



NAVY NEWS

APRIL 2024

A Merlin helicopter from HMS Portland conducts anti-submarine warfare operations during Steadfast Defender. See pages 2-3 and 19-21

Picture: LPhot Edward Jones



FLIGHT FANTASTIC

Inside: ■ RM in the spotlight ■ Richmond and Diamond in Red Sea

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EYES ON THE P

ROYAL Marines attacked vital 'enemy' infrastructure and carried out covert reconnaissance missions as they paved the way for large-scale NATO forces to move into the Nordic regions.

As part of the Royal Navy's amphibious task group (known as Littoral Response Group (North)) designed to react to crises in northern Europe's waterways and chokepoints, small teams of raiders from the UK's elite Commando Forces landed ashore to conduct reconnaissance on key routes, towns and beaches to relay information back NATO headquarters to lay plans on where best to deploy the main punch of the alliance's forces.

The Commandos, led by strike teams of Royal Marines of Arbroath-based 45 Commando, tracked down 'enemy' technology used to deny access to airspace and airwaves, creating favourable conditions for armour and aircraft to enter the region.

These missions were during Exercise Nordic Response as part of Steadfast Defender 24, NATO's largest military drills in Europe in a generation, which test allies' ability to reinforce the continent's frontiers from North America and across the Atlantic in the face of an aggressor.

Nordic Response focused on amphibious landings on Norway's complex northern coastline, bringing troops across the Arctic and into NATO's newest members Sweden and Finland with HMS Prince of Wales and the UK Carrier Strike Group, including F-35B Lightning jets, part of a potent naval force.

Royal Marines and the Commando Force play a crucial role in this giant jigsaw puzzle of NATO strength (some 20,000 troops from 12 nations took part in Nordic Response alone) firstly as the UK's experts in Arctic warfare – deploying to Northern Norway every year to sharpen skills in surviving, moving and fighting in this inhospitable environment, but are also a specialist force able to strike along complex coastlines and open up strategically important zones.

"This exercise was an excellent opportunity to work alongside NATO partners to deter Russia in the High North," said Commanding Officer of 45 Commando, Lieutenant Colonel Alex Nixon.

"The exercise demonstrated the operational utility of Littoral Response Group (North), one of the Royal Navy's amphibious task groups, in a warfighting context.

"The Littoral Response Group enabled the United Kingdom's Commando Forces, who are the UK's leading experts in Arctic and mountainous environments, to find and destroy anti-access/area denial systems that allowed NATO to gain access to northern Norway.

"The Royal Navy is learning lessons from Ukraine and is adapting and upgrading its forces to ensure they are as potent as possible."

45 Commando's Zulu Company landed ashore from RFA Mounts Bay in Burfjord, Northern Norway, gathering information on beach landing sites along the E6 road south to Sorstraumen.

This allowed Italian forces to land at Badderen as the Dutch landed further northeast in the vicinity of Hammerfest.

Zulu worked closely with the French 9th Marine Infantry Brigade and US Marine Corps' Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, which call in strikes from warships offshore.

Meanwhile, Yankee Company had been operating in the region for 11 days before Nordic Response began to gather information to shape the ground offensive.

Yankee deployed from Skibotn and carried out a covert 200km ride on snowmobiles deep into 'enemy' territory (known as a tactical insertion) to begin their reconnaissance work.

The company worked with Norwegian Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol teams and other units associated with the Norwegian Military Intelligence Regiment.

As well as the UK Carrier Strike Group and Commando Forces, Nordic Response involved over 20,000 military personnel from 12 other NATO members, including Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the USA.

The Littoral Response Group (North) is centred on 400 Royal Marines, Army and Navy Commandos and the amphibious ship RFA Mounts Bay.

Nordic Response comes off the back of a winter of operating closely with allies.

Marines from 45 Commando completed the Dutch Arctic Movement

& Survival Training – the equivalent of the Royal Marines' own Cold Weather Warfare Course, which French and US Marines completed this year alongside the latest cohort of UK Commandos.

DEALING WITH CHEMICAL ATTACKS

Close to where the amphibious landings took place in Burfjord, marines from 42 Commando – who spent much of Nordic Response playing the role of enemy troops – carried out some unique warfare training in responding to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks (known as CBRN).

It was the first time in many years that the Royal Navy instructors in CBRN warfare had deployed to the Arctic to carry out such training.

The marines had to deal with attacks wearing protective kit, including gas masks, on top of the challenge of operating in deep snow and the extreme cold.

"The importance of CBRN warfare has increased since the illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022," said training staff member Lieutenant Commander Dennis Murphy.

"CBRN warfare is amongst the most challenging aspects of modern warfare and combined with the difficulties of extreme cold it is down to the Royal Marines to lead UK Defence in developing this capability.

"Staff from the Defence CBRN Centre were on hand to learn lessons to pass onto the rest of UK Defence."

"Working in Norway is tough and rewarding," added 42 Commando's Marine Jay White. "Operating in the High North using CBRN kit is an additional challenge, using this kit in this environment builds confidence and makes me eager to practice it more."

Praising the overall success of Nordic Response is Vice Admiral Rune Andersen, the Commander of the Norwegian Headquarters.

"The exercise sends a clear signal of unity and strength within the alliance," he said.

"It also demonstrates our ability to gather land, sea, and air forces from multiple countries and operate effectively together.

"What sets Nordic Response apart from previous exercises is that we are training on integrated operations in the Nordic region, with exercise activities extending across the borders to our Nordic neighbours.

Andersen added: "Finnish and Swedish membership in NATO marks a new era for defence cooperation in the north.

"We are well underway in revising our plans for various scenarios we must be prepared for. At the same time, it is necessary to maintain the close cooperation we have with our other close allies who have an interest and ability to contribute to security in the northern regions."

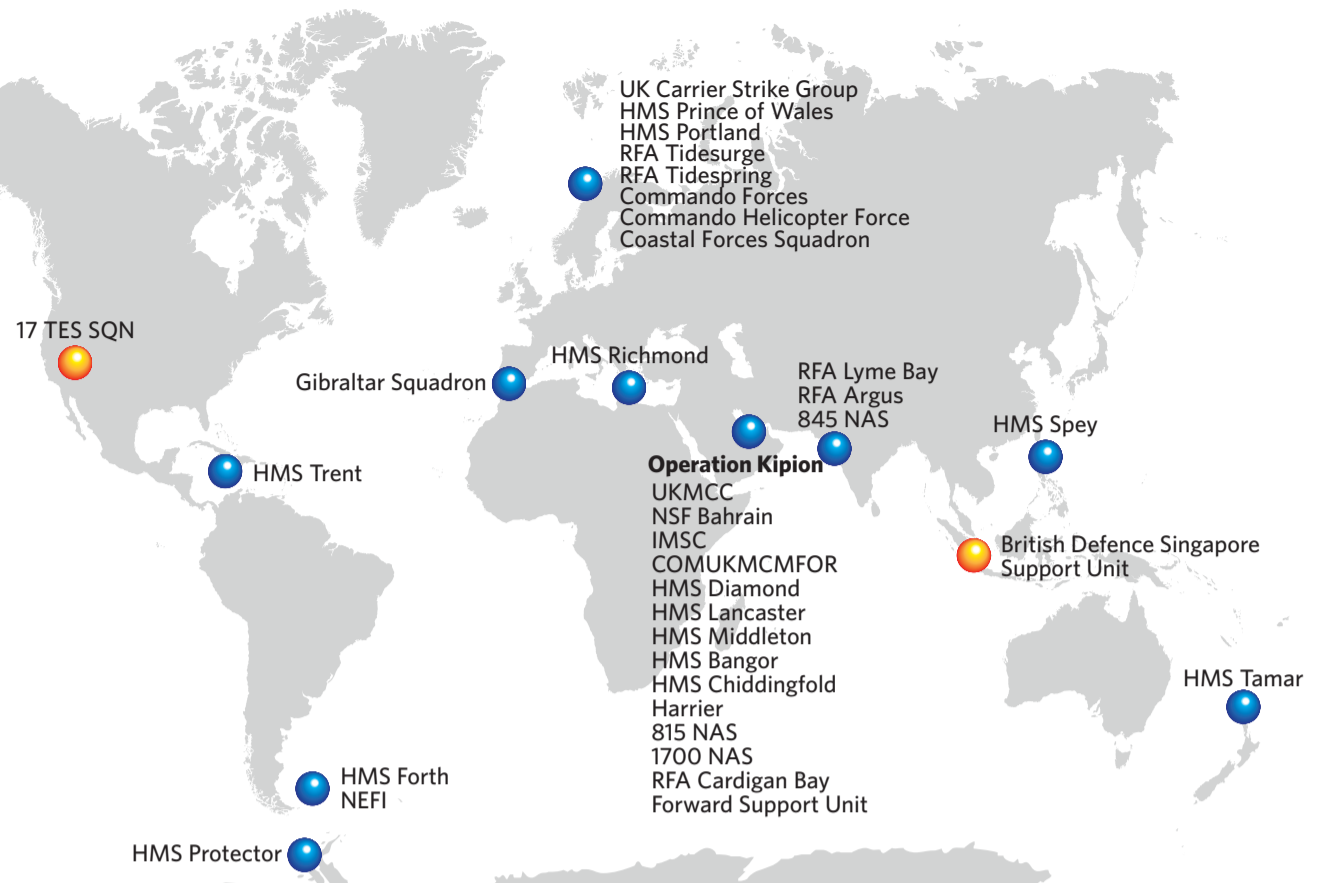
PRIZE



Royal Marines Scout Snipers from the Surveillance & Reconnaissance Squadron (SRS) on Exercise Steadfast Defender in Norway worked with their Norwegian counterparts to improve skills needed to operate in this extreme cold weather environment. Image by AS1 Daniel Smither

Training or on patrol around the UK

HMS Hurworth 824 NAS
 HMS Northumberland 825 NAS
 HMS Iron Duke 845 NAS
 HMS Severn 846 NAS
 HMS Mersey 847 NAS
 HMS Tyne RFA Tiderace
 Coastal Forces Squadron RFA Stirling Castle
 XV Patrick Blackett RFA Proteus
 Project Wilton DTXG
 814 NAS
 815 NAS



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

GLOBAL | MODERN | READY

THE thaw has happened and we've arrived in spring and the new hope it brings, but this April edition has a very wintry feel to it for good reason.

Royal Marines are just beginning to return from the Arctic Circle having spent the opening months of 2024 operating in the extreme cold. All of that culminated in raiding missions at the tip of the NATO spear (see pages 2-3)

HMS Prince of Wales, at the head of the UK Carrier Strike Group, which included HMS Portland, RFA Tidespring and RFA Tidesurge, has been north too at the heart of potent NATO maritime task force during Steadfast Defender, the alliance's most important exercise in Europe for a generation (see pages 20-21).

The big ships bag the headlines, but equally impressive has been deploying the Coastal Forces Squadron further north than ever before: four P2000 patrol boats supported Norwegian units operating on Steadfast Defender (see page 19)... and are remaining in the land of the Vikings this month for training with 815 NAS around Bergen.

From north to the extreme south as HMS Protector wraps up another successful scientific and conservation mission to Antarctica, clocking up 7,000 nautical miles helping protect the frozen continent (see pages 14-15).

It would be neglectful not to highlight next the operational success of HMS Richmond during her time in the Red Sea, shooting down Houthi drones with Sea Ceptor missiles before handing back to HMS Diamond (see pages 16-17).

Richmond should be back home in Plymouth by the time you read this... leaving her sister HMS Lancaster as the sole RN frigate east of Suez. We take a rare look at the logistic demands maintaining an operational warship thousands of miles from home (see page 13).

There's a welcome return to sea for another T23, HMS St Albans, while the Fighting Clan HMS Sutherland is back in the water as the massive Duke-class LIFEX programme nears its conclusion (see page 6).

Moving on to the world of Offshore Patrol Vessels, HMS Spey latest leg on her odyssey has taken her to the Philippines and onwards to Brunei to meet up with the Gurkhas. Sister ship and fellow Asia-Pacific patroller HMS Tamar has geared up for joint operations helping to safeguard fishing stocks around Fiji with training in New Zealand with our Commonwealth ally's Navy (see page 5).

The patrol ships have experimented with one of the key concepts of future RN operations: PODS, shipping-container-sized boxes packed with the kit or systems a ship might need for a specific mission: drone ops, minehunting, diving, disaster relief, medical assistance. We were given exclusive access to developments with the PODS – and broader tech driving the Service of tomorrow (see page 9).

One future within touching distance is autonomous mine warfare operations in the Middle East. Harrier, which is intended to replace tradition minehunters, has completed a year's trials, training and experimentation in Gulf waters (see page 7).

Every year is a big year for the Royal Marines (they don't do things by halves...). 2024 marks their 360th anniversary. To kick off a series of events for 'RM360', the Corps laid on a high-profile delivery of a barrel of port to the Tower of London for the historic Ceremony of the Dues (see right).

No less spectacular in the capital – and a staple of the Corps calendar – the Massed Bands of the Royal Marines' Mountbatten Festival of Music, this year given extra heavy metal thunder courtesy of the drummer from rock legends Iron Maiden (see page 11).

And finally... should you ever be involved in a serious accident at or near RNAS Yeovilton, you're in safe hands. Base and local civilian emergency services staged a combined exercise to demonstrate collective skills and coordination (see page 23).

BARRELLING INTO THE 360TH ANNIVERSARY

ROYAL Marines powered along the River Thames to deliver a barrel of port to the Tower of London as part of an historic Ceremony of the Dues marking the Corps' 360th anniversary.

Three raiding craft made the short journey from HMS President, under Tower Bridge to the Tower of London carrying their 'Dues' (the barrel of port) for the Constable of the Tower – fittingly, retired senior Royal Marine, General Sir Gordon Messenger.

The ceremony is a tradition that dates back to the 14th Century when naval ships passing into London were ordered to pay a levy.

Normally Royal Navy sailors carry out this task, but given the significance of their 360th year, Royal Marines were given the honour to mark their illustrious history and also their place at the very forefront of UK Defence.

It is the second time the Royal Marines have conducted this ceremony – the first time was in 2014 when the Corps was marking its 350th anniversary.

A Commando Merlin helicopter from 845 Naval Air Squadron carried out a fly past and Royal Marines past and present gathered at the Tower to mark the occasion, with head of the Corps, Commandant General Royal Marines General Gwyn Jenkins, overseeing events.

He said: "To be afforded the opportunity to enact this unique ceremony on our 360th anniversary is a tremendous honour.

"Like all Royal Marines, I am humbled to stand on the shoulders of the giants who have gone before us.

"What you have seen today is the combination of tradition that speaks to our core ethos and values, alongside the adaptability and professionalism of the modern commando force who will continue this legacy into the future." Warrant Officer 1 Simon Stroud, the Ceremonial Lead for the occasion, added: "It's always a great privilege to conduct ceremonial duties in the nation's capital. The Ceremony of the Dues is steeped in history, and to be part of that is a fantastic honour.

"Every Marine taking part will remember this day with pride throughout their careers."

Marines from Plymouth-based 47 Commando – who specialise in boat and landing craft operations – landed the Dues on the banks of the Thames at the Royal Fortress, handing over to a ceremonial guard comprising regular and reserves and members of the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines, Collingwood.

The guard marched the Dues through the outer gates of the Tower of London.

As is tradition, the contingent bearing the Dues were challenged at the entrance to the Tower by the Yeoman Gaoler and two Yeoman Warders (better known as Beefeaters), wearing full state dress, before the Chief Yeoman Warder paraded the Dues through to Tower Green, where they presented them to the Constable of the Tower, General Sir Gordon Messenger. The launch event mixes a ceremony deeply rooted in naval tradition with latest Royal Marines kit and tactics – two concurrent themes throughout the 360th anniversary year, as the



Royal Marines march the barrel through the streets of London



General Sir Gordon Messenger, Constable of the Tower, receives the Dues

Corps celebrates its rich, proud history, but also looks to the future as a hi-tech, elite Commando Force.

A fresh investment in kit, tech and vehicles and a return to raiding operations in small teams – opposed to the more conventional warfare of Afghanistan and Iraq – has underscored a bold modernisation of the

Royal Marines.

Some of the new kit – including new rifle and uniform – were used by Commando Force personnel as they delivered the Dues, a nod to the future in a deeply historic event.

Pictures: Rosie Hallam, DDC

GETTING FAMILIAR

HMS SPEY'S LATEST STOP IN MANILA

HMS Spey paid a short but extremely fruitful visit to Manila in the Philippines on the latest leg of her Indo-Asia-Pacific odyssey.

The Philippines Armed Forces are going through a massive modernisation programme, Re-Horizon 3, which includes improving the ability to work together with allied and partner nations.

The patrol ship's visit to the Philippines capital coincided with 13 of the UK's leading defence firms such as BAE Systems, Thales and Leonardo showcasing their equipment and systems to hosts.

Crew took part in a string of professional and social interactions with the Philippine Navy, Philippine Coast Guard and local community, including a friendly game of football and 5-a-side matches at the Philippine Marine Corps Barracks in Fort Bonifacio.

Staging the games was aided by ten football coaches from Football for Humanity, a UK-based 'sport for development' charity which uses football-focused interventions to tackle complex social issues.

The ship's company hosted tours for Philippine Navy and Philippine Coast Guard personnel, including officers who had recently graduated from a maritime planning course delivered by the Royal Navy in Manila in early February.

"It's been excellent to visit Manila and improve our ability to work together with colleagues from the Philippine Navy and Philippine Coast Guard," said Commander Paul Caddy, Spey's Commanding Officer.

"This is part of an increasing level of engagement. With Spey recently taking part in the multinational Exercise Sama Sama for the second time, it is clear that the relationship is only going to grow.

"The UK and Philippines firmly believe in, and promote the rules-based international system; we share an interest in upholding international maritime law and supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific."

He discussed future cooperation in the region with Rear Admiral Cornelio of the Philippine Coast Guard before Spey sailed from Manila for joint manoeuvres with the host navy's fast patrol vessel BRP Valentin Diaz and an AW159 helicopter – the export version of the Wildcat operated by our Fleet Air Arm.

Spey's visit to the republic came hot on the heels of two recent training delegations from the UK's Armed Forces. The Army sent 20 Regular and Reservist comms and intelligence experts to mentor Philippines cyber specialists for the first time on the global 'hacking' war game, Cyber Marvel. It saw the best military coders/programmers on the planet.

The exercise took international teams from Europe and the Indo-Pacific through their paces on a theoretical hacking attack against national infrastructure.

This was the third visit to the Philippines by a vessel flying the White Ensign in the past 18 months – "a clear demonstration of our strengthening defence relationship,"

said the UK Ambassador in Manila, Laure Beauflis.

"We deeply value cooperation and growing seamless interaction with the Philippines on maritime issues.

"This supports security and our shared commitment to upholding the rules-based international system, as well as of trade and environmental protection."

What could sailors learn from Gurkhas? And would Gurkhas benefit from going to sea?

Those were the questions posed by Spey and the elite rifle regiment, who are now formally bound.

The two agreed an affiliation when the patrol ship visited Brunei to improve sea-land integration.

The sultanate on the northern coast of Borneo is home to a permanent British military presence: an army garrison (1st Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles – typically shortened to 1 RGR), the Jungle Warfare School and a supporting RAF Squadron, 230, and its Puma helicopters.

The Gurkhas took Spey's protection force – who defend the ship against potential unwanted/hostile boarders, as well as supporting board-and-search operations – to their close-quarters training area at Tucker Lines barracks to practise clearing techniques.

That visit was reciprocated when a group from 1 RGR visited Spey to understand more about her mission, general life at sea and discuss future joint training opportunities.

"It was an excellent opportunity to test and develop our skills in an urban environment. It is a great opportunity to work with the Gurkhas and improve our ability to train together," said Leading Weapon Engineering Technician Ben Smythe.

Spey – and her sister HMS Tamar which is also deployed to the Indo-Asia-Pacific theatre – has substantial capacity for carrying a Gurkha (or commando/regular army) detachment up to 50 strong.

"The Gurkhas in Brunei are the UK's largest and most persistent military presence in the region and have been for over 25 years," explained Colonel Hugo Stanford-Tuck, Commander British Forces Brunei.

"The formation of the Indo-Asia Pacific Task Force based on 1 RGR is recognition of the capability we offer to allies and partners in the region as well as to UK Defence."

He said working and training alongside Spey had been "brilliant".

"We really welcome their renewed focus on this part of the world. Our work together has been a fantastic demonstration of how well we can operate with each other and sets us up to contribute more effectively to addressing any regional security and humanitarian challenges."

Spey's Commanding Officer Commander Paul Caddy added: "Like HMS Spey, the Gurkhas, and British Forces Brunei form part of the UK's commitment to Southeast Asia and the wider Indo Pacific."

"By deepening our co-operation with 1 RGR, we can improve our ability to work jointly on the full range of operations from security assistance to humanitarian aid and disaster relief in the region."

A Philippines AW159 helicopter approaches HMS Spey from astern during training



HMS Spey's departure from Manila



Spey's crew pose with some of the Gurkhas on the patrol ship's forecastle

TAKING STOCK



Royal Navy FOST trainers confer with their RNZN counterparts

HMS Tamar geared up for an intensive period safeguarding vital fishing stocks in the South Pacific through training in New Zealand.

Making use of their hosts – both personnel and ships – the crew of the Portsmouth-based vessel made use of the waters of the Hauraki Gulf, just off Auckland on the North Island, to get acquainted with the Royal New Zealand Navy's deployable boarding team.

