



# NAVY NEWS

DECEMBER 2024

## EYE OF THE STORM



Two Merlin Mk4s from 846 Naval Air Squadron arrive at Okehampton camp for Exercise Merlin Storm as student pilots and aircrew begin the gruelling final week-long test before earning the right to fly on global commando operations.

See pages 16-17

Picture: PO Phot Lee Blease

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# ENJOYING THE AFRICAN LYME-LIGHT

IF YOU want the perfect villain, get a Brit.

Just ask Hollywood. Die Hard. Silence of the Lambs. The Emperor in the Star Wars franchise. And Darth Vader (though not the voice artist...).

So if you're looking for someone to play the bad guys in an international naval exercise in the Gulf of Guinea, there's only one contender: RFA Lyme Bay.

Her crew and embarked Royal Marines hammed it up to make life difficult for elite troops from Ghana and Nigeria, who swept through the Bay-class ship repeatedly to hone board and search techniques.

Lyme Bay, the smuggler. Her crew/commandos, the awkward, unhelpful, obstructive crew. The challenge facing the African boarding teams: to elicit what they could from the crew - the official term is 'non-compliant' - and seize their illicit cargo.

Awkward crew like Marine Stephen Freeth who barked furiously: "What are you doing here? Get off my ship. GET OFF MY SHIP." as the Nigerian Navy Special Boat Squadron stormed Lyme Bay's bridge.

Stephen and his shipmates were suspected of being in cahoots with the merchantman MT Wahab, taking on board an illegal cargo. It's

exactly the sort of thing the Royal Marine and his 42 Commando comrades would normally search for... but he relished putting the boot on the other foot.

"It was a decent challenge being given the opportunity to play the non-compliant crew member - I would normally be the one on the operational end of conducting boarding operations, so when given the chance to play the role, I decided to be 'that difficult person' that personally I wouldn't wish to have to confront myself, it was good fun," he said.

Fun with a serious purpose, for the waters of the Gulf of Guinea have suffered from piracy and other criminal activity in recent decades.

Ensuring African and visiting navies can individually - and collectively - prevent such crimes is a key strand of Grand African Nemo, the annual exercise run each autumn by France and West/Central African nations.

Signed up to the Yaoundé Maritime Security Architecture, they are committed to ensuring shipping safely passes through waters from Senegal to Angola - a coastline of around 6,000 kilometres (nearly 4,000 miles) - and how partners and allies of the African navies can assist or bolster that effort.

As well as RFA Lyme Bay, French assault ship FS Dixmude, Italian Corvette ITS Borsini, and patrol ships from Spain (SPS Bam Meteoro), Portugal (NRP Viana do Castelo), Morocco (RMN Bir Anzarane) and Mauritania (MN Timbedra) joined a host of Nigerian patrol vessels.

Before the dynamic strand of the exercise at sea, Lyme Bay spent three days in Lagos, Nigeria where there was

a multitude of defence engagement activities coordinated with the British High Commissions.

Jonny Baxter, the UK's Deputy High Commissioner in Lagos, told his hosts that the UK was committed to improving regional maritime security and helping to enhance Nigeria's ability to constrain security

threats ranging from piracy, violent extremist organisations and so on. He added: "This deployment demonstrates our pledge to work with the Nigeria Government to tackle shared international security challenges and help improve maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea."

The dynamic phase in Lagos opened with the men of 42 Commando and their Nigerian Navy counterparts of the Nigerian SBS honing close quarters battle techniques aboard Lyme Bay to search and secure a potentially hostile vessel... through to zipping around the waterways of Lagos with the marines of 47 Commando (Raiding Team) at the helm of Commando Raiding Craft, developing core amphibious and surface assault skills.

At sea, that was taken up a few notches as Nigerian Navy patrol vessels, NNS Aba and NNS Chalawa, closed two 'suspect merchant vessels' - one played by Lyme Bay - whilst Augusta 109 helicopters of the Nigerian Navy conducted patrol and shadow duties of the area. Boarding operations were then carried out by the Nigerian Navy Special Boat Squadron aboard their fast-raiding craft to stop and 'assault' the suspect vessel.

Once onboard Lyme Bay, the Nigerian SBS conducted a search for 'exercise narcotics' then headed up numerous flights of stairs to Lyme Bay's bridge where they found crew being particularly unhelpful, refusing to co-operate/answer questions, and carried out a non-compliant seizure of the bridge along with the detention of a number of 'exercise' merchant crew members played by Royal Marines... while those not acting offered guidance and feedback to the Nigerians.

They ran through an extensive list of aspects of board-and-search operations - Close Quarters Battles (CQB), detainee handling, method of entry, Commando Raiding Craft/boat handling drills and combat medical procedures.

"The training had rubbed off on both African and UK personnel," said Lieutenant Sam Alberici RM, Officer Commanding 42 Commando Royal Marines Boarding Team 8. "We have achieved some really valuable training opportunities with the Special Boat Squadrons of both the Ghana Armed Forces and Nigerian Navy focusing on maritime security and interdiction skills. "Working together to share

experiences, understand our common ground, hone our skillsets and fine-tune our standard operating procedures, we have built professional relationships and proven our ability to work side-by-side in combined assault teams whilst building close friendships through camaraderie and an understanding of having the same mission goals, effects and outcomes."

Commanding Officer Captain Chris Ovens RFA said participation in Grand African Nemo had been one of highlights of the ship's 14-month-long deployment. "The opportunity for my ship's company and embarked forces to visit the region presented an exciting prospect for them to showcase the breadth of capability of a Bay-class ship," he added.

"The ability to train and exercise alongside our overseas counterparts, to hone skills, improve capability and demonstrate our interoperability is extremely valuable."

His ship - which has been away from the UK since the late summer of 2023 - formed one half of the UK Commando Forces' Littoral Response Group (South) alongside aviation support ship RFA Argus.

The pair deployed as far east as Australia for a major Anglo-US-Australia exercise, Predators Run, over the summer.

Since then she's been on the long journey home via Brunei, Singapore and the Maldives before rounding the Cape of Good Hope to make a logistics stop in Cape Town, South Africa, then up to the Gulf of Guinea and Tema, the port city of Ghana's capital Accra.

Alongside a variety of defence engagement activities, the embarked Royal Marines of 42 Commando conducted maritime training with their counterparts of the Ghana Armed Forces Special Boat Squadron.

Meanwhile ashore, some 26 of the ships' crew aka the 'Lyme Runners' - took part in the Accra half marathon/10k/5k runs.

"It felt really good to represent the ship in an international running event and it was great to integrate with other crew members of the RFA, Royal Navy and Royal Marines," said 19-year-old Seaman Grade 1 Oscar Field RFA.

"Although we started the run early, it was still extremely hot and

humid so felt really rewarding to cross the finish line to a welcome party of Ghana's traditional drums, music and dancing."

Elsewhere in the city, some 20 volunteer crew members attended Accra's Future Leaders School where, in partnership with the British High Commission and the FutureStars Charity, the sailors knuckled down to DIY to transform facilities. The team worked tirelessly to paint the kitchen, spruce up a converted 20ft container used as an office and sports equipment storage, and give a fresh look to the school's wooden classroom and toilet blocks.

"It was such a memorable experience and I'm grateful for even this small opportunity we had to improve the learning environment of so many children," said RFA Communications and Information Systems (CIS) Apprentice, Jason Small.

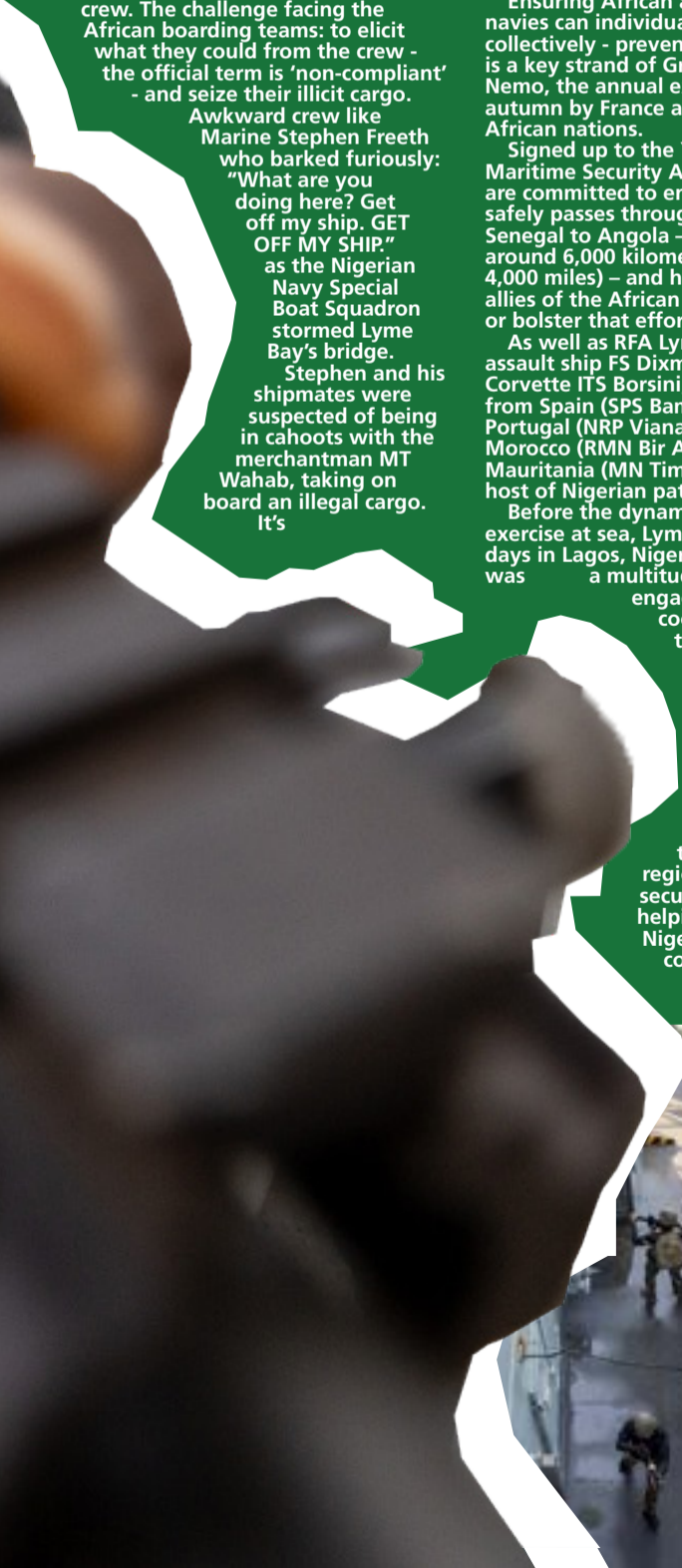
"The interaction, playing games and witnessing the joy and happiness of their smiles and laughter was really gratifying. To gain an understanding of their backgrounds and the challenges that face them made it feel extra special that we may have made even the slightest of difference to them."

As well as refurbishing buildings, crew raided Lyme Bay's store and pantry to hand out chocolate treats and playing with the children leaving a lasting impact with donations of books, diaries, and chairs to support learning and create more opportunities for the students in the future.

Lyme Bay's Commanding Officer, Capt Chris Ovens RFA, said, "It is a great privilege to bring RFA Lyme Bay's team to visit some of our West African partner nations. The opportunity for my ships' company and embarked forces to visit the region presents an exciting prospect for them to showcase the breadth of capability of a Bay Class. The ability to train and exercise alongside our overseas counterparts, to hone skills, improve capability and demonstrate our interoperability is extremely valuable."

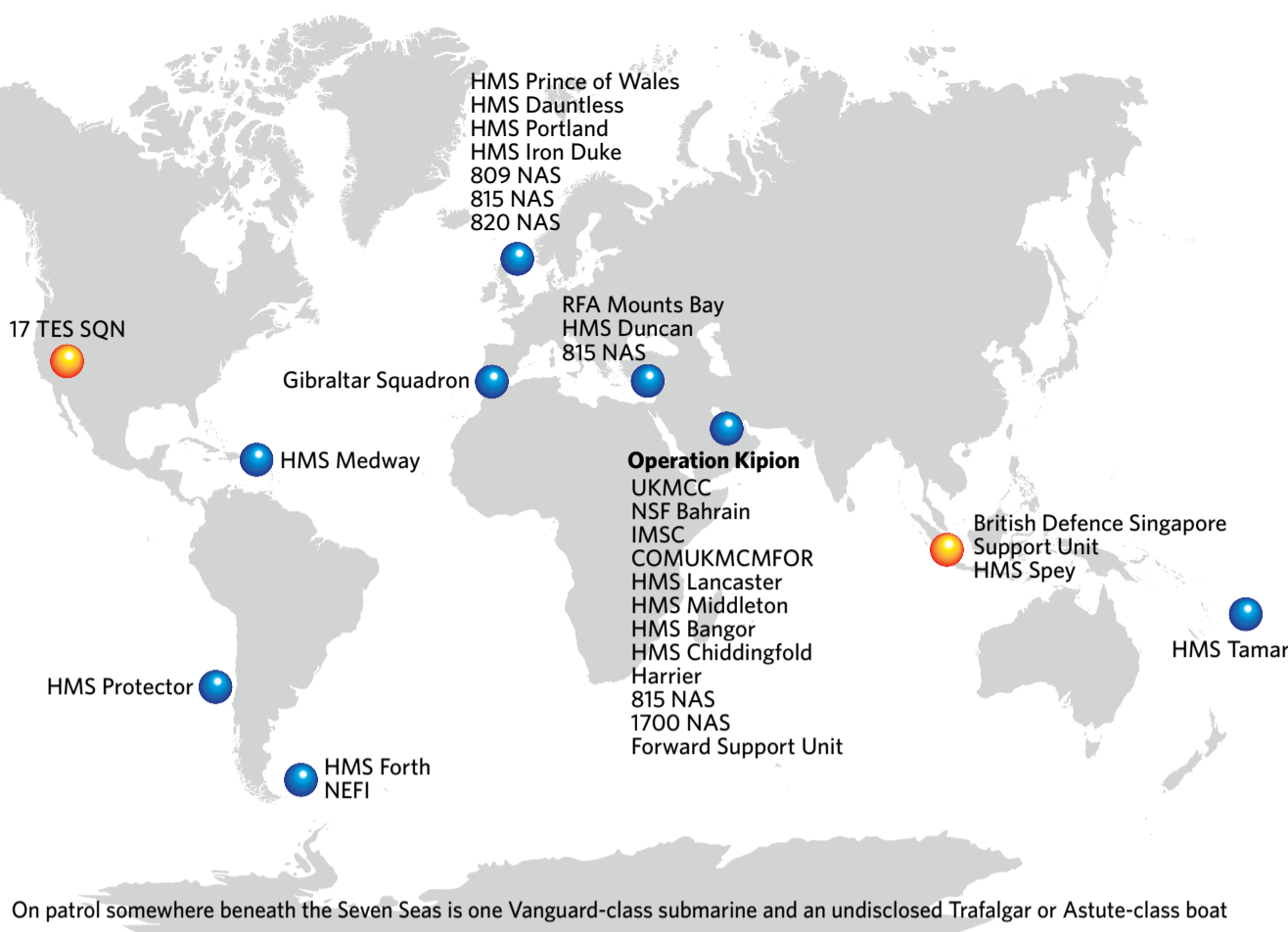
Post Grand African Nemo, RFA Lyme Bay has continued her passage north with a number of planned stops for further defence engagements/integration training with other West African nations.

Pictures and words: Lt Cdr Shaun Roster



## Training or on patrol around the UK

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



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



## GLOBAL | MODERN | READY

THE Royal Navy ends 2024 as it began – with warships and personnel deployed across the globe.

And as it is now winter, who better to start with than icebreaker **HMS Protector** (see page 9) as she prepares to welcome two researchers from the University of Portsmouth who will gather crucial data on pollution in Antarctica.

In warmer waters was **RFA Lyme Bay** and Royal Marines from **42 Commando** as they helped personnel from Nigeria beef up their training in waters which have suffered from piracy (see pages 2-3). Exercise Grand African Nemo took place in the Gulf of Guinea and involved West/Central African nations.

Over to Southeast Asia and patrol ship **HMS Spey** (see page 13) joined Commonwealth Allies for Exercise Bersama Lima 24. Ships and aircraft from Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the UK undertook exercises to test the collective military forces in the region.

Forty sailors returned home to **St Vincent and the Grenadines** to mark the island chain's 45th anniversary of independence from the UK (see page 20). The Commonwealth nation is a staunch supporter of the Royal Navy and gave their returning sailors a huge, warm welcome.

Closer to the UK, **HMS Iron Duke** joined **HMS Cattistock** and **RFA Tideforce** in maintaining a constant watch on two Russian naval task groups (see page 6).

His Majesty the King made his first visit to the **Commando Training Centre** as the ceremonial head of the Royal Marines (see page 11).

Twelve naval aviators from **Commando Helicopter Force** have earned their wings during a gruelling week-long test (see centre pages). Students, instructors, engineers and survival equipment specialists from **846 Naval Air Squadron** deployed to Dartmoor in Devon, for an intense week of rapid planning and real-time tasking with three Merlin Mk4 helicopters.

Aircraft carrier **HMS Prince of Wales** led the UK Carrier Strike Group for Exercise Strike Warrior (see page 5). The exercise included the carrier meeting up with the US Carrier Strike Group, led by the USS Harry S Truman.

The Royal Navy has enhanced its ability to thwart drone attacks after a Wildcat from **815 NAS** used its Martlet missile to destroy a Banshee jet over the Bristol Channel (see page 7).

Six Ukrainian divers have become the latest bomb disposal experts to be trained by the Royal Navy to ensure their home waters are safe (see page 6). They are the latest Armed Forces of Ukraine personnel to undergo the three months of intensive training in and off the coast of southern England at the hands of the Royal Navy's **Diving and Threat Exploitation Group**.

