



NAVY NEWS

MARCH 2020

Forth dimension

HMS Forth is pictured from HMS Scott as the Royal Navy's new patrol ship arrives in the Falklands, where she will be stationed for several years as part of the forward presence vision of Royal Navy Transformation.
(see pages 16-17)

Picture: LPhot Kyle Heller



INSIDE: ROYAL NAVY TRANSFORMATION



After nearly two decades almost entirely focused on saving lives in the heat of Iraq and Afghanistan, Royal Navy medics are re-inventing the art of doing so in the extreme cold of the Arctic to support the Future Commando Force and its ten-year plan for operating in the High North. RICHARD HARGREAVES joined Commando Logistics Regiment's Medical Squadron in the snow-covered valleys of northern Norway.

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In the grey light of a winter's morning, five troops in white over-jackets trudge over a cross roads.

They're deep behind enemy lines, conducting a reconnaissance patrol. *Crack. Crack. Crack.* "Contact!"

The group breaks into two - one providing cover for the other as they fall back.

Wearing snow shoes, the recon party throw up clouds of snow as they slap their feet in the fresh white stuff, while impacting bullets throw up momentary fountains.

"Man down!"

Marine Nick Wilson crumples, clutching his left leg. He's taken a round. His thigh bone is smashed.

Two comrades rush to his aid - including Medical Assistant Stuart Kirk. The 24-year-old from South Shields produces a 'drag bag' from his Bergen - a sack which can be placed around the casualty so he can be hauled in the snow.

Rumbling in stage right, two Viking armoured vehicles and a BV, its rear trailer converted into a battlefield ambulance. In the back, Medical

Assistant Vicky Reynolds prepares to receive the wounded marine.

Here, 200 miles inside the Arctic Circle, it's not just the bullet wound and loss of blood which might kill Nick. It's the cold. To be sure, with several layers of clothes on, gloves, helmet, he's well insulated against the sub-zero temperatures.

With the wound he's losing blood. If you lose blood, you lose body heat. And at low temperatures, it doesn't stop coming; the blood doesn't coagulate.

The back of the BV is warm, but Vicky has a couple of extra tricks up her sleeve to stop Nick going into hypothermic shock.

Most important are 'heat packs' - they activate on exposure to the air and generate warmth for 20 minutes; they're applied to the body's core, such as under the armpits.

To prevent heat escaping from the wounded man, he's wrapped in a giant foil sheet (a 'blizzard blanket') - as you might see at the end of a marathon.

"Everything out here is just more problematic," explains 32-year-old

Vicky from Bootle. "It's a massive challenge, but I've loved it - it's taught me so much."

Like most of the Medical Squadron personnel out here, she's never experienced living and working as a naval medic in the High North - only in Afghanistan and at sea.

"It's tough physically - you need to be fit and strong. You have to really think about how you treat a casualty: where do you apply a tourniquet, for example? You've got to keep them warm, keep yourself warm."

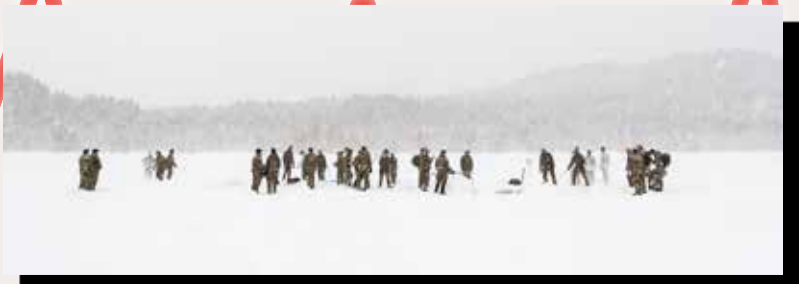
The BV trundles off with Vicky tending to the casualty. A few minutes later (the goal is within one hour of wounding) it pulls up outside what was once known as the first aid post, today a 'Role 1' facility for rapid assessment - and some more warmth.

After checking the wounds and making pertinent observations, the medics place a 'bear hugger' - a transparent mini air bed or lightweight hot water bottle... filled with hot air - then tighten the blanket with straps for the onward journey by ambulance to the casualty treatment facility.

"Patient packaged?" one medic asks.



IN-TENT-SIVE CARE





"Patient packaged."
"Two-six! Lift!"
The wounded marine leaves the tent looking somewhat like a green mummy... and arrives at the Role 2 tented complex a few minutes later still looking like a green mummy...

Here, medics, surgeons, nurses, consultants and anaesthetists will perform life-saving surgery (or save limbs/eyesight) - "and it's typically a matter of last resort," explains consultant Surgeon Commander Calum Arthur - before the casualty is transferred to more permanent hospital facilities (aboard RFA Argus or a civilian medical centre).

There is everything you would find in A&E/emergency room/trauma centre, only in more rugged form - a portable X-Ray machine (based on one developed for vets...), a mini blood lab, a reception area, resuscitation table, operating theatre, and two-bed intensive care unit. It's almost all computerised/digital (the X-ray, for example transmits almost instantaneously to an iPad studied by the consultants).

"When you see all this, you have to remind yourself you are actually in the Arctic Circle - but then you step

outside..." said Petty Officer (Naval Nurse) Laura Davis.
The 28-year-old is typically found at Plymouth's Derriford Hospital. Here she's head of the A&E department, orchestrating the various moving parts.

“““

I have loved this. It's completely different and it's great to be a trailblazer.

PO(NN) LAURA DAVIS

"I have loved this. Working with the marines - they get everything done, simple, no fuss, cheerful. It's completely different and it's great to be a trailblazer."

Trailblazer? Well, it's been 16 years since Medical Squadron deployed en masse to the Arctic. It's expected to provide battlefield care for up to 1,800 men and women when the commandos

are deployed around the globe.

Anywhere.
Given the long hiatus, the squadron took a fresh look at its ability to deploy a Role 2 facility in temperatures down to 30 degrees below Celsius - everything from equipment through to the men and women using it.

As the medics work side-by-side with commandos, so they must live like them in the field - as the head of Defence Medical Services, Peter Homa, and Commodore Inga Kennedy, the RN's senior medic, found out on a visit to Bardufoss.

They've undergone survival training, living in makeshift shelters for a night with only their cold weather clothing and bivvy bag, they've come through the infamous icebreaking drill - from medical assistant up to consultant - and while surgeons haven't had to learn to ski, they have learned to walk in snow shoes.

And if the casualty facility is in the field, that's where its staff live.

A few yards away a cluster of separate four and ten-person tents act as the medics' makeshift home.

They've dug out the snow down to the permafrost, created a wall of snow as

protection against the wind and put up the tent in the middle.

The larger ten-man tents - "the Hilton" - look like something straight out of Scott's expedition to the South Pole.

Inside, people are arranged "supposedly like a pizza slice, but it's more like the spaghetti junction", their stuffed Bergens against the tent wall, naphtha cookers boiling water to turn dehydrated food into a filling meal.

"Living out here doesn't get any easier," says Surg Cdr Arthur, "but the kit is getting better.

"Looking after yourself is key. Eat and drink to keep warm. Simply wearing lots of clothes in the field and climbing into your sleeping bag won't work.

"The rations are good, but very heavy on the sugar, so your teeth will suffer."

And going to the toilet is a "bit of an adventure", especially at night, but holding it in merely causes constipation.

Under the Future Commando Force concept, the medics must be able to sustain their casualty treatment facility for up to week. The ration packs will have to get smaller - carrying a week's food in one go is not practical yet. Dental hygiene too is a problem... although non-

freezable toothpaste is being developed, for example.

And there's the human element. Three to four days in the field is about the limit of endurance presently - not least because of the night time sentry duties personnel must perform, keeping an eye on the safety and security of colleagues, sweeping snow off the tent.

"The team out here are outstanding," said Surg Cdr Arthur. "Few of them are commando-trained, but everyone has 'dug out blind'. They've shown courage, determination and delivered in spades."

This year is the first run-out. They'll be back (in force in even-numbered years for large-scale Cold Response-esque exercises, in smaller numbers in odd ones).

"Only practice and time and field can fix these things. But over the next ten years we'll build a core of people who are able to live and work in the Arctic," Surg Cdr Arthur adds.

"We have a great capability here - we are the only extreme cold weather medical facility like this in the UK's armed forces."

Pictures: Writer Tom Lloyd, CLR; Leading Photographer Paul Hall, 30 Cdo IX Gp; Captain Chris Steer, CLR



TENTS.

They're not high-tech. A few poles. Bit of canvas. Sorted.

Soldiers and marines have 'bivvied' for decades, centuries even, in the field.

First aid posts, field hospitals too have been found on the battlefield for a good 150 years.

So what is innovative about a row of joined tents in a snow-covered Norwegian field which is home to the 50 or so surgeons, medics, nurses and technicians of the Commando Forward Support Group?

For a start it was erected in seven minutes. It can receive its first casualty inside 90. It can be 'collapsed' in a similar time frame, perhaps quicker, packed

up in shipping containers, loaded on to a handful of trucks ready for its next location.

Without it, the commando medics are convinced they would not be supporting this year's winter deployment by the Royal Marines to Norway.

It took a couple of hours - if conditions were right - just to put up the hospital tent with its numerous metal poles and canvas, neither of which are suited to the cold.

Taking it down was even more arduous; the poles would often freeze. Kettles of boiling water were poured over them to free them.

Snow which heaters melted on the roof of the tent would freeze

as soon the blowers were turned off, the canvas would become brittle and tear or break.

An exercise with the Norwegians pointed the way ahead: an inflatable hospital.

"It's a game-changer, the number one thing which has made a difference to the way we work," enthused Lieutenant Commander Steve Andrews, in charge of Medical Squadron.

The advice didn't end there. To ensure medical kit and supplies arrived ready to use, the Norwegians introduced the marines to the 'reefer' - a refrigerated shipping container with a bolted-on heater/cooler to ensure neither equipment nor medicines are too warm or cold.

Once blown up and equipped with the relevant kit, the facility can take its first casualty. He's wearing a 'snap bracelet' - what looks like a small ruler, but slap it against a patient's wrist and it coils around snake-like. It also doubles up as a USB stick holding information about the injured person.

That information has been recorded at the first aid post courtesy of another new piece of kit: the Tempus Pro, which looks like a chunky iPad and monitors a patient's vitals. It'll last for 14 hours on one charge, can be used in the field, in the casualty facility, in an NHS hospital. It connects to medical databases securely and wirelessly real time - or you

can download the data on to the snap bracelet. You can also screen grab the information. Or you can take a picture/record a video of the patient. And transmit that. You can also plug in ultrasound scanners and endoscopes.

"All the information on the casualty is here from the moment they are first treated, all the way back to the UK," explained Petty Officer James Morwood, an operating department practitioner.

"We've got six of them. They're good, they work in extreme temperatures, they get battered around and still work because they're rugged."

Tech plays a key role during the surgery. A camera above

the patient feeds live imagery of the operation to a cloud-based server which a surgeon in the UK can watch and offer advice if necessary... or simply act as a safe pair of hands.

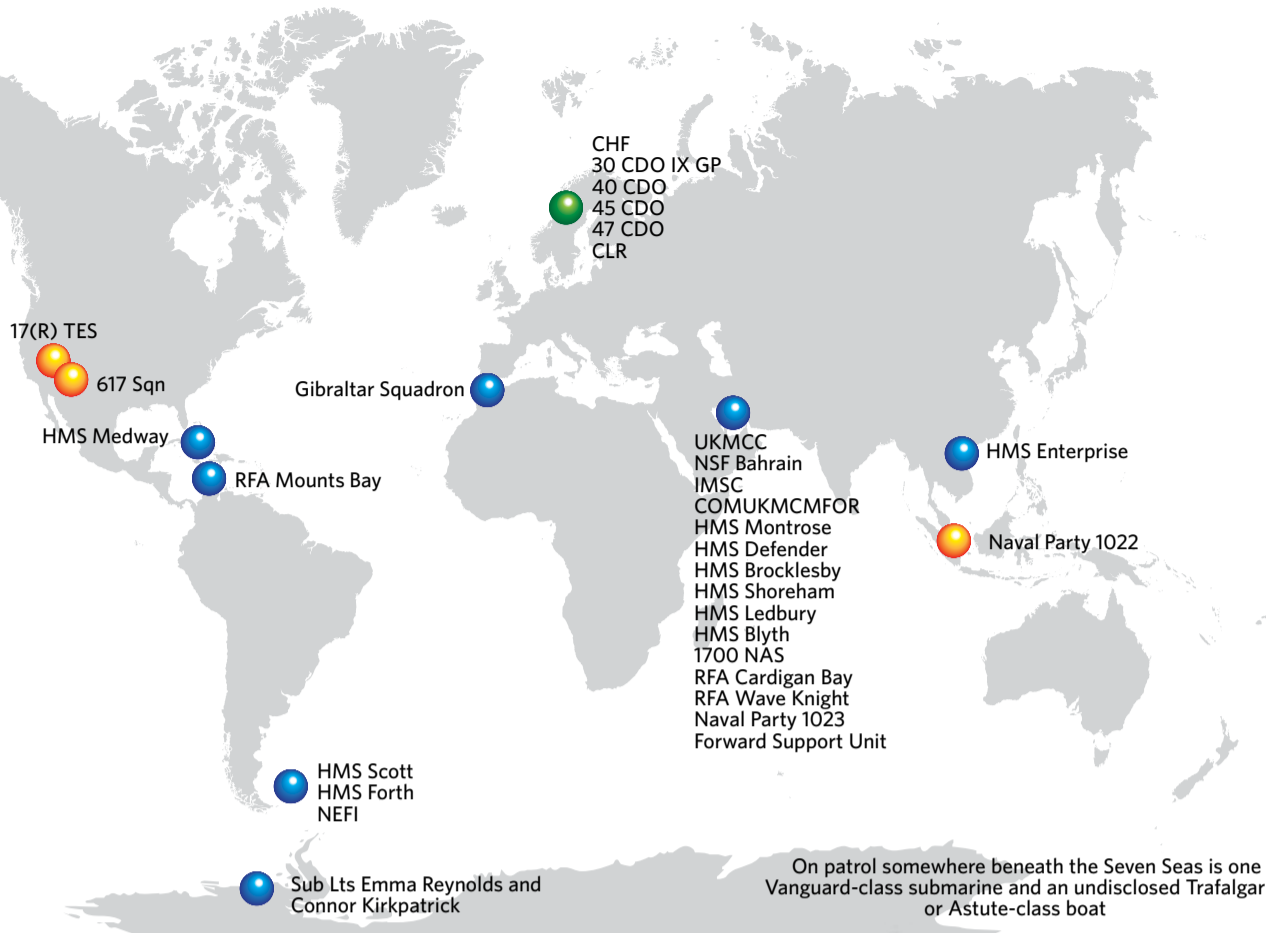
"High-end battlefield wounds and trauma are our medics' comfort zone," explained Colonel Aldeiy Alderson, Commando Logistics Regiment's Commanding Officer.

"But say you've been on a hurricane relief mission, dealing with one casualty after another, day after day, you're tired. The guy on the other end of the video screen will be keeping you on your toes to make sure you don't make a mistake."



Training or on patrol around the UK

- HMS Albion
- HMS Trent
- HMS Mersey
- HMS Tyne
- HMS Maggie
- HMS Chiddingfold
- RFA Tidesurge
- 820 NAS
- HMS Westminster
- HMS Sutherland
- RFA Tideforce
- HMS Prince of Wales
- HMS Queen Elizabeth



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

FLEET FOCUS
Protecting our nation's interests

TRANSFORMATION is the name of the game for the Naval Service – and this month's *Navy News* is packed with information about how the Senior Service is changing to meet the demands of today's world.

We kick-off with the view of the three new senior **Warrant Officers**, see right, as they share their opinions of RN Transformation.

What the changes mean to Naval Service personnel is highlighted (pages 20-21) as the new **People and Training Directorate** stands up.

The recently-released **My Navy** mobile application can make a big difference to RN personnel. Find out how it can help you (see page 30).

First Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin shares his vision of the New Navy (see page 29), while we look at how those who have left the Royal Navy can return thanks to the **Golden Ticket** scheme after finding the grass wasn't greener in Civvy Street (see page 28).

The Royal Navy key transformation themes also feature this month (as they have for several previous months).

Forward Presence in the form of **HMS Forth**, **Medway**, **Montrose**, and **RFA Mounts Bay** all feature, beginning with Forth (see pages 1, 16 and 17) as she arrives in the Falkland Islands, which will be her home for the next few years.

Her younger sister, **Medway**, has reached the Caribbean (see page 17), where she will offer a reassuring presence to British Overseas Territories. The patrol ship replaces **RFA Mounts Bay**, as she marked the end of her deployment with a successful drugs seizure (see page 16).

The crew of **HMS Defender** also celebrated as they bagged hash worth £1m from drug runners in the Indian Ocean (see page 5).

Frigate **HMS Montrose** (see page 39) is forward deployed in the Gulf and met up with the world's largest passenger liner and flagship of the Cunard line, RMS **Queen Mary 2**.

The move towards a **Carrier Strike** navy came a step closer as **HMS Queen Elizabeth** hosted day and night F-35 Lightning trials in UK waters (see page 6). Younger sister **HMS Prince of Wales** was making her visit to her affiliated city of Liverpool (see page 6) as *Navy News* went to press.

To **Technology and Innovation** next and the first of nine P8 Poseidon aircraft have arrived to help protect the Continuous At Sea Deterrent (see page 11). Each of the aircraft will have RN personnel as part of the crew.

The first sailors are learning to drive the RN's twin jet boats of tomorrow (see page 19) courtesy of two new craft at **HMS Raleigh**.

The first of the Royal Navy's next-generation frigates, **HMS Glasgow**, is more than half-way through construction in Scotland (see page 11). The Type 26s will replace the anti-submarine Type 23s.

Front-line units are benefiting from new search kit supplied by the Royal Navy's **Board and Search** experts based at **HMS Raleigh** (see page 11). Seven kits – two at the training school in **HMS Raleigh** – have been acquired for use by sailors and Juliet Company, 40 Commando, the Royal Marines' dedicated board-and-search specialists.

After nearly two decades almost entirely focused on saving lives in the heat of Iraq and Afghanistan, Royal Navy medics are re-inventing the art of doing so in the extreme cold of the Arctic (see pages 2-3). It's been 16 years since **Medical Squadron** deployed en masse to the Arctic and this year they are trialling their inflatable hospital, which can receive its first casualty within 90 minutes of the squadron's arrival.

The medics are supporting the **Future Commando Force** and its ten-year plan for operating in the High North (see pages 13-15 and back page).

Marines from **47 Commando Raiding Group** have put their small, fast raiding craft through their paces 640 miles north of Oslo in Norway, while **45 Commando** have confronted developing threats on demanding training missions around Bardufoss – all vital preparation for **Exercise Cold Response**, which kicked-off as *Navy News* went to press.

Back in the UK and **HMS Middleton** returned to water after a six-month maintenance package (see page 9), which includes improved living quarters for her crew, a key tenet of the Royal Navy's **People and Training** transformation.



Delivering the Big T

Availability, sustainability, lethality: WOs' views

MANY of you will know that the Royal Navy is currently going through the most ambitious programme of transformation for decades.

You can read more about the progress we are making in the five key outputs – the North Atlantic; Carrier Strike; the Future Commando Force; Forward Presence; and Technology and Innovation – throughout this month's *Navy News*.

Helping to deliver transformation is the new Warrant Officer of the Naval Service, WO1 Carl 'Speedy' Steedman. He will be working with the holders of two brand new positions; Second Sea Lord's Warrant Officer, WO1 Ian Wilson and Fleet Commander's Warrant Officer, WO1 Mick Turnbull, together with the RM Corps RSM, WO1 Dave Mason. The new WOs are pictured above with ISL, 2SL and Fleet Commander.

This month, the three new senior Warrant Officers talk about what RN Transformation means for them.

"The 'Big T' has spread into all of the Navy's business," says WO Wilson. "I think the best way of describing this is that we are improving three things: availability; sustainability; and lethality."

"The RN is currently doing amazing things across the globe to support our government," says WO Steedman. "HMS Forth has taken over as the Falkland Islands patrol ship, and HMS Medway is en route to her new permanent base in the Caribbean."

"However, to meet future challenges, the number of days our ships, submarines, aircraft and Commando Units are available for operations are likely to increase," explains WO Turnbull.

VIEW BRIDGE

"Part of this involves increasing our forward presence and promoting the White Ensign on a global scale."

Underpinning this are new crewing models that are improving sustainability. HMS Montrose, forward deployed in Bahrain for three years, is now into her fourth crew rotation and has proven that we can successfully dual crew a complex warship. Now, we are looking at whether we can extend this to more ships.

"This means we need more people in frontline-facing roles," adds WO Turnbull.

This is one of the drivers behind the current review of Navy Command Headquarters. But it isn't just about sending more people to sea.

"We're going to make the lived experience better for everyone – and that includes making serving on frontline units the best place to be," WO Wilson clarified.

"The routines, leave packages and unit stability, will provide the best opportunity to plan your life."

One of the transformation elements that has made headlines is the reduction in the Warrant Officer cadre, from around 1,000 to about 250 by 2025. The trio are positive about this.

"We're going to restore the cachet of the WO1 rank," explained WO Wilson. "They will be the top one

percent, working in key positions and will provide a headmark to aspire to for our brightest ratings."

WO Steedman was equally keen. "Don't forget," he said, "this opens up brilliant opportunities for WOs as well. They will have increased prospects for rapid selection for commission, providing them with continued meaningful employment and career opportunities as a naval officer."

But underpinning everything is our ability to deliver lethality.

"Whether you are conducting operations in the Gulf or on a fire-fighting course in Raleigh, you are part of an amazing fighting service," enthused WO Steedman.

And we are harnessing today's technology to develop that, from arming our Royal Marines with the latest equipment to transform them into a light, agile Future Commando Force, to using HMS Prince of Wales as a test platform to develop our ability to use unmanned air systems.

There are some big changes going on. "Will this change come naturally to some of us?" asked WO Wilson. "No! But do we need to have an open mind about it? Yes!"