That team is integral to Tamar's next mission, in Fiji, so getting used to each other's navy's ways of working – similar given their heritage, but not identical – was crucial.

The customs launch Swan V and the multi-purpose HMNZS Canterbury – the 'Swiss pocket knife' of the Kiwi Navy – served as 'vessels of interest' for search teams to first board, then scour for 'illegal' fishing hauls. Tamar is about to work with authorities in Fiji, conducting joint patrols of the waters of and around

the island chain, helping the Commonwealth nation build up their capacity for and knowledge of board-and-search operations to help curb illegal fishing.

Fishing counts for around one tenth of Fiji's exports, while illegal activities not only deprive the island of immediate income, but can also upset the delicate ecological balance of the South Pacific... and future prosperity.

The same waters also allowed a specialist training team from the UK to fly out and assess Tamar.

With the ship operating thousands of miles from her home country now for more than two years, and with her crew rotating regularly to sustain her Asia-Pacific mission, an assurance team from the UK drops in sporadically to put sailors through their paces – as they do for Royal Navy vessels in home waters with Fleet Operational Standards and Training.

"It is a bit different from doing our sea training in the South Coast Exercise areas," said Lieutenant Justine Lambert, Tamar's correspondence officer.



Boarding drills



HMS Tamar departs New Zealand

"North Island and the Gulf of Hauraki are stunning. The welcome and assistance we have had from the RNZN has been amazing. The traditional Powhiri welcome is an experience that will stay with me for a lifetime."

Indeed Team Tamar say New Zealanders proved, once again, first-rate hosts throughout their visit, from the superb facilities at Devonport naval base and the training establishment HMNZS Philomel.

Gunnery officer Lieutenant Ben Blackmore said: "We have been really well hosted by our Kiwi friends. After the training we managed to get out and about for the weekend. We got to see Hobbiton from the Lord of the Rings, so good – I am a big fan."

Commander Tom Gell, Tamar's Commanding Officer, added: "Working with our close partner navy, the RNZN, is like working with colleagues."

"The training in the Hauraki Gulf with the Royal New Zealand Navy's Deployable Boarding Team and Maritime Training Group has been outstanding."

"It has also been fantastic to see the Royal Navy's FOST organisation and the Royal New Zealand Navy's Maritime Training Group come together to deliver world-class training."

"Tamar and her ship's company have really benefitted. The welcome and support we have received from our New Zealand brothers and sisters has been awesome. The partnership between our two navies continues to flourish."

While in Auckland Commander Gell also joined veterans of Operation Grapple – and other British nuclear tests in the Pacific 60-70 years ago – as they received medals issued by the UK Government in recognition of test veterans' service.

They were invited into the Naval Museum in Devonport for the formal presentation of the decorations in the presence of British High Commissioner Iona Thomas, New Zealand's Associate Minister for Defence and Veterans, Chris Penk, and the Deputy Chief of the RNZN, Commodore Andrew Brown.

A STALWART RETURNS

BACK at sea for the first time in four-and-a-half years is HMS St Albans – the penultimate Royal Navy frigate to undergo a massive overhaul.

The Type 23 warship left Devonport Naval Base on the first stage of her regeneration to return her to front line duties later this year.

She'll spend the next few weeks flashing up her systems and testing her improved/refurbished machinery in the Channel to ensure all the work which has been carried out is effective.

The ship's 178-strong crew moved back aboard in mid-November, since when they've been working hand-in-hand with contractors and engineers from defence firm Babcock, which has overseen the entire refit programme, to prepare The Saint to move under her own power for the first time since 2019.

"Going back to sea is a huge milestone. Today is the result of a real team effort where Ship's Company, Babcock, other specialist contractors, shore-based support organisations, Devonport Naval Base and even some people from other Devonport-based ships have come together to help us transition from engineering project back to being a warship," said HMS St Albans' Commanding Officer Commander Helen Coxon.

"Whether it is the first day at sea – as is the case for many of our less experienced sailors – or returning back to where we feel at home for the more experienced, today is a big day and we'd like to thank all those involved in making it happen."

After nearly 20 years of constant service in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Gulf, St Albans arrived in Plymouth in 2019 to begin preparations for the refit, known as the life extension (LIFEX) upgrade.

The upgrade will help carry the class of Duke-class frigate into the middle of the next decade, while their successors – the Type 26 City-class currently under construction on the Clyde – enter service.

Revamping the 23s has been a massive undertaking stretching back a decade. Work on HMS St Albans alone has demanded more than 1.2 million working hours by sailors, civilian engineers and shipwrights, software specialists and many more.

Around 350 structural enhancements to strengthen the ship and allow her to carry new equipment have been carried out, demanding more than four kilometres of welding.

All four diesel generators were replaced, meaning the ship can produce more power, the main engines removed, overhauled, and reinserted—a complex engineering feat, and a first for her project team.

More than two dozen new pumps with four kilometres of pipework have been fitted, and some 10,000 square metres of paintwork refreshed – that's the size of a football pitch.

She's now more efficient, more reliable, and brighter, and living quarters overhauled to give them a fresh look and better meet the needs of sailors in the 2020s (more plugs, USB ports etc).

As a war machine, St Albans emerges from the revamp as a far more potent warship: all weapons and sensors have been upgraded, not least the installation of the Sea Ceptor air defence system which can provide protection to an area the size of Greater Manchester against incoming threats in the skies.

One magazine has been adapted for the new Martlet missile which has recently entered service with the Fleet Air Arm, and aviation facilities enhanced to support the latest variants of Merlin, Wildcat and most NATO maritime helicopters.

As a dedicated submarine hunter, the ship has been fitted with Sonar 2150 in place of 2050, which can detect underwater threats at greater range and is easier to operate.

After the initial trials in the Channel, St Albans will return to base for any necessary tweaks to the work carried out in refit,



HMS Sutherland emerges from refit



HMS St Albans in pristine condition as she sails from Plymouth

Image by LPhoto Barry Swainsbury

before starting her work-up to becoming fully operational again, which culminates with Operational Sea Training off Plymouth.

Just one Type 23 frigate is left to complete the LIFEX programme: HMS Sutherland, which is currently in Devonport's frigate refit complex.

The waters of the Hamoaze lap around the hull of HMS Sutherland once more as the warship passes a major milestone in her multi-year revamp.

The Type 23 frigate has been high and dry for well over 12 months, taken out of the water for her LIFEX (life extension) refit in the hands of defence firm Babcock.

Sutherland is the last ship in her class to go through the overhaul, which – as the name suggests – extends the life of the frigates to allow them to continue in service into the mid-2030s.

While in dry dock in Devonport's frigate refit complex, Sutherland has undergone a full structural survey and a major upgrade including 700 inserts, 11,500 weld repairs demanding more than five kilometres of welding.

Entire sections of the ship have been deconstructed and then rebuilt to allow engine, generator and machinery control upgrades: forward and aft switchboards, new diesel generator and motor generator sets in the forward and upper auxiliary machinery rooms, as well as the installation of several miles of new pipework and cables.

As a fighting machine, Sutherland has also received an upgraded 2150 Sonar system, requiring the removal of the sonar bow dome – a major lifting operation involving specialist support.

And she's the very last ship in her class to receive the Sea Ceptor missile system – now proven in action after HMS Richmond downed drones at the weekend.

With the ship now back in the water, the focus is on bringing the Fighting Clan to life again as the growing ship's company (just 11 sailors this week, but nearly 100 by the end of next) and Babcock engineers complete the overhaul and trial the myriad of systems upgraded.

"We are excited by the significant milestone flood up presents to HMS Sutherland's ship's company and the

Babcock team who have worked extensively to get her to this stage. We look forward to the next steps and are delighted to see Sutherland back in the water," said the frigate's Senior Naval Officer Lieutenant Commander Alexandra Page.

"Our focus is to now work side-by-side with Babcock as we commission systems, whilst training as a ship's company ready to return to sea later this year.

"I could not be happier to see HMS Sutherland back where she belongs with the Fighting Clan ready for the exciting journey ahead."

Gary Simpson, Managing Director of Babcock's Marine Support business, added: "We are proud to work alongside our colleagues from the Royal Navy to carry out life-extensions of the Navy's Type 23 fleet.

"Flooding up HMS Sutherland is another great milestone in that journey.

"The skills shown by our engineers, fabricators, technicians and experts have been outstanding to get us to this stage. We're delighted to see HMS Sutherland back in the water, where she belongs."

CYBER WARRIORS IN JAPAN

ROYAL Navy specialists joined forces with Japanese counterparts in Tokyo to fend off cyber-attacks during a large-scale cyber battle exercise.

Forty-one teams from 17 nations tested their cyber defence skills during the British Army's Defence Cyber Marvel 3 exercise in Estonia, but with an international network plugging in from across three continents.

The Royal Navy's cyber operations specialists based in Portsmouth are usually on the front line across the world, protecting ships and bases from threats around the clock, but were deployed to Tokyo for this valuable exercise.

They worked closely with Ukrainian teams in 2023 while in Tallinn, but this year – for the first time – formed a joint team with the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force's Communication Security Group.

The 22-strong team – 12 RN and 10 JMSDF – were tasked with protecting an island in the Indo-Pacific facing aggressive cyber-attacks from a 'hostile' nation state.

The cyber battle – which increased in its complexity throughout – helped forge closer bonds and understanding between Japanese and British personnel as they prepare to work with each other next year as the UK deploys its Carrier Strike Group to the region.

These skills are highly valuable given the ever-evolving attacks by hackers seen across the globe on a daily basis.

The team battled attacks on national infrastructure amid an ongoing insurgency in this mock island state.

Lieutenant Commander Paul Adkins, in charge of the RN team, said: "Our participation in the exercise with the Communications Support Group based in Tokyo represents a culmination of activity that only came into being last year; but has already cemented an enduring relationship with our friends in the JMSDF.

"Together we have refined and developed joint tactics and procedures that have borne fruit now, but more importantly, will serve us well in the future, particularly as we look to provide cyber assurance to CSG deployment 2025. Here we look forward to continued engagement with the Japanese Defense Forces".

Leading Engineering Technician Joe Barnett said: "Being relatively new to Navy Cyber, it was an amazing experience to work with a cyber team from the Japanese Navy and I have learnt a lot throughout the exercise.

"The opportunity to do this, whilst also being able to explore the city of Tokyo in my downtime makes me feel that I have one of the best jobs in the RN."

At its heart, Cyber Marvel is a test of guile and mental agility designed to stretch the most experienced cyber specialists, allowing allies and partners to learn and sharpen skills together.

The majority of the 1,000 personnel in 46 teams involved were operating from Tallinn,

Estonia, at NATO's Cyber Range, but others were dialled in from Kenya, Singapore, Philippines, India, Indonesia and Brunei and, in the Royal Navy's case, Japan.

Each 'blue' team is scored on the success of its defence against attackers' (the hostile red teams), system availability, command briefing quality, situational and reports as well as side challenges which included Digital Forensics, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Quantum Computing.

The RN/JMSDF team performed outstandingly, missing out on top spot to finish a close sixth.

The exercise created government, hospital, power plant and military networks, with the team defending critical national infrastructure from increasingly sophisticated attacks ensuring maximum availability, removing exploited vulnerabilities, and eradicating malicious actors from the networks.

The joint team regularly briefed back up to an Australian chain of command throughout the scenario and successfully maintained 100 per cent availability of Critical National Infrastructure (CNI), repeatedly removing malicious access and artifacts throughout the country's infrastructure.

The Royal Navy team comes from the Maritime CSISR Support Unit (MCSU) from Portsmouth, which delivers 24/7 defensive monitoring of networks from the RN Cyber Security Operating Centre on Portsdown Hill.



The joint Japanese and UK team fight cyber threats together



The joint team together

GOLDEN YEAR FOR MINEHUNTING TEAM



THE team responsible for introducing autonomous minehunting into front-line operations in the Gulf has successfully completed its first 12 months.

The Mine and Threat Exploitation Group's Operational Evaluation Unit has spent the past year in the Middle East testing a series of uncrewed and remote-piloted systems which will one day be the future of minehunting in the Royal Navy.

Working with Royal Navy Motor Boat Harrier and based on RFA Cardigan Bay, the team have put various pieces of equipment and technology through their paces to see how they operate and react to the climate of the Gulf and the complex missions current minehunting units carry out.

Harrier is capable of operating both autonomously (pre-programmed to conduct a mission) or remotely from a ship or shore-based remote-control centre. She tows a side-scan sonar behind her to look for mines on the seabed, alerting units ashore or at sea of their whereabouts.

As part of the trials she has also been working with remotely-operated underwater vehicles and a minesweeping system.

In a fruitful first year for the Operational Evaluation Unit, the team has integrated and deployed Harrier from Cardigan Bay, a shore control base at the UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain and Sandown and Hunt-class minehunters.

Lieutenant Alex Gibby, MTXG Group Engineering Officer, said: "We have gained valuable experience in the deployment and operation of Harrier to provide lessons ahead of the main roll-out of Mine Hunting Capability Block 1 systems.

"We have also begun to establish the infrastructure and logistical support required to operate autonomous minehunting systems at reach."

The trials and tests held by MTXG will pave the way for the use of autonomous and uncrewed systems on operations in the Gulf.

Using the systems in theatre gives better protection to Royal Navy personnel, who can remain a safe distance from any possible explosives and also gives more options on how to deal with potential threats.

With the success of Harrier, the team can now look to operating other autonomous subsurface and remotely-operated vehicles which can survey, ID and neutralise threats.

The next milestone for us will be the receipt of new medium autonomous underwater vehicles, Arcims-class uncrewed surface vessels, and Remus 300 robot underwater vehicles offering a wider profile as the UK moves to an in-service operational unit in MTXG this year.

"These will increase our agility and flexibility to contribute to MCM operations, and X-Ray Squadron is suitably excited to begin employing these new systems," Lt Gibby added.

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A POD fitted with drone equipment is demonstrated at Portsmouth Technology Park during a NAVY PODS demonstration event. Images by LPhoto Lee Blease



A POD fitted with medical equipment



A POD fitted with IT equipment

TECH THIS OUT...

NEW technology and innovation was on display at two events hosted by the Royal Navy's Office for the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO).

They have been showcasing the variety of projects they are working on and backing, and the difference they can make to operations.

First up, was the Royal Navy's ability to adapt to any operation at a moment's notice being advanced further with significant research and development into "plug and play" interchangeable mission modules - known as PODS.

With the help of a diverse range of end-users, the Office for the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) has been researching and trialling the use of more than a dozen different configurations of PODS to enable ships and shore-based units to do experiments and take on a variety of different roles.

Although navy ships have a core use, they have the ability to be deployed where needed and to a variety of operations.

But getting the ship prepared and ready, such as taking on supplies or additional equipment, can take time. OCTO and others have been working to make this process smoother and more efficient with the use of PODS - a container and payload which is designed and built to suit one or more specific tasks or missions.

Similarly, units deployed to austere and expeditionary locations stand to benefit from the availability and use of PODS personalised to support their activities.

During a demonstration day held at Portsmouth Technology Park near Portsmouth, OCTO showcased a number of PODS including a medical unit, an autonomous drone unit, a mine counter measures unit and a SCIF (Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility).

Each one had been kitted out and constructed to fit its role, for example the MedPODS have the same equipment and systems as a deployed advanced medical bay. With it on board, a ship would be able to administer anaesthesia, do X-rays and undertake complex surgery.

Meanwhile, other containers on show can host a variety of uncrewed air systems including heavy lift quadcopters such as the Malloy T150 and T400 and a Command and Control (C2) centre for the operation of drones in all three sub-domains - below the surface, on the surface and in the air.

Brigadier Jaimie Roylance, the Royal Navy's Chief Technology Officer, said: "This day has allowed us to showcase some of what my team and a huge cast of end-users have achieved over the last two years to prove the concept of PODS."

"Today, we have been able to gather all sorts of stakeholders who could and should be interested in the use of PODS and that maybe would sponsor these sorts of capabilities. We've also had a very good cross section of current and potential future users, whether in mine counter measures, seabed warfare or the Commando Force, brief on their interest in the PODS they're currently using and may get in the future."

"And we also have people representing the parts of the Royal Navy and DE&S who might deliver a PODS programme in the near future."

While the demonstration day showed the potential of the PODS and their many uses, trials have taken place with a PODS successfully loaded onto HMS Tamar during its recent patrols in the Pacific. Two 20ft Seabed Warfare PODS gave the patrol ship the ability to conduct underwater operations alongside divers from the Royal Navy and US Navy.

And having the PODS on show and with the necessary equipment and systems installed is a key part of the next stage of delivery.

"Showing real, physical PODS is essential," Brig Roylance added.

"Bringing the PODS concept to life via the real physical working prototypes that we have here today has been very important. I have been pleased to hear how many of our guests have been pleasantly surprised to see how far we've

come in such a short space of time. There's no substitute for the immersive experience we've been able to show them in detail at the demonstration day so this engagement has been vital."

A week later, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, quantum navigation, surveillance drones, autonomous submersibles, and heavy-lift quadcopters were all on show.

They are all potential and actual future systems and capabilities in the pipeline for future naval and littoral operations.

Showcased and explained by in-house innovators and industry experts, a range of technologies and prototype capabilities were presented to the Navy Board, the RN's most senior leadership body.

Drones already flying on operations across battlefields far east of the UK, to Peregrine, a surveillance drone due to deploy to the Gulf later this year, the kit showed how the Royal Navy is embracing new technologies in order to field enhanced capabilities as quickly as practicable.

Virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) was a technology theme which cropped up throughout the day - VR/AR as a key training tool but also as a means and method for understanding, integrating and designing other capabilities.

At one particularly immersive stance, a VR headset, available off the shelf from virtually any tech website, was demonstrated using bespoke software to develop and design PODS before any physical construction takes place.

Using virtual reality, the navy is understanding how it might blueprint, plan and construct the PODS in 3D by playing around with possible functions, dimensions and infrastructure before physically building them thus saving time, effort and money.

Elsewhere, VR was showcased for training uses in the form of a deployable ship bridge simulator procured from the commercial shipping market and also for diver training currently under development by Dstl.

As part of a project coordinated from the London Tech Bridge (a collaboration between the Royal Navy and US Navy), the VR on show demonstrated how crucial training can be carried out to ensure bridge teams can maintain the highest navigational standards, even while busy and deployed.

Commander Daniel Weil, co-director of the London Tech Bridge, said: "The Royal Navy can use immersive technologies to improve training opportunities, provide technical support to deployed sailors and marines and allow for us to collaborate with our allies virtually, far more easily than at present."

700X Naval Air Squadron and officers from Navy Command HQ demonstrated their Peregrine surveillance drone and a 1:10 scale model of Proteus which is a programme between the UK MoD and Leonardo to develop a 2-3 ton uncrewed next-generation helicopter.

Peregrine has already been trialled extensively and is due to enter service into the Royal Navy later this year when it is deployed to the Gulf. Both Peregrine and Proteus will be used for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions which are currently undertaken by 700X using the Puma fixed wing drone.

The future of Anti Submarine Warfare was on display with the presence of a model of CETUS, the Xtra Large Uncrewed Under Water (XLUUV) technology demonstrator.

Brigadier Roylance said: "This event was a great opportunity to expose our senior leadership to a representative slice of some of the most exciting and impactful technology-led projects and initiatives which are taking place across the whole of the Navy."

"This is a tremendous team effort, with virtually all parts of the Navy represented, but also some of our most fruitful collaborations with the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) and the most innovative parts of Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) and Defence Digital."

"And not forgetting some of our closest partners in the UK's technology ecosystem."

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Rock-solid performance



THE world-famous Massed Bands of His Majesty's Royal Marines played their spectacular annual showpiece at the Royal Albert Hall – for the 52nd year.

In front of a packed Royal Albert Hall, the Band – whose members are among the world's finest military musicians – opened the Mountbatten Festival of Music with the national anthem in honour of His Majesty the King, who is also Captain General of the Royal Marines.

The stunning night of pageantry celebrated the 360th anniversary of the Royal Marines, recognising 360 years of global deployments, battle honours and a valuable presence across the world.

Musician Issie Chadwick, first time performer at the festival, said: "This is my first time performing at the Royal Albert Hall, and although I'm not front and centre for my first song, I haven't really done many solos before. This will be one of my first solos on one of the world's biggest stages."

A highlight from the evening was the collaboration between the Royal Marines Band Service (RMBS) and Nicko McBrain, the drummer from legendary heavy metal band, Iron Maiden.

Nicko played his own drum kit, named *Legacy of Royals*, alongside the Massed Band and Corps of Drums for the piece *The Maiden Legacy*, a medley of Iron Maiden's most popular songs. His drumkit will now be sold at auction in order to raise money for the Royal Marines Charity and the Grand Order of Water Rats Charity.

When asked about his collaboration with RMBS, Nicko said: "I was so stoked. It was suggested "would you like to do next years [Mountbatten Festival of Music]" and I went "of course I'd love to do it!", what an honour, a great honour to be asked and to be involved."

The evening saw the showcase of another performance, *Invictus*. This piece, centred around the Invictus Games, also featured a video of Team UK alongside other athletes, including four serving members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. Amongst the athletes featured in the video is former Royal Marines Musician, Becky York.

Becky plays the clarinet and piano and joined the Royal Marines Band Service at just 18 years old. During her time with RMBS, she performed at many high-profile events including the Royal wedding of Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, but was medically discharged in 2014 due to an injured hip. This piece is a tribute to the Invictus Games, Team UK and all the wounded, injured and unwell service personnel involved in the games.