And thousands of Royal Navy personnel joined in acts of **Remembrance** (see pages 14-15) as services were held throughout the UK - and on the flight decks of deployed ships.

# AUTONOMOUS TECH TESTED DOWN UNDER

THE Royal Navy has boosted its ability to work seamlessly with allies in the control and use of autonomous and uncrewed systems with a series of trials in Australia.

Under the AUKUS defence partnership, Australia, the UK and the United States have conducted a critical series of the 'Maritime Big Play' exercise series deploying and testing 30 autonomous platforms to increase interoperability across the three nations and prove the ability to control assets belonging to each other's navies.

Exercise Autonomous Warrior saw hundreds of personnel, around 30 unmanned air vehicles, uncrewed vessels, submersibles and submarine-hunting sonobuoys deployed in Jervis Bay, on Australia's east coast.

The Royal Navy tested a system called Strike Net which allowed the UK to control remotely-piloted kit owned by the US and Australia, and vice versa.

To test Strike Net and push it to its limits, the nations sent a variety of systems out to sea and tested how they would use them in operational scenarios.

The Australians deployed Bluebottle – an all-weather autonomous vessel which surveys the environment using cameras and sensors. The data and information it gathered was analysed and interpreted by, Australia, the UK and US participants, helping to build a tactical picture to help with warfighting decisions.

Meanwhile the UK trialled SONIX, which can be used in anti-submarine warfare. It is designed to receive messages from sonobuoys, which can be dropped into the sea from airplanes and helicopters among other methods, with its data then analysed to identify and track enemy submarines.

Like Bluebottle, SONIX's information was then accessed and utilised by all three nations.

The Royal Navy's Director Develop, Rear Admiral James Parkin, who oversees the UK teams responsible for developing these technologies and systems, said: "This exercise has unlocked the potential of autonomous and uncrewed systems that will increase the mass, persistence



and lethality of the Royal Navy, Royal Australian Navy, and the US Navy.

"Maritime Big Play is giving AUKUS partners the opportunity to accelerate capability development together, learn lessons from each other and our innovative companies, and to develop our concepts of operations for the future."

The AUKUS nations used Autonomous Warrior as a backdrop for their experimentation series Maritime Big Play - the first large-scale Maritime Big Play exercise delivered in the Indo-Pacific and follows recent successful trials in Portugal.

During international exercise REPMUS, the Royal Navy was able to control a vessel across the world in Australia.

Now, Autonomous Warrior has taken that ability one step further and proven that ability one step further and proven the three AUKUS nations can contribute different systems and utilise them to match their operational needs.

Representatives from Japan also joined Autonomous Warrior to observe Maritime Big Play activities. This follows consultations with Japan on improving interoperability with Japan's maritime autonomous systems as an initial area of cooperation under AUKUS Pillar Two.



# READY FOR MORE

ONE of the most powerful maritime forces in the UK's arsenal joined forces with a US counterpart to demonstrate allied resolve, unity and cooperation in the North Sea.

While at sea for Exercise Strike Warrior the UK Carrier Strike Group (UKCSG) – spearheaded by HMS Prince of Wales – and the US Carrier Strike Group 8 (CSG8) centred on the USS Harry S Truman, joined forces to deliver a powerful statement of NATO's ability to project power from the sea.

Britain's biggest warship hosted the US Strike Group Commander Rear Admiral Sean Bailey, who watched UK F-35B Lightning stealth fighters launch from her flight deck – then join the Truman's F/A-18 Super Hornets and an E/A-18G Growler conduct a flypast over the two naval groups.

The UK Carrier Strike Group comprising HMS Prince of Wales, associated air wing, escorts, supporting vessels and almost 2,000 personnel, has been at sea for training as part of exercise Strike Warrior, one of the final milestones in the preparations of the Strike Group to undertake a global deployment to the Indo-Pacific region in 2025.

Lightnings from the UK's new front-line strike fighter unit, 809 Naval Air Squadron have been operating from the deck of HMS Prince of Wales, training for strike missions that has included the dropping of live ordnance onto the Cape Wrath range in Scotland.

The exercise scenario was choreographed by the UK's Joint Training and Exercise Planning Staff based in the Royal Navy Warfighting Centre in Portsmouth Naval Base with the activity of the Strike Group in response to the training scenario being directed by the staff of Headquarters UK Carrier Strike Group, embarked in HMS Prince of Wales.

Involving warships and support vessels from the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary along with elements of the British Army, Royal Air Force and NATO warships from six nations – Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Germany, Portugal and the UK – Exercise Strike Warrior has seen air and naval power tested in challenging tactical situations.

The RAF supported the anti-submarine defence of the Carrier Strike Group through provision of Poseidon P8 maritime patrol aircraft while other NATO aircraft supported F35s in defending the strike group from "aggressor" aircraft, to fend off threats from the sky.

Between these large scale set-piece activities, participating ships have conducted their own training – fighting fires and floods, dealing with mock casualties, replenishing with fuel and stores while underway. The end goal being to hone both individual and collective skills to forge a powerful yet flexible trike group able to deploy around the globe.

"Strike Warrior has delivered a short and intense period of training for the UK Carrier Strike Group, testing the group all the way from individual responses to a fire or flood through to complex long-range F-35B missions involving live weapon drops in support of Royal Marines ashore," said Captain John Cromie, Deputy Commander UK Carrier Strike Group.

"Throughout the Strike Group has taken the opportunity to work alongside NATO partners participating in activity concurrent to Strike Warrior, confirming our procedures

and interoperability with key Allies and demonstrating the UK's continued and absolute commitment to NATO."

Since departing Portsmouth in September HMS Prince of Wales has sailed 1,500 conducting training. Her aircraft have conducted 71 sorties accounting for 210 hours (nearly nine whole days) airborne, and the F-35s have dropped four Paveway bombs on the Cape Wrath range during a live ordnance exercise.

Commander Nick Smith, 809 Naval Air Squadron's Commanding Officer, said the maiden embarkation had been "phenomenally successful", laying "firm foundations" for when his F-35s re-join the task group in 2025 on its first deployment.

He continued: "The training teams have surpassed their targets with 19 pilots completing carrier qualifications within the first weeks of the deployment and flight deck teams receiving their authorisations to safely operate on the deck, both day and night.

"Our integration has also spread beyond the ship, demonstrated by the successful release of live weapons on targets at Cape Wrath; weapons prepared by the ship's company, loaded and delivered by 809 NAS and 617 Squadron engineers and pilots, controlled by Royal Marine Commandos on the ground."

Strike Warrior concludes an intensive early autumn of training for HMS Prince of Wales and her 750-strong ship's company. Her Commanding Officer Captain Will Blackett said it had been "hard work – but all of our benefit. We have made huge strides – from improving our ability to deal with emergencies internal to the ship, to refining task group defensive tactics, all the way through to accurately delivering live munitions on simulated targets at reach. This ship is amazing – and my people are even better."

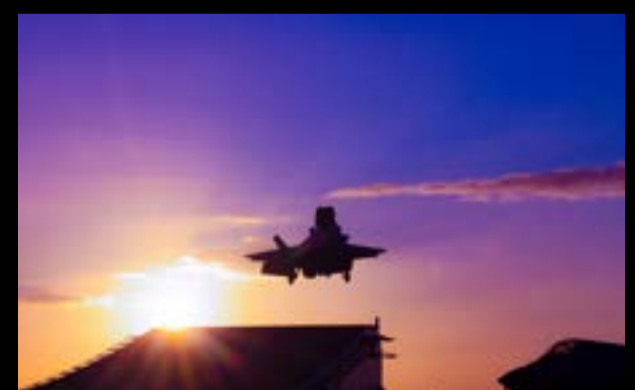
Among those benefiting was junior rating Able Seaman Thomas Fobbester who works in the carrier's operations room who described the exercise as "a very valuable learning experience".

Thomas added: "This is my first Ship and first time getting involved in this sort of thing. Camaraderie with the lads has been a key point. The air defence exercises have been the best, as the highest activity for me, but there's also a lot of time living and working with the same people so getting to know them during our downtime has been really good."

Portsmouth-based destroyer HMS Dauntless led the air defence of the strike group. Her Commanding Officer Commander Ben Dorrington said his team had been tested by "a broad range of threats, including enemy air sorties, anti-ship cruise missiles, and the challenges posed by electronic warfare" thanks to the scale and scope of the exercise – and proven the ship's ability to protect the carrier group.

"The comprehensive training applied during Strike Warrior has thoroughly prepared Dauntless' ship's company to handle everything from fire and floods to high-end warfighting."

Although Strike Warrior completed in October, further training will be conducted in UK waters before the Carrier Strike Group deploys in 2025.





## Teamwork and unity with Ukraine divers

THE peaceful waters of the Solent are a world away from the Dnipro or the Black Sea.

They make for a perfect location for advancing bomb disposal/mine warfare training for Ukrainian clearance divers – side-by-side with Royal Navy counterparts.

There are now 39 Ukrainian personnel who've been taught next-level diving skills, underwater navigation and explosive ordnance disposal by the RN's Diving and Threat Exploitation Group on (and off) the South Coast.

The latest six to complete the short, intensive course raise the respective ensigns as a 'thank you' before they head back to their homeland, ready to neutralise mines, bombs, unexploded shells and other explosive devices in the Black Sea, rivers and waterways.

The latest successful Ukrainian candidates received training in the classroom – including legal aspects of mine warfare/disposal and regulations – and practical training, including complex underwater navigation to identify 'dummy' ordnance as well as using explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) weapons.

The training has been designed to work with different levels of diver ability, slowly building the difficulty of underwater scenarios and lessons, by using different locations/waters and hence different levels of visibility and varying tidal difficulty.

"In the wake of Russia's invasion, mines and other explosive devices have become an increasing threat both within Ukrainian waterways and out into the Black Sea," said the Commanding Officer of the DTXG Squadron.

"The ability to deal with this escalating threat requires a very niche skill set, often requiring a diver to operate in strong tidal currents and poor visibility for prolonged periods.

"Thanks to the Ukrainian divers' determination, professionalism and previous experience we were able to overcome the challenges posed by training with unfamiliar equipment in a foreign language to achieve this tailored training package, with the teams able to focus on developing the Ukrainian divers' ability to locate, identify and dispose of explosive ordnance in this challenging maritime environment."

Building on the UK's long-standing commitment to assist with maritime training support to Ukraine, this course allows students to become familiar with and operate complex diving equipment, including underwater navigation systems and sonar, as well as practise vital underwater safety drills such as casualty recovery.

One of the Royal Navy divers who has helped train his Ukrainian allies said it had been a privilege for the Britons to share their knowledge and experiences – and they too had learned from their students' first-hand experience of the latest devices encountered.

"The teamwork and unity which emerged serve as a testament to the pride and determination that the Ukrainian nation exhibits daily," he added.

"Collaborating with our allies allowed us to showcase a wide range of expeditionary diving skills, while also acquiring knowledge of alternative techniques that we would not have had the chance to explore otherwise."

The diver continued: "Working together, I believe we developed the standard operating procedures which the Ukrainian divers can employ to achieve their goals.

"We feel privileged to have been able to contribute to the development of this important capability, which will ultimately serve to increase the safety of maritime traffic in the region and we are eager to maintain the robust partnership established."

# Keeping an Iron grip

From following the Bear in our backyard... to demonstrating NATO resolve in the Bear's backyard.

November proved a busy month for HMS Iron Duke, first activated to monitor the activity of Russian warships around the UK... then joining a NATO task group to the Baltic to work with the alliance's newest member.

We'll begin in home waters and a broader, seven-day operation to keep constant tabs on two Russian naval groups heading in opposite directions through the Channel which required a concerted (inter)national effort: RN, RFA, RAF, Dutch, Norwegian and French navies, helicopters and long-range maritime patrol aircraft.

The operation was triggered by the appearance of the Russian Fleet's newest frigate, Admiral Golovko (pictured in company with Iron Duke) – only commissioned on Christmas Day last year – accompanied by oceanographic research vessel Yantar and supporting tanker Vyazma.

All three had been tracked by the Norwegian Navy before Iron Duke and tanker RFA Tideforce took over, then shadowed their contacts for several hundred miles westwards through the Dover Strait and Channel before handing over monitoring duties to the French Navy.

The Yantar remained around the British Isles, with minehunter HMS Cattistock watching the survey vessel's every move.

As the Golovko and Vyazma continued their journey past France, Iron Duke took over shadowing duties of a second Russian group inbound from the Atlantic: frigate Neustrashimy and her support ship, tanker Akademik Pashin, which were making for their home port in the Baltic.

Iron Duke remained in contact with the pair back through the Channel and into the North Sea before handing over to HNMLS De Ruyter to finish escorting them back into the Baltic.

Throughout both operations, Iron Duke's Wildcat helicopter from 815 Naval Air Squadron, a Merlin from 814 Naval Air Squadron based at Culdrose, and RAF P8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft supported the maritime assets.

"Having been heavily involved in this type of operation for the past six months, we were glad to be back at it – protecting the integrity of our territorial waters and critical national infrastructure," said Commander David Armstrong, HMS Iron Duke's

Commanding Officer.

"My team have notched up their eleventh escort, and I remain in awe of their selfless dedication. It's never more moving than during the period of national reflection surrounding Remembrance Sunday – it was a poignant moment conducting our own service whilst on task, no better way to honour our fallen than to do our duty."

Released from monitoring duties the frigate almost immediately attached to NATO's Danish-led Standing Maritime Group 1 – four frigates drawn from the Portuguese, Belgian, Dutch and French Navies, plus flagship, Norwegian tanker/support ship HNoMS Maud – committed to security at sea from from Portugal to Bergen and the Baltic.

After a few days integrating with the international group and a port visit to Latvia's capital Riga, business began in earnest as we went to press with Freezing Winds 24, the annual exercise hosted by the Finnish Navy in the northern Baltic/Gulf of Finland.

As one of the alliance's two newest members the Finns are keen to demonstrate their ability to operate seamlessly with their allies... and NATO is equally keen to do the same with its new Scandinavian partner.

Collectively they had 11 days to do just that, as some 30 vessels – from large warships like Iron Duke through to coastal craft and NATO's Mine Countermeasures Group 1 (the mine warfare counterpart of Standing Maritime Group 1) – throw their hat into the ring.

In all around 4,000 military personnel from around a dozen NATO nations were committed to Freezing Winds.

The focus of the 2024 iteration of the exercise was protection of maritime transportation/sea lanes, and surveillance and protection of the underwater infrastructure.

Exercise Director Captain Marko Laaksonen said Freezing Winds had become "an important part of NATO operations in the Baltic Sea" though he warned participants to be prepared for unpleasant conditions.

"At this time of the year, the weather can be anything from heavy snowfall to rainy autumn storm. We must ensure interoperability in all circumstances, and exercises in these unique conditions will definitely enhance our readiness."

For Iron Duke, the chance to workout in a different environment – snow, sleet, sub-zero temperatures – alongside numerous navies was a welcome chance to broaden the experience of her 180 crew, who'd spent the bulk of 2024 on patrol in and around the UK.



## Spear is nearly here

FOR the first time the tank-busting Spear 3 cruise missile – a key weapon in the future armoury of the UK's aircraft carriers – has been successfully fired on the test range.

In service, it will be the principal weapon used by F-35B pilots to knock out enemy ground-based air defences, such as surface-to-air missile batteries and flak positions.

A trials variant of Spear 3 – minus a warhead – was launched from a Typhoon fighter high above a range at Vidsel, inside the Arctic Circle in Sweden.

Once released, the missile's turbojet kicked in and Spear 3 – one third of the size of the only cruise missile operated by the Royal Navy at present, Tomahawk – autonomously navigated its route to its target via predefined waypoints, using its advanced all-weather radar seeker to map the target area and acquire its target, and then use seeker radiofrequency imagery to successfully engage it.

Designed to take out mobile, manoeuvrable enemies, Spear 3 can also be employed against enemy armour.

When in service, each F-35B jet will be able to carry up to eight Spear 3s – turbojet-powered miniature cruise missiles – providing the next generation of stand-off air-to-surface missiles for Suppression of Enemy Air Defences missions in challenging and complex operating environments.

Each missile has a range in excess of 100km (more than 60 miles), closing on its target using GPS-aided navigation and engaging it with a combination of laser, radar or GPS-aided guidance.

A BAE-operated Typhoon – the production variant in service with the RAF will not be equipped with Spear 3 – was used for the maiden firing which was the first in a series of trials involving the MBDA-designed weapon.

"This trial was a key step on the way to delivering Spear 3 to the UK frontline, where it will provide a new capability to defeat the most complex air defence systems, enabling pilots to fly and fight wherever they're needed in defence of the UK and its allies," said Matthew Brown, team leader on the programme at DE&S.



## Guarding the Rock, remembering in Morocco

THE chase is on...

A clutch of small craft race after HMS Dagger in the shadow of the east slope of the Rock as the guardians of Gibraltar's waters pool collective resources to enhance the security of Gibraltar.

The RN Gib Squadron – HMS Dagger and Cutlass plus Pacific 24s – worked with the Royal Gibraltar Police, Gibraltar Defence Police and HM's Customs Gibraltar for a series of drills, manoeuvres and procedures, from joint patrols in close formation, to boarding suspect craft and driving away potential foes.

Known as 'riding off', it's used to force another vessel off course and disrupt unwanted activity. It involves pacing with a vessel, before making contact and applying pressure to the ship's side, forcing it into a turn.

Although a commonly-practised manoeuvre, the key to the workout was attempting it with unfamiliar, but friendly, vessels.

It resulted, said Dagger's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Jonathan Davies, in "vessels and coxswains were literally being pushed to their limits".

The combined training ended in the naval base with Gibraltar Defence Police performing an armed boarding exercise on Dagger – the final phase in training the police had been undertaking for several weeks.

"These exercises also go a long way to improving our operational

capability while providing reassurance to Gibraltarians that our presence on the water is significant and government organisations can cooperate effectively if required," Lt Cdr Davies added.