WO Steedman added: "I would ask that you all just keep doing what you are doing supporting your command, and remember, 65,000 tons of aircraft carrier sat in a task group is not our greatest weapon – the people that form the Royal Navy are, it is our people that will deliver the battle winning edge."

WO Turnbull summed it up: "Irrespective of fighting arm, unit or rank, we are One Navy."



Jackpot!

Defender's crew bag £1m of illegal drugs in Indian Ocean

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A MILLION pounds of drug money will never line the pockets of terrorists thanks to the efforts of HMS Defender and her ship's company.

Defender's crew made their second drugs bust in as many months, seizing 2,500kg of hash in the Indian Ocean.

They'd been working as part of Combined Task Force 150, the international team keeping Gulf waterways secure.

Commander Richard Hewitt, Defender's Commanding Officer, said: "Once again Defender has seized a significant amount of narcotics, reinforcing the Royal Navy's commitment to ensuring maritime security by disrupting the operations of drug smugglers and terrorists."

The bust unfolded after Defender launched her Wildcat helicopter to begin a search for possible illegitimate maritime traffic in the Indian Ocean.

Before long, a suspicious dhow was identified and HMS Defender sent a boarding team of Royal Marine Commandos to investigate.

RM Lieutenant Ben Clink, who led the team, said: "A strong performance from my team once again proved the versatility of the Royal Marines at sea."

Once the Royal Marines had secured the dhow, a Royal Navy team followed and searched the vessel for illicit cargo.

The boarding party soon discovered 119 bags of hashish, worth around £1m hidden throughout the dhow.

Defender's haul of crystal meth in December was the largest ever seen by the Combined Maritime Forces.

The Royal New Zealand Navy's Captain Sean Stewart, the deputy



commander of CTF 150, said: "HMS Defender has done some terrific work and proven to be a high value asset to CTF 150."

Defender currently forms part of the Royal Navy's ongoing presence in the Middle East.

The Naval Service has a long-standing commitment to keeping the vital waterways there safe from threats.

Since 1980, ships of both the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary have maintained a presence there 365 days a year. The way that forces operates is changing, with Type 23 frigate HMS Montrose now stationed in the Gulf as part of the transformation of forward presence ensuring peace, stability, and the free flow of trade through some of the world's most vital shipping lanes.

Pictures: LPhot Rory Arnold



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Milestone in UK waters means Carrier Strike Group has

Frontline in sight

THE UK is a step closer to deploying the Royal Navy's Carrier Strike Group on frontline operations following more trials with UK F-35 Lightning jets.

Day and night take offs and landings took place onboard HMS Queen Elizabeth, the first time fighter jets have operated from a British carrier in home waters in a decade.

HMS Queen Elizabeth was in the North Sea, conducting Carrier Qualification for Royal Navy and Royal Air Force pilots from the UK Lightning Force, based out of RAF Marham in Norfolk.

The jets flew daily to and from the ship's 4.5-acre deck, giving the pilots vital experience in operating from a floating airfield in both daylight and at night, some for the very first time. It also provided further training for the ship's crew, who have previously conducted trials with UK and US Marine Corps Lightnings in the USA.

Exercise Lightning Fury, saw Royal Navy and RAF fighter pilots from 207 Squadron based at Marham deliver a seminal carrier qualification event – the first of its kind in home waters for a decade – qualifying six Lightning instructor pilots to operate day and night from the 65,000-tonne carrier. 207 Squadron instructors will now train 617 Squadron pilots – and in time, 809 Naval Air Squadron pilots – for all future Carrier Strike operations.

Following on from the successful operational testing phase off the East coast of the USA last year, when the Carrier

Strike Group deployed on WESTLANT 19, this training period also qualified Landing Signals Officers, all of whom integrated seamlessly with HMS Queen Elizabeth's Air Management Organisation to supervise F-35 flying operations.

Braving Storm Ciara, the future fleet flagship faced down 100mph winds, large sea states, and rolling swells, but still achieved more than 85 F-35 deck landings, during more than 50 hours of fixed-wing flying.

Commander Ed Phillips, HMS Queen Elizabeth's Commander Air (Wings), said: "This Carrier Qualification period marks the first joint training of UK-owned F-35B Lightning jets and anti-submarine Merlin helicopters in UK waters in a decade. It reflects the hard-work of a great many people across this endeavour, and is a significant step on the path to our first operational deployment in 2021."

HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales are the first aircraft carriers in the world to be designed specifically to operate the Lightning jet.

Commander UK Strike Force, Rear Admiral Mike Utley, said: "Operating the UK's Lightning Force from the deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth in UK waters is a significant milestone. This training with

207 Squadron will set the conditions for valuable warfighting exercises later this year between the operational squadron and the ship. The future utility of these tremendous UK Defence assets is gaining clarity each day as we push the envelope of their combined ability, leading to the first combined operational deployment of the carrier strike capability next year.

"Once fully operational, the UK Carrier Strike Group will be a formidable force around the world, using a number of platforms to work alongside our allies and signalling the UK's position as a global player on the world stage."

Commanding Officer of HMS Queen Elizabeth, Captain Angus Essenhigh, said: "Operating UK Lightning jets is a moment that the UK should be immensely proud of. We have proven the range at which we can operate HMS Queen Elizabeth together with her jets, having spent the past two autumns in the USA. There is now tremendous training value to be gained for both my ship's company, and the Lightning Force team at RAF Marham, as we work together to operate our jets to and from the ship from their land base".

Alongside fixed-wing flying, the ship has also been busy qualifying new helicopter aircrew and developing the ship's internal fire-fighting and damage control responses

ready for Operational Sea Training later in the year.

Embarked elements of 824 Naval Air Squadron and their Merlin Mk2 anti-submarine helicopters made 245 rotary deck landings, qualifying three new pilots, six new observers, and four new aircrewman during intense training including Helicopter In Flight Refuelling (HIFR), Vertical Replenishment at Sea (VERTREP), and deck landing packages, whilst holding search-and-rescue duties in support of F-35 flying.

A 54-strong engineering detachment from RNAS Culdrose supported the helicopters; only 12 had been on the carrier before and 21 junior technicians enjoyed their first spell at sea.

"Our students are trained to hunt submarines in the Merlin Mk2, and the culmination of this training is to do this by day and night from a ship," explained Commander Martin Russell, 824 Squadron's Commanding Officer.

"To conduct that training in HMS Queen Elizabeth is both an excellent opportunity and an honour."

The UK will declare Initial Operating Capability for Carrier Strike by the end of 2020.

The UK currently owns 18 aircraft, with an additional order placed for 30 jets.

The first operational deployment for HMS Queen Elizabeth, 617 Squadron and a squadron of US Marine Corps Lightning jets is due to take place in 2021.

Pictures: LPhot Belinda Alker



Carrier will mark more firsts with big city visit

FIREWORKS and friendship awaited HMS Prince of Wales this month as she visited her affiliated city of Liverpool for the first time.

The giant carrier was due to arrive in the city as *Navy News* went to press, kicking off a week-long visit packed with celebrations and engagement with the local community.

Her ship's company will welcome almost 20,000 members of the public on board during her stay – the first time one of the new aircraft carriers has officially been open to visitors.

In return, Liverpool is set to herald the ship's arrival with fireworks displays and celebrations throughout the week.

Captain Darren Houston, the Commanding Officer of HMS Prince of Wales, said: "My ship's company and I are hugely excited about our first visit to Liverpool. This is an opportunity for us to cement our bond with the city as one of the newest warships in the Royal Navy's fleet.

"We're looking forward to hosting people from the local community on board during our time alongside, and I know we will receive the warmest of welcomes."

The visit is an opportunity to demonstrate to the Navy's friends in the north of England just how potent the largest ships ever built for the UK will be.

As the Royal Navy transforms into a force centred around carrier strike, HMS Prince of Wales' visit to Liverpool is a visual sign of things to come.

Commodore Phil Waterhouse, the Naval Regional Commander for the Royal Navy in the north of England, said: "I'm delighted HMS Prince of Wales is visiting her affiliated city so soon after her commissioning.

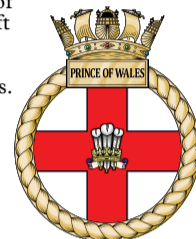
"It gives both the city council and the ship's company the opportunity to further build upon their strong bond – a bond that was established during build and that will be in place for the next 50 years or so."

For those Liverpoolians on board the 65,000-tonne carrier, the moment they sail into the city with their families watching on will be an exciting one.

Commander Gareth Mawdsley, from Liverpool, is the Commander of Logistics on board. He said: "Having grown up in Liverpool it is always special to be able to sail back along the Mersey, and I have been lucky enough to do so in several ships before.

"But being able to bring the largest ship in the Royal Navy fleet into my home port is fantastic. The city is always welcoming to visitors, and mariners in particular, so I am delighted we have the opportunity to return the hospitality by welcoming people on board.

"This aircraft carrier, like her sister ship HMS Queen Elizabeth, is vital to the work we do in the Royal Navy to help keep Britain safe."



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FRIENDS UNITE TO MONITOR RUSSIANS

HMS Sutherland keeps a close watch on a Russian task group as it passed the UK in a concerted five-day Royal Navy operation.

Three navy ships and two helicopters were involved in shadowing four Russian vessels as they made their way up the Channel and into the North Sea.

Plymouth-based frigate HMS Sutherland located the force – RFS Marshall Ustinov, a Slava-class cruiser, RFS Admiral Kulakov a Udaloy-class destroyer and their support vessels Silva, an ocean-going tug and tanker Vyazma – as the group sailed up from the Bay of Biscay having completed a deployment to the eastern Mediterranean.

As well as Sutherland and her Merlin helicopter from 814 Naval Air Squadron at Culdrose in Cornwall, patrol vessel HMS Mersey, tanker RFA Tideforce, and a Wildcat helicopter from 815 Naval Air Squadron at Yeovilton ensured the Russian force was continuously observed as it sailed through UK waters.

Royal Navy sailors and aircrew monitored every movement of the task group using state-of-the-art radar, surveillance cameras and sensors, allowing them to track their course and speed as

they passed the British Isles.

"As the UK's high-readiness frigate we conduct security patrols in and around our territorial waters and national infrastructure," said Commander Tom Weaver, Commanding Officer of HMS Sutherland which was tasked as the navy's on-call vessel to respond to incidents in home waters.

"Working with our French and Norwegian allies, these units were monitored on their transit north from the Mediterranean and our interaction with them was wholly professional."

Lieutenant Commander George Blakeman, Sutherland's weapon engineer officer, added: "HMS Sutherland has a fantastic reputation for versatility – last year we justifiably won the coveted Above Water Warfare trophy, so we're well trained and more than capable of carrying out this duty."

"Our ship's company remain determined to uphold the integrity of our sea lanes and will maintain a vigilant watch. It's vitally important the Royal Navy continues to demonstrate its presence and commitment to the integrity of our territorial waters and this tasking is a clear example of that."



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Tyne's on side as ship goes 'home'

TUGS guide HMS Northumberland up the river of her birth for a visit to her namesake county.

The veteran Type 23 frigate spent four days on Tyneside, allowing her 180 sailors to renew ties with the county.

She was built at the now-defunct Swan Hunter yard in Wallsend in the early 1990s and berthed four miles downstream at Northumbrian Quay – part of the international ferry terminal in North Shields.

The frigate hosted visits from local Sea Cadet units and the RNLI from Tynemouth who also escorted Northumberland into the Tyne.

The general public also got a unique opportunity to tour the ship and talk with the sailors about their lives on board and share some of their nautical experiences.

The captain of HMS Northumberland, Commander Thom Hobbs said his ship's company were well received in the city, and was pleased

that his sailors were given the chance to interact with those that came along to the open day and everyone really enjoyed their time.

"Having recently assumed command of HMS Northumberland it was a great honour bringing her and my ship's company to the North East. Whilst a Plymouth-based warship, some of my sailors come from the region, which made this visit even more special."

Picture: PO (Phot) Jim Gibson

Middleton's back – and far better

RN takes over Gulf mission

THE most important security mission in Middle Eastern waters is in Royal Navy hands until the summer.

A team under Commodore James Parkin took charge of the International Maritime Security Construct – a coalition of nations committed to safeguarding merchant shipping from hostile attacks and interference, allowing the safe, free flow of trade.

The Bahrain-based organisation – perhaps better known under its operational name, Sentinel – provides warships to shepherd civilian vessels into and out of the Gulf via the Strait of Hormuz, where four tankers were attacked last summer and the illegal seizure of the British-flagged oiler Stena Impero.

The increased threat prompted a strong response from the Royal Navy – HMS Montrose has been heavily engaged since July in protecting merchant vessels and remains on patrol there as part of the UK's forward presence in the region; she's been supported by HMS Duncan, Defender and Kent.

On an average day, two British-flagged container ships or tankers are passing through the Strait of Hormuz and each day their journey is delayed costs their owners an estimated £230,000.

Beyond that, there are around 2,200 merchant vessels in the region daily, hence an international response to the threat.

Seven nations stepped up to the plate: UK, USA, Australia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia the UAE and Albania – with the IMSC officially beginning operations in early November under US Rear Admiral Alvin Holsey.

He handed over to Cdre Parkin, who is normally based at Stonehouse Barracks in Plymouth where he commands the UK's Littoral Strike Group – the newly-renamed amphibious forces.

Cdre Parkin, whose domain also includes two other key 'choke points', said: "The UK is committed to ensuring the safety of shipping in the Gulf region, which contains some of the most important choke points in the world."

"We recognise the importance of freedom of navigation and will ensure it is upheld."

HMS Middleton has returned to the water with the help of a hydraulic barge after spending six months ashore as part of her £7.5 million maintenance package.

She went into BAE Systems' Ship Production Hall at HM Naval Base Portsmouth in July, with her Portsmouth-based crew helping integrate the upgrades and enhancements.

HMS Middleton is now preparing to return to the Fleet for her 37th year of service with improvements to her generators, hull and living quarters which include every bed space being fitted with electrical sockets and USB ports – a highly popular addition for improving life at sea for the crew, a key tenet of the Royal Navy's people and training transformation strand.

Leading Engineering Technician (Marine Engineering) Gary McKnight, 30, from Portsmouth, said: "Having the opportunity to work alongside our industry partners has been fascinating – particularly getting to see the ship out of the water."

Whilst some members of Crew 8, the minehunter crew currently assigned to HMS Middleton, stayed with the ship



others were assigned to active crews.

During their time apart, all have kept their essential seafaring and mine warfare skills honed with a tour of the Gulf ahead of them.

The UK maintains a constant presence of four minehunters in the Gulf with crews rotating onto the vessels there.

Commanding Officer of HMS Middleton, Lt Cdr Christopher Hollingworth, said: "We are another

step closer to taking HMS Middleton back to sea and rejoining the operational fleet for her fifth decade in Royal Navy service.

"Returning a warship to sea after a docking period is a testing time for all the crew, but with the enhancements she has been provided we will be well-prepared for whatever we encounter in

training or on operations."

Gary Firbank, BAE Systems' Project Manager for HMS Middleton said: "The load-out of HMS Middleton from the ship hall here at HM Naval Base Portsmouth marks a significant milestone within her docking programme.

"Our team has completed over 65,000 production hours, including a full structural re-baselining of the ship, with over 3km of laminating cloth being laid, extensive system enhancements, plus maintenance and defect rectification.

"We now look forward to embarking on the commissioning phase and readying the ship to return to sea on schedule."

HMS Middleton is the seventh of 13 Hunt class Mine Counter Measure Vessels (MCMVs), six of which remain in service.

These ships are the largest in the world to be built of glass-reinforced plastic and have seen service in the Falklands and the Gulf.

They counter anti-ship mines by hunting them using a high definition sonar; any mines detected by sonar are disposed of by their highly-trained divers or the unmanned mine disposal system, Seafox.

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Meet Poseidon P8, our subs' new mate

TWO Typhoon escorts peel away from the first British maritime patrol aircraft to appear in the UK's skies for more than a decade.

And it wasn't just the RAF rolling out the red carpet for the arrival of the first of nine P8 Poseidons.

The Silent Service is equally delighted by the advent of the Pride of Moray for the aircraft heralds the return of submarines' 'long-range ears'.

The first duty of the aircraft and her eight sisters – to be delivered to the air force by the end of next year – is to safeguard the nation's nuclear deterrent, as well as scouring the waters in Britain's 'backyard' for threats on and below the waves and supporting long-distance search and rescue missions.

The aircraft – military versions of Boeing's 737-800 airliner – will be operated by the RAF's 120 and, later, 201 Squadrons at Lossiemouth, but with RN personnel as part of the crew on each sortie. The aircraft – military versions of Boeing's 737-800 airliner – will be operated by the RAF's 120 and, later, 201 Squadrons at Lossiemouth, but with RN personnel as part of the crew on each sortie. The aircraft – military versions of Boeing's 737-800 airliner – will be operated by the RAF's 120 and, later, 201 Squadrons at Lossiemouth, but with RN personnel as part of the crew on each sortie.

the RAF late last year, since when they've been learning how to pilot, maintain and operate the P8 from the US Navy's air base at Jacksonville in Florida.

And it was from there that the jet took off at midnight, local time, for the 4,060-mile journey to Britain – landing at Kinloss a little over seven hours later.

The former air station will act as the jet's temporary home; the permanent base of the Poseidons, 20 miles away at Lossiemouth, is in the middle of a £500m transformation, including £75m spent currently resurfacing Lossiemouth's runways and taxiways.

That's part of a wider £3bn investment in the maritime patrol aircraft programme. Pride of Moray was welcomed to Kinloss by political and military leaders, including the RN's Commander of Operations (and a submariner) Rear Admiral Simon Asquith.

Poseidon's advent fills the gap left by the demise of the Nimrod MR2 which bowed out in 2010 and the plug was pulled on its over-budget and long-delayed replacement, the MR4A.

The P8 is tried and trusted technology, in service with the US and Indian Navies and Royal Australian Air Force, with several more nations (including New Zealand and

Norway) lined up to receive the patrol aircraft.

The aircraft will also work with Fleet Air Arm Merlin Mk2s from 814, 820 and 824 Squadrons as part of the defensive 'ring' forged around the submarine carrying out the deterrent patrol.

Each Poseidon is equipped with 129 Sonobuoy listening devices – dropped in the ocean in the path of a suspected submarine to help locate and track it – plus high-resolution area mapping to locate contacts of interest on and below the waves.

And in time of war, Poseidon carries torpedoes and Harpoon anti-ship missiles to prosecute any targets.

First Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin said the P8 was a "superb aircraft" and its introduction would allow Britain to work seamlessly with our NATO allies at the cutting edge of anti-submarine warfare.

"The arrival of the first Poseidon marks a significant upgrade in the UK's ability to conduct anti-submarine operations," he added.

"It will maintain operation freedom for our submarines and apply pressure to those of our potential foes."

Picture: Sgt Ashley Keates RAF



It's all go aboard HMS Glasgow Rig trainer opens

THIS is HMS Glasgow – the first of the Royal Navy's next-generation frigate flotilla – more than half-way through construction.

Or rather this is part of the forward section of the ship – the fore and aft sections of the 8,000-tonne warship are being built separately; the aft is currently hidden behind lots of tarpaulin, and not especially photogenic presently.

In fact, the ship is being built in numerous sections – or 'units', each one constructed in BAE's fabrication facility at their Govan yard.

From there, once complete, the units are wheeled to the ship block and outfit hall where they are joined together and pipes and cabling linked up.

Just over half of HMS Glasgow is now complete or under construction, out of eight planned vessels in the class (all are named, three have been ordered, two are in build at

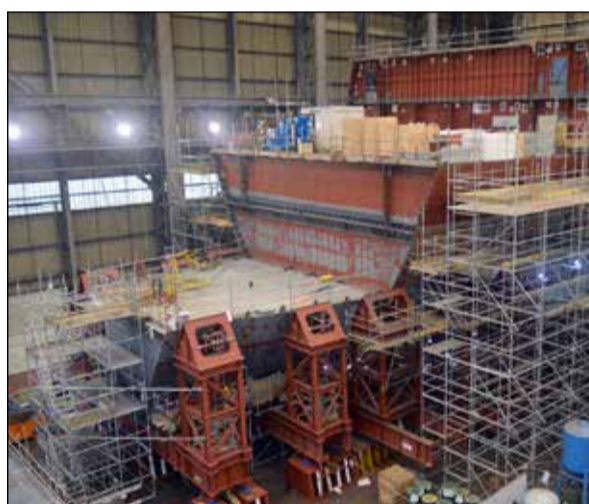
Govan – HMS Cardiff is No.2).

Once the fore and aft sections are complete they will be joined on the hard in front of the block hall, before the bridge/main mast are craned into place.

The completed ship will then be 'launched' by being lowered into the Clyde via a barge, then towed downstream to BAE's yard at Scotstoun to complete fitting out.

The 26s replace the 'souped-up' anti-submarine Type 23s which will begin retiring from service later this decade after more than 30 years on patrol; still to come are five Type 31 general duty frigates to replace their five Type 26 counterparts like for like.

Over 1,500 people are involved in the Type 26 programme under the banner of the Royal Navy's Acquisition/government's National Shipbuilding Strategy, peaking at around 3,400 jobs created or supported.



ARMOURERS assigned to the UK's two new carriers can practise moving ammunition from the magazines to the flight deck safely and efficiently thanks to a new £8m trainer installed at HMS Collingwood.

The Highly Mechanised Weapon Handling System (or HMWHS) drastically reduces the number of sailors required to fetch the right ammunition/bomb/weapon to embarked aircraft – chiefly the F-35 Lightning strike fighter – relying heavily on automation.

A series of remotely-controlled 'moles' move around a network of tracks, carrying pallets of weapon loads to the weapon preparation areas and hangar from where they are stored in deep magazines via a system of hydraulic lifts which run through the middle of the ship.

The training rig represents the full software and much of the mechanical mole, pallet handling, track, drive and controls systems found on HMS Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales.

The rig and software which drives it cost £2m, with additional £6m spent by the the Royal Navy's Future Training Unit designing and delivering 22 new Queen Elizabeth-class training courses.

