White-out

A VIKING from Armoured Support Group Royal Marines conducts driving training in the snow and ice at Setermoen in Norway during the Green Berets' winter deployment (see pages 20-25)

Picture: PO (Phot) Si Ethell

FREE INSIDE: PULL-OUT AND KEEP FLEET POSTER 2020
AIRCREWMAN Leading Seaman Ben Nixon averts his gaze from the conflagration devouring Morton and Jerrawangala National Parks – 125 miles southwest of Sydney – unwilling, for the moment, to watch his homeland being devoured by the seemingly-unstoppable wildfires raging through southeast Australia.

Looking away isn’t an option for the young sailor’s Flight Commander, trying to guide his MRH90 helicopter through smoke and flame. This is the third month Lieutenant Commander Nick Grimmer has endured such conditions. His flying suit reeks of smoke and burning. So too his helicopter.

This is about as far away from pining as the pilot might expect to be. The 35-year-old is on a three-year exchange with the Royal Australian Navy’s Fleet Air Arm,

swapping the submarine-hunting Merlins of 814 Naval Air Squadron for troop carrying MRH90s of 808 Naval Air Squadron.

The Australian squadron, based based at HMAS Albatross, 100 miles south of Sydney, is a dedicated disaster relief/aid unit. This austral summer it found itself in action. On its doorstep.

Crews expect to be called upon to help during the bushfire season, which typically begins in November.

What they – and most Australians – did not anticipate was the scale of this year’s fires. 808 have been in constant action since the first blazes flared up in November, providing assistance to people whose lives have been threatened by the fires.

The fieries were given a few days’ rest over the festive period to recuperate. But as crews got ready to enjoy new year celebrations, they were recalled to duty as the fires threatened to engulf a succession of towns and communities in southeastern Australia; Nick Grimmer’s Flight – one helicopter, five aircrew and 14 engineers – was ordered to join the amphibious ship HMCS Choules.

Residents of the small town of Mallacoota fled to the beach in November. Nick Grimmer’s Flight – one helicopter, five aircrew and 14 engineers – was ordered to join the amphibious ship HMCS Choules. Lieutenant Commander Nick Grimmer takes a break from sorties and (top left) the terrifying view from the cockpit.

The Choules – formerly in UK service as RFA Largs Bay – was turned into “something of a Noah’s Ark” as alongside around 1,100 people evacuated from Mallacota were 117 dogs, four cats, a parakeet and a rabbit. They were safely transported along the coast to Melbourne.

“Watching people – everyone from a baby of two months to an elderly lady in her 90s – get off in Melbourne, relieved, saying ‘goodbye’, ‘thank you’ and shaking everyone’s hands was very gratifying, definitely the highlight and made all our efforts seem worthwhile.”

Despite wall-to-wall global media coverage, Lieutenant Commander Grimmer says nothing can prepare anyone for the reality on the ground.

“The scale of the fires are phenomenal and the devastation is truly horrific. At times it seems the entire horizon is on fire with flames up to 50 or 60 feet high, and smoke, everywhere you look,” he added.

“I don’t think people in the UK can comprehend the size or gravity of them. There are towns without power, without communications with the outside world, where nine out of ten buildings have been destroyed.”

The pilot has been flying for up to ten hours a day alongside his colleagues in the most difficult of conditions, with crews expected to make life-and-death decisions on almost every sortie.

“You have to fly low because of the visibility – then suddenly you find yourself in thick smoke and are forced to either turn back or climb rapidly to avoid running into mountains. There’s a fine line between what you can do and what is not possible, with risks being constantly re-evaluated.

“It’s frequently difficult to breathe. Your clothes, in fact the entire aircraft stinks of smoke and everyone is exhausted. But it’s also by far the most rewarding thing we’ve done.”

Lieutenant Commander Grimmer spent six months in Sierra Leone as part of Britain’s efforts to halt the spread of the Ebola virus in 2014-15 – another challenging but rewarding mission – but nothing in his 12 years in the Royal Navy compares with the past two months in southeastern Australia.

“Every day you go through the spectrum of emotions – from intense lows to highs,” he explained.

“And every day you are making life-and-death decisions: can we get in there to evacuate people or not? There are times we have to say ‘no’ because the smoke is too thick.

“On one occasion, we winched down our aircrewman. There were two elderly gentlemen, the flames were lapping at their porch – they were just 50 to 100 metres away. They had no escape, but we safely evacuated them.

And then there is the much-publicised plight of Australia’s animals dying in their huge numbers.

“I’m an animal lover and seeing it both on wildlife and heart-breaking – all too often we are seeing dead animals who have succumbed to the fires in fields we are landing in.”

Yet for every such tragedy there is a triumph – small on the grand scale of the disaster, but personally heartwarming.

“We recently winched down our aircrewman from 150 feet to a man on his porch. He was fine, his house was safe, but his wife had fled the fire a few days before. She had no idea whether he was alive or the house was standing due to no power or communications. We were able to tell her both were safe – that was a wonderful feeling.”
Made to feel part of team

JANUARY 12 2000 was a momentous day. For the first time, LGBT personnel could serve openly in the Armed Forces without fear of dismissal.

Over to the Middle East and Type 45 destroyer HMS Defender is preparing to head north for Exercise Cold Response later this month.

On patrol somewhere beneath the Seven Seas is one Vanguard-class submarine and an undisclosed Trafalgar or Astute-class boat.

IT’S winter and that means one thing – the Royal Marines are in the snow.

Personnel from 45 Commando, 47 Cdo, 40 Cdo, 30 Cdo, CLR, and CHF have deployed to northern Norway (see pages 21-25) to prepare for Exercise Cold Response later this month.

The Royal Navy marked the end of an era for the Royal Marine Association (see page 13) and the Royal Marine Association recently announced plans for a new military museum telling the story of the Royal Marines (see page 6). The museum is expected to open in Gosport. The Royal Navy’s fishery protection vessels have had a busy time. HMS Trent arrived in Portsmouth for the first time (see page 5), and days later former sister HMS Medway left the south coast bound for her long-term deployment to the Caribbean (see page 3).

The Royal Navy’s fishery protection vessels have had a busy time. HMS Trent arrived in Portsmouth for the first time (see page 5), and days later former sister HMS Medway left the south coast bound for her long-term deployment to the Caribbean (see page 3).

The oldest sister, HMS Forth, arrived in the Falkland Islands, where she has taken over as guardian from HMS Clyde (see pages 16-17). Forth’s arrival allowed HMS Scott to continue her programme in the area.

Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Alberni 820 NAS
HMS Trent 45 CDO
HMS Mersey 40 Cdo
HMS Tyne RFA Tidesurge
HMS Magpie HMS Prince of Wales
RFA Tidesurge HMS Queen Elizabeth

Lightning Force

Gibraltar Squadron Sub Lt Joe Avery

FLEET FOCUS

Protecting our nation’s interests

January 12, 2000, was a momentous day. For the first time, LGBT personnel could serve openly in the Armed Forces without fear of dismissal.

Last month, we celebrated 20 years since this milestone and looked back on the progress we have made towards becoming a truly diverse and inclusive Royal Navy. 

PO Matt Hyde, pictured above, told us about his experiences of joining the Royal Navy four years ago as a Queen Alexandra’s Royal Navy Nurse.

“My main concern wasn’t the fact that basic training was going to be hard – that is the point of it! I was more concerned what would happen if people found out I was gay. In my previous job I didn’t tell anyone, as I had already heard their views on how unnatural and disgusting it was. Yet from the recruits in my intake it was not an issue. There was no awkwardness or avoidance of the subject, which completely dissolved any stress that I originally had. This is what made me feel like I was part of a team.

“Without the stress of trying to hide half of my life I had the opportunity to focus on my training. From this I was awarded class leader for the full duration of training and was awarded the Captain’s Prize for best recruit.

“Looking back I would doubt I would have been given either of these if I had been hiding my sexuality – you cannot give your all if you are holding something back.”

The Royal Navy was the first of the three Services to join Stonewall’s Diversity Champions programme, and was ranked 15th in Stonewall’s Top 100 LGBT Employers in 2019 – a proud achievement for an organisation that had excluded this community only 20 years beforehand.

PO Hyde believes that a great deal of the credit for this goes to the RN’s Compass Network.

“At my first Compass meeting, I saw the fantastic work people are doing to make the RN a more inclusive workplace including policy, events and changing the structure and foundations to accommodate the diversity of people in the service.

“I attended the 2017 London Pride event, marching through London representing my service, which has to be one of the proudest moments of my career so far.”

Diversity isn’t just about ticking boxes, though. Numerous studies have shown the improvements in productivity, efficiency and effectiveness that come from a truly diverse and inclusive workforce.

As the Royal Navy continues to go further in its transformation journey, this is more important than ever.

In March, the Naval Service will celebrate International Women’s Day, marking another diversity milestone – the 30th anniversary of women serving at sea.

Last month, Naval Bases and Royal Marines units flew rainbow flags from their main masts, sailors attended a House of Commons reception and Portsmouth’s Naval Base headquarters was lit in rainbow lights. It was a clear message that the Royal Navy welcomes all talents, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity – and we will continue to do so.

PO Hyde is in no doubt about this.

While serving I am proud to say that I have never been discriminated against. I am able to be myself and can help make the RN a more inclusive place to work.”

Memorabilia celebration, see page 36
Medway ready to deploy. Since leaving Scotstoun months for his ship. deploying came off the back of a whirlwind few, said Commander Ben Power, pictured far right. Marines.

supporting amphibious operations by the Royal for maintenance before resuming her 'day job':
patrol for nearly three years – she returns home frees up RFA Mounts Bay which has been on year-round /f_l ying the /f_l ag for the UK. storms which barrel through the region; and all-autumn on disaster relief stand-by for the frequent

quintet at the heart of the RN's new 'forward mase stationing the vessels in areas key to the UK's military, political and economic interests around the globe.

not two months after the /f_i rst of the new generation of patrol ships, HMS Forth, headed to the Indies/North Atlantic.

In taking up station in the Caribbean, Medway frees up RFA Mounts Bay which has been on patrol for nearly three years – she returns home for maintenance before resuming her 'day job': supporting amphibious operations by the Royal Marines.

HMS Medway's Commanding Officer, Commander Ben Power, pictured far right, said deploying came off the back of a whirlwind few months for his ship.

"It has taken an extraordinary effort to get Medway ready to deploy. Since leaving Scotstoun we have conducted the fastest generation of a surface ship in recent memory – this has only been possible due to the commitment, loyalty, grit and hard work of my superb ship's company. I am indebted to them and their families," he said.

While Medway is deployed, members of the ship's company will spend ten weeks on board and then four weeks off in rotation, allowing them to enjoy leave or undertake courses and training, without disrupting the vessel's busy programme.

A few weeks earlier and sister ship HMS Trent – the third of the second generation patrol ships – made her debut in Portsmouth.

With HMS Tamar and Spey still to come, the quintet at the heart of the RN's new 'forward mase stationing the vessels in areas key to the UK's military, political and economic interests around the globe.

For now, however, Trent's eyes are fixed on home waters and getting through trials and training ready to perform any mission from fishery protection through to anti-smuggling, border patrols, counter-terrorism and counter-piracy.

Aside from a crew of 40, there's space for up to 50 troops/Royal Marines: the flight deck can accommodate Wildcat and Merlin helicopters; there's a 30mm automated main gun; and flat out the engines push Trent along at a good 24kts.

"The ship's company and our partners in BAE Naval Ships have put in a tremendous amount of work to ensure she is ready to be accepted into the fleet," said Lieutenant Commander James Wallington-Smith. "It is a great privilege to be the ship's first commanding officer and I am proud of what has been achieved thus far.

"Trent now enters the next phase which will see her develop into a warship, being made ready for sustained patrol operations in the new year."

Trent's newest joiner, Sub Lieutenant Hugh Brook, added: "It is an incredible experience to be part of HMS Trent's maiden voyage and I am looking forward to spending more time at sea driving the ship."

HMS Trent is due to be formally commissioned later this year in the presence of crew's families, affiliates and Lady Sponsor Pamela Peets, who formally named the warship on the Clyde at BA's Scotstoun yard in March last year.

She joined Trent upon the ship's arrival to see the Blue Ensign – the flag of a vessel in government hands – hoisted in its place, an historic moment in the warship's history also witnessed by friends and family.

They welcomed Trent at Portsmouth's South Railway Jetty – and were given a tour of the brand-new ship once the gangway was across. Trent conducted her first sea trials over the summer, before returning to BAE for final tweaks and completion of fitting out ahead of the ship's company moving aboard a couple of months ago to begin turning Trent into a working warship.

The Christmas plans of 40 men and women aboard HMS Tyne were interrupted by the Russian Navy.

The patrol ship, top right, was called upon to leave her native Portsmouth on Christmas Eve to keep watch on the Smolny-class training ship Perekop which passed the UK on December 25.

Tyne met up with the 41-year-old vessel off the Thames estuary and remained with the Russian as she passed through the UK's area of interest.

"National security doesn't stop for Christmas - we had bags packed and were ready to go," said Commander Jon Browett, HMS Tyne's Commanding Officer.

Medway heads west as younger sister makes home debut
Proposal as Kent back in homeport

THERE were cheers, tears and at least one proposal of marriage as HMS Kent returned home to Portsmouth.

A four-month stint guarding shipping entering and leaving the Gulf ended – and with it a hectic 2019 for the frigate – when she came alongside the naval base’s South Railway Jetty, where well over 200 friends and family were waiting on a blustery, grey December day to be reunited with their loved ones.

Second down the gangway behind the frigate’s Commanding Officer, Commander Andrew Brown was Leading Engineering Technician Jordan Andrews.

The leading seaman from North East in Portsmouth claimed he’d won a raffle to get ahead of his shipmates...

“...but on the jetty, to the applause of the rest of the 200-strong ship’s company, he got down on his knee, whipped out a ring he’d purchased in Dubai, and asked his long-term girlfriend Charlotte Winson, a nurse at the city’s Queen Alexandra Hospital, to marry him.

“Proposing today was always part of the plan – I thought I would make the most of the homecoming. I’m so pleased she said yes” said an emotional Jordan.

Having clocked up 46,100 miles at sea in 2019 and guided her ship into and out of 17 ports, Commander Brown was delighted his men and women could finally enjoy some rest, mission accomplished.

“I could not be prouder of the ship’s company who have all repeatedly risen to every challenge presented to them,” he said.

The return of Kent’s take was the capper merchant shipping through the Strait of Hormuz – gateway to the Gulf – to prevent any untoward interference to vessels.

Rocked out for 28 hours along the south coast to Plymouth, where she came alongside the naval base’s South Sea in earnest this year to really test the ship’s readiness and ability to defend the Rock after a week-long workout with the territory’s other protectors.

The RH Gibraltar Squadron – a couple of dozen personnel crewsing fast patrol boats HMS Sabre and Scimitar plus three Pacific 24 RIBs – linked up with their waterborne counterparts from the Gibraltar Police, plus the RAF and troops of the Royal Gibraltar Regiment.

The imaginatively-titled GIBEX19 was designed to see how well the military units on the Rock could collectively respond to not one, but two simultaneous major incidents: a vehicle crashing into an aircraft at the RAF-run airfield leading to an inferno...while at the opposite end of the runway another careless driver had careered into the Bay of Gibraltar, trapping several people in his submerged car.

That was the climax to the exercise which opened with the various forces carrying out independent training before combining their equipment, skills and experience for the double-disaster.

Highlights of the squadron’s training included ‘fast pacing’ drills with three Pacific 24s approaching HMS Sabre at various speeds, ‘touching on’ before peeling off, resetting and doing so again. “Fast pacing allows the RIB coxswains to practise precise ship handling at high speed in close proximity to another vessel,” explained Leading Seaman David Geo, the squadron’s senior RIB coxswain.

There were also opportunities for some gunnery funnery with live and blank firings of the weapon systems on board all craft and participation in a simulated search and rescue.

The blank firings took place inside the Bay of Gibraltar with a Pacific 24 taking on the role of the ‘enemy’ as HMS Scimitar practised defending her sister ship.

The squadron works with the Defence Police on a daily basis to safeguard the Rock’s territorial waters.

Link ups with the RAF and Royal Gibraltar Regiment are less frequent, to Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Kyle Walkley and his team enjoyed the broader experience...all the time also upholding their core duty of protecting Gibr.

“the exercise provided us with a great opportunity to get out on the water and train hard with our colleagues in the Gibraltar Defence Police, as well as interacting with RAF personnel on the airfield and Royal Gibraltar Regiment on land.”

At the height of GIBEX, I deployed all of my units – HMS Scimitar, Sabre and all three Pacific 24s, along with two police vessels in a strong demonstration of the maritime capability that British Forces Gibraltar has to offer.”

Injured sailor airlifted from Enterprise

SAILORS on board HMS Enterprise were ready to act when one of their own had to be winched up into a helicopter after falling ill.

While she does not have an aircraft of her own, the ship’s company knew what to do when the US 7th Fleet sent two HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters to pick up the casualty and take him to shore.

The incident happened while the Echo-class survey ship was sailing in the Asia Pacific, south of Japan.

With one of the sailors on board needing urgent medical treatment ashore, Enterprise used her strong relationships with her US counterparts to ensure he got treatment in just a few hours.

