Starship shines

HMS Enterprise docks at Harumi Pier in Tokyo during her high-profile visit to the land of the rising sun. We look at what life on board the starship is like (see pages 16-19)

Picture: LPhot Alex Ceolin

PRINCE OF WALES COMMISSIONED • HOMECOMINGS • YEAR THE SILENT SERVICE ROARED

The rain drenched the red carpet and caused the Sea Cadets and Sea Scouts dutifully forming a royal guard of honour with little protection from the elements to shiver. The darkening gloom devouring Portsmouth as Storm Brendan whipped up the harbour waters was in sharp contrast to the colour and pomp filling the sprawling hangar.

The workshop for state-of-the-art stealth fighters and helicopters had been transformed into a makeshift amphitheatre, three huge banks of seats for a good 2,000 guests who’d been dutifully filing through the naval base gates since 6am.

On the hangar wall, an array of signalling flags: HMS PRINCE OF WALES COMMISSIONING. In the ‘arena’, the Band of Her Majesty’s Royal Marines Collingwood, a 96-strong Royal Guard, plus Colours Party plus several divisions of sailors, all immaculately presented, drilled for weeks. Commissioning ceremonies have changed little through the decades, even centuries. Martial music.

An inspection of the massed ranks by the guest of honour, in this case the carrier’s Lady Sponsor the Duchess of Cornwall. An inspection of the massed ranks by the guest of honour, in this case the carrier’s Lady Sponsor the Duchess of Cornwall. The warrant of commission ordering the ship’s commanding officer: “you are to proceed forthwith to prepare for service…”

A pertinent biblical passage about the sea or water. The Naval Hymn. The Naval Prayer and other blessings of goodwill and prosperity.

And, to conclude, the youngest sailor (Chef Seth Day, just 17) and the captain’s wife (Liesel Houston) plunge a knife into a magnificent commissioning cake (in the form of a replica carrier and huge ship’s crest).

Except that these days a commissioning is a carefully choreographed multimedia affair run as much by directors wearing headphones and microphones as naval chaplains and parade marshals with commanding voices. Huge TV screens give the audience an unparalleled, intimate view of proceedings.

The click and whirr of cameras in the crowd has given way to the occasional flashing light and a sea of phones capturing the moment, or recording a snapshot in time.

And corralled in a ‘pen’ at the side of the temporary grandstand, two dozen cameramen, journalists and photographers observed everything for tonight’s news and tomorrow’s headlines.

It was a world away from the last time the Fleet had welcomed an HMS Prince of Wales: January 17 1941. A low-key service in the depths of a wartime winter, largely out of the public eye to shield the vessel’s advent from the enemy.

That Prince of Wales, a King George V-class battleship, was loved by her crew. “She was a thrilling sight,” gushed former Able Seaman gunner Richard Osborne, now 95. Her flame burned brightly but all-too-briefly. Within 11 months she was at the bottom of the South China Sea, a victim, with battle-cruiser HMS Repulse, of overwhelming Japanese air power.

Seventy-eight years to the day, almost to the hour, of that tragedy the Royal Navy chose to welcome the new Prince of Wales into its family. Seventy-eight years to the day, almost to the hour, of that tragedy the Royal Navy chose to welcome the new Prince of Wales into its family. The ‘other ship’, dressed overall like other vessels in the naval base to mark the occasion, was berthed next to Prince of Wales on the specially-reconstructed jetty.

Outwardly – apart from the huge crest and R08/R09 on the superstructure – the two carriers are identical. Prince of Wales is slightly longer, slightly heavier, with minor modifications, incorporating lessons learned during building HMS Queen Elizabeth, as well as new tech like the ‘Bedford array’ – a series of lights which will help guide pilots still carrying live weapons to the correct spot to set down their Lightnings on the flight deck.

Lieutenant Helen Crisp, one of the officers of the watch, said to take part in the ceremony watched by her family and royalty made the commissioning the highlight of her three-and-a-half-year career to date.

“There was a lot of pressure to get it right,” she said. “We practised, practised, practised – and it paid off. I think we did well and put on a good show today.”

And as Storm Brendan whipped up the harbour waters was in sharp contrast to the colour and pomp filling the sprawling hangar.

Helen continued: “There’s a different character and feel to HMS Prince of Wales – she’s a bit more relaxed than her sister, a sort of younger sister vibe, but we are still the military force that we need to be.”

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The Harrier couldn’t land still carrying active bombs and missiles, it was too heavy. The combination of the Prince of Wales’ size, the array and the ability of the F-35 to conduct a slow rolling landing. It will save money, save time and save on the need to restock on supplies. It has the ship’s air engineering officer Commander Simon Brierley very excited. As does the prospect of seeing the cavernous hangar – as long as HMS Illustrious, his previous carrier – filled with F-35s and Merlins.

‘The mood on board is fantastic,’ he said. ‘Everyone has been looking forward to the commissioning for a long time. And now everyone really wants to get on with the job of getting her to sea, showing what she can do. There’s enthusiasm, a great esprit de corps, a great family feeling.’

Air Engineering Technician Patrick Gauson was temporarily assigned to HMS Queen Elizabeth during his basic training and took part in her commissioning ceremony.

‘That blew my mind,’ the 30-year-old from Edinburgh said. ‘It confirmed that I’d made the right decision with my career. ’

The Duchess of Cornwall and her husband the Prince of Wales – newly-titled Commodore-in-Chief, Aircraft Carriers, as the royal patron of our two new 65,000-tonne future flagships – spent a good 90 minutes mingling with the ship’s company.

‘The mood on board is fantastic,’ he said. ‘Everyone has been looking forward to the commissioning for a long time. And now everyone really wants to get on with the job of getting her to sea, showing what she can do. There’s enthusiasm, a great esprit de corps, a great family feeling.’

As he and his shipmates chatted with reporters or showed off their ship to their families, the Duchess of Cornwall and her husband the Prince of Wales – newly-titled Commodore-in-Chief, Aircraft Carriers, as the royal patron of our two new 65,000-tonne future flagships – spent a good 90 minutes mingling with the ship’s company.

The Duchess, who formally named the carrier just over two years ago, hailed an ‘incredible feat of British engineering...The sheer scale and size of HMS Prince of Wales is simply breathtaking - Clarence House would fit on the flight deck 25 times.

‘Impressive though she is, she only becomes a warship with a ship’s company who breathe life into her. Without them, she is just a steel hull. They represent the very best of the United Kingdom, Britain’s Overseas Territories and the Commonwealth.’

They will not represent Britain far beyond home waters this year, as the ship continues training as well as undergoing maintenance and receiving capability upgrades in Portsmouth; the first F-35 Lightning jets aren’t due to embark until early 2021... about the same time as HMS Queen Elizabeth deploys for the first time.

It’s a far cry from when 26-year-old Lieutenant Zoe Jones joined the carrier in November 2018 and the ship was “more scaffolding and pipes” than active warship.

She’s one of those 600-plus souls who has breathed life into the vessel, all the way through to taking Prince of Wales to sea for the first time and parading at the commissioning.

‘I didn’t think I would feel the pressure, but I did,’ said the officer of the watch. ‘When you see the stands full, the band, you realise it’s the real thing, not the practice. And you realise you are not aboard Prince of Wales, but HMS Prince of Wales. You are a naval ship.’

To echo that point, a couple of dozen feet above the young officer, on the flight deck, Leading Seaman Damien Bye and Writer McKenna Shepherd-Ford fought with Storm Brendan – there was an audible patter of rain draining off the deck during quieter moments of the service – to haul down the Blue Ensign and raise the White.

And thus, in the words of the new carrier’s sponsor, ‘a new chapter opens in the ship’s history – which stretches back to the 1765... and the beginning of an exciting new era in our long naval history.

‘Wherever in the world HMS Prince of Wales sails, may she acquit herself with honour and return safely home’
Training or on patrol around the UK
HMS Albion
HMS Medway
HMS Trent
HMS Mersey
HMS Tyne
HMS Magpie
HMS Hurworth
RFA Tidesurge
820 NAS
HMS Westminster
RFA Tidesorce
HMS Prince of Wales

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**FLEET FOCUS**
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**NEW YEAR, new start, new carrier.**
We begin 2020 with HMS Prince of Wales (yes, we ended 2019 with her as well) as she was commissioned into service in the presence of the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall (see pages 2-4).

The following day the royal couple attended a service of thanksgiving (see page 26) for the life of Royal Navy benefactor Sir Donald Gosling.

The second of the Royal Navy's carriers welcomed her big sister HMS Queen Elizabeth as she returned to Portsmouth following her successful Westlant 19 deployment to the USA and Canada (see pages 6-7).

The strike group's escorts and units, HMS Dragon, Northumberland, RFA Tidesorce, 820, 845, 814, 815 NAS and 42 Commando also returned to their respective bases (see page 5).

Flying the flag for the Royal Navy over the festive season was HMS Enterprise., as the survey ship continued her high-profile Asia-Pacific deployment.

2019 was the year the Silent Service roared and we look back at how the Submarine Service commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Continuous at Sea Deterrent (see page 13).

Royal Navy sailors, accompanied by Royal Marines Band Scotland, took over guarding Royal palaces for the second time in history (see page 12).

Budding F-35 Lightning naval pilot Lieutenant Lewis Phillips has become the first trainee fast jet fighter to 'go solo' in the UK's new trainer, just a month after it entered service (see page 15).

Royal Marines from 45 Commando swapped their Arbroath home for the humid and wet conditions of the Borneo jungle for Exercise Curry Trail (see centre pages). The Lead Commando Group were put through their paces in the humidity and difficult terrain.

Type 23 HMS Richmond (see page 17) has emerged from refit as the nation's most advanced frigate.

Offshore Patrol Vessel HMS Tamar (see page 15) has welcomed the first members of her ship's company.

Royal Marine experts as combating piracy and drug smuggling, Juliet Company, 42 Commando, took their training to the next level aboard HMS Albion (see page 9) and tested their sharp-shooting skills on Lydd Ranges in Kent (see page 14).

We take a look at the work being done by the Submarine Service (see pages 6-7), with HMS Defender, Kent and Montrose.

Sailors behind one of the most dramatic rescues in recent years, and a record-breaking drug haul, were among Servicemen and women recognised by the Queen in the Operational Honours (see page 21).

**Leading Airman Engineer Technician Ben Welsby** has become one of the country’s top apprentices at the UK's largest skills event (see page 23). He is based at RNNS Yeovilton, where 64 Servicemen and women marked the successful completion of their engineering training (see page 95) at a formal parade.

Using unmanned oceanographic gliders and profiling floats in anti-submarine warfare operations has seen the Royal Navy DARE team honoured at an awards night (see page 15).

A book by the curator of the Fleet Air Arm Museum tells the story of 110 years of naval aviation in 100 iconic objects (see page 14).

A 56-year chapter in the life of HMS Raleigh has ended with the departure of Royal Navy logistics training (see page 17). Before the move, six teams went head to head in the Raleigh kitchens to take part in the annual Devonport Foiliaire Cook and Serve competition (see page 22).

A team of RN and RAF survival experts from RAF Marham travelled to Norway to join their NATO partner for a training package (see page 15).

Finally, 2019 was a great year for Royal Navy logistician Sam Matavese. He played for Fiji in the Rugby World Cup in Japan, then signed for Northampton Saints – and topped it off by winning the Sportsman of the Year Award at the Naval Service Sports Awards (see page 39).

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**HAPPY NEW YEAR, and welcome to the first View from the Bridge of 2020.**

Over the past year, we have been setting out the details of the navy’s exciting transformation programme. This is changing the way we operate, making a good navy even better and helping our people to be the best that they can be.

We have already told you about many of the changes we are making, from our shift to a carrier strike navy again to the Continuous at Sea Deterrent.

We have some amazing people in this One Navy. We are going to change the structure of the navy, starting with reorganising Navy Command Headquarters and reducing the number of 2* posts. We will flatten Command Headquarters and reducing the chain of command, but we do want people to feel able to challenge the status quo, take decisions and seize opportunities when they arise.

Empowerment is in your hands; it is now up to you to use it. Email your ideas to editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk with ‘my view’ in the message field.

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

On patrol with ‘my view’ in the message field.
We’re so proud of you

Carrier Strike Group escort ships and units return home

ESCORT ships and units from the HMS Queen Elizabeth carrier strike group returned to their respective homes after three months in the USA.

First home was 815 Naval Air Squadron’s 212 Wildcat Flight to RNAS Yeovilton, followed by HMS Dragon into Portsmouth.

Brittany MacDonald, from Basingstoke, was wanting to welcome home her wife Leading Hand Chloe Macdonald.

The pair got married in August and Brittany was looking forward to spending time together as newlyweds.

The 31-year-old said: “This is my first homecoming and it’s been really exciting. It has been hard with Chloe being away, especially so after the wedding – I have been counting down the days until her return.

“I am so proud of what she and the ship have been doing.”

HMS Dragon’s Commanding Officer Commander Giles Palin spoke highly of what his ship’s company achieved while in the States.

He said: “It is with immense pride that we return to Portsmouth having made history on our Western 19 deployment. “Not only did we demonstrate the operational readiness of our carrier strike capability – with the magnificent HMS Queen Elizabeth as its heart – but in doing so became the first Type 45 destroyer to act as the air and missile defence commander, clearing the skies out to hundreds of miles for a UK Carrier Strike Group with F-35 Lightning jets in the foreground.

He added: “None of this would be achievable without the support and dedication of our families in the UK.

“All Dragons can return to their families with their ship and her stories told, having achieved so much.”

Days later HMS Northumberland and RFA Tideforce, returned to warm welcomes in Devonport. The ship’s flight made their way to their respective homes at RNAS Culdrose and Yeovilton.

Supporting the Strike Group units throughout were Merlin from 814 NAS based out of RNAS Culdrose, providing anti-submarine protection and search-and-rescue capability, along with personnel from 1700 NAS.

Commando Merlins from 845 NAS acted as the aviation workhorses, transporting stores and equipment, providing SAR cover and also landing Royal Marines from Lima Company, 42 Commando ashore to exercise the recovery of isolated personnel.

Merlin from 814 NAS – aka the flying tigers – and Wildcat from 815 completed the air group.

HMS Northumberland, which deployed ahead of the rest of the strike group, first encountered Hurricane Dorian as she arrived in Halifax. She went on to play a key role in the NATO Exercise Cutlass Fury, which involved 26 ships and 36 aircraft.

Commanding Officer of Northumberland, Cdr Ally Pollard said: “It has been an exciting challenge for my ship’s company, some of whom have never been to sea or deployed, and whilst only a short deployment it has nevertheless been demanding.”

HMS Northumberland has sailed some 21,896 miles since August 27. This is equivalent to driving from Lands’ End to John O’Groats 29 times.

HMS Northumberland’s Merlin Mk2, Mohawk Flight, clocked up 130 hours flying including over 55 sorties and numerous periods of high alert.

Feeding 200 sailors three meals a day was a challenge with 20,790 rashers of bacon, 13,840 sausages, 9,000 potatoes 190 kg sweetcorn being consumed. Charity has also been a strong focus throughout deployment with Northumberland raising over £2,800.

