



NAVY NEWS

JULY 2020

Tamar's time to shine

THE Royal Navy's latest offshore patrol vessel HMS Tamar is pictured in Plymouth Sound. The greenest ship in the fleet, Tamar is the fourth of five in her class and will operate around the world as part of the forward presence vision of the navy's transformation programme.
(see pages 16-17)

Picture: LPhot Alex Ceolin

INSIDE – ROYAL NAVY TRANSFORMATION





Carrier pigeon's stowaway nest

A MISSING racing pigeon made its home in the hangar of HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Confused and exhausted, the bird sought sanctuary aboard the carrier in the North Sea.

Sailors on watch found the bird as they were stowing the F-35 Lightning jets after a busy day of flying.

Air Engineering Technician Alexander Thomason said: "I was putting lashings on the jet when I looked up and saw this pigeon nestled behind the hangar gantry. It appeared pretty pleased to be there. We've named her Pauley."

After being given a bit of a run-around by the feathered stowaway, sailors managed to catch the bird and found a safe place on board for it to live while they search for the owner.



Sailors' 88-lap flight deck run

TWO sailors endured strong head winds to complete the first ever marathon on board HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Air Engineering Technicians Giorgio Zsirai and Calum Dee took on the 26-mile run while the aircraft carrier was anchored in the Solent.

The pair completed 88 laps around the warship's enormous flight deck, finishing within five hours.

Keen runner AB Zsirai had planned to run the Manchester Marathon for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity last month. But when it was postponed, he decided to use the flight deck instead.

Fellow runner AB Dee, from Liverpool, decided he would also take part. He said: "I thought it would be a bit harsh running around the deck by himself so I tagged along."

AB Zsirai finished in four hours and 45 minutes and AB Dee in four hours and five minutes.

AB Zsirai, from Sheffield, said: "The wind was really rough, I definitely should have trained more."



Two years of training. Six weeks of relentless tests. Now HMS Queen Elizabeth is officially declared...

FIT TO FIGHT

Cheers rang out through the decks of the nation's future flagship as HMS Queen Elizabeth successfully completed her first operational sea training.

From flying to food hygiene, every aspect of life on board was tested to the limit over six intense weeks to make sure the warship is ready to take her place at the heart of the UK's Carrier Strike Group.

Among all that, the decks of Britain's biggest warship roared once again with the sound of F-35 Lightning jets as the famous Dambusters squadron landed on the aircraft carrier for the first time.

Commodore Steve Moorhouse, the Commander of the UK's Carrier Strike Group, said: "I was delighted to act as inspecting officer for HMS Queen Elizabeth's first operational sea training period and declare her ready for the next stage of her strike carrier programme."

"After an intensive six weeks, testing the entire ship's company, she is ready to act as the flagship at the heart of my carrier strike group."

Words
Sam Bannister
Cdr Richard Harris

Pictures
LPhoto Unaisi Luke



A team of 46 Fleet Operational Sea Training (FOST) staff, or 'sea riders' as they are widely known, embarked HMS Queen Elizabeth to put her through her paces during six weeks of assessments.

The training was delivered in two phases, with four weeks of basic sea training and two weeks of carrier sea training.

Basic sea training saw the ship's company tested in navigation, damage control and engineering all while safely conducting helicopter operations.

Carrier sea training took it up another notch, pushing everyone on board to develop their warfighting skills while also operating helicopters and jets together.

Lieutenant





▲ One of the UK's operational F-35 Lightning jets of 617 Squadron on the flight deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth

Commander Si Bailey, from the FOST team on board, said: "While she is the largest and most technologically-advanced warship in the fleet, a fire or flood in one of HMS Queen Elizabeth's mess decks or engine spaces would still require the same immediate reactions from her sailors as an incident in a smaller ship."

"The real challenge for FOST staff arose from understanding how the ship's company would respond to these key exercises given the sheer size of the ship and resources available."

The ship's aviation training was supported by Merlin Mk2 helicopters of 820 Naval Air Squadron and F-35s of 617 Squadron.

Pilots, engineers, cyberspace and mission support staff from 617 Squadron, the UK's operational strike squadron, embarked the carrier a few days before the aircraft themselves landed on board.

The F-35 jets that joined the ship will be the same aircraft that will sail next year for HMS Queen Elizabeth's maiden Global Carrier Strike Group 21 deployment.

Commander Mark Sparrow, the

Commanding Officer of 617 Squadron, said: "We are excited to be on board the carrier and we have been training hard to be here."

"This is the first time the ship's operational squadron has embarked and worked together."

The aim was to demonstrate that the jets can successfully defend the aircraft carrier by delivering combat air patrols – launching from the ship to conduct strike missions against a target – and being ready to take off at short notice.

After the initial qualification period, 617 Squadron tested their ability to work with Portsmouth-based HMS Queen Elizabeth and Merlin helicopters of Culdrose-based 820 NAS by conducting a number of complex training missions.

This is all in preparation for their second embarkation later in the year when the squadron will join the carrier and her task group for a large multinational training exercise with US, European and NATO partners.



"We put to the test everything we have learned over the last two years – we're ready for anything"

COMMANDER CHARLIE GUY

Commander Charlie Guy, the second-in-command of HMS Queen Elizabeth, said: "This is the first basic sea training period for a Queen Elizabeth-class carrier. It was a chance for us to put to the test everything we have learnt over the last two years and show our assessors we are ready for anything."

Having now completed operational sea training, the ship remains in the North Sea to complete further strike mission exercises and more advanced warfare training.

This will ensure she is ready to act as the flagship of a large NATO exercise in September, which will

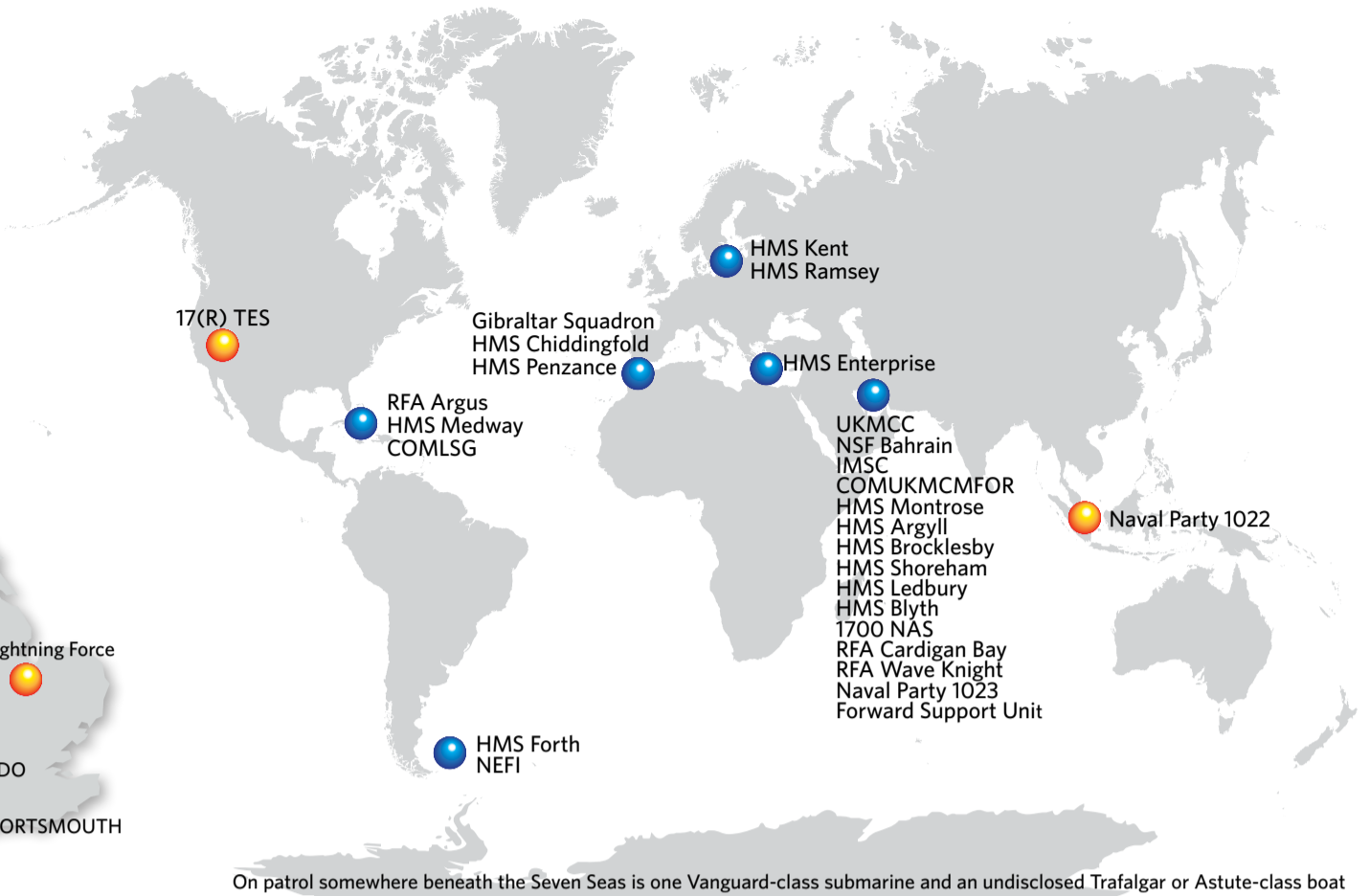
bring together US and European allies as part of a UK-led Carrier Strike Group.

The Royal Navy is transforming into a force centred around carrier strike – supporting the ships as they conduct carrier strike missions, enforce no-fly zones, deploy Royal Marine Commandos, deliver humanitarian aid, and build international partnerships with our allies.

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Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Queen Elizabeth	HMS Richmond
HMS Trent	RFA Tidespring
HMS Tamar	RFA Tidesurge
HMS Mersey	RFA Tideforce
HMS Tyne	814 NAS
HMS Magpie	815 NAS
HMS Westminster	820 NAS
HMS Lancaster	824 NAS



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

GLOBAL NAVY
Protecting our nation's interests

NEW month, new ship. The fourth Batch 2 River-class offshore patrol boat, **HMS Tamar**, has joined the frontline fleet (see pages 1 and 16-17).

The seventh ship to bear the name, Tamar was welcomed to the Senior Service during a ceremony on her namesake river in the West Country. She will join her older sisters, **Forth**, **Medway** and **Trent**, and younger sister **Spey**, in global operations under the Forward Presence vision as part of the Royal Navy's transformation programme.

HMS Forth is operating from the Falkland Islands, (see page 25), and her crew paid their respects to the liberators of 1982 during a 'remembrance season' in the South Atlantic.

HMS Medway reunited with **RFA Argus** in the Caribbean (see page 6) where they are to support British Overseas Territories during hurricane season and to carry out counter-narcotics operations.

Back in the UK and another milestone was achieved in the Royal Navy's carrier strike programme as the first UK operational squadron landed on **HMS Queen Elizabeth** in British waters (see pages 2-3). **617 Squadron** is now also commanded by a RN officer for the first time in its illustrious history (see page 18).

Helping to defend the carrier strike group will be Royal Navy **Wildcat** helicopters which marked a milestone with the firing of new Martlet missiles (see page 13).

HMS Kent and **HMS Ramsey** lead the Royal Navy's involvement in the biggest war games of 2020 in the Baltic (see pages 14-15). The two British warships and their 250 sailors join upwards of 3,000 military personnel from over a dozen nations in NATO's Baltops, an annual workout of allied and partner nations.

Minehunters **HMS Chiddingfold** and **Penzance** left their homes in Portsmouth and Faslane respectively for the 6,000-mile journey to the Gulf (see page 5). Once they arrive, sister ships **Blyth** and **Ledbury** will make their way back to the UK.

HMS Ledbury marked her 39th birthday last month, making her Britain's oldest frontline warship (see page 9).

Also in the Gulf is **HMS Shoreham** (see page 9) where the crew enjoyed a mini-breather while the Sandown-class warship underwent a spot of TLC in Bahrain.

A new **mine warfare battle staff** team directing the Royal Navy's key minehunting mission in the Gulf tested their mettle over seven demanding days (see page 9) as Commander Rich Talbot and his team took over from Commander Neil Griffiths at the UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain.

Also in the Gulf, the latest crew change for **HMS Montrose** is complete and she now takes her place on patrols again alongside her sister **HMS Argyll** (see page 20).

Royal Marines have marked key milestones in their **Future Commando Force** concept with, firstly, the unveiling of a new uniform (see page 19). Commandos will also have access to more information when making tactical decisions thanks to a new helmet camera (see page 5).

HMS Lancaster spent a fortnight flexing her military muscle (see page 11) as the frigate prepared for renewed front-line duties.

HMS Pembroke became the Royal Navy's most modern mine counter-measures vessel after being equipped with a new state-of-the-art mine counter-measures command system (see page 11).

Naval aviators from **824 NAS** practised a rescue from one of the smallest vessels in the fleet when they dropped in on **HMS Magpie** (see page 29).

The three new **Royal Navy warrant officers** discuss their first 100 days in post while the **Corps RSM WO1** reflects on two dynamic years for the Royal Marines (see page 21).

New powerboats have been delivered to the navy's Tyneside and Welsh headquarters **HM Ships Calliope** and **Cambrìa** (see page 20) to enhance seafaring training for reservists.

Finally, last month marked the 80th anniversary of **Dunkirk** (see pages 24-25). In Portsmouth, former sailor Lawrence Churcher, now aged 99, laid a wreath at Portsmouth Naval Memorial, where he was joined by serving sailor Lt Calvin Shenton.

No time to rest

So much to be proud of – and so much to do

THE past few months have been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, and our responses to this across the Royal Navy.

There have been some fantastic achievements, and all of you in the Royal Navy should all be rightly proud of the way you have all responded to support the government, keep our operations going and carry on training and generating both our people and our ships for the future.

The adaptability, agility and quality that you have all shown is truly impressive.

HMS Raleigh has maintained training at nearly 100 percent throughout. **HMS Albion** has developed flexible routines during a Fleet Time Support Period to minimise the risk of transmitting the virus and improve social distancing.

Not only is she expecting to complete her FTSP on time, but her ship's company have been more able to focus on their own training and have benefitted from a better work-life balance. And **HMS Queen Elizabeth** has been able to carry on her trials programme unaffected by Covid-19, through a mixture of testing, quarantining and strict social distancing measures. Well done to you all.

We are now starting to recover from the pandemic, although its longer term

VIEW BRIDGE

effects will continue to be felt and should not be underestimated, and our attention is naturally turning to the future.

Royal Navy Transformation is continuing to accelerate. We are in the exciting position of being able to have discussions about where around the world we deploy our two aircraft carriers – those are conversations that no other nation in Europe is able to have.

And this includes working closely with the RAF, both in developing our carrier strike and F-35 capability and bringing the P-8 into service to improve our operational advantage in the North Atlantic.

We have brand new Offshore Patrol Vessels deployed to the Caribbean and Falklands, and three more of the class will soon be ready to deliver forward presence for the Royal Navy in other areas too.

Our Royal Marines are reshaping into a Future Commando Force that will deliver their specialist skills more rapidly, more effectively and in more places around the world.

And we continue to invest in

technology and innovation, which underpins everything that we do.

However, we cannot rest on our laurels. The Integrated Review is now resuming, and this is still expected to be a significant and fundamental examination of the UK's defence policy, conducted in a short time frame.

As the UK focuses on its post-Covid recovery, we continue to have a duty to support the government. And we are well placed to do this.

Our vision is of a lethal, available and sustainable Royal Navy, forward deployed globally. Collaborating with our partners within Defence, across government and around the world, every platform will become a sensor, an intelligence station and an embassy.

Our ships will be launchpads for a range of exciting new capabilities and effects, part of a network with the RN at its heart that extends around the globe.

And, perhaps most importantly, we will be a 21st century responsible employer: modern, truly representative of the nation we serve, and with people at the heart of everything we do.

If we all work together, this vision is within our grasp: a Global Navy, in support of a Global Britain.



• **HMS Albion**, pictured in Norway earlier this year, has developed flexible routines during her Fleet Time Support Period

Marines trial new camera

ROYAL Marines will have access to more information when making tactical decisions thanks to a new helmet camera.

The purpose-built camera is not only tougher and weather proof to keep up with the extreme conditions commandos operate in, it also links up to a new network system ensuring live data can be analysed and exploited quickly.

Both the network and cameras have been procured by MarWorks – the Royal Navy's information warfare technology specialists.

The introduction of the new equipment forms part of the Future Commando Force concept which will see Royal Marines go back to their commando roots – operating in small lethal teams to wreak havoc – and embrace new tech.

MarWorks worked with company Visual Engineering to take the general-purpose cameras and adapt them to fulfil the requirements needed by the marines – to be hardy, easily mountable, work with open software and to be able to stream data.

Although there are many body-worn devices, they rely on Bluetooth, WiFi or uploads to a cloud-based system, things Royal Marines on operations in often remote and extreme environments don't always have access to.

The cameras will work hand-in-hand with the recently-procured mobile network radios that MarWorks have been trialling with 40 Commando and Advanced Force Operations.

Their feed can be live streamed over the network to marines on the ground in order to provide greater situational awareness and help in making decisions. It can also be fed to other members of the team to see on smart devices or, if required, to anyone working off-site.

Dave McInerney, MarWorks programme manager, said: "We take a problem from the user community, try to find an affordable technical solution, if it is off-the-shelf then great, but when it's not quite there we are able to work with industry, big and small, to develop a solution that meets the users' need."

As part of Future Commando Force experimentation, MarWorks had helped set up a tactical IP network, opening the doors for new equipment and technology to be introduced to Royal Marines operating on the ground.

Colonel Mark Totten, FCF programme director, said: "Every Royal Marine should have one."

Uniform change, see page 19

Bring on the Gulf

BEGINNING a 6,000-mile odyssey which will take their ships to the Gulf for three years are the crews of minehunters HMS Penzance and Chiddingfold.

The latter sailed from Portsmouth to begin the epic journey to Bahrain, a journey she will share with Penzance which departed her base at Faslane a few days earlier and, after a brief fuel stop in Falmouth, linked up with Chid in the Atlantic.

It's the second time the two vessels have sailed in company to the Middle East for a three-year tour of duty, having last made the extended trip between 2014 and 2017.

Heading back to the UK, mission accomplished, once Penzance and Chiddingfold arrive, are their sister ships HMS Blyth and Ledbury.

The Royal Navy has maintained a four-strong minehunting force – bolstered by a dedicated battle staff and mother ship, currently RFA Cardigan Bay – for more than a decade.

Together, they keep the sea lanes open, deter aggression, work with allies and fly the flag for the UK in a part of the world which is key to the nation's security and economy.

The two Gulf-bound ships are the first to switch over to a new crew rotational system – four months aboard instead of six, followed by four months back in the UK on leave/undergoing training, courses, education and the like.



● HMS Penzance made a brief stop in Falmouth; Members of Chiddingfold's crew look happy to leave the UK

The programme is intended to give sailors – 51 on Chid, 40 on Penzance – a more settled life, while getting the maximum out of their vessels on operations in theatre.

"We are the first crews in this new programme – and we're determined to make it a success. Many sailors are pleased to have increased stability in their lives," said HMS Chiddingfold's Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Tom Harrison.

The global Covid-19 pandemic reduced the scale of the traditional send-off from families and friends – the usual pre-deployment look around the vessel was, in Chiddingfold's case, replaced by a

social-distanced wave from Portsmouth's Hot Walls – and will limit/restrict the ten or so port visits on the journey out.

That aside the crews are keen to knuckle down to their mission.

"This will be my first deployment and I'm very much looking forward to putting into practice on operations what I have learned over the last year," said Able Seaman Connor Hurst, one of Penzance's mine warfare specialists.

"Minehunters have a long history of delivering success in the region and I look forward to becoming part of that."

Lieutenant Commander Harrison, 32, from Exeter, said that his team had worked "incredibly hard to get to this stage – it's

been a long run-up to deployment. Now the ship's company are excited and I am hugely confident they will continue to perform to a high standard, particularly with the introduction of four-month deployments."

His counterpart on Penzance, Lieutenant Commander Graeme Hazelwood, agrees.

"It has been a team effort across the enterprise and one made all the more challenging during the current coronavirus crisis," he added.

"I feel incredibly proud of the hard work and dedication that the crew and all the support organisations in Faslane have shown in getting Penzance ready to deploy."

Pictures: LPhot Ben Corbett and David Barnicoat

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Follow @HMSChiddingfold, @HMSPenzance and @RoyalNavy on Twitter



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MEDWAY MAKES HEADWAY ON CARIBBEAN MISSIONS

HMS Medway has been right in the thick of it over the past month as her Caribbean mission ramped up a notch.

The Royal Navy's task group in the region is centred around Offshore Patrol Vessel Medway and support ship/helicopter carrier RFA Argus.

Argus has been on an extensive tour of the Caribbean since her arrival in April, but now it was time for Medway to enter the fray alongside Argus as preparations for the hurricane season continued in earnest.

The season has now begun and the Royal Navy group are ready for action, but, until they are called up to react in the event of a real natural disaster, they continue to train, train, train so they are as sharp as a razor for when they are truly needed.

Argus, her air group of Wildcat and Merlin helicopters and commandos have already been on an island hop of British Overseas Territories, practising delivering vital humanitarian aid to islands across the region, including Turks and Caicos, Montserrat, British Virgin Islands and Bermuda.

Medway is now well involved in activity, too.

After Commando Merlins from 845 Naval Air Squadron debuted on her flight deck during aviation training, Medway linked up with Argus to head to the Cayman Islands.

It is the second time Argus has been to the Caymans, following a visit to find the best helicopter landing sites and carry out patrols and exercises with the Royal Cayman Islands Police.

But this time the stop on the islands in the western Caribbean Sea saw the Royal Navy's task group really come together to deliver what's known as the Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief Capability (HADR).

These exercises were designed to show the task group's ability to come together and work seamlessly in a crisis.

"It was an extremely valuable exercise to pull together all force elements in one location and work together to ensure that we are ready to deliver assistance in the event of a hurricane," Royal Navy Lieutenant John Mason, of HMS Medway, said.