The sailor had an irregular heartbeat and it meant the ship had to make a bold alteration in, lash, unlash and launch her helicopter…while at the opposite end, the US sailors were waiting on a blustery, grey December day to reunite with their loved ones.

A four-month stint guarding shipping entering and leaving the Gulf ended – and with it a hectic 2019 for the frigate – when she came alongside the naval base’s South Railway Jetty, where well over 200 friends and family were waiting on a blustery, grey December day to be reunited with their loved ones.

Second down the gangway behind the frigate’s Commanding Officer, Commander Andrew Brown was Leading Engineering Technician Jordan Andrews.

The leading seaman from North East in Portsmouth claimed he’d won a raffle to get ahead of his shipmates...

“...but on the jetty, to the applause of the rest of the 200-strong ship’s company, he got down on his knee, whipped out a ring he’d purchased in Dubai, and asked his long-term girlfriend Charlotte Winson, a nurse at the city’s Queen Alexandra Hospital, to marry him.

“Proposing today was always part of the plan – I thought I would make the most of the homecoming. I’m so pleased she said yes” said an emotional Jordan.

Having clocked up 46,100 miles at sea in 2019 and guided her ship into and out of 17 ports, Commander Brown was delighted his men and women could finally enjoy some rest, mission accomplished.

“I could not be prouder of the ship’s company who have all repeatedly risen to every challenge presented to them,” he said.

The return of Kent’s take was the capper merchant shipping through the Strait of Hormuz – gateway to the Gulf – to prevent any untoward interference to vessels.

Rocked out for 28 hours along the south coast to Plymouth, where she came alongside the naval base’s South Sea in earnest this year to really test the ship’s readiness and ability to defend the Rock after a week-long workout with the territory’s other protectors.

The RH Gibraltar Squadron – a couple of dozen personnel crewsing fast patrol boats HMS Sabre and Scimitar plus three Pacific 24 RIBs – linked up with their waterborne counterparts from the Gibraltar Police, plus the RAF and troops of the Royal Gibraltar Regiment.

The imaginatively-titled GIBEX19 was designed to see how well the military units on the Rock could collectively respond to not one, but two simultaneous major incidents: a vehicle crashing into an aircraft at the RAF-run airfield leading to an inferno...while at the opposite end of the runway another careless driver had careered into the Bay of Gibraltar, trapping several people in his submerged car.

That was the climax to the exercise which opened with the various forces carrying out independent training before combining their equipment, skills and experience for the double-disaster.

Highlights of the squadron’s training included ‘fast pacing’ drills with three Pacific 24s approaching HMS Sabre at various speeds, ‘touching on’ before peeling off, resetting and doing so again. “Fast pacing allows the RIB coxswains to practise precise ship handling at high speed in close proximity to another vessel,” explained Leading Seaman David Geo, the squadron’s senior RIB coxswain.

There were also opportunities for some gunnery funnery with live and blank firings of the weapon systems on board all craft and participation in a simulated search and rescue.

The blank firings took place inside the Bay of Gibraltar with a Pacific 24 taking on the role of the ‘enemy’ as HMS Scimitar practised defending her sister ship.

The squadron works with the Defence Police on a daily basis to safeguard the Rock’s territorial waters.

Link ups with the RAF and Royal Gibraltar Regiment are less frequent, to Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Kyle Walkley and his team enjoyed the broader experience...all the time also upholding their core duty of protecting Gibr.

“the exercise provided us with a great opportunity to get out on the water and train hard with our colleagues in the Gibraltar Defence Police, as well as interacting with RAF personnel on the airfield and Royal Gibraltar Regiment on land.”

At the height of GIBEX, I deployed all of my units – HMS Scimitar, Sabre and all three Pacific 24s, along with two police vessels in a strong demonstration of the maritime capability that British Forces Gibraltar has to offer.”

Handling lessons

AIRCRAFT handlers from Culdrose spent a fortnight with the Oman Navy ensuring sailors from our Middle Eastern ally’s navy could safely operate Super Lynx helicopters at sea.

The Royal Navy of Oman has 14 ships with flight decks – each one requiring a fully-qualified team to guide in, lash, unleash and launch the Lynx, as well as cope with emergencies.

The students faced classroom work at Sultan Bin Saal Naval Base in Wadham and then hands-on experience onboard one of the Oman navy’s patrol vessels, KNV Khassab.

They were taught – and assessed to the same exacting standards of professionalism and safety expected of Royal Navy flight deck teams.

Chief Petty Officer Paul Bryant said the Omanis were eager students – and quick to pick up the skills taught by his team: six men qualified as flight deck officers.

He said: “This course was last delivered more than a year ago so it was very much in demand to maintain the operational capability of Oman’s ships with flight decks.”

The course was run by 1700 Naval Air Squadron, which deploys expert teams of sailors to allow flying operations on Royal Navy and RAF vessels – as well as bolstering ship’s companies where needed with additional personnel: chefs, stewards, weapon engineers, logistics experts and medics.
SAILORS and Royal Marines dealt a blow to terrorists with a record haul of crystal meth in the Middle East.

The crew of destroyer HMS Defender pounced on a suspicious dhow as they swept the Northern Arabian Sea for smugglers and traffickers.

A day-long search by the Portsmouth-based warship’s boarding team ended in success with 11 bags of crystal meth discovered – worth an estimated £3.3m on the streets of the UK.

Defender has been deployed to the Middle East since August last year, devoting the bulk of her time to safeguarding merchant shipping entering and leaving the Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz.

Shortly before Christmas, however, she joined an international task force dedicated to stopping terrorists smuggling arms, people or drugs – the latter are used to fund illegal activities – in the Indian Ocean.

Defender’s success came thanks to the alertness of her helicopter crew during a dawn patrol over the Northern Arabian Sea.

Their Wildcat located a dhow on its own, not flying any flag or showing any evidence that it was carrying out any fishing.

That prompted the destroyer to investigate, sending Royal Marines across in skiffs to secure the dhow and its crew, and Royal Navy sailors to conduct a thorough search of the vessel while the Wildcat hovered overhead to provide protection.

The sailors located 11 mail-bag-sized sacks, some weighing between 15 and 20 kg, suspected of containing crystal methamphetamine. The total haul came to 131kg.

"After all the training and preparation, it was fantastic to have the opportunity to demonstrate our capability with a successful boarding," said Lieutenant Ben Clink, in charge of the Royal Marines detachment aboard Defender.

The destroyer’s Commanding Officer Commander Richard Hewitt added: "I am really proud that Defender has been able to interdict such a significant quantity of drugs and prevent it reaching the UK streets.

"It goes to show that even over the festive season, the Royal Navy is at sea 24/7 protecting the UK’s interests and this has been a real boost for the ship’s company."

---

This New Year, resolve to find out how to get the most from your pension.


No-one knows better than we do, how complex your pension options can be. Our team of experts deals with these complexities on a daily basis.

We also know that a great many in the Armed Forces, for one reason and another, haven’t appreciated the intricacies of the schemes, or the many options available to them.

That’s why we believe this New Year is the ideal time to resolve to put that right.

Join our fast-growing membership – now almost 60,000 strong.

You will become better informed about your options, learn how to get the most from your pension entitlement and have access to the acknowledged experts in our Pension Advisory Team.

Independent, not-for-profit

We are independent, calling governments to account wherever we spot unfairness or injustice in the Armed Forces Pension Schemes. It is part of our commitment to the whole military community. And we also represent your interests where it matters, giving you a voice on the Public Sector and MoD Pension Boards.

Visit: forcespensionsociety.org/join-now

Annual membership for you and your spouse/partner costs just £40. From the moment you join us you will not only have access to our Pension Advisory Team but also to a wide range of membership benefits from discounts on new cars, white goods, outdoor clothing and equipment and pet insurance, to low-cost money transfers and much more.

Forces Pension Society
68 South Lambeth Rd, Vauxhall, London, SW8 1RL
T: 020 7820 9988  E: memsec@forpen.co.uk
www.forcespensionsociety.org
CASH FOR YOU

Do you drive from home to work?
Do you own your own car?
Have you worked in different locations?

You could be entitled to thousands of pounds in TAX REFUNDS. Millions have already been received by your colleagues.

• Over 10 years experience
• Family connections with RN and RM, so you know you are in safe hands
• Bootneck and Matelot friendly
• We’ll square the admin away!
• Specialist areas: Maritime security, Overseas and UK security sector, Diving, Pilots and Rental Property

GET YOUR TAX REFUND NOW!
CONTACT US TODAY

FIXED FEE OF £100 PER YEAR
NO REFUND – NO FEE

E: info@atkinsandco.com  T: 01934 527888  W: www.atkinsandco.com

Atkins & Co. Chartered Accountants are fully regulated by ICAEW (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales)
A £900,000 museum celebrating the Royal Navy’s ‘Spirit of the Sea’ will open in Gosport next year, bringing forward a £30m redevelopment of a former ammo depot.

The Coastal Forces Museum – featuring two restored vintage destroyers as well as a wealth of contemporary memorabilia – will breathe life into a disused mine store at Priddy’s Hard as the site undergoes an 18-month transformation, completing regeneration work begun more than 20 years ago.

The huge site on the western shore of Portsmouth Harbour was home to one of the Navy’s most important ammunition and armament depots for more than two centuries. The site was declared redundant in 2001, with the site owners Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust having been given the green light for the second stage of the depot’s redevelopment, entirely safely storing everything from the collection we have inherited from the Coastal Forces Museum is part of the first commandos forming – today’s Royal Marines – their spirit, their ethos, their approach to life.”

Within 26 plots, visitors will be surrounded by a ‘filmmatic experience’ recreating what it was like to be on the bridge of one of these fast craft.

Given the size of the force and its exploits, Dr Dominic Dredge, Director General of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, says the story of these motor launches is ripe for telling.

"Coastal Forces were an important component of the Royal Navy through both world wars. They attracted people looking for a bit of ‘derring do’ because the missions they performed were brimming with excitement and often action. There are stories we want to tell," he said.

"Although the boats were built by the thousand, there are not many survivors. The boats were expendable – they were not built to last. Those which did survive the war were often converted into houseboats and are beyond saving.

"While the restored boats form the nucleus of the exhibition, the collection we have inherited from the Coastal Forces Trust is very impressive and really evokes what it was like to serve in these craft."

Small, fast gun boats and torpedo boats were used in coastal/confined waters through both world wars – from famously attacking the Soviet Fleet in its base at Kronstadt, near St Petersburg, to rescuing downed airmen and fending off German E-boats throughout World War 2.

At its peak in 1944, Coastal Forces numbered over 2,000 boats of various types, crewed and maintained by 25,000 officers and men. They fought an estimated 900 actions between 1919 and 1945, sinking around 400 enemy vessels, laying minefields, intercepting coastal convoys, taking part in clandestine raids, dropping off and recovering spies from occupied territories. In doing so, one in every 12 boats was lost.

Among those who served in Coastal Forces who went on to widespread fame and acclaim were Avenger Patrick Macnee, Bond film/Battle of Britain director Guy Hamilton and the second Dr Who, Patrick Troughton.

The relocation of the Coastal Forces Museum is part of a broader plan to finish the redevelopment of the sprawling former armament depot site, to include a restaurant, visitors’ centre, holiday home and residential properties.

...big plans

ROYAL Marines need up to £5m of your money to fulfil their dream of opening a new museum in Portsmouth.

For three years their story has gone untold as their old museum in Portsmouth closed...in preparation for a new one opening in the city’s historic dockyard.

They were counting on a handout from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help with the £10m cost of the move – but 18 months ago the bid for lottery cash was rejected, leaving the museum in limbo.

Museum bosses hope to pay for the majority of the move by selling the former museum building at Eastney – plus a second, hopefully-successful, bid for lottery funding.

But that still leaves them at least £1.1m short (or £1.5m short if the lottery application fails a second time) – prompting the big push for donations.

The museum closed in April 2017 as the 150-year-old building was no longer suitable for the museum in limbo.

Top on that, the location of the former officers’ mess in Eastney meant the museum pulled in fewer than 40,000 visitors every year...whereas tourist numbers in the historic dockyard have doubled in the past decade to nearly one million.

The plan is to take over Boathouse No.6 overlooking the Mast Pond, and replace the AMT. Site owners Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust have been given the green light for the second stage of the depot's transformation.

That includes the first official exhibition dedicated to Coastal Forces, being established under the banner of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, the umbrella organisation for the four principal Senior Service museums.

The Spitfires of the Navy's display is due to open in spring 2021, with two veteran ‘greyhounds’ at its heart.

Coastal Motor Boat 331 which was built in World War 2 but represents the design of WW1-era craft, was built at HMS Hornet in Gosport throughout its active life.

Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) T1, built in Portsmouth for the Royal Norwegian Navy, but commandeered by Britain on the outbreak of war. She saw extensive action in the Dover Strait and North Sea – including attempting to stop the breakout of German capital ships in February 1942 (‘the Channel Dash’).

In addition, the National Museum has acquired the huge collection of personal effects, papers, decorations and objects gathered by the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust over the years. And visitors will be surrounded by a ‘filmmatic experience’ recreating what it was like to be on the bridge of one of these fast craft.

Given the size of the force and its exploits, Dr Dominic Dredge, Director General of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, says the story of these motor launches is ripe for telling.

"Coastal Forces were an important component of the Royal Navy through both world wars. They attracted people looking for a bit of ‘derring do’ because the missions they performed were brimming with excitement and often action. There are stories we want to tell," he said.

"Although the boats were built by the thousand, there are not many survivors. The boats were expendable – they were not built to last. Those which did survive the war were often converted into houseboats and are beyond saving.

"While the restored boats form the nucleus of the exhibition, the collection we have inherited from the Coastal Forces Trust is very impressive and really evokes what it was like to serve in these craft."

Small, fast gun boats and torpedo boats were used in coastal/confined waters through both world wars – from famously attacking the Soviet Fleet in its base at Kronstadt, near St Petersburg, to rescuing downed airmen and fending off German E-boats throughout World War 2.

At its peak in 1944, Coastal Forces numbered over 2,000 boats of various types, crewed and maintained by 25,000 officers and men. They fought an estimated 900 actions between 1919 and 1945, sinking around 400 enemy vessels, laying minefields, intercepting coastal convoys, taking part in clandestine raids, dropping off and recovering spies from occupied territories. In doing so, one in every 12 boats was lost.

Among those who served in Coastal Forces who went on to widespread fame and acclaim were Avenger Patrick Macnee, Bond film/Battle of Britain director Guy Hamilton and the second Dr Who, Patrick Troughton.

The relocation of the Coastal Forces Museum is part of a broader plan to finish the redevelopment of the sprawling former armament depot site, to include a restaurant, visitors’ centre, holiday home and residential properties.

...and RM Museum needs £5m
We're proud to offer current and former military personnel savings on selected vehicles.†

† Selected vehicles only. Eligibility criteria applies. See ford.co.uk/militarysales for more information.

Model shown is a Fiesta ST-3-Door 1.5 200PS Manual Petrol with optional Full LED Headlamps.

Fuel economy mpg (l/100km): Combined 40.4 (7.0). *CO₂ emissions 136g/km.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO₂ figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real-life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.

*There is a new test used for fuel consumption and CO₂ figures. The CO₂ figures shown, however, are based on the outgoing test cycle and will be used to calculate vehicle tax on first registration.
We're proud to offer current and former military personnel savings on selected vehicles.

† Selected vehicles only. Eligibility criteria applies. See ford.co.uk/militarysales for more information.

Model shown is a Fiesta ST - 3 3 - Door 1.5 200PS Manual Petrol with optional Full LED Headlamps.

Fuel economy mpg (l/100km): Combined 40.4 (7.0).*CO₂ emissions 136g/km.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO₂ figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.

* There is a new test used for fuel consumption and CO₂ figures. The CO₂ figures shown, however, are based on the outgoing test cycle and will be used to calculate vehicle tax on first registration.

DON'T LOOK DOWN: A commando undergoes vertical assault training in Snowdonia during Exercise Winter Walker.

MOUNTAIN training is a vital first step to being prepared for the wilds of the Arctic Circle.

The winter deployment in northern Norway is a real test of endurance in one of the most unforgiving environments known to man. To make sure Royal Marines and members of the RAF and Army were ready to step off to the high north, they had the chance to undergo eight days of arduous winter training. This is to make sure they are physically and mentally ready for the extreme cold and harsh terrain in Norway.

At the same time, marines from 3 Commando Information Exploitation Group undertook vertical assault and abseiling at the iconic Snowdonia Rock on Dartmoor in preparation for their own Arctic training.

Now, Royal Marines are testing their combat and survival skills in temperatures as low as -30°C living in the wilds but also testing across feeds in small boats on commands raids deep into the mountains.

That will eventually lead to Norwegian war games Exercise Cold Response, where marines will launch amphibious raids onto the Nordic coast by sea and from the air.

Before any of that could happen, though, the marines, sailors and soldiers of 3 Commando Brigade undertook these mountain tests in the UK.

"Mountain Training in Snowdonia has provided us with a range of unique and useful skills, and the opportunity to work with the Royal Marines in an interesting and varied environment," Lance Corporal Neil Forde said.

"It has also given us the chance to work in what is amongst the most beautiful and picturesque parts of the country and experience some of the best mountain routes and scenery the area has to offer. It will be a vital in preparing the unit for deployment to Norway."