Deputy Marine Engineering Officer, Lt James Jeffcoate added: “Having served in HMS Monmouth for Westlant 18, it’s been fantastic to see the development of UK Carrier Strike.

“Seeing HMS Queen Elizabeth close up is a strong focus throughout deployment with Northumberland raising over £2,800.

“Having served in HMS Monmouth for Westlant 18, it’s been fantastic to see the development of UK Carrier Strike.

The CO of RFA Tideforce, Captain Terrence Burke, said: “Ground-breaking milestones, first-of-class trials and unwavering professionalism of the ship’s company has truly demonstrated the capability of RFA Tideforce and her ability to extend the limits of the RN and our NATO Allies, ensuring their operational effectiveness 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.”

RNAS Yeovilton also welcomed back 815 NAS’s 201 Flight from RFA Tideforce.

“The deployment has been my highlight as a flight commander,” said Lt Jim Carver, of 201 Flight.

“I joined the RN as AET in 2005, and never for one minute thought I would become a pilot, let alone a small ship’s flight commander.

“It has been a privilege to lead such a well-motivated, enthusiastic and professional group of people in support of the re-generation of UK Carrier Strike.”

Sister Act, see pages 6-7.

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TOGETHER at last.

HMS Queen Elizabeth lines up alongside younger sister HMS Prince of Wales in Portsmouth Naval Base for the first time.

The elder of the two returned home to Hampshire after three months in the USA.

Hundreds people gathered to welcome back their loved ones, and to see the two carriers together.

HMS Queen Elizabeth sailed from the UK in August, along with her escorts HMS Dragon, HMS Northumberland and RFA Tideforce, to conduct Operational Tests with UK F-35B jets from the UK Lightning Force for the very first time.

HMS Queen Elizabeth's first port visit was to Halifax, Nova Scotia, before the Strike Group made their way down the East coast of the USA to Florida.

The carrier embarked three UK jets from 17 Test and Evaluation Squadron (TES) based at Edwards Air Force Base in California, as well as three that crossed the Atlantic from RAF Marham.

The five-week Operational Test phase, headed up by the Air Warfare Centre, was designed to provide 'end-to-end' testing of the jets and the combined Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel that operate and support the squadrons.

The tests included mission briefs, preparation of the jets, including arming them using the ship's Highly Mechnanised Weapon Handling System (HMWHS), launching, fighting the mission (including weapons drops) and recovery back to the ship.

This has been an extremely successful deployment for HMS Queen Elizabeth. Westlant19 has all been about increasing the complexity and tempo of our activity, building the capability of the Strike Group and testing ourselves in a demanding training environment with our close partners from the US Navy and Marine Corps.

Embarking UK F-35B Lightning for the first time and integrating them within the Carrier Strike Group is a significant milestone and we are well set for an equally demanding 2020 and our first operational deployment in 2021.
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ROYAL Marine experts in pirate/drug smuggler take-downs took their training to the next level aboard the nation’s flagship.

The men of Juliet Company, 42 Commando, are the UK’s specialists in board-and-search operations – they are behind a string of multi-million pound drugs busts in the Middle East over the past 12 months.

The unit, based at Bickleigh just outside Plymouth, is undergoing a transformation as part of the reshaping of the Royal Marines under the Future Commando Force programme, with 42 in general focussing on seagoing operations – and each of its four companies assigned bespoke roles:

- Juliet – board and search;
- Kilo – short term training teams;
- Mike – additional force protection for deployed Royal Navy/Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships.

Three seven-strong teams from Juliet deployed to the Gulf aboard Her Majesty’s Ships Montrose, Kent and Defender as part of the effort to safeguard shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and the wider mission of general maritime security (such as intercepting drug-runners whose illegal trade funds international terrorism).

Such missions are generally performed by relative newcomers to boardings – they’ve undergone an eight-week training course before joining the small teams assigned to frigates and destroyers.

That experience means they are eligible, with the relevant training, to serve with the Fleet Contingency Troop – the men called upon to face down a hostile crew on a ship, known in military parlance as a ‘Level 3 boarding’ as the RN classifies its operations thus:

- Compliant (crew of the target vessel will welcome you aboard);
- Non-compliant (crew of the target vessel are obstructive and unhelpful, but not openly hostile);
- Opposed (the crew will attempt to block any boarding attempt; fighting will be involved).

Such classifications can count for little in the real world, however. “You never know what you are going up against on a boarding. Even on a compliant boarding, someone could pull a gun on you half way through,” says Major John Middleton, Officer Commanding Juliet Company.

Boardings involving the Fleet Contingency Troop are invariably on a larger scale than those carried out on dhows in the Gulf, so Juliet took advantage of flagship HMS Albion as she conducted training off Plymouth to prepare her for a winter deployment to Norway.

Using two RAF Chinook as their steeds and the cavernous loading dock of Albion – packed with landing craft, vehicles and shipping containers – as their target, more than two dozen commandos ‘rapid roped’ (abseiling... without a rockface) from the helicopters and made their way into the bowels of the assault ship.

Pretty much everything Juliet Company wear and carry into action is specifically adapted to their mission:

- Lightweight helmet with night vision device
- Additional gloves for fast roping
- FRIS suit (fire retardant immersion suit)
- Tactical floatation system
- Lightweight body armour which both provides protection and is buoyant should a marine end up in the water
- C8 rifle with extendable stock
- Glock pistol

“The equipment is top end, lightweight, capable, adapted to close-quarters battle,” explained Major Middleton. “Over the past three or four years, Juliet Company has developed its equipment and now we’ve pretty much got the optimum suite.”

The few days on Albion gave his men the chance to get back into the routine of living at sea in relatively austere conditions, but above all train, train, train.

“We are the specialists in this environment and what makes us good is that we exercise all the time. Last week we were boarding a Brittany ferry, this week Albion. It’s all good practice,” Major Middleton added.

Report and Pictures: WO2 Richard White RM
Range Rovers, see page 14
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* 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.
SAILORS marched back to Buckingham Palace – and the history books – by mounting guarding duties for only the second time in 359 years.

After weeks of rehearsing drills to the highest of standards the 104 officers and ratings started their sentry duties, taking over from the 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards.

It is only the second time the Naval Service has ever undertaken the role, with the first being in 2017 to mark the Year of the Navy.

Officer commanding the Royal Navy Guard, Lieutenant Commander Richard Dobson, said: “This is an intense and memorable experience for all of us at the end of several weeks of ceremonial duties training, just eight or nine days of it specifically on palace guarding, and could be regarded as the pinnacle of my professional career which began as a rating in 1990.

“The instructors from the guards could not have been better, for those eight or nine days they really put us through our paces and prepared us thoroughly for our inspection last week enabling us to mount guards today.”

Palace duties for the sailors followed November parades at the Cenotaph and Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance.

Only after they were concluded could training, mostly conducted on the HMS Excellent drill square in Portsmouth, focus on guarding.

 Pronouncing them ready to take over duties at Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, St James Palace and the Tower of London, Brigade Major of the Household Division Lieutenant Colonel Guy Stone said: “The sailors were outstanding and had clearly put a huge amount into their preparation. They were well turned out, confident of all guard change formats and clearly enjoying the experience.”

Palace duties also meant the Band of Her Majesty’s Royal Marines were in high demand, with one of the bands providing musical support whenever the Navy mounted or dismounted the guard.

Troops of the Army’s Household Division have guarded the sovereign and Royal Palaces since 1660.

Navy mounts ‘outstanding’ palace guard
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THE JOURNEY DOES NOT HAVE TO END!
IT WAS the year that the Silent Service roared.

2019 marked CASD 50 – 50 years of the Continuous At Sea Deterrent – with people from around the country coming together to mark half-a-century of dedication, sacrifice and commitment.

CASD 50 began in January with a visit by then First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Philip Jones, to the Home of the UK Submarine Service at HM Naval Base Clyde.

Six Submariners received new silver deterrent patrol pins – awarded after ten patrols – but more importantly First’s visit launched CASD 50 commemorations, shining a spotlight on this usually stealthy lightweight arm of the Royal Navy.

Operation Relentless as it is known has been the longest sustained military operation, ever undertaken by the UK’s armed forces. Generations of Submariners, their families, civilian workers and industry partners have dedicated countless hours to keeping our submarine-based deterrent at sea, 24 hours a day, seven days a week for 50 years.

In May this remarkable human endeavour was recognised by a service at Westminster Abbey: Attended by Honorary Head of the Submarine Service, The Duke of Cambridge, the event included testimonials from Submariners, their family members and those who have supported the maintenance of the deterrent.

At HM Naval Base Clyde, which has operated and maintained the deterrent since its inception in 1969, a major CASD 50 event was held in July. It was thought to be the biggest single gathering of Royal Navy Submariners since World War 2 and The Princess Royal attended to mark the occasion.

Chief Petty Officer Karl Davies was one of several people who received an award on the day, being presented with his gold deterrent pin by the Princess, signifying 20 patrols.

“It was the highlight of my career with the Submarine Service,” said Chief Davies. “I am fortunate to be supported by my fantastic family and friends, so I felt that receiving my pin from Her Royal Highness on the 50th anniversary of CASD was a testament to them.

“Both my fiancé and my mum travelled from West Wales to be there on the day. It was an incredible honour!”

Visitors were also treated to the usually secret sight of a Vanguard-class submarine completely out of the water, when the base’s shiplift facility, was opened in doors to reveal one of the 16,000-tonne vessels undergoing routine maintenance.

The year of commemorations concluded in November when the iconic Edinburgh Castle was the venue for a Service of Thanksgiving.

Around 200 people gathered within the Castle’s Scottish National War Memorial, among them Miriam Walker who gave a moving account of what it is like to be the wife of a submariner.

Speaking at the event, Miriam said: “I honestly don’t know how those of us who stay behind get through it. Not knowing where your loved one is, what they’re doing, how they are or when they’re even likely to be back is, for most people, incomprehensible.

“I can’t emphasise enough how living in a community where deployment and separation is part and parcel helps. Being surrounded by others who have a natural empathy is immensely supportive.”

Miriam also spoke of that magical moment when the boat returns home from deployment.

“It’s exactly the same feeling I had as a little girl on Christmas Eve,” she said. “Knowing he’s back but still not home is excruciating but the minute he walks through the door it’s like meeting him on that blind date all over again.”

During the Edinburgh event several charities were also in attendance with Erskine Veterans, Military Vs Cancer and Helensburgh Sea Cadets as the nominated beneficiaries of money raised throughout the year at the CASD 50 events and through the sale of merchandise each receiving £10,000.

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2019 marked CASD 50 – 50 years of the Continuous At Sea Deterrent – with people from around the country coming together to mark half-a-century of dedication, sacrifice and commitment.

CASD 50 began in January with a visit by then First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Philip Jones, to the Home of the UK Submarine Service at HM Naval Base Clyde.

Six Submariners received new silver deterrent patrol pins – awarded after ten patrols – but more importantly First’s visit launched CASD 50 commemorations, shining a spotlight on this usually stealthy lightweight arm of the Royal Navy.

Operation Relentless as it is known has been the longest sustained military operation, ever undertaken by the UK’s armed forces. Generations of Submariners, their families, civilian workers and industry partners have dedicated countless hours to keeping our submarine-based deterrent at sea, 24 hours a day, seven days a week for 50 years.

In May this remarkable human endeavour was recognised by a service at Westminster Abbey: Attended by Honorary Head of the Submarine Service, The Duke of Cambridge, the event included testimonials from Submariners, their family members and those who have supported the maintenance of the deterrent.

At HM Naval Base Clyde, which has operated and maintained the deterrent since its inception in 1969, a major CASD 50 event was held in July. It was thought to be the biggest single gathering of Royal Navy Submariners since World War 2 and The Princess Royal attended to mark the occasion.

Chief Petty Officer Karl Davies was one of several people who received an award on the day, being presented with his gold deterrent pin by the Princess, signifying 20 patrols.

“It was the highlight of my career with the Submarine Service,” said Chief Davies. “I am fortunate to be supported by my fantastic family and friends, so I felt that receiving my pin from Her Royal Highness on the 50th anniversary of CASD was a testament to them.

“Both my fiancé and my mum travelled from West Wales to be there on the day. It was an incredible honour!”

Visitors were also treated to the usually secret sight of a Vanguard-class submarine completely out of the water, when the base’s shiplift facility, was opened in doors to reveal one of the 16,000-tonne vessels undergoing routine maintenance.

The year of commemoration

The Princess Royal presents CPO Karl Davies with his gold deterrent pin at HMNB Clyde

Shiplift facts and figures

1984: Design started
1989: Design completed and construction started
1990: Superstructure erected
1993: Shiplift commissioned and handed over to HMNB Clyde
1994: Operational proving programme started. First docking of SSBN
1995: Engineering modifications made to the submarine cradle
1996: First docking with the new cradle
2013: 100th docking within the shiplift

Dimensions:
Length: 186 metres
Width: 52 metres
Height: 45 metres

■ The shiplift is a covered dock running the length of 22 double-decker buses
■ It is constructed of reinforced concrete supported by piles driven into the bedrock
■ It uses a proven ‘syncrolift’ lifting system, consisting of a steel platform operated by 96 hoists and associated cables
■ It is capable of raising a giant, 16,000-tonne Vanguard-class submarine clear of the water so that engineering staff can conduct maintenance to submarines on dry land

Six Submariners received new silver deterrent patrol pins as the CASD 50 commemorations began

Submariners gathered at Clyde in July to mark CASD 50

A Vanguard-class boat returns from her patrol

The Princess Royal presents CPO Karl Davies with his gold deterrent pin at HMNB Clyde

Above, submariners attending the service at Westminster Abbey; Above right, the year of commemorations ended with a service of thanksgiving at Edinburgh Castle; Right, three charitable organisations received £10,000 each from fundraising throughout 2019
ROYAL Marines boarding operations specialists have been testing their expert marksmanship to ensure they are ready for combat in the tight and difficult environment of a ship.

The marines from Juliet Company of Plymouth-based 42 Commando are the Green Berets at the forefront of the boarding missions specialism. They are called upon to carry out such tasks – which includes counter piracy and counter narcotics – but also play a role in training allies in their expert area, called maritime interdiction operations (MIOPS).

The commandos are embarked on Royal Navy warships in small elite teams – very much in keeping with how the Royal Marines want to continue to work as they evolve into the Future Commando Force, which puts their amphibious commando skills at the forefront of their work.

This latest training makes sure the marines are up to scratch, ready to carry out operations and maintain their expertise in combat in the often cramped surrounding of ships or smaller craft.

The ranges element of the training package took place during the day and under the cover of darkness, testing elements of J Company using their Glock pistol and the C8 rifle – weapons used by the commandos because of their advantage in close-quarters combat.

This all took place at Lydd Ranges in Kent and was the perfect chance to lay down some lead.

"The live fire training needs to be done in all conditions, day and night," said Major John Middleton, Officer Commanding of J Company.

"Royal Marines boarding operators are also trained to a high enough level to instruct Close Quarter Marksmanship and Close Quarter Battle Techniques to partner forces overseas."

