickin, some would-be participants have appeared daunted by the distance.

"Trust me, it's very achievable but you will need to train and get the miles in," said WO2 Hickin, who plans to upload a training guide on to the RMCTF website to help riders.

"I would also like to stamp on the myth that you need a £5k all-singing, all-dancing carbon-fibre bike - you don't.

"An average, well-serviced road bike fitted with tool kit, lights etc, will be more than adequate. The most important bit of kit is you, properly trained,

## Up for Downs yomp?

IF cycling's not your thing, how about a walk to mark the birth of the Royal Marines Corps?

Members of the public are being urged to become one of 1,664 people yomping 166.4km of the South Downs Way.

Each yomper is aiming to raise, you guessed it, £1,664 for the RMCTF, during the 36-hour event.

As well as raising funds for the RMCTF, walkers will be able to experience some of England's finest countryside between Winchester and Eastbourne.

The yomp takes place over the weekend of June 7-8. Registration fee is £166.40 and each participant needs to raise a minimum of £1,664 sponsorship. To register or to view a map of the walk visit [www.rmctf.org.uk](http://www.rmctf.org.uk)

fed and hydrated prior to and during the ride."

The event, which takes place on August 2, starts and finishes at the RM Museum in Portsmouth, taking in support stations en route at Winchester, Blandford, Taunton, Exmouth and Bridport.

The road race is open to serving and former Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel

and their families.

WO2 Hickin said: "Having participated in many endurance events, I know that the training will require dedication, mostly in your own time. For this you will need to buy in from your loved one, the SO1 Domestic.

"Involve your families, they'll enjoy it, mine did, but then again my wife is a nurse and they're

almost as daft as we are...but not quite!"

To keep friends and family occupied as they wait at the museum, the organisers are planning to put on entertainment as well as food stalls.

It costs £150 to enter the event, payable in three instalments. All riders will receive a RMRide350 cycling jersey, pre and post-ride meal, free parking at the museum, commemorative medal and event goodie bag.

WO2 Hickin is appealing for volunteer riders to man the support stations. All riders will receive a polo shirt and commemorative medal.

All riders and riders will receive the RMRide350 event brochure with riders' times and event photos about one month after the event.

Anyone wishing to enter the ride should do so before Easter. Entry forms are available at [www.rmctf.org.uk](http://www.rmctf.org.uk), along with forms for riders.

Updates on the event will also appear on Twitter @rmride350

## Record bid foiled

BAD weather put paid to a Royal Marine's bid to break the world record for the fastest 10k run by an amputee.

Andy Grant, pictured, marked the fifth anniversary of devastating injuries sustained in Afghanistan by attempting to break the 37min 55sec world record at the Mad Dog 10k in Southport.

But 28mph winds played a major role in the bid with Andy, 25, recording a time of 42min 54sec, which put him in the top four per cent of competitors.

"There will be other 10k races to attempt the world record in," said Andy, who was raising funds for the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund.



Andy was injured by IEDs while serving with 45 Commando in Helmand Province in 2009.

He suffered 27 injuries and spent three months in hospital before having his right leg amputated in November 2010.

"For me it was about celebrating five years after being injured with friends and family and raising money for the Royal Marines.

"The support from the public has been unbelievable and my total to date stands at £4,150. A huge £650 more than I set out to raise. I can't thank people enough for the support."

## Speakers share views

FILM-MAKER Chris Terrill is giving the first lecture in a series of four to mark the 350th anniversary of the Royal Marines Corps.

The anthropologist, adventurer and author will present *Cheerfulness in the Face of Adversity - 350 Years of Smiling Through Gritted Teeth* at the Royal Marines Museum in Portsmouth on March 5 from 6pm.

Chris trained with the Commandos and won his own green beret before following them to Afghanistan.

He is also the oldest person (military or civilian) to have passed the commando tests.

He writes graphically about the way young men are plunged into one of the planet's most dangerous wars in the

outlaw mountain terrain of Helmand Province. He tells of ferocious battles, jaw-dropping heroism and tragedy as casualties are suffered.

Tickets, which are £5 per person to include a glass of wine or soft drink on arrival, are available by calling 023 9281 9385.

The three other lectures taking place this year are:

■ Maj Gen David Hook will give a talk entitled *Personal insight into the changes of command in modern warfare* on September 10;

■ Maj Gen Julian Thompson will provide insight into his experiences as a military historian on October 25;

■ David Rowlands will talk about his work as a military artist on November 19.

## Join the proms in Plymouth

THE Royal Marines have announced details of a four-night visual and musical extravaganza in July to mark the 350th anniversary of their formation.

The RM350 South West Proms will be hosted by Plymouth Albion Rugby Football Club (RFC) from July 16-19.

RM350 South West Proms is one of the main events to be held in the UK to mark the 350th anniversary and is the Royal Marines' flagship celebration in the South West to honour the long and proud relationship they have with Plymouth.

It is expected to attract more than 18,000 spectators across the four nights.

With military precision and flair, the celebration will capture the sense of occasion the Royal Marines are renowned for.

Her Majesty's Band of the Royal Marines will lead each night's proceedings, with support from local bands and impressive military displays from the Commando Recruiting Team.

Looking to the sky, it is hoped there will be a dramatic Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm historical flypast and a firework display.

It will be a ticket-only event, with thousands of tickets now on sale and available to the public.

A 25 per cent discount is being given to all Plymouth residents and Royal Marines, serving and retired.

Plymouth Albion RFC has pledged the ground for free to the Royal Marines, beyond the running costs, which means all proceeds will go to the Royal Navy and Royal Marine Charity and Plymouth Drake Foundation.

Tickets can be purchased online at [www.plymouthalbion.com/store/tickets/rm350/](http://www.plymouthalbion.com/store/tickets/rm350/).

Tickets are also available from the Plymouth Albion ground.

## Music in museum

MUSICIANS from the Royal Marines School of Music have been drumming up support for a major world record attempt by playing drums continuously for 24 hours, raising £2,000 for the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund.

The event, which took place at the Royal Marines Museum in Southsea, is one of many this year honouring the 350th Anniversary of the Royal Marines.

Nine members of the Corps of Drums spent the night locked in the museum drumming non-stop.

A team from the Royal Marines Corps of Drums will attempt to break the world record for the longest continuous drumroll later this year. The current world record stands at 28 hours, 19 minutes, and three seconds.

## Flying flag

ROYAL Marines musicians drummed up support in Bahrain for all things British.

A team of five drummers and buglers from Portsmouth Royal Marines Band travelled to Bahrain in support of the British Embassy-sponsored Great British Week.

The RM Corps of Drums played at a series of events to highlight business and cultural links between the two countries.

The five Royal Marines were Cpl Bugler John Sumner and Buglers Mark Metelko, David Nevatte, Perry Lawrence and Lee 'Ironface' Kidd.

Follow the Royal Marines during their anniversary year at [www.Royalnavy.mod.uk/RM350](http://www.Royalnavy.mod.uk/RM350)

# Time for Twickers

THE big Army v Navy rugby showdown is fast approaching and the RNRMC is once again challenging you and your colleagues to get involved.

The Road to Twickenham campaign invites you to run, row, ride, abseil, swim or skate – basically partake in any physical activity – the equivalent distance from your ship, base or place of work to Twickenham Stadium.

Hilary Jukes, Regional Fundraiser at the RNRMC, said: “Everyone can be part of our Road to Twickenham challenge.”

“We’ve already had people sign-up from the Commander Helicopter Force Yeovilton, HMS Calliope, HMS Dauntless and HMS Dragon. One team is even doing the distance from Bahrain to Twickenham...and back.”

Other ways to be involved include fundraising on the coaches to the tournament – raffles and collections are popular options and the charity can provide you with buckets and posters.

To join in, contact the RNRMC’s fundraising team ([fundraising@rnrmc.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@rnrmc.org.uk)) or set up your own fundraising page on Virgin Money Giving.

# Arctic Convoy on Coniston

STUDENTS took part in an Arctic Convoy-style mission during an adventure weekend in the Lake District.

Thirty-five members of the URNU, which normally conducts its sea-based exercises in training vessel HMS Exploit or its drill nights at HMS Forward, took on apocalyptic weather conditions to kayak down Coniston Water – their enthusiasm not once wavered.

The up-and-coming leaders of tomorrow’s Royal Navy received partial funding from the Navy’s principal charity.

Lt Simon Shaw, Commanding Officer of Birmingham URNU and HMS Exploit, said: “Without the donations and support from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity and West Midlands Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, we would not have been able to run this fantastic adventurous training weekend.”

Sub Lt Mike Kenning added: “Each student learned something new on the weekend such as improved navigation skills and put these new found skills into practice on the fells.”

Birmingham URNU made use of the University of Birmingham’s Raymond Priestley Centre near Torver in Cumbria.



● Some of the students from Birmingham URNU during their Priestley weekend in Cumbria

Sir Raymond Priestley was an Antarctic explorer and vice-chancellor of the University of Birmingham.

He was a member of the British Antarctic expedition of 1907-09 led by Sir Ernest Shackleton.

Mid Jodie Garrington said:

“The staff at the centre added naval aspects to the activities – on the water we had an Arctic Convoy-style mission with kayaks escorting the larger canoes around the lake in freezing conditions.”

Sub Lt Kenning said: “The Priestley weekend is the highlight

of the spring term at university.

“We look forward to the activities at the centre despite the weather.”

Students also took part in orienteering, canoeing, kayaking, fell walking, compass and map work and sailing during the weekend.

## EVENTS

**MAR**  
26-29

### Witches Abroad

HMS Collingwood RSC’s amateur theatre performs Sir Terry Pratchett’s *Witches Abroad* at the Millennium Hall. Tickets £6. Call 07502 037922.

**APR**  
3

### Forces comedy show

Two of Britain’s veteran comedians, Jim Davidson and Jethro, return to Portsmouth Guildhall. Call the box office for tickets: 023 9387 0200.

## New deadline

THE team behind Red, White and Blue Day has extended the deadline for entries to its children’s Christmas card design competition.

Designs this year will be themed on the Centenary of WW1.

The competition is open to all schools; however, schools need to make sure they register for the day which takes place on 14 October 14 – and the competition. More information can be found at [www.redwhiteblueday.co.uk](http://www.redwhiteblueday.co.uk).

## FUNDRAISER OF THE MONTH

### TYPE 42 ASSOCIATION



● Hilary Jukes, RNRMC, is handed the cheque by Type 42 Association chairman Bob Mullen

## Great effort in short time

IN JUST over six months the Type 42 Association, since adopting the RNRMC as its Charity of the Year, has raised over £4,000.

Contributions have come from near and far.

More than £3,000 was raised at the Association’s Drumhead

Dedication Ceremony and BBQ at HMS Excellent and a reunion of ex-serving Type 42 crewmen was even organised in Perth, Australia.

Anyone who served in a Type 42 is welcome to attend these events, and indeed to join the Association: [www.type42association.co.uk](http://www.type42association.co.uk).

# Mess revamp to benefit sailors

MESS recreational facilities at MOD Caledonia and HM Naval Base Clyde have been transformed with thanks to investment from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC).

In Rosyth, to prepare for the generation of the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers, a 14-week revamp for MOD Caledonia has seen tired, outdated and unwelcoming common areas transformed into the ideal setting to unwind.

The RNRMC’s Naval Service Amenity Fund grant of £135,000 enabled the base to make much-needed improvements to the Warrant Officers’ and Senior Rates’ Mess, in addition to the Junior Rates’ bar, which has been renamed The Highlander Sports Bar.

Over 2,000 serving personnel and 100 civilians will benefit each year.

The opening of the newly-refurbished social spaces couldn’t have come at a better time as the number of permanent



● The new-look Kennedy Bar

lodging staff is expected to rise, especially as the Queen Elizabeth crews up for her Float Out in July and HMS Prince of Wales then moves into construction.

In the West, HM Naval Base Clyde is also gearing up for the arrival of more personnel as they prepare to become the fully-fledged home of the Submarine Service.

Senior Rates will be pleased to hear

that their refurbished Kennedy Bar was officially opened last month by Captain of the Base Capt Alistair Willis, after a facelift with £22,000 of funding from the RNRMC.

Mess president, WO Stephen Thorpe said: “We have over 500 Mess members and all of them will benefit from this work. The funding from the RNRMC has been invaluable.”

Robert Robson, Chief Executive of the RNRMC, said: “As a charity we are happy to invest in facilities.

“Refurbishments such as these boost morale and in turn, support the capability and personnel programmes of the Royal Navy...the two go hand-in-hand.

“The environment in which off-duty personnel can relax and socialise should not be underestimated.

“These new facilities will allow hundreds of military personnel to ‘work hard and play hard’ for years to come.”

## Marching to music

THE Mountbatten Festival of Music makes a welcome return in 2014 in what is likely to be one of the event’s biggest and most ambitious performances to date.

The Massed Bands of Her Majesty’s Royal Marines will be performing live at the world-famous Royal Albert Hall in London for three nights this month – two of which are nearly sold out.

This is proving to be one of the Bands’ most dazzling events of the year, particularly as it celebrates the Royal Marine Corps 350th anniversary.

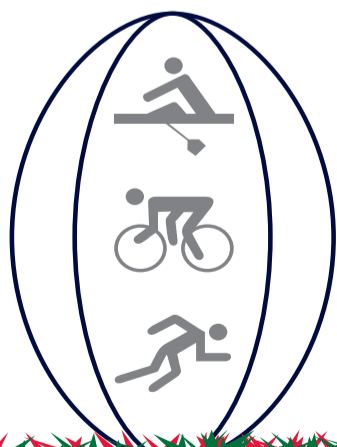
Lt Col Trevor Sawyer SO1 Massed Bands Events, said: “The Festival of Music goes from strength-to-strength. This year our finest and most versatile military musicians will be on show.



● The RM Band will perform at the Royal Albert Hall

“The Royal Marines Band will include pieces from film and television, traditional marches and overtures... all played to perfection!”

Tickets for the event on March 13-15 are available by calling 0845 401 5018 or by visiting the Royal Albert Hall website [www.royalalberthall.com](http://www.royalalberthall.com).



**GO THE DISTANCE!**  
**MAKE EVERY MILE COUNT!**

You can help us wherever you are in the world by taking part in a run, row, swim or cycle.

Your challenge is to cover the number of miles you are from Twickenham before the Army v Navy rugby game. For example, if you are based in Portsmouth, you could row 80 miles. If you are based in Lympstone you could cycle 180 miles. You could do this individually or as part of a team, with your starting point being your unit, ship’s current location or your affiliated town. Raising sponsorship will help your charity care for you, your family and oppos.

Register now and measure up to the challenge! Search ‘Road to Twickenham’ on the Virgin Money Giving website or contact: [fundraising@rnrmc.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@rnrmc.org.uk) T: 023 9254 8289

Registered charity in England and Wales (1117794) and Scotland (SC041898).

the road to TWICKENHAM

[rnrmc.org.uk/roadtotwickenham](http://rnrmc.org.uk/roadtotwickenham)

ROYAL NAVY & ROYAL MARINES CHARITY

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## 10,000 miles at sea – on bikes

ROYAL Navy servicemen Tim Cox, Shawn Savage and Duncan Barnes have successfully completed their mammoth 10,000-mile cycling challenge on board HMS Richmond to raise money for Asthma UK.

Between them they cycled 10,000 miles in six months – over 3,300 miles each – using the ship's exercise bikes to meet their target.

But it wasn't all plain sailing as the boys encountered quite a few obstacles along the way.