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. The skill uses advanced climbing and abseiling techniques to cross the obstacle undetected and catch the enemy unaware.

This technique was developed by the first commandos during World War Two, to launch raids against German forces behind enemy lines. Modern technology has improved the equipment used, but the basic principles have changed very little since the first commandos.

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 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.

Lance Corporal James Mulroy said: "Brigade Mountain Training has been a great opportunity for all ranks to work together from different units and cost centres. It has given other units a chance to see how Royal Marines operate in a cold weather and mountain environment."

Surviving, see pages 21 and 25.
Commission a bespoke limited edition watch from Christopher Ward to commemorate your years of service and keep alive the esprit de corps you shared with comrades.

We’ve created over 50 bespoke watch designs for Navy vessels, Army battalions and RAF squadrons. Choose from our British designed, Swiss made collection and we’ll work with you to customise the design to your specifications – it’s the perfect memento to honour your elite unit and all those who served in it.

Discover more at christopherward.co.uk/bespoke

(Minimum quantity of 25 pieces applies to all bespoke orders)
We’ve created over 50 bespoke watch designs for Navy vessels, Army battalions and RAF years of service and keep alive the esprit de corps you shared with comrades. Time honoured christopherward.co.uk/bespoke

(Minimum quantity of 25 pieces applies to all bespoke orders)

Official Licensee of the UK Armed Forces

End of an era as training tower closes

FOR the last time the team who teach submariners how to escape from a stricken boat gather at a Gosport landmark before the iconic structure closes this month.

Thousands of submariners have passed through the Submarine Escape Training Tank (SETT) since July 13 1954 when the first man ascended the 10ft column of water to simulate emerging from a sunken submarine.

With the entire submarine flotilla moving to Faslane – as well as advances in submarine design, escape training and changes in the way rescues are handled – the SETT is no longer required.

The tower was built between 1949 and 1953 as part of a wholesale revamp of submarine escape training, prompted by a report drawn up by Captain Philip Ruck-Kenner just after World War 2.

The loss of HMS Thetis – on the eve of war – and HMS Truculent – sunk in the Thames after colliding with a Swedish tanker in January 1950 – both with heavy loss of life, as well as many other submarine accidents and experiences played a significant role in the lessons taught.

Using the tank, submariners are expected to escape without breathing apparatus; they use a specially-designed escape suit to breathe as required.

Today the tank is just one element of the UK’s submarine rescue capability, which also includes the Submarine Parachute Assistance Group (who leap from aircraft into the water to help crew who’ve escaped from a boat as taught in the SETT), and the NATO SM Rescue System (NSRS) ‘Nemo’, based in Faslane.

The Royal Navy stopped pressurised ascent training in the 900,000-litre tank in 2012, but still uses the facility for non-pressurised drills and teaching. It’s thought the escape tank has been used more than 150,000 times in its 66-year life.

In the SETT’s existence, only one British boat – HMS Arcturus – has been lost (she sank at her moorings in an accident in 1971, ironically just a stone’s throw from the tower), without any casualties.

In its place, opening later this year, is the Submarine Escape Rescue Abandonment and Survival Training Facility (SMERAS FT). The team will be moving en-masse from Gosport to Faslane, leaving a skeleton team behind on the south coast.

“For 2020 marks the end of an era, so it’s a poignant moment for all of us,” said Lieutenant Commander Gareth ‘Griff’ Griffiths, in charge of the team.

“We’re looking forward to carrying on all the lessons of our past many years into the future of submarine escape, rescue, abandonment and survival training.”

“Our success is due, in no small part, to our commitment to one another and the unique perspective of being submariners.”

As the heart of the replacement complex at Faslane is a huge ‘abandonment and sea survival training environmental pool’ where various weather conditions and sea states can be replicated in the safety of an indoor pool.

Main image: LPhot Barry Swansbury

Above, rescue boats gather around the stern of the the HMS Thetis

Picture: Royal Navy Submarine Museum

... and Royal honour for SETT veteran

A SUBMARINER who helped search for a missing Argentine boat, two Royal Marines dedicated to helping injured, wounded or traumatised comrades and veterans are among nearly 30 Naval Service personnel honoured by the Queen.

The 2020 New Years Honours list rewards more than two dozen experienced officers and senior leaders, volunteers and subordinates of the many branches of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines.

Warrant Officer 2nd Class Brian Dent of 30 Commando, based at RM Stonehouse in Plymouth, has devoted the past five years of his career to supporting some of the most badly injured, sick or wounded military personnel.

He acts as a military liaison officer at the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre in Stanford Hall, near Loughborough, it has taken over from Headley Court as the place where the forces’ most seriously injured are helped back to fitness.

 Fellow Royal Marine Colour Sergeant Samuel Sherriff from the Commando Training Centre at Lympstone, near Exeter, set up the charity REFOR to help both serving personnel and veterans suffering from mental health problems or physical disabilities.

Royal Navy Warrant Officer 1st Class Nick Sharpard is the Warrant Officer Naval Service – the most senior of all the 23,000 ratings and ranks in the Navy and Royal Marines.

He acts as the adviser and right-hand man of the First Sea Lord when it comes to morale, discipline, training and any other issues affecting the non-officer cadre of the Naval Service.

Warrant Officer 1st Class Steve Thorpe is one of the Silent Service’s most experienced submariners with 34 years under his belt in almost every class of submarine operating since the mid-80s.

He also proved a key member of a team sent to Argentina in late 2017 to help the international search effort looking for the missing submarine ARA San Juan and has since helped raise money for the lost crew’s families.

All four men receive the MBE for their efforts.

“There’s a fundamental pride in being a submariner – it’s a unique job in a unique environment. I am immensely proud to be receiving the MBE,” said Warrant Officer Thorpe, aged 51, originally from Sheffield, but now living in Fareham.

“Despite the sad outcome and the loss of 44 submariners in the San Juan, it was an unforgettable experience.

“The Argentine military and people were welcome – and appreciative of the assistance offered. There’s a mutual respect between submariners whatever the nation, a common bond so you understand what your counterparts or their families are going through.”

The full list of Naval Service recipients:
Knight Grand Cross in the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath
Sir Philip Jones

Companion of the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (CB)
Major General Tim Rea RM

Rear Admiral Tim Hodgson

Commodore of the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE)
Rear Admiral Martin Connell

Commodore Andy Crewe

Captain Tim Neil

Brigadier Matt Pierson RM

Officer of the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE)
Commander Andy Donaldson

Commodore Henry Duffy

Colonel Garth Mangham RM

Colonel Paul Maynard RM

Captain Michael ‘Rocks’ Salmon

Commander Dan Symes

Captain John Wills

Colour Sergeant Richard Swainbury

Member of the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE)
Warrant Officer 1 David Amann

Warrant Officer 2 Brian Driver RM

Commander Justin Hains

Acting Captain Mark Hankey

Commander Andy Perks

Commander Justin Saward

Warrant Officer Susie Seagrave

Warrant Officer 1 Nick Sharpard

Colour Sergeant Samuel Sherriff RM

Lieutenant (Sea Cadet Corps) Janice Spicer RNR

Lieutenant Commander Adam Spike

Warrant Officer 1 Stephen Thorpe

Queen’s Voluntary Reserve Medal (QVRM)

Lieutenant Will Benbow RNR

Ordinary Member First Class Royal Red Cross (RRC)

Commander Ian Kennedy

FEBRUARY 2020 · 13
royalnavy.mod.uk/navynews
Sailors peak in Caribbean

Downtime follows high-tempo operations

DON'T say we don't bring you variety in these pages…

You want sailors in diving masks and snorkels and a cuddly toy on top of a tropical mountain? You got it.

Personnel from RFA Mounts Bay used their winter break in Curacao to scale the island's highest peak while the amphibious ship underwent maintenance.

RFA Mounts Bay is on a long-term mission assisting Britain's overseas territories in the region, spending roughly one half of the year ready to respond to natural disasters (chiefly hurricanes and tropical storms), the other half working with US law enforcement agencies dedicated to stopping the flow of illegal drugs from South to North America – and the wider world.

Embarked throughout the relief mission phase of her deployment (May-June onwards until the end of the year) is a mixed military team of Army engineers, Royal Marines, soldiers who operate the Mexiflote powered raft and a Wildcat helicopter flight from 815 Naval Air Squadron.

Collectively, they form the ship's dedicated Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) Troop – over 120 men and women – who work side-by-side with authorities across the Caribbean to explain what help they can offer… and see what facilities are available to them should the worst happen.

The ship and her team were only called upon once during the 2019 hurricane season, helping the people of the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian barrelled its way through the islands.

The ship is gearing up for a spring and summer dealing with drug runners as part of the international effort to prevent trafficking of illegal narcotics in the Caribbean.

Having spent the autumn on hurricane watch, Mounts Bay sailed in to Willemstad to prepare for the counter-drugs mission by undergoing a spot of maintenance and reconfiguration.

The bulk of the troop left the ship in Willemstad, Curacao, where Mounts Bay underwent her end-of-year overhaul ready for operations with the US Coast Guard and their Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) who carry out boardings of any suspicious vessels the auxiliary comes across on her patrols.

Capt Kevin Rimmell RFA, Mounts Bay’s Commanding Officer, said the ship was sorry to see most of the troops – maintenance teams have remained on board – depart.

"The ethos of 'Team Mounts' brought all the elements of the embarked forces together – many took on additional responsibilities as part of the ship’s team, including tasks such as welding, as well as bolstering the first aid party and taking part in gunnery exercises," he explained.

"This level of integration paid dividends when the ship was called upon to deliver aid to the stricken inhabitants of the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian. All the parties worked tirelessly, hand-in-hand, to provide the much-needed assistance."

As well as local contractors, that work has demanded input from the RFA sailors aboard – but in their spare time, they’ve had the chance to explore the Dutch territory which is little bigger than the county of Rutland.

The northern tip of Curacao is dominated by Mount Christoffel, which rises 372 metres above sea level. The hike began as a walk, turned into a scurry and eventually became a climb as the sailors faced ever more challenging terrain – in temperatures of over 30 degrees Celsius.

"It was certainly not the walk in the park some had assumed and was challenging in places," said Third Officer Jamie Turnbull.

"We scratched elbows, grazed knees and ankles, squeezed through gullies and then with a final grunt we emerged at the peak and were greeted with some amazing views of the island."

Accompanying them on the climb was the ship’s cuddly toy mascot Coo, pictured left, and some diving kit, after the heights of Christoffel, the sailors headed to the beach at Westpunt where they shared the waters with locals and turtles.

"They moved gracefully through the water, nonchalantly brushing inquisitive snorkellers aside and were a joy to behold and almost seemed to be posing for photos," Jamie added.

"It was fantastic to see these beautiful animals and share their space with them and we were all beaming as we talked about it."

"We returned to Mounts Bay with smiles on our faces and great memories of Curacao."

Mounts Bay is due to be relieved in the Caribbean later this year by new patrol ship HMS Medway as part of the Royal Navy’s forward presence initiative, permanently deploying ships in regions around the globe key to the UK’s interests.

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @RFAMountsBay, @RFAheadquarters and @RoyalNavy on Twitter

THE MASSED BANDS OF HER MAJESTY'S ROYAL MARINES

Mountbatten Festival of Music 2020

Friday 6 March at 7.30pm
Saturday 7 March at 2.00pm
Saturday 7 March at 7.30pm
Heart of ‘wood

Big change, literally

AFTER 54 years, one of the Royal Navy’s longest-standing training bases is going through its third name change – and dropping the word amphibious.

What since 1997 has been the Command Amphibious Task Group (narrowly abbreviated to COMATG) is now COMSLG – Commander Littoral Strike Group.

It’s still based at RM Collingwood in Fareham, still has Commodore James Parkin at the helm, still calls HMS Albion its home when deployed and still calls upon 3 Commando Brigade as its fighting punch.

But the name change is part of a shift in the way amphibious operations are conducted in the 21st Century – and marks other shake-ups in senior command, including the merger of two (COMUKMARFOR and COMUKAMPHIBFOR) to form COMUKSTRICOFOR – Commander UK Strike Force – under Rear Admiral Andrew Burns.

It oversees Cdr Parkin’s littoral group… and its flat-top counterpart, the Carrier Strike Group under Cdr Steve Moonhouse.

COMSLG traces its history to 1966 and the Commander Amphibious Warfare Forces (COMAWF), established in the Far East, moving to Fort Southwick in 1971 as part of the withdrawal from east of Suez, and to Southampton in 1991. It’s carried the COMATG title since 1997.

For the 2020 iteration the staff comprises 35 personnel from all three services including staff officers from the Netherlands, Australia and France.

QE 1st in Ox12

SAILORS from Britain’s future flagship will parade through the streets for the first time this spring.

The men and women of HMS Queen Elizabeth will exercise the highest civic honour – Freedom of the Borough – by marching behind the Colours and Guard, with barracks fixed, next month.

London? Or Edinburgh? Perhaps – both are the aircraft carrier’s affiliated cities.

Nope. Oxford. It is the small market town of Wantage in Oxfordshire, 41 miles from the nearest open waters and not an Oxfordshire, 41 miles from the nearest open waters and not an

The answer is the small market town of Wantage in Oxfordshire, 41 miles from the nearest open waters and not an obvious choice to be linked with the Portsmouth-based battleship.

But last autumn, civil leaders asked the carrier to accept its offer of freedom – an offer sparked by a longstanding association with another Portsmouth-based warship, HMS Royal Oak.

Each year Wantage folk pay tribute to the battleship in particular two local men – Master Seaman Perpoint and Able Seaman Joseph Wilkins – who died when the warship was torpedoed in Scapa Flow.

The 90th anniversary of the tragedy last autumn prompted civic leaders to consider a permanent affiliation with the Royal Navy – offered to, and accepted by, the 65,000-strong Wantovian.

The parade begins at midday on Saturday March 21, led by the Band of HM Royal Marines, and is the culmination of a fly past of serving and vintage naval aircraft, plus a jump by the RN’s parachute display team, the Raiders – weather, serviceability and operational commitments allowing.

BOSTING makes us feel good

READY for all that 2020 might throw at them after a hectic end to 2019, the ship’s company of HMS Albion kicks off the roaring Twenties with the (very) rare parade through the streets.

HMS Albion takes the roiling 20s to heart, and the Littoral Strike Group will be taking it forward into a new era of Persistent Deterrence with a future-focused mission set.

"As we reflect on the vital service this establishment has given over the years, I’m pleased to be taking it forward into a new future, modernising training and encouraging all our personnel to reach their full potential within today’s Royal Navy.”
A NEW naval era has begun in the Falklands as HMS Forth begins her first patrol around the islands.

After a 9,000-mile journey from Portsmouth, the 2,000-tonne patrol ship arrived in the South Atlantic islands ready to take on duties after HMS Clyde retired just before Christmas.

Her successor is the first of five second-generation River-class ships built with the goal of stationing them long-term around the globe, protecting UK interests, working with regional allies and flying the flag for Britain.

Forth picks up where her predecessor left off, working with the RAF and Army units based in the Falklands, providing reassurance to locals, visiting inhabitants of the outlying islands, and supporting the territory’s authorities in everything from ceremonial events through to assisting with emergencies.

Even before the ship arrived at East Cove Military Port – about 30 miles southwest of the Falklands’ capital Stanley – she was working with two RAF Typhoon interceptors to see how the air and naval forces can work together.

Once at the remote port, the Commandant of British Forces South Atlantic, Brigadier Nick Sawyer, was on hand to welcome Forth to the islands, stepping aboard to chat with Commanding Officer Commander Bob Laverty and his team.

“Arrival at East Cove was met with excitement for those who had never operated in the environment before,” said Commander Laverty.

“And it was met with enthusiasm by all the ship’s company who were looking forward to making an impact in an operational theatre, as well as taking advantage of the fantastic adventurous training, wildlife and rich history the Falkland Islands have to offer.

“For me, it’s fantastic to be back and the presence of HMS Forth signifies both posture and the continuous UK commitment to the Falklands.”

Then it was time to start getting acquainted with the islands, its wildlife and its defenders; the RAF showed the sailors around one of their A400M transports stationed at Mount Pleasant; the people of Stanley (figuratively) rolled out the red carpet for Forth’s debut in the capital (the obligatory exchange of official shields between Governor Nigel Phillips and Cdr Laverty); and the seal populace of Bertha’s Beach rolled on their (rather large) stomachs when the sailors paid the beauty a visit.

The journey to the Falklands took Forth to Gibraltar and Mindelo in the Cape Verde Islands.

On the latter, the ship’s company paid their respects to British sailors buried in the Municipal Cemetery, where AB Craig Pollock paid tribute to fellow naval reservist T Henderson, laying a wreath on the grave of the 17-year-old Shetlander who died serving on cruiser HMS Donegal on convoy duties in 1916.

The ship’s company also had time to explore the island, from encounters with the local wildlife and bartering in the markets, to enjoying the magnificent beaches and climbing Mount Verde. A highlight for most was the opportunity to snorkel with turtles in Sao Pedro Bay.

For Forth’s policeman, 22-year-old gunny officer Lieutenant Ian Phillips and Cdr Laverty; and the ship’s company paid their respects to British sailors buried in the Municipal Cemetery, where AB Craig Pollock paid tribute to fellow naval reservist T Henderson, laying a wreath on the grave of the 17-year-old Shetlander who died serving on cruiser HMS Donegal on convoy duties in 1916.

