

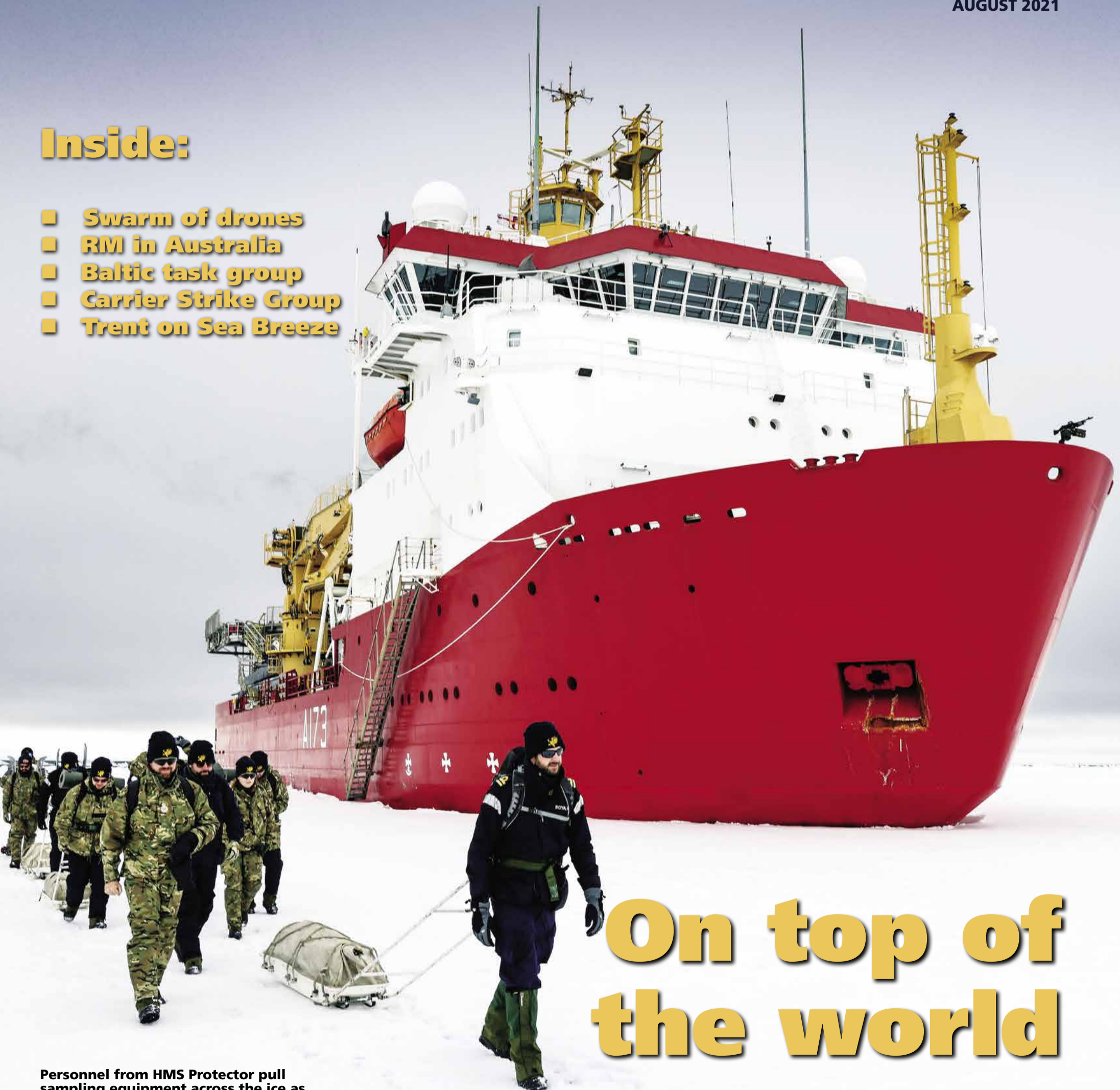


NAVY NEWS

AUGUST 2021

Inside:

- Swarm of drones
- RMI in Australia
- Baltic task group
- Carrier Strike Group
- Trent on Sea Breeze



On top of the world

Personnel from HMS Protector pull sampling equipment across the ice as the patrol ship carries out ice-ramming trials in the Arctic (see pages 23-25)

PICTURE: LPhot Belinda Alker



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SUEZ AND

Flanked by the spectacular scenery of Egypt's desert landscape, HMS Queen Elizabeth, her escorts and auxiliaries passed through the Suez Canal, marking a new chapter in the operational deployment of the UK Carrier Strike Group.

The passage through the world-famous waterway marked the end of a six-week phase of exercises and operations in the Eastern Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Black Sea.

The nine ships of the Carrier Strike Group between them visited eleven different European countries, drawing together presidents, prime ministers, diplomats and military leaders, as well as holding a series of events designed to support British trade and exports.

But the central purpose of the opening phase of this seven-and-a-half month deployment was to promote solidarity and co-operation with the United Kingdom's NATO partners.

Highlights included exercises with the French aircraft carrier Charles De Gaulle; this dual carrier operation was the first of many where Europe's two most powerful navies rendezvous and work together.

There were also exercises with the Italian air force and navy, and with the combined might of Western maritime forces for NATO's Steadfast Defender exercise.

More recently, the Strike Group joined coalition operations in the Eastern Mediterranean; a historic milestone as British and American F-35 Lightning strike fighters flew the first operational missions from a Queen Elizabeth-class carrier, as they stood ready to strike at Daesh.

This kept the carrier's embarked air engineers, pilots and other flight personnel of joint RAF/Fleet Air Arm 617 Squadron, the Dambusters, busy.

Petty Officer Adam Walker works with HMS Queen Elizabeth's Air Weapons Party. He said: "Operation Shader was a busy period for the Air Engineering department.

"Maintaining HMS Queen Elizabeth's Highly Mechanised Weapon Handling System has given me an incredible opportunity to expand my experience as an engineer.

"No other navy has anything with this level of automation. The system enables us to provide air weapons for preparation in a fraction of the time it took on a traditional carriers, and with a minimum of personnel.

"During these operations we have also been working closely with US Marine Corps aircraft and US Navy weapons and our integration with them has been seamless."

Meanwhile, 1,600 miles away, HMS Defender and the Dutch frigate HNLMS Evertsen visited Ukraine, Georgia and Romania in a mission designed to underline NATO's commitment to security, prosperity and the rule of law in the Black Sea (see

page 4 for more details of Defender's time in the region).

Commodore Steve Moorhouse, Commander United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group, said: "The Carrier Strike Group's period working with our NATO partners in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Black Sea offers unmistakable proof that the UK's most important overseas defence commitment remains the security of the Euro-Atlantic region.

“ ”

It was a very proud moment for HMS Richmond as we sailed from Devonport for the Carrier Strike Group 2021 deployment

Commander Hugh Botterill



THREE TASK GROUPS UNITE

BRITAIN'S flagship joined forces with two US Navy task groups for training and a demonstration of combined naval power in the Middle East.

HMS Queen Elizabeth – leading the Royal Navy's Carrier Strike Group on a global mission – linked up with the USS Ronald Reagan carrier strike group and USS Iwo Jima amphibious ready group in the Gulf of Aden.

The two-day exercise saw the three navy task groups, comprising US, UK and Dutch ships, test their abilities in anti-air, anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare tactics and techniques.

Each ship in the task groups has a specific role to help fight against a range of threats from above, on and below the waves from the F-35 Lightning stealth jets embarked on HMS Queen Elizabeth to the advanced radar on the navy's Type 45 destroyers.

The crews practised manoeuvring in close formation, hunting simulated enemy submarines and defending against simulated adversaries in the air.

Commodore Steve Moorhouse, Commander United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group, said: "The aircraft carrier is the ultimate expression of global maritime power."

"HMS Queen Elizabeth, USS Ronald Reagan and USS Iwo Jima symbolise the might of the US and UK partnership, and the ease with which our naval and air forces can combine here in the Gulf of Aden, or anywhere else in the world."

"Last month, the UK Carrier Strike Group

exercised with NATO forces in Europe; this month we will be working with the United States and other coalition partners in the Middle East; and soon we will join a host of nations in the Indo-Pacific.

"Day-by-day, week-by-week CSG21 is demonstrating the breadth of the United Kingdom's partnerships, and the strength of our commitment to freedom and security at sea."

Rear Admiral Will Pennington, Commander of the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group and Task Force 50, added: "Our team was proud to operate alongside the UK Carrier Strike Group during this unique opportunity to hone the full scope of our mutual capabilities."

"By operating together at sea, we deepen our coalition partnerships and extend our global reach throughout the region's critical waterways."

The recent exercises marked the second time this year the Iwo Jima amphibious ready group has operated alongside the UK Carrier Strike Group, following an exercise off the coast of Scotland in May.

Captain Darren Nelson, Commodore Amphibious Squadron Four, said: "The Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group remains in a high state of readiness to support our partners and allies as an effective amphibious force."

"Operating with the Ronald Reagan and UK carrier strike groups allows us to better address common threats to regional security."

• Pictures: POPhot: Jay Allen; LPhot: Unaisi Luke; LPhot: Dan Rosenbaum

BEYOND

"While HMS Queen Elizabeth launched counter-Daesh missions over Iraq and Syria from the Eastern Mediterranean, HMS Defender and HNLMS Evertsen were conducting concurrent operations 1,600 miles away in the Black Sea – true strategic reach."

"Meanwhile, our programme of defence engagement involved a huge amount of work in support of British Embassies and High Commissions, but from Alicante to Alexandria and Bar to Batumi, the message was the same: Britain's friends and allies are delighted to see the Royal Navy back in town."

"Now we head east, towards the rising economies of the Indo-Pacific. From the Strait of Gibraltar to the Strait of Malacca, CSG21 offers unprecedented influence and engagement in support of Global Britain."

With Phase One of the deployment now complete, the Carrier Strike Group is looking ahead to Phase Two and completing further training in the Middle East and working with navies in the Indian Ocean.

Squadron Leader Joanna Magill, a Royal Air Force physiotherapist based within HMS Queen Elizabeth's medical team, said: "The days are long and the work is hard but it's rewarding: I am enjoying the deployment so far. After a year of being so restricted at home it's great to be able to look out and experience the world, even if at times it is still from the confines of the ship."

Richmond leads the way

Frigate HMS Richmond is ready to begin the second phase of her operations as part of the UK's Carrier Strike Group deployment.

After a busy few weeks at sea working with allies and partners, the Devonport-based warship has passed through the Suez Canal and is continuing east. Along with sister ship HMS Kent, Richmond's role is to protect the Carrier Strike Group from potential threats below the waves.

This put her at the front of the group when they left the UK and

headed across the Bay of Biscay. The ship and her embarked Wildcat helicopter from 815 Naval Air Squadron ensured waters were safe for the carrier as they sailed towards the Mediterranean.

Their journey took them around the toe of Italy, passing through the Strait of Messina, and on towards their first port visit to Bar, in Montenegro in early June. There she hosted numerous senior dignitaries and local officials, including Baroness Annabel Goldie, the UK's Minister of State for Defence, President of Montenegro Milo Djukanovic, British Ambassador to Montenegro Karen Maddocks, Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapic and Defence Minister Olivera Injac.

As well as hosting numerous diplomatic discussions and engagements, HMS Richmond's flight deck was also the setting for the official signing of Memorandums of Understanding between the UK and Montenegro governments.

The ship also put on a boarding demonstration, hosted an engineering education event with local school children and a Women in Peace and Security Network event.

Her sailors also got the chance to explore the country (*group picture far left*), with a handful exploring the rocky landscape on bikes.

The final event in Bar marked Her Majesty The Queen's birthday. Richmond provided a reception and capability demonstration, followed by a ceremonial sunset with all senior officials attending.

Commander Hugh Botterill, HMS Richmond's Commanding Officer, said: "It was a very proud moment for HMS Richmond as we sailed from Devonport for the Carrier Strike Group 2021 deployment."

"It's been a challenging and busy period for everyone connected with the ship, generating for operations is a busy time for any fighting unit, but when back-dropped against COVID 19, it has been especially demanding on the ship's company and their friends and families back home. We are looking forward to all the challenges ahead and our journey so far is already living up to all our expectations."



BACK FROM THE BLACK SEA



● Main image: HMS Defender transits the Suez Canal. Above (left to right): Royal Marines conduct training; Traditional Georgian dancers welcome Defender in Batumi; Wildcat and marines conduct fast-roping exercises; Ship's company salute delegates on board in Batumi; On the bridge while sailing in the Black Sea. Pictures: LPhoto Dan Rosenbaum

WITH her mission to the Black Sea complete, HMS Defender is back with the UK Carrier Strike Group.

A busy period in the region saw the Portsmouth-based ship host delegates and visitors on board, carry out training with her embarked Royal Marines from 42 Commando and work with fellow CSG ship HNLMS Evertsen and the US Navy.

Defender's time in the Black Sea started at the beginning of June and built on the recent work of both HMS Dragon and HMS Trent – continuing the UK's commitment to partners in the area.

After transiting through the Dardanelles Straits, the Type 45 destroyer arrived in Istanbul, Turkey, where she welcomed on board dignitaries and officials from the Turkish government, businesses and defence sector.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the ship's company were unable to go ashore but a taste of Turkey was delivered to the ship when a five-piece band, various market stalls, Turkish cuisine and even a Turkish barbers visited the jetty.

AB Jordan Parfitt, deploying to the Black Sea for the first time, said: "Being my first time to visit Turkey, it was disappointing not to be able to get ashore to see the sights.

"But it was definitely made up for by the various events and entertainment put on during our five-day stay in Istanbul and even being able to get a fridge magnet from one of the stalls on the jetty."

After an enjoyable stay in Turkey, Defender passed through the Bosphorus Strait with Dutch ship Evertsen and headed towards Ukraine. Upon entering the Black Sea, she was greeted by her first Russian ship who followed her at distance.

This spell at sea allowed the ship's Wildcat helicopter to conduct training and meet up with US Navy Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Laboon.

After being serenaded into Odesa by a military band it was straight down to business as the ship welcomed on board 15 personnel from the Ukrainian Navy for them to learn how Defender deals with a range of emergencies such as chemical attacks, firefighting and flooding on board.

The second day saw the majority of personnel explore the region while a select few paid their respects and laid wreaths at a monument of an unknown sailor.

Defender's chaplain Timothy Ndegwa, who attended the poignant event, said: "We were able to remember those lost during conflicts especially at sea, and to be able to conduct a short ceremony held in Ukraine with other nations was a proud moment I shall remember for years to come."

Meanwhile, the ship's Royal Marines Boarding Team spent time training with the Special Operations Forces of Ukraine and US forces. Their final boarding exercise culminated in a demonstration in front of VIPs attending a Defence Engagement Day, including guests MinDP Jeremy Quin and First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Tony Radakin.

"The maritime boarding training provided by the RMBT working alongside Ukrainian Armed Forces has been greatly beneficial and highlighted the interoperability between the two forces," said Lieutenant Jacob Randle-Bissell, Officer Commanding Royal Marines on board.

"It has been a fantastic opportunity for us to pass on our knowledge to enhance their capability and they have been keen to learn from us."

After a quick pit-stop in Batumi, Georgia, Defender left

the Black Sea and arrived in the Aegean Sea to rejoin the Carrier Strike Group on its way to the Indo-Pacific region.

Her Commanding Officer, Commander Vincent Owen, said the ship's time in the Black Sea had tested his sailors but been highly rewarding.

"They have been tested mentally and physically from high profile visits and engagements alongside, to periods at sea in a heightened posture ready to respond to any eventuality," he added.

"Undeterred by Russian presence they have remained calm and professional when under pressure and to me the 240 highly-trained men and women we have on board really represent the best that Britain and the Commonwealth has to offer, they should be justifiably proud of their achievements.

"I would like to thank everyone involved for the warm welcome Defender received in Turkey, Ukraine and Georgia.

"It was great to strengthen our relationships with these important partners in the Black Sea and show that the Royal Navy remains committed to providing reassurance and security in the region and a credible deterrence to those who seek to undermine global security."



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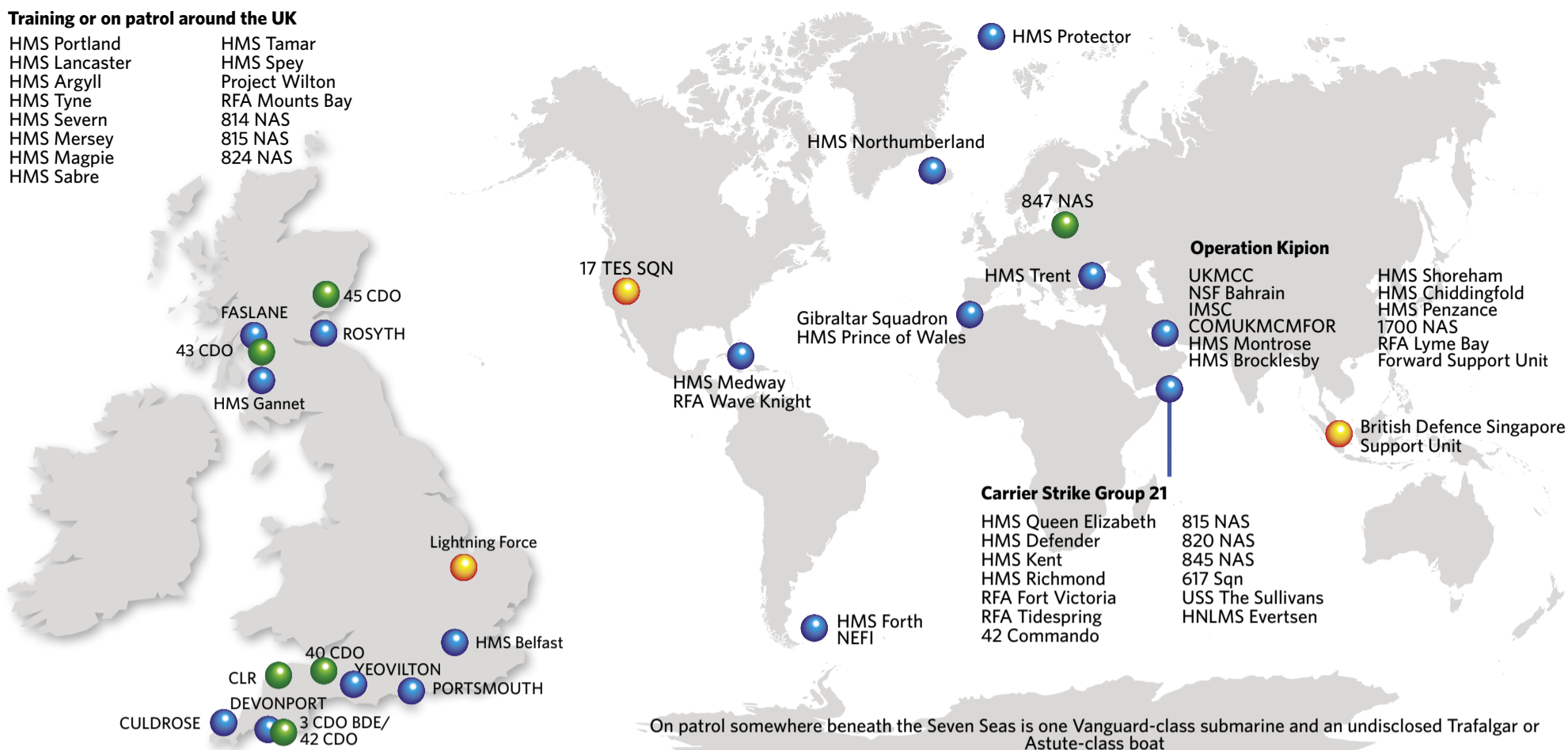
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HMS Tyne
HMS Severn
HMS Mersey
HMS Magpie
HMS Sabre

HMS Tamar
HMS Spey
Project Wilton
RFA Mounts Bay
814 NAS
815 NAS
824 NAS



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

Big workout for RN's small ships

SOME of the Royal Navy's smallest vessels took centre stage with a mass workout off the coast of Plymouth.

Ten craft from the Coastal Forces Squadron headed into Plymouth Sound and exercise areas for a rare combined exercise – during which they were joined by their WW2 predecessor.

Harbour Defence Motor Launch Medusa is the last of 464 vessels in her class built during the war to provide anti-submarine protection for harbours, but were also used to escort convoys, land agents on enemy-held shores and take part in offensive sweeps. Today the boat is maintained and operated by the Medusa Trust as part of the Coastal Forces Heritage museum.

She sailed alongside the eight P2000 boats and fast patrol boats HMS Sabre and Scimitar for a series of complex Officer of the Watch manoeuvres to exercise the ships and their crews in a

large formation.

The P2000s are used both to give students across the UK a flavour of life in the Senior Service via the University Royal Navy Units and to help train the rest of the Fleet, from helping aircrew practise winching drills from a small deck, to carrying out swarm attacks against task group to test the response of gunnery teams.

It was those fast-attack tactics which were tested and developed off the Devon coast. Two P2000s – HMS Archer and HMS Charger – were given the task of sailing from Dartmouth to Plymouth Sound undetected.

The remaining participants used the speed of the Scimitar-class vessels – over 30 knots – to probe and block off any escape, and the mass of the other P2000s to locate and attack their two 'foe'.

"Despite being the smallest ships in the Fleet, being able to look across a

line of 10 Coastal Forces vessels – and a WW2 ancestor – in formation brought home the reality of the ship handling and communications challenges this exercise presented," said Lieutenant Tim Clouter, Commanding Officer of HMS Sabre and the exercise's chief planner.

"To have an entire squadron on manoeuvres is an impressive sight – if not a bit of a logistical challenge."

It's the second combined exercise of the summer for the squadron; last month some of its Portsmouth-based craft headed out into the Solent and Channel for a workout off Bournemouth with River-class patrol ships.

"Squadex is another key event for the Coastal Forces Squadron allowing us to rehearse our in company skills and complete more tactical development at scale," said Commander Jamie Wells, the squadron's Commanding Officer.



GLOBAL NAVY

Protecting our nation's interests

ICE in the height of summer? Yes, that's right as HMS Protector (see pages 7, 23-25) sailed closer to the North Pole than any other Royal Navy surface ship in recent history on her first patrol of the Arctic.

Enjoying much warmer temperatures are the warships on the Carrier Strike Group 21 deployment (see pages 2-4) as HMS Queen Elizabeth and her escorts and auxiliaries marked a new chapter as they passed through the Suez Canal.

HMS Defender has returned to the Carrier Strike Group following her mission to the Black Sea (see page 4).

HMS Prince of Wales has returned to Portsmouth (see page 6) for summer leave and maintenance after a successful spring of aviation trials, FOST and her first overseas port visit: five days on The Rock.

Over to the Caribbean and HMS Medway and RFA Wave Knight demonstrated their capability should disaster strike (see page 9). The ships and their personnel took part in a three-day intensive workout on Montserrat.

Royal Marines from 40 Commando have carried out raids on beaches in North Queensland at the start of a busy deployment alongside allies in Australia (see pages 16-17). It marks a return by the commandos to Australia's eastern coast to continue their work started in 2019.

More than 1,000 sailors and Royal Marines have returned to the UK after a mission to the heart of the Baltic Sea for the largest gathering of NATO naval power in the region this year (see pages 14-15). The Littoral Response Group (North) deployment saw Royal Marines and amphibious ships HMS Albion and RFA Mounts Bay work across the region with the operations culminating in war games Baltops that saw forces from 18 countries work together.

Drones dived, sailed and flew together in a swarm in a first for the UK's armed forces during experimental exercises – Autonomous Advance Force 4.0 – with the Royal Marines (see pages 20-21). An array of autonomous systems operated underwater, on the water, in the sky and over land to help Royal Marines Commandos as they carried out training raids on a number of complex 'adversary' positions – such as missile and radar installations – in Cumbria and Dorset.

Patrol ship HMS Trent has completed intensive training on Ukrainian and United States-hosted exercises during her second visit to the Black Sea in a matter of months (see page 11).

The Royal Navy's premier shield against air attack will be bristling with missiles thanks to a £500m upgrade (see page 7). All six Type 45 destroyers are adding the Sea Ceptor system to their arsenal – an extra layer of protection for the ships and the task groups they protect.

The Royal Navy's bomb disposal experts in Scotland exercised their freedom of Orkney by marching through the streets of the island's largest town, Kirkwall (see page 19). Northern Diving Group were cheered by members of the public who lined the streets.

The flying eyes and guns of the Royal Marines flexed their muscle in Lithuanian skies honing their ability to work with commandos and allied ground forces (see page 13). The Commando Wildcats of 847 Naval Air Squadron tested their combat, night-flying, radar-evasion, low-flying and troop-carrying skills as part of a test of their 'surge' capability.

The Royal Navy's switch to the minehunters of tomorrow has begun in earnest with the first crew formed to take automated boats on operations (see page 19).

There are now three Type 26 frigates under construction after the Duke of Cambridge set the cutters to work on HMS Belfast (see pages 34-35). Meanwhile, her predecessor has undergone the first phase of a ten-year revamp.

HMS Montrose is now more than two thirds of the way through her three-year Gulf mission as the RN's first 'forward deployed' frigate (see page 29). She has spent 850 days operating out of Bahrain, with more than 350 days assigned to international security missions.

Sailors from the Royal Navy's Gibraltar Squadron are a step closer to operating their new jet-propelled patrol vessels, HMS Cutlass and Dagger (see page 19).

Finally, the former head of the Royal Navy Medical Service has named a new cruise ship (see page 27). Saga Cruises selected Commodore Inga Kennedy for the honour of naming the Spirit of Adventure in a nod to the medical profession's work during the pandemic.





Apes, dolphins & Wales

ONE of the Rock's most enduring sights seems nonplussed about the arrival of the new kid in town.

Over the left shoulder of this barbary ape, a good mile and a quarter from the top of the Rock, Britain's biggest warship basks in the Mediterranean sunshine on her first overseas visit.

Nearly 80 years since a warship named Prince of Wales last called on Gibraltar, the Portsmouth-based carrier berthed at the North Mole for a five-day break – and a welcome break from spring training.