"I think it's fair to say that we had a lot of obstacles; rough seas have made it feel like being on a roller coaster at times and extremely hot weather conditions have made it feel like a sauna," said Tim, who was diagnosed with asthma years ago.

"We would love to raise £3,000 but we'll have to wait and see – it's been difficult trying to promote our JustGiving page whilst we've been deployed overseas."

You can still offer your support to Apples, Digger and Lily by visiting [uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/applescox](http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/applescox)

## Funding for four

THE charity chest has been opened at Britannia Royal Naval College to provide donations to four good causes.

Representatives from the Friends of Stoke Fleming School, the Rowcroft Hospice, the Soldiers, Sailors and Airman's Families Association (SSAFA) and the Dartmouth Sea Cadets were invited to the college to receive cheques totalling £1,488.

The money was raised through a variety of events held at BRNC, including a cake sale and a 'man v food' eating competition.

Sarah Simnett, from Stoke Fleming School, said: "The donation of £200 will help us to create a 'reading school' where all our children have access to a wide range of reading materials and dedicated reading areas across the classes."

The £1,000 donated to the Dartmouth Sea Cadets will help fund activities for more young people within the town.

A cake sale organised by Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Cadets provided the £104 donation to SSAFA.

The donation of £183 for the Rowcroft Hospice was also raised by the RFA Cadets.

## Marathon to aid MS fund

A WOMAN is planning to run the Paris Marathon next month in memory of her late father.

Vivienne Gawley aims to raise money for the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

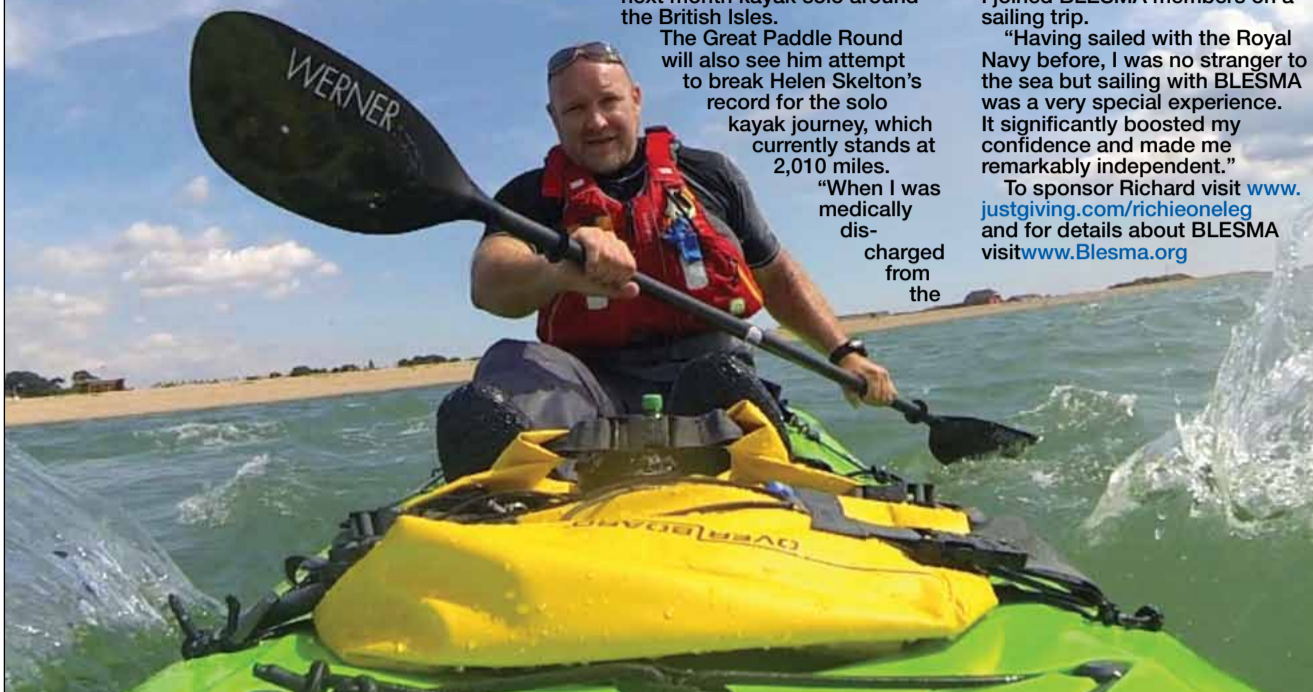
Her father Trevor, whose nickname was Yarpie, was an Able Seaman between 1980 and 1985.

He was medically discharged after being diagnosed with MS and died at the age of 29.

Vivienne said: "I am running this marathon not only in memory of him, but to all those others that lost their battle with the disease and for those that are battling with it now."

To sponsor Vivienne visit [www.justgiving.com/vivienne-gawley](http://www.justgiving.com/vivienne-gawley)

## Richard's ready to break record



FORMER Royal Navy seaman Richard Hunt is in training for his 2,300-mile challenge in aid of BLESMA - The Limbless Veterans.

Richard, 43, who lost his left leg above the knee following complications with surgery, will next month kayak solo around the British Isles.

The Great Paddle Round will also see him attempt to break Helen Skelton's record for the solo kayak journey, which currently stands at 2,010 miles.

"When I was medically discharged from the

Navy I was devastated," said Richard, who lives at Fareham.

"It wasn't until BLESMA became involved, that my life began to change for the better.

"Once I had been through rehabilitation and learnt how to walk again on a prosthetic limb, I joined BLESMA members on a sailing trip.

"Having sailed with the Royal Navy before, I was no stranger to the sea but sailing with BLESMA was a very special experience.

It significantly boosted my confidence and made me remarkably independent."

To sponsor Richard visit [www.justgiving.com/richieoneleg](http://www.justgiving.com/richieoneleg) and for details about BLESMA visit [www.Blesma.org](http://www.Blesma.org)

# Getting stuck in at school's gardens

TRAINEE Royal Navy submariners have been lending their support to St Stephens Community Primary School in Saltash by helping to spruce up the grounds.

The budding submariners spent the day out of their own classroom to carry out a range of tasks from clearing bushes at the front of the school to giving the railings a lick of paint.

They also dug out to overhaul a fenced area at the back of the school giving it a general tidy up and removing overgrowth.

Headteacher Martin Watkins said: "These jobs have needed to be done for a while, so it was great to have the Naval students come across and do them for us."

"We have a lot of connections with the Services and a number of our families include Service personnel.

"We're very proud of these links and it therefore seems fitting to have had these young



● The trainee submariners clear the quiet area at the back of the school  
Picture: Dave Sherfield

people here doing the work for us. It actually makes it all the more special."

The trainees have spent nine weeks in the classroom at HMS Drake where they have been

learning how to operate beneath the waves.

Writer (Submariner) Chris King, 22, from Callington, said: "Being a local lad I know several people who came to this school.

"I think it's great that we were able to help the community after completing the latest stage of our training.

"It's good too that we were able to come in and get the work done perhaps sooner than the school may have been able to do on their own.

"Being there helped to build the camaraderie amongst us all. It was really great to get out of the classroom and get stuck into something we're not used to doing."

Following a period of leave the trainees will move on to the final stage of their training in their bid to qualify as submariners.

This will take place on board an operational submarine where they will be expected to put into practise everything they have learned in the classroom.

The training will culminate with the students' final tests. Those who make the grade will then be presented with their dolphins, the coveted emblem of the Submarine Service.

# Visit cements support



● Capt Dainton led a visit to the RNBT's Pembroke House

THE Commanding Officer of HMS Collingwood led a delegation to visit the Royal Navy Benevolent Trust's care home Pembroke House.

Capt Steve Dainton chatted to the residents of the Gillingham home during a tour of the facilities and saw the activities on offer.

Artist Bill Vowden impressed with his paintings of animals, landscapes and submariners.

Capt Dainton even suggested commissioning Bill to paint him a picture.

The guests also had an opportunity to sample the homemade cuisine during lunch.

The visit continues to cement the support HMS Collingwood and Victory Squadron has with the RNBT.

Victory Squadron has dedicated Pembroke House as their affiliated charity, with staff and students lending their support at the summer garden party each year.

■ An outbreak of man flu reduced the RNBT's grant committee meeting to three people for the first time in many years.

The twice-weekly meetings are required for the fast turnaround of grant applications – and despite the shortage of members, the applications were dealt with.

If you feel you could give something back to your peers and could spare an hour, either on a Monday or Thursday (or both) and you would like to join the committee please contact the Trust on 02392 690112 or visit [www.rnbt.org.uk](http://www.rnbt.org.uk)

## Holidays help the whole family

YOUNG people are being offered the chance to sign up for one of SSAFA's exciting adventure holidays and this summer the Forces charity has added an extra break for older children to its popular scheme.

The breaks are tailor-made for young people with an additional need or disability, their siblings and young carers, and give children the opportunity to make new friends and build their confidence in a safe and secure environment.

They also have the opportunity to challenge themselves with a range of exciting activities, such as horse-riding, abseiling, kayaking and archery.

Staffed by a dedicated team, including trained volunteers, the holidays not only give children the chance to gain some independence, they also give families an opportunity to spend quality time with their other children and recharge their batteries safe in the knowledge that their child is well cared for.

The full cost of the breaks is covered by SSAFA but parents are asked to transport their children to and from the holidays and contribute a small amount towards pocket money.

The following breaks are available for this year:

■ May 25 – 31 Siblings & Young Carers ages 8-12. Fairthorne Manor, Southampton. Deadline for applications March 14.

■ Aug 2 – 7 Additional Needs & Disability Break, ages 8-13, Calvert Trust, Exmoor. Deadline: April 14.

■ Aug 23 – 25 Additional Needs & Disability Break, ages 14-16, Venue TBC. Deadline: April 14.

SSAFA would not be able to operate the Short Breaks Scheme without a team of dedicated coaches and more volunteers are needed.

You must be over 18 years of age.

Parents, carers and potential volunteers should contact the Short Breaks Team on 020 7463 9275 or [hannah.w@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:hannah.w@ssafa.org.uk) for further information.

## Car rally to aid charities

DRIVING skills will be put to the test in this year's Race for Freedom.

Cars driven by serving or former Servicemen and women will be taking part in a seven-day car rally across France and Spain in September.

Organisers hope to raise £5,000 to be shared between the RMCTF and the RNRM Children's Fund.

The participants will also be joined by members of the South of France Jaguar Enthusiasts Club.

The rally cars will be leaving Dover on September 1.

This year's route will take the drivers through France and Spain, concentrating on the mountainous regions of the Pyrennes and the Andorra ranges.

The race will culminate in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Cockleshell Heroes memorial in Bordeaux.

For more information visit [www.raceforfreedom.co.uk](http://www.raceforfreedom.co.uk) or the Race for Freedom Facebook

## Seahawk trainers saluted

TWO members of HMS Seahawk Field Gun crew have been saluted for their hard work and commitment to Culdrose.

CPO John 'Jumper' Collins, the First Trainer, and PO Dave Robson, the Buffer, picked up their Captain's Awards from Capt Mark Garratt, the Commanding Officer of Culdrose.

The trainers have been the main architects of success for field gun crews at Culdrose. Seahawk competes in the annual Brickwoods Field Gun Competition at HMS Collingwood, Fareham.

The event attracts up to 22 crews from the Royal Navy, the Army and RAF as well as Gibraltar and NATO HQ in Naples.

CPO Collins joined Culdrose in December 2010 and volunteered to be First Trainer for the field gun team.

He set about preparing a crew for the 2011 competition, the Culdrose and Yeovilton Air Days in July and two weeks' worth of runs against HMS Heron at the Edinburgh Tattoo in August.

Approaching these challenges with enthusiasm and tenacity, he led Seahawk to second place in the Second Plate final, narrowly losing to Heron at their Air Day, but winning the majority of runs at the tattoo.

The 2012 season began without a Field Gun Officer or Buffer, and for a time 'Jumper' Collins was the sole member of the Field Gun Command Team conducting all three roles, as well as organising and conducting pre-season training.

He was soon joined by PO Robson, who made all necessary arrangements for the crew's attendance at Collingwood.

Seahawk's crew won a place in the final with a creditable fifth overall, improving on 2011.

Last year saw Seahawk have their best year yet.

The crew easily took a place in the final with the fourth fastest aggregate time, and had there not been an unfortunate slip during the final run, it is widely believed they would have achieved second overall.

Despite losing many members to deployments, assignments and injury in preparing for Air Days, the men worked tirelessly recruiting and training a competitive crew – and were rewarded with six wins out of six.

"CPO Collins and PO Robson have undertaken their Field Gun roles willingly and to impressive effect despite also conducting busy jobs within the station," said Lt Cdr Dave Quate, Seahawk's Field Gun Officer.

"Over the last three years HMS Seahawk's Field Gun Crew have gone from strength to strength and enjoyed ever greater successes."

### United nations

THERE was a touch of the United Nations around RN Air Station Culdrose when Welsh veterans helped Service personnel at the English establishment celebrate a Scottish tradition.

Members of the Royal Welsh Comrades Association from Newport – including two Chelsea Pensioners – were hosted by CPO Mark Houston, of 771 Naval Air Squadron, the Cornish station's search and rescue unit.

And one of the highlights was the WOs and SRs Mess Burns Night supper, celebrating the life and poetry of Robert Burns.

The veterans – including former AB Arthur Gallivan, stationed at Culdrose in the early 1960s – toured the base and met members of the Fleet Air Arm squadrons based there.



● Lt Phillip Morgan, Lt Cdr Heather Lane and Lt Cdr Ian Pratt on the sofas of the *This Morning* programme at the ITV London Studios

# Media specialists in town (and studio)

TWENTY media operations specialists from the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) have sharpened their skills by meeting some of the Civil Service's most senior communications professionals.

The day-long visit to Whitehall was organised by two members of the RNR's Media Operations Specialisation (MOS) who work for the Civil Service in their civilian life.

They also invited some of their colleagues from their Army Reserve counterpart, the Media Operations Group – and took the opportunity to look at the workings of a television studio.

First up was the Cabinet Office for a briefing on the future of government communications, an overview of life in a departmental press office and a digital media workshop.

Later the venue switched to the Department for International Development (DFID).

This was an opportunity to learn about communicating the UK's response to the recent natural disaster in the Philippines.

Two Royal Navy warships – destroyer HMS Daring and helicopter carrier HMS Illustrious – worked closely with DFID to deliver aid ashore.

The programme also included a visit to the historic Admiralty Boardroom, from where the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty ran the Royal Navy for over 200 years, together with the customary photo-call outside Number 10 Downing Street.

Those attending reflected a range of civilian jobs to be found in the Royal Naval Reserve, including a marketing manager for a major electronics company, a theatrical lighting director, a university lecturer and the managing director of a family-owned manufacturing company.

Lt Cdr Mark Hankey has recently become head of the

Media Operations Specialisation having just returned from an operational deployment to Afghanistan.

He said: "The media is an inescapable feature of modern military operations, and reservists from the Media Operation Specialisation are an enduring source of expertise and experience for the Royal Navy.

"Communications is not an add-on or an optional extra, but a skill which requires continual training to remain effective.

"The opportunity to learn from Whitehall's professionals has been a hugely valuable opportunity."

Alex Aiken, Executive Director for Government Communications, said: "The Civil Service is exceptionally proud of our reservists – and determined to be a supportive employer.

"I hope today can be the start of a strong, productive relationship between the Government Communication Service and the Royal Naval Reserve's media specialists, and I recommend other communicators consider the benefits that joining the reserves can bring."