The ship’s company also had time to explore the island, from encounters with the local wildlife and bartering in the markets, to enjoying the magnificent beaches and climbing Mount Verde. A highlight for most was the opportunity to snorkel with turtles in Sao Pedro Bay.

For Forth’s policeman, 22-year-old Able Seaman Ben Coomber this was exactly what he signed up for.

“These kind of experiences are the reasons I chose the Royal Navy,” said 29-year-old gunny officer Lieutenant Ian Copeland, experiencing his first festive period at sea.

“It was different, but enjoyable with a real family environment on board.”

That included passing over the Equator and upholding the nautical tradition of the ‘Crossing the Line’ ceremony, paying homage to King Neptune and his band of dubious characters from under the ocean, followed by a ‘hands to bathe’ – allowing all on board to swim in the Atlantic with nothing beneath them but more than 4,000 metres of water.

Which is just the sort of water HMS Scott normally finds herself in as she collects data from the oceans to support the navy’s front-line operations...and not the shallower confines of San Carlos

From Cape Verde, the ship faced a 16-day, 5,200-mile voyage to her new home – a journey which meant she was at sea over both Christmas and new year.

Sailors turned their flight deck into an outdoor cinema to watch Die Hard on Christmas Eve, followed by the naval tradition of officers serving the turkey dinner to their shipmates the next day.

“"These kind of experiences are the reasons I chose the Royal Navy."

ABLE SEAMAN BEN COOMBER

“It’s a Christmas I will definitely remember,” said 29-year-old gunny officer Lieutenant Ian Copeland, experiencing his first festive period at sea.

“It was different, but enjoyable with a real family environment on board.”

That included passing over the Equator and upholding the nautical tradition of the ‘Crossing the Line’ ceremony, paying homage to King Neptune and his band of dubious characters from under the ocean, followed by a ‘hands to bathe’ – allowing all on board to swim in the Atlantic with nothing beneath them but more than 4,000 metres of water.

Which is just the sort of water HMS Scott normally finds herself in as she collects data from the oceans to support the navy’s front-line operations...and not the shallower confines of San Carlos

Providing a home from home for older members of the Royal Naval family

Located close to the historic Chatham Dockyard, we provide 24 hour nursing and residential care in our exceptional building that features good sized, well furnished rooms, en-suite facilities, comfortable communal areas and landscaped gardens.

We believe personal enrichment shouldn’t stop when you move in with us, so we don’t just provide quality of care, we ensure quality of life.

11 Oxford Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 4BS
Call 01634 852431 or email enquiries@pembrokehouse-rnbt.org.uk
Water. Britain’s biggest survey ship entered the bay to pay her respects to HMS Antelope, one of four Royal Navy warships lost in 1982 during the Falklands’ liberation.

Ten metres below the now-calm waters of the natural harbour, sitting upright, almost snapped in two, is the shattered hull of frigate HMS Antelope, torn apart by a series of explosions after bomb disposal experts triggered an unexplained device, in turn detonating the ship’s magazine.

The horrific sight which the blast left - a once-proud ship snapped with thick black plumes of smoke rising about San Carlos Water – provided one of the iconic images of the Falklands conflict. Nearly 40 years later, Scott’s crew mustered on the quarterdeck for a service of thanksgiving – probably the most emotional moment in her first, fortnight-long patrol of the remote British territory.

Scott helped plug the gap between long-standing Falklands guardian HMS Clyde (see below) departing the Falklands, welcoming HMS Clyde as well and I got to visit her /f_i irst deployment; I thought I was going to do six months in South Georgia. It’sindered her /f_i irst deployment and she’s been away from the UK since she sailed south to relieve the Castle class as the Royal Navy’s constant presence in the Southern Hemisphere back in 2007.

The mission – one now picked up by HMS Forth to offer assistance and reassurance – to offer assistance and reassurance to the Falklands’ inhabitants, explore the outer reaches of the archipelago, and maintain a presence in South Georgia.

Since 2007, the crew have changed places with shipmates from East Cove to Portsmouth – trailing a long, thin decommissioning pennant for the very final leg from Outer Spur Buoy into harbour. Able Seaman Reece Backshall spent seven months with the ship on his first deployment in the Royal Navy, including a visit to Rio De Janeiro on the way back to the UK.

“It’s a small team so we’re close and everyone gets on with everyone else.”

“It’s been a perfect first deployment; I thought I was just going to do six months in the Falklands, but it turned out we were decommissioning the ship as well and I got to visit other continents.”

The only warship to have been built in Portsmouth this century, Clyde hadn’t seen home since she sailed south to relieve the Castle class as the Royal Navy’s constant presence in the Southern Hemisphere back in 2007.

The mission – one now picked up by HMS Forth to offer assistance and reassurance to the Falklands’ inhabitants, explore the outer reaches of the archipelago, and also maintain a presence in South Georgia.

Since 2007, the crew have changed places with shipmates back in the UK an estimated 25 times. It’s thought around 800 sailors have served aboard her.

HMS Clyde has been a very good ship, so reliable and she’s had to be – the South Atlantic’s not a forgiving place,” said her final Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Richard Skelton, who also served as her second-in-command five years ago.

“It’s hugely bittersweet for us, homecoming is always emotive; the separation from families is possibly the hardest part of the job, and the joy of seeing them is brilliant. She’s been away from Portsmouth for just over 12 years, and to come back to families just before Christmas and decommission her on the same day makes it doubly poignant.”

That ceremony was attended by around 200 guests, including former commanding officers and the ship’s Lady Sponsor, Lady Dunt, who named her in the same naval base back in 2007.

Clyde will now be stripped of personal belongings and prepared for her handover to BAE Systems, who built her, for the next phase of her life.

“More than 800 members of the squadron have served in Clyde, experiencing life in the southern oceans for over six months at time, providing many of them with unique and special memories from an outstanding part of the planet,” said Commander Simon Pressdee, in charge of the Fishery Protection Squadron, parent unit of the entire River class.

**KEEP UP WITH THE SHIPS**

@HMSScottRN on Twitter

Follow @HMS_Forth and @HMSScottRN on Twitter

---

**Your WelComE account card...**

A WelComE account card is assigned to you for your entire military career and can be used to access telephone and Internet services whilst deployed.

You should receive it after basic training. If you haven’t been given it, speak to your admin officer. For more information visit: [www.mywelcome.co.uk](http://www.mywelcome.co.uk)

Lost your account card? No worries! Speak to your admin officer who will be able to provide you with your WelComE account number and a password to reset your PIN.

---

WelComE Customer Contact Centre

customer.support@mywelcome.co.uk | [www.mywelcome.co.uk](http://www.mywelcome.co.uk)
Affordable finance you can trust

As a credit union, our purpose is to support the financial wellbeing of all those who serve. We make it easy to manage your money and build for the future with with budgeting tools, purpose-built current accounts and salary-deducted savings.

- Open to all serving RN personnel and immediate family members
- Not-for-profit credit union, operating since 1982
- Fully regulated by the FCA and PRA
- 32,000 member-owners
- Provided in partnership with the Ministry of Defence

Learn more and join
forcesfinance.org.uk

Forces Finance is a trading name of London Mutual Credit Union Ltd. London Mutual Credit Union is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority (FRN 213248)
FLYING INTO THE FUTURE

700X Naval Air Squadron have been putting drones through their paces to see if they have the potential to enhance the Royal Navy

Their job is to test and operate drones for possible use by the Royal Navy. And 700X Naval Air Squadron have been working hard over the past few months to trial unmanned equipment and its suitability for future operations.

Based at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, 700X has taken to the sea in the latest step of its pioneering adventure into remotely-piloted air systems.

They headed out for a week of trials on board the fishery protection ship HMS Mersey.

700X commanding officer Lieutenant Commander Justin Matthews said it was a hugely exciting time to be at the cutting-edge of UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) technology.

“These remotely-piloted systems can act as an extension to a ship’s suite of sensors and potentially as a weapon delivery platform,” he said.

“We’ve set up this new flight to test that concept as a capability. We want to be able to demonstrate how you could take any generic UAV, fly it from a ship, and get its information back in a meaningful way.

“Although we continue to work with industry, this is about the Royal Navy flying a Royal Navy UAV from a Royal Navy ship. That is a fabulously exciting concept.”

The team are using an existing air system known as Puma, which can be launched and recovered from ships.

Lt Cdr Matthews added: “The Puma is just one air system. It can stay up for two-and-a-half hours and it has a really good camera.

“Will we use it in the future? Well, it’s a starting point.

“For the Royal Marines for example, this is an awesome piece of kit. In other areas, we need to assess its utility across the differing requirements of vessels.

“It’s important to remember that new technologies are coming through all the time. The most important aspect of our work is not about the air vehicle itself however.

“While we’ve done some work already on civilian ships, this trial is about how a Royal Navy ship can use these remotely-piloted-vehicle systems.

“We’ll be exploring how you get the information back in a way which can make a difference.

“It needs to go to the operations room or the bridge. What is the best way of launching and retrieving these vehicles which is not going to impact the ship?

“These are the kinds of issues we have to tackle. I am especially pleased that we will be back on Mersey, because 700X previously went on board the same ship during an operation and used quadcopters.

“This is a natural progression to move into this more sophisticated air system.

“700X plays the lead role in all aspects of remotely-piloted systems, such as testing and evaluating drones from industry at Predannack airfield on the Lizard peninsula, close to RNAS Culdrose.

“To help the squadron get to grips with remotely-piloted aviation, they spent time in the USA.

“In Huntsville, Alabama, they received training on the Puma and Wasp air systems and learned how to operate the aircraft in various scenarios.

“With a mixture of classroom and practical training, the team learnt how to launch and recover the vehicles in a variety of modes from purely manual to autonomous.

As we move forward and take this technology to sea, we are leading the way in developing a new capability for the Royal Navy

-Lieutenant Commander Justin Matthews

Minehunting taken to new levels on Clyde

The Royal Navy has a new way of hunting mines and surveying waters.

Project Wilton, which uses autonomous systems and equipment to carry out operations, has now been handed over into service, with naval personnel joining the team.

This handover marks a significant milestone for the navy as it looks to move into digitally-driven, autonomous mine warfare and survey work.

It follows a successful demonstration last year of an autonomous boat fitted with a towed side scan sonar that was controlled remotely from a command centre ashore at Clyde Naval Base. Live operations on the Clyde are due to start from March.

Commander Mike Knott, assistant chief of staff Maritime Capability, said: “This exciting project handover is a real step forward in realising our ambition to make mine hunting safer and more effective through the use of autonomous and robotic technology.

“With equipment and personnel now operating on the Clyde, the transition to widespread use of autonomous systems in mine counter measures (MCM) is becoming a reality and places the Royal Navy MCM community at the cutting edge.”

Royal Navy personnel with now be stationed at Clyde Naval Base and initial operations are being carried out, including survey work using autonomous underwater vehicles.

Targets will be laid and surveyed to support the joint UK/French MCM trials programme.

The full Project Wilton system will comprise of three boats (two autonomous and one manned) and multiple autonomous underwater and remotely-operated vehicles.

This kit will supplement the Royal Navy’s current minehunting missions carried out by the mine countermeasures ships of the Hunt and Sandown classes.

The work builds on the ongoing trials of unmanned and autonomous technology carried out by the Royal Navy, Defence Equipment and Support and Defence Science and Technology Laboratory.
The Arctic is increasingly a region of great curiosity and that puts the cold weather specialists of the Royal Marines in an important position.

As the ‘big thaw’ continues, Arctic Ocean shipping lanes are opening up and natural riches previously out of reach can begin to be plundered.

That, unsurprisingly, means Arctic nations are preparing for what the future may hold as the area gets busier. As governments turn their attentions to the untapped potential, so too are they working out what they will need militarily.

Norway have moved troops further north and so UK eyes have also looked in that direction.

There has been an underlining of the UK’s commitment to security in the Arctic in the last year and, naturally, that responsibility has fallen at the snow shoes of the winter warriors of the Royal Marines.

For 50 years or more, the Green Berets have worked continually in the high north.

Not only that, but several commando raids took place in World War Two along Norway’s coastline.

It’s almost a home from home.

THE ARCTIC IS INCREASINGLY A REGION OF GREAT CURIOUSITY AND THAT PUTS THE COLD WEATHER SPECIALISTS OF THE ROYAL MARINES IN AN IMPORTANT POSITION.

As the ‘big thaw’ continues, Arctic Ocean shipping lanes are opening up and natural riches previously out of reach can begin to be plundered.

That, unsurprisingly, means Arctic nations are preparing for what the future may hold as the area gets busier. As governments turn their attentions to the untapped potential, so too are they working out what they will need militarily.

Norway have moved troops further north and so UK eyes have also looked in that direction.

There has been an underlining of the UK’s commitment to security in the Arctic in the last year and, naturally, that responsibility has fallen at the snow shoes of the winter warriors of the Royal Marines.

For 50 years or more, the Green Berets have worked continually in the high north.

Not only that, but several commando raids took place in World War Two along Norway’s coastline.

It’s almost a home from home.

The tradition and depth of knowledge is already there and now the marines are integrating closely with the Norwegians.

There is very little different from what they have done for years and years. They know this mission inside out. Now, the next generation of commandos are getting their Arctic training and so the tradition will continue.

And while the region ‘heats up’ in more than one way, Royal Marines are there ready and equipped to fight in a place unique in its challenge, where the sun barely rises and temperatures plummet to below -30°c.

The first mission is to learn to survive. For the most part, fighting and winning here is about ‘out-surviving’ the enemy.

As 3 Commando Brigade’s highest readiness unit, it is 45 Commando at the forefront of this year’s winter deployment, but they are also joined in the region by the small boats of 47 Commando, Commando Logistics Regiment and 30 Commando Information Exploitation Group.

All ranks must go through the survival course, a commando’s rite of passage.

“Overcoming this demanding environment presents its own challenges. The survival phase of training includes learning how to construct snow shelters, navigating by the stars and how to trap animals in a survival situation,” said Lieutenant Alex Saunders (Royal Navy) of 45 Commando.

Warm-up: A Royal Marine takes a dip in the frigid waters of the Arctic.

The initial phases on the Arctic training concludes with the infamous ice breaking drills. Commandos have to plunge into a hole in the ice and climb out of the icy water unassisted using their ski poles.

This brutal part of the training is designed to help Royal Marines recognise and reduce the risks of cold shock: a physical response to being immersed in cold water that can rapidly incapacitate and even kill.

CROSSING A FROZEN LAKE OR RIVER CAN BRING A TACTICAL ADVANTAGE BUT COMES WITH A HUGE RISK, SO ICE BREAKING IS ABOUT PREPARING FOR THE EVENTUALITY OF BEING SUDDENLY DIPPED INTO BRACING WATER.

“It was my first time doing ice-breaking drills. It’s a marine’s rite of passage and so I’m really happy I got the opportunity to come to Norway and take part in this exercise,” said Lance Corporal Angus McKenzie.

“I’m really looking forward to the rest of the training and seeing what Norway has to offer.”

After rearming from their dip through the ice, the marines head further into the wilderness to build and live from shelters.

They are left with the clothes on their back and a day pack with warm kit. That’s it. The rest is up to them.

THE FIRST MISSION IS TO LEARN TO SURVIVE. FOR THE MOST PART, FIGHTING AND WINNING HERE IS ABOUT ‘OUT-SURVIVING’ THE ENEMY.
Supporting the Royal Navy

With over thirty years of naval industry experience, from designing the Queen Elizabeth Class carrier, to helping to sustain the Royal Navy’s in-service nuclear submarines, we solve the problems of today and shape the ideas of tomorrow.

Get in touch

+44 (0)1225 473600
defence-security.das@bmtglobal.com
www.bmt.org
Royal Navy

PORTSMOUTH

AIRCRAFT CARRIER
QUEEN ELIZABETH  R06
Displ. 70,600 tonnes. Length: 281m. Beam: 76m
Phalanx gun system, 32mm close-range guns. Carrier Air Wing of F-35B Lightning II fighters and helicopters.

PRINCE OF WALES  R09
Displ. 72,000 tonnes. Length: 284m. Beam: 76m
Phalanx gun system, 32mm close-range guns. Carrier Air Wing of F-35B Lightning II fighters and helicopters.

TYPE 45 DESTROYER
DARING  D32 DRAGON  D35
DASHER  D33 DEFENDER  D36
DAMOUL  D34 DUNDON  D37
Displ. 7,200 tonnes. Length: 152.4m. Beam: 21.2m
4.5" gun. Sea Viper missiles. Phalanx gun system. 32mm close-range guns. Towed towed SAM system, Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.

TYPE 31 FRIGATE
SHIP 1 (planned) SHIP 2 (planned)
Displ. 5,700 tonnes. Length: 137.6m. Beam: 19.2m
32mm gun. Sea Ceptor missiles. 32mm close-range guns. Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.

HUNT CLASS MCMV
LEDGERY M30 MIDDLETON M34
BROCKLEISY M33 CHESTERFORD M32
Displ. 750 tonnes. Length: 50m. Beam: 16m
30mm close-range gun. Remote control dive disposal system.

TYPE 23 FRIGATE
KIMBERLEY F70 IRON WARRIOR F73
LANCASTER F29 WESTMINSTER F27
Displ. 4,400 tonnes. Length: 131m. Beam: 18.1m
6.5" gun. Sea Ceptor missiles. 32mm close-range guns, Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.

