



# NAVY NEWS

MAY 2024

## TAMAR TACKLES TONGA

HMS Tamar comes alongside Nuku'alofa, Tonga, for the first time as the offshore patrol vessel continues her Pacific deployment

See pages 2-3

Picture: LPhot Unaisi Luke



■ LANCASTER AND TRENT DRUGS BUSTS ■ RM'S DOGS OF WAR

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# TAKE IT

DON'T say we never bring you variety.

This month we bring you fish. And fishing pigs. (No, they don't use rods... or nets.)

We bring you royalty. And rugby. A home for people with visual impairments. And the Red Cross.

We bring you Pacific idylls... and possible trouble in paradise. And it revolves around fish (but not the fishing pigs).

Fijian waters are home to 1,200 fish species – they're described as a 'paradise for anglers' – among them dorado, coral trout, barracuda and yellowfish tuna.

The same waters are also proving a fruitful hunting ground for illegal fishing.

Fiji's vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) spans an area of the Pacific spanning 1.29 million square kilometres – five times larger than the United Kingdom.

Experts reckon illegal fishing deprives Pacific nations of more than £200m every year.

But the impact goes beyond merely depriving economies of cash.

If fishermen have nothing to fish for, they're out of a job (or food for their families). Communities which have relied on the sea for their livelihoods might die, and the delicate eco-balance in the Pacific upset.

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (IUUF) is one of the greatest threats not only to the Pacific Ocean and its island, coastal and fishing communities, but seas and oceans around

the globe and is in direct contravention of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Hence the Fijian authorities were delighted at the opportunity to step up their policing activity.

Enter HMS Tamar, which sailed from New Zealand with a RNZN specialist boarding team embarked, then took on board an expert from the Fijian Ministry of Fisheries and headed off on patrol.

"Our partnership with the Royal Navy and Royal New Zealand Navy allows us to be at the forefront of fishing operations in our Exclusive Economic Zone," said that embarkee, Fisheries Officer Arieta Tunidau.

"Together, we're ensuring surveillance and patrols are undertaken to address and deter illegal fishing."

Tamar conducted training with its Kiwi allies off Auckland earlier this year and the New Zealanders from HMNZS Matataua relished the chance to carry out a concerted operation with tangible benefits.

"This has been an awesome opportunity to represent the Royal New Zealand Navy and Aotearoa [the Maori name for New Zealand], working alongside the Royal Navy and Fijian Ministry of Fisheries to counter illegal fishing in the region," said Lieutenant Jack Walters RNZN, the officer in charge

of the boarding team embarked on Tamar.

"Our combined efforts have strengthened deterrence and enforcement, directly benefitting the prosperity of our Pacific Island partners."

Tamar's Commanding Officer, Commander Tom Gell, said: "This is a real demonstration of multi-agency and multi-national cooperation and partnerships in action."

"Fiji, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have come together for this vitally important mission to minimise the far-reaching and devastating impact of illegal fishing; I could not be prouder of HMS Tamar's role in this cohesive team."

Beyond illegal fishing, the team on Tamar kept a sharp lookout for vessels operating with poor crew welfare, those polluting the environment, poaching or involved in the lucrative shark fin trade.

Time with Tamar's visit to the archipelago, for the first time, a UK military team made the long (three flights, 30+ hours of travelling each way) out to Fiji to take part in one of the island's famous Rugby 7s competition (see page 36 to find out how they fared).

Not 500 miles from Fiji lies another Commonwealth nation suffering from 'fish rustlers'.

On this leg of her long-term Pacific patrol, there was no time for a fishery protection patrol.



# EEZY





But there was time to lay the foundations for one on a future visit by the RN.

Otherwise, Tamar's week in the capital Nuku'alofa served to underscore – and reinforce – ties between the UK and Tonga.

Which shouldn't be too hard, because those ties really are rather strong.

Legendary Royal Navy explorer Captain James Cook famously labelled the chain 'the friendly islands' for the warm reception he received 250 years ago.

Much more recently, Tamar's sister ship HMS Spey – also patrolling the Pacific – was on hand to deliver aid and assistance to Tonga in the wake of the January 2022 Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai underwater volcanic eruption and subsequent tsunami.

Tamar's Pacific odyssey – she's been in the region for two and a half years – had not brought her to Tonga until now.

Barely had she arrived in Nuku'alofa than Tamar was hosting Tongan royalty: their Royal Highnesses The Crown Prince and Crown Princess who visited twice, the second occasion accompanied by Tonga's Princess Royal and her husband Lord Tuita plus island dignitaries and civilian and military leaders for a demonstration of what the River-class ship and her crew can do, as well as traditional RN hospitality with a flight deck

reception.

The patrol ship also hosted members of Tonga's Legislative Assembly and regional Commonwealth partners and opened her gangway to Women in Uniform and school groups, furthering efforts to uplift and inspire marginalised and underrepresented groups.

Tamar's crew – bolstered by Officer Cadets from Britannia Royal Naval College undergoing training – helped two worthy causes while in Nuku'alofa.

Teams painted shipping containers used by the Tongan Red Cross Society for disaster relief supplies to extend their lifespan and revamped a run-down building at Tonga National Visual Impairment Association, fixing the roof, fitting new doors and external cladding, and installing a completely new kitchen.

"We all really enjoyed this amazing opportunity to help these wonderful people," said Petty Officer Callum Frogley, who led the overhaul.

"We were asked to fix the roof, but on Tamar we like to go the extra mile, so we did that, and rebuilt the kitchen and dining area to give them a family space to enjoy meals together and fixed up the outside.

"Thank you to everyone involved – without their help we could not have reached the goal we set out to achieve in just 48 hours. The Visual

Impairment Association has our very best wishes and thanks for allowing us into their home and trusting in our skills."

Feofaaki Leka, the homeowner and project manager, was fulsome in her praise of the visiting sailors. "We are so grateful to the crew of HMS Tamar for taking the time to come here and help us. I can't put into words how we felt the first time we saw the house and moved in 18 months ago," she said.

**After HMS Tamar, it's a joyful place. Thank you so much from the bottom of our hearts.**

FEOFAAKI LEKA,  
TONGA NATIONAL VISUAL  
IMPAIRMENT ASSOCIATION

"Now, after HMS Tamar, it's a joyful place. The happiness of seeing the transformation means so much to us. It's beautiful for the children – to sit down and enjoy mealtimes together for the first time. It's a place we can now call home and enjoy all that you have done for us. Thank you so much from the bottom of our hearts."

And Tamar's command team discussed environmental and climate issues, plus disaster relief

preparation and support with the island authorities and agencies.

"The bonds of friendship and partnership between the United Kingdom and the Friendly Isles stretch back to beyond our living memory. It is fitting that those bonds have been celebrated again with Their Royal Highnesses on board HMS Tamar, as well as parliamentarians, school groups and more," said Tamar's Executive Officer Lieutenant Commander Jim Langley.

"We've thoroughly enjoyed welcoming so many visitors on board, strengthening relationships and inspiring the next generation."

British High Commissioner to Tonga, Her Excellency Lucy Joyce, added: "The visit by the Royal Navy demonstrates the enduring strength of our relationship and the importance the UK places on its partnership with Tonga and the Pacific region.

"We are able to showcase HMS Tamar to many of our partners here – progressing key shared objectives on climate change, defence and inclusion while also focusing on some of the next generation of Tongans with several school groups visiting the ship."

Tamar left Tonga escorted by Guardian-class patrol boat VOEA Ngahau Siliva ('Silver Arrow') of the Tonga Maritime Force before heading back across the Pacific for a second stint working on fishery

patrols with Fiji.

Given their proximity (Pacificaly-speaking), the two island chains fall under the same UK Defence Advisor (who, for good measure, also covers Vanuatu and Solomon Islands).

Lieutenant Colonel Sophie Waters says the visit by and efforts of Tamar in Tonga and Fiji have gone down very well with islanders and their leaders. The work in Fiji to protect fishing stocks was "not only hugely rewarding, but vital".

As for the time in Tonga, well, "the ambition and scope of the programme in Tonga led to a superb range of engagements, and some memorable opportunities for crew.

"The finale of departing Nuku'alofa's palm fringed shores in company with a navy vessel of His Majesty's Armed Forces visually symbolises the significance of the defence engagements between the UK and Tonga and our desire to drive forward maritime security cooperation in the region."

Ok, so what about the fishing pigs we promised several hundred words ago.

Well, if you go to the beaches of Tonga at low tide – as Tamar's sailors did during down time – they were accompanied by the island's pig populace which famously roots among the rock pools for shellfish left behind.

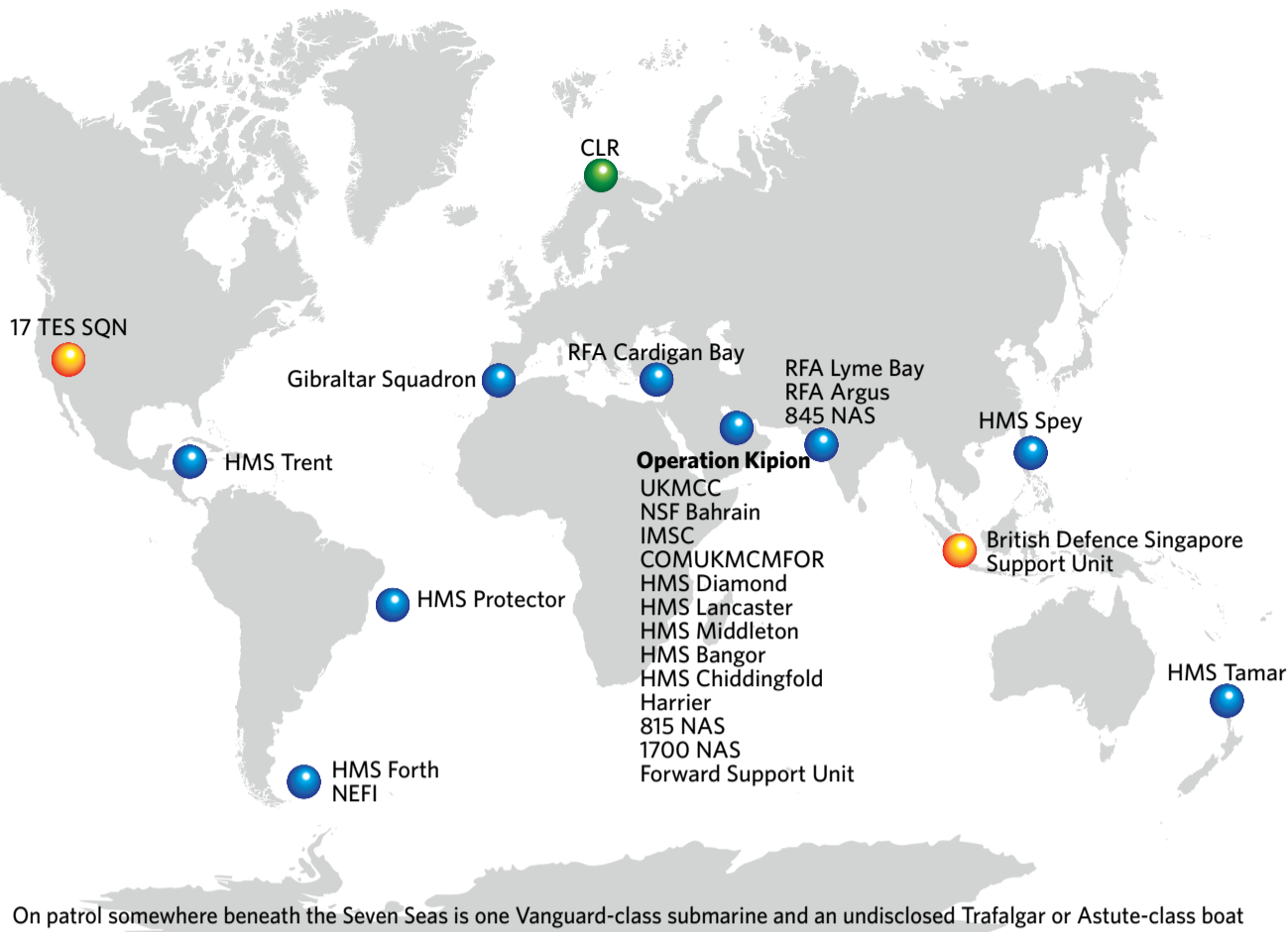
Words: Lieutenant Craig Purvis  
Pictures: LPhoto Unaisi Luke





## Training or on patrol around the UK

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



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



## GLOBAL | MODERN | READY

LAST month our focus was on NATO, showing the collective effort prepared to defend the alliance's northern flank.

This month we bring you drugs and fish. Among other items. There's no obvious main effort – but lots of hard work, with tangible results, worldwide.

Such is the variety of the RN.

We'll begin with drugs. In the East, HMS Lancaster struck twice in 24 hours on the very first day out of port: £33m of illegal narcotics found on dhows trying to slip across the Indian Ocean (see opposite).

And in the West, patrol ship HMS Trent has scored hit after hit... over £200m of illicit drugs seized (and subsequently destroyed) in the Caribbean in a series of joint busts with the US Coast Guard (see pages 14-15).

HMS Diamond continues to patrol the Red Sea to keep Houthis rebels in check (as of going to press there had, thankfully, been no more actions demanding the destroyer fire her weapons in anger). In future such ships may down aerial threats using DragonFire, the new laser weapon which the MOD has pledged to install on a Royal Navy warship by 2027 (see page 13).

The RN/civilian team at the UK Maritime Trade Organisation (UKMTO) continue to deal with threats to shipping in the Middle East at an unprecedented tempo. We were given a rare glimpse into their ops room (see pages 34-35).

For those at the business end of operations in the Gulf such as Lancaster, RFA or MCM crews there will be formal recognition of their efforts courtesy of the new Wider Service Medal, approved by the King, to reward some of the more challenging and demanding missions the forces carry out (see page 28).

This month we welcome three new ships into our family at various stages of their lives. Astute-class boat No.6 is now HMS Agamemnon officially, having formally been named by her sponsor Lady Sedwill in Barrow (see right). HMS Venturer, our first Type 31 frigate, welcomed her Royal Sponsor, HRH The Princess Royal, aboard and into the impressive assembly hall at Rosyth for her inaugural visit. And just a day later it was the honour of her younger brother The Duke of Edinburgh to be just down the Forth in Leith where autonomous minehunting mother ship RFA Stirling Castle raised the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's fouled Blue Ensign for the first time (see page 11).

Supporting Ukraine in her ongoing struggle with Russia, two former RN Sandown-class minehunters HMS Grimsby and Shoreham – now Cherkasy and Chernihiv under the Ukrainian Ensign – have temporarily moved to Portsmouth to continue their training (see page 7).

Although she's long left Antarctica (she's spending the summer in Canada) HMS Protector's work there is the focus of an exhibition which runs till mid-month in London. Artist Polly Townsend joined the ship for five weeks capturing as much of the landscape and wildlife as she could on canvas (see pages 16-17).

One thing Protector's crew might benefit from ashore in the snow is improved mobility. You could try the Royal Marines new snowmobiles to get around at speed. Or for authentic exploration, you could turn to huskies, as the Commando Logistics Regiment have done during training to deliver supplies to remote detachments in the wilds of Norway (see pages 19-21).

Hundreds of Maritime Reservists from across the UK converged on Northern Ireland for one of the largest tests of their individual and collective abilities on the ranges at Ballykilner south of Belfast (see page 38).

Students from BRNC crossed the North Sea to get bridge sim time in at their college's German counterpart near Flensburg, Marineschule Mürwik (see pages 28-29).

And finally, aviators at RNAS Culdrose joined families to mark 50 years since a Sea King crash on the cliffs of the Lizard Point. All gathered at the crash/memorial site for a highly-emotional service and flypast (see page 30).

# A new chapter in the Troy story

THE sixth of the Royal Navy's leading-edge Astute-class hunter-killer submarines has been formally named – a key milestone on the road to front-line operations.

HMS Agamemnon will act as both sword and protector – able to strike at foes on land courtesy of her Tomahawk cruise missile – and fend off threats on and beneath the waves with Spearfish torpedoes.

Nearly 11 years after the first steel was cut on the 7,000-tonne Fleet submarine at BAE Systems' yard in Barrow-in-Furness, the state-of-the-art boat was unveiled to VIPs, led by the submarine's Sponsor Lady Sedwill, affiliates, friends and family and those who have toiled on 'Awesome Aggie' as she's known by crew, since 2013.

In a ceremony which mixed a hi-tech light show and displays with Royal Navy tradition inside the cavernous Devonshire Dock Hall which dominates the Barrow skyline, it fell to Lady Sedwill, who visited the boat late last year to catch up on progress with construction, to address the crew and then smash a bottle of locally brewed-beer – in keeping with the yard's tradition – to bless Agamemnon and all who will serve aboard for the next 25-plus years.

"As Ship's Sponsor I am exceptionally honoured to be here to name the latest HMS Agamemnon. I thank all who have made this day possible and those involved in the build of this incredible submarine," she told all present.

"In the near future she will join her sisters at His Majesty's Naval Base Clyde where I am certain she will go on to great operational success."

Proceedings concluded with the cutting of the naming ceremony cake performed by Lady Sedwill and the youngest member of Agamemnon's 98-strong crew, Catering Services specialist 22-year-old Aydon Hogg.

For Commanding Officer Commander David 'Bing' Crosby, there was a sense of *déjà vu* about proceedings – having helped bring the fifth Astute-class submarine, HMS Anson, into service.



Her naming ceremony three and a half years ago was a low-key affair mid-pandemic, so Agamemnon's event was a welcome opportunity to truly show off the boat to all those who've supported the endeavour to date – an Astute-class submarine is described as a more complex machine than the Space Shuttle – such as affiliates, charities and families.

"It is a fantastic honour to be entrusted as the first Commanding Officer of the sixth Astute and the sixth HMS Agamemnon," he said.

"It is especially nice to be able to share this day with our enterprise partners, our affiliates, friends and families; after all they too will play a key part in delivery of this submarine into service and beyond."

The submarine is the sixth Agamemnon to fly the White Ensign, tracing a history back to 1781. The first ship to bear the name was captained by one Horatio Nelson.

It is where he earned his spurs as a leader and she became his favourite vessel thanks to her stealth, power and capabilities – characteristics her 21st Century successor shares "in abundance".

Commander Crosby continued: "The naming ceremony of our HMS Agamemnon is a significant milestone in her build and final preparation for launch.

"It is a very special day for me, my current ship's company and those previous Aggies that have moved on to new challenges.

"We're looking forward to getting 'Awesome Aggie' ready to join her sisters in the Royal Navy fleet."

Over the coming months, work will continue on Agamemnon ahead of her being rolled out of the dock hall and carefully lowered into the neighbouring basin for the first time.

That will be followed by a period of tests and commissioning of systems alongside, before her maiden dive in the basin followed by departure from Barrow for sea trials and joining the rest of the Astute class at HMNB Clyde.





# SUCKER PUNCH

*Lancaster's Wildcat provides cover as the boarding team clamber on to the dhow in the first bust*

ROYAL Navy warship HMS Lancaster seized nearly £33m of illegal drugs as she struck twice against traffickers in the Middle East inside 24 hours.

In the wake of HMS Trent's blow to Caribbean traffickers by seizing £17m of illegal narcotics, their colleagues pounced half a world away in the Indian Ocean.

Heroin, hashish and crystal meth were found by Lancaster's sailors and Royal Marines – nearly four tonnes of illicit narcotics which have now been destroyed.

Taking part in a concentrated operation – Crimson Barracuda – orchestrated by the Canadian-led Combined Task Force 150 which is dedicated to stopping criminal activity across more than two million square miles of ocean in the Middle East – the frigate intercepted two suspect vessels.

HMS Lancaster was on the very first day of her security patrol following a period of operational sea training and assurance when her Wildcat helicopter spotted a suspect vessel during a routine sortie.

That was the beginning of an eight-hour operation which saw Royal Marines from 42 Commando secure the vessel, to allow Lancaster's Royal Navy boarding team to look for any illicit cargo.

An in-depth search of the dhow recovered nearly 100 packages – each containing smaller parcels, found to contain hashish, heroin and crystal meth upon subsequent testing aboard HMS Lancaster.

The crew were still celebrating their success when the Wildcat helicopter – from 815 Naval Air Squadron at RNAS Yeovilton in Somerset – launched on a dusk patrol for another sweep of the Indian Ocean.

Once again aircrew came across a suspicious dhow. Lancaster tracked the vessel through the night, then struck at dawn.

And once again the Commandos boarded and secured the dhow before sailors joined them to conduct a comprehensive search.

This time, over six hours, they recovered 2.4 tonnes of hashish – bringing the two-day haul to 3.7 tonnes of illegal drugs.

Collectively the tally from the two drugs hauls comes in at just under £33m according to the

National Crime Agency.

"After weeks of training and preparations it's been great to be out here making a real difference," said Lieutenant Nart Farouqa, Lancaster's Deputy Logistics Officer – and also one of her boarding officers. "Two busts in 24 hours gives us a flying start to the deployment and hopefully there will be many more successes to come. It is a true team effort with everyone on the ship playing their own role as part of Team Lancaster.

