



NAVY NEWS

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POSITIVE SPIN

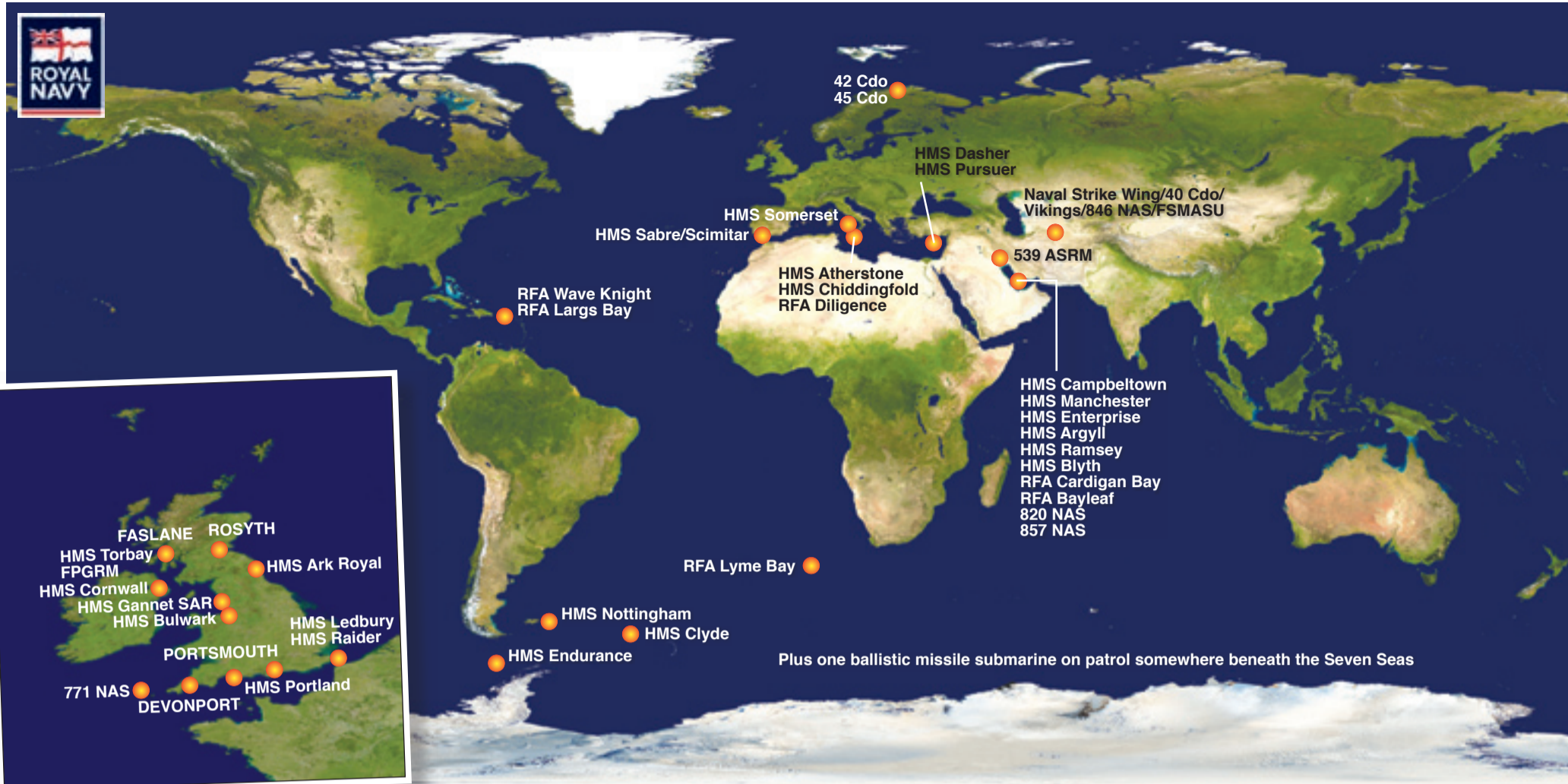
846 Sea Kings go hot and high in Afghanistan – centre pages

TANKS FOR THE MEMORY

Warfare on a small scale

THE BOMBER BEAT

Extra protection for V-boats on the Clyde



Fleet Focus

THE Royal Navy's major deployment of the first half of the year, Orion 08, has got off to a rather faltering start thanks to some engineering troubles for flagship **HMS Illustrious**.

But while the cat's away... minehunters **HMS Atherstone** and **Chiddingfold** have been enjoying semi-autonomy as they edge ever eastwards, first visiting The Rock (see opposite), then Malta (see pages 8 and 9).

The Orion force will eventually unite and head east of Suez, already the domain of **HMS Argyll** (see page 4), **Campbeltown**, **Ramsey**, **Blyth** and **RFA Cardigan Bay**; the latter has just replaced **RFA Sir Bedivere**, which has returned to the UK and paid off for good (see pages 6 and 7).

Back too from the Gulf – possibly for good – are the fliers of **847 Naval Air Squadron** who have completed a tour of duty in Basra (see page 6). Now home, they can prepare for another tour of duty, this time in Afghanistan. Out of the frying pan...

Their Commando Helicopter Force comrades, **846 NAS** are already in theatre (see the centre pages) getting used to an environment the Harriers of the **Naval Strike Wing** and the Royal Marines of **40 Commando** (see pages 14 and 15) are now accustomed to.

Life in the Gulf region can be a bit monotonous, so lions and dolphins livened things up aboard **HMS Manchester** – the Detroit Lions and Miami Dolphins (see page 7).

In rather cooler waters, destroyer **HMS Nottingham** had the gremlins from Flag Officer Sea Training drop in on them in the Falklands for a week to hone their fighting skills (see page 7), while the islands' new patrol ship **HMS Clyde** headed to South Georgia for the first time to get to know the area... and its manifold penguins (see page 22).

The penguin-related tomfoolery doesn't end there. Nope, as if there were not enough penguins in this world, now there are more of them as **HMS Endurance** found a previously unknown colony. The icebreaker also found the wreck of the cruise ship Explorer which sank last year (see page 37).

At the other end of the earth, there's a convergence of RN/RM forces around Harstad in northern Norway for winter war games. Involved are HM Ships **Ark Royal**, **Cornwall**, **Albion** and **Bulwark**, plus **RFA Mounts Bay** and **42** and **45 Commandos** (see page 7).

In home waters, the deeds of the Search and Rescue men and women of **HMS Gannet** and **771 NAS** have deservedly been in the news for two high-profile rescues off the English coast (see page 4).

Getting to know home waters all over again is Fleet submarine **HMS Torbay**, the first boat in the Silent Service to receive electronic charts – among other enhancements during a year-long revamp (see right).

Knowing how Royals like to blow things up, we spent a couple of days on the range with them in Dorset... blowing things up (and learning the art of being a 'tankie' – see page 23).

The Royals also stop things blowing up sometimes, most notably Britain's nuclear arsenal, which now has an extra layer of protection thanks to the green berets of **Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines** (see page 16).

Minehunter **HMS Ledbury** and university boat **HMS Raider** met in the Channel off Deal to commemorate the 66th anniversary of the Channel Dash (see page 13).

Sailors from **HMS Richmond** were applauded through the streets of Hampshire's county town as Winchester hosted a parade for veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq (see page 21). If that isn't praise enough for the frigate, she's also our ship of the month (turn to page 12).

HMS Exeter drew thousands of visitors at the London Boat Show (see page 17)... but if you missed her there's another chance to meet your Navy at an event in Portsmouth in July, cunningly titled **Meet Your Navy** – the successor to Navy Days (see page 36 for details).

Manual labour

HUNTER-killer submarine **HMS Torbay** is at the forefront of underwater warfare after emerging from a year-long overhaul.

The Trafalgar-class boat is the last of Britain's fleet submarines to be fitted with Tomahawk cruise missiles... but the first to receive the latest version of the weapon, Block IV.

And **Torbay** is also the first vessel in the Silent Service to ditch paper charts having been fitted with the electronic mapping system WECDIS during her year alongside in Faslane.

WECDIS has become bread and butter for the surface fleet in recent years, where it has drastically cut the workload of navigators.

Torbay's navigator Lt Simon Donovan expects it to do the same for his job – but first he has to write the manual.

WECDIS for boats is different from the surface variant. For a start, once submerged there's no way of knowing precisely where the submarine is; surface ships receive constant GPS updates to their location.

Submariners use a complex series of algorithms and calculations to estimate their position underwater – creating an ellipsis within which their boat should be found. As long as the submarine remains within that ellipsis, she should be safe.

Those same algorithms have been programmed into WECDIS and each five seconds it will update the ellipsis – which is drawn around the submarine on the computer screen.

The **Torbay** team have less than three months to learn how to use the new navigational system – and two of those are spent in the simulators.

"There is no handbook for WECDIS in submarines – the pages are blank. FOST are learning at the same time as we are. We've got to write the manual," explained Lt Donovan.

"I've already had guys from the next boat to get it ringing up, asking for all the information we've compiled."

With writing that manual and planning routes on paper and on computer, WECDIS is doubling the officer's workload. In time, however, it will half it.

"Planning the route into Faslane, for example, would take two to three hours on charts. With WECDIS, it's a 20-minute job – and once it's done it can be saved so you don't have to keep planning it," Lt Donovan added.

"I will not miss the paper charts and WECDIS will give me more time to devote to other duties, such as divisional responsibilities."

WECDIS links in with the submarine command system (SMCS or 'smacks'), allowing contacts to be marked on the map.

"Boats are making more use of WECDIS than the surface fleet," said CPO(TSM) 'Kirsty' Nicoll.

"The picture we have for command of the boat is superb. It's good to see we're going forwards, not taking one step backwards."

Another step forward comes in the form of Block IV Tomahawk which allows the missile to be 're-targeted' in flight; the Block III version of the weapon would self-destruct if it veered off course.

Away from 'warfighting' improvements, life aboard **Torbay** on deployments should be slightly more bearable.

Her crew will be able to send and receive emails at sea for the first time and, on occasions, access the internet.

The improved communications system will gather all the electronic mail written by the submariners and each time the boat is at periscope depth, she will send back all this data – and pick up any incoming email.

"It should revolutionise things," said Lt Jez Barron, **Torbay's** deputy weapon engineer officer. "As well as the hearts and minds aspect, all the surface ships do a lot of their work via email so it's important that submariners integrate with them."

"Most of the time we're operating dived, but we'll pop up to periscope depth, get all the info in and out and then dive again."

Keeping hearts and minds happy has been a challenge with the boat spending a year away from her home port; T-class boats are usually overhauled in Devonport.

Unsurprisingly only a handful of **Torbay's** crew live near Faslane; most live in and around the West Country.

"Generally speaking the lads have not been out of pocket up here thanks to warrants," said CPO Nicoll.

"I did tell my wife: 'Don't come to Faslane.' She doesn't believe me that the weather's so bad up here."

"On the plus side, because we're in Faslane the lads have not been itching to get away in the evening, and that has focused the minds."

Torbay is undergoing trials following her revamp and will return to her home port of Devonport ahead of work-up for an impending deployment later this year.

● Steely skies for **Torbay** as she conducts trials near Faslane
Picture: PO(Phot) 'Mez' Merrill, FRPU Clyde



GLOBAL REACH

● *Lolling in the shadow of The Rock, HMS Atherstone escapes the winter gales battering Blighty. Gibraltar was the first port of call for the Crazy A and her 'partner in crime', HMS Chiddingfold, on their Orion deployment to the Gulf and Indian Ocean. The two Hunt-class mine warfare vessels took advantage of the Mediterranean sun and rather more clement seas to test their Seafoxes ahead of reaching an operational theatre. See pages 8 and 9 for a round-up of the Orion deployment so far.*

Picture: LA(Phot) Pete Smith, FRPU East





'Thank you, the Royal Navy...'



THIS is the dramatic moment Chief Petty Officer Dave Rigg lifted a passenger off the stricken banana boat MV Horncliff to the safety of Rescue 193 as winter storms threatened to overwhelm her.

It was one of two high-profile rescues by Naval aviators within two days during ferocious weather which lashed the British Isles.

Sea Kings from Gannet Flight at HMS Gannet in Prestwick and 771 NAS of RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall were scrambled, respectively, when maydays were received from a ferry – MV Riverdance – and the Horncliff as January turned to February.

The Riverdance, a freight ferry, had almost crossed the Irish Sea bound for Heysham in Lancashire when ferocious winds and fearsome seas threatened to overwhelm her.

The Gannet fliers were over the

struggling ship just 65 minutes after being scrambled – aided by strong winds which helped their Sea King south.

When they arrived over the Riverdance, the ferry was listing at up to 60° in winds gusting up to 65kts.

An RAF Sea King from Valley in Anglesey was already on the scene and beginning to winch passengers and crew off the Riverdance as the Gannet helicopter arrived.

It fell to the Fleet Air Arm crew to watch over the scene and co-ordinate the rescue mission as lifeboats and a Coastguard helicopter arrived.

Once the RAF had pulled eight people to safety, the Gannet fliers moved in, lowering aircrewman Kev Regan on to the listing deck of the Riverdance.

He winched six people into the Sea King – two at a time – before the helicopter turned for Blackpool airport to drop the frightened sailors and passengers safely on dry land.

"It all went smoothly – it was a

challenging night, but we didn't encounter any major problems," said co-pilot Lt Olivia 'Liv' Milles.

"The weather was pretty awful so we didn't want to hang around any longer than necessary and the ship was listing heavily. We were fortunate that it was close to shore so there was quite a lot of natural light – unusual for a rescue at sea."

The Gannet team had expected a challenging night – but had not expected a ferry rescue as most of the crossings that night had been cancelled.

"Twenty-three people is quite a lot to rescue," said LACMN Regan. "That's why there were so many helicopters on the scene. We were actually told the ship was at 60° and people were going into the water."

The fliers were back at Gannet before midnight, fighting their way back to Scotland in the teeth of the gale – a flight which proved almost as difficult as the rescue.

As Riverdance foundered, the

merchantman Horncliff was being lashed in the Western Approaches where waves threatened to overwhelm her.

She ran headlong into a Force Ten storm off south-western Ireland.

The Liberian-registered ship rocked violently as three huge waves in succession struck her, tossing upwards of 100 containers into the sea, leaving those aboard fearful for their lives and injuring several sailors, including the ship's captain who suffered spinal injuries and internal bleeding.

The ship sent out a mayday on Friday February 1 and the RAF scrambled a Search and Rescue helicopter from Chivenor.

Atrocious weather conditions forced the RAF fliers to abandon their rescue mission.

By Saturday morning, the weather had abated sufficiently for another rescue attempt, this time conducted by 771 NAS from RNAS Culdrose.

Sea King Rescue 193 found Horncliff about 70 miles off the Cornish coast.

Winchman CPO Rigg was lowered on to the vessel to assess three casualties before the trio were winched up in a stretcher and flown to Royal Cornwall Hospital.

Among those rescued was Hamburger Dahne Carstensen who was honeymooning in the Horncliff with his wife Suzanne.

The Carstensens were on the bridge at the time the ship was struck by the three huge waves.

Herr Carstensen suffered a broken shoulder and ribs as the Horncliff lurched violently.

"The ship went right over, then the containers came off and the ship came back up," said Frau Carstensen.

"It was really horrible."

She praised CPO Rigg for calming her husband's nerves as he was prepared for winching into the Sea King.

"Thank you, the Royal Navy," she said simply.

Horncliff had been heading for Dover carrying a cargo of fruit from Costa Rica.

Shhhh... it's HMS Argyll

WE'D love to tell you what HMS Argyll has been up to these past few weeks.

Unfortunately, it's really rather secret.

But we can tell you that she's still east of Suez and not in the Gulf.

The Devonport-based frigate duties in the northern Gulf have been handed over to HMS Campbeltown while Argyll headed for the Indian Ocean to conduct sensitive maritime security operations – which meant communications with home have been somewhat stifled.

The good news is that incoming emails were still getting through... and there's half a tonne of post waiting for the ship's company when the frigate finally puts into port.

The bad news is that all the fresh food has just about run out after a lengthy patrol, which means the chefs (sorry, logisticians (catering services(preparation))) have had to rely on frozen and tinned produce to feed their shipmates.

Luckily CO Cdr Gavin Pritchard has a penchant for UHT milk, although it's a foible not necessarily shared by his shipmates.

Haven can't wait for RFA

FOR the second time this winter, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary is coming to the aid of one of the world's most remote communities.

Last month tanker Gold Rover dashed across the South Atlantic to deliver urgently-needed medical supplies to the people of Tristan da Cunha.

Now a more permanent RFA presence is required as the sole harbour in the isolated British dependency needs urgent repairs.

The 270 inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha, which lies about 1,800 miles west of Cape Town, rely on the sea for all their supplies and trade.

Its harbour is being undermined by the Atlantic swell, forcing emergency repairs – ahead of a more permanent solution next austral summer.

And so landing support ship RFA Lyme Bay is being dispatched 5,000 miles from her home of Portland with 150 pallets of cement, bulldozers, stone crushers, cement mixers and landing craft, plus 40 Royal Engineers, soldiers from the Royal Logistics Corps and a team of RN medics, to effect temporary repairs.

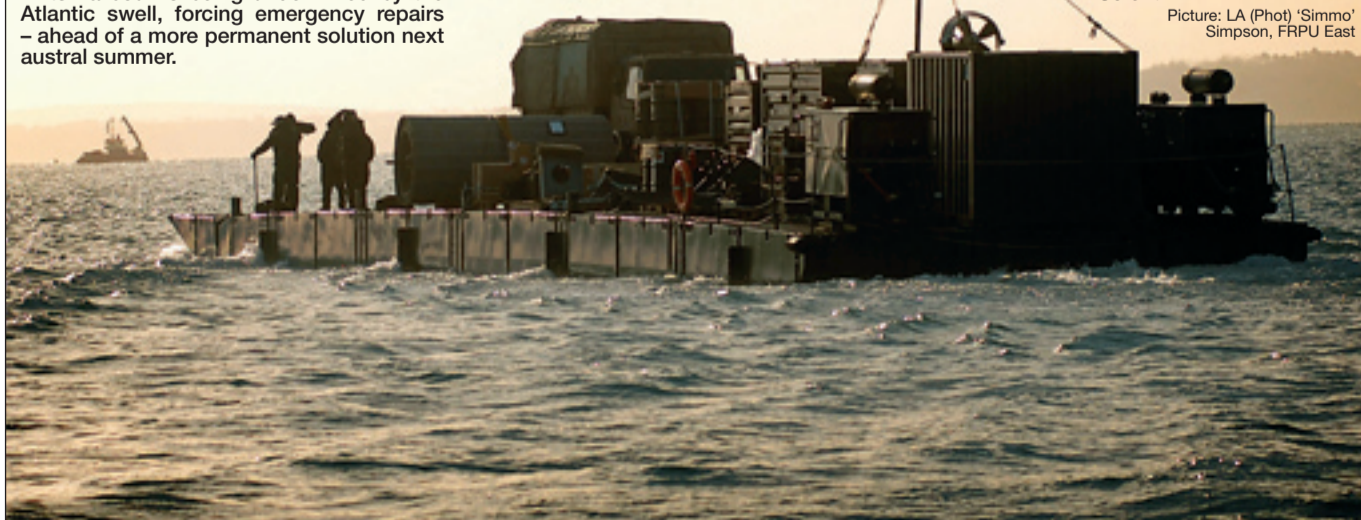
The vessel was due to arrive off the island at the end of February and will remain there until March 31. Once the austral winter sets in, it's unlikely any work can be carried out on the harbour.

"We'll be operating off the harbour for about a month, probably in difficult sea conditions, offloading the necessary equipment and stores," said Capt Peter Farmer.

"The isolation of the community brings its own challenges, but the ship's company are thoroughly looking forward to the task – and hopefully a successful outcome for the islanders."

● Supplies and kit are ferried on a Mexeflote from Marchwood to RFA Lyme Bay in the Solent

Picture: LA (Phot) 'Simmo' Simpson, FRPU East



Back to Portland

HMS Portland could be found in the island with which she shares her name.

The Devonport-based frigate is actually named after the Earl of Portland (it's his family motto, *craignez honte* – fear dishonour – which the warship also bears) but Commanding Officer Cdr Mike Utley says his men and women very much regard the island as their 'hometown'.

Indeed the ship enjoys close ties with its affiliated towns of Weymouth and Portland.

During her four-day spell in harbour, the frigate played host to the usual dignitaries and affiliates.

Also climbing aboard were students from colleges and schools along the south coast who had shown an interest in joining the Senior Service.

It's the first time Portland has been to the island in two and a half years.

She was kept busy much of last year putting the kibosh on drug traffickers in the Caribbean.

Just days after the ship departed – and as *Navy News* went to press – councillors in Weymouth and Portland were debating granting the frigate and her ship's company the freedom of their borough.

There shall be wings... and cranes

THE aircraft which will be the punch of carrier aviation into the middle of this century finally takes to the skies this spring. The Fleet Air Arm variant of the Joint Strike Fighter, successor to the Harrier, is earmarked for its maiden flight on May 8. Conventional versions of the JSF – officially the F35 Lightning II – have been flying for several years.

Britain wants a short take-off, vertical landing (STOVL) version of the jet to operate from its future carriers Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales next decade.

The very first of those STOVL jets rolled off the production line at Lockheed Martin's Fort Worth plant in Texas just before Christmas.

It is currently going through trials and tests ahead of that maiden flight with veteran Harrier test pilot Graham Tomlinson at the controls.

He will fly conventional take offs and landings at first before progressing to the Lightning II's specialist methods of departure and arrival.

In addition to progress on the aircraft front, £28m of contracts have been placed for the future carriers.

The MOD has ordered four diesel engines and electricity generators – two for each ship – at a cost of £18.5m.

A further £7.5m is being pumped into visual landing aids to guide helicopters and jets in safely.

And £2m will be swallowed up by detailed designs for the ship's bridge/navigation room and Flyco, which directs flights on and off the flight deck.

Ashore, Babcock has placed a £35m contract to revamp the dockyard at Rosyth so the carriers can be assembled there.

Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales will be built in sections at yards around Britain and ferried to the Forth to be pieced together.

Given the size of the carriers (circa 65,000 tons apiece), the dry docks and infrastructure need improving.

Included in the investment in the yard will be the largest 'Goliath' crane installed in the UK; it will be capable of lifting the huge ship modules.

Return of the big gun?

AN EXTRA inch and a half could make all the difference.

Yep, gunnery experts are looking at replacing the Fleet's standard weapon of choice with a more potent and more accurate gun.

The 4.5in gun has been the mainstay of the destroyer and frigate fleet for three decades.

But despite modifications – the latest variant of the gun, the 'Kryten', sits inside an angular housing on some destroyers and frigates – warfare officers believe the 4.5in lacks the range and accuracy demanded by modern naval gunfire support.

The guns of the fleet have been called upon in the Falklands in 1982 and, more recently, during the bombardment of the Al Faw peninsula in Iraq five years ago.

The AS90 155mm howitzer is a proven weapon with the Army, delivering shells on to a target up to 25 miles away.

Naval and land warfare experts are working with BAE Systems to try to adapt the 155 so it and its mounting and ammunition-handling system can be fitted within the confines of the existing 4.5in mountings and compartments.

The result could mean the return of the 6in (or, more accurately, the 6.1in) gun for the first time since the guns of cruiser HMS Blake barked nearly three decades ago.



Big bad Wolf

BURSTING out of its silo, a Seawolf missile leaves the sanctuary of HMS Somerset and races towards its target low over the silver-blue Mediterranean.

This is the moment that the Devonport-based frigate earned her spurs, the very last 'tick in the box' after months of trials following an extensive refit.

With Seawolf successfully fired, the Type 23 warship could be declared fully operational.

So the morning of Saturday February 2 was somewhat tense as final preparations were made.

Seawolf is the principal line of defence for Britain's frigate fleet, battle-proven in the Falklands and updated and improved since.

After refit initially, Somerset's Seawolf computer systems really didn't want to play ball.

By the time the ship went through Operational Sea Training, the glitches had been ironed out.

But it was going to take a live firing to convince all 180-plus souls aboard that the missile was on the top of its game.

Falcon jets from the Fleet Support and Air Tasking Organisation, operating from RAF Gibraltar, towed small drone targets (pictured inset) on a leash about three miles long over the Med.

It fell to Somerset to track the targets and blast them out of the sky – missing the Falcon in the process, of course.

Six, five, four, three, two, one. Command approved.

Missile directors CPO 'Chuck' Norris and PO Jamie Cockfield flicked the firing switches.

Four times a missile roared out



of its silo, shattering the thin glass covering each launch tube, then barrel rolled and flew horizontally towards their victims... and bang went the drones.

A salvo dispatched one drone; two more targets were brought down by individual Seawolfs.

"This was a champagne moment for a team which has worked diligently for months to prepare a very sophisticated system," said Somerset's Commanding Officer Cdr Rob Wilson.

"Seawolf has passed this test with flying colours and Somerset's operational survivability has been demonstrated to all of us."

Seawolf maintainer LWEA 'Toddy' Todd added: "There was quite a lot of pressure, but it was a great feeling to see the missiles taking out the targets – a real weight off our minds."

Seawolf was not the only weapon system tested by Somerset upon leaving Devonport.

On the way down to Gib she carried out trials on her new Sonar 2087 off the coast of Portugal.

Since leaving The Rock, Somerset has joined NATO's Standing Naval Maritime Group 2 on Operation Active Endeavour.

The force prowls the Med keeping tabs on movements at sea by monitoring shipping and conducting boarding operations.

You can follow Somerset on her Mediterranean adventure via her captain's blog at hms-somerset-co.blogspot.com

Picture: CPO(ET)(ME) Bob Hunt



Fintastic voyage

THE huge fin of HMS Ambush – the second of Britain's next-generation submarines – has been carefully lowered on to the boat's ever-growing hull.

Cranes at BAE Systems' Barrow yard inched the 78-tonne structure into place, watched by the men who built it and Ambush's weapon engineer/senior naval officer Lt Cdr Bruce Russell.

"You can really see how she's coming together and taking on the familiar submarine shape," Lt Cdr Russell said.

That distinctive outline should become increasingly recognisable by the month; the Astute-class submarine is earmarked for launch in June 2009 and enter service in 2010.

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High tempo operations take toll

IF YOU thought a punishing operational tempo was taking its toll of RN assets, the Senior Service is not alone in suffering.

The patrol craft which are the backbone of the Iraqi Navy are also becoming worn out by constant training missions and operations in the northern Gulf.

Luckily, there are RN engineers on hand to save the day.

The biggest challenge at present for the Royal Navy-led Naval Transition Team (NaTT) is to teach the Iraqi Navy the art of keeping tired boats running (something we have a little bit of experience in).

Iraq's five Predator patrol boats in particular need a lot of husbandry (and toil, sweat and perhaps even tears) as they suffer from a shortage of spares and under-funding.

"Basic maintenance has been happening, but with the high tempo of operations, the boats are in a bit of a state," explained LMEM Tormey.

"Hopefully, by working closely with the Iraqis we can show them how to do the job even more effectively and then just keep an eye on them to ensure that standards are maintained.

"It's great fun and with good leadership, the Iraqis can work very hard."

Supporting the boats is a challenge for a lengthy logistical chain – a chain made even more taut by an influx of new sailors and marines as the Iraqi Navy swells in numbers.

"The logistical chain is not great – probably not surprising considering what has been happening in Iraq," explained Logs(SC) Robinson.

"A system is slowly being put in place and the warehouses are filling up finally."

Away from the Navy's home of Umm Qasr, the forward training 'base' around the KAAOT and ABOT oil platforms in the Gulf is now provided by RFA Cardigan Bay which has replaced RFA Sir Bedivere.

The latter arrived at Marchwood military port in Southampton Water for the final time last month.

She was greeted by the Commodore RFA Cdre Bob Thornton and the titular head of the auxiliary navy, the Earl of Wessex – Commodore-in-Chief of the RFA.

For the final leg of her journey home from the Gulf, the Knight of the Round Table carried families of her ship's company.

New role for Brecon

FORMER minehunter HMS Brecon has a new lease of life as a training vessel for rookie ratings.

The Hunt-class ship most recently served in Northern Ireland, but with the increasingly stable security situation in the province, she was decommissioned.

Now she's in use again at HMS Raleigh.

Externally, Brecon looks almost identical to the prime of her life; inside, however, engineers have removed her props and shafts, overhauled her mess decks and created a classroom.

The ship will be used to give basic entry trainees an idea of living aboard a warship; at present, rookie sailors at Raleigh sleep on board a yacht and trot up a jetty for food and ablutions, which isn't an accurate depiction of life in an RN mess deck.

Brecon will also be used by more experienced sailors for seamanship and boarding training.

She is now moored in the River Lynher, replacing an old fueling barge, Ajax.

Bye, Basra Part 2

ANOTHER month, another Naval Air Squadron home from the sands of Iraq.

In our January edition we featured 845 NAS' return to Somerset after nearly five years over the desert.

Now the Junglies' sister squadron 847 are also back in the familiar surroundings of Yeovilton.

The Lynx fliers spent four months at Basra on their latest deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Telic.

The round-the-clock efforts of the maintenance team ensured the aircrews were airborne on average 250 hours each month – more than 1,000 flying hours in all – they were in theatre in the Mk9 Battlefield Lynx.

It's the first time the squadron has deployed with the Army variant of the famous helicopter, instead of the models with the more typical skids.

Skids or wheels beneath them, the task of the squadron remained the same: constant support for Allied ground forces.

That meant ferrying troops around, conducting recce patrols, offering 'top cover' for ground convoys and being ready at short notice to carry casualties to hospital.

The naval aviators found themselves called upon to investigate rocket sites used by insurgents, interdicting fleeing vehicles carrying suspected terrorists and escorting Merlins on flights around southern Iraq.

In all, 56 personnel from the squadron were deployed to Basra, operating six Lynx.

At any one time, the 26-strong engineering team was expected to have four of the aircraft serviceable.

"The engineering effort on this deployment has been highly impressive," said CPO(AET) Jase Douglas, the senior maintenance rating, who oversaw ten engine changes in just three months.

"The sustained effort ensured that a remarkably high level of serviceability was maintained throughout."

Somehow the engineers also managed to find time to clock up 2,847km on the cycling, rowing and running machines in the gym at Basra – one of the few recreational facilities available to the 847 NAS team.

One major event during the three-month tour was the handover of control of Basra province to the Iraqis.

The 847 fliers provided aviation expertise and top cover for Iraqi Air Force Mi-17 'Hip' helicopters, sent from Baghdad to cover the ceremony.

"It was a unique experience for us," said Lt Graham Humphries. "It not only allowed us to fly alongside our Iraqi counterparts, but also to share their experiences and tactics over a traditionally British cup of tea."

They were treated to a homecoming party in the squadron's hangars at Yeovilton



● 'He wears the rose of youth upon him'... CPO Jason Douglas lifts his daughter Bethan aloft

Picture: PO(Phot) Susan Emery

where they were reunited with loved ones.

We would like to tell you that the Lynx men and women are enjoying a well-deserved break after their exertions.

We would, but we can't.

The day after the team returned from Basra, the remainder of the squadron flew out to northern Norway to conduct Arctic warfare training.

Once back, the whole squadron

will work up towards yet another front-line deployment amid the sand and dust, this time to Afghanistan "where their steely determination and sense of humour will once again be tested on operations," says Maj Lenny Brown RM, 847's Commanding Officer.

That means a fortnight of mountain-flying training in southern France, six weeks in the heat of Arizona, before heading to

Kandahar in September.

"Our departure from Basra marks a milestone in the history of the Commando Helicopter Force as the focus firmly shifts to operations in Afghanistan," said 847's senior pilot, Maj Jaimie Roylance RM.

"The lessons learned and experience gained over the past few months will stand the squadron in good stead for what will be another busy, but rewarding, year."

Snapshot of serviceability

BARELY half the Fleet Air Arm's front-line helicopter force was available for duty as 2007 drew to a close, despite the best efforts of aero engineers, according to official figures.

Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth was asked to provide numbers of helicopters fit for operations – either front-line missions such as in Afghanistan or search and rescue flights, or for training missions – from what the MOD classes as its 'forward fleet', operational rather than training units.

According to the figures he supplied to Parliament, in November last year just 12 of 31 Junglie Sea King Mk 4 and 6 were available for missions; 25 out of 41 Lynx were deemed serviceable, as were 12 of 27 Merlins, two thirds of the nine-strong 'Bagger' Sea King Mk 7 Airborne Surveillance and Control fleet, and six of the 11 SAR Sea King Mk 5s.

In all, of the 119 helicopters in the Fleet Air Arm's front line, 61 were serviceable on average during the month.

Serviceability rates in the RAF were slightly better – 48 of its 79 helicopters were ready – and markedly higher in the Army Air Corps, 97 out of 154 serviceable rotary-wing aircraft.

Mr Ainsworth also told fellow MPs of the dates the various FAA helicopters would end their active days.

The venerable Sea King – the first flew in 1969 and the last one rolled off the production line in 1990 – will be phased out over the next decade, Mr Ainsworth said.

The HAS6 Junglie variant is due to pay off this year; its sister HC4 flies on until 2012. Search and Rescue Sea Kings continue until 2017, while the Baggers will be the last to be decommissioned, making their final flights in 2018.

The Lynx HAS3 will serve until 2013 and their 'Super Lynx' sisters, HMA8, will be decommissioned in 2015, by which time their successor, 'Future Lynx', is due to be in service.

The much newer Merlin HM1 will be in service until 2029.

Tyne meets the Thames

AFTER a lumpy start to 2008, fishery protection ship HMS Tyne left the open water behind for the shelter of the Thames.

The River-class ship spent four days berthed outboard of HMS Belfast after a spell on fish duties in the Irish and North Seas and English Channel enforcing British and European fisheries legislation.

During her stay the 30-strong crew hosted a number of events on board, including visits from civic dignitaries and local Sea Cadets, plus an official reception attended by Cllr Bob Skelly, the Mayor of Southwark.

"After four busy weeks of pitching and rolling in typical winter weather, we were very much looking forward to enjoying all the capital had to offer," said Lt Cdr Ian Clarke, Tyne's CO.

Bristol in the thick of battle

LONG-retired destroyer HMS Bristol found herself attacked by raiders on jetskis.

The Falklands veteran, which serves as a youth training and accommodation ship at the foot of Whale Island in Portsmouth, was used by experts from the Maritime Warfare Centre at HMS Collingwood to test theories of defence against terrorist attack by fast craft.

Two jetskis and around 30 personnel took part in the four-day exercise which did not involve the discharge of any live ammunition.



Go West(minster)

HMS Westminister's ship's company man the upper deck as the frigate leaves Portsmouth on a glorious – and admittedly unseasonal – February morning bound for the Mediterranean and beyond.

The Type 23 frigate is one of two escorts attached to the Orion 08 deployment led by HMS Illustrious (see pages 8-9 for more details).

Destroyer HMS Edinburgh is the task group's air defence guardian and has also left Pompey.

She endured some top-up training from the Flag Officer Sea Training team before leaving UK waters.

The FOSTies threw ten fires, six floods, four intruders, one helicopter crash on deck, two helicopter ditchings, one simulated disaster, one simulated grounding and two all-out wars at the Fortress of the Sea to keep her sailors on their toes.

Picture: LA(Phot) Pete Smith, FRPU East

Mersey beat for Bulwark

AMPHIBIOUS flagship HMS Bulwark spent four days in Liverpool – the newly-crowned European City of Culture – as she headed north for Norway.

The assault ship berthed in the shadow of the Liver Building in a dock normally used by cruise liners.

Bulwark hosted various groups and organisations during her stop on the Mersey: Sea Cadets, schools, Royal Naval Association shipmates, Mersey Naval and Maritime Society and World Ship Society. Her sailors also played several sporting fixtures against Liverpool teams.

The ship is leading the maritime side of winter war games in Norway, Armatura Borealis, with Amphibious Task Group commander Cdre Peter Hudson and his staff directing operations from the ship's impressive command suite.

Three RN capital ships are involved in the Norwegian exercise: Bulwark is joined by her sister Albion, plus commando/helicopter carrier HMS Ark Royal. Also committed to the fjords for two months are RFA landing support ship Mounts Bay and frigate HMS Cornwall.

The aim is to test the ability of men and machines to fight in the most demanding environment known to man.

3 Commando Brigade will be ferried to the fjords before being landed alongside comrades from Norway and the Netherlands.

Albion will be used by Major General Garry Robison, Commandant General of the Royal Marines, and his staff to oversee the maritime side of the exercise.

Bulwark's sailors have been training hard to prepare themselves for operating in the demanding Arctic environment and Capt Jeremy Blunden is convinced his men and women will rise to the occasion.

"The Arctic weather we will experience in Norway will be extremely demanding, but we have all the necessary equipment we need and all the sailors and Royal Marines are looking forward to the challenge," he added.

His ship will be back in Liverpool later this year to take part in the city's Battle of the Atlantic commemorations.

Cornwall, meanwhile, enjoyed five days of Irish hospitality, berthing at Belfast's Pollock Dock.

The ship hosted a careers' forum for local headteachers and careers officers, as well as students, schoolchildren and Northern Ireland VIPs.

Cornwall's sailors toured Carrickfergus Castle and the Giant's Causeway, while more strenuous exercise lay in store for Cornwall's rugby and football sides who clashed with RAF Aldergrove.

Feeling the pinch...

THE Navy is short of fast jet pilots, Merlin helicopter crews, able seamen, leading hands and divers.

Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth outlined several 'pinch points' – branches lacking key trained personnel.

There are 15 areas of concern for the RN, spread across the entire spectrum of Senior Service activities.

Among those 15 'pinch points' are Harrier pilots and instructors, whose posts are half filled; the RN is also short of a third of its AB(Divers) and leading hand warfare ratings.

Almost half the Merlin observer positions are vacant and, across the board, four out of ten able bodied seamen billets need filling.

One of the healthier areas is the Royal Marines. Nine out of ten other ranks drafts in the Corps was filled at the end of 2007 according to the figures given by Mr Ainsworth.

Enjoying a taste of home

EVERYONE knows that in the Navy there's war on Thursday. Even in the Falklands.

Yes, there's no escaping those nice chaps and chappesses from the Flag Officer Sea Training, even when you're 8,000 miles from home.

Eighteen FOSTies dropped in on HMS Nottingham to offer some top-up training to the destroyer.

The team from Devonport spent a week aboard the Type 42, running almost identical exercises to those staged typically off Plymouth.

RAF Tornados not FRADU Hawks

provided the 'enemy' in the skies while new islands' patrol ship HMS Clyde served as Nottingham's replenishment at sea partner – a task normally fulfilled in the UK by an RFA vessel.

Once the FOSTies departed satisfied that the Nottingham team were on the top of their game, the ship headed for Stanley.

Well, not the entire ship. A small group decided upon a week's adventurous training, re-tracing the steps of 2 Para in the 1982 conflict, walking the 80-or-so miles from Goose Green to the islands' capital.

Their ship, meanwhile, steamed to San Carlos Water, circling over the wreck of HMS Antelope where CPO Sid Hannant, a veteran of the conflict, cast a wreath into the water, and the son of one of the frigate's crew read a tribute to the ship and her men.

Then it was on to Stanley – well, actually, a buoy at Port William. Boats ferried the ship's company ashore; their visit coincided with a number of cruise liners in port, so Stanley found itself occupied by scores of non-natives.

Forty-knot winds (it was high summer in the

islands, after all) threatened to curtail Nottingham's visit, making it increasingly difficult for the 'liberty boats' carrying sailors from ship to shore and back again.

In the end the boats called it a day, leaving several sailors stuck in Stanley. Thankfully, they enjoyed the hospitality of the town's guest houses while the winds calmed sufficiently overnight for the boats to carry them home to their destroyer in the morning.

Nottingham's time in the South Atlantic is drawing to a close; her six-month deployment ends in April when she returns to Portsmouth.



● Night falls on Nottingham... The destroyer berthed at Mare Harbour on a glorious South Atlantic evening
Picture: WO2 Lowe, HMS Nottingham

Lions led by Dolphins

DOLPHINS are not unusual sights for men and women on Her Majesty's Ships.

Lions less so, however.

The sailors of HMS Manchester posed with both in the middle of the Gulf, but then we're talking about Miami Dolphins and the Detroit Lions.

American footballer Stanley Wilson – a cornerback (a defensive player for those not au fait with gridiron) with the Detroit Lions – and cheerleaders Michelle Hernandez and Lacie Randall, who spur on the Dolphins, dropped in on the British destroyer during a morale-raising trip to the USS Harry S Truman carrier group.

The Busy Bee has the rare honour of protecting the American flat-top on her Middle East deployment – and that means enjoying hosting some of the visitors who've been dropping in on the US warships.

The football trio spent a day aboard Manchester which was enduring some rather rough Gulf weather at the time.

Luckily, they escaped some of the lumps and bumps on the ocean thanks to a ride in Sting, Manchester's Lynx.

The three were given a comprehensive tour of the Type 42... and in turn offered a little

insight into the world of American football.

For each position on the cheerleader team, the Dolphins receive 300 applicants. The wage isn't enough to support the leaders full time, so all have second jobs – and they must fight for their places again at the end of each season.