RIVER CLASS PATROL SHIP
FORTH P222 TAMAR (planned) P225
MERTHYR P223 SWEET (planned) P226
Displ. 3,700 tonnes. Length: 90m. Beam: 18.3m
32mm close-range guns.

SCIMITAR CLASS PATROL BOAT
SOMERSET P284 SIAMRE P285
Displ. 1,700 tonnes. Length: 36m. Beam: 13.2m
32mm close-range guns.

DEVONPORT

LANDING PLATFORM DOCK ASSAULT SHIP
ALBION L14 BURWICK L15
Displ. 27,000 tonnes. Length: 135m. Beam: 28.6m
Phalanx gun system, 32mm close-range guns. Landing Craft, unclassified military force.

RIVER CLASS PATROL SHIP
TYNE P301 MERSEY P303
Displ. 1,700 tonnes. Length: 79.8m. Beam: 13.6m
32mm close-range guns.

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY

AUXILIARY OILER & REPLENISHMENT SHIP
FORT VICTORIA A387
Displ. 15,500 tonnes. Length: 109.1m. Beam: 32m
Phalanx gun system, 32mm close-range guns. Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.

SOLID SUPPORT SHIP
FORT ROYAL A365 FORT AUSTER A386
Displ. 23,336 tonnes. Length: 180.5m. Beam: 24m
Phalanx gun system, 32mm close-range guns. Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.

FLEET TANKER
WAVE KNIGHT A305 WAVE RULER A306
Displ. 15,500 tonnes. Length: 165m. Beam: 27.8m
Phalanx gun system, 32mm close-range guns. Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.

FLEET TANKER
TIDESPORE A136 TIDESURGE A138
TIDEFORCE A139
Displ. 22,000 tonnes. Length: 200m. Beam: 26.4m
Phalanx gun system, 32mm close-range guns. Wildcat or Merlin helicopter.
PROJECT FIREFLY

From Regular To Maritime Reserves

THE MARITIME RESERVES: are a force of highly trained civilian volunteers who are readily available to support any of the Royal Navy’s worldwide operational commitments.

Job Opportunities
There are a wide range of specialisations available.

Commitment
An annual requirement of 24 Reserve Service Days (RSD) achieved through your spare time and some Civilian Employers may also contribute days towards your commitment!

Benefits include
- Excellent rates of pay, pension and a generous annual tax-free bounty
- Opportunities for continued professional development and promotion
- A more stable work-life balance with the added benefit of a 2 year harmony period (although attending the required annual training days still applies)
- Remain part of Naval/Corps Family with its special camaraderie

Who is eligible?
Open to Fully Trained Naval Service Leavers and Ex-Regulars (up to 24 months post TX date). Members with the desired skills from the other Armed Services may also apply.

For further information contact the Firefly team at:
NAVY PCAP-CM WF FF MAILBOX@MOD.GOV.UK

THE JOURNEY DOES NOT HAVE TO END!
A ROYAL NAVY recruit from Plympton has become the sixth generation of his family to join the Naval Service.

A WISH came true for Finlay Kalter as he walked for the first time through the main gates of the Royal Navy Submarine School at HMS Raleigh.

The 23-year-old said: “I joined the Royal Navy to have a career that I can be proud of.”

He added: “It was great to see the young photographers in this group our ages, because it gives me the opportunity to show them different ways of doing things.”

A ROYAL NAVY recruit from Plympton has become the sixth generation of his family to join the Naval Service.

A ROYAL NAVY recruit from Plympton has become the sixth generation of his family to join the Naval Service.

A ROYAL NAVY recruit from Plympton has become the sixth generation of his family to join the Naval Service.
Living the dream on the Liberty

EVERY now and then, a young Royal Navy officer will be given the opportunity to sail with another navy. Far less frequently however, is the opportunity to sail aboard an Argentine tall ship. Sub Lieutenant Joe Avery, the second Royal Navy Officer to sail with the 340ft, three-masted ARA Libertad, writes about his time on board.

I was not the only invitee; between Cadiz and Dublin we were joined by officers and cadets from Italy, Portugal, Belgium, France and South Africa. Additionally, personnel from the Argentine Air Force, Army, Gendarmerie, Federal Police, and Merchant Navy were among the crew.

The Libertad, which means ‘Liberty’ in English, departed Buenos Aires in the summer. The first port visit on her transatlantic and transequatorial voyage was to Tenerife. She then continued to Cadiz, where I embarked.

My first night onboard was slightly blurred thanks to being offered copious quantities of Fernet, a strong Italian spirit highly popular among the Argentineans. I hope I did the RN proud by remaining on two feet that evening.

From Cadiz, we sailed to Lisbon, across the Bay of Biscay to Brest, up the River Sheldt to Antwerp, then across the English Channel and up the Thames to Canary Wharf. After a whistle-stop tour of the "wonderful city" of London, we sailed to Dublin where I would reluctantly disembark.

Subsequently I would not take part in her storm-ridden transatlantic voyage to Boston or her continued adventures to Miami, Barbados and Brazil before she returns to Buenos Aires.

The Libertad serves the Argentine Navy as a training ship. There are three elements to her crew; an officer cadre, qualified ratings, and midshipmen who receive their training onboard.

"Inviting personnel of other ships is very important because sharing conversations with them makes you understand other cultures and ways of life. These experiences improve you as an officer [and] contribute to the international relationships of our country," says Midshipman Ezequiel Peyret.

Whilst the Argentineans consider us to be a highly professional and well-equipped navy, their own prowess at seafaring should not be underestimated. Before joining the fleet, they study for five years at their Naval Academy, and their sea survival training involves living on starvation rations for five days at sea in a full life-raft.

The midshipmen aboard the Libertad represented the top-scoring tier from their academy. Many spoke excellent English, although I was determined to (attempt to) speak their native tongue. During my four weeks onboard, my Spanish-language skills (and Google translate) were tested to the limit.

The Argentineans share with us a clear passion for rugby and football. Above these, however, their true passion is the ‘asado’. This Argentine-style barbeque involves various methods of grilling meat, and is central to the Argentine ‘Gaucho’ culture. An asado was held at each Port Visit.

Despite some unfortunate weather conditions, much of our journey was still conducted under sail. I was lucky enough to be invited up to the topsails on several occasions.

The four weeks I spent aboard the Libertad were undoubtedly the highlight of my naval career thus far.

I believe the value of sending our personnel to experience other navies cannot be underestimated.

The Royal Navy remains a global navy, and I sincerely hope that exchanges of this kind continue.
Y Basil received a birthday card from The Queen...
Relationships don’t have to be bad to be better

WITH the expectation of up to 660 days in every three-year period spent away from home for every member of the Naval Service, there are inevitable strains and pressures on relationships and family life that are faced in almost no other profession.

The support provided by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity is therefore a lifeline for those struggling to maintain their relationships while serving.

For several years the RNRMC have partnered with Relate to provide free and confidential face-to-face, online and telephone counselling to serving personnel, veterans and their families.

In 2018, 580 courses of counselling and 1,327 separate counselling sessions were completed thanks to RNRMC funding.

In 2019 the RNRMC’s ‘Building Stronger Families’ portal was launched, a self-directed online learning programme providing a discreet and accessible way for all Naval families to access advice and support when relationships are put under strain.

The RNRMC recently committed £321,840 to Relate over the next three years in order to continue providing relationship support to Naval families. This funding forms part of the RNRMC’s new ‘Family Support’ programme, which will bring together several partner organisations to offer a comprehensive support package for Naval families in 2020.

One user of the RNRMC/Relate service, who wished to remain anonymous, said: “We have been married for over 35 years, but it hasn’t all been plain sailing. There have been arguments and it’s been tough, but because we’ve had so many great years together, and we have a lovely daughter, we wanted to make our marriage work.

I saw Relate’s partnership with the RNRMC advertised, so we both agreed to seize the opportunity and booked seven free sessions.”

“The counselling offered by the RNRMC was very helpful. We are still together and our relationship is getting better and better. We still have our differences and can both be strong-willed and stubborn. The difference now is that we try to resolve our differences calmly, and we both agree that this programme has helped us.”

To book counselling, call 011354238579, or to access the ‘Building Stronger Families’ online portal visit the ‘Need Help Now’ page at rnrmc.org.uk.

Putting an arm around the whole family

JANUARY’S edition of Navy News featured the mountaineering adventures of Joe Watch, as the former Royal Marine reflected on his recent summit of Mount Everest.

For over two years Joe has been recovering from severe Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and his epic Everest achievement marked a significant milestone in his recovery.

However, while mental or physical injuries sustained during service can be hugely traumatic for the sufferer, they can also have a significant impact on their loved ones.

Throughout Joe’s recovery, his wife Amy has been by his side, but the effects of Joe’s illness have made family life difficult at times and have put strains on Joe and Amy’s marriage.

“We are critical to Joe’s recovery; he needs us there every day to support him. I simply didn’t have time to think about myself”, said Amy.

Amy received counselling and child care support from the RNRMC, but in the RNRMC’s funding of the charity Ripple Pond which has really made the difference to her.

Uniquely dedicated to supporting the adult family members of physically or emotionally-injured service personnel, Ripple Pond has a regional network of people going through exactly the same journey of living with a spouse or partner with PTSD. They can share whether they are having a rough day or a good day and meet up regularly to give one another support. So far, the RNRMC have provided almost £11,000 in grants to the Ripple Pond so that they can support the loved ones of Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel with physical and mental injuries.

FOUR British submariners completed an epic challenge after rowing 3,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean in just 36 days, 6 hours, 40 minutes.

The HMS Oardacious team were just a day behind the record-breaking winners – three brothers from Edinburgh – as they rowed into Nelson’s Harbour in Antigua, a little over seven weeks after setting out from La Gomera.

The four men – Lieutenant Hugo Mitchell-Heggs from Sheffield, Lieutenant Callum Power from Basingstoke, Petty Officer Dylan Woods from Northern Ireland and Leading Engineer Technician Matt Harvey from Kirkcaldy – hoped to raise £125,000 for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

The team embarked upon the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, the ‘world’s toughest row’, on December 12 in their 200-long, 50,000 lightweight R45 Ramnoth boat.

They faced, at times, shark-infested waters, waves reaching heights of 40ft, heavy storms, and busy shipping lanes.

Hugo said: “The beginning of the race was touch and go, due to the demise of our autopilot which meant we had to steer manually and cook us down to three men for 24 hours, but determination and great team work meant we still managed to remain in the front pack.”

Completing 1.5million strokes by keeping to a strict schedule of rowing two hours / sleeping for two hours, 24 hours a day, the submariners overcame seasickness, blisters and sores.

A few days before the finish a huge wave threw Callum and Dylan out of the boat in their first full-capsize. Dylan chipped a tooth, an snapped the water maker took a big hit, repeatedly turning itself off, and the autopilot was wiped and truly on its last legs.

Despite the fight, all four rowers had gone through extensive training on what to do in exactly this scenario; they had everything strapped down and strapped on, so at no point were they at any real risk, just a big shock.

At their lowest, the team battled dehydration and extreme fatigue in 40-degree heat, burning 12,000 calories a day and losing around 20 per cent of their body weight.

“It was an incredible challenge for a worthwhile cause and it feels great to be back on land, reunited with loved ones. My gran was told to prepare bangers and mash for our return so that will be next on my list!”

Dylan said.

You can still support the team – they were just £24k short of their target when they finished the race – by texting ‘NAVY OAR’ to 70900 to donate £5 to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

We did it!

Dylan, front, and Hugo, are welcomed by loved ones in Antigua; the team’s rowing boat; below, at the start of the race in the Canary Islands

Pictures: 6BM

The discovery of SMS Scharnhorst is bittersweet,” says Sadie in Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, where Uruguay won the first World Cup; the Andes museum dedicated to the 1972 plane crash; and the Graf Spee,” explained Peter Trott."
The Navy’s premier submarine hunters are at the top of their game after their autumn workout in the USA.

Merlin helicopter crews, say their three months with HMS Queen Elizabeth’s task group mean they are much better prepared to defend Britain’s future fleet.

The Merlin Mk2 helicopters of 81 and 820 Naval Air Squadrons – normally based at Clydebank in Faslane – were assigned to frigate HMS Northumberland as well as Queen Elizabeth herself, charged with forming invisible, yet impermeable ring of steel to protect every submarine getting within torpedo or missile range.

Despite both squadrons calling on experience in submarine hunting going back more than six decades, the tactics of protecting a carrier group from a 21st Century underwater threat are still in their infancy and evolving.

A series of anti-submarine exercises – firstly a Canadian-led NATO workout off Nova Scotia, then against American Los Angeles-class hunter killers off the Eastern seaboard of the USA – had seen the British forces put in more than 9,000 hours – a huge amount of training.

That pressure demands supreme efforts – and not just from the four crew in the helicopter; for every hour in the air a Merlin Mk2 requires 60 hours of maintenance in the carrier’s hangar, work performed by a 60-strong team of engineers, technicians and avionics experts.

As well as the cunningly-named Anti-Submarine Warfare game, the duo have also devised a second helicopter search game, ‘Pingers’, similar to the Asian strategy game Go, while a card game teaches NATO codewords in an elaborate version of Snap.

The pair have adapted the classic boardgame Battleships: one ‘player’ uses the latest tactics, NATO/RN planning, analysis and search grids to find the submarine, his opponent tries to avoid the Merlin’s grasp. “This is not about playing games,” Ed underlined. “This is about learning by doing.”

“The key thing about the games is that you have to get the science right, because that is the reality. You’ve got to do your maths and you’ve got to make sure your timeframe and the game mechanics are in sync with the maths.”

The artistic part of designing the game is about making it fun, because it has to be enjoyable too as that is how the human brain works and that is an effective way to learn.”

As well as the cunningly-named Anti-Submarine Warfare game, the duo have also devised a second helicopter search game, ‘Pingers’, similar to the Asian strategy game Go, while a card game teaches NATO codewords in an elaborate version of Snap.

Ten sets each of ASW and Pingers have been produced for aircrew on the Merlin training squadron, 824, who are undertaking the Applied Warfare Course.

“These new war games are a fantastic addition to the Merlin training regime and introduce the basics of anti-submarine warfare to the aircrew in a really innovative format,” said 824’s Commanding Officer Commander Martin Russell.

“I can’t praise highly enough the work of Ed Oates and Gavin Cooper, who I know have put so much effort into producing these games. I am sure the trainees will enjoy getting to grips with these games as part of all their training here at Clydebank in the classroom, simulators and in real aircraft.”
New block on the Rock

TAKING shape now just three minutes from Gibraltar Airport are 17 two-bedroom apartments designed and built specifically for personnel and families based at – or visiting – the Rock.

All 17 apartments have full disabled access, are fitted with air conditioning throughout (the average temperature on the Rock is over 20°C for most of the year) and can accommodate up to six people in two bedrooms, plus a sofa-bed settee in the lounge.

The complex at Four Corners is being provided by the Gibraltar Naval Trust which has been supporting personnel since 1940, from organising sporting and adventurous training activities to improving facilities and amenities for those seeking work on the Rock.

The materials will be made available to serving personnel, UK-based civilians, veterans from all three services, and families of personnel assigned to or visiting Gibraltar.

For the bookings for upcoming 2020, will be taken this month.

For prices, availability and booking details, see www. gibraltar navaltrust.com.

Apprentices, sign up

A former recompression chamber converted into a relaxation area in Sultan’s revamped learning hub

Pompey’s top engineers recognised

NECA and marine engineers can enjoy a much improved ‘learning suite’ from the refurbished system. Ethernet is still under way and will be kick off National Apprenticeship Week.

HMS Sultan’s new look development hub is a hub for training and development, learning how to maintain communications equipment, lighting systems, front line technology and remotely controlled vehicles. The theming, work to be opened to the public later in the year, will continue to train personnel to work on modern warships and provide the new learning and development hub at Sultan.

The larger, more modern hub at the Goosport home of marine and air engineers, features more space, a silent study area, small classrooms for exams and interviews, and a total overhaul of e-learning computer tech set up.

Regardless of your discipline, the apprentice ship programme offers the opportunity to build up your skills and knowledge and be part of a multi-disciplinary team. Excellent opportunities to work on modern warships, new-builds and existing ships, you will be encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities available to you.

The programme is open to all ranks and any ship’s personnel can apply.

The programme is open to all ranks and any ship’s personnel can apply.

For more information see www.realnavy.mod.uk/careers/apprenticeships.

ROYAL Marine Lance Corporal Tom Copeman on the UK-led Combined Task Force 151 Party, has been awarded a Herbert Lott award for efficiency from his commanding officer.

The latter were nominated by Lt Cdr Packer, HMS Duncan’s weapon engineer officer, the team conduct an in-theatre exchange of a major weapon system in a compressed timeframe, making a significant impact on personal issues to deliver success.

The Centre is located in Portsmouth Naval Base and has a permanent staff of four sailors/civilians but the location will allow greater use of the facilities and reduce the need to travel to far-flung research and papers, but a longer-term goal is for the centre to partner with other leading institutions to organise conferences and seminars on maritime topics and details about conducting research under its wing, see www.realnavy.mod.uk/.

The roll-out version of the app allows personnel the flexibility and freedom to manage their Naval lives.