"We know that our efforts half way across the world have a direct and positive impact at home and supports the interests of the UK across the region."

The frigate's Commanding Officer Commander Chris Sharp said he was "exceptionally proud of the entire team in Lancaster executing these two interdictions on the first two days of our deployment.

"Complex interceptions like these in such a challenging environment require true teamwork across the entire ship's company. This success is shared with our partners in CTF 150 who provided essential support to the operation."

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps hailed another success for the Navy in the ongoing international fight against trafficking.

"The fantastic achievements of the crew of HMS Lancaster and Royal Marine Commandos in the Indian Ocean shows the important role our Navy plays policing the oceans. Their relentless effort and professionalism have dealt another decisive blow to criminal networks," he said.

"Following HMS Trent's similar success in seizing a substantial amount of drugs on the other side of the world, the Royal Navy continue to lead the UK's commitment to disrupting drug smugglers across the globe."

Lancaster's double-hit wasn't the only success of the opening phase of Crimson Barracuda: US Coast Guard cutter Clarence Sutphin Jr seized 257kg of crystal meth, 92kg of heroin, 17kg of amphetamines, 296kg of hash and 15kg of marijuana – 677kg of illegal drugs in all – when its team raided another dhow.



*HMS Lancaster's Pacific 24 sea boats wait off the dhow in the second bust*



*Sailors bring drugs aboard HMS Lancaster following the first bust*





Lt Cdr Stu Millen congratulates his son, Lt Jack Millen

## Dad's the word at wings parade

AS NEWLY-QUALIFIED Royal Navy aircrew were handed their 'wings' – the badges that symbolise the start of their frontline careers – they were watched by three very proud fathers.

The pleased parents were themselves naval aviators and had each earned their own wings with the Fleet Air Arm.

The informal presentation was held at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose for a total of 11 new aircrew, who have completed their training to join the frontline squadrons of Merlin Helicopter Force.

Lieutenant Jack Millen was congratulated by his father Lieutenant Commander Stu Millen, an instructor at RNAS Culdrose's Merlin Training Facility.

His father was handed his wings 34 years ago and said: "I am extremely proud of Jack and I am proud of them all. It's been a long time in the training system. Everyone knows this training is tough and we all recognise that achievement today."

Lieutenant Millen added: "I grew up hearing about the navy all the time. I do have a memory of being about three years old and climbing into a helicopter at a Culdrose air day."

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Jake Odgen was joined by his father Brad Odgen, who got his wings 30 years ago as an observer.

Mr Odgen said: "We always encouraged him to go to Sea Cadets. I remember when he went to a navy gliding camp at Yeovilton for a week, when he was about 17, that was when he decided to be a pilot."

Petty Officer Danny Cheesman was also joined by his father Chief Petty Officer Kieron Cheesman, who is also an aircrewman and works at RNAS Culdrose's Merlin Warfare Operational Support Team.

Chief Petty Officer Cheesman congratulated his son on his career choice, adding: "Being an aircrewman is an absolutely fantastic job."

In total, there were four pilots, two anti-submarine warfare observers, two airborne surveillance and control observers and three aircrewmen who received their wings. Ten of the new aircrew joined the Royal Navy as trainees while one transferred from the Army Air Corps.



PO Danny Cheesman is congratulated by his dad CPO Kieron Cheesman

## PTI reward for rehab work

A PHYSICAL trainer based at RNAS Culdrose has been singled out by the head of the Royal Navy for his determination in opening a new rehabilitation facility.

Petty Officer James 'Besty' Best spent three years sourcing funding and commissioning work to create the Primary Care Rehabilitation Facility which opened at the air station in 2022.

It is stocked with £90,000 of dedicated physical training equipment, purchased by Defence Primary Healthcare, and helps sailors get back to full fitness and frontline operations.

First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Ben Key presented him with a commendation for his tireless determination in driving the project forward.

Part of the citation reads: "Perhaps his dedication and expertise as a rehab instructor are unsurprising given his passion for his role. But it is his professionalism and dedication, combined with his initiative and self-starting ethos that is so impressive."

POPT Best said: "It was a great honour to be nominated and receive this award. The goal of developing the rehab facility was always to improve the patient experience and what they had access to at Culdrose. To be recognised for the effort and work that went into it is a great feeling."

"It was also a real privilege to attend this ceremony alongside the First Sea Lord and the other award recipients, listening to their citations and the reason they were all there."



# GREEN SCREEN FOR AIR STATION

## THOUSANDS OF TREES ARE PLANTED FOR SUSTAINABILITY DRIVE

AROUND 6,500 new trees have been planted at a Royal Navy air station as part of a major sustainability drive.

Planting at RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall began this year with 3,000 trees on the edge of the sports field used by RNAS Culdrose Football Club.

Another 1,500 trees have been planted to the north of the airfield while an extra 2,000 have now gone alongside the main road beside the workshops and aircraft hangars known as W-Site.

It is part of a project currently underway at the Helston air station to replace the nine miles of perimeter fence.

The trees are all single shoots – known as whips in the forestry business – and of native species. While it is not expected, due to natural wastage, that all the trees will reach maturity, enough will grow to screen the base and provide wildlife habitats.

A mixture of tree types have been planted and species include the wild service tree, hornbeam, hazel, birch, grey alder, field maple, rowan, tilia cordata, bird cherry, sea buckthorn and wild pear.

The project is a collaboration between the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Navy Command Infrastructure, VIVO Defence Services Ltd and the RNAS Culdrose Infrastructure Team.

The tree planting has been undertaken by Gavin Jones Grounds Maintenance.

Captain Stuart Irwin, the commanding officer of RNAS Culdrose, said: "Culdrose sits on the edge of an area of outstanding natural beauty and it is only right that we take all steps we can to be sympathetic to this beautiful part of Cornwall."

"Whilst this project is primarily to provide the security required of a military base, playing our part in addressing sustainability and climate change is key to all of our security in the long term. "When we were discussing the project to replace the air station's fence, I made it clear that I wanted to plant as many trees as possible. I have to commend the team, as they have completely excelled in that regard."

Michael Lintott-Danks, DIO's regional head forester, added: "We're really pleased with the progress of this

significant replanting project.

"It's been a fantastic opportunity to reconsider where the new trees should be planted as well as the mix of species.

"We chose native trees based on their likelihood to survive and thrive in this location, and planted a variety of species to ensure resilience against pests and diseases."

Jerry Moloney, VIVO Defence Services' managing director, said: "Replacing and rebuilding a nine-mile security fence at a military base as strategically important as RNAS Culdrose is a mammoth and important task, and I am pleased that sustainability and the environment are very much at the heart of this project."

Additional work has also started to improve the area at W-Site, including wooden fencing to screen a caravan parking area. Plans are also in place to install one of the navy's decommissioned Hawk jets on public display beside the main road to The Lizard.



THE CO of RNAS Culdrose, Capt Stuart Irwin, plants some of the young trees on the perimeter of the base





TWO former Royal Navy ships now serving with the Ukrainian Navy will be a frequent sight in the waters off the South Coast as they operate from their new temporary home in Portsmouth Naval Base.

The Sandown-class minehunters, formerly HMS Shoreham and HMS Grimsby, now renamed Cherkasy and Chernihiv after being transferred to Ukraine last year, arrived in Portsmouth following a two-day voyage from Scotland.

The ships will be based in Portsmouth for the foreseeable future as they prepare for exercises with the Royal Navy alongside the US Navy in UK waters, which will help Ukraine understand how to operate with NATO navies.

The Ukrainian sailors have undergone training with the Royal Navy's instructors from Fleet Operational Standards and Training over the past 18 months, meaning they are able to safely operate their new vessels.

Their arrival is a key milestone in the Maritime Capability Coalition, which helps Ukraine's navy with training, equipment, and infrastructure, to bolster security in the Black Sea region. The UK is co-leading the Maritime Capability Coalition, alongside Norway.

Eventually, the plan is for Cherkasy and Chernihiv to operate in the Black Sea after Russia's illegal and unprovoked war in Ukraine ends, clearing mines from vital sea lanes.

"We haven't been telling too many people the ships are coming, but now they're here they will be welcomed with open arms both here in the Naval Base and in the city of Portsmouth," said Naval Base Commander, Commodore John Voyce.

"I've just been on board and the sailors are excited and positive about being here in Portsmouth Naval Base, getting support from UK companies and training with the Norwegian and Royal Navy.

"The ships will be based here for as long as they need, and we will be here to support them. The training of their people is important, and they can get out on the sea and work on maritime skills."

Commodore Paul Pitcher, the Royal Navy's Commander Surface Flotilla, added: "There are huge amounts of Russian mines across 800 square kilometres of the Black Sea and Ukraine's economy is heavily based on exporting grain through the same sea.

"Key to the post-conflict stability of Ukraine and economic recovery is the safe passage of traffic. These vessels will be crucial in providing safe sea lanes for the Ukrainian economy."

Cherkasy and Chernihiv are currently not able to head home to Ukraine as they cannot enter the Black Sea due to the terms of the Montreux Convention, which restricts

passage of military vessels through the Bosphorus Strait at times of war.

The ships, however, will form a critical capability for Ukraine in the future defence of its coastline as the UK looks to support the longer-term capabilities of the Ukrainian Navy, while they look to protect commercial shipping by detecting and disabling sea mines.

Ukraine has sunk or disabled around a third of Russia's Black Sea Fleet since the start of the conflict through a series of precision-guided missile strikes and innovative use of maritime one-way attack drones. With support from the UK, Ukraine's Black Sea activity has meant, despite ongoing Russian strikes against Odesa oblast, Ukraine has almost certainly exported more grain through its seaports in the first months of 2024 than at any time since the outbreak of the war.

The UK's dedication to supporting Ukraine has been unwavering since the illegal invasion in 2022. As one of the largest military donors to Ukraine, the UK has demonstrated its commitment through substantial military aid. So far, we have committed more than £7 billion to supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine.



# WELCOME TO TEMPORARY NEW HOME

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# THE ART OF WARGAMING



A DEDICATED wargaming facility used by the Royal Navy – and the wider UK Armed Forces – will help improve decision-making for both operations and sailors’ lived experience.

Just metres away from where the D-Day invasion and the liberation of Western Europe was directed exactly 80 years ago – is the UK Strategic Command Defence Experimentation and Wargaming Hub, a versatile space committed to running scenario-based wargames.

The building, based at the old Maritime Warfare Centre on the former HMS Dryad site in Southwick, Hampshire, has seen investment to become a site where personnel from units and formations can converge and play out the outcomes of different scenarios.

These can range from operational-based such as examining future command and control or people-based, like how changing

certain aspects of Service life could impact retention.

Information and data gathered is then fed back to see how it could be used to guide future decisions.

The hub is designed for Defence-level wargames and bringing together single Service, Joint, Defence and International partners.

Head of Joint Warfare Development, Commodore Christopher Goodsell, said: “This hub is not an isolated entity but rather an integral part of a global network that brings together teams from diverse locations.

“This collaborative approach ensures a rich exchange of ideas and perspectives. The Hub is designed to evolve in tandem with the changing world, leveraging technological advancements to establish connections with academia, single Services,

industry, government and allies worldwide.

“This integration enables us to conduct wargames, share analysis and derive insights regardless of geographical boundaries.”

Captain Eugene Morgan RN, who heads the facility, added: “Wargaming enables players to see how the outcome and sequence of events affect, and are affected by, their decisions and gives the opportunity for them to analyse, plan and make decisions in a controlled and safe-to-fail environment.

“Everyone can wargame and learn a

new skill. By participating people can grow confidence in decision-making as well as learn how to challenge; skills which can be applied more widely.”

It encourages critical thinking and can help develop insights into challenges the Royal Navy and wider Defence could face in the future and possible ways to overcome them.

And now, having a dedicated space with all the necessary kit means a wider variety of wargames can be held giving more personnel the chance to get involved.

“Everyone can wargame and learn a new skill.”

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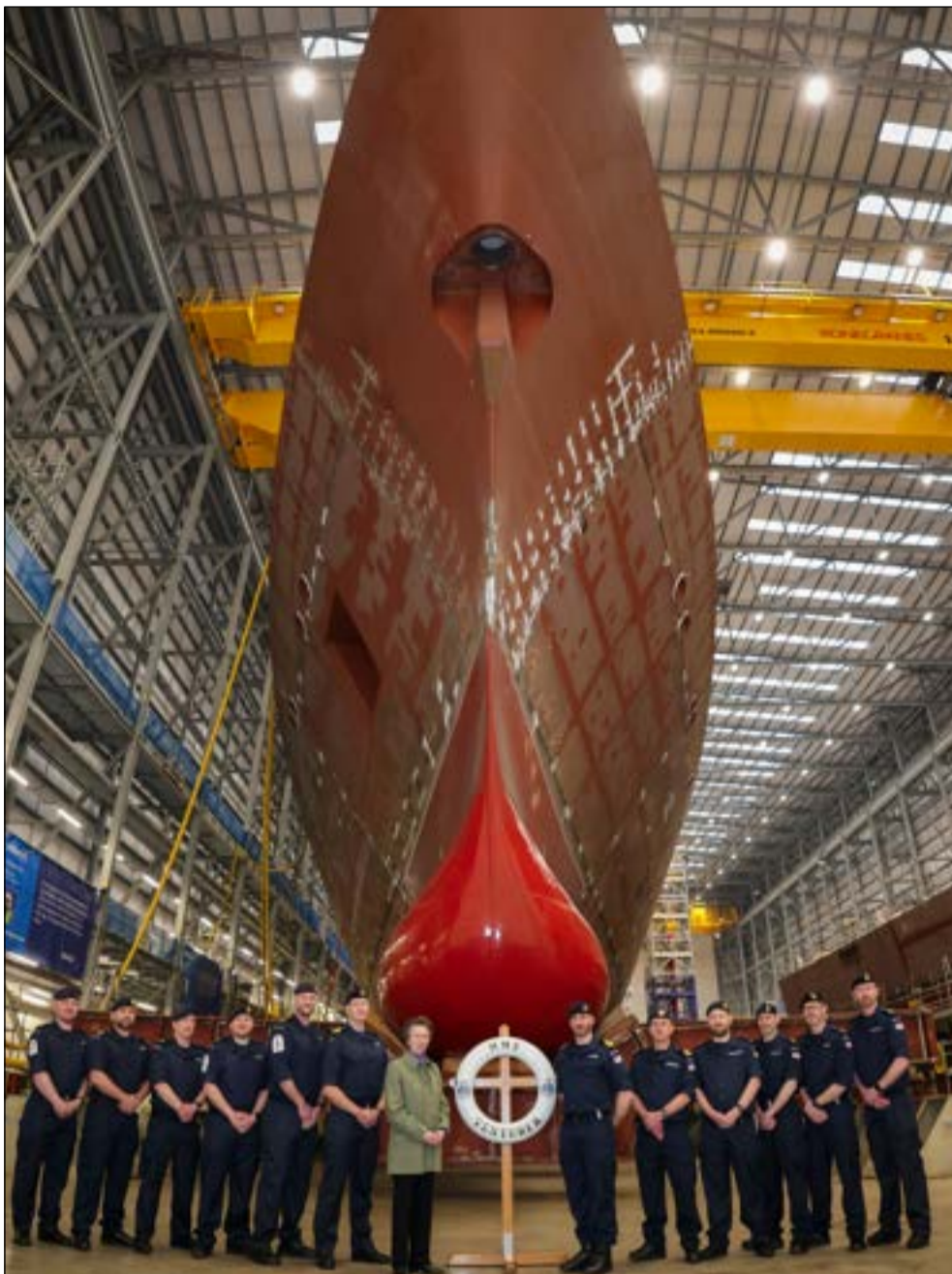
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# Royal boost for two new Royal Navy ships in Scotland



The Princess Royal with members of the ship's company in front of HMS Venturer in Rosyth

## Inspiring the Inspirational

AS Sponsor of the Royal Navy's newest frigate, The Princess Royal has visited HMS Venturer in Rosyth.

Her Royal Highness met those responsible for constructing the UK's first Type 31 warship, as well as the sailors charged with breathing life into the 455ft vessel and turning her into a working warship ready to serve around the globe.

Venturer is the latest Royal Navy warship sponsored by The Princess Royal – who is also Royal Sponsor of Devonport-based assault ship HMS Albion. The Princess Royal is also Commodore-in-Chief of Portsmouth Naval Base and Chief Commandant of Women in the Royal Navy among numerous long-standing associations with the Senior Service.

As Ship's Sponsor, Her Royal Highness will have an opportunity to be the Guest of Honour at key moments in HMS Venturer's life, such as the naming and commissioning ceremonies, and will receive regular updates on the ship's deeds and the activities of around 115 men and women on board.

With the frigate under construction, the ship's company numbers just 12 souls, who were introduced to their new sponsor as The Princess Royal toured both the assembly facility and Venturer herself.

The frigate is more than two years into her construction with the hull and much of the superstructure complete in a cavernous, state-of-the-art assembly facility where defence firm Babcock is building all five ships in the Type 31 Inspiration class under contract with the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support.

When completed, Venturer and her four sister ships will perform widespread duties around the globe: anything from operating independently on maritime security patrols to escorting the Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carrier strike groups to operating side-by-side with the UK's partners and allies.

To complete the visit, Her Royal Highness presented two Long Service and Good Conduct Medals to two of HMS Venturer's ship's company, including Leading Hand Adam Duncan, the ship's newest and most junior member.

"It was an honour to be presented with the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal by The Princess Royal during her visit to Venturer as recognition of my continued service," he said.

Before leaving Rosyth, The Princess Royal, as Royal Sponsor, joined the ship's company in front of the frigate's bow for a group photograph.

"It is an honour for HMS Venturer to have Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal as the Ship's Sponsor," said Commander Chris Cozens, the new frigate's Senior Naval Officer. "Her Royal Highness is an inspirational person and befitting as the figure head to lead the Type 31 Inspiration Class into service alongside the Ship's Company."

"Today's visit comes at a transitional period between the final large sections being lifted into place in the build hall and the beginning of the fitting out before a launch at the end of the year. We welcome Her Royal Highness once again into the Royal Navy family."

Babcock Chief Executive Officer David Lockwood, who welcomed Her Royal Highness to the defence company's Rosyth site and introduced her to some of his employees involved in the Type 31 programme both in the UK and overseas (the Polish Navy is building three export versions of the frigate).

David said: "The Inspiration class is an important addition to the UK's defence and as capability partner, Babcock is proudly delivering these vessels to the Royal Navy fleet, while providing many opportunities in the UK supply chain and within local communities, including more than 1,000 new job opportunities here at Rosyth in the next four years."



The Duke of Edinburgh with Cdre David Eagles on the bridge of RFA Stirling Castle

## Welcome to the RFA family

HIS Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh joined the Dedication Service of a new Naval ship which will help safeguard UK waters from underwater threats.

Resplendent in her unique blue and white livery, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's Stirling Castle was formally dedicated during a high-profile ceremony.

The ship marks a move away from traditional minehunting, embracing cutting-edge technology as she acts as a 'mother ship' for an array of remotely-operated and autonomous systems which will scour home waters looking for mines.

With Stirling Castle due to begin operations later this year, a break from training offered the ideal opportunity to welcome the new ship into the RFA family in the presence of the Service's Commodore-in-Chief, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

It's the second high-profile Royal visit to the Royal Navy in Scotland in 24 hours; Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal paid her first visit to new Type 31 frigate HMS Venturer under construction in Rosyth.

Prince Edward joined Robert Aldridge, the Lord Lieutenant of Edinburgh, Commodore David Eagles, the Head of the RFA, and civic leaders from Stirling among others.

"Bringing a ship into service is a demanding endeavour which relies on a diverse, multi-skilled team, strong leadership, and unflinching determination," said Commodore Eagles.

"RFA Stirling Castle is no different and I pay tribute to the men and women in the UK – military and civilian – who have contributed to this project and made today possible.

"In particular, I would wish to reflect the efforts of all our partners across the Royal Navy and Defence Equipment and Support, along with our industrial partners and of course the ship's company."

Procured and delivered by Defence Equipment & Support in less than a year, for the past few months RFA Stirling Castle has been on the Clyde working with the experts from the Royal Navy's Mine and Threat Exploitation Group (MTXG) at HM Naval Base Clyde.

The Group's Zulu Squadron are at the forefront of advancing new minehunting technologies,

helping the Royal Navy to keep pace with the evolving threat from naval mines.

Some of the new, high-tech, equipment includes Autonomous Surface Vessels and Uncrewed Underwater Vehicles (UUVs) capable of being operated remotely using a portable command centre.

And that is where RFA Stirling Castle comes in. Not only can the portable command centre be located onboard the new vessel, but it can also be used to store, prepare, and deploy boats and UUVs on mine warfare and hydrographic survey tasks.

RFA Stirling Castle is helping to extend the reach and effectiveness of Royal Navy mine hunting operations and to make it safer for those sailors whose job it is to locate and destroy mines.