Stanley is the son of a professional footballer and has been in the Lions for the past three seasons after being drafted from college. He was particularly impressed by the Busy Bee's cuisine (he asked for seconds at every sitting).

All three praised the efforts by Manchester to support peacekeeping in the region.

"The coalition's support of better governments in the region is clearly good news, and the support of our boys on the ground by the maritime units is essential," said Lacie (*Blimey, I was expecting a dream of world peace – Ed*), a graduate in international affairs specialising in the Middle and near East (*Ah, that explains it – Ed*).

Stanley added: "It's reassuring to know that you guys are out there, defending and protecting our freedom."

The visit over, the three Americans returned to the Truman courtesy of Sting.

A bowl for Sir Bed

THE final act in the long and fruitful life of landing support ship RFA Sir Bedivere was a happy one.

As the venerable auxiliary returned to Marchwood in Southampton Water for the final time, she received the Wedgwood Bowl.

It is presented each year to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel which has done the most to foster international relations or offer humanitarian aid.

It is for the former that Sir Bedivere is honoured; she has served as a floating forward operating base for the Iraqi Navy in the northern Gulf, dramatically improving the training opportunities available to the fledgling navy and, in the words of her citation, making "a significant and sustained contribution to international relations".

Sir Bedivere has now retired; her place in the Gulf has been taken by her successor RFA Cardigan Bay.

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Focus shifts to unsung heroes

WHEN flagships are mentioned, HMS Chiddingfold is perhaps not the first ship's name which springs to mind.

And, to be fair, she was not claiming the glory of flagship of the Orion 08 deployment, nor even lead-ship status.

But as she and her Hunt-class sister HMS Atherstone entered the relative shelter of Grand Harbour in Valletta, there was a palpable sense of satisfaction that the mine warfare task unit element of Orion was going pretty much according to plan.

Exercises in which Chiddingfold and Atherstone used Seafox off Gibraltar are described opposite, but Chiddingfold's Operations Officer Lt Alan Nekrews said the minehunter's involvement was entirely appropriate.

"We have been heavily involved; last year on trials to bring Seafox into the MCMV community, we were the first to be fitted and the first to do a live firing," he said.

Chiddingfold's CO Lt Cdr Tom Tredray said the Hunts were versatile ships.

"The good thing about fibreglass is that it doesn't rust, which gives them an advantage over metal hulls," he added.



"And because we have lost the sweep gear we have got a lot of room for extra capability in the future."

He was also pleased to be away from fishery protection duties: "It is really nice to be on a mine countermeasures vessel which is doing mine countermeasures work – particularly one that is right at the cutting edge with Seafox."

Lt Nekrews said Orion 08 would be hard work for the small ships, but would prove to be well worth the effort.

"This is good for the guys, getting out to the Gulf and getting stuck into some interesting tasking," he said.

Some of that effort went into force protection – for ships which have been pretty much part of the UK scene for years, these skills had to be honed before the Suez Canal.

Atherstone's Commanding Officer, Lt Cdr David Morgan, was also pleased to be in unfamiliar surroundings.

"It's excellent to get out of UK waters," he said.

"The whole ship's company is looking forward to operating as part of a major task group and the chance to see new places, which for the mine warfare group does not happen very often."



● RFA Diligence approaches her berth in Grand Harbour, Valletta (above) where she joined the two Hunt-class ships Chiddingfold (pictured left alongside) and Atherstone, the two having been delayed outside the breakwater by heavy seas



Sludge, skips and sport: 'no problem'

SHIPS have been calling into the fortified Grand Harbour of Valletta in Malta for centuries, so there it's a fair bet that the locals could cope with the modest vanguard of the Orion 08 deployment.

Even so, the etiquette and negotiations that involve such visits are a fascinating glimpse of the 'brotherhood of the sea' at work, with the Maltese effortlessly seeing to the needs of the two Hunt-class vessels which rolled alongside Pinto Wharf on a long swell driven by brisk north-easterly winds.

Within minutes of arriving the local shipping agent Anton Buttigieg was on board with a couple of colleagues, as was the Naval and Air Attaché at the British Embassy in Rome, Cdr Sean Steeds, and Third Secretary Political at the Maltese High Commission, Andy Hamilton.

Sitting in the cosy wardroom of Chiddingfold, the men ran through some essentials, then on to the 'nice to haves' – none of which caused the slightest problem to the accommodating hosts.

Chiddingfold's Liaison Officer Lt Alan Nekrews was told a skip would be provided for each of the Hunts, and emptied as and when needed; does the gash need to be separated for recycling, wondered the officer?

Back came the answer minutes later, not a problem, but no engine room waste, please.

How much water would each ship need? Tonnages were calculated, and tankers would provide it.

A sailor popped his head round the door. Is the water chlorinated? No, pure spring water would be supplied. Satisfied, he dashed off to ask his colleague on Atherstone what their needs would be.

A chandler went off with Chiddingfold's chef to sort out fresh food supplies, while keys and insurance details were sorted out for hire cars and MPVs for the two ships.

Transport arrangements were finalised for an officer leaving Chiddingfold for the airport that day, then bags of goodies for the sailors were handed over, including vouchers for free drinks at a tourist resort bar which has 'Naval leanings' (and came highly recommended after that night's run ashore).

'Sludge' would be removed from both ships on halfway through their visit, while the same day would also see divers going into the water for some training.

"That should be no problem – we just need to let Valletta Harbour Control know," said Andy, who was straight on to his mobile to set the ball rolling.

After mail pick-ups and times for calls to local VIPs were settled, it was on to the important stuff.

"For the rugby match; we need to get there a good hour early to teach them how to play. You think I'm joking ..." said Lt Nekrews, a PTI in a former Naval life.

With only 45 men in each ship, even a combined team was not easy to rustle up, but even their lack of a kit was swiftly sorted by Andy Hamilton.

A pitch was also requested for an inter-ship football match, and it was established that the jetty and a nearby stadium could be used for PT and RN Fitness Tests.

With that the meeting ended, and the visit could begin.

Landmark appeal

A LANDMARK – and seamarck – on the island of Malta is seeking help to restore one of the great church organs of the world.

St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral was built on the site of the Auberge d'Allemagneth funds provided by the Dowager Queen Adelaide, widow of King William IV.

It was completed in 1844, but it is believed the organ pre-dates it by more than a century – it is thought Handel played the instrument in Chester Cathedral while on his way to Dublin for the first performance of *The Messiah* in 1742.

Now the cathedral, the slender spire of which acts as a mark to mariners approaching Grand Harbour, is seeking £90,000 to restore the organ to its former glory before it fails completely.

Mike Turner, who is one of the leading players in the fund-raising drive, said St Paul's is a "maritime

church" and a retired RN officer, Cdr Geoff Fosberry, sits on the appeal committee.

Plaques and memorials around the walls recall the great and greatly-missed of the Senior Service over two centuries, and Mr Turner said that many a ship's company attended services at the Cathedral over the decades.

"We do still play it – in fact we had one of the best organists in the world here over Christmas, and he plays very loud and very hard, so we were terrified it would break down," said Mike.

The £90,000 will rebuild elements of the machine using modern equipment, ensuring many more years of music.

For further details contact Canon Tom Mendel, Chancellor, St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral, Independence Square, Valletta VLT 12, Malta, tel 00356 21 225714.

The Royal Maritime Club

(Formerly The Royal Sailors' Home Club)



-NOTICE-

The 144th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Maritime Club, Queen Street, Portsmouth, will be held in the Trafalgar Ballroom of the club on Tuesday 22nd April 2008 at 1030. Commanding Officers are requested to encourage maximum attendance from their ships and establishments. ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND



Lusty lingers on...

AS *NAVY News* went to press, Orion 08 flagship HMS *Illustrious* was expected to be on her way to join the rest of the task group.

The carrier had lingered in the hands of Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) staff, although there had also been mechanical issues to rectify before the ship was ready to sail for the Med.

The various elements of Orion are now expected to gather this month before pushing on through the Suez Canal and into the Gulf region.

Exercises ahead include work with the

Pakistan and Indian navies, and three Allied warships will also attach to the group for various elements – the USS *Cole*, subject to a terrorist suicide bomb attack in Yemen in 2000 which killed 17 American sailors, arrived in Malta on the same weekend as the British minehunters and *Diligence*.

Other ships lined up for all or part of the trip include destroyer HMS *Edinburgh*, Type 23 frigate HMS *Westminster*, submarine HMS *Trafalgar*, RFAs *Wave Knight*, *Fort Austin* and *Bayleaf*, French destroyer FS *Jean Bart* and Spanish frigate SNS *Mendez Nuñez*.

The diligent shepherd

HOT on the heels of the two Hunt-class ships came RFA *Diligence* – and demonstrated her agility to those watching from the Upper Barracca Gardens on a hazy Sunday morning as she pirouetted gracefully before nudging alongside the jetty aft of her two charges.



for the maintenance teams on board as well as her crew – she is that rarity in Naval terms, a ship with a sauna...

For Capt McNally this was the first visit to Malta since he was a cadet in 1976, and he is pleased with the ship's performance to date – she spent most of last year in refit in the North-West.

The Forward Repair Ship, commanded by Capt Tony McNally, had also been held up by adverse weather which delayed her entry past the Valletta breakwater.

"It is a typical North Sea support ship," said Capt McNally of the former *Stena* vessel, taken up by the MOD in the aftermath of the Falklands Conflict.

"Everything is up for'ard and it can bounce about a bit in heavy seas."

But it is proving a popular ship

Her programme with the Orion 08 MCMV task unit sees her visit Crete as *Navy News* went to press, then spend some time in the Gulf supporting Operation Aintree, though she will also shepherd the little ships through exercises in the Indian Ocean, with members of the Fleet Support Unit using her extensive workshops and equipment as necessary.

She is also capable of acting as a depot ship for RN submarines.



● *USS Cole* lies alongside in Grand Harbour, with the MCMV task unit further along the jetties (top) while a dockyard worker helps secure ropes for RFA *Diligence* at Pinto Wharf (above)

Rock solid results

THE vast protective bulk of the Rock of Gibraltar was a comforting presence to HMS *Atherstone*, even without the kind of winter gales which were battering UK coasts at the time.

Gib was the first port of call for the Crazy A and her sister HMS *Chiddingfold* on their Orion 08 deployment to the Gulf and beyond.

The two Hunt-class mine warfare vessels took advantage of the Mediterranean sun and rather more amenable seas to test the Seafox mine disposal system before reaching an operational theatre.

Seafox is the replacement for the 'yellow submarine', used by the UK's mine countermeasures forces for the past quarter century to find and destroy underwater explosive devices.

The new piece of kit is still at the trials stage, and probably won't be fully operational until later this year.

But ahead of a major international deployment, live firing trials were required – and the weather in the Strait in February is generally kinder than it is in the Solent.

"My teams have been in the sea exercising every day," said LD Adrian Morris, *Atherstone's* dive team leader.

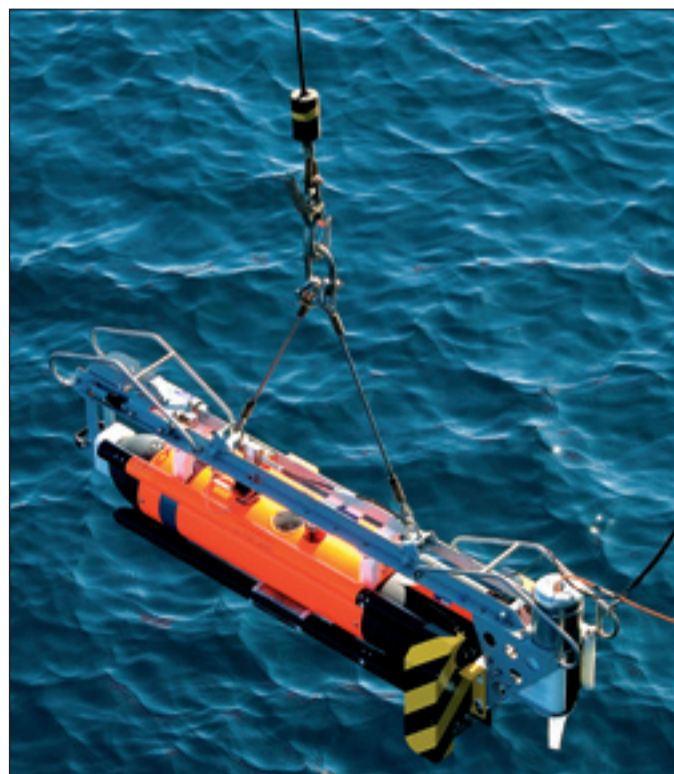
"Out here, every day is a great diving day. The weather has been fantastic."

Seafox was launched to find and destroy a trials mine – which it achieved.

Reams of data were also collected by the sailors for Fleet HQ and boffins to pore over before they can declare the new system operational.

That underwater 'kill' marked the culmination of a year of trials, trials which have mightily impressed all those involved.

"Seafox is revolutionary in many



● The Seafox mine disposal system is deployed from HMS *Atherstone* off Gibraltar
Picture: LA (Phot) Pete Smith

ways – it significantly increases the speed of mine clearance operations, so it's very good news for the Royal Navy," said Lt Cdr David Morgan, *Atherstone's* CO.

Seafox is a one-shot system, as the delivery vehicle is destroyed as it fires its charge into the target.

That may seem wasteful, but the negligible cost of deploying the exploratory element of the system to examine a suspect device means it very quickly works out cheaper than the yellow submarines.

And because it actually fires its charge at a target, rather than just dropping it in the vicinity, as is the case with the yellow submarine, it means Seafox is just as good at handling buoyant mines as those on the sea bed.

The Orion deployment will see *Atherstone* and *Chiddingfold* operate in the Gulf – where HMS *Ramsey* and *Blyth* can already be found – and also off the coasts of Pakistan and India alongside the navies of those two nations.

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Off to join Spartacus

● Type 23 frigate HMS Richmond arrives home in Portsmouth at the end of last year

NO, frigate HMS Richmond is not rushing off to join a slave revolt, but to take part in an anti-submarine warfare exercise with the US Navy.

Although before the Type 23 reaches her Operation Spartacus deep-water site off Andros in the Bahamas, she will first be taking part in multinational exercise Grampus 08.

The ship sets sail at the end of this month for an intensive trials package before journeying on to the ASW exercise in the Bay of Biscay which will bring together ships, submarines and aircraft

from the navies of Britain, France, America, Canada and Norway.

Once she has crossed the Atlantic, Richmond will be busy with Op Spartacus, a two-week exercise that includes torpedo firings, Sonar 2087 optimisation trials and war gaming exercises with the American Submarine Command Course.

Her homeward journey will dally along sights and cities of North America, seeing the British warship visit West Palm Beach, Nassau, New York and Quebec – where she will take part in the Canadian city's 400th anniversary celebrations.

Not a bad deployment for a

ship which started this year in the midst of a busy maintenance period which brought enhancements to her sonar and steering system.

The latter part of this year will be devoted to trials and deployment preparations as the Type 23 prepares herself for a longer trip east of Suez.

This particular frigate is the eighth generation of HMS Richmond to have sailed the world's oceans.

Wakefield of 1655 became Richmond of 1660 and so the name began, borne by a 26-gun warship.

The next was an eight-gun

yacht that served between 1672 and 1685.

It was not until 60 years later that the name re-surfaced upon the captured French frigate Dauphin, although this vessel only saw service with the Leeward Island Squadron for another four years.

Hence the name passed on to a 32-gun fifth rate of 1757, which enjoyed various adventures including the captures of Quebec and Havana, and the American War of Independence, before in a twist of karmic fate, she was captured by the French fleet in 1781 off Chesapeake.

For eight years from 1806 a

14-gun brig bore the name, and then a century's gap until a brief appearance upon a trawler hired in during World War I.

It was not until 1940 that the name came into its own again, upon the rechristened Fairfax, a US destroyer transferred into the Royal Navy under a lease agreement.

This warship saw service on escort duties in both the Atlantic and Arctic campaigns, before continuing her multinational character with a four-month loan to the Canadian Navy in 1943, then on to the Soviet Navy in 1944 where she saw her name change once more to Zhivuchi.

Picture: LA(Phot) Emz Tucker



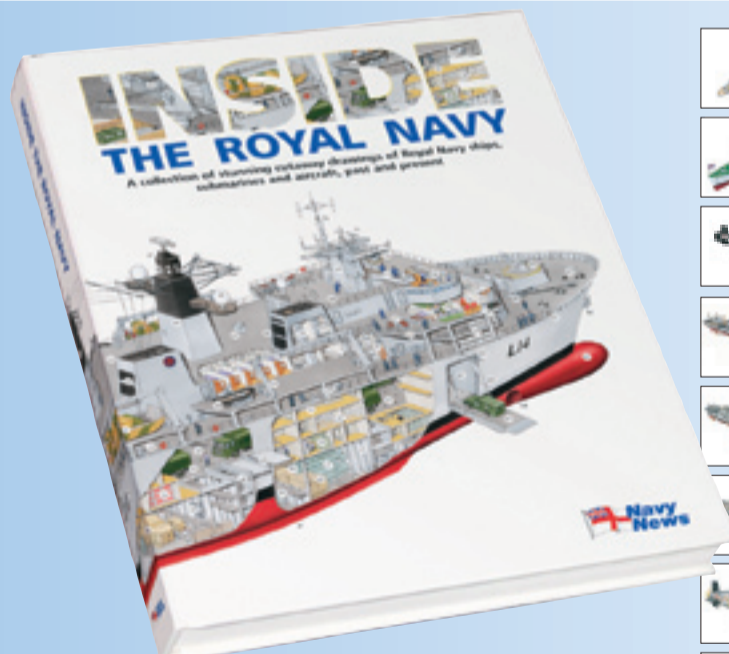
Quebec..... 1759
Havana..... 1762
Atlantic..... 1941-43
Arctic..... 1942

Class: Type 23 frigate
Pennant number: F239
Motto: *A deo et rege*
Builder: Swan Hunters, Tyne
Laid down: February 16 1992
Launched: April 6 1993
Commissioned: June 22 1995
Displacement: 3,500 tonnes
Length: 133 metres
Beam: 16 metres
Draught: 7 metres
Speed: 28 knots
Complement: 200
Propulsion: CODLAG; two Rolls Royce Spey SM1C; four Paxman diesels
Sensors: Radar 996 – long-range 3D surveillance; radar 1007 – high-definition navigation radar; radar 1008 – ship safety; sonar 2050 – omnidirectional, hull-mounted active sonar; sonar 2087 – variable depth sonar; sonar 2170 – surface ship torpedo defence; UAT – passive surveillance; GPEOD – general purpose electro-optical director used for the 4.5in gun; AIS – automatic identification system
Armament: Seawolf; Harpoon; 4.5in gun; 30mm cannon; minigun; general purpose machine gun; magazine torpedo launch system
Helicopter: Merlin HM1

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HEROES OF THE ROYAL NAVY No.47

Lt Dennis Copperwheat, GC

IN THE spring of 1942 British fortunes in the Mediterranean were approaching their lowest ebb.

In North Africa Rommel was preparing his capture of Tobruk and his thrust towards the Suez Canal.

At sea, the Mediterranean Fleet had been crippled by one disaster after another in 1941 – Crete, the sinking of the Barham, the loss of Ark Royal, the Italian human torpedo raid on Alexandria.

And then there was Malta, besieged by sea and air; the lynchpin of Britain's Mediterranean position was attacked almost daily by the Luftwaffe and Regia Aeronautica.

Sustaining Malta in the spring of 1942 demanded an effort from the Royal Navy second only to safeguarding the mother country from the U-boat peril.

That effort would reach its climax in high summer with Operation Pedestal, but there were other, less celebrated operations, week in, week out, to ferry food, stores and ammunition to the beleaguered isle.

The Norwegian steamer Talabot was just one ship of dozens which ran the gauntlet to Malta. She sailed from Alexandria in company with other merchantmen, heavily protected by a bodyguard of British cruisers and destroyers.

The passage from Alexandria was traumatic; the convoy faced the guns of the Italian surface

fleet and Axis bombers – and was severely mauled by the latter. The men aboard Talabot took “a very pessimistic view of our prospects of reaching Malta”.

So the sight of Grand Harbour was naturally a relief. Maltese lined the shore to cheer the ammunition ship's arrival.

But arrival in Grand Harbour offered no protection. Shortly after mid-day on March 26, the Stukas and Ju88s of the Luftwaffe turned their attention against the newly-docked ships.

Despite the urgency of the hour, most of Talabot's cargo had still to be unloaded. It would remain so. For at 12.30pm she was struck by German bombs and set ablaze.

Talabot's companion on her journey from Alexandria had been cruiser HMS Penelope – nicknamed HMS Pepperpot by her men thanks to pasting she'd received at the Luftwaffe's hands.

Fire teams from the Penelope tried in vain to extinguish the blaze aboard the Norwegian, while the merchantman's crew hurriedly shifted what cargo they could ashore.

When the flames could be kept at bay no longer, a scuttling party was sent to Talabot to prevent the ship exploding – and wrecking much of the harbour in an almighty explosion.

Lt Dennis Copperwheat, Penelope's torpedo and explosives officer, led the party, slinging charges over the side while ammunition exploded on deck about them.

With the charges set, the 27-year-old Northumbrian sent his men ashore while he stayed to fire the scuttling explosives.

He was exposed to the full brunt of the blast, which lifted him up in the air and threw him into the harbour. He survived, however, and swam ashore.

Talabot settled in the water; she did not explode – and some of the ordnance she had ferried to Malta was promptly dropped on Italian soil.

As for Dennis Copperwheat, he remained in the RN for another 15 years, attaining the rank of lieutenant commander. He died aged 78 in 1992.



Remembering men with Dash

TWO Royal Navy warships took part in moving commemorations of one of the bravest – and most tragic – episodes in the history of the Fleet Air Arm.

Under glorious skies HM Ships Ledbury and Raider lolled over the spot where six Swordfish torpedo bombers had charged against three of the most potent warships in the German Navy 66 years ago.

All six were shot down and the German heavy ships – Prinz Eugen, Scharnhorst and Gneisenau – reached the safety of home waters after breaking out from Brest.

The 'Channel Dash' as it became known was seen initially as one of the most embarrassing episodes in British naval history by the media.

But newspapers of the day were quick to praise the bravery of the fliers of 825 Naval Air Squadron who set off on what was effectively a suicide mission.

The antiquated Swordfish ran into an umbrella of modern German fighters protecting the warships. Their leader, Lt Cdr Eugene Esmonde, earned the Victoria Cross.

The futile attack was, said Admiral Bertram Ramsay, architect of the Dunkirk evacuation and Normandy landings, "one of the finest

exhibitions of self-sacrifice and devotion to duty the war had ever witnessed."

Sixty-six years later to the day, minehunter Ledbury and Cambridge university training boat Raider sailed from Dover and Ramsgate respectively and converged in the Channel off Deal with a pilot boat and a Dunkirk 'small ships' veteran, Sundowner, for a memorial service with members of the Channel Dash Association.

Survivors of the Dash were few in number in 1942 – of the 18 Swordfish crew, just five were plucked from the Channel – but 66 years later, three are still with us and two were able to attend the ceremony.

Guest of honours at the wreath laying were former observer Lt Cdr Edgar Lee – also a survivor of HMS Ark Royal's sinking in the Mediterranean in 1941 – and Telegraphist/Air Gunner Les Sayer, a veteran of the attack on

the Bismarck; his Swordfish is credited with damaging Hitler's flagship.

They were joined by relatives of Lt Cdr Esmonde, local dignitaries and the Rev Peter Adams, who led a service of remembrance.

With the wreaths laid and prayers said, the four craft returned to port and guests and sailors retired to Ramsgate RNA for lunch and presentation of numerous mementoes.

"There were some incredibly brave stories and one thing we learned from speaking to Lt Cdr Lee was that the Dash brought about a revolution in co-operation between the three Services," said Lt Mark Headley, HMS Raider's CO.

"What was striking particularly was the difference between 1942 and 2008.

"There we were on a fine day, enjoying glorious sunshine. In 1942 there was snow on the

airfield, gloomy skies. It was not a good day. The contrast could not have been greater."

The Channel Dash Association was formed to honour the men of 1942 and to erect a statue in their memory at Manston – today a civilian international airport.

The aim is to install a full-size statue of a Swordfish as a permanent tribute to 825 NAS in front of a museum which celebrates the former airbase's Spitfire and Hurricane heritage.

It's expected to cost £150,000 and more than two thirds of that sum has already been raised.

The association's vice patron is legendary record producer Sir George Martin (the man behind The Beatles), who trained as an observer in Swordfish and was taught aerial gunnery by CPO Don Bunce, credited with shooting down a Focke Wulf 190 on the day of the Dash.

"Sadly, he was unable to attend – he had to go to the Grammys instead. As excuses go, that's a pretty good one," said Lt Headley.

You can read more details about the appeal at www.channeldash.org

● "There we were on a fine day, enjoying glorious sunshine..." HMS Raider follows HMS Ledbury into the Channel for the memorial service for men of 825 NAS

Picture: Peter Nixon, Channel Dash Association



New Saab 9-3 Saloon range: Urban – from 16.7 (16.9) to 39.2 (7.2), Extra-urban – from 39.2 (7.2) to 64.2 (4.4), Combined – from 26.2 (10.8) to 52.3 (5.4). CO₂ Emissions from 147 to 259g/km. New Saab 9-3 Convertible range: Urban – from 16.3 (17.3) to 36.7 (7.7), Extra-urban – from 36.7 (7.7) to 60.1 (4.7), Combined – from 25.4 (11.1) to 48.7 (5.8). CO₂ Emissions from 154 to 266g/km.

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War and



● Men of Charlie Company, 40 Commando, engage Taliban forces near Kajaki with mortars and Javelin missiles while (below) Mne Rich Fussell enjoys a nice hot shower at FOB Gibraltar... or perhaps not



pictures: la(photo) 'aj' macleod, 40 commando

HAVE you had a tough day at work?

The computer crashed.
That email never arrived.
The monthly sales figures had to be compiled.
The boss was riding your back.
The phone never stopped ringing.
Well, frankly, you've got it easy compared with the men of 40 Commando and the people they are trying to help.
The Royals are into the second half of their six-month tour of duty in Afghanistan's Helmand province – and adjusting to a hard but bearable existence.
There are few basics here. Creature comforts are even fewer.
At Forward Operating Base Gibraltar – home to Delta Company – in the Upper Gereshk Valley, chef Cpl James Cox

prepares pot messes some of our older readers would be proud of.
It's his job to turn ten-man ration packs – supplemented by the occasional treat – into a feast for his comrades returning from patrol.
It's not *haute cuisine*, but it is wolfed down by the Royals.
"It's rewarding to see the appreciation you get when the lads come into the galley after their hard work patrolling, hungry for a good meal," said Cpl Cox.
Preparing a 'banquet' consumes only part of the non-commissioned officer's day; he can also be found on sentry duty in the sangars – guard posts built using giant sandbags.
Working days at FOB Gibraltar last a good 14 hours.
And after that, what better way to refresh yourself than with a nice

hot shower?
Well, shower. It's only hot if the sun is shining, as vehicle maintainer Mne Rich Fussell – who keeps the base's motors and generators running – explains.
"Taking a shower is 'emotional' when it's cold, but quite pleasant when the sun is shining," he said succinctly.
It's easy to forget with all the images of sand and dust that Helmand in the winter is not a hospitable environment.
Water supplies are limited, so carrying out all the daily chores has been far from easy.
"Clothes were taking three days to dry – everything gets wet and muddy," said Cpl Denny Gildea, Delta Company's armourer.
"Luckily it's getting warmer now, so the situation is improving."
No Royal Marines' unit in



peacemakers



● An empty shell casing spirals away from a .50 calibre heavy machine gun as the Fire Support Troop of Charlie Company, 40 Commando, pound Taliban positions near Kajaki

Helmand is in greater demand than the Armoured Support Company – the Viking warriors.

We have trumpeted the success of the green berets' armoured vehicle in Helmand in these pages before.

The Viking is the transport *de rigueur* for British troops in Afghanistan – but there are only a finite number of the tracked beasts, and only a finite number of Royals to look after them.

To alleviate the strain on the two units from the Armoured Support Company, the British Army has also been trained to use Viking in the form of the Queen's Royal Lancers.

For the green berets, re-learning the art of armoured warfare after a 50-year hiatus, having the Lancers on board is useful.

"Although Viking is different from what they have used before, their experience of armoured vehicles won't go to waste," explained Maj Jez Stemp, Officer Commanding the Armoured Support Company.

"The Viking's a phenomenal vehicle – its greatest asset is its all-terrain mobility. The Taliban tend to mine known routes, but Vikings can manoeuvre around them and go off road.

"The flip side is the high demand across the task force. The guys are in constant work and the tempo of activity is high."

The Vikings are used chiefly as armoured taxis: they ferry troops into inaccessible areas, drop them off for a patrol, then return to pick the lads up. They also double up as ambulances should there be any casualties.

Viking offers some, though not total protection, to the men it carries. It is not a tank, and mines are a big fear.

But the Royals driving Viking are in no doubt that the 'armoured

shell' has saved lives.

L/Cpl Dean Walker points to a scar of battle on one vehicle where an enemy round was stopped; it never reached its intended target, the driver's head.

"You see that and think: *Thank f*** we've got this kit,*" he says rather bluntly. "You'd still s*** yourself if you'd been sitting there,

but it's a great example of how Viking's doing its job."

The most exposed part of the Viking is its upper gun, but the turret has been redesigned to afford the gunner greater protection.

And when the GPMG is pounding away, the insurgents tend to keep their heads down.

"The battlefield's a fast-moving place and Viking is capable of keeping the enemy on the back foot," enthused Cpl Simon Whitby,

on his second tour of duty with the Vikings in Helmand.

"I'm loving being back. I'd much rather be back here than sitting back at home."

If there's an Achilles' heel, it's Viking's love of fuel. "Apart from that, I can't fault them at all," said Mne Tom Aylett.

"They provide us with a lot more protection and allow us to get closer to the enemy.

"I am actually in love with this vehicle – you couldn't ask for a better one."

Of course meeting and defeating the Taliban head-to-head in battle is only half the struggle in Helmand.

To prevent the fundamentalists taking hold again, the Allied forces in Afghanistan must show the indigenous population there can be a better future.

Key to a better future is better facilities, facilities we take for granted.

After the warriors have gone, the Royal Marines' 'outreach patrols' move into a town or village, accompanied by engineers, medics, nurses, dentists.

The pioneers begin repairing walls, culverts, drains, the irrigation system; winter clothes, blankets and farming implements are distributed; refreshed by his shower, Rich Russell fixes cars and motorbikes; and the medical teams offer check-ups and treatment for minor ailments.

"Once news got out that a medical team were in the area, the local population were more than happy to receive treatment, including pain relief and dental aid," explained Surg Lt Mike Hesketh, 40 Cdo's dentist.

"The key to all our outreach work is ensuring security first, then following it with positive activity, helping local people to develop their communities – and alienating the insurgents.

■ Whitehall has just announced that 3 Commando Brigade will be heading Britain's efforts in Afghanistan from October.



● Delta Company, 40 Commando, conduct an 'outreach' patrol in the Upper Gereshk Valley accompanied by medics and a dentist and (left) a novel approach to ablutions... a Royal catches up on his reading in the heads at FOB Gibraltar

Meet the loch keepers

ACHILLES had his heel.

The Death Star had its thermal exhaust port.

The Bismarck had a dodgy rudder.

And Britain's ultimate weapon? Well, it really doesn't feel at home where most ships do: riding the waves.

Yes, even the most potent of leviathans has a weak spot. Fortunately, Britain's V-boats now have the Royal Marines to protect them.

Every movement by a strategic missile submarine in the Clyde is now guarded by a cloak of steel, brandished by the Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines.

Two of the Royals' new fast patrol boats, ORCs – Offshore Raiding Craft, pictured here by LA(Phot) Del Trotter of FRPU Clyde – straddle each Vanguard-class boat on its return from/ departure for patrol or trials, with a third riding shotgun behind it.

They form the last line of defence for the 16,000-ton boats; police ribs and a police launch and two tugs from HM Naval Base Clyde provide an outer cordon, aimed at protecting the boats and chiefly warning off any protestors.

Traditionally, the Navy's 'bombers' have been escorted by the police alone, but Whitehall decided beefing up security for the boats would be a wise move.

FPGRM were the obvious choice. The Faslane-based unit already protects the boats in port and also safeguard the nuclear warheads at Coulport ammunition depot.

And so at least three ORCs – each crewed by armed Royal Marines – accompany every V-boat in and out of the lochs by day and night.

The men are given up to 48 hours to prepare for their task – movements of the Vanguards are naturally not widely broadcast.

And while the ORCs can scurry along at a fair rate of knots, the submarines cannot – not on the surface at any rate.

It takes roughly six or seven hours to shepherd the boats before they sink beneath the Firth of Clyde or tie up inside their protective booms at Faslane.

And so, it's fair to say, this new task is not the most attractive mission in the Corps – at least not on a very windy February morning. Six hours in a dry suit bumping up and down the Clyde is rather laborious (and not especially dry either).

But come glorious summer on the Clyde (this year it's on a Saturday – Ed) it will be, as Cpl Barry O'Neill points out, "happy days".

ORC is not ideal for this job – not yet at any rate. It's fast and well armed, but it's not



the best seakeeper (RIBs, the FPG chaps explain, are better) and it is, as one Royal acidly remarked, "the wettest boat I have ever known". (Trials are under way on modifications to put this right, though.)

Still, the job has to be done – there is none more important.

"We realise that the job needs doing and we will do it to the very best of our ability," Barry says.

And there are few people better qualified to safeguard the bombers than FPG... as they're also the experts in attacking slow-moving vessels.

"We think of the worst, the maddest thing

which someone could do against us so we know the best way of defending against it," Barry explains.

"We head to Loch Long to carry out training with tugs acting as submarines and try to attack/defend them to hone our skills."

No-one has tried to penetrate the steel cordon yet. In fact, most people stay away.

"If you see police escorts, police RIBs, a couple of tugs, three heavily-armed ORCs and a nuclear submarine, you tend to stay away," says FPGRM's second-in-command Lt Col Mark Maddick.

"You get the odd Sunday afternoon sailor wanting to have a look, or perhaps a peace protester, but generally speaking people stay clear of us."

The men from R.O.N.S.E.A.L.

Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines is Britain's 'Ronseal unit' – "We do exactly what it says on the tin", explains second-in-command Lt Col Mark Maddick.

The 'tin' says fleet protection – and that's what the commandos do... and a little bit more to boot.

FPGRM is actually a rather eclectic formation as its duties are scattered across the globe and spread between land, sea and air.

First and foremost the 500-plus green berets protect Britain's ultimate weapon, patrolling the 'special area' both at HMNB Clyde and also at the nearby Coulport armament depot where the nuclear warheads can be found.

Whenever nuclear weapons move on Britain's roads, FPGRM escort them. In all these sentry and guard duties, it is the commandos' task not to stop peace campaigners – a job for the police chiefly – but armed attacks.

"We are here fundamentally to stop a terrorist attack – we are the last line of defence, the people who deal with something or someone that the police cannot deal with," says Lt Col Maddick.

"It's a demanding task – in the 'special area', for example you spend five weeks on and five weeks off – training and catching up on leave.

"You're at extremely high readiness to move throughout. The lads are fully booted and spurred with all their kit ready to go.

"These men possess unique skills – fighting in and around the base, beneath the jetties if they have to."

Other FPGRM detachments safeguard the 'command bunker' at Northwood.

It's part of the Royal Marines role which doesn't feature too often in these pages, unlike the Fleet Standby Rifle Troop – the men who protect RN warships on deployment and provide expert boarding teams for operations in the Gulf and Caribbean.

Lastly, the group – which comes under the command of Fleet Headquarters, not 3 Commando Brigade – provides a support group for the country's Special Forces.

Not all green berets enjoy their attachment to Faslane, but life has improved markedly for the men in recent years believes Lt Col Maddick.

"As Comacchio Group, this was not a particularly attractive draft," he adds. "Now our tasks are much, much more interesting."

"For the guys doing nuclear protection duties, what FPGRM provides is stability – the protection cycle is planned rigidly.

Food is good, there are computers for education and the internet, a very good gym. It's like working in a concrete submarine.

"Our boarding teams are very, very busy – they don't have the stability, but they do get the interesting jobs."



Samples can help with ID

SAILORS and Royal Marines are being urged to volunteer their DNA to ease the process of identification should they be killed in action or accidents.

Whitehall would like anyone deploying to an operational theatre – Service personnel or MOD civilian staff – to offer samples, care of swabs taken from inside the mouth.

At present only aircrew and men and women involved with flying duties provide samples.

The MOD wants to make identification in the event of death failsafe.

In some instances, such as an air accident, traditional methods of identification such as using dental records cannot give conclusive the proof offered by DNA.

Personnel who volunteer will see their samples stored at the RAF Centre of Aviation Medicine in Bedfordshire.

The samples will not be analysed or logged on a database; they will simply be stored and analysed only when post-mortem identification is required.

Samples can be destroyed at the written request of the person who has given them, or when they leave the Service/after 45 years, whichever is sooner.

More details can be found in DIN 2007 01-146 DNA Sampling Policy.

Daring folk in Guernsey

THE good people of the island of Guernsey should sleep easy in their beds... they have the most potent anti-air warfare ship in the world as their guardians.

Already affiliated to the City of Birmingham, Type 45 destroyer HMS Daring is now bound for life with the Channel Island.

First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Jonathan Band agreed that the warship, currently in the latter stages of fitting out on the Clyde, could be affiliated with Guernsey.

"The island community knows better than most the importance of the Royal Navy in today's uncertain world," said Guernsey's Lieutenant Governor – and retired vice admiral – Sir Fabian Malbon.

"I know from personal experience that the people of Guernsey will give Daring a warm welcome whenever she is able to visit."

After first-rate sea trials off Scotland last summer, Daring returned to BAE Systems' yard at Scotstoun for continuing work to finish her.

She is due back at sea this spring for further trials and will pay her first visit to her future home of Portsmouth later this year.

Daring is due to commission in 2009.

York enjoys big package

HMS York will be out of action for the next year as she undergoes a £17m overhaul in Portsmouth.

It's been four years since the destroyer was last revamped.

This latest major package of work is aimed at all parts of the White Rose ship.

Her Sea Dart launcher is being ripped out... and replaced with a refurbished one.

The computer/comms system will also be completely revamped with fresh cables laid throughout the ship.

The engines will receive some TLC and a transom flap – a sort of underwater spoiler – is to be fitted on the stern to increase York's speed without increasing her fuel consumption.

A team of 100 engineers and shipwrights from FSL, the Portsmouth support and repair organisation, will also give mess decks and living spaces a makeover.

York will be in dry dock until August and will not return to the Fleet until March 2009.

Best in show

BASKING under the beams of powerful floodlights, another day ends for HMS Exeter at the 2008 London Boat Show.



Exeter was, without doubt, the largest and most expensive craft on show... and the only one to have shot down enemy aircraft in battle.

The show has been the preserve of the Type 23 frigate fleet in recent years; in fact, Exeter was the first destroyer to visit the event in the heart of London's docklands.

Getting into King George V Dock was, we're told "challenging" as the inclement January weather raged.

Indeed the show opened in pouring rain, which meant the Band of the Royal Marines could be found inside the ExCel exhibition centre providing appropriate musical accompaniment for the opening ceremony (the weather cleared up sufficiently later for the musicians to perform on the quay next to Exeter).

The ship herself was opened to visitors throughout the show; aside from tours of the upper deck, tourists were also permitted to tour some of her superstructure, including the bridge.

In excess of 2,000 people climbed Exeter's gangway every day of the ten-day event – that's one in every six visitors to the show (and 16,000 more people than the Volvo Ocean race simulator got... but 15,000 less than the number of pints

of Guinness downed). Many of those people wandering around Exeter's hallowed passageways in the January cold attended the boat show solely to see the Falklands veteran.

When not hosting dignitaries and guiding the public around the destroyer, the ship's company wandered through the cavernous ExCel centre in No.1s – and were invariably buttonholed by visitors.

They did, however, find time to clamber on to some of the luxury yachts on display, whose interiors were "like a five-star hotel" (just like Exeter, then – Ed).

"I've never seen anything like them – it was amazing to see the glamour of these multi-million-pound yachts. I just wish I could afford one," lamented LS Michelle Coleman.

Actually, she probably could. The cheapest craft on sale was a £545 dinghy (the priciest, a £11½m Sunseeker yacht, was just out of her price range though).

Such dreams of luxury on the high seas have now evaporated. Exeter sailed straight from London for The Rock where she's being used to train budding principal warfare officers in the art, er, of warfare.

● Night and day... HMS Exeter lit up at night at the London Boat Show

Picture: LA(Phot) Alex Cave, FRPU Whale Island



● Cold but at least dry... Mnes Lee Hanmore (left) and Rich 'Reg' Melia take a break from paddling the Gironde to pose in their authentic 1942-era commando kit

Picture: BBC

'If they didn't have it, we didn't have it'

RECREATED down to the last detail. Same clothes. Same boat. Same route. Same month.

Marines Lee Hanmore and Rich 'Reg' Melia set out on a cold night in December to recreate that epic journey to the shipyards of Bordeaux by the Cocksleshell heroes in Exercise Frankton Remembered.