TWO SIX FEBRUARY 2020

TWO SIX FEBRUARY 2020
Engine gift revs up interest at Penarth

THE Marine Engineering (ME) Department of Penarth Sea Cadet Unit (TS Glamorgan) were in their element thanks to a car manufacturer.

Ford Motor Company’s Dagenham Engine Plant, donated a brand-new diesel engine to the unit.

The gift came after hearing of the unit’s desire to enhance and improve the cadets’ ME training within the three progression levels of the specialisation with a greater level of hands-on experience.

Andy Price, of the unit’s management committee, approached Ford to see if they could assist, and the company’s response was to generously donate a fully-assembled engine, mounted on a carriage to enable ease of access to every part.

The unit’s Commanding Officer, Midshipman Joshua Biundo (SCC RNR), thanked Ford for their generosity and Mr Price for his endeavours in securing such a valuable asset.

He went on to say: “This unexpected and extremely generous donation will improve the level of training within the ME specialisation immeasurably.

“W deflect allow my teams of instructors to give the cadets the highest level of hands-on experience, thus enabling many more of them to gain this valuable qualification.”

Midshipman Biundo is pictured unpacking the newly-delivered engine with the unit’s ME specialisation cadets.

Bandies inspire future musicians at Weston

MARINE Society and Sea Cadets were well represented in the New Year’s Honours List.

MMStC, Trustee John May DL becomes a CVO for his work as Lord Lieutenant of Argyll and Bute.

The recognition of Sea Cadet volunteers across the country remains one of the highlights of the Honours List.

While three cadets have become recipients of British Empire Medals (BEM), Janice Argyll and Bute.

The opportunities and self-discipline I learnt as a sea cadet were key in me realising my ambition for a career more than 20 years ago.

Emma Walton BEM from Grimsby has helped recruit a new set of cadets since getting involved within Sea Cadets in 2015, Emma has helped recruit a new set of cadets since getting involved within Sea Cadets in 2015.

Emma Walton BEM from Grimsby has helped recruit a new set of cadets since getting involved within Sea Cadets in 2015.

Emma Walton BEM from Grimsby has helped recruit a new set of cadets since getting involved within Sea Cadets in 2015.

Emma Walton BEM from Grimsby has helped recruit a new set of cadets since getting involved within Sea Cadets in 2015.

Emma Walton BEM from Grimsby has helped recruit a new set of cadets since getting involved within Sea Cadets in 2015.

Emma Walton BEM from Grimsby has helped recruit a new set of cadets since getting involved within Sea Cadets in 2015.

Emma Walton BEM from Grimsby has helped recruit a new set of cadets since getting involved within Sea Cadets in 2015.
Tributes paid to Ray of sunshine

SEA Cadet veteran Lt Ray Newman received a special award to mark his 65 years in the organisation.

Ray joined the Sea Cadets at the age of 12 and has remained within the organisation every since.

His roles include command at Caterham and Crawley units, but he says his current role as district staff officer for parade and ceremonial has been his favourite as it has given him the opportunity to have a positive impact on thousands of cadets and adult volunteers lives.

The presentation was made during an evening of awards held by Surrey District Sea Cadets at Woking unit.

Unfortunately for Surrey District, Ray has stood down from his role as he has recently moved to the West Country, however, he has promised to travel back to watch the Annual District Drill Competition.

Other presentations made at the event to cadets and adults by the Southern Area Officer Commander Trevor Price RN and SSO Cdr (SCC) Karen Kristiansen RN included:

Certificates for completing BTSC Awards through CVQO, Bronze / Silver Duke of Edinburgh Awards and National Citizen Service Certificates.

Camberley Unit were presented with a Certificate as the Southern Area Nominees for the National McBeath Trophy.

Captain (SCC) Paul Chapman RMR was presented with his Certificate for being the Southern Area Nominee for the Roddie Casement Sword and Guided RMCD for being selected to take part in the National RMCD Gibraltar Cup Competition in March 2020.

Cdr Price also presented Officers Commissioning Scrolls, Long Service Certificates and Cadet Forces Medal Clasps to other long-serving staff members.

The evening was rounded off with a buffet and soft drinks provided by the team at TS Dianthus – Woking SCC & RMCD.

Sea Cadets veteran Lt Ray Newman received a special award to mark his 65 years in the organisation at TS Dianthus – Woking SCC & RMCD.

At other long-serving staff members.

Certificates and Cadet Forces Medal Clasps 2020.

RMC Gibraltar Cup Competition in March being selected to take part in the National Casement Sword and Guildford RMCD for Certificate as the Southern Area Nominees Citizen Service Certificates.

Duke of Edinburgh Awards and National included:

Officer Commander Trevor Price RN and District Drill Competition.

moved to the West Country, however, he has given him the opportunity to have a positive ceremonial has been his favourite as it has role as district staff officer for parade and every since.

12 and has remained within the organisation 65 years in the organisation.

sea-cadets.org or call 020 7654 7000
Home for Liverpool veterans

LIVERPOOL’S Speke House, the city’s largest building provided as accommodation for veterans, is undergoing a revamp thanks to a £23k handout from a Forces charity.

The facility provides safe, secure en-suite bedrooms and flats for up to 48 veterans to help them stabilise their lives and make the successful transition from military to civilian life.

The building – originally put up in the 1960s as accommodation for the elderly – is now being refurbished inside and out through the donation from Forces Support, the bereavement and veterans’ support charity.

All flats will be fitted with new windows, communal areas updated, IT, safe laundry, corridors and toilet facilities will be fully redecorated.

Outside, new gates and fencing will be installed, and a bike storage area will also be built.

Since the house was turned into flats for veterans 30 years ago, it’s helped scores of former service personnel get back on their feet: in the last 12 months to June 2019 alone, it housed 300 residents – 80 of whom came from a homeless background.

Nearly half left with employment and third-quarters moved on to permanent accommodation, either living independently, reunited with family or with the support they need.

A new day care service for veterans living in the High Wycombe area has been launched by Royal Star and Garter.

The service will run from the farm, known as the new veterans’ art home in the town, offering care for veterans and their partners who are living with disabilities or dementia who do not yet require full-time residential care.

Up to eight guests can join permanent residents in an art workshop, organised each weekday, including quizzes, outings, guided entertainment, yoga, art therapy, and movement to music. All the meals will be provided and health checks and exercise classes made available.

The initiative is aimed at tackling social isolation encountered by older people and those relatives to carers, who are often not young themselves.

To make use of the service, contact hw.enquiries@starandgarter.org or call 01444 927555.

New magnifier gives Jim fresh lease of life

ENJOYING these pages thanks to a specialist video magnifier and a Scottish forces charity is WW2 veteran Jim Thompson.

Nearly 75 years after being demobbed, the nonagenarian remains keen to keep in touch with present-day naval affairs.

Jim served in Gibraltar working in the signalling tower and then in contraband control with the Royal Navy Patrol Service for two-and-a-half years. He then served in minesweepers in the Bristol and English Channels until he entered civvy street 1946.

The 95-year-old suffers from age-related macular degeneration, which has left him struggling to read.

“When I have a black spot in the centre of my eye that I can’t see with, but I can get a picture in my peripheral vision. In my right eye I have cataracts,” said Jim.

“I get Navy News, which I like reading, I like keeping up to date with what’s going on. But I was trying to use a hand-held magnifier to read it and I was struggling for ages until it ended up bringing my eyes.”

Which is where Scottish War Blinded came in. After being assessed by one of the charity’s rehabilitation teams, he received a free Octelter Traveller HD video magnifier – a portable, lightweight device that can zoom in on text and change colour contrast to suit the reader’s requirements – Jim is delighted to be enjoying his monthly naval read once more.

“Now that I’ve got the Traveller with the stand I can read it again. The screen is perfect for me, I’m enjoying it. It’s been a lifesaver. I get a lot of letters so it helps me to read those too.”

The charity has also provided the former sailor with specialist portable lighting and anti-glare glasses to allow Jim to enjoy his independence – all free of charge (the magnifier alone costs nearly £2,000).

“I just think all the help I’m getting is brilliant. Some of this equipment can be quite expensive, but there’s Scottish War Blinded helping me with it for free.

“I hope my sight doesn’t get worse, but I know Scottish War Blinded will have things to help me if it does.

“The magnifier provided to us by Scottish War Blinded is important because it gives you more interests in your life.”

Scottish War Blinded gives free support to former servicemen and women of all ages, no matter if they lost their sight during or after service.

It has a wealth of specialist equipment it can provide to veterans with sight problems: electronic magnifiers, lighting and Synapptic tablets and phones, to canes, talking clocks, talking watches and cooking aids.

Beyond rehabilitation and outreach workers, the charity also organises reunion lunches for veterans like Jim, who was invited to dine with fellow former military personnel with sight loss at the Hawkhead Centre in West Lothian.

Visit www.scottishwarblinded.org or call 0800 035 6409 to refer a veteran to the charity.

NEW year, new challenge.

Shed a few pounds at the gym? Find a new job? Finally pop the question?

What about: honour all Britain’s war dead in the Falklands?

That’s the challenge former Royal Marine Colin Wate from North Shields has set himself to remember the 255 Servicemen lost in the South Atlantic over six better weeks in 1982 – plus the conflict’s three civilian victims (landmines accidentally killed during the lighting) by producing 255 pieces of art.

The now 61-year-old drove HMS Fearless’ BABY beach recovery vehicle during the 1982 conflict has always sketched – in part to deal with the effects of PTSD. He realised many of his artworks featured scenes from the Falklands.

“I was drawing a picture of Doc [Rick] Jolly outside the Red and Green Life Machine and it reminded me of a long conversation I had with the Doc,” Colin said.

“He said sometimes we just have to do one small act to be remembered and do some good. He was talking about being lowered into the water to rescue someone in 82.”

The result is Project 255 which will probably be the most comprehensive artistic record of the war, a body of work based on personal and press/official photographs from 1982, some well known such as the torpeter, others less so, such as Colin himself taking a break on the BABY (spat).

Colin continued.

“I decided that life is all about challenges so I set myself a challenge using my artistic skills. I’ve announced it to the world, so I’ve got big ideas to give up and I know that won’t happen.

I will have days when I’ll feel ‘why’ and want to – but then a new day arrives and a challenge starts.”

And when he’s finished all the images? Possibly an exhibition, or a book, or a big sell-off, with the proceeds going to charity.

You can follow Colin’s progress at: www.facebook.com/Falklands-1982-Project-255-101503112283315.

Cossack’s raiders remembered

SAILORS past and present will march through Worthing this month to remember one of the naval highlights of the ‘Phoney War’.

In February 1940, boarding parties from HMS Cossack stormed the German tanker Altmark, hiding in a Norwegian fjord, releasing 299 prisoners.

They had been seized by the raider Graf Spee as it picked off Allied merchant shipping in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

When the pocket battleship was cornered off South America (see page 28), the Altmark attempted to run the gauntlet of the British blockade to reach Germany – until it was located in Jøssingfjord, near the southwestern tip of Norway, and Cossack was sent in to free the captives.

Eight Germans were killed in the ensuing action which persuaded Hitler to invade Norway two months later.

Eighty years later and sailors from destroyer HMS Dauntless will join veterans, representatives from the Norwegian Embassy in London, the Cossack Association and local council officials will parade at Durrington Cemetery in Worthing at 11am on Monday February 17 to pay tribute to all those involved in what became known as the ‘Altmark incident’.

There will a 30-minute long service and parade, including wreath laying at the war memorial.

The event is being organised by Falklands veteran Commander Neil ‘Nobby’ Hall, serving with NATO in Belgium.

“One of the heroes of that night in 1940 was gunner Warrant Office J J F Smith – he won the Distinguished Service Cross and was the only British casualty, wounded by a booby trap,” Commander Hall explained.

Smith – who was ‘on loan’ to Cossack from cruiser HMS Aurora – was treated by the Altmark’s surgeon, survived the war and served in the Navy into the mid-90s. He is buried at Durrington, prompting local veterans to suggest the cemetery as a fitting venue for the 80th anniversary parade.

Come Abroad!

… the Royal Maritime Club, the perfect venue for overnight stays, holiday breaks, social occasions and business meetings.

• A welcoming atmosphere
• Over 100 comfortable bedrooms to suit all needs
• Special rates for seafarers and other military personnel
• Fully-accessible Stunning Food with wines
• Hatfield’s Restaurant serving a set price dinner
• Traditional Buffet on the English breakfast
• Congenial Bar
• Smoker and Shisha Area

Telephone or email for further details:
Royal Maritime Club
Queen Street, Portsmouth, PO1 3AR
Club Tel: 02392 622412 Email:info@maritimeclub.co.uk

Come Abroad – One Night Only

£45.00 for 2 people

4 Course Meal, B+B, Free Parking

Book your table now!
DO YOU recognise this case?
Royal Marine Dave Prichard hopes you do; he’s appealing for help in uncovering the whereabouts of the cabinet which once held pride of place aboard HMS Cardiff.
Dave, who served as a sergeant at HMS Cambria in Cardiff, visited the Type 42 destroyer HMS Cardiff several times during her visits to the city.
He made a number of presentations to the ship, including a centenary presentation containing a crystal glass engraved ‘The President’s Glass’ which was attached to the wall in the mess bar.
The case was lost following Cardiff’s decommissioning in 2009. Now a new HMS Cardiff (the second Type 26 frigate) is being built, Dave is keen to find the case and present it to the new vessel when the ship enters service.
Anyone who can help is asked to contact Dave on 029 2079 0233.

# Making covenant history

SHIPMATES from Warwick put their signature to the Armed Forces Covenant (Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Area) for the first branch in the UK to do so.

The Great Hall at the town’s Royal Artillery and Engineers’ Hospital was the venue for the occasion, with the document adapted slightly to reflect the association’s composition - covenants usually support employer criteria, not relevant to the RNA.

Signing the covenant means the branch is committed to:
- promoting the fact that it’s an Armed Forces-friendly organisation;
- using the help and support to veterans in apportioning benefits, services and accessing charitable funds;
- providing support for the whole Armed Forces family, establishing an immediate social network for the family and a voice within the community;
- actively working with partner organisations – such as the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Armed Forces Strategic Forum, which helps people on their way;
- companionship with like-minded veterans through regular meetings and social events, encouraging mental wellbeing;
- offering support to local cadet units;
- active participation in Armed Forces Day.

Putting pen to paper were Commander Phil Sparke, CO of Birmingham GNR HMS Forward and Lt Cdr Bob Beveridge, Warwick RNA president, witnessed by Timothy Cox, Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire.

The ceremony was concluded with a traditional toast to The Queen and Warwick branch with a tot of rum for all present.

# Cardiff case mystery

DO YOU recognise this case?
Royal Marine Dave Prichard hopes you do; he’s appealing for help in uncovering the whereabouts of the cabinet which once held pride of place aboard HMS Cardiff.
Dave, who served as a sergeant at HMS Cambria in Cardiff, visited the Type 42 destroyer HMS Cardiff several times during her visits to the city.
He made a number of presentations to the ship, including a centenary presentation containing a crystal glass engraved ‘The President’s Glass’ which was attached to the wall in the mess bar.
The case was lost following Cardiff’s decommissioning in 2009. Now a new HMS Cardiff (the second Type 26 frigate) is being built, Dave is keen to find the case and present it to the new vessel when the ship enters service.
Anyone who can help is asked to contact Dave on 029 2079 0233.

# Making covenant history

SHIPMATES from Warwick put their signature to the Armed Forces Covenant (Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Area) for the first branch in the UK to do so.

The Great Hall at the town’s Royal Artillery and Engineers’ Hospital was the venue for the occasion, with the document adapted slightly to reflect the association’s composition - covenants usually support employer criteria, not relevant to the RNA.

Signing the covenant means the branch is committed to:
- promoting the fact that it’s an Armed Forces-friendly organisation;
- using the help and support to veterans in apportioning benefits, services and accessing charitable funds;
- providing support for the whole Armed Forces family, establishing an immediate social network for the family and a voice within the community;
- actively working with partner organisations – such as the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Armed Forces Strategic Forum, which helps people on their way;
- companionship with like-minded veterans through regular meetings and social events, encouraging mental wellbeing;
- offering support to local cadet units;
- active participation in Armed Forces Day.

Putting pen to paper were Commander Phil Sparke, CO of Birmingham GNR HMS Forward and Lt Cdr Bob Beveridge, Warwick RNA president, witnessed by Timothy Cox, Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire.

The ceremony was concluded with a traditional toast to The Queen and Warwick branch with a tot of rum for all present.

# Cardiff case mystery

DO YOU recognise this case?
Royal Marine Dave Prichard hopes you do; he’s appealing for help in uncovering the whereabouts of the cabinet which once held pride of place aboard HMS Cardiff.
Dave, who served as a sergeant at HMS Cambria in Cardiff, visited the Type 42 destroyer HMS Cardiff several times during her visits to the city.
He made a number of presentations to the ship, including a centenary presentation containing a crystal glass engraved ‘The President’s Glass’ which was attached to the wall in the mess bar.
The case was lost following Cardiff’s decommissioning in 2009. Now a new HMS Cardiff (the second Type 26 frigate) is being built, Dave is keen to find the case and present it to the new vessel when the ship enters service.
Anyone who can help is asked to contact Dave on 029 2079 0233.

# Making covenant history

SHIPMATES from Warwick put their signature to the Armed Forces Covenant (Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Area) for the first branch in the UK to do so.