The Maritime Operations specialists 42 Commando are deployed from their Bickleigh Barracks home all over the world right now.

Lima Company have been on Westlant 19 and have tested themselves in rescuing downed pilots as part of the HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier Strike Group. They fought their way through a replica developing world village, developing the tactics they would use to locate, if necessary liberate and finally escort or carry injured or trapped personnel back to either of Britain’s two new aircraft carriers.

"It’s great to be back in Quantico to further our skills – the training facilities and terrain here provide a great environment for doing just that," said Warrant Officer 2nd Class Neil Smith.

It marks a busy time for the Royal Marines as they build up to the Winter Deployment in the Arctic. A 40 Commando Battle Group have been in the California desert while 45 Commando have been Exercise Lusty Scel in the jungles of Belize.
Award for those who DARE

Project HECLA has the potential to change the way the Royal Navy conducts anti-submarine warfare, closing the gap to machine speed warfare and accelerating detection or deterrence of opposition assets. The difference it could make to operations impressed the judges at the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) Innovation Awards. It won the Armed Forces category at a ceremony in London.

USING unmanned oceanographic gliders and profiling floats in anti-submarine warfare operations has seen a Royal Navy team honoured at an awards night.

Project HECLA, funded by the Navy’s Discovery: Environment and Rapid Exploitation (DARE) team, will see ships use near real-time, oceanographic data in anti-submarine exercises.

The intention is for near real-time data mapping of the ocean environment to be fed via satellite to shore units for processing and analysis, then to front line units to give an enhanced understanding of the underwater battle space.

Lt Cdr Matthew Cox, from Portsmouth-based DARE, said: “By improving our understanding of the environment, we can make better decisions in anti-submarine warfare operations.

The gliders and profiling floats are versatile as they could be shipborne or put on the back of a fast boat. “It is about benefiting live operations and that’s something we hope to start trialling next year.”

Survival team deliver key training to NATO partner

A TEAM of survival specialists answered a call from Norway to help with training for F-35 pilots.

The team of Royal Navy and RAF personnel from RAF Marham in Norfolk travelled to Orland Air Base in Norway to join their NATO partner for a training package.

The Norwegian Air Force called on the UK for training aircrew on how to survive if their aircraft was downed.

Run-up of the Armed Forces category went to Royal Marine Colour Sergeant John McDonald, of 47 Commando, who researched modern solutions to surveying a beach before an amphibious assault. He repurposed an off-the-shelf product using side-scan sonar technology to support beach reconnaissance.

The training consisted of a simulated brief on parachuting from the F-35, moving on to land training brief. This included elements of the equipment used to save their lives if they were to eject from the aircraft. The team also discussed rescue methods and how to use the equipment provided to survive.

Following the briefings, the pilots were despatched into a swimming pool and had to use their life rafts in various simulated scenarios to replicate what could happen at sea.

“The Norwegian Air Force were extremely impressed with the training delivered,” said PO Williams. “They commented saying this is the best survival training they had ever had and that the training we provided would be the difference between life and death.

“This was an extremely satisfying detachment to help an F-35 and NATO partner out.”

“This shows the strength and adaptability of the F-35 SERE training team, and the ability of the RN and RAF to work successfully to deliver training for the F-35 aircraft.”
Not six months after tensions in the Strait of Hormuz reached their highest level in years, there’s a new guy in town to keep the peace. His name is, er, IMSC. RICHARD HARGREAVES reports from Bahrain.

OPERATIONAL headquarters. Conjures up images of underground bunkers. Retinal scans. Fingerprint readers. Long sterile corridors. A conference room with a huge table. And, naturally, a map of the world. So when we’re directed to a couple of beige tents in a courtyard surrounded by sandy-coloured shipping containers down a side street behind the US Fifth Fleet’s headquarters, it’s a little disappointing.

Step inside, however, and Tardis-like a modern operations centre unfolds before our eyes: an air-conditioned space filled with tables, computer displays, two dozen staff and, at the far end, a couple of giant screens depicting all that is happening in the waters.

In front of them stands Commander Ben Keith, the Royal Navy officer selected to run Operation Sentinel on a day-to-day basis.

Six months ago none of this existed. But then tensions in the region increased. Iranian revolutionary forces attempted to seize the tanker British Heritage – only to be driven off at gunpoint by HMS Montrose. A few days later the Stena Impero was taken, her crew held captive for two months until they and their ship were released.

Those actions prompted a concerted British response initially – four major surface ships ushering UK vessels through Hormuz.

But these are international waters. The 2,000 ships in them fly a myriad of national flags. The goods or fuels they carry are bound for a myriad of lands.

Security in the Strait of Hormuz is an international problem, demanding an international solution: the international Maritime Security Construct, to be precise, formally opened in early November in Bahrain.

Committed to it, initially, are the UK, USA, Australia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Albania.

They provide the ships and personnel to run Operation Sentinel, offering protection to millions (14.7 to be precise by mid-November) of tonnes of merchant shipping.

Their movements – and others – are plotted on the large display screens at the ‘business end’ of the tent complex, each one peppered with hundreds of colourful markers denoting a vessel of 300 tonnes or more. Today there are more than 1,800 ships on the board. The figure is typically around the 2,200 mark, and we’re not counting vessels under 300 tonnes which are not obliged to transmit their details.

That discounts hundreds, if not thousands, of dhows, plus tugs and other small craft at work in the Gulf.

A long-standing international task group, CTF 152, takes charge of security at sea in the central Gulf; it’s the mission of the new organisation to watch over vessels passing through its narrow gateway at Hormuz – depending on the speed of the ship, a passage which typically lasts 12 to 18 hours.

Larger ships – cruisers, frigates and destroyers, such as HMS Defender and Montrose – act as ‘sentinels’ on both sides of the strait.

And a number of smaller fast patrol boats act as ‘entries’ operating across the southern Gulf providing additional protection on other key sea lanes, while maritime patrol aircraft such as Australian P8 Poseidons, gather intelligence from on high.

Men and women of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines serve their country, often at times of danger. Established in 1922, the RNBT helps non-commissioned Sailors, Marines and their families (The RNBT Family) throughout their lives.

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We are the bobbies on the beat, the deterrent.

COMMANDER BEN KEITH
A dignified end and a Worthy beginning

A 36-year chapter in the life of HMS Raleigh has ended with the departure of Royal Navy logistics training. In two months’ time all members of the logistics branch – supply chain, caterers, writers – will leave their respective trades (or return for refresher/promotion courses) at a new tri-Service £331m purpose-built complex at Worthy Down near Winchester.

Guest of honour was Rear Admiral Andy Kyte, Chief Naval Logistics Officer, who also acted as the VIP inspecting officer for the weekly passing-out-parade of new recruits. Staff and students from the DMLS joined the successful trainees on the parade ground. Commandant Suzi Nielsen (picture below by Dave Sherfield with Brigadier Mike Caldicott chatting to senior rate instructors) the school’s final commandant, said it had served as the alma mater for two generations of sailors.

“While we leave with some sadness, the prospect of training alongside our Army and RAF colleagues in significantly-improved facilities is very exciting,” she added.

“It will allow us to share best practice on a tri-Service basis, while still maintaining our Naval ethos.”

The move to the new site is being staggered over five months to minimise disruption to staff and students. The first RN writers are due to arrive this week. The move to the new, purpose-built complex was announced at a Defence Maritime Logistics School Graduation parade on Saturday 29 September 2018.

The school now moves to the new-look Type 23 class of frigates which is set to enter service in 2019.

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Gearing up for an imminent return to sea are the crew of HMS Richmond, emerging from refit as the nation’s most advanced frigate.

Located in Portsmouth, the ship has switched homes twice – from Plymouth where all the dedicated submarine-hunting Type 23s were being concentrated.

While in the hands of the engineers at Babcock, Richmond has undergone most of the same upgrades as the remainder of the frigate fleet has received over the past few years, notably replacing the aged Sea Wolf air defence missile system with the new Sea Ceptor.

Where Richmond stands out, however, is as test bed for her successors in the Type 26 City class of frigates; she’s the first vessel to receive the PGMU propulsion system – a new generation of diesel electro-gas turbine engines, accompanied by a fully-modernised control and surveillance system, making it easier to control and monitor the engines.

Richmond’s marine engineers have been putting the new system through its paces, with an extensive series of trials that will ensure the frigate sails with the highest levels of confidence and operational capability when she begins her sea trials.

Other crew members have been training extensively during the refit: regular fire and flood drills, warfare specialists fought simulated battles in the ops room simulator and chefs got stuck into Devonport’s cook and serve contest, earning a bronze medal for their efforts.

Sailors have also had time to enjoy adventurous training opportunities.

“It’s one of the perks of being in the Navy,” said Able Seaman Callum Board-Lynch. “I was fortunate to get on a summer package to the Navy Outdoor Centre in Germany – and what a week it was!”
Their job titles may read chef, hydrographics surveyor or engineering technician but in reality, for the men and women on board HMS Enterprise, their roles are as varied as the many port visits they have made so far this deployment.

One day, they could be steering the ship’s fast-boat during a man-overboard exercise, the next collecting data of the sea bed. It is no easy task ensuring the ship’s company are prepared and trained for any eventuality but Commanding Officer Captain Cecil Ladislaus knows he can rely on them to act when needed.

This was certainly true when the Plymouth-based ship had a substantial change of programme from survey operations in the Mediterranean to survey and engagement work in the Far East. With numerous port visits hosting important guests and a Remembrance ceremony with the Singapore navy, it is not just operations the crew have to be well trained for.

CO Ladislaus said: “We have been able to ensure the Royal Navy has a presence on the world stage with this deployment.

“It has taken me 18 years to get back to this part of the world and for many of the sailors, they have not been to these countries before. But they handled the change as professionals and they have really stepped up.

“On smaller ships, you get more opportunities and I think this deployment has shown that. We have people who’s roles can change on a daily basis and they are expected to perform to a high standard no matter what they are doing.”

At the end of one of her training serials, Enterprise conducted a routine investigation of the remains of WW2 ships HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse, before concluding with a memorial service.

A total of 764 died when the battleship and battle-cruisers were sunk on December 10 1941.

Sub Lieutenant Jennifer Walton read a short summary of the events of 1941 before Cdr Ladislaus addressed his ship’s company.

“It is right and proper that we take some time to think about what it was like for them as they were attacked from the air – over two hours or so – before their ships were sunk,” he said.

“If we put this into the context of the 45-minute battle damage exercise serials which we experience at work up during the Thursday war, this is quite a significant amount of time in this heat, watching, hearing, smelling, and sensing the fight to survive.”

In memory of the fallen, a weighted White Ensign was lowered into the water over the remains of the vessels and the Naval Prayer recited by all on board.

Time sailing from the Mediterranean to the Far East, via the Suez Canal, and then between Singapore and Japan has given the crew plenty of time to train in their different roles.

As pictured below, chefs can be asked to leave the galley during meal prep to help in a man-overboard situation while hydrographic surveyors could be tasked with manning the guns if the ship needs to protect herself.

But all on board are happy to step up, especially for a deployment many in the navy won’t have experienced.

Cdr Ladislaus added: “For the younger sailors, it’s the dream deployment. It is what you join up for. And for the people who have been before, it is still a bonus because they have that experience.”

Enterprise headed back to Japan after her stop in Singapore and was remaining in the Far East for the new year.
Able Seaman
Jack Horner

HIS first few months at sea have been memorable for Able Seaman Jack Horner. HMS Enterprise is his first ship and the hydrographic surveyor has enjoyed the challenges that come with life at sea. As well as his daily job collecting and analysing data from the ocean, the 20-year-old also has a few other key roles on board. These vary depending on what operational tasks or exercises HMS Enterprise has to conduct but training ensures he is up to scratch with all aspects of his responsibilities.

But his main focus is on surveys, using the ship’s single beam echo sounder and the multi-beam. AB Horner, from Milton Keynes, said: “There’s different types of survey that we do and this deployment has shown the diversity in what we can do. It’s the environmental data and imagery of the seabed - that side of it I do enjoy. A lot of what I have had to do has been on the bridge, monitoring the systems and maintaining logs.

“The hydrographic side of what I have to do is really busy. We take temperature readings from the water and there’s places where the ship works as a weather signal.

“It helps keeps people’s knowledge sharp and the data we collect is useful not only to us but other ships that could visit the same waters. We have to make a note of what we find, if there are any changes or anything unexpected. Sometimes we do go to places that have never been surveyed and there are risks with that.”

Being a survey ship, HMS Enterprise works closely with the UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton. Data collected can be uploaded to charts and then used for maritime safety or to learn more about the environment.

“AB Horner said: “Survey ships are something that people are surprised are in the Royal Navy. When they think the navy they think of frigates and destroyers. Hydrography is a niche branch that do get a lot of time at sea.

“At the start of her time at sea, HMS Enterprise went to Norway to work with NATO on mine countermeasures.

“The NATO exercises in Norway were really good. That was for ten days and the ship got to the Arctic Circle. AB Horner added: “We then did some survey work around Scotland and then four weeks off the coast of Dover. We were doing a couple of surveys mostly of the seabed.

“But when he’s able to pull away from his surveys, AB Horner spends time on the guns, the sea boat and as part of the guard for visitors hosted on board. Weekly training means he knows what is expected of him for these different jobs. He said: “It has been good keeping busy and getting the experiences as we go. We have been able to build on our skills through training and the ship is really good at peer-to-peer training as well.

“I always like getting out on the sea boat. That is by far my favourite thing.

“If the guard part of it. I enjoy the exercises we do on the guns to ensure we can be safe and know how to fix any problems. Shooting 200 rounds at a target is always exciting.

“Having a crew of around 60 is something AB Horner likes about HMS Enterprise.

“You get to know everyone, it being a small ship,” he explained.

“We have a good company on board and although there’s less manpower so we have to do more, by doing it you get to know everyone.”

Petty Officer
Mary O’Hagan

IN HER 16 years as a Royal Navy sailor, Petty Officer (Sea) Mary O’Hagan has served on a number of ships. These include all four Off-shore Patrol Vessels as part of the Fisheries Protection Squadron, aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious and now HMS Enterprise. The County Durham sailor, pictured left in the camouflaged “Buffer” on board the survey ship as well as the PO for Above Water Warfare. She has also overseen everything from training for gunnery exercises to practising guard parade for VIP visits.

She has enjoyed their recent visits to Singapore and Tokyo - even though the latter came with the pressure of getting Enterprise ready to host The Prince Of Wales.

Ensuring the guard are at their best and live up to the high standards set by the Royal Navy is one of her roles on the ship. PO O’Hagan spends hours training the ship’s company, running drills on the deck and making sure Enterprise was in top condition.

And when the visit was over, she was impressed with how the ship’s company did. “It went really well,” she said.

“The ceremonial guard looked great, the ship looked great so the visit was a success.

“It was the first time 50 per cent of the crew have met a member of the Royal family so I am really happy for them.”

“It was tough making sure Enterprise looked in shipshape seeing as we battled a typhoon the week before. But we accepted the challenge and got it done.”

Royal visits aside, PO O’Hagan was able to carry on with other aspects of her job on Enterprise - a ship she’s been on for two and a half years.