Throughout the evening, the band performed pieces such as *Top Gun* and *Commando Force*, featuring the world-famous Corps of Drums, *Saved from the Waves*, a piece commemorating the 200th anniversary of the RNLI and *Splashes of Tartan*, featuring dancers and pipers from the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo performers.

Lieutenant Colonel Huw Williams RM, Principal Director of Music for RMBS, said: "We had a wide variety of styles and pieces at this year's Mountbatten Festival of Music.

"Alongside the regular ceremonial pieces and modern arrangements, we had some guest artists including pipers and dancers from the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo and athletes from the Invictus Games.

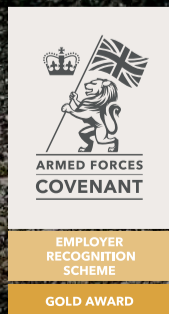
Report: Megan Rhodes
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And your bosses wouldn't be happy if you couldn't sail because that engine part hadn't turned up. Or you had to return to port because the pantry was empty.

Ignore logistics in wartime and you fail. Plain and simple.

Ask Rommel at El Alamein (all three battles). Or Russian troops in Ukraine.

Get it right – such as the Mulberry Harbours – and you've laid the foundation of success.

Recent tensions and actions in the Middle East have placed additional demands on the RN – from requiring the deployment of HMS Diamond and Richmond to help protect shipping against missile/drone attacks (see pages 16-17) – to stepping up the tempo of operations involving the RN's permanent 'big ship' presence in the region, HMS Lancaster.

Over the winter, the veteran frigate has completed the busiest month in her 30-year career – putting demands on the entire Starboard Crew and the kit they operate, including the logistics team.

"From the moment you land in theatre the workload is instant, and it does not ease until you step back on to the plane four months later," said caterer Petty Officer Sean Raine.

"It throws everything at you, defence watches, action stations, late nights, early mornings, training exercises, long periods at sea, huge store ships and sometimes even throws in a little run ashore somewhere off the beaten track, like Kochin in India, as a reward."

Everyone aboard was expecting to remain alongside in Bahrain over the festive period, but when the frigate arrived in Bahrain two days before Christmas, she was told to prepare to head back out for operations in the Red Sea as soon as possible. That meant an emergency food order to be ordered, delivered the following morning, quality assured and finally stored aboard.

"A good working relationship with the ship's agents and local chandlers is key to the success of every store ship as unforeseen changes to the programme can require last minute top-ups, delayed delivery dates or even cancellation of major orders entirely."

Every time Lancaster sails, she must be prepared to remain at sea for up to 60 days – with enough food and provisions to feed 200 sailors and Royal Marines three meals a day. That's

36,000 meals in all... not including snacks for sale in the NAAFI.

Even with scores of sailors volunteering the average 'store ship' can take between four and six hours as four or five tonnes of food are passed from hand to hand: fruit and veg, meat, desserts, ice cream and cakes.

In a typical four-month the Lancastrians get through 300 boxes of sausages (line the bangers end to end and they'd be three-and-a-half times the length of the Empire State Buildings), drunk enough milk to fill a 12ft American family swimming pool and eaten enough chicken to put KFC out business.

"The ship's company delivers 24 hour a day while on task and it is my job to sustain them – and quite often provide the morale, trying to make stressful situations that bit better by providing good food and some banter across the counter," said Leading Chef Archie Bell.

"On a daily basis the galley team need to adapt and overcome to a multitude of situations – short-notice serials, additional personnel to feed, equipment defects which change the menu at the drop of a hat. But we always manage to adapt and overcome to produce the nutritious meals everyone needs."

The caterers don't just meet the ship's day-to-day requirements, but defence engagement, hosting VIPs in Bahrain or while visiting ports across the region flying the flag for the UK – anything from canapes and nibbles at a cocktail party, but also high-end meals served up for dignitaries dining with the commanding officer.

Not only does the ship need food, it also needs stores. Everything from oils and greases for engines and machinery, clothing, cleaning equipment, ammunition and weapons, even spare windscreens for the embarked helicopter.

A small team of six sailors maintains this never-ending conveyor belt of equipment, liaising with people around the globe: shipping companies, other military establishments, local agents and embassies.

Working day and night to arrange the delivery of essentials stores to a floating warehouse which moves daily is no mean feat.

So far this deployment the team have arranged the delivery of £1.48m worth of ammunition, and returned over £1.3m.

Thanks to the wealth of experience the RN has operating Type 23s in the Gulf (going back to the 90s), loggies have a good idea of what they – or Port crew – will need.

That means the delivery of 180 ft worth of shipping containers, packed with over 13 tonnes of supplies, four months ahead of the required delivery date.

And then there are the day-to-day things which need replacing: more 400 items (worth just under £50m) has been ordered and delivered to

Lancaster to ensure she continues operations.

The four writers in the ship's office meet a myriad of requirements to support the 206 souls aboard: pay queries, competency collation, expenses and cash issues/returns, as well as arranging all travel and immigration requirements.

"The most rewarding part of this job is the ability to continue learning," said Writer Orin Ashton who is on his first deployment.

"There is a huge difference between working in a Unit Personnel Office (UPO) ashore and working on a Type 23 on operations. Every day I learn something new about the Navy, and about the world I live in."

Orin and his colleagues act as the ship's 'travel agents', booking travel for over 220 people both arriving and departing, from new joiners and people proceeding on draft to visitors and contractors, who have to be processed in and out of immigration, boarding passes, train tickets and accommodation.

The writers are also Lancaster's 'cash machine': during a four-month deployment to the Gulf they've handed out more than £45,000 to shipmates (£218 per sailor), most of which is spent at the NAAFI.

"The biggest challenge is the unpredictability," said Petty Officer Simon Johnson who heads the office team.

"We plan most personnel movements well in advance to ensure flights and additional baggage can be booked and transport can be arranged.

"Our programme change can happen at any moment resulting in last-minute cancellations and amendments."

Also under the logistics team is the small medical department (one ship's doctor/medical officer, one leading medical assistant, one MA) providing everything from GP services through to life-threatening triage.

They train shipmates in first aid, including mass casualty scenarios and disaster relief exercises so they are prepared and equipped to deal with anything that may be thrown their way.

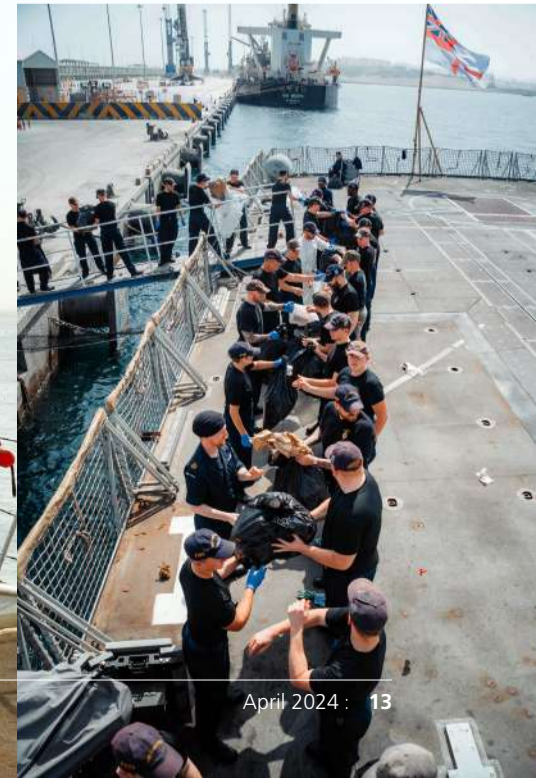
The sickbay stocks thousands of different types of medication, equipment, documentation, vaccinations, even sea sickness tablets.

Some of which have been used, dealing with 460 cases in four months – from cuts and bruises to dental and medical appointments ashore – liaising with local authorities, hospitals and medical professionals.

Helping to oversee and ensure all the ship's needs are met is deputy logistics officer, Lieutenant Howard Peplow. Like many of his shipmates he's been deployed in the Gulf region for eight of the past 12 months.

"The role is at a constant fast pace with everyone on the ship at some point relying on you. But if it wasn't for the people and their good humour it would be a lot harder," he said.

"Lancaster's ship's company are by far the best I have known in my 23 years in the Royal Navy, so the hard work on operations have been worth it."





SETTING THE SEAL

ON PROTECTOR'S LATEST ANTARCTIC OPERATIONS

THE Royal Navy's ice patrol ship HMS Protector has completed a scientific and conservation mission to the Antarctic.

The ship covered 7,000 nautical miles during its annual foray in the frozen continent, helping scientific research and environmental efforts in one of the world's most remote and inhospitable regions.

The mission – known as Operation Austral – upholds the UK's commitment to the Antarctic Treaty, protecting this precious place from harm.

Commanding Officer of HMS Protector, Captain Tom Weaver said: "We are reminded every day by the stunning wildlife and environment that surrounds us. Operating in Antarctica is a rare privilege.

"I'm delighted that we were able to use Protector's many capabilities to support Antarctic research and uphold the UK's role within the Antarctic Treaty system."

During the deployment, Protector was joined by two University of Portsmouth professors who collected water and rock samples which will contribute to understanding

the human impact that increasing levels of shipping and tourism are having on this delicate region.

Sailors delivered 4.5 tonnes of conservation supplies to Port Lockroy and Detaille Island to help UK Antarctic Heritage Trust (UKAHT) members complete structural works on the historic buildings there.

The Plymouth-based ship eventually delivered aviation fuel to The British Antarctic Survey's (BAS) logistics centre at Rothera, which is essential for supporting their two aircraft that shuttle scientists to remote field study sites.

Two penguin scientists from Oceanites joined Protector and researched over five penguin colonies counting over 10,000 penguins evaluating vital research on Antarctic penguin populations in support of climate science.

While surveying Antarctic waters, HMS Protector observed wildlife, recording data on species, numbers, behaviours and locations.

During the latest survey, the ship documented 74 fur seals, 26 sei whales, 161 humpback whales, 25 fin whales, 18 killer whales, and even one reported sighting of an

albino whale.

Continuing her conservation work, HMS Protector contributed to preserving the pristine Antarctic environment by collecting three tonnes of waste leftover from previous missions at Brabant Island.

Furthermore, the ship recovered 1.8 tonnes of stores for UKAHT as part of their heritage conservation work.

The deployment also focused on updating charts and improving navigational safety of Antarctic waters, with Protector surveying and collecting over 1,500 nautical miles of data using their Multibeam Echo Sounder (MBES).

The ship also surveyed more than 33 square nautical miles of UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) priority areas.

Protector's four Drake Passage transits during the season were remarkably uneventful for a notoriously wild stretch of water, and she also enjoyed navigating through narrow transits in Antarctica including Lemaire Channel (also known as Kodak Alley for its stunning scenery) and Neptune's Bellows – the entrance to Deception Island which is formed from a sunken volcano caldera.

Throughout the deployment, Protector embarked seven personnel from UKAHT, three Mountain Leaders from the Royal Marines, two penguin counters from Oceanites, two professors from Portsmouth University, two University Students from Cambridge University, one Captain from the Canadian Coast Guard, one Hydrographic Officer from the Royal Australian Navy, one photographer from the Royal Navy Photography Branch, one Hydrographic Metrological specialist from the New Zealand Navy and one award-winning composer, sound and recording artist.

The ship's First Lieutenant, Lieutenant Commander Phil Boak said: "Having recently stepped on board HMS Protector after a short stint on the RRS Sir David Attenborough, it was great to see how the Royal Navy operates in the Antarctic.

"Being deployed over February 2024 was particularly poignant, as this coincided with the 80th anniversary of Operation Tabarin, the secret British mission to Antarctica during the Second World War which laid the foundations for the British Antarctic Survey."




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A selection of images from HMS Protector's voyage into the Antarctic by LPhot Gareth Smith

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RED SEA AT NIGHT, RICHMOND'S FIGHT

"IT TAKES three years to build a ship, it takes three centuries to build a tradition."

The immortal words of Admiral Andrew Browne Cunningham, who refused to abandon the Army to its fate in Crete in 1941 and continued to put Royal Navy ships – and sailors – in harm's way to evacuate troops.

Eight decades later you could adjust his words to accommodate the demands of 21st Century warfare.

"Engagements last a matter of minutes, success is built on months of hard work, training and dedication."

That was proven in the small hours of Saturday March 9 when the display screens of aerial picture operators suddenly flickered with an alarming array of contacts moving rapidly from land towards a flotilla of international warships in the Red Sea.

The largest wave of attacks yet – 57 one-way attack drones launched by Houthi rebels from various sites in Yemen – forming swarms directed against those castles of steel.

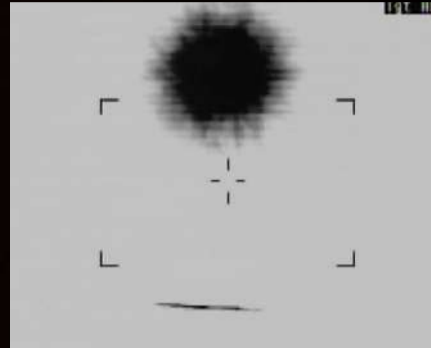
Tactically positioned 'up-threat', Richmond used her systems to track and ultimately engage a pair of drones with her Sea Ceptor missiles.

Although in service for nearly a decade, Ceptor was proven only on the test range to date – never fired in anger.

Unlike Sea Viper on HMS Diamond, there's no flash of fire on the bridge to signify missile away.

Instead, a loud whoosh – high pressure gas forces Sea Ceptor out of its silo in the 'mushroom farm' on the Type 23's forecastle – before the rocket kicks in at a safe distance from the ship so the flames don't cause any damage.

Once the solid-fuelled rocket motor kicked in, the missile rapidly accelerated up to Mach 3 towards its foe, a 'kill' which



took fewer than ten seconds.

Targets destroyed (as evidenced by the video grab above) – with no damage to nearby vessels and Sea Ceptor had proved itself in battle.

The action on March 9 was the Devonport frigate's first and last of her Red Sea deployment – a few days later, after more than five weeks on the front line, she handed over to Diamond as the Type 45 returned from resupplying in Gibraltar ready for her second patrol protecting merchant shipping.

It was not the frigate's sole contribution to the international security effort, however.

/// I am reminded why I joined the RN; every day is different and exciting. The pipe 'Hands to boarding stations' followed by 'Action Wildcat' stir up suspense and excitement. ///

WRITER DAISY BARTRAM-BURCH

Indeed, much of the ship's efforts since the beginning of February have been focused on broader maritime security operations in the region. The combined Royal Marines/Royal Navy boarding team, watched over by the frigate's Wildcat helicopter, carried out seven boardings – to ensure the vessels were who they said they were and carrying what they should be.

"Having the responsibility to board vessels was a testing, but enjoyable experience," said warfare specialist Able Seaman Patrick Naylor.

A member of the underwater warfare department, he's switched focus to monitor the surface picture from the ops room, in between duties on the upper deck behind one of the many guns protecting the frigate.

"There is a mood that the whole ship's company is ready and supporting each other to deliver the output required.

"Being able to contribute to the crucial tasking of merchant vessel protection in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden really feels like we are making a difference."

That's a feeling shared by shipmate Writer Daisy Bartram-Burch. "I feel a sense of pride being part of the team and seeing

the hard work and preparation come together," she said.

"I am reminded why I joined the RN; every day is different and exciting. The initial pipe 'Hands to boarding stations' followed by 'Action Wildcat' stirs up both suspense and excitement.

"The sea boats are launched and the team on the bridge must concentrate on achieving the Command Aim: merchant vessel protection."

Since her sudden departure from Devonport in the first week of January, Richmond has sailed over 17,000 nautical miles – 9,000 of them in February alone, the most in any month since she commissioned and quite the achievement for a 30-year-old warship and a testament to the engineers who maintain her.

Every bit as busy the Wildcat from 815 NAS which flew 115 hours of sorties making it the busiest in the Navy.

Her crew were first on the scene after the merchant vessel Sky II was struck by a Houthi missile, provided the ship's master with an assessment of damage; the helicopter also offered assistance to the merchantman but Sky II's sailors were on top of the situation.

She was one of hundreds of merchant vessels Richmond interacted with, providing reassurance and protection, not to mention the warships of nine nations all striving to keep trade flowing and the Houthi drones and missiles at bay.

With more than 200 souls aboard, the frigate is packed to the rafters, while the nature of the mission has meant round-the-clock operations, which in turn has demanded a round-the-clock effort from the galley where caterers served up four meals a day (more than 80,000 so far during a relatively short deployment).

How many eggs/sausages/spuds/litres of milk was that? Well, we can't let you down: 25,000, 36,000, 5,000kg and 20,000 litres...

It's not been all work and no-play. On the rare days out of theatre, crew enjoyed a hands-to-bathe on their way to Oman, as well as flight deck sports followed by the essential barbecue.

After stops in Saudi Arabia, Malta and the Rock, the ship sailed back up the Hamoaze at the end of last month with praise from both the Defence Secretary and her Commanding Officer ringing in the ears of the sailors and marines.

From Mr Shapps, gratitude for the Richmond's "incredible work" done "to stand up for freedom of navigation and the safety of seafarers".

And from Commander Richard Kemp: "I was exceptionally proud to witness my ship's company go to action and defeat threats in such a professional and resolute manner.

"Whilst our Ceptor engagements happened in mere minutes, their success was built upon many months of hard work, training and dedication.

"Every single member of the team has played an important role and has performed in accordance with the highest traditions of the service."

Pictures: LPhoto Chris Sellars







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FOUR GO FORTH



FOUR of the smallest vessels in the Royal Navy's inventory took their place in NATO's biggest exercise in a generation.

Patrol boats HMS Biter, Blazer, Exploit and Trumpeter have completed a month-long voyage from their base in Portsmouth to venture further north than any of their class – above the 70th Parallel – have gone in 35 years' service.

After a journey of nearly 2,200 miles from their home in Portsmouth, the quartet are ready to play their part supporting NATO raiding forces deep in the Arctic Circle as the first phase of the alliance's huge winter exercise Steadfast Defender reaches its climax over the next week in the fjords, valleys and small towns and villages of Norway's Finnmark and Troms districts.

While it takes a few days for most participating ships – Royal Navy involvement is led by aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales – to sail from Portsmouth to the exercise area, it's been an epic of logistics, planning and engineering to send the fast patrol craft to the Arctic,

The boats are designed for operating in coastal waters – usually at sea by day, returning to port at night, although they can be out longer, but never more than a few days.

As a result the four boats have 'hopped' from port to port on their epic journey to the Arctic, first via Ramsgate, Scheveningen and Den Helder (Netherlands), then the island of Helgoland off Germany's North Sea coast and Esbjerg and Thyboron in Denmark.

And then into Norway, gradually making their way up the west coast from Kristiansand in the southwest to north of Tromsø deep inside the Arctic (calling in for fuel and supplies along the way at: Egersund, Stavanger, Bergen, Florø, Måløy, Alesund, Kristiansund, Trondheim, Sandnessjøen, and Harstad).

Lieutenant 'Teddy' Bradley, the Royal Navy exchange officer to the Royal Norwegian Navy said having completed the journey, the small boats had an important role to play in the exercise.

"Deploying four Archer Class to the Arctic is some challenge. Successfully integrating them and their support

team into a well-established and specialist force like the Norwegian Coastal Rangers, and achieving operational success is another level entirely.

"It's a real demonstration to our adversaries of what NATO can do even with the most unlikely combination of resources."

Engineer Lieutenant Jack Meggs is part of the specialist staff supporting the deployment to the Arctic.

"Bringing the Coastal Forces Squadron to the north of Norway is no mean feat but the teams onboard have proven what we knew to be true, that the Archer class platform is just as capable deep in the Arctic Circle as it is in UK waters," he said.

Due to their size the patrol boats are limited to waves of no more than three metres – which has forced them either to skirt around bad weather or take shelter in harbour.

And when the weather has relented and allowed the quartet to sail, the craft are operated from a 'flying bridge' completely exposed to the elements.

Temperatures this winter have been unusually mild - the

lowest the quartet have recorded is -4 Celsius... but the windchill has taken it down another 20 degrees at times.

"While the journey north has not been without its challenges, the ships have continued to perform as we have headed north," said Leading Engineering Technician Matthew Read, deputy marine engineer on Biter.

"The trip has been one to remember and now that we are working on Exercise Steadfast Defender, it is providing a fantastic opportunity to work alongside NATO allies and partners."

His shipmate Engineering Technician Kai Hitchcock added: "Deploying for the first time has been very enjoyable, seeing the Northern lights has been a particular highlight as well as entering the Arctic Circle.

"I am looking forward to what lies ahead in the exercise as we work with our NATO partners over the coming weeks."

The boats will remain in Norway once their role in Steadfast Defender ends; they will make their way back down the coast towards Bergen for Joint Expeditionary Force training with the Fleet Air Arm and Norwegian Navy at the end of April.

STRIKE GROUP GATHERS



A POTENT force of NATO allies have proved their ability to defend the alliance's northern flank during exercises in North Atlantic and Arctic.

The UK Carrier Strike Group led a series of training scenarios alongside allied warships, submarines, aircraft and personnel.

After leaving Portsmouth in February, HMS Prince of Wales was joined by NATO ships for the start of exercises off the UK coast.

The carrier and her task force practised sailing in close formation and learning how different navies operate as they began Joint Warrior.

Royal Navy frigate HMS Portland and tankers RFA Tideforce and Tidespring joined the carrier and their numbers were bolstered by Royal Canadian ship Navy Halifax-class frigate HMCS Charlottetown; Spanish Navy Alvaro de Bazan-class air defence frigate SNS Cristobal Colon and Danish Navy Iver Huitfeldt-class frigate HMDS Niels Juel.