Lt Tamar Howard-Pearce works for the Department of Transport in civilian life, and was one of the organisers of the event.

"One of the reasons I joined the Royal Naval Reserve is because it allows me to learn new skills which are useful in my civilian career – so it was great to be able to host my colleagues from the RNR in Whitehall.

"There are so many areas where we can share knowledge and skills."

The group also called in at ITV's London Studios on the South Bank, a visit organised by studio manager and MOS officer Sub Lt Ritchie Wilkinson.

Although more used to being off-camera, they stepped forward to create a ten-minute 'programme' to familiarise



● Lt Cdr Sacha Brooks, Lt Richard Scarth, London Studios camera supervisor Chris Owen (facing camera) and Lt Cdr Greg Young (white shirt, in foreground) handle the equipment on the ITV London Studios *This Morning* set  
Pictures: Lt Jeremy Oliver

themselves with the production of a live TV show, using the set and cameras of *This Morning*, which is normally presented by Holly Willoughby and Phillip Schofield.

The government's Future Reserves 2020 study has set out plans to expand the use of Britain's reserve forces – including those whose job is to communicate the work of the Armed Forces and escort journalists in operational theatres.

In the past few years, Royal Naval Reserve media specialists have filled headquarters roles in Afghanistan, Iraq, Bahrain, Naples and the UK.

They have also served at sea off the coasts of Libya and Somalia, in the Gulf and the Caribbean as well as at the London Olympics.

The day-to-day work of media operations includes escorting journalists to ships and operational theatres, briefing senior officers before interviews, generating stories and photographs, monitoring foreign media, training personnel prior to deployment, and shielding Service personnel and their loved ones in emotionally-charged situations.

Anyone interested in joining the Royal Naval Reserve can find out more at [www.royalnavy.mod.uk/navyreserves](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/navyreserves)

## Trainees' homage to Scott

ENGINEERING students at HMS Sultan celebrated the achievements of Robert Scott on the anniversary of his expedition reaching the South Pole.

The group of 23 Phase Two trainees undergoing their Engineering Technicians Initial Career Course (ETICC) within the Defence School of Marine Engineering are the latest class to pass out to their first sea drafts.

As part of their final week students produce a presentation based on leadership, selecting the focus of their brief themselves – in this case, a presentation on Robert Falcon Scott's heroic expedition to the South Pole.

Using an atmospheric audio backdrop of howling wind, with a tent erected in the theatre to enhance their presentation, students conjured up the harshness of the South Pole.

Props included the skis used by PO Edgar Evans – who died at the foot of the Beardmore Glacier during the return march – loaned by the WOs and SRs Mess of HMS Excellent.

During Scott's preparations for the 1910 Terra Nova expedition he learned that Roald Amundsen had commenced a Norwegian expedition, igniting the ill-fated 'Race to the Pole'.

Using a large-scale map, the students were able to compare the routes taken by both parties – Scott reached the Pole on January 17 1912, to find Amundsen had beaten him by 33 days.

Extracts from letters were read out, demonstrating the grit, determination and cheerful attitude of Scott and his team. The final reading came from Scott's last entry.

The trainees, who are now joining their first ships, later attended their passing out parade 102 years ago to the day of Captain Scott reaching the Pole.

ET(ME) Michael Robinson said: "We looked at a variety of leaders that we could have studied and decided, as a group, that it was important to mark the anniversary of Scott reaching the South Pole."

He added: "Despite the expedition's ill-fated outcome, Scott's story still remains an inspiration for us today, especially as we start our own adventures of joining up with our first ships."

Divisional Officer CPO Nigel 'Curly' Watts said: "The standard of presentations that are delivered by ETICC courses are normally very high, however the trainees have raised the bar once more with the efforts they have shown, in a thought-provoking presentation."

### Genesis of a relationship

MUSICIAN Mike Rutherford has written about his Royal Naval family background in his new autobiography.

The former Genesis axeman is the son of Capt William Rutherford, one-time Captain of Whale Island at the Gunnery School.

In *The Living Years* Rutherford recalls his career from Charterhouse School, where Genesis was formed, through to global fame.

Rutherford's progress is a counterpoint to his relationship with his father, a reserved World War 2 naval officer, who was nevertheless a proud supporter of his son's career.

The musician contacted Andy Godfrey at his father's old establishment at Whale Island, for Capt Rutherford's Service records, and was also put in touch with retired RN Cdr Alastair Wilson, who provided a 'context' for the officer's career in terms of responsibilities.

# Worlds apart

## Siblings reunited at sea



● WO Simon Hanson on board HMS Westminster as he trains for the London Marathon

### Tough run-in for Simon

PUTTING in the miles in preparation for a marathon is tough.

Putting in the miles in preparation for a marathon when you are confined to the metal decks of a warship in a hot climate is very tough.

But that is what WO2 Simon Hanson has had to do as he prepares to run the London Marathon for the RNLI.

WO Hanson is currently on board HMS Westminster, which was due back in the UK from her deployment east of Suez shortly after *Navy News* went to press.

By that time WO Hanson will have got some good training under his belt as he looks forward to making his debut on the streets of the capital next month.

Marathons feature prominently in WO Hanson's life – he and his wife live in Inverness, which means a round-trip of 1,200 miles every weekend to visit home when his ship is in her base port of Portsmouth.

WO Hanson deployed last August, and has had to put up with some unusual problems.

“My training has to be conducted on board the ship, which involves running around the upper deck where seven full laps equal a mile,” he said.

“Unfortunately, due to flying operations, the flight deck is often out of bounds, so I have to tailor my runs through a small cross-ship passageway.

“During my deployment overseas, I have however been lucky enough to run in some fabulous places including Goa and the Seychelles, to name a couple.”

He hopes to finish under 3h 30m – not surprisingly some way short of his personal best of 3h 10m 54s.

A VETERAN submariner has been given the chance to compare his time in the Royal Navy with that of modern sailors when he was invited on board the namesake of his Cold War boat.

Ron Raymond, 77, is one of the last-known sailors to have served in the original HMS Astute, an Amphion-class vessel launched towards the end of World War 2.

Earlier this year Ron was treated to a tour of the nuclear-powered Astute while she was alongside in Clyde Naval Base.

During the day the Grangemouth man met with some of the 98 crew on board and explored the hi-tech submarine.

“HMS Astute is a lovely boat,” said Ron.

“The conditions on board are a hundred times better than I was used to on the original Astute.

“One of the things that stands out in my mind is the quality of food we had on the old submarines.

“After a while the bread would start to get green and mouldy and we’d be living on what’s known in the Navy as ‘babies’ heads’ – that’s tinned steak and kidney puddings.

“Touring today’s Astute was fantastic. I am sure I will keep in touch with the crew through the Grangemouth Submarine Association.”

Although the original Astute was commissioned in 1945 she did not see action in the war – though she did have a role in the Cold War in the late 1950s, by which time Ron was part of her crew.



● Ron Raymond meets crewmen on board HMS Astute

Picture: LA(Phot) Will Haigh

“During one deployment with the original Astute we were involved in testing anti-submarine defences around the USA,” said Ron.

“The Americans had laid hydrophones around the coast and we were playing the part of a Soviet submarine to test them.

“We had US and Canadian Navy ships looking for us, but managed to slip past them and fire two dummy missiles.

“The Captain had me sew a

Jolly Roger with two missiles on it to mark the occasion. We flew it as we returned to port.”

Today’s HMS Astute – displacing 7,400 tonnes compared to her predecessor’s 1,620 tons – is one of the most sophisticated boats on the planet.

Capable of circumnavigating the globe without resurfacing, she is the most powerful attack submarine ever built for the Royal Navy.

CO Cdr Stephen Walker said:

“After hearing about Ron’s service with the original Astute you realise how far submarine technology has come.

“Today’s HMS Astute is relatively luxurious in comparison to the submarines of Ron’s day, but there is the same professionalism, sense of duty and spirit of adventure which unites submariners from all eras and nationalities.

“It was a pleasure to have Ron on board.”



● Sgt Neil Craven with his grandfather Stan and father Michael

### Family tradition

WHEN Sgt Neil Craven became an Army Physical Trainer at the end of last year he became the third successive generation in his family to make a career in military PT.

Grandfather Stan Craven served in the Royal Navy from 1950-74, finishing as a Staff Chief PTI and representing the Navy and Combined Services at cricket along the way.

And Neil’s father Michael served in the Merchant Navy

for four years before joining the Senior Service in 1975, qualifying as a PTI in 1978 and specialising in adventurous training.

Neil joined the Army in 2006, and while serving with the REME was recommended for selection to the Army PT branch.

A green beret, Neil finished his PT course at Aldershot in December – and his proud father (who now lives in North Carolina in the USA) and grandfather were there to see the ceremony.



● Maltese naval photographer Patrick Dagostino presents one of his pictures of HMS Dragon to the destroyer’s Commanding Officer, Capt Iain Lower. Mr Dagostino – who operates under the name World Navy Club – presents such pictures to every ship that visits the Mediterranean island. Mr Dagostino said the Maltese had waited a long time to see a Type 45 destroyer sail into Grand Harbour

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## Hull mark diamond jubilee

HULL branch celebrated its diamond anniversary with two days of events at the turn of the year.

On the last Saturday of 2013 a formal dinner was held in the Holiday Inn Express Hotel, Hull, attended by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of East Yorkshire and Kingston-upon-Hull, Trevor Larsen, the Lord Mayor of Kingston-upon-Hull and Admiral of the Humber, Cllr Nadine Fudge, the Chairman of the Hull Sea Cadets, National Chairman S/M Chris Dovey and Area Secretary S/M John Rooney.

Youngsters from the city's Sea Cadet unit TS Iron Duke also attended.

During the evening the 60th Diamond Jubilee Certificate was presented to the branch, and a further presentation was made to retiring standard bearer S/M Jock Ogston.

The Deputy Lord Lieutenant made a speech regarding his and his family's connection with the sea and gave a brief historical view of Hull's maritime activities.

The following day a combined service of Christmas and Naval hymns took place in the 700-year-old Holy Trinity Church, conducted by Canon the Rev Neal Barnes and branch chaplain the Rev Duncan Harris.

There was a parade of standards, including that of 11 Area, and many standards from the region.

The Hull branch standard was rededicated during the service.

A buffet was enjoyed after the formal ceremonies, after which the event moved to the Minerva pub and the Minerva Pier, where the Hull branch Naval Service memorial stands.

## Fair and party

CHARD branch raised £155 at the mayor's charity Christmas fair, where the shipmates manned a stall selling festive fare and goods.

Members of the branch also helped celebrate the 39th wedding anniversary of S/Ms Roy and Anne Allin – the date happened to coincide with the branch's Christmas dinner at the Golden Fleece inn and country hotel in the Somerset town.

## Memorable new number

SPVA's Veterans UK helpline has a new, memorable freephone number. The new number – 0808 1914 2 18 – represents the start and end dates of the Great War, and it is hoped that the link to such an historic event will create a more memorable number.

The Veterans UK helpline will now be open longer – from 7.30am to 6.30pm (5pm Fridays) on all working days.

Currently those calling the helpline out of hours get through to an answer-phone service enabling a message to be left and advising of a next working day call-back, but as part of improvements the SPVA has negotiated a partnership with Combat Stress and with the Samaritans, whose helplines operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This new agreement will allow out-of-hours callers to the SPVA helpline to opt to be routed to Combat Stress or the Samaritans, so that callers in a crisis can access help out of hours.

# Veterans urged to return to beaches

VETERANS are being urged to make the pilgrimage to Normandy this June for what is likely to be the final major commemoration of D-Day involving the men who were there.

Lottery funding is available for Normandy veterans to help pay for them to go back to the beaches for what will be a series of events of international significance.

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines will be represented in strength at commemorations on both sides of the Channel, details of which will be announced later this spring.

Events already confirmed include a mass parachute drop by 16 Air Assault Brigade on June 5 around Ranville – the first village in France liberated in 1944 – and the unveiling of a statue to Field Marshal Montgomery in Colleville-Montgomery on the opposite bank of the Orne.

On June 6 – 70 years to the day after the landings – there will be an Anglo-French service in Bayeux Cathedral organised by the Royal British Legion and the Normandy Veterans Association, followed by a special event at the town's Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery and its poignant memorial: *We, whom William conquered, have set free the Conqueror's fatherland.*

A number of veterans will also attend an international ceremony organised by the French government, and a service held by the Normandy Veterans Association at Arromanches.

The 70th anniversary of Operation Overlord – and its naval element, Operation Neptune – will be the last to be commemorated by the Normandy Veterans Association.

Later this year, the association plans to officially disband and lay up its national standard at a service at St Margaret's, Westminster.

Personnel from all three Services will provide logistical and ceremonial support to the Normandy 70 commemorations.

Veterans wishing to return to

Normandy in June will be able to apply for financial support from the Big Lottery Fund and its Heroes' Return initiative, which helps World War 2 soldiers, sailors and airmen and their spouses, widows and widowers, and accompanying helpers to undertake the journey.

Details of how to apply can be found at [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog\\_heroes\\_return](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_heroes_return)

Some 22,000 Commonwealth Servicemen and women are laid to rest in 18 official CWGC cemeteries across Normandy as well as village churchyards and

smaller burial grounds.

Those graves and graveyards are undergoing a major renovation by the Commission in anticipation of this summer's events.

Speaking about the plans for the anniversary, Defence Minister Lord Astor said: "I'm delighted that the Ministry of Defence will be supporting the veterans of this historic campaign as they gather to remember on the beaches of Normandy.

"The 70th anniversary will be an occasion for us all to pay fitting tribute to those who fought for the liberation of Europe, and

I know that our Servicemen and women will be honoured to take part."

Brig David Baines, President of the Normandy Veterans Association said: "We are working with the Ministry of Defence and others on what will be an important last act of remembrance for the Association.

"I encourage all veterans to join us in Normandy if they are able."

**N**avy News will commemorate the 70th anniversary of Operation Neptune with special supplements in our May and June editions.



● From left: Cyril Small, Gordon Smart, Cyril Tolchard, Thomas Warden and Roy Young at the medal presentation ceremony at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton  
Picture: PO(Phot) Mez Merrill

## Convoy men receive medals

VETERANS in their 80s and 90s, alongside families of veterans who have passed away, were honoured at the Fleet Air Arm Museum for their role in the World War 2 serving north of the Arctic Circle.

Six veterans between the ages of 86 and 96 and three families representing veterans who recently died were presented with their Arctic Star medals by the CO of RNAS Yeovilton, Cdre Jock Alexander, with local MP David Laws, Mayor of Yeovil Manny Roper and Graham Cole, Chairman of Augusta Westland.

The Arctic Star was commissioned last year to recognise the outstanding bravery of Servicemen who delivered vital aid to the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945, as well as anyone who served in the Arctic Circle during the

war – including Narvik in 1940 and Fleet Air Arm and X-Craft submarine raids on the Tirpitz.

The men on the convoys were under constant threat from U-boats, air and surface ship attacks. They also had to deal with extreme weather conditions and Arctic temperatures, making it a truly perilous journey.

Addressing the veterans and families, Cdre Alexander said: "A pilot by trade, I was a captain of a small ship for a short time doing fish protection duties, so I know what rough weather is all about – but I can't comprehend the weather you went through north of the Arctic Circle.

"I'd like to thank you for allowing me the honour of presenting you with this medal."

Gordon Smart, 94, who completed ten Arctic Convoy runs to Murmansk and Archangel

in HMS Beagle, summed up the experience as "blasted cold!"