Her Commanding Officer Captain Duncan Vernoum RFA, hailed his ship as "a highly-capable vessel with a highly-trained and motivated ship's company. In concert with embarked Royal Navy Mission Teams and specialist personnel, the ship is at the forefront of the Royal Navy's future minehunting capability."

"The Service of Dedication, held in the presence of His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, Commodore in Chief of the RFA, is an opportunity for Stirling Castle to showcase her abilities, and the hard work that has been put in by the ship's company both on and off-watch to get her to this stage."

"There is more work to be done to achieve full operational capability and this will take place in the next few months."

The ship began life as oil rig support vessel MV Island Crown but was snapped up by the Navy last year and underwent extensive conversion at HM Naval Base Devonport to transform her into the first RFA vessel dedicated to supporting mine hunting.

The ship is operated by 27 RFA officers and crew, augmented by 15 Royal Navy minehunting specialists on operations – with room onboard for up to 100 more personnel depending on the mission.

There are plans to acquire up to three additional ships to perform the role of mine countermeasures command and support from the mid-2020s.



Left, The Duke of Edinburgh meets members of the ship's company; Right, RFA Stirling Castle in Leith

PICTURES: LPhoto Barry Wheeler



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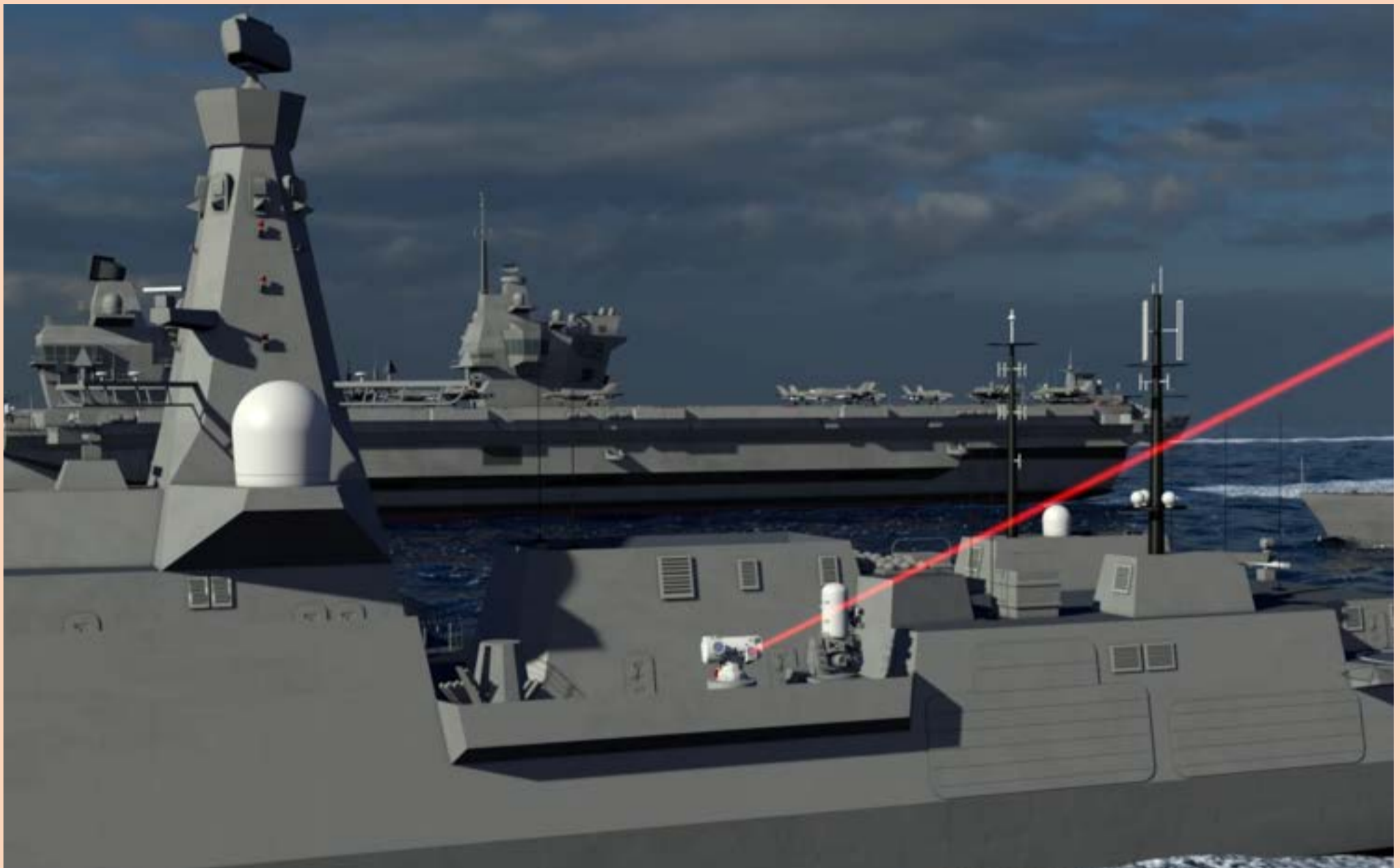
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# BEAM ME UP, JACK

A POWERFUL laser weapon will be added to the Royal Navy's arsenal in the next three years as the need for weapons to counter drone and missile threats – like those fired by Houthi rebels – grows.

The cutting-edge DragonFire laser will be installed on a warship in 2027, adding to the Royal Navy's potent array of air defence weaponry, which includes the Sea Viper and Sea Ceptor missile systems which have recently shot down Houthi targets in operations in the Red Sea with HMS Diamond and HMS Richmond.

A burst of the high-intensity beam from DragonFire costs no more than £10 – yet can engage targets – drones, missiles, aircraft – at the speed of light by concentrating it on a target.

The laser has been under development for nearly a decade and underwent tests by government scientists on the Ministry of Defence's ranges in the Hebrides at the start of this year.

Now, plans have been brought forward five years from 2032 to install DragonFire on a Royal Navy ship under new procurement rules which were introduced this week.

Captain Matt Ryder, responsible for new capabilities as Head of Above Water Battlespace in the Royal Navy's Develop Directorate, said: "The Royal Navy has always been on the front foot to embrace new technologies to enhance our capability.

"We recognise this cutting-edge UK laser weapons technology as highly relevant and the need to accelerate it into service on board our ships at the earliest opportunity.

"Clearly a current operational focus is on protecting Freedom of Navigation in the Southern Red Sea as part of Operation Prosperity Guardian, where in recent months HMS Diamond and HMS Richmond have each successfully deployed Air Defence capabilities to defend

legitimate shipping in the area against drone and missile threats.

"Noting the quantity and varied sophistication of air and missile threats seen in the Southern Red Sea, we see a very relevant and current example of where laser weapons could provide an additional layer of defence to protect shipping, at a potentially much lower cost per shot and without the inherent onboard magazine and silo capacity constraints associated with interceptor missiles."

The current missile systems remain highly relevant and will continue to be a core component of the Royal Navy's air defence capability, especially with further investment in Sea Viper to defeat ever-evolving threats.

DragonFire has been developed by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), on behalf of the UK MOD, working with its industry partners MBDA, Leonardo, and QinetiQ.

Dstl's Chief Executive Paul Hollinshead said: "This is excellent news, and a real step forward in enabling operational advantage at pace for UK Defence. Dstl is all about preparing for the future and the DragonFire technology is a great example of that. Our scientists along with industry partners have worked tirelessly to bring laser technology to where it is today, one which I am proud to say is a UK sovereign capability."

Defence Secretary, Grant Shapps, said: "In a more dangerous world, our approach to procurement is shifting with it. We need to be more urgent, more critical and more global.

"Our widespread reforms will deliver the latest kit and weaponry for our Armed Forces faster and help identify export opportunities that can boost the UK economy.

"DragonFire shows the best of the UK at the forefront of military technology, and we will not delay in getting it in the hands of our military to face down the threats we're facing."





*Team Trent with their huge haul of cocaine*



# THE BUSTERS

## DRUGS BUST NO. 5

ROYAL Navy patrol ship HMS Trent stopped £204m of cocaine reaching Britain's streets after a night-time pursuit in the Caribbean Sea.

The Portsmouth-based ship has seized £511m of drugs across five operations in the Caribbean since deploying to the region in December.

HMS Trent was alerted to potential smugglers by a United States maritime patrol aircraft and used her powerful radars to track down a go-fast boat matching the reported course and speed.

The call "hands to boarding stations" was raised, the signal for the ship's boarding team of sailors, Royal Marines and US Coast Guard

personnel to prepare to stop and search the vessel.

With five outboard motors, the go-fast could potentially outrun Trent and her two seaboats, meaning keeping the element of surprise was imperative to the mission's success.

As Trent closed in and darkness fell, the seaboats pounced and the chase was on.

The go-fast was hopelessly weighed down by its illegal cargo and to evade capture, the crew began jettisoning bale after bale of cocaine.

As the go-fast escaped, accelerating to nearly 50mph, the sheer amount of cargo left behind became apparent.



*US Coast Guard personnel collect discarded bales of cocaine*

## GUIDE TO THE ROYAL NAVY 2024

A mixture of warship profiles, commentary and analysis, including:

- Assessment of the Royal Navy
- Update on the Type 31 Frigate programme
- The rise and illogical fall of the amphibious forces
- Lessons offered by conflict in Europe

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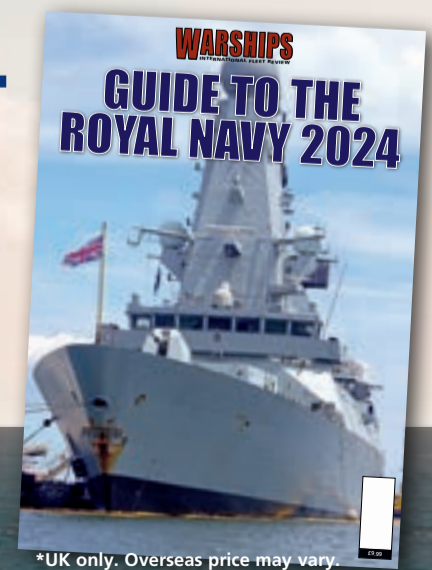
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“Every direction we looked in, there was cocaine bales, we knew this was a big haul, they must have ditched the entire cargo to escape,” said a Royal Marine, who cannot be named for operational reasons.

The recovery operation went on through the night and eventually 2,548kg of cocaine was recovered back to Trent.

“Considering the time lapse from the previous night’s chase, we were able to factor in the drift and calculate the area where the bales should be,” explained HMS Trent’s First Lieutenant, who cannot be named for operational reasons.

“We calculated right, the look outs did a superb job picking out the bales against the wider ocean.”

Trent’s Commanding Officer, Commander Tim Langford, added: “The combined capabilities of the ship, the embarked US Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment and our 47 Commando coxswains have proven once again the utility of our ship in countering narcotics smuggling.

“Working seamlessly to complete another covert take down, Trent and her crew continue to achieve unparalleled success in intercepting traffickers with over half a billion pounds worth of narcotics now disrupted.”

HMS Trent is part of a multinational effort to stem the flow of drugs being smuggled to Europe and America.

Across five months of operations, the ship has seized 6,390kg of drugs worth £511m on Britain’s streets.



HMS Trent’s seaboats return from drugs bust number three in the Caribbean Sea

## DRUGS BUST NO.3 AND 4

Before drugs bust five, came number three and four as Trent seized drugs with a street value of £16.7 million in two separate blows to drug runners.

British sailors, Royal Marines and a US Coast Guard team on Trent intercepted a smuggling speedboat immediately following a port visit to the island of Martinique.

The warship launched her fast sea boats, piloted by Royal Marines of 47 Commando, to intercept the speedboat,

seize the drugs and detain the crew before darkness fell.

Less than 48 hours later, HMS Trent was back in action, working with a US Coast Guard patrol aircraft to track and intercept another speedboat.

Across the two operations, HMS Trent seized 200kg of cocaine and other drugs, with an estimated street value of £16.7 million.

Commanding Officer, Cdr Langford, said: “The flexibility shown by my

ship’s company to move straight from high-level defence engagement activity in Martinique straight into successful boarding operations is a testament to their dedication and professionalism.

“The level of cooperation between the Royal Navy, US Coast Guard and other partners has been excellent, and has been key to making these seizures possible.”

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: “These interceptions demonstrate the

Royal Navy’s commitment to disrupt and dismantle the operations of drug traffickers across the world.

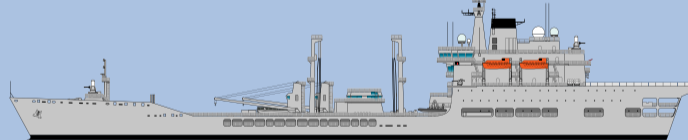
“I congratulate the ship’s company for their invaluable efforts to keep illegal drugs off our streets.”

These successful interceptions not only disrupt criminal networks in the UK but also underscore the Royal Navy’s vital role in maintaining maritime security and upholding international law in the region.

## THE TOP FIVE DRUGS-BUSTING SHIPS OF THE 21ST CENTURY



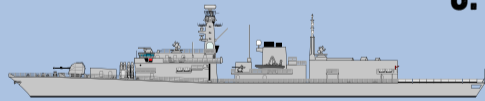
1. HMS ARGYLL: £620M



3. RFA WAVE KNIGHT £542M



5. HMS SOMERSET: £508M



2. HMS IRON DUKE: £589M



4. HMS TRENT: £511M

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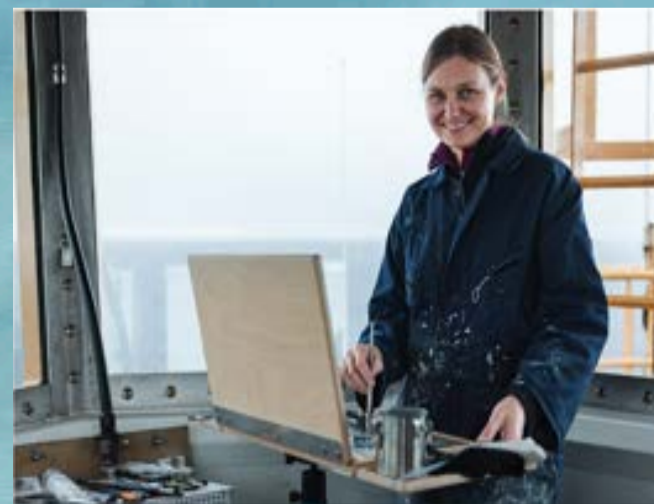
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# ICE BREAKER HELPS ARTIST GAIN ACCESS TO REMOTE LANDSCAPES



*Main image: Mass Antarctica - oil and acrylic on canvas; above, Penny Townsend at work aboard HMS Protector; right: Penny Townsend; far right: HMS Protector*

Pictures: LPhoto Gareth Smith



ROYAL Navy icebreaker HMS Protector is built and equipped to sail in some of the most hostile environments on Earth.

Her specially-designed hull and skilled ship's company mean she can reach remote places in Antarctica and access landscapes not seen anywhere else in the world.

Last year, she sailed once again to the south and was accompanied during part of her deployment by artist Polly Townsend.

It was a perfect pairing, with Polly drawn to remote and hostile landscapes.

Polly joined the ship in the Falkland Islands and spent five weeks on board the navy vessel, a residency supported by the Friends of Scott Polar Research Institute.

Speaking to, she said: "HMS Protector collected me in the Falklands and then we crossed Drake's Passage to the Peninsula.

"From the start, the Royal Navy were wonderful, kind and welcoming, and being with them added another dimension to the whole experience. I was able to get to otherwise remote and inaccessible places. Captain Ingham generously allowed me to use the crew's nest as an extraordinary studio.

"As the highest place on the ship, it had 360-degree views, protected from the weather and was a quiet place to work.

"With 24-hour daylight and no other responsibilities, I was able to work from early morning until late into the evening.

"I was also permitted to join all 'leg stretches' and landings and these outings were some of the most thrilling experiences of my life. We had incredible encounters with wildlife.

"A 60-foot humpback whale breached right in front of our Zodiac boat – and there were many opportunities to spend time working on the ice and land. Antarctica is obviously like nowhere else on earth and painting the landscape was amazing."

Polly is used to working in remote places and for the crew on HMS Protector, handling the freezing temperatures and unpredictable landscape becomes second nature. They quickly learn how to operate safely and efficiently in Antarctica, carrying out a number of operations and missions.

This year, 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 also delivered aviation fuel to the British Antarctic Survey's (BAS) logistics centre at Rothera. It also carried out crucial conservation work with the help of scientists.

And journeys to and from the icy continent gave Polly plenty of chances to get creative – despite the freezing temperatures.

"As you would expect it came with some challenges, most notably the weather," she added.

"Not only is it cold – which makes it hard on the fine motor skills in the hand needed for painting – but it's windy, so you have to really cling to everything.

"It's it's very, very changeable. This means the view is constantly refreshed and things like contrast and colour are rarely constant.

"When working on the ship, the landscape

whizzes past at several knots so a fast pace is essential in all respects.

"I took oil paints, drawing materials and several cameras and came back with 50+ works and 2,500+ photos. I reflect on it as a period of intense productivity in one of the best studios in the world."

Polly, who lives and works in London, has had several of her paintings exhibited in the UK and the United States. She has also worked in climates completely opposite to Antarctica having been selected for the National Park Artist-in-Residence at Death Valley, in California (as hot as Antarctica is cold).

Her work in remote places helps support the key messaging HMS Protector and her scientists have been pushing during the deployment – conservation work is important to keeping these environments thriving.

Polly said: "I have increasingly seen places through the lens of environmental fragility. Places often seem barren on the surface but are rich, life-supporting ecosystems.

"I feel a tenderness towards the minutiae of life and awe at the ancient and monumental landscapes.

"It's a privilege to be able to spend time in places like this and produce work which people will look at again and again.

"Being alone allows a deeper level of awareness and connection to the sights, sounds and – certainly where penguins are concerned – smells."

And speaking of penguins, she added: "My favourite species of penguin is the king penguin. On my arrival on the Falkland Islands, I saw one standing like a sentinel on Bertha's Beach.

"I kept the appropriate distance but it generously allowed me to take a huge wide walk all around it. I'm sure I was the more curious. It was a magical introduction to the Far South.

"Antarctica is the most important continent in the world right now in terms of climate stability.

"I think we have to use any means we can to help people access and connect with it and connect with the subject of climate change.

"Art can be a powerful tool. Visual mediums can be easier for many people than facts and figures, and art is based on emotions, which is the basis on which most people make their major life decisions."

■ Polly's work can be seen at John Martin Gallery, 38 Albemarle Street, London, until May 17.

*With thanks to UK Antarctica Heritage Trust*







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# NEW BRIDE

ROYAL Marines will strike faster and further across the Arctic snow thanks to a £10m investment in new snowmobiles for reconnaissance and raiding operations.

The UK Commando Force is the nation's specialist extreme cold weather troops, capable of surviving, moving, and fighting across the Arctic's inhospitable terrain. Royal Marines have traditionally moved across the snow on skis, snowshoes or towed by their armoured vehicles (known as skijoring) to get into combat.

But the Commando Force's battlefield tactics have rapidly evolved, with smaller teams deployed across a wide area on reconnaissance, raiding and strike missions to disrupt the adversary behind enemy lines, allowing freedom of action for the UK's F-35 stealth jets operating from a Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carrier.

That means there is a growing need to move more quickly over longer distances and across very difficult terrain.

With that, there is fresh investment with the purchase of up to 159 Lynx Brutal Over Snow Reconnaissance Vehicles made by Finnish subsidiary of Canadian firm Bombardier Recreational Products (BRP).

The snowmobiles will be supplied by BRP from March 2025 onwards.

The Lynx Brutal is custom built to operate in deep snow and is ideally suited for taking Commandos and their equipment deep behind the adversary's lines and help give them the tactical advantage as they deliver special operations in the High North.

Captain Nick Unwin RN, Commando Force Programme Director, said:

"This is the next step in the transformational change taking place across the Commando Force in terms of what they do and how they do it. The Lynx Brutal is a well-proven vehicle operated by many partners and allies, and will play a key part in the Commando's ability to operate in areas and in ways that are beyond the capabilities of conventional forces in the High North."

Steve Hayward, Team Leader for the Specialist & Autonomous Mobility (SAM) team at Defence, Equipment and Support (DE&S), added: "It has been a pleasure to award a contract for supply and through-life support of BRP Over-Snow Reconnaissance Vehicles.

"This contract follows an intense period of Assessment Phase trialling underpinned by some outstanding collaboration between DE&S, Navy, UKSC and Industry.

"The commercial milestone marks an important step towards DE&S delivering and supporting new equipment that will enable the Commando Force to operate effectively in extreme cold weather environments, including the High North. We look forward to moving into the Demonstration and Manufacture phases at pace."

While the Commandos already have snowmobiles this investment reflects the change in tactics and the need to maintain an operational advantage.

The snowmobiles will deploy as part of Littoral Response Group (North), a Royal Navy amphibious task force with Commandos at its heart, designed to react to world events in Northern Europe's waterways, including the complex Norwegian coastlines, the High North and the Arctic.