Mne Hanmore said: "It wasn't about me and Reg – all our focus was on the memory of the original guys. That was just as important as the paddle itself."

"If we wanted to put ourselves into their shoes, we had to go back to absolute basics. If they didn't have it, we didn't have it."

Of the 12 men originally intended for the dangerous mission, only ten set out after one canoe was damaged getting it out of the submarine HMS Tuna.

Capsizing, cold, capture and death were the fate of six of the men, while four made it to plant limpet mines on the enemy shipping in Bordeaux harbour.

Only Major 'Blondie' Hasler and Mne Bill Sparks eventually made it back to England alive.

"We never capsized, although very nearly on the first landing in the first night – six foot waves on the beach," said Mne Hanmore. "Even the safety boat couldn't get in."

"It was cold, but nothing that we haven't come across before. All it did was rain the whole time. Exactly the same as it did for them."

"The longest leg, 28 miles, was the second one. The conditions were absolutely horrendous with waves coming from all angles. We were rolling and pitching all over the place. The waves would hit the side then splash up in the air and into the canoe."

"After five and a half hours I was sitting up to my waist in water."

He added: "We were paddling over five nights,

sleeping in the canoe during the day with a camouflage net over us.

"All our clothing and kit were exactly as they had, or as close as we could get. It was really hard to research it, the information just isn't around any more or wasn't recorded in the first place."

"It was a real buzz paddling into Bordeaux. We were fighting against the current a little bit. You could even feel the buzz from the safety team in their boat."

"The harbour wasn't all that different from their day. If you look in the accounts, the first thing they saw were some cranes. Those are still there today. It was quite weird really."

"We were surprised by how lit up it was, how they managed to get in and out without being seen. That river is a big place, but even so, it was a remarkable achievement."

"We got a few interested looks when we paddled in to Bordeaux with our hoods up in the rain from some French people wandering along the quayside."

Arrival in Bordeaux was not the end of the exercise as the two marines attended commemorative events with veterans associations, and visited memorials around Bordeaux: "We laid wreaths at the places where the guys who were captured were executed."

"I'm 99 per cent certain we're the first team to repeat it as originally done – at night, in December, in World War 2 kit."

"People have been really supportive in the Corps. It took a while to get it together – lots of issues safetywise, etc. No one was really sure how to do it."

"Then Capt Matt Pinkney RM got involved. He worked really hard and really helped us out."

Mne Hanmore plans to mark the raid once more in December 2012, and is looking for more commandos to take up the challenge in memory of the heroes of Operation Frankton.

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A FORCE FOR GOOD



Doin' it for the KIDS

SAILORS on the System Engineering Management course at HMS Sultan put aside their traditional tools for spades and secateurs when they went to help out at the KIDS Family Centre in Fareham.

Once the revamp of the garden was complete, the sailors headed inside to mend broken toys and rebuild play areas.

Liz Morley-Smith, assistant director, said: "They were absolutely fantastic – they just mucked in with everything."

"They were the best we've had and the children loved it too, they got to join in and the sailors were really good with them (pictured above). When they came back from the garden, they brought in a load of muddy boots – but then I turned around and two of them were already mopping up."

The KIDS centre offers children with special needs and their parents a mix of fun, learning, friendship and support.



● HMS Ark Royal arrives in Poole harbour with escorting RNLI lifeboats

Picture: RNLI/Nathan Williams

Saving lives at sea is Ark's priority

Calliope cares Sporting surveyors

RESERVISTS from HMS Calliope in Gateshead visited the Special Care Baby Unit at the local Queen Elizabeth Hospital to donate £2,736.

The money was raised over the course of the year, from raffles, social events and races.

CPO John Hamilton, the main driving force, said: "We're delighted to visit the hospital and get the opportunity to meet the staff of the SCBU, giving us a valuable insight into their hard work."

SPORTSMEN and women at the Hydrographic, Meteorological and Oceanographic Training Group in Plymouth raised £700 for the Macmillan Unit at Christchurch Hospital in Dorset.

The charity was chosen by the surveyors as it offered terminal care for the wife of a former colleague WO Steve Hawes, Sylvie, who lost her battle with cancer last year.

The money will go to provide specialist home-care equipment.

AIRCRAFT carrier HMS Ark Royal arrived in Poole to show support for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution's (RNLI) 'Train one, save many' campaign.

The Fleet flagship was escorted into the Dorset harbour by RNLI lifeboats and their volunteer crews.

The RNLI crews in their D- and B-class lifeboats took advantage of the carrier's weighty presence to practise their pacing techniques, a core skill for rescue operations.

Meanwhile on board Ark, a presentation was made to the RNLI's Andy Whyte, who said: "We're absolutely thrilled to carry out our training exercise alongside HMS Ark Royal and feel very privileged that its crew continue to support the RNLI and its campaign."

"I'd especially like to thank the crew for their fundraising efforts and for taking the time to come and visit us in Poole today. It's been a very special and worthwhile exercise for our volunteer lifeboat crew members."

The 'Train one, save many' campaign is intrinsic to the RNLI's work, as only one volunteer crewman in ten now has any maritime background, yet they are working on one of the most demanding environments.

Four RNLI volunteer crew members – Stephen Johnson, Lee Firman, Steve Saint and Glenn Walker – had joined HMS Ark Royal in her affiliates' voyage south from Newcastle, finding out a little about life on board a Royal Naval vessel.

The ship's company on board the warship began raising funds

for the RNLI last year, announcing the affiliation during the Falklands 25 commemorations in London.

Capt Mike Mansergh, commanding officer of the carrier, said: "HMS Ark Royal greatly values the close link between the RNLI and the Royal Navy in the safety of life at sea."

"The Fleet flagship is a strong advocate of the RNLI's 'Train one, save many' campaign."

"We welcomed the opportunity to train together with volunteer RNLI lifeboat crews as we passed Poole harbour on our ship's return from training in the North Sea."

● IT'S not Royal Navy ships that support the RNLI across the country, as once more ratings

from HMS Raleigh will left onto their shoulders the 'Black Prince' for the lifeboat crews.

The flower-decorated boat, which has a permanent home in the Naval training establishment, is carried through the villages of Millbrook, Kingsand and Cawsand in south-east Cornwall as part of their May Day ceremonials.

Collections on the day will be in aid of the RNLI, which organises the event along with the Black Prince committee.

● Sailors from HMS Raleigh carry the Black Prince during last year's May Day celebrations



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Blasting beebees for the RNBT

THE Royal Naval Benevolent Trust benefitted from a day of bullet-free battling, courtesy of Combat South, a sport akin to paint-balling, but using plastic projectiles called beebees.

The sport which uses guns to real weapon specifications, says owner Steve Banks, is popular with RN personnel in the Portsmouth area, and that was why he decided to run a fundraising shoot for a Service charity.

Initial hopes to raise £500 were confounded by generous support which boosted the total to £1899.

Steve said: "I chose the RNBT because my father spent 26 years in the Royal Navy and we have another family member who is currently serving. I just wanted to do something to help."

"I am absolutely overwhelmed by people's generosity."

The RNBT is the main naval charity for those who are serving or have served in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, up to and including warrant officers, and their dependants. The primary purpose of the RNBT always has been to give grants to individuals in financial difficulties.

Grants can range from relatively small amounts up to thousands of pounds, which are provided to relieve distress or in necessity – food, clothing, rent, medical items, funerals, the possibilities are almost endless. The Trust also runs Pembroke House near Chatham which provides nursing care for 50 residents.

If you would like any more information, call 023 9266 0296 or visit **www.rnbt.org.uk**.

814 NAS Tigers cycle south

FOUR cyclists from 814 NAS, the RNAS Culdrose-based Merlin helicopter squadron, cycled from John O'Groats to Land's End to raise money for Macmillan nurses and Sennen Children's ward at Treliske Hospital in Truro.

The Tigers on Tour were WO AET Shane Court, CPO AET Paul Breen, POAEM Paul Turton and LAET Ian Maskell, ably supported by Lt George Gillingham, PO Chris Jackson and AETs Rhys Dyas, Jason Hall and Karl Baker.

The event was dedicated to Lt Cdr John Phesse, who was Air Engineering Officer of 814 NAS, and died last August after a long battle against cancer.

news
in brief



● Former Tiff Steve Chard

FORMER electrical artificer Steve Chard is running the Stanley Marathon in the Falklands this month in memory of three friends who were killed in the 1982 war and to raise funds for the Royal British Legion.

Steve served in the Royal Navy from 1974 to 1987 on board submarines Spartan, Swiftsure, Sceptre and Splendid.

He has set himself the ambitious target of raising £10,000 – pledge your support online at **www.justgiving.com/stevechard50**.

MORE marathon men are former Naval officers Myles Morson, now with the RNR at HMS Wildfire, and Craig McEwen, who is leaving the dark blue to join the Army, both of whom are tackling this year's London Marathon in April.

The two men plan to take on the 26 miles of London streets dressed in full military attire to raise money for the British Forces Foundation.

Find out more on their website **www.macventure.org.uk** or **www.justgiving.com/macventure**.

SUBMARINER CPO Scott Macphail from HMS Triumph is organising a 100-mile charity walk from Plymouth to Exmouth along the South Coast Path this month.

The team are raising money for the Chestnut Appeal based at Derriford Hospital.

Send your support c/o CPO Macphail, HMS Triumph, BFPO 406.

A NEW stained-glass window dedicated to the Royal Marines commandos who have given their lives in their country has been the inspiration for a two-track CD entitled *The Light that Brings Us Home*.

The CD, available online via **www.glasgowthecaringcity.com** at £4, has the support of Rev Mike Hills RN, the Fleet Protection Group RM chaplain.

He said: "The CD is a gentle tribute, as is the stained glass window in Cathcart Old Parish Church, to all who have paid the supreme sacrifice and a gift to those who continue to love in a broken world."

"All money raised will be used by the Naval Chaplaincy Service to quietly assist in the pastoral care of our bereaved Service personnel, their families and partners."

CHARITY Veterans Aid is encouraging anyone who recognises a homeless ex-Serviceman or woman to point them towards the charity for help and support.

After ten years service in the RN, Nick's (surname removed for anonymity) return to civilian life was torn apart by the death of his mother. He was helped at the charity's hostel in Stepney for several months, before setting out to re-establish himself with a new job, career and wife.

The charity has close links with the RN since its beginnings when in 1924 Major Gilbert Huggins and his family, with Lt Cronyn RN, were travelling to visit HMS Calypso in Malta's Grand Harbour and their boat was struck by HMS Venomous.

After a remarkable escape from the bottom of the harbour, Mrs Huggins set up this charity.

Tel: 020 7828 2468 or visit **www.veterans-aid.net**.

news
in brief

Diver turns driver

THERE'S a good chance that most readers of *Navy News* have stood beneath the legs of the Eiffel Tower and marvelled at this triumph of engineering.

Later this month PO(D) Mark Jones will stand in the shadows of the French icon astride another triumph of engineer: a KTM 640 Adventure motorbike.

It will, fingers crossed, take him across continents, over mountains, across desert, through woods and copses, over scrubland – all in the name of his mum.

Mark, based at Fleet Diving Unit 3 at Horsea Island in Portsmouth, is one of 157 competitors in the Heroes Legend race which takes motorcyclists from the Eiffel Tower to the shores of the Atlantic in Dakar, Senegal.

The diver hopes his participation in the 14-day race will make life easier for families who endure the trauma of what his family suffered four years ago.

His mother was diagnosed with the incurable brain disease CJD at the end of 2003. By the summer of 2004, it had claimed her life.

Whilst scientists continue research into CJD, the senior rating hopes to help sufferers of the disease on a more personal level, raising cash for the CJD Network which aids victims and their families through trying times.

"I see this as the final chapter in my mum's life, so while I'm looking forward to the challenge and looking forward to seeing different countries and different nations, I want to raise as much money as possible for other people in my mum's name," Mark explains.

The result is the Paris-Dakar Heroes Legend race – "a bit of a boy's adventure, but with a serious side".

There's nowhere in the UK which can prepare you for the demands of the Sahara – the section of the race which is both the most physically demanding and potentially dangerous.

"Getting through the soft sand of the desert really saps your energy – it probably takes three times the effort you need on hard ground," says Mark.

The diver/biker has been practising his off-road skills in 'hare and hounds' races around the rug-



● PO(Diver) Mark Jones prepares for Paris-Dakar

Picture: LA(Phot) Alex Cave

ged English terrain – races which proved an eye-opener as after a couple of hours in the saddle, he was "pole axed".

The real thing is even more demanding. Yes, there are 6,800km (4,225 miles) to cover in 14 days. Yes, there's a lot of off-roading, yes there's desert.

But that's only half the story. Each stage of the race requires a 'road book' – a small pictograph which fixes to the handlebar and guides competitors around the course. It has to be rolled forward

manually... and it's in French. There's also GPS to keep tabs on too.

"You have to look at the road ahead, keep track of the GPS and keep looking at the road book – and remember to roll it along," says Mark.

Keeping track of location is crucial in the desert, as the road book guides you to check points where you can refuel. Last year one rider was lost for three days in the Sahara. There is a 'panic button' – each bike is fitted with a

locator, but activating it is a measure of last resort: press it and your race is over.

Few bikers press the button. Last year, everyone finished the Heroes Legend.

"There's a hell of a lot of miles to do every day – and a hell of a lot of miles off road. The challenge for me is not to win, it's to finish and to raise as much money as possible," Mark adds.

"The Heroes Legend is a race and there is a serious side to it, but it's also a gentleman's race – if you break down there's a good chance that someone behind you will stop and help you out."

The racers leave the French capital on March 8 and should arrive in Dakar on March 22.

It has cost each one £4,500 to enter – the fee covers things such as the helicopter which accompanies riders throughout the event to ensure everyone is safe – an outlay offset by some help from DNR and the sale of a couple of bikes. Elsewhere a local motorcycle shop has prepared Mark's KTM 640 Adventure and Michelin provided discounted tyres.

But otherwise, the burden falls upon the diver. "I didn't realise how much planning and preparation was involved. I set five or six months aside and it's flown by."

"I need two passports, I need to arrange visas for the countries I am riding through. And in between that and my day job, I have to learn to ride off road and learn basic mechanics."

The 42-year-old has clubbed together with three fellow racers to pay for a support driver/mechanic (in this case experienced ex-enduro racer Clive Dredge).

"When you have had ten to 14 hours in the saddle, you don't want to be putting up your own tent. Hopefully, it will be ready for me at the end of each day."

Even when the race ends in Senegal, the adventure – and the spending – isn't quite over. Mark's bike will be shipped back (he himself flies home from Dakar), eventually arriving in Belgium... so he'll have to cross the Channel to collect it and ride it back to Devon.

You can donate to the CJD network via Mark's website www.justgiving.com/bikeforcjd.

Superb effort for former crewmate

MEMBERS of HMS Superb's crew have raised £500 for one of their old shipmates.

Carl Baller, a leading hand on the submarine, was diagnosed in February last year with acute myeloma.

The past 12 months have seen him visit four hospitals, undergo intensive chemo and radiotherapy, and become wheelchair bound.

Carl is now in remission and in the care of the Larkfield Unit of Inverclyde Royal Hospital where he is undergoing a course of physiotherapy to get him back on his feet.

WO Neil MacKinnon and PO Brian Baldasara led the efforts on board the Swiftsure-class submarine to raise money for the former crewmember.

A Thousand-Number Draw on board the boat saw each number sold off for £1 each, and at the suggestion of the CO, Cdr Steve Drysdale, £500 was ringfenced for Carl while the rest was split into first, second and third prizes.

Neil and Bryan visited their friend at the Greenock hospital to present the cheque, which Carl plans to spend on an orthopaedic mattress to aid his recovery.

Carl said: "I am just so touched by this gift from my crewmates. It means a huge amount to me and my family."



● Aircrew from 750 NAS help Carus the Patagonian sea lion

Picture: Al Edwards

Culdrose cares for Carus

CARUS is a slightly unwieldy half-tonne Patagonian sea lion, and the kind-hearted fliers of 750 Naval Air Squadron at Culdrose were called to his aid.

The 420kg seal was in urgent need of an operation, but it needed a bit of extra help to hoist him from his pool to his makeshift operating theatre at Gweek Seal Sanctuary in Cornwall.

Ten staff and students from RNAS Culdrose, including 750's commanding officer Lt Cdr Bow Wheaton, helped to coax the sea lion into the cargo net then up

into the air for medical transfer.

We are told that despite his size, Carus is a gentle character, and the only aggressive thing about him is his fishy breath...

Once the lifting and shifting work was done, the expertise of the local vet took over, and the Naval aircrew retreated to the Sanctuary's café for a warming cup of tea.

Operation complete, Carus was gently returned to his poolside home.

Go to www.sealsanctuary.co.uk to find out more.

Allies dig in to dig out Churchtown

THE British and American navies joined forces – as they are wont to do – but not usually up their knees in mud...

A team of 20 trainee sailors from HMS Raleigh and 30 US sailors from the Joint Maritime Facility (JMF) at RAF St Mawgan worked together at the Vitalise Churchtown Centre in Lanlivery.

Laying a wooden path, levelling the ground and clearing overgrowth from a stream were among the tasks tackled by the sailors from the US and UK – along with some RAF airmen also based at JMF.

The annual work day saw the centre's staff and willing volunteers complete some much-needed maintenance and renovation.

The Churchtown activity centre focuses on the needs of adults and children with physical, sensory and learning disabilities, and each year closes for a month to allow for some repair and reconstruction.

HMS Raleigh's commanding officer, Capt Jonathan Woodcock, said: "This is the third year that we have joined forces with our American counterparts."

"The Royal Navy are often called upon to provide humanitarian aid to local communities all over the world – sailors can be sent ashore to carry out tasks similar to that at Churchtown."

"Our sailors enjoy their work at the centre, and this is a good opportunity for them to gain some



● US Navy and Royal Navy join forces to lay a path at Vitalise Churchtown Centre in Lanlivery

Picture: Dave Sherfield

experience of the role they may be asked to fulfil in the future."

Churchtown fundraiser Mick Ryan said: "We are extremely grateful for the continued generosity of the Royal Navy and Joint Maritime Facility personnel."

"With a 12-acre site and numerous buildings to upkeep, the centre would not be able to offer the much-needed breaks to disabled people and their carers without the help and assistance of our many supporters in the community."

Sailors from HMS Raleigh are regular visitors to Churchtown – the establishment adopted the activity centre as its nominated charity over 20 years ago.

The centre provides year-round day services for adults with physical and learning disabilities from the local area, with activities including swimming, woodwork, music, arts and crafts. It also offers week-long holidays for disabled people and their carers.

Find out more online at www.vitalise.org.uk.

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● CPOs Jack Hammond and Alan High in Afghanistan

Bumping into old bunkmates

TWENTY-FIVE years since first joining the Royal Navy together, CPOs Jack Hammond and Alan High found they were back to sharing the same room in Afghanistan.

The two men are serving together in 801 NAS, under Naval Strike Wing which is made up of elements of 800 and 801 Naval Air Squadrons.

This is the third time the pair have served together since basic training.

The duo have consecutive service numbers due to their alphabetical ordering as new entries in to Raleigh.

Jack, Unit Mobility Officer for 801 NAS, said: "Al is like a stubborn rash that won't go away, even after 25 years!"

"I'm always happy to pose for a photo with Al as it makes me look so much slimmer."

"In all honesty, Al is a top bloke and I'm happy to have dragged him through the last 25 years and help him get his Chief's rate..."

"As I see it, Al may have got his Chief's rate before me but due to

having an earlier official number than him, I'll always be senior to him."

Al, who is the Regulator and Squadron Manpower Controller for the Harrier unit, recalled the start of their careers: "One thing which still sticks in my mind is that whilst in new entry training I was bulling up my steel-tip boots as normal in the evening, but by mistake I picked up Jack's boots as he was in the bed next to me."

"I worked on his boots to gain a good shine – the only time they were ever in a good state."

"While I was doing this Jack had come into the barrack block and saw his boots were missing – after some investigation he knew I was polishing his boots but did not let me know until I had finished them."

"So, since day one and for the last 25 years, I have been carrying him."

As far as both men are aware, there is only one other man left from their original intake, LAET Dave Ingram, now serving with 702 NAS.

...and in Cornwall

WHEN frigate HMS Cornwall visited her affiliated county, her commanding officer Cdr Jeremy Woods met up with a shipmate from his early days at Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth.

However John Trott eventually gave up life in a dark blue uniform for life in a dark blue uniform... Inspector Trott, Devon and Cornwall Police Commander for Falmouth and Penryn.

Cdr Woods said: "It was a real pleasure to host John on board and see the success he has made of his career in Devon and Cornwall police, where I always knew he would do well."

Inspector Trott said: "A strong friendship was formed during the year at Dartmouth before we went our separate ways into the Fleet and that friendship has remained ever since. This is a great opportunity to catch up."

New music star on the horizon

THE last time you saw PTI Jay Picton in the pages of *Navy News* he was deep in a Norwegian snowdrift, honing the fitness of the Commando Helicopter Force in the Navy's Arctic gym.

What the story didn't say was that Jay was spending his spare time honing a different set of skills – his growing talent as a singer/songwriter.

Now the Navy's PTI is widely tipped as a name to watch in the music world.

The original *Navy News* feature was in March 2007. A few months earlier a serious knee injury had laid Jay up for some weeks, and put his rugby playing into doubt.

But there is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune – or in Jay's case, the discovery of a completely unexpected talent.

To while away the hours while he recovered, Jay bought a guitar, and although he couldn't even read music, he found he had a knack for singing and writing songs.

When he returned home to Portsmouth he did some gigs in a Southsea bar and was soon discovered by a leading record producer.

After recording and unofficially releasing his three debut tracks, Jay topped the indiestore download charts after just two days and stayed there for five weeks.

The industry is now hot for him, and the 24-year-old from Tenby is already being described as "the Navy's answer to James Blunt."

The Sun's music columnist wrote in sweetly old-fashioned terms that he was "set to make the ladies swoon."



● Jay Picton

But Jay isn't letting it go to his head. He is currently working at Fort Blockhouse where, he says, his feet are firmly on the ground.

"I have great ambitions for my job as a physical trainer – it's still what I love doing," he said.

He added: "This musical career came out of the blue really – and it's taking over more of my life."

"Things are already hectic with working fulltime as a PTI and laying down the tracks for my new album."

Tipped as one of the big names for 2008, Jay is now working with one of the UK's top managers Paul Stacey and leading record producer Jasper Irn, who produces Lily Allen and the All Saints.

But has no plans to leave the Navy – and he's promised *Navy News* that he won't be too grand to talk to us when he's splashed all over the world's media.

Find out more online at www.jaypicton.co.uk and www.myspace.com/1jayp.

White Ensign banquet at the Palace

THE White Ensign Association marked the beginning of its 50th anniversary with a banquet in Buckingham Palace, hosted by the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall.

The other principal hosts were Commodore Sir Donald Gosling (President of the Association) Admiral the Lord Boyce (Chairman) and Admiral Sir Jonathan Band, First Sea Lord.

Serving officers and commanding officers of ships, establishments and units of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines also hosted the guests, who included Countess Mountbatten of Burma, friends and supporters of the association and captains of industry.

Sea Cadets from TS Saumarez based in Teddington lined the stairs as the guests arrived, and the Band of HM Royal Marines (Portsmouth) provided the music.

The White Ensign Association was set up in 1958 to help all those leaving the Navy in the wake of major defence cuts. It offers free, impartial and confidential advice about such issues as resettlement and future employment, house purchase, divorce, debt and bereavement.

To date the association has advised and briefed well over 100,000 people, and finds its workload undiminished, although the Navy is only a quarter the size it was when it was founded.



● Proud uncles WO Don Shaw and Cdr Steven Shaw flank their nephew Trainee Naval Airman Callum Lang

Shaw-ly a recipe for Lang service

WHEN Trainee Naval Airman Callum Lang passed out on parade at HMS Raleigh, his proud uncles were there to cheer him on and welcome him into his Naval career.

WO Don Shaw joined the Navy in 1975, and was followed five years later by his brother Steven, who is now a commander serving as branch manager for logistics officers.

Callum said: "It feels great to finish nine weeks of intensive work and training."

"The training was varied and kept us occupied all the time. There was always something different to learn."

"I can't wait to start the next stage of my training and get on to a ship to start some 'real' work, and also continue training so that I can gain promotion in the future."

From Raleigh, the Larkhall lad is heading further southwest to RNAS Culdrose where he will continue his training with Naval aircraft.



JACK OF ALL TRADES

IN THE first of an occasional series on the myriad jobs in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, Padre Bill Gates, 45 Commando, sheds light into the life of a 'devil dodger' with the green berets...

"AS I look back, it seems a long journey from ordinary civilian clergyman to becoming Padre of 45 Commando Group Royal Marines.

I joined the Royal Navy after five years as a full-time Methodist minister in Weymouth.

Following time at BRNC Dartmouth, I went to CTCRM to undertake commando training and earn my 'green lid'.

Having achieved that, I joined 45 Commando in time to complete the whole deployment to Afghanistan.

Now we are in the Arctic Circle in Harstad, Norway and facing a totally different challenge.

Like many in the unit out here, this is my first trip to Norway with the Corps and as such I am a Novice undertaking the Cold Weather Warfare Course (CWWC).

I have never skied before, so learning how to ski on 'Pusser's Planks' is taking quite a long time, and if truth be told, I'm having a bit of an epic, to put it mildly.

The Mountain Leaders (MLs) are in charge of supervising the various companies through the CWWC, and having spent the first week learning how to move around on skis, we are now beginning to move around carrying weight, namely our daysacks and bergens.

For someone who still hasn't mastered the snow plough and stopping in general, this is proving to be an enormous challenge for me, and a great deal of amusement for Whiskey and Yankee Companies who continually see me 'yeti' (fall over/crash).

The CWWC includes a Survival aspect which teaches about various types of shelter, but this week we built a 'quincy'.

This involves making a mound of snow two metres high and about the same amount in diameter. It has to be compacted tightly, and then hollowed out to make a living space. All in all it took four of us about seven hours to make, and then we ate and slept in it overnight. It was a tight fit, but quite warm at 0° Celsius.

The following morning we destroyed it and left the spot much as we had found it, before loading our bergens with the normal kit including shovels, tent and cookers, and moving off to another location.

For a padre it is a great opportunity to get to know the lads, as I am spending most of my time alongside them in the field.

The men get to know who I am and hopefully feel that if they need to talk to someone, then I may meet that need.

It's not simply a case of me preaching and 'Bible bashing' all the time, but providing a moral component to their training and also a listening ear who knows what they're going through work wise, with the ability to take their concerns further if required.

It is a very different life from being a 'normal' Methodist minister in Weymouth, but it's also very rewarding. The fact that my job involves doing phys, travelling and currently learning to ski is pretty cool. It's just a shame that I'm running out of instructors who have the patience to teach me to ski! ☺



Picture: LA(Phot) Nick Tryon, 45 Cdo

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● Auditions for The Bill went particularly smoothly... The rare sight of steaming bats pounding the cobbled streets of Winchester
 Pictures: LA(Phot) Kaz Williams and Richard Watt



Reign on our parade

SAILORS traditionally only march through the streets when celebrating the freedom of a town.

Or perhaps it's Armistice Day. Now there is a new reason: the homecoming parade. In a bid to reinvigorate the bond between the people and their Armed Forces, civic leaders in Hampshire invited 300 military personnel, veterans of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, to march through Winchester.

The Army made up the bulk of the personnel pounding the streets of Hampshire's county town.

But let's not talk about them. No, we're interested in the 20 or so sailors from HMS Richmond who marched through the heart of Winchester, cheered on by 3,000 people.

The frigate returned from the northern Gulf at the end of last year after a six-month tour of duty guarding Iraq's oil platforms.

As she sailed past Portsmouth's historic Round Tower, Richmond was treated to the waves, cheers, flag-waving and tears from loved ones – an emotion-laden homecoming such as Her Majesty's ships have enjoyed down the years.

Such returns are, typically, family affairs, however.

The parade through Winchester was a public show of support. Whatever people might think about the rights and wrongs of Britain's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, they feel a strong affinity for the men and women of the Armed Forces.

And so more than 3,000 people turned out on a dry but biting-cold January lunchtime to see a contingent from Richmond, plus soldiers of The Rifles, The King's Royal Hussars, Irish Guards, Grenadier Guards, 4 General Support (Medical) Regiment and RAF personnel from Odiham.

All but the The Rifles marched off at the same time; the Rifles moved off from the shadow of King Alfred's statue five minutes later as their march rate is 24 paces a minute faster than their comrades.

● Youngsters celebrate the sailors' and soldiers' return (and perhaps the fact that they're skipping lessons too)



With the parade over, the military personnel made for the Great Hall where they were presented with individual mementoes of the occasion (a specially-brewed bottle of beer and inscribed glass tankard from a Hampshire firm) and a commemorative scroll for each unit.

All the sailors marching were touched by the strength of support displayed by the massed crowd.

"I felt a huge sense of pride and it was great to be recognised by the people of Hampshire as the Royal Navy," said AB(CIS) Amy Foroosandeh. "It would be nice to have the same in the streets of Portsmouth."

Lt Cdr Steve Spiller, Richmond's weapon engineer officer added: "There was a feeling you were being honoured – people were taking an interest in the military, 3,000 of them on a Tuesday lunchtime. "Everyone treated us like royalty."

For Cdr Piers Hurrell who led Richmond through her challenging deployment in the Gulf – it fell to the ship and her team to introduce changes to the way we do things in the wake of the Cornwall incident – it was important to show the British public what their Navy had been up to.

"We are very grateful to be provided with an opportunity to strengthen the service links with the county and remind people of the Royal Navy's enduring commitment and presence in the Middle East," Cdr Hurrell added.

The Winchester parade is the latest in a series of public displays organised on a local level over the past year or so to recognise the global commitments of the Armed Forces.

"It has long been my desire to see the service of all returning servicemen and women being acknowledged and recognised in this way," Hampshire County Council leader Cllr Ken Thornber told the marchers.

As for Richmond, she's undergoing some tweaks to her new sonar kit, 2087, ahead of trials involving the enhanced equipment in the Caribbean this spring.



A new Victory panorama

BRITAIN'S most famous warship has featured in these pages countless times... but never like this.

For this is HMS Victory in her historic dockyard environs as visualised by 'photospherical' artists WrightGeorge.

From next month, passengers on Britain's largest cruise ship, P&O Ventura, will see this image daily – one of 15 pieces of original artwork produced by these unique artists for the £300m vessel.

P&O commissioned £1m of art for the Ventura and selected WrightGeorge to produce a series of 15 iconic British images to adorn the 115,000-ton liner (other icons/locations featured include Portsmouth's Spinnaker Tower, SS Great Britain in Bristol, and Cheddar Gorge caves in Somerset).

The artists received special permission to get as close as possible to the edge of the dry dock which is Victory's home and took a series of photographs before returning to their studios to create this 360° panoramic view.

The Victory artwork is not the only link between Ventura and the Senior Service.

The Royal Marines will ensure good luck is bestowed upon all who sail in her by abseiling down the side of the cruise ship at her naming ceremony in Southampton next month.

It will be the commandos' mission to smash a bottle of champagne against the Ventura's side (something which didn't happen initially when the last P&O liner Queen Victoria was named in a traditional ceremony before Christmas).

The Royals will move on the orders of Oscar-winning actress Dame Helen Mirren, guest of honour at the ceremony.

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● Some were more enthusiastic than others about recreating The Beatles' iconic Abbey Road cover... Penguins file through the waters of South Georgia with HMS Clyde berthed in the background



Their names liveth online

RELATIVES and historians can delve through the hallowed records of one of the bravest – and least known – units in Royal Navy history via their computers.

The 63rd (Royal Naval) Division, the brainchild of Winston Churchill, fought with distinction in the Dardanelles and on the Western Front throughout the Great War.

The future premier ranked the sailor-soldiers – the division was formed from RN reservists with no draft appointment at the outbreak of war in 1914 – among “that glorious company of the seven or eight most famous divisions” in the British Army.

Although the men fought alongside Tommies, they maintained their unique RN identity, upholding naval ranks, naval customs and naval speak.

More than 50,000 men served in the division during the 1914-18 war; more than 10,000 of them perished.

Now historians at the National Archive in Kew and from social history website have loaded thousands of records on to the Internet for the public to scour.

The ancestry.co.uk team has provided the division's casualty list, accompanied in some cases by extracts from letters, diaries and memories from those killed.

Among the division's 10,200 dead was former insurance clerk David Robertson, killed in Gallipoli in 1915, who found death pre-occupied many of his comrades during the bungled campaign to force the Dardanelles.

He asked a petty officer what he planned to do after the war. “He said rather apologetically that he was going to be killed the first time he went into action.

“On June 5 I had to see about our rations. When I got back about three hours later I found that this same petty officer... had been killed four minutes after I had left – our first casualty, by a stray bullet through the head, unaimed, unintended, a dropping shot of the kind hardly ever fatal, a chance in a million, and foreseen with absolute clarity eight months before.”

The records held at Kew are the individual service records of the men who fought with the division. Those personal papers include details such as person's occupation, religion, awards, medical issues and any distinguishing features such as tattoos.

You can delve into the casualty records at www.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=1252

Individual service records can be found at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/royalnavalddivision.asp

War, what is it good for?

WELL, passing a couple of hours apparently...

Forces TV viewers overturned a vote by the British public when Channel 4 searched for the 100 Greatest War Films.

BFBS polled serving personnel and their families, as well as senior officers to find the Forces top big-screen military epic.

C4 viewers put *Saving Private Ryan* in the top spot.

Today's sailors, soldiers and airmen prefer Michael Caine fending off the hordes in *Zulu*. (*Thousands of 'em voted – Ed.*)

The 1964 classic nudged Spielberg's Normandy tale into second spot with *A Bridge Too Far* ranked third.

Thankfully, things nautical weren't entirely absent from the top 20. *The Cruel Sea* was voted ninth-best, while *Das Boot* claimed the number 14 position.

Former Chief of the General Staff Sir Mike Jackson couldn't decide from *The Longest Day*, *A Bridge Too Far* and *Saving Private Ryan*, while First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Jonathan Band plumped for *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (*Excellent film – Asst Ed.*, which didn't make the top 20.

Life is a Clydeoscope

... NOT a cabaret, as Liza Minnelli sang. Anyway, patrol ship HMS Clyde has left the Falklands behind for the first time... and paid her inaugural visit to South Georgia by doing so.

The South Atlantic guardship is coming to the end of her first six months around the Falkland Islands – and has spent most of the time getting to know the people and the environs.

And once thoroughly acquainted with the dependency, she bade them farewell for ten days in the even more isolated surroundings of South Georgia – another outpost of Empire the River-class warship is charged with safeguarding.

Eight men from the Scots Guards, the Army unit currently deployed to the Falklands, plus a two-strong Explosive Ordnance Disposal team, joined Clyde for the trip to South Georgia.

The key aim of the mission was to ensure fishery regulations around the island were being complied with.

But there were also plenty of opportunities to get ashore... and fill those photograph albums.

The soldiers were dropped off to carry out patrols, while Clyde sailed around the various abandoned whaling stations, avoiding several hundred icebergs (including one two miles wide).

The last port of call was tiny Bird Island (so named because of its plethora of feathered inhabitants) at the northwestern tip of South Georgia for a lightning visit to a British Antarctic Survey post, home to four scientists eager for contact with the outside world.

After the rugged terrain of the Falklands, South Georgia proved to be a very welcome change for Clyde's ship's company.

“Animal life is in such abundance that wherever you point a camera, you're almost guaranteed to catch a penguin, seal, sea bird or reindeer,” said Operations Officer Lt Gavin Lowe.



“South Georgia is a breathtaking place – rugged, carved mountains, glaciers, greenery, snow-covered peaks.

“It's home to some of the most unspoiled natural sights in the world.”

On a more sombre note, back in Falkland waters, the ship hosted six veterans of destroyer HMS Glamorgan, badly damaged in the war with Argentina a quarter of a century ago.

Glamorgan was the only ship to survive an Exocet attack – but the missile still claimed the lives of 14 ship's company.

The half dozen Glamorgan veterans paid their respects to their comrades by casting a wreath into the South Atlantic.

As for Clyde, she's slowly becoming a ‘firm fixture’ in the Falklands. Islanders became very attached to her predecessors Leeds and Dumbarton Castles.

In time, the same will be said of Clyde; for one in ten Falklanders has already trotted aboard (an open day in the capital Stanley saw 270 people visit the ship).

Clyde has also conducted her first major exercise with islands-based forces, serving as the command post for a joint exercise and landing and extracting troops from beaches around West Falkland.

With the first six months south of the equator now just about up, Clyde's sailors are coming home, even if the ship herself is not.

The ship's company is rotated twice a year using the pool of sailors in the Fishery Protection Squadron.

As for Clyde, she will remain in the South Atlantic until at least 2012 under the lease deal the Royal Navy has with her builders, VT Group.

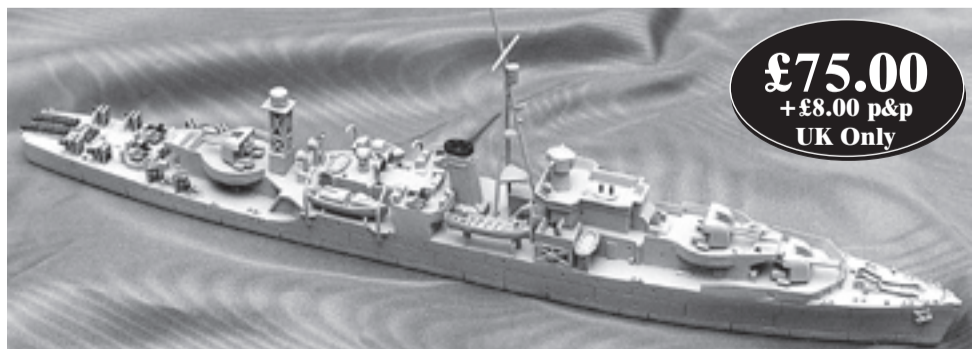


● Clyde approaches tanker RFA Gold Rover at speed for a replenishment at sea
Pictures: WO2 Matt Adams, HMS Clyde

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● 40 Cdo fire the Javelin missile in Denmark last year during Exercise Noble Mariner

The heavier they are, the harder they hit

'FIRE and forget'. It's a simple phrase for a simple task. Run forward, drop to the ground, fire Javelin then move on while the missile hurtles blithely towards its target. Fire and forget.

But the one big problem with fire and forget is that you need to be really sure what you're firing at. As C/Sgt Mark Lightfoot RM, Heavy Weapons (Anti-tank) chief instructor, says: "Once locked on, there's no way of stopping it."

That's why, down in CTCRM Lympstone, the tankies – or Heavy Weapon (Anti-Tank) specialists to give them their full title – spend a hefty part of their six-week HW3 training course learning how to identify, with absolute confidence, a comprehensive range of armoured vehicles.

And this is where the talents of the tankies sometimes go unrecognised by the wider military population.

Commanders on the ground know to call on their tankies for more than just long-distance destruction, but also for surveillance – that these men have the ability and the kit to scan the horizon and monitor the action.

As they say, forewarned is forearmed.

The impressive Javelin is fired from the equally impressive Command Launch Unit or CLU (spoken as 'clue').

"It looks like a 1920s camera, but it's the brains of the weapon system," said C/Sgt Lightfoot.

Even without the launch tube, the CLU gives an astonishing facility to watch the surrounding landscape. On a bracing morning at Lympstone, buildings on the far side of the Exe Estuary are brought into sharp focus through the eye of the CLU.

Blink. You can count the individual windows in the conservatory extension.

Blink. You can see the thermal shadow of the birds moving in the trees.

Blink. You can assess the surrounding area for any incoming vehicles.

Of course, shifting the grainy green thermal image into the familiar shapes of the miniature tanks that litter the desks is not easy, but that's what the tankies are trained to do.

Well, in addition to being trained to fire the Javelin missile and Heavy Machine Guns (HMG) that make up their traditional trade.

Heavy Weapons (Anti-Tank) specialists – the 'tankies' – the name really doesn't say it all... These are the men who on the battlefield can direct destructive fire on every known type of armoured vehicle, whether a heavily armoured tank or terrorist 4x4s, can blast into buildings and bunkers through narrow doorways, and can observe their foe's every move day and night.



● The .5 Heavy Machine Gun is fired at Lulworth Camp during the HW3 course

"To say that we're anti-tank is really a disservice to what the lads can do," said C/Sgt Lightfoot. "We can do so much more."

"We provide a surveillance service – day and night."

"We can destroy bunkers and buildings, weapon emplacements."

"Javelin can destroy all known armour in the battlefield."

However all that punch comes at a price, which is why the ponderous power of Javelin is backed up by the fast rattle of the Heavy Machine Gun.

The Javelin missile, with its tandem warhead and electronic brains that will drop onto armoured vehicles, isn't cheap, and in many cases its sibling, the old-fashioned HMG, can just as effectively take down a light-armoured vehicle at significantly less cost.

It's a simple case of choosing the right weapon for the job.

The Royal Marines have taken the lead in HMG training, with members of the Army and RAF regularly travelling to CTCRM for

their heavy machine gun courses.

However the more advanced HW2 and 1 courses – once the important business of training as a RM corporal or sergeant is complete – takes place at the Army's camp in Warminster.