"Where we operate within the same waters, carrying out a broad spectrum of roles, it makes perfect sense to operate together."

Dagger subsequently crossed the Strait with Gib's Diving Support Boat Crabb (named after Buster) and the Rock's clearance diving team to take part in remembrance ceremonies in Tangier, Morocco.

Thirteen Commonwealth servicemen are buried in the grounds of St Andrew's Anglican Church – and 13 present-day personnel joined local dignitaries and Embassy staff in paying their respects.

It was a staple ceremony in the Gib Squadron's diary – but stopped during the pandemic/lockdown, so its return was warmly welcomed by Defence Attaché Lt Col Huw Law.

Lt Col Law, the British Defence Attaché to Morocco said: "Across Tangier there are 15 graves that mark the final resting places of fallen Commonwealth service personnel from World War 2 and it gave me great comfort to see their service so poignantly remembered, particularly as they lie so far from home."

"I hope that their families find solace and pride in the knowledge that they will never be forgotten and that their memory forms such a vital part of life in Tangier."

# DRONE DOWNED BY A WILDCAT



THE Royal Navy has enhanced its ability to thwart drone attacks after helicopter crews downed a pilotless aircraft off the Welsh coast.

In the first air-to-air trial of its kind, the crew of a Wildcat used the Martlet missile – designed to take out enemy surface targets – to destroy a Banshee jet flying at hundreds of miles an hour over the Bristol Channel.

The helicopter operates from Royal Navy frigates, destroyers and aircraft carriers performing a wide range of key roles, from supporting board and search operations and tracking down drug-runners moving at high speed across the ocean, to ferrying troops/equipment and personnel around and conducting rescues when necessary.

Thanks to two new missile systems – Martlet, which has been in service since 2021, and Sea Venom, successfully tested earlier this autumn – it can also take out hostile ships.

Martlet in particular is designed to foil enemy fast attack craft/speedboats – but experts also spotted its air-to-air potential.

That's now been realised at the Manorbier range, near Tenby, in Southwest Wales – the first time the Wildcat has detected, tracked, and engaged a drone without outside assistance.

It marks a step forward for the Royal Navy, unlocking a new defence against a very modern threat – seen most recently in the Red Sea.

Commander James Woods, commanding officer of 815 Naval Air Squadron, said: "This is a fantastic development for the Wildcat HMA 2 helicopter and a significant advancement in maritime strike capability for the Royal Navy that further refines our ability to deter and neutralise airborne threats."

The two-day trial saw the Royal Navy deploy the autonomous Banshee drone as the target for the Wildcat and its missiles.

After being launched via a ramp, the Banshee moved across the range with the Wildcat poised to intercept.

Control: *You are clear hot, that's clear hot.*

Wildcat: *Cleared hot.*

Wildcat: *Ready to fire.*

Wildcat: *One, two, firing.*

Wildcat: *Eight seconds.*

Wildcat: *Impact. Rounds complete. Switches safe. TARGET DESTROYED.*

Wildcat pilot Lieutenant Dave Guest said the ability to take out drones added another crucial string to the helicopter's already-impressive bow.

"It's really important that we can demonstrate the Wildcat's effectiveness in engaging targets such as uncrewed systems and that we can do so on our own, without requiring the assistance of other assets," he added.

"Martlet is a highly-capable – and also cost-effective – weapon in our arsenal, ideal for this, while Banshee is representative of the challenges we face globally, particularly in the Red Sea."

Earlier this year a Wildcat from 815 NAS deployed aboard destroyer HMS Diamond and repeatedly faced the threat of drones fired by Houthi rebels at shipping in the Red Sea and

Gulf of Yemen. Both the air and ground crew were recently recognised for their bravery.

Martlet is a lightweight, multi-role, laser-guided missile originally acquired for use against small, manoeuvrable targets such as fast attack craft, jet skis and speedboats.

It was tested overseas during the UK Carrier Strike Group's global deployment in 2021 and since then, has been thoroughly tested in different operational scenarios and situations.

In its primary role of maritime attack, the Wildcat is designed to engage a wide range of vessels, including submarines, and can now boast an air-to-air capability usually restricted to fast jets.

Used in the air-to-air role the Wildcat offers multiple advantages – it can get airborne quickly to respond to incoming threats and be rapidly repositioned to provide counter-drone screening, all while providing a simultaneous anti-surface capability.

Pictures: LPhot Mark Johnson; Thales

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# Protecting Antarctica

## Scientists join icebreaker for upcoming mission



SCIENTISTS will study the impact of tourism and climate change on one of the world's most unique and fragile environments during an upcoming Royal Navy expedition to Antarctica.

Two researchers from the University of Portsmouth, Dr Adele Julier and Dr Keiron Roberts, will join the ice breaker HMS Protector for five intensive weeks immersed in the frozen continent to gather crucial data on pollution from increased tourism and the far-reaching impacts of climate change.

Dr Julier, a senior lecturer and palaeologist, will focus on understanding wind and weather patterns through pollen collection techniques, using pollen, charcoal and other particles from sediments to analyse historical climate data and track shifts in the patterns.

The ecologist has spent over a decade studying pollen in tropical climates and is excited about this adventure to the cold, while especially looking forward to seeing the Adélie penguins, native to Antarctica.

"I'm thrilled to undertake fieldwork where I won't have to worry about scorpions under my bed or fight wasps to take a shower," Dr Julier said.

It's the second year running the university has teamed up with the Royal Navy for in-depth studies of the continent – the data gathered by Professor Fay Couceiro and Dr Clare Boston's research from last year into the effects of tourism on pollution and historic glaciers, is still being analysed.

Dr Roberts, a senior lecturer in sustainability and the built environment, intends to build on Prof Couceiro's research into the impact of tourism on the region's unique marine and wildlife.

With more than 100,000 tourists visiting Antarctica during the 2023-24 season, the region is experiencing unprecedented human activity, which could have drastic consequences on the delicate ecosystems.

Dr Roberts will collect water samples to measure nutrient levels, metals and antimicrobial resistance – indicators of human pollution. The oceanographer will use a plankton trawl net to capture microplastics and a sediment grab to assess long-term environmental changes.

He plans to fly drones to survey the coastline for litter in hard-to-reach areas, helping build a comprehensive picture of the impact tourism has on this delicate ecosystem.

"This trip allows me to return to my roots in oceanography while incorporating my passion for sustainability," he said.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and will contribute to critical research that could shape the future of tourism in Antarctica."

HMS Protector serves as the hub for the researchers' mission in the polar region and is equipped with everything needed to assist the scientists with their projects.

The ship has a full sonar suite as well as a small survey boat equipped with a multi-beam echo sounding system that can survey the sea floor at shallow depths, close to calving glacier margins. High tech-equipment is used to collect data quickly and accurately in extreme conditions.

Commanding Officer, Captain Tom Weaver,

said: "HMS Protector's mission in Antarctica provides valuable opportunities for scientists to access the world's most important natural laboratory."

"Last year we embarked two scientists from the University of Portsmouth to research water pollution and glacier change in Antarctica and I'm delighted that during this Austral summer season the Royal Navy can continue to support the University of Portsmouth and their environmental research."

Sailors from HMS Protector and their Chilean allies paid homage to British sailors lost in one of the first great naval actions of World War 1.

One hundred and ten years to the day that the Royal and German Navies clashed three dozen miles off the coast of Chile, the survey ship's crew joined Chilean sailors for a service of remembrance in the city which gave the battle its name: Coronel.

At last light on November 1 1914 an outgunned and obsolescent Royal Navy squadron led by Rear Admiral Christopher Cradock attempted to bring an end to the escapades of German Admiral Graf von Spee and his East Asia Squadron.

The German ships had evaded all British attempts to intercept them for three months since abandoning their home base of Tsingtao – then a German colony – in China to prevent being trapped there when war broke out.

When Cradock's squadron – two aged armoured cruisers, one light cruiser and a passenger ship converted into an armed cruiser – sighted smoke on the afternoon of November 1 1914, the ships gave chase and soon found themselves facing Graf Spee's force.

Despite being outnumbered and mostly outgunned, Cradock gave battle rather than regrouping to fight another day. His decision was in accordance with the "highest traditions of His Majesty's Navy" – but it cost the lives of 1,660 officers and men.

Both HMS Good Hope and Monmouth sank with the loss of all hands. The Germans suffered just three wounded in a clash which lasted no more than three hours.

The Britons are commemorated by a memorial and plaques in Coronel – the focal point for sailors from HMS Protector, crew of the Chilean warship CNS Capitán Prat and the band of Talcahuano Naval Base honoured Cradock and his men.

"It was extremely important to remember this battle which took place on the far side of the world," said Protector's 1st Lieutenant Lt Cdr Phil Boak.

"It was an honour to be there." In the autumn of 1914, with Britain adjusting to the prospect of a lengthy war, defeat at Coronel was a blow to both national morale and the Royal Navy's standing.

The shock provoked a disproportionate response from the British, who dispatched two capital ships – hitherto vital for keeping the bulk of the German High Seas Fleet in check in the waters of northern Europe – to hunt down Graf Spee's squadron.

Six weeks later, on December 14 1914, that force – led by battle-cruisers Inflexible and Invincible – avenged Coronel by sinking most of the German ships off the Falklands.



Above: Personnel from HMS Protector at the memorial service in Coronel; Below, memorial plaques to the lost ships HMS Monmouth and Good Hope; Left, a wreath at the memorial



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# THE KING AND THE COMMANDOS

HIS Majesty the King welcomed a new generation of Commandos on his first visit to their training centre as the ceremonial head of the Royal Marines.

In his capacity as Captain General Royal Marines, the King watched 28 recruits of 362 Troop pass out at the Commando Training Centre in Lympstone, near Exeter.

He told the successful recruits and their families: "As your Captain General, I can only express my pride in each and every one of you, together with my admiration for passing such a demanding course.

"We are fortunate indeed to be able to rely on you – as well as on those families here today who so loyally support you."

For the first time since his grandfather King George VI in 1939, His Majesty presented the coveted King's Badge to the recruit deemed the most impressive of those passing out, before watching the remaining successful recruits receive their iconic green berets, earned over 32 gruelling weeks.

Marine Stephens, from North Wales, was just three weeks away from passing out last year when he picked up a serious injury.

After ten months recuperating, he resumed his training this autumn and completed his final five weeks with aplomb to earn that badge – an honour and memorable moment in his career, but especially so to receive it from The King.

"This moment will stay with me for ever.

"I know the last time a King presented the King's Badge was back in 1939, it's quite daunting to think that I will be only the second Royal Marine to enjoy that honour," said the 20-year-old.

"Definitely the hardest part of my training was when I was injured, a real shock to pick up a leg injury, after doing so well for so long. But with determination I took the knock, got back up again and got myself back to where I wanted to be."

Also triumphing over adversity after a lengthy shoulder injury picked up late in training – he spent five months recuperating and rehabilitating – and the only recipient of a green beret from His Majesty was 20-year-old Marine Ryan from Merseyside.

He received the Commando Medal for epitomising the commando spirit and ethos through his conversion from civilian to Royal Marine.

To acknowledge that achievement, he was singled out to receive his green beret – the Commandos' iconic headgear – from His Majesty.

"Being presented my green beret by the King is amazing – honestly the biggest honour I could ever have.

"I'm very aware that no-one in the Royal Marines has had their beret presented by the monarch, I'm so proud. It is a great honour!" said Marine Ryan.

"The lads in the troop have been brilliant, a really great bunch of guys, we've been through so much in the past few weeks together."

His Majesty used his visit to announce the renaming of two of the Corps' most prized awards.

Henceforth the Best Marine of the Year will be known as the King's Royal Marine of the Year.

And the best young officer to complete training will receive The King's Sword.

His Majesty's visit to Lympstone – where he went through Commando training 50 years ago – opened with a welcome from Colonel Innes Catton RM, Commandant CTCRM, and a General Salute from a Royal Guard of 96 Royal Marines and the Royal Marines Band Lympstone.

After proceedings on the parade



Pictures by PPhot Arron Hoare and LPhot Finn Stainer-Hutchins



ground, His Majesty moved to the Tarzan Course to see recruits completing one of the four gruelling Commando Tests which qualify them to wear the much sought-after green beret.

The King met instructors, Royal Marines who've recently returned from operations and those who have been involved in training Ukrainian Forces, Royal Marines Cadets and staff from the Royal Marines Charity, and had the chance reminisce of his time at the base in 1974 with a tour of the facilities.

His Majesty was also introduced to families and veterans, among the latter D-Day veteran Norman Ashford.

Known affectionately by today's Royal Marines as 'grandad', the 100-year-old drove a landing craft on June 6 1944 and is one of a handful of Royal Marines still

with us from the Normandy landings. He returned to the beaches in June to pay homage to comrades on the 80th anniversary.

Before departing, His Majesty signed the visitors' book at the Officers Mess, where he also met families of serving Royal Marines.

Colonel Catton RM said the royal visit was "an extremely proud moment for all those involved and the crowning glory of this the Royal Marines 360th anniversary year.

"For the King to take time to come down to Lympstone to present the King's Badge and Commando Green berets to the King's Squad, as well as speak to his Marines will be an enduring memory for my staff and the whole Royal Marines family."

## SURGING TO THE NORTH



ONE of the Navy's biggest tankers is coming to the end of a hectic two-month mission providing vital support to UK and NATO warships in the North Atlantic.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship Tidesurge has spent the early autumn sustaining Allied warships in the grey wastes of the Atlantic and into the Arctic to make sure vessels on the front-line had the black gold they needed to sustain operations.

The tanker – one of four built for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the navy's vital support arm – typically accompanies a task group – to meet its regular demands for fuel.

But since September, the Tide-class ship has clocked up more than 13,500 miles (the equivalent of sailing half-way around the world) delivering fuel to Royal Navy and NATO vessels.

In just two months of operations in the Atlantic the tanker has safely pumped enough fuel into the tanks of Allied warships to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool – or more than 40,000 family saloons.

Though routine, the manoeuvre – a Replenishment at Sea, commonly reduced to 'RAS' in naval parlance – demands skilful seafaring from both warship and tanker.

The two are separated by a distance of about five London bus lengths, travelling parallel on the same course at the same speed, typically for a couple of hours – depending on how much fuel needs to be transferred.

"A replenishment at sea is a dangerous and challenging evolution for all involved," explains Tidesurge's Third Officer Josh Sylvester.

"Carefully closing the distance between two ships, edging them closer together, matching their course and speed until there are only 42 metres between them, then passing a series of lines across and bringing them under tension so that you are able to pump a volatile commodity through a replenishment rig suspended across a span of thrashing sea, all the while being challenged by the pressures of the swell and the elements of the weather takes skill, concentration



and experience – something that increases amongst everyone involved after every successful evolution."

It is something crew are expected to be available to provide come night or day, good weather or poor, and at short notice. If they can't, the warship will have to break off its mission and return to port to refuel/take on supplies.

Tide-class ships are also expected to carry limited 'dry' stores: food, consumables, every-day essentials which can be transferred either on a pallet by wire (a traditional 'jackstay transfer') or by air, slung beneath a helicopter in a huge sack (a 'vertical replenishment' or vertrep) – in this case food, spare parts and toilet rolls ferried to waiting ships by allied NH-90 helicopters.

Despite being in demand almost constantly, there have been opportunities for Tidesurge's sailors to let their hair down.

Although the ship herself has ventured into the Arctic Circle (66° 30'N latitude) before – celebrated with painting the bull ring on the bow blue – some three dozen crew had not, and were introduced to the centuries-old seafaring ceremony of 'crossing the line', receiving permission to enter the Arctic from 'King Neptune' with certificates to celebrate the occasion before mugs of hot chocolate and ice creams were distributed and Arctic veterans (known as 'blue nosers') regaled shipmates with stories of life operating in the High North.

And there have also been several unique sights and experiences afforded by a career at sea.

"Cruising over 12,500 nautical miles of open sea has provided the ships' company with some of outstanding displays of natural beauty," Josh added, "including the Northern Lights, sailing alongside different species of whales, dolphins and other marine mammals, and offering a remarkable vantage point for spotting tabular and pinnacle icebergs.

"Passing slowly at a safe distance, the ship's company could look on in awe at the natural wonder of these frozen leviathans. We were close enough to spot the frozen cyan rivulets crossing the face of the bergs like rivers leading to the sea, yet far enough away to respect their submerged scale and silent might as they continue on their long-lived journey."

Having completed all that was asked of her in the Atlantic/Denmark Strait/Arctic the tanker will return to Portland shortly for a spot of maintenance, a crew change, and then she'll head back to sea for continued duties.