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The box of tricks to find narcotics

UNDER the relentless heat of an autumn day in the Arabian Sea – where temperatures are still in their high 30s Celsius – sailors from HMS Montrose toiled in unpleasant conditions.

The dirty dhow rolled and pitched. The foul smell aboard merged with the stench of sweat. The crew were nervous. Every indicator suggested the craft was being used for illicit purposes.

But ten hours of searching had drawn a blank.

It was then that Montrose's boarding team brought out their new box of tricks.

The result? Drugs worth an estimated £1m discovered by the RN's Forward Presence frigate.

That bust by the forward deployed frigate in October last year was the first triumph scored by a new search kit being supplied to front-line units by the Royal Navy's Board and Search experts based at HMS Raleigh.

It was prompted by increasing efforts by smugglers to beat the 'bobbies on the beat' and prevent their illegal cargoes being confiscated such as false bulkheads, secret compartments and even one occasion when £65m of cocaine was hidden beneath three tonnes of ice in a freezer.

"Some smugglers make no attempt to hide their cargo – nails, or screws sticking out are a dead giveaway," explained Captain Anthony Swan, the Royal Marine in charge of 47 Commando's Board and Search School.

"But there are times when a search can run for hours. You know there's something suspicious on the way the crew are acting, but you can't find what you're looking for."

The result is the intensive search kit – a long black box which is half a DIY enthusiast's delight (knives, hammers, screwdrivers and the like), half spy school (angled mirrors, miniature video cameras/endoscopes etc). It's all off-the-shelf equipment and rugged enough to endure the bashing it's going to get during a mid-ocean boarding.

The kits have been acquired with the help of the Army's search teams; they've shared their experience of searching homes and compounds in Afghanistan for improvised explosive devices, hidden arms caches, drugs hauls and the like.

"We'd become very, very good at the boarding side of board and search – the Royal Marines are world leaders – but the search side hadn't progressed much: check the

paper work, talk to the crew. If something looks untoward, get permission from the master for a thorough search," Capt Swan added.

"Our search kit wasn't as good as our boarding kit – and we were determined to put that right. What we've acquired is pretty basic, but it's durable, it works and it gets results."

Seven kits – two at the training school in HMS Raleigh – have been acquired for use by sailors and Juliet Company, 40 Commando, the Royal Marines' dedicated board-and-search specialists.

The 'snake camera' – basically a flexible cable with a camera and light on the end – connected to a handheld display/controller can be fed through drillholes to see what lies beyond them; the images it picks up can be recorded for evidence.

Also included is a stud detector – just as you'd use at home to find nails, cables or metal behind a wall or plaster if you were carrying out home improvements; here it's used to locate tell-tall signs of secret compartments.

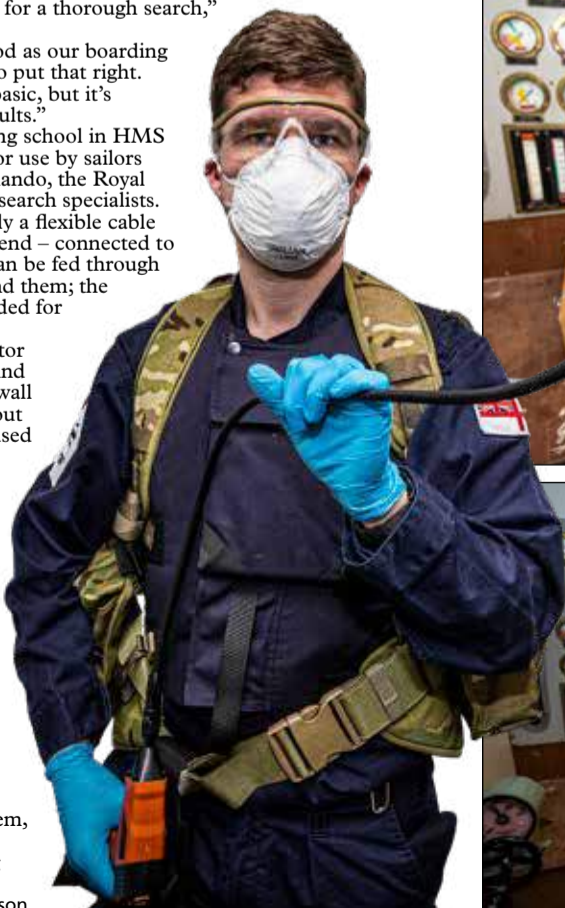
"And if we don't find anything, then we have to put the boat back in the condition we found it, so the new kit causes far less damage to be put right," Capt Swan adds.

Also filtering through to the front line is the biometrical enrolment device which can scan a suspect's iris and take their fingerprints and check them against a database.

"It will 'red flag' suspicious people in a matter of seconds," Capt Swan explains.

"The Americans use it all them, we're starting to introduce the devices and we'll begin training personnel shortly."

Pictures: LPhot Mark Johnson



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ARCTIC

THE NEXT CHAPTER



ROYAL Marines are confronting the threats posed by ever-evolving adversaries in the fjords and the wilderness of the Arctic Circle.

It should not be overlooked that the knowledge and experience of fighting in the one of the most unforgiving environments on earth is already well established within the corps.

This training in the ice has taken place since the Cold War, but, as commandos have always done, they're preparing for what comes next on their latest Arctic missions.

The push is on in the corridors of power at Navy

Command Headquarters (NCHQ) to adapt and develop the way commandos firstly get into battle and secondly how they work when they're in the midst of the fight.

It's also about what kind of operations the marines are able to undertake and the kit they will have to support them.

The Future Commando Force (FCF) team at NCHQ are working on these areas round the clock, while the boots on the ground are putting a lot of the new theory into practice.

The latest opportunity to test these evolving FCF tactics has come nearly 200 miles inside the Arctic Circle...



BY FJORD

On the fjord at Hellarbogen, 640 miles north of the Norway's capital Oslo, 47 Commando Raiding Group have been carrying out training missions with their small, fast raiding craft.

The unit are on their first deployment in Norway as 47 Commando, having dropped the 1 Assault Group name and moved under the command of 3 Commando Brigade in November last year.

This was a move to align the unit with the naming traditions of the rest of the brigade but also with Future Commando Force in mind. The 'raiding' element of the name holds considerable significance as commandos surge forward into the next era.

Their ability to raid in small, lethal teams using fast boats is very much key to the Future Commando Force concept and, therefore, 47 Commando are pretty central to it all.

As Navy News went to print, the unit were preparing for experimentation with autonomous boats and other unmanned vehicles on Exercise Cold Response.

Prior to that, though, these amphibious specialists trained with Norwegian troops and the Royal Norwegian Navy.

One of their major training serials saw them work alongside a Norwegian stealth missile ship.

It saw commandos of the Plymouth-based unit dropped ashore from the Skjold Class Corvette, which has a low radar signature, ship-busting missiles and is able to speed through the water at up to around 70mph.

Once on land, a reconnaissance team from 47 Commando was tasked to secure a key landing point, allowing for resupply to flow through a 'contested' area.

"The range, stealth and firepower of the corvette aligns perfectly with the Future Commando Force Operating Model that the Royal Marines are moving towards," said Captain Jack Denniss, Operations Officer of 539 Raiding Squadron.

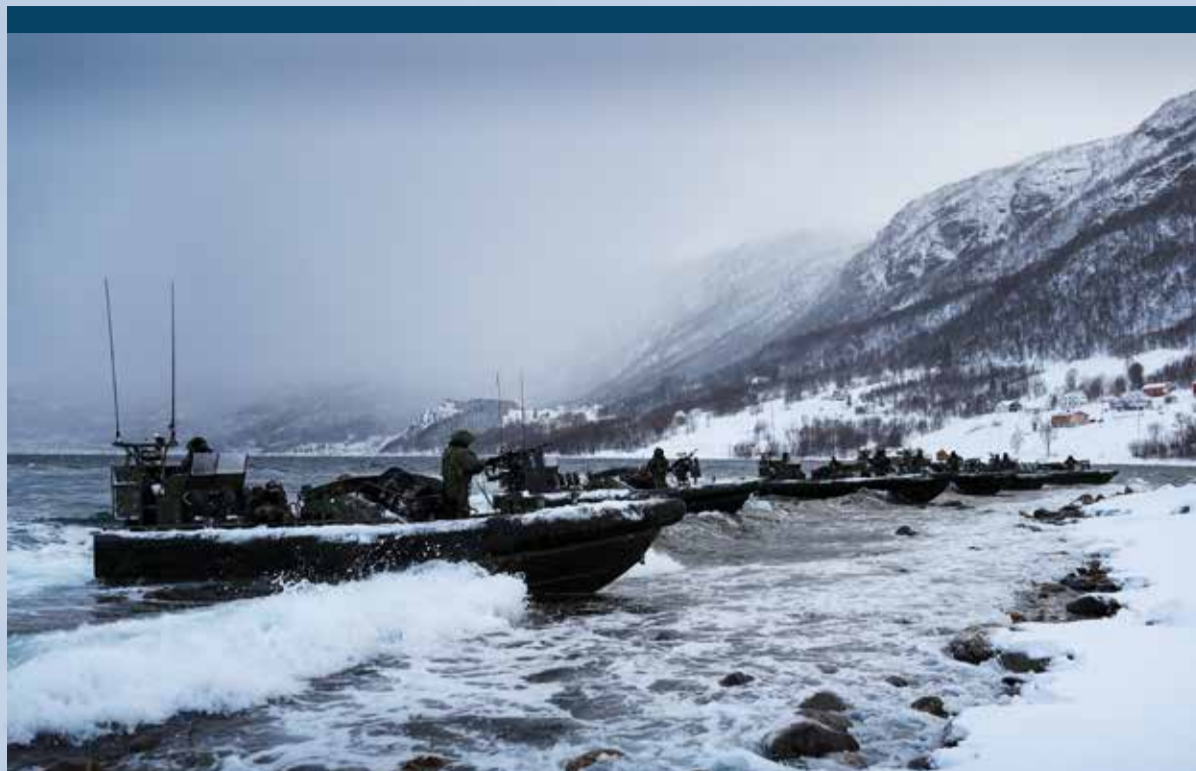
"Equipped with capabilities that allow it to dominate Norway's coastline, the corvette's stealth and speed also make it highly suited for inserting small teams of commandos into contested areas unseen."

The commandos moved discretely into position, securing the area and moving Offshore Raiding Craft and Vikings from Armoured Support Group into position to provide protection as the corvette moved in.

"The Norwegian Corvette Class is a very impressive platform, able to integrate seamlessly with 47 Commando's Inshore Raiding Craft teams," said Major Mat Bayliss, Officer Commanding of 47 Commando's 539 Raiding Squadron.

"On future iterations of the corps' Arctic Deployment, we plan to work with the Corvette Squadron even more closely, further refining our ability to work together."

Once alongside and secure, the Commando Logistic Regiment (CLR) brought forward vital supplies to replenish the corvette and prepare it for further tasking.



"This exercise has been a good example of the flexibility offered by 3 Commando Brigade," added Capt Denniss.

"One of the unique strengths of CLR is their ability to sustain both Brigade assets and allied forces in extreme conditions, without the presence of any major infrastructure."

There were also raiding missions with the troops of Brigade Nord, the Troms-based force of the Norwegian Army.

In blizzard conditions, the fast raiding boats of 47 tore through the icy waters with the Norwegian raiders aboard.

The joint forces sped towards the beach backed by landing craft before they brought their fire and fury onto the land.

"Bilateral activity with Norwegian forces is the focus of our training here in the high north," explained Capt Denniss.

"It's not just about developing our own skills in these extreme environments, it's about ensuring that we can operate seamlessly with our NATO allies in the most testing conditions."

The hardy commandos were exposed to 25mph gusts, white-out conditions and temperatures as low as -20C on their fjord mission.

It is all vital training to ensure that the Norwegian military and the Royal Marines can operate effectively together and understand the tactics utilised by both sides.

Of course, sharing information and tactics with allies is nothing new but remains key as the corps evolves for future missions as part of FCF.

The marines are returning to working in small, highly versatile and lethal teams which disrupt enemy forces from the sea.

Capt Denniss added: "The Royal Marines are re-rolling into smaller, separate teams as we move toward the Future Commando Force concept."

"These teams will be highly flexible, able to integrate with allied forces to amplify their effectiveness."

"As we move toward this, continued training with our partner nations is developing cohesion in strategically important regions."

**THE RANGE, STEALTH
AND FIREPOWER OF
THE CORVETTE ALIGNS
PERFECTLY WITH THE
FUTURE COMMANDO
FORCE OPERATING MODEL**

“ ”

CAPTAIN JACK DENNISS



SMALL TEAMS. BIG IMPACT.

FUTHER north and away from the fjords, 45 Commando have been working on fighting tactics on demanding training missions of their own in the training areas around Bardufoss.

This is all part of the preparations for Exercise Cold Response, the Norwegian-led war games along the Arctic shoreline that were kicking off in earnest as *Navy News* went to print.

More than 15,000 troops, as well as a task group of ships, are involved in Cold Response, which will see NATO allies and partner nations flex their muscles in the Norwegian Sea.

It's all part of an underlining of the UK's commitment to security in the region, with the Green Berets right at the forefront as experts in fighting in the most extreme of environments on the planet.

During Cold Response, commandos will use their Arctic combat skills to carry out amphibious raids.

They will be working in small deadly teams designed to covertly disrupt enemy infrastructure and hamper their ability to fight.

This is all part of preparations for a new era of amphibious combat, in which Royal Marines will focus on their ability to attack coastlines incisively with devastating consequences to any potential foe.

"As we've seen in recent conflicts, confronting an adversary with access to modern technology means that commando forces have to deal with new challenges," Major Jonathon Boucher said.

"They could have the ability to deny our communications and navigation systems. As a result, our commando forces need to be able to operate autonomously, insert at range and deal the enemy a bloody nose before quickly blending back into the environment.

"Ironically, utilising technology to dominate the battlespace

**AS WE'VE SEEN IN RECENT CONFLICTS,
CONFRONTING AN ADVERSARY WITH
ACCESS TO MODERN TECHNOLOGY
MEANS THAT COMMANDO FORCES HAVE
TO DEAL WITH NEW CHALLENGES.**

““””

means that commando forces need to firstly master the 'analogue' skills of soldiering before tackling the digital – in the modern battlefield, a map and compass is still an essential skill when GPS systems can quickly be denied or disrupted.

"The transition to a Future Commando Force ensures that we remain at the cutting edge of warfare while firmly re-establishing our commando roots.

"As our time in Norway has shown, our ability to operate in any environment, in inhospitable terrain, makes us a complicated problem for our most professional of adversaries."

45 Commando, the elite mountain and cold weather warfare specialists based in Arbroath, Scotland, are held at high readiness to deploy anywhere in the world as the Lead Commando Group.

The unit are a potent force in the UK's arsenal and are trained in operating in extreme climates around the world, from the searing temperatures of the deserts to the extreme humidity of the jungles of Belize.

This latest deployment is a statement of the UK's commitment to the high north region in the face of increasing economic and strategic competition.

Winter deployments to Norway have been commonplace since the Cold War, but 2020's exercises sees land, sea and air capabilities work together to deliver a powerful and coherent force.

The changes to the way commandos operate is reminiscent of Churchill's deadly strike and raiding groups of the Second World War, which were raised in response to the Nazi occupation of Norway.

These raiding groups have now been re-imagined to combat new threats on the modern battlefield.

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Bay Team aids seizure of cocaine haul

FORTY million pounds of cocaine will never reach the streets after a combined Anglo-French-American bust in the Caribbean which snared a drug-running team.

Support ship RFA Mounts Bay and a US Coastguard team pounced on two speedboats as they raced through open seas south of the US Virgin Islands.

They seized 1.4 tonnes of illegal narcotics – which turned out to be cocaine, with an estimated street value of more than £35m.

The traffickers managed to ditch 150kg of drugs in the Caribbean before they were intercepted – ensuring another £3.75m of cocaine won't reach the streets.

Mounts Bay has been on counter-drugs patrol since the beginning of the year, taking part in a combined UK-US-French operation, Carib Royale.

Aboard the Falmouth-based ship is a specialist board-and-search team of US Coastguard personnel – the Law Enforcement Detachment – and their MH65 helicopter.

That helicopter was on a patrol when it came across a 'go-fast' craft – typical of those used by smugglers in the region.

Mounts Bay changed course to intercept and once within close range, sent the Coastguard detachment across to stop the craft and seize its cargo.

The boarding team found 44 large bales of cocaine – and learned from the five-strong crew that they had succeeded in jettisoning 150kg, about one tenth of their cargo, before they were halted in the tracks.

Also intercepted was a second go-fast carrying oil drums and pumps to transfer fuel to the first boat, as well as two crew.

All seven prisoners and the drugs haul were transferred to Mounts Bay – where the latter were weighed, tested and recorded as evidence.

"The 'Bay team' has dealt another big blow against drug traffickers – £40m of drugs will never plague the streets and ruin lives thanks to our efforts. Everyone aboard Mounts Bay has a right to feel proud of the part they played in the bust," said Captain Kevin Rimell RFA, Mounts Bay's Commanding Officer.

"This successful interdiction comes at the end of Mounts Bay's three-year deployment and epitomises the capability of the ship and the assets we have embarked, along with the unique co-operation that exists between the UK and US and our military organisations."

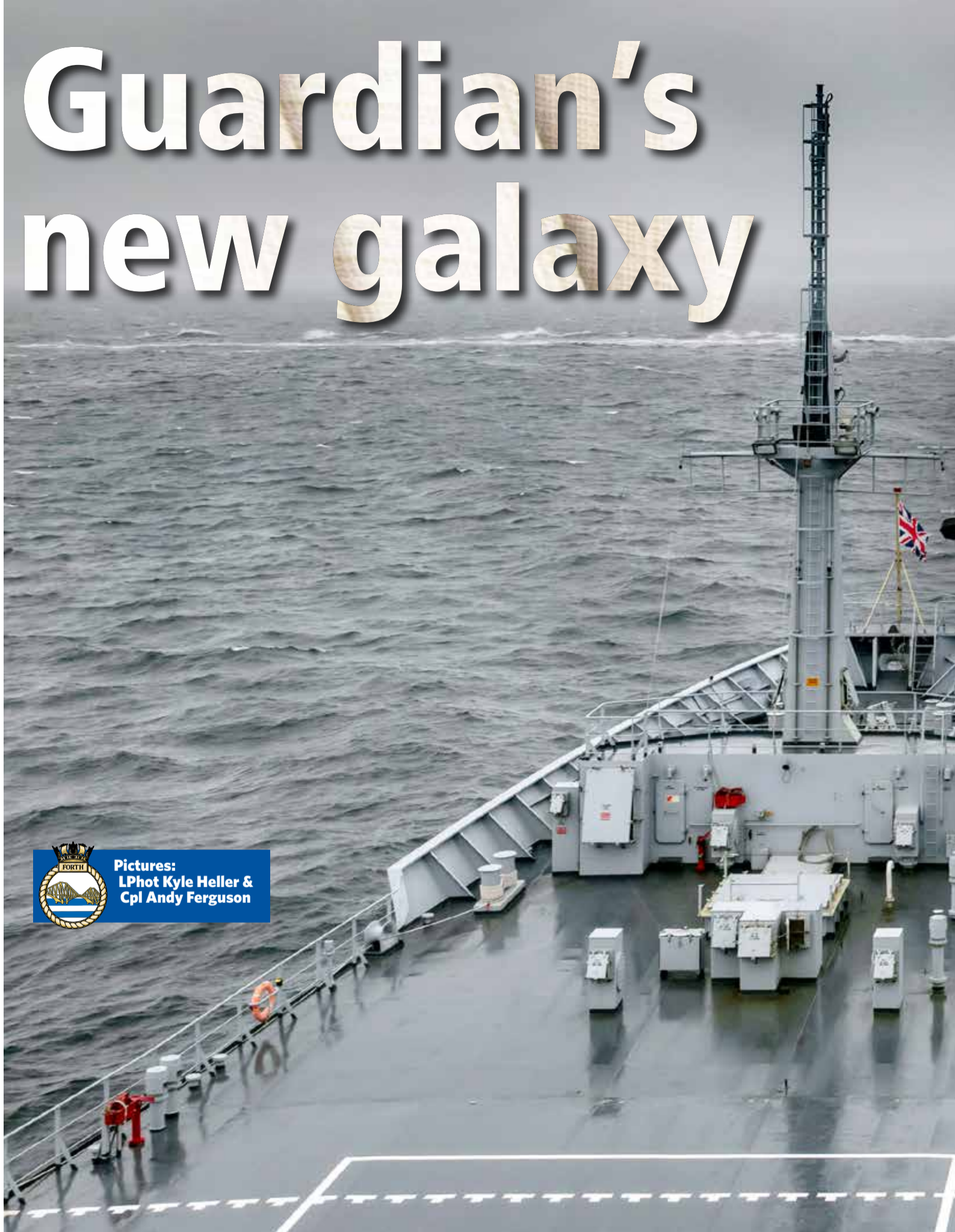
The detainees were later handed over to the US Coastguard cutter Joseph Doyle for authorities in the USA to consider prosecution.

Mounts Bay is coming to the end of her patrol of the Caribbean, spending the winters and springs supporting the international fight against drug trafficking, and the summers/autumns providing assistance in the wake of the frequent hurricanes barreling through the region.

She's being replaced by new patrol ship HMS Medway, see opposite page.



Pictures:
LPhoto Kyle Heller &
Cpl Andy Ferguson



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THE Royal Navy's new patrol ship HMS Forth passes by HMS Scott in Berkeley Sound, East Falklands.

The two ships met up as Forth – the first of five second-generation River-class ships which will be stationed around the globe as part of the navy's new forward presence vision – arrived in the remote South Atlantic archipelago.

And soldiers protecting the Falklands were the first to be given a new taste of what the offshore patrol vessel can offer.

More than 40 Grenadier Guards joined HMS Forth for their first exercise – demonstrating the improvements she brings to the islands' defences over her predecessor.

HMS Clyde retired at the end of last year after a dozen years of patrolling Britain's South Atlantic territories.