The close manoeuvring was a chance to test the navigation officers and bridge teams of all the ships involved, as they overcame

language barriers and sailing ships of varying sizes in tight formation.

HMS Prince of Wales navigator, Lieutenant Commander Tom Parsons, said: "Bringing together warships from different countries is always an enjoyable challenge.

"Although we may all speak different languages day-to-day, it is proof that there is no barrier to us operating as a single Carrier Strike Group.

"My bridge team and I are looking forward to the coming weeks as we get to know our NATO allies better as we tackle increasingly demanding exercises side by side."

Joint Warrior was one aspect of NATO's biggest exercise in a generation Exercise Steadfast Defender which sees dozens of countries working together across Scandinavia and northern Europe, demonstrating NATO's resolve, unity and capability.

While the UK Carrier Strike Group operates at sea, Royal Marines once again deployed to Norway to test their ability to fight and defend in one of the harshest environments on Earth.

They were joined by the task group as she headed to Norway in early March, a NATO Amphibious Task Group and a range of aircraft as part of Exercise Nordic Response.

The formation of more than 10 ships from eight nations gave the men and women on board the chance to practise close manoeuvres - overcoming language barriers and different ways of operating at sea.

In a show of might for NATO and its partners, the exercise allowed the vessels and their aircraft to demonstrate their ability to defend allied territory while simultaneously defending themselves from potential enemies.

Taking part were: Royal Navy ships Prince of Wales, Portland, RFA Tidespring and amphibious landing ship RFA Mounts Bay; Spanish frigate ESPS Almirante Juan de Borbon; German replenishment ship FGS Bonn; Norwegian frigate HNoMS Otto Sverdrup, corvette HNoMS Gnist, patrol vessels HNoMS Olav Tyrggvason and HNoMS Magnus Lagabote; Norwegian coast guard ship KV Bjornoya; Dutch support ship HNLMS Karel Doorman; Italian aircraft carrier ITS Giuseppe Garibaldi; French frigate FS Normandie; and US destroyer USS Paul Ignatius.

There was also a fly past by Swedish JSA-39 Gripen and Finnish F-18 Hornets.

Commodore James Blackmore, Commander of the UK Carrier Strike Group, said: "This has been the largest maritime manoeuvre of Exercise Steadfast Defender 24, amalgamating the UK Carrier Strike Group, the Amphibious Task Group, Norwegian and allied vessels, all over flown by a multitude of fixed wing aircraft from the alliance.

"These manoeuvres are challenging to plan but make for a stirring sight when they come together and demonstrating the might of capability.

"I can't think of a better

symbol of NATO unity, trust, and resolve than these ships coming together; it really embodies what Steadfast Defender has achieved so far and will continue to do so over the coming months."

Capturing the 15 ships and aircraft on camera to document fell to three Royal Navy photographers deployed with the UK Carrier Strike Group and her escorts.

LPhoto Stuart Dickson said: "Filming and photographing a formation of this size was a first for me as a RN photographer, with the added challenge of capturing the fixed wing aircraft as they passed over the assembled ships.

"The Merlin aircrew who were flying us were really helpful, manoeuvring whenever we asked and giving us all the angles that we needed.

"The whole exercise has been a great experience as a photographer - from the fjords, humpback whales and the Northern Lights on top of all the NATO maritime and air activity there has been to capture."



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Casualty!

Casualty!

Casualty!

What would happen if a fuel tanker crashed, spilling fuel across Britain's biggest and busiest naval air base?

...At the same time as a Merlin helicopter smashed into a neighbouring house and a line of stationary traffic, flattening half a dozen cars and a cyclist?

It sounds like something out of a Hollywood disaster movie... or the stuff of nightmares.

In fact it was the scenario played out by base and local emergency services to test the ability of all to deal with a major incident at RNAS Yeovilton.

The base can call upon its own firefighters, medics and police for any initial response... supported by civilian services: Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue, Avon and Somerset Police, South West Ambulance Service.

They grappled not merely with the two accidents – a lorry jack-knifed on the road, several cars to simulate stopped traffic and training smoke to bring the scenario to life – but also live 'casualties' which made a huge difference to the training, accurately capturing the chaos of a real-life incident.

"The presence of role-playing casualties enhanced the authenticity of the scene,"

said Yeovilton's fire station manager Chief Petty Officer Tom Meechan.

"Injuries suffered ranged from burns and fractures to smoke inhalation, necessitating the evacuation of some individuals using specialised equipment."

Every element of Yeovilton's first responders benefited from some aspect of the exercise:

From the firefighters: "The exercise proved to be exceptional, offering a multitude of valuable insights which we can enhance through future training sessions alongside the local authorities," said Chief Petty Officer Meechan.

From the RN Police: "It was useful to practise communications with Avon and Somerset Police in real time and demonstrate likely response times to a major incident," said Master-at-Arms Chief Petty Officer James Connolly.

From the medics: "The exercise was incredibly valuable and provided an insight in how major incidents play out on the ground in a way that cannot be taught in any other way or any other environment," said Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Robert Strachan.

And: "Working alongside civilian practitioners significantly enhanced my understanding of South Western Ambulance Support Trust's procedures, allowing me to prepare for any mass casualty situations in the

future," said Medical Assistant Able Rating Abigail Barford. "It was an extremely enlightening experience which has vastly improved my clinical competence and understanding of major incidents."

Away from the immediate 'coalface', a command team helped orchestrate the response to the twin accidents from the Incident Control Point, providing essential support to personnel on the ground.

Senior air station personnel say valuable lessons were learned from the exercise – which had been nearly a year in the planning – and will be incorporated into future contingency plans for dealing with worst-case scenarios.

Yeovilton's First Lieutenant, Lieutenant Commander Adam Seaborn, said the involvement of civilian services – and the ability to both communicate seamlessly and work side-by-side with them was crucial to a real-life response.

"Under major accident crash regulations, any major incident requires the coordination of multiple activities – both at the incident site and in the command centre," Lt Cdr Seaborn explained.

"Being able to do this exercise with the civilian emergency services has made it as realistic as possible, and we will capture the lessons from it."

Pictures: LPhot Dan Rosenbaum





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Ellie battles back to set sights on ultras



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For more information or to sign up, please scan the QR code.

Magic of the music

BEATING Retreat will take place on Horse Guards Parade on July 11 and 12.

The spectacular will showcase outstanding military music and pageantry, featuring more than 200 of the world's finest military musicians, the precision drill of the 40-strong Corps of Drums and a 100-strong Royal Navy Guard of Honour.

This historic parade, including the emotive Naval Sunset ceremony, is performed on Horse Guards Parade in front of the backdrop of St James's Park.

All proceeds from this event will go to the RNRMC and RMA – The Royal Marines Charity.

Tickets are available at <https://tickets.rnrmc.org.uk/navy-beating-retreat/index.htm>



Don't miss out on our camps

THE summer dates for the Kings Camps at Naval Bases will be available to book from April 15.

Working in partnership with the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC), Kings Camps offer subsidised places for children of serving personnel at a cost of £90 per week.

For serving personnel who don't live near to one of the Naval bases, don't worry – you can attend any of the camps across the UK which are also subsidised for Naval families by the RNRMC.

Head to www.kingscamps.org/kids-camps-at-military-bases/ or call 01142632161 for more information.

ROYAL Navy Reservist, Ellie Bainbridge, is on a mission to complete the Ultra X GB Slam, an ultra marathon journey which will see her complete three 50km and three 110km runs, plus one Ultra Tour de Mont Blanc (UTMB) series race over the course of 2024.

No mean feat for a woman whose career was almost over before it began having sustained a serious injury whilst still in training at Dartmouth.

Currently studying for a PhD in Engineering, Ellie intends to transfer over to regular service following her graduation this year with the ambition of becoming a Marine Engineering Officer.

Having originally joined in 2021, it was on her initial team building course at Britannia Royal Naval College where she suffered a catastrophic ankle break.

"While I was at BRNC, I had an accident which is medically called a trimalleolar fracture with talar shift," she said.

"In non-medical terms, the ankle joint has three hooks that hold it in place and I'd broken all three and shifted the foot out to the side. I got taken into hospital and went into theatre twice - once was just to relocate it all and then the next time was to put metal work in. I've now got a plate, a couple of bolts and a couple of screws in my ankle."

"While I was in the hospital they said the chances are in two years you're still going to walk with a limp. This could mean that this is your career in the military completely over."

While trying to deal with the shock of a freak accident potentially ending her dream of serving in the Armed Forces, Ellie moved home to begin the long and daunting process of recovery.

She was completely non-weight bearing, so even simple tasks like getting a glass of water became a challenge. But it was a conversation with her medical officer which spurred her on.

"I asked what this meant for my career and he said, 'At the moment, we don't know, but the fact that you've got metalwork doesn't mean it's game over'. Straight away that for me was a relief - that was the light bulb moment that I could still have a full career and was just another push for me to move forwards."

As her accident had happened while on duty, Ellie was referred to a military physiotherapist at RAF Cranwell, the regional rehabilitation unit which was closest to her home.

"I joined their injured flight and so I had the support of other people going through physio as well, which really helped mentally because I didn't feel as alone."

"I had two hydro sessions and then five sessions in the gym every week - Monday through to Friday. The goal was to be physically fit enough to serve again but I thought if I had a set target and a set date to work towards that would give me something tangible to work with. Ironically, at the same time, I'd seen that



there was the Easter 50 Ultra Challenge in Windsor, so I signed up!"

Her hard work in physiotherapy paid off. It was almost six months to the day from taking her first steps, that Ellie completed that first 50km ultra marathon race in Windsor in support of RNRMC.

Raising vital funds for the navy's principal charity was a way of strengthening her own mental and physical resilience, as well as providing that feeling of giving something back.

She explained how the charity has supported

her reserve unit at HMS Sherwood and she in turn wanted to support the charity.

"I got discharged from physio in the December and while it was great to have a clean bill of health from the physio team, I then didn't have that support network around me. I felt a bit lost. Thankfully I reached out to Sherwood and they said just because you're downgraded doesn't mean you can't attend and be around your oppos."

"I would never have got this far without the



support that I've had from the services. So I wanted to run for charity.

"This is as much for what I can give back for the support I've had as it is the other way around. I can give back so that other people can get support whenever they're going through difficult times."

Having returned to the Easter 50 Ultra Challenge last year and placing as 13th female, she now takes her trusty RNRMC running tech top with her wherever she goes.

If there's a local race somewhere, she will sign up and complete it on the spur of the moment.

She's also in the early planning stages of organising a field gun fundraising event, clearly not deterred by having the field gun run over both feet in competition last summer and being stretched out on gas and air. Another injury to her legs which thankfully only resulted in severe bruising but no breakages.

When asked what her advice would be for other people considering fundraising for RNRMC, she said: "If someone's interested and isn't certain, it's a great way of not only pushing yourself but doing it for an amazing cause. So step out of that comfort zone and help other people as well as yourself."

Ellie's next race will see her heading back to the Easter 50 Ultra Challenge for a third time on April 6, where she is aiming to be in the top three females.

Then come her 110km races in Scotland, Wales and England as part of her Ultra X GB Slam attempt.

And by a strange twist of fate, she will be returning to Dartmouth this summer to act as staff on the course where she was originally injured three years ago, coming full circle in her recovery.

If you're inspired by Ellie's ultra marathon journey, you can follow her progress on [Instagram @ellie_ultras](https://www.instagram.com/ellie_ultras) where you can also find a link to her fundraising page.

RNRMC is proud to support all Royal Navy units, both regular and reservist. If you're interested in fundraising for us, please contact fundraising@rnrmc.org.uk.

Making mental health and wellbeing a priority

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines charity (RNRMC) welcomed key organisations and individuals working in the Mental Health and Wellbeing space to a workshop on Whale Island.

This was a great opportunity for experts within their field to share their experiences and insights with one another.

For the last few years, the RNRMC has supported projects with its grant funding to help address the health and wellbeing needs of the naval community.

This workshop was organised with the aim of bringing together key professionals and charity representatives from diverse backgrounds and specialties within the space.

The day was filled with meaningful conversation as participants explored key topics and strategies for navigating the complexities of providing the right support for serving personnel and their families.

Presentations were given by Emeritus Professor Janet Walker OBE and WO1 Claire Robson from The Royal Navy Family and People Support.

Participants took part in interactive discussions and practical activities, helping them to gain new perspectives and insights.

The day also featured seminars led by other subject matter experts covering a range of

relevant topics including children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, the deployment cycle, insights into Navy life for families and Moral Injury.

The workshop received incredibly positive feedback, with participants commenting on the high-quality content, engaging presentations and supportive atmosphere.

Many expressed their appreciation for the practical tools and insights gained, which they plan to incorporate into their professional practice.

"We are thrilled with the overwhelming response to our workshop and the meaningful connections made among participants," said Mandy Lindley, Director of Relationships and Funding at RNRMC.

"It was inspiring to see practitioners come together to share their experiences, learn from each other, and reaffirm their commitment to serving the Naval community."

"We are grateful to all the speakers and attendees who contributed to the success of the workshop," added Mandy Lindley.

"It is our hope that the knowledge and connections forged during this event will continue to benefit practitioners and the individuals they serve."



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Great experience during MARL at BRNC

IN the latest activity at URNU East Scotland, we had seven of our lucky Officer Cadets get first-hand knowledge of Officer Training at BRNC Dartmouth by supporting Exercise MARL, one of the final maritime leadership tests for those at BRNC going through their Initial Officer Training.

Run through a week, the OCs performed a multitude of exciting roles from 'enemy forces' to 'casualties' to 'protestors', operating ashore in the grounds of BRNC or afloat in one of BRNC's many vessels on the River Dart.

A/OC Ella Murton, a first year Language student at University of Edinburgh, said: "Waking up on Monday morning and getting to see BRNC Dartmouth for the first time in the

light of day was an incredible moment – the sheer mass of grounds, buildings and historical artefacts would've taken days to explore all of, and I am still in awe of its grandeur.

"From acting as injured patients to migrants, media reporters to rioters, we got to fully witness the lives of OCs, whilst having enormous amounts of fun. I made amazing friends in such a short amount of time, and have gained a huge amount of respect for OCs and staff members, who I was lucky enough to get to know a little.

"I can only thank BRNC Dartmouth for allowing us this incredible opportunity, and am really excited and encouraged to start looking at the process of applying to attend myself."

A/OC Angus Kennedy, a first year Economics student at Edinburgh Heriot-Watt University, added: "What a valuable experience this was and just so enjoyable. We conducted exercises both on the River Dart and across all the Royal Naval College grounds.

"We witnessed the operation of small watercraft up close, acquired a good knowledge of the estate's layout, as well as the routines and structures in place.

"It was also highly entertaining, especially in tasks where we were instructed to take our character-creations to the extreme. Overall, it was an excellent and revealing glimpse into the workings and culture at BRNC, and one I would enjoy doing again in the future."

Special nights for Yorkshire

YORKSHIRE URNU had the pleasure of hosting Commander Universities, Cdr Andrew Loring RN.

After a very insightful fireside chat, the team were honoured to receive the Captain BRNC's Special Award from Cdr Loring, on behalf of Captain Andrew Bray RN.

The citation highlighted the efforts of unit Coxn, WO1 Justin Kirby RM and Senior Training Officer, Lt Wendy Goode for the stability and oversight they have provided through the last two years of uncertainty for Yorkshire URNU.

The citation also noted, the units recent fundraising efforts, led by A/OC Heather Lyons, during which the Officer Cadets raised £18,909.94 for the Royal British Legion Poppy appeal from across the Yorkshire region.

Commanding officer, Lt Paul McKenna, said: "I'm extremely proud of my team in Yorkshire, they have demonstrated the finest qualities of the RN and what URNU's up and down the country stand for. Their teamwork and selfless dedication over the past few months has been truly remarkable."

Members of the Yorkshire URNU were also invited to joined Royal Navy contingents from across the North of England to deliver a Regional Capability Demonstration to the people of Grimsby.

The evening was hosted by the newly appointed Naval Regional Commander, Commodore Thomas Knowles ADC. A hugely successful event, URNU OC's Heather Lyons, Ellie Smith and Alex Wrightson were invited to talk with Commodore Knowles, members of the public and local dignitaries about their experiences and life in the URNU.

The evening held at the Town Hall also included the presentation of the ship's bell and names plates of the former HMS Grimsby to the town.

Pictured are: From left, CO Paul McKenna, OC's Smith, Commodore Thomas Knowles, OC Heather Lyons, Alex Wrightson and Senior Training Officer, Lt Wendy Goode.



D-DAY TOUR FOR GLASGOW

URNU Glasgow travelled back in time for a historical tour of D-Day.

Officer Cadets and Training Officers first stopped in Portsmouth to see the last surviving Landing Craft Tank (LCT 7074), and exhibits such as Field Marshal Montgomery's famous beret at the D-Day Story Museum.

This was followed by a tour of the iconic HMS Victory and the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

This was a great introduction to the events of June 1944, as after a sail across the channel to Normandy, OCs alternated researching and preparing presentations for each stop of the trip.

They learnt about the events that led up to Operation Neptune and the extensive preparations and intelligence required to carry out the largest seaborne invasion in history.

The first stop was Pegasus Bridge, where airborne troops seized crucial transport routes into the area, followed by the cemetery at Ranville.

At Sword, Juno and Gold beaches, OCs learnt about the British and Canadian amphibious landings, which were at the mercy of the weather, the tides and the moon.

The beautiful British Normandy Memorial was a stark contrast to the immense number of names engraved on the pillars overlooking the sea where these men fought and lost their lives.

This was a theme that continued through the trip: "It is very sobering how the beautiful French

coastline we can see today, with the remnants of concrete and steel left behind, was the site of battle where so many young men and civilians lost their lives," A/Mid Harris said.

The last day in France focused on the American landings at Omaha and Utah beaches, and the view of D-Day outside of the Commonwealth perspective.

The day began with German battery guns at Longues-sur-Mer which looked impressive, if not frightening, in the sunrise.

The patriotic Normandy American Cemetery and subtle La Cambe German War Cemetery were another contrast that sparked in-depth conversation for the OCs.

At Pointe du Hoc, OCs learnt about the courageous Rangers who helped turn the events at Omaha and Utah beaches around and begin the long journey towards Berlin.

The trip drew to a close at the first liberated towns of Carentan and Sainte-Mere-Eglise.

Here, presentations covered the famous *Band of Brothers* "Easy" Company and Major Richard Winters, and paratrooper John Steele, as well as the Free French regiments that took part in the following operations that brought WW2 to an end.

The trip was a great success for strategic and historical studies for OCs, and URNU Glasgow is already planning its next Historic Battlefield Tour to educate the future leaders of the next generation.



Trio of golds for URNU competitors

THIS year's Royal Navy Winter Snowsports Festival kicked off in Les Deux Alpes, France.

The URNU fielded 21 OCs, 3 TOs and 7 COs or Coxswains from across 11 units, taking part in both ski and snowboard across all experience levels from beginner to advanced.

The weather conditions ensured that the training was challenging, with the sun only making brief appearances through the snow, rain, wind and fog on occasion.

The week's training culminated in a race in each discipline – we are pleased to report that the URNU garnered three gold medals (Intermediate Boardcross – Lt Cdr Nick Bates, Beginner Ski Giant Slalom (GS) OC Madeleine Warmer, Advanced Ski Slalom A/Mid Charlotte Fife) and three silver medals (Beginner Ski GS OC Raphaella Sheldon, Novice GS A/Mid Sophie West, Intermediate Ski GS S/Lt Kate Harper).

AB Georgie Altham of HMS King Alfred, who won the Female Telemark and is on the RN team was previously an OC in URNU Southampton.



Leading the URNU delegation, Lt Cdr Barry McWilliams said: "This was a great result for the URNU. Whilst many were rewarded for their hard work with podium finishes, it must be recognised that for the majority this was their introduction to snowsports.

"Everybody enjoyed a week of excellent instruction and gained confidence to tackle slopes of varying difficulty. The experience and personal development is unequalled elsewhere in our sports syllabus."

Meritorious service rewarded

URNU East of Scotland Senior Training Officer, Lt Iain Maciver, was recognised with a Lord Lieutenant Award for Meritorious Service.

Presented by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, the ceremony was attended by 40 guests from across the military and civilian sector at the spectacular Edinburgh City Chambers on the Royal Mile. Lt Maciver was one of seven award recipients, and the only one from the Senior Service.

The CO, Lt Cdr Nick Bates, said: "Lt Maciver has been a stalwart of this URNU for over 20 years, and Senior Training Officer for the past five."

Also presented with a Lord Lieutenant Award was A/OC Jamie Scott, a DSUS Officer Cadet at URNU East Scotland, recognising his previous time as a Cadet Warrant Officer in the Edinburgh Air Training Corps.

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



Naval Children's Charity

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



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

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



Pledge to mark 100th birthdays

WHEN Frank White's daughter reached out to the P&T Engagement Team, she was hoping a birthday card could be sent on behalf of the Royal Navy to acknowledge her WW2 veteran father turning 100.

A new initiative means that requests from veterans and their families to recognise this milestone achievement can now be taken straight to the office of the First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Ben Key.

On this occasion, the Naval Regional Commander's Team (Northern England and Isle of Man), were able to arrange for a personal letter from the First Sea Lord paying tribute to both Frank's centenary and his service in HMS Bazeley during the Battle of Atlantic.

The letter was hand-delivered by Cdr Noakes (pictured above with Frank) and CPO Barrett from HMS Ceres in Leeds and proudly displayed alongside Frank's birthday card from Their Majesties The King and Queen.

