



NAVY NEWS

FEBRUARY 2019

Snow cat

PERSONNEL from 847 NAS carry out load-lifting drills with a Wildcat as Commando Helicopter Force conduct its annual winter training in the current half-light of the Arctic Circle. (See page 6)

Picture: PO(Phot) Des Wade, CHF



Pacific odyssey

HMS Montrose's epic journey

Hide and seek

HMS Argyll in submarine exercise

Solemn tribute

Iolaire's lost souls honoured



Off-sale date: February 28 2019
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Forging an alliance for science



HMS Protector's stern rope extends across the Antarctic ice in the vain search for a capstan.

You won't find one here. You'll have to dig deep into the Stange Ice Shelf to secure the Royal Navy's sole icebreaker for a vital scientific mission.

A few hundred miles from this site at the base of the Antarctic Peninsula a gigantic mass of ice and rock moves relentlessly towards the Amundsen Sea at a rate of 18 feet every day.

Except that this seemingly endless wall of ice - about the size of Great Britain - is disappearing, melting at a worrying rate.

The gradual vanishing of the Thwaites Glacier accounts for four per cent of the sea level's annual rise - and scientists fear the rate of melting could increase or, worse still, the entire natural wonder might collapse... raising the oceans by as much as three feet in the process.

A five-year international scientific mission will hopefully provide the answers.

But first, you have to get there.

Protector smashed through 300 miles of ice in company with British Antarctic Survey's vessel RRS Ernest Shackleton to reach the Stange shelf, chosen as the base camp for the mission.

With the nearest British and American scientific research stations 1,000 miles away, the duo were called in to deliver essential heavy stores to the ice edge in preparation for the arrival of the scientists next year.

The pair shipped four large tracked vehicles, 14 snow mobiles, numerous sledges, a caboose to act as living quarters, fuel and food to last nearly 5,000 days.

Upon arriving at the Stange Ice Shelf, a team went on to the ice to dig deep holes to secure the ship's berthing lines.

Protector's sailors and Royal Marines then worked around the clock for 72 hours with their colleagues from the British Antarctic Survey to offload around 300 tonnes of equipment, machinery and supplies.

"It was hard work yet extremely rewarding; having the opportunity to play a small part in such a huge project is something that I will certainly look back on with pride later in my life," said Leading Engineering Technician Colin 'Chappers' Chapman, part of the team involved in the unloading.

BAS Director of Science, Professor David Vaughan, said Protector's input was crucial to the mission.

"Without the assistance of HMS Protector, we just couldn't have delivered all the necessary

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cargo to this remote part of West Antarctica in time to begin this vital research.

"This partnership with the Royal Navy has been enormously valuable and the kit they have delivered will mean that our joint UK/US science teams can begin their fieldwork on schedule next year."

Mission complete, it was time for Protector's crew to get their balls out for a spot of rugby on the ice, organised by HMS Protector's clubz, David Clayton-Charlesworth.

"How many people in their life will get the opportunity to play rugby in Antarctica? It is something that just had to be done and was enjoyed by all that took part and watched," he said.

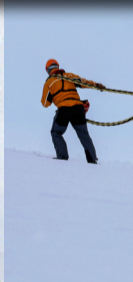
Joining in the long-range Antarctic mission were BAS Twin Otter aircraft and an RAF Hercules, which dropped 70 tonnes of supplies to outlying UK research sites and conducted a low fly-past of Protector while she was berthed at the ice shelf - rounding off a memorable three days at the foot of the peninsula.

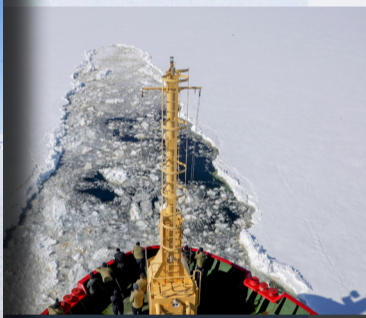
"It was a privilege to contribute to the International Thwaites Glacier Collaboration and a thrill for the ship's company to see first-hand how this globally significant research is being supported," said HMS Protector's Commander, Commander Peter Higgins.

"It took a massive team effort by everyone - the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Air Force and the British Antarctic Survey. It's been a long haul, but it's worth it."

With all stores successfully delivered, it was time to punch through the ice once more to return to the South Atlantic and press the 'reset button' for her next scientific mission before the austral summer ends, ruling out further work around Antarctica.

Pictures: LPhot Rory Arnold, HMS Protector





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FLEET FOCUS
 Protecting our nation's interests

IT'S WINTER so that means it must be Norway time. Elements of 3 Commando Brigade, Commando Helicopter Force and 1AGRM have – or are about to – decamp to the Arctic Circle for their annual cold-weather training (see pages 1 and 6).

To prepare for Norway, Royal Marines refined their mountaineering skills during Exercise Winter Walker (see page 11) in Snowdonia National Park.

At the other end of the world HMS Protector continues her deployment in Antarctica (see pages 2-3) with a visit supporting scientists studying the melting Thwaites Glacier.

Enjoying a much warmer climate was HMS Montrose (see centre pages) as the Type 23 frigate island hopped her way across the Pacific, culminating in a traditional Haka ceremonial welcome in New Zealand.

Also in the Pacific was HMS Argyll as she joined Japan's fearsome helicopter destroyer Izumo in a two-day hunt for a US Navy submarine, the first time three of the world's leading navies have conducted such an exercise (see page 5).

In the warm waters of the Gulf, HMS Dragon continued her fight against drugs barons (see page 7) with a massive haul of narcotics worth more than £75m, one of the most significant seizures in the region.

Also in the Gulf and minehunters HMS Blyth and Ledbury, along with RFA Cardigan Bay, undertook a week-long workout with their American counterparts (see page 6). Minehunter HMS Shoreham was at sea in the region on New Year's Day (see page 6), while engineers were preparing HMS Brocklesby to do the same.

Sailors from HMS Echo honoured 68 Britons killed during a largely-forgotten military campaign as the survey ship visited the Black Sea port of Batumi in Georgia (see page 9).

Back in the UK and the new F-35 Lightning strike fighter has been declared operational (see page 16).

In Rosyth and Britain's second new aircraft carrier, HMS Prince of Wales, has fired up her main engine for the first time (see page 16).

Her elder sister, HMS Queen Elizabeth, will return to Rosyth this summer for a maintenance package (see page 16).

Staying in Scotland and the Royal Navy has announced a series of events to celebrate 50 years of dedication by submariners on the continuous at sea deterrence (see page 13).

Royal Marines from 45 Commando left their base at Arbroath and headed south to Salisbury for Exercise Toxic Dagger (see page 10), designed to help them refresh their skills in dealing with a potential chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incident.

Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Gordon Messenger joined veterans for the launch of plans to mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day in June this year (see page 35).

P2000 HMS Ranger has formed an unusual affiliation – with the village of Ocracoke in North Carolina (see page 13).

2019 is the year of transformation, see right, and a Royal Navy engineer is off on the right tracks as one of his ideas has been hailed as a brainwave of the year (see page 19).

Commando Training Centre at Lympstone, Devon, gave a teenager an insight into life as a Royal Marine (see page 26). The youngster, who suffers from a rare condition, dreams of joining the Corps.

Personnel from HMS Albion took part in two-week climbing expedition in Malaysia (see page 36).

Trainees from 824 NAS paid tribute to the trailblazers of 100 years ago as they visited the Flying Services Memorial in Arras – to airmen what the Menin Gate and Thiepval Memorial are to the dead of Ypres and the Somme (see page 27).

One of the final acts of remembrance for the First World War centenary commemorations took place in the Western Isles (see pages 14-15) as Royal Navy personnel paid tribute to those who perished aboard HMY Iolaire on January 1 1919.

Finally, we are offered a rare insight into the world of defence engagement (see page 17) as our man in Mexico shares some of the massively-important work carried out by often tiny teams.

Exciting times with new tech

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

AS the pages of this month's Navy News shows, there can be no doubt we've started 2019 in the same way we ended 2018 – with the Fleet deployed extensively around the world, delivering success on operations.

That should come as no surprise – our utility is well understood by key decision makers so demand for the Royal Navy is sky high.

Yet we know that simply 'doing more with less' is not a sustainable approach so we must keep adapting, becoming ever more productive if we are to assure the long-term health of our service.

Last month's View from the Bridge described the programme of transformation that we have embarked upon, to help build resilience back into the service so that we remain ready to meet the demand for operational activity around the globe today, whilst also preparing the service for the challenges of tomorrow.

A key strand of this transformation work is examining the role that new and emerging technology can play, both to ease the burden on our people and to ensure we remain competitive in a modern digitised world of machine speed warfare.

Programme Nelson is one of our

'technical accelerators', delivered with our in-house digital and data consultancy.

At the heart of this programme is the sort of concept that you would find in something most of us use every day – smart phones.

Broken down into its major elements, your smart phone consists of hardware (the phone) that is expensive and upgraded infrequently, but which uses a common 'platform' such as iOS or Android which is updated regularly and automatically, and then a host of applications downloaded to meet your personal needs which can be added or removed at any time.

Programme Nelson is replicating this sort of approach by designing its own platform that can be inserted in new and existing hardware, and then leveraging innovation from industry to create applications for our use quickly and cost effectively. When combined with the huge resource that is

cloud-based data warehousing and the opportunity to develop intelligent applications using modern artificial intelligence

to exploit this mass of data, the potential benefits are enormous.

Trials have already proved the programme's potential. In one test, an application

hosted on the Nelson Data Platform, using a range of data detailing the patterns of life of thousands of ships around UK waters, was able to correctly identify vessels acting suspiciously.

When you consider that this process of gathering and analysing patterns of life would ordinarily draw in several people over a significant period of time to build and then interrogate the surface picture, the benefit of this type of automation, delivering the same effect whilst reducing the demand on ops room team, is self-evident.

In a separate test, another application – again hosted on the Nelson Data Platform – has been providing engineering analytics in HMS Defender.

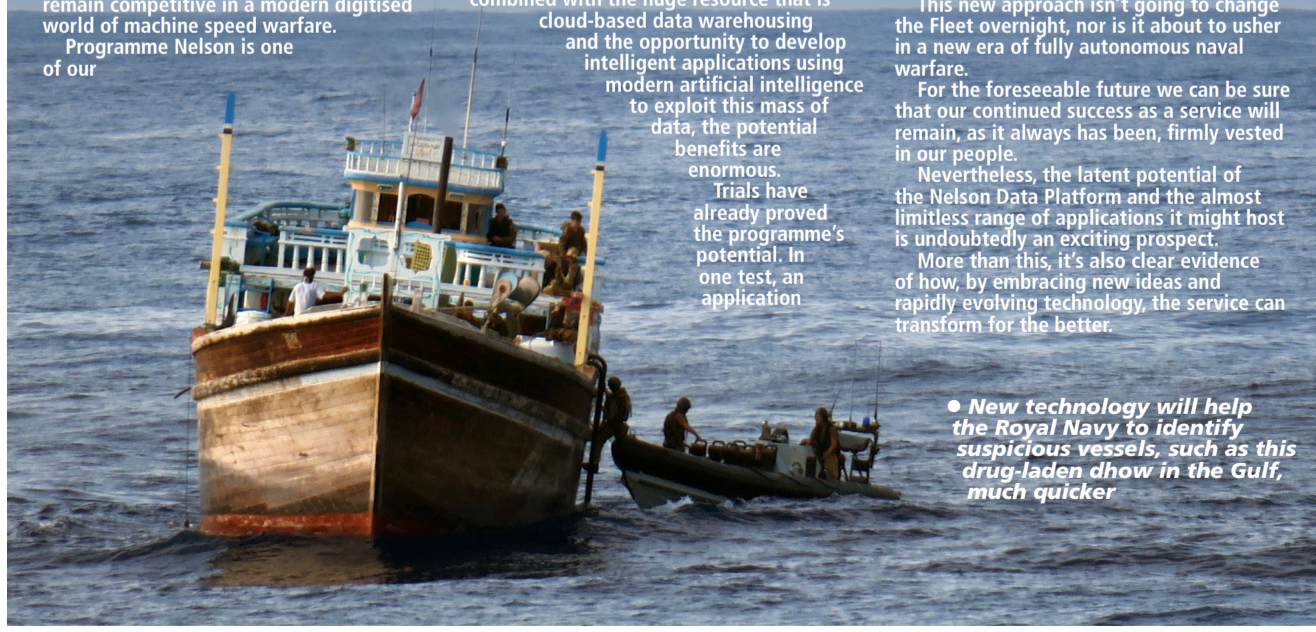
By drawing from thousands of inputs from the ship's platform management system and archive data, machine learning algorithms are being implemented to predict faults before they occur, allowing preventative maintenance to be targeted in an effective and timely way to enhance overall platform reliability and availability.

This new approach isn't going to change the Fleet overnight, nor is it about to usher in a new era of fully autonomous naval warfare.

For the foreseeable future we can be sure that our continued success as a service will remain, as it always has been, firmly vested in our people.

Nevertheless, the latent potential of the Nelson Data Platform and the almost limitless range of applications it might host is undoubtedly an exciting prospect.

More than this, it's also clear evidence of how, by embracing new ideas and rapidly evolving technology, the service can transform for the better.



• New technology will help the Royal Navy to identify suspicious vessels, such as this drug-laden dhow in the Gulf, much quicker



HIDE AND SEEK

A-HUNTING we will go,

A-hunting we will go,
We'll catch a boat, stop him float
And never let him go...

HMS Argyll and her Wildcat helicopter have been tracking down submarines in the Philippine Sea.

The Plymouth-based frigate joined Japan's fearsome 'helicopter destroyer' Izumo in a combined two-day hunt for a US Navy Fleet submarine in the Pacific to hone the skills of sailors, aircrew and submariners from the allied nations – the first time three of the world's leading navies have conducted such an exercise.

Argyll has been designed from the keel up to find, hunt and destroy submarines, using a Wildcat – here 208 Flight of 815 Naval Air Squadron in Yeovilton – to launch Sting Ray torpedoes (carrying a 100lb explosive warhead, though not in the Test Variant Torpedo used in the exercise) at a target.

Izumo is a 27,000-tonne 'helicopter destroyer' designed to carry seven anti-submarine helicopters, a similar concept to the Invincible-class of aircraft carriers as they were originally designed 45 years ago.

She launched her Seahawks to share the Pacific skies with the Wildcat and a long-range Maritime Patrol Aircraft, all determined to find the 'enemy' hunter-killer nuclear submarine.

"Given the increase in maritime traffic worldwide and current events, the importance of increased collaboration and cooperation between our three highly capable and like-minded services can't be overstated," said Captain Katsuyoshi Motoyama, Commander of Izumo.

"We all share a common vision of enhancing the operational effectiveness of our maritime forces."

Argyll is the third RN vessel to visit Japan and work with its Maritime Self-Defence Force in the past 12 months, after Sutherland and Albion, and HMS Montrose is due to make it four shortly when she too visits the land of the Rising Sun.

The increased Far East presence by the RN follows an agreement between London, Tokyo and Washington for the three navies to work ever-more-closely-together.

Which can only be a good thing, says Commander Toby Shaughnessy, Argyll's Commanding Officer.

After the workout, Argyll entered the US Naval Base at Yokosuka, just outside Tokyo, which gave her ship's company the chance to explore the Japanese capital Tokyo and head into the mountains above

Yokosuka to take part in winter sports.

Following the stop in Japan, Argyll joined the US Navy for a two-day combined workout in the South China Sea.

She linked up with American destroyer McCampbell, underlining the Royal Navy's return to the Pacific Rim as Britain looks to broader horizons after Brexit.

After spending Christmas just outside Tokyo in the US Navy's Seventh Fleet home of Yokosuka, Argyll began the first homeward leg of her nine-month Asia-Pacific deployment.

Linking up with the Arleigh Burke guided missile destroyer McCampbell, Argyll conducted communication drills, combined manoeuvres and sent some of her crew to the US warship to trade places with Americans so both individual sailors and marines could get used to different routines, terminology and working practices.

The aim is to forge an even closer working relationship between the two allies at sea on a personal and professional level – ties which will benefit both fleets for many years to come.

"Following on from our successful time in north-east Asia, where we've been contributing to promoting regional security and prosperity, we were delighted with the opportunity to train alongside our closest ally," said Cdr Shaughnessy.

His counterpart in the McCampbell, Commander Allison Christy, added: "We routinely train with regional allies and partners, but it is a rare opportunity for my team to work with the Royal Navy.

"Professional engagement with our British counterparts allows us the opportunity to build upon our existing strong relationships and learn from each other."

The frigate is making her way back to Devon for a March homecoming after a varied deployment which has seen her search the Indian Ocean for terrorists and smugglers, and work with warships from Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand and Australia for a regular test of Commonwealth navies off the Malay peninsula.

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Mine the gap

BRITISH minehunters led a week-long workout in the Gulf to keep the Royal and US Navies at the tip of the spear when it comes to finding – and destroying – underwater explosives.

Upwards of 500 British and American sailors rolled out their full panoply of minehunting kit for combined training in the central Gulf.

The two allies maintain a permanent, sizeable minehunting presence in Bahrain, taking those forces to sea for combined exercises three or four times a year as part of a regular cycle of training to keep them at the forefront of mine warfare.

Thrown into the mix for Mine Countermeasures Exercise (MCMEX) 19-1 were HMS Blyth (specialists in hunting mines in deep waters), Ledbury (ditto in shallower waters), USS Devastator and Sentry and the command ship RFA Cardigan Bay, with a battle staff directing proceedings embarked.

Giant Sea Dragons from the US Navy's Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 15 – known as the Blackhawks – dragged minehunting equipment through the water. Robot boats and unmanned underwater vehicles were also used.

"This 'mixed golf bag' approach allowed us to use several different sonars in the same area and clearly demonstrated our ability to conduct integrated, high-tempo mine-hunting operations,"

explained Commander Steve White, in charge of the Mine Warfare Battle Staff on Cardigan Bay.

Despite technological advances, the process of finding a mine is complicated and long, beginning with the highly-skilled operations room team who work around the clock staring at detailed displays of the seabed, looking for the slightest anomaly.

If they find something, they took a closer look, using the data gathered to determine an object's size and shape, even if it's partially-buried in the sea bed.

From there, Seafox (think: yellow submarine on a wire) is launched to dive down to the suspicious object to take a closer look with the submersible's built in camera which beams images back into the ops room.

If the operators are satisfied the device is a mine, bomb, torpedo or some other discarded ordnance, they can use a Seafox to blow it up – or ask the ship's dive team to enter the water to place an explosive charge on the device and safely detonate it.

"It's great to work with such advanced technology," said Able Seaman Lily Brindley, a mine warfare specialist aboard HMS Shoreham, based at Faslane when the ship is in UK waters.

"While the sonar operating shifts can be a bit tiring, the thrill of finding something hidden in the sea and then preparing and launching Seafox is great."

Business as usual for ships in the Gulf

2019 begun as 2018 ended for Royal Navy ships in the Gulf – either on patrol or gearing up for one.

Most countries in the Middle East follow the Islamic lunar calendar – making a regular working day, including for Bahrain-based RN personnel and ships.

Minehunter HMS Shoreham was at sea on a security patrol and practising diving operations on January 1 while engineers were preparing HMS Brocklesby to do the same.

More than 1,000 Royal Navy personnel are committed to the UK's Middle East operation, Kipion, which focuses on keeping the sea lanes open and strangling illegal activity: piracy, drugs/charcoal smuggling, people trafficking and arms running.

Five ships are permanently based at the new UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain – four minehunters plus one RFA support vessel – soon to become six when frigate HMS Montrose is stationed there in a few months' time.

In addition, destroyer HMS Dragon is in the Middle East on

a seven-month deployment.

The actions of all are directed by the UK Maritime Component Command, the Royal Navy's Gulf headquarters in a purpose-built building in Bahrain. It's a '24/7/365' operation.

Coming across an unknown object on the Gulf sea bed on New Year's Day, HMS Shoreham chose to send its dive team out to investigate, plunging into murky, but mild, waters (about 22°C) to keep their skills and procedures up to date... and to unfurl a White Ensign underwater.

"It might have been New Year's Day, but we remain ready for any eventuality and my dive team enjoyed the good weather while practising our mine clearance diving skills," said Leading Diver Jeremy Osborne.

The crew of HMS Brocklesby, alongside at Mina Salman Port, were readying the Hunt-class ship for the first patrol of 2019, carrying out engineering maintenance with the help of Forward Support Unit 2 – a team of specialist technicians based in Bahrain permanently on hand to help with larger engineering jobs.

Read about the Royal Marines' warm up to the Arctic on page 11.



commitment to defend NATO's northern flank and see if they were capable of supporting 3 Commando Brigade in the unforgiving environment.

It turns out they are more than capable of lifting the Green Berets to the heart of the action, even when the temperatures sink well into their minus numbers.

Now, CHF will celebrate 50 years of Clockwork and, as usual, it is a fantastic opportunity for aircrew and engineers to practice operating in frozen surroundings.

At Bardufoss – itself 167 miles inside the Arctic Circle – a Royal Navy Sea King MK4 will be presented as a gate guardian by the UK military to the Norwegian armed forces to mark the 50th anniversary.

The Sea King first deployed to Norway 40 years ago and every year since, up until its retirement from CHF duties in 2016, and is an icon of the skies in the region.

Since 1969, some 17,000 personnel have passed through Clockwork's gruelling programme, teaching UK forces to survive, operate and fight in the extreme cold. In that time, British military aviators have flown more than 40,000 hours in the Norwegian mountains. This time around, Apache attack helicopters of 656 Squadron, 4 Regiment Army Air Corps, have joined CHF helicopters.

As *Navy News* went to press, 847 Naval Air Squadron's Wildcat Battlefield Reconnaissance Helicopter was carrying out underslung load training operations as things kicked off in earnest.

Now, 847 will be joined by her CHF sister squadron, 845 NAS. Three Mk3A Merlins will be flown from Yeovilton through Europe over a three-day period to join in the action.

Once there, engineers will brave temperatures around -30°C out on the flight line to keep the aircraft functioning in an environment that takes its toll on people and machinery.

Up in the icy skies, aircrew will be tested in a wide variety of tasking to qualify as competent operators in the Arctic Circle.

Their tasks will involve night-time snow landings, mountain landings, troop drills and load lifting.

Everyone who heads to Norway must complete the cold weather survival course, led by the Royal Marines Mountain Leader cadre, equipping them with the vital skills to survive if isolated in the Arctic. All of this builds up CHF's Arctic experience and capability, readying personnel for duties in the region.

TICK tock, tick tock. Like clockwork, Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) have stuck themselves back in the deep freezer of Norway. This month and next, the thud and roar of the Wildcat and Merlin helicopters of CHF will be reverberating around the fjords and mountains of the high north.

The wings of the Royal Marines are heading back to the Arctic Circle for their annual war games, Exercise Clockwork, which has now reached its 50th year.

Every winter, around this time, CHF leave their RNAS Yeovilton base and head to their second home, the Joint Helicopter Command facility at the Royal Norwegian Air Force base of Bardufoss, from which they operate hundreds of miles inside the Arctic Circle.

CHF fly anywhere in the world. They deal with extremes in heat and cold and Clockwork is vital in readying themselves for the latter.

It was 1969 when the first Westland Wessex helicopters, of what is now CHF's 845 Naval Air Squadron, arrived in Scandinavia and, living out of rudimentary shelters, conducted trials to show the UK's

JUST LIKE CLOCKWORK

Dragon delivers in Gulf

ROYAL Navy warship HMS Dragon has seized and destroyed ten tonnes of drugs worth more than £75m in one of the most significant drugs busts in the Gulf.

In a highly-fruitful 48-hour window, the Type 45 destroyer intercepted two boats carrying the huge haul of illicit narcotics on notorious drug smuggling route known as the 'Hash Highway'.

They are the third and fourth hauls for the Portsmouth-based destroyer in the space of a month, taking the total drugs seized to 13.3 tonnes during the first three months of the ship's deployment.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said: "Seizing four hauls of this magnitude is a remarkable achievement and represents a significant dent in the pockets of criminals who seek to put these drugs onto our streets. The global narcotics network is a scourge that we are absolutely committed to tackling, as part of our commitment to security in the Gulf and across the world."

Dragon's sailors and Royal Marines were launched on fast boats to halt the two dhows – a type of vessel common to the Middle East – in two separate missions over a demanding two-day period.

Boarding and painstakingly searching the boats, personnel removed hundreds of sacks of narcotics worth a UK street value of more than £75m.

One of Dragon's boarding officers, Royal Navy Lieutenant Jonathan Bennett, was among those in the heat of the action in both raids.

He said: "To achieve two major drugs busts in under 48 hours is a massive achievement for the team."

"Our Royal Navy and Royal Marines boarding teams worked long hours in very challenging seas to remove nearly 10,000kg of narcotics."

"During the second boarding, the sea deteriorated resulting in increasingly-hazardous conditions for our searchers."

"We had to endure heavy seas, large

amounts of ship movement and a dangerous working environment, all while removing over 300 heavy bags of narcotics and transporting them back to Dragon successfully."

As weather conditions worsened, Dragon deployed her Wildcat helicopter to aid the boarding teams' work. It allowed them to return the drugs back to ship quickly, with their work complete before midnight.

Royal Marine Lieutenant Elliot Titman, from Juliet Company, of Devon-based 42 Commando Royal Marines, said: "These recent operational successes represent a positive start to this deployment and are the result of the efforts of the whole ship together with support from our combined task force partners."

"This deployment is the culmination of a long specialist training programme and the team and I look forward to continuing to deliver on operations in the coming months."

HMS Dragon left for this deployment in September and has been working in the Middle East as part of the Combined Task Force 150, a multi-national organisation responsible for maintaining security in some of the world's most important shipping lanes.

Dragon's 'outstanding' work earned praise from the US navy's recently-appointed commander of the region.

Vice Admiral James Malloy, Commander of the US Fifth Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces, commended UK naval personnel on their expertise on operating in the Middle East and the "special relationship" they have with their American counterparts.

He was appointed into the roles last month and will be based in Bahrain which is also home to the headquarters of the UK Maritime Component Command (UKMCC) and the UK Naval Support Facility (UKNSF).

Vice Admiral Malloy, who visited the two Royal Navy sites at the start of the year, said: "I have always enjoyed working with the Royal Navy and



there is a special relationship between our nations and our navies that I have benefited from for 30 years.

"I am proud of the outstanding British team that supports the Combined Maritime Forces and our staffs of Combined Task Forces 51, 52, 53 and 55."

"I really appreciate the professionalism and expertise of the British sailors and their ships out here in the Gulf and across the wider Middle East."

Currently, the Royal Navy has six ships operating in the Gulf region.

In October, more than 4,000 British personnel took part in the largest combined military exercise for UK forces since 2002 in Operation Saif Sareea in Oman.

Several exercises were also held with the US navy including Mine Countermeasures Exercise 18-2 in June, commanded from RFA Cardigan Bay, and the 23rd iteration of Khunjar Hadd

(Sharp Dagger) in March.

Commodore Steve Dainton, commander of UKMCC, welcomed the appointment of Vice Admiral Malloy. He said: "Our navies have always had much in common and I have enjoyed working with the US navy throughout my career."

"Our true friendship is demonstrated almost daily afloat with US Navy and Royal Navy assets often working together with the same goal, to maintain maritime security across the Middle East."