This includes helping the gunners on board be ready should they be called upon. She oversees the gunnery exercises, giving tips to the sailors and making sure they can operate the guns safely and with precision.

These took place on a transit to the Asia Pacific region. Even with 16 years in the Royal Navy, the Far East is not somewhere she’s been before.

PO O’Hagan said: “This deployment has been really good and I have never been to this part of the world before so it is very exciting.

“My dad was in the navy and visited the Far East so it is nice to visit the places that he saw in the 1960s. Our change in programme meant there’s been quite a bit of variety.

“We also didn’t have long to be ready for the change. It was all quite short notice.

“We had the ceremonial guard part of it for all the visits and then we attended a Remembrance ceremony in Singapore which we had to prepare for.

“When you see their memorial and how their memorial and how they look after it, you want to do your best to show your respect.

“This is the first deployment that I have done these sorts of things as the buffer and although it is busy, it is rewarding.”

Nearer to home, PO O’Hagan helped get HMS Enterprise ready when she made a rare visit to London early in 2019.

“Our time in London was a great success,” she added.

“We got lots of positive reaction from the public and it was good PR.”
It's raining, it's pouring, the Royals have got their brollies up. It wasn't just continually raining in the Belize jungle on Exercise Curry Trail, it was also, as is standard for the Central American jungle, humid. Real humid. It's often at 100 per cent during the rainy season.

What it creates is this sweat-box/soggy smash up that is a considerable portion of the challenge when going into battle in one of the world's most extreme climates. Not to mention cutting through the dense jungle and thick mud on the ground.

It's a bit different from their Arbroath home in Scotland, but this was another trial for 45 Commando in their role as Lead Commando Group, a mantle they took from 40 Commando back last summer.

Now they're getting ready to step off to the deep freezer of the Arctic, but first came the jungle and an environment they must master and be ready for combat in.

Being Lead Commando Group puts these marines at high readiness to deploy anywhere in the world, no matter how extreme the climate may be... hence why they must be ready for the jungle, desert and Arctic.

But before the freezing north, came Belize for Zulu Company and learning how to fight in the extreme humidity and difficult terrain of the jungle.

"It was a great experience, I was surprised how dense the jungle was in the area we were working and how difficult this made it to operate," said Marine Will Thomas.

"It is rainy season here which made the ground underfoot very muddy during the field firing."

The exercise is designed to teach all exercising troops to survive, move and fight in a jungle environment, operating from small four-man teams all the way up to a 30-man troop formations.

On arrival in Belize, all troops conducted an acclimatisation package at Price Barracks, the main base of the Belize Defence Force and the home of British Army Training Support Unit Belize (BATSUB), located just outside Belize City.

They then stepped off into the jungle, carrying out the exercises in several training areas.

The Spanish Creek area, a small zone about 50km north of Prince Barracks, saw Zulu undergo river crossing training, before heading to Guacamallo Bridge, where the commandos built base camps and all blank and live firing as well as engineer training was carried out.

The exercising troops and training teams then deployed to jungle base camps to conduct a 14-day basic and intermediate skills packages.

This included individual skills to survive, navigate and fight in the jungle, before moving on to eight-man section and 30-man troop level tactics, culminating in a seven-day live firing serial moving from individual to troop level.

The result of this training is that Zulu Company are now trained in jungle warfare, meaning 45 Commando can now call upon these specialists if needed in their role as Lead Commando Group.

During the live firing package ranks from 45 Commando's Assault Engineers also conducted a jungle demolitions package, practicing creating clearings for helicopter abseil insertions and extractions as well as emergency Helicopter Landing Sites (HLS).

This deployment also gave the marines a chance to experiment with the Future Commando Force concept, as the Green Berets press on with the way they will operate in combat in the coming years.

That put the specialist commando tactics at the forefront of their work, adding new kit and cutting-edge tech into the mix.
Knives out as chefs do battle in the kitchen

TWO sailors from Plymouth were among those competing in a Royal Navy Master Chef-style competition held at HMS Raleigh.

Six teams went head to head in the kitchen to take part in the annual Devonport Flotilla Cook and Serve competition, sponsored by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity and using the facilities at the Defence Maritime Logistics School (DMLS).

Leading Hand (Catering Services) Maria Richards, from Keyham, was part of HMS Richmond’s team, while Able Rate Danielle Burton, also from Plymouth, competed with a team known as the Devonport Catering Services Shore Establishment Team (CSSSET).

LSC Richards’ team were awarded a bronze medal for their efforts. The 32-year-old originally joined the Royal Navy in 2008 as a Steward and has recently completed a bespoke course to become one of the first Catering Services ratings capable of providing both front-of-house and rear-of-house services.

She said: “The guy who I was cooking with was coaching me; he was superb. It’s quite tough in that environment, but I really enjoyed it. I’m hoping in the future I’ll take part in many more competitions.”

AB Burton’s team also received bronze medals. The 22-year-old has been in the Royal Navy for four years and has so far served on three warships and ashore at 3 Commando Brigade for four years and has so far served on three warships and ashore at 3 Commando Brigade.

She said: “This competition aims to encourage our Flotilla’s highly professional team to showcase their core culinary skills, while nurturing pride in their professional achievement, building their team spirit, imagination and innovation.

“From this we hope to generate a greater interest in the Inter Flotilla Cook and Serve competition and the Tri-Service event, known as ‘Exercise Joint Caterer’, when we will take on the Army and RAF later this year.”

“Those were reciprocal years where a fish starter and a main course of beef. The dessert had to include flambé skills to be demonstrated at the table side.

The head judge for the competition was Chief Petty Officer Si Geldart, the Captain of the Naval Services Culinary Arts Team (NSCAT).

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The head judge for the competition was Chief Petty Officer Si Geldart, the Captain of the Naval Services Culinary Arts Team (NSCAT).

He said: “This is a stepping stone and as the NSCAT lead, I’m looking to pick up on their talent and bring them on for future competitions.”

Sweet and savoury treat for charity

A CAKE sale at HMS Collingwood raised £560 for the Parkinson’s Society.

There was something for everyone with treats both sweet and savoury, including bagels, neeps and tatties sausage rolls, cheese straws, caramel slices and lemon gherkins.

Sarah Porter won the savoury category and Tanya Macdonald triumphed in the sweet section with her “It’s Halloween and nearly Christmas but still dreaming of Summer” cake.

The Showstopper category was won by Simon Rollins who has only recently left the Royal Navy to join the Babcock team at HMS Collingwood.

He said: “This has been a great way to integrate myself into my new team here and, as I made my daughter Maisie in to help with the cake, it became a great way to enjoy some father-daughter time too.”

FORMER Royal Marine Joe Winch celebrates climbing Everest just two years after suffering severe Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Here Joe reflects on his epic achievement.

Climbing Mount Everest is a remarkable achievement for anyone. But climbing Mount Everest as part of my recovery from acute Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – when only two years prior the PTSD had destroyed everything about me and my world – that’s not just remarkable, it’s practically impossible.

But this was a remarkable opportunity for me and my recovery, so I committed to the expedition – understanding well that the journey would be incredibly difficult.

We were all experienced mountaineers, who had climbed in the Alps repeatedly, and as a team we had successfully summited Ben Nevis together in the summer of 2018 – enduring temperatures well below -20° Celsius and one of the worst storms on the mountain in over a decade.

Furthermore, we were all Royal Marines Commandos – meaning that not only had we passed one of the toughest military courses in the UK, but also, to have passed our course, we had all had to demonstrate the utmost courage, determination, selflessness and cheerfulness.

We began climbing in relatively mild conditions under a clear full moon, moving from 5,400 metres across the Khumbu Glacier, ascending the face, and then traversing the length of the Western Cwm – surely one of the natural wonders of the world.

Located at 6,400 metres, teetering on the edge of the glacier and perilously close to a row of huge overhanging seracs that were guarding the lower slopes of Everest, Camp Two is not a restful place. Yet, so far at least, the weather had been kind and we had made good progress.

We rested for a day and set off for Camp Three. Although another pleasant day with little wind, the climb from Camp Two to Three leads straight up the highest Face – a 1,500-metre wall of steep blue ice.

But here we were at least rewarded with the most spectacular views of the Western Cwm, Nuptse, Everest, and the Himalaya far below.

As we climbed the route ahead became increasingly clear – up the rest of the face to the South Col, beyond to the Balcony, and finally to the north summit of Everest.

We left the South Col at 19:30 as the sun set, the wind picked up and the temperature plummeted, the risk of the weather deteriorating further and leaving us dangerously exposed at the forefront of my mind.

When we reached the Balcony at 8,400 metres it was bitterly cold, but the wind had eased, and with a full moon overhead the views across the Himalayas, even in the middle of night, were spectacular.

On the way to the south summit though I started to have serious problems with my oxygen flow, my feet became painfully cold, and the wind – which had started to relent – increased dramatically driving down the temperature.

Despite being at an altitude of well over 7,700 metres in strong wind and temperatures as low as -30° Celsius, we covered the last few metres to the summit and at 06:50 we finally reached and embraced on top of the world. Being on the summit of Everest was an incredibly overwhelming feeling, full of emotion, relief, and pride.

I must emphasise that neither Everest nor my wider recovery has “cured” my PTSD – I still struggle tremendously. But in many ways my journey has done something far better than just curing me – it has helped me create a new life, a life which is far happier, brother, and less chaotic.

I am no victim, in many ways I am still striving for the top of the world, and I always will be – wherever I am, whatever I am doing. Because that’s who I am, Joe Winch, proud husband, father, mountaineering team member, Royal Marines Commando, and Everest summitter.

Knives out as chefs do battle in the kitchen

The Royal Children’s Charity

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A ROYAL Navy engineer from Manchester has been crowned one of the country’s top apprentices after winning a gold medal at the UK’s largest skills, apprenticeship and careers event.

Leading Airman Technician Ben Welsby, 28, was awarded the prestigious prize in Mechanical Engineering in the field of Aeronautics.

A panel of expert judges voted him top of his category after he completed a series of demanding challenges at the World Skills UK event in Birmingham.

Ben, who is currently serving at RNAS Yeovilton with 825 NAS, beat the best apprentices from around the country to win the prize.

“Achieving this is something I am very proud of,” said Ben. “I take pride in my work and the experiences I have gained in the competition can follow me into my future as an aircraft engineer.”

Joining the Royal Navy in 2015, Ben has been studying mechanical engineering for the last four years with the Royal Navy. His job at RNAS Yeovilton sees him work alongside some of the best aeronautical engineers in the world, maintaining and servicing aircraft at the site.

The former St Mary’s Catholic High School pupil, who still lives in Manchester, said this month he was joining his new squadron – 847 NAS – as a supervisor, putting what he has learned during training into full effect.

He continued: “I am excited to see what the future holds for my career as an aircraft engineer and where it might take me, but all I can do at the moment is gather the experience needed to maintain the right standards within my job.”

World Skills UK, at the NEC Birmingham, attracted some 80,000 young people seeking a vocational pathway to work.

One of the highlights of the three-day event was the National Finals of World Skills UK’s Competitions. More than 900 apprentices and students competed in over 70 different disciplines to establish who were the best in the country. Winners will be considered for the UK squad for the World Skills Shanghai in 2021 when students from around the globe will compete.

Cdr Andy Cree, Assistant Chief of Staff Training for the Royal Navy, said: “The Royal Navy’s involvement in important national and international events such as World Skills provides a benchmark to shape the training and careers on offer in a highly capable and technologically advanced Service.”

During the World Skills event in Birmingham the Royal Navy team hosted tens of thousands of young visitors. The navy’s display included Virtual Reality simulators replicating life on board a submarine, a Royal Marine physical fitness challenge, a Lynx helicopter, members of the Royal Marines Band, a culinary demonstration and plenty of information on apprenticeships. Personnel were also available throughout to provide expert advice to young visitors and parents alike.

There were also several talks with naval personnel including LFT Emily Rose from the Submarine Service, PO Jummy Clements from HMS Diamond, and Marine Louise Mottashed from the Royal Marines Commando Recruitment Team.

Report: Gavin Carr

Sailor carving out second career as author

THE Bee Gees bagged one of their first hits with the impossibly-titled New York Mining Disaster 1941. Filmmaker Irwin Allen made a career out of making skyscrapers (The Towering Inferno) and, er, killer bees (The Swarm).

And when not sorting out communications systems aboard Portsmouth-based frigate HMS Westminster, Leading Seaman Richard Jones, pictured, right, is carving a small niche for himself as an author bringing long-forgotten disasters and tragedies back into the public eye.

The 39-year-old in passion about giving victims and survivors a voice – it can be a cathartic experience for them – and making sure that tragedies which make the headlines do not disappear into oblivion when the journalists move on.

“I’ve always been interested in disasters, but what happens after the initial story has passed?” says Richard. “Everyone knows about Hillsborough, Lockerbie, the Herald of Free Enterprise, but what about the Lockington rail crash, the European Gateway which sank off Felixstowe in 1982, the Moongate tube disaster?”

In researching such tragedies the communications rating has also campaigned vigorously for memorials to be erected – there’s one in London’s Pimlico Square to the 43 victims of the Moongate disaster in 1975 (the worst peacetime accident on the tube), and at Lockington in East Yorkshire where a train and van collided on a crossing, killing nine people.

“I was 23, I had been gathering information and material since I was 11 and thought to myself ‘What can I do with all this?’ I decided to pick a subject, research it to death, and see what came of it,” says Richard, who’s spent 19 years in the Royal Navy.

“Official reports, inquests, local newspaper reports, interviews with survivors or eyewitnesses where possible – the amount of information out there is amazing, but it’s not just a case of googling it. The writing itself is fun. It just a matter of piecing it all together…”

The result – after ten years’ work – was The Toweing Inferno, which vanished in the North Sea…

It was written while serving in Westminster during his Baltic deployment earlier this year.

“‘I was fascinated by her life, but everything has been written about her already so I decided to invent something – but even though it’s fiction, the story has to be based on as much fact as possible,” he says.

He’s now returned to non-fiction, juggling three books simultaneously. Next up is the tale of the Pacific Glory, the tanker which exploded off the Isle of Wight in 1970, an anthology of ‘forgotten’ disasters such as the disappearance of the cement carrier Flag Theofano which sank in a storm in the Solent in 1990 and, finally, the most famous disaster of them all, the Titanic and her links with the author’s home town.

Aviators inspire future aircrews

SIX personnel from Commando Helicopter Force returned to their former university at Loughborough to inspire the next generation of aircrew.

Numerous engagement activities were undertaken by the officers and crewman of 845, 846 and 847 Naval Air Squadrons, Naval Flight Training School Flight and Flight Test involving students of the Aeronautical & Automotive Engineering Department - Typhoon Squadron, East Midlands University Air Squadron and Welbeck Sixth Form Defence College.

Lt Ollie Trowman, CHF Maintenance Test Pilot who led the visit, said: “This has been a unique opportunity to bring together ex-Loughborough alumni and showcase the careers and activities available within the Defence, Royal Navy, Joint Helicopter Command, Fleet Air Arm and Commando Helicopter Force.