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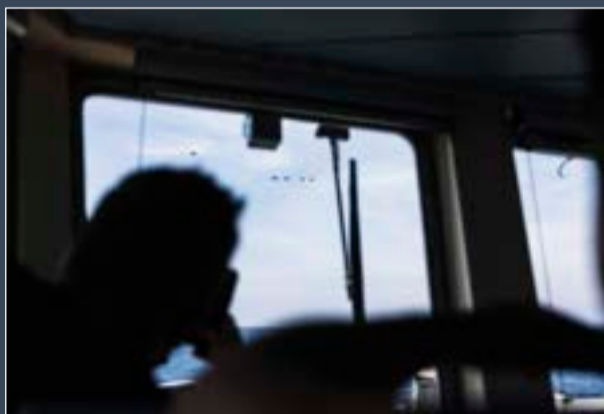
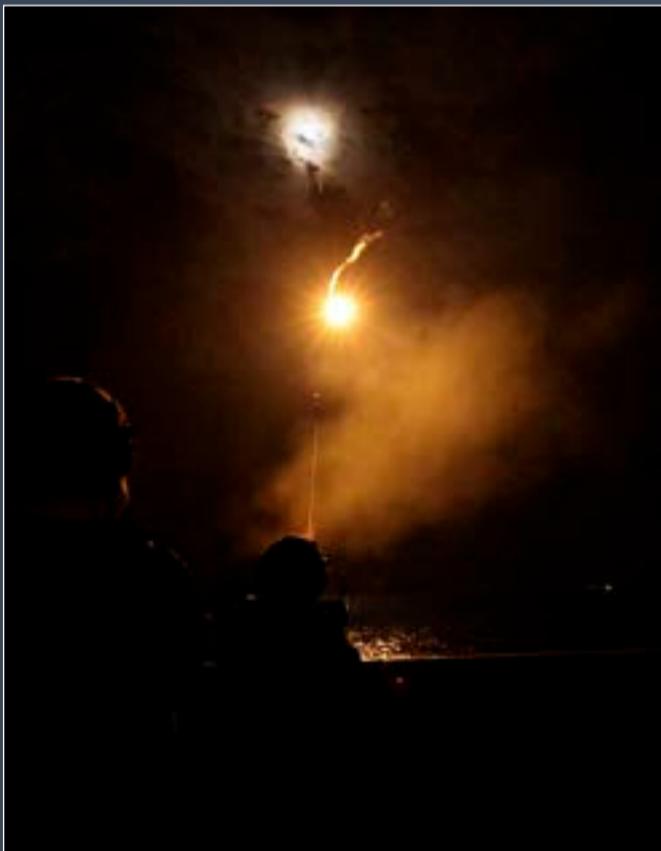
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# HMS Spey's five-star display



Clockwise from main image: HMS Spey, nearest camera, with ships from Singapore and Malaysia; Watching aircraft from Spey's bridge; A seaboot launch; aircraft pass over participating ships, Spey is far right; Spey's gunners conduct a night shoot.

ROYAL Navy patrol ship HMS Spey joined Commonwealth allies in a demonstration of resolve and unity in Southeast Asia.

With her distinctive dazzle paintwork, the Portsmouth-based warship – one of two Royal Navy vessels deployed to the Indo-Pacific on long-term missions – stood out alongside allies during Exercise Bersama Lima 24.

For more than 50 years, five Commonwealth nations – Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the UK – have pledged to work together under the Five-Power Defence Arrangement to ensure regional security in Southeast Asia.

Bersama Lima – Malay for 'together five' – is a cornerstone of that arrangement, a long-standing annual test of the collective military forces in the region to work together to a common aim.

Spread over 18 days – split between planning/conferences/sporting and social activities on land, then an active exercise by air, sea and land.

It involved five ships, 38 aircraft – including the first deployment by Australian F-35s outside their native land – four ground-based air defence systems, four diving teams and more than 2,000 military personnel.

The naval element saw HMS Spey link up with two Royal Malaysian Navy warships (frigate KD Lekiu and patrol ship KD Terengganu) and two Singaporean vessels, frigate RSS Formidable and OPV RSS Valour.

They joined up in Malaysian territorial waters for numerous complex naval warfare scenarios including air defence, escort missions and naval gun firing.

The shooting of the latter was guided by specialist 'spotters' from 148 Battery Royal Artillery who frequently operate behind enemy lines to guide shells, bombs and missiles on to targets.

The Royal Gurkhas Regiment (1RGR), the Royal Navy's Diving and Threat Exploitation Group's Echo Squadron as well as personnel from all three Armed Forces completed UK participation in the 2024 exercise.

Overhead, the skies were shared by the Australian F-35 (the RAAF operates the conventional land-based 'A' variant of the stealth fighter), Singaporean F-15

and F-16 fighters, and Malaysian F/A-18Ds.

They played out numerous air defence scenarios, and supported moving troops around as the ground forces 'fought' in jungle and urban environments.

Spey's Executive Officer Lieutenant Commander Kris White said the patrol vessel's 50 crew benefitted hugely from their participation in such a large international exercise – especially one involving air, sea and land elements.

"HMS Spey has a relatively young ship's company and I know my warfare officers have made connections during Bersama Lima with their Australian, Malaysian, New Zealand and Singaporean counterparts which will last the rest of their military careers," he added.

"Bersama Lima has offered a chance for personal and professional relationships to form, develop and strengthen between operational planners and tactical operators across the five armed forces."

Lt Cdr White continued: "Exercises like Bersama Lima provide invaluable opportunities to enhance our cooperation, interoperability, and trust with our regional partners."

"The evolutionary nature of these annual exercises allows us to address shared security challenges in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing security environment with unity, agility, and foresight."

General Tan Sri Dato' Seri Mohammad bin Ab Rahman, Chief of Defence Forces Malaysia, was delighted with the outcome of this year's exercise, telling participants Bersama Lima had demonstrated the five nations' "shared purpose" and underlined their "readiness to respond as one".

He continued: "The security challenges we face will continue to shift and we must remain ever vigilant, agile and united to stay ahead of the curve."

"I am confident the friendships and professional ties we have forged here will continue to grow and evolve as we embark on future exercise to work towards our common goal of a peaceful and secure region."



Pictures: AS1 Smither RAF and Republic of Singapore Navy

**WE WILL  
REMEMBER  
THEM**



IN THE heat of the Gulf and the Caribbean to the chilly Baltic, serving personnel of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary honoured their forebears during the annual Remembrance weekend.

All deployed units and personnel at home and abroad held memorial services or took part in acts of remembrance.

At the Cenotaph in London more than 100 men and women from across all branches of the Royal Navy took part in national Remembrance Sunday ceremonies in Whitehall, led by His Majesty the King, the Prime Minister and Heads of the Armed Forces.

Led by Warrant Officer 1 Glynn Moffat, 115 sailors were on duty at Whitehall on Sunday and a smaller group were on parade at the Royal Albert Hall for the Festival of Remembrance.

The Royal Navy contingent included branches of the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service as well as 48 members of the Royal Marines Band Service, including ten buglers.

In Puerto Rico the ship's company of HMS Medway paused for their Remembrance service on the flightdeck. The offshore patrol vessel is part of the Royal Navy's permanent presence in the region to support the UK's Overseas Territories.

Personnel from HMS Spey attended a moving service at Kranji War Memorial in Singapore. Sister ship HMS Tamar held a ceremony on the flightdeck while the vessel remained on patrol in the Pacific.

In the Med, HMS Duncan's ship's company took part in a Remembrance service on the destroyer's flight deck.

In the Falklands and personnel from HMS Forth attended services both in Stanley and on board the offshore patrol vessel.

In Norway, HMS Portland conducted a Remembrance service while alongside in Haakonvern.

While at sea off West Africa, personnel aboard RFA Lyme Bay paused to pay their respects on Remembrance Day.

In the Gulf, HMS Lancaster's personnel attended a service

at sea, while a number of HMS Bangor's ship's company joined service personnel at a service of Remembrance at the British Embassy in Bahrain.

Sailors from HMS Chiddingfold back in the UK attended a service in their namesake village of Chiddingfold, Surrey. They laid a wreath to remember those who came before them.

Fleet Flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth held a Remembrance service in the hanger as the aircraft carrier continued her aviation training around the UK.

On Remembrance Sunday, Clyde Naval Base Commander, Commodore Sharon Malkin gathered with local residents and dignitaries at Hermitage Park, Helensburgh to join the nation in the act of remembrance.

Personnel and veterans from around Scotland gathered in Glasgow's George Square for the second largest Remembrance parade in the UK.

This year the Royal Navy provided the Guard of Honour which was made up of personnel from HM Naval Base Clyde and HMS Glasgow, the Royal Navy's first Type 26 frigate currently being built in the city.

Sailors from HMS Venturer, the first of the Royal Navy's Type 31 frigates currently under construction in Rosyth, joined colleagues from Royal Navy Reserve units HMS Dalriada and HMS Scotia as they provided the guard for Edinburgh's Remembrance commemorations.

Sailors and Royal Marines from HMNB Portsmouth took part in services across the city, while personnel from HMNB Devonport took part in Plymouth's Remembrance Sunday parade on the Hoe.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel attended a Remembrance Sunday service in the gardens of Trinity House in London. A memorial marks the 36,000 Merchant Navy personnel who made the ultimate sacrifice, including 23,800 who have no known grave.

RFA Commodore, Cdre Sam Shattock represented the RFA and the honour guard was provided by officers and ratings from HMS President, led by Lt George Devereese and Sub Lt Robin Blyth.

Personnel at HMS Collingwood placed 'In Memory' cards on branches of a tree (pictured inset) during a Remembrance Day service at the base. The cards contained the names of all those who had lost their lives in the Senior Service in the past year.

Sailors from RNAS Culdrose took part in the Remembrance Sunday parade in Helston and then joined civilian colleagues

for a Remembrance Day parade at the air station.

At RNAS Yeovilton, sailors from the base joined personnel from Commando Helicopter Force, Wildcat Helicopter Force and 1 Army Air Corps for a Remembrance Day service.

Sailors and Royal Navy and Royal Marine Volunteer Cadet Corp Cadets from HMS Sultan took part in acts of remembrance throughout the local community, including at services at Gosport War Memorial and the Fleet Air Arm Memorial and the sunken garden in Lee-On-The-Solent.

Wreaths were laid by members of the Type 21 Association, including in the Falklands to honour those who died on HMS Ardent and Antelope.

In the UK wreaths were laid at the Cenotaph, the National Memorial Arboretum, and war memorials in Portsmouth, Chatham and Plymouth.

The previous weekend saw Royal Navy Submariners travel to London for their annual Submariner Remembrance Service.

Hundreds of members of the Silent Service attended events at Westminster Abbey on the Saturday, and Middle Temple Gardens on Sunday, paying their respects to those Submariners who have gone on "eternal patrol".

A group of Submariners from HMS Sultan attended the event, with one of the youngest members of the Submarine Service, trainee Engineering Technician Marine Engineering, AB Freddie Lawson laying a wreath on behalf of the training establishment.

"I am so happy to be part of the Submariner's Remembrance and to be asked to lay a wreath on behalf of HMS Sultan is a huge honour," said AB Lawson.

"I decided to join the Submarine Service after visiting one of the boats. I was really attracted to being part of the submariner community and I am so grateful to join with serving and veteran submariners this weekend to remember those who have served in the past."



THE names below are Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel on the Active List, Reservists and Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel who have died during the last year – from 1 November 2023 to 1 November 2024:

Mne William Brook Corke, 25 November  
AET Joe Richard Andrew Baker, 27 November  
ET(ME) Danny Mark Peterson, 21 December  
WO2 Mark Patterson, 22 December  
PO Ashley Head, 25 December

Lt William Jack Brown, 9 January  
Surg Cdr Matthew Craner, 4 February  
LH Gerard John Keogh, 5 March  
Lt Angus Herbert Donald Robertson, 27 March  
ET(ME) Joshua Matthew Gayton, 21 April  
LET(ME)SM James Robert Thornton, 7 June  
CPO David Allman, 28 June  
Second Officer Gary Lee, RFA, 20 July  
PO Reece Walding, 1 August  
Lt Rhodri Leyshon, 5 September  
AB Dylan Townsend, 23 September  
Col Clinton Read, 3 October

Pictures:  
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***THE FINAL***

# ***GRUPELLING TEST***

***HOPEFUL JUNGLIES EARN THEIR WINGS***

TWELVE naval aviators are ready to fly Commandos into combat wherever they're needed in the world after earning their wings during a gruelling week-long test.

Commando Helicopter Force must be able to carry out sorties anywhere across the globe, providing critical aerial support to the Royal Marines as they operate in extreme environments – from the Arctic to desert and jungle.

To ensure they are ready for their daring missions, students, instructors, engineers and survival equipment specialists from 846 Naval Air Squadron deployed to Okehampton battle camp, on the edge of Dartmoor in Devon, for an intense week of rapid planning and real-time tasking with three Merlin Mk4 helicopters.

The squadron specialises in training pilots and aircrew for the front line and, for some of Commando 4 Operational Conversion Flight course, this final test comes at the end of more than seven years of flying training.

Exercise Merlin Storm puts students into a melting pot of relentless operational sorties, testing their skill, determination and cunning as they navigate ever-changing scenarios.

Not only that, but they are personally put through the wringer, living out of rudimentary accommodation in the form of two tents atop a hill battered with near gale-force winds – having to establish a forward operating base from scratch themselves.

Ultimately, to become a Junglie – the nickname given by the troops supported in the jungle campaign of Malaysia and Borneo in the 1960's – the students are intentionally placed out of their comfort zone, which will serve them well on duty with the front-line fliers of 845 Naval Air Squadron.

Lieutenant Commander Tom Morris, 846's Warfare Officer, said: "Sometimes you'll find yourself briefing off scribbles on the back of a cigarette packet after plan A, B and C have fallen apart.

"As Junglie pilots and aircrew, it is paramount to know no plan survives first contact and oftentimes some infamous Junglie cunning must be applied in order to make a sound plan and achieve the task at hand."

After building their own operating base, the students are thrust into action – lifting and shifting loads around the moors, transporting



“ ”

**It is paramount  
to know no plan  
survives first  
contact**

*Pictures by POPhot Lee Blease*

troops and fulfilling any tasks required of a support helicopter on the front line.

This may sound like routine business, but often the students only had 90 minutes between receiving the tasking to delivering a full set of orders, including comprehensive timings and fuel management plans.

The instructors also took great pleasure in throwing spanners into the works – not literally, of course – to test the students' ability to quickly adapt.

Captain Elliott Graham, a Royal Marines student pilot, said: "The best part of Exercise Merlin Storm 24 was the real time tasking that had been generated which enabled realistic and challenging scenarios and the ability to utilise the aircraft in an operational capacity for the first time."

For the student pilots, the road to wings passed through Dartmouth, a short assessment at Yeovilton on Grob Tutors to determine they possessed the qualities expected of all aviators, completed Elementary Flying Training – learning the basics of flight, again on a fixed-wing aircraft.

Next comes helicopter pilot training in the Juno HT1 at RAF Shawbury from general handling (described as "easy once you've got the hang of it"), then advanced manoeuvres: instrument flying, low-level navigation, landing/taking off from confined spaces, night flying including low level with Night Vision Devices, mountain flying and moving under-slung loads.

The capabilities of the Merlin were put on display during the exercise with the three cabs present remaining fully serviceable and achieving a mammoth amount of real tasking, resulting in the movement of over 800 passengers over the course of the four days of flying.

Highlights included squeezing two Merlins into Scraesdon Fort, in Cornwall, to drop off a contingent of 42 Commando Royal Marines, collecting a troop of Royal Marine recruits fresh from receiving their coveted green berets after the infamous 30-miler and performing an in-scenario Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) of cadets as a formation of three aircraft.

The Commando 4 students now prepare for their long-awaited wings ceremony at Royal Navy Air Station Yeovilton, before joining 845 Naval Air Squadron.





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THE Royal Navy has successfully demonstrated the capabilities of ground-breaking cold atom technology.

P2000 vessel HMS Pursuer hosted the trial, which unlocks new possibilities in areas such as covert monitoring, which require precise signals for accurate positioning, navigation and timing.

The Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) for the RN worked with UK quantum technology company Aquark Technologies.

The trial involved the company's miniature cold atom systems, founded on Aquark's unique laser-cooling method, known as supemolasses. This method to generate cold atoms does not need an applied magnetic field, therefore reducing the size, weight,

power consumption and cost of sensors.

A cold atom is an atom that has been laser-cooled to extremely low temperatures, typically near absolute zero (-273.15C). At these temperatures, the thermal motion of atoms is very slow, allowing their quantum mechanical properties to be precisely controlled. Quantum Sensing is an advanced sensor technology that detects changes in motion, and electric and magnetic fields, by collecting data at the atomic level.

Commander Matthew Steele, who heads up Future Technology for OCTO, said: "Quantum technologies being developed in the UK will offer an alternative Position, Navigation and Timing (PNT) capability necessary to operate effectively in GPS denied or degraded environments."

"Over the next three years, the Navy seeks to accelerate the development of quantum technologies – such as Aquarks – through funding and sea trials, to secure the Royal Navy an opportunity to invest in a non-GPS-based PNT capability and to maintain its global operating advantage."

Lieutenant John Hawke, Commanding Officer of HMS Pursuer, added: "It was a great privilege to conduct these trials with Aquark Technologies. The Royal Navy is at the cutting-edge of modern technology, and assisting in the development of new products is key to maintaining our operational advantage whilst also

supporting UK industry."

Cold atoms were captured continuously throughout the trials, which involved several locations onboard HMS Pursuer.

The trials highlighted areas that require further work, particularly magnetic shielding, which will be channelled into Aquark's prototype atomic clock system, called AQlock, the UK's first commercial cold atom clock.

Quantum sensing can power military and defence operations to achieve full performance, even in environments where GPS may be degraded or denied. Aquark Technologies successfully raised €5m in seed funding, with investment led by the NATO Innovation Fund and supported by MBDA, an alliance between aerospace and defence specialists Airbus, BAE Systems, and Leonardo.

Aquark Technologies Co-Founder and CEO, Andrei Dragomir, said: "With this latest trial of our technology at sea with the Royal Navy, we are continuing to show the real-life applications of our technology after our successful flight of the first cold atom device on a drone."

"The completion of this trial marks an encouraging milestone for the future of quantum technologies in fields such as defence and infrastructure."

"Demonstrating these cold atom systems in real-world environments will drive us towards deployable systems. Our goal now is to continue enhancing our technology off the back of these results and with the help of our recent investment to make them ready for real-world use."



# Let's get atom

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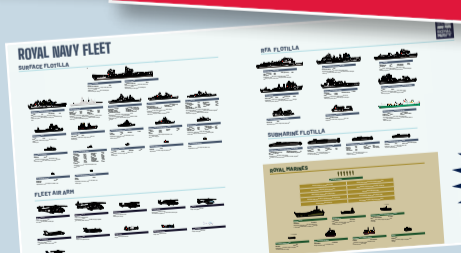
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## Valkyries get royal approval

THE fourth annual HMS Oardacious Gala, attended by HRH The Princess Royal, unfolded in grand style at the historic Painted Hall of the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich in support of the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity.