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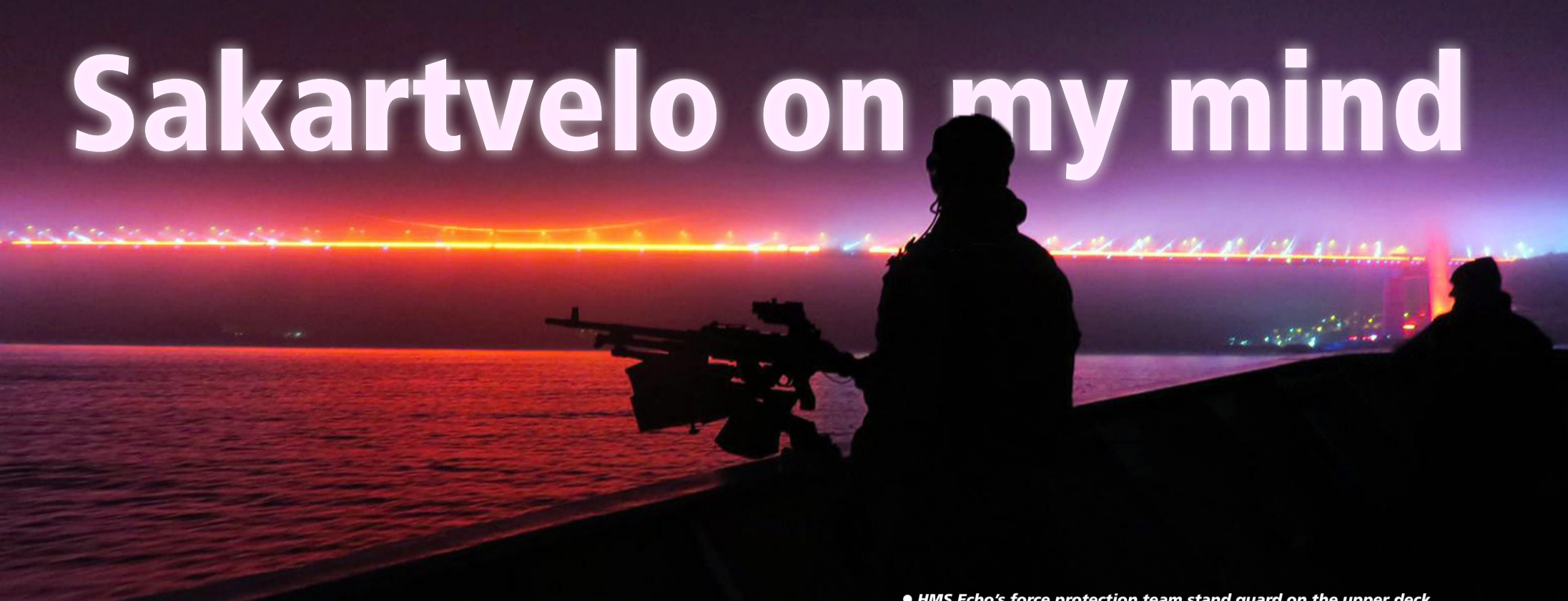
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Sakartvelo on my mind



● HMS Echo's force protection team stand guard on the upper deck as the ship passes the Bosphorus Bridge at the start of her Black Sea

TO NATIVES, Germany isn't Germany. It's Deutschland.

Norwegians live in Norge. Finns, Suomi. Sakartvelo? Georgia – one of three countries fringing the Black Sea visited by HMS Echo in a frantic festive fortnight.

For while many people were winding down and eyeing up turkey and Christmas pud, the survey ship was activated for Operation Rockhard: to conduct defence engagement with the UK's allies and friends and demonstrate Britain's commitment to the region.

Under the Montreux Convention, warships from non-Black-Sea navies are only permitted to spend three weeks in these waters.

The clock began ticking for Echo on December 17 as she sailed through the Bosphorus bound for Ukraine's principal port and naval base: Odessa.

The UK has been offering its support to Ukraine's armed forces as part of Operation Orbital for some time, and the arrival of a Royal Navy ship was extremely well received.

Crew were able to enjoy the city's preparations for Christmas and soak up the atmosphere of a city which has as much of a Mediterranean feel as it does Black Sea.

The key part of the visit was hosting Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson who underlined Britain's commitment to the security of the Black Sea states, which included a visit to the Ukrainian Navy's flagship, frigate Hetman Sahaydachniy, before a tour of Echo and the presentation of an award from the Royal Humane Society to the ship's company for their long-term mission aimed at curbing people trafficking in the central Mediterranean.

That mission has seen more than 4,600 people plucked from the Med by Echo's sailors, and many of the boats used by traffickers dispatched to Davy Jones' Locker.

From Odessa Echo sailed for Constanta – Romania's oldest city and largest port.

Fourteen crew spread some festive cheer at a disabled children's home. On arrival they were serenaded by a Romanian Christmas song and shared in a traditional meal of bread and onion, before giving out gifts around the Christmas tree.

"It was very rewarding to deliver some Christmas cheer to these children spending their Christmas in a children's home," said Leading Medical Assistant Lauren Armour.



Christmas Day was marked in traditional Royal Navy-style, kicking off with a dip in the Black Sea (temperature 7 Celsius) by some of the braver members of the ship's company, led by navigator Lieutenant Ben Adams who declared the water "bloody cold!"

That was followed by a visit by Santa and a giant snowman to the flight deck and the most junior member of the ship's company, Engineering Technician Matthew Sutch, trading places with his Commanding Officer Commander Matthew Warren for the day, and a turkey dinner served by officers to ratings.

With stomachs still digesting the festive fare, the ship crossed 700 miles of sea for the two-day visit to Batumi in Georgia.

The Devonport-based hydrographic vessel was greeted by Georgian military commanders and UK representatives in the Eurasian country, but also a traditional dance troupe.

"It was, without doubt the most athletic and enthralling welcome we've ever had! If you've never seen Georgian dancing you really should," said Cdr Warren.

A cemetery in Batumi is home to a 'wall of honour' erected by the Commonwealth War

Graves Commission in memory of 68 British military personnel – five of them RN – buried in the British Military Cemetery between 1918 and 1920 during the failed attempt by anti-Communist forces to prevent the Bolsheviks from overrunning the Batumi-Tiflis-Baku railway line during the bloody civil war.

No trace of those graves could be found after the fall of the Soviet Union, so a memorial wall was put up to ensure the sacrifices were not forgotten.

It was visited when HMS Dragon called in at the port of Poti last May on NATO duties. Seven months later Echo did the same when she became the first Royal Navy ship in several years to enter Batumi itself.

Defence Attaché Lieutenant Colonel Dave Ethell RM explained the history of the site before the list of fallen was read, a commemorative silence kept, and a wreath laid by Cdr Warren, with prayers led by Echo's chaplain, the Rev Phil Amey.

"It is easy to forget these people as they are so far away from home and yet died in the pursuit of peace," said AB Ryan Prince, wreath bearer and ceremonial piper.

Later a number of sailors and embassy staff were invited by the Georgian Coastguard to a traditional Georgian banquet or *supra*.

A *supra* is almost a ritual for Georgians, who take hospitality very seriously. It was not long before the table was groaning under a wide variety of dishes and local wine, little known in the West but direct descendants of what claims to be the oldest tradition of wine-making in the world, going back over eight thousand years.

Captain 1st Rank Ramaz Papidze acted as *tamada*, or toastmaster, leading a series of naval-themed toasts, each followed by the Georgian cry of "*Gaumarjos!*" (Hurrah!)

Echo sailed from Batumi on New Year's Eve with two members of the coastguard on board to observe the ship's departure from the bridge, followed by joint manoeuvres with the cutter Ochamchira, ending with the return of the Georgian guests to their ship and a ceremonial sail past.

"It was," says Cdr Warren, "a fitting conclusion to a very rewarding port visit in Georgia."

"Everyone on board experienced a Christmas like no other in the Black Sea."



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CHOK TO THE SYSTEM



ROYAL Marines are ready to respond immediately if there's a repeat of the Novichok attack after honing their chemical warfare skills.

Zulu Company from 45 Commando, based at Arbroath, will now be the first men on the ground should the marines be called on to deal with a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) incident at home or abroad.

Due to the heightened threat following last year's incident in Salisbury, the commandos refreshed their skills at the country's specialist training centre preparing troops for such forms of warfare.

Military and civilian specialists from the Defence Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Centre at Westdown Camp on Salisbury Plain - just 15 miles from the site of the fatal Novichok attack - helped the Scottish-based marines perfect their skills

After a week in the classroom learning about the latest threats and how to deal with them both practically and in planning a co-ordinated response, the marines moved on to a week of practical training - Exercise Toxic Dagger - which culminated in an all-out attack on Imber village, testing all they had learned.

"The recent attack on British soil highlighted the importance of this capability and it is more important than ever for us to be able to operate effectively in this environment should the need arise," explained 36-year-old Sergeant Ben Fall from the Defence Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Centre.

The village was cleared of its inhabitants back in 1943 to allow American troops to train for the liberation of Europe and has since been developed to add modern housing to prepare for 21st-Century urban combat.

The final assault incorporated pyrotechnic and electronic battle simulators to make the experience as real as possible, allowing Zulu Company - wearing protective gas masks - to gain a huge amount of training benefit and vital CBRN experience.

"The Royal Marines are high-readiness troops who need to be able to react to all threats at short notice anywhere in the world," said Lieutenant Oliver Crow, 25, of Zulu Company.

"This is a very important skill for us to maintain in view of the current threat."

Toxic Dagger is the second major chemical/nuclear warfare workout for the Royal Marines inside 12 months.

Not only are Zulu Company now the Corps' experts in CBRN warfare and the first called upon in the event of an incident or attack, but they will share their knowledge across the rest of 3 Commando Brigade to enhance the Royal Marines' ability to deal with these particular forms of war.

Pictures: LPhoto Dean Nixon, 30 Cdo IX Gp



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Mountain men

Marines decamp to Wales to prepare for the Arctic

ROYAL MARINES have been refining winter mountaineering skills in Snowdonia National Park during Exercise Winter Walker.

Personnel from 3 Commando Brigade made the journey to Wales for an eight-day arduous mountain-training package to ensure they are physically and mentally ready for the harsh arctic conditions of Norway this year.

"Mountain training ensures the necessary knowledge, physical and mental robustness to operate in the Arctic," said Colour Sergeant Cameron Smith, 36.

The commandos use the difficult mountainous terrain to test basic skills such as navigation and casualty evacuation alongside vertical assault and river crossings which are specialist skills unique to the Royal Marines.

Vertical assault training is used to pass vertical obstacles, whether it be a cliff face or a mountainous feature inland, the skill uses advanced climbing and abseiling techniques to cross the obstacle undetected.

The technique was developed by the first commandos during World War 2, to launch raids against German forces behind enemy lines.

Technology has improved the equipment used but the basic principle has changed very little.

Mountain training is carried out annually in both Scotland and north Wales to ensure the Marines are fully prepared to deploy to the harsh arctic environment of Norway to conduct Arctic warfare training.

The Marines have a long history of operating in mountainous and Arctic environments, stretching back to the cold war era, when the commandos were tasked with holding the Northern flank.

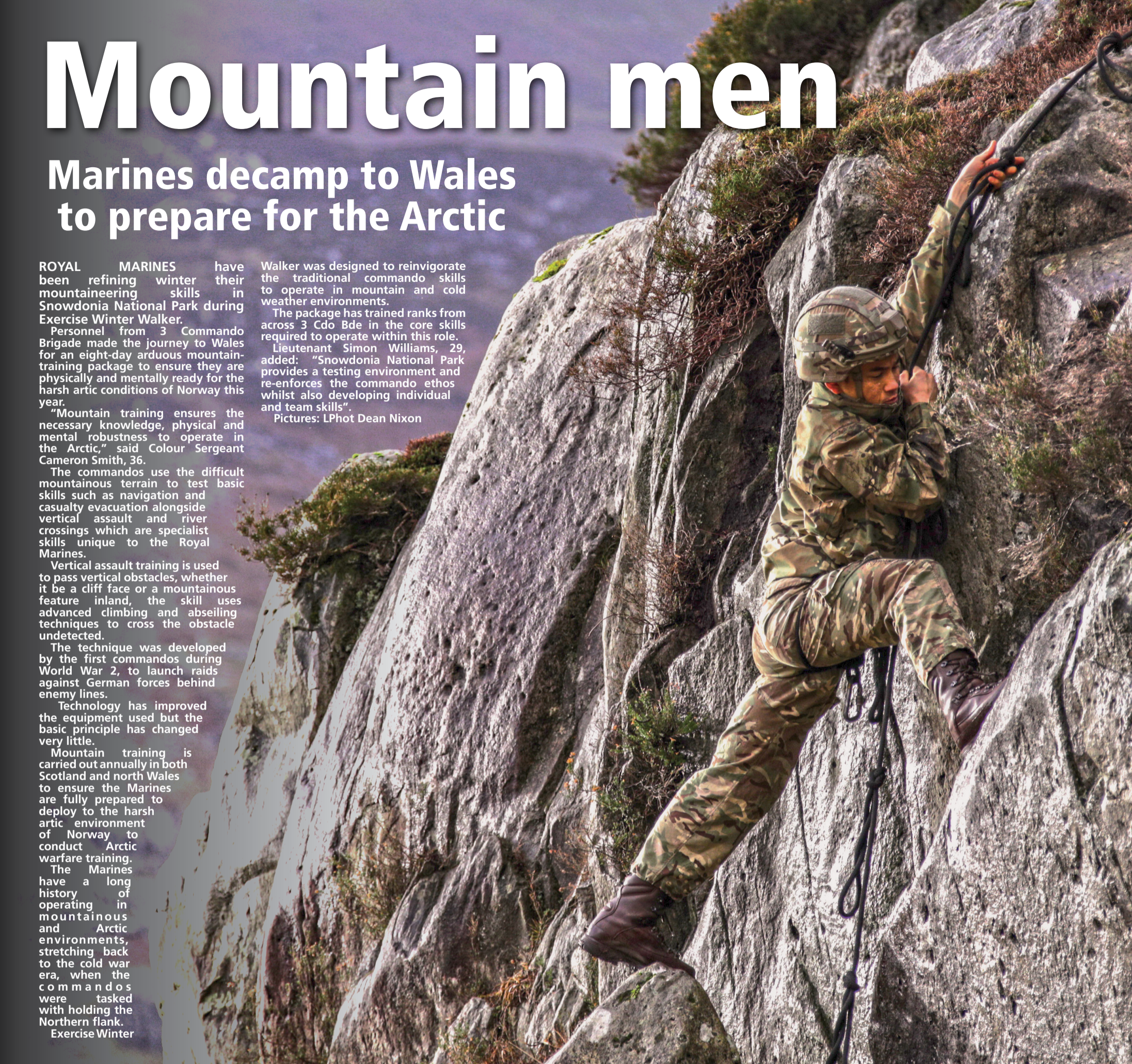
Exercise Winter

Walker was designed to reinvigorate the traditional commando skills to operate in mountain and cold weather environments.

The package has trained ranks from across 3 Cdo Bde in the core skills required to operate within this role.

Lieutenant Simon Williams, 29, added: "Snowdonia National Park provides a testing environment and re-enforces the commando ethos whilst also developing individual and team skills".

Pictures: LPhoto Dean Nixon



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Celebrating 50 years of RN's ultimate mission

● HMS Resolution on patrol in the 1960s

EVENTS across the UK will celebrate 50 years of dedication by submariners on the longest operation ever carried out by our armed forces.

No mission has been longer – or more important – than the nuclear deterrent patrols performed around the clock by the Royal Navy over the past half century.

Since April 1969 there has always been one submarine from Clyde Naval Base carrying out Operation Relentless.

To mark that commitment – and success – high-profile public events, including services of thanksgiving in London and Edinburgh, a parade through the home of the deterrent force on the Clyde and a new commemorative award for crew are all lined up.

Political, industry and naval leaders are determined 2019 also recognises the expertise, innovation and skill of the thousands of people who have designed, built and supported the deterrent force on more than 350 patrols since the late 1960s.

Today's generation of Trident-missile-carrying submarines are the size of a small aircraft carrier and more complex to build than the Space Shuttle.

Britain's senior sailor First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Philip Jones launched the year of commemoration by presenting new 'badges of honour' to veterans of patrols on a visit to HMS Vengeance – one of the four Vanguard-class submarines needed to provide the continuous at-sea deterrence.

Up to now, submariners who complete a single patrol have been awarded a pewter pin and those achieving 20 or more patrols presented with a gold deterrent pin. The new silver award bridges the gap between the two, being awarded after ten patrols.

On patrol, the crew of over 160 are cut off from the rest of the world except for short messages of 120 words which can be sent by families each week that their loved ones are away – with no opportunity for submariners to communicate back.

"Delivery of our nation's strategic nuclear deterrent is the first duty of the Royal Navy – and Defence as a whole; the importance of this operation and the incredible feat of engineering and logistics that underpins this enormously complex capability, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, cannot be underestimated," Admiral Jones said.



"The Continuous At-Sea Deterrence is the longest sustained military operation ever undertaken by the UK and this 50th anniversary year presents a valuable opportunity to recognise and thank those from the Naval Service and their families, the wider Ministry of Defence and our many industrial partners who have contributed to this vital national endeavour."

He continued: "As we begin our commemoration of this remarkable milestone, it's fitting that we recognise the extraordinary dedication and professionalism demonstrated by our submariners, through the introduction of a new silver deterrent pin, which signifies completion of at least ten deterrent patrols."

"Their service at sea in our Vanguard-class nuclear submarines lies at the heart of this mission's continued success and I'm pleased to be presenting the first six of these new silver deterrent pins."

Submariners receiving the new silver pin included Coxswain Daryn Mathieson, pictured above with Admiral Jones.

He joined the Submarine Service in 1992 and has completed 18 deterrent patrols – the equivalent of nearly five years submerged.

"It means a lot to receive my silver deterrent pin on the 50th anniversary of deterrent patrols," he said. "50 years is a real achievement and I'm proud to have played even a small part."

"I've served on board Resolution-class and Vanguard-class boats – HMS

Resolution was my first submarine after qualifying, although unfortunately I missed her final patrol.

"Both my father and grandfather were in the Royal Navy. Before I even left school I knew that I wanted to be a submarine sonar operator and that is what I aimed for."

Also receiving the new silver pin badges from the First Sea Lord were Coxswain Patrick Sheekey, Leading Chef Al Crawford, Leading Engineer Technician Scott Munro, Warrant Officer Kerrigan and Chief Petty Officer Ormiston.

The first submarine to carry the nuclear deterrent was HMS Resolution which left Clyde on her maiden patrol in June 1968.

Continuous patrols began in April 1969 as the remaining R-boats – Repulse, Renown and Revenge – entered service, each armed with Polaris nuclear missiles.

The four conducted 229 deterrence patrols until they were retired in the 1990s as the much larger V-boats – HMS Vanguard, Victorious, Vigilant and Vengeance – replaced them.

As they approach the end of their lives, work has begun on the third generation of deterrent submarines, the Dreadnought class, which will also be equipped with Trident missiles.

Built by BAE Systems at its state-of-the-art facility in Barrow-in-Furness, the new boats will enter service in the early 2030s – taking the continuous at sea deterrence up to its 100th anniversary, ensuring the safety and security of generations to come.



● Lt Smith and officer cadets from Sussex URNU at the grave of Lt Maynard

Pirate's demise leads to unique link for P2000

P2000 HMS Ranger has formed an unusual affiliation – with the village of Ocracoke in North Carolina.

The official Bond of Friendship is a result of a visit by two Royal Navy officers to the US for commemorations.

HMS Ranger is affiliated to Sussex URNU and the unit's Commanding Officer and three officer cadets took part in commemorations to mark the tercentenary of the capture of notorious pirate Blackbeard.

The pirate, Edward Teach, terrorised the Caribbean and the southern coast of North America in the early 1700s.

He was captured in a bloody battle off Ocracoke, North Carolina, by Royal Navy forces, including the sloop HMS Ranger.

Blackbeard was killed during a fight with HMS Pearl's First Lieutenant Robert Maynard.

Sussex URNU mark the capture of Blackbeard every year at their annual mess dinner.

The latter part of 2018 saw the Commanding Officer of Sussex URNU, Lieutenant Craig Smith, accompany three officer cadets to Great Mongham in Deal.

They laid a wreath at the grave of Maynard to honour him and the 11 Royal Navy sailors who died in the battle.

Lt Smith said: "It was appropriate for Sussex URNU to pay respects to the brave sailors who rid the, then British colony of North Carolina, of the pirate Blackbeard and it allowed us to draw parallels with what the Royal Navy has continued to do in recent times off the coast of Somalia"

Sussex URNU then hosted a Blackbeard Tercentenary Mess Dinner which was attended by 60 members of the unit, the ship's company of HMS Ranger and guests from across the Royal Navy and local area.

Attending was Rear Admiral John Kingwell, Deputy Commandant of the Royal College of Defence Studies, and a previous Commanding Officer of Sussex URNU.

OC Ethan Labouchardiere said: "This was my first mess

dinner and it was an amazing night and I feel privileged that I was able to attend."

Lt Smith and the new Commanding Officer of HMS Ranger, Lt Roddy Hartridge then travelled to North Carolina to take part in the commemoration of the battle on Ocracoke Island, where they were joined by Cdr Dickie Underwood from the British Defence Staff in Washington.



They were invited by the Ocracoke Preservation Society, an organisation dedicated to preserving its rich historical and cultural heritage.

While there, they received an extremely warm welcome from the townspeople and were invited to events to meet the townspeople which including an oyster roast, tea party and hog roast.

The highlight of the visit was a service on the beach remembering the 11 RN sailors killed in the battle.

A synopsis of the battle was read by students from the local high school and the *Last Post* was played by a local musician.

Lts Smith and Hartridge were invited to take dinner with a local family where their hospitality was in keeping with that seen from everyone else.

They also had the honour to visit the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, the smallest in the world, in which four sailors from HM Trawler Bedfordshire, sunk in World War 2, are buried.

Lt Smith said: "It was an absolute honour to attend the remembrance events in Ocracoke, not only to pay our respects to the sailors who died, but it also gave us an opportunity to meet the kind people of the town who have done so much to keep Lt Maynard's memory alive."

Lt Hartridge added: "I can't overstate the warm welcome awarded to us by the people of Ocracoke. They really made us feel like part of the family and I'm determined to retain and strengthen the bonds of friendship we made. It was especially moving to read out the names of the sailors from Ranger who fell during the battle."



● Cdr Underwood, Lt Hartridge and Lt Smith saluting during the Last Post in Ocracoke

Honouring lost of Iolaire

Solemn tributes
mark centenary
of the worst
maritime
disaster in the
Western Isles





● (left) Lt Alison Ross joins colleagues as sentinels at a service held at the Iolaire monument in Stornoway in the early hours of New Year's Day; (above left) Prince Charles laid a wreath at the monument on New Year's Day at a later service; (right) Sailors march through Stornoway

Pictures: Lenny Warren/
Warren Media

IT IS 1.55am, January 1 1919 and 280 men on board a navy yacht are excited to be heading home having survived World War 1.

They had boarded HMY Iolaire a few hours earlier, willing to travel in the darkness to see their loved ones and celebrate the new year.

As they get closer to Stornoway shore, the weather worsens and as the ship goes through the harbour, disaster strikes.

Just before 2am, and metres from the rocky shore, HMY Iolaire hits notorious rocks and 90 minutes later lays at the bottom of the sea. Only 79 men survive the sinking.

One hundred years later, descendants of the victims and the survivors gathered for a series of services to remember one of Scotland's worst maritime tragedies.

The emotional events started at 1.55am on New Year's Day when a candlelight vigil was held in Stornoway to commemorate the centenary.

There were no fireworks or cheers, instead loved ones marched through the streets and gathered at the Iolaire monument to share in their grief of the disaster – one which hit families on the Isle of Lewis and the Isle of Harris so hard that many generations did not speak about what happened for decades.

A majority of the men on Iolaire (meaning 'eagle' in Gaelic) were Royal Naval Reserves who had signed up to fight in the First World War.

The Isles of Lewis and Harris had already suffered losses with around a fifth of the 6,000 men sent to the Great War killed. With peace now established, families were looking forward to the homecoming.

The ship set off into the night from the Kyle of Lochalsh on December 31, 1918 but just a few hours later on January 1 she struck rocks known as the Beasts of Holm near the entrance to Stornoway Harbour.

With the shore just metres away, some of the men tried to swim but were dragged under the freezing depths of the water.

Others tried to escape in the lifeboats but they had too many people on board and capsized.

Of the 280 people on Iolaire, 201 died.

Residents of the islands woke to the heartbreaking news and spent New Year's Day finding bodies washed ashore.

A third of those who died would never be recovered.

Half of those who survived did so thanks to John Finlay MacLeod. He had been on board HMY Iolaire and managed to swim to the beach with a heaving line. Others in the sea grabbed on and 40 people made it ashore.

His great-great-niece Lieutenant Alison Ross acted as one of four military sentinels around the Iolaire memorial at the early morning service on New Year's Day.

The 29-year-old, who is part of the team helping to bring the new aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales into service, was also part of the ceremony attended by the Lord of the Isles – as Prince Charles is officially titled in Scotland.

Lt Ross said: "My great aunt is the daughter of John Finlay MacLeod. She was there for the service with her son and it was nice to see her.

"I was really honoured to be involved with the commemorations and see the Royal Navy taking part too.

"It was really important for the community because I don't think it was talked about at the time as much as it could have been.

"But for the centenary, so many people came together for the many services which I am pleased about."

Prince Charles, attending the service as Lord of the Isles, laid a wreath at the Iolaire monument in the daytime service.

A Royal Navy guard, composed of personnel from HMNB Clyde and HMS Prince of Wales, attended along with the Royal Marines Band.

A two-minute silence was held and the *Last Post* was played along with the *National Anthem*.

Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon attended to lay a wreath, given to her by Able Seaman Laurie Connolly who lived on the Isle of Lewis as a child.

He said: "Having lived on the island for most of my life I was keen to get involved. I am glad they made a big deal of the anniversary and those who died were remembered."

Meanwhile some families and members of the community boarded the CalMac Ferry which went to the wreck site to hold

a poignant service in the afternoon.

The Loch Seaworth anchored at Holm and Reverend James MacIver, of the Stornoway Free Church, led the relatives in the memorial event.

Then, 201 pupils from the islands cast flowers into the sea to represent the sailors who died. A wreath was also laid on the wreck.

At the Kyle of Lochalsh, a plaque was unveiled to mark the tragedy.

Led by Reverend Roddie Rankin, minister of Plockton and Kyle Free Church, the service saw wreaths laid by Lord-Lieutenant of Ross and Cromarty Janet Bowen, the Royal Navy's Commander Gary Mills and Gregor Talbot, a descendant of one of the victims.

Rear Admiral John Weale, Flag Officer for Scotland and Northern Ireland who was part of the service on Stornoway, said: "The commemoration was very appropriate and I am very happy with Royal Navy was able to participate.

"The men who perished in the tragedy were sailors and it is absolutely fitting the Royal Navy pays tribute to their sacrifice. It's something we do, as a naval service, when we lose people on operations and we weren't able to do that 100 years ago.

"So it was particularly important to us and I speak for all of the sailors and marines when I say we are privileged to have taken part, to be able to pay our respects to fallen comrades and to be able to meet their descendants."

"I applaud the community for their determination to keep the memory of those men and disaster alive today and tomorrow."



● The Iolaire wreck



● The Last Post is played at a commemoration service held at the Iolaire monument on Stornoway on New Year's Day.

Pictures: Lenny Warren/
Warren Media



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Mexican Waves

Insight into world of defence engagement

ROYAL Marines musicians settle into their new surroundings during a visit to Mexico.

The visit, during which the bandies celebrated the Day of the Dead holiday, was one of a number of ways in which the Naval Service supported our man in Mexico, **Captain Andy Hancock**, the UK Defence Attaché.

Capt Hancock takes up the story of a busy year for his team in Mexico City.

Many have heard of the slightly bland term Defence Engagement but what does it actually mean in practice?

Most Defence Sections comprise an officer as the Defence Attaché, a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer as the Assistant and Office Administrator, a locally-engaged civilian as an administrator or Defence Coordinator and a locally-engaged driver.

In Mexico we are fortunate to also have two retired naval spouses that help greatly!

The main objectives are to be the Chief of Defence Staff's representative with the host nation's armed forces and to provide defence and security advice to Her Majesty's Ambassador.

In Mexico, we have the Latin America and Caribbean Strategy which frames the work but the reality is that we are constantly looking for opportunities to build trust, confidence and understanding with our hosts in order to further our defence relationship.

Here's a snapshot of a hectic end of activities in 2018.

In October we received our new Ambassador, Corin Robertson. Her arrival coincided with our efforts to promote the commemorations of the Centenary of Armistice, where the section was organising a combined event with the French and US Embassies.

To promote this, musicians from the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines, Lympstone spent a week performing



Members of the Joint Service team talk to Mexican medics about rehabilitation methods; Staff from the Mexico Defence Section, from left, Capt (Rtd) Angie Hancock, Capt Andy Hancock, CPO Jo Bouckley, defence co-ordinator Eva Gonzalez and driver Alfonso Perea

in local schools and participating in a concert entitled *Music and the Great War*.

Arranged by the section with the Mexican Navy's Philharmonic Orchestra, the Pipers of the Mexican Saint Patrick's Battalion, a 60-strong professional choir and our ten Royal Marine musicians, it provided an evening crammed with classical music.

Entertainment featured famous British composers of the period, then songs from the trenches.

To a packed National Conservatory, Band Corporal Alice Hudson, under the direction of Captain Sam Hairsine RM, provided the encore of a beautiful solo violin performance.

At her first formal function, the Ambassador hosted the Mexican Navy Board to a Trafalgar Night dinner – a novelty for all of them!

The evening was an outstanding success, bringing 213 years of tradition to the Mexican Navy High Command in an unforgettable format and demonstrating

our soft-power capability.

Immediately thereafter, we organized a seminar on Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) and casualty rehabilitation.