C/Sgt Lightfoot shrugs: "It's where the armour is."

But while the Marines, RAF Regiment and Army knock shoulders under training it all bodes well for tactics and battle procedure out in theatre.

Marines Tom Pike and Mike Collins have both recently returned from Afghanistan and are both now earning the 'tankie' title on the Heavy Weapons (Anti-tank) 3 course.

Mne Collins said: "I've been using the HMG out in Afghanistan already. It's an essential bit of kit."

Mne Pike added: "The .5 looks so dated, but that's a battle winner, that is. If you've got enemy advancing at you, when you use the .5, that's game over."

In week three of the HW3 course, the marines head out to Lulworth Camp in Dorset to begin their live-fire drill.

The men firing the machine guns rattling at the scattered targets on the scarred hillside are midway through the six-week anti-tank course, and once they attained their instructors' high standards they will take on the challenge of Javelin.

"I'm looking forward to Javelin," joked Mne Pike, "I'm fed up with getting filthy on the HMG."

Once the HW3 title is under their belt, these men are waiting the call out to theatre in their new role. And there are no doubts about the anti-tank life.

"I've been waiting 2½ years for this," said Mne Pike. "I joined an anti-tank troop straight from training. They were a good bunch of lads and I thought 'this is for me'."

Mne Collins added: "It's duty at the sharp end. Afghanistan – it's a heavy weapons war."



Tankspotting



THE .5 Heavy Machine Gun and Javelin missile system are the two weapons at the heart of the Heavy Weapons (Anti-Tank) specialisation.

At first glance the sophisticated electronics of Javelin are a world apart from the traditional action of the HMG.

But although the two weapons tell different stories of weapon development, their allied natures are known from theatre.

"They're always being used together," said Mne Mike Collins, under training as a 'tankie'. "Whenever you see Javelin, there's a .5 behind backing it up."

"Javelin is a phenomenal bit of kit," he added. "It's one of the easiest weapon systems you can use."

"Watching your mates fire it for real out in theatre makes you realise how much it can do," said Mne Tom Pike.

But it also highlights the risks that come with that easy strength. "You don't want to be shooting blue on blue. It's that important. It's drilled into us," said Mne Collins.

AFV – armoured fighting vehicle – recognition is a drill that can only be perfect, no doubts, no questions.

The walls of the somewhat spartan building assigned to Heavy Weapons are adorned with pictures and silhouettes of the world's armoured-clad vehicles and tanks.

On a desk in one of the teaching rooms sits a miniature carpark, with micromodels of tanks and vehicles, all less than half an inch in size and with detailed wheels, gun turrets and distinctive shape.

The micromodels, many just the size of a 50p piece, must be identified through a scope at seven metres distance with absolute confidence.

The tankies have to be able to recognise each of 83 vehicles and know their different capabilities.

"We train ultimately to fight armour," explained C/Sgt Lightfoot.

"We were formed for high-intensity war-fighting against an army that has a vast amount of armour."

"However the Taliban don't have heavy armour. But our skills are easily adapted to the current situation's conflicts – bunkers, buildings, any vehicles."

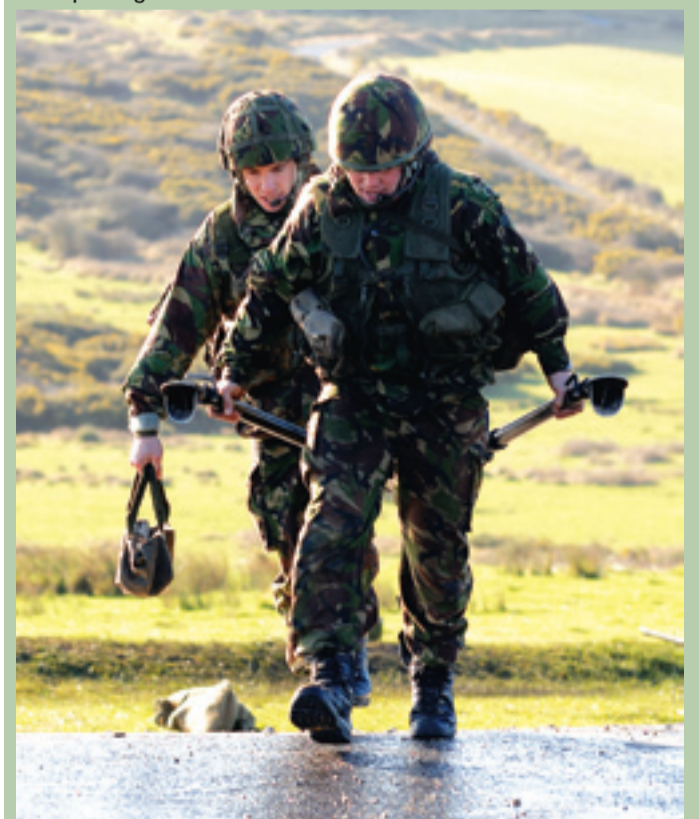
Live firing of both weapons takes place at Lulworth Camp in the midst of the beautiful Dorset countryside.

The hillside basks in the bright winter sunshine and the gentle sound of birdsong is broken up by men's voices chatting about last night's TV.

Then brrrrrrt, brrrrrrt, brrrrrrt – staccato gunfire flashes through the day's tranquility and the Heavy Machine Guns begin to heat up the wintry morning.

The .5 or 50-cal Heavy Machine Gun is a sinister shape that packs a powerful punch. Although the machine gun has a long history within the military, the Heavy Machine Gun fell out of favour after the Korean War.

But the harsh effectiveness of the HMG called it back into service with the Royal Marines some ten years ago, and it has been proving its worth on the front line ever since.



● The name says it all – the .5 Heavy Machine Gun weighs in at 38kg for the gun alone, add to it the bulk of the tripod and ammunition and the weapon more than earns its title, not to mention the power that it fires



Landlocked in a sea

THE DUST, sand and mountains of Afghanistan have been a theatre of war for millennia – the Persians, Alexander the Great, the Mongols; and recent decades have brought the Soviets, Americans and British to this tribal nation.

And here, now, the naval aviators of the Commando Helicopter Force are carving their name into the history books of warriors who have done battle in this landlocked nation.

It was the middle of the night in late November when the airmen of D Flight of 846 Naval Air Squadron arrived in their new theatre of operation in a blacked-out RAF TriStar.

Scant days later the enhanced Sea King HC4+ – new rotor blades and tail rotor, gearbox upgrades and more – joined the 70 men and women of 846 NAS in Afghanistan, and the squadron became embedded within the established Army Lynx, Apache and RAF Chinook detachments of the Joint Helicopter Force (Afghanistan).

Cdr Mario Carretta, commanding officer of 846 NAS, said: “We’re well used to working with the other elements of the JHF, but what’s different is that with the improved performance of the new blades we can keep pace with the other aircraft out there.”

Kandahar is home to some 15,000 military and civilian personnel from the US, Canada, the Netherlands, Denmark, France and many other nations, and the barrack blocks of the base made a pleasant change from the tents of Basra that 846 NAS had come to know so well in recent years.

Initial introductions, getting used to the theatre in daylight and dark hours and plunging into the murk of dust landings, were followed by the start of operations on December 1 when the Naval Sea Kings began to take on some of the burden of keeping supplies flowing across the scattered units in Helmand Province.

In a short time the remit of the Sea Kings expanded to include the whole of Regional Command South, where the Commando Sea Kings were called to work in a variety of roles.

Naturally the lift and shift Sea Kings were tasked with troop movements and carrying under-slung loads through the Afghan region, with additional tasking such as mine-strike evacuation, command tasks and force protection.

Force protection included the technique of Eagle Vehicle Check Points, where troops are dropped next to roads to check cars and vehicles for illegal weapons and explosives, and the Sea Kings buzz around as aerial sentinels.

Hot and high. It’s been the key phrase for much of the British military’s theatre of operations for several years. But it’s been a phrase that up to now has caused the heart of a Sea King pilot to sink.

But no more. Upgraded, bolstered and beefed-up the Sea King HC4+ has been proving itself in the hot and high conditions of Afghanistan for the past four months. This is the start of an enduring commitment by the Naval airmen and women of the Commando Helicopter Force to this landlocked nation.

A significant proportion of the squadron’s tasking is working with aircraft from all three British Armed Forces and the other coalition forces, and often with British or American Army Apache AH64 attack helicopters.

During Forward Operations at Camp Bastion, the Sea Kings of the CHF were the High Readiness Force – at short notice to carry out any of their essential roles – during the assault by air on the Taliban stronghold of Musa Quala.

As a result of this major attack in northern Helmand, the Sea Kings have come to know a new set of very dusty landing sites in their ongoing efforts to keep the ground troops supplied in the enduring operation.

But the ‘brown-out’ of their dust-filled landings are a familiar challenge to the fliers experienced in the ‘white-out’ of Norwegian snow.

Unlikely as it seems, the months of preparation leading up to this deployment began in the cold peaks of Bardufoss at the start of the year.

“The dust in Afghanistan is like a very fine talcum powder that gets everywhere, it makes operating aircraft very difficult,” said Cdr Carretta.

“The techniques learnt in Norway work even in the demanding extremes of Afghanistan – training and flying in sudden bad weather, the problems of losing visual reference in snow – it’s all paying dividends for the guys.”

Pilot Lt David Brewin said: “In January 2007 whilst training in Norway, the rumours of a change of direction for 846 NAS operations became reality, when the commanding officer Commando Helicopter Force Col John McCardle RM confirmed that we would be deploying to Afghanistan in support of Op Herrick.

“As the first Royal Navy helicopters to be used in this notorious theatre, the Commando Helicopter Force headquarters and squadron faced the challenge of recovering from its commitment to Iraq, while getting ready for a new theatre of operations in less than seven months.”

He added: “CHF has a wealth of experience in desert operations, accrued during several years of support to Op Telic; so many of the tactics and techniques were directly transferable.

“Despite this experience there was much to learn of the intricacies of this landlocked and remote country.”

However it was not just a new theatre that the airmen were getting to grips with, but the use of new equipment and aircraft modifications that included Display Night Vision Goggles, Carson main rotor blades, Agusta-Westland five-bladed tail rotor, a new Defensive Aid Suite and Bowman radios.

The months of operational, flying, and infantry training were pulled together in a final exercise Hida (High Density Altitude) at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, a chance

to prepare aircrew for hot weather operations in mountainous, dusty terrain.

“Operating higher and hotter than usual”, said Lt Brewin, “the modifications enabled the aircraft to conduct landings at various sites high in the Troodos Mountains, during the hottest part of the day and an extra 2,000lbs heavier than previously possible.”

Cdr Carretta said: “The big thing for me is the procurement of the new blades. The new blades have been a real success, delivered to a short timescale and delivered well.”

He added: “Another big change is the Display Night Vision Goggles.

When we look through the goggles we get a head-up display.

“We no longer look inside the cockpit for flight data. We’re looking out the cab’s windows all the time, and it improves our situational awareness.”

“We’d flown with the DVNG in the UK, particularly in the Welsh mountains. But out in Cyprus was the first time we’d flown with the goggles and blades as a package.”

And once the upgraded HC4+ arrived in Afghanistan, it quickly proved its worth to its brethren in the Joint Helicopter Force (Afghanistan).

“For the engineers, the changes have brought a new challenge. But they are rising to it and doing really well,” said Cdr Carretta.

The Sea King commitment to Op Herrick is due to be shared with sister CHF squadron 845 NAS who will arrive in theatre in the spring.

“Each squadron will provide a Flight. We’re posturing ourselves that the guys will spend three months in Afghanistan in a year,

with the rest of the time on our other

commitments, such as amphibious exercises,” said Cdr Carretta.

“And now we find we’re supporting 40 Commando out there – from training with them on Exercise Vengeance it has now moved to operations – and we’re very pleased to be doing so.”

He added: “Things are going well so far. It’s challenging, as we expected.

“But everyone has settled in well. In Kandahar we’re in barrack blocks rather than the tents of Basra. All the life support and welfare are gathered in the camp.”

He added: “What is nice is that our friends from the Naval Strike Wing are out there with the Harriers. There’s a strong Royal Naval presence in the mess.”

Camp life was further bolstered in the run-up to Christmas when 846 NAS donned their Santa hats and the Sea King sleigh delivered up to 60 bags of mail and Christmas presents each day to the units scattered across the regional command.

“It was with a sigh of relief that the squadron was able to clear the





of sand of sand

backlog of free postal packages in time for the festive season," said Lt Brewin.

"It was a massive undertaking, as many parcels were addressed to troops in some of the most remote areas of Afghanistan."

The squadron also enjoyed some notable visitors over the festive season when *Top Gear* presenters Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May arrived in Kandahar.

"Many of the personnel who had requested to grow beards whilst in theatre rather wished they had not when the famous trio relished in the opportunity to stand in for the Detachment Commander's inspection, displaying the kind of 'harsh banter' that many will have seen on their BBC television show," added Lt Brewin.

Another esteemed visitor was the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band, who during a visit to deployed RN personnel in Afghanistan spent some time with the Sea King detachment, and talked through some challenging

issues during a valuable question and answer session.

The winter months in Afghanistan have seen a determination on the part of the International Security Assistance Force to 'take the fight to the enemy', depriving the Taliban of their traditional rest and reorganisation period in the mountains and the Naval Sea Kings are making a real contribution to operations on the ground.

The 'Junglies' of CHF have already established their usual good reputation in theatre, and word will continue to spread as the Sea King Force's footprint expands over coming months.

The Sea Kings have left behind their traditional waves for a new dominion over a landlocked sea of sand.

● *Top and right: Sea King HC4+ operating over the dry landscape of Afghanistan*

● *Below: The helicopters of the Joint Helicopter Force (Afghanistan): Lynx, Sea King, Chinook and Apache*

Pictures: Cpl S Dove, AGC



Masters of the elements



● HMS Scott at sea and (right) the survey ship's sea-boat during a man overboard exercise

Pictures: LA(Phot) Luis Holden (FRPU East)

ONE of the newest branches in the Navy traces its roots to one of the oldest specialisations – and was created to cope with the oldest variables known to man.

Those who are now trained to make the most of the environment also find themselves breaking down barriers, as they contribute significantly to both warfare and defence intelligence.

The mastery of such diverse elements as the deep ocean, the shoreline and the skies above and far inland was historically carried out by two distinct branches.

Surveying Recorders (SRs) were the 'Droggies' of yore, charting the sea lanes of the world and clearing the way for amphibious operations.

Alongside – but always distinct from the Droggie – was the meteorologist ('Professor Fog' or 'weather guesser' to the cynical matelot) who aimed to forecast conditions with a high degree of accuracy for a location which could be hundreds of miles away.

Allied to the MET (meteorology) element was OC (oceanography), giving the METOC branch.

Never the twain did meet – or not very much, anyway – until the two skills were brought together in the Hydrographic, Meteorological and Oceanographic (HM) specialisation, which spawned its first trained rating in the autumn of 2004.

HM training is carried out by the HM Training Group (HMTG) – a sub-unit command of the Maritime Warfare School – at Devonport, which is the first destination of fledgling HM able rates when they leave HMS Raleigh, just across the river.

HM ratings' training from 2004 to early this year combined the need to provide specialists in hydrography and meteorology at able rate level.

During generic training all AB(HM)2s were taught basic theory in surveying and

meteorology, before practising their newly-found knowledge during practical sessions in a variety of surveying tasks, including data-gathering using multibeam echo sounders, sidescan sonar and establishing tidal stations, as well as conducting meteorological observations afloat.

The culmination of their training was based on a Rapid Environment Assessment (REA) scenario, where they had to conduct a beach survey in support of amphibious landings.

On completion of initial training AB(HM)2s were drafted to sea in surveying ships (Echo, Enterprise, Scott, Roebuck or ice patrol ship Endurance) to consolidate their training in the operational environment.

After eight or nine months, and once an HM has reached AB(HM)1, around half of the original intake returned to the HMTG for more in-depth training in meteorology in preparation for the job of Meteorological Office

"They get a BSc for completing their Naval training, while being paid, and not having to do anything extra. How good is that?"

Observer at RN air stations Culdrose or Yeovilton.

Training and employment patterns governed which route an HM's career path followed, Hydrography or Meteorology and Oceanography.

Following a review of manning policy late last year, it was determined that the concept of dual-training AB(HM)s in both H and M disciplines was ineffective, and that the sub-specialisation choice should be made earlier in an AB(HM)'s career – before they leave Raleigh.

So from the middle of this year, AB(HM)s will join the HMTG to attend a course in either Hydrography or Meteorology and Oceanography, before following their chosen career path.

The H and M fork is still apparent in the career path, not as a separate branch but more subtly approached in terms of an individual's personal preferences – although an HM

officer will be expected to provide a comprehensive service in both areas.

The calibre of those training at HMTG has taken an upturn in recent times – Officer in Charge of the Hydrographic Training Unit Lt Cdr David Wyatt recalls that over the previous year there had been ten or 12 ABs coming through with degrees ("and not just Mickey Mouse degrees – they have subjects such as marine biology," said Lt Cdr Wyatt).

That and the age spread – from 17-year-olds to those in their mid-30s who have seen a bit of life – provide a challenge to trainers and the HMTG as an employer, as they are dealing with highly-educated and motivated students.

With some sea time or a stint at an air station under their belts, they head back to Devonport for advanced training as leading hands – LS(HM).

The LS(HM) H course takes 12 weeks, the M course nine, with some elements common across

both courses – and it is the first stage of a foundation degree course, to boot.

As they climb further up the promotion ladder, the weighting towards H or M becomes even more pronounced.

The career path of these environmental warriors keeps looping round to the HMTG.

For those who favour hydrography, the next hurdle is the 14-week PO (Surveyor) course.

And the status of PO brings with it enough credits for a BSc Honours degree in Marine Science awarded by the University of Plymouth.

"They get a BSc for completing their Naval training, while being paid, and not having to do anything extra. How good is that?" said Lt Cdr Wyatt.

On the Meteorology and Oceanography side ratings advance from AB to LS to PO and finally, when selected, they come back for the CPO course to become weather forecasters – and qualifies successful candidates for



a BSc Honours degree in Applied Meteorology and Oceanography.

This final element, as with the PO(SR) course, runs concurrently with one of the officers' courses, allowing crucial interaction between the two cohorts.

Officers face a more substantial programme.

Having tackled the rigours of bridge watchkeeping duties, the officer students go to the HMTG for a 14-week HM course, which segues into a 19-week METOC course.

The reward at the end is a METOC posting at an air station then an H posting, or *vice versa*.

And with the third posting comes a decision as to whether the officer will specialise in H or M.

Some five years further down the line there is a 19-week advanced surveying course, accredited at Category A by the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO).

There is a similar nine-week advanced course for officers on the METOC side.

Other students have darkened the doors of the training group.

Small ship flight observers attend for one-week Met courses, as the Lynx and Merlin aircrew

are usually self-forecasting.

There is a similarly short but busy Met course for Royal Marines landing craft officers and cox'ns.

There is also a healthy international interest in the work of the HMTG.

In the academic year which ended in 2005, 35 per cent of students on H career courses were overseas candidates, representing countries such as the United States, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, the Netherlands, Egypt, Singapore, Pakistan and Oman.

Since 1968, the HMTG and its forerunners have trained more than 550 students from 39 countries, which not only brings in welcome revenue but also enhances the RN's reputation and promotes respect and valuable friendships around the globe.

The environmental approach – or "tactical use of the environment" – is not just confined to the classrooms of the HMTG complex.

Three boats, each kitted out with the same cutting-edge sonar equipment as survey launch HMSML Gleaner, are berthed just a few metres from the Group.

These are used for day runs out

into Plymouth Sound, allowing up to six students per boat to put theoretical skills into practice.

In the process, they will produce high-quality data of the state of the sea bed around Devonport.

Members of staff go out to Thursday Wars, disaster exercises and the like in the South West to supplement the HM specialists at Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST).

"This is good, because they take their theoretical training in the classroom into the maritime environment, and FOST people come here to inject operational input back into the critical training environment," said Lt Cdr Wyatt.

"Technology and techniques change rapidly, and a lot of our effort goes into maintaining our currency, particularly on the Hydrographic side."

The standard of training is such that an officer will leave the care of HMTG at pretty much operational standard.

"They can go straight out into an operational task, which can be very demanding for METOC officers, joining a squadron and producing forecasts from Day One," said Lt Cdr Wyatt.

"There is no probationary period, although on the H side there is the opportunity to hold someone's hand a little longer."

📍 **Next month – Testing the waters**



Dee-lighted with the RN

I WOULD like to thank the ship's company of HMS Northumberland through the pages of *Navy News*.

Just three hundred miles from the finish line of my first solo Open 60 race, disaster struck in the notorious Bay of Biscay. Onboard Aviva I was forced to retire from the race as my mast had broken and fallen over the side.

Having cut the rig free from the boat and checked the integrity of the hull all I could do was wait for rescue and keep watch. Suddenly my 60ft yacht looked more like a 60ft surf board as she bobbed aimlessly about in the heavy seas. I had no radar signal and was stranded in one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.

For 12 hours it was daylight and I was confident in my ability to keep a good look out whilst preparing Aviva for a tow. As the daylight faded I was feeling very vulnerable and fear began to overtake me as I waited unsure of my future.

The thought of another 12 hours, this time alone in the dark, keeping watch and trying to avoid collision made me realise that I may have to be taken off Aviva for safety reasons. As this fear was growing, a guardian angel arrived in the form of HMS Northumberland.

Out of the dark, I sighted the ship's lights and after

a VHF transmission with the Commanding Officer I knew everything was going to be okay. It was as if a huge weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

The ship's company were on their way home to Plymouth for Christmas leave, yet the unwritten law of the sea is so strong with mariners, that they had agreed to stay on station to keep watch over Aviva and allow me to get some much-needed sleep.

Refreshed and revived from a bacon sandwich (supplied by the guys onboard) I felt like a new woman. The Navy had made getting both Aviva and myself to safety a reality. They assisted the Spanish towing tug in locating me and then I reluctantly bade them farewell as they set off for home.

During those 24 hours and for days after, many of the crew sent messages of support via my website and these really raised my spirits. Their presence was an absolute godsend and I am eternally grateful to all those on HMS Northumberland.

I hope they continue to follow my progress when I compete in the Vendee Globe later this year and that I can do them all proud! I am also thankful that the lore of the sea is still so strong amongst the many of us that choose this environment for our place of work.

– Dee Caffari



● **Mystery men...** RN divers pose during an exercise in Guernsey in the early 80s... standing (l-r) 'Smudge', Tony Groom, Dave 'Saggy' Southwell, Tim Horner, 'Shiner' Wright; kneeling 'Ginge' Lincoln and Ian Milnes

Groom-ed for greatness

IF ANY readers are in doubt as to what an RN Clearance Diver does when he goes to work, I urge them to read Tony Groom's excellent book *Diver*.

It's one of the most modest, straight-from-the-shoulder books on this subject I have ever read.

I think that the write-up given by Maj Gen Julian Thompson on the work the clearance divers did during the Falklands war speaks volumes about their often-overlooked expertise.

He said that Navy clearance divers, not the SAS, were the mystery unit of the Falklands war.

OK you do not see these lads at work. It is done out of sight, offshore and underwater and usually under two metres of bottom mud.

Today they are still at work in the Gulf, working unseen to defuse explosive devices, often booby-trapped, and old and new ordnance scattered around.

The next time you see a blue RN Land Rover passing at

speed, think, those are the young clearance divers rushing to put themselves into harm's way to render safe yet more explosive ordnance.

They put their lives on the line every time they go to work.

It's time someone in the MOD had the balls to give them the recognition they have so long deserved, that of being one of our excellent 'special services'.

– Christopher Roddis, former diver, Malaga, Spain

Since we published the review of Tony Groom's book, *Navy News* has been informed of the problem over medals in the Falkland's conflict. Tony did receive a CinC's commendation for bravery and we understand that all those who received the CinC's commendation had been recommended for an award by their commanding officers but the powers that be could not support the total number recommended. The divers are also recognised on the memorial in Stanley – Ed

Ars gratia artis

I HAD the great privilege recently of attending the 50th Anniversary Banquet for the White Ensign Association at Buckingham Palace.

It was a most fitting occasion to pay tribute to an excellent organisation that does so much to help and support our people, particularly when in financial difficulty and when seeking employment on leaving the Service.

You can imagine what a grand occasion it was and I am sure that all who attended were stunned by the wonder of the Palace; the paintings, artefacts and treasures on display.

All these were magnificently complemented by the superb performance of the Band of the Royal Marines, Portsmouth (the Royal Band).

The incidental music throughout the meal was an excellent blend of the popular and traditional and played at just the right level – not too loud to drown the many dits being spun at the tables or too soft to be lost in the great hall.

It was, however, the finale which really impressed. It was flawless; the rendition of the Post Horn Gallop was perfect – the technically tricky triple-tongue

sequences and each high note hit with precision and perfection and the stationing of the horns at each corner of the hall, the Corps of Drums on the stage and the Band down the sides made for great dramatic effect.

All in all it was a wonderfully professional piece of musical artistry which gave a huge sense of pride to all of us from the Naval Service attending.

And, while I write of professional artistry, may I send my compliments to the Photos who made such a contribution to the February edition of *Navy News*, from the striking and very clever front page and centre spread by LA(Phot) Kelly Whybrow to the well-composed and lovely artistry of the Gulf oil terminals by LA(Phot) Owen King, Jannine Hartmann and Kelly Whybrow and the atmospheric and dramatic shots of the Royals by PO (Phot) Dave Husbands and LA(Phot) AJ Macleod in training and on ops.

These professional artists do much to show us desk-jockeys what is going on and what we are missing.

– Capt Bob Brown,

Deputy Director Armed Forces Act Implementation & Discipline Policy, Fleet Headquarters

Bish out of water

IN 1988, in HMS Beaver in the middle of the Gulf, the ship's company decided to make me walk on water with clerical cassock and surplice.

It was great fun and even today there are sailors who recall this miraculous event.

– Mike Brotherton, Staff Chaplain to FOST, Devonport



Kandahar comrades

MY PHOTO shows Commanders Kevin Seymour, Richard Blackwell and Geoff Wintle, who all joined BRNC nearly 24 years ago, in 1984, and now all find themselves serving in Afghanistan.

Cdr Seymour (left) is commanding the Naval Strike Wing at Kandahar while I (centre) am the PJHQ Liaison Officer with 52 Bde.

Cdr Blackwell (right) is nearing the end of his tour as Chief J1 with the Regional Command (South) Headquarters.

All three are seen enjoying a cup of coffee on Boxing Day at one of the popular coffee shops.

– Cdr Geoff Wintle, PJHQ 14

Narrow margin

WITH reference to your story about HMS Exeter's tight fit in the Corinth Canal (*February*), I made a similar trip in HMS Surprise in 1949, when the Greek government was having problems with terrorists.

As the Commander-in-Chief's despatch vessel, we made the first transit of an RN ship since the war, carrying Admiral Power and with Capt Gordon-Lennox in command.

We took all the precautions necessary, and the passage was uneventful, with lots of sighs of relief.

– Jim Dearlove, Fareham

THE article about HMS Argyll (p27, *January*) and the Opinion piece stated that the sailors were working six hours on and six hours off for three to four weeks, and I applaud their professionalism and commitment.

However, to put this in context, I met a submariner at Christmas who said that he had just done four months under the oggin doing six hours on and six hours off, he was pale, haggard and had lost 1½ stones in weight during his last trip, and I don't wonder men are leaving the Service.

These facts are never mentioned in official or unofficial circles, and it is no wonder the Royal Navy is short of submariners if they are treated in this way.

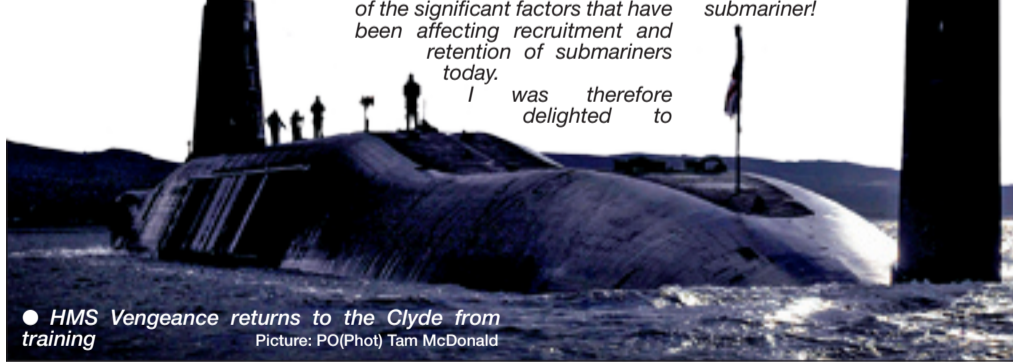
The shortage of submariners is highlighted by the full page advert on page 11, trying to recruit new ones by hook or by crook. The Silent Service is just that where these men are concerned and it is about time their commitment and very stressful hard work was recognised.

These men must have more time topside and direct help to cope with the pressures they are under because the stress on their minds and bodies must be life-threatening.

I may sound a bit over-the-top on the subject but if nothing is done we will not have the men to run our submarines in future, whether they be old boats or new.

These men are, to me, modern-day heroes and deserve better treatment by us all.

– Charles Le Clere, ex L/Writer, N ew Moston, Manchester



● **HMS Vengeance returns to the Clyde from training**

Picture: PO(Phot) Tam McDonald

Rear Admiral David Cooke, Rear Admiral Submarines writes in response: *You are right in saying that today's submariners are busy; in the last 12 months we have achieved both one of the longest SSN deployments and the longest Trident deterrent patrol.*

Operating from all points of the globe, the operational tempo remains high as the Royal Navy continues to deliver on its many worldwide commitments including the provision of the UK's nuclear deterrent.

To achieve this safely, and with consideration for both fighting efficiency and crew fatigue, long practical experience – over at least the last 40 years – has shown the 'six hours on six hours off' routine to give the best balance between watchkeeping requirements and adequate time to recuperate off watch.

It has thus been very much a standard routine for large numbers of submariners, often throughout their careers – as it was for me during my 20 years of active submarining.

This may sound daunting to many outside the Service but it is a routine that submariners quickly adjust to and it ensures that the submarine can operate at a high state of readiness around the clock.

The Royal Navy recognises the commitment and hard work of its submariners and works continually to improve conditions of service. There has been a substantial amount of work conducted over the past five years by the Submarine Service in ensuring that the 2008 AFPRB Quinquennial Review was aware of the significant factors that have been affecting recruitment and retention of submariners today.

I was therefore delighted to

We do not wish to take anything away from those RAF SAR fliers who risk their lives so that others may live.

Nor, of course, do RN Search and Rescue crews want adulation and accolades; they are among the most unassuming and humble members of the Naval community.

But even they no doubt balked when national TV introduced Fleet Air Arm rescuers standing in front of a red and grey Sea King emblazoned with the words 'Royal Navy' as 'RAF'.

Several years ago RN PR bosses in Whitehall succeeded in reminding Fleet Street that in spite of the Combat 95s, the Royal Marines were an integral part of the Royal Navy.

With the 100th anniversary of naval aviation just nine months away, perhaps another reminder is in order.

opinion

A COUPLE of years ago we produced a supplement focusing on the squadrons of the Fleet Air Arm.

The skies are open to us, we proclaimed (borrowing a bit of Ovid).

They are, but they are dominated seemingly by the RAF. Wherefore our lament?

In the past month there have been two high-profile rescues carried out in British waters by Search and Rescue fliers.

Fleet Air Arm aviators were heavily involved in both successful rescues – plucking mariners from a stricken ferry off Blackpool and a foundering merchantman in the Western Approaches.

In both instances most of the media attention focused on RAF efforts.

The views expressed in *Navy News* do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Defence

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You made his day...

THE RESPONSE to my letter (December) asking for Christmas cheer was second-to-none and we have tried to reply to each and every letter to thank everyone for their kindness to us.

The benefactors of the correspondence and parcels have been Delta Company and attached ranks, as I moved from Alpha Company to Delta, but the conditions remained the same.

I would like to thank each and every one of your readers for their time, effort and goodwill in support of the Royal Marines deployed in Afghanistan.

We have received some parcels from ex-servicemen who served in World War 2, and just as we haven't been forgotten by them, I can safely say we will never forget them, and owe them a debt of gratitude we can never repay.

Thank you all for bringing some Christmas cheer into our time served in Afghanistan, God bless you all, and the Queen.

On a last note, the lads would like any ladies to write to them, myself as a point of contact.

– Cpl Piers Eastwood,
40 Cdo RM, Op Herrick,
BFPO 792

... On behalf of all the lads in I section, Mortar Troop, 40 Commando, we would like to say thank you to your readers who sent us all the parcels after Cpl Eastwood's letter.

The reaction to the letter has been staggering and we are all truly overwhelmed.

To know that all these people have taken the time to send us the parcels has made our time here go that much quicker and also had a huge effect on morale.
– L/Cpl Kevin Readings,
40 Cdo RM, Op Herrick

Maltese days

READING about the return of 845 NAS from Basra (January) put the deployment of the Squadron at the beginning of 1972 in a different light.

I was the Squadron's Leading Writer and we were aboard HMS Bulwark (it flew Wessex Vs then) berthed in Valetta Harbour. Don Mintoff no longer wanted the British Forces stationed on the island and we were assisting the dismantling of the Services infrastructure. The Squadron pilots clocked up some very useful flying hours.

Thankfully the local residents were not as hostile as those the Squadron would have to contend with in Basra.

– Charles Lawson, Fareham

See page 8 for the Orion task force in Malta – Ed

A fine officer

I WAS saddened to read of the death of Lt Cdr John Bloom (December).

I also served on the Gavinton/ Monkton and Nurton, he was our Jimmy and I can say he was a true gent and a pleasure to work with.

I recall him attending Portsmouth magistrates court to pay my fine after a silly night out – £4. I paid him back over four pay days (I think)

An officer to remember.

– Jack Robinson (former AB
Tas) Tyldesley, Manchester

Pie not pasty

I MUST take issue with Brian Johnson's Meals on Keels dit (January).

For when did a Cornish pasty ever look like a dockyard tortoise? I think Brian may have got confused by too much cider down in Oggie land.

Dockyard tortoises are in fact steak and kidney pies – served upside-down.

See the naval cook's glossary in my book *Bomb Alley* (Pen and Sword Books Ltd).

– David 'Rowdy' Yates,
Ventnor, Isle of Wight

I name this ship...

IT IS often the smallest things which galvanise our readers to pick up the phone or put pen to paper. Last month Tom Hay asked for help in identifying a cruiser steaming past the Doge's Palace in Venice a good half century or more ago. We would love to give Mr Hay a definitive answer... but as yet there is none.

Joseph Paris, from Cranleigh in Surrey, rang to tell us the ship was HMS Sheffield, confirmed by her distinctive two stacks. However, Bill Bartlett rang to say it was HMS Liverpool, in 1949, at that time flagship of the 1st Cruiser Squadron in the Mediterranean. He was onboard at the time, as was Lord Mountbatten. Mr D Davies, from Rosyth, agrees that she is HMS Liverpool, as do Ray Smith, from Gravesend, and Chas Devlin from Dundee, who sent us the photo of HMS Mauritius in 1947, taken in the same position as our 'mystery ship'. Peter Sisson believes she is HMS Mauritius. Mr J Suters, of Romford, Essex, thinks she is HMS Glasgow in 1953 and former CPO Charles Grimmer, now living in Norwich, thinks she is HMS Arethusa. A Mr Clements thinks she was HMS Tiger in 1952 and Ian Cowell believes she is HMS Newcastle. I'm sorry I ran out of space to print all the letters – Ed



I was amazed to see not one but two ships on which I served in the January edition. The ship at the Doge's Palace was HMS Birmingham, on commission from January 1957 to July 1958 and we anchored in that swift running water for a five-day visit in 1957.

I turned to the following page and there was HMS Ausonia, I was originally in HMS Narvik but transferred to Ausonia in the run-up to the Suez crisis.
– David ('Bunny') Austin,
Penkridge, Staffs



... She is probably HMS Newcastle. I have a similar picture of the Sheffield which shows her with four Carley rafts on the superstructure. The only picture I have of a Town-class cruiser with five Carley rafts is Newcastle.
– Ian Cowell

... After careful scrutiny and comparison of the spacing of the starboard scuttles of each ship of the class I feel certain that she is HMS Liverpool in her 1948 configuration. Successive refits rarely involve alterations to the hull plating and this photo also shows stowage of five Carley floats abreast the fore-funnel, a feature of Liverpool at the time, together with the single small Carley-type float secured to the side of 'B' turret, not shown on any other ship of the class. I rest my case!

– Dudley Mills, Northwick, Worcester

... It is definitely HMS Liverpool. As an ex-Liverbird who was serving at that time as motor boats crew I would like to point out that just abaft the forward funnel was the boat deck/AA gun deck.

On close inspection a motorboat can be seen with the upper half of the hull painted white and the lower half black, the colour for the ship's motorboats.
– F Marshall, Eastville, Bristol

... I think she is HMS Liverpool. We were there in 1951. Captain Luce was CO and we were flagship to C-in-C Med. Admiral Edelston. Also in Venice at that time, as one of our escorts, was HMS Magpie, commanded by the Duke of Edinburgh.

– Len Westwood



The cruiser in the photograph is a Town-class ship, HMS Liverpool, photographed in the late 40s-early 50s. Why? X turret removed, plenty of Carley floats, boats mounted on aircraft deck, windows below open bridge. No ventilation trunks on side of hull below the bridge... Liverpool was the only surviving Town not to have them. She also served in the Mediterranean Fleet from 1946-52... during this time she made at least one visit to Venice... June 11-16 1951.

These ships were never known as City class... always being known as the Southampton class, only being referred to as Towns on the loss of the name ship during the war. Indeed, the town of Southampton only became a city in the mid-60s.

The near-sisters, York and Exeter, were sometimes known as the City class... being reduced-size County-class cruisers.

– Allen M France

PS I have taken *Navy News* for many years, and over the years it has improved tremendously. The only thing lacking is the page called 'commissioning forecasts'.

There are so few commissionings these days it would be a rather blank page, sadly – Ed

... She appears to be HMS Liverpool. The City or Southampton Class Cruisers were divided into two groups, the Southampton and Gloucester classes.

The first group were all built with square bridges, but the second group all had rounded fronts to the bridge structure.

At the end of the war the first group, HM Ships Sheffield, Glasgow, Birmingham, and Newcastle remained.

Birmingham did not have a knuckle to her hull, and Glasgow had a prominent aircraft homing beacon between the after funnel and main mast. These features rule out the ship shown.

When Newcastle and Sheffield were refitted they were given rounded fronts to their bridges but also a lattice foremast.

The ship shown has a rounded front to her bridge, but a tripod foremast - which identifies her as HMS Liverpool.

– Ian Richardson, High Shincliffe,
County Durham



... I believe she is the 'Shiny Sheff'. This may have been the occasion when Diana Dors arrived at the cocktail party wearing a fur coat, which she discarded to reveal only a bikini underneath.

– John Perry, former FCOEA

The ship in your photo is HMS Sheffield, the first 'Shiny Sheff'. How do I know? The photograph used to be in the bar at HMS Hallam, the Communications Training Centre of the Royal Naval Reserve in Sheffield.
– R J Horner, former CO HMS
Hallam, Holywell Green, Halifax

Email is not good enough

I WOULD like you to publish a short congratulations to my husband, WO1 MA Steven 'Jumper' Collins for receiving his bar to the Long Service and Good Conduct medal, for serving 30 years in the Royal Navy, having joined in 1976 at the age of 16.

Sadly, all he officially received was an email telling him to collect it from the UPO, where it was just handed to him in a box by a member of staff.

I suppose Service personnel receive awards for serving 30 years all the time, and that to the Royal Navy it's nothing special, but to my husband it is a big deal, and I think it would be nice for him to receive at least a small amount of recognition by having a mention in *Navy News*.
– Alison Collins

Command approved

WITH reference to the article *Rainey days ahead* (February) I held the last post of Warrant Officer to the Commander-in-Chief Naval Home Command.

When the offices of Commander-in-Chief and Second Sea Lord amalgamated my appointment was changed to Command Warrant Officer to CNH/2SL.

Although the infrastructure and Terms of Reference had not fully been implemented by the then Admiral's Secretary, Capt Wykeham-Martin RN, before I retired I was the first Command Warrant Officer to Admiral Sir John Kerr.

Having said this I believe that when I retired in 1994 the post did not remain and it was some time before it was resurrected.

These facts can be verified by the photographs of the old CNHs and CNH/2SLs that hang, outside the Admirals office in 2SL/CNH Building, whereby each member of staff photographed with the Admiral has their rank and title mentioned.

One of the reasons that the post of Command Warrant Officer was implemented was due to a visit by the Master Chief of the US Navy, when Admiral Sir Jeremy Black was CNH.

Admiral Black was impressed by the fact that the US Navy's lower deck had a 'mouthpiece', even to the extent that the Master Chief's wife was the ombudsman to their families.

Admiral Black and Capt Wykeham-Martin, I believe, had a similar belief that the RN lower deck should also have a representative within the 2SL/CNH organisation, hence the post of Command Warrant Officer.

– Terence Higgins,
former WO1 (Coxn) SM

Strait talk

IT IS not often that *Navy News* makes mistakes but when you have, I have held back from going into print with a gentle reprimand.