3 Commando Brigade's Crisis Response Troop landed ashore on the islands from both Medway and Argus.

The commandos from 24 Commando Royal Engineers linked up with a security team stationed on the islands and a headquarters was established with communications to the ships and helicopters.

The task group then practised evacuating casualties to the ships.

All the training was done using PPE, testing what it would be like to react to a disaster with Covid-19 still active in the region.

"It was great to get ashore and actually trial something rather than tabletop it. It was really interesting for me to see how 24 Commando operate and work their communications systems," Engineering Technician Harry Awome, from HMS Medway, said.

Corporal Chris Teasdale is a member of the Mobile Air Operations Team who worked to find the best helicopter landing sites and was involved in evacuating a casualty by Wildcat helicopter as part of the exercises.

"Practising HADR work is important as it proves we can access and extract from small areas," he said.

"This exercise was a good simulation for a real scenario where we have to account for local people, keep them at a safe distance from the helicopter and still achieve our goal quickly."

The air group on Argus is made up of a Wildcat from 815 Naval Air Squadron, three Mk4 Merlins from the Commando Helicopter Force's 845 Naval Air Squadron and ranks from 1700 Naval Air Squadron.

The air group were heading on patrols around the Cayman Islands following the HADR training.

Royal Navy Pilot, and Operations Officer for the Tailored Air Group, Lieutenant Steve Doughty said: "In the Cayman Islands, we are helping out with the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service, conducting routine patrols while their aircraft is down for scheduled maintenance."

"We are in the Caribbean in preparation for the upcoming hurricane season, having a look at landing sites that we might use in the future, and making sure we are ready when the time comes."

Both Medway and Argus will continue to operate in the Caribbean. As well as continuing to prepare for HADR work in the hurricane season, they will be working closely with the US Coast Guard and local partners to conduct counter-narcotics operations.

In the last five years the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary have seized or disrupted circa 11 metric tonnes of cocaine and cannabis in the Caribbean, worth £750m in the UK.

On board Argus are also Royal Marines from 47 Commando who operate fast boats to intercept any suspicious craft that might be involved in drug-running. The marines are also there to help land people and essential supplies ashore.

For the commandos in the Caribbean, this year is particularly significant as it mark 80 years since the first commandos were formed up for special missions raiding Nazi-occupied Europe in World War Two.

To this day, the commandos still operate around the world and are trained to the highest standards, meeting the toughest of requirements.

It's not only Royal Marines who don the covered green beret, with people from all military backgrounds completing the All Arms Course.

Marines, sailors and soldiers are among those with green lids currently deployed in the Caribbean.

The rich history and heroics of the past naturally carries a weight of responsibility for the modern commandos. Corporal Thomas Thornton, a Royal Marine from 47 Commando Raiding Group who operate fast boats and landing craft, said: "You have to live up to the values that are passed down. You look to times like the Falklands, when the nation relied on the Corps, and you want to take on those values. There is determination and cheerfulness even when conditions are hard, and anyone who is a Commando understands that, they are part of a family."

Working alongside the Royal Marines is Lieutenant Adam Figgins, a Royal Navy Commando who commands the Mobile Air Operations Team.

This small team are experts in helicopter landing site reconnaissance, and are a valuable asset in identifying where Task Group aviation can bring in vital aid in the aftermath of a hurricane. He is further supported by Commando Helicopter Force aircraft from 845 Naval Air Squadron.

The Crisis Response Troop from 24 Commando Royal Engineers are also closely linked in and ready to be landed ashore and provide crucial engineering support to local communities.

The troop commander, Captain Henry Perks, said: "There is a shared mindset amongst commandos and this helps us work together. They know that we can endure the same tough conditions and we can push ourselves. Commandos often have more drive than other soldiers, we are trusted to not just to keep up, but deliver and deliver well"

Images by LPhot Rory Arnold and LPhot Joe Cater



BACK TO THE ISLANDS

TANKER RFA Tiderace left the best berth in Liverpool and returned to sea for trials after a revamp on Merseyside.

The 39,000-tonne vessel departed the Cruise Liner jetty on Liverpool's world-famous waterfront to prepare for renewed front-line duties supporting Royal Navy operations around the globe.

The tanker has been in the hands of Birkenhead's Cammell Laird yard for a revamp which ended with the ship being berthed across the Mersey at the city's cruise terminal in the shadow of the Liver Building.

The cruise jetty typically hosts passenger liners, or warships paying high-profile visits to the port (such as carrier HMS Prince of Wales which drew massive crowds on her debut in her affiliated city at the end of February).

But with no liners using the berth during lockdown, merchant vessels have been using it for resupply and maintenance work.

Tiderace – one of four Tide-class vessels built to provide Prince of Wales,

HMS Queen Elizabeth and their carrier battle groups with fuel to power both the ships and F-35 strike fighters and helicopters – has been in the hands of Cammell Laird for the work.

She's one of numerous RFA vessels being revamped by the Birkenhead yard as part of a ten-year/£619m contract to maintain, overhaul and refit the auxiliary flotilla.

Tiderace went into dry dock for work beneath the waterline, such as adding a fresh lick of paint to the 200-metre-long hull and the task of inspecting the sludge tanks.

Since then further work has been carried out in Tranmere Basin on the left bank of the Mersey... and then Canada Dock in Bootle on the right bank.



Improvements and changes include all four funnel exhausts, a significantly-enhanced firefighting system, and enhancements and tweaks based on lessons learned by the ship's company since the tanker was handed over from its builder.

The final phase of Tiderace's revamp revolved around a fresh coat of (special) paint for the tanker's huge flight deck under a protective awning to spare shipwrights exposure to the elements.

"Liverpool has, of course, been a strange place of late given the COVID-19 restrictions in place," said Captain Chris Clarke, the tanker's Commanding Officer. "The cruise berth is normally at the heart of the famous clubs, bars, restaurants and museums of Liverpool. But while it

has been strangely quiet, Tiderace has at least given the locals an impressive ship to view.

"I am delighted to have taken command of Tiderace and given the privilege of starting the complex steps of turning a ship in refit to a fully-operational vessel capable of supporting our mighty carriers in times of both peace and conflict.

"Now we have to take the work of Cammell Laird – and its supporting contractors – and turn Tiderace into a fighting ship once again. This is an exacting task with little manoeuvre for mistakes, and thus the foundations of success and safety will be built on the great work of Cammell Laird."

Revamp for Protector

THE navy's only icebreaker HMS Protector is undergoing a major overhaul on Teesside – including preparing the ship to carry unmanned survey devices.

The distinctive Plymouth-based scientific vessel spends the austral summer – winter back in the UK – charting the waters around the frozen continent and working side-by-side with the British Antarctic Survey to gather information on the southern ocean, ice and sea levels and the region's unique wildlife.

Given the unforgiving nature of the Antarctic environment, Protector undergoes maintenance every time she returns from the southern ocean.

And every five years she is subjected to 'deep maintenance' – a particularly thorough revamp which will prepare the vessel for the long term, in this case until the middle of the decade.

So over the summer, shipwrights and engineers at UK Docks are working above and below the waterline, overhauling Protector from bow to stern, topmast to keel.

Her 60-tonne crane and flight deck have already been removed for major servicing and, with the dry dock emptied, extensive work is taking place on the hull.

Beyond what might be regarded as routine maintenance, the ship is being substantially upgraded to embrace latest operational scientific/survey techniques, including increasing use of autonomous survey methods.

Captain Michael Wood, the ship's Commanding Officer, said: "This refit marks the start of our long journey back to Antarctica."

Once work on Teesside is complete, Protector's ship's company will undergo operational sea training.

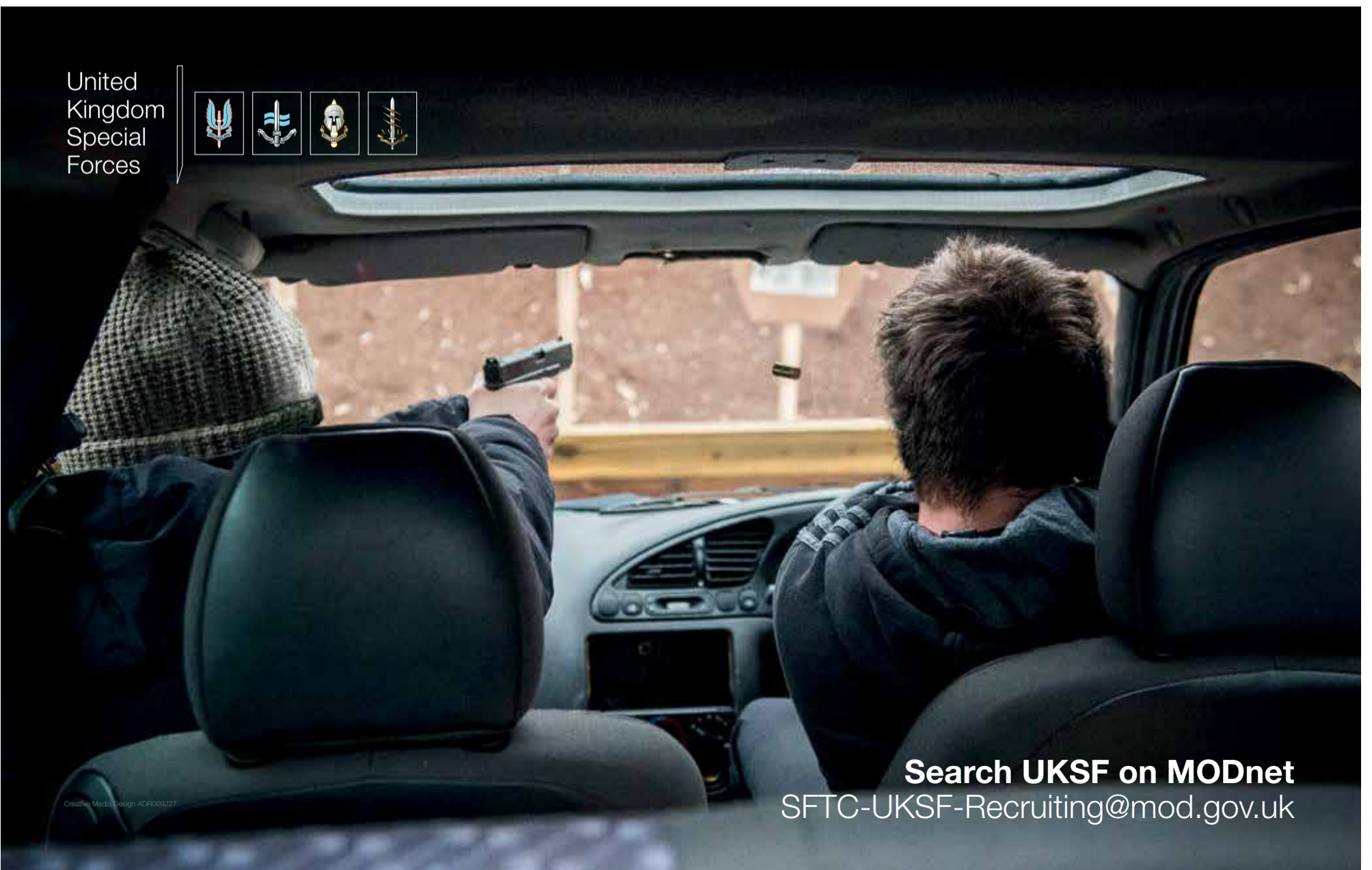


Mersey makeover

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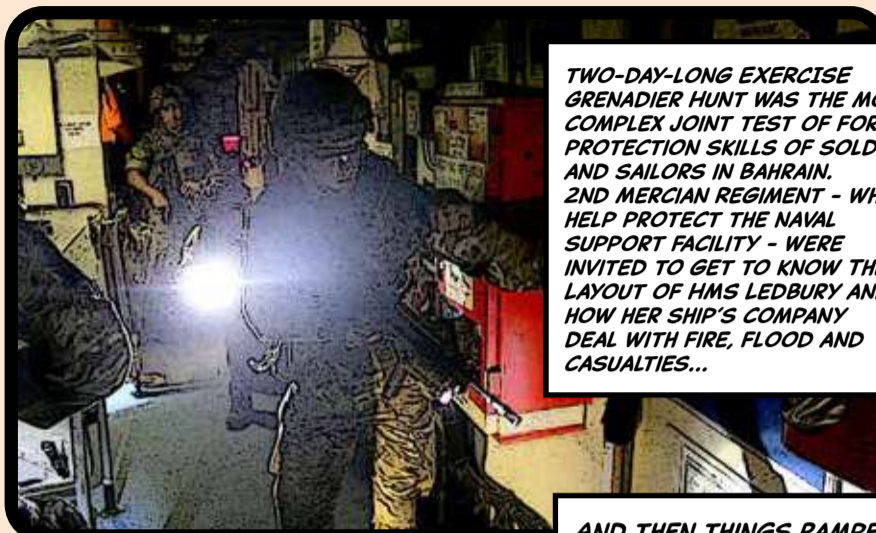
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THE MCM TEAM



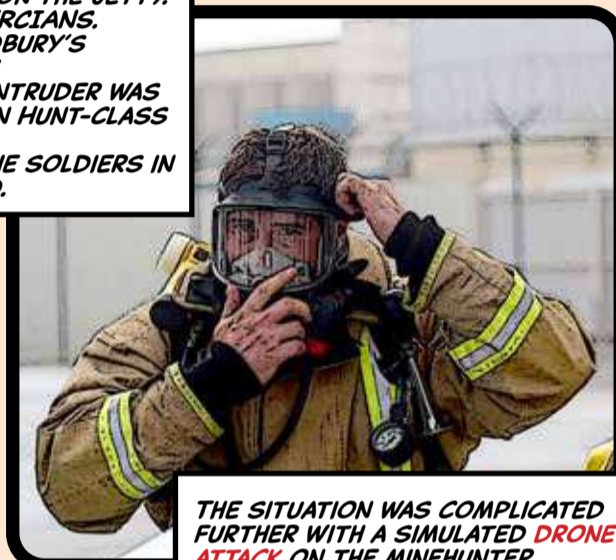
IT IS ONE OF THE MOST HEAVILY GUARDED AND ALERT UK MILITARY SITES. BUT WHAT IF...SOMEONE PENETRATED THE RING OF STEEL AROUND THE NAVAL SUPPORT FACILITY IN SAUDI ARABIA? WHAT IF THEY PLACED HOME-MADE BOMBS AROUND THE SITE? WHAT IF THEY CO-ORDINATED THEIR RAID WITH A DRONE ATTACK ON A BRITISH WARSHIP? WHAT IF THE DRONE LEFT A MINEHUNTER AFLAME, ITS COMPARTMENTS FILLED WITH CASUALTIES?



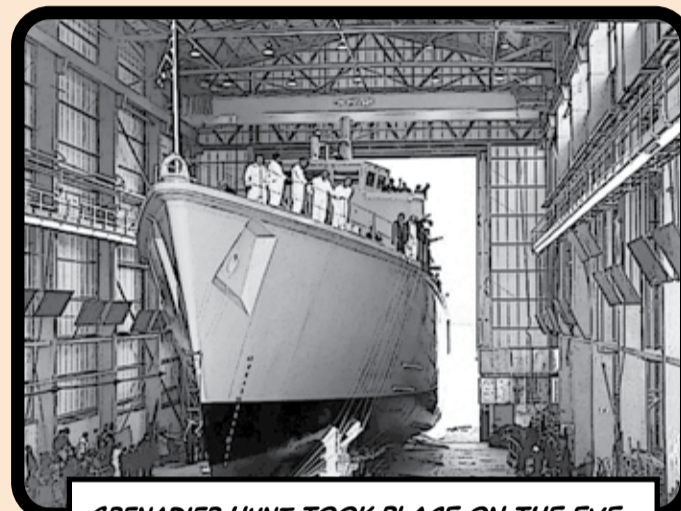
TWO-DAY-LONG EXERCISE GRENADIER HUNT WAS THE MOST COMPLEX JOINT TEST OF FORCE PROTECTION SKILLS OF SOLDIERS AND SAILORS IN SAUDI ARABIA. 2ND MERCIAN REGIMENT - WHO HELP PROTECT THE NAVAL SUPPORT FACILITY - WERE INVITED TO GET TO KNOW THE LAYOUT OF HMS LEDBURY AND HOW HER SHIP'S COMPANY DEAL WITH FIRE, FLOOD AND CASUALTIES...

AND THEN THINGS RAMPED UP A BIT...

AN UNEXPLODED IMPROVISED DEVICE WAS FOUND ON THE JETTY. IT WAS CORDONED OFF AND SECURED BY THE MERCIANS. MEANWHILE, A SUSPECTED INTRUDER (ONE OF LEDBURY'S DIVERS) WAS LOCATED INSIDE THE BASE. HE WAS APPREHENDED BY THE TROOPS... BUT A SECOND INTRUDER WAS SUSPECTED TO HAVE GOT ON BOARD THE VETERAN HUNT-CLASS SHIP. LEDBURY'S FORCE PROTECTION TEAMS JOINED THE SOLDIERS IN SWIFTLY CLEARING ALL COMPARTMENTS ON BOARD.



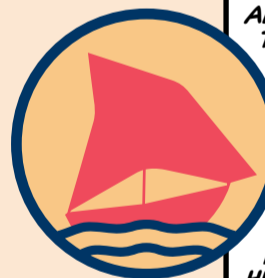
THE SITUATION WAS COMPLICATED FURTHER WITH A SIMULATED DRONE ATTACK ON THE MINEHUNTER, CAUSING A FIRE AND INFLECTING MULTIPLE CASUALTIES. WHILE CASUALTIES WERE TREATED AND MOVED TO SAFETY, THE SHIP'S COMPANY GEARED UP TO FIGHT THE FICTIONAL FIRE.



GRENADIER HUNT TOOK PLACE ON THE EVE OF LEDBURY'S 39TH BIRTHDAY - SHE'S THE OLDEST OPERATIONAL WARSHIP IN THE FLEET. CO LT CDR MATT ELLICOTT SAID HIS SHIP WAS "39 YEARS YOUNG AND STILL VERY MUCH AT THE TIP OF THE SWORD OF FREEDOM, DELIVERING ON OPERATIONS, REGARDLESS OF CONDITIONS OR CLIMATE."



HMS SHOREHAM - NOT HALF LEDBURY'S AGE - HAS BEEN IN ALMOST NON-STOP ACTION SINCE JANUARY, MOST RECENTLY VISITING KUWAIT WITH HMS BLYTH. THE TWO RN VESSELS CARRIED OUT MANOEUVRES WITH KNS ISTIQLAL, A FAMOUS KUWAITI WARSHIP WHICH TOOK PART IN GULF WAR I.



ALL THESE ACTIVITIES ARE DIRECTED BY THE UK MINE COUNTERMEASURES FORCE ON RFA CARDIGAN BAY. CDR RICH TALBOT'S TEAM HAS JUST TAKEN OVER FROM CDR NEIL GRIFFITHS' STAFF BEGINNING WITH A COMBINED EXERCISE INVOLVING LEDBURY, BROCKLESBY AND BLYTH TO ALLOW THE STAFF TO GET USED TO CONDITIONS AND OPERATIONAL TEMPO IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND TO SEE WHAT HIS MEN AND WOMEN ARE CAPABLE OF.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE STORIES - AND KEEP UP WITH THE MCM TEAM - VIA THE SHIPS' PERSONAL WEBSITES AT WWW.ROYALNAVY.MOD.UK



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Back with a bang

Revamped Lancaster ready to return to the frontline

HMS Lancaster spent a fortnight flexing her military muscle off the south coast as she prepared for renewed front-line duties.

After a spot of maintenance in her home base of Portsmouth, the frigate put to sea to focus on the 'business end' of Royal Navy operations: warfare.

The ship is gearing up for her first operational duties in nearly five years following a period of extended readiness and two-year refit in Devonport.

That overhaul gave her numerous new systems and sensors, from Artisan 3D radar (the grey slab which spins on top of the main mast) to the Sea Ceptor air defence system (the Mach 3 missiles which take out airborne threats up to 15 miles away).

Those systems, as well as the ship's company, will face a two-month-long test in September when the Queen's Frigate – she's named after the monarch in her role as Duke of Lancaster – faces Operational Sea Training.

Akin to 'pre-season training' for Royal Navy warships, it ensures the 180-plus sailors and

Royal Marines on board are ready for every possible eventuality on deployment.

That includes, however unlikely, preparing for chemical or nuclear incidents by donning precisely-fitting respirators (Lancaster has a self-contained inner citadel to protect its sailors in the event of radioactive fallout/biological threats, but it doesn't extend to working on the upper deck).

Firefighting and damage response teams were put to work in the bowels of the frigate. And the 4.5in main gun was thoroughly put through its paces at maximum elevation, maximum depression and maximum rate of fire (two dozen rounds a minute) which truly tested the gunbay team handling 21kg shells beneath the turret.

Shells leave the barrel at speeds in excess of twice the speed of sound and have a maximum range of 15 miles.

"It was great to finally be back at sea and use the gun," said Petty

Officer Alan Bates. "Having joined Lancaster over a year ago as the maintainer to get to function the gun was fantastic. We are now ready to move forward in our training. A lot of the junior members of the crew have never heard or seen the gun fire so it was a great demonstration to them about the impact the gun can provide."

Further training and equipment trials over the next ten days will focus on the 4,500-tonne warship's other weapons and sensors – every day bringing her one step closer full operational status.

"Lancaster's story from engineering project to ship and warship is now in its final few chapters," said the frigate's Commanding Officer Commander Will Blackett. "She is a fantastic ship, with a fantastic team and plenty more to offer UK Defence over the months and years ahead."

Pictures: PO Phot Carl Osmond

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @HMSLancaster and @RoyalNavy on Twitter



Pembroke leads way with new ORCA kit

FASLANE-based HMS Pembroke became the Royal Navy's most modern Mine Counter-Measures Vessel after being equipped with a new state-of-the-art mine counter-measures Command System.

ORCA or Oceanographic Reconnaissance Combat Architecture, to use its full title, was commissioned to replace the existing NAUTIS Command System, allowing the Royal Navy to maintain its position at the tip of the global minehunting spear.

After emerging from an eight-month refit, Pembroke was chosen to be the first MCMV in the Royal Navy to receive the ORCA Command System.