Mexico has been fighting a war on drugs for over 12 years and has suffered 235,000 casualties, many from the armed forces.

Recognising that there is much to be shared between us, the seminar brought UK military experts from Mental Health (Lt Col Sarah Isherwood), Physical Rehabilitation (Maj Watson) and TRiM (Maj Mark Woosey RM and WO1 Paul Fudge) to lecture with 60 medical and nursing representatives from the Mexican Navy and Army.

There was such great interest that we will do more this coming year.

November saw the culmination of seven months of planning for the Armistice Centenary.

The Defence Section delivered an event for 600-plus guests, 27 diplomatic missions, veterans from WW2, including



Mexicans from the 201st Fighter Squadron, a military band and civilian choir.

We also raised £1,000 for the Royal British Legion.

Our next major event was co-ordinating a team from 43 Commando to provide Maritime Interdiction Operations training to Mexican Marines based near the Guatemalan border in Tapachula.

Under the command of Colour Sergeant Baz O'Neil and working with US MARFORNORTH, 25 marines received three-weeks' training in order to give the local brigade commander a day and night capability to intercept traffickers operating off the Pacific coastline of southern Mexico.

It was certainly a busy period but enormously rewarding and there is rarely a dull day.

Viva Mexico and Viva Defence Engagement.

Pictures: Nigel Bouckley



Nations unite in tribute

THE Commanding Officer of HMS St Albans, Commander John Cromie, lays a wreath in tribute to sailors who died in Estonia's battle for independence.

A Royal Navy fleet travelled to the Baltic Sea in December 1918 – just a month after the end of the First World War – to halt Soviet advances into nations in the region.

The British warships helped to stop their progress, destroying a vital bridge and delivering vital supplies, with the Soviet army camped just 21 miles outside of capital Tallinn.

HMS Cardiff – a light cruiser built during the First World War involved in the campaign – entered Tallinn on December 12, 1918, and the same day welcomed members of the Estonian Provisional Government.

Fast forward 100 years – to the day – and HMS St Albans came alongside in Estonia to further strengthen the strong bonds which have stood for a century.

The Portsmouth-based warship took centre stage and was a big hit with the Estonians who flocked to visit the ship. St Albans was there with the Yorkshire Regiment, who are currently deployed in Estonia.

Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid – who inspected a Presidential Guard of Honour – also went on board during the four-day stop.

While the trip strengthened bonds with the Estonians, it was also a chance to look back and pay tribute to the 112 British sailors who lost their lives during the battle for Estonian independence.

The Tallinn stop was also a chance for the ship's company of St Albans to have some down time.

Cheery Chid back in water

HMS Chiddingfold has returned to the water following an extensive work package.

At 60m long and 10m wide, the Hunt-class vessels are the largest glass-reinforced plastic vessels in the world and have been in service for over 30 years.

All six are base-ported at Portsmouth Naval Base and maintained by BAE Systems teams.

The first phase of HMS Chiddingfold's upkeep was carried out in the former ship hall facility, which is now the Minor Vessels Centre of Specialisation.

The Cheery Chid's programme included an extensive blasting of her hull, ship's side and decks to prepare her for repainting.

She also received upgrades to many of her systems, including firefighting equipment, new fuel tanks, salvage generator and underwater valve replacements.

There were also modifications to the electrical systems, and a new galley was installed so that the crew have better on board facilities.



The training team from 43 Cdo head out on their final trip; Royal Marines musicians perform for children at a school in Mexico City



Full Power is coming

POWER pulses through the 920ft hull of Britain's second new aircraft carrier after engineers fired up her main engine for the first time.

Just weeks after switching on the smaller diesel generators, experts aboard HMS Prince of Wales finished all the checks and tests needed before the 'on' button was pressed and one of two huge Rolls-Royce MT30 engines roared into life.

It's the most powerful gas turbine ever installed on a ship, based on the Trent 800 engine which powers Boeing 777 airliners.

Two are installed on the 65,000-tonne leviathan, which is due to go to sea for the first time in the autumn of 2019.

A combined team from the Royal Navy and the Aircraft Carrier Alliance – the combination of industry and military experts formed to build the carrier and her completed sister HMS Queen Elizabeth – is working flat out to finish the carrier at Rosyth dockyard, installing and testing as many systems as possible ahead of her maiden voyage.

Marine Engineer Chief Petty Officer Will Horsepool said to feel and hear the mammoth engine running at last was a milestone for the ship – and "one of the proudest moments of my career."

"It has been an enjoyable experience to be part of the team that has successfully achieved the first run of a gas turbine on board after so many months of work."

In the civilian world, the engine generates enough power to meet the needs of 36,000 homes – that's roughly a town the size of Burnley or Guildford – or 450,000 80 watt light bulbs.

Aboard HMS Prince of Wales, each MT30 is responsible for producing 30 percent of the ship's power requirements, with the four diesel generators making up the remaining 40 percent.

Collectively, all six engines on full power could supply Portsmouth or Swindon.

First look at carrier's bottom in five years

NAVAL engineers will have the chance to see what five years in the water has done to the hull of Britain's biggest warship when she goes into dry dock later this year.

HMS Queen Elizabeth will return to Rosyth for a six-week maintenance package over the summer.

It's the first time the Portsmouth-based carrier has gone into dry dock since she was floated out of the same facility in July 2014.

Around 100 Babcock employees will carry out work on the hull, machinery, inlets and bilges below the waterline, as well as conduct a general hull survey in a £5m package.

Queen Elizabeth is currently in her home base undergoing an upgrade following her autumn deployment to the USA to conduct maiden fast-jet trials with F-35s. Among the improvements being made presently is the installation of Phalanx automated Gatling guns, one of the last lines of defence against missile/air/fast inshore craft attacks.

Her docking period on the Forth means the carrier will be reunited with her younger sister HMS Prince of Wales, currently in the final stages of fitting out before beginning her sea trials towards the end of the year.



Green light for action

NAVAL aviators can now fly the world's most advanced fighter on front-line missions after the F-35 Lightning was declared operational.

In a new hangar built specially to house the stealth fighters at their home on land – RAF Marham in Norfolk – Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson announced the fifth-generation jet was ready to take its place in the nation's aerial order of battle.

Nine F-35s are on UK soil at present, flying with the legendary 617 'Dambusters' Squadron – an RAF formation, but nearly half its personnel are Royal Navy pilots or engineers.

Mr Williamson said the advent of the Lightnings made the UK's "commitment to a role on the world stage clear to both our allies and our enemies."

The declaration of Initial Operating Capability means the Lightning Force can conduct combat missions from land bases if world events require the stealth fighter's intervention.

"This is great news for the Royal Navy and the United Kingdom as it is a key milestone along the road to operating the F-35 Lightning at the heart of our carrier strike capability from 2021," said Commander James Blackmore, who has been involved in the programme for the past decade and is now in charge of flying operations (known as Commander Air, or 'Wings') aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth.

"As a fifth-generation fighter, the F-35 is streets ahead of anything we have operated before. It's proving itself to be highly capable in air-to-air and air-to-ground operations. Fuse that together with its stealth capability, it's way beyond anything other land or sea-based fighters."

There are now half a dozen nations who have operational F-35s, although only the US and UK are flying the stealth fighter from carriers.

The next key step for Britain is to declare the F-35 operational at sea – from the more challenging surroundings of HMS Queen Elizabeth, ready for the carrier's maiden deployment in two years' time.

So far the F-35, carrier and task group are bang on track to make that deadline.

Test variants of the F-35 conducted maiden jet trials off the Eastern Seaboard last autumn.

The data and experiences gathered are helping to 'write the manual' for safely operating F-35 squadrons when they embark – beginning this autumn with a return to the Eastern Seaboard of the USA.

This time the carrier will be joined by Marham-based front-line F-35s from 617 Sqn plus Lightnings from 17 Sqn, based at Edwards Air Force Base in California, where Fleet Air Arm and RAF pilots are developing the combat techniques for exploiting the fighter's awesome capabilities in action.

The British-based pilots will prepare for that deployment both in UK skies and in four new full mission simulators opened by Mr Williamson on his visit to Marham; the new training complex also features classrooms and mock-ups of the F-35s for air and ground crew to practise on.

The Westlant 19 deployment will focus on operations, rather than the basics of flying the F-35 on and off the carrier's expansive deck, and working as part of a carrier task group.

"HMS Queen Elizabeth was designed from the keel up to support the F-35 and it showed. The 'marriage' between the ship and the aircraft was superb. We learned that together, we have got something quite special," Cdr Blackmore added.

"It's not just about the aircraft, however. The key now is to bring the aircraft together with a whole carrier task group to deliver a truly potent force – and we are on course to deliver that from 2021."



824 NAS' high Tide

ROOKIE aviators from Culdrose were given a taste of the big league when they learned how to work at sea with Britain's largest warship.

Trainee pilots, observers, aircrewmembers and engineers learning to operate the Merlin Mk2 joined HMS Queen Elizabeth and her task group in the USA.

The students spend around a year mastering the state-of-the-art helicopter in and around Helston with 824 NAS before some sea time as aircrew deal with the challenges of landing and taking off on a pitching and rolling ship, while engineers must learn how to maintain Merlins with limited tools and limited space. And all have to get used to living at sea, such as daily routines and mess deck life.

Typically, naval fliers get their sea legs with a few days off the Cornish coast aboard aviation training ship RFA Argus.

As she's just about to emerge from a major refit in Falmouth, however, the Fleet Air Arm has sought other flight decks to train its Wildcat and Merlin air and ground crew.

The latest batch of trainees sailed with RFA Tidespring. Built to provide Queen Elizabeth and her battle group with fuel, she's also designed to carry helicopters up to Chinook size.

Beyond take-offs and landings, once embarked the Merlin trainees tackled challenges such as load lifting, a hi-line transfer – safely lowering a guideline to someone waiting below before conducting a lift, or winching a person to safety – and refuelling without having to land on deck.

And once Tidespring had caught up with the carrier following a pitstop in Halifax, Canada, it meant aircrew could practise ferrying supplies across to the largest flight deck in Royal Navy history.

"Flying a helicopter to and from a ship at sea is the culmination of three years of training for us as naval aviators – it's what separates us from our compatriots in the other two services," said Lt Phill Fordham, a trainee pilot.

"Once we had got our first few deck landings out of the way the excitement of operating as part of a task group supporting HMS Queen Elizabeth's first deployment really kicked in."

"There was never a dull day and because we were able to witness the wider spectrum of naval operations like landings of the Fleet Air Arm's new F-35s to refuelling the new aircraft carrier whilst underway, we really got the sense that we were a small part of something big and exciting."

Ben Flint, a trainee observer – responsible for a Merlin's sensors and weapon systems – said after years of "theory and talks" joining the carrier group was "a great experience".

He continued: "Working alongside HMS Queen Elizabeth and various other surface ships and aircraft over the three weeks added new dimensions to our training which we hadn't previously been a part of. It gave us useful insights into the environments we will all be working in during our first front-line deployments."

Most of the aircrewmembers, like Leading Seaman Alex Hart, had spent little or no time at sea before joining Tidespring.

"It was extremely challenging to practise refuelling and replenishments for the first time in the North Atlantic – but extremely rewarding and satisfying to complete them."

"We also practised tactical flying which was interesting to convert these skills from the simulator to the aircraft. It was all well rounded off with time ashore with our peers in Canada and America."

The three months off North America allowed two groups of trainees to earn their seagoing qualifications. Aircrew who successfully completed the training aboard Tidespring will now receive their Wings – the coveted badge of honour which says they are ready for the front line.



Get with the F-35 program programme

DO YOU fancy trying your hand at brain surgery?

You could be just what the team working on the world's most advanced jet fighter are looking for.

While the pilots grab the glory and handlers marshal the F-35 around the deck and hangar of HMS Queen Elizabeth, a specialist team of engineers and computer/comms experts are working on the mission data which is key to everything the new jet does.

ACURL – the Australian and United Kingdom F-35 Reprogramming Laboratory (no the acronym doesn't work...) – pools the best talent from the two Commonwealth nations, plus US civilians and contractors, to generate, monitor and maintain the data behind every flight by a Lightning jet at sea or on land.

The lab at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida is an offshoot of the RAF's Air Warfare Centre

based in Lincoln and counts a significant number of dark blue personnel on its books: primarily WS (EW) and AET (AV) specialisations, but also RN aircrew, air engineering officers, logisticians and IT support.

By tapping into the skill and experience of engineers from the Fleet Air Arm and operators from the General Service brings a unique blend of engineering know-how and knowledge on how potential adversary's operate systems that may be of threat to the aircraft.

"While impressive to behold, the aspects that make the F-35 a multi-role fifth generation aircraft is not its looks. It's what's on the inside that counts," says CPO(EW) Rab Butler.

Supercomputers – referred to as sensor fusion – make up the F-35's brain which provides the fighter with unique capabilities, making it more lethal, survivable and adaptable than any other



interceptor in service.

Without ACURL personnel inputting critical mission data, however, sensor fusion wouldn't work as intended – the aircraft wouldn't know which threats to search for and defeat, or when.

To use an iPhone analogy, the aircraft software load is similar to iOS – basic operating system. Mission data is similar to an

iPhone's contact list and apps.

The iOS is required for an iPhone to turn on, but the contact list and apps are what help translate this technology into something functional and usable. So, mission data interacts with the F-35's software to enable the sensor fusion, giving pilots unprecedented awareness of the battlespace around them.

Stress-reliever top idea of year

A NAVAL engineer's idea to adapt railway technology to measure stresses on warships has been hailed one of the brainwaves of the year.

Leading Engineering Technician Michael Townsend's brainwave to use fibre optic cables which are the central nerves of a 21st Century warship will tell how much machinery is vibrating.

His idea was one of seven singled out from more than 350 entries drawn from over two dozen nations at the Institute of Engineering and Technology's Innovation Awards.

The RN put forward several ideas for the awards, a number of them resulting from the DARE programme which has been set up to encourage and support bright ideas across the Senior Service.

The US Rail industry uses Fibre Network Vibration Analysis to remotely monitor the degradation of tracks.

Michael came across the concept while reading a paper from Stanford University about a 'glass microphone' 18 months ago. It proved to be his 'Eureka moment'.

LET Townsend identified a potential alternative use for the technology in warships to replace existing machinery monitoring systems using existing fibre infrastructure.

Off his own back, he suggested the idea of using the network cabling running through Royal Navy warships to monitor vibration – an idea the MOD's science labs, DSTL, confirmed could work.

The system works by detecting the effect of stresses induced by vibration in the optical fibre, analysing the back-scatter from a pulse of light and comparing it to the original pulse can ascertain the conditions in the fibre. These returned signals are sufficient to highlight vibrations from specific areas of interest such as diesel generators, pumps or hull cavitation.

"I truly felt speechless when I was nominated – to know I was one of seven people to be



● LET Michael Townsend and POET Lee Blease

selected for the finals out of over 350 applicants was a surreal experience but an enjoyable one at that. This has given me the drive to push my creative side even further," said the leading hand.

Michael, who hails from Nottinghamshire but today lives in Gosport, has spent seven years in the RN, the bulk of it spent on Portsmouth-based ships, most recently the Fishery Protection Squadron.

His fibre-optic idea is now being tested to see whether the concept is practical and can replace existing machinery monitors.

"The ability to get a nomination shortlisted out of 350 entries was a real success for both LET Townsend and the navy, but beyond this was the success of getting a number of nominations from all arms of the Service, highlighting the extent of innovation across the Navy," said DARE project officer Lieutenant Commander Matt Cox.

■ HMS St Alban's Petty Officer Engineering Technician Lee Blease realised the existing method of storing Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) equipment was actually harming the kit.

The equipment pack contains pyrotechnic

elements and is normally stored in its delivery case in a magazine for safety. When a ship sails, it's moved to the upper deck in case it's needed.

The constant moving and repacking the equipment has resulted in wear and damage, meaning that it might not operate correctly if needed in an emergency.

To prevent this POET Blease has designed a bracket that can be installed in a magazine and safely hold the SOLAS equipment in its operational fitting, removing the requirement to repeatedly disassemble and re-package the equipment.

His innovative solution has been designed to comply with magazine regulations and has passed the scrutiny of the Navy's rigorous safety assurance process.

So effective has his solution been, that it's quickly been nicknamed 'the Blease Bracket' across the Fleet. PO Blease was nominated for an award in the Young Innovator category.

■ Royal Marine Captain Thomas Buck was determined to find a more efficient, environmentally-friendly way to provide power headquarters in the field.

He asked industry leaders in hybrid power to loan equipment which 45 Commando tested in the field on exercises and training events.

Using hybrid power will not only make field headquarters more sustainable and lighter (possibly by several hundred kilos) but also less vulnerable to damage and the rigours of warfare.

Capt Buck's hybrid power plan is innovative because it allows a headquarters, irrespective of size, to use a combination of energy sources (solar, diesel, 'energy harvesting' and methanol).

As well as reducing a unit's reliance on carbon fuels, it will also minimise its thermal and noise signature – helping to keep the headquarters hidden from the enemy.

If you have a good idea you want to progress, why not visit the DARE DefNet page <https://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/defnet/Navy>.



● PO Cartwright receives his prize from Barry Brooks, president of the Institute of Engineering and Technology

Deep rises to the top to take prestigious prize

PETTY Officer Simon Cartwright has won the prestigious Bateson Award.

Serving as a Petty Officer Engineering Technician (Weapon Engineer Submariner) in HMS Astute when he was nominated for the award, Simon impressed Command, FOST and SUBFLOT with the application of his technical knowledge.

PO Cartwright said: "I was truly honoured to be nominated let alone to be awarded. It was humbling to know that my hard work and personal sacrifice had been noticed. I will continue to honour myself and the Submarine Service by maintaining this work ethic in the hopes of instilling it in others."

The citation said: "When given delegated tasks from his Warrant Officer or line manager that are often pan-departmental, he delivers on time demonstrating a high degree of technical knowledge with staff work at a very high standard that is by far the best amongst his peers."

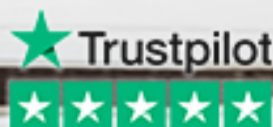
The Rear Admiral Bateson Award is named after Rear Admiral S L Bateson CB CBE, who was tasked with forming the Electrical Branch in 1946 under the recommendations of the Middleton Report. The branch evolved over time into what is now the Weapon Engineering sub branch.

The Bateson prize is awarded to the Weapon Engineer who has made a significant contribution to unit OC/innovation/engineering excellence/branch development over the last 12 months.

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Easter. Henderson. Pitcairn. Tahiti. Auckland. HMS Montrose has visited them all in a 5,500-mile odyssey across the Southern Ocean

COULD YOU BE MORE PACIFIC?

STAND on the waterfront in the Chilean city of Concepción and stare westwards.

Beyond the mudflats, rocks and islands of the Bio Bio estuary lie the waters of the Pacific. Blue. Infinite. Forbidding.

The nearest landfall is 5,500 miles away – almost equivalent to the trip from Devonport to the Gulf by sea or a round-trip to Halifax (Canada, not Yorkshire...).

That's a daunting amount of ocean to cover.

Hopscothing across the South Pacific makes it somewhat more palatable. And considerably more enjoyable... especially the prospect of Christmas at Easter.

Easter Island, that is.

After a high-profile visit to Chile, which saw sailors join Princess Anne in 200th birthday celebrations of the South American nation's navy, followed by a stop in the southern naval base of Talcahuano, Concepción, HMS Montrose struck out into the seemingly-endless expanse of the Pacific, bound for New Zealand, as the Plymouth-based frigate edges her way ever closer to her final destination: Bahrain and a three-year stint in the Gulf.

Montrose didn't quite make Easter Island by December 25 – still at sea, ploughing westwards relentlessly.

So Christmas Eve and Day were spent mid-ocean and marked in true Royal Navy style accordingly: a nativity play on the flight deck, with sailors dressing up as Mary, baby Jesus, three Wise Men (finding three on board was a struggle...) and other figures from the Christmas story.

The ship's chaplain, the Rev Peter Dixon, then led a Christmas daytime and midnight service – four hours behind UK time – as December 24 turned to 25.

"For many of us, this was our first Christmas away from home, let alone our first Christmas on board a warship, but in the retelling of the Nativity and the singing of carols, the spirit of Christmas flowed in abundance," he said.

"As Christmas Day dawned, many gathered on the flight deck in festive attire for a unique Christmas service with the sun beating down and the Pacific swell rolling us from side to side."

The frigate's officers helped the chefs in preparing Christmas dinner, then served the three-course meal, manning the serving counters and dining halls, with Commanding Officer Commander Conor O'Neill and his deputy, Executive Officer Lieutenant Commander Tom McKay, carving the joints.

Having enjoyed dinner with their mess mates, everyone spent the afternoon and evening opening presents – whether from home or from the numerous departmental and mess-based 'Secret Santas' – ringing home or relaxing in the sun of the South Pacific (the temperature was in the low 20s Celsius).

By the time most of the ship's company awoke the next day, the ship was off Easter Island.

Everyone on board given the once-in-a-lifetime chance to get ashore (Montrose is the only RN vessel to call at Easter this century) and see the distinctive ancient statues known as Moai (younger readers may recognise them as the 'dum dum' heads from the *Night at the Museum* films) and the quarry from where the stone came at Rano Raraki.

They ended the brief visit with a Christmas-themed barbecue on the sands of the beach at Anakena.

"This was truly an amazing unique time and one of those Christmases I will remember for the rest of my life," said Engineering Technician

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @HMS_MONTROSE and @RoyalNavy on Twitter



(Weapons Engineering) Oli Dymott. "It was definitely a career-defining experience."

Easter Island lies 2,500 miles off the west coast of South America. It is, like Montrose's previous port of call of Talcahuano, Chilean soil. Like most port cities/naval bases (it's home to the Chilean fleet's engineering and logistical hub), Talcahuano isn't really a tourist destination.

It is, however, just a couple of hours from the rapids of the Bio Bio as it cascades down the western slopes of the Andes towards the Pacific at Concepción, making it perfect for white water rafting among other adventurous training activities organised by clubz, Leading Physical Trainer Cat Forrest.

Half the ship's company volunteered to climb into rafts for a 12-kilometre ride through the Andean foothills, overcoming nine stretches of rapids.

"It was also a great day out and enjoyed by all," said Cat... but it was not a jolly.

"The white-water rafting was great for developing teamwork and communication skills – you had to work together and communicate effectively just to stay in the raft and out of the water."

The waters of the Bio Bio may rage and foam, but they're relatively clean.

Not so the currents swirling around Henderson Island, given the unenviable tagline 'most polluted island on the planet'.

Every day the Pacific dumps upwards of 270 objects on the shores of Henderson – which is roughly the size of Oxford, but with no human inhabitants.

Despite being a UNESCO World Heritage Site, its beaches are littered with an estimated 40 million items of plastic and other rubbish, prompting an international outcry at the waste being dumped in our oceans – and prompting a clean-up by the authorities later this year.

Before they get stuck in, they wanted an up-to-date survey of the island's shoreline before deciding how and where to tackle the crisis.

Montrose's Wildcat was launched with Leading Photographer Joe Cater in the back; his reconnaissance imagery will be pored over by conservationists, who will also study the film footage recorded at the same time by Cdr O'Neill, who joined Joe in the cab for the recce.

"Our patrol of what should be a pristine area of the ocean has highlighted the importance of the ongoing battle against plastic waste and wider efforts to keep our seas clean," said Montrose's CO. "It's clearly an issue around the world."

Henderson lies in the middle of the South Pacific and is part of the Pitcairn Island Group, the only British Overseas Territories in this ocean.

Pitcairn (population 52) is the only one of the four where human life can be found – mostly descended from the mutineers who took charge of the Bounty and scuttled the ship here in 1790.

Nearly 230 years later HMS Montrose anchored in the same spot, Bounty Bay, giving all 200

personnel on board the very rare opportunity to get ashore in long boats crewed by islanders.

Not since September 17 2000, when Montrose's sister ship HMS Sutherland visited during a world tour, has the White Ensign been flown in Pitcairn.

So crew seized the chance to pick up souvenirs – postcards, hand-carved gifts and honey from the craft market in the 'capital' Adamstown – and explore natural wonders such as Christian's Cave and St Paul's Pool.

There was also time to learn about the history of the island, the Bounty and the mutiny in the island's museum and one sailor from Montrose's namesake town in Scotland, James Valentine, whose death at the hands of the ship's drunkard and incompetent doctor on the way to Tahiti was one of the sparks of the mutiny.

After tea at the residence of Pitcairn's administrator, Nick Kennedy, with Mayor Shawn Christian – a direct descendant of lead mutineer Fletcher Christian – Montrose's Commanding Officer was given a tour of the island, which is roughly as big as Swindon.

After enjoying islanders' hospitality, the ship returned the favour; 20 Pitcairn residents were given a tour of the ship, before joining sailors for a brew on the flight deck.

Before departing with crests as gifts from the ship they serenaded the ship by performing their traditional song *In the Sweet By and By*.

The next hop (a mere 1,400 miles) and another rare destination: French Polynesia, where the White Ensign hasn't been seen for 15 years.

Just like the UK does in the Falklands, so the French maintain a permanent military presence in their distant island chain (5,000 miles from Japan, 2,500 miles from Auckland and Paris is a whopping 9,750 miles away).

The British and Royal navies work together regularly in each other's backyard of the English Channel/La Manche. The link-up half a world away allowed Montrose to hone her air-defence skills against a French Guardian Maritime Patrol Aircraft.

And the French made use of HMS Montrose, practising setting down one of their Dauphin helicopters on the flight deck – all before the British warship sailed into the Tahitian capital Papeete.

Sailors stretched their legs with a trip to the beaches, tried their hand at scuba diving or headed into the heart of Tahiti for a mountain hike.

"Following our recent visit to Chile and the hike I conducted in the Andes, Tahiti delivered equal challenges but rewarded us all with some truly stunning views," said Sub Lieutenant Deri White, in charge of the ship's boarding team.

Their commanding officer called on the Deputy Commander of Armed Forces in French Polynesia, Air Colonel Paul Bader to discuss the value of Anglo-French exchanges; the aviator is a former Jaguar pilot who has flown alongside Britons.

And HMS Montrose's senior electrical engineer, Warrant Officer Pierre Le Roi, shared his experiences of being a Frenchman on board a British warship.

Montrose is ultimately heading for Bahrain, where she'll be based for three years, swapping her entire crew with sister ship HMS Monmouth every six or so months to allow Britain to maintain a major warship in the Middle East long term.

The Marine Nationale in French Polynesia works on a similar principle, so Cdr O'Neill was keen to hear from the French Maritime Commander for the Pacific, Rear Admiral Laurent Lebreton for tips and ideas.

So just 2,500 miles to go to the frigate's destination on this trans-Pacific odyssey: New Zealand's North Island.

Two decades have passed since a Royal Navy vessel called on the home of its Commonwealth ally at HMNZS Philomel in Devonport, opposite New Zealand's most populous city, Auckland (HMS Protector did call in at Christchurch in 2016 for the record).

The Type 23 (also based in Devonport... but the one in Devon) was greeted by the crew of HMNZS Canterbury performing the traditional *haka* on the jetty at the 'cradle' of the Royal New Zealand Navy.

The welcome didn't end there as Cdr O'Neill and his crew were invited to partake in a *powhiri* – another traditional Maori greeting ceremony hosted in the naval base's own *marae* (Maori meeting house) featuring singing, dancing and speeches and ending with the famous *hongi* (touching of noses and foreheads).

Kiwi hospitality extended to the netball court where the guests triumphed... but stopped (perhaps undersurprisingly) on the rugby pitch, where the RNZN All Blacks proved victorious.

Montrose hosted a defence industry day to showcase the best of British products, particularly ably demonstrated by her Wildcat which took to Auckland skies.

As elsewhere on the trans-Pacific adventure, the ship's company had time to explore a little of New Zealand and especially to get in some adventurous training such as a spot of yachting around Auckland Harbour or a hike to Hunua Falls.

All in all, it's been a magical month in Montrose's career.

"Easter Island, Pitcairn, Tahiti, New Zealand – these have all been very special visits," said Cdr O'Neill.

"There were once-in-a-lifetime opportunities for most of the ship's company, and the history and beauty of the islands and the hospitality of islanders have certainly made an impact on my ship's company,

"At the same time we've underlined the UK's commitment to the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region, training with old and established allies thousands of miles from our normal operating regions."

Right. Bring on Japan.



Pictures: LPhot Joe Cater, HMS Montrose



- HENDERSON ISLAND 168 km
- ISLAND 200 km
- ISLAND 475 km
- NEW YORK 9322 km
- LONDON 14821 km
- PARIS 15127 km





Mural magic from UKMCC personnel

PERSONNEL from UKMCC and HMS Shoreham assisted more than 120 young people and adults with learning disabilities from Bahrain to create a giant mural.