‘It has been great to see and hear the students reaction, some of whom have never seen a helicopter up close, and fielding numerous questions and debates on what our jobs entail and how we fly and fix our aircraft.”
Raft of activities for URNU new joiners

Sailors bring cheer to hospital patients

NEARLY 100 sailors from RNAS Culdrose gave staff and patients at their local hospital some surprise cheer and respite by spending the day with them.

Air Engineering and Survival Equipment Technician trainees made the short trip from the air station to Yeovil District Hospital for a day of volunteering. Staff assigned the trainees to various wards and departments at the hospital, which admits around 35,000 people every year, and the sailors spread around orthopaedics and oncology wards, worked with the dementia team, helped out in A&E and generally bring some relief and a little cheer into the lives of people recuperating or awaiting treatment.

Among the tasks performed by the volunteers – some of whom had been born in the hospital – were serving up lunches and afternoon tea and bed making (including attempting the famous ‘hospital corners’), while a small group could be found in the foyer raising money for the hospital with a relay row.

Air Engineering Technician Daniel Barton joined the dementia team, drawing on his experience from a dementia charity that his mum founded. He said: “I had a great day – it’s been all about creating a positive social environment where we could just chill out, have lunch and play some games. I hope they enjoyed it as much as I did.”

For organiser Captain Nicholas Haines, spending time helping out at the hospital was a chance to “give something back to the community and in some small way return the fantastic support that the women and men of the hospital have given us and we will continue to give us in our hour of need.”

He continued: “Personnel from Yeovilton quite often require the help of the hospital. My family has used it many times and have always been treated with compassion and respect.”

“Where our young people came into their own however was taking the time to engage with the on, have someone help you with a crossword or simply make a cup of tea brings a welcome distraction.”

Students go back to school

BIRMINGHAM URNU students and their Commanding Officer spent two days working in the grounds of a school as part of their charity work.

Maintenance was carried out at St John Fisher RC Primary School in Kings Norton.

CO Lt Cdr Chris Andrews was ‘hugely impressed’ by the volunteering nature of the students who gave up free time between lectures.

The main task during their time at the school was the regeneration of a children’s vegetable garden that had become overgrown.

By moving three tonnes of earth by hand 200 yards from the delivery sacks to the gardening beds as well as weeding, the school plans to use the site for the planting and nurturing of vegetables by children who live in the city who may never have seen crops in a field. In addition to the gardening work, the team also added in the tidying up and removal of playground equipment that was no longer safe to use.

Aviators swoop in to clean up beaches in Cornwall

THE unit Warrant Officer from HMS Forward has hung up his hat after over 30 years in the Royal Navy and Royal Naval Reserve.

After having a young 17-year-old Steve Bland started his training to become a Marine Engineering Artificer at HMS Fugard. After completing his apprenticeship, he served on a number of ships, including HMS Achilles, RFA Diligence and HMS Donsdale. He also served on HMS Bristol during the Falklands War, and it was this service for which he was awarded the South Atlantic Medal in 1982. He was also awarded the General Service Medal in 1988 for his service in the Gulf.

After serving 13 years in the Regular Royal Navy, and at the rank of Charge Chief Petty Officer, Steve decided to leave in search of opportunities to 750 undergraduates from the country’s leading universities.

Forward has not gone unnoticed, as well as the medals awarded during his Regular service, Steve was selected to represent the Royal Naval Reserve at the Royal British Legion’s Festival of Remembrance in the presence of the Queen at the Royal Albert Hall in 2018.

In July 2019 he was presented the Lord Lieutenant’s Certificate at the HMS Forward Ceremonial Division to recognise his contribution to the Service. In September of the same year he had the privilege of parading the Scroop round the streets of Wolverhampton during the Freedom of the City celebrations, which he proclaimed to be a real highlight of his career.

Having bought a villa in Portugal a number of years ago, WO Bland now plans to permanently move abroad where he can relax, garden and drink wine with his wife.

**A young Steve Bland and, right, proudly wearing his medals; Below, during his career in the West Midlands Police**

Trainee flight crew from RNAS Culdrose have cleared rubbish from beaches in west Cornwall, including Swanpool and Gyllyngvase beaches at Falmouth and Poldhu Cove, Church Cove, Lee Bay and Polperro beach.

Taking part were Lieutenants William Vinnell, Sam Cass, Matthew Johnson and Charles Skeet from 824 Naval Air Squadron, the Merlin helicopter training unit.

Lieutenant Vinnell said: “We conducted beach cleaning around the Culdrose local area. We believe that this is an important community project at the station to the detriment due to the increasing amount of plastic pollution and it is particularly important for Culdrose, as a key employer and pillar of the community, to be involved in this issue.

“Our first day was spent in Falmouth on Gylly and Swanpool beaches. We were surprised by the amount of litter we were able to collect on a relatively small stretch of beach, filling almost three bin liners between us. The majority of the litter collected seemed to be food wrappers rather than litter washing up, which indicates that the problem is certainly with the public’s education on the impact that they are having by carelessly leaving their litter on the beach. This day was particularly important as we were able to bring along family members to help.

“The other beaches throughout the week had varying amounts of litter, however we were always able to find significant amounts of plastic. We finished the week back at Gylly and Swanpool to see whether we’d made an impact. We were pleasantly surprised by how clean the beach was, proving that we had made a difference, hardly able to fill a small bag with litter. This highlights that incentives such as the two-metre beach clean do make a difference and by improving public interest and education, we can make our beaches cleaner and safer.”
**Support for entire family**

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity visited Haslar Marina in Gosport, where a 1940’s wooden yacht provides local navy children with a unique experience on the water.

The Boleh Trust was founded in 2015 to offer inspirational sailing experiences to those facing challenges in their lives. This includes young people who may face periods of separation from a parent serving in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines.

For the last two years the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity has provided over £20,000 in grants to the Boleh Trust, enabling hundreds of children from Portsmouth’s Naval families to learn basic sailing and teamworking skills in a historic vessel.

Four junior school children from Portsmouth had the opportunity to sail on Boleh on the day of the RNRMC visit, and despite heavy rain the experience was enjoyed by all, particularly the chance to steer the vessel and work as a team raising sails.

Henry Middleton, Boleh Trust Chairman, explained the value of working with the RNRMC to provide sailing experiences for naval children:

“Sailing on Boleh with her unusual junk rig inspires young people: “They learn new skills in sailing the boat, they learn how to work together, and above all, they have an adventure.”

“Boleh means ‘Can Do’ in Malay and our message is all about encouraging young people to adopt a ‘Can Do’ approach to life - anything is possible!”

**Battlefield perspective**

MANY Wounded, Injured and Sick (WIS) personnel can feel disengaged from the service through being signed off on shore for long periods of time, resulting in serious detrimental effects on well-being.

The RNRMC have recently helped fund the Normandy Venture 2019, organised by PSG Recovery for WIS personnel of all ranks/rates. The aim was to promote team cohesion, comradeship and re ignite a sense of belonging. This trip took 12 divisional members, accompanied by four staff, on a team building and inspiring tour of the Normandy battlefields, primarily taking in the key sights of the invasion, before the battle moved inland.

One of the attendees said: “I’d just like to thank all involved in organising, supervising and providing the trip to Normandy. Being with other Wounded, Injured and Sick personnel puts perspective on my individual situation, that I am not alone in what I am dealing with and that there are others in just as serious a situation.

“It helped me quite a bit and I feel all the richer for the experience. I am very grateful for the opportunity you provided.”

**Join our beach trek**

YOU can support your charity and your fitness by taking part in the RNRMC’s Normandy Beaches-Trek in September.

Discover the sites and scenery of the D-Day landings on this unforgettable five-day trip along the beautiful Normandy coastline, to commemorate 75 years since Victory in Europe.

With a dedicated historian joining you for the whole trip, you’ll be fully immersed in the surroundings of the Normandy beaches which played a vital part of the WW2 Allied invasion of Normandy.

The challenge will set off from HMS Excellent in Portsmouth, home to Navy Command HQ, and conclude four days later at the magnificent Pegasus Bridge and the village of Ranville, which was the first village to be liberated in France in 1944.

The route takes us along the majestic coastline of Omaha, Juno and Sword beaches, taking in sites of significant military action including Point du Hoc and the Mulberry Harbour of Arromanches. We pay our respects to the Allies at the Normandy American Cemetery and Juno Beach Memorial.

You’ll cover just under 50 miles over the four days, which involves full days of trekking over a varied terrain of dunes, grass or tarmac. Our route finishes north of Caen via the iconic Pegasus Bridge and Ranville War Cemetery where we will lay a wreath, a poignant end to an unforgettable journey.

For more information and to secure your place visit: www.rnrmc.org.uk/trek

A TEAM from the Royal Navy (MCM2 Crew 4) will be walking across the length of Western Front in April next year.

The challenge is to set off from Petterhouse in the French Alps and walk the 680 miles over the course of 30 days, finally arriving in Nieuwpoort in Belgium.

The idea came about after a team member was researching his family history and learned of a family member who fought and was captured at the Battle of Loos in 1915, which lead to the discovery of the Western Front Way charity (thewesternfrontway.com).

This organisation was established after Sir Anthony Sheldon discovered a long-lost letter, sent by a young 2nd Lieutenant, Alexander Douglash Gillespie from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

In his letter, he reflected on the horrors realities of war and suggested the possibility a sacred road (a via sacra) which would span the length of the Western Front and give walkers the opportunity to reflect on the atrocities of the times.

Unfortunately Gillespie was killed shortly after writing his letter, and it was lost for a contrary but on discovery of his letter in 2015, the Western Front Way was created, and they have worked to map a route, for all to explore, and make the via sacra a reality.

The team will be the first team to walk the full length of the route, covering just under 690 miles over the course of 30 days. The aim is to raise as much as possible for Winston’s Wish, who help children with bereavement, Pancreatic Cancer UK and the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

To sponsor the team visit https://www.spacesorme.co.uk/stephenharlondwestern-front-600-royal-navy-mcm2-crew4.aspx

Follow the team at: @https://instagram.com/ front_60013g/bid=mwo44j/fbyrgt

**Fabulous effort by Miss G**

SOUTHSEA businessman Andrew Pearce transformed into his alter ego – drag act Fabulous Miss G – to host a World War 2-themed variety evening at The Royal Maritime Club, to raise funds for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

Champion charity fundraiser Andrew, who runs the Creatiques Bridal Boutique in Albert Road, said: “In the Navy” then a disco to finish the evening.

“A rousing sing-along was enjoyed by all, followed by the choir singing “In the Navy” then a disco to finish the evening.

Hilary Hesbrook, Regional Fundraiser for The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, said: “What a brilliant evening - a huge thank you to Miss G and everyone who gave up their time to be involved in making the show a reality.”

The event raised £3,000 for the RNRMC.

![Image](https://example.com/image1)

**Minehunter crew to walk Western Front**

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Taking the sting out of diving

DEFLUSING deadly mines is challenging enough.
But Portsmoth-based Royal Navy divers faced extra threats posed by Jaws, venomous snakes and poisonous octopuses when they flew half way around the world to train in Australia.

Eighteen experts from Fleet Diving Unit 2 - the UK's specialists in finding and neutralising mines and bombs in the shallowest waters - joined counterparts from Canada, New Zealand and the USA at Garden Island in western Australia.

Divers at HMAS Stirling invited their allies to a three-week test of the latest equipment and techniques in the shallowest waters - opened to the people we would

ROYAL Navy personnel join colleagues from NATO aboard the USN Mount Whitney for Exercise Trident Jupiter.

STRIKFORNATO, which includes the UK, US, Australia, and Royal Marines, left their bases in Qatar, Lebanon, to embark the Blue Ridge-class amphibious command ship for the exercise.

Trident Jupiter was NATO's most ambitious Computer Assisted Command Post Exercise (CACPX) since the Cold War designed to test the alliance's ability to carry out its core role of collective defence against a peer competitor.

For STRIKFORNATO it was an opportunity to be certified by SHAPE to lead a NATO Expanded Task Force (NETF), making it the first HQ capable of doing so.

The exercise scenario featured a fictitious enemy invading five NATO nations and testing the full spectrum of the alliance's capabilities. NATO marked its 70th anniversary in 2018.

"Over two weeks, the staff of STRIKFORNATO demonstrated their ability to plan dynamic warfare operations," said Royal Navy Rear Admiral Guy Robinson, Deputy Commander, STRIKFORNATO.

"Our ability to work through a highly-challenging scenario shows the interoperability and strength of our NATO Alliance, protect and defend."

STRIKFORNATO is a Memorandum of Understanding organisation drawing on contributions from 12 NATO nations, whose primary purpose is to integrate high-end US assets (such as carrier and amphibious formations) into NATO command and control structures.

For this reason they are always led by a US Commander currently Vice Admiral Lisa Franchetti, who is also (Commander US 6th Fleet based in Naples, Italy.

"Dugong 19 provided a challenging environment, and a mix of remote-controlled and autonomous underwater vehicles as well as the divers themselves."

In addition to the mines, the Australian environment presented some unique challenges for the visiting diving units: the waters around Garden Island are home to venomous tiger snakes and great white sharks... aka Jaws.

And on top of that, the shape of the mines laid in the water by the exercise organisers attracted the attention of the local blue-ringed octopus population. Their venom paralyses then kills. Every diver received a brief from their hosts on how to remain safe.

"The very shallow water community is a small yet specialist group, so it is important to conduct exercises to strengthen the bonds between participating nations," said FDU2's Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Keith Mabbutt.

"These divers could be working together in the future on operations, so it is important that they understand how to operate together effectively and efficiently."

"Dugong 19 provided a chance to maintain and develop our wartime diving skills in a challenging environment, alongside the people we would be operating with."

ROYAL Navy personnel past and present attended a Service of Thanksgiving for the life and work of one of its greatest benefactors, Sir Donald Gosling, at Westminster Abbey.

The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall joined other members of the Royal Family, including the Duke of Cambridge, the Earl and Countess of Wessex, Prince Michael of Kent and Vice Admiral Sir Timothy Laurence, for the service, which was conducted by the Dean of Westminster, the Very Reverend David Hoyle.

Former First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir George Zambellas, represented the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh.

The congregation also included Dame Shirley Bassey, former newpaperer Angela Rippon, Sir Bruce Forsyth's widow Lady Forsyth-Johnson, and Riverdance creator Michael Flatley.

Sir Donald, who held the title of honorary Vice Admiral, died in September, aged 90.

"We recall his enduring love of the Royal Navy, and his loyalty to the bonds of commitment that unite it and the traditions that sustain it," said the Dean.

The White Ensign was then presented to the Dean by Sergeant Jay McGhee RN, Chief Petty Officer Glen Hinkle-Harper, Petty Officer Gary Wright and Leading Hands Christopher Redman and Nathan Edwards.

First Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin read a prayer before veteran comedian Jimmy Tarbuck delivered a tribute. He was followed by the Countess of Wessex, who read from Joshua 55:6-13.

Readings were also given by Admiral of the Fleet the Lord Boyce and prayers were delivered by Chaplains of the Fleet, the Venerable Martin Gough. A tribute was delivered by Warrant Officer Naval Service Nick Shairland.