Engineers and contracting staff fitted the new system in a maintenance period alongside

HM Naval Base Clyde in February and March, conducting harbour acceptance trials prior to sea acceptance trials which concluded in April.

The upgrade involved a complete overhaul of the operations room, installing new consoles throughout the compartment, and the replacement of the console on the bridge as well as integrating the new system with the myriad of sensors available onboard.

Petty Officer (Mine Warfare) Matthew Routliffe, Ops Room Supervisor said: "After a busy integration of a new Command System on HMS Pembroke and successful acceptance trials, ORCA is a step forward for the mine warfare cadre, ensuring the Royal Navy continues to be a global leader

within the mine counter measures community."

ORCA allows the Mine Warfare Officer in the Ops Room to have increased situational awareness in comparison with the previous NAUTIS system, with a radar picture and navigation charts being integrated into the display.

In addition, the more user-friendly system allows training to be conducted at a lower level, leading to a skilled junior crew.

MCM1 Crew 5 have worked tirelessly to ensure that targets were met and there were no delays to the operational readiness of the unit. The ORCA Command System has been proven and the crew will deploy to the Gulf in the summer.



From Canada to the best job ever

A ROYAL Canadian Navy clearance diver was thrust into the deep end when he arrived for a three-year exchange visit with the Royal Navy Fleet Diving Squadron.

Lieutenant Kevin Okihiro responded to around 45 calls during his first year with the Senior Service.

Most calls were historic bombs and mines from World War 1 and 2 – but one was highly unusual.

The landlord of a car mechanic's garage in the village of Upton Cross in Cornwall came across firebombs placed under several cars.

"When we got the call I was on duty," said Lt Okihiro. "We're held at ten minutes notice to move, so we have to respond quickly."

"When I turned up, the police, the fire service and crime scene investigators were already on scene awaiting my team's arrival."

After making sure everyone in the affected area had been evacuated and the area was blocked off, Lt Okihiro spoke with the on-scene incident commander to get a better idea of what type of IEDs they had found.

Then, with his fireproof protective equipment on, he approached the first car.

"They were under cars and they were armed incendiary bombs," said Lt Okihiro. "So, if you made a wrong movement or were too aggressive there was a chance that you could function one."

"And because it was a car garage, the entire ground was covered in fuel. So that was a little bit problematic."

Lt Okihiro says he does not lose sleep over the dangerous nature of his job, although there is always the stress of making sure you do everything right, especially with IEDs, as the level of government and public interest is higher than with war-era bombs.

"The training is excellent," said Lt Okihiro. "So when I get the opportunity to go out and do something for real, I'm actually kind of excited to go out and do it."

He moved from car to car at his own pace, calmly and decisively reaching under each one to render each IED safe by hand. Their position under the vehicles made reaching some of them awkward.

"It was just a matter of making sure your actions and what you were doing was precise."

The investigation is still under way, but police have classified the incident as attempted arson.

After clearing each car, he had to search the entire area and worked with crime scene investigators to ensure the site was safe.

"I felt a huge sense of satisfaction on completion of the job. We train



for years to become qualified and competent in preparation for something like this. It was really the coolest thing I've ever done."

Lt Okihiro was initially drawn to diving rather than disarming explosives.

"I love reading about history, and especially the world wars. That interest is why I chose to major in history at university, and probably what spurred me to join the military in the first place."

Since joining his teammates in the UK and responding to a variety of calls to disarm anything from hand grenades to 1,000 kg, WW2-era German bombs, his interest in explosive ordnance disposal has grown.

"The most exciting conventional call I've responded to was just after Christmas, where my team was tasked to dispose of two First World War British mortar bombs filled with mustard gas, two miles from Portsmouth Harbour."

"It's such an amazing experience to put hands on the historical ordnance I read about in my youth, and ultimately be responsible for making them safe," said Lt Okihiro.

"If I could go back in time and tell my younger self that this would one day be my job I would never have believed it."

In the UK, legacy historical munitions are found every single day, and a Royal Navy bomb disposal team is dispatched every 18 hours to respond to a callout. This adds up to about 300 calls per year per unit.

"I love this job," said Lt Okihiro. "I love being on duty, taking tasking calls on the duty operator cell phone, preparing a plan and briefing the team, before departing the base at best speed in a blue-lit, emergency vehicle with 'Royal Navy Bomb Disposal' emblazoned on the sides."

"Without a doubt, this is the best job I've ever had."



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READY...

WILDCATS SHARPEN THEIR CLAWS



AIM...

Armed with a new missile system, Royal Navy Wildcat helicopters are now ready to be part of HMS Queen Elizabeth's carrier strike group during the ship's maiden operational deployment next year

Hovering in the air, a Wildcat helicopter gets ready to be part of a landmark moment years in the making. The Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton-based aircraft is preparing to fire the new Martlet missile system.

be used against stationary and moving targets. Captain Mark Langrill, DE&S Wildcat Delivery Team Leader, said it was important these trials went ahead. "These firings mark a vital step forward in the integration of the uniquely flexible Martlet missile into what is already an outstanding helicopter to provide the Royal Navy with a world-class capability," he added. "I am grateful to all those, across industry and the Ministry of Defence, who have worked so hard to achieve this milestone."



Weeks of final preparations have built up to this moment – preparations made more difficult due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and social distancing rules.

After several successful trials to test if the missile can detach itself from the helicopter without causing damage, it is ready to be fired towards a target on the range off the coast of Wales.

In 0.3 seconds, the missile detaches from the Wildcat HMA Mk2 helicopter, accelerating to one and a half times the speed of sound. This milestone means Royal Navy helicopter crews have proved their ability to protect the UK's aircraft carriers.

The Wildcats that deploy as part of HMS Queen Elizabeth's maiden operational deployment next year will be armed with this new firepower, bolstering the defence systems of the carrier strike group.

Commander Matt Bouлинд Royal Navy, the Wildcat Maritime Force Commander, said: "This test firing shows the Wildcat helicopter will be ready to help defend our Queen Elizabeth-class carriers and their strike groups for years to come."

"The Royal Navy and Army introduced Wildcat helicopters into service five years ago and the firing of the Martlet is a very significant milestone and represents a huge success for the joint industry and MoD team."

"This firing underpins future Royal Navy offensive capability and the defence of the surface fleet."

Managed by the Lightweight and Medium Attack Systems and Wildcat delivery teams at DE&S, and manufactured by Thales, the laser-sensor missile can

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“““

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Wildcat Maritime Force Commander Cdr Matt Bouлинд

Philip McBride, general manager of Integrated Airspace-protection Systems at Thales UK, said: "Martlet will ensure the Wildcat has the best-in-class offensive capability to protect the carrier strike group. With each helicopter capable of carrying up to 20 missiles, the Wildcats deployed will be a significant deterrent to anyone wishing to interfere with UK interests."

Nick Whitney, Managing Director of Leonardo Helicopters, added: "This major milestone demonstrates that the combination of the AW159 Wildcat and Martlet missile will be a flexible and effective tool for the Royal Navy. Next year the Wildcat fleet will embark on Carrier Strike Group missions with HMS Queen Elizabeth on its maiden operational deployment. As the only British company to design and manufacture helicopters on-shore, we're extremely proud to be equipping the UK Armed Forces with world-beating sovereign capabilities."

The Royal Navy is transforming into a force centred around carrier strike – supporting the ships as they conduct carrier strike missions, enforce no-fly zones, deploy Royal Marine Commandos, deliver humanitarian aid, and build international partnerships with our allies.

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SO, what do you get if you mix up A516. M862. M861. M110. F78. A couple of B-52s. Several F-16s. A few Su-22s.

Sounds like a very complex chemical formula...

...but it's actually some of the participants in the largest military exercise staged in European waters so far this year.

And for those of you who don't speak pennant/hull numbers... F78 (HMS Kent) and M110 (HMS Ramsey) led the charge for the Royal Navy during Baltops, NATO's annual test of its ability to defend the nations with a Baltic coastline and keep the namesake sea open.

So far, pretty regular fare for Baltops No.49 (the first was held way back in 1972). In fact, Kent and Ramsey both took part in No.48.

But for the 2020 iteration, the pandemic meant action was concentrated at sea and in Baltic skies (Royal Marines were heavily involved in training in Latvia and Estonia in 2019, for example).

And there was the rarity of Kent being a dastardly foe.

The Portsmouth-based frigate was assigned to the 'Orange Forces' from the fictional state of Bothnia - the enemy - in this year's scenario, which meant her sailors had to approach Baltops with a different mind-set.

"Playing the bad guys for a change rather than ourselves has been good," said Above Water Warfare specialist, 31-year-old Able Seaman Jonathan Mills.

"It really forced us to look at how we normally do things, then doing something sneaky instead. It has been really busy, but I have definitely learned a lot."

More than two dozen vessels, led by the US Navy's amphibious command ship Mount Whitney, a similar number of aircraft and upwards of 3,000 military personnel threw their hat in the ring for the 11-day long exercise, directed from 1,500 miles away.

A baker's dozen of sailors and Royal Marines were part of the international team choreographing

the air-sea battle.

Baltops is run by Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO) based in the Portuguese capital, Lisbon.

Rear Admiral Guy Robinson acted as exercise director, overseeing an international staff who spent 11 months working with the 19 participating nations to ensure flawless execution.

"Running Baltops is a personal highlight in my yearly schedule," Adm Robinson said.

"It is always a privilege to work alongside highly-competent maritime commanders at sea, and with our NATO colleagues in their headquarters ashore, to deliver the best exercise we can.

"The pandemic forced us to do things differently - and in some cases better."

His team gave participants seven days to hone individual and collective skills, training side-by-side in numerous demanding scenarios covering most aspects of naval war (submarine hunting, manoeuvring task forces in close proximity, gunnery, resupplying on

the go and aerial warfare).

Kent's gunners - armed with their automated 30mm and Miniguns - lined up Banshee drones in their sights.

Though sluggish by jet or missile standards, the drones - travelling at 120mph - nevertheless proved tricky targets given their size,

rather murky visibility, and the difficulty of hitting one moving object while on another one.

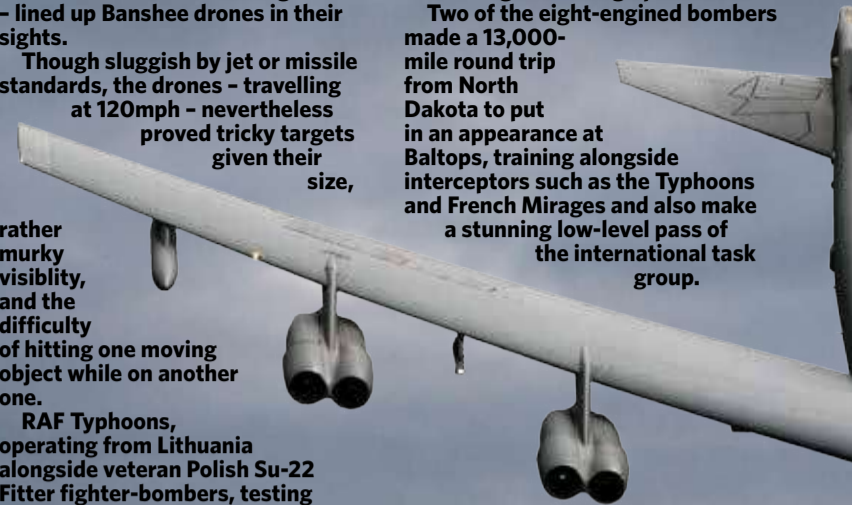
RAF Typhoons, operating from Lithuania alongside veteran Polish Su-22 Fitter fighter-bombers, testing sensors, operation room teams and anti-air missile systems as they buzzed the task groups as more Polish jets, F-16 Falcons, tried to fend off the attackers.

Impressive as the sight of those jets were, they were dwarfed by

giant B-52 Stratofortresses - seven decades old and still a mainstay of US strategic bombing operations.

Two of the eight-engined bombers made a 13,000-mile round trip from North Dakota to put in an appearance at Baltops, training alongside interceptors such as the Typhoons and French Mirages and also make a stunning low-level pass of the international task group.

Ramsey, meanwhile, was involved in nine days of intensive minehunting alongside seven ships - plus two drones from the German Navy - especially close to the Danish and Swedish coasts. The Faslane-based warship



arrived in the Baltic well in advance of Baltops to take her place with NATO's Mine Countermeasures Group 1, which roams the waters of northern Europe all year round looking for the leftovers of last centuries conflict and training to be ready for any future confrontation.

Ahead of Baltops, she took part in the second stage of a concerted hunt for old ordnance in the waters off Estonia's capital Tallinn, which witnessed particularly heavy

fighting in the summers of 1941 and 1944 especially.

That, plus extensive mine laying during both world wars mean that, despite more than 75 years of peace

and sweeping/clearance operations, the seabed is still peppered with aged ordnance.

The NATO group - Ramsey, plus flagship FGS Donau, Norwegian minesweeper Otra and German minehunter Fulda - were joined by Estonian naval forces for the concerted effort, including two old friends.

The Estonians snapped up three Sandown-class ships back in 2006, two of which - Admiral

Cowan (ex-HMS Sandown) and Ugandi (formerly HMS Bridport) - took part in the joint exercise.

Together, the international force scoured an area of 58 square miles (roughly the size of Bristol), identified 180 mine-like objects, three of which turned out to be historic mines... which were

neutralised.

That genuine hunt segued neatly into Baltops - where the search was on an even greater scale (as evidenced by the nine ships 'rafted up' with flagship Donau in the main image; Ramsey is the second vessel off the tanker's port beam).

That allowed the 40-strong ship's company to take their training and expertise to the next level as they located - and neutralised - practice mines in challenging conditions.

"It has been really interesting to see other nations conduct mine hunting operations and observe how they do it, especially the German Navy using autonomous drones during the exercise," said mine warfare specialist AB(MW) Harry Streeter.

"The Royal Navy is already using - and accelerating the introduction of - new autonomous and remote systems into mine warfare, so to see how other nations employ similar technology has been great."

Alongside the latest technology, more traditional methods of rendering mines were practised, with Ramsey's clearance divers

plunging into the depths; even in mid-June the water temperature in the Baltic only scrapes into the low teens Celsius.

"Baltops has offered mine countermeasures training on an impressive scale and has allowed Ramsey to develop her operational capability, as well as our understanding of how we can support and protect collective UK and NATO interests," said her Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Joel Roberts.

"Bringing together so many partner and allied nations to exercise in a controlled environment using common procedures to execute sustained task group operations is fundamental to proving our readiness."

After the scripted opening week, Baltops shifted to a rather more free-flowing four-day-long tactical exercise to test the agility and reactions of participants to ever-changing events.

Certainly tactical exercise director, Royal Marine Lieutenant Colonel Kian Murphy, was impressed by the response of all

participants to the challenges set.

"We aimed to challenge them in a wide range of maritime and air warfare - up to high intensity conflict. They stepped up to the challenge and proved highly capable."

Kent's Commanding Officer, Commander Matt Sykes, concurs. "Baltops certainly tested the mettle of my team and I am very pleased by the way they rose to the challenge," he said.

"It was a great opportunity to prove how quickly the Royal Navy can integrate with NATO and regional allies, whilst also providing reassurance to our partners in the Baltic Sea region."

And with that, Kent headed back towards the UK for training in home waters and the North Atlantic, before a well-deserved period of maintenance and leave in her home port of Portsmouth over the summer, while Ramsey was preparing to leave her NATO group and return to the Clyde.

Pictures: LPhot Dan Rosenbaum, HMS Kent, and NATO SNMCMG1

NO MINOR 49ER



Dawn of the Tamar era



'Lions of the sea' takes



ON a cool and cloudy summer's day the White Ensign was raised for the first time aboard HMS Tamar as the patrol vessel took her place in the Royal Navy Fleet.

The ceremony was held on the River Tamar as the Batch 2 River-class vessel reinforced her close affiliations with both Devon and Cornwall.

With her rampant red lion motifs – three metres long by two high – the fourth of the Royal Navy's second-generation patrol vessels will be hard to miss.

The creature – which features on the ship's badge – dates back to Richard, Earl of Cornwall, in the 13th Century and appears on the crests of the two counties separated by the warship's namesake river.

"It's an incredibly proud moment for the ship," said her Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Michael Hutchinson.

"We've generated really quickly, we've done all our training and now we are at the point where we can join the Fleet and start to get ready for our first deployment later this year."

In the weeks leading up to the ceremony, Tamar had been operating around Plymouth Sound and the south west training areas, carrying out acceptance trials and achieving a number of firsts – her first gunnery exercises and boat drills and emergency exercises.

But the highlight of the firsts was the arrival of a Wildcat from 815 Naval Air Squadron as the ship

undertook aviation trials.

The successful landing of the cutting-edge maritime helicopter (and subsequent take-off to return home to RNAS Yeovilton in Somerset) just inside the breakwater in Plymouth Sound marked one of the last tests the Portsmouth-based ship had to complete ahead of being handed over to the Royal Navy.

Tamar's 40-strong ship's company – assisted by builders BAE – brought Tamar to life in just four weeks – a pace unseen in peacetime.

As the fourth ship in her class, Tamar (and No.5, Spey) feature some differences from their predecessors, notably a special filter which reduces her diesel exhaust emissions by 90 per cent, allowing her to patrol seas which are subject to strict emission controls.

She and her second-generation sisters are larger, faster and able to stay at sea for longer than the original River class (Tyne, Severn and Mersey) which remain in service, largely on fishery protection duties in home waters.

Tamar carries a 30mm main cannon, can conduct helicopter operations and can embark up to 50 personnel, in addition to her regular crew, half of whom will trade places with their shipmates who'll fly out from the UK every few months to sustain Tamar on an extended patrol far from the UK.

Tamar is earmarked for long-term duties around the globe under the Royal Navy's growing Forward Presence programme.

Older sisters HMS Forth and Medway are currently



TAMAR



her place in the Royal Navy fleet

in the Falklands and Caribbean respectively. Trent, Tamar and Spey's patrol regions are to be announced.

One of Tamar's affiliates is the Cornish city of Truro, whose Mayor Councillor Bert Biscoe said: "On behalf of the community of Truro, the elected members and establishment of Truro City Council, and all those for whom Truro is home and a workplace, may I convey the good wishes and congratulations to the captain of HMS Tamar on the auspicious occasion of its commissioning into the Fleet.



"The River Tamar is the oldest cultural boundary in Europe, and it is fitting that the vessel carries the name of the River which bonds, as a son to his mother, the Duchy of Kernow to the Crown.

"Long may she patrol and protect us one and all – *Tamar bys Vykken* (Tamar forever)."

The ship's Lady Sponsor Lady Brigitte Peach also sent a message to the ship's company: "Congratulations to you all on the outstanding achievement of your transition to a warship proudly bearing the famous White Ensign. From the wonderful moment of her launch just over a year ago, I followed your excellent progress from build acceptance to a fighting platform.

"Of course, current circumstances have prevented me from being with you at sea and for the memorable moment of the raising of the White Ensign, but I am there with you in spirit and

continue to follow your progress with interest. I look forward to joining you when and where circumstances permit, my best wishes for an exciting future. Fair winds and following seas to you all."

Naval Regional Commander Wales and Western England, Brigadier Jock Fraser, also sent his congratulations.

"It has been tremendous to have HMS Tamar in south west waters and proudly flying the White Ensign for the first time not far from her affiliated city. HMS Tamar's ship's company will be all the stronger knowing that the people of Truro are behind them."

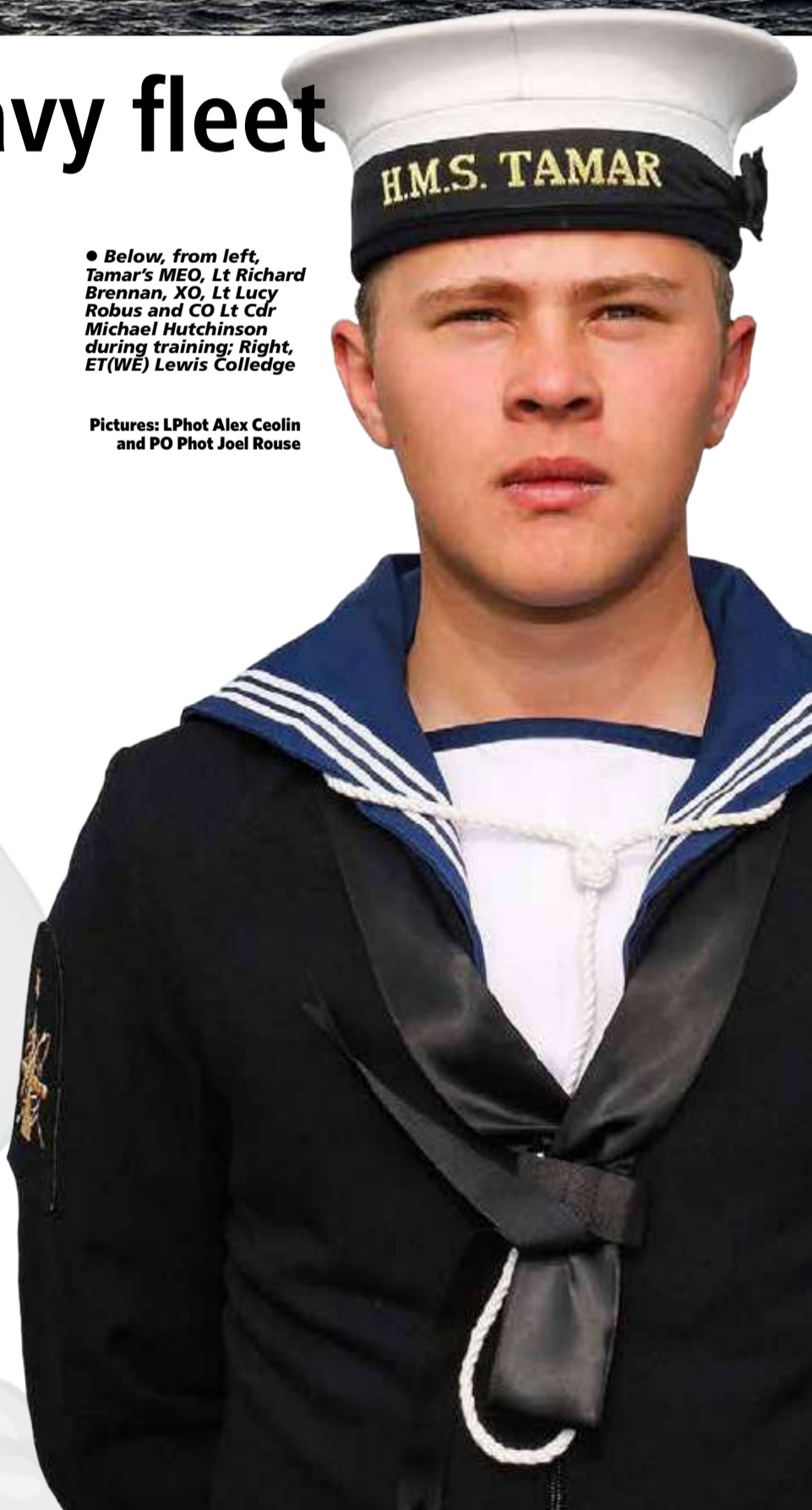
Tamar is the seventh ship to bear the name, following in the footsteps of the 16-gun sloop from 1758; a store lighter of 1795; a 38-gun fifth-rate from 1796; a 26-gun sixth-rate from 1814; an iron screw troop ship from 1863, which became a base ship in Hong Kong in 1897. The shore station bore the name Tamar until 1997, while the frigate HMS Aire was briefing renamed Tamar when she transferred to the Hong Kong base in 1946 as a depot ship.