The finished piece will be located in pride of place in the atrium of the Harbour Gate in the Bahrain Financial Centre.

The project was organised by the non-profit initiative Bahrain for All, All 4 Bahrain to coincide with the international World Disability Day.

Several sailors from the Royal Navy helped out with the event, assisting the children with painting. Petty Officer Adam Thompson said: "It was fantastic seeing all of the children and young people enjoying themselves and being so happy painting."

UKMCC chaplain, Rev Mark Mander, added: "Our sailors constantly excel in representing themselves and the Royal Navy at events such as this, where they are able to come alongside and help people from the local community."

"Today, the team from UKMCC and HMS Shoreham demonstrated kindness, patience and understanding as they assisted the children and young people in their project."

This event is one of a number of occasions where personnel from UKMCC and the Royal Navy's ships based in Bahrain have engaged with local charities and colleges.

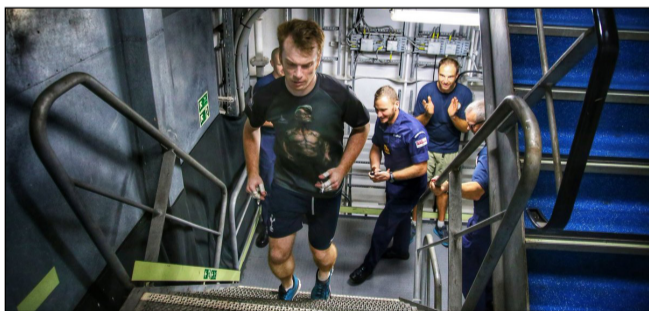
Recently, engineering students from a local polytechnic toured HMS Ledbury and learned all about engineering in the Royal Navy. Opportunities like these enhance the relationship between the military based in Bahrain and the local community.

End of an era for wives

THE HMS Sultan Wives Club made its final charity cheque presentation, bringing the curtain down on decades of fund raising for good causes.

The small group put their exceptional baking skills to good use, providing refreshments at several events within the establishment in order to raise £1,000 for the Jigsaw Unit, Royal Hospital Bournemouth.

Margaret Bailey who has been a member of the group since 1979, said: "It was a big group when I joined. There were at least 20 of us and it gave us a life, and that's what I enjoyed. It gave me friends and somewhere to come and I liked that we were all in the same situation."



Officer climbs stairs a mere 353 times

LIEUTENANT Commander Alex Coleman climbed 29,029ft up and down the stairs of Royal Fleet Auxiliary Cardigan Bay.

The height equates to the ascent of Mount Everest and was in aid of the charities Prostate UK and the Royal Naval Association.

Lt Cdr Coleman works for the Mine Warfare Battle Staff which is embarked in the RFA.

The ship is deployed in the Gulf supporting the four mine counter measures vessels permanently based in the Middle East on Operation Kipion.

He is quite used to running up and down the stairs, but on this occasion, he ascended and descended 'Charlie' Stairwell 353 times.

He completed the challenge in 22hrs 46mins and so far has raised around £1,000.

"I know it is important to be fit in the Royal Navy, but this was a

real challenge," he said.

"I knew it was going to be tough, but I really had to dig deep to complete it."

"Knowing that I had the sponsorship kept me going. I think my legs will be tired for a while."

Other members of the ship's company joined him for some of the climb that took place while the ship was at sea.

He added: "Having other members of the team with me was a real bonus."

"They, and the rest of the support team encouraged me to keep going. I don't think I could have done it without them."

Half of the money raised will help research into prostate Cancer through the charity Prostate UK.

The other charity, the Royal Naval Association, helps former members of the Royal Navy.

RUNNING through the mud, climbing ropes and making lunch from ration packs gave a teenager a small insight into what it is like being a Royal Marine.

Fourteen-year-old Malachi Neat spent the day at the Commando Training Centre (CTC), in Lympstone, Devon, to spend time with the unit.

The youngster, from Coventry, has Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA) which affects joints, energy levels and mood, and Uveitis which affects his eyes. He takes daily eye drops, injections and medication to help with the condition.

BBC radio show *The C Word*, hosted by Letitia George, learnt about his condition when he appeared on the programme in the summer.

As a special gift they organised a day with the Marines – Malachi's dream job.

Letitia surprised Malachi at school and sent him and his mum Emma to CTC.

He said: "Spending the day with the Marines was something I never thought possible."

"Living with JIA Uveitis is a daily challenge. I have good days and really bad days. A lot of the time it's all the side effects of the medication that make me so ill."

"I have always tried to maintain a high level of fitness so when I do have bad days it doesn't set me back too far. Hopefully this helped me when doing the activities."

Dressed in full Royal Marine gear, and battling against his condition, Malachi completed an assault course which included running across muddy fields, jumping across water, climbing over walls and doing monkey bars.

He also had a go at close combat and then helped make lunch out of ration packs over an open flame.

Malachi added: "To complete the assault course was a huge achievement and spending time talking with the Marines and them being so welcoming made my whole time there so enjoyable."

"Having the dream to become a Marine but then getting the



Pictures: LPhoto Paul Hall



JIA Uveitis diagnosis made me question whether I can actually do it.

"When I was told I was to spend the day as a Marine I was so overwhelmed and shocked, I couldn't believe it. The moment I put on the uniform I felt like I belonged and it was where I wanted to be. The lads at Lympstone made me feel so

welcome.

"When I was doing the various activities they had planned for me, I felt like I was a Marine. I embraced it so much hoping that this taster of Marine life would hopefully one day become a reality."

Captain Oliver Mason, from CTC, said the Royal Marines had a great day with Malachi

teaching him about it takes to be a Commando.

"We were delighted to host Malachi and give some insight into what Royal Marines do," he said.

"He gave every challenge 100 per cent and really got involved with the team. He seemed to enjoy himself and didn't let his arthritis get in the way."



Malachi lives his marines' dream

Inspiring others earns honours

A COMMANDO who inspired England to reach the World Cup semi finals and the crew of HMS Daring who braved 'missile alley' were singled out at the Millies.

Also recognised at the 11th Sun Military Awards was a naval officer who dived into the river Hamble to save a woman trapped under a yacht.

They were among ten people or groups/units from across the three services honoured at a night of stars in London's Banqueting House.

England manager Gareth Southgate presented the 'Inspiring Others' award to Major Scott Mills, who helped prepare the England team for Russia 2018 with a weekend of Royal Marines challenges at the Commando Training Centre at Lympstone.

Players and the England boss praised the green beret for his drive and motivation – and the ethos fostered by the 51-year-old commando in the squad helped them when the chips were down in the tournament.

"It definitely helped and inspired us to achieve what we achieved in the summer," said England skipper Harry Kane. "We had a fantastic time with the Royal Marines – we learned all about each other and teamwork."

His boss presented the award to Maj Mills who said he was "completely humbled" by the occasion.

Double Olympic gold medal-winning cyclist Victoria Pendleton named the crew of HMS Daring Britain's 'Overseas Heroes' for running the gauntlet of the Bab El Mandeb Strait when rebels threatened shipping passing through the southern Red Sea.

The Portsmouth-based destroyer spent 50 days patrolling the region, at times well within the reach of sophisticated anti-ship missiles and surface attack. They spent 97 hours at action stations, providing safe escort to more than 800,000 tonnes of merchant shipping.

Daring's Commanding Officer Commander Phil Dennis at the time joined some of his former ship's company on the red carpet.

"I am absolutely delighted that HMS Daring and her ship's company have been recognised for their exemplary actions – it was an extremely busy deployment and we operated at a relentless pace," he said.

"The ship's company fought the ship beautifully, doing their job, under very difficult circumstances. It was a first deployment for many of them and was one of the greatest threats we have faced since Libya in 2011 so we had to go silent for long periods without being able to explain why to our families.

"For everyone to now understand what we were doing and why we were doing it means so much to all of us and I am incredibly proud of all the men and women who were on board."

And actor/documentary presenter Ross Kemp and Olympic middle distance runner Dame Kelly Holmes handed the individual 'hero at home' title to Commander Andrew Parkinson.

He broke off birthday celebrations on his boat in the Hamble to jump into the river when Linda Davies fell in and became trapped beneath another yacht.

He kept her head above water before



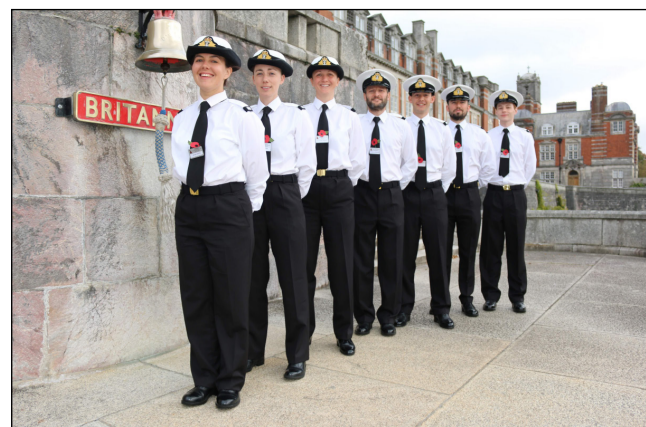
● Major Scott Mills helps England manager Gareth Southgate during the national squad's weekend challenge at Commando Training Centre; Below members of HMS Daring's ship's company at the Millies



cutting her free and emptying her lungs of water ahead of paramedics arriving to stabilise Mrs Davies.

In the 100th anniversary year of the RAF, it received a special award from the judges

and the team who responded in the aftermath of the Salisbury novichok attack – the Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Task Force – were named the 'Hero at Home' unit.



Eight new officers for RN Reserves

THREE medical professionals, a trainee solicitor and a quantity surveyor were among the latest group of Royal Naval Reservists to complete training at Britannia Royal Naval College.

The group of eight gave up their civilian lives for two weeks at BRNC to complete their RNR confirmation course, which ended with their formal commissioning as officers.

Prior to attending the course the students had been working hard to develop their skills within their units, having joined the RNR approximately a year ago.

Arriving at BRNC they were ready to take on three days of intense training to refine their boat skills on the River Dart; an exercise on Dartmoor and within the grounds of BRNC; as well as ceremonial training, weapons training, strategic studies, theoretical and practical leadership development, and gruelling physical sessions.

At the end of their course the RNR Officers took part in a passing-out-parade watched by their families and friends. Captain Paul Hill, Captain RNR Operational Support was the inspecting officer.

Picture: CPO Justin Blackford

Katie's loss, charities' gain

THE loss being most of the RFA Tideforce officer's hair. And the gain? Around £1,500 for Dementia UK.

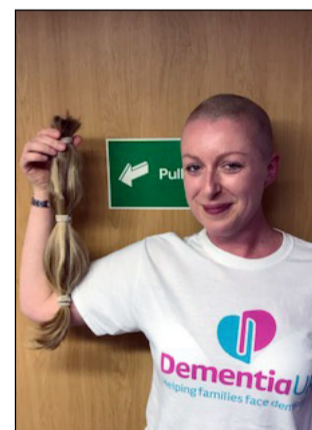
With three grandparents suffering from dementia (two with the senile form of the illness, one with vascular dementia), 2nd Officer (Engineering) Katie Hughes was determined to do something to help research into the condition.

"It wasn't until I started to research dementia that I learned there are more than 200 different types, and as yet, there are no cures," Katie said.

"I have experienced firsthand the sad realisation that your loved ones will never be the same again, and also witnessed the hard work it takes from surrounding family to be supportive and understanding in the face of such a large obstacle; a task that takes its toll on even the saints among us."

It took Katie two years to grow her blonde locks... and considerably less time for shipmates to relieve her of that hair.

The shave and an auction to cut Katie's pony tail brought in £580 from shipmates, with more than double that raised online. Rather than sweep the chopped hair in the bin, Katie's donated it to The Little Princess Trust, which makes wigs for children with cancer.



Ticket raffle for veterans

WHEN is £26 actually worth £370? When it's a ticket to the game of the season north of the border.

Submariner Petty Officer Mark Raeburn decided to auction his ticket for the festive Old Firm clash at Ibrox to raise money for the Erskine Home for Veterans just outside Glasgow.

He raffled the ticket, raising its value more than 14 times and handed over the proceedings to Erskine's community fundraiser, Jim Watret, a former CPO(SA)... who happened to have recruited Mark into the RN nine years ago while working in Glasgow's Armed Forces Careers Office.

The owner of the ticket joined 49,862 other fans who witnessed Rangers' first league triumph over their arch rivals Celtic in nearly seven years with a 1-0 win.



Keeping it in the family

ROYAL Navy Reservist Sub Lieutenant Michelle Ping attended the unveiling of a portrait of her at Clydebank Town Hall.

Michelle was Mentioned in Despatches and awarded the Queen's Volunteer Reserves medal for her actions in Afghanistan in 2011. She saved the life of 4th Scots soldier Craig Paterson, who had been shot in the head.

Michelle, who posed for the portrait with her daughter Ellena, said: "Craig is out of the Army and working in Health & Safety near his home in Aberdeenshire."

"They have recently has their first child, a baby girl and they have called her Hannah Michelle which I think is a great honour! We keep in touch lots and hopefully we will be flying up to meet the new arrival soon."

In her day job, Michelle works at the Defence CBRN Centre in Winterbourne Gunner as part of the National Ambulance Resilience Unit NARU Faculty. The portrait was painted by Tom McKendrick.

The Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund

The only charity dedicated to supporting children whose parents serve, or have served, in the Naval Service.

Originally set up as an orphanage, we now assist children with a wide range of needs and at times of family crisis. Applications can be made at any time and those seeking assistance can contact the office directly for an application form, or download it from our website.

311 Twyford Avenue, Portsmouth PO2 8RN • t 023 9263 9534 e caseworkers@rnmchildrensfund.org.uk www.rnmchildrensfund.org.uk

RNRMCF Registered charity number: 1160182 • Patron: HRH The Duke of York, KG, GCVO, CD



Long Walk Home for ex-Deep

FORMER submariner David Wheatley marked the centenary of Armistice by completing a marathon walk from Ypres to London.

He was part of a team of 100 veterans and serving men and women taking The Long Walk Home to raise money for Haig Housing, a charity set up in 1916 to provide housing assistance and advice to ex-service personnel and/or their dependents.

David, who works in the Maritime Composite Training System section at HMS Collingwood, was bussed to Belgium with the rest of the team and arrived in Ypres in time to attend the *Last Post* ceremony at the Menin Gate.

The following day's march took the group through the flat Flanders fields where traces of World War 1 trenches still scar the landscape. The group stopped at cemeteries on the way to lay wreaths and pay their respects before, upon reaching the coast, they were bussed back to Dover.

After another wreath-laying ceremony at Dover's Duke of York's Military School, supported by the school's military band, the group then began a punishing three-day march along the North Downs Way and along busy A roads.

They paused to remember the fallen at several memorials, with people along the route turning out to support them as they passed.

Reflecting on the challenge, David said, "Overall a fantastic six days, meeting loads of very interesting, funny and genuinely kind fellow marchers and support staff, organisers, medical teams and drivers, plus photographers who all worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make our walk relatively straightforward."

The following day, Armistice Day itself, saw the walkers march past the Cenotaph and then onto Horse Guards where the Princess Royal took their salute.

David, who was inspired to take The Long Walk Home after reading of his grandfather's experiences at Ypres during World War 1, said: "For those who have never attended it is a most moving occasion. Although we were a 'civilian' group we were also all ex-serving personnel, so we took great pride in marching in step."

David has raised £483.50 so far. Donations can still be made via Justgiving account [David-Wheatley6](#) and following the donate section.

Cakes cash in

A BIG bake held by Interserve staff in the Unit Personnel Office at HMS Sultan proved it had all the right ingredients to raise valuable funds for Harbour Cancer Support.

In total, the event raised £1081.49 for the charity.

Bahrain's Bish leads from front

ROYAL Navy Reverend Mark Mander led the way when it came to running in the heat of Bahrain.

He joined seven personnel from UK Maritime Component Commander (UKMCC) in the Cross Desert Run.

The team, which included five submariners, ran 15km from the east coast of the island to the west coast, covering rough terrain.

The route crosses the Sakheer Desert, near Zallaq in the south of the island.

There were around 380 participants from across the world and of all abilities. The first person across the line completed the challenge in 53 minutes.

Bahrain's Bish, who completed the time quicker than his colleagues, said: "Over the past six months one way in which morale and unit cohesion has been strengthened at UKMCC and UKNSF is through exercise and sporting challenges; hence the reason why I sought to be involved in as many events as possible."

He covered the distance in 1 hour 18 minutes and 37 seconds and was the 66th competitor to cross the finish line.

Among the other runners was Lieutenant Commander Andy Roberts, who said: "It was horrendous! Think Tough Mudder, but instead of mud, soft sand, rocks and oil pipelines to climb over or under."

"It was a very challenging course, the soft sand for the first 5km completely sapped your energy, followed by rock and sand for another 5km and then a road section to the 15km finish line."

The challenge is one of a number where personnel from UKMCC, UK Naval Support Facility and the Royal Navy's ships based in Bahrain have taken part.

Lt Cdr Roberts added: "It was well organised and great to run with the

other 370 participants. I really couldn't imagine doing it at any other time of year though, it was 24 degrees Celsius, and that was hot enough!

"We did appreciate the irony of five submariners competing in a desert race, but I think we did pretty well considering!"

Rev Mander warmed up for the run by running around the Naval Support Facility at Bahrain.

Donning a MTP uniform and 20kg kit, the padre walked 12 circuits around the base to raise money for a local charity, covering more than 50 kilometres in the process.

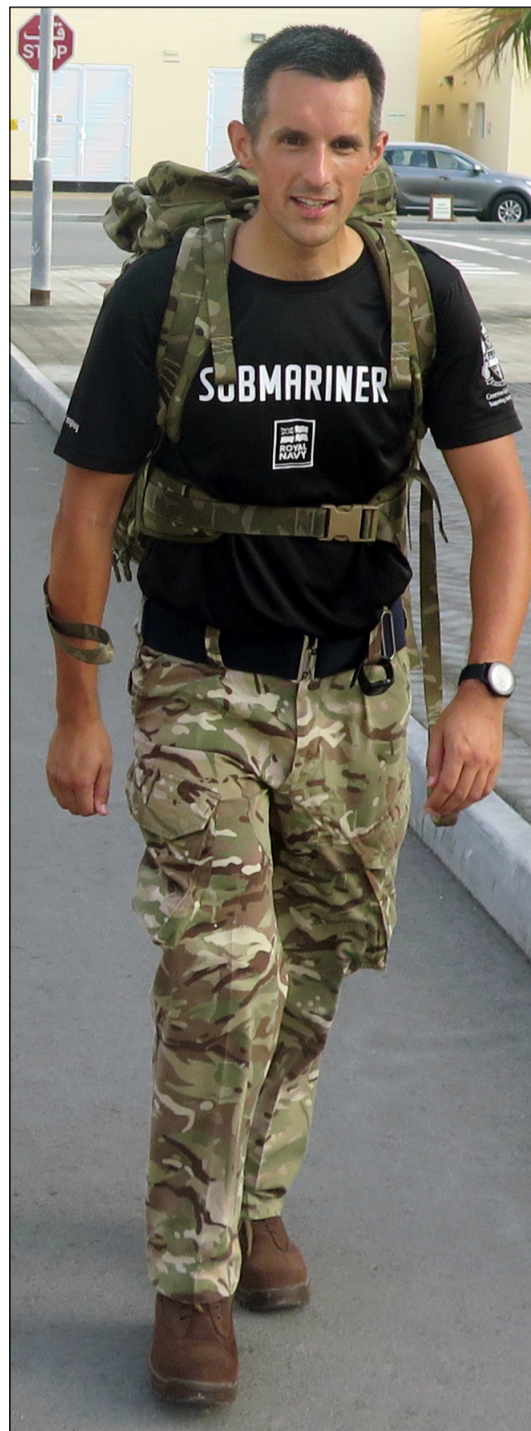
He was joined by fellow personnel for stretches of the 12-hour walk around the base and neighbouring Mina Salman Port, including motor transport officer RAF Sergeant Cameron McEwan, who accompanied the Bish for around 24 kilometres of the walk which took place in relatively pleasant conditions (20-25°C).

"Each month we have supported the local charity Bahrain-4-All," he said.

"I thought this month, along with raising money for this worthy cause, I would challenge myself. I had little preparation time and I felt tired and relieved when I finished, but also a great sense of satisfaction."

His tour almost over, Reverend Mander has enjoyed his time in Bahrain. He has worked hard in the 'parish', getting to know the variety of military personnel who work in Bahrain supporting the half-dozen RN and RFA ships operating in the Middle East.

"I will miss the camaraderie of the personnel at UKNSF, my local friends from Bahrain for All and the parishioners at St Christopher's Cathedral. I am not sure I will miss walking in full kit for 12 hours, but I am glad I did it and helped local people."



• The Rev Mark Mander, above, took part in the Cross Desert Run with UKMCC colleagues, left



Second guest at Sultan divisions

SECOND Sea Lord Vice Admiral Tony Radakin paid a special visit to HMS Sultan as the guest of honour at the establishment's Ceremonial Divisions.

The Admiral inspected personnel from across HMS Sultan within the Royal Naval Air Engineering and Survival Equipment School's Stephenson Hangar, including a Guard of Honour made up of current trainees.

The Admiral, who was accompanied throughout by Captain Peter Towell, the Commanding Officer of HMS Sultan, also presented several medals for Long Service and Good Conduct, before he took the salute from those on parade.

The following presentations were made for the LSGC Medal: Lt Cdr M J McCrea, Lt L D Milner, CPO J Jarvis-Broad and PO S J Shovel.

Training top of the agenda

AN OPPORTUNITY to experience training was among the highlights of a visit to Britannia Royal Naval College by a delegation from the Republic of Korea Naval Academy.

Three Midshipmen, accompanied by a Staff Officer, spent four days at the college for a visit designed to improve professional links between the establishments and the services they represent.

The visitors took part in a PT session alongside their UK counterparts and were given the chance to get out onto the River Dart in the small boats owned by the college.

They were also taken to sea on one of the Royal Navy's P2000 patrol boats for a navigation exercise and saw where young officers practise their skills in BRNC's bridge simulator.

Digging deep at orchard

CADETS from Britannia Royal Naval College lent their support to the Dartmouth Orchard and a church in Modbury for their latest outreach projects in the community.

With the orchard receiving most of its care and maintenance, a group of international cadets raked up the grass strimmings in the western paddock after the area had been cut by groundsman Rob Harkness and his team.

The cadets also got stuck into maintaining the hedgerows along with the boundaries which are so important for bats and other wildlife, cutting back where needed and clearing out invasive plants from the base.

To finish a hard, but enjoyable day's work the cadets were tasked with pressing the remaining apples from the autumn crop to make eight litres of juice which were donated to the Dartmouth Food Bank.

Chairman of the Friends of Dartmouth Orchard, Peter Shaw said: "There's still winter work to do; tree pruning and further scrub clearance, but thanks to the joint efforts of the town groundsman's team, the friends, and the local community, the orchard will be kept in good fettle and remain the wonderful place it is for people



and wildlife; one of Dartmouth's gems."

Cadets also helped at St George's church in Modbury. There they supported a clean-up of the graves, gathering leaves and other debris as well as removing the ivy that had consumed some of the headstones. The debris was disposed of by a bonfire. Several cadets were tasked with remapping the graveyard recording the names of the deceased to add to the church's records.

Groundwork for airmen

HELPING out in the grounds of St Luke's Church and decorating the Christmas tree at Dartmouth Academy were among the tasks undertaken by Young Officers from Britannia Royal Naval College.

The group of budding naval aviators were taking part in a week-long outreach project providing assistance to four local organisations.

At St Luke's Church in Milber, the Young Officers showed their green-fingers by getting stuck in to pruning hedges, removing old fence posts and repairing the mound outside the church. They also helped move tables into the church in preparation for a Christmas fair.

Moving on to Dartmouth Academy, the group assisted the caretaker in a range of jobs, from tidying the school hall and the IT suite, to a litter pick followed by shifting desks and cabinets and decorating the academy's Christmas tree.

At Stoke Fleming Primary School, the young officers were tasked with giving the school hall a lick of paint in preparation for the parents of pupils to come in and paint ships on the walls, to continue the school's nautical theme.

Before completing the work the young officers were also introduced to each



class. The students were allowed to pose questions to the Royal Navy personnel which included 'where is the scariest place you've been' and 'where did you get those outfits'.

For the final day of their outreach week the team travelled to the Forest and Beach social enterprise project at Beeson. There they were able to clear a large area of overgrown brambles in preparation for a new seating area.



Medics are supported by shops

TWO teams of medical assistants at HMS Collingwood visited two local supermarkets to raise money for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

Medical Assistant (MA) Shaun West arranged the fund-raising trips to Tesco in Alver Valley and Morrisons in Gosport, raising £492.41.

Shaun said: "Local supermarkets are an ideal way for the local community to be involved in charity by donating at ease as they're shopping."

"It's a great way for the community to see their Royal Navy out doing things above and beyond their usual working roles and uphold the charitable reputation of the RN."

The teams were Shaun, MA Nathan Ulyott, MA Steven Marrow, MA Olivia Gollick, MA Barry Stayte and MA Andrew Pellatt.

"On the day we had a lot of fun and had so many chats with local veterans who are always willing to share their stories of their time in the military."

"The RNRMC do so many great things for the military community and an event like this is an all-round winner."

Pictured above are MA Marrow, MA Gollick and MA Pellatt.

Not-so-fab weather for Victory Walker

COMMANDER Jane Allen, the Victory Walker set off from HMS Victory on 21 October 2017, to walk anti-clockwise round the coast of mainland UK raising money for two naval charities, the WRNS BT and RNRMC. In her last update she had been welcomed by Royal Navy submariners into Barrow-in-Furness, from where she picks up her story.

Shortly after leaving Barrow I had the first of two unwanted companions – Storm Diana – which howled against me and lashed me to a dripping mess as I trudged up the Leven estuary.

Above me, on a hill, I noticed what I thought was a lighthouse looking remarkably like John Smeaton's famous Eddystone Light, which now stands on Plymouth Hoe.

I learned the tower was a monument to commemorate Sir John Barrow, a local man who, among other things, had been Second Secretary to the Admiralty with responsibility for running the Royal Navy. He held the position for almost 40 years and was in post when Admiral Lord Nelson fought at Trafalgar.

My route became briefly sweeter when I came across a sticky toffee pudding factory shop, close to Cartmel; this is reputed to be where that classic pub dessert was first created.

Rain soon returned as I struggled to discern where acres of grey mud and sand finished, and a wet skyline began. More of the same followed as I crossed into Lancashire, where I found myself walking on grassy sea banks and concrete walls, interspersed with nature reserves.

The monotony was broken by Morecambe's sandy beach and I almost wanted to make a sandcastle!

As much of the coastline here experiences incredibly fast tides and quicksands, I chose not to stray too far out into the bay. Of the three large river



estuaries I faced in Lancashire – the Lune, Ribble and Wyre – it was only the latter which provided a foot ferry across into Fleetwood.

The tedium of walking up and back down the opposite bank of the Ribble was brightened with an evening at TS Galloway, Preston Sea Cadet unit, *pictured above right*. You can always rely on cadets to provide some humour!

From Fleetwood, sandy beaches seemed to stretch southwards all the way through Blackpool, on to Lytham St Anne's, Southport, Formby and Crosby, petering out just before the River Mersey appeared through my second unwanted companion – Storm Deirdre.

I'd had a pleasant break at a café-cum cycle shop near Southport, where I'd met up with some former Wrens, *pictured above left*. While there, I was extremely tempted to buy a bicycle rather than a frothy coffee,

reasoning it would get me to the finish line at HMS Victory in double-quick time. On second thoughts, cheating is something Admiral Nelson probably wouldn't turn a blind eye to!

Despite the atrocious weather, a worsening foot injury and sinusitis, seeing Liverpool again was a definite high for me. The city's skyline with its iconic Liver, Cunard and Port of Liverpool buildings is unmistakable, along with the statues of the Beatles, *main picture*.

Liverpool's commercial success was first created by its docks, and more recently by the Merseyside and football: it has always been accompanied by genial Liverpoolian humour.

I've had a soft spot for Liverpool, ever since I worked as HMS Invincible's liaison officer during the Battle of Atlantic's 60th Anniversary Celebrations in 2003.

I'm eternally grateful that the large and

special anniversary cake, baked by RN chefs, made its way safely down the side of HMS Invincible onto a MOD Police launch and survived a choppy Mersey crossing, before arriving unscathed at the anniversary dinner venue in Albert Dock.

Liverpool continues to be justifiably proud of the major part it played during WWII in the Battle of the Atlantic. Merchant and Royal Navies alike each contributed to that Campaign, and both lost so much too. But of course, Great Britain was not alone. Other countries including Norway, the USA, Canada and the Netherlands all contributed and suffered losses during that Battle.