It was a sentiment echoed by the other five veterans at the presentation, including John Fay, aged 92, who served with the Fleet Air Arm, and Roderick Raymond, 87, who said: "You had to chip ice off the deck and the guns by hand."

Joyce Bentley accepted the medal on behalf of her husband Herbert, who died on Christmas Eve.

"He had been so excited about coming to the presentation," said Joyce.

"Although I am so very sad, I am here for him. It's been a lovely thing – I'm so glad I came with my family."

Cyril Tolchard, 89, served as an able seaman on two convoys in 1944 and 1945, and on one return leg was involved in a rescue mission to help save 200 people who were stranded and starving on an island close to Norway.

Others receiving medals were Thomas Warden, 86, torpedo operator Cyril Small 89, and Roy Young, 96, who said: "I am no hero. I just survived."

Also at the presentation was Andrew Jones, representing his late father William, and Katharine White was presented with a medal on behalf of her grandfather Gordon Mason.

Year 6 pupils from Huish Primary School were also invited to the ceremony – they are studying wartime rationing, and dressed as evacuees to attend and hear the veterans' recollections.

## John was blockade runner

TRAFFORD branch has reported the death of one of its members – a veteran believed to be the last British survivor of a daring dash for freedom from neutral Sweden.

S/M John Hague died just before Christmas at the age of 93, having signed up as a member of the branch on commissioning night, April 23 1986.

He rarely missed a meeting until his appearances were restricted by ill health, and was always willing to lend a hand with fundraising.

But it took plenty of persuasion for S/M John to reveal details of his war record, originally printed in Area 10's *Vanguard* magazine.

John joined the Royal Navy in 1938, but as he was interned in a neutral country he was unable to continue in service and was discharged in February 1942.

He had been serving in HMS Hunter, which was sunk in the First Battle of Narvik in April 1940.

Rescued by German sailors, John and other survivors were marched through deep snow and sub-zero temperatures, surviving off iron rations, until they were released at the Swedish border.

He found work on a farm, but later that year met up with a Royal Navy CPO who was seeking volunteers for a daring escape back to Britain.

John, aged 20 at the time, was left in no doubt that he would be putting his life in extreme danger – but he signed up to what would eventually be known as Operation Rubble.

The sailors had to wait for the right moment – which came in late January 1941, when the group surreptitiously boarded five Norwegian freighters which had been scheduled to sail to the UK with valuable war supplies, a voyage thwarted by the Germans.

The five ships, ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 tons, sailed out of Gothenburg on a moonless, foggy evening into the Kattegat, where they inadvertently fell in with a German convoy.

The Germans only realised anything was amiss when the five ships – including John's, the oil tanker MV Ranja – broke away, running the gauntlet of the Luftwaffe and German warships (including the battlecruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau) in the Skagerrak, as well as minefields.

They were fired on, and Ranja suffered casualties, but at a flat-out ten knots the Ranja reached the North Sea by dawn and around a day after the scattered group of blockade-runners were met by British warships and escorted into Kirkwall in Orkney with their cargoes of steel, machine tools, aircraft parts, guns and oil.

Along with the other volunteers, John received a telegram from the Admiralty thanking them for their spirited and courageous actions.

## Never too late

LIMAVADY shipmates welcomed their newest recruit – 92-year-old S/M Thomas James McFarland from Omagh.

Area 12 president S/M Peter Campbell officially welcomed S/M Tommy by presenting him with his RNA badge.

S/M Tommy served from 1941-46 and again from 1953-54 as a bunting tosser – a signaller.

During the war he saw service mostly in small minesweepers (MMS43) with the Royal Naval Patrol Service, Arctic and Atlantic convoys, and his call back to Service in the 1950s was spent on the Rock in HMS Rooke.



## Do you meet the standard?

THE National Standard Bearers Competition will take place at HMS Collingwood in Fareham on May 17.

Areas are invited to submit the names of qualified standard bearers for this event, which is open to area standard bearers, deputy area standard bearers, and the serving National Standard Bearer and his deputy.

Deputy standard bearers are to be equipped with their branch standard and associated equipment: sling, gloves and drapes.

Where an area has not held an area competition, a nominated standard bearer is permitted to enter.

All standard bearers holding trophies are asked to return them, cleaned and polished, on the day of the competition, and competitors are reminded that they are responsible for arranging their own accommodation.

Names should be forwarded to S/M Mick Kieran (NCA) at [mick.kieran@virginmedia.com](mailto:mick.kieran@virginmedia.com) or by phone on 07593 573301.

The closing date is April 17.

## New for old

MARCH branch plan to dedicate a replacement standard for the March Naval Old Comrades Association at a service in the summer.

The standard of the disbanded group was destroyed in a fire at the Church of St Mary in 2010, and it is hoped restoration work will be completed this year.

Shipmates have bought a new standard, and will dedicate it and lay it up in the church at 11am on July 6 – and as that date also represents the 10th anniversary of the commissioning of the branch shipmates will celebrate this with a garden party and BBQ following the service.



● Members of Lt Gilbert Welman's family and representatives of the RN Submarine School gather at Rame Head to honour the 11 men who died when submarine A7 was lost off the Cornish coast in January 1914

# Family gathers to honour men of A7

THE crew of a Royal Navy submarine lost 100 years ago in Whitsand Bay have been remembered during an informal memorial service at Rame Head in Cornwall.

Representatives from the RN Submarine School at HMS Raleigh gathered with the great-nieces and nephews of Lt Gilbert Welman, the CO of HM Submarine A7, to remember him and the ten crewmen who lost their lives on January 16 1914.

The memorial was organised by Mrs Pamela-Jane Shaw, whose paternal grandmother was a younger sister of Lt Welman, who was known to the family as Gibby.

A group of 14 family members travelled from across the country to attend the service.

Prayers and poems were recited, and the names of the crew were read out by CPO Jeff Crawford and PO Matt Bradley, from the Submarine School.

The youngest member of the family, Sophie Catlin – Lt Welman's great-great niece – laid a bouquet of 11 white roses, one for each of the crew.

Mrs Shaw said: "There were several reasons why we wanted to remember Gibby and HM Submarine A7 in a special way.

"We're a close-knit family and dearly loved our respective grandparents, Gibby's brother, Paul, and his sister, Loveday, whose fond and funny memories of their brother gave us a warm, vivid picture of him.

"Also, there's something particularly terrible about what happened to the A7, but we were fortunate in knowing where the wreck lies, and in having, at Rame Head, an ideal place to gather and remember Gibby and his crew.

"Initially it was just to be a family occasion, but we were very touched when CPO Crawford asked whether a small delegation from the Submarine School could come to show respect."

The A7 was the first to be fitted with experimental hydroplanes and was conducting trials off Rame Head in January 1914.

She was in company with HMS Onyx, gunboat HMS Pigmy and five other submarines.

At 11.10am the A7 dived to conduct another mock attack on HMS Pigmy, but the attack failed to materialise and Pigmy hoisted the black ball signal for



● A-class boats – A7 is at the rear, with pennant number 17 on the fin

the flotilla to resurface. A7 failed to respond.

Pigmy steamed towards Rame Head to search for her, and when bubbles were seen on the surface the ship signalled Devonport for immediate assistance.

With only six hours' supply of oxygen on board A7, by nightfall hopes of rescuing the crew had vanished.

Pigmy had left a marker buoy, but before the rescue attempt could begin the buoy broke loose in heavy seas and drifted away.

It was thought that A7 must also have drifted, so the search was initially conducted too far from land.

The submarine was eventually located on January 21, but two attempts to raise her failed, and at the end of February the operation was abandoned.

A memorial service was held at sea on March 5.

Mrs Shaw said: "My great-

uncle was due to be married and his fiancée and one of my aunts were among those in Plymouth waiting for news.

"When it became clear that all the crew had been lost there were messages of condolence from King George V, Queen Alexandra, the Kaiser, Admiral von Tirpitz and the heads of state from most of the European countries as well as the USA, Japan and Chile.

"Submarine technology was in its infancy and lots of questions were being asked in Parliament and in the media about the safety, but then World War 1 broke out and attention moved elsewhere."

The crew who died alongside Lt Welman were ABs Charles Russell, Frank Harris, Frederick Jewell and Ernest Dyer; L/Stokers John Northam and Lancelot Wagstaff; ERA 2nd class Robert Nagle; ERA 1st Class Richard Venning; PO John Crowley and Sub Lt Robert Morrison.

## Memorial project evolves

WORK on the Naval Service Memorial has been gathering pace over the past few weeks – as has fundraising activity.

Of particular note is a £50,000 donation from the Gosling Foundation, which was welcomed by RNA HQ as "wonderful news" – though money is still being collected through a donations page for the memorial on the Association website.

The Kilkenny limestone for the bowed figure arrived at sculptor Graeme Mitcheson's studio at Ashby de la Zouche, and he has already started work on carving the sailor figure from the two-tonne block. It is hoped that the BBC will film part of the process.

Limestone paving was deemed too soft for the ground conditions at the National Memorial Arboretum, which used to be a gravel workings site, and the closest alternative – white quartz – is only available in small panels, requiring too many joints.

Instead, Association officials have chosen the lightest flecked granite they could find.

## Anzio survivor mourned

A MARKET Harborough branch veteran who survived the sinking of HMS Spartan during the Allied landings at Anzio in World War 2 has died at the age of 88.

S/M Geoff Smith was an 18-year-old electrician on board Spartan when the cruiser was bombed during Operation Shingle, an amphibious bid to outflank German defences.

He was among the last surviving sailors from the 500 brought out alive.

S/M Geoff was drafted to HMS Aurora after Anzio, where his senior officer was the late British actor Kenneth More.

He went on to receive a mention in dispatches for capturing 16 German prisoners during an operation on the Greek island of Levita.

S/M Geoff's ardent wish was to pay a last visit to the Italian fishing port where 46 of his shipmates were killed on January 29 1944.

For the past 16 years, he had visited Anzio to remember his fallen shipmates – and the Mayor of Anzio said: "Geoffrey has been a hero of the last century and will be remembered by the city."

S/M Geoff, who died on January 15, leaves Betty, his wife of 68 years, a daughter and a son, as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

## Arctic Star for Paul

A WAR veteran who survived Arctic convoys and had a remarkable escape after being washed overboard in the Mediterranean has been awarded an Arctic Star medal.

S/M Paul Ashwell, of Henlow branch, was a senior rate on board light cruiser HMS Arethusa when she escorted convoys to Murmansk.

The ship later took part in operations in the Med, and during one convoy S/M Paul was washed off deck by a wave – only to be washed back onto the deck by another wave.

He later transferred from the ship shortly before she was badly damaged by an Italian air-launched torpedo which caused heavy casualties.

S/M Paul received six decorations during the war, and a further six – including two from the Russians.

## Farewell to Sandy

SHIPMATES are mourning the death of popular Lee-on-the-Solent and Stubbington branch member S/M Sandy Powell, who died in December.

S/M Sandy trained as an electrician at HMS Collingwood in the mid-1950s and served in a number of ships, including HM Ships Bulwark, Diana, Alert and Newfoundland, and he also spent time in several shore establishments, including HMS Terror in Singapore.

He left the Navy in 1984 as a CPO after 24 years' service, his career having survived a potentially sticky moment when, during a gun test, a loader used a live shell instead of a dummy with the result that an admiral's barge was sunk...

## £50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in our January edition (right) was HMS (or FPV) Jura, built by the Hall Russell shipyard, and Mr MacArthur, of Southport, wins our £50 prize for identifying her.

This month's ship (above) was one of the workhorses of the Fleet from the 1960s onwards as part of a large class of frigates.

Launched on the Clyde in late 1962, she was first commissioned in April 1964 and decommissioned almost exactly 23 years later.

She was named after a mythological figure, in this case a Roman goddess.

(1) What was her name, and (2) what did her mythological namesake represent?

We have removed the pennant number from the image.

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News,



Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY. Coupons giving the correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner. The closing date for entries is April 14.

More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our May edition. The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

### MYSTERY PICTURE 229

Name .....

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My answers: (1) .....

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[www.royal-naval-association.co.uk](http://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk)

**Project Faraday**

**On track with key changes**

DURING February the Faraday team has made good progress on most work streams.

A multi-million pound contract with Babcock Flagship Ltd has been placed for redesigning the engineering training at Collingwood and Sultan.

The redesign work is looking at how the Individual Competence Framework (ICF) is to be turned into new career courses.

The redesign work is on schedule to be finished on time with the new courses available to start from April 15.

The first Interim Fast Track selection board has taken place with those selected being loaded onto courses starting in May.

The next selection board will take place in the autumn, so if you are interested check out the Faraday team website or read RNTM 288/13.

This month the team will be focusing on how to introduce the ICF in a way that does not cause unnecessary work for people.

Work is also under way to develop the syllabus for the future professional examinations, and similar to the ICF we are looking at how to implement these changes.

The process to 'stream' the current strength is well understood; the RNTM describing this change will be issued towards the end of the month and includes details of how to apply to change streams from your provisional allocation if you believe you are suitable.

The Faraday team will let you know what has been happening during March in next month's *Navy News*, so please look out for this regular feature.

If you have any questions or comments on Faraday then please contact WO1 Sharky Ward on 93832 7441 or via e-mail at [navy-pers-faraday WO1a](mailto:navy-pers-faraday@wo1a)

# Assignments ranging from ops to ceremonial

*Drafty's corner*



**FOR this month only Drafty's Corner becomes Assignment Corner.**

The Augmentation, Crisis Manpower and Planning (ACMP) cell within CNPERS delivers prioritised Naval Service (NS) augmentation manpower, in two distinct areas; personnel deployed on current UK and multinational operations, and augmented support to a wide range of national, public, UK resilience and ceremonial events and Defence exercises.

In times of national crisis (ie national industrial action, natural disasters, state funerals) ACMP will act as the Crisis Manpower Ops room to coordinate NS personnel in support of the UK's Standing Joint Commander.

The following augmentation are to be expected in 2014:

**Commonwealth Games - Op COMET**

The Commonwealth Games will require Naval Service personnel support so the ACMP cell are looking for personnel to assist.

There are a wide range of tasks requiring differing ranks to support, from ceremonial



● HMS Illustrious, RFA Mounts Bay and HMS Bulwark pictured on Cougar 13. Lusty and Bulwark are due to take part in Cougar 14

to security and Command and Control.

At present all personnel from AB to Cdr are welcome to volunteer for this event; the required number will be in excess of 200.

The Games themselves will take place from July 22 to August 3 but an element of pre-training will be involved.

Personnel could be employed as the Venue Security Force, or as part of a Ceremonial Team or in a Supervisory C2 capacity.

Anybody wishing to volunteer for the Games should first check availability with their Line Manager and then either contact ACMP direct on 93832 3534 / 02392 623534, or volunteer via their Career Manager.

**Operational Posts**

Despite the drawdown in Afghanistan, there remain a number of interesting and exciting positions available

to personnel of all ranks and specialisations both there and in many other far flung corners of the globe.

Personnel could be augmented to Bahrain, Tampa, Oman, the UAE, Djibouti, Nigeria and even the Seychelles.

**Dual Positions**

Even if you are not augmented for an Op Tour you could still be directed to fulfil a dual assignment.

This means that as well as conducting your day job, you will be at readiness to leave your post and deploy on an operation to a specified location either in the UK (MOD, PJHQ etc) or overseas. Your Career Manager will notify you if you are in one of these posts.

Line Managers should be aware that dual assignees will be expected to conduct 2-4 weeks' exercise time per year, and may also require theatre specific Pre-

deployment training, weapons training and kit issue on taking up that assignment.