Royal Marines have just completed major military drills in the Arctic

alongside NATO allies.

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

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

Their operations enabled HMS Prince of Wales and the UK Carrier Strike Group, including F-35B Lightning jets, to strike the adversary's targets deep inland.

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.

The arrival of the new snowmobiles next year goes hand in hand with new amphibious vehicles. Sixty of the Future All-Terrain Vehicles replace the fleet of older Bv 206s and Viking vehicles as part of an £140m international agreement.

The new All-Terrain Vehicles, complete with amphibious swimming capability and better lift capacity, will be in service until 2058.





# THE DOGS OF WAR

Images by PO Phot Arron Hoare and AS1 Dan Smither



# PUNCHING THROUGH TO REACH RAIDERS

BRITAIN'S elite commandos have trialled using dogs to supply troops operating deep behind enemy lines with ammunition and food in the Arctic Circle.

Specialists from Chivenor-based Commando Logistic Regiment and the Commando Helicopter Force's Ground Mobility Troop trained with huskies during their deployment to Northern Norway to look at how the dogs could be used on high-risk supply runs into adversary territory.

Known as a Combat Service Support Squadron, the group of Royal Marines and Army Commandos are responsible for punching through the front lines and quickly supplying advanced commando raiding parties with ammunition, fuel, food and medical kit.

Whisky Squadron is made up of expert engineers, logisticians and drivers as well as protection troops well-armed with heavy and grenade machine guns, taking lessons from Russia's illegal war in Ukraine on the way in which logistics has continued to evolve on the modern-day battlefield.

Mainly operating at night, the squadron uses various methods to reach the raiding teams – on foot, skis or snowmobiles or in some cases using tracked vehicles and trucks depending on the delivery size. The emphasis is on speed and remaining hidden.

The commandos looked at how sleds pulled by huskies – known for their strength and endurance – could help deliver supplies to troops, making considerations on the types of operations canine companions could be deployed on.

The squadron looked at the distance the dogs can travel, how snow conditions can affect their speed and endurance, the planning required to navigate complex routes given the significant speed the huskies reach that make them unable to make quick turns.

The need to avoid

compromise while restocking hidden caches was also considered, given the huskies would become restless if left too long.

"We have been addressing the threat of high tech weapons by looking at low tech, low signature solutions, like the huskies, to resupply advanced forces," said Captain Al Hunter Royal Marines, about the training with the dogs from Norwegian organisation Riverland Husky.

This training was just one small part of Whisky Squadron's inaugural deployment, which has bonded the deployed troops and headquarters tightly together having only formed six months ago.

Marine Robert Swart, a Weapon Technician said: "As a young marine you want to come out to Norway and test yourself in one of the hardest environments in the world, operating in the frozen plateau is arduous and a great way to confirm one's soldiering ability."

Private James Gledhill, a Royal Logistics Corps Logistic Supply Specialist, added: "As a young soldier you read the news and see what is happening today in Ukraine, I think this more than any other exercise serves as a mission rehearsal to make sure we are ready if the worst were to happen to stand shoulder to shoulder with our Norwegian partners."

Whisky Squadron are responsible for operating in the extreme cold of the Arctic with 45 Commando as part of the Littoral Response Group (North), a Royal Navy task force designed to react to world events in Northern Europe's waterways and chokepoints.

Delta Squadron, meanwhile, are responsible for operating in desert and jungle with 40 Commando, which forms the main punch of Littoral Response Group (South) that keeps a continuous presence in the strategically-important Indo-Pacific.

The need for these squadrons is borne out of the Commando Forces' return to raiding operations, landing in small teams on coastlines to cause mayhem on an adversary.

Major Rory Bate of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, the Officer Commanding Whisky Squadron was jubilant about the inaugural deployment of his squadron in its new role.

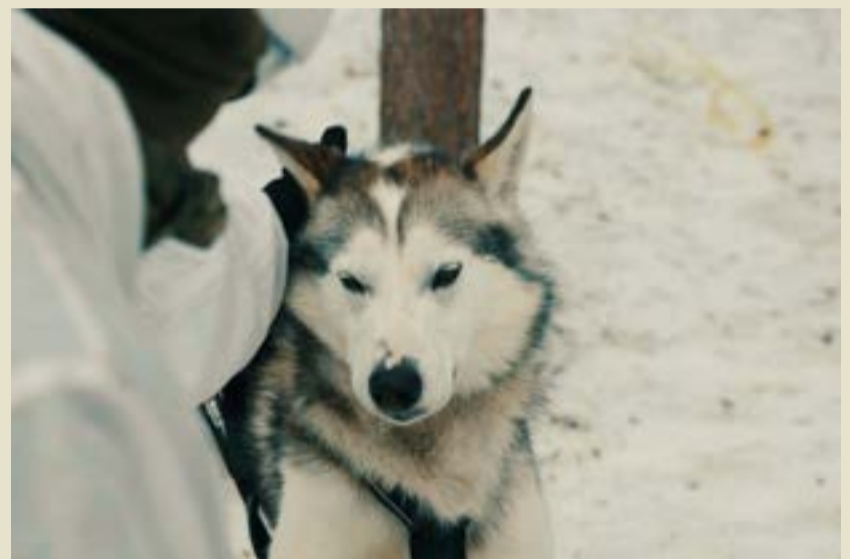
He said: "Having such a firm offer of support for the Littoral Response Group as it counters the pernicious threat faced in Northern Europe is reassuring. With such a responsive and credible squadron, we are able to adapt to the need of the Strike Companies and literally deliver the goods."

The early phases of the deployment taught the commandos of Whisky Squadron's Fenrir Troop essential skills in surviving, moving and fighting in the Arctic, mastering the ability to ski with ever-increasing loads in their bergens and pulks.

This culminated in a week-long phase where the whole troop deployed on the multinational Exercise Nordic Response to carry out their main responsibilities; recovering stricken vehicles, repairing vehicle breakdowns in the field, conducting supply missions and punching through enemy lines.

The commandos landed ashore from RFA Mounts Bay instantly getting to work, delivering 18,000 litres of diesel and 3,500 ration packs to troops operating across Northern Norway.

Sergeant Ashley Marsh Royal Marines, the Fenrir Troop's second in command, said: "In today's and tomorrow's battlefield slow large moving vehicles are vulnerable. We must continue to invest into Combat Service Support as a concept in order to remain a credible force that can support 45 Commando and allied forces."







# THE MODERN COMMANDO

THE HEAD of the Royal Marines has emphasised the importance of his commandos in the modern era of warfare as the Corps celebrates its 360th anniversary year.

Commandant General, General Gwyn Jenkins and the most senior Royal Marines Warrant Officer, Regimental Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer Nick Ollive, have outlined what it means to be a commando in the modern era in a video address to the Corps.

The Commando Force – with Royal Marines at its heart – continue their bold modernisation into a force that embraces technology but also returns to their roots as raiders from the sea.

At its core, each commando brings with them unrivalled training and a mindset that means they can adapt and overcome when others may founder.

“Commandos are a special operations warfighting force,” said General Jenkins. “This unique role that was born in 1942 in the hills of Achnacarry, has never been clearer, more relevant, or more important.

“Commando operations are, by their very nature, special operations. Our force was originally conceived for this purpose.

“We have the ability to disperse and strike with precision, or come together to deliver a decisive

blow.

“In these hardest and most threatening of environments where the commando is in their element, we bring the best of technology to bear.

“Our uniquely comprehensive, arduous and testing training develops this ability. It is technical. It is physical. Above all, it is cognitive.

“The Commando Mindset is the single most important thing we have,” adds the General.

“Don’t doubt it. Nurture it. Be the first to understand. The first to adapt. The first to overcome.

“Qualifying as a commando gives us the privilege of wearing the Green Beret. It gives us the responsibility of embodying that title in our actions.

“We master the basics. We think the unthought. We do whatever it takes to keep ourselves ready.

“There is no one else who can do what we can do.”

WO1 Ollive has laid down the gauntlet to this generation of commandos and those who will follow, urging them embrace to the challenge of thinking differently and adapt faster than anyone else in this era.

“Do not underestimate what warfighting commandos are. This is about doing the hard

yards, being the advanced force, and operating behind enemy lines,” he said.

“This is not a new role, nor is it something we are unfamiliar with.

“We are small groups of specially trained individual who use novel tactics, master the element of surprise and have an aptitude for performing the improbable.

“We overcome a numerically superior enemy and defeat the most difficult targets.

“We operate up threat. We thrive in the most inhospitable of locations so we can utilise terrain that others cannot.

WO1 Ollive adds: “We are the modern commandos. We will adapt to the modern age faster than anybody else.

“My challenge to every commando is to live this vision.

“Embrace the robust challenge a team needs to do things differently, and win.

“The commando leader is relentlessly positive, particularly in adversity, and we should not accept anything less.

“Reject the corrosive cynicism of those who cannot rise to the challenge of finding a better way to win.” Watch the video at [youtube.com/royalmarines](https://www.youtube.com/royalmarines).



# The end of an era as stalwart Dave retires

AT THE end of this month the Navy bids farewell to one of its longest serving stalwarts: David Wright whose career spans six decades.

After 47 years and one month in uniform – 14 of them as a rating – the lieutenant commander is stepping down to enjoy family time having served in the smallest ships in the Fleet... through to the largest in as varied career as you're perhaps likely to find in today's Royal Navy.

It's a journey which began at HMS Raleigh on March 29 1977... which is before most of today's serving RN were even born...

Fleetwood Mac had just released their iconic album *Rumours*. The Queen was visiting Pacific islands as part of her Silver Jubilee tour. Shipwrights were adding the finishing touches to carrier HMS Invincible ahead of her launch in early May.

You could pick up a tabloid newspaper for seven pence, a pint of milk for 11p, beer for 38p. A colour TV would cost the average male worker nearly a month's wages, while women typically took home pay packets two thirds the size of their male colleagues.

David joined as a sonar operator, but also added the feather of ship's fiver to his cap with his first ship, Euryalus, after which he served extensively at sea and ashore (Gibraltar, FOST in Portland, frigates Charybdis, Brazen – during the 'tanker wars' in the Gulf – and Chatham).

He was then selected for warship officer and completed his Officer of the Watch course, completing it with two awards: top student and top navigation student... which led to joining frigate HMS Alacrity in the Caribbean on drugs patrol/hurricane relief duties.

David then moved into the world of mine warfare, qualifying as a mine clearance diving officer (again as a top student in the disposal phase of the training) and spent nearly a decade either serving in Hunt-class ships (Hurworth and Ledbury) or sharing his experience and expertise on a three-year assignment to the USA.

From small ships to big and two years each on carriers HMS Invincible (damage control officer) and Illustrious (first lieutenant) and, most recently, HMS Prince of Wales (his last ship appointment – as first lieutenant), sandwiching a string of mine warfare appointments at Navy HQ, in Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.

After another stint in the Middle East, his career has concluded as Fleet Executive Officer, responsible for Executive Policy across the Service... all of which means an array of medals: Queen's Jubilee (Golden, Diamond and Platinum), Coronation, General Service (Gulf) and Long Service and Good Conduct (3 bars).

David rates his top three RN highlights as serving on Illustrious, blowing up a 2,000kg sea mine in the Baltic, and serving as commander in Saudi Arabia, where he received a commendation from Her Majesty's Consul-General in Jeddah.

Amid all these duties and appointments, David's found time to qualify as an instructor in PADI Open Water Diving (training/certifying more than 50 people, including both his daughters Victoria and Charlotte) and Emergency First Response.

He's completed two marathons (US Marine Corp Marathon in Washington DC in 2000 and 2001) as well as the Great South Run (2018), raising money for the RNRMC.

He plans to enjoy his retirement with quality family time with his family, including his wife Annette and five grandchildren.



Clockwise from top left, a young David; Lt Wright at BRNC; David on his divers course; with members of his family; David as acting Commander with wife Annette in Bahrain; David on his first ship, HMS Euryalus on his way to Denmark in 1978



Bob Wilton (second from right) is presented with a signed Merlin Training Facility poster by the commanding officer of 824 Naval Air Squadron. With him is the officer in charge of the training facility Lt Cdr Kevin Murgatroyd and the simulator site manager for CAE Chris Richardson

## Aviation veterans bid farewell to the RN

IT IS farewell to two absolute stalwarts of helicopter aviation in the Royal Navy this month: Dave Smith and Bob Wilton – with more than eight decades' experience between them.

Their efforts have helped generations of aircrew, be it the training Bob has overseen at Culdrose or Dave's encyclopaedic design/engineering know-how with the specialist 1710 Naval Air Squadron.

Dave, pictured right, has served in the RN, Royal Navy Reserve and finally civil service, leaving Portsmouth-based 1710 as one of its most distinguished design engineers.

He has worked on 27 different aircraft types and marks, served with 11 squadrons, and completed multiple operational tours, notably the first Gulf War and Operation Herrick in Afghanistan.

During that time he's delivered more than 158 aircraft modifications, which have introduced new capabilities across all Defence rotary and fixed-wing aircraft, past and present.

He's also led numerous urgent operational tasks, where his creativity and enthusiasm proved key to enabling rapid capability upgrades.

In addition, he's devoted substantial time sharing his expertise and mentoring both the civilian and military personnel he has worked with.

Colleagues say his impact on military aviation and its people throughout his career has been "beyond remarkable and he should be immensely proud of his career".

Much of which could also be said of Bob Wilton, an aircraft simulator engineer who has retired after more than three decades helping train helicopter aircrew.

Bob worked for CAE (UK) at the Merlin Training Facility maintaining the pilot and rear-crew Merlin Mk2 helicopter simulators which play a key role in instructing 824 Naval Air Squadron personnel ahead of front-line operations.

He joined the Cornish air base in 1991, working first with rear-crew Sea King helicopter simulators at 810 Naval Air Squadron, before moving over to maintain the Merlin simulators with 824 NAS which replaced the veteran helicopter at the beginning of the 21st Century.

Mr Wilton was presented with a poster signed by his colleagues and a unique clock – made from a programmable touch-screen device mounted inside an old aircrew console (a common control unit) from a Merlin Mk1 helicopter.

Surrounded by military and civilian staff and admiring his gifts, Mr Wilton said: "Thank you for all this and being a great bunch of people. It's nice to know that I've contributed something to the Fleet Air Arm. That's super – great. Thank you very much indeed."

Bob is also well known as a member of HMS Seahawk's Volunteer Band – conspicuous as a reservist in his RAF uniform – which he will continue to support.



## RN phot's footage features in BAFTA-nominated film

FILM captured by a Navy photographer which recorded the dramatic evacuation of Kabul in 2021 could win a 'TV Oscar' this month.

*Evacuation*, which features extensive footage filmed by Petty Officer Ben Shread, has been nominated for a BAFTA Television Award, one of four documentaries fighting for the title: Best Factual Series.

Operation Pitting, as it was codenamed, was one of the largest British military undertakings in recent times, evacuating 15,000 British nationals and eligible Afghans from Kabul.

Ben's work in Kabul over those momentous few days in the late summer of 2021 earned him the highest honour his branch can award: Royal Navy Photographer of the Year.

But as well as hundreds of still images, many of which were used by newspapers, news agencies and outlets around the globe, the senior rating recorded hours of footage with his Combat Camera Team colleague Flight Lieutenant James Langan.

Spread over three episodes, the 140-minute documentary, which aired on Channel 4 last year, was granted unparalleled access to those involved in the operation – and the many hours of footage (much of it previously unseen) filmed.

Filmmaker James Newton and Wonderhood Studios used that material, plus first-hand interviews with participants, to tell both the story of the evacuation and its impact and emotional toll on those involved.

Should *Evacuation* triumph at the ceremony on May 12 – it's up against three other highly-rated factual series: *Dublin Narcos*, *Lockerbie* and *Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland* – it will be the director who lifts the BAFTA, but Ben says it will be recognition of the efforts he and, above all, all those involved in the operation went to.

"A BAFTA nomination is a nod from your fellow professionals – an affirmation that your work resonates," said the 46-year-old from Glasgow, who's since left the service and works as a project manager for Barclays Bank. "It's an honour that is not given to many and I'm grateful I could have some part in telling the stories of our servicemen and women on the ground."

You can watch *Evacuation* at [channel4.com/programmes/evacuation](https://www.channel4.com/programmes/evacuation)



## Actor named patron of Naval Children's Charity

THE Naval Children's Charity have revealed actor Dame Kristin Scott Thomas as its new patron.

Dame Kristin Scott Thomas has always had a close personal connection to the Royal Navy. Her father, grandfather, stepfather and uncles all served in the Navy.

In 2023 she completed work on her directorial debut *North Star*, a feature that she co-wrote about an RN family, which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival.

Dame Kristin is the recipient of a BAFTA Award for *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. A bilingual actor, she received Academy Award and Golden Globe Award nominations for her starring role opposite Ralph Fiennes in Academy Award-winning *The English Patient*.

Dame Kirstin was born in Cornwall. Her father was a Lieutenant Commander in the RN's Fleet Air Arm, who tragically died in a flying accident when Kristin was at the tender age of five. She is the granddaughter of William Scott Thomas, who commanded HMS Impulsive during World War II.

In 2019 Dame Kristin took part in the series 'My Grandfather's War' telling the story of her grandfather who was in Command of a destroyer and made eight Arctic convoy voyages. He was also instrumental at Dunkirk, rescuing over a thousand men.

Dame Kristin said: "I am delighted to become a Patron of the Naval Children's Charity. The work that they do supporting Naval children and young people really resonates with me from my own experiences growing up. The work of the charity is invaluable, and I am only too pleased to be able to endorse it."

The charity's CEO Clare Scherer MBE said: "We could not be more delighted to welcome our new Patron. The life experience she brings to us, as a Naval child, and the inspiration she will give to our current children and young people, is amazing. Having overcome challenges as a Naval child herself she is a fantastic role model to inspire our young people."



## HMS Trent's chef wins top catering accolade

A ROYAL Navy chef has been named the best in the Armed Forces after showing exceptional skill and unwavering commitment while deployed on operations.

Petty Officer Cat Taylor was singled out after patrol ship HMS Trent was widely praised for the quality of its food, especially in challenging or unusual locations – the ship was deployed to West Africa last autumn and has been in Caribbean since December.

Cat, originally from Weston-Super-Mare but now living with her family in Plymouth, was crowned Armed Forces Caterer of the Year 2024 at the prestigious Public Sector Awards in London.

"I'm still in complete shock if I'm honest, but I am honoured to have been nominated for the award and absolutely blown away by winning," said Cat, who was named Royal Navy Caterer of the Year in February and subsequently put forward for Armed Forces prize.

"I can't take all the credit though; my team onboard Trent have been truly amazing, and I couldn't have done what I have without their dedication and support... and also, my mum and daughter for always motivating me to keep doing what I love."

Newly-appointed Fleet Caterer, Warrant Officer George Mee, noted Cat's leadership and unwavering commitment as she and her team upheld exceptional standards of excellence even during challenging deployments – and the complexities of operating off the coast of West Africa.

"Despite limited support and supply obstacles, her innovative menus and the team's evident passion for catering have set a new benchmark for excellence," George said.

"It is an honour to commend Petty Officer Taylor for her outstanding dedications and hard work, which reflect the highest standards of the Royal Navy Catering Services specialisation."

George also recognised Cat's contributions to her unit, branch and the Royal Navy as a whole after edging out fellow chefs from the RAF and British Army to win the top prize.

With only around 50 sailors typically on-board Trent and five caterers, Cat performs one shift in four in the galley alongside her tight-knit team, who are expected to provide three hot meals for shipmates 365 days a year.







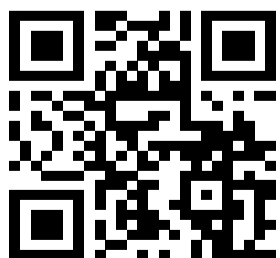
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# FATHER DAUGHTER DUO HAPPY TO SUPPORT CHARITY

IT CAN be easy to overlook the role which parents play in supporting their children when they join the Armed Forces.

And it's worth remembering that many young people join the Royal Navy as teenagers leaving thousands of proud, but perhaps just a little bit anxious, parents at home willing them on.

One intergenerational father daughter team are keen to give back to the RNRMC, the navy's principal charity, which is there to support all who serve or have served in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Supporting the charity is a tangible way for parents to give back to an organisation which will be by the side of their children throughout their service and beyond.

Father, Tony, and his daughter, Tilly, were born and bred in London.

Tilly always wanted to be a nurse and joined the Royal Navy in 2022.

Having completed her basic training at HMS Raleigh, she is currently in her second year studying for her adult nursing degree at Birmingham City University and is on track to graduate as a Navy Nurse in 2025.

She recently completed the London Landmarks Half Marathon, her first half marathon, having just turned 21 the week before.

Tilly wanted to fundraise for RNRMC having heard about the breadth of support offered by the charity during a briefing she received at Raleigh.

She also donates to the charity on a regular monthly basis via payroll giving, a great way for both serving personnel and civilians to give to RNRMC on their pre-tax earnings.