If you have a request relating to a veteran's 100th birthday, email: navypeople-engagementteam@mod.gov.uk.

You said, we did

There is a lack of accredited, specialist Domestic Abuse training for Service Police.

As a result of detailed investigations into this, the Defence Serious Crime Command (DSCC) introduced a Domestic Abuse Matters culture change programme – the national benchmark, created with the College of Policing and Survivors. This training will continue to be rolled out across all three Services.

There is a lack of suitable maternity outerwear

Following some positive consultation, feedback and a series of trials, the uniform team are awaiting distribution of updated side panels for use on the soft blue jacket that can be worn both inside as well as outside.

New paramedics making progress

THE Navy's first combat paramedics are currently going through comprehensive training ready to join front-line units in two years' time.

Drawing on lessons from Afghanistan and Ukraine, where extracting and treating injured patients in quick time can mean the difference between life and death, last year the Royal Navy established the Medical Assistant (Paramedic) cadre.

It will give the RN and ROM independent practitioners with high-end clinical delivery and decision-making skills to manage complex clinical situations in the most austere of locations.

Training alongside civilian counterparts – and resulting in civilian registration as a paramedic – every year six trainees will begin a three-year, level 6 BSc (Hons) course, including the Emergency Response Advanced Driving Course, delivered by a partner university.

Operating as independent pre-hospital emergency practitioners requires resilience, intelligence, and grit.

Leading Medical Assistant Steven Babington, a trainee at the University of Central Lancashire, describes his journey so far:

"After several months in university we embarked on our first clinical placement. I was assigned to the North West Ambulance Service, working out of Carlisle, which was an incredible experience.

"We would all agree that the placement time was the most fulfilling aspect of the first year. Looking back since beginning our journey as student paramedics, we have been incredibly fortunate to have been afforded this opportunity.

"We can appreciate the scale of work the Royal Navy and Royal Marines have been undertaking

over the past 12 months, and it serves not only as a reminder of the exciting deployments that lie ahead, but also as a motivator to continue progressing as student Paramedics and continually strive to improve the operational effectiveness of the Royal Navy Medical Service."

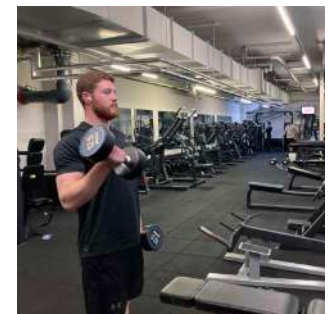
Once qualified, Royal Navy Paramedics will deploy with Commando Forces, Special Forces or with the Maritime Medical Emergency Response Teams (M-MERT), rapidly responding to global incidents to evacuate casualties and provide advanced life-saving care.

The first cohort of trainee paramedics will be ready to meet this challenge in 2026 and will join the Fleet for assignment where they will help to ensure the delivery of optimal emergency medical care at the very front edge of operations.

"Paramedics will enable an increased level of pre-hospital care further forward in the battle space, working alongside already highly-capable medical assistants in the RN and UK Commando Force, be that on humanitarian, routine military, or special operations tasksings," said WO1MA(Paramedic) Phil Towers, who's based at HQ UK Commando Forces (and pictured checking some of his kit).

"This has been 20 years in the making and allows medical assistants another pathway to progress academically, continue to learn new clinical skills, and most importantly, create a firm base of pre-hospital experience, which will also benefit the wider medical assistant cadre."

Exceeding the role of a traditional medical assistant, selection for paramedics is rightly competitive and details on selection criteria and eligibility can be found at RNTM 07-074/23.



Gym suite dreams are now reality

THERE are vastly improved gym facilities at two major naval establishments in the South West thanks to £330,000 investment.

The fitness suites at Britannia Royal Naval College and RNAS Culdrose have both undergone major transformations to meet the requirements of today and tomorrow.

The PT department in Dartmouth have spent four months overhauling the three existing fitness suites which neither met the demands of their users... or a modern navy.

Rather than replace the old kit, the decision was taken to rip it out and start afresh in most cases, such as installing four Watt bike Pros, four C2 Rowing machines and one Stairmaster – all of which complement existing CV items and will create a room fit for purpose and very appealing to all users.

The old weights room has been relocated to the adjacent room, with every item serviced and brand-new coloured bumper weights for every strength machine provided.

The old weights room will see the biggest difference, not least a custom-built three-tier lifting platform with integrated wall ball targets and pull-up bars which spans the width of the suite. Additionally, a custom-built monster storage rack and dual pulley system will complete the fit.

"We always mention the 'lived experience' – and having a modern and new facility really does contribute to the welfare and lived experience," said Chief Petty Officer Keir Woodhead.

"There is nothing better than reaping the benefits of a good workout and doing a session in a facility which is new and the type of environment which keeps you coming back."

A similar effort has gone into the air station's new-look gym (pictured) at a cost of £200k, spread across four rooms of new machines – from weight-training benches to exercise bikes, running machines and everything in between.

Petty Officer Steve Homer, who oversaw the revamp, said the facility was used by around 300 people daily – thanks not least to it being open 24/7.

"People can come here at any time, they don't have to just sit in their cabins, and they've got this fantastic 24-hour facility," said Steve.

"Keeping fit is good for your physical health and it's also good for your mental health. It makes a huge difference."

The gym is housed downstairs at the Cornish air station's sport centre, which also includes a sports hall, squash courts and swimming pool.

Extra hands-on training for warfare rates

AS PART of efforts to modernise training and recruitment, a new Warfare Training Squadron (WTS) is giving warfare junior ratings at Training Performance Standard (TPS) invaluable opportunities to build on their training in operational environments prior to their first formal assignment to a ship as a warfare specialist.

Offering bespoke opportunities to undertake branch-specific training at sea, alongside broader development, including opportunities to build leadership and resilience skills, the WTS aims to accelerate progression to Able Rating First Class status and deliver skilled, experienced, and motivated

individuals to the frontline faster.

The initial 'proof of concept' of this innovative programme was carried out aboard HMS Iron Duke in January, and the second tranche last month; it saw the initial cohort of warfare junior ratings successfully embark and undertake a period of training at sea, using and developing their leadership and management skills under



challenging conditions.

AB WS(AWT) Statham (pictured) was one of 15 junior ratings who took part in the training and make use of the experience to achieve Role Performance Standard (RPS).

"Without the Warfare Training Squadron I wouldn't have achieved RPS, CPO Barrett and the staff here have been amazing," he said. "It's not like being in the training environment, they have prepared me to be a professional sailor, in an operational environment at sea."

Do you possess the write stuff for 1SL?

DO YOU want to win £1,000 for your skill as a writer and naval commentator?

In fact three cash prizes (£750 for the runner-up, £500 for third place) will be awarded to the best submissions in the First Sea Lord's annual essay contest.

All can receive their awards from Admiral Sir Ben Key at his Sea Power Conference, hosted at



Lancaster House on May 14-15.

Run in conjunction with the Council on Geostrategy, this year's contest is looking for entries on one of three subjects:

1. How should the UK apportion its naval resources across the globe?
2. What lessons are there from naval operations in the Black Sea

and/or Red Sea since February 2022 for the Royal Navy?

3. How will the proliferation of autonomous, uncrewed and minimally crewed systems change naval warfare by 2040?

Entries will be judged by Captain Sarah Oakley, former Commanding Officer of Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth; James Rogers, co-

founder and director of research at the Council on Geostrategy; Captain Dr Kevin Rowlands, head of the Royal Navy Strategic Studies Centre; and Dr Emma Salisbury, associate fellow at the Council on Geostrategy.

The contest to open to anyone, the word limit is 1,250 (plus/minus 10 per cent, excluding footnotes) the submission must

be unique and must follow this guidance: <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/02/First-Sea-Lords-Essay-Contest-2024-Style-guide.pdf>

Entries must be received by 11.59pm on Monday April 15 via: <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/first-sea-lords-essay-competition-2024/>

Tech for female personnel on show

USING artificial technology to help with exercise, wearing the correct base layers for work and the benefits of new body armour were some of the possible solutions presented to female sailors at an event to see how technology can improve their life in the Royal Navy.

The London Tech Bridge - a collaboration between the Royal Navy and US Navy to source technology in the UK - hosted the Royal Navy Servicewomen's Network for International Women's Day.

Every month the Tech Bridge invites companies to discuss how their technologies might solve a particular challenge faced by the navy in what has become known as 'Tea & Tech'.

Female personnel were invited to give their opinions on how technology might help them overcome challenges they face while serving, generate the problems they face, serve as the subject-matter experts and lead the Tea & Tech discussion.

The aim was to encourage greater female engagement in the development of technology and highlight how the Royal Navy is driving forward with investment in novel solutions through engagement with small to medium enterprises across the UK.

Personnel from of all ranks from across the RN attended the event including sailors from RNAS Culdrose, HMS Raleigh and HMS Excellent.

The Naval Servicewomen's Network had identified its greatest areas of concern centred on the challenges around health and fitness for women serving at sea.

Presentations from companies included the application of Artificial Intelligence and remote coaching to help with physical training, including during pregnancy, maternity leave, and recovery.

The team was also briefed by a researcher from University of Portsmouth regarding the wearing of the right bra for specific military tasks, the interaction of undergarments with other military equipment, and how this equipment performs in the most challenging environments.

Lastly, the group heard from a company presenting revolutionary lightweight 3D-printed body armour which provides greater protection and is more flexible so fits the female figure significantly better than current equipment. What's more, the body armour can be recycled into new body armour at the end of its operational life thus reducing the impact on the environment.

"The event was really empowering for those who attended," said Petty Officer Naval Nurse Ellie Walls.

"It was great to come together as a Network and learn that this kind of thing exists and that innovation is inclusive.

"I liked how the discussion was about showing us and including us in the process and we all got a huge amount from it."

Looking ahead, the team will prioritise and share the technology presented at Tea & Tech based on the feedback and assessments of the Naval Servicewomen's Network.

It will connect high potential solutions with the delivery teams and organisations who could further develop and integrate the technologies.

Additionally, it will work to obtain additional research funding where appropriate, to ensure the most promising technologies continue to develop.



Pictures: LPhot Barry Swainsbury

Capturing e-motions

THE first recruits to take part in ground-breaking work to dramatically reduce injuries in training – and throughout their careers – have passed out from HMS Raleigh.

Civilians joining the Naval Service now undergo comprehensive scientific assessments, using the latest tech and sports science knowledge which will shape future training programmes and how the Royal Navy helps rehabilitate personnel with injuries.

Motion capture technology (kinematics) record recruits' gait as they walk or run across a series of pressure points and pads, assessing how and where they distribute their body weight as they do so.

Coupled with measuring grip strength, height, and observing how someone stands, as well as noting health factors such as smoking and diet, the data will be used in a bid to curb the single biggest cause of sailors and marines being medically downgraded: musculoskeletal injuries.

Such injuries – anything which is muscular/bone related, such as a twisted knee or hip injury – account for half the military personnel who are medically downgraded.

Working side-by-side with leading academics from Bath, Exeter and Southampton Universities, the goal is to drastically cut those injuries (typically caused by overuse, playing sport, physical training, or poor working practices) across the Naval Service.

Scientific Support Facilities (SSF) have been installed at two of the Royal Navy's 'entry' training establishments: HMS Raleigh and the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines in Lympstone; a third facility will be established at the Institute of Naval Medicine in Alverstoke later this year to capture Phase 2 and 3 trainees.

The first batch of recruits at HMS Raleigh had their details recorded over several hours in the new facility.

Markers – reference points – were fitted to a recruit's



body before they walked/ran down a short runway, filmed all the way, while pressure sensors under the walkway recorded the distribution and application of weight.

"It's a bit like how they filmed Gollum in *Lord of the Rings*," explained Ellie Scott, a post-graduate researcher from the University of Exeter.

/// I wish this had been available when I joined the Royal Navy. ///

– CAPTAIN JANE ROE

"It creates a 'virtual stick person' who replicates exactly how you run or walk. We can calculate angles and forces someone puts through their body when walking or running to see if there are any factors which make them susceptible to certain injuries."



Dr Jo Fallowfield, who heads the Royal Navy Musculoskeletal Mitigation Programme, said that, "Historically we have not focussed on this bit of 'kit' – the person. And this piece of 'kit' makes everything else function. We need to present ourselves as a 21st-Century employer, who invests in its people, supports them, treats their health as a priority and supports them throughout their career."

With between 3,000 and 3,500 people joining the Naval Service every year, the aim is to build up comprehensive data (and with it much greater understanding) of injuries, intervene to prevent them, and tailor training, be it during the civvy to military conversion, or later in their careers.

"This programme will ensure we don't lose high quality individuals, employed in demanding roles, through preventative injuries. I think this is an exciting initiative – I wish this had been available when I joined the Royal Navy," said Captain Jane Roe, Raleigh's Commanding Officer.

Lieutenant Colonel Erik Nielsen RM, joint head of the programme with Dr Fallowfield commented, "We need to understand that when we're putting our training programmes together, we need to understand how to train individuals, how to prevent injuries, and we need to understand health behaviours and rehabilitation."

Data will also be collected as recruits end their training, after one year of service, and – if they should suffer injury – as close to the point of injury as possible.

"This programme is also about holding on to the exceptional talent we have – there are people leaving the service with health issues which could have been prevented," Dr Fallowfield stressed.

"We can do things better – we can look after people better, improve the effectiveness of our rehab and recovery programme and get more people off the side-lines."



A Royal Navy police officer displays the numerous roles performed - and uniforms worn

CENTURIES OF POLICING 15 YEARS AS RN POLICE

It's happy birthday to the Royal Navy Police, marking 15 years in its current form – building upon centuries of experience and history.

This year marks 15 years of the Royal Navy Police (RNP) after the full implementation of the Armed Forces Act 2006 on 31 October 2009.

The force came into being at the end of October 2009 when the 2006 Armed Forces Act was fully implemented, bringing the Regulating Branch and the Royal Marines Police Troop together under the new title, establishing its identity in statute as a Service Police Force.

The Regulating Branch can trace its history as far back as the 16th Century when the Royal Navy used ship's marshals to maintain order and discipline. And in 1944, the branch introduced the role of leading patrolman, to support major naval bases around the world.

As for the Royal Marines Police, they go back 'only' as far as the early 20th Century as the military police arm of the Royal Marines.

Now combined as the Royal Navy Police, they comprise the smallest of the single Service police organisations, led by the Provost Marshal (Navy), the professional head and capability lead.

Its roles and responsibilities are diverse. Operating at sea, ashore and overseas (such as below in Diego Garcia), the RNP provide an agile and professional policing capability to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. All officers are vetted and accredited to the same standard as Home Office police colleagues and the service adopts the College of Policing's Code of Ethics and Ethical Policing Principles and hold our personnel to the highest standards of behaviour.

Being part of the communities it polices is essential to its mission; the RNP is proud of its heritage, the RN and RM identity and its specialist policing skills and abilities.

Drawing powers from the Armed Forces Act, the RNP can respond to all criminal or Service offences and routinely conduct policing activities ashore and afloat to reassure the service community, while supporting maritime operations.

More recently, the formation of the RNP support to operations team has changed the way support is delivered to ships, submarines, and shore-based locations in the UK and overseas which would not have previously have enjoyed our support. This team deploys globally, often at short notice, to assist during port visits, help with operational detention training, carry out community engagement and assist with specialist policing requirements.

Royal Marines police personnel are also held at high readiness and are continuously deployed in support of Commando Forces and wider UK Defence in close protection, policing and other close-support roles.

The RNP provide personnel to the Defence Serious Crime Command and Unit DSCC and DSCU, which was formed in 2022. The DSCC/U provide UK Defence with a professional and accredited serious crime investigative capability which is fully deployable at short notice.

Until 2017, the only way to join the RNP was to transfer from another branch of the RN or RM.

But for the past seven years, it's recruited Direct Entry candidates from a variety of different backgrounds. (Royal Marine candidates are still required to undertake the full commando training package before applying to transfer.)

It is a challenging and exciting time to be a member of the RNP and wider Service Police community. Collectively we are pursuing a professionalisation agenda at pace, which is driving significant change across Defence.

The RNP play a key role in this development and will continue to do so through the delivery of its unique capabilities and support to maritime operations, Command teams and the Service community in general.

If you are interested in a career with the RNP see www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/roles/royal-navy-police.



Heritage centre re-opens

THE Naval Base Heritage Centre, which charts the development of the dockyard and Plymouth's role in supporting the Royal Navy through major conflicts, has reopened its doors to the public after a revamp ahead of this year's 200th anniversary celebrations of Devonport Dockyard.

The centre – in Vivid Approach, off Granby Way – comprises historic buildings, galleries, and exhibits.

In the Old Fire Station, there is the Age of Sail Gallery which highlights the sailing navy and wooden shipbuilding in Devonport.

The 19th-Century Dockyard Superintendent's and Pay Office has the core of the collection, including uniforms through the ages, a Royal Yacht China collection and the Courageous gallery celebrating the Silent Service, featuring the a fully operational submarine periscope to look through.

Peter Dunlop, manager of the heritage site said a 21-strong team of volunteers had worked with him over the winter to improve all every gallery, "showcasing the history of the Dockyard and Royal Navy from 1700 to the present day.

He continued: "Visitors will have the option of going on a guided tour or exploring the centre on their own. We would encourage you to come along and see for yourselves what treasures we have here."

Deputy Naval Base Commander Captain David Preece who was full of praise for the those who gave up their free time to run the centre.

"We all know the magic doesn't happen by magic," he said. "It happens due to the hard work of the volunteers to get involved and I am enormously grateful to the volunteers for all hard work that has gone into getting to this point. It's always important to look backwards to see at how we arrived here today."

The centre is open to visitors from March to October every Wednesday and every second Saturday from 10am-3pm. There is no need to book but check the website for latest information at www.devonportnhc.wordpress.com.

Admission is free, but donations to cover running costs are appreciated. Parking is available on site.

Wrecks revisited

CHIEF Petty Officer Richard Jones hopes to shed light on mysteries of the Solent with his 22nd book.

The senior rate from HMS Collingwood has made it his life's mission to highlight 'forgotten' tragedies across the UK – underground accidents, ships lost in war or in peacetime, train and air crashes – with memorials erected to the victim, plaques for rescuers and books bringing the stories to life.

For his latest work he turns to waters most RN personnel know well: Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight.

Even for an experienced shipwreck hunter and student of tragedy, delving into wrecks on his doorstep has proved eye-opening.

"There are a surprisingly large number of historic ships that have come to grief in such a small body of water so close to the shore that in many cases you could almost walk to them," Richard said.

Shipwrecks of the Solent is published by Amberley, priced £15.99.



In front of the memorial wall to which their names have just been added, naval D-Day veterans Stan Ford and John Roberts recall memories of June 6 1944
Picture: Sgt Jimmy Wise, RAF

Make sure it does not happen again

"I'M JOHN, so you must be Stan..."

They had never met before, but within 60 seconds John Roberts and Stan Ford were locked in conversation and sharing their memories of June 6 1944.

The only barrage they faced 80 years on was the persistent flash of cameras and a bombardment of questions from the media.

The two naval veterans – Stan, aged 98, and John, 99 – were guests of honour at the D-Day Story Museum on Southsea seafront as plans for 80th anniversary commemorations, sadly likely to be the last major event involving those who were there, were announced.

Five major events on both sides of the Channel will mark the milestone this June 5 and 6.

To mark one hundred days to D-Day 80, Stan and John were invited to Portsmouth to add their names to a large memorial wall on Southsea's seafront honouring those who were involved in the 'Great Crusade' in the summer of 1944.

Both said adding their names to the wall of honour was both humbling – and would remind future generations of the sacrifices made by everyone involved in the effort to liberate Europe in 1944.

"I wouldn't say it's a pleasure," said Stan as he was presented with a plaque bearing his name to be added to the wall.

"What we did was a necessary evil. I hope that young people learn about the exploits and sacrifices made in 1944 and together we make sure that it doesn't happen again. That is my wish."

Mr Roberts hopes that his great grandchildren – and their contemporaries – will see his name, and others, on the wall "and learn about those who gave their lives for a free world".

The former sailors' names were two of 13 from a dozen allied nations symbolically fixed on the wall at the D-Day Story museum to mark the milestone countdown.

Come June 5 – as it was in 1944 – Portsmouth will be the hub of activity on this side of the Channel, hosting a national act of commemoration – similar in style and content to the 75th anniversary event in 2019, with a purpose-built stage hosting an event featuring D-Day veterans, music from the era, serving personnel and tributes from special guests. Proceedings will be broadcast live on TV around the globe and will feature a sail past by Royal Navy warships and fly pasts by the Red Arrows and WW2 vintage aircraft.

Across in France on June 5, the Royal British Legion is leading a service of thanksgiving at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Cemetery in Bayeux.

And on June 6 itself, for veterans, family members and the public who wish to pay tribute but are unable to make it to Normandy, there will be commemorations at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

And in Normandy, commemorations will be concentrated at the new British Normandy Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer and at Bayeux Cathedral.

These are likely to be the last formal events at which veterans of the Normandy campaign, now all in their late 90s at the youngest, will be present in numbers. As Stan succinctly put it: "There are not that many of us left now."

As a 19-year-old gunner he was one of 38 men rescued when HMS Fratton – an armed boarding vessel – was sunk by German 'human torpedo' just a week before the liberation of Paris.

Stan has worn leg callipers ever since due to the injuries he sustained after being blown into the Seine Bay by the blast.

"There are 31 reasons that keep me going back to Normandy – the 31 shipmates who never came back," he said.