Dual Positions are usually at five to ten days' Notice To Move.

**Ceremonial Events**

2014 marks the 100th Anniversary of the beginning of the First World War and the 70th Anniversary of D-Day so it should perhaps come as no surprise that ceremonial events which require military support will be taking place throughout the country.

Personnel will be required to march in Portsmouth, Whitehaven, Exeter, Stirling, Edinburgh and Glasgow at various times of the year.

The CMCs will be trawling for suitable personnel for these events from May until November.

**Exercises**

The two Joint Warrior exercises will require augmentation in

April and October and Cougar 14 requires significant augmentation support in August. There will also be a number of smaller exercises taking place in various locations throughout the globe.

**How to get involved**

Personnel are nominated via Career Managers or CMCs for these jobs. However, a volunteer is always preferred.

If you would like to know what is available, speak in the first instance to your CM, who may put you in touch with ACMP.

There is a great deal of benefit to be taken from these short-term assignments both professionally and personally and all are encouraged to take these opportunities.

In particular, as the UK makes plans to draw down numbers in Afghanistan, anyone still hoping for an OpTour in this theatre has only a limited time remaining and should contact their CM asap.

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## Focus on offering a child a real home

THE third annual Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) adoption and fostering week takes place between March 3-9 2014.

This national event aims to educate prospective parents and carers about the processes involved, and allow them to hear from others in their area who have adopted or fostered children themselves.

In the UK, an estimated 4,000 children need adopting every year, and an additional 9,000 foster carers are needed.

To adopt or foster a child you do not have to be in a heterosexual relationship without a child; same-sex couples, couples who already have a child, and single people can adopt or foster children.

The leading charity for Armed Forces personnel is SSAFA, who welcome applications from serving personnel, regardless of sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or marital status.

More information about the support that SSAFA can provide is at [www.ssafa.org.uk/how-we-help/adoption/](http://www.ssafa.org.uk/how-we-help/adoption/).

If you want to find out more about adoption or fostering, and the entitlements and support the Naval Service provide, contact the NS Parents' Network or NS LGBT Network at [navy-nsparentsnetworkmailbox@mod.uk](mailto:navy-nsparentsnetworkmailbox@mod.uk) or at [navy-nslgbtnetworkmailbox@mod.uk](mailto:navy-nslgbtnetworkmailbox@mod.uk), or visit the website: Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Announcements.

Your local LGBT adoption and fostering events can be found at: [www.lgbtadoptfosterweek.org.uk/](http://www.lgbtadoptfosterweek.org.uk/)

## Where to look

**GALAXY**  
04-2014 – Lifetime allowance changes  
**DIBS**  
DIB01/14 – Update on the progress of the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 2015.  
DIB02/14 – Final Tranche of the Armed Forces Redundancy Programme  
DIB04/14 – The new government security classification system - practical guidance for staff  
**RNTMs**  
RNTM 007/14 – Learn to fly at the Portsmouth Naval Gliding Centre Training Week 12-16 May 2014.  
RNTM 010/14 – Safety and Readiness Check 2 – Logistics.  
**DINS**  
2014DIN01-039: Relocation allowances – rewrite of disturbance expense and movement and storage of personal effects regulations  
2014DIN01-032: Increase in the rate of excess fares allowance from April 6 2014.  
2014DIN01-029: Clarification of Preserved Rights 'Legacy' E(IS) Officers without a sea charge recommendation. This DIN supercedes 2013DIN01-188

**NEED to get your message across?**

To feature in the Navy News' Two-Six pages contact Navy Command Media – Internal Comms Staff Officer:  
Lt Cdr Emma McCormick,  
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(External) [NAVYMEDIACOMMS-IC-TL@mod.uk](mailto:NAVYMEDIACOMMS-IC-TL@mod.uk)

# Housing remains top of our to-do list for 2014

The chairwoman of the NFF, Kim Richardson joined the heads of the Royal Naval fighting arms in a brief to the Navy Board at the end of January. We thought that *Navy News* readers would like to see a précis of that brief.

First Sea Lord, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to do two things today. Make you aware of a few points of interest from 2013 and also to let you know what is firmly on our radar for 2014.

We'll start with 2013 which could count as the NFF's busiest year yet.

The team has changed over 2013; we have a different blend.

We have gained some HIVE expertise and we have a man – a retired WO to be precise. I can report that the NFF team is in fine fettle.

There is a lot going on, which doesn't scare us, but we can't afford to drop a ball.

We undertook 485 commitments and meetings in 2013.

We survey almost everyone who contacts us. Ninety-five per cent were content with the speed of the response they received from the NFF. Ninety-six per cent would contact us again and recommend us to friends and family.

The 2013 top-three recorded concerns were housing, Service issues, and signposting. Allocation of Service Families Accommodation, followed by entitlement is still causing angst.

In recent months we have noticed a marked increase in enquiries regarding the condition of accommodation, and in particular mould.

The Service Issues mainly focus on communication, in particular family support information (largely for those who live outside the port areas) and communication with deployed ships.

Assignment/deployment enquiries mainly involve family, welfare and housing concerns linked to short-notice or duration deployments. Signposting most often involves NPFS RMW and the charities. The charity we



engage with on the most regular basis is the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund.

So what were families talking about? Inability to plan life, short-notice changes, the package and moving goalposts and how we do more with less. No surprises there then.

In the last year we have been to all but one RM Commando unit. As you know we only go where we are invited. We had some amazing engagement with ships – HMS Somerset and HMS Illustrious stood out.

They really thought about their ships' companies and families in innovative ways. We undertook a comprehensive Scotland road trip, visiting Rosyth, Faslane and Arbroath. We spoke to serving personnel and families and toured the patch.

NEM and the future was a theme, along with allowances centred on separation. We also picked up two very serious concerns that we raised directly with the Scottish Government under the Covenant.

So to 2014. We have a Prime Minister who takes the time to chair an annual meeting of the Covenant Reference Group in Downing Street, and a Min AF who has an undisguised passion for the Covenant. But it still has little resonance with the RN because they think many of the commitments do not make a



● The NFF's engagement with HMS Somerset was one which stood out in 2013

difference to them. We undertook a short survey that backs this statement up. Sixteen per cent felt the Covenant had affected them positively, 10 per cent affected them negatively 74per cent affected them not at all.

Before Christmas the CO of HMS Illustrious asked our Armed Forces Covenant Coordinators to fly out and join the ship on her passage home. He wanted them to speak to every serving person on board and talk Covenant – so we educate as well as gain feedback.

The flights were booked, plans were made, and then, for good reason, the programme changed. The visit will still take place. The ship is looking at a suitable window for the Team to join them soon.

We have a new Minister, in fact we have two. I have my first formal meeting with Anna Soubry and Dr Andrew Murrison in April. They are chairing our Families Forum jointly, which will be a first.

Dr Murrison has the housing agenda and I am confident that our relationship will work well.

For the past ten years the NFF accommodation focus has been quite rightly aimed at Service Families Accommodation. What has that meant? We haven't really shown any interest in Single Living Accommodation at all.

What I have always been clear about though is that when away from home a family wants to know their serving person is in accommodation that is warm, dry and fit for purpose. In some areas that is simply not the case.

At the Royal Marines Warrant Officers Conference just before Christmas I was challenged to 'come and see where we live'. So I did. A few weeks ago, I visited Stonehouse, Chivenor and also Norton Manor camp.

I am so pleased I did. When Royal talks of Maslows hierarchy of need we should be worried. Topics for discussion included the pros and cons of SLAM accommodation – because not everyone wants it, discussions on why rec spaces have got beds in them and why they are choosing to cook for themselves and not eat the core meal on offer.

We produced a report, it has

gone out, I am now looking forward to receiving some 360° feedback on what it contains.

So what else will we be keeping a weather eye on in 2014?

We will be looking at support to dispersed families.

We will be looking at future accommodation. We know that DIO are continuing the process of transformation. The NGE (Next Generation Estates Contract) was due to be in place by now, but has been informally extended and extended. We understand it MUST be in place by this summer.

It is widely known that 50 per cent of experienced HASC staff at Aldershot have gone already. This HASC deals with all our allocations along the South Coast. We are concerned that the next round of changes could make the 2012 changes from Housing Information Centre (HIC) to Housing Allocation Service Centre look like a walk in the park.

This worries me, it is on our radar, and we are talking to DIO.

We have started to undertake some commitments with Reservists and their families and have also undertaken some discussions with the RFA to see how we can better support and engage with their families.

Holidays in term time are raising their head again. The government has moved the goalposts – only in exceptional cases may children have authorised absence for holidays. We spoke to personnel who will be contributing to Operation Cougar for the third year in succession; they rely on being able to take holidays outside of term time. They have expressed their concerns. One for our new minister next month methinks.

Please keep your eyes peeled in *Navy News* and NFF website and *Homeport* magazine for feedback about the Ministers meeting...

To contact the NFF. Write to Castaway House, 311 Twyford Road, Portsmouth, PO2 8RN. E-mail: [admin@nff.org.uk](mailto:admin@nff.org.uk) or telephone: 02392 654374.

# Help and advice 'miraculous'

THERE are many people who don't like the words 'mental health'.

But all of us would agree there are times when life is seriously tough, and it can be difficult to talk about troubles or issues, usually for fear of what others will think.

The simple truth is, it doesn't matter what you're struggling with, sometimes it just gets too much – and burying your head in the sand doesn't help.

But there's one service called [bigwhitewall.com](http://bigwhitewall.com) which offers free, safe, anonymous support 24/7 to the UK forces community (aged 16+). That includes all serving personnel, ex-forces, and families.

It's online, and has trained counsellors available at all times if you need to get something off your chest. Whether you're struggling with anxiety, stress or depression, or just feel burdened by everyday worries, the temptation is usually to just 'get on with things'.

But many people are amazed when they first come to Big White Wall that there are so many other people who feel the way that they do.

Instead of bottling things up, you can

use the support of Big White Wall to take control of your troubles.

Big White Wall provides a supportive community, trained staff online 24/7, and many practical ways to move forward. You can also take free online courses to tackle anything from anxiety to stopping smoking.

Ninety-five per cent of members say they feel better as a result of using Big White Wall, and it's helped more than 5,000 people from the Armed Forces community since 2011.

That includes people like Domino (*not her real name*).

Domino is a mother and grandmother, whose son was badly injured by an IED on his first tour of Afghanistan.

In her own words: "He's coping brilliantly, I'm not – that's why I'm here."

But Domino soon found, from her first contact with the BWW community, that she was not alone.

Others with loved ones in the forces came together on Big White Wall and discovered that as they spent so much time being strong for their families and partners,

they also needed support themselves.

The ability to find others in the same situation made a real difference: "You couldn't have come to a better place: here you will find mums, partners, veterans, dads, as well as serving members of the forces."

Now Domino has gone on to found a charity to support others like herself, and still champions Big White Wall for being there when she needed a listening ear.

Domino encourages others to share their story on Big White Wall: "Try and share your feelings on here... it has helped me enormously."

Many who are ex-forces have also found help from BWW.

Baz (*not his real name*) is a veteran who came to Big White Wall at a very low ebb. He had been thinking about suicide, and was struggling with PTSD.

When he joined Big White Wall, Baz found a community of support, others who would listen, and share similar stuff, and he found he was able to talk about what was bothering him.

He used BWW to support him through

his therapy for PTSD, and to listen to his fears and pain about what he had experienced in combat.

Baz also discovered how valuable he could be to others: he posted his thoughts and support for others who were struggling – with work, relationships and PTSD – and found a sense of community that he hadn't felt in a long time.

In discovering how he could give insightful advice in tough situations, Baz began to recover. He saw himself as someone getting better, not someone broken.

Baz said: "The support and advice I got on BWW was nothing short of miraculous and I wouldn't have got this far without the BWW community. I can never repay what you people have done for me if I lived a million lifetimes."

Big White Wall is there to help, whatever you're going through. Whether you're serving, ex-forces, or a family member of either, it can help you find support, take control, and feel better.

Simply go to [www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com) and join for free today.





# Part-time marines, all green berets



**PART-time Royal Marines have earned the coveted green beret after fitting in arduous commando training with their full-time day jobs.**

Recruits from the Royal Marines Reserves converged on the spiritual home of the Corps, the Commando Training Centre at Lymington in Devon, for two weeks of intensive training, culminating in the four much-feared commando tests.

The recruits gathered from the four Royal Marines Reserve (RMR) units – Bristol, London, Merseyside and Scotland – have been in training since at least October 2012. The training is broken into three phases with the commando tests at the end of the second phase.

Candidates must complete all four tests in just five days, carrying 32lb of kit:

- 1 an endurance course – a series of tunnels including a short underwater one;
- 2 a nine-mile speed march;
- 3 the 'Tarzan' high-wire obstacle course, followed immediately by the assault course (pictured, left, by LA (Phot) Dean Nixon of CTCRM);
- 4 the infamous commando yomp: 30 miles across Dartmoor in eight hours.

"The training has been good but it's fitting it in with my other commitments that makes it a constant juggling act," said 23-year-old Mne James Williams, a third year dental student from RMR Merseyside's Manchester detachment.

"Sometimes in the middle of winter in the freezing cold when you've just had a nice day sat in university and then you have to drag yourself out to go on exercise it is hard, and it takes a long-term view of what the goal is.

"It's just starting to sink in now that I've passed the commando tests. Now I have to get on with the next phase of training."

Those who passed the quartet of tests can wear the legendary green beret – but their training is not finished yet: they will now receive instruction in advanced commando skills, urban combat, and live firing battle drills package, whereupon they will be ready to deploy with a frontline commando unit.

The reservists normally work one night a week, one weekend a month and take part in a two-week exercise once a year: typically the RMR will run an annual fortnight-long exercise abroad in countries such as Norway, the Falkland Islands and the USA.

"I think doing the tests with the Reserves is harder in some respects because you need to be self-motivated and train yourself to the

level of fitness needed," said 33-year-old Mne Craig Leggat, a plumber from Nottingham, who had previously completed most of the regular Royal Marines recruit training before leaving in 2008.

"The full-time recruits are trained by PTIs all the time and are observed throughout, whereas we have to do a lot of ours unsupervised."

The RMR is upwards of 600 strong and in addition to the four main units, there are numerous detachments across the UK from Belfast and Aberdeen to Portsmouth and Plymouth

The reservists are generally used to bolster the numbers of regular commando units on operations. Individuals are merged into a normal fighting company to boost their strength, rather than deploying en masse as an entire RMR unit.

"That's the whole point of doing this. I definitely want to deploy with the Corps at some point," said Mne Simon Woods, a maths teacher at Portchester Community School, near Portsmouth.

"I had been quite nervous about the commando tests because I only just passed them during the practice runs but on the day I managed to come in well within the time allowed."



## RN's senior customs officer rewarded

### Sherwood's new home almost built

The new £1m headquarters of HMS Sherwood will be completed this month – with reservists moving into the complex in April.

Sherwood – which serves as the HQ for both the RNR and RMR in the East Midlands – is currently based in Aspley in the north-west of the city.

But as part of a reorganisation of reserve forces, the unit is moving six miles to the western suburb of Beeston and the Army Reserve base at Foresters House in Swiney Way, home of 350 Field Squadron Royal Engineers for the past 15 years.

A new two-storey building is being built at the back of land previously used as garage space, while existing facilities on the site are being revamped to bring the facility up-to-date.

Sherwood's CO Cdr Martin Clegg is itching to move into the new complex with his men and women.