As the service concluded, the Band of HM Royal Marines Collingwood played a series of Henry Wood's medleys, Fantasia on British Sea Songs.

Sir Donald joined the Royal Navy in 1944 and, after completing training, served in the cruiser HMS Leander on a two-year post-war patrol of the Mediterranean. This left a lasting impression on him, and both his house and his yacht Leander G were named after the warship.

Upon leaving the RN in the late 1940s, he teamed up with fellow ex-serviceman Ronald Hobson, buying a bombsite in London and turning it into a car park.

Over the past 50 years, the venture grew into National Car Parks, business operating more than 650 sites and was worth £800m when the two friends sold it in 1998.

By then, Sir Donald – he was knighted in 1976 – had been a long-time advocate, supporter and benefactor of the Royal Navy, including four years as chairman of the White Ensign Association. At the end of the service, a collection was made for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity and the White Ensign Association.
WW2 destroyer hero honoured

WITH the Norwegian flag on the wall, Colonel John Olsen kneels to present his countrymen’s gratifying insignia to the RN. Olsen is believed to be the only World War 2 destroyer captain still with us, and is also the oldest living first-class cricketer.

And 75 years ago next spring, the then-35-year-old naval officer brought HMS Viceroy into Trondheim to help liberate the city after five years under the Nazi yoke.

Under Operation Conon – the Royal Navy’s codename for the liberation of Norway – he helped oversee the surrender of thousands of German military personnel who, despite the scale of their nation’s defeat, “tended to be a bit arrogant”, and hosted Crown Prince Olaf at Norway’s heir to the throne, as well as helped to get the city and port back on its feet.

With key anniversaries of Norway’s occupation and liberation looming, Oslo has been overwhelmed. Bridges were lit up, and a young prince took part in either operation, presenting them with diplomas of thanks – in the same way France is honouring its liberators of 1944 and 1945 with the Legion of Honour.

Col Olsen said Viceroy’s commanding officer had shown “tremendous courage and determination” in 1945. "He put his life in danger to defend our freedom."

Before and after the war, John Manners was both cricketer and naval officer. His performance with the bat for the RN earned him a call-up for the Hampshire and Kent teams.

In the dying weeks of war in Europe, Viceroy sank U-1274 in the North Sea – an action which earned her commanding officer the DSC. Within a month he was dispatched to Trondheim.

“I was overwhelmed with the kindness of the Norwegian people,” he recalled as Col Olsen presented the diploma at his care home in Newbury. “They were so welcoming to us, and it is an honour to be recognised for what we did while we were there.”

After Trondheim, Lt Cdr Manners remained in the RN for a dozen or years post-war – and resumed his cricketing career in 1948, playing for five more years and ending his first-class career with four centuries under his belt and a batting average of 31 from his 21 appearances.

Beyond his sporting and naval achievements, Lt Cdr Manners is an accomplished author and chronicler/photographer of rural crafts and life.

You can read more about Lt Cdr Manners and Viceroy at www.hmsviceroy.org.uk/HMS_Viceroy/index.html#Manners

Blue moon for Jupiter with Charles’ backing

FORMER commissioners become patron of association.

A very uncommon. And not normally news in these pages. But when said commissioners are the heir to the throne...

A long-time supporter of HMS Jupiter, Prince Charles has agreed to become the official patron of the Leander-class frigate’s association to mark its 15th anniversary.

A then Lieutenant Wales (pictured right as Jupiter returned to Plymouth in August 1974) aboard the ship on a Pacific/Caribbean deployment which took in Singapore, New Zealand, Tonga, Western Samoa, Houhulu, San Francisco, Acapulco and Bermuda. Upon leaving Jupiter, the prince went on to train as a helicopter pilot, ultimately joining 845 NAS aboard HMS Hermes.

After an eventful career – West Indies, Grand Shipwrite to operations in the South Atlantic in the 1980s including supporting the evacuation of Britons from Yemen in 1986 and Armilla Patrol in the Gulf, and an unfortunate encounter with London Bridge on a visit to the capital (damaging both ship and bridge...) – the frigate off in 1992.

It took another dozen years before the Jupiter Association was formed, since when several reunions have been held across the country, the latest 15th annual get-together was hosted by Lt Cdr Manners (Arborlech in Litchfield).

In congratulating the association, said Prince Charles had followed the Jupiter story long before he became a member and continued to take interest in its association, regularly sending messages to former shipmates his best wishes.

“We are very privileged for this as very few new patronages are taken on by the Prince of Wales each year – we must of course use this accolade wisely and to further the good name of the association,” he added.

The former ‘Jups’ are now eyeing up their 2020 reunion (planned for Plymouth) with another goal in mind: displaying the original ship’s bell.

It was thought it went to Middlesbrough Council when the frigate decommissioned, Jupiter enjoyed close ties with the Tresside town for nearly 20 years.

But on closer inspection, it was discovered the bell was actually a replacement; association members had hoped to find the original wall filled with the names of children christened aboard the frigate during her 23-year career... but instead found it blank.

After considerable research, the bell has been traced to the family of Captain Will Hacking and son, who lives in London; it was recovered from the frigate’s original home in Newbury.

“In addition, there are 44 cottages for veterans and their families and five assisted living apartments at the Erskine Estate at Bishopton, with building work underway on 24 single living apartments. The charity also assists younger veterans who need help beginning the next chapter of their lives, offering social, recreational and training facilities at its activity centre. “Being able to give something back to the charity makes us feel particularly proud,” said WO1 Hackings.

The Longest Day

FALLOUT of the 1944 Normandy landings are taken on by the Prince of Wales as he visits the scene from X Ring Private Ryan to prepare for our trip – but it’s not until you go there and see the beaches and the German trenches that it makes you think.

“We visited the US, British and German cemeteries. The US and the British ones each had around 9,000 graves but the German one had 21,000 headstones. We also found Royal Navy graves marking the death of unknown sailors.

“To end our trip, we also watched The Longest Day at Bayeux which showed all the places we’d visited.”

Clyde’s boost for Erskine veterans

SAILORS and Babcock staff from Babcock handed over a year’s worth of fundraising donations to Erskine veterans.

Warrant Officer 1st Class Mark McLaughlin, president of the Warrant Officers/Senior Rates’ association, present veterans and staff with £1,850.

And just for good measure, Babcock retail services manager Graham McLaughlin gave the charity (157,581 – the tally of all the spare change donated by Babcock staff) a cheque.

Erskine is Scotland’s principal provider of care for veterans and their families and is a registered charity with the Scottish Charity Registra. It offers residential, respite and dementia care.

In addition, there are four car parks and 39 cottages for veterans and their families and five assisted living apartments at the Erskine Estate at Bishopton, with building work underway on 24 single living apartments.

The charity also assists younger veterans who need help beginning the next chapter of their lives, offering social, recreational and training facilities at its activity centre.

“We are very pleased with our donation to support Erskine as our mess charity for 2019 and it is appreciated that we are making a difference,” said Graham McLaughlin.

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Musicians serve up lesson for students

MEMBERS of the Royal Marines School of Music (RMSoM) spent a rewarding weekend with Brentwood Imperial Youth Band (BIYB), showcasing the career options offered in the band service. Led by Assistant Director of Music Training, Captain Phil Trudgen RM, bugle/drum instructors from RMSoM delivered engaging workshops. The Royal Marines then hosted a question-and-answer session after lunch.

Among the RM musicians visiting were two former members of the Bentwood Band: Recently promoted Band Lance-Corporal Chris Turrell, currently serving in RM Band Portsmouth (Royal Band) and Mus Cowley, who is currently in training studying flute and sax at RMSoM. Music was played by Stevie Wonder to 90s pop, as well as music from The Lion King, all enjoying the fun environment.

Mus Cowley said: “It was very exciting to return to the band that had motivated me to join the Royal Marines and show them how much the Royal Marines had done for me.”

She added: “Capt Trudgen encouraged the youngsters to relax and enjoy themselves, he had whole sections of the band swinging from side to side or standing up and sitting down in sequence to the music. Everyone had a great time.”

Brentwood Imperial Youth Band were one of the participating bands to the inaugural Victory Youth Tattoo held in HMB Portsmouth during May, so have now established a firm link with RMSoM.

New commission reward for committed volunteers

VOLUNTEER officers have received an historic new commission for cadet force volunteers.

The new commission, for volunteers in the Sea Cadets, Army Cadet Force, RAF Air Cadets and the Combined Cadet Force, was approved by the Queen and is the first royal commission created for 155 years.

The commission recognises the immense contribution made by volunteer staff as leaders of national uniformed youth organisations sponsored by the Ministry of Defence.

Bedfordshire District Sea Cadets were presented with their new commissions by the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Mrs Helen Nellis.

“It was a pleasure to see the joy on the faces of the newly-commissioned officers,” she said.

The officers’ receiving their commissions were from Bedford, Biggleswade, Dunstable, Finstock & Ampthill and Luton Units and the Eastern Area Sea Cadet Canoe Centre based in Bedfordshire District.

A GROUP of youngsters from the Military Mentors’ Training Academy visited HMS Sultan to learn about engineering in the Royal Navy.

Twenty-one 16-19 year olds were given a morning of hands-on activities within the Defence College of Technical Training’s Defence School of Marine Engineering and the Royal Naval Air Engineering & Survival Equipment School.

The visit enabled the students to learn about the mechanics of helicopters and diesel engines. In addition, the group were given an active demonstration of the six-legged Mantis Hexapod which is maintained as part of a Sultan engineers club.

Based at Bradgeway School, Gosport, the Military Mentors’ Academy run a college course for students who aspire towards a career in the Services. Offering a Level 1 or Level 2 Diploma for entry into the uniformed services and qualifications in first aid and martial arts, the Academy also teaches students about core military values, the selection process and helps prepare them for the first phase of military training.

Military Mentors Senior Instructor Dave Scott said: “As part of their studies, the students are on a look at life program to see what careers are on offer and what roles are available to explore and this ties in really well. We have a few who are interested in a career in the military, so this may be another option for them to consider.”

Student Ashleigh Wiltonson said: “I’ve been to Navy Open Days before, but today has been a real eye opener into seeing what it’s really like. Watching the engineers working really hard, you can see that they are doing something that they really enjoy.”

Fellow student Alfie Stoddard said: “The visit to Sultan has been really worthwhile. Although I already know the Base well as a cadet here, today has given me a different insight into some of the things that go on here and a better understanding of how things work.”

Sultan STEM Ambassador, Warrant Officer Alexander ‘Midge’ Ure said: “I’ve visited the students to brief them on various different aspects of life within the Royal Navy and today’s visit gives the students an ideal opportunity to experience some of our training first hand.”

FORMER Royal Marine Ant Middleton has become the first new Chief Cadet for the Volunteer Cadet Corps.

The Portsmouth-born television presenter attended an investiture at HMS Excellent, attended by cadet force volunteers.

The Chief Cadet is an honorary role to provide a senior ambassador and inspirational leadership to the Volunteer Cadet Corps.

The Chief Cadet is public facing to ensure that the VCC maximises public awareness and helps to enhance cadet development through the promotion of the ethos, values and standards of the Cadet Forces.

During the investement ceremony, Hon Captain Ant said: “What a privilege and honour to be appointed Chief Cadet in the VCC. I absolutely thrive on mentoring our future generation.”

His new role will see him visit each VCC Unit and support the VCC at major events, such as Cautley Cup, field gun events and the VCC birthday parade.

Lieutenant Louise Copley RMVCC, Staff Officer VCC, said: “It is absolutely fantastic to have Ant Middleton on board with our incredible organisation.

“The wealth of experience and skills that Ant will bring to the role will engage our cadets but inspire them and new cadets to give it all they can and MeetTheChallenge. We all look forward to working close with him during this time as our Chief Cadet.”

Ant, who joined the Army in 1997 at the age of 16, enlisted in the Royal Marines in 2005. He passed out of his commando course in January 2006, winning all the coveted King’s Badge. He joined 40 Commando and served in Afghanistan.

He is now best known as the chief instructor on the Channel 4 show SAS: Who Dares Wins.

For more details about the VCC, visit volunteercadetcorps.org or email hq@volunteercadetcorps.org.

Tenaziers are hands-on at Sultan

FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE VCC, VISIT www.army-vcc.com
A TRIP down Memory Lane was a complete surprise for former Sea Cadet David Field. Twenty cadets from Woking hosted David as he marked his 90th birthday – and reminisced about his time as a cadet. Woking born and bred, David was a cadet during World War 2. He joined Chertsey Unit, which covered Woking. David recalled cycling to Chertsey every Wednesday and Sunday for training and still has his original identity card, notebooks and some photographs, which include detailed hand-written notes showing flags, semaphore, lights and compass work.

One of the key roles for Sea Cadet units during WW2 was to train signallers for the Royal Navy. David didn’t go on to join the Senior Service, opting to join the Royal Signals for his National Service and after the war, moving to a career on the railways.

The party at TS Dianthus was arranged at the request of David’s four daughters. Cadets surprised David with a rousing rendition of “Happy Birthday” and presented him with a sailor’s cap bearing the tally of his old unit, TS Dianthus. David promptly replaced his party hat with the cap and raised three cheers for the sea cadets.

Spritely David danced all night and told everyone he had a whale of a time. One of David’s treasure possessions is a photograph of him with five of his peers. They are all wearing naval uniform, complete with belts, gaiters and bayonets. David is circled second from the right in the back row. Do you know who the others are and what became of them? If you can help, please email Gary Murany at veterancadets@dianthustrading.com

Once a cadet, always a cadet

THE Royal Senior School Choir was once again proud to sing at the Annual National Service for Seafarers at St Paul’s Cathedral. The service was attended by a 1,000-strong congregation with seafaring connections, including the Admiralty Board, The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, The Honourable Company of Master Mariners and The Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

The Royal School is one of only five schools in the UK to be invited to participate in this special service. After a picnic lunch in the Cathedral garden, The Royal School was joined by the four other schools that form the massed choir and rehearsed a series of anthems and hymns that they had been preparing throughout the past year.

The sermon was given by The Reverend Oliver Ross, Vicar of Malmsbury and Upper Avon, and the Naval Prayer was led by The Venerable Martin Gough RN, Chaplain of the Fleet, a Governor of The Royal School.

Upper Sixth student Aniela said: “The opportunity to sing at St Paul’s, during such a special and prestigious service, was a huge privilege for us as a choir and the beautiful music combined with the celebration of all seafarers through the readings, prayers and sermon made me proud to be a part of a school with such a rich history and links to the Royal Navy.”

Shoppers dig deep

WHITEHAVEN Sea Cadets received a boost to their funds from collection boxes placed in McColl’s stores in Seatcliffe, Distington and Mirehouse, whose customers donated a total of £103.68. The Sea Cadets were also nominated for an award from the company’s Community Fund which resulted in a cheque for an additional £224.16 being presented.

Whitehaven unit’s Commanding Officer, Petty Officer (SCC) Stuart McCourt said that the whole unit were delighted and very grateful for the donations. “We rely on the support of our local community and this is a tremendous boost for us. We are grateful to the great McColl’s customers at Seatcliffe, Distington and Mirehouse, and for the donation from their Community Fund.