Destroyer HMS Serapis was more fortunate despite spending the first 11 days of the invasion on the gun line, pounding German positions.

Sub Lieutenant John Roberts, aged just 20, was one of 180 souls aboard on D-Day as Serapis arrived off Sword Beach at 7.30am – during the height of the landings – to hammer the defences. After the war he went on to become a fighter pilot, flew a Sea Fury in Korea, captained aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal and headed the Fleet Air Arm, retiring after a 40-year career in the Service in 1978.

He continued: "I will never forget D-Day, and I'm proud to know that the British people won't forget either. I hope that the commemorations in June will help a whole new generation understand the sacrifices made on their behalf."

The Royal Navy's involvement in June's commemorations – details will be announced in due course – will be overseen by Portsmouth Naval Base Commander Commodore John Voyce.

He said given the history – Eisenhower's headquarters at Southwick Park just outside the city, the huge build-up of forces in the port and surrounding area – Portsmouth was the obvious choice for the main event on this side of the Channel 80 years on.

"We have a really exciting event planned with Portsmouth as the focus of national commemorations," Commodore Voyce said.

"We can already see the public really getting behind the 80th anniversary with wonderful projects such as 'the longest yarn' knitting initiative."

He continued: "For me, the opportunity to talk to those who were there has been both humbling and inspiring, hearing the stories, learning about their experiences."

"I don't think anyone who speaks to a D-Day veteran can fail to be inspired by what they did 80 years ago."

Further details about anniversary events can be found at: dday80.campaign.gov.uk.

Descendants of five of the Allied leaders who oversaw victory in Europe will share their unique insight for the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

The granddaughters of Churchill and Eisenhower, grandsons of Field Marshal Montgomery and Admiral Ramsay and the son of Eisenhower's deputy Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder will meet on June 8 in Southwick – the village outside Portsmouth which served as the headquarters for the Normandy landings.

The five guests will hold a panel discussion, sharing memories of their relatives and showcasing pertinent artifacts and heirlooms.

The gathering is part of wider D-Day 80th anniversary events in Southwick which will allow visitors access to sites connected with the Normandy landings which are normally off limits to the general public, notably Southwick House, home to the famous 'map room', and the underground HQ at Fort Southwick.

Various themed events, contemporary music, costumes, food and entertainment are also part of the two-day event, with tickets (priced £10-£27) available from southwickrevival.co.uk.

Proceeds go to – which in 2023 topped £46,000 – are shared among local military charities and villages causes.



Dave in Borneo in the early 60s with two Rolleiflex cameras, a cine camera and a machine gun

Legend with a lens

PHOTOGRAPHERS past and present gathered in St George's Church in Waterlooville to pay tribute to one of the most accomplished Cold War Royal Navy cameramen.

For nearly 40 years the images captured by Dave Morris (pictured inset enjoying his retirement), who died on Boxing Day in Portsmouth's Queen Alexandra Hospital at the age of 84, were seen by hundreds of thousands of people, locally, nationally and internationally.

Born in Charlton, Dorset, and educated at Shaftesbury Grammar School, Dave took up photography as a schoolboy, selling prints of weddings, football teams and even local prize-winning cattle.

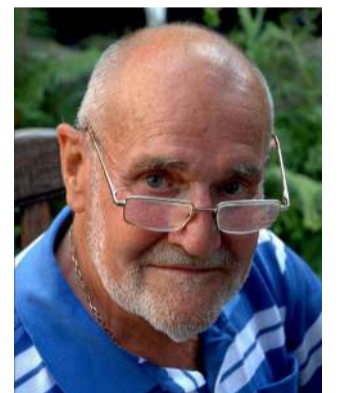
He joined the Navy in 1956 aged 17, and went to HMS Gamecock, the Royal Naval Air Station near Nuneaton where he came top of his class in basic seamanship and airmanship, before being selected to train as a photographer at HMS Peregrine (RNAS Ford) near Arundel.

Dave passed top of his course and joined the section at HMS Heron... but found himself mostly working at nearby RAF Merryfield where an off-shoot section had been established in an old Nissen hut under the wonderfully-named Petty Officer 'Pinhead' Smalley who left all the jobs to Dave... who in turn welcomed the experience gained.

Drafts with HMS Vidal in the West Indies, allowing him to build up his aerial portfolio fly around the Caribbean islands in the ship's Dragonfly helicopter, the Fleet Photographic Unit (then based at Fraser Guntery Range in Eastney), HMS Hermes in the Med, then new frigate HMS Ashanti followed, before two years in Singapore – at the height of the Borneo conflict.

Dave was airborne frequently, taking stills or filming operations at the forward operating base at Nanga Gaat, and chasing Indonesian kumpits (boats) – the footage being used by Movietone News.

His next seagoing draft was the coveted Royal Yacht Britannia; he spent two years photographing numerous VIPs and world leaders and particularly impressed HM the Queen Mother with one portrait



which she used as that year's official Christmas card.

On his return to the UK Dave picked up his petty officer's rate and a draft to the RN press office in London for an introduction to public relations.

He later described the course as "a joke" but rectified the situation by helping to devise a more intensive and practical training programme which was subsequently used by all three Forces and earned him the BEM, presented aboard HMS Victory.

In 1968, he was the last individual photographer to win the Peregrine Trophy before the rules were changed to make it a competition open to sea-going ships and shore-based sections irrespective of size.

His naval career ended in 1977 when he was medically discharged and he immediately received job offers from several national newspapers but instead became senior press photographer with the Portsmouth News, where he remained for 20 years.

Such was his impact on his colleagues both in the RN and the Portsmouth News that a memorial service was held to celebrate his life and work, attending by friends, family, serving and former RN and press photographers, standard bearers and a bugler.

"He was one of the most accomplished and creative members ever to serve in the photographic branch," said former colleague Ray Pogson.

"Fellow photos remember Dave as an enthusiastic individual who worked hard to capture the perfect picture, and who was always prepared to help and advise younger members making their way in branch."



Peter Marchment and Heather Brown - Ian's son and widow - with family members a tour of 820 NAS with senior pilot Lt Cdr Si Thompson

Culdrose family honour tragic aircrewman Ian

MORE than 40 years since a Royal Navy aircrewman lost his life in a horrific mid-air collision, his widow returned for an emotional visit to his squadron.

Leading Aircrewman Ian Marchment was one of five aircrew killed when two Sea King helicopters collided and crashed into the sea on March 6, 1981. They were both flying in poor visibility from aircraft carrier HMS Invincible.

All five crew - Lieutenant Commander David Roue, Lieutenant Paul Littleton, Sub-Lieutenant Robert Bateman and Sub-Lieutenant Marcus McDonald plus Ian - were serving with 820 Naval Air Squadron based now, as then, at RNAS Culdrose.

Joined by her the couple's son Peter Marchment, who was just eight months old when his father was killed, Ian's widow Heather Brown laid a wreath to remember all five men when the family returned to the Cornish air station to present a trophy awarded in the aircrewman's name.

"I've had mixed emotions," said Mrs Brown, reflecting on her return to Helston. "I am proud to have been able to do it and proud for my family to be a part of that. I always wanted to return to the base, but it has been emotional coming back."

"I know Ian was happy when he died, doing a job he loved. Yes, the accident might not have happened, but he knew - and lived with - those risks. It is something I think about but you have to live for today."

Immediately following the tragedy, a trophy was created at Culdrose in memory of LACMN Marchment for the Sea King Force, which Mrs Brown presented the following year.

With Sea Kings have passed into history, but the Marchment trophy has been revived by their successor, the Merlin Helicopter Force.

It was presented by Peter Marchment to the Merlin aircrewman who has shown outstanding

performance in anti-submarine warfare operations over the past year: Petty Officer Aircrewman Nathan Allen for his role with 814 Naval Air Squadron's Mohawk Flight in locating and tracking submarines during live operations.

Mr Marchment, who was accompanied by his wife and children, said it was moving to be back in a place where his father worked and lived all those years ago.

In 1981, the Marchment family lived in Bulwark Road in Helston. The couple were both just 23 years old and Peter had been born the previous year.

"We were just starting out in life," said Mrs Brown. "Ian had joined the Royal Navy from the age of 16 and he'd changed over to the Fleet Air Arm. That's when he was really happy and he came into his own. This was something he'd seen and got interested in and he wanted to become an officer."

"They flew out on the Thursday up to Portsmouth. The next day they were doing their sorties and visibility was poor. That's when the accident happened."

"I was getting ready to drive to Cheltenham the next day, when I saw the news on the television and there was a knock at the door. It was the naval padre. I didn't really understand what was happening on the news and he just flew past me and turned the TV off. I can remember it quite vividly."

"I stayed on in Helston for three and half years and I made lots of friends. It was a very friendly community so I have lots of happy memories too. I stayed in touch with Ian's family too."

"I am quite a strong person really and I grieve privately in my own way. It did make me realise how life is short and you don't know what's around the corner."

The family were shown around 820 Naval Air Squadron to see how it is today, a chalice engraved with LACMN Marchment's name, which is still used in church ceremonies.

The visit ended with a short remembrance service and wreath-laying at the air station's memorial garden.

Coventry's Cross now on canvas

EMERGING from the depths a diver clasps the Cross of Nails - symbol of a city, a Royal Navy warship and hope over suffering - this is a specially-commissioned painting of a unique feat of diving.

Four decades after the Cross was recovered from the wreck of HMS Coventry off the Falklands, one of the team involved in the delicate operation commissioned a tribute to the men lost when the warship went down - and the men who dived on the wreck on the secret recovery operation.

Former clearance diver Ray Sinclair says the Cross of Nails is a "significant religious relic" and its history and importance to the Royal Navy, HMS Coventry and her namesake city "cannot be understated".

The original cross was fashioned by the Rev Arthur Philip Wales who found several 18in mediaeval nails in the still-smouldering ruins of Coventry Cathedral on the morning after the Midlands city was flattened by the Luftwaffe in November 1940.

The clergyman used some wire to bind together three nails into the shape of a Latin cross, creating the original Cross of Nails, which became an icon of suffering in war, but also of human triumph over adversity and a symbol of peace and reconciliation.

When Coventry Cathedral was rebuilt in the aftermath of WW2, other nails and roof spikes recovered from the ruins were welded together, plated with silver and sent to cities in Germany which suffered badly from bombing including Kiel, Berlin and Dresden.

And when a new HMS Coventry joined the Fleet in the late 1970s, a Cross of Nails was donated to the destroyer as an enduring bond with the city.

Kept in the captain's cabin, it also became the centrepiece of the Sunday morning service aboard.

And that is where divers found it, among personal possessions of Captain David Hart-Dyke, HMS Coventry's Commanding Officer on the fateful day of May 25 1982.

The destroyer was struck by three 250kg bombs on her port side while operating with



HMS Broadsword off Pebble Island, north of the Falklands, in a bid to lure Argentine aircraft away from the bulk of the British amphibious force around San Carlos water.

The destroyer sank in 23 minutes, taking 19 men down with her, coming to rest on the seabed 330ft down.

She lay there for several months until the autumn of 1982 when a team of Royal Navy clearance divers was sent to recover top

secret UK/NATO material and documents to prevent it falling into hostile hands.

Recovering the Cross - or some of Capt Hart-Dyke's personal effects - was not strictly part of Operation Blackleg, but was done all the same.

The Cross was returned to Coventry Cathedral by the destroyer's captain, loaned to the next HMS Coventry until the Type 22 frigate was decommissioned in 2002, returned once more to Midlands, before again loaned to the next ship linked with the city, destroyer HMS Diamond - currently deployed on operations in the Mediterranean/Middle East.

More than 40 years on from the delicate recovery operation, Mr Sinclair asked award-winning South African artist Dave Coburn to capture the moment the cross was seen for the first time being carried towards the surface of the Atlantic.

"I wanted him to capture the light and the dark of the diving conditions the team worked in, but symbolically and spiritually to represent John 1:5: 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.'"

The resulting artwork, which can be seen in Gosport's civic museum, is dedicated to HMS Coventry's dead, as well as all those involved in the recovery mission, not just the divers, who successfully completed their mission, recovering everything on the MOD manifest in the most physically and psychologically demanding of circumstances, but also their civilian support crew.

"To this day, Operation Blackleg has been the Royal Navy's finest achievement in deep saturation diving recovery from inside a warship - on the same page as the gold recovered from HMS Edinburgh. One was for the security of NATO, the other was about treasure," said Ray, who now lives in Brisbane, Australia.

"I hope the families of those sailors who remain forever on watch in the South Atlantic - and the 20th crewman who died from injuries sustained much later find some comfort in the painting."

Words by Ray Sinclair

WW1 Naval VC sells for £220k

A VICTORIA Cross posthumously awarded to a WW1 Royal Navy officer was bought at auction for £220,000.

For only the second time in more than a century the decoration, won by Lieutenant Commander Edgar Cookson in 1915, came on the market at auction.

And as in 1977, when it was last auctioned, it was snapped up by a private collector who paid the maximum fee. London auctioneers Noonans expected the medal to fetch between £180,000 and £220,000.

Mark Quayle, Noonans' medal specialist and associate director was not surprised.

"The rarity of the award, and the repeated acts of gallantry, are all reflected in the price achieved on the day," he said.

Of the four dozen Victoria Cross recipients in the Royal Navy in the Great War, neither the name Cookson nor his deeds are as well known as household names such as Jack Cornwell at Jutland or submarine Edward Boyle, or actions such as the Gallipoli landings or Zeebrugge Raid.

They deserve to be.

In September 1915 the 31-year-old officer, originally from Tranmere in present-day Merseyside, led a force of gunboats up the River Tigris as part of an effort to support British troops grappling with the Ottoman Empire in

Mesopotamia (today Iraq).

By the end of the month, British soldiers were bearing down on the town of Kut-al-Amara - just 100 miles southeast of Baghdad.

The British drive on what is today the capital of Iraq relied on supplies via the Tigris, but Turkish forces had thrown a series of barriers across the river to block any traffic.

On September 28, Cookson in HMS Comet was sent to reconnoitre - and, if he could, destroy - one such obstruction near Kut.

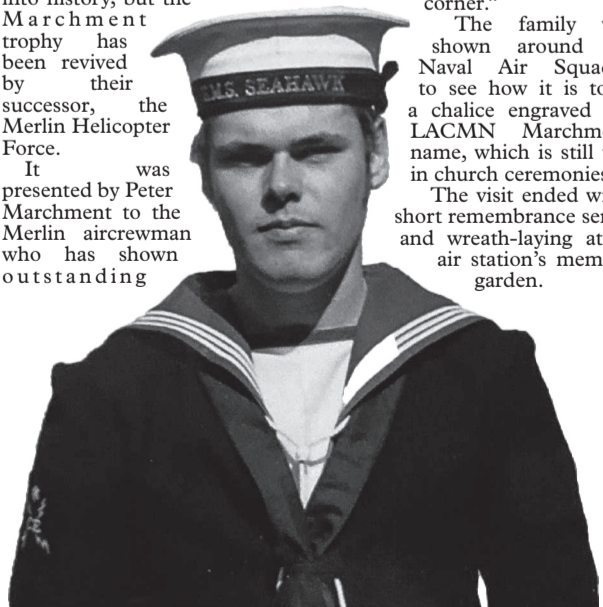
As the gunboat flotilla approached the barrier, it came under ferocious rifle and machine-gun fire from both banks.

When the first attempt to sink a dhow in the middle of the flow was thwarted by defensive fire, Cookson ordered the Comet to be placed alongside the vessel.

He then jumped on to the dhow with an axe and tried to cut the wire hawsers connecting it with the two other craft forming the obstruction.

His action drew intense Turkish fire and Edgar Cookson was cut down - one fellow officer said "there were more bullet holes in him than they cared to count".

Cookson's selfless actions earned him Britain's highest decoration, presented to his mother in November 1916 by George V.



Naval Quirks

THE FILM "MASTER AND COMMANDER" WAS BASED ON A TRUE STORY SET IN 1814 - BUT ONE KEY CHANGE WAS MADE...

THE FRENCH FRIGATE THAT IS PURSUED AND CAPTURED BY HMS PHOEBE IN THE FILM WAS IN THE REAL STORY AN AMERICAN RAIDER - THE ESSEX!

PRESUMABLY IT WAS THOUGHT THE DEFEAT AND CAPTURE OF A US WARSHIP IN THE FINAL REEL WOULD NOT BE GOOD FOR US BOX OFFICE RECEIPTS!

A RE-MAKING OF "SINK THE BISMARCK" SLANTED SO AS NOT TO UPSET THE GERMANS?



Cadet conference success

NEARLY 300 cadets from across the UK attended their Cadet Conference 2024 for an unforgettable weekend of learning, camaraderie and fun.

Held at Kingswood Activity Centre in South Yorkshire, the weekend featured interactive cadet-led workshops, thrilling activities and fireside chats with Captain Sea Cadets, Captain Neil Downing RN.

The theme of the conference was Future Ready Together, with sea cadets providing input in key areas of the strategy, looking at growth, inclusion, a youth-centred approach, Cadet Voice and flexible volunteering.

Young voices were given free rein in a series of interactive workshops designed for cadets, by cadets, with topics ranging from improving collaboration between sea cadets and royal marines cadets, to 'what makes a great volunteer?'

With so many great ideas coming forward, the event confirmed that Cadet Conference continues to play a major role in making Sea Cadets even more inclusive and relevant to today's young people.

"Cadets should have a voice because in the end it's our organisation," summed up Royal Marines cadet Kwame, 13, from

Wolverhampton Unit.

"If we have a voice, we can tailor Sea Cadets to our needs and help everyone have a better experience."

Parents of the cadets also saw the value in their sons and daughters participating in the event.

"My 13-year-old had a fantastic time learning skills that schools just don't teach," reported one parent.

The water quality campaign session provided one such example.

Able Cadet Fraser, 14, from Dundee Unit, said: "It's something I hadn't really thought about until I did the workshop."

"It has opened my mind to the importance of knowing we're boating in water that is clean and safe."

By showing cadets how to carry out water quality tests checking for harmful algae, nitrates and microplastics, the workshop brought home the real-world impact of climate change and pollution on both local wildlife and global ecosystems.

And because the weekend was all about empowering cadets to use their voice, the workshop also showed them how to use their evidence to raise awareness and persuade

decision-makers to take action.

As ever, the central purpose of Cadet Conference was using cadets' in-depth knowledge of the organisation to draw out their ideas on how to make it even better.

And with the charity's Senior Management Team in attendance, Fraser explained how cadets appreciated the chance to "express thoughts and opinions to people who can actually exercise change".

"The 'no rank policy' [meaning ranks and titles were left at home] really helps to highlight the fact that your opinion does matter," Fraser added.

"These cadets feel like they can speak and be listened to."

The weekend was also a valuable lesson in the importance of listening to the opinion of other cadets.

Leading Cadet Keira, 16, from Swansea Unit, said: "I have made many friends with cadets from all areas and been exposed to a range of viewpoints because of people's different background."

"It has given me a better understanding of those differences, and we've discussed how to improve co-operation and worked on our teamwork skills."

The warm and friendly atmosphere created by the event organisers – led by the young people of the National Cadet Voice team assisted by 2023's First Sea Lord's Cadets) gave everyone the confidence to speak up.

"I really loved how everyone was engaged and willing to put their ideas forward," added Kwame, while Cadet First Class Jessica, 15, of Ballymena Unit talked about the "need to be vocal and express ourselves".

Between workshops, cadets had the chance to take part in an RMC map-reading activity; enjoy a unit fundraising masterclass; experience 'fireside chats' with Captain Sea Cadets; and receive informal careers advice from naval officers and senior representatives from the maritime sector.

In between the busy schedule, cadets also had a chance to relax and unwind through activities like the Buddhist tea ceremony and let their hair down and enjoy some dancing with their fellow cadets at the conference disco.

"I've enjoyed seeing cadets that we don't normally see, sharing ideas and making bonds that will hopefully last a lifetime," said Cadet Corporal Colin, 17, who is part of the Royal Marines detachment at Sheffield Unit.



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National awards back with a bang

SEA Cadets celebrated their first National Annual Awards since 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic broke out.

The Canada Trophy for the most efficient unit of 2023 went to Twickenham Unit, who reached the top spot for the first time in their 92-year history.

Another London Area winner, West Ham Unit, were thrilled to receive the McBeath Trophy in recognition of the way they have overcome severe challenges to thrive in a new permanent home.

The Colditz Award for community social action went to Milford Haven Unit, whose Heat & Eat project has provided hot meals and a warm space for young people and families for the past two winters.

Rosyth Royal Marines Cadets was awarded the SRMO's (Staff Royal Marines Officer) Trophy for the most improved detachment, while the TS Indefatigable Cup for the most improved unit went to Barrow Sea Cadets, who achieved over 85 boating hours per cadet during 2023; finished third in the National Junior Boys rowing competition and delivered over 1,000 cadet training days.

The unit even got to meet the Admiral of the Sea Cadet Corps, the Princess Royal, when supporting her visit to the site of BAE Systems' new Submarine Academy in the town.

The prestigious Roddie Casement Sword went to Sub Lieutenant (SCC) Nadine Daly RNR of Clydebank Unit, who Captain Sea Cadets, Captain Neil Downing RN recognised as the Commanding Officer who, by example and dedication, contributed most to the aims of Sea Cadets during the year.

Considering that Nadine is just 27 years old and has been in post for only three years, this is a remarkable achievement, reflecting her hard work and commitment to her cadets.

Among her many successful projects last year was the creation of a new training and parade area at the unit, with help from the Royal Navy's Faslane-based submariners.