Today, it is planned to erect an International Memorial for the Battle of Atlantic on Liverpool's waterfront, and fundraising has already started.

To begin my next leg around the Wirral I crossed the Mersey by means of its passenger ferry, immortalised in the 1960s hit *Ferry Across the Mersey*. Sung by Gerry and the Pacemakers, one of the many groups to spring out of Liverpool at that time, I found myself humming the tune as the Royal Iris took me closer towards the River Dee which marks the border between England and Wales.

Having crossed into Wales, I accepted that my foot needed professional attention. The result was that I was told to start Christmas leave three days early.

It appears one foot has grown larger than the other: I will need to wear a different sized boot on each foot – one pair for the price of two! Luckily Father Christmas obliged, so on Old Year's Night I raised my left leg in the hope I'd begin 2019 on the right foot!

The Victory Walk is raising money for two Naval charities, WRNS BT and RNRMC. To donate go to www.Virginmoneygiving.com/victorywalk17-18.

To find out more about Jane's Victory Walk go to www.victorywalk.uk

CYCLISTS are being urged to sign up to a London to Paris cycle ride later this year.

The RNRMC and BAE Systems are holding their first Heroes Challenge to honour the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

Riders will set off from London on September 18 and conclude four days later in the French capital.

Passing through picturesque English countryside, the cycle will cross the Channel at Portsmouth and continue through the small villages and medieval market towns of northern France, while making time to take in some of the Normandy landing beaches.

Other highlights include visits to D-Day landing points Juno Beach and the Gold Beach, plus a trip to the historic Pegasus Bridge where the first house to be liberated from the Germans in 1944 still stands.

After four days in the saddle, the Heroes Challenge 2019 will conclude under the famous Eiffel Tower.

Riders and their crews will then be invited to a prize giving and celebration event.

The route will comprise:

- Day one, London to Portsmouth and ferry to Caen.
- Day two: Caen – Lisieux (visiting Juno Beach, Gold Beach and Pegasus Bridge).
- Day three: Lisieux to Evreux.
- Day four: Evreux to Paris
- Day five: Return to London.

Riders are urged to fundraise £1,600 each, including the registration fee of £140.

For details and to sign up visit www.rnrmc.org.uk

The heart of war

QUESTIONS David Bickerton never asked his parents while they were alive have been answered by the discovery of wartime letters.

Don Bickerton and his future wife Linda exchanged nearly 150 letters between 1942 and 1945, shedding light on how the couple met, their wartime service and how Britain's greatest generation came through the sternest test imaginable: total war.

More than 75 years after the couple first met, the letters form the heart of a book compiled by their son, both in tribute to his parents and to give current and future generations an insight into young lovers coping with the ordeal of war.

Don started out as a rating in 1940, serving in cruisers, notably HMS Dorsetshire during the Bismarck chase.

He was then selected for officer training, after which he was posted to Coastal Forces at Milford Haven (HMS Skirmisher II).

Which is where Linda enters the story. She was stationed nearby at RAF Hayscastle Cross radar station, a 20-year-old from Newport on the Isle of Wight who served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force tracking Luftwaffe incursions into Britain's skies.

The two met by chance in a Haverfordwest hotel in 1942... and almost immediately separated as Don (pictured inset) was promoted to lieutenant and given command of motor launch ML 338 in the Mediterranean... and hence the correspondence.

ML 338 proved to be an interesting command. She took part in the invasions of North Africa, Sicily, Salerno and Anzio, the island of Elba and finally southern France (Operation Dragoon).

Don's wartime service in the Med also brought his boat into contact with the French resistance, the Maquis; nine freedom fighters signed a 'Pact of Friendship' aboard the launch. Seventy years on and, with the help of a French historian and author, Don's



son was able to identify some of those Maquis.

In the meantime, Linda was promoted to Corporal and tracked enemy aircraft during the D-Day Normandy landings.

At the war's end, the couple married and a few months later David arrived. The Bickertons enjoyed a happy family life for more than 60 years.

Don went on to become Director General of the Central Office of Information, holidaying on the Isle of Wight each summer and, during retirement, sailing a cabin cruiser up and down the Solent.

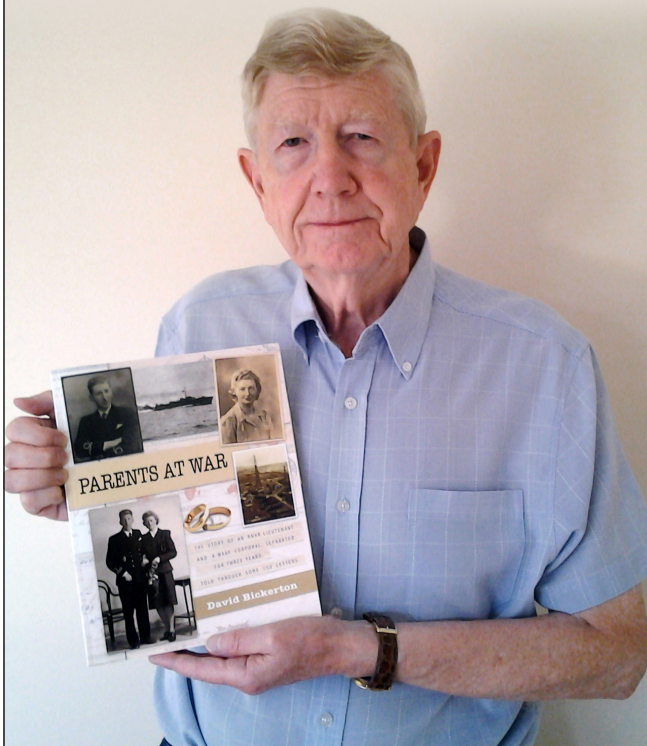
Don and Linda died within a year of each other a decade ago. Their passing prompted their son to search through their possessions, which is when he came across their wartime correspondence.

"I was impressed with the passion of their words and realised I knew so little of their time in the forces. Like many of their generation, for all they'd lived through, they spoke so little of it after," said David.

"It is to my regret that I did not ask questions during their lifetimes."

He's transcribed the letters for *Parents at War* (Marvellous Books, £16.50 ISBN 9781909900110 and pictured below, held by the author) which he describes as the story of "two ordinary people who volunteered to do their bit during World War 2."

It's available from bookshops and online retailers.



Delight at Fury

IN 2019 airlines promise to fly passengers from the UK to Malta in as little as three hours and ten minutes.

Sixty-five years ago, Lieutenant William 'Harry' Hands managed it one minute quicker. In a single-seat interceptor built for relatively short-range missions from aircraft carriers.

Understandably the beautiful Sea Fury proved to be the young pilot's favourite aircraft – and for his 95th birthday he was treated to a reunion with the piston-engined fighter.

With the help of Fleet Air Arm charity Navy Wings, his daughter Carrie arranged a surprise treat for the nonagenarian from Bournemouth: a look around the RN Historic Flight at RNAS Yeovilton, Harry's old base.

In a flying career spanning 16 years, the fighter pilot flew both propeller and jet aircraft.

World War 2 ended before he could see action as a Hellcat fighter pilot in the Far East and he left the Fleet Air Arm in May 1946...

...only to be recalled at the end of 1951 as experienced pilots were needed; RN carriers and their aircraft were heavily engaged in the Korean War.

Harry re-trained to learn to fly the Sea Fury – the last propeller fighter to see front-line service with the Fleet Air Arm – serving with 807 NAS aboard HMS Theseus and Ocean.

It was while working up to join the carriers that he and colleague Lt 'Gunner' Haliday broke the UK-Malta air speed record, covering the 1,500 miles from HMS Daedalus at Lee-on-the-Solent to RAF Hal Far (near



Malta's present-day international airport) in three hours and nine minutes... aided by good weather and a spot of tail wind.

After Korea, Harry converted to jets including Vampires, Meteors and Attackers.

With 29 different types of aircraft in his logbooks, the nonagenarian is possibly Britain's most qualified naval aviator.

At the end of the 50s he plumped for a career on the ground as a civilian air traffic controller... at military establishments.

Among the aircraft he safely directed in a 25-year career in control towers were the 'flying bedstead' – forerunner of the Harrier – and jump jets conducting ski ramp trials for the Invincible class of carriers.

Harry thought he was heading for a family reunion to mark his birthday... until he began seeing the road signs for Yeovilton. The



experience of looking around the RNHF hangar – including the recently-restored Sea Fury – was "superb, really good".

As it was for the RNHF team with whom Harry shared numerous aviation dits (pictured above underneath the Sea Fury).

"When the old guys come back, they bring so many accounts, so many memories, experiences – all first-hand. It was a great day – and a great way of keeping the memory and the heritage alive," said the Flight's Lieutenant Commander Mark Jameson.

WW2 veteran's birthday presence

ROBERT Sawers shares a joke with Lieutenant Commander David Bailey aboard HMS Ramsey as the WW2 veteran relived his RN experiences.

Like Harry Hands, the former sailor was treated to a birthday to remember thanks to the RN – in his case his milestone 100th anniversary and a trip to Faslane, including visiting minehunters Bangor and Ramsey, to celebrate his milestone 100th birthday.

Mr Sawers spent six years in the RN between 1940 and 1946 as an ordnance artificer, responsible for ammunition ashore and at sea.

He served in destroyer HMS Greyhound, cruiser Bonaventure and battleship Barham, and in Alexandria, Algiers and Bejaia.

Post-war he worked briefly at Mechan's shipyard in Scotstoun, then moved to Govan's Themotank where he was an engineer on air conditioning and cooling units, many of which were fitted to Clyde-built ships. Today he enjoys his retirement in Bearsden on the northwestern outskirts of Glasgow.

His granddaughter Jennifer



serves with the MOD Police's Clyde Marine Unit and arranged the treat as a birthday present no-one else could provide.

"It is difficult to find a gift for someone turning 100 so I wanted to do something no-one else could do for my papa," she said. "Thanks to help from the Royal

Navy we managed to give him a special day to remember.

"His experience of being a sailor in World War 2 was very different from these days, but he still shares that connection with the Royal Navy of today. I am immensely proud of him."

Picture: LPhot Pepe Hogan

Arboretum's glaze of WW1 glory

THE National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, is hosting a ceramic art installation to mark the end of Great War centenary commemorations.

Medals for the Future by artist Clare Twomey has been inspired by events held at the arboretum on the 100th anniversary of WW1's end.

At last year's Armistice Day commemorations at the Alrewas site, Clare held a drop-in session where visitors were asked to consider the qualities and achievements that they hope can be commended in the coming century.

These reflections have been glazed on to 100 ceramic medals which are displayed on wooden benches. The shape of each medal was inspired by a 'dead man's penny' (aka Next of Kin Memorial Plaque) was bestowed to the family of all Commonwealth service personnel who died as a result of their injuries in WW1.

Naval Quirks

IN THE DAYS OF SAIL, THE MOST POWERFUL WARSHIPS – THOSE WITH 64 GUNS OR MORE –



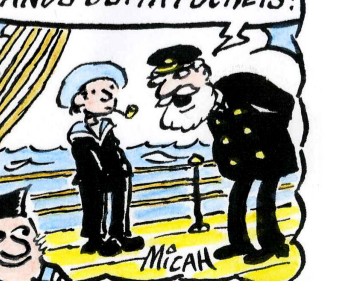
MADE UP THE "LINE OF BATTLE" IN A FLEET ACTION AND WERE DULY CALLED "SHIPS OF THE LINE" OR "LINE OF BATTLE SHIPS".



THIS WON OUT OVER THE PREVIOUS CONFUSING NINETEENTH CENTURY ABBREVIATION – "LINERS".



Never mind the abbreviation lad, I assure you this is NOT a cruise so ANDS OUTTA POCKETS!





Honouring the first aces

TRAINEES from 824 Naval Air Squadron prepare to place wreaths on one of the most hallowed sites in the history of aviation as today's fliers remembered the trailblazers of a century ago.

The Flying Services Memorial in Arras is to airmen what the Menin Gate and Thiepval Memorial are to the dead of Ypres and the Somme: a tribute to Great War aviators with no known graves. Some 990 Great War aviators – mostly Royal Naval Air Service (forerunner of the Fleet Air Arm) and Royal Flying Corps are listed on the huge monument.

It was the first stop for nearly 30 engineers, aircrew and trainees from the Culdrose-based Merlin squadron.

Renewed interest in the Great War around the 100-year anniversary of the conflict's end prompted the 824 team to spend a weekend paying homage on the Western Front.

Historian Dr Guy Finch from the military academy at Shrivenham accompanied the Merlin helicopter men and women to put the battlefields and memorials in context.

Dr Finch gave faces to many of the names on the monument – and outlined the deeds of and dangers faced by Great War aviators.

To today's fliers, the stories often sounded "outrageous", said student pilot Lieutenant Callum Moir.

"From death-defying flypasts to raise the morale of the troops, to highly innovative mid-air firefighting techniques and half-hour long dogfights over enemy lines, many of the Victoria Cross citations from that time almost beggar belief.

"A palpable sense of respect hung in the icy air as the group contemplated the risks taken and the sacrifices made by the people whose names are etched into the memorial.

"In particular by those on the Flying Services Memorial who paved the way a century ago for aviation in the military and whose legacy continues to inspire members of the Fleet Air Arm today."

Trainee observer Lieutenant Lewis Randall added: "The number of people lost was completely mind blowing and the architecture of the memorial was stunning.



● Small crosses – including one placed by his great-great grandson Lt Matt Le Feuvre of 824 NAS – freshly adorn the grave of Cpl Charles Hollister in Artillery Wood Cemetery

"One particularly incredible monument was a globe which was orientated to exactly replicate the position of the Earth at 11am on November 11 1918."

From Arras, it's just a 20-mile drive to the heart of the Somme battlefield, where sailors fought alongside soldiers during the bloody five-month battle in 1916 – then again as the tide of the war began to turn in the summer of 1918.

The missing are commemorated by the largest British cenotaph in the world: the imposing Thiepval Memorial remembers more than 72,000 men whose bodies were never identified.

The tour continued back on Belgian soil at Mons where the war symbolically began and ended for British forces – made all the more poignant by the sudden appearance of a local resident who showed the group a photograph of the last casualty of the war.

The bulk of the British Army's fighting in Belgium between 1914 and 1918 took place in the Ypres salient, bulging to the east of the historic town.

Dr Finch detailed how one million soldiers from 50 nations on both sides of the line were killed, wounded or posted missing during the many battles fought on this stretch of front, including the infamous Third Battle of Ypres – better known as Passchendaele.

Corporal Charles Hollister fell at the height of the second battle in 1915 in the bloody struggle for Hill 60. The 34-year-old left a

young wife behind in Jersey.

A century later, his great-great grandson Lt Matt Le Feuvre is training to become a Merlin pilot with 824, so a visit to Artillery Wood cemetery north of Ypres allowed him to pay his respects.

A short distance from Cpl Hollister's last resting place is one of the most hallowed German sites on the Western Front, Langemarck Cemetery.

The death of student volunteers, cut down in their hundreds in the autumn of 1914 as they attacked near Langemarck, became a potent symbol of sacrifice in inter-war

Germany. There are more than 45,000 men buried in Artillery Wood and Langemarck cemeteries – a typical attendance when Chelsea play at Stamford Bridge.

"Many of the group found it hard to grasp how such large numbers of casualties could be possible in only a single area of the front," Lt Randall said.

Trainee aircrewman Leading Seaman Will "Biscuit" Brown said that the entire group returned to Culdrose with a much deeper understanding of the conflict and how it helped to shape today's world.

He said: "I think we will all come away from this feeling significantly better informed about the conduct of World War 1, but also feeling immensely more privileged to be embarking upon a career that was only made possible by the brave actions of all those who fought and sacrificed."



Can you help Harrier project?

EVERYONE loves a Harrier... not least the folk at the City of Norwich Aviation Museum.

They've spent a decade turning the barely-recognisable wreck above into the T4N two-seat trainer below.

The jump jet (XW268) was written off after 24 years' service in 1994 following a heavy landing at Yeovilton which caused substantial damage (though thankfully no casualties).

It was subsequently sold by the Fleet Air Arm and discovered by aviation enthusiasts in a field in Faygate near Crawley in 2008.

They saved it from the scrapyards and began the long process of restoration at the East Anglian air museum. They've fitted a mock tailboom and canopies as part of efforts to restore the aircraft to static display condition in 899 NAS markings.

It is the last unmodified T4N variant in existence (a version only used by the Fleet Air Arm).

The restoration team are keen to hear from anyone with information about or photographs of T4N cockpits, or XW268 in FAA service.

They can be contacted via www.XW268.net, www.facebook.com/XW268, or contact XW268Harrier@gmail.com.



RBL's pride in LGBT

FOR the first time there's a Royal British Legion branch dedicated to LGBT veterans – almost two decades after the ban on their serving was lifted.

The new branch recognises and remembers the contribution of the LGBT community across the services past and present.

It's been set up by the RBL because it believes the community is currently under-represented; no other veteran organisations specifically support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender former personnel.

"There are many people who historically have not been treated appropriately by the military, but that has now changed," said Emma Miller-McCaffrey, one of the founding members of the new branch.

"I am proud to be married to my wife – a serving member of the Royal Navy, and I am proud of who I am as a gay woman. Becoming a member of the Legion's LGBT branch allows me to be all of those things without judgement."

The branch is open to veterans, those currently serving and civilians, from across the UK. See www.britishlegion.org.uk/membership.

Bye, Cheshunt

Cheshunt branch (No 1 Area) bowed out after 30 years of comradeship and support for the community in the Lee Valley.

President Victor Everest said the shortage of full members to fill committee positions had forced the branch's closure.

It closes in the proud knowledge, he said, of being very successful throughout its lifespan, raising many thousands of pounds for its chosen charities.

ROYAL NAVY

The Mounded Bands of Her Majesty's Royal Marines

Mountbatten festival of music 2019

Friday 15 March at 7.30pm
 Saturday 16 March at 2.00pm
 Saturday 16 March at 7.30pm

THE ROYAL MARINES **CLIC Sargent** **Children in Cancer**

Royal Albert Hall
 Royal Albert Hall Box Office 0845 401 5018
www.royalalberthall.com



Scouts honour RN for partnership

THE Scout Association has thanked the Royal Navy by awarding them 'The Scout Association 2018 – Most Philanthropic Partner' at their Annual Partnership Awards ceremony, in London.

The prestigious national award was presented in recognition of the Royal Navy's support and sponsorship of the Scout's 'Time on the Water' badge, which can be earned by taking part in several waterborne activities.

There to collect the award on behalf of Flag Officer Sea Training was Commander Gavin MacDougall and Lieutenant Commander Jack Parnell, of FOST's Cadets & Youth team. *Both are pictured, top.*

"It was a real honour and pleasure to receive the award," said Lt Cdr Jack Parnell. "Completely unexpected, but very gratefully received on behalf of the Royal Navy. We look forward to continuing to work closely with The Scout Association".

The Scouts Association provide an array of awards and activity badges to its 400,000 UK young people membership annually. In 2017, 104,000 'Time on the Water' (TOTW) badges were awarded and 96,000 in 2018.

In identifying the importance of sponsorship of the TOTW badge the Royal Navy hopes the promotion of national maritime domain awareness, helps young people to undertake waterborne activities safely. In equal measure the Royal Navy is committed to allowing volunteers to pass on their expertise to its youth members and to further support all Scouts in making available opportunities to get out on the water.

Cdr MacDougall, Team Leader said: "My Cadets and Youth Team, in particular Lt Cdr Jack Parnell, has been pivotal in ensuring the success of the badge, the success of the relationship with the Scouts, and acting as the focal point for the full delivery of the Royal Navy's undertakings in this partnership."



TS Vanguard support brings in vital funds

MEMBERS of Worthing's **TS Vanguard** Sea Cadets unit helped raise thousands of pounds for military veterans.

The cadets collected cash which helped Care for Veterans raise £4,335 at their annual carol concert at Lancing College.

The service was led by the Worthing charity's Chaplain, the Rev Beverley Miles, and featured readings by residents, staff members and Care for Veterans' patron, Nicholas Witchell.

There were also performances from local choir, Worthing Voices with *Cantamus*, as well as the charity's very own choir.

Fundraising Officer at Care for Veterans, Christine Gillott, said: "We'd like to thank everyone who bought tickets to our concert and helped us raise this fantastic amount of money."

"Special thanks also to Lancing College, both of the fabulous choirs, the Worthing TS Vanguard Sea Cadets, and all of our other volunteers. The money raised will be very well spent on the veterans in our care."

Cadets cash in on new drama

WHITEHAVEN Sea Cadets are cashing in on a new TV drama.

Television cameras have recently been in the Whitehaven Harbour area filming for *The Bay*, a new ITV crime drama starring Morven Christie – and the town's Sea Cadets are being given a cash donation by the film production company.

The cadet unit's Chairman, David Abbott said that Tall Story Pictures had been in touch to say they were donating £750 to the cadets.

"The call came as a complete surprise" said David.

"I have to admit my first reaction was that this was someone playing a practical joke, but we were apparently nominated by the Harbour Commissioners to receive the money.

"Our sincere thanks of course go to Tall Story Pictures, and to the Harbour Commissioners for thinking of us."

Celia MacKenzie, Chief Executive of the Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners said that the production company had so liked the harbour and the people of Whitehaven that they wanted to make a donation to two local organisations.

"We were happy to nominate the Sea Cadets and the Harbour Youth Project, two organisations that use the harbour facilities and do so much for our young people, to receive £750 each," she said.

Confirming the donations, a spokesperson for Tall Story Pictures added that they were delighted to be able to support two groups which were close to the Harbour Commissioners' heart and were clearly well-liked and respected in the town.

The Bay is still in production and no



● **Councillor David Moore** chats to members of **Whitehaven Sea Cadets**

broadcast date has yet been announced.

Whitehaven cadets also welcomed their latest VIP visitor, Councillor David Moore.

He spent the evening chatting with cadets and staff, and presented various awards to some of the cadets.

Before he left, Cllr Moore told the cadets that he had been pleased to accept the invitation, and impressed with the cadets.

"My congratulations to all of you on your standard of dress and conduct, and special congratulations to those who received awards this evening," he said.

"I did not realise there were so many activities open to you and encourage you to

take advantage of them. The skills you learn as part of the Sea Cadets will not only give a good foundation for your future, but will stay with you for life."

The cadet unit's Commanding Officer, Petty Officer (SCC) Stuart McCourt said that VIP visits of this type were valuable for both cadets and the unit.

"Having visits from local dignitaries such as Councillor Moore give our cadets experience of meeting and speaking with VIPs, and that helps build their confidence. It is also important for the unit as it gives us the opportunity to talk about what we do, and what we can offer our cadets."

Unit ship-shape and Bristol fashion

NORTHAMPTON Sea Cadet Unit has won the award for having the smartest cadets at the Eastern Area Sea Cadet awards.

With over 100 cadets the Unit Stores Officer, Yvonne Jolley was praised for her tireless efforts in making sure every cadet has the right uniforms, smartly pressed, with badges correctly placed.

The senior cadets of the unit presented the award at the annual carol service, which was held at Duke Street Church, Northampton.

The unit finished 2018 having organised many activities leading up to the festive season, alongside the training the cadets have enjoyed at the unit.

The unit had a fun weekend where many of the cadets participated in ice skating and a number of cadets visited HMS Belfast and the Imperial War Museum to see the fabulous might of the Royal Navy's 6 and 15 inch guns which supported the allied landings in June 1944.

The cadets received a tour of the veteran warship.

The last competition of the year was the district five-a-side football competition where three of the unit's teams won the tournament against Sea Cadet units from across the county.

Both Lance Corporal Hayden and Leading Junior Sea Cadet Skyler were selected



● **Northampton Sea Cadets** on **HMS Belfast** and during the visit to **HMS Alliance**



out of the 100-plus competitors for their sportsmanship and were named 'players of the tournament'.

Thirty cadets attended a training weekend touring HM Naval Base Portsmouth. Staying on the Type 82 Destroyer HMS Bristol moored in Portsmouth the cadets visited Mary Rose, HMS Warrior and the submarine HMS Alliance.

Able Cadet Ethan said: "The visit was fantastic and we got to see all over the ship including where the sailors lived and worked on a variety of ships from history."

The last social events of the year were the annual trip to Planet Ice in Milton Keynes where 15 cadets enjoyed the skating.

The Sea Cadets are recruiting now for cadets and adult volunteers to join and anyone interested in becoming part of the team should contact the unit.

Northampton Sea Cadets are a registered charity, which aims to help young people between the ages of ten and 18 years to responsible adulthood using a naval theme.

Northampton Sea Cadets meet on Tuesday and Friday evening and Northampton Junior Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets meet on a Wednesday and Friday evening from 7pm to 9.15pm at their headquarters in Nunn Mills Road, Northampton. Northampton Sea Cadets can be found by visiting www.northamptonseacadets.org.uk

Reading unit are back in business



LORD Lieutenant of Berkshire James Puxley formally recommissioned **TS Jervis Bay** at Reading.

Mayor of Reading Cllr Debs Edwards and Reading West MP Alok Sharma inspected the unit and Area Officer Commander Trevor Price conducted the prize-giving ceremony.

TS Jervis Bay training facility was closed in May 2014 due to unsafe roof conditions and for the next four years the unit used the gym at Brock Barracks.

After obtaining approval to fix the roof, the cadets started fundraising – raising £86,000 in a year.

The roof was duly fixed and Reading Sea Cadets moved back into TS Jervis Bay in September.

Hundreds hear war thoughts

CAPTAIN Sea Cadets Captain Phil Russell and Martin J Coles, CEO of Marine Society and Sea Cadets were joined by guests of honour including Rear Admiral John Kingwell, Sheriff of the City of London Elizabeth Green, Representatives from the Royal Navy, MSSC trustees, supporters and families at the London Area Carol Concert.

The Chapel of the Old Royal Naval College Greenwich was packed with around 320 cadets, volunteers and guests.

Cadets gave the lessons in-between carols. But instead of Bible verses they each prepared their own reflection on 100 years since the end of WW1.



• Arbroath cadets with their instructors in the back row and, in the front row, Ant Middleton, Maj Bell, Lt Col Wing and Maj Spratt Pictures: Wallace Ferrier

Pioneering cadets lead the way in Scotland

THE first cadets to pass out from the Royal Marines Volunteer Cadets Corps in Scotland pose proudly for their group photo.

The Arbroath Division marked their first-ever pass out with TV personality Ant Middleton.

It was back in August that 16 youngsters began their 30-week journey with the cadets at Royal Marines Condor.

The RMVCC is one of the oldest cadet corps, having started in Portsmouth in 1901.

Originally established for the children of serving Royal Marines, it has evolved in to a youth organisation that takes in boys and girls

of all backgrounds between the ages of nine and 17.

The Royal Marine Volunteer Cadets at Arbroath have been designated "Troop 181" and, following a marching tour of Condor just to get their bearings, they continued to gain more training experience every Monday and Wednesday evening.

They were taught map reading, drill, camping and the gym on the base, where they took part in team building and Initial Military Fitness to Royal Marine Standard.

45 Commando's Signals Branch taught the cadets how to use radios and they were also

given first aid lessons.

One of the final courses was on a chilly December night where the temperature was -2°C degrees. The cadets camped out and cooked with hexamine cookers and ration packs.

In January the cadets held their pass out parade in front of their family, where they were presented with their cadet berets by Ant Middleton.

Cadet Daniel received the Belle Isle Cup for being the best cadet in the troop. He is pictured right receiving his award from Ant Middleton, watched by Colour Sergeant Derek McNulty.



You'll never forget your first-aid skills

FIRST Aid training is a core skill taught to all sea cadets. Here, Petty Officer (SCC) Keith Jeffery, the officer-in-charge of Castleford Sea Cadets, talks of the value of learning such life-saving skills.

I prepared to go to my friend's wedding in Bradford on December 29. She was getting married at her local mosque and was having a reception that evening at 7pm.

As I was travelling from Castleford by bus, I thought I had better leave early as could get delayed on the way.

As there was a chance it might go on late, I had also prepared my rucksack with clothes to stop at a friend's house.

I noticed my first aid kit was still in there and decided that you never know what might happen so it's best to take it with me.

I arrived in Bradford with 50 minutes to spare so decided to walk the mile to the venue instead of taking a taxi.

As I got closer to the venue, I heard screams. I found four men attacking a child. As I approached the scene the four men ran away.

My first aid training immediately kicked in and I remembered I had packed my first aid kit, freshly

restocked with latex gloves.

I put them on started to check him over looking for any wounds whilst asking him for his details and making sure he was not on any blood-thinning medication. Another passer by approached and called for an ambulance and the police.