Forth represents not just technological improvements made since Clyde was built, but also changes in the way the Navy operates.

All five new patrol ships have a dedicated mess for up to 51 troops – bunks, galley, toilets and showers, plus space for their kit – something HMS Clyde never had, and can accommodate another 50 soldiers or Royal Marines on camp beds.

The Grenadier



Guards made full use of those facilities when they filed aboard for Cape Bayonet – one of the regular exercises testing the ability of Falklands-based forces to work together to protect the islands or carry out co-ordinated relief and rescue missions.

As part of the air, land and sea forces assigned to defend the UK's South Atlantic territories, the Army rotates an infantry company through the Falklands every few months.

For many of the young Guardsman on board, this was their first time on a working warship and represented a steep learning curve early in their military careers.

"These are some of our most junior Guardsman, for many this is the first time they have ever been so far from home or on a naval ship," explained Lieutenant Mark Osmond.

"The exercise provided invaluable experience and training for the soldiers."

After spending the night aboard, they were ferried ashore the next day by Forth's boats to continue the exercise ashore, while the ship resumed her patrol of the nearly 800 islands in the territory and reassuring inhabitants of Britain's ongoing commitment to their protection and liberty.

New is one of the most westerly islands, home to an abandoned whaling station from the beginning of the 20th Century, a nature reserve for albatrosses and Gentoo and Rockhopper penguins and a small community of Falklanders.

"It really was an eye-opener into how remote certain areas of the Falkland Islands can be and gives us a perspective of how big an impact we could have to areas that may be cut off for prolonged periods of time," said logistics expert Able Seaman Siobhan Deakin, part of the landing party which visited New Island.

When the ship returned to her base at



East Cove – about 25 miles southwest of the Falklands' capital Stanley – she immersed herself in the islands' recent history, hosting six Royal Marines who fought against overwhelming odds in 1982.

Naval Party 8901 was a small detachment of commandos assigned to defend the Falklands. After a short but determined fight, they were forced to surrender when Argentine forces invaded in April 1982.

The veterans shared their experiences with the ship's company and outlined what Forth's men and women could expect while carrying out their patrols.

"It was fascinating to hear the stories that we have all been reading about from the people who actually lived it and took part in the conflict," said trainee officer Sub Lieutenant Jacob Mikurenda.

"It was extra special for me being able to get the book signed for my brother by the veterans who had taken part, which will be a motivator for him whilst going through commando training."

Forth also hosted their senior officer, Commander Simon Pressdee, in charge of the Fishery Protection Squadron, who saw how the ship – named this year's best patrol vessel in the Royal Navy – was settling in.

"It was fantastic to show him just how far we have come as a ship's company – just 12 months ago we were in dry dock in Portsmouth," said Lieutenant Commander Samuel Fields, Forth's second-in-command.

"Operating around the Falklands is a unique experience, full of history and natural wonders that are we are all respectfully enjoying."

The ship is undergoing a short period of maintenance at Mare Harbour before she resumes patrols – including a maiden visit to mountainous South Georgia, another of the UK's South Atlantic territories.



Medway makes waves en route to Caribbean

NEW patrol ship HMS Medway is pictured in Bermuda en route to the Caribbean to begin her long-term mission.

The second of the UK's five new River-class patrol vessels left Portsmouth to take up station in the region as part of the Navy's new 'forward presence' initiative – basing ships long-term around the globe and rotating crews every few weeks, rather than bringing the vessels back to the UK every six or so months.

In Medway's case, the mission is Atlantic Patrol Ship (North), a task performed admirably and expertly by RFA Mounts Bay – see opposite page – for the past three years: humanitarian aid in the event of hurricanes, supporting the international fight against drug trafficking and reassuring citizens of British territories peppered around the North Atlantic/Caribbean that the mother country is there for them.



The first of those British citizens to receive that reassurance were the inhabitants of Bermuda (pop. 71,176) after a 3,350-mile journey across the Atlantic.

Medway took on final supplies and fuel for that passage in Gibraltar, then gave her sailors the chance to explore Britain's Mediterranean territory with sights such as the top of the Rock and visits to the Donkey's Flipflop.

When she arrived in Bermuda, the ship was given a plum berth in Hamilton, allowing her to host a succession of events almost from the moment she came alongside, first with a lunch reception hosted by Commanding Officer Commander Ben Power, then a capability demonstration for island leaders, led by the Governor, John Rankin, giving Bermudians their first taste of what the new River-class ships can do.

With the island, like many British Overseas Territories in the North Atlantic and Caribbean, prone to being hit by tropical storms, it was important Bermuda's police force and fire brigade were present; a key part of Medway's mission will be to provide relief and assistance should natural disaster strike – and how effective her sailors are in that work will depend on close cooperation with local authorities.

Luckily hurricane season doesn't really get going for another six months, so there was time to show off the ship to the island's Sea Cadets among other visitors who enjoyed private visits.

"This was a thoroughly enjoyable first port visit on our Atlantic Patrol North deployment – interest in Medway was strong and we were treated with the utmost respect by the extremely friendly Bermudians," said logistics officer Lieutenant Ian Rooney.

The ship used the 1,000-mile passage from Portsmouth to put her flight deck to use, conducting training with a Wildcat from 815 NAS at RNAS Yeovilton, flashed up her main 30mm cannon with a spot of gunnery funnery, and hosted her first bingo night – comprehensively won by the weapon engineering department.

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

THE JOURNEY DOES NOT HAVE TO END!



New grey funnel Lynher

THE first sailors are learning to drive the navy's £1m twin-jet boats of tomorrow courtesy of two new high-tech craft at HMS Raleigh.

Two 11-metre craft have been handed over to the Royal Navy's School of Seamanship for instructors to teach sailors how to drive other boats also powered by twin jets.

It is part of a multi-million pound acquisition drive to replace more than 30 new small craft of various sizes which perform vital duties as varied as passenger boats, diving support vessels, officer training at Dartmouth and surveying inshore waters on behalf of larger Royal Navy survey ships.

Already delivered is the largest ship ordered under the banner of Project Vahana, inshore survey boat HMS Magpie, which has been used

extensively since entering service last year.

Next to be received from Dorset-based firm Atlas are Small Workboats 01 and 03, provided to the team at Jupiter Point near Torpoint, where small boat driving and handling skills are taught.

After six months of evaluating the boats, instructors are now passing on their knowledge to sailors on the front line and officers at Dartmouth.

And what will they get? Well, a near-fully-automated craft, with digital/touch screen displays/systems/sensors, a remote control crane and searchlight, heads/shower, an 'armoury' for a couple of SA80 rifles, bunk space for two, microwave, fridge, boiler, an automated fire-fighting system which is kind to the environment, crew and engine, not so kind to

the fire itself. There are a couple of computerised navigational terminals – the boats can, if necessary, venture up to 60 miles from their base/mother ship thanks to two 850-litre fuel tanks – operating with a crew of three leaves space for ten passengers using the flip down seats, two in the wheelhouse and ten in the well-deck area, where you can also rig an awning to cover the passengers in just five minutes.

The pièce de résistance is the 'mouse' ('Mouseboat Manoeuvring Controller'), located next to the wheel, allowing you to manoeuvre the boat in any direction, very much like moving the pointer around your computer screen; the more force you apply, the more power is applied... although it's not as powerful as

driving the boat using the dual control levers and wheel.

"The safest way to manoeuvre the boat in confined spaces is by using the mouseboat controller," explains Petty Officer Grant Mabin. To prove it, he departs from the pontoon at Jupiter Point, gently 'crabbing' SWB01 sideways, spinning it around before sailing through the narrow exit and out into the open waters of the Lynher, where he can put his proverbial foot down on a half-mile-long speed run.

There's a slight delay between applying power... and that power kicking in (rather like accelerating in a diesel-engined car), but in a matter

of seconds we're tearing along at over 30 knots.

In open water, the boat is very manoeuvrable, her bow rising as you ramp up to full throttle – then dipping as you 'brake'. On the special seats in the cab – designed to minimise the effects of vibration – it's a relatively comfortable ride.

"It takes a bit of getting used to, and it is very sensitive – some alarms go off at the slightest touch, but otherwise it's a cracking bit of kit, absolutely fantastic," Grant adds.

By next month, 12 people should have passed the twin jet boat course run at Jupiter Point. From May, the team will be running the fortnight-long course every three weeks.

Pictures: LPhot Mark Johnson



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Transformation – w

People and Training changes: why are we doing it?

FIRST Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin announced the New Navy Vision in September 2019, highlighting how as a Naval Service we must transform to better tailor our operations, structure and business practices to the world of today and the future operating environment of tomorrow.

The Navy will invest in the North Atlantic operating environment, become a Carrier Task Group Navy, establish a Future Commando Force, increase Forward Presence for our ships and embrace Technology and Innovation.

People, with the right training, knowledge, skills and

experience, are essential enablers to deliver the New Navy plan.

The people of the Naval Service are fantastic, and always have been, and the policies and processes that have developed to support and manage our people have been done so with absolutely the right intent.

The transformation activities within People and Training are not an effort to replace what we already have because what we have is wrong or flawed, but recognise that the world around us, (for example, in technology and employee expectations) are changing and so we must transform to embrace

these changes, to keep us competitively advantageous in UK Defence, on the world stage and as an employer of choice.

Putting our people first

People and Training Transformation: How we will employ and train the whole force to deliver the New Navy.

Transformation activities that will fall within this category include a complete review of the current divisional system – how we move more towards a system in which people feel both cared for and supported, but also empowered as individuals and divisional senior rates and officers to access information and support more easily.

More detail will be available in the next few months as the review matures. Using artificial intelligence and technology, plans are afoot to place BR3 on a 'bot', so it is simple to 'ask BR3 a question'.

This may eventually be included in the Royal Navy App (see page 30) so that at all of our finger tips we can ask a simple question such as 'what are the eligibility requirements for me to be promoted?' or 'where do I find information about which uniform to wear?', 'how do I recognise someone's excellent effort?'. This provides transparency of information and easy access to it.

Project Selborne is the RN's Training Transformation project. From 2021, it will bring together around 30 training

services contracts into one, to be delivered by a strategic partner.

Project Selborne will transform the delivery and support of RN individual training to get better trained people to the front line faster, removing duplication and using innovative training methods, redressing many of the frustrations expressed by our people.

These pieces of work, and more, will make the lives of our people easier to manage and information more transparent.

We are also building a People and Insights Hub. At present over ten different teams across People and Training collect, fuse, analyse and use data and research about our people; cohering these into one team will not only help us understand what data is held and where, but also direct the use of it more clearly so the right people can take action, learning from the information and delivering improvements as necessary.

Improved communication regarding 'you said, we did' will also be forthcoming so that our people feel their responses to questionnaires and their partaking in focus groups actually leads to change.

Integrating the way we work

On January 30 2020, Rear Admiral Phil Hally took over responsibility for people-related policies, processes and career management from the Assistant Chief of Staff Personnel and Naval Secretary Rear Admiral Mike Bath.

And from Rear Admiral Will Warrender (FOST), Admiral Hally took on the responsibility for individual training at BRNC Dartmouth, HMS Raleigh, CTCRM, HMS Collingwood and HMS Temeraire.

Admiral Hally's new portfolio brings a new title of Director People and Training. In April Captain Naval Recruitment will also come under his responsibility.

Why is this significant? Because the creation of this single directorate is a significant transformation milestone, delivering one of 1SL's key visions.

It is more than a merger of NAVSEC and parts of FOST, but the knitting together of the full employment cycle from attract, recruit, train, employ, retain and resettle.

It also creates the opportunity to work differently, moving away from working in separate teams to working together with the same agenda of 'Putting our People Capability First' to make decisions and changes more readily and by empowered individuals.

The integration also seeks to improve how we manage and deliver people capability from a whole force perspective.

As a Naval Service we seek to embrace the knowledge, skills and experience of our regular, reservist, civilian and contractor employees and colleagues.



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Programme Hecate is a workforce transformation programme divided into three parts: a Navy Command Headquarters review, a Shore Base Project and an Operational Workforce Review (OWR).

The OWR has two objectives: to deliver greater availability of fighting units by reshaping how we crew the frontline and, as an equal priority, to give individuals greater ability to plan their lives by delivering more programme predictability and stability for them and their families.

The size and function of the HQ is under review, with the aim to identify duplication of effort and inefficiencies and where military workforce requirement can be redistributed to frontline-facing roles (OWR identified).

The Shore Base Project is tasked to identify between 10-20 percent of military positions that could be redistributed to the OWR and/or backfilled by whole force employees.

The key outcomes of the overall programme will benefit our people: more ability for people to plan their lives through crewing and operating models for operational units that offer predictability and stability, and sufficient employment in frontline-facing, HQ and shore-support roles that develop the professional career skills required in the second stage careers of officers and executive appointment for Warrant Officers.

It will also offer enough employment opportunities for those who are temporarily unsuitable to be employed in high-readiness roles, for example due to caring, welfare or medical reasons.

Programme Hecate will also result in the growth of the use and value of a whole force (regular, reservist, civilian, contractor) workforce – how do we continue to grow an organisational culture where all members of the Naval Service are equally valuable, and where people can seamlessly transfer from regular, to reservist or civilian, and back again dependant on the skills they have and the deployability they aim for.

The Golden Ticket work, see page 32, is one way to remind people that as an organisation the Royal Navy actively seeks to re-employ sailors, marines and officers who have left.

Project Firefly is the seamless transition from regular to reservist, and Project Dragonfly is the seamless transition from reservist to regular.

In the transition the value contributed by Civil Ser

Programme Hecate is a workforce transformation programme

The OWR has two objectives: to deliver greater availability

The Shore Base Project is tasked to identify between 10-20 percent

The key outcomes of the overall programme will benefit our people:

It will also offer enough employment opportunities for those who are temporarily unsuitable

Programme Hecate will also result in the growth of the use and value of a whole force

The Golden Ticket work, see page 32, is one way to remind people that as an organisation

Project Firefly is the seamless transition from regular to reservist, and Project Dragonfly is the seamless transition from reservist to regular.

What it means for you

You shared your experiences, good and bad



It is important we transform, not only to meet the needs of the New Navy, but to ensure we still offer an attractive career for our current serving and future workforce.

The People and Training Directorate has engaged expert assistance from outside the Navy to help us identify what technologies and practices exist in other organisations that we may consider adopting, and to help us understand what in our employment lifecycle is important to our people.

In January 2020, the *Sailor's Experience* report was compiled: this took evidence from AFCAS results, the Pulse Survey conducted internally in the Navy in October 2019 where 12,000 individual frustrations were aired from 2,500 respondents, 60 face-to-face interviews and different workshops with over 200 people afloat and ashore to find out more about what our people felt were the areas throughout a career and life in the Navy that could be improved.

Top themes included transparency of information, consistency of treatment, and the desire to feel valued as an individual – not just a rate or number.

In particular, the research confirmed that people want the ability to better plan their career and employment, have better 'Life Support', (such as divisional support, accommodation, access to mental health provision, coaching, sport and adventurous training); and want training that is better accessible, delivered in other ways than a classroom, and does not duplicate qualifications already held before joining.

The face-to-face interviews featured 11 different ranks across eight branches, who spoke of a range of experiences, good and bad.

"The RN are really good when it involves a family emergency," said one respondent.



"You get instant feedback and recognition for what you're doing," added another.

Negative experiences were also highlighted. "It's a cultural issue that we don't listen to people which leads to a lack of empowerment."

Another respondent said: "Training needs to be more accessible to people."

The findings of this report are being used as a foundation to prioritise some of the many transformation activities within People and Training, the results of which should directly improve the lived experience of our people.



Training needs to be more accessible to people.

RESPONDENT IN *SAILOR'S EXPERIENCE* REPORT



The RN are really good when it involves a family emergency.

RESPONDENT IN *SAILOR'S EXPERIENCE* REPORT



The future will bring new and exciting opportunities.

CDRE ROB VITALI
ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF (WARFARE)

In the future we would also like to explore a seamless route from regular to civil servant, reflecting transferable skills and experience our service people can bring to the expertise that already exists within the service.

Operation Hecate will also lead to a full review of current Branch and Career Structures, making the elements for skillsets clearer and the opportunities for career paths and opportunities better defined.

Career Managers are embracing the use of technological tools to automate some of the JPA processes they must conduct, therefore freeing up more time to career manage, as well as be aided by analytical tools to match people's capabilities to post requirements.

In addition, individuals are encouraged to use the new mobile app to help them identify career opportunities that they may have previously been unaware of.

Commander Robert Vitali, Assistant Chief of Staff (Warfare) said: "Operation Hecate will increase personnel available to support and operations while providing much better stability for our people and flexibility for them and their families about when they will be deployed. The team will be looking into every aspect of life in the front-line, in submarines, in air squadrons and across Royal Marines units to determine how we should most appropriately crew the front-line and the optimum ratios of time spent deployed, embarked or onboard. Gathered evidence, my objective is to present options for a revised manning model to the Navy's Executive Committee. This will not be constrained by legacy thinking or branch perceptions; we will engage widely with you, our partners and the maritime offshore community to search for innovative solutions.

The future will bring new and exciting opportunities; it may also present personal challenges associated with the change process. We will look to provide opportunities for you to share your ideas and views on how we can improve how we work and how we support you and your families.

The team will visit operational units to seek views; so please engage and contribute to the process."

Picture by: AB Jack Harding



Technology and digitalisation is about the way we empower our people through transforming the way they engage with human resource services through technological and digital innovation.

This fourth strand enables the first three.

Many of you will have used the new My Navy App (available via the Defence Gateway log in page, accessible from all personal WIFI/4G enabled devices and through Internet Chrome on Dii or MODNET).

This is one of the ways we are transforming as an organisation, by producing a modern channel that provides military personnel with the flexibility and freedom to manage their Naval lives through providing the tools and freedoms to do so.

The App currently enables users to:

- find future assignment options
- see Career Manager information
- view Promotion Boards
- view Pay Statements,
- book leave
- receive latest alerts
- provide feedback for future versions.

The App will be routinely upgraded and is being designed with the wants and needs of the user at its centre, utilising the research conducted by our expert assistance from outside of the Navy.

GOLDEN TICKET – Page 28
1SL'S VISION – Page 29
MY NAVY APP – Page 30



LET inspires pupils at his old school

LEADING Engineering Technician Harry Taggart returned to his old senior school in his home town, where he represented the Royal Navy at the school's career event.

Calderglen High School hold their careers event annually, which is often attended by representatives of the Glasgow Armed Forces Careers Office.

Chief Petty Officer Philip Thirlaway, Royal Navy Careers Advisor at the Office remembered Harry from when he joined the navy and decided to contact HMS Collingwood to see if his attendance was possible. The rest, as they say, is history.

Harry joined the navy as an Accelerated Apprentice (Weapon Engineer) (AA(WE)) in 2019, having left the school the previous year.

Since then he has completed his basic training at HMS Raleigh, Cornwall, commenced his trade training at HMS Collingwood, Fareham, Hampshire and been deployed on HMS Queen Elizabeth in North America.

He rejoined HMS Collingwood at the beginning of the year to complete his communications systems training.

The school careers event was attended by upwards of 300 students and parents who went along to obtain information and guidance on available careers and/or what subjects they need to

study to achieve particular careers.

At Calderglen High, Harry received a very warm welcome from teachers and older students (and their parents) who knew/remembered him.

Harry was ideal for this role, as he is a very engaging individual, relaxed and at ease discussing his experiences and opportunities to those that had an interest in the Royal Navy,

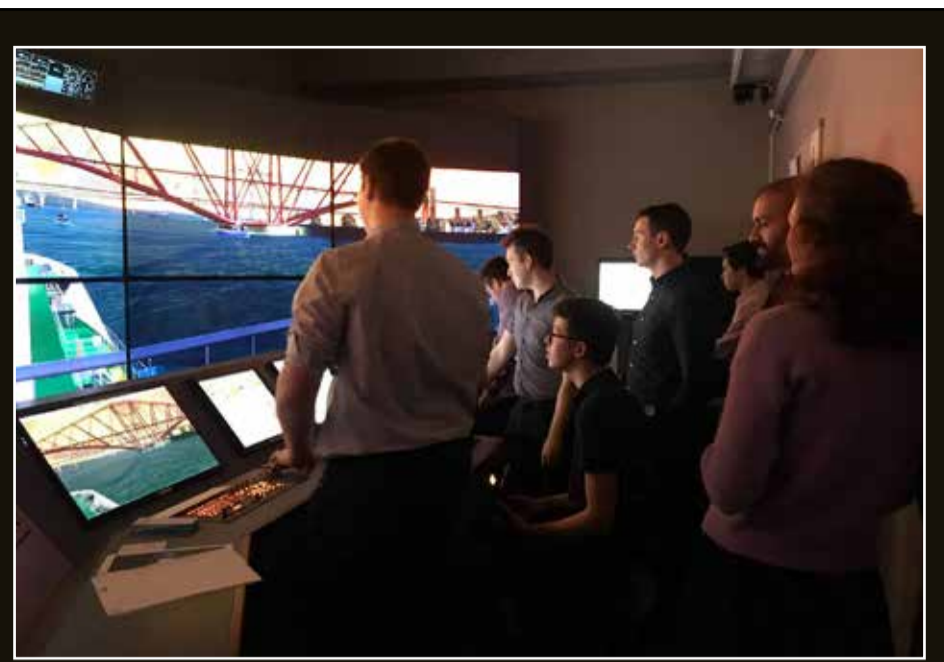
Phil said: "It was a pleasure to enable a former pupil to return to his school in order that he could enthusiastically talk about his recent achievements as a Royal Navy Engineer in training and on board HMS Queen Elizabeth on her deployment to America."

Harry said: "It was a real privilege to represent the Royal Navy and return to my old school for their annual school's careers evening.

"I thoroughly enjoyed talking about the world class engineering training I have received at HMS Collingwood and how proud I was to serve on board HMS Queen Elizabeth during her recent deployment to North America."

Details of career opportunities within the Royal Navy are available online at www.royalnavy.mod.uk or by calling the Recruitment Line on 08456 07 55 55.

Picture: CPO Crawford Dick



Students bridge the gap

THE imposing bridges which span the River Forth were the focus as URNU students visited a maritime training centre.