But on this occasion I have decided to be a grumpy old man and point out a common, but nonetheless unforgivable, error.

Your photo (January) of HMS Blyth and HMS Ramsey is captioned "as they pass through the Straits of Hormuz at sunset."

There is only one Strait of Hormuz in the same way as there is only one Strait of Dover, one Strait of Gibraltar, one Strait of Malacca, *et cetera*.

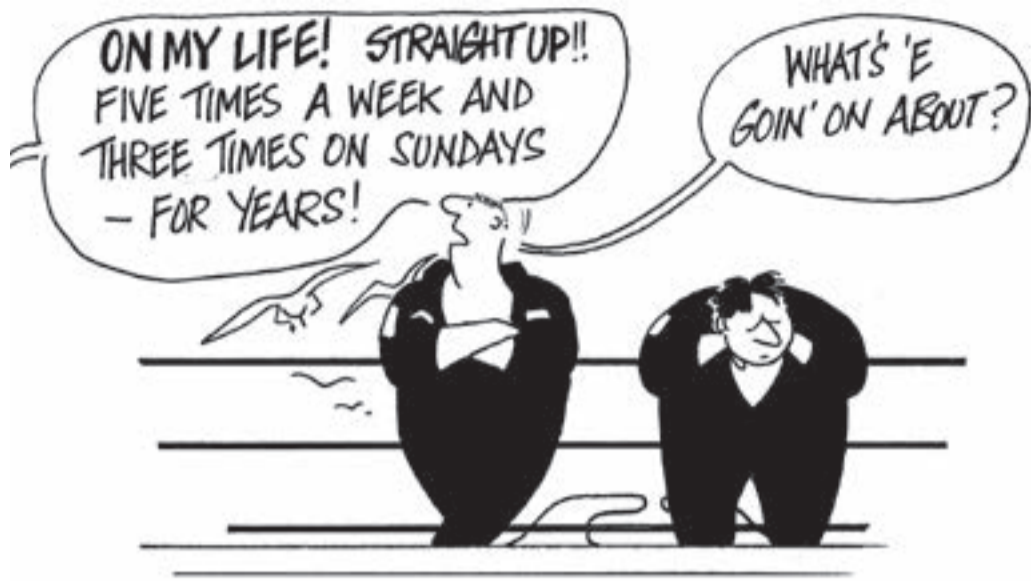
Collectively they are the plural straits but individually they are the singular strait.

– Trevor Wand,
Much Hadham, Herts

Thank you for setting us 'strait' – Ed

CLASSIC JACK

BY TUGS



● Lima echoes... This photo of HMS Hampshire giving a 21-gun salute as she entered Callao, near Lima, first appeared in Navy News in 1969. Thanks to Dave Evans of Sutton Coldfield, in Hampshire's ops room at the time, for plugging a gap in our archives

LETTERS to the editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent's name and address, not necessarily for publication.

E-mail correspondents are also requested to provide this information.

Letters cannot be submitted over the telephone.

Given the impressive volume of

letters, we cannot publish all of your correspondence in Navy News.

We look particularly for correspondence which stimulates debate, makes us laugh or raises important issues.

Please try to keep your submissions as brief as possible - our space is limited.

The editor reserves the right to edit your submissions.



The right precautions

I WAS disappointed by the views expressed in Keith Miller's letter (*January*) which suggests that the Navy projects a 'wimpish' image.

This accusation was based upon the fact that HMS Lancaster's saluting gun team were correctly dressed to carry out a salute using the ship's 3pdr saluting guns.

The saluting gun has a significant discharge from the barrel which may be largely wadding, but which is extremely unpleasant should you be on the receiving end.

Many persons in best uniform will have experienced being downwind of this discharge and know the cost of putting right the damage it does.

Similarly, salutes are generally carried out with the ship far enough at sea for the gun crew not to be observed directly.

In the 1980s, I was involved in using saluting guns ashore in the West Indies so that islanders could return the ship's salute to them.

We bolted the guns to two large railway sleepers. When fired, the recoil of the guns physically pushed the railway sleepers backwards, and over what I recall

as a 15-gun salute they moved significantly.

My point is that saluting guns remain dangerous and proper precautions should be observed when using them. Not to do so would be unprofessional.

In the picture of the Royal Marines mortar crew, which the same letter hails as 'doing it for real,' you can clearly see burning material ejected from the barrel.

Yes, the lads are doing it for real and the risks in their situation are significant, but in my mind that doesn't mean that a lack of protection is desirable.

As far as I can tell, they are wearing hearing protection and are adopting protective positioning, making the risk as low as they practically can.

I suggest that both teams are doing their jobs as professionally as the available equipment allows.

Our people do a great deal and are often pushed for resources. I do hope that the writer of the letter to which I refer looks through *Navy News* to discover the plentiful evidence that the RN remains an organisation of which we can all be immensely proud.

- Lt Cdr Guy Nicholls, AIB, HMS Sultan

Shedding light where it is Dark

I JOINED the Dark Buccaneer at Vospers in Portsmouth at the beginning of 1957 and brought her round to HMS Hornet.

She became leader of the 2nd Fast Patrol Boat Squadron with Dark Clipper, Dark Killer and Dark Rover.

The 1st Fast Patrol Boat Squadron was already in service in 1956 consisting of Dark Hunter (leader), Dark Aggressor, Dark Avenger and Dark Biter but by August 1957 all had paid off at HMS Hornet on economic grounds.

But official acceptances of new Darks coming into service continued and included Dark

Hero, Dark Hussar, Dark Highwayman, Dark Fighter, Dark Adventurer, Dark Gladiator and Dark Intruder.

Two more arrivals in 1958 were Dark Invader and Dark Scout, making 18 in the class.

All these conducted trials for short periods so no more squadrons were formed for operational requirements.

However, by December 1960, the First Lord of the Admiralty stated that the Navy had not abandoned coastal forces altogether.

A nucleus had been kept alive of three boats to form the fast special service squadron which included

the new Brave class, Brave Borderer and Brave Swordsman, so that the art would not be lost.

Both operated from HMS Vernon until the end of 1970.

To make up the squadron to three boats, four of the Darks were brought out of reserve - Dark Fighter, Dark Hero, Dark Intruder and Dark Gladiator - and operated with the Braves at varying times until 1970.

In your photo (*December*) showing three Dark Class boats at speed, the leading one is Dark Adventurer (not Adventure as captioned).

- Brian Hudson, Birstall, Leicestershire

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'ONCE NAVY, ALWAYS NAVY'

Senior rates welcomed to dinner

THERE was a good turnout of members of the Redruth and Camborne branch for election time – and with no other nominations on the table, all the officers were re-elected.

Ten days later the branch annual dinner dance was held at the Penventon Hotel.

Among the guests were members of the Chiefs and Warrant Officers Mess at RN Air Station Culdrose.

A raffle proved popular, and shipmates enjoyed the usual banter which crackled between the Association and the visitors from Culdrose.

Final date for Ulster reunion

THE 50th anniversary and final reunion of the HMS Ulster 1958-60 commission will take place between October 24-27 2008.

Booking forms and full details for the reunion, to be held at the Kistor Hotel in Torquay, can be obtained from Reg Ralph at 20 Penhale Road, Eastbourne BN22 7JX, telephone 01323 725978 or email rejoice@milnet.co.uk

Birthday bash for Laurie

LAURIE Cook, vice president and chairman of Letchworth and Hitchin branch, cuts a cake to celebrate his 90th birthday last month.

A stalwart who still does everything for himself – and a prize-winning gardener – S/M Laurie joined the Navy as an apprentice tiffy in 1934, straight from the Royal Hospital School in Greenwich, and left the Service in 1948 as a CPO.

Caprice group stays steadfastly informal

AT A TIME when many RN associations are struggling to recruit and retain members, the HMS Caprice (1968) Association is going from strength to strength.

In 1968 Caprice, a World War 2 destroyer, completed a circumnavigation of the globe.

During her world cruise she visited numerous countries, including Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Tonga, Hawaii and the continental United States, to name a few.

Former crew members will say: "We are not quite sure why we did it, but it was a heck of an experience," especially as many of the crew had just passed out of training.

They joined the Navy and did see the world.

Caprice was scrapped in 1973, although her sister ship HMS Cavalier is preserved at Chatham Historic Dockyard.

In 1996 five of the original crew members met up in Blackpool, Annual reunions were planned, and as word got round many others

joined the fledgling association.

Today that organisation is still growing and has attracted 75 members – which from a ship's company of 250 represents an impressive 30 per cent from 40 years ago.

Association members hope a book will be published later this year recording the ship's history and airing many pictures of Caprice from 1944 to 1973.

They believe the book will also be of interest to the wider World War 2 destroyer community.

The only criteria for joining the Association is that you were on board Caprice for at least part of the 1968 world cruise, regardless of rank – three officers, including the First Lieutenant, are members.

The Caprice Association does not 'do' Annual General Meetings, constitutions, presidents or top tables.

There is no need, they say – if it works, don't fix it.

Reunions are very informal affairs, and partners are most welcome.

In fact, such events often culminate in a Sods Opera...

One member comes all the

way from California every year, and another comes along in his caravan – such is the resolve of ex-matelots.

This year's reunion is scheduled for Bristol in October.

Details are available from Graham Latter on 01482 632276, or check the Association website at www.hmscaprice1968.org.uk

HMS Caprice was launched in September 1943 as one of 36 War Emergency class destroyers built to replace ships lost in action.

During the war, the ship served in the far East and on Russian and Atlantic convoys, and acted as escort to the liners Queen Elizabeth and Ile de France on their high-speed trooping runs.



● From left: S/M Mike Gee, Plymouth branch standard bearer, Andrew Smith, S/M Harry Sparks, life vice president of Plymouth branch, and Joan Smith

RN VC honoured

STANDARDS were paraded once again at Ford Park Cemetery as members of Plymouth and Saltash branches, the Ganges Association and the RFA Service gathered at the graveside of Naval

hero Lt George Hinkley VC to pay their respects.

Joining them were Lt Hinkley's great granddaughter Joan Smith and great great grandson Andrew Smith.

Lt Hinkley was serving as an able seaman in HMS Sphinx during the Taiping Rebellion in China in 1862 when, in a daring rescue, he carried two wounded officers to safety whilst under continuous heavy enemy fire.

He was awarded the VC in February 1863, left the service in 1867 and died on the last day of 1904 at the age of 85.

Following the wreath-laying, a short service was conducted by the Rev Alen McCulloch RN.

Sadness clouds New Year for York

YORK branch had little reason to celebrate over New Year, having lost four shipmates in a short space of time, said branch PRO S/M Bernard Hallas.

First was S/M Bill Cox, who started as a Boy Bugler and, after serving in the Corps, entered the police and became the 'village bobby' until he retired.

Next was former branch secretary S/M Geoff Miskelly, who also joined the police, attaining high rank.

Shortly after that the branch lost ex-Royal S/M Ernie Burrows, and the final member to cross the bar was ex-Wren S/M Iris Carson.

S/M Hallas said the branch sends its condolences to all their families, and that the shipmates will be sadly missed.

On a different matter, S/M Hallas said York is still the "most energetic branch in Yorkshire," enjoying a full calendar and never short of volunteers.

A few booties will be visiting London for the Royal Marines Graspan Parade – with S/M Hallas claiming the honour of being the "oldest still-serving official in the ranks" at 90.

Pat Farrington, wife of hard-working secretary S/M Mike, has entered her last year as national chairman of the Association of Wrens, so it's "goodbye to cucumber sandwiches and a big 'Well done' from the branch."

70th anniversary for Worthing

WORTHING Branch will be celebrating its 70th year in commission at a Thanksgiving and Rededication service on Sunday March 16 at St Michael's Church in Amberley.

The branch extends an invitation to other branches interested in parading their Standard or being represented.

Please contact S/M J Pannett at 76 Brighton Road, Lancing, West Sussex, or telephone 01903 754349.

Happy shipmates

THE HMS Dunkirk Association was formed after the first reunion in 2005, since when it has grown rapidly.

Originally things were set in motion by some members of the 1961 commission who had fond memories of their time on board the ship, a Battle-class destroyer launched on the Clyde in August 1945 and broken up on the same river in the mid-1960s.

Little did they know that the men who served on the 1957-59 and 1959-61 commissions also remembered the Dunkirk fondly, and also wanted to be involved.

That would just about be

it, they thought – but lo and behold, the folk from the 1947 commission also started to appear on the scene.

It would seem that there was something about the ship that left a lot of people with a lot of happy memories.

The next reunion is scheduled for Malta on April 18-19, when members will be placing a plaque on the small memorial at Sliema Creek.

Anyone who served in Dunkirk at any time and would like to join the reunion should check the Association's website, www.HMSDunkirkassociation.org or contact the secretary, George Silvester, on 01381 600315.



Standard passed on

AFTER more than 50 years in the town, the Tunbridge Wells branch disbanded on the last day of 2007.

The last official act was for the chairman of the branch, S/M Alf Goddard, and the few remaining shipmates to hand over the branch standard to the Tunbridge Wells Sea Cadet unit TS Brilliant for

safekeeping (see picture above).

One of the longest-serving members, S/M Gary Faulkner, said: "It is a very sad day for the town."

"We have put the standard here rather than laying it up with the hope that if a new branch is formed in the future they have got a good start."

Naval Quirks

IN DECEMBER 1914 OFF ALEXANDRETTA, HMS "DORIS" HAD CONVINCED THE TURKS UNDER THREAT OF NAVAL BOMBARDMENT, THAT THEIR RAILWAY ENGINES HAD TO BE DESTROYED..

..THE TURKS, HOWEVER, INSISTED THAT THEY RATHER THAN US, ACTUALLY BLEW UP THE ENGINES – DESPITE THEIR NOT HAVING THE EXPERTISE TO DEAL WITH OUR EXPLOSIVES..

..IN THE END, THEY AGREED THAT A BRITISH TORPEDO-LIEUTENANT BE RATED AS A TURKISH NAVAL OFFICER FOR THE DAY AND HE DULY BLEW UP THE ENGINES!

Well done! You will now be locked up as a p.o.w. until midnight when you will revert to your RN rank!



Supporting independent living for our ex-Service community

SVR
Scottish
Veterans'
Residences



SVR supports independent living accommodation for ex-Service men and women of all ages who find themselves homeless or in times of need.

Since 1910 we are proud to have helped over 60,000 veterans and we currently offer support and assistance to over 300 ex-Service men and women each year.

WE URGENTLY NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

Please send your donation, large or small to ensure that our veterans are looked after for years to come.

Please make cheques payable to 'SVR' and send them to:
Marion Anderson, Fundraising, SVR,
53 Canongate, Edinburgh, EH8 8BS

For more information or to donate on-line visit
www.svrnline.org

Sods Opera aids research

THE chairman of Southport branch, S/M Noel Williams, presented a cheque for £600 to Maggie Blanks of the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund in Southport Town Hall.

Maggie, the founder of the fund, visited members of the association to pass on her personal thanks.

Little is known about pancreatic cancer, and Maggie is determined to raise awareness and money for research. Information is available at www.pcrf.org.uk

Southport shipmates raised the money at their Trafalgar Night dinner and at a social night with a Sods Opera provided by Crosby branch members, a fun evening bringing back happy memories.

For information on the Crosby Sods Opera team contact Dave Tollerton at dave_tollerton@btinternet.com

Friends of Vidal

THE 2008 reunion of the Friends of HMS Vidal will be held at the Burlington Palm Hotel, Great Yarmouth, on September 6.

Contact David Parker, 28 The Sanctuary, Green Lane, Morden, Surrey CM4 5NX, telephone 0208 648 0160, for full details.

Pair celebrate RN's Maltese heritage

A NUMBER of shipmates from the Norwich branch visited Malta to renew their ties with the George Cross island, having served there at some time in their naval careers.

During the course of their stay they met John Mizzi, one-time editor of the *Times of Malta*, and now of a bi-monthly publication, *Malta at War*.

On one evening John joined the Norwich contingent for dinner, after which they adjourned to a room where he spoke to them for two hours without notes about how the island fared during World War 2.

Now 82, during the war John was a teenaged schoolboy, and he recounted his memories of living through the siege.

He also has an expert knowledge of the part played by the Royal Navy, and is not only able to name all the ships which served in the Mediterranean, but also their commanding officers.

John has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the war in general, but in particular the North African campaign and Maltese convoys.

He is known personally to two Norwich shipmates, and other members felt he would be a fascinating guest speaker to other ex-RN groups who visit the island.

As well as John, the shipmates visited the home and private maritime museum of Victor Wickman which is situated in the

village of Xghajra, a bone-shaking 30-minute bus ride from Valletta.

This is the lifetime's work of another man who is totally in love with the Royal Navy and its Maltese connections.

The collection is quite remarkable, according to the visitors.

"Victor Wickman was well known and closely associated with Lord Mountbatten, and was with him a few days prior to his tragic death in Ireland," said S/M Brian Fuller, Area 5 PRO.

"He has many items of Mountbatten memorabilia, including personal family items.

"There is also the binnacle from HMS Magpie which was delivered to the museum courtesy of the Duke of Edinburgh.

"The downstairs part of the collection is mainly commercial shipping, with many large-scale models.

"There is a complete wardrobe of Admirals' uniforms donated by Flag Officers who served in Malta.

"Upstairs, in what he describes as the Royal Navy Room, are many items of RN memorabilia, much of which has been donated by senior officers now retired, and there is a large library.

"RN cap tallies are displayed under headings 'Destroyer', 'Cruiser' etc.

"Also spotted were a cap tally from the German warship Graf Spee, and from other German

capital ships.

"A visit to this collection is a must for any ex-RN group, or indeed individuals, visiting Malta.

"It is, however, a private collection in a private home, and viewing is by appointment, but a warm welcome is assured.

"Victor has also indicated that he is continually on the look-out for Royal Navy memorabilia with a Maltese connection.

"If any branch has any items then the Wickman Collection is a safe resting place."

To contact John Mizzi, email jam2@maltanet.net and for Victor Wickman telephone (00 356) 21 69 02 54.

Different bearing for competition

DUE to circumstances beyond the RNA's control, arrangements for the National Standard Bearer's competition have been changed.

The contest will now take place on Saturday June 7 at the Royal Engineers Gymnasium, Chatham, starting at 10am.

The weekend programme will begin at 8pm on Friday June 6 with a get-together at the Pembroke Suite of the King Charles Hotel.

The gym should be available for practice on the Saturday morning, with the competition itself taking place at 2pm. A social event and awards evening is also planned.

On Sunday, at 10.45am, there will be a parade to the Chatham Naval Memorial for an 11am service, followed by a buffet lunch.

For competition enquiries contact S/M Alan Robinson on 07813 910479, and for all other enquiries contact S/M Bill Murray on 01634 304973 or email him at bill.murray@blueyonder.co.uk

Entries must be with S/M Robinson by May 10.



● HANWORTH shipmates staged their annual Sods Opera, raising a total of £1,500 for Age Concern, Breast Cancer, Parkinsons and the Hanworth Club. The branch also hosted a visit by Whitstable branch, who brought a coach-load of members along for the fun. Funds from the latest Sods Opera, pictured above in full swing, bring the total raised since 2002 to almost £10,800.

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in our January edition (right) was HMS Fleetwood.

The £50 prize-winning entry came from Mr P Cooter, of Frimley in Surrey.

This month's vessel was engaged on official duties in the Goodwin Sands area when pictured above.

She was the first of a class of three, built at Cowes on the Isle of Wight around 50 years ago.

Can you name her? The right answers could win you £50.

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH. Coupons giving correct answers will



go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

Closing date for entries is April 11. More than one entry can be submitted, but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our May edition. The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 157

Name

Address

My answer



● S/M Harold Chalkley

Cheshunt founder dies at 84

A FOUNDER member of the Cheshunt branch has died at the age of 84.

S/M Harold Chalkley had been president of the branch since 1996, and was also president of the local Sea Cadet unit TS Intrepid until he moved five years ago.

Harold suffered from Parkinsons Disease, and moved from his home in Cheshunt to Suffolk, to be cared for by his daughters.

As well as branch RNA duties and his links with the Sea Cadets, S/M Chalkley was a long-term Area and National representative for the Association, was a member of the Royal British Legion and supported the RNLI.

He was also a member of the Haverhill branch.

S/M Chalkley died in hospital following a fall at home.



The Royal Naval Association

Once Navy Always Navy

Unity, Loyalty, Patriotism and Comradeship

Who can join?

- Full Members
Serving and Ex-Service members of RN, RM, QARNNS, WRNS, Reserves RFA and RNXS
- Associate members
Others in sympathy with our objects especially families

What does the Association do?

We:

- Support the Royal Navy
- Maintain Naval traditions
- Enjoy social activities
- Re-unite shipmates
- Remember the fallen
- Help the disabled
- Look after the needy
- Cheer up the distressed
- Stand together in unity

How to join

Write to RNA HQ

82 Chelsea Manor Street

London SW3 5QJ

Tel: 020 7352 6764

Fax: 020 7352 7385

www.royal-naval-association.co.uk





Service honours Balkan operation

AN OFFICIAL commemorative service to mark the withdrawal of UK Forces from Bosnia and Herzegovina will take place at the Armed Forces Memorial, Staffordshire, on Thursday May 22, and 1,000 tickets are available for the event.

The service will give thanks for the outstanding contribution made by UK Forces in bringing stability, security and peace to the country.

MOD Minister for Veterans Derek Twigg said: "I am proud of the contribution that our Armed Forces made in bringing peace and stability to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"It is fitting that we are remembering their contribution through this commemorative service, especially those who lost their lives.

"The success in Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrates what can be achieved through a unified international presence."

Tickets are available for the commemorative service for veterans of the conflict, and the families and friends of those who lost their lives.

An application form can be downloaded from www.veterans-uk.info or by calling the free ticket line on 0800 169 2277.

Each successful application will receive two tickets, and the closing date for ticket applications is Tuesday April 22.

The MOD aims to contact all successful applicants by May 2.

Thousands of UK personnel served in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) from 1992 to 2007, playing a vital peacekeeping role in support of the UN, NATO and the EU.

The war that divided the multi-ethnic population broke out in Bosnia during 1992, and was brought to an end with the Dayton Peace agreement of 1995.

UK personnel remained in the country for a further 12 years to assist in fulfilling the terms of the agreement.

During the 15-year campaign 55 members of the UK Armed Forces lost their lives – their names are listed on the Memorial – and many more were injured.

The Bosnian death toll after the war ended in 1995 was reported to be at least 100,000-110,000, military and civilian, with over 1.8 million people forcibly displaced from their homes.

RNPT date

THE next RN Presentation Team's event is on Wednesday March 5 at the Town Hall, Burton-upon-Trent.

Anyone wanting to book a place at this presentation should contact the RNPT on 020 8833 8020 or email rnpt@gtnet.gov.uk

It's your 2-6

NEED to get your message across to the rest of the RN?

To feature in 2-6 contact Lt Cdr Gregor Birse (Fleet Media Ops), 93832 8809 or Lt Cdr Harvey Burwin (DPR(N)), 9621 85984.



NATO spotlight falls on NCOs

NATO has announced that 2008 is to be the year when non-commissioned officers (NCOs) step into the limelight.

Heralding the Year of the NCO, Supreme Allied Commander Europe Gen John Craddock said: "Our NCOs are an integral link in the chain of command and leadership in NATO.

"We cannot conduct our important missions without them. They provide leadership, inspiration and motivation."

The Year of the NCO aims to recognise the contribution made by NCOs as junior managers in all areas of military activity and the role they play in transforming the Alliance.

"This is an exciting year that provides us the impetus for the future development of generations of NCOs," said Allied Command Operations Senior NCO, Command Sgt Maj Michael Bartelle, the brains behind the idea.

Sgt Maj Bartelle will bring together NCOs from across the Alliance to begin development of an NCO Charter, which will act as a template for the development of NCO competencies.

And throughout 2008 NATO will spotlight the contribution being made by NCOs.

NCOs are the vital link between the officer cohort and the ranks.

As senior enlisted personnel, they have practical experience of life on the messdecks and have much expertise, and can therefore advise their officers as well as offering the benefit of their experience in training and mentoring junior rates.

The Royal Navy does not refer to NCOs; petty officers, chiefs and warrant officers are known as senior rates, although WO's situation in the Royal Marines is closer to that of the Army, with corporals, sergeants, colour sergeants and warrant officers being classed as NCOs – although WO's are often regarded as a separate group.

Project Fisher trials take long-term view

PROJECT Fisher has completed its concept phase and the Navy Board has approved the next phase of work.

This will involve developing a range of detailed proposals for manning system adjustments, some of which will be trialled later in the year.

Changes to the manning system for ships are essential to ensure a sustainable supply of qualified personnel to the Naval Service and to exploit the operational potential of highly-capable new ships such as the Type 45s and the future carrier.

Project Fisher is a long-term programme, and any decision on future manning options will be subject to thorough examination.

This means conducting an extended series of manning trials over the coming years, building on the Sea Swap approach and lessons identified.

Project Fisher, the Navy's Flexible Manning initiative, was stood up by the Navy Board last year to look at how warships

should be manned in the future, with a view to addressing a number of long-term difficulties – in particular, the changing shape of the Fleet, especially as the shift to leaner-manned ships such as T45 will significantly reduce the number of junior rate billets available to grow experienced senior ratings for the future.

If left alone, this will seriously threaten the sustainability of personnel structures.

Equally, with a smaller number of ships – albeit very much more capable ones – the RN will need to be able to operate as flexibly as possible.

This means, wherever possible, manning ships and front-line units in such a way that, if required, they can be deployed for much longer, and much more flexibly than at present, whilst still providing high-quality harmony and personal stability for our people.

Changes to front-line manning regimes are therefore essential – doing nothing is not an option.

Because the effect of lean manning is most significant in the newest surface ships, the project has focussed initially on manning

arrangements in the Surface Flotilla.

Over the past five months, the project team has identified and analysed almost 30 different ways of manning some or all of the ships.

Many originated from suggestions made by personnel serving at sea, in the organisations closely involved in supporting them, such as Flotilla and waterfront manning office staffs, as well as from Senior Rate Command Courses.

These ideas include some of the arrangements tested in the Sea Swap trials.

Following an initial assessment of the potential advantages and disadvantages of each, and examination of the lessons learnt from Sea Swap, the project has now completed its concept phase work and presented its findings to the Navy Board.

The Navy Board has agreed that a selected number of manning options will now be developed further and trialled.

Within this programme, early priorities will be to:

- 1 Investigate the benefits of junior rate squadding across ships of the same class within a region;
- 2 Secure significant improvements in the delivery of AB2 task-book training and achievement of OPS;
- 3 Optimise the management of T45 personnel;
- 4 Optimise the management of manpower across capital ship types.

Furthermore, the project will also begin detailed development of proposals both for manning FF/DD ships using a three-watch system, similar to that in use for the survey flotilla, and separately using a more innovative 'modular' approach.

The Navy Board will consider these in the summer, and decide whether either or both should be trialled as well.

Throughout all of this work it is emphasised that Project Fisher's primary focus is on finding the best manning solutions for the

future, building on the changes already introduced under Topmast and Branch Development.

It is not seeking to address today's issues of gapping and churn, where there is much work already under way, although obviously where project proposals can be used to solve current problems, they will be.

Project Fisher is also an integral part of the Navy Board's Personnel Change Programme (NBPCP).

Finally, the Navy Board is very aware that there is already a great array of change under way affecting people.

It is therefore adamant that any adjustments to future manning arrangements, however vital, will only be introduced after thorough examination under realistic conditions, and only when they can clearly be proven to be of benefit.

This is why the full trials programme will take several years to complete, why Fisher is a long-term programme, and why, if some options do not work as well as initially expected, you may see certain trials (and associated work-streams) altered or terminated.

Project Fisher remains the Navy Board's highest priority personnel change programme, but its success remains crucially dependent on Navywide engagement.

There have been excellent contributions from a number of units and commands, all of which have been incorporated into the project's work to date.

Trial and experimentation is the key to longer-term success; for those involved, either directly or in a supporting role, it is your opportunity to help shape the future.

Project Fisher is being led by Cdre Ian Corder with a dedicated team based in Leach Building within the Fleet HQ.

Further details will unfold over the coming months, and the project team will keep personnel informed through face-to-face briefings, road shows and further IC messages as appropriate.

Clear signal

THE British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS Radio) is providing the missing communications link for the British Forces.

For the first time, BFBS Radio is being heard on-air in Great Britain via DAB digital radio in a trial of the service which started in mid-January.

BFBS Radio – part of the Services Sound and Vision Corporation (SSVC) – has been broadcasting to British forces overseas since 1943, and currently has bases in 11 countries, including Iraq, Germany and the Falkland Islands.

Now, through the pioneering trial, the service will be available across mainland Britain and can be received on any DAB digital radio.

See www.ukdigitalradio.com for more details.

Diseases scheme is 'faster and less costly'

THE Compensation Scheme for Radiation Linked Diseases in the MOD is a joint initiative between participating employers and their trades unions.

Scheme members include AWE plc, DML, Babcock Naval Services, and BNFL, and is administered by an independent Executive Secretary on behalf of all participants.

Claimants must be an employee or ex-employee of a scheme participant or a dependant, in the case of death.

A radiation dose record must exist for the individual, and they must have contracted or died from a disease covered by the scheme.

This includes most (but not all) forms of cancer as well as cataracts.

Under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965, licence holders are liable for any harm arising from site operations and negligence need not be proven.

Although compensation claims may be settled by reference to the courts, such recourse can be lengthy and expensive.

The Compensation Scheme is designed to be faster, less costly, less traumatic and adopts a less rigorous test than applied by the courts.

It should be borne in mind that cancer is one of the most common diseases in the developed world.

Around one in three of the UK population contracts the disease, and around one in four die from it, thus not all cases applying to the scheme will be successful.

The purpose of the scheme is to attempt to distinguish cases where there is a reasonable probability that they have been caused by occupational radiation exposure from those where there is a low probability.

It is an essential feature of the scheme that compensation cases are never closed.

In the event of further evidence becoming available, such as changes to a claimant's dose history or advances in scientific or medical knowledge, cases can be reassessed.

Applicants may apply through their trade union, or to the Compensation Scheme Executive Secretary, B582/IFS British Nuclear Group Sellafield, Cumbria CA20 1PE, tel 01946 774716.

The scheme is entirely voluntary; claimants can choose whether to use the scheme or to take legal action against their employer for radiation injury. The trade unions recommend the scheme.

Full details on how the Scheme operates is available on the Scheme's website at www.csrlid.org.uk

Aiming high

THE Guild of Air Pilots and Navigators (GAPAN) are currently trying to attract as many high-calibre applications as possible to their 2008 Scholarships Programme.

The Guild is concerned with every technical aspect of flying, from safety to navigational aids, airport facilities to training methods, and in particular with new developments in aircraft and their handling.

It is a unique organisation, as its membership is restricted to qualified pilots and navigators and therefore it can truly claim to bring together the views and

ideas of people who control aircraft in the air.

Perhaps the most important function of the Guild is to help set and maintain standards of conduct among aviators.

They are offering complete PPLs (fixed wing) and Instructor Ratings (fixed wing and rotary) bursaries for further Instructor qualifications and a Jet Orientation Course.

Application paperwork and further information on these and other scholarships and bursaries are available on the website www.gapan.org

The closing date for the PPL and Instructor applications is April 9.



● The silver woodpeckers presented to HMS Warspite in 1926

Warspite's woodpeckers

THESE two silver woodpeckers perched on tree stumps (trophy numbers 12511 and 25235) were presented in 1926 to the battleship HMS Warspite by Lady Chamberlain, who had named the ship at launch in 1913.

The battleship was flying the flag of Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham in March 1941, leading a force of two further battleships, a carrier, three cruisers and 16 destroyers (including three Australian ships), when an Italian force was intercepted in the Med.

The Italian ships, led by Admiral Angelo Iachino in the battleship Vittorio Veneto, were set to attack

Allied convoys heading for Greece.

Air strikes achieved two torpedo hits, one slowing the Italian flagship and the other halting the cruiser Pola completely.

Admiral Iachino detached a squadron led by cruisers Fiume and Zara to support the Pola, which was ambushed the same evening by a squadron led by battleship HMS Valiant.

In the ensuing action off Cape Matapan, the Italians – who were not equipped to fight at night – lost all three cruisers and two destroyers, costing more than 2,000 lives, while the British lost the three-man crew of a bomber.

Pay rise boosted by bigger X-Factor

THE Government has accepted the recommendations of the independent Armed Forces' Pay Review Body and will implement them in full from April 1.

All Servicemen and women will see their basic pay rise by 2.6 per cent.

There is also an increase in X-Factor (an adjustment to military pay in recognition of the conditions of service experienced by members of the Armed Forces compared to those in the civilian sector, including exposure to danger, separation from family, and discipline) by one per cent to 14 per cent.

The amount of X-Factor paid to officers at the equivalent of Lt Col, Col and Brig ranks has also been restructured for the first time since 1974.

This reflects that officers of these ranks now experience conditions and frequency of tours similar to more junior officers.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, Chief of Defence Staff, said: "This pay increase is good news for the Armed Forces at a time when their dedication, determination and courage continue to be tested."

"It reflects the outstanding contributions our people and their families are making to the defence of our nation."

"It is also a tangible demonstration of the high regard in which our people are held by the Government and the nation."

The Longer Separation Allowance will increase by 2.6 per cent, giving troops deployed overseas at least £1,100 over a six-month tour.

The rates of Specialist Pay (including Flying Pay, Submarine Pay, Diving Pay and Hydrographic Pay) will also increase by 2.6 per cent.

A new category of specialist pay is also being introduced for Explosive Ordnance Disposal personnel.

Manning in the Armed Forces remains "challenging", and the department is responding by introducing new Financial Retention Initiatives for nuclear submarine watchkeepers, Army vehicle mechanics, the Royal Artillery, the RAF Regiment and firefighters.

The pay award will mean around £282 million more will be spent on Armed Forces pay.

For more information about the pay rise, see www.mod.uk

Poseidon advent

THE NEW Poseidon 2087 Emulator has been officially opened at the Maritime Warfare School at HMS Collingwood.

From the introduction of Sonar 2087 in 2004, when the equipment first went to sea, until the opening of Poseidon, operator training was carried out at Thales Underwater Solutions at Cheadle in Stockport.

But the new facility is a key enhancement to the preparation of students and command teams as it allows operators to realistically train on an accurate emulation of the real equipment, as carried by Type 23 frigates.

Top award for Raleigh centre

A FACILITY at HMS Raleigh which gives military personnel, civilian staff and their families the chance to improve their qualifications online has picked up an award as the best-performing Royal Navy and Royal Marines Learndirect Centre for 2007.

The Torpoint centre has signed up more than 100 learners to study for around 500 courses in a range of subjects, including Skills for Life, National Vocational Qualifications, computer skills and leadership and management studies.

To win the award, the centre's performance was compared with similar facilities at Royal Naval and

Royal Marines establishments across England and Scotland.

Judging was based on the targets set, the quality of support to learners and the management of facilities.

The Raleigh centre is managed by John Raphael and Linda Hampson, who work for Flagship Training Ltd, a commercial company that has a partnering arrangement with the Royal Navy to provide a range of services.

The facility opened in January 2006, and is one of around 120 centres at Armed Forces establishments through the UK and abroad.



● Members of Mortar Troop, 40 Cdo RM, deployed to FOB Gibraltar in Northern Helmand for six months, pass their spare time with a game of cricket. Such opportunities to maintain morale are vital in such a harsh environment

Picture: LA(Phot) AJ Macleod (40 Cdo RM)

Morale victories

WELFARE support is about strengthening and sustaining the morale of personnel, contributing to operational capability.

It encompasses the provision of a range of welfare enablers, and should be viewed as a natural extension rather than a substitute for good leadership.

The Deployed Welfare Package (Overseas) or DWP(O) seeks to achieve four effects:

- **Communication**, enabling deployed personnel to retain contact with family and friends;
- **Entertainment**, providing for leisure and relaxation needs;
- **Support**, providing for physiological needs;
- **Connection**, providing support for families of deployed personnel and facilitating the person's reintegration into the family unit.

DWP(O) is based on the art of the possible and some elements of the Services – including deployed SSBNs, Special Forces and Royal Marines units – are restricted in their ability to use the 'communication' enabler due to the nature of current operations.

The only restriction to access to DWP(O) for all deployed personnel is 'what is possible' – every effort is made to support these elements as much as the strategic situation allows.

Most of the Naval Service have seen a radical and positive improvement in deployed welfare support in recent years.

Platforms/personnel are eligible if they are on:

- Operations overseas, expected to last for two months or more;
- Maritime deployment outside UK home waters, expected to last for two months or more;
- Operations, exercises and

"The moral is to the physical as three is to one"

Napoleon

deployments overseas, outside north-west Europe, which are expected to last for two months or more, by formed and non-formed units under the operational command of NATO, PJHQ or the single-service Commands.

The Fleet Pers Ops team will conduct a brief to all eligible platforms prior to their deployment and arrange all elements of the DWP package.

Communication:

● Telephone: Paradigm Services

Personnel in receipt of DWP(O) will receive 30 minutes per person per week during the deployment.

Individuals can also make privately-financed calls, and credits may be bought and added to Paradigm account cards using credit cards; this facility is also available to families at home.

Disposable £10 cards are also available in ships' NAAFI's.

The SSBN community receive 180 mins of call time for the two weeks preceding and following their deployments.

● Email/Internet

All Fleet personnel have access to daily email facilities, and access to Internet services is improving as modern technology advances.

● BFPO

Efficient mail delivery is one of the most important aspects of the DWP(O).

Letters and packets up to 2kg may be sent from families or friends to personnel, or vice versa, at the Forces Concessionary Parcel Rate, and personnel can send and receive Free Forces Air Letters (FFALs or blueys) during the deployment, as can their families and friends.

Entertainment

● Newspapers/magazines

Pers Ops at Fleet HQ will arrange for units to receive newspapers and magazines through BFPO.

An e-newspaper service is also available, allowing platforms to receive a text-only news and sports service.

SSBNs receive a generous allowance to buy magazines and DVDs, electronic games and CDs prior to deployment.

● BFBS TV and radio services

Fleet's TV policy is to provide recreational TV and deliver live round-the-clock news.

Major RN Milsat-fitted platforms receive TV Over Military Satellite (TOMS) produced by BFBS, a single radio and bespoke TV channel drawn from the six BFBS Eutelsat W3a channels.

A similar service was achieved for non-Milsat units using commercial stabilised satellite systems and BFBS decoders; the majority of Fleet platforms can now receive live BFBS TV and radio at sea and in port.

The six current BFBS channels are BFBS 1 (all-round family channel), BFBS 2 (a more adult-themed channel), The Hits (a 24-hour music channel), Sky Sports 1 and 2 and Sky News.

BFBS hope to add a movie channel, a documentary channel, repeat peak-time broadcasts and reschedule some timings to suit Afghanistan and the Middle East.

There are also two BFBS radio stations.

● RN Film Library (RNFL) And Cinema Projection Equipment

Deploying platforms can receive BFBS DVDs, containing UK TV programmes and radio CDs.

Ships' Film Officers can contact the RN Film Library in Portsmouth prior to deployment and collect loan DVDs, and cinema projection kits is issued to all platforms.

● Live entertainment

Every effort is made to stage Combined Services Entertainment (CSE) shows, and units will normally only be eligible to bid once they have been deployed from the UK in excess of four months with no crew rotation.

Shows are usually co-ordinated with a port visit on the way home.

Operational Equipment (OFE)

Fitness equipment will be updated and replaced in a rolling programme. Any ship requiring service, repair or replacement of equipment should contact Maj Mark Freeman RM at HMS Temeraire, on 9380 24193.

Support

● Laundry

There are two laundry allowances applicable to Service personnel on seagoing platforms:

Major warships have a main laundry with a contracted laundryman permanently embarked. Personnel have an allowance of £35 per month, which increases to £60 when the platform becomes eligible for DWP(O).

Minor war vessels and submarines that do not have a dedicated laundry facility and do not carry a contracted laundryman will be in receipt of a laundry allowance of £1.25 per person per week, rising by a further £2 per person per month when deployed and in receipt of DWP(O).

Connection

● Family Welfare Grant

The opportunity for families to support each other during a deployment is also a part of DWP(O).

The Family Welfare Grant assists home units in providing welfare support to families of personnel deployed on operations.

COs can claim £1 per week for each of their deployed personnel in receipt of DWP(O), and can claim for Operational Casualties who are hospitalised outside operational theatres.

● **Christmas initiatives** include free Christmas boxes, a free mail service, and an additional 30 minutes of telephone call time.

● Early Entry Forces (EEF)

Following 3 Cdo Bde's interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, Fleet have pioneered the development of Early Entry Packs (EEP), each supporting 120 personnel to be used during the initial phases of an operation.

Key elements include a 30-minute telephone call per week, short wave radio, DVD/VCR player, projector, speaker and screen, lightweight fitness equipment and free blueys.

Full details of DWP(O) can be found in RNTM 153/07 (Surface Ships including SSN) and RNTM 026/07 (SSBNs).



Make your views known

HAVE you used the Key Workers Scheme to buy your own home?

Have you had a good or bad experience of obtaining access to a school place of your choice or to a GP/or dentist following posting?