Tilly said: "I get really homesick and I know it can be hard for my friends who are serving being away from home too.

"The RNRMC does so much to help the navy community and it especially appealed to me how much they do to support serving personnel with morale-boosting events.

"That's why I wanted to do my first half



marathon fundraising for the charity and am more than happy to donate monthly too."

Although he hasn't served in the Armed Forces himself – he was a career detective in the Metropolitan Police force for 30 years – dad, Tony, has always had a huge amount of respect for those who serve.

"I joined the police force in 1982 and can vividly remember being a cadet at Hendon and watching the start of the Falklands conflict on television," he said.

"Ever since then, it's lived with me what the forces go through – basically to look after all of us."

After seeing the RNRMC's

sign at his daughter's passing out parade at Raleigh two years ago, Tony immediately decided it was a worthwhile cause and that he wanted to make a regular donation to the charity.

He signed up to a monthly standing order, which he described as a quick and easy process.

He's thrilled to see how much his daughter is enjoying the start of her navy career and has encouraged her to follow her dreams at every step of the way.

As ever, RNRMC is grateful to those who donate to the charity and our thanks go out to each and every one of you, and to Tony and Tilly for sharing their story.

## Raise money with coffee morning



The RNRMC Stand Easy is your invitation to hold your own Stand Easy, allowing time to connect with friends, family and colleagues whilst raising vital funds to support the wellbeing of our Naval family.

Taking part will help to fund anything from improvements to social spaces on ships and bases to wellbeing activities for those who have served.



JOIN the RNRMC this Mental Health Awareness Week (May 13 to 19) by hosting your own Stand Easy coffee morning.

Get together with friends, family and colleagues for a cup of tea and a slice of cake, in true navy style.

Host your own Stand Easy coffee morning to

help raise vital funds to support sailors, marines, and their families.

Stand Easy is the name for a sanctioned break in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, normally between 1000 and 1030. This is a time when sailors and marines sit down, have a wet (drink) and connect with their oppos (friends).

RNRMC funded projects help combat the causes of mental health issues, as well as managing the effects.

For a physical Stand Easy pack, sign up by May 5 to allow time to send this out to you if your event is being held during Mental Health Awareness Week.

You can opt to download the pack digitally. For more information, scan the QR code.

## TEMERAIRE POOL GETS MORE FUN FOR FAMILIES

A POOL used by service families has had a cash boost to buy inflatables and other games.

HMS Temeraire is bustling with activity and has been successfully hosting family swims at weekends and during leave periods for many years.

To enhance these family swims and bring more variety and enjoyment to the pool sessions, HMS Temeraire, in Portsmouth, requested funding from the RNRMC for an inflatable and other games equipment.

With this funding, the RNRMC hopes to help strengthen bonds between service personnel and their families and contribute to the overall wellbeing of service children.

The team at Temeraire said the inflatables provide great entertainment and fun for all the family and are contributing to the physical fitness and wellbeing of everyone.

WO1 Paul Nash said: "The donation from the RNRMC has been amazing and has allowed us to purchase a brand new inflatable which everyone loves and numerous other wet side

inflatables, canoes and zorb balls.

"These are having a positive impact on all our users, in particular the children, so a massive thank you must go to our wonderful charity for allowing our children this fantastic opportunity."

There are also plans to refurbish the Sportsmans Arm, which was previously a bar facility but is now very rarely used by sports associations or teams.

The intention is to make use of and modernise this communal facility that will provide shelter, refreshments and enjoyment for both sports teams and spectators.

There are also plans for the space to be used by HMS Temeraire staff for meetings, a breakout space and a well-deserved rest area. This project is supported by funding from both RNRMC and Royal British Legion (RBL).

There are also various other projects underway at the base including the creation of a brand-new Breastfeeding Suite, funded by RNRMC, which will provide mums with a safe and comfortable area to feed and store any expressed milk.



# Veteran commando Baz leads capital speed march to help fellow marines



ROYAL Marine veteran Baz Gray will lead a dozen fellow retired green berets on a gruelling 'commando marathon' around London to help comrades.

The former RSM from Yelverton in Devon will lead a speed march through the capital – 12 ex-Royal Marines, all aged over 45, running 26 miles in full military gear, carrying 40lb of kit in their Bergen backpacks.

Baz hopes to set a world record and, more importantly, raise more than £50,000 for the Royal Marines Charity to help veterans with mental health issues.

On the day the runners will be spurred on for stretches of the marathon by supporters who'll run with them (minus the impediments).

For those who don't fancy such a demanding run, Baz is also organising a series of smaller challenges nationwide, open to anybody of any age who wants to take part and have a go at running a 400-metre course with a 40lb pack as quickly as possible.

"Physical and mental health issues within the entire veteran community are as bad today as they have ever been," Baz said.

"This is a result of many years in conflict zones on a global scale, most notably in Afghanistan and Iraq."

He added: "The knock-on effect of this goes far beyond the individual. It has huge impact on friends and family, especially children.

"Having a project to focus on and a purpose in life can transform it from one of utter boredom and depression to one of excitement and fulfilment.

"This initiative is already changing lives and inspiring many veterans to get up, get active and find a bit of their old selves. We want to grow it, share it and transform as many more lives as we can."

With two months to go until the event in July, Baz is just over £5k short of his £50k target – donations can be made at [justgiving.com/page/rmveteransspeedmarchteam](https://www.justgiving.com/page/rmveteransspeedmarchteam).

## Get tickets for Beating Retreat

HERE is a reminder that Beating Retreat will be returning this July 11 and 12 on Horse Guards Parade.

This year's event will be particularly memorable as we take the opportunity to commemorate the 360th birthday of His Majesty's Royal Marines.

This spectacular evening of outstanding military music and pageantry, featuring over 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 beautiful backdrop of St James's Park.

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

Scan QR code for tickets.





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## Adventurous times for Welsh students

OFFICER Cadets from URNU Wales participated in an Adventure Training weekend involving caving and white-water canoeing, to build spirit de corps, resilience and challenge OCs in an outdoor environment.

One of the OCs in attendance, **A/Mid Matthew Gosden** recalls his experience:

"Officer Cadets from URNU Wales participated in Adventure Training, with the first activity being caving.

"In purely descriptive terms, that of crawling through narrow passages in the earth under tons and tons of rock in darkness, may seem not enjoyable to some.

"In mine and other's view is of the opposite opinion and I heartily recommend doing it if you get the chance.

"All reservations and woes we may have had about caving were dispelled before we had been 30 seconds in the first cave, of which three that day were traversed.

"The first cave was a good introduction for us novices, being not too tight a squeeze but with a good number of challenging parts; it ended in a large cavern through which part of a stream flowed.

"On the final day white-water canoeing on the River Usk was completed. It was rather relaxing when not on the rapids and thrilling when on them.

"No one capsized or ended up in the river whilst going through the rapids. However, at the end of our row down the Usk, a good number of OCs ended up in the river after attempting 'balancing acts' on the canoes for lack of a better descriptor."



## Sterling effort on RFA Stirling Castle

OFFICER Cadets enjoyed a tour of the coast of Scotland on RFA Stirling Castle. Six Officer Cadets and two Training Officers from URNU Glasgow, East of Scotland and NI set sail on RFA Stirling Castle from Garelochhead on the West Coast of Scotland and spent three days and three nights sailing up and around the North coast of Scotland into Leith, Edinburgh.

Alternating through the different departments onboard, OCs learned the ins and outs of the ship, from touring the engineering departments to helping out in the galley, and watchkeeping on the bridge.

OCs were also introduced to the ship's firefighting protocols and even got to don their PPE in cases of fires on the ship, seeing how the various members of her crew would come together to respond to emergencies on board, where emergency services aren't an option.

Learning how each of the ship's crew have multiple roles outside of their department to ensure the safety and protection of RFA Stirling Castle and her crew helped the OCs understand the value and importance of teamwork in the service.

OCs were initially tasked with Planning Exercises revolving around Stirling Castle's future role in autonomous mine exploration, which involved researching mine warfare resources and strategies throughout the deployment ahead of presenting their proposed solutions to the Executive Officer on their last night.

Throughout their deployment, OCs were treated as part of the crew, encouraged to get involved in all the departments and learned a tremendous amount about the role of the RFA and what life is like for those in it.

"I had an amazing time onboard RFA Stirling Castle, the crew never hesitated to make us feel welcome and we were able to learn on the go, speaking to different departments and getting involved in watchkeeping," said A/OC Josie O'Brien.

"Given the small crew onboard, we assimilated rather quickly and got to know a few faces which made it all the more enjoyable. Eventually, I even managed to find my own way around the ship without the need for directions, which I would probably say was my biggest achievement on board."



# CADETS PULLING TOGETHER

UNIVERSITY Royal Naval Unit Officer Cadets from the Wales and West England region comprising of URNU's Devon, Bristol, Birmingham and Wales have participated in a militarisation weekend at HMS Raleigh.

The basis of the weekend was to prepare the New Entry OCs from each unit for the URNU, with a vast array of activities from indoor lectures on core values of the Royal Navy to outdoor Practical Leadership Tasks and Sport.

The morning of day one of the weekend was largely spent indoors – after an early breakfast the first brief was on the standards within the Royal Navy OCs must uphold, with emphasis on C2DRIL, the RN Core Values. It was then on to weapons familiarisation, with OCs being shown the SA80 rifle and Glock pistol.

Afterwards, OCs moved from the classroom to the swimming pool, where they had to complete the Royal Navy Swim Test; a two-minute tread water and then two lengths of the pool – all in overalls.

This test is crucial for OCs wishing to gain sea time

within the URNU and deploy with vessels such as the P2000, as passing the swim test is a requirement to do so.

It was then outside to the parade square for an afternoon of Drill and PLTs.

For many OCs it was the first time they had marched properly, and it was time well spent dialling in marching, saluting and responding to commands as a squad.

Then it was onto PLTs, led by Senior OCs and staff from each unit.

In small teams OCs had to tackle a variety of tasks, from building runways to constructing radio towers, usually with a caveat such as being in complete silence, having to stay within a certain distance of another object or OC, or an unexpected twist to the task mid way through.

These PLTs allow OCs to gain leadership skills in some-times challenging tasks, as well as team building within each unit and the region as a whole.

Day two was a very early start for OCs, beginning with a 0600hrs outdoor PT session – a mix of

exercises such as press ups, then a lap of the base.

After breakfast and a quick clean ship, it was straight to both the astroturf and sports hall for a three-hour round robin of sports, including bucketball, netball, Swedish longball and football.

Not only was this a valuable fitness session for all OCs, but it also served as further team building between units as teams were mixed.

That all changed however, when all four units were gathered in the sports hall after the round robin had been completed and the tug-of-war rope was brought out.

What followed was a fiercely competitive event in which New Entry OCs, Senior OCs and staff all got involved to support their respective units.

On completion of the militarisation weekend, the new recruits had points for the URNU task book in Militarisation, Marinisation, CLM and ATS, as well as a more in depth view at what to expect from the URNU and what it could offer them, as well as a look at life in the Royal Navy for those OCs that do choose to join.

## Ration packs and superb scenery in NI

EXERCISE CLM (Command, Leadership & Management) EXPRESS 24 was led by URNU Virtual at Ballykinler Training Camp in Northern Ireland.

On the shores of the Irish Sea, some of the finest training estate in the UK hosted Officer Cadets from URNU units Virtual, Belfast, Glasgow and East Scotland.

Planned and led by URNU Virtual CO, Lt Cdr Barry McWilliams and the unit Coxswain, CPO Stefan Johnson, 40 OCs came together for a fast-paced weekend of basic field craft and Practical Leadership Tasks (PLTs).

On the Saturday forenoon, OCs learned how to survive in field conditions using service issued kit. They built bashas (shelters using ponchos) and using Dragonfuel stoves boiled water to make meals, gaining an understanding of Operational Ration Packs and the difficulties of cooking in typical weather conditions to be found in Ulster at the end of winter.

Pausing for a visit from Cdre Jo Adey ADC, Commander Maritime Reserve – there to visit HMS Hibernia who were leading a national training exercise concurrently, the Commodore presented the CO's certificate of promotion to substantive CPO to the Coxswain.

Six OCs also volunteered to participate in the Royal Navy Reserve's Cyber branch evolutions of Digital Forensics and a Cyber board gaming exercise.

Training resumed in the afternoon and as the weather freshened still further, Training Officers from Virtual, Belfast and East Scotland took them in teams around six stances in a purpose-built Command Task Area.

Dependent on experience they were either assessed and scored or coached and mentored. All teams and staff battled valiantly in driving freezing rain to complete three per team (against a planned six) before the conditions were assessed to be worsening and a decision made to draw stumps early.

After being revived with dinner, Chaplain Owen Crane from URNU Belfast led the group in a quiz and CO's challenge coins were presented to five OCs who had particularly impressed in their PLTs, and Easter Eggs (The "Good Egg" award) presented by the Midshipmen to those more junior ones who had impressed them with their bearing and attitude.

On the Sunday, OCs participated in a Non-combatant Evacuation Exercise designed by staff from HMS Hibernia.

Acting as role players and citizens of a fictitious country, they acted in roles as varied as casual drinkers in a pub, a distressed mother who lost her baby, minor medical casualties, evacuating embassy personnel and an angry mob.

Ex CLM EXPRESS 25 will be planned to be even better and cover all aspects of fieldcraft in the current OC taskbook, with more involvement in the evacuation exercise too.

## Making new friends

THIRTY-FOUR Officer Cadets and six staff deployed to Palermo in Sicily to support the annual International Forum for Peace, Security and Prosperity (IFPSP).

Now in its fourth year, and the second consecutive year the URNU has supported having attended as the SNI Region last year, IFPSP is run by Canadian Academics (most ex-military) and facilitated by the Italian Army.

This year saw 31 nations, including USA and Ukraine, and over 90 institutions represented, an audience of about 350 in total, with the URNU taking by far the largest contingent of personnel.

The IFPSP mission is to develop selected Cadets' leadership skills and their understanding of the Royal Navy's approach to Defence Engagement while enhancing the URNU's relationships with Partner Nations' officer training academies.

A comprehensive and interactive programme incorporating academic study sessions, debating panels and presentations based around Eight Pillars of Peace, the Cadets were provided with, and seized, the opportunities to present on stage in front of high-profile audiences of 100+.

Among the VIPs were the President of Sicily, the Mayor of Palermo, Generals of the Italian Army and Canadian Defence Academy, and senior representation from the United Nations. It's aim is to become the largest student peace forum in the World.

CO URNU East Scotland, Lt Cdr Nick Bates, lead the deployment and said: "IFPSP '24 was another fantastic success story for our URNU Officer Cadets. The mission was to develop selected Cadets' leadership skills and their understanding of the Royal Navy's approach to Defence Engagement while enhancing the URNU's relationships with Partner Nations' officer training academies."

Officer Cadet Sophie Coombes, a second year Language student at University of Edinburgh, and on placement in Estonia, added: "The IFPSP was a space for URNU OCs to collaborate with military colleagues from around the world, reflecting on the interconnecting dynamics of, secure, and prosperous societies."

Registered charity number: Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund 160882

**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





Welcome to the third edition of P&T Corner, where we update you on recent initiatives and changes within the People and Training Directorate.

## Women, get active

**HMS Temeraire ran a pilot aimed at promoting women's health: Let's Get Active.**

After identifying a need for more targeted promotion and information around women's health and physical fitness, the Health and Wellbeing Team and Sports Development Team collaborated to deliver a safe, welcoming and fun event for women in the RN to try out a variety of sports and activities, learn more about nutrition, and have the opportunity to discuss all things women's health with a range of experts.

The event was open to all women across the RN regardless of fitness level and 120 women took part across the day – over triple the expected turnout.

The morning saw attendees try spin classes, Zumba, yoga (pictured right), football, functional fitness, and indoor climbing, along with baby swim sessions running for those on maternity leave.

The afternoon comprised several extremely well-attended women's health talks delivered by Surg Lieutenant Commander Ruth Guest, and health specialists were also on hand to offer tailored advice and guidance.

An appearance from online favourite and Royal Marine 'Commando Chef' rounded



off the day with a cooking demonstration showcasing how to balance the preparation of quick and healthy meals around the responsibilities and pressures of service life.

Jen Wells, who led on the project organisation on behalf of the Sports Development Team

said: "It was great to see such a fantastic turnout on the day and really demonstrates the appetite our women in the Royal Navy have for these bespoke events."

"We are excited to run the next one in the autumn and are expecting a similarly high uptake."

Following the success of the pilot event, a second women's 'Let's Get Active' event will run on September 18 in Devonport and is open to women in Royal Navy/Fleet Air Arm based in the Western region, with future events also in the pipeline for the Northern and Eastern regions.

## You said, we did Yes, we CAN change

**The number of people a CM oversees means you don't always get a response and can't be seen in person:**

To provide a better Career Management service, the number of people a CM oversees will now be significantly reduced, allowing CMs to spend more time on each individual and provide a more personal and bespoke touch.

**There is a lack of necessary support for apprentices:**

A new Apprenticeship Communication Plan was rolled out at the end of January 2024. All Units will now have an apprenticeship 'Target Week' every 12 weeks to provide a better flow of information on what is required to achieve success.

**Some allowances have been frozen since 2010 but the cost of living have risen significantly in this time. They should be reviewed and increased accordingly:**

The Remuneration Team have undertaken an in-depth view of these allowances and as a result, an uplift of 20 per cent to the frozen capped limit of Day Subsistence has been approved and the Child element of Disturbance Expense has also been increased by 35 per cent.

Both increases were put into effect on April 1.

THE Change Advocate Network (CAN) – comprising over 500 advocates drawn from across the whole force – encourages change and empowerment in their teams and beyond.

Jointly sponsored by Rear Admirals Paul Beattie, Director Naval Staff, and Jude Terry, Director People & Training, the CAN encourages and enables all those serving – irrespective of rank or grade – to use their unique backgrounds and skill sets when it comes to influencing and implementing behavioural and cultural change.

"The CAN is a powerful resource to engage our people – to enable more creative, innovative thinking; challenge outdated or unnecessary practices; and provide free-flowing feedback," said Admiral Beattie.

The CAN holds regular dial-ins with advocates cascading key messages from these sessions to their teams, encouraging full and frank participation so that any changes, local or more widely, are driven by team members' experiences, observations, and recommendations.

Recent CAN sessions have focused on leadership, empowerment, coaching, mentoring, climate change and sustainability, and health and wellbeing.

Advocates also lead or support local change and empowerment initiatives; participate in an Empowerment Focus

Group (a monthly virtual forum which helps to develop new empowerment initiatives and shares good practice across the RN); and deliver or support 'Challenge and Innovation', 'Empower You' and 'Empower Team' training.

Lieutenant Commander Will Astley from HMS Bulwark has been a member of the CAN for over a year and has found it invaluable when it comes to his team's view of the future.

"A series of empowerment-focused workshops are currently being delivered to Bulwark's blended workforce: RN regulars, FTRS and industry partners. The intention is to recognise the value of the individual and the impact this can have on the team – irrespective of role or experience. We have set aside an hour each week to discuss topics such as self-awareness, approaches to decision-making, psychological safety, and the benefits of a growth mindset.

"Feedback so far has been very positive, and team members have welcomed the opportunity to reflect on areas that will help to increase team cohesion, collaboration, and output."

For further information about how you can become part of the CAN, contact Michelle Ross [helen.ross105@mod.gov.uk](mailto:helen.ross105@mod.gov.uk), or Catherine Evans [catherine.evans231@mod.gov.uk](mailto:catherine.evans231@mod.gov.uk).

# Simulation

FLensburg on the German-Danish border proved not to be a bridge too far for a group of trainee officers from Dartmouth.

Junior warfare officers spent a week at the spiritual home of the German Navy's officer corps – counterpart to the Royal Navy's very own Britannia Royal Naval College – and especially its hi-tech bridge simulators.

The two establishments enjoy long-standing links and twinning arrangements courtesy of liaison and exchange officers and students.

For those who've not been, the Marineschule (naval academy) is an imposing red brick building which sits on a hill overlooking a bay and trains hundreds of young men and women annually in the art of naval leadership.

Which rather sounds like BRNC... except that it's located in Mürwik on the outskirts of Flensburg in Schleswig-Holstein.

Otherwise, the academy mirrors the Royal Navy's Dartmouth college – both were built around the same time, in a similar style (inside and out), with the goal of training officers for one of

the world's premier navies.

Royal Navy personnel on the Initial Warfare Officer (Foundation) course crossed the North Sea to broaden their horizons, foster links with our NATO ally in the alliance's 75th anniversary year, and above all get in some sim time.

The RN has installed brand-new Virtual Reality 3D bridge simulators at BRNC, HMS Collingwood and Faslane – but it's rare for complex and challenging scenarios to be run for junior officers beginning their seafaring careers.

"This week has been a significant benefit to my development as a future Officer of the Watch," said Sub Lieutenant Will Fairley.

"Being put into scenarios that we would not encounter for another five or six years in our career is a brilliant means of building future bridge skills – my capacity has grown the most due to the intense simulator runs had.