The Princess Royal, was the esteemed guest of honour with Captain Pete Reed OBE, a decorated officer and Olympic champion rower delivering the keynote speech.

There is just over a month to go until HMS Oardacious's first ever all-female team the Valkyries begin their daring Atlantic crossing.

The team encapsulates all of the event's themes of resilience, charity, adventure and of course Admiral Lord Nelson's iconic victory.

The gala brought together a cross-section of the Royal Navy and broader maritime community, including serving personnel, veterans, their families, charity partners, and leaders from corporate and industry sectors.

Adding to the evening's atmosphere, The Music Man Project returned to captivate the audience once again.

This award-winning service for individuals with learning disabilities performed alongside His Majesty's Royal Marines Band, underscoring a strong partnership and highlighting the spirit of inclusion and unity.

## Marathon in dad's memory

A SERVING Royal Navy sailor has completed the Bank of America Chicago Marathon in memory of his late father, a former Royal Marine, who shared his passion for running.

Leading Hand Chef Ben Radford, based at RMB Chivenor, took on the 26.2-mile challenge on 13 October.

It was his first marathon, and he finished with an impressive time of 4 hours and 31 minutes.

The race was not only a personal challenge but also a way for Ben to honour his father, Steve Matthews, who served as a Royal Marine.

Steve passed away on 1 May 2022, after a battle with cancer.

The date marked exactly six years to the day since Ben joined the Royal Navy.

A shared love of running was a bond between father and son.

The two had regularly competed in races together and Ben learned after his father's death that Steve had intended to run the Chicago Marathon himself before his illness prevented him from doing so.

Determined to fulfil his father's dream, Ben decided to run in his place.

"My dad was always a huge inspiration to me," said Ben.

"He'd planned to run the Chicago Marathon, so when I crossed that finish line, I felt like I was doing it for both of us."

In addition to taking on the marathon as a personal tribute, Ben used the opportunity to raise funds for the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC).

Ben's marathon journey is a powerful reminder of the enduring bond between family, service, and sacrifice - and a heartfelt tribute to a father whose memory continues to inspire.

# Bursting with pride

## Royal Navy's Caribbean sailors buoyed by their return home

FORTY sailors say their return home to the Caribbean as a thank-you for its outstanding support for the Royal Navy has been an unforgettable experience.

The sailors and Royal Marines made the 9,000-mile round trip to St Vincent and the Grenadines to mark the island chain's 45th anniversary of independence from the UK.

From TV crews waiting on the tarmac at the airport in the capital Kingstown to parading in front of thousands of fellow countrymen and women, the sailors were warmly welcomed wherever they went - and invariably in the spotlight of the local media.

The Commonwealth nation is one of the staunchest supporters of the Royal Navy - out of a population of just over 100,000, some 600 Vincentians are serving as sailors and Royal Marines.

The Royal Navy and its principal charity, the RNRMC shared the costs 50-50 for around 40 personnel to return for the small nation's 45th independence anniversary celebrations.

The returning sailors seized the opportunity to thank islanders - and families in particular - for their ongoing, long-distance support, got stuck into community projects, and offered schoolchildren and students an insight into their lives in the Navy and the careers available.

They say throughout their ten days back home, the warmth and love shown by family, friends and fellow countryfolk has been overwhelming.

Able Seaman Ronique Glasgow, who serves as a writer with 1700 Naval Air Squadron at RNAS Culdrose, looking after the administration/pay/travel details of her shipmates, returns to Cornwall after ten days back in her homeland she will never forget.

"Being able to wear my navy uniform and be there on Independence Day, engaging with people in the community, that meant the world to me - one of my best moments in the Navy," the 25-year-old said.

"The way you grow up in Saint Vincent, everyone is like extended family and everyone is very friendly. Family is a big, big thing for us."

Able Seaman Telson Goodgie, a writer at HMS Nelson in Portsmouth, surprised his mum by turning up for her birthday, celebrated his own birthday while back in St Vincent and above all returns to the UK filled with joy and pride.

"The whole experience was heart-warming. I was able to show people the 'new me', in my uniform, that was a very proud moment for me," he said. "The noise from the crowd as we were marching was so overwhelming that it gave me goosebumps."

Able Seaman Zoe Da Silva's family were unable to watch her pass out of basic naval training in the UK, so this was her first opportunity to show them how she



looked in uniform, take pictures and watch as she marched through the capital on Independence Day.

"I think the country as a whole was also proud, seeing their nationals return home and participate in events. I hope we'll be able to send another delegation for the 50th anniversary of independence - even bigger and better."

In a packed programme, the sailors:

- visited schools and colleges to showcase careers in the Navy and wider UK armed forces which drew considerable interest from students;

- joined the coast guard to see the impact of June's Hurricane Beryl on the 3,000 residents of Union Island at the southern end of the archipelago;

- conducted a flurry of interviews with the island's media (TV, radio and news outlets who followed the sailors pretty much wherever they went);

- toured the botanical gardens (the oldest in the Western Hemisphere);

- collected ten sacks of rubbish from Canash Beach with the coast guard to rid it of invasive sargassum seaweed;

- hosted a beach barbecue featuring traditional island cuisine;

- and enjoyed breakfast with Vincentian

Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves.

Independence Day itself was marked by a parade through the heart of the capital from the old Parliament Building to Victoria Park, its main sports stadium, where the marching sailors were cheered upon entry, for the main celebration. When they drew to a close, the group were joined by friends, family and the public for photographs.

Logistics expert Able Seaman Dimitri Mayers surprised his family, including his recently-born nephew Lucas - they were not expecting his visit.

"Dimitri, we are so proud of you, you make us happy and you also make St Vincent very proud," his sister told him.

Every Vincentian sailor was filled with pride taking part in the Independence Day events, none more so than Warrant Officer 2 Myron Campbell, a marine engineer with the Surface Flotilla based in Portsmouth.

"I have never experienced anything like it in my career and to top it off my entire family was there to see me for the first time in 22 years in Naval Uniform representing them, my country and the Navy in a formal, official capacity and it was the proudest moment of my career."

Writer Magdalene Johnson, based at RNAS Yeovilton, said her return home was

a "truly remarkable" experience she would "cherish for a lifetime".

She continued: "A standout moment for me was visiting our alma mater in our ceremonial rig. Seeing my former teachers again and feeling the overwhelming warmth and support they showed was deeply moving."

Like many of the returning Vincentians she didn't tell her family she was coming home. "Their astonishment and joy were worth every bit of secrecy."

"This experience is something every Vincentian in the Navy should have the opportunity to enjoy," she added.

Anne Carr, Head of Grants at RNRMC, said the charity had been only too glad to support the sailors' return home.

"We believe in the power of such initiatives to bring people together, reinforce connections, and remind our personnel that they are never far from home, no matter where their service takes them."

"In the wake of Hurricane Beryl's impact on Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada, this visit is more vital than ever, offering a message of solidarity and hope to the wider community with a vital helping hand."

# MARINES JOIN UNIVERSITY UNITS IN MILESTONE MOMENT



**FOR** the first time in the Royal Marines' 360-year history, there are now Royal Marine Officer Cadets in University Royal Navy Units.

The Royal Marine University Royal Navy Unit (RM URNU) pilot scheme finally got underway, coincidentally and poignantly, in the week of the Royal Marines' 360th Birthday.

Twelve URNU students from 10 out of the 17 URNUs from across the country assembled on the Exeter to Lymington train on a cold, dark, and wet Sunday night, so far from the comforts of university life.

Fully immersing themselves into the Candidate Preparation Course (CPC) alongside their civilian counterparts, the 12 students embarked on what has become an historical achievement.

Below is a shorthand account of one man's experience.

Pulling up to Lymington Commando station for the first time, reality set in. It was also very humbling knowing that every Royal Marine has been in the same position as me.

While walking up the steps to the CPC block, the recruits grinned at me, knowing what I was about to be put through.

Understanding that the first two days were light on the physical demands and aimed at medicals and interest lectures, it gave me time to adjust to early mornings and eating like a recruit.

The highlight of these two days was learning about the different specialities within the Royal Marines as well as getting hands-on with the different weapon systems the RM use.

Wednesday began with the RMFA, this was followed by the swim test. Wednesday afternoon was our first taste of the infamous bottom field, where our courage and determination were truly tested.

That evening the other URNU lads and I were glad that we had made it past the first day of real challenge, but we were still dreading the Endurance Course the following morning.

Thursday was the real test for us all, on the coach up to the Common all the lads were giving words of encouragement to each other.

The day was truly physically and mentally challenging, far from the usual morning of a university student. Going through the tunnels, Peters' pool, and the sheep dip was almost an enjoyable experience compared to the plyometric work and legs raises that Sgt Julian was getting us to do.

The one time that I did question why I'd chosen to miss my university lie ins to go on the CPC was when we had to crawl through the peat bogs of Woodbury Common.

Throughout the day we had the opportunity to compete against each other, this is when I learnt what pays to be a winner means.

The URNU lads performed very well throughout the day with a lot of us being in the front of the pack. The four-mile run back gave us time to compose ourselves and enjoy the exercise high we had spent the morning earning.

On completion of the gruelling few days, those that had passed the RM URNU selection course, were proudly presented the Royal Marine Beret by the Corps Colonel who gave us words of inspiration and motivation to continue with a path towards a career in the Royal Marines.

With the aim to gain more experience with 'green skills', the new RM part of URNU has given me a glimpse of what it takes to be in the elite fighting force of the Royal Navy.

I look forward to seeing how the URNU and the Royal Marines can work together to give students exposure to life as a Bootneck.



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



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## RFA awards

THE longest serving sailor in Royal Fleet Auxiliary history unsurprisingly heads the list of men and women who in the past few weeks have received the RFA's Long Service Medal for 20 years' dedication – or clasps and bars for 30, 40 and 50 years' service.

With half a century under his belt chef Chief Petty Officer Martin Etwell – a regular in these pages thanks both to the longevity of his service and prowess in the kitchen – stands out, but there are also 13 sailors who devoted 40 years to the RFA.

The list is

### 50 years

CPO(CH) Martin Etwell

### 40 years

SG1A Kevin Benney  
CPO(E) Stephen Cummins  
PO(SC) Bernanrd McCarron  
1/O(LS) Dean Gallini  
CPO(D) Nicholas Houghton  
CPO(D) Graham Dyer  
CPO(D) Phillip Picknett  
PO(CH) Ian Callicott  
1/O(LS) Mark Whyton  
Capt(X) Simon Herbert  
1/O(LS) David Knight  
C/O(X) James Garson  
2/O(LS) Duncan Kennard

### 30 years

2/O(C) James Lipp  
1/O(LS) David Leighton  
2/O(C) Christopher Marchant  
Capt(E) A E Dinnis  
Capt(E) Craig Holden  
C/O(X) Stephen Pickering

### 20 years

LH(SC) Andrew Rawlinson  
SG1A Christopher Peacock  
1/O(SE) Jonathan Poole  
1/O(LS) James Smith  
1/O(SE) Phillip Curtis  
C/O(SE) David Hendon  
MM1 Michael Ireland  
LH(D) Stephen Lea  
C/S Nigel Castell  
1/O(X) Alexander Devine  
Capt(X) Pierre Wyatt  
SG1A Selwyn James  
LH(C/S) Neil Perkins  
CPO(E) Cameron Douglas  
SG1A Stephen Black  
C/O(X) Craig Harris  
CAPT(E) Sean Hindle  
C/S Alexander Clark  
PO(D) Michael Stroh  
3/O(LS) Steven Unsworth-Brown  
ASST(CH) Peter Wallace  
SG1A Matthew Williams  
LH(D) Edward Winslade  
LH(D) Nicholas Carter  
SG1A Paul Brown  
CAPT(X) Alistair Clack  
MM1 Christopher Bradshaw  
PO(E) David Ferguson  
LH(E) John Paterson  
LH(D) Anthony Stewart  
LH(E) Mark Payne  
C/S Brian Pitcher  
2/O(X) David Duncanson  
LH(CH) Pauyl Mann  
LH(D) Andrew Gilchrist  
LH(C) David Groll  
PO(E) Gary Medcalf  
PO(C) Mark Richmond  
CPO(SC) David Hinde  
LH(E) Simon Morgan  
LH(D) Dafydd Davies  
PO(C) Michael Farrow  
CPO(C/S) Peter Shannon  
LH(C/S) Lynda Todd  
MM1 Alan Gates  
LH(C/S) Dale Jones  
2/O(E) Karl Middis  
PO(D) Samuel Mole  
C/O(E) Michael Legge  
1/O(X) Marc Bongartz  
1/O(LS) Garry Owen  
C/O(LS) Katherine Moggach  
2/O(C) A G Carroll  
SG1A Michael Crampton  
2/O(LS) Andrew Doherty  
SG1A Sarah Buckle  
2/O(LS) Phillip Balch  
C/O(SE) Steven Dowse  
2/O(E) John Ruttley  
CPO(E) Ryan Ashworth



# From MASTT to MTXG

**AFTER a dozen years sailors at the forefront of harnessing underwater tech are moving from trials and testing to front-line operations.**

Over its 12-year existence, the specialist unit has participated in a huge number of exercises, conducting trials worldwide with different equipment in a multitude of environments, all pushing the boundaries of autonomous and remotely-operated systems chiefly impacting mine warfare/diving/survey operations – many of which are either being used... or will be used.

Set up in 2012 originally under the title FUUVU (Fleet Unmanned Underwater Vehicle Unit) dedicated to exploiting burgeoning drone/autonomous technology, its role evolved into supporting the wider naval programme looking at the future of mine warfare and hydrographic/survey activity – and with it a new name, MASTT.

Driving the team throughout its trials and experimentation have been four goals: greater accuracy, greater effectiveness and greater speed – and, in the case of mine warfare, removing sailors from harm's way as much as possible.

MASTT personnel – drawn from mine warfare, hydrographic, engineering and logistic specialisations – have tested kit for use in the heat of the Gulf, cold Canadian waters, or alongside counterparts from France and the USA.

"My time at MASTT was a great opportunity to get my foot in the door with all things autonomy-related," said mine warfare specialist Chief Petty Officer Sarah Tapp, who was assigned to the team as an able rating and is now chief of operations with X-Ray Squadron of the Mine and



Threat Exploitation Group.

She relished the opportunity to experiment with equipment no-one else in the Navy was grappling.

"Autonomous mine warfare has progressed so much since 2014 and I feel privileged to have played a part in it alongside the team at that time," Sarah added.

The team is particularly pleased with its efforts to help reintroduce influence minesweeping – safely triggering mines/explosive devices – to the Fleet after a 20-year gap, working with experts from Atlas, DE&S and government science labs Dstl.

And most recently MASTT has been at the forefront of trials resulting in the first Royal Navy vessel being authorised to operate without any humans aboard, RN Motorboat Apollo (pictured top launching a towed array off the South Coast).

The final trials period in September

involved integration trials with support vessel SD Northern River, successfully demonstrating how to use a 'vessel of opportunity' as a base/launchpad for operating autonomous systems, with a view to using ships such as RFA Proteus and Stirling Castle in the future.

Lieutenant Callum Burns, the Mine and Threat Exploitation Group's Navigating Officer, said that thanks to MASTT's hard work over the past dozen years the Royal Navy was better prepared for the future.

"The impact of the invaluable effort which has been exerted over the past 12 years by personnel of this small but impactful team cannot be overstated," he said.

"The Royal Navy is better equipped to take delivery of the mine countermeasures systems in the coming years, and to face potential underwater threats in the world with confidence."

With the White Ensign formally hauled down at the team's home in Portsmouth Naval Base (pictured left), the 21 MASTT personnel are now part of the Mine and Threat Exploitation Group, comprising more than 200 sailors, focused on dealing with the mines/improvised explosive devices of today and tomorrow.

"MASTT's contributions to the Royal Navy's Mine Countermeasures capability transition, as well as broader input to maritime autonomous system development, has been impressive," said the group's Commanding Officer Commander Daniel Herridge.

"Through the efforts of talented and passionate people, the Royal Navy has gained significant experience in autonomous systems.

"The success of MASTT has been solely down to the tenacity and drive of its personnel: 'autonomous' systems still – and will always – rely on skilled and dedicated people."



## Joseph has the write stuff

IF AT first you don't succeed... Marine engineer Joseph Hardiman re-wrote his submission for the Royal Navy's annual essay contest ten times before finally handing it in.

His dedication – and persistence – were rewarded with the 2024 Lieutenant Commander Hooper Prize for the best essay by a member of the Service on a maritime subject

The Portsmouth-based engineering technician (pictured above receiving his certificate from Captain of the Base Capt Lee McLocklan) beat 25 fellow essayists to take the title, impressing the judges with his exploration of the Royal Navy's capability to operate independently in the southern hemisphere while unsupported by NATO or the United Nations.

The contest dates to 1952 and a trust fund established in memory of Lieutenant Commander Geoffrey Hooper – continued in more recent years by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

It is open to all junior ratings and aims to broaden both their essay-writing abilities and knowledge of current affairs.

ET (ME) Hardiman's journey to winning the top prize is a result of his dedication and hard work – going far beyond the ten re-drafts of his words – plus the ability to access the RN's Learning and Development Organisation (LDO).

Joseph joined the Royal Navy in 2019 after deciding not to complete his A Levels – he didn't believe he had the capacity to turn his inquisitive academic character into results in an exam.

Through study techniques at HMS Sultan, Joseph completed his professional training, but also gained the skills to attempt the academic work needed to provide a sound foundation for his aim of becoming an officer.

"I entered the Lt Cdr Hooper Prize in 2022 but didn't get very far as I didn't really analyse the topic to the level I have this year," Joseph said.

"Through the Royal Navy I have secured an A\* in my English Literature A-Level and hope to get the same when I take the exams for History and later for Classic Civilisation.