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @HMS_Tamar, @OverseasPatrol and @RoyalNavy on Twitter

● Below, from left, Tamar's MEO, Lt Richard Brennan, XO, Lt Lucy Robus and CO Lt Cdr Michael Hutchinson during training; Right, ET(WE) Lewis Colledge

Pictures: LPhot Alex Ceolin and PO Phot Joel Rouse



First Sea Lord drops in on naval personnel across the UK

Lightning update



Personnel are praised for carrying on

FIRST Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin visited bases in the South West to thank sailors and civilian staff for their efforts in keeping the navy operational during the coronavirus pandemic.

Over three days he visited Devonport Naval Base, HMS Raleigh, and the Royal Marines Commando Training Centre at Lympstone.

In Devonport he met a range of personnel including off-watch RN medics who had been supporting the COVID-19 response in NHS hospitals in Plymouth.

Commanding Officer of the Joint Hospital Group (South West) Surgeon Commander Jo Keogh said: "I was delighted that a small number of JHG(SW) personnel were invited to join 1SL for a fireside chat. It provided a fantastic opportunity to explain their clinical roles and, in particular, how these have delivered support to the COVID-19 response locally at University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust."

While in the COVID-19 cell Adm Radakin presented a Herbert Lott Efficiency Award to PO WS(UW) Justine Gibson.

Justine, who has worked for the Executive Department since 2017, was rewarded for being a pivotal member of the department in her role as the IT security officer and is considered as the go-to person for all aspects of IT.

Moving on to the Royal Marines 47 Cdo Raiding Group HQ, RM Tamar within the NB, 1SL was briefed by the Commanding Officer, Col Chris Haw, on current ops and training before meeting members of the landing craft 3s course who were going through safety drills.

He took a boat trip across the Tamar to HMS Raleigh by the crew of the 15m Vahana workboat.

At HMS Raleigh the First Sea Lord met with the staff who had been involved in maintaining essential training.

He was briefed on the adaptations made to ensure that training is conducted in a safe manner following Public Health England guidance on social distancing. Where that is not possible mitigations have been put in place to reduce the risk.

Captain Rich Harris, the Commanding Officer of HMS Raleigh, said: "Since the restrictions were put in place by the government to tackle the pandemic in March, around 600 sailors have completed their initial naval training here at HMS Raleigh."

"That's thanks to the significant effort from my staff, both service and civilian, who have worked hard to adapt our training and the facilities to ensure that we can operate safely."

THE head of the Royal Navy has visited the Lightning Force for the first time since the appointment of a new Senior Service commanding officer to an F-35B squadron.

First Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin's visit came after Commander Mark Sparrow became the first Royal Navy officer to command the historic 617 Squadron, the first of two F-35B squadrons.

Adm Radakin was joined by Chief of the Air Staff, Mike Wigston, as he toured RAF Marham and met the Royal Navy and RAF personnel who make up the Lightning Force.

The two service chiefs visited the Integrated Training Centre to see where pilots are trained to fly the Lightning using the Full Mission Simulators and engineers are trained on the maintenance of the aircraft.

They then went to 207 Squadron to see where the training continues with the pilots flying the jet for the first time.

They were also briefed on how 207 Squadron have been supporting 617 Squadron in the build up to their deployment to the carrier, see pages 2-3.

Adm Radakin said: "It was a pleasure and a privilege to be invited to join CAS for the day at RAF Marham. Lightning is a truly game-changing fifth-generation aircraft that will transform our abilities in the air."

"But what is even more important is the way that the Royal Navy and RAF have been working together, alongside industry and our international partners, to deliver this. It is an enormous honour that the RAF have given command of 617 Squadron to a Royal Navy aviator, and really underpins the extent to which we are completely integrated on this joint endeavour. This is one Lightning force, delivering on behalf of Defence and the UK."

RAF Marham Station Commander, Group Captain Jim Beck said: "It was great to welcome Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston and Admiral Tony Radakin to RAF Marham to show them first-hand how the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and industry partners work hand in hand as the Lightning Force."

Cdr Sparrow, who took over the Dambusters from Wing Commander John Butcher, said: "I am delighted to be commanding 617 Squadron and extremely proud to be the first Royal Navy officer to be selected to the position in its illustrious history."

"The next two years will see the potent combination of Lightning and the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers become jointly operational. I look forward to us playing a key part in the generation of both the Lightning Force and Carrier Strike Group's capabilities."

Cdr Sparrow, who joined the



Royal Navy in 1997 as a direct entry pilot, served with 801 NAS on the Sea Harrier FA2 before taking the opportunity to be among the first Royal Navy pilots to convert to the Harrier GR7 at RAF Cottesmore in 2003.

His time on the GR7/9 saw him serve with IV(AC) Sqn, Naval Strike Wing (NSW) and 20 (R) Sqn (OCU). He undertook five operational tours of Afghanistan and multiple exercises from HMS Illustrious and Invincible in the North Sea, Baltic and Arabian Gulf.

Having been selected as a Qualified Weapons Instructor (QWI), he served operationally with Naval Strike Wing, leading the tactical employment of the squadron in Afghanistan and on deployments both at sea and on shore.

He then moved to the OCU teaching both new pilots and the QWI course; he led the first QWI course embarkation from HMS Illustrious where PWTV was employed from the maritime for the first time.

In 2010 Cdr Sparrow was selected for a three-year assignment with the US Navy flying F/A-18 E/F Super

Hornets in Operational Tests with VX-9 on the west coast of the USA. On return to the UK he spent a year sharing his time between DSTL and Navy Command, working on development of UK F-35 tactics, before completing Advanced Command and Staff Course in the summer of 2015.

After two years as the F-35 desk officer within Air Command, responsible for all aspects of platform capability and delivery, he then became the Fixed Wing Force Commander at RNAS Culdrose.

In July 2019 Cdr Sparrow commenced conversion to the F-35B prior to assuming command of 617 Squadron this year.

Married with two children, he enjoys running (slowly) and rugby (armchair) when he gets any spare time.

His predecessor at 617, Wg Cdr Butcher, said: "Command of 617 Squadron has been an absolute privilege and we have been on quite a journey over the past two years."

Because of social distancing measures, the handover ceremony, pictured right, was a low-key event.



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ROYAL MARINES GET A NEW LOOK

Images by LPhoto Dan Shepherd // Words by Peter Howard

FOR THE FUTURE BUT INSPIRED BY COMMANDO HISTORY

ROYAL Marines Commandos are to get a brand new uniform under the most significant transformation and rebranding programme launched since World War Two.

Elite commandos of the Royal Navy are undertaking a bold modernisation project – known as the Future Commando Force programme – which will overhaul the way world famous Green Berets operate around the globe.

As part of this restructuring, Royal Marines will have a new uniform, fit for a new era of warfare, that is in-keeping with the maritime traditions of the Corps, and also honours their commando forebears.

The NATO-procured uniform – which is made by USA-based firm Crye Precision – weighs less, has a higher tear-strength, is faster-drying and is more breathable than typical 50/50 cotton/nylon kit.

It also has a subtle change in camouflage design – instead of the previous Multi-Terrain Pattern – the uniform now uses Crye Precision's MultiCam pattern.

And, in the week that saw the 80th anniversary of Operation Collar, the first commando raid of the Second World War, the Marines have drawn on their heritage by returning to the traditional Royal Marines Commando insignia, just like the design first worn by commandos when they launched daring raids into Nazi-occupied Europe.

The flash with red writing and navy-blue background will be worn once again, as commandos evolve to conduct more raids from the sea, persistently deployed to counter the threats of the modern-day battlefield.

For the first time the White Ensign features on one sleeve, as a clear indication of the Royal Marines' integration with the Royal Navy.

The iconic Fairbairn-Sykes Dagger patch of 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines

has been redesigned and is based on the first pattern of the legendary fighting knife made in 1940.

Lieutenant Colonel Ben Reynolds RM, who led with the procurement and design of the new uniform, said: "The Royal Marines are integral to the Royal Navy and an extremely versatile elite force, able to operate from mountain and Arctic wastes to jungle and littorals.

"The Royal Marines' Commando Uniform 2020 reflects our distinctiveness and the unique capabilities we bring to defence, in addition to the Royal Navy's eagerness to invest in our development towards the Future Commando Force.

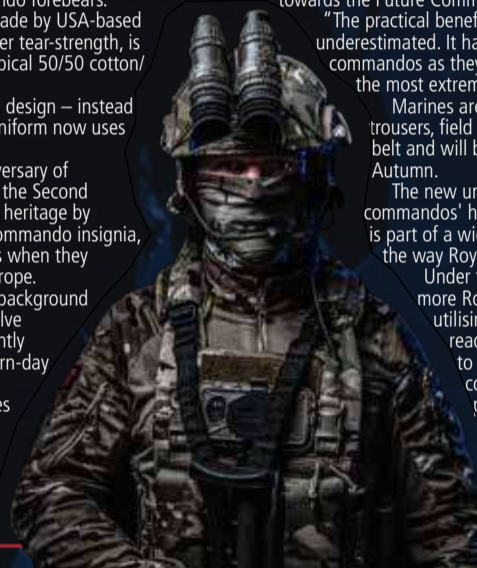
"The practical benefits of this uniform shouldn't be underestimated. It has been specifically selected to serve commandos as they carry out operations all around the globe in the most extreme environments."

Marines are already receiving the new combat shirt and trousers, field shirt and trousers, a utility jacket and utility belt and will begin wearing the new uniform from this Autumn.

The new uniform – which harks back to the fabled commandos' heritage while modernising their equipment – is part of a wider transformational drive which will change the way Royal Marines operate.

Under the Future Commando Force programme more Royal Marines will operate from the sea, utilising new and innovative technology as high-readiness troops, forward deployed and ready to react, whether that's war-fighting, specific combat missions such as commando raids, or providing humanitarian assistance.

The Royal Marines' Commando Uniform 2020 was procured in just over one year, using the NATO Support and Procurement Agency, demonstrating the Royal Navy's appetite to invest in the Royal Marines.



ASK YOURSELF:

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

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GULF NIGHTS & GULF KNIGHTS

A FLASH of fire from the muzzle of a C8 carbine momentarily outlines a Royal Marine Commando as he hones his marksmanship and firearms skills on a pitch-black night in the Middle East.

HMS Montrose is once again rising to the challenge of keeping Middle Eastern sea lanes open – now through the height of the Gulf summer.

The crew of the frigate have undergone intensive assessment to resume patrols, just months after they were carrying out the same mission in these same waters.

The frigate is geared up for four demanding months keeping Middle Eastern sea lanes open – and keeping illegal activity in check – in the latest chapter of her extended tour of duty in the region.

The Type 23 is at the vanguard of the RN's Forward Presence programme which ensures vessels spend more time at sea in an operational theatre – and their crews enjoy more settled, plan-able lives.

Every four months the ship's company of more than 200 sailors, Royal Marines boarding team from 42 Commando and Wildcat helicopter crew change entirely – in this case Port crew, under Commander Ollie Hucker, moved on board Montrose for the third time.

Straight back into it, the ship sailed and the Port team were assessed by a specialist team from the UK to ensure they were prepared for the unique demands of Gulf operations.

The ship herself was given a 'MOT and service' to ensure her machinery and systems are ready for summer in the Middle East when temperatures can hit 50°C on the upper deck, even more in non-air-conditioned parts of Montrose, such as her hangar and engine spaces.

The ship performs a wide-ranging mission from working with the UK's partners and Allies in the Gulf to provide reassurance to merchant shipping arriving or departing the region and conducting counter-terrorism/smuggling/piracy patrols in the broader waters of the Indian Ocean.

"We are safe, we have been trained and assured to a high standard and we are ready to conduct operations," said Commander Hucker.

"After a comprehensive handover, Port crew are once again re-established back onboard; HMS Montrose, alongside our sister ship HMS Argyll remain at the tip of the spear in delivering operations in the broader Middle East."

Argyll is on a regular, rather than long-term, deployment to the region and is currently assigned to the international Operation Sentinel, which concentrates on keeping shipping safe in the southern Gulf and Strait of Hormuz especially, with the two 23s occasionally meeting up on patrol (such as below).

During their four months in theatre, Port crew plus friends and family back home have set themselves the ambitious goal of running or walking around the world - 40,075km (24,901 miles), the equivalent of 160,300 laps of the frigate's upper deck (approximately 250 metres).

"Being away from our families during these challenging times, we wanted to do something to support those back home, so we came up with an idea to raise some money for some charities close to our hearts," explained organiser Lieutenant Commander Barry Crosswood, the ship's Principal Warfare Officer.

"Being able to involve the wider Montrose family in the initiative is really important to us – it's about looking after everyone's welfare, staying healthy and fighting the pandemic together. We can run laps around coronavirus."

Proceeds will be shared among the mental health charity MIND, the Royal Navy Benevolent Trust and Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity. You can show your support via: <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/HMSMONTROSE>

Pictures: AET Matt Godfrey, 815 NAS



A positive start

Back in March we introduced you to the three new warrant officers who have the ears of both the most senior officers in the Royal Navy – and the thousands of men and women who are the backbone of the Fleet. Here the trio, WO1 Carl 'Speedy' Steedman (now retired Warrant Officer to the Royal Navy or WORN as the term 'Naval Service' is retired), 2SL's Warrant Officer WO1 Ian Wilson and Fleet Commander's Warrant Officer WO1 Mick Turnbull shed light on their first 100 days in post... 100 days dominated by Covid-19 and Transformation... and Corps RSM WO1 David Mason, who's coming to the end of his time in his respected role, reflects on two dynamic years as the Royal Marines reinvent themselves.

“ Having been the Warrant Officer to the Royal Navy for over 100 days all I can say, hand on heart, is that it is just amazing to be in this role. I am still confused how I got here and if I'm honest it has been a very strange start. My handover notes from WO1 Nick Sharland did not cover what to do in the event of a global pandemic or give any tips on how the RN would operate should the country drop in to lockdown. So, from the early stages it has been very much finding different ways of working and different ways to interact with the Royal Navy. But with the new senior Warrant Officers starting at the same time, the three of us have been able to really find our feet not only with our admirals but also each other, while deciding the three main areas to focus on: communications, leadership and reward and recognition. In all these fields we continue to improve and I truly hope that the Royal Navy of 2020 is seeing that improvement. Before Covid-19, I had the pleasure of getting out and about to gauge your views on some of the on-going challenges – positive and negative – in the Royal Navy. Addressing over 80 Warrant Officers in your first week is a good way to start and the Royal Marines of 42 Cdo were particularly friendly in early March, allowing the First Sea Lord and me the opportunity to wade across a cold river after a good old-fashioned squad march up and down a hill. Those of you who know me will understand that the navy and its personnel will always be top of my priorities, but another key area I will focus on is reaching outside that domain. I've had the pleasure of representing the RN in various Skype and Zoom calls with the Senior Enlisted Advisor to Chiefs of Defence Staff Committee (SEAC) and my opposite numbers in the RAF, Army and Strat Command. This allows all warrant officers across defence to ensure that everyone is linked in at the correct level and I feel this is an import aspect of my job, even more so as we move forward. To close, it genuinely feels that the Royal Navy is in a good place in these uncertain times, but we can't rest on our laurels and we must maintain focus as we move forward together as one Navy. Remember: better never stops. –WO1 Carl Steedman

“ I think any time you come in having been selected for a new job it's both daunting and exciting. Even after 100 days I would be naive to say I have my head wrapped around what the Second Sea Lord's Warrant Officer does. In basic terms I could relate it to one of my first, quite short meetings with 2SL. The direction I got was: Go get 'stuff' done! I thought: I can do that, that's what Warrant Officers do! I then reflected: What stuff? The obvious segue linked into when the three of us spoke about the 'Big T' in the March edition on how we saw improving availability, sustainability and lethality. Wrapped around all of these, and in all three of our 'bailiwicks', is making sure that our people's interests and improving the 'lived experience' are always at the heart of this when the Navy Executive Board – of which WORN is a voting member – makes its decisions. One good example followed our first get-together with our three admirals. We discussed the WO review and pitched a different way of rolling it out – while still meeting the admirals' intent. They saw merit in it, so we worked with West Battery, and the NEC agreed the proposal on the future WO1 construct and commissioning scheme. We think it has been received well by most. Since then I've got involved in other areas of transformation, but in while we still press forward, the lockdown required a change of tack from the three of us. WO1 Turnbull (Fleet Commander's WO) and I imbedded ourselves in the N1 Covid cell in NCHQ to continue to provide the broader Moral Component of Operational Capability (view on behalf of our people when we were looking at re-rolling the navy to support a Covid response – while maintaining our operational output to Defence. Over the past eight weeks it has been truly humbling to see the Royal Navy – including families and loved ones – continue to act selflessly and with humility, supporting and delivering in spades and being innovative when looking at new ways of working over this period. As WORN would say: "It's just been amazeballs." –WO1 Ian Wilson

“ It has been an absolute privilege to be selected as the first Fleet Commander's Warrant Officer... although slightly daunting at the same time. As with any job, there is the pressure of getting your feet under the desk and understanding what the demand is – unfortunately I had no one to take over from. That said, I received full support and direction from Vice Admiral Kyd to get out to front-line units and then look at where I could add value. I was in the fortunate position of taking up the role simultaneously with the new Second Sea Lord's Warrant Officer and Warrant Officer of the Naval Service. Having served with both before I knew that they were excellent, professional operators and two people that I could lean on for advice and guidance. And I've had support from WO1 Dave Mason, the Corps RSM, not just in understanding what the RM do but also accompanying him and CGRM for some of Cold Response. Visiting Norway, seeing what commando units do on the ground, provided a valuable insight into where the Future Commando Force concept and Littoral Strike will progress. In addition to taking up the role there was getting to grips with transformation and understanding the impact on front-line personnel. The four delivery outputs signify how we are going to operate as the Royal Navy with ships, submarines, aircraft and personnel deployed, cross cutting the Fighting Arms, while maintaining a maritime presence on a global scale. During my initial eight weeks I visited ships, all flotillas, RN establishments and Cdo units and was fortunate to run the last three miles of the 30-miler with 283Tp as they completed their final commando test. Finally, improving reward and recognition was a key aim, especially personnel who've delivered on operations, so 43 Herbert Lott awards have been presented, plus two club family breaks, and five more people shortlisted for future breaks. Overall, it has been a busy 100 days in post and I've enjoyed getting out and seeing personnel from all aspects of the RN. I am looking forward to reengaging with the frontline as we drive forward as 'One Navy, One Team'. –WO1 Mick Turnbull

“ I have had the honour of representing the Royal Marines in the role of the Corps RSM since April 2018. So much has occurred, the most obvious the introduction of littoral strike and the Future Commando Force. This reinforces the commando ethos and mindset, witnesses further investment in littoral capability and enables a modern, more adaptable way in which we train, operate and fight. Throughout I've been immensely proud to serve and support the RN and Commandant General Royal Marines as the RM senior non-commissioned advisor and leader. The role has allowed me to provide timely, accurate and succinct advice to CGRM on all matters pertaining to the Corps. No two days are the same: my role has allowed me to travel the globe and engage with enthusiastic, dedicated and highly professional marines. I have proudly witnessed new Marines march off the parade square at CTCRM, and I have marched alongside and paid my respects to RM veterans. One of the most important roles of the Corps RSM is to be the exemplar of the values and standards. The morale, well-being and good discipline of members of the Corps is never far from my mind. My role in promoting better mental health and wellbeing has been a highlight. As a trustee of the Royal Marines Charity I witnessed the merger of a number of smaller supporting charities and am very proud to be part of an evolving organisation that provides so much for the whole Corps family. The role of Corps RSM navigates all military functions and serves every marine from CGRM to the youngest cadet and I cannot emphasise enough the pride I have in today's Royal Marine. Maintaining operational effectiveness, providing support, advice, direction and empowerment where needed continues to be my aim. During the current transformational changes across an increasingly integrated RN and RM, the valuable and timely advice provided from the Senior Warrant Officer position will continue to apprise the senior leaders in the RN of grass root issues and assist in preparing the whole service for future operational success. –WO1 David Mason



815 say goodbye... then hello to vintage Whisky

WE DON'T do grip and grins. We'll make an exception for this lockdown-inspired 'touch and grin' as one of the stalwarts of the Fleet Air Arm bows out.

Thanking Chief Petty Officer (Air Engineering Technician) Paul 'Whisky' Haigh for his unprecedented service with 815 Naval Air Squadron is CO Commander Scott Simpson.

The latter was just four years old when a young Paul Haigh joined the RN in January 1982 to begin his training as an aviation engineer.

Since then the senior rating has spent all but five of his 38 years in the Royal Navy with 815, responsible for maintaining first Lynx and more recently Wildcats, to support front-line destroyer and frigate operations, as well as several RFAs.