The ship was welcomed off the Rock by a pod of dolphins and, as the carrier drew closer to the harbour, the Gibraltar Squadron which came out to meet the Prince of Wales and escort her to her berth.

She follows in the footsteps of her big sister HMS Queen Elizabeth which visited the British Overseas Territory in February 2018 at a similar stage in her training, and tested the facilities on the Rock for supporting the largest warships ever built for the Royal Navy.

The visit was a welcome break after undergoing assessment under the watchful eyes of Fleet Operational Sea Training or 'FOST' which has tested the men and women aboard in every aspect of life at sea, from dealing with engineering breakdowns to coping with fires, floods and crashes on the flight deck.

That deck has seen its first F-35 Lightning, as well as Army Air Corps Apaches, RAF Chinooks and currently Fleet Air Arm Wildcat helicopters of 825 Naval Air Squadron over

the past month or so as the flight deck team and air department build up their collective knowledge and skills which will allow them to launch, recover, refuel, arm and re-arm a fully operational carrier air group.

While in Gib, the Wildcats decamped to the airfield, the footballers took on the local FA side, crew tried their hand at sea kayaking in waters where the temperature is a lovely 19/20 Celsius, and fit early risers took on the Rock race (2.7 miles from the naval base to the top of the Rock, climbing 1,300ft on the way).

There were runs ashore in and out of rig, official functions including lunch onboard for the Governor (and former Second Sea Lord) Vice Admiral Sir David Steel and, before casting off from North Mole, a farewell ceremony for the commanding officer.

Guiding the ship into Gib – as well as for the past two years – was Captain Darren Houston whose tenure came to an end during the Rock visit; he handed over the reins of the 65,000-tonne warship to Captain Steve Higham – and did so having laid solid foundations.

Captain Higham, who's Prince of Wales' third seagoing commanding officer came directly to the ship from No.10.

Yes, that No.10. For the past three years he's been the military assistant to the prime minister, first Theresa May, then Boris Johnson, who also selected Captain Higham as his private secretary.

He said his predecessor had done "an amazing job leading a great team to get this

ship ready for operations.

"Really exciting times lie ahead for HMS Prince of Wales as we start life as an operational carrier and making our contribution, with friends, partners and Allies, to the prosperity, peace and security of the UK, NATO and the Euro-Atlantic area in 2022."

He and his predecessor are not Gibraltar rookies, but for many of HMS Prince of Wales' younger sailors, the Rock was their first port visit away from Portsmouth, such as Able Rating Susan Stobie, who's recently joined the carrier.

"I've really been looking forward to Gibraltar. It's my first trip away from the UK with the Royal Navy and it'll be a good opportunity for the crew to relax after a quite busy period at sea!" she said.

And faster than you can say 'Donkey's Flip-Flop' or 'Casemates Square' the Wildcats were back on board, the ship was casting off and heading back to Portsmouth for maintenance and summer leave.

So taking it easy then?

Nope.

The carrier is the latest RN vessel to support the people of St Vincent, whose lives have been turned upside down since April when the Caribbean island's La Soufriere volcano erupted.

More than 500 sailors across the Royal Navy come from the Commonwealth nation – including roughly one in 20 of the 700 souls aboard the new carrier.

The eruption caused – and continues to cause – widespread disruption to island life.

Around one sixth of the populace remains in temporary accommodation while one third of the nation's farming crops have been destroyed.

Writer Tom Lloyd, who works in the ship's office, noticed how much the disaster had affected shipmates and their families and was spurred into action.

"I thought that we could do something to help and as we were going to be at sea a lot of people will work on their fitness," said the 27-year-old.

"Running the distance for St Vincent seemed a useful way to help the families of our shipmates and stay fit."

Thirty-four sailors have committed to the gruelling challenge – one mile for every 2½ laps of the sprawling flight deck when it's not in use, or on gym treadmills when it is – with the goal of £1 per mile between Portsmouth and St Vincent (4,215) and a deadline of September 1. So far they've covered 2,433 miles with £2,145 in the coffers.

The ship is now on her way home from her first overseas port visit in Gibraltar following a spring of work-up, including the first F-35 Lightning jet aboard, and completing Operational Sea Training.

You can show your support at: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/HMSPRINCEOFWALESRUNTOSTVINCENT>

Pictures: LPhoto Mark Johnson and Cpl Connor Payne RAF



THE Royal Navy's premier shield against air attack will be bristling with missiles thanks to a £500m upgrade.

All six Type 45 destroyers are adding the Sea Ceptor system to their arsenal – an extra layer of protection for the ships and the task groups they protect.

In addition, the Portsmouth-based vessels' existing Sea Viper system – their principal weapon system and first line of defence against air attack – will also be enhanced.

Sea Ceptor is already in service with all 13 Type 23 frigates and will be installed in their successor class currently under construction, the Type 26 and 31 classes.

It's smaller and has a shorter range than Sea Viper, but Sea Ceptor can protect an area the size of Greater Manchester (500 square miles/1,300 square kilometres) engaging multiple targets simultaneously, reaching speeds of up to three times the speed of sound

as it intercepts.

As well as incoming missiles and aircraft – and unlike Sea Viper – Sea Ceptor is able to engage small surface targets, such as fast attack craft.

It will replace Sea Viper's shorter range Aster 15 missiles which are being phased out of service... while the longer range Aster 30s will be upgraded as part of the £500m programme by defence firm Eurosam.

As for integrating Sea Ceptor on to the destroyers, that falls to MBDA UK.

The 45s were built with an additional missile silo as well as spare compartments to meet future requirements and new tech arriving on the scene.

This forward silo space – often used as a gym – will now house 24 Sea Ceptors in what is dubbed "the mushroom farm" due to the black caps on each missile launcher.

In addition the data link systems – they

look like large grey suppositories and share information between the missile in flight and ship – will be fitted on the bridge roof and aft.

"These programmes of work will provide an exceptional capability to the front line, ensuring the Royal Navy remains poised to defend the surface fleet – and most importantly the Carrier Strike Group – against complex air threats both now and into the future," said Vice Admiral Jerry Kyd, Fleet Commander.

The investment should support more than 100 highly-skilled jobs in Bristol, Stevenage, Gosport and Bolton.

The Aster upgrade is a joint British-French-Italian effort and includes investment in a dedicated facility at Defence Munitions in Gosport.

The first Sea Ceptor-enhanced Type 45 is expected to be delivered by the summer of 2026, with the entire flotilla completed by winter 2032.



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Above, Engineers from 24 Commando check demolition charges for road clearance work, below, the Wildcat from RFA Wave Knight flies over Montserrat



THE Royal Navy's Caribbean task group has shown the people of Montserrat – and islanders across the region – what it can do should disaster strike.

A three-day intensive work out for RFA Wave Knight and HMS Medway, their sailors, soldiers and marines, plus a helicopter was the first test of their combined response this summer.

Working with the Montserrat disaster management agency, the task group landed a troop of commando engineers on the edge of the island's volcanic zone.

The navy task force – comprising tanker/support ship RFA Wave Knight, patrol vessel HMS Medway and a Wildcat helicopter – stayed just off the coast throughout the exercise. Ashore, troops practised methods of re-opening roads after a disaster.

The Wildcat of 213 Flight was kept busy every day, flying water ashore for the troops and getting photos from around the island to support planning.

Montserrat is no stranger to disaster – two-thirds of the island are still out-of-bounds following volcanic eruptions a quarter of a century ago. While a terrible tragedy for the local people, the ruined towns in the restricted zone are now an excellent training area for disaster relief.

"The island is beautiful, of course, but as a training area it's brilliant. We were able to photograph damaged areas, as part of the exercise, but also to get photos of important buildings in the north of the island. These will help us understand the situation more quickly if a hurricane does hit Montserrat," said Wildcat pilot Lieutenant Commander Eifion Parri.

The task group carries specialist equipment, emergency supplies and 166 highly-trained men and women, including a dedicated humanitarian aid/disaster relief team of commando engineers from the Army's 24 Commando.

Having operated together in the Caribbean over the past four weeks – including participation in the major regional exercise Tradewinds – the group has been honing its skills to support both UK Overseas Territories and other islands across the Caribbean.

"I enormously grateful to the people of Montserrat for inviting us to train on their island," said Task Group Commander, Commander Brian Trim. "Training in the restricted zone was an ideal way to keep our skills sharp,

while also keeping Covid-safe."

The two-week long Tradewinds exercise, which saw Medway and Wave Knight join forces for the first time this year, is run by the US military and concentrates on the ability of military and law enforcement agencies across the Caribbean and Caribbean basin to work together with the focus on stopping the trafficking of illegal narcotics and providing humanitarian assistance/disaster relief.

Thirteen nations committed to Tradewinds 2021 among them the Netherlands, France and Canada as well as the hosts.

On the water, the British vessels were joined by French patrol vessels Dumont d'Urville and La Confiance, US Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser, Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard Cutter Jaguar P-810, Canadian coastal defence vessel HMCS Shawinigan and Guyana coast guard ship Essequibo.

They practised combined manoeuvres with the various participants just 250 yards apart – relatively simple for smaller, nimble vessels like Medway and the coast guard cutters, less so for a 30,000-tonne tanker like Wave Knight, a large-scale air defence exercise which was a rare test of the RFA's gunnery/warfare skills,

Wave Knight's Wildcat helicopter – call sign Knightrider – tested the response of gunnery teams on the tanker and Medway, practised rescuing by winching sailors from confined decks, and worked with boarding teams in preparation for counter-drugs operations, when its commando sniper team will provide cover for personnel.

"Our experience, expertise and ability to work closely with our allies and partners contributed significantly in making Exercise Tradewinds a success," said Captain Simon Herbert RFA, Wave Knight's Commanding Officer.

Lieutenant Sam Stallard, HMS Medway's navigator, added: "It's been really great to work with our partners during Tradewinds. After two weeks of training together, it will be much easier to cooperate in the months ahead."

HMS Medway provides the Royal Navy's permanent presence in the Caribbean and is now into her second storm season, while tanker Wave Knight picks up where RFA Argus left off at the end of last year.



Task group ready for anything



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TRENT HEADS BACK TO THE BLACK SEA...

BLACK SEA MISSION: HMS Trent is captured on camera from USS Ross during Exercise Sea Breeze in the Black Sea. Picture by Petty Officer 2nd Class Claire DuBois of the US Navy



TOWING THE LINE : HMS Trent simulates towing USS Ross. Picture by Petty Officer 2nd Class Claire DuBois of the US Navy



IT'S A BREEZE: HMS Trent works with Bulgarian Navy ships Godri during Exercise Breeze

HMS TRENT has completed intensive training on Ukrainian and United States-hosted exercises during her second visit to the Black Sea in a matter of months.

The patrol ship is on an enduring mission to the Mediterranean, having left the UK at the end of March to begin operations that will see her continually be a presence across the Med and south into the tropical waters of the Atlantic and Gulf of Guinea.

The Black Sea has also become familiar waters for Trent – one of five new River-class Batch 2 patrol vessels built for the Royal Navy to be a forward presence in areas of strategic importance to the UK – having made her debut in the region in May.

Trent returned there for Exercise Sea Breeze, a mission designed to help the Ukrainian Navy improve its ability to work with NATO after it lost its operating base and two thirds of its fleet in 2014 as Russia annexed Crimea.

This latest mission builds on Trent's earlier work in the region as part of Operation Orbital – the codename for the UK Armed Forces' capacity building deployment to Ukraine, which established a UK-led Maritime Training Initiative to prepare the Ukrainian Navy for Exercise Sea Breeze.

Two Royal Navy officers have been deployed to improve the capabilities of the Ukrainian Navy to deliver training in a range of skills, while Trent and HMS Defender have both visited Odesa for shore-side exercises, which paved the way for further activity during Sea Breeze.

"Sea Breeze is a very broad exercise. For us it was very much about operating with partner nations in this region, including Ukraine, where we're building on a maritime training initiative," said Trent's Commanding Officer, Commander Tom Knott.

"We now see training elements at sea in a more complex environment, learning how to manoeuvre our ships together, how to integrate other regional partners into our task group and manoeuvre with them and also build on command and control."

One of the multi-national task groups was made up of ships from eight nations, including the United States, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Italy, Georgia, Romania, Turkey, and the UK.

The warships included those from NATO's Standing Maritime Group 2, Arleigh Burke-class USS Ross, Bulgarian ship BGR Bodri, Romanian corvette ROS Macellariu, Ukrainian anti-submarine corvette Hryhoriy Kuropiatnykov, and HMS Trent.

Together they trained in tracking submarines, engaging aerial and surface threats; ultimately increasing their ability to work together.

First Lieutenant Bogdan Yatsko, who was involved in Trent's training with Ukrainian patrol ship Kostopil, said: "It was useful for



TASK GROUP: A multinational group of warships form up in the Black Sea for Exercise Sea Breeze

us to operate with British colleagues in order to improve our tactical manoeuvring and formation skills at sea and various battle orders for warships."

Sea Breeze first started in 1997 and brings together NATO allies and partners to increase their ability to operate smoothly together.

This year's iteration, which was co-hosted by the United States and Ukraine, saw a total of 31 ships carry out 175 different training scenarios, including Trent simulating towing USS Ross.

There were also air and land elements of Sea Breeze, with a total of 5,000 troops, 40 aircraft and 18 special operations and dive teams involved from more than 30 different nations.

Following Sea Breeze, Trent sailed to Varna in Bulgaria for a stop and reset ahead of the similarly-named Exercise Breeze, which she has now started, beginning with work alongside Bulgarian Navy ships Bodri and Gordi.

The multinational Bulgarian-led exercises includes participants from Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2 (SNMCMG 2) and Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG 2).

It will again focus on joint working for future maritime security missions in the Black Sea.

Operational Orbital's navy focus has now switched to planning next year's Maritime Training Initiative with the long-term aim of helping lift the capability of the Ukrainian Navy.

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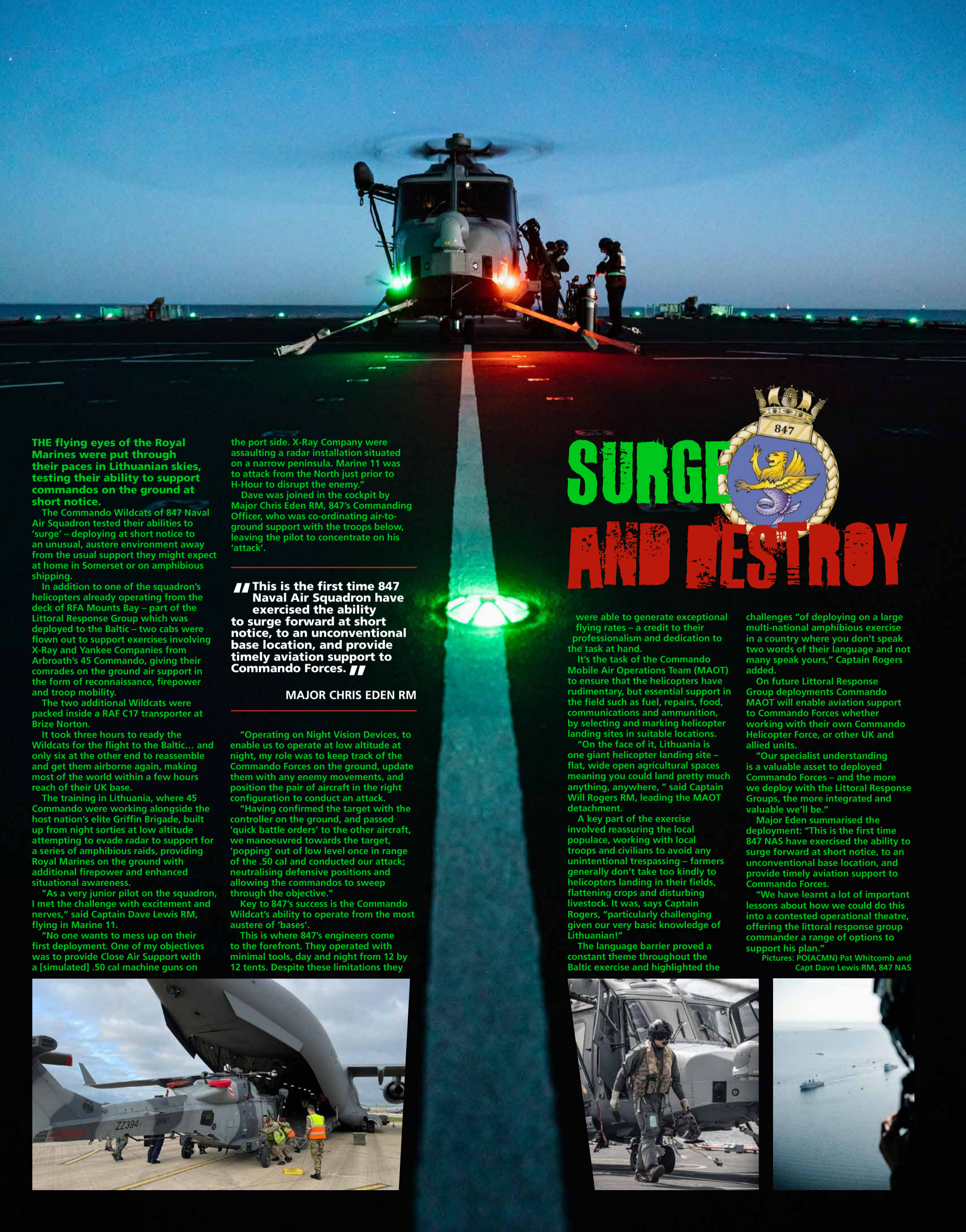
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THE flying eyes of the Royal Marines were put through their paces in Lithuanian skies, testing their ability to support commandos on the ground at short notice.

The Commando Wildcats of 847 Naval Air Squadron tested their abilities to 'surge' – deploying at short notice to an unusual, austere environment away from the usual support they might expect at home in Somerset or on amphibious shipping.

In addition to one of the squadron's helicopters already operating from the deck of RFA Mounts Bay – part of the Littoral Response Group which was deployed to the Baltic – two cabs were flown out to support exercises involving X-Ray and Yankee Companies from Arbroath's 45 Commando, giving their comrades on the ground air support in the form of reconnaissance, firepower and troop mobility.

The two additional Wildcats were packed inside a RAF C17 transporter at Brize Norton.

It took three hours to ready the Wildcats for the flight to the Baltic... and only six at the other end to reassemble and get them airborne again, making most of the world within a few hours reach of their UK base.

The training in Lithuania, where 45 Commando were working alongside the host nation's elite Griffin Brigade, built up from night sorties at low altitude attempting to evade radar to support for a series of amphibious raids, providing Royal Marines on the ground with additional firepower and enhanced situational awareness.

"As a very junior pilot on the squadron, I met the challenge with excitement and nerves," said Captain Dave Lewis RM, flying in Marine 11.

"No one wants to mess up on their first deployment. One of my objectives was to provide Close Air Support with a [simulated] .50 cal machine guns on

the port side. X-Ray Company were assaulting a radar installation situated on a narrow peninsula. Marine 11 was to attack from the North just prior to H-Hour to disrupt the enemy."

Dave was joined in the cockpit by Major Chris Eden RM, 847's Commanding Officer, who was co-ordinating air-to-ground support with the troops below, leaving the pilot to concentrate on his 'attack'.

// This is the first time 847 Naval Air Squadron have exercised the ability to surge forward at short notice, to an unconventional base location, and provide timely aviation support to Commando Forces. //

MAJOR CHRIS EDEN RM

"Operating on Night Vision Devices, to enable us to operate at low altitude at night, my role was to keep track of the Commando Forces on the ground, update them with any enemy movements, and position the pair of aircraft in the right configuration to conduct an attack.

"Having confirmed the target with the controller on the ground, and passed 'quick battle orders' to the other aircraft, we manoeuvred towards the target, 'popping' out of low level once in range of the .50 cal and conducted our attack; neutralising defensive positions and allowing the commandos to sweep through the objective."

Key to 847's success is the Commando Wildcat's ability to operate from the most austere of 'bases'.

This is where 847's engineers come to the forefront. They operated with minimal tools, day and night from 12 by 12 tents. Despite these limitations they

SURGE AND DESTROY



were able to generate exceptional flying rates – a credit to their professionalism and dedication to the task at hand.

It's the task of the Commando Mobile Air Operations Team (MAOT) to ensure that the helicopters have rudimentary, but essential support in the field such as fuel, repairs, food, communications and ammunition, by selecting and marking helicopter landing sites in suitable locations.

"On the face of it, Lithuania is one giant helicopter landing site – flat, wide open agricultural spaces meaning you could land pretty much anything, anywhere," said Captain Will Rogers RM, leading the MAOT detachment.

A key part of the exercise involved reassuring the local populace, working with local troops and civilians to avoid any unintentional trespassing – farmers generally don't take too kindly to helicopters landing in their fields, flattening crops and disturbing livestock. It was, says Captain Rogers, "particularly challenging given our very basic knowledge of Lithuanian!"

The language barrier proved a constant theme throughout the Baltic exercise and highlighted the

challenges "of deploying on a large multi-national amphibious exercise in a country where you don't speak two words of their language and not many speak yours," Captain Rogers added.

On future Littoral Response Group deployments Commando MAOT will enable aviation support to Commando Forces whether working with their own Commando Helicopter Force, or other UK and allied units.

"Our specialist understanding is a valuable asset to deployed Commando Forces – and the more we deploy with the Littoral Response Groups, the more integrated and valuable we'll be."

Major Eden summarised the deployment: "This is the first time 847 NAS have exercised the ability to surge forward at short notice, to an unconventional base location, and provide timely aviation support to Commando Forces.

"We have learnt a lot of important lessons about how we could do this into a contested operational theatre, offering the littoral response group commander a range of options to support his plan."

Pictures: PO(ACMN) Pat Whitcomb and Capt Dave Lewis RM, 847 NAS





THE BALTIC SUNSET...

MORE than 1,000 sailors and Royal Marines have returned to the UK after a mission to the heart of the Baltic Sea for the largest gathering of NATO naval power in the region this year.

The Littoral Response Group (North) deployment saw Royal Marines and amphibious ships HMS Albion and RFA Mounts Bay – supported at times by the Type 23 frigate HMS Lancaster – work across the region with the operations culminating in war games Baltops that saw forces from 18 countries work together.

Plymouth-based Albion led the UK task group on the major exercises – which also included US-led training along the Norwegian coastline – as the Royal Navy continued to shape how British commando forces, centred on the Royal Marines, will operate in the future by testing tactics and equipment.

The assault ship returned home to Plymouth after briefly stopping in Leith in Edinburgh to offload her vehicles on her way back.

Captain Simon Kelly, Task Group Commander and Commanding Officer of HMS Albion, said: “We have conducted a busy three months of training and engagement with our NATO allies and regional partners.

“Since leaving Plymouth in April, we have conducted amphibious training around the coast of Scotland, participated in a major exercise off the coast of Norway and operated in the Baltic Sea region.

“We have developed the Royal Navy’s commando force concepts, shaping how Royal Marines will operate in the future by trialling new tactics and equipment.”

Albion began her deployment with amphibious exercises with the US Navy and the US Marine Corps, operating alongside the USS Iwo-Jima and the USS San Antonio.

The training had an emphasis on US aircraft working with Royal Marines, lifting them ashore from Albion’s flight deck and on sorties inland, including with the unique tiltrotor Osprey, to help the two sides operate easily together in the future.

Albion’s mission then took her into the Baltic for the first time since

2019, visiting Finland, Lithuania and Latvia, as well as training closely with Swedish and Finnish forces before Baltops began.

The assault ship tested her air defence abilities, coming under simulated attack from two Spanish Typhoons of NATO’s Baltic Air Policing mission, which fired mock anti-ship missiles at them.

The Littoral Response Group (North) ships also gathered in the North Atlantic as part of a group of fifteen allied ships from five NATO nations in one of the most impressive showings of naval strength in recent memory.

Two Royal Navy task groups, the Carrier Strike Group and the Littoral Response Group (North) sailed in tandem with the US Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group off the Scottish coastline.

Support ship Mounts Bay completed exercises with the Danes, Swedes and the Norwegians among others, as well as making a stop in Estonia and the finale of the deployment: an ‘invasion’ of Lithuania’s coastline as part of Baltops exercises.

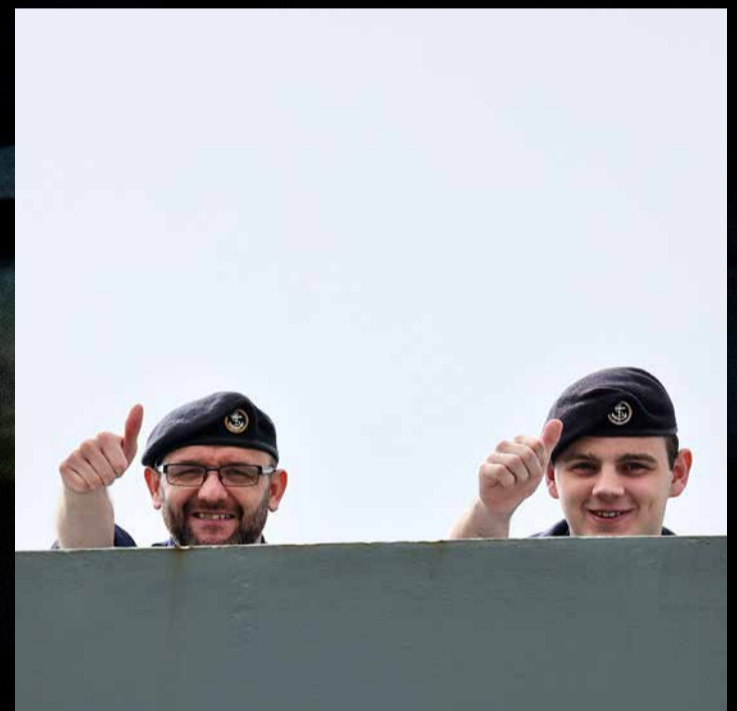
Arbroath-based 45 Commando were the amphibious spearhead of the response group and, as darkness fell along Lithuania’s coast, Exercise Strong Griffin – the codename given to intensive training the marines have participated in alongside Lithuanian, American and Portuguese forces – ramped up for its fiery climax.