He continued: "The Learning and Development Organisation provided an English tutor, have paid for my exams and I have used my annual £175 Standard Learning Credits to get extra tutor support to prepare me for my history exam.

"The analytical skills developed are so important for officers and translates to helping me perceive the world around me, how I engage with people I work with, understanding how politics are relevant to my job and especially demonstrates I'm capable of more."

The facilities and a wide range of opportunities available in all Learning and Development hubs, including those provided by the LDO Operations team to deployed units, are available to Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Maritime Reserve personnel.

Joseph's winning essay can be read in *The Naval Review*.

# App and ingenuity boost air safety

ENGINEERING experts believe they have improved the safety of naval airpower – and cut repair times for front-line helicopters.

The team at 1710 Naval Air Squadron, located in Portsmouth Naval Base, perform a unique service for the UK armed forces, providing specialist engineering support to helicopters operated not just by the Fleet Air Arm, but also RAF and Army Air Corps.

Their latest two initiatives will benefit naval aviators and ground crew especially, starting with an app which should improve safety across the board.

Led by CPO David Shears and developed by LH Eathan Dart, 1710 have introduced the app to help process hundreds of reports submitted following incidents during flights or found during maintenance on the ground.

Squadrons currently file a Defence Air Safety Occurrence Report to the Royal Navy Flight Safety Centre outlining how the unit feels flight safety was or could have been degraded during a particular incident.

The reports cover anything from human error to mechanical failures, maintenance, weather conditions or other external factors which may have impacted on the safety of the crew/aircraft during a particular sortie.

Reports come in from more than two dozen squadrons and units – not just major front-line formations such as the Merlin Mk2s of 814 and 820 NAS or the Yeovilton-based Wildcat squadrons, but also air traffic control towers, drone unit 700X NAS, even the vintage aircraft of Navy Wings such as the Swordfish and Wasp.

The centre receives over 1,000 reports a year, each of which has to be sifted through and assessed before recommendations are made to the correct authority and guidance given to help prevent repeats.

Thanks to the app – known as POFU, or Post-Occurrence Follow-Up – reports can be

analysed/processed electronically, speeding the process up, freeing up safety centre personnel for other duties and, above all, enhancing flight safety.

The app also empowers individual units to generate bespoke reports which highlight their specific issues, providing a tailored approach to addressing and resolving safety concerns.

Meanwhile the squadron's repair department's I-Beams project, led by CPO Tom Hone, has cut the repair time to critical I-Beams on Wildcat helicopters operated by 815 and 825 Naval Air Squadrons from 16 to just eight to ten weeks.

I-Beams support the main gearbox, serving as a primary load-bearing component that transmits essential flight loads into the helicopter's structure.

Given the demands on this structure, any damage requires a precise and durable repair to

maintain the helicopter's flight safety and structural integrity.

Hitherto it's required extensive off-site servicing, but thanks to advances in repair processes and protocols, that's been cut – and with support from the Portsmouth-squadron, engineers at Yeovilton have been trained to conduct the complex task.

The result has been upskilling for the Wildcat engineers and a drastic impact on helicopter availability.

## Sports lottery

MAKING a welcome return after an absence of several years are the results of the RN sports lottery:

**November 2**  
£5,000 – D Blanchford (17-40-53); £1,800 – M Williams (04-34-65); £800 – L Fleming (01-26-38); £600 – D Jackson(02-39-42); £500 – T Williams (41-45-46); £400 – C Scott (10-34-35)

**November 9**  
£5,000 – J Blackford (04-59-60); £1,800 – P Piazza (24-36-40); £800 – J Fennell (19-42-69); £600 – A Rimmer (16-39-47); £500 – D Gray (43-50-68); £400 – L Scott (03-20-63)





# Tapping a rich 'pool of talent

THE Liverpool Armed Forces Careers Office opened its doors to hundreds of potential recruits during a highly-successful Royal Navy Acquaint Day led by PO Karl Hille and supported by a team of dedicated Careers Advisors and Specialist Attract Teams.

The event provided a valuable opportunity to showcase the unique careers available in the RN and RM, while also strengthening ties with the local community.

Specialist units and branches, including the Submarine Service, Royal Navy Police and Mine Clearance Divers, were on hand to offer hands-on experiences and professional insights. Attendees were given a close-up look at the challenges and rewards of life in the

Service, from the complexities of operating beneath the waves with the Submarine Service to the precision required in bomb disposal operations demonstrated by the Mine Clearance Divers.

Also attending: the Royal Navy Combat Sports Initiative (CSI), made up of RNRM martial artists, civilian instructors and RNRM sponsored athletes, led by WO2 Dennis Harrison.

The CSI work tirelessly to highlight the benefits of a career in the RN/RM in gyms all over the north of England and operate in tandem with the Weapons Down/Gloves Up charity to combat knife crime and street violence.

The day was a prime example of how the Royal Navy continues to inspire and attract the next generation with many of those present expressing keen interest in joining, drawn by the diverse career paths and the opportunity to serve their country, and a number choosing to withdraw extant applications with sister Services to pursue a career at sea.

"Events like this are vital in demonstrating the breadth of opportunities within the Royal Navy," said Senior Recruiting Officer Lt Cdr Greg Learoyd.

"It's not just about filling positions; it's about finding individuals who are ready to challenge themselves and contribute to something greater."

# Congrats Culdrose Sultan back in the RN

TRAINING staff from the Royal Naval School of Flight Deck Operations at RNAS Culdrose have been recognised for their hard work and achievements with a host of 3-star and establishment-level awards.

Every term, senior officers, divisional officers and line managers are encouraged to nominate their staff for the various RNAS Culdrose awards on offer in recognition of efforts and performance above and beyond normal duties.

The station awards include the Honorary Officer's Bottle (HOBs) in recognition and appreciation of going the extra mile, the Live Your Life Awards for JRs performing with distinction both in and beyond the workplace, the Captain's Award for recognition at station level outside an individual's squadron or department, the Special Achievement In Leadership (SAIL) issued



to those demonstrating inspirational qualities above what is normally expected of leaders, and the Culdrose Award for Special Endeavour (CASE) received by those making notable contributions to the running of the air station.

This term citations were awarded respectively to CPOA(AH) Gavin Tracey (CASE), LA(AH) Chris Ellor (HOB and Captains Award), LA(AH) Lee Gribble (SAIL), NA(AH) Andrew Lawrie (HOB and Live your Life), NA(AH) Emily Macmillan (HOB and Live your Life), NA(AH) John Revell (Live your Life), NA(AH) James

Wilson (HOB).

Similarly, the base has presented Team Fisher (TF) Awards for TF members Wendy Gabbott, Alison Harper, Debbie Hendra, Steve Christie, Kerry Gilbert, with Jonti Nankivell also receiving the TF Termly Award.

The Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) has been awarded to WO1 Scott Iszard (pictured aboard HMS Victory receiving it from the Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Martin Connell).

And 3\* Commendations have been awarded by the Second Sea Lord to POA(AH) Paul Girvin and POA(AH) Alan Williams of the Shore Delivery Team for their exceptional and innovative contributions to training.

"The entire team are working incredibly hard to deliver first-class training and are quite rightly earning recognition for their outstanding achievements," said Flight Deck School Officer Commanding Lt Cdr William Benton.

BACK in the bosom of the Royal Navy is HMS Sultan after a dozen years 'on loan' to the RAF.

Since 2012, the base has come under the command of the Defence College of Technical Training, when it transferred to Air Command.

A Flag Haul Down ceremony was held to mark the transfer of Command from Number 22 Group Royal Air Force to the Royal Navy.

As part of the shake-up, the Defence School of Marine Engineering is being renamed the Marine Engineering Training Group (METG).

And RAF involvement on the site doesn't end completely as the Royal Naval Air Engineering and Survival Equipment School, which trains RN Air engineers and technicians in support of Fleet Air Arm operations, remains under Air Command, retaining its strong links with aviation technical training across the Services.



## Arboretum meet after memorial ride

AMONG the many services which took place up and down the country last month to mark Remembrance Sunday, one unique event in the north of England saw motorcyclists converge on Staffordshire as part of 'Ride to The Wall'.

Established in 2008, the ride is an annual fundraising journey to the Armed Forces Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, uniting civilians, serving and former serving personnel, their friends and families to honour and remember the 16,000-plus servicemen and women whose names are engraved on The Wall of the Armed Forces Memorial. All funds raised by the event go to the upkeep and maintenance of the memorial.

CPO Mark Amato RFA (pictured paying his respects at the Royal Fleet Auxiliary memorial) was responsible for leading a contingency of riders on the 170-mile pilgrimage from Portsmouth to Staffordshire.

"Paying respect to those that help in maintaining our freedom is a small price to pay to those that have given their all. This event and location gives me a humble feeling, both personal and professional, to understand and cope with the feeling of loss," Mark said.

"The ride brings that community together in support of all. The camaraderie is second to none on all levels of diversity. Stories and memories are told and brought back to life never to be forgotten. To celebrate the life and achievements of our lost ones, helps us to mourn our loss."

## New route to career as medical officer opened

THERE'S now a third route to becoming a Royal Navy Medical Officer – one which doesn't involve leaving the Service.

Hitherto there have been two pathways – a Cadetship or a Direct Graduate Entry (qualified) route – both of which required external recruitment, meaning leaving the Service to follow either path.

Not so with the new route – which also opens up the role to applicants outside the medical profession.

That broadens the pool of potential applicants for Medical Officer training and provides a positive opportunity for those serving

to train as Medical Officers while remaining in service.

It also means it's expected to be competitive so a separate selection board will convene to choose successful applicants.

Funding is available for 2025, but it will need to be monitored by the Medical Branch Manager (Med BM) and bid through the Annual Budget Cycle (ABC) for future applicants, along with the release of a calling notice via RNTM 07-039/24.

The first selection board will take place in April 25 for a start date of September 2025. At present, the closing date for all applications is March 31 2025.

## You said, we did...

IT'S not always clear what is on offer to recognise and reward exceptional length of service beyond the standard 20 years, such as for those who have completed 40 plus years.

As part of the Senior Command Warrant Officers' (SCWO) initiative to improve reward and recognition in the Royal Navy, the Long Service Recognition Award (LSRA) was introduced in collaboration with Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) to recognise a career of 40 years or more of Regular and/or Reserve service.

A leaving gift, funded by the RNRMC – up to the value of £250 – can be applied for to symbolise a recipient's exceptional time in the Service, and will be presented, along with their Valedictory Certificate, as they leave the Royal Navy.

The LSRA is an important step in recognising the valuable service of RN personnel and affords the RN the ability to reward exceptional time served. Thanks to the work of the Protocol Team, in particular WO1 Paul Dungey, the procedures for promoting the award and identifying eligible personnel been much improved.

Details of the LSRA are now briefed on the Divisional Officers', XO and EWO Designate Courses, and SCIO is being used to effect to identify those who would become eligible for the award within a six-month lead time, enabling the Protocol Team to reach out to these individuals and/or their chain of command.

For details of the award, eligibility criteria and application process, see RNTM 09-021/24.



## TO THE OUTBACK AND BACK

COMMANDO fliers completed one of the longest deployments in the force' history – more than 12 months supporting operations and exercises from Cyprus to the Outback.

The team from 845 Naval Air Squadron say the first run-out of the Navy's Littoral Response Group (South) has proved extremely useful for future operations.

Its Merlins helicopters joined veteran aviation training ship RFA Argus in September last year providing the aerial support to the commandos, with RFA Lyme Bay the amphibious element of the Littoral Response Group.

The conflict in the Middle East meant much of the early part of the deployment was focused on preparing for any contingency as the ships/personnel were held at readiness in and around Cyprus should Britons need evacuating from the eastern Mediterranean.

When the situation was deemed to be less tense, the deployment resumed and the ships headed east of Suez and the deployment returned to its more regular mission: exercising with a string of partner nations, beginning with India and INS Sahyadri to test the Merlins' ability to shift stores with the Commonwealth navy and opening doors to further co-operation the next time the response group is in the Indian Ocean.

The key workout was an extended stint in and off Australia's enormous (and mostly empty) Northern Territory (five times the size of the UK, but with a population the size of Plymouth).

The vast open spaces are perfect for military training – and so played host to Exercise Predators Run, Australia's principal combined exercise, with US and UK forces invited to participate.

Assisting Royal Marine Commandos, the Merlins of 845 NAS conducted raids on to an 'enemy'-held island during the night, 'rescued' a downed pilot on the run in the bush, and covertly inserted a reconnaissance team deep into 'enemy' territory.

"The chance to fly, often at night, in formation with other aircraft in support of Royal Marines in an environment as unique as the Australian Outback is something that most aviators may never get the chance to do," said Lieutenant Commander Scott Reilly, who flew one of the first aircraft on to Argus last year and re-joined the ship as environmental training officer for Predators Run.

"I know I learned a lot from the experience, and I am sure that the lessons that the squadron took away will help shape and improve what we do for years to come."

Operating from RFA Argus in the heat of Northern Australia, the aircrew, engineers, and the ship's crew worked tirelessly – often to the absolute limit of their capability – to ensure friendly forces 'triumphed'.

Predators Run and Northern Territory marked the high-water mark of the deployment, after which both ships made a beeline for the UK via Diego Garcia and Cape Town before returning to Portland having covered more than 25,000 miles. Lt Cdr Reilly returned one final time to fly the last Merlin from Portland the short distance to Yeovilton.

"It was a privilege to have been there for the beginning and the end of this year-long journey knowing what it has achieved," he said.

"The opportunity for our aircrew and engineers to operate around the world and see places that they may never have had the chance to travel to, whilst flying and assisting Royal Marines on exercise was unique and for many would have been their first experience of a deployment of this scale."

Above all, he says, it was the variety – the mix of real-world events, exotic locations and wide-ranging exercises/training – which made the deployment extremely beneficial and a springboard for similar missions in the future.

Lt Cdr Reilly added: "Flying in all environments, day and night, ready to react to an ever-changing world provided fantastic opportunities to train and improve ourselves ready to face threats and assist our allies and partners around the globe."

"The Littoral Response Group was ever-ready to react, and this provided a lot of excitement. To have the capability to assist all over the world whenever needed always kept the deployments interesting. The plan was ever changing, and we were always ready to support whenever the UK called upon us."





## Taking the lead on recruiting

MEET the newest addition to the Royal Naval Association family: Reggie the labrador, now on the books of the Bude branch.

He's been drafted in again to help matelots past and present in the north Cornwall town bolster numbers, joining them on recruiting drives.

His potential was spotted in the summer when, after wandering up a driveway while enjoying a walk, it resulted in the householder joining the branch.

Since then (with a little help from his owner, branch welfare officer Jaqi Edwards) he's added a serving officer and rating to the branch's books, plus an associate member... and is now eyeing up a retired diver who's recently settled in Bude.

If you swayed by Reggie's charms... or even if your not and fancy swapping dits with fellow sailors, the branch meets at the town's Falconer Hotel at 7.30pm on the first Thursday of each month. If you would like details, best to speak to branch secretary Bob Gelder (rather than Reggie) on 01409 253791 or [bobbelder1@gmail.com](mailto:bobbelder1@gmail.com).

## A return to Raleigh

DID you serve at HMS Raleigh and fancy a trip down memory lane - while encouraging a new generation of Royal Navy sailors?

After a winter break for the weather, from spring 2025, the gates to the Torpoint establishment are open again, allowing veterans back on site on some Fridays for a mix of nostalgia and a glimpse of tomorrow's navy.

First introduced in the autumn of last year, the initiative allows old shipmates to reminisce, see how training has (or in some instances hasn't) changed, and watch recruits pass out filled with the same sense of pride as they did.

Raleigh's senior staff are keen to reinvigorate the initiative, giving access to the site to veterans, but also to show them how training has evolved to meet the expectations of young men and women and meet the demands of the Fleet in which they serve.

You will watch successful recruits receive their epaulettes, tour a messdeck which serves as their home for the ten weeks of basic training, and watch a film showing how the RN of 2025 turns civilians into sailors.

After eating you'll move to the parade ground (or drill shed if raining) for the passing-out-parade.

Throughout you will be hosted by members of staff, meet families of trainees passing out, as well as the recruits themselves, before attending the parade.

Anyone - whether you served on the staff or Raleigh or only attended basic training and never returned - is welcome to attend and you can bring a partner/friend/carer, with allocation made on a first-come, first served basis. Contact [claire.axford624@mod.gov.uk](mailto:claire.axford624@mod.gov.uk) to find out more.

# A snapshot of an age now passed

AN UNFINISHED letter to a loved one, a sentimental postcard, some yellowed newspaper clippings.

These are mementos of life aboard and the actions of a Royal Navy destroyer in wartime - rediscovered after decades as her successor ship celebrates her 40th birthday on operations in the Gulf.

HMS Chiddingfold served extensively in home waters and the Mediterranean throughout the second half of World War 2, escorting convoys - especially those at the beginning or end of their journeys to/from the UK - supporting daring raids and grappling with German fast boats in the Channel.

As wartime destroyers go, Chiddingfold lived a charmed life - there's little in her history to suggest she was badly damaged or suffered heavy casualties, despite escorting at least 15 convoys.

One of her crew - it's not known who - kept a comprehensive scrapbook of her activities and actions, and continued to follow the ship's progress after the war when she was transferred to the newly-independent Indian Navy, before the vessel was finally broken up in the late 1970s.

When a namesake ship - today's minehunter - joined the Fleet in the 1980s, some of that scrapbook was donated to the new vessel... and then accidentally forgotten.

The envelope containing an eclectic mix of ephemera from the 1940s and 50s - most, but not all, of it relating to the wartime destroyer - resurfaced as the present-day HMS Chiddingfold was gearing up for 40th birthday celebrations in Bahrain.

Sadly there are no accompanying notes, so the minehunter's crew are keen to learn the back story - if anyone can help.