City of Glasgow College's nautical training centre includes a state-of-the-art bridge simulators used for bespoke training courses.

The college invited in students from Glasgow and Strathclyde URNI, many of whom have yet to experience any time at sea.

The Officer Cadets were able to put the theoretical lessons, taught in the classroom to good use and become somewhat familiar with the equipment and scenarios that they may come across at sea.

The staff at the City of Glasgow College allowed the Training Officers and Officer Cadets to use five of their bridge simulators, which resulted in

the Officer Cadets tackling a variety of virtual exercises. In preparation for their HMS Archer weekend deployment.

Officer Cadets had the opportunity to take practice being Officer of The Watch on the helm and radar training.

All of these skills are crucial for future deployments. The simulators enabled different weather conditions and visibility to enable realistic simulations of the challenges posed at sea, thankfully without the requirement for donning foul weather gear.

Officer Cadet Reid said: "The training was incredibly useful, I feel more prepared for my first sea weekend. It was great to have the chance to train in the bridge simulators, and a fun evening out with the unit."



Boost for charity's sports project

THE Armed Forces Covenant Fund has awarded Worthing-based charity Care for Veterans £70,000.

The charity has received the funding towards a two-year project, sporting chances for disabled veterans, which will allow physically disabled veterans, many with brain injuries, to participate in more varied outdoor and sporting activities, such as abseiling, cycling, sailing and archery.

The aim of the project is to provide new experiences for the residents of Care for Veterans,

encourage feelings of self-achievement, reduce the risk of institutionalisation and improve well-being.

Participating in games or sports can have positive benefits for people with disabilities. As well as the health benefits of physical activity, such as lowering high blood pressure, maintaining a healthy weight and boosting the immune system, exercise through games or sports can also help you feel good, increase your self-confidence and provide an opportunity for social interaction.



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www.rnmchildrensfund.org.uk

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Queen's close encounter with Lightning



ROYAL Navy Lieutenant Neil Wright explains some of the finer points of the F-35 Lightning strike fighter to the Queen during her visit to RAF Marham.

The Queen, who is Honorary Air Commodore of the Norfolk station, was met by flag-waving children from Cherry Tree Academy and the Rainbow Daycare Centre.

She was driven to the Integrated Training Centre where she was first introduced to personnel from across the station before moving into the training areas to watch demonstrations of engine maintenance, weapons load and a canopy change.

During the demonstration Her Majesty spoke to students from the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy who are attending the training courses within the Integrated Training Centre.

The Queen was then driven to a viewing location to watch the F35 Lightning aircraft conduct a vertical landing on one of the purpose-built vertical landing pads.

She later met personnel at the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess before having lunch at the Officers' Mess.

Team Waudby's trek to support veterans

Medics join first city event

A NAVAL husband and wife team will trek the Western Front through Passchendaele and the Somme in Northern France and Belgium this summer to raise funds to support British veterans and serving personnel in need.

Media Operations officer Lt Cdr Lindsey Waudby and her husband Steve, a former Chief Petty Officer, will walk 50 miles taking in the Lochnager Crater, memorials at Thiepval and Vimy Ridge, the Beaumont Hamel trenches through to the Menin Gate at Ypres.

There they will take part in a wreath-laying ceremony at the final resting place of 54,000 soldiers who died in Belgium and have no known grave.

Hundreds of thousands of servicemen of the British Empire marched through the Gate on their way into battle.

The Waudbys are competing against each other to raise the most leading up to the trek, which has been organised by the Royal British Legion.

Lindsey, who is currently based at Navy Command Headquarters in Portsmouth, said: "It's been more than 100 years since British personnel went through absolute hell on the Western Front, even serving personnel like me cannot imagine the horror they endured, but we can never forget.

"This is just a small way to keep events from that terrible time in the public's conscience.

"There have been other, high-profile conflicts in more recent times, but hopefully this will help remind younger generations of the sacrifices so many made to



give them their freedom today. It also helps that the scenery is stunning – a far cry from that time."

Steve, who left the Royal Navy as a CPO (AWT) two years ago after 22 years' service, added: "As a veteran myself, it is so important to know that help would be available to me and my family through the Royal British Legion, if I ever needed it. Just £10 can pay for a security chain to give an isolated veteran the confidence to open their door – £10 isn't much to most people, but it can mean all the difference in



helping to open up the life of someone in need."

Lindsey added: "Hopefully the trek itself will go better than our training – I broke my big toe walking home from work last month!

"Securing donations is the incentive though, and I'm happy to provide my JustGiving details below, as I used initiative to get this article into print – snooze you lose Steve!"

To sponsor the couple, *well mainly Lindsey*, please visit [justgiving.com](https://www.justgiving.com) and search for Lindsey Waudby.

MEDICAL staff from the Joint Hospital Group (South West), based at Derriford Hospital, gave up their time to attend the inaugural MEDIFEST Plymouth.

There to promote Science, technology, engineering and maths subjects within clinical services, the event was run over two days, day one allocated for students and day two was open to the public at the city's guildhall.

MEDIFEST was organised by the STEM co-ordinator for Plymouth City Council, Tina Brinkworth, with the assistance of Devonport High School for Girls. The event showcased a number of paramedical careers, with up to 1,000 students from across the city attending.

The aim of MEDIFEST is to raise awareness for young people to research careers in a range of medical and allied professions and science, especially pharmacy where there is a shortage in the south west.

The exhibition was designed to unite the community to explore ways to pursue a healthy lifestyle and share vital public health messages as well as provide opportunities for universities, medical practitioners and businesses to share current practice.

Dad hands down family heirloom to his son at Dartmouth



A ROYAL Navy Officer from Portsmouth has become the custodian of a family heirloom.

Sub Lieutenant Martin Carter was presented with a ceremonial sword at his passing-out-parade on completion of his training at Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

The sword originally belonged to SLt Carter's great-great uncle, Paymaster Commander Charles Driscoll. The sword had been given to SLt Carter's father, Lieutenant Commander Simon 'Nick' Carter, when he passed out of Dartmouth in 1993.

Hailing from Gosport, SLt Carter comes from a naval family. As well as his dad, his grand-father and three uncles have all served in the Royal Navy.

The 30-year-old said: "It's been my life-long

ambition to join the Royal Navy. As well as my family links I was also attracted by the variety and travel. The training was challenging at times, but I enjoyed the experience. It's great feeling to have accomplished my ambition and to take ownership of the family sword."

SLt Carter joined the Royal Navy as a Writer in 2016. He was promoted to the Officer Corp last year and so far his career path has mirrored that of his father. Lt Cdr Carter also joined up as a rating in 1981, specialising as a catering accountant. Twelve years later he became a Sub Lieutenant in the Logistics branch.

After a varied career spanning four decades Lt Cdr Carter retired from full-time service in 2014 and transferred to the Maritime Reserves.

Just a week later he was mobilised to support the community in Somerset following flooding.

He's also served as a Royal Naval Reservist in Bahrain on two occasions and undertaken full-time reserve service as the unit operations officer at HMS Hibernia.

Lt Cdr Carter said: "Watching my son pass out of BRNC was one of my proudest moments. When the sword was given to me it had been in storage for almost 60 years, so seeing the family sword being passed on and staying in commission made the day."

SLt Carter is now undergoing his specialist training to qualify as a Logistics Officer at the Defence College of Logistics, Policing and Administration, Worthy Down.

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Learning new skills on the slopes thanks to RNRMC

NAVAL Service personnel have enjoyed their introduction to winter sports, thanks in no small part to the RNRMC.

The charity have financially contributed towards the Alpine Championships for several years, helping to ensure that this opportunity is accessible for as many as possible within the Naval Service.

"On behalf of the association, we are exceptionally grateful of the kind generosity and financial support given to the RN winter sports by the RNRMC", said Lt Cdr Debra Vout, RNWSA Secretary.

Novice skiers took part in the Beginners' Race at the RNWSA Alpine Championships in Tignes in France.

Five days prior to the race, most of the skiers taking part had never squeezed into ski boots before, and the snowboarders had no idea what 'regular' or 'goofy' stance meant, let alone which one applied to them.

Nevertheless, within a matter of days each of the beginners was able to call himself a Royal Navy Winter Sports Competitor.

While the determination and dedication of these newcomers cannot be understated, their rapid progression was due in no small part to the expert tuition provided by the Royal Navy instructors.

"It's amazing", commented Ski Instructor, Lieutenant Commander Mark Headley.

"They start on the Sunday on what is basically a very shallow slope and by the end of the week they're racing, showing how much they've learned."



Royal launch for families' flagship

THE Princess Royal opened a renovated facility at the heart of Helensburgh in Argyll and Bute.

The Drumfork Community Centre in Helensburgh's Churchill Square has undergone £2m of work, with much of the funding coming from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC), writes Gavin Carr.

The new centre will be a hub for military personnel, their families and members of the wider community.

"It is an honour to have Her Royal Highness join us to officially open the renovated Drumfork Community Centre," said Captain Nick Gibbons, Captain of HMS Neptune at nearby HM Naval Base Clyde.

"The team has worked tremendously hard to create an environment which will provide significant support to our Service families, as well as presenting opportunities for the local area.

"We were delighted that The Princess Royal took the time to meet so many of those involved in the creation of the centre and also speak with those who will use and benefit from the facility."

Greeting The Princess Royal during the visit were local children from John Logie Baird Primary, Parklands School, St Joseph's Primary and Clarendon, part of Lomond Junior School.

Members of the Police Scotland Youth Volunteers were also on hand to welcome her to the Drumfork Centre.

The tour included a visit to St Margaret's Community Church and IT training facilities.

The Princess Royal also met with key donors including representatives from the MacRobert Trust, Greenwich Hospital, British Forces Broadcasting Services Scotland, the Royal Marines Association and the Royal Navy Association.

RNRMC's Director of Fundraising, Alasdair Akass, said: "The physical manifestation of our philosophy to play our part in building community resilience among Naval Service families is no better demonstrated than in this flagship project in Helensburgh.

"The fully refurbished Drumfork Community Centre represents the biggest demonstration to date of putting the weight of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity behind our beneficiaries."

Work began on the Drumfork Centre in 2018 when a £2m contract was awarded to a local firm to upgrade the facility.

The refurbishment is linked to the joint Strategic Delivery and Development Framework agreement signed between the Ministry of Defence and Argyll and Bute Council in February 2017.

The Memorandum of Understanding commits both parties to work together to find ways which the investment in HM Naval Base Clyde can benefit the entire Helensburgh and Lomond community.

Work on improving the environs of the Centre is set to continue with an impressive new play area being developed outside Drumfork.

The finished play area is expected to be completed later this year.

Pictures: PO (Phot) Jay Allen and LPhotos Will Haigh and Finn Stainer-Hutchins



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#ByYourSide

● Emma received her Lieutenant stripes from Capt Michael Wood



Navy pilots lan



TWO trainee Royal Navy pilots swapped the UK for Antarctica. While Sub Lieutenants Emma Reynolds and Connor Kirkpatrick waited for a date for their rotary training, they were sent to work as radio operators with the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). SLt Reynolds takes up the story.

Since 2005, the Royal Navy has sent two holidays south to Rothera Research Station every year to assist with BAS's aviation operations in the Tower, albeit with a brief break between 2013-2016.

Whilst we had both heard of the Antarctic hold, we never thought we would be in the right place, at the right time – but luckily, circumstances lined up and somehow, we ended up in Antarctica, on what can only be described as the dream hold and an amazing opportunity.

Radio Operators have two main roles: Firstly, communicating with aircraft and science projects in the deep field and secondly, controlling movements at and around Rothera, including aircraft operations, polar boating, local travel, and most importantly, coordinating runway operations.

Working in a small team of five, we started at 0645 and finished whenever the planes landed – sometimes, if there was an emergency, as late as 0400 the next day.

Our primary job role was talking with aircraft; mostly looking after flights in the north and west of Antarctica, with pilots of all nationalities – an area the size of Europe. The farthest journeys covered a distance equivalent of the UK to Africa – this was when aircraft were flying over the South Pole. This is an immense area, and could get very busy.

BAS works primarily out of Rothera, on Adelaide Island,

on the Peninsula. Roughly 150 staff work here in the summer (October to April), supporting science projects and keeping the station running – this number reduces down to approximately 20 over the winter months, where the continent is isolated, with no access in or out.

During the summer, BAS operates another permanent station, Halley, on the Brunt Ice Shelf – although not safe to winter there, as the ice shelf is slowly cracking off from the continent. BAS also opens up two field sites over summer, Fossil Bluff and Sky Blu, which are used as manned refuelling hubs and depot areas for aircraft. Lastly, the field parties undertaking scientific research can end up almost anywhere – and BAS needs to be able to fly to these locations.

Aviation in Antarctica is undertaken mainly by DHC-6 Twin Otter aircraft on skis/wheels – a twin-engine, high-wing turbine aircraft, perfect for Antarctic operations with the exception of range. Another aircraft used is the DC3 Basler, but whilst this has greater range and more cargo capacity, it lacks the versatility in landing. BAS also operates a DHC-7 Dash 7, which flies the inter-continental run between the Antarctic and South America – and the main route in and out for BAS personnel.

Antarctica itself is a hostile environment, where the ground is littered by crevasses, mountains, and other hazards to aircraft. Pilots need to be able to land anywhere below them at any time – not only for prospective emergencies, but also, because that's where the scientists want to land.

A technique called 'trailing skis' has been developed – an aircraft will make an approach to land at a new site, and will skim above the ground for the duration of the landing strip, trailing their skis along the ground.

This is intended to open up any crevasses along the landing strip, and make hazards visible. Then, they climb away, make another approach, and land.

One of my main jobs was to ensure that the aircraft checked in with us on a regular basis, and if they missed a time, to initiate emergency procedures. After the Chileans tragically lost a Hercules aircraft over the Drake Passage in December 2019, it was brought home how likely this occurrence actually was.

Flights can last a long time in the Antarctic; getting to one field party, in the Ellsworth Mountains this year, took three days – and this was not an uncommon event. Pilots carry tents and emergency food in the back, but it's often preferable to sleep in the plane, using a P-bag – a sleeping system comprising of a sheepskin mat, bivy bag, winter sleeping bag, and liner.

Refuelling can also be a problem, but there are many drums of fuel deposited at known locations across Antarctica, by a roving ground team called the Traverse – a group of heroic individuals who spend five months driving tractors around the continent to leave fuel for aircraft. The fuelling sites are marked, but often involve up to seven hours digging to find the drums.

One of the most rewarding parts of the deployment was the flying. The Twin Otters fly single pilot, which means that there is space for a non-qualified co-pilot – a great opportunity extended to everyone on station, with the aim to get everyone at least one flight. This was an opportunity to leave the peninsula and see more of Antarctica, and it was amazing.

Rothera has a secondary purpose to BAS operations, in that it is also the gateway to Antarctica for anyone wishing to fly in. It is the closest airfield to another landmass, and as such many international operations fly through en-route to their own country's bases – such as the Americans, Chileans, Chinese, Australians etc, plus private tourism companies. As most of the aircraft that fly in Antarctica are maintained in Canada, and employed in the Arctic during the off season, this is the most popular route.

Actually living in Antarctica is a challenge in itself, but amazing. Every day you wake up to a different view, with a different set of extreme weather conditions – the ice had normally shifted



overnight, leaving different conditions in the morning. It could have snowed two feet in a couple of hours, or you could wake up to 50 knot winds and not be able to go outside without snow goggles, mountain boots and multiple buffs. Or, you could step out of one building and be surrounded by penguins and seals, who have no fear of humans.

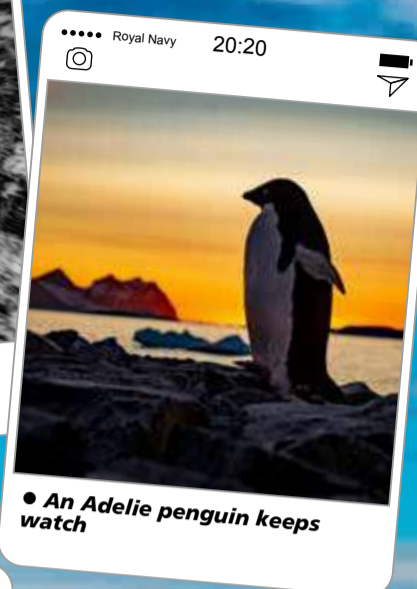
To learn about the environment, we had five weeks of pre-deployment training, based out of BAS's HQ in Cambridge. This involved discussions about base life, medical courses,



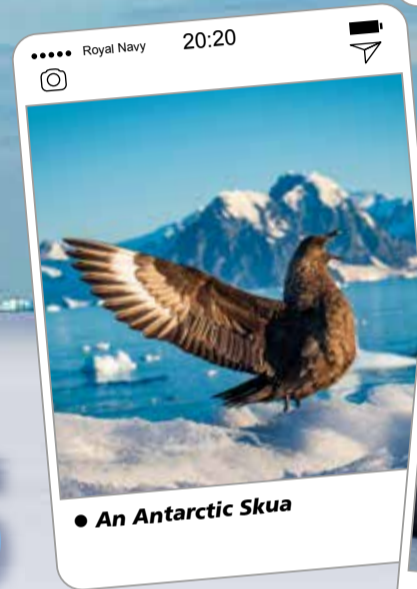
Pictures: S/Lt Emma Reynolds, Tim Gee, Andy Lines, Drew Robertson, and Andy Van Kints



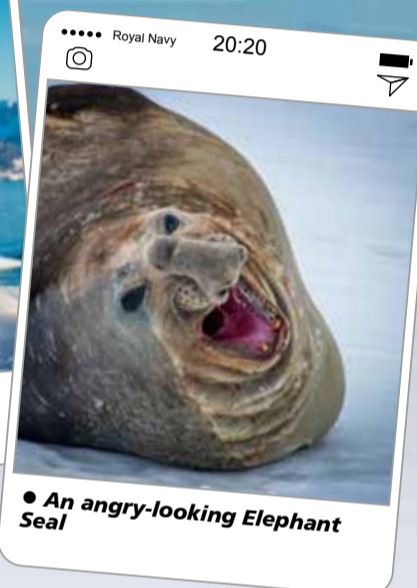
● A sleepy seal



● An Adelie penguin keeps watch



● An Antarctic Skua



● An angry-looking Elephant Seal

and dream roles

meteorology courses, mapping software inductions, major incident management, fire training etc – with more specialist on the job training.

Once arriving in Rothera, training in skidoo (snowmobile) driving was essential, as well as further first aid, field training, boat crew, avalanche training, mountaineering and crevasse practical courses, and instruction in using equipment such as skis and crampons for day-to-day tasks.

Every tasking in the Antarctic takes longer than it would normally – not just due to the extreme conditions, but also the remoteness. For example, it took about half a day to reach the local weather mast about 10km away, using a combination of crampons, skis and a skidoo. Medivacs are another example – something routine in the UK such as a broken leg could be life-threatening here.

But, living on the station itself was incredible – the people BAS employ have often been trying for years to get a job there, and with such high competition, the quality is great. A team of five chefs look after everyone, having mostly working in Michelin-starred restaurants before travelling south. The base doctor is highly experienced, and runs extra sessions for anyone interested and keen to learn. The opportunities to get involved with marine search-and-rescue were many, and highly rewarding. Supporting science



projects is also available to everyone, even if it just involved taking water samples, or surveying the bird population. Recreationally, skiing, snowboarding, climbing, mountaineering and boating was available pretty much every evening that the weather was good. There have been some events here which I will always remember. Firstly, Taranto Night was my contribution – running a Fleet Air Arm traditional evening and teaching the station about a typical mess dinner.

Remembrance Day was also a really moving ceremony. About 40 people were on station at the time, and relocated up to the Cross – a memorial on a local hill. Bagpipes were played, and a list of the names for BAS personnel who died in Antarctica was passed around, with everyone to read a name out – and there were many more than I expected. Whilst it was a small ceremony, without ceremonials etc, it really captured the point of it all – no more was needed to remember.

Christmas on station was surreal. After a big Christmas Eve party, a late brunch – with real eggs and mushrooms saved especially – was organised for Christmas Day by the chefs. Most people then went out for recreation – on the boats, up the mountain, or out skiing, and finished off with a formal dinner.

However, it was still a working day for many – the weather was good, so planes were still flying, people were still out in the field, and the station still needed to run. The chefs had sent Christmas cakes and whiskey out to the field parties, spending Christmas Day in a tent, which was a nice touch.

Another event was the visit of the James Clarke Ross (JCR), whose purpose was the resupply Rothera with food, fuel and extras. This involved a week of moving cargo, where the station really came together to get it done. It also included a visit from Captain Michael Wood, recently appointed captain of HMS Protector. This provided an opportunity for which I could not refuse – the chance to stripe up to Lieutenant in Antarctica, with a ceremony by the Cross.

You can't travel to Antarctica without experiencing the wildlife or vast landscapes – a photographer's dream. Whilst it was too extreme in October for anything but birds, as soon as the local sea ice started retreating, seals appeared in their hundreds – populating every corner of the station, outside windows, and most frustratingly, relaxing all over the runway. Elephant seals were the most common, although the distinctively-patterned Weddells were seen a bit further out on the ice – and occasionally, the most dangerous of all, the leopard seal, which will hunt humans.

November brought the arrival of the penguins, who again, just wandered everywhere, and also seemed to like the runway. Finally, in January the whales appeared – predominately orcas (killer whales), although humpbacks and minnies were also spotted. If an orca was seen, then diving operations had to be



halted. How does two aircrew spending their time as radio operators in the Antarctic help the Royal Navy? Well, we have gained a broad perspective in how aviation operations work at an early point in our careers, which will really help when back on squadron, to see the bigger picture.

We have also kept current in communications and radiotelephony, which will be a big help later in flying training – as well as seeing communications from a different perspective, ie that of the tower, and will thus be far more aware of what is happening during sorties.