He handed me his phone so I could describe the condition of the young lad to the ambulance service.

I sat the lad down on my rucksack and held him upright as I was worried if he lay down he might go unconscious and increase pressure to his head wounds.

I continued to check him over whilst looking into his eyes and checking his responses to questions for signs of possible brain injury.

The police arrived and relieved me as the first aider. They took over whilst I stayed with the lad and continued to check for other signs of injury whilst waiting for further support to arrive.

Thankfully the lad survived his

ordeal. I have no idea what would have happened if I wasn't passing or how well it would have gone if I did not think to bring my rucksack and first aid kit.

My newly-married friend described the event as a divine intervention. That Allah had seen fit for me to be there at the right time to help. Whilst I can't speak to that end, I know that my first aid training had prepared me for that night, communication skills had enabled me to take charge of the situation and leadership skills had enabled me to be there at the right time with the equipment ready to act.

These are the skills that I have developed within the cadet forces that I did not have five years ago.

■ First aid training for Sea Cadets is accredited by St John Ambulance, and is taught to junior cadets and cadets first class.

From the age of 16, cadets can undertake a first aid at work qualification.

First aid is also a pre-requisite skill for sea cadet instructors.

Last month the government announced that schoolchildren in

England will have to learn first aid.

Draft legislation says primary schoolchildren will be taught basic first aid, such as dealing with head injuries and calling emergency services.

Secondary schoolchildren will learn life-saving skills such as CPR and the purpose of defibrillators.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said he wanted to give young people "the tools they need to be ready to thrive when they leave school".

Research by the British Red Cross, which also campaigns on the issue, found that 95 per cent of British adults would not be able to provide aid in "three of the most life-threatening first aid emergencies".

Mike Adamson, the charity's chief executive, said teaching children "simple yet vital first aid skills" would save lives.

The government's decision comes after Lord Kerslake's inquiry into the Manchester Arena bombing in May 2017 found members of the public tried to help the injured and dying but lacked the requisite first-aid skills.



Sea time thanks to the Lions

ABINGDON Sea Cadets are to benefit from a sea-going bursary.

Abingdon Lions have committed to sponsoring a cadet to attend a week at sea on board one of the sea cadet training ships or yachts for the next five years.

This will allow that cadet to have great experience, the most exhilarating and unique challenges.

Nothing compares to the feeling of being out at sea, right there in the elements.

Cadets will pull together with other cadets to safely navigate Britain's coastline. This is teamwork taken to another level.

Offshore operations give cadets a great opportunity to develop their nautical knowledge and skills, complementing the nautical training they gain at unit level.

The Sea Cadets have three classes of vessels, all of which are capable of coastal/offshore passage making.

For each cadet the target should be to spend at least one week afloat offshore in a power vessel, and another in a sailing vessel, during their time in the Corps.

Unit staff will carefully select the vessel best suited to the needs of the cadet.

Abingdon Sea Cadets are always looking for local companies and charities for support in keeping the unit running and providing safe and challenging adventures for cadets.

For further details about the unit visit: sea-cadets.org/abingdon

Rewarded for their service

A NUMBER of sea cadet volunteers were honoured in the Queen's New Year Honours list.

Malcolm John Bone was made an MBE for voluntary service to young people and the community in Tyne and Wear. He is currently chairman of Hebburn Sea Cadets.

The same honour went to MSSC Trustee Alan Robert William Marsh for fundraiser for services to Marine Society & Sea Cadets.

Chairwoman of Canterbury Sea Cadets, Johanna Rohan, was made a BEM for services to young people in Kent.

Captain Ian McNaught MNM, MSSC Trustee and Deputy Master of Trinity House, London, was awarded the CVO (the Royal Victorian Order).

Three uniformed volunteers received Second Sea Lord Commendations.

Lieutenant (SCC) Royal Naval Reserve D Atkins in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the Sea Cadet Corps for over 30 years.

Lieutenant Commander (SCC) Royal Naval Reserve A Loveridge in recognition of his extraordinary dedication to the Sea Cadet Corps for over 50 years.

Lieutenant Commander (SCC) Royal Naval Reserve R Mitchell in recognition of his exemplary contribution to the Sea Cadets, particularly as Deputy National Sea Cadets Staff Recreation Officer over a long period.



Comms Shack

WELCOME back and I hope that most of you had a chance to have a break and for those that have been deployed, then I hope you have had at least one great run ashore, writes *WO1 Daniel Castle*.

As we start 2019 I think the message I want everyone to take is: this is the year we get our Broadcast in Sync and pass data around our networks and get our stream back online.

As you know during 2018, ACOS IW released Project Mountbatten and I am very pleased to say we are on track to deliver most of the project lines detailed.

That is thanks to multiple members of the department who have taken responsibility and gone above and beyond to recover our stream and make a difference and I thank them all for their support.

I know there has been a lot of feedback regarding training and again following Project Mountbatten, we are now on contract for the analysis phase for our LETs and POETs and we hope to start training design during Q2/3 2019.

While this work is ongoing, I need you all to continue to support our Mountbatten effort and do all you can to enhance localised training and support to our personnel, especially during this regain period – training is not just WETG responsibility, but we all have a part to play.

Over the last six months we have also seen updates regarding new technologies, which the *Naval Engineer* has published, in addition we have new equipment coming online from new SCOT infrastructure, to KMY being replaced by KRS and there is much more to come, which makes CIS both Tech and Spec a very exciting field to be working in.

I will end this article with a plea for support again... Your branch management has enhanced its communication methods to the WE department, with online Skype Call, to the use of Defence Connect and the traditional visits. I need you all to support these communication media and 'get online'! – Knowledge is power!

If there are any questions, then I hope by now you have your 'BLACK' networks online and my email address is below. Again welcome back and get ready for a great 2019.

Contact Daniel.Castle304@mod.gov.uk or call 93832 8981.

LIBOR cash fixes Gearbox

JUNIOR ratings at HMS Sultan now have a much-improved place to relax thanks to the RNRMC and money from the LIBOR fines imposed on banks.

That paid for a refurbished social centre, the Gearbox Bar, which features, live Sky Sports/BT Sports on TV and a games arena complete with X Rocker gaming chairs, 50in inch TVs, PlayStation and Xbox One consoles.

During the day the bar, located in the Junior Rates' Amenities Centre will operate as the home of the establishment's new coffee shop, offering a variety of food and drinks.

It's your 2-6 - so contact Sophie Dennis (sophie.dennis100@mod.gov.uk/93832 5500) to include items on these pages.

Targeting ideas

ROYAL Marines snipers will be more lethal than ever thanks to new kit pitched at a *Dragon's Den*-style event.

Just five months after commandos pitched various ideas to improve the effectiveness of the small cadre of snipers, the specialist marksmen of 40 Commando had the enhanced weapons and accessories in their hands for testing.

Less than £5,000 was spent on the kit: lightweight scopes for urban combat which can see around corners without putting the sniper team in danger; weather meters with an inbuilt calculator for data such as wind, altitude and temperature to give an instant, accurate shooting solution, substantially improving the chances of hitting a target with the first or second round; a spirit level on the scope to ensure the sniper has not accidentally tilted their guns, which can lead to wide misses at longer ranges; and a radar for measuring muzzle velocities – crucial as all shooting solutions rely on accurate readings.

Those enhancements were put to the test in the sands of Oman in October during Exercise Saif Sareea – and lived up to expectations; the sniper teams deployed by Taunton-based 40 Commando reported a significant increase in the likelihood that the first rounds to leave their rifle muzzles hit the target.

The enhancements are

another success for the Royal Navy's DARE (Discovery Assessment and Rapid Exploitation) initiative – aimed at encouraging sailors and commandos to come forward with affordable ideas which will improve front-line operations.

Royal Marines snipers have a reputation as being among the best in the world – they regularly take out the engines of drug runners' go-fast boats in the Caribbean, shooting from the back of a helicopter while the traffickers hurtle along at high speed.

But without regular combat operations, kit development can stall – one of the factors prompting a 'DARE Lair' (Dragons' Den) event at 3 Commando Brigade's headquarters in Plymouth during the summer to showcase new kit and listen to suggestions from across the Corps.

"This initiative is an easy and effective way for individuals with a good idea to have their say in resourcing capability," said Lieutenant Commander Matt Cox.

"Thanks to the success of this initiative 40 Commando's snipers have the latest cutting-edge technology to complement their high personal soldiering skills, allowing them to retain their global reputation as the world's best."

If you have an innovative idea you want to progress, visit the DARE DefNet page <https://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/defnet/Navay>



ORCs and IRCs

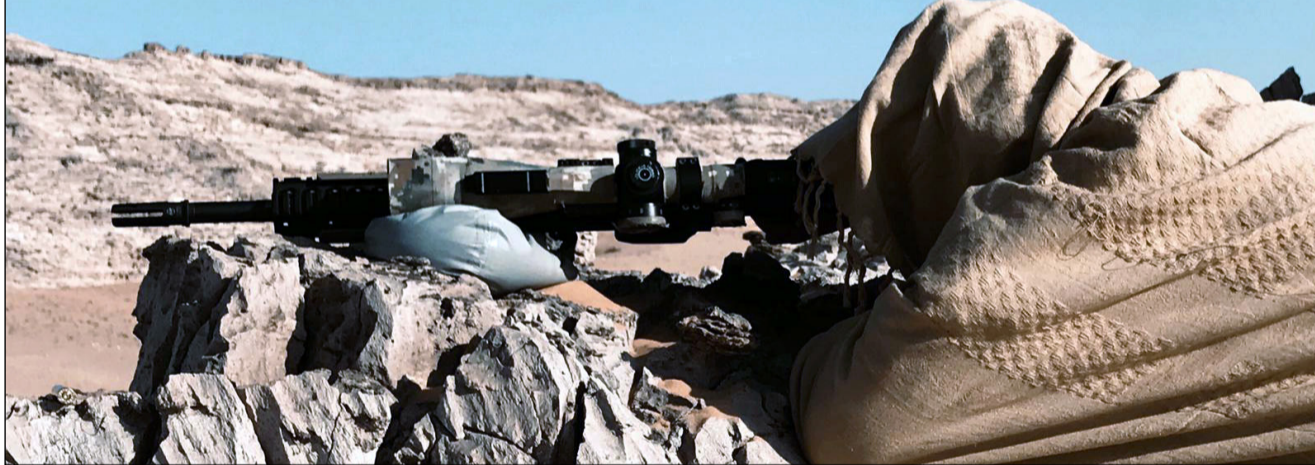
INNOVATION in the Corps doesn't stop with sniper kit. 11(ATT) at Instow are adapting the Offshore Raiding Craft so it can carry/deploy the much smaller Inflatable Raiding Craft.

The ORCs, operated by 539 ASRM, are used to provide security, give covering fire on raids, conduct riverine patrols and perform covert raids. To assist with the latter in particular, the IRC – just 16ft long, weighing a little over one tonne, yet capable of carrying half a dozen commandos at speeds of up to 20kts for up to two hours - is an indispensable part of the Corps' raiding capability.

The project team at Instow designed and built a steel-frame prototype to fit under the IRC, holding the bow in the natural planing position behind the ORC... riding on the plume generated by the boat's jet drive, even at speeds of 35knots.

Trials with the operational 539 ASRM on exercise proved less successful; they broke the cradles by sitting, rather than moving at speed, in choppy water.

Six reinforced cradles were then designed and built by the Instow folk and have been handed over to 539 ASRM for further rigorous testing and steps have also been taken to obtain Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and, ultimately, a patent, if the concept works in the field.



You're hired! Apprentice success

DEDICATION to apprenticeships earned the Royal Navy a Special Recognition Award at the National Apprenticeship Awards.

It comes after the Naval Service Apprenticeship Programme was rated Outstanding by Ofsted in March 18, ranked as a Top 100 apprenticeship employer and positioned in the top two of UK providers with a cohort of 1,000 or more apprentices for its achievement rates.

The Naval Service – including the RFA and Royal Marines – offers 23 apprenticeships across all sectors and trades such as engineering, chefs, hospitality, health care, aviation, ICT, leisure, public service and deckhand.

Damian Hinds, the Secretary of State for Education, presented the award to Commodore Andrew Cree, Assistant Chief of Staff (Training).

"We are very proud to receive this special recognition award in what has been an amazing year for the Naval Service Apprenticeship Programme," he said.

"The Royal Navy has a resolute commitment in promoting and developing apprentices through their career ensuring



they possess the skills required by a modern, high-tech navy.

"It is also vitally important that the skills and qualifications gained within the Naval Service are transferrable in to the national workforce and supports their eventual transition from the service."

Commander Allan Youp, Head of Naval Service Apprenticeships (pictured above proudly holding the award with his

team), added: "We are one of the larger employer-providers and have over 3,200 apprentices on a programme annually – that's ten percent of the workforce."

"All new recruits undertake an apprenticeship when they join the Naval Service and have opportunities to progress from a Level 2 Intermediate Apprenticeship to a Degree Apprenticeships dependant on the chosen branch."

Progression also includes options to gain a range of academic or practical qualifications from GCSEs, degrees, postgraduate qualifications through to adventurous training qualifications.

Cdr Youp continues: "These learning and development opportunities are plentiful as it is at the heart of what we do. Indeed 20,600 qualifications were achieved last year and is a stark indicator of how seriously we are investing in our people's education and skills development."

Next month is a key one in the calendar: National Apprenticeship Week runs from March 4-8, with the Naval Service Apprenticeship Awards on March 5.

For more information see www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/apprenticeships.

RN media champions honoured

TV star HMS Duncan was named the ship which did the most to promote the RN's work through the media in 2018.

The destroyer collected the Desmond Wetheren Fleet Award for helping to raise the profile of the Senior Service courtesy of the Channel 5 documentary *Warship: Life at sea* aired at the end of last year.

The programme drew an average of two million viewers each week and was one of the channel's top performing shows of 2018.

The Type 45 was singled out at the annual Maritime Media Awards where naval journalists, filmmakers, historians and authors



are recognised for their efforts to underline the importance of the sea – and seafaring – to the nation.

Legendary broadcaster and naturalist Sir David Attenborough received the prestigious Maritime Fellowship Award for raising public awareness of how life on earth depends on the oceans.

The First Sea Lord's Award for best use of digital media was won by The Mary Rose Trust.

Testimony Films took the Donald Gosling Award for Best TV or Film for BBC Four documentary *Hull's Headscarf Heroes* – focusing on the 1960's campaign by fishermen's wives to improve standards of safety in the industry.

The Mountbatten Award for Best Book was awarded to the man who found the Hood and Bismarck, David Mearns for his memoir *The Shipwreck Hunter*.

And the coveted Desmond Wetheren Award – named after a popular Fleet Street naval correspondent and reservist officer – for outstanding journalism was presented to Christopher Cope, political correspondent of *Warship World* magazine for more than a quarter of a century.

Where to Look

GALAXY BRIEFS

01-2019 First Sea Lord's Priorities 2019
DINS

01 Personnel

DIN 2018DIN01-149 Amendment to the Armed Forces Pension Schemes - AFPS 75, AFPS 05 and AFPS 15

03 Defence Policy and Operations

DIN 2018DIN03-028 Military Aid to the Civil Authorities – Immediate Assistance
07 Training and Education

DIN 2018DIN07-130 AIR 440: Class 1(b) Remotely Piloted Air Systems (Multi-Rotor) Remote Pilot Course

DIN 2018DIN07-133 Volunteers for 4/73 (Sphinx) Special OP Battery Royal Artillery
DIN 2018DIN07-135 Offshore Sail Training Craft (STC) from JSASTC for Unit Adventurous Training Exercises

DIN 2018DIN07-138 Joining Instructions for personnel attending Maritime Warfare School Courses at Phoenix Training Group
DIN 2019DIN07-004 City and Guilds Professional Recognition Awards in Leadership and Management – Naval Service

09 Honours, Awards, Royal and Ceremonial Events

DIN 2018DIN09-016 Buckingham Palace Royal Garden Parties 2019

10 Sports and Social Events

DIN 2018DIN10-042 Wimbledon Tickets

RNTMS

01 Personnel

RNTM 01-081/18 Recruitment and Retention pay (Naval Service Engineer) guidance

RNTM 01-002/19 Exchange Programme Long Look (EXPLL) 2019

07 Training and Education

RNTM 07-084/18 Marine Engineering (General Service) conference March 21

Awards across the board

Smoking ban at Temeraire

A DIVER who responded to more than 700 call-outs and the Royal Navy's most senior photographer are among 23 men and women from the Senior Service recognised in this year's New Year Honours list.

Portsmouth-based Petty Officer Diver Darren Carvell (pictured inset, left) said he was proud to have received an MBE for his work in various diving roles. He has been dealt with more than 700 incidents in his 16 years as a diver.

He joined the navy in 1996 and transferred to the diving branch in 2002 as a clearance diver. He then spent time at the search and rescue school in Culdrose before transferring to the Southern Diving Unit 1 in Plymouth – his home town.

PO Carvell is now an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) operator for the Southern Diving Unit 2 team in Portsmouth. The 40-year-old said: "I am deeply honoured and immensely proud to have received the MBE.

"It is on behalf of the team because all of the work I have done has been part of a team."

He added: "My family were really excited when I told them and there were a few tears. It is just a real honour."

Meanwhile, Warrant Officer 1st Class Nathan 'Scooby' Dua (pictured inset, right) from Lowestoft received the Meritorious Service Medal.

Originally joining the Royal Navy in 1986 as a marine engineer, he discovered a passion for photography while on deployment in the Falklands on HMS Diomedea and transferred to the Portsmouth-based Photographic Branch in 1991. The branch is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2019.

Since then, his talents have



been employed covering every aspect of Royal Navy life, including capturing imagery of campaigns and conflicts such as Kosovo and Operation Telic in Iraq.

The 48-year-old said: "I feel honoured to have been nominated and receive such an award and will wear it proudly for my whole family, who have stood by me throughout my career.

"The one thing I learned early about being a Royal Navy photographer is they are probably the only people in the service that get to see and experience everything the navy has to offer.

"My best operational highlight would have to be Kosovo where both my military and photographic training had to combine seamlessly to enable me to produce the imagery required while also staying safe."

The head of the Submarine Service, Rear Admiral John Weale, is made a Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (CB) for his work as the 'face' of the Royal Navy in Scotland and Northern Ireland and his dedication to the Silent

Service. He has served on nuclear and conventional diesel-powered submarines, including command of hunter-killer HMS Trafalgar, before leading the training and assessment of HMS Astute's entry into service.

"I am humbled to be awarded this honour for my service as the face of the Royal Navy in Scotland and head of the Submarine Service," the admiral said.

"It has been my immense privilege to serve and lead the silent service who, with the unfailing support of their families, work tirelessly to protect the United Kingdom."

Rear Admiral Paul Methven, Director Submarine Acquisition at the Submarine Delivery Agency, is also made a CB while Vice Admiral Clive Johnstone, Commander at NATO Maritime Command Headquarters, is made Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE).

Commander Neil Lamont was one of six naval service personnel to be made OBE – an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the

<p>Promotions in and Appointments to the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath</p> <p>As Companion (CB)</p> <p>Rear Admiral Paul Methven Rear Admiral John Weale OBE</p> <p>Appointments to the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire</p> <p>As Knights (KBE)</p> <p>Vice Admiral Clive Johnstone CB CBE</p> <p>As Commanders (CBE)</p> <p>Rear Admiral Paul Chivers OBE Brigadier Rory Copinger-Symes RM Commodore Mike Walliker OBE</p> <p>As Officers (OBE)</p> <p>Commodore David Bartlett Commodore Tim Henry Commander Neil Lamont Captain Jason Poole Colonel Mark Totten RM MBE Captain Ken Whitfield</p> <p>As Members (MBE)</p> <p>Lieutenant Phill Blight Petty Officer (Diver) Darren Carvell Major Steven Cotton RM</p>	<p>Warrant Officer 1st Class Douglas Davitt RM Lieutenant Commander Caroline Dix Lieutenant Commander Claire Lees Commander Mark Lister Commander Steve Mardlin Major Anthony Milne RM Captain Ryan Morris RM Warrant Officer 1st Class Warfare Specialist (Underwater Warfare) David Smith</p> <p>Civilian awards</p> <p>OBE</p> <p>Jane Elizabeth Burrows, Devonport Naval Base</p> <p>MBE</p> <p>Lorraine Coulton, Devonport Naval Base Malcolm John Bone, Hebburn Sea Cadets Dean Michael Alexander Rogers, RNRMC</p> <p>BEM</p> <p>Michael Goldthorpe, ARNO Irene May Harman, HMS Sultan Johanna Alexandra Rohan, Canterbury Sea Cadets William John Stocks, SBS Association</p>
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THE Royal Navy's home of sport, HMS Temeraire, has become the first military base to go 'smoking free', outlawing tobacco across the establishment.

All sports fields, sports accommodation and buildings at the Burnaby Road site in Portsmouth are cigarette and cigar-free; also banned is the chewing of tobacco products on site, although vaping is still allowed, but only in designated areas.

The ban is part of a five-year strategy by the MOD to reduce smoking across the forces and make all defence sites smoking-free in just three years' time.

Temeraire's CO Cdr Richard Bird said he was "proud" his establishment was the trailblazer for the initiative.

He continued: "It has been proved that there is a link between people who smoke and get injured take longer to recover, so it's in the Naval Service's and individual's best interest to stop using tobacco products."

Support will be offered in conjunction with Portsmouth City Council's Wellbeing service as well as unit medical centres to help personnel quit; see www.royalnavy.mod.uk/sports/physical-education/executive-health/health-and-wellbeing/smoking-cessation.

Within a year quitters should reduce the chance of a heart attack by 50 per cent, but it will take ten years without a cigarette to reduce the risk of lung cancer to half that of smokers.

According to official figures, a 20-a-day tabber will save themselves more than £3,000 a year by giving up.

British Empire. He joined the Submarine Service in 1989 and served on all classes of submarines before being selected for the Submarine Command Course in 2004. After a role in career management, he was promoted and selected for SSBN Command in 2015.

He is currently the Commanding Officer of nuclear deterrent submarine HMS Vengeance (Starboard). Cdr Lamont said: "I am delighted to be receiving this award following

one of the most challenging and rewarding jobs I have ever done.

"This award is a reflection of the operational success that HMS Vengeance (Stbd) has achieved – and continues to achieve – as we enter the 50th year of continuous at sea deterrent.

"Of course none of this is possible without the unseen support of our families who are just as deserving of recognition as the men and women that go to sea."

Monumental job offer

SAILORS and Royal Marines with a flair for Indiana Jones-style adventure are needed to protect – or recover – ancient treasures in a special *Monuments Men*-esque unit.

The British Army is forming a 15-strong team of reservists who would be willing to risk life and limb to defend some of the world's greatest cultural treasures.

It wants reservists from across the three services who are curators, art specialists, archaeologists and investigators by day to volunteer for the new Cultural Property Protection Unit.

Its job will be to return works of art stolen by invasion forces or terrorists, investigate looting, bring smuggling gangs to justice, protect ancient buildings and report on important cultural sites in places where British and allied forces are operating.

"Our staff could find themselves out on an exercise doing operational planning or sitting at a border, checking vehicles for stolen artefacts," says the unit's commander – and only member at present – Lieutenant Colonel Tim Purbrick, a Gulf War tank veteran-turned-arts dealer and reservist.

"There's a strong possibility we'll be working with allies such as the French out in somewhere like Mali where they are trying to prevent antiquities being smuggled out of the country."

The unit – part of the Army's specialist 77th Brigade which deploys to war-torn and disaster-stricken parts of the globe to provide stability and security alongside other government agencies – has been set up partly in response to the destruction



● *Mosul's Great Mosque of al-Nuri is blown up by ISIS forces*

of historic sites by the so-called Islamic State.

Its forces bulldozed the ancient Nimrud palace in Iraq, flattened or blew up most of the mosques in Mosul and destroyed some of the Roman ruins in Palmyra as part of a deliberate campaign against historic and religious sites.

Beyond preserving or recovering some of the world's most important historic sites or works of art, the aim of the unit is also to stem the flow of money into the hands of terrorists.

As with drug-running in the Middle East, money generated by the illegal sale of artefacts and artwork is known to fund terrorist groups.

"Looting and selling antiquities has been proven as a fund-raising method for terrorist groups," Lt Col Purbrick explains.

"Part of our job is about preventing 'threat finance' – you have an adversary extracting cultural property from the region

you are operating in and then, in effect, sending it back at you in the form of bombs and bullets."

And protecting heritage and culture on the ground can help win the hearts and minds of the local population – as well as ensure tourists returning once conflict ends.

Lt Col Purbrick has identified an Arabic-speaking archaeologist from the Army Reserve and a historic building inspector from the Royal Navy Reserve as potential candidates to join his unit.

"I'm looking for experts in art, archaeology and art crime investigation, leaders in their field who are able to deploy on operations down to the tactical level," he says.

The team is open to all ranks; a high level of knowledge in cultural property is required.

Lt Col Purbrick can be contacted via Modnet or through 77th Brigade's page on the Army's website.

ASK YOURSELF:

- Were you made in the Royal Navy?
- Do you want to give others the opportunity to make it in the Royal Navy?
- Are you seeking a rewarding Second Career?

If the answer to any is yes then...

APPLY TO BECOME A CAREERS ADVISER.

Flag Officer Sea Training is currently seeking RN and RM WOs, Senior Rates and SNCO Service Leavers and former Service (those that left Service under 3 years), to work in Armed Forces Careers Offices which are listed on the map.

Positions are nationwide, employed on Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) (NCS) Limited Commitment.

Salary starts from £30k with promotion opportunities to rise to £43k.

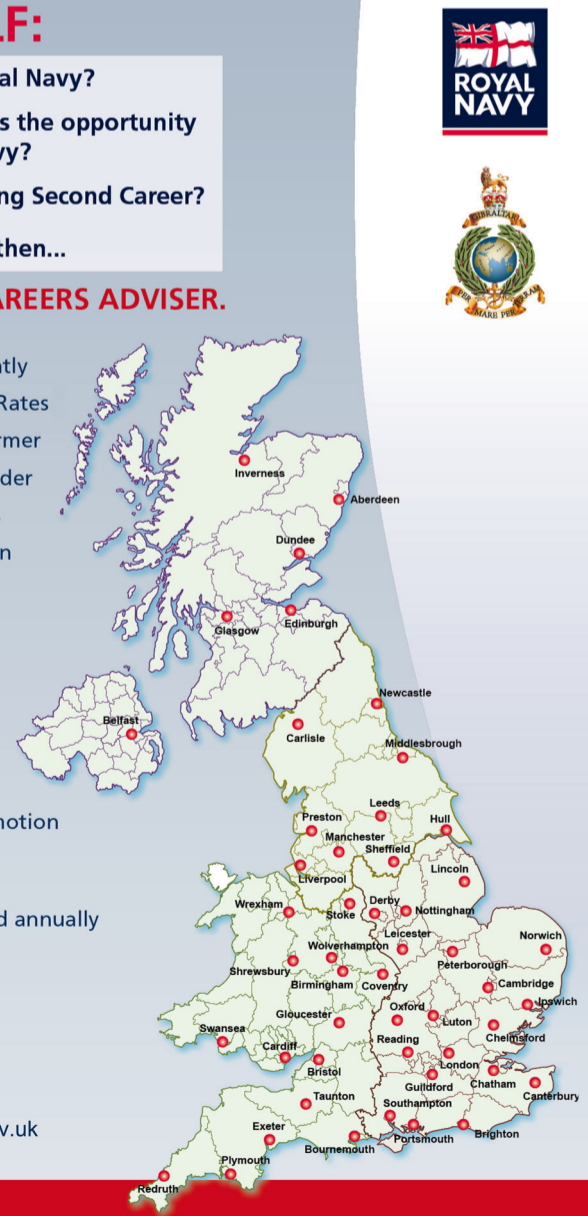
FTRS rates of pay apply (Reviewed annually and pensionable).

For more information contact:

PSTN- 01929 403172

Mil- 94374 3172

E-mail- Jane.anneda513@mod.gov.uk





Reunions

HMS Dunkirk Association: Our reunion in 2019 will be held at the Hallmark Hotel in Chester from March 29-30. For further details telephone 01692678721 or email jarroll@jandecarroll.plus.com

ROYAL Naval Communications Association: A reunion weekend, annual general meeting and dinner dance takes place at the Prince of Wales, Southport from March 8 to 10. For more information visit www.rnca.org or contact the secretary Carl Beson, 07807 347509, secretary@rnca.info

HMS Glory Association: The next reunion and annual meeting will be held at the Aston Court Hotel, Derby DE1 2SL from March 29-31. Contact Bernie Cohen at b.cohen2@ntlworld.com

HMS Decoy Association: Our 32nd reunion takes place at the Imperial Hotel, Eastbourne, from April 12-15. All former crew members of any commission are invited. Contact Malcolm 'Dobbo' Dobson on 01502 677395 or email dobbo.exrn@btinternet.com for booking details.