When not at 815's home at Yeovilton, he's deployed as part of – or leading the maintenance team – on ship's flights on operations from the Gulf and Somalia to the wilds of the Falklands, ensuring the helicopters were at immediate notice to fly on a multitude of ships: (deep breath) Brazen, Coventry, Liverpool, Somerset, Sutherland, Montrose, Cornwall and RFAs Wave Ruler and Fort Victoria.

That service has earned him a 3* C-in-C Fleet Commendation for outstanding operations in the Arabian Gulf in 2011, the Meritorious Service Medal in 2016 and a second bar to his LS&GC in 2017.

And although Paul is now looking to enjoy some well-deserved quality time with his Beth at the family home in Weymouth, plus children Samantha, Oliver and Jacob and a growing number of grandchildren, this isn't the end of his association with 815.

Just one week after leaving the squadron... he signed back on with them, this time in an RNR capacity.



• Reservists from HMS Cambria get their hands on two new Gemini RIBs

RIBs put RNR on the water

NEW powerboats have been delivered to the navy's Tyneside and Welsh headquarters to enhance seafaring training for reservists.

HMS Calliope in Gateshead and the new HMS Cambria in Cardiff have each taken delivery of two Gemini RIBs to take their unit's volunteers out on to the water.

The aptly-named Project Gemini is the realisation of an idea born three years ago: to underline the 'sailor first' element of a naval reservist's training, irrespective of what branch or role they might be assigned to.

Given the increasing use of reservists in seagoing billets – such as the Gibraltar Squadron or fishery protection ships – and support for the RN's broader transformation programme, the boats will be used to teach seamanship and navigation, including Royal Yachting Association-accredited learning, and provide general seagoing time – some of the essential skills and experiences that help maintain the ethos of the Royal Navy.

"It builds teamwork, confidence and helps reinforce our core values and develops

leadership," said Commander Graeme Deighton, Calliope's Commanding Officer who was on hand to receive the two high-spec Geminis.

"The buzz and excitement these two boats are generating among our ship's company is phenomenal.

"For the moment, we wait for the current Covid-19 situation to improve, so that once again the White Ensign can fly from the stern of vessels crewed by Royal Naval Reservists on the River Tyne and the North East coastline."

His counterpart at Cambria, Commander Steve Fry, said the arrival of the RIBs was "something my ship's company has been very excited about, and trained hard for.

"When we re-locate to our purpose-built new unit on July 31, these boats will enable us to train reservists right in the heart of Cardiff Bay."

The third and final beneficiary of Project Gemini will be HMS Eaglet in Merseyside, (HMS King Alfred and Vivid in Portsmouth and Plymouth respectively, for example, already make use of RIBs in their nearby naval bases).

Fabric tests for new working rig begin

TRIALS begin this month to improve the working uniform for sailors – particularly in the searing heat of the Gulf, Far East and Caribbean.

Nearly 300 sailors deployed to the Middle East will receive test uniforms made from three different modern fabrics to see which best suits their requirements.

The dark blue Personal Clothing System (PCS) was introduced in 2015 to replace the long-standing Action Working Dress (aka No.4s) which hadn't fundamentally changed in 70 years.

The navy has received extensive feedback on PCS over the past five years, both from individual sailors and in deployment reports, prompting Navy Command to develop a new, upgraded version – especially timely given the RN's growing presence in the Middle East and renewed interest in operations to the Asia-Pacific region.

Temperatures in the Gulf – where well over 1,000 Royal Navy personnel are deployed throughout the year – reach 50°C and more at the height of summer and while air conditioning keeps the heart of RN ships cool as best it can, there's no escaping the heat working on deck or in compartments outside the citadel – such as the hangar on frigates and destroyers, or the Seafox compartment on minehunters.

The two-month trial in the Gulf is focused only on the fabric to be used. It must be both comfortable enough to allow men and women to work in the extreme heat... but also offer the wearer protection against fire.

Hand-in-hand with work on the fabric, the uniform is being designed to better meet the needs of sailors on the front line – from comfort and fit to features specifically incorporated such as Velcro-fastened name tallies which can be easily removed to protect the identity of boarding team members.

A number of prototype uniforms are being considered incorporating the features requested. As they progress, feedback will be encouraged before the design is finalised.

Once the design and fabric have been selected, the first new uniforms will start to be distributed to the front line from May next year.

■ *New uniform for commandos, page 19*

Former 2SL takes charge of Gibraltar



FORMER Second Sea Lord Vice-Admiral Sir David Steel has made his first visit to Gibraltar as governor of the Rock.

And days after being sworn in, he met members of the Royal Gibraltar Regiment during a socially-distanced parade, which included members of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal team, recruiting team, ceremonial light guns and supporting staff.

The governor, or His Excellency to give him his official title, later addressed troops, telling them he was delighted to meet them in his role as their commander in chief and looked forward to seeing more of them in future.

Adm Steel, 59, also signed the visitors' book before calls with Commanding Officer, Lieutenant

Colonel Simon Dyson, who updated him on the regiment's current activities and plans.

Adm Steel, who succeeds Royal Marine Lieutenant General Ed Davis, was due to have been appointed governor earlier this year but the move was delayed because of the current pandemic.

He had a long and distinguished career in the Royal Navy, holding number of senior posts and serving in the Falklands and Kosovo. He joined the Senior Service in 1979 and retired as Second Sea Lord in 2015.

His early career was spent in a variety of sea and shore appointments, including as the Fleet Legal Adviser. In December 1999, while serving in the

aircraft carrier HMS Invincible, he was awarded a Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in support of operations in Kosovo and Macedonia earlier that year.

Prior to becoming Second Sea Lord, he served as Naval Secretary and Director of Personnel and Career Management; Director of Armed Forces Pay and Manning at the Ministry of Defence; Naval Base Commander Portsmouth; Director of Logistics and Director of Legal and Personnel Services at the RN. He also served as Aide-de-Camp to the Queen.

Adm Steel's last role before moving to Gibraltar was chief executive of Leeds Castle in Kent, a job he has held for the last six years.

PWOs recognised with new pin badges

THESE are the new pin badges available to officers of the Surface Fleet who make the grade as principal warfare officers or bear the burden of command.

Similar to the silver/gold badges issued to submariners who complete nuclear deterrent patrols, the Principal Warfare Officer and Sea Command pin/badge was brought in last month to better recognise career progression among Surface Fleet warfare officers and provide a distinguishable symbol of this achievement.

The introduction of the pins mirrors similar

recognition in allied navies and is part of a series of measures to strengthen surface warfare officer ethos.

The pins – silver for RN and RFA officers who successfully complete the full UK PWO course and are in or have completed a PWO assignment at sea, gold for command-qualified Surface Fleet officers – have been designed in consultation with the Naval Historical Branch.

Each features a pair of heraldic sea horses (hippocampi) – the symbols of the Surface

Fleet – supporting a shield (to signify defence), bearing a trident for sea power and crossed with naval swords for warfare, all signified by the Naval Crown.

Future recipients will receive silver pins at PWO course graduation ceremony and gold as part of CO/XO Designate Course.

Veterans will also be entitled to wear the pins, but there is also no entitlement to issue at crown expense – unlike serving personnel.

For full details concerning the criteria for issuing the pins and wearing instructions, see [RNTM 09-011/20](#).



Digger digs deep for health workers

A ROYAL Navy submariner has been raising money for the NHS Charity while at sea by completing a herculean feat of physical stamina.

Inspired by the heroic efforts of frontline NHS workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, super-fit submariner Chief Petty Officer 'Digger' Gardner decided to undertake a continuous 12-hour session of burpees while on patrol.



The dedicated athlete and self-confessed Cross-Fit fanatic decided on his favourite exercise – burpees – as the way to raise cash.

Completing 12-hours of burpees in the confines of a submarine presented several unique challenges, most significantly space and heat.

But, having identified a compartment that was just big enough, Digger and his fellow engineers set about rigging up a temporary ventilation system to provide the airflow needed to keep him cool and prevent heat exhaustion.

Digger, who is originally from Hartlepool, was accompanied throughout by a steady stream of shipmates completing burpees along with him, although most completed a more modest 15-minutes.

Collectively, his supporters managed a total of 4,997 burpees with the single most completed in 15 minutes by Petty Officer Hart.

One submariner, Lieutenant 'Percy' Purhouse took a different approach, helping to keep up Digger's fighting spirit by reading extracts from Sun Tzu's *Art of War*.

At the end of the 12-hours, a tired but cheerful Digger had completed a total of 3,547 burpees. When asked if he would do it again, he replied simply: "never again!"

So far, the burpee challenge has raised over £4,000 for the NHS Charity. Donations can still be made at: justgiving.com/fundraising/12hourburpeechallenge.



Astute move for hospice

CREW of HMS Astute used their daily exercise time to raise cash for the Wirral children's hospice they support.

Nearly half the submariners aboard the hunter-killer stepped forward to walk, run, cycle or row the 560 miles from Faslane to Claire House Children's Hospice and back in a weekend, hoping to raise £1,000 to care for sick youngsters and their families.

In fact, the submariners smashed both targets, covering 2,163 miles (enough for a round trip to the Leaning Tower of Pisa...) and raised £4,120.

Warfare specialist Leading Seaman Andy McColl, pictured left, accounted for 250 of those miles in a single session on the bike, while Lieutenant Commander John Gabb, pictured right, ran two half marathons over the two days.

"We knew this would be a huge challenge and I've been blown away by both the generosity of our supporters and the wonderful efforts put in by the crew," said event organiser Lieutenant Arran Deakin. "The way everyone has risen to the challenge of the event is typical of the submarine ethos and I wouldn't expect anything less from the crew of HMS Astute."

Claire House helps seriously and terminally-ill children live life to the full by bringing back a sense of normality to family life. Like many organisations the pandemic has had a big impact on its regular fundraising.

Gutsy Gary warrants all the applause

A FORMER Royal Navy Warrant Officer has completed a marathon challenge in the blistering heat to raise money to support NHS heroes in Cornwall.

Gary Slater, who served in the Royal Navy for 38 years, embarked on a six-hour run around the perimeter of HMS Raleigh. With one lap measuring approximately one mile, Gary managed to complete 27 laps, averaging 12 minutes per lap.

The 62-year-old has exceeded his original target of raising £1,000 for the Cornwall Foundation Trust – Coronavirus appeal. His online donation page has raised just over £1,000 and around £450 was donated through collection boxes in HMS Raleigh. He also asked for donations of non-perishable food for the food-bank in Torpoint and has six boxes to hand over.

Gary has previously taken part in a number of marathons and half-marathons and went on two three-hour runs to prepare for the challenge.

He said: "I consider myself a fairly good runner, but the heat was a real challenge and I hit a brick wall at about the four-hour mark, but with the encouragement of everyone I managed to complete the six hours."

Gary now works at the Royal Navy training base in Torpoint, in a civilian capacity for ESS, part of the Compass Group, that provides services to the Defence and Government sector.

While Gary was running, some of his colleagues were completing their own challenge, by walking or running for 15 or 30 minutes, depending on their ability, in the opposite direction to ensure the appropriate social distancing was maintained.

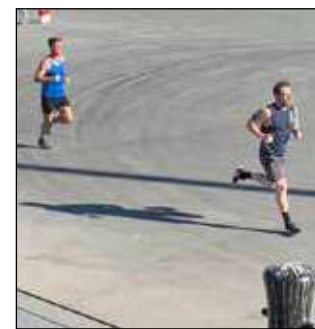
Gary, who has been helping to support neighbours and others during the current pandemic, decided he'd like to go a step further and was delighted to have his colleagues support.

He said: "It's great that the others decided to get involved. We've all watched how hard those on the frontline have worked during this crisis and we wanted to show them our appreciation, while also helping those who may be struggling in the community."

The Cornwall Foundation Trust – Coronavirus appeal is run by the Cornwall Partnership Foundation Trust Charitable Trust. Money donated will support frontline NHS workers across communities in Cornwall. It could provide them with a hot meal, grocery box, soothing hand cream or a special thank you to make their lives a little bit easier during the crisis.

Gary has set up an online donation page at: justgiving.com/fundraising/gary-slater6

Pictures: AB Jack Harding



Hot run for NHS

CREW of frigate HMS Argyll were inspired by the 75th anniversary of VE Day and the national effort tackling Covid to help the NHS.

Taking a break from operations in the Gulf, sailors and Royal Marines pounded the jetty at the Royal Navy's Middle East headquarters in Bahrain, running 75 miles.

Three 25-strong teams took part in the fundraiser – which has so far raised more than £1,500 for NHS Together.

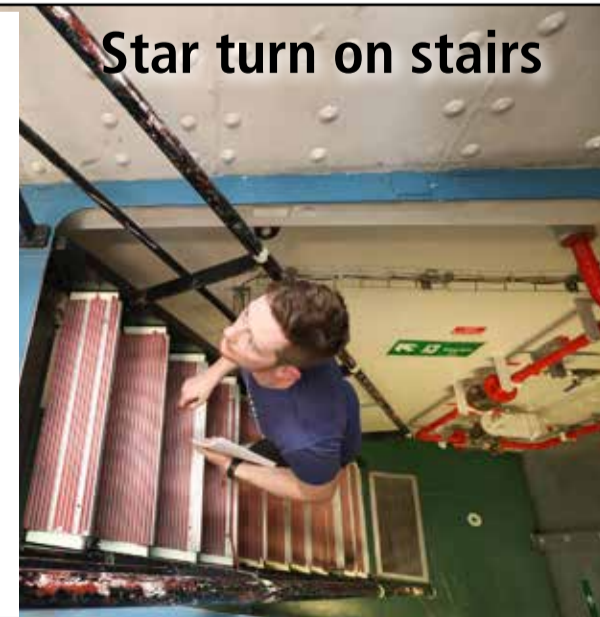
The event was organised by the ship's physical training instructor Leading Seaman Bart Thomas who knew his shipmates wanted to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of World War 2 in a worthy manner.

"The ship's company wanted to do something to mark VE75, and also expressed an interest in doing something to recognise the hardships happening at home," Bart explained. "We are experiencing our own hardships on deployment at the moment and this was a chance to work together and achieve something, for the memory of all those involved in VE Day, and to give back something to those working so hard at home. Some of the ship's company have been directly affected by what is going on, and have friends and loved ones who work in the front-line services as key workers, this is a small way to show our appreciation."

With temperatures in Bahrain already into the 30s Celsius, the leading hand and his fellow runners waited till late afternoon before stepping out on to the Finger Jetty at the UK Naval Support Facility to begin their relay (one mile is roughly 1½ laps of the jetty).

Having run 75 miles in the Bahraini heat, Argyll's combined times will now go forward to compete with other ship's and units for this year's Fleet Trophy. Most places in the top ten were taken by the commandos of the Royal Marine Boarding Team, although Bart himself (who represents the Royal Navy at cross-country) posted the fastest mile.

The frigate – deployed to the Middle East alongside her sister HMS Montrose – is currently attached to the international task group protecting merchant ships entering and leaving Gulf on Operation Sentinel.



Star turn on stairs

A SAILOR in Britain's biggest warship has completed the greatest mountaineering challenge in the galaxy.

HMS Queen Elizabeth Chef James Hopkinson set out to scale Rheasilvia – twice the height of Everest – to raise money for medics fighting the coronavirus.

Looking for an unusual challenge before his draft to the 65,000-tonne warship ended, he fell upon Rheasilvia, the highest peak in the known universe – a mountain estimated to rise 22,000 metres (about 14 miles) above the surface of the asteroid Vesta.

Over three weeks, he trotted up four flights to stairs from his accommodation on the carrier's No.6 Deck to No. 2 Deck (Queen Elizabeth's quarterdeck) – climbing 70 or 80 times a day for two to three hours.

"I've never done anything like this before and I don't really go to the gym either," he said. "But I just wanted to do something a bit different. I have to admit that I nearly gave up around the 11,000 metre mark."

His shipmates have so far chipped in nearly £200 for his efforts. If you'd like to thank James – visit justgiving.com/fundraising/james-hopkinson2

Registered charity number: Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund 1160182

Naval Children's Charity

Supporting children whose parents serve or have served in the Naval Service.

Naval Children's Charity, 311 Twyford Avenue, Stamshaw, Portsmouth, PO2 8RN

www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk
023 9263 9534
caseworkers@navalchildrenscharity.org.uk



Now for the wet phase...

EIGHT submariner trainees line up with their certificates after a social distancing passing-out parade at HMNB Clyde.

The class, who all passed the first phase of their Submarine Qualifying Course, are being trained for service in the Vanguard-class submarines.

The class graduated with Captain FOST (N), Captain Ian Breckenridge presenting each student with their certificates in the Memorial Garden outside the HMS Neptune Wardroom.

"I wanted to be a submariner so that I could work with all three sciences and be faced with extra challenges to overcome in my day-to-day life," said Medical Assistant (MA) Lucy Milner-Smith.

"I'm most excited about being able to do a job that I am a genuinely passionate about to the best of my ability. I cannot wait to go on my first sea draft."

MA Allan Adam, who also received his certificate, said: "The reason I joined the Submarine Service was to test myself. Not everyone has the right frame of mind to become a submariner. Being stuck under water for a lengthy period without any sunlight could be daunting but it's a challenge I think I will relish."

The trainees will now go on to the second phase of their training, the 'wet' phase on board a submarine with those who are successful receiving their coveted Dolphins badge.



Engineering own engine

A SAILOR has used the skills taught to him as a Royal Navy engineer to build his own miniature jet engine.

Trainee marine engineer Ryan Bruno used 3D printing technology to produce the parts – then called on his three years of training to produce the tiny working gas turbine.

Ryan spent five years as a Royal Marine with 43 Commando, before being selected for the navy's fast-track advanced apprentice scheme and has just completed 18 months' training at HMS Sultan in Gosport as a leading engineer specialising in gas turbines and diesel engines.

That course, Ryan's studies in thermodynamics (heat and its relation with energy) and a fascination in the possibilities presented by 3D printing, inspired the sailor to attempt to build his own turbine.

The 27-year-old from Deal in Kent used refractory (fire resistant) concrete, tweaking the designs of Swedish inventor Axel Borg, and made use of 3D design software which he taught himself to use.

The result is a nine-inch-long (23cm) working jet engine which starts up aided by an air compressor and is built entirely with the materials and tools Ryan had access to – "slightly different to what had been used previously to make these engines," he says.

"Building the gas turbine was an interesting project – a great learning experience which allowed me to learn more about 3D computer-aided design and explore new materials and processes.

"It also highlights how 3D printing technology provides the ability to produce complicated functioning components in your own home."

Irish eyes on Tyne

Patrol vessels unite for exercises

HMS TYNE completed two days of training with LÉ George Bernard Shaw from the Irish Defence Force in the Celtic Sea.

The exercises strengthened ties between the navies, as the two patrol vessels worked together on navigation skills and carried out a transfer of supplies from one ship to another.

"This was a great opportunity to practise working in company with other ships, an opportunity we don't often have within the Overseas Patrol Squadron due to our routine patrol tasking," said Lieutenant Ryan Grieg, HMS Tyne's Navigating Officer.

LÉ George Bernard Shaw, a Samuel Beckett-class offshore patrol vessel, works on maritime security operations, assisting Irish Civil Authorities and carries out fishery protection in the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone.

The Irish ship has very similar responsibilities to Portsmouth-based Tyne, which is on patrol in the waters around the UK for much of the year, carrying out a variety of missions.



The meet up between the ships took place off the south coast of Ireland and began with Officer of the Watch Manoeuvres designed to test their abilities to communicate proficiently and manoeuvre in close proximity to each other, during the day and at night.

Following that, the two patrol vessels carried out

Replenishment at Sea – abbreviated to RAS in everyday navyspeak – training. This transfer of stores requires skilful seamanship and tactical communications from both ships to safely and successfully manoeuvre alongside and transfer stores.

"It's great to practise our RAS skills, which is an evolution River-class ships don't normally get to practise," Leading Seaman Harry Perks, a communications specialist, said.

Before both ships parted to continue their respective patrolling missions, the warships carried out navigation exercises and passed over a small token of appreciation to mark the meeting.

All of the training was carried out with COVID-19 restrictions in place.



Main picture: PO Phot Des Wade

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

Follow @HMS_Tyne and @RoyalNavy on Twitter



● Cdre James Parkin handed over to Cdre Rob Pedre at Stonehouse Barracks in Plymouth

Littoral strike group changes hands

FOR the second time in a month Commodore James Parkin handed over control of a front-line command – and again without a handshake.

After a virtual handover of control of the International Maritime Security Construct – safeguarding merchant shipping entering and leaving the Gulf – two years in charge of the UK's amphibious task forces came to a (socially-distanced) end in Plymouth.

As the Commander Littoral Strike Group – known until last year as the Amphibious Task Group – it's the duty of the commodore and his staff to ensure a sizeable force is available at short notice to deploy anywhere in the world to respond to global events, putting ashore Royal Marines and all the equipment they need for their mission (fighting/disaster relief/military aid/civilian evacuation) by landing craft or helicopter.

During his two-year tenure Cdre Parkin led four operational deployments overseas and numerous exercises involving "too many nations to list" as well as the name change of an organisation which traces its history back to the mid-60s to better reflect present-day RN operations and the transformation of amphibious warfare.

The high point of the task group's efforts was its foray into the Baltic last summer led by UK flagship HMS Albion. At the peak of Operation Baltic Protector, the staff directed the actions of 44 ships – 16 of them British – and 3,850 personnel from the nine partner nations.

The result was the largest UK-led Task Group since 1991 – and the largest British deployment into the Baltic since 1919 when states were fighting for their independence in the aftermath of the Russian revolution and end of World War 1.

Handing over the littoral baton to his successor Commodore Rob Pedre at Stonehouse Barracks in Plymouth – a simple lowering and raising of their respective broad pennants marked the transfer of command – Commodore Parkin said the scope of the tasks accomplished by his staff had far exceeded expectations.

"When I assumed command, we knew about all the exercises in which we would be participating, but only one of the four operational deployments in which my team and I have taken part had been thought about.

"My task group has operated in the Pacific, Indian, Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, and in the Arabian, Red, Mediterranean, South China, Baltic, Norwegian, North and Caribbean seas.