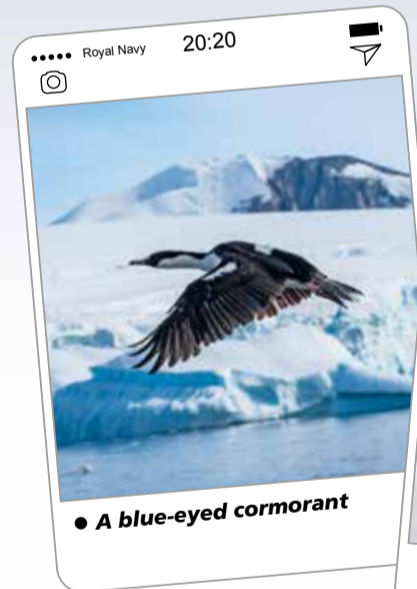
We are also familiar in operating in a polar environment – just day-to-day living down here requires a lot of kit and lots of knowledge, such as driving snowmobiles, medical courses, mountaineering skills, avalanche training etc. All this will hopefully make us more effective in future.

Finally, we even managed to get some flights in, brushing up on our general handling and emergency procedures in the air.

We have had an amazing time, and perhaps one day in the future, I would be very happy to return to fly for the British Antarctic Survey.

This was an absolutely fantastic hold which has given me so many experiences, friends, opportunities and connections – a big thank you to everyone who has made this experience possible. I relish any chance in the future to return to Antarctica.

I have certainly made many friends, and have come to love the white continent.



● A blue-eyed cormorant



● A Weddell seal pup



● S/Lts Connor Kirkpatrick and Emma Reynolds marked New Year's Eve in style in Antarctica



Dentists celebrate a full-filling century

THE Royal Navy Dental Services celebrated their 100th birthday at St Ann's Church, Portsmouth, to remember their forebears.

Naval dentists actually trace their history back to 1870 when acting Assistant Surgeon Christopher Harvey joined HMS Warrior and was appalled by the provision afforded the crew and wrote a journal article on the state of sailors' teeth.

It took another 35 years and lobbying from the British Dental Association and others led to the introduction of a small, dedicated dental service in 1905.

But it was January 22 1920

when the Admiralty formally approved the formation of the Royal Naval Dental Services, largely thanks to the experiences of the Great War.

"Dentistry has changed significantly over the past 100 years, but our aim has never changed: high-quality dental care to our sailors and marines, minimising dental risk and maximising the Navy's operational capability across the globe," said Surgeon Captain (Dentist) David Hall, head of Naval Dental Services.

"Nearly 1500 Dental Officers and thousands of Dental Support

Staff have served in the RNDs and it was an absolute privilege to see so many serving and retired guests at our Centenary Church service".

Centenary commemorations continue on May 15 with a presentation day and supper aboard HMS Warrior in Portsmouth to recognise and celebrate the achievements of the RNDs through ten decades of service to the Fleet.

Anyone interested in attending should contact Surg Cdr (D) Karl Drummond (karl.drummond313@mod.gov.uk).

New Reserve head

COMMODORE Melanie Robinson has assumed command of the Royal Navy's Reserve forces.

Cdre Robinson, who takes over from Cdre Martin Quinn, has served in the RN for 27 years and was among the first women to go to sea.

The former ship captain has become one of only four female naval officers to have achieved flag rank as she assumes the role of Commodore Maritime Reserves (COMMARES).

"I am determined to lead a step-change in how the Maritime Reserves recruits, employs and deploys its personnel," she said.

Served once? Serve again

HAVE you or perhaps your partner left the navy, then found you miss service life?

Two initiatives have been established to entice leavers back, one aimed at those well outside the Senior Service, the second focusing on those who've only recently started to make the transition to the civilian world.

In the past, the navy has sent letters to leavers to see whether they'd be interested in returning – letters which were often put aside, lost, binned or else former shipmates dissuaded friends from rejoining.

When they needed additional chefs and stewards in the galleys of ships and submarines, Commander Pete Viney and WO1 Jon Boreham trawled through records to find the relevant men and women who'd been back in civvy street for five to eight years.

The pair identified nearly 300 ex-sailors who might consider rejoining... and then contacted the most likely candidates.

The calls were followed up with home visits to chat with those who were interested in coming back – including chatting with the rest of the family to ensure that they were also comfortable with a return to service life.

In the five weeks of a project they dubbed 'Jules Verne', they brought 25 fully-trained chefs back into the fold.

But there's more.

"It soon became clear that others – not just chefs and stewards – were also interested in coming back, along with some former serving Army and RAF who were interested in transferring across," said Jon.

As a result, there's now a dedicated team targeting branches and specialisations where there are shortages and generally dealing with any former servicemen and women looking at a return to active service.

Hand-in-hand with the Rejoiners/Interservice Transfer Team is a similar initiative aimed to help recent leavers who find that despite expectations, the grass isn't necessarily greener outside the navy.

Everyone ending their careers and returning to civilian life will receive an information leaflet – a 'Golden Ticket', if you like – at the release cell. Hold on to it and keep it somewhere safe (but if you misplace it, visit the rejoiners page on the RN website, or call into an AFCO for the team's contact details).

Provided you have a 'recommend for further service', the scheme gives individuals the chance to rejoin as smoothly and quickly as is possible.

"Both schemes should help plug gaps and cut both recruiting and training, but more importantly, the ability to provide Suitably Qualified and Experienced People back to the Navy very quickly," Jon added.

"If you are in the process of leaving, rest assured: there is a route for you to return if everything doesn't quite work out. And if you know of anyone that would like to be considered for a return to service, please help us spread the word that if you have served once, you can serve again."

The team can be contacted on 02392 727 747 / 07971 366 366 or email NAVYCNR-REJOINERSMAILBOX@mod.gov.uk.

'I've completely settled into Naval life...'

Natasha Mackie from Pumpherston, near Livingston in Scotland, joined the Army straight from school in 2010.

She excelled as a trainee chef at the Army's culinary school at Worthy Down and then spent the next eight years cooking for her comrades in Cyprus, Germany, Northern Island and finally Bulford, as well as on exercise in Kenya.

She was also loaned to HMS Ocean for 12 months during the helicopter carrier's final deployment.

"We were lucky enough to spend most of it at sea and saw many parts of the world I know I would never get to see while in the Army.

Added to this was the humanitarian work in the Caribbean following Hurricane Irma – hard work, yes, but the feeling of helping those who needed it was, at times, overwhelming.

It was then later that year that HMS Ocean was decommissioned and to have been part of that was amazing.

After a short time being back with the Army, I realised that working for a civilian contractor wasn't the same as being part of

a big family on ship and started to miss the banter, laughs we had and the camaraderie. After careful consideration (and a really good chat with my boyfriend), I decided to put my transfer request in and join the navy permanently.

The whole process took around seven months, but before I knew it, I was down at HMS Raleigh drawing my kit and learning how to stop stamping my feet and waving my hand when saluting.

Being qualified as a chef, I didn't have much training to do and before long was assigned to HMS Prince of Wales – exactly what I wanted.

I have settled completely into naval life and within the



short space of time I have been rewarded with my acting local leading hand, something I am immensely proud of.

I can see myself finishing my career within in the Royal Navy and look forward to the challenges that lay ahead.

As I now constantly 'dit on' about the navy to my fiancée, I am pleased to say he too has now submitted his transfer papers to join the navy.

'Sometimes the grass isn't greener...'

LCH Martin Luckily spent 22 years in the RN, leaving in 2012 with "just great memories".

He spent two seasons as a head chef on super yachts, worked in a chateau in Geneva, then in the oil industry on platform supply ships until a shortage of the black stuff led to redundancy.

Martin then tried a new challenge – working with his wife Vanessa to support her dog walking and home boarding business which was both challenging and very successful.

"But then, out of the blue came a new opportunity: the chance to rejoin the Royal Navy.

The RN has always been there in my mind, fond memories and fantastic

friendships, simply a job that I loved.

So, a good discussion with my wife Vanessa and she was happy with my decision to rejoin.

Commander Viney and Warrant Officer Boreham made me feel completely at ease – they were totally focused on me and what I could bring back to the service.

It was a completely different approach to Navy recruiting that I have ever experienced, and a very positive one.

After a visit to a careers office and a medical, Martin was back in the RN without much bother.

"Life in the navy now is very different, as is the technology, changing over the short time from my last day and walking out of the gate at Faslane.

"Lifestyles in the mess decks have changed to suit the more modern sailor, cabins have been given a more relaxed and less-congested look and with ample space.

For my colleges from killicks and below, it has given me the chance to share that experience outside and give sound advice on the pros and cons of leaving the service – especially for those thinking do so at an early stage, maybe giving them a more realistic approach to what lies out there in civvy street if you're not ready for it.

The future for me in the Royal Navy seems to be rather bright as my goal is to mentor younger chefs and to seek promotion.

Not a lot of people are given a second chance in doing the things they've enjoyed, and I'm grateful to have it. Sometimes the grass isn't greener.



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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We are in a great place and will be even better



FIRST Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin was one of the keynote speakers at the Defence IQ's Surface Warships Conference in London earlier this year. Here's what he had to say.

I want to talk about the UK's National Shipbuilding Strategy and the Royal Navy's priorities for capability development. In doing so, I will touch on three things: where we are as a Navy; how we are changing; and finally some of the ways in which navies in general, and the Royal Navy in particular, can deliver on behalf of a nation. Because for me, the days when a nation's Navy was just about warfighting at sea are long past, and we need to understand our role in this wider context.

Firstly, where are we? I am proud to say that the Royal Navy is in a good place. The National Shipbuilding Strategy is at the heart of delivering that, from the two new aircraft carriers, through to our new Type 26 and Type 31 frigates, our new Offshore Patrol Vessels, new Tide-class support ships, and the Dreadnought-class replacement for the Vanguard-class submarines that deliver our nuclear deterrent.

But we have only won that investment because we are in heavy demand to deliver on operations, all over the world. There is a real buzz from this, across all elements of the Navy. Whether that is through our continued presence in the Indo-Pacific; the Gulf, where the situation remains tense; the North Atlantic, where Russian activity is at its highest for 30 years; or our Royal Marines, who took part in the largest amphibious exercise in decades last year. The real highlight for me has been achieving 50 years of Continuous at Sea Deterrence. And also seeing both our aircraft carriers, HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales, at sea at the same time at the end of last year. And that includes embarking UK jets on board Queen Elizabeth for the first time. We're a busy Navy.

But being busy is not a goal in itself. The risk is that the demands of the future will outweigh the demands of the past, and we need to be ready to face them.

And so, as well as delivering in the here and now, we are going to undergo substantial changes over the next five years. But let me emphasise this through the lens of where we have come from, and where we are heading. I see 2020 as a pivot point, where we will move from – if we are honest – a slightly uninspiring recent past, to a really incredibly exciting future.

We are already transforming; and in 2020 we will be going further.

Five years ago, we had no carriers. Today we have the two of the most advanced aircraft carriers in the world. And in five years' time, both will be operational and capable of deploying 36 jets.

And we have delivered these without any major increase in our overall people numbers, which is a remarkable efficiency. And I want to go further. The Chief of the Air Staff, Mike Wigston, and I are looking at using HMS Prince of Wales in 2021 as an experimentation platform and with a view to challenging our services to launch large drones as at least technology demonstrators from our carriers within the next five years.

Five years ago, we had an ageing fleet of frigates, with no real sense of how we would replace them. Today, we have two frigate programmes on contract. We (alongside our Australian and Canada friends) think T26 will be the best high-end ASW frigate in the world. And we think T31 will be the best valued medium-capability frigate in the world, with bags of room to host innovations and modern technology. And in five years' time, we will have new frigates in the water.

And I want to go further. We are contemplating what it means for all our frigates to be 'strategic platforms'. Which ships have what intelligence fits? And how much information is processed onboard and how much is sent back to the UK for analysis? How much automation can we pack in? We are already seeing some of the benefits that technology and autonomy can deliver; now I want to use those to deliver increased efficiency and lethality to the front line, faster, better, and cheaper.

Five years ago, our permanent forward presence was limited to some patrol ships in Gibraltar and the Falklands, and some ageing mine countermeasures vessels in the Gulf. Today, we have HMS Montrose deployed for three years to HMS Jufair, our own base in Bahrain. We have a brand-new offshore patrol vessel, HMS Forth, deployed to the Falklands for ten years and her sister ship, HMS Medway, on her way to her new permanent station in the Caribbean. And in five years' time, we will have all five of the new Offshore Patrol Vessels in service, ready to be forward deployed around the world.

And I want to go further. We have proven with HMS Montrose that we can double crew a complex warship. I want to extend this model to more Type



26s and Type 45s, improving our availability, improving our flexibility – and improving the lives of our people.

To achieve all this on the front line, without increasing how many people we have, means that we need to have some really fundamental conversations about how we do things, do we have the ambition, do we have the courage, do we have the humility to admit that we can do things better? I am up for those conversations.

And so we are going to challenge ourselves and assess whether we can decrease our headquarters by around 1,000 people, which will give us more people and more money to reinvest at sea. We're re-designing our headquarters so that we have flatter structures, and we empower our high-quality people to take decisions and – quite simply – get on with stuff. We had thought it was going to take us until the end of this decade to balance all personnel structures. Now, we have recruiting up by 20 percent; and we are looking to fill lots of our traditional people shortage areas by the end of 2023.

But it is also about questioning whether we do things entirely differently, having a different support model for our ships. Should we plan on deploying Type 31s and never bringing them back to the UK? The Danish have an engineering structure that has only three different grades on their T31 equivalent. We have nine. Can we get flatter, leaner, more efficient? Can we slow down or even stop the constant churn that we have in our personnel structures? And can we make the front line – whether sailor or marine – the best place to serve in the Royal Navy: with the most stability, the best leave patterns, and the best chance of doing adventurous training?

And I believe that if we have these conversations, if we answer these questions, if we admit that yes, we can be better – then we can drive a 20 percent increase in productivity over the next two-three years.

All of this is great for the Royal Navy. But more than this, it is great for Britain. And this brings me to my third point, about how we as a Navy can deliver more on behalf of our nation.

The UK has always been a maritime nation. We are an island, whose history has been built upon going out into the world by sea, and the Royal Navy has been an intrinsic part of that history. But maritime nations are more than just those nations with a coastline. They are nations that understand the importance of the sea, not just for themselves but in a wider global context. They are nations that engage with the sea and with others that use it. But it goes even further than that. My former counterpart at the Indian Naval Staff, Admiral Sureesh Mehta, observed that "In an era of globalisation, every trading nation is necessarily a maritime nation."

Even the most landlocked country in the world is now a maritime nation, as the sea is the lifeblood of its connectivity with the world. We deliver prosperity, presence and power on behalf of our countries, every day.

Navies deliver prosperity. In the UK, the shipbuilding industry contributes around £6bn to the economy every year. And that means nearly 25,000 people are employed as a result in defence shipbuilding activity. Our second carrier, Prince of Wales, was delivered 25 percent faster than Queen Elizabeth because of the progress our shipbuilding industry has made. And we will carry this on into Type 26 and Type 31 – and Dreadnought, as we continue our commitment to deliver the nuclear deterrence on behalf of the nation.

But this is also about protecting our prosperity – and that of our allies – as well as increasing it. We all know that 90 percent of world trade travels by sea, and we saw the impact that instability in the Gulf has. If the tanker rates go up by 15 percent, as they did recently, and that affects a fifth of the world's oil, that's a huge global financial impact – and having the Royal Navy there to protect shipping keeps those rates lower.

But even more important today is the fact that 99 percent of the world's data travels on undersea cables, and these are vulnerable to mines and to submarines – and to relatively cheap methods of interference. And that data ranges from people's internet searches and video streaming, to the information travelling to and from stock exchanges and industry.

You can imagine the financial impact of losing those connections. And so today protecting those assets is becoming even more important than protecting physical trade – and that is how the Royal Navy is going to have to respond.

And navies deliver presence. Eighty percent of people live within 60 miles of the sea; 70 percent of the world is covered by water. The sea is a global commons, allowing us to deliver persistent access and influence worldwide, switch instantly between defence engagement and warfighting, and engage without becoming embroiled.

And for all of us here, the rules based international system remains at the core of global co-operation. Warships are in a unique position, simultaneously benefiting from and upholding this system.

But all of this only works because navies deliver power. I started by saying that we are not just about warfighting. We are not. But at our core, everything else we do is enabled by our fundamental ability to fight and win. The soft power effect of our presence is backed up by hard power, credibility as warfighting assets.

And this brings us back to my earlier point. To maintain that credibility in a rapidly changing world means that we need to change as well, to stay ahead of our enemies, to stay at the forefront of technology and to deliver on behalf of our nations and our allies.

I am genuinely excited by where we are as a navy at the moment.

We are in a great place, and we are going to become even better. A Global Navy, going further for a Global Britain.

KEEP UP WITH THE RN TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME
Visit the Naval Service Transformation Hub on defnet



Appy days

Making your life so much easier

CAPTAIN Christopher Skidmore describes how the recently-released Navy mobile application relates to People Transformation and what its future development might look like.

To all those many of you who have helped with the testing, development and given us your ideas already, this article will not be new. Hopefully it will reflect what you have said and thought.

Practically all of us have mobile devices with applications on them and its something that we take for granted and now expect.

However, a simple, small thing like the recently released mobile application for naval personnel as far as Navy People Transformation is concerned is actually a potential deal breaker if we could not get it to work as a starting point.

Transformation is about doing things differently and better and as far as people are concerned it's about trying to enable and empower them to take ownership of their naval careers – to enter into a conversation with their employer which is based on mutual respect and communication.

Many in the navy would claim that is the case already – we now have a significant amount of evidence from this project to say that it isn't always the case.

We need to get to that conversation and alongside a review of the divisional system to a better and more productive employer – employee relationship.

The phone application is intended to be a part of this – especially keeping the service relevant to the culture and behaviours of the people we are and will recruit, and frankly to the world in which we actually live the rest of our lives.

This is the context to the mobile phone application that is now available to all naval service personnel through the Defence Gateway. If you haven't had a look – please do. The challenge from 2SL was to deliver.

But everyone was saying to him, nice idea but no chance; too difficult; can't be done.

The answer put an empowered Lieutenant in charge. It took four months to produce something that

was General Data Protection Regulation compliant and from a security accreditation perspective safe.

A little bit of testing the boundaries; some programme management which didn't involve endless colouring in and reporting and bonza we are there.

It's only a start – it's a Beta version; the current functionality is an initial step. However, we could have waited months, buffed and polished it to an inch of its



This is not pie in the sky – these concepts are now in touching distance.

CAPT CM SKIDMORE

life, run it out and it would have taken us two years and be obsolete.

So we are on a journey. But we all have had these journeys everyday with our other applications on our personal phones so why should the navy be any different.

This people centric application is not about cramming it full of worthy documents and rules.

If you want to read BR3 download it. We want the application to be useful and help people remove the nausea from their working lives and more broadly help them, whether its ordering replacement kit, thinking about career opportunities or dealing with mental health challenges.

And those applications should treat them with respect and as adults. A conversation.

The images on this page (which are mock ups) will hopefully give an idea of the sort of thing we are aiming at.

This is not pie in the sky – the current Beta version has shown us that these concepts are now in touching distance. We can deliver them.