HMS Hermes 4th Commission Cooks 1968 - 1970: Our annual get together will be held in the Scarborough over the weekend of Saturday April 27. For details contact scouseenight@hotmail.co.uk or 07884404041.

FLEET Air Arm Association: A reunion and annual general meeting takes place at the Best Western Royale Hotel in Bournemouth from April 5 to 8. Friday will be a meet-and-greet, Saturday will see the annual meeting and a shopping day for women, followed by a gala dinner. Sunday will include a trip to the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton and to the nearby Clarke's Village, before returning to the hotel for evening entertainment. For details and bookings contact IOW Tours Ltd at 3 New Road, Lake, Sandown, Isle of Wight PO36 9JH.

HMS SURPRISE Association: Our annual reunion will be held at the Hadleigh Hotel, Burlington Place, Eastbourne Sussex BN21 4HR from April 5 to 8. For information

contact Geoff Prentice (Chairman). Telephone 01394 274813 or e-mail geoff.prentice@virginmedia.com

HMS Phoebe: A reunion will be held at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea, from May 3 to 6. Further details can be obtained from Secretary Dave Newson hmsphoebeassociation@outlook.com or Bob Hobbs Robert.hobbs1949@sky.com

HMS Bulwark, Albion and Centaur Association: Our annual reunion takes place at the Royal Beach Hotel in Southsea over the weekend of May 10-13. Full details can be obtained from association secretary Denis Ashkam on 01772 322910 or askhamd3@gmail.com

Veteran fieldgunners: We are once again meeting at Tiffanys Hotel, Blackpool, from May 17-20. Contact Colin Burley on 01543 572212 or email barbaraburley@hotmail.co.uk

BRNC 40th Reunion 1979 Spring Entry: Planning is currently underway to hold a 40th anniversary reunion and dinner at BRNC for the 1979 Spring Entry, on Saturday May 25. Details of the event will be posted on the Britannia Association Website they develop. Additionally a closed group is established on LinkedIn. All former Officers Under Training who are interested in the event are invited to contact Steve Smith (Cunningham G1) via email steve.smith329@mod.gov.uk

HMS Ulster: A reunion will be held in Torquay from September 20-23. For details contact Norrie Millen at ulster@candoo.com

HMS Eagle: The Friends of HMS Eagle reunion weekend will be held at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea, Portsmouth, from September 27-29. All Commissions, plus wives/partners and guests welcome to help celebrate 47 years since HMS Eagle was decommissioned in Portsmouth. Meet and greet Friday evening; Saturday, visits and tours around Portsmouth, nautical gala dinner Saturday evening. Contact the main organiser, Danny du Feu. Email: ddf.photography@gmail.com or phone 07711 083465.

Deaths

Frederick Hilson, CPOMEM. Served February 1971 to November 1989 in HM Submarine Resolution (71-79), Renown (81-83). Member of West of Scotland Branch of Submariners Association. Died December 11, aged 69.

Alan Ausden. PO Elect. Served 1955 to 1968. Died October 20, 2018.
Brian Douglas 'Soapy' Watson. Mech 1. Served from 1962-77 in HMS Raleigh, Urchin, Naiad, Sultan and Sheffield. After service worked as shift engineer in water department for Qatari government before managing own service company in Lanzarote. Died at home in Lanzarote on November 29, 2018, aged 71.

Dennis John Hilliker, former Fleet Air Arm and member of Bude Branch of RNA. Died November 26, aged 91.

Keith Bloom, CEA(A). Served 1944 to 1968. HMS Condor, Gannet, Daedalus, Heron (809), Fulmar, Ariel, Seahawk (700H), Seahawk (814), Hermes (814), Daedalus. Died December 19, 2018, aged 90.

Bernard Anthony Davies, Lt Cdr (Retd). Passed away peacefully on December 28, aged 82, after a short battle against cancer and the effects of a stroke.

Frank 'Barney' Barnett. LMEM(M). Served 1958 to 1982 in HMS Hermes, Russell, Thermopylae, Maidstone, Albion, Rapid, Ashanti, Blake, Zulu, Brilliant (during Falklands Conflict). Spent ten years in Merchant Navy, serving in RFA Olwen, Fort Grange and Sir Galahad. Died December 21, aged 76.

Paul Hanniman. FCPO. Served 1949-74 in HMS Loch Fada (1950-51); HMS Londonderry (1965-66); Loch Inch, Undaunted, Apollo, Ulysses, Petard, Rattlesnake and Newfoundland. Member of HMS Loch Fada Association. Died 2018, aged 87.

Reginald Gilbert. Joined in 1943, served in HMS Ajax until March 1946. Member of HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans' Association. Died November 21, 2018.

Frank Roland Burton. LTel. Served in HMS Ajax from 1938-39 at the Battle of the River Plate. Member of HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans' Association. Died December

26, aged 100.

Capt RM Jeremy J D 'Paddy' Ashdown. GCMG CH KBE PC. HMS Tamar. 41 Cdo RM. HQ 3 Cdo. ATURM. ITCRM. Died December 22, aged 77.

Surg Capt RNR Charles D Peters VRD. Severn Division RNR. Died December 3.

Cdr Michael Goodman. 815 NAS. HMS Hermes, Lincoln, Ark Royal, Dryad, Shoulton, Blake, Caledonia, Dido. NATO. C-in-C Fleet. JWS Poole. FOF3. Died October 6, aged 75.

Lt Cdr Bernard A Davies. HMS Hermes, Mercury, Punchedon, Ajax, Ark Royal, Neptune. FO Plymouth. RAN. Died December 28, aged 82.

Lt Cdr Peter McN Cunningham. HMS Undaunted, Fulmar, Scarborough, Salisbury, Tiger, Ark Royal, Invincible, Excellent, Royal Arthur, Raleigh. C-in-C Naval Home Command. Died December 20, aged 74.

Lt Cdr Douglas Kingsford Hale. HMS Albion, Seahawk, Hermes, Heron, Goldcrest, Bulwark. Died September 22, aged 87.

Lt Cdr Kristian N Ward. FO Naval Aviation. RAF Linton, RAF Valley, RAF Cottesmore. 800 and 801 NAS. JSSC. Died November 15, aged 45.

Lt Graham J (Fred) Secker. 800, 801, 803, 809 NAS. HMS Fulmar, Hermes. Died September.

Lt Nicholas J Wiles. HMS Seahawk, Sea Eagle, Victorious. RAF Linton on Ouse. RAF Ballykelly. Died November 20.

Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNOC

Surg Vice Adm Anthony L Revell. HMS Eagle, St Angelo, Centurion. NH Haslar and Plymouth. INM Alverstoke. RCDS. MDG(N). CinC Fleet. Died December 30, aged 83.

Lt Col RM Raymond J Elliott. HMS Eskimo, Centurion. 40, 41, and 42 Cdo RM. CTCRM. JSDC. CGRM. Dir Records Office RM. Died December 12, aged 73.

Cdr Clifford W Fiander. HMS Sceptre, Repulse, Neptune, Fearless. RNEC Manadon. DG Ships. Capt SM10. Died November 30, aged 72.

Cdr Jeremy Nash. OBE DSC. Def Intel Staff. HMS Newfoundland, Maidstone, Teredo, Tradewind, Varenian, Proteus, Neptune. Underwater Weapons Dept. Died November 23, aged 98.

Lt Cdr William E Ball. HMS Mohawk, Excellent, Fearless, Blake, Warrior, St Angelo, Loch Fada, Torquay. Died December 13, aged 89.

Lt Cdr Graham R D Jackson. HMS Hermes, Zulu, Osprey, Heron. 707 NAS. NAS Portland. Exch US Marines. 2018. Aged 67.

Lt Cdr Peter L Rice. HMS Zulu, Dryad, Achilles, Minerva, Plymouth, Raleigh, Lindsfarne, Neptune. NATO Oslo. HQ Baltic Approaches, Def NBC Centre, C-in-C Fleet. Died November 10, aged 69.

Lt Peter J Macfarlane. HMS Daedalus, Bulwark. RM Eastney. 2018. Aged 78.

Lt Richard W D Westlake. HMS London, President, Eagle, Fife, Caesar. Died December 31.

3/O WRNS J C Reilly (nee Evans). Died December 2, aged 81.

Submariners' Association

Alan Johnson. AB UW*, Served 1961-65 in HM Submarines Thesus Sea Lion Walrus Narwhal. Merseyside Branch. Died December 22, aged 81.

John Houlding. CCMEA. Served 1969-86 in HM Submarines Churchill, Courageous, Conqueror, and Turbulent. Member of Barrow In Furness Branch. Died December 30, aged 72.

Ask Jack

HMS INTREPID: I served in the Royal Navy from October 1966-December 1972. My first ship was HMS Intrepid and in 1968 we took part in a Southeast Asia Collective Treaty Organisation exercise with a number of navies.

We sailed from Japan to Australia via the South China Sea and the Coral Sea to Brisbane. We spent a few days in Brisbane with HMS Albion before sailing to Singapore and catching a flight home.

I am doing a scrapbook for my grandson and would be grateful if anyone can name the navies that took part in the exercise.

Mr JE Higgins, 45 Arundle Green, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP20 2BL

WILLIAMS: Kay, Steve, Ryan and Rees. We met at the Adams Beach Hotel in Ayia Napa in Cyprus quite a few years ago and we had such fun and would love to get back in touch. Kay was a former Wren and Steve was also in the navy. At the time they were living in Helston in Cornwall. If anyone knows of their whereabouts please contact us on 01638 507658 or email lesleybird3@icloud.com

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the December edition of Navy News (right) was RFA Stromness, which became the USNS Saturn.

Mr M Kirkham, of Lee-on-the-Solent, wins £50 for sending us the correct answers.

This month's mystery ship (above) is a River-class minesweeper built by Richards Shipbuilders at Great Yarmouth.

She was operated by the Royal Navy Fishery Protection Squadron from 1985 and was sold to Brazil in 1988.

1) What was her name and 2) What is her new name?

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.

Entries must be received by March 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 April edition. The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 288

Name
Address
My answers: (1)
(2)

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

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ROYAL NAVY NAVY NEWS

Mail Point 1-4, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY

FEB 2019 No. 775: Founded 1954

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Published by Navy News, Navy Command HQ, Portsmouth and printed by Wyndeham (Roche) plc.

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ORCs and talks for Oxford in Devonport



OXFORD URNU's Spud Murphy tries his hand at the SA80 rifle – here fitted with the new ELCAN SpecterOS 4x optic and Shield Q5 Close Quarter Battlesight – during an action-packed two-day visit to Devonport by Oxford URNU.

The students were hosted first by FOST, who gave the students a tour of Britain's biggest naval base, before a briefing and fireside chat with WO1 Michael Driscoll, Naval Training Warrant Officer to Flag Officer Sea Training, about the organisation and the world-renowned training it provides.

The second day was spent on the other side of Weston Lake at RM Tamar, home of 1 Assault Group Royal Marines, the UK's amphibious warfare specialists.

WO2 James Swift from the group's

539 Assault Squadron explained what the specialist unit does before the students were shown around the workshops, training facilities, innovation team, impressive armory, and a comprehensive look at the numerous vessels in 1AGRM's inventory.

Looking at fast raiding craft isn't the same as riding in them, so three ORCs took the URNU team out for a white-knuckle ride around Plymouth Sound (three students are pictured, left, before being taken out for a spin).

"It was an excellent couple of days at FOST and 1AGRM and the ORC ride really was an unforgettable time for the cadets," said CPO Gary Maskell, Oxford URNU's coxswain.



Tyne team turn students into sailors

FRESHERS from universities in the **Edinburgh** and **Newcastle** areas took their first civvy-to-matlot steps at a combined new entry weekend on the Tyne.

HMS Calliope, the Gateshead reservist unit – and also home of Northumbrian URNU (aka NURNU) – hosted the under graduates, who began their conversion with lectures introducing them to the Royal Navy's core values, ethos and the expectations and standards of the URNU.

The cadets had to pass the RN swim test to qualify for future sea training in P2000 patrol vessels... as exemplified by NURNU's own HMS Example, whose sailors taught the students bends and hitches (knot tying to civvies) and line handling.

The highlight was some index berthing (practising leaving the pontoon and then berthing the ship) with onlookers watching from the banks of the Tyne, as the students practiced their line handling skills (pictured above).

There was finally time for some ceremonial practice, including the RN tradition of Colours at sunrise/sunset and drill – a new skill for most of the new entry students.

The weekend was enjoyable and a great opportunity for the new Officer Cadets to learn important aspects of the URNU such as the daily life, uniform, drill and the expectations required to be members of the URNU.



Ace DC visit

TWO Medical Cadets spent four weeks in the US capital seeing how their American counterparts are pushed to the limit in training.

Becoming a medic with the US military under the auspices of the Uniformed Service University of Health Sciences reaches its climax with a final exercise where students are expected to demonstrate all they have learned.

Surg SLt Hugh Sutton and Surg SLt Sam Cassidy, of **Liverpool** and **Manchester and Salford** URNUs respectively – and both from Jolly Division (named after the Falklands War lifesaver Surg Capt Rick Jolly) at BRNC – were invited to take part in Operation Bushmaster in Washington DC.

Designed to push the medical students' leadership and practical skills to the limit, Bushmaster opened with a two-week pre-deployment work-up involving mission planning, environment analysis, last-minute briefs and even lessons in dentistry.

Students then made their way to the fictional land of 'Atropia', situated on a national guard base in Pennsylvania, where they were given scenario after scenario involving fake blood and incredible make-up to mimic the shock factor of real trauma patients.

The final – and largest – challenge posed by the exercise was

a mass casualty simulation; Surg SLt Cassidy acted as platoon leader, his fellow Brit as the doctor. They arrived by truck to a compound under gunfire, with screaming Sergeants and over 40 casualties. The mantra "measure your own pulse before the patients" proved appropriate as the team of 13 worked hard, treating each patient as quickly as they could. They held their nerve until support came and the extraction of casualties could begin.

The exercise demonstrated to the Brits that situations are dynamic and how information which seems pertinent to front-line warriors also applies to a medical officer.

They also saw how the US military approaches missions and learned the similarities and differences between our two armed forces.

The brief from senior medical officers, about their past deployments, educated them about the full role of MOs – not just as a doctor reacting to injuries, but also as a key staff officer, providing information to command to enable a mission.

"It was an amazing opportunity to work with a foreign military so early in their careers and we learned a great deal from the experience which we can take into our future careers," said Hugh.



If I had to do it all again, I would...

BEN Fernando takes a fix on a rather empty bridge of HMS Enterprise as the **Oxford** URNU midshipman experienced three days with the 'star ship' of the hydrographic squadron.

Ben joined the survey ship as she was gearing up for the rigours of Operational Sea Training.

After a thorough tour of the survey ship – including a good look at the machinery spaces, home to a propulsion system completely different from any Ben had seen before in other RN vessels (she's driven by azimuth thrusters rather than conventional propellers).

After sailing from Portsmouth, Ben joined some of the Young Officers on the afternoon and dogs watches, and was lucky enough to be given the con at one (duly entered in the captain's log) point allowing him to give propulsion and steering orders.

His second day at sea was taken up with a number of training serials: a Quickdraw exercise – testing the reaction of the gunnery team to a small attack craft bearing down on the ship. After donning body armour, Ben was put in charge of the Aldis lamp on the bridge wing for signalling cuties.

He witnessed how the crew would deal with a Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear damage control exercise, joined XO Malcolm McCallum on rounds, discussed survey equipment with the hydrographers and chatted with Commanding Officer Commander Cecil Ladislaus about Enterprise's scientific and survey missions.

"One of the highlights was getting into a Pacific 24 for the short ride back to Portsmouth – this was an incredible, high-speed experience which was most exhilarating," Ben said,

"I am extremely grateful to the ship's company for being so welcoming and answering all my questions – it was a most memorable experience and I hope to be able to visit again at some point."

Wild flights

CAMBRIDGE University Royal Naval Unit were taken up in a Wildcat from 815 NAS when it dropped in on Duxford.

Pilot Lt William Thornton gave four short 'acquaint' flights, taking students on a tour of Cambridge by air, after a briefing on the high-tech digital successor to the trusty Lynx.

"It was an amazing day out and such a good opportunity to see the Wildcat up close. Being able to get in and go for a flight was such a privilege," said Mid Patrick Tolan, who's hoping to become a FAA aviator.

Students roped in for weekends at BRNC

MORE THAN 250 Cadets from 13 University Royal Naval Units swapped lecture halls, libraries and essay writing for a weekend of officer training at Britannia Royal Naval College.

Spread over three weekends, the cadets took part in activities on the River Dart and developed their communication and teamwork skills during practical leadership tasks around the college grounds and using the low ropes training course.

They also spent time on Dartmouth's state-of-the-art bridge simulator and carried out some ceremonial training on the parade ground.

All took the plunge in the pool for their military swim test. And some of the URNU students found themselves training alongside German

cadets on a 'militarisation' exchange package.

"These weekends are challenging, exciting and designed to push the cadets further than they thought possible – just like initial officer training," explained SLt Lewis Ginger, BRNC's Sponsored Undergraduate Staff Officer.

"The timetable is tight – the cadets were busy, constantly on the go, taking part in activities that encourage team work and leadership combined.

"Despite the challenging weather we also had fun. I would like to say how impressed I was with the students from the respective URNUs and would encourage all to think about joining this amazing life we call a career in the Royal Navy."





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NAVY LISTS

NAVY LISTS 1827 to 2014. Available to view online: www.NavyListResearch.co.uk

Rescue plan put to test

PERSONNEL from France, Norway and the United Kingdom gathered at HM Naval Base Clyde to take part in a NATO Submarine Rescue System (NSRS) training exercise.

Over 110 people participated in the week-long event – the largest evacuation exercise ever to be planned at Faslane – bringing together military and civilian staff including submariners, divers, medics and Babcock personnel.

The NSRS, which is jointly owned by France, Norway and the UK, is in three main parts – an Intervention Remotely Operated Vehicle (IROV), a Submarine Rescue Vehicle (SRV), and the Transfer Under Pressure System (TUP). The system is based and operated out of HM Naval Base Clyde.

A speedy response time is vital in the saving of lives and with the system available to be transported anywhere in the world within a 72-hour timescale, it is important that this response is tested on a regular basis.

The annual Mass Evacuation Exercise – MASSEVEX – brings together all the partner nations to test the system and performance and provides an opportunity for the operating staff, medical staff, divers and pilots to meet and exchange their knowledge and experiences to enhance their collective capability and effectiveness.



effectiveness.

Maître Thomas of the French Navy said: "This is my first time attending an exercise of this scale and it has been a good experience, training with the other nations is an excellent way of sharing knowledge and learning from the experience of others. I look forward to being involved in similar exercises in the future."

As well as the partner nations, Medical Officers from the United States Navy attended to observe the scenario-led training with the aim of developing relationships and sharing knowledge. Their attendance is invaluable as the US have their own similar Submarine Rescue System and there is a mutual agreement that each rescue system will provide back-up to the other if required.

Commander Chris Baldwin, NSRS Operations Officer, said: "We have achieved a great deal in our four-day annual Mass Evacuation Exercise, which has brought together over 110 submariners, divers and medics from France, Norway, the UK and the USA, practicing crucial procedures and sharing knowledge."

The NATO Submarine Rescue System is available to respond to a stricken submarine anywhere in the world. The equipment can be transported by road or air before being taken by ship to the location of the distressed vessel. Once there the SRV has the ability to dive to the submarine, engage with the escape hatch and begin the process of ferrying the crew to the safety of the waiting Transfer Under Pressure system.

Trustees wanted for RNBT

THE Royal Naval Benevolent Trust has vacancies for four Ordinary Member Trustees.

The charity helps all those who are serving or have served as Warrant Officers and below in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, and their dependents.

A founding principle of the Trust is that it is predominantly run by those who are serving or have served, with 11 of the 16 trustees currently meeting that criteria.

The closing date for applications is March 11 and anyone interested should contact the Chief Executive Rob Bosshardt on 02392 690 112 or email asking for an information pack at rnbt@rnbt.org.uk

The election for the four vacancies will take place at the end of March, with those successful taking up their positions from April 1.

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● ET Matthew Dunne listens intently to D-Day veterans sharing their accounts of the 'longest day' as plans for this year's commemorations are announced

Normandy return for D-Day heroes

AS IN 1944, so in 2019.

Portsmouth and the sands of Normandy will become the focal point of world events for what is likely to be the last major commemoration of the D-Day landings featuring the men who were there.



Up to 300 veterans have been invited to join a cruise ship for a 'return to Normandy' experience, one of the key events in this summer's anniversary announced by Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Gordon Messenger.

The senior Royal Marine was joined by serving personnel from the three forces, plus veterans, in Portsmouth's D-Day Story Museum to reveal some of the ways Britain will commemorate Operation Overlord this June.

Portsmouth was the hub for the liberation operation. Beyond the obvious naval participation in 1944, Southwick House just north of the city served as the headquarters of Supreme Commander General Dwight Eisenhower.

So the city will host the UK's national event on June 5 – amid five days of local commemorations by the Solent.

The main event will include a military parade along the seafront, music from military bands, a drumhead ceremony on Southsea Common, readings by VIPs and a flypast featuring period aircraft, including a poppy drop from a Lancaster bomber. A demonstration showing how today's Royal Navy and Royal Marines execute amphibious landings is also planned on Southsea seafront.

Other events will include a Royal Collection Trust exhibition of portraits of some of the dwindling number of D-Day veterans, plus concerts by military and 1940s-themed bands.

The first Portsmouth Revival festival – celebrating the food, music, dancing and vehicles of the era – will also be held, with events concluding with a 'Sunset Concert for Heroes' featuring acts include the Military Wives Choir and the D-Day Darlings.

There's planned to be a 'memorial flotilla' of vintage small boats, several of which took part in operations in 1944, such as HMS Medusa which marked minefields approaching Omaha Beach and gunboat MGB81 which attacked a German convoy trying to break out of Cherbourg.

And before sunset on June 5, the MV Boudicca will leave Portsmouth bound for Normandy carrying 300 veterans of the Great Crusade, escorted, as they were in 1944, by the Royal Navy.

The cruise ship has been specially-chartered using cash from The Royal British Legion and a grant from the Treasury from fines levied on banks for fixing the LIBOR rate.

Boudicca will accommodate veterans for the duration of their visit to Normandy – at no cost to the men of 1944.

"They are the real VIPs at this year's events," General Messenger said. "D-Day is an event which changed history and shaped modern Europe, but it is made up of thousand upon thousand of human stories, stories of bravery, determination and overcoming adversity."

"The 75th anniversary is going to be a fabulous event. Portsmouth was at the heart of the effort so it's fitting that it will be the focal point of the British element of commemorations."

Across the Channel, anniversary events will include an inauguration at the site of the Normandy Memorial Trust's British Normandy Memorial and services of thanksgiving at Bayeux Cathedral and Bayeux Cemetery before concluding with an evening of music and entertainment beside the beaches in Arromanches – the site of Gold Beach in June 1944.

Those events in France will be beamed live to giant screens erected on Southsea Common for those unable to attend proceedings over the water.

Around 2,000 current serving personnel will be taking part in events in the UK and France, and be on hand to offer veterans support.

■ Veterans interested in travelling on the Boudicca can download an application form from The Royal British Legion, which needs to be completed and returned by Monday February 4. Each veteran will be entitled to travel with one guest or carer.

The RBL will arrange the full return trip from successful applicants' homes to the ship and back at no cost to them.

See www.britishlegion.org.uk/community/d-day-75/

Masters of the Med

ADMIRAL Sir Henry ('Bobby') Harwood is famous for his defeat of the German pocket battleship Admiral Graf Spee. His later career has become more controversial – especially his command of the Mediterranean Fleet in 1942-3.

Now, Captain Peter Hore – an old colleague of mine at Dartmouth – former Head of Defence Studies at the Royal Navy and writer of naval obituaries for the Daily Telegraph has written a biography that sets the record straight, writes Prof Eric Grove.

In *Henry Harwood: Hero of the River Plate (Seaforth, £25, ISBN 978 1 5267 2529 5)*, he makes clear the subject's many strengths as a highly-intelligent and politically-very-astute staff officer and commander. He qualified as a torpedo (and electrical) officer in 1911-13 and attended the staff course at Greenwich 1921-2, joining the Plans Division of the recently-reformed Naval Staff. The author is not correct to say that "Plans' major problem" at this time was adjusting the Washington Treaty to British requirements of trade protection.

Cruisers – considered the classic trade protection assets – were only affected in size (an increase) not numbers and Britain was laying plans for a large fleet of 8in gun armed ships.

There then followed a frustrating time for Harwood working as a staff officer in the Mediterranean Fleet, where relations with the centralising, overworking second-in-command Dudley Pound were not easy. Happily the C-in-C Roger Keyes praised Harwood in his report on "a very able and hardworking staff officer. Possesses initiative and imagination".

Harwood then moved to be second in command of the new cruiser Cumberland sent to the China station (whose livery is misreported in the book. Hulls were indeed white but funnels were buff not 'dark'). He then moved to command a Home Fleet destroyer division in HMS Warwick.

His professional education was further enhanced by attendance at the Imperial Defence College, after which he was sent to command the cruiser London, flagship of the 1st Cruiser Squadron in the Mediterranean. This was a great success although C-in-C, W W Fisher, took exception to Harwood's "corpulence" and his being "too placid to be inspiring".

Harwood next went to the War College at Greenwich where he was soon appointed to the staff, developing and lecturing on trade defence and the tactics to be

adopted against Germany's new pocket battleships. He became the expert in the latter subject that would stand him in good stead in a few years' time.

There then followed a posting in which Harwood absolutely shone: Commodore of the South American Division of the America and West Indies Station, flying his broad pendant in HMS Exeter. As both a Roman Catholic and a Spanish speaker he had a natural empathy for South Americans with whom he got on very well, greatly, perhaps decisively, increasing British influence and prestige in the region.

War then broke out and within three months the Battle of the River Plate had been fought. The author provides a good account of this as seen by Harwood. He is right to point out that, contrary to what I said in my book on the battle, Graf Spee could, *in extremis*, fire her turrets at different targets but this was not encouraged as such fire was not very accurate.

Harwood's tactics of splitting German fire worked. Peter Hore is right to stress the importance of the battle in retrieving the Navy's reputation after the Goeben fiasco in 1914 (*a still-burning Graf Spee is pictured, above, following her scuttling off Montevideo*). All was not perfect however; the shortcomings of Captain Fallowfield of HMS Cumberland are interestingly revealed.

Harwood's next ship was HMS Hawkins, which had been demilitarised before the war for a brief period under the London Treaty (not as reported in the book, Washington).

Harwood, promoted Rear Admiral by Churchill then went to the Admiralty as a highly-competent Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Foreign) with a seat on the Board of Admiralty, the first Roman Catholic to sit on the Board since 1689, as the author points out.

Peter Hore then mounts an able and convincing defence of Harwood's time when he succeeded Cunningham in the Mediterranean Command (*he's pictured in his whites below*). He clearly did as well as anyone could in the difficult and unreasonable circumstances; his problems were more due to the ego and Ulster prejudices of Montgomery than anything else.

One of the author's most important discoveries is that the failure of the 'Vigorous' Malta convoy was more due to Vian's ill health than failures by the C-in-C.

The book is a great success and benefits greatly from the cooperation of the family and

their work with the Harwood papers. There are a few other niggling errors (and how did Henry Harwood become 'Bobby'? We are not told...) but these do not detract from a great book that deserves a very wide readership and totally vindicates its subject.

Remaining in the Middle Sea, John Grainger has established himself as a naval historian with books on such subjects as the Navy in the Baltic and the Pacific dimension of the Russian War of 1854-56. Now he has turned his attention to *The British Navy in the Mediterranean (Boydell and Brewer, £65 ISBN 978 1 78327 231 0)*, a comprehensive and clearly written account of British naval activities in that sea and its approaches from the Crusaders to the late 20th Century.

The author takes an original perspective casting new light on well known episodes and filling in gaps which have not been given sufficient attention, such as the Royal Navy's role in a remarkably-modern-sounding Lebanese crisis in 1860. Grainger clearly makes the point that the Royal Navy's greatest ever victory, Trafalgar, although fought just outside the Mediterranean was all about preventing Napoleon disputing control there and ensuring overall British command.

Nelson's successor, the politically-sophisticated and hard-working Admiral Collingwood, was "able to range all the way to Constantinople and Acre and Alexandria without hindrance". As a sign of post-war British dominance in the region, Britain took over the Ionian Islands to add to its bases in Malta and Gibraltar. These islands – the largest of which are Corfu, Zante and Cephalonia – remained British possessions until 1864 when they were given as a 'gift' to Greece.