“Our special thanks must also go to Lynne Thompson, Seatcliffe store manager, and Kerry Patience, McColl’s area manager for their support.”
Carrier hosts celebration of friendship

WITH the future of naval aviation behind them and aboard Britain’s future flagship, the best and brightest of the UK and USA’s military brains celebrated the special bond between the two nations.

ANCHORED in Chesapeake Bay – off the spiritual home of the US Navy in Annapolis – aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth hosted the second Atlantic Future Forum, championing defence, industrial and technological ties linking the United Kingdom and United States.

The event – the second, and also the second hosted by the Portsmouth-based carrier – drew 350 guests, nearly double that of the inaugural forum, held in New York in 2018.

It also saw London and Washington sign of the Annapolis Accord, pledging to “harness the power of the fourth industrial revolution for good”, combining human ingenuity and technological mastery to deliver the values we share and to enhance our collective prosperity and security.

The 2019 iteration of the forum, which was set up to celebrate – and build upon – the unique space, defence, security and technology relationship between Britain and the US, took place over two days.

The first was largely devoted to allowing trade and industry to showcase cutting-edge systems and equipment, but also saw the heads of the Royal and US Navies and the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force – respectively Admiral Toor Radakin, Michael M Gilday and Hiroshi Yamamurra – put pen to paper, reaffirming their intention to work closely together.

And the second day – under the banner of The Future We Choose – focused on subjects as diverse as autonomous technology, artificial intelligence and machine learning, not just in the defence realm but also finance and health care, and space.

First Sea Lord Admiral Radakin gave the opening address, Cabinet Secretary and UK National Security Adviser Sir Mark Sedwill, closed proceedings, while US counterpart Robert O’Brien was among the guest speakers.

“The forum brought together in one unusual place, at one time, representatives of government from both our nations, our militaries, our business leaders, our tech entrepreneurs and innovators and some of the brightest minds to consider, debate and agree on the Future We Choose”, said Honourary Commodore Stephen Watson, Director of the Atlantic Future Forum.

“HMS Queen Elizabeth represents the very best of UK industry and technology so it is particularly relevant that we should have hosted these exciting events on board,” said Captain Steve Moorhouse, the carrier’s Commanding Officer.

“The UK-US relationship continues to go from strength to strength – as demonstrated by the support we have received from the US Navy, Marines and Air Force throughout our journey to bring our new carriers and jets in to service.”

“It is events like these which help to reinforce, develop and bring new relevance to this vital relationship as we prepare together for any future threats we face.”

IN THE FINEST TRADITIONS

...a fantastic experience, one of the best

SAILORS behind one of the most dramatic rescues in recent years of a breaking drugs haul are among servicemen and women recognised by the Queen.

Four RN personnel have been nominated for the latest Operational Honours announced. The leading hand feared that some Iraqi soldiers might not respond to “a small, blonde, blue-eyed female medic but after a couple of days, they came out of their shells.”

“the level of knowledge varied wildly. Some soldiers had no first-aid training at all, others had a good understanding, mainly based on their first-hand experience of treating comrades.”

The 37-year-old from Dunfermline, who is married to fellow sailor Craig – currently deployed with HMS Kent in the Gulf – has spent 13 years as a Royal Navy medic.

Just returned from helping to run RFA Cardigan Bay’s Role 2 sick bay working with the RN’s Bahrain-based minehunters, Gemma’s next assignment is working at HMS Collingwood’s medical centre.

Surprised by her award, she feels the time she spent at Camp Taji was

ASK YOURSELF:

- Were you made in the Royal Navy?
- Do you want to give others the opportunity to make it in the Royal Navy?
- Are you seeking a rewarding Second Career?

If the answer to any is yes then...

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For more information contact: PSTN 01929 403172 | Mil 94374 3172 | E-mail navycnr-rnsrtrainingassist@mod.gov.uk

TWO-SIX
Reward for scheme to help mums to be... jobs I’ve done...

A GROUNDBREAKING scheme to help servicewomen cope while on maternity leave earned the Royal Navy officer behind it an inspirational award.

Surgical Lieutenant Commander Ruth Guest was singled out for her ‘Project Regain’ pilot initiative at the South Devon, is expected.” That was as much experience, but it was against regulations.”

“TWO-SIX Royal Naval family

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www.mrbt.org.uk

royalnavy.mod.uk/navynews January 2020: 31

Regain your mental fitness this winter

THE winter months can take their toll on anyone’s mental health, so there is never a bad time to remind serving Royal Marines that there’s a simple way to access treatment.

The initiative – Project Regain – masterminded by a serving commanding officer, is aimed at promoting early detection and help for Royal Marines who could suffer from mental health issues.

Evidence collected by the project suggested that commandos find it hard to ask for support when symptoms of illnesses like post-traumatic stress disorder and depression first present themselves.

Royal Marines have one of the most physically and psychologically demanding jobs on the planet and findings show lack of knowledge about mental health issues makes it more difficult to recognise a problem developing.

Regain was set up to change this for the better by allowing Royal Marines and related ranks to refer themselves directly to specialists without the need to first go through their unit’s medical officer.

All they need to do is pick up a phone and call the Department of Community Mental Health at Colchester and from there they will be put straight through to a nurse who will arrange an appointment locally.

Find out more at: royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/features/project-regain.
£50 PRIZE PUZZLE

The mystery ship in the November edition of Navy News (right) is the Leda-class Tank HMS Anzio, which was served in the 1940s before being scrapped in Spain.

David Name, of Portsmouth, wins £50 for sending us the correct answer.

This month’s mystery ship is the first of the Bird class patrol vessels, designed for patrol and fishery protection tasks in coastal and inshore territorial waters.

1) What is her name?
2) How many were in her company?

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY. Coupons giving the correct answer will be put into a prize draw to win a new book.

Entries must be received by February 14. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope as no correspondence can be offered and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our March edition. The competition is open to all active service employees and their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 299

Name

Address

My answers: (1) (2)

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NOTICEBOOK ENTRIES

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

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The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Swap Draft columns in February's Noticeboard must be received by January 20 2020 at the Novotel Hotel in May 8 to Monday May 11 2020. Membership is open to all who served on any of the Loch-class ships.

If you are sending your notice via email, please include your correspondence can be entered into and no photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not contact HMS Saintes askhamd3@gmail.com or call 07773651213.

Deaths

Cdr Simon J D Ryan QVRM RD VR RNR. Served in HMS Palatine, Sutherland and Exeter (54-55), Trespasser, (55-58), Seraph (58), Member of Clockside Branch. Died November 23, aged 85.

Cdr Richard Hargreaves

Establish a winner.

Portsmouth PO2 8BY . Coupons giving the

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entered in the November 2020 at the Novotel Hotel in May 8 to Monday May 11

Royal Navy Cup Final for HMS Dolphin Services cloth badge to sew on to his during his service in the 60s and was Michael Frampton.

Commissioning Book 1963-64. I served a Imperial Services/Combined Service New Entry Squad 2/70. There is a 50th reunion planned for August 2020 and we would dearly love to invite him. Anyone who knows his whereabouts is requested to pass this calling note on. Joe Joryeff joryeff@gmail.com

Cdr Howard Percy: 1962 - 1964 in HM Submarines Cyclops Jun 1944 – Aug 1944; Services cloth badge to sew on to his during his service in the 60s and was Michael Frampton.

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Assistant to the Managing Editor, RN Submariners’ Association

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LIKE the clock on the mantelpiece in one of Titanic's luxurious first-class ante-rooms, the pocket watch of a photographer at Hiroshima, the wall clock in one of the corridors leading to Reactor No.4 at Chernobyl, this century-old watch is frozen in time, fixed at the moment of catastrophe.

It belonged to one Squadron Commander Edwin Dunning, killed just five minutes after carving his name into Royal Navy and naval aviation history.

The 25-year-old became the first man to land an aircraft on a ship at sea... and then the first man killed trying to land an aircraft on a ship at sea; his Sopwith Pup was caught by a gust and toppled over the side of HMS Furious.

Dunning's body was recovered and the aviator buried with full military honours in the churchyard of his home village in Essex.

His watch eventually ended up with what is today the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton, one of 30,000 artefacts, joint records and several hundred thousand photographs charting the highs and lows of naval aviation from 1908 to the present day.

Now pick 100 of those items to tell that story.

That was the challenge museum curator David Morris faced when asked to encapsulate the story of British naval aviation by publishing Amberley for The Fleet Air Arm and Royal Naval Air Service in 100 Objects (£14.99 ISBN 978-1-4456-8902-8).

"Objects" is a fairly loose term, for it incorporates photographs, individuals, actions as well as tangible items.

"It is certainly not 'just a book of aircraft'... says David, who has sought to fill the 98 pages with a mix of 'not-so-obvious objects and I didn't know that'-type stuff as well as 'firms and defining moments and a good spread of lighter subject matter, such as lucky mascots/superstition, ship's cats, badgers, pigeons -- a very broad spread of material indeed.

You want Wrens riding ice cream vendors' bicycles in a field in Yeovilton? Not a problem (picture centre right).

The bikes were used to train Fighter Direction Control Officers. "It was pure inspiration," says the author, "a typically-British solution to a vital need that would see combat air traffic control taught at almost zero cost and without putting aircraft or naval airmen at risk.

Or what about a cat resting in its specially-sized hammock? The imaginatively-named Puss was mascot of post-war carrier HMS Eagle. In true RN pet style, the cat (picture top right) had its own ID card, virtualing card and rum ration coupons... which he apparently shared with the ship's crew.

Aside from helping matelots snaffle a little extra rum, Puss was a fearsome mouser aboard the carrier... something which no doubt Puss the elephant would have appreciated.

When tractors and trucks weren't available to shunt aircraft around, Fifi the elephant... something which no doubt Fifi the elephant would appreciate.

Or the illuminated wands which guide a helicopter or aircraft down safely in low visibility (bottom right).

Other objects have faded into history. Like Rocketeer's Take-Off Gear, a sort of precursor of the catapult, using disposable rockets to give an extra boost to aircraft to get them off a flight deck.

A rubber flight deck anyone? Could aircraft land on a ship without the need for undercarriage?

Yes they could... but they were a bugger to manoeuvre once landed because of the lack of wheels.

The man who proved you could put a wheelless aircraft safely down on a rubber deck was one Capt Eric ‘Winkle’ Brown, himself one of the 100 'objects' picked out by the author.

Capt Brown retired with a string of flying records under his belt (most aircraft types flown, most deck landings, take-offs, first jet landing on a carrier and so on).

Many of the late naval ace test pilot's moments from an unparalleled career found their way to the museum, among them a pair of flying goggles... worn not by the man himself but aviatrix Hanna Reitsch, one of Hitler's favourites, interrogated by Brown at the end of WW2.

Eric Brown is, of course, not the sole remarkable naval flyer within these pages, all four RNAS-Fleet Air Arm VC winners feature.

And then there's object No.100, last but most definitely not least, a bust of WW1 aircraft fitter and engineer Henry Allingham (inset).

Born before the Wright Brothers achieved powered flight, Henry lived to the age of 113, dying in 2009, the last Royal Navy veteran of the Great War.

He is, says David, "possibly unique -- he had the potential to have seen every object in the book."

"The bronze bust of Henry -- on display at the Fleet Air Arm Museum simply has to be my personal number one favourite object in the book."

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Awards for the best new air engineers

SIXTY-FOUR servicemen and women marked the successful completion of their training at a formal parade in the presence of their families at RNAS Yeovilton.

The next generation of Royal Navy Air Engineering Technicians are joining the trained strength of the Fleet Air Arm, having qualified to support and maintain frontline capability with Wildcat and Merlin helicopters.

Cdr Ben Perkins-Brown, Commanding Officer of the Air Engineering Department at RNAS Yeovilton, said: “We are here to recognise and celebrate your achievements as you become part of a team deployed in the UK and around the world having met the highest standards in military aviation engineering.”

Guest of honour was Cdr Tom Manson, a former Commander Air Engineering at RNAS Yeovilton.

The Commodore presented Qualified to Maintain certificates to the Air Engineering Technicians ratings having completed their Phase 2B training.

Four individuals were recognised for their outstanding achievements and qualities.

The SAFRAN Academic Trophy to the CHF Merlin trainee who has achieved the best all-round academic results in Phase 2B Training, was won by AET Eliis Herridge.

The AgustaWestland Trophy for the Wildcat trainee who has achieved the best all-round academic results in Phase 2B Training, was presented to AET Jack Toichman.

The Commando Helicopter Force Trophy for the CHF trainee student demonstrating the strongest commitment to the Royal Naval ethos during Phase 2B training was presented to AET Stephen Cane.

The Commando Helicopter Force Trophy for the CHF trainee who demonstrated the strongest commitment to Royal Naval ethos during Phase 2B training went to AET Benjamin Angus.

● From left, AET Toichman, AET Angus, AET Herridge and AET Cane with their awards

Varied bunch tell their tales

THE GROVE REVIEW

MARK JESSOP and Pen and Sword of Barnsley have produced a fascinating and original book The Royal Navy in the Napoleonic Age; Senior Service 1800-1815 (ISBN 978 1 52672 037 5).

This is not a considered history of this important period but more a commentary based on contemporary and later 19th Century sources. Nothing in the extensive bibliography is more recent than 1895.

The author uses the literary device of inventing fictional characters and interspersing them with real events and people. In this way Jessop hopes to “represent the men and women swept up in the tide of history, often unknown and unnamed.”

They are a varied bunch. We have a Danish pilot assisting in Hyde Parker’s and Nelson’s attack on Copenhagen, a German merchant settles in Plymouth, a ‘canning crew’ recruiting ex-sailors to work in the Plymouth dockyard, a nurse retired from Stonehouse hospital, three junior petty officers meeting, shortly after Trafalgar, the sisters of an old shipmate; a rather second-rate poet seeking inspiration at Plymouth for a Trafalgar ode; a black West Indian Lieutenant RN on boring blockade duty; a rather tedious abolitionist; a chaplain and two more survivors (all doomed) of a ship wrecked on the Australian coast; an invalid injured at sea living in Torpoint but still interested in naval matters; a Yorkshire-born American sailor captured with the USS Wasp; two builders of the Plymouth breakwater; a dentist with an interest in naval technology; a naval widow in Plymouth; a Madras-born sailor captured when HMS Penguin was taken by USS Hornet, an RN captain with a serious interest in naval tactics; a boatman who took people to see the captured Benaparte on board HMS Bellerophon off Plymouth; and a judge with an interest in naval matters looking back from the 1890s.

The approach makes for an entertaining book but it has its drawbacks.

Sometimes it is hard to separate fact from fiction.

Perhaps more seriously, the author’s use of somewhat biased American 19th Century sources gives a very distorted impression of the War of 1812.

There is nothing about America’s aggressive ambitions to conquer Canada and a rather modern pro-American view of the successful punitive operations against the American coast that helped coerce a reasonable status quo ante peace.

One doubts that the real people who the author is representing would have felt quite so worried about operations against their American “brothers”(!) as a 20th Century writer.