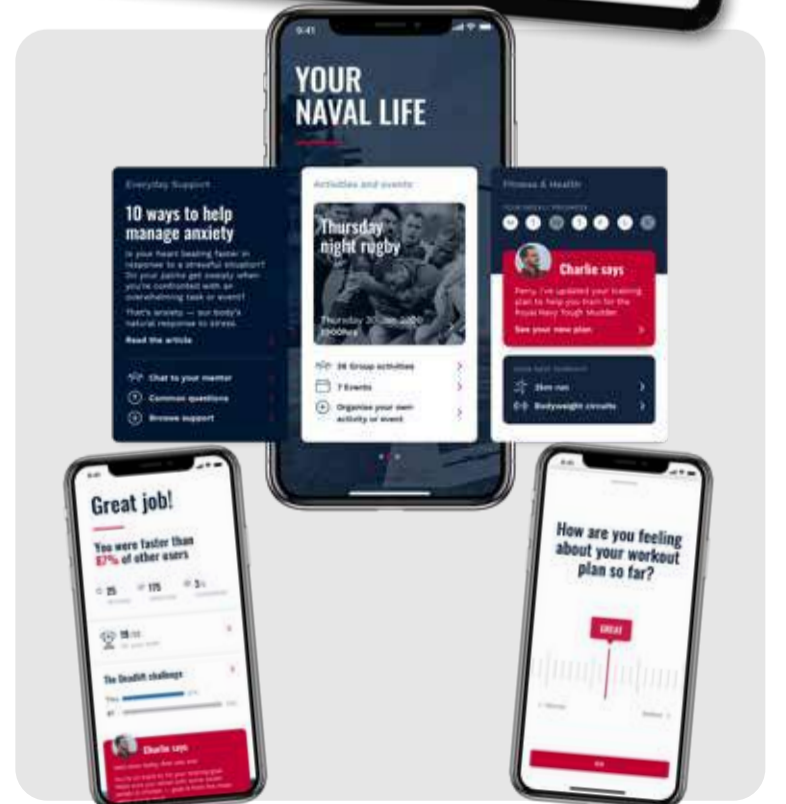
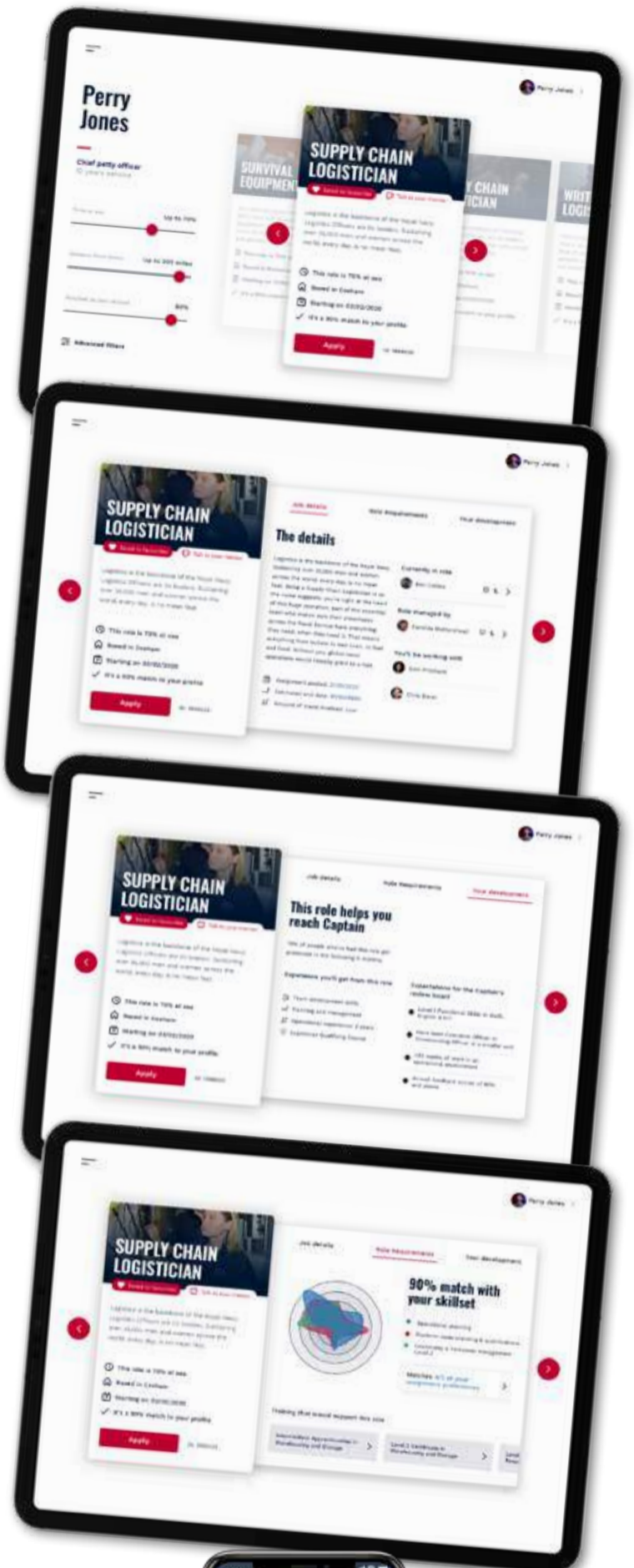
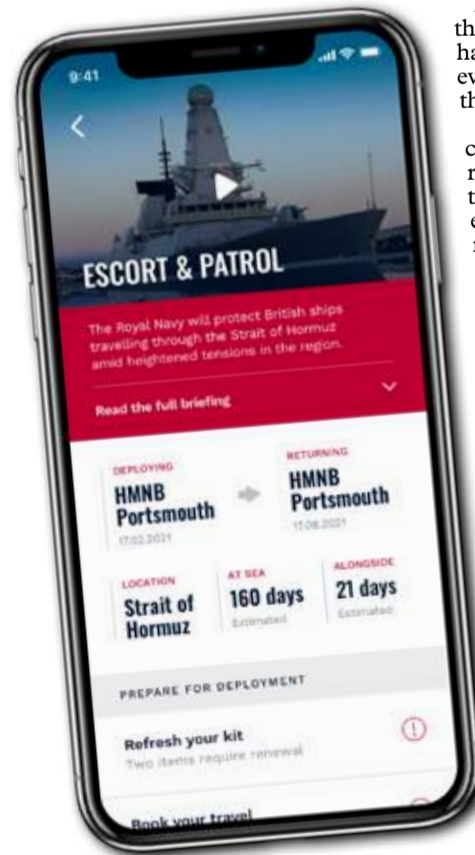
The focus starts with the outcome or the result. It is not about digitalising existing often complicated and pain-in-the-neck processes that exist for themselves.

Delivering some of these things will be easy; some difficult.

Undoubtedly we will fail on some and others will not pass the so what test.

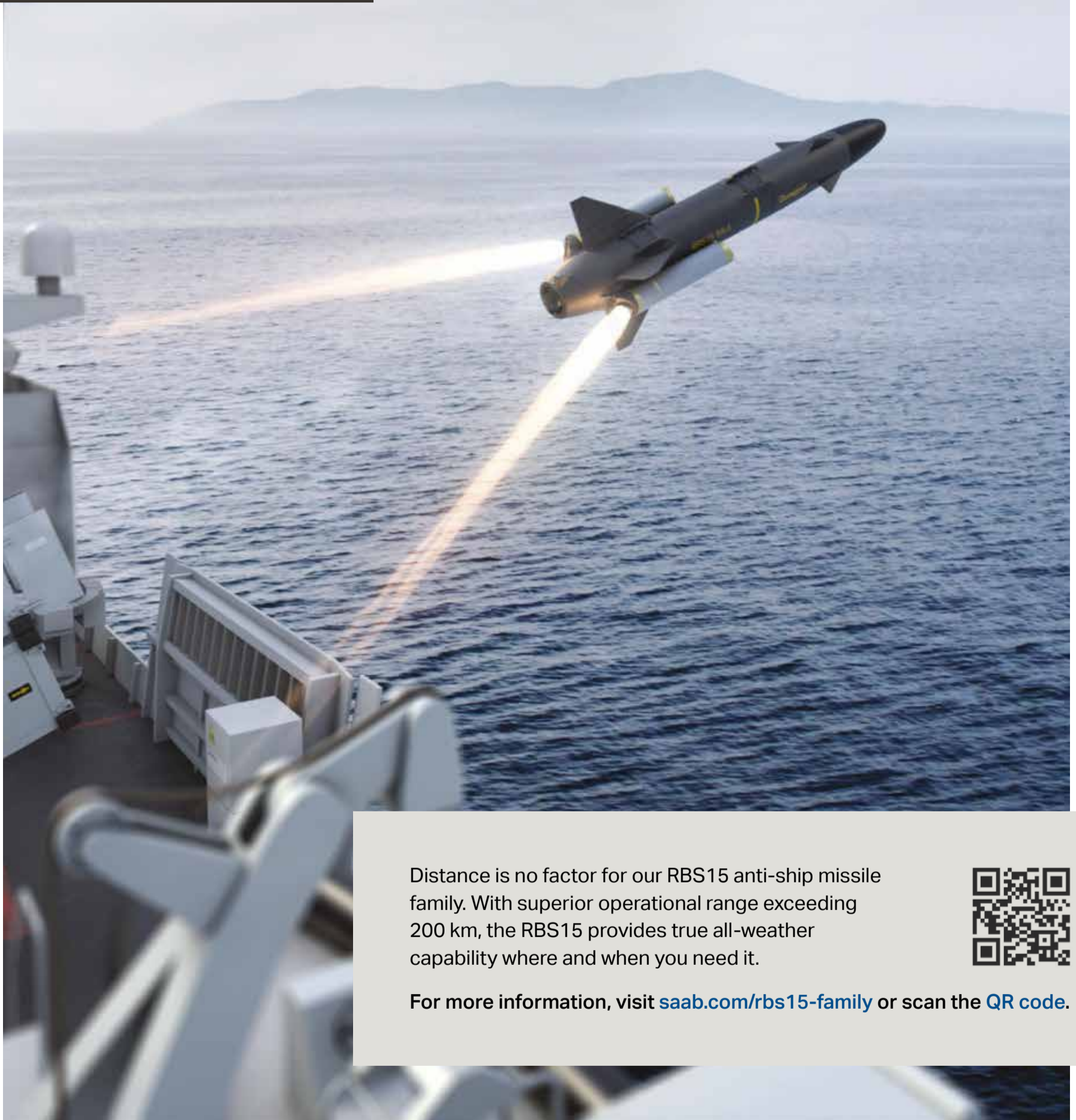
But in many ways this is just a microcosm for people transformation.

And like transformation if you want to get involved with this project with ideas or testing or even coding lets us know. And you will be.



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SAAB



Start of new home

GOSPORT Sea Cadets have begun the process of new facilities for their volunteers and young people.

With the help of local MP Caroline Dineage and senior MOD Civil Servant Rachel Asquith, ground has been cut on the new station which is at Fort Blockhouse.

The Ministry of Defence has granted a 25-year lease with £400,000 funding for a purpose-built block with classroom shower & changing facilities, a large boat stowage building and a workshop.

Gosport Sea Cadets had been based at Royal Clarence Yard, until the site was recently sold.

Chairman Gavin Pritchard said: 'A lot of people have worked very hard to make our new boating station a reality and we will be able to come back here for good in a short space of time. Thanks to everyone involved.'

Pictures: Gosport Globe



Delivering on diving

A GROUP of students from Kingston Maurward College visited the Defence Diving School on Horsea Island in Portsmouth to see for themselves what life as a military diver entails.

The group began their visit with a briefing by army diver Sergeant Craig Cardy, which was followed by a tour of the island.

They also received a brief on sea survival, together with an insight into the equipment used by the divers.

Kingston Maurward college student, Ashleigh Cornish, 18, who was part of the visiting group, said: "I really enjoyed the trip to the dive school. It was interesting to see the navy and army working together, especially in diving, considering I didn't know the army had divers."

"I didn't know what I wanted to join after I left college but after the trip to the dive centre, I have really been considering diving as a future career in the army."

Fellow student Joseph Martell-Mizzi, 17, said: "I really enjoyed the trip to the dive school. I didn't know the army had divers, I thought it was just the navy."

"It was good to see the Army and Navy working together. It was interesting to hear about the different pay scales in the army and navy. I am now considering a job as a diver in the Royal Navy although the fitness tests look difficult."

Kingston Maurward College is in Dorchester, Dorset. They specialise in providing a wide range of full-time, short courses, apprenticeships and university-level courses.



Picture: LPhot Ben Corbett

Enthusiastic team fills 1SL with pride

ADMIRAL Tony Radakin has officially welcomed his First Sea Lord Cadets (1SL Cadets) for 2020 at a ceremony on board HMS Victory in Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard.

Eleven cadets were appointed, representing each of the Naval Cadet Forces' headquarters.

The principal aim of the appointment of the 1SL Cadets is to raise the profile of the Naval Cadet community through exposure of a top-quality cadet to professional bodies and social contacts that deal with Navy Board Members and other high-ranking RN Officers.

The appointment offers these Cadets a privileged insight into the higher echelons of the Naval Service.

Six Sea Cadets were appointed, Cadet Cpl Laurelle, from Waltham Forest, Leading Cadet Emma, from

Inverness, Petty Officer Cadet Ellie, from Malvern, Petty Officer Cadet Poppy, from Southampton, Petty Officer Cadet John, from Connah's Quay, Petty Officer Cadet Jonathan, from Workshop.

Admiral Radakin said: "We the Royal Navy are the beneficiaries of what the Sea Cadets do."

"What they create in and beyond their units is fantastic for the nation, their enthusiasm and commitment is phenomenal."

1SL Cadets are approved and agreed within each of the Naval Cadet Forces' Headquarters, the Volunteer Cadet Corps) and the Combined Cadet Force. 1SL Cadets are appointed for a year with each cadet no older than 17 years on appointment to ensure they can serve for a whole year.

They are expected to remain within

their parent Naval Cadet Force for the duration of the appointment.

They must also be of senior Leading Cadet/Corporal or Petty Officer/Sergeant Cadet rank.

During their tenure, they have exposure to Navy Board members, Trustees of parent cadet organisation, organise and build area forums and provide feedback to their respective headquarters. They will attend formal parades, ship visits, royal occasions, opening ceremonies, presentations and awards and receptions.

"My cadets should take enormous confidence and pride in what they have achieved, whether for the Sea Cadets or in their broader lives, but more importantly in how they are growing up as young men and women," said Admiral Radakin.

Donation will improve training facilities

REDDITCH and Bromsgrove Sea Cadets 595 have received a £1,000 cash boost from Persimmon Homes South Midlands.

The grant was awarded as part of the firm's Community Champion scheme.

The money will help buy equipment and extras to train the cadets in catering and engineering.

Lieutenant James Sanders, who applied for the funding on behalf of the Sea Cadets, said: "Our aim is to provide our cadets, aged between ten and 18, with the best headstart in life."

"We help young people gain skills in sailing, water sports, adventure training, engineering and much more."

"With more equipment we can increase what we teach and ensure that they get the best training environment possible."

"We are extremely thankful."



Cadets' tribute to K13 victims



● Right, veterans at the service; Below, the K13 salvage operation at Gare Loch



TWO Royal Marines Cadets had the honour of ringing the bell of submarine K13 during a memorial service.

The cadets, from Helensburgh Sea Scouts, joined Royal Navy submariners and veterans at a service at Faslane Chaplaincy to commemorate the sinking of K13.

The early steam-driven submarine sank in the Gare Loch in 1917 with 80 people onboard, leading to the death of 32 men, some of them buried at Faslane Cemetery.

Members of the Submariners' Association visited HM Naval Base Clyde for a weekend of K13 commemorations, beginning with a trip to Govan where a monument to shipyard workers who died during the tragedy is situated in Elder Park.

The next day they joined naval personnel at the Naval Base's Church of St John the Evangelist for a solemn ceremony led by Royal Navy Chaplains.

Members of TS Neptune were given the

honour of ringing K13's ship's bell during the ceremony – 32 times, once for every person who perished on board.

Submarine K13 sank during her sea trials on January 29, 1917. Onboard were Royal Navy Submariners, Admiralty Pilots and workers from shipbuilders Fairfield's.

Captain of K13, Lieutenant Commander Godfrey Herbert, accompanied by Commander Francis Goodhart, who was the visiting Captain of submarine K14, attempted to escape from the stricken vessel, hoping to use their expert knowledge to guide rescue efforts.

Using the space between the inner and outer hatches as an airlock the pair tried to make it to the surface. Tragically Commander Goodhart died during the effort.

The 57-hour ordeal came to an end when an airline was attached allowing the bow to be raised and a hole cut in the side of the submarine. 48 survivors were rescued.

Main image: LPhot Finn Stainer-Hutchins



● Lt Cdr Derek Scrivener

Cadet bonds have lasted us a lifetime

ONE hundred former Fleetwood Sea Cadets came together for a special reunion.

They swapped stories and shared memories of their days with the hugely successful Fleetwood unit when they met up for a reunion at the cricket club.

Paul Reynolds, who organised the reunion, said: "It shows the bond we had and still have 50 or so years on to Fleetwood Sea Cadets.

"This was reinforced on the evening by the tremendous reception given to our leader over many decades, Lieutenant Commander Derek Scrivener, now 92 years young.

"Without his and his fellow officers dedication and motivation, Fleetwood Sea Cadets wouldn't have been the successful unit it was.

"It was the best Sea Cadet unit in the country, bar none for many years, we had the best bands, we won every single band contest we entered. Fleetwood Sea Cadet unit was what every other unit in the land aspired to!"

From the Sea Cadets, many went on to have very successful careers in the forces.

Some served with distinction in the Royal Navy, joining as seamen and gaining promotion to the rank of Commander. Amongst them there have been honours including MBE's and BEMs.

"They all owe a major part of their success due to their time in Fleetwood Sea Cadets under Lt Cdr Scrivener's direction," said Paul.

"A group of ex Cadets are in the process of submitting an application to the government to get Lt Cdr Scrivener recognition for his unwavering dedication to generations of the youth of Fleetwood over many years."

Former cadets travelled from all over the country and even some from Spain and Cyprus.

Picture: Dan Martino

Green light for unit's expansion plans

CASTLEFORD Sea Cadets are to further develop their site, after being given the go-ahead to build new premises at the old Fryston Colliery site.

With £130,000 of funding from Wakefield Council, the group are currently using prefab buildings off Wheldon Road and want two new buildings to cope with the increase of numbers.

With growing numbers of new cadets, two modular structures will go up, including a kitchenette.

Hunter killer now on DVD

THAT'S hunter-killer, not *Hunter Killer*, the Gerard Butler Hollywood blockbuster... The hunter-killer in question is HMS Courageous, whose story is recounted over nearly three hours on a new DVD.

Former crew came up with the idea, then the money to fund, a 170-minute documentary celebrating the boat's career from being laid down in 1968 through to her retirement in 1992 and present-day role as a museum piece in Devonport naval base.

Courageous was the third of the navy's Churchill-class first-generation nuclear-powered Fleet submarines.

Two years in the making and endorsed by Rear Admiral John Weale, the head of the Silent Service until the end of last year, the documentary is split into five segments, each roughly 30 minutes long, concentrating on: the hull and construction, 'hotel services' provided aboard (food, fresh water, heads etc); the propulsion system, dealing with fires and the art of escape; the boat's tactical weapons systems and, finally, a history of the boat and her achievements in service, plus her unique decommissioned role as a museum – she's believed to be the only nuclear-powered hunter-killer on the planet which can be visited by the public (providing you pass a security check).

To order the DVD (£20, plus £3 postage and packaging) visit www.hmscourageous.co.uk/html/shop.html. You can use Paypal to purchase the two-DVD set, with proceeds going to the naval charities.

Can you help with medals?

AN appeal has been made to return a RN seviceman's medals to his family.

Heather McKay came across the medals, which were kept by her grandfather Peter Henderson Clark, of Edinburgh.

The medals belong to one Richard Archer (sometimes recorded as Arthur) Gibson. He was born on September 4 in Consett, Durham and he served from November 17 1924 to January 23 1947. His service number was M38629 and his rank at leaving service was temporary Warrant Aircraft Officer.

"I don't know what the connection was between Mr Gibson and my family, however I'd be really delighted if the family of Mr Gibson could be traced so that I could return the medals to them," said Heather.

Anyone who can help is asked to email Heather at theathermckay@gmail.com.



PICTURE Royal Navy veterans.

You're probably imagining men bearing standards. Wearing blazers, breasts bristling with medals. Enjoying a tot. Toasting old comrades. Spinning the odd seafaring yarn, Uncle Albert-fashion.

Not wearing puffer jackets, with compass in hand on a barren heath in the middle of winter ready to join men and women – or boys and girls in some cases – on a four-hour moorland slog in near-zero temperatures.

But here we are. On Dartmoor. With 60 would-be sailors from HMS Raleigh, two thirds of their way through training. Plus a handful of Royal Naval Association volunteers, braving the hostile environment and giving up their free time to help the youngsters.

Gutter Tor refuge is a largely-unknown gem of a facility, a hostel-like granite building under a cluster of trees at the end of a single-lane road.

Owned by Raleigh, used by all the RN's establishments in the South West, it's a haven of warmth (roaring fire, piping hot showers, kitchen) and civilisation (satellite TV, electric lighting, phone signal) in the middle of a primeval landscape.

You're only 30 minutes' drive from the centre of Plymouth, but with the cloud hugging the tree tops and a sleety rain driving across the bleak terrain, you might as well be at the end of the earth.

Trainee ratings spend two days in this hostile environment. They've already walked and scrambled from Burrator Reservoir in the valley below to get to the refuge – no bus could navigate the narrow, winding lanes up to the outpost.

With them on that several-mile hike – and now dishing out a steaming-hot shepherd's pie (or hot vegetarian option) – are those RNA mentors, part of a 26-strong team of former sailors who volunteer each week to help the next generation of ratings through their ten-week transition from civilian to sailor at the Torpoint establishment.

Four veterans are assigned to Nelson 26 – Raleigh's 26th intake of recruits in 2019, whose course straddles the turn of the year.

They shout encouragement as trainees struggle through the cold waters at Pier Cellars during adventurous training, or undertaking Raleigh's assault course, or offer guidance on preparing kit for muster, ironing. They'll spin dits over a wet, listen to concerns.

Leading the mentoring is Les Yeoman, a former chief petty officer medical assistant with 33 years' experience in the RN and another ten in the RFA.

Les (pictured, above left in the red puffer jacket) joined as a boy in the mid-60s – a world away from 2020 when it comes to technology and culture, yet facing many of the same challenges a 16-year-old arriving at Raleigh today.

"I went through the same things – away from my family for the first time, sharing messes with strangers, I had the same feeling when I walked through the gates or walked up the gangway of my

first ship," says Les, who's shared his experience and knowledge for the past four years.

"We're with them from week one, day one, looking after them, staying with them throughout. On that first day, we tell recruits: We want to see you in ten weeks' time at the passing out ceremony.

"We also tell them that they've already made the best decision of their lives so far by joining up, that they will see the world, make friends in training they'll remember for the next 30 or 40 years."

The initiative has been running for more than a decade, but it's grown from a simple chat in the classroom at Raleigh to the more practical mentoring and assistance offered today.

What's not changed is the enthusiasm of the volunteers... or the appreciation of the recruits.

"The veterans are always really positive – and the more encouragement you get, the easier the course is to get through. You need someone to 'gear you up'," said Charlotte Woods, a 28-year-old trainee dental nurse from Cornwall.

At just 16, Jake Orrell from Blackburn is one of Nelson 26's youngest recruits. He struggled with his kit musters. "Thanks to their help I eventually passed with flying colours," the teenager said.

"They have done everything they could for us – they're legends. If you are struggling, they will step in. They could not have been more help."

And for the volunteers, mentoring mixes nostalgia with a warm feeling inside.

"For us, we're reminded of the camaraderie of naval life, but most of all, you're giving something back," says Les. "It's great to see a recruit on the first day pass out ten weeks later."

By Gutter Tor, the recruits are well down the road to passing out. It's week seven – they're more sailor than civvy.

"The first couple of weeks of admin are a bit dull, but after that we've loved the course," said trainee seaman specialist Connor Southern aged 19, from Saltash. "And we are loving the outdoor element."

Right now, he's possibly alone in that sentiment. It's barely above freezing. The horizontal rain is driven between the slats on the huge barn at the rear of the refuge which serves as the 'dining room' for the recruits.

With stomachs lined, the recruits don all manner of warm headgear, pull up snoods, wrap scarves around them, put on woollen gloves, and finally lift a rucksack weighing 15-20kg containing all they will need to survive on the moor.

This afternoon's challenge: a five-six-mile trek via eight checkpoints in three hours before bivvying in tents and sleeping bags after an evening meal à la ration pack.

The recruits move 'up the line' – on to the moor. An instructor is with them. So too a mentor. They march off together and into the bleak expanse of the tor, disappearing as the Dartmoor mist devours them.