Have you made use of the Mental Health Community Pilot scheme or spoken to your GP about the priority healthcare scheme for veterans?

If so, the Service Personnel Command Paper team are keen to hear from you about the issues that are currently affecting you as a member of the Armed Forces, serving, reservist or veteran, or a family member (be it parent, partner, spouse or child).

In particular, the team are keen to hear of your experiences of the delivery of services such as health, housing, childcare and education.

The Service Personnel Command Paper, announced by the Defence Secretary late last year, will set out the first cross-Government strategy for support to the Service and ex-Service community.

The Command Paper will set out Government plans for accommodation and home ownership; access to education and health provision of Service personnel and their families; the transition to civilian life; care for the medically discharged; veteran and widow welfare; support to families of those killed or injured; and issues affecting Gurkhas and Commonwealth Service personnel.

Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth said: "The provision of support to our Service community has progressed significantly since SDR, but we are not complacent and realise there is much more to be done."

"The Service Personnel Command Paper provides us with an unparalleled opportunity to ensure a comprehensive approach is taken in Government to the provision of these services."

If you would like to make a contribution to the Command Paper consultation, please send them to www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/ContactUs/OtherContactForm/ServicePersonnelCommandPaper.htm or via post to Service Personnel Command Paper, Zone M, 7th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB.

Further information can be found at: www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/Personnel/Welfare/ServicePersonnelCommandPaper.htm

Aviation lead

LAST month saw the arrival at Fleet HQ of the new Chief of Staff (Aviation), Rear Admiral Simon Charlier, who is responsible for the generation of aviation capability and is the Fleet lead on the future aircraft carrier project.

At the same time, the post of Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm transferred from Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns to Rear Admiral Charlier.



Windfall for Mary Rose

BRITAIN'S oldest warship will finally be given the home she deserves thanks to a £21m lottery handout.

A state-of-the-art museum will be built around Henry VIII's flagship Mary Rose which will allow people to walk up to her hallowed timbers – three decades after she was lifted from the Solent seabed.

The ship currently sits in dry dock in the shadow of HMS Victory, covered by a shed. Little more than 1,100 of the 19,000 artifacts raised with her are housed several hundred yards away in a 'temporary' museum near the historic dockyard's entrance.

The aim is to reunite artifacts with the warship in a £35m project which will be completed in 2016. The new museum will be built around the ship in her current location and allow far more Tudor items to be displayed.

The new galleries are due to open in time for the 2012 Olympics when Britain is expecting an upsurge in tourists.

Meanwhile Mary Rose will continue to be sprayed with a wax solution – a sort of 'wood Polyfilla' which repairs some of the damage caused by five centuries beneath the Solent – until 2011. She will spend the next five years drying out. After that visitors will finally be able to peer at the ship face to face, rather than from behind glass panels.

The Heritage Lottery Fund is providing £21m. The Mary Rose Trust must raise £14m; to date it is a quarter of the way towards its target, but backed by such luminaries as TV historian Dr David Starkey – he calls Mary Rose "this country's Pompeii, painting the finest picture of the world of 16th-Century life" – the trust's chief executive John Lippiett is confident the public will rally around the Tudor icon.

"Mary Rose and her unique collection will be saved for the nation – in perpetuity," he added. "We are encouraged to have raised £3.5m already. Our call now is for everyone to get behind the fundraising to help us preserve this priceless national treasure forever."

Anchored in rail history

RAIL users in Plymouth now have a daily reminder of the city's proud shipbuilding heritage.

One of the anchors from HMS Scylla – the last vessel to roll down the slipway of the Devonport Royal Dockyard – now sits in Plymouth's central station.

Scylla was scuttled in Whitsand Bay as Britain's first artificial reef back in 2004 and has since become a major attraction among the diving community.

The ship was stripped out before she was sunk, and among the items removed were her anchors.

One has now been restored by apprentices from Babcock Marine, Devonport's repair and support organisation, and installed in Plymouth's main railway station – gateway to the Royal Navy past and present for sailors based at Devonport or heading over to HMS Raleigh at Torpoint.

In time, experts from Plymouth's National Marine Aquarium intend to fix TV screens to the anchor display so rail travellers can experience some of the sealife swimming around Scylla's wreck.

Scylla was launched in Devonport in August 1968 and served under the White Ensign for a quarter of a century before spending her retirement in Portsmouth Harbour – until the reef project came along.

"We are all proud of the Naval base and Plymouth's strong maritime heritage," said Lord Mayor of Plymouth Cllr David James. "The Scylla anchor is a message from the city to visitors telling them of our links with the Royal Navy and the sea."



● One of the skeletons of dead sailors buried at Greenwich which is helping to shed fresh light on the Nelsonian Navy

From the lowliest to the loftiest

LONG-buried skeletons are shedding surprising new light on the men who delivered victory at Trafalgar and helped build the British Empire.

New research suggests the sailors of the Nelsonian era were drawn from the bottom rung of English society, writes David Keys, archaeology correspondent of The Independent.

The evidence comes from a scientific examination of 100 skeletons of retired 18th and 19th-Century sailors exhumed by archaeologists at the Royal Hospital burial ground in Greenwich.

Detailed analysis of those bones has revealed that the sailors were shorter than most other 18th and 19th-Century English working-class men, usually between one and two centimetres shorter.

On average, sailors 200 years ago were 1.68 metres tall (5ft 6in), but around a quarter were under 1.64 metres (5ft 4in) with a few being under 1.6 metres (5ft 2in). (Nelson, often portrayed as a shortish chap wearing an eye patch, with his arm in a sling, was about 5ft 7in tall.)

The sailors' stunted growth strongly suggests that they came on the whole from the most

deprived sections of British society.

In Georgian and Victorian England, heavy drinking by their mothers during pregnancy and a very low quality diet during infancy, ensured that the poorest children grew up noticeably shorter in stature.

Up till now, historians had thought that the sailors who established Britain's naval supremacy came from the working class as a whole – but the new evidence reveals that a large proportion came from an underclass at the very bottom of society.

The study of the 100 naval skeletons also suggests a high level of inter-personal violence in the 18th and 19th-Century Royal Navy.

The investigation discovered a very high level of injuries consistent with boxing and brawling.

Two out of five sailors had broken noses – more than three times the normal rate for the period; three out of ten had fractured ribs, one in five had broken hand bones, and one tenth had fractured upper jaws.

Although many of these injuries were almost certainly acquired in fights, some must also have been sustained during accidents on board ship. In the study, only one injury (a sword cut) can be seen as almost certainly having been sustained in naval combat.

The examination of the skeletons was carried out by osteologists Annsophie Witkin and Ceridwen Boston of the Oxford-based organisation Heritage Burial Services

Their study also showed that other, non-fracture, injuries were responsible for severe infections.

The research – funded by a UK property developer Mount Anvil – reveals that most of the men had suffered soft-tissue trauma, particularly in the shoulder and elbow muscles. What's more, a substantial number had suffered from scurvy.

Nearly two thirds of the sailors had arthritis and almost a third had lung diseases. One poor sailor suffered from scurvy, arthritis, bone infections plus 22 fractures.

The picture compiled by the Oxford team adds to our existing knowledge of the era, chiefly based on naval records.

Those papers show, for example, that in 1810, two thirds of non-disease-related naval deaths were from accidents, while one in five men died in the horrors of naval life – fire, shipwrecks. Just one in eight sailors killed that year lost his life at the hands of a foe.

■ An exhibition, *Medicine at Sea*, will be held later this year at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

PORTSMOUTH will stage the biggest naval showcase since Trafalgar 200 celebrations three years ago as Navy Days are re-invented for the 21st Century.

Upwards of 50,000 visitors are expected to flock to the Solent between July 25 and 27 for 'Meet Your Navy', when up to 20 warships from different countries will be on show, together with flying and diving displays, field-gun

runs and concerts by the Royal Marines Band.

Meet Your Navy is closer in size and scope to the old Navy Days (last held in Portsmouth in 1996 and in Plymouth in 2006) than the International Festival of the Sea, which took over almost the whole of Portsmouth naval base in 1998, 2001 and 2005, but whose theme was maritime rather than naval.

Organisers are keen to stress that Meet Your Navy is *not* Navy Days, not least because the emphasis during the three-day event will be less on military hardware than the men and women behind it, hence the event's new title.

The aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious* will be the

event's flagship, joined by other RN ships (to be announced nearer the time) and naval vessels from Denmark, Holland, and possibly other countries including Russia and the USA.

The festival is organised in partnership with Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, with the aim that visitors can link the historic ships with today's Royal Navy.

Cdre David Steel, Naval Base Commander, told guests at the official launch in HMS *Ark Royal*: "There is not a nation on earth which sends its ships to sea as much as the Royal Navy."

"That is what our Navy is for, but it does mean that

people don't get to know what our Navy is doing when it's far away at sea."

Cdre Steel continued: "This is their chance to see the ships and meet the people, who after all are our most important asset."

The event will alternate between Devonport and Portsmouth.

For details of ticket prices – which will be discounted in advance of the event – call 0871 230 5582 or visit www.meetyournavy.co.uk

● *Balloons are launched from HMS Ark Royal as plans for Meet Your Navy are revealed*

Picture: PO(Phot) Jon Hamlet, HMS Ark Royal



Mr & Mrs Victory honoured

THE commanding officer of HMS Victory, Lt Cdr John Scivier, and his wife Kerry have been given the Freedom of the City of London in an unusual double ceremony.

The award recognises the high standing that the ship and the Royal Navy have in the City of London, and because of John's links with the city in his previous Naval appointments.

Lt Cdr Scivier said: "Kerry and I were delighted to be invited to become Freeman of the City. The fact that we were permitted to have a double ceremony, and that it was conducted by the Chamberlain himself, Mr Chris Bilsland, was particularly special."

"I am very conscious of the fact that I am but a figurehead for a ship and an armed service that is particularly dear to the city."

The Freedom of the City brings with it some ancient and unusual privileges – including the right to go about the City with a drawn sword, and if convicted of a capital offence, to be hung with a silken rope.

Lt Cdr Scivier added: "I was slightly disappointed to hear that the majority of the old privileges have been repealed so whilst I cannot drive my sheep across London Bridge, I am now technically open to being press-ganged..."

The ceremony took place in Guildhall Art Gallery – the home of two very special Freedom parchments: Lord Nelson and Thomas Masterman Hardy.

Lost heritage of Mundy

WHEN clearing out an old storage room at HMS Collingwood, PO Jeffrey Lee came across a box of historic objects about Chief Communications Yeoman (CCY) William Mundy.

PO Lee set out to find CCY Mundy's family, and return these items of family history, that included service and campaign medals from both World Wars, photographs, a goodwill letter from his CO, and a citation.

These items were framed and presented to CCY Mundy's son and grandchildren at a ceremony at Collingwood.

Son William Mundy, aged 83, said: "My father and I were very close, I can't believe this is happening."

During his naval career, CCY Mundy served in Atlantic convoys and on the Royal Yacht.

Engines 'ere for engineers

NAVAL engineering establishment HMS Sultan will be awash with young engineers this month, when 31 teams of schoolchildren from across Britain gather for Operation Wave Rider.

The Royal Navy Challenge is organised each year by Young Engineers, an organisation that sets out to inspire an interest in engineering in young people.

This year the aspiring engineers are tasked to help the crew of Type 45 HMS Defender to retrieve containers thrown from a wrecked ship off the Pelorous Islands.

The competition takes place on March 13 at HMS Sultan in Gosport.

Find out more online at www.youngeng.org.

New Clyde chief

THERE'S a new man in charge north of the border, with the post of Flag Officer Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland now filled by Rear Admiral Philip Jones.

The admiral, a Falklands veteran and expert in amphibious warfare, takes over from Rear Admiral Tony Johnstone-Burt.

Emperors and explorers

GO ON, tickle his tummy. You know you want to.

A crabeater seal (they actually gorge themselves mainly on krill, not crabs, despite the name), rolls about on a small iceberg near the British Antarctic Research Base at Rothera, with HMS Endurance anchored in the background.

These creatures are (apparently) the second most numerous mammals on earth... but once again it's pingu and friends who seem to have occupied the ice ship's sailors and her scientists.

We thought there couldn't possibly be more penguins in this world, but we were wrong.

A new colony of the birds has been found a good 300 miles from their nearest 'colleagues'.

It's been 13 years since Endurance last ventured so far south of the Western Peninsula (73°S to be precise) – and penguins were notable by their absence.

But in the austral summer of 2008, one of the Red Plum's two Lynx

helicopters spied the birds waddling around on pack ice.

The British Antarctic Survey scientists – being carried by Endurance to a southerly research post – decided the birds needed further investigation, so the icebreaker nudged her way through.

What they found around Ronne Entrance, between the Beethoven Peninsula and Smyley Island, was a small colony of emperor penguins – between 50 and 75 birds in all.

The colony was a good 300 miles south of the nearest penguin populace (according to the Woehler SCAR penguin compendium, the bible of colonies in and around the frozen continent).

The new emperors were not the only surprise for the Red Plum since her last visit to these waters.

The sailors found the ice shelf had retreated eight

miles inland in the intervening 13 years – a fact which might explain the new colony. The BAS scientists are carrying out research to learn more.

Another unexpected find for Endurance was the wreck of the polar cruise ship MS Explorer – victim of an iceberg last November.

The liner's last resting place was found by the hi-tech sonars and scanning equipment of the Royal Navy's ice survey ship.

Before departing for frozen waters, the survey team reckoned finding the hulk would be a task akin to finding a needle in a proverbial haystack.

After one unsuccessful sweep of the area where the Explorer went down early in January, the Red Plum returned to the spot later in the month – this time meeting success.

Explorer lies at the north-western end of the Bransfield Strait – the actual position

is 62° 24.2929'S, 57° 11.7748'W – resting 1,130 metres (3,700ft) beneath the sea. The current carried her more than 2½ miles from her last-reported position.

The Explorer had been taking more than 90 passengers and 60 crew in the footsteps of Ernest Shackleton when she struck a submerged object on November 23. All tourists and the ship's crew were safely evacuated.

Despite a gash no larger than 25cm by 10cm, the ship foundered within 20 hours.

Today there is no trace of her, save for a slight oil slick on the surface of the ocean near her last position.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office asked Endurance to search for the Explorer's wreck in line with the survey ship's annual mission to improve charts of hazardous Antarctic waters and to record the environmental impact of the cruise liner's demise.



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Life inside a diving bell

INTERDIVE Services Ltd, the UK-based diving operations management and training company, has added a diving bell simulator to their list of hi-tech equipment used to provide quality training in their Plymouth school.

The 'Bell' has been installed in one of the lecture theatres and from the outside appears nothing special. However, on climbing in through the lower manway the interior appears just like the real thing, in fact all the standard equipment one expects to find in an offshore saturation system diving bell.

It gives bell divers and diver medics the opportunity to carry out diver rescue drills and practise medical emergencies and procedures such as mouth to mouth and CPR which require different techniques inside the cramped confines of a diving bell.

For further information please contact our Plymouth, UK office +44 1752 55 80 80

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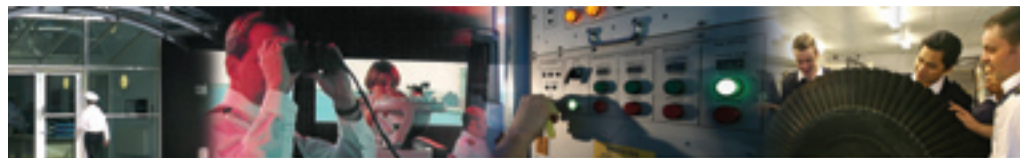
Flagship Academy, which trains over 200 Network Rail engineering apprentices; training the crews for three ex-RN Type 23 frigates for the Chilean Navy; designing a new learning 'hub' for the RN's School of Marine Engineering and developing and delivering training for the new British Land Forces FALCON Battlefield communications system.

The Royal Navy remains a major customer, and in March 2007 Flagship won a £40 million contract to design, deliver and assess more than 900 courses across a wide range of disciplines.

Flagship has a number of exciting UK projects, which will suit subject matter experts from all branches and specialisations. It welcomes applications from individuals with an RN, Merchant Navy, RFA, British Army, RAF or Royal Marines background, as well as those from civilian educational fields.

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Jo Fellows, Human Resources, Bldg 2/261, Postal Point 132, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth, PO1 3NJ.

Or email: jo.fellows@fleet-support.co.uk

Closing date: 20th March 2008



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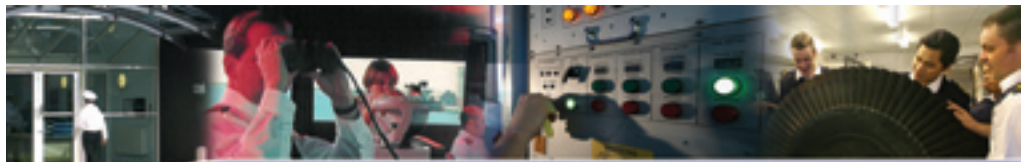
Mon 21 April 08: 1000 - 1200
 at Clyde Learning Centre,
 HMNB Clyde, Helensburgh.
 To register please contact
 Peter Shire on 01383 425225 or
 email: PShire@ctp.org.uk

Wed 23 April 08: 1000-1200
 at Regional Resettlement Centre
 Portsmouth, Rodney Block, HMS
 Nelson.
 To register please contact
 Grace Tyrrell on 02392 724595
 or email: GTyrrell@ctp.org.uk.

Thur 24 April 08: 1000-1200
 at Regional Resettlement Centre
 Plymouth, Building S027A, HM
 Naval Base, Devonport.
 To register please contact
 Chris Cowley on 01752 553409
 or email CCowley@ctp.org.uk

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RESETTLEMENT

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commercial ship repair contracts.

The through life operational effectiveness of ships depends upon continuous improvement and upgrade and FSL provides ship maintenance services to the Royal Navy and commercial customers through seamless teams of civilian and service team leaders and technicians.

FSL has achieved a relatively constant workload through supplementing RN warship repair with reactivation contracts for two Type 22 frigates for Romania and three Type 23 frigates for Chile, in

addition to many small commercial ferry repairs.

FSL has many exciting business opportunities and sees people as pivotal to its future success.

Over the next few weeks FSL will be advertising for Design Engineers to work in an expanding CBRN section. The company is currently seeking estimators with either a mechanical, electrical or constructive background in ship repair. The role involves breaking tasks into measurable units so that the number of work hours can be accurately planned. Please see our advert on page 38.

FSL also requires a Supply Chain Manager and a Sub-Contract Manager to drive business forward and shortly will be recruiting Commodity Buyers to develop modern, progressive purchasing practices.

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Cornish group is enchanted by Merlin

CADETS and staff from the City of Truro unit spent an evening visiting 700M Naval Air Squadron, their affiliated squadron at RN Air Station Culdrose.

Over the course of the evening the 20 cadets of TS Pellew were briefed on the Merlin helicopter's roles and capabilities, the contribution that Culdrose-based squadrons are making to global operations and future programmes for the aircraft.

The cadets, who were accompanied by seven staff, were then given a tour of one of the helicopters in the hangar, where the squadron's maintenance personnel explained the challenges they encounter working on these complex aircraft on board ship, and ensuring that they are available to fly in all weathers.

The group rounded off their visit by trying their hand at flying Merlin – well, a Merlin simulator, to be exact.

They were given control of a Merlin on board an aircraft carrier and attempted take-offs and landings from the flight deck, without any expensive damage to Navy kit.

All too soon the coach arrived back at the squadron building to return the cadets to Truro, but all agreed it had been a fantastic introduction to the work of one of the Culdrose squadrons.

Sea Cadet units are financed solely from charitable donations, and through a variety of initiatives 700M NAS raised £350 to help the City of Truro unit this year.



● Cdt Danny Groombridge lays a wreath at the National Destroyer Memorial in memory of the men of HMS Gallant

Wreath laid for wartime Gallant

ON JANUARY 10 1941 destroyer HMS Gallant struck an Italian mine off the Mediterranean island of Pantellaria, resulting in the deaths of more than 60 of her crew.

The warship sustained serious damage, her bows being blown away, but because of first-class damage control measures and admirable seamanship skills, Gallant survived a tow by HMS Mohawk to Malta for her condition to be assessed.

She spent several months being repaired, but just weeks before being made fit to rejoin the Fleet she was damaged by Axis bombing, and in April 1942 was deemed uneconomical for repair.

The following year the hulk of Gallant was towed out of Grand Harbour and became a blockship, remaining there until 1953 when she was broken up.

So it was fitting that members of the ship's company of TS Gallant, the Westerham unit, laid a wreath at the new national destroyer memorial at Chatham Historic Dockyard in honour of the warship and her crew.

Former cadet takes the helm at Dunbar

A FORMER cadet has taken over at the helm of Dunbar and District unit.

Michael Kaszuba was a cadet at TS Valiant for six years, and went on to join the Royal Navy in 1985.

While serving in his first ship, HMS Plymouth, Michael was selected to serve in the Royal Yacht Britannia.

Active duty then took him to the first Gulf War to work on the clearance of mines from waterways.

His next move was to joint intelligence, but he then returned to small ships until he left the Senior Service because of personnel cuts in 1996.

Michael met his future wife Sharon, who was also serving in the Navy, at MHQ Pitreavie.

They married in 1995 and have two daughters; both are members of the Junior Sea Cadets.

His departure from the Navy did not mean the end of his maritime commitments, as Michael became a full member of the Coastguards as a Search and Rescue Officer.

As part of the team he was awarded the Chief Coastguard's Commendation.

With Michael's experience and leadership skills, the unit at Dunbar is going from strength to strength.



● Michael Kaszuba (in yellow jacket) with members of the Dunbar and District unit

A recruitment drive had the desired effect, increasing the number of members from a wide area.

Donations to the unit have also increased – and special thanks go to the 999 Club of Dunbar, a

group which includes lifeboatmen from the area, which donated more than £900.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the Dunbar and District unit, so plans are being laid to make it a very special year for cadets, staff

and volunteers.

The unit meets at North Road, Dunbar – near the swimming pool – on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

For more information, ring Michael on (mobile) 07702 550533.

Buxton hosts VIPs for big night

BUXTON Sea Cadets had the honour of welcoming two special VIP guests to their annual inspection at the end of January.

The unit rolled out the red carpet for their president the Duke of Devonshire and the Mayor of High Peak, Cllr Jean Wharmby.

Other guests included the mayor's consort, George Wharmby, S/M Dave Parker, chairman of the local Royal Naval Association branch, and Devika Dobson, commodore of Errwood Sailing Club.

Members of the Bulwark, Albion and Centaur Society also attended.

Both the Duke and the Mayor spoke of their appreciation of the enthusiasm and smart turnout by the cadets, which they said they found most impressive.

They thanked the volunteer staff and committee for their efforts, and the parents for their support for this "highly-successful" unit.

As with many such units, TS Bulwark is always on the look-out for new cadets, staff and committee members.

If you are interested in joining in, please contact the Buxton unit Commanding Officer, Lt Bruce Luckman, on 01298 78092.

Among the events coming up in the unit calendar are a family quiz night on March 5 and a Flag Day on June 7.



● Back row, from left: Lt Cdr (SCC) W G Davies RNR, Lt Cdr (SCC) W Alan Thomas RNR, Cdre R C Hastie, Lt Cdr (SCC) Mike Hulonce RNR and Cdr Jos Binns; front row, from left: POC Nigel Morton, POC Sean Vanstone and POC Daniel Owen

Picture: Jane John

Goodbye and hello to Lord Lieutenant's men

THE Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan, Commodore Robert Hastie RNR, presided at a ceremony at John Chard VC House in Glamorgan Street, Swansea, the headquarters of the Territorial Army in the city.

Cdre Hastie presented the outgoing and incoming Lord Lieutenant's Cadets with their certificates and insignia.

POC Nigel Morton, from TS Ajax, the Swansea unit, was given a certificate to mark his 12 months as Lord Lieutenant's Cadet.

POC Sean Vanstone, from TS Encounter, the Neath unit, and POC Daniel Owen, also from TS Ajax, were presented with their new appointments.

Also attending were Lt Cdr (SCC) Bill Davies RNR, the CO of the Swansea Unit, Lt Cdr (SCC) W Alan Thomas RNR, District Officer for West Wales, the former Officer in Charge of the Neath unit, Lt Cdr (SCC) Mike Hulonce RNR (now part of the District Officers team) and District Area Officer Cdr Jos Binns.

Beef and Oysters

GREENWICH Sea Cadets were on hand to escort the Baron of Beef and line the steps for the Oyster Marine London Owners Dinner, which took place at the Painted Hall at Greenwich in January.

The event, which was attended by Ellen McArthur, was staged

by luxury yacht builders Oyster Marine as part of their 35th anniversary celebrations.

ACs Collins and Ginnely and Leading Junior Bes Green joined CPO (SCC) Paul Webster in escorting the beef to the top table.



New trophy is objective for trainee engineers

THE Sea Cadet Engineering Training Centre in HMS Gannet became responsible for a prestigious trophy at a ceremony at the beginning of last month.

The trophy, in the shape of a silver plate, has been donated to the Training Centre by the Figgard Association, to be awarded annually to the cadet who has displayed the best practical skills during the course at the centre.

The Figgard Association is an 'old school' association for all ex-Royal Navy-trained artificer apprentices.

Until it closed in 1983, HMS Figgard was the Part I training establishment for artificer apprentices on joining the Royal Navy.

These apprentices were later to become the skilled craftsmen of the Fleet, on completion of a five-year apprenticeship.

In 1998 the Sea Cadet Training Centre at Prestwick formally adopted the name Training Ship Figgard.

The first cadet to qualify for the trophy was LC James Scott, from the Bridge of Don unit (pictured above).

Peter Eaton, representing the Figgard Association, said: "The plate was previously presented to the best all-round artificer apprentice."

"I am pleased that the same sort of training is being carried out here today, and the plate will be used to mark a similar type of achievement."

The centre was founded in HMS Gannet in 1974 by Lt Cdr Donald Briggs – himself a former HMS Figgard apprentice – who was a guest at the presentation, together with Lt Cdr Bryan Nicholas, CO of HMS Gannet.

Under the leadership of the Superintendent, CPO Pat McManus, the training centre has an annual throughput of around 500 cadets and adult instructors from throughout the UK, and now provides courses leading to a BTEC Diploma in Engineering (Maintenance).

James Scott was also one of the first cadets to achieve this diploma during its trial year in 2007.

Still space on yachts

TRAINING ships Vigilant and City Liveryman are circumnavigating the UK from the end of this month, and as *Navy News* went to press there were still a few places left.

This will be the furthest the sail training yachts have gone, and will be a great opportunity for cadets to get some deep-water experience during the various stages.

The yachts leave Gosport on March 29, travel anticlockwise around the UK, and return on July 4.

The cost is £230 per cadet, with an accompanying adult going free.

Planned ports-of-call include Ramsgate, Lowestoft, Grimsby, Newcastle, Arbroath, Inverness, Oban, Largs, Bangor, Liverpool, Milford Haven and Falmouth.

For information on bursaries please contact Offshore Office on 02392 765888.

Anniversary approaches for Great Yarmouth

NEXT month will see Great Yarmouth unit celebrate its 70th anniversary.

Originally commissioned as TS Wishbone, Great Yarmouth has always been an active unit in the heart of Norfolk.

The training ship assumed another guise in the 1960s, being renamed TS Yarmouth after becoming affiliated with the frigate of the same name.

The unit maintained a close relationship with the ship through the rest of its service life, and took part in her decommissioning ceremony in the mid-1980s.

At around this time the unit's name changed for a second time when a new affiliation was forged, this time with Type 23 frigate HMS Norfolk.

Now based on Riverside Road in Gorleston, TS Norfolk is currently enjoying an upswing, and the staff and cadets are committed to bringing Great Yarmouth back up to the standard they believe it deserves.

TS Norfolk is now seeking as many former cadets and members of staff, as well as anyone else involved with the unit over the past 70 years, to join a special anniversary parade.

The event will be followed by a buffet at which photos and memorabilia from past and present will be displayed.

Anyone who would like further information or to attend the parade should contact PO(SCC) Graeme Richardson on 07817 901114, or email grichardson@tsnorfolk.org

Galley stalwart

SEA Cadets from across the UK joined in wishing a happy retirement to CPO (SCC) Bradnock – known as JB – after 35 years of service as cook on TS Royalist.

JB joined the vessel in April 1972 and, after spending some time working on deck and as the coxswain, was permanently employed as cook in 1978.

He has produced many thousands of meals over the years out of a tiny diesel-powered galley, and his commitment to the Corps resulted in the award of the BEM and the Sea Cadet Medal.



● Cdt Stephanie Sinclair, Anne Edwards and AC Tim Peterson with a sample of the new stand-easy snacks available at Merton unit

Merton unit goes for healthy stand easies

CADETS at TS Trafalgar now enjoy fresh fruit, nutritious cereal bars and soup at stand easy.

In 2007, the Merton unit PFA, chaired by Anne Edwards, decided to offer cadets a new-style menu of fresh fruit and fruit juice to replace the 'norm' of sweets and sugary fizzy drinks.

The choice includes such exotic items as passion fruit, pineapple and water melon.

This quickly became so popular as to become a permanent practice. These are supplied free of charge



● Nookie 1 – named by the Coventry unit in honour of former Sea Cadet Richard Darnell, who died in helicopter crash – is put through its paces during 'sea trials' at Draycote Water Sailing Club

Coventry's new boat is tribute to Richard

COVENTRY unit has named its new rigid inflatable boat (RIB) in honour of a former cadet who died in a Royal Navy helicopter crash.

Richard Darnell was a helicopter winchman for the Royal Navy, based at Yeovilton, who joined the Navy in 1991 after several very successful years as a Coventry Sea Cadet.

The new RIB was officially launched at Draycote Water Sailing Club following a special waterside service, blessing and naming ceremony.

The unit's chaplain, the Rev Cleophas Lunga, conducted the service in front of family, friends, naval colleagues and cadets.

The boat was officially named Nookie 1 after Richard's affectionate nickname.

Following the ceremony, Richard's mother and sister were the first to be taken afloat for 'sea trials', followed by other family members and friends.

The day concluded with an excellent buffet laid on by Draycote Water Sailing Club.

The RIB had been purchased through grants and donations

from the Awards for All scheme, Rolls Royce plc, Richard's family, naval colleagues and friends.

It will be used as a safety and training boat by the unit.

Lt Steve Warwick, the CO of Coventry unit, said: "We wanted to have some form of fitting and lasting memorial to Richard, who was our Cadet of the Year in 1990.

"As he enjoyed boating so much as a cadet, and as the unit were looking for a new safety boat, we decided to combine the two projects.

"I'd like to thank everyone who contributed and made this important project a reality.

"We're all delighted and moved to have shared such a special day with Richard's family."

Richard's mother Carole said: "I would like to thank you, from Kevin, Kim and myself, for all of the hard work that you and your colleagues put into this project, for us, our family and our friends.

"We had a wonderful day. I don't think that any of us expected quite so much, and the turn-out of people was tremendous.

"The officers at the unit were so helpful to all of us, giving us their time and their care and attention, including a very interesting tour of the Coventry HQ, and letting us see where all the young cadets do their learning."

Coventry Sea Cadets are based on Crescent Avenue, Binley, and there are some 75 youngsters aged between ten and 18 on the unit's books.

Warspite Scouts reaffirm RN link

1st CUDDINGTON (Warspite) Sea Scout Group reaffirmed their strong links with the Royal Navy at their inspection night.

Lt Cdr David Griffiths was hosted at the group's HQ in Worcester Park, Surrey, rather than at their riverbank boathouse at Thames Ditton, four miles distant.

More than 130 people turned out for the event, among them Martin Gerrard, Regional Commissioner for South East England, and N Bird, District Commissioner.

The event began with Lt Cdr Griffiths being piped onboard, and after Colours the Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers started their various nautical-based activities.

Among the displays were first aid, survival skills, chart work and planning water-based activities, while the Beavers made bookmarks for use in training manuals.

Following the formal inspection, a number of presentations were made, including four Scout Investitures.

Lt Cdr Griffiths then presented a trophy to the winning team of the U14 pulling crew, who entered the 'Great River Race', a 22-mile pulling race on the Thames.

Martin Gerrard presented Lt Cdr Griffiths with the Chief Scout's Award for Merit in recognition of his outstanding services to Scouting, and the Bar to the Long Service Award.

Afterwards Lt Cdr Griffiths complimented the group on its performance, discipline, piping and dress code, declaring the group had achieved the required standards, and presented the Certificate of Recognition to Group Scout Leader Len Brooker.

1st Cuddington was first recognised in 1941, together with Leander Sea Scouts from Kingston, and in 1955 1st Cuddington became a stand-alone unit – 66 years as one of the top 100 Sea Scout Groups (their recognition number is RN95) is something of which the unit is rightly proud.

Going back

FORMER Great Yarmouth cadet CPO Pointon returned to his old unit to deliver a careers presentation to the current crop of youngsters.

CPO Pointon, now a Royal Navy careers officer, was at TS Norfolk between 1982 and 1990.

Joan's hard work is rewarded

THE EFFORTS of Southwark unit's chairman has been recognised with the award of an MBE in the Queen's New Year Honours list.

As we reported in our February edition, Joan Nevard was given the award for her many years of service to the young people of Southwark.

It is around 20 years since Joan first visited the unit headquarters, in Surrey Square, as a parent.

As volunteers are always in short supply, she was quickly inveigled into joining the Unit Management Committee (UMC).

And now, as chairman, Joan is jointly responsible for running the unit alongside the Commanding Officer.

Her duties include fund-raising and financial management, health and safety issues and the maintenance of buildings and equipment.

Joan said that the organisation was always seeking volunteers on the UMC side as civilians or the

staff side as uniformed adults.

But even more important, she said, were the 'young volunteers', without whom there would be no Sea cadet Corps.

"But enough about me," said Joan, pointing out instead the wealth of opportunities offered by TS Cossack.

In the course of 2007, cadets took part in pulling, sailing, canoeing and power boating, both locally and at HMS Caledonia (Rosyth) and HMS Raleigh (Plymouth) for specialist training.

Four cadets took passage in the sail training brig TS Royalist, including a visit to a foreign port, two joined HMS Roebuck from Ostend to Devonport, and another pair sailed on board RFA Largs Bay from Portsmouth to Greenwich.

Southwark cadets were involved in numerous parades, including those at Tower Hill, St Paul's Cathedral, Horse Guards Parade and Trafalgar Square.



● Joan Nevard at the Southwark unit headquarters

Off to a flying start – now only £999,999.70 to go...

Norwich cadets put on display

30p MIGHT not sound like very much, but when you are aiming to raise £1 million every penny counts.

So when the cadets of Nottingham unit were told of ambitious plans to raise a seven-figure sum to transform their headquarters on the north bank of the River Trent, Junior Cadet Christopher Askew had no hesitation in stepping up to the mark.

As soon as the meeting had finished, he approached members of the management committee and asked when the appeal officially started.

"Well, now, I suppose," was the reply – at which Christopher checked his pockets and said "Here is 30p – it's all I have got on me."

And with that 30p the Nottingham Sea Cadets £1 Million Development Appeal was up and running.

The current HQ of TS Orion is a motley collection of buildings, mainly wooden and most dating back 60 years.

The original huts were built entirely by volunteer labour using scavenged bomb-damaged material after World War 2.

Other buildings were added piecemeal, again built by volunteers.

And the site, south of the city's racecourse, is on the Trent's flood plain, making the buildings liable to damage when the river bursts its banks.

The land is also directly adjacent to the new Waterside Masterplan Area, and as such could add to the overall benefit of the scheme, reaching out beyond the Corps itself.

"We want to turn this into a really fabulous facility for the cadets," said Sue Dewey, chairman of the Nottingham unit.

"We want to see it become a regional centre, to develop the facility so that it is available for the wider Corps in the area and for other youth organisations to come and use it."

Mrs Dewey said fund-raisers have set themselves a three-year target, and a lottery bid is in preparation.

"And don't forget all these things have to be done in people's spare time," said Sue.

The current HQ already hosts youth organisations, the site has limited teaching and sleeping accommodation, but it is hoped



● Architect Julian Marsh, of Marsh:Grochowski, who has designed the building free of charge, with Sue Dewey at the existing Nottingham unit buildings (right). Above are illustrations of how the new headquarters should look, and pictured top right is Junior Cadet Christopher Askew with his 30p donation which got the fund-raising effort under way

that the new buildings will enable even more groups to use it.

Even with today's limited facilities, TS Orion has hosted some major events at district, area and national level, when up to 700 cadets and staff could be on board for a regatta or band competition.

New buildings on the site will be purpose-built for the location, with as much as possible above the flood plain, and elements such as canoe stores being self-draining.

If you would like to contribute to the fund, contact TS Orion at Access Road, Colwick Park, Nottingham NG2 4BH, or telephone 0115 958 0528.



Picture: Bob Hayes

THERE was an air of excitement as cadets and parents of the Norwich unit met at Chapel Field Road Methodist Church Hall for their annual prize-giving evening.

Cadets of the riverside training ship Lord Nelson gave demonstrations of the type of activities they have undertaken in the past year to Mr and Mrs Peter Badcock of Capital Shopping Centres, who presented the prizes.

The top honour, that of cadet of the Year, went to LC Tom Hunt.

There was also a presentation for parents illustrating a year in the life of the unit, showing examples of activities such as a week spent going to sea, when cadets were able to put the theory they had learned into practice.

In his address to cadets and parents, Mr Badcock said: "Tonight you have shown how worthwhile the Sea Cadets are and what they have to offer."

"I only wish I had known about them when I was young."

Lt Alan Blackburn, the Commanding Officer of the Norwich unit, said: "The awards presented to the cadets tonight reflect the hard work and commitment they have made."

"This has been recognised by the Marine Society and Sea Cadets Headquarters awarding us with a burgee, which is the highest award for sea cadets in the UK."

The Marine Society and Sea Cadets give out awards of excellence to units around the UK who reach various stipulated levels.

TS Lord Nelson has always been up to pennant standard, but has never quite made it to the top award of burgee.

The unit's cadets have been busy, travelling around East Anglia and Eastern England, winning handfuls of cups and shields along the way.

Commanding Officer Lt Alan Blackburn said: "It is the icing on the cake – I am very proud of them."

But there will be no time for resting on laurels – having obtained a burgee, they have a higher standard to maintain, and a busy year ahead.

Seal of approval for detachment

THE formation of a Marine Cadet Detachment within Whitehaven's unit has been formally approved following a visit by Maj (SCC) Phil Hadfield RMR.

The detachment was formed last May as a 'probationary' unit with just three cadets.

By the end of 2007 that had risen to eight, and on February 1 the detachment officially became Whitehaven Marine Cadet Detachment, Number 1 Troop, Bravo Company.

Maj Hadfield, Marine Cadet Staff Officer North West, based in Liverpool, said he was pleased by their progress.

"You are doing extremely well and I am satisfied that the detachment is being operated efficiently," he said.

S/Lt (SCC) Keith Crowe RNR, CO of the Whitehaven unit, praised both the cadets and staff.

"The Cadets have shown tremendous enthusiasm, as have the Marine Detachment staff led by our Detachment Commander, Sgt (SCC) Simon Gray," he said. "I look forward to their continued success and further growth."

Sgt Gray said he would be pleased to welcome potential recruits.

"Membership is open to boys and girls between 13 and 18 years of age," he said.

"Parade nights are every Monday and Friday between 6:30 and 9:30, and there are plenty of opportunities to take part in training, camps and various sporting events."

Sgt Gray added that there are also opportunities for adults to get involved.

"Just get in touch by phone on 01946 66093 or email at marines@tsbee.org.uk and we'll get back to you," he said.

● The first official photo of the Whitehaven Marine Cadet Detachment; front, from left, Detachment Commander Sgt (SCC) Simon Gray, Maj (SCC) Phil Hadfield RMR, Whitehaven SCC's CO S/Lt (SCC) Keith Crowe RNR and Sgt (SCC) Steve Everett



Whitehaven CO steps down

AFTER five years in command of the Whitehaven unit, S/Lt (SCC) Keith Crowe RNR stepped down last month as TS Bee's Commanding Officer.

Lt (SCC) Peter Lucas RNR is Keith's replacement and, as part of the handover, temporarily took over as First Lieutenant during January.

Although he relinquished command, Keith does not intend to disappear.

"Although I feel that it is time for a change, I intend to remain as a member of the TS Bee staff and will continue to support the unit in any way I can," he said.

"I still have a great interest in Expedition Training and hope to concentrate some of my abilities in this area."

Chairman Chas Tinkler said that Keith's announcement had come as a complete surprise.

"I knew Keith was planning changes, but this was absolutely the last thing I expected," he said.

Chas said TS Bee owed him a tremendous debt of gratitude: "Much of Keith's work has been unseen, but without his efforts we would not have the close-knit team we have now, or the successes we have enjoyed in the past few years."

Corps mourns loss of a friend

A FORMER trustee of the Sea Cadet Association, Paul Harris, died on December 21 2007 at the age of 94.

According to Corps headquarters, Paul was "an exceptional individual, and the Sea Cadet Corps was fortunate to be one of the select charitable causes to which he dedicated a huge amount of time and effort over many years."

For more than 50 years Paul was actively involved with the Sea Cadets at local, area and national levels.