The papers include:

- a barely-started letter home to a certain Joan on notepaper from HMS Collingwood, the training base in Fareham (inset);
- photographs of refit in Middlesbrough in 1943
- several photographs of crew on the open bridge in the Mediterranean in 1943, including her then Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander Thomas Dorrien Smith (inset)
- the possible surrender of an Italian submarine in the Mediterranean in 1943 (main picture)
- escorting the aircraft carrier HMS Avenger in the North Atlantic in 1942
- newspaper cuttings relating to the transfer to the Indian Navy in the 1950s



The crew of today's Chiddingfold intend to hand the material to the Royal Navy's official historians at the Naval Historical Branch in Portsmouth for safekeeping.

Navigator Lieutenant Max Renouf said the collection was a poignant reminder - particular during the period of remembrance - of past sacrifices and deeds, and the ties which today's sailors with their wartime forebears.

"They showcase a different time in the Royal Navy but the threads of family and the creation of lasting memories are woven through everything in the small collection.

"As the person served during the war it makes it even more special as there is no telling the horrors and tribulations he went through whilst on board.

"While people and technologies may change, the values and standards that have driven excellence have not changed."

Similar sentiments marked the minehunter's 40th birthday party. Despite that age, due to her 'plastic' hull which doesn't age like the steel of traditional

warships, inside Chiddingfold is equipped with the latest machinery, sensors and systems to hunt mines in the Middle East.

Her 40th anniversary was marked by a blessing from a naval chaplain, a service of remembrance for all those who have served in the two HMS Chiddingfolds, and the distribution of commemorative coins donated by the minehunter's first Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander David Sandiford in recognition of the continued efforts from all who serve on her.

"As the 43rd Commanding Officer of HMS Chiddingfold, it gives me great pleasure to lead this remarkable ship into her fifth decade," said Lieutenant Commander Craig Clark.



## £50k for X-man's medals

MEDALS won by one of the submariners who helped cripple Hitler's flagship were bought at auction for £50,000.

Edmund 'Eddie' Goddard was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal for his role in Operation Source, steering a 50ft 'midget' submarine for hours on end through cold, confined waters to attack the mighty Tirpitz deep inside the Arctic circle in German-occupied Norway.

In 1941, he volunteered for 'special and hazardous service'... which led him to training to operate 'midget' submarines - officially designated X-craft (he's pictured above posing by the stern of one post-war).

In 1943, the Germans' biggest warship Tirpitz was potentially the greatest surface threat to the Royal Navy.

Skulking in the fjords of northern Norway, protected by layers of defences on and beneath the waves, as well as strong Luftwaffe cover to fend off air attack, Tirpitz was proving impossible to 'get at'.

The Admiralty turned to small-scale submarines to penetrate the fjords, evade the defences and finally plant explosive charges on Tirpitz's hull to cripple or even sink the battleship.

Helmsman Eddie Goddard was the only rating in the four crew on HMS X-6, one of six X-craft due to execute Operation Source in September 1943.

X6 led the operation against the Tirpitz, slipped through the anti-submarine defences, passed under the battleship's keel, placed explosive charges near one of the forward turrets and then was forced to scuttle as there was no hope of reaching safety with a broken periscope.

The X-craft attack put Tirpitz out of action for six months (after further attempts to sink her, special heavy bombs dropped by the RAF caused her to capsize in late 1944).

Eddie Goddard returned to the UK from captivity at the war's end, receive the CGM from the King, then settled into civilian life as an engineer. He died in Berkshire in 1992.

His medals and some personal effects/wartime mementos ended up with a private collector, who has since died, so Eddie Goddard's medals were re-sold by London auctioneer Noonan's on November 7.

Also among the lots sold was a group of medals won by Marine Arthur Alexander Henry Harper of 41 Independent Commando RM attached to 1st US Marine Division - including one of just nine Military Medals awarded to commandos in Korea (four are held by the RM Museum). Mne Harper's is regarded as particularly valuable, awarded for actions in combat at the Choisin Reservoir on December 7 1950. The collection sold for £28k.

And the Distinguished Service Cross awarded to Flt Lt Michael Fearnley, the RAF surgeon who was flown in to take over the post of medical officer aboard HMS Amethyst during the 'Yangtze Incident' went under the hammer for £20k.



# WW1 Hawke found

ROYAL Navy experts have confirmed the identity of a World War 1 wreck off the Scottish coast found in the summer as HMS Hawke.

Before divers swam around the remains of the cruiser, no-one had seen her since she was torpedoed by a German submarine on October 15 1914 while carrying out a patrol of the North Sea.

The wreck was found by Lost in Waters Deep, a volunteer team of civilian researchers and divers who aim to help find lost and forgotten shipwrecks around the UK and remember their crews.

The team consulted both the war diary (log) of the U-boat which sank Hawke, as well as the corresponding logs of the nearest warships to the cruiser at the time, plus contemporary and present-day charts of the North Sea to help pinpoint the possible wreck site.

The ship was found in August about one kilometre away from an 'obstruction' marked on existing charts of the North Sea – and about ten kilometres from Hawke's location estimated by the UK Hydrographic Office in the early 1970s.

When they found that 'obstruction' – 110 metres down (over 350ft) – the divers recorded tell-tale features of a WW1-era warship, while a side-scan sonar sweep of the wreck by the divers' mother ship MV Clasina suggested similar dimensions and layout to HMS Hawke.

"The wreck is in remarkable condition for a vessel of this era, likely due to the depth and having never been dived before," said Steve Mortimer, one of the divers.

"It's a fascinating site. You can look through the open scuttles and see artefacts just lying there on the deck. There's lots of Royal Navy crockery, including teacups, plates and bowls. It's a really remarkable time capsule."

He and his colleagues also recorded



two large guns (estimated 9in, one at the bow, one at the stern), 6in casemate guns along the ship's sides, an Admiral's walkway around the stern, navigation equipment, and teak decking.

Three months later, having pored over the footage, photographs and scans gathered by the expedition – as an official war grave, nothing was recovered from the wreck – as well as contemporary records and plans, experts from the Royal Navy Historical Branch, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Salvage and Marine Organisation and Hydrographic Office have confirmed the sunken vessel is HMS Hawke.

The cruiser fell victim to U-boat ace Otto Weddigen and his submarine U-9 – fêted in their native Germany but notorious in Britain for sinking three Royal Navy cruisers in one hour in September 1914, killing more than 1,450 sailors and Royal Marines.

Hawke, an Edgar-class protected cruiser, was more than 20 years old and had hit the headlines in 1911 when she collided with the White Star Liner Olympic – older sister of the Titanic – in the Solent, losing her bow in the process.

When war broke out in August 1914, the veteran warship was assigned to enforcing the naval blockade of Germany – preventing shipping reaching or leaving North Sea ports – by patrolling between Scotland and Norway, until she was sighted by U-9 on

October 15 about 130km (80 miles) east of Fraserburgh.

"It is great to hear that the Royal Navy has confirmed our discovery of HMS Hawke," said Kevin Heath, who runs Lost in Waters Deep.

"A huge amount of effort went into the research behind this project, so we knew we were searching in the right area – but until divers go down and visually ID the wreck, you can never be 100 per cent sure.

"It was such a relief when the divers surfaced and reported they had found a wreck with guns; I knew it had to be HMS Hawke. To have the Navy confirm this means that the final resting place of those 526 souls is no longer 'lost' and the site can be protected for future generations."

Lieutenant Commander Jen Smith, who has joined the team on previous dives including surveying the wreck of WW2 destroyer HMS Exmouth earlier this year – said even after the passage of more than a century, the ongoing efforts to locate and identify wrecks around the UK was appreciated by today's Senior Service, as well as the descendants of those lost.

"Without these volunteers dedicating their time to these projects, the resting place of many of our sailors would never be found and their sacrifices forgotten, so we are most grateful."

Dive pictures courtesy of Simon Kay and Charlie Comrie



## England expects... a buffet in Hawaii

WITH the UK footprint on Oahu having grown from three to 15 as a result of the UK Government's Tilt to the Indo-Pacific, the renewed RN presence in Hawaii decided the time had come to resurrect Trafalgar Night.

Eight of the 15 posts at the US headquarters – US INDOPACOM (Indo-Pacific Command), dedicated to security and freedom of movement at sea across the vast region of the same name – are filled by Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel, who wanted their US (and Australian) colleagues to share the traditions of the most memorable date in the Senior Service calendar.

Due to the tropical climate in Hawaii, the team decided to forego the usual sit down dinner to mark the 219th anniversary of Nelson's victory in favour of a reception hosted at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam in the residence of Commodore Jonathan Lett RN who serves on exchange as the deputy director for policy in the J5 (strategy, plans and policy) section at US INDOPACOM (Indo-Pacific Command).

The property is historic in its own right having been built in 1939, witnessing – and surviving – the December 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Resplendent in their Polynesian print cummerbunds, the hosts from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines introduced their guests to mini-beef Wellingtons, home-made chocolate ships of the line and a selection of sea shanties played, Hawaiian style, on the ukulele by Lt Cdr Jonathan Laverick who also serves on exchange in US INDOPACOM.

Contributing to RNRMC's Trafalgar Night at Home, the event also raised £250 for charitable causes.

More howay than Hawaii, Wansbeck RNA Branch in Northumbria did sit down to a meal – and a jolly good one at that, spread across three courses at the Half Moon pub in Stakeford.

Twenty-two branch members and guests enjoyed proceedings, which closed with a raffle, and are now eyeing up this month's Christmas function at the Cherry Tree in Choppington.

Air Engineering Officer Lieutenant Commander Samuel Cuff was guest of honour in his native Street in Somerset as the town's RNA branch gathered at the Wessex Hotel to toast the immortal memory.

Sam's career began with him being sponsored through sixth form by the Royal Navy before going to Southampton University as part of the Defence Technical Undergraduate Scheme.

He's currently responsible for the Merlin Mk4s of 845 Naval Air Squadron at Yeovilton.

Joining Sam, his wife Sheree and RNA members – led by the branch's oldest representative, Alec Lowe – were members of Somerton Royal British Legion and cadets, staff and officers from TS Excalibur, the Glastonbury and Street Sea Cadet unit. The cadets carried out ceremonial and general duties in support of the early part of evenings programme.

And a meal described as "scrumptious" was enjoyed by more than 50 shipmates in the Portland area where guest of honour was RNA Area 4 Chaplain, the Reverend Martin Kirkbride, who carried out a blessing and gave grace, then delivered a rousing speech for fellow diners, receiving a gift of rum measures in a presentation box as a thank-you from his hosts.

## On the (mini)buses

THE Royal Naval Association is calling on its members to make use of its minibuses to support group outings/trips.

Three minibuses – based in Plymouth, Manchester and Portsmouth – are available for use by shipmates, thanks to a generous grant from the Seafarers' Charity which helps tremendously in maintaining the vehicles.

On a daily basis the buses are managed by a team of RNA volunteers – your contacts should you wish to borrow a

vehicle:

■ in Plymouth Les Yeoman, [lesyeo3@gmail.com](mailto:lesyeo3@gmail.com) (07795 2313970);

■ in Manchester David Barlow, [dbarlow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dbarlow@hotmail.co.uk) (07747 006100)

■ and in Portsmouth Sara Field, [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org) (02392 723747).

For insurance purposes, there are certain criteria for driving the minibuses and these, along with additional details, are available from RNA HQ.

## 'Steff would have loved this match'



THE inaugural memorial rugby match honouring sailor Steffan Rees went Germany's way after a thrilling encounter at Gloucester's Kingsholm Stadium.

Played on the eve of Armistice weekend, the UK Armed Forces Remembrance Match commemorated the life, service and love of the sport by the 29-year-old.

From Aberystwyth, Steffan (pictured) represented for both the RN and UK Armed Forces rugby teams.

He had been playing for the Combined Services team in the World Defence Rugby competition in Brittany when his body was discovered following a cliff fall in August last year.

So it was fitting that the first of an annual

fixture inaugurated in his name turned out to be a thriller with the German Armed Forces eventually running out 43-26 winners over their UK counterparts.

The Royal Naval Association sponsored the Man of the Match trophy and salver in honour of Steffan, presented to Ryan Crowley

Among those watching the encounter were Steffan's father, Jamie Tank, and his best friend, Jordan Thomas.

"I have enjoyed the continued connection with the Armed Forces that this match offers," said Mr Tank.

"It is an emotional time and I'm so proud that Steff was so well thought of within the Navy. It is as though Steff belonged to a bigger family and I'm made up that they

loved him too."

Jordan Thomas added: "We were like brothers and I miss him. I was the last person who spoke to him before he died and that is a big responsibility.

"It has been such a hard day, because I know Steff would have loved this, he loved his rugby. Maybe he's here with us. I hope so, except he'd have been annoyed that we didn't win."

Sarah Oakley, Chair of RN Rugby Union, said, "What better way to commemorate Steffan's life than by an annual rugby match. And a big thank you to the Royal Naval Association for the trophy.

"It was also great to see so many Royal Navy players on the pitch today."

# NO DAMP SPIRITS AT TRAFALGAR DAY PARADE

MORE than 400 cadets and volunteers overcame wet and windy conditions to honour the legacy of Lord Nelson, and the history and sacrifice of the Royal Navy, with a magnificent display in Trafalgar Square.

After months of preparation with their units and districts, cadets from across the country came together for two days of intensive final practice at Kingswood Activity Centre in Kent – perfecting their drill and uniforms while forging new friendships.

“The training days were definitely ones to remember,” said Petty Officer Cadet Ashley, 17, of Dunbar Unit.

“It was an incredible atmosphere with cadets from different cadet forces coming together to commemorate the same thing.”

POC Chloe, 17, of Huddersfield Unit added: “From being strangers from all areas of the UK we became one unified parade.”

“After we got off the coaches at Horse Guards Parade, the excitement and anticipation was high from all present – everyone was in a frenzy helping each other put on their uniforms and straighten their caps.”

Meanwhile, POC Will of Torpoint Unit was preparing for his final National Trafalgar Day Parade, as part of the Massed Band of the Sea Cadet Corps.

He said: “Trafalgar Day is massively important to Sea Cadets.

“It’s really important to remember

the nation’s naval heritage and the important battle Nelson won at Trafalgar. It’s been two days of hard training, but it’s all going to pay off now.”

For Cadet Sergeant Gemma, 17, of Scarborough Unit, a drum major in the band, the event was her first experience of a National Trafalgar Day Parade.

“The first time the band have ever come together was on Thursday, so training has been really exciting,” she said.

“But we’re all really ready to go – which has just made it more enjoyable today.”

Gemma was also looking forward to discovering the sights of central London.

All the hard work and preparation ensured that hundreds of spectators enjoyed an unforgettable show of precision drill.

A moving ceremony featuring a fine reading of Nelson’s Prayer from POC Grace of Bournemouth Unit, and a powerful rendition of The Last Post from six cadet buglers.

As the buglers played, wreaths were laid at the foot of Nelson’s Column in memory of all those who lost their lives during the battle.

The First Sea Lord’s Cadets – including Ashley, Chloe and Grace – also had a particularly special duty to carry out together.

Chloe said: “We formed the White Ensign Casket Party to carry the last remaining pieces of the flag which flew on HMS Victory on the

day of the battle of Trafalgar.”

“It was both a deeply meaningful and rewarding experience,” added Ashley.

“As a team we shared feelings of camaraderie and pride.”

The music and drumming of the Massed Bands of the Sea Cadets provided another spectacle for guests including the Minister for Veterans & People, Alistair Cairns and the Reviewing Officer for the day – former Governor of Gibraltar and Deputy Commander of NATO Land Forces, Lt Gen (Rtd) Ed Davis.

After being inspected by the VIPs and other special guests – including the new Commander Royal Navy Cadet Forces, Brig Ged Salzano, and Commander Maritime Reserves & Cadets, Cdre Jo Adey ADC RN – cadets marched out of Trafalgar Square for another traditional highlight of the day.

Cadets, volunteers and supporters were then able to enjoy a surprise PT display by junior sea cadets – who had been unable to perform on Trafalgar Square earlier due to the conditions.

Their energy and enthusiasm made for a rousing end to a day when Sea Cadets showcased the very best of its resilience and dedication.

Ashley said: “The cadets could have let the poor weather bring us down, but the purpose of the parade helped us push through.

“We are Royal Navy cadets for a reason, a little water can’t stop us.”



## Chief executive to step down

IT WAS with great regret that Marine Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC) made the announcement that, after nearly 15 years of dedicated service as Chief Executive, Martin Coles will step down from his role in late spring 2025.

Jeremy Penn, Chair of Trustees at MSSC, said: “On behalf of the entire organisation, I want to express our profound gratitude to Martin for

his visionary leadership over the past decade and a half.

“His tenure has been one of remarkable transformation.”

Under Martin’s leadership, MSSC now offers a safer, more consistent, inclusive and engaging Sea Cadets Experience, supported by modern systems and equipment, together with more effective volunteer training and support.

They are actively listening to young people, inspiring ever more of them to reach their potential through challenge and nautical adventure, all guided by the customs and traditions of today’s Royal Navy.

Reflecting on his time at the helm, Martin Coles said: “It has been the honour of a lifetime to lead the Marine Society and Sea Cadets and a real privilege to serve alongside such a passionate group of volunteers, employees, and trustees who together are making such a positive impact on the lives of young people and seafarers.”

Martin will continue as Chief Executive until late spring 2025, and the recruitment process for his successor will begin shortly.



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# BLUE AND GREEN JOIN FORCES FOR ANNIVERSARY

THE power vessel TS Jack Petchey helped Sea Cadets celebrate the 360th anniversary of the formation of the Royal Marines during a very special week of activities.

Voyage P44 began with the mixed crew of sea cadets and Royal Marines cadets paying tribute to the historic contribution of the Royal Marines at Warsash – at the memorial to the British and Allied Naval Commando Units who embarked on the River Hamble to be part of the D-Day landings.

The following day marked the official anniversary of October 28 with a cake baked and decorated by the ship's company.