Pictures: LPhoto Alex Ceolin, FRPU West

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Liverpool's merchant memorial completes major renovation

A 'ONCE-in-a-generation' restoration project has been completed on a memorial paying tribute to 1,400 seafarers from Liverpool who died during World War 2.

Liverpool Naval Memorial, located at the centre of the city's dockyard looking over the Mersey, had started to deteriorate after years of exposure to the elements.

Two half-tonne Portland stone globes, which bear maritime designs, were replaced after some impressive craftsmanship from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's stonemasons.

With no blueprints, the stonemasons spent two weeks carefully tracing every millimetre of the intricate designs to hand-carve like for like replacements.

The stonework took more than four months to complete.

"The Liverpool Naval Memorial has pride of place at the heart of the city's docks, a fitting location to remember these 1,400 men who took to the seas and sadly never

returned," said James King, director of Commonwealth War Graves Commission's UK and Northern Area.

"This location on the banks of the Mersey means the stone takes a battering from the elements and it's important we care for this memorial and its intricate design features.

"This project really was a once-in-a-generation opportunity for our stonemasons to show the kind of skills it takes to preserve our heritage."

The memorial was unveiled in 1952 and remembers local men but also crews from around the world who supported the Royal Navy during the war.

It was opened as a single point to remember the missing dead of the Merchant Navy who served under Royal Navy command.

They came from more than 120 different ships ranging from ocean liners to rescue tugs that had all been requisitioned to help the war effort.



No drama with Ken's diorama

BET you never thought you could fit HMS Queen Elizabeth, HMS Dragon and RFA Tideforce on your kitchen table...

But here they are, thanks to modelmaker and former sailor Kenneth O'Brien from Southend-on-Sea.

Having completed a diorama of HMS Illustrious with mini replicas of two ships he used to serve aboard – frigates Lynx and Eskimo – the 69-year-old was looking around for another modelling challenge and decided to tackle Britain's biggest warship.

There is no kit of the 65,000-tonne carrier... so Kenneth decided to build her. Out of balsa wood. From scratch. 1:350 scale.

"There were no plans or drawing of her, for obvious reasons, as HMS Prince of Wales had not even been completed," the veteran explained.

"All the information that I needed had then, to come from the web which, surprisingly, gave me everything I required for size, shape and colour."

Various websites, enthusiast groups and forums helped to fill in the gaps, such as providing close-ups of random sections of the ship, as well as the imagery and information being fed back from everything the carrier did.

The model was almost complete when Queen Elizabeth headed to the States last autumn for her Westlant 19 workout... which gave Kenneth another idea: why not add a tanker to the display? And when he heard there had been a simultaneous RAS, HMS Dragon was also included in the diorama (she came in kit form).

All this effort might have gone largely

unnoticed, but being part of the wider HMS Queen Elizabeth community led to an invite to her homecoming to Portsmouth in December, and a chance to show his models to the ship's company.

"That was a dream come true as far as I was concerned," Kenneth said.

"Not only did I get to exhibit the model but I was there when both carriers docked one in front of the other for the first time.

"Then I was asked to take it on board to display it in the hangar, after which we were shown around and went up on the upper deck and, of course, the ski jump.

"It was an absolutely cracking day out and one that I shall never forget."

And one which he recounted to his hometown RNA shipmates – naturally showing them his impressive models to boot.

The Navy's here (again)

SAILORS past and present commemorated one of the most stirring episodes in World War 2 – 80 years after the action made worldwide news.

Services were held in Worthing and at HMS Raleigh in Torpoint to remember 33 men from HMS Cossack, armed with rifles, bayonets and even a cutlass, who stormed a Nazi tanker in a Norwegian fjord and released 299 merchant sailors held prisoner for months.

The boarding – known to history as the Altmark Incident, named after the tanker – was one of the few highlights of the Phoney War.

The man who gave the rallying cry during the action – and was also the sole British casualty – was the focal point for the main act of remembrance in Durrington Cemetery, Worthing.

The West Sussex graveyard is the last resting place of gunner Warrant Officer John James Frederick Smith, who won the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on February 17 1940.

The 35-year-old, who was on loan to Cossack from cruiser HMS Aurora, famously shouted: "The Navy's here" when the prisoners in the bowels of the tanker asked what was the cause of the commotion aboard.

WO Smith was wounded in the shoulder by a booby trap but



● Commander Neil Hall (SHAPE) recounts the deeds of WO John Smith during the boarding of the Altmark in 1940

Picture: LPhot Paul Halliwell

survived; the Altmark's surgeon treated his injury.

The Briton's daughter Sheila Sandford, just six at the time, was guest of honour as sailors from Portsmouth-based destroyer HMS Dauntless joined local naval and military veterans and representatives from the Norwegian Embassy at the former senior rating's graveside.

John Smith died in 1973 having never told his family about his role in the incident – so the memorial ceremony came as a surprise.

"My father was 'typically naval' – upright and reserved. Today it really come home to me how terribly important it was," she said.

The action also inspires today's dedicated Royal Navy and Royal Marine boarding teams who train at HMS Raleigh in Cornwall – the headquarters of board-and-search operations is the Cossack Building.

Royal British Legion veterans joined personnel from 47 Commando Royal Marines – who teach 21st-Century boarding

tactics to hundreds of sailors and marines every year.

"We thought it fitting to hold a service of Remembrance here at Raleigh," said Captain Anthony Swan, Royal Marines, Officer-in-Charge of the Board and Search School

"It has helped improve and strengthen our relationship with the Cossack Association and is a real privilege to be a part of."

Back in 1940, the Altmark incident was a cause of celebration in the Allied media. The prisoners had been held for several months aboard the tanker after being captured during the raiding spree carried out by Hitler's 'pocket battleship' Graf Spee.

The warship was cornered off South America in December 1939 and subsequently scuttled off Montevideo, but her supporting tanker evaded the Royal Navy vessels patrolling the Atlantic. Altmark made it as far as the Norwegian coast before RAF reconnaissance located her.

That prompted the Royal Navy's dramatic action, sending destroyer HMS Cossack into Altmark's hiding place, Jøssingfjord, near the southwestern tip of Norway.

Eight Germans were killed in the ensuing boarding which served as the spark to the Scandinavian powder keg, prompting Hitler to invade Norway two months later.

'Channel Dasher' dies

THE last officer to take part in the daring, but failed attempt to prevent Hitler's surface ships charging through the Dover Strait has died.

Sub Lieutenant John 'Bill' Wedge is believed to have been the last of scores of naval officers – in warships, motor boats and Swordfish torpedo bombers – involved in the 'Channel Dash' in February 1942.

Hitler ordered three of his largest ships – battle-cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and cruiser Prinz Eugen – to return to Germany from ports in France to avoid regular bombing by the RAF.

Aged just 20, former Barclays Bank employee John Wedge – nicknamed Bill after his father, 'Bosun Bill', who served in the Merchant Navy – served aboard the World War 1-vintage V&W-class destroyer, HMS Worcester.

The ship had sailed that day for gunnery practice, only to be ordered to intercept the German force when it was belatedly spotted.

Swordfish from 825 Naval Air Squadron were ordered to halt the enemy ships – but all six antiquated torpedo bombers were shot out of the sky by the Luftwaffe 'umbrella' surrounding the warships.

The half dozen destroyers located the Germans off the Dutch coast mid-afternoon after ploughing through rough seas at full speed.

Bill Wedge was in charge of the quarterdeck pom-poms – anti-aircraft guns – which were called into action to keep German aircraft at bay, before Worcester's 4.7in guns began to engage the three enemy heavy ships.

Worcester closed to within about 2,000 yards of her foes before unleashing her torpedoes.



"We were already being hit, but it was a relief at least to be turning away. However we continued to be straddled and hit and quite shortly we were lying stopped," Mr Wedge recalled (his account can be found at vandwdestroyerassociation.org.uk/HMS_Worcester_Channeldash.html).

Worcester's bridge was peppered by fire, killing most of the bridge team, the ship's surgeon and sick bay attendant cared for the wounded, and superhuman efforts by engineers eventually restored power for the battered destroyer to limp back to Parkeston Quay in time for Mr Wedge to enjoy the evening at a local hotel.

He left HMS Worcester shortly afterwards, subsequently serving in veteran battleship HMS Iron Duke, new Captain-class frigate HMS Garlies on U-boat hunting duties in the Western Approaches, and finally destroyer HMS Wheatland in the months immediately after the war's end until he returned to the world of banking upon being demobbed.





● Commander Samantha Kinsey-Briggs

Tough going trying to keep on track in forest

THIRTEEN Naval Service athletes competed for the Inter-Service Orienteering Championships.

The event, which took place at Lightning Tree Hill, near Cinderford in Gloucestershire, saw runners from all three armed forces compete.

The winter weather was bright but cold and much of the terrain near the Forest of Dean comprised thick, sticky mud.

Slips and falls were a regular occurrence, but the added challenge did not halt the fun, with all competitors leaving the event tired, dirty, but in high spirits.

The RNRM Orienteering Club put out a team of 13 runners across the men's and women's events.

The women put in a strong combined performance, with fourth place for Sub Lieutenant Lauren Eyre and fifth place for Lieutenant Commander Megan Ashton.

Sixteen women competed, with the RNRM team securing second place overall.

The army put in strong performances in both competitions, winning the men's and women's events.

The RAF Men just pipped the RNRM men orienteers to second place, with Colour Sergeant Alex Heath RM achieving the best RN team result at 16th out of 28.

With several new orienteers on the navy team, there is good opportunity to develop strength for future competitions.

The RNRM Orienteering club enters events throughout the year and are always looking for new members to help us take on Army and RAF.

If interested, please contact Lt Cdr Megan Ashton or Lt Cdr Oli Nokes at Megan.Ashton371@mod.gov.uk or Oliver.Nokes466@mod.gov.uk.

Pictures: Andy Johnson (Flickr andyjohnson97)



● From left, Marine Toby Huthwaite, and WO2 Nigel Lane



● Clockwise from above, LICpl Jon-Lee Fielding leads the attack against the Northern Territories; AB Kesia Gerald defends against the New Zealand Army; The victorious men's volleyball team

BONZER TIME IN BONDI





ROYAL Navy volleyball players visited Australia for their first major overseas tour in five years, writes Lieutenant Commander Daniel Bonner.

The RN Volleyball Association took a women's, men's and mixed teams to take part in the prestigious Australian Defence Force (ADF) Volleyball Championships.

With 15 of the touring party players competing overseas for the first time it was certainly going to be challenge for the association in what is an exceptionally tough eight-day tournament that is on a par with the UK Crown Services competition.

Convinced that the tournament would come down to small margins, nothing was left to chance and the association's latest recruit, strength and conditioning coach LPT Rachel Luckham set the tone with an eight-week pre-tour programme.

This, coupled with impressive performances in final pre-tour matches against National League Division 2 opposition ensured both the men's and women's teams departed the UK in confident spirits.

With limited time to get over jet lag, the first three days were all about recovery and final game-based training preparations at their holding camp at Randwick Barracks in Sydney.

With training complete for the indoor competition, the first opportunity for silverware would come at the ADF Beach tournament held on Maroubra beach, Sydney.

Any thoughts that the 'Pomms' would offer little competition on the sand were soon forgotten, as it was soon apparent that we were not just there to make up numbers.

After an incredibly tough day in searing heat, S/Lt Richardson and LH Gerald narrowly missed out on the women's finals, however the men's pairing of Lt Moir RN and L/Cpl Fielding RM did make it through and went on to dominate their South Queensland opposition for the gold.

Also, in the same competition representing the RN was that of a father and son combination, Cdre Dave Childs (the RNVA President) and Lt Jonny Childs who, with

a combined age of 80 produced a great showing.

In addition to the pairs competition a team was also entered into the mixed four's division.

Despite having never trained together, LH Jones, Musn Richardson, Mne Bushnell, AET Wainwright, AET Yeomans and AET Adamson were outstanding and ensured that a second gold came the way of the RNVA.

With no time to rest it was straight onto RAAF Richmond for the indoor tournament.

Limited in playing time as a group, the RN women grew into the competition and after eight matches the team found themselves one win away from a bronze medal match.

Led by LH Thurlow's attacking prowess and some pretty raucous support from the men, the women got over the line and were through to the bronze medal final against the experienced NZ Army team.

Digging deep into what was the smallest squad of players at the competition, the women finally ran out of steam and lost out in what was an exceptionally hard-fought match.

At the midway point in the tournament there was a short reprieve for some of the players whilst the Inter-Service matches took place and an 'invitational' friendly mixed match between the Royal Navy and the Australian Navy.

Fielding a male contingent of the coaching and officiating staff from the touring party, the team was bolstered by the hitting power of Lt Jonny Childs alongside members of the women's squad.

Undeterred by the opposition who at times were only playing one female, the RN women Lt Connolly, S/Lt Richardson and LH Thurlow remained ever-present on court and were magnificent as they took the honours.

On the men's side of the tournament the RN team faced stiff competition with Northern Territories, the NZ Army and hosts NSW among the favourites.

After seven days of intense pool play the men topped the seedings going into 'finals day'.

Arriving at the gym in a confident but slightly nervous mood it was to be a battle of the touring sides in the first semi-final with the RN facing the New Zealand Army.

The first two sets were nip and tuck with defence being tested to the full. Key in this was some great blocking by Mne Luke Bushnell and

backcourt defence through Lt Matt Johnson and AET Baden Yeomans.

Spurred on by being only a set away from the finals, set three would become the AET Josh Wainwright and Lt Jonny Childs show, with both producing a great display of spiking to secure the win.

As NSW had won the other semi-final and with the pool matches against each other standing at one win each, it was going to be a tough final.

Getting out of the blocks quickly had been something the team had done well all week but it was soon apparent that they were not going to have it all their own way and soon found themselves one set to nil down.

The men found another gear and took the next two sets through accurate and aggressive serving led by AB Akeme Franklyn and with some great attacking options being given by setter Lt Callum Moir.

Leading 2-1 and almost over the line, NSW were not going to just roll over and hit right back to square the final at 2-2.

With fitness and conditioning now starting to play its part, the RN stretched into an early four-point lead and kept playing aggressively to ensure that they would not be denied the win.

In what was a truly incredible tournament where every player contributed an immense amount, it was fitting that L/Cpl Jon-Lee Fielding closed out the final point.

The ADF awards ceremony followed that evening and in addition to the impressive haul of silverware by the RNVA teams, individual recognition was given with the award of the Finals Most Valuable Player (MVP) going to L/Cpl Jon-Lee Fielding who additionally shared the overall tournament Men's MVP with the RN setter, Lt Callum Moir.

Away from the court, time was found for players to relax and enjoy the sights of Sydney and the stunning Blue Mountains along with finding some kangaroos.

The devastating fires also prompted the touring party to make a donation to the Australian Red Cross.

The RN Volleyball Association is actively looking to recruit players of all standards into their ranks ready for their next challenge and that of the Crown and Inter-Services this summer.

If anyone is interested in joining, they can contact the association via the men's team manager Lt Callum Moir – callum.moir102@mod.gov.uk – or women's team manager Musn Nadia Richardson at Nadia.workman101@mod.gov.uk



Dreams really do come true, even if you have to wait

ROYAL Marines Colour Sergeant John Jackson has finally picked up a bronze medal for his efforts at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic as part of Team GB's four-man bobsleigh.

Along with fellow team members Bruce Tasker, Stuart Benson and Joel Fearon he originally finished fifth behind two Russian crews, who were later disqualified for doping.

And after a five-year wait the quartet received their medals at the Team GB Ball in London.

"We will never have that Olympic moment, but receiving our medal at the Team GB Ball was a very special moment," said John, the pilot of the crew.

"It has been an incredible journey with highs and lows within it. I think the real low point was crashing at my first Olympics in 2010, and on many occasions in good Royal Marines humour, I was asked, 'are you the driver of the Olympic upside down bobsleigh team?' However, my second Olympics in 2014 was slightly better."

Initially in Sochi 2014 Team GB finished outside the medals, just .11 seconds behind teams from Latvia, USA and two from Russia. Overall they were happy with the result at the time and believed they were beaten by better teams.

However, in during 2016, it was reported by the World Anti-Doping Agency that Russia had used a state-sponsored doping programme to win, which involved tampering with test results and urine samples of potentially more than 1,000 Russian athletes for years leading into Sochi, their home Olympics.

John continued: "After anti-doping rule violations were broken, the two Russian teams in front of us were disqualified moving us into third."

"Out of the eight athletes in their two sleds, six were found to have been involved in tampering, the remaining two didn't have



enough evidence against them to prove it.

"However, one of them was subsequently banned a year later for doping. After a long and emotional roller-coaster of many Russian appeals, in November 2019 we received our Olympic bronze medal, presented by Princess Anne at the TeamGB Ball in London.

"What added to the whole farcical journey we had been on, is the medal we received had a spelling mistake on it, so we had to send it back to get a new one made delivered through the post."

"I look back at my bobsleigh career and over the years I have competed at seven World Championships, two Winter Olympics and won medals at World Cup, European Championships and Olympic Games.

"I came into the sport by accident really and think to myself, how did that happen. A big reason why it did happen is from the support I had from the Royal Marines and Royal Navy. I am eternally grateful for their support and can't thank them enough, as it allowed me to achieve my dream of winning an Olympic medal."





We're faster than you...

ON glassy waters in the Gulf, HMS Montrose puts on a burst of speed as she crosses the wake of the world's largest passenger liner and flagship of the Cunard line, RMS Queen Mary 2.

The frigate encountered the 150,000-tonne ocean liner while conducting routine operations in the Gulf and while the Queen Mary 2 was on the latest leg of a 113-day round-the-world cruise which began and ends in New York and will continue via the Gulf to Sri Lanka, and beyond.

Queen Mary 2 boasts 15 restaurants and bars, five swimming pools, a casino, ballroom, theatre, and the even a planetarium serving 2,700 passengers, whose needs are met by 1,300 crew.

She is two-and-a half-times the length of Montrose but what the frigate lacks in swimming pools, casinos, ballrooms, and theatres... she more than makes up with a state-of-the-art helicopter capable of tracking around 200 contacts simultaneously, anti-ship and anti-air missiles, and a 4.5 inch naval gun, plus she bristles with cutting-edge sensors – all in the hands of around 200 sailors and Royal Marines.

Montrose is permanently deployed to the UK's Naval Support Facility in Bahrain and run by two crews – one aboard, one

back in Britain enjoying leave/undergoing training – allowing the Royal Navy to maintain a forward presence in the Middle East, rather than repeatedly deploying/bringing home a frigate to and from the region.



It means the ships spend more time on operations promoting and protecting the UK's interests in the region and ensure freedom of navigation at sea.

And it allows sailors more settled home lives with more predictable routines and assured time at home with families and loved ones.

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Dry dock for Chid as ship prepares for the Gulf



● HMS Chiddingfold in the dry dock at Portsmouth Naval Base

HMS Chiddingfold is undergoing a final phase of maintenance as she prepares to head east.

The minihunter has entered the dry dock in Portsmouth Naval Base and there, work will take place to ensure she is ready for three years of operations forward deployed in the Gulf.

The ship's company currently with HMS Chiddingfold, Mine Counter Measures 2 Crew 1 (MCM2 Crew 1) known as the Fighting Aces, spent time on her sister ship HMS Ledbury in the Gulf last year.

They will use their experience to ensure the ship is ready to deploy following the usual extensive trials and training. They will then handover to the crew responsible for sailing her to the region.

For the 'docking down', naval base tugs helped manoeuvre the minihunter into the

narrow dock and ten hours later, with the water drained away, Chiddingfold's hull was accessible for contractors to inspect.

Lieutenant Harry Eaton, the ship's navigating officer, was on the bridge roof with the pilot and commanding officer Lieutenant Commander Mark Heward.

"The fact the basin is surrounded by buildings on one side and an aircraft carrier on the other can make the wind do some strange things," Lt Eaton said.

"It wasn't easy for the Admiralty Pilot to manoeuvre the ship through such a small gap in those conditions."

The current crew will now continue to work with the Royal Navy's industry partners to ensure the ship is ready for her voyage to the Gulf.

Once there, she will be stationed at the UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain.

HMS Chiddingfold will relieve her sister ship HMS Ledbury to become one of four mine countermeasure ships – it is the first time she has returned to the Gulf since 2017.

While there, her work will support the efforts of HMS Montrose who is in the Gulf as part of the navy's commitment to having a forward presence in the area.



When Chiddingfold sails, MCM2 Crew 1 will move onto HMS Cattistock where they will conduct operational sea training before deploying.

Lt Cdr Heward said: "Entering service in the 1980s, the Hunt class remains a great capability delivering valued support around the world despite recently entering their fifth decade of active service."

"With the challenge of our own generation to come, it is great that crew 1 will be re-joining the 'Cheery Chid' when we arrive in theatre ourselves later this year."

Ruff seas during refuelling

CONDUCTING replenishments-at-sea is everyday business for RFA Wave Knight.

But the tanker had a couple of interesting fuelling sessions while operating in the Gulf.

Firstly, an unexpected crew member turned up to watch the ship's RAS with French frigate FS Courbet.

RFA Wave Knight is on hand in the Middle East to support ongoing operations to both Royal Navy ships and ships from allied nations.

During the RAS, FS Courbet's ship's dog looked on from the bridge as RFA Wave Knight sailed alongside. "RFA Wave Knight is currently operating east of Suez, providing direct support to Combined Task Force 53," said the ship's commanding officer Captain Simon Herbert.

"This guarantees that we have a wide range of customers that rely on the RFA's ability to deliver worldwide logistical and operational support."

Then later, RFA Wave Knight met up with USS New York – transferring 100,000 gallons of fuel to the San Antonio-class amphibious transport deck.

The US ship has a poignant feature



● FS Courbet's ship's dog watches RFA Wave Knight

with 6.8 tonnes of the steel in her bow coming from the rubble of the World Trade Centre following 9/11.

Normally, state names are only reserved for US submarines but following the 2001 terrorist attack, the navy bestowed the name New York to a surface ship.

Her sister ships are named Arlington and Somerset in commemoration of the places where two of the other planes used in the attacks came down.

Capt Herbert added: "It was a great honour to support USS New York as well as Nato and coalition allies."

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