He was for many years chairman, then president, of the Eastbourne unit, and in order to raise the money to build a new headquarters he put on several successful

light operas in local theatres.

In due course Paul became Southern Area chairman and served as a trustee at national level, helping to raise the funds to build the Corps' highly-popular square-rigged training ship TS Royalist.

Paul was honoured with an OBE for his work with the Corps.

And the organisation itself showed its appreciation through the presentation of the prestigious and rarely-awarded Sea Cadet Medal.

A spokeswoman for the Corps said: "The Sea Cadets are immensely grateful for all he did to further their cause, and will greatly miss him."



In the footsteps of heroes

"EVERY child knows the story of Zeebrugge," enthused Lloyd George in the 1930s.

They did then, they perhaps do not now. But the 1918 raid on the Belgian port and its near neighbour Ostend raised flagging British spirits – despite a heavy body count and little appreciable military success.

The 90th anniversary of the attempt to bottle up the Kaiser's U-boats in their pens at Bruges by blocking their outlets to the sea at Zeebrugge and Ostend has, unsurprisingly, provoked fresh interest.

Next month sees Paul Kendall's eagerly-awaited *Zeebrugge Raid 1918*. Out now is Stephen McGreal's *Zeebrugge and Ostend Raids* (*Pen & Sword*, £12.99 ISBN 978-1844156085), a mix of battle narrative and guidebook.

The former part of the book is copiously illustrated with contemporary images and sketches, the latter depicts the 'battlefield' as it is today.

Nature devours most battlegrounds over time.

At Zeebrugge and Ostend, man has eliminated many of the sites sailors and marines fought over nine decades ago.

The Mole, the huge pier arching into the North Sea at Zeebrugge, remains, but has been heavily altered since 1918; where HMS *Vindictive* came alongside it is now reclaimed land.

Memorials, however, abound, as do cemeteries where the fallen of the raid are buried.

And in Ostend, fixed into concrete, are the bows of *Vindictive* next to the canal she tried to block.

The raids themselves failed; at best they caused the Germans inconvenience. The moral effect, however, was tremendous – thanks in part to a rather disingenuous Admiralty which hailed a great victory... and the world believed it.

To the Belgians, the raids were – and remain – beacons, however.

You will find streets, parks and squares named for the men of 1918.

As David Lloyd George correctly predicted, "these are thrilling deeds that give new heart to a people not merely for the hour, but for ages to come."

The art of war

IN 2006 Conway brought out *A Seaman's Pocket-Book*, a facsimile reproduction of booklet BR827 issued from the end of 1943 to Hostilities Only conscript seamen to help their rapid transition to Royal Navy life.

Brian Lavery provided an introduction and now he has produced a companion, *Royal Navy Officers Pocket-Book 1944* (Conway, £6.99 ISBN 978-1-84486054-8), writes Prof Eric Grove of the University of Salford.

This has required rather more editorial work as it is an illustrated compendium of seven publications. These comprise: 'the Officer's Aide Memoire' issued in 1943 to help conscripts selected for officer training at HMS King Alfred; 'Notes for Medical Officers on Entering the Royal Navy' produced the same year; 'The Treatment of Battle Casualties Afloat' promulgating the new casualty handling doctrine of 1942; Capt Peter Gretton's Standing Orders for the destroyer *Duncan* issued in July 1943; the booklet 'Your Ship' issued to commanding officers of small ships from late 1944; an amended edition of Home Fleet Destroyer Orders of April 1943; and 'Notes on Dealing with Mutiny and Massed Disobedience' issued in August 1944.

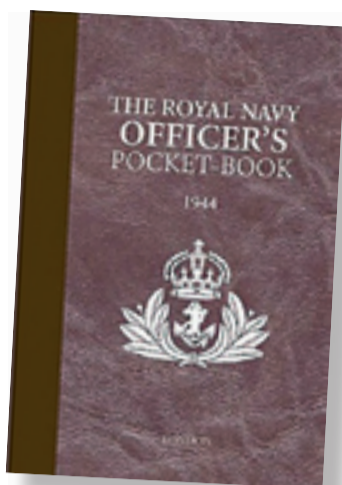
The first document, the 'Officer's Aide Memoire' was issued by King Alfred's CO Capt John Pelly, a distinguished and highly-experienced officer recalled to service in 1939 after five years' retirement. The leadership section was based on a set of instructions to newly joined officers issued over the name of Capt F Pridham of the mighty Hood.

The editor reports that the date of the second edition was 1938 but one suspects its origin probably had much to do with Hood's exceptionally able former executive officer Cdr Rory O'Connor whose enthusiasm for written guides to naval officership is well known.

O'Connor's and Pridham's periods on board overlapped. The first paragraph concludes with the memorable phrase: "Never forget that the ratings have few rights; but they definitely have a right to good officers."

The subsequent sections stress the importance of bearing and example, knowledge ("Bluff is the trait of a bad officer... You cannot be just without knowledge"), firmness and fairness, loyalty (to superiors and subordinates and to the ship), smartness, word of command, parade smartness, saluting, knowing and serving the men, encouraging higher ratings, fighting qualities and forethought.

There are then technical sections on subjects from defaulters'



The Grove Review

routine to correspondence.

'Notes for Medical Officers' is an attempt to prepare civilian doctors for their time in the service.

It warned them that "a higher standard of conduct is expected of a Medical Officer" than of any other and gave admirable advice on how to achieve this.

Interestingly, it quoted O'Connor's published guide 'Running a Big Ship on the Ten Commandments' in informing the newly recruited in how to conduct themselves on board ship.

The following guide to treatment of battle casualties describes the new distributed system of First Aid Posts and the reasons for its adoption. As the editor writes this 'sombre document' demonstrates the challenge encapsulated in the previous 'Notes': "You are at the beginning on a new venture and new experiences... This is a great privilege. Try to be worthy of it."

Peter Gretton's standing orders are, as might be expected, a model of their type. They are a remarkable guide to how a destroyer of this period was handled by an experienced officer.

The term 'abandon ship' was never to be used; neither was 'full ahead' except in emergencies. Gretton recognised the wartime tendency for ships to get "steadily more slack" in personal and ship smartness.

This Commanding Officer would have none of it: "There is no need for this and I would like all officers to preserve a high standard."

'Your Ship' appeared under the signature of the Second Sea Lord, Sir Algernon Willis, but Lavery tells us it was written in the main by Willis' Naval Assistant Capt Guy Hodgkinson, in consultation

with a committee of experienced seaman officers.

It told the new COs that assumption of command was "the greatest step you will ever take... It carries with it an historic tradition of dignity and privilege, and in return makes demands on your skill and endurance, which have never before been asked and which brook no failure."

The booklet was intended to be 'a mould' into which new COs should pour their existing character attributes, one "fashioned in the foundry of many distinguished Commanding Officers."

It stressed that anything that happened in the ship was now their responsibility; personal example was even more important. New COs were warned not to be overwhelmed by paperwork on joining, to resist the temptation to come up with new ideas to seniors that had already been tried and to make sure standing orders were effectively promulgated, especially in the issue of rum.

Captains were not to overstay their welcome in the wardroom. Rather unhistorically, the supposed memory of the much maligned Capt Bligh was quoted to advise the avoidance of sarcasm and contempt in dealing with juniors.

There is too much good advice in subsequent sections to quote here but one shone out.

Under the heading 'Training and Inspiration of Ratings' is: "A fighting ship should be composed of a number of fighting teams welded together into one big club. You are captain of each team and president of the club."

The conclusion quoted, among others, Socrates, Sun Tsu and John Buchan. In all, the guidance was very sound, well informed and generally impressive.

Home Fleet Destroyer Orders provide useful insight into the actual handling of these vital and ubiquitous ships. Finally, the Top Secret notes on mutiny go into what is to be done if things go wrong.

The notes emphasise prevention and mitigation rather than suppression.

Great confidence was expressed in the majority of the men in any situation: "However serious the situation may appear to be, it can be said with certainty that many of the men can be relied upon, if they are given a proper lead by their Officers and the opportunity to break away from the trouble."

Brian Lavery has made the social side of the 20th-Century Royal Navy very much his subject in recent years and this little book still further enhances his reputation.

It describes how ships were (or at least should have been) run at the time and also expresses some more timeless rules of naval leadership that every modern officer should read.

It deserves a wide sale as it is exceptional value in every respect.

In the line of fire

ARE you bored by David Attenborough? Do sweeping vistas of the wilderness of Antarctica no longer inspire you? Does the sight of dolphins frolicking leave you cold?

Then throw away that *Planet Earth* documentary and chuck *Commando: On The Front Line* (ITV DVD, £17.99) into the DVD tray. Four hours of rumpin', pumpin', boomin', bangin' action. And a debate about Star Wars...

Last month we cast our eyes over Chris Terrill's book of the same name.

The same characters fill the documentary which spawned the book. Print can capture emotions and feelings, but it can never compete with moving images if you want to understand the visceral nature of 21st-Century combat.

The story begins 4,000 miles away, however, at Lymptone, spiritual home of the Corps and the Commando Training Centre, where Terrill arrived to film the progress of the latest bunch of recruits to file through the gates.

Commando could have been an enjoyable yet fairly standard documentary had it simply ended with the men of 924 Troop receiving their green berets and passing out of Lymptone.

What takes it to the next realm is Terrill's willingness to follow those raw recruits into battle – no mean feat for the 55-year-old one-man band (he filmed, edited and narrated the series) who earned the coveted green beret... and considerable respect to boot from the Booties.

What Terrill captures is not merely the marines' legendary fighting ability, but also their warmth – and vulnerability.

It's hard not to feel sorry for Terry John, the recruit from St Vincent desperate to be a Royal Marine but destined never to receive his green beret because of a medical condition.

And it's hard, too, not to feel sorry for the children of Helmand whose drawings in school are of tanks, bombs and airplanes, yet who also can't resist a kickabout with the Royals – just like our own youngsters.

It is easy to brand the green berets as raw killing machines, the very elite of Britain's regular forces.

They are human beings first, Royal Marines second. Not one of them was unmoved by the death of Mne 'Vinders' Curry.

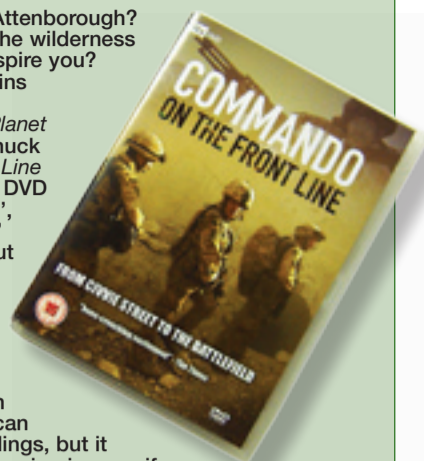
And who else amid the heat of battle could pause to debate the night's offering in the base cinema? *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones* or *Pirates of the Caribbean*? *Star Wars* won the day... fittingly a simple story of good triumphing over evil.

■ WE HAVE 20 copies of the documentary for our readers to win, courtesy of ITV DVD.

To win, name the 2005 documentary series Chris made about life in today's Royal Navy.

Send your answer to: *Commando Competition*, *Navy News*, *Leviathan Block*, HMS *Nelson*, Portsmouth PO1 3HH, or email it to commando@navynews.co.uk. Remember to include your name, address and telephone number. The closing date is April 10 2008.

Entries must be received by 12 noon on April 10 2008. Twenty winners will be drawn at 3pm that day. Each winner will receive a single copy of the double-disc DVD in the post. The decision of the editor is final and there is no alternative prize. No employees of *Navy News* nor anyone aged under 15 may enter.



Continuing our Bond with history



THERE'S a unique chance to see inside the world of Britain's most famous naval officer as a new exhibition celebrates the life of Ian Fleming and his legendary creation James Bond. 2008 marks the centenary of the birth of Fleming, failed army cadet, failed Foreign Office official, sometime stockbroker, successful journalist and best-selling novelist.

The Bond novels were based in part on Fleming's wartime career in Royal Navy intelligence.

The author attained the rank of commander – like his fictional spy – and oversaw a shadowy espionage unit which carried out covert intelligence operations.

The exhibition – For Your Eyes Only at the Imperial War Museum in London – charts Fleming's wartime escapades and explains how the men and women he worked with influenced the 007 novels and stories.

The display also looks at the impact of the Bond books, and the films which came out of them in Britain and beyond, and the 'Bond industry', such as the clothes, gadgets and toys which have made the spy an iconic figure.

Among items from the film adaptations on show will be Halle Berry's bikini from *Die Another Day* (sadly minus Halle Berry – *Assistant Ed*), Rosa Klebb's flick-knife shoes as seen stabbing at Sean Connery (pictured, left) in *From Russia With Love* and the blood-spattered shirt worn by latest screen Bond Daniel Craig in *Casino Royale*.

The exhibition opens on April 17 and runs until March 1 2009.



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● Mne Greg Barden (RM Poole) chases after AB Silvenusi Buinamasi (HMS Cumberland) during a training session at the new home of RNRU training

Official duties for HMS Collingwood

HMS COLLINGWOOD is now the official home of RN rugby union training.

With immediate effect all teams; Senior XV, Women, U23s and Vets will use the Fareham establishment to prepare for matches.

Collingwood has just opened new pitches, under floodlights, and with the continued investment in its first-class training facilities is honoured to become the formal home of RN rugby.

"Navy rugby union has enjoyed a long association with Collingwood, which itself remains a major force in Service rugby," said Lt Cdr Geraint Ashton Jones, RNRU Director of Rugby.

"The move of the RNRU representative sides to Collingwood is viewed as a natural step and reinforces our shared commitment to rugby excellence."

Elsewhere, a buffet reception was held on board the Fleet flagship HMS Ark Royal to thank RNRU sponsors for their continued support to the game.

The event was extremely well attended and saw Rolls Royce, VT, Thales, Flagship, KooGa, Volkswagen – Peter Cooper, Aramark, QinetiQ and Charles Trywitt in attendance.

Guests were given a presentation on the programme leading up to the Inter-Services fixtures by Lt Cdr Ashton Jones.

He was in buoyant mood declaring that he was "very confident about the programme and preparations by all the Royal Navy teams in the lead up to the Inter-Service competition".

The highlight of the evening was the announcement of the RNRU captains for the Senior XV and Women for 2008.

PO Dave Pascoe (RFANSU) and CPO Paula Bennett-Smith (FOST) were chosen to lead their respective teams, based on their track records as players and their obvious leadership ability.

Lt Cdr Ashton Jones highlighted the fact that both players were widely respected by their peers and each set high standards – both as players and team members. However he was quick to add that "being selected as captain is no guarantee of selection for the IS matches."

"Competition for places is very tough this year and the captains will earn their places alongside their team-mates."

The RN take on the RAF on Wednesday April 16 in Portsmouth. The Senior XV plays at the United Services Ground, Burnaby Road, kick-off 7pm. This match will be preceded by RN Women v RAF Women (2pm) and RN Veterans v RAF Veterans (4pm).

The 'big one', the annual Army-Navy clash at Twickenham is on Saturday May 3 2008, kick-off 3pm. The match will be preceded by the CS U23s taking on England Students U23s at mid-day.

Tickets for both matches are available by telephoning the Royal Navy ticket hotline on 0870 444 6633 or booking online at www.navyrugbyunion.co.uk.

Early in the same day, the RN Women take on their Army counterparts and the RN Veterans clash with the Army Veterans; both matches will be played at Kneller Hall, Twickenham (next to the main stadium), kicking off at 10.30am on adjacent pitches.

A surprise in Bavaria

THIS month sees the start of the RN's annual adventurous training exercise, Bavarian Surprise.

Weekly packages of outdoor challenges are on offer (cunningly in Bavaria, hence the name) from the beginning of March until the end of September.

Activities include: climbing, canoeing, kayaking, Klettersteig (mountaineering using fixed cables, stemples, ladders and bridges), mountain biking and skiing.

This year no financial contribution is expected from sailors/Royal Marines wanting to go to southern Germany and 50 places are available each week.

Priority will be given to members of the RN/RM Sports Lottery, however.

More details are available from PO(PT) Matthews at Nelson gym on 9380 24392.

The team of teams

NAVY cyclists clinched the most coveted title in Forces' sport – team of the year.

The riders of the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Cycling Association (RNRMCA) from the South West and Portsmouth have won the coveted Combined Armed Services Team of the Year 'gong' for a series of results which blew the competition away in 2007.

Not only have the Army and RAF struggled to keep pace with the Senior Service cyclists, but the RN team has become one of the country's top-ranked clubs.

It is in time trials – a race against the clock over a set distance – that the team truly excelled last year.

The success, believes CPO Sean Childs (HMS Raleigh), can be laid at two doors: dedication and preparation.

"The preparations for the 2007 season were put in place as early as September 2006," he explained.

"Major changes were made to the training camp, making it a harder boot-like camp in the heart of mid-Wales.

"Twenty eight riders committed to self-organised and back-to-basics in-house coaching including 32 hrs and 500-miles plus of strength, stamina and endurance training.

"Physically fitter and mentally stronger, the riders were more committed than ever to achieving the best possible results



● Spokespeople... (l-r) Lt Steve Kelly, Bob Richards, C/Sgt Stuart Edwards and CPO Sean Childs

throughout a very long and demanding season. The results were amazing."

Indeed they were: there were more than 20 individual and ten team wins on the roads in 2007.

The RN took the ten-mile and 25-mile Inter-Service titles, while CPO Aran Stanton (HMNB Portsmouth) took the 'best all-rounder' title for consistent performances throughout 2007, narrowly pipping his Raleigh comrade to the award.

And talking of best all-rounders, the RN team were the No.3 cycling side in the UK last year. Individually, Sean was ranked 8th, Aran 23rd and C/Sgt Stuart Edwards (42 Cdo) 58th.

"This was quite remarkable – we were competing against specially-formed cycle racing teams with a single aim: winning."

The riders are now preparing for the 2008 season. At least they don't have too much to live up to...

Camp time on the ice

NOT all the RN's winter sports efforts were concentrated on the slopes of Les Menuires.

Several Naval personnel – many of them novices – took up an offer from the Army to join them at their skeleton bob, bobsleigh and luge ice camp in Calgary, Canada.

Lt Cdr Gary Mills (HMS Ocean) grappled with the two-man bob for the first time.

"I wish I had discovered this sport 20 years ago," he lamented.

"There is no fairground ride like it. The feeling of trepidation was massive on the first day, but once I was down I just wanted to do it again."

His shipmate Lt Cdr Mark Campbell, a Sea King pilot, was a skeleton bob virgin.

He soon found himself hurtling down the ice head-first at speeds of up to 60mph.

"The first drive can only be described as terrifying," he said.

"It felt like you have less control than flying – once you are on the track you can't stop; you can slow a helicopter down."

"I enjoyed it – it has been a brilliant experience, but skiing is the winter sport for me."

The taming of the screws

WE'LL begin our round-up of the past month's football action with an impressive comeback by the Seniors against HM Prison Service:

RN Seniors 4 Prison Service 3

THIS was a tough encounter against the National Prison Service at Holmes Park, the Leicester FA County Ground.

The squad was again depleted by unavailability and injuries, meaning a complete new RN back four with Mne Ryan Rule making his debut at right back.

The Prison Service started the brighter and took the lead after only six minutes, which was doubled eight minutes later with a blistering left foot shot from fully 25 yards.

However, straight from the kick-off LAET Russ Hardwell exposed the opposition left back and then delivered a great cross into the box that was only cleared to the feet of C/Sgt Ritchie Hope, who scored a fine 20-yard goal.

The Senior Service dominated most of the rest of the first half but the equaliser only came very early in the second half, again through Hardwell's pace down the wing and an excellent cross for LPT Steve Young to pass it in from close range.

On 68 minutes, Young hit a superb left foot shot across the keeper and into the bottom right corner of the net to give the RN a deserved lead, and he got his hat trick 15 minutes later having rounded the keeper.

A late consolation goal for the gaolers could not deny the RN a deserved victory.

RN Seniors 2 Civil Service 0

For this match in London, the squad was pleased to welcome back both the RN captain Cpl Graham Carr and vice captain POET(WE) Phil Archbold, while L/Cpl Kunle Atiba made his debut.

The RN dominated most of the match and should have scored more, but goals from Mne Christian Courtney half-way through the first half, and a penalty converted by LPT Steve



Inside with Capt Paul Cunningham, RNFA

Young on 68 minutes, gave the match a respectable scoreline.

RN U21 1 England Schools FA 3

This match was played at Lilleshall against a development squad vying for a place in the final 18 for the forthcoming schools home international tournament.

The opposition were primarily made up of players who had either been released by professional clubs or were on the verge of entering contract discussions.

A lively opening exchange saw the game settle into a pattern with the RN team absorbing pressure from a very technical opposition.

An early injury to AET Tillsley, playing in the centre of defence, saw team captain ET(ME) Danny Kerr drop into that position alongside WEA Jamie Ritchie and an enforced change in the centre of the team allowed AB Jamie Grindrod to stake his claim for the central midfield role.

ET(ME) Kenealy (St Albans) playing in goal for the RN was busy throughout and effectively kept the RN in the game with an outstanding performance.

Eventually pressure told when the ESFA went on to score their first goal.

With the second goal following in close succession, the RN management team adopted a fresh pattern of play and attacked ESFA with an ambitious 4-3-3 formation that eventually paid off with the RN scoring a goal a shot by AET Brookes deflecting in off WEA Ritchie.

Unfortunately the Navy were unable to turn pressure into more goals and the ESFA broke away to score a third goal and effectively wrap up the fixture. A valuable experience for the U21 team, playing against opposition who although younger were technically superior and undoubtedly at the top of their game, hence their involvement with a national team. Performances from both AET

Brookes and ET(ME) Kerr were worthy of note and received comment from a number of professional scouts in attendance, but without doubt the man of the match award must go to ET(ME) Kenealy as keeper for maintaining the respectability of the Service with a tremendous performance.

RN U21 0 Newport County Youth 3

Once again the U21 team looked to pit their wits against a very capable team, with youth international players amongst their ranks.

Unfortunately an early goal was conceded through a penalty, but the RN rallied and began to build on possession with some intelligent play from the midfield trio of Kerr, Mitchell and Grindrod attempting to find the runs of WEA O'Neill, ET(ME) Tobble and ET(WE) Eddy.

However a momentary lapse of concentration saw Newport regain possession in a dangerous position and go on to score their second.

Once again ET(ME) Kenealy had a fine performance in goal and although the RN team really applied pressure in the second half and played some of their best football of the season, they failed to turn possession into goals and inevitably the opposition scored a third goal during a counter-attack.

Some promising performances overall in the build up to the Inter-Service Championships with both LMA Keating (Drake) and LMEA Toms (Sultan) performing well as Full backs and AB Thompson (York) making a good impression in the centre of midfield.

RN Women 2 Portsmouth Police 1

LOM Julie Hewitt (HMS Northumberland) and LReg Mich Garrett (HMS Richmond) made welcome returns to the squad, and AB Jess Dorey (HMS Collingwood) made her debut.

The Police applied the early pressure, and deservedly went ahead after only five minutes, but the goal seemed to wake the Navy up and they started to control the flow of the game, with plenty of possession.

The half ended with the Navy on top, even though they were a goal down. On 49 minutes, good RN possession ended when LPT Nat Bavister (HMS Sultan) drove the ball into the top right corner.

The equaliser clearly gave the women confidence, and as the game moved into the final five mins, they were rewarded with a winner from AB Edwards (HMS Kent).

■ THIS year's home Inter-Service match for the senior squad is against the RAF on Wednesday March 12, kick-off at 7.30pm.

The match is due to be played at Fratton Park but if this is not made available we will be playing at Victory Stadium, Burnaby Road. Entry to whichever venue will be free. The U23 match versus the Army will be on Tuesday 4 March at 7pm at Victory Stadium.

And finally, on far-flung shores... As part of the RNFA's 'defence diplomacy' policy and the FA's overseas initiatives, members of the ship's football team and other members of HMS Nottingham's ships company visited orphanages in Fortaleza and Rio in Brazil.

Together the sailors carried out general DIY in an effort to make living conditions for the children a little more bearable, and football matches were played against local teams, watched by children from the orphanages.

The ship's clubz LPT Kevin Green also took the opportunity to run basic coaching sessions, each followed by a ten-minute fun match, where the children were presented with England kits and balls; an additional bag of goodies was taken to the orphanage for those who were unable to attend the coaching sessions.

The training and kick-about will long be remembered by the ship's footballers who only wished they had the ball skills of the Brazilian kids.

More details at www.royalnavyfa.com.

Taking the Lane to Wembley

THE Brothers have started down the road to Wembley in the Rugby League Carnegie Challenge Cup after a memorable victory over Yorkshire side Castleford Lock Lane, writes WO1 Keith Humpleby, RNRL spokesman.

The first-round match saw the West Yorkshire side, not having the best of seasons in the league, prove to be tough and resilient – and in with a shout of progression until well into the second period.

In a thrilling first half the Yorkshiremen took the lead only for the RN to cancel out the lead with a try for centre Buinamasi converted by Dane Smallbone.

The home side once again nosed ahead with a rather fortuitous try resulting from a sliced kick.

The RN struck back with a Scott Partis try converted by Smallbone.

The touchdown of the match then came courtesy of some slick handling deep in their own half by the RN. Debutant Manasa Tamoi then proceeded to sprint 60 metres beating the covering defence before feeding Jim Barnes who went over for the try.

A late try by Lock Lane's Andy Townsend brought the scores level at the half time break.

Spurred on by their success before the break the home side came out strongly but were unable to break the RN defence and the perfect response came from Lee Hunter who forced his way over and with another Smallbone conversion the visitors were back in front.

Despite two serious injuries the Navy began to dominate a tiring Lock Lane side.

This domination was confirmed when prop forward and RN skipper Jamie Goss burst through the defence to score another try. Dane Smallbone converted Goss' try and knocked over a late penalty to confirm the victory 18-32.

A terrific team performance, especially in the second half when resources were stretched through injury, saw the Brothers go into the hat for the second round draw.

Their reward was a home tie against National Conference Premier League high-flyers Rochdale Mayfield.

Mayfield are currently locked in a four-way fight for supremacy in the NCL Premier, almost neck and neck with Leigh Miners, East Hull and Skirlaugh.

The third-round place they were fighting for should have been filled by the time you read this. Unfortunately, the match occurred after we went to press – but we'll have a report next month.

Pompey's just the ticket

THIRTY complimentary tickets are available to football fans in the Portsmouth area who fancy watching some Premiership action.

Thanks to a deal with Pompey, the RNFA has tickets for two home matches to give away – but only to Service personnel, not civilians.

Pairs of tickets for Milton End seats are available to applicants for Portsmouth's clashes with Aston Villa (Saturday March 15) and Blackburn Rovers (Saturday April 26).

The tickets will be allocated through a draw and Portsmouth Naval Base Commodore's reward and recognition scheme.

RN/RM personnel serving in Portsmouth Naval Base/ Nelson, Collingwood, Sultan and Excellent are eligible.

If you do win, do not wear any football clothing which might cause offence to fellow fans. The tickets are non-transferrable, so you cannot sell them/pass them on.

Details from WO1(PT) Ian Binks on 9380 22828.



● Swede dreams... RN physical training instructors at Pitt Street demonstrate the 'Swedish system' in practice for the 1914 Royal Naval and Military Tournament

Spar wars for ladies

THE RN's female boxing community gathered at HMS Nelson for its inaugural training weekend.

Nineteen female pugilists from HM Ships Kent, Collingwood and Sultan, plus JSU Northwood and RNAS Cudrose, took part in the three-day sparring and fitness session, writes Lt Lucy Abel (HMS Sultan).

These numbers, combined with women already part of the RN ladies' team who were unable to attend due to other Service commitments, prove once again that female boxing is not only a sport for the future but a major sport for the present.

Female boxers of all levels from novice to international took part in the weekend to learn, develop or polish their boxing skills.

The programme of events included technique sessions, circuit training, sprint training, sparring and not forgetting high-powered games of football and basketball.

The female fighters were helped in their training by Cpl Baz O'Connell (JSU Northwood) and LPT Bungy Edwards (HMS Kent).

The aim was to kick-start the ladies' boxing season in the build-up to the National ABA Ladies Championships to be held at Maida Boxing Gym, Aldershot, on June 21.

Many of the RN female boxers are already showing strong potential to do well in this competition.

That and the success of the women last year will mean the RN will be the team to beat in the championships.

In the lead-up to the nationals, there will be monthly training weekends (the next was due to be February 29-March 2).

Regular evening training sessions also take place on Tuesdays and Wednesdays 6.30-8pm at HMS Collingwood and on Thursdays between 5pm and 7pm at HMS Nelson.

Land of slopes and glory

Continued from back page and support their friends and colleagues negotiate their way down the floodlit piste in their first ever ski race.

The main race week produced yet another year of good competition with many individuals achieving the personal satisfaction of successfully negotiating challenging courses down the former Olympic piste.

New young talent was also discovered during the races by both the ski and snowboard teams that has improved the pool of available people for selection and hopefully with sufficient time to train over the coming year a strong performance at the 2009 Inter-Service Championships.

That said there is always room for more so any individuals – especially female winter sports enthusiasts – who are interested and would like to try out for the Navy squads should contact Cdr Gary Skinnis at HMS Temeraire (9380 27880) who will put you in touch with the relevant people.

The full race results from the 2008 Alpine Championships can be viewed at www.skiworldse.com/navy – to gain access the login is 'rnwsa' and the password 'band'.

For those of you already looking to 2009, next year's championships will run between January 10 and 24.

IF YOU wish to submit a report/images for inclusion in the sports pages of our April edition, please ensure your submission reaches us by Friday March 14.

PTIs bid goodbye

"BRING me my chariot of fire..."

The immortal words of William Blake's *Jerusalem* – the anthem of the RN PT branch – echoed around the hallowed but derelict gym at Pitt Street in Portsmouth for a final time as PTIs paid homage to the spiritual home of Senior Service fitness.

For nearly 80 years the red-brick building was known as HMS Temeraire, the RN School of Physical Training.

Its RN role ended in 1988 when the present-day Temeraire site opened.

But Pitt Street remained and became a sports centre for civvies, specialising in gymnastics.

Now, however, the Edwardian building has no role to play in the regeneration of Portsmouth city centre, so the bulldozers moved in to flatten it.

The wrecking balls stopped swinging long enough for today's generation of PTIs to pay their respects in the derelict building in a short service of remembrance, led by Naval chaplain the Rev Roland Wort and Cdr Bob Holmes, Temeraire's CO.

CPO(PT) Wayne Hodkinson, Temeraire's establishment CPO, is one of the dwindling number of serving RN club swingers who attended Pitt Street in its Naval days, admittedly very briefly.

"There was an atmosphere, an aura which surrounded the building. You'd walk in and think: *I need to be part of this.*"

"During the service, this once-thriving building with its glorious history and tradition seemed a shambles of the place we once knew.

"But during those last prayers on that sorry day, during that silent moment, we reflected on our memories of times gone by. Pitt Street may have gone, but the memories of this hallowed place will live forever in our hearts."



● The detritus of demolition... A few rather forlorn reminders of Pitt Street in its prime gathered up by demolition teams as they prepared to pull the building down

Picture: LLogs (CS) Alex Knott

Next month



'Something striking and brilliant' – Zeebrugge raid 90th anniversary supplement



May the gorse be with you – a day with Britain's busiest SAR fliers



Come on in, the water's lovely – winter war games in Norway

Plus

Changes for the better – how the Admiralty Interview Board is getting it right



● Lord of leaping... An RN snowboarder flies off a jump against a picture-postcard Alpine backdrop

Picture: Cpl Scott Robertson, RAF

Land of slopes and glory

AFTER the snow worries of 2007 came the snow Aflurries of 2008.

As the skies darkened and snow began to fall in early December a number of individuals were crossing their fingers hoping that by the start of the 2008 **RN Winter Sports Association Alpine Championships** the mountains would be bathed in sunshine and the pistes in perfect condition with abundant snow, writes Lt Cdr Andy Hurry, 815 NAS.

When the advance party arrived in Les Menuires on January 11 the snow started to fall, and fall and fall and continued to do so for the next 24 hours.

Of course, snow is always welcome in a ski resort but over a Friday and Saturday it can also lead to chaos on 'transfer day' – and Saturday January 12 proved to be one of those days.

Fortunately, despite aircraft being diverted to various airports and the mountain road only being passable using snow chains, the hordes of die-hard Royal Navy skiers and boarders and those yet to be initiated made it to Les Menuires by late evening.

Thereafter followed two weeks of excellent conditions with snow falling overnight leaving blue skies to reign supreme during the daytime.

The 2008 event was well attended by 900 serving personnel and 300 civilian members of the RNWSA – an impressive total considering the continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and a large contingent of the Royal Marines away training in Norway.

An increased number of people over both weeks took ski instruction, particularly at the intermediate and advanced levels, which kept Tommy Wallace and his team of instructors extremely busy.

Snowboarding continues to grow in popularity at the event with even a few skiers trying it out for a couple of days under the expert tutelage of Nick Daukes, the discipline manager.

The snowboard instructors were all smartly kitted out in very dapper black suits to help them blend into their surroundings and, to make sure they couldn't be missed when instructing, they sported magnificently bright Day-Glo orange bibs – not that anyone

gave them any grief about that.

After all, rule number one of the boarders' code, according to Nick, is to look good at all times, even when face down in the snow.

Over the two-week period some 180 people took part in beginners ski and snowboard instruction which culminated in the weekly beginners' race.

This remains one of the event's highlights, with hundreds of people coming out to the Les Bruyeres area to watch and

Continued on page 47



● An RN skier kicks up the snow as he races down the Les Menuires slope
Picture: Richard Olsen



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See page 39 for information on the exciting new opportunities available now.

'Much blood will flow'

The Kaiser's Battle

A DECISIVE BLOW

TIME RUNNING OUT

A FATEFUL DECISION

IT WAS barely light in Mons on a dank autumn day.

The heart of the Belgian town was pleasant enough but its environs had little to recommend them, for Mons sat amid Belgium's coalfields and its slag heaps.

Here three years earlier the Old Contemptibles of the British Expeditionary Force had entered the name 'Mons' in the proud annals of the Empire's military history.

And now, on Sunday November 11 1917, the brains of the German Army conspired once again to strike in the West.

It was 8am when Erich Ludendorff, *Erster Generalquartiermeister* – First Generalquartiermeister – of the Imperial German Army strode into the headquarters of Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, located in a château in Hardenpont, just outside Mons.

A serious, sober leader, Rupprecht was by far the ablest of Germany's royal commanders – a realist, not a man to be roused by tubthumping and patriotic clarion calls.

Now he listened as Erich Ludendorff outlined Germany's grand strategy for the months to come.

For more than a year, the German soldier had stood on the defensive on the Western Front, that 450-mile-long man-made barrier which carved its way from the Franco-Swiss border to the North Sea between Dunkirk and Ostend.

Twice, the Imperial Army had sought outright victory in the West: in the autumn of 1914 when it marched on Paris and in the spring of 1916 at Verdun when it looked to bleed France white. Twice, the Imperial Army had failed.

Since then the ordinary German soldier, the *Landser*, had been ordered to hold the ground he stood on as the Tommy and *poilu* battered against him.

But this was no way to win a war. Slowly, inexorably, the Kaiser's Army was being ground down. The weight of numbers, the weight of matériel against him was too great, while sitting in trenches and bunkers gnawed at his morale.

As 1917 drew to a close, Erich Ludendorff was certain that the German soldier in France and Belgium "pined for the offensive".

It wasn't just the *Landser* who pined for the offensive. So too did their commander. "The offensive is the most effective means of making war," he believed. "It alone is decisive. Military history proves it on every page."

And so, Erich Ludendorff explained, the moment had come to strike once more. For time was against the Reich. The American doughboys would soon flood across the Atlantic and tip the scales of war against Germany.

The Americans were coming into the war. The Russians were going out. It was the sworn intent of the Bolsheviks to make peace.

Peace in East fuelled war in the West. The end of war with Russia would allow Germany to ferry soldiers westwards. And with these men, the Reich would strike.

"We hope to be able to deliver the enemy a blow he'll feel," Ludendorff declared brashly.

But where to strike and against whom?

To Erich Ludendorff the whom was easy. The 'English'. Germans always spoke of the English, never the British.



● 'The brazen spirit of the attack swept through the massed troops'... Stosstruppen on the attack during Germany's gamble for victory in 1918

The *poilu*, the general argued, would fight to the last for his sacred soil. Not so the Tommy. Besides, the Tommy lacked the skill of his French counterpart. Beating the English appeared "easier, more certain".

The where was more problematic. Staff officers suggested another blow at Verdun, but they were quickly dismissed. (Aside from being French it was the toughest nut on the Western Front to crack.)

Instead, German eyes fell upon Picardy and British Army holding the line around the town of St Quentin.

And so, after three hours, Ludendorff had made his mind up.

"Our general situation demands that we strike as soon as possible," he told the gathered array of commanders, "before the Americans can bring their weight to bear. We must strike the English."

The ensuing blow, the monocled general proclaimed, would be "a decisive operation".

It would indeed be a decisive operation. The war would end a year to the day of the Mons conference, but not as Erich Ludendorff expected.

Among the last towns to be liberated from the German yoke would be Mons and among its liberators would be British sailors.

NO REST FOR THE 63RD

DAILY LOSSES

100 CIGARS

The men of the 63rd (Royal Naval Division) cared little for grand plans and decisive blows.

The sailors and marines were weary of war. The Somme, Arras, Passchendaele... all had promised victory but delivered little more than mud and blood.

The 63rd left Flanders behind as the curtain came down on 1917 and found themselves in a bulge in the German line – the Flesquières salient – before the town of Cambrai.

Escape from Flanders brought no relief from the horrors of war,

however. On the penultimate day of the old year, the German guns barked and pummelled the 6,800 yards of trench the sailors held. Before 1918 was rung in, one company alone in the Hood Battalion had lost 30 men.

But then life daily on the Western Front ate at the soul of the British soldier. Even when it was supposedly quiet, there were casualties. In the five months between the end of the fighting at Passchendaele and the unleashing of the German spring offensive, the RND lost five battalion commanders. Lower down, the situation was even worse: there simply were not enough junior officers to lead the men – and what officers there were seemed to have rolled straight off a production line. They were fine men, but they lacked initiative.

One such junior officer undergoing training was Royal Marine Capt Harold Horne, sent to V Corps' school mid-way between Doullens and Albert.

Life away from the front for Horne was almost pleasant. There were lectures every day, parades, drill, and almost daily instruction in the art of horse riding. And if the delights of Albert did not distract the officers under training, there was always the Tank Corps' concert party, The Idle Willies.

Harold Horne's ultimate master was also enjoying life away from the front.

The new year of 1918 opened for Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig in the capital of the British Empire, amid a flurry of high-level conferences and dinner parties.

Secretary of State for War Lord Derby squabbled with Prime Minister Lloyd George over the war's length. Derby was convinced the Allies would be victorious before the year was out – and promised the prickly Welsh premier 100 cigars if he was right.

Douglas Haig agreed with his war minister. The conflict would be over before 1919; Germany's parlous internal situation guaranteed it.

But for the moment the Allies were weak, worn out by fighting coupled, in France's case, with unrest in the ranks.

The first four months of 1918 would be critical to the Allies' fortunes, Douglas Haig warned his political masters.

The Germans enjoyed a superiority of one million men – a figure, in reality, Erich Ludendorff could only dream of.

But what would the foe do with such a surplus, Haig wondered. Surely he would not risk them to seek a decision on the Western Front. That, Douglas Haig reasoned, would be the act of a gambler playing his last card.

THE LAST CARD

'WE'LL SMASH A HOLE'

IN A RIGHT PICKLE

Albrecht von Thaer agreed. The son of a Silesian landowner, 49-year-old Thaer had served with distinction as a staff officer in the West – so much distinction, indeed, that he earned Germany's highest military honour, the *Pour le Mérite*, the Blue Max in common parlance.

Thaer's mood in the winter of 1917-1918 swung violently between hope and despair.

"We stand on the eve of a future just as someone stands in front of a dark curtain," he noted in his diary.

"Coming events will bring huge upheaval and, for many, horrors. Much blood will flow – hopefully not on our side."

Sometimes he praised his nation's leadership. Sometimes he chastised it.

What troubled Thaer above all was confidence bordering on hubris which possessed Germany's military leaders.

Veterans of the Eastern Front and Italy expected a rapid breakthrough in France. Albrecht von Thaer shared none of their optimism. The English were not the pushovers these

Ostlandkämpfer – eastern warriors – believed them to be.

Perhaps the officer's misgivings were compounded by the knowledge that his son was now a *Frontkämpfer* – front-line warrior.

"It's becoming harder and harder to deal with the horrors of war – the dead, the wounded, the dying," Thaer wrote to his wife.

Surely, he argued, there had to be a better way of ending the war than sending young men against a steel hail of enemy bullets and shells.

"Is this not, perhaps, the last good card that we hold in our hands and wouldn't a Bismarck be able to bring things to a rapid conclusion without so much blood being shed?"

Germany did not possess a Bismarck. She did, however, possess Erich Ludendorff.

Field Marshal Paul Ludwig Hans Anton von Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg was the Chief of the General Staff but it was his deputy Ludendorff who ran Germany's war.