HMS Warwick remembered



A SERVICE to mark the 80th anniversary of the sinking of HMS Warwick was held against the backdrop of Warwick Castle.

Leamington & Warwick Sea Cadets played a prominent part in the event, which was organised The Royal Naval Association – Warwick Branch and held close to the memorial tree in the castle grounds.

Some 40 people attended the service including the Mayor of Warwick, Cllr Oliver Jacques; the Town Clerk Jayne Topham, councillors and officers of Warwick District Council and Warwickshire County Council, the RNA National Chairman Peter Godwin, RNA Area 8 Chairman Chris Lincoln, RNA Shipmates and Standards and members of The Family and Friends of HMS Warwick Association, with relatives of those who served the ship on that day.

Following a welcome by John Langdon (Chair Warwick RNA), the service was conducted by Arthur Webster (Chaplain Warwick RNA) and *The Last Post* was played by Chris, a music scholar from Warwick School.

HMS Warwick was sunk by enemy action in the Bristol Channel on 20 February 1944, which resulted in the death of 60 men on board.

Fourteen-year-old Jacob, who carried the RNA Standard and is a cadet at

Leamington & Warwick Unit, said: "I was very proud to represent Sea Cadets and the RNA at the ceremony."

CPO (SCC) Paul Freeman, Officer in Charge of Leamington & Warwick Sea Cadets, added: "I felt privileged, humbled and honoured to attend the ceremony and remember those who gave their lives for us."

PO (SCC) Hazel Robbins, Juniors Training Officer at Leamington & Warwick Unit, said: "It was a moving ceremony and an event that should always be remembered. I am proud to have been a part of it."

A display telling the story of HMS Warwick and its crew was also on display inside the Court House in Jury Street. PO (SCC) Ashley Garrison-Brown, Unit Training Officer at Leamington & Warwick Sea Cadets Unit, played an active role in researching for and setting up the display.

"It was an enormous privilege to be able to join members of the local community and relatives of the crew to remember HMS Warwick, a ship that served with such distinction in two world wars, and pay tribute to those who were lost on the day the ship was sunk," Ashley said.

"As more Second World War veterans pass away, it becomes our duty to keep their memory alive and it is a duty that we, as Sea Cadets perform proudly."



CEREMONY FOR 19TH CENTURY ARCTIC EXPLORERS

DARTFORD & Crayford Unit played a key role in the recent commemoration of an ill-fated 1845 Arctic expedition led by Rear Admiral Sir John Franklin, in which two Royal Navy ships never returned after becoming trapped with ice.

Actor, comedian, writer and TV presenter, Sir Michael Palin, attended to unveil a commemorative plaque at the banks of the River Thames in Greenhithe, Kent – the place where the expedition set sail from in the nineteenth century.

Ten cadets (including two junior

cadets) from Dartford & Crayford Unit took part in the unveiling ceremony conducted by the local reverend, councillors and Sir Michael Palin, after which the cadets and staff reformed to give three cheers.

LC Molly Sargeson, in her capacity as Mayor's cadet, escorted the Dartford Mayor, Cllr Rosanna Currens.

The *Monty Python* star spoke of "feeling emotional" as he unveiled the plaque to remember those who lost their lives during the doomed voyage of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror in a bid to cross the Northwest Passage.

All 129 men on board died, with the shipwrecks only discovered by Canadian authorities a decade ago.

Sir Michael, who has written a book about the voyage, said: "This is a story about the achievement of the Navy and the extraordinary skills of our sailors."

"But I suppose, most of all, it is just that slightly emotional feeling that this would have been the last place where people would have seen these ships departing from."

"I've become so attached to the story of Erebus and the crew of Erebus and all the people on board, I've read their letters, I feel all the sort of emotions they must have felt – great hope and some doubt. The spirit of this place is quite important."

The event was well covered by ITV News and the local press.

"Our cadets did an amazing job," said the unit's Commanding Officer, PO (SCC) Kai Sargeson MInstLM.

Finley makes sailing championships



A 12-YEAR OLD cadet from Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Sea Cadets is making waves after qualifying to compete in the Topper World Championships.

Finley joined Sea Cadets in February 2022. He had his first taste of sailing a year ago and enjoyed it so much that he saved to buy his own Topper dinghy sailboat.

Since then, Finley has been unstoppable. He started racing at Cheddar Reservoir with Bristol Corinthians Yacht Club.

The experience and confidence Finley has gained from Sea Cadets gave him the determination to join the next step up from club racing, South West Toppers.

Within six months of owning his own boat, and three months into joining The International Topper Class Association (ITCA) and winning a haul of trophies, Finley managed to secure third place in the overall leader board for the South West Toppers and a first place in the South West Autumn series.

Finley is one of 25 sailors across the country to be chosen to join the ITCA (GBR) 4.2 squad this year. He has also qualified to receive invitational top coaching to further develop his sailing skills.

Finley has begun his first series of National events NS1–NS5, competing against some of the best Topper sailors in the country.

The Topper National Championships will be held in August 2024.

He said: "I'm really proud of myself for getting this far in a short amount of time and I have just received the news that I will be sailing at the Worlds in Mar Menor in Spain later in 2024."



Meet the best chef in the navy

DELIVERING 'the world on a plate' to shipmates on HMS Northumberland at mealtimes earned Leading Caterer Carl Tester the title 'Royal Navy Chef of the Year'.

No matter where the ship has been – chiefly on patrol in the North Atlantic – Carl has endeavoured to bring the world to dinnerplates, drawing upon his skill, imagination and what's in the frigate's pantry... although he modestly attributes the success to the team spirit and collective skills of HMS Northumberland's catering department.

"Being recognised with this award is a huge honour, but it really belongs to the whole galley," said Carl, who's originally from Haywards Heath in West Sussex but who now lives in Plymouth with his wife Marianne and daughter Eowyn.

"We always aim to make every meal feel like a piece of home, with mealtimes a highlight of the day, making the lived experience on board a little better."

The 31-year-old joined the Royal Navy nine years ago, cooked for the Queen when she paid her final visit to HMS Ocean and represented the service against the Army and RAF in the culinary arts team.

His passion and skill in the galley particularly came to the fore last year, when Northumberland was heavily engaged on patrols in the North Atlantic – an unforgiving environment and not the easiest place to take on board fresh supplies. According to his citation: "His global menus bring excitement to meal times, turning them into culinary adventures and breaking the monotony of life at sea."

"His efforts have not just showcased his culinary talents but have also connected the diverse ship's company through their love of great food."

His boss aboard Northumberland, Chief Caterer Chief Petty Officer Tim Rowe, said Carl "expertly creates a sense of adventure in his menus, delighting the taste buds of his shipmates with global flavours served in the middle of the ocean."

As well as his Chef of the Year title, Carl is nominated for the Craft Guild of Chefs Public Sector Chef Award, with hopes of being shortlisted for their awards ceremony in June.

He joins Petty Officer Cat Taylor of HMS Trent who was crowned RN Caterer of the Year in January in being put forward for a national award.



Wrens reunited at Yeovilton

RNAS Yeovilton hosted a visit from the members of the Yeovil and District branch of the Association of Women of the Royal Navy Service (Wrens).

The Association of Wrens was formed in 1920 and welcomes all serving and former women of the Royal Naval Services. Fourteen members visited Yeovilton with the oldest member being 86 years old.

Ms Lisa Snowden, 56, who left Yeovilton in 1996 as a Leading Wren Radio operator, said: "It is always so positive to meet those serving in the Royal Navy and Fleet Air Arm of today, keeping the connections with us veterans. Sharing stories and memories of our experiences and hearing about what it is like to serve today."

The Wrens had a station tour visiting Merlin helicopters at Commando Helicopter Force 846 Naval Air Squadron (NAS), Air Traffic Control and historic aircraft at Navy Wings.

Ms Anne Griffiths, 66, who left Yeovilton in 1983 as a Wren Air Mechanic 1st class, said: "The young female sailors were fantastic and were really interested in our memories and our stories. Likewise, I was totally engaged with their experiences. So different."

Yeovilton servicewomen and Wrens shared their stories and during a coffee break reflected on the differences between serving now compared to 35+ years ago.

Student turns instructor within months

ONE minute you're beginning your career as a Fleet Air Arm helicopter pilot... the next you're a qualified instructor, helping others follow your career path.

OK, so it's not quite as easy as that, but Lieutenant Jack Cook has made a little piece of UK aviation history: the first Qualified Helicopter Instructor (known through the air world simply as QHI) to complete the Central Flying School course having only finished ab initio pilot training a few months earlier.

Jack has actually been flying with the Navy since 2012 – just not as a pilot. He joined the service as a direct-entry aircrewman, earning his wings on the Merlin Mk3 in 2014.

He spent the next four years with Commando Helicopter Force as an aircrewman, serving with both Merlin squadrons and the Wildcats of 847 NAS, deploying around the world: Norway, the Mediterranean and Caribbean, the latter providing humanitarian aid in the wake of Hurricane Irma which wrecked British and Commonwealth territories in the region in September 2017.

Selected for the Officer Corps and training as a pilot the

following year, Jack could have been flying F-35 stealth fighters from his grading assessment and element flying training with 727 and 703 Naval Air Squadrons respectively.

Instead, he stuck with his passion: helicopters.

On joining RAF Shawbury to undertake pilot training on the Juno helicopter, Jack's previous aviation background came to the fore; he flourished both in the simulator and the 'real thing' and had the capacity to support his fellow course mates through the basic and advanced phases, earning title of best overall trainee on 670 Squadron AAC.

During his time as an ab-initio trainee, staff also began to recognise his potential as an instructor and so, after a short period as a staff pilot with No 1 Flying Training School to build up his flying experience and captaincy, Jack began training to become a Qualified Helicopter Instructor in August...

... and four months later he graduated from the Central Flying School – the world's oldest military flying training school in the world, formed in 1912.

Since the end of January he's been sharing his knowledge with the next generation, before eventually returning to CHF.



Marines aid rescue

TWO Royal Marines helped rescue a climber who had fallen 65ft down a Lake District fell.

Lieutenant Colonel Mick Trafford and veteran Tris Finn were planning to summit Blencathra via Sharp Edge on the second day of their trip to the national park, but were told by a fellow climber that someone had fallen into a gully and that the Mountain Rescue Team (MRT) from Keswick had been called.

Sizing up the situation and drawing on vast commando experience and training, Tris and Mick determined they were able to reach the fallen climber – despite extremely slippery conditions.

On getting to the female casualty, nothing immediately indicated anything life-threatening, but she'd temporarily lost consciousness in the fall and had sustained a number of other injuries.

Drawing on their training, experience and emergency equipment in their daysacks, Mick provided casualty care, including treatment for shock and prevention of hypothermia, while Tris coordinated with the Mountain Rescue Team and the paramedic at the MRT's base.

The pair knew they weren't equipped to extract a casualty from this precarious position, and that it would be a number of hours until MRT arrived, so settled in, monitored the casualty and helped keep her spirits up.

"The casualty had taken a really nasty fall in difficult conditions," said Mick, who is Commanding Officer of Royal Marines Reserve Bristol.

"She was fortunate to have been able to arrest herself where she did.

"Once we understood the situation, it was immediately clear that without assistance she'd be in increasing



Lt Col Mick Trafford and veteran Tris Finn

danger as time passed waiting for the MRT.

"Tris and I formed a quick plan and from there experience, training and a bit of decision-making was all that was needed.

"Delivering casualty care in such precarious conditions is pretty demanding.

"Tris and I have been oppos for more than twenty years – I couldn't have picked a better person to be with on the day.

"Subsequently, we've been delighted and relieved to learn that the lady who fell will make a full recovery."

Tris, who left service as a Major in 2022 and is now a history teacher at Colyton Grammar School in Devon, added: "Mick and I were just glad we were able to help, and keep her comfortable and reassured until the MRT arrived. From a personal perspective, it was an incredibly valuable learning experience that thankfully ended well."

After about two and a half hours the vanguard of the MRT arrived. The first of the team in the gully brought additional medical equipment, and began making an assessment of the best extraction option.

Shortly thereafter Tris was able to climb from the gully on a top rope set up by the mountain rescuers, but as Mick was built into the casualty's platform, and had been leading her care thus far the MRT in the gully were keen to keep hold of him to assist with the casualty.

About 30-40 minutes later, the necessary high anchors were in place to bring in the extraction stretcher.

As this came down into the gully, they began to prepare the casualty for extraction, including dressing wounds, pain relief and pelvic splinting.

Loading the injured walker on to the stretcher allowed Mick to get out of the gully with some of the MRT, to be reunited with Tris.

As the stretcher and casualty were lowered into the re-entrant below, and the remainder of the MRT extracted, Tris and Mick were able to gather up (most) of their kit and make their way back off the hill.

"Not quite the day we'd planned," Mick said. "But definitely right place, right time"



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ROW OF THE VALKYRIES

FIVE Royal Navy sailors will make history next winter as the first serving military women's team to attempt to row the Atlantic Ocean.

The five – known collectively as the Valkyries – face 3,000 miles of open seas and competition from around three dozen other teams as they take on the World's Toughest Row.

It's the fourth time a Royal Navy team has taken part in the row in five years under the banner of HMS Oardacious.

The five sailors – skipper Izzy Rawlinson (a marine engineer in submarines), mine clearance diver Ali Aindow, Aaby Aldridge who maintains survival equipment, pilot Lily-Mae Fisher and warfare specialist Nic Hall – plan to set off from San Sebastian de la Gomera in the Canaries on December 12... and row into Nelson's Dockyard, Antigua around five weeks later.

The team – who are also managed by a female sailor, helicopter observer (navigator/sensors and weapons specialist) Alex Kelley – will row in shifts of two hours on, two hours off, all day every day.

The rowers will suffer salt sores, blisters, sleep deprivation, sea sickness, 40ft waves and scorching tropical sunshine as they push themselves to the limit – driven by the goal not merely of completing the epic challenge, but also of beating an all-female British Army team also taking part in the race.

Beyond the physical and mental strains the event will place on the team, above all the rowers hope it will inspire girls and young women.

"We hope to portray ordinary women doing something extraordinary and to

showcase that as hard as something could be, tomorrow is a different day," said skipper Izzy.

"If I could make someone's life slightly better by them looking at me and thinking, if she can do it then I can get definitely out of this, I can definitely make it through to the other side, then that's good enough for me.

"It gives us the opportunity to promote women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics – and advocate for mental health, wellness and resilience."

The Valkyries will use the same boat which helped a five-strong all-male Royal Navy team to victory in the 2023-24 race, Captain Jim.

Completely self-sufficient, stocked with food to last up to 55 days and equipped with solar panels providing power to two batteries which supply all the essential equipment (including the all-important water maker – a mini reverse osmosis plant which makes fresh water from seawater).

As with the three previous incarnations of Oardacious, the rowers are looking to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing, building on achievements since 2019; to date, in conjunction with the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, the campaign has raised more than £200,000 for submariners and their families and is now looking to expand it to the broader naval family.

Over the next nine months, the rowers – who are peppered around naval bases across the UK – will train independently for the most part, as well as taking Captain Jim into the Atlantic at every opportunity.

MEET THE FIRST MILITARY WOMEN'S TEAM TO ATTEMPT TO ROW ACROSS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN



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SCAN TO EMAIL



ROWERS ARE POWERED UP IN PRAGUE FOR WORLDS...

ROYAL Navy rowers won five medals at the World Rowing Indoor Championships in Prague.

The navy's ergers claimed six top-ten finishes over 2,000m at the event which also incorporated the European Championships.

It meant in the 500m races, the RN had six top ten finishes in the World Championships (WRIC24) and nine in the European competition (ERIC24).

Colour Sergeant James Wade of Plymouth-based 30 Commando was once more at the forefront, finishing second in the World Championship Men's Hwt 40+ 2k in a time of six minutes 06.0, which was enough to take European gold.

This was James' third successive year of finishing in the top two at the Worlds.

Meanwhile, Chief Petty Officer Collin Leiba of FOST SMQ – otherwise known at Mr Plymouth 1992 – took silver in both the World and Europeans with a 1 min 23.6 500m race.

Collin has considerable prower over shorter distances where he had held a number of age group World and UK records for the 500m and 1,000m distances.

He was the first Royal Navy winner ever at the World Championship in 2015.

Warrant Officer Mark Branson of HMS Sultan took European silver with a 1 minute 33.9 effort in the 500m.

The standard of competition within Men's and Women's, Hwt and Lwt, 23-39 Age groups is always very high and involves large numbers of racers, including many with Olympic 'on the water' pedigrees and similar future aspirations.

Thus, special mention should be made of RNRA affiliate Dutch RM Exch Officer Captain Ruben Kon (3CDOX), who rowed personal bests of 6 mins 31.0 secs and 1 min 24.0 secs in WRIC Men's Lwt 23-39 2k (9th) and 500m (8th) respectively (also ERIC 9th and 6th).

Without doubt the best performance of any RNRA erger was by affiliate and recent RN Sportswoman of the Year (2022), former Lt Cdr Rachel Aldridge who finished 7th in the WRIC24 Women's Hwt 23-39 2K in 6 mins 57.3 secs. Any sub-7 min time in the Women's 2k is world class and at least matches the levels of performance achieved by many of those who will be racing at the forthcoming Paris Olympics 'on the water'.

The RN team included five new team members racing at WRIC for the 1st time and all team members had benefited from adherence to long-term structured training programmes, including that provided within the Royal Navy Rowing Performance Programme (RNIRPP) under Coach (recent Ex Cdr) Jim Thomson (who took 5th in the Men's Hwt 45+ 500m with a time of 1 min 20.0 secs).

The value of effective training regimes was indicated by the fact that 25 of 32 RNRA race performances were either season or personal lifetime best performances. RN ergers featured heavily in the live streamed races and some were involved in live and recorded interviews/videos for World Rowing and Concept2.

Thus the 2023/24 racing season concludes with a consequent transition to develop base aerobic capacity over the next few months in readiness for the 2024/25 season beginning in September 2024.



SCOTIA ON THE SLOPES

HMS SCOTIA reservists challenged themselves to learn skills and top podiums at Royal Navy Winter Sports Festival.

The Royal Navy Winter Sports Festival took place in January 2024.

HMS Scotia was one contingent of many from the Royal Navy.

Participants were embedded alongside members of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and other Royal Naval Reservists.

The expedition took place solely in the French resort of Les Deux Alps.

The purpose of the expedition was to expose junior members of the Ship's Company to skiing and to challenge them physically and mentally.

The five Junior Rates and four Young Officers all participated in ski lessons of varying levels and disciplines.

These lessons concluded with a race event where all members were exposed to competition and a unique environment.

Beginners' lessons were undertaken by five members of the contingent none of whom had any skiing experience.

The team spent the first two days on the nursery slope learning the basics of donning skis and understanding the feeling of skiing.

Some of the group had difficulties initially but the team effectively pulled together, ensuring that they all progressed.

They were more exposed to the severe weather conditions experienced during the week and not only managed, but overcame the risks and challenges associated with this.

One member of the contingent achieved a bronze medal.

Three members of the group participated in the novice lessons. This builds on a beginner (SF1 week) and creates a link prior to intermediate lessons.

The mixed group in this category brought together a wide range of abilities and pushed the reservists to conduct more advanced techniques and navigate the mountain with safety and speed.

Within the novice group SCOTIA the contingent achieved one silver and one gold medal.

This expedition would not have been possible without the support of the Highland Reserve Forces and Cadet Association and their financial support.



MEG GETS ON HIS BIKE FOR D-DAY CHALLENGE RIDE TO MARK 80 YEARS

CHIEF Marc Ryan, nicknamed 'Meg' is taking part in an 80-mile cycle ride with veterans and other service personnel to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings and to raise money for The Not Forgotten Association, a charity which combats isolation and loneliness amongst the Armed Forces community.

On June 6, 80 years on from the D-Day Landings, Meg along with eight veterans from The Not Forgotten Association Community and eight other Royal Navy and Royal Marine service personnel will undertake the challenge. Consisting of an 80-mile ride from RM Poole to Navy Command HQ in Portsmouth, for the 80th Anniversary, it is estimated it'll take just under ten hours due to varying degrees of physical ability.

Chief Ryan, pictured right, who has been in the Royal Navy for 21 years said: "My aim is to cycle with the veterans, at their speed and it will take as long as it takes, it's not about beating any times or performance goals, it's about sharing an experience and creating a sense of community on a monumental day."

Commander Micheal Bray – Royal Navy lead for The Not Forgotten said that events like the D-Day 80 cycle ride is key to raising awareness of what the charity does for all veterans as they are not well known.

He said: "The Not Forgotten Association is a key forces charity that looks after veterans from all three services by providing entertainment. This is key in enabling veterans of all ages to get out of their houses and attend events such as the garden party at the palace, a weekend's fishing, an afternoon dance or an afternoon tea."

Chief Ryan who first got into cycling from commuting to work at Portsmouth Dockyard from his home in Gosport, is now a brand

ambassador for LIOS, a British owned cycle brand created by Royal Marine Veteran Steve McCulley. Chief Ryan runs a free social Sunday cycle club from the LIOS shop in Lee-on-the-Solent, which started as a social community for ex-serving and current military personnel who enjoy cycling or just want to get a little better at fitness, but the club is open to all.

Chief Ryan said: "A regular member of the Sunday Social cycle club is 70 year old Gerry McDougall who was part of the 1st recy parties to go on to the Falklands. Gerry is not taking part in the D-Day Anniversary ride as he is away but he's a true inspiration and one of the reasons I love being able to spend a Sunday out on a bike with veterans and it's a great way to improve mental health."