The Great Hall at the town’s Royal Artillery and Engineers’ Hospital was the venue for the occasion, with the document adapted slightly to reflect the association’s composition - covenants usually support employer criteria, not relevant to the RNA.

Signing the covenant means the branch is committed to:
- promoting the fact that it’s an Armed Forces-friendly organisation;
- using the help and support to veterans in apportioning benefits, services and accessing charitable funds;
- providing support for the whole Armed Forces family, establishing an immediate social network for the family and a voice within the community;
- actively working with partner organisations – such as the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Armed Forces Strategic Forum, which helps people on their way;
- companionship with like-minded veterans through regular meetings and social events, encouraging mental wellbeing;
- offering support to local cadet units;
- active participation in Armed Forces Day.

Putting pen to paper were Commander Phil Sparke, CO of Birmingham GNR HMS Forward and Lt Cdr Bob Beveridge, Warwick RNA president, witnessed by Timothy Cox, Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire.

The ceremony was concluded with a traditional toast to The Queen and Warwick branch with a tot of rum for all present.

# Making covenant history

SHIPMATES from Warwick put their signature to the Armed Forces Covenant (Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Area) for the first branch in the UK to do so.

The Great Hall at the town’s Royal Artillery and Engineers’ Hospital was the venue for the occasion, with the document adapted slightly to reflect the association’s composition - covenants usually support employer criteria, not relevant to the RNA.

Signing the covenant means the branch is committed to:
- promoting the fact that it’s an Armed Forces-friendly organisation;
- using the help and support to veterans in apportioning benefits, services and accessing charitable funds;
- providing support for the whole Armed Forces family, establishing an immediate social network for the family and a voice within the community;
- actively working with partner organisations – such as the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Armed Forces Strategic Forum, which helps people on their way;
- companionship with like-minded veterans through regular meetings and social events, encouraging mental wellbeing;
- offering support to local cadet units;
- active participation in Armed Forces Day.

Putting pen to paper were Commander Phil Sparke, CO of Birmingham GNR HMS Forward and Lt Cdr Bob Beveridge, Warwick RNA president, witnessed by Timothy Cox, Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire.

The ceremony was concluded with a traditional toast to The Queen and Warwick branch with a tot of rum for all present.

# Cardiff case mystery

DO YOU recognise this case?
Royal Marine Dave Prichard hopes you do; he’s appealing for help in uncovering the whereabouts of the cabinet which once held pride of place aboard HMS Cardiff.
Dave, who served as a sergeant at HMS Cambria in Cardiff, visited the Type 42 destroyer HMS Cardiff several times during her visits to the city.
He made a number of presentations to the ship, including a centenary presentation containing a crystal glass engraved ‘The President’s Glass’ which was attached to the wall in the mess bar.
The case was lost following Cardiff’s decommissioning in 2009. Now a new HMS Cardiff (the second Type 26 frigate) is being built, Dave is keen to find the case and present it to the new vessel when the ship enters service.
Anyone who can help is asked to contact Dave on 029 2079 0233.

# Making covenant history

SHIPMATES from Warwick put their signature to the Armed Forces Covenant (Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Area) for the first branch in the UK to do so.

The Great Hall at the town’s Royal Artillery and Engineers’ Hospital was the venue for the occasion, with the document adapted slightly to reflect the association’s composition - covenants usually support employer criteria, not relevant to the RNA.

Signing the covenant means the branch is committed to:
- promoting the fact that it’s an Armed Forces-friendly organisation;
- using the help and support to veterans in apportioning benefits, services and accessing charitable funds;
- providing support for the whole Armed Forces family, establishing an immediate social network for the family and a voice within the community;
- actively working with partner organisations – such as the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Armed Forces Strategic Forum, which helps people on their way;
- companionship with like-minded veterans through regular meetings and social events, encouraging mental wellbeing;
- offering support to local cadet units;
- active participation in Armed Forces Day.

Putting pen to paper were Commander Phil Sparke, CO of Birmingham GNR HMS Forward and Lt Cdr Bob Beveridge, Warwick RNA president, witnessed by Timothy Cox, Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire.

The ceremony was concluded with a traditional toast to The Queen and Warwick branch with a tot of rum for all present.

# Cardiff case mystery

DO YOU recognise this case?
Royal Marine Dave Prichard hopes you do; he’s appealing for help in uncovering the whereabouts of the cabinet which once held pride of place aboard HMS Cardiff.
Dave, who served as a sergeant at HMS Cambria in Cardiff, visited the Type 42 destroyer HMS Cardiff several times during her visits to the city.
He made a number of presentations to the ship, including a centenary presentation containing a crystal glass engraved ‘The President’s Glass’ which was attached to the wall in the mess bar.
The case was lost following Cardiff’s decommissioning in 2009. Now a new HMS Cardiff (the second Type 26 frigate) is being built, Dave is keen to find the case and present it to the new vessel when the ship enters service.
Anyone who can help is asked to contact Dave on 029 2079 0233.

# Making covenant history

SHIPMATES from Warwick put their signature to the Armed Forces Covenant (Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Area) for the first branch in the UK to do so.

The Great Hall at the town’s Royal Artillery and Engineers’ Hospital was the venue for the occasion, with the document adapted slightly to reflect the association’s composition - covenants usually support employer criteria, not relevant to the RNA.

Signing the covenant means the branch is committed to:
- promoting the fact that it’s an Armed Forces-friendly organisation;
- using the help and support to veterans in apportioning benefits, services and accessing charitable funds;
- providing support for the whole Armed Forces family, establishing an immediate social network for the family and a voice within the community;
- actively working with partner organisations – such as the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Armed Forces Strategic Forum, which helps people on their way;
- companionship with like-minded veterans through regular meetings and social events, encouraging mental wellbeing;
- offering support to local cadet units;
- active participation in Armed Forces Day.

Putting pen to paper were Commander Phil Sparke, CO of Birmingham GNR HMS Forward and Lt Cdr Bob Beveridge, Warwick RNA president, witnessed by Timothy Cox, Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire.

The ceremony was concluded with a traditional toast to The Queen and Warwick branch with a tot of rum for all present.

# Cardiff case mystery

DO YOU recognise this case?
Royal Marine Dave Prichard hopes you do; he’s appealing for help in uncovering the whereabouts of the cabinet which once held pride of place aboard HMS Cardiff.
Dave, who served as a sergeant at HMS Cambria in Cardiff, visited the Type 42 destroyer HMS Cardiff several times during her visits to the city.
He made a number of presentations to the ship, including a centenary presentation containing a crystal glass engraved ‘The President’s Glass’ which was attached to the wall in the mess ba
WITH bright colour – and poignant reflection – sailors and Royal Marines around the UK marked 20 years since the lifting of the ban on LGBT men and women serving in the armed forces.

Naval bases and Royal Marines units flew rainbow flags from their main masts, sailors attended a House of Commons reception and Portsmouth’s Naval Base headquarters lit up in colours to mark the anniversary.

Those who took part wanted to send a clear message – that the Naval Service welcomes all talent to its ranks, regardless of your sexual orientation or gender identity.

Commander Sam Kinsey-Briggs is the co-chair of Compass, the sexual orientation and gender identity network of the Naval Service.

Cdr Kinsey-Briggs, who attended the reception in Parliament, said: “I was honoured to attend this special occasion.

Celebrating 20 years since lifting the ban with fellow service personnel and our veterans, some who lost their careers, was humbling and inspiring.

“It’s especially relevant for me as we celebrate 30 years of women at sea this year too.” Lieutenant Aaron Wilding, who also attended the reception, joined the Royal Navy before the ban was lifted. He said: “Having joined the navy before it was lifted, I have lived through the transition process and on a personal level I now feel so proud to feel liberated enough to be my true self.

“I spent so many years holding back on who I was but now I feel that being allowed to be myself allows me to give all my all.

“I joined the Royal Navy to serve my country and I have faith that I work for an organisation that stands for honesty, openness and integrity.

“In order to defend our nation, we need to be representative of what that is.”

Rainbow flags were raised at key locations across the UK, including the Royal Navy’s three main naval bases in Portsmouth, Devonport and Faslane.

Fleet Air Arm personnel at RNAS Yeovilton and Royal Marines from 43 Commando in Faslane also flew the flag to mark the anniversary.

In Portsmouth, the Naval Base Headquarters was floodlit in rainbow colours for a week and banners adorned lampposts around the base.

Lieutenant Commander Jenny Dunford, from Portsmouth Naval Base, said: “For a while now, generations of people joining the Royal Navy simply don’t rate sexuality as a quality of any more importance than eye colour.

“I would highly recommend the armed forces to people of any sexuality and assure them they can be safe in the knowledge that hard work and the ability to bring your whole self to work is the key to reward and our overall operational capability.”
FREE Mortgage Advice

Whether you’re looking to use the Forces Help to Buy scheme, finding your first mortgage, want to switch rates to save money or releasing capital to renovate your own home… you can get the advice you need by calling our Free Mortgage Advice service.

It’s as easy as this
We ask you a few simple questions, incomings, outgoings, that kind of thing. It takes around 15 minutes. Then it’s an appointment with one of our impartial mortgage advisors. They take the time to understand what you’re looking for, before coming back with the best option for you. They will then guide you through your mortgage journey.

One call could put you on your way to a better deal
01543 440 944
Lines are open: Mon-Fri 8.30am - 5.30pm.

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.

Mortgage Excellence Plc, trading as Forces Mutual, is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Registered in England & Wales No. 03527577. Registered office: Alexandra House, Queen Street, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 6QS. For your security all telephone calls are recorded and may be monitored.

FM3086
The LAST of an elite group of men who led the daring ‘midget submarine’ attack on Hitler's flagship has died aged 97.

Lieutenant John Lorimer was second-in-command of X-6 – one of three four-man X-craft submarines tasked with taking the German battleship Tirpitz in Norway in September 1943.

Only two of the 52-men strong crew survived the extended adventures through the arctic at their base in Narrative.

They placed explosive charges under the battleship, but the X-craft were spotted by the Germans and towed to the beach by the British. The crew was captured and some men lost their lives.

The submariners told their captors what they had done, but Tirpitz’s crew paid too little attention to what the British had seen, and a boat from bow to stern as the explosives detonated.

The ship sank on 10,000 tonnes of water, one of her dive planes was captured and the man’s plane was shot down. The battle damage put them out of commission for months.

The two X-craft commanders subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross for their actions, John Lorimer was awarded the DSM.

All spent the rest of the war in German prison camps, notably Marlag O (officers) near Bremen, where Lorimer was involved in an attempted escape to attempt.

Two fellow inmates fled the camp after an elaborate ruse set in for them at roll call.

The two men became a post-war film, Albion RN, while the attack on the Tirpitz was turned into a semi-fictionalised account on the big screen,.

On returning to civil life near Ay, Mr Lorimer became a forestry consultant and author.

He took part in 50th and 70th anniversary reunions of X-craft submariners in Scotland where a memorial cairn was erected, the neighbouring loci, battleships used by the X-craft to train for their missions.

He also attended the 10th anniversary of the Ministry of Defence in 2003 at the Alfred Hotel, and he was guest of honour at Faslane in 2018 for the annual dinner celebrating the Silent Service (personal advice with a commemorative X-craft Commando coin).

Capts Michael D Booth, DSC
MSM Heron, Sacred, Fife, Bulwark
Peter Forsey, RNVR
Received 2019: 48
Qualified as mine clearing diving officer December 1966.
Joined as a Boarder in 1966 and went on to be a Sub Lieutenant in HM Med Fleet, Chevon, Mercury, QHFM Ewbank, Eroyd, Rembrandt, Green, Tring, BRNC, Dartmouth, Brixham, Mumbles, COMCVDN, Yarm, Wootton (CO), Beacham (CO), FSCNV, (CSc), Wootton (CO), Beacham (CO), 28 December 1989, aged 86.

Submariners’ Association

Capt Ronald W Jenkins
RNVR
Bristol, HMS Alexander, Andrew, Thule and Tactician. Member of Manchester Branch. Died on December 10, 1980.

Kelvin Tanton Mech1, Served 1960-68 in HMS Ambuscade, Defiance. RNEC
Died December 28, 2019, aged 86.

Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNCO
Lt Cdr Derek J Freeman, HMS Fiji, Tiger, HMS Tiger, Ambuscade, Defiance, RNCO
Died December 29, 2019, aged 86.

Lt Cdr John Baden Forsey, Served from 1949-
Reno (Commander), RNVR (Royal Naval Reserve) Brixham, Mumbles, COMCVDN, Yarm, Wootton (CO), Beacham (CO), FSCNV, (CSc), WSCNV (CSc), Brixham, Mumbles, (CO), Beacham (CO), 28 December 1989, aged 86.

Submariners’ Association

Capt Ronald W Jenkins
RNVR
Bristol, HMS Alexander, Andrew, Thule and Tactician. Member of Manchester Branch. Died on December 10, 1980.

Kelvin Tanton Mech1, Served 1960-68 in HMS Ambuscade, Defiance. RNEC
Died December 28, 2019, aged 86.

Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNCO
Lt Cdr Derek J Freeman, HMS Fiji, Tiger, HMS Tiger, Ambuscade, Defiance, RNCO
Died December 29, 2019, aged 86.

Lt Cdr David John Baden Forsey, Served from 1949-
Reno (Commander), RNVR (Royal Naval Reserve) Brixham, Mumbles, COMCVDN, Yarm, Wootton (CO), Beacham (CO), FSCNV, (CSc), WSCNV (CSc), Brixham, Mumbles, (CO), Beacham (CO), 28 December 1989, aged 86.

Submariners’ Association

Capt Ronald W Jenkins
RNVR
Bristol, HMS Alexander, Andrew, Thule and Tactician. Member of Manchester Branch. Died on December 10, 1980.

Kelvin Tanton Mech1, Served 1960-68 in HMS Ambuscade, Defiance. RNEC
Died December 28, 2019, aged 86.

Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNCO
Lt Cdr Derek J Freeman, HMS Fiji, Tiger, HMS Tiger, Ambuscade, Defiance, RNCO
Died December 29, 2019, aged 86.

Lt Cdr David John Baden Forsey, Served from 1949-
Reno (Commander), RNVR (Royal Naval Reserve) Brixham, Mumbles, COMCVDN, Yarm, Wootton (CO), Beacham (CO), FSCNV, (CSc), WSCNV (CSc), Brixham, Mumbles, (CO), Beacham (CO), 28 December 1989, aged 86.

Submariners’ Association

Capt Ronald W Jenkins
RNVR
Bristol, HMS Alexander, Andrew, Thule and Tactician. Member of Manchester Branch. Died on December 10, 1980.

Kelvin Tanton Mech1, Served 1960-68 in HMS Ambuscade, Defiance. RNEC
Died December 28, 2019, aged 86.

Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNCO
Lt Cdr Derek J Freeman, HMS Fiji, Tiger, HMS Tiger, Ambuscade, Defiance, RNCO
Died December 29, 2019, aged 86.
THE GROVE REVIEW

brief summary of British cruiser classes which might have come earlier with a bit more detail to explain the nature of the units at the heart of his account. He concludes with sectors on weather damage, design and machinery.

The author clearly feels himself a cut above other writers on naval history – ‘historians’ he calls them, in inverted commas – at least some of whose work he rather provocatively describes in his introduction as “tired excuses for acceptable writing”. Dismissive mentions of ‘commercial’ books seem rather strange. All this means that the reader expects a paragon of historical writing. Sadly, and perhaps understandably, no-one is perfect.

The book has more than its fair share of errors. The author is so fixated on his largely British sources that – contrary to his claims of a wider perspective – he provides a too-narrowly-focused analysis. For some reason he makes a particular point that the destroyer attack on Bismarck (cruiser warfare?) scored hits on the German ship. These were claimed but they did not happen. It may be a misprint but the Italian battleships in the Battle off Calabria in 1940 fired 13in, not 15in shells. The author invents non-existent naval air arms for both Italy and Germany. Both countries’ maritime air forces were under Air Force control, like RAF Coastal Command. There is also an annoying tendency to move from the past to present tense, for no apparent reason.

The book is liberal in its criticism, particularly of the Italian Navy which, as far as the author is concerned, could do little or nothing right. He overstates the effects of the Taranto raid. Italian capital ships were out only days later, hence the Battle of Cape Spartivento that he had discussed earlier. This is an example of the sometimes loose relationship of the various parts of the book. The Italians basically had a ‘fleet in being,’ concept – not a bad idea given their manifold disadvantages. Sir Julian Corbett would have approved, even if the author of this book does not. Its conclusion that “a fleet in being is not a real fleet – it is a failed fleet” is verging on the strategically illogical.

Despite all these problems the book is not without its virtues and utility. Its detailed tactical accounts and analysis demonstrate that British cruisers were not as vulnerable to air attack as many assume. The in-depth analysis of anti-aircraft gunnery and tactics is ground-breaking and most enlightening. British cruisers were sunk by air attack but they survived most attacks and the anti-aircraft capabilities protected them and the assets they were escorting to good effect. Cruisers also contributed their gunfire to surface actions, not least the sinking of the Bismarck. The gunnery details are fascinating and this is a book from which much can be learned, although the rather strange and self-conscious refusal to use footnotes or end notes undermines its role as a guide to further research.