Ludendorff could be, and frequently was, brilliant, incisive, inspired. But he could also be – and frequently was – tired, irrational, and prone to fits of mental collapse. All these traits, and more, would reveal themselves in the coming months.

And the monocled general's greatest strength was also his greatest weakness: he would micro-manage battles down to the smallest detail, but invariably fail to look at the bigger picture. Woe betide anyone who asked what his grand plan was. "I object to the word 'operation'," he scolded Rupprecht. "We'll smash a hole and see what happens. That's what we did in Russia!"

Like Albrecht von Thaer, the Bavarian Crown Prince had grave doubts about the impending offensive.

The attack, he told Kaiser Wilhelm II, Germany's impetuous ruler, would do little more than to drive a bulge into the Allies lines at the cost of horrific losses.

Wilhelm II agreed, but he did not



THIS was the man Germans believed would bring victory to the Reich in the spring of 1918: the *Stosstrupp*.

Stosstruppen (literally 'thrust' or 'assault troops') – commonly referred to in English as 'stormtroops' – were the German Army's antidote to the stalemate of trench warfare.

While the Allies experimented with mechanised warfare, the Germans reinvented the infantryman.

After a ferocious but relatively short bombardment of gas and high explosive shells, the *Stosstruppen* would storm forward in small groups.

They would probe the weakest part of the Allied line, then punch through, avoiding combat and invariably bypassing strongpoints such as bunkers.

Those Allied bunkers would be dealt with by subsequent waves of specialist troops, such as machine-guns or flamethrower units, while the *Stosstruppen* continued their forward thrust.

Typically, a *Stosstrupp* wore a *feldgrau* (field grey) jacket and trousers, plus puttees and ankle boots (rather than jackboots).

The *Pickelhaube* spiked helmet had been replaced by the more practical *Stahlhelm* (steel helmet) – often referred to as the 'coal scuttle helmet'.

He would carry an assault pack, a haversack, gas mask, a canteen, water bottle, entrenching tool, ammunition, bayonet and sometimes cutters to deal with barbed wire.

The Mauser rifle was his constant companion as well as the *Steilhandgranate* (stick grenade) favoured by the German Army, although the men also carried British-style 'egg' grenades.

Continued from page i
intervene. The forthcoming offensive would bear his name – *Kaiserschlacht*, the Kaiser’s Battle – but he had neither decided upon it, nor would he direct its course.

By the fourth year of war, the Kaiser was an increasingly distant, irrelevant figure. Hindenburg – and especially Ludendorff – were the Reich’s *de facto* rulers.

The tentacles of the Army stretched into every facet of life in Germany: newspapers, films, food distribution, factories. Yet such overarching control of everyday life could not disguise the fact that as 1918 opened, Germany was almost on her knees.

The Germans were starving. The Allied naval blockade was choking trade. Demonstrations turned to riots. “Down with the war,” the people demanded. “We don’t want to starve any longer!”

Food was just one of the Reich’s shortages. She lacked fuel. She lacked men. She lacked material. She lacked horses. The nation was bankrupt.

Church bells were melted down and re-moulded as guns, lead pipes ripped up and turned into bullets.

Man and beast proved harder to find, beast especially. The horse was the backbone of Kaiser’s Army, the beast of burden. Every month 20,000 died or were worn out from the exertions at the front.

Germany’s manpower situation was almost as dire. She had lost 1,200,000 men in 1917. Even by raiding the 1899 yeargroup – 18 and 19-year-olds – and sending 50,000 wounded back to the front line, her Army would still be almost half a million men short.

“We cannot endure a war drawn out indefinitely,” Paul von Hindenburg warned his front-line commanders. “We must be prepared to end the war with a great blow. The breakthrough must succeed at all costs. If it fails, then for sure we’ll be in a right pickle.”

THE FIFTH ARMY

A MOST GALLANT SOLDIER

General Sir Hubert Gough shared Paul von Hindenburg’s manpower concerns – he too lacked men.

Gough’s Fifth Army would bear the brunt of the German onslaught – not that he knew it yet – and its position was unenviable.

The Fifth Army had been given a ‘quiet sector’ of the front stretching for 28 miles through the Picardy countryside, the southernmost end of the British line on the Western Front.

The trenches had been allowed to stagnate, fall into disrepair. In some places they were even non-existent. There were few observation posts, few communications trenches linking the front with the rear, and telephone lines ran along the ground, not beneath it.

The parlous state of Fifth Army’s front was perhaps unsurprising.

For more than a year, the line here had been quiet by the standards of the Western Front. But the signs as 1917 drew to a close were disquieting.

Almost nightly German raiding parties stormed across No Man’s Land, grabbed a couple of Tommies, then hauled them back for interrogation.

Orders from above were unrealistic. Fortify. Fortify. Fortify. Gough reckoned he would have to dig an extra 300 miles of trenches – with the accompanying barbed wire, communications trenches, dugouts – to defend his front as he and his masters required.

Fifth Army’s plight worsened as January drew to a close when it was ordered to take over yet more of the French line; its eight divisions now defended 42 miles of trenches.

Length of front and lack of men troubled David Lloyd George less than the man at the head of Fifth Army. The British premier had his doubts about Gough. He was “a most gallant” soldier. But he was also one who did not enjoy the trust of his men. And, crucially, he was “rather out of his depth”.

Gough was – and remains – a rather divisive figure. Some troops would fight and die *for* ‘Goughie’, many would fight and die *because* of him. He was the British Army’s youngest general. He was also one of its hardest taskmasters – although for all his energy and drive, the work of his staff was usually slapdash. His manner was abrasive, often intolerant, and his record on the Somme and in Flanders was far from impressive.

All of which mattered little, for ‘Goughie’ enjoyed the patronage of Douglas Haig – and



● ‘I think some did not care what happened’... British prisoners of war rest on the road to Cambrai

the field marshal protected his protégé, even from the hawks in Whitehall... for now, at any rate.

TOUGH BUT GRIM

‘QUALITY NOT QUANTITY’

CALM AND VERY CONFIDENT

In the bulge at Flesquières, CPO Richard Tobin and his Hood Battalion comrades took shelter in a wood behind the front line.

The men, the senior rating recalled, were “tough, grim, determined”. Tough, grim, determined and few in number – “quality not quantity,” a battalion joker observed grimly.

The Steadies – the men took their nickname from the battalion motto, Steady Hood – were held in reserve, but that did not save them from the terror of the *Materialschlacht* – the battle of matériel.

Tuesday March 12 was the worst day yet. The entire Flesquières salient was plastered by the enemy’s guns – perhaps as many as 200,000 shells fell on the bulge. The Germans hurled gas not high-explosive at Flesquières, mustard gas. It lingered in every trench, every crater, every dug-out, every bunker, for days.

For the lucky ones, the gas “reduced the voice to a whisper,” recalled Tobin. “We were a whispering army.”

To those less fortunate, it spelled blisters, blindness, a lingering death as lungs blistered and bled.

Despite gas masks, despite the alarms, despite the training, some 2,000 men fell victim to this pungent yellow gas even before the day of the Germans’ main assault.

And that day was not far off now, Hubert Gough reasoned. Unable to address every man in his army directly, Gough summoned his divisional commanders and urged them to impart his words and rally the men who would bear the brunt of the imminent assault.

Hubert Gough was not a great orator. His orders of the day were invariably rather terse. Today, however, he turned to Abraham Lincoln for inspiration.

“We accepted this war for one object, a worthy object, and the war will end when that object is attained. Under God, I hope it will never end until that time.”

At his headquarters the small intelligence pieces – an officer captured here, Alsatian deserters there, the crew of a downed German aircraft – slowly completed the jigsaw.

By March 19, Hubert Gough was in no doubt. The German guns would open up the following day. And on the twenty-first, the first day of spring, the infantry would come. “Everyone is calm and very confident,” he assured his wife. “All is ready.”

Hubert Gough’s confidence might have evaporated had he known the might arrayed against him.

THE GREAT PLAN

DETAILED PREPARATIONS

‘DAY OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE’

Across the mud, craters and barbed wire of No Man’s Land: 76 assault divisions waited to unleash the Kaiser’s Battle, supported by more than 6,500 field guns and howitzers and 1,000 aircraft.

They would fall not merely upon Hubert Gough’s Fifth Army, but also its northerly neighbour, Julian Byng’s Third Army.

They would crush the Flesquières salient, trapping any Britons holding the line. They would smash their way west and south-west beyond Albert and the old battlefield of the Somme and on to Amiens. They would drive a wedge between the British and French Armies and destroy one, or the other, or perhaps both in the process. Such was the plan.

The ordinary German soldier never saw the bigger picture, he only saw the minutiae of preparations for the attack. And he was impressed.

He watched road building detachments prepare the way over the cratered landscape for men and artillery. He watched traffic officers direct the flow of troops and matériel to the forward positions. He studied maps of enemy strongpoints compiled after months of intelligence work. He watched the stockpile of ammunition at depots grow ever higher.

Each unit had a dedicated ‘air raid warden’, ensuring that everything being massed for the assault was hidden from the prying eyes of Allied air power.

By day, the soldiers waited in their dugouts and trenches, in the shadows of walls of villages which once peppered the Picardy landscape, or in the cellars of homes which no longer stood. Only at night did they emerge from their hideouts.

Gunner *Leutnant* Herbert Sulzbach and his men bivouacked next to a hedge on the edge of the village of Hauteville, near St Quentin.

Hauteville was normally home to 700 people. In mid-March 1918, there were 15,000 German soldiers billeted in and around the village.

Sulzbach was struck by the morale of the infantry marching through Hauteville to their jump-off positions. They waved and smiled. Their regimental bands struck up the folk songs. *Muss i denn, muss i denn zum Städtle hinaus* – Must I leave, must I leave this little town...

It was all terribly inspiring, but Sulzbach felt a shiver run down his spine as he watched these infantrymen.

“Which of these good men – and which of us, for that matter, is going to come home from this battle?” he asked himself.

By the time Herbert Sulzbach and his comrades moved into Hauteville, preparations for the Kaiser’s Battle were

complete. All that men could do they had done. Now the *Landser* waited for Nature to conspire with him against the English.

It rained continuously on Tuesday March 19, but that night the clouds parted and the stars looked down upon the Western Front.

The following morning the British lines were obscured by a dense fog which the weak March sun struggled to burn through.

At Ludendorff’s headquarters, *Leutnant* Dr Schmaus, the German Army’s senior meteorologist, presented his forecast.

Ludendorff’s guns needed wind coming from the right direction at the right strength for their gas shells to paralyse the defenders, but Schmaus’ forecast was far from encouraging.

Again Erich Ludendorff gambled with the fate of his nation. At mid-day that Wednesday, the order went out to every army group, to every army, to every corps, division, regiment earmarked for the Kaiser’s Battle: tomorrow Germany would strike.

“Now it could no longer be stopped,” Ludendorff wrote. “Everything must run its course.”

“Higher commanders and troops had all done their duty. The rest was in the hands of fate.”

Fate weighed heavily upon Erich Ludendorff, a religious, nay superstitious man.

He consulted the book of the *Brüdergemeinde* – the Church of the Moravian Brethren. The omens were promising.

“Tomorrow is the day of the Chosen People,” he told a colleague over lunch. “Don’t you think we can look to the offensive with confidence?”

THE FINAL HOURS

A GREEK TRAGEDY

‘THE HAMMER NOT THE ANVIL’

After dark on Wednesday March 20, the order was handed to 86 *Füsilier Regiment Königin*. The news quickly filtered down to the men in the trenches. *X-Day, March 21. H-Hour, 9.40am*. “At last, we leave behind the narrow trenches, the endless monotony of trench warfare with its standing guard, digging in, hacking away, having to seek cover and crouch down!” one soldier enthused.

“Finally revenge for four years of suffering and teeth-grinding endurance! At last we’ll be the hammer and no longer the anvil!”

Junior officer Rudolf Binding stared westwards over a land “laid waste, where there are neither roads, trees nor villages”.

Binding and his comrades had been “packed in position” for ten days, waiting for the order to strike.

“It will be a drama like a Greek tragedy, with a fate hanging over it, shaped and created by man alone, and ready to

descend on the head of him who is responsible,” he wrote home.

Schütze (rifleman) Karl Brunotte waited for the 6,000 guns of the German artillery to roar. This would be Brunotte’s *Feuertaufe*, his baptism of fire. “Would we be mown down by machine-guns or have to fight man against man? Would I be wounded?” he wondered. “I was certainly not keen to be hit by a large splinter in the chest or belly or to lose a limb. I would prefer to die a ‘hero’s death’.”

The night was cold, silent. Behind the German lines, the roads were deserted. No crack of rifle fire from the British trenches pierced the silence, no sporadic roar of the enemy’s artillery. Coloured flares raced through the Picardy heavens, briefly bathing this man-made desert in light before fading.

The *Stosstruppen* snatched what little sleep they could in their cramped jump-off positions, clutching their battle packs – a cartridge belt, bags of hand-grenades, gas masks, steel helmet and rifle. Those awake did not talk, lost in thoughts of home.

Richard Tobin could not sleep. He carved a ‘bed’ for himself in a bend somewhere in Havrincourt Wood. When the wind was in the right direction he could make out the noise of German troops marching or moving up to the front line.

“A quietness I knew so well falls over fronts just before an attack,” he recalled. Tonight, such a quietness came over the Hoods.

“We were grim. We were determined,” said the senior rating. “Behind us lay the Somme battlefields, every yard soaked with British blood.”

It was ground Tobin and his comrades were loathe to abandon. If they had to fall back, they would do so “foot by foot, inch by inch, fighting and killing.”

THE GUNS BELLOW

THE WORLD COMES APART

LITTLE SHORT OF TERRIFYING

It was still long before dawn, yet the darkness of night seem to give way to a slight half-light as Herbert Sulzbach roused his gun crew at 4am. The men hung around their battery, gas masks slung around their necks.

Battery commander Robert Mimra went over the target co-ordinates – British guns at Neuville – yet again with his gunlayers. By 4.30am, *Batterie 4* stood ready to fire, its barrels trained at Neuville, its men with the firing cords in their hand, ready to pull the moment their commander gave the word.

4.39am. One minute to go.

Mimra raised his right hand and stared at his watch.

4.40am. Mimra dropped his arm. Four flashes of fire

lit up his battery. Six thousand flashes of fire danced along the Western Front from Cambrai to St Quentin.

“The world seems to come apart at the seams, the earth trembles, the skies are torn apart, flitting about, driven insane,” wrote Mimra. “There’s hissing, howling, roaring, whistling through the air. Amid these terrible noise a mighty wall of fire rears up. It rumbles with a dull, piercing sound. Our eyes and ears begin to hurt. We can no longer hear our own voices. Messages and orders have to be bellowed in someone’s ear. This is no longer a barrage. This is pandemonium.”

The noise of Mimra’s *Batterie 4* was drowned out by the boom of the howitzers to the rear. This hellish concert shook every man to the depths of his soul, until he overcame his fears and somehow managed to keep going.

The gunners pummelled the British lines with a mixture of high explosive and gas shells. Those Tommies not wiped out by the German barrage were stunned by the noxious fumes drifting over the battlefield.

Richard Tobin grabbed the band sergeant and scurried for a dugout. There the men sat as the ground shook as each enemy shell crashed down with a loud thud.

To 32-year-old former clerk David Polley the enemy’s barrage was “little short of terrifying” – especially so for the two sentries cowering at the dugout entrance and the handful of sailors on the firesteps staring out from the Royal Naval Division’s lines towards the German trenches.

“The enemy guns searched almost every inch of the ground,” the Irishman recalled. When he clambered out of his bunker he found a world he barely recognised.

It was ten minutes after five when the thunder of the guns shook Hubert Gough out of his bed in his quarters in Nesle, a good dozen miles behind the front. He dashed across the hallway to his office, grabbed the phone and demanded information. Which part of his front was being bombarded? The response was blunt, frightening. *All of it*.

He issued what orders he could. But the battle was already out of his hands. The fate of the British Army, the Allies, perhaps the Empire, rested with Tommy. And Jack.

Fighter pilot Rudolf Stark was at his airfield by first light alongside his comrades. Their aircraft sat on the Le Cateau grass in long rows, ready to start.

The 21-year-old Bavarian had gone to war as a cavalryman with the feared *Uhlans*, before transferring to the air force, first as an artillery observer, now as a fighter pilot.

He had been awake since long before dawn. The dull growl of the guns had woken him and the constant rattle of the furniture and window panes in his billet had kept him awake.

Now, however, Stark and his fellow fliers could do nothing. A dense mist cloaked the land.

THE HURRICANE

A WELL-OILED MACHINE

STORM TROOPS TO THE FRONT

By mid-morning, the German gunners had perfected their hellish art.

The men stood in their shirt sleeves, sweat running down their faces, their arms and dripping on to the mud.

“Shell after shell is rammed into the breach, salvo after salvo is fired, and you don’t need to give orders any more, they’re in such good spirits, and put up such a rate of rapid fire, that not a single word of command is needed,” Herbert Sulzbach observed.

For five hours, the guns roared. The crescendo reached its peak shortly after 9am. “What we did not believe was possible now occurs,” wrote Robert Mimra. “The hurricane becomes even more ferocious.” For 30 minutes, a hail of high explosives the like of which the world had never seen fell upon the British lines.

In *Leutnant* Hermann Wedekind’s trench, something strange, uplifting occurred. The battalion commander began to sing. *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles...* His men joined in. The strains of *Deutschlandlied* echoed along the trench.

“It was the first time I had heard of our men singing the national anthem since the autumn of 1914,” Wedekind remembered. “The spirit now wasn’t the same, but I think the battalion commander sang to take our soldiers’ minds off the coming battle.”

There was no singing among the Hanoverians of



Leutnant Ernst Jünger's regiment. The men moved about their assault trenches waiting for the signal to storm forward. An NCO stood in front of Jünger's foxhole, urging him to take better cover as the British counter-barrage began.

"An explosion cut him off," Jünger recalled. "He sprawled to the ground, missing a leg, he was past help." The officer dove for another dugout. As clumps of earth and dust were tossed around the German trenches, Jünger watched powerless as his company was decimated.

And then the English barrage subsided. The officers drew their pistols, nodded at each other or engaged in small talk. Sporadically mortar fire falling short kicked up mud. Jünger's comrade handed him a water bottle. He took a long swig, then tried to light a cigar. Three times the air pressure blew out his matches.

"I sensed the weight of the hour," he recalled. "The mood was curious, brimming with tension and a kind of exaltation. The noise of battle had become so terrific that no-one was at all clear-headed."

It was now 9.40am. The barrage began to creep forward. In the German trenches, whistles sounded and trumpeters blew the historic call: leap up.

It was an exhilarating moment. "One division after the other breaks through in a gigantic leap," enthralled junior officer Wilhelm Held wrote to his brother. "Across No Man's Land, into the first enemy trench!"

Richard Tobin sheepishly left his dugout. He had no orders and wandered into Havrincourt Wood in search of the rest of the Steadies. The Hoods were not there. They had been sent up to the front. Tobin walked down a plank road built through the copse by British troops. He found no Hoods. He did find confused soldiers coming back in dribs and drabs. None knew where the Hood Battalion was.

Machine-gunner Sgt Frank Cooper was also struggling to find his comrades.

Today was his 22nd birthday but the former factory worker from Walsall did not feel like celebrating. The war had already cost the lives of his two best pals.

The Royal Marine found not stragglers but an avalanche of British soldiers pouring back from the front line. Cooper's commander tried to buttonhole a few of the retreating Tommies. *The Germans have broken through, they told him. We're falling back.*

The commander of 190 Machine-gun Company could not fight the tide. He ordered his marines to withdraw and dig in with their four guns when a target presented itself.

As the Royals withdrew, the officer spied the outlines of German *Stosstruppen* moving through the mist to the right. The machine-guns "let fly". *Brrrt. Brrrt. Brrrt.* They fired no more than a handful of belts before the figures vanished. Once again, the Royal Marines picked up their guns and headed westwards.

At Le Cateau, the sun had pierced the mist sufficiently for *Leutnant* Rudolf Stark to take to the French skies in his personalised Pfalz D III fighter – he had painted a purple nose and a purple band behind the cockpit.

From several hundred feet, Stark could see the ground steaming and smoking "from a thousand shell holes". The thick layer of haze below prevented the airman from gaining an idea of progress on the ground. It also prevented the enemy air force from harassing him. There was a brief scrap with a handful of Sopwith Camels, but in the mist, friend and foe lost contact.

THE TERRIBLE FOG

THE HUN'S LOYAL ALLY

The fog masked everything this terrible Thursday morning. Hubert Gough stared out of his office window into the garden. He could just make out the faint outline of a tree 40 feet away. His eyes in the sky were useless. They weren't in the sky. They sat on airfields. There were no telephone calls from the front; the bombardment had seen to that. It had also seen to the messengers who could not find their way through this milky cloak. Hubert Gough had called on the Almighty to support the Allied cause, but this Thursday morning, he lamented, "the stars in their courses seemed to be fighting for the Germans."

It was late morning before Flak gunner Fritz Nagel began moving up to the front line to support the advance. His battery laboured to make headway

Order of the Day

We are again at a **crisis in the war**. The enemy is aiming at the destruction of the British Army. I feel that everyone in the Army, fully realising how much depends on the exertions and steadfastness of each one of us, will do his utmost to prevent the enemy from attaining his object.

– Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig
Commanding Officer, British Expeditionary Force

against the stream of carts and vehicles struggling back from the fighting, each one crammed with casualties, "lying motionless, pale and bloody looking," he recalled. "I had seen many wounded before, but not in such an awful parade, one vehicle after another without end. The sight shook me up."

Even as the mist thinned, the Allied air forces did not offer battle. Rudolf Stark found he had time to follow the fighting beneath him.

"Below us a battery is firing, infantry are advancing to storm. Columns take cover in trenches and behind rising ground," he recorded in his diary. "Everywhere I see flashes – smoking, flaming mouths of cannon."

Some German aircraft swept low over the British lines, strafing anything which moved, "pumping lead into the trenches," David Polley recalled. "Others paid full attention to our observation balloons, which they brought down in flames."

For the moment the battle was out of the hands of men like Albrecht von Thaer. It was almost peaceful in his IX Corps headquarters as the months of preparation and planning paid off. "Everything runs like a film," he noted in his diary. Boyish excitement seemed to grip these otherwise reserved General Staff officers.

"We feverishly try to follow things through the field binoculars," Thaer continued. "We can see little of our advancing infantry. Smoke and dust hide too much."

After a day of supreme effort, Herbert Sulzbach sat on a limber and compiled his diary. "I'd like to write volumes about this day; it really must be the greatest in the history of the world. So the impossible thing has been achieved; the breakthrough has succeeded!"

Fritz Nagel rested beneath the truck which carried his anti-aircraft battery into battle. Around were scattered the bodies of a dozen or so Tommies, their pockets ransacked, their letters home and playing cards lying in the mud. Nagel picked up a handful. *Perhaps, he thought, I could write to the families when all this was over.*

Sgt Frank Cooper had little idea where he was or where he was going. He watched a BEF field kitchen go up in flames. He fleetingly caught sight of German soldiers advancing. And he found some of his gun team had simply vanished in the chaos of retreat. "I don't know what happened to them," he remembered, "and I never saw them again."

The rest of the Royal Naval Division had begun Thursday March 21 holding the line between Flesquières and Marcoing. By nightfall it had been driven back a couple of miles.

The sailors and Royal Marines had fared better than many of their comrades that fateful Thursday. Twenty-one thousand British soldiers fell into German hands on the first day of the Kaiser's Battle. At least 7,000 more lay dead on the battlefield.

And so the breakthrough, as Herbert Sulzbach enthused, had indeed succeeded. But at a far greater price than any German leader predicted. Germany's dead numbered 10,000, her wounded that Thursday three times that figure, and punctured the lines of Fifth and Third Armies were, they were not broken, and nor were the men holding them.

BREAKTHROUGH

THE KAISER REJOICES

BACKS TO THE WALL

March 21 was only the beginning. At dawn on the twenty-second, on came the *Stosstruppen* once more – again shielded by the guardian angel of Nature as mist covered the battlefield. Even when it cleared at mid-day and British guns were presented with clear targets, the impetus rested with the Germans. And again the men of the 63rd Royal Naval Division fared better than most of the British Army, pushed back only another couple of miles.

Hubert Gough's Fifth Army was disintegrating, however. A young captain



Yesterday evening we witnessed the wonderful spectacle of the English blowing up all the munition dumps in the area – and there were not a few. Millions of shells will have no further chance of being fired at us.

– Rudolf Binding

● A British supply dump and ammunition depot goes up in flames

whole of this dreadful march, we were shelled, shelled, shelled, and if there can be monotony in the expectation of death, then the very din of battle became monotonous."

Sullen Frenchmen and women stared at the retreating soldiers, barely hiding their contempt. They offered no aid, no food, no shelter.

"They were frightened and accused us of having let them down," recalled Polley. "We, in turn, were not as polite as we probably should have been."

The local populace's mood was probably not helped by acts of vandalism by the retreating army.

Desperate for somewhere to rest, Polley and his comrades forced their way into locked barns and crashed down on the straw.

To the Dubliner it seemed the entire British Army was on the move – westwards.

Perhaps not *all* the British Army, for this was a fighting retreat, not flight.

Near the village of Beaulencourt, south of Bapaume, Polley marvelled at the defiance of the artillerymen.

"All along the roadside, the big guns were in action, the gunners working like fiends and pouring with perspiration," the Irishman remembered.

Polley and his fellow machine-gunners joined in the battle before orders inevitably arrived to fall back once more. The sailors left some ammunition boxes behind. Their officer called for volunteers to recover the munitions. Two men stepped forward and headed eastwards. They never returned.

By dark on March 23, the Royal Naval Division had lost all contact with 47th Division on its right. German infantry had smashed an Army infantry brigade in its rear and, as darkness enveloped the battlefield, there was an almighty explosion which rocked the ground and lit up the night; the ammunition and supply dump at Ytres had been blown up by retreating

THE GREAT RETREAT

'THIS DREADFUL MARCH'

WITHDRAWAL NOT FLIGHT

The English were indeed dreadfully stubborn adversaries. They were also extremely weary adversaries. The men were tired, hungry. Rations had run out. Communications had broken down – telephone lines had been cut off, runners failed to make it back to headquarters or, if they did, they failed to find their comrades when they returned to the front. Machine-gunners struggled to carry their weapons over the cratered terrain. Mortar teams simply buried their weapons and fought as foot soldiers.

It was the regulars, the veterans of 1914, not the men who responded to Kitchener's appeal, or those conscripted, who maintained some semblance of order, morale and above all discipline in battle.

"I reckon it was our RM sergeants that kept us going," Cpl George Banks remembered. "They were regulars – good men – who kept walking up and down the firing line, waking up the lads."

Not all could be roused, however. "One lad fell asleep," Sgt Frank Cooper recalled. "We could not wake him up." Cooper's company simply left their comrade behind and hoped the advancing Germans would look after him. His exhaustion was the rule, not the exception. "We were all dead tired," wrote the Midlander. "I think some did not care what happened."

In three days of battle, machine-gunner David Polley had retreated almost a dozen miles.

"Days and nights came and went without marked difference," he recalled. "On, on, all the time until at last we linked up with the retreating infantry and during the

British troops.

The situation was sufficiently desperate for Capt Harold Horne to be dispatched from V Corps' training school back to the front line – if he could find it.

He tramped across the Somme battlefield of 1916: Albert, Martinpuich, Pozières. The lanes and roads of the Somme were filled with stragglers trying to find their units, including several sailors and marines hoping to re-join the Royal Naval Division.

Horne rounded them up, grabbed a breakfast from a field kitchen, plus an ample supply of biscuits and chocolates to keep the men's morale up, and set off towards the Ancre where the Royal Naval Division had earned its baptism of fire on the Western Front 18 months before.

After four days of battle, the German spearheads had driven the Royal Naval Division back almost 15 miles, beyond the village of Flers where the tank had made its debut in the autumn of 1916, to the charred, battle-scarred remnants of woods and copses around the village of Martinpuich.

Dubliner David Polley stumbled through the remains of Delville Wood – or Devil's Wood as many men preferred to call it – dead on his feet.

"We were beginning to feel the strain of the past few days, for the lack of sleep pulls a man down quicker than most things – nerves were almost at snapping point," he remembered.

The sight of the canteen raised morale in a flash. Polley and his comrades lined up and waited for their cuppas.

Suddenly a staff officer rode up in a rage. "His face was purple and his eyes literally bulged," Polley remembered. "He harangued us: 'What the hell are you men doing? Can't you see the enemy advancing?'"

The gunners never enjoyed their cuppas; they poured the tea into a ditch and headed for the front line.

With not a little bitterness, Richard Tobin sank into a trench on the Ancre. "It was a trench we knew of old," he recalled. "We had started to retreat on March 21 and here we were back in the trench we had started to attack from on November 13 1916 – back to the Somme battlefields, these old battlefields."

Yet like David Polley, Tobin realised the 'great retreat' was just that – a retreat, a withdrawal. The British soldier did not flee in the face of his foe – there was "always a company, always a battalion standing facing the enemy, ready to fight." What wearied the men was not retreat but the return of "the old trench ding-dong" with no end in sight. Still, Richard Tobin and his fellow Hoods were defiant. "We had a little joy in our hearts because although we had not won, we had not been beaten."

INEXORABLE MARCH

DISCIPLINE BREAKS DOWN

'LAND OF MILK AND HONEY'

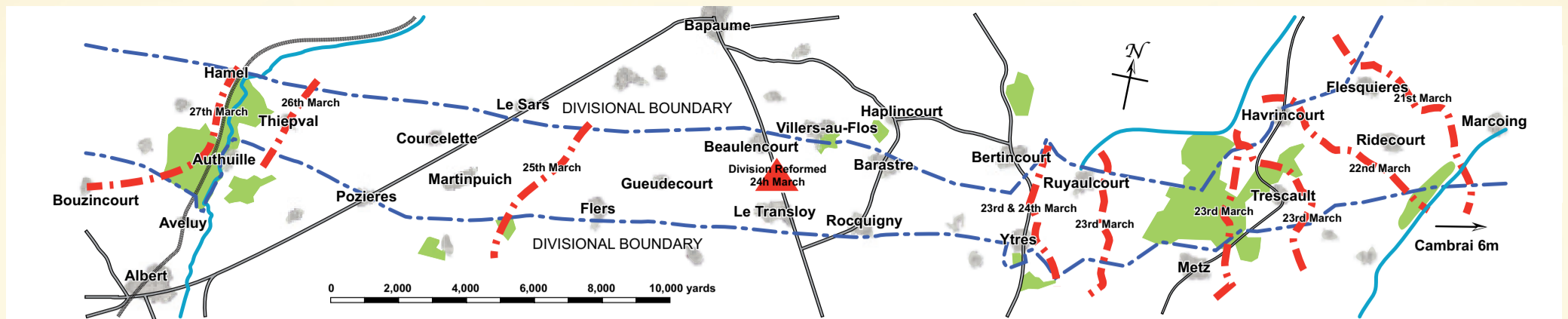
Not beaten, yes, but would the storm troops ever falter, ever stop, the retreating Britons wondered. The German advance seemed relentless, inexorable, unstoppable. To Royal Naval Division brigade commander General Hugo de Pree, the sight of *Stosstruppen* jinking across the battlefield was terrifying but also intoxicating, mesmerising. Wherever the German advanced, he sent Very lights racing into the sky as signals to their gunners and commanders. "As far as the eye could see" the enemy was advancing, in lines two or three deep, de Pree remembered. "Troops in the rear at once poured through the gap, and in a few minutes our flank was turned at that place."

What Hugo de Pree did not realise, or perhaps did not appreciate, was that the scale and speed of the German advance was also its nemesis. The *Stosstruppen* were quickly exhausted. Too much had been asked of the ordinary soldier. He could only give his all for so long.

The vast organisation supporting him broke down. Dedicated for years to a war of stagnation, it simply could not cope with a war of movement. The howitzers and field batteries of Albrecht von Thaer's corps had to move three miles west to keep up with the advance of the *Stosstruppen*. It was a demanding task in itself, but with all the supply columns diverted to support another part of the front, there was nothing to move the piles of ammunition. The guns were starving.

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Thaer pleaded to headquarters for help. "You have your ammunition, now get it to the front yourself," a staff officer sneered. There was no way Thaer and a handful of adjutants could physically move 2,000 rounds per battery. "What are these people in their ivory towers thinking about?" he fumed.

Thaer had spent almost the entire battle hunkered in a dugout. The telephone rang incessantly. The staff officers smoked incessantly. Dust and dirt drifted around the bunker incessantly, covering everything. The air was indescribable. Every now and then, Thaer briefly left his subterranean existence behind and stepped outside. All around the entrance to the bunker lay the wounded, dead and dying. "These fine, heroic men who died for us lay in front of me," the officer wrote. "Their faces and upper bodies are covered with coats as they await burial."

Elsewhere, the *Landser* satisfied his most basic need: food. In the main road to Albert, Fritz Nagel and his comrades fell upon a British supply dump. There was condensed milk, tea, cocoa, corned beef, sugar, bacon, butter, biscuits, countless packets of cigarettes, even rubber raincoats. For the first time in years, the men drank real cocoa, not *Ersatz*.

To most German soldiers, the world beyond the British front lines was "a land flowing with milk and honey", junior officer Rudolf Binding observed. His men seized boots, leather jerkins, their horses gorged themselves on piles of oats and foodcake. The soldiers slaughtered cows, chicken, pigeons. They plundered the wine cellars of French homes. Entire divisions simply broke off the battle to hunt for food and liquor, possessed by a "craze to plunder".

Anything seemed fair game. Near Albert, Rudolf Binding found soldiers driving cows through a street, others hauled a red curtain torn down from a drawing room behind them, and others still swanned around in top hats. The streets of Albert "were running with wine". A junior officer stumbled out of a cellar and pleaded to Binding for help. "I cannot get my men out of this cellar without bloodshed," he lamented.

At the height of the battle, Crown Prince Rupprecht drove across the Somme battlefield which was scarred by two years of fighting.

In a hollow was a shot-up British battery – field guns, howitzers, even some tanks, abandoned, the area strewn with the cadavers of horses. There were freshly-dug graves of British airmen, marked with crosses and cockades in red, white and blue. There were no towns, no villages, Rupprecht observed. "Places have disappeared without a trace," he noted in his diary. "They are only identifiable from recently-erected signs." Gone too were the copses and woods. The once-sprawling St Vaast forest had been reduced to a handful of clusters of tree stumps.

Every man should see this picture of desolation, Rudolf Binding reasoned.

"There are miles upon miles of flat, empty, broken, and tumbled stone-quarry, utterly purposeless and useless, in the middle of which stand groups of these blackened stumps

● 'This area ought to remain as it is'... German troops move through the ruins of Chaulnes, between St Quentin and Amiens, on March 26 1918



of dead trees, poisoned oases, killed for ever.

"This area ought to remain as it is. No road, no well, no settlement ought to be made there, and every ruler, leading statesmen, or president of a republic ought to be brought to see it, instead of swearing an oath on the Constitution, henceforth and for ever. Then there would be no more wars."

THE TIDE STEMMED

FOE ROUTED "LIKE CHAFF"

THE ENEMY EXHAUSTED

As the German assault slackened, so the resolve of the British soldier hardened. Sgt Frank Cooper had fallen back perhaps 18 miles, carrying his machine-gun the entire distance. His company had simply melted away. Now alone, with no ammunition, he fell into an old trench near Thiepval Wood, where he found scattered infantry. There, he says succinctly, "a stand was made".

That stand was far more heroic than the Midlander's terse statement bears testimony to.

For as night fell on Tuesday, March 26, the first German *Stosstruppen* began to move across marshes in front of the wood.

Sailors and marines dug in by a road, their foe across a stream and railway line.

That night a small German raiding party attempted to infiltrate the British lines. There followed a "hectic" ten-minute "scrap" with the two antagonists facing each other barely ten yards apart. The men had no grenades, so each side brandished firearms.

The Britons held on. The Germans slipped back across the stream,

leaving behind their dead and wounded.

As March 26 turned to March 27, the sailors and marines were relieved by soldiers from Lancashire and sent 2,000 yards to the rear to catch some sleep.

The men began to settle down in the ruins of Martinsart, when they were suddenly roused: the Germans were through the Lancastrians' lines.

Before dawn, a scratch force of sailors, Royal Marines and infantry struck back, sweeping through a wood at Aveluy. The attack stunned the Germans who fled in disorder, some screaming, others scrambling up trees in panic. At least 50 fell into British hands. Countless more lay strewn across the battlefield.

"It spoke volumes for the men," wrote Hugo de Pree, full of praise. "Worn out with fatigue, after days of retirement in which there had been little cause for encouragement, they could turn on their pursuers and drive them before them like chaff."

The fighting at Aveluy Wood was all but the last action by the Royal Naval Division during the March retreat; the exhausted sailors and Royal Marines were pulled out of the line and sent to the rear to recuperate.

David Polley and his fellow machine-gunners were mustered for roll call. The men were a sorry sight. Unwashed, unshaven, their uniforms soiled from a week of fighting and living rough. Their officers looked no better. One carried his arm in a sling "and looked as though he should have been tucked up in bed". Cpl George Banks' company paraded in a village square, where its sole remaining officer tried to rally the men – who were convinced Britain would soon be suing for an armistice. Nonsense, said their commander. The retreat was a grand plan dreamed by Haig and his fellow

generals "to draw the Germans into a trap". Nonsense, said the men, who responded to their officer's pep talk by blowing raspberries. "His little speech seemed to do a bit of good," recalled Banks. "At least it gave us a bit of a laugh."

Officers everywhere observed that their men had bucked up noticeably – and enemy activity had died down; even the chatter of machine-guns and the roar of the howitzers. "The enemy had exhausted his offensive and we had held him," Capt Harold Horne noted with some satisfaction in his diary.

THE GAMBLE FAILS

A MUDDLED OFFENSIVE

THE BUTCHER'S BILL

The enemy had indeed exhausted his offensive. By April 5, the Kaiser's Battle had run its course. That evening, Erich Ludendorff ordered the offensive halted. His great blow had inflicted nearly 180,000 casualties on the British Army and brought in a haul of almost 100,000 Tommies. The German soldier had driven a huge bulge into the Allied line – but the line had held. And in holding that line, albeit with great difficulty, the British and French soldier had inflicted nearly a quarter of million casualties upon the Kaiser's Army. The rest of the troops committed to the offensive were worn out and demoralised.

Germany had played her last card. The gamble had failed. To Crown Prince Rupprecht, the failure had been all too predictable.

"It strikes me that in none of the directives can a clear aim be identified," he complained in his diary.

"Instead, there is constant talk of the area of land to be reached, and I am left with the impression that the High Command lives, so to speak, from hand to mouth."

Leutnant Ernst Jünger only saw Valhalla glory in the great offensive. The men had been possessed by "the brazen spirit of the attack". To Jünger it was worth celebrating that "it needed a world in arms to bring such a floodtide to a standstill". In time, Ernst Jünger would become the champion of the *Stosstruppen*.

Hermann von Kuhl agreed with the young officer's assessment. Kuhl, Chief-of-Staff of Army Group Rupprecht, had shared his master's misgivings about the attack, but the found much to admire in "one of the greatest feats of glory that the German Army ever achieved". The German soldiers' deeds that March, Kuhl observed, deserved "the palm of victory".

Erich Ludendorff was convinced he did hold the palm of victory in his hand. He had smashed nearly 60 enemy divisions. The British Army, he told his staff, was no longer an effective fighting force. "What the English and French had not succeeded in doing, we had accomplished – and in the fourth year of the war," he smugly proclaimed.

Leutnant Joseph Kübler could see little sign of victory and even less glory. The Bavarian's regiment simply ceased to exist. It had begun the Kaiser's Battle with 1,300 men. British machine-gunners soon took their toll. A hill on the road to Amiens was strewn with dead and dying Bavarians – "one of the most horrible sights I saw in this war". Every man had been reduced to plunder, desperately raiding the haversacks of dead English for bread as their own supplies ran out.

"At the front all was chaos and confusion – scrambled regiments, scrambled companies," the officer remembered. When Kübler's regiment was pulled out of the line on April 5, only 226 men of the original 1,300 were uninjured.

The balance sheet for the Royal Naval Division was little better. One in three sailors or Royal Marines was a casualty of the Kaiser's Battle – 6,000 men killed, wounded or captured. Battalions were barely 250 men strong.

But numbers alone do not tell the story of the Kaiser's Battle. There was also the unquantifiable – the feeling among the *Stosstruppen* of a victory unfulfilled and among the Tommies of a victorious defeat.

"We had suffered a defeat," wrote the Royal Naval Division's official chronicler, Douglas Jerrold, "but there was the suspicion that we had yet been victorious."

Man for man and officer for officer, the men of the Royal Naval Division were convinced they held the edge over their foe – as warriors and as human beings.

"Never was there more scope for personal gallantry and initiative – the hour usually found the man," Jerrold wrote.

"To bring a brigade, a battalion or a company through a period such as that which began on March 21 was a feat of arms."

Marshalling the 'great retreat' was indeed a feat of arms. Retreats, however, are not deeds worth celebrating.

Within a month sailors and Royal Marines would perform an even more notable feat of arms which would "give new heart" to the British people.

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