"I pay tribute to my team from every one of the British Armed Forces, and our sister civilian services, and to those many nations who entrusted me with their men, women, ships, and aircraft, all of whom have worked so extremely hard to make our shared endeavour so successful."

Elements of the task group and staff are currently deployed with RFA Argus on hurricane relief duties in the Caribbean.

"It is a huge honour to take command of the Littoral Strike Group – especially to do so the day after the anniversary of the San Carlos amphibious landings in 1982," said Commodore Pedre, who previously was the final Commanding Officer of helicopter carrier HMS Ocean.

"I know that the men and women under my command are of the highest quality, and I look forward to working with them as we advance our littoral strike capability."



Salvage experts bid to remove wreck's masts

A SPECIALIST salvage firm is being offered £5m to remove the masts of a potentially-lethal wartime shipwreck in the Thames Estuary.

An estimated 1,400 tonnes of explosives remain aboard the wreck of the SS Richard Montgomery, lost off Sheerness in 1944.

The Liberty Ship – one of more than 2,700 mass-produced merchant vessels built to support the war effort – was due to ferry munitions to Cherbourg to support Allied armies driving Hitler's troops out of occupied Western Europe.

While waiting for a convoy to form, she drifted at anchor and ran aground on a sandbank. An

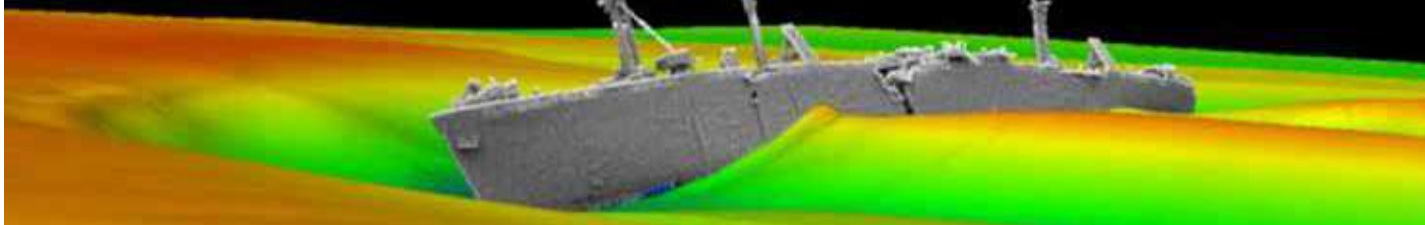
extensive rescue mission succeeded in removing around half the cargo, ammunition and explosives, but the ship broke in two and sank before the remaining stores were salvaged.

Since then the state of the wreck has been monitored closely and although the risk of an explosion is thought to be extremely low, the site remains marked as a danger area to other shipping and the Richard Montgomery continues to deteriorate gradually.

Since she sank, the fore, main and mizzen masts have

become both a landmark – and warning – to fellow mariners. They are now in need of removing according to the MOD's Ships, Salvage and Marine Operations, which will announce later this year which firm has been chosen for the delicate job – all the remaining unexploded ordnance is believed to be stored in the wreck's forward section.

Estimates vary, but should the explosives detonate, it would generate a tsunami between one and five metres high, hurl debris up to three kilometres and possibly shatter every window in properties in nearby Sheerness.





Headstone for a hero

MORE than seven decades after he died, a sailor finally has a gravestone befitting his gallantry.

Historians have ensured George Niven is no longer forgotten by marking his resting place in a Birmingham cemetery.

In July 1929, the then 32-year-old was serving aboard brand-new heavy cruiser HMS Devonshire.

The ship was testing her 8in main guns with a shoot off the Greek island of Skiathos when there was a mis-fire causing a tremendous explosion which ripped the roof off the turret, killing or gravely injuring all but one man working inside.

Together with a midshipman, George Niven was among the first men to respond to the accident, following the junior officer into the wrecked turret, helping to evacuate the wounded, many of whom were badly burned, as cordite explosive charges burned fiercely.

When the officer went further down into the bowels of Devonshire to see if anyone else needed assistance, Niven went with him, vowing: "I am not going to let him go down alone." When the midshipman had returned to the upper decks, Niven remained below checking if any more shipmates needed assistance.

Eighteen men died in the tragedy – all bar one a Royal Marine – and they are honoured with a memorial plaque at the Corps' Stonehouse barracks in Plymouth.

George Niven – originally from Edinburgh and a veteran of the Great War – plus Midshipman Anthony Cobham were awarded the Empire Gallantry Medal for their bravery, a decoration subsequently replaced by the George Cross... second only to the Victoria Cross.

He continued to serve in the Royal Navy through a second world war, settled with his wife Rosie in Birmingham and died in the Midlands city in February 1947 aged just 49.

He was buried in Yardley Cemetery – roughly half-way between the city centre and airport – and if the grave was marked 73 years ago, it wasn't when former soldier Steve Davies visited the site as part of an initiative to clean, restore and refurbish war graves.

The unmarked plot prompted the ex-Royal Green Jacket to work with VC historian Mark Green, the VC and GC Association, Birmingham City Council and local stonemasons Loxley Memorials to ensure George Niven's final resting place is officially marked.

Through the research, Steve finally managed to trace a member of the sailor's family, George Niven's granddaughter, who lives in Adelaide, Australia.

Once the pandemic is over, there are plans to formally rededicate the grave in the presence of serving sailors and Royal Marines.



Still full of Dunk

MORE than 338,000 men were evacuated from Dunkirk over ten critical days in the late spring of 1940 – each with a story of deliverance to recount.

Few can be more remarkable than that of 99-year-old former sailor Lawrence Churcher, who paid his respects to those killed saving an army – and perhaps a nation – by laying a wreath at Portsmouth's Naval Memorial.

Eighty years ago, a teenage Lawrence was sent ashore during the May fighting to help move ammunition to the front line.

He found himself first posted to a railhead just outside Dunkirk, then fell back to the port with hundreds of thousands of Allied personnel as the Germans closed in.

Among the tide of men were his brothers Edward and George, serving in France with the Hampshire Regiment.

Amazingly, the three brothers found each other and stayed together until reaching the UK on the same ship. They were not reunited again until the end of the war.

"When my brothers found me, I just felt relief. There were so many soldiers there and continuous aircraft dropping bombs and strafing us, I had so many things on my mind until I got on board of our ship. One fella leaned on my shoulder, gave a sigh of relief and said, 'thank God we've got a navy' and that sort of churned it up inside of me.

"I felt relief that the soldiers could come on those boats, there was all sorts there, practically rowing boats. We knew we had to get those soldiers back from Dunkirk."

Eight decades later and living in Portchester, the veteran was befriended by junior officer Lieutenant Calvin Shenton as part of Age UK's Joining Forces initiative to pair

military personnel young and old.

"I'd planned various activities ahead of Laurie turning 100 in August, and to mark the Dunkirk anniversary I had planned to take him for lunch in the Wardroom so he could talk to other officers, but those plans have had to change and that is where the idea of a wreath-laying came from," Calvin said.

"It's great that we were able to celebrate the end of war recently but it's important to remember today that 80 years ago 338,000 troops needed evacuation from France and there were five more years of hard work ahead of them."

Lawrence has returned to Dunkirk several times since the war and has a jar of sand as a memento of his escape.

Any plans for a return to the beaches in 2020 were kiboshed by the pandemic (these had including RN vessels escorting some of the surviving 'little

ships' across the Channel and the participation of ship's companies at events in the French port).

Instead, Lt Shenton organised a short ceremony with a Royal Marines Bugler and Naval chaplain at the waterfront memorial which honours sailors and Royal Marines of both world wars with no known graves.

Nearly 250 vessels of all types, including half a dozen destroyers, were lost trying to save Allied troops from the jaws of Hitler's armies in May and June 1940.

Lawrence went on to serve with the RN in the Mediterranean, off Normandy and in the Far East, while his brothers served extensively across the Mediterranean.

There are only two ships in today's Fleet with Dunkirk heritage: frigate HMS Montrose, deployed to the Gulf, and Welsh universities training boat HMS Express.

Denis overwhelmed by medal response

WORLD War 2 veteran Denis Gregory was moved to tears when the local – and naval – community rallied to replace his stolen medals.

The 93-year-old survivor of Atlantic battles and kamikaze attacks in the Far East was left distraught when the four decorations were taken during a burglary of his Sheffield home.

His son Robert said his father had scoured the house from tip to toe, looking in every drawer, cupboard and even the attic in the hope that the medals had been misplaced rather than taken.

News of the former leading seaman's plight eventually reached a Facebook group for Royal Navy aircraft carriers and their crews.

Two enthusiasts offered to provide replacements – Denis earned the 1939-45, Atlantic and Burma Stars, plus the 1939-45 War Medal for his service between 1943 and 1946 – and other members of the online community suggested a formal re-presentation.

Which is why on a beautiful day in the Sheffield suburb of Richmond, Royal Marine drummers marched down Denis' street and the Navy's Regional Commander for the North of England, Commodore Phil Waterhouse, joined family and neighbours for an unusual (socially-distanced) ceremony to



● Cdre Phil Waterhouse, Lt Penny Thackray and two RM drummers honour LS Denis Gregory with his replacement medals and (above) as an able seaman circa 1943

Pictures: Robert Gregory

formally award the veteran with his new medals.

"It is very important that I should have these," said Denis. "Not everyone claimed them after the war, but I did."

His son Robert added: "This is an immaculate tribute, superb, and I'm really grateful to everyone concerned."

Much of his wartime service was spent aboard carrier HMS Indefatigable. Denis was aboard in March 1944 when legendary

aviator Eric 'Winkle' Brown landed a twin-engined Mosquito on the deck for the first time.

Fourteen months later he was a member of the fire party which responded to a Japanese suicide bomber smashing into the deck during the invasion of Okinawa in April 1945. The attack killed 21 of Denis' shipmates, but the damage control team had the flight deck operating again inside 30 minutes.

Neighbours in the Sheffield

suburb of Richmond applauded the veteran on a glorious summer's day and gave him three hearty cheers – which left Denis visibly moved.

"The story of Denis having his medals stolen and the community coming together to reconstitute them and coming up with this small ceremony is wonderful," said Commodore Waterhouse.

"I feel truly proud – and rather humbled – to be asked to present them to Denis."

RNBT's Covid-19 help

MORE than £153,000 has been dished out in grants to naval families by the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust in two months.

The pandemic has seen the charity respond to 200 requests for grants covering 243 different categories of assistance from the end of March, when lockdown began, to the end of May.

At the same time, the team who run the charity's home for veterans, Pembroke House in Kent, have worked miracles in keeping the home running and keeping it free of Covid-19.

"We now have sufficient stocks of PPE to be able to

react to any situation requiring quarantining, and indeed we are now announcing that the home is open to new residents," said RNBT chief executive Rob Bosshardt.

"All staff and residents recently completed a swab test which confirmed that nobody is carrying the infection. Sadly the focus on the plight of those Homes with Covid-19 in the media will make restoring confidence more difficult, but we will rise to the challenge."

The pandemic has, however, delayed planning procedure for a new care home in Portsmouth.



Dunkirk spirit

The destroyer predecessor of the latter made four trips to Dunkirk, brought home around 3,200 troops, and helped tow a stricken HMS Jaguar to safety when the latter was immobilised by German bombs.

The Commanding Officer of today's Express, Lieutenant Andy Sturman, possibly has her forebear to thank for saving his grandfather, a driver in the Army who was on one of the last ships to leave Dunkirk... and Express was one of the final ships to depart before the port fell.

"Every ship has a battle honours board and we are especially proud of our heritage, not many have Dunkirk on theirs. It's a great tribute to have that honour and to remember our WW2 forebears on Express," said Andy.

"I'd hope that it was HMS Express my grandfather was rescued on and have that family synergy with this ship, and obviously I'm delighted he managed to get off the beach."

Officer Cadets and staff

at Dartmouth formed up on Britannia's parade ground to remember the role of the College (and town) in the evacuation.

Some of the rescued soldiers were brought back to Dartmouth – the Dart estuary was crammed with fishing trawlers from France, Belgium and Holland, while Britannia's famous quarterdeck turned into a mess deck as the men of the British Expeditionary Force slept there before rejoining their units as the Army was reformed in the summer of 1940, including two companies of the Durham Light Infantry housed at the college while they refitted.

To mark the 80th anniversary, *Dunkirk Operation Dynamo: 26th May-4th June 1940 – An Epic of Gallantry* (available in paperback/ebook priced £9-£14.90, ISBN 978-18380-10706) has been produced, based on the rare official account in the college's archive, with a modern historical commentary and a large number of previously-unpublished photographs.

Picture: PO(Phot) Arron Hoare



RIP Area 4 stalwart 'H'

AREA 4 and Portland, plus the RN's photographic branch, have lost one of the stalwarts of both the association and the service with the passing of Charles 'H' Thompson aged 87.

When he retired as a chief petty officer back in 1997 at the age of 65, 'H' was the longest-serving naval airman: 48 years and seven months under his belt.

He joined as a National Serviceman in 1949, one of just seven who became a photographer, training at the branch's spiritual home of HMS Peregrine/RNAS Ford.

He recorded the deeds of HMS Theseus and operations in Korea, served on the staff of Earl Mountbatten in the Mediterranean, and covered the Malay emergency with 848 Squadron. He also found time to achieve a 1st Class Referee Certificate with Joint Services and officiated at the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne.

Returning to the UK, he spent two stints (one as chief instructor) at the RN School of Photography, and served on the staffs of Flag Officer Naval Air Command at Yeovilton and as

Chief Photographer working closely with the then C-in-C Middle East, Admiral Sir Michael Le Fanu, including the emergency in Aden.

While stationed at Yeovilton in 1974 he took part in a games night organised between the wardroom and CPOs' Mess... and was drawn against Prince Charles in the darts. Due to confusion between the names of the two players, the Prince of Wales renamed the photographer 'Charles H' – a name which he cherished and adopted for the rest of his life.

The photographer joined the Weymouth branch of the RNA in 1966, before transferring down the road to Portland 16 years later.

A mainstay of Area 4 events, he chaired its reunion every year between 1975-96, was area chairman from 1979-96, after which he was named Area Life Vice President. And he was the RNA's National Ceremonial Officer in 1995 and 1996.

Shipmates lined the streets of Weymouth for Charles H with the RNA Area 4 and RNA Portland Branch standards leading his coffin up to the chapel entrance where they came to the dip as his coffin and the family entered.

Falklands remembered

FOR the first time Falklands patrol ship HMS Forth was able to pay her respects to the liberators of 1982 during 'remembrance season' in the South Atlantic.

May and June are peppered with a series of key anniversaries from the loss of HMS Sheffield (May 4) to the British territory's liberation from the Argentine junta on June 14 1982.

The fighting reached its peak in mid-May with the landings at San Carlos, just off Falkland Sound, and resulted in an all-out effort by the Argentine Air Force to stop them over five bitter days.

The aerial onslaught cost the RN frigates Ardent and Antelope, plus many more vessels damaged.

It is one of the tasks of the islands' patrol ship – since the turn of the year new River-class vessel HMS Forth – to not only safeguard the islands, but also maintain the memorials and remember the fallen.

On the 38th anniversary of the landings, Forth anchored in San Carlos Bay – close to wreckage of HMS Antelope – for a poignant wreath-laying ceremony.

For many on board, like Able Seaman El-leigh Neale, 21, this was her first experience of islands for which 255 men died in 1982.

"Moments like this really re-iterate why we do what we do and provides a real sense of purpose to operating in the South Atlantic," he said.

Marine engineer Petty Officer Andrew Birchall said: "Being here in the notorious and confined waters of 'Bomb Alley' brings home the reality of the many obstacles sailors had to overcome during the conflict.

"It shows the incredible skill that was required by both sides to operate under such conditions where the environment and



● Forth's Commanding Officer Lt Cdr Edward Munns prepares to cast a wreath into the now-silent waters of San Carlos (left) while HMS Raleigh's Hanson Division instructor PO Sean Ronald pays his respects to HMS Ardent's Shaun Hanson, lost with 21 shipmates on May 21 1982 in those very waters



weather favoured nobody."

Of the 22 men killed when HMS Ardent was bombed repeatedly on the first day of the landings was Acting Steward Shaun Hanson, a 20-year-old from Sheffield.

He is honoured by a division of recruits at HMS Raleigh in Torpoint. The latest Hansons formed up on the parade ground for a short service of commemoration, while some of their instructors headed to the Falklands Memorial on the Hoe to place a wreath on the anniversary of their namesake's death.

After the first wave of bombs, he was seen fighting fires in the frigate's hangar and later rendered first aid to a wounded shipmate. Both were killed instantly when the second wave of bombs fell.

The lockdown prevented the annual reunion of Ardent veterans, but former weapons engineer Steve Palmer was on

hand to see the recruits remember his young shipmate.

"By the time the sun went down on May 21, three warships had been damaged by bombs, and one, the Ardent, was ablaze and sinking," he recalled.

"The captain, realising that the ship was lost, ordered 'abandon ship'. Sadly, 22 of our ship's company, including Shaun, were lost. The rest of us were lucky enough to survive and were picked up by another frigate.

"Because of the pandemic we weren't able to be together this year, but we are hugely appreciative that the Hanson team in HMS Raleigh were able to mark the remembrance for us by laying a wreath at the Falklands memorial on the Hoe on our behalf."

And sailors and Royal Marines from flagship HMS Albion filmed a unique 'virtual service' with relatives and veterans to remember six men killed when landing craft Foxtrot Four was

sunk by Argentine aircraft.

Each June 8 since, Foxtrot Four's parent unit – 4 Assault Squadron Royal Marines – has staged a memorial service, originally on veteran assault ship HMS Fearless, more recently on her successor Albion.

The Covid lockdown ruled that out, so instead, the ship devised a virtual Service of Remembrance instead.

Serving members of 4 ASRM and ship's company recorded the service, interspersed with contributions from relatives of the fallen including Mandy Kazmierski, the sister of Marine Robert Griffin, and Bryan Miller, whose brother David was one of two naval marine engineers killed in the attack.

Foxtrot Four had already made a name for herself in the 1982 conflict, having rescued more than 100 men from HMS Antelope shortly before the frigate spectacularly exploded and broke in two.

Bill Parry, who was only 18 years old and on his first ship, recorded a moving account of his experiences that day. He clearly remembers the actions of Foxtrot Four, and describes its commander Colour Sergeant Brian Johnston as "the bravest man he never got to thank".

In addition to the annual service, the memory of Colour Sergeant Johnston and his men lives on daily aboard Albion with one of her large Landing Craft Utility named Foxtrot J – J for Johnston.

Captain Peter Laughton, Albion's Commanding Officer, said "It is entirely fitting that each year we take time to reflect and pay tribute to the crew of Foxtrot Four. We pay tribute to their selfless commitment, their courage, their heroism and sense of duty. They are an inspiring example to us all."

The virtual service can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/EmKtJPcd1Pw>.

Martyn's making Legion history in Scotland

LOOKING after the affairs of veterans north of the border is Martyn Hawthorn, recently appointed National Chairman of Legion Scotland – believed to be the first former sailor to hold the post in its 99-year history.

As the name suggests, Legion Scotland performs a similar role to the Royal British Legion. It too was established by WW1 leader Field Marshal Earl Haig, who brought together several Scottish

charities which had been set up to help Scottish veterans returning home adjust to civilian life and overcome the horrors they'd endured in four years of conflict.

Martyn was the secretary of the Moffat Branch of Legion Scotland for 15 years, has represented Dumfries and Galloway on the National Executive Committee for seven years, and been Area Secretary for Dumfries and Galloway since February 2014. He was on the working group that

revised the Royal British Legion Scotland (RBLs) Constitution and Handbook and acted as convenor of the working group looking at the structure of the RBLs.

Those many years service to Legion Scotland come on the back of a varied career which began as a PE and maths teacher, then leisure centre manager and, between 1977 and 1994, a Royal Navy instructor officer.

His RN service included time in

HMS Fearless, Raleigh, Hermes, Heron, Nelson, Armilla Patrol in the Gulf with HMS Glasgow, an exchange draft to HMAS Cerberus in Australia, and finally Staff and Training Officer at Faslane.

Throughout, he's been passionate about rugby, refereeing for the Combined Services and RN, helped found Moffat RFC, the town where he lived for 25 years, and served as Scottish RFU's referee development officer until 2014.

PROJECT FIREFLY

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



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Who is eligible?

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



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

THE JOURNEY DOES NOT HAVE TO END!

Miles of climbing for Miles

ONE Junior Cadet and his younger brother are showing the Sea Cadets values at a very early age, raising funds for NHS charities.

Junior Cadet Miles from Hove and Adur Sea Cadets is attempting to climb the equivalent of the height of Mount Everest – 8,848 metres – up and down the stairs at his family home.

Miles got the idea from his time within Sea Cadets and needs to climb and descend the stairs 1,508 times.

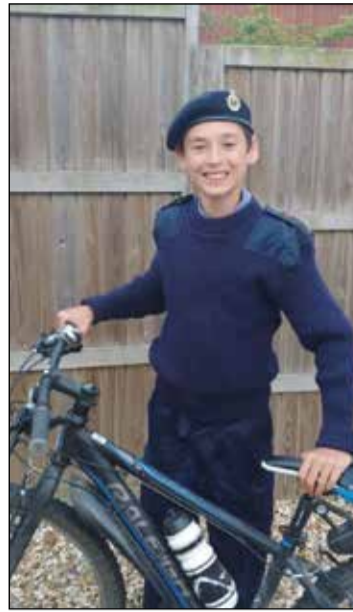


Connor gets on his bike

A GUERNSEY Sea Cadet is taking on a near 3,000-mile virtual cycle challenge during the course of the year.

Cadet Connor is aiming to raise £1,000 for both Guernsey Sea Cadets and the Guernsey Sailing Trust as they're the "two things he's missing most during lockdown." You can find him on Just Giving.

He aims to complete 2,973 miles in under 238 days on an indoor trainer. That works out to around 12.5 miles each day between now and the end of the year. BZ Connor!



RNRMC partners with Combat Stress to support veterans

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) has awarded Combat Stress a grant of £55,000 per year for three years to fund the charity's vital specialist services, specifically in support of Royal Navy and Royal Marine veterans.