"Before had I would have struggled with many of the situations and dealing with the large quantities of information coming in. After the week in Germany I feel far more confident and with

## Medal recognition for long-standing campaigns

SAILORS and Royal Marines who have served in the Gulf will be eligible for a new decoration – one of several operations recognised by the Wider Service Medal.

Operation Kipion – the long-standing security mission carried out by Royal Navy and RFA ships from Suez to the Seychelles and involves hundreds of Senior Service personnel 24/7/365 – is one of several operations singled out for eligibility under the new medal, announced by Defence Secretary Grant Shapps.

Approved by The King, the WSM as it will be abbreviated, recognises military personnel and civilians on operations who make a significant contribution to the UK's missions in rigorous circumstances but where the physical risk to life – traditionally required for the award of an operational medal – is lower.

To be eligible for the medal you must have completed 180 days' aggregated service on one of the named operations (further service of 180 days will earn a bar up to a maximum of three) since December 11 2018 (selected because it was the day HM Queen Elizabeth II approved the new decoration in principle).

As well as Kipion, the first tranche of eligible ops includes: HMS Tamar and Spey's Asia-Indo-Pacific deployment (Woodwall), strategic missile deterrence patrols (Relentless, in addition to the existing 'bomber pins'), as well as the Tri-Service missions to safeguard eastern Europe (Cabrit) and train Ukrainian personnel (Orbital). Other operations are being considered.

The first WSMs will be presented early this summer to a representative sample of recipients, with the medal enter mass production in the autumn, when it will be issued more widely.

All personnel who qualify for the Wider Service Medal will be notified in the usual manner.



## Framework will record your skills and talent

A NEW way of capturing skills across all areas of Defence will offer Royal Navy personnel more choice and control over their career development.

The Pan Defence Skills Framework (PDSF) is a new whole-force approach to identifying, defining, and managing an individual's diverse portfolio of talents.

By updating their online profile with knowledge, skills application, experiences, and behaviours (KSEB), individuals will be able to receive recognition for all their abilities and expertise and explore new career trajectories in the RN that best align with these.

The skills profiles are easily accessed through SCIO and individuals can add

accomplishments and interests from outside of their specialisations.

The framework will allow Defence to manage its workforce as a whole and reduce barriers within and between the civil service, military, and industry, leading to more effective long-term workforce planning and the ability to create job opportunities outside of traditional pipelines. The framework will also engender more focused and tailored training, reduce the RN's dependency on external contractors, and make it easier to identify and fill any capability gaps.

RN Project Lead and member of the Workforce Planning Team Lieutenant Joanna Steel said: "The framework

means we can record and acknowledge the breadth and depth of talents our people have and manage them better.

"It looks 'beyond the uniform' at a person's wider skills and experiences they have developed, including those outside of their profession, and how these can be utilised to shape their career pathways. It will ensure that we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time."

The PDSF will be rolled out from June 2024 and once live, personnel are widely encouraged to log into SCIO to update their profile and ensure that all their skills and experiences are accurately reflected.



# stimulation

the ability to process and retain more information than before."

Sub Lieutenant Sam Lugton added: "There are a few highlights from the trip to Germany – such as the evening mixing with German junior warfare officers.

"In terms of work though, the RAS run was one of the highlights of my career. I had gone from watching multiple replenishments aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth to enacting one as an officer of the watch on a highly-detailed and life-like simulator.

"Although intense it was thoroughly rewarding and I am very grateful for the opportunity given."

Sub Lieutenant David Marshall found the time in the simulator "excellent". He continued: "The opportunity to develop on more advanced training serials was highly beneficial, and I truly feel like I am much better than I was before the trip.

"It was a great opportunity to bond with my division and to build strong team relationships, as well as for the members of staff to meet us as people/individuals and not just students.

"Both the training and

social events in the evenings were incredible experiences and ones I will remember for the rest of my life."



## (Meno)pause for thought

HMS Sultan Women and Allies Network (SWAN) held a lunch to highlight and support women through perimenopause and the menopause.

The network meets regularly, offering support to women and allies on a wide range of topics and open to anyone working at Sultan, ensuring all voices are heard.

Guest speaker was the aptly-named Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Ruth Guest, a GP with a special interest in women's health.

"Perimenopause is the time where women get the first symptoms of menopause, but still have a cycle, before actual menopause," she said.

"It's really important to educate people, because often they put down the symptoms to other life stresses and events, but it's something we can help manage and it's really important as you start seeing women leave the armed forces, rather than identifying their symptoms and potentially treating it.

"Everybody knows a woman who will eventually go through the perimenopause. You might be married to one or it might be your mum, sisters, or colleagues so it's really important to understand the symptoms so we can best support one another."

The MOD has plenty of guidance for those going through – and those supporting those going through – the Menopause including the MOD Menopause Network.

For further information visit [modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/SitePages/Menopause--Continuing-the-conversation](https://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/SitePages/Menopause--Continuing-the-conversation).

# Do you yearn to learn?

DID you know you can learn in your cabin? Deployed on ops? In your tent in the desert or sub-zero temperatures of Norway? Or while your shipmates refuel a destroyer mid-Atlantic?

Learning and Development Organisation Operations (LDO Ops) bring learning to the front line, wherever Royal Navy ships, Royal Marines and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary are deployed.

To mark Learning at Work Week (May 13 to 19) the LDO Ops team want to highlight the opportunities they can bring to you to help with personal and professional development – spending anywhere between four days and two months at a time meeting specific needs.

Services include delivering the learning and development brief, giving a full overview of entitlements, delivery of coaching courses, engaging in one-to-one interviews, providing access to Standard and Enhanced Learning credits, and signposting key resettlement information.

"It is vital we support our deployed personnel by providing access to all the retention-positive services they would normally have easy access to while in the UK," explains LDO Ops Officer Lt Graeme Nolan.

"One of the most rewarding aspects of the job is delivering revision sessions and invigilating exams which are key for promotion from able rate and marine, through to WO1."

Graeme continued: "Playing a part in helping sailors progress their careers is extremely satisfying, particularly when you make them aware of opportunities they didn't know existed.

"It is important for our sailors and marines to feel valued and supported wherever they are,



Crew of HMS Tamar show certificates for the qualifications they've earned half a world from home in Portsmouth thanks to the RN LDO



## LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION

particularly, with the high tempo of operations and exercises our people are taking part in."

Over the past six months; the seven-strong team from the Training Management specialisation and RFA have visited personnel in places as diverse as Singapore, the USA, Bahrain, the Caribbean, Gibraltar and Rosyth.

"As a team, we collectively work to ensure we visit units as often as possible, including supporting at times of watch rotations to maximise the number of people we can help in each unit," said Lieutenant

Commander Doug Wharry (SO2 LDO Delivery).

"Our visits are highly-retention positive – we can open doors to new learning opportunities which our people may not have been aware of, or otherwise had, and can therefore incentivise our people to stay in the Naval service a little longer."

Onboard unit Education and Resettlement Officers are the first port of call for L&D queries while deployed and are effective in coordinating the LDO Ops team's visits and we'll share more of the work they do over the coming year.

## Use the (alternate) source

MORE than 40 days of waiting for supplies have been eradicated in the Type 45 destroyer community thanks to a new approach to acquiring spare parts.

Alternate Sourcing – which has been introduced under Project Renown, the programme focusing on dramatically increasing the availability of warships – has been piloted by destroyer logistics teams.

So successful has the trial on the Type 45s been that since March 4 a six-month pilot has also been introduced across the Type 23 frigate flotilla.

Since June last year, destroyer crews have enjoyed permission to seek alternative suppliers and ways of sourcing critical parts where necessary.

It's intended not merely to increase the availability of destroyers, but also ease the burden on crews by getting them what they need, when they need it.

There are ten different alternate source options, including tapping up other MOD sources, finding commercial off-the-shelf items where appropriate/applicable or using the electronic Procurement Card (ePC).

While alternate sourcing has been used before, it has been always been a last resort – there were no other options.

The trial run involving Type 45s allowed alternate sourcing to be seen as an official option, strictly governed and regulated, which has allowed comprehensive data to be gathered to help analyse and address the root causes behind the sourcing issues.

Thanks to a combination of fixing operational defects, avoiding store robbing, improved delivery forecasts and a flexible, common-sense approach which allowed supply chain managers to expand their options and meet requirements in a different way. The Type 45 flotilla has been available for more than 40 additional days.

"We have used the alternate sourcing route with great effect, managing to source items from freezer fans, o-seals and sight glasses and without their timely arrival, our onward programme would have been delayed," said one destroyer logistics officer.

"Items that we were unable to get through normal routes or locate suitable replacement items to purchase with an ePC were quickly identified using the process.

"This has had two effects on board: engineers were able to focus on fixing rather than sourcing and the correct items arrived quicker than through store robbing or other routes."

Commander Isha Harvey, Renown Supply Chain Workstream Lead, added: "We're seeing some real benefit to the front line in the short-term and alternate sourcing is helping to improve the lived experience."

Comprehensive 'learning from experience' has been gathered from the pilot and shared with Navy Command and other areas in DE&S Ships and Strategic Command.

The learning will continue from both trials, the data reviewed and assessed to allow for better demand planning in the future.

Contact Cdr Harvey, NAVY FGEN-Ships RENOWN SC1.





## The flags of our fathers

THIS is a Jolly Roger. Not any Jolly Roger either, but for submariners the Holy Grail – the oldest believed still existing.

Raised on World War 1 submarine HMS E54 after successful patrols, it can now be seen at the spiritual home of the Silent Service.

This earliest known surviving example of a Royal Navy submarine Jolly Roger joins the RN Submarine Museum's newest acquisition, the flag from HMS Thorough from 1943 as centrepieces of a new display celebrating the links between British boats and the skull and crossbones, plus the cultural history of the iconic standard.

E-class boat HMS E54 served in the second half of the Great War, chiefly employed as a U-boat killer in the North Sea and Atlantic – sinking two German submarines in the process.

HMS Thorough saw extensive action in the Far East in the later years of World War 2, where she proved to be a scourge of the Japanese, dispatching more than 40 vessels to strangle Tokyo's sea lanes. She remained in service until the early 60s, becoming the first Royal Navy submarine to complete a circumnavigation.

The association between the Service and the Jolly Roger dates to the first days of World War 1 when Lieutenant Commander Max Horton had a makeshift flag hoisted on his HMS E9 as she returned home sinking a German warship.

It was an act of defiance to some of the dinosaurs in the Admiralty who regarded the submarine as a machine unworthy of the Royal Navy: "underhanded, unfair and damned unEnglish... treat all submarines as pirates in wartime... and hang all their crews" – in the words of Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson.

E54's flag was a rather basic affair. By WW2, the Jolly Roger had become more standardised – though still crafted by crews – and elaborately decorated with symbols to signify success: a white bar for a merchant ship, red for an enemy warship, an explosion for gunfire support, a dagger for special ops ('cloak and dagger').

"Visitors are intrigued by our Jolly Rogers and enjoy deciphering their meanings. They give a fascinating insight into the often secret and mysterious world of the submariner under the waves and out of sight," said Alexandra Geary, curator of artefacts from the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

The flag continues to be flown to this day by any submarine which sees front-line action from HMS Conqueror, which sank the Argentine cruiser General Belgrano in the Falklands, to HMS Turbulent in Iraq in 2003 and HMS Triumph in Libya in 2011 for launching Tomahawk missile strikes.

As well as learning about the boats, their exploits and the significance of the Jolly Roger, visitors are able to create their own skull and crossbones through an interactive display, projecting their creation on to a wall.

# Wonderful young men remembered always

ROYAL Navy sailors and family members gathered on cliffs in Cornwall to remember the crew of a Sea King helicopter which crashed 50 years ago.

A short service was held at Beagles Point on the Lizard Peninsula where on the night of March 21 1974 the helicopter collided with the cliffs, killing all four crew.

Those lost were Captain Kenneth McDonald, aged 25, of the Royal Canadian Navy; Sub-Lieutenant Robert Stephen Johnson, 24, from Edinburgh; Sub-Lieutenant Edward Wild, 22 from London; and Leading Aircrewman Brian Sharpe, 27 from Peterborough.

All served with 824 Naval Air Squadron – still based at nearby RNAS Culdrose, though today the Merlin Mk2 has replaced the Sea King.

A memorial was erected at the crash site, then restored five years ago with a plaque added, and served as the focal point for anniversary commemorations.

Culdrose's chaplain the Rev Raphael Duckett led the act of remembrance, while bugler Sub-Lieutenant Chris Harris of HMS Seahawk's Band sounded the Last Post.

Wreaths were placed on the monument by the family of Leading Aircrewman Sharpe, including his brother Peter Sharpe and the aviator's daughter Pamela Puncher.

"When I thought what it might be like to be here today, my first thought was that it might be windy... not very

prosaic perhaps but actually it's quite a deep-rooted metaphor for me and a remembrance that takes me all the way back to this day in 1974," Ms Puncher said.

"That night, when these wonderful young men that we're here to honour and remember tragically left us all, there was a piercing wind. I was eight years old and I awoke in the middle of the night feeling cold. I came out of my bedroom into the hall of our bungalow in Trenethick Parc in Helston.

"The front door was open. A policeman stood in the doorway and the wind blew in wrapping my night dress around my legs and making me shiver. I remember my poor grieving mum, Valerie, sitting with friends. They were all crying. She held my hands and asked me to be brave."

She continued: "We are not here bound by sadness and loss, that is just the consequence of the love we felt. We are all of us bound together by love; our love for them and their love for us and now thanks to this memorial these wonderful young men who died in service of their country can be remembered always by the many people who will stop and read about them, not only by those that loved and lost them. So finally, on behalf of all the families, to Brian, Kenneth, Robert and Edward I say, we love and salute you all."

Also attending the service were local residents, members of Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency as well as Major Justin Lystiuk of the



Above LACMN Brian Sharpe (right) and (above right) pilot Sub Lieutenant Stephen Johnson both killed in the tragedy as reported by the local newspaper (right)

Royal Canadian Air Force.

The service ended with a flypast by a former Royal Navy Sea King helicopter, now operated by HeliOperations at Portland, Dorset, accompanied by a modern-day Merlin Mk2 helicopter from 824 Naval Air Squadron.

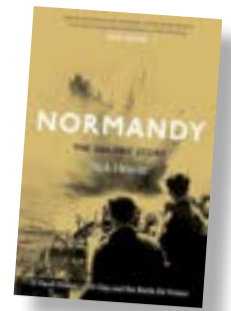
Commander Chris Jones, 824's Commanding Officer, said it was his duty not merely to look after the squadron's currently family, but also remember those who had gone before.

"This event is something we continue to remember, and I've been really pleased to see some of the younger people on the squadron come down to

Beagles Point to maintain the memorial. They recognise the importance of what this means to us all.

"What we do in the Royal Navy is inherently dangerous. At 824, we train people to fly at very low level, often at night, and sometimes hundreds of miles away from land in the north Atlantic. We mitigate the risks with our equipment and training. That's as true today as it was in 1974. We do everything we can to try to make sure a tragic event such as this does not reoccur."

Picture: LPhot Eddie Damulira



## Much more than 'just' D-Day

"BECAUSE it all went so smoothly, it may seem to some people that it was all easy and plain sailing. Nothing could be more wrong."

Thus wrote Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay at the end of July 1944 of the greatest naval operation in history.

And yet, given the dominance in historical memory of D-Day itself – June 6 is commemorated every year on a (inter)national level but not subsequent events until the liberation of Paris – it's the traditional view of the navy's role in the Normandy campaign.

Troops landed. Mission accomplished.

It's easy to forget there was a lot of bloody fighting ahead for Allied arms before the German front finally collapsed – and not just on land.

Just short of one in every seven vessels in the 7,000-strong Neptune armada was lost or damaged, while the names of 2,234 Royal Navy sailors (plus 179 merchantmen and 433 Royal Marines – the latter includes those who fought on land with commando units) can be found on memorials in Normandy. Then there are the Americans, Canadians, Free French, Norwegians...

The latter lost the destroyer Svenner on D-Day, torpedoed by German surface forces before any man stepped ashore.

One of the doyens of Normandy historians Stephen Ambrose (behind *Band of Brothers*) proclaimed it "the sole serious attempt" by the Germans to disrupt the invasion fleet.

Which where naval historian Nick Hewitt comes in. [Normandy: The Sailor's Story](#) (Yale, £20) is not just about D-Day. It spans nearly four years of preparation and more than three months of campaigning until the fall of the Channel ports at the end of September 1944.

It's an operation in scale and planning pretty much impossible to envisage today (indeed one third of the book is devoted to pre-D-Day).

And as the author shows in his meticulously-researched account (official reports from all nations involved, first-hand accounts, memoirs, studies, photographs and film), the battle of the Seine Bay was a "long, exhausting and dangerous battle" on a par with the fighting ashore.

In doing so Hewitt goes some way in redressing the balance of 'land vs sea' in Normandy historiography. It gives voice to the men who secured victory – and demonstrates conclusively that they were in harm's way from the first day of the campaign to the last.

And death at sea was just as instantaneous, unexpected, horrific as it was, say, in a Sherman tank 'brewing up'.

Take the loss of destroyer HMS Quorn, victim of a Marder human torpedo. She broke in half and sank in two minutes. As she went down, her captain saw his men stuck in scuttles, trying to squeeze through holes too small in a desperate bid to escape. Many men made it into the water, but died waiting more than four hours to be rescued.

Their sacrifice – and that of thousands more – has largely been "airbrushed from the narrative". Thanks to Nick Hewitt's efforts they have rightly been painted back in.



# Seaside honour for commando pioneers

**MEN** who took part in the greatest commando raid will be honoured in the place it all started – thanks to two sailors.

A memorial plaque will be unveiled on the former headquarters of No.5 Commando whose men went on to storm German defences at St Nazaire, helped seize Madagascar from pro-Nazi French forces, and served extensively across the Indo-Pacific in the final two years of the war with Japan.

It's the latest reminder to today's generation of past sacrifices which has been driven by Chief Petty Officer Richard Jones.

The senior rating, who's based at HMS Collingwood, devotes his spare time to drawing attention to forgotten tragedies in the UK – shipwrecks, rail and tube accidents – and ensuring they're remembered, be it with a monument or memorial plaque, a book, or both.

Much of his recent efforts have focused on his hometown of Bridlington and its role in both world wars – there are four blue plaques in the resort already to local George Cross/Medal winners.

The focus of his most recent attention has been No.5 Commando, whose links with the East Yorkshire seaside town were pointed out to him by local Navy veteran Martin Barmby.

The unit was one of the first commando units set up by Prime Minister Winston Churchill to raise hell in occupied Europe, formed less than a month after the fall of France in 1940.

The fledgling unit made its headquarters in the unlikely setting of a grand Victorian-era terrace: 6 The Crescent, Bridlington.

Although an Army Commando unit (commandos only became the preserve of the Corps post-WW2), it frequently fought alongside Royal Marine Commandos, or operated from Royal Navy warships – notably at St Nazaire and Madagascar.

During the former, an old destroyer – HMS Campbeltown – packed with



**RN veteran Martin Barmby and CPO Richard Jones present Carlton Apartments owner Thomas Bui (centre) with a reminder of the building's WW2 heritage** Picture: Ian Ellis



explosives rammmed the dock gate and subsequently exploded, denying the use of the dry dock to the German Navy for the rest of the war.

The invasion of Madagascar six weeks later in May 1942 – the first major amphibious operation by the Allies in the war – led to the swift capture of the northern tip of the island and the key port of Diego Suarez.

The special green, not blue, plaque was dedicated at 6 The Crescent – today the Carlton Apartments – at midday on Wednesday April 3, with a relative of a commando killed in the St Nazaire Raid performing the honours.

Madeleine Waplington lost her 22-year-old uncle Lance Serjeant Bertie Johnson during the raid on St Nazaire

in 1942.

He was one of the 'originals' who served with the unit from its inception and was one of 15 No.5 Commando personnel who took part in Op Chariot; only seven returned.

Holding back tears as she recounted the story of her family and how proud they were of him; she unveiled the green plaque with the words: "In memory of the most ordinary people who did the most extraordinary things."

Richard said there had been widespread interest in his latest unveiling – the 16th he has overseen – with funding for the memorial quickly secured.

"It just goes to show the enthusiasm for this unit to be remembered and commemorated," he added.

"It's an incredible piece of history and, for me, another opportunity to put Bridlington history on the map."



## Neuro charity benefits from shipmates' kindness

NEUROLOGICAL charity Movers & Shakers became the latest good cause on Spain's Costa Blanca to benefit from the kind hearts and deep pockets of shipmates of Torrevieja branch of the Royal Naval Association.

Members chose several different worthy causes to support each year. Four charities will benefit this year, among them the Association of Movers and Shakers (AMS) which supports people suffering from five neurological diseases (including Huntington's, Parkinson's and

Multiple Sclerosis) and their families.