Some might balk at the title 'British' rather than 'Royal' Navy but an important part of the early story is that of the actions of the Commonwealth Navy. Several commanders of the Republican Fleet operated in the region, notably Robert Blake, operating under the direct oral instruction of Oliver Cromwell from 1654, against both France and the Barbary corsairs. Although apparently only authorised to blockade the corsairs, Blake mounted an attack on Tunis that had some tactical success. It had the effect of giving Blake more authority in renewing the treaty with Algiers that was extended to safeguard Irish and Scottish ships. As war with Spain was declared Blake returned with a still larger fleet in a campaign which culminated in the victory at Santa Cruz in the Canaries. Blake died on the way home, a British admiral who never served a monarch.

My only serious problem with this interesting and stimulating work is the penultimate chapter on the 'supercession' of British naval

power in the Mediterranean by the Americans after 1945. Grainger rather overestimates the pace and extent of British naval decline in the region. There are serious gaps, with nothing on the controversy between Britain and the USA over NATO Mediterranean command that was solved by a compromise which appointed Britain's Mediterranean Fleet Commander, Lord Mountbatten, as C-in-C Allied Forces Mediterranean, with no power over US forces but responsible for Mediterranean naval operations. To Supreme Allied Commander Europe. This NATO headquarters was set up in Malta in 1953 and lasted until 1967 when the last British C-in-C Mediterranean Fleet hauled down his flag, surely an event worth mentioning.

There was indeed a considerable run down in RN strength in the Mediterranean in the 1960s, squeezed by East of Suez commitments and the Beira Patrol. The decision to withdraw from the former commitment actually allowed a greater emphasis on the Mediterranean as the southern flank of NATO in the early 1970s, until the second Wilson government ordered concentration on the Eastern Atlantic (and northern flank) in the mid-70s.

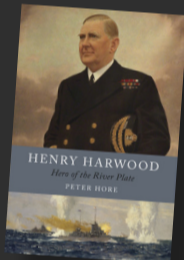
Although it is true that Britain did nothing to defend Cyprus from the Turks, there was a major and successful evacuation operation that is dismissed in the book as "occasional rescuers".

Hermes, landing commandos to reinforce the sovereign base areas, is not mentioned at all. Also the book should have mentioned the Royal Navy's role in clearing the Suez Canal at about the same time. Malta was indeed closed down as a base in 1979 but there had been many British warship visits to Malta in 1977-8.

The 80s did not see the end of British naval activity in the Mediterranean. There is nothing on more recent activities – notably the important operations off former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s and the intervention in Libya in 2011. There have also been significant exercises and the November issue of *Navy News* illustrated a significant Mediterranean deployment on its front page, the highly-sophisticated destroyer Diamond and cruise-missile-equipped SSN Talent.

The author underestimates the run down in American strength in the region of late and ignores recent changes in the balance of power in the region, in which Britain is still a significant player, as it was in the early days of English activity there.

Despite this serious problem, the book is overall a worthwhile contribution to naval history. There are 306 rather thick pages and illustrations are limited to three (useful) maps.





Rocking all over the world

PERSONNEL from HMS Albion took part in a two-week climbing expedition in Malaysia, writes **Lieutenant Commander Duncan Turner.**

The team travelled to Tioman Island, a paradise island off the west coast for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

The first day was spent exploring the island via moped, discovering the spectacular rainforest and waterfalls within, whilst finding the perfect spot for the first bit of climbing.

After dodging the long-tailed macaque monkeys, the remote beaches were discovered and everyone got the chance to try the amazing local cuisine.

After some initial climbing teaching the group tried their hand at bouldering, this was the first physical activity as a team and proved to be a lot of fun jumping between boulders, watching the pros whilst others found their feet!

Mne Luke Chapman, 26, said: "It was a great experience to learn the foundations of rock climbing. I have overcome fears and found a new way to challenge myself."

Travelling up the coast to Cherating, a small surf shack town, provided some great experiences.

Snorkelling, paddle boarding and surfing were all sampled interspersed with learning how to rock climb with full kit.

After long days the nights on the beach in surf bars were perfect to reflect on what had been learned.

A short seven-hour overnight bus trip to the vast highlands of Ipoh, a large and scenic city in the north west of Malaysia, marked the next phase of the exped.

'This was an experience I will never forget'

The first day was spent gaining experience with the new climbing techniques that had been learned over the past days.

Rock climbing proved to be difficult but rewarding, giving a massive sense of pride as the difficulty of the climbs intensified.

As the confidence grew, nerves of steel were required when needing to practice such skills as a controlled fall off the rockface of ten feet, give or take!

Some were hesitant at first but all found the grit and courage to succeed. This gave the skills and bolstered the enthusiasm required to abseil 75 ft down a rockface towards tigers and hippos in the waterpark below.

ET Jordan Cooper, 23, from Kent, who previously hadn't experienced climbing before, said: "You got a great sense of achievement after completing each climb; this was an experience I will never forget and would think about returning to Malaysia in the future."

The final stop on the epic expedition was to travel south to visit the capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur – a perfect chance to recuperate and let worn-down fingertips heal whilst exploring the majestic sights of the city including the Petronas Towers and watching base jumpers on the KL Tower.

Once rested and raring to go, the hardest and most technical climbs were undertaken in the awe-inspiring Batu Caves.

Here all the exped team managed to lead their own climbs, hanging on tenuously with fingernails at points whilst securing themselves to the rockface ready to move upto the next technical slice of rock.

On completing a particularly hard route which left him shaking, Cpl Dave Clowes RM, of 30 Viking Squadron, said: "I've had a fantastic time in Malaysia, the whole experience from travelling to climbing has been a real eye opener and I intend to use my skills gained on my return to the UK."

My aim of this exped was to take a group of young and adventurous Royal Marines and sailors and let them experience the joy of rock climbing.

They have gained a foundation qualification and had the opportunity to climb in an amazing area of the world – this is what adventurous training is all about.





● Lt Stu Moss takes his turn in the men's 4k relay

Record-breaking show for the RN

FOUR individual medals, one world record, 12 top-ten finishes and a host of personal bests.

That was the outcome for 16 Royal Navy rowers who competed in 19 events at the British Rowing Indoor Championships at the Olympic Velodrome in London.

Petty Officer Sean Gaffney (RNAS Yeovilton) rowed a world record 2k time of 6 mins 28.3 secs to win the men's para rowing 3 (physical disability) title before going on to win the 500m title in the same class with a time of 1 min 21.5 secs.

He also had to move quickly to sign autographs after the medal ceremony to prepare for the 4k relay.

WOPT Paul 'Tiny' Nash (HMS Nelson) has long been established as a world-class performer and he was an easy winner of the men's heavyweight 50+ 2k title, just shy of his personal best and fastest RN 2k team member of the day, with a time of 6 mins 17.6 secs.

Over the following two weeks he also set UK records for men's heavyweight 50+ at 5k (16 mins 37.4 secs) and 30 mins (8843m).

He remains keen to take ownership of the 10k record too, but prime training focus under the auspices of coach Lt Cdr Jim Thomson (NCHQ), within the RN Indoor Rowing Performance Programme, remains the World Championships in Long Beach,

California, at the end of this month.

POPT Rich 'Emoji Chazz' Charrett (HMS Sultan) has also benefitted from the RNIRPP regime, confirmed by his third place in the men's lightweight 30+ 2k in 6 mins 47.7 secs.

Sub Lt Giles Piggott (HMS Defender) went close to a medal with fourth-place finishes in both the men's open lightweight 2k (6 mins 37.1 secs) and 500m (1 min 27.8 secs), also taking the Inter-Service men's lightweight 2k title.

CPOPT Helen Richardson (HMS Temeraire) was ninth in the women's heavyweight 40+ 2k in 7 mins 59.5 secs, but delighted to take the Inter-Service women's heavyweight master's gold medal.

Emily Loftus (HMS Temeraire) rowed close to a personal best with 7 mins 45.0 secs to finish tenth in the women's heavyweight 30+ with Clare Valentine (HMS Temeraire) ninth in 8 mins 09.5 secs in the women's heavyweight 50+.

Other top-ten finishes included eighth-placed 2k finishes for former world championship bronze medalist Lt Cdr Craig Guest (HMS Albion) in the men's heavyweight 30+ in 6 mins 30.6 secs and fellow RNIRPP devotee Lt Stu Moss (HMS Sultan) in the men's heavyweight 40+ in 6 mins 19.6 secs.

Following close behind Moss were Lt Col

Tom Blythe (JSU Northwood) 11th in 6 mins 27.2 secs, Cdr Dan Vincent (HMS Nelson) 13th in 6 mins 29.4 secs (pb by 0.1!) and Brig Matt Jackson (3CdoX) 15th in 6 mins 33.7 secs.

Younger emerging talent featured in close competition in the very high standard men's open heavyweight 2k races with a battling RN trio that saw Nelson's Sub Lt Sam Cass's 6 mins 20.5 secs just edging out Lt Josh Terry's (also Nelson) 6 mins 21.5 secs, with LET(ME) Joe Marquis (HMS Prince of Wales) just cracking the 6.30 barrier for first time in 6 mins 29.9 secs.

The final event was the men's 4k relay race, featured many high-quality teams, including rowers and crossfitters, but most significantly included teams from each of the UK Armed Forces competing side by side for the Inter-Service Championship.

The Royal Navy four-man team comprised Moss, Gaffney, Marquis and Terry rowing for approx 15 strokes/20 secs in turn, with smart changeovers and teamwork throughout.

Their time of 11 min 08.4 secs saw them in fourth place overall, just behind the RAF (10 mins 55.4 secs) and just ahead of the Army (11 mins 12.7 secs), benefiting from sustained, controlled pace to overhaul and extend a lead over the Army in the final stages of a very exciting race.

Deona settles for silver



ROYAL Navy martial arts specialist Deona Chan picked up a silver medal at the Open European Taekwondo Masters in Spain.

The Surgeon Lieutenant, aged 34, was looking to build on her success at the British National Championships, where she picked up a gold medal in the Taekwondo Veterans A-class 57kg category.

Accompanied by her Royal Navy coach John Harrison, Deona, who was born in Hong Kong but moved with her family to the UK aged 15, was using the championships at Marina 'Dor, near Valencia, to gain more competition experience.

"Fighting confidently, I came close to winning," she said. "In the final match I came painfully close, losing seven-eight to an athlete from the host nation.

"Despite the heartache, I have reflected on my performance and learned from the experience and can hopefully improve my sparring in 2019."

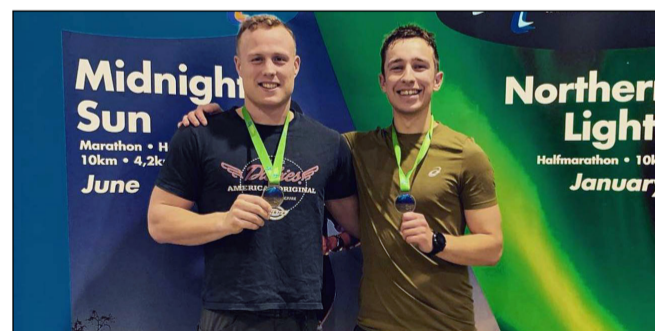
Pitching in to help players

POMPEY'S stars of tomorrow can be found at HMS Collingwood today after the club signed a deal to use the Fareham naval establishment's pitches.

Portsmouth Football Club are linking-up with the Royal Navy to provide pitches and facilities for young Pompey players to progress as footballers.

Academy sides from U9 to U14 level will play their Sunday fixtures at the warfare/engineering training base, using four pitches, as well as changing room and physio facilities and lounge areas for parents and other family members.

As part of the deal, the club – riding high at the top of League 1 – will invest in the pitches, which will be maintained by the club's own ground staff.



Pair slip and slide in northern race

TWO Naval Service personnel completed the Polar Night Half Marathon in the Norwegian city of Tromsø.

Weather conditions were unseasonably warm at 4°C in the town, which sits high in the Arctic Circle.

The most northerly city in Europe welcomed 938 competitors, including Captain Dan Wickham RM and Surgeon Lieutenant Dr George Liedig RN.

The pair finished in 138th and 139th spot, 30 minutes behind the winner, Norwegian Lasse Finstad.

It is the northernmost half marathon in the world and provides runners with the opportunity to run a torchlit route under the northern lights.

"Arriving at the start line we realised everyone else was wearing ice spikes," said George.

"Nevertheless, we set off at a decent pace trying to beat a target of 1.45.

"Trying to stay upright on the ice took its toll but thankfully we finished in a time of 1.44.

"Afterwards we had the opportunity to sample a few of the local delicacies and enjoy a well-earned wet in one of the renowned bars. Overall it was a fantastic opportunity and one we would definitely recommend for those looking to challenge themselves in an Arctic environment."

India event sees duo show great promise



A TEAM from Britannia Royal Naval College represented the UK in the largest military sailing competition in the world.

Officer Cadet Patrick Crouch and Midshipman Iona Urquhart competed against 30 other nations at the event hosted by the Indian Naval Academy and held at Ettikulam Bay, Southern India.

They were accompanied by Lieutenant Simon Schnetler, who was co-opted as a member of the Protest Committee to help adjudicate.

Each pair was split into A and B fleets and carried out races each afternoon across three days.

OC Crouch, pictured left in boat 71, raced well and finished in ninth position in his best race while facing good competition from his Australian and Canadian counterparts. He was placed in the top half overall of B fleet and qualified for the gold

fleet for the final series of races, which in turn took place over two days.

Mid Urquhart came 21st in her first race and finished in that position in the table at the end of the initial series. She moved to the silver fleet for the finals.

The last day of the competition brought the strongest winds, producing some much faster racing conditions. The silver fleet, with Mid Urquhart, started the competition.

She began in a good position, but after a slight set-back, finished in tenth place. This moved her up to 15th place in the silver fleet, and 47th out of 62 participants overall.

Meanwhile OC Crouch had another successful day, placing 11th in his final race and finishing 19th overall. Combined, the BRNC pair were placed 15th out of the 30 nations. The overall winners were the Italian Navy.



Gym highlight for carrier's boxers

MEMBERS of HMS Queen Elizabeth's boxing squad kept up their skills while on the Westlant 18 deployment. All members trained with a structured programme in place, which sometimes would involve two sessions per day. While in New York, the squad had a fantastic time at the world-famous Gleason's boxing gym on Brooklyn waterfront. The squad had a brilliant two-hour training session with many of the gym's trainers coming over for a chat and words of encouragement, including the current owner Bruce Silverglade. Founded by Italian boxer Peter Gagliardi in 1937 (he changed his name to Bobby Gleason to appeal to residents in the Irish neighbourhood), the gym was used by champions such as Jake LaMotta and Carlos Ortiz. After the very hard session, members of the squad had photos taken and memories to take away that will last a life time. Prospects are high in the squad for the Eastern Region Championships at HMS Collingwood this month.

Magnificent seven

Navy fighters deliver knockout blow

ROYAL Navy fighters swept the board as they went toe-to-toe with the Army at the HMS Sultan Boxing Dinner.

A combined Royal Navy team, from HMS Sultan and fellow training establishment HMS Collingwood, took on an Army team from the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME), MOD Lyncham.

The competition was played out in an electric atmosphere, with the program of events including a display by a Corps of Drums from the HMS Sultan Volunteer Band, a parade of the fighters and an exhibition bout between two of HMS Sultan's Muay Thai Kick Boxers all adding to the occasion.

The event provides the perfect platform for novice boxers to take their first steps into a competitive boxing ring.

In total eight action-packed bouts were on the card, including youth and senior bouts, as well as male and female fights, each consisting of three, three-minute rounds.

In possibly a first for Sultan, two brothers both represented the base. Engineering Technician, (Marine Engineering) Joel Murray, 17, was inspired to join the Royal Navy after watching his brother ET (ME) Jake claim



● ET(WE) Stephanie Armstrong, in blue, beat Cfn Bethany Carter; below, Stephanie receives her award from Capt Peter Towell, CO of HMS Sultan Pictures: PO(Phot) Nicola Harper

the top boxer award at the event in 2016, and this time both fighters claimed victories in their respective youth and senior bouts.

The fight of the night turned out to be an all-female encounter between Craftsman (Cfn) Bethany Carter (REME) and Engineering Technician (Weapons Engineering) Stephanie Armstrong (Collingwood).

Both boxers showed plenty of courage and determination, but it was the sheer quality of the display from Armstrong which saw the fight stopped, with the victor also later claiming the award for the evening's top performer.

The Defence College of Technical Training oversees both the Air and Marine Engineering training at Sultan and the training of REME engineers at Lyncham and, as the evening drew to a close, the Commandant of the College, Brigadier Richard Bennett was invited to present the winning Royal Navy team with the trophy.

Sultan Boxing Squad Coach, Leading Physical Training Instructor James Thacker said: "It was a really successful night for Royal Navy boxing. For the squad to come away with just one loss on the night is a massive



achievement. "The two brothers, Joel and Jake, were really buzzing off each other and getting really psyched up in the changing rooms, which seemed to lift everyone and help the whole squad focus." "For several of our fighters, this was their first time in the ring after just ten weeks in training, but they fought with great composure to claim a win. It was great to see some of the girls women out there too, with AB Stephenson claiming the top fighter award for her fantastic display."

Bout results:
 Muay Thai 80 KG - (Sultan) AB Petre (Sultan) beat AB Cavanagh (Sultan).
 Youth Boxing 71kg - ET(ME) Joel Murray (Sultan) beat Cfn Steven Crane (REME).
 Senior Boxing 61kg - ET(WE) Stephanie Armstrong (Collingwood) beat Cfn Bethany Carter (REME).
 64kg - AB Kane Stephenson (Collingwood) beat (REME) Cfn Liam Calderwood.
 69kg - ET(ME) Jake Murray (Sultan) beat AB Greg Causer (Collingwood).
 75kg - AB Christopher Herron (Collingwood) beat AB Ben Stevens (Collingwood); (REME) Cfn Charles Glover beat ET (WE) Max Auty (Collingwood); LET James Godber (Sultan) beat REME Cfn Joshua Smith.
 81kg - AET Ellis Hassan (Sultan) beat (REME) Cfn Jack Covell.



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Cracking time at fight night

HMS Drake WO and SR Mess was transformed into the prestigious venue for the IAGRM annual charity boxing dinner.

Now in its second year the event is an all-ranks Corps Birthday celebration with invited corporate guests to support the event and the opportunity of being part of an experience money can't buy.

For some this included an amphibious mission utilising the landing craft to rescue a downed helicopter pilot, where they experienced an ambush scenario, successfully rescuing the pilot, withdrawing from the ambush, winning the firefight with plenty of smoke and enthusiastic bursts with the GPMG, withdrawing to the LCU for a boil-in-the-bag meal, before returning to RM Tamar.

The evening started impressively with the renowned Mess Beatings setting the scene for what was to be a fantastic night of celebration with the finest food, drink and pugilistic skill.

The order of council was read aloud by Sgt Simmons with several Corps memorable date vignettes recited throughout the dinner.

A packed-out mess enhanced by a laser light show combined with the rocky soundtrack created a walkout entrance worthy of any championship boxer.

Five highly-contested bouts took place with Royal Marine boxers competing against boxers from the Royal Navy and London club Dale Youth.

Mne Matthew Garrett was awarded boxer of the night against a tough opponent.

The event raised over £5,000 for the Royal Marine Charity.



Report: Sgt Turner



Easy riders

Cycle challenge posed few problems

COLOUR Sergeant Sam Shields, of 1AGRM, reports on an epic 1,200-mile cycle challenge, riding from Roscoff in northern France to Tarifa in southern Spain.

To create some team cohesion before the event, a 60-mile ride to Instow in north Devon from Plymouth was organised.

It turned out, as the mountain biker of the group, I was the weakest link on my £300 special, with all my mountain bike gear.

I got heat exhaustion and had to slip stream into Instow. Luckily for me, it is mostly downhill from Torrington garage.

The return trip the next day was a bit easier, but I spent no time at the front. I needed to rethink my attitude to road cycling if I was going to complete the challenge.

Fast forward and we disembarked the ferry and assembled our bikes in the car park of Roscoff ferry terminal.

We were full of ourselves and banter. As it turned out France was colder than England and it would remain that way in the mornings for the next five days. All of us wish we had bought more cold weather gear.

France was a blur and we blew through the country in five days.

Highlights were definitely not the food which Colour Sergeant Gav Young and Will Parker provided, taking it in turns to bully us all into eating rations to save money.

Nor was it Sgt Tom McGrath injuring his knee so bad that he could not continue.

He still managed to jump out of the wagon for the rest of the trip and get himself in every photograph which kept us all amused.

PO Bennett managed to break a spoke which took him out of the running for a point to point trip, as he had to jump on the wagon to get his bike fixed.

WO2 Mallinson proved to be an ox on the bike. Thrashing us all at every opportunity with his stamping as hard as he can pedalling style.

I don't think I ever saw him out of the big ring. Often we would send him the wrong way just so we could have a rest.

I don't think he noticed our shoulders shrugging up and down as we tried to contain our laughter.

By day nine his riding style started to show and even I dropped him on the hill.

A quick flash from him was met unanimously with "welcome to our world!"

Corporal Creed suffered badly with the pace of the stop/start of our small peloton.

So often he would drop off the back to look after his knee. Often I would not see him for an hour only to have him blast past me on the hill, like the hill was flat.

CPO Jones was often found cycling on the wrong side of the road. Mostly at speed. Often overshooting corners or racing kids on BMXs.

Mne Murphy had the task of navigating on the last day.

His brief was that "the terrain was slightly undulating". Obviously, he had not looked at Google earth as the first 40 miles was hideously

uphill.

For some strange reason, he came in to his own and sped up all the hills.

The reason for this became apparent as one of the unsung heroes of the trip Cpl Johnson had 13 missed phone calls from Mne Murphy begging him to meet us at the top of the hill as the "Sgt Major Mallinson was going to kill him for the undulating route selection".

After 1,400 miles, we were met with a view of Gibraltar with the Atlas Mountains in the background.

Further on we could see our destination at Tarifa and the lighthouse on the most southern point.

Little did we know Mne Murphy was putting in a dog leg, so we could finish on 100 miles a day and he could get his 1,200 miles in the bag.

The challenge turned in to the trip of a lifetime, with us completing some 1,424 miles in 12 days.

We rode over 58,000ft of ascents and descents which is the equivalent of going up and down Everest twice plus some.

We were averaging 120 miles a day equalling 7hr 20 min in the saddle, burning in the region of 4,500 kcal each day.

It is something we will all remember forever.

Anyone interested in watching the action unfold can see it on YouTube under **Sam's World 1200 in 12**.

None of this would have been possible without the support crew - C/Sgts Young and Parker, Cpl Johnson and Mne Moye.



Spinner Hazelle calls time on county

LEFT-ARM spinner Hazelle Garton is retiring from county championship cricket after eight years.

The Lieutenant Commander is Devon's leading wicket taker.

Lt Cdr Garton, 31, started her career in Nottinghamshire and joined Devon eight years ago.

During her career she has taken 156 wickets, her best return being six for 20 against Derbyshire in 2017, which was one of many match-winning performances.

In each of the last five seasons Garton has taken more than 20 wickets in a championship season, her best return being 26, also in 2017.

Despite a serious knee injury Garton has maintained high performance standards while managing a busy career in the Royal Navy.

She signed off as the leading wicket taker in Division Two of the county championship, her 22 wickets in 50 over cricket only placing her sixth in the 2019 list of leading wicket takers. Garton's tally of 134 wickets places her ninth in the all-time list.

She will continue to captain the Royal Navy and UK Armed Forces Ladies at cricket. She also represents the Royal Navy at golf.



High five for running squad in Bahrain

ROYAL Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel based in Bahrain took part in the Bahrain Half Marathon.

Nineteen British sailors completed the 13.1-mile course in windy but cool conditions, and five were awarded with trophies for their efforts.

Commander Antony Crabb, Staff Officer Operations at UK Maritime Component Command (UKMCC), enjoyed the run, despite the conditions.

"The knees may be aching but participating in this year's Bahrain Half Marathon proved to be great fun," he said.

"It was quite windy at times, which tested morale and stamina, especially running into the wind on some of the flyovers, but everyone got through. We had a good number of participants from UKMCC Headquarters, the UK Naval Support Facility (UKNSF), the UK Mine Warfare Battle Staff, HMS Blyth, HMS Brocklesby and RFA Cardigan Bay. It was a great effort by everyone, and even a few trophies were taken home."

It proved a successful day for the military participants. Many achieved personal bests, despite the conditions and all were pleased with their performances, whether they were regular half marathon runners, or having a go at the distance for the first time.

Of the 446 competitors who took part, RN or RFA personnel were on the podium five times for finishing in the top three overall or in their age category.

Lt Cdr Richard Bicknell came first in his age group and Lt Cdr Martin "Sammy" Seal, Lt Cdr Wendy Wheatley and Surgeon Lieutenant Michael Wood all came second in theirs.

Apprentice Toni Cupit of RFA Cardigan Bay was third place overall.

To help with the fitness challenges personnel set themselves, UK NSF has its own running club, the Juffair Joggers, which is an all-ability group of military personnel who go out for runs in order to improve their fitness and build team cohesion.

There is also a full range of organised sporting and fitness events at UKNSF. These are arranged by the newly-appointed Physical Training Instructor, Petty Officer Karl Thorpe.

"Although new to the role, it was evident right from the get go just how first class the sporting facilities are here in NSF," he said.

"There are lots of personnel deployed here on operations and whilst they have busy day jobs, they want to improve their fitness levels at the same time.

"Part of my role is to support and deliver physical training to all personnel with the aim of helping the individuals to achieve their goals, have fun along the way and assist with the already great team spirit here at UKMCC.

"With so many individuals completing events like the Bahrain Half Marathon, I am really looking forward to my deployment."



Golden times in Virginia

PERSONNEL from HMS Queen Elizabeth took part in a number of athletics events in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Half marathons, 10km and 5km events were on offer and Petty Officer Roper was the first of the carrier group home in the half marathon in a time of 1.34.15.

ET Prisk picked up the bronze medal with a time of 1:38:39 and Lt Smith claimed gold in the over-40 category and WO Ebdon won gold in the over-50 age category.

Thirteen of ship's company competed in the 10k, with SLt Cowan taking gold in a time of 45.25.

LET Rowston won silver in a time of 45.27, with Surg Lt Cdr Streets taking gold in the over-50 age category and CPO Murray winning gold in the over-40 age category.

The 5km event saw PO Roberts take bronze in a time of 24.40 while Michelle Groom (Naafi) also collected bronze with her time of 30.47.



Smiles all round

Highest placing for RN pair in contest's history

ROYAL Navy showjumper Petty Officer Sophie Fuller celebrates jumping a clear round aboard Smiler at Olympia.

Competition doesn't get much bigger on home turf than the prestigious London International Horse Show at Olympia.

This staple of the equestrian world hosted a military Services Showjumping Class where the top eight uniformed combinations battled it out for the Welch Trophy in a competition that is sponsored annually by the Worshipful Company of Saddlers.

To qualify, riders earned points competing in a league all season and then took part in a semi-final at the Defence Animal Training Regiment to shortlist the final eight horses and riders.

The class contained six Army combinations (three of which were on military working horses), one RAF and one RN so it was truly a joint competition.

PO Fuller and her own horse Smiler represented the RN for the second year running.

This time the combination looked more relaxed in the



imposing arena than the previous year and with behind-the-scenes help of the Royal Navy's showjumping coach, Wendy Foot, their focussed performance this year was outstanding.

In the first round they had a very unlucky pole at the tricky last upright, but in the second they changed up a gear with some economical turns to produce a hoofing clear round in a great time.

That put them into first place, before they were unluckily pipped to the post by a calmly-ridden, slightly faster, second-round time from 19-year-old Lance Corporal Laura Charley of the Royal Signals – who won on her own horse at her first attempt.

This was a fitting pinnacle to a challenging 2018 for PO Fuller, which started in January with Smiler being struck down with a

serious medical condition that took much nursing, care and patience to recover and rehabilitate from, meaning they missed the first half of the season.

On return to competition back in June at the Army Championships they won the Queen's Cup, and quickly earned the points to take them through to Olympia.

They have also been stalwarts of the Royal Navy Team, performing impeccably in both the showjumping and combined training legs of the Loriners competition.

To end the year as a runner-up at Olympia – the best placing for a Royal Navy regular rider since the contest began – was richly deserved.

■ The Grand Military Gold Cup Day takes place at Sandown Park on March 8. For tickets visit www.sandown.co.uk and to apply the military discount use the code GM2019.

Pictures: Blackmore-Heal Media