"The new site's location will make us much more visible to the local Nottingham population and it has good public transport links," he said.

"Most importantly, it provides the extra space and up-to-date facilities we need to attract and train new recruits to the high standards required by the Royal Naval Reserve."

Martin Capewell, head of estates at East Midlands Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, added: "This is a really exciting project that will allow HMS Sherwood to be based in a modern training facility with improved office and training spaces – that will hopefully also aid their recruitment efforts."

Sherwood's new home will be formally opened on April 26 with a rededication parade.

**WHEN in Rome, do as the Romans do.**

And when in the Middle East, do as Lt Cdr Shah Esfahani advises – for one of the Navy's most senior cultural specialists has been singled out for his efforts in helping Britain's military understand life, customs and traditions in a region which is key to the UK's interests.

The HMS Wildfire officer will receive a Chief of the General Staff's Certificate for Outstanding Service – as approved by the head of the Army, General Sir Peter Wall.

The award acknowledges the invaluable contribution the reservist has made on the last two Royal Navy Cougar deployments to the Middle East (2011 and 2013) as well as his work with east of Suez operations in 2012.

Lt Cdr Esfahani, who's currently based at the Defence Cultural Specialist Unit in Bedfordshire, joined the RNR back in 1989 whilst working as a radiotherapy radiographer in hospital cancer units across the capital.

He's been First Lieutenant of his alma mater reservist unit, HMS Wildfire in Northwood, and was named its best officer for two years running.

Since 2000 his language skills (he's fluent in Farsi and Dari and has a very good grasp of Arabic) and cultural knowledge have been called upon constantly by the Armed Forces – as a linguist in Iraq in 2003 and chief linguist at the International Security Assistance Force HQ in Kabul for four years.

More recently he served as the RN's cultural adviser aboard HMS Albion on Cougar 11, on HMS Diamond on her maiden deployment in 2012, and on last year's Cougar 13 with flagship HMS Bulwark. He's due to sail with the latter again on this year's Cougar to the Mediterranean and Middle East.

Thanks to his experience, it's not just the RN, or UK military, which have benefited from Lt



● Lt Cdr Shah Esfahani briefs staff aboard HMS Bulwark on the history, culture and customs of the Middle East ahead of the flagship's exercises there last autumn on Cougar 13

Picture: LA(Phot) Arron Hoare

Cdr Esfahani's knowledge: he occasionally briefs the NATO School in Oberammergau and has shared his wisdom with the staff running the international counter-piracy/terrorism task force in the Indian Ocean.

Aboard ship the knowledge Lt Cdr Esfahani imparts ranges from how to receive foreign dignitaries such as members of the Kuwaiti, Qatari or Omani royal families and high-ranking military commanders, to explaining to junior sailors and marines about local customs and facets of daily life – religion, eating habits, how to behave in public places, 'do's and don'ts'.

"My role isn't about changing our culture in the Royal Navy or the UK – my task is to make Service personnel aware of the other religions, customs and behaviour and in doing so provide a climate of mutual understanding and respect," he explains.

"If there is a requirement for being dressed modestly, then the ship's company need to be told

in advance to bring appropriate clothing for when going ashore.

"Likewise, if there are restrictions on drinking when ashore during a specific period, then they need to know so as not to have high expectation or indeed to avoid breaking the country's rules."

And similarly, visiting foreign guests are advised how to act on board one of Her Majesty's Ships – rules, regulations, conduct and protocols.

This two-way cultural and military sharing has reaped benefits with praise for Lt Cdr Esfahani from within the UK Armed Forces and from foreign visitors. Omani staff said that when they were hosted by the RN for a joint exercise, their commander described the experience as the most considerate he had ever seen throughout his career.

And as one British commander puts it simply: "I doubt his understanding and experience of this region could be matched by many others across defence."



## Hot and dusty with a chance of shamals...

AFTER a winter of forecasting a succession of storms, Kevin Thomas now has to contend with dust devils, sandstorms and the Shamal.

Kevin is known to many Cornish folk as the 'voice of weather' – he can normally be heard delivering forecasts from BBC Radio Cornwall's studios in Truro.

But he's also a meteorology officer in the RNR Air Branch, serving at RNAS Culdrose – which is why he's been drafted for a two month stint forecasting in support of UK operations in the Middle East.

For the past 12 months, the RNR Air Branch has provided a meteorologist to the Middle Eastern Met Office for up-to-date analysis and predictions on the local weather patterns.

"Shamals – strong winds associated with the region – come down the Gulf affecting everything in their path," said Kevin (pictured above with his back to the camera in the studio).

"They can last up to five days and can be several thousand feet deep. Travel by air and on the ground comes to a standstill and the resulting sand storms can strip the paint off cars and aircraft.

"Dust storms and other weather patterns are not completely strange to me – I've done a fair amount of forecasting in the Middle East during my regular Service career – but a fair time ago, so there will be a certain amount of refreshing going on.

Kevin continued: "It's going to be really interesting looking into the book again, most of the time the weather is settled and reliable. But it's those odd occasions when they need a Met forecaster out there."

"I've had a vested interest in following what the weather will be like out there and getting away from storms, rain and the cold. The idea of going to somewhere with 20-degree heat and sunshine is pretty good news."

Kevin began his RN career in 1981 and served at home, abroad and at sea until leaving the regular Service to join the Beeb.

### RNR LIVE

HERE are the dates for this month's RNR and RMR Live events giving an insight into life in the Maritime Reserves. See [www.royalnavy.mod.uk/News-and-Events/Special-Events/Events-Calendar](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/News-and-Events/Special-Events/Events-Calendar) for details.

-  **RMR London**  
Wandsworth  
9am
-  **HMS Flying Fox**  
Bristol  
9am
-  **HMS Wildfire**  
Northwood  
9am
-  **HMS Vivid**  
Devonport  
9am

# Herts and minds

MONEY raised by the Hertfordshire District annual Trafalgar Dinner allowed cadets to hand a cheque for £300 to Macmillan Cancer Support.

The event, for a district which includes St Albans, Stevenage, Hitchin, Welwyn Garden City and Hertford and Ware units, attracted almost 100 guests to celebrate the anniversary of Nelson's victory at the Battle of Trafalgar.

Staff members got together in their best Number One uniforms and evening dresses and had a traditional mess dinner.

Guests included Eastern Area Officer Cdr Charles Bagot-Jewitt RN and a number of local dignitaries.

After the dinner, a raffle was held as well as a contest to guess the length of the speech, which raised £140 to be donated to the MacMillan Cancer Support.

Alongside this the DJ for the evening, Paul from Absolute Classics, also donated his £160 payment to charity, which brought the total from the evening to £300.

CPO (SCC) Terry Atkins said: "After the three-course meal port was served, and we were given the opportunity to toast Lord Nelson.

"Overall I felt the evening was a huge success for all that attended, and the donated money went to a worthy cause. We are thoroughly looking forward to the next Trafalgar dinner."

The MacMillan team went to Welwyn and Hatfield unit to receive the cheque from Lt Cdr (SCC) Peter Waring RNR, cadets and staff.

# Service honours Brazen victims



THE annual memorial service for HMS Brazen was held in Newhaven 214 years to the day after the former French privateer foundered on rocks off Newhaven with the loss of all but one of her crew.

Newhaven and Seaford unit attended a service in St Michael's Church which was also attended by the Town Mayor, Cllr Julie Carr. It was led by Rev Martin Miller, who is also the unit padre.

Following the service the cadets moved on to the Brazen Memorial and stood in the rain whilst prayers were said (pictured left).

Cdt Garrett then laid a wreath on the memorial.

Brazen sank on January 26 1800, and many of the 95 bodies washed ashore were buried at St Michael's.

The remaining ten or so victims, including Commanding Officer Capt James Hanson, were never recovered, but the loss of the CO and his men was commemorated by an obelisk funded by his friends and later restored by his widow.

The wreck prompted the people of Newhaven to investigate then part-fund (along with Lloyds of London) a lifeboat in 1803.



● James Kenyon

# Trail blazers

SPRING 2013 saw the introduction into Eastern Area of a relatively new Sea Cadet activity – Mountain Trail Biking (MTB) – with the acquisition of eight specialised Rockhopper mountain bikes and trailer.

Within weeks districts were booking weekend training courses for their cadets, and the bikes soon started to pay for themselves.

However, before cadets even got to ride the bikes the staff first had to provide adequately-trained instructors, as well as a structured maintenance system and a base/holding station from which the new bikes could be operated.

Barnsley unit was chosen for the base station, and CPO Andy Devonport as the Area Lead MTB Instructor.

CPO Devonport soon set about arranging courses for cadets to qualify with their Proficiency Adventure Training (MTB) Basic Award, as well as CALA Level 1

courses for adult volunteers.

This enabled the instructors to take cadets out on trails local to their own units.

Some might argue that mountain biking isn't water-based, so why does the Corps do this activity?

Well, apart from the advantages in getting young people outside and into the countryside, doing a physically enjoyable activity and getting fitter and healthier, the answer is in the numbers that have qualified in the last nine months.

In short, cadets want it!

A total of 82 cadets gained the Basic Award – 64 of these in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Six instructors have been trained to either CALA Level 1 or the higher TCL, with a further six due to qualify.

Mountain biking is set to become more popular, both with new riders and with the existing basic riders wanting to progress further towards Intermediate level which is what is best described as 'exhilarating'.



● Northampton cadets make use of the new Eastern Area mountain bikes

# Volunteers to race on the Pacific

A DOZEN Sea Cadet volunteers are embarking on an adventure of a lifetime as part of the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race, sailing across the mighty Pacific Ocean for 33 days.

The selected Sea Cadet volunteers, aged from 18–54 from across the UK, have endured a tough, extensive training programme learning how to sail a 70ft yacht – one of the world's biggest ocean racing yachts.

Each volunteer will join a crew of 20 on 12 racing yachts starting from Qingdao in China to sail 6,000 miles to San Francisco in the United States.

The lucky chosen volunteers are Arron Welling, Kieran Comer, Keith Bisson, Kirsty Russell, Adam Montgomery, Maggie Gage, Laura Frudd, Matty English, Jessica Barton, James Kenyon, Matthew Owen and Rob Barker.

Speaking of the race, James Kenyon said: "I'm nervous about the Clipper challenge but I know that it'll be an experience I'll never forget.

"The training has been tough but very rewarding.

"However, it's equipping me with skills and knowledge that I need to learn to manage a yacht that size.

"It's massive, but on the Pacific Ocean it will look very small."

The race has eight legs in total, but Leg Six across the Pacific will be one of the most challenging.

The crews face strong currents, snow and very cold, damp conditions.

For 33 days they will have to keep a competitive focus, preserve their kit and keep their morale high until they reach the Californian coast.

To follow the action see [www.clipperroundtheworld.com](http://www.clipperroundtheworld.com)

# Picture life in the Sea Cadets Corps

SEA Cadets are invited to enter the Royal Navy Peregrine Trophy Photographic Competition.

The competition is open to all serving Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets aged 13 to 18, who are encouraged to show their skill and creativity in a bid to win the Sea Cadet Amateur Open Category Award.

Last year's winner was POC Tamsyn Faulder, 17, of Carlisle unit in Cumbria District, who bagged the title with a snap taken through the cockpit window of a Royal Navy Sea King helicopter while flying over the coastline of Ayrshire in Scotland.

Sea Cadets are urged to take pictures whenever they are taking

part in a Sea Cadets or Royal Marines Cadets activity – maybe underwater at a diving course, aloft on an aviation course, perhaps mountain biking, climbing steep hills, parading through your town or sailing offshore.

The winning photographer will receive an all-expenses paid trip to London to attend the award ceremony, an offshore voyage, £100 worth of Sea Cadet shop vouchers for their unit, and the photo will be published on the Royal Navy website and in *Navy News*.

Terms and conditions apply – email [marketingsupport@ms-sc.org](mailto:marketingsupport@ms-sc.org) for further information about the competition.



● REMEMBRANCE Sunday 2013 saw the first public performance for Southport unit's fledgling Sea Cadet Band, which was resurrected just over a year ago by PO(SCC) Sophie Feeny. Sophie's father was Bandmaster in the early 1990s and PO(SCC) Chris Cook, who as a cadet, was a member of the band at that time. Officer-in-Charge PO(SCC) Tim Petford said he was extremely proud of all the cadets and juniors who, over the two weekends in November, collected nearly £8,000 for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

**YOUR SUPPORT WILL TACKLE CHALLENGES.**



## SALVAGE OPERATOR (UNDERWATER)

Plymouth, Devonport

Ref: 1396213

This is a reserved post within the Salvage and Marine Operations (S&MO) PT Retained Grade structure. S&MO PT supports the United Kingdom Armed Forces around the world.

Based at HMNB Devonport, you will be part of a highly trained, multi-skilled team, able to respond to operational emergencies in the UK and worldwide.

A high degree of flexibility and motivation is essential. The post will involve a full range of S&MO capabilities, but will primarily be required to conduct underwater operations and supervise diving to HSE/ADC standards. The post will have an obligation to become a sponsored reserve.

You must hold HSE SCUBA and Surface Supply diving qualifications and must be a qualified diving supervisor. Preference will be given to individuals holding an ADC supervisors qualification and closed bell. You must hold a current HSE dive medical and a full UK driving licence is required.

Informal enquires may be made to Mr Robert Coombes, email [DESSANMO-SALSUPOPS@mod.uk](mailto:DESSANMO-SALSUPOPS@mod.uk)

To apply, please visit [www.civilianjobs.mod.uk](http://www.civilianjobs.mod.uk)

Closing date: 17 March 2014.

The MOD is an Equal Opportunities employer and seeks to reflect the diverse community it serves. Applications are welcome from anyone who meets the stated requirements.



**A Force for Good.**  
[www.civilianjobs.mod.uk](http://www.civilianjobs.mod.uk)



● Cdt James Pidwell

## James is on heroes shortlist

A SEA Cadet from Teign Valley unit has been shortlisted for a national newspaper award celebrating inspiring first-aid achievements by individuals.

Cdt James Pidwell is a finalist in the *Mail on Sunday* and St John Ambulance Guy Evans Young Hero of the Year Award, selected by a panel of experts from hundreds of nominations.

James saved the life of his 14-year-old sister when she collapsed with an epileptic fit on her way to school last September.

He told the paper that he did not know that she was epileptic, but that the first aid training he had undergone with the Sea Cadets gave him the confidence to deal with the situation without panicking until professional help arrived.

James had the presence of mind to check his sister was breathing, then put her in the recovery position and block off the road with school bags before running to a nearby house to call an ambulance.

Among TS Canonteign staff who have helped with James's training was PO (SCC) Viv Pointer, a retired NHS paramedic.

The awards ceremony, when the overall winner of this and a number of other categories will be announced, takes place at the Lancaster London Hotel, hosted by TV celebrity and *Strictly Come Dancing* presenter Tess Daly.

## RM Cadets up for cup

IT'S that time of the year when Royal Marines Cadets are training for the toughest event in their calendar.

Running through thick mud, crawling in dark narrow tunnels and carrying heavy logs up steep hills – only the toughest, fittest detachment survives as the best units from around the country head for Devon to compete for the Gibraltar Cup.

Last year, Burton-on-Trent took the honours for X-Ray Coy.

Company Commander Mike Cartwright said: "We were thrilled to win last year. The cadets trained very hard for months to bring the trophy home."

"This year cadets have been training since October and will be fine-tuning their skills in a week-long training course."

"Good luck to all cadets competing this year."