The Almoradi-based group works across the Costa Blanca, meeting each Friday between 1-3pm at O'Brien's Bar & Restaurant El Raso. Contact [info@amscb.org.es](mailto:info@amscb.org.es) / 0034 711 00 82 50; they also have a Facebook page and their web site [www.amscb.org.es](http://www.amscb.org.es).

Treasurer s/m Carl Loudon handed over the branch's fundraising proceeds to AMS President Marion Smith surrounded by colleagues from both groups.

## Time for us to join forces?

IS IT time for associations to consider joining forces as numbers fall with the passing of years?

That's the question posed by The HMS Bulwark, Albion and Centaur Association.

Given the size of the ships and the length of their service, it still has a very healthy membership of around 300.

But shipmates are fully aware of diminishing numbers across associations and groups – the wartime generation has, sadly, largely gone and now the early Cold War/National Service generation are crossing the bar.

To keep the flame alive, the Bulwark, Albion, Centaur Association linked up with the small membership of the HMS Tenby Association for their 2023

reunion. The associations enjoyed separate AGMs but joined forces for the gala dinner – and went down well.

*Could this be the future*, wonders Denis Askham, BAC Association Secretary.

This year's reunion is in Prestatyn – with an open invitation to Anglesey RNA to join shipmates for the gala dinner.

Denis says this is not a plea for new members to join BAC veterans, but for interested like-minded parties to come together at least annually to celebrate their branch or group.

Other associations or shipmates interested in joining BAC for key functions and events should contact the committee via Denis either at [askhamd3@gmail.com](mailto:askhamd3@gmail.com) or 07773651213.

# Ancient site hosts memorial for WW2 boat

BRITAIN'S most iconic ancient site was the fitting setting for an 80th anniversary service to a lost WW2 submarine.

HMS Stonehenge vanished on only her second patrol some time in mid-March 1944 in the Bay of Bengal.

All 50 souls aboard were lost – neither their fate, nor their boat's have ever been determined. Most likely, the submarine struck a mine or suffered mechanical failure in waters between the Nicobar Islands and Sumatra.

HMS Stonehenge (pictured inset on the Mersey in 1943) was officially listed as lost on March 22 1944 – less than three weeks after an official war photographer had captured crew on camera preparing for their fateful last mission.

Eight decades later, national veterans' charity Alabaré organised a memorial service in conjunction with English Heritage at the prehistoric monument in Wiltshire which gave the ill-starred sub her name.

Ten RN veterans joined representatives of the Submarines Association, Royal Naval Association and serving personnel from Navy HQ in Portsmouth gathered around the ancient stones with Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire Sarah Rose Troughton for a commemorative service led by the Rt Reverend Stephen Lake, Bishop of Salisbury.

Local sea shanty choir The Navy Larks sang *Crossing the Bar* and Sea Cadets read the names of all 50 men those with HMS Stonehenge.



"I spent my early and later years in the Royal Navy working with submariners. I have the utmost respect for them; the conditions in which they

lived were far from ideal and they undertook very challenging missions," said Commodore Richard Lord, a retired Naval Officer and ambassador

for Alabaré.

"The service brought home the tragedy of one such mission in World War 2 and the sacrifice the ship's company of His Majesty's Submarine Stonehenge had made. Their loss must have been so tragic for the families and all who knew them.

"Thank you to everyone who have contributed to such a memorable service which brought together veterans, serving personnel, civilians and cadets. It reminded us so powerfully of their valour and we will remember them."

Alabaré helps veterans UK-wide who are vulnerable and homeless, providing safe accommodation and a pathway of support to help them progress to a brighter future.





# FUNDING BOOST FOR UNITS



THREE Sea Cadets units are set to benefit from funding from the government's Youth Investment Fund – Scunthorpe, Gosport and Margate units.

Margate Sea and Royal Marine Cadets has been awarded a Youth Investment Fund refurbishment grant of £120,884 to renovate its premises and facilities so they can support even more young people across Thanet and surrounding areas.

The unit has been providing nautical adventure and fun to young people for over 200 years.

The grant will allow them to refurbish much of the existing timber 'hut,' (pictured right) built as a temporary unit around 1965, bringing it up to current building and safety standards.

The renovation will improve the galley area, which will provide on-site catering, and there will be additional shower areas so cadets can benefit

from sleepovers for training purposes and early morning excursions and voyages.

Two of the classrooms will also be refurbished, the electrics will be brought up to current environmental standards with new lighting units and heaters inside.

The money will also see refurbished mast lights outside for use on parade nights, football practice and for the Queen's Regiment Corps of Drums to hold their practice sessions. Sections of the building fabric will also be weather-proofed.

Kate Hart, the Chair of the Unit

Management Trust for Margate Unit, said: "We are absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to improve the unit's facilities for the benefit of local young people for another generation."

"We would also like to thank everyone that has helped us get to this stage, including Thanet District Council, Sir Roger Gale MP, and the contractors that quoted for this work and gave us advice."

Cadet First Class Gemini

added: "I am really looking forward to having a new galley and mess deck."

"I hope that with the changes we'll



be able to all sit in the mess and play games.

"I'm also looking forward to having new classrooms because they may feel more comfortable to sit in and learn, same for the parade ground."

"Hopefully we'll be able to learn drill with more space. I'm really looking forward to these changes for the unit."

The funding will also enable the unit to deliver specialist courses in Catering, Seamanship, First Aid, Navigation and Boating for their cadets and will also extend this training to other local units, thus enhancing their career prospects.

Scunthorpe Unit has received a £100,000 donation from the fund, which has allowed them to rebuild their training facility, Ironside Block, a former Scout hut.

The government's cash award benefits the unit's 50 cadets through offering improved courses as well as sleeping accommodation.

The unit also reintroduced Royal Marine Cadets in April 2023 and the funding means they are able to provide improved classroom and stores for them too.

The Commanding Officer of Scunthorpe Unit, Lt (SCC) Scott Day RNR, said: "We are delighted for the very generous donation from The Youth Investment Fund. It's a dream come true for cadets."

"The building was in a very poor state and would not have been serviceable for much longer, it has enabled us to offer a diverse training block by all being on one level and a ramp being installed."

Scunthorpe Sea Cadet Unit recently opened its newly revamped facility, with Holly Mumby-Croft MP and Mayor of North Lincolnshire, Cllr Janet Longcake, in attendance.

Scunthorpe Unit, which meets at Wragby Road in Riddings, opened its doors to local young people in April 1943.

Since then, it has supported thousands of young people in Scunthorpe and surrounding areas to learn nautical skills, supported by

volunteers. The unit's recruitment drive is aiming to increase their cadet numbers from 50 to 80.

Gosport Sea Cadets Unit has received £17,492 by the Youth Investment Fund to refurbish their facilities at Berkeley Hall in Royal Clarence Yard.

These works will enable them to support an additional 50 young people a year, helping them to develop vital skills to launch them well into life.

Gosport Sea Cadets has expressed their gratitude on social media, stating: "This is excellent and most welcome news for all Gosport Sea Cadets."

"The grant from Youth Investment Fund will be a key element towards sustaining our thriving unit and the opportunities it offers the young people of Gosport."

Sea Cadets is among the 140 youth projects in England to benefit from the Youth Investment Fund grant, announced by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the charity Social Investment Business, which is delivering the grant programme in partnership with Key Fund, National Youth Agency and Resonance.

The Youth Investment Fund, of over £300 million, aims to support an additional 45,000 young people per year to access youth facilities through building, renovating and extending youth services in the parts of the country where new spaces and opportunities are most needed.

Culture Secretary, Lucy Frazer, said: "I want every young person to have the opportunity to access the kinds of life-changing activities which expand their horizons and allow them to develop vital life skills."



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## Former Sea Cadet wins annual award

THE confidence, skills and qualifications acquired through Sea Cadets have helped Freddie Jablonski achieve the Royal Yachting Association Yachtmaster of the Year award.

HRH, The Princess Royal – who is also the RYA's president – presented the prestigious accolade to Freddie at an annual event held in London.

"I am delighted to be honoured

with the award," said Freddie.

"It wasn't something that I anticipated; I was just trying to do my best on the course."

Freddie grew up in the East Midlands and was 10 when he was introduced to sailing through Sea Cadets.

"Probably the most challenging part was having to do my blind navigation to Cowes via the Eastern Channel, in driving rain

and 40 knots of wind, wedged in at the chart table with a towel to absorb all of the water that was dripping off me," he said.

Richard Falk, RYA Director of Training and Qualifications, added: "This is an outstanding achievement and one that Freddie has every right to be proud of, especially given the extremely challenging conditions encountered during his exam."

## Annual parade marks sinking of vessel

NORTHAMPTON Sea Cadets took part in the annual parade to remember HMS Laforey, the RN destroyer that was sunk on March 30, 1944.

This year is the 80th anniversary of her sinking caused by a torpedo fired by a U-boat during the Second World War, with most of the crew on board perishing.

The event, which is paid for by the community of Northampton, saw sea cadets and RAF cadets set off from the Guildhall and marched along St Giles Street, forming a loop before returning to St Giles Square to salute the Mayor of Northampton Stephen Hibbert and other dignitaries.

The landlocked town of Northampton had 'adopted' HMS Laforey during World War 2.

As well as helping to pay for the ship, local charities, churches and schools provided the crew with gloves, socks and hats, and schoolchildren wrote letters to them.

And when the officers and crew from the adopted ship visited the local community, a celebratory parade was organised in their honour.

The warship was assigned to several operations in the Mediterranean, including escorting a relief convoy to Malta as part of Operation Halberd.

An annual parade by sea cadets and the RAF cadet band marks the historic link with the warship and its crew.

The Commanding Officer of Northampton Sea Cadets, Sub Lieutenant (SCC) Sam Green RNR, said: "It's important to remember all those on board and what they did for us."

POC Emily, 17, said: "Being able to participate in the HMS Laforey parade

was such an honour, the parade is all about remembering those who fought for our country and put their lives on the line for our town.

"I also had the pleasure of escorting the Deputy Lord Lieutenant around the Guard for the inspection.

"More than 150 cadets from across Northamptonshire showed great respect. I've had the privilege of doing this parade for three years now and every year more cadets show up to support the town for the march past.

"Being in cadets has shown me that even though we are always moving forward we are never forgetting those who helped to make sure our country stayed as one.

"The attendance we had from the public was amazing, they all supported us as we did the march past and as we had the two minutes of silence in respect for HMS Laforey."

AC William, 14, added: "I feel very honoured and proud to represent Sea Cadets on parade for the memorial of HMS Laforey."

The Mayor of London, Stephen Hibbert said: "It's important to acknowledge the community's huge fundraising efforts in 1941 – the thousands of pounds raised then is equivalent to almost £26.5m in today's money.

"The Laforey Parade has taken place every year for at least 30 years, reminding us how connected the townspeople were to this ship and its crew during the Second World War.

"The parade also gives us another chance to remember and honour those men who gave their lives to protect our freedom."

## BUSINESSES PULL TOGETHER TO REVAMP BLACKPOOL UNIT

THE Blackpool business community pulled together to help Blackpool Sea Cadets Unit in installing new facilities at their premises – and give more opportunities to local young people.

Construction company, Evolution, donated the time of eight members of its team and equipment to install new facilities at Blackpool Unit's premises.

After a shout-out to other companies across the area to see if they could also donate materials to help their local Sea Cadets, they were inundated with offers of help.

A total of seven companies worked together to install a

new shower and toilet block at Blackpool Sea Cadets base on Devonshire Road, Bispham.

These included Style Carpets, Huws Gray, City Electrical Factors (CEF), Travis Perkins, Jewson and Smiths Hire.

The project, which was completed in just three weeks, has helped to modernise the facilities and ensure that the unit can be more inclusive.

CPO (SCC) Kay Jackson, Commanding Officer of Blackpool Sea Cadets, said: "I can't thank Evolution and all the other businesses enough. They have been amazing."

"The work they have completed

has transformed our tired old toilet block into something that is practical and fit for purpose.

"They have made it so that we can be inclusive to all young people and volunteers who want to join Blackpool Sea Cadets."

Kay added: "It's easy to say you support something. But when businesses back it up like this and move heaven and earth to give their time, expertise and materials free of charge to help give young people better life chances, that's real community action right there."

Blackpool Unit currently has 15 volunteers and 45 cadets from surrounding areas stretching from

South Shore and Blackpool to Over Wyre.

John Joseph Fitzgerald, Managing Director of Evolution, said: "The Sea Cadets help young people build their confidence, self-belief and resilience.

"It opens young people's eyes to possibilities and opportunities, helping them fulfil their potential and be the best they can be. This is exactly the type of project we like to support at Evolution.

"Kay is amazing. We wanted to support her and all the volunteers as well as it's only by them giving up their time that these young people have the opportunity to enjoy a better start in life.

## Cadets recognised for outstanding service and commitment to duty



THE efforts of ten people, including two young cadets, from across Dyfed have been recognised by the King's representative for the county.

In recognition of their outstanding service and devotion to duty, five people were awarded the Lord-Lieutenant's Certificate of Merit by Miss Sara Edwards

at a ceremony held at the Ivy Bush Royal, Carmarthen.

The five were Colin Sharp and Hilary Anderson both of Milford Haven Sea Cadet Corps; Sub Lieutenant (SCC) Lucy Killick RNR of Llanelli Sea Cadet Corps; Staff Sergeant Instructor Colleen Chinnery and Staff Sergeant Instructor Kirsty Richards of

Dyfed and Glamorgan Army Cadet Force.

The achievements of the Lord-Lieutenant's two cadets were recognised and celebrated during the event attended by more than 80 people.

Petty Officer Cadet Annis Henton of Fishguard Sea Cadet Corps and Petty Officer Cadet Luke Coburn of Tenby Sea Cadet Corps outlined to the audience their time in cadets, including highlights of their role over the last 12 months.

The role, which continues until September, includes attendance with the Lord-Lieutenant at a number of official engagements such as Remembrance events, Royal visits and parades.

The pair were selected for the prestigious Lord-Lieutenant's cadet role after being put forward for nomination by cadet group leaders and the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association for Wales.

Association for Wales.

During the evening, three long service and volunteer service awards were also presented to members of the Sea Cadet Corps.

Lieutenant Commander (SCC) Peter Killick RNR of Llanelli Sea Cadets was awarded the 5th Clasp to the Cadet Forces Medal; Mrs Valerie Callaghan of Fishguard Sea Cadets received the Gold Volunteer Service Recognition Award and Mr Brian Murphy of Fishguard Sea Cadets was awarded the Bronze Volunteer Service Recognition Award.

The cadet syllabus is delivered by 1,850 volunteering adult instructors and civilian assistants who give up their free time.

The awards event was organised by the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (RFCA) for Wales.



## Vessel officially handed over in Portsmouth

ALONGSIDE Portsmouth, in the midst of squally rain and strong winds, Lieutenant Cameron Fisher RN took Command of Sea Cadet power vessel TS Jack Petchey.

A former Navigating Officer of USS Winston Churchill, and lately instructor at HMS Collingwood, Lt Fisher is ideally placed to begin his tenure at the helm of one of five Sea Cadets Offshore vessels which take teenagers to sea for week-long voyages.

And he is looking forward to his assignment.

"To be able to instruct Cadets is a unique opportunity in the Royal Navy and one which isn't widely known," he said.

"It's up to our small crew of four people to deliver consistent training week-in and week-out and I'm really looking forward to the challenge." Outgoing Commanding Officer Lt Cdr Michael Royle added: "What an amazing opportunity. Some personal highlights have been passing through the inland waterways of The Netherlands, visiting D-Day sites in northern France, and spending the night at anchor in Lulworth Cove on the south coast of England – after hands to bathe and a barbecue of course.

"It's been an awesome experience and a truly independent Command. I will remember my time very fondly."

The Sea Cadets Offshore season is well underway. The 2024 programme for TS Jack Petchey includes commemorations for D-Day 80 and a near-circumnavigation of the British Isles (taking the Caledonian Canal as a short cut).



# Supporting ships in Red Sea

Behind the scenes at the Royal Navy's 999 control centre



HMS Diamond, far right, escorts ships into the Red Sea; inset, the T45 destroyer shot down Houthi drones earlier this year

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**SCAN TO EMAIL**



A Royal Navy-led '999 emergency centre' has dealt with an 'unprecedented' rise in distress calls due to the Red Sea crisis.

The team at the UK Maritime Trade Organisation based on Portsdown Hill overlooking Portsmouth are dealing with two or three reports of attacks and incidents daily – compared with monthly – as a result of the wave of attacks on shipping in the southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since November.

For the first time the UKMTO opened the doors of its headquarters to shed light on the efforts of its small team – just 18 strong – to help terrified or distressed sailors, guide other vessels to help out (or avoid the area) and work with international shipping companies to keep trade flowing.

The 24/7/365 operations room acts as the '999 call centre' for shipping of any nationality in the Gulf, Red Sea and central/northern Indian Ocean.

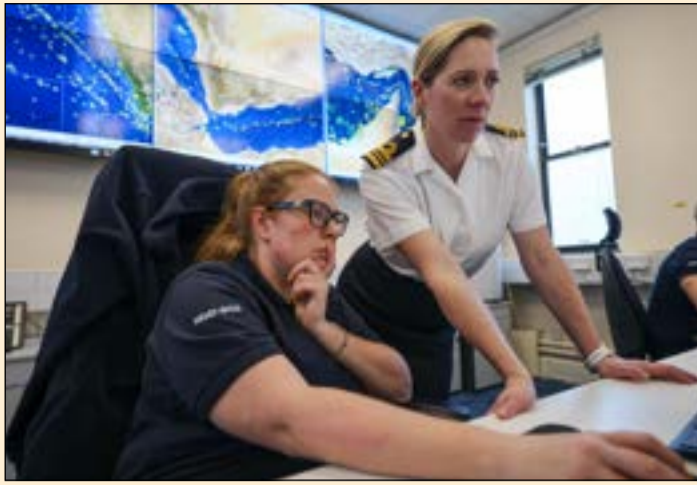
The UKMTO's operators – no more than five personnel at any one time – monitor thousands of ships moving across an area ten times the size of the North Sea, as well as a similar size of the Atlantic Ocean focused on the Gulf of Guinea which has suffered piracy and criminal activity, though not to the same extent.

They've seen a 475 per cent increase in incidents reported by seafarers in the Middle East since attacks began in the autumn, with over 2,500 emails coming into the HQ daily.

Despite the concerted efforts by international warships to protect commercial traffic in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and frequent downing of drones and missiles, including by HMS Diamond and Richmond, more than a dozen merchantmen have been hit and one, the bulk carrier Rubymar, sunk by Houthi attacks in recent months.

"There are times when we take a call from very distressed mariners as an attack is taking place – for them it's a potentially life-changing moment," said Lieutenant Commander Joanna Black.

"You can hear the gunfire, perhaps banging or an explosion – it's real time and you can see from the look on the team's faces what is happening.



"We are rooting for the seafarers and do everything we can for them. We take a great deal of pride in being able to help people in their hour of need – we are the only organisation who do what we do."

Former sailor Darren Longhurst, now a watchkeeper, said the tempo in the operations room "has gone up to 200mph" since the attacks began in mid-November.

"It's a big adrenaline rush when they call in," he explained, "but you're here to calm the master or whichever member of the crew is calling, calm them down as best as you can, and try to assist them in the best possible way you can considering you're a fair way away from them."

The team call every vessel registered with the UKMTO – many smaller fishing vessels operating in the same waters are not – within a 20 to 50-mile radius of an incident, either to ask them to assist, or to warn them of the danger.

Trade passing through the Red Sea has dropped by nearly one third as a result of the attacks with liquefied gas carriers in particular avoiding the route due to their flammable cargoes.

The increased traffic taking the longer route to Europe and the Americas sailing down the eastern seaboard of Africa means higher costs and longer waiting times for goods.

It also means ships sail down the

Somali coast for around 1,000 miles – a possible lure to pirates and criminal gangs.

"The current focus of industry and military in theatre is on a possible resurgence of Somali-based piracy at extended range – 600 nautical miles – from shore," Lieutenant Commander Black added.

"Although this could have a significant impact on ships, it's expected that international trade will adapt by re-routing to avoid the danger areas."

Whether under attack by pirates or Houthi drones, or suffering from a fire or serious injury, seafarers are encouraged to call the UKMTO in an emergency – irrespective of their nationality – and the team will co-ordinate a response.

Set up in the wake of the September 11 atrocities in 2001, the UKMTO also has a regional centre in Dubai – its personnel visit ships in the Gulf, brief crews and discuss the big picture with industry leaders.

"We've become the equivalent of an international 999/911 organisation for commercial shipping in the region. There is no other organisation which does what we do – informing, responding, and reassuring; we've become trusted and respected by mariners as the central point of contact for conflict and piracy-related emergencies in the region."



Above: Screens at the UKMTO call centre monitor shipping in the Red Sea

Pictures: LPhoto Matt Bradley



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# GLOBETROTTERS HELP OUT IN FIJI

ROYAL Navy rugby players flew half-way around the globe to take on Fiji's finest teams – and help their hosts prepare for the Olympics.