There are other problems. The author implies that impressment was used after 1815. It was indeed kept on the statute book for a while as a wartime measure of conscription but it was unnecessary to man the peak-time navy.

Jessop underestimates the Admiralty’s interest in steam propulsion and repeats, apparently uncritically, the legend of Nelson’s “blind eye” incident at Copenhagen, although he does make the important point that Hyde Parker was in fact giving Nelson a good excuse to withdraw eastwards when the battle occurred.

The book leaves out a great deal - Duckworth at San Domingo and the Dardanelles, Gambia and Cochrane at Basque Roads.

Neither is there any mention of Sydney Smith, the naval hero who replaced Nelson in contemporary popular acclaim.

Nevertheless it must be admitted that Mark Jessop succeeds to a great extent, in his aim of giving as flavour of the language and opinions of dozens of politicians, naval officers and ordinary people swept up in the tumultuous storms of the first years of the nineteenth century.

The book is an entertaining and absorbing read and goods value at £19.99. Most readers will learn something from it but please though do not use it as a reliable historical source!
Royal Navy showjumper Commander Jo Bollen was in the spotlight at the Horse and Hounds Annual Awards.

Cdr Bollen, who represents the Royal Navy Dressage, Showjumping and Eventing Team, was shortlisted for the Amateur Rider of the Year award.

She was largely recognised for all her sterling work that she carries out within the RNRM Equestrian Association and the UKAF Equestrian Association, without which many events would have stalled or been cancelled over the past couple of years.

The logistics officer was in very good and esteemed company and, although her name and picture appeared on the big screen, she was not successful in securing the trophy.

Despite this it was a fabulous evening with many people delighted that the Royal Navy was represented and more surprised that the Senior Service have an equestrian team.

Cdr Bollen said: “I’d like to express my immense gratitude to everyone who had a hand in nominating me/supporting me and voting for me; to be shortlisted as a nominee in the Horse and Hound (H&H) 2019 Amateur Rider of the Year category was a complete honour.

“To be recognised in the same vein as many other hugely worthy nominees was very humbling and we all experienced a wonderful evening at the awards dinner.

“It was also a valuable opportunity to be able to promote what the UKAEFA do with the great and good of the equestrian industry.”

NAVY NEWS

Royal Navy footballers triumphed Down Under in the Carnival Cup.

The RN men, women and veterans teams took on sides from the Royal Australian Navy, Air Force and Army in a week-long tournament in Sydney.

The squads had four days to acclimatise to the 30°C heat and the ten-hour time difference, during which they held training and enjoyed some touristy visits to the Blue Mountains, the Sydney Cricket Ground and iconic harbour bridge.

The first match saw the RN take on the Australian Army sides. The veterans, managed by Hughie Doyle, dominated their match but had to settle for a 1-1 draw.

The RN woman, managed by CPOT Sam Covey were on course for a 3-2 victory but suffered heartbreak in injury time when the home team equalised.

Last up were the men, managed by WO1 Marty Wallace, benefiting from an evening kick off and cooler conditions, they started very well and finished 3-0 victors.

Day two of the contest was against the Royal Australian Navy. The men were up first and won 1-0, the women also triumphed.

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On their return home, the Royal Navy footballers will be looking forward to the Royal Navy football season.

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THE final round of 2019 was held at Oulton Park in Cheshire on a cold and wet Saturday for one-day race meeting but with double points up for grabs, writes Chief Petty Officer Stuart Goodson.

Racing was on a damp track so lap times were a bit slower than in the dry. Despite this, some went off to mid pack in 16th place for my Services Military Race.

Going into the final round of the Golden era, I was holding third place in the championship with only a 19-point lead over the midfield-place contender.

With double points up for grabs, I would be really keen to throw it all away if I made a mistake, so for the first time ever since I have raced, I actually felt a bit of pressure to do well. We had just finished a race with lots of heavy downpours, and I was feeling a bit of steady away and remaining smooth tread was a real plus through corners.

Fortunately I made it to the one hour and 3 minutes, and took a few riders and scored four points out of 120 overall.

My championship rival finished ninth in class so that gave me a bit more of a points buffer going into race two. I managed to get a gap in the grid the actual race got underway, but my main rival suffered a dis-located shoulder, scored zero points, meaning that I secured second place in the GESB championship.

I was over the moon as I have been trying to hold on to this position for the majority of the season.

Starting from 12th on the grid on a damp but drying track the warm-up lap for the Inter-Services Military Race caught out a few riders into turn one, causing them to crash out and miss the start of the race.

With a slightly diminished grid the actual race got underway and I was in 16th place but then wasn't great, and I got overtaken into the first turn by a couple of other riders.

I was determined to dig in and try and gain back my places. Once I got into my stride and knew I had adequate heat in my tyres, I started to push on to my surprise started to reel in the bikes in front of me one by one.

First of all gaining back the two places I lost off the start, then managed to catch up with the next group of riders.

The race leader from the Air Force was leading into the last remaining laps on his Honda CBR1000 SuperSport, a car that had been concentrated on the group of three riders battling for second place.

I eventually caught them and managed to get past the first two riders placing me third on the last lap.

With only a few corners to go I caught the second-placed Army rider but couldn’t quite get him, crossing the finish line almost side by side but he had the advantage.

This was probably the best I have ever ridden in these mixed conditions and, unknown to me at the time, I posted the fastest lap of the race.

It was an amazing feeling to finish the season’s final race on the podium in third place after finishing third in the GE SBK championship and fifth overall in the Inter-Services Military Championship.

I had a very consistent and injury free season gaining a new PB for the Inter-Services Military Race and I look forward to getting my hands on double the points to decide between dry or wet tyres. Having been wet all day and still puddles on the track, the majority of CB500 riders opted for full wet tyres, but the same applied to the CB400.

A strong breeze led to a dry line on 50 per cent of the track, leaving us looking for damp patches.

To make us worse, a couple of exhaust heater nuts melted and I had to retire on corner one to blow quite badly. Fortunately the tyres held out and exhausted runners (including me) and I managed to finish fifth.

Straight from the chequered flag onto the military grid, by this point the track was blowing badly and tyres starting to twist and crack.

Being on a CB500 on a grid of 600s and 1000 sports bikes means I’m never likely to win points, but the racing is fun. One thing you learn is that the majority of CB500 riders and holding corner speed around the outside is the only way to keep up in this race, but eventually my handlers fell off completely, the exhaust only held on by the end and again.

All in all it was a great weekend of racing for all, keeping up my reputation of crashing at almost every round. You just never know what 2020 has in store.
Double delight for sailor Sam

ROYAL Navy sailor Sam Matavesi has two reasons to celebrate.
He has signed for Northampton Saints rugby union side and days later picked up the Sportsman of the Year award at the Naval Service Sports Board awards.

All Matavesi, who plays for Fiji, has left the Championship outfit Cornish Pirates. He played in all four of Fiji’s pool games at the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan. The hooker, who can also play at number eight, impressed for Pirates since signing in 2017 from Redruth, earning a recall to the Flying Fijians’ side after a five-year international hiatus.

This will be his first taste of the Wallabies’ campaign for the Rugby World Cup in Japan, with his team missing the Six Nations tournament due to the political unrest in Fiji.

“Having experienced the World Cup, I feel I’ve been fortunate enough to be selected to play against the French Navy, RAF then the Army in Twickenham.

“I’m still in my first year of service and already achieved the incredible experience of a sell-out Twickenham.

“I’ve only served for four years and I’ve gained 12 Royal Navy service caps. I felt very honoured and humbled to be selected to play for the UK armed forces team against Bat, Saracens and Bristol.

“Since then I’ve played for Northampton Saints in the Premiership and Saracens.

“Now it is my time to compete at the top level of English rugby and I can’t wait to pull on a black, green and gold jersey for the first time,” he said.

“Northampton Saints is a club steeped in history and the team is playing a fantastic brand of rugby at the moment – plus having a few fellow Fijians here at Franklin’s Gardens is a nice bonus!

“Can’t wait to get started.”

The winners of the Naval Service 2019 awards were announced at a glitzy ceremony at Lord’s in London.

Taking the trophy for Sportswoman of the Year was Lieutenant Commander Lauren Hulston, a warfighting officer with the Merlin Helicopter Force, for her success in golf.

Lauren and Sam were presented with their trophies by sports champion Sue Campbell, now Baroness Campbell of Loughborough.

“The day was Offshore Sailing, while Chief Petty Officer Scott Jackson was named Official of the Year for his football refereeing.

Boxer, Able Seaman Writer Sophie Celeburn was named Young Sportsperson of the Year.

Special awards went to Lieutenant Commander BJ Smith, for cricket, Mr BJ Petty for hockey and Colour Sergeant John Jackson for boxing.

Pictures: Courtesy of Naval Service Sports Board.
Sporting fun aboard Royal Navy carrier

ENSURING it wasn’t all work for personnel aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth for her four-month Westlant19 deployment were PTIs CPOPT Hoare and LT James Thacker. The duo created a wide-ranging sports programme during the carrier’s time off the USA and Canada.

First up was indoor hockey as a ship’s team took on a team from HMCS Toronto during their visit to Halifax in Nova Scotia. Ice hockey is Canada’s national sport and, despite its being an indoor match, the hosts romped into a 5-0 lead after just 15 minutes. Half-time saw the score 5-1 as POPT Little scored for the visitors. The second half saw the hosts run riot, taking the score to 10-0. The final ten minutes saw the carrier team recover ground to make the final score 10-4.

Next on the sporting fixture list was a rugby match between teams from HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMCS Dragon at HMCS Scotia, the headquarters of the Royal Canadian Navy’s Atlantic fleet.

The destructor’s team were four short because of work commitments so the carrier lent them players and, referee CPO Let Rugby got the encounter underway.

NA(AH) Osian Frobisher was the stand-out player for the carrier team, as they took the game 42-14.

The final event was the maritime race weekend at Fisherman’s Cove, Nova Scotia, involving 5k, 10k and half-marathon events.

Some 55 members of HMS Queen Elizabeth’s ship’s company took part. “It was a totally amazing experience where friends were made for life and a memory from the deployment no one will ever forget,” said CPOPT Hoare.

The carrier then sailed south to Florida, where the ship’s football team had their first run-out of the deployment.

The match against the USS Iwo Jima saw the carrier field a makeshift team, with the host sailors triumphing 2-1.

The ship’s golf society got out for plenty of golf, visiting some outstanding golf courses. The ship’s annual golf open was held in Mayport and was heavily contested between many gaffers. Overall winner was CPO George Carroll; 0-19 Handicap winner was LET ME Connor Eade, and 20-28 Handicap winner was CPO Christopher Schrlefield.

The second rugby fixture saw QNLZ play local side Jags. QNLZ kept their 100 percent undefeated record in America alive with a hard-fought 12-5 victory over JAX Rugby on a hot and humid Thursday night in Florida. The evening saw 36 men taking the field for the future flagships.

POUSM Alex Kightley brought 12 women from the ship to take part in a joint training session with Jax Rugby’s female side. For many of them, it was their first time playing the sport and all said they would play it again.

While all the sport was ongoing, other members took part in some adventurous training with kayaking and biking just north of Mayport in Amelia Islands, another stunning venue, which will live with people for the rest of their lives.

Football was up next and this time a wartime team got out to play against local Bank of America Employees and associates. The game took place at Lesco Park, home of ‘Florida elite academy’ and the carrier team won 1-0, thanks to a goal by AB David Parker.

Another early morning start awaited some of the ship’s runners taking part in the US Navy’s Birthday 5k event. PLET Scott Reagan took third place with a great time of 18.55.

Later that day clubz was out again taking the ship’s society got out for plenty of golf, visiting some outstanding golf courses. The ship’s annual golf open was held in Mayport and was heavily contested between many gaffers. Overall winner was CPO George Carroll; 0-19 Handicap winner was LET ME Connor Eade, and 20-28 Handicap winner was CPO Christopher Schrlefield.

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NAVAL diving exponents Petty Officer Barrie ‘Baz’ Chambers and Lieutenant Nick Spurgeon give the OK signal during an expedition to Malaysia and Brunei.

The duo were among a team from across the Senior Service to take part in the first trip to either country organised by the Royal Navy-Royal Marines Sub-Aqua Association.

Cubie Chambers, based at HMNB Neptune, and submariner Lt Spurgeon joined their diving colleagues to pay their respects to 339 prisoners killed when their Japanese slave ship was lost off Borneo 75 years ago.

Brunei provided impressive wreck diving and Malaysia excellent reef diving,” said Lieutenant Commander Jez Spring, based at Britannia Royal Navy College in Dartmouth. The RNR officer spent more than a year organising the trip with Royal Marines Colour Sergeant Richie Hall from Northwood headquarters.

Divers spent a week in each country, exploring the unique underwater habitats, but it was the waters of Brunei – explored far less by tourists and frogmen than Malaysia’s – which proved to be the most eye-catching, helped by the fact that more experienced members of the team were able to dive deeper for longer courtesy of the more advanced kit made available to them.

Brunei’s corals and underwater habitats are largely undisturbed, whilst the seabed is littered with World War 2 wrecks, now home to rich marine life.

The Brits were able to explore those down to about 35 metres (115ft), including the most haunting of them all, a former Dutch steamer seized by the Japanese. Known as the ‘Australian wreck’, the SS De Kieler was renamed Imaji Maru by the occupiers and pressed into service as a transporter/cargo vessel.

She was lost in the entrance to Brunei Bay in September 1944 as she sailed for Manila – possibly the victim of an attack by Australian aircraft (hence the wreck’s name)... although more likely a Japanese mine. Of the 1,720 souls aboard, more than 330 died – most of them prisoners of war, chained up in the hold; they were being moved to the Philippines for use as slave labour.

“The entire experience was excellent and whilst all the dive sites were unique, the ‘Australian wreck’ was my personal highlight,” said Royal Marine Corporal Jason Phillips.

“The dive conditions of poor visibility made it a haunting experience that emphasised the sombre nature of the wreck.

“The trip had some challenging diving and it was great to gain new experiences whilst improving my own skills as a diver.”

In all, the divers spent more than 128 hours below the waves during 210 dives at 16 locations (eight in each country).

“The expedition provided a fantastic opportunity for a wide range of ranks and rates from different units to interact and develop their diving skills,” he added.

“We conducted a wide range of challenging diving, the team picked up an array of new skills and gained a lot of new qualifications.”

The team also had time to explore the cultural sites of Brunei, including the Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque – considered to be one of the most beautiful in the Asia Pacific region with a main dome covered in pure gold – and explored the mangrove forests by boat, stepping ashore to get up close with the jungle wildlife.

The final day was helping to give something back by a sweep of the sands for rubbish.

“Plastic in the sea and beaches was rife,” said Jez. “After a half-day of sweeping the team collected numerous bags – made of biodegradable material – filled with rubbish and made a small contribution to keeping the seas clean.”

The divers also retrieved plastic from the seas during their dives and when ‘decompressing’ on the surface.

To get involved with the association email RNRMSAA@gmail.com

Report: Lt Cdr Jez Spring
Pictures: Lt Alex Saunders