The units aiming for glory in this year's competition, at the Commando Training Centre RM, Lymington, are Lincoln RMCD (East), Kingston RMCD (London), South Shields RMCD (North), Rochdale RMCD (North West), Chatham RMCD (South) and Bristol Adventure RMCD (South West).

● AC Reece Murray and OC Gemma White use sextants to check the position of a navigation buoy



# Masters of all they survey...

AND now for something completely different...

The famous tagline from *Monty Python's Flying Circus* has become something of a mantra to the cadets of Warsash unit.

Not content with Duke of Edinburgh expeditions to Australia and the Corps' flagship TS Royalist berthing at their unit, a group of Warsash cadets decided to take a closer

interest in their immediate environment by trying their hand at a hydrographic survey of their jetty at the entrance to the River Hamble near Southampton.

Not having access to a purpose-built ship, the sophisticated equipment, or technical expertise available to the Royal Navy's Hydrographic Squadron, the cadets had to rely on more traditional methods of mapping their environment, as

used by Cook or Shackleton.

This meant using a hand-bearing compass, leadlines, sextants and a tide pole.

The main objective was to give the cadets an opportunity to consolidate their burgeoning boating and navigation skills as well as learning some new ones, all within the backdrop of the survey project.

The project originated in the need for one of the unit's Civilian Instructors, a Royal Navy warfare officer, to gain experience of basic surveying before starting his Hydrographers course at the RN's Hydrography and Meteorology School in Devonport.

By a happy coincidence, the Port of Southampton was about to start dredging the commercial

harbour to take bigger ships; so effected users had been instructed to survey their areas to monitor for any build-up of sediment arising from the work. The survey commenced in the aftermath of a storm, so the team also checked for any changes resulting from the weather.

Collecting the data, it turned out was the easy bit. Converting it all into a form easily understood proved to be a more time-consuming and thought-provoking task; but their efforts have resulted in a number of submissions to the UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton, which may be incorporated into charts and other relevant publications of the area used by seafarers in the near future.



● AC Reece Murray uses a Seechi disc to measure the sediment level in the water



● Cdt Dominic Roberts and PO Kerry Fuller assemble the tide pole

● AC Reece Murray, OC Gemma White and JC Lane find the depth of water the old-fashioned way



## Padre marks silver jubilee

FATHER Peter Needham, Barnsley unit's padre, celebrated his 25 years as a priest with a service at St Helen's Church in Athersley.

He was joined by supporters from all over the UK and from across his career.

Fr Peter had been a good friend of the unit for a number of years before becoming padre almost six years ago.

He joined the Church as a brother of the Society of St Francis – or, as most people would know it, a friar.

It was whilst living as a friar that the opportunity to go to sea arose, and Fr Peter joined the Royal Navy as a padre – believed to be the first friar to take on such a role.

Fr Peter later trained and became a priest, and served parishes in Ealing and Grimthorpe before his current role as Chaplain for Barnsley District General Hospital.

## Second boat for Sheppey

SHEPPEY unit has bought a further Trinity 500 boat thanks to the Tesco Charity Trust.

The Kent unit gratefully received a cheque from the trust for £2,725, allowing them to obtain a second Trinity rowing boat and oars.

The Trinity 500 is a plastic moulded rowing boat which can accommodate a crew of four plus a coxswain, and by buying a second craft the unit will be able to offer rowing to a greater number of cadets.

This in turn will give young people the chance to gain qualifications accredited by British Rowing, and train to compete in competitions.

The unit will also be able to offer its extended facilities to other Sea Cadet units in the West Kent District.

Unit Commanding Officer Lt (SCC) Brian Moore RNR said: "I now hope that the unit will be able to secure funding to place an order for a third Trinity 500, which will help towards the unit gain accreditation as a centre of excellence for Sea Cadet boating in West Kent."

## Cup for Barnstaple

BARNSTAPLE Sea Cadets have been awarded the Jim Gibson Cup, presented to the Sea Cadet unit that has made the most improvement in the South West Area.

Officer-in-Charge PO(SCC) Alistair MacLeod said: "We are obviously delighted to receive the cup."

"It is testament to the hard work put in by the cadets and staff at the unit."



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# Final heartache in Guernsey

THE Royal Navy Volleyball Association took a good sized squad to the Guernsey International Open Volleyball Tournament this year.

The tournament is run by the Guernsey Volleyball Association in order to allow their teams to test themselves against opposition from the UK mainland and beyond.

The good numbers allowed the RN to enter two sides in this year's tournament and as luck would have it the fixture draw saw them meet in the first match.

Despite a good show from the development team, the senior Navy side came through relatively unscathed.

Lt Cdr Colin Rex's power and court presence stood out again in the second match as the Royal Navy brushed aside Orchard Apples to end the first day with two victories and two Most Valuable Player (MVP) awards for Lt Cdr Rex.

On day two the Navy traded blows with Surrey Fire and Orchard PR in the first two games. The early stages in both matches were extremely close with the teams matching each other point for point.

With some great attacking play from Lt Fraser Smith (CTC Lymptstone) the Navy did



● The Royal Navy team line up for the competition in Guernsey

manage to maintain their lead through to the final whistle in each game beating Surrey Fire 45-42 and Orchard PR 50-44 with Lt Smith earning two MVP awards in the process.

The final match of day two was against an Oxford side looking to retain the trophy that they had won for the previous three years. Despite pushing hard in the early stages, the match ended with the first defeat for the Royal Navy as they found themselves on the wrong end of a 50-39 scoreline.

Team manager and player/

coach CPO Andy Ryan-Page responded to this by altering his line-up for what had become a semi-final against local Guernsey side and 2012 runners-up Nashcopy.

In came the powerful attack of AB(Logs) Junnas Masi and the defence was bolstered by the introduction of LAET Gordon 'Tex' Marshall in the Libero position.

Despite Nashcopy initially taking the lead, the Navy maintained a steady pace and worked themselves in front.

Nashcopy ultimately had no answer to the attack of Lt Smith and AB Masi, whilst their own attacks were met and defeated repeatedly by the blocks of Lt Cdr Rex and Lt Danny Bonner.

As the referee signalled the end of the match with the score at 50-39, the Navy found themselves in the final.

The final saw the Navy come up against the only team that had managed to defeat them at this year's tournament, Oxford. Despite a much stronger start to the match, and a good team performance, the Navy lost the first set 25-23.

With LAET 'Tex' Marshall putting in what was arguably the performance of the tournament at Libero, the Navy were very quickly winning the hearts of the neutrals amongst the gathered spectators with their never-say-die attitude.

The Navy recovered to win the second set 26-24.

However it was not to be their day as Oxford powered home with a 15-7 final score.

Navy team manager/coach CPO Andy Ryan-Page is looking for new players.

There is a training weekend in Portsmouth on March 29-30. Call 9380 22375 or email [navymcta-mp3cpo@mod.uk](mailto:navymcta-mp3cpo@mod.uk)



● CPO Andy Ryan-Page, AB(Logs) Junnas Masi and Lt Cdr Colin Rex in action for the Royal Navy in Guernsey

# Navy team on cresta wave

A CHANGE in the rules proved beneficial for the Royal Navy in the Inter Services Tobogganing Championships at the Cresta Run.

The decision to allow active Reservists to take part enabled Lt Cdr Andrew Mills, a former winner of the Prince Philip Trophy, to don the navy blue suit and this proved to be a vital difference on race day.

The conditions through the season had been dominated by the Alpine snow and the frustrating mild temperatures associated with cloudy days.

As race day approached, the thermometer dropped a few degrees and cold conditions, hard ice and an inviting run had been achieved and prepared.

The camaraderie that had been the common thread through all the preparation became a distant memory as the individual Services withdrew to their corners.

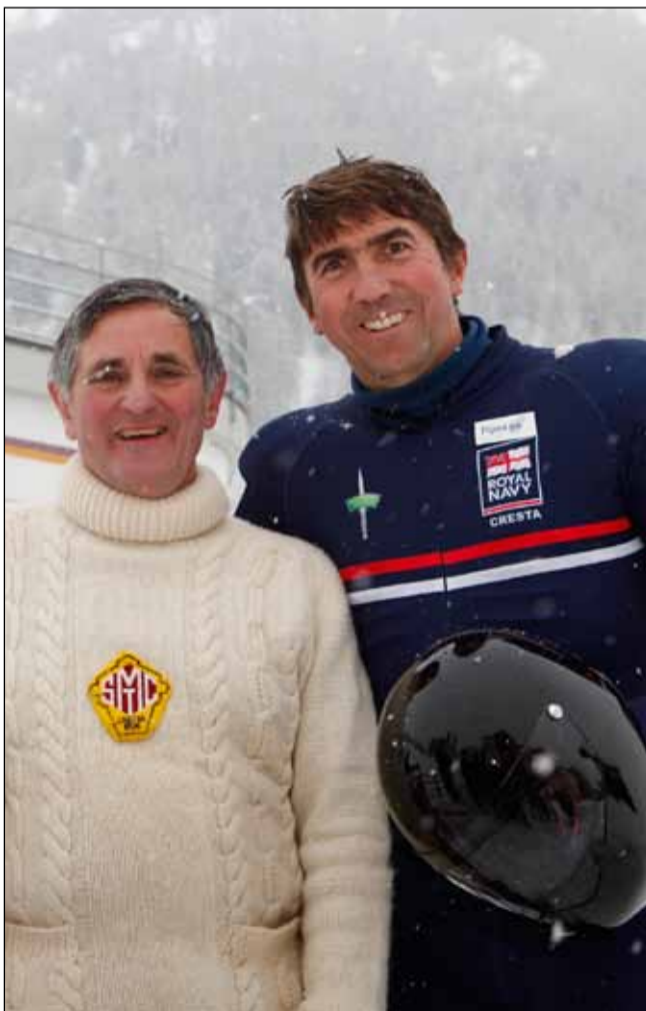
Supported by Rear Admiral Matt Parr, Commander Operations, who rode in the Junction Race, the Royal Navy were ahead after the first course with Surg Lt Cdr David Potter the leading rider and Lt Cdr Mills lying second. The Army lead rider was a distant third.

With a difference of just over three seconds, the RN could not ease up and consistent riding increased their lead to six seconds after the second course of three.

In Cresta terms, this was a country mile and the Army knew they were beaten. As a consequence, their lead rider went for his best ever time and pipped David Potter to the individual title by nine hundredths of a second after three courses.

Lt Cdr Mills kept third place with team captain Lt Col Jamie Summers in sixth overall and the final winning margin was a comfortable three seconds, in a team total of 696 seconds.

The spirit in which Lt Col Summers has captained the



● Above: The winners gather for the prize-giving ceremony

● Left: Lt Cdr Richard Mendelsohn with Lt Cdr Andrew Mills

● Right: The winning Royal Navy team after their victory on the Cresta Run for the Inter Services Tobogganing Championships



team guaranteed a huge roar of approval at prizegiving and the Admiral, team sponsors, the many friends and service families who had gathered were thoroughly immersed in the jollity of the awards ceremony.

The Prince Philip Trophy has been won equally over its 69-year history by the three services

and now it returns to the Senior Service.

As an aside, the RN team consisted of three Royal Marines, one Reservist, three officers, three other ranks, one medic and two engineers, all of whom have been overseas on duty in the last year, including Afghanistan, Cougar 13 and Bahrain.

The additional race for serving and retired Cresta riding military personnel, the Harland Trophy was won, handsomely by Col Kev Oliver, 3 Cdo Bde, also to rousing cheers of support and recognition.

Lt Cdr Richard Mendelsohn, late of the Fleet Air Arm and a Reservist at HMS President performed splendidly and will no doubt be joining the RN team next season.

The team extends its heartfelt thanks to those serving and non-serving sponsors, supporters, managers and former team members, who allow the active riders to represent and in this case, win the premier team trophy in military ice sports competition.

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## On course for cross country

**RUNNERS** representing Royal Navy establishments from across the Eastern Region gathered at HMS Sultan to compete for a place in the Royal Navy's full cross country competition.

Service personnel from HMS Sultan were joined by competitors from HMS Collingwood, HMNB Portsmouth, HMS Temeraire and Lt Cdr Katherine Rackham (Collingwood), with a time of 20min 14sec.

The 4.3km course winners were AET Elliot White (Sultan), in the junior men's, timed at 16m 44sec and Lt Cdr Katherine Rackham (Collingwood), with a time of 20min 14sec.

The 8.6km course saw L/Cpl Neal Russell (RM Poole) take the seniors with a 29min 46 sec run.

Within the vets the winning time of 31min 41sec was achieved by WO1 Sean Neale (Temeraire).

Sultan emerged victors in the men's juniors, with HMNB Portsmouth scooping the senior's prize, and HMS Collingwood claiming both team prizes in the men's vets and ladies competitions.

## Mad Dog VIP guest

**PLAYERS** from HMS Atherstone had a unique opportunity to meet an ex-England international player during a tens rugby tournament in Bahrain.

HMS Atherstone was invited to play in the Bahrain International Tens Tournament at Bahrain Rugby Football Club, which included teams from across the Middle East and as far afield as Sri Lanka.

Guest of honour was Lewis 'Mad Dog' Moody, part of England's 2003 Rugby World Cup-winning side.

Moody took time out for a photograph with HMS Atherstone and talk to the team about their deployment in the Gulf.

LET(ME) Jack Vallis said: "It was great to meet an international rugby player who had come all the way to Bahrain for the tournament, and who was so impressed with the great atmosphere created within the ex-pat community."

## Ultimate challenge

**ROYAL NAVY** personnel are being given the opportunity to run ultra marathons in extreme locations such as the Amazon or the Arctic.

Beyond The Ultimate is launching a new competition, the Military Star, where members of the Armed Forces can enter a team to go up against Forces teams from the rest of the world.

The company specialises in ultra marathon events. Four races form their series – the Jungle Ultra, Mountain Ultra, Desert Ultra and Ice Ultra.

Founder Wes Crutcher said: "We already attract a good number of military participants, US Marines plus British Marines and Army have already completed the Jungle Ultra, but not as a team."

Teams of four, one from each Armed Force, will receive £5,000 in sponsorship towards the £8,000 entry fee for the launch year in 2015.

For details visit [www.beyondtheultimate.co.uk](http://www.beyondtheultimate.co.uk)

# Onboard for surf school



**ROYAL Navy and Royal Marine surfers** from across the country headed for Cornwall for a training weekend to take advantage of a sponsor's generous offer.

Changeable weather and freezing sea temperatures didn't put off a hard core of Service surfers who gathered at Towans Beach, Newquay, for a training weekend with Newquay Activity Centre (NAC) using Skindog Surfboards, which are designed to push the Naval personnel and improve their boarding techniques.

Briefings from Rob Barber (NAC Director) and a question-and-answer session with Ben Skinner, the world No 2 longboarder, established a benchmark to start the level of instruction from and what was required by the surfers.

Sessions in the water were videoed for playback later and one-to-one instruction from the NAC team proved to be very popular.

"Being taught by some seasoned professionals from the surf world was pretty awesome," said Lt Simon Schnetler, from 857 Naval Air Squadron and

chairman of RN&RMSA.

"We don't get many opportunities to get together during the summer so off-season training camps like this are essential to bring on new blood."

Fired up with top-quality instruction and professional feedback the RN&RMSA hope to attend the Tri-Service championships next month.

For details of training weekends, as well as competitions and foreign training camps visit [www.surfnavy.com](http://www.surfnavy.com) or the Surf Navy Facebook page.

Picture: Aaron Parsons

# Chance to serve at home of tennis



● CPO Ian Luck on Centre Court as the roof closes last year

## ANYONE for tennis?

The Royal Navy is recruiting 108 ratings to serve as stewards at Wimbledon this summer.