Demand remains high for Combat Stress' services. Combat Stress are working diligently to be there for veterans, and although clinical staff cannot see veterans in person, they have adapted and enhanced their phone and digital services to provide one-to-one therapy sessions, a range of online resources and an online peer support community to those veterans already in their care.

"We're extremely grateful to RNRMC for this generous grant, which will help us provide former servicemen and women from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines with the support they need", said Sue Freeth, CEO of Combat Stress.

"Combat Stress provides unique life-changing and often life-saving support to veterans in the UK with mental health problems. It's therefore crucial that we raise awareness and funds to ensure we can continue to be there for veterans in the years to come".

Mandy Lindley, Director of Relationships and Funding at RNRMC, adds: "We consider Combat Stress to be one of our most important service delivery partners and the new three-year funding approach reflects this. Now more than ever, it is vital that charities work together. We look forward to continuing this partnership as we work with Combat Stress to support the health of our joint beneficiaries".

The grant is part of RNRMC's extensive support programme for Royal Navy and Royal Marine veterans, to ensure they live fulfilling lives post-service.

To help veterans rebuild their lives Combat Stress provide a range of free services at treatment centres and through regional community teams, including short-stay clinical treatment, a specialist PTSD Intensive Treatment Programme, occupational therapy, a Peer Support Service and a free 24-hour Helpline (0800 138 1619).

Find out more at combatstress.org.uk

Lockdown podcasts keep all informed

THE pandemic has forced us all to make significant adaptations to our lives. Few have escaped significant and sudden changes to their work life or leisure time, and many organisations have needed to adapt ways their of working and explore new avenues of delivery to fulfil their aims.

This has been true of many organisations who work to support the Naval community, including the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity and its delivery partners.

With social distancing measures rendering their veteran workshops no longer viable, Portsmouth-based social enterprise, Company of Makers, had to consider how they would continue to engage their audience and keep up the morale of their beneficiaries.

Looking to the digital space, one of the ways that they are doing this is through the development of a podcast. Working with the RNRMC to adapt funding that was originally provided for spring workshops, Company of Makers were able to purchase equipment that allows them to produce to a high-quality podcast series, under the name 'Lockdown'.

So far 'Lockdown' has featured interviews with Stephen Morgan MP, Shadow Minister for the Armed Forces, Andrea Macfarlane, Military Co-Chair of Defence Mental Health Network and a conversation with RNRMC CEO, Adrian Bell. In this episode Adrian discusses his service career, the RNRMC and how the Charity are supporting the RN/RM community through the COVID crisis. He also speaks passionately about his personal experience with missing his family, something that I'm sure many can relate to now more than ever.

'Lockdown' is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and other leading podcast platforms. Search 'Company of Makers Lockdown'.

It is also available to stream at companyofmakers.com/lockdown

Virtual fun for families

THE RNRMC has partnered with Naval Service Family and People Support (NS FPS) to develop weekly competitions and activities for naval families to take part in during lockdown.

Due to the pandemic NS FPS staff have taken their work online to actively engage with service families throughout the UK and overseas. With community buildings closed a new project has been launched with the support of RNRMC – virtual community activities.

The project includes weekly creative competitions (with prize vouchers funded by the RNRMC), a fortnightly quiz and community chat sessions.

The weekly competitions are run through the NS FPS regional Facebook groups. To take part in the competition and be in with a chance of winning up to £50 worth of Amazon vouchers you need to join your local NS FPS Facebook group. Find your local group via the NS FPS Facebook page: facebook.com/NSFamilyPeopleSupport

Every Wednesday a creative competition is launched and there will be a regional winner from each group. Each regional winner will receive a £20 Amazon voucher and will go through to the national competition. The overall winner will receive an additional £30 Amazon voucher.



We need you

Urgent plea to keep Sea Cadets units running

COMMUNITIES around the world have been impacted by Covid-19, many left devastated.

In more than 400 communities across the UK, a Sea Cadets group has felt that same pressure.

Relying on donations to keep the lights on, they now face months of no income, with added expenses to manage in order to reach their cadets online.

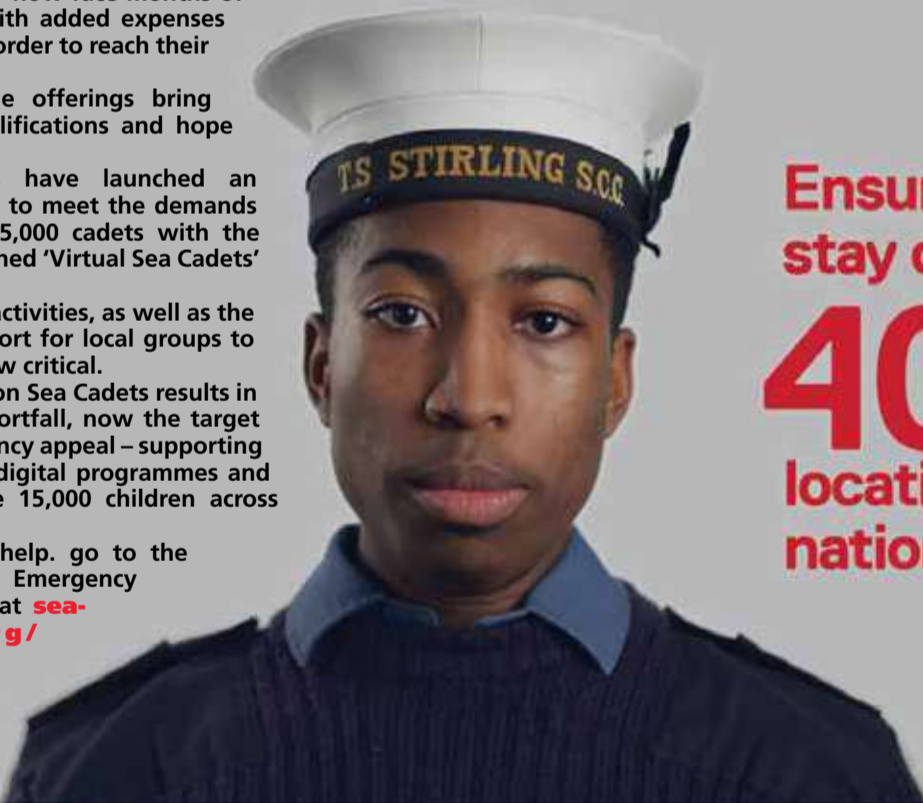
These online offerings bring activities, qualifications and hope to thousands.

Sea Cadets have launched an urgent appeal to meet the demands of reaching 15,000 cadets with the recently launched 'Virtual Sea Cadets' initiative.

These new activities, as well as the financial support for local groups to remain are now critical.

The impact on Sea Cadets results in a £500,000 shortfall, now the target of the emergency appeal – supporting local groups, digital programmes and ultimately the 15,000 children across the UK.

If you can help, go to the Sea Cadets Emergency Appeal page at sea-cadets.org/emergency-appeal



Ensure we stay open at **400** locations nationwide.

Heroes one and all

SEA Cadets have celebrated 2020 Volunteers Week by paying tribute to the "Ordinary Heroes" playing their part in the battle against Covid-19.

Without our volunteers, Sea Cadets couldn't exist. Eighty-five per cent of Sea Cadet activities at unit level are taking place virtually, with the success of the Virtual Sea Cadets programme plain to see.

Every volunteer is playing their part and we thank them for everything they're doing. But special thanks go to those who have helped battle the

coronavirus pandemic amid the NHS, care homes and the emergency services.

Captain Phil Russell RN said: "These are just some of the ordinary heroes helping Sea Cadets offer the different kind of adventure to children up and down the country. We have strong links with the Royal Navy but many volunteers join us from all walks of life to become part of our family.

"Whichever unit they join, adults can be assured of a warm welcome if they join the Sea Cadet family."

Portal keeps us in touch

THE Sea Cadets Portal is off to a flying start, after more than 1,000 new users went to the platform in its first week of full operation open to cadets.

With parents, cadets and volunteers all having access to the digital platform, takeup is expected to increase rapidly as its potential becomes more widely known.

This system is designed to empower our cadets to offer the amazing opportunities that being a Sea Cadet can provide. Cadets will be able to track their progress and receive feedback on their

performance and make them more able to make informed choices about their time in the cadets.

While some of the planned 175 courses are not available because of lockdown, cadets can express an interest in future courses through the activity centre and friend fellow cadets to follow their progress too.

Martin Coles, CEO of Sea Cadets, said: "I believe the Sea Cadets Portal will open up a larger world of opportunities for cadets, to enjoy more adventures and develop themselves."

Visit portal.sea-cadet.org.

Keeping Covid in check

TRAINEE Royal Navy doctor **Chris Storer** detailed the highs – and lows – of the front-line fight against the disease in one of England's busiest hospitals.

The 30-year-old from Sussex URNU tended to patients as a healthcare assistant at Brighton's Royal Sussex County Hospital while studies were suspended.

Healthcare assistants are essential in supporting doctors and nurses in providing patient care, inserting cannulas, helping to take blood samples for lab analysis, performing electrocardiogram and ultrasound bladder scans, as well as helping patients with their personal hygiene and helping to dress and wash them.

Among non-Covid patients what struck Chris was the effect of the lockdown on the public's mental health – particularly on the Brighton's most vulnerable population: homeless and those living in sheltered accommodation.

"We also saw several elderly patients arriving where they had fallen at home whilst isolating alone. Without family members or carers attending like usual, they'd been stuck lying on the floor for days in some cases," Chris said.

"One elderly lady had even started to show signs of hypothermia as the ambulance had brought her in. It was heart-breaking and I could only imagine what she must have been through."

In the dedicated, self-contained Covid area of A&E, Chris and colleagues worked 12-hour shifts dressed in full PPE. Work was hot, tiring and uncomfortable – but there were also "many morale-boosting moments" working in the hospital through the pandemic.

"I feel incredibly privileged to have worked as part of the A&E nursing team providing frontline care to patients," he added.

"It was wonderful to see how much the local community had come together to really support the NHS."



THE repatriation of more than 2,300 people during the pandemic was assisted by specialist UK military teams who've completed the latest stage of their mission.

Britons and other nationalities were safely flown home from China, Cuba and Peru thanks in part to a small group of sailors, soldiers and RAF personnel.

Working side-by-side with Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff, the Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Teams – based at Northwood in Middlesex and on immediate notice to respond to world events – assisted the planning and successful evacuation of British and entitled foreign nationals from Wuhan, epicentre of the virus outbreak, as well as hundreds of cruise liner passengers from Havana and people stuck in Peru via Lima.

The military teams are drawn from Joint Force Headquarters which is UK Defence's extremely high readiness crisis response unit, mobilised when there's a major incident or disaster anywhere in the world (see below).

The goal is to provide extra personnel on the ground to help British embassies and consuls, offer specialist military advice, and assist or remove entitled citizens from harm's way as quickly and safely as possible.

Commander Rory West, a former Sea King helicopter observer (navigator/weapons and sensor specialist) and warfare officer, helped plan the first evacuation from Wuhan at the end of January and flew to China for the second repatriation flight a week later.

By then, the city was largely on lockdown.

"Wuhan was a ghost town – nothing looked as it should do and the only people we saw were at the airport and the feeling I got was that they were far more scared than we had assessed. There was a definite sense of fear," the 50-year-old from Portsmouth said.

"But they were also



● Britons eager to leave Wuhan are processed by the team at the city's airport

determined. The city had adopted the chant of the local football team. 'Go Wuhan' was a sign you saw frequently."

Cdr West continued: "Some of the passengers were scared, some didn't want to miss the flight as they feared there wouldn't be any other opportunities. It was both heartening and sad."

"We got people out, but we also saw the airport staff who'd been so helpful watch people flying out of their city, and they were being left behind."

Once the specially-chartered 747 landed back in the UK all aboard were quarantined for two weeks in Milton Keynes.

Shortly afterwards, Cdr West was dispatched again – this time to Cuba to help get passengers and a couple of crew off the cruise ship MV Braemar, which had been refused entry to some

ports already before Havana said it would accept the vessel.

"Medical supplies were running low, the majority of the passengers fell into the high-risk category in terms of their age bracket and concern was high that if the ship were to sail back to the UK – a journey of about two weeks – there would be serious problems on board, so repatriation flights were organised," explained Army Major Stephanie Manning, who was part of the military team dispatched to Havana.

Cuban authorities did much of the work to assist the evacuation and repatriation, working hand in glove with the British military, as four flights were laid on to fly passengers to the UK.

"I've been in the navy for 31 years and this job has been completely different from any

other – one of the best I have ever done. Hugely rewarding," Cdr West said.

"Everything we did, we knew it had an immediate effect. I feel very fortunate to have been part of it."

Cdr West believes the "cool heads in a difficult situation" provided by the military teams not only proved vital in bringing people home, but in forging stronger ties between UK and China/Cuba.

"Our assistance has hopefully helped the UK's relations with China and Cuba. It shouldn't end with the pandemic. The links we made should have an important diplomatic role as well," he added.

"We have really good training – we have to be as we're ready to respond at all times. That's our hashtag: always ready."



IN Manchester, Liverpool URNU Officer Cadet **Ciaran Finn** (left) spent nearly a month helping patients through the worst of coronavirus at the city's Nightingale Hospital.

The 22-year-old Business Studies with Spanish and Portuguese undergraduate from Altrincham had been working as a carer in a nursing home when there was a plea for staff at the temporary 750-bed facility in Manchester's G-MEX centre.

"I got on well with one elderly patient, who unfortunately died. It was upsetting, but the fact that his

family couldn't come and visit him was heart-breaking," Ciaran said.

"We all held his hand and comforted him as much as we could during his death, which I hope is comforting for his family to know that he didn't die alone and was surrounded by people who enjoyed his company and admired him."

He feels the pandemic has presented him with different, other life-changing opportunities.

"It is a great feeling to know I am helping in a time of national crisis. I've formed bonds with people I never expected I would."

"I knew it would be difficult to balance working full-time at the hospital with university work and exams, but I knew this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to do something like this. It is incredibly rewarding and definitely worth it."

MORE than 3,000 face masks have been provided to hospitals, care homes and emergency services across the UK thanks to Southampton URNU's **Georgiana Alpham** (right).

The 20-year-old is one of a group of a dozen volunteers in the Cambridge area determined to help those in the front-line struggle against Covid-19 by producing masks on a series of 3D printers.

The engineering student is committed to the national effort to fight the coronavirus, producing around 30 masks every day after responding to an initial plea on Facebook for help from anyone with a 3D printer to make parts for the PPE masks.

Through fundraising, she's bought five more and been loaned a couple extra, so that now she has eight such printers running 18 hours a day, seven days a week, churning out face shield frames.

"I know many people who work in the hospitals – including my mother – and I really wanted to help protect them after hearing about the global shortage of PPE," Georgiana said.

"If doctors and nurses don't get the PPE that they need, Covid-19 will spread quicker than ever and we will be forever in debt to them for the heroic work that they are doing!"

The design for the masks is available free on the internet – all the student needed was the plastic filament to produce the parts... and additional printers to meet the immense demand, funded through donations.

"I have been surprised how generous people are and how much they have wanted to help."

"It's been really hard work, but I feel so proud that what I am doing is having such a positive effect."



THE teams sent to China, Cuba and Peru form just one strand of the work of the Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ) Group this year.

The group consists of three joint headquarters held at high readiness in Northwood to deploy and command operations anywhere in the world.

The headquarters commands both warfighting and complex operations – such as disaster relief, peacekeeping, evacuations from war zones (or, this year, pandemics).

As a joint organisation, sailors and marines make up just under a third of the group.

All three headquarters reacted in the new year during the crisis in the Middle East, with teams deployed to provide liaison in the region...

And soon after, they were deployed again, this time dealing with the pandemic.

Royal Marines Lieutenant Colonel Mark Freeman found himself leading a Security Assistance Team in the Cayman Islands, when the headquarters were activated to command operations supporting UK Overseas Territories during the pandemic.

A second team was deployed to the Turks and Caicos Islands as well as a liaison cell led by Dutch Navy Captain Andre Van der Kamp – SJFHQ is a multinational HQ – to coordinate with French and Dutch forces in the region.



● A Royal Marine MP and UK police officer visit a police station and prison as part of the Security Assistance Team in the Turks and Caicos Islands

Picture: PO(Phot) Si Ethell

The response in the overseas territories has certainly been complex as the headquarters worked with the Foreign Office, Departments for International Development and Transport, plus the Home Office, focussing on health, security, economics and supplies – not dissimilar to the support provided by the military in the UK.

The teams deployed to the Caribbean reflected this mix, with police-men as well as experts from 45 Cdo, 30 Cdo IX Group, 29 Cdo Regiment RA and 3 Cdo Bde making up the numbers alongside SJFHQ staff.

"This has been a tremendous

opportunity to work with military and civilian partners to provide the support the Cayman Islands need," Lt Col Freeman said.

Meanwhile, over in the Turks and Caicos Islands, Royal Marines under command of SJFHQ have been supporting the local maritime police with border security, interdicting a number of vessels – a classic 'Royal' skill-set albeit used in very different times.

To provide the horsepower to command the operation, additional staff joined the SJFHQ in Northwood. Cdr Hannah Mackenzie, who had

been on the teaching staff at Shrivenham and is about to take over command of HMS Wildfire, quickly found herself in the thick of it as one of the plans team.

"Working with civilian colleagues, marines and planning for the next stages of the operation have all been part of a day's work," she said.

Understanding sentiment and themes online has been key to the SJFHQ's operational response, with LH Thomas Wilkinson – on loan from Carrier Strike Group – doing that analysis every day.

"Keeping the headquarters informed about how people are responding to the crisis has been critical to ensuring we stay ahead of the game," Thomas explained.

Meanwhile the Standing Joint Force Logistics Component HQ has been planning for some of the consequences Covid has had on UK operations around the world and for planning for a potential redeployment from Afghanistan.

"The SJFHQ Group is the perfect environment for gaining new experiences," said Lieutenant Commander Pete Gow who's been part of the planning effort.

"It offers massive breadth of opportunity, literally anywhere in the world, including operational responses for Covid, or joint exercises with the US, NATO, France or the UN. Different experiences are not in short supply."



Magpie milestone

Merlin casts its spell as it debuts on survey vessel

NAVAL aviators practised a rescue from one of the smallest vessels in the Fleet when they dropped in on survey ship HMS Magpie in the Solent. Observer (navigator/weapons specialist) Lieutenant Commander 'AJ' Pearson was carefully lowered on to the tiny open deck area of Magpie by his fellow 824 Naval Air Squadron aircrew – the first time winching to and from the 18-metre-long craft has been attempted. Magpie's quarterdeck is little larger than the cockpit of a yacht – making it ideal for practising winching a casualty from a confined space. Although the Royal Navy no longer maintains dedicated search and rescue squadrons – a service now provided by



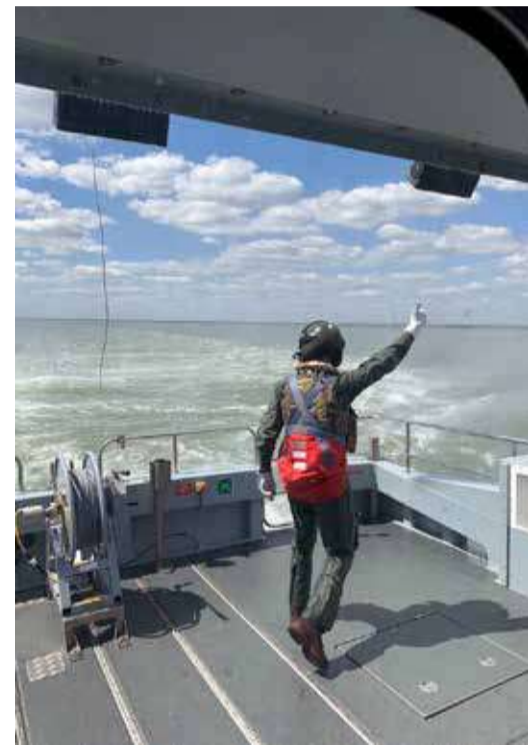
the Coastguard – its helicopter crews must maintain the ability, whether it involves saving a casualty from one of our warships such as an injured crew member aboard Magpie, plucking downed aviators out of the ocean, or responding to Maydays from civilian mariners wherever a British warship might be on patrol in the world. Culdrose-based 824 trains the Fleet Air Arm's two front-line Merlin Mk2 squadrons in the art of flying, operating and maintaining the world's leading submarine-hunting helicopter. "It's testament to the hard work of our engineers and aircrew that we can achieve essential training opportunities like this whilst simultaneously being at

readiness to support local authorities in the South West and train the next generation of Merlin Mk2 aircrew for the Royal Navy," said 824's Commanding Officer Commander Martin 'Leathers' Russell. At the helm of Magpie was her Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Mark White, who deftly manoeuvred his vessel in the face of a very powerful downblast from the rotors of the 14-tonne helicopter. "This was absolutely a Magpie first," he said. "It definitely gave us a salty wash down but we were able to hold course no problem, despite the impressive downwash."



After an extensive refit earlier this year in Cornwall, Devonport-based Magpie is conducting survey work in home waters. Her size and the fact that she's packed from bow to stern with leading-edge sonar and scanning equipment means she can survey inshore waters larger vessels in the Royal Navy's Hydrographic and Survey Flotilla cannot – and in unparalleled detail, providing the most accurate mapping of ports, harbours and shipping lanes in home waters.

KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP
Follow @HMS_Magpie and @RoyalNavy on Twitter



NAVY NEWS

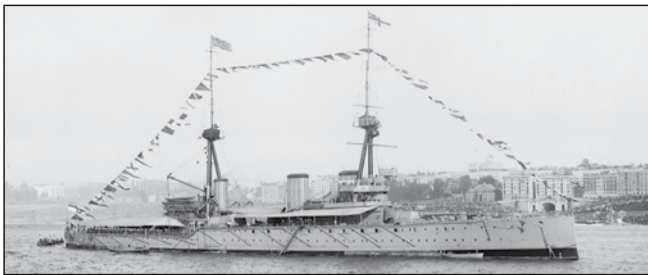
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OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE ROYAL NAVY

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the May edition of *Navy News* (right) was the light cruiser HMS Emerald, which operated in the East Indies for the majority of her career.