Two strike teams of Yankee Company headed ashore from Mounts Bay using inflatable raiding craft from 47 Commando, landing on Melnrage Beach, north of the port city of Klaipeda, where they met with a reconnaissance team from X-Ray Company for their mission.

The commandos moved swiftly through exercise areas which included urban sprawl and countryside to a target location, taking out ‘enemy’ positions before quickly extracting back to ship via their raiding craft.

At the same time, two further teams from Yankee Company landed a little further north and, alongside Lithuanian forces, carried out an ‘assault’ on a radar station.

This came after extensive joint training around Lithuania, plus a VIP day showcasing kit and equipment at the Kairiai Training Area.



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Main image: Royal Marines land ashore in Lithuania during the finale of their Baltic deployment. **Right:** HMS Albion and RFA Mounts Bay, and their Royal Marines landing craft, are joined by allied boats from Sweden. **Left:** Sailors from HMS Albion give a thumbs up on their return to Plymouth after the Baltic deployment

Pictures by: PO Phot Si Ethell, PO ACMN Patrick Whitcomb and LPhot Phil Bloor



Green berets from 45 Commando's X-Ray Company worked with their Lithuanian and Portuguese counterparts to showcase the kit and equipment they had been using during the exercises, which included the newly-formed pre-hospital treatment team's mobile medical facility, a fire support strike team with Javelin missiles and General Purpose Machine Guns, along with their command vehicle.

Also on display were two inflatable raiding craft from 47 Commando and diving equipment from 24 Commando Engineers.

Brigadier Rich Cantrill, commander of 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines, attended alongside Lithuanian Chief of Defence, Lieutenant General Valdemaras Rupsys, Major General Flemming Mathiasen, commander of Headquarters Multinational Division North, Colonel Nerijus Stankevicius, commander of the Lithuanian Griffin Brigade and the UK's Defence Attaché to Lithuania, Squadron Leader Geisinger.

The event started with an exercise overview, followed by a walk around of all the participating nations' displays, where the Chief of Defence and distinguished visitors asked questions about the capabilities of each of the forces.

Lieutenant Colonel Innes Catton, Commanding Officer of 45 Commando, said: "The strike companies relished the opportunity to exercise their initiative and commando force skillsets.

"Working closely with our NATO and Joint Expeditionary Force allies is very rewarding and demonstrates the strength of our partnership. The distinguished visitors' day was a highlight."

Mounts Bay sailed off Lithuania's coastline, acting as the launch pad for the commando raids, pouring her embarked Bootnecks onto beaches during mock invasion.

"Klaipeda, Lithuania was the location for our final showdown. Mounts took station in the dead hours of the night and poured forth her Royal Marines in their landing craft to storm the beaches," said Cadet Francis Cox-Palmer-White, an officer under training on Mounts Bay's.

"Alas, that is where the executive officer's role in the final confrontation ends, for we had delivered the payload to the right place

at the right time – it was over to Royal for the rest.

"Yet, Mounts had proved that the Royal Fleet Auxiliary delivers side by side with every other element of a NATO task force. She is a vital bridge between first strike and sustainable invasion."

The deployment kicked off with Mounts Bay first looking west before heading east, completing preparations for their eventual deployment on Exercise Highland Dagger in Scotland, as well as meeting up with the UK Carrier Strike Group in the North Sea.

"This was the dry run where our team honed their craft, refreshed their training and recited their gun drills," said added Cdt Cox-Palmer-White.

Mounts Bay then sailed with Albion through the Skagerrak – a strait running between the Jutland peninsula of Denmark, the southeast coast of Norway and the west coast of Sweden – and under the Øresund Bridge, which connects Sweden and Denmark.

"By the time we arrived in Estonia, the vessel had exercised with the Danes, the Swedes, and the Norwegians, among others," said Cdt Cox-Palmer-White.

"We had scouted out the coastlines of Bornholm, Gotland, and Stockholm and racked up sufficient hours of flying serials that even our four cadets were feeling confident in their routines."

The task group then headed back out of the Baltic for exercises in the North Sea aimed at protecting them from threats above and below the waves, before turning their attention to the deployment's finale in Lithuania.

Mounts passed this time under the Storebæltsforbindelsen (the 'The Great Belt Fixed Link' between the Danish mainland and her islands).

Then it was onto the amphibious exercises in Lithuania, which saw 45 Commando crash ashore and complete intensive training in the Baltic nation.

Mounts then headed for her final stop in Gdynia, Poland – the twin city of both Klaipeda and Plymouth, before heading back to the UK.

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AUSSIE RULES

Royal Marines head Down Under for large-scale exercises alongside the Australians and regional allies

ROYAL Marines have carried out raids on sun-scorched beaches in North Queensland at the beginning of a busy deployment alongside allies in Australia.

Bravo Company of Taunton-based 40 Commando landed from helicopter carrier HMAS Canberra – flagship of the Royal Australian Navy – alongside troops of the

2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, in the Cowley Beach Training Area, nearly 10,000 miles away from their Somerset home.

The commandos attached to the Australian light amphibious infantry to form a 'pre-landing force' designed to secure beaches and beachheads to clear the way for larger amphibious forces to land ashore.



The deployment will give Bravo Company the opportunity to work with their Australian counterparts and other allies, allowing us to strengthen relationships, test each other's skills and lay the foundations for future joint operations.



Royal Marines of 40 Commando join Australian Army soldiers during an amphibious, air-mobile assault as part of Exercise Sea Explorer at Mourilyan Harbour in Queensland. Pictures by Australian military photographer WO2 Max Bree

The green berets and A Company of the 2nd Battalion carried out patrols before Chinooks and landing craft brought in waves of troops, armoured vehicles and artillery to shore for the main thrust inland, all with Australian Tiger attack helicopters in support overhead.

It marks the commandos' return to Australia's eastern coast to continue their work started in 2019, when they also attached to the 2nd Battalion.

"Over the next three days we practised break contact drills, navigation and patrolling through the jungle in our small 12-man team, as well as being shown and taught drills by our Aussie partners," said Bravo Company's Marine Sam Eva.

"This included beach marking, their landing drills and their rendezvous point drills."

The marines swam 400 metres to shore in the waters of the Coral Sea from their landing craft and patrolled into the wilds of the training area, which is in a 19-mile zone on the Queensland coastline and also includes Lindquist Island, one of a string of protected islands in the region.

The commandos were ashore three days ahead of the main force completing their missions and worked in small 12-man teams on a range of intensive training scenarios, before later launching raids via Chinook alongside A Company from HMAS

Canberra later in the exercises, known as Sea Explorer.

This was all part of preparations for the upcoming Exercise Talisman Sabre, which is Australia's largest war-fighting exercise that takes place every two years.

On the sun-scorched terrain and on idyllic beaches, the commandos are spending part of the Aussie winter, in which temperatures can still reach 27°C, attaching themselves to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment and training with allies from the USA, Canada, Japan, Republic of Korea, and New Zealand.

Talisman Sabre has been scaled back this year because of Covid-19 guidelines, with a maximum of 2,000 troops from outside Australia taking part in the exercises around the Shoalwater Bay Training Area and Townsville – around 150 miles south of where the marines have been training so far.

"The deployment will give Bravo Company the opportunity to work with their Australian counterparts and other allies, allowing us to strengthen relationships, test each other's skills and lay the foundations for future joint operations," said 40 Commando's Lance Corporal Miller.

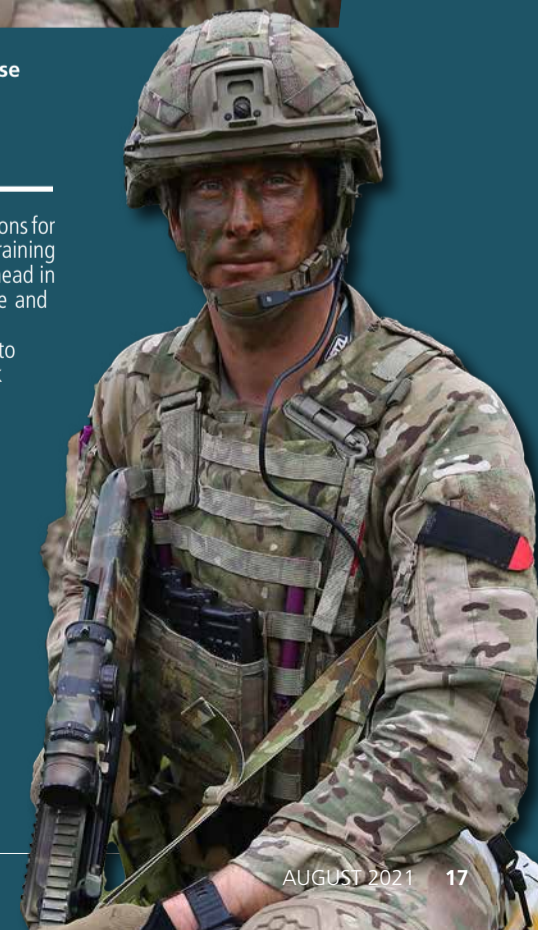
Talisman Sabre will include amphibious landings, field and logistics training, urban operations, air combat and maritime exercises.

Bravo Company completed preparations for going Down Under with a mountain training and tactical exercise around Garelochhead in Scotland, including climbing Beinn Ime and Ben Vorlich.

LCpl Miller said: "The aim was to practise our navigation, teamwork and mountain skills while summiting these peaks."

"Over the two days we were fortunate enough to experience some of the most breathtaking views in the UK and also experience every type of weather Scotland had to offer."

The arduous exercises also included working in small 12-man teams – a part of the evolving way in which Royal Marines' are working – for the first time for many of the marines and using small drones to assist in making battlefield decisions.



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Orkney's tribute to RN's bomb disposal experts

THE ROYAL Navy's bomb disposal experts in Scotland exercised their freedom of Orkney by marching through the streets of the island's largest town – Kirkwall.

Orkney Island Council unanimously voted to bestow the honour on Northern Diving Group in May this year, in recognition of the Faslane-based team's outstanding work in assisting the island's community over the years.

It was the first time that the Royal Navy Clearance Divers have had the opportunity to exercise their privilege to march and members of the public and local dignitaries were there to cheer the sailors along.

Commanding Officer of Northern Diving Group, Lieutenant Commander Mark Shaw, said: "It was a distinct honour for Northern Diving Group to receive their Freedom of Orkney and to exercise the privilege of marching through the town. It was done in ceremonial fashion, with bayonets fixed, drums beating and with colours flying.

"We have heard some very moving speeches during the ceremony which reflected on Northern Diving Group's close connection with Orkney – a relationship current and former members of the team hold very dearly.

"We were very warmly welcomed by the public, who I'm sure also enjoyed the ceremony and the chance to listen to the Royal Marines Band.

"We are looking forward to continuing our special relationship with Orkney for the annual HMS Royal Oak commemoration, and most likely we will be back soon to dispose of more historic munitions, although we won't be marching in full ceremonial uniform!"

Accompanying the sailors was a 20-piece marching band from Royal Marine Band Scotland based at Rosyth.

The relationship between Orkney and Royal Navy Clearance Divers goes back decades.

For over 40 years Scottish-based divers have been visiting, not only to safely deal with wartime ordnance washed-up on the coastline, but also to help pay their respects at the wreck of HMS Royal Oak in Scapa Flow.

Each year members of Northern Diving Group dive to the registered war grave to replace the White Ensign – the flag of the Royal Navy – and to remember the 833 sailors lost.

Orkney Islands Council Convenor, Harvey Johnston, said: "The Royal Navy Northern Diving Group has been coming to Orkney for many years.

"In addition to always carrying out their professional duties in an exemplary manner they have become true friends to Orkney, assisting in acts of remembrance in Scapa Flow and winning the respect of the local populace.

"It is for this reason that we are delighted to bestow the Freedom of Orkney on the Northern Diving Group."

Headquartered at HM Naval Base Clyde on the west coast of Scotland, Northern Diving Group is a 39-strong team of Explosive Ordnance Disposal divers that are responsible for providing bomb disposal expertise throughout Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland.

Their area covers a coastline of over 12,000 miles and touches hundreds of small, and often remote, communities.

This year so far Northern Diving Group have been called out on 55 separate occasions, including five tasks in Orkney. In 2020 the team completed 140 call outs across the country.

Northern Diving Group also provides in-water maintenance and repair diving support to naval ships and submarines, both at Faslane and for Fleet units deployed around the world. They train in four different diving sets along with the ability to operate many underwater tools and equipment, including recompression chamber operations.

The unit provides a unique Enclosed Space Diving capability. Using special equipment divers can conduct maintenance work in tight and difficult to reach compartments. Currently Northern Diving Group are the only military diving unit which can carry out enclosed space diving.

The Diving Group have teams at immediate readiness 365 days a year ready to support the civil authorities in keeping the public safe by providing explosive ordnance disposal.w



First crew get to grips with future

The Royal Navy's switch to the minehunters of tomorrow has begun in earnest with the first crew formed to take automated boats on operations.

Fresh from the delivery of three specialist launches to Clyde Naval Base, mine warfare experts from HMS Shoreham have returned from the Gulf and will re-train to use the new craft and their associated state-of-the-art hunting and sweeping equipment.

Controlled remotely either from a ship or command station on land, Hebe, Harrier and Hazard can be used to detect and classify mines or ordnance dumped in the sea – at speed, without putting sailors and a multi-million-pound warship in danger.

The vastly-experienced team from 1st Mine Countermeasures Squadron Crew 7 have completed numerous tours of duty in the Middle East either in HMS Shoreham or one of her Sandown-class sisters which spend three years at a time operating from Bahrain.

Under the recent Defence Command Plan, the Royal Navy has decided to gradually move to autonomous mine warfare technology.

Instead of returning to take charge of another Sandown-class ship for UK-based operations the mine warfare specialists will get to grips with the new launches.

"I am extremely proud of the work of this crew over the last 14 years, especially during operations

in the Gulf," said Lieutenant Commander Dafydd Bryden, MCM1 Crew 7's Commanding Officer.

"We are a team who are absolutely focussed on our readiness to defeat mines, anywhere and at any time. We do this by being at the cutting-edge of tactics and technology. It is an exciting and natural progression for many of this crew to move on and spearhead the development of this new capability."

Among the veterans embracing the tech revolution is Petty Officer Chris Proctor, Operations Room Supervisor. He said the transition represents a chance to be a part of the future of mine warfare.

"After seven years working with the Sandown community, times are changing with the future of mine warfare now clearly on the horizon," he added.

"Though I do not expect the transition to be free of teething

problems I am excited to get to work with the new systems and be part of the future of mine warfare." Fellow mine warfare specialist Able Seaman Adam Holmes is also part of the transition. "I am excited to be part of the first team to work with the new systems. I am looking forward to taking on the new challenges that it will present to me, as well as learning more about the capabilities it will bring to the Royal Navy."

Using the three new boats, he and other mine warfare experts can coordinate and control the boats or monitor autonomous offboard sensors.



Milestone for Gib Squadron

SAILORS from the Royal Navy's Gibraltar Squadron are a step closer to operating their new jet-propelled patrol vessels.

Commanding Officers successfully completed the Jet Boat Course held at the Royal Navy School of Seamanship at HMS Raleigh.

The two-week course gave the officers an opportunity to operate a vessel propelled by jets, rather than conventional propellers.

Later this year the squadron will take delivery of the first of two new £9.9m fast patrol boats – HMS Cutlass and Dagger – which will form the backbone of the Royal Navy's Gibraltar Squadron.

Lieutenant Commander Adam Colman, the Commanding Officer of HMS Pursuer, said: "Every type of vessel within the Royal Navy has its own manoeuvring characteristics and, despite being in the Royal Navy for over ten years, I have never operated a jet-propelled craft.

"We are now prepared for the arrival of HMS Cutlass later in the

year."

Cutlass and Dagger will provide 24/7/365 cover, racing through the waters around the territory at speeds of up to 40kts, providing protection for Royal Navy and visiting allied warships with machine-guns and, potentially, heavy machine-guns.

The squadron currently patrols the territorial waters with HMS Dasher and Pursuer, plus several small Pacific 24 RIBs.

Dasher and Pursuer are temporary replacements for the squadron's long-standing guardians, fast patrol boats HMS Scimitar and Sabre, which returned to the UK last summer.

The squadron is due to take delivery of Dagger in the spring of 2022. The MOD ordered the 19-metre boats from Merseyside-based Marine Specialised Technology last year.

Each with a crew of six sailors and operating out of the Naval Base in Gibraltar, the two boats are the first vessels built for the Royal Navy on the Mersey in 30 years.



Rare naval medal is sold

A rare naval gold medal awarded to one of Admiral Lord Nelson's protégés has sold for £120,000 at auction.

The medal was awarded to Captain Sir William Hoste for the Battle of Lissa, in the Adriatic in 1811.

The medal, which had never been sold before, had been estimated to fetch between £60,000 and £80,000 and was bought by an anonymous private collector at auctioneers Morton & Eden in London.

David Kirk, Morton and Eden's medal specialist said: "We are delighted for the family, and we feel that this result does real justice to what is, without doubt, a superb medal.

"Captain Sir William Hoste was an extremely important naval figure, as well as being a protégé and friend of Nelson."

Capt Hoste joined the Royal Navy at an early age and was soon introduced to Nelson, who invited him to serve as his Captain's Servant aboard HMS Agamemmon.

In 1805 he was sent by Nelson to deliver diplomatic gifts and messages to the Dey of Algiers, therefore missing the Battle of Trafalgar.

Hoste's finest hour came during the opening stages of the Battle of Lissa (now called Vis) off



the coast of Croatia. He led his ships in a devastating attack against a larger French and Venetian squadron.

The British suffered 190 dead and wounded, but the French and Venetians lost more than 700 men, along with four frigates.

Hoste went on to captain the Bacchante, which captured and destroyed more ships near Apulia and Ancona. In 1813 he led the attack on Cattaro and went on to capture

Ragusa.

Failing health forced his return to England and in 1814 he was made a baronet. His Knight Commander's neck badge was also included in the auction and sold for £19,200.

In 1822 Hoste commanded the Albion guardship at Portsmouth and three years later he was appointed to the Royal Yacht. He died of tuberculosis in December 1828.

Hoste's first son, Rear-Admiral Sir William Legge Hoste, would also go on to serve with distinction in the Royal Navy (Sir William's son's pair of campaign medals for the Second China War, 1857-60 also sold for £4,560.)

A number of insignia and artefacts were also sold, bringing the family a total of £171,960.

A Ghost drone flies overhead while a Royal Marines operates in the foreground during experimental exercises

THE SWARMS

DRONES dived, sailed and flew together in a swarm in a first for the UK's armed forces during experimental exercises with the Royal Marines.

An array of autonomous systems operated underwater, on the water, in the sky and over land to help Royal Marines Commandos as they carried out training raids on a number of complex 'adversary' positions – such as missile and radar installations – in Cumbria and Dorset.

The uncrewed systems were used on missions at the Electronic Warfare Tactics facility at RAF Spadeadam on the border with Northumberland and off the south coast in training areas around Lulworth Cove and the Defence BattleLab.

In a first for UK Defence a group of six medium-heavy lift drones were operated in one autonomously controlled swarm from a single ground control station.

The drones were tasked with tactically re-supplying commandos with everything from ammunition for the assaulting troops, through to blood for combat medics.

The swarm also demonstrated significant flexibility and switched roles to conduct reconnaissance missions to provide intelligence for commando raids ashore and at sea against a hostile target, when launched from RFA

Mounts Bay.

The autonomous systems also worked together, being tasked independently to find and identify enemy targets, accurately using their range of increasingly powerful sensors and target acquisition algorithms.

The trials – named Autonomous Advance Force 4.0 – are the latest in a series of experimental exercises that have developed ways in which the UK Commando Force will operate in the future, putting an emphasis on human and machines teaming closely together to gain a battlefield advantage.

The ultimate aim is to seamlessly embed autonomous systems on the front line to support commando forces on the battlefield. These experiments scrutinise tactics and develop knowledge of how the drones can and cannot be used.

First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, said: "Only by continued experimentation with the latest technology and innovation can we properly prepare our people for the challenges of the future. AAF4.0 is testing just how hybrid forces can operate on the battlefield, with elite Royal Marine Commandos enhancing their capabilities with the use of drone swarms."

Colonel Chris Haw, the officer in charge of the experiments, said: "This has been yet another enormously important step forward in Royal Navy autonomy and particularly Commando Force transformation; I have seen

phenomenal progress through this series of trials over the past two years.

"But we must always remember that this tech is there to enhance commando excellence, not to replace it."

Royal Marines strike teams from Alpha Company, of Taunton-based 40 Commando, were on the ground and able to call on swarms of Malloy TRV150 drones – which can lift up to 68kg in all weathers – for deliveries of ammunition, blood and other supplies.

The commandos carried a small rugged tablet on their chest, giving the ability to tap a map location and time for the delivery of their supplies, leaving the Malloys to do the rest and drop in what they need when they need it.

A mini-helicopter called the Anduril Ghost drone – which flies almost silently and is equipped with advanced sensors – gave the commandos a live feed of what lay ahead.

The Ghost is very difficult to detect, can fly autonomously, accurately identify targets and has a long endurance.

It can work in a swarm with other Ghost drones – capturing thermal images and footage – and can be tasked with finding numerous targets in coastal zone, be that a human on the land or a vessel at sea.

The Ghost can also carry a payload, paving the way for forces to land



S ARE

Pictures inset to the title, right, in descending order: a swarm of Malloy TRV150s are launched at RAF Spadeadam; a Royal Navy MADFOX autonomous vessel supports commandos in the waters off Dorset; a TRV150 drops supplies during exercises at Spadeadam in Cumbria; commandos launch a Tactical Precision Strike system; a Ghost drone supports a boarding team from 42 Commando during trials with RFA Mounts Bay; a Malloy carries blood supplies to deliver to combat medics on the battlefield

Pictures by PO Phot Si Ethell, LPhot Baz Wheeler and Lt Caleb Williams



ashore and conduct their mission without delay with the drone continuing to support in a variety of roles, with a payload bespoke for the mission at hand.

Also plugging into this network were Remus underwater vehicles dropped into the sea by the Malloy TRV150s. Remus can scan the ocean for mines and obstructions using an array of sensors to feed valuable information back to the amphibious command and help make decisions on where marine forces can land ashore via a clear route.

On the waves, the Royal Navy's MADFOX vessel scanned the horizon using advanced sensors.

The autonomous vessel can carry out reconnaissance operations and surveillance patrols, providing valuable information on a coastal area before Royal Marines get in their raiding craft to come ashore.

Adding to the already impressive range of autonomous systems, the commandos also had the fixed-wing Cobra drone flying overhead.

The Cobra – which has a 3.1m wingspan and long endurance – can be launched from unprepared ground or from ships and is used for identifying and tracking targets.

This drone can be carried in a backpack and has been engineered to function in harsh environments, ideal for following commandos into all

extremes of climate.

Finally, the commandos carried out simulator and range training with the Tactical Precision Strike system – which is what's known as a lethal loitering munition (essentially meaning it flies to the vicinity of a target, and waits until the human operator specifies it to attack).

The information fed through from all these autonomous sensors were brought together in an experimental communications network – known as an EVE network – which ultimately increases commandos' situational awareness on the battlefield but also helps reduce the physical threats personnel face while on operations.

Together, these autonomous sensors enable commandos to carry out find and strike missions, while also keeping them supplied and in the fight for longer.

During two weeks on Autonomous Advance Force 4.0 the drones have been tested in a range of scenarios, adding to experiments completed in the Mediterranean and in the Arctic last year.

The experiments have continually increased in complexity and have taken big leaps and will continue in the United States later this year on Exercise Green Dagger in the Californian desert.

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Arctic role



ICE. ✓
Icebreaker. ✓
Rather nippy. ✓
Endless desolation. ✓
Curious native wildlife. ✓
But wait, they're bears, not penguins.

This may look like a typical scene in the life of HMS Protector.

Except it's the *boreal*, not austral, summer.

This is the High North. *Highest* North to be more accurate as the Navy's sole icebreaker turned north, not south, for the first time under the White Ensign, venturing where no Briton has believed to have been before in a surface ship.

The survey and research ship crunched her way through polar ice to within 1,050 kilometres of the top of the world as she gathered data about the ocean and environment

Only submarines – such as HMS Trenchant which punched through the ice at the Pole in 2018 – can travel further north than the position the Plymouth-based survey ship reached: 80°41.5 North in the Greenland Sea.

It is a testament to the seamanship of her sailors, the design and build of the ship herself, but also an indictment of global warming; the retreating and thinning Arctic ice field is opening up previously-inaccessible water to shipping.

Pictures: LPhoto Belinda Alker
HMS Protector

Continued overleaf

Continued from page 23

Protector completed the most extensive overhaul in her decade-long career in the Royal Navy in January, since when she's been conducting extensive trials and training – all with the goal of deploying to Antarctica in the autumn.

Having been nowhere near the ice in more than two years, the ship tested the strength of her engines using a specialist bollard pull in Flekkifjord, southern Norway, then began icebreaking in earnest in the Fram Strait – between Greenland and the Norwegian island chain of Svalbard.

The ship tested herself against various depths and types of ice, assisted by scientists, engineers and advisors including from the Ministry of Defence and the British Antarctic Survey.

Also helping the ship were two Royal Navy officers who sailed into the Alaskan Arctic aboard the US Coast Guard cutter Polar Star during the winter, and ice-breaking expert Lieutenant Lauren Kowalski, also from the US Coast Guard.

Among those delighted at the way the ship handled extreme temperatures and conditions again was Protector's Engineering Officer, Lieutenant George Cave.

"Having seen Protector's journey through her five-yearly maintenance period, it is a pleasure to see her work as she is designed to.

"Many systems are configured to regulate and work in very cold water, and we need that water to test those systems fully. The preparations and adjustments made convince me she is ready and capable."

Executive Officer Commander Adam Ballard added: "This is my second time in Protector and I continue to be amazed by the versatility, utility, and sheer adaptability of the vessel and those who operate her."

The ship's Royal Marines' Mountain Leader Sergeant Chris Carlisle led daily patrols on to ice floes inhabited by polar bears to set up the trial ranges and take ice samples, while small remotely-operated vehicles were launched beneath the ice to assess it.

"The team adapted well to the Arctic," he said. "Within a week of sailing from Devonport the temperatures and conditions changed immeasurably. Everybody on-board proved they can safely do their job in the most extreme of environments."

The ship also conducted surveys of the sea bed – between 2,000 and 3,000 metres deep in the Fram Strait – collected data about the North Atlantic currents, observed marine mammals, and helped the British Antarctic Survey with its work studying the polar ice cap.

"This team has ventured far to one of the most amazing parts of the planet," said

Protector's Commanding Officer Captain Michael Wood.

"The chance to familiarise ourselves with this unforgiving environment has been fantastic, and re-asserts the UK's ability to operate in the Arctic."

Protector ended her mission to the High North by visiting Reykjavik to mark Iceland's recent accession to the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, drawn from nine northern European nations committed to global security.

Within a week of sailing from Devonport the temperatures and conditions changed immeasurably. Everybody on-board proved they can safely do their job in the most extreme of environments.

SGT CHRIS CARLISLE RM

To highlight the important, enduring relations between the two nations on issues such as environmental science in the Arctic – especially hydrographic surveying which Protector conducted on her foray north – and the security of the frozen region, the ship invited VIPs, led by Foreign Minister Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson and the UK's Ambassador to Iceland, Michael Nevin, aboard for a look around the unique vessel.

And the sailors and marines were able to get ashore to sample the Icelandic capital as well as travel slightly further afield to sample some of the island's primeval landscape and natural features.

"The ship's company were exceptionally well hosted by the people of Iceland and had some wonderful experiences exploring this fascinating country; we hope to return in the future," said Captain Wood.

His ship returned not to her home in Devonport but to Teesside (a balmy 13.5°C compared with just 9°C off Reykjavik) and some maintenance/final preparations for her voyage south at the end of the summer.

Before returning to the frozen continent there's surveying work to conduct around Britain's mid-Atlantic territories of Ascension Island and St Helena.

"We are ready to get back to Antarctica," said Captain Wood. "In the year the UK hosts the COP 26 Conference, our commitment to preserving and understanding this pristine continent, and the impact of climate change upon it, is more important than ever."





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Divers look to recruit police

MARITIME Reserve divers visited the Police's National Dive School in Northumberland to encourage officers to consider joining them.

The recruitment drive is part of the professionalisation of divers in the reserves, focused on organisations and professions where employees are already qualified divers.

Northumberland Police Marine Unit Insp Graeme Homewood and Sgt Suzanne Crossley, Head of the Police Dive School, invited Commander Richard 'Soapy' Watson and Lieutenant Commander Tim Wood, to deliver a presentation on their branch and diving in the Senior Service to several police divers who'd expressed an interest in joining the Maritime Reserves.

Among various military-recognised courses and qualifications, police divers train to operate from RIBS – making their skill set ideal for the Maritime Reserves.

Instructor PC Peter Wilson gave the naval officers a tour of the Jarrow facility, which

underlined how much the Reserves could benefit from the training and courses police divers have already completed.

The RN intends to follow up the visit to Tyneside with further visits/presentations at other police units around the UK.

Meanwhile, the Reserves have welcomed five personnel.

Lieutenant Berry and Able Seamen Finerty, King, Wilson and Richardson have passed the initial diver training course after a fortnight's intensive training and instruction.

The course is the first formal qualification for all military divers to get the necessary basic diving training under safe, controlled conditions.

The successful candidates move on to the next stage of training in early 2022: the basic air phase, consolidating what they've learned to date as well as learning to use the SABA half mask, completing longer dives (including at night), and then the underwater search course.



Magical as Merlin aircrew gain wings

NINE newly-qualified Merlin Mk2 helicopter aircrew were handed their 'wings' at a special parade at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose.

It was a proud moment as the small, winged badges each mark the completion of three or four years of tough training – learning how to fly and how to work together to use the formidable Merlin helicopter as a weapon.

The three pilots, four observers and two aircrewmembers will now enter frontline anti-submarine warfare and maritime patrol operations in the Merlin Helicopter Force.

A small, socially distanced ceremony was held in the aircraft hangar of the training unit 824 Naval Air Squadron at the Helston air station.

Guest of honour at the parade was Vice Admiral Keith Blount, himself an anti-submarine warfare helicopter pilot and instructor and former head of the Fleet Air Arm. He now commands maritime forces with NATO. He was joined by RNAS Culdrose's commanding officer Captain Stuart Finn.

Speaking at the parade, Commander James Taylor, the commanding officer of 824 Naval Air Squadron, said the event was "a fantastic day in the careers of the graduates" who had "earned the right to wear their wings on their sleeve."

He added: "The graduates are foremost of course, having worked so hard for so long to get here, and today is about recognising their achievements."

"For me, what is equally important is to recognise the supporting role of friends and family."

"Our graduates would not be here without them. You are the ones who believed in them from the very beginning and who supported them through the long and demanding training."

"Thanks to you, here they are – ready to join the frontline and follow in the footsteps of our esteemed and illustrious Fleet Air Arm predecessors."

The Merlin Mk2 helicopter force has two frontline squadrons, both based at RNAS Culdrose.

With 820 Naval Air Squadron away on the carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, these graduates will now join 814 Naval Air Squadron, known as the Flying Tigers. The squadron operates from Royal Navy frigates to protect UK waters and the submarine-based nuclear deterrent.

Pictures: LPhot Kyle Heller, RNPOTY



Liner honour for medical profession

THE former head of the Royal Navy Medical Service has named a new cruise ship.

Saga Cruises selected Commodore Inga Kennedy for the honour of 'godmother' and naming the Spirit of Adventure in a nod to the medical profession's work during the pandemic.

Cdre Kennedy follows in the footsteps of the Duchess of Cornwall, who is godmother to sister ship Spirit of Discovery and who is Commodore-in-chief of the RN Medical Service.

"I was thrilled to be asked to become Spirit of Adventure's godmother and feel I'm accepting this on behalf of the wider medical community who have worked so tirelessly throughout this pandemic and will continue

to do so long after this crisis period fades," said Cdre Kennedy.

"Personally, it is also a privilege to follow in the footsteps of Spirit of Discovery's godmother. I wish Spirit of Adventure, and all who sail on her, the very best of voyages."

During the naming service in Portsmouth, Cdre Kennedy smashed a bottle of English sparkling wine on the hull of the ship.

Cdre Kennedy was then given a tour of the ship, which can host a maximum of 999 guests, with every cabin having a balcony.

Cdre Kennedy, who trained as a registered nurse, midwife and lecturer, worked for the NHS before joining the Royal Navy Reserve in 1987.

She worked as a senior midwife at the Royal Navy Hospital Gibraltar before joining Queen Alexandra's Royal Navy Nursing Service in 2000.

She was promoted to commander in 2005 and served in Afghanistan in 2011 and was made captain that year.

She was promoted to commodore in 2015 and two years later was appointed head of the RN Medical Service, a position she relinquished recently.

Group CEO of Saga, Euan Sutherland, said: "Commodore Kennedy has given a lifetime of service to nursing and our armed forces and it is a privilege to watch her send Spirit of Adventure on her way."



Fee pipped at post to top award



SENIOR rating Felicia 'Fee' Collins finished as a runner up in a national award for her expertise and dedication in the world of logistics.

The 41-year-old chief petty officer was a finalist in the Amazon Everywoman Supply Chain Awards, selected in the 'above and beyond' category.

Now in their 14th year, the awards – backed by the internet shopping/media behemoth – celebrate the vital contribution women make to transport and logistics, showcasing progression, accomplishments and increasing avenues of opportunity in a traditionally-male-dominated industry.

Fee, who serves with the Portsmouth-based Fleet Logistics Inspection Team, has already been recognised by the Senior Service for her dedication

and commitment providing assurance and compliance in the supply chain for the Royal Navy's deployed ships, shore establishments and overseas forward bases.

"I was very surprised when I learnt that I was nominated for the award and was on the shortlist," said the chief petty officer, who's originally from St Vincent in the Caribbean.

"When the initial shock subsided, I was elated that my efforts have been recognised both within the Royal Navy and now by civilian counterparts in transport and logistics. I still feel that I was just doing my job."

Fee has completed a BSc in Logistics Management and is now enrolled on the Defence Logistics Staff Course which will help her complete a Master's degree in logistics management.

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

Naval Children's Charity

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

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

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



Former RN nurse is hailed an inspiration

A FORMER RN nurse has been named as a national role model for her work in the NHS.

Sharon McCann, acting operational director at Solent NHS Trust, was honoured at the Ex-Forces in Business Awards.

Sharon, who was a nurse in the Royal Navy for 27 years before transitioning to the NHS in 2017, has been named the winner of the Role Model of the Year category for her forward-thinking approach to recruiting nurses and attracting Armed Forces veterans as part of that work.

The prestigious, national awards celebrate the achievements of ex-forces personnel who are now excelling in their second careers.

“My 27 year career in the Royal Navy as a nurse really shaped me as a person and it will always run through my veins,” said Sharon.

“Transitioning from the Armed Forces into Civvy Street is a big deal for a veteran and it requires patience and understanding from family and work colleagues.

“This would not be achieved without the NHS supporting, employing and valuing the vast array of skills and experiences that Armed Forces veterans bring to an organisation. I am proud to be a nurse, an armed forces veteran and for being a member of the Solent family.”

Sharon’s first civilian role was with Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust as an area matron. She joined Solent in March 2019.

Learn more about the Ex-Forces in Business Awards at: <https://exforcesinbusiness.co.uk/>

Picture: Caroline Jenkins Photography

Ex-Wren keeps all in picture

A FORMER Wren created and gifted portraits to members of her local community, including key workers.

Marie, from Reading, has been creating portraits of NHS staff and volunteers to thank them for their services during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Marie, a SSAFA volunteer who supports the local Gurkha community, served in the WRNS before getting married to a sailor and spending 20 years as a Naval wife.

Marie said: “I began painting portraits for NHS staff when an artist called Tom Croft did a call-out on social media asking artists to paint the portrait of an NHS Key Worker.

“I did a portrait of my son, who is based at ICU in Huntingdon, and my daughter-in-law who works in the Blood Transfusion Department.

“I then offered portraits to NHS key workers at RBH, as well as the vaccination team at Emmer Green Surgery.

“Painting the portraits gave me an incentive to get up in the morning! It really kept me occupied.”

Marie has gifted 38 portraits to members of the local community, including local Gurkha women. In her spare time, Marie supports the local Gurkha community as an English teacher with SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity.



SAILORS from Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose in Cornwall helped run a schools’ electric car racing championship on an old Second World War airfield.

In school teams, around 200 children took part in the event organised by the charity Greenpower Education Trust.

It was hosted by the Royal Navy at Predannack Airfield on the Lizard peninsula in west Cornwall, which is used for training by nearby RNAS Culdrose.

Sailors from the air station lent a hand organising the

races, as well as passing on some technical tips from the aircraft engineers.

There were two categories of races for different age groups. Teams taking part included primary and secondary schools from Cornwall as well as Torquay, Taunton and one school all the way from near Stoke-on-Trent.

Lieutenant James Turner, from RNAS Culdrose’s Air Engineering Department, said: “It was great to be able to host an inspiring and enthusiastic team and the



OUR FRIENDS ELECTRIC



children certainly enjoyed building and racing their own cars.

“We had military personnel from across Culdrose come and take part. They were happy to get involved and it was good to be working again with schools to promote science and engineering.”

Last year’s event had been cancelled due to Covid restrictions and special measures were put in place this year to ensure the event took place safely.

Pictures: Adam Pigott/Spacesuit Media

Marathon marine

Royal set for punishing 250km race

A ROYAL Marine is planning to complete one of the toughest races in the world to help his fellow commandos.

James Legg faces a 250km (155 miles) slog across one of the driest regions on Earth.

The green beret is one of 136 ultra-runners committed to the seven-day Atacama Crossing through the namesake Chilean desert.

Over the week, competitors must overcome salt flats, enormous sand dunes, icy cold slot canyons, river crossings, living ‘under the stars’ in the foothills of the Andes as they complete the course.

Competitors must carry the food, water, clothing and safety equipment needed – between 10kg and 20kg on a rucksack throughout.

James, who joined the Royal Marines in 2017 and is serving with 30 Commando IX Group at Stonehouse, Plymouth, wanted to mark the 75th anniversary of the Royal Marines Charity with a personal challenge which would also boost their coffers.

The 36-year-old Londoner is already an experienced ultra-long-distance runner, having completed the Sahara race in Jordan back in 2014 – the same format over 250 kilometres of desert.

He’s drawing on that experience to prepare for the South American race, which takes place at the end of September, helping him to cope with cramped muscles, improving his diet, and above all, knowing when to push himself to the limit and when to move at a steadier pace.

“I’ve always been driven and intrigued by something that takes you out of your comfort zone,” he said.

“It’s a good way of character building and pushing your limitations and ultimately I love it when everything hurts and you’ve given your all – only then am I content knowing that I’ve done my best.”

You can support James’ efforts at: <https://gofund.me/2f764e22>. He’s already three-quarters of the way towards his £1,000 fundraising target.



Doc delivers after epic cycle ride

THE Armed Forces Director of Rugby, Lt Cdr Doc Cox, has raised more than £3,000 for charity after completing a cycle ride from Glasgow to London.

He travelled more than 900km to the NHS Nightingale Hospital at the Excel in London to raise the money for SSAFA and NHS Charities Together.

As reported in last month’s *Navy News*, Doc received his 2nd Long Service and Good Conduct Bar after 38 and a half years’ service, joining the Royal Navy in June 1984.

Doc was supported on his route by Nathan ‘Pony’ Moore.

Verity Harding, Head of Events at SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, said: “We are incredibly grateful to Doc and his team for taking on this epic challenge and cycling over 900km from Glasgow to London to raise money for SSAFA. The money raised by Doc will make a real difference to the lives of our beneficiaries, including service personnel, veterans and their families. Thank you.”

If you would like to support Doc, visit <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/DoRNightingaleChallenge>

To find out more about SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, visit: ssafa.org.uk

FORWARD THINKING



HMS Montrose leads minehunter HMS Penzance and a US Navy Mark VI patrol boat during Anglo-US combined training in the Gulf. Routine business for the frigate which is now more than two thirds of the way through her three-year mission as the first 'forward deployed' frigate. As of the end of July,

she'd spent 850 days operating out of the RN hub in Bahrain, over 350 of them assigned to international security missions such as the Combined Task Forces of 150/151/152 and Sentinel. She's offered protection to 110 ships passing through the region's choke points at times of heightened tensions and she's seized more than six-and-a-half

tonnes of illegal drugs – heroin, crystal meth and cannabis – worth nearly £240m while patrolling the Indian Ocean. To achieve all this, the ship has been the trailblazer for the forward presence/forward deployed programme: stationing ships overseas long-term, changing crews every four months, sparing the vessels the lengthy voyages to and from

the UK, getting more out of them in theatre, and allowing sailors a more settled and certain programme to balance work and home life. We asked a selection of the Starboard Crew from HMS Montrose – currently deployed on patrol – for their feedback on this new way of operating. Pictures CPO Lee Pardoe, HMS Montrose, and the US Navy



Living the Forward Deployed Model and knowing when I will 'RIP' [roulement in place] into and out of theatre allows me to better plan holidays and time with family and friends.

A significant benefit is knowing that when I am home I can relax and enjoy my well-earned leave without out the possibility of being recalled to go to sea.

The FOST-covered training has helped a number of new members of the warfare department integrate into the ops room in a relatively short period of time ensuring we provide maximum operational capability to the command from the moment we enter theatre.

– WARFARE SPECIALIST PO STEVE KERR



It provides me with stability. The four months on/four months regenerating model is ideal for planning ahead. I am in the middle of a house renovation and being able to plan when I am going to be off during the regeneration has allowed me plenty of time to work on my house whilst still having time on the weekends to socialise with friends and family.

Whilst deployed in the Gulf, the command have arranged for adventurous training teams to fly out. Against the backdrop of Covid, they have arranged day trips to the desert for mountain biking, hiking and camping. This provides us with much-needed down time during very challenging maintenance periods.

As a ship we have overcome the challenge that Covid presented, which has limited our ability to leave the ship. Mess decks arrange events on the jetty each weekend which has allowed the crew to bond together no matter what department you are from and provides us with the opportunity to 'get away' from the ship.

– PO(ME) ROBERT WHIFFING

I am in favour and like the forward deployed model. It provides a good work/life balance.

The biggest positive is the guaranteed leave we get. This is a significant positive for everyone onboard. Knowing you are not going to have to conduct duties during your leave period makes for a more pleasurable and relaxing leave period, unlike other ships currently operating out of the UK.

During the regeneration period there is an opportunity to go on a number of courses which will develop my skills.

On deployment it has allowed me to exploit many opportunities to undertake AT, the quality of which has been very good. It has allowed me to get away from the ship and de-stress.

The countries we have visited have been very good, though the experience has been limited due to the restrictions imposed. I look forward to living the model when Covid restrictions end. I believe the runs ashore will be great and I look forward to experiencing new cultures.

It has made saving money significantly easier. The additional money that comes with being on deployment is a huge benefit and really does help. It means I can save money to one day perhaps buy a house. Although each deployment is only four months, limiting the time I have to get qualified, I – and many junior rates onboard – believe that because we are so operationally active we qualify faster compared to those onboard ships not currently operating the forward deployed.

– ET(ME) David Williams

The model offers me stability. I am able to work out when I will be leaving the UK and returning to the UK which allows me to plan ahead.

I really enjoy the fact that I am guaranteed time off before and after the deployment during which I don't have to return to my unit to cover duties.

The training I receive onboard HMS Monmouth [which serves as a training ship in Devonport] ensures I am at the standard required before entering theatre.

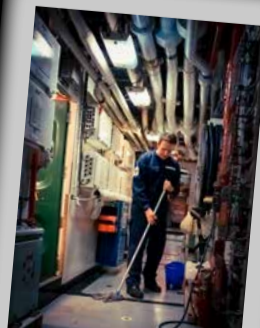
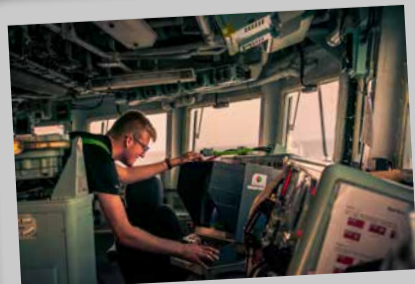
When deployed I have been afforded the opportunity to conduct AT that would otherwise not be available to me back in the UK: camping in the desert, mountain biking along dunes and paddle boarding in the Gulf of Oman – all once-in-a-lifetime opportunities.

– LET(WE(CIS)) SIMON KNOWLES

I've found that living the forward deployed model provides me with a greater level of job satisfaction compared to when I was onboard units operating in the South Coast Exercise Areas.

HMS Montrose is the most operational unit in the Fleet and as such, this poses unique challenges which we must overcome together as a ship. There is a greater dependence on me as a maintainer to perform because we do not have the safety net of the UK support networks such as fast store deliveries and immediate support. I believe this additional responsibility has provided me and many of my co-workers with a greater level of job satisfaction.

– PO (WE) VINCENT



It takes a team to fly the F-35

HELPING to ensure jets flying from the deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth have all the support and equipment they need is Lieutenant Commander Stuart Greenfield – from an office near the Pentagon.

The Royal Navy air engineer is one Briton on the US-led headquarters which oversees the entire F-35 Lightning programme – hundreds of aircraft, three different variants, operated or ordered by more than a dozen nations.

Since February 2019 he's been assigned to the Assistant Programme Manager of Logistics in the F-35's Joint Programme Office in Crystal City, Washington DC – a stone's throw from the Pentagon.

There's a logistics team dedicated to each of the three variants of the strike fighter: the A model (conventional land-based), the C (for conventional US 'cats and traps' aircraft carriers), and the B operated by the UK, US Marine Corps, Italy and Japan among others.

It's their job to be the crucial link between front-line units and the F-35 Programme Office which oversees the entire stealth fighter project, ensuring the former get what they want from the latter.

Stuart (pictured below) arrived in Washington after several years with the Commando Helicopter Force, a period as an engineering instructor and working in the world of Lightning on both sides of the Pond from the F-35 test and evaluation unit at Edwards Air Force Base in California to helping to establish the engineering team behind 617 Squadron, the UK's first operational unit.

"I worked on F-35 squadrons for two years before the Joint Programme Office, so I knew F-35s," says Stuart. "I didn't know acquisition – I didn't understand the US way of doing acquisition or how a US programme office worked, but my US teammates were there for me and were very helpful with getting me acclimatised."

"I was the only one on our team who had experience on an F-35 squadron and had maintained the air system. It tied in with the fact that everyone has a unique skill that elevates the quality of your team here."

He also enjoys the multi-national flavour of the Lightning project.

"While we all have the same end goal, we have slightly different



ways of achieving it due to our cultures and the different core values found in our militaries, but that is what works well for the F-35," he adds.

His only regret is that he's in Washington and not aboard Queen Elizabeth seeing the fruits of his team's efforts with British F-35Bs operating side-by-side with those from the US Marine Corps.

"The milestone deployment is great!" Stuart adds. "To see the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force operating on HMS Queen Elizabeth is very exciting. And to do it with US Marines is a testament to the strong relationship between our two countries."

"We trained with the Marines at Beaufort, and to now be deployed at sea with them is fantastic. It shows the great benefits of this programme and the interoperability of the F-35. I'm jealous of anyone who gets to sail with the Queen Elizabeth for the next couple of months."

■ Air Traffic Controller Lieutenant Jason Le Huray has been singled out for his efforts readying HMS Queen Elizabeth for her first deployment.

Now working at FOST in Devonport, the junior officer received the Fleet Air Arm's Air Traffic Management ATM Fulmar Award, for his role as an Air Traffic Control Officer in HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Jason stood out from fellow controllers for taking the initiative on a number of safety and carrier procedures which have directly contributed to the effectiveness of the UK's carrier strike capability.

He was embarked on the flagship – currently deployed on her maiden mission – through trials and training up to preparations for this first deployment.

According to his citation, Jason left HMS Queen Elizabeth with her air department "providing safe and efficient air traffic control to the largest air wing embarked in a British carrier since before he was born, skillfully coordinating jets and helicopters in both the tower and radar environments."

"What set Le Huray apart was his ability to maintain safe, expeditious air-traffic management to a high standard whilst considering the additional tactical situation in his decision making with aplomb. His hard work, dedication and effort have made the most valuable contribution to the development and delivery of air-traffic control operations, at the forefront of Defence aviation and the renaissance of British carrier strike."

Logistics team's lifeline for Lifehouse charity

SAILORS who support Portsmouth warships undergoing maintenance helped the city's needy through traditional board games.

Logistics experts from the FTSP Support Group – responsible for making sure ships undergoing Fleet Time Support Period have the replacement spare parts they need – put their feet up for an afternoon and challenged each other to chess, dominoes and draughts (although not the RN's favourite board game, uckers).

With 21 participants paying £5 each the team – based in a warehouse near the naval base's D Lock – raised £105, promptly spent on the necessities of life.

"We have an unofficial affiliation with The Lifehouse, a homeless shelter/soup kitchen in Southsea that we support," explained Leading Hand 'Otto' Ottewill.

"The director of the shelter has a top ten list of items which are always urgently required featuring coffee, sugar, marmalade, longlife milk, biscuits, crisps, toilet roll, pot noodles and cooking oil."

Money spent, the team delivered to the charity's Albert Road home, where it was warmly received... and has prompted the logisticians to do more for the Lifehouse.

Next up is a walk from the naval base to Hayling Island and back (26 miles) involving 20 participants with the goal of raising £2,000 for the Lifehouse.



A conference for everyone

THE First Sea Lord wants to hear from the backbone of the Navy – not senior officers and officials – when he hosts his annual conference next month.

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin (pictured by LPhot Mark Johnson chatting with HMS Prince of Wales' bridge team) wants to "reach down" to junior and middle-ranking officers, petty officers and non-commissioned officers, the men and women who will "inherit the future Navy and future Commando Force" at the annual event.

The conference gives the Navy's most senior sailor the chance to update high-ranking officers, civil servants, defence experts and analysts and warrant officers on the latest developments affecting the Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary – and allows them to raise any issues or put forward suggestions and ideas.

Admiral Radakin wants to use the 2021 event – a virtual conference, like last year's – to update regular RN, RFA, RM personnel and civil servants on the ongoing transformation programme, now into its third year of revolutionising the way today's Royal Navy and Royal Marines operate around the globe – and take onboard feedback.

"I want to reach down to a younger audience – our lieutenants and lieutenant commanders, our petty officers, and our sergeants in the Royal Marines. They are the ones who are going to inherit this future Navy and Future Commando Force

"So my next conference is about talking to that audience. They can hear it from me, they can question, they can challenge, advise.

"I want to acknowledge that the changes that we're making are very much the ones that they will inherit, and it's their opportunity to hear about that – but they also have a role in implementing those changes and how we make it even better."

Speaking on the eve of the main period of summer leave for much of the Senior Service, said throughout 2021 – as it did last year – the Royal Navy was continuing to deliver on front-line operations against the backdrop of the pandemic, from the No.1 mission of the

strategic deterrent to dispatching the largest carrier group from UK waters in a generation.

And two years into the Navy's transformation programme – to forge a modern Navy embracing the latest technology, new ideas and ways of working to meet the challenges of the mid-21st Century and the goals and missions set by the UK Government – many of the initiatives are making a clear difference.

The Navy's headquarters staff and senior officers have been reduced by one third – while the rank and file is growing by several thousand.

The biggest success continues to be Forward Presence: stationing warships in key strategic points around the world (Falklands, Caribbean, Mediterranean, Middle East and, soon, Asia-Pacific) replacing the crews every few months to sustain the vessels on operations – and spare them the lengthy voyage to and from the UK.

HMS Montrose, which has operated from the Royal Navy's hub in Bahrain for more than two years, is the trailblazer for the programme – and has exceeded expectations.

"There were some people saying you can't possibly do this," Admiral Radakin said. "Well actually, we proved it's a much better model, we deliver more for the government, and the nation. But we also have better lives for our people and HMS Montrose has been the most available ship going."

The Navy's transformation is ongoing – not least to keep pace with technology. And besides headline-grabbing equipment such as drones delivering re-supplies to marines in the field or autonomous minehunters, the admiral is keen to see tech improve the day-to-day lives of personnel.

"In the same way that you can sit down on Sunday evening, and you can book a holiday, anywhere in the world," the First Sea Lord said.

"Why can't you sort out your naval life on your phone with your partner at home when you've got some time to think about it – that's what we should be offering."

Details about logging on will be provided ahead of the September 12 conference.



PCS is now standard across fleet

FROM September 1 PCS is officially the standard working rig across the entire Royal Navy.

Introduced in 2015 to mark the biggest uniform change since World War 2, the RN Personal Clothing System – to give it its full title – is modelled here by some of the ship's company of frigate HMS Lancaster (which, incidentally, was the first ship to receive the roll out of the upgraded clothing).

It was brought in to be more practical, comfortable, durable and fire-retardant – as well as to update the 'look' of the Navy.

And over the next two years, PCS is itself undergoing a £78.8m overhaul following widespread consultation with sailors and test runs.

Stores will begin issuing the new PCS, initially to personnel serving in the Gulf/ hot climates.

The upgrade is part of a ten-year plan to incorporate better materials and designs to deliver the best navy uniforms, in this case improved shirt and trousers.

Picture: PO(Phot) Paul A'Barrow

The green green grants of home

MULTI-million-pound grants have been made available to Portsmouth to continue to drive down the base's energy use and impact on the environment.

Up to £3.5m is available for a mixture of new building projects and up-grades to the existing estate.

All seven grants have been provided by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with work already under way on some projects, including the new Queen Elizabeth Class Forward Logistics Centre.

Two grants are providing up to £625,000 for solar panels and LED lighting at the centre; the solar energy will recharge electric forklift trucks used to move pallets for the carriers.

Additional funding will provide solar panel canopies over existing car park spaces, improvements in managing and monitoring of Nelson's energy supply saving about 600 tonnes of CO₂ every year, and to replace single-glazed windows with triple in Victory Building, plus more LED lighting in place of mechanical ballast lighting in three buildings, and improvements to the heating system in another.

Energy consumption across the base has been cut by more than 50 per cent since 2003 and carbon emissions by two thirds.

RAF take over police training

RN police training now comes under a new banner as part of a shake-up of the upper echelons of instruction.

The Defence College of Logistics, Policing and Administration is now responsible for overseeing the three military constabularies following a merger which should save the taxpayer £30m over the next decade.

The Army is going through a similar transformation programme to the RN, with the logistics/policing/administration merger one of the key changes under the initiative.

Having centralised logistics and personnel training at Worthy Down near Winchester – which saw the logistics school from HMS Raleigh relocate to Hampshire last year – the next step was to overhaul Defence School of Policing and Administration, known as Project Ariel.

The road taken was a merger with the new

logistics college which is intended to both save money – and generate external income among other changes.

Those include taking the Defence School of Policing and Guarding (DSPG) at Southwick Park near Portsmouth directly under its wing.

Training with Hampshire Police already takes place at the former HMS Dryad site and as part of Ariel, MOD Police will undergo training there too from next year.

The new college is looking to centralise security training at the same location, something other government departments have also expressed an interest in.

Coming up next is Project Mitra which is looking to improve and make more use of virtual and distributed training, learning lessons from ways of working during the pandemic and making use of new technologies.

'You are part of something bigger'

IN THE shadow of a US Marine Corps F-35 in the hangar of Britain's flagship, watched by the UK's highest-ranking sailor Admiral Sir Tony Radakin and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the most senior military figure in the alliance addresses international press at the height of the largest exercise of 2021.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach – who stood down in June as chairman of NATO's Military Committee – says the alliance's leaders left HMS Queen Elizabeth impressed not only by the ship, but the wider carrier strike group and the international nature of the force, all working together to a common goal.

"We were struck on HMS Queen Elizabeth by the power the ship presents – and represents. The Secretary General remarked: 'I can feel NATO in action.'" Air Chief Marshal Peach said.

At the beginning of his RAF career in the mid-70s, a young Stuart Peach served aboard HMS Ark Royal (that's the post-WW2 fleet carrier, not the more recent Harrier carrier).

"Ark Royal in 1975 was impressive, but the carrier strike group is so much more impressive," Sir Stuart said.

"Seeing it in action was remarkable: the integration of the team, the other nations, the range and breadth of the tasks that the group will carry out. It represents maritime power for our alliance. It is a demonstration of power projection on a very large scale."

The carrier group is now moving east of Suez – and beyond NATO's domain – for much of the remainder of 2021.

Despite the 'North Atlantic' in NATO's title, the alliance talks in terms of 'seas': the



● 'This is NATO in action...' Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (in the light blue shirt) watches a US Marine Corps F-35B land on HMS Queen Elizabeth with Commanding Officer Captain Angus Essenhigh

Atlantic plus the Baltic, Mediterranean and Black Seas.

This year the Royal Navy has been active in all of NATO's seas – Lancaster and Westminister, plus the UK Response Group in the Baltic; Trent in the Mediterranean and Black Sea; the Carrier Strike Group in all but the Baltic – either on UK-led operations or under the alliance's standard.

For a period – late 2000s through to the middle of last decade – many NATO missions which had been bread and butter for the RN down the years took a back seat in favour of other operations around the globe and long-standing forces, such as the standing naval groups, lacked a UK warship.

In recent years, that's started to reverse: a British minehunter is once again a near constant presence in the Baltic task group (appreciated by the crew for the scope of

the mission, different port visits and interaction with other navies, and by NATO for the RN's commitment and expertise in the field).

HMS Trent's long-term mission in the Med means she can regularly support the Sea Guardian security mission, while sorties into the Black Sea

role of the alliance's Military Committee Chairman in 2018, NATO's most senior military post.

"My message to the Royal Navy is: You are part of something bigger, called NATO. We encourage you to fly the NATO flag on your missions.

"Being part of the

underline UK/RN commitment to Ukraine.

And capital ships such as Albion or Queen Elizabeth are key when Britain is in charge of the NATO Response Force.

This renewed commitment to NATO is naturally welcomed by Sir Stuart who's served as Chief of Joint Operations and Chief of Defence Staff in the UK before taking on the

alliance is good for the UK, good for the maritime sector and we are grateful for the UK's naval support."

Although the RN leans towards the two principal naval HQs in Northwood and Virginia – the latter recently established to meet the growing challenge of the North Atlantic – Senior Service personnel are spread across the alliance's



Australian triumph for 814 NAS

THE Flying Tigers – 814 Naval Air Squadron – have been praised for achieving the highest degree of operational capability over the last year.

A special presentation was made by the deputy head of the Fleet Air Arm, Commodore Nick Walker, inside the squadron's hangar at RNAS Culdrose, where its Merlin Mk2 helicopters are serviced.

Representing the squadron was Air Engineering Technician Christian Cunningham-Wood, who accepted the Australia Shield.

The Flying Tigers provide and support all non-carrier operations requiring a submarine-hunting Merlin, from detachments to Scotland for exercises to providing flights for RFAs and frigates, as well as supporting the nuclear deterrent and counter-terrorism operations when required, leaving sister front-line unit 820 to concentrate on protecting the carriers.

814's Commanding Officer Commander Chris Wood said: "I am very pleased we have received this award. This has been a real whole-squadron effort and it recognises the wide breadth of the activity and contribution the squadron makes to defence."

Thank you, Paul

VETERAN engineer Paul Roberts has completed 45 years' service with a personal thank-you from Britain's first sailor.

The air engineering mechanic received a gold valedictory – presented only to those who have served under the White Ensign for 35 years or more and signed by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin – to mark his departure and return to civvy street for the first time since August 1976.

Brits were wilting in a never-ending heatwave which turned into a drought, chuckling along to Ronnie Barker and David Jason in the first series of *Open All Hours* and listening to Elton John and Kiki Dee at the top of the singles chart.

Only veteran supply ship RFA Fort Rosalie remains from the Fleet Paul joined (she was launched that December) and the aircraft he learned his trade on with 706 Naval Air Squadron at Culdrose, the Sea King, finally retired from service in 2018.

"Your successes are too numerous to record individually, but they have each been due to your infinite professionalism, dedication and loyalty," the First Sea Lord said in his valedictory. "You should be justifiably proud of your achievements and



● The three ages of Paul Roberts (l-r) at Raleigh in 1976, Hong Kong in the 80s and leaving the Service in 2021

the legacy you leave behind."

The chief petty officer's service with the Fleet Air Arm took him around the world: a draft to front-line 824 NAS meant deployments with HMS Bulwark and Hermes and time in the USA, and RFAs Fort Grange and Olwen in the Far East and Mediterranean.

It was with Olwen that he endured Typhoon Orchid off the Philippines in 1980 – near to where the MV Derbyshire went down with the loss of all hands, the largest British ship even to be lost at sea; the tanker was subsequently involved in the search for the wreck/survivors.

In 1982 as a leading hand he was one of the engineers supporting the first airborne early warning Sea Kings which sailed with then-brand-new HMS Illustrious to the Falklands at the end of the conflict.

Other duties have included time with the specialist helicopter engineers, designers and scientists of Mobile Aircraft Support Unit (MASU, now renamed 1710 NAS), responsible for the UK's entire military helicopter fleet around the world.

Paul left the RN in 1999... but signed up for the Royal Naval Reserve Air Branch and

eventually signed up full-time again in 2004, since when he's served in the Arctic and deployed to Afghanistan, where he led a 5,000-man-hour repair job on a Commando Helicopter Force Sea King which had been damaged near Kandahar.

For the past five years he's been looking after ships, not helicopters with the Marine Engineering facility in Devonport and received Babcock's Marine Efficiency award for his work during HMS Kent's latest refit.

He's also helped to run the annual Ten Tors challenge on Dartmoor.

Faslane's feedback tweaks FAM pilot

SOME of the criteria for finding a home in the Faslane area are changing following feedback from sailors, marines and their families.

Clyde Naval Base is the Royal Navy's 'pilot area' for the Future Accommodation Model, introduced a couple of years ago to give Service personnel greater choice when it comes to where and how they live, based on individual or family needs and requirements – not their rank or marital status.

Due to invaluable feedback received from Clyde, plus the Army and RAF pilot sites (Aldershot Garrison and RAF Wittering) several changes were introduced on July 12:

- The 12-month Future Availability Date has been reduced to six months;
- Personnel can claim support for voluntary mid-assignment moves;
- Length of service has been reduced from four years' service to one.

Further details are available from the FAM Cell at Faslane: people-famcell-cly@mod.gov.uk

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SAAB

Get your family active with new activity packs



MANY children have spent more time sitting down watching a screen during the pandemic.

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity has worked with The Kings Active Foundation to deliver new active families packs to RN families.

The packs consist of specially-designed activity items and these are supported by a host of physical and online resources.

They aim to help families get active and having fun together for 60 minutes every week and activities can be done in the home or outdoors.

As well as helping families get active, the packs also contain resources and games which aim to support family cohesion and conflict resolution.

"The active families initiative came about when it was observed that family members, both young and old, are increasingly spending more time looking at screens rather than interacting together", said Richard Holmes, CEO of the Kings Active Foundation.

"Kings Active has worked with children

and young people via Kings Camps for over three-decades, now the addition of active families allows us to work with the whole family, encouraging them to have fun being active together."

Feedback from families has been fantastic so far, with parents commenting on the positive effects that the packs have had on their children.

"I just wanted to say thank you so much for sending us this bag of resources. When we ordered it, we did not know what a huge impact it would have on us," said one parent who got in touch with the RNRMC.

"We have a lot going on at home and in life, but my young boy loves the activities.

He has now started getting up early every day before school to play 1-100, he used to really struggle with getting up and was never enthusiastic about anything but has made him a lot happier both physically and mentally."

Packs are available for free to any Royal Navy and Royal Marines family. There are 600 packs available so do make sure you register so that your family can have fun, learn and play together this summer.

Scan the QR code to register for your free pack.



Helping veterans stay connected

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity is working in partnership with the Royal Naval Association to bring online connectivity into the homes of our older veterans.

We need your help to find naval veterans who could benefit from this.

The Sparko TV kit is a small box which connects to a TV* and comes with a webcam and a very simple remote control. This enables people to connect with family, friends and community using simple digital technology.

Sparko TV features:

- Video call communication
- Live classes and social activities
- Tailored entertainment content

As well as connectivity with other Sparko TV users, the service allows

friends and family to connect using their smartphone via the free Sparko Connect App.

Sparko TV also features easy-to-join live group activities through a simple remote control.

Activities can include discussion groups, book clubs, chair-based exercises, Bingo, quizzes, Stand Easy and art classes.

WW2 veteran, Ernie Davies has been using Sparko for several months.

Ernie (pictured) has found the service straightforward and uses it to keep in touch with his old naval friends.

"It's great to have this facility and to be able to be in regular touch with shipmates and oppos who I would otherwise struggle to see," said Ernie.

RNA Welfare Programme Manager, Lynda Pearson, is managing the rollout of Sparko TV.

She said: "The RNA is all about camaraderie and fun, and that's what you'll get from being part of this project!"

Sparko TV is completely free for Royal Navy and Royal Marines veterans.

Could you, or somebody you know, benefit from a Sparko TV kit?

If so, visit royal-naval-association.co.uk/sparkotv for more information and an Expression of Interest Form.

* In order to benefit from Sparko, a HDMI port must be available (any TV that's 15 years old or less should have this). Sparko then plugs directly to an existing TV.



Marathon bike ride to support mental health

A Royal Navy officer was cycling from Lands End up to John O'Groats in aid of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) to support military mental health.

Commander Pascal Patterson was taking on the challenge as *Navy News* went to press.

His route will see them make stops at various military establishments across the UK.

Pascal said: "I see this challenge as an opportunity to give back to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, organisations that have given me so much over the years.

"In particular, mental health is incredibly important for our personnel, it is vital that we collectively provide the necessary support to those who have been through so much. Hopefully the scale of our challenge will generate much needed awareness and funds for our charity."

He and Lieutenant Commander Dan Waskett, originally planned to take on a 5,000km ride across the USA, however this has been postponed due to Covid.

In 2022 they will be riding entirely unsupported from San Diego (California) to St Augustine (Florida), across the USA from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

Dan said: "When Pascal suggested this challenge to support the RNRMC I leapt at the chance. They are a fantastic organisation who give so much back without question.

"A great friend of mine died in military service not long ago, the charity offered wonderful support to his family, during what was an incredibly difficult time. I see this ride as my way of saying thank you, and hopefully helping them in turn to help someone else in need."

Pascal and Dan joined the Royal Navy on the same day in January 2005, and continue to serve.

Since joining, both have enjoyed varied and challenging careers as Aircrew Officers, deploying all around the world on frontline operations.

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● Two submariners demonstrate escape equipment and techniques in the new Thetis building for Prince William
Pictures: LPhotos Pepe Hogan and Stevie Burke



HRH endorses new submarine rescue complex

AFTER getting construction of HMS Belfast going (below right), Prince William gave his seal of approval to the Silent Service's new £34m rescue trainer.

The prince, who is Commodore-in-Chief Submarines (the Service's honorary head), officially opened the Submarine Escape, Rescue, Abandonment and Survival facility, which ensures hundreds of crew are prepared for the worst case scenarios facing those who serve beneath the waves.

Known as Thetis building – after HMS Thetis which sank in Liverpool Bay during on the eve of World War 2 with heavy loss of life and which resulted in major changes to submarine safety – the facility is used to train submariners to safely escape from a stricken boat.

The state-of-the-art building features a realistic simulator capable of mimicking a variety of weather conditions and sea states.

Instructors can put students through their paces in the water, giving them the opportunity to practise abandoning a submarine and escaping to life rafts while wind, rain and even thunder and lightning rage around them.

Submariners can also practise 'escape from depth' methods in a realistic training environment, simulating the expected conditions on board a submarine in distress.

The complex has been in use since last year, but only now has Prince William – officially the Earl of Strathearn north of the border – been able to visit and perform the honours by formally opening the facility.

He toured the entire building, met training staff and students, and enjoyed some hands-on operation of the escape towers and wave generator.

And he added his name to the guest book, signing the same page as his grandfather Prince Philip did in 1961, and his father Prince Charles in 1972.

The guest book was inherited by the SMERAS team from the previous submarine training facility, SETT (Submarine Escape Tank Trainer), in Gosport through which generations of submariners passed and whose iconic escape tower continues to dominate the waterfront.

Its 21st-Century replacement is part of the concentration of submarine training on the Clyde – alongside basing all the flotilla in Faslane.

Work is now under way on the £100m submarine training school which will take over from the existing facilities at HMS Raleigh and HMS Sultan.

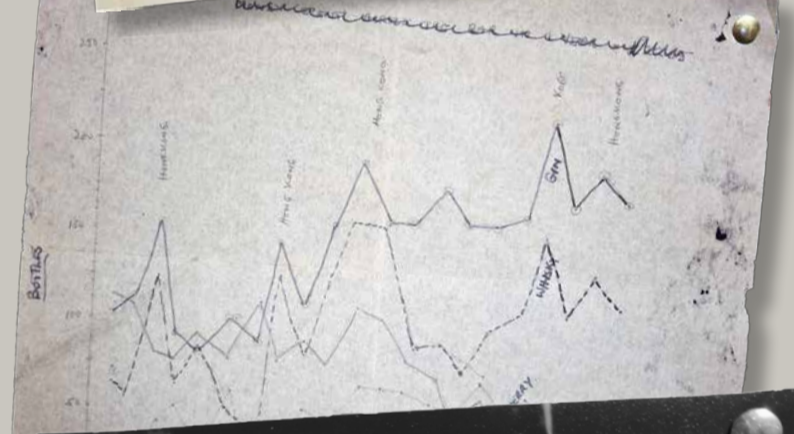
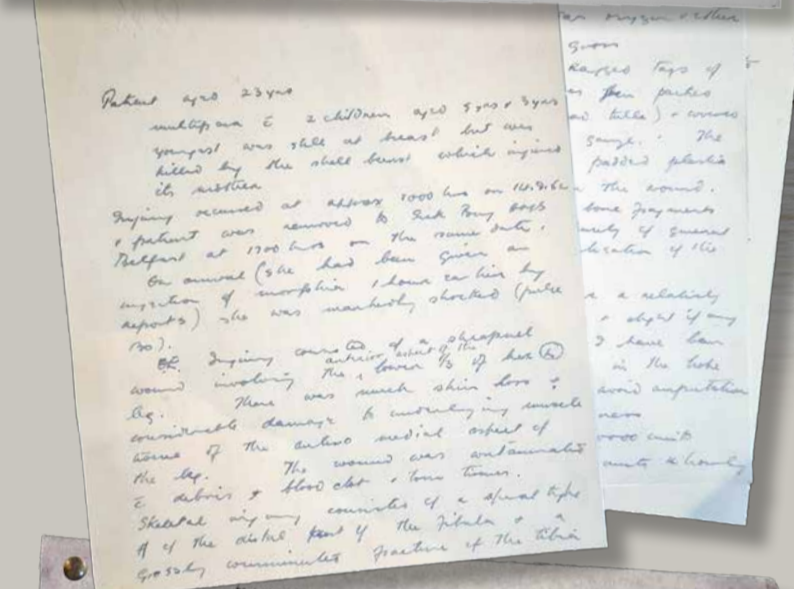
Before departing Faslane to catch the England-Germany clash at Wembley in his role as President of the FA, the prince chatted with serving submariners in the memorial garden next to the supermoss complex (pictured below).

He heard from deeps about life in the Silent Service and ongoing initiatives aimed at helping to improve mental health of members of the Forces.

"This visit was an excellent and important opportunity to update the Submarine Service's Commodore-in-Chief on recent operations," said Commodore Jim Perks, the head of the Silent Service.

"It has also provided us with an opportunity to highlight the ongoing work on the Clyde to make the Naval Base the Royal Navy's Submarine Centre of Specialisation.

"These are exciting times to be a Submariner at HM Naval Base Clyde as we continue to shape the future of the Service."



It's been a big month for HMS Belfast

A tale of

JULY 15 1952 isn't one of those dates chiselled in history.

It was the very beginning of the new Elizabethan era – the Queen had been on the throne just five months.

Plagued by failing health, Churchill was prime minister again, now in charge of a nation which possessed both the atom bomb and the ration card.

And he was in charge of a nation at war once more – this time locked in battle against Communism in, off and above the Korean peninsula.

This summer's day, cruiser HMS Belfast was patrolling the islands off the west coast, not far from Seoul.

Communist forces from North Korea landed on the island of Chang-ni Do in inflatable boats, prelude to a ferocious battle with casualties on both sides, and civilians caught in the middle.

The actions of Surgeon Lieutenant Tony Rowan (top and bottom, centre) would earn him a Mention in Dispatches and, more importantly, save the lives of 16 people.

The 28-year-old Cambridge graduate kept copious notes of what would be his most demanding day aboard – the horrendous injuries some casualties faced,

the care and treatment all received, the strain on the sailors looking after them.

Casualties on stretchers filled the passages. Sick berth attendants bandaged wounds, sterilised instruments and prepared the operating table. The men worked solidly for 24 hours. Bowels were exposed, or bits of brain. Some died before Rowan and his shipmates could help them. "Don't worry, just lie still. You're in safe hands," the officer assured them – though as his patients were Korean, they probably only understood the tone, not the content.

HMS Belfast spent 404 days on operations off Korea. She fired more than eight thousand 6in shells at enemy positions ashore – Naval Gunfire Support in modern parlance – far more than left the barrels in WW2.

When not in battle, Rowan dealt with the usual ailments any GP would face... but with considerable more cases of venereal disease.

He also kept track of wardroom alcohol consumption; his graph, (left, centre) echoing a doctor's chart, shows the highs (port visits) and lows (battle, understandably) when officers let their hair down.

It was these rich personal papers donated by the family which prompted Belfast's curatorial team to focus on

THERE are now three Type 26 frigates under construction after Prince William set the cutters to work on HMS Belfast.

The Queen's grandson pressed the button on hi-tech machinery at BAE Systems' Govan yard and lasers began to move across the first steel plate for the £1.2bn warship.

Before setting the cutters to work on steel which will eventually become part of the machinery space housing HMS Belfast's gearbox and stabilisers, Prince William told BAE workers and VIPs, including numerous representatives from Northern Ireland and the frigate's namesake city, how impressed

he was by the Type 26 programme.

"The scale of achievement is truly staggering, and all the staff I've met here today are rightly proud of what you are doing," the duke said.

"Proud not just because you are creating these cutting-edge ships, but because you are supporting the Royal Navy and the national security of the United Kingdom."

He revealed that his wife would be the official patron of HMS Glasgow – the first ship in the class which is nearing completion in the same shipyard – promising the Duchess of Cambridge would visit for the frigate's naming



with the first steel cut on the new ship and the revamp of her predecessor of two City class

the immediate Cold War period in the first stage of a ten-year revamp revealed to the public last month.

The cruiser's enforced closure for 16 months as a result of the pandemic prompted her Imperial War Museum masters to bring forward plans to overhaul both the ship and the visitor experience.

"We are blessed with a wealth of rich personal stories, memoirs and the like from throughout the ship's career," explained Rob Rundle, Belfast's curator.

"Surgeon Lieutenant Tony Rowan's recollections of Korea were so vivid we decided to tell the story of that war through the sick bay.

"I hope that we have got the balance and tone right – between the serious side of HMS Belfast, and the fun, the life aboard for the men."

The first phase of the revamp has focused on No.2 Deck – the main viewing area which includes mess decks for junior/senior rates, the galley, workshops, chapel, offices and sick bay.

You are now immersed in sound – 3D speakers dotted around the ship authentically bring her to life with banter, the noise of chippies banging away or chefs in the galley. It's effective, authentic and definitely not gimmicky

For younger visitors, numerous touch-screen

displays have been added to shed light on the work of 26 chefs to feed 956 souls aboard (the final complement).

Belfast grew over her 25 years in service. The ship

Patient aged 23 years

2 Children, aged 5 years & 2 years

Youngest was still at breast but was killed by the shell burst which injured its mother

On arrival (she had been given an injection of morphia 1 hour earlier) she was markedly shocked (pulse 130)

From Surg Lt Tony Rowan's case notes, July 1952

visitors see is not the wartime cruiser but a ship of the early atomic age. She was extensively refitted/rebuilt in the late 50s to create a central citadel where crew would be safe from the dangers of nuclear fallout (a principle maintained to this day in RN ships).

That same overhaul saw hammocks replaced by bunks – not a million miles away from today's messes, though there are no partitions between beds and no sockets

for 21st Century gadgetry.

Serving sailors who have never visited Belfast will find her closer to today's warships than they might imagine – piping, wiring, ducts and vents are everywhere. The passages are wider, there are far fewer bulkheads and hatches to get through – Belfast is rather more 'open plan' – and there are none of today's ubiquitous computers, only the occasional typewriter.

Otherwise, there's little personal space in the mess decks, and meals are still served from a food counter (the offerings in 2021 are a little healthier than the meat and two veg on offer to the cruiser's crew).

As for veterans, well.

"When I come aboard, I am 25 again," says former chief ordnance artificer Fred Sutton.

"Although I never served on Belfast, this is my Navy, the Navy I knew."

For the past seven years, he's volunteered once a fortnight, working with the handful of full-time maintenance team and fellow veterans to keep Belfast looking her best, a task akin to painting the Forth Bridge.

"Covid was a bit of a blessing as it has allowed us the time to do some work," Fred adds. "She's in a much better state now than she was a year ago. I hope people will like and appreciate what has

been done."

And while some of the mountings, fixtures and fittings on the upper decks still require a good deal of attention from Fred and his fellow conservators, Belfast herself is in pretty good nick; her hull is in remarkably good condition for a vessel laid down in the mid-30s and designed to last perhaps 20 years.

"We think of Belfast as a 'living machine'," says Rob.

"Looking after her is a formidable challenge – there is a huge amount of maintenance required. But it is also hugely rewarding."

In time, the team will retell the account of the ship's role in the Arctic Convoys, the Battle of the North Cape and Normandy as part of the revamp, as well as her even longer career as a floating museum/memorial (she celebrates her 50th anniversary on the Thames on Trafalgar Day).

Among the more surreal snippets: the cruiser hosted a seminal gig by Spandau Ballet before the New Romantics hit the big time.

To cut a long story short, that's an anecdote for a future revamp...

HMS Belfast is open daily until September 5. Visitors must book a time slot in advance to tour her via: www.iwm.org.uk/visits/hms-belfast

ceremony to give her blessings to the ship and all who sail in her.

And he said his late grandfather, who died in April aged 99, would have been "fascinated and excited to see" the "advances in skills and technology" embodied by Belfast and her sisters.

They are the mid-21st Century successors to ships such as HMS Magpie, the Duke of Edinburgh's sole command.

The 26s – each named after one of the UK's major cities – will replace the eight 'souped-up' Type 23 frigates which are dedicated to submarine hunting, while the five general purpose 23s will be superseded by the

Type 31/Inspire class, with work due to begin on the first ship later this year in Rosyth.

HMS Glasgow is out of the construction sheds at Govan with her fore/aft sections awaiting joining before the ship enters the water to undergo completion, with HMS Cardiff a couple of years behind her and over 40 per cent finished.

Prince William was given a tour of sections of Glasgow, including her ops room and flight deck, and chatted with those responsible for the construction of the frigate, which cuts an impressive sight towering over the Clyde waterfront.

"Standing in the shadow of

HMS Glasgow which has been brought together on the hard standing, with large parts of HMS Cardiff in construction around us, the steel cut for HMS Belfast is another significant milestone in the delivery of the Type 26 class," said Vice Admiral Christopher Gardner, Director General Ships at Defence Equipment and Support.

"This is a proud moment for everyone who has worked so hard on this strategic national programme, which sustains thousands of jobs across the United Kingdom and harnesses all of our skills and knowledge to produce the best possible ships/capabilities for the Royal Navy."



Falmouth's Covid help rewarded

MEMBERS of the Falmouth branch were rewarded for their efforts to help fellow townfolk through the dark days of the pandemic.

Civic leaders of the Cornish port invited branch Chairman, Mick Stevens, along with representatives of other charities to the Falmouth Town Mayor's Presentation Afternoon.

The Branch received a donation from Mayor Steve Eva in recognition of the branch's commitment to and activities organised in support of the Town Council throughout the pandemic.

"Falmouth RNA has unity, loyalty, and comradeship as part of our core values," explained s/m Mick.

"These values have helped us to not only support those within our branch but the wider community as well.

"Commemorations of those who have gone before should not cease in times of difficulty but should be adapted to suit the times, with the Town Council's help and support this we have done.

"We look forward with the rest of the community to better days."

Accounts from Arctic sought

HISTORIAN Hugh Sebag-Montefiore would like to hear from the families of any naval officers or ratings – or merchant ship officers or men – who served in the Arctic Convoys and have vivid accounts or photos revealing what they witnessed or went through.

Hugh, who's behind acclaimed bestselling books on the Enigma code, Dunkirk and the Somme, is now focusing on the convoys which delivered vital aid to the USSR between 1941 and 1945.

He's interested not just in accounts/photographs of the convoy journeys and German attacks on them, but also the experience of sailors in Russian ports such as Murmansk and Archangel and their contact with citizens of the USSR.

Hugh can be contacted at sebags@hsmontefiore.com and if he does not respond within 48 hours, call 0207 435 1035.



Band strikes up for Jim's birthday

A FORMER submariner who served during World War 2 was treated to a personal performance from Her Majesty's Royal Marines Band Service to mark his 100th birthday.

Royal Navy veteran Jim Booth, from Taunton, was led to believe from his family that they were treating him to a birthday tea at nearby Bidwell House in Devon.

But unbeknown to Jim, Vicky his daughter had contacted the Naval Regional Commander who organised the musical treat by the Corps of Drums of the Commando Training Centre's Royal Marines Band.

Jim is considered one of the unsung heroes of WW2, especially for his role as a mini-submarine commander, working with the Combined Operations Pilotage and Reconnaissance Parties – COPP. A special covert group set up before D-Day to improve invasion techniques and collect details of the beaches.

Jim joined the Royal Navy at 18 as a seaman and served throughout World War 2. Within a year of joining he'd made it to officer and for the next three years served on various warships, carrying out convoy and escort duties to places like Gibraltar and across the Atlantic.

At 23 he transferred to the submarine service and became a submarine pilot on the Navy's X-Craft, which were special smaller attack boats capable of getting in close to enemy targets and were towed to their operating areas by much larger vessels. Once the attack was over the mini-submarines would rendezvous with the larger 'mother' boats and be towed back their base.

"In 1943, our X-Craft had been employed specifically to sink German battleships and when the prospect of invading Normandy came along," Jim explained.

"My group called COPP, looked at an alternative way of doing our job to recon Normandy shoreline in advance, as well as mark the beaches by shining a light on D-Day.

"In order to do that, normally we would have used large submarines but there was an extreme risk that Germany, which had quite good radars would have picked us up by the time we reached the shore."

He and his crew sailed from Portsmouth to Normandy to chart where the British and Americans could safely land. On the day of the D-Day landings, Jim and his crew left their X-Craft in a fold-up canoe to shine beacons to guide the Allied landing craft safely onto the beaches.

"This operation was special, because Normandy was special and unique, and it was critical in winning the war."

Royal Marines Brigadier Jock Fraser, Naval Regional Commander Wales and Western England (pictured above chatting with Jim), said: "It was a great privilege to join Jim's family at his 100th birthday celebration and to introduce a surprise birthday performance from the Royal Marines Corps of Drums.

"Meeting Jim and learning more about his extraordinary story was inspiring and humbling in equal measure. We owe Jim and his fellow D-Day veterans so much."



The new lives of old ships

NICK Hewitt, Head of Collections and Research at the National Museum of the Royal Navy, admires a 'Spitfire of the Sea', installed in its permanent new home in Gosport.

Motor Torpedo Boat 71 will be one of the two 'stars' and centrepieces of the tribute to the Coastal Forces at a new exhibition/museum.

Joining the fast craft in a previously-disused store at Priddy's Hard, close to the Explosion firepower museum, is fellow 'Spitfire' Coastal Motor Boat CMB331.

Together the two craft – each measuring almost 60ft – will be the largest exhibits in The Night Hunters: The Royal Navy's Coastal Forces at War, which tells the story of the squadron from August 1916 to the late 1950s.

Immortalised as "Spitfires of the Seas" the boats were often deployed in the dark, engaged the enemy at incredibly high speeds, and crewed by a rare breed of very young men, often reservist volunteers, among them future Avenger Patrick Macnee and the second *Dr Who*, Patrick Troughton.

In World War 2 alone, they fought an estimated 900 actions, sinking around 400 enemy vessels, laying minefields, intercepting coastal convoys, taking part in clandestine raids, dropping off and recovering spies from occupied territories. In doing so, one in every 12 boats was lost.

CMB331 is WW2 vintage but represents the design of craft from the previous war and was based at HMS Hornet in Gosport throughout her active life.

MTB71 saw extensive action in the Dover Strait and North Sea – including attempting to stop the breakout of German capital ships in February 1942 ('the Channel Dash').

Most recently they've been stored at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton, from where they made the 100-mile journey by road under escort at a more sedate pace.

Now carefully positioned, work can commence on fitting out the exhibition located in the historic former mine store built in 1899 at Priddy's Hard, the armament depot that supplied weapons, ammunition and equipment to the Royal Navy which is now home to Explosion – which comes under the NMRN's umbrella.

"It's an incredible opportunity to pay tribute to these boats and the crew who manned them by putting them at the very centre of our exhibition," said Nick.

"Our visitors can see them up close and marvel at just how perilous their tactics were, stealthily travelling at high speed, often in the dark, and get a sense of the real risks these young men took."

Details on the exhibition's opening will be announced soon. All tickets must be pre-booked and are available, with time slots, on www.historicdockyard.co.uk.

Meanwhile, the oldest warship afloat in the National Museum's collection – indeed the oldest warship afloat anywhere in Europe – has been given a fresh look by the same team who painted Britain's biggest warships.

Frigate HMS *Trincomalee* – a floating museum to the RN in the days of the sail – has undergone a five-week authentic repainting.

It not only makes the 204-year-old warship better protected against the elements, but gives visitors to the museum's Hartlepool branch an idea of how she looked in her prime.

It took seven painters from Industrial Coating Services – whose expertise has previously been applied on carriers HMS Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales – five weeks to complete the job.

It required three of the painters to hang over the edge on ropes to paint the sides of the ship and, in



total, devoured 600 litres of primer, 115 litres of black, 50 litres of white, 10 litres of green and 10 litres of maroon paint, and last but not least, 2500 gold leaves.

Trincomalee's exterior has been painted in historically-correct shades of black and a creamy white – colours based on analysis of the paint applied to HMS Warrior which was famously restored in Hartlepool as traditionally, Royal Dockyards used the same paint stocks

"HMS Trincomalee looks even more magnificent following her paint job but, perhaps even more importantly, her protection from the weather has been improved," said Clare Hunt, senior curator at the NMRN Hartlepool.

As with the rest of the National Museum sites in England, the Hartlepool site is open to the public again, but visitors must buy/book tickets in advance from www.nmrn.org.uk/book-your-visit.

And crowning what's been a jolly good few weeks for the museum... the seven-year £7m dream of restoring one of the last surviving D-Day warships, Landing Craft Tank 7074 was named the restoration/conservation project of the year at the national Museum and Heritage Awards.

Judges said the challenges faced by the team from the NMRN and Southsea's D-Day Story – where the craft enjoys pride of place – to turn a sunken hull into a visitor attraction which captures the spirit of 1944 and those who served in such ships had been overcome "brilliantly".

LCT7074 is the last of more than 800 landing craft (tank) which delivered Allied armour to the beaches of Normandy in June 1944 – and one of only a small number of vessels still left from the Operation Neptune armada.

When the restoration project began in 2014, the ship was sunk at her mooring in Birkenhead.

With the help of lottery cash – which pumped well over £5m into the overall project – the vessel was raised and brought to Portsmouth for a two-year restoration job in the naval base before the refurbished craft was moved to its new permanent home on the waterfront.

The ship, with a Sherman and Churchill tank embarked, is now open to the public to view with films and displays explaining her role in June 1944.

The award citation reads: "The scale of this project is astonishing and was, without doubt, challenging. It was detailed in its conservation principles and brilliantly delivered – the judges felt that it was a remarkable achievement."

Professor Dominic Tweddle, NMRN Director General, said the award recognised "the unique and extraordinary skills" the team of conservators possessed.

"The challenge to conserve a fragile low-grade steel vessel made to last months and ensure she is robust enough to tell the vital story of D-Day for generations to come was immense," he added

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Last salute to Britain's 'oldest sailor'

THE Naval family has lost possibly the country's oldest sailor: Commodore David Hughes, who died just short of his 107th birthday.

The New Zealand-born officer was one of the last survivors of the Yalta Conference – where Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin drew up plans for post-war Europe – one of many remarkable moments in a 32-year naval career.

David Hughes (pictured above playing the harmonica on his 106th birthday) was born two days before Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo, the trigger for WW1.

He joined the Royal New Zealand Sea Scouts with his twin brother John aged 14 and then the Royal New Zealand Navy as midshipmen.

The brothers attended Britannia Royal Naval College for officer training, then on to Collingwood and Excellent for training as gunnery officers.

David was subsequently assigned to motor torpedo-boats and made three trips to Dunkirk during the evacuation, while his twin brother was killed as navigator of a Q ship – used to lure enemy submarines into a trap – which was sunk by the Japanese in the Indian Ocean.

David remained on the Dover Patrol, grappling with German E-boats, supply vessels and coastal batteries and took part in the legendary St Nazaire raid in 1942, suffering a shrapnel wound to the stomach.

Recovered, he served in Normandy and was then assigned to the staff of Winston Churchill as a liaison officer, accompanying the premier to Yalta in 1945.

After a spell on secondment with the US Navy and post-war service with the RN, he joined the MOD... but never disclosed his job due to its secrecy.

He settled in Whiston, near Rotherham, in South Yorkshire and became an active member of the RNA in Mexborough, serving as its president.

Even at the age of 106 he strove to keep in touch with the modern Royal Navy. He was gutted at missing out on a visit to look around flagship aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth (aged 105) and similarly hoped to look around the Imperial War Museum, where his medals are held.

A keen harmonica player, he added to his musical portfolio at 106 by taking up yodelling.

"David was a remarkable man with many stories and a very interesting naval career," said Neil Pearson of Mexborough RNA.

Serving personnel from the Naval Regional Command at HMS Eglet attended the funeral service with veterans and RNA shipmates.

Bill's a sight for soar eyes

A wing-walker barnstorming - not an entirely unusual sight in summer skies.

Except this daredevil is 82 years old.

And his aerial exploits capped a remarkable fundraising effort by former matelot Bill Sheppard to help the hospice caring for his wife Anne.

Bill, from Membury near Axminster, celebrated his 82nd birthday by completing three consecutive 26-mile challenges to raise money for Hospiscare, the local hospice charity caring for his wife.

Bill embarked on his triple marathon at 10.55pm on the eve of his birthday, coinciding with when his mother started her birthing pains.

By 8.30 the next day he'd completed a 26-mile run, followed by a 26-mile cycle ride, ending with 26 miles in

his wife's mobility scooter.

Which brought him to 78 miles covered. So he walked four more "to make up the extra" and match his age.

"I was a little saddle sore by the end but that soon went the next day when I ran a few miles again," he added.

He waited another couple of weeks before his final fundraising challenge – a wing walk 500ft up, watched by his family.

His final stunt was a magic trick – to pull out two bouquets for his wife upon landing.

"Anne has fought these awful seven tumours in her brain and left lung and to me, she is so very brave and positive," he said.

"Her courage with everyday living is incredible. Anne deserves a medal for putting up with my running

and my excitement for my challenges!"

His exploits have collectively raised £2,150 for the Exeter-based care charity.

"Hospiscare's nurses have been so supportive, so encouraging and so very sympathetic to us both, lending a calmness to the awful trauma that is taking place. I will never be able to thank them enough," he said.

His love of exercise dates back to his RN service.

"When I was at my peak, I ran from Miami to Jacksonville, Florida, in four days," he said.

"My ship, HMS Falmouth, docked at Miami Clearwater and the day it set sail, I set off to beat it to Jacksonville. I raced it to Fort Lauderdale, arriving one hour after the ship docked. It was a long way."



Set for Falklands 40

SHIPMATES from Rushden and District branch – including veterans of the Falklands Conflict – are planning a series of charity fundraising events ahead of a 40th anniversary visit to the South Atlantic islands next April.

One of several planned events is a yomp of 74km – one for each day of the conflict – over the weekend of August 20-22 to raise money for the Falklands Veterans Foundation (FVF) and Liberty Lodge, the first UK charity for Falklands veterans and their immediate families.

'Yomp' is Royal Marine slang describing a long-distance march carrying full kit – a term which gained wider understanding after the conflict.

The circular route for the yomp starts in Rushden and passes through Northampton, Kettering and Wellingborough. Veterans and supporters plan to visit as many villages and war memorials as possible along the way, including a service of commemoration for all those who died in the conflict, to be held at the memorial for Northampton-born Naval aviator Lt Cdr John Eyton-Jones, of 801 Naval Air Squadron, at St Peter and St Paul Abington Church on Friday August 20 at 5pm.

S/m Maurice Weight, organiser of the Falklands 40th Anniversary visit, said Rushden-based veterans were mostly in their 60s now, and included former Royal Navy sailors, Royal Marines and a Falklands veteran and son pairing.

Five of the branch's veterans paid a visit to Plymouth during Armed Forces week in June to launch the fundraising initiative.

S/m Paul Mills was an 18-year-old WEM(O) when he joined Type 21 frigate HMS Avenger,



IN WEATHER worthy of the islands they were honouring – wind, cold, rain – sailors from HMS Raleigh joined Falklands veterans on Plymouth Hoe for a double commemoration.

The islands' flag was hoisted throughout Armed Forces Week, recognition of the sailors, Royal Marines and soldiers who sailed from the city 39 years ago to liberate the South Atlantic archipelago.

At the same time, a memorial bench to the men and women of 1982 was dedicated in the Belvidere memorial gardens on behalf of the Falklands veterans' group South Atlantic Medal Association 1982 to the people of Plymouth.

Trainees from HMS Raleigh in Torpoint plus their Commanding Officer Captain Suzi Nielson joined SAMAS2 representatives, and Royal Navy and Royal Marines veterans who served on Devonport-based ships and with 3 Commando Brigade for the combined ceremonies.

The Lord Mayor of Plymouth, Councillor Terri Beer and commanding officers of some of the units which took part in the war were also in attendance, as well as Richard Hyslop, the Falkland Islands' representative to the UK and Europe.

The memorial bench was inspired by plaques at the SAMAS2 memorial in the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

Picture: PO(Phot) Alex Ceolin

which was rushed through a works package in Devonport to prepare for sea. Avenger sailed after a short work-up, arriving the Falklands 15 days later.

Paul said: "It was appropriate

that the veterans return to Plymouth, the home port that they all sailed from in the Easter of 1982, to launch today's charity fundraising appeal".

S/m Frazer Warner, son

of veteran Philip Warner – a veteran who also served on HMS Avenger during the conflict – was not born in 1982.

He said: "My father, an MEM(L), sailed 8,000 miles to the other side of the world, aged 18 years, to fight over a group of islands with little strategic value in the South Atlantic.

"Today, those same islands are economically thriving".

By visiting the islands, Frazer hopes to bring the events of 40 years ago to a present-day generational understanding.

Plymouth Gin is supporting the fundraising initiative, and hosted the veterans at its historic distillery on the Barbican.

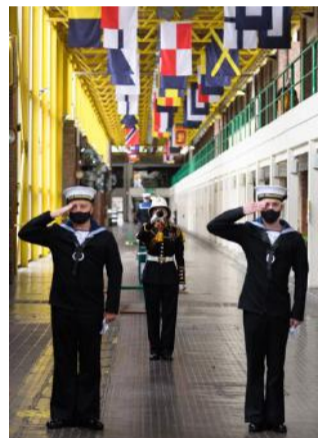
Launching the charity walk fundraising appeal, veterans spoke of the work of the FVF, the first UK-based charity for Falklands veterans and their immediate families, which is committed to providing a network of support and direction for those in need.

S/M Paul McKay said there are many Falklands veterans who continue to battle post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), triggered by the conflict – Paul himself is a past sufferer.

In total 255 British personnel and 649 Argentinians lost their lives, and speaking from personal experience, Paul said that decades later, veterans are still dealing with the scars, both physical and emotional. The charity helps to support those who have lost their way in life.

Veterans are affected in different ways depending on what memories they have and what happened to them.

You can contribute to the Falklands 40 Charity Walk Fundraising event through JustGiving. See <https://falklandsveterans.enthusie.com/pf/maurice-weight-ce78f/post/683736>



Bombing victims honoured

TRAINEES from HMS Collingwood salute as a bugler from the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines sounds the Last Post in honour of the Fareham establishment's darkest hour.

In June 1943, a lone German bomber, flying behind a squadron of British planes dropped two bombs on the base, one of which landed on accommodation huts, killing 33 young sailors and wounding 38 others – almost all volunteers aged 17 or 18 and in uniform for barely a fortnight.

Reverend Roland Wort, one of Collingwood's chaplains, spoke of the importance of keeping the memory of those lost and injured alive even though it was so long ago before Warrant Officer 1st Class Martin Watson read out the names of the fallen.

The service was made even more poignant this year thanks to families of three of the victims who supplied photos and letters sent home by their relatives just before they died. These were displayed alongside a wreath consisting of 33 hand-made poppies, one for each of the lives lost.

Afterwards, Captain Catherine Jordan, RN, Commanding Officer of HMS Collingwood, laid a wreath on the spot where the sailors' accommodation hut had stood. Today, a tree stands as a permanent reminder of the tragedy.

Naval Quirks



Princess awards father's medal at last inspection

THE Princess Royal presented a medal in honour of her late father at the final parade at a defence college.

Welbeck Defence Sixth Form College in Loughborough saw the final 115 upper-sixth form students on parade for the last annual general inspection before the college closes.

The Duke of Edinburgh instigated the Prince Philip Medal in 1993 and it was awarded annually to the most outstanding student in the senior year.

Princess Anne spoke with students and their families of the final class under the Defence Technical Officer and Engineer Entry Scheme (DTEES) before awarding the 27th Prince Philip Medal to Jess Leat.

DTEES is a university-sponsored programme for students wishing to join the Armed Forces or engineering and science branch of the Ministry Of Defence.

Jess said: "It was an honour to be the last DTEES student to receive

this prestigious award, especially from HRH the Princess Royal. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Welbeck and wish to thank all the staff and students who made it all such good fun.

"I am looking forward to the next step of my career – going to Loughborough University, where I will be reading electronic and electrical engineering."

Major General Andrew Roe, Chair of the Board of Governors, said: "Excellence in STEM is critically important for Defence.

"As the pace of technological change is accelerating, having the best technical officers and civil servants is key to keeping our edge.

"I hope one day to welcome you all to the Defence Academy as you continue your careers in Defence."

The DTEES programme will be replaced by the Defence STEM Undergraduate Sponsorship (DSUS) scheme, which will now be able to recruit from universities across the UK. The first students under DSUS will join in September 2022.



The Princess Royal with Rear Admiral Paul Marshall, Director Navy Acquisition and a governor of the college, Head of Nelson House Officer Cadet Khai Veal, best Royal Navy student OC Oscar Watson-Maguire, and head of Stirling House OC Jack Mackenzie-Briggs



Ramsgate to the rescue

SEA Cadets at Ramsgate helped clear rubbish and litter from the town harbour.

The event happened after training officer PO Lisa Middleton spoke with Ramsgate Port Officials and offered the services of the cadets in their Trinity rowing boats and Champ power boat.

The harbour had got quite bad with litter and a build-up of rubbish so when it was suggested, the Cadets jumped at the chance to help clean up.

With equipment supplied by Ramsgate Town Team and donated fishing nets the Cadets eagerly took to the water in the boats and several sacks full of rubbish were collected.

Ramsgate harbour is a very popular tourist area and staff who were monitoring the cadets received a number of really positive comments and enquiries on how to join.

Civic praise for Dartford

THE Chairman of Kent County Council, Cllr Ann Allen, visited the Dartford and Crayford Sea Cadets and praised them for the work they are doing.

Cllr Allen spent time chatting to the cadets during her visit to their base at Brooklands Lake in Dartford and heard first-hand about the life skills training they are taking part in, such as first aid, marine engineering and seamanship as well as communications and catering.

The cadets also told her about the activities they are enjoying through being part of Sea Cadets, including sailing, rowing, windsurfing, camping, archery and shooting, in addition to visiting Royal Navy ships and undertaking offshore voyages.

During her visit, Cllr Allen had the opportunity to see the cadets on parade. She also asked a number of cadets what being part of Sea Cadets means to them.

Cadet First Class Millie said: "I joined Sea Cadets as a quiet, shy 12-year-old, not knowing anyone at the unit. Sea Cadets has allowed me to grow in confidence over the last three years, becoming a First Class Cadet in the last six months.

"Sea Cadets has allowed me

to meet a variety of friends from other schools and walks of life. It makes me feel I am part of something special."

"Some of the courses I have undertaken have been at my own unit, but some have been further afield allowing me to visit other areas such as HMS Cavalier at Chatham Historic Dockyard."

Leading Cadet James, who joined the unit six years ago at the age of ten, said: "Sea Cadets have a fleet of ships, which pre-Covid, undertook voyages around the UK and to the North coast of Europe. I was lucky enough to twice go onboard the TS John Jerwood for a week. I had a great time there and enjoyed the opportunities to get involved with activities, even getting to helm the ship into port."

"I have been to many other interesting places - Scotland to complete a meteorological course and at Plymouth, where I spent a week at the Royal Navy training centre at HMS Raleigh."

After her tour, Cllr Allen said: "The range of activities they undertake and the opportunities they have allow the young people attending this cadet group to learn and develop valuable life skills."

Junior cadet saves his brother's life

A JUNIOR Sea Cadet put his first aid skills into practice to save the life of his younger brother who was choking on a piece of bacon.

Cai, 11, learned the skills at Neath and District Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets.

He saw five-year-old Ioan turning blue so immediately slapped him across the back, successfully dislodging the piece of food.

The boys were at their grandmother's house when the incident happened.

Although she was sitting beside Ioan when he started choking, she couldn't quite get herself into the right position to help him herself.

Luckily, Cai was able to come to the rescue thanks to the useful tip he'd learnt on a Zoom first aid session with his unit during lockdown.

"I'm so glad that I knew what to do and was able to help my brother," Cai said.

The boys' mother, Daniella was a Sea Cadet herself, and the boy's dad Jonathan, who is a Leading Hand in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, said: "We are so proud of Cai's quick thinking. He remained calm and knew exactly what he needed to do to help his brother."

"He has only just turned 11 and was just ten when this happened a few weeks ago so it really is amazing that he was able to react so



quickly and calmly in a very scary situation."

"This underlines why it is so important for children to have an understanding of first aid. We are very grateful that Cai had received this training."

Naval Regional Commander Brigadier Jock Fraser said: "I was amazed to learn how brilliantly well Cai responded to the situation

and how skilfully he put his Sea Cadet first training into action.

"Cai is a remarkable young man and we are all very proud of him. His younger brother thinks Cai is a hero and so do we."

In recognition of Cai's achievement Brigadier Fraser presented Cai with a special gift – a Royal Navy rugby ball.

Sub Lieutenant Chloe Oglesby, Cai's Commanding Officer, said: "I am very proud of Cai as both as his Commanding Officer and family friend. He reacted in a way that many people would not be able to, resulting in his brother's life being saved.

"It really does go to show that learning basic life-saving skills at a young age, even with the hope that you will never need to use them, really can make a huge difference to someone's life."

When local regional rugby side the Ospreys heard about Cai's speedy response, they went along to meet him and present him with a rugby shirt and tickets to their first game of the season.

To watch a video of Cai talking about the incident and being presented with a rugby ball and rugby jersey, visit <https://youtu.be/PPop8-yTytI>

Cai is pictured with his brother Ioan and his new rugby ball.

It's great to be back at sea

IRVINE sea cadets were excited to climb aboard the TS John Jerwood for their first trip this year after the long lockdown.

The cadets enjoyed a day trip to the Isle of Arran, off the west coast of Scotland, on the 24-metre power vessel.

They were first given a safety briefing at Ardrossan Harbour before going on board. After setting sail, the cadets were given a chance to take the helm on the bridge to steer the vessel.

The cadets were also given a tour below deck to see how the engines work before dropping anchor in the Firth of Clyde for lunch. As they entered the

harbour on their return to Ardrossan, the cadets lined the deck, in naval tradition.

AC Jack said: "It was a great experience. I've never been on a proper ship before!"

AC Calvin said, "The day trip's given me a taste for it and now I can't wait to go on a proper voyage when they start up again!"

AC Luke said, "There's so many different things involved in running a ship, I was amazed at the teamwork involved."

Sub-Lieutenant Robert Duncan, Commanding Officer of Irvine Sea Cadets, said: "It was our first time afloat this year and everyone was really excited to be back on the water in such style."



Whitehaven's new boat

IT WAS a long wait, but Whitehaven Sea Cadets can now finally enjoy their new safety boat.

The cadets spent a year working hard to fundraise for their vital new safety boat. But when they finally got their longed-for boat, it had been locked away in storage for a year due to Covid-19 restrictions.

"Having a safety boat underpins what we do; we can't go out on the water without one," said the Commanding Officer of Whitehaven Unit, Stuart McCourt.

"Our old boat was unreliable and it was past its best. Now we're able to plan things and get the children out on the water again.

"Having the boat is a key driver into getting back to normality and it is vital we get the children back on the water.

"Not just for the sake of it but getting them together with their friends and as part of a team is important for their wellbeing.

"They've had a year of virtual meetings but getting them together and on the water will be great for their mental health."



Life's a cleaner beach for Dunbar cadets

SOME 20 bags worth of litter, including disposable barbecues, were picked up by Dunbar Sea Cadets cleaning up a popular beach.

The cadets took to the seaside at Pease Bay Beach (Scottish Borders) for one of their first community events of the year. The cadets joined Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs) to collect litter during the clean-up.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the environmental expedition was the first opportunity the Dunbar Unit has had to say thank you to Graham Hodgson, Verdant Leisure Park CEO, who donated 60 high-visibility vests to the youth charity.

Chief Petty Officer Martin Galloway, Dunbar Sea Cadets' Commanding Officer and CFAV, said: "The Sea Cadets have been involved in this beach clean, in partnership with the Pease Bay Leisure Park."

"The company that donated our high-visibility jackets, Verdant Leisure, who own the park, donated them free of charge so, as a thank you, we decided to do a beach clean next to one of their parks."

Cadet Hannah said: "We are doing a beach clean by picking up all the litter as we want to help the environment. We can all do something to help, even by just not dropping our rubbish and letting it go into the sea."

Cadet Natalie said: "I'm currently completing my Duke of Edinburgh's Award and I've been litter picking for that. I heard about this litter picking event and I knew I needed to come down and help."

Having recently joined Keep Scotland Beautiful, which aims to improve Scotland's environment, combat climate change and tackle litter and waste, Dunbar Sea Cadets are continually on the lookout for ways of protecting the sea and their local environment.

Many of the cadets and volunteers walk to the boats down at the harbor to take part in boating activities, which involves travelling on busy roads.



£3m ship-shape plan for new HQ

SUTTON COLDFIELD Sea Cadets are looking to get funding and planning permission for a £3 million 'navy ship' design as their new base.

The plans for the new facility in the shape of a ship, designed by Fleming James Architects, has the potential to become an important focal point in Sutton Coldfield, celebrating the town's history.

If building goes ahead, it will not only serve the Sea Cadets and Royal Marine Cadets, but will also have a strong community focus, with opportunities for group meetings, youth education, ward meetings, police surgeries – and even as a potential wedding venue.

The proposals have the backing of MP Andrew Mitchell, who is also the President of the Sutton Coldfield Sea Cadets, as well as numerous other local councillors.

"If we get this done, we will have a hell of a building for the future of the town and for the success of our own unit," said Nigel Smith, Chairman of the Sutton Coldfield Sea Cadets.

"This would be a very special building. It would look spectacular. We would have something which belongs to this town, to the greater good of the community that we serve.

"It's a special project and if we are successful and raise the funds required, this town will have a first-class, modern architectural building. You will think you have a ship in the town."

The existing ship base was built in 1952 and modelled on HMS Sutton, a World War 1 Hunt-class minesweeper but it's now in a rather dilapidated condition.

The new building would be modelled on the Type 26 frigate. One will mirror as a land-based version, providing a new unit base.

It will include the re-design of the external site areas with a parade space, dinghy storage, and external classroom facilities, all based around the existing boat storage buildings that are to remain.

Sub Lieutenant Joshua Walsh, the Commanding Officer of the Sutton Coldfield Unit, said: "The current building was made by materials used during the war and it's very old.

"The cost of maintenance is huge so it became a decision that we needed to knock the building down and rebuild.

"This space, although it would look like a ship, which we decided on to retain its history, will be a major community project. It's not just for a one-off youth organisation's single use. We want to use it for all of Sutton Coldfield."

The aim is for the project to be completed in advance of the 2022 Commonwealth Games, where the new cadets' building will support the Sutton Park venue being used for the games.

Teenager takes on SAS challenge

A SHEFFIELD teenager is believed to be the youngest person ever to conquer the legendary Welsh mountain trail used to train Special Forces.

Salahudeen Hussain, 15, is a Cadet Lance Corporal for the Royal Marines Cadets' Sheffield detachment.

He first committed to scaling the 'Fan Dance' exercise at the Pen Y Fan peak in 2019 – when he was just 13 years old – to raise money for his unit. Pen y Fan is the highest peak in South Wales, situated in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The Fan Dance is used in the selection process for the UK Special Forces, where candidates fail if they do not complete it within four hours and ten minutes.

Sal did the 15 weighted-pack march up the 2,907ft ridge, which is renowned for being the make-or-break test for SAS candidates, being as much a test of mental endurance as it is physical.

The teenager overcame the grueling SAS training route in a personal challenge to

raise £5,000 for his detachment of the Royal Marine Cadets.

"I was nervous beforehand," explains Sal. "We got there at 4am and you set off at 8am. For four hours you're just looking up and thinking 'I'm going over that'."

"The hardest part is the start. It's foggy and there are so many false summits, at some point you look up and think it's going to go on forever. It's a real mental challenge."

After numerous delays due to Covid, he finally set off, accompanied by Detachment Commander, Sergeant John Daley.

"My commander John was brilliant, he was with me the whole way and kept me going," Sal said.

Finally, clocking at just over six hours, Sal was applauded as he crossed the finish line after breaking into a run for the last leg.

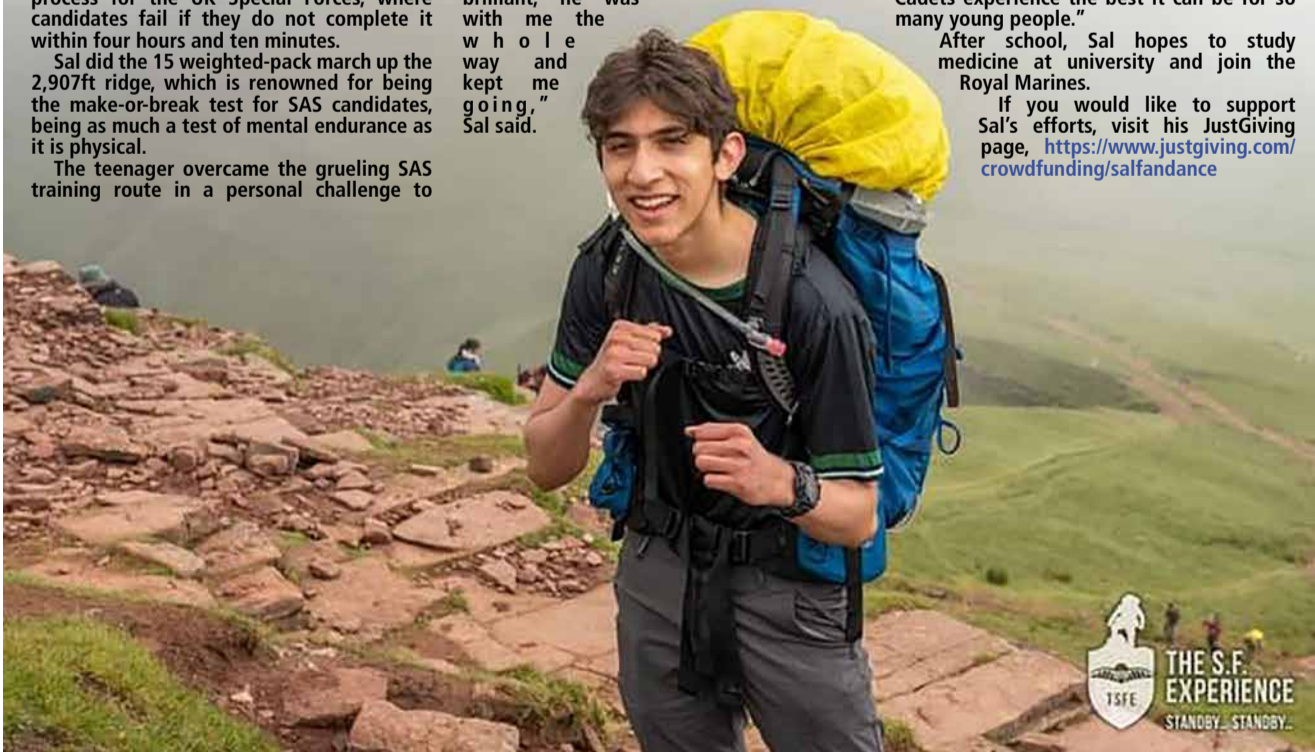
His efforts have raised over £4,200 out of his target of £5,000 on his JustGiving page.

The money he raised will go towards buying boots, webbing, shirts and basic equipment for the Royal Marine Cadets, which has seen a surge in membership during the lockdown.

Sergeant Daley said: "It's just an outstanding effort and for a young person to find the discipline for it is amazing. "His donation will help us make the Royal Marine Cadets experience the best it can be for so many young people."

After school, Sal hopes to study medicine at university and join the Royal Marines.

If you would like to support Sal's efforts, visit his JustGiving page, <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/salfandance>



Top role for Jessica Ballymena's grand prize

LEADING Cadet Jessica Black from Wisbech Sea Cadets, has been appointed Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire for 2021 and 2022.

She has received a royal promotion to work alongside the Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, Julie Spence OBE.

Mrs Spence, HM The Queen's representative in Cambridgeshire, welcomed LC Black into her new role during a socially-distanced event at the end of June.

"It's absolutely brilliant to have Jessica as one of my cadets this year, they are truly the best of the best," Mrs Spence said.

Jessica will join representatives from the army and air cadets at all formal and royal events across the county.

Sub Lieutenant Jade Merson, Officer in Charge of Wisbech Sea Cadets, said: "Jessica has been with us from a young age and has grown through the ranks, following the traits of the Royal Navy and promoting Sea Cadets at every opportunity she possibly can."

"She works extremely hard to achieve in everything that she does in her journey as a cadet and pushes hard to constantly strive for new heights.

"Jessica is a credit to herself, her unit and her district."

BALLYMENA Sea Cadets won a £1,000 'Movement for Good' award from Ecclesiastical Insurance Group, thanks to nominations from the public.

They were one of 500 winners in specialist insurer Ecclesiastical's Movement for Good awards, which is giving away £1 million to charities.

The funds donated to Ballymena will be used to purchase sports kit and equipment.

Members of the public were invited to nominate causes close to their hearts, with 500 gifts of £1,000 available for donation.

Over 13,000 charities were nominated by more than 210,000 members of the public.

"We are delighted to have been chosen as one of the winners of the Movement for Good awards," said Ruth Verner, Chairperson of Ballymena Sea Cadets.

"Our purpose is to promote the development of young people in achieving their physical, intellectual and social potential."

"We also provide access to education and training, which allows them to obtain nationally-recognized qualifications, such as BTEC and Duke of Edinburgh awards.

"We are incredibly grateful to those who nominated us."



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Armed Forces Week celebrated at home and abroad



Superb show of support

THE nation celebrated its military and its bonds with the British public during Armed Forces Week.

The pandemic forced the postponement of the national event in Scarborough for the second year running, as well as many smaller regional events organised by veterans and community groups... but not all.

The Armed Forces Week flag was raised on public buildings local and national. Two sailors and a Royal Marines musician helped to raise the flag in Palace Yard at the Palace of Westminster.

And 30 RN/RM personnel attended an event at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on Armed Forces Day after a week of virtual and physical activities.

The Princess Royal joined more than 100 personnel at the arboretum, where visitors enjoyed a flypast by the Red Arrows.

In London, a special tribute to the Armed Forces took over the iconic billboards

of Piccadilly Circus. The monumental screens showed moving portraits of Armed Forces personnel alongside a thank you message from the nation.

British Forces Gibraltar marked Armed Forces Day by opening its naval base to the public for a day of activities, events, and entertainment, including tours of HMS Trent and Dasher.

Commander British Forces Gibraltar, Commodore Steve Dainton, said: "The last 12-18 months have been really difficult for people, so this was a great opportunity to bring together the Armed Forces here in Gibraltar and the Gibraltar community, coming together for a really nice open day."

This year marked the tenth anniversary of the Armed Forces Covenant – the formal agreement between the government and some 7,000 organisations/employers/councils to ensure that no-one is placed at a disadvantage as a result of serving in the Forces, past or present.



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Mad as Max thunders back at Mallory

MALLORY Park was the first race of the season for Lt Cdr Max Wilmot after a seven-month deployment.

His bike had been packed away from the final round of 2020 and after a quick clean up and fluid change it was left until his return.

A dust down of the bike on the Thursday and frantic search for kit as the van was packed was conducted just prior to the long drive to Mallory to be ready for a morning of testing on the Friday for the Thundersport GB and most importantly the Inter-services Road Racing Championships.

Friday was an early start, first off was a track around the circuit to talk through the complexities of the track.

The day was going well until completion of the second session where an oil leak was spotted from the crank casing of his R6.

A call to all the local garages lead to the closest garage with the part in stock being 130 miles away, with that Max commenced on a six-hour round trip whilst the team stripped and prepped the bike and on return the team worked into the night to get the bike ready for the following days racing.

Starting on the button with no leaks Max was ready for qualifying, albeit without the practice he wanted qualifying mid pack for the Thundersport race and tenth for the Inter-services. Both Thundersport races went well with a few challenges for position dusting away the cobwebs from the winter.

The Inter-services race was the primary focus, starting in tenth Max got a good start leaping forward a few places, unfortunately pushing too hard into Devil's Elbow to gain an extra place saw the rear wheel step out, whilst staying on the bike Max was sent through the gravel trap and into the tyre wall.

Managing to keep the bike upright a quick glance over his shoulder and dropping a few gears he was back on the track in last place.

Pushing hard he managed to gain a few places back and finished 15th out of 21, thankful that he and his bike are still in one piece.

The second day saw much the same without the loss of traction, a few battles for position and bonus Inter-services race last thing starting and finishing in tenth.

In all an extremely tiring and challenging weekend of racing for all.



(Cr)Ash alert

Bootneck's journey from enthusiast to competitor

ROYAL Navy Royal Marines Road Race Team member **Captain (Cr)Ash Harbison**, pictured above, took part in his first competitive motorcycle race at Cadwell Park. He describes his journey from enthusiast to rider.

I first obtained my motorcycle licence a few years ago, like most Bootnecks, post-op tour with funds saved to spend on something of my choosing, rather than the wife's.

My motorcycle licence was achieved using a week's intensive course post theory test pass. From there, the usual purchasing and swapping of motorcycles occurred based on the need to go faster (within legal boundaries) and the desire for the latest lightweight bikes.

My experience of riding was grown from UK roads on weekends and the odd commute from the south east to the south west to commute to and from work weekly.

This was until the urge to book a track day was so overpowering that it was easier to ask for forgiveness rather than permission from the better half.

Ron Haslam Race School at Donnington Park was where I first tested myself on track using the school's CBR650R. I was assigned an instructor for the days training which improved riding position, smooth throttle control and race lines. The day was educational and enjoyable which left

me hungry for more.

During the outset of the COVID pandemic I reached out to Sgt Luke Terry and, fresh from my Ron Haslam experience, I proceeded to interrogate Luke as to what the RNRMRRT was and how to get involved.

Luckily, he was well equipped for the bombardment of questions being the team secretary. He also introduced me (via e-mail) to the Team Captain C/Sgt Brian Fuidge.

After establishing the best way to proceed, I then attended a race weekend at Cadwell Park as pit crew in October 2020.

This also afforded me the time to watch a few races during my visit at Cadwell Park. I was in awe of all the races, but the one race that gripped my attention was the CB500 class. Although the bikes are dated compared to some of the bikes competing in the GP1 class (1000L bikes) for example, what drew my attention was the sheer aggression and competitive spirit in this particular class.

After conferring with Luke and Brian, I decided to join the RNRM Motorsport Association and obtain my Auto Cycle Union (ACU) Road Race licence which is achieved by attending a four-hour theory session, Competitor Training Course (CTC), with a multiple guess test at the end.

Then attending a practical Basic Rider Assessment (BRA) at a racetrack to complete laps and practice grid

starts to ensure competence and safety. For me, this took place at Brands Hatch.

Upon successful completion of the ACU licence acquisition process, that roughly cost £180, I was able to compete with the RNRMRRT at the next available race weekend.

I signed up to compete in the CB500 Freshman class for the upcoming Cadwell Park race event as my first exposure to racing.

During qualifying I achieved a best lap time of 2.06 minutes (which for my first time, I thought was credible) and my first off! This was due to the aggressive riding of fellow CB500 riders taking my race line leaving only the grass.

After qualifying started the competitive racing which was exhilarating and terrifying in equal measure. The rest of the weekend continued in a similar vein with my lap times fluctuating around the 2.10-minute mark and couple more offs but this time due my own lack in concentration.

Motorcycle racing with the RNRMRRT is a challenging and rewarding opportunity with some elements such as travel subsidised by the RNRM.

Those looking to get involved should email C/Sgt Brian Fuidge, rnrmrtr@hotmail.co.uk

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Carrier Strike Group personnel demonstrate athletic prowess



Richmond have grit in Haifa

HMS Richmond's Rugby Club were able to enjoy Mediterranean opposition during a port visit to Haifa, Israel.

The Type 23 frigate's team comprised of 28 mixed experience players were invited to play against a combined opposition picked from local rugby clubs, which included the well-drilled Tel Aviv Rugby Club, and thus the name 'Israel Barbarians' was coined!

The Royal Navy side, who were playing together for the first time in 2021, were excited by the prospect of playing an international fixture.

They were well supported by approximately 50 supporters from the ship's company and British Embassy, who provided a raucous atmosphere for the game.

The 35C heat was almost as tough as the opponents and HMS Richmond got off to a slow start, quickly conceding two tries as their lack of playing time showed. But the ship's team began to adapt and overcome, making best use of the rolling subs and regular water to refocus and improve during the first half.

The experience and talent of the Barbarians did not subside as they continued to pile on the pressure. However the sailors from the Duke-class frigate did not let their heads drop, and managed to get on the scoreboard before halftime.

The ship rang in the changes at half time which brought a vast improvement and HMS Richmond began to go toe to toe with the opposition. There were scores for both teams but crucially the Royal Navy side kept within touching distance.

As the game entered the final 20 minutes the deficit was down to two points and both teams players seemed dead on their feet, but the ship's team found an inner drive and edged slowly closer to the Barbarian try line.

A well-taken quick tap and go penalty within the opposition 22 allowed HMS Richmond to threaten the try line and a neat offload allowed them to bundle over the line in the corner as the clock went red and take the win.

The 34-31 scoreline was testament to a tough and entertaining match against a wonderful home team.

The teams were able to share their camaraderie after the game at a BBQ hosted by Her Majesty's Ambassador to Israel.



Sporting milestones

A NUMBER of firsts were achieved as sport dominated the agenda for personnel from HMS Queen Elizabeth during stopovers in Italy and Cyprus.

The ship's women's rugby team took part in their first match, which also saw the Cyprus Rugby Federation's first women's game.

The hockey team had their first outing and the ship's cricket team recorded their first victory.

First to play in Cyprus was the football team, comprising ship's company, 820 NAS, and 617 Squadron, took on RAF Akrotiri FC in 39C heat, with plenty of breaks to take on water.

The match finished 3-1 in favour of the hosts, with Lt Walter on the scoresheet for the carrier with a penalty.

The following day the cricket team were in action at the Happy Valley Cricket Club.

Caked in sun cream and eager to play, Captains CPOMA Corbett (Ronnie) of QE and Sgt Lund (Andy), of British Forces Cyprus, met for the toss. Their choice was a complicated one; if you bowled first, you capitalised on what was left of the slightly cooler morning period but you risked chasing a tricky target. If you batted first, you could set a good target and put pressure on the opposition, but you risked grilling your own team in the field!

Sgt Lund chose to bowl first and dutifully exploited the pitch's condition and it was tough going at first, with HMS Queen Elizabeth 8-2 in the third over.

They needed stability and Lt Phil Mitchell (not his nickname this time!) stepped out, understanding what was required. The middle order continued to up the rate and to contribute, and did so with the odd four, but until ETME "Jay" Sangwan stepped out at number 8, the contributions were valiant but small. Jay began by rotating the strike, but quickly found the boundary.

He had scored 30 before anyone had blinked an eye. His confidence growing - Jay tried to hook the final delivery of the innings to the square leg boundary, instead wearing the ball on his lip. A half pint of blood and 20 minutes of British resolve later, he was fine to continue. HMS Queen Elizabeth, 126-8 after 20 overs.

After a quick drink, and a much needed 99 hailed from the ice cream vendor, HMS Queen Elizabeth took to the field and despatched BFC for 64 all out after 12 overs, meaning the visitors won by 62 runs. Man of the match was Phil Mitchell for his 35 runs.

That evening the hockey team took to the pitch against Episkopi Exiles and by half time the ship was 2-0 up thanks to goals from AB Tom Miller and Lt Ben Flint. The hosts clawed their way level, leaving it all to play for in the final quarter. AB Miller scored again to leave the ship the victors.

The following day saw the male and female rugby teams in action at the Limassol Crusaders touch rugby tournament.

The female team took part in their



first ever competitive tournament, held at AEK Katholiki Stadium, against Cyprus side Spartans. This would be the first ever official women's rugby match under the Cyprus Rugby Federation.

Royal Navy capped player, Rachael Carragher, led out the aircraft carrier's fledgling side against the Spartans.

It was the first game of the series which utilised tweaked rules to suit the conditions, number of available players and local Covid-19 restrictions. It saw Spartans cruise to victory, despite the excellent defensive play and a great try by Jenn Menn.

HMS Queen Elizabeth's women were able to overcome the disappointment of the first match and made amends by winning the next game.

The experiences gained in the first game resulted in the Ship's team having a more robust defensive system. Susan Badger made an excellent try saving tackle; to prevent the Cypriot team from winning the match but it was Lucy Honeybell's work rate and performance that saw her be chosen as Player of the Match.

HMS Queen Elizabeth's men were also in action at the AEK Katholiki Stadium where they ran out winners of the men's Touch Rugby tournament.

On the last day CPOPT "The Hatchet"

Hoare got an invite from Paphos running club to take part in their anniversary 5k park run along the lovely stretch of coastal path next to the fort in Paphos harbour.

Daz got to work and recruited 25 people to go for the early morning run. As it was so early the chefs made the team some bacon baps to keep them fuelled.

The team were hosted well by Paphos running club and they even had their Olympian female runner taking part, Thalia Charalambous who did an outstanding 17:24, but the first three males home were from the ship, gold SAC Stockdale 18:09, silver Mid Ship Buck 18:23 and bronze Lt Nokes 19:46.

Prior to the stopover in Cyprus, the ship called in at Augusta, Italy, where personnel enjoyed cricket, football, golf, netball, and rugby.

The golf society got to play at the Monasteri golf club in Syracuse, where LET Brooks emerged the victor.

The football team trained on a grass pitch in the American NAS, which reminded everyone of HMS Temeraire.

The following day the ship's departments battled on the football field, with the Marine Engineering department recording a 2-1 victory over the warfare department.

The rugby team got their deployment off to a fantastic start, taking on local side



ASD San Gregorio, with loads of new joiners the team managed to rotate many players.

The first competitive game in well over 15 months, Lt Salmon said this will certainly blow a few cobwebs off, which also included referee Lt Cdr Howells' whistle as it had not been out of his kitbag during lockdown.

The match took place in a lemon plantation where the farmer had created a rugby pitch for the local community in the centre of the plantation with the fantastic sight of Mount Etna in the background.

This local side had three or four generations of the same family playing with the oldest being 75.

The game was very even to start with the hosts having the chances early on with some break aways but some brilliant tackling by the backs put a stop on proceedings, this kick started HMS Queen Elizabeth's team and they used their skill and strength to run out 47-0 winners.

After the match the layers witnessed an eruption of Mount Etna.

Other members of the ship's company took to the water for some stand-up paddle boarding delivered by the ship's two resident instructors.

CPOPT Daz Hoare, who organised the sporting activities, received the Captain's Award for his work.

WHAT AN ADVENTURE



SURPRISE surprise...you're going to climb some mountains.

Personnel from HMS Chiddingfold and Penzance joined marines from 43 and 45 Commando for some adventurous training on a mass scale.

Exercise Cairn Surprise took place over three weeks and was split between the Exmouth Water Activity Centre in Devon and the Cairngorms National Park in Scotland.

On offer was mountain biking, trail cycling, stand-up paddle boarding, kayaking, mountaineering, and rock climbing – all delivered by the Royal Navy Adventurous Training Team (RNATT).

Participants enjoyed some stunning weather, with Leading Seaman Diver JJ Brown, of HMS Chiddingfold, saying: "I feel that the staff pitched the instruction and coaching at the perfect level and pushed us all at different times."

"After we finished each day it felt extremely rewarding."

All those attending, enthusiastically got involved and encountered 'testing moments' but safe to say, all had to draw upon the personal qualities and values that RNRM personnel need to exhibit on operations.

Climbing or abseiling at height can elicit a response, a coping mechanism, perfect for developing resilience.

During the first week, the Exmouth WAC provided an excellent base, located very close to the Exe Estuary and seafront.

HMS Chiddingfold's Commanding Officer (Crew 1), Lieutenant Commander Chris Sharp said: "The provision of AT to the crew as a formed unit, prior to deployment has been crucial in building team cohesion, essential prior to an operational period."

"The RNATT provided a fantastic, tailored week, operating from Exmouth where the entire ship's company were able to come together for a range of activities at a pace adapted to all abilities, ensuring everyone was pushed but all came away having a great time."

"It's something I now see as essential activity as part of our regeneration plans prior to each deployment."

Exmouth Water Activity Centre, owned by Commando Training Centre Royal Marines, is purpose-built and includes accommodation, dining room and galley. By Exmouth Marina, the centre is available for ships and establishments to book for activities. Contact 013 9526 8867.

The RNATT is a deployable team of Royal Navy and Royal Marines PT instructors, whose main aim is the frontline delivery of adventurous and challenging activities to aid retention, improve morale and increase operational capability.



£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in the June edition of *Navy News* (right) was the Active-class scout cruiser HMS Amphion, which helped to sink the German ship SMS Konigin Luise on the first day of WW1.



Mr H Downey, from Tyne and Wear, wins £50 for sending us the correct answers.

This month's mystery ship (above) was a Bay-class frigate built for the RN during WW2 but converted into a survey vessel while under construction.

1. What was her name and 2. what were her names when she was laid down and reordered?

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

We will also accept emailed entries to

bm@navynews.co.uk with August Mystery Ship in the email header.

Coupons and emails giving the correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

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

The winner will be announced in our October edition. The competition is not open to *Navy News* employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 318

Name
 Address
 My answers: (1)
 (2)

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

- Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to - The Editor, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY, or email: news@royalnavymail.mod.uk or editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk
- If you are sending your notice via email, please include your full address and telephone number.
- Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.
- Please send in reunions at least two months (preferably three) before the month of the event. There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.
- Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.
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ROYAL NAVY NAVY NEWS

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Editor: Lorraine Proudlock
 Email: editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk

Editorial
News@royalnavymail.mod.uk
 Sam.Bannister@royalnavymail.mod.uk
 Richard.Hargreaves@royalnavymail.mod.uk
 Peter.Howard@royalnavymail.mod.uk
 Elisha.Quade@royalnavymail.mod.uk

Graphics
dtp@navynews.co.uk

General enquiries:
news@royalnavymail.mod.uk

Business
 Business manager: Lisa Taw
 Admin assistants: Georgina Skingsley and Mistrala Harries
bm@navynews.co.uk

Subscriptions:
www.royalnavy.mod.uk/navynews
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 Telephone 07773 155321

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Swap Draft columns in September's Noticeboard must be received by **AUGUST 17 2021**

Appeal for headstone for hero veteran

AN appeal has been launched to pay for a headstone on the unmarked grave of a Royal Navy veteran who risked his life to save passengers aboard a stricken liner.

William Johnson Ancient, who spent nine years in the Senior Service in the 1800s, became famous for his actions when White Star Line steamship Atlantic struck a rock near Nova Scotia on April 1 1873.

Some 200 or so passengers made the perilous 40-yard trip over the ropes to the rock.

Chief Officer John W Firth, who could not swim, sought sanctuary in the mizzen rigging to wait for help as the ship began to break apart.

Three small rescue boats arrived but couldn't get to Firth and the others for fear of wrecking themselves.

Third Officer Cornelius L Brady tried to gather crew to go out again to rescue Firth and the others, but nobody volunteered.

The ship was wrecked only a mile from Lower Prospect, a small fishing village about 30 miles southwest of Halifax.

Once informed of the disaster that morning, William Ancient, a former Royal Navy sailor turned Anglican priest from nearby Terence Bay, coordinated the efforts to help the survivors that had safely made it to shore.

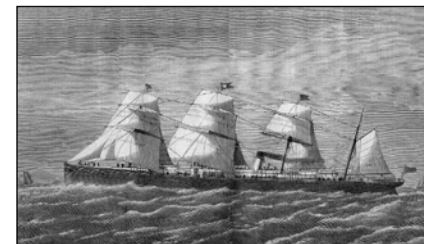
He went to the local magistrate, Edmund Ryan, once he caught wind that three people



were still clinging to the ship's rigging and asked for a boat and four volunteers to help him rescue them.

He saved Firth and a boy named John Hindley, but a woman with them died from exposure. More than 500 of the 976 passengers perished, including every woman on board, while Hindley was the sole child to survive.

Ancient received medals from the Royal Lifesaving Society and the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society, a commendation from the Humane Society of Massachusetts and gold watches from



the City of Chicago and the Government of Canada, along with numerous cash rewards.

Ancient had joined the Royal Navy in 1854 and served in the Baltic during the Crimean War and went on to serve in the North Atlantic and Mediterranean squadrons before leaving in 1863 and training to become a clergyman.

He died on July 20, 1908, at the age of 74. He was buried at Saint John's Cemetery in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The fundraising is organised by Francis Jastrzembski, of Wisconsin, who founded Shrouded Veterans in 2019 to rescue neglected graves.

He said: "Ancient is a Royal Navy veteran, and I believe he should be honoured for his service."

You can support the appeal at: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/reverend-william-j-ancient-headstone-fund>.

Deaths

Edward 'Eddie' Smith, LSA (Stores). Served from 1949 to 1957, mainly in HMS Forth. Based in Malta a great deal and went to the Greek islands after the 1953 earthquake. Died June 1, aged 89.

Victor Harvey Judd, Royal Marine. Joined August 1954 and left July 1979. Died June 19, aged 81.

Peter Fawkes. Member of Glasgow Old Boys Association and Torbay Branch of the RNA. Died June 13, aged 88.

Lt Cdr Gordon C Clark. HMS Fife, Mercury, Scarborough, and DN Signals. Died June 15, aged 87

Lt Cdr Andrew C F David. Hydrographic Dept. Died May 29, aged 96.

Lt Cdr Philip N Dickinson. HMS Highburton, Dryad, Torquay, Seahawk, Invincible, 826 and 810 NAS. Maritime Warfare Centre. Died May

24, aged 69.

Capt Gordon A Hogg. HMS Seahawk, Saker, Heron, Sultan. RNAY Fleetlands. DGA(N). FONAC. Died June 16, aged 86.

Lt Cdr Anthony G Merriman. HMS Echo, Vidal, Hecate, Centurion. Died June 16, aged 89.

Capt John M Neville-Rolfe. HMS Seahawk, Osprey, Fearless, Antrim, Tiger, Heron, Saker, Osprey, Excellent. 737 NAS. ACDS. SHAPE. AIB Sultan. CinCNAVHOME. Died June 28, aged 83.

Cdre Malcolm S Williams CBE. HMS Dryad, Zulu, Hecla, Eskimo, Ambuscade, Mercury, Broadsword, Illustrious, Andromeda, Scylla. CinCFleet. CINC Nav Home. HQRM. Died April 20, aged 69.

Capt Robert N Blair. HM Yacht Britannia, HMS Shavington, Hermes, Dryad, Ashanti, Excellent, Ark Royal,

Naval Attache Athens and The Hague. Died Apr 17, aged 84.

Association of Royal Navy Officers and RNOC

Cdre RNR A D Barrett CBE RD** DL. RNR List 1. Died June.

Capt Ian B Sutherland. HMS Warrior, President, Antrim, Dolphin, DNW, Nav Sec. FOSM. DPR(N). DNR. Died June.

Lt George F Galvin. HMS Collingwood, Hampshire. Died June.

Cdr Geoffrey W Greet. DNOT. NATO. Died June.

Cdr John M Vaughan MBE. HMS Rooke, Cochrane, Def Attache Sierra Leone. ACR. Died June 9, aged 95.
Cdr Roger Porteous. HMS Kildarton, Devonshire, Sirius, Endurance, Dryad, Blake, Excellent, CINC/NHC/25L, Loan Barbados. Died June.

Commander M C Watson. HMS Ark Royal, Naiad, Sea Eagle. DG Ships. Died June.

Submariners' Association

Derek Sidney Day CPO UW1. Served Mar 1953 to Mar 1973 in HM Submarines Upstart, Sentinel, Aurochs, Tiptoe, Truncheon, Orpheus, and Resolution. Member of Gosport branch. Died June 4.

William James Patrick Woodcock Lt Cdr. Served 1973 to Oct 1988 in HM Submarines Warspite, Resolution, and Renown. Former member of Gosport branch. Died June 23.

Alan Derek Jones CC EL. Served Nov 1968 to Jun 1978 in HM Submarines Finwhale and Otus. Former member of Barrow-in-Furness branch. Died June 24.

Reunions

HMS Wildfire 111: This year's parade and service takes place in Queenborough, Kent, on September 12. A parade will muster in the High Street at 1.30pm for a march-off at 1.45pm. A service and wreath-laying event takes place in the park. A reception is being held in the Rose Inn, High Street, Queenborough. The event is being organised by Queenborough and District Naval Ensign Association. For further details contact Janet Flew. janetflew@sky.com

British Nuclear Test Veterans' Association: The association is looking to locate British nuclear test veterans and is also holding a reunion at the RAF Museum at Cosford on August 10. www.bntva.com

738 Kings Squad, Royal Marines. Our reunion will take place from August 12 to 14 2021. I have contacted 18 members so far but are after details of the following: Andrewartha; Bateman; Cheney; Comper; Denver; Ellis; Graham; Lambert; Merry; McFarling; Plant; Saunders. Roger 'Taff' Sheppard 01656 670224 shep9409@gmail.com

HMS Cleopatra Old Shipmates Association: Our 36th AGM and reunion is planned at the

Ask Jack

Liam Hazzard: I am trying to get in touch with Liam who left the Royal Navy in the early 1980's as a Chief REL.

We both served in Malta (HMS St Angelo) from 1972-1974 and both our families lived in the same block of flats (Lea Flats) in Qwardamanga for the two-year drafting. Liam served his time at the RNWS Rinella while I served at RNWS Zebbug as a REA1, but we lost contact many years ago after returning to the UK.

His wife's name was Bernadette (Berni) and his two children were named Susan and a younger brother Shaun. It would be great if we could get the opportunity of doing a "47 year catch-up" He may well have settled in the Plymouth area on

Best 5-7 November 5 to 7. Contact the Honorary Secretary Warwick Franklin at warwickfranklin@outlook.com or ring 01752 366611 for details.

RMBS 1/70 and 2/70 Squad. A joint 50th anniversary reunion of 1/70 and 2/70 squads is planned for August 2021 in Deal. Contact Nick Buckley on nickbuckley55@aol.com

HMS Tenby Association. Our next reunion is planned at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea, on September 24 to 27. Please contact David Macalister, Association Secretary. Email dmac121dm@gmail.com if you require more information.

HMS Undaunted, Eagle and Yarmouth Associations: Annual reunion, Hallmark Hotel, Midland Road, Derby, October 28 to November 1, 2021. Contact Alan (Whiskey) Walker on 01268 548041, whiskey666@outlook.com

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association: The 2021 annual reunion at the Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea, takes place from August 13 to 16. Contact Secretary Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email askhamd3@gmail.com

HMS Tartar: Our reunion will take place at the Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth, from October

completion of his service or possibly returned to his native Dublin.

Peter Hart
peter.hart21@btinternet.com
 07837023678

HMS ROOKE: I served on HMS Cavalier doing a long refit at Gibraltar from 1964-65, and was billeted in the shore establishment of HMS Rooke, sadly which is no more. I have been trying to get some photographs of the establishment as I will hopefully be visiting in August. If any Navy News readers has pictures of Rooke from around that time that they could send me, it would be very much appreciated.

1 to 4, 2021. For details contact Andy Eason on roseandandy12@gmail.com, telephone 07812 600568, or Linda Powell on linpowe25@gmail.com, telephone 07513 413640

HMS Troubridge Final Commission Association 1966-69: Our reunion will be at the Royal Beach Hotel, Portsmouth, from October 8 to 10 2021. Contact Bryan Pace at Romft1@GMail.com or our website HMSTroubridge.com.

HMS Neptune Association: Annual member's meeting takes place at the National Arboretum on October 16 at 11.30am. For further details see www.hmsneptune.com/news or contact organiser Christine Pitman-Corner at ceccorner@yahoo.co.uk

HMS Carysfort reunion: This will be held at the Royal Beach Hotel Southsea, from November 26 - 28 2021 and is open to all who served in the ship throughout her seven commissions (1945 - 1969) and their wives/partners. A 1, 2 or 3 night package is available or join us for the Saturday night gala dinner only. Contact SF Events Ltd at The Withyholt, Paul Mead, Stroud Gloucs GL6 6PG Tel: 01452 813173 or email associationmembers@sarahfletchererevents.co.uk Further details can also be found at www.hmscarysfort.co.uk or hmscarysfort@gmail.com

Sid Anning
 53, The Queen Mother Court, Borstal Road,
 Rochester, Kent ME1 3JF.
sidannging73@gmail.com
 07592132614

HMS Raleigh - Drake 25s - 21st June 1977: Looking to contact fellow shipmates of the infamous class of Drake 25s and planning to have a reunion, after the dreadful COVID-19 epidemic. Already in contact with a number of classmates. Any members out there, that wishes to connect, please contact me directly.

David Cannon
dcannon8bells@outlook.com

How – and why – ships die

DEATH – and above all the death of great warships – is the subject of this month's literature to land on our desks.

Paul Brown's *Abandon Ship* (*Osprey*, £20 ISBN 978-14728-46433), is to the best of our knowledge, the first volume dealing with the vessels lost in the Falklands in 1982 to exploit declassified material.

And in revisiting his earlier work on the Bismarck chase, Iain Ballantyne provides the definitive account of the final 24 hours of Hitler's flagship – and the Royal Navy's efforts to destroy it – in *Bismarck: 24 Hours to Doom* (*Agora*, £7.99 ISBN 978-19130-99930).

Perhaps the biggest eye-opener for anyone reading these two books side by side are the recurring themes which resonate between 1941 and 1982.

Those themes are numerous: technologies and weapons may change, but a series of events – from human factors to bad luck, machinery breakdowns and the enemy's skill/bravery – almost always conspire against the ill-fated vessel.

The injuries suffered and horrors witnessed by the men of 1941 are mightily similar to those in the Falklands four decades later.

There is bravery and self-sacrifice on all sides, humanity, vengeance too. The greatest differences between the Atlantic clashes of 1941 and 1982 are the scale of the casualties (over 2,000 in the Bismarck, more than three times the total naval losses in the Falklands) – and the lack of fanaticism; there were ardent Nazis among Bismarck's crew, men devoted to Hitler who even spat at their rescuers. And while the German flagship's captain chose to stoically go down with his ship, the commanding officers of 82 realised that such acts served no-one.

Seven ships were lost in the six-week South Atlantic conflict – one Argentine, the Belgrano, six British (HM Ships Sheffield, Ardent, Argonaut and Coventry, RFA Sir Galahad and the Atlantic Conveyor).

Brown meticulously breaks down each loss, making use of declassified official reports and documents as well as the testimony and accounts of survivors. He paints vivid scenes of the horrific final moments and suffering the men aboard suffered, as well as the bravery of those who struggled to save lives – and the ships.

He ascribes blame where he feels it is due, but this is no sensationalist tome looking to raise eyebrows, but a calm, thorough analysis of each tragedy.

The aged cruiser Belgrano was the heaviest single loss of life in the Falklands – the wrong ship from the wrong era, wrongly handled and let down by its escorts.

Yet just two days later, many of the factors which played a part in the sinking led to the demise of destroyer HMS Sheffield... and the Belgrano was avenged.

The impact of the Exocet missile, remembered Lieutenant Peter Walpole who managed to warn some, but not all shipmates, of the attack with seconds to spare, was like "a bad car accident but ten times worse – the pressure wave and the sound of such a terrific explosion."

The Exocet killed most of the men in the galley instantaneously; but more of Shiny Sheff's crew died from asphyxiation trapped by, or fighting fires, which the missile strike caused.

The scenes which played out in the bowels of the destroyer belong to the finest – and worst – annals of the Royal Navy.

The efforts of firefighters and damage control teams, such as Lieutenant Commander John Woodhead and his shipmates in the computer room who were overcome by smoke as they strove to restore Sheffield's systems, were as brave and selfless as those by the men in the turrets at Jutland or fending off Japanese bombers in HMS Prince of Wales and Repulse.

The horrors too – flames and pungent/toxic smoke, men trapped in hatches, burned flesh, skin peeling off – were sadly no different too, though treatment in 1982 was invariably faster and more effective.

Task group commander Sandy Woodward was convinced Sheffield's crew had been "pretty careless" – and told her Captain, Sam Salt, as much. Salt, taking a well-deserved rest at the moment the missile hit, was plagued by "the most ghastly guilt complexes" as his mind chewed over what he might have done. Had he been in the ops room, might he have saved the destroyer?

Beyond Sandy Woodward's indignance, a subsequent Board of Inquiry suggested two officers should be court martialled for Sheffield's loss – a suggestion apparently rejected by then Commander-in-Chief Fleet Sir John Fieldhouse who didn't wish to upset the national mood in the euphoria of victory.

The author sides with Woodward and the Board of Inquiry argues that Sheffield's loss was probably avoidable – HMS Glamorgan, which was at action stations and took some evasive measures, did survive an Exocet strike in the closing days of the conflict.

Sheffield was a wake-up call – for the British public and media, but also sent shockwaves through the RN and the Operation Corporate task force.

Most of the lessons of Sheffield – the need for close-in defences such as Phalanx, improvement in fire-resistant fittings and fire defence measures and responses – would be implemented after the 1982 conflict.

Still, within 48 hours of Exocet hit, the initial lessons of the attack were being flashed around the rest of the task force.

News of the sinking of the Bismarck on the morning of May 27 1941 flashed around the world, ending a dramatic chase which opened with another shock to shake the RN to its foundation: the loss of HMS Hood.

In the breezy *24 Hours to Doom*, Iain Ballantyne revises his 2016 original which chronicles the period of the morning of May 26 1941 until the battleship's demise the next day.

Over the past 30 years, the author has interviewed or gathered accounts from veterans of the battle on both sides – now almost all no longer with us, sadly – as well as dig out archival accounts.

And *24 Hours to Doom* isn't merely a rehashing of a well-worn story: the last-ditch effort by Swordfish to stop Bismarck in its tracks, the fatal jammed rudder, the big guns of the Grand Fleet closing in for the kill.

The author casts his net much wider than the principal participants to shed light on lesser known aspects of Bismarck's death throes.

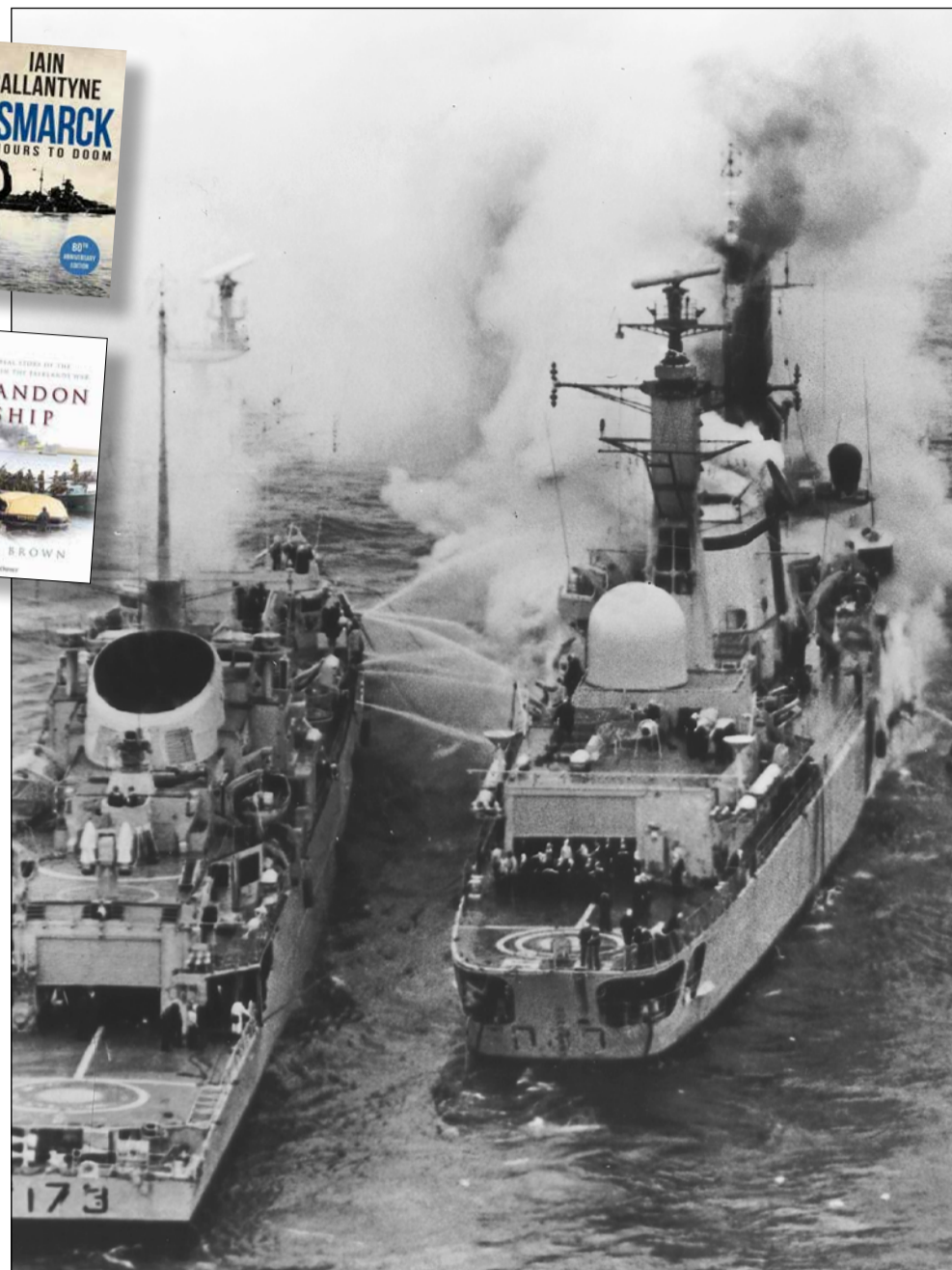
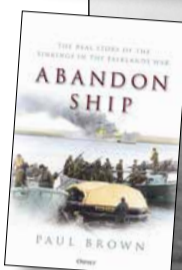
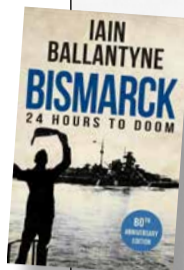
Such as the role of the German trawler/weather ship Sachsenwald.

It reached Bismarck's last reported position around 36 hours after the battleship sank and, despite the seas, found the Atlantic still stained by "thin oil streaks", "an empty tin container of a German gasmask," and then "numerous bodies still in their lifejackets, pieces of wreckage and empty lifejackets."

Working with U-boats, the Sachsenwald "criss-crossed" the debris field – and eventually came across a liferaft containing two exhausted Bismarck crewmen.

The reported presence of U-boats forced British warships picking German sailors out of the water to break off the rescue.

Aboard HMS Maori, a German-speaking rating shouted the news to the *Matrosen* – ordinary sailors – bobbing in the Atlantic.



● With HMS Sheffield billowing smoke centre and for'ard, frigate HMS Arrow attempts to stem the fires by pouring water on the stricken destroyer

"It is something I will never forget," junior officer Lieutenant Innes Hamilton recalled years later.

Convinced they would be shot by their captors, some of Bismarck's crew swam away from their rescuers while at least one officer shot himself.

Though the means of its demise – armour-piercing shells and torpedoes – differed from the missiles and bombs of the Falklands, the horrors of Bismarck's final moments share

many horrific characteristics, except on a much larger scale.

"Hundreds and hundreds of shipmates were lying there in blood.

"The turrets were crooked, and three quarters of the ship was underneath the sea already." Otto Peters recalled.

"Almost everything was destroyed..."

Peters was among the last men to leave the doomed German flagship, whose death throes were observed by 'Splash' Carver in a

Swordfish circling overhead.

Bismarck was now "a cauldron of fire, making a few knots, but a bit of a list". A torpedo from the Dorsetshire struck aft.

Bismarck began to roll to port – and neve stopped. In 15 minutes she was gone.

"I heaved a sigh of relief and my first reaction was: 'Thank God we've avenged the Hood.'" Carver told the author.

"My second thought was: 'What a gallant fight that the Germans had put up against impossible odds.'"

WALL SHIELDS OF ROYAL NAVY SHIPS



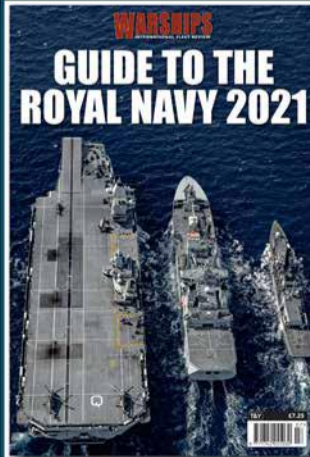
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GUIDE TO THE ROYAL NAVY 2021

The Essential Guide to the UK's Naval Forces

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