NAVY SEES OFF ARMY

THE WOMEN'S and men's senior football teams beat the British Army in their Inter-Service fixtures.

Outstanding performances from both senior representative teams saw them victorious in two of the three fixtures against the Army.

In an end-to-end game at Westleigh Park, home of Havant and Waterlooville Football Club, the Navy women edged the result 1-0 with a well taken goal by Jade Berrow to lift the Knight trophy.

The Royal Navy men followed the success of the women the night before by regaining the Mercury Cup. Goals from Elliot Holmes and Jack McCormack saw the team secure a narrow 2-1 victory against the Army in a thrilling encounter at Fratton Park.

During the game, nineteen former Royal Navy senior players who have made 100 or more appearances for the senior service team were honoured on the pitch at Fratton Park with the coveted golden cap.

Three players were also recognised for reaching more than 200 caps for the Royal Navy, with the most appearances being achieved by former player and Royal Navy Football Association Chief Executive Officer, Steve Johnson.

The Masters team were unfortunate to concede a late goal and lose to strong Army side in their fixture.

YOUNG TOBY'S DYING WISH DOESN'T COME UP 'SHORT'

TERMINALLY ill Royal Navy veteran Toby Brann had his dying wish come true when he watched England beat Ireland 23-22 in the Six Nations at Twickenham.

The 23-year-old, who has a rare form of cancer, met match-winner Marcus Smith and came away with a unique souvenir, the fly half's England shorts.

Toby and his dad, Royal Navy Commander Rob Brann, were gifted tickets for the game by Rugby4Heroes after an appeal on social media by Rob and his wife Helen, which was shared by former SAS soldier and best-selling author Chris Ryan.

"The match was superb, England were awesome and the whole stadium was jumping – the atmosphere was terrific," said Toby, who is now wheelchair bound.

"I could not have wished for a better day and then to meet Marcus after the match and his amazing drop goal was just the icing on the cake."

Smith, whose drop goal won the match, said: "It was great to share that moment pitch side with Toby and his dad and to celebrate the win with them."

Toby served five years in the Navy including a memorable spell aboard the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth during exercises in the United States.

Rugby4Heroes (rugbyforheroes.org/about-us/) is a rugby and music festival run by Old Leamingtonians RFC to support Armed Forces charities.

Volunteer and member Mike Vallance donated his own tickets to the pair. He said: "It was the least I could do for a young man who has served his country and is showing such courage in such difficult circumstances."

"I am just so grateful for everyone who made this possible especially Rugby4Heroes and the brilliant staff at Twickenham. Thank you for a very special day."

The young sailor, who has Stage Four of a rare form of cancer called adrenal cortisol carcinoma, had always wanted to watch England play rugby at Twickenham with his father Rob.

At the end of the game fly half Smith, who had come on as a substitute in the 60th minute and won the match with a last-gasp drop goal raced from the West Stand tunnel area right across the pitch to the East Stand to meet up with his family and his girlfriend, where Toby and his father were sitting.

Rob said: "At the end of the match, with England players finishing their lap of honour to rapturous applause, Marcus Smith came over to the area we were in to celebrate with his family members."

"I approached his girlfriend and explained Toby's situation and his terminal illness and that he would love to have a photo with Marcus. She duly asked Marcus, who came over to chat with Toby."

"What a fantastic day. The amazing reaction to Chris Ryan sharing our story, the generous donation of tickets, the accommodating helpfulness of staff at Twickenham and the great atmosphere created by the fans."

"Everyone helped make way for Toby's wheelchair and laughed and joked with us – and, of course, two fantastic rugby teams treated us to an amazing game of rugby – an experience which has touched our hearts and created a lasting memory for all of us."

Afterwards Chris Ryan said on social media: "We all know RN veteran Toby and let's be proud of the tiny part we played in putting that smile on his face."

"For his dreadful condition, he was in really high spirits and I spoke with Toby as soon as the game finished. He was actually next to Marcus Smith, who came over to say hello to him. He was just overwhelmed and overjoyed."

"He's such a strong character for the position that he's been placed in, he's just steadfast in his spirit. He is worrying about his family. He's more concerned about them than himself. He's just a great man. He sent me the picture of him with Marcus and it was actually overwhelming, to tell you the truth."

"This will be his last winter and last summer," Chris added.



Toby with England's match-winner Marcus Smith after the 23-22 epic



Pants for the memories: Toby with his unique souvenir of the match



Toby and father Rob aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth



Toby and father Rob at the England Six Nations game against Ireland

"Now having met the young man, what surprised me was his love for his family, his concern for his family. The reason he asked to go to the rugby match was for memories for his father. He's a selfless young man who is thinking about other people rather than himself. It's moving. I've been around a lot of people in situations where death occurs, and this actually had a profound effect on me."

The Rugby Football Union and the Royal Navy Rugby Union had earlier contacted Toby's father with an invitation to Twickenham to watch England's Guinness Six Nations match against Wales.

The England team had also invited them to squad training

at Pennyhill Park but, while being very grateful for the offer, it was decided that making the journey from Plymouth was not manageable at that time. Father and son were, however, able to be guests at the Wales Test before going back to watch England's dramatic victory over Ireland.

Royal Navy Rugby Union Council member, Kirsty Marlor, said: "It was a real privilege to have Toby and Rob at Twickenham as our guests for the Wales match, to recognise their service and help them make memories. The rugby family has wrapped their arms around them and I'm so glad that they were at the stadium to enjoy the England victory at the weekend."

A WARM UP IN WARMER CLIMES FOR INTER-SERVICES



THE Royal Navy Women's Hockey Team returned to Gibraltar once again in February to take advantage of the warm weather in preparation for the United Kingdom Armed Forces Hockey Inter-Services tournament.

The team arrived with a squad of 20 including 16 players, three of whom are RN doctors, and four members of staff who came from all areas of the UK and included a member of HQ British Forces Gibraltar.

Various matches were played against local hockey teams – Hawks Veterans, Eagles Ladies and Hawks Ladies – with the Royal Navy team winning all of their matches.

Although the women thought they were coming to Gibraltar for some warm weather, their last match against the Gibraltar U16's team was abandoned due to a downpour of rain resulting in the pitch being flooded.

The RN women returned back to the

UK and will continue their preparations for the United Kingdom Armed Forces Hockey Inter Services tournament being held in Aldershot where they will play against the Army Ladies Hockey and the Royal Air Force Ladies Hockey.

A Royal Navy spokesperson said: "We thoroughly enjoyed our time in Gibraltar. We always get a warm reception from our friends from the Gibraltar Hockey Association. They support us for our training and match needs."

"Another supporter of Royal Navy (Women's) Hockey is our former President of the Royal Navy Hockey Association, Vice Admiral Sir David Steel KBE, DL.

"Sir David made time in his very busy programme to come and speak with all the players and cheered us on quietly in the stands as he observed the match."

SAM VISITS RALEIGH

SAILORS in training at HMS Raleigh had the opportunity to listen to and meet Premiership Rugby player Leading Hand Sam Matavesi.

Supported by Mr Jamie Bethell (Rugby Players Association), the Leading Logistician delivered a presentation focusing on resilience, as he talked through his journey from joining the Royal Navy to his current position playing full time at the top-of-the-premiership rugby side Northampton Saints RFC, as well as for his native Fiji at two World Cups.

Sam talked about the strategies and coping mechanisms he uses, not only to overcome setbacks (including injuries and non-selection) but also in his everyday activities.

Sam was watched by an audience of over 400 sailors, including Royal Navy Rugby Head Coach CPO Dave Pascoe, and was joined on stage for Q&As by three members of the current Royal Navy Rugby squad, including Capt Jarrard Hayler RM, the RN First Team Captain who plays in the IPA Championship for Hartpury RFC.

On completion of the Q&A, recruits were able to have selfies with Sam and a one-to-one chat.



LLogs Sam Matavesi at HMS Raleigh

TAYLOR'S SLEIGHING

ROYAL Marine Taylor Lawrence finishes fourth in the two-man Bobsleigh World Championships.

Taylor matched the UK's best 2-man bobsleigh result for 58 years alongside pilot Brad Hall in Winterberg.

The Great Britain two-man team just missed a podium place behind a dominating home nation as Germany took the top three spots.

Taylor and Brad clocked a combined time of 3 minutes 39.44 seconds, just 1.2 seconds slower than last year's World Champion, Johannes Lochner in third place.

The duo has had reduced time on the ice together in preparation for the season due to Hall undergoing back surgery last year.

Taylor said: "Going into the season was always going to be a bit of an unknown with the injuries that we have had in the team, but ultimately we knew that by the time the world championships came around we would be in a position to be fighting for medals despite not everyone being 100 percent."

"A world champs is all about consistency across the four runs and Brad Hall drove a stormer every run and as a duo we pushed well all things considered."

"It's not just the two of us that make it happen though, the support from the whole team in the background is an integral part of making this happen."

Hall and Lawrence made history with Arran Gulliver and Greg Cackett last year when they won GB's first four-man bobsleigh medal for 84 years and will be looking to add to the silverware.

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Trip of a lifetime for engineering squadron



NAVAL engineers from Portsmouth swapped helicopters for the Himalayas on a 15-day trek to Everest base camp.

A 14-strong team – from able seaman to commander and normally responsible for recovering and adapting military helicopters, monitoring and assessing their engines/systems, spent 15 days being guided by two expert instructors through the Himalayas.

The adventurous training expedition took the air engineers of 1710 Naval Air Squadron to iconic locations – the mountainside town of Lukla, the home village of Sherpa Tenzing Norgay, the first person to conquer Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary, and finally Everest base camp.

The team tackled the 'Three Passes Trek', regarded as the most challenging of the recognised routes in Nepal's Sagarmatha National Park.

The route, beginning at Lukla (home to the 'world's most dangerous airport, where the runway is on a 11.7 per cent gradient) and taking in three high-altitude passes and Everest base camp – all above 5,360 metres/17,560ft.

Due to trekking in winter – the tourist off-season – the trail was shared with locals, mules, yaks and porters rather than usual visitors other hiking groups or tourists.

Above 4,000 metres the effects of altitude sickness began to affect many team members: headaches, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea and fatigue – with oxygen saturation levels monitored twice daily.

And with higher altitudes came lower temperatures – down to -26 at the lowest. The trekkers slept in tea houses which offered very basic facilities: no running water or electricity.

Maintaining sanitary conditions so high up is a major challenge: all the water – including for washing hands and toilets – was frozen. The only heating is from a stove in the dining room, lit only in the evening and fuelled by dried yak dung.

The first pass – Renjo La – took the engineers over 5,000 metres for the first time.

They had to help each other to the top after a steep climb and ever-lower levels of oxygen. At the summit, the reward of a stunning view was denied them by snow... which also made the descent dangerous.

The next challenge was to cross the Ngozumba Glacier – at 36 kilometres, the longest in the world. It is a stunning natural creation, but soon became tiring to cross, especially as heavy snow fell as the engineers reached their next destination ready to take on the second pass, Cho La Pass (over 5,400 metres).

Here they really felt the effects of altitude and lack of oxygen: even donning or removing gloves proved to be a challenge. Thanks to lessons learned on crossing the first pass, Cho La proved both less demanding and more rewarding; the descent took the team down the Cho La Glacier, and although the cloud had come in, the wintry landscape over stunning vistas.

Next up: a 12-hour hike to Everest Base Camp (at 5,364m) and back, which proved to be well worth the effort for the combination of the views offered and the fact that the engineers were the only ones there out of season.

"Although weather conditions made it more difficult and temperatures were as low as -26 Celsius, there were almost no other trekkers around, so the team could fully appreciate the enormity and magnificence of the huge towering mountains of the Himalayas," said Lieutenant Jenna Clark.

Wintry conditions forced the engineers to skip the final pass of the trek, Kongma La, and instead they headed back down the valley – a sobering trek as they passed the memorials to climbers who've lost their lives climbing Everest and other mountains in the region rising above 7,000 metres.

Avionics specialist Air Engineering Technician Matthew Edwards said despite the exertions, the expedition was "pure joy".

He continued: "Every step felt like an adventure and I couldn't get enough of it. The most challenging aspect was becoming ill the night before the first and most challenging pass.

"I had to push my body to the limit, running on very little energy and an empty stomach (due to being ill). I felt a huge sense of accomplishment once that day was over – it was the most mentally and physically challenging day of my life so far."

Exped leader Lieutenant Olivia Critchley-Peddle said beyond the experience of a lifetime, the Himalayan trek said her squadron would benefit from the skills learned in the mountains – and the determination needed to overcome adversity.

"There were multiple times and prolonged periods that our resilience was tested. To keep trekking day after day, setting off at 0500 on some days and in such low temperatures, the entire team deserve all the credit I can give them," she added.

"Physical fitness and courage played major roles in the trek, but the resilience developed and the leadership shown at various points, pulling each other through and working together to get over the high passes was amazing."



Tributes to devoted navy surgeon

NAVY NEWS

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The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the MOD

TRIBUTES have been paid to a Royal Navy medic who has died at the age of 54. Surgeon Commander Matthew Craner was a consultant neurologist who worked with the Defence Medical Services and had a passion for Multiple Sclerosis research and neurodegeneration mechanisms.

Surg Cdr Craner, who joined the service in 1989, was described by his family as passionate about finding a cure for MS and had set up a trials unit at Oxford University. He also held a Royal Marines green beret and was attached to Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey.

Surg Cdre Stuart Collett, Commander Joint Hospital Group, said: "Surgeon Commander Matt Craner was a superb military clinician and an impressive clinical and military leader. Hardworking, loyal, and gifted he was committed to always doing the best for his patients, NHS, and military, and always going above and beyond to support military colleagues."

"He had a renowned national and international academic reputation and utilised his specialist knowledge to advance medical care. His passing will be a significant loss to Defence and to those he worked with in the NHS."

"I personally will remember him as an approachable, supportive professional who could always be relied on to go out of his way to help you when you had tricky clinical problems."

Colonel James Combes, Military Clinical Director, Joint Hospital Group South East, added: "Surgeon Commander Matt Craner epitomised a Royal Naval Medical Officer, serving and caring for the Service person with unstinting devotion and

commitment, good humour and clinical excellence.

"He had a stellar medical research career and his delivery of clinical care was exceptional, yet he wore these attributes lightly, never losing the 'common touch' or being too busy to engage unreservedly with the Medical Officer or junior doctor seeking advice."

Lt Col Chris Kemp, Commanding Officer Joint Hospital Group South East, said: "Matt was a very capable, hardworking and conscientious medical officer."

"Always highly motivated and diligent he worked unstintingly on behalf of his patients. Bright and quick witted, Matt was a smart athletic officer, who held a charming and easy going personality who was unfailingly courteous to patients and staff at all levels."

"Outstanding achievements included completing a PHD on an overseas placement at Yale University USA, followed by consistently excellent work in the Institute of Neurology, London and the Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford where he supervised and trained junior clinicians. A regular 'Teacher of the Month' nominated by the student body exemplifies his trust and popularity."

Surg Cdr Craner also loved mountain biking and had won a bronze medal at the MTB National Championships. In his spare time he also loved to cook and was an avid World of Warcraft player.

He leaves a widow Heather and children Jack and Ellie.



Deaths

CPO Anthony Broomfield, known as Tony or Broomus. Joined RN in 1958 as an aircraft artificer training at Torpoint and Arbroath. Served on many ships, including HMS Victorious when the ship was delayed returning home after a year at sea due to the six-day Israeli war. He was also a SMR on HMS Glamorgan and RNAS Engadine and served at Portland. He was on the aircraft inspection team at Gosport for nearly two years. He received a Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. Died October 30, 2023.

Roy Ian Dennis, CPO. Served for 25 years, retiring in 1982. Member of Portsmouth Field Gun team in the 1970s. Died February 1, 2024.
Wiltshire, Ray. Served in RN and long-standing member of Wansbeck RNA until ill-health forced him to retire in 2017. Died February 18, aged 93.
Hutton, Charles. Served in the Fleet Air Arm from Feb 1952 to August 1964. Served in HMS Eagle, Illustrious, Victorious, Vidal and shore establishments HMS Blackcap, Daedalus, Gannet, Gamecock, Peregrine, Sea Hawk, Ariel.

Dave Morris, PO. Served from 1956 to 1977. Trained at HMS Gamecock and selected to train as a photographer at HMS Peregrine, RNAS Ford, in Sussex. Last individual photographer to win the Peregrine Trophy before the rules were changed. Was regulating chief and senior instructor at the School of Photography at HMS Excellent before being medically discharged. Went on to work as a photographer at the Portsmouth News for 20 years. Died December 26, aged 84. **Full obituary, see page 30.**

Ask Jack

Warship World: 162 copies of the magazine from 1985-2016 in mint condition seeking an appreciative home ideally in the Havant-Waterlooville-Portsmouth area if you are able to collect. Call Ex CPO(TASI) Terry 'Dodger' Long on 02 9271 2555.

HMS Lord Austin: I am seeking family or friends of sailors who served on the trawler which was sunk in the Seine Bay on June 24 1944. Seven crew were lost and the remainder were rescued by US Coast Guard

Rescue Flotilla One cutter USCG 56. My cousin Jess Alton Gipson was a crew member of USCG 56 which rescued survivors. I am in contact with the daughter of the Commander and the son of one of the crew of USCG 56 and we want to share information with any of the survivors' families about their rescue. If anyone has information, please email sggipson@msn.com.

Gary Gipson

Vicky Grosvenor. Your friend from the 1990s, Colette 'Letty' Leydon, is interested in getting back in touch. Originally from Windsor, where she worked in a veterinary practice and volunteered as a Special Constable with Thames Valley Police, Vicky joined HMS Raleigh in 1998 as a Wren Writer 2nd Class. The two friends maintained contact via letter for a while, but eventually lost contact. Contact colettel1000@yahoo.co.uk

Reunions

HMS Pellow: A final reunion of the Exeter RNR unit takes place at Livermead House Hotel, Torquay, on April 6. Contact CPO Chris Mills on icmills@hotmail.co.uk

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association and HMS Tenby Association: The 2024 reunion takes place at the Beaches Hotel, Prestatyn, North Wales, from May 10 to 13. Contact Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email askhamd3@gmail.com.

HMS Troubridge (Final Commission) Association 1966-69. The 2024 reunion will be at The Queens Hotel, Osborne Road, Southsea, Portsmouth PO5 3LJ October 7-11. Contact Bryan Pace at Romft1@GMail.com.

Royal Navy Photographic Branch: – Week-end Reunion at The Doubletree By Hilton Hotel, Bristol from October 4 to 7. After the very successful Reunion in Liverpool last year, – All 'Ex & Serving Photos' plus wives/partners & guests are very welcome to help celebrate 105 years since the Branch was formed. Meet and greet on Friday evening. Saturday, visits and tours around Bristol City & SS Great Britain. Saturday evening consists of a nautical extravaganza experience, gala dinner and traditional Up Spirits enactment, in the Southville Suite followed by dancing &

entertainment. For further details please contact Social Secretary: Danny du Feu, email: ddf.photography@gmail.com; Tel: 07711 083465.

HMS Undaunted, Eagle and Yarmouth Association: The final reunion will take place from Friday 25 October to Monday 28 October 2024 at the Derby Mickleover Hotel, Etwall Road, Derby DE3 0XX.

Sadly this will be the final reunion due to dwindling numbers. Cost for 3 nights is £420 for a double room or £140 per night. Further details available from Alan (Whiskey) Walker by email whiskey666@outlook.com Tel: 01268 548041. Come and join us for the final bash.

HMS Medway Queen. Are you connected with the Medway Queen – one of the last large ships involved with the Dunkirk evacuation still with us? The team lovingly restoring the paddle steamer want to celebrate her 100th birthday this year by involving every one who has played a part in bringing her back to life.

As well as carrying hundreds of thousands of tourists from the Medway to Southend, Herne Bay and Clacton on pleasure cruises, she was pressed into service as a minesweeper in WW2.

In May 1940 she was sent across the Channel and brought back around 7,000 troops from Dunkirk, securing her place in naval history.

100th birthday plans include a memorial service at Rochester Cathedral on April 21 2024.

Former crew, staff, anyone involved in the long restoration of the ship or has a story to tell about the ship and their experiences aboard, especially families of Dunkirk veterans saved by the ship should contact Pam Bathurst of the preservation society (pambathurst@sky.com) or Medway Queen Preservation Society, Gillingham Pier, Pier Approach Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 1RX).

Friends of HMS Eagle. Reunion weekend will be held at the Inn at Charlestown, Fife Friday Oct 25 to Sun 27. All Commissions, plus wives/partners & guests welcome to help celebrate 52 years since HMS Eagle was decommissioned in Portsmouth. Meet & Greet Friday; Saturday, Visits & Tours around Charlestown, Dunfermline & Edinburgh. Nautical Gala Dinner & traditional 'Up Spirits' enactment & followed by dancing & entertainment in the ballroom Saturday evening. For further details please contact main organizer. Danny du Feu, Email: ddf.photography@gmail.com. Mob: 07711 083465.

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

■ Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to – The Editor, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY, or email: news@royalnavymail.mod.uk or editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk

■ If you are sending your notice via email, please include your full address and telephone number.

■ Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.

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

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

■ The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

Talking Navy News

Navy News is available free of charge as a digital file on memory stick or email from Portsmouth Area Talking News for those with difficulty reading normal type. Contact 07770 088388 and leave a message, or email studio@patn.org.uk A speaker that will take a USB plug is required but this can be obtained from the Talking News, or the file can be played back through a computer.

Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Ask Jack columns in next month's Noticeboard must be

**received by
April 15 2024**

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