Malcolm Yates, from Wolverhampton, wins £50 for sending us the correct answers.

This month's mystery ship (above) is an Invincible-class battlecruiser which had an active time during World War 1.

1) What was her name and 2) which German battlecruiser did she inflict damage to during the Battle of Jutland?

Please complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY.

During the COVID-19 pandemic we will also accept emailed entries to edit@navynews.co.uk with July Mystery Ship in the email header.

Coupons and emails giving the correct



answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

Entries must be received by August 14. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted.

Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our July edition.

The competition is not open to *Navy News* employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 305

Name

Address

My answers: (1)

(2)

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■ Please send in reunions at least two months (preferably three) before the month of the event. There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.

■ Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Swap Draft columns in August's Noticeboard must be received by

JULY 14, 2020

Deaths

Ed Horgan, Leading Airman (Handler). Served from 1962 to 1971 in HMS Ark Royal, Hal Far, Victorious, Hermes, Portland and RNAS Culdrose. Died April 16, aged 75.

Ralph (Dickie) Henderson, Lt SD(S) (W). Served from 1962 to 1983 in Cochrane, Nurton, 800 NAS, Fulmar, Eagle, NAVBALTAP Kiel, Matapan, Centurion and Pembroke. Member of RNWA. Died September 28, aged 74.

JC O'Neill (Peggy). CPO (Coxswain). Served RN for 25 years, including the Barossa and the Ashanti 1965 to 1967 commission. Stalwart of Command Seamanship School (Flathouse) and had connections to HMNB Portsmouth. Emigrated to Australia after leaving RN and died on May 26.

Stephen 'Steve' Fuller. Lt Cdr. Served from 1957-1993. Served in HMS Caledonia, Paladin, Excellent, Vernon, Kent, Victory, Dolphin, Collingwood, Jaguar, Londonderry, and Liverpool. Gave 43 years' service to Royal Navy Basketball. Died May 2, aged 79.

Michael George Britton. Joined RN on October 8 1957, aged 15. Served on Royal Yacht Britannia from 1964 to 1969. Family scattered his ashes off the yacht at Leith.

Tom Dickinson. Served in, among others, battleship HMS Anson as acting master-at-arms, during which time he received the British Empire Medal from King George VI in 1944. After RN service he was officer in charge at Sheffield Careers Office. Member of Stockbridge branch of Royal Naval Association. Died May 18, aged 102.

Leslie Hall. AB. Served from November 1939 to May 1957 in HMS Ganges, St George, Pembroke, Suffolk, Falcon, St Angelo, Phoebe, Ceres, St Kitts, Dainty,

Obdurate and Birmingham. Founder member of both Nidderdale Branch of RNA and Harrogate and District Branch of RNA, as well as a life member of the RNA. Died June 3, aged 96.

Lt Cdr Chris G T Wilson. HMS Falmouth, Dryad, Vernon, Brinton, Heron, Seahawk, Osprey, Ark Royal, and Cochrane. Loan Turks and Caicos. 810 815 848 NAS. Died April 24.

Cdr Rob E Woolgar. HMS Ark Royal, Brearley, Heron, Bossington, Dryad, Abdiel, Gavinton, Nelson, York, and Ark Royal. Service Attache Copenhagen. DNOT. 893 NAS. Died May 5.

Capt RNR John E Felice VRD*, Mersey Div RNR, 4 and 5 Wireless District RNR. Died April 29, aged 96.

Lt Cdr Ronald W Graham-Clarke. HMS Victory RNB, and HMS Mercury. Died May 17, aged 91

Hon Capt Jack P Grimwood. HMS Forth, D of Quartering, and NATO Oslo. Died May 29, aged 98.

Lt Cdr Rowan G P Menzies. HMS Dolphin, Resolution, Neptune, and Rorqual. Died April 12, aged 82.

Rear Adm Roger O Morris CB. HMS Hydra, Beagle, Fawn, Hecla, RCDS, and Hydrog of the Navy. Died April 18, aged 87.

Inst Lt Cdr John C Wiltshire. HMS Mercury, Forth, Ganges, and Dir Naval Education. Died May 7, aged 89.

Cdr Robert E Woolgar OBE. HMS Ark Royal, Heron, Bossington, Osprey, Ark Royal, Dryad, Abdiel, Gavinton, and Nelson. DNOT. Service Attache Copenhagen. Died May 5.

CPO REA(A) Eric Andrews MBE. Served in the Fleet Air Arm from 1946 to 1969, training at HMS Caledonia and HMS Ariel. Served in HMS Gannat (RNAS Eglinton) 1952; HMS Ariel 1954;

HMS Bulwark 1955; HMS Eagle 1956 in Suez; HMS Seahawk 1959; HMS Sanderling 1962; HMS Sembang 1964; HMS Daedalus 1966. Took part in flypast for 1953 Coronation Fleet Review at Spithead. On leaving the RN, he worked at New University Coleraine, where he commissioned the new advanced electronic components plant, where he worked until he retired. Member of RNA Limavady, was branch president at the time of his death on June 3, aged 89.

Tony Stirk.CCMEA. Served Jan 1976 to Dec 1998 in HMS Fisgard, Sceptre, Churchill, Talent and HMNB Clyde. Died June 12, aged 61.

Director Naval Careers Service. Died aged 102.

Cdr James J L Henegan OBE DSC. HMS Collingwood, Sultan, and Falcon.

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur

David W Lee. HMS Bulwark, Centaur. LREM 845 Sq. Died March 30, 2020.

Anthony Holley. Died April 4, 2020

Roy Walton. HMS Bulwark. NAM(A1), Died April 15, 2020.

Anthony Hand. HMS Centaur. AB. Died April 23, 2020.

Albert W Tew. HMS Albion. L/Ck. Died May 16, 2020.

Submariners' Association.

Alan Sutton ME.1. Served 1962 to 1972 in HM Submarines Sealion. Member of Merseyside Branch. Died May 9, aged 74.

Michael Cook CPO WEA(ADC). Served Oct 1966 to Mar 1985 in HM Submarines Renown (67-68), Ambush (69), Oberon (71-73), Porpoise (76), and Orpheus (79-80). Member of Dolphin Branch. Died May 12, aged 75.

John Scott Ch Mech. Served 1960 to 1974 in HM Submarines Porpoise, Rorqual, Thermopylae, Amphion, and Courageous. Member of Blyth & Wansbeck Branch. Died May 17, aged 84.

Dan McGrady L/Sto. Served 1946 to 1953 in HM Submarines Seadevil, Seneschal, Sturdy, Tradewind, and Trespasser. Member of Northern Ireland Branch. Died May 19, aged 93.

Steve Dooley LMEM. Served Jan 1967 to Mar 1974 in HM Submarines Sealion, Cachalot, and Walrus. Member of Merseyside Branch. Died May 25, aged 75.

Reunions

HMS Phoebe: Reunion will now take place on October 2-5 2020 at the Aztec Hotel, Bristol. Details from IOW Tours Ltd, 3 New Road, Sandown, Isle of Wight PO36 9IN. Tel 01983 405116, or email enquiries@iowtours.com.

HMS Liverpool Association: Reunion planned for Saturday June 13 has been cancelled. Next year's reunion will be held on June 12 2021. For membership details contact the secretary John Parker at info@hmsliverpoolassociation.org.uk or call 02392521222.

HMS Londonderry. First Commission July 1960 to October 1962 are having a reunion from July 19 to 22 at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea. Contact Brian Coward at briancoward39@btinternet.com for details.

RMBS 1/70 and 2/70 Squad. A joint 50th anniversary reunion of 1/70 and 2/70 squads is planned for the last weekend in August 2020 in Deal. Contact Nick Buckley on nickbuckley55@aol.com

HMS Troubridge Final Commission Association 1966-69 Royal Beach Hotel, Portsmouth October 2-5

2020. Contact Bryan Pace at Romft1@GMail.com or via HMSTroubridge.com.

HMS Lowestoft Association: Our tenth reunion will take place at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea, from October 2 to 5. All who served in Lowestoft during her RN service (1961-1986) are welcome, including wives/partners/guests). A 1, 2 or 3 night package is available or if you reside locally why not join us for the Saturday night gala dinner only. For further details call IOW Tours on 01983 405116 or contact ian@hmslowestoft.co.uk Tel: 07778 546861.

HMS Ajax and River Plate Veterans Association: Our reunion due to be held on October 2-4 at Weymouth has now been cancelled.

Royal Marines Band Service Annual Reunion: The RMBS reunion will take place on October 10 at the Warrant Officers, Senior Rates & Senior NCOs Mess, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth. For further information and tickets contact the Blue Band Office: 023 9254 7563 or email: sec@royalmarinesbands.co.uk. The annual RMBS Memorial Service will take place at 11am the

following day in St Thomas of Canterbury (Portsmouth Cathedral), Old Portsmouth.

Weapon Mechanicians Association: The 2020 annual reunion takes place at the Bear Hotel in Havant, on October 10. This will be the association's final reunion, wives and partners are welcome. Peter Andrews at weaponmechs50@btinternet.com or phone 07411 807552.

HMS Undaunted, Eagle and Yarmouth Associations: Annual reunion, Hallmark Hotel, Midland Road, Derby, October 23-26. Gala dinner on October 24. Contact Alan (Whiskey) Walker on 01268548041 or email whiskey666@outlook.com

BRNC Entry Sept 1980 40th anniversary reunion dinner, BRNC Dartmouth, October 31 2020. Details from Cdr N J 'Nobby' Hall, neil.hall324@mod.gov.uk

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association: Reunion will now take place on May 7-10 2021 at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea. Contact Secretary Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email askhamd3@gmail.com

Ask Jack

Trincomalee: My stepfather Leslie Mears was a Royal Marine based at Eastney Barracks and was posted to Trincomalee in Old Ceylon during WW2. He served at least three years there. To try to complete a large family tree, I would like to know exactly when he and his group returned to the UK after the war.

Roger Myers, Rogermyers@btinternet.com

RNTT Kenya Navy Reunions. I would like to contact the person in charge of these reunions. Having moved to Spain 20 years ago, I have lost all contact.

John Dymond, ex-Chief Engineer of **NKS Ndovu**
Johndymond1936@icloud.com

HMS Royal Oak. I have recently discovered an item from *Navy News* of October 1993, in which Laurence Myers would like to hear from anyone regarding the Royal Oak and in particular from anyone who knew George Edward Myers (who was lost on the Royal Oak). I am the son of George

Edward Myers and would like to know if anyone has contact details for Laurence, who was living in Little Sutton, South Wirral.

Roger Myers
rogermyers@btinternet.com

Brian Boulton. I am trying to trace an old friend who was training to be a diver at HMS Ganges from 1958.

Pauline Mahon (nee White)
01677 988296 / 0791 0275290
pauline22@hotmail.com

CPSA Jim Asher. I am trying to contact a former shipmate with whom I served in HMS Cardiff during the Falklands conflict. I served as a CPOMEM at the time.

Terry Edson
Sallyann.edson@tiscali.co.uk

CPO John Terrett. We are trying to trace my sister's brother-in-law. He served in HMS Ark Royal in either the 1970s, 80s or 90s. He was born in

Middlesbrough and had a brother, Norman, and mother Milly.

Alison and Nigel Bryden
Invermill@talk21.com

Michael Frampton. My brother-in-law boxed extensively for the navy during his service in the 60s and was awarded his colours. He would love to get a Imperial Services/Combined Services cloth badge to sew on to his sweatshirt. He is now 75 and I would love to obtain one for him.

Joe Joryeff
joryeffj@gmail.com

HMS Isis. D-87 'That which Remains' 1936 to 1944. My father was an Army officer attached to HMS Isis as BLO and survived her sinking on July 20 1944. I am seeking contact with former crew, survivors, families and or descendants.

Angus Beaton
07966166981
angusbeaton@me.com

Battleship protected

THE wreck of a German battleship lost off Folkestone is now being protected by the British Government.

Ironclad SMS Grosser Kurfürst was exercising in the Channel with another German vessel in 1878 when the two collided.

The bow of SMS König Wilhelm – specially designed for ramming enemy ships – tore into her ill-fated compatriot, leaving a huge hole.

Grosser Kurfürst sank rapidly, taking 284 of her 500 crew down with her.

Many of the bodies were recovered and interred in Cheriton Road Cemetery in Folkestone, where a monument was subsequently erected.

Now both wreck and memorial has been given protection; the former has been added to the National Heritage List for England (it's the only non-Royal Navy warship lost in UK waters in the 50 years leading up to World War 1) and the monument is now a Grade II listed structure.

Talent milestone

THE routine of submarine patrol was interrupted aboard HMS Talent celebrated her 30th birthday beneath the waves.

The 100-plus crew of the hunter-killer were expecting to sit down to a traditional Wednesday night curry... but instead found pork Wellington, fondant and roasted veg and a triple chocolate cheesecake... and a submarine-shaped birthday cake.

And as their stomachs digested that, Commander Paul Jamieson took to the T-boat's main broadcast system to address his crew and highlight Talent's significant achievements during her lengthy career during which the boat has sailed more than 600,000 nautical miles (more than 27 times around the globe).

Talent has spent the bulk of her three-decade career based in Plymouth, but now calls Faslane home as the entire Silent Service is concentrated on the Clyde.

Severn to the rescue

THE crew of HMS Severn towed a stricken powerboat to safety off the Isle of Wight when it ran out of fuel and began drifting.

The fishery protection ship responded to a distress signal from the boat off Ventor; despite dropping its anchor, the 18ft RIB was dragging along the coast in a strong tidal stream.

Half an hour later, Severn was on the scene and launched her sea boat.

Its crew were unable to provide fuel as the RIB was petrol, not diesel powered, but they did provide the two Australian sailors in it with food and drink and towed the craft four miles to Sandown pier where a friend was on hand with a jerry can of fuel.

"I've rescued a fair few people in my time, but these were the first Australians!" said Commander Phil Harper, Severn's CO. "The sea can be a suddenly dangerous place, and I'm really glad we were able to prevent this becoming a much more serious incident."

Historic ships turn virtual in pandemic

NATIONAL Historic Ships has singled out HMS Belfast and Dunkirk veteran Medway Queen for keeping the flame of maritime history alive through the Covid-19 pandemic.

It has named the wartime cruiser and Thames museum ship as its 'national flagship' and paddle steamer-turned-WW2-minesweeper a 'regional flagship' in its annual awards, which for 2020 have focused on how the 1,600 vessels and their owners/trusts under the organisation's umbrella have adapted and responded to the coronavirus.

The lockdown has starved those opened to the public – such as Belfast and Medway Queen, which is being restored in Gillingham – of their main source of income/funding.

Worse in the case of the latter, she's been prevented from crossing the Channel with other 'little ship' survivors of the 1940 evacuation for 80th anniversary commemorations as well as participation in events in Kent.

Richard Halton of the Medway Queen Preservation Society said Covid had "wiped out our visitor revenue". The ship is offering virtual tours via its website (<https://www.medwayqueen.co.uk/virtual-tour.html>) with 'visitors' encouraged to make a donation upon completing their look around.

The biggest blow, however, has been the cancellation of Dunkirk 80 events, including an appearance at an event in Ramsgate which was expected to bolster funds by several thousand pounds.

Instead, the preservation society is asking supporters to donate £7,000 – £1 for each man rescued in 1940 – to plug the gap: <https://localgiving.org/fundraising/Dunkirk-Day-by-Day/>

HMS Belfast – which receives a quarter of million visitors a year – has run various online events, such as quizzes, lectures, digital exhibitions and rummages around in the archives.

She and Medway Queen will receive a grant each – between £250 and £500 – and be permitted to fly a special broad pennant once the lockdown ends.



● Lieutenant (later Commander) Frank Brock (far left) poses with Flight Lieutenant Sidney Vincent Sippe, Squadron Commander Philip Shepherd, French Army Captain R Seyrig, Flight Commander Noel Pemberton-Billing; Squadron Commander Edward Featherstone Briggs, C Renaud of the French Army, Lieutenant John Tremayne Babington and Flight Commander Roland Portman Cannon in the balloon hall at Belfort after attacking the Zeppelin works at Friedrichshafen in late 1914
Picture: IWM Q 73784

Brock of ages

BORN into the well-established Brock's fireworks dynasty, Frank Brock was a remarkable man.

The term 'Brock's Benefit' for a spectacular explosive display was already in the English language for any kind of spectacular explosive incident decades before 1914, writes Prof Eric Grove.

In the years before the war Frank Brock organised displays for his firm all over the world. When war broke out he joined the Royal Artillery, which may have been a cover for continued clandestine intelligence gathering activities for the predecessor of MI6.

His work gave him access to Germany and as late as July 1914 Brock was in Düsseldorf arranging a display. It is possible he reported back on the Zeppelin sheds there. Certainly, he went down to Friedrichshafen, Zeppelin's headquarters, posing as an American. He was shown round the factory and inspected a newly-built airship.

Once war broke out, the Admiralty's dynamic Head of the Air Department Murray Sueter chose Brock for further special service. He had been in discussion with Brock about anti-Zeppelin incendiary bullets and knew about his exploits at Friedrichshafen which he was planning for the Royal Naval Air Service to bomb.

Lieutenant Brock was loaned to the Admiralty, where he joined Noel Pemberton Billing, another enthusiastic adventurer, to prepare for the operation. The chosen base for the attack was a French airship base at Belfort. They visited the base, obtaining French support, and then, dressed in civilian clothes and with false passports, the intrepid pair carried out another reconnaissance of Friedrichshafen using a boat from the Swiss side of Lake Constance.

Four Avro 504s were duly assembled at Belfort and three of them flew to attack the plant. Damage was limited but the

THE GROVE REVIEW

Germans were rattled and decided to move Zeppelin production to Potsdam.

Frank was formally transferred to the RNAS as a Flight Lieutenant at the beginning of 1915 and was put in charge of the RNAS Experimental Station at Stratford in East London. Here his work included developing probably the best of the three incendiary bullets



which allowed British aircraft to shoot down airships; smoke floats to defend ships from submarines; air-to-air rockets; colour filters to improve vision through goggles, binoculars and cameras and powerful flares which transformed the effectiveness of the Dover anti-submarine barrage.

Brock was promoted to Wing Commander and was awarded the OBE in 1918 for his many contributions to the war effort.

By this time he was involved in preparing for the raid s on Zeebrugge and Ostend to block the canal egress of the small Belgian-based U-boats. These were a particular problem as, unlike thir larger High Sea Fleet cousins, they did not use radio and were thus hard to find.

Brock played an absolutely key role in the operation, developing flame-throwers, incendiary grenades and, most importantly, very dense smoke to cover the approach of the raiders.

Frank was determined to go on the operation himself, and, armed to the teeth, he jumped onto the Mole defending the harbour at Zeebrugge. He used his experience as both a boxer and rugby player to charge German positions. He

was observed to use his fists against the Germans. It could not last and seems to have ended with a sword fight with a German sailor Hermann Künne (who later had a World War 2 German destroyer named after him sunk at Narvik) in which both participants died.

This remarkable story is told by Harry Smee, Frank Brock's grandson, assisted by former journalist and political adviser Henry Macrory, in their book **Gunpowder and Glory: The Explosive Life of Frank Brock OBE** (Casemate, ISBN 978-1-61200-8448 £25).

Brock's life is put in the context of the evolution of the Brock family and their fireworks. It is accessibly and attractively written and an absorbing read.

There are however a few problems. Perhaps understandably, there is a tendency to give an optimistic interpretation of Brock's role.

Surprisingly, however, the effects of the Friedrichshafen raid are rather underrated. The operational impact of the Zeebrugge raid is, on the other hand, somewhat overstated – although the authors are right to emphasise its impact on restoring the reputation of the Royal Navy at the end of a rather unsatisfactory war.

HMS Vindictive had not 'come out of retirement' to lead the raid (she had just been serving in the White Sea). The authors seem unaware of the special nature of the Flanders U-boat threat. Given the circumstances of Brock's death there is confusion as to whether he was armed with his own sword or a cutlass.

Despite these points, this is a fascinating story of one of the most amazing figures in the history of the Royal Navy. and a recommended read.



Bob's tips for fellow authors

A 32-YEAR career in the Royal Marines spanning the end of Empire, the Troubles in Northern Ireland, sea time aboard HMS Danae in the Middle/Far East, Cold War training in Norway and the first Gulf War have provided former commando officer Bob Fanshawe with a rich vein of memories and military experiences.



That plus a history of Fanshawes serving in the Royal Navy for decades if not hundreds of years (including a nephew currently serving in submarines) might all suggest a nautical/marine-themed book when Bob put finger to keyboard.

Instead it's the Great War which has fired his literary imagination.

Inspired by the anti-war classic *All Quiet on the Western Front* which he read as a young officer and many stories of family members who had served including an uncle killed at Pilckem Ridge in the first days of the grim

Third Battle of Ypres (aka Passchendaele), and spurred on by the centenary of WW1, Bob's second novel, **A Cellist Soldier**, rolls off the presses this month.

The green beret, who runs a large pub/restaurant in south-east London (closed during the pandemic), wrote a play based on soldier/poet Wilfred Owen, followed by his debut novel: *The Cellist's Friend*, published a couple of years ago. Book No.2 is a prequel with another novel planned to complete the trilogy.

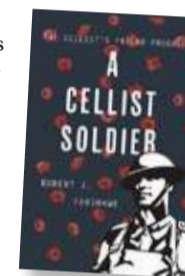
For former servicemen and women considering writing as a potential 'second career', offers some sage advice.

"Publishing is an extremely difficult industry to break into," Bob explains. "If you are looking for the 'traditional' publisher who will pay for your books to be published, publishers may not see a long-term investment in older writers.

"Self publishing is the only option left. There are a large number of publishers offering this service at a price or self-publishing can be done individually much cheaper via various digital platforms including those established by Amazon.

"Publishing a book is just the beginning if you are interested in any sort of a career. You have to market your book and give it a chance to compete with the many hundreds of thousands of others published every year."

If you don't have a writing bent but fancy dipping into some WW1 historical fiction, *A Cellist Soldier* by Robert J Fanshawe is published on June 9 by Clink Street (ISBN paperback 978-1-913340-41-4, ebook 978-1-913340-42-1).



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