The Senior Service has provided stewards to the All England Lawn Tennis Championships since 1947.

Royal Navy stewards get the added bonus of manning the famous Centre Court as well as Court One.

More than 300 personnel from all three Services are recruited to be stewards at the two-week tennis championships every year.

Their responsibilities include helping the public get from their queue positions outside the courts to their seats, ensuring that members of the public abide by Wimbledon rules – such as turning off mobile phones during play – and making sure that members of the audience are comfortable and well-hydrated.

As over half of those who are chosen must have done the job before, the competition is fierce for the hundreds of personnel who apply to work at Wimbledon, so for those who are chosen

success is so much sweeter.

One of the team of steward organisers, WO1 Mark Hannibal, said: "They have a wonderful time."

"On Armed Forces Day they receive a 40-second standing ovation which just goes to show how much they are appreciated."

This year's championships run from June 23 to July 4, however play could continue for an extra day and personnel must be prepared to stay until after duties on July 7 if required.

Personnel need to use their leave allocation if they are selected for the championships.

As part of the Safety of Grounds Act (1985) all those selected to be Service Stewards will be required to report to Wimbledon on June 22 to undergo a short period of training in emergency evacuation and fire-fighting procedures. Instructions detailing the day's events will be issued to all those personnel selected.

To apply contact WO1 Hannibal on 023 9272 0609 or email [mark.hannibal101@mod.uk](mailto:mark.hannibal101@mod.uk)

## Testing time for novices

**HMS WESTMINSTER'S** rugby players took on expats and members of the Armed Forces from the US, Canada and the UK during a port visit to Bahrain.

NSA Buccaneers is a multinational rugby team made up of Service personnel based at the Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain.

They have been playing together for only seven months and some of the players had never played rugby before arriving in Bahrain.

Within the first ten minutes, HMS Westminster's experienced team scored two converted tries. The Buccs stepped up to play a challenging and physical game against the strongest opposition they had ever encountered but ended up going down 21-0.

LS Paul 'Chuck' Berry, HMS Westminster's team captain, said: "The drop in temperature was a welcome relief from previous fixtures during our time away."

Lt Paula Bennett-Smith, Media Operations Officer at UKMCC Bahrain and team coach to the NSA Buccaneers, said: "This was a great opportunity for the Buccs to play against a clearly talented rugby team and it was great to see how much they have developed over the last few months."

# Masters of martial arts showcase skill



● POET(WE)s Jamie Macdonald and Paul Scarrett

**FOUR** members of the Royal Navy Muay Thai Association participated in a demonstration at the UK's largest martial arts event of 2013.

All Royal Navy participants were based at HMS Collingwood on POET Weapons Engineering Qualifying courses.

The four, who are members of Gary Gregory's Hanuman Muay Thai academy based in Gosport, Hampshire, took part in a number of demonstrations on the main stage after only two months of dedicated training using Krabi-Krabong weapons and the fighting style Muay Thai Korat.

The Tmaxx Expo, organised by Kwoklyn Wan, was held in Coventry's Ricoh Arena, and

attracted hundreds of spectators.

The two-day event attracted special guests, including Gok Wan, Alex Reid, Dave Lea, Edmunds Sistas, Shaolin Warriors and Julie Kitchen, the No 1 world-ranked ladies Muay Thai boxing champion.

Gary has been training in the art of Muay Thai since 1989.

A former Army boxing bantamweight champion, Gary was awarded 14th Khan (Arjarn) in Muay Thai earlier this year, one of only three people in the UK to hold the highest level attainable from a non-Thai national.

Gary visits Thailand each year to train with his tutor – a Brigadier General in the Thai Army.



● LET(WE)s Lisa Lee and Dan Bennett demonstrate Krabi-Krabong using daabs (swords)

# Tignes fly when you're having fun in snow

THE newest member of the Royal Navy Winter Sports Association's Committee, Lt Ralph Wood, offers a first-timer's view of the **Alpine Championships**, the largest sporting event in the Royal Navy's calendar.

It was the fifth year in Tignes, France, for the championships and the ski area is enormous, with more than 300km of pistes of various grades, as well as vast areas of off-piste skiing.

With no more experience of Alpine racing than the occasional viewing of *Ski Sunday*, I joined the committee's ski hill team, responsible for organising the skiing races, a little wide-eyed and overwhelmed.

For those unfamiliar with the lingo, here's a quick recap of the races available at the Alpine Championships:

For skiing there's the Slalom, Giant Slalom (GS), Super Giant Slalom (Super-G) and Premier Super-G (basically the course gets longer and faster and there are more gates to go through).

There's also the more freestyle event of Skicross, which borrows straight from the established snowboarding equivalent, Boardercross. Both involve four racers setting off on a narrow



● ET Daniel Stead in action in Tignes during the Alpine Championships

course at the same time and aiming to be the first to the finish line – cue some sharp elbows and impressive falls!

For boarding there's also the Parallel Giant Slalom (PGS) where two riders race through different sets of gates alongside each other at the same time, and finally the big event, the Slopestyle.

In Slopestyle riders perform a series of tricks – 'kicker' jumps – along rails and other obstacles while being marked by a judging panel, and the Slopestyle event provided some of the most exciting action.

In the majority of these races the competitors are broken down into experience categories and are in competition for medals only with racers of the same experience.

Add in the team element of Alpine skiing

and there are a lot of medal ceremonies during the two weeks.

Congratulations go to the overall female and male winners in the snowboard, POPT Lucy McKenna and AET Ross Taylor; the skiing, Lt Cdr Sam Dunbar and Lt Chris Sharrott, and the overall best team, the RNR Air Branch. They all received impressive glass and silverware from Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral David Steel at the closing ceremony.

For the more serious skiers and boarders, the RN Alpine champs are the final build-up towards the Inter Services Snowsports Championships held in Meribel.

The Alpine Champs are also an excellent opportunity for anyone who's never been sliding on snow before to take to the slopes for the first time.

More than 80 people began their skiing and boarding careers on the nursery slopes this year, and the resort around Tignes caters perfectly for the complete beginner.

After four days of lessons these intrepid amateurs threw themselves (sometimes literally) into one of the highlights of each week: the floodlit, snow-dappled, *vin-rouge*-fuelled Beginners' Giant Slalom race.

While there is still a definite element of competition to it, with some snazzy prizes and winners medals up for grabs, the beginners' race is a seriously enjoyable affair.

The ethos of the race is captured beautifully by the special prize of 'Best Stooft', and every competitor was warmly carried down the slope by the cheers from the crowd below.

All of this year's results are available on the RNWSA website, [www.pdevportal.co.uk/sports/winter\\_sports](http://www.pdevportal.co.uk/sports/winter_sports)

The next RNWSA Alpine Championships takes place in Tignes from January 10-24 2015. You can follow the RNWSA on Twitter @RNWSA or on Facebook at Royal Navy Winter Sports. A full report on Meribel will appear in April's *Navy News*.

■ Cresta Run victory, see page 37

● Snowboarding action from Tignes

Pictures: LA(Phot) Dave Jenkins



● A competitor in the Super Giant Slalom event at Tignes



● Snowboarder Lt Berron Parker



● Snowboarder POPT Lucy McKenna

# Taming of screws proves easy

## RN Seniors

The RN hosted HM Prison Service for their annual fixture designed to simulate a hard-fought Inter-Service match

The RN sparked into life on 35 minutes with Sgt Ads Fowler striking a powerful shot that the keeper did well to save; however, the keeper's parry only rebounded to POPT Ross McEvoy, who guided the ball home.

It was another rebounded effort on 38 minutes that gave the RN a two-goal advantage.

Again, some neat work around the edge of the box drew a Prison Service foul.

Up stepped Cpl Shea Saunders, who struck a quality shot from the resulting free kick that the keeper did well to save. Mne Mike Scott was on hand to put the loose ball in the net.

With the RN in the ascendancy and dominating play the Prison Service were keen for the half-time whistle; however, the RN managed to add another goal



## ONSIDE with Lt Mark Toogood, RNFA

just before the interval when POPT Geordie Horsman beat the offside trap.

Having skilfully negotiated his way past the keeper he coolly stroked the ball into an empty net.

A fourth was added to the tally on 55 minutes when Fowler needed one touch to control the ball and one to lash it across the keeper and into the far corner.

The visitor's misery was compounded on 70 minutes when man-of-the-match Fowler provided an exquisite pass for Scott to beat the embattled keeper.

Despite a consolation goal on 80 minutes, 5-1 was a superb result.

### RN U23

The RN U23s notched a convincing

4-3 win against the RAF Officer Corps, Icarus FC, at the Victory Stadium.

The RN were rewarded for their blistering start on four minutes when pressure on the opposition goalkeeper forced an error and AB Ash Lewis slotted the ball into an empty net.

Further early pressure from the RN created the second goal on nine minutes.

AB 'J' Jackson latched onto a long throw into the penalty area and rifled a right-foot shot into the roof of the net from seven yards.

Following a sloppy RN passage of play on 25 minutes the Icarus striker picked up a loose ball and calmly chipped the RN keeper.

The RN were rewarded from another

set piece on 40 minutes when, following a corner, Mne Sean Button drilled a left-footed shot from the edge of the box into the bottom right-hand corner.

Deep into the second half and against the run of play the opposition clawed a goal back on 81 minutes.

The loss of a sloppy goal sparked the Navy into life and a two-goal advantage was re-established on 87 minutes.

AET Danny Brookwell beat three players and struck a swerving shot from the edge of the box which the Icarus keeper could only parry into the path of AB Lewis, who headed the rebound in for his second of the game.

Icarus managed a further goal at the death, but could not find an equaliser.

### RN Ladies

The RN Ladies team enjoyed a stunning victory over Basingstoke Ladies FC, despite going an early goal down.

The RN's persistence paid off when they were awarded a penalty, which

AET 'T' Kaptein put away.

Within short order Kaptein doubled her tally, and with five minutes of the first half remaining the RN established a two-goal lead as LPT Nat Bavister made a blistering run down the left, cut inside the full back and crossed the ball.

The quality of cross caused confusion amongst the Basingstoke defence and the keeper watched helplessly as it floated into the top corner.

The second half started as the first had finished with RN dominance the order of the day, and Kaptein completed her hat-trick with a rasping shot from just inside the 18-yard box, leaving the keeper with no chance, to make it 4-1.

Substitute OC Jessica Barnes made an instant impression when she netted with five minutes remaining

Star player Kaptein notched her fourth goal to finish the scoring at 6-1.

Dates and times of all Inter Service matches can be found at [www.royalnavyfa.com](http://www.royalnavyfa.com)



● The Royal Navy, right, overcame the Fleet Air Arm to retain the Inverdale Challenge Cup

Picture: Alligin Photography / © Geraint Ashton Jones

## Last-game heartache for squad

THERE was heartbreak for Royal Navy squash players in the Inter Services Championships at HMS Temeraire.

The two-day contest saw the RN under-25 and veterans' teams take on the RAF, while the women's and men's sides faced the formidable Army.

Lt Matt Ellicott, Mne Ryan McKechnie and Musn Mark Hambley all won to give the Navy a 3-2 victory over the Army.

The second day of competition saw three out of the five matches going to five sets.

Hambley took his game 3-0 but the Navy lost two other games before McKechnie took a nailbiting five sets to win his match and leave the scores at 2-2.

It was all down to the No1 seeds. Ellicott took on old adversary Flt Lt Damien May.

Ellicott lost the first two games and it was not until the third that he found a new gear from somewhere to take the next two and level the score, setting up yet another nail biting fifth set.

Ellicott and May had a gargantuan battle in that last game, with points being traded in ones and twos right up until the death.

Ellicott had match point at 10-8 but could not finish it off and both players shared match points with 20-30 shot rallies. With the match at 21-all, May got the rub of the green and took the final two points to make the score 23-21.

As a result the Army took the title having beaten the RAF by a bigger margin than the RN beat the Army.

RN Squash colours were awarded to: Seniors - Mne R McKechnie (42 Cdo), Sgt D Green (Cdo Logs), Musn M Hambley (Raleigh), LAET S Wallace (Sultan); Veterans - Cdr S Mardlin RN, Lt J Stephenson RN (both Gib HQ), POAET S Smith (Yeovilton); Ladies - Logs L Small, LLogs L Worsfold (both Nelson); Under 25 - Sub Lt T Parsons RN (BRNC).

Next year's Inter Services Championships will be hosted by the Army at Aldershot on February 5-6.

## Marines down airmen to keep cup

THE Royal Marines overcame the Fleet Air Arm and constant rain to hold on to rugby's Inverdale Challenge Cup with a comfortable 31-15 victory.

The first quarter of the match was stop-start as both teams looked to get used to both the wet conditions and the speed of the 3G surface at HMS Temeraire.

Jonathon Humphrey converted an early penalty to the Fleet Air Arm for a 3-0 lead following some promising play as their forwards looked to drive the ball close and the Royal Marines were slow to move at

the breakdown. It was very much a false dawn.

It wasn't long before Royal Marines captain Nathan Huntley landed his second attempt at goal to level the scores. Coleman at scrum half was having the easiest of rides and eventually, following more quick ball he sold the most outrageous dummy to ease through the Fleet Air Arm defence and score the first try of the match. Huntley converted and followed up shortly afterwards with two more penalties to give the Royal Marines a comfortable and deserved 16-3 lead.

The Royal Marines built a 21-8 lead going into

the second half, which was played in slightly better conditions.

Mills crossed for the RM's third try, converted by Huntley.

The Fleet Air Arm were no match and Huntley became the first Royal Marines captain to retain the Command level championship, now played for the Inverdale Challenge Cup. It was also the first final on an artificial pitch.

Huntley received the cup from John Inverdale and his sister Jenny Weekes.



● LPT Ozzy Oswald, fourth left, with members of the victorious HMS Raleigh boxing team

Picture: Dave Sherfield

## Raleigh take boxing crown

HMS RALEIGH'S boxing squad recorded four victories on a memorable Royal Navy Championship night.

Seven boxers represented the Torpoint establishment at HMS Drake's Wyvern Centre for the Royal Navy Cup.

However, only four of the squad - Phase Two trainees - made it to the finals.

The four finalists - Chef Bucher, Chef Rankin, SA Hardy and SA Fitzsimmons - had less than two years' experience between them.

They faced boxers from HMS Drake, Collingwood, Nelson, Sultan and RMB Chivenor.

On the night of the finals the whole squad were feeling the nerves, however each one of

the final four had shown in the prelims what they were capable of and thoroughly deserved to be where they were.

All four boxers representing Raleigh won their bouts by points and won their trophy on merit.

All that was left was the naming of the establishment that won the entire event...

... and cheers rang out as Raleigh's name was announced.

Coach LPT Pete 'Ozzy' Oswald said: "I was absolutely delighted and so proud of the team.

"This was my first attempt at coaching the boxing squad since I had become a PTI, so this was a very proud moment for me leading the squad to victory.

"The following week after the

event, I started the boxing club up once again to recommence training and to see if there had been any further interest generated from the hundreds of spectators who came to witness Raleigh's triumph.

"I was shocked to find nearly 30 people turn up for training and express their eagerness to represent the establishment and the sport - this was very pleasing for me, and will benefit the squad massively."

LPT Oswald now has numerous Phase Two trainees and members of ships' company turning up for training.

"We cannot wait to show other establishments why we were crowned the Royal Navy champions," added LPT Oswald.

# ARMY VS NAVY

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