The squad were invited to join the best Rugby 7s sides in Fiji and surrounding area for the renowned Bitter Marist tournament.

No team travelled further (16,000km/9,940 miles) to take part in the three-day contest than the Royal Navy – it's the first time a side from UK has participated in the competition, now in its 48th year.

For making that tremendous effort alone, the side were honoured by their hosts with a standing ovation and received traditional sulu skirts and garlands.

Nearly 90 teams threw their hats in the ring for the event – men's/women's and U18 sides all taking to the field.

Split across two grounds in the capital Suva, Bitter Marist is a festival of rugby with up to 44 matches per day from 7.15 in the morning through to the final games shortly before 8pm, with sides in action three or four times in a day.

The competition is focused on developing rugby at the grassroots level in Fiji – but with one eye firmly on the Olympic team heading to Paris this summer to defend its gold medal from Tokyo 2020, making it a tournament of rugby played to the highest standard.

Sadly, despite their best efforts – and despite being joined by guest player and Olympic gold medallist Napolioni Balaca – the RN didn't make the finals (the DCX Army Green were crowned champions), but they will take the experience and any lessons learned into the Inter-Service contest in June.

"Fiji has been incredible, to experience the culture and customs has been an honour and one I will cherish forever – in Fiji, Rugby 7s is more of a religion that just a game, it's engrained into every single person," said Petty Officer David 'Trigger' Heming, RNRU 7s logistics manager.

"To watch teams play with the freedom and expression has been incredible. The Marist 7s was always going to be difficult, and it was disappointing not to have progressed into the latter stages of the competition, but I believe we have learnt so much more than just rugby whilst we have been here. I am proud of what we have achieved and on our return to the UK we will strive to rectify our game so when we come back to Fiji we will be competing for the top prizes."

Royal Marine Freddie Elliott added: "It's my first time in Fiji and it has been incredible to play with an Olympic gold medallist but, for me, when I'm playing with my family's name's on my back, it means they can be here with us as well. All I aim to do is make my family proud which I hope I have done."

Thanks to the UK's historic links with the Pacific islands, there was a strong Fijian-born contingent in the RN squad: two players, two coaching staff and one photographer.

"It has been nice to see the Royal Navy Rugby 7s team embrace the Fijian culture, experience our



food and embrace the lifestyle during the competition," said the latter, Leading Photographer Unaisi Amei 'May' Luke.

"It was truly wholesome to see fellow Fijians welcoming them and giving them a standing ovation for travelling so far to compete and was a pleasure to capture."

Commander Rob O'Kane, the Director of Rugby for the Royal Navy added: "I have served with many

Fijian servicemen and women during my career and the culture and community spirit that they all display, in all that they do, is really quite special."

The Navy rugby team's presence in Fiji coincides with a visit by patrol ship HMS Tamar which is working with local and New Zealand authorities to clamp down on illegal fishing activity in Fijian waters as well as reinforcing the UK's link with the Commonwealth nation.

## BOOTNECKS AND THE MASTERS

ROYAL Marines have been training with Brazilian Jiu Jitsu masters at local facilities in New York and Quantico.

Embracing the opportunity to train in new environments with some of the most renowned faces of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ), the Royal Marines BJJ team have spent the last week honing their skills in the lead up to the Virginia Gauntlet showdown against the US Marine Corps.

The group kick started their week with a visit to the veteran owned, Process Over Prize Academy in Stafford, Virginia. The centre's owner and founder is an active-duty military service member with over 20 years of combat sports experience.

Then straight into their next session of the trip at the KOA Martial Arts School where Royal Marines BJJ's very own Jimmy Carter is a regular, he said: "Thank you to Kelly Grissom for allowing the Royal Marines to share the mats tonight. Having the two teams I represent on the mat together was pretty special for me."

After an eight-hour journey to the big apple, the association stepped into the world-famous Blue Basement of the Renzo Gracie Academy in Manhattan. Mike Jamarillo held several sessions for the team over the week at the centre founded by multiple-time BJJ champion and 7th degree coral belt BJJ practitioner and coach, Renzo Gracie.

Mike said: "It's been an honour to have the Royal Marines BJJ group visit the Renzo Gracie Academy as part of their training camp for the Exercise Virginia Gauntlet 3, when they will engage with engage counterparts from the US Marine Corps in a BJJ tournament. They have shown an admirable attention to detail, discipline, camaraderie, and spirit."

"I've always been appreciative of the men and women in the armed forces who make great sacrifices so that we can enjoy the safety and freedoms that many of us often take for granted. It's inspiring when BJJ can play a role in bringing people together, whether that's through training for fun or competing."

The team also visited the Essential BJJ school in White Plains and Unity Jiu Jitsu school, a few blocks away from the Empire State Building.

Each session has opened doors to new skills and a higher level of experience in the sport, allowing the team to make connections, build friendships, and grow stronger as a unit.

The new techniques picked up during their stay in New York will put the team in a good position for their upcoming Virginia Gauntlet showdown against the US Marine Corps.

## ... THE ROYAL NAVY'S BOXERS ARE FIJI MAGNETS TOO

EIGHTEEN Sailors and Marines of the Royal Navy Boxing Association have returned from a once in a lifetime trip to Fiji where they fought against members of the Fijian Army and National Boxing team.

The boxers spent the two week visit in Fiji's capital, Suva, at the invitation of the chairman of the Fiji Amateur Boxing Association, Manasa Baravilala, who wanted to show support for 'Fiji's historical ties to The Crown, British Navy, Marines, Army and Air Force' and for the 'Fijians [who] have enlisted, served and been honourably discharged.'

The team engaged in daily training sessions and took the opportunity to get some rounds under their belt against unique opponents. Head coach PO Nick McGarry said: "It's a good culture and lifestyle and a completely different style of boxing."

AB Alex Burbury, who joined the squad this season and fought twice against the Fijians agreed: "You've got to have heart to fight Fijians, they don't stop

coming."

A highlight of the visit was the interaction with the Fijian boxers and their families who came out in force to support the squads from both sides of the Commonwealth. As the families turned out for the events, there was singing, photos and a great sense of camaraderie.

Over the course of the trip, eleven Royal Navy boxers fought against the Fijian Army, securing six victories in total and five boxers fought against the National team, leaving with two wins.

Alongside the boxers were also service coaches and referees, who have been working hard in support of the squad's endeavours during the season. Outside of coaching, training and sparring, the team took some well-earned downtime with tours of Sydney Harbour, scuba diving with sharks or spending time on the beach. ET Billie Matthews, captain of the development team said: "The beach was unreal! Fiji was like something from Jurassic Park."







# FULL THROTTLE

THE Royal Navy's offroaders started their 2024 campaign at full throttle... until a puncture curtailed things slightly.

The All Wheel Drive Club and the Dirt Nationals competitions are underway with the RN's Rob Cozens and Rory Lowther behind the wheel.

The Dirt events began with Monster Mountain in Merthyr Tydfil in Wales.

The 94-acre site is atop a huge mound of spoil from an open cast coal mine nearby.

"What a setting," said Rob. "Steep drops, masses of mud and some typical wet Welsh weather made for a difficult weekend."

Friday was test day, securing a set up that will ensure success and an opportunity to explore and find the best lines for the race. Saturday saw a step up to qualifying over a two-mile course.

"It was tricky at the best of times but with a new co-driver strapped in even more of a challenge," added Rob.

"Finding the balance between speed and not falling down 50-foot drop certainly kept things interesting."

Race day, 55 trucks racing tyre to tyre. 8.5-mile laps, with a target of eight laps in six hours.

Not only did the team face the expected challenges they also had to contend with a fan belt issue and a puncture.

Sadly for the team, the puncture was terminal as the spare was back in the pits.

Nonetheless, the team completed a respectable five laps and finished 5th in a class of 17 trucks.

Rob said: "What a round. What a course."

You can join the team at round two in Gloucester, for more information visit [dirtnationals.co.uk](http://dirtnationals.co.uk).

If you would like further details, contact WO1 Rob Cozens - [offroad@nrmsa.co.uk](mailto:offroad@nrmsa.co.uk).



## BROTHERS ARE GOING TO SYDNEY

ROYAL Navy Rugby League have returned to Australia for the first time in ten years for an intense three match series based in the Sydney area of New South Wales.

Led by RNRL Chairman Cdr Sean Heaton MBE RN, the playing squad of 25 plus coaching and backroom staff have travelled to Australia setting up camp at Australian Defence Force Base Randwick, in the south Sydney suburbs in preparation for three games epic games of Rugby League. The playing squad will be coached by CPO Darren Bamford, whilst on the field PO Ben Taylor will skipper the side. The playing squad is made up of a mixture of RN and RM Senior and Academy players who swept the board at last season's Inter Services competition, achieving unprecedented back-to-back triumphs at both grades. This tour is a step up for most of the players who have not toured in RNRL colours before, however all involved are relishing the challenge to test themselves against Southern Hemisphere Opposition.

All those selected for the tour, and RNRL as an Association, are very grateful to our sponsors, notably tour sponsors the ACPL Group, RBL, the RN Sports Lottery as well as individual Units for their financial support for the tour. Notwithstanding outside funding, the tour party have also made significant personal financial contributions in order to make the tour a reality. Whilst by no means a holiday this tour has been a year in the making and is just rewards for the 'class of 22', who have brought so much success to RNRL as RN Sports Team of the Year, and RN sport as UK Armed Forces Team of the Year, and since the return to competitive sport post the Covid Pandemic

The climax of the three-match series will be a rematch against the Royal Australian Navy Tridents, who will be desperate for a win after being whitewashed 3-0 in 2018 on their tour to England. The two preceding matches will be against Renown United and Coogee Dolphins who are feeder clubs for NRL clubs St George Illawarra Dragons and South Sydney Rabbitohs respectively. The final fixture of the series will be as a curtain raiser for the Manly Sea Eagles and Parramatta Eels NRL fixture being part of the annual ANZAC commemorative round of NRL fixtures.

Although 'downtime' will be limited the squad will take the opportunity to see as much 'RL footy' action as possible whilst in Sydney, with the obligatory Harbour Bridge climb also on the agenda. Regular updates from the tour will be posted on RNRL Social Media with full details on all the action at [royalnavyrugbyleague.com](http://royalnavyrugbyleague.com)

## CARNE GETS A NEW LEASE OF LIFE IN THE FAST LANE



A MARINE Engineer from HMS Sultan is pursuing his racing dream by representing the Royal Navy Royal Marines Road Racing Team (RNRMRRT) for the 2024 season.

Former junior Scottish champion, Leading Engineering Technician Marine Engineering Jamieson Carne had to give up competing as a youngster but is enjoying a new lease of life after getting involved with the RNRMRRT, he will be competing in this year's Pirelli Metzler 600s Super Sport Championship and the Inter-Service Championships and "NO LIMITS" competition.

In addition, Jamieson's hopes of racing success have been given a massive boost this season thanks to an upgrade to a new Triumph Daytona 675 bike and a grant from the HMS Sultan Central

Amenities Fund (CAF).

He said: "Before joining the RN I used to race motorbikes and was Scottish Champion in the 4.2 Mini Moto series racing with the likes of Moto2 and MotoGP riders Rory Skinner and Lewis Rollo, but financial issues meant it became logistically impossible to continue.

"An opportunity to join the RNRMRRT and compete in the racing series called "NO LIMITS" quickly got me back into the sport competing in their racing series and the Inter-Service Championships.

"There are eight races' weekends within the calendar where the team go to GP circuits including the likes of brands hatch, Donnington Park and Snetterton and the support from Sultan CAF has been crucial as it will allow me to compete with the team at each one.

"My love and passion for this sport has not changed since I was a boy, I am proud to be representing motorsport at all events and to tell others what the RN can offer within the sport."

There are lots of opportunities within the Royal Navy to participate in Motorsport. In addition, the Royal Naval Motorcycle Club provides service personnel, veterans, civil servants, and associate members with an opportunity to meet up for ride outs, socials, holidays and charity events. The club meets every Tuesday and on Saturday mornings at Fort Rowner, HMS Sultan.

RN Motorsport: [royalnavy.mod.uk/navyfit/sports/associations/motorsports](http://royalnavy.mod.uk/navyfit/sports/associations/motorsports)

RN Motorcycle Club: [facebook.com/RoyalNavyMotorcycleClub/](https://www.facebook.com/RoyalNavyMotorcycleClub/)





Pictured, from top left: Reservists learn to conduct a patrol; AB Mark Hamid from HMS Scotia; A reservist on patrol; Lt Laura Harpham, from HMS Forward, and Mid Uppal from HMS President; Reservists deal with a casualty. Main image: A Reservist on patrol



# THE TOUGHEST OF CHALLENGES

MARITIME Reservists from across the United Kingdom gathered in Northern Ireland to develop key land-focused skills, before putting them into practice in a realistic, demanding, fast-paced scenario.

One hundred and 60 part-time members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, from 13 Reserve Units were joined by Royal Air Force Reservists from 502 Squadron and students from University Royal Naval Units at the Northern Ireland Exercise Areas in Ballykinler.

Instructors from the Royal Naval Reserve and Royal Marines Reserve delivered training in skills ranging from vehicle stop and search to building clearance, from first aid to weapon handling and blank firing, through to mass casualty evacuation, before they were exposed to a scenario focused on non-combatant evacuation from a conflict zone.

The exercise is facilitated each year by staff and Reservists from HMS Hibernia, the Royal Naval Reserve's Northern Ireland-based Unit, but is an invaluable opportunity for continuous professional development for Reservists from 16 Royal Naval Reserve and four Royal Marines Reserve Units.

CPO Watson, the Exercise Coordinator, said: "The sheer vastness of the Exercise Areas at Ballykinler provide an excellent backdrop to our annual training weekend; with access to the sea, space to search, and a mock up village on site, the area provides excellent facilities for Reservists to develop their professional core skills that should prepare them for a realistic scenario they could find when they deploy overseas in one of His Majesty's Ships.

"It's also an opportunity to bring together Reservists from across the

United Kingdom, meeting here in Northern Ireland to build team cohesion amongst an otherwise geographically disparate group of people.

"I work really closely with Regulars and Reservists in the unit here in Northern Ireland, assisting them during their limited time in HMS Hibernia to ensure they maintain their high level of training readiness, particularly around weapons and general naval awareness and understanding.

"Preparing for Ballykinler takes a significant amount of planning, and putting in place the logistics support to cater for, and accommodate, over 150 people. But seeing the look of pride on the faces of Reservists when they successfully clear a building, or identify a mock-up of a car bomb at a vehicle check point, something they've never done before, is worth it."

Commanding Officer, Commander Kurt Courtney, added: "The exercise is broken down into two phases: phase one, on the Saturday, allows Reservists to acclimatise to the exercise environment, getting to know the ground, bonding with their shipmates, and learning (or re-learning) skills to prepare them for when they need to deal with the scenario in real life.

"Phase two, on Sunday, is all about putting everything they learned the previous day into practice. Even in such a compressed space of time, this simulates the experience Reservists face when they join a ship, getting to know their role onboard, who they'll be living and working with, and then, when necessary, putting all their training to good use."

Able Seaman Mark Hamid, a part-time member of East of Scotland-based HMS Scotia and full-time Senior Governance Officer at Heriot Watt

University in Edinburgh, said: "We secured a beach landing zone, patrolled from the beach to a local town, secured the area, identified those eligible for evacuation, and escorted them safely back to the beach for evacuation.

"It sounds simple, but when you add body armour and weapons, attacks from Royal Marines Reservists role-playing hostile forces, demonstrations from chanting hordes of the local population, not to mention members of the press who wouldn't take no for an answer, it was a physically-challenging, mentally-exhausting but thoroughly enjoyable exercise that certainly prepared me for future service alongside Regulars."

This year for the first time, students from University Royal Naval Units in Glasgow, Belfast, East Scotland and the Virtual Unit, conducted their own training on Saturday, joining the Reservist Exercise as role players on Sunday.

Officer Cadet Chloe Burbury from Glasgow said: "Taking part in training events like Ballykinler is a welcome break from studying, and I really enjoy mixing with Reservists and Regulars. I'm definitely interested in exploring the options available to stay in the Navy when I graduate."

Commodore Jo Adey ADC, Commander of the Maritime Reserves, said: "Exercise Ballykinler isn't just an opportunity to develop some of the professional skills we don't naturally think about in the maritime environment, but it's also a chance to gather Reservists from Units as far afield as Plymouth, Nottingham, Glasgow and Cardiff, to learn leadership skills, to work as a member of a high-performing team, and to have a brilliant time doing this in a safe but challenging environment."



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# Illustrious flying career remembered

A PILOT who flew the final Fairey Gannet aircraft from the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal, has died at the age of 80.

Born in Southampton, Lt Cdr Kenneth G Lamprey excelled in sport, especially football and rowing – playing football for Hampshire youth and Southampton's nursery side CSC Sports. His claim to fame was he kept Martin Chivers later of Spurs and England on the subs bench!

Unfortunately Ken broke his leg just as he was due to join the Royal Navy at 16, so in September 1960 he joined Thornycroft ship builders, Woolston.

He joined the Royal Navy as an Electrical Mechanician (Air) on the 26 March 1962 at HMS Raleigh and completed his three-year apprenticeship, qualifying in August 1965 with top honours.

Having passed the requisite aptitude for pilot training he was immediately promoted to Naval Air Cadet and commenced his Royal Naval Officer and basic flying training in September 1965 at Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

Graduating from Dartmouth in April 1966 Ken moved to Number 1 Flying Training School, where he was awarded his wings in March 1967.

This culminated in a military flying career lasting

over 30 years.

At 759 squadron he continued fast jet training in the Hunter jet, his favourite. However, he side stepped fast jets to fly the Fairey Gannet from 849 squadron at RNAS Brawdy. Flying the Gannet he made his first carrier deck landing onto the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle in May 1968.

He continued with Gannet flying until 1970. Ken was given the option to transfer to rotary wing or leave the RN. He trained and qualified as a helicopter instructor.

Early 1975 Ken was once again given the chance to revert to fixed wing flying. He was appointed to the Royal Naval Elementary Flying Training School, No 1 Squadron, Central Flying School where he completed the Qualified Flying Instructors course.

He then moved into an instructing role with the Royal Naval Elementary Flying Training School teaching prospective military aviators' basic flying in the Bulldog aircraft.

For almost two years he was also very heavily involved in the RAF Bulldogs aerobatic team displaying around the country. In recognition of the time spent with the aerobatic team and flying training Ken was awarded the Air Force Cross in the Queen's Birthday honours list June 1978.

On completion with RNEFTS he headed back to Gannet squadron 849, joining B flight where he spent time on board HMS Ark Royal. This was her final deployment and in November 1978 Ken flew the final Gannet from the carrier before she was decommissioned and the Gannet aircraft was taken out of service.



He then was appointed to serve as the commanding officer of Seahawk Flight, at RNAS Culdrose.

After his marriage in 1983 to Gillian, Ken moved to RAF Wyton, Cambridgeshire, where he became Senior Naval Officer, 360 squadron flying Canberra jets. He remained flying at Wyton until he retired from the Royal Navy in 1991.

Ken died on February 5.

## Deaths

**Winstanley, Michael, Petty Officer (Weapons Engineering Artificer (Ordnance Artificer)).** Served 1980-94 including HMS Herald, Yarnton, Exeter, Glasgow, Edinburgh. Died December 9, aged 60.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:colettel1000@yahoo.co.uk)

**RFA Tidepool:** I served on RFA Tidepool during the Falklands Conflict as 3rd Engineer Officer. After the end of the conflict we were escorted around Cape Horn to Chile to hand the ship back over to them as they had allowed us to 'borrow' it back following its sale to them earlier in the year. Is anyone able to provide details of the RN ship escorted which us back round the Cape to Punta Arenas as I have lost my records of that passage.

**Norman Killin,**  
[killinclan@talktalk.net](mailto:killinclan@talktalk.net)

## Reunions

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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, Etwell 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](mailto: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, Heme 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 included a memorial service held at Rochester Cathedral last month. 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](mailto: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 details contact Danny du Feu, Email: [ddf.photography@gmail.com](mailto:ddf.photography@gmail.com). Mob: 07711 083465.

**HMS Lowestoft Association:** The 2024 reunion will take place at the Queens Hotel, Southsea POS 3LJ on Tues/Wed 15/16 October. All who served in Lowestoft during her RN service (1961-1985) are welcome (including wives/partners/guests). Bookings direct with Events at the Queens Hotel on 02392 822466, for further details and a booking form please email: [admin@hmslowestoft.uk](mailto:admin@hmslowestoft.uk)

**HMS Broadsword Association:** Bi-annual reunion and AGM takes place in the WO&SR Mess, HMS Drake, Plymouth, on May 24, 2025. For more information go to <http://hmsbroadswordassociation.co.uk> or contact Steve Bullock at [steve.bullock@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:steve.bullock@blueyonder.co.uk)

## NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

■ Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to – The Editor, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY, or email: [news@royalnavymail.mod.uk](mailto:news@royalnavymail.mod.uk) or [editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk](mailto:editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk)

■ 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](mailto: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**  
**May 15 2024**

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