Technical detail on cruisers can be enhanced by a monumental reference book by Conrad Waters, British Town Class Cruisers: Design Development and Performance, Southampton and Belfast Classes (325 pages, ISBN 978-1-5267-1885-3). Based on archival material, the book analyses in great detail the design and careers of these important ships. He concludes that they “can be considered a successful design” with the flexibility to fulfil unexpected technical and operational requirements, earning a “distinguished service record.” The ships were also of great use in the post–1945 navy and, of course, HMS Belfast still survives in the Pool of London.

The final Seaforth cruiser book is rather different: a study of the French armoured cruisers which posed a major threat to the British Empire’s maritime trade at the turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries. French Armoured Cruisers 1887-1932 by John Jordan and Philippe Caresse (272 pages, ISBN 1-5267-4120-2, £40) contains much interesting new material and is essential reading for those interested in this period of naval history.

Unidentified British cruisers engage the Italian Fleet off Sardinia on November 27 1940, as seen from HMS Sheffield. Picture: IWM A 2408
SPORT

THE Royal Navy 10km team are looking to build on their successful 2019 campaign. The year started off with two informal 10km races; Bristol in May and Cardiff in September. These events were a chance for the team to get together and represent the Navy in a competitive yet relaxed environment, ready for the more serious Inter-Service fixtures later in the year.

Runner Mathew Hendery said: “In September the RN Athletics Club 10km team headed to Cardiff. The team was comprised of various members of the fleet; Royal Marines, FAA, Surface Fleet, RNR and CDF.

“With a range of abilities and injury statuses, goals varied widely between getting around the course and smashing PBs. A chilly start led to glorious sunshine and spending most of the race shifting from side to side chasing the shade.

“Being a flat course and a fierce level of competition, the race saw several members improve their 10k PBs and others race competitive times. In particular, Jodie knocked 15 minutes off her PB and I managed to shave off four minutes and join the sub-40 club.

“I particularly enjoyed my first outing in the RN vest and am looking forward to competing in future events (hopefully further afield, having today only ventured from Swansea).”

During the year, several members of the RN also represented the UK Armed Forces Team (UKAF) across the country. These included Craig Connor and James Thomas in the Stirling 10km, and Adam Stokes in the Brighton 10km. Adam was the second RN runner that year to go sub-32, with a time of 31:59.

While on exchange at RAF Cranwell, navy runner Lieutenant Phil Boak became the first member of the Senior Service to win the RAF Benson seven-mile road race. Lt Boak also won the Lincolnshire Road Running Series, helping Cranwell’s men’s team take top spot and scoop the college’s sports team of the year awards.

Lt Boak was credited with resurrecting the RAF Cranwell running club, which now has around 40 active athletes.

If you are interested in running for the navy, regardless of ability, distance or skill, please email Lt Phil Boak at Philip.boak743@mod.gov.uk

Racing teams for Cardiff 10km (above); Benson seven-mile race (left) and Brighton 10km (below)
Ride out in the country

SPORTSMEN and women aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth rowed 14,820km to raise more than £2,000 for RNRMC. AB (WS) Ryan Whatmore describes how it went.

I thought it might be possible to use the indoor rowers on board HMS Queen Elizabeth to row the distance needed to get the ship back to homeport, of the ship’s Westland 19 deployment.

We needed 30 team members to cover 8km everyday to complete the 14,820km journey and get the ship back to homeport.

After proposing my concept to the Physical Training Instructors onboard, I was given their full support and advice on how to get started.

The recruitment started slow and with only a month a get together, I was worried we wouldn’t have the members required. However, as word spread, more people became interested in taking part and by the time we had enough people on the team, knocking the daily total down to 6km per day, a very agreeable figure.

With the support of the PTIs, they delivered training and technique sessions, rowing programmes and dietary advice suited to the team due to the high level of physical activity we would be doing. Unfortunately, within the first few weeks of the deployment, members of the team started to experience the hardship of the challenge or the incompatibility it had with their routines at sea and dropped out. The team was beginning to display its effect on the ship, reduced personnel down to 38 personnel.

Although initially they picked up some penalties, very quickly the team got the hang of things and in the first round every rower had managed to clear at least one section. Mne Ollice Harcombe displayed fantastic control of his machine and was one of only three rowers on full-size Enduro bikes to make it past the second corner on the particularly difficult graded hill.

The afternoon saw the start of the two-hour hare-and-hound event and the end of the dry weather.

With two classes, novice and expert, the team were split between two lines starting 30 seconds apart.

As the flag dropped on the expert class, Mne Harcombe and his Yamaha 250 got caught up in a three-bike crash with Army star Tom Ellwood, allowing Michael to gain a lead and Oliffe leaving himself with a job to do to make up the time.

Thirty seconds later the novice class shot off into the rain with WO1 Bill Callister getting a great start on his Husqvarna 350, followed by LAET Michael Mne Ollie Harcombe Callaghan on his big 450cc KTM. As the race wore on the team smashed in the laps and everybody finished well, including LAET Richardson despite his spectacular attempt at crossing a particularly large tree which luckily was caught on camera and surely a contender for crash of the year.

The following day saw the start of the main event, a time-enduro Enduro to include three laps.

Each lap involved a steady 12Km loop followed by a 750M flat-out sprint section which combined with the trials scores would decide the overall winner of the event.

Michael showed fantastic pace from the start and put up a 1:46 on the sprint, but the team were no match for Ellwood of the Army, who straight off the back of a world Enduro title managed a very impressive 1:23 lap.

The Army Championships proved to be another step in the right direction for the RNRMC, which is currently enjoying a surge of success thanks to the incredible input from the team management in fostering support and sponsorship from the RNRMC and industry.

The added support partnered with a fantastic team spirit and drive to train and compete has seen the team go from strength to strength in 2019 and the huge RNRMET branded awning is now a well-known sight at events across the south west. The aim will be for a podium at the 2020 Army Championships.

Picture: Gooner Snaps

Masterful displays

NINETEEN Royal Navy rowers competed at the British Rowing Indoor Championships, winning two individual medals and three UKAF Inter Services 2k titles.

Setting a high standard early on, WO1 Paul “Tiny” Nash (Nelson) finished with a bronze in the men’s 50+, in a time of 6 mins 25.5 secs. Nash also took the UKAF men’s Hwt Masters 2k title.

CPO Collin ‘Mr Plymouth’ Lebea (Drake/MCIT) won gold in the BBC Men’s Hwt 55+ 500m in 1 min 22.1 secs. Cdr Dan Connor (HGS) finished fourth in the men’s Lwt 50+ 2k in 6 mins 52.1 secs, taking the UKAF Inter Services men’s masters Lwt title.

PoP Rich ‘Chazz’ Clarett (Sultan) was also a fourth-place finisher in the men’s Lwt 30+ 2k in 6 mins 51.6 secs.

CPO Claire Drew (HGS) was seventh in the women’s Hwt 40+ 2k in 7 mins 38.2 secs, but was another team member with a UKAF Inter Services title in the women’s masters 40+.

Other top ten finishes included WO1 Mark Branson (Sultan) seventh in the men’s Lwt 55+ 2k in a personal best 7 mins 15.4 secs. Lt Cdr Adrian Long (Sultan) last competed for a full season in 2012, where he was the fastest RN 2k racer at the World Championships in Falmouth. Consistently the fastest RN 2k performer this season, he posted a season’s best of 6 mins 14.5 secs to finish eighth in the men’s Hwt 30+, just 1 second slower than his 2012 time.

PO Sam Spencer (HMS Queen Elizabeth) was competing in her first major race, having spent a few months on board under the guidance of COP/DAZ Hogie. She rowed close to her personal best, finishing 12th in the women’s Hwt 40+ 2k in 7 mins 56.1 secs.

Lt Cdr Ruth Guest (INM) rowed 7 mins 53.6 secs to finish 15th in the women’s Hwt 30+, with PO Roxane Long (HGS) finishing eighth in the women’s Lwt 30+ 2k in a personal best 8 mins 20.8 secs.

The men’s Hwt 40+ 2k has long been ultra-competitive, always attracting large numbers. Leading the way for the Royal Navy was Major Alex Pickett (CBR) setting a personal best of 6 mins 33.0 secs to finish 16th, just ahead of Lt Cdr Clinton Good (HGS) and PO Jack Greenan (SULTAN) ecstatic at beating the 7 min barrier for the first time in 6 mins 58.0 secs. Lt Sam Caus (NAS Caldey) competed in the very high class Men’s Open Hwt 2k, rowing 6 mins 24.0 secs to finish 15th in a race where the winner was one of only 2 to go sub 6 mins at the event.

Perhaps the biggest achievement of the RN team was PO Nicola Harper (Sultan), demonstrating what can be achieved through structured training, setting a third consecutive 2k personal best in a race setting.

Oarsome challenge
MORE than 80 sailors and Royal Marines swapped warships and military bases for the dramatic setting of Stubai Glacier to sharpen their Telemark skiing skills. Personnel from 18 different units across the land volunteered for the annual development camp, this year hosted on the slopes just outside Innsbruck in Austria.

They went through two weeks of intensive training from military and civilian experts on the largest winter camp run by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines in the 13 years it has nurtured the sport, which is still considered a niche alongside its Alpine cousins.

And although the fortnight was chiefly aimed at skiing prowess, improving fitness and fostering team spirit and morale, Exercise White Dagger also taught Royal Marines skills which they will use when they head to Norway on their annual Arctic exercise.

Telemark skiing originated in the namesake region of Norway in the mid-19th Century. A long piece of synthetic fabric – known as a ‘skin’ – is fitted to skis to allow users to move uphill. The ski binding fixes the toe but frees the heel, making its unique ‘lunging’ turn very distinctive on a downhill slope. The technique is extremely popular among Royal Marines thanks to their long-standing experience of cold weather and mountain training in Norway.

Telemarking is recognised as an official Royal Navy winter sport. Each year White Dagger allows novice skiers to learn and develop their skills under a team of top-quality military and civilian instructors.

The exercise is also designed to support participation by the most junior ranks in the service – personnel who might otherwise never get involved in winter sports.

“White Dagger was a great opportunity for the most junior Royal Navy and Royal Marine ranks – both regular and reservist – to learn a challenging sport,” said organiser Warrant Officer Wayne Sear, Royal Marines, from the headquarters of the Littoral Strike Group based in Plymouth.

The skills and confidence they gain are also hugely transferrable to their military careers.”

Under his supervision what started as a single minibus of keen volunteers in 2005, is expected to reach 100 participants this year. Under interest in Telemarking has fluctuated over the years in the civilian world, the sport continues to make inroads in the Navy, partially due to the Royal Marines’ expertise in the Arctic, but it is also because Telemarking is viewed as a more challenging and aesthetic version of downhill skiing.

Marine Tom Morgan from 45 Commando, based in Arbroath, said: “White Dagger was great for me. For someone who has never skied before, it got me fully involved with the Telemark technique and its definitely something I wish to continue alongside my Naval career.”

The exercise concluded with a slalom under race conditions followed by a prize ceremony. After two rigorous weeks of instruction, the sailors and marines cut an impressive sight as they Telemarked down the glacier – Scottish participants especially, dressed in kilts!

The top skiers from White Dagger will be selected for Exercise Telemark Titan, involving both military and Great British Telemark racing teams in France, before progressing on to both the Naval and Inter-Services competitions.

The 2019 season saw the Naval Service Telemark skiers win at the Inter-Services Snow Sports Championships – claiming victory over the Army and RAF for a third consecutive year.

Many of the Royal Marines were also putting their new skills to the test during their annual winter deployment to Norway culminating in Exercise Cold Response next month.

Report: Lieutenant Colonel Angus Precious RM
MORE than 80 sailors and Royal Marines swapped warships and military bases for the dramatic setting of Stubai Glacier to sharpen their Telemark skiing skills.

Personnel from 18 different units across the land volunteered for the annual development camp, this year hosted on the slopes just outside Innsbruck in Austria.

They went through two weeks of intensive training from military and civilian experts on the largest winter camp run by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines in the 13 years it has nurtured the sport, which is still considered a niche alongside its Alpine cousins.

And although the fortnight was chiefly aimed at skiing prowess, improving fitness and fostering team spirit and morale, Exercise White Dagger also taught Royal Marines skills which they will use when they head to Norway on their annual Arctic exercise.

Telemark skiing originated in the namesake region of Norway in the mid-19th Century. A long piece of synthetic fabric – known as a ‘skin’ – is fitted to skis to allow users to move uphill. The ski binding fixes the toe but frees the heel, making its unique ‘lunging’ turn very distinctive on a downhill ski slope. The technique is extremely popular among Royal Marines thanks to their long-standing experience of cold weather and mountain training in Norway.

Telemarking is recognised as an official Royal Navy winter sport. Each year White Dagger allows novice skiers to learn and develop their skills under a team of top-quality military and civilian instructors.

The exercise is also designed to support participation by the most junior ranks in the service – personnel who might otherwise never get involved in winter sports.

“White Dagger was a great opportunity for the most junior Royal Navy and Royal Marine ranks – both regular and reservist – to learn a challenging sport,” said organiser Warrant Officer Wayne Sear, Royal Marines, from the headquarters of the Littoral Strike Group based in Plymouth.

“The skills and confidence they gain are also hugely transferrable to their military careers.”

Under his supervision, what started as a single minibus of keen volunteers in 2005, is expected to reach 100 participants this year.

While interest in Telemarking has fluctuated over the years in the civilian world, the sport continues to make inroads in the Navy, partially due to the Royal Marines’ expertise in the Arctic, but it is also because Telemarking is viewed as a more challenging and aesthetic version of downhill skiing.

Marine Tom Morgan from 45 Commando, based in Arbroath, said: “White Dagger was hooting and a fantastic introduction to Telemark skiing. It will really set me up for success during my deployment to Norway for Exercise Cold Response.”

Leading Seaman Archibald Lucas, from the Submarine Flotilla in Devonport, added: “White Dagger was excellent. For someone who has never skied before, it got me fully involved with the Telemark technique, and it’s definitely something I wish to continue alongside my Naval career.”

The exercise concluded with a slalom under race conditions followed by a prize ceremony. Under two rigorous weeks of instruction, the sailors and marines cut an impressive sight as they Telemarked down the glacier – Scottish participants especially, dressed in kilts!

The top skiers from White Dagger will be selected for Exercise Telemark Titan, involving both military and Great British Telemark racing teams in France, before progressing on to both the Naval and Inter-Services competitions.

The 2019 season saw the Naval Service Telemark skiers win at the Inter-Services Snow Sports Championships – claiming victory over the Army and RAF for a third consecutive year.

Many of the Royal Marines were also putting their new skills to the test during their annual winter deployment to Norway, culminating in Exercise Cold Response next month.

Report: Lieutenant Colonel Angus Precious RM
ROYAL NAVY boxer Jake Murray punches his way to victory to earn the top performer award at the HMS Sultan boxing dinner.

The LETME, who beat REME fighter Lance Corporal Bradley Greenwood, was part of a combined Royal Navy team, from Sultan and Collingwood, to take on boxers from REME at MOD Lyneham.

The competition was played out in a highly electric atmosphere, with the show including a display by a Corps of Drums from the HMS Sultan Volunteer Band and a parade of the fighters.

The boxing dinner provides the perfect platform for novice boxers to take those first steps into a competitive boxing ring. In total, nine action-packed bouts were on the card, with one all-female navy fight, in addition to the eight Army vs Navy bouts, all consisting of three, three-minute rounds.

The fight of the night turned out to be the clash between Able Rating Samuel Cole (Collingwood) and Craftsman Thomas Hutchinson (REME).

For LETME Murray, it was his third success at HMS Sultan, having represented the Gosport base in 2016 and 2018. The Defence College of Technical Training oversees both the Air and Maritime Engineering training at Sultan and the training of REME engineers at Lyneham. As the evening drew to a close, the Commandant of the College, Air Commodore Adam Sansom was invited to present the winning team with the trophy. With the balance of bouts tied at 4-4, it was the Royal Navy team who had previously won the show who retained the trophy.

Sultan Boxing Squad Coach, Leading Physical Training Instructor Joel Kirby said: “All the boxers fought with great bravery and, considering it was a lot of their first bouts, showed a great deal of skill and class in the ring.

“They put all the hard work in during the weeks leading up to the competition and performed well under the pressure of fighting in front of a crowd of over 500 cheering spectators.

“I couldn’t be prouder of our Navy boxers. The preparation for the show has revealed a lot of talented boxers at Sultan with huge potential, not limited to those who made it into the ring. I hope they all decide to stay in the sport, as they could have great futures in the sport, should they desire it.”

Results were:

ET(CIS) Ellie Naylor, HMS Collingwood, beat Sub LT Clare Mawson; L/Cpl Jack Lewis, REME, beat ET(ME) Marcus Houston; CFN Asa Huw Owen-John, REME, beat LET(CIS) Billy Robbins; Mid Thomas De Carvalho Gross, Collingwood, beat Spr James Nelson, REME; LET (CIS) Callum McCall, Collingwood, beat Lt Max Heron, REME; ET(ME) Michael Burns, Sultan, beat Spr Anthony Lowe, REME; Cfn Thomas Hutchinson, REME, beat AB Samuel Cole, Collingwood; Spr George Louveridge, REME, beat PO Dave Gibson, Sultan.

Pictures: PO Phot Nicola Harper