The rest of the week then saw TS Jack Petchey take part in Exercise Coastal Guardian, with cadets working in teams and provided with intel and satellite imagery to plan their own amphibious missions.

The first mission scenario involved providing assistance to the 17 Port

& Maritime Regiment of the Royal Logistics Corps.

TS Jack Petchey rendezvoused with the Army units at sea and provided an escort to the beach assault area; cadets then boarded the Mexeflote motorised pontoon which was driven on to the beach for equipment to be offloaded – a quite unique experience for the cadets.

Cadet Lance Corporal James, 15, of Northampton Royal Marines Cadets Detachment, said: "Taking part in a simulated beach assault was my favourite part of the week as it was something that we would not ordinarily get the opportunity to do."

The following day saw cadets take part in an exercise where the Royal Marines cadets were challenged with a mission to wade ashore to drop off humanitarian supplies, without being intercepted by a team of sea cadets.

"I enjoyed working with the Royal Marines cadets in their landex mission," said Ordinary Cadet Pip, 16, of

Glastonbury & Street Sea Cadets.

"I also learnt some strategies in camouflage techniques from their Sergeant."

Later in the week, the ship's company took part in a security training exercise with the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Police Marine Support Unit, culminating in cadets being given a chance to experience a high-speed ride in their RHIB.

To cap an incredible voyage, cadets also enjoyed a tour of the River-class offshore patrol vessel HMS Mersey, a highlight for Marine Cadet Eleanor, 17, of Yeovil Detachment:

She said: "The tour was an incredible opportunity to have a look at what life might be like on a Royal Navy ship, helping to solidify that option for me as a career."

The cadets were also thrilled to meet Brigadier Ged Salzano during his visit to learn more about the experiences provided by Sea Cadets' Offshore Team.

TS Jack Petchey's crew also relished the opportunity to fly the Commander's 1\* pennant – making it the senior vessel in Portsmouth Harbour for a short time.

In-between all the action, the cadets had enjoyed the full offshore experience – getting stuck in with helming the ship, handling all the lines, keeping lookout, helping out the engineer in the engine room, and even getting involved in the galley.

Ordinary Cadet Edward, 15, of Brackley Sea Cadets, said: "While I was on the TS Jack Petchey, I learnt about a wide variety of topics including navigation, helming, seamanship, engineering, safety whilst on boats, and the rules of the sea. I found this a thrilling adventure and the pinnacle of my sea cadet career; I would highly recommend this experience to any cadet."

The week also epitomised the value of the 'one ship, two colours' philosophy of collaboration between Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets.

"I feel the week improved my teamwork and leadership skills which I will bring back to my detachment and onward to my corporal promotion board," said Cdt L Cpl James.

"The voyage was a really good opportunity to build relationships with other cadets from around the country and reflect on the work of the Royal Marines in their 360th anniversary year."

Detachment Commander at Yeovil RMCD, CPO Steve Gavin RN, summed up the importance of the week for Eleanor and her fellow cadets.

"The opportunity to go offshore is not just about navigating the seas; it is about navigating challenges, building resilience, and fostering teamwork," he said.

"All cadets working together during a voyage broadens their skills, exposes them to new techniques, and strengthens their ability to work across different teams – qualities that will guide them long after their cadet days."



## Cadets help name green ship

DOZENS of cadets from Eastern Area's South East District were part of a ship's naming ceremony at the Port of Felixstowe.

The ship in question was the Alexandra Maersk – a giant 350m-long, 16,000-container vessel which is part of a new fleet using green methanol fuel to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 90 per cent.

Cadets lined the red carpet for VIPs including Maritime Minister Mike Kane and the chief executives of the ship's Danish owners Moller Maersk.

Cadets proudly carried the Union Jack and Danish flags and

provided music for the ceremony, thanks to an Eastern Area Band featuring musicians from Harrogate, Grimsby & Cleethorpes, and Flitwick & Ampthill Units.

They were also given a tour of the new vessel's bridge and engine room, providing great engagement with the maritime sector.

## Successful year for cadet aviation

WITH the applications process underway for the Naval Wings Programme 2025, Sea Cadets' Cadet Naval Aviation Course (CNAC) team has been looking back on a dynamic 2024 programme at RNAS Yeovilton.

The programme began last February with a Bronze Wings ground school course immersing cadets in basic flight principles. The top performers were then invited back for the Silver Wings course where they gained experience in aircraft handling and procedures, both on the ground and in the air.

The cadets with the highest grades in ability and aptitude then went forward to August's Gold-level course, having come through each stage of selection from a competitive pool of 200 initial applicants.

These six cadets included three from the Combined Cadet Force along with three Sea Cadets participants: Leading Cadet Chloe, 16, of Llanelli Unit; Petty Officer Cadet Andrea, 17, of Medway Victory Unit; and Cadet Sergeant Harriet, 17, of Burton Unit.

Together, they showcased their newly-acquired skills and knowledge during extended flights in the Grob 115, supported by the dedicated team of experienced training pilots from 727 Naval Air Squadron (NAS).

The week culminated in a visit from Commandant CCF, Cdr Russell Haines, who spoke extensively with the cadets and staff and was impressed by their enthusiasm.

The visit concluded with his presentation of Gold Wings to the cadets as a fitting celebration of their hard work and dedication throughout the programme.

POC Andrea said: "It has always been a goal of mine to fly. From dreaming about it when I was little, to seeing jets fly by on an offshore voyage – sparking my interest in going for the Cadet Naval Aviation Programme. With continuous



feedback throughout the programme, I developed my ability to stay calm and collected under times of pressure."

POC Andrea also praised the quality of the instruction of the CNAC Team as "above excellent", during a course which also aims to foster camaraderie and teamwork among the cadets.

SLT (SCC) Steve Cook RNR, National Staff Officer for Cadet Naval Aviation, added: "We are incredibly proud of the class of 2024 passing out from the Naval Wings Programme.

"The programme is designed to cultivate the next generation of naval aviators, and seeing these young individuals excel is truly inspiring."

# A SURFER'S DREAM



**A BOAT charter is a quest that all surfers have dreamt of at least once before. Two years in the making, WO2 Andy Williams RM together with nine companions from the RN Surfing Association met at Heathrow in early October; it was clear that the dream was about to become a reality.**

A boat charter to the remote waves of South Sumatra, Indonesia is a place that lures surfers with its promise of powerful waves, warm waters, and untouched jungle coastline. The journey to get there was epic, and with our skilled surf guide Eugene – a former British professional surfer from Devon – leading the way, we set off on the Jiwa, a traditional Indonesian trading vessel that the team would call their home for the next ten days of pure surfing adventure.

Getting from Heathrow to the first surfing destination took four days, with each flight and layover heightening the anticipation. When they finally arrived, the sight of the Jiwa anchored off the local fishing village made all the travel worth it. The surfers were itching to get in the water, however, the trip to the first location was worthy of an adventure story in its own right. It took 24 hours of navigating rough seas, unsuccessfully attempting to outrun a seasonal storm. A long first night ensued; seasoned sailors were being sick in their beds,

some literally thrown out of their bunks by the ferocity of the seas. Awaking to grey skies and the ever-present strength of the sea state, some that had suffered from seasickness kept their spirits up by the promise of world-class waves. After all, these waves were the reason they had travelled halfway around the world.

The first day in the water greeted the team with towering 10 to 15 foot spitting barrels and no other surfers in the water, so extremely difficult to gauge the actual size of the swell. These waves had real power, enough to humble even the most seasoned surfers in the group – and they didn't hold back. Seeing Eugene take on the 'swell of the season' was both inspiring and a little intimidating. Even he had to dig deep to ride the unforgiving waves.

It didn't take long before one of the boards snapped, a sign of just how intense the conditions were. That first day left everyone feeling awe-struck and humbled by the raw force of nature. But it was also a reminder of why South Sumatra was chosen: to challenge one's ability, to feel that rush, and to ride waves that are truly one of a kind.

After the wild intensity of the first day, the swell eased up, providing perfect and consistent 6-8 foot conditions that lasted for the remaining nine days. Once acclimatised, the waves were long, clean,

and just the right size to allow everyone to fine-tune their skills and settle into the rhythm of each session. Whether it was surfing left or right handed point breaks over reef, the warm water and tropical landscape made every session feel like a dream.

Eugene was there every step of the way, offering tips and encouraging everyone to make the most of each unique Indonesian location surfed. And then there was the second British Ex Pat. Luke, the boat's cameraman, capturing every ride and the incredible scenery. Thanks to his talent, each surfer now has hundreds of stunning photographs that bring back each memory: cutting through the waves, the Jiwa anchored in paradise, and every spectacular sunset we watched from the deck.

One of the best parts of life on the Jiwa was the food. Every day, the chef served up delicious meals that were perfect for the climate. From fresh seafood to European classics and tropical fruits, the meals were just what were needed to keep energy levels up. Each meal was a reminder that no detail had been overlooked by the crew; just what was needed following surfing 6-8 hours a day in equatorial heat to refuel everyone's bodies.

This South Sumatra adventure onboard the Jiwa was truly an incredible

experience for all who were lucky enough to attend. All excelled in the world class conditions, pushing their personal abilities and becoming a much improved surfer as a result. From the excitement of the journey, the thrill of challenging waves to the calm of perfect surf days, every moment was a reminder of why people surf: the exhilaration, the camaraderie, the peace, and the delight of being out on the open water amongst nature. Having surfed three different island chains, six locations and sailed 600 nautical miles in the quest for surfing perfection, departing Indonesia with three snapped surfboards and a variety of reef cuts, the friendships made and unforgettable memories will last a lifetime.

A debt of thanks must be awarded to the RN Sports Lottery, RN Surfing Association, Royal Marines Charity and The Gosling Foundation for financial assistance, and to C-Skins for sun protection clothing.

An additional thanks must be endowed to Eugene for guiding the trip, to Luke for capturing it all, and to the five Indonesian crew and chef for keeping everyone safe and fed. South Sumatra provide the waves surfers dream of, and the Jiwa was the vessel to reach them.

**Report by: Lieutenant Freddie Norris**



# KNOCKOUT NIGHT AT HMS NELSON...



THE Royal Navy Physical Training Branch Association (RNPTBA) held a Boxing Dinner show at HMS Nelson and it was a complete sell-out. The evening aimed to raise funds for the Royal British Legion and provide a spectacle for guests.

Champion ex-boxers from the 70's and 80's were in attendance.

RN and RM ex-Boxers Association Chair, Tony Bevel said: "There are 50 years of Navy boxing in this room. Boxing is service's most successful sport with a gathering of outstanding talent here tonight."

The boxing fielded Royal Marines and Navy boxers against local civilian boxing club members.

Judge, Michael Urhegyi, said: "There was a good spread of boxing of standards from novice to England level tonight and it went really well. The standard was great."

Overall, the trophy for Most Valiant boxer went to 17 year old, Able Seaman, Kyle McGregor, pictured left, from RNAS Yeovilton. He received his trophy from event sponsor, Rob Coleman of Indigo Fitness.

Another notable winner was Able Seaman Dylan Scott, from HMS Collingwood, who received his trophy from author and SAS legend, Phil Campion.

Phil said: "I have enjoyed myself enormously and it is great to see the young talent being nurtured here tonight."

Harry Rednapp was also in attendance and kindly presented the auction prizes for the evening's fundraising.

At the end of the bouts there was a presentation of the Commonwealth Games blazer that belonged to Commander Roderick Robertson MBE - who was the most qualified boxing official in the Combined Services. The blazer was gifted to HMS Nelson staff.

Commodore Mike Farrage CBE, Chairman of the RNPTBA, said: "It is wonderful to have the Royal Navy Boxing team back in Portsmouth. Tonight has been an amazing celebration of the RNPTBA and the Physical Training Branch, the Royal Navy's Jewel in the Crown. The camaraderie and the boxing from novice to England elite standard was exceptional. It was a fantastic night of PTIs, Boxers, Field Gunners, old and new."

The RNPTBA is open to all serving and former serving Royal Navy PTIs. They offer networking, career development, reunions and sports and social engagements. Contact the RNPTBA membership secretary at [rnptba@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rnptba@hotmail.co.uk)

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# Historic role for former First Sea Lord

FORMER First Sea Lord Admiral Sir George Zambellas now holds one of the oldest military titles after an historic investiture.

The naval aviator – who served held the highest position in the Royal Navy between 2013 and 2016 – is now Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, a post held by some of the greatest names in the annals of our isles, include the Duke of Wellington, Winston Churchill and Her Majesty The Queen Mother.

The post has been vacant since the death of Admiral the Lord Boyce two years ago, but earlier this year, King Charles agreed to appoint Admiral Zambellas as the submariner's successor, an appointment confirmed with the service of investiture at the Grand Court of Shepway in Kent.

The Cinque Ports – despite the title, there were more than a dozen, not five – comprised South Coast towns and Channel ports which banded together from the 13th Century to nurture maritime trade and also protect each other from raiders/pirates.

They were also expected to provide the Crown with vessels when required – subsequently earning the ports the collective title 'Cradle of the Royal Navy'.

By the 15th Century the ports' role both as trading



posts and providing the monarch with ships was waning and today is purely historical.

Among the duties which persists is the role of the grandly-titled Lord Warden and Admiral of the Cinque Ports and Constable of Dover Castle, a position which pre-dates the Norman conquest.

Responsible originally for 'law and order' on the High Seas, today it's a purely ceremonial role at major events, akin to that performed by a lord lieutenant.

It comes with an official residence, Walmer Castle in Kent and an historic investiture in Dover, which takes place in the grounds of the Duke of York's Royal Military School.

Having worked closely with the late Admiral the

Lord Boyce during his naval career and given the ports "once provided the backbone of the English navy", Admiral Zambellas said he was "deeply honoured" when asked by the King to assume the role.

"With very good reason, the Cinque Ports have been dubbed the "Cradle of the Royal Navy". Although most are no longer major ports – Dover being the obvious exception – they are proud of their maritime heritage and their centuries-old connection with the British Crown," Admiral Zambellas said.

"The Royal Navy remains intensely busy with its global operational responsibilities, supporting our great maritime nation, with its dependence upon the sea."

**Pictures: Susan Pilcher**



## Deaths

**Lowery Norman, Petty Officer Aircraft Radio/Radar.** Served January 1954 to September 1967. Served in HMS Bulwark, Eagle, Ark Royal, RNAS Ford, Brawdy, Lossiemouth and Lee-on-the-Solent. Saw action in Suez and Cyprus. Life member of Thurrock and Bognor Regis RNA. Died October 27, aged 87.

**Iain (Pat) Pattison, CCY.** Born in Darlington,

County Durham in 1965, he joined the RN in 1981 and served for 27 years. Served in HMS Fife, Minerva, Sandpiper, Dumbarton Castle, Cardiff, Glasgow, Invincible, Illustrious, FOST and HMS Collingwood. Died October 24, aged 59.

**Colin E Wade.** Master at Arms. Served in HMS Mermaid 1973 to 1978. Died October 1.

**Bryan Michael Dunster, AKA Bryan the Drum,**

**CPO ERA1.** Served from May 1951 to October 1975 in HMS Figgard, Caledonia, Victory, Undine, Glasgow, Maidstone, Pembroke, Loch Ruthven, Sultan (five times), Dundas, Vernon, Devonshire (twice), London and Nelson. Volunteer Bandmaster on HMS Devonshire. Member of The Figgard and Caledonia associations. Died November 7, aged 89.

## Ask Jack

**We Remember Submariners:** Can the family of submariner Michael Wayne Rowe, whose death was reported in October's *Navy News*, please contact me.

**David Smith**

[david.smith@weremembersubmariners.com](mailto:david.smith@weremembersubmariners.com)

**HMS Ganges:** Seeking former messmates May 1965 intake, Benbow 27 mess.

**Ray Lavall, ex LMEM**  
[raylavall@hotmail.com](mailto:raylavall@hotmail.com).

**HMS Mercury 1986-1987:** I am after video or photos of the passing-out parades at HMS Mercury in 1986 and 1987, when I was the guard commander.

**RS(SM) George Carnegie.**  
07442 174176 or email [carnegieen@talktalk.net](mailto:carnegieen@talktalk.net)

**Hugh Kepple Harry Jeans:** I am researching

## Reunions

**The Penelope Association:** Open to all who served in the cruiser between 1938 and 1944 or the frigate from 1963 10 1992 or are relatives of those who did so) are holding the 38th annual reunion weekend at the Best Western Carlton Hotel, Blackpool, from February 14 to 16 2025. For details of membership and the Reunion, use contact [Secretary@hms-penelope.com](mailto:Secretary@hms-penelope.com)

**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. In May 1940 she was sent across the Channel and brought back around

7,000 troops from Dunkirk, securing her place in naval history.

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.

**Submarine Service:** What is expected to be the largest gathering of submariners in years takes place in Plymouth in July 2025.

Two days of events have been organised at the Warrant officers and Senior Rates Mess at HMS Drake on Friday July 25 and Saturday 26.

**Chris Green**

[Green943@btinternet.com](mailto:Green943@btinternet.com)

**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 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. 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.

**Gary Gipson**  
[sggipson@msn.com](mailto:sggipson@msn.com)

T-boaters interested should contact Richard 'Figgy' Figgins and Ian 'Tally Ho' Talbot at [Trafalgarclassreunion2025@outlook.com](mailto:Trafalgarclassreunion2025@outlook.com).

**HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association:** The 2025 reunion is confirmed at the Royal Maritime Hotel Portsmouth, from April 25 to 28. Contact Denis Askham at 07773651213 or email [askhamd3@gmail.com](mailto:askhamd3@gmail.com)

**HMS Mohawk Association:** Our next reunion will take place at the Royal Hotel, Weymouth from March 14 to 17. For details call IOW Tours on 01983 405116 or contact Bob Proud email [rob.proud@mypostoffice.co.uk](mailto:rob.proud@mypostoffice.co.uk)

# NAVY NEWS

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**Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Ask Jack columns in next month's Noticeboard must be received by December 7 2024**

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