



# NAVY NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2023

HMS Dauntless alongside in Cartagena in Colombia. The Type 45 destroyer was in South America for the world's longest-running multinational exercise ahead of counter narcotics and reassurance patrols of the Caribbean Sea.

See pages 2-3

Picture: LPhoto Gareth Smith



# UNITED AND UNDAUNTED

Inside: ■ UKRAINE MARINES ■ NORTHUMBERLAND'S NORTHERN MISSION

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# FROM COLOMBIA TO CURACAO





## DRUG runners beware, there's a powerful presence lurking in waters near you – ready and waiting to be a thorn in your side.

Her name is HMS Dauntless, the Royal Navy's most advanced destroyer – fitted with new engines and upgrades – which is deployed to the Caribbean Sea to hunt you and halt your illegal activity.

Dauntless is a world-leading air defence destroyer, but beneath the grey steel, world-class radar systems and lethal weaponry, there is a mission of reassurance, friendship and conservation alongside the pursuit of criminals.

The ship is in the Caribbean to support British Overseas Territories during hurricane season from June to November, ready to respond if the worst were to happen and a storm sweeps the region.

Dauntless deployed in May on her first mission since completion of a major overhaul, which saw the ship installed with brand efficient engines...

### FRIENDSHIP

The first real test was the world's longest-running multinational military drills, as Dauntless sailed into Cartagena in Colombia for Exercise Unitas.

Dating back to 1959, Unitas (Latin for 'united') brings nations together to show a united front in the fight for stability and prosperity in the region, making it the United States Southern Command's most important exercise.

The Type 45 destroyer's presence – Dauntless was participating in her second Unitas (the first was in 2012) – shows the UK's commitment to the deepening relationship with Colombia, which is the only Latin American country to be a NATO partner nation.

The ship's Wildcat from 815 Naval Air Squadron was in the thick of the action carrying Sting Ray light torpedoes, hunting down submarines and simulating attacks.

Assisted by Dauntless' powerful array of sensors and a US Navy P8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft, the Wildcat showed its prowess in anti-submarine warfare.

It was a major step forward with the Wildcat fitted with new weapon wings – which can hold a variety of armaments for use on a range of targets – as it proves its ability to hunt and destroy submarines and ships.

Flight Observer, Lieutenant Wayne Henaghen, said: "Our ability to equip Wildcat with Sting Ray torpedoes demonstrates the versatility of the helicopter, and it is the combined effort of 815 Naval Air Squadron and HMS Dauntless which proves this capability on operations."

In all 26 ships, three submarines, 25 aircraft and around 7,000 sailors and marines from 20 countries were involved in Unitas, which took place off the coast of Cartagena, as Colombia's navy celebrated its 200th anniversary.

Commander Ben Dorrington, Commanding Officer of HMS Dauntless, said: "It is an honour to be here in Colombia to mark the bicentenary of the Armada Nacional Colombia and to test the capabilities of Dauntless with 20 allies and partners from across the region."

Alongside the UK, participating nations included Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Honduras, Jamaica,



## DAUNTLESS BEGINS CARIBBEAN PATROL

Mexico, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Spain, South Korea, United States, and Uruguay.

The task group took part in warfare operations, including firing weapons and amphibious landings, while Dauntless operated in her main role as air defence destroyer.

For Dauntless' Sub Lieutenant Anastazja Masters participation in Unitas meant a reunion with Sub Lieutenant Silvia Santana, a Colombian officer whom she trained with at Britannia Royal Naval College in the UK.

She said: "It is a privilege to be work alongside Silvia again. The friendships made early on in our careers will last a life time and it is an honour to be in Cartagena to celebrate the formation of the Armada Nacional Colombia."

"Unitas has been an incredible experience to work with partners such as the Armada Nacional Colombia across an array of tasks with assets such as submarines and helicopters. This enables us to test our abilities from war fighting to supporting humanitarian aid and disaster relief."

Silvia added: "I am delighted that HMS Dauntless is here to celebrate the bicentenary of the Colombian Navy and that we can enhance our understanding of how we work together. The Royal Navy is one of our oldest allies and I am proud to be part of the history of our two nations."

While in Cartagena, the Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral Martin Connell, visited as Dauntless hosted dignitaries and a reception – which included a performance by the Royal Marines Band.

He said: "We work very closely with the Armed Forces of Colombia and in particular the Colombia Navy in order to co-operate against illicit trading."

"I expect we'll continue to do so closely in the years ahead, so that perhaps when the Colombia Navy is perhaps celebrating its 300th anniversary there will be another Royal Navy ship here."

### CONSERVATION

From Colombia to conservation on Curaçao.

Sailors from Dauntless cleared dangerous waste plastic from a turtle nesting site on the Caribbean island.

Fifty British sailors from the Type 45 destroyer volunteered with Sea Turtle Conservation Curaçao during a logistics stop on the Dutch island, helping clear more than 200kg of ocean plastic from a nesting beach and carrying out medical checks on the turtle population.

Able Seaman Megan Page, from the Royal Navy's Hydrography and Meteorology Branch, was among the volunteers.

She said: "The environment is very important to the Royal Navy and, with the growing impact of climate change, we are here today to conduct a beach clean-up."

"It is important to be able to work with local organisations as part of this deployment to understand the challenges faced by marine life and support where we can."

Sea turtles often mistake plastic debris for food, leading to ingestion and internal injuries that can prove fatal.

### TURTLE ECLIPSE OF THE HEART: AB Megan Page with a Sea Turtle in Curacao



**BANDIES:** The Royal Marines Band plays during an event on HMS Dauntless in Cartagena, Colombia



**TURTLE RECALL:** One of the turtles on Curacao that Dauntless helped as part of conservation work

Entanglement in discarded fishing nets and other plastic waste presents life-threatening hazards for these gentle marine creatures.

The joint effort by HMS Dauntless and Sea Turtle Conservation Curaçao aims to raise awareness about the urgent need to combat ocean plastics and safeguard the biodiversity of the world's oceans.

Ard Vreugdenhil, the Field Co-ordinator for Sea Turtle Conservation Curaçao, said: "I am very happy people are more and more aware of the care we need to have for the world we are living in. We have to spread the word and be an example."

"It is good to show this example of collaboration and taking responsibility and hopefully we can continue the partnership between the Royal Navy and Sea Turtle Conservation Curaçao."

"Nature deserves our helping hand and we have to reconnect with the world we are living in. Together we are the example for others and have the power needed to make a difference."

The beach clean formed part of the 'One Tonne Challenge'; an environmental drive aimed to get Royal Navy personnel to collectively collect one tonne of litter from their local area – it further aims to improve environmental awareness and bonds with their community.

Dr Imogen Napper, a marine scientist specialising in plastic pollution, Royal Naval Reservist and project lead for the 'One Tonne Challenge', added: "Whether in Curaçao, home or abroad, environmental changes affect us all."

"However, it has been shown that individual, group and organisational changes can improve our immediate environment."

"The ship's company from Dauntless have shown this by volunteering their own personal time on a deployment and removing litter from a key turtle nesting site, helping support turtle conservation within the area."

While visiting Curaçao, the ship's company also visited the Commonwealth War Grave in Willemstad, paying their respects to six British service personnel who died in Curaçao during the Second World War.

HMS Dauntless will now continue her patrol countering the region's narcotics trade and providing reassurance to British Overseas Territories as hurricane season continues.

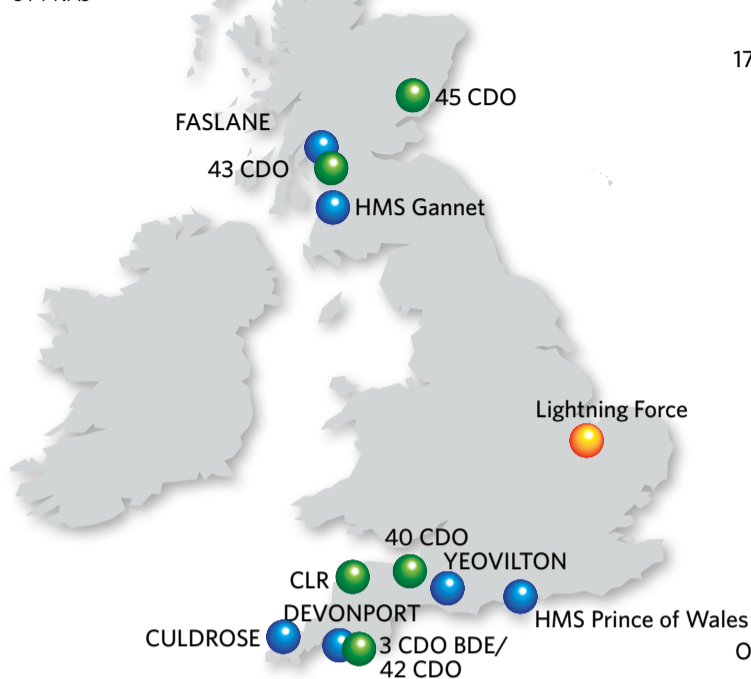


**LIFE IN A BLUE ONE:** ET(WE) Jones at work during Exercise Unitas off the coast of Colombia



## Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Diamond 815 NAS  
 HMS Richmond 824 NAS  
 HMS Hurworth 825 NAS  
 HMS Iron Duke RFA Tiderace  
 HMS Severn RFA Stirling Castle  
 HMS Portland DTXG  
 Coastal Forces Squadron  
 XV Patrick Blackett  
 Project Wilton  
 814 NAS



17 TES SQN

HMS Northumberland  
 RFA Tideforce  
 814 NAS

814 NAS  
 824 NAS

45 Cdo  
 HMS Albion

HMS Trent  
 HMS Forth  
 Gibraltar Squadron

HMS Dauntless  
 815 NAS

### Operation Kipion

UKMCC  
 NSF Bahrain  
 IMSC  
 COMUKMCMFOR  
 HMS Lancaster  
 HMS Middleton  
 HMS Bangor  
 HMS Chiddingfold  
 Harrier  
 815 NAS  
 1700 NAS  
 RFA Cardigan Bay  
 Forward Support Unit

British Defence Singapore  
 Support Unit

HMS Tamar  
 HMS Spey

HMS Medway  
 NEFI

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



## GLOBAL | MODERN | READY

WE KICK off this month's edition with a focus on **HMS Dauntless** (see pages 1, 2 and 3) as the Type 45 destroyer deployed to the Caribbean Sea to counter drugs smugglers. First the warship completed a large-scale exercise off the coast of Colombia – marking a return to full front-line action after a major overhaul.

Sister ship **HMS Duncan** (see page 11) led NATO Maritime Group 2 as it linked up with the international minehunters of Mine Counter Measures Group 2 in the central Mediterranean to clear and sail through a simulated minefield at sea.

HMS Duncan's **Wildcat** helicopter became the first British aircraft to land on the world's largest warship, the US Navy's **USS Gerald R Ford** aircraft carrier (see page 7).

**Royal Marines** were at the tip of the spear during the largest military exercise in the Southern Hemisphere (see centre pages). The UK's Commando Force are ramping up their presence in the Indo-Pacific and, after a mission to South Korea earlier this year, deployed to Australia as 13 nations demonstrated their combined military might.

Britain's biggest warship is all systems go as she returned home to Portsmouth (see page 5). **HMS Prince of Wales** spent ten days ramping up for an autumn deployment, which will see the ship operate a multitude of aircraft and drones off the east coast of the United States, pushing the boundaries of carrier operations.

**HMS Northumberland** (see pages 16-17) returned home to Plymouth after spending more than half of 2023 at sea operating across the Arctic, Baltic and the North Atlantic. The frigate has sailed nearly the distance around the world, racking up 23,043 miles on the high seas since the start of the year, protecting UK waters.

Also home is **HMS Albion** after six years of intensive operations around the world (see page 6). For the past half dozen years the amphibious flagship has sailed the world, initially to the Far East in 2018, then spending most winters and springs in the Arctic and Baltic with autumn deployments to the Mediterranean.

Royal Navy vessels swapped open seas for the canals and lochs of Scotland as they gave university students a taste of life in the Fleet (see page 9). Patrol boats **HMS Charger**, **Smiter**, **Biter** and **Blazer** have hosted under-graduates from several UK universities as they conduct summer deployments around the highlands and islands of Scotland.

Back on operational patrols after a five-year revamp is the Silent Service's last Cold War warrior: **HMS Triumph** (see page 19). After an extensive, multi-million pound refit vastly enhancing all of her equipment and systems, the Royal Navy's final Trafalgar-class submarine in service – and the last submarine still based in Plymouth – has resumed front-line operations for the first time since 2018.

The **Commando Helicopter Force** rolled out a unique ground-support arm – a combat convoy – to determine how to protect a vital vehicle column in hostile territory (aka RNAS Merryfield, Yeovilton's satellite airfield) using heavily-armed Jackals (see page 13).

A **Wildcat** helicopter from **815 NAS** tested the **Martlet** missile during extensive tests in Wales (see page 14). While **Commando Wildcat** crews from **847 NAS** say their stint supporting **HMS Albion** in the Baltic has underscored their aircraft's utility (see page 15).

Finally, **Offshore Patrol Vessels HMS Spey**, **Tamar** and **Trent**, are deployed across the globe (see page 23), with **Spey** becoming the first RN ship to sail into Brisbane, Australia, in nearly 30 years. Sailors from patrol ship **HMS Tamar** restored and rededicated a memorial to 517 British Army gunners killed as prisoners of the Japanese on a remote Pacific island in World War 2. **HMS Trent** has joined the international fight against piracy and armed robbery along West Africa's coastline.

# COMMANDO SKILLS FOR UKRAINIAN MARINES...

**ROYAL Marines have spent more than six months training nearly 1,000 Ukrainian counterparts in the art of commando raiding and complex amphibious operations.**

Specialist instructors from across the UK Commando Force passed on invaluable expertise and knowledge in how to plan and carry out raids using small boats by day and night.

One unnamed Ukrainian Marine said: "The training I have received from the UK Royal Marines has been far more intense than I expected."

"I have learned so much and never expected to be doing the things I have done."

"All the way through, our British instructors have been beside us, showing us how to move and how to work together in a small team – this will make a difference when we return home to Ukraine."

Each group under training underwent a rigorous five-week programme, developing individual skills including living/survival in the field, battlefield first aid, close quarters combat, and fitness, and unit planning in realistic scenarios. The training will further support Ukraine's capability to develop its own marine force and an international training concept for marines.

Approximately 900 Ukrainian marines completed the course, which included instruction in the use of mortars, Next Generation Light Anti-Tank Weapons (NLAW) and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, drones for reconnaissance, and explosive demolition of obstacles such as Dragon's Teeth anti-vehicle fortifications.

Equipment used in the training has been identical to some of the military support the UK has provided to Ukraine – such as more than 10,000 anti-tank weapons, including thousands of NLAW systems already provided.

Trainees came from a variety of backgrounds from civilian volunteers with no prior military experience to those who've transferred from other sections within the Armed Forces of Ukraine – some having already been engaged in combat on the front line.

Instructors from 42 Commando and 47 Commando Raiding Group delivered the training, alongside Army Commandos from 24 Commando Engineers and Royal Artillery Gunners from 29 Commando.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said: "The UK has led the way in training the Armed Force of Ukraine, providing world-leading training in frontline combat skills to more than 20,000 of Ukraine's Army recruits through Operation Interflex."

"This programme of training, delivered by elite British commandos, will support Ukraine to build its own distinct marine force and expand its capability to



operate in a maritime environment."

More than 20,000 recruits from the Armed Forces of Ukraine have already received training in the UK since the start of 2022, learning essential frontline skills including trench and urban warfare, leadership, and medical training.

At the start of 2023, the UK committed to train a further 20,000 Ukrainian recruits – approximately double the amount trained last year – under one of the largest training programmes of its kind in the world.

Beyond teaching combat skills to recruits, the UK has provided a broad package in other skills including medical training and the training of military chaplains

to provide pastoral care, spiritual support and moral guidance.

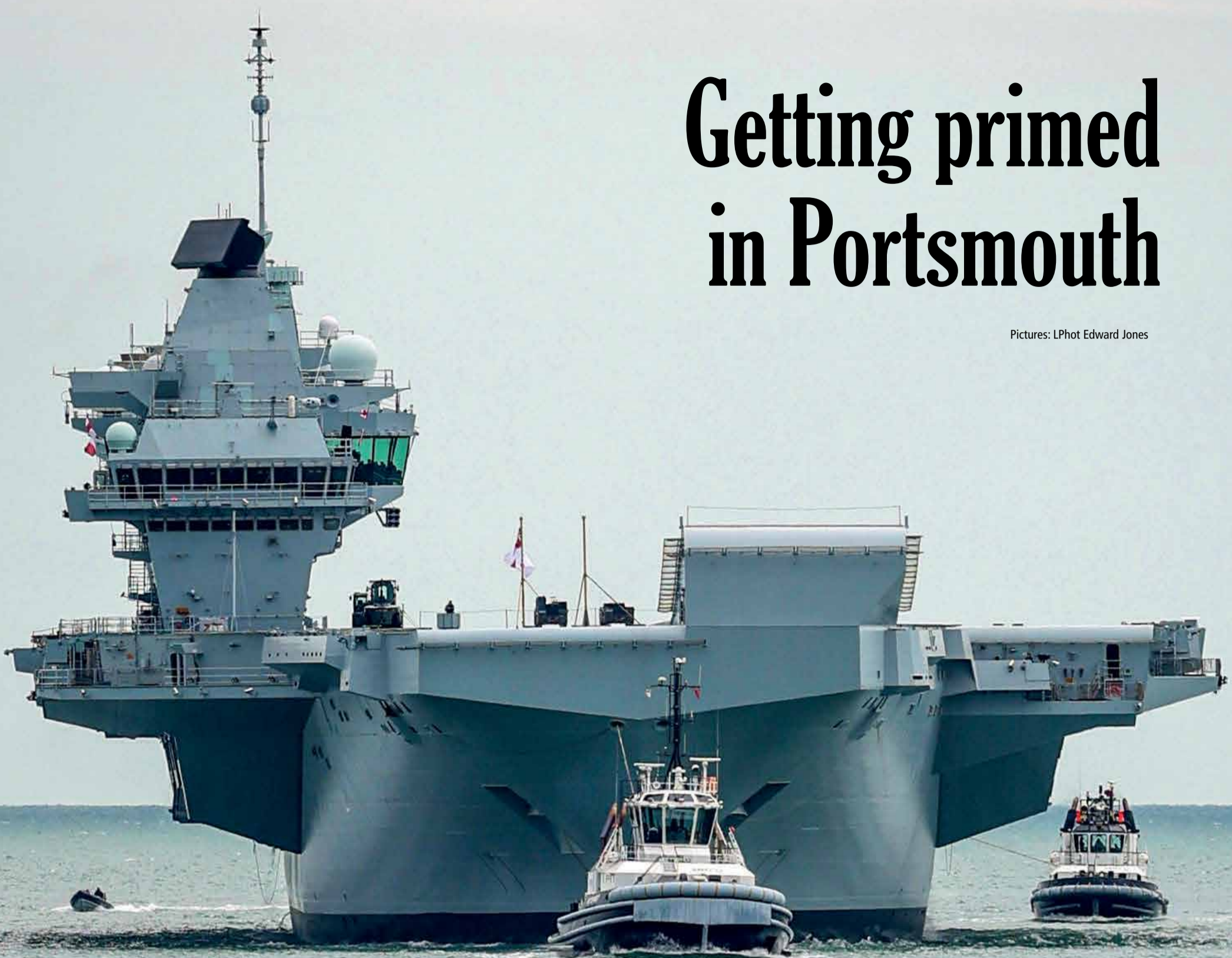
Including both the Op Interflex and the programme for marines, the UK's training for the Armed Forces of Ukraine is supported by Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden.

The UK remains fully committed to supporting Ukraine, with a further £2.3bn already earmarked for further military support through 2023, with additional munitions and equipment to be delivered in the coming months. Further UK government assistance continues in the form of humanitarian support and economic aid.



# Getting primed in Portsmouth

Pictures: LPhot Edward Jones



## Families welcome HMS Prince of Wales back to home port as she prepares for autumn deployment

BRITAIN's biggest warship is all systems go – and primed for front-line duties – as she returned home to Portsmouth.

HMS Prince of Wales spent her journey home ramping up for an autumn deployment, which will see the ship operate a multitude of aircraft and drones off the east coast of the United States, pushing the boundaries of carrier operations.

The 65,000-tonne behemoth made 'calm seas rage' on a series of trials, putting her upgrades through their paces and ensuring all her state-of-the-art systems were ready for full action.

It was then onto the carrier's main line of work as the flight deck reopened for business, with Chinook and Merlin helicopters appearing on board during a busy schedule of day and night flying.

HMS Prince of Wales also worked with F-35B Lightning

aircraft – the fifth-generation stealth jet the ship was designed around – and Typhoon fighters on air defence training. It means both the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers are now ready for deployments this autumn.

Fleet flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth completed a period of sea training in June and flying operations with F-35B jets from 617 Squadron and Wildcat and Merlin helicopters across July, readying her for operations in the coming months.

HMS Prince of Wales' Commanding Officer, Captain Richard Hewitt, said: "My sailors have worked hard to get us back to sea and ready to deploy this autumn. Now back in Portsmouth we will take some leave with families and friends and then we go."

Prince of Wales also worked with Royal Fleet Auxiliary tanker RFA Tidesurge to take on diesel and aviation fuel

while sailing.

Known as a replenishment at sea, this involves intricate work as the tanker and carrier manoeuvre close together and fuel lines are fed between the two.

This allows the carrier to stay on operations longer, keeping aircraft and the ship fuelled and where they are needed most.

This intensive phase at sea ensures the ship is ready for tasking and has refreshed the ship's company on key skills ahead of a high tempo of operations in the coming months.

The carrier will be looking to build on her previous successes including acting as NATO's command ship and leading the Maritime High Readiness Force in the Arctic, before she takes over from HMS Queen Elizabeth as the nation's flagship in 2024.







Sailors line HMS Albion's deck as the assault ship returns to Plymouth after completing her latest mission in the Baltic Sea

# THE END OF AN ERA

## ALBION MARKS SIX YEARS OF FRONT-LINE OPERATIONS

**THE hardest working capital ship in the Royal Navy is heading for a well-earned rest at the end of six years of intensive operations around the world.**

For the past half dozen years amphibious flagship HMS Albion has sailed the world, initially to the Far East in 2018, then spending most winters and springs in the Arctic and Baltic with autumn deployments to the Mediterranean.

The assault ship returned home to Plymouth at the end of July with families and friends aboard, having just completed a mission to the Baltic with stops on the way back in Den Helder to mark the 50th anniversary of the UK Netherlands Amphibious Force and in Scotland to offload ammunition.

At the munitions depot in Glen Douglas, the ship's sponsor Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, visited and presented medals and awards to crew. She was briefed on the ship's recent operational successes before Albion sailed to Belfast and Falmouth to bring more than 100 family members and friends aboard for the homecoming into Devonport Naval Base.

Albion will now hand over duties to sister ship HMS Bulwark.

Commanding Officer, Captain Marcus Hember, said: "It was a pleasure and a privilege to welcome The Princess Royal back on board Albion after what has been a demanding operational programme over the past 12 months.

"Our operations have been at the forefront of the UK contribution to Northern European security at a difficult time, working alongside partners and allies.

"At this end of this intense operational period, it was great to welcome friends and family on board for the final leg of our deployment before my people return home to enjoy some well-earned rest over the summer period."

Over her six years as UK and then amphibious

flagship, Albion's sailors and Royal Marines worked tirelessly with NATO allies and partners across European waterways, promoting peace and stability and tightening UK bonds with countless nations.

The ship's specialist role is to bring the punch of the Royal Marines ashore where they are needed most, using the range of landing craft and raiding boats stowed in her cavernous dock to land commandos and their kit.

Albion has spent the recent years leading the Littoral Response Group (North): a force – centred on amphibious ships and commandos – which is able to deploy across Europe's waterways and react to crises and world events.

Over the past four months of their most recent deployment alone, Albion's crew of 350 have chomped their way through 30,000kg of potatoes, 5,000 chicken breasts, 500 litres of mayonnaise and eaten over 50,000 eggs.

More importantly, they have visited Sweden, Estonia, Norway, Netherlands, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Finland, forging bonds with regional allies and clocking up more than 45,000 miles along the way.

Leading Weapons Engineering Technician 'Lewis' Hutchins, HMS Albion's Ordnance and Magazines Maintainer, said: "I've found the whole deployment thoroughly enjoyable. I had the opportunity to take part in the sailing regatta championship during Kiel week, representing HMS Albion, and also spent some time working with the Swedish Navy on their new raiding craft during our port visit to Stockholm. I'm now looking forward to returning home and catching up with friends and family in Plymouth."

Leading Seaman Peter Carson, Above Water Tactical Operator, added: "I have gained valuable operational experience, which will set me in good stead for my promotion course in the near future.

"I'm now eagerly looking forward to getting back home to Scotland to spend leave with friends and family."



**CLOCKWISE: HMS Albion sails into Devonport; Commanding Officer, Captain Marcus Hember on the bridge; Her Royal Highness, Princess Anne, visits the ship in Scotland; the ship's company gather on the flight deck as Albion sails home for Plymouth**

Images by: LPhot Bill Spurr, and LPhot Barry Swainsbury





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And extending a warm welcome to America's allies, embodied here by the Fleet Air Arm.

About to touch down on the deck of USS Gerald R Ford is the Wildcat of 815 Naval Air Squadron operating from HMS Duncan, the first British aircraft to land on the world's biggest warship.

Duncan is heading NATO's Mediterranean task force, Standing Group 2 (see page 11), whose frigates and destroyers were bolstered substantially by the presence of the US Navy carrier battle group for a series of combined exercises.

Ahead of the workout, Duncan's Wildcat was dispatched to the flattop for a planning conference, flying aboard Royal Navy Commodore Paul Stroude, in command of SNMG2, and his staff.

"As a pilot it is a real privilege to land on an ally's ship for the first time," said Wildcat Flight Commander, Lieutenant Sean

Bending.

"The ability to fly our aircraft between the different classes and nationalities of ships is key to allowing us to operate effectively together."

"The Ford-class aircraft carriers will be in service for at least 50 years so it was extremely important to demonstrate that we can use their deck."

This first landing demonstrates the ability to work with a new class of ship for Royal Navy aircraft.

"Flying from the deck of a destroyer to a carrier, there is a huge difference in both size and the number of aircraft and people around," added Lt Bending.



"It is a truly impressive sight to see that much aviation activity being conducted in one place."

Commodore Stroude added: "NATO Standing Maritime Group 2 will be operating in close cooperation with the ships of Carrier Strike Group 12 for several months in the Mediterranean."

"This was a vital opportunity to cement our working relationship and to plan the next period of activity."

It isn't the first time the Royal Navy has operated with the USS Gerald R Ford after HMS Northumberland, HMS Defender and RFA Tideforce worked with the ship in the Arctic Circle in June during a security exercise.

Picture: MC3 Simon Pike USN



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# “Zero room for error” as P2000s navigate canals

ROYAL Navy vessels swapped open seas for the canals and lochs of Scotland as they gave university students a taste of life in the Fleet.

Patrol boats HMS Charger, Smiter, Biter and Blazer have hosted under-graduates from several UK universities as they conduct summer deployments around the highlands and islands of Scotland.

And they've also demonstrated their skill in navigating the narrowest of man-made waterways: the Crinan and Caledonian Canals.

The former links Loch Fyne with the Atlantic, sparing small craft a lengthy journey around the Kintyre peninsula, while the more famous Caledonian Canal links a series of lochs (including Ness) allowing boats to pass from the west coast to the Moray Firth.

Though just nine miles long, it took HMS Charger two days to complete the Crinan Canal transit, negotiating 15 locks and seven swing/retractable bridges.

Even though Charger is one of the smallest vessels in the Royal Navy's inventory (under 21 metres long and just five metres wide), Lieutenant Andrew Bonham, the boat's commanding officer, said the canal passage posed "a significant challenge".

At the narrowest points, there were just 40 centimetres (a little over 1ft in old money) space sideways... and a mere 10cm (four inches) under the keel.

"This was a challenge we relished, a chance for us to test our skills managing seamanship, line handling, and ship handling, with zero room for error," said Lt Bonham.

"I'm delighted to say that we got Charger through without any damage – either to the ship or the crew – which is a testament to the teamwork exhibited by everyone on board."

Though still a navigating challenge, the much longer Caledonian Canal is wider and demanded crew and students on Blazer remained on their A-game

for the three-day passage.

Sailing the Crinan Canal under the White Ensign is a much less frequent experience.

"We had a fantastic response from the local community, and became very friendly with the Crinan Canal staff, who clearly weren't used to seeing a warship squeeze through and seemed delighted to see us," Lt Bonham added.

"We were able to host several for tea, some for dinner, and many for tours, as the programme allowed. My personal highlight was bringing one of the lock keepers on board at the Crinan Sea Lock, who was donned full highland dress and piped Charger out to sea."

Students from universities in and around Plymouth, Bristol, Wales and Glasgow have all benefited from the P2000 experience over the past few weeks.

In recent years, the Coastal Forces Squadron has shifted its focus away from its recent historic role of introducing university under-graduates to the work the Royal Navy does at home and abroad, to operational deployments in support of the Fleet.

The boats have deployed to the Arctic and Baltic supporting the work of larger warships such as HMS Albion and helped Wildcat crews develop anti-shiping tactics when using their new Martlet air-to-surface missiles.

But the role of giving students at University Royal Naval Units an extended taste of life in the Senior Service – from seafaring, navigation, daily routine and boat handling to flying the flag for the navy in places other vessels cannot or rarely visit – has not disappeared entirely.

The craft have called in a string of ports, including Tarbert, Carbost (Skye), Lochmaddy (North Uist), Stornaway, Thurso and Fraserburgh, while Biter has hosted junior officers from HMS Collingwood to teach the basics of pilotage and navigation, while Smiter helped Belfast Coastguard helicopter hone winning rescue skills.



Main picture: HMS Charger passes through a lock on the Crinan Canal; below L to R: HMS Smiter in Tarbert; HMS Charger alongside in Stornaway; HMS Blazer goes through a lock



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# MEZE IN THE MED



“... AND if you look out of your port windows you’ll see Calabria while on the starboard side the pylon of Torre Faro, a discussed electricity pylon which now acts as a landmark and navigation point...”

HMS Duncan passes through the narrows between Sicily (on the left) and mainland Italy (on the right) as she leads her NATO group on a patrol of the central Mediterranean.

We left the destroyer last month in Taranto where she had taken over responsibility for NATO’s Standing Maritime Group 2 from USS James E Williams, which had built up extensive knowledge of the region, the ships operating within it and the ways of NATO and its allies.

Since then she’s been at the heart of three major exercises, operating with 15 Allied vessels (including the world’s largest warship, USS Gerald R Ford – see page 7) as she knuckles down to her six-month Med mission.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Mediterranean has become a region of greater focus, as allies are more attuned to the critical importance of ensuring the NATO Alliance is operational, visible, acting as a deterrent to potential threats, and ultimately prepared to defend allied countries should the need arise.

And nothing prepares ships for the latter that a good old international workout. Or several.

Let’s begin with Neptune Strike

23-2 and Greek and Turkish F-16s, RAF Typhoons, along with an RAF Voyager for in-flight refuelling.

The exercise tested tactics, anti-air warfare and the ability to work together flawlessly, reinforcing readiness against airborne threats... which is Duncan’s forte.

She is less adept at finding mines (except inadvertently, for any ship – as the mine warfare community like to point out – can be a minehunter but once...).

Frigates and destroyers are almost as vulnerable to mines as merchant shipping was through both world wars and, more recently, the ‘tanker wars’ in the Gulf in the 1980s.

Luckily, NATO patrols the Med with a second task force, Standing Mine Countermeasures Group 2.

The two groups joined forces to see how they might navigate a mined chokepoint – while fending off hostile aircraft and fast attack craft – a realistic scenario which either warships or merchant vessels might face around the world.

“Both the world economy and our daily existence are utterly reliant on merchant shipping,” explained Commodore Paul Stroude, the Royal Navy Commander of Maritime Group 2.

“It is vital that we are able to keep these strategic routes open such that merchant vessels are able to pass through them safely.”

The minehunters and a command and support ship (Turkey’s Erdek and the Italian ships Stromboli and

Viareggio) used their specialist equipment and expertise to clear a safe route through the minefield.

The vessels of Maritime Group 2 (Duncan plus frigates Gokceada (Turkey) and Carabinieri (Italy), bolstered by the USS Ramage, followed safely in their wake whilst providing protection from air and surface attack.

In this case the air and missile attacks were represented by computer simulation, and defeated by a combination of long and short-range missile systems (such as Duncan’s Sea Vipers) and close-in defensive systems such as Phalanx Gatling guns (also fitted to HMS Duncan among other vessels).

For good measure, small boats from the task group were used to represent fast-attack craft, countered by close-range weapons such as 30mm or .50 calibre machine guns.

Commodore Stroude leads a 23-strong staff. They are responsible for planning and delivering the complex programme for the task group.

Amid a packed operational calendar, Duncan’s crew have found moments to unwind and recharge, at sea and in Mediterranean ports.

From Italy to Greece and Turkey, with more destinations ahead, during their downtime they’ve savoured the Mediterranean summer and immersed in diverse cultural experiences. Whether exploring

Crete’s Knossos Ruins, or Italy’s Matera, a UNESCO World Heritage site, Duncan has embraced every part of this deployment so far.

Crete is also redolent with more recent history: the scene of ferocious fighting ashore and at sea in May 1941, when German air power ensured the island was under the Nazi jackboot for the rest of WW2... while the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean came close to breaking point in first defending Crete... then evacuating it.

“The visit was fascinating, walking the ground of the battlefield really drives home the struggle faced by allied forces at the time,” said Lieutenant Alex Dundon.

The 200 sailors have also benefited from the Royal Navy’s deployed Adventurous Training team, allowing more than a third of the crew to participate in strenuous – but rewarding – organised activities, including mountain biking, stand up paddle boarding and rock climbing.

WO1 Paul Harris said: “The day of climbing was a great way to carry out AT as you work in teams, have to trust each other and puts you in challenging positions to problem solve your way up a rock face.”

While in Souda Bay, Crete, a group of Armed Forces veterans – ex-pats from all three Services, – reconnected with their military routes by visiting the ship. The veterans were taken on an exclusive tour, encompassing the

bridge, operations room, 4.5in gun, Missile Silo, and Hangar.

The veterans were in awe of the technological advancements of the modern Royal Navy.

“We felt immensely privileged for the opportunity to gain insight into the role of HMS Duncan,” said former RAF Regiment corporal Sean Johnstone.

“The visit gave us a real feel of what life on a modern warship is like.

“It was an experience of a lifetime to see one of our warships up close and personal. The crew were professional and made us feel welcome answering all our questions with in a way we could all understand.”

They sampled life on HMS Duncan for just a few hours. Their hosts will be deployed until the year’s end, continuing, says her Commanding Officer Commander Ben Martin, to make a valuable contribution to the collective security of the region.

He continued: “Duncan, her crew and the embarked NATO Staff are trained and prepared to play our role within this operationally-important region.

“We are all committed to ensuring that we are ready for any tasking whilst we maintain the essential allied interoperability that is the hallmark of NATO. I look forward to continuing this commitment over the coming months.”

Pictures: PO(Phot) Lee Blease





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Imagine heavily-armed armoured vehicles attempting to form a ring of steel around an Oshkosh tanker filled with fuel, roaring down a wide highway.

Not a scene from post-apocalyptic *Mad Max* movies, but Royal Marines testing their ability to support helicopters in the field.

For five days the relatively quiet airfield at Merryfield in Somerset was dominated by the rattle of gunfire, the clatter and rumble of heavy vehicles, and the smell of burned aviation fuel as personnel in a small, highly-specialised unit demonstrated their collective abilities.

The Aviation Combat Service Support Squadron is unique in the UK Armed Forces, expected to meet most of the needs of Merlin and Wildcat helicopters when operating in the field: providing fuel, food, spare parts, ammunition, medical care, ground transportation – effectively all the logistical support required, bar engineering.

Its ability to deploy rapidly is integral to the success of the Commando Helicopter Force – as is its ability to fend off foes.

The five days of training rolled into Exercise Jungle Defender tested both experienced and new members of the squadron in their ability to move, blend in and hide ('mobility, camouflage and concealment') in rural and urban environments.

As with the rest of the Commando Helicopter Force, the squadron is expected to go wherever the Royal Marines go: jungle, desert, Arctic, as well as temperate climes like Somerset.

Although it's high summer, it's got eyes firmly fixed on the force's winter deployment to Norway which culminates with the major NATO Arctic exercise, Nordic Response (previously known as Cold Response).

Personnel are expected to plan routes, carry out reconnaissance and, when they reach their destination, give the helicopters what they need: in this instance forward refuelling in the field, far from any base.

So to Merryfield, satellite airfield to the Commando Helicopter Force's home base at Yeovilton. With Merlins and Wildcats awaiting fuel, the squadron formed a column or convoy of vehicles – here a tanker and a handful of Land Rovers – with a pair of Jackal armoured vehicles equipped with heavy machine-guns as escorts.

The Jackals (officially Mobility Weapon-Mounted Installation Kit, or MWMIK) are crewed by operators, who've undergone a three-week course from zero knowledge of the vehicle to mastery of day and night ground manoeuvres over challenging terrain tactically to gain a tactical advantage.

They're guided by commanders – skilled Jackal operators who've undergone two weeks bespoke instruction to fully exploit both the abilities of their vehicle's operator and the Jackal itself, with the goal of out-manoeuvring any adversary.

And then there's the gunner, who's received two week's training on the heavy-machine gun (qualifications mean if they decide to return to the Commando Force

they can serve as gunners straight away).

Jungle Defender proved to be something of an eye-opener for marines new to the unit.

"The contribution the squadron makes has to Commando Helicopter Force's operational output is something I was unaware of while serving within the rest of the Royal Marines," one green beret said.

"We deploy persistently – in warm weather climates such as with the Littoral Response Group (South) to the Middle East this autumn; and in support of our NATO allies in the High North and Arctic Circle region.

"This blend of training really reinforces why we work so hard to maintain the high standards of our skills."

Assessors are looking for a combination of skills – imagination, safety, diligence and professionalism – and were impressed by the combination of experience.

Captain Alan Hunter RM says the support squadron has grown into "a product unparalleled within Joint Helicopter Command".

He continued: "The Forward Refuelling Point capability is constantly evolving to current and novel threats, through innovative solutions and deep knowledge of the tactical employment of the kit and equipment we use."

# FULL



# METAL



# JACKALS

Pictures: PO(Phot) Kyle Heller, CHF







# MISSILE MIGHT

## WILDCAT SQUADRON TESTS MARTLET SYSTEM AGAINST SURFACE AND AERIAL THREATS

A ROYAL Navy missile which can eliminate small, fast-moving threats was pushed to its limits in a series of firings in skies above the UK.

The Operational Advantage Centre (Maritime Warfare), the Royal Navy's lead organisation on tactical development, has staged an extensive Martlet missile firing trial in Wales, using a Wildcat helicopter from Yeovilton-based 815 Naval Air Squadron to test the weapon to its maximum ability.

Improving lethality and operational advantage in support of front-line operations is at the core of what the centre stands for, and the trial – dubbed Triton's Arrow – has proven key to 815 NAS better defining the capability of the Martlet missile.

In a first for the squadron, it also involved a successful firing against an aerial target.

The Martlet has been used on front-line operations over the past few years but the latest testing, supported by 744 NAS and 825 NAS, was to see how the missile system could be used further in a variety of circumstances to combat a range of threats and how it can continue to protect and support the Royal Navy's fleet.

The trials, conducted over two weeks, involved a range of challenging tests for 815 NAS and industry partners Thales and QinetiQ. It saw the Martlet put through its paces and prove its ability to neutralise the equivalent of small, fast-moving craft from speed boats and jet skis at

range and airborne threats such as drones.

Up to 20 missiles can be loaded onto a Wildcat HMA Mk2 helicopter, adding to the protective ring of steel formed around the UK's Queen Elizabeth-class carriers. In 0.3 seconds, the missile detaches from the helicopter, accelerating to one and a half times the speed of sound towards



its target.

So far, a Wildcat has fired the Martlet successfully on front-line operations (including hitting an inflatable target while embarked on Portsmouth-based HMS Defender in 2021 as part of the UK's Carrier Strike Group deployment) and now against moving targets on the water and against a Banshee drone – the first air-to-air Martlet firing by a UK helicopter.

Lieutenant Michael Vivian, pilot for one of the firing sorties, said: "It was an incredible experience to be involved in the planning and execution of what is now a new capability for the Maritime Wildcat Force and for Defence.

"The ability to protect a warship such as HMS Queen Elizabeth from fast-moving surface and now air targets make the Wildcat HMA a world-leading capability."

Commander Stuart Crombie, Commanding Officer of 815 NAS, added: "The Martlet firings conducted by an 815 NAS Wildcat during the Triton's Arrow trial have proven the devastating air-to-air lethality that the Wildcat offers.

"This capability places us in a unique position amongst the UK's – and the world's – military helicopters. Maritime Strike – on, under and now above the waves – is at our core, and 815 stands ready to defend our carriers and their strike groups day and night."

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# BALTIC WORKOUT

COMMANDO Wildcat crews say their stint supporting the Navy's premier amphibious deployment this spring has underscored their helicopter's utility.

847 Naval Air Squadron, embarked in RFA Mounts Bay, joined HMS Albion for the 'business end' of their stint in the Baltic/North Sea, providing helicopters for Operation Rondache – the key Baltops exercise – and Anglo-Dutch joint amphibious training celebrating the 50-year link between the two nations.

Based at RNAS Yeovilton in Somerset, the squadron is one arm of the Commando Helicopter Force, providing crucial support to the Royal Marines whenever and wherever they deploy around the world.

Even though the Wildcat helicopter has been in service with the squadron for nearly a decade, crews continue to squeeze more and more out of both the helicopter itself and its suite of sensors – to the benefit of their comrades on the ground.

The helicopter performs a multitude of roles, from the basics of ferrying troops and kit, to scouting for hostile forces, calling in air strikes, 'painting' targets with lasers for precision air strikes by missiles and laser-guided bombs, spotting for the guns of Allied warships, providing overhead cover for columns, and depositing raiding parties stealthily behind enemy lines... to name a few.

Operation Rondache allowed the Wildcat team to team up with Royal Marines from 45 Commando – normally based in Arbroath, Scotland – for the annual NATO exercise focused on security in the Baltic region.

It built up to a 48-hour-long final 'battle' involving more than 30 ships, scores of aircraft, thousands of troops, HIMARS rocket systems and specialist raiding teams on and off the Pomeranian coast in Poland.

That introduced nearly 20 NATO allies to the Commando Wildcat alongside 45 Commando.

It was the task of the two Wildcats to ensure the amphibious forces got ashore safely – and once on Polish soil, to gain a firm foothold until successive

waves landed reinforcements, vehicles and kit.

The mission demanded crews provided combat air support, escorted either raiding craft or troops, or delivered supplies to US and Royal Marines and Italian troops on the ground who needed it – all carried out on and above a busy 'battlefield' teeming with personnel and air power from 19 nations with varying degrees of knowledge of English, the shared NATO tongue.

On the way home from the Baltic, the squadron particularly revelled in the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with the Dutch Korps Mariniers in and around Den Helder, building up to the golden jubilee of the Anglo-Dutch amphibious force.

The Wildcat fliers used the voyage from Poland to Amsterdam to train, then decamped to De Kooy airfield in the Netherlands – the Dutch equivalent of 847's home at Yeovilton – for the joint exercise.

After just a day's joint practice, the two marine forces laid on three days of demonstrations for a combination of VIPs and the general public, with the Wildcats showing their ability to deliver marines with pinpoint accuracy on to landing craft (via rope) – regularly performed – or dropping them into the

water to swim ashore (known as helicasting) – less frequently carried out.

The detachment is now back home in Somerset analysing lessons of its Baltic workout, from operating two helicopters from a flight deck where there's only space for one (RFA Mounts Bay) which placed demands on the engineering teams, to wider integration on the battlefield with the rest of the Royal Marines and NATO allies.

"The key takeaway is raising awareness to commanders at all levels as to how useful the Commando Wildcat is," said pilot Captain Dave Lewis.

"45 Commando were exposed to the multi-role capability of the Wildcat – it gives commanders flexibility and high levels of situational awareness.

"And we learned that this key message has to be pushed in order for the wider Royal Marines to fully take advantage of the key Commando Helicopter Force asset Wildcat is."



## MERLIN PUSHED TO ITS LIMITS

THE wings of the Royal Marines can fly further – or carry more commandos into action – after extensive trials pushing their Merlin helicopters to the limit.

Extensive trials with commando assault ship HMS Albion over the past few weeks around the UK – in good weather and bad – mean Merlins could carry up to a dozen extra troops or, with extra fuel aboard, fly for another two hours, which mean operating much deeper into hostile territory if necessary.

The Merlin has been the 'battlewagon' of the Commando Helicopter Force since 2016, ferrying up to two dozen Royal Marines from ship to shore and around the battlefield, wherever the green berets deploy around the world. The helicopters also carry supplies, ammunition, guns, even vehicles where needed.

For nearly a decade, the 'handbook' for safe Merlin operations – such as weight limits, wind speeds, humidity, weather conditions – known as Ship Helicopter Operating Limits or SHOL have largely been based on data gathered using the helicopter's predecessor, the venerable Sea King: older, smaller, lighter.

With the Royal Marines transitioning to new Littoral Response Groups – operating in northern Europe and the Middle East region – with an increased focus on raiding operations, the decision was taken to squeeze as much as possible out of the Merlin Mk4 the Yeovilton-based helicopter force operates.

Tests years in the planning – which drew upon expertise in the MOD's Defence Equipment and Supplies organisation, science/tech firm QinetiQ, the Air and Space Warfare Centre Rotary Wing Test and Evaluation Squadron (RWTES), 846 Naval Air Squadron

– were arranged on HMS Albion as she returned from her spring deployment to the Baltic.

It resulted in taking the Merlin into unexplored areas of the flight envelope and culminated with a series of aviation firsts.

Both the ship and the aircraft were fitted with bespoke instrumentation, allowing flight test engineers to see in real time the aircraft's performance and handling characteristics.

The Merlin was also fitted with ballast which was incrementally increased to artificially increase the aircraft's operating weight.

As the aircraft weight increases the amount of power required increases. Additionally, for certain wind conditions, the handling pilot will encounter turbulence caused by the ship's superstructure.

The combination of power required and turbulence encountered increase the pilot's workload and makes landings and departures more challenging – exacerbated in rough seas where the ship's flight deck is pitching and rolling.

It is the trials team's job to safely define the edges of the flight envelope such that front-line aircrew can safely recover the aircraft to the ship without excessive workload whilst remaining within the helicopter's engine and transmission limits.

After ten days of testing, 350 deck landings were achieved including into wind landings 'heavy' across a range of headings relative to the ship's position and aft facing landings, offering a 360-degree SHOL clearance.

And running landings – rolling to a stop on the deck rather than dropping down vertically – will provide a very effective profile for heavy, limited-power recoveries in low winds and taxi and castor data will allow the helicopter to

reposition safely on deck upon landing.

Lieutenant Commander Tom Lofthouse, the detachment commander for the trials – and the last person to land on Albion's deck in a Commando Sea King – hailed the trials as "a game-changer for amphibious operations in constrained waters such as the Norwegian fjords. We are delighted to be able to increase the capability of the Commando Helicopter Force and to support the growth of Littoral Readiness Groups by enabling more Royal Marines to fly further."

As well as impacting future Merlin helicopter operations from Albion or her sister HMS Bulwark, the data from the trials is being pored over by experts to see whether the lessons learned can be transferred to other ships – and the submarine-hunting version of the Merlin, the Mk2 – to increase its range and lifting power too.

Lt Cdr Lofthouse continued: "The trial was the culmination of years of planning and preparation. Bringing lots of teams together to achieve success. From instrumentation to aircraft to ship to analysis, each has to be spot on to safely define the edges of the handling and performance envelope for each condition. Its success is down to the incredible individuals involved across a large number of teams."

The trials also brought down the curtain on the extensive Royal Navy career of Commander Chris Knowles, Commanding Officer of Rotary Wing Test and Evaluation Squadron.

"My last flight involved test points at 16 tonnes corrected lift for Merlin, aft-facing landings and was preceded by a compassionate passenger move into HMS Raleigh to get a sailor to his wife's hospital bed. I can't think of a better way to finish," he said.

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# ***THE HUNTER***



**HARD Worker HMS Northumberland returned home after spending more than half of 2023 at sea operating across the Arctic, Baltic and the North Atlantic.**

The frigate has sailed nearly the distance around the world, racking up 23,043 miles on the high seas since the start of the year, locating Russian units and protecting UK waters.

The Type 23 frigate returns to Plymouth having also operated with NATO allies on submarine-hunting exercises in the North Atlantic, patrolled the High North and operated with the world's largest warship, the US Navy's imposing aircraft carrier the USS Gerald R Ford, in the Arctic Circle.

Commander Will Edwards-Bannon, Northumberland's Commanding Officer, said: "I have once again been profoundly impressed by the selfless commitment and tactical excellence that my ship's company has demonstrated across the length and breadth of our operating area, from the Atlantic to the Arctic and the Barents to the Baltic.

"Everyone on board can look back on this successful deployment with pride in our collective achievements: from once again leading task-group operations in the Arctic Circle alongside close allies, to marking the coronation of His Majesty The King while we were in Iceland.

"I am hugely grateful for the support of all our friends and families who enable us to do our important work for the Nation and it is a great pleasure to see so many of them here to welcome Northumberland and her fantastic ship's company home."

Northumberland spent three quarters of her deployed time on concerted operations, but also managed to visit Denmark, Iceland, and Norway in between tasking.

Her 200 sailors chomped their way through 82,500 meals – including precisely 40,320 sausages and around 8,000 eggs, with the ship's galley serving up meals no matter how rough the seas.

In the waters between Norway, the Faroe Islands and Iceland, Northumberland, alongside tanker RFA Tideforce and Merlin helicopters of 814 Naval Air Squadron, took part in Exercise Dynamic Mongoose, NATO's premier cold water anti-submarine warfare exercise – training designed to strengthen allies' ability to track and destroy threats lurking beneath the surface.

The frigate followed that up by tracking Russian warships, Vice-Admiral Kulakov and Admiral Levchenko,

## **NORTHUMBERLAND'S NORTHERN PATROL**

as they sailed in waters close to the UK.

In Reykjavik in Iceland, Northumberland marked His Majesty The King's Coronation, hosting sailors from allied warships for a flight deck 'street party' and supporting efforts at the British embassy.

Petty Officer Vucago 'Vinny' Bainitabua, said: "I'm proud to look back and when people ask: 'where were you for the King's Coronation?' I can say: I was deployed on operations with HMS Northumberland in Reykjavik, hosting our NATO allies. It's definitely one to remember."

Northumberland, Type 45 destroyer HMS Defender and tanker RFA Tideforce joined the US Navy's Carrier Strike Group 12, whose flagship is the USS Gerald R Ford, training with the ship as she continued her Atlantic Ocean deployment.

The frigate then led an allied task group in the High North, demonstrating the UK's commitment to supporting and collaborating with Arctic partners, as well as enhancing the Royal Navy's long history of operating in the region.

Northumberland was joined by RFA Tideforce, Norwegian frigate HNoMS Otto Sverdrup and United States Navy (USN) destroyer USS Thomas Hudner.

The crew did manage to get some down time with a myriad of self-generated entertainment such as raffles, quizzes, and race nights, raising money for the frigate's favourite charities and welfare fund, plus Northumberland's first Pride event at sea.

"This has been my first deployment with the Royal Navy and it has been a challenging but highly rewarding experience, from operating in the Arctic Circle, to escorting the world's largest warship," said Able Seaman Nathan Mounsey, an underwater warfare specialist.

"However, organising, planning and executing Northumberland's first ever Pride was fantastic and my personal highlight from the deployment."

Joining the ship's company was a flight from 814 Naval Air Squadron, nicknamed The Flying Tigers, which operated the Merlin Mk2 submarine-hunting helicopter. Supported by ten engineers, the four aircrew of Mohawk Flight flew more than 160 hours on ASW sorties during the deployment.



**NORT BAD:** A montage of images from HMS Northumberland's deployment, which took them through the Arctic, Baltic and across the North Atlantic.

Homecoming images by LPhot Barry Swainsbury and deployment images by LPhot Finn Stainer-Hutchins





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# BACK IN TRIUMPH

**BACK** on operational patrols after a five-year revamp is the Silent Service's last Cold War warrior: HMS Triumph.

After an extensive, multi-million pound refit vastly enhancing all of her equipment and systems, the Royal Navy's final Trafalgar-class submarine in service – and the last submarine still based in Plymouth – has resumed front-line operations for the first time since 2018.

At 32 years old – she entered service just after the first Gulf War and just before the Soviet Union ceased to exist – Triumph is the last of a class of submarines built at the height of the Cold War, which found themselves adjusting to a new world order.

Of the six hunter killer boats in service, Triumph is also the only one to fire in anger – launching Tomahawk cruise missiles against the Taliban in 2001 and again ten years later against the Gaddafi regime in Libya's Civil War.

Since 2018, however, she's been out of action, undergoing refit in her home base. Eight months before that ended, crew began the long process of regeneration and bringing Triumph back to life, starting on simulators ashore, then moving on to the boat herself, building up to a 'fast cruise': demonstrating that they know how to safely operate the submarine and all her systems without actually leaving port.

After being assessed for nine gruelling days, tackling fires, flood, and mastering the many systems on board, Triumph's crew were determined ready to take her to sea – and her first dive in five years once the boat had reached sufficiently deep waters.

The coxswain piped 'diving stations' over the ship's broadcast system and the submarine was brought to high readiness before the Commanding Officer ordered "dive".

The main vents opened and with that the Atlantic welcomed the submarine to her natural home.

Embarked for the first six weeks of training were experts from Fleet Operational Standards and Training, moving through a complex package including dealing with any emergency possible at sea, to test firing weapon systems (Spearfish torpedoes/Tomahawk cruise missiles) and conducting special operations while engaging combatants in hostile waters.

Commander Scott Taylor, the boat's commanding officer said there had been a lot of expectation resting on his crew.

"The name Triumph has been ubiquitous throughout the history of the Royal Navy – with over 500 years of battle honours, she has seen action in nearly every



major maritime conflict since the first vessel to carry the name was launched in 1562," he said.

"It has taken resilience and only the highest of professional standards from us, as her ship's company, to return the name Triumph back to where it rightfully belongs.

"I'm honoured to command the tenth HMS Triumph – the final Trafalgar-class hunter killer submarine, as we again return to operations."

To demonstrate her readiness, Triumph was thrust into two exercises with NATO allies: firstly against a US Navy Los Angeles-class submarine – contemporary hunter killer – then against numerous submarine hunters (including HMS Northumberland) in the cold Atlantic waters around Iceland which culminating in the boat making a dash to be within range of land to get a TV signal and watch the second

half of the King's Coronation.

Crew held cream tea parties in each mess and caught the highlights of the day while staging a 'very British' quiz. There was not the occasion's signature dish, however, as fresh eggs had run out after two months at sea... ruling out a Coronation quiche, so the submariners had to make do with a steak dinner...



Reward for being on-the-go almost non-stop since the turn of the year – and a welcome breather before her summer deployment was the Rock after a rare dived transit of the strait, no mean feat in one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.

Crew decamped to hotels – in recognition of the rudimentary conditions aboard, not least swapping bunks with shipmates –

and took part in sporting and AT activities including the run to the top of the Rock 'enjoyed' by any Royal Navy ship or unit visiting Gib (the deputy marine engineering officer posted the fastest time).

Once maintenance on Triumph was complete, the boat slipped away from the Rock and resumed her high-readiness patrol defending UK interests at home and abroad.





**R** OYAL Marines were at the tip of the spear during the largest military exercise in the Southern Hemisphere.

The UK's Commando Force are ramping up their presence in the Indo-Pacific and, after a mission to South Korea earlier this year, were deployed to Australia – embarking on helicopter carrier HMAS Adelaide – as 13 nations demonstrated their combined military might.

In amongst more than 34,000 troops, Royal Marines strike teams from 40 Commando carried out surveillance, reconnaissance and strike missions, establishing a foothold inland to pave the way for larger forces to land ashore on Australia's eastern coast.

Crucially, the intensive training – known as Exercise Talisman Sabre – helped build trust and the ability to seamlessly operate together, meaning allies are better equipped to respond rapidly to global challenges.

The exercise took place across five states and territories, with much of the maritime elements taking place off the coast of New South Wales and Queensland in an area the size of mainland Europe, testing joint capabilities across land, sea, air and, less tangibly, space and digital.

Major Aran Sandiford, the Company Commander leading the UK Commando Forces on the exercise, said: "The opportunity for UK Commando Forces to integrate with like-minded, specialist reconnaissance and raiding forces, really is invaluable."

"As well as being a fantastic chance to develop shared tactics and practice operating alongside key partners, deploying Commandos into the Indo-Pacific is one of the best ways of demonstrating the Royal Navy's continued commitment to the region."

Royal Marines have taken part in Talisman Sabre since 2019 and are increasingly deployed to the Indo-Pacific, as the UK works with allies and partners for the security and stability of the region.

The Commando Force presence couples with the long-term deployment of HMS Spey and HMS Tamar to the Indo-Pacific.

"It sends the right message that the same members of the UK Commando Force exercising here this month, were also deployed to the Korean Peninsula in March," added Maj Sandiford.

"The UK Commando Force were here in force in 2021 and, more recently, a number of the partner nations here for Talisman Sabre worked together to extract their citizens from Sudan, during the evacuations in April this year.



# DOWN UNDER



"There's a really strong sense across the multinational force that we're amongst friends."

With more than 150 personnel from the Royal Marines, RAF and British Army deploying to Australia it was the largest UK contribution since Talisman Sabre began in 2005.

RAF Support Force based at RAF Wittering provided logistical support, providing 40,000 meals for over 600 personnel alongside their Australian counterparts.

Electronic Warfare from the British Army's 14 Signals Regiment, 4 Regiment Army Air Corps, observers from 4th Battalion Ranger Regiment and UK Space Command attended for the first time, signalling a growing intent from the UK.

Joining the hosts Australia are the UK and USA, Canada, Fiji, France, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Korea, and Tonga, with military personnel from India, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand observing the exercise.

Exercise Talisman Sabre is a complex and ambitious exercise which involves risks, as the tragic loss of an Australian helicopter at sea on 28 July has reminded. UK personnel assisted in search and rescue efforts for the crew and the Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Sir Tony Radakin sent his condolences to his Australian counterpart for the tragic loss of four Australian Army soldiers.



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# RIVERS OF THE

THIS – and you’ll have to take our word for it because (1) it’s dark and (2) it looks like every other major port in the world – is Brisbane.

And alongside is HMS Spey, the first Royal Navy vessel to visit the capital of Queensland in nearly 30 years (the last to drop in was HMS Monmouth in 1995).

High summer found the five second-generation River-class ships peppered around the globe, thousands of miles apart – all on patrol, or gearing up for it, at a time when much of the Senior Service is enjoying leave.

Spey’s visit to Brisbane was a mix of flag-flying and testing the water.

Flag-flying for the UK/RN (the visit coincided with the England’s Women’s World Cup quarter final victory on penalties over Nigeria).

The Lionesses’ game was live streamed on Spey’s flight deck as the ship hosted more than 80 people from Australian government, trade, industry and armed forces.

There was also a ceremonial sunset for Queensland’s governor, Dr Jeannette Young, and engagement with students from Brisbane’s Aviation High School which focuses on preparing young people for careers in the skies... or on the ground in support.

And the toe in the water? Would the Queensland city be a suitable forward base or hub for future RN vessels operating in the southwest Pacific? It certainly possesses potential: a major port with facilities able to support larger warships and with good air links with the UK (a major consideration given that half the ship’s company change every six weeks).

Certainly the attractions of Brisbane and environs got the thumbs up from Spey’s crew as they hit the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Byron Bay, Noosa Island

and Australia Zoo.

Some 1,400 miles to the north and Spey’s older sister HMS Tamar was performing more solemn duties on an island uninhabited for nearly eight decades.

Ballalae – one of 992 islands in the Solomon chain – was the scene of atrocities by Japanese forces against 517 Royal Artillerymen.

Taken prisoner after the fall of Singapore, the gunners were shipped to Ballalae where they were forced to hack down trees and clear an airstrip – which the Japanese dubbed an ‘unsinkable aircraft carrier’ – to support the defence of the island chain, then the scene of bitter fighting.

Many PoWs subsequently died from exhaustion and tropical disease during unrelenting forced labour in the brutal tropical climate – or were killed by Allied bombs when they attacked the island; their captors forbade them building trenches to shelter themselves.

There were just 57 prisoners left on the island by 1943 and with the tide of war now against Tokyo and Allied forces liberating the Solomons, Japanese commanders on Ballalae were convinced their island would fall next and ordered every captive executed.

Ballalae wasn’t actually liberated until 1945 – when troops found the remains of the murdered PoWs in shallow trenches... and then a mass grave containing the bodies of the remaining gunners who died building the air strip.

They were re-interred in separate graves at the Bomama War Cemetery near Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, their headstones marked only with the words: *Here lies a Soldier, known only to God.*

A plaque donated by the Royal Artillery Association on the airfield was installed 20 years,

but as it’s not a registered Commonwealth War Grave it does not receive any regular maintenance and there’s no-one on uninhabited Ballalae to tend to it.

Nevertheless, British High Commissioner to the Solomon Islands Tom Coward is keen to ensure the memorial is maintained. The 80th anniversary of the atrocity and the presence of HMS Tamar allowed just that with sailors returning the monument to its former glory.

“Ballalae is – simultaneously – the site of a horrific chapter of World War 2, in the most inhospitable of places, and now a peaceful and idyllic island. Our sailors were eager to pay their respects and did so beautifully,” said Commander Teilo Elliot-Smith, Tamar’s Commanding Officer.

A service of re-dedication was held to remember the soldiers who had died on the island, led by the patrol ship’s chaplain Rev Mick Uffindell, joined by sailors, Mr Coward, and the local island chiefs who kindly allow the memorial to stand on their ancestral land.

“It was an incredible privilege to be able to pay tribute to these servicemen and their families,” said Rev Uffindell. “In addition to restoring the memorial we placed 517 white stones, one for each individual who lost their life on Ballalae Island.”

Ten thousand miles west and HMS Forth is conducting final trials and training before she leaves Gibraltar after refit and returns to her regular patrol area of the Falklands (covered presently by HMS Medway).

HMS Trent has already left the Rock and is now patrolling the waters off West Africa, her sailors and Royal Marines delivering training to regional nations to bolster the fight against maritime crime, including

piracy and armed robbery.

Equipped with an expert boarding team of Royal Marines and a Puma surveillance drone, Trent’s been tasked with increasing stability across the Gulf of Guinea through training, in order to protect around £6 billion of UK trade that passes through the region.

The ship – tasked with providing a regular presence in the Mediterranean and Africa – will deliver training to help partner navies take the fight to malign actors, fostering ties and sharing knowledge, whilst conducting patrols to increase security.

Puma is a new tool in Trent’s toolkit, capable of monitoring an area larger than the size of Greater Manchester.

“The opportunity to deploy Puma as an aviation asset on board Trent will benefit our deployment as well as shape future tasking across the patrol ship fleet,” said Lieutenant Christopher Windsor, Puma Flight Commander from 700X Naval Air Squadron.

“My team is looking forward to testing this capability.”

Trent’s, Executive Officer Lieutenant Commander Mike Rydiard is also keen to see how the addition of the drone impacts both on the ship’s work and also her interaction with other navies and law enforcement organisations in West Africa.

“The integration of a Royal Marines boarding team and the Puma remotely-piloted air system in Trent is a first, and demonstrates our flexibility.

“It is a testament to a lot of hard work by my team in Trent and organisations across the whole force that have supported us.

“We are ready for maritime security operations and look forward to working with and supporting regional partners.”



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## Join us for Trafalgar Night

RNRMC is bringing Trafalgar Night to your doorstep this October.

By signing up, you will be able to immerse yourself in an evening of festivities, commemorating the legendary battle while supporting a noble cause.

Don't miss the chance to get together with friends and family for an evening to remember whilst making a real difference to sailors and marines all over the UK. Make a difference and be part of history!

Each October since the early 19th Century, officers in the Royal Navy have joined together to commemorate the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Nelson's famous victory is celebrated in wardrooms all over the world, and now we are bringing it home to you.

The Trafalgar Night dinner is a grand affair with a number of long-standing traditions including parading a baron of beef, Ships of the Line (chocolate replicas of the Victory), speeches, toasts are more. You could choose to follow these traditions during your Trafalgar Night at Home or have fun with the theme and make the evening your own. Why not come up with a creative way to recreate the Ships of the Line?

Visit [www.rnrmc.org.uk/trafalgar-night-home](http://www.rnrmc.org.uk/trafalgar-night-home) for details on registering.

Thanks to your support we are able to tackle a wide range of issues that people experience throughout their lives. The funding you generously provide goes towards combatting homelessness, unemployment and supporting those struggling with mental health recovery is in constant demand.

We partner annually with around 60 different organisations and charities to deliver bespoke support for Royal Navy families and children, conscious that although one person may join, the whole family ends up serving.

# A DAY TO REMEMBER

WHAT do you get if you mix together three Normandy veterans, 100 supercars, 40 abseilers, Star Wars characters and one shopping/leisure complex?

A day to remember and at least £13k raised for the Navy's No.1 charity. Oh, and one Guinness world record probably set.

'Spinnaker Supercars' as the event was billed set out to give three Normandy veterans – ex-RN Henry Rice and Cyril 'Stan' Ford plus former tank driver/mechanic Richard Aldred – a day to remember, give people in the Portsmouth area the chance to see some of the fastest, most sought-after motors on the planet, and some plucky fundraisers the opportunity to abseil one of southern England's tallest structures, the Spinnaker Tower.

More than 5,200 signatures – including from the Normandy veterans – were scribbled on a £450,000 Ferrari 812 Superfast... which should earn the vehicle the world record for 'most signatures on a supercar' (yes there is one, and yes the latest tally is now being tallied by Guinness for verification and validation).

Even before the day, organiser Warrant Officer 1 Baz Firth – who serves with the RN Leadership Academy – had raised more than £13k, but hopes when he's counted all the donations the total should top £15k for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity and the Spirit of Normandy Trust.

Certainly it proved the busiest day at the Gunwharf Quays shopping-leisure complex (on the site of the old HMS Vernon) in four years, with 32,000 people visiting the site... up an impressive 47 per cent.

And, best of all, the Normandy veterans thoroughly enjoyed the experience.



Henry served as a signalman on landing ship (dock) HMS Eastway which arrived off Normandy five days after the initial landings and supported troops on Juno Beach.

Stan is one of 38 men to survive the loss of escort vessel HMS Fratton, sunk probably by a German midget submarine on August 18 1944.

The blast which tore Fratton apart hurled

the gun platform Stan was operating into the water – with Stan still on it. The injuries he sustained left him walking with leg callipers for the rest of his life.

As for Richard, he spent six weeks with a Cromwell tank from mid-July until it was knocked out in late August as Allied forces broke out from Normandy and spread across northern France.

When a replacement was found, he

continued the advance into Belgium.

"The veterans all had an amazing time," said Baz, who's a trustee of the Spirit of Normandy Trust which supports and organises trips for veterans of the 1944 operations.

"They were driven by Rolls-Royce - provided by the factory - to and from the event and said they felt like royalty, so that's a goal achieved."

## Joining forces to support facility for veterans



IN A significant step towards enhancing the well-being of veterans, RNRMC has joined hands with Tom Harrison House (THH) to fund a crucial part of their capital build project.

This collaboration seeks to expand THH's activity space and build a sensory garden at their home in Anfield, Liverpool, allowing the organisation to deliver a range of therapeutic activities during their 12-week programme.

THH is a specialist facility providing invaluable addiction treatment facilities and support exclusively to military veterans, reservists, emergency personnel, and their families. The capital build project, made possible through the RNRMC's funding, aims to create a therapeutic centre offering a holistic approach to enhancing the wellness of veterans on their road to recovery.

One of the key features of the therapeutic centre will be the incorporation of various holistic therapies designed to promote mental and emotional well-being.

Activities such as yoga, meditation, mindfulness, and sessions in the sensory area and garden will contribute to restoring a sense of peace and balance in the lives of service-users.

The centre will also focus on behavioural therapies to address harmful thinking patterns and equip veterans with the tools to navigate challenging situations with confidence and self-efficacy.

By gaining a better understanding of their own behaviours and those of others, veterans can develop healthier coping mechanisms and build more positive relationships.

Recognising the importance of family support in the recovery process, Tom Harrison House plans to offer family therapy and assistance to keep loved ones engaged and motivated throughout the journey.

The project aims to improve relationships and equip family members with strategies to cope with the recovery process together.

Counselling will be a vital component of the

programme, enabling veterans to confront past traumas and move forward with a more positive mindset. Through professional guidance and support, veterans will find a safe space to address their mental health challenges and find the strength to heal.

In addition to professional therapy, the centre will offer peer support groups and motivational talks, delivered by THH's graduates, some of which are pictured below.

This aspect provides veterans with the opportunity to connect with others who understand their experiences, share coping mechanisms, and find inspiration from those who have overcome similar challenges.

The new centre will be fully equipped to facilitate these therapeutic activities.

From loudspeakers for music and soundscapes in the relaxation and mindfulness room to a sensory area in the garden, the environment will foster a sense of calm and rejuvenation.

For details, see [www.tomharrisonhouse.org.uk](http://www.tomharrisonhouse.org.uk)



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## Astute move for Officer Cadets



A FANTASTIC opportunity occurred for URNU East Scotland as four URNU ES Officer Cadets were privileged to visit the nuclear-powered submarine HMS Astute at HMNB Clyde.

After a fireside chat with some of the Officers from the boat and a night in the wardroom at Faslane, the cadets were treated to an incredible tour of the submarine while it conducted harbour drills.

Exploring the bridge, operations room, power plant, and weapons control rooms, the cadets got a sense of what life might be like on board during patrols by observing where the crew eat, sleep and work while understanding a little more of the strategic role the Silent Service play.

Accompanying URNU ES were four Officer Cadets from URNU Glasgow. Acting Midshipman Patrick Wither, a second year International Relations student at University of Edinburgh, said: "It was a fascinating insight into life in the Submarine Service."

"To be able to discuss at length what the day-to-day comprises when working on submarines offered us a unique perspective."

"From seeing the power plant, all the way through to the weapon control centre, it really showed off a way of life and environment that was a privilege for us rarely seen in everyday life."

"After seeing it up close, it's not surprising that these vessels are compared to the space shuttle in terms of complexity – they really are impressive pieces of kit."

"For many of us in the URNU, who are trying to establish exactly what roles we want to pursue when we join the Service, it was an eye opening 24 hours."

"The intensity and purpose that submarines can offer is an exciting prospect, and one I am eager to pursue."

## DIVING IN HOLD FAST

URNU Glasgow were the third University Royal Naval Unit to take on the Hold Fast Challenge in response to URNU Birmingham throwing down the gauntlet earlier this year.

The activities are based on the rigorous fitness training that Royal Navy Clearance Divers undertake, making for a tough day of circuits, carrying Oppos and the unit pulling themselves through the "Swamp".

Just outside of Perth, the team at Hold Fast Elite were waiting for us with wetsuits and flippers, allowing the teams to get stuck straight in.

Officer Cadets and training staff, including our Commanding Officer, started with a brief of the expectations of the day; kit displayed and how to carry it properly and checking that everyone was fit and ready between each activity.

"This was a great way to teach the OCs the importance of discipline and attention to detail, which are vital as a diver," said Ocdt Greta Harris.

Splitting into teams, a warm-up of circuits was next, running to the end of the lake and swimming back again to practice with flippers.

Once warm, OCs carried large containers of water to simulate the heavy equipment normally carried by divers.

They then alternated taking lake dips and doing shuttle runs and demonstrated their teamwork pulling each other out of the slippery lake bank.

Different team leaders volunteered themselves for each of these activities and everyone had an opportunity to support their team – making sure no one was left behind.

The official 1,000m lake swim was shortened slightly but this made it no less difficult or chilly! Next came the "Swamp" and a few lucky OCs got to practice being casualties as their team dragged them out of the muddy water.



Then came the main event, the timed Hold Fast Challenge! All the exercises done throughout the day were to prepare us for the log carry through the swamp, across the lake, and carried back to the starting line.

Each team had their own log and weren't permitted to help another team with the load, but this didn't stop OCs cheering each other on at the end.

Every unit member who took part finished with a great time of just over 23 minutes, only nine seconds short of URNU Northumbria.

Instructor Robert Hinton and his team ran the fantastic day with lots of smiles through the gruelling activities.

Talking at the end of the day, Ocdt Greta Harris said: "URNU Glasgow was praised for demonstrating the can-do attitude that the Hold Fast Challenge aims to develop, by pushing ourselves to the limit, both mentally and physically. We did ourselves proud and showed off our camaraderie and teamwork."

Check out the videos via our Twitter [@URNUGlasgow](#) and on the Hold Fast Elite social media pages on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

If you want to find out more about the unit, search for "URNU" on the Royal Navy Website. **Report: OC Greta Harris**



## Man, we had a great time

OFFICER Cadets from Manchester and Devon URNUs undertook public engagement and race marshalling as part of a larger Royal Naval presence on the island during the annual Isle of Man TT event.

The Commanding Officer of URNU Devon (Lt Jamen Smith) coordinated URNU attendance with the North Regional Command Event Lead Lt Valente and was present at the event as URNU duty staff.

This event is a fantastic opportunity for URNU students to experience the public relationship side of the Royal Navy, with the benefit of the TT as a stunning setting to conduct this vital work.

During the two-week event RN personnel attended receptions hosted by the Governor of the Isle of Man, the Mayor of Douglas and Bremont.

Defence engagement in this regard is important in establishing or building relationships with key stakeholders to ensure enduring collaborative working.

Bremont is a British watchmaker were releasing a limited-edition timepiece for the event and who have a strong connection to the armed forces.

This was enjoyed by all, a fabulous event and one that is heralded by many as "The Greatest Race on Earth."

The welcoming which the Royal Navy received both within the TT Paddock from the fans, as well as around the island in general, was warm and comforting.

This continued to grow through the time spent exploring the picturesque landscape.

To chose one highlight is difficult, but if pushed it would have to be marshalling at one of the locations known as Windy Corner – a very appropriately named location where bikes go through a sweeping right hand turn at approximately 120 miles per hour!

## Swinging into action to help the RNLI



YORKSHIRE University Royal Navy Unit took part in a unit challenge to cover the distance of 238 miles in one week either by walking, cycling, running or swimming.

This was to raise money for the RNLI, a charity which do so much towards saving lives at sea.

The unit chose 238 miles as their target, as this is the number of lifeboat deployment stations all around the country.

Over the course of the week, URNU Yorkshire managed to raise £540 for the RNLI through generous donations from friends and families.

It was a great incentive to get outside and take some exercise all for a good cause.

Registered charity number: Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund 950182



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## Cdre Jo returns to her reservist roots

THE 3,270 men and women who give up their spare time to serve their Navy have a new leader.

Command of the Maritime Reserves changed hands during a ceremony aboard HMS Victory in Portsmouth as Commodore Mel Robinson (pictured left) passed the baton to her successor Commodore Jo Adey (pictured centre addressing some of her team).

Cdre Mel took charge of the reserve arm of the Senior Service on the cusp of Covid lockdown in February 2020.

The response to the pandemic saw Maritime Reservists heavily engaged supporting the government and civilian organisations and agencies.

More than 900 Reservists immediately volunteered to help out; those mobilised into full-time and more-time service, blending their military experience with civilian skills, making a tangible difference at a time of national and international crisis, serving as medics, logisticians and liaison officers at home and around the globe.

After the nation settled after Covid-19, Cdre Mel switched focus to the once-in-a-generation transformation of the Maritime Reserves – comprising 2,496 officers and ratings of the Royal Naval Reserve and 774 green berets in the Royal Marines Reserve.

She has overseen modernising the organisation, replacing structures and processes built around the Cold War with a regional training model which has embraced technology to deliver greater training capacity than ever before.

Today, through the addition of new fast boats in ‘waterfront hubs’ around the country, reservists can access hands-on training at a much earlier stage in their career than has been the case for two decades, familiarising themselves with basic seamanship skills.

That allows reservists to seamlessly slip into the ship’s company of a warship at sea – such as Offshore Patrol Vessels, or with the Gibraltar Squadron safeguarding the Rock and its waters – operating alongside regular counterparts as soon as they join.

And by digitising administrative processes, reservists can now manage their careers, training courses and pay online through their phones and tablets.

Reflecting on her three years at the helm, the commodore – who has served both the regular and reserve for more than 30 years – said: “I am extremely proud of what Maritime Reservists have achieved together over the past three years – against the backdrop of the most difficult circumstances we’ve faced for a generation; a global pandemic, a demanding fiscal environment, conflict in Europe, the list goes on.

“Reservists met these challenges head on, whilst working with me to deliver a complex change programme on an unprecedented scale – and at pace.

“Serving as Commander of this exceptional part of the Royal Navy has been the highlight of my career, and I wish Commodore Adey, and her husband Richard, every success as she assumes the role of the next Commander of the Maritime Reserves.”

Handing over the ‘chains of office’, Cdre Mel was joined by her husband, Guy – a Vice Admiral who’s the senior UK military representative in the US – daughter Maisie and son Max, who is currently completing his initial officer training at Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth.

Her successor has also served in both the regular and reserves for three decades, joining HMS Calliope in 1993 while studying at Newcastle University.

She’s been a full-time sailor since 2004, serving as a training manager, including being in charge of training at HMS Raleigh turning civilians into sailors, and has recently graduated from the Royal College of Defence Studies in London.

“It’s a real honour to be returning to my roots, coming back as Commander of the Maritime Reserves, to work with the exceptional people who make up the Royal Naval Reserve and Royal Marines Reserve,” she said.

“I’m grateful to Commodore Mel for all the work she’s done to modernise the Maritime Reserves and I’m looking forward to continuing this progress and getting to know the organisation better over the coming weeks and months.”

Picture: LPhot Belinda Alker

# Annapolis, now

**FOUR newly-commissioned Royal Navy midshipmen spent a month learning how the US trains its naval leaders of tomorrow.**

They were given the opportunity to take a Yard Patrol boat – nicknamed YPs or ‘Yippees’ – up the USA’s Eastern Seaboard for their summer deployment.

All four Brits are budding engineering officers under the University Cadetship Entry scheme – unlike many fellow officers, they complete the first phase of their officer training at Dartmouth before going to the university of their choice to study a STEM degree.

Between passing out in April 2023 and the start of the academic year in September 2023, the latest UCEs applied themselves in a variety of fields – initially seven weeks onboard a P2000 undertaking Op Aurora with allies and partner nations in the Baltic region before subsequently flying out to Annapolis, for a month of ‘yard patrol’ training.

That culminates with a stint on Yard Patrol boats – larger than the new Vahana picket boats used on the Dart, or the P2000 fast patrol craft used for widespread training of the Fleet and University students.

This month-long training package is broken down into three phases:

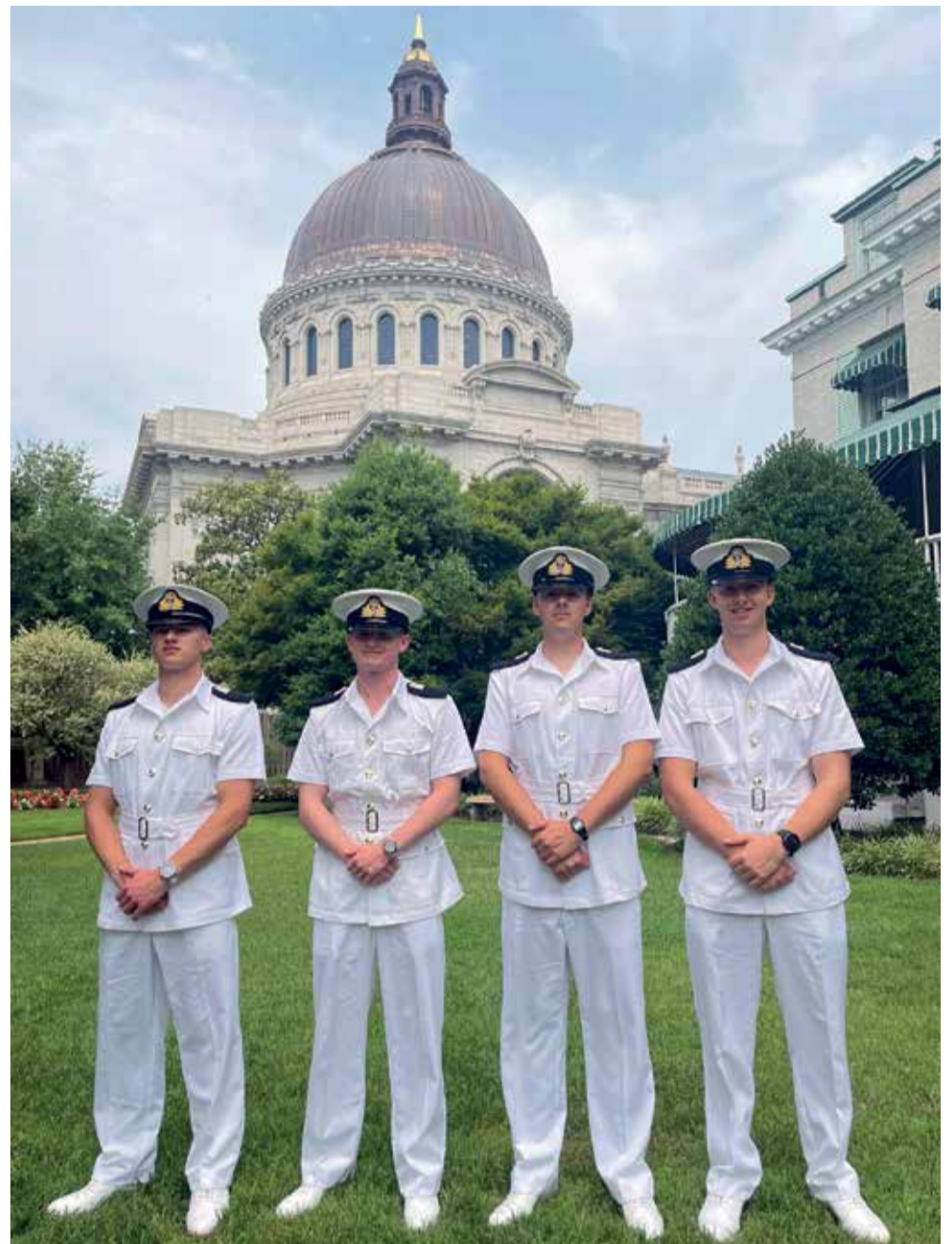
- **Walk:** classroom-based instruction on basics such as navigation, seamanship, and rules of the road.

- **Jog:** moving on to the academy’s simulators to practise pilotage, ‘rules of the road’ situations with other vessels and operating with bridge watch teams in specific roles. The Brits stepped into a variety of leadership roles: Ben Allen was put in charge of a YP, Alexander Tolley as executive officer, Henry Francis was Officer of the Deck and Nathan Hayes served as Squadron navigation officer – all ‘appointments’ far removed from their engineering backgrounds.

- **Run:** when the skills learned and teamwork came into their own; on the bridge of a YP as a watch for multiple days at sea, navigating to various ports spanning the Eastern Seaboard of the USA, stopping at first New York, then Boston.

All underway evolutions were executed with precision, culminating in the return of the four YPs two weeks after departing.

Midshipman Ben Allen, Midshipman CO of Pennant 1, said: “It was a brilliant opportunity to train with the future leaders of the United



Midshipmen Ben Allen, Henry Francis, Alexander Tolley, Nathan Hayes pose against the backdrop iconic of the US Naval Academy Chapel in Annapolis

States Navy.”

As well as time preparing for and then going to sea, the British quartet made the short trip to Washington DC, attending the academy’s Muay Thai Club and meeting the Superintendent at his house before he left the USN.

“The training provided by the US Naval Academy will not be forgotten,” said Henry.

“Whether new experiences, people, or opportunities – this journey reinforces the close relations held between the UK and US and exemplifies why it is so important to maintain such partnerships.”

■ The leaders of the French Navy of tomorrow met their British counterparts after sailing their training ship into Dartmouth.

Twelve students and four

instructors staff brought their craft L’Intrepide 150 or so miles from their college, located in Lanvéoc on the Crozon Peninsula opposite Brest, to southern Devon.

The students are attending the École Navale – the Marine Nationale’s equivalent of Dartmouth. The two historic establishments maintain close links given both their proximity and the ties between the two navies: there’s a liaison officer representing each fleet at the respective institutions.

And so it was that Lieutenant Francois Vauna, the French Navy liaison at BRNC, welcomed his countrymen as they brought their training vessel – used to develop sailing and watchkeeping skills – into Sandquay.

The Officer Cadets and staff enjoyed a full tour of the College, learning about the training delivered to Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary Officer Cadets, and discussing the challenges and innovations common to both establishments.

After an enjoyable lunch in Dartmouth, the visitors completed their day with a visit to Dartmouth Castle, learning about the 600-year historic fortress, now managed by English Heritage.

The École Navale prepares future officers for service onboard surface ships and submarines, in French Naval Aviation, with the Fusiliers Marins and Commandos, as well as on the General staff.

## One-tonne challenge tackles wanton neglect

SAILORS across the RN have responded to the clarion call from the First Sea Lord’s One Tonne Challenge.

Earlier this summer, Admiral Sir Ben Key used World Ocean Day to call on sailors and Royal Marines to litter pick along a waterfront near their base or location, with the goal of collecting more than one tonne of waste collectively.

Phase 2 trainees from HMS Collingwood focussed their efforts on the beach at Lee-on-the-Solent; personnel from South-West Reserve Units along the shore of the Tamar in Plymouth and Royal Marine Reserves serving on Whale Island tackled trash around Portchester Castle near Fareham.

These initial sweeps brought in 20 filled bags of rubbish.

Subsequently, Eaglet (who also engaged community/veterans groups, Amazon, and a local charity to name just a few), Vivid, the RNR HQ, a second collection by Collingwood and Sherwood raised the trash tally by 180kg.

The latter sought to clean up one of the nation’s great rivers, the Trent.

Using equipment provided by Nottingham Sea Cadets, Nottingham Kayak Club and British Canoeing’s Clean Water Access, reservists spent the day combing the water, banks, basins and bridges along the river.

As well as filling six large bags with plastic bottles, crisp packets, drinks

cans and burger boxes, the recovered items included an empty beer keg (pictured right), some drifting structural timber, a temporary crash barrier and the entire back seat of a car. All the recovered items were retrieved, carried in the canoes and then taken ashore for proper disposal.

The challenge runs until the end of this month. Further information can be found by emailing [NAVYMR-TONNECHALLENGEMAILBOX@mod.gov.uk](mailto:NAVYMR-TONNECHALLENGEMAILBOX@mod.gov.uk)

Remember to complete the short post-activity form so the weight of the litter and location can be recorded and use the #OneTonneChallenge hashtag for social media posts.





## FAA and flagship's new Royal affiliates

THE nation's flagship has a new sponsor with His Majesty the King assuming the role from his late mother.

And the Princess of Wales is now the honorary head of naval aviation as she assumes the role of Commodore-in-Chief of the Fleet Air Arm.

The appointments are two of many announced by Buckingham Palace following a review of all military titles and positions held by members of the Royal Family, initiated following the deaths of Queen Elizabeth II and the late Duke of Edinburgh, and the Accession of His Majesty The King.

"I am delighted with these announcements," First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Ben Key said.

"I know the Ship's Company of HMS Queen Elizabeth and all of the Fleet Air Arm are very much looking forward to engaging with their new Sponsor and Commodore-in-Chief respectively.

"I am particularly pleased that with The King as her Sponsor, HMS Queen Elizabeth will continue to be 'The Monarch's Carrier'."

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was the sponsor of Portsmouth-based HMS Queen Elizabeth, formally naming the aircraft carrier in Rosyth, attending the ship's commissioning and, famously, paying a surprise visit before the vessel sailed on her maiden deployment in 2021.

Beyond attending milestone moments and events in the ship's life, the sponsor is kept regularly informed of activities and deeds by the ship via reports sent on behalf of the commanding officer.

The role of Commodore-in-Chief of the Fleet Air Arm is similar, reaffirming the bond between the Royal Family and the Armed Forces, again the guest of honour at major ceremonial occasions and events, being kept abreast of developments and actions of the world of naval aviation.

It is the second naval honour bestowed on the Princess of Wales, who is already the sponsor of HMS Glasgow, the leading ship of eight new Type 26 frigates design to protect the Fleet and nation from the prying eyes – and teeth – of hostile submarines.

## Regions for change

ALL four of the Royal Navy's regional commands – which support a string of naval and military functions nationwide, from hosting visiting RN and allied warships, to staging events and outreach projects and supporting civilian authorities when needed (e.g. the Covid pandemic) – have been renamed to both better reflect their respective roles and the areas they serve.

Gone is the old Naval Regional Command title, replaced by Royal Navy Headquarters (RNHQ).

Eastern England shall now be known as London and Eastern England; Wales and Western England becomes Wales, Western England and Channel Islands; and Northern England has been rebranded Northern England and Isle of Man.

The senior officers in each region will continue to hold their long-standing titles of 'Naval Regional Commander' as they are well established in

# Surveying the future

**DID you know there are two boats sitting on the seabed opposite one of Britain's busiest naval bases?**

Or that Royal Navy frigates have launched float drones helping scientists to understand dramatic weather effects such as El Nino and monsoons and climate change.

Or even that Royal Navy meteorologists have ensured the safe operation of RAF helicopters over the jungle of Borneo.

Well, you do now – and it's all thanks to the work of the small-but-crucial Fleet Hydrography and Meteorological Unit, in the vanguard of the Royal Navy's environmental and survey work.

Based in an historic sail loft in Morice Yard in Devonport, the 64-strong unit sends small teams around the world to operate on land or at sea, supporting tasks from all spheres of military duties from data gathering and survey work, to meteorology for air operations and oceanographic modelling.

Headed by Commander Joe Tretton, the unit is split between meteorological/oceanographic experts and the Fleet Survey Team, who conduct the physical surveys of shorelines and seabeds.

It's expected to meet a series of standing commitments from anti-submarine warfare combat teams, – oceanographic specialists for submarine hunting – a team for the Merlin detachment attached to the duty tanker, and the Mobile Rapid Environment Assessment Team which is used for harbour surveys in support of disaster relief operations; their work paves the way for shipping to safely enter harbours again after nature strikes.

As a result, right now, there's a team assigned to destroyer HMS Dauntless which is deployed to the Caribbean throughout the Atlantic hurricane season, as well as a forecaster at short notice to fly to a neighbouring territory to provide forecasts of weather windows to best use time to help with disaster relief if necessary.

"This year the seas off Africa are significantly warmer than normal due to lighter winds over the Sahara Desert meaning less dust in the air, which in turn means less of the sun's radiation is reflected back into space," explained meteorological officer Lieutenant Darren Petty. "This could well be a very busy year for this arm of our unit."

Weather experts have also been essential to supporting RAF 230 Squadron in Borneo, whose Puma helicopters are responsible for jungle rescues in Brunei. The aircraft are on call to life casualties/injured personnel undertaking jungle training on Borneo, with precise weather details needed for safe operations.

Leading Seaman Dan Willis and Able Seaman Rebecca Doyle (pictured right in front of the Puma) spent six weeks setting up the forecasting and 'nowcasting' (as in current weather conditions right now) required to assist the aviators, above all avoiding the immediate influence of thunderstorms, deluges, and huge downdrafts – information critical in the planning stages of any rescue mission.

Although taught on course, it's an environment neither sailor had encountered before, and had to undergo heat acclimatisation training to avoid becoming casualties themselves. Adequate water consumption and techniques learnt within this training package staved off heat exhaustion.

And while the pair were deployed specifically to support the RAF flight, it's likely to impact future RN operations in the tropics with rising sea levels, a warming climate, storms becoming more destructive. The groundwork has been laid for flights to have a forecaster attached in future for more comprehensive support, allowing helicopters to operate with greater autonomy, without the need for constant support from the UK.

The other key strand of the unit's work is traditional surveying – carried out using the latest kit by the Fleet Survey Team, around 20 personnel currently focusing their efforts in and around Clyde Naval Base with their hi-tech launch.

Survey Motor Boat Shackleton (pictured top right) is on the water seven days a week, providing extremely detailed and accurate bathymetric images of the seabed courtesy of the leading-edge sonar suite. The data gathered is passed on to the UK Hydrographic Office to update charts used by the RN and thousands of mariners worldwide.

And those charts – as well as those used by the King's Harbour Master Clyde – will need updating after the team found two uncharted wrecks on the bed of northern Gareloch



(one scan is pictured below).

The FST is currently working alongside the Project Wilton pioneers who are introducing autonomous and remote systems to the world of mine warfare – replacing traditional hunters and sweepers.

Hydrographic survey work is heading the same way and the Fleet Survey Team will soon be using state-of-the-art autonomous hydrographic equipment operationally – allowing broader patches of sea to be scanned more quickly – taking on board many of the lessons and tips providing by their mine warfare counterparts.

To that end later this year it will acquire up to four new small Vahana work boats – similar to those already operated across the Fleet – to support its surveying mission; one or more of which may be tasked to operate on the Clyde to maintain navigational safety.



Climate change is also increasingly impacting the unit's work. It operates a number of Argo floats – which 'sink' for around ten days at a time, gathering details of water temperature and salinity at depths down to around two kilometres before resurfacing when the batteries run low, allowing the data to be gathered.

The Royal Navy operates around ten such floats – part of a global 'fleet' of an estimated 4,000 – and has been deploying them in the Atlantic from frigates HMS Portland and Northumberland.

The data is used by weather and climate centres to help understand the way the oceans affect climate and weather phenomena such as monsoons and global warming, plus improve forecasts of El Nino-type events.

■ Although the unit is predominantly run by hydrographic/oceanographic/meteorology specialists, there are opportunities for engineers (maintaining vessels and kit) and a team of writers keeping track of teams deployed worldwide, ensuring transport and accommodation needs are met.

If it sounds like the place for you, speak to your career

## Logistics branch renews livery ties

THE Worshipful Company of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators re-affirmed their close ties with the Royal Navy in a ceremony aboard HMS Victory.

The Master Elect for the livery company, Christopher Edge and Past Master Edward Nicholl, joined the Chief Naval Logistics Officer, Rear Admiral Andy Kyte and the Fleet Writer, WO1(Wtr) 'Alf' Ramsey, to sign a new Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations.

The document was signed in the Great Cabin on Victory – a fitting venue given the sheer number of historic letters, despatches and documents compiled there by studious admiral's secretaries, clerks and writers over the past 200+ years.

The agreement encourages close cooperation between the livery company and the Logistics branch, ranging from the sponsorship of awards, through professional qualifications, exchange visits and personal development opportunities, through to joint charitable fundraising activities and the odd posh dinner invitation.

The livery company is the latest affiliate relationship to be re-affirmed in recent years, a process vital to expanding the breadth of awareness and opportunity for RN writers and logistics officers. It opens the door to professional accreditation, and corporately it allows the Royal Navy to educate and inform influential civilian leaders and innovators about our 'trade' and military life.

## Library donated to College

STAFF, students and visitors to Britannia Royal Naval College can while away spare time ploughing through the library of a 20th Century naval leader.

The books of Vice Admiral Brian Betham Schofield can now be found in the college's newly-refurbished wardrobe guest room.

The admiral's service spanned both world wars and some of the Royal Navy's pivotal actions in both, from the Battle of Dogger Bank in 1915, to the ill-fated Norwegian campaign in command of light cruiser HMS Galatea.

He also commanded battleships HMS Duke of York and King George V, but it is staff work which probably contributed most to the Allied victory in World War 2.

He headed the Trade Division (Convoy and Routing) in the Admiralty as Britain struggled to stave off the U-boat threat and was a senior planner behind Operation Neptune – the naval element of the Normandy invasion.

When he retired in 1950, he devoted his time to naval history, publishing several well-respected books covering the demise of the Bismarck, the Russian Convoys and Operation Neptune among other subjects.

As a result he built up an impressive personal library, a library his daughters Victoria – also a historian and biographer – and Elizabeth felt deserved a good home... in the form of the home of the naval officer corps. Further back in history their fourth great grandfather, Sir John Henry Seale, 1st Baronet of Mount Boone, supplied three cannons to help defend the town which can be seen today in Bayard's Cove.





## The 'forgotten' war recalled

SEVENTY years of fragile peace on the Korean peninsula and the sacrifices made by 1,100 Britons were commemorated at ceremonies in England and Scotland.

Serving personnel and Korean War veterans gathered at the Scottish Korean War Memorial and Horse Guards Parade in London on the 70th anniversary of the armistice between Communist North and democratic South (there is still no formal peace treaty).

Royal Navy, Royal Marines, British Army, Royal Air Force and Royal British Legion Scotland laid wreaths alongside a small number of veterans of the 1950-53 conflict at the small but impressive Korean War Memorial in a quiet corner of Beecraigs Country Park in West Lothian (pictured above by PO(Phot) Jim Gibson).

Among the veterans was Adam McKenzie, ex-The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, who served in Korea in 1955 as part of a post-war peacekeeping force and is responsible for having the Memorial built – the only one in Scotland dedicated to the conflict.

His overriding memory is how cold the winters were. "I can remember being given an orange and it was like a cricket ball, we watched the chefs boiling eggs to thaw them out before they could be fried, it was that cold," he said.

He was joined by fellow veterans Douglas Beattie and Ronnie Wilson. The latter wiped away a tear when asked about

his feelings: "Sad. Very sad." The place clearly resonates with him and his fellow veterans.

The memorial – an oriental pagoda surrounded by 1,100 Korean firs, one representing each British life lost – serves as a living monument to The Fallen.

A Royal Navy Chaplain led tributes to the 81,000 British personnel who served in the conflict with Royal Marine Band buglers conducting the Last Post and a Piper from the Royal Regiment of Scotland playing a poignant Lament.

Brigadier Andy Muddiman, Naval Regional Commander Scotland and Northern Ireland attended the Ceremony, laying a wreath on behalf of the Royal Navy.

"It is truly an honour to stand beside these veterans who served in the Korean War and to pay our respects to those who did not return. Many of these men were already veterans of the Second World War, who had rightly earned the respect and gratitude of their country and who should have been enjoying life after that enormous conflict," said Brigadier Muddiman.

"Instead, they found themselves being called upon once again to serve on the front line in a faraway country and it's a shame that this further service and in some cases, sacrifice isn't more widely recognised. So, it is truly a privilege to have this opportunity to say, 'thank you' to them and, to represent the currently serving Armed Forces Personnel, who owe so much to our predecessors."

## Hams remember Mercury move

RN RADIO buffs converged on HMS Collingwood at the end of July to mark the 30th anniversary of the closure of the signal school at HMS Mercury.

In 1993, the functions and duties of the Hampshire establishment – between Portsmouth and Petersfield – were transferred to Fareham.

It's there that the RN Amateur Radio Society have established their HQ 'shack' – and it was there, too, that hams, veterans, and radio enthusiasts from both the military and civilian worlds converged for a 30th anniversary celebration.

Former First Sea Lord – and RNARS' patron – led the guest list, alongside the society's president (and Mercury's last CO) Commodore Paul Sutermeister and Captain Tim Davey, Collingwood's CO.

They were joined by members of the Radio Society of Great Britain, the Royal Signals Amateur Radio Society, the Royal Air Force Amateur Radio Society, and local radio clubs including Fareham, Horndean, Isle of Wight, Fort Purbrook and Itchen Valley. The RNARS promotes and fosters amateur radio activity across the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. It liaises with the

Radio Societies of the other UK Services – and sister societies of other Navies worldwide. Founded back in 1960 it met in the cinema at Mercury. Today it counts some 550 members, mainly current and Service veterans with the majority in the UK but with sizable groups in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and across Europe. The HQ Shack (a room or structure used for housing radio equipment) in HMS Collingwood has a selection of radio transmitters/receivers (known as transceivers) which operate across the radio spectrum using a range of aerials, allowing members to communicate with other radio amateurs – aka hams – around the world including communicating by amateur radio satellite.

For the uninitiated, amateur radio is the use of radio for purposes of non-commercial exchange of messages, wireless experimentation, self-training, private recreation, radiosport, contesting, and emergency communications.

Hams must pass an exam before they can be granted a licence by Ofcom – there are more than 70,000 held in the UK – and apply for a unique callsign, such as the society's G3BZU.



# Minerva return to summer of '73

**A NAVAL reunion in Portsmouth? Surely not.**

Well, yes, it's not unusual. Even a 50th anniversary get together of old shipmates. But when it's Portsmouth, New Hampshire, you've got to make a bit of an effort.

Former ship's company of HMS Minerva made the pilgrimage across the pond to mark half a century since one of their most memorable and enjoyable visits on an already-unforgettable deployment.

The Leander-class frigate spent seven months as WIGS – West Indies Guard Ship – patrolling the Caribbean.

It would have been a fairly regular deployment... but for the presence of one Lieutenant Wales, Prince Charles, our future king.

The New Hampshire city – 50 miles north of Boston – was the last port of call for the Leander-class frigate at the end of a seven-month deployment to the West Indies.

The visit coincided with the 350th anniversary of Portsmouth's founding – and the Brits were heavily in demand for celebratory events.

The 250 sailors revelled in the generosity and incredible hospitality shown by Portsmouthians – not least Lt Chris Brant RM, in charge of the green beret detachment on board, who met his wife, Ellen Keyes, one of the 'Queen's Court' for the 350th



**Minerva's former RM detachment commander Chris Brant and his wife Ellen revisit old haunts in Portsmouth**

anniversary events; 16 months later the couple were married at the city's North Church.

In the years since, former shipmates have met yearly (the 32nd reunion was hosted by Prince Charles at Highgrove House), but for the 50th they decided to return to New Hampshire, so memorable had the reception been back in 1973.

Half a dozen Minerva crew from the 'class of '73' (some of whom hadn't seen each other in 50 years) and their partners converged on Portsmouth for

five memorable days, coinciding with the city's 400th anniversary celebrations... and a rare appearance by another Royal Navy ship, this time survey ship HMS Scott coming to the end of a year-long Atlantic deployment.

"There were many highlights and included the parade on Saturday June 3," said Chris. "Although the weather had turned cold the rain held off and the Minerva crew members walked with a banner flying right behind a Lexus convertible containing Ellen – wearing an

appropriate sash noting her earlier role in the Queen's Court of 1973.

"The convertible followed a strong contingent of sailors from HMS Scott. Several spectators shared that they had watched the parade 50 years before and welcomed members of the British ship's company back again."

As Chris pointed out this time around cityfolk would not have to lock up their daughters with Minerva's crew back in town...

At the local branch of the American Legion, a former Commandant of the Portsmouth NH Marine Corps League said that the visit of the Minerva and Scott crews had made the occasion one of the best days of his life.

Presentation gifts were exchanged between the American Legion Post Commander, the Marine Corps League Detachment Commandant, HMS Scott's Commanding Officer and the Minerva veterans.

The latter got fully involved in Portsmouth 400 – judging clam chowders at a festival in Prescott Park, a tour and lunch on HMS Scott, tasting beers at the Tributary Micro Brewery in nearby Kittery Maine along with a splicing of the mainbrace.

"The reunion experiences of the old HMS Minerva shipmates in 2023 – added to the memories of 50 years ago – will be treasured by all those attending for the rest of their lives," said Chris.

## Iris' WW2 service honoured

AT 101 years old, Iris Burrow from Lewes in East Sussex has probably seen it all...

...except, that is, the medals she was due for serving her nation through its darkest hour.

That wrong was righted 79 years on, when Iris received her wartime medals in recognition of her time as a Wren telephone operator, which included working for the Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth.

"I love the medals and I shall wear my Armed Forces Veterans' Badge with pride when I am down town shopping," she said proudly.

The High Sherriff of East Sussex and veteran Chief Petty Officer Terence Bullingham, who was left blinded by an attack on HMS Antrim in the Falklands, presented Iris with her medals at Lewes' House of Friendship in front of more than 50 guests, including family, friends, and members of the community.

A 19-year-old Iris Benstead as she was then volunteered for the Women's Royal Naval Service to support the war effort.

Serving as a telephone operator under the Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth, Iris worked across various establishments throughout her Royal Navy career, as well as having interactions with her fair share of public figures.



Her job brought her into contact with actors Lawrence Olivier and Ralph Richardson, both Fleet Air Arm pilots, and transferred many important and confidential calls during her

time, including calls between then Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip Mountbatten.

She was introduced to the horrors of war on her first base, HMS Peregrine, the air station at Ford in West Sussex.

It was heavily bombed by Stukas during the opening moves of the Battle of Britain on August 18 1940: 23 civilian and military personnel were killed and many more were wounded.

Iris went on to serve at HMS Spartiate, a shore-based establishment in Glasgow, overseeing the safeguarding of the River Clyde and Clyde Intelligence System Hub, another key element to the allied victory in Europe. Ending her time with the Royal Navy at HMS Daedalus in 1944, Iris went on to have three children.

Her eldest, Keith, served in the Royal Navy for over 30 years retiring as a commander, while granddaughters Clare and Tamsin served in the WRNS and Queen Alexandra's Royal Navy Nursing Service.

"These medals have not only delighted my mother but represent the valuable contribution of women in war: those in uniform and within industry making Spitfires, Lancasters and riveting ships deserved these medals. Most are gone," Keith said.

Picture: LPhoto Chris Sellars



# They entered hell, repeatedly

**D-Day has claimed its 'last victim' with the passing of Royal Marine Ted Owens at the age of 98.**

The green beret was thought to be the last man to be wounded in action on June 6 1944 to still be with us more than three quarters of a century later.

He and his comrades stepped off the gangway on their landing craft and into a hellish maelstrom of armour clanking, shells from warships crashing down, the clatter of machine-guns raking the shore, smoke, fire and an indescribable noise.

"If anyone wasn't frightened, there was something wrong with them. I certainly was – and I don't mind admitting it," he recalled more than seven decades later.

His brush with death on D-Day was the first of three occasions when he was wounded helping to liberate western Europe from the Nazi yoke.

Ted spent more than two months recuperating from his D-Day injuries – his comrades thought at first he had been killed when struck in the chest, back and left shoulder by shrapnel... and his body carried more than a dozen pieces for the rest of his life.

Born in Pembroke Dock, Ted volunteered for the elite 41 Commando Royal Marines and was just 19 when he went into action with them on Sword Beach in Normandy on 'the longest day'.

Once recovered from his D-Day wounds, Ted returned to the front line for the final battles in Normandy, was wounded during operations on Walcheren in November 1944 (injured by a landmine) then again shortly before Christmas 1944 by a ricochet from a sniper's bullet which struck his windpipe and required a further spell in hospital.

Upon demobilisation he returned to his hometown and re-joined the fire brigade with whom he'd served before his



**They survived D-Day – left former Marine Ted Owens in a recent portrait (top) and in WW2 and (right) landing craft crewman Ronald Murphy, both of whom have died aged 98**

Royal Marines duties.

For decades Ted struggled to come to terms with his wartime experiences. But when he did finally did open up "it was like a relief and I never stopped talking since".

Indeed, the veteran made it his mission to ensure today's generation were aware of the sacrifices made by his contemporaries, sharing his wartime experiences with schoolchildren in his native Wales, as well as France and the Netherlands, reminding them: "It gave us freedom."

He attended both the 70th

and 75th commemorations of the invasion – enjoying afternoon tea with the now Princess of Wales at the former.

His wartime service and attendance at high-profile events made Ted something of a celebrity both in his hometown and beyond late in life. "I have had a wonderful life, exceptional," he told one interviewer.

Naval Regional Commander for Wales and Western England, Brigadier Jock Fraser RM, whose team frequently met and worked with the Normandy veteran, said simply: "We have lost one of our finest."

845 Naval Air Squadron provided a fly past for another Normandy veteran who also died just weeks from his 99th birthday.

Ronald Murphy, originally from London, served through WW2, volunteering to join the RN at the age of 15, moving into the fledgling world of Combined Operations.

That led to a draft to the world of landing craft – firstly D-Day and Normandy (he made two runs into Juno Beach on June 6 landing troops), then to operations in the Far East and the Burma campaign as quartermaster of HM Landing Ship Tank 331.

His wartime service earned Ronald, who eventually settled in the Bridport area in Dorset, the Burma and France and Germany Stars, while the French government presented him with the Legion d'Honneur for his deeds in 1944.

Post war, the former sailor took up a role with the Admiralty in Whitehall, subsequently transferring to Gosport, Bath and finally to Portland, ending his civilian career as senior executive officer with the Admiralty Underwater Weapons Establishment, earning the MBE from the Queen for his commitment a few years before he retired in 1984.

Throughout his life he kept a set of (increasingly worn) keys from his D-Day landing craft – all that survived of the vessel after it was destroyed by a mine on the second and final run into Juno; the set took pride of place on a model of the craft which was presented seven decades later.

Despite earning half a dozen medals for his war service, family say Ronald was a quiet, unassuming man – typically of the greatest generation – summed up by the title of his memoirs dealing with his youth and time in uniform: *The First Twenty-Five Years of an Average Chap.*

845 NAS provided a Merlin to fly over Holy Trinity Church in Bradpole following Ronald's funeral service.



## Fantastic (Area) 4

**HIGH summer and holidays normally make for lean periods... but not for RNA Area No.4.**

Another fabulous Murdoch day in Redruth saw shipmates from Redruth and Camborne celebrating a famous past resident.

The event honours Redruth-based inventor William Murdoch, who came up with the idea of replacing oil and tallow in lighting by using coal gas instead. His home in Cross Street became the first in the country to be lit by gas lighting.

Shipmates – led by Dave 'Jack' Russell – used the occasion to promote their branch and generate revenue and, despite all the thunderstorms forecast, the day proved a roaring success.

S/M Annette Laurie, secretary of Bodmin branch, was invited to 10 Downing Street in her capacity as an ambassador for veterans' charity Help for Heroes. Hosted by Veterans Minister Johnny Mercer, she joined other representatives from H4H, SSAFA and Scotty's Little Soldiers as guests of the government. Among other things, they were treated to a presentation from Akshata Murthy – the wife of the prime Minister Rishi Sunak – about the importance of saying thank you to our veterans and remembering the work they do to protect and serve the UK.

"I felt humbled and honoured to have been asked to attend – it gave me a chance to feel veterans like us mattered and that the Government were willing to listen to our concerns," Annette said. "I was also over the moon to meet and stroke Larry the Cat – who is now a stately 17 years old and still going strong – albeit he was asleep and purring quietly at the time!"

S/M's Ron Shilton and Andy Fletcher from Southend and Monmouth respectively, masterminded this year's 'Big Meet' – a 'special interest group' comprised of Motorhomes, Caravans and Campers.

More than 60 shipmates, from branches as dispersed as Bodmin, Plymouth, Ipswich, Gosport, Portsea and HQ, met at Blackmore in Worcestershire's Malvern Hills at the beginning of July for five nights of barbecues, games, many more tots and much fancy dress took place.

Walks were organised for a few days with afternoons seeing more social activities: a cocktail party in Banyan rig; a BBQ (in the drizzle) plus giant Jenga and Connect 4



(pictured top). There were also quizzes for the less sporty and more intellectual types and horse racing, all followed by the RNA tot time at 6pm – believed to be the biggest attendance on a Zoom meeting ever.

There were also the mandatory fundraisers – with such terrible crimes as being adrift, non-wearing of name badges etc. Such frivolity was watched intently by the many dogs who accompanied their humans to the shenanigans. The afternoon on Sunday was rounded off with tea and cake – and more rum!

Anyone interested in attending next year's Big Meet – date tbc but possibly in June – contact Ron Shilton via Selby branch.

The generosity of members who attended No.4 Area's Reunion at Bideford raised £2,000, split equally between Help for Heroes and Blind Veterans UK.

Another successful fundraiser was the Plymouth branch summer ball held at HMS Drake.

Some 81 people – representing Bodmin as well as Plymouth branches, plus the ASWI (Anti-Submarine Warfare Instructors) Association, Royal Marines Association and veteran members of the Senior Rates Mess – attended, enjoying a five-course gala dinner and an address from Mess President Warrant Officer 1 Steve Harvey who gave an insightful talk about the complexities and vastness of duties undertaken in the base.

The end-of-evening raffle ploughed £401 back into branch funds... the same funds which allowed the branch to heavily subsidise the occasion.

## Deep interest in nation's flagship

MEMBERS of Gosport Submariners Association were given a tour of HMS Queen Elizabeth (or as they prefer to call her: an imposing grey target), hosted by some of the submariners serving aboard the 65,000-tonne carrier.

Logistician WO2 Dave Ham and his team provided a quick health and safety dit in the hangar before splitting the group into two and leading the groups through the main walkways and living quarters.

The visitors were blown away by the sheer size of the ship, but the spritely deeps rolled back the years, making light work of the ladders and lengthy walkways. There were many great photo

opportunities taken by all – especially on the flight deck and bridge.

The highlight for many was the presentation of a tot in the WO&SRs on completion of the tour, with 'American Jon' being presented with a Queen Elizabeth WO&SRs' mess coin.

Colin Mould presented the president of the mess CPO Mike Claridge with a painting of the carrier produced by Colin's son from a photo of the ship (pictured right).

Many dits were exchanged and a fantastic time was had by all. For all it was a visit that they will remember for a very long time.



## All set for capital parade

THE Naval Associations' Biennial Parade will take place at the Cenotaph in London on Sunday September 10.

Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Martin Connell, will take the salute with the Royal Naval Volunteer Band Association providing music and the Chaplain of the Fleet, the Venerable Andrew Hillier, conducting the service.

Shipmates wishing to take part should be in King Charles Street no later than 10.25 (standard bearers at 10.10) and the parade is due to finish around 11.45 with attendees retiring to the Civil Service Club, in Great Scotland Yard for refreshments and to enable serving and veteran personnel from across the Naval Service to gather together.

If you are an RNA Member and would like to march, inform your branch. If you are part of a different Naval association and want to march, register at [sara@royalnavalassoc.com](mailto:sara@royalnavalassoc.com).



# Boat donation boost for Gosport unit

Former sea cadet, Keith Gooch, recently donated his beloved vessel 'Alexandra' to give a helping hand to Gosport Sea Cadets Unit.

The Gosport Sea Cadets will use the funds raised from the sale of Keith's boat to buy a replacement Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) so the unit can continue to deliver RYA level 1 and 2 as well as safety boat courses.

"I had a great future thanks to my grounding as a sea cadet," explains Keith.

"When I decided to hang up my sea boots, I approached the Gosport Sea Cadets to see if they could make use of my 24ft motor sailor.

"I am very happy the funds from the sale can be put towards their fundraising project, and support the cadets to keep helping young people be the best version of themselves."

The vessel will be sold by the boat sales company, boatpoint, and is available to view at boatfolk's Haslar Marina.

Lt Simon Bush, Commanding officer of Gosport Sea Cadets Unit, said: "We are immensely grateful to Keith for his generous donation, which will enable us to continue changing the lives of our cadets, now and in the future.

"Sea Cadets is instrumental in shaping the lives of countless young individuals, providing them with a solid foundation and empowering them to achieve their full potential.

"As the Gosport Sea Cadets embark on their new chapter, they express their heartfelt appreciation to Keith, boatfolk and all those involved in this great occasion."

Like all the other 400 Sea Cadets units across the UK, Gosport Sea Cadets is an individual charity, and therefore reliant on fundraising to sustain operations and deliver comprehensive training programmes to their 70 cadets.



## Memorial trees planted

THE Right Hon Greg Clark MP, keen supporter of TS Brilliant, was joined by cadets, staff and supporters to plant four memorial trees at Bewl Water, the unit's boat station.

A service was led by Rev David Houston RNR chaplain to Tunbridge Wells Sea Cadets.

The first tree is in memory of HM Queen Elizabeth and was planted by Mr Clark while the second is in memory of Lt(SCC) Derek Ireland MBE RNR, the unit's former chairman, and planted by his widow Carol. She was joined by their grandchildren who laid wooden messages in with the tree.

The third is in memory of Peter Fry, a cadet tragically shot and killed in 1943 while at a military camp in Poole, and was planted by Lt Cdr (SCC) Jon Vanns RNR, author of a book that shares the story of the local sea cadets since 1935.

The last tree was planted by Cadet Jaime in memory of children killed in the Ukraine war.

Following the ceremony Greg took to the water and when ashore met cadets who quizzed him on what its like to be a member of Parliament.



# New HQ for Torpoint

THE CAPTAIN of HMS Raleigh has formally opened the new headquarters of Torpoint Sea Cadets in a traditional navy commissioning ceremony.

Captain Jane Roe ceremonially commissioned Jellicoe Building, within HMS Raleigh, in a customary maritime ceremony with the words 'may God bless her and all who train in her'.

Torpoint Sea Cadets, Training Ship Ramehead, had been without a permanent headquarters building until HMS Raleigh kindly provided the facility for the 60 Cadets and 20 adult volunteers.

The 80-strong ship's company of Torpoint Sea Cadets paraded their marching band, an armed guard and marching platoons in front of an audience of 100 parents, guests and supporters.

The ceremony saw the band play on the guard and platoons, before Captain Roe inspected the Ship's Company.

The unit Chaplain, Rev'd Michael Brown, delivered the commissioning sermon prior to the Sea Cadet ensign flag being raised to the National Anthem.

The cadets then undertook a marchpast, with the Captain of the Base taking the salute.

After the ceremony, Captain Roe presented each cadet with a commemorative coin to mark the historic event, before she unveiled a plaque and cut the commissioning cake with the assistance of the youngest member of the Ship's Company, Junior Cadet Alex, with the Commanding Officer's sword, in accordance



with navy tradition.

Captain Roe congratulated the cadets on the ceremony, stating: "The cadets have done themselves, their unit and their families proud with the standard of drill and music.

"HMS Raleigh is delighted to support the young people of Torpoint."

Ordinary Cadet Tabatha, who performed in the band for the occasion, said: "Performing in this traditional ceremony in front of our families makes all the cadets really proud."

Lieutenant Rhys Tanner Royal Navy, Commanding Officer of Torpoint Sea Cadets, added: "We are so grateful to HMS Raleigh



for providing us with this fantastic unit headquarters so we can continue to deliver brilliant maritime-based experiences and training for the young people of Torpoint."

Torpoint Sea Cadets is currently recruiting new cadets between the ages of 10 and 17. Contact [TSRamehead@gmail.com](mailto:TSRamehead@gmail.com) for information.

## New sailing dinghy for Felixstowe cadets

TS Landguard, the Felixstowe Sea Cadet Unit has received a generous donation of a RS Zest sailing dinghy from the Loch Class Frigates Association, kindly made possible by a legacy donation left by the late Oliver Brett.

A dedication ceremony was held at Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club, to officially receive the dinghy and to dedicate her to the late Oliver Brett.

Members of the Brett family witnessed the dinghy be blessed by the Unit's chaplain, the Reverend Dotchin of St John the Baptist Church and officially launched into service.

A poignant moment for the Brett family, as

they used to sit and watch the boats go by from the banks of the river Deben.

District Officers and members of the sailing club joined parents, cadets and staff from Felixstowe, Clacton on Sea and Colchester Sea Cadet Units for the evening.

The dinghy will not just help Felixstowe unit's 30 cadets to get afloat, but up to a further 60 cadets from their collaborative Sea Cadet partners too.

The Unit Chairman, Captain Peter King, said: "Your late father would have been hugely proud – only a great pity that he was not with us. His contribution of the RS Zest

dingy will make a lot of young people very happy, while setting them on their way with a love of sailing (and capsizing!)."

Commanding Officer PO (SCC) Tony Duke thanked the Loch Class Frigates Association, the Brett family and all involved for their support.

Five sailing dinghies and four powerboats then took to the water to escort the newest addition to the fleet on her maiden voyage.

The unit opened in October 1957 and has supported hundreds of young people in Felixstowe and surrounding villages to learn nautical skills, supported by volunteers.



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# Vital lessons in life-saving skills



CARLISLE Sea Cadets got a fantastic opportunity to do some joint training with Cumbria Fire and Rescue – with the aim of saving lives.

The evening consisted of members from Carlisle East and West fire stations teaching cadets how to use a throw line if someone was in difficulty when swimming in the river.

Putting their knowledge to the test, the cadets took part in practical tests to help save the firefighters by hurling throw lines to help them safely out of the water in the River Eden by Stoneyholme.

The firefighters also taught the cadets vital life skills around water safety, such as defence swimming techniques to help cadets if they got into difficulty in the water, and the importance of swimming with a flotation device.

A spokesperson from Carlisle East Fire Station said: "We ended with practical scenarios requiring the cadets to perform rescues with throw lines, as well as teaching the cadets how to self-rescue if they find themselves being swept away. The cadets even demonstrated their learning by swimming across the

river – wearing personal flotation devices and in a controlled environment, with the fire crew acting as safety in case anyone got into difficulty. There were some great skills on show, and everyone had a great time."

Cadet James, 13, said: "It was a very informative evening and I really enjoyed it. I feel I have learnt new skills and will be able to use these skills in the future."

Cadet Levi, 12, added: "I really enjoyed the session with the fire service, it was interesting to listen and find out what they do in emergency situations and what we should do."

PO (SCC) Tony Lobb, Officer in Charge at Carlisle Unit, said: "This was a brilliant evening where we were able to do some water safety training with an external organisation. The skills passed on from Cumbria Fire Service are vital, giving our cadets more confidence and insights in how not only to take care of their own safety, but to also be able to help anyone else who may be in difficulty. We look forward to more sessions in the future."



## Hundreds do the Sea Cadets proud

SOME 600 Cadets and volunteers from South West Area (all nine districts) had an action-packed weekend representing Sea Cadets in front of local dignitaries at four events in Bristol.

On the Friday evening, a small group of cadets and volunteers from Avonmouth Unit were invited to the HMS Bristol Bell Service of Dedication at the Lord Mayor's Chapel, involving the Lord Mayor, Bristol City Council's elected Armed Forces Champion, Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff. The service was led by The Very Revd Dr Mandy Ford, Dean of Bristol Cathedral.

At the same time, the Area Officer SW (AO), Cdr Gary Mills RN was the Inspecting Officer at the Royal Naval Presentation (RNP) at TS Adventure SCC Unit, where the Area Chaplain Fr Jordan Spence, Avon District Officer, Lt Cdr (SCC) Rich Priest RNR, S/Lt Jimmy Paington RNR (CO TS Adventure) and Unit Management Team joined the AO.

Some of the guests arrived in style by boat (Champ) crewed by two talented cadets and overseen by a volunteer.

The pressure was on for the 600 high-spirited cadets and volunteers eager to showcase their skills at the Area's Combined Rowing Regatta the following day, even faced with the challenging inclement weather!

After a quick change into their blue uniforms, cadets accompanied by volunteers from Trowbridge Unit got the opportunity to participate in a formal flag raising ceremony at HMS Flying Fox, marking the arrival of RMR Bristol onto the site and as Head of Establishment. The cadets were part of the quarter guard inspected by Bristol's Lord Lieutenant Peaches Goulding OBE and the outgoing Commodore Mel Robinson, Commander Maritime Reserves.

"It's been an amazing weekend in Bristol, with my area cadets and volunteers literally stealing the show," said Cdr Gary Mills.

## Milestone in Midlands

AN important milestone in the history of Sea Cadets was reached in mid-July with a 'breaking ground' ceremony that marked the beginning of the construction of the state-of-the-art Midlands Boat Station.

Located on the banks of Birmingham's Edgbaston Reservoir, this venture is set to support the community and revitalise the area. The new boat station will offer a wide range of water-based activities to thousands of young people.

Sea cadets from all over the country, together with local schools and youth groups, will be able to take part in sailing, paddle sports, power boating, rowing and windsurfing. Once completed, the boat station will also be the official home of the Birmingham Sea Cadets Unit, TS Vernon.

"We envision a premium venue for training, education, and water sports, bringing huge benefits to the entire community," said Sea Cadets CEO, Martin Coles CBE. "The new boat station will be a welcoming place for the younger generation to gain essential life skills. The facility will also provide an extraordinary waterside venue for community groups to host their events."

The community-centric project was inaugurated in the presence of Cllr Sir Albert Bore, Mr Coles, senior contractors as well as Sea Cadets staff, volunteers and cadets. The construction company, Speller Metcalfe, has been entrusted with the task of bringing the new structure to life.

Cllr Sir Albert Bore said: "I was delighted to take part in this event, celebrating the beginning of a project which will have such a significant and far-reaching impact on our local community, especially our young people. Well done, Sea Cadets!"

Addressing the long-standing lack of accessible waterside facilities in the Midlands, Howard Eeles, the Midlands Boat Station Manager, said: "This issue affects some 1,500 sea cadets in the region. We have 37 Sea Cadets units within a 90-minute radius of this location, who have been grappling with extended commutes for water-based training. Thankfully, those days will soon be behind us."

The young people who are part of Sea Cadets are excited about the building of their new, first-rate facility. "The new boat station will provide an upgraded, relaxed environment where I can safely enjoy time with my friends," said 13-year-old Mei.

Despite the ongoing construction work, the boat station will continue its operations, offering a variety of water-based activities and courses to sea cadets from across the country. These experiences aim to foster essential life skills and offer qualifications in first aid, sailing, navigation, marine engineering, catering and leadership.

Situated on the banks of Edgbaston Reservoir – a 70-acre open water site within easy reach of Birmingham's city centre – the new boat station will be completed by autumn 2024.

# PAINTING BY NUMBER 10

## PM drops in to give Dartford cadets a helping hand

EXCITEMENT was in the air at Dartford and Crayford Sea Cadets when they received a surprise visit at their unit – by the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

The PM's visit was well-timed with the unit celebrating their 80th anniversary this year, which involves a variety of community-focused activities.

It's not often that an organisation can say they've enlisted a serving Prime Minister as a volunteer, but Mr Sunak got stuck in and lent a helping hand with the painting work going on at the unit.

The Prime Minister also spent a good deal of time talking to the cadets, volunteers and staff members.

The PM was greeted onboard by Dartford and Crayford's Commanding Officer, Petty Officer (SCC) Kai Sargeson, the MP for Dartford, Gareth Johnson, Mayor of Dartford, Councillor Rosanna Currans, Deputy Mayor Councillor Andy Lloyd and the Mayor's Cadet, Able Cadet Molly.

Mr Sunak was given a tour of the unit by Commanding Officer, PO (SCC) Sargeson. Mr Johnson explained that the visit was arranged for the Prime Minister to meet the cadets as part of the unit's Local Community Projects initiative.

PO (SCC) Sargeson said: "He met with both cadets, uniformed volunteers, Unit Management Team and parents of the cadets, then everyone got stuck into the painting."

Mr Johnson playfully added: "The Prime Minister, the Mayor and I all had a go at painting, although I'm not sure how good the standard was!"

The unit has opened its recruiting programme for September and is encouraging young people aged between ten and 18 years old to join in on the fun.



## Hundreds of disadvantaged youngsters get out on the water

Giving disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people aged nine to 14 the chance to try out watersports, have fun and boost their confidence was the aim of Sea Cadets' summer outreach programme, On The Water.

Running in Birmingham and London, hundreds of young people enjoyed water-based activities free of charge and learned valuable life skills through sailing, kayaking, windsurfing and canoeing.

Participants included children in care, disabled young people, children from low-income households and young carers. For many of them, it was the first time they have ever experienced something like this.

"Sea Cadets is all about giving young people skills, confidence and the chance to make new friends through nautical adventure



and fun," says Head of Outreach at Sea Cadets, Hugo Dell. "It's only right to provide these opportunities to children and young people who would benefit most but, because of finances or other difficulties, have never had the chance."

AAA (Ambition Aspire Achieve) Zone are one of the groups who took part last year and were at London's Royal Docks to take part in the programme again this year. The charity provides opportunities for young people most in need living in the London Borough of Newham.

"The young people we work with have the opportunity to experience being on the water thanks to the Sea Cadets summer outreach programme," says Ann Sparrowhawk, AAA Zone's Project Coordinator.

"Trying out watersports such as sailing and kayaking has a really positive impact on the young people's physical, mental and social development."

Sea Cadets have been running the popular On The Water event since 2019.



# New sonar for Swans give cadets new skill

THE Combined Cadet Force's two Swan crafts have been fitted with new state-of-the-art sonar systems.

The CCF headquarters operate two Talisman 48 vessels, Blue Swan and Black Swan, which are used to train cadets in seamanship, navigation and handling a vessel.

But to give cadets an even more immersive experience, new Raymarine sonar systems have been installed so they can see underneath the waves.

The high-definition system has a downward sonar, side scan and 3D seabed mapping.

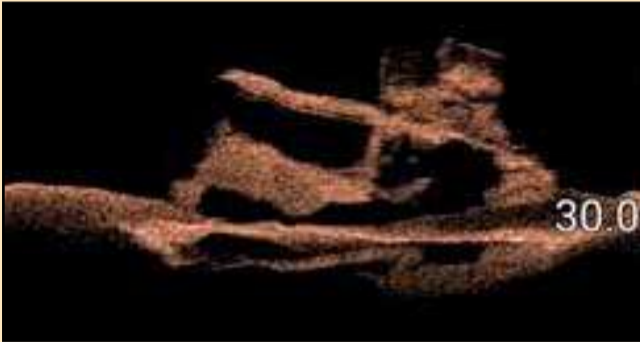
The sonar uses a narrow fan beam and processes the result to give a near photo quality image taken as if sitting on the seabed looking horizontally.

Meanwhile, the side scan looks out to each side of the vessel with the beam angled down so that it covers the seabed for some distance each side; it is good for finding objects before using the high resolution.

The 3D mode combines all the data to show a 3D map of the seabed; if an area is criss-crossed it will stitch the results together

to give a 3D bathymetric chart.

Having this new equipment gives the cadets an extra skill to learn and utilise while on the Swan crafts. And while they are comfortable with using the on board electronic navigation, the sonar adds a challenge and seeing what's on the seabed has



proven popular.

When using the Swan crafts, they are tasked with finding a wreck marked on the chart and getting a sonar image.

There are a few favourite wrecks around the Solent where a good image can be achieved and also to share the story of the wreck.

One of the favourite targets is the wreck of LCT (landing craft tank) 427 which was cut in half by HMS Rodney while returning from Gold Beach on June 7, 1944.

The images captured are the after section, the forward half is some distance away.

The after part of the vessel can be clearly seen, the rectangular piece in the foreground is the tank deck and the superstructure can be seen beyond it.

But the cadets have discovered it's not as easy as it sounds - the first element is to navigate to a position which is unmarked, it has to be precise to get a sonar image and then takes a few passes to balance wind and tide to get a good image. A good result leads to a real sense of achievement.

# New sailors ready to serve



promotion to the Officer Corps, and 12 former Warrant Officers who received commissions.

And 21 International Cadets (from Bahrain, Bahamas, Egypt, Germany, Jordan, Kuwait, Malta, Montenegro, Nigeria, Pakistan, Thailand, UAE and for the first time ever Peru) will now be returning to their native lands to begin their officer careers having completed their training.

"This is the proudest day of my life so far and I am really pleased to Pass Out in front of my loved ones," said Midshipman Katelyn Robinson, from Portsmouth, who's now joining HMS Scott to begin her professional training as a hydrographic/ meteorological officer.

"I am looking forward to the travel opportunities with the Royal Navy and especially getting down to Antarctica, as a picture of HMS Protector was one of the reasons I was inspired to join."

Vice Admiral Guy Robinson, Chief of Staff at Headquarters Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk, Virginia, was the Guest of Honour and Inspecting Officer (pictured top right).

Joined by his wife Commodore Mel, who has recently stood down as head of the Maritime Reserves, they saw their son Midshipman Max among those passing out.

Admiral Robinson told the new officers that they would face the challenges of dealing with the latest threats and new technologies.

"We are going to need leaders who can navigate these complexities and have the vision to chart a course to a future Navy – a future where we continue to blend our traditions and our fighting spirit with the cutting edge of technology," he told the sailors assembled before him.

Turning to the families and friends, he added:

"You too are now part of our Naval family, and you too will get to experience the pride and emotion that goes with life in the Naval service. With your support, understanding and love please continue to help your Naval officer as they move forward to the next stage of their careers and beyond."

The college's Captain, Captain Sarah Oakley, said everyone on parade had given "100 per cent to meet the stringent standards."

"Passing out at BRNC is a great achievement and a proud moment for all those involved."

Families were treated to a fly-past by the historic Supermarine Seafire Mk XVII aircraft, courtesy of the charity Navy Wings, while Rear Admiral Steve Moorhouse, the Royal Navy's Director of Force Generation, presented awards to a handful of stand-out cadets.

Sub Lieutenant Daniel Palmer was awarded the Herbert Lott Sword as the Cadet who had championed the College the most, chiefly through a rugby tour to France.

Sub Lieutenant Tim Harding collected the Officers' Association 'Spirit of the Royal Navy' Sword for demonstrating Naval Service core values and ethos.

The Cochrane Sword, provided by the Chilean Navy to mark its recent 200th anniversary, was presented to Sub Lieutenant Lewis Appleton-Jones for mentoring others in his class, while also finding the time to represent the College at hockey.



Sub Lieutenant Ben Streeter received the Armada de Chile Prize as the Officer Cadet who contributed most to life in the college – in his case setting up a BRNC choir as well as supporting the Chaplaincy department. And Sub Lieutenant Sophie Nashford took the MacRoberts Trust Award as best Reserve cadet.

THERE are 165 junior officers ready to serve the Royal Navy and its allies and partners around the world after completing up to 29 gruelling weeks of training.

The spiritual home of the Officer Corps – Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth – bade farewell to the latest Officer Cadets and trainees who passed out before leaders and loved

ones. On parade were 96 Officer Cadets who had completed a 29-week intensive course designed to test them in a variety of scenarios: in the classroom, on Dartmoor, the River Dart and at sea on board an operational warship.


They were joined by a dozen officers each from the Royal Naval Reserve and Royal Fleet Auxiliary, 12 former Royal Navy ratings selected for

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# LANCASTER'S SAILORS GET A SLICE OF DESERT

SAILORS from HMS Lancaster explored the Omani coastline during a ten-day pause in Middle East patrols.

Adventurous Training instructors travelled to Oman while the Type 23 stopped in Duqm for essential maintenance.

The Deployable Regional Unit (DRU) delivered a range of activities to the crew of the Royal Navy's frigate, which permanently operates in the seas of the Middle East and wider Indian Ocean, keeping shipping lanes safe and countering maritime narcotic trafficking in the area.

The crew explored the wild beaches, hills and wadis - a valley, ravine, or channel that is dry except

in the rainy season - along the isolated area of the Omani coastline near Duqm, which looks out onto the Arabian Sea.

Multiple sailors threw themselves into wild camping and beach sports on a remote beach called Ras Madraka.

They explored hidden and unknown wadis around Duqm along with hill walking and mountain biking over deserted and arid terrain.

Additionally, access to local hotel facilities was also organised for many and funded thanks to the Royal Navy Sports Lottery.

For many the highlight was wild beach camping. "The night spent away from the ship where we

observed green sea turtles on the beach was a truly once in a lifetime opportunity," said Lancaster's Padre, Rev Sam Burke.

"I know how much the whole of ship's company appreciated the programme. Without exception, every participant returned abuzz from their various experiences.

"This was just the tonic needed after a long and busy deployment."

Other planned activities such as stand up paddle boarding and snorkelling were restricted due to the strong winds and rough seas generated by the 'Khareef', the south eastern monsoon season which runs between June and September each year.

Despite this the package provided was enjoyed by all and a complete success providing adventure and operation respite in equal measure.

LPT Rob Rowston (HMS Lancaster PT) said: "The package delivered by the DRU was vital for the ship's company to decompress after time on operations."

ETME Mclachlan added: "It's pretty cool to say I've cycled through a desert, and got paid."

WO2 Stan Bloomer RM said: "Instructors from the DRU can deliver AT in the UK and overseas and will design a bespoke package to suit the needs of a ship or unit. Enjoyable, physically and mentally challenging training activities aid in personal development, leadership, and team building."

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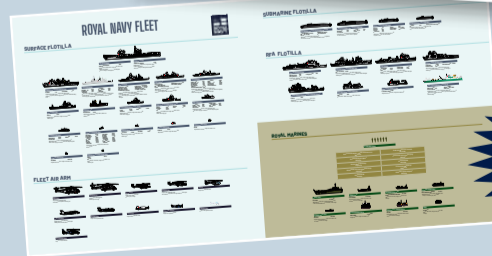
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# BOOTNECKS GO TOE TO TOE

## 45 COMMANDO were crowned champions as Royal Marines went toe to toe in the boxing ring at the Corps' Boxing Championships finals at Lympstone.

The Arbroath-based outfit retained their title after a thrilling night of action, which included 12 tooth and nail bouts.

Only two fights ended in a referee stoppage, with the other ten going the full distance.

A powercut briefly stopped action during the second fight, but once the lights came back on the boxing action was pulsating.

One of the highlights of the night saw Marine Connor Fanning of 30 Commando take home the Middleweight Open Belt after beating Marine Grant Crookes of 45 Commando by a split decision.

You can watch all the action from the championships on the Forces News YouTube channel.

### Full results:

Marine Josh Harvey (43 Commando Royal Marines) beat Marine Jonas Lord (45 Commando Royal Marines) by split decision.

Marine Tommy Caulfield (CTCRM) beat Gunner Brookson Wildish (29 Commando Royal Artillery) by unanimous decision.

Marine Toby Hamer (45 Commando Royal Marines) beat Marine George Nicholls (43 Commando Royal

Marines) by unanimous decision.

Marine Daniel Humphries (CLRRM) beat Private Lemeki Digitaki (29 Commando Royal Artillery) by unanimous decision.

Marine Max Green (CLRRM) beat Marine Connor Fawley (45 Commando Royal Marines) by unanimous decision.

Marine Jack Fowles (42 Commando Royal Marines) beat Marine Max Pentith (45 Commando Royal Marines) by unanimous decision.

Marine Tommy Tolhurst (CTCRM) beat Marine Clarke Gutterage (40 Commando Royal Marines) by referee stoppage.

Marine James Ramshaw (30 Commando Royal Marines) beat Marine George Blake (CLRMM) by split decision.

Marine Sacha Zachariades (45 Commando Royal Marines) beat Lance Bombardier Tuaga (29 Commando Royal Artillery) by referee stoppage.

Marine Jo Slatter (42 Commando Royal Marines) beat Marine Tom Burtwell (42 Commando Royal Marines) by unanimous decision.

Marine Gabriel Rands Silva (42 Commando Royal Marines) beat Marine Dominik Zieba (CTCRM) by unanimous decision.

Marine Connor Fanning (30 Commando Royal Marines) beat Marine Grant Crookes (45 Commando Royal Marines) by split decision.







# CHARLIE DOES ALL-WHITE...

SERGEANT Charlie White took two top 25 finishes at Snetterton circuit at the British Superbikes for the Royal Navy Royal Marines Road Race Team and True Heroes Racing.

Charlie rode the Ducati V2 in the British Super Sport class at the Norfolk track and, after getting 31st spot in the grid with a new personal best in qualifying, managed two respectable finishes at stop five of the British Superbike Championship.

Like many UK short circuits, this track is based on an old disused Second World War military airfield used by the RAF and US military. As like many UK circuits it has its own unique set of corners which are usually flat and two massive straights, making it one of the largest tracks in the UK.

"The British supersport class is a mix of 600cc bikes with a few modifications to make the class as fair as possible," said Charlie. "Each round gets around 40 riders competing from all over the world."

"Free Practice one and two went as well as myself and the team thought putting in some laps, getting a set up for qualifying and the races."

"Qualifying I managed to get 31st on the grid, with a new PB. Happy to get near the top 30 in this class when world super sport riders come to ride and I'm just cuffing it on the day with minimal practice between rounds."

"Race one began with a terrible start by not finding the clutch biting point but with the usual carnage at turn two with the Snetterton race circuit I managed to actually gain a couple of places."

"A couple of riders managed to clip handlebars both staying on their bikes. Right time right place helped with that. As the 10-lap sprint race continued I gain a couple more positions as I settled into a rhythm and finished 22nd."

"Race two was a 14-lap feature race, starting in place 29 which was dictated by lap times on the sprint race."

"This time I got a much better launch of the line

and found myself in a five-place rider battle with my team mate Dave Mackay (Ex- Army)."

"I was initially leading the group and then got stood up and lost all four places and couldn't find a rhythm after and finished 25th."

"Once again a massive thank you to the Navy Motorsport Association for the support given to allow me to represent the Navy at British superbikes."

"Also, to True Heroes Racing who have allowed me to be a part of the team and to the people in True Heroes who work tirelessly to make sure the bikes are on the grid."

At Round Six of the True Heroes Racing campaign Charlie took on the wet at Brands Hatch Circuit.

"Friday was a day of practice, with two x 30 min sessions to get the bike set up and remind ourselves of the technical fast circuit," Charlie explains.

"Saturday morning was qualifying, and with 45 riders attempting to qualify for 40 spaces meaning there would be five disappointed riders."

"I managed to qualify 31st which was my best dry qualifying session for the season."

"Race 1 was in the afternoon and the heavens opened making it a wet race."

"We put the wet tyres in and changed the set up for wet conditions."

"On lap 1 of the race I managed to gain 11 places battling against the like of Davy Todd who races and finishes in the top 5/6 at the Isle of Man TT. In the end I finished 20th."

"Race 2 I started 22nd because it is calculated on your lap times from the previous race. Once again I got a great start gaining a few places, getting into the top 20."

"Once I settled into the race the fast riders who didn't perform in the wet condition came flying by. Ending in 20th it was a great result for myself and the team."

# MAX SHAKES OFF THE RUST

LIEUTENANT Commander Max Wilmot shook off the rust at Anglesey on the latest stop of the British Super Bikes.

A busy year of being deployed has meant that Lt Cdr Wilmot has only managed one race this season prior to Anglesey.

Needless to say having not raced since May Max was feeling more than a little rusty, not to mention that he was still running in a new bike that was built over the winter, but thanks to all the sponsors it was ready and looking great for the race weekend.

Anglesey is a highlight of the racing calendar, the drive to north Wales is a long one but always rewarding, on arrival you are presented with the most scenic track there is overlooking the coastline to Snowdonia, once set up team members can relax ready for a weekend of racing.

Friday was a full day of testing and the first opportunity to run in the bike, with a new engine having been recently been tuned. This was the first time that Max had to opportunity to ride this bike in anger and the whole day was most definitely needed to settle in to the rhythm of the track and sort the gearing.

Frustratingly, the heavens opened and the day was a continuous downpour meaning that extreme caution was needed to maintain rubber side down on the track. By the end of the day the bike was running well however further track time was still needed.

Saturday was an early start and a quick tyre change from wets to dry's before qualifying for the first race. As the day progressed the weather deteriorated and by lunchtime, the day had been cancelled due to high winds for the safety of all the riders. Unfortunately no further racing took place that day.

Sunday morning was dry so a further tyre change was needed and Max was straight in it with a qualifying session for the Inters Services Championship directly followed by Saturday's cancelled race. Max qualified further down the grid than he would have liked, however he made a good start gaining a few places off the line, having some close battles throughout the race and finishing mid pack.

In race 2 Max again got a good start but an accident at Rocket resulted in a red flag and the race being restarted. This time the start was not so good and Max remained mid-pack throughout and remained the story for the day.

The weather, while sunny, was extremely windy, making high speed corners interesting blowing you off the racing line at every opportunity. A frustrating weekend plagued by high winds and heavy rain cancelling sessions and keeping the timetable fluid, however this is what racing is all about. Next stop is Brands Hatch GP Circuit followed by the RNRM Grass Roots Track Day.



Max in action at Anglesey. Picture by Phil Newell

# THRILLER AT THE GOLF CHAMPS

THE Fleet Air Arm won a thrilling Royal Navy Golf Championships team event at Hilton Park Golf Club.

The Northern Region upset the apple cart, taking it to the wire but the Fleet Air Arm came away narrow winners.

Evenly balanced regional teams with a number of new talented players discovered through the regional development programme entering the event for the very first time certainly raised the bar on this competitive competition.

In the Match play event, the Northern Region (NR) shook the regional teams on the first day by halving their match with the favourites FAA.

They didn't stop there and went on to beat both Eastern (ER) and more surprisingly the Royal Marines (RM) team leaving a final day where three teams could have won the event depending on how results went.

The NR went on to beat WR 5/3 in the final round and therefore all eyes on the FAA/RM result as the matchplay championships came to a close.

The FAA had to win and by a good margin and with many of the matches going to at least the 17th hole, it could have gone either way, but in the end the FAA team secured their win over the RMs 5½/2½.

With both FAA and NR on 3 ½ points, the greatest game difference went to the FAA and they were crowned winners scoring 24½ games to the NR 21½.



Meanwhile, 74 players took part in the strokeplay format over three rounds.

Corporal Alfie Fletcher became the 101st Royal Navy Golf Champion with 297 shots through the three games, while the Royal Marines won the Team Strokeplay, beating the FAA by just three shots.

Fletcher and Lt Kieran Dixon were leaders of the event and were out in the last group of the Championships.

Despite a delay start due to inclement weather, superb golf played by all, especially those fronting the competition.

PO Ryan Moore scored the best round of the men's event on the final day with a gross 70 which put him back up in the top standings and Dixon shot a gross 79, his highest score of the week. Fletcher finished with a steady gross 73 to put him in pole position with 297 shots. Moore finished 2nd on countback to Kieran who both finished with gross 298s.

In the women's event, SET Olivia Trehwela started her quest to win the women's individual competition with an incredible Gross 70 – three under par and a potential course record for Hilton Park GC.

After round three, she was ten shots ahead of last year's champion, AB Alex Forrest. Lt Cdr Lauren Hulston, the RN Lady Captain was out with Lt Cdr Lucy O'Connor and between 1st and 4th positions, there were 31 shots.

A huge ask for Lucy and Lauren to close that gap, but for Alex, a great challenge in the final round. Both ladies played well and despite Alex finishing with a gross 70, it was just not quite good enough. Alex had closed the gap by 8 shots, but Olivia with a Gross score of 282 after 4 rounds beat Alex by 2 shots to become the RN Ladies Individual Champion.

Those who did not make either, took part in the Greensomes events on the club's alternative course the Allander.

Eleven pairs took part in this tightly fought competition.

Pairings were evenly split based on handicaps and while AB Cam Williams with Jeremy Black scored a credible 36 points, it was Lt Cdr Mark Jones and CPO Steve Aries that walked away as victors with 37 points.

To summarise the NETT competition, Lt Declan Johnson RN, who only took up golf 12 months ago and had to borrow a set of clubs to take part, was playing steadily through the first two rounds. He was four shots clear of WO Chris Stewart after three rounds with an increasing gap between them and 3rd/4th place.

Chris closed the gap to 2 after round three, and with 10 shots between them and 3rd place. On final day, rain delayed the start of the round but the players were keen to get out and get the round underway.

Declan and Chris were in the Final NETT pairings up against each other and they both battled well. Chris endeavoured to narrow the gap but by the 18th, Declan remained 2 strokes clear and became the NETT Individual Champion.

# BAKER'S ON A ROLL

LIEUTENANT Chelsea Baker smashed the Royal Navy's record in the Women's 5k by almost two mins at the Inter Services Track and Field Championships in Aldershot.

Although yet to be ratified, Chelsea crossed in 16 mins 39.86 seconds in a comfortable and convincing win during a stellar display for the RN team at the Championships.

The combined RN team of 27 (15 men and 12 women) showed great commitment to the team cause, delivering a range of outstanding achievements, whether: medal winning performances, personal or seasonal bests or just willingly stepping up to fill gaps within the team.

Amidst a widespread abundance of moral and physical courage demonstrated, the other two services were complimentary of the Royal Navy team spirit and ethos.

Ten medals were won, five each for men and women, but it was Chelsea who grabbed the headlines.

It was Wednesday, July 10 2019 when Sub Lt Chelsea Baker ran 21 mins 29.7 seconds to finish 5th of five runners

at that year's Inter Services Championships, instigating her resolve to develop fitness and performance to achieve current levels of performance and put her on the cusp of international selection for distance running.

LET Rachel White (47CdoRM) won silver in the women's javelin, with women's bronze medals won by AB Hannah Holman (HMS Calliope) over 400m and Lt Emma Morley (HMS Trumpeter CO) in both 100m and 200m.

Men's medallists were: silver for AET Lyle Sargent (207 Sqn) 400m, with bronzes for: Mne Calum Hart (CTCRM) 400m, AB Andres Safars 400mH (RNR) and LAET Mark Duffett (RNAS Yeovilton) in both 1500m and 3000m Steeplechase).

The commitment to the team cause was met by all who competed, most notably by those who filled team gaps in their non-specialist events - those who competed in at least four events (including relays) were:

Men: LCpl Ben Di Salvo (30CdoRM) - 4, AB Andres Safars

- 6 and Mid Robbie Carson (HMS Sultan) - 7; Women: AB Jolisia Tash (HMS Richmond) - 4, Lt Emma Morley - 5, AB Shairee Williams (RM Stonehouse) - 5, Sub Lt Samantha Hill (RAF Shawbury) - 6 and LCS Maria Richards (HMS Richmond) who takes special credit for her enthusiasm to complete 8900m over four races, most of which included a cheery wave to the applauding masses of all three services alongside the home straight.

"Grateful thanks are afforded to all who supported efforts to field a Royal Navy team at this year's Inter Services T&F Championships, given the competing demands and constraints of operational, career training and personal factors," said team manager Paul Winton.

AET Lyle Sargent (207 Sqn) represented the UKAF at the combined England Athletics/Inter Counties Championships at Chelmsford, where he ran a personal best time for 400m of 49.43 secs to finish 6th in his heat, a very creditable performance given the big step up in standard.



# Bowing out with grace



**THE long, proud career of His Majesty's Ship Pembroke comes to an end this month as she becomes the latest ship to make way for the future of minehunting.**

After 25 years service in home waters and extensively beyond – notably the Baltic, Mediterranean and especially the Gulf/Middle East – the Sandown-class vessel is due to decommission, part of the Royal Navy's transition to smaller, remote-controlled and autonomous systems to find and neutralise the mines of tomorrow.

With that in mind, Pembroke – based at HM Naval Base Clyde – has been on a 'farewell tour' of the UK over the summer, mixing operational with civic and ceremonial duties, culminating in a highly-charged goodbye to her namesake town in Wales.

Since March she has been crewed by 1st Mine Countermeasures Squadron's Crew 6 – part of the regular rotation of crews through the class to support round-the-clock operations at home and overseas.

In their six months aboard, the final crew have made a significant contribution to national security conducting several weeks' worth of minehunting operations on the west coast of Scotland and also worked with allies from several NATO and partner nations in UK waters, interspersed with port visits in all four Home Nations including Douglas, Isle of Man – coinciding with the world-famous TT races.

"I was lucky enough to visit the grid and meet the competitors, gaining a unique perspective of the race and getting to understand the physical demands of riding a motorbike on public roads at up to 200mph," said mine warfare specialist Able Seaman Zoe Burgess.

Participants typically cover the 37.7 mile Mountain Course in just 17 minutes, making for a dramatic

spectacle of sound and colour as they tear full throttle past enraptured crowds of spectators.

"I've never seen anything like it. It was easily the best weekend of my Naval career. I'll definitely be coming back next year," Zoe added.

Prior to taking charge of HMS Pembroke, Crew 6 were embarked in her sister ship HMS Bangor in Bahrain.

Their visit to Northern Ireland therefore felt like a 'second homecoming', with sailors warmly welcomed by locals who were keen to engage with the ship.

"This was one of my first port visits in my career as I joined during the Covid pandemic. I was impressed with the engagement of the local children and the warmth with which we were received by the Bangor community," said Sub-Lieutenant Oliver Hall-Tomkin, who hosted tours for Sea Cadets.

Two weekends in Campbeltown provided opportunities to stand down from intense periods of survey operations in Scottish waters, and were especially poignant for the ship's Leading Diver Luke Scally, who hails from the small port.

"I was able to collect my son from school and bring him to visit the ship. It was a fantastic surprise for him – and to be able to walk home from work for the first time in my career," he said.

Several sailors visited Springbank distillery, one of Scotland's most prestigious. "The distillery tour was a great success and a chance to showcase my hometown's heritage," Luke added. "There's nowhere else in the world I'd rather live."

Wales was the last of the UK's nations to be visited and a final appearance in Pembroke.

More than 30 of her ship's company exercised the freedom of the borough for the last time, marching through the

town centre with bayonets fixed, drums beating and colours flying.

The parade closed with a moving service at the historic Pembroke Castle, in recognition of the Sandown-class mine countermeasures vessel's 25 years of service in the Royal Navy.

At the conclusion, sailors returned the scroll conferring the freedom of the city, to the town's Mayor. Chief Petty Officer Leighton O'Doherty, who carried the document, said: "It was a huge honour to be entrusted to return the scroll."

"The affinity between the town and the ship is an important one, and being granted the freedom of the city is a symbolic representation of that relationship. I felt privileged to be chosen to return the scroll, until such time as it may be bestowed upon a future ship."

This final visit to Pembroke and Pembroke Dock came on the back of a long weekend in London with a reception at HMS President to mark the formal handover from 1st Mine Countermeasures Squadron to its successor Mine and Threat Exploitation Group (MTXG).

"While it is a sad day to see the ship leave active service, the transition from MCM1 to MTXG is a cause for optimism about the future of mine warfare," said Pembroke's final Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Dan Briscoe.

"Many of my ship's company are moving on to new roles within MTXG and are excited about the challenges involved in moving to an autonomous model of mine warfare operations."

The ship will formally decommission later this month in Rosyth. Her duties will be assumed by a combination of new RFA vessel Stirling Castle and her range of autonomous minehunting systems, while in the Gulf and UK RN motor boats are undergoing thorough trials before beginning mine warfare operations.



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## Deaths

**James 'Jim' Richard Brownbill, CPO RP.** Served 1952-1975 in HMS Implacable, Montclare, Newfoundland, Tenby, Blake (twice), Defender, Dryad, Cochrane, Pembroke, Ganges. Joined RN Careers Service in Glasgow, Doncaster, Leeds and Barnsley before retiring in 1990. Awarded LSGC Medal and Clasp. Died May, aged 87.  
**O'Donnell, Thomas B.** Pilot's Mate 1950-1957. Yeovil 803, HMS Albion, Centaur, Eagle and Ark Royal. Participated in steam catapult trials. Died July 25, aged 91.  
**Roadnight, John Michael, CPO Stores**

**Accountant.** Joined 1950. Trained at Pembroke and Ceres. Served in Leeds Castle, Superb, Carysfort, Crane, Eagle. Also spent two years in newly-independent Kenya with the BNTT. Died July 4.  
**Whileman, Brian, Marine Engineering Mechanic.** Served 1964-1971: HMS Ganges, HMS Raleigh, HMS Hermes, HMS Sultan, HMS Diomedea, HMS Vernon. RNA Norwich member since 2017. Died July 22, aged 74.  
**Blake, Doug, Lt Cdr.** Served 1952-1980, then resettled in Canada and served in the RCN until 1986. Trained at HMS Raleigh, qualified as an ERA,

then a career in diesel boats from 1957 onwards, including Anchorite, Spiteful and Orpheus. Highly commended for his efforts in Olympus in 1968 adapting her V16 engines to run on 14 cylinders when she suffered large end bearing failures mid-Atlantic. Promoted sub-lieutenant in 1969, he subsequently returned to Olympus as her marine engineering officer. Upon leaving the RCN Doug carved a new career in the Canadian shipbuilding industry. Married to Joan for 68 years. Father of three, grandfather of three with one great grandson. Died Ladysmith, June 13, aged 91.

## Ask Jack

**Exeter White Ensign Club** will be closing in early 2024 after more than 40 years in the former Holy Trinity Church in South Street.  
 Over its lifespan the club, which serves as a hub for several veterans' groups in the city, including the WRNS, Royal Marines and Submariners' Associations, has collected more than 270 plaques/mounted crests of ships and units. All are being sold for £40 each (including postage and packing), available from the club treasurer at [roc91014@gmail.com](mailto:roc91014@gmail.com) or 07812 789 233. Just name the crest you'd like.

**HMS Lord Austin:** I am seeking family or friends of sailors who served on the trawler which was sunk in the Seine Bay on June 24 1944. Seven crew were lost and the remainder were rescued by US Coast Guard Rescue Flotilla One cutter USCG 56. My cousin Jess Alton Gipson was a crew member of USCG 56 which rescued survivors. I am in contact

with the daughter of the Commander and the son of one of the crew of USCG 56 and we want to share information with any of the survivors' families about their rescue. We have the names of the seven crew members who were lost but not the survivors. If anyone has information regarding the survivors, they can contact me by email at [sggipson@msn.com](mailto:sggipson@msn.com). **Gary Gibson**

**FRADU:** I would like to contact the following former Fleet Requirements and Air Direction Unit Hunter pilots who mounted detachments at RAF Gibraltar from 1980 to 1983: Tommy Thompson, Godfrey Underwood, Simon Willoughby and Derek Morter.

**Tony Fairburn, Sqn Ldr (Rtd)**  
[tony.fairbairn@btinternet.com](mailto:tony.fairbairn@btinternet.com)

**Johnny Craig:** We are trying to contact Johnny for our 40th secondary school reunion. We know he

joined the Royal Navy and served in submarines. He left St Columba's College in Dublin in 1982, aged around 18.

**William Simpson**  
[Whpsimpson@gmail.com](mailto:Whpsimpson@gmail.com)

**HMS Plym:** I would like to trace the River-class frigate's unofficial timber crest. She left Devonport reserve in 1951/2 and deployed on Operation Hurricane in the Monte Bello Islands of Western Australia, where she was destroyed in the UK's first nuclear weapon test.

The ship was stripped beforehand and I have discovered an auction house sold a badge said to be from the frigate (K271) in 2007 but I believe it to be unofficial, something confirmed to me by Chatham Dockyard Historical Society.

**Geoff Robinson**  
 7 Mountfield, Borough Green,  
 Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8HX

## Reunions

**Friends of HMS Eagle:** Reunion will be held at the Queen's Hotel, Southsea, from October 27 to 29. For details please contact Danny du Feu at [ddf.photography@gmail.com](mailto:ddf.photography@gmail.com) or 07711 083465.

**HMS Undaunted, Eagle and Yarmouth Association:** The 2023 Reunion Dinner & Dance is confirmed at the Bournemouth Carlton Hotel, East Overcliff Drive, Bournemouth BH1 3DN from Friday October 20 to Monday October 23 2023. Contact Whiskey Walker on 01268 58041 or email: [whiskey666@outlook.com](mailto:whiskey666@outlook.com) or [andyjmancini@gmail.com](mailto:andyjmancini@gmail.com) for further details.

**Loch Class Frigates Association:** The final annual reunion takes place at the Royal Maritime Hotel and Club from October 6 to 8. Contact Andrew Nunn at [andrew.nunn@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:andrew.nunn@blueyonder.co.uk), phone 0117 9505835 or visit [www.lochclassfrigates.com](http://www.lochclassfrigates.com)

**Royal Navy Photographic Branch:** Reunion

takes place at The Liner Hotel, Liverpool from September 29 to October 2. All former and serving photos plus wives/partners and guests are very welcome to help celebrate 104 years since the branch was formed. Meet and greet on Friday evening. Saturday, visits and tours around Liverpool City & Royal Docks. Saturday evening consists of a Nautical Extravaganza experience, gala dinner & traditional 'Up Spirits'. For further details please contact Danny du Feu. Email: [ddf.photography@gmail.com](mailto:ddf.photography@gmail.com); Tel: 07711 083465.

**HMS Lowestoft Association:** Our 2023 reunion will take place at the Alexandra House Hotel, Swindon SN4 0QJ from September 29 to October 1. All who served in Lowestoft during her RN service (1961-1985) are welcome to attend (including wives/partners/guests). Book direct with SF Events on 01452 813173, for further details and a booking form please email: [admin@hmslowestoft.uk](mailto:admin@hmslowestoft.uk)

**HMS Blake Association:** Our inaugural reunion and annual meeting takes place at the Royal Maritime Hotel in Portsmouth on November 3 to 5. Call 02392982182 Ext. 1 to book your accommodation using code GA000510. Full details on [www.hmsblake.co.uk](http://www.hmsblake.co.uk) and HMS Blake Facebook page.

**HMS Ark Royal:** A reunion is planned at the Wallasey branch of the RNA from Friday November 17 to Sunday November 19. For details please contact Gordon Weir at [gordyweir@gmail.com](mailto:gordyweir@gmail.com) or John Williams at [jwillo85@gmail.com](mailto:jwillo85@gmail.com)

**HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association and HMS Tenby Association:** The 2024 reunion is confirmed at the Beaches Hotel, Prestatyn, North Wales, from May 10 to 13. Contact Secretary Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email [askhamd3@gmail.com](mailto:askhamd3@gmail.com). For HMS Tenby contact David Macalister on [dmac121dm@gmail.com](mailto:dmac121dm@gmail.com)

## £50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ships in the July edition of *Navy News* (right) were HMS Enterprise, Echo and Egeria, all part of the fleet of specialist hydrographic survey vessels from the 1980s.

Mr A Yates from Wolverhampton wins £50 for sending us the correct answers.

This month's mystery ship (above) is a Majestic-class aircraft carrier, launched in 1945 for the RN but sold before she was completed.

1. What was her RN name and  
 2. What name was she given when sold?

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



[subs@royalnavymail.mod.uk](mailto:subs@royalnavymail.mod.uk) with September Mystery Ship in the header.

Coupons and emails giving the correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner. Entries must be received by October 12. More than one entry can be submitted but photocopies cannot be accepted. No correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our November edition.

### MYSTERY PICTURE 343

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](mailto:news@royalnavymail.mod.uk) or [editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk](mailto:editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk)
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## ROYAL NAVY NAVY NEWS

Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY

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Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Ask Jack columns in next month's Noticeboard must be received by

SEPTEMBER 14 2023

## Cash boost for Unicorn

MORE than £1.1m will be pumped into helping to preserve Britain's third oldest warship, HMS Unicorn.

The National Heritage Memorial Fund has made its largest ever donation to the team looking to repair and restore the 19th Century frigate in Dundee.

The ship serves as a floating museum to the Royal Navy in the days of sail at her berth in South Victoria Dock. She never saw action, instead serving out the bulk of her career as a training vessel.

When finally paid off in the 1960s, she became a museum - but half a century later is in much need of restoration as part of a wider revamp.

A £20,000 donation by American entrepreneur and self-made billionaire, John Paul DeJoria, and a £100,000 grant received from The Headley Trust makes up the final funding which will allow the preservation society to press ahead with the overhaul.

Despite Unicorn's age, much of her fittings and wood are original, and the restoration seeks to preserve that as far as possible.

Shipwrights T Neilsen and Company - who've already been involved with the similar work on Victory and Trincomalee - are lined up to tackle Unicorn's timberwork.

Museum Director Matthew Bellhouse Moran hailed the handout as a "game changer".

He continued: "This work is essential to preserve the historic fabric of this much-loved ship, replacing rotten and missing timbers which are causing rapidly accelerating structural damage."

The restoration and repairs are expected to take around 18 months.

## Possible RN wreck is found

DIVERS believe they may have found one of six Royal Navy ships lost off Cornwall in a forgotten wartime tragedy.

Half a dozen large landing craft were lost off Land's End in October 1944 when a storm overwhelmed their convoy, killing more than 50 Royal Navy sailors.

A team of divers - known as the 'Gasperados' - operating out of Newquay on the boat Atlantic Diver took the plunge off the westernmost tip of the English mainland in the hope of locating a shipwreck.

They didn't find it, but around 100 metres down, in an undisclosed location, they did come across a different wreck - possibly an amphibious vessel.

They sought the advice of Dr Harry Bennett, Associate Professor of History at Plymouth University to identify it.

He suggested that it could be the one of six Landing Craft Tanks (LCTs) lost while being towed to Asia in 1944 in anticipation of the planned invasion of Japan (Operation Downfall, scheduled for 1945/46).

With France liberated and Allied troops on German soil by the autumn of 1944, the decision was taken to repair/refurbish/upgrade the 650-tonne vessels and prepare them for the mammoth journey to the Far East theatre of war.

In mid-October 1944, vessels of the 9th LCT Flotilla left ports in Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales to link up with convoy OS92/KMS66 bound for the Mediterranean and ultimately Asia.

The landing craft were never meant for such voyages - or rough weather; older LCTs could not withstand wind above Force 4, newer ones Force 6.

On October 18-19 1944, the convoy ran into an Atlantic storm off the Cornish peninsula with winds estimated at Force 9 - speeds of up to 55mph - and mountainous seas.



Six landing craft tanks - 480, 488, 491, 494, 7014 and 7015 - were lost at the height of the storm, going down with some or all of their crews.

Although more than 100 sailors were saved in horrendous conditions, 55 men - including some in workshops carrying out the rescue, washed overboard - lost their lives.

No-one has seen any of the missing vessels since October 1944 - until now.

"As divers, we never take for granted that we might discover the final resting places of sailors who died fighting for our country," said 'Gasperado' Steve Mortimer.

"We are privileged to suggest that we may have found the remains of LCT 488 or, if not that ship, then a similar craft from World War 2."

Dr Bennett said: "The tragic story of the lost convoy of LCTs which this wreck brings to the fore is a brutal reminder that in the midst of war our mariners still had to contend with the old foes of unrelenting storms and the cruel sea to sometimes deadly effect."

Further diving and investigation is required to formally identify the wreck and for those interested in the divers' work so far, they'll be presenting at the Guz.tech diving conference at Plymouth University on November 25.





# The Commemorative Veterans Star Medal

AWARD, in support of SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, is proud to have struck the commemorative Veterans Star Medal to recognise veterans' service within any British and Commonwealth Forces.

Apply today and receive a FREE Veterans Star Lapel Badge worth £6.95.



## Eligibility

Available to veterans who have served at home or abroad in any of our British and Commonwealth Forces during any period to the present day with a minimum of two years service. Next of kin may also apply. This important issue can be worn with pride, not alongside gallantry decorations, but separately and distinctly. The miniature medal and all other items are available without restriction.

## SPECIAL OFFER

### Personalised Medal Presentation Set

Featuring an engraved full-size and a miniature Veterans Star Medal and matching Ribbon Bar elegantly displayed in an attractive case which will be personalised with your service details as engraved on the medal.

Save £25.50 on the individual prices.



**AWARD**  
PROUD TO SERVE

Proud supporters of  
Veteran Groups and  
Charities for over 35 years.

We are proudly associated with SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity. Registered as a charity in England and Wales (210760) in Scotland (SCO38056).

## The Medal

**Obverse:** The obverse of the medal comprises the flag of Great Britain surrounded by the words "For Crown and Country". The distinctive star formation has been inspired by the First and Second World War Stars and the highly polished, nickel-plated medal is struck in the United Kingdom to the exacting standards for which AWARD has become internationally renowned.

**Reverse:** The reverse of the star has a sandblasted finish, perfect for naming with the service details of the recipient.

**Ribbon:** The broad central stripes of the ribbon represent the Navy, Army and Air Force framed between red, white and blue stripes representing Great Britain and The Commonwealth, making this a truly patriotic ribbon.

**Medal Engraving:** Your service number, rank, name & initials and service or regiment can be professionally engraved on the reverse of the medal.

**Individually Engraved Clasps:** Specially engraved clasps (max 20 characters) designed to match the finish of the medal highlight the details of your service.



Code	Description	Price
VSFM	Full-size Medal	£59.50
ENGB	Medal Reverse Engraving	£12.50
NIEC	Nickel Clasps (cost per clasp)	£9.00
VSMM	Miniature Medal	£17.50
VSRB	Ribbon Bar	£6.00
FMPB	Personalised Medal Presentation Case	£14.50
CMPSVS	Medal Presentation Set (SAVE £25.50)	£84.50



SCAN ME

[www.awardmedals.com](http://www.awardmedals.com)

Apply for the medal or send for a catalogue and details of our medal services:  
AWARD (Dept NN35), PO Box 300, Shrewsbury SY5 6WP, UK  
Tel: 01952 510053 Email: [info@awardmedals.com](mailto:info